

Forth Seabird Group

Forth Islands Bird Report 2013

Compiled by Bill Bruce

April 2014

SEABIRD SPECIES SUMMARIES

Notes:

- AOS / AOB / AON / AOT = *Apparently occupied sites / burrows / nests / territories.*

FULMAR

Breeding numbers similar to last year

CORMORANT

Incomplete count on Inchkeith with only the seaward side of the colony being counted.

SHAG

For the last seven years there has been a steady increase in breeding numbers. Over the winter this species has obviously suffered during the storms and numbers returning to breed this year are only just over half of last year's count.

GANNET

Not counted this year

EIDER

Not counted on all islands

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

Although the numbers on some islands are different, the total number of territories is the same as last year

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

Not counted on most islands but first count on Fidra for several years shows increase from 162 in 2006 to at least 207 AON.

HERRING GULL

Last count on Fidra was 917 in 2006 and this has dropped to approx. 891 AON this year. Not counted on most of other islands.

KITTIWAKE

Over the last 15 years there has been a downward trend which averages out at approximately 6% each year. This year there has been a decrease of about 33% compared to last year.

COMMON & ARCTIC TERN

On May Isle Common Tern numbers remain the same as last year while Arctic Tern numbers are up by about 50%. The Common Tern colony within Leith Docks continues to do well with 816 nests ie up 43% on last year. Better news from Long Craig where there were no breeding terns. There were 20 breeding pairs this year.

ROSEATE TERN

There are no reports of this tern breeding on the islands this year.

SANDWICH TERN

There are no reports of this tern breeding on the islands this year.

RAZORBILL

Breeding numbers are down slightly on last year though still up on the previous four years.

GUILLEMOT

Although numbers are down approximately 8% on last year, numbers are not too dissimilar to the last few years.

PUFFIN

In March and April there were storms in the North Sea. From mid-March large numbers of dead auks were getting washed ashore along the east coast and it is thought that they were underweight and starved, unable to feed during the storms. The majority of these were puffins and approximately 60% were of breeding age. There were also smaller numbers of guillemots and razorbills. More details can be found in Scottish Birds volume 33:2.

The Scottish Seabird Centre organised puffin burrow counts on Fidra (30 April) and Craigleith (2 May) and these revealed that on Craigleith in particular the number of AOB were approx. half of what might have been expected. On May Isle Mike Harris and his team had noticed the same but over the next 2-3 weeks the AOB had doubled as more puffins returned. Unfortunately the weather prevented any further checking on Craigleith but it was agreed that it was likely that numbers here would probably have doubled too. This higher figure is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of seabird counts for the Forth Islands, 2013

2013	Bass Rock	Craigeith	Lamb	Fidra	Eyebr-oughty	Inchkeith	Carr Craig	Inchcolm	Haystack	Inch-mickery + Cow & Calves	Inch Garvie / Forth Bridge	Long Craig	May Isle	Total
Fulmar (AOS)	63	89	13	159		265	0	c170	0	36	201	0	218	1,214
Cormorant (nests)	0	24	56	0		60+ part count	63	0	0	0	0	0	0	203+
Shag (nests)	24 (FSG) 32 (SSC)	117	44	153		170	10+	17	0	59	0	0	201	796+
Gannet (nests)	x	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eider (nests)	7	c70+	x	16		x	x	x	0	41	42	x	x	176+
Great B-b Gull (nests)	0	21	1	3		9+	0	1	0	1	1	0	36	73
Lesser B-b Gull (nests)	c2	x	x	207+		x	9	x	17	156	c37	0	x	428
Herring Gull (nests)	x	x	x	891+		x	50	x	12	233	c260	0	x	1446+
Kittiwake (nests)	c270	293	47	128		300	0	82	0	0	0	0	1,712	2,832
Common Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	73	c20	c93
Arctic Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	c399	399
Roseate Tern (nests)														0
Sandwich Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Razorbill (pairs/sites)	105	129	59	109		59	0	14	0	0	0	0	2,879	3,354
Guillemot (birds on cliffs)	c1710	c1,620	2460	411		71	0	0	0	0	0	0	14,764	21,036
Puffin (birds unless otherwise stated)		c5,000 AOB	25 b	c755 AOB		c700 b	0	38 b on sea	0	11 b on sea	0	0	c46,200 AOB	c51,955+ AOB

AOB/AON/AOS/AOT=Apparently occupied burrows / nests / sites / territories; x=birds present but not counted; 0=none breeding; c=circa; b=birds; pr=pairs

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF VISITS AND SIGHTINGS

Fidra 30 April (Recorded by Kevin Ingleby)

Breeding on island:

Eider - 16 nests with eggs

Peregrine 1 pair

Grey lag goose 2 pairs, both on nests

Rock pipit 2 pairs at least

Feral pigeon/rock dove 1 pair at least

Also herring, lesser black backed, great black backed gulls (at least 2 pairs), kittiwake, fulmar, razorbill, guillemot, puffin, shag

Present (not breeding):

Cormorant.

Probably/possibly breeding on island:

Pied wagtail 1 pair

Oystercatcher 1 pair

Linnet 1 pair

On sea:

Gannet

Shelduck

Mallard

Velvet scoter

Common scoter

Flying over:

Carrion crow

Swallow

Craigleith 2 May 2013

Eider duck - 58 nests (containing 0-5 eggs, average 3 eggs)

Shag, some on eggs but season is late

Fulmar, only a few present, should be a lot more

GBB gull – good number of birds around, 5 seen on nests

LBB & herring gull – both present in numbers

Puffin – a quick count gave estimated 150 off south side of island, 200-300 off west side. No count done for north or east sides. Many birds seen around the island.

