



Ymddiriedolaeth Natur  
**De a Gorllewin Cymru**  
Wildlife Trust of  
**South & West Wales**

# SKOMER ISLAND NNR

## ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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# Contents

1 Introduction .....	6
1.1 Weather .....	6
1.2 Map of Skomer .....	8
2 Monitoring and Recording .....	9
2.1 Birds .....	9
Feature: Seabirds .....	9
Feature: Short-eared owl .....	12
Feature: Chough .....	13
Feature: Peregrine .....	14
Feature: Bird assemblage not-qualifying .....	15
Feature: Little owl .....	17
Feature: Canada goose .....	17
2.2 Biosecurity .....	17
2.3 Mammals .....	19
Feature: Skomer vole .....	19
Feature: Grey seal .....	20
Cetaceans .....	21
Rabbits .....	21
2.4 Invertebrates .....	22
Feature: Lepidoptera .....	22
2.5 Herptiles .....	22
2.6 Lichens .....	23
Feature: Lichen assemblage .....	23
2.7 Vegetation .....	24
3 Research .....	27
4 Visitors .....	29
4.1 Day Visitors .....	29
4.1.1 Cancellations .....	30
4.1.2 Shoulder Season .....	31
4.2 Educational Visits .....	33
4.3 Overnight Stays .....	34
4.3.1 Bookings .....	34
4.3.2 Feedback .....	35
4.3.3 Cancellations .....	35
.....	36
4.3.4 Member Bookings .....	36
4.3.5 Booking Timings .....	36
4.4 Human Impact .....	36
4.4.1 Visitors .....	36
4.4.2 Seaborne disturbance .....	37
4.4.3 Pollution .....	37

4.5 Equality, diversity, inclusion, and access .....	38
5 Staff and Volunteers .....	40
5.1 Island staff .....	40
5.2 Lockley Lodge .....	40
5.3 Volunteers .....	40
Weekly vols.....	40
Work parties.....	41
LTVs.....	42
6 Reserve Administration.....	43
6.1 Finance.....	43
6.1.1 Landing Fees .....	43
6.1.2 Overnight Accommodation Fees .....	43
6.2 Membership.....	43
6.3 Island Sales.....	43
6.4 Commercial Code of Conduct.....	44
6.5 Training.....	45
6.6 Health and Safety.....	45
7 Media, Interpretation, and Events.....	46
7.1 Media and Filming on Skomer .....	46
7.2 Marketing, Publicity, and Social Media .....	47
7.2.1 Facebook .....	47
7.2.2 X (Twitter) .....	48
7.2.3 Instagram.....	48
7.2.4 Skomer Island Blog .....	48
7.2.5 Skomer Webcams .....	49
7.2.6 YouTube .....	49
7.3 Interpretation .....	49
7.4 Events.....	49
7.4.1 Overnight Events .....	49
7.4.2 Day Events .....	51
8 Reserve Management .....	52
8.1 Management Plan .....	52
8.2 Species and Habitat Management.....	52
8.3 Buildings and Infrastructure .....	53
8.4 Machinery and Equipment .....	56
9 External groups and liaison .....	57
10 Grants and Donations .....	58
.....	59
11 Acknowledgements.....	61
12 References.....	62

## Table of tables

Beaufort scale .....	7
General summary of data on the chough population in the SPA – 2024 .....	13
Productivity in the SPA and National Park .....	14
Peregrine breeding summary (2023 figures in parentheses) – Bob Haycock pers. comm. ....	15
Monthly maximum Canada goose counts .....	17
Locations of surveillance boxes on Skomer .....	19
rabbit numbers .....	21
- Day boat cancellations from 2018 to 2024. ....	30
- The number of hostel stays booked each month for the 2024 season. The shaded section indicates when the hostel was open. ....	36
Landing fees for private landers and hostel guests in 2024. ....	43
Day visitor fees in 2024. ....	43
Hostel prices in 2024. ....	43
Overview of maintenance work carried out in 2024. ....	55
Overview of machine maintenance .....	56

## Table of Figures

Map of Skomer .....	8
Map of rodent surveillance stations in 2021 .....	18
New voles found each day and cumulative total at each site .....	20
Mean number of rabbits per hectare. Not counted in 2020 .....	22
- Number of day visitors to Skomer from 2018 to 2024. ....	29
- Total visitors numbers to Skomer from 2018 to 2024. ....	30
- A percentage of total day tickets booked compared to the total number of day tickets available from 2018 to 2024. ....	30
- The proportion of no boat days which occurred each month in 2024. ....	31
- Total day visitors in August and September between 2018 and 2024. ....	31
- The number of people on education boats yearly between 2018 and 2024. ....	33
- The number of people on education boats each month in 2024. ....	33
- The number of beds sold in the hostel yearly between 2018 and 2024. ....	34
- The number of beds sold as a percentage of beds available each month in 2023 and 2024. ....	35
- The number of full refunds given each month to hostel groups in 2024 as result of inclement weather. ....	36
- The number of binoculars hired and percentage of visitors hiring binoculars in 2024. ....	44
- Bottles of water sold in 2024. ....	44
- The number of web and press pieces about Skomer produced throughout the 2024 season. ....	46
- A word cloud of Skomer media outlets in 2024. ....	46
- Figure 17 - The total number of followers on Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram in 2022, 2023 and 2024. ....	47
- A puffin on the Wick. This photo accompanied the announcement of puffin numbers on social media and was our most popular post on Facebook. © Huia Wesling Macgregor, Skomer Long-Term Volunteer 2024. ....	48
- Skomer Music participants performing their compositions at the end of the retreat in the ruined farmhouse. ....	50

