



Forth Seabird Group

Forth Islands Bird Report

2001

Compiled by Dave Jones

December 2001

SEABIRD SPECIES SUMMARIES 2001

FULMAR

Complete Forth Islands count. 1523 aos. Overall, a fall on last year. However, some islands saw increases; Craigleith, The Lamb and Fidra. The largest decrease was on Inchcolm from 257 to 178.

CORMORANT

Complete Forth Islands count. 372 nests counted. Most of this was accounted for by decreases at The Lamb and Inchkeith.

SHAG

Complete Forth Islands count. 1343 nests up nearly 28% on 2000. Very encouraging as almost every colony is showing an increase.

EIDER

Not all islands counted. 1322 nests found. Only Inchkeith, Bass and Craigleith were not counted. Most recent counts were 7 on Bass (1997), 153 on Craigleith and 323 on Inchkeith (both 1994).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

Near complete count. Breeding confirmed on seven islands. The total of 35 nests is a new all-time high. There were 34 two years ago.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

A partial count of 1362 nests was obtained. A further decline noted on Fidra and a large fall of 60% on Inchmickery. Also a continuing decline on the Isle of May by 17%

HERRING GULL

Also a partial count of 4499 nests. Last year 5464 were counted on the same islands. This is a decline of c18% overall. Increases, however, were noted on the Lamb and Inchmickery.

KITTIWAKE

Complete Forth Islands count. A fall to 5460 nests counted, this is only half the last highest count of 11,229 in 1997.

COMMON TERN

A complete Forth Islands count of 163 nests. This continues a decline since 543 nested in 1999.

ARCTIC TERN

Complete Forth Islands count. A slight increase of 8 to 916 nests, all once again on the Isle of May

ROSEATE TERN

Complete Forth Islands count. Disappointingly, only two nests at two sites confirmed. At one site, a chick was rung on 17th August, but it was doubtful whether it survived to fledging due to its late hatching.

SANDWICH TERN

Complete Forth Islands count. The recovery of this species continues. Numbers have risen to an impressive 500 nests, all on the Isle of May.

RAZORBILL

Near complete count with 4643 aos, a 35% increase on last year. Only Inchcolm (recently no more than 11 aos) was not counted.

GUILLEMOT

Complete Forth Islands count. 37,876 birds were counted on the cliffs of six islands. This is another increase in line with the last few years

PUFFIN

Incomplete count. A total of 2382 birds were counted from four of the islands. This is however a tiny fraction of over 70,000+ birds in the Forth.

Table 1: Summary of seabird counts for the Forth Islands, 2001 (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)	53	185	7	179	0	365	0	178	0	16	224	0	369	1523
Cormorant (nests)	0	78+	90	0	0	82	117	0	0	5	0	0	0	372
Shag (nests)	39	237	99	139	0	78	7	5	3	41	0	0	734	1343
Gannet (nests)	x	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x
Eider (nests)	x	x	0	56	4	x	4	0	0	253	51	7	947	1322
Great B-b Gull (nests)	x	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	27	35
Lesser B-b Gull (nests)	x	x	3	51	0	x	0	x	1	91	12+	0	1203	1362
Herring Gull (nests)	x	x	117	840	2	x	52	x	21+	395	227	0	2845	4499
Kittiwake (nests)	670	440	117	243	0	309	0	42	0	0	0	0	3639	5460
Common Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	24	132	163
Arctic Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	916	916
Roseate Tern (nests)														2
Sandwich Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	c500	500
Razorbill (pairs/sites)	137	136	96	89	0	71	0	x	0	0	0	0	4114	4643
Guillemot (birds on cliffs)	3650	3180	2180	682	0	81	0	0	0	0	0	0	28103	37876
Puffin (as stated)	x	x	14 birds	x	0	2337 birds	0	10 birds	0	21 birds	0	0	x	2382 birds

Frb = Forth Rail Bridge

MAIN BREEDING SEABIRDS - ADDITIONAL COUNTS AND COMMENTS

FULMAR

Twenty were prospecting Craigleith on 25th Feb. Two pairs on Fidra by 18th Mar. and 5 were already prospecting on 12th Nov.