Feral pigeon

Wren

Grey lag goose – 3 pairs, 2 nests seen with eggs

Mallard - 1 duck seen near pond

Rock pipit

Grey seal – 2 seen near landing area

Bass Rock 25 May 2013

Clear sky with bright sunshine, wind westerly force 3-4, slight swell with waves <1foot

Count from boat 12:15 – 13:00

Counters: Bill Bruce, Howard Andrew, Alan Duff, John Davies, Louise Gall, Nicola Goodship, Alex Laird, James Leyden, Martin Moss

Fulmar (AOS)	60
Shag (AON)	24
Kittiwake (AON)	c270
Razorbill (AOS)	105
Guillemot (birds)	c1710

Other sightings

Peregrine 1 bird seen

Maggie Shedden (31/05/13) reported seeing

Shag (AOB) 31

Eider (AON) 7

Fulmar (AOS) 3 that wouldn't have been seen on main count

LBB Gull c2

Herring Gull present

Plus further sightings on 06/06/2013:

Shag 1 additional nest. Other nests with chicks between approx. 1 and 10 days old

Peregrine 2 birds seen

Rock Pipit breeding on island though only 1 pair seen

Craigleith 25 May 2013

Clear sky with bright sunshine, wind westerly force 3-4, slight swell with waves <1foot

Count 13:30 – 16:45. East cliff counted from boat and remainder of island counted after landing.

Counters: Bill Bruce, Howard Andrew, Alan Duff, John Davies, Louise Gall, Nicola Goodship, Alex Laird, James Leyden, Martin Moss

	East Cliffs (from boat)	Rest of island	Total
Fulmar (AOS)	27	62	89
Cormorant (AON)	24		24
Shag (AON)	12	105	117
Great B-b Gull (AON)		21	21
Lesser B-b Gull (AON)		present	
Herring Gull (AON)		present	
Kittiwake (AON)	224	69	293
Razorbill (AOS)	53	76	129
Guillemot (birds)	1490	132	1622

Other sightings

Grey Lag Goose 4-6

Pied Wagtail 1
 Rock Pipit several
 Grey Seal 1

Birds seen with darvic coloured rings

Shags: all white on red – EEW; POT, TPL, EEP, EFA, EEJ, TPF, EFB

Cormorant: white on green – LFZ

Maggie Shedden (31/05/13) reported seeing

Peregrine

Inchkeith 26 May 2013

Started with clear sky and bright sun becoming overcast with 100% cloud. Wind west force 1 rising to 2-3. Sea initially flat calm, later small waves <1 foot.

Counters: Ron Morris, Bill Bruce, Gordon Anderson, John Davies, Martin Moss, Stewart O'Malley, David Ross, Pete Wright

Count started 8:50, ended 12:00

	NW Bay	West cliffs	Leith Harbour to S tip	East Side	Total
Fulmar (AOS)	66	44	71	84	265
Cormorant (AON)				60+ part count from boat	
Shag (AON)	11	3	6	150	170
Great B-b Gull (AON)				9+	9+
Lesser B-b Gull (AON)					present
Herring Gull (AON)					Present
Kittiwake (AON)	79	54	87	80	300
Razorbill (AOS)	16	6	16	21	59
Guillemot (birds)			7	64	71
Puffin (birds on land & sea)	40		15	639	694

Additional comments

Eider, several seen with ducklings

Gulls: some on eggs, a few nests with eggs just hatching or small, recently hatched chicks

Shags: some on eggs

Razorbills and guillemots on eggs

Other Sightings

Shelduck – 3 birds seen

Mallard – nest with 10 eggs from pill box; 3 drakes plus another pair

Oystercatcher – 6+ pairs

Rock pipit – 4+ pairs

Swallow – 1

Blackbird – 3

Gannet – 25 off east side

Peregrine

Oystercatcher

Feral pigeon

Small white butterfly – 4+

Dead ringed birds found:

Shag: recently dead (many maggots), BTO 1398245, additional white ring

Shag: very recently dead, BTO 1444914

Inner Forth Islands 28 May 2013

Started overcast and cleared to sunshine later, dry. Wind west force 3-4. Sea waves <1 foot.

Counters: Ron Morris, Allison Leonard, Alan Leitch, John Davies, EJ Shields, Stewart O'Malley

Count started 8:45, ended 15:00

Inchgarvie (Landing)

Fulmar (AOS)	201
Herring Gull (AOT)	c.260
LBB Gull (AOT)	c.37
GBB Gull (AOT)	1 x 3 eggs
Eider (AON)	42 (6 predated)
Mallard	1 (nest with 9 eggs) (new record for island though suspected in the past)
Feral Pigeon	2+ nests. (1 with 1 squab + 1 with one egg)
Crow	1 pair, no nest
Oystercatcher	1 bird

Long Craig Rock - Dalgety Bay

Grey Seal	9+ hauled out
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Haystack (From Boat)

Herring Gull (AOT)	12
LBB Gull (AOT)	17

Other sightings:

Common Tern	2 flying over
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Oystercatcher	1 bird
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Turnstone	8
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House Martin	over
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Grey Seal	c. 35 on rocks
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Carr Craig (From Boat)

Cormorant (AON)	63
Shag (AON)	10+
Herring Gull (AOT)	50
LBB Gull (AOT)	9
Grey Seal	1
Harbour Seal	3
Eider	2 drakes

Inchcolm (Landing)

