



Forth Seabird Group

Forth Islands Bird Report 2015

Compiled by Bill Bruce

February 2016

SEABIRD SPECIES SUMMARIES

Notes:

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

FULMAR

This is the third consecutive year where we see an increase in the all-islands total AOS. However Craigleith, Inchcolm and Inchgarvie are the only islands showing an increase.

On Carr Craig last year a bird was seen probable AOS and this year it was confirmed that this pair are breeding.

CORMORANT

Between the mid-1990s and 2013 numbers dropped by approx. 50% so it is encouraging to see that there has been an increase (c+19%) again this year.

The count on Lamb is always tricky as many nests can be hidden in the tree mallow. In June 35 nests could be seen from the boat. However 69 nests were counted after landing on the island in September.

SHAG

The winter of 2012/13 saw breeding numbers crash by approx. 44%. This has been a better year with the total count up approx. 30% on last year and most islands are showing increased numbers of AON.

GANNET

No count this year

EIDER

Not counted on all islands

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

The steady increase (+12%) in the total number of AOT has continued with Craigleith showing the biggest individual increase (+16 AOT or +52%).

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

On the islands where this species was counted, the number of AOT is down on last year. A count was carried out on Inchcolm this year and this showed numbers well down (c-30%) on the last count of 2,600 in 2009.

HERRING GULL

Where this species was counted, some islands show an increase while other show a decrease. Overall on these islands total numbers were down (c-8%) compared to last year. On Inchcolm numbers are down (-23%) compared to the last count of 650 in 2009.

KITTIWAKE

2013 saw the lowest count ever for this species (2832 AON) so another good year has seen numbers almost double since then, and are now similar to the average for the years 2001-2012.

COMMON & ARCTIC TERN

Common tern numbers are almost identical to last year's count with only one extra AON on each island. Arctic terns have done better with an increase of 21%.

ROSEATE TERN

There was a report of a possible mixed roseate/common tern pair nesting.

SANDWICH TERN

There are no reports of any breeding this year.

RAZORBILL

Compared to last year total numbers are up again (+4%) making it the 5th year out of the last six years where numbers of AOS increased. Individually,

May Isle, Bass Rock and Inchcolm are the only islands which actually had increased numbers.

GUILLEMOT

This is a tricky species to count but it has been another good year with the total number up (approx. +26%) compared to last year and this increase was seen on most islands. Numbers are now similar to the counts carried out between 1995 and 2005.

PUFFIN

Lamb is the only island where a burrow count was carried out this year and this was performed after the breeding season. Numbers of AOB were higher than expected and approx. four times the 150 estimated in the last count in 1995.

Table 1: Summary of seabird counts for the Forth Islands, 2015

2015	Bass Rock	Craigleith	Lamb	Fidra	Eyebr-oughty	Inchkeith	Carr Craig	Inchcolm	Haystack	Inch-mickery + Cow & Calves	Inch Garvie / Forth Bridge	Long Craig	May Isle	Total
Fulmar (AOS)	c35	137	7	170		218	1	255	0	31	271	0	300	1,425
Cormorant (AON)	0	c42+	69	0		c106	c75	0	0	0	0	0	0	292+
Shag (AON)	c14	151	59	179		214	15+	29	0	44	0	0	401	1106+
Gannet (AON)	x	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x
Eider (AON)	x	43+	x	9+		x	0	x	0	27	53	3	x	135+
Great B-b Gull (AOT)	0	47	12 birds	4-5		9+	0	2	1	3	2	0	53	117+
Lesser B-b Gull (AON)	x	c100	x	148		x	c8	c1,800	17	66	c32	0	x	2171+
Herring Gull (AON)	x	c1,030	x	897		x	c69	c500	26	283	c288	0	x	3093+
Kittiwake (AON)	c441	537	99	275		260	0	68	0	0	0	0	3,433	5,113
Common Tern (AON)	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	132	13	145
Arctic Tern (AON)	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	484	484
Roseate Tern (AON)														0
Sandwich Tern (AON)	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Razorbill (AOS)	c144	193	46	139		101	0	18	0	0	0	0	3,202 (4,590 b)	3,843
Guillemot (birds on cliffs)	c3,230	c3,053	c3,100	632		243+	0	1	0	0	0	0	21,598 (15945 pr)	c31,857
Puffin (birds unless stated otherwise)	2+ b	x	c620 AOB	c400+ b on sea		462 b on sea	0	22+ b on sea	0	25 b on sea	0	0	x	620 AOB 909 b

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

Craigleith 14 March 2015 (from Maggie Sheddan, tree mallow trip)

Dunnock
Robin
Blackbird
Goldfinch
Wren
Pied wagtail
Curlew
Rock pipit and
Mixed finch flock
along with all the regular summer seabirds

2 grey seal cows

Fidra 10 April 2015

Greylag goose: 4 adults seen and 2 nests. One nest with 8 eggs at the foot of the cliffs above the arch; the other with 10 eggs inside and beside the wall round the garden beside the lighthouse.

Mallard: 3 nests – two with 10 eggs each on the ramp above the arch, the third with 9 eggs higher up near the top of the island.

There were a good number of puffins coming and going above the arch and on the slopes to the north below the lighthouse, also shags, kittiwakes, fulmar and gulls in the usual places, one pair of GBB gull by the pier. There were guillemot and razorbill on the Castle when we arrived but had gone later. There were also several wrens, one singing early on, at least one pied wagtail and a pair of oystercatcher.

Inchkeith 10 April 2015

Goldcrest	4
Oystercatcher	6
Mallard	3 drakes
Blackbird	3 males and 1 female
Meadow Pipit	3
Rock Pipit	2
Pied Wagtail	4
Shelduck	1 pair and 1 individual
Jackdaw	1
Carrion Crow	1 pair

Black-throated Diver 1 off south end

Rabbit 2

Grey seal 80-100 (30+ on Iron Craig, 2 on Seal Carr, 50+ on beach at south-east of island. The same numbers were seen at Iron Craig and SE island on 11th April.

