

Seabirds of the North Sea

Red-throated diver

This species was associated with bad weather in the Scottish Islands, where its local name is 'Rain Goose'. It nests on small lakes near the coast but feeds entirely at sea.

Diet: predominantly fish, but also crustaceans.

Threats: highly vulnerable to coastal oil spills, highly sensitive to disturbance from coastal wind farms, entanglement and drowning in inshore fishing nets.

Lat *GAVIA STELLATA*
UK RED-THROATED DIVER
FR *PLONGEON CATMARIN*
DE *STERNTAUCHER*
NL *ROODKELDUIKER*
DK *RØDSTRUBET LOM*
SE *SMÅLÖM*
NO *SMÅLÖM*

Northern Fulmar

Fulmars protect themselves from predators (including humans) by spitting foul-smelling, sticky stomach oil. Potential attackers such as Great Skuas leave fulmars alone and steal food from other seabirds.

Diet: variable quantities of fish, squid and zooplankton (especially amphipods), fish offal and carrion (whale blubber).

Threats: over 90% of fulmars have microscopic plastic particles in their stomachs.

Lat *FULMARIUS GLACIALIS*
UK NORTHERN FULMAR
FR *FULMAR BORÉAL*
DE *EISSTURMVOGEL*
NL *NOORDESE STORMVOGEL*
DK *RØDSTRUBET LOM*
SE *MALLEMUK*
NO *STORMFÅGEL*

Northern Gannet

The gannet is the largest seabird in the North Sea region with a two meter wingspan.

Diet: shoaling pelagic fish which are mostly caught by plunge-diving from considerable heights. Attends trawlers and will form large congregations where food is plentiful.

Threats: longline fisheries, off-shore windfarms; also susceptible to marine litter.

Lat *MORUS BASSANUS*
UK NORTHERN GANNET
FR *FOU DE BASSAN*
DE *BASSTÖPPEL*
NL *JAN-VAN-GENT*
DK *SULE*
SE *HAVSSULA*
NO *HAVSULE*

Great Skua

Great Skuas behave like pirates, often stealing food from other seabirds by pestering and harrying them until they let go of their prey or disgorge it out of fear.

Diet: a hugely varied diet and highly opportunistic feeder. Individuals show individual specialisations in diet and feeding with some colony-specific learning.

Threats: climate change, discard reduction.

Lat *STERCORARIUS SKUA*
UK GREAT SKUA
FR *GRAND LABBE*
DE *SKUA*
NL *GROTE JAGER*
DK *STORKJØVE*
SE *STORLABB*
NO *STORJØ*

Great Black-backed Gull

This is the largest gull species in the world.

Diet: The species is omnivorous and opportunistic, its diet consisting of fish (discards), adult and young birds, birds eggs, mammals (rabbits, lemmings, rats and mice), insects, marine invertebrates (crustaceans, molluscs) and carrion. Winterdispersion is strongly determined by the presence of fishing fleet.

Threats: The species is hunted for sport in Denmark.

Lat *LARUS MARINUS*
UK GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL
FR *GOÉLAND MARIN*
DE *MANTELMÖWE*
NL *GROTE MANTELMEEUW*
DK *SVARTBAG*
SE *HAVSTRUT*
NO *SVARTBAK*

Black-legged Kittiwake

Kittiwakes are the most pelagic of gulls, rarely venturing inland.

Diet: predominantly marine invertebrates (squid and shrimps) and fish (sandeel). At sea during the winter also planktonic invertebrates. Often exploits sewage outfalls and fishing vessels.

Threats: depletion of food resources (through over-fishing and climate change), marine oil spills and fishing vessels.

Lat *RISSA TRIDACTYLA*
UK BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE
FR *MOUETTE TRIDACTYLE*
DE *DREIZEHNENMÖWE*
NL *DRIETEENMEEUW*
DK *RIDE*
SE *TRETÅG MÅS*
NO *KRYKKJE*

Common Guillemot

Guillemots nest at high density on narrow cliff ledges.

Diet: fish, including sandeels and small species in the cod and herring families. Mainly forages during daylight, diving to maximum depths of about 180 m.

Threats: because guillemots spend most of their lives at sea and dive for their food, they are very sensitive to oil pollution. Climate change.

