

SMPnews

Monitoring internationally important seabird populations across the UK

Welcome...

to the first issue of *SMP news*. The **Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP)** tracks the population changes of the UK's internationally important breeding seabird species at coastal and inland colonies.

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Kittiwake and chick, Newcastle: Jonnie Fisk

The seabird monitoring journey so far

By Sarah Money, JNCC

The Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) was established by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, JNCC, (then known as the Nature Conservancy Council) in 1986, working in partnership with 19 other organisations. The aim was to set up an annual monitoring programme for the 25 seabird species which breed regularly in the UK, to allow their conservation status to be assessed.

JNCC coordinated the collection, collation, and analysis of data on seabird breeding numbers and success, which were gathered from around the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland, by hundreds of skilled volunteer and professional participants. A dedicated SMP database was set up to allow entry of the tens of thousands of records from coastal and inland colonies. In addition, more detailed studies on adult survival, diet and phenology were also captured annually at four geographically dispersed Key Sites located on Canna, Fair Isle, Isle of May and Skomer Island.

The data and statistics were initially published annually as a report – *Seabird Numbers and Breeding Success in Britain and Ireland* – but in more recent years were presented online on the JNCC website. The data have provided invaluable insights into the status and trends of our breeding seabirds, have helped identify possible drivers of change and, alongside national censuses, have been crucial for informing conservation policy, research and actions for this group of species.

In 2022, JNCC formed a new partnership with BTO and RSPB for funding and management of the SMP. Drawing on its considerable expertise in running bird monitoring projects, BTO now leads on the coordination of the scheme, data collation and analysis. Huge thanks are due to all who got the programme to where it is today.