

St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve

Seabird Report Summary for 2017

Whole Colony Counts

Species	Count Unit	2017 Total	Change on 2016	Comments
Shag	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	126	+2%	An increase on last year but the fourth lowest count on record. It represents 94% of the 10 year mean of 134 AON, and 55% of the 33 year mean of 230 AON.
Herring Gull	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	187	-5%	The fourth lowest count on record. It represents 84% of the 10 year mean of 223 AON, and 56% of the 33 year mean of 331 AON.
Kittiwake	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	4,803	+73%	A substantial increase on last year and the highest count since 2008. It represents 113% of the 10 year mean of 4,248 AON, but still just 50% of the 33 year mean of 9,590 AON. NB sea count estimated
Fulmar	Apparently occupied site (AOS)	95	-6%	The second lowest count on record. It represents 71% of the 10 year mean of 134 AOS, and just 40% of the 33 year mean of 238 AOS. NB sea count estimated
Gannet	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	3	+300%	Three AONs, one egg laid, one chick hatched but none fledged.

Productivity

Species	Mean productivity in 2017 (chicks fledged/active nest)	Change on 2016	Comments
Guillemot	0.81	+ 5%	A slight increase on the 2016 figure of 0.77 chicks fledged per active nest.
Kittiwake	1.02	+32%	An increase on last year and an above average figure. It represents 150% of the 10 year mean of 0.68 and 154% of the 31 year mean of 0.66 chicks fledged per active nest.

Shag	1.46	-22%	A second year of decline after the highest ever productivity in 2015. It represents 91% of the 10 year mean of 1.61 and 111% of the 28 year mean of 1.31 chicks fledged per active nest.
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Counts at Monitoring Plots

Species	Count Unit	Sum of plot means in 2017	Change on 2016	Comments
Guillemot	Individuals	1584	- 6%	A small decrease on last year and represents 104% of the 10 year mean of 1526 and 108% of the 34 year mean of 1473.
Razorbill	Individuals	153	+21%	An increase on last year and represents 120% of the 10 year mean of 127 and 109% of the 34 year mean of 140.

Whole colony counts were carried out by Liza Cole and Lizy Smith. Shag productivity by Lizy Smith, kittiwake productivity by Liza Cole and guillemot productivity by Zander Salmond. Counts at guillemot and razorbill plots were carried out by Liza Cole.