Fulmar (AOS)	c170
Shag (AON)	17
Kittiwake (AON)	82
Razorbill (AOS)	14

Puffin (birds) 38 on water
 Oystercatcher 2+ pairs
 GBB Gull 1 pair
 Shelduck 1 nest x eggs + 1 other bird
 Wood Pigeon 3 birds
 Blackbird 2+ birds
 Grey Seal 6 at west end

Oxcars Rocks (From Boat)

Grey Seal c. 20 on rocks

No.14 Red Channel Buoy

Grey Seal 5 on floats

Inchmickery (Landing)

Fulmar (AOS) 36
 Shag (AON) 59
 Eider 41
 G.B.B. Gull (AOT) 1 pr
 Oystercatcher 1 terr
 Shelduck 3 prs
 Puffin (birds) 11 on water
 Rock Pipit 1 bird
 H.Gull 233
 L.B.B. Gull 156

Lamb 2 June 2013

Bright sun; wind westerly force 1-2; waves <1foot

Count started 8:45, ended 9:05, count from boat

Bill Bruce, John Hunt, David Ross, Allison Leonard, Robert Coleman, Alan Leitch, James Leyden, Alex Laird, Howard Andrew, Duncan MacDougall

Fulmar (AOS)	13
Cormorant (AON)	56
Shag (nests)	44
Great B-b Gull (AON)	1
Lesser B-b Gull (AON)	present
Herring Gull (AON)	present
Kittiwake (AON)	47
Razorbill (AOS)	59
Guillemot (birds on cliffs)	2460
Puffin (birds on land & sea)	25

Other sightings:

Oystercatcher 1 pair 3 pairs flying over
 Carion crow 1 flying over

Fidra 2 June 2013

Bright sun; wind westerly force 1-2; waves <1foot

Count started 9:30, ended 11:00

Bill Bruce, John Hunt, David Ross, Allison Leonard, Robert Coleman, Alan Leitch, James Leyden, Alex Laird, Howard Andrew, Duncan MacDougall

The tide was in which meant that Castle Tarbet was cut off, so the north side was counted across the channel from the main part of the island. The south side of the cliffs were counted from the boat. As a result there will be some birds missed – mainly gulls, and possibly some shags and auks from South Dog

	Main island	Castle Tarbet	South Dog	Total
Fulmar (AOS)	96	63		159
Shag (nests)	129	14	10	153
Eider (AON)	6			6
Great B-b Gull (AOT)				3
Lesser B-b Gull (AOT)				207
Herring Gull (AOT)				891
Kittiwake (AON)	128			128
Razorbill (AOS)	70	37	2	109
Guillemot (birds on cliffs)	316	56	39	411
Puffin (birds on land & sea)	25	6		31

Other sightings

Oystercatcher 1

Feral pigeon 4+

Shelduck 2 (flying over pier on arrival)

Inchkeith 5 October 2013

grey seals c120 adults, no pups

Oystercatcher

Curlew

Blackbird

Robin

Wren

Rock pipit

Siskin

Linnet

Sea eagle (juv) - 1

Buzzard - 1

Peregrine - 1

Sparrowhawk - 1

Remains of at least 63 cormorant nests at south end; probably more that had been destroyed by waves

Red admiral - a number flying

Small tortoiseshell - many hibernating in underground passages

See Appendix 5 for further sightings during seal count trips

FSG FOOTNOTES

Reports and monitoring figures for previous years can be found on the group's website:

www.forthseabirdgroup.org.uk

DATES FOR MAIN ISLAND COUNTS

Bass Rock	25 May 2013
Craigleith	2 May 2013 (puffin burrows) 25 May 2013 (main count)
The Lamb	2 June 2013
Fidra	30 April 2013 (puffin burrows) 2 June 2013 (main count)
Eyebroughty	no count
Inchkeith	26 May 2013
Carr Craig	28 May 2013
Haystack	28 May 2013
Inchcolm	28 May 2013
Inchmickery	28 May 2013
Inchgarvie	28 May 2013
Long Craig	through breeding season
Isle of May	through breeding season

Bass Rock was counted from boat; Craigleith, Lamb, Fidra and Inchgarvie were counted partly from boat and remainder after landing; all other islands were counted from ashore.

Tree Mallow Project – SOS Puffin

For further information about this project go to the Scottish Seabird Centre website at

www.seabird.org or for information on tree mallow go to www.abdn.ac.uk/treemallow

COUNTERS & CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to everyone who helped with counts or provided data for this report

Data passed on to:

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Dr R M Sellers for inclusion in the annual
Cormorant Breeding Colony Survey;
JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme.

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owners who have allowed access to their islands for counts, and to boatmen Dougie Ferguson and Bill Simpson, and to Forth Pilots for their help

Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve Long Craig Island 2013 Annual Report

The island maintenance visit made on 26th April when the usual clean up and re-marking of recording areas was undertaken. The weather during the winter period left its mark on the island with significant movement of the scree edging. Mayweed continues to remain at a reduced level and as much as practicable of the emergent growth found was grubbed out. There was only a small amount of debris on the island which was collected and disposed of ashore. Rough grass is now becoming established in the central area of the island.

Again personally another difficult year for monitoring and recording the island, other projects, family commitments and inclement weather conditions conspiring to reduce the opportunity and available time for monitoring visits and recording visits.

Eider

Again only three nests found on the island this year. No outcomes for the nests were recorded however a crèche of four adult females and eight ducklings was noted in the adjacent North Queensferry Bay on 7th May and then a crèche of three adult females and two ducklings was noted there on 17th June, three adult females and two juveniles were present on 6th August.

