

SEABIRDS ON THE ISLES OF SCILLY

1997

**A REPORT FOR
THE ISLES OF SCILLY ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST**

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FULMAR

Although no formal survey was carried out on this species this year, it was thought that Fulmars are still doing well on Scilly. 25 sites were being used on Annet on 27th May.

MANX SHEARWATER

The bi-weekly counts of the evening assembly off Annet produced slightly higher counts than last year. The peak count was of 300+ on 3rd June, and 200+ noted on 21st July and 18th August. Five other counts of over 100 were obtained between 1st May and 25th August. A small group of eight was noted on the sea to the north of Round Island at dusk on 20th August, otherwise, small numbers were noted offshore throughout the summer.

STORM PETREL

Survey work assessing numbers present on Annet was done by PJR and Jon Haw. Small numbers were seen near Annet during July and August. Overnight ringing was achieved on Annet on 23rd July, and again on 12th August and on Round Island on 20th August.

CORMORANT

Ten nests were on Great Innisvoulis on 26th April, with two on Ragged Island on the same date. Nine nests were on Mincarlo on 6th May. The colony on Melledgan in the Western Rocks was not counted this year. This possibly indicates a further decrease from last year's figures.

SHAG

The only Shag population counted was that on Annet on 27th May. The total of 187 nests was an increase of 28% on last year's count. This was the highest count for this species on Annet.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

An all-island count was made on this species this year. This resulted in 3,050 pairs. A few islands were not reached but these produced only 5.9% of the 1987 total of 3,802 (plus or minus 350), so I do not think this results in a significant omission. There has been some decrease, but not as dramatic as at first feared. There have been some major shifts of population with increases on Gugh and St. Helen's for example, but decreases in the Eastern Isles and Tean. (See table).

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LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS (CONT)

The colour ringing project continued this year, although seven of the 100 rings broke during application. The source of this problem has now been found, so this should not happen again. Twenty nine were ringed on Annet (much easier to find than last year) and nine ringed on St. Helen's. Twenty five were ringed on Samson, thirty on Gugh. None were ringed on Tean as the colony failed after the gales of 26th June, so the extra rings were then used on Gugh. Small numbers of colour ringed birds are being seen in Portugal, and on the Atlantic seaboard of France. I am hopeful that we should start to see some of the ringed birds returning to Scilly next year.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL NESTS ON SCILLY

ISLAND	TOTALS FOR 1997	TOTALS IN 1987	TOTALS IN 1983	CHANGE FROM 1987
ST. MARTIN'S	n/c	66	61	
WHITE ISLAND	11	180	258	94% DECREASE
PERNAGIE	0	0	3	NO CHANGE
PLUMB ISLAND	0	1	0	INCREASE OF 1
MURR ROCK	0	0	1	NO CHANGE
GUTHERS	0	2	0	INCREASE OF 2
GREAT GANINICK	6	6	0	NO CHANGE
LITTLE GANINICK	0	0	25	NO CHANGE
LITTLE GANILLY	6	12	15	50% DECREASE
ARTHUR	8	7	25	+ 12.5%
NORNOUR	0	2	1	INCREASE OF 2
GREAT GANILLY	6	63	66	90.5% DECREASE
GREAT INNISVOULS	2	1	4	INCREASE OF 1
LITTLE INNISVOULS	2	0	0	INCREASE OF 2
MENAWETHAN	4	9	51	56% DECREASE
GUGH	1,032	244	159	INCREASE OF 788
ANNET	622	1,000	898	38% DECREASE
MELLEDGAN	n/c	0	1	
MINCARLO	n/c	0	1	
ILLISWILGIG	n/c	1	0	
MAIDEN BOWER	n/c	1	9	
SCILLY ROCK	n/c	0	33	
GWEAL	n/c	17	3	
WHITE ISLAND	n/c	64	34	
SAMSON	1,045	1,045	2,047	43% DECREASE
MERRICK IS. BRYHER	n/c	1	0	
SHIPMAN HEAD	n/c	58	71	
PUFFIN ISLAND	15	16	4	6% DECREASE
TRESCO	n/c	16	4	
NORTHWETHEL	12	54	80	78% DECREASE
ST. HELEN'S	223	77	133	INCREASE OF 146
TEAN/PEDNBROSE	44	58	64	24% DECREASE
HEDGE ROCK	0	1	0	INCREASE OF 1
ROUND ISLAND	12	5	0	INCREASE OF 7
MEN-A-VAUR	n/c	0	3	
TOTALS	3,050	3,802	4,054	

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HERRING GULL

No colony counts were made this year. Roof nesting was again attempted in Hugh Town.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

The only count on this species this year was of 105 nests on Annet on 27th May '97, a very similar figure to last year.

KITTIWAKE

per PJR. Productivity was up by about 2% this year overall with that on Gugh up by 20%. The small colony on the outer side of Shipman Head was washed off by the gales of 26th June. Again, as in other successful years, early nesting was a feature. Some 266 chicks and five adults were ringed.

