

St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve

Seabird Report Summary for 2016

Whole Colony Counts

Species	Count Unit	2016 Total	Change on 2015	Comments
Fulmar	Apparently occupied site (AOS)	101	+9%	An increase on last year, but still a low count. It represents 74% of the 10 year mean of 136 AOS, and just 41% of the 32 year mean of 243 AOS.
Shag	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	124	-7%	The third lowest count on record. It represents 92% of the 10 year mean of 124 AON, and 53% of the 32 year mean of 233 AON.
Herring Gull	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	197	-4%	The third lowest count on record. It represents 86% of the 10 year mean of 228 AON, and 58% of the 32 year mean of 335 AON.
Kittiwake	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	2779	-34%	The lowest count on record. It represents 63% of the 10 year mean of 4,414 AON, and just 29% of the 32 year mean of 9,740 AON.
Gannet	Apparently occupied nest (AON)	1	N/A	First breeding attempt on record (not successful).

Productivity

Species	Mean productivity in 2016 (chicks fledged/active nest)	Change on 2015	Comments
Shag	1.66	-28%	A decrease on the last two years, but still above average. It represents 106% of the 10 year mean of 1.56 and 128% of the 27 year mean of 1.30 chicks fledged per active nest.
Kittiwake	0.77	-29%	A decrease on the last two years, but still above average. It represents 131% of the 10 year mean of 0.59 and 120% of the 30 year mean of 0.64 chicks fledged per active nest.

Guillemot	0.77	+ 13%	This is a 13% increase on the 2015 figure of 0.68 chicks fledged per active nest.
Razorbill	-	-	No productivity monitoring carried out this year.

Counts at Monitoring Plots

Species	Count Unit	Sum of plot means in 2016	Change on 2015	Comments
Guillemot	Individuals	1684	+15%	A small increase on last year and represents 111% of the 10 year mean of 1513 and 115% of the 33 year mean of 1469.
Razorbill	Individuals	126	+11%	A small increase on last year and represents 90% of the 10 year mean of 126 and 100% of the 33 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 Jill Grozier. Counts at guillemot and razorbill plots were carried out by Liza Cole.

Species Accounts

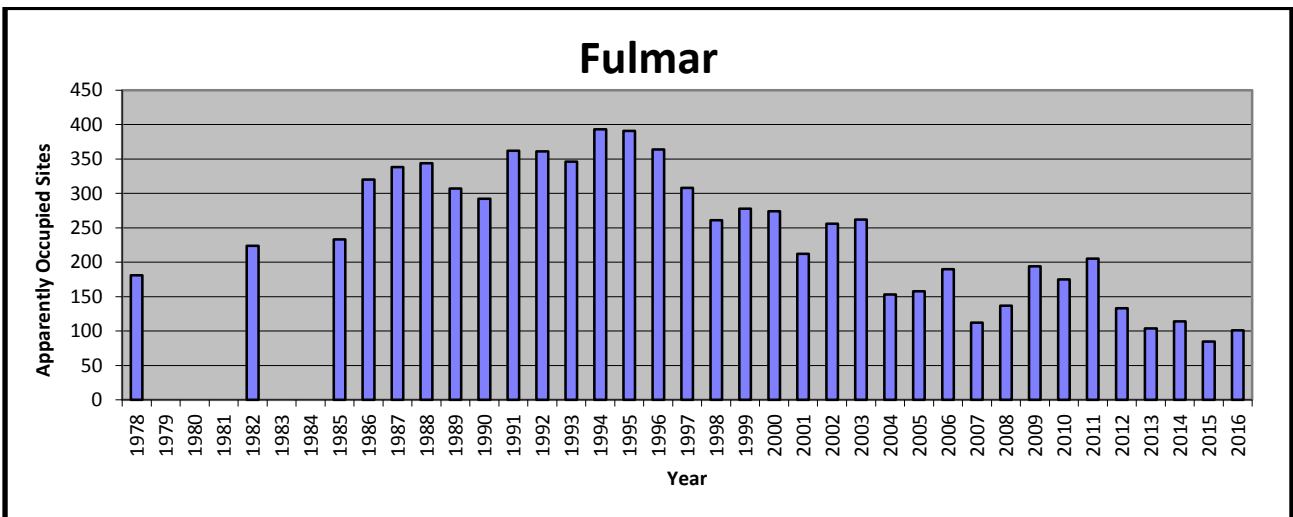
Fulmar

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 20th, 21st, and 22nd June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 23rd June.

Results

101 AOS were counted, an increase of 9% on the 2015.



Breeding Success

No formal productivity monitoring done, but only 6 chicks fledged from the whole colony (no boat counts).

