



# Forth Seabird Group

## Forth Islands Bird Report

### 2005

Compiled by Dave Jones

FEBRUARY 2006

#### SEABIRD SPECIES SUMMARIES 2005

##### FULMAR

Complete Forth Islands count of 1,189 aos, down again by 175 on last year and now only 58% of the 1997 count. Greatest losses by over 70 aos were at Craigleith, Fidra and Inchcolm. On the positive side, Bass recovered slightly, Inchmickery rose by 71% to 41 and the Isle of May by 40 sites. Only one noted on the cliff at Carling Nose Point.

##### CORMORANT

Complete Forth Islands count of 303 nests, a decrease of 97 (24%) on last year and well below the 1991 figure of 511 nests. The Carr Craig birds moved to Haystack this year.

##### SHAG

Complete Forth Islands count of 825 nests, a dramatic 51% decrease on last year. Largest losses were on the Isle of May (406, 59% and Craigleith (311, 60%). Despite this Inchkeith increased by 8 to 161 nests.

##### GANNET

No count made. 48,065 aos counted last year

##### EIDER

Incomplete count of 1,345 nests. The greatest change was on the Isle of May, the largest colony, where numbers fell again by 31 to 1070. Increases only on Fidra and Inchgarvie, by 9 and 1.

##### GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

Complete Forth Islands count of 46 nests on eight islands, eight more nests than last year. It may also have nested on Bass Rock.

##### LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

Incomplete count of 1583 nests. The Isle of May increased by 99 nests after falling by 32 last year. Fidra also recovered partly from 90 to 131 nests. Once again, the substantial colonies on Craigleith, Inchkeith and Inchcolm were not counted.

##### HERRING GULL

Incomplete count of 3,624 nests, a further continuance of the downward trend on those recorded, with falls on Inchgarvie, Fidra, The Lamb, Haystack, and on the Isle of May. Modest increases occurred on others.

##### KITTIWAKE

A complete Forth Islands count, giving a 4% decrease to 5,591 nests. This is now just half the 11,229 of 1997.

##### COMMON TERN

A complete Forth Islands count of 195 nests, down 43 on last year, caused by a fall of 51 at Long Craig, with modest increases at Forth rail Bridge and Isle of May. 804 pairs counted at two mainland sites in the Forth.

##### ARCTIC TERN

Complete Forth Islands count of 609 nests. All of these were on Isle of May. Most recent high was 916 nests in 2001.

##### ROSEATE TERN

Complete Forth Islands count, maintaining last year's four pairs. At least four young fledged (1 ringed). The maximum adult count was eight.

**SANDWICH TERN**

Complete Forth Islands count of just three nests, all on the Isle of May. Last year the May held 151 nests and in 2001, it held 500 nests.

**RAZORBILL**

Complete Forth Islands count of 5,238 pairs/sites. A welcome increase of 60% after three successive years of decline and the highest since records began. The previous best was 4,541 in 1995.

**GUILLEMOT**

Complete Forth Islands count of 28,277 birds on cliffs. An overall decrease of over 8% on last year. Decreases were noted at all sites except Fidra, which increased by 135 birds (24%).

**PUFFIN**

Incomplete count. Birds recorded on Bass, Inchkeith, Inchcolm and Inchmickery. Less than 600 counted on and around four of the islands, an insignificant part of the 83, 000+ occupied burrows in the Firth of Forth.

Table 1: Summary of seabird counts for the Forth Islands, 2005 (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>
<b>Fulmar (AOS)</b>	45	62	4	127	0	302	0	131	0	41	201	0	276	1189
<b>Cormorant (nests)</b>	0	112+	55	0	0	85	0	0	51	0	0	0	0	303
<b>Shag (nests)</b>	18	131	49	115	0	161	11	4	3	52	0	0	281	825
<b>Gannet (nests)</b>	x	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x
<b>Eider (nests)</b>	x	x	0	78	0	x	1	x	0	130	63	3	1070	1345
<b>Great B-b Gull (nests)</b>	?	6	0	2 birds	0	3	1?	1	0	1	1	0	32	46
<b>Lesser B-b Gull (nests)</b>	x	x	0	131	0	x	c1-2	x	2	109	19	0	1,320	1583
<b>Herring Gull (nests)</b>	x	x	27	957	1	x	38	x	8	319	180	0	2,094	3624
<b>Kittiwake (nests)</b>	563	492	94	257	0	329	0	66	0	0	0	0	3790	5591
<b>Common Tern (nests)</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	120	65	195
<b>Arctic Tern (nests)</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	609	609
<b>Roseate Tern (nests)</b>														4
<b>Sandwich Tern (nests)</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
<b>Razorbill (pairs/sites)</b>	198	132	73	69	0	49	0	4	0	0	0	0	4713	5238
<b>Guillemot (birds on cliffs)</b>	1860	1452	1578	701	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	22,667	28,277
<b>Puffin (as stated) OB = occupied burrows</b>	10 ind on land	x	x	x	0	548 ind mostly on sea	0	2 on land, 2 on sea	0	4 ind ashore 26 at sea	0	0	x	>592 inds

