

Seabirds of Fife



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Limekilns Primary School 2026

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of
Fife



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Introduction

The topic that I have chosen to share with you today is about the many seabirds of Fife. I have decided to do this as my project because, living right beside the coast, I have seen most of the birds that will be mentioned later. I love birds because they are all so different, and each have their own characteristics. There are a few that I have not seen unfortunately but many I know well anyway. I hope that you enjoy this, and you learn something, as I have so much through this process of making this project.

Map of Fife

Fife is on the east coast of Scotland. On this map, I have labelled places in Fife that the sea birds I have mentioned can be spotted.



Climate change and impacts

A massive decline in numbers of sea bird colonies in Fife is often due to the recent lack of food. Rising sea temperatures are causing fewer and fewer sand eels which many of the sea birds I have mentioned depend on for food. The decreases are unfortunately in sync with the breeding seasons, creating mass starvation and unsuccessful nests.

Another problem that climate change is creating for sea birds is unpredictable weather. Natural disasters such as cyclones during winter are causing disruption for both juveniles and adults. These weather changes also make “chilled nests” which means that icy rain and even frost can enter the egg and kill the fragile chick inside.

Low nesting birds also suffer from habitat loss. As sea levels rise, water covers many nests, and eggs and chicks are washed away by the unexpected higher tides. Some cliff nesting birds also have their nesting grounds threatened by erosion. As the sea rises to the cliff tops, it can bring down debris, nests, and chicks.

Fife has several nature reserves including Isle of May, Loch Leven and many others. They are great places to look for birds, and their habitats and nesting grounds are protected and looked after.

IUCN

IUCN stands for the International Union for Conservation of Nature. They work to rank birds and other animals based on whether they are common or endangered. This can help to raise awareness to people and is great for protecting endangered species.

The IUCN has a code that represents how endangered the particular animal is. I have also given my birds a code for the same reason to show how endangered they are.

IUCN coding	Description
	Least concern
	Near threatened
	Endangered
	Critically endangered



Puffin



Fratercula arctica
(little brother of the north)

Puffins are globally well known, particularly for their bright and short beaks, as well as their small stubby orange feet and short stature. They have a sleek black outer plumage and wings, contrasting to their pure white feathers on their bellies. Their broad beaks are red, blue, and yellow, however during winter-after the breeding season- they lose their bright colours in their beaks, turning them a dark grey. This helps them to blend into their surroundings better when bright colours are not so critical.



Habitat -

Puffins tend to prefer nesting in burrows buried in cliff sides during the breeding season, helping to hide from unwanted predators. They will also choose to settle on small rocky islands directly beside the ocean to ensure that they never have to travel far from their nests to fish. When the breeding season is over, puffins tend to avoid settling anywhere and instead float on the sea for around eight to nine months.

Diet-

Puffins stick to a main diet of sand eels, herrings, sprats, capelin, small squids, planktonic crustaceans and marine worms. Puffins will easily dive up to 60 metres deep to find their food and will consume around 40 small fish a day.

Location in Fife-

Scottish puffins are mostly found in the Isle of May National Nature Reserve, found in the Firth of Forth. They can also be seen on Bass Rock and at the Scottish Seabird Centre.

Movements and migrations-

Puffins are migratory birds, that arrive in April to Fife and then head on towards the open sea. When they are not nesting, they tend to head out for the North Sea or North Atlantic, during late August and early September.

Why I chose this bird-

I personally have always loved puffins for their funny colours and the cheeky looks about them. I have seen puffins before when I was very small and hope to spot them again someday.



Common sandpiper



Actitis hypoleucos
(White-bellied coast-dweller)

Sandpipers are small, 18-20 cm long wading birds featuring olive-brown upperparts, a white belly, and a distinctive white wing bar visible in flight. They are best identified by their constant "teetering" or bobbing motion while walking, a short grey bill, and pale olive-green legs. While in summer, they appear as an olive-brown and white bellied bird, contrasting to their more muted winter coats.



Habitat-

Sandpipers are often seen nesting on ground near freshwater, typically along rivers, lochs, and reservoirs. Breeding will often occur from May to June. When breeding season finishes, they spend the winter in a wide variety of, mostly tropical, warm wetland habitats. They occupy coastal areas, estuaries, lakes, rivers, canals, and mangroves.

Diet-

Sandpipers generally eat insects (larvae and adults), small crustaceans, molluscs, spiders, and occasionally small fish. A major portion of their diet also includes beetles, mayfly and stonefly nymphs, flies, and ants, crabs, shrimp, and snails, frogs, spiders, and occasionally plant material like seeds.

