



Seabirds on Land and Sea

Activities for Young Seabird Ambassadors

Introduction

The aim of this session is to take young people out to visit seabirds and see signs of seabirds. This activity has two parts, the first is spotting seabirds from a boat as we travel to another island (Puffins can only be seen from a boat as they nest on uninhabited islands), the second part is based on the land investigating coastal habitats and why the islands are so important to our 14 species of breeding seabirds.

This is a great activity any time between April and July as this is when most of the seabird species are breeding on the islands.

The project field teacher can offer you this activity (info@ios-seabirds.org.uk) but due to limited booking spaces you can use this resource to lead your youth group and explore the islands safely.

Use the seabird recovery ID leaflet to learn how identify and protect seabirds on Scilly. You can download the seabird leaflet from the project website here (<http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk/files/9513/9828/3652/IOSSRP-seabird-web1.pdf>) or pick one up from the tourist information centre on Scilly.

Learning Objectives

- Using the seabird leaflet learn to identify up to 14 species of breeding seabirds.
- Learn which seabird species nest in which coastal marine environment.
- Learn how not to disturb nesting seabirds.
- Learn why the Isles of Scilly are important for breeding seabirds, and why they are a 'Special Protection Area'.

Materials Required

- Outdoor clothing – in summer it gets hot on Scilly, so take a sunhat and suncream
- Binoculars or a camera if you have them
- Recording sheet. You can download the spring and summer ID sheet here http://ios-seabirds.org.uk/index.php/download_file/view/960/156/

Stay Safe

- Take plenty of water and suncream
- Don't go too close to the edge of cliffs
- Make sure everyone is wearing appropriate foot wear and remind people of areas with particular risk of falling (tree roots, wet leaves, slippery rocks).



Looking for Seabirds from a Boat

- If you are joined by a field teacher they will point out seabirds seen from the boat, but you and your group can easily spot feeding seabirds when out on a boat and use the seabird leaflet to ID them.
- Why not our how to use binoculars guide before you head out http://ios-seabirds.org.uk/index.php/download_file/view/970/156/
- Species to look for include:
 - * The largest breeding seabird in the UK – the Northern Gannet. They plunge dive in our coastal waters foraging for fish and are highly adapted to withstand the impact of diving.
 - * Puffins! They breed on the uninhabited islands and can be seen flying with their fast wingbeats out at sea. Your boat skipper will often alert you if they see puffins.
 - * Manx Shearwaters can be seen ‘shearing’ over the water between islands, particularly between St Marys and St Agnes. This species is one of the main species the project is protecting. In 2014 chicks successfully fledged from St Agnes and Gugh for the first time in living memory since the removal of brown rats in 2013.



How to Observe Natural Behaviour of Nesting Seabirds

- Now you have arrived on the island and seen seabirds at sea, it is time to look for seabirds and signs of seabirds nesting on land – **but we need to take care not to disturb them!**
- Move away from birds showing signs of distress. This can be birds alarm calling or some waders use the ‘broken wing display’ trying to use diversionary tactics to move you away from the nest.
- Watch where you are working for example ringed plover nests are well camouflaged!
- Avoid going into seabird colonies – you will always see more natural behaviour from a distance!
- Keep dogs under close control so that they don’t disturb birds.
- 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.



Which seabird lives in which habitat?

As you walk around the island look for the wonderful habitats in which our seabirds nest. Why do you think they have chosen these habitats? Back in the classroom learn more about their nesting behaviours from <http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk/seeing-seabirds/>

Cliff

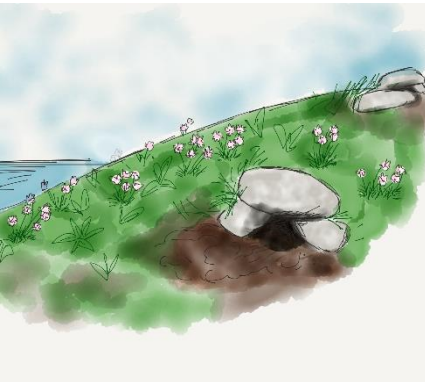
Here you may find – Kittiwakes, Fulmars and Guillemots



Burrows

Here you may find – Manx Shearwaters and Puffins

Burrows around the coast may not be made by rabbits as they could be made by Manx Shearwaters. During the day time adults are incubating eggs and chicks. Puffins live in burrows on uninhabited islands.



Hills and Grass land

Here you may find – Lesser Black Backed gulls, Great Black Backed Gulls and Herring Gulls



Ledges

Here you may find – Shags, Guillemots and Razorbills

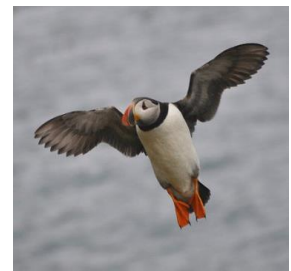
Look closely at uninhabited islands as many seabirds nest on the ledges.



Sea

Back on the boat keep looking for feeding and flying seabirds. Now you have seen where they nest look closely at any seabirds, are they carrying fish? Where are they heading? Within your group discuss how seabirds are perfectly adapted for land and sea.

Here you may find – Gannets (the UK's largest breeding seabirds) diving, Manx Shearwaters and Puffins flapping on fast wing beats, and any of the above species.



Did you know?

Storm petrels live far out at sea. Special boat trips are needed to see them, but other seabirds such as kittiwakes nest on the cliff sides on Scilly and can often be seen

What can you do for seabirds?

- Visit the website to find out about opportunities on the island to help the Seabird Recovery Project.

<http://www.ios-seabirds.org.uk/>

- Report and signs of rats on Agnes, Gugh or uninhabited islands by calling the number 01720 422153.

- Avoid seabird colonies.

- Keep dogs under close control.

- Dispose of waste properly and help keep beaches clean.