Species Accounts

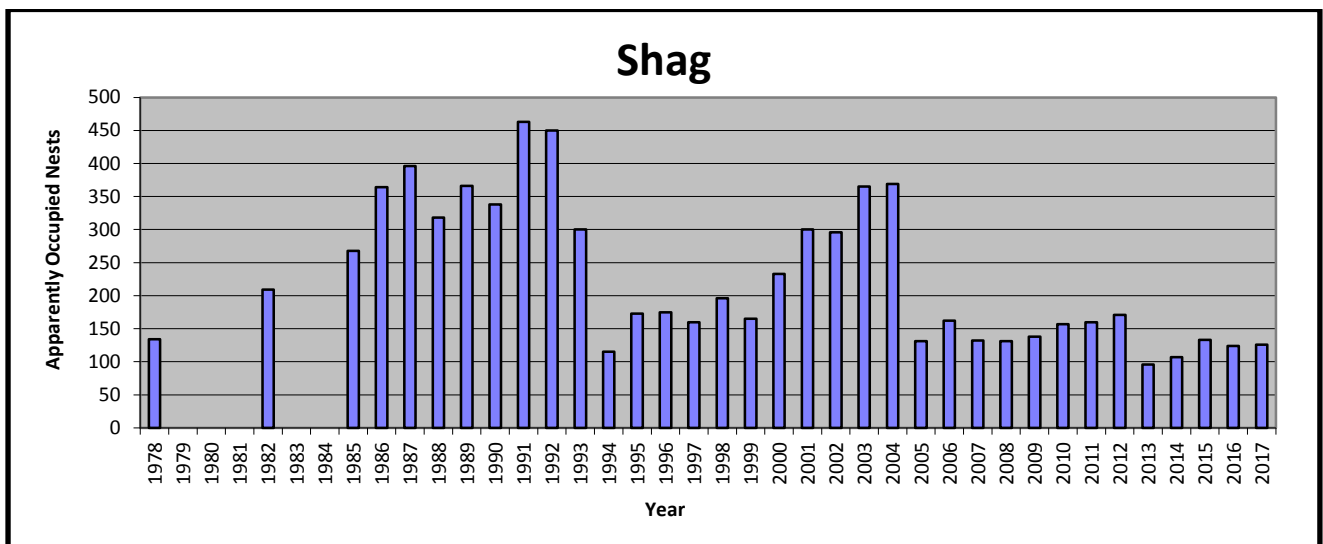
Shag

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 7th, 8th and 15th June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 13th June.

Results

126 Apparently Occupied Nests (AON), 2% increase on 2016.

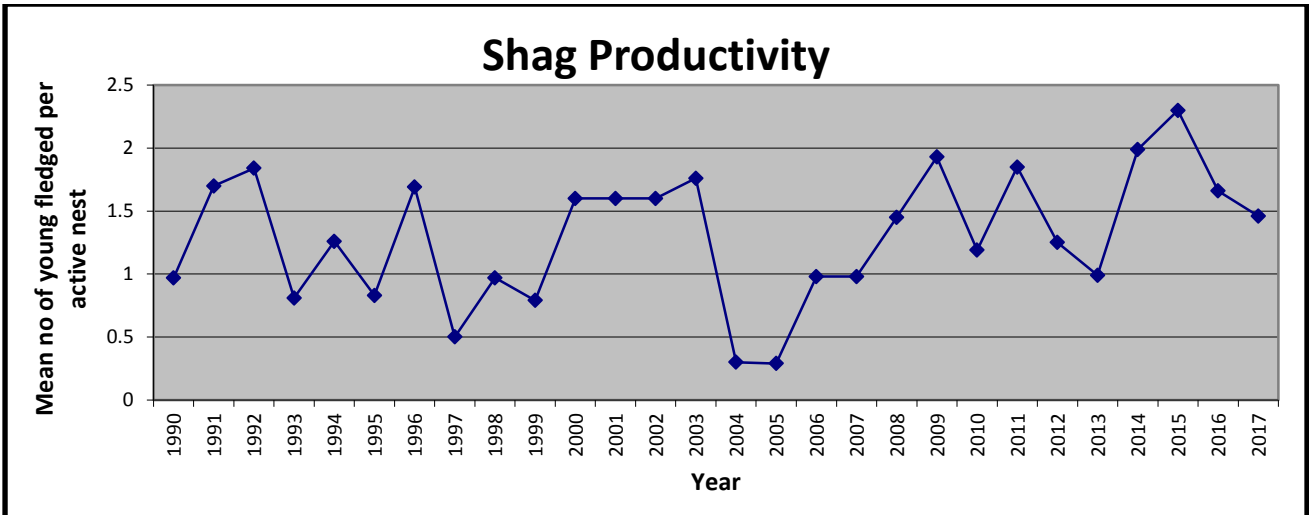


Breeding Success

An assessment of Shag breeding success was carried out using methods described in the 1990 report and following recommendations in the Seabird Monitoring Handbook. Nests were individually mapped on monitoring plots and 19 visits were made to the 4 monitoring plots between the 2nd April and 27th August to record the progress of each nest up to fledging.

Results

A total of 53 active nests were mapped on the plots and 67 chicks successfully fledged. The breeding success, expressed as the mean of the individual plot figures, was 1.46 young fledged per active nest; a decrease of 22% on 2016.