Small Tortoiseshell butterfly 4

Inchkeith 11 April 2015

Sparrowhawk

Bass Rock 23 May 2015

Peregrine 1 bird seen
Rock pipit 1-2 seen/heard on east cliffs

Additional comments:-

Gannets continue to take over any suitable nesting areas and large groups of club birds elsewhere eg around helipad. Very little tree mallow now growing below battlements and hardly any vegetation seen growing anywhere else.

Bass Rock 28 May 2015 (from Maggie Shgeddan & Dougie Ferguson)

Shag	1-2 AON that cannot be seen from the boat *
Eider	3 AON
Rock pipit	3+ pairs breeding
Pied wagtail	1 pair
Peregrine	thought to be breeding
Guillemot	a bird with an orange bill on an egg, close to the steps at the south landing
LBB gull	2 pairs present *
GBB gull	1 pair present *
Herring gull	present
Puffin	probably 3 pairs breeding in openings in the battlements

* these are in addition to the figures in Table 1.

Craigleith 23 May 2015

Grey Lag Goose	1 bird on island with 4 chicks heading for the sea, 11 flying over
Pied Wagtail	1 pair seen
Rock Pipit	several seen
Wren	1 singing

Carrion Crow 2 old nests, 1 bird seen
Feral Dove 20+
Wood Pigeon 1 bird seen

Leucistic Herring Gull - 1 bird seen flying back and forth above east cliff. This was originally wrongly identified as a Glaucous Gull.

Nest - start of new nest, carrion crow or possibly pigeon

Grey Seal 1

Shag darvcs seen ANW, ARB, APE, AWD

Additional comments:-

Very little tree mallow seen and the only plants of any size are along the East Cliff and the slopes above it. Patches of nettles are spreading. Some areas of bare soil and no vegetation but these didn't appear to be eroding.

Inchmickery 26 May 2015

Oystercatcher 1

Inchgarvie 26 May 2015

Pied wagtail 1 bird
Feral pigeon present in usual numbers

Carr Craig 26 May 2015

Crow 2 birds present

Haystack 26 May 2015

Crow 2 birds present
Grey seal 5 adults and 2 yearlings

Carr Craig 27 May 2015

Grey seal 7

Inchcolm 27 May 2015

Swallow 2 nests and several pairs present
Jackdaw 14+ pairs present
Wood pigeon several seen
Feral pigeon 150+ seen
Blackbird 1 male and female seen at different locations; 1 old nest found.
Goldfinch 1-2 birds seen
Pied wagtail 1 seen
Chaffinch At least one pair present
Crow 2 seen

Shelduck 1 pair plus one individual seen
Oystercatcher 6+ territories seen
Common tern several offshore
Greylag goose 4 at Abbey grounds
Eider 59 birds and 8 ducklings seen on water
Wren 1 + 1 singing
Robin
Mallard 3 drakes and a pair
Grey seal 2 bulls + 2 cows on arrival. 12+ seen later, poss incl the former?

Inchkeith 30 May 2015

Oystercatcher 12 territories
Rock pipit 4+ territories
Blackbird 1 male seen
Peregrine 2 birds seen
Shelduck 1 pair circling at island's SE
Mallard one drake flying, one drake in Leith Harbour
Crow one pair present
Heron one immature chased by gulls at island's north end
Feral pigeon present in numbers
Starling one dead bird found
Rabbit 3 seen

Orange tip butterfly
Peacock butterfly
Green veined white butterfly - many seen

Grey seal 1 ashore in NW bay, 18 on beach at island's SE, 20+ seen at Iron Craig later in the day when tide came in

Additional comments:-

Oil seed rape in full bloom over large parts of the island, growing densely to approx. waist height in many places which makes progress slow. Gulls are still trying to nest in some of these areas but obviously have difficulty when trying to fly out.

Martin Moss attempted a gull count but found this impossible due to the height of the vegetation.

Lamb 10 June 2015

Greylag goose 2 birds seen ashore
Raven 2 adults and 4 young seen

Additional comments:-

Patches of mature tree mallow growing up in places though these don't appear to be interfering with the breeding seabirds. There are cormorants nesting in and around these areas and some nests may have been hidden.

Fidra 10 June 2015

Khaki Campbell duck 1 male seen
Rock dove 4 birds seen
Mallard 1 male
Oystercatcher c4 territories
Shelduck 2 birds seen
Pied wagtail pair carrying food
Rock pipit 2 breeding pairs
Peregrine 1 bird seen

Additional comments:

There are many young tree mallow plants growing, scattered across the island which are not big enough to be causing any problems at the moment. A few eiders are using these as cover. The main species growing over many parts of the island is a short, wild barley type of grass.

Leith Docks 27 June 2015 (Alan Leitch)

624 Common Tern nests on the island and a further 25 nests on the old pier

Lamb 9 September 2015

Rock pipit 2
Pied wagtail at least 1
Turnstone 12
Carrion crow 1
Fulmar 5
GBB gull 4+1 juv
Herring gull 15
Shag approx 150 birds; 2 nests seen with large chicks (one with 2 chicks & the other with 1 chick)

Inchcolm 20th October 2015

Oystercatcher 250 – 300 in South Bay
Curlew 5+
Peregrine 1

Black Rat 2 at NW Ridge
Red Admiral several
Small Tortoiseshell 1

Inchmickery 20th October 2015

Redwing 1

Inchkeith 24 October 2015 (Alan Duff)

Shag 105
Goldfinch 50
Linnet 100
Cormorant 8
Peregrine 1
Mallard 1 (female)
Robin 5
Blackbird 1
Wren 3
Gannet 4
Kestrel 1
Rock Pipit 8
Eider 7
Redshank 3
Oystercatcher 35
Turnstone 20
GBB gull 6
Curlew 20
Rabbit 5+