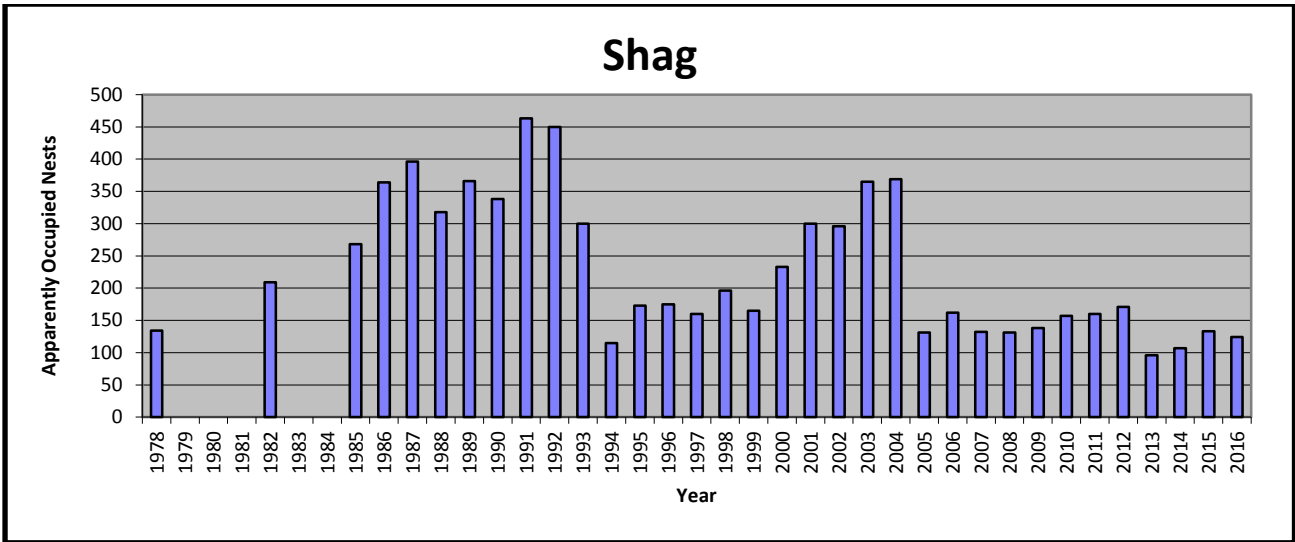
Shag

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 29th and 30th May and the 2nd and 6th June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 8th and 23rd June.

Results

124 Apparently Occupied Nests (AON), 7% decrease on 2015.

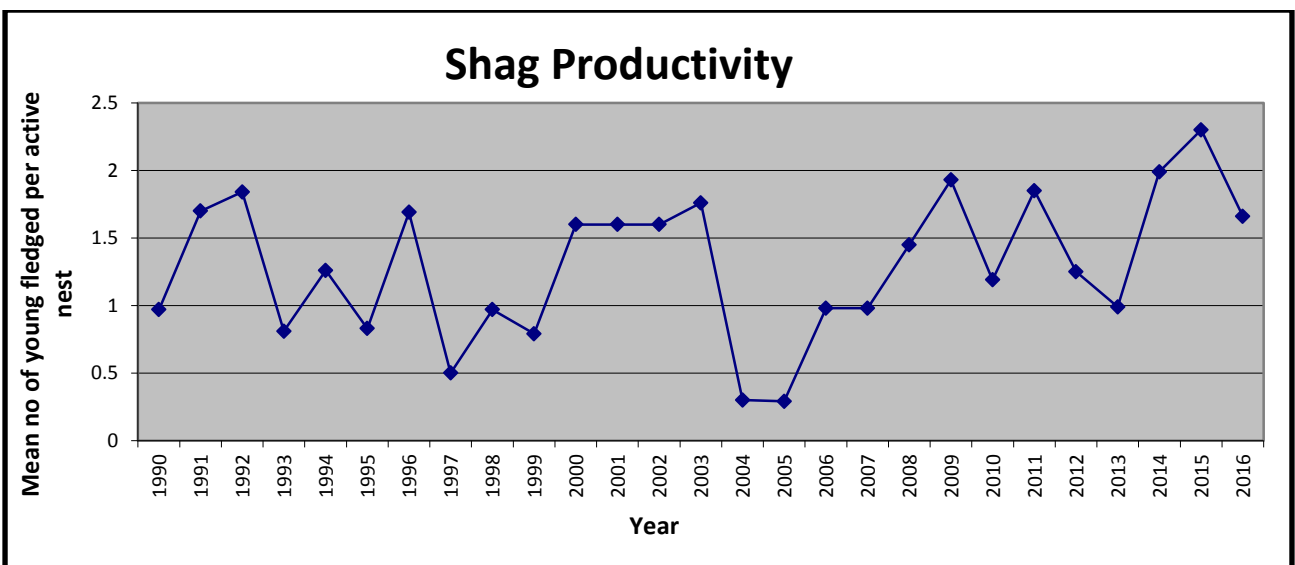


Breeding Success

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 18 visits were made to the 4 monitoring plots between the 19th March and 5th August to record the progress of each nest up to fledging. NB the monitoring was started earlier this year because the Seasonal Ranger's contract started at the beginning of March rather than the beginning of April.