Location in Fife-

Sandpipers in Fife are mostly found in Eden Estuary Local Nature Reserve, Kilminning Pond (Crail), Fife Ness & Balcomie Beach, Morton Lochs National Nature Reserve, Letham Pools & Cameron Reservoir and Cocklemill Burn (Largo Bay).

Movements and migrations-

Common sandpipers begin to arrive back in Scotland around late April to early May and then afterwards, head for West Africa. Males tend to arrive slightly earlier than females to claim territories. The migration heading south starts early. Adults often leave their breeding territories in Scotland as early as late July or early August, with some migration movement starting in June. Adults leave earlier than juveniles, which leave about a month later. They will travel 5,000 km to reach West Africa.

Why I chose this bird-

Where I live sandpipers are often seen and are also one of the houses at my school. They were a big part of building ambition through houses in my later primary school years.

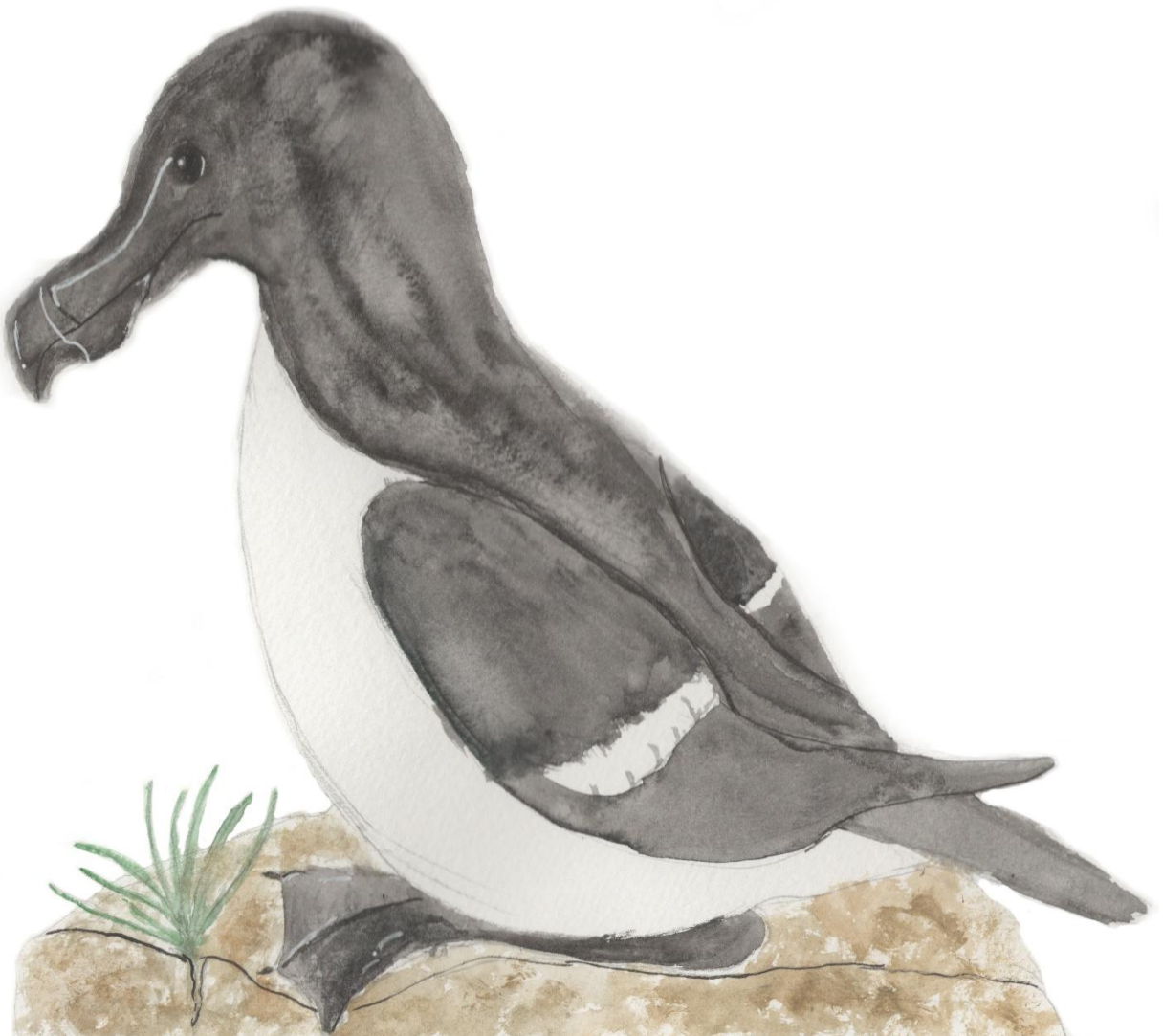


Razorbills



Alca torda
(filthy seabird)

