



Forth Seabird Group

Forth Islands Bird Report 2000

Compiled by Dave Jones

December 2000

SEABIRD SPECIES SUMMARIES 2000

FULMAR

Complete Forth Islands count. 1,676 AOS is a welcome increase on last year, but not up to the recent peak of 2,045 in 1997. Increases on all nesting islands except Inchmickery. Here numbers fell from 38 to 30.

CORMORANT

Complete Forth Islands count. A count of 440 nests is up on last year, and approaches the 460 complete count of 1997. Increases of 20% were recorded on Inchkeith and Carr Craig, and 52% on Craigleith. Numbers stable on the Lamb.

SHAG

Complete Forth Islands count. 1,050 nests were recorded. This represents more than a full recovery from the low of 1993/4.

EIDER

Not all islands counted. 1,220 nests were found, a fall on last year's 1,484. Numbers fell by about 100 each on Inchmickery and the Isle of May. Fidra (111 in 1999) was not counted this year, which also accounts for some of the reduction.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

A count of 30 nests is comparable with last year's all-time high of 34.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

A partial count of 1,898 was obtained. Large decreases on The Lamb and Fidra may reflect the late date of these counts. Numbers were also down, however, on the Isle of May and Inchgarvie.

HERRING GULL

Numbers counted fell by about 1600 nests to 5764+. Craigleith, however, was not counted and this island held 1,146 nests last year.

KITTIWAKE

Complete Forth Islands count. A total of 7108 up by 289 nests. The last high was 11,229 in 1997. Six dead adults were found on nests with chicks on Inchcolm. A mystery, as food shortage was apparently not the problem.

COMMON TERN

Complete Forth Islands count of 378 pairs. A significant breeding failure occurred in early June on Long Craig with 40% of the total egg stage losses occurring during this period.

ARCTIC TERN

Complete Forth Islands count. Another increase to 908 nests, all on the Isle of May.

ROSEATE TERN

Complete count. 12-13 nests at two sites, continues an increase over the last five years. The last higher count was 17 in 1995. Significant failures occurred at the laying stage in early June.

SANDWICH TERN

Complete Forth Islands count. All 176 nests (up 54) were on the Isle of May. A later "wave" of nesting occurred. It is thought that c300 pairs may have nested. A good consolidation after their recent low numbers.

RAZORBILL

Complete Forth Islands count. Fairly stable. 3,660 pairs/sites is comparable with last year, representing a decrease of just 209.

GUILLEMOT

Complete Forth Islands count. Total rose again to 36,732 birds on cliffs. The Lamb showed a decrease this year, all others an increase.

PUFFIN

Incomplete count. Just 1,838 birds were seen. Recent counts have produced 43,000 pairs on the Isle of May and 28,000 pairs on Craigleith.

Table 1: Summary of seabird counts for the Forth Islands, 2000 (x = present but no count, 0 = none breeding).

	<u>Ba</u>	<u>Cr</u>	<u>La</u>	<u>Fi</u>	<u>Eb</u>	<u>Ik</u>	<u>CC</u>	<u>Ic</u>	<u>Hs</u>	<u>Im</u>	<u>Ig/Frb</u>	<u>LC</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Total</u>
Fulmar (AOS)	68	144	5	154	0	417	0	257	0	30	234	0	367	1676
Cormorant (nests)	0	85+	133	0	0	101	121	0	0	0	0	0	0	440+
Shag (nests)	28	208	46	123	0	58	7	3	4	32	0	0	541	1050
Gannet (nests)	x	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x
Eider (nests)	x	x	0	x	3	x	1	1	1	263	59	x	892	1220+
Great B-b Gull (nests)	1	3	1	0	0	x	0	1	0	0	1	0	23	30+
Lesser B-b Gull (nests)	25	x	3	179	0	x	2+	x	1-2?	230	16+	0	1442	1898+
Herring Gull (nests)	210	x	36	1716	3	x	62	x	22	231	327	0	3067	5764+
Kittiwake (nests)	c1000	539	132	343	0	365	0	111	0	0	0	0	4618	7108
Common Tern (pairs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	75	303	378+
Arctic Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	908	908
Roseate Tern (nests)														12-13
Sandwich Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	c.300	c.300
Razorbill (pairs/sites)	83	200	87	110	0	64	0	11	0	0	0	0	3105	3660
Guillemot (birds on cliffs)	3570	2878	2523	643	0	73	0	0	0	0	0	0	27045	36732
Puffin (as stated)	x	x	x	398 birds	0	1373 birds	0	52 birds	0	15 birds	0	0	x	1838+