Results

A total of 51 active nests were mapped on the plots and 86 chicks successfully fledged. The breeding success, expressed as the mean of the individual plot figures, was 1.67 young fledged per active nest; a decrease of 28% on 2015.



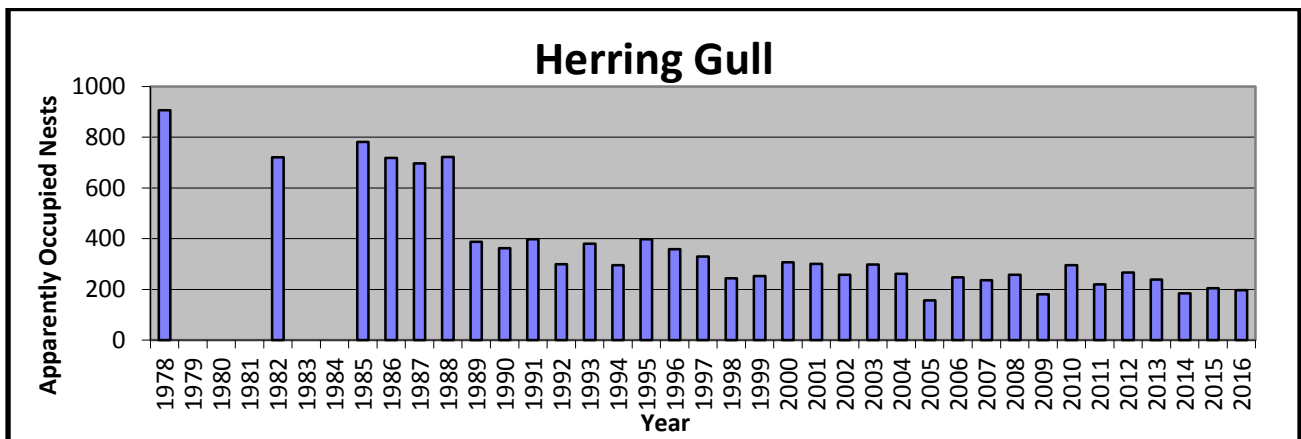
Herring Gull

Whole Colony Count

A whole colony count of apparently occupied nests (AON) was carried out on 29th and 30th May. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 6th June.

Results

197 AON, 4% decrease on 2015.



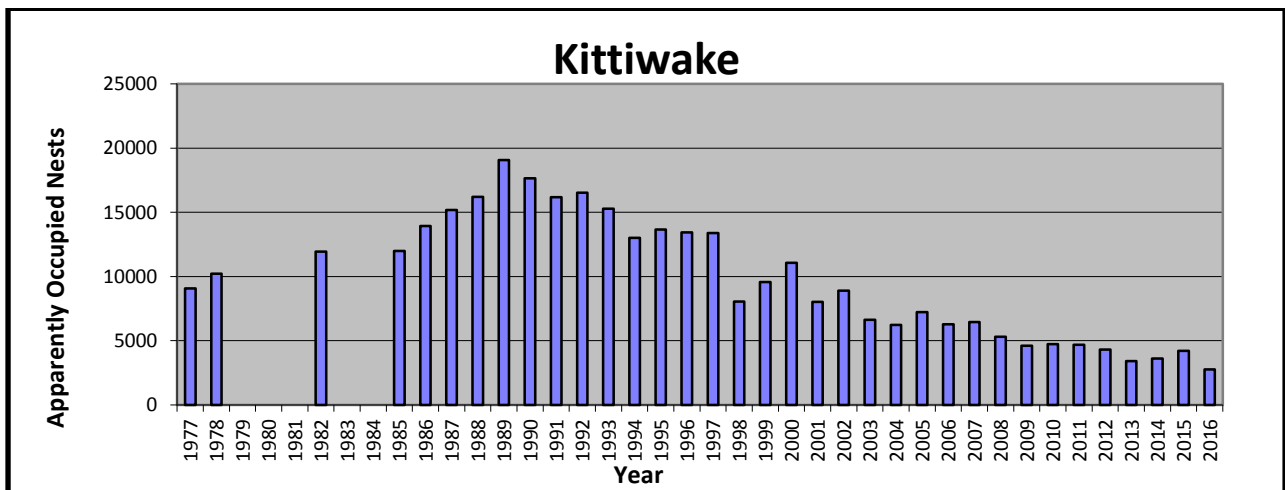
Kittiwake

Whole Colony Count

A count of apparently occupied nests (AONs) was carried out on 20th, 21st, 22nd and 28th June. Blind spots were counted from a boat on 23rd June.

