

St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve

Seabird Report Summary for 2018

Whole Colony Counts

Species	Count Unit	2018 Total	Change on 2017	Comments
Shag	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	95	-25%	The lowest count on record. It represents 73% of the 10 year mean of 131 AON, and 42% of the 34 year mean of 226 AON.
Herring Gull	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	211	+13%	This represents 97% of the 10 year mean of 218 AON, and 65% of the 34 year mean of 327 AON.
Kittiwake	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	3,244	-32%	The second lowest count on record. It represents 80% of the 10 year mean of 4,043 AON, but just 34% of the 34 year mean of 9,403 AON.
Fulmar	Apparently occupied site (AOS)	77	-19%	The lowest count on record. It represents 60% of the 10 year mean of 128 AOS, and just 35% of the 34 year mean of 233 AOS.
Gannet	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	1	-67%	One AON, one egg laid but this was deserted.
Species	Count Unit	2018 Total	Change on 2013	Comments
Guillemot	Individuals (IND)	42,905	+30%	A significant increase on the quinquennial count of 2013, and the highest count on record.
Razorbill	Individuals (IND)	2,683	+45%	A significant increase on the quinquennial count of 2013, and the highest count on record.

Productivity

Species	Mean productivity in 2017 (chicks fledged/active nest)	Change on 2016	Comments
Guillemot	0.83	+ 2%	A slight increase on the 2017 figure of 0.81 chicks fledged per active nest.
Kittiwake	0.83	-19%	A decrease on last year but it represents 111% of the 10 year mean of 0.75 and 125% of the 32 year mean of 0.66 chicks fledged per active nest.
Shag	1.76	+21%	An increase on last year, it represents 107% of the 10 year mean of 1.64 and 133% of the 29 year mean of 1.32 chicks fledged per active nest.

Counts at Study Plots

Species	Count Unit	Sum of plot means in 2018	Change on 2017	Comments
Guillemot	Individuals	1,566	- 1%	A small decrease on last year but represents 102% of the 10 year mean of 1539 and 106% of the 35 year mean of 1475.
Razorbill	Individuals	157	+3%	A small increase on last year and represents 120% of the 10 year mean of 131 and 111% of the 35 year mean of 141.

Whole colony counts were carried out by Liza Cole, Lizy Smith, Chris Haines and Lindsay Mackinlay. Shag productivity by Lizy Smith, kittiwake productivity by Liza Cole and guillemot productivity by Chris Haines. Counts at guillemot and razorbill plots were carried out by Liza Cole.