Frb = Forth Rail Bridge

## MAIN BREEDING SEABIRDS - ADDITIONAL COUNTS AND COMMENTS

### FULMAR

Small numbers of large chicks present on Inchcolm on 23<sup>rd</sup> August.

### CORMORANT

Birds present on Inchkeith, Haystack, Inchcolm and about twenty on Carr Craig on 13<sup>th</sup> November. A minimum of 15 on Craigleith and five on Fidra on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

### SHAG

Present on Inchkeith, Haystack and Inchcolm and five on Carr Craig on 13<sup>th</sup> November. A dozen were seen at Craigleith on 20<sup>th</sup>.

### EIDER

Three nests produced three young this year on Long Craig. Two present on Inchkeith and four on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November. Around 20 were close inshore to Craigleith on 20<sup>th</sup> of that month.

### GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

On 5<sup>th</sup> June, the nest on Inchmickery had a clutch of three. A second pair of birds was also on the island on that day. On Inchkeith, two pairs definitely nested and a third probably did so. One bird on Fidra on 27<sup>th</sup> August and another on Carr Craig on 13<sup>th</sup> November. At least thirty on Inchmickery on 13<sup>th</sup> November, also on Haystack and Inchcolm on this date. At least three were on Craigleith and four on Fidra on 20<sup>th</sup>.

### LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

One nest on Jubilee Tower of FRB. Birds present on Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### HERRING GULL

Birds present on Inchkeith, Haystack and Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November. 100 on Carr Craig on the same day and between 50-100 on Craigleith on 20<sup>th</sup>.

### KITTIWAKE

About 25-30 almost fledged chicks still at nest sites on Inchcolm on 23<sup>rd</sup> August.

### COMMON TERN

Four nests seen on the Jubilee Tower of the Forth Road Bridge on 21<sup>st</sup> May, this rose to 10 by 11<sup>th</sup> June. A minimum of 120 nests was found on Long Craig, although the maximum adult count was 160 birds. From these at least 140 young were produced and 32 were ringed. Later 370 birds were counted post-breeding.

### SANDWICH TERN

Sandwich tern nested at Long Craig this year, with a maximum of eight adults present, producing three nests and one fledgling. On 5<sup>th</sup> June two were over Inchmickery. Several, at least one adult and juvenile near Fidra on 27<sup>th</sup> August.

### ROSEATE TERN

The breeding details this year were a maximum of eight adults present at one site. These made four nests each producing one fledged youngster. One of these was ringed on 24<sup>th</sup> July. Post-breeding birds, from another site, were seen at Port Edgar on the previous day.

### GUILLEMOT

Two close inshore at Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### PUFFIN

Eight on Inchcolm on 6<sup>th</sup> August.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF OTHER BIRD SIGHTINGS (including breeding records)

### RED THROATED DIVER

One seen on 21<sup>st</sup> May on RSPB Puffin cruise in Inner Forth. Two were offshore, at Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November and a bird flying past the north side of Fidra on 20<sup>th</sup>.

### GREYLAG GOOSE

A roost of 23 noted on Craigleith and three close inshore to Fidra on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

### BARNACLE GOOSE

One on Inchcolm on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> October, which is the first recorded for the island.

### SHELDUCK

A pair on Inchmickery on 5<sup>th</sup> June and twelve birds at sea. Another pair over the harbour of Inchkeith and a bird on Iron Craig on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Three birds at Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May.