Results

2,779 AON, 34% decrease on 2015.

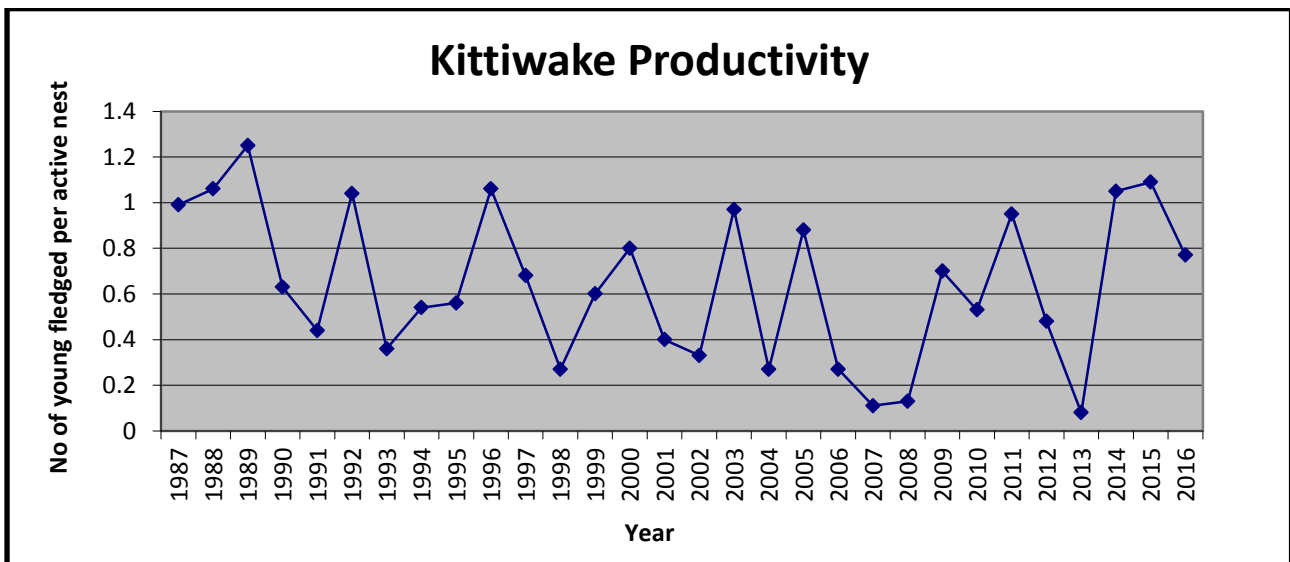


Breeding Success

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 28th May when all nests were marked on laminated photographs of the plots, then again on 10 further occasions up to 9th August to check the progress of each nest up to fledging.

Results

A total of 178 active nests were mapped on the plots and 137 chicks successfully fledged. The breeding success, expressed as the mean of individual plot figures, was 1.09 young fledged per AON; a decrease of 29% on 2015.



Gannet

This year we had the first ever record of gannets attempting to breed at St Abb's Head. Four pairs settled on Foul Carr in the third week in May (first sighting 22/5/16), and stayed in residence until early June. One pair showed display behaviour, built a rudimentary nest and were witnessed mating. Therefore we have a count of 1 apparently occupied nest (AON ie one or two adults with nest material, however flimsy). The breeding attempt was not successful.