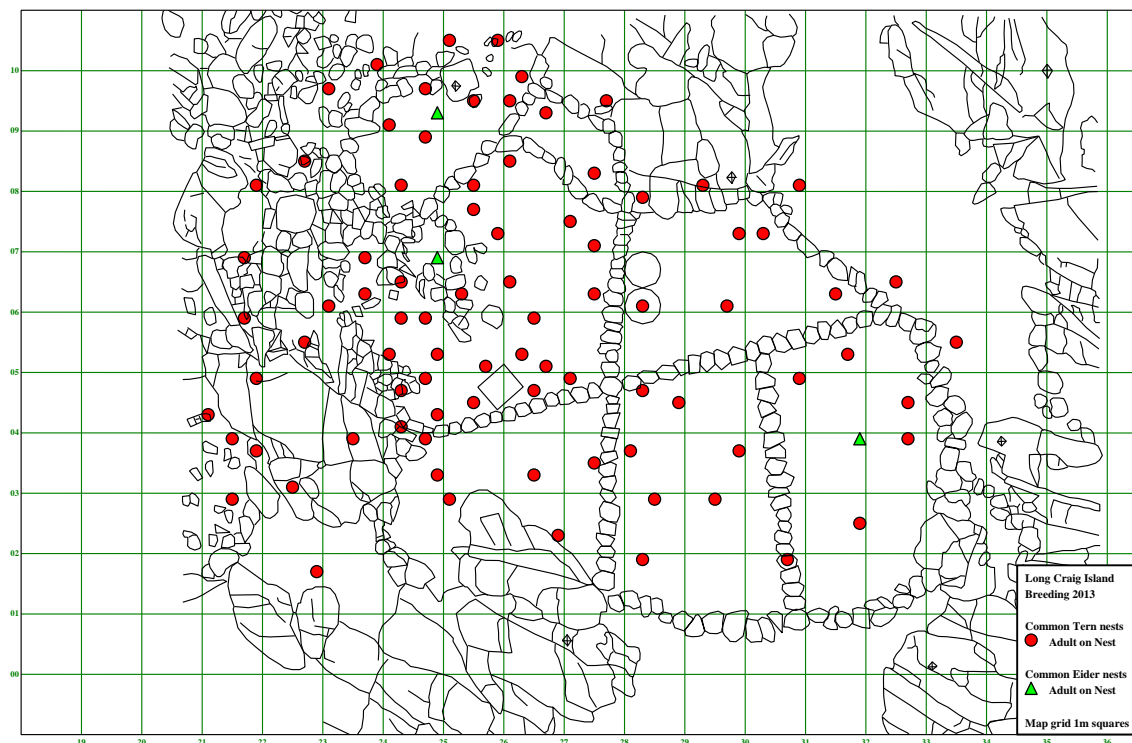
Long Craig Island	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Eider Nests	11	9	5	4	3	3

Oystercatcher

Birds were noted present in the immediate vicinity feeding in the intertidal mud however no birds were observed nesting on the island this year.

Common Tern

Birds were noted in the area from late Mid-May and were nesting by the end of May. There was a notable reduction (circa 25%) in breeding numbers undoubtedly due to last year's total failure.



Long Craig Island Common Tern Breeding					
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	181	163	170	5	109
Breeding pairs	122	109	105	0	73
Clutches	163	124	162	0	84
Eggs laid	218	163+	289+	0	151+
Eggs Hatched	177	c120	134	0	96
Eggs Un-hatched	28	38+	141	0	16
Eggs outcome unknown	13	38	14	0	39
Young Fledged	152	c100	122	0	c90
Young Died	25	27	12	0	4

Ringling

No ringling of tern chick was undertaken this year and no recoveries were received.

Development

The use of welded mesh gabions to stabilise the tidal scree areas of the island was discussed further with Rory Sandison (SWT Reserves Manager - East Central Scotland) during end of season island visit on 7th September, but no action has been progressed.

Further work on bridge tower foundations and structure for the new Forth Crossing has continued.

Mark Oksien (Reserve Convenor)
Long Craig Island Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve

Other Common Tern counts

Carlingnose Pier 2013 – Common Tern Breeding

Two June counts also 50 young reported but no date given. Several of the adult birds were wearing metal rings and are more than likely birds that were ringed and chicks on Long Craig.

Date	02-Jun	14-Jun	
Nests (AON)	98	140	
Adults	155	166	
Juveniles	0	0	50

Inverkeithing

One pair reported nesting on wooden jetty

Some Notes from Isle of May NNR, 2013

Management of Heritage

Seasonal Rainfall

Start of April to end of September - 235.5 mm of rain. (Annual 12 month average – 560mm) – this means a dry year, 5 of the 6 months were below average. (516mm fell in similar period last year).

The well ran dry in May and the water in the tanks ran out in early June. For the next 6 weeks all tap water was brought on in containers. By August the well was filling tanks only for it to run out again mid September till end of October. With so little rain the tanks for flushing toilets were only saved from running out by pumping water from the Lowlight tanks

Seabird Breeding Summary

	Fulmar	Shag	Kittiwakes	Guillemot Individis	Guillemot Pair	Razorbill Individis	Razorbill Pair
2012	290	545	2465	16991	14100	3305	3068
2013	218	201	1712	14764	13349	3155	2879
% +/-	-25	-64	-31	-14	-5	-5	-6
Prod	0.47	1.2	0.41		0.69		0.48

Cliff nesting birds.

The all island count was conducted between the 1st and 6th June and the 20 plots were counted between the 1st and 14th June.

Seabird counts and productivity.

