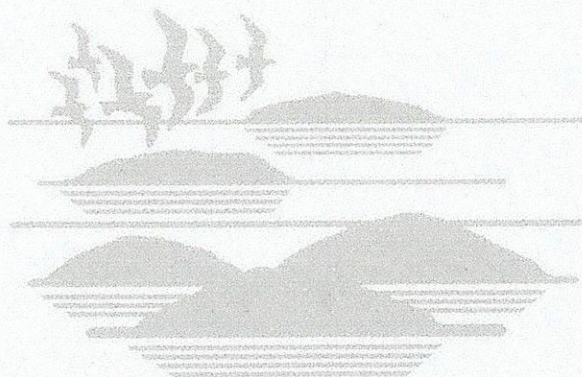


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Breeding Seabirds in Scilly - 1996

Terns, Kittiwakes and all species on Annet

All-island count of Shag nests



A report for

**The Isles of Scilly
Environmental Trust**

Will Wagstaff
Trust Conservation Officer

Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

Reference Library

BREEDING SEABIRDS ON SCILLY 1996

This year's programme was for an all island count of Shag nests. The continuation of the nest counts of Shag, Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Fulmar on Annet. A count of Cormorant nests in all colonies and the monitoring of the tern population. The Kittiwake population census was continued by P Robinson. New this year was the Storm Petrel census techniques study on Annet by P Robinson for RSPB.

FULMAR

A total of 143 birds on apparently used nests were counted in Western and Norrard Rocks plus Round Island, Men-a-vaur and Daymark, St Martin's. This continues the increase noted on past surveys. The 1987 all island total was 91+ pairs. Several islands where Fulmar are known to breed were not surveyed this year, so the true total is higher.

Annet	25
Mincarlo	15
Castle Bryher	7
Daymark, St Martin's	31
Samson	2
Men-a-vaur	20
Round Island	20
Gugh	1
Menawethan	22
TOTAL	143

MANX SHEARWATER

More than previously noted ashore on Round Island 18th June. Regular evening counts near Annet between the end of April and the end of August averaged 33.6 birds per trip. Peak count was of 200+ on 4th June. As in past years peak counts were in the late May to early July period. Used nest holes were again found on the Northern end of Bryher, on Shipman Head (24 AOS) and Shipman Head Down (7 AOS).

STORM PETREL

Small numbers were seen at dusk near Annet in flat calm conditions during the summer. {The study by P Robinson indicates an estimated 1600-2000 pairs on Annet . This figure needs confirming from him.} . Many responded very quickly to tape on West side of Gweal Hill, Bryher. Although there is still the possibility that these were breeding birds from the Northern Rocks.

CORMORANT

A total of 38 pairs were counted this year. This compares to 51 pairs in 1987 increasing to 61 in 1992. These colonies were not counted until late May / early June by which time many nests had been re-used by the later nesting Shags. Therefore the low nest count may well be as a result of the late date of survey.

Ragged Island	1
Great Innisvouls	14
Mincarlo	17
Melledgan	6
TOTAL	38

SHAG

A total of 725 nests were counted. This figure is well below the figure for the 1987 and 1983 surveys. Although some of the smaller islands were not surveyed this year, their numbers are not thought to be very significant. These islands contained 3% of the 1987 total and 6% of the 1983 total. Increasing the 1996 total by 3% results in a total of 747 nests. This total is still well below the 1987 figure of 1200 nests even taking into account the $\pm$ error of 100 that was given with the 1987 figures. The decline seems to be not confined to one area but spread over all islands. The only island with appreciable numbers that hasn't been affected is Annet. The count of 146 is only 14 less than the '87 figure, a fall of 9%. Gorregan has seen the largest fall with 250 noted in '87 decreasing to 68 in 1996, a fall of 73%. Mincarlo (56%) , Rosevear (43%) and Great Innisvouls (32%) have also shown similar large reductions in number of nests.

Shag Distribution on Scilly

ISLAND	'96	'87	'83
Annet	146	160	117
Melledgan	83	90	117
Gorregan	68	250	115
Rosevear	76	135	180
Rosevean	31	50	49
Great Crebewethan		4	4
Mincarlo	42	96	137
White Island (Samson)	25	3	0
Castle Bryher	16	19	32
Illiswilgig	30	41	45
Gweal	66	80	127
Scilly Rock	31	55	48
Seal Rock		1	0
Maiden Bower		4	5
Men-a-vaur	32	50	57
Menawethan	22	30	23
Great Innisvouls	57	84	94
Little Innisvouls		16	24
Great Ganinick		1	0
Little Ganinick		6	8
Ragged Island		23	32
Puffin Island		2	3
Shipman Head		0	6
Samson	1	0	0
TOTALS	725	1,200	1,223

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

An apparent almost total breeding failure was noted on Annet in both colonies. The number of nests on Annet was lower than in recent years (511 nests compared to 799 in 1992). Elsewhere breeding was much more successful.

HERRING GULL

The count of 31 nests on Annet was low, possibly due to their earlier nesting season and the late date of counting. Roof nesting was noted in Hugh Town for the second successive year. Unlike last year the one confirmed pair were unsuccessful with the success of a potential second pair unknown.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

The 102 nests counted on Annet is probably not a reliable figure as many young had already left the nest. This count was only a week later than last year but their breeding season seemed to be earlier. (124 pairs counted in 1995.)

KITTIWAKE

A total of 248 nests were counted by P Robinson on Gugh, Samson, Tresco and St Martin's. A decrease was noted on Samson with increases on Gugh and Tresco. Productivity was high as was also noted last year.

COMMON TERN

Successful breeding on Green Island (Samson) with 25-30 pairs noted. Five pairs bred successfully on Green Island (Tresco). The colony on Kallimay, St Agnes probably failed due to domestic cat predation / disturbance. Three pairs attempted breeding on Plumb Island, St Martin's and one pair on Tean.

ROSEATE TERN

No breeding. Only noted on seven dates in Spring between 27th April and 31st May. Returning birds noted from 5th July. Then seen on seven dates until last noted on 25th August. Max. 3 on 11th and 28th July.

GUILLEMOT

The only apparent change was of more birds noted at Men-a-vaur.

RAZORBILL

As above the only change noted was of more birds noted at Men-a-vaur than in past years.

PUFFIN

Regular counts offshore Annet and Mincarlo indicated no apparent changes. Counts at Men-a-vaur were slightly higher than in recent years.

RAT ERADICATION

The Rat Eradication programme continued this year. Re-baiting of Samson was undertaken during February using the existing boxes. Some of these had washed away during the severe easterly gales during the winter months.

During the summer 30 new lightweight plastic boxes and five large bait stations were obtained along with bait blocks and indicator blocks.

In December these new bait stations were used to replace the existing bait boxes and baiting sites as follows :-

Samson Two Large bait stations and eight bait boxes.

St Helen's One Large bait station and five bait boxes.

Menawethan Five bait boxes.

In addition two new islands were baited for the first time.

Great Innisvouls One Large bait station and six small bait boxes.

Northwethel One Large bait station and six small bait boxes.

The bait was contained in small plastic sachets making the process of re-baiting much safer and quicker. Therefore there are now five Large Bait stations and thirty bait boxes in use on five islands. Partial baiting was continued on Gugh in response to indications of Rat predation in the Kittiwake colony at the northern end of the island.