Species Accounts

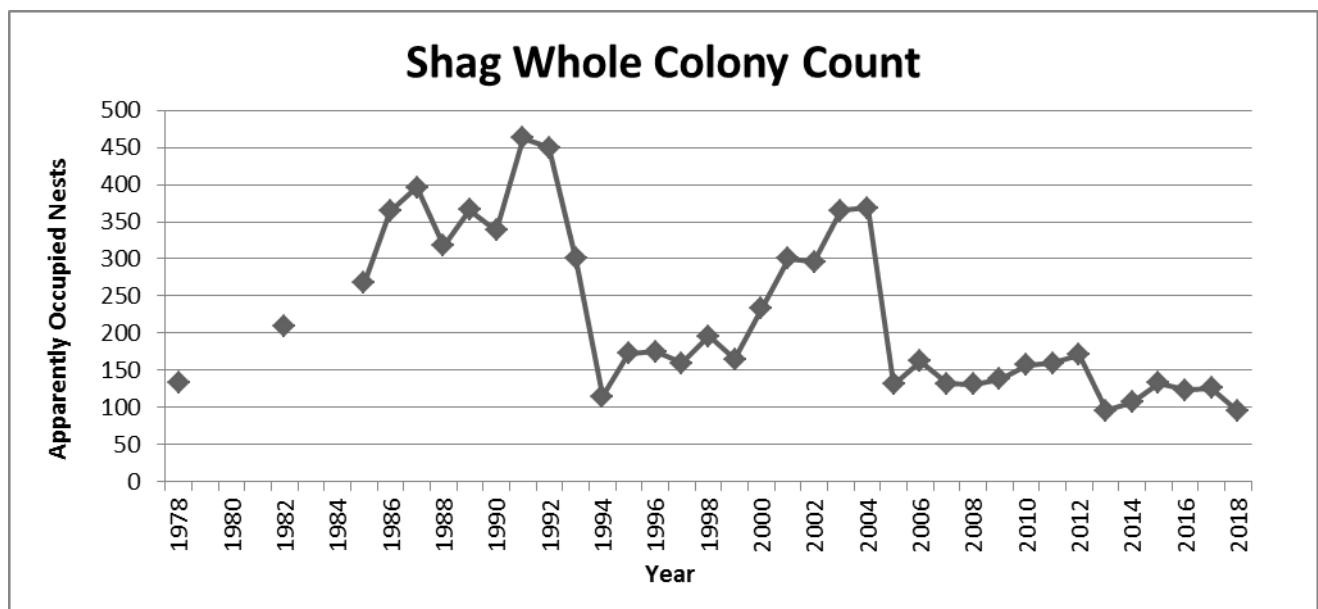
Shag

Whole Colony Count

A count of apparently occupied nests (AON ie a well-built nest capable of holding eggs with at least one bird in attendance) was carried out on 28th, 29th May and 2nd, 3rd and 12th June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 15th and 19th June.

Results

95 Apparently Occupied Nests (AON), a 25% decrease on 2017.



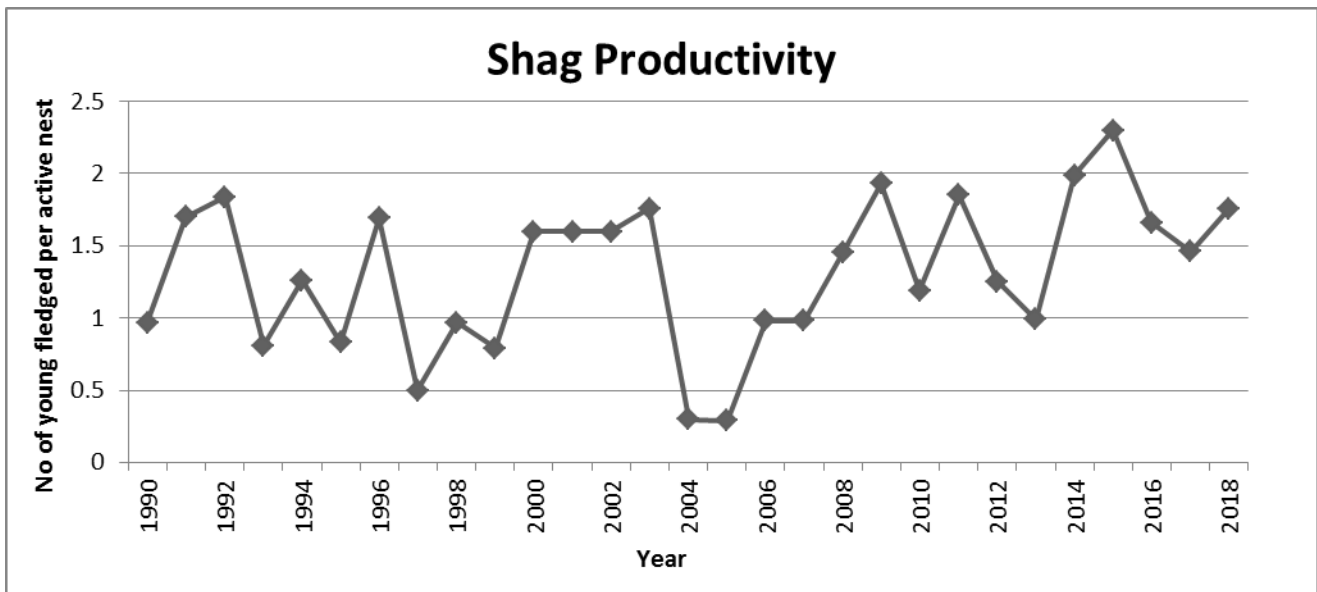
Breeding Success

An assessment of Shag breeding success was carried out using methods described in the 1990 report and following recommendations in the Seabird Monitoring Handbook. Twenty visits were made to the 4 monitoring plots between the 26th March and 28th August. Nests were individually marked on laminated photos of the monitoring plots and the progress of each nest was recorded up to fledging.