Lat *URIA AALGE*
UK COMMON GUILLEMOT
FR *GUILLEMOT MARMETTE*
DE *TROTTELLUMME*
NL *ZEEKOET*
DK *LOMVI*
SE *SILGRISSLA*
NO *LOMVI*

Little Auk

Little Auks breed in vast colonies in the far north, dispersing far out to sea after breeding. After western storms the birds may occasionally be found around the coasts of western Europe.

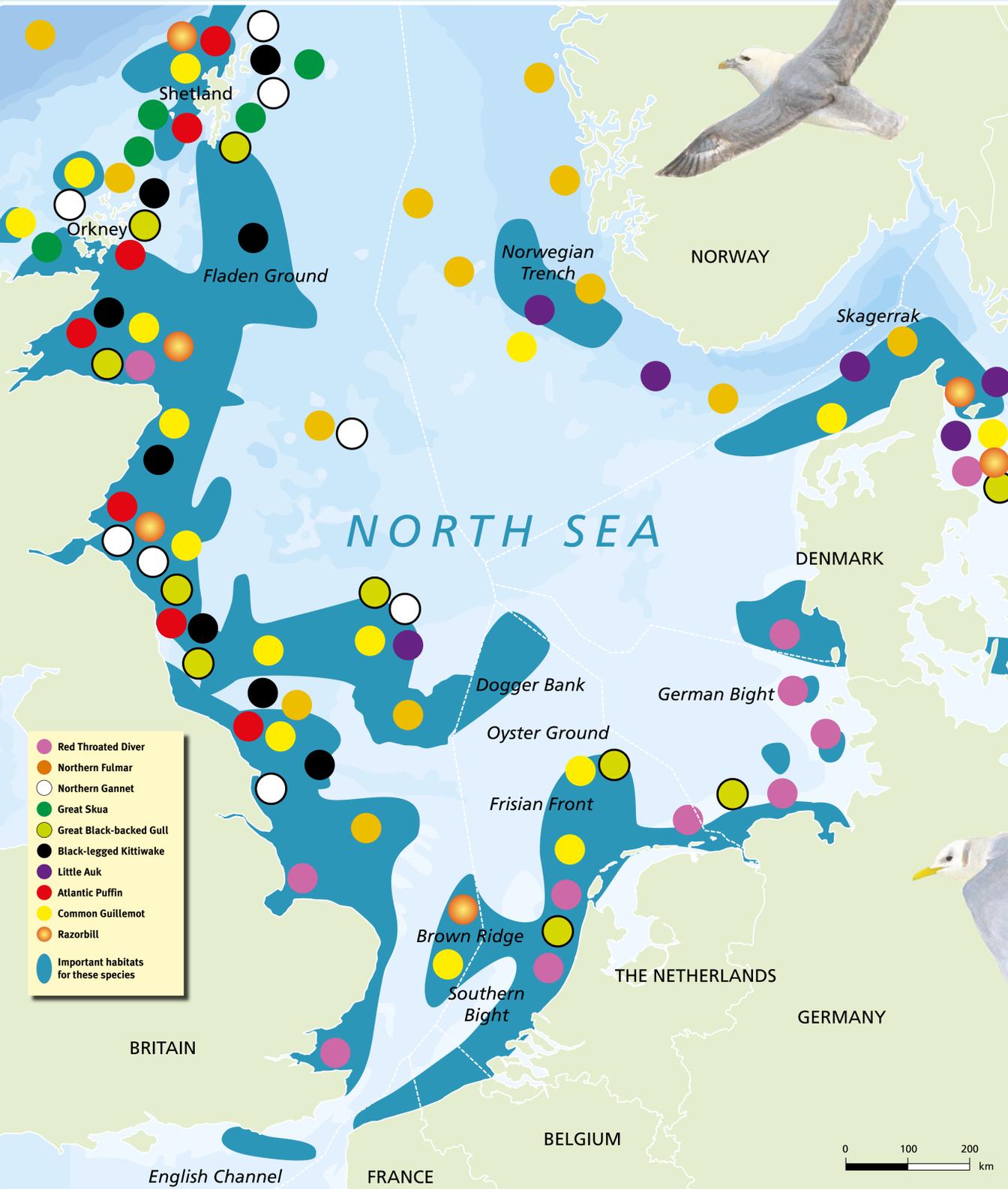
Diet: Feed on small invertebrates such as amphipods and shrimps and on fish larvae.