## **Data Usage Policy**

Skomer seabird demographic data is submitted to the SMP database each year. WTSWW remain committed to making seabird data from Skomer available free of charge for individual interest and academic requests and datasets can be downloaded from the SMP Online Portal. Our annual reports can also be found on the WTSWW website.

**Requests for data for commercial (development) purposes are chargeable and commercial users must contact WTSWW before proceeding to download or interrogate any Skomer data. The modest fees charged for data release contribute towards the fieldwork costs (including the experienced staff and specialist equipment) involved in collection, verification and management of data and help to ensure the security of future monitoring.**

### **Recommended citation for this report:**

Newman, L., Knott, R., Aston, C., Whittington, W. & Morgan, L. 2024. Skomer Island NNR Annual Report 2024. Internal report to The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 WEATHER

Weather data is collected from two sources. The first is the nightly island bird log where the day's weather is recorded in brief. The second is from the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) weather station on Wooltack Point on the Marloes Peninsula (51.7367, -5.2474).

Where figures are compared to an average, they are compared to the nearest weather station run by the Met Office. This is in Milford Haven (51.708, -5.055) a distance of 8.48 miles from Wooltack Point, so some differences may occur.

Throughout the season there were seven days where the wind reached or surpassed F7: one in March, two in April, one in June, one in August, one in September and one in October. The maximum wind speed recorded during the seabird season was 77mph on 15<sup>th</sup> April. It was a drier year than the long-term average with 272mm less rain falling through the nine months.

Wind data for October and November is not available due to a problem with the weather station.

**March** – The month started with variable wind strengths and directions reaching F7 from the south-east on the 4<sup>th</sup>. After the 4<sup>th</sup>, the winds remained moderate at between a F3 and F5 for the rest of the month apart from two days where it reached F6. Rain was consistent throughout the month with precipitation recorded on most days of March, leading to an above average rainfall figure.

**April** – Southerly winds dominated the first half of the month, with winds peaking at F7 on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of the month. The maximum wind speed recorded for the season was 77mph on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The second half of the month was calmer, with the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month recording a maximum daily wind speed of only F2. Wind speeds increased towards the end of the month and on the final two days of the month reached F6. Rain tended to be linked to stronger winds with the start and end of the month being the wettest periods. There was a dry period in the middle of the month, with no rain recorded from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> inclusive. The rainfall was very similar to the long-term average, as was the wind.

**May** – A calm start to the month with most days at a F4 or below, excepting the 5<sup>th</sup> when winds reached a F5. Winds reached F6 on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> before subsiding for the rest of the month, only reaching a F6 again on the final day of the month. Along with these calm days the wind direction was variable, never settling in a certain direction for more than a day or so. Precipitation was scattered throughout the month and was 10mm below the long-term average. Temperatures peaked at 20°C on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**June** – Variable and light winds dominated the month with the only exception coming on the 13<sup>th</sup> with winds reaching a F7 and a maximum gust speed of 66mph. Rain was again spread through the month but rainfall was lower than the long-term average. Temperatures were low with a maximum of 17.68°C being recorded on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**July** – The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of the month saw the strongest winds with gusts of 46mph recorded. After this the winds dropped and averaged around a F3 or F4 most days, with no one wind direction dominant through the month. There was rain recorded on just over half of the days in the month and rainfall was below the long-term average. Temperatures were subdued all month with the weather station recording the maximum temperature of 18.91°C on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

**August** – A windy month with westerly and southerly winds dominating and 15 days where winds were recorded above F4, peaking at 75mph on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Temperatures were again subdued but did reach 23.35°C on the 11<sup>th</sup> before falling below 21°C on the 13<sup>th</sup> and staying there until the final day of the month. Precipitation was recorded on 17 days.

**September** – A moderately windy month with nearly a third of the days recording wind speeds above F4. Westerly or north-westerly winds were the predominant winds recorded and winds peaked at 68mph on 29<sup>th</sup>.

