

Circumpolar Seabird Expert Group (CBird) Implementation Update United Kingdom, 2019

The [Circumpolar Seabird Expert Group \(CBird\)](#) promotes, facilitates, and coordinates conservation, management and research activities among circumpolar countries and improves communication between seabird scientists and managers inside and outside the Arctic.



*Seabirds Count census fieldwork in the Orkney Islands.
Photo: Tim Dunn*



Current CBird Priorities

● Country participating ● Country not participating

- The State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (SAMBR)
- Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI) (Implementing the Circumpolar Flyway Workplan)
- Implementation of the species-specific conservation strategies and action plans
- Contributing seabird monitoring data to State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (SAMBR) and Seabird Information Network (SIN)
- Circumpolar Review of Arctic Tern Population Trends
- Assessment of seabird bycatch in Lumpfish fisheries
- Murre harvest study and scientific recommendations to international and national harvest schemes
- Black-legged Kittiwake conservation strategy
- Publication: Circumpolar dynamics of a marine top-predator track ocean warming rates (Descamps et al. 2017, *Global Change Biology*)

Links with National Priorities

The UK's involvement in the CAFF CBIRD group is driven by the following priorities:

- our [UK Arctic Policy Framework](#) which has a commitment to help understand and protect the Arctic environment and is based on the principle of respect for the sovereign rights of the Arctic States, the indigenous peoples and others who live there, and for the Arctic environment;
- our implementation of multi-lateral environmental agreements which are relevant to the Arctic (AEWA, CBD, CITES and others) including related targets such as the Aichi targets;
- our desire to cooperate in the conservation of migratory wildlife we share with the Arctic; and,
- our willingness to share the data we gather, whether from the UK or elsewhere, on such shared wildlife.

*VSAS survey on the CalMac ferry to Islay.
Photo: Tim Dunn*



CBird Summary of 2017-18 Country Achievements

Project LOMVIA

The UK and Germany led project LOMVIA, which aims to investigate the roles of climate change and competition upon Brünnich's and Common Guillemots in Iceland, progressed well in 2018/19. A three-week reconnaissance of the proposed study sites was completed to evaluate practicalities and collect blood samples for stable isotope analysis. Recruitment of the project post doc and field assistants is complete and logistic arrangements for the 2019 field season are underway, which will include tracking and sampling from five localities around the coast of Iceland. This study contributes to the CBird "International Murre Conservation Strategy and Action Plan" by addressing Actions 13, 14, 15 relating to habitat recognition and the identification/protection of important areas at sea.



Thorkell Lindberg Þórarinnsson noosing a guillemot at Látrabjarg cliffs during Project LOMVIA.
Photo: Norman Ratcliffe

Seabirds Count Census

The fourth breeding seabird census will provide accurate population-level trends for all UK breeding seabird species in 2021. These will contribute to CBird's 'Circumpolar Review of Arctic Tern Population Trends' and provide the first UK population trends for Leach's and European Storm Petrels, thus contributing to the CBird "Status, trends and drivers of Leach's and European Storm Petrel populations" project. It will also provide geographic context for changes in the populations of 16 other species whose ranges span the UK and the Arctic.

Volunteer Seabirds at Sea

In 2018, the VSAS programme began and will collect seabirds at sea data from commercial shipping via a network of trained volunteers. Surveys began in 2019 on the west coast of Scotland with project partners CalMac Ferries and will be scaled up to a UK level over time. Future data and results from this programme are expected to support the progress of relevant CBird priorities and knowledge gained useful to CBird members planning to implement long-term, low cost, seabirds at sea monitoring.

Seabird Monitoring Programme

The SMP collects data annually on breeding seabird abundance, productivity, survival and diet, allowing robust breeding population status assessments to be made. These contribute to CBird priorities such as the 'Black-legged Kittiwake conservation strategy' and 'Circumpolar Review of Arctic Tern Population Trends'.

UK Seabird Bycatch Plan of Action (PoA)

The PoA aims to "Deliver a coherent approach to understand and where necessary reduce seabird bycatch in UK fisheries", having regard to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's International PoA for Reducing the Incidental Catches of Seabirds and other initiatives. An initial task has been to better understand the scale and nature of bycatch in UK waters, including from UK and foreign-registered vessels at biologically-meaningful population scales, including for CBird priority species.

Scottish Seabird Conservation Strategy

This aims to optimise the conservation prospects of seabirds in Scotland through effective management of existing and emerging threats. It will include action for CBird priorities, including on Black-legged Kittiwake.

Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI)

The UK, with co-authors from Republic of Ireland, delivered a paper at CAFF's Arctic Biodiversity Congress in Finland in October 2018. It identified the role that non-Arctic states can play in the conservation of Arctic-breeding migratory birds. UK JNCC is a member of the African Eurasian Flyway Committee under AMBI.

Survey work outside the UK

The UK charity RSPB contributed a team to assist Erpur Hansen with a storm petrel survey in SW Iceland, which supported the CBird project "Status, trends and drivers of Leach's and European Storm-Petrel populations".

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