

Our Seabirds

The number of seabirds found in the Faroe Islands is impressive. Scientists have estimated that there are some 2 million pairs.

To observe the bird life here is certainly one of the main reasons visitors come

to our islands. This brochure offers an overview of the various seabird species in the isles.



Gulls have a red spot on their beaks. When the chicks peck this spot it is a sign to the adults that they are hungry.

Food

Among the various seabird populations in the Faroes, there is considerable variance in habitat, life cycle and especially in how they forage for food. For example, Kittiwakes, Fulmars and Storm Petrels hunt for food on the surface of the ocean for they are unable to dive. Gannets and Terns, on the other hand, are able to dive below the surface, while Puffins, Razorbills and Guillemots can dive some 50 to 180 meters deep. Eiders, Black Guillemots and Shags, however, stay close in to the shore for the most part and may dive down to the bottom to forage. The Skuas are considered the most opportunistic of foragers and are not above stealing food from other seabirds.



Seabirds are vulnerable in the breeding season. It is therefore of great importance that they are given the peace they require.

Breeding

All seabirds lay their eggs and brood on land, thus they must come ashore during the breeding season. Here in



Most birds migrate far from the Faroes in winter. The Arctic Tern will fly all the way south towards the Antarctic before returning.

the Faroes, you will discover Guillemots, Kittiwakes, and Puffins all gathering during the season to breed in large colonies, each species claiming their own part of the cliffs. As soon as the chicks fledge, the seabirds disperse back to sea. Most seabirds migrate long distances in winter. For example, the Faroese Guillemots can be found off the coast of Norway and in the North Sea, while a part of the English and Icelandic Guillemot populations come our way. Razorbills from Iceland and Little Auks from further north also appear here in the winter. Gannets are present in the North Atlantic all year round, but some, especially the young, will fly south all the way to North Africa's west coast.

Population Size

Fluctuations in the seabird population stem from a variety of natural causes. The largest change in recent times is felt to be the veritable invasion of the Fulmars in the early 19th century. With the exception of the Fulmars and Gannets, there has been a steady decline in the seabird population since the late 1950s. The severe decline that was observed in the late 1980s was due to low food production in the seas around the Faroe Islands. This decline was noted among the Puffins and Arctic Terns and not least in Faroese society as a whole, for the fisheries in subsequent years was especially limited.

Hunting



As you approach a cliff, you can hear the incredible cacophony of Kittiwakes, each trying to be heard over its neighbour.

For hundreds of years, seabirds were of great importance to Faroese households as a source of nourishing food. Guillemots and Puffins especially were abundant and provided many a tasty meal for the Faroese. Gannets and the young of Gulls, Kittiwakes, Shags and Manx Shearwaters were also caught. The gaming legislation has reduced the hunting pressure. Today, primarily Fulmars and, to a lesser extent, Puffins are caught.






















Threats

Seabirds are very vulnerable when ashore.

Therefore, during the breeding season, they usually situate their nests in nearly inaccessible nooks and ledges on the cliff face. Puffins, Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels have suffered severely from the menacing rat wherever it has gained a foothold. All should be on their guard to ensure that the rat population does not spread any further.



For hundreds of years seabirds have been of great importance to the Faroese households. But the hunt for seabirds has led to a decline in some local populations.

Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	600.000 pairs
Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	550.000 pairs
Common Storm Petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	250.000 pairs
Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	230.000 pairs
Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	175.000 pairs
Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	25.000 pairs
Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	9.000 pairs
Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	4.500 pairs
Black Guillemot (<i>Cephus grylle</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	3.500 pairs
Eider (<i>Somateria molissima</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	3.500 pairs
Gannet (<i>Sula bassana</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	2.000 pairs
Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	2.000 pairs
Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	1.500 pairs
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	1.500 pairs
Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	1.200 pairs
Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	1.000 pairs
Leach's Storm Petrel (<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	1.000 pairs
Arctic Skua (<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	900 pairs
Great Skua (<i>Stercorarius skua</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	450 pairs
Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	250 pairs
Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>)		J F M A M J J A S O N D	15 pairs

The months the birds are:
Population size:

	Absent	Few	Many
pairs: 10			
100			
1.000			
10.000			
100.000			
1.000.000			

Bird size is not shown to scale.



PRESERVE THE BIRDLIFE



- Do not sail closer than 200 m of the bird cliffs during the breeding season (1 May - 1 August).
- Be cautious when sailing close to birds - do not sail too fast or zig-zag.
- Do not disturb nesting birds - you may cause them leave the nest and to lose their chicks.
- You are not allowed to collect eggs.

SOME ADVICE

- Keep well clear of cliff edges, especially in wet or windy conditions.
- Only walk on the marked paths.
- Do not litter - not even at sea. Please return your glass and plastic bottles for a refund of your deposit.