Razorbills are crow-sized, measuring 37–43 cm in length with a wingspan of 60–69 cm. Adults have jet-black upperparts (head, neck, back) and pure white underparts. A thin, distinct white line runs from the eye to the base of the beak, and the black throat extends up to the white chest. Their most noticeable feature is a blunt, black beak, which is flattened with vertical grooves, and in the breeding season, a thin, vertical white line crosses it. They have a longer, pointed tail compared to other auks, which is often held slightly upward when swimming. Juveniles are like adults in winter plumage, but with smaller bills and less distinct markings.



Habitat-

Razorbills prefer to nest in crowded colonies on steep rocky cliffs, coastal boulder fields, and islands across the North Atlantic. They prefer sheltered, narrow crevices, ledges, or gaps between boulders, often hiding their single egg rather than nesting on open ledges. They favour dark, hidden crevices at least 10 cm deep to protect their single eggs from predators, sometimes using old burrow sites from Atlantic Puffins. When breeding season is over though, razorbills move away from coastal cliffs and spend their time at sea in the open ocean.

Diet-

Razorbills have a diet that mostly includes small, schooling fish like sand eels, Atlantic herring, sprats, and capelin. They forage by diving up to 30 metres deep, propelling themselves with half-opened wings to catch prey. During winter, they also consume crustaceans and polychaete worms.

Location in Fife-

The Isle of May, Fife Ness, St Andrews, Inchcolm Island and Kinghorn/Burntisland are all places in Fife where razorbills can be easily watched from a close distance.

Movements and migrations-

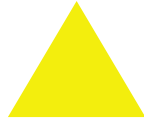
North American razorbills migrate to the Grand Banks and New England, while European birds move to the Bay of Biscay and the Mediterranean, beginning as early as September. North Atlantic birds stay close to the ice edge, while others move south to warmer waters, including the Mediterranean Sea and the Moroccan Atlantic coast. The departure of colonies happens earlier in colder, northern climates, and then they return to breeding sites from late February through April.

Why I chose this bird-

Razorbills are well known in my family for “looking like dinosaurs” for their funny bills and proportions. I have never actually seen a razorbill, but I still think they are very cool.



Oyster- catchers



Haematopus
ostralegus
(*blood-footed oyster
gatherer*)

Oystercatchers are best known for their bold black-and-white plumage, bright orange-red bill, and pinkish-red legs. They have a completely black head, neck, back, and wings, contrasted with a clean white chest and underside. The adult has a red iris with an orange eye ring.



Habitat-

Oystercatchers are mostly found in coastal areas, such as rocky and estuarine shores, mudflats, and shingle beaches. They are also spread inland, nesting on gravel pits, lakesides, and sometimes gravel rooftops. They are often seen in huge flocks on coastlines in winter. Nesting grounds consist of rocky shores, and beaches, though many now breed inland on farmland, meadows, and gravel pits.

Diet-

Oystercatchers primarily eat coastal shellfish, specifically mussels and cockles, which they open using their strong, flattened bills to either pry or hammer them open. While named for oysters, they rarely eat them in the UK, preferring limpets, whelks, small crabs, and fish. Inland populations feed on earthworms and insect larvae. They use their long, red bills to probe mud for worms or forage on rocky shores.

Location in Fife-

Key locations in Fife to spot oystercatchers include Limekilns, Eden Estuary, Isle of May, Kinghorn, Crail, Dunfermline, and Mossmorran.

Movements and migrations-

Oystercatchers are not fully migratory and instead have highly variable, individualistic movement patterns, often migrating from northern breeding grounds (Iceland, Norway) to warmer coastal European locations for winter. While some oystercatchers have many different breeding grounds, others travel over 1000km to return to the same wintering sites annually.

Why I chose this bird-

Oystercatcher is another house in my school making them another important bird in the last two years. I see them all the time on the beach where I live and they are a commonly known seabird in my community.



Black-legged kittiwake



Rissa tridactyla
(three-toed
bird from the
cliffs)

The black-legged kittiwake is a small marine gull (38–41 cm long) known for its solid black wingtips, yellow bill, and dark legs. Adults have a white head, body, and tail, with a silvery-grey back and upper wings. They have a distinctive red mouth and a harsh, screaming call.