Results

A total of 43 active nests were mapped on the plots and 66 chicks successfully fledged. The breeding success, expressed as the mean of the individual plot figures, was 1.76 young fledged per active nest; an increase of 21% on 2017.

The productivity at the separate plots was as follows: West Hurker – 1.50; Downie’s Goats – 1.13; Foul Bay – 2.29; White Heugh – 2.14.



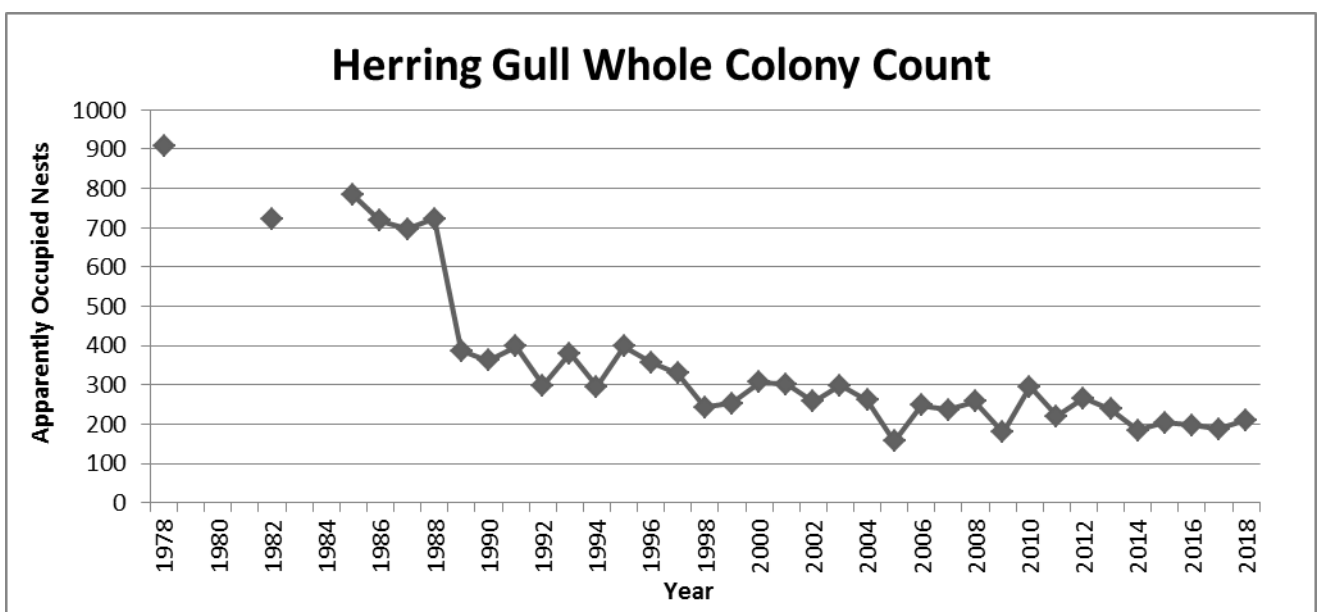
Herring Gull

Whole Colony Count

A whole colony count of apparently occupied nests (AON) was carried out on 28th and 29th May and 2nd and 3rd June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 15th June.