The island's seabirds were affected by the late winter storms with birds not returning to breed until late on in the season. All breeding numbers were down with Shags, Fulmars and Kittiwakes numbers worst hit. Fulmar productivity was greatly improved on last year but Razorbill was down.

CEH conducted a full puffin count in 2013. An estimated total of 46200 occupied burrows were counted. A total of Puffin Productivity was 0.70 which is an improvement on last year.

Terns

	Date	c/1	c/2	c/3	Eggs	Total Nests
Beacon	11/6/2013	35	298	54	387	200
Kirkhaven	11/6/2013	35	258	21	314	171
Priory	11/6/2013	9	68	15	92	48
					793	419

Tern numbers were up again with all colonies showing a significant increase. A total of 419 nests was up on the 285 nests counted in 2012.

The highest fledgling count was 46 which is up on 36 last year.

Gulls and Eiders will be counted in 2014.

Management of People

Summary of visitor numbers

	2011	2012	2013
May Princess – landed visitors	8383	5871	9029
- cancelled sailings	43	73	39
- non-landings	3	7	2
Osprey – landed visitors	44	463	863
Seabird – visitors landed	480	506	705
- cancelled	44	38	27
Dive boats (divers)	28(136)	25 (150)	34(224)
Kayaks	50	28	111
Visitors landed by other boats	169	191	96
Total visitor landed on island	9240	7059	10804

Points of Note

- Fine weather from May onwards meant few cancellations and more visitors landed in a year since the Pilgrimages in the 15th century.
- All licenced visitor boats broke records for numbers of visitors landed.
- Record numbers of kayaks landed.
- Dive boat use of island is changing. Few small dive club boats, more large charter boats.
- The Seabird Centre photography trips were again over subscribed.
- The high visitor numbers seemed to be due to the good weather, improved boat service (especially the May Princess) and the high profile of the island in the media.

Other Management of People tasks completed.

- 7 SNH open day event were planned with only 1 of the lighthouse open days cancelled due to weather.
- The visitor map and booklet were produced in 4 different languages (French, German, Spanish, Mandarin).
- The Isle of May NNR blog received approx. 60,000 page views over the season (100 000 pages views in last 2.5 years).

Media coverage

There was exceptional interest in the island this year, much of it on the back of the puffin wreck. It included the following:

- ITN news crew filmed on the island on 30 April and 31 May covering the puffin wreck and count. .
- Countryfile filmed on 7 May looking at the general problems that seabirds face.
- Springwatch filmed on 2/3 May looking at shag research.
- BBC Scotland broadcast live on 21 June for a Midsummer live programme.
- BBC Scotland filmed the lighthouses as part of a Great Scottish journeys programme.
- The Isle of May also features on the One Show looking at Seal Research.
- An article on the island also features in the BBC Wildlife magazine.

David Pickett
Warden

BTO report for ring recovered on Craigleith

19 September 2013

Dear Helen Wakely

Thank you for taking the time to report to us details of a bird ring you found. Information about this bird and its movements is given below. If you notice any errors in the information, please return it (or a copy) with your corrections, so we can update our records.

Ringling Scheme: London Ring Number: **GG42036** Species of bird: Lesser Black-backed Gull

This bird was **ringed** by Lothian RG as age nestling, sex unknown on 13-Jul-1986 at Craigleith, Firth of Forth, East Lothian
OS Map reference NT5587, co-ordinates 56deg 4min N 2deg 43min W.

It was **found** on 28-Aug-2013 at Craigleith, Firth of Forth, East Lothian
OS Map reference NT5587, co-ordinates 56deg 4min N 2deg 43min W.

The bird was Dead: Not fresh Bird Found

Remarks

It was found 9908 days after it was ringed, 0 km from the ringling site, direction ---.

Note: 9908 days is a little over 27 years.

John Hunt's comments to Helen Wakely included the following:

"It was indeed a remarkably old bird. I had a look in some of my books and the Birds of the Western Palearctic gives 26 years for LBBs and 31 years for Herring Gulls (which is a very similar species) as the oldest ringling recoveries. However that book is now very out of date and I expect there have been older recoveries since then. The annual survival of adult LBBs is given as 93% which would indicate an average life span of about 14 years and some sources give 10-15 years as the life span of the larger gulls."

FIFE SEAL GROUP REPORT 2013

Three main counts of pups took place this season, on dates 27th October, 17th November and 8th December. This year the initial count took place 6 days later than the initial count of 2012, and 7 days later in the case of the subsequent counts in relation to the corresponding visits of 2012. Additionally, an interim visit took place on 31st October.

The initial count on 27th October revealed that the pups were at a very similar stage as last year, suggesting a later season of up to 7 days, however, this year there were 81 pups present on the first visit as opposed to 42 in 2012.

During 2012 the count of 42 whites (all live) from the initial visit seemed to be reflected in the following count when 38 moults and several near moults were recorded. As it was felt the initial pups were more or less accounted for in the second visit, the initial count figure was disregarded and the overall count of whites and moults from the second visit was used instead to base the annual count upon. Numbers of whites from the third main count and a fourth (late season) visit were then added to this figure to arrive at an overall estimate.

Inchkeith was visited on 31st October 2013 with a party from Burntisland Historical Society for the purpose of conducting a guided tour of the old military buildings on the island. Opportunity was taken during this visit to monitor the colonies when it was seen that in only four days the number of pups had increased from 81 to 140.

The 2nd main count which took place on 17th November, was carried out at the peak of the pupping season when a total of 380 pups were counted. It appears that this year there has been a higher percentage of quick moulting pups. During the initial visit, there were 81 whites, including 2 dead ones. There were no moults.