Habitat-

These seabirds like nesting in dense, noisy colonies on narrow, sheer seaside cliff ledges in the Arctic and North Atlantic/Pacific. They prefer inaccessible, steep, or vertical rock faces to avoid predators, sometimes nesting on synthetic structures like buildings, bridges, and oil rigs. After the breeding season, they leave their coastal colonies and spend most of their time on the wing over open ocean, often far from land. This means they spend August through March at sea in the North Atlantic and Pacific after departing nesting cliffs. Their breeding season lasts from April to August but can be extended in some small groups.

Diet-

Kittiwakes prefer a diet of small, shoaling fish, such as sand eels, herring, and capelin, typically caught at the surface. They also eat marine invertebrates, including copepods, amphipods, and squid, often foraging in large, mixed-species flocks.

Location in Fife-

Black legged kittiwakes in Fife can be spotted in Isle of May National Nature Reserve, Fife Ness & East Coast, Inchcolm Island, Chapel Ness, Anstruther, Pittenweem, St Monans, and Kinghorn.

Movements and migrations-

After nesting, birds leave colonies in late August or September, moving to wintering areas such as the North Atlantic, North Sea, or North Pacific. They fly a clockwise migration in the North Atlantic, traveling south along East Greenland in autumn and returning north closer to the British Isles in spring.

Why I chose this bird-

I find black legged kittiwakes fun and cute looking, due to their stubby feet and slim bodies. Their little faces also represent their clumsy appearance. In general, I find them fun and despite few colours, remarkably interesting to draw.



Herring gull



Larus argentatus
(silver-plated gull)

Adult herring gulls are large, robust seabirds (55–67 cm) characterized by pale silvery-grey backs, white heads/underparts, and black wingtips with white spots. They have distinctive pale-yellow eyes with an orange ring, yellow bills with a red spot on the lower mandible, and pink legs. Unlike adults, young herring gulls are mottled brown and grey, taking up to four years to reach full adult plumage. They have a 130–150 cm wingspan and weigh approximately 690–1440 g.



Habitat-

They are adaptable seabirds that nest in large colonies on coastal cliffs, islands, sand dunes, and increasingly on urban rooftops. They prefer high, safe spots for their bulky nests. Breeding pairs often mate for life and return to the same location annually in early spring. After the nesting season (which ends in late summer, around August), herring gulls leave their breeding colonies and become highly mobile, adopting a more generalist lifestyle. While some individuals remain near the breeding area, many migrate south or disperse to coastal and inland locations.

Diet-

Herring gulls are omnivores and scavengers that eat a vast range of marine and on land food, including fish, crustaceans, insects, rodents, young birds, and eggs. They often scavenge on dumps and steal discarded human food like chips or ice cream, often preferring easy pickings over hunting.

Location in Fife-

Herring gulls are common throughout the Fife coast, particularly around fishing harbours, urban areas, and industrial sites. Key locations include the East Neuk (Pittenweem, Anstruther, Cellardyke, Crail), North Haugh Ponds in St Andrews, the Isle of May, and coastal spots like Leven and St Monans.

Movements and migrations-

Herring gulls have many populations remaining near breeding sites year-round or performing short-distance movements, especially in Western Europe. In Britain, Ireland, and coastal North Sea areas, many Herring Gulls remain near breeding sites. dispersal occurs from August to October, with wintering locations maintained through January. Spring migration back to breeding grounds happens in March–April.

Why I chose this bird

As a person living beside the sea, herring gulls are extremely common. As very funny characters, they are a big part in a small village. They are often seen either sitting on a lamppost or stealing someone's food!



Guillemot



Uria aalge
(dove or pigeon)

The Common Guillemot is a medium-to-large auk, often described as penguin-like due to its upright posture on rocky cliffs. It is a sleek seabird with a long, pointed black bill, dark chocolate-brown head and upperparts, and white underparts. Their length is generally 38–45 cm, with a wingspan 64–73 cm.



Habitat-

Guillemots nest in dense, noisy colonies on narrow, steep coastal cliff ledges, primarily in northern England and Scotland. They lay a single pear-shaped egg directly onto bare rock between March and July, with colonies sometimes numbering thousands. Following the breeding season (around the end of July), adults fly away from nesting cliffs to spend winter in the open sea, often in the northern North Sea.

Diet-

Their diet usually consists of small, oily fish, supplemented by marine invertebrates. They feed mainly on lesser sand eels and sprats, alongside herring, capelin, and gadoids (cod family). They hunt by diving up to 100 or more metres, using their wings to "fly" underwater.