You will find information on guided tours at the local tourist information offices.

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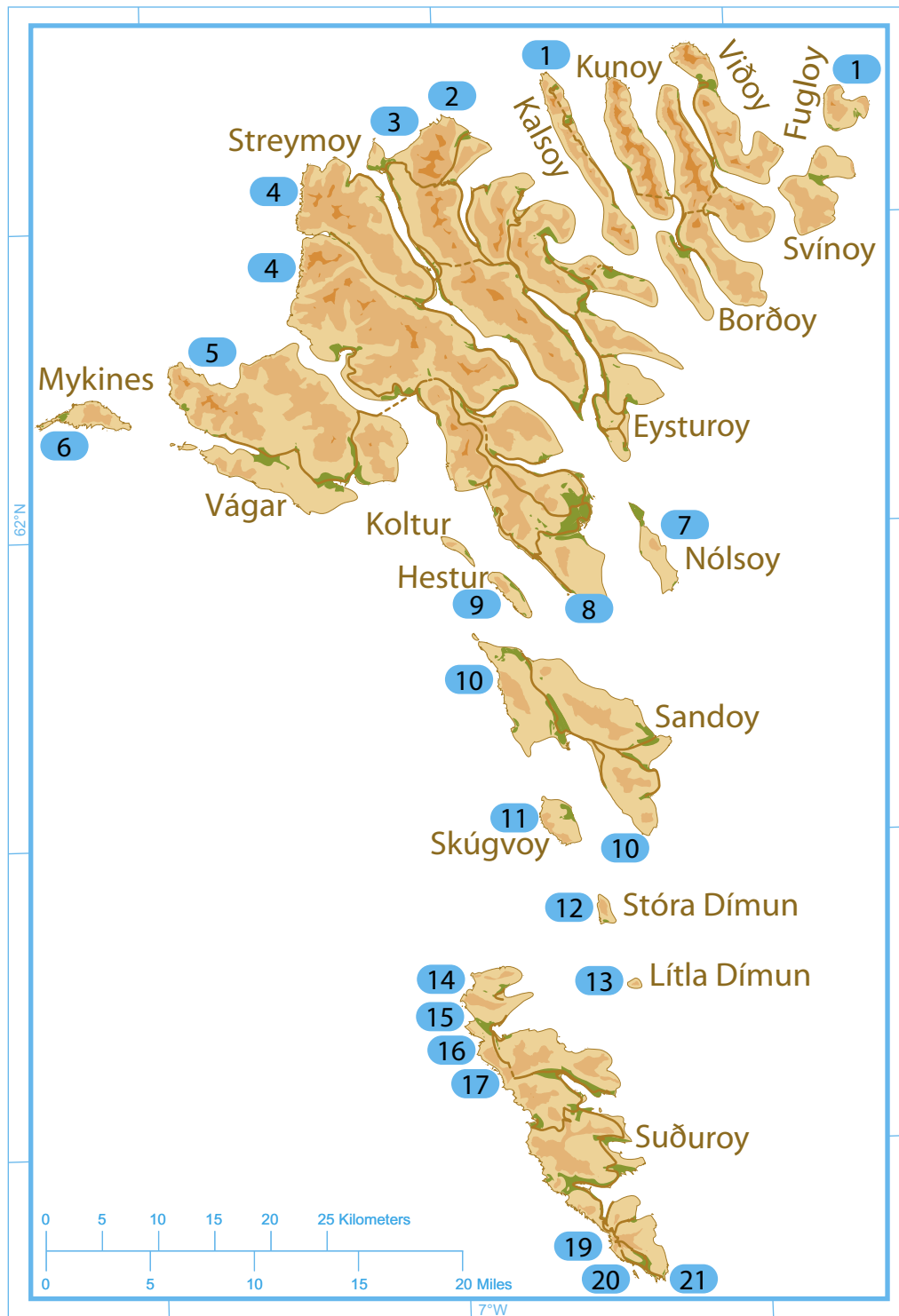
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Seabirds of the Faroe Islands







www.visit-faroeislands.com

- 1 **Norðuroyggjar**  * 
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins.
On the island of Svínoy you will see many Great Skuas.
- 2 **Eysturoy** 
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and some Puffins.
- 3 **Eiði**  
A pair of stationary binoculars, free of use, are by the road. From there you can see the monumental cliffs of Risin and Kellingin.
- 4 **The cliffs of Vestmanna and Saksun**  *
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins.
- 5 **Víkar**
Nearby the deserted village of Víkar is Viðvík with many puffins. The sea-cliffs further east have Guillemots and Kittiwakes.
- 6 **Mykines**  *
Guillemots, Kittiwakes, many Puffins Common and Leach's Storm Petrels. The only local population of Gannets.
- 7 **Nólsoy**  *  *
With 250.000 breeding pairs, this is the largest colony of Common Storm Petrel in the world. Only accessible with guide.
- 8 **Kirkjubøhólmur**
Eider and Tern colony.
The islet is protected and people are prohibited from going there. It is close to land, however, you can use your binoculars.
- 9 **Hestur**  *
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins.
- 10 **Sandoy**  *
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and some Puffins.
- 11 **Skúgvoy**  * 
Largest Guillemot colony, many Kittiwakes and many Puffins. There are many Great Skuas on the island.



