NEWSLETTER 158

February 2025

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Update from Chair

Alex Bond, Chair of The Seabird Group

Happy 2025! Whether it's winter fieldwork (or for those in the Southern Hemisphere the thralls of the summer breeding season), planning for the next colony visit, lab analyses, or finally putting those ideas to paper, I hope everyone's start of the year brings some seabird-y joy. For the Executive Committee, we welcome a number of new members following our Annual General Meeting in November and are looking forward to bringing you another successful year of The Seabird Group.

The Seabird Group is a registered charity, which means we have a number of legal obligations so that we can continue to deliver what our members ask of us. These are all set in our Constitution, which is available on our website. This is the governing document for The Seabird Group and sets out how we spend money, what activities we can undertake, and most importantly how we are governed.

Primary among this final point is that our Executive Committee must be elected by the membership, and that we must meet with members at least once a year – our Annual General Meeting. This is where summaries of the group's activities are presented, large decisions are brought for a vote by the membership, and members can bring their own concerns. Since COVID, we've successfully done these online, which means that they are more accessible and not dependent on members being present at our conference (or in the past at the Scottish Ringers' Conference).

But while we have just over 400 members, we had fewer than 20 in attendance at this year's AGM, most of whom were the Executive Committee. A minimum of 12 members is required for the AGM to be valid, but it was concerning to us that more of our members did not attend.

So, we're after some feedback – a few short questions that will help us plan our 2025 AGM (which will again be online) and hopefully have more of our members attending. What would make the AGM more attractive or easy to attend? Should it be part of a larger day or afternoon of events? Your feedback would be very appreciated.

You can visit https://forms.office.com/e/u4AqmhbhSU, and it should take about 5 minutes of your time.

Wishing you all the best, Dr Alex Bond

Submit your photos of 'Gulls Eating Stuff' to a new citizen science project

Alice Risely, University of Salford

Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** (*Larus fuscus*) will eat absolutely anything and everything, no matter how gross (or cute). They fill the ecological role of vultures - cleaning up carcasses and picking off the weakest. And, increasingly, spreading human garbage and stealing children's ice creams. This second bit – and their tendency to grab and gulp down ducklings in front of horrified kids – has given gulls a bit of a PR problem.

Despite what we think we know, there's still plenty to learn about gull diets and resource use. Both species have undergone dramatic demographic shifts in the UK in recent decades, with natural coastal colonies—particularly in England—declining sharply, while urban and industrial populations have surged, spreading further inland. Reduced predation on rooftops plays a role, but food availability is likely just as important. What resources are driving this change? Are there seasonal trends or individual strategies? And just how big a role does human rubbish play?

Herring Gull stealing a Common Guillemot egg
Photo: Gemma Kellegher

As opinions about gulls and their management grow more polarised, understanding their resource use and linking it to demographic shifts is increasingly important. Equally important is reducing polarisation through outreach and education about gull ecology and behaviour.

To tackle these questions, my colleagues and I at the University of Salford are developing diet metabarcoding techniques to study the varied and often anthropogenic diets of gulls in Cumbria and Lancashire, in partnership with Natural England. We've also launched '*Gulls Eating Stuff*', a citizen science project that gathers photographic evidence of, well, gulls eating stuff. Participants can submit photos with details of the date and location, and we'll supplement these with images from eBird, iNaturalist, and Flickr. The goal is to uncover diet diversity while engaging people with gull behaviour in a fun and light-hearted way.

Lesser Black-backed Gull eating a Puffin chick
Photo: Samuel Schmidt

Seabird researchers may have seen gulls picking off chicks of their study species—and might even have photos. If so, please consider contributing to the project. The pictures don't need to win awards—just show the gull species and what it's eating. You can submit photos by following this link: https://citsci.org/projects/gulls-eating-stuff/, and registering to the CitSci platform. If you have any questions or would be able to advertise the project within your own network, you can email me on a.risely@salford.ac.uk.

Biosecurity in Scotland

Sophie Smith, Biosecurity for LIFE, RSPB

Seabirds are in crisis, with 10 of our seabird species on the UK red list. Factors such as climate change, avian influenza and increasing offshore renewable infrastructure are having devastating impacts. But the greatest terrestrial threat our seabirds face is from invasive, non-native, mammalian predators, species such as rats, mice, mink, hedgehogs and stoats.

These species are adapted to be the ultimate island invader. They are adept swimmers, are able to rapidly reproduce, and have voracious appetites, predating upon seabird eggs, chicks and even the adult birds. Mink can cover an incredible 4 km in a favourable tide. But being out of swimming distance doesn't safeguard an island. Rodents in particular are savvy stowaways, with both rats and mice being able to fit through gaps as small as just 12 mm. Once they have landed on an island, they quickly make themselves at home. A single pregnant rat can produce a population of 300 in just eight months, while in stoats, delayed implantation allows a male to go into the den and impregnate the young while they have barely opened their eyes, with the resulting embryo not beginning to develop until the young stoat has matured. This means that should a female stoat reach an island, it is likely she will be pregnant. Collectively these adaptations mean invasive mammalian predators can very quickly have significant impacts on island seabird colonies.

Globally, invasive non-native species are the second greatest threat to biodiversity, second only to habitat loss. Species on islands are disproportionately affected, with 37% of island species globally classed as Critically Endangered. **Manx Shearwater** (*Puffinus puffinus*) have already been lost from 12 Scottish islands this way. Further breeding populations of Manx Shearwater and other small petrels are currently at risk of being lost from several UK islands where they are subject to predation by invasive, non-native, mammalian predators.

Biosecurity for Scotland is a partnership project of The RSPB, NatureScot, National Trust for Scotland and the Northern Lighthouse Board, working to safeguard 38 island sites designated for their breeding seabird populations, by protecting them from the threat posed by these invasive predators in a threefold approach of prevention, surveillance and incursion response.

As is often the case, prevention is better (cheaper and quicker) than cure. Taking steps to prevent these invasive species from ever reaching our seabird islands is a key part of good biosecurity and takes many forms, from island visitors packing food in sealed containers, to boat operators having surveillance tools onboard, and projects like Biosecurity for Scotland raising awareness of the risk invasive species pose.

Surveillance is key in detecting signs of invasive species early, which is crucial in allowing a timely and effective response. Surveillance can take many forms, from the monitoring of wax chew blocks, to trail cameras and looking for field signs. The participation of island staff, visitors and volunteers is crucial in ensuring this early detection system works.

You might see where we are going with this. Seabirds need our help; good biosecurity means all of us doing our part. In many instances you might be one of a very small number of people who are fortunate enough to visit these islands, and as such, here is how you can help with the biosecurity of these sites. While your visits are crucially important for seabird monitoring, boat trips are one of the primary pathways by which an invasive predator can reach our islands. Below are some common-sense steps to take to reduce the risk of transporting any unwanted stowaways:

Before getting on the boat:

- Where possible pack on the day of travel.
- Store food in rodent-proof containers, such as sealed plastic lunch boxes.
- Avoid leaving your bags open or unattended while waiting for your boat.

Dropping on wax block, with scale
Photo: RPSB

• Where possible avoid loading after dark. Where this is unavoidable try to light the area as much as possible.
• Check any equipment (nets, tents, etc.) for signs of gnaw marks, holes, nesting material or droppings. Remember rodents can fit into small holes ~12 mm in diameter, so check thoroughly. Between uses, try to store equipment off the ground.

As part of our mission to prevent these invasive mammalian predators from reaching seabird islands, Biosecurity for Scotland have launched a biosecurity accreditation scheme 'The Predator Free Certification' for commercial boat operators. It is a free and voluntary certification; training is online and can be done at a time that suits individuals. The accreditation encourages and rewards the uptake of biosecurity measures onboard. New operators are warmly welcomed, so do signpost any boat operators to our training. If you have any questions or want more information, drop us an email: biosecurityforlife@rspb.org.uk.