Location in Fife-

Fife guillemots can be seen in Fife Ness, Largo Bay, Anstruther Harbour, Ruddons Point, Kilminning Wildlife Reserve, Kinghorn, Leven, Dysart, and St Andrews Bay.

Movements and migrations-

Guillemots are dispersive rather than truly migratory, with populations in the British Isles mostly preferring to only move short distances. They spend winters in offshore waters, while high-latitude breeders migrate south to avoid sea ice, often wintering in the North Atlantic and Barents Sea.

Why I chose this bird

To me, a guillemot is a very "cute and cuddly" type of bird. With its stubby shape and fluffy plumage, they are a very recognisable species. They also have a strange spelling as their name making them very unique.

White-tailed sea eagle



*Haliaeetus
albicilla*
(sea eagle white
tail)

Their bodies are typically around 66-94 cm, with females being larger and heavier. Sea eagles also have massive and broad wingspans of up to 2.45 metres long. Adults have pale brown heads and hooked yellow beaks and yellow legs, while juveniles have more dark feathers and beak and become paler after 4-5 years.



Habitat-

White-tailed sea eagles in Fife inhabit coastal areas and large freshwater lochs, notably breeding around Loch Leven, inhabiting tall, old trees or steep cliffs for nesting. As opportunity seeking predators, they require extensive fishing and hunting grounds, often nesting near safe, quiet areas to support their huge, structural nests. When not nesting, White-tailed Sea Eagles in Fife and surrounding coastal areas of Scotland occupy coastal habitats, estuaries, and sheltered lochs. As "sit-and-wait" foragers, they spend considerable time perched in mature coastal trees or on rocky crags overlooking water, often remaining static for hours.

Diet-

Their diet primarily consists of fish, seabirds (such as fulmars), and waterbirds, supplemented by small mammals like rabbits and hares. They often scavenge carrion, including dead lambs or washed-up marine life, especially during winter. They are also known to steal food from other birds, such as ospreys and cormorants. They prefer the fish species including salmon, trout, and other marine fish.

Location in Fife-

White tailed sea eagles are primarily found in Tentsmuir Forest/Point. Sightings also have been reported near Out Head at West Sands, St Andrews. They have been spotted near Loch Leven, and occasionally inland or along the coast near Crail, Cellardyke, and Methil.

Movements and migrations-

Young eagles released in Fife move extensively across the UK, with some travelling to mainland Europe. They tend to wander for their first few years and get to the age where they mark their own territories, which helps in connecting the eastern population with those on the west coast. Adults are non-migratory and sedentary, staying near their established breeding territories throughout the year. Foraging grounds and territories typically occur within a 5–10 km radius of the nest, though this can vary with prey availability and habitat quality.

Why I chose this bird

I only recently found out that there are in fact sea eagles in Fife. I was very surprised, but I am glad that they are globally non endangered. I think it is very cool to have a wingspan of over 2 metres, and I think these are over all amazing birds of prey.



Common Terns



Sterna Hirundo
(swallow tern)

The common tern is a slender, medium sized (12 to 15 inches long) known for having long pointed wings and forked tail. Breeding adults have silvery grey upperparts, white underparts, a glossy black cap, orange legs, and an orange red bill with a black tip.



Habitat-

Common Terns nest in noisy, ground-dwelling colonies, typically on sandy, gravelly, or rocky surfaces near water. Favoured habitats include coastal islands, barrier beaches, shingle beaches, inland lakes, and gravel pits. They prefer areas with low vegetation, using slight ground scrapes that are often close to feeding areas. When not nesting, Common Terns inhabit coastal marine areas, including beaches, estuaries, harbours, jetties, and piers, where they forage and roost.

Diet-

They tend to feed on small fish less than 7 inches long, such as sand eels, sprats, anchovies, and herring. They forage over marine and freshwater habitats, plunge-diving from the air to catch live prey, and consume crustaceans, insects, and small squid.

Location in Fife-

They have been spotted in Long Craig Island, Isle of May, Fife Ness & Crail, Eden Estuary, North Queensferry/Carlingnose Point, Lower Largo/Ruddon's Point and Kinghorn, Harbour/Pettycur Bay. Key Inland Locations also include Morton Lochs National Nature Reserve and Loch Gelly.