### MALLARD

A pair on Inchmickery on 5/6<sup>th</sup>, and three drakes present on Inchkeith on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. A nest with eight eggs found on Craigleith on 4<sup>th</sup> June. A female on Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May. About 30 close inshore to Fidra on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

### COMMON SCOTER

A dozen birds near to Fidra on 6<sup>th</sup> June. About 30 flying off the north side of Inchcolm

### VELVET SCOTER

A single drake with the twelve commons on 6<sup>th</sup> June.

### RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

A female with eight newly hatched ducklings seen on Inchcolm in the first week of August. Previously she was seen several times over the last few weeks and was flushed from undergrowth (nest site?) behind the tourist shop. This is the first recorded breeding on the Forth Islands and in Fife

### BUZZARD

Three birds, one being attacked by a peregrine at Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November

### PEREGRINE

A nesting pair seen on 22<sup>nd</sup> May on Inchkeith. One of the brood of three ringed. A pair, with two fully feathered chicks, was seen on Craigleith on 4<sup>th</sup> June. A male present on the west cliffs of Inchcolm on 23<sup>rd</sup> August and at least one bird present at Fidra on 27<sup>th</sup>. Two were on Inchkeith and one on Inchmickery on 13<sup>th</sup> November. One present on Craigleith on 20<sup>th</sup> November and another roosting near the south end of Fidra.

### KESTREL

One on Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### MERLIN

One flushed from vegetation on Craigleith on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### OYSTERCATCHER

A nest on Inchmickery on 5<sup>th</sup> June. A possible territory on Fidra the next day, plus ten roosting on Castle Tarbert. Seven territories, plus two single birds on Inchkeith on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Six pairs on Inchcolm on 29 May, one clutch of two eggs. Five birds on Carr Craig and a roost of c150 at the west side of the North Bay, Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November. Ten on both Craigleith and The Lamb and at least 15 on Fidra on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

### RINGED PLOVER

Four or more present on The Lamb on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

### PURPLE SANDPIPER

About 30 on Inchkeith and one on Haystack on 13<sup>th</sup> November. One on Craigleith and two on The Lamb on 20<sup>th</sup>.

### DUNLIN

About 30 on Haystack on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### WHIMBREL

One over Fidra on 27<sup>th</sup> August.

### CURLEW

One at Haystack on 6<sup>th</sup> August and two on Inchcolm on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Twenty-five at Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November and one on Fidra on 20<sup>th</sup>.

**REDSHANK**

Two on Inchkeith on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, on Fidra on 27<sup>th</sup> August and on Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**SNIPE**

Remains of a predated bird found on Craigleith on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

**TURNSTONE**

One on Inchcolm on 6<sup>th</sup> August. About 32 on Inchkeith and 30 on Haystack on 13<sup>th</sup> November. Two on Craigleith and eight on Fidra on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

**ARCTIC SKUA**

One dark phase bird seen in Inner Forth on RSPB Puffin Cruise on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL**

About 250 on the water just off the harbour at Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**LITTLE AUK**

Two corpses seen ashore on Inchkeith on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

**FERAL PIGEON**

At least 52 individuals at Inchmickery on 5<sup>th</sup> June. Only two birds noted on Fidra on the following day. Present on Craigleith on 4<sup>th</sup> June. At least 500 (probably 1000+) on Inchkeith and over 50 on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**WOODPIGEON**

One on Inchcolm on 6<sup>th</sup> August. At least six seen on 23<sup>rd</sup> August and a nest found with two eggs.

**SWIFT**

Two over the lighthouse at Inchkeith on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Several over Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May.

**WREN**

Male singing on Inchmickery on 5<sup>th</sup> June. Two singing on Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May and 23<sup>rd</sup> August. Over 15 were on Inchkeith and 11 on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**MEADOW PIPIT**

At least four on Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**ROCK PIPIT**

One on Inchkeith on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Three pairs on Craigleith on 4<sup>th</sup> June. At least seven birds at Inchkeith and one each on Haystack and Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November. At least was seen on Craigleith on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

**PIED WAGTAIL**

An adult and a juvenile on Fidra on 6<sup>th</sup> June. A pair on Inchcolm on 29 May and one bird there on 23<sup>rd</sup> August. A bird on Fidra on 27<sup>th</sup> August. Two on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**DUNNOCK**

One singing on Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May and an old nest found. Five birds on Inchkeith and four on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**ROBIN**