Rat (presumed brown rat) 1 (found dead in a building)

Craigleith 5th November 2015 (Stan de Prato)

Rock Pipit
Feral Pigeon – 40+
Sparrowhawk – 1
Peregrine – 1
Wren – 3 singing
Starling – 6
Linnet – Flock of 100+
Great Black-backed Gull
Herring Gull
Dunnock – 3
Fieldfare – 8
Carrion Crow – 2
Skylark- 3
Robin
Goldfinch – 3+
Blackbird – 2
Pied Wagtail – 1

Arctic Skua – 1 over
Pink-footed Goose – Many flying over

Inchkeith 14th November 2015

Oystercatcher 31
Blackbird 9
Shag 41
Eider 3
Short-eared Owl 1
Wren 12
Robin 4
Rock Pipit 14
Cormorant 6
Greater Black-back Gull 1
Linnet 80
Goldfinch 30
Kestrel 1
Curlew 9
Redshank 3

Carr Craig 14th November 2015

Shag 33
Turnstone 1

Inchcolm 14th November 2015

Shag 8
Oystercatcher 1
Wren 2
Blackbird 1

Inchmickery 14th November 2015

Shag 193
Eider 2
Oystercatcher 3
Turnstone 6

Inchkeith 6 December 2015 (Alan Duff)

Robin 1
Wren 9
Blackbird 8
Shag 37
Oystercatcher 36
Curlew 27
Linnet 150
Goldfinch 20
Eider 19
Redshank 2
Rock Pipit 12
Peregrine 1

Sparrowhawk 1
Kestrel 1
Buzzard 1

Inchkeith 27 December 2015 (Alan Duff)

Goldcrest 1
Robin 4
Wren 10
Goldfinch 62
Oystercatcher 4
Curlew 8
Fulmar 16
Blackbird 11
Rock Pipit 15
Shag 17
Sparrowhawk 1
Short-eared Owl 1
Redwing 4
Eider 1
Peregrine 1
Buzzard 1
Linnet 200
Kestrel 1
Redshank 4
Carrion Crow 2

Inchcolm 27 December 2015 (Alan Duff)

Oystercatcher 1
Redshank 1
Heron 1
Short-eared Owl 1
Blackbird 1
Eider 7
Sparrowhawk 1
Shag 1

Inchmickery 27 December 2015 (Alan Duff)

Shag 70+

Inchkeith (photo taken Nov 2009)



Comments from Adrian Sumner: The snails are the Garden Snail, *Helix aspersa* (which we're supposed to call *Cornu aspersum* these days!).

Very fine specimens and a good population. If it was winter, they'd be hibernating, though not all of them come through the winter, so you might see aggregations like this at most seasons. However, they don't look like old shells. I wonder what they feed on out on the island.

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	23 May 2015
Craigeith	23 May 2015
The Lamb	10 June 2015
Fidra	10 June 2015
Eyebroughty	no count
Inchkeith	30 May 2015
Carr Craig	26 May 2015
Haystack	26 May 2015
Inchcolm	27 May 2015
Inchmickery	26 May 2015
Inchgarvie	26 May 2015
Long Craig	through breeding season
Isle of May	through breeding season

Bass Rock and Lamb were counted from boat; Craigeith, 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 (includes):

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

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Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve Long Craig Island 2015 Annual Report

No island maintenance visit was made this year as there was little discernible debris and the significant movement of the scree areas continues to make the re-marking of recording areas impracticable. As in recent years the Mayweed continues to survive in a significantly reduced level and this year's plants were grubbed out during the end of season visit. The rough grass is now well established in the central area of the island.

Eider

Again only three nests found on the island this year. No outcomes for the nests were noted.

Long Craig Island	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Eider Nests	5	4	3	3	3	3

Oystercatcher

Birds were noted present in the immediate vicinity feeding in the intertidal mud throughout the breeding season however no birds nested on the island this year.

Common Tern

Birds were present in the area from mid-May and were nesting by the end of May with 31 apparently occupied nests (AON) by 10th June.

The maximum adult count of 200 individuals gives a calculated total of 133 pairs which affirms the monitored breeding population of 132 pairs

A count of 161+ chicks was made on 16th July; fledging success was undetermined however only four chick corpses were found during the end of season visit made on 3rd September suggesting a high fledging success this year.

Long Craig Island Common Tern Breeding					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Maximum adult count	170	5	109	312	200
Breeding pairs	105	0	73	131	132
Clutches	162	0	84	137	134
Eggs laid	289+	0	151+	180+	169+
Eggs Hatched	134	0	96	140+	161+
Eggs Un-hatched	141	0	16	12	-
Eggs outcome unknown	14	0	39	10	-
Young Fledged	122	0	c90	130+	157
Young Died	12	0	4	c10	4

Long Craig Island Common Tern Breeding 2015				
	10th June	20th June	3rd July	16th July
AON	31	125	119	31
<i>Unattended clutches/eggs</i>	2/3	2/4	-	3/8
Nest (1 egg)				
Nest (2 eggs)			5	
Nest (3 eggs)		1	8	
Nest (1 young)				25
Nest (2 young)				38
Nest (3 young)				20
Nests flooded by rain			1	
Total active nests	31	126	132	114

Ringling

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

Development

The proposed plan to stabilise the tidal scree areas of the island with welded mesh gabions filled with rocks is yet too actioned.

Work on the construction of the new Forth Crossing Bridge has continued throughout.

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

Other Common Tern counts

Carlingnose Pier 2015 – Common Tern

Site checked on 10th June up to 6 adults present on or around pier but no sign of any attempted breeding.

Notes from Isle of May NNR, 2015

We only count the gulls and eiders once every two years. We don't have the productivity figures yet from CEH so cannot tell how the breeding season has been yet, but the majority have increased.