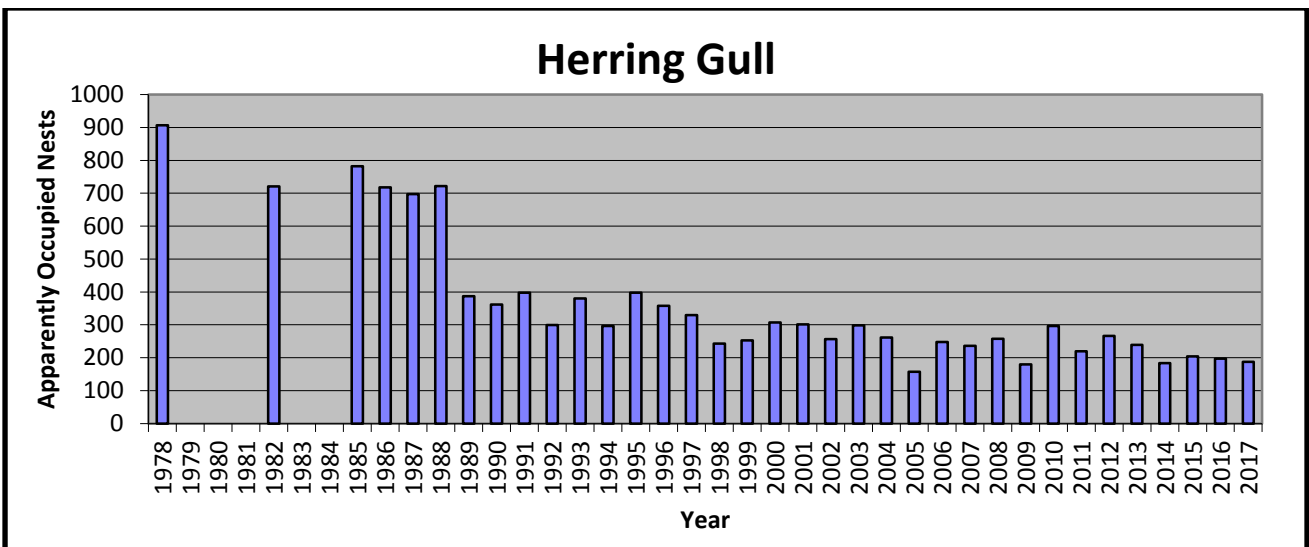
Herring Gull

Whole Colony Count

A whole colony count of apparently occupied nests (AON) was carried out on 7th, 8th and 15th June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 13th June.