GANNET

Five were near the Isle of May on 5th Jan. The first of the year landed on Bass Rock on 28th and 10 were on the water nearby on 3rd Feb. Thousands present by the month's end.

50,000 (estimated by Scottish Seabird Centre) on and around the rock on 26th Mar. The 1st egg was seen on 16th April.

75,000 estimated by SSC on 11th May. c30 flying west off the north side of Inchcolm on 30th May. The first chick was seen on 31st and two seen on camera on 8th June. SSC estimate of 100,000 birds on 18th June.

A few still on eggs by 10th Aug. Several hundreds on sea, south of Isle of May on 23rd Aug. and a juvenile seen in flight from the SSC on 25th. Bass Rock almost empty of birds on 26th Oct. None present on 1st Nov.

CORMORANT

Thirty-two on the Craigleith breeding site on 25th Mar. Five nests on Cow & Calves on 19th May. The 82 nests on Inchkeith included 28 on the Long Craig rocks off the southern tip of the island.

SHAG

Three nests with eggs on Haystacks on 30th May underneath wooden palettes

EIDER

Twenty loafing off Cow & Calves on 19th May. The first eggs seen on Bass Rock were on 3rd May

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

A nest on Inchcolm contained two eggs. Another on Inchgarvie contained 3 eggs on 30th May. One nest contained three eggs on Inchkeith on 2nd June.

HERRING GULL

Three chicks seen on Bass Rock on 31st May.

KITTIWAKE

The first birds were at nesting sites on 1st Apr. Some immatures were present on Fidra on 18th of the same month. Chicks were visible on SSC camera on 22nd June.

COMMON TERN

Four at Inchmickery on 19th May, no nests though. Also four off Inchcolm on 30th May.

ROSEATE TERN

Two seen on Puffin cruise of 3rd June, on the north side of the Firth. Three were seen from a cruise on 16th and three passed the Scottish Seabird Centre on 22nd July.

SANDWICH TERN

One flew by Inchgarvie and two were seen off Inchcolm on 30th May.

RAZORBILL

A pair seen on Fidra on 9th Mar. The first egg was seen from SSC camera on 21st May. First chick on Fidra on 20th June. By 17th Aug. nearly all had left the stacks.

GUILLEMOT

A pair landed on Craigleith on 26th Jan. 200+ were on Fidra on 23rd Mar. On 1st Apr, 100s were in rafts off Craigleith and also on the island. Similar numbers were on Fidra on 10th. One was killed by a herring gull near the SSC on 2nd Apr. Chicks were visible on SSC camera on 22nd June and a juvenile was seen leaving the cliffs of Bass Rock on 13th July. By 17th Aug. nearly all had left the stacks.

PUFFIN

Twenty were over Craigleith on 20th Mar and one bird was on the water off Inchgarvie on 30th May. 100s in rafts were off Craigleith on 1st Apr, and 25 were on the island on 26th May excavating burrows, also several on Fidra. Five juveniles seen on the water on 27th July. By 1st Aug. most puffins had gone from Fidra.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF OTHER BIRD SIGHTINGS (including breeding records)**MANX SHEARWATER**

Four seen on seabird cruise on 28th Jul.

GREYLAG GOOSE

Nine were on Fidra on 10th Apr. and one pair was in the south bay of Inchcolm on 29th May.

SHELDUCK

Two displayed on Fidra on 15-21st Apr. and a nest was found on Inchmickery and five birds seen their in flight on 19th May. One nest with seven eggs was found on 29th May.