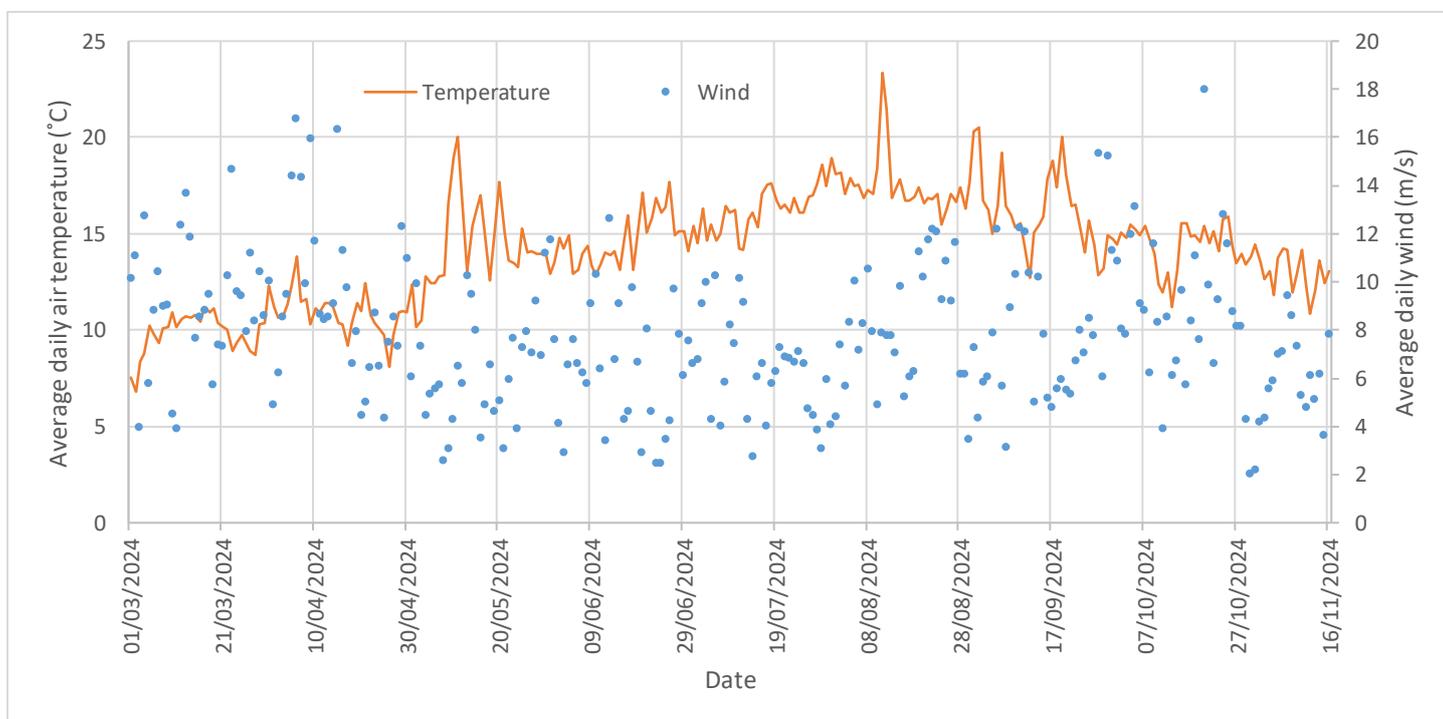
Precipitation was recorded on 18 days; however, rainfall was still below the long-term average. The highest temperature recorded was 20.53°C on the 1<sup>st</sup> and, apart from a brief foray into 20°C on the 19<sup>th</sup>, temperatures remained in the mid-teens for the rest of the month.

**October** – A moderately calm month with only nine days where winds were recorded above F4. The maximum temperature recorded was 15.87°C on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Rainfall was recorded on fewer than half the days of the month and the cumulative total was below the long-term average.

**November** – Up until the staff departure from the island on the 17<sup>th</sup>, there was only one day where wind was recorded above a F4 which was on the 7<sup>th</sup>. The maximum temperature of 14.21°C was recorded on the 6<sup>th</sup> and precipitation was recorded on seven of the days.

Beaufort	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Miles per hour	<1	1-3	4-7	8-12	13-18	19-24	25-31	32-38	39-46	47-54	55-63	64-72	>72

