

A6.6 Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* (breeding)

1. Status in UK

Biological status		Legal status		Conservation status
Breeding	✓	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	General Protection	Species of European Conservation Concern
Migratory	✓	Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985	General Protection	(UK) Species of Conservation Importance
Wintering	✓	EC Birds Directive 1979	Migratory	All-Ireland Vertebrate Red Data Book

2. Population data

	Population sizes (pairs)	Selection thresholds	Totals in species' SPA suite
GB	539,000	5,390	308,797 (57% of GB population)
Ireland	31,300	313	1,482 (5% of all-Ireland population)
Biogeographic population	7,540,000	75,400	310,279 (4% of biogeographic population)

GB population source: Lloyd et al. 1991

Ireland population source: Lloyd et al. 1991

Biogeographic population source: Lloyd et al. 1991

3. Distribution

Fulmars have a circumpolar distribution breeding from the high arctic to about 45°N in both the North Pacific, as well as the North Atlantic (Fisher 1952). The species is polytypic — the Nominate *F. g. glacialis* occurs in the North Atlantic, whilst *F. g. rodgersii* breeds in the North Pacific.

In the northern and eastern Atlantic, breeding occurs in Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Svalbard, the Faeroe Islands and Britain, and the species reaches the southern edge of its eastern Atlantic range in northern France (Brittany). Fulmars are present at their UK colonies during most months of the year, although as a highly pelagic species, they range widely, not only during the non-breeding season, but also whilst nesting. Accordingly, they can be found in waters around the UK in all months of the year (Stone *et al.* 1995).

In the UK, breeding occurs on all coasts with suitable cliff nesting sites, but is concentrated in the northern and western isles of Scotland (Lloyd *et al.* 1991). On islands free from mammalian predators, Fulmars nest on relatively level surfaces.

4. Population structure and trends

The North Atlantic population of this species has increased dramatically over the past 350 years to the current estimate of 7,540,000 pairs (Lloyd *et al.* 1991). Prior to this, the only sites where breeding occurred in Europe was on St Kilda and at a site in Iceland. It colonised Foula, Shetland in 1878 and then extended its breeding range steadily around the coastline of Britain and Ireland.

On the south coast of England, prospecting for breeding sites started in the 1940s (Fisher 1952), and since the 1950s the population has continued to increase steadily. In 1949, the British and Irish population was estimated at about 109,000 pairs, with 38,200 of these on St Kilda (Fisher 1952). This had increased to 571,000 pairs by the time of the 1985-87 census, with 62,800 on St Kilda (Cramp *et al.* 1974). However, the percentage annual increase appears to have been higher in the 1950s and 1960s than more recently. A similar population increase and spread in range has occurred on other suitable coasts in northern France, Ireland, and Germany. There has been relatively little expansion in Norway.

The causes of expansion have been the subject of some debate, with the most likely reason being associated with the human provision of food in the form of offal and waste. Initially this would have been from the whaling industry, but more recently from the offshore, deeper water fishing industry.

5. Protection measures for population in UK

SPA suite

In the breeding season, the UK's SPA suite for Fulmar supports an average of 310,279 pairs. This amounts to about 57% of the British breeding population, nearly 5% of the all-Ireland population and 4.1% of the international population. This total is contained within 25 sites (Table 6.6.1) for which Fulmar has been listed as a qualifying species.

6. Classification criteria

All the sites within the SPA suite for Fulmar were selected under Stage 1.3 (see section 5.3); that is, Fulmars were identified as important components of a wider breeding seabird assemblage. All sites thus identified were included within the suite. Some of these sites in the remote north-west of Scotland (Flannan Islands, St Kilda, North Rona and Sula Sgeir, and Foula) have a very long recorded history of occupancy with records from the 19th century (Fisher 1952; Holloway 1996). Other sites were colonised in the expansion and spread of the population that occurred in the twentieth century.

Given that the selection of sites under Stage 1.3 resulted in a suite which gives good coverage of key breeding sites for Fulmar in the UK, it was not considered necessary to select additional sites using Stage 1.4.