Despite adhering to these preventative measures, invasive species may still make it to our seabird islands - remember for example the incredible swimming ability of the mink! Surveillance is vital in ensuring early detection of incursion incidents. When you are visiting islands, keep watch for invasive predators or signs of one, such as: droppings, runs, burrows, gnawing or predation. If you see anything that falls into any of these categories, please take a photo with a tape measure or something such as a coin to provide scale. Then report it to island staff or send it to us as soon as possible at: biosecurityforlife@rspb.org.uk. We hope when you visit you won't see anything out of the ordinary, and this information is also very useful, so do please drop us an email when you get back from your visit to let us know.

Prints with a coin for scale
Photo: RSPB

PhULMaR

Chloe Cargill

PhULMaR stands for the PhD inter-University Lab for Marine bird Research. A somewhat contorted acronym, you say, with questionable capitalisation? I promise you, the other options of catchy names relating to seabirds were... peculiar.

PhULMaR (fulmar, get it?!) is an informal lab group of student seabird researchers. We exist purely to link up PhD students (and Masters by Research students are also welcome!) who are studying marine birds with shared or similar life-history characteristics and geographic contexts, and who are affiliated with a research organisation within the UK and Ireland. We started out in November 2023, and now comprise 35 student members from 21 research organisations around the British and Irish Isles. Members contribute skills and knowledge in ringing, biologging, breeding ecology, oceanography, genetics, stable isotope analysis, population modelling, energetics, vessel interactions, disease and parasitology, and cover petrels, cormorants and shags, auks, shearwaters, penguins, albatrosses, gannets, gulls and terns.

Some of the PhULMaR members meeting in person at the Seabird Group Conference in Coimbra, September 2024
Photo: Chloe Cargill

From a science perspective, networking outside of a university or supervisor group bubble is great for inspiring new ideas, motivating new short or long-term collaborations, and identifying overlaps and synergies among research topics. Last year, a subgroup of PhULMaR teamed up to give a collaborative

'Spotlight on student research' presentation at the Scottish Power Renewables Offshore Wind and Ornithology conference in Glasgow, and in September we took the opportunity to have our first in-person meet-up at the 16th International Seabird Group Conference in Coimbra, Portugal.

However, PhULMaR has a further, less 'tangible' role. As a group we provide mutual support to fellow student seabird researchers - because don't we all know that successes observed are the result of many more challenges overcome? To all early-career students: you are not alone, whether you are formulating your PhD thesis questions and initial research plans, just starting to gain confidence as an independent researcher, tackling a nitty-gritty methods problem, or deciding whether academia is the right place for you. In 2024, PhULMaR also welcomed guest speakers from the BTO and the RSPB, who took us through their individual PhD journeys, as well as providing personal insights about their transition from PhD life into professional ornithology.

PhULMaR is very much a 'get out what you put in' network – indeed, what you get out may very well exceed what you put in – like-minded and respectful collaborations often do. PhULMaR members meet on Microsoft Teams every last Friday of the month – year round – to catch-up, share fieldwork and laboratory anecdotes and to meet new members. The concept of PhULMaR as a cross-university support group originated from a place of personal adversity and became a reality due to the unconditional support of friends and colleagues. Therefore, we will keep meeting as long as there is a student who needs us – and as long as we have a current PhD student able to send out a Teams invite! If you are a PhD or MRes student and would like to join PhULMaR, then please reach out by email to c.cargill.21@abdn.ac.uk.

A Great Black-backed Gull seen taking a large crab, and the infrequent presence of crabs in their diet in Europe

Antony Cheke and Sam Langlois

Introduction

On 11 July 2024, alongside the Hurst Castle Spit by the tidal Keyhaven Marsh on the Solent in Hampshire (UK), Antony Cheke observed a flying adult **Great Black-backed Gull** (*Larus marinus*), henceforth GBBG, carrying a substantial prey item. On landing the prey was seen to be a large live crab, probably, from the size and flattened limbs, a Velvet Swimming Crab (*Necora (=Macropipus) puber*) (see photo) - something this observer had never before seen in 65 years of birdwatching. The bird positioned the crab on its back then stabbed at it several times to kill it, and apparently ate the soft parts. This prompted a literature search and reaching out to seabird expert Sarah Wanless to discover if perhaps this was an overlooked behaviour and more common than reported, which brought in SLL, who studied the diet of GBBGs on the Isle of May in the Firth of Forth in Scotland in 2021.

Discussion

While eating crabs is clearly normal practice for GBBGs in Atlantic North America[1] [2], it seems this is relatively unusual in Europe[3], although related species, **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** (Netherlands), and **Yellow-legged Gulls** (*Larus michahellis*) (Iberia), at least in some areas, specialise in taking swimming crabs (*Liocarcinus* spp. and *Polybius henslowii*) [4] [5] [6]. O'Hanlon *et al.*[7] found that **Herring Gulls** in different colonies around western Scotland and Northern Ireland had very variable percentages (0-60) of pellets containing crabs (not specifically identified). Bergman[8] did not mention crabs when discussing the diet of large gulls, including GBBGs, in

[1] Ellis, J.C., Chen, W., O'Keefe, B., Shulman, M.J. & Witman, J.D. 2005. Predation by gulls on crabs in rocky intertidal and shallow subtidal zones of the Gulf of Maine. *Journal of Experimental Marine Biology & Ecology* 324(1): 31-43.

[2] Maynard, L.D. & Ronconi, R.A. 2018. Foraging behaviour of Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus* near an urban centre in Atlantic Canada: evidence of individual specialization from gps tracking. *Marine Ornithology* 46: 27–32.

[3] Götmark, F. 1984. Food and foraging in five European *Larus* gulls in the breeding season: a comparative review. *Ornis Fennica* 61 :9-18.

[4] Munilla, I. 1997. Henslow's swimming crab (*Polybius henslowii*) as an important food for yellow-legged gulls (*Larus cachinnans*) in NW Spain. *ICES Journal of Marine Science* 54: 631–634.

[5] Schwemmer, H., Schwemmer, P., Ehrich, S. & Garthe, S. 2013. Lesser Black-backed Gulls (*Larus fuscus*) consuming swimming crabs: An important link in the food web of the southern North Sea. *Estuarine, Coastal & Shelf Science* 119: 71-78.

[6] Calado, J.G., Veríssimo, S.N., Paiva, V.H., Ramos, R., Vaz, P.T., Matos, D., Pereira, J., Lopes, C., Oliveira N., Quaresma, A., Ceia, F.R., Velando, A., & Ramos, J.A. 2021. Influence of fisheries on the spatio-temporal feeding ecology of gulls along the western Iberian coast. *Marine Ecology Progress Series* 661: 187–201.

[7] O'Hanlon, N., Rona A. R. McGill, R.A.R. & Nager, R.G. 2017. Increased use of intertidal resources benefits breeding success in a generalist gull species. *Marine Ecology Progress Series* 574: 193–210. DOI: 10.3354/meps12189.

[8] Bergman, G. 1982. Population dynamics, colony formation and competition in *Larus argentatus*, *fuscus* and *marinus* in the archipelago of Finland. *Annales Zoologici Fennici* 19(3): 143-164.