Results

211 AON, 13% increase on 2017.



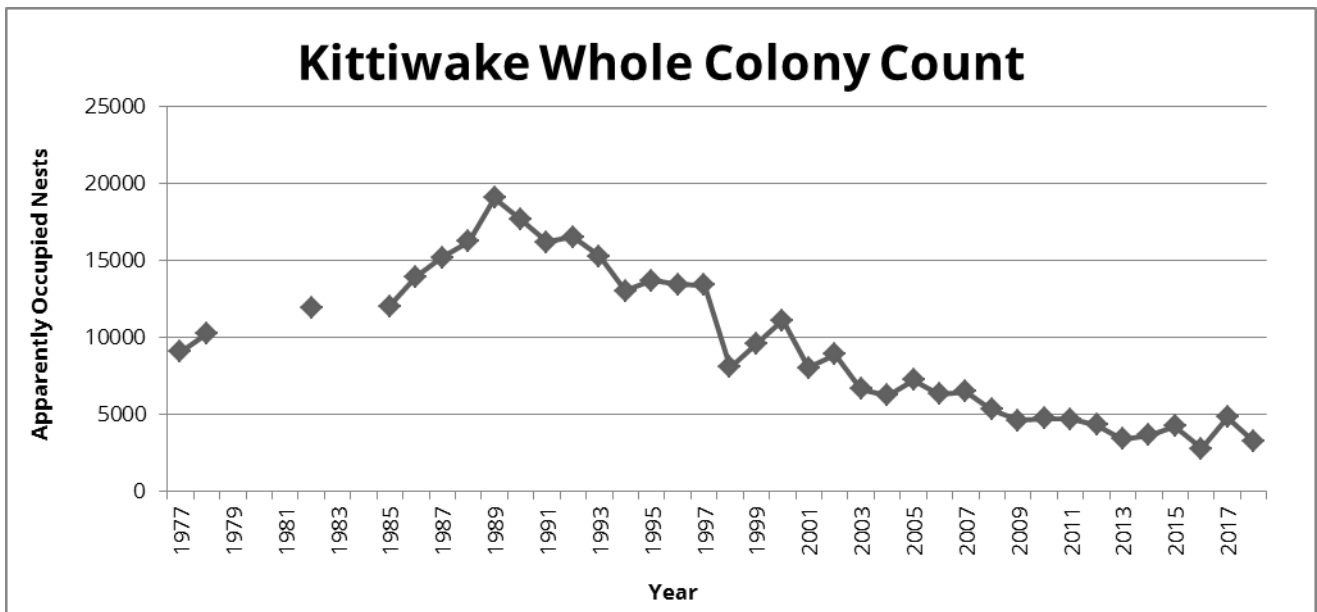
Kittiwake

Whole Colony Count

A count of apparently occupied nests (AONs) was carried out on 15th, 18th, 20th, 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th and 28th June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 15th June.

Results

3,244 AON, 32% decrease on 2017.



