

FORTH ISLAND SEABIRD COUNTS 1990

RWJ Smith

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All counts are of nests or occupied sites except for those of Guillemot and Puffin which are of individual birds. Once again the RSPB has kindly provided the counts for Inchmickery. For many years now the counts have shown a general increase of most of our seabirds with perhaps a tendency to 'level off' recently. This year there is an obvious reversal of that trend with fewer breeding pairs of most species. Only Cormorant bucked the trend with some 40 extra nests counted. The East Lothian islands had their standard 235 nests while Carr Craig held a record 182. Last year we reached Carr Craig on a flimsy blown-up plastic boat launched from the Inchcolm ferry when it was near the island and we breathed a sigh of relief as, count completed, our bobbing cork was picked up by the ferry on its return journey. This year the local lifeboat did the honours and, for a donation to the service, we were safely landed on this awkward lump of rock, did our count and whizzed back in comfort to the mainland.

At Inchkeith we were able to get over courtesy of the 'Pride of Inchkeith'. This very fine boat runs most Sundays from Granton to Inchkeith carrying supplies to Mrs. Kathleen Allan who lives alone on the island looking after her animal home there. The Allandale Animal Sanctuary takes care of a large collection of dogs, cats, donkeys, ponies, a pig, goats and sheep. In spite of some initial anxieties about the possible effects of all these animals wandering around there is minimal disturbance to the large seabird population and that mainly confined to the large gulls. Before Mrs. Allan's residence there were several incidents involving youths throwing eggs and killing chicks so, on balance, things are undoubtedly better now.

Once again, the weather was kind to us and the landings were made with hardly a hitch. The main counts were completed by 4 June, a fortnight earlier than in 1989, and we may well have missed a few of the late nest starters. For instance, Fulmar and Puffin counts can involve some non-breeding birds and are possibly low. However, there is a definite drop of about 2.5% in the numbers of breeding Shags and around 10% in Kittiwakes. On Fidra one bay with several small cliffs had a nice group of about 40 Kittiwake nests in 1989. This year most of these nests had been repaired and lined with grasses and three nests even held a single egg but they had all been deserted obviously just when laying was beginning. The reason for this desertion became clear when we found a nest of Carrion crow with two tiny young in the middle of the colony. A crow's nest on Craigleith was less successful with the small young there found lying dead on the ground below the nest possibly caused by 'big gull' disturbance. Finally, although four pairs of Oystercatchers breed regularly on Fidra, a clutch of three eggs on the Lamb was a first for the island.

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	Craigleith	Lamb	Fidra	Eye-broughy	Inch-keith	Inch-mickery	Carr Craig
Fulmar	138	3	171		443	7	
Cormorant	116	80		49			182
Shag	522	290	116		19	28	23
Great B-b Gull	6		1+				
Lesser B-b Gull	x	5	x		x	950	
Herring Gull	x	x	x	50	x		41
Kittiwake	850	187	598		556		
Common Tern						141	
Roseate Tern						0	
Sandwich Tern						418	
Razorbill	60	33	75		60		
Guillemot	1570 bds	2400	89		70 bds		
Puffin	550 bds	c5	150		700 bds		

x is present but uncounted.

Please note that the numbers in this table may not agree with those in the main Forth Seabird Group tables. In some years some islands were counted more than once. When this happened the Forth Seabird Group figures reflect the main count.