At least one on Inchcolm on 23<sup>rd</sup> August and ten or more on both Inchkeith and Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**WHEATEAR**

One on Inchkeith on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

**SONG THRUSH**

One each on Inchkeith and Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**MISTLE THRUSH**

Two on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November, first record for the island

**BLACKBIRD**

One male and one female on the east side of Inchkeith, plus a pair and another single bird seen on the west side of the island on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Four, including two males seen on Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May. Up to two females on Inchcolm on 6<sup>th</sup> August. Over thirty birds were seen on Inchkeith and seven on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November. A male and a female seen on Craigleith on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

**WILLOW WARBLER**

One on Inchkeith on 2<sup>nd</sup> May.

### BLUE TIT

One nesting in a nest box in the Custodian's garden on Inchcolm on the 29<sup>th</sup> May. A family party of nine birds seen on Inchcolm on 23<sup>rd</sup> August. Three were there on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### JACKDAW

No records on Inchcolm this year after many years with a small colony of c6-12 pairs. This decreased notably in 2004.

### CARRION CROW

Two birds on Eyebroughy on 6<sup>th</sup> June.  
One on Inchkeith on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. One on Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May and two on 23<sup>rd</sup> August. Four on Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November and two each on Craigleith and Fidra on 20<sup>th</sup>.

### STARLING

A flock of 20 on Inchcolm on 6<sup>th</sup> August and twelve there on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### HOUSE SPARROW

One on Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### CHAFFINCH

One on Inchcolm on 23<sup>rd</sup> August. Two on Inchkeith and six on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### GOLDFINCH

At least 37 at Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November

### GREENFINCH

One or two heard on Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May and eight on Inchkeith on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

### LINNET

Two birds on Fidra on 6<sup>th</sup> June. New nest being built on Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May, ones and twos seen regularly there. Present on Craigleith on 4<sup>th</sup> June. Several pairs present on Inchcolm on 23<sup>rd</sup> August. About twenty on Fidra on 27<sup>th</sup> August. There were 51 on Inchkeith and four on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November. Seven were seen on Craigleith on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

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### MAMMALS 2005

#### GREY SEAL

About 12 on Iron Craig, Inchkeith on 22<sup>nd</sup> May and ten on Swallowcraig rocks of Inchcolm on 29<sup>th</sup> May. Another 25 were on Haystack on 29<sup>th</sup> May. Two young greys hauled out on Inchmickery on 5<sup>th</sup> June. Two on Inchcolm on 6<sup>th</sup> August. For results of the Forth Islands Seal Survey 2005, see Appendix 2

#### COMMON SEAL

Two on Inchmickery on 5<sup>th</sup> June.

#### RABBIT

Two live adults seen on Inchmickery on 5<sup>th</sup> June.

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### INVERTEBRATES 2005

Garden tiger caterpillar on Inchmickery on 5<sup>th</sup> June and an adult red admiral on Fidra the next day.

On 29<sup>th</sup> May several small whites, one green-veined white, a small copper and a male orange-tip were seen on Inchcolm. The small copper was a first for Inchcolm and orange-tip may be a first for the island (except the Isle of May)

On 6<sup>th</sup> August the following were recorded on Inchcolm; small tortoiseshell, large white, small white and small copper.

A small white seen on Fidra on 27<sup>th</sup> August.

For summary of butterfly records see Appendix 3

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## FLORA 2005

Thanks to Ron Morris and Anna White for providing the bulk of these records from their visits to various islands in May and August this year.

## TREE MALLOW (*Lavatera arborea*)

Following last year's summary below is an update on current knowledge of the species occurrence in our area of study.

Bass Rock	Common
Craigeleith	Tree mallow is taller and denser than ever on Craigeleith, although work by CEH and volunteers have begun to tackle this.
Fidra	Further ground has been covered by this species on Fidra. A work party visited the island in August and cut down a large area of mature plants
Inchcolm	Extent of cover similar to last year
The Lamb	At least 12 plants this year, present since 1980s – early 1990s when 3-4 plants were present
Inchkeith	Presence noted this year, possibly just isolated plant/s
Inchgarvie	Not recorded recently
Isle of May	May have been attempts in the past to introduce for bird trapping, but they failed.