Movements and migrations-

Common terns are very migratory seabirds that breed across North America, Europe, and Asia before wintering along the coasts of Africa, South America, and Asia. Arriving at breeding grounds in April, they nest inland and on coastlines, returning south in late summer. They use both East Atlantic and Indian Ocean flyways, often showing a so called 'leapfrog' migration where northern populations winter further south.

Why I chose this bird

I find the migration pattern of common terns quite different to the others. The "leapfrog" motion sounds and looks unique. They are also some of the few ground dwelling birds I have here today.

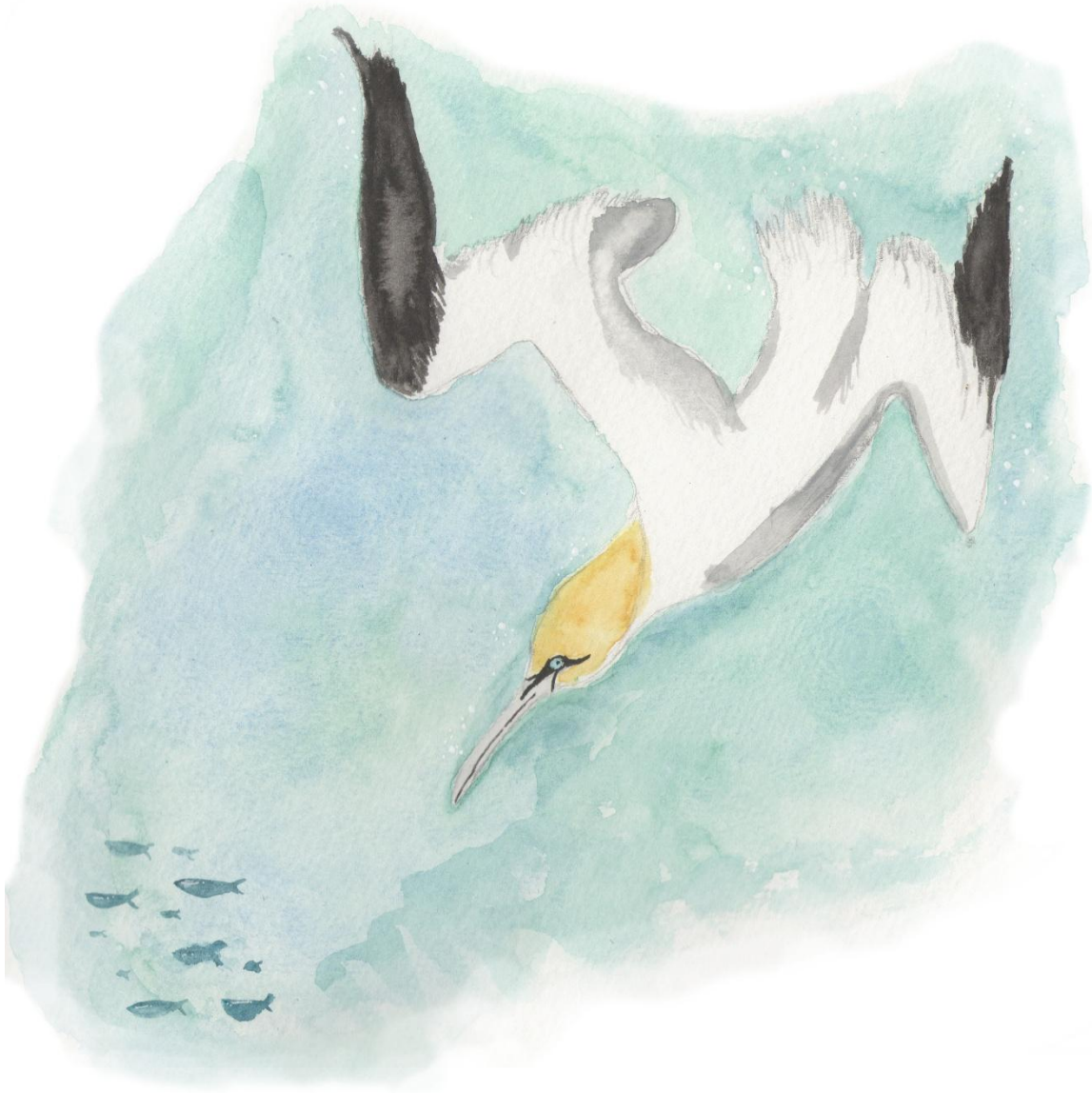


Northern gannet



Morus bassanus
(foolish bird from Bass
Rock)

The northern gannet is goose sized, with snowy white plumage, black tipped wings, and a muted yellow head. They are a streamlined bird of about 37-43 inches long with a six-foot wingspan. They have bright blue grey eyes, and blue grey bills. Juveniles are deep brown for camouflage and protection and can take up to five years for their snowy white waterproof coats to come in.