Table 1 Beaufort scale



## 1.2 MAP OF SKOMER

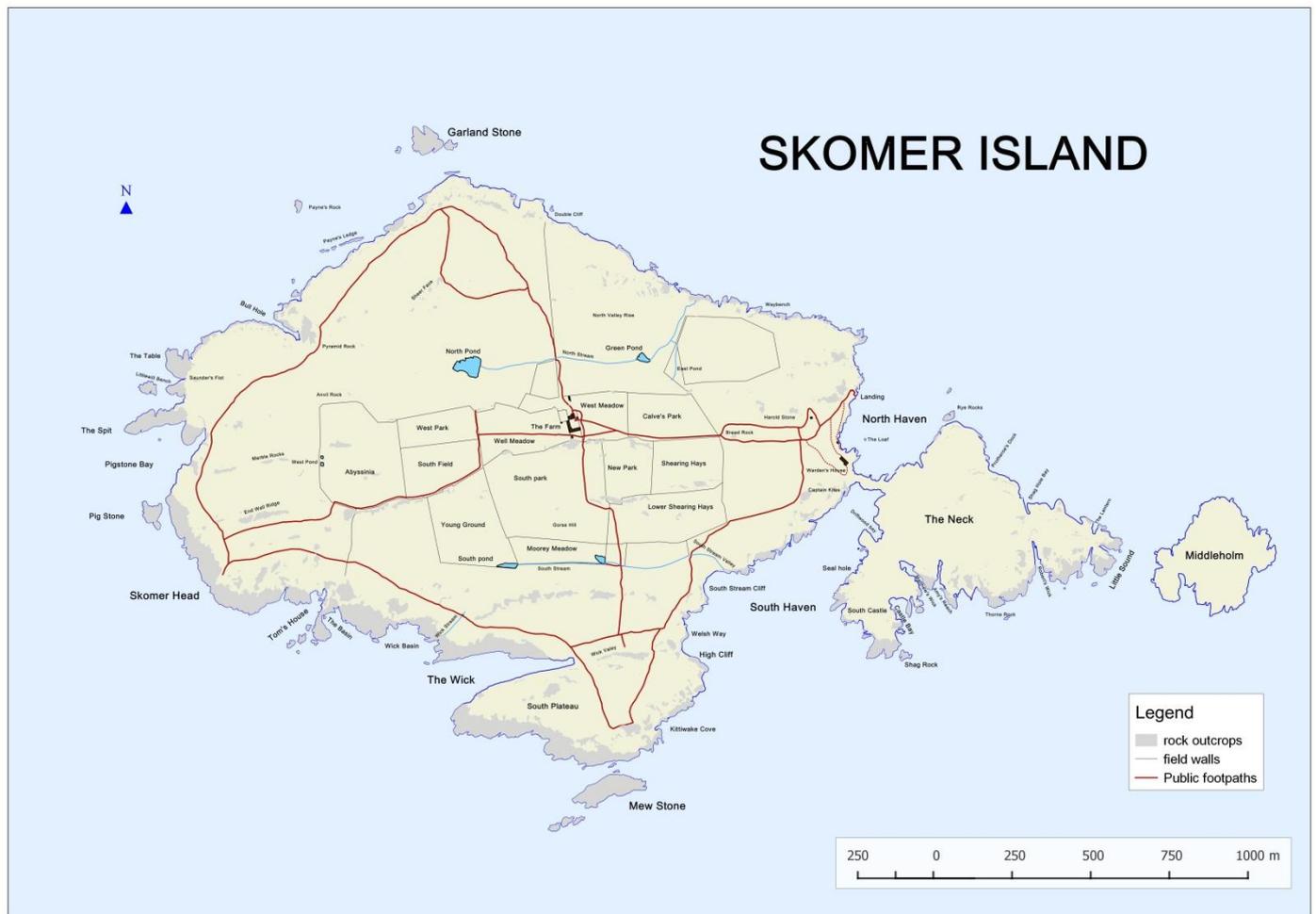


Figure 1 Map of Skomer

## 2 Monitoring and Recording

N.B – The codes referred to during this section, and section eight are codes used directly in the Skomer management plan. The management plan is approved by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Island Conservation Advisory Committee (ICAC). These codes follow a standardised system which is:

First letter

R – Recording project

M – Management project

Second letter – Further denotes the element within recording – for example RA is the recording of fauna, where RF is the recording vegetation. The number codes which follow are unique to that group, species and project.

### 2.1 BIRDS

#### *Feature: Seabirds*

#### **RA 10/09 Record any significant seabird burrow collapse**

No significant seabird burrow collapse was recorded in the seabird season in 2024.

#### **Seabird Summary**

The following is a summary of results from the seabird season on Skomer in 2024. The objectives reported here were completed by the Skomer team. A more detailed account can be found in the Skomer SMP Key Site seabird report to JNCC and BTO (Newman & Whittington, 2024).



The terms AON and AOS refer to apparently occupied nests and sites respectively.

**Northern fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*:** The whole island population was 381 AOS which is 91 fewer AOS than 2023. Overall, this is nearly 30% lower than the five-year mean. Productivity was 0.39 chicks fledged per AOS which is a slight rise on the mean of the previous five years (0.37).



**Manx shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*:** Within the standard annual census plots, the number of responses (1,366) was 286 greater than 2023. This is 3.64% higher than the five-year mean number of responses.

**Great cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*:**

RA11/32: No cormorants nested on Skomer in 2024, making it the fourth year in a row with zero breeding pairs.

RA11/33: No productivity data available.

**European shag *Gulosus aristotelis*:**

RA11/34: 11 AON were recorded on Skomer in 2024, an increase of six nests on 2023 and the highest total since 1978.

RA11/35 Four fledged chicks were noted at the Mew Stone on 17<sup>th</sup> June and one at the Garland Stone on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, with four seen five days later.

**Atlantic puffin *Fratercula arctica*:** A total of 41,605 individuals were recorded in 2024, a drop of 908 individuals on 2023 but nearly 19% higher than the five-year mean.



