

## SEABIRD 2000 UPDATE

### BLACK GUILLEMOT SURVEY IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

From an Irish perspective, the two most interesting opportunities opened up by participation in Seabird 2000 were getting to grips with the real population size of Black Guillemots (Tysties) and, likewise, for the nocturnal petrels and shearwaters. Although reliable methods for surveying Tysties were available during the Seabird Colony Register, 1985-1987, these were not strictly adhered to in Ireland. In common with Operation Seafarer, most data for Tystie were gathered whilst censusing cliff-nesters later in the summer rather than the optimal early mornings in April. The deficiencies of earlier surveys were appreciated by a small group of keen seabird workers in Ireland and we actually started a systematic Tystie survey in 1998, one year ahead of the commencement of Seabird 2000. Now, after three springs (April - early May) of fieldwork, we have covered around 80-90% of the Republic's coast. With very few exceptions this has been done on foot, in the early hours of the morning, by a dedicated bunch of BirdWatch Ireland staff and volunteers, and National Parks and Wildlife (Dúchas) conservation rangers and research staff.

What have we discovered? No big surprises regarding geographical distribution; this very much follows the maps given in both the *New Breeding Atlas* and *The Status of Seabirds in Britain and Ireland*. Tysties are present on all Irish coasts, especially the north, west and southwest where 'hard' cliffy coast predominates. They are relatively scarce on the south coast (east Cork, Waterford and Wexford), despite the presence of hard coasts, and they are patchy but locally abundant in the east. Muddy estuaries, sand and shingle beaches are frequent on the latter coast, so the Tysties are more or less confined to the rocky headlands, such as Wicklow, Bray and Howth Heads.

The table opposite gives some preliminary numbers on a county-by-county basis. Asterisks indicate those areas in which significant sections

still remain to be done (Foot and Mouth permitting) in 2001.

**TABLE - Numbers of Tysties counted in the Republic of Ireland during three springs of fieldwork, 1998-2000.**

Donegal*	471
Sligo/Leitrim	101-125
Mayo	389
Galway & Aran Islands	249
Clare	147
Kerry*	273
Cork	563
Waterford	21
Wexford	10-15
Wicklow	208
Dublin	181
Louth	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,636-2,655</b>

With the counted total standing at around 2,650 (pre-breeding adults), covering the remaining sections of Donegal and Kerry should take the total to over 3,000. What a let down! After all that effort we have only just surpassed the estimate of 2,500 given for the Republic in *The Status of Seabirds*. However, and perhaps more importantly, we now really know where the important 'colonies' are, and we have a much better idea of nesting habitats. The full story will be written up in detail in the near future.

We are very grateful to the Seabird Group for their financial support of the Irish Black Guillemot Survey in 1999 and 2000.

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