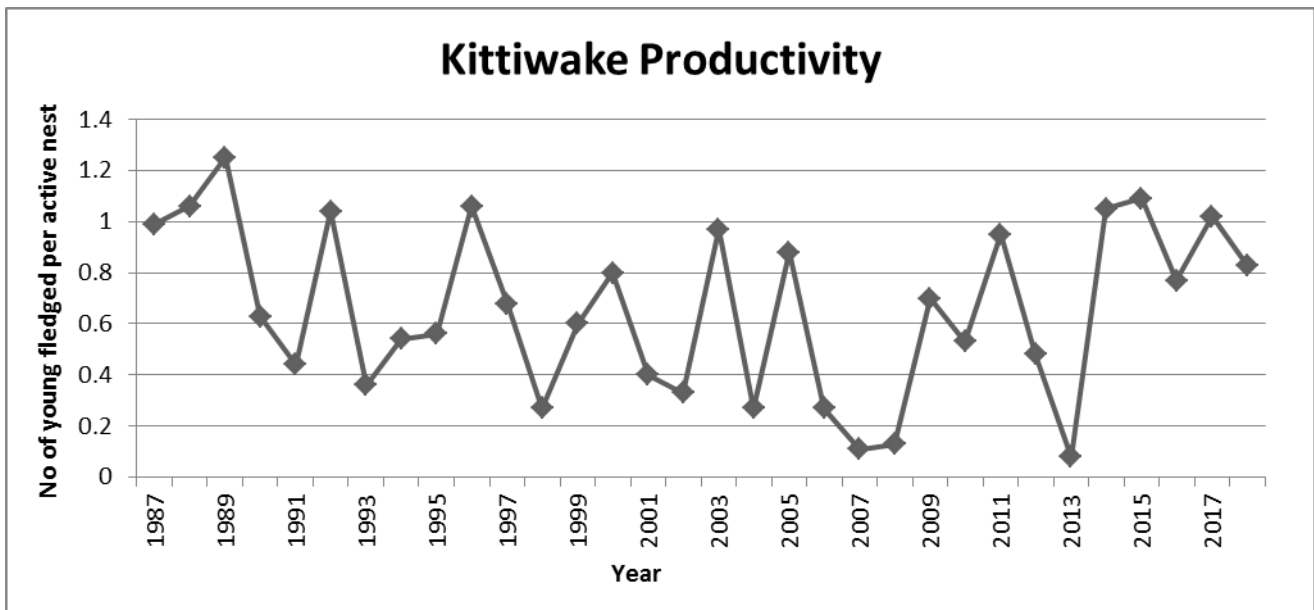
Breeding Success

An assessment of breeding success was carried out using methods described in the 1995 report following recommendations from the Seabird Monitoring Handbook. Eleven visits were made to the 3 monitoring plots between the 2nd June and the 9th August. Nests were individually marked on laminated photos of the monitoring plots and the progress of each nest was recorded up to fledging. Please note: because the number of nests in one plot (West Hurker) had dropped below the minimum number recommended in the Seabird Monitoring Handbook a new plot had to be substituted in its place. Because the colony is now so diminished, this was not selected randomly, rather it was a matter of finding an accessible location not too close to the other plots, where it was possible to see the contents of the nests (Cleaver Gully).

Results

A total of 172 active nests were mapped on the plots and 149 chicks successfully fledged. The breeding success, expressed as the mean of individual plot figures, was 0.83 young fledged per AON; a decrease of 19% on 2017.

The productivity at the separate plots was as follows: Hope's Heugh – 1.18; Headland Heugh – 0.88; Cleaver Gully – 0.44.



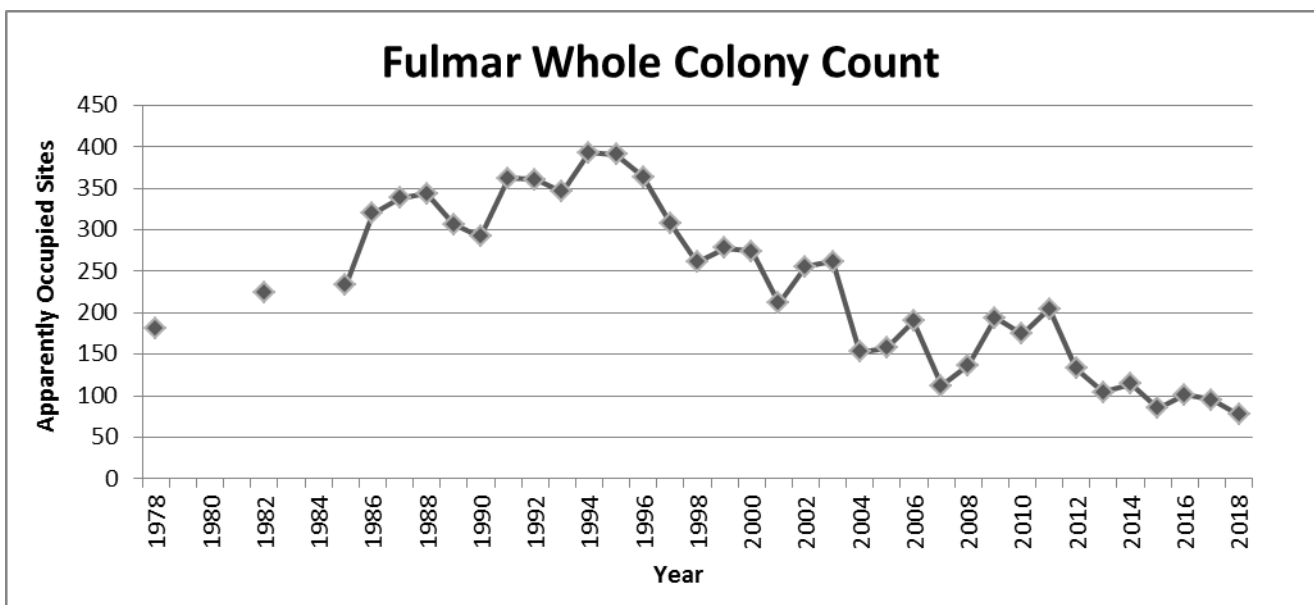
Fulmar

Whole colony count

A count of apparently occupied sites (AOS ie a site with a bird sitting tightly on a reasonably horizontal area judged large enough to hold an egg) was carried out from land on 18th, 20th, 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th and 28th June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 15th June.

Results

77 AOS were counted, a decrease of 19% on the 2017.



Breeding Success

No formal productivity monitoring done.