2015 saw an increase in the populations of seabirds here on the May: all but Fulmars, which had an 8% decrease. The real success story of 2015 were the Kittiwakes that increased a whopping 44% on last year's count and were seen nesting in areas where they haven't been for years. It is encouraging to see populations rising and cliffs filling with breeding birds and hopefully this will continue in future years.

Bex Outram

Colour ringed cormorants

The evening roost of Cormorants on the May has been impressive (for this island) with regular counts of over 100 with peaks of 153 on 21st April (mainly involving young birds). Whilst counting I noted three darvic ringed birds:

21st April: White darvic (green text) JPV

21st April: White darvic (green text) NDB

1st May: Green darvic NXC

David Steel

Cormorant Darvics:

White (green text) JPV – ringed as a chick 21 June 2014 at Inverbervie, no previous re-sightings

Inchcolm Gull Count 27 May 2015

(approx. 13:30 – 15:00, dry at the start turning to heavy rain)

The grass was quite long apart from in the mown areas. Counts were made by counting the island from East to West.

The area above (east of) the visitor centre was block counted first.

Vantage points were used to count the visible sections of the island further west and the areas and counts were marked on the map (see below).

The tower was used as a vantage point for counting parts of the north and west of the island.

After leaving the tower it began to rain heavily resulting in fewer gulls being visible since they had hunkered down out of the weather and were more reluctant to get up in the air.

The sums from the map and Maggie's east and west shore counts (from the Maid of the Forth earlier returning boat) are as follows (L = LBB gull, H = Herring gull)

Boat counts

East 50 : 50 L:H

170 AON 85 L and 85 H

West 80:20 L:H

120 AON 96 L and 24 H

Island counts

Lesser	Herring
1003	227

Totals

Lesser	Herring
1184	336

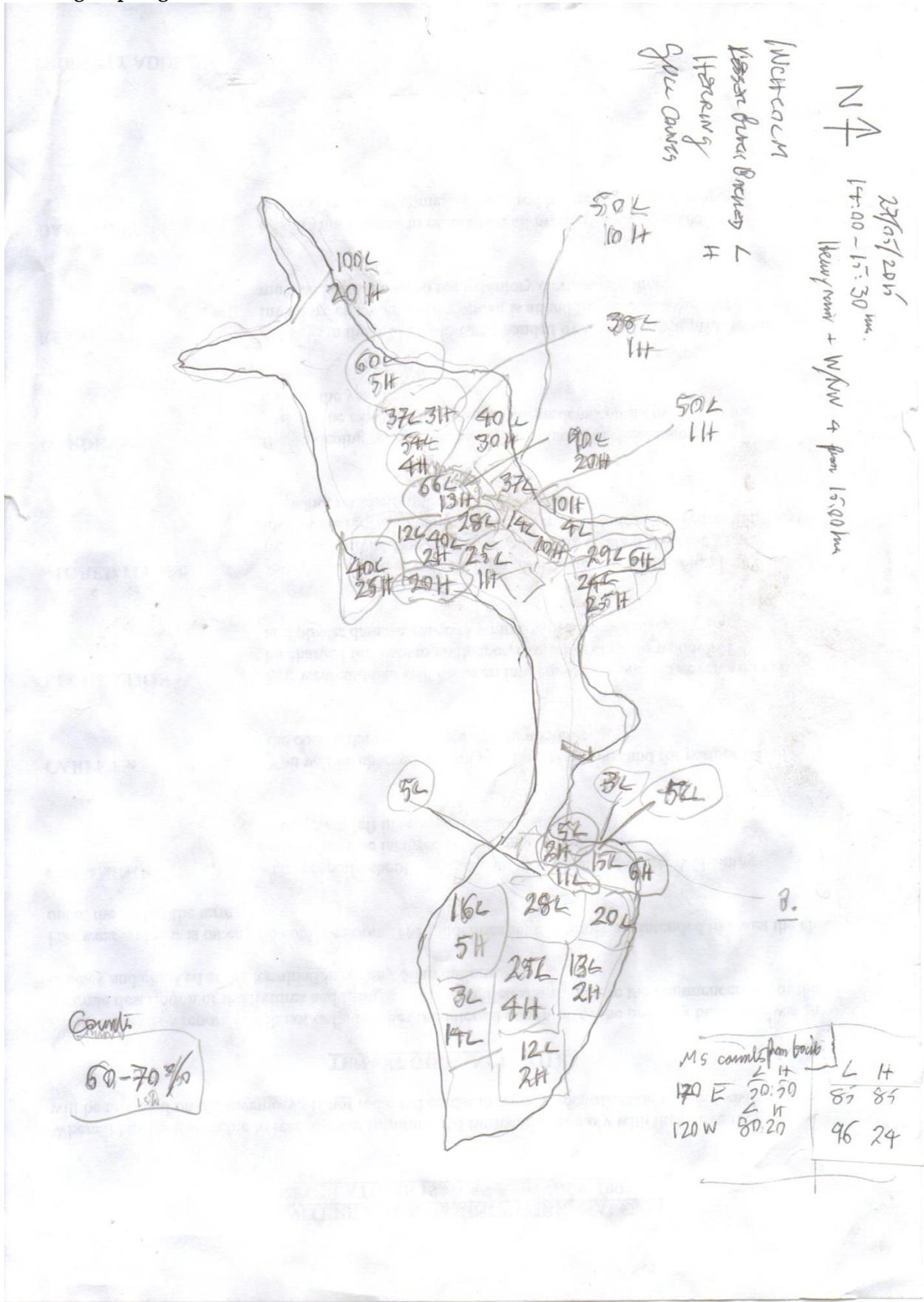
Since we missed a lot of birds due to the density of the vegetation and limitations of vantage point counting it would probably be reasonable to estimate that we saw about 60 to 70% of the AON. The real figures would therefore be about 1.5 times these

