

7.1. Seabirds – Lead Partner RSPB

Main Objectives & Key Actions:

- 1) **Maintain suitable conditions for internationally important populations of seabirds including, Balearic shearwater.**
 - Ongoing.
- 2) **Maintain suitable conditions for nationally important species of seabirds including black-necked grebe, shag, guillemot.**
 - Investigate the creation of a winter protected zone from Roundham to Seven Quarries by 2009.
 - Strictly control the use of gill nets by 2008.
 - Increase an awareness and compliance with the Area of Special Protection at Berry Head - ongoing.
- 3) **Maintain numbers of breeding herring gulls.**
 - Ongoing.
- 4) **Improve data collection, dissemination and communication between groups.**
 - Ongoing.

7.1.1 Background & Current Status

Torbay is nationally important as a winter roost site for a number of bird species, holding up to 40% of the national winter population of black-necked grebes. Berry Head is nationally important for its guillemot colony, with up to 450 pairs present in the spring, forming the largest breeding colony on the English Channel Coast. The cliffs and surrounding water are as a result designated an Area of Special Protection.

Other seabirds that breed on Torbay's cliffs: Shag, herring gull and kittiwake are notable. A large winter population of divers and grebes has developed in Torbay over recent years with, for example, upwards of 100 great crested grebes being seen at one time. A winter roosting herring gull count of approximately 12,000 individuals has been counted in one evening (pers comm, Langman, 2005). The Balearic shearwater, a critically endangered species is also seen in and around Torbay.

Refer to the Torbay Marine BAP for more information.

Species to be included:

Guillemot	Razorbill
Red-throated diver	Black- throated diver
Great northern diver	Great crested grebe
Black-necked grebe	Red-breasted merganser
Manx shearwater	
Slavonian grebe	

Kittiwake
 Balearic shearwater
 Common scoter

Fulmar

7.1.2 Current problems/threats to these species:

- Noise disturbance – nesting
- Gill nets
- Need more research on stability of population numbers (especially divers)
- Litter
- Lack of systematic data collection of breeding seabirds and productivity, distribution of wintering birds and the frequency of use of Torbay and Lyme bay by Balearic shearwater, especially to determine feeding areas.
- Leisure activity disturbance wind surfers, kite boarders, water skiing the uncontrolled proliferation of these activities does affect the winter populations of seabirds.

Table 13: Seabirds Action Plan Table. Actions that require further funding are shaded in grey. **High priority actions** are proposed for completion within the next 3 years (to end of 2009). **Medium priority actions** are proposed for completion within the next 6 years (to end of 2012). **Low priority actions** are proposed for completion within the next 10 years (to end 2016).

Actions for Seabirds Priority Action Plan	Priority (High, Medium and Low)	Objective	Partners	Ongoing Action
Policy & Legislation				
S1 - Investigate the creation of a marine nature reserve extending from Roundham headland to Seven Quarries.	H	1, 2, 3,4	NE, TCCT, TC	
S2 - Establish a code of conduct on gill nets only being set out at dusk and brought in at dawn.	H	1,2,4	DSFC, NE,	
S3 - Devon Sea Fisheries to strictly control the use of gill nets e.g. code of conduct.	H	1,2,4	DSFC, NE	✓
S4 - Introduce byelaw on not feeding seagulls.	L	3	TC	
S5 – Investigate the feasibility of establishing a no launch from Broadsands for kite boarding/windsurfing between Oct – march. Implement with notices.	M	2	TC, NE	
Species & Site Management				

S6 – Investigate creating no go zones for winter leisure activities either with buoys or instruction. Put signs in carparks.	H	2	TC	
S7 - Seek to put guillemot restricted zone into Admiralty Charts.	H	2	NE, Harbour Authority	
S8 - Research into the cost of seagull bins and establish in areas where there is a known problem. Empty existing bins more frequently.	L	3	TC	
S9 - Establish significance (in population terms) of urban breeding herring gulls and seek broad consensus about management if appropriate.	M	3	DBPS, RSPB	
Communication & Publicity				
S10 - Raise awareness of the problems associated with litter.	H	4	TCCT	✓
S11 - Publicise and promote Torbay as a significant wintering seabird population site in the SW/UK.	M	4	TCCT, RSPB	✓
S12 - Increase awareness with boat operators of the guillemot restricted zone.	H	4	Harbour Authority	✓
S13 - Increase communication between bird groups, RSPB, TCCT.	H	4	TCCT, RSPB, Bird groups	✓
Research & Monitoring				
S14 - Continue to take part in the JNCC Seabird Survey at Berry Head.	H	4	TCCT	✓ (yearly)
S15 - Research and monitor the stability of the population/numbers (especially divers) and the population decline in kittiwakes.	H	4	TCCT, DBPS, RSPB	✓ (yearly)
S16 - Encourage and increase the sharing of seabird data in the Bay.	H	4	TCCT	✓
S17 – Research into the problems associated with Kite surfers and wintering birds at Broadsands	H	2	DBPS	

Abbreviations: Torbay Coast & Countryside (TCCT), Torbay Council (TC), Natural England (NE), Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society (DBPS)