**Razorbill *Alca torda*:** 10,639 individuals were counted in 2024 which represents an increase of 559 individuals on 2023. This is over 12% higher than the five-year mean. Productivity for 2024 was 0.49 chicks fledged per AOS for Active and Regular sites and 0.59 for Active only sites. These figures are 0.01 and 0.05 higher than their respective five-year means.

**Common guillemot *Uria aalge*:** 29,358 individuals were counted in 2024 which represents an increase of 217 individuals on 2023. Productivity was 0.75 chicks fledged per AOS which is 0.05 higher than 2023, the highest productivity since the methodology changed in 2022.

**Black-legged kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*:** There were 1,572 AON counted in 2024 which is an increase of 281 AON on 2023. It's also over 6% higher than the five-year mean. Productivity in 2024 was 0.64 chicks fledged per AON which is 0.03 higher than the five-year mean.



**Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*:** The whole island population estimate was 5,198 AON/AOT in 2024 which is a decrease of 714 nests or territories on 2023. Compared to the five-year mean this is nearly 18% lower.



**Herring gull *Larus argentatus*:** This year's count of 246 AON was a decrease of 32 AON compared with 2023. This is nearly 13% lower than the mean of the previous five years. Productivity was 1.16 chicks fledged per AON which is significantly higher than the five-year mean of 0.50.



**Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*:** 122 AON were counted in 2024, an increase of one AON compared to 2023. This is over 9% higher than the five-year mean. Productivity was 1.44 chicks fledged per AON, which is below the five-year mean of 1.61.



**RP/01 Record severe storm effects which affect seabirds**

The maximum wind speed recorded during the seabird season was 77mph on 15<sup>th</sup> April. This is early enough that it is unlikely to have had a large impact on breeding seabirds. Winds peaked at 52mph in May and 66mph in June although no significant impacts on seabirds were noted.

**Feature: Short-eared owl**

**RA 11/43 Monitor short-eared owl population and distribution of nests**

Three pairs bred on Skomer in 2024. Birds were first noted on 3<sup>rd</sup> March with two at the Farm. The first displaying bird was seen on 17<sup>th</sup> April with further displaying observed on 5<sup>th</sup> May. The first chicks were seen on 22<sup>nd</sup> June with two east of the Farm. It is unclear how many chicks fledged.

## Feature: Chough



### RA 11/44 Monitor chough population and location of nests

Seven territories were held with pairs attempting to breed at: Amy's Reach (one chick), the Wick (two chicks), Welsh Way (one chick), South Castle (failed), the Amos (failed), the Lantern (one chick) and Payne's Ledge (unknown).

### RA 11/45 Monitor chough relationship with national trends

The following data is taken from the report 'Annual surveillance of chough populations in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park-2024' (Hodges & Haycock, 2024).

Status	Skomer Island	Skokholm Island	SPA	% National Park total
No. occupied territories	7	5	12	12
No. pairs attempting to breed	7	5	12	13
No. nests with eggs	6	5	11	13
No. nests with young	5	5	10	12
No. successful pairs	3	3	6	8
No. young known to have fledged	4	5	9	6
No. non-breeding choughs <sup>1</sup>	10-20	Up to 16	c.20	17-25

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The non-breeders recorded on the two islands during the spring are most likely to have been parts of the same flocks as those observed on the Marloes–St Ann's coast.

Table 2 General summary of data on the chough population in the SPA – 2024

Productivity expressed as:	Skomer Island	Skokholm Island	SPA	National Park
Mean no. young fledged/confirmed territory-holding pair	0.6	1	0.8	1.5
Mean no. young fledged/pair attempting to breed	0.6	1	0.8	1.6
Mean no. young fledged/successful pair	1.3	1.6	1.5	2.2

Table 3 Productivity in the SPA and National Park



**Feature: Peregrine**

**RA 11/46 Monitor peregrine population and distribution of nests**

Present throughout the season with three territories held. Territories were held at the Garland Stone, Protheroe’s Dock and The Wick. The first territorial behaviour was seen on 5<sup>th</sup> April. On the 18<sup>th</sup> April it was noted that a pair of peregrines had ousted a nesting raven and taken over the nest. This pair were then seen mating on 1<sup>st</sup> May and feeding young on 19<sup>th</sup> May. One chick fledged from the Wick on 29<sup>th</sup> June. The pair which nested at Protheroe’s Dock were territorial throughout the breeding season but fledging was never confirmed and observations at the Garland Stone seemed to point to them fledging one chick.