MALLARD

A drake on Inchcolm on 30th May. One pair plus five other drakes around Inchkeith on 2nd June

PEREGRINE

On SSC camera on Fidra on 17/18th Jan. and 9-24th Feb, with a pair present on 15th. One eating a knot on Craigeith on 18th. Another seen on Fidra with a full crop on 9th Mar. Also present Apr and May. A male was on the F.R. Bridge on 3rd and 16th June. A young bird (ad. nearby) had a dead puffin on Fidra on 20th June. A pair and juvenile there on 1st July and a female on 26th Aug. One on Craigeith on 21st Sept. and on Fidra on 23rd Nov.

OYSTERCATCHER

Two on Inchmickery on 19th May and seven clutches found on Inchcolm on 29th. An eighth nest was found there the next day. Five sites found on Inchkeith on 2nd June, one with eggs.

TURNSTONE

Two on Inchmickery, one on Cow & Calves on 19th May. One bird was present on Carr Craig on 30th.

LONG-TAILED SKUA

One near Forth Road Bridge on 16th June was seen on the RSPB Puffin Cruise.

FERAL PIGEON

Twenty-seven aos, including three definite nests on Inchmickery on 19th May. Birds present on Craigeith on 26th and one bird present on Carr Craig on 30th May.

WOODPIGEON

Two birds seen on 29th May on Inchcolm.

SWALLOW

Two on Inchcolm on 30th May.

HOUSE MARTIN

One flew west over Inchcolm on 29th May.

ROCK PIPIT

Present on Bass Rock on 9th June and Craigeith on 26th May.

PIED WAGTAIL

A pair on Craigeith on 26th; and a single on Inchcolm on 30th May. A male on Inchkeith on 2nd June.

ROBIN

Three different birds were seen on Inchcolm on 29th May.

BLACKBIRD

One adult and an immature on were seen on Inchmickery on 19th May. One and a nest seen on 29th on Inchcolm. Two were there on the next day. One on Inchkeith on 2nd June and two on Bass Rock on 22nd Oct.

REDWING

Two were recorded on 21st and four on 22nd Oct on Bass Rock.

ROBIN

Two were seen on Bass Rock on 22nd Oct.

JACKDAW

Over 15 birds were counted on Inchcolm on 29th May

CARRION CROW

A nest noted on Bass Rock lighthouse on 19th Apr. One bird on Inchmickery on 19th May. Two Inchgarvie, two Inchcolm and one on Carr Craig on 30th May. Two were also seen on Inchkeith on 2nd June.

STARLING

One present on Inchcolm on 29th May and three the next day. Over 500 roosting on Craigeith on 3rd Nov..

CHAFFINCH

A pair on 29th May on Inchcolm and three birds the next day.

LINNET

At least two present on Inchcolm on 29th and 30th May.

MAMMALS 2001**GREY SEAL**

Records refer only to animals on or near islands. One off Inchmickery and two off Cow & Calves on 19th May. Six yearlings were seen on 29th May off Inchcolm. Four present at Carr Craig, 33 on rocks at low tide off Haystacks on and three adults were on the rocks at Inchcolm on the next day. Two were on

Eyebroughy on 11th Nov and 12 hauled out onto the rocks on the south side of Craigleith on 14th. 17 hauled out here on 20th.

COMMON SEAL

The only record was of two off Inchmickery on 19th May.

BOTTLE-NOSED DOLPHINS

Four were seen in the East Bay, North Berwick on 31st Jan. August saw ten here on 3rd and twelve on 17th. Ten were seen near Burnmouth on 14th Sept. 14-20 unidentified dolphins were seen near Fidra and approached a boat on 22nd Sept. Twenty were seen moving between Craigleith and Fidra on 27th.

RABBIT

Long dead remains were found in a shag nest on Inchmickery on 19th May.