Lesser 1776 or about 1800 AON

Herring 504 or about 500 AON

Martin Moss

Working map of gull count areas and numbers



Lamb Puffin Burrow Count 9 Sept 2015

Counters Bill Bruce, Kevin Ingleby, Martin Moss, David Ross

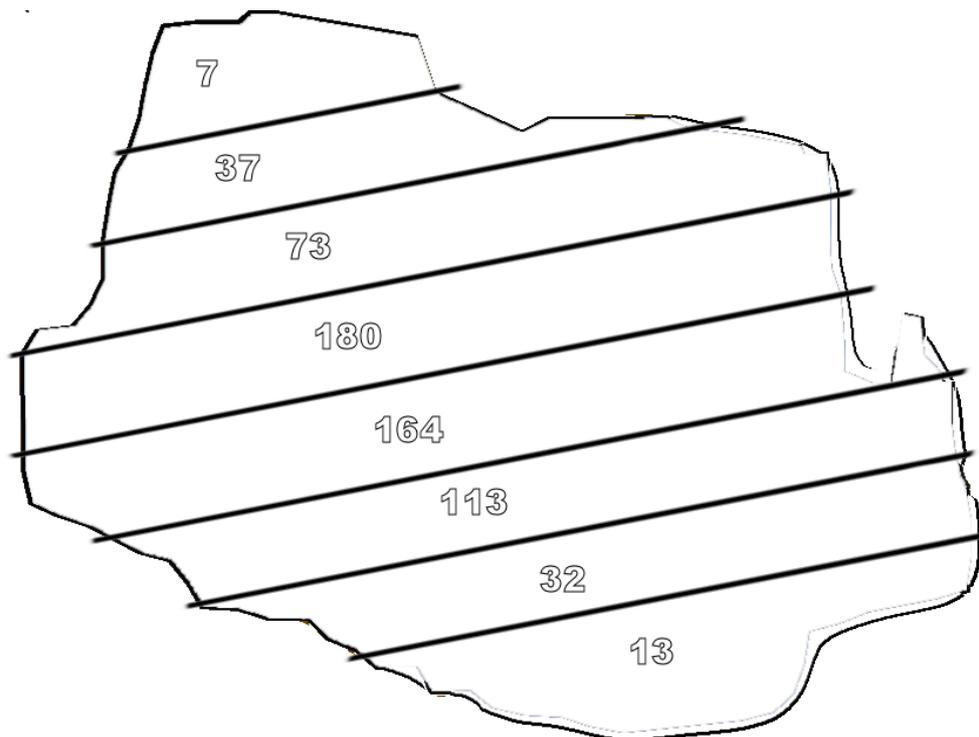
Count carried out between 10:30 and 12:00

Conditions: wind easterly force 1-2, cloudy, dry

Puffin Burrow Count Method

We started in the north west of the island and covered the island in a series of transects as roughly indicated in the diagram below. The number of apparently occupied burrows (AOB) in each transect is shown. **The total is 619 AOB for the whole island.**

We had hoped to be able to see the puffin burrows fairly easily however the grass and other vegetation had grown back and covered most of them. The result was that we covered most of the island on our knees looking for holes and deciding whether they were AOB or not. We didn't count any unsuitable holes, attempts at burrows, old unoccupied burrows or the many runways through the grass tussocks. Every AOB counted was therefore checked by one of us and each was a good burrow and obviously used this year.



Previous Counts

1969	2 AOB
1985	c8 AOB
1986	c56 AOB
1988	c10 AOB
1989	c25 AOB
1995	c150 AOB

Additional note: When we do the puffin burrow count on Craigleith or Fidra we use the majority of the party to count all "holes" and then have sample plots to check and work out the AOB. Having seen how hidden the burrows on the Lamb were today this method would have been impossible. The small party of people with previous knowledge of burrow counts was therefore ideal with each person checking each hole as they found them.

Cormorant Nest Count

During the main seabird count earlier in the season we counted 35 cormorant nests but we felt that there were probably more hidden in the patches of tree mallow. To get a better idea of the actual number we walked round the island and counted a total of 69 cormorant nests.

Other Sightings

Kevin recorded the following birds

2 rock pipits

at least 1 pied wagtail

12 turnstone

1 carrion crow

fulmar (5),

GBB gull (4+1 juv),

H gull (15),

shag (approx 150 birds); 2 nests seen with large chicks (one with 2 chicks & the other with 1 chick)

Tree Mallow

We spent the last hour cutting tree mallow in the gully on the west side of the island.

There are many dense patches of tree mallow around the island much of which has flowered and is now dropping seeds. There are also many first year plants, many of which are getting on for 2m in height.

We estimated that it would probably take work parties 1-2 days to chop all of the tree mallow round the island.

Bill Bruce

Lothian Ringing Group - Seabird Ringing 2015

During the summer of 2015, seven trips were made to ring seabirds on five islands in the Firth of Forth (the Bass Rock, Craigleith (twice), Fidra, Inchkeith, Inchmickery) and Leith Docks. A total of 762 new birds were ringed (47 adults and 715 chicks) plus 17 retraps, controls and recoveries.

The main project in 2015 was to continue colour ringing Shags at the four main colonies on Craigleith, Fidra, Inchkeith and Inchmickery. This is a collaborative project, begun in 2009, with Dr. Francis Daunt (CEH Edinburgh and the Isle of May) and Dr. Jane Reid (University of Aberdeen) mapping the winter distribution of Shags. For further information see:

<http://www.ceh.ac.uk/our-science/projects/mapping-winter-distribution-seabirds>

So far this winter (February 2016), 6,200 sightings of 2,289 individually colour ringed Shags have been made.