Frb = Forth Rail Bridge

MAIN BREEDING SEABIRDS - ADDITIONAL COUNTS AND COMMENTS

CORMORANT

Inchgarvie: One immature bird present on 31 May
Carr Craig: 60-65 nests seen on 18 April
Haystack: One immature bird on 18 April

SHAG

Carr Craig: 3 nests seen on 18 April
Haystack: 2+ pairs nesting on 18 April
Inchcolm: On 18 April there was one nest with three eggs and a total of 7 birds present. A second nest was found on the N.W. cliffs
Inchkeith: The 58 nests recorded on 29 May is the highest ever count and nearly doubles the previous record

EIDER

Carr Craig: One nest with 3 eggs seen on 30 May
Inchcolm: One bird with 3 eggs found on 18 April

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

Inchgarvie: One nest containing 2 young on 31 May
Inchcolm: One nest on 30 May contained one egg.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

Carr Craig: Several present on 18 April
Haystack: One bird present on 18 April, no count made on the 30 May, but usually only 1-2 nests
Inchcolm: Present in high numbers (not counted).

HERRING GULL

Carr Craig: 40-50 pairs seen on 18 April
Haystack: 12-15 pairs on 18 April
Inchcolm: Present in high numbers (not counted).

KITTIWAKE

Inchcolm: 127 birds on cliffs on 18 April.

COMMON TERN

Long Craig: Breeding population estimated at 70-80 pairs with a count of about 142 adults on 4 July. At 112 nest sites, more than 245 eggs were laid, more than 108 hatched, 28 young were recorded dead, 74 fledged and the outcome of 6 were unknown. Nineteen young were ringed.

ROSEATE TERN

Forth Islands: One of the confirmed nest sites may be a re-lay of an earlier failure. Twelve eggs were recorded, from which four young hatched and fledged. Four young were ringed.

RAZORBILL

Inchcolm: 18 birds on and offshore on 18th April.

PUFFIN

Inchcolm: 17 birds on 18th April.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF OTHER BIRD SIGHTINGS (including breeding records)

MANX SHEARWATER

Firth of Forth 5 seen on 2 July (Puffin cruise)

SHELDUCK

Inchmickery: A pair present on 22 May
Inchcolm: Five pairs in South Bay.

MALLARD

Inchmickery: A drake on 22 May
Inchcolm: Five males seen on 18 April. The custodian reports nine males and one female on 30 May.
Inchkeith: Three males and one female on 29 May.

PEREGRINE

Fidra: One present on 21 June

OYSTERCATCHER

Inchgarvie: Two birds present on 31 May (no obvious nest site)
Inchmickery: 4 pairs on 22 May
Carr Craig: One present on 30 May
Inchcolm: 5-6 territories (four nests with eggs found) on 30 May
Fidra: 2 on 21 June
Eyebroughy: 1 on 21 June
Inchkeith: More than five sites.

CURLEW

Inchcolm: Two birds seen on 18 April.

REDSHANK

Inchcolm: Three birds recorded on 18 April.

TURNSTONE

Inchcolm: Two birds seen on 18 April.

FERAL PIGEON

Inchmickery: At least 15 present on 22 May
Carr Craig: One present on 30 May
Haystack: One pair seen on 18 April and present in Blowhole on 30 May. Breeding suspected.

WOODPIGEON

Inchcolm: One bird seen on 18 April and a nest with 2 eggs found on 30 May with 2 eggs.

SWALLOW

Inchcolm: One bird seen on 18 April.

WREN

Inchcolm: Two singing on 18 April. Four birds (one carrying food) and one nest found with young.

ROBIN

Inchcolm: One on 18 April.

BLACKBIRD

Inchcolm: A male seen on 30 May.
Inchkeith: One male on 29 May.

JACKDAW

Inchcolm: 11 birds on 18 April and seven on 30 May. Several nest sites seen on the latter date.

CARRION CROW

Inchgarvie: One bird present on 31 May
Carr Craig: One present on 30 May
Haystack: One bird seen on 18 April and again on 30 May.
Inchcolm: A pair and a single bird seen on 18 April and a single bird on 30 May.

LINNET

Inchcolm: Six on 18 April and two on 30 May.