Finland. Studies in the British Isles either found no crabs at all in GBBG diet[9] [10], or only very marginal amounts. Harris[11], found remains of two Shore Crabs (*Carcinus maenas*) in the stomach contents of 244 GBBGs shot on Skokholm and Skomer Island in Wales, both in June, and no crabs in 420 pellets from 21+ nests (21 + a few 'others'). Westerberg *et al.*[12] (2019) reported 3% 'unidentified crustaceans' in GBBG pellets on Skomer, and Buckley[13] found similar proportions (2-3%) in 264 pellets on Cape Clear Island (southern Ireland), though the contribution by weight (calculated from remains) was tiny (0.006%). However, one study on Great Saltee Island, off south-eastern Ireland[14], found that the diet of chicks for c.300 pairs of GBBGs nesting colonially comprised mainly fish (55%), with crabs making up 12%. Whereas solitary nesters took mostly the chicks of auks and gulls (68%), and only 4% were crabs. Beaman[9] also remarked on the lower percentage of seabirds taken by colonial against solitary nesters, but in Orkney and Shetland the colonial GBBGs fed on sandeels (*Ammodytes* spp.), not crabs.

Adult Great Black-backed Gull tackling a large and still living crab at Hurst Castle, Hampshire, UK on 17 July 2024. Photo: Anthony Cheke.

However, fairly significant crab predation can occur in UK colonies. SLL examined 1191 pellets from 81 GBBG nests in 2021 on the Isle of May, off Fife in Scotland, finding crab remains (Velvet Swimming Crabs, where identified) in 65 pellets recovered from 23 nests. As only 28% of pairs fed on crabs, it was a minority practice, and even in those nests only 12% of pellets (65/546) contained crabs, with only one pair looking like crab specialists (7/7 pellets). Percentages were almost always lower in nests with over 20 pellets (2-25%), and very variable. In 2017, Bennett[15] found a similarly low frequency (7.6%) of crustaceans in GBBG pellets also on the Isle of May. It appears that the lack of evidence of crab consumption in the UK is at least partly due to a limited number of studies and study sites compared with North America. In addition to the two studies on the Isle of May, both Harris[11] and Westerberg *et al.*[12] worked on one or both of the adjacent Welsh islands of Skomer and Skokholm. It is possible that crab eating may not be as unusual as it has seemed.

It should be noted that all the studies, Hudson[14] excepted, referred to the percentage of pellets containing crabs, not to the percentage of crabs in the diet (either by number or biomass). The contrast between percentage occurrence and dietary contribution is starkly demonstrated in Buckley's analysis[13].

However, all detailed studies in the UK using pellets have been conducted in the breeding season (Harris[11], Mudge & Ferns[10], Bennet [15], Westerberg *et al.*[12], this study), though Harris[11] also collected stomach contents in late winter and autumn. The only other study done in another season was observational, recording (as expected by Harris[11]) fewer items and with less precision (Mudge & Ferns[10]). It is possible that outside the breeding season GBBG diet in Britain differs, and may thus include more crabs, and we would appeal to birdwatchers to keep a lookout for this.

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[9] Beaman, M.A.S. 1978. The feeding and population ecology of the Great Black-backed Gull in northern Scotland. *Ibis* 120: 126-127.

[10] Mudge, G.P. & Ferns, P.N. 1982. The feeding ecology of five species of gulls (Aves: Larini) in the inner Bristol Channel. *Journal of Zoology, London* 197:497-510.

[11] Harris, M.P. 1965. The food of some *Larus* gulls. *Ibis* 107(1): 43-53.

[12] Westerberg, K., Brown, R., Eagle, G. & Votier, S.C. 2019. Intra-population variation in the diet of an avian top predator: generalist and specialist foraging in Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus. Bird Study* 66(3): 390-397. DOI:10.1080/00063657.2019.16939.

[13] Buckley, N.J. 1990. Diet and feeding ecology of Great Black-backed Gulls (*Larus marinus*) at a southern Irish breeding colony. *Journal of Zoology, London* 222: 363-373.

[14] Hudson, A. 1982. Great Black-backed Gulls on Great Saltee Island, 1980. *Irish Birds* 2: 167-175.

[15] Bennett, S., 2017. 'An investigation of the predation of Atlantic Puffins, *Fratercula arctica*. In: Great Black-Backed Gulls, *Larus marinus*'. Unpublished Master of Research Thesis, Imperial College London, England.

Training Grant Report

Training grants provide up to £250 for individuals to use towards travel, accommodation and subsistence in order to undertake unpaid seabird-focused fieldwork or volunteering. They are aimed at people with limited or no previous experience with seabirds, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds or those who have faced increased barriers to gaining experience. Therefore, no previous experience is required. Seabird fieldwork is often unpaid and can be expensive, but field skills are highly sought after and can be key for future career opportunities. We hope that this grant will enable people to undertake such activities who may not otherwise be able to afford it.

Below are examples of successful applicants from 2024. The deadline for the next round of grants is **28th February 2025**.

More details and application forms can be found on our website here: http://seabirdgroup.org.uk/grants.

Skokholm

Gwenna Butler

In April, after more than ten hours driving from the Scottish Highlands and an overnight stay in Haverfordwest, I found myself boarding a boat bound for the island of Skokholm off the coast of southwest Wales. As the boat pulled into South Haven, under bright blue skies and swirling auks, I knew the next three months were going to be special.

Ringing Razorbill chicks at the Bluff
Photo: Giselle Eagle

My first night on the island set the tone for the next three months. I had the chance to ring my first seabird species, the **Manx Shearwater**. 'Manxies' would become a large part of my time on Skokholm, as I helped monitor the productivity sites and conduct playback surveys. Hearing their calls outside my window each night was a unique soundscape and one I will always miss. Returning to the mainland later and falling asleep to the sound of cars and sirens was a bittersweet change.

Evenings on the island were often spent at Crab Bay where the hide offered the perfect vantage point and escape from the often wet and windy weather to record **Puffin** (*Fratercula arctica*) activity at the study burrows and spot colour rings. One of my favourite activities was participating in daylight puffin watches. For two-hour shifts on selected days, we observed puffins delivering fish to their chicks and recorded any instances of fish-stealing by other birds. These daylight watches came with a perk: I'd treat myself to a Tony's chocolate bar from the island shop!

Perhaps the most intriguing part of the Crab Bay hide wasn't what we could see outside, but what was hidden behind a locked door inside. This dark little room housed a little seat and a curtain. On drawing back the curtain, once your eyes adjusted to the darkness, you could see a pair of puffins in their burrow, separated from you only by a thin piece of one-way glass. If you were lucky enough to visit the island at the right time, you may have had the privilege of watching puffins incubating their egg, and later tending to their chick, an experience rarely offered outside webcams! This egg hatched a few weeks after I arrived on the island, and the puffling fledged days before I left!

Skokholm was not just about Puffins and Manxies though! As the first **Fulmar** (*Fulmarus glacialis*) egg was spotted, we also began searching for apparently incubating adults (AIAs). Watching these elegant birds—my personal favourite—was always great even though you could go days thinking an individual was on an egg, only for it to finally move and reveal a bare patch of rock! Towards the end of my stay, we were rewarded with the sight of the season's first fluffy chick peeking out from beneath its parent. As we entered the third month, our focus shifted to locating AIAs and conducting playback surveys for **Storm Petrels** (*Hydrobates pelagicus*). It was fantastic to play Storm Petrel calls into crevices and hear their unmistakable responses echo back. In the first

couple of weeks, I also had the chance to help finish the construction of "Petrel Station II", a wall of artificial Storm Petrel nestboxes. Hearing that an egg had already been laid in its first year was fantastic, and fingers crossed for a chick or two next year!

One of the standout moments from my Skokholm experience was ringing **Great Black-backed Gull** chicks. Having only been ringing for three months before arriving, and having only ringed garden passerines, it was a steep learning curve handling these much larger birds and learning how to properly fit the rings.

Since leaving Skokholm, I've been fortunate enough to continue gaining experience with seabirds. Most recently, I spent a few days camping on a remote Scottish island, where I ringed my first Storm Petrels! As I look ahead to next year, I'm already planning more seabird adventures and hope to one day land my dream job working with these fantastic birds.

