

## Other sea birds – Classification and adaptation

Burhou is home to many different species of sea birds. Besides the Puffin find out which other species of sea birds live on the island.



## The Gannet

Adults are large and bright white with black wingtips. They are distinctively shaped with a long neck and long pointed beak, long pointed tail, and long pointed wings. At sea they flap and then glide low over the water, often travelling in small groups. They feed by flying high and circling before plunging into the sea. It breeds in significant numbers at only a few localities and so is an Amber List species.



### Where to see them

Two mainland colonies at Bempton and Troup Head, Scotland. Big island colonies on St Kilda, the Northern Isles, Bass Rock in Scotland and Grassholm in Wales. Can be seen offshore almost anywhere, especially when they migrate south between August and October.

The Gannet is a summer visitor to Burhou.

### When to see them

They arrive at their colonies from January onwards and leave between August and October. Non-breeding birds can be seen at any time around the coasts and the main migration period offshore is during the autumn.

### What they eat

Fish

### Population

There are 218 546 nests in the United Kingdom.



#### Gannet (adult)



**Size:** bigger than mallard

**Feather colours:** black, white, yellow

**Beak colours:** black/dark grey, blue

**Beak length:** long

**Beak thickness:** long

**Beak shape:** long

**Leg colour:** black/grey, brown

**Behaviour:** part of flock, bird walks/runs on the ground, dives underwater

#### Gannet (juvenile)



**Colouring:** Juvenile

**Size:** bigger than mallard

**Feather colours:** brown, black, white

**Beak colours:** black/dark grey, blue

**Beak length:** long

**Beak thickness:** long

**Beak shape:** long

**Leg colour:** black/grey, brown

**Behaviour:** part of flock, bird walks/runs on the ground, dives underwater

## The Kittiwake

The Kittiwake is a medium-sized gull with a small yellow bill and a dark eye. It has a grey back and is white underneath. Its legs are short and black. In flight the black wing-tips show no white, unlike other gulls, and look as if they have been 'dipped in ink'. The population is declining in some areas, perhaps due to a shortage of sand eels. After breeding the birds move out into the Atlantic where they spend the winter.



### Where to see them

A strictly coastal gull. In the breeding season, look for it at seabird colonies around the UK. In late summer and autumn it can be seen flying past offshore, or collecting at roosts. It spends the winter months out at sea.

The Kittiwake is a summer visitor to Burhou. Sometimes Kittiwakes will stop over on Burhou when they are migrating south.

### When to see them

The best time to see them is on the breeding grounds in spring and summer - they arrive back at the colonies from February, staying until August.

### What they eat

Fish, shrimps and worms.

### Population

There are 372 892 pairs in the United Kingdom.



#### Kittiwake (adult breeding)



**Size:** between pigeon-mallard

**Feather colours:** black, white, grey

**Beak colours:** yellow

**Beak length:** medium

**Beak thickness:** medium

**Leg colour:** black/grey

**Behaviour:** part of flock, on ground, bird walks/runs on the ground, dives underwater

#### Kittiwake (juvenile)



**Colouring:** Juvenile

**Size:** between pigeon-mallard

**Feather colours:** black, white, grey

**Beak colours:** yellow

**Beak length:** medium

**Beak thickness:** medium

**Leg colour:** black/grey

**Behaviour:** part of flock, on ground, bird walks/runs on the ground, dives underwater

## The Shag

Shags are goose-sized dark long-necked birds similar to cormorants but smaller and generally slimmer with a characteristic steep forehead. In the breeding season adults develop a dark glossy green plumage and prominent recurved crest on the front of their head. In the UK they breed on coastal sites, mainly in the north and west, and over half their population is found at fewer than 10 sites, making them an Amber List species. Shags usually stay within 100-200km of their breeding grounds.



### Where to see them

During the breeding season at their large Scottish colonies on the Orkney, Shetland and the Firth of Forth. Elsewhere they can be seen around the coasts of Wales and South West England.

The shag is a resident bird and can be seen on Burhou all year round.

### When to see them

All year round

### What they eat

Fish and occasionally crustacea and molluscs.

### Population

There are 27 444 pairs in the United Kingdom.



#### Shag (adult)



**Size:** bigger than mallard

**Feather colours:** brown, black, green

**Beak colours:** black/dark grey, yellow

**Beak length:** long

**Beak thickness:** long

**Beak shape:** long

**Leg colour:** black/grey, brown

**Behaviour:** part of flock, dives underwater

#### Shag (juvenile)



**Colouring:** Juvenile

**Size:** bigger than mallard

**Feather colours:** brown, black, white, green

**Beak colours:** black/dark grey, yellow

**Beak length:** long

**Beak thickness:** long

**Beak shape:** long

**Leg colour:** black/grey, brown

**Behaviour:** part of flock, dives

underwater

## Great Black backed Gull

A very large gull, with a powerful beak. Adults are blacker than the smaller lesser black-backed gull. It has a heavy flight and can look quite hunched when perched. It will fight off other gulls and chase them to snatch food.

### Where to see them

Found around the coasts in the breeding season. At other times of year they can be found wherever gulls congregate - at reservoir roosts, rubbish tips inland, and bays and harbours.



The Great Black backed Gull is a resident bird and can be seen on Burhou all year round.

### When to see them

All year round - found inland most in winter.

### What they eat

Omnivorous - shellfish, birds and carrion.

### Population

76 000 birds winter in the United Kingdom. This figure drops to 17 160 pairs in the summer months.



### Great black-backed gull (breeding)

**Size:** bigger than mallard

**Feather colours:** black, white, grey

**Beak colours:** yellow, red/pink

**Beak length:** medium

**Beak thickness:** medium

**Beak shape:** medium

**Leg colour:** pink/flesh

**Behaviour:** part of flock, on ground, bird walks/runs on the ground, eats birds/chicks/eggs



### Great black-backed gull winter

**Size:** bigger than mallard

**Feather colours:** brown, black, white, grey, cream/buff

**Beak colours:** black/dark grey

**Beak length:** medium

**Beak thickness:** medium

**Beak shape:** medium

**Leg colour:** pink/flesh

**Behaviour:** part of flock, on ground, bird walks/runs on the ground, eats birds/chicks/eggs

