



# Fulmar

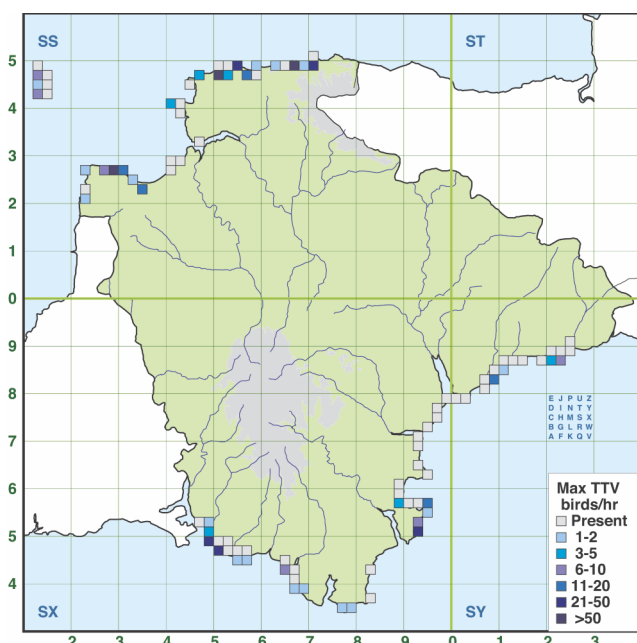
*Fulmaris glacialis*

Amber listed

WITH THEIR easy gliding flight, Fulmars are a relatively common sight during the breeding season on cliff faces around both the North and South Devon coastline. The county's first breeding record was as recently as 1944, on Lundy, and within a few years Fulmars had colonized both coastlines of the mainland.

Proving breeding can be difficult as birds may prospect suitable nesting ledges and caves for years before settling down to breed. Cliffs occupied by apparently sitting birds even in mid-spring may be deserted in June. Lundy undoubtedly holds the most significant breeding population and was reported to hold 40% of pairs (Seabird 2000). In 2009 a late breeding season survey on the Island recorded 209 occupied sites.

Winter-period abundance 2007–13



Inclusion of the 'present' category in this survey showed Fulmars to be present in 6.14% of Devon tetrads. If the 'present' category in this atlas is excluded, the numbers of tetrads with probable breeding are remarkably similar to that of the *Devon Tetrad Atlas 1977–85*. National surveys show a reduction in both numbers and breeding productivity since the 1990s with a marked decline since the turn of the century; but this was not identified in this survey.

From the end of August to mid-September, after breeding, Fulmars move out to sea where both adult and immature birds moult. During the winter most Fulmars remain at sea and are slow to return inshore, but in Devon birds generally return to breeding ledges from late February onward (and on Lundy they can reoccupy the ledges from December and hence may also have been recorded during winter surveys). Fulmars were recorded present in 94 tetrads (5.06%). 'Blue' or dark-phase Fulmars, thought to originate from northern colonies, are seen infrequently during the winter, but there were exceptional numbers, perhaps as many as 14 birds, noted in 2008 and 11 in 2012, contrasting with one in 2009 and none in 2007, 2010 and 2013.

While there is no significant change in numbers recorded between this survey and that for the *Devon Tetrad Atlas 1977–85*, the further reduction of the South West's fishing fleet and the introduction of regulations prohibiting the discard of unwanted catch may have future implications for a species whose initial range expansion was linked to the fishing industry.

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Photos: Barry Bowden (left) & Dave Scott

Fulmar sponsored by Exmoor National Park Authority



Balmer et al. 2013: 262; Sitters 1988: 50; Tyler 2010: 132