I owe a huge thank you to Rich and Giselle, the wardens on Skokholm. Their knowledge, enthusiasm, and passion for the island's wildlife were infectious. From their guidance on everything seabird-related and everything else in between, they made my time on the island unforgettable, and I have gained so many new skills and knowledge. I even found myself quoting part of Rich's night-time Storm Petrel talk not long ago!

Lastly, I would like to extend my thanks to The Seabird Group, whose grant made this experience possible.

Bardsey

Jonathan Singlewood-Dodds

I was fortunate enough to spend the spring season at Bardsey Bird Observatory as their Spring Residential Volunteer! From the first week of arrival, it was already clear how isolated Bardsey Island is, positioned at the end of the Llŷn Peninsula looking towards the Irish Sea; it was clear that my time at Bardsey was set to be fulfilling. Early in the year, efforts were centred around preparing the observatory for day visitors and staying guests during the upcoming season. This really connected us as a team and was a great way to keep ourselves busy when the weather still felt like winter at times!

'Many days were spent round the East Side ringing seabirds. This was a special morning where I assisted with ringing Kittiwakes, where we found ourselves in the centre of the colony. You can't ask for anything more.'
Photo: Kate Fox

We were eagerly awaiting hearing our first Manxie (**Manx Shearwater**) of the year, and sure enough, as spring progressed they started arriving on the dark nights! Work started early on, assisting Lauren Evans for her PhD, monitoring the Manx Shearwater diet. We helped install a number of artificial nestboxes just in time before the shearwaters began arriving in numbers. It is hoped the boxes will offer unique opportunities to monitor the Manxies in a more efficient way. Before long, they were turning up again in their thousands preparing to breed for another season. Over the other side of the island, the infamous 'East Side' was starting to get noisy again; auks, gulls and shags were all reclaiming their cliff-face haunts like they'd never left! From this point onwards is when the seabird monitoring began.

Between observatory responsibilities and censusing the island for migrant birds, I had the opportunity to assist with various projects on the island's seabirds. As the East Side was getting busy, regular monitoring began where coordinated efforts were made by land and by boat to estimate the numbers of each species. This was great over the season as it would get you right in the centre of a seabird colony, a new experience for me, one that I can still smell and hear as I'm writing this! It always felt like we had to go into the seabird's world to get a true picture of the numbers of birds; this was a special feeling. Concerted efforts were made to fit uniquely numbered rings on as many birds as we could. As a trainee bird ringer under BTO license, this was exciting seeing how seabird ringing is done, learning the techniques, and even applying them myself on species such as

Razorbills (*Alca torda*), **Guillemots** (*Uria aalge*), **Shags** (*Gulosus aristotelis*), **Herring Gulls**, **Great Black-backed Gulls** and even **Kittiwakes** (*Rissa tridactyla*)!

Once the Manxies started arriving in numbers, numerous dark nights were spent systematically ringing them and ring-reading to gain longevity data. It was interesting to learn about the unique techniques used for Manx Shearwaters, with their 'flat' legs, where specialised methods are used to fit the rings carefully so they can endure their otherwise pelagic lifestyle without falling off. This was a brilliant experience, building my knowledge with bird ringing and gaining further insights into their ecology. Often these sessions would coincide with guided walks that Bardsey Bird Observatory led. Assisting with these walks, it was great to help people connect with the island's most famous species and teach them more about the way the warden team monitor these birds.

Towards the end of my time on Bardsey, I was fortunate enough to join the warden team on the annual trip to the Gwylan Islands, a short 20 minute boat journey east of Bardsey. Despite being across the water, the Gwylans had an equally unique feel and these islands support large numbers of **Puffins** and **Cormorants** (*Phalacorax carbo*). Here, we conducted several census counts of the populations of each species to support the continuing efforts to monitor the seabird colonies. Once counts were logged, priorities turned to ringing the seabirds. This was another exciting opportunity to see how different species were ringed. Cormorants, Great Black-backed Gulls and Puffins were all fitted with rings and it was great to practice the different techniques used.

Without the help of The Seabird Group Training Grant, I simply wouldn't have been able to get to Bardsey Bird Observatory as their Spring Residential Volunteer. Island life was something new to me, something that I'll never forget! I sincerely encourage applying for this grant so this opportunity can be made possible for anyone else who wants to explore working with seabirds!

Isle of May

Jelaine Gan

Situated on the east coast of Scotland, the Isle of May is a seabird haven. Although I went there almost at the end of the seabird breeding season (late July), the island was still teeming with bird life; **Puffins** were jumping in or flying out from their burrows, gulls were loudly squawking, **Guillemots** and a few **Razorbills** were still busy tending to their almost oversized chicks, and the **Fulmars** were drawing figures of eight in the air with their graceful flights. My senses were overwhelmed, and it was exhilarating to be there.

The Isle of May is a popular tourist destination for both birders and non-birders. More than a hundred people visit the island each day, spending about 4-5 hours roaming the island and discovering its wildlife, scenery, and history. I must admit I was sceptical of this idea, as surely, I thought, the presence of people will disturb the breeding seabirds. However, long-term monitoring and research on the Isle of May, as well as on other seabird islands, has shown little to no effect of human presence on the productivity and population of the seabirds. With my mind at ease, I realised how valuable such experiences are to engage more people with conservation. Visitors can come and appreciate wildlife quite close and personal. I believe that without this appreciation, there can be no conservation.

During my trip, I met and interacted with the three primary organisations working on the island. NatureScot deals with the public visitor engagement and overall island maintenance and management. They are the happy bunch that greet visitors upon landing and tell the same joke at every orientation (makes me laugh every time). Joining them in their routine and in wader surveys showed me what a career with seabird conservation can be like.

The second group is the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), which have ecologists and ornithologists on the island to conduct research on seabirds. They work mainly on five priority species on the island, namely the **European Shag**, **Black-legged Kittiwake**, **Common Guillemot**, **Razorbill**, and **Atlantic Puffin**. I was absolutely thrilled to ring gull pulli and a Fulmar chick with them. Holding gulls with my hands made me realise just how big and strong they are! I have always found it tricky to identify juvenile gulls, and so this was a valuable learning experience as I got to examine the plumage of **Lesser Black-backed**, **Great Black-backed**, and **Herring Gulls** up close.

Lastly, there is the Isle of May Bird Observatory. Members of the charity stay at the cozy lower lighthouse and do bird surveys and ringing. That week, a lovely couple were there ringing **Storm Petrels**. Other volunteers and I joined them for a night. Staying up until 3 am was worth it as we ringed a few petrels.

It was a short but amazing trip. I wish I can visit again next seabird season or during the migration season. The island also has Heligoland traps for catching migratory birds. They are massive permanent structures that funnel birds into a small box at the end of the narrowing 'cage'. By chance, we got to ring a group of juvenile Pied Wagtails (*Motacilla alba*) that went in the Heligoland trap. It was definitely a cool way to catch birds, very different in scale and strategy than the usual mist netting!

I am very grateful to David Steele and the NatureScot team, as well as the CEH team, for an amazing time on the Isle of May. This trip would not have been possible without the support of The Seabird Group. Thank you for offering grants that encourage and empower the next generation of bird conservationists and researchers. I hope others get to have a similarly great learning experience!

Ringing gull and Fulmar pulli at the Isle of May
Photos: Josie Hewitt

Breeding Season Report

Flamborough and Filey Coast SPA

James Butcher, RSPB

Overall, 2024 was a mixed year for seabird productivity (Figure 1). Both **Northern Fulmar** and **Razorbill** productivity declined to their lowest recorded values, although localised predation seems to be a key factor in driving the latter. **Common Guillemot** productivity declined slightly, and **Black-legged Kittiwake** productivity dipped after last year's high, but remains encouraging. **Northern Gannet** (*Morus bassanus*) productivity continued to recover strongly, while **European Herring Gull** productivity dramatically recovered from an all-time low in 2023 to record one of its highest ever values.

