



## REPORT ON THE STATUS OF BREEDING SEA-BIRDS

By R. W. BRITTON

June - July 1969

This year has seen the combined efforts of many observers in the national "Operation Seafarer". The writer wishes to thank all those who have helped with the count on Lundy. Their efforts made the count possible. The absence of a resident warden was an undoubted handicap as organisation was of the "remote control" variety. This resulted in the count being spread over a longer period than desirable and "lack of time" became a hazard. The figures for this year are compared with those of 1967 when there was a warden resident.

**Manx Shearwater** (*Puffinus puffinus*). The counting of this species is extremely difficult and estimation only is possible. In 1967 the maximum of  $600 \pm$  was recorded off North Light in June. This year nocturnal sorties revealed the presence of this species coming to land at the following sites:—Below and to the West of Ben's Chair (20 + birds), Lametry Peninsula and Rat Island (20 +), Castle Hill (6), below "The Ugly" and Northwards as far as Half-Way Wall Bay were several locations where there were possibly 50-80 birds. A considerable amount of observation is required in order to assess the numbers of birds landing. It is apparent there are several small isolated colonies which could be breeding sites. This is obviously interesting work for the future.

**Fulmar** (*Fulmarus glacialis*). The status of this species on the island appears to be static. 44 nests were counted which is the same number recorded in 1967. The largest colonies are on Gannet's Rock and in Jenny's Cove. There are several other nests in relative isolation on the West coast.

**Shag** (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*). It seems that in 1967 there was a marked increase in the number of nests in use. This was 91 compared with 62 in 1962. This year there were 58 but this is thought to be a conservative figure. Apart from the small colony on the South coast the majority of nests are concentrated between St. James' Stone and North West Point.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*Larus fuscus*). There is a considerable increase in the breeding population. This year there were 99 nests, in 1967 45 nests, and in 1962 69 nests. It seems there is a general increase all round the island with 18 nests between Battery Point and Needle Rock, 22 nests between St. James' Stone and North West Point, and 24 nests at the North East corner.

**Great Black-backed Gull** (*Larus marinus*). The breeding population of this species remains steady. In 1962 and 1967 there were 49 pairs, in 1969 50 nests were counted. They are distributed widely along the entire coastline.

**Herring Gull** (*Larus argentatus*). This species continues to increase at an almost alarming rate. In 1967 1608 nests were counted. This year 2399 (to an accuracy rate of + or - 100) were recorded. This indicates an increase of 600 to 700 in two years. During the count the writer noticed on several occasions adult birds of this species attacking young on their first flights. This resulted in the death of at least 6 in one morning.

**Kittiwake** (*Rissa tridactyla*). This is another species increasing on the island. In 1962 there were 760 breeding pairs, in 1967 1256 nests and this year 1441 nests. The entire breeding population occurs from Jenny's Cove northwards, and the entire North End around to Gannet's Rock.

**Razorbill** (*Alca torda*). Due to the type of nesting sites chosen this is a most difficult species to count accurately. In 1967, 1602 birds were counted—almost 1000 fewer than in 1962. In 1969 584 nests were counted. This represents almost 1200 birds. From this figure it can only be hoped that the serious decline is perhaps easing.

**Guillemot** (*Uria aalge*). For this species the requirement of "Operation Seafarer" was to count individual birds. Unfortunately this revealed a continuing decrease as follows:—figures for the counts of 1962, '67, and '69 are 3,560, 2,355, and 1,647 respectively.

**Puffin** (*Fratercula arctica*). Forty-one nests were counted this year (this includes sites apparently used for breeding purposes). Since the count was finally completed in July it is likely that the number of Puffins on the island is higher than supposed. The non-breeding birds are possibly still at sea when part of the count in June was done. It is reasonable to suppose that with the non-breeders the population is 90 to 100 birds. The previous count in 1967 revealed 110 birds.

The Lundy Puffins are now scattered in small colonies from Battery Point northwards to the single pair in Puffin Gully. It is apparent that on Lundy the Puffin is becoming increasingly a crevice nesting species using similar sites to Razorbills. In many cases the colonies are less accessible—this may be a change in habit which will assist in the preservation of the species on the island.

## REPORT ON THE SEAL COUNT ON JULY 5th, 1969

By R. W. BRITTON

The species being counted was the Grey Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*).

Volunteers to spend a little of their valuable time were eager to assist in this interesting task. The plan was to divide the coastline of the island into sectors equal to the number of individuals, or parties, engaged. These observers were in their pre-arranged positions and the count began at 3 p.m. The weather for several days prior to the count and on the day of the count was clear and warm with a light N.W. breeze. At the time of the count the state of tide was low water spring. This gave the advantage to observers who then were likely to see the maximum number of seals hauled out on rocks and skerries.

The details of the count are as follows:—

Sector	Number of seals
Landing Bay to S. of Battery Point	37
N. Battery to Dead Cow Point	0
D.C. Point to N. end Jenny's Cove	16
N. End Jenny's Cove to N.W. Point	6
N.W. Point to Gannet's Rock N. side	12
Gannet's Rock to Brazen Wood	6
Brazen Ward to Tibbett's Point	0
Tibbett's Point to ½ Wall Cotts. (off)	3
½ Wall Cotts to Landing Bay	0
	Total 80.

The writer thanks all those who took part in this task, particularly the divers who so kindly took him by boat to Seal's Hole and around the S.W. Corner.