However, on this occasion, which occurred 21 days later, there were 104 complete moults in the overall count. This is 25 in excess of the 79 live pups seen during the earlier visit. Therefore it was necessary to disregard the initial count figure and use the overall total from the 2nd count in order to accommodate these 25 pups. Similarly the numbers from the interim visit have been disregarded in arriving at total numbers. However, a total of three dead pups from these two visits have been added to give a total of 383 pups to date. This is necessary in order to more properly estimate pup mortality.

The early season visits are nevertheless valuable for monitoring the development of the colonies over the pupping season.

As per previous season's calculations, 77 whites counted during the final main count carried out on 8th December, are added to the figure of 383 to give the season an overall total of 460 pups, representing a 14.5% increase over the previous year's total of 402. In order to remain consistent with previous year's methods of calculation, the figure of 460 should be regarded as the actual number of pups counted.

With regards to the numbers established on 17th November, the 25 quick moulting pups (i.e. the estimated number of pups born after the first visit and having completely moulted before the next visit) represents a percentage ratio of 9.1% against the 276 whites counted on that date.

As it is possible that some of the moults present on 8th December may also have been quick moulting, a 9.1% ratio of 77 = an additional 7 pups to be considered. Furthermore, a visit made at the end of December 2012 indicated an estimate of 7 – 18 pups are born during that month per the current status of the colonies. Taking these factors into account the true figure for pups born this year is likely to lie between 460 - 485.

Over the course of the four visits a total of 30 dead pups were counted, i.e. 26 whites and 4 moults. All of the dead moults were counted during the final visit. Three were located in Area 2 (the North Bays), with the

other in the South-East Bays. All three in Area 2 bore the tell tale signs of corkscrew injuries, whilst the fourth (in Area 5) was not properly examined.

Overall pup mortality is therefore estimated at 6.5%.

Inchkeith

No pups were present on 5th October. The first main count of pups took place on 27th October, when 81 pups (all “whites”) were recorded. It appeared that the great majority of these pups were less than one week old with a high percentage being 1-3 days old.

27th October 2013 – 1st Main Count –

Grey Seal Pups:

Area 1 – West side of island	= nil
Area 2 – North Bay	= 9
Area 3 – Kirkcaldy Harbour	= 20 (incl. 1 dead white)
Area 4 – Lighthouse Bay	= 38 (incl. 1 dead white)
Area 5 – South-east Bay	= 9
Area 6 – South Point	= 5
Total	= 81 pups (all whites)

Adult seals:

Area 1 - 5 cows, 1 bull
Area 2 - 19 cows, 2 bulls
Area 3 - 32 cows, 4 bulls
Area 4 - 38 cows, 2 bulls
Area 5 - 19 cows, 5 bulls
Area 6 - 10 cows, 1 bull

Total = 123 cows, 15 bulls

A visit to the island occurred on 31st October for a tour of the old military buildings. Opportunity was taken to carry out a follow-up count of pups present.

31st October 2013 – Interim count. Pup numbers by areas are as follows:

Area 1 – West side of island	= 2 (in harbour area)
Area 2 – North Bay	= 23
Area 3 – Kirkcaldy Harbour	= 29 (incl. 1 moult)
Area 4 – Lighthouse Bay	= 50 (incl. 1 moult and 1 dead white, different corpse from previous visit)
Area 5 – South-east Bay	= 25
Area 6 – South Point	= 11
Total	= 140 pups (incl. 2 moults and 1 dead white)

The two moults appear to have been quick developers. One was on the beach and the other in the shallows. Both were interacting with cows.

No counts of the adult seals was undertaken during this visit.

17th November 2013 – 2nd Main Count (Peak Count)

Grey Seal Pups:

	Whites	Moults	Totals
Area 1 –	42 (incl. 2 dead)	2	44
Area 2 –	64 (incl. 4 dead)	20	84
Area 3 –	24 (incl. 1 dead)	23	47
Area 4 –	50 (incl. 1 dead)	35	85
Area 5 –	81 (incl. 3 dead)	16	97
Area 6 –	15	8	23
Totals	276 (incl. 11 dead)	104	380

Dead pups from earlier visits = 3 (all whites) 3

Overall Total = 383

Adult Seals:

	Cows	Bulls	Total
Area 1 –	98	10	108
Area 2 –	57	5	62
Area 3 –	28	3	31
Area 4 –	45	5	50
Area 5 –	71 (incl. 1 dead cow)	13	84
Area 6 –	10	3	13
Totals	309	39	348

Inchkeith – 8TH December 2013 (Final Main Count)

Grey Seal Pups:

	Whites	Moults	Totals
Area 1	18 (incl. 3 dead)	14	32
Area 2	9 (incl. 2 dead)	14 (incl. 3 dead)	23
Area 3	7	2	9
Area 4	14 (incl. 5 dead)	16	30
Area 5	15 (incl. 2 dead)	37 (incl. 1 dead)	52
Area 6	2	5	7
Totals	77 (incl. 12 dead)	76 (incl. 4 dead)	153

Adult Seals:	Cows	Bulls	Total
Area 1	12	6	18
Area 2	3	2	5
Area 3	4	3	7
Area 4	11	3	14
Area 5	13	5	18
Area 6	4	2	6
Totals	47	21	68

Total of pups for the 2013 season = 383 from visits up to 17th November plus 77 from 8th December = 460. This represents an increase of 14.5% over the previous season's total of 402.

Other Islands

Inchcolm

Bill Simpson reported discovering a grey seal pup on Inchcolm on 12th September. Photographic evidence suggests the pup was born earlier that day. A second pup was born on 21st September at an obscure location on the island's coast.