The results from the 2024 breeding season are as follows:

Northern Fulmar: 44 chicks fledged from 133 Apparently Occupied Sites (AOS), resulting in a mean productivity of 0.35 chicks fledged per pair. This is the lowest productivity recorded since 2009 and is a cause for concern as productivity has declined steadily since 2019.

Northern Gannet: A total of 337 Apparently Occupied Nests (AON) were monitored across six plots, from which 249 chicks successfully fledged, giving a mean productivity of 0.74 chicks fledged per pair. This is another encouraging year of strong recovery in gannet productivity following the low values recorded in 2022 after an outbreak of HPAI in the colony.

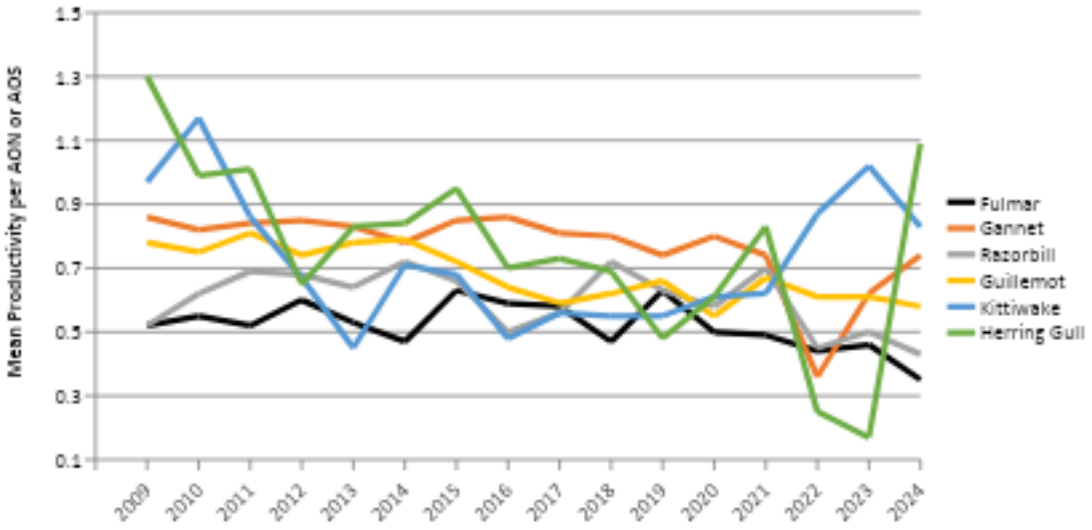

Figure 1. Summary of the productivity trends of the six seabird species monitored from 2009-2024 across the Flamborough and Filey Coast SPA.

Black-legged Kittiwake: A total of 865 AON were monitored in 16 plots across the SPA. From those nests, 715 chicks successfully fledged, giving a mean productivity of 0.83 chicks per pair. Although this is a slight decline from 2023's record productivity of 1.02 chicks per pair, the overall trend since 2019 remains encouraging.

European Herring Gull: A total of 83 chicks fledged from 82 AON this year, giving a mean productivity of 1.09 chicks per pair. This represents a dramatic and very welcome recovery from the all-time low of 0.17 chicks per pair recorded in 2023. However, the long-term trend continues to be one of decline, and remains a cause for concern.

Common Guillemot*:* A total of 149 chicks fledged from 257 AOS across five plots. The mean productivity was 0.58 chicks per pair, representing a marginal decline from 2023. Data from Bempton was this year restricted to a single plot due to the closure of Grandstand viewpoint.

Razorbill: Four plots were monitored this year, with 113 chicks successfully fledging from a total of 251 AOS. The mean productivity of 0.43 chicks fledged per pair is the lowest value recorded since 2009. Heavy predation on at least two plots is likely to be a significant factor in this result. It is also worth noting that this year's sample size was significantly smaller than usual due to the loss of two plots at Grandstand.

Gannet whole colony count

A whole colony boat count for Gannets was carried out again in 2024. This year the colony held 15,794 AOS, an increase of 561 AOS on the 2023 count of 15,233 AON (Figure 2). A minimum of 1,951 non-breeding birds were also present. Despite the impact of HPAI, the colony has grown by 21.6% since 2022. However, the rate of growth is not equal across the colony. Growth rates in the Staple Newk area, which prior to HPAI was the hub of the colony with the highest densities of nesting birds, have declined significantly. This contrasts with increasingly higher growth rates in the size of the colony northwards from Staple Newk.

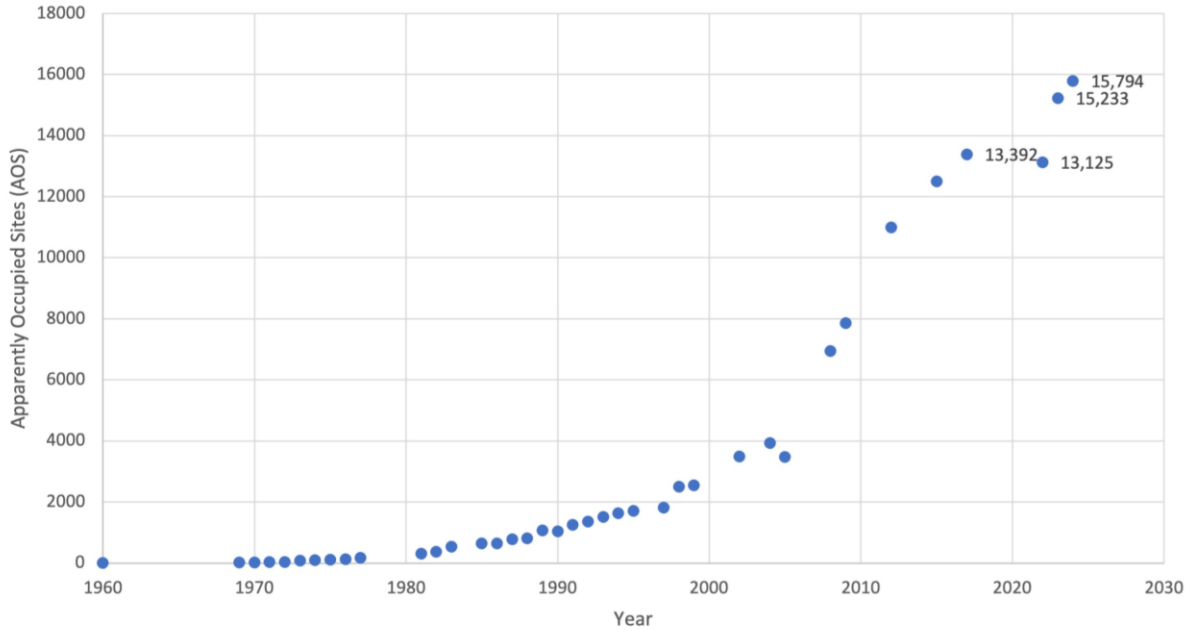

Figure 2. Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) breeding population trend for the Flamborough and Filey Coast SPA colony (Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs colony) 1960-2024

Shetland

Will Miles and Roger Riddington (SOTEAG), Jen Clark, Aidan Doherty and Mike Pennington (NatureScot), Kevin Kelly (RSPB) and Sheila Gear (Foula Ranger Service).

This summary includes key results up to the end of August.