- 12 **Stóra Dímun**
There are more Kittiwakes here than on any of the other islands. There are also many Guillemots and Puffins.
- 13 **Lítla Dímun**
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins.
- 14 **Rituskor** 
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins.
Rich birdlife on Ásmundur's sea stack, which stands offshore.
- 15 **Norðbergseiði** 
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins.
- 16 **Hvalbiareiði** 
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins.
- 17 **Á Røðini** 
Walk for 15 minutes along the path marked with wood poles. You can then use the stationary binoculars, free of charge.
- 19 **Beinisvørð**  
Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins.
- 20 **Sumbiarhólmur**
Eider and Tern colony.
- 21 **Akraberg** 
Guillemots, kittiwakes and some puffins.

-  * Organised boat tours
-  * Organised walking tours
-  Accessible by car
-  Accessible by foot

This map is not intended to be used as a hiking guide. It only gives a simple overview of some of the places where you will see many seabirds. In some instances it has been noted how you get to the viewpoint.

Fulmars



Fulmars began breeding in the Faroe Islands in the early 19th century and have since become the most numerous bird in the Islands.

Now our most common seabird, 400 years ago it was so rare that it was thought to be an omen of menacing weather. Originally, it only occupied the high cliffs and escarpments, but now it also inhabits smaller bluffs further inland.

Guillemots and Kittiwakes

The most well known bird cliffs are those occupied by the Guillemots and Kittiwakes. All around the Faroes where Guillemots breed, you will also find Kittiwakes. There are, however, a few cliffs that only the Kittiwakes occupy. Kittiwakes are most often densely aggregated where the cliff above offers some shelter. They can secure their nests onto the sheerest of cliff face, just as long as there is a minute protrusion to which it can be attached. Razorbills are also found on small ledges and crevices among the Guillemots, but they are few, perhaps one Razorbill for every one hundred Guillemots.

Puffins

A Puffin colony is easily recognised by the bright and lustrous green colour of the vegetation around their nests. This colour is due to their nutrient-rich droppings. The Puffins usually colonise steep grassy slopes near the top of the cliffs, but they also seek out small tufts on sea stacks or where some bit of turf may occur on the sea cliff itself. Puffins dig burrows about one meter in depth into the slope and at the bottom each pair will lay one egg.

Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels

As a precaution against predators, Manx Shearwaters and Common Storm Petrels only fly at night and are therefore rarely observed. These species cannot easily protect themselves against rats,

which is the reason you will not find any Storm Petrels on islands where rats occur, and only a few Manx Shearwaters. Manx Shearwaters construct their nests in a manner similar to Puffins, but the number of Manx Shearwaters is much lower. Storm Petrels mostly occupy screes and the last of the chicks are fledged in December.



The world largest colony of Storm Petrels is on the island of Nólsoy. One must venture out at night to see them, however.

Gannets



The Gannet only breeds on Mykines.

no increase there. Gannets build large nests on wide ledges on Mykineshólmur and on the top of the stacks. They lay their eggs in early May and the chicks are fledged in early September.

The majority breeds on the islet of Mykineshólmur, but a few hundred pairs also breed on the sea stacks, Flatadrangur and Píkarsdrangur. In the mid-20th century, a few Gannets started breeding on the island of Mykines itself, but there has been little or

Shags

Shags inhabit boulder screes by the sea. The time of laying varies considerably, but normally the first chicks will hatch in early June. They feed along the shore and aggregate to roost in large numbers on the shore. Cormorants bred in the Faroe Islands until the middle of the last century, establishing their nests on ledges and shelves on the sheer cliffs.



Black Auks

Black Auks make their nests in boulder screes and ravines. They mainly stay close to the shoreline.



You can always recognise the Black Auk by its distinctive markings and bright red feet.

Eiders

Eiders nest on the rocky and grassy shore and also further inland. They are seen mostly close in to shore searching for food. It would seem that food from the salmon farms in the fjords, as well as other sea life attracted to the farms keep the Eider population well fed.