MAMMALS 2000

GREY SEAL

Haystack: Two seen on 30 May.
Inchcolm: Six present on 18 April.

COMMON SEAL

Inchcolm: One present on 18 April.

BUTTERFLIES 2000

No records received this year

**A SUMMARY OF SEABIRD MONITORING
AT ST ABB'S HEAD NNR IN 2000 (by Kevin
Rideout)**

Fulmar

Fulmars decreased slightly by 1.4% to 274 AOS, compared to 278 in 1999. Between the years 1986 and 1999, the population fluctuated between 261 (1998) and 393 (1994) AOS with a mean over this period of 310 AOS.

Breeding success was 0.2 young fledged per active site. Between 1988 and 1999, productivity on the plots ranged from zero (1998) to 0.35 (1996) with a mean of 0.22

Shag

Shags increased markedly by 41.2% to 233 AON, the highest count for seven years, compared to 165 in 1999. However, breeding numbers remain much reduced compared to the high counts between 1986 and 1992 when the population ranged between 318 and 463 AON (mean = 385).

The breeding success was a healthy 1.6 young fledged per active nest. This is above the average value of 1.2 for the period 1990 - 1999 (range = 0.5 - 1.85).

Herring gull

Herring gulls increased by 21.3% to 307 AON, compared to 253 in 1999. However, this number is still low compared to the 1978 peak figure of 907 AON.

Kittiwake

Kittiwakes increased by 15.7% to 11,077 AON, compared to 9,576 in 1999. Between 1985 and 1999, the population ranged from 8,044 (1998) to 19,066 (1989) with a mean over this period of 14,230 AON.

The productivity was 0.80 young fledged per AON. This compares with an average productivity for the period 1998 - 1999 of 0.73 (range = 0.27 to 1.25).

Guillemot

After the low counts of the previous two years, all monitoring plots showed an increase in the mean count. These were the highest counts on record with an average increase of 37% (range +30 to +45).

Razorbill

Compared to 1999, the mean counts of individual birds on the monitoring plots increased on average by 25%, with changes ranging from +2% to +48%. As with guillemot, these were among the highest counts on record, following two years of reduced numbers.

**SUMMARY OF ISLE OF MAY SEABIRD
SPECIES ACCOUNTS IN 2000 (Data supplied
by Jared Wilson and Prof MP Harris)**

Counts of the cliff nesting species were all made between 1-8 June. All clearly showed an increase in numbers except for Razorbill (see below).

Fulmar numbers rose by 18% (after last year's fall of 14%), giving a total of 367 nests on the island.

Shag numbers also, after a decrease of 58% last year, rose by 109%. This made a total of 541 nests.

Kittiwake breeding numbers also rose by 11% to give a count of 4618 apparently occupied nests.

Guillemot individuals counted went up by 25% to 27,045, while the number of pairs rose only by 6% to 17,979.

Razorbills, however, only rose by 5% to 3958 individuals. In contrast the number of pairs actually fell by 9% to 3,105.

Eider nests were counted between 28 May and 1 June. A total of 819 was counted, this being corrected to 892. Hatching success was found to be 85%.

The total number of large gull nests was estimated as 4509, this consisted of 3067 herring gulls and 1442 nests of lesser black-backed. Gull productivity was calculated as 0.98 and 0.64 chicks per nest for lesser black-backed gulls and herring gulls respectively.

1,211 nests of "commic" terns were found, of which it was estimated that 75% were Arctics (908) and the remainder were common terns (303).

A total of 176 Sandwich tern nests were noted. However, the actual number was thought to be closer to 300. Unfortunately, nest counts could not be carried out after mid-June for fear of disturbing/chilling young "commic" tern chicks.

No count was made this year of occupied puffin burrows.

SUMMARY OF ISLE OF MAY SEABIRD SPECIES PRODUCTIVITY ACCOUNTS IN 2000 (Data supplied by Prof MP Harris)

In general 2000 was a highly productive season for the Isle of May seabirds with many species breeding early and/or successfully.

Shags had an excellent breeding season. Breeding started early and new breeding attempts continued throughout the season. Overall breeding success (1.48 chicks per incubated nest) was the highest recorded since intensive monitoring began in 1986.

Kittiwakes had their most successful season since 1989. Laying started earlier than in recent years, and few pairs failed. The average breeding success was 0.97 chicks per completed nest.