The 2024 seabird breeding season was one of the worst on record, with decreases in breeding numbers and very low productivity recorded in multiple species at multiple sites. Unusually late breeding, abnormal asynchrony in the timing of egg laying, and high numbers of 'loafing' non-breeding adults were also observed, particularly in **Guillemots** and **Razorbills**. The cause of these events is uncertain, but a possible explanation is that many adult seabirds returned to Shetland in poor breeding condition, following extremely unstable and severe weather and sea conditions through the winter (for the third consecutive year). Thankfully, there was no evidence of unusually high seabird death rates attributable to bird flu this breeding season, at any of the beached birds monitoring sites or at any of the annual population and productivity monitoring sites (to date, the only positive cases of bird flu have been one **Herring Gull** on Noss and one **Great Skua** (*Stercorarius skua*) on Fair Isle). However, the dramatic impacts of the 2022 bird flu pandemic on breeding Great Skuas and **Gannets** were still in evidence in 2024.

Great Skua population monitoring on Noss recorded 80 AOT (Apparently Occupied Territories), an increase on the count of 69 in 2023, but still way down on the most recent count made prior to bird flu of 476 in 2018. Similarly, at Hermaness, the number of AOT had increased from 208 in 2023 to 228 this year, but the most recent count before bird flu was 956 in 2018. On Foula, population plot counts revealed a continuing decrease, from 277 AOT in 2015 to 66 in 2023, down to 42 in 2024. Great Skua productivity in 2024 was low on Noss at 0.11 chicks fledged per AOT (0.23 in 2023), very low on Foula at 0.09, and low at Hermaness at 0.17, although this was very similar to the recent Hermaness average.

Gannet population monitoring at the sample sites at Hermaness showed an overall increase of 3% since 2022. The largest increases were seen at the Hermaness Hill stacks (+11%) and at the Neap to Saito site (+7%), but numbers had continued to decline at Muckle Flugga skerries (-10%). Gannet productivity remained low at Hermaness, at no higher than 0.49 chicks fledged per AON (August assessment), which is lower than in any year other than 2022 during the bird flu pandemic.

Fulmar numbers had decreased on Noss and at all four of the annual monitoring sites across Mainland Shetland and Yell in comparison with 2023; a very unusual phenomenon, especially given recent trends of increase or stability (e.g., Figure 1).

Productivity at these five sites was very similar to last year and generally remained stable, but at Hermaness productivity was higher than in any year since 2019.

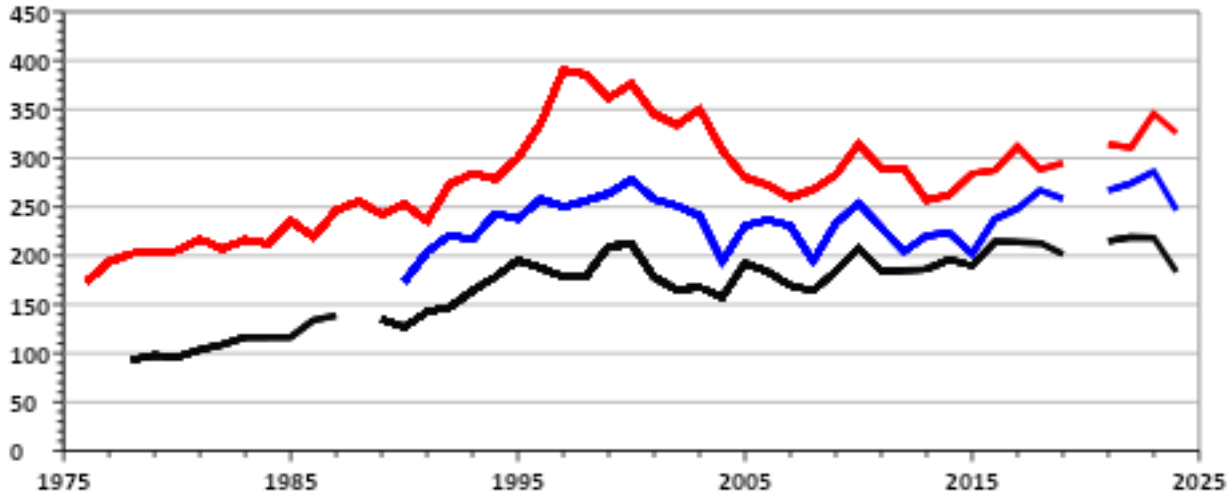

Figure 1. Mean population counts of Fulmar AOS at Eshaness (red), Sumburgh (blue) and Burravoe (black), 1976–2024. Unusually, in 2024, a comparatively large decrease in AOS occurred at all three of these sites. (Data for 2020 are lacking due to Covid.)

On Noss, the first full island census of **Storm Petrels** since 2018 found 35 'call-responding' nest sites, compared with 23 in 2018. On Mousa, Storm Petrel studies in 2024 included blood sampling to assess bird flu immunity and tracking adults to determine flying heights.

Numbers of nesting **Kittiwakes** had increased around southeast Yell (54 AON in 2024 cf. 46 AON in 2023) and in south Mainland Shetland (174 cf. 155), but numbers had decreased at Noss (77 cf. 86) and Fetlar (54 cf. 64). Productivity was about average at Burravoe on Yell (0.60 chicks fledged per AON), but low at Hermaness (0.35), Eshaness (0.17) and Noss (0.10), and exceptionally low at Sumburgh (0.05), Foula (0.04), Burra (0) and Dalsetter (0).

Breeding numbers of **Arctic Terns** (*Sterna paradisaea*) on Noss had decreased from 92 AON in 2023 to 39 this year, although adults that were clearly not nesting were often in attendance this year. Productivity was low at 0.13 chicks fledged per AON, but had increased since 2023, when many chicks died from bird flu. Huge post-breeding flocks gathered on Noss in late July, peaking at 300 birds; an exceptionally high number for the island. On Foula, Arctic Terns were very late to lay and a flush count on 19th July gave a total of 207 adults (c.200 in 2023 in mid-June). On Mousa, a total of c.175 adult birds were recorded on territory (cf. 400 in 2022), with a count of 18 fledged birds (minimum) carried out later than intended due to weather restrictions. Ad hoc observations suggested that nesting attempts were relatively few, and productivity low also at most of the main tern colonies around Mainland Shetland and further north on Yell, although in general seabird colonies seemed to fare worst in the south.

It was generally a very poor year for nesting **Shags**. Numbers had substantially decreased at Noss (74 AOT in 2024 cf. 121 AOT in 2023), No Ness (75 cf. 166), southeast Mainland Shetland (89 cf. 422) and Sumburgh Head (67 cf. 131), and were low at the monitoring plots at Hermaness (just 21 AOT). However, at the plots on Foula, numbers had increased slightly (35 in 2024 cf. 29 in 2023). Shag productivity in 2024 (assessed in August) was low at both Burravoe (0.94 chicks fledged per incubated nest cf. 1.35 in 2023) and Sumburgh (0.28 cf. 1.10).

Guillemot numbers at Hermaness, Noss, all four of the annual monitoring sites across Mainland Shetland and Yell, and on Foula, had decreased in comparison with the most recent counts. Such a widespread, simultaneous decrease in numbers across the monitored colonies is very unusual, although at most sites decreases were small. It was clearly a very odd year for Guillemots, with late colony-return, late egg laying (e.g., Figure 2), asynchronous egg laying, and high 'loafing' and non-breeding observed at several colonies. At the Sumburgh Guillemot productivity monitoring plot, just 60 pairs apparently laid (normally well over 100),

laying was late and erratic, just six chicks fledged, and productivity was exceptionally low (0.10 chicks fledged per laying pair in 2024 cf. 0.48 in 2023). Most breeding attempts at the Sumburgh plot failed quickly at the egg stage, and as the season progressed there were so few chicks that annual chick diet monitoring was not possible.