## Flora newly recorded on Inchkeith, 28<sup>th</sup> May

Lesser swine-cress	<i>Coronopus didymus</i>
Thyme-lvd speedwell	<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>
Wetted thistle	<i>Carduus ancanthoides</i> ( <i>C. crispus</i> )

## Flora newly recorded on Inchcolm, 29<sup>th</sup> May

Welsh poppy	<i>Meconopsis cambrica</i>
Honesty	<i>Lunaria annua</i>
Dusky crane's-bill	<i>Geranium phaeum</i>
Daffodil agg.	<i>Narcissus agg</i>

## Flora newly recorded on Inchcolm, 23<sup>rd</sup> August

Pear	<i>Pyrus pyraeaster</i> ( <i>P. communis</i> )
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A bush of probably several years, with small fruit, recorded at the east end

## Flora newly recorded on Haystack, 29<sup>th</sup> May

Common scurvy-grass *Cochlearia officinalis*

## Flora newly recorded on Carr Craig, 29<sup>th</sup> May

Common chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Knotgrass	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>
Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Goose-grass	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Smooth sow-thistle	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>

## Flora recorded on Inchgarvie, 29<sup>th</sup> May

Male Fern	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>
Ramping Fumitory	<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>
Orache sp	<i>Atriplex spp</i>
Hemlock	<i>Conium maculatum</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Common Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Curled Dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>
Broad Leaved Dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Thrift	<i>Armeria maritima</i>
Common Mallow	<i>Malva sylvestris</i>
Garlic Mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>
Rape	<i>Brassica napus</i>
Common Scurvy-grass	<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>
Wallflower	<i>Erysimum cheiri</i>
Common Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Wood Sage	<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Sticky Willie	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Groundsel	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>
Smooth Sow-thistle	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinalis</i>
Sea Mayweed	<i>Tripleurospermum maritimum</i>
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Yorkshire Fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>
Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Annual Meadow-grass	<i>Poa annua</i>

## FUNGI 2005

Thanks to Neville Crowther for these records

## SHAGGY PARASOL (*Macrolepiota rhacodes*)

A colony observed on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November during the seal survey.

## TAWNY FUNNEL CAP (*Clitocybe flaccida*)

Recorded on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November.



**CLOUDED AGARIC** (*Clitocybe nebularis*)

Observed on Inchcolm on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**SUMMARY OF ISLE OF MAY SEABIRD PRODUCTIVITY 2005 (Based upon Harris M P, M. Newell, F Daunt & Wanless S (2005) Isle of May Seabird Studies in 2005 - contract report by CEH (Banchory) to JNCC as part of their Integrated Seabird Monitoring Programme.**

The 2005 seabird breeding season was one of the latest since detailed studies started in the 1980s. However, it did not result in catastrophic breeding failures for all the species. Indeed, breeding success of black-legged kittiwakes was one of the highest recorded. Return rates of black-legged kittiwake, shag, puffin and guillemot were all extremely low, suggesting that overwinter and spring conditions were bad for many species. Most species appeared to find conditions difficult early in the season with colony attendance being rather low. Although lesser sandeels remained the main food of young puffins, razorbills and kittiwakes, guillemots fed their young mainly clupeids and shags brought in a wide variety of bottom-living fish. Very few 1-group sandeels were present in food samples during the chick-rearing period.

Northern fulmar breeding success (0.27 chicks per incubating pair) was one of the lowest recorded.

Numbers of European shags were greatly reduced following a major wreck early in 2005. Return rate was therefore very low (36%), the second lowest recorded. Breeding was late and success was poor (0.48 chicks fledged per pair laying). As in 2004, the diet was unusually varied with sandeels making up only 40.6% by mass of the diet. Those sandeels that were eaten were mainly 0 group rather than the older (1+ group) fish normally taken.

Black-legged kittiwakes had by far the latest season ever recorded. Despite this, the breeding success of 0.85 chicks fledged per active nest was the highest since 2000 and had been bettered in only three other previous seasons. Adult return rate (69.7%) was the second lowest recorded. All regurgitations contained sandeels that made up 92% of the diet by weight.

Common guillemots had their lowest recorded return rate (83.9%), breeding numbers were depressed and breeding was very late and

unproductive (0.63 chicks leaving per pair laying). As in 2004, many chicks were left unattended but surprisingly few were taken by gulls. Adults fed their chicks mainly on sprats with small gadoids being the main alternative. Sandeels made up only 1.2% of the diet by mass. Chicks grew slowly and all the evidence suggested that feeding conditions were poor.