## RA11/47 Relationship with national trends

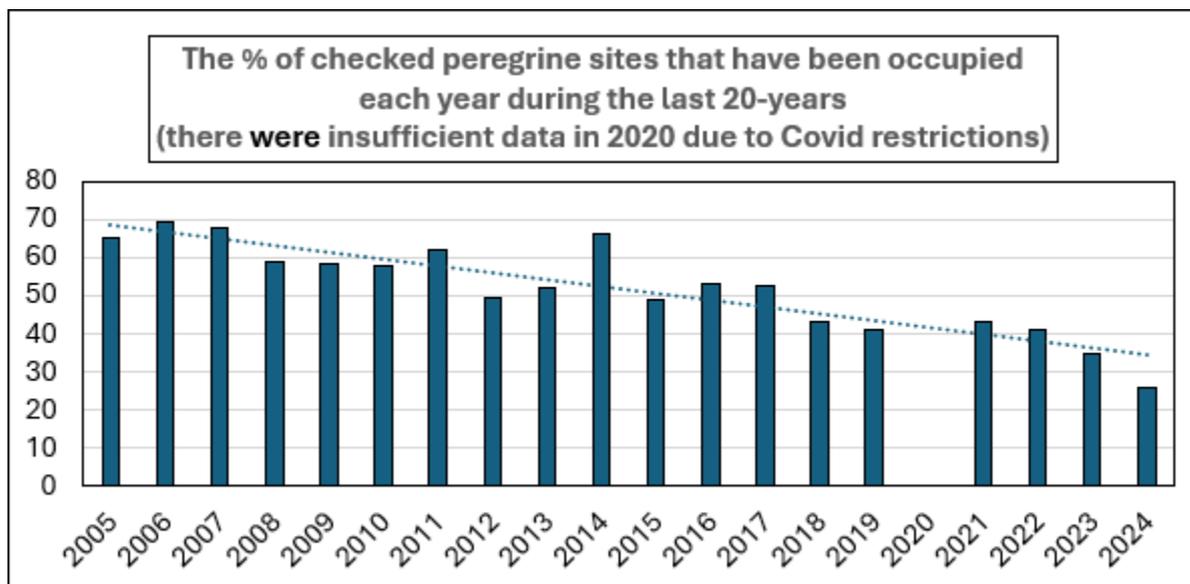
Summarised figures from the Pembrokeshire Bird Report are as follows:

No. of sites checked	No. of occ. sites	Proportion of sites occupied	Confirmed breeding	Prob. breeding	Poss. breeding	Min. No. of young fledged	Avg. productivity
85	Min. 22 Max. 31	Min. 26% Max. 32%	9	1	2	13	1.4
(86)	(30)	(34%)	(15)	(3)	(2)	(16)	(1.1)

Table 4 Peregrine breeding summary (2023 figures in parentheses) – Bob Haycock pers. comm.

The breeding population and breeding success was the lowest for more than 40 years, with confirmed breeding determined at only nine sites (cf. 15 in 2023), from where a minimum of 13 young were known to have fledged (cf. 16 in 2023).

It was noticeable during the early spring period that peregrines were absent at a larger than expected number of sites, compared with previous years. Data obtained over the last 20 years shows that the proportion of sites occupied each year has been falling steadily (see graph below).



### Feature: Bird assemblage not-qualifying

#### RA 10/05 Record bird populations which are not qualifying features

The annual Breeding Bird Survey was conducted in 2024. Bird migration is followed by the staff, volunteers, researchers, overnight guests and anyone with an interest in the subject and recorded in the daily bird log. Please see the bird report for a full systematic breakdown of every species recorded on Skomer in 2024.

#### Annual census of breeding oystercatcher

In 2024, 75 pairs bred on Skomer.



### **Annual census of breeding curlew**

Birds were present through most of the season with four pairs nesting on Skomer. The first singing bird was heard on 5<sup>th</sup> March with the first territorial behaviour seen on 12<sup>th</sup> April. The first chicks, four in Shearing Hays and two on Gorse Hill, were seen on 15<sup>th</sup> May during a whole island curlew watch. Of the four pairs, three are thought to have fledged one chick with the fourth likely to have failed.



### **Feature: Little owl**

#### **RA10/06 Record/annual census**

A single little owl was seen sporadically through the spring. First seen on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March it was again seen on 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April then again on 6<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> May. During this time, sightings were split between Skomer Head and South Field/Well Meadow. No sign of breeding behaviour was seen.

### **Feature: Canada goose**

#### **RA 10/07 Annual census of breeding Canada goose**

A total of 10 pairs nested on the island in 2024.

#### **RA 10/08 Record Canada goose in winter/non-breeding population**

Canada geese were recorded in the daily bird log throughout the season.

Month	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Max count	34	27	29	23	33	39	74	33	64

*Table 5 Monthly maximum Canada goose counts*



## **2.2 BIOSECURITY**

A network of biosecurity monitoring stations was established in 2021 to actively monitor for incursions of invasive non-native species (INNS) (Figure 2). Together with this, a biosecurity plan was set up which has been integrated into the management plan.

Every month, surveillance stations are loaded with two wax chew blocks, an ink pad, and peanut butter as a lure. They are then left for a week and checked for presence of INNS. Checks were started in March and ended in October. In total, 280 wax blocks and 126 ink pads were deployed. No signs of INNS were seen with all droppings, tracks and bite marks being attributed to wood mice/Skomer voles, snails, and slugs.