We also ringed Gannets on the Bass for the first time; continued counting and ringing at the tern colony in Leith Docks; and made an effort to continue ringing Puffins on Craigleith. Unfortunately, for logistical reasons, we didn't ring any Fulmars on Inchgarvie or Kittiwakes on Inchkeith this season.

Seabird Ringing Totals 2015

	Full grown	Pulli	Retraps/ Recoveries	Total
Gannet	0	18	0	18
Shag	33	593	12	638
Herring Gull	0	0	1	1
Great Black-backed Gull	0	1	1	2
Common Tern	0	55	0	55
Razorbill	2	16	1	19
Puffin	12	32	2	46
Totals:	47	715	17	779

Gannet

The Bass Rock was visited on 22 July and 18 chicks ringed with a BTO (metal) ring and a light green (lime) colour ring, to indicate the natal colony.

Shag

Fidra was visited on 8 June, Craigleith on 10 June, Inchkeith on 11 June and Inchmickery on 16 June. A total of 626 new birds were ringed (33 adults & 593 chicks) plus 12 retraps, controls and recoveries. A total of 505 uniquely lettered colour rings (green with white letters) were added to 40 adults and 465 chicks. Whilst some chicks were too small to ring, some were large enough to wear a BTO ring, but not a colour ring.

	Full grown	Pulli	Retraps/ Recoveries	Total
Fidra	10	155	4	169
Craigleith	12	136	5	153
Inchkeith	9	184	3	196
Inchmickery	2	118	0	120
Totals:	33	593	12	638

Common Tern

The Common Tern colony in Leith Docks was visited on 27 June. There were 624 nests counted in the main colony and 25 on the old west jetty – 649 in total. (2014: 816 + 2 = 818) 55 chicks were ringed in the main colony.

Razorbill

18 Razorbills (2 adults & 16 chicks) were ringed on Craigleith (plus one adult retrap) on 10 June while ringing Shags.

Puffin

Craigleith was visited for a second time on 3 July and 44 Puffins were ringed (12 adults & 32 chicks) plus two adult retraps.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the people who helped ring seabirds last season - Lothian Ringing Group members and others. We are grateful to our boatmen, Dougie Ferguson of North Berwick and Bill and Stuart Simpson of Granton, for safe passage to and from the islands. We are also grateful to the island owners, Sir Hew Hamilton-Dalrymple (the Bass and Craigleith), Allison Leonard and the RSPB (Fidra & Inchmickery), Sir Tom Farmer (Inchkeith) and Forth Ports (Leith Docks), for continued permission to ring seabirds on the islands.

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St Abbs Head NNR

Summary taken from their Seabird Report for 2015 by Liza Cole, Senior Ranger

Whole Colony Counts:

Species	Count Unit	2015 Total	Change on 2014	Comments
Fulmar	Apparently occupied site (AOS)	85	-25%	This is the lowest count on record. It represents 59% of the 10 year mean of 145 AOS, and just 34% of the 31 year mean of 247 AOS.
Shag	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	133	+24%	The second year of population increase since the wreck in the winter of 2013 which led to the lowest count on record. It represents 95% of the 10 year mean of 139 AON, and 56% of the 31 year mean of 236 AON.
Herring Gull	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	204	+11%	Up on last year, but still the fourth lowest count on record. It represents 88% of the 10 year mean of 233 AON, and 60% of the 31 year mean of 340 AON.
Kittiwake	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	4209	+16%	Kittiwakes have now seen two year's growth in numbers, but this is still the third lowest count on record. It represents 88% of the 10 year mean of 4,765, and just 42% of the 31 year mean of 9,964 AON.

Productivity:

Species	Mean productivity in 2015 (chicks fledged/ active nest)	Change on 2014	Comments
Shag	2.30	+16%	The second consecutive year of good productivity and the highest figure on record. It represents 202% of the 10 year mean of 1.49 and 178% of the 26 year mean of 1.29 chicks fledged per active nest.
Kittiwake	1.09	+4%	A small increase on last year and the second highest figure on record. It represents 154% of the 10 year mean of 0.54 and 170% of the 29 year mean of 0.64 chicks fledged per active nest.
Guillemot	0.65	+ 41%	This is a 41% increase on the 2014 figure of 0.46 chicks fledged per active nest. However, the monitoring method is still being refined and so these results should be treated with caution.
Razorbill	0.33	- 23%	This is a 23% decrease on the 2014 figure of 0.43 chicks fledged per AOS. However, the monitoring method is still being refined and so these results should be treated with caution.

Shag Colour Rings Noted

Colour	Code	Seen by Forth Seabird Group	Additional notes
Green	ECI	Inchkeith 30 May	Ringed as adult, Inchkeith, 2014 Reported later seen at Boddam & Buchanhaven in Oct 2015
Green	ECL	Inchkeith 30 May	Ringed as adult, Inchkeith, 2014 Reported later seen on May Isle Oct & Nov 2015
Green	EEH	Inchkeith 30 May	Ringed as adult, Inchkeith, 2014 Reported later seen on May Isle Oct & Nov 2015
Red	PWD	Inchkeith 30 May	Ringed as chick, Fidra, 2015. Reported later seen at Arbroath Sept 2015
Red	THN	Fidra 10 June	Ringed as chick, Fidra 2009 Reported later seen at Portnockie Oct 2015
Red	TZA	Craigleith 5 November	Ringed as chick Craigleith 2009. Previously reported seen Dunbar Oct 2015
Green	RIL	Craigleith 5 November	Ringed as chick Craigleith 2015
Green	RZE	Inchmickery 14 November	Ringed as chick Inchmickery 2015
Green	CRS	Inchmickery 14 November	Ringed as chick Farne Islands 2014
Green	IHS ?	Inchmickery 27 December	IHS is best guess at code IHS was ringed on May Isle in 2001, not reported seen since. Possible alternative code "THS" was ringed in 2011 and not reported seen since then.
Green	RWC	Inchmickery 27 December	Only leg with ring found, so bird is assumed dead. Ringed Inchmickery in 2015