Razorbill breeding was late and breeding success (0.57 chicks leaving per pair) was well below the long-term average. In contrast to all the other species, adult return rate (84.6%) was higher than the long-term average. Chicks were fed mainly 0 group sandeels.

Atlantic puffins had the latest breeding season since records began in 1972. Breeding success at 0.71 chicks per pair, although an improvement on 2004, was still one of the lowest recorded on the Isle of May. Chicks were mainly fed 0 group sandeels (92% by number, 71% by biomass). Adult return rate (77.0%) was well below normal.

The commercial sandeel fishery on the Wee Bankie has been closed since 2000. Seabird monitoring on the Isle of May indicated that breeding success of kittiwakes and shags improved during this period, although the situation was less clear for the auks. However, in 2004 all species had a disastrous breeding season despite the fishery remaining closed. Analyses of fish fed to young seabirds revealed that lipid levels were extremely low indicating that feeding conditions for mid trophic species such as sandeel and sprat were poor. These findings, and those from elsewhere in the North Sea, suggested major changes in the ecosystem, with climate change being a strong candidate as the driver. Results from 2005 provide further evidence of change with the whole of the North Sea sandeel fishery now closed, and some seabird breeding seasons shifting later. However, the 2005 year-class of sandeels in the Firth of Forth area appeared to be strong and benefited species reliant on 0 group sandeels for rearing their chicks in comparison with 2004.

# St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve

## Summary of Seabird counts in 2005

### 1. Whole Colony Counts

Species	Count Unit	2005 Total	Change on 2004	Comments
Fulmar	Apparently occupied site	158	+3%	Only marginally better than 2004 which was the lowest count since 1958.
Shag	Apparently occupied nest	131	-64%	Big decrease from 2003 and the lowest count since 1994
Herring Gull	Apparently occupied nest	157	-40%	The lowest count on record
Kittiwake	Apparently occupied nest	7,239	+16%	Welcome increase on last year but population has halved in last 10 years

### 2. Counts at Monitoring Plots

Species	Count Unit	Sum of plot means	Change on 2004	Comments
Guillemot	Individuals	1,702	+19%	Better than 2004 which was the lowest count for 10 years, but still below 2000-2003 counts
Razorbill	Individuals	126	+19%	Better than 2004, which was the lowest count since 1986, but still well below all other counts in last 15 years

### 3. Productivity

Species	Mean productivity (chicks fledged / active nest)	Change on 2004	Comments
Shag	0.29	-3%	Lowest value since monitoring began in 1990
Kittiwake	0.88	+225%	Big improvement on 2004 and well above 15 year mean (0.68)
Razorbill	0.48	Not monitored	This survey last done in 2000 when figure was 0.38
Fulmar			No formal monitoring this year but from casual observation only six chicks known to have fledged from the whole colony

**SUMMARY OF OTHER TERN SITES IN THE FORTH (Data supplied by East Scotland Tern Conservation Group (ESTCG))**

**Aberlady Bay**

No terns nested this year

**Grangemouth Docks**

No count made this year

**Granton Harbour**

No count made this year

**Leith Docks**

764 nests of common terns recorded.

**Methil Docks**

No count made this year.

**Port Edgar**

Common terns were present, but breeding not confirmed

**Rosyth Royal Dockyard**

Breeding confirmed with at least forty pairs producing viable young

**FSG FOOTNOTES**

**DATES FOR MAIN ISLAND COUNTS**

<b>Bass Rock</b>	4 June
<b>Craigleith</b>	4 June
<b>The Lamb</b>	6 June
<b>Fidra</b>	6 June
<b>Eyebroughy</b>	6 June
<b>Inchkeith</b>	22 May
<b>Carr Craig</b>	29 May
<b>Haystack</b>	29 May
<b>Inchcolm</b>	29 May
<b>Inchmickery</b>	5 June
<b>Inchgarvie</b>	29 May
<b>Forth Rail Bridge</b>	11 June
<b>Long Craig</b>	late May to Aug
<b>Isle of May</b>	late May to June

Note that due to nesting cormorants and peregrine on Craigleith, the grassy area above the east cliff was not counted

**TERNS IN EAST SCOTLAND**

Data supplied by the East Scotland Tern Conservation Group (ESTCG) whose monitoring area stretches from the Borders to the southeast boundary of the Moray Firth. Collated by Pete Gordon. Counting unit is in pairs. 2004 totals in brackets.