Razorbill numbers were similar to 2023 at Eshaness but had decreased at Sumburgh, Burravoe and Troswick Ness. Very unusually, Razorbill productivity at Sumburgh was zero (cf. 0.14 in 2023 and 0.59 in 2022). There were few breeding attempts at Sumburgh in 2024, all failed very quickly at the egg stage, and there was high non-breeding there this year, with many adults seen loafing ashore and at sea throughout the season.

Population counts of **Black Guillemots** (*Cepphus grylle*) showed numbers had decreased at six of the annual monitoring sites around Shetland but increased at three since 2023. Ad hoc observations of fledged juveniles inshore around Shetland in August indicated that productivity may have been high in 2024.

Figure 2. Guillemot at Sumburgh laying an egg, the first seen in Shetland in 2024, on the unusually late date of 14th May. This photo shows the typical laying posture. The body is highly tensed and held upright, the wings are pressed slightly open, and the diameter of the cloaca greatly expands as the huge egg slowly descends out onto the bare rock.

Photo: Will Miles

Isles of Scilly

Hester Odgers

Annet (main sample site for majority of species)
Figure 1 shows the numbers of AONs since 2015 on Annet. In this table we can see **Great Black-backed Gulls** have continued to decline since 2019 (now 138 AON, down from 151 AON in 2023), with **Fulmars** also continuing to decline, the population now at its lowest recorded level (30 AON) since 2000. The **Storm Petrel** population at our regular study beach was an estimated 29 AON, a drop from 2022's estimate of 132.

On the positive side, the **Shag** population has slightly recovered since last year's record low of 53 AON, up to 88 AON this year, and 11 **Common Tern** (*Sterna Hirundo*) pairs nested (the first time they are known to have nested here since 2021), but the breeding success was unknown.

St Agnes & Gugh
The **Lesser Black-backed Gull** colony on Gugh has remained reasonably stable at around 400 AON since 2013. There was a drop in **Manx Shearwater** numbers (Fig. 2) but this is largely due to the high response rate (and therefore low correction factor) calculated from this year's calibration survey on St Agnes.

A Storm Petrel playback survey carried out at Burnt Island, St Agnes, suggests the population of around 40 remains stable since 2023. The **Kittiwake** colony produced 11 fledged chicks from 22 nests, the highest productivity seen at this colony since 2010.

Year	SH	GBBG	LBBG	HG	RAZ	FUL	COT	SP*	MX*
2015	85	235	1	20	5	57	2	778	229
2016	86	215	1	16	6	41	14	(106)	-
2017	74	222	7	12	5	41	27	(132)	-
2018	81	170	6	19	0	46	0	(175)	(30)
2019	103	199	19	10	2	46	0	(338)	(30)
2020	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021	106	184	7	8	1	39	18	-	(29)
2022	98	188	5	17	4	37	0	(132)	-
2023	53	151	5	5	3	47	0	n/a	n/a
2024	88	138	18	10	4	30	11	(29)	(26)

Figure 1. Breeding populations (AON) on Annet since 2015.
() indicate estimated AON obtained by applying correction factor to replies received.

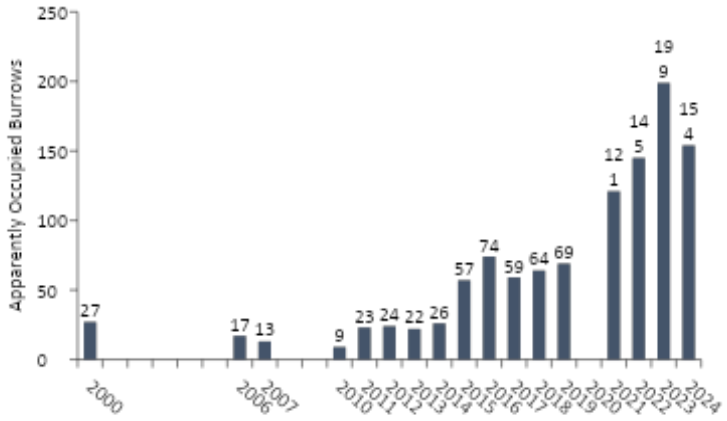

Figure 2. Manx Shearwater population (corrected AON) on St Agnes and Gugh since 2000.

Round Island & St Helen's

Storm Petrel counts from Round Island are down from 105 AON last year to 17 this year. This may be related to a rat incursion that occurred at some point between August and December 2024 (the island was subsequently re-cleared of rats). There was a drop in the estimated Manx Shearwater population of Round Island from 96 in 2023 to 62 in 2024, but this is again partially due to the low correction factor used for all Manx Shearwater surveys on Scilly this year.

A survey of the Manx Shearwater population of St Helen's found an estimated 89 pairs, and it is not known whether any chicks were successfully fledged (given the rat population was dramatically reduced over winter during an attempted eradication, but not completely eradicated).

Other

Fulmars on two sub-colonies (Menawethan and The Daymark) showed productivity is at its lowest since 2021 (at 0.11 and 0.18 respectively). The recent low productivity levels possibly partly explain the drop in breeding population of 16% since 2015 across Scilly.

Seabirder Spotlight

Seabirder Spotlight aims to illuminate the variety of career paths and roles available to aspiring seabirders. Contributors are asked a range of standard questions about their careers, for example on what their current job involves, what aspects they love about their work and what skills have been important to cultivate on their journey. In particular, we hope that the contributions from members of the seabird community will inspire and motivate people in their early careers to work with seabirds.

Sabiya Sheikh – PhD student at University of Exeter

Hello, I am Sabiya, and I study seabird foraging and diet in relation to prey distributions in the southwest of the UK as part of my PhD.

Growing up in a landlocked town in Central India, I had never even seen a seabird till I was in my late teens, let alone thought about working with them. I first worked with seabirds right after I finished my undergraduate degree when I interned at a seabird rehabilitation centre in Cape Town. That experience was so incredible because it not only gave my hands-on exposure to working with seabirds, but also helped me develop a keen interest in seabird conservation. I was hooked.

Upon returning to India, I sought opportunities to work with seabirds in India but quickly realised how scarce jobs and information in this field were. I soon did an MSc in Wild Animal Biology and lined up opportunities to do some seabird fieldwork the following summer. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted those plans. Still determined to work on seabird related research, I volunteered on 'Project Puffin' with The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) where I identified, counted, and measured fish carried by puffins using photographic data from across the UK. This introduced me to one of the innovative methods being used to study seabird diets.

During this time, I also, along with a couple of colleagues, established the Indian Seabird Group. Since then, our team has grown significantly, and we have undertaken a range of initiatives. These include hosting webinars, creating educational posters about

seabird strandings, and moderating online groups to facilitate the reporting of seabird sightings and strandings. Through these activities, we are hoping to build a stronger network for seabird conservation and research in India.

Before I started my PhD, I worked on various conservation projects across India that were unrelated to seabirds. These experiences helped me gain a range of valuable transferable skills, such as organising fieldwork and writing donor reports, that I use very frequently in my current role. I believe these experiences have equipped me well to take on a PhD that demands a high level of independence.

I feel very lucky to be able to work on such an exciting project that aims to map seabird and forage fish interactions using a multi-method approach to inform conservation strategies in the Isles of Scilly. My favourite part about my PhD project is conducting fieldwork to study at-sea movement of seabirds in one of the most beautiful places in the UK. Fieldwork is very demanding, but it energizes me and keeps me motivated especially during the long, gloomy English winter while I am processing data and writing.

Looking ahead, I hope to continue working on seabird movement ecology after completing my PhD, with the aim to expand my research to the Indian subcontinent.

Seabird Paper Roundup

Jacqui Glencross, ECR Representative

Seabird Paper Roundup is a section included to help Early Career Researchers promote any recent seabird papers they have produced. We hope this can help highlight some of the amazing work that is being undertaken across our community, whilst highlighting work to those of you who may not be aware of it yet.