Other colour ringed shags seen:

Inchkeith 30 May 2015:

Blue: Worn out

Green: EBL, ECA, ECH, ECW, EDC, EDJ, EEN, EET, EHS

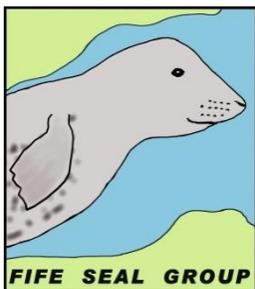
Red: ENS, LSH, PUW, PWA, RHZ, RIJ, TZS, WHU, Worn out

Fidra 10 June 2015:

Red: WJT

Blue: ZHC

Green: TIW



Fife Seal Group Annual Report 2015

Compiled by Ron Morris

This year a total of four visits were made to Inchkeith for grey seal pup monitoring purposes, taking place on 24th October, 14th November and 6th and 27th December. The last visit was decided upon during the course of the third visit which revealed a significant increase in pup numbers, which made it advisable to make an additional trip to finalise numbers for the season.

The first visit just caught the beginning of the pupping season with 23 x 1-2 day old pups present, of which two were dead. The second trip, 21 days later, revealed a total of 403 pups, i.e. 351 live whites, 13 dead whites and 39 moults. Once more the number of moults showed that a considerable percentage of pups had been born and completely moulted during the normal 21 day period between visits. On this occasion it appears to be 46.15%, ($39 - 21 = 18$ i.e. 46.15% of 39). The two dead pups from the first visit were added to the total number of pups from the second visit to give a running total of 405 pups. This figure was very similar to the total for the corresponding visits in 2014, when a running total on 16th November 2014 = 402.

At this juncture it appeared eventual numbers for the current year would be similar to those from the 2014 season. However, the visit on 6th December returned 146 live whites, 24 dead whites, 178 live moults and two dead moults (decaying/predated corpses displaying corkscrew injuries), which showed a considerable increase on the corresponding trip of 7th December 2014, which returned 109 live whites, 22 dead whites, 118 live moults and three dead moults.

It is also appreciated that a considerable number of the total 180 moults for the 6th December 2015 trip would have been born and completely moulted since the previous trip. Notwithstanding this, the total number of whites had risen from 129 to 170, an increase of 41. It was decided to add the number of whites, i.e. 170, to the running total of 405, i.e. 575 pups to date, appreciating the true figure was likely to be something considerably higher, bearing in mind the "moults" factor.

The fourth visit returned 18 live whites, 5 dead whites, 29 moults and one dead moult. The youngest pup was estimated to be 5-7 days old, suggesting the pupping season was at its close? By adding the total of 23 whites from this visit to the running total of 575, gives **598 pups** for the season, using our standard method of calculation.

The numbers of moults from the final two visits, i.e. $180 + 30 = 210$. The only way to estimate how many of these may have been born and completely moulted between visits is to use the 46.15% indicator calculated from the second visit. By doing so, an additional 97 "possible" pups can be added to the running total, giving a total of 695 pups (i.e. $598 + 97$). However, in the interests of consistency with past counts the running total figure of 598 pups for the season has been adopted for the actual count. This represents a 17% increase on the 2014 figure of 511, although it must be bourn in mind that a fourth trip took place in 2015, which resulted in a further 23 pups being taken into account for the year's total. If we disregard the pup numbers from 2015's fourth trip the total is reduced to 575 representing a 12.52% increase over 2014's total figure.

INCHKEITH 24 October 2015

Grey Seals	Whites (live)	Whites (dead)	Moults (live)	Moults (dead)	Adults male	Adults female
Area 1 (All west side of island)	0	0	0	0	3	19
Area 2 (North bays – Kinghorn Harbour)	0	0	0	0	1	7
Area 3 (North-east bay – Kirkcaldy Harbour)	3	1	0	0	4	36
Area 4 (East bay / Lighthouse Bay)	17	1	0	0	2	37
Area 5 (South-east bays)	0	0	0	0	4	6
Area 6 (South Point and Long Craig)	1	0	0	0	2	10
Totals	21	2	0	0	16	115

Overall total = 23 pups

All the pups were probably 1-2 days old.

INCHKEITH 14 November 2015

Grey Seals	Whites (live)	Whites (dead)	Moults (live)	Moults (dead)	Adults male	Adults female
Area 1 (All west side of island)	56	3	0	0	7	76
Area 2 (North bays – Kinghorn Harbour)	57	3	4	0	3	71
Area 3 (North-east bay – Kirkcaldy Harbour)	52	2	6	0	7	65
Area 4 (East bay / Lighthouse)	69	2	26	0	7	72
Area 5 (South-east bays)	106	3	3	0	10	95
Area 6 (South Point and Long)	11	0	0	0	0	13
Totals	351	13	39	0	34	392

Overall total for Inchkeith = 403 pups

INCHCOLM 14 November 2015

Grey Seals	Whites (live)	Whites (dead)	Moults (live)	Moults (dead)	Adults male	Adults female
All in south bay	5	0	0	0	2	14

Overall total for Inchcolm = 5 pups

INCHMICKERY 14 November 2015

	Whites (live)	Whites (dead)	Moults (live)	Moults (dead)	Adults male	Adults female
Harbour seals	0	0	0	0	0	4
Grey seals	0	0	0	0	1	13

CARR CRAIG 14 November 2015

No pups sighted

INCHKEITH 6 December 2015

Grey Seals	Whites (live)	Whites (dead)	Moult (live)	Moult (dead)	Adults male	Adults female
Area 1 (All west side of island)	40	1	28	0	6	27
Area 2 (North bays – Kinghorn Harbour)	23	7	35	2	3	10
Area 3 (North-east bay – Kirkcaldy Harbour)	12	2	21	0	3	10
Area 4 (East bay / Lighthouse Bay)	26	6	35	0	4	15
Area 5 (South-east bays)	35	8	54	0	8	21
Area 6 (South Point and Long Craig)	10	0	5	0	2	7
Totals	146	24	178	2	26	90