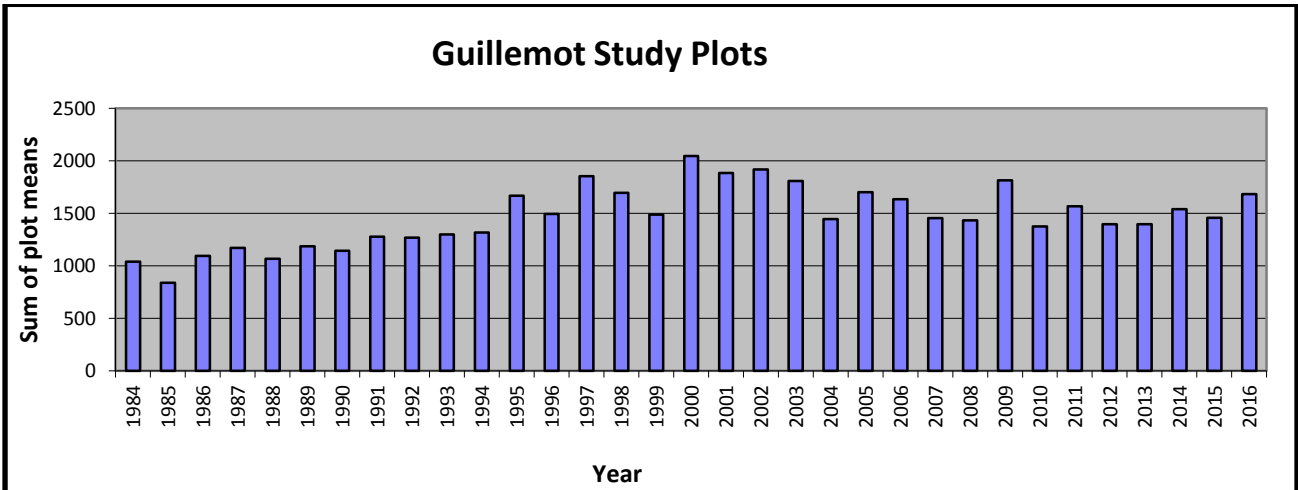
Guillemot

Counts at Monitoring Plots

Six counts of individual birds on ledges were carried out at each of the five plots between 3rd & 18th June.

Results

The mean number of individuals on study plots in first three weeks of June is 1,684, a 15% increase on 2015.



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 2016 report and this will be the method used from now on so that results from year to year are comparable. Fifty Apparently Occupied Sites (AOS) were individually marked on photographs of each of the 2 monitoring plots selected, and 36 visits were made to observe progress at each AOS between 11th May and 9th July.

Results

A total of 116 active nest sites were monitored, of which 89 chicks successfully fledged. The breeding success, expressed as the mean of the individual plot figures, was 0.77 young fledged per active site.

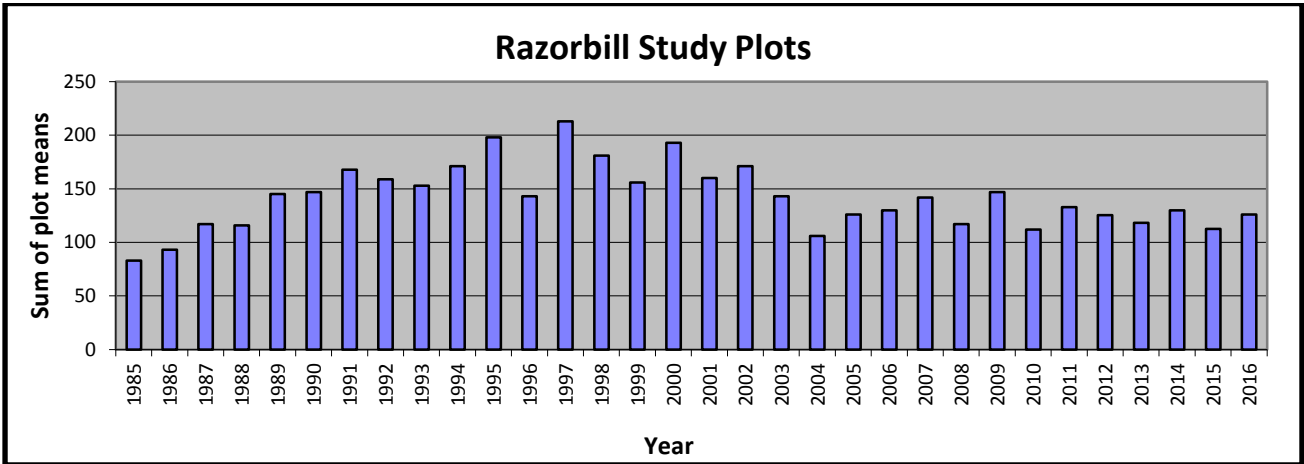
Razorbill

Counts at Monitoring Plots

Six counts of individual birds on ledges were carried out at each of the five plots between 3rd & 18th June (as for the guillemots).

Results

The mean number of individuals on study plots in first three weeks of June is 126, an 11% increase on 2015.



Breeding success

No monitoring of breeding success of razorbills took place this year, it was decided that we should concentrate all staff resources on monitoring guillemot breeding success.

Puffin

A small number of birds were seen ashore on several occasions during the season and an evening count in late June recorded 2 birds ashore.