Distribution map for Fulmar SPA suite

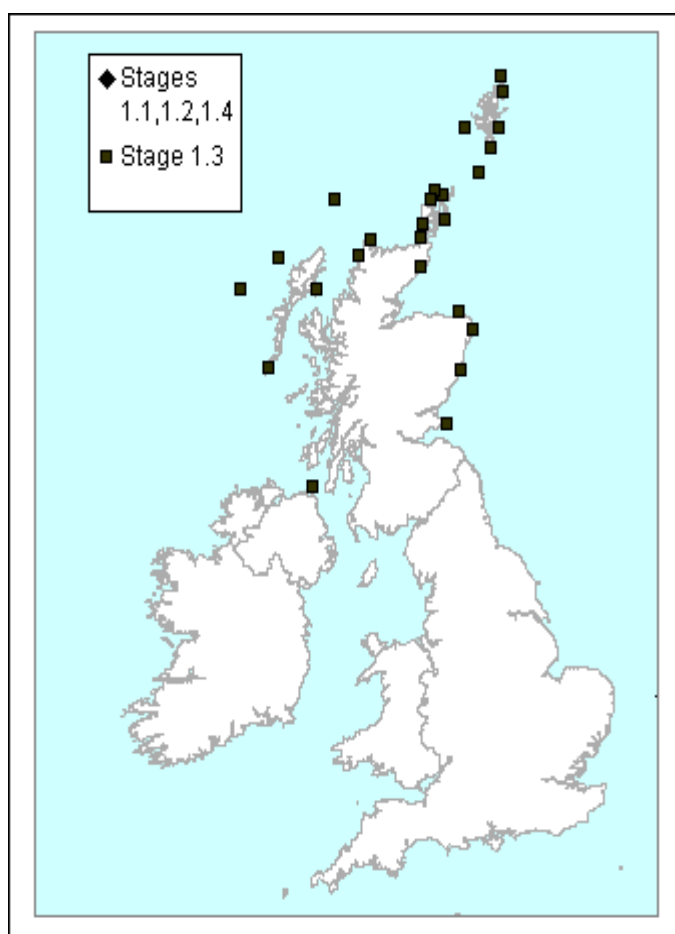


Table 6.6.1 – SPA suite

Site name	Site total	% of biogeographical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast	1,765	<0.1	0.3	1.3
Calf of Eday	1,955	<0.1	0.4	1.3
Cape Wrath	2,300	<0.1	0.4	1.3
Copinsay	1,615	<0.1	0.3	1.3
East Caithness Cliffs	15,000	0.2	2.8	1.3
Fair Isle	43,320	0.6	8.0	1.3
Fetlar	9,800	0.1	1.8	1.3
Firth of Forth Islands	1,600	<0.1	0.3	1.3
Flannan Isles	4,700	<0.1	0.9	1.3
Foula	46,800	0.6	8.7	1.3
Fowlsheugh	1,170	<0.1	0.2	1.3
Handa	3,500	<0.1	0.7	1.3
Hermaness, Saxa Vord and Valla Field	14,890	0.2	2.8	1.3

Site name	Site total	% of biogeographical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Hoy	35,000	0.5	6.5	1.3
Mingulay and Berneray	12,500	0.2	2.3	1.3
North Caithness Cliffs	16,310	0.2	3.0	1.3
North Rona and Sula Sgeir	11,500	0.2	2.1	1.3
Noss	5,870	<0.1	1.1	1.3
Rathlin Island	1,482	<0.1	4.7	1.3
Rousay	1,240	<0.1	0.2	1.3
Shiant Isles	6,820	<0.1	1.3	1.3
St Kilda	62,800	0.8	11.7	1.3
Sumburgh Head	2,542	<0.1	0.5	1.3
Troup, Pennan and Lion's Heads	4,400	<0.1	0.8	1.3
West Westray	1,400	<0.1	0.3	1.3

TOTALS	310,279	4.1%	57.3% 4.7% (Ire)
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