Results

187 AON, 5% decrease on 2016.



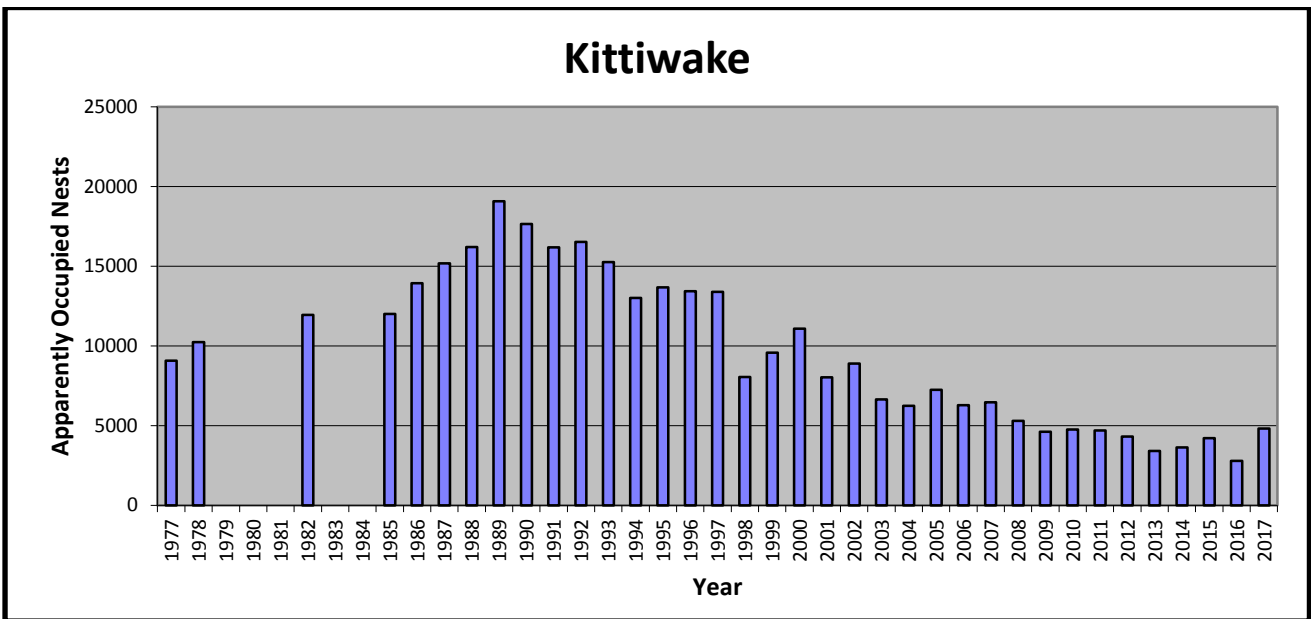
Kittiwake

Whole Colony Count

A count of apparently occupied nests (AONs) was carried out on 25th, 26th and 28th June and 3rd and 5th July. Inclement weather prevented us from counting blind spots from a boat so the number was estimated using last year's figures for land and sea counts.

Results

4,803 AON, 73% increase on 2016 (including estimated sea count).

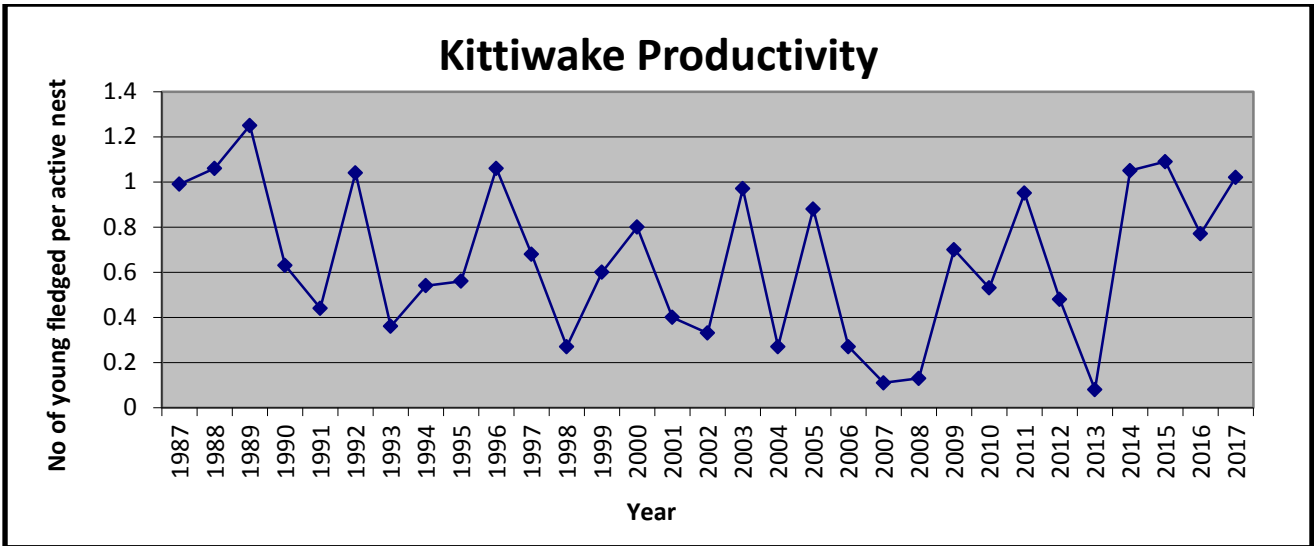


Breeding Success

An assessment of breeding success was carried out using methods described in the 1995 Report following recommendations from the Seabird Monitoring Handbook. Each of the plots was visited on 25th May when all nests were marked on laminated photographs of the plots, then again on 12 further occasions up to 8th August to check the progress of each nest up to fledging.

Results

A total of 199 active nests were mapped on the plots and 203 chicks successfully fledged. The breeding success, expressed as the mean of individual plot figures, was 1.02 young fledged per AON; an increase of 32% on 2016.