A routine check of the island by Biosecurity for Wales conservation detection dog, Jinx, was carried out on 19<sup>th</sup> March. This involved checks of North Haven buildings, the Farm complex, North Haven beach and South Plateau. Jinx also visited on 3<sup>rd</sup> July to follow up on a report from visitors of a rat at the boat landing area. No

signs were found by Jinx, our trail cameras or extra wax block monitoring so it is assumed it was a false alarm.

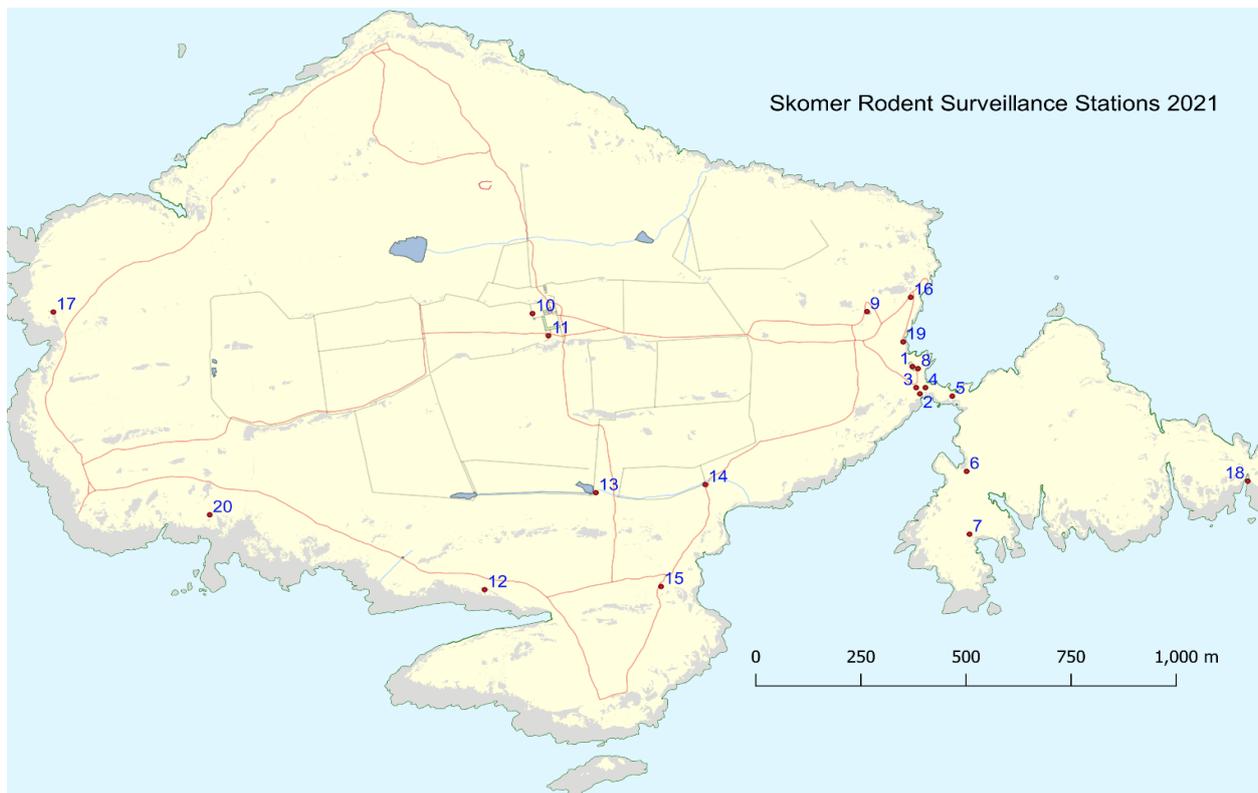


Figure 2 Map of rodent surveillance stations in 2021

Station number	Station Name	NGR	Station number	Station Name	NGR
1 (box 18)	NHV	SM7350709398	11 (box 8)	The Hut	SM7264109478
2 (box 12)	SHV Operational from October	SM7352509328	12(new box 15)	The Wick (moved in 2021)	New grid ref: SM 72497 08812

3 (box 5)	NHV Track – no longer operational	SM7351609344	13 (new box 10)	Moorey Mere	SM7275609068
4 (box 2)	Isthmus West	SM7353809344	14(new box 11)	South Stream	SM7301409094
5 (box 19)	Isthmus	SM7360209322	15 (new box 14)	Wick Valley Ridge/High Cliff	New grid ref: SM 72909 08831
6 (box 7)	Driftwood Bay	SM7363609128	16 (New box 20)	Landing Lime Kiln	SM7350309577
7 (box 16)	Castle Bay	SM7364308966	17 (New box 13)	Pigstone Bay	SM 71463 09539
8 (box 4)	NHV - Balcony	SM7351409394	18 (New box 6)	Lantern – not operational from May - September	SM 74305 09103
9 (box 17)	Lime Kiln	SM7339909540	19 (New box 1)	Boat Shed	SM 73485 09462
10 (box 3)	Compost Bin	SM7260309535	20 (New box 9)	Tom's House	SM 71835 09016

Table 6 Locations of surveillance boxes on Skomer



## 2.3 MAMMALS

### *Feature: Skomer vole*

#### **RA 00/04 Record population of Skomer voles in study plot**

Monitoring of the established vole plots (North Valley and West of the Farm) was continued in 2024 by Dr Claire Risley from Aberystwyth University.