Gannet

This year only one pair of gannets made a breeding attempt, building a nest and laying an egg, but the attempt failed. However, many birds were recorded prospect the area, some settling on the same sea stack and performing courtship displays.

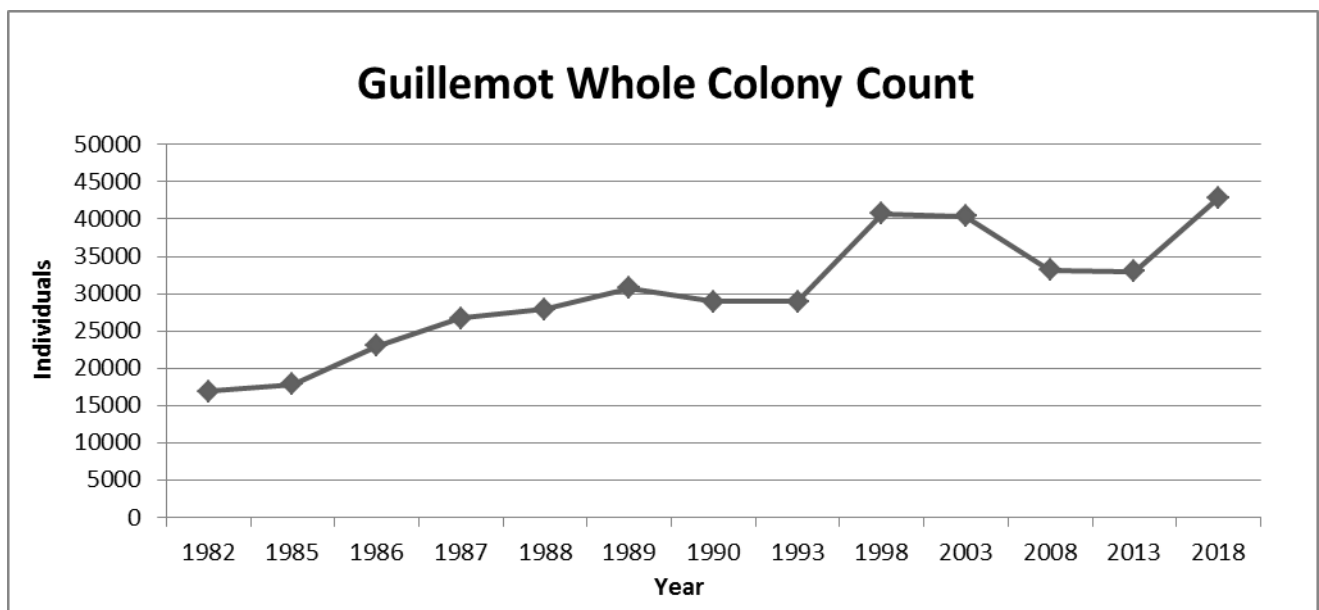
Guillemot

Guillemot Whole Colony Count

A whole colony count is carried out every 5 years so the last count was in 2013. Individual birds on ledges were counted between 4th and 30th June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 15th June.

Results

The count was 42,905 individuals, a 30% increase on 2013.