BUTTERFLIES etc 2001

Garden tiger moth caterpillars were seen on thistles on Inchmickery on 19th May.
No butterfly records were received this year

A SUMMARY OF SEABIRD MONITORING AT ST ABB'S HEAD NNR IN 2001 (by Kevin Rideout)

FULMAR

Fulmars decreased by 23% to 211 AOS, compared to 274 in 2000. This is the lowest count since 1978. Between the years 1978 and 2000, the population fluctuated between 181 (1978) and 393 (1994) AOS with a mean over this period of 310 AOS. Breeding success was 0.28 young fledged per active site. Between 1988 and 2000, productivity on the plots ranged from zero (1998) to 0.35 (1996) with a mean of 0.21.

SHAG

Shags increased markedly for the second successive year by 29% to 300 AON, compared to 233 in 2000. This is the highest count for eight years. Between the years 1978 and 2000, the population fluctuated between 115 (1994) and 463 (1991) AOS with a mean over this period of 285 AOS. The breeding success was a healthy 1.6 young fledged per active nest. This is above the average value of 1.18 for the period 1990 – 2000 (range = 0.5 – 1.85).

HERRING GULL

Herring gulls decreased slightly by 2% to 301 AON, compared to 307 in 2000. The current breeding population is low compared to the 1978 peak figure of 907 AON.

KITTIWAKE

Kittiwakes decreased markedly by 28% to 8,028 AON, compared to 11,077 in 2000. This is the lowest count for over 30 years. Between 1970 and 2000, the population ranged from 7,293 (1970) to 19,066 (1989) with a mean over this period of 12,906 AON. The productivity was only 0.4 young fledged per AON. This compares with an average productivity for the period 1998 – 2000 of 0.73 (range = 0.27 to 1.25).

GUILLEMOT

On the monitoring plots, numbers of individuals decreased on average by 8%, but were still the second highest counts on record. The last full census was in 1998 when 40,720 individuals were counted.

RAZORBILL

On the monitoring plots, numbers of individuals decreased on average by 17% and were the lowest counts since 1996. The last full census was in 1998 when 2,214 individuals were counted.

SUMMARY OF ISLE OF MAY SEABIRD SPECIES ACCOUNTS IN 2001 (Data supplied by Jared Wilson and Prof MP Harris)

Counts of the cliff nesting species were all made between 1-7 June

Fulmar numbers rose by 1% (after last year's rise of 18%) giving a total of 369 apparently occupied nests on the island.

Shag numbers also rose by 36%, building on last year's rise of 109%. This made a total of 734 nests. This was the highest count following the population crash of 1993 (1,634 AON were counted in 1992).

Kittiwake breeding numbers declined by 21% after last year's rise of 11% to give a count of 3,639 apparently occupied nests. This is the lowest count on record for the Isle of May and follows the recent general decline in population observed since 1995.

The all island count of guillemots gave a total of 28,103 individuals, an increase of 4% and the largest count on record. The estimated number of pairs after conversion was 18,442, an increase of 3% on 2000.

The all island count gave a total of 4,114 birds, an increase of 4% on last year. This is a continuation of the general increase in population and the highest count recorded for the island. This converted to an estimated 3,346 breeding pairs, an increase of 8% on 2000.

Eider nests were counted between 27-31 May. A total of 871 were counted, this being corrected to 947, (an increase on last year) as nest finding accuracy was found to be 92%. Hatching success was found to be 86%.

A total of 3821 nests were counted which converted to 4048 nests when count efficiency was accounted for. Herring gulls were estimated at 2845 nests and lesser black-backs at 1203. The overall gull population therefore declined by 10% on last year's figures with herring gull showing a decline of 8% and lesser black-back a decline of 20%. This continues a general trend of slowing population growth and decline since 1995.

A total of 27 nests of Great black-backed gull was an increase of 4 pairs on 2000. The first egg was noted on 23rd April, and the first chick on 16th May.