<b>Totals for East Scotland</b>	<u>2005</u>	<u>(2004)</u>
Common tern	1208	1385
Arctic tern	1197	1047
Roseate tern	4	4
Sandwich tern	573	984
Little tern	34	38

**Firth of Forth Breeding Terns**

These totals are minima and include all reported island and mainland sites, with 2004 totals in brackets. (Not all sites counted, see above)

Common tern	999	(968)
Arctic tern	609	(667)
Roseate tern	4	(4)
Sandwich tern	3	(151)
Little tern	0	(0)

**OTHER NEWS**

**Tree mallow work in the Forth**

Over the last year or so there has been a project running to monitor the distribution and to investigate the removal of tree mallow (*Lavatera arborea*) on the Forth Islands. This plant, although a British native, was introduced to this area and presents problems of habitat change for seabirds in particular. For further information about this project go to the website at

[www.ceh.ac.uk/treemallow/](http://www.ceh.ac.uk/treemallow/)

**Coquet island**

Some good news to report from just outside our area, a record ninety-one pairs of roseate terns nested at Coquet Island RSPB reserve this year. That is twenty more than 2004. All of them used nest boxes provided especially for them by RSPB staff.

## LIST OF COUNTERS & CONTRIBUTORS

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Cormorant Breeding Colony Survey  
The Scottish Natural History Archive

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Appendix 1

## **ADDITIONAL MAINLAND COUNTS**

**CARLINGNOSE POINT 21st May and 11th June 2005**

Supplied by Ali Little

Count of nests from MV "Maid of the Forth"

FULMAR – One site

## SEAL SURVEY OF THE FORTH ISLANDS NOVEMBER 2005

Surveyors: Bill Bruce, Ron Morris, Lesley Fairweather, Paul Burns, Anna White, Neville Crowther and Lorna Douglas.

### Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> November.

The inner Forth islands of Inchkeith, Carr Craig, Inchcolm, Haystack and Inchmickery were all surveyed for evidence of Grey Seals pupping. Landings were made at Inchkeith and Inchcolm. The remaining islands were studied from the boat.

In the week preceding the survey, the Forth area was subjected to much heavy rainfall and strong westerly winds, some reaching gale force. On the day of the survey, the wind had diminished, and it was a cool, sunny day.

The islands were surveyed in the above order. Approximately two hours were spent ashore at Inchkeith and one hour at Inchcolm. No common seals were recorded during this survey.

### **INCHKEITH**

There were 67 pups in total, mainly divided between four colonies, i.e. south end (30), N.E. bay (6), Kirkcaldy Harbour (20), and N.W. bay (5). Only one pup was seen to be dead /still-born (?). This was at the southern colony.

All pups were within the age bracket of 1-2 days to nearly 3 weeks old. None were at the stage of losing their white coat.

Seven bulls were counted, at least six holding territories at the colonies (3 south end). At least 57 cows were present.

It may be that the colonies at Inchkeith offer more shelter from prevailing winds, as there were no seals at suitable locations throughout the west side of the island.

### **CARR CRAIG**

Three pups were recorded, one on the east side and two on the west. All had their white coats and were probably less than two weeks old.

Only one cow was seen, although other adult seals may have been present but escaped detection.

### **INCHCOLM**

Seven pups seen in south bay (S.W. part), one of which was dead/still-born (?).

Two of these pups were the oldest seen on the day and had lost about half of their white coats (over. 3 weeks old?) The remainder were estimated to be in the 4 to 14 days bracket.

One bull and seven cows were seen at this location. Two yearlings were seen at Swallowcraig rocks, just off the harbour.

## HAYSTACK

No seals present.

## INCHMICKERY

No obvious signs of pups, although one bull and five cows were ashore at the east slipway.

### Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2005

## CRAIGLEITH

This trip commenced with non-landing visits to The Lamb, Fidra and Eyebroughy, before a landing was made at Craigleith. There were no adult seals present, in the water or ashore at The Lamb and Fidra and no obvious signs of pups. At Eyebroughy, the tide only allowed a tour off the north side. The rock stratum at this rock makes it impossible to survey for seal pups from a small boat. However, one bull seal was present in the water at the east end. No pups could be seen although a report of one pup was received at the Scottish Seabird Centre during the first week in November.