ECR PAPERS

Edney, A.J., Danielsen, J., Descamps, S., Jónsson, J.E., Owen, E., Merkel, F., Stefánsson, R.A., Wood, M.J., Jessopp, M.J. and Hart, T., 2025. Using citizen science image analysis to measure seabird phenology. *Ibis*, *167*(1): 56-72.

> This study investigated the use of citizen science image analysis for monitoring Black-legged kittiwake phenology across large spatial scales. Time-lapse cameras collected >200,000 images between 2014 and 2023, across 11 colonies (range 51.7°N–78.9°N), with >35,000 volunteers 'tagging' kittiwakes in these images. They found that citizen science analysis was comparable to manual analysis by a researcher, and that kittiwake colony arrival was 2.6 days later and departure was 1.2 days later per 1° increase in latitude. Most volunteers (81%) classified images for only a single day, and each volunteer classified a median of five images, suggesting that high volunteer recruitment rates are important for the project's continued success.

Siddiqi-Davies, K., Wynn, J., Padget, O., Bond, S., Danielsen, J., Fayet, A.L., Fisher-Reeves, L., Freeman, R., Gillies, N., Kirk, H. and Maurice, L., 2024. Night flight facilitates late breeding catch-up in a long-distance migratory seabird. *Scientific Reports*, *14*(1): 31792.

> The authors were interested in understanding whether late-breeding Manx Shearwaters who go on to depart later from the breeding grounds are able to 'catch up' on migration. The study found that later breeders had shorter breeding periods, and during migration flew more at night, using moonlit nights for visual guidance. These birds therefore had shorter migrations with less stopovers, suggesting later individuals are able to catch up on migration and arrive more promptly at the over-wintering grounds in the Patagonian shelf.

Appoo, J., Graham, N.A., Jones, C.W., Jaquemet, S. and Bunbury, N., 2024. Seabird nutrient subsidy alters size and resource use of functionally important mangrove macroinvertebrates. *Ecosphere*, *15*(12): e70121.

> How does nutrient-rich guano from seabirds nesting in mangroves influence the mangrove food web? This study explores the trophic responses of mangrove gastropods and crabs to seabird-driven nutrient enrichment at Aldabra Atoll, Seychelles.

Saldanha, S., Militão, T., Cox, S.L., Llamas-Cano, I., Dinis, H.A., Gomes, I.S., Lopes, A., dos Santos, M., Brito, V., Hernández-Montero, M. and González-Solís, J., 2025. The effect of seasonality on the foraging behaviour and breeding success of a tropical marine top predator. *Progress in Oceanography*, 103413.

Seabird Group News

New ExComm members

The Seabird Group is wishing a warm welcome to our new Executive Committee members. Our Treasurer, Seabird Editor, Assistant Newsletter Editor, Social Media Manager and Equality and Diversity Officer all departed at the November AGM. We would like to give a huge thank you to Ian Cleasby, Ruth Dunn, Kirsty Franklin, and Lila Buckingham for the invaluable contributions made to the work of The Seabird Group during your time on the committee. Our new committee members introduce themselves below:

Treasurer: Alice Edney

Alice Edney (she/her) is a final year PhD student at the University of Oxford researching the development of remote technologies to understand changes in seabird behaviour and ecology. She is a big advocate for citizen science and is happiest outside monitoring seabirds. Alice is currently the Treasurer of The Seabird Group where she is responsible for managing the group's accounts.
treasurer@seabirdgroup.org.uk
@aliceedney.bluesky.social

Seabird Editor: Ingrid Pollet

Ingrid Pollet (she/her) is a seabird ecologist collaborating closely with Environment and Climate Change Canada and Acadia University. She supervises students from Acadia University and Windsor University on diverse projects focusing on Leach's Storm Petrels. As Editor for Seabird, Ingrid works with the Assistant Editor and the broader team to produce high-quality Issues, aligning with The Seabird Group's mandate.

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Assistant Newsletter Editor: Debs Allbrook

Debs Allbrook is in her 3rd year of a PhD on Exeter's Cornwall campus, researching Black-legged Kittiwakes nesting on offshore oil and gas rigs. Previously she worked as a warden on Rockabill Island, monitoring and protecting a colony of Roseate Terns, and also studied anthropogenic disturbance to Northern Gannets on the Saltee Islands (both off Ireland). Her favourite seabird is the Black Guillemot! Passionate about writing and sharing science, Debs can't wait to help deliver the newsletter to the Seabird community.

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@debsallbrook.bsky.social

Social Media Manager: Eryn Shinnie

Eryn Shinnie is the Social Media Manager for The Seabird Group. Having grown up on the Isle of Skye, Eryn has constantly been around wildlife and seabirds, developing a passion for seabirds over the past few years. She has a great amount of knowledge in social media management and looks forward to bringing her skills to the role to help The Seabird Group continue to grow.

socialmedia@seabirdgroup.org.uk

Equality and Diversity Officer: Trina (Katrina) Siddiqi-Davies

Trina Siddiqi-Davies (she/her) was already part of the Executive Committee, doing a fantastic job as the Social Media Manager, so we are lucky to have her remaining with us as the new Equality and Diversity Officer. She is a third year PhD student at Oxford looking at the migration of Manx Shearwaters. Specifically, she is looking at long-term changes in winter foraging, exploring links between diet and behaviour, and investigating sex differences in pre-laying behaviour and what they might mean. Trina is the group's Social Media Manager where she updates our followers on The Seabird Group activities as well as sharing papers, grants, artwork and opportunities with the seabird community.

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Website: **www.seabirdgroup.org.uk**

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/pages/TheSeabirdGroup/

Twitter: **www.twitter.com/TheSeabirdGroup (@TheSeabirdGroup)**

Bluesky: **https://bsky.app/profile/theseabirdgroup.bsky.social (@theseabirdgroup.bsky.social)**

Registered charity No. 260907

The Seabird Group promotes and helps co-ordinate the study and conservation of seabirds. Members also receive the journal *Seabird*. The Group organises regular conferences and provides small grants towards research.

Current Seabird Group Committee

Chair	Alex Bond (2027)	chair@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Secretary	Andie McQuillan (2027)	secretary@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Treasurer	Alice Edney (2028)	treasurer@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Antoine Grissot (2026)	membership@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Seabird Editor	Ingrid Pollet (2028)	journal@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	Amy King (2026)	newsletter@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Website Officer	Amanda Mead (2027)	website@seabirdgroup.org.uk

Ordinary Members:

Assistant Newsletter Editor	Debs Allbrook (2028)	newsletter@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Seabird Assistant Editor	Katherine Booth Jones (2028)	journal@seabirdgroup.org.uk
ECR Representative	Jacqui Glencross (2026)	ecr@seabirdgroup.org.uk

Social Media Manager	Eryn Shrine (2028)	socialmedia@seabirdgroup.org.uk
EDI Officer	Trina (Katrina) Siddiqi-Davies (2028)	edi@seabirdgroup.org.uk

Current membership rates	
Ordinary	£30
Concession	£15
Institution	£50
Individual Life:	£350
Institution Life	£500

The Newsletter is published three times a year. The Editor welcomes articles from both members and non-members on issues relating to seabird research and conservation. We aim to provide a forum for readers' views so that those provided in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor or Seabird Group.

Submissions for the newsletter should be emailed to the newsletter editor: newsletter@seabirdgroup.org.uk. We recommend a maximum of 1500 words and ask that photographs and figures are sent as separate files and with full credits, where appropriate. **Deadlines are: 15th January (February edition); 15th May (June edition); and, 15th September (October edition).** Every effort is made to check the content of the material that we publish. It is not, however, always possible to check thoroughly every piece of information back to its original source as well as keeping news timely. If you have any concerns about any of the information or contacts provided, please contact the Newsletter Editor.