1,048 nests of "commic" terns were found, of which it was estimated that 86% were Arctics (916) and the remainder were common terns (132). This represents an increase of 1% of Arctic terns but a dramatic 56% decline in common terns

An estimated 500 pairs of Sandwich terns nested this year, a large increase on the suspected 300 last year. 305 clutches were counted earlier on 8th June. Once again a second count of nests could not be carried out after mid-June for fear of disturbing or 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 2001
(Data supplied by Prof MP Harris)

In general, 2001 was a mixed season in terms of productivity for the Isle of May seabirds. Some species had their most productive season since monitoring began and others had their least productive one. Timing in auks and fulmar was normal, while shags and kittiwakes laid later than in recent years.

Shags had an excellent breeding season. Breeding started later than 2000 and overall breeding success (1.53 chicks per incubated nest) was the highest recorded since intensive monitoring began in 1986.

Kittiwakes started breeding later than in recent years. Losses were high during incubation but few failures occurred during chick-rearing. Thus overall breeding success (0.61 chicks per pair laying) remained above the long-term average, although not as high as in 2000.

Razorbill breeding success (0.60 chicks per pair laying) was lower than the long-term average.

Guillemots also had low breeding success, their lowest since monitoring began in 1986 (0.63 chicks per pair laying). Some chicks were neglected and fledging weights were considerably lower than the long-term average.

Puffins, however had their most successful season in four years and breeding success (0.78 chicks per pair laying) was above the long-term average.

Fulmars had a very poor season, with breeding success estimated at only 0.26 chicks per incubating pair, well below the long-term average.

The return rate of colour-ringed shags (89.8%) in 2001 was similar to that in 2000. The kittiwake return rate (81.2%) was the highest since 1990. The return rate of guillemots (82.9%) was slightly below the long-term average, whereas razorbill and puffin return rates (82.9% and 90.5% respectively) were much higher than in 2000.

Sand-eels predominated in the diet of shags, kittiwakes and puffins in 2001. In contrast to 2000, well over half of guillemot chick diet was made up of clupeids, which also predominated in the razorbill chick diet.

As in 2000, there was no commercial sand-eel fishery on the Wee Bankie. Results for 2000 provided circumstantial evidence that the presence of an industrial fishery on the Wee Bankie was having an adverse effect on some components of the Isle of May seabird community and that closure of the fishery could potentially have an immediate and positive effect

on seabird productivity. In particular, kittiwake breeding success returned to the high levels of the pre-fishery period. In 2001 breeding success of the two species with the highest reliance on sand-eels (kittiwake and shag) continued to be above the long-term average, although kittiwake performance in 2001 was not maintained at the 2000 level. Puffins, although less reliant on sand-eels, had a very successful season. Guillemots and razorbills which both fed their chicks predominantly on clupeids, and fulmars, for which sand-eels do not appear to form an important part in the diet, all had poor seasons.

SUMMARY OF ROSYTH DOCKYARD COLONY IN 2001 (Data supplied by Mark Oksien)

Common tern counts; 18 birds 11th May, 56 birds 17th May, security arrangements this year prevented a better counts but colony estimate was as good as previous year.

FSG FOOTNOTES

DATES FOR MAIN ISLAND COUNTS

Bass Rock	9 th June
Craighleith	25 th May (9 th June E cliff count)
The Lamb	9 th June
Fidra	9 th June
Eyebroughy	9 th June
Inchkeith	2 nd June
Carr Craig	30 th May, 3 rd June
Haystack	30 th May, 3 rd June
Inchcolm	29 th May, 30 th May
Inchmickery	19 th May
Inchgarvie Forth Rail Bridge	30 th May
Long Craig	late May to Aug
Isle of May	late May to early 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	2001	(2000)
Arctic tern	?	1280
Common tern	?	1578
Sandwich tern	?	824
Little tern	?	53
Roseate tern	?	13-14

Firth of Forth Breeding Terns

These totals include all island and mainland sites, with 2000 totals in brackets.

Common tern	824
Arctic tern	916
Roseate tern	1
Little tern	0
Sandwich tern	500

Awaiting other Forth sites?