At Craigleith, 33 Grey Seal pups were counted at the one colony on the south side. Three of these pups were dead, perhaps stillborn. The pups ranged in age from 1 or 2 days old to 4 to 5 weeks old. According to the boatman, there were several pups present 4 to 5 weeks before; therefore, it is possible a small number had already left the island.

An estimate of 41+ adult grey seals was made, at least three of which were bulls. A member of the party recollected a visit 25 years ago to the Bass Rock tunnel/cave, which traverses the rock. He remembered there being several seal pups at that time. It is likely that pupping had taken place for years beforehand and up until the present time. As it is impossible to survey this particular location from outside the tunnel/cave and as pup numbers are likely to be relatively low it is not intended that a special effort be made to obtain precise data.

### Summary of counts carried out on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2005

	Grey Seals				Common seals
	Bulls	Cows	Pups live	Pups dead	
Inchkeith	7	57	66	1	0
Inchmickery	1	5	0	0	0
Carr Craig	0	1	3	0	0
Inchcolm	1	7	6	1	0
Haystack	0	0	0	0	0

### Summary of counts carried out on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2005

	Grey Seals				Common seals
	Bulls	Cows	Pups live	Pups dead	
The Lamb	0	0	0	0	0
Fidra	0	0	0	0	0
Eyebroughy	1	0	?	0	0
Craigleith	>3	<38	30	3	0



Appendix 3

**BUTTERFLIES RECORDED ON FORTH ISLANDS 2005**

	Inchgarvie	Inchmickery	Inchcolm	Inchkeith	Fidra	Craigleith	May
<b>Small copper</b>			1 on 29/5, present 6/8				
<b>Red admiral</b>			1 on 13/11		1 on 6/6		
<b>Small tortoiseshell</b>			present 6/8				
<b>Small white</b>			Several on 29/5, present 6/8		1 on 27/8		
<b>Large white</b>			present 6/8 and 23/8				
<b>G-v white</b>			1 on 29/5				
<b>Orange-tip</b>			Male on 29/5				
<b>Garden Tiger</b>		Larva on 5/6					

**NOTES**

Small Copper (first for Inchcolm)

Orange tip (this may be the first for the islands except perhaps The May)

## RINGING RECOVERIES 2004-5

### 2005

These are birds recovered on beached bird surveys and breeding surveys of the Forth for which the BTO have provided details.

#### **Shag**

Ring number	1388700	carrying colour ring	Blue "I J F"
Ringed	Nestling	5/07/2002	Isle of May
Found	Dead	28/02/2005	Kinghorn, Fife

Reporter Elspeth Christie, Vane Farm

#### **Shag**

Ring number	1375113	carrying colour ring	White "N D J"
Ringed	Nestling	6/07/2000	Isle of May
Found	Dead	26/02/2005	St Monans, Fife

Reporter J Grant Robertson

#### **Shag**

Ring number	1387443	carrying colour ring	Blue "D L.U"
Ringed	Nestling	20/06/2002	Isle of May
Found	Dead	2/03/2005	Shell Bay/Earlsferry, Fife

Reporter Glen Docherty

#### **Shag**

Ring number	1389472	carrying colour ring	White "L I F"
Ringed	Nestling	05/06/2003	Isle of May
Found	Dead	27/02/2005	Elie Beach, Fife

Reporter Ruth St Clair

#### **Shag**

Ring number	1374848	carrying colour ring	Red "F L X"
Ringed	Nestling	30/06/2000	Isle of May
Found	Dead	05/06/2005	Inchmickery, Lothian

Reporter Dave Jones, Vane Farm

#### **Shag**

Ring number	1377234		
Ringed	Nestling	13/06/2003	Bullers of Buchan, near Cruden Bay, Grampian
Found	Dead	06/06/2005	Fidra, Lothian

Reporter Dave Jones, Vane Farm

#### **Shag**

Ring number	1387165	carrying colour ring	white on blue "D A L"
Ringed	Nestling	11/06/2002	Isle of May
Found	Dead	06/06/2005	Fidra, Lothian

Reporter Dave Jones, Vane Farm