Razorbills and puffins had average breeding seasons producing 0.68 and 0.73 chicks per pair laying respectively. Although the breeding success of guillemots (0.73 chicks per pair laying) was higher than last year it was still slightly below the long term mean for this species.

In contrast to the other species fulmars had a relatively poor year with breeding success estimated at 0.37 chicks per incubating pair.

The return rate of colour-ringed shags (89.4%) in 2000 was much higher than in 1999. The return rates of guillemots (91.6%) was slightly below the long term average (94.8%) whereas razorbill and puffin return rates 66.7% and 82.8% respectively) were within the normal range.

Sandeels predominated in the diet of all species monitored in 2000 and feeding conditions appeared to be good.

For the first time since 1989 there was no commercial sand-eel fishery on the Wee Bankie. Breeding success of the two species with the highest reliance on sandeels (kittiwake and shag) were well above the long term average and in the case of the kittiwake returned to the high levels typical of the pre-fishery period. The effect was less obvious in species like the auks which are less reliant on sandeels, while breeding success for fulmars for which sandeels do not appear to form an important item in the diet was below the long term average.

These results provide circumstantial evidence that the presence of an industrial fishery on the Wee Bankie might have an adverse affect on some components of the Isle of May seabird

community and that closure of the fishery can potentially have an immediate positive effect on seabird productivity. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that other factors e.g. hydrographic conditions were involved.

FSG FOOTNOTES

DATES FOR MAIN ISLAND COUNTS

Bass Rock	9/10 June
Craigleith	3/10 June
The Lamb	21 June
Fidra	21 June
Eyebroughy	21 June
Inchkeith	29 May
Carr Craig	18 April, 30 May
Haystack	18 April, 30 May
Inchcolm	18 April, 30 May
Inchmickery	22 May
Inchgarvie Forth Rail Bridge	31 May
Long Craig	4 July
Isle of May	May-June

TERNs IN EAST SCOTLAND

Data supplied by the East Scotland Tern Conservation Group (ESTCG) whose monitoring area stretches from the Borders to the south-east boundary of the Moray Firth. Collated by Pete Gordon. Counting unit is in pairs.

Totals for East Scotland	<u>2000</u>	<u>(1999)</u>
Arctic tern	1280	1209
Common tern	1578	1548-58
Sandwich tern	824	846
Little tern	53	71
Roseate tern	13-14	9

Firth of Forth Breeding Terns

These totals include all island and mainland sites, with 1999 totals in brackets.

Common tern	1242+ (1211)
Arctic tern	908 (737)
Roseate tern	12-13 (9)
Little tern	2.(1)
Sandwich tern	c300 (126)

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To Ian Mitchell (Seabird 2000 Co-ordinator) and his team.

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Berwickshire Breeding Seabirds

2000

Collated by Pete Gordon, other counters Mark Holling, Kevin Rideout, Gregor Hall, Ray Murray and Jim Mattocks.

From	To	FU	CA	SH	LB	HG	GB	KI	GU	RA	PU
Dunglass	Lansey Bank	236	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lansey Bank	Fast Castle	17	36	60	0	106	0	792	607	282	0
Fast Castle	St Abb's	715	0	269	1	541	1	15430	43137	2875	0
St Abb's	Eyemouth	56	0	0	0	199	1	0	0	0	0
Eyemouth	Burnmouth	44	0	20	0	83	0	2516	892	377	21
Burnmouth	Border	78	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0
Count units		AOS	AON	AON	AON	AON	AON	AON	IND	IND	IND

AOS = apparently occupied site

AON = apparently occupied nest

IND = individuals

Fulmars show a slight decline from 1978 and 1987 counts but great daily variation in attendance means that inferences from single counts should only be drawn with caution. Shag figures, although up on 1978, are well down on 1987 and (especially) early 90s figures. Cormorant numbers broadly similar - 33 in 1978, 41 in 1987 (but at Fast Castle alone in 1995). Herring gulls show steady decline - at least on cliff sites although an unknown number nest on roofs - but an earlier count date would doubtless increase the tally. The black-backed gulls have never been common breeders on this coast. Guillemots and razorbills, although showing large increases from 1978 and 1987 figures, have actually declined from peaks in 1997. Attendance of puffins at and near cliffs is erratic.