Habitat-

The northern gannet is found nesting in large colonies(gantries) on offshore islands, coastal cliffs and sometimes flat ground or slopes. However, when no longer nesting, they typically stay on the Atlantic Ocean.

Diet-

Gannets are full time carnivores and do not have such a wide variety of food in their diet as many of the birds mentioned so far. A gannet's diet consists of squid, herring, mackerel, sand eels, capelin, cod, saithe, that are typically around 2.5-30.5 cm in length.

Location in Fife-

Gannets near Fife are primarily found on bass rock, holding one of the largest colony of gannets in the world. Fife Ness, Isle of May National Nature Reserve, East Wemyss, The Scores, St Andrews, Anstruther Harbour, and Shore are all other key places to find them.

Movements and migrations-

Gannets are migratory, with adults starting the journey in August and juveniles following soon after. They have a distinct mostly clockwise migration around Britain and Ireland. The migration back tends to start around February to March. These birds are highly mobile, engaging in intense foraging during the breeding season and long-distance, often clockwise migration around the British Isles in autumn.

Why I chose this bird

I find gannets remarkably interesting birds, with their vibrant yellow tinges and streamlined bodies. I also love how they dive down into the water like a bullet to catch their prey. I have seen gannets before, and I think they are just so amazing and full of surprises.



Manx



Puffinus puffinus
(bird like a puffin on
the Isle of Man)

Shearwater

They are a small shearwater with straight slim wings, that are mostly black on top with, white underparts. They have black beaks, pink and brown legs, and are around 30-38 cm in length. Manx shearwaters also have a wingspan of 76-82 cm and weigh 350-450g -which is around the same as a can of soup.



Habitat-

Manx shearwaters nest in burrows on remote islands. They tend to prefer turfy slopes, and steep grassy terrain that are easy to make their nests in. When nesting season finishes however, they like to stay on South American waters and disperse around July and make the return journey in around February the following year.

Diet-

Manx shearwaters eat a diet of herrings, sprats, sardines, sand eels, squid, and crustaceans. They dive up to 50 feet below the surface of the water to find food if it is not near the top of the sea.

Location in Fife-

They are primarily found in Fife Ness, but Manx Shearwaters have also been spotted in other coastal spots during migratory periods, including off Kinghorn and in the Firth of Forth near the Isle of May.

Movements and migrations-

Manx shearwaters are long-distance migratory seabirds that breed the coastal waters of Fife, particularly the Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay, during March–October. While their primary, massive breeding colonies are on the west coast of Scotland and Wales, they are regularly seen in eastern Scottish waters, with sightings peaking in August.

Why I chose this bird

To be honest, my favourite thing about a Manx shearwater is its Latin name. “*Puffinus puffinus*” is a name that just sounds so cute! The bird itself is also very cute and entertaining to watch.



Arctic skuas



Stercorarius parasiticus
(dung roller parasite)

Arctic skuas are medium sized and agile birds, with distinctive pointed wings, and light or dark colour phases. Adults are about 46 cm long, with long narrow wings, dark caps, and sometimes sharp aggressive looking features.



Habitat-

Arctic skua nesting grounds are mostly on the ground, and are usually found in grassy moorlands, heather-lands, and arctic tundra. When they are not nesting, they tend to stay out on the open ocean and rarely return to land until the following breeding season.

Diet-

A Fife dwelling arctic skuas diet will mostly consist of stolen fish that they have snatched straight out of the air from gulls, terns, and puffins. They steal and eat a list of sand eels, whiting and Norway pout.

Location in Fife-

They are not very common in Fife but sometimes have been spotted in Fife Ness, Kinghorn, Eden estuaries.

Movements and migrations-

Arctic skuas are long distance migratory birds and spend August to September passing through the Fife coast. They are only in Fife to breed and head back to America once the season has ended.

Why I chose this bird

I think arctic skuas interesting because of their habits of stealing other birds' fish. They are like flying thieves! This makes them full of character and different feelings. This gives them an almost pirate sounding and looking appearance.



Grey heron



Ardea cinerea
(ash-grey heron)

Hérons are very well known for their tall and slim bodies. They have long legs, an 's' shaped neck and a dagger like bill which they use for hunting. They have blue-grey or white plumage, as well as wispy crest feathers with some species. They are large in height, often being up to 1 metre tall.