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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(This year £1000 was received from Westminster Gravels Ltd for monitoring on Inchkeith. Also £20 via Pete Gordon from Ecos for information supplied for the development by Forth Ports plc at Leith.

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

A special thank-you to those owners who have allowed access to their islands for counts and to boatmen Fred Marr and Bill Simpson.

OBITUARY

R.W.J (Bob) Smith

(11 April 1922 - 17 October 2001)

Members of the group were saddened to hear of the death of Bob Smith who passed away on October 17th of this year, after a short illness.

Bob was a keen birdwatcher all of his life and had an active interest in the Forth Islands. He initiated these annual seabird counts over forty years ago (1959) as a member of the Edinburgh Natural History Society, and then continued as a member of this group.

His enthusiasm encouraged others (including several members of this group) to further their interest and involvement in wildlife.

In recent years he reduced his involvement in the island bird counts, due partly to a troublesome knee but also to spend more time on his researches into dragonflies

Our condolences go to his wife Betty and daughter Mandy.

NEWS ITEMS

A new camera trained on the Isle of May grey seal colony is now operational and can be viewed from the Scottish Seabird Centre.

For book enthusiasts Bryan Nelson has launched a second edition of his monograph "The North Atlantic Gannet".

Appendix 1

Seabirds Ringing Totals Forth Islands

2001

(Data supplied by the Lothian Ringing Group)

Total

Species	Adult	Pullus	Total
Fulmar	6	102	108
Cormorant		156	156
Shag	23	189	212
Kittiwake	11	148	159
Guillemot	8	26	34
Razorbill	3	49	52
Puffin	88	131	219

Craigleith

Species	Adult	Pullus	Total
Fulmar	6	68	74
Cormorant		107	107
Shag	14	153	167
Kittiwake	1	4	5
Guillemot	8	25	33
Razorbill	2	46	48
Puffin	88	131	219

Inchkeith

Species	Adult	Pullus	Total
Fulmar	0	34	34
Cormorant		49	49
Shag	9	36	45
Kittiwake	10	144	154
Guillemot		1	1
Razorbill	1	3	4

Appendix 3

INNER FORTH ISLANDS GREY SEAL PUPPING SURVEY 2001

Carried out by Ron Morris and Alan Murray on Saturday 10th November 2001

This trip was organised mainly for the purpose of conducting a grey seal pupping survey of the islands of Inchkeith, Inchcolm, Carr Craig, and Cow & Calves. Opportunity was also taken to note some details of birds seen at these islands and rocks. Due to restricted daylight hours at this time of year, and the time involved in travelling to, and each between, the islands, only a very limited time was spent at the islands. Landings were made at Inchkeith and Inchcolm, with offshore surveys made at other rocks.

Inchkeith

Adults present on or around the island = c 40 + Pups present = 27
i.e. Southern tip / southeast corner of the island = 24
North east part known as "Kirkcaldy Harbour" = 2
Small cove at west side of North Bay (Kinghorn Harbour) = 1 (dead)

All the Grey Seal pups had white coats, and most were less than 2 weeks old. Two or three were estimated to be approaching 3 weeks of age

Rabbit = 12 + seen

Carr Craig

Adults present = 3 Pups present = 2

Both 2 weeks old at most

Inchcolm

Adults present = 8 plus a yearling. Pups present = 4 in South Bay.

All were less than two weeks old

One Adult bull had four cows in attendance , plus one "yearling" and three other cows were present around the island but no more pups.

Cow and Calves

Adults present = 1 cow Pups present = none

This is a very unlikely place for pupping

Inchmickery

Adults present = 5 Pups present = None

Footnote;-

A total of 33 Grey Seal pups were counted during this island circuit. Only one was dead. It is possible that additional were present at Inchkeith, or on Carr Craig, in obscure gullies, etc. However, at most this is likely to have been limited one or two at each location.