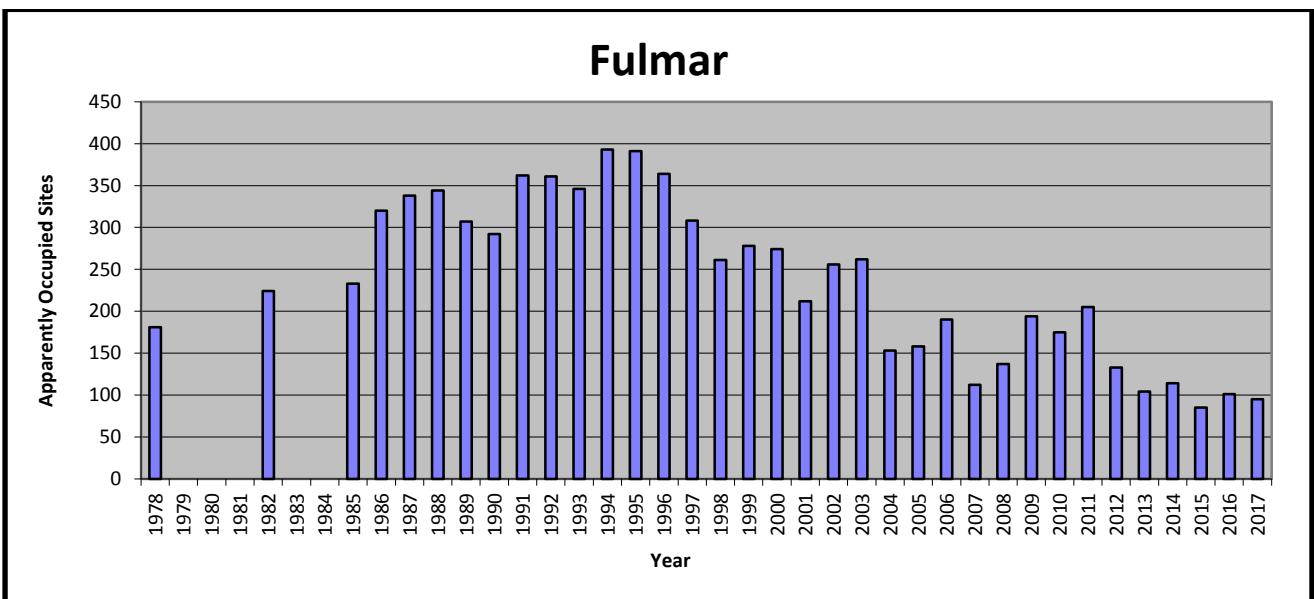
Fulmar

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 25th, 26th and 28th June and 3rd and 5th July. Inclement weather prevented us from counting blind spots from a boat so the number was estimated using last year's figures for land and sea counts.

Results

95 AOS were counted, a decrease of 6% on the 2016 (including estimated sea counts).



Breeding Success

No formal productivity monitoring done, but only 3 chicks fledged from the whole colony (no boat counts).

Gannet

This year we had the first ever record of a gannet laying an egg and hatching a chick at St Abb's Head. In mid May up to 70 birds were recorded prospecting Foul Carr. Three pairs settled and remained in situ until early July. Unfortunately, because of the location of the birds, it was only possible to confirm that one was sitting on a nest. However, because the other two pairs remained in situ for the nearly two months, it was assumed that they too were sitting on nests. On 22nd June an egg was spotted in the nest and on 7th July a chick was seen. The chick was last seen on 18th July, when the other two nesting sites had been deserted, and on 19th July the third (visible) nest was deserted also. Up to 50 birds were seen to prospect Foul Carr and Cleaver Rock in mid June and mid July so it will be interesting to see how many birds return and attempt to breed next year.