Overall total for Inchkeith = 350 pups

INCHKEITH 27 December 2015

Grey Seals	Whites (live)	Whites (dead)	Moult (live)	Moult (dead)	Adults male	Adults female
Area 1 (All west side of island)	4	0	8	0	2	22
Area 2 (North bays – Kinghorn Harbour)	1	1	2	0	0	0
Area 3 (North-east bay – Kirkcaldy Harbour)	6	0	5	0	1	3
Area 4 (East bay / Lighthouse Bay)	2	2	5	0	0	0
Area 5 (South-east bays)	4	2	9	1	0	0
Area 6 (South Point and Long Craig)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	18	5	29	1	3	25

Overall total for Inchkeith = 53 pups

Other Islands

Grey Seals	Whites (live)	Whites (dead)	Moult (live)	Moult (dead)	Adults male	Adults female
Inch Gnome (Swallow Craig)	0	0	3	0	4	2
Inchcolm	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inchmickery	0	0	6	0	4	9
Totals	0	0	9	0	8	11

Notes:

1. All the adults and two of the moults included in the Inchkeith Area 1 count were on Seal Carr.
2. The youngest of the pups sighted were around 5-7 days old, so these are probably the last of the season.
3. The number of adults, particularly on Inchkeith, is probably an underestimate as the seals in the water may not be fully accounted for.
4. Most adults were either in the water or some distance away, so the division between males and females is not likely to be totally accurate.
5. No Harbour Seals were seen.

Inchcolm

Stuart Simpson (boatman) reported a new born grey seal pup here on 8th October. At this time the pup was alive and appeared well. However, the pup was found dead on 13th October. A second dead pup was found between these dates.

No pups were found during a visit to the island by group members on 20th October. However two cows were close inshore in South Bay, where most pupping occurs. Three – four other grey seals and one bull were present in the waters around the island.

On 14th November five whites were recorded from the usual birth site at the south-west corner of South Bay. This gives a total of 7 pups for this season.

Inchmickery

During a visit here on 20th October c. 20 seals were hauled out, or were close inshore at the east side of the island. About seven of these were grey seals, with the remaining 13+ or so being harbour seals, of which it was estimated that 5-7 were this summer's offspring.

Craigeith

On 5th November Maggie Sheddan, Bill Bruce and Stan de Prato landed on Craigeith and counted 15 pups, all of which were "whites," as well as 28 adult cows and 1 bull. Thirteen of the pups were in the "Glen" area of the island, with the other two on the rocks. All were alive.

On 9th November 21 pups, including 2 dead were counted in the observable areas using the cameras at Scottish Seabird Centre, North Berwick. A further count on 13th November using the SSC cameras returned 21 pups, of which three were dead. A further breakdown between whites and moult numbers was not established.

A second landing was attempted on 26th November but failed due to the condition of the sea which was forecast to continue for several days. A partial count from the boat returned 13 whites, including one dead, one moult, 14 cows and two bulls. Afterwards a visit was made to SSC where a further count was made, establishing the presence of 19 whites (one dead) and 26 cows.

It was decided in the circumstances to add the number of whites from the landing trip on 5th November to the figure obtained from the SSC cameras on 26th November, as well as including c.3 dead whites to give this season's estimate of grey seal pup numbers.

Craigeith Pups 2015 = 15 + 18 (live) + c.3 dead = 36+

Inchkeith and Craigeith seal data was recorded by Sue Hamstead and Bill Bruce with the assistance of other Fife Seal Group members.

Harbour Seals and other Sightings

Unfortunately, due to other commitments and inclement weather, recording of harbour seal numbers at some of their more prominent haul out rocks was less than what was hoped for. The key areas of interest for this species are currently Seafield Rocks south of Kirkcaldy, East and West Wemyss and the islands of Inchmickery and Carr Craig. There are other well frequented rocks which are less convenient for the recorders to visit and of course the species may be found at many other locations in the estuary.

The following records are some of the more noteworthy examples for 2015.

Carr Craig

1st September 2015

Harbour Seal – 16 Adults and at least one pup.

Grey Seal – Two yearling grey seals.

Haystack

26th May 2015

Grey Seal – Five adults and two yearlings.

Inchmickery

26th May 2015

Harbour Seal – Two adults.

Grey Seal – One Adult bull plus two yearlings.

Inchcolm

26th May 2015

Grey Seal – Two bulls and two cows.

Seafield Rocks

16th May 2015

Harbour Seal – C. 24 Adults

Grey Seal – 14+ Adults

30th July 2015

Harbour Seal – 44 Adults and 5 pups

Grey Seal – 67 Adults (including West Vows haul-out site)

31st July 2015

Harbour Seal – 31 Adults and two pups

Grey Seal – 1

6th August 2015

Harbour Seal – 44 Adults and 4+ pups

Grey Seal – 66+ Adults

East Wemyss**West Wemyss****26th May 2015**

Harbour Seal – 26 Adults and 2 pups

6th August

Harbour Seal – 11 Adults and 3 pups

Elie (east of Lady's Tower)**16th April**

Harbour Seal – 2 Adults

Grey Seal – 21+ Adults

Summary of seal pup numbers for 2015

Inchkeith – Grey seal pups = 598 actual count, with up to 695 estimated.

Inchcolm – Grey Seal pups = 7

Craigeith – Grey seal pups = 36+

Carr Craig – Harbour Seal pups = 1

Seafield Rocks – Harbour Seal pups = 5-7

West Wemyss – Harbour Seal pups = 5 pups

Other islands and sites = nil return