



Forth Seabird Group

Forth Islands Bird Report 2021

Compiled by Bill Bruce

March 2022

SEABIRD SPECIES SUMMARIES

Notes:

- AOS / AOB / AON / AOT = apparently occupied sites / burrows / nests / territories. IND = individual birds
- Due coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic restrictions in place in May and June 2020 no seabird counts were possible last year. A full programme of counts was carried out in 2021 therefore comparisons below are against the 2019 counts.

FULMAR

Breeding numbers on some islands have increased this year while other islands show decreases. Inchcolm appears to have dropped by 62% which can be partly explained by counting the main colony from the shore, therefore missing a few sites, rather than from the boat offshore. Also the previous count (2019) had shown a significant increase (ie +79%). Looking at all islands, numbers are down by 5% (ie -66 AOS).

CORMORANT

The largest colony is on Inchkeith and the last count here (ie 2019) was down 23% compared to 2018. This year numbers have recovered to what they were in 2016-17. Over all islands numbers are up 13% compared to the average for the previous 10 years.

SHAG

Most islands showed higher counts compared to 2019 – overall, numbers were up by 13%. The exceptions were Inchcolm and Inchmickery where numbers were down.

GANNET

There was no count of gannets on Bass Rock this year. However at St Abbs Head NNR the rangers reported 46 pairs of gannet nesting this year, up from 11 in 2019. They also reported 11 chicks being fledged so this new colony is doing well!

EIDER

There was no formal count of eider this year though a note was made of those nests seen during the main seabird counts.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

The biggest increase was seen on Isle of May where numbers increased by 56% (ie +45 AON) compared to their last count in 2018. Overall numbers are down 12% compared to 2019 but they are still doing well compared to the 10 year average ie up 53%.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

The two main islands where a count of territories was carried out were Fidra and Inchmickery and both showed decreases ie -10% and -23% respectively.

HERRING GULL

Again, Fidra and Inchmickery were the two main islands that were counted. On Fidra there was an increase of 10% while on Inchmickery numbers decreased by 39%.

KITTIWAKE

Once again this species has done well on all islands in the Forth except for the Lamb where only one AON was counted. However there is some evidence that more may have settled later. Overall numbers increased by 67% compared to 2019 and this is an increase of 72% compared to the 10-year average. Although this year has shown a healthy increase numbers are

still well below the 10-12,000 AON that were counted in the mid 1990s.

COMMON TERN

On Isle of May the teams there recorded 51 AON in 2019, then 15 in 2020 and figures picked up this year with 23 AON. Unfortunately, although the season started well on Long Craig and also on the RSPB raft in Port Edgar, both of these colonies abandoned mid-season.

ARCTIC TERN

The only colony in our area is on Isle of May where numbers dropped by 18 AON (ie -5%)

ROSEATE TERN

Although a few birds were seen none are known to have bred.

SANDWICH TERN

Although this species has bred on Isle of May a few times in recent years none bred there this year.

RAZORBILL

Rozorbill numbers on Isle of May showed a healthy increase of 16% (or +647 AOS) while all of the other islands showed decreases. Overall numbers are still up 34% on the average for the previous 10 years.

GUILLEMOT

Guillemot numbers also saw a big increase on Isle of May ie +22% or +4641 IND. Inchkeith also showed an increase while the other islands saw decreases. Overall numbers increased by 13% (ie +3912 IND) compared to 2019.

PUFFIN

The last count of puffin burrows was in 2018 and this year they were counted again on Craigleith, Fidra and the Lamb. After low numbers in 2018 on Craigleith this year's count was more in line with the previous counts. Over these three islands total numbers were almost the same as the 2018 total.

A full report has been compiled and although it is initially being withheld it will be published here in due course.