East Lothian carried out by the East Lothian Ranger Service (provided by Alan Leitch)

Totals for all known sites on the coastline of East Lothian;

Fulmar	545
GBB Gull	1
Herring Gull	46
LBB Gull	1
Kittiwake	1191

Traprain Law

Fulmar	8
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Seabird trips in 2000

There were 8 seabird ringing trips in 2000 with 4 visits to Craigleith and 4 visits to Inchkeith. Slightly fewer birds were ringed on Craigleith (628 compared with 661 in 1999) and on Inchkeith (297 compared with 305).

Fulmar numbers ringed on Craigleith were almost identical between 1999 and 2000 with 73 and 72 pulli ringed. 3 fewer adults were ringed in 2000. On Inchkeith the number of pulli ringed decreased from 124 to 102 in 2000.

Cormorants were ringed in similar numbers on Craigleith (54 in 2000 vs 49 in 1999). On Inchkeith only 14 pulli were ringed due to the timing of visits and the size of the young (too large).

There was a dramatic increase in the number of Shags ringed on Craigleith with an increase from 90 pulli in 1999 to 186 pulli in 2000. There was a similar increase in the number of adults ringed, from 10 in 1999 to 32 in 2000. There was no similar increase in retraps (27 in 1999, 32 in 2000) but this was still a good number. On Inchkeith there was an even larger increase in the number of Shags ringed with 56 pulli ringed in 2000 compared with 12 in 1999.

The number of Puffins ringed on Craigleith declined in 2000 although there was a similar amount of effort put into ringing them. The number of pulli ringed declined from 179 to 150 whereas the decrease in the number of adults ringed was larger with 118 ringed in 1999 and only 57 ringed in 2000. This would suggest that a greater proportion of adults were away from nest burrows during our ringing trip in 2000.

The number of Razorbills ringed fell below last year's tally of 48 pulli and 10 adults since our visits did not coincide with the peak number of birds available for ringing. 27 pulli and 3 adults was still a good effort.

There were similar numbers of Guillemot pulli ringed on Craigleith in both years (31 in 2000 vs 34 in 1999). No Guillemots were ringed on Inchkeith in 2000.

A 3J Great Black Backed Gull was ringed on Craigleith.

We would like to thank Sir Huw Hamilton Dalrymple (Craigleith) and Sir Tom Farmer (Inchkeith) for continued permission to visit the islands. Thanks also to the Forth Pilots at Granton and to Dougie Fergusson of North Berwick for ferrying us safely to and from the islands.

Martin Moss and John Davies

Craigleith

Visit Dates	Type	Fulmar	Corm	Shag	Kitt	Raz	Guill	Puffin	Herring Gull	LBB Gull	GBB Gull	Totals
3 June	Pullus		33	5								38
	Adult			3								3
	Retrap			2								2
	Dead											
24 June	Pullus		21	130		27	30	26				234
	Adult			27	3	3	3	7				43
	Retrap			28		1	1	1				31
	dead											
1 July	Pullus			16				124				140
	Adult			2				50				52
	Retrap			5				10				15
	Dead							1				1
5 Aug	Pullus	72		35	5		1				1	114
	Adult	3			1							4
	Retrap											
	Dead							1	1			2
Totals	Pullus	72	54	186	5	27	31	150			1	526
	Adult	3		32	4	3	3	57				102
	New	75	54	218	9	30	34	207			1	628
	Retrap			35		1		11				47
	Dead							2	1			3

Inchkeith

Visit Dates	Type	Fulmar	Corm	Shag	Kitt	Raz	Guill	Puffin	Herring Gull	LBB Gull	GBB Gull	Totals
29 May	Pullus		14									14
	Adult											
	Retrap											
	Dead											
18 June	Pullus			30	10							40
	Adult			1	1			1				3
	Retrap			1	1							2
	Dead								1			1
14 Jul	Pullus	1		25	104							130
	Adult	1										1
	Retrap											
27 Jul	Pullus	101		1	1							103
	Adult	6										6
	Retrap											
Totals	Pullus	102	14	56	115							287
	Adult	7		1	1			1				10
	New	109	14	57	116			1				297
	Retrap			1	1							2
	Dead				1				1			2

LRG Forth Island Totals 2000

Type	Fulmar	Corm	Shag	Kitt	Raz	Guill	Puffin	Herring Gull	LBB Gull	GBB Gull	Totals
Pullus	174	68	242	120	27	31	150			1	813
Adult	10		33	5	3	3	58				112
New	184	68	275	125	30	34	208			1	925
Retrap			36	1	1		11				49
Dead				1			2	2			5