



SPECIES ACTION PLAN

NORTHERN FULMAR

Local Name: Maalie

Appearance: Distinctive seabirds with stiff-winged flight, white underparts, and grey upperparts.

Feeding Behaviour: Surface feeders, skimming the water for small crustaceans, plankton, and fish. Frequently follow fishing vessels to scavenge offal and discards.

Breeding Habits: Almost exclusively coastal nesters, typically found on cliffs but can nest along dry-stone walls and in croft ruins. Mate for life, single egg/chick.

Breeding range in Shetland: Fair Isle to Unst, Foula to Out Skerries.

Population Trends:

- First recorded breeding in Shetland in 1879 in Foula, expanding to five more sites by 1890s.
- Seabird 2000 census (1998-2002) Population 190,243 Apparently Occupied Sites.
- Seabird Counts census (2015-2021) Shetland population 151,790.
- UK population: 319,508 pairs.
- Scotland holds 96.9% of the UK's Fulmar population.

Conservation Status: Amber - Scotland showed a 37% decline in the most recent census.



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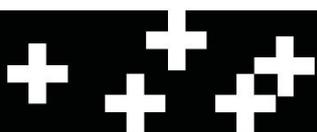
Threats At Sea

Climate Change: Fulmars are vulnerable to shifts in prey distribution due to rising sea temperatures and oceanographic changes which can impact food availability, potentially influencing breeding success and survival rates.

Marine Plastics: Fulmars can ingest marine plastics, which can accumulate in their stomachs and lead to sublethal effects, including reduced nutrient absorption.

Offshore Wind Developments: The potential impacts of offshore wind farms on Fulmars remain uncertain. Potential risks include collision, displacement, and barrier effects, as well as indirect impacts on prey availability.

Bycatch: Fulmars are highly vulnerable to bycatch in fishing gear, particularly in offshore longline fisheries targeting European Hake to the north and northwest of Scotland. As many as 9,100 Fulmars are estimated to die annually as bycatch on UK-flagged vessels alone. UK breeding Fulmars are also affected by fisheries outside UK waters, such as those in the Faroe Islands, where an estimated 9,500 Fulmars are killed annually in longline fisheries. Tracking studies have shown an overlap between Scottish breeding Fulmars and Faroese fishing



zones. It is therefore also important to consider those threats outside our EEZ as well (although this is harder to quantify).

Threats On Land

Mammalian Predators: While Shetland has no native land mammals, several have been introduced, and predatory mammals such as polecat ferrets, stoat and feral cats may be impacting Fulmar breeding success, though this remains poorly documented.

White-Tailed Eagles: In other parts of Scotland, White-tailed Eagles are known to prey on Fulmars.

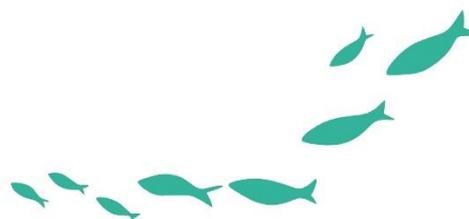
Threats at Sea and On Land

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza: Few cases recorded to date, but Fulmar have extensive foraging ranges and are largely pelagic outside the breeding season influencing the number of carcasses found.



Key Actions

<p>✦ Promote responsible wildlife tourism and recreation guidelines to minimise human disturbance at breeding sites.</p>	
<p>✦ Reducing marine plastic by dealing with them at source, as well as those already in the environment.</p>	
<p>✦ Continue to conduct long-term monitoring of Fulmar population trends and breeding success in Shetland.</p>	
<p>✦ Expand research into the impacts of marine plastics on Fulmar health at a molecular level.</p>	
<p>✦ Study the extent and effects of mammalian predation on Shetland’s breeding Fulmar colonies</p>	
<p>✦ Assess the potential effects of offshore wind developments, including collision risks, displacement, and barrier effects on Fulmar movements.</p>	
<p>✦ Effective monitoring of Fulmar bycatch impacts and mitigation strategies through rollout of remote electronic monitoring with cameras (REM) onboard all vessels operating in UK waters.</p>	
<p>✦ Develop, implement and monitor mitigation measures to minimise and where possible eliminate Fulmar bycatch.</p>	
<p>✦ Good biosecurity practices are important for this species, and eradications could be considered. Fixed links between islands may lead to more INNS on islands where they are currently absent.</p>	



This action plan was co-written with RSPB Shetland and forms part of a wider document produced by UHI Shetland, co-developed with the Shetland community and funded by the Marine Fund Scotland.

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