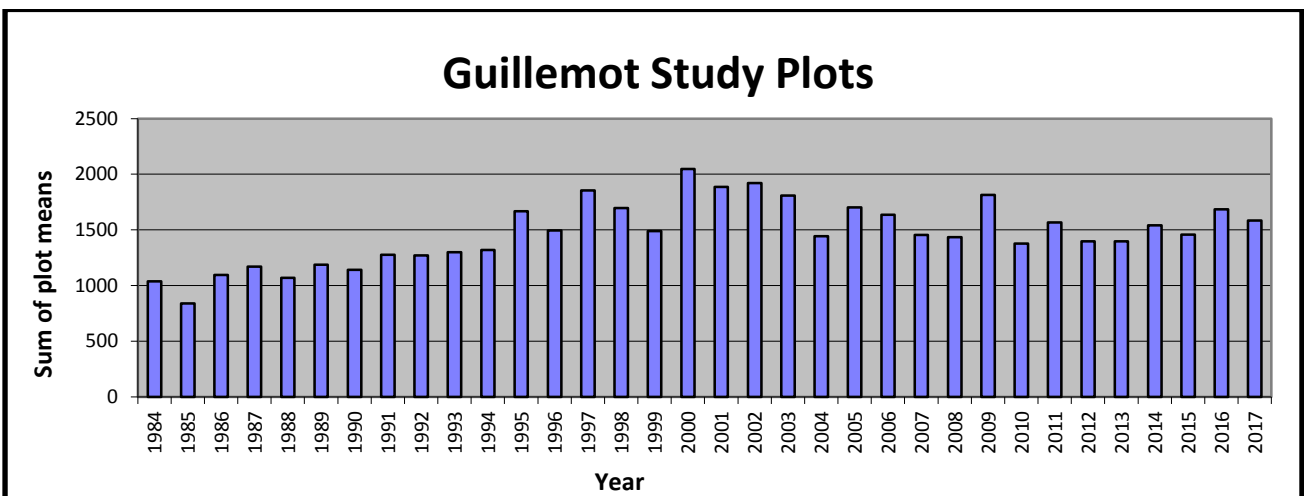
Guillemot

Counts at Monitoring Plots

Nine counts of individual birds on ledges were carried out at each of the five plots between 1st & 20th June.

Results

The mean number of individuals on study plots in first three weeks of June is 1,584, a 6% decrease on 2016.



Breeding success

An assessment of breeding success of guillemots was carried out for the third 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 42 visits were made to observe progress at each AOS between 9th May and 15th 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.

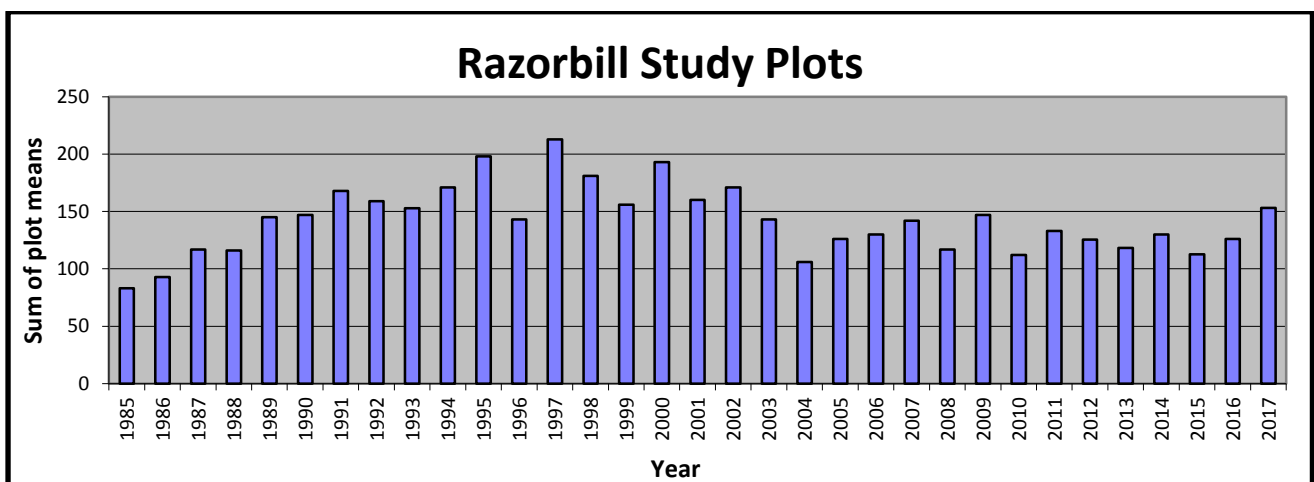
Razorbill

Counts at Monitoring Plots

Nine counts of individual birds on ledges were carried out at each of the five plots between 1st & 20th June (as for the guillemots).

Results

The mean number of individuals on study plots in first three weeks of June is 153, an 21% increase on 2016.



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 26th June recorded 0 birds ashore.

