



Forth Seabird Group

Forth Islands Bird Report 2018

Compiled by Bill Bruce

February 2019

SEABIRD SPECIES SUMMARIES

Notes:

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

FULMAR

Last year the number of fulmar attempting to breed showed an increase (+14%) compared to the previous year. This year that increase has been more than reversed as numbers across most islands dropped (-17%). Inchgarvie is an important island for this species with numbers not far short of the much bigger islands of May Isle and Inchkeith. This island bucks the trend showing an increase (+9%).

CORMORANT

All islands showed a drop in breeding numbers this year, reversing last year's increases. Interestingly some of the birds that bred on Carr Craig last year moved to Haystack this year, the first to have bred there since 2008. Overall, numbers are up 11% compared to the average for the last 10 years.

SHAG

The Beast from the East storms in March washed out many nests causing birds to retreat to more sheltered cliffs eg St Abbs Head. Many birds then returned to relay but breeding numbers were down on most islands – overall down by 12%).

GANNET

No count this year however, reports suggest that only about 20% of pairs managed to hatch chicks compared to the more normal 50% to 60%.

EIDER

Not counted on all islands

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

This species continues to do well though the steep rise in numbers seen in recent years seems to have tailed off and we have only seen a 2% increase compared to last year.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

This species was not counted on all islands this year but where counts were done only Inchmickery and Inchgarvie showed increases. Overall breeding numbers are down 12% compared to the previous counts.

HERRING GULL

For the islands that were counted this year overall numbers were down by 9% compared to previous counts. Only Fidra showed an increase.

KITTIWAKE

This is another species that has struggled this year with overall drop of 23% in breeding numbers. Only Bass Rock showed an increase (+16%) though this is a notoriously difficult count as the accuracy very much depends on sea conditions.

COMMON & ARCTIC TERN

These species had a very difficult season with breeding attempt well down. Common tern numbers were down by 55% while arctic tern were down by 69%.

The new tern raft installed at Port Edgar by the RSPB attracted good numbers of common terns and they had a peak count of 11 AON however only 6 pairs were successful and they raised 13 chicks to fledging.

ROSEATE TERN

There were no reports of pairs of roseates attempting to breed.

SANDWICH TERN

No sandwich terns bred this year.

RAZORBILL

Compared to the other species, razorbill had a pretty good year with the all islands total down by only 1% compared to last year. Numbers are well up (+27%) on the average for the previous 10 years.

GUILLEMOT

Bass Rock and Craigleith were the only islands to show increased (both islands +7%) breeding numbers while all other islands showed decreases. Although overall numbers are down 18% this year's total is still up 2% on the 10 year average.

PUFFIN

Several burrow counts were carried out this year with Craigleith showing a decrease of 36%, Lamb an increase of 10% and Fidra a decrease of 5%. On Inchkeith we carried out the first burrow count for the main areas used by puffins and this gave a total of c1600 AOB for the island.

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