ROSEATE TERN

Very few were noted this year. Two were seen off Bar Point, St. Mary's on 26th, 28th and 29th May. One was then reported from Tresco on 30th May. (This bird was written on the Bird News Board that day. At this time, very few Common Tern were about, so I feel this is an unsubstantiated record at best). Singles were then in the "Roads" on 20th and 27th July. Despite doing regular boat trips throughout the summer, I only saw one very worn adult (the bird on 27th July).

COMMON TERN

As in recent years, Common Terns were late arriving in any numbers and were highly mobile. The only settled colony was that on Green Island (Samson) where 30 pairs were present from 15th May until these were all removed by the strong Northerly gale on 26th June. This exceptional storm was worse than many of the winter gales we get. Some huge swells were generated which washed over many small and some not-so-small islands (e.g. Shipman Head, Bryher). After this gale, very few terns were present (e.g. five on 6th July) until migrants were noted - very worn-looking birds - on 13th July, when 60+ were between the islands.

Some other sites were occupied for a short period:-

Merrick Island.

Four birds were present on 1st June, with five birds present on 18th June. None subsequently.

Samson (North Hill)

Ten birds were defending the site on 10th and were airborne on 13th June, and again on 15th June. None noted subsequently.

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COMMON TERN (CONT)

<u>Foremans Island</u>	Nesting was noted (including eggs laid) by EN in 3rd week of June. None were present on 29th June after gale of 26th June. Although 110+ were nearby the next day, all were roosting at the water's edge.
<u>Tresco - Appletree Banks.</u>	50+ birds were over this old colony on 29th May, and 60+ again on 1st June, but none were around on 9th June.
<u>Tean</u>	Two pairs on 1st June, with 9 pairs on 15th and 5 pairs on 16th June. None on next visit on 29th June.
<u>Green Island (Tresco)</u>	Six birds were sitting on 15th June, with one present on 29th June, but none subsequently.
<u>Kalimay (St. Agnes)</u>	Four pairs were incubating 19th June, none seen on visits after gale of 26th June.

GUILLEMOT

No counts were made this year. Numbers feeding around the Islands appeared to be similar to past years. More young than usual were noted between the Islands during mid July.

RAZORBILL

No colony counts were made this year, although four eggs were found on Annet on 27th May. As last year, good numbers were around Men-a-Vaur all season.

PUFFIN

The monitoring of the evening flocks in the North East par of Annet saw less than ten birds per visit until 9th June when 45+ were counted. Between ten and 35+ were then noted until 14th July when three were present. Seven were noted on 17th with eleven on 21st. July. The last of the breeding season off Annet was noted on 29th July. As in past years, others were seen in the Western and Northern Rocks, and near St. Helen's and Men-a-Vaur. The numbers of birds near Mincarlo were again often higher than those counted at Annet. The last of the breeding season saw just one, near Mincarlo on 8th August.

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TERN ACTION PLAN

The area on the top of the South Hill on Samson was again fenced off. The model terns were placed to the west of the high point (PJR). During March, the area of bramble scrub on the lower edges of this site was cleared and removed. A band some four metres wide was created. It was felt that to make it any wider would mean that it would then include areas that the Lesser Black-backed Gulls were already nesting in, and therefore encourage them to spread into the tern nesting area rather than the reverse effect which was being looked for. The planned spraying of Bracken was not achieved this year due to the gale of 26th June where salt burned most of the exposed bracken, making spraying rather pointless. The only area that could have been done on Samson (that had been slightly sheltered) was not done due to the non-availability of boat and manpower on the arranged day. Subsequently, bad weather meant we had missed the available window of opportunity to spray Bracken.

RAT BAITING

Following the baiting trips last winter, the bait boxes were removed from Menawethan as no further sign of rats was noted. Although no signs were visible on Samson, it was thought further baiting was advisable. This was undertaken during October. A similar visit to St. Helen's found that evidence of rats was very strong around the Pest House. It was then decided to add a further four bait stations and re-bait all the existing stations. This was checked and re-baited during November when evidence of rats had increased dramatically. There are now eleven bait stations on the Island. Northwethal also some evidence of rats in two areas. All stations were refilled with other bait placed in holes apparently being used. This island was also re-baited during November, so that nine bait stations are now in use, although only one area still had signs of infestation. Some evidence of rats still on Great Innisvouls was found during October. This site was then re-baited.

WADERS

An all-island wader count was attempted on the weekend of 25th/26th January, 1997. All major islands except Annet, Tean and St. Helen's were counted. The idea behind this count was to determine the problems involved with such an undertaking prior to the national counts taking place this forthcoming winter, the Non Estuarine Wader Survey (NEWS). Despite a lot of volunteer and RSPB help, it was found that some areas take a lot longer to count than was first thought. This count included Gulls, Shags, Cormorants and wildfowl. Some of these species will not be counted in NEWS, thus speeding the counts, making it easier to get them completed in the time span involved. The total number of birds counted of all species was 6015 birds. Of these, Ringed Plover, Sanderling, and, possibly, Purple Sandpiper, make up more than 1% of the UK population. We will get a better idea of the status of our waders once the national figures have been published after this winter's count.