The first was still being fed by its mother on 3rd October (21 days old), but appears to have left the island by 5th October. A visit to the island on 8th October did not discover the second pup, which was not known about by the visiting party at that time.

17th November 2013 – Main Count

Pups: 3 (all whites and all in South Bay).

This brings the season's total to five which is a slight increase from recent years.

Adults: 4 Cows and 2 Bulls

Carr Craig: 1 Cow

Haystack: Island not visited, but 1 cow in water seen from Inchcolm.

Oxcars Rocks: 2 adults in water at Oxcars lighthouse and 5 adults on No. 14 Red Channel buoy north of lighthouse. Sex of these adults not established.

Inchmickery

Pups: 1 Moulting at NE side of the island.

Adults: 1 cow, 1 bull and 2 yearlings in water off east side of island.

Craigeith Seal Pup Count 2013

By: Maggie Sheddan, Fran Thomas, James Leyden.

Craigeith Island visit seal count, 0845 hrs Thursday November 28th 2013

Conditions: Sunny, clouding over later. Wind: South-westerly Force 3. Sea: Slight, with dropping swell.

Total number of pups: 32
9 white (incl. 3 partial moult)
19 full moult
4 dead

7 cows
1 bull

SSC Craigeith camera seal pup count Saturday November 16th 2013, including aborted trip observations Monday 9th November 2013

Total number of pups: 31

Total number of new born combining both counts: 37 (see comments)

Comments

- All seals observed and counted were grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*).
- As has been the case in recent years weather conditions were generally not favourable for landing on this difficult-to-get-to island. We experienced an aborted landing on November 9th and although we managed to get close to the island to survey a few camera blind spots we were limited to using the SSC cameras until conditions eventually provided a window of opportunity almost a full three weeks later. Thus, we were limited to a single island visit this year rather than the preferred two trips.
- Craigeith does not have a flat haul out area. The seals have fairly steep and slippery rocks on which to manoeuvre in order to reach the main area of safety - the central south-facing "Glen" area. If there is a constant swell running along the south side of the island it makes haul out difficult.
- There were the usual areas of observed pup sites: the Glen, the elderberry tree (higher up the Glen), and the SW corner.
- The first Craigeith seal pup born for the 2013 season took place on Thursday October 24th.
- The first count (SSC camera) took place 23 days after the first pup was born and the island visit took place 12 days after this. 21 days is the preferred gap between counts, however the exact timing is dictated by when conditions afford us the opportunity of getting onto the island.
- The island count, when adults are also counted, took place relatively late this year and may be a reason for the low number of adults observed particularly cows.

- On December 10th the SSC's camera was used to check for any newborn since the island visit but none were observed.
- The total figure is approximate. Considerations are:
 - a) Because of the absence of a "walk-through" three or four observation sites need to be visited to cover blind spots and it is during the travelling between these sites when we lose sight of the colony that the more mobile pups, particularly moults, can sometimes make an exact count tricky.
 - b) Although an effort was made to clear the breeding area of the invasive Tree Mallow plant (*Lavatera arborea*) by the time of the counts it had returned enough to conceal some pups and it was only with great care that a number were spotted. It is possible a few may have been missed.
 - c) With the first count taking place at first pup +23 days, and also being a camera count, it is likely that a few early pups will have been missed as a result of camera blind spots and/or the pups leaving the island having been weaned.

All this considered it is not unreasonable to suggest a number of at least 40 newborn.

Summary of Craigleith Island Grey Seal Count

year	first count	pups			adults		no. of counts	
		first pup	Total	Total (minimum suggested)	cow	bull	Island visit (adults & pups)	SSC camera (pups only)
2013	16.11.13	24.10.13	37	40	7	1	1	1
2012	08.11.12	22.10.12	36	40-45	39	1	0	2
2011	20.11.11	19.10.11	29		20	3	1	1
2010	16.11.10	20.10.10	51		32	2	2	1

Seal Incident Report – Inchkeith – Sunday 17th November 2013

Observers: Bill Bruce, James Leyden
 Observer Activity: Adult seal count
 Observing duration: 2 minutes (approx.)
 Observing distance: 20 yards (approx.)
 Weather: sunny, cold, calm

At Area 5 (South-east bays) a broken rocky ridge extends parallel to the island within the tidal zone. A short cliff of about 4' in height forms a boundary at the island side of a rock shelf which extends down to the seaward side. The incoming tide had not reached the inside of the ridge, although a rock pool had formed in an area below the cliff.

About 1200 hours Ron Morris and two other seal pup counters arrived at locus. One bull grey seal (Bull A) was on top of the rock shelf hanging over the "cliff" and snarling at another bull (Bull B) in the rock pool below, which was returning the aggressive gestures in kind. There were also two cows on the rock shelf and at least two other cows in the rock pool, with several pups in the close proximity. It appears the vertical boundary in the rock had allowed both bull seals to hold territories in very close proximity to each other, as it prevented each from pressing home an attack on the other.

A quick check on top of the rock shelf revealed one moulting pup. Neither bull was particularly concerned about the human presence; such was their territorial aggression towards each other. Ron and the counters then continued towards the south end of the island to complete the pup count.

About 1245 hours James Leyden and Bill Bruce who were carrying out a count of the adult seals, arrived at the scene and observed the following interaction between the two bull seals.

Bull (A) lay was still lying atop the "cliff," whilst, Bull (B), was lying about 7' away at the edge of the rock pool.