Habitat-

The majority of Fife herons nest in colonies known as heronries, typically in the tops of tall trees near water sources. They build large, bulky nests from sticks, often reusing the same nesting sites for years. Although they prefer treetops (25–50m high), they will occasionally nest in reedbeds, bushes, or on cliff ledges. When they are no longer required to nest, they are solitary, highly adaptable hunters found near almost any shallow, still, or slow-moving water, including lakes, rivers, canals, marshes, and even urban garden ponds.

Diet-

Heron are omnivores and have a diet consisting of eels (a favourite), but they take many types of small fish. They also like to eat a variety of frogs, toads, newts, voles, mice, and occasionally small rats or rabbits. Small water birds, (especially ducklings, and sometimes chicks) crustaceans, aquatic insects, molluscs, and snakes can also become meal options if food is scarce.

Location in Fife-

Grey Herons are found year-round across Fife, particularly along the coast, rivers, and near fishing spots. Key spotting locations include Limekilns, the River Leven, Fife Ness, Silver Sands in Aberdour, the Kinness Burn in St Andrews, and along the Fife Coastal Path at Dalgety Bay.

Movements and migrations-

Heron in Fife are largely sedentary (resident year-round), meaning they do not migrate in the traditional sense. So, even though they travel up to 24 miles in one day to forage, they do not use their ability to fly for extended periods of time to migrate over winter.

Why I chose this bird-

Heron are another regularly sighted bird in the village where live and can be spotted down at the beach on a sunny day. It can often mean a good day for a hang out at the beach and relaxing.



Cormorant



Phalacrocorax carbo
(charcoal raven)

Cormorants are large, dark birds with a long, hooked, reptilian-like neck and a distinctive yellow chin pouch. They have iridescent green blues on their sleek black plumage making them easily recognised. They have a wingspan of 121- 160 centimetres and stand at 70-100 cm tall.



Habitat-

Cormorants are highly adaptable waterbirds that nest in large, noisy colonies on both coastal cliffs and inland lakes, using twigs, seaweed, and grass to build nests. They prefer areas near fish-rich water and often build nests on rocky islets, trees, and synthetic structures like old docks or channel markers, frequently killing the trees with their acidic droppings. When not nesting, they prefer a wide variety of coastal and inland water habitats. During this time, they prioritise areas with plentiful fish and safe, elevated spots for resting and drying their feathers.

Diet-

They eat almost entirely fish, including perch, carp, salmon, and eels. They also occasionally eat crustaceans (like crayfish), water snakes, and insects. They are voracious eaters, sometimes consuming up to 70% of their body weight in a single day.

Location in Fife-

Key spots to see cormorants in Fife include Kilminning Coast Wildlife Reserve, Fife Coastal Path, Tayport Lighthouse, Loch Gelly, Cameron Reservoir, Birnie Loch, Kilconquhar Loch.

Movements and migrations-

Cormorants in Fife are "partial migrants". Many are resident year-round, but numbers significantly swell in autumn and spring due to migratory stopovers and post-breeding dispersal. Birds move between the North Sea coast, the Firth of Forth, and inland lochs, with notable concentrations shifting seasonally.

Why I chose this bird-

A lot of books that I used to read when I was younger often had cormorants in them. They were always described as dark and foreboding birds, but I think the way that they just lie in the sun for half of the day is remarkably interesting and clever.



Glossary

Plumage- feathers

Contrasting –completely different to another

Forage- gathering wild foods

Distinct- a noticeable change or feature

Remote-a place with no people living there

Migration – a movement that happens seasonally when an animal moves from one place to another

Erosion-the gradual destruction of something

Endangered- to be close to extinction

Breeding season- the time of year when animals reproduce

Mollusc-a type of invertebrate that mostly all have an external shell

Juvenile- young birds that are no longer in the nest but are not yet fully mature

Habitat – the ideal place for an animal or plant to live in

Copepod- a microscopic or small aquatic crustacean

Amphipod- a specific species of crustacean

Omnivore – to eat both meat and plants

Camouflage- to blend into or look similar to its surroundings

Population – how many of a certain animal or human species is living there

Bibliography

Some of the websites that I used include

- RSPB
- All about birds
- The wildlife trusts
- Wikipedia
- eBird
- Avon wildlife trust
- National geographic kids
- And many more



A very key book that I used was the *RSPB Handbook of British Birds* by Peter Holden and Tim Cleves. It was filled with key information and great pictures too.

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Thank you very much for reading this. I hope you enjoyed it and that you learned something new about the many interesting sea birds of Fife. Who was your favourite?