Threats: climate change and severe weather.

Lat *ALLE ALLE*
UK LITTLE AUK
FR *MERGULE MAIN*
DE *KRABBENTAUCHER*
NL *KLEINE ALK*
DK *SKONGE*
SE *ÅLEKONG*
NO *ÅLEKONGE*

Disclaimer

Information on this poster is based on the best available data. Not all areas in the North Sea, especially offshore areas, are equally well surveyed for the presence of the selected birds. The poster gives a simple representation of the most important areas for the selected seabirds in the North Sea, but it is important to bear in mind that these birds can be found over the entire North Sea, using different areas at different times of year. The poster should not be used as evidence in licensing and permitting procedures. A reference to national and international legislation is required.



Razorbill

Razorbills often nest among boulders at the bottom of cliffs. Pursuit divers like razorbills, guillemots and puffins use their wings to 'fly' under water. Spend most of their lives at sea, only coming ashore for nesting.

Diet: feed on fish and crustaceans, amongst other prey, diving as deep as 120 m.

Threats: depletion of food resources (climate change).

Lat *ALCA TORDA*
UK RAZORBILL
FR *PETIT PINGOUIN*
DE *TORDALK*
NL *ALK*
DK *ALK*
SE *TORMMULE*
NO *ÅLKE*



Atlantic Puffin

Puffins breed in burrows which they excavate with their sharp claws, often in grassy areas at the top of cliffs.

Diet: catch most of their prey within 30 m of the water surface. They feed entirely on fish, such as herring and sandeel, and occasionally crustaceans.

Threats: Puffins are hunted for food in Iceland. Climate change.

Lat *FRATERCULA ARCTICA*
UK ATLANTIC PUFFIN
FR *MACAREUX NOIR*
DE *PAPAGAITAUCHER*
NL *PAPAGAARDUIKER*
DK *LUNDE*
SE *LUNNEFÅGEL*
NO *LUNDE*

Ten typical North Sea birds

This poster highlights ten typical North Sea seabird species out of 31. Some ten million seabirds can be found in and around the North Sea at given times during the year. Many of these seabirds breed in colonies on islands and headlands off the coasts of the United Kingdom, Iceland and Scandinavia. After breeding, they disperse throughout the North Sea and beyond, into the Atlantic Ocean. Outside the breeding season the birds lose their colourful appearance; in winter their plumage is much paler. On this poster the birds are displayed in winter plumage.

Threats

Seabirds suffer from most of the impacts that marine ecosystems are facing. Threats include:

- Climate change, causing breeding failure and changing communities of plankton and fish;
- Overfishing, causing decreasing fish stocks and declining food resources for birds;
- By-catch: Many species are caught accidentally in fishing nets, where they drown;
- Pollution: for example, between the years 2000 and 2010 more than half the Common Guillemots that washed ashore were polluted with oil;
- Habitat destruction and degradation, disturbance by human activities;
- Offshore wind farms;
- Plastics: Plastic items remain in the environment for many years and may be eaten in mistake for food by seabirds. Birds also become entangled in discarded plastic nets, ropes and packing materials.

Legal protection

All seabirds in the North Sea are protected by law through a number of international legal instruments and national legislation in the coastal States.

Key international instruments are:

- The EU Birds Directive that protects all species of seabirds naturally occurring in marine areas falling within the jurisdiction of the coastal States that are EU members.
- The EU Habitats Directive that establishes the ecological network of protected areas known as Natura 2000, which includes all sites designated for seabirds under the Birds Directive. Some Important Bird Areas in the North Sea have been designated as protected areas, but many have yet to be designated.
- The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive that requires the adoption of dedicated measures for the conservation of seabirds. It also requires mitigation of threats posed to seabirds as part of the broader programme of measures to achieve improvements in the environmental status of the marine environment.
- The EU Common Fisheries Policy that plays a crucial role in the reduction of negative impacts of fishing activities on seabirds, including seabird bycatch. An Action Plan has been developed to reduce incidental catches of seabirds in fishing gear and minimize seabird bycatch to levels which are as low as practically possible.

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature>
www.birdlife.org/worldwide/programmes/seabirds-and-marine
www.birdlife.org/datazone/species



Rijkswaterstaat
Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu

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