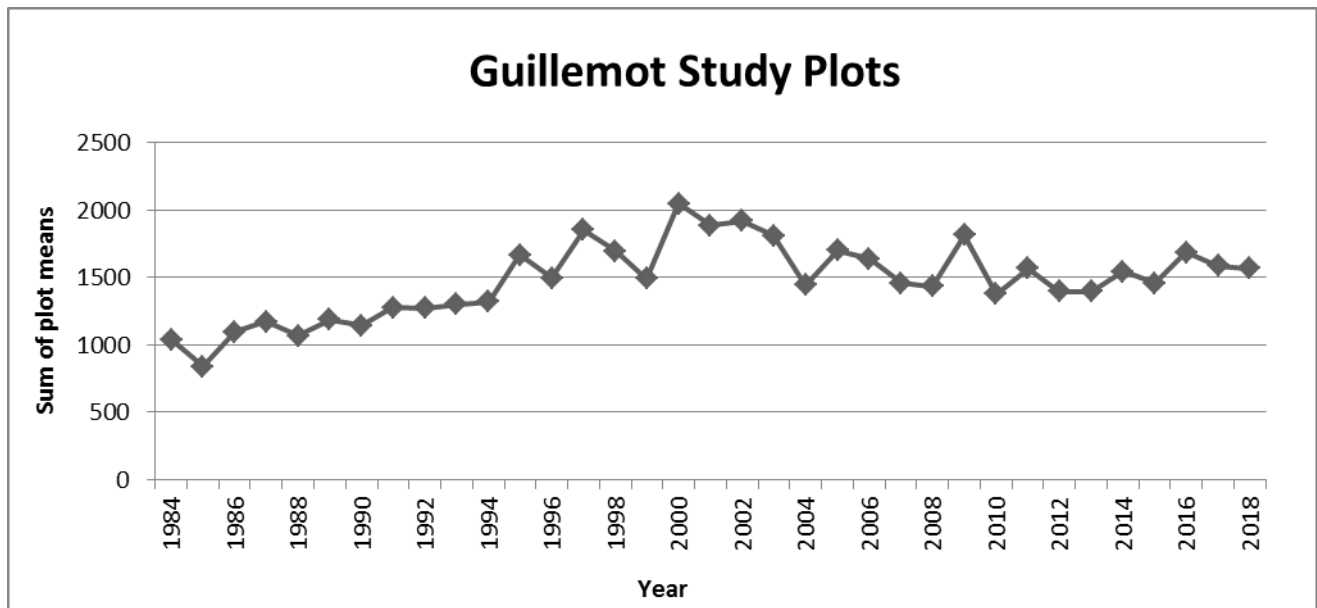


Counts at Study Plots

Nine counts of individual birds on ledges were carried out at each of the five plots between 2nd & 21st June.

Results

The mean number of individuals on study plots in first three weeks of June was 1,566, a 1% decrease on 2017.



Breeding success

An assessment of breeding success of guillemots was carried out for the 4th time this year. This was broadly following the method from the Seabird Monitoring Handbook with amendments suggested by Mike Harris (Co-author of the handbook) and Mark Newell (Isle of May). The protocol is described in the 2017 report. Approximately 50 Apparently Occupied Sites (AOS) were individually marked on photographs of each of the 2 monitoring plots selected, and 43 visits were made to observe progress at each AOS between 12th May and 11th July.

Results

A total of 138 active nest sites were monitored, of which 112 chicks successfully fledged. The breeding success, expressed as the mean of the individual plot figures, was 0.81 young fledged per active site.

