

Help us keep the Isles of Scilly special

The Isles of Scilly are famous for their internationally important wildlife and inspiring landscape. This rich heritage generates significant income from tourism, and is highly valued by islanders and by visitors.



©Joe Pender

Puffin—a very popular summer visitor to the uninhabited islands

Five things you can do to make a difference

- Report any signs of rats on the uninhabited islands, St Agnes and Gugh, or on your boat. Call 01720 422153.
- Avoid seabird colonies, keep dogs under close control and move away from birds showing signs of distress.
- Please follow restrictions on visiting the uninhabited islands as all are important for wildlife.
- Always dispose of waste properly and help keep our beaches clean - litter provides food and nesting material for rats as well as being a hazard for seabirds and other marine life.
- Become a 'seabird ambassador' as there are lots of exciting opportunities to get involved and learn new skills. Contact us at www.ios-seabirds.org.uk



We need YOUR help to protect our important seabird heritage

Together we can keep these islands 'rat-free'

Rats are the biggest threat to seabirds on land, please report any signs of rats on the uninhabited islands, St Agnes and Gugh, or on your boat. Call 01720 422153. For further information visit www.ios-seabirds.org.uk

The Project partners and supporters

- RSPB rspb.org.uk
- Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust www.ios-wildlifetrust.org.uk
- Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty www.ios-aonb.info
- Isles of Scilly Bird Group
- Natural England www.naturalengland.org.uk
- Duchy of Cornwall www.duchyofcornwall.org
- Treco Island www.tresco.co.uk
- Isles of Scilly Steamship Company www.islesofscilly-travel.co.uk



The RSPB is the country's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home.

RSPB is a registered charity in England and Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654

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Front cover: Manx shearwater ©Joe Pender.

2014



Your guide to the... Seabirds on the Isles of Scilly



THE ISLES OF SCILLY
SEABIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

Working with the local community and visitors on the Isles of Scilly to enhance their important seabird heritage



Why Scilly's seabirds are so special

The Isles of Scilly have one of Europe's most important populations of seabirds - some 20,000 breeding birds of 14 different species, from puffins to gulls. The archipelago's location makes Scilly the ideal home for seabirds, with many isolated and undisturbed islands for nesting, surrounded by rich seas for feeding.



Storm petrel

And some of these seabirds are really special: storm petrels breed nowhere else in England, and Lundy is the only other English island where Manx shearwaters breed. These two remarkable birds are members of the petrel family. They spend most of their lives far out to sea, performing astounding migrations across the oceans, only coming ashore to breed. The UK supports a significant proportion of the world's populations of these two seabird species.

In recognition of their value for seabirds, the Isles of Scilly are designated a Special Protection Area, part of a European-wide network of key wildlife sites called Natura 2000. Most of Scilly's important seabird colonies are also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and managed as nature reserves by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust. All seabirds, including gulls, are protected by law.

Scilly's seabirds are in trouble

Man has lived with seabirds on Scilly for thousands of years - evidence of Manx shearwaters was found in excavations of a site at Nornour dating back to 2000 BC. By the 13th century, seabirds were so important that they were used as currency - rents were paid in "pufons".



Manx shearwaters and razorbills

And there were vast numbers, perhaps 150,000 Manx shearwaters and tens of thousands of puffins.



Puffin

But the accidental introduction of brown rats to the islands spelt disaster for seabirds. These non-native predators eat the eggs and kill the chicks, especially of species that nest on the ground or in burrows.

There are now just 20,000 seabirds altogether on Scilly. Numbers continue to fall, with 25% of the islands' seabird population lost between 1983 and 2006 alone. We need to help seabirds to recover.

Action to restore Scilly's seabirds

The Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project is the largest community-supported island restoration project attempted in the world to date. The main aim is to protect the seabirds on Scilly by keeping St Agnes and Gugh and the uninhabited islands 'rat-free'.



Keeping the islands litter-free removes food and shelter for rats

A brighter future

The project involves many people helping to safeguard seabirds, and supports islanders to make the most of their seabird heritage, now and in the future. The project will also benefit other wildlife such as the Scilly shrew.



Boat trips to seabird colonies are important for Scilly's economy



Your guide to breeding seabirds on the Isles of Scilly

A great place for seabirds

The Isles of Scilly are home to 20,000 seabirds of 14 different species. They are a great place to enjoy the UK's spectacular seabird heritage.