The two bulls were still aggressively "eyeballing" each other. Keeping his distance Bull A was partly hanging and stretching himself downwards over the ledge whilst aiming what I can only describe as a lengthy open-mouthed hissing growl, almost tired and plaintive sounding, towards Bull B. Bull A's back was covered with multiple long lacerations that were red and bleeding as if fresh out of a fight. There were no such injuries to Bull B.

James and Bill continued to walk slightly southwards and as their viewing angle improved they noticed that Bull B held a white-coat pup in its jaws, mainly by the pup's hind flippers. Bull (B) then proceeded to shake it from side to side rather violently.

The shaking occurred twice, for a few seconds duration each time. However, its hold on the pup was definite and constant. Although the condition of the pup could not be determined (the pup's upper body and head were hidden by an intervening boulder), there were no obvious signs of injury, although there were no obvious signs of movement from it either.

Three or four cows were in the same end of the pool about 5 to 10 yards away, seemingly attentive but otherwise passive to the bulls' behaviour. Of course this attentiveness may have been due to our presence. There were also three white-coat pups lying on dry land very close to the pool edge and the bulls, mostly nestled between rock and boulders.

It was interesting to see that the interaction lost little, if any, of its intensity even though the bulls' gaze would occasionally turn to the observers.

This whole observation was brief as time to leave the island was drawing nigh. Although the feelings of the two observers are that Bull (B) had killed the pup, they cannot state this for definite.

Other Wildlife

Inchkeith 5th October 2013

Pergrine 1

Sea Eagle 1

Sparrowhawk (female) 1

Buzzard 1
Rabbit – several seen

Inchcolm 8th October

Grey Seal – 11
Harbour Seal – 1
Buzzard – 2
Curlew – 3
Robin – several
Chaffinch – 1+
Wren – 1+
Blackbird – 1+
Wood Pigeon – several
Rock Pigeon – 200+ One next with two young squabs found.
Jackdaw – 12+
Carion Crow – 4+
Red Admiral butterfly – 3 seen

Haystack 8th October

Grey Seal – 10

Inchkeith 27th October 2013

Kestrel - 1
Buzzard – 1
Sparrowhawk (female) - 1
Linnet – Two flocks of 50-60 birds comprising mainly this species.
Turnstone – c. 20
Robin - small numbers
Wren – small numbers
Blackbird – One +
Goldfinch – Mixed flock of 30-40 with green finch
Greenfinch – as above
Rabbit – several seen

Inchkeith 31st October 2013

A list of bird species was not compiled for this visit. However, nothing of a particularly noteworthy manner was observed.

Rabbit – several seen

Feral cat – One member of the party reported having encountered glimpses of cats on two separate occasions within the old military buildings, quite some distance apart, suggesting his second sighting was of a second animal, not a repeat of the first. The second cat apparently had black and white markings. The colour of the first cat was not established.

At first it was thought these were sightings of “Charlie’s” ginger and white cat which had been freely roaming the island since the last occupier of the island left a number of years ago. However, the subject of

the cat sightings was raised with Bill Simpson who confirmed that Charlie's cat been found dead on the island during late 2012.

Assuming the latest sightings are correct, the question as to how these cats have arrived at the island. They may have been deliberate introductions or escapees from boats visiting the island?

Inchkeith - 17th November 2013

Heron	3
Shag	28
Peregrine	1
Pink-footed goose	54
Little Grebe	2
Oystercatcher	4
Robin	4
Wren	6
Goldfinch	80
Linnet	20
Blackbird	16
Cormorant	4
Rock Pipit	8
Buzzard	1
Curlew	2
Eider	3
Carrion Crow	2
Feral Pigeon	2
Song Thrush	2
Gannet	2
Redshank	2

Carr Craig – 17th November 2013

Shag	15
Cormorant	2

Inchcolm – 17th November 2013

Mallard	1
Wren	2
Eider	1
Cormorant	1
Feral pigeon	77
Carrion Crow	4
Robin	2
Blackbird	2
Song Thrush	1
Redshank	8
Buzzard	1
Chaffinch	2

Inchmickery – 17th November 2013

Shag	46
Oystercatcher	8
Eider	10

Inchkeith – 8th December 2013

Peregrine 1
Kestrel 1
Oystercatcher 21
Curlew 1
Shag 9
Cormorant 3
Wren 6+
Eider 24
Redshank 12
Goldfinch 100+
Blackbird 17
Song Thrush 2
Merganser 8
Rock Pipit 6
Robin 1
Grey Heron 1

(Ron Morris)

Birds of Inchcolm

Recorded by Ed Glenwright, working on the island over the summer

1 Pair of Greater Black Back Gull.

Lesser Black Back (Thousands)

Herring Gull

Puffin

Guillemot

Razorbill

Eider Duck

Shelduck

Cormorant

Fulmar

Oystercatcher

Curlew

Graylag goose (probably feral)

Wren

Black tailed godwit

Arctic tern

Common tern

Roseate tern????

Possible sandwich tern?

Swallows

Goldfinch

Robin

Blackbird

Wood pigeon

Jackdaw

Pigeon

Song thrush

Juv Gannets

Warbler (not sure which species)

Heron

Canada Geese

Peregrine Falcon

Arctic Skua (15th September seen chasing terns)

The early season was a delight to see so many eiders and hear their rich call. Large rafts of males were displaying to females. Some mornings there can be 60-100 eiders on the 2 main beaches.

On the 30/05/2013 two nests of Eider eggs hatched.

9/06/2013 I noticed the first Gulls were hatching.

I don't think there is any species that occurs there that is rare or unusual. I have not noticed anything botanical that stands out. Much of the island is covered in nettles.

Seal pup was born on the 12th of September outside the Inchcolm cottage on the beach