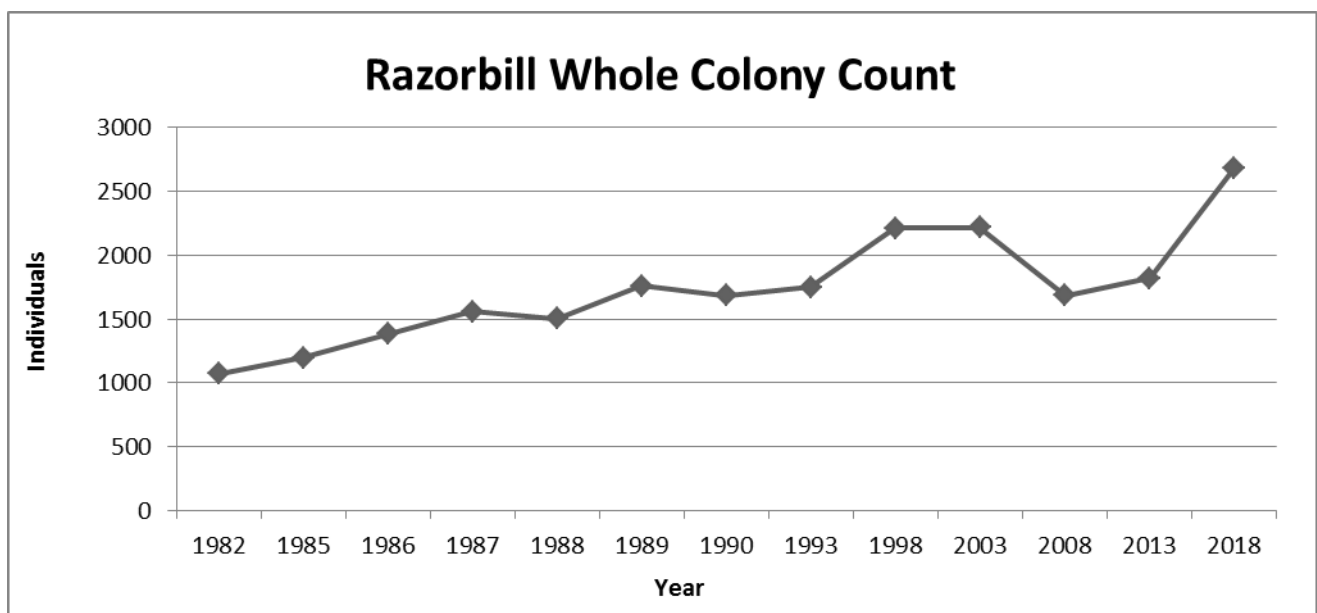
Razorbill

Razorbill Whole Colony Count

A whole colony count is carried out every 5 years so the last count was in 2013. Individual birds on ledges were counted between 4th and 30th June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 15th June.

Results

The count was 2,683 individuals, a 45% increase on 2013.

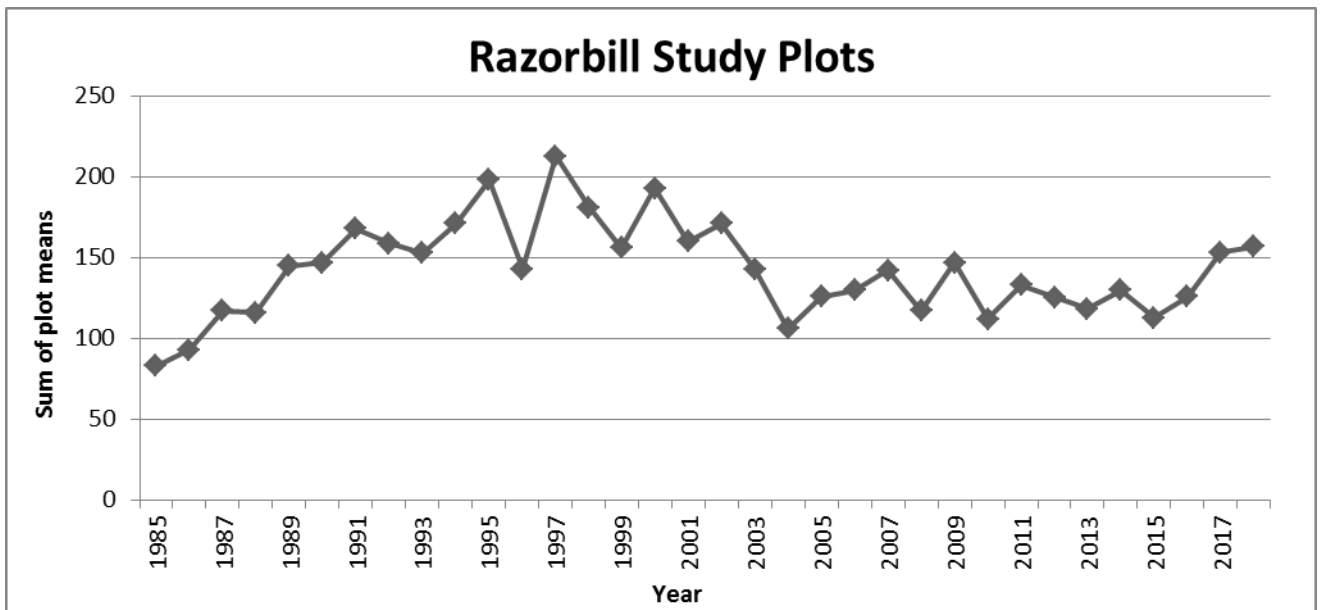


Counts at Study Plots

Nine counts of individual birds on ledges were carried out at each of the five plots between 2nd & 21st June (as for the guillemots).

Results

The mean number of individuals on study plots in first three weeks of June is 157, a 3% increase on 2017.



Breeding success

No monitoring of breeding success of razorbills took place this year.

Puffin

There were very few occasions when puffins were seen ashore this year. An evening count on 27th June recorded 2 birds ashore.