St Agnes seen from Annet

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Seabird facts

- Storm petrels breed nowhere else in England. In 2006 there were 1,398 pairs on Scilly.
- In England, the Manx shearwater breeds only on Scilly and on Lundy. In 2006 there were 171 pairs on Scilly.

For more information, please contact us at www.ios-seabirds.org.uk or 01720 422153



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Manx shearwater

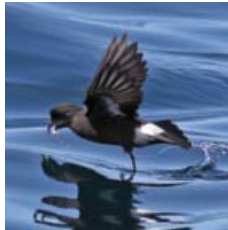
Black above and white below, they fly with rapid, stiff-winged flaps followed by long glides on slim, straight wings, occasionally 'shearing' over the sea. They breed mainly in the UK, coming to their nest burrows on offshore islands at night. Birds leave in August to winter at sea off Brazil and Argentina, returning in late February.



Manx shearwater

Storm petrel

Little bigger than a sparrow, they are all black with a white rump. They spend most of their life out of sight from land, fluttering over the water with V-shaped wings and feet pattering the waves. They breed on rat-free islands in the north east Atlantic, nesting in burrows.



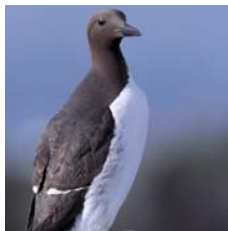
Storm petrel

Puffin, guillemot and razorbill (auks)

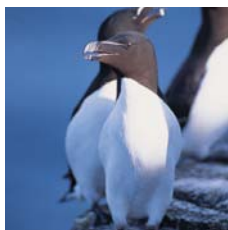
Boat trips between May and July to Annet, Mincarlo and Men-a-Vaur are the best way of seeing these auks. Look for dumpy, black and white birds that fly low with rapid beats from short wings – all can be identified year-round by bill shape. Razorbills have blunt, deep bills, while guillemots (which have browner plumage than the very black and white razorbills) have dagger-like bills. The smaller puffin has a colourful parrot-like bill in summer which is greyish in winter. Once present in their thousands, there were only about 170 pairs of puffins on the islands in 2006.



Puffin



Guillemot



Razorbill

Fulmar, kittiwake and common tern

Common terns, kittiwakes and the larger fulmars have silvery-grey upperparts and white underparts.

Fulmars have a characteristic stiff-winged flight. The kittiwake is our smallest breeding gull and can be distinguished by its call, black legs and small yellow bill. Common terns, known as sea swallows, are graceful, buoyant fliers and can be seen around the islands plunge-diving to catch fish. The common tern has a black cap and red bill with black tip.

Fulmars are increasing whilst both kittiwakes and common terns are declining on the islands.



Fulmar



Kittiwake



Common tern

Lesser black-backed, great black-backed and herring gulls

The colonial-nesting lesser black-backed gulls have slate grey backs and yellow feet. The similar sized herring gulls have silvery backs and wings with black tips and pink feet. Great black-backed gulls are larger, with black backs and pink feet. Use bird guides to identify the confusing brown plumages of younger birds.

All three of these gull species have declined over the last 25 years. Surveys in 2006 found the Isles of Scilly were internationally important for lesser black-backed gulls and nationally important for great black-backed gulls.



Lesser black-backed gull



Great black-backed gull



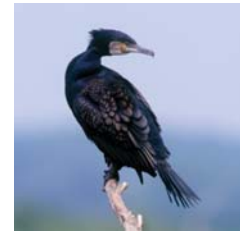
Herring gull

Shag and cormorant

Nowhere else in England can you enjoy the spectacle of large rafts of glossy green-black shags afloat between islands. Cormorants are less widespread and your best chance of spotting this larger bird is from a special boat trip when guides can help you spot the differences. Both species' populations have been fairly stable over the last 25 years.



Shag



Cormorant

Enjoy our amazing seabirds

- Take a guided boat trip to enjoy the seabird colonies, or a pelagic boat trip between April and September when most seabirds are here.
- Listen for the eerie calls of Manx shearwaters at night.
- Take a guided walk around the islands or go to a talk where experts can tell you more about the wildlife.
- Look for seabirds from the Scillonian III passenger ferry. Check the Steamship Company's website for sailings with wildlife guides on board at www.islesofscilly-travel.co.uk.

The Project is funded by LIFE, the EU's financial instrument for the environment, and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project is also supported by the Defra-backed Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