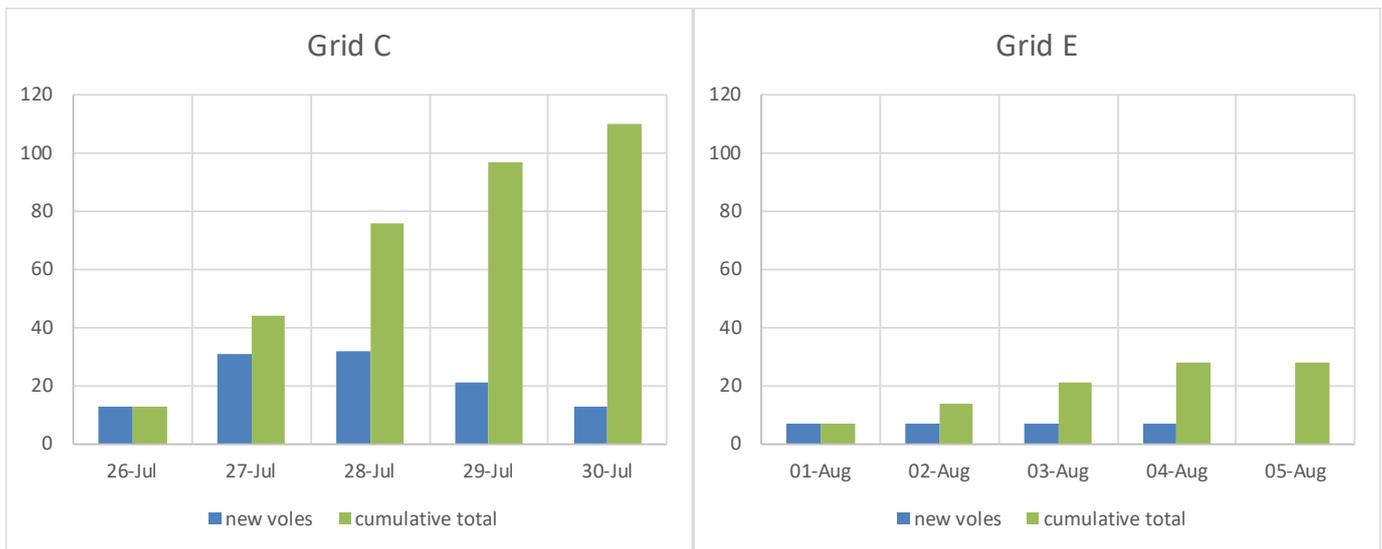


Figure 3 New voles found each day and cumulative total at each site

2024	Total bank voles found	Equivalent hectare	per
<b>Grid C</b>	110	306	
<b>Grid E</b>	28	78	

**Feature: Grey seal**

Grey seal productivity was monitored by WTSWW. E. Whatley carried out this work. Furthermore, L. Newman, C. Aston, W. Whittington, R. Knott and long-term volunteers helped collect the data.

The following summary is taken from the 2024 seal report. For the full report, please see: Whately, E. & Newman, L. 2024. Grey Seal Monitoring on Skomer Island Report for 2024. The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and Swansea University.

In 2024, the breeding activities of grey seals on Skomer Island were observed and recorded using a cliff-top vantage point methodology, with no beach access or marking of individual pups. This was a significant change from previous years, and therefore the results of the monitoring in 2024 should not be directly compared to previous years.

In 2024, 159 pups were born on Skomer island, which is 91 pups fewer than in 2023. On the Marloes Peninsula 167 pups were born, giving a total of 326 pups for the whole Skomer MCZ this year, which is 99 fewer than last year.

2024 was an early pupping season once again, with the first pup of the season born on Matthew’s Wick on 27<sup>th</sup> July. The peak of the pupping season was in weeks 36 and 37 when 61 pups were born. The most productive beaches were Matthew’s Wick and South Haven, each of which had 37 pups.

A total of 41 pups were found dead on Skomer Island in 2024 (37 pups and four weaners), which is 22 fewer than last year. We cannot confirm the cause of death of any of these pups, however abandonment has historically been the most common cause.

The maximum haul-out (on the main haul-out sites) in 2024 was 388 seals, which occurred on 22nd October. North Haven had a peak haul-out of 96 seals on 7th November. Driftwood Bay had 46 seals on 22nd October, Matthew’s Wick had 104 seals on 22nd October, and Castle Bay had 135 seals on 22nd October.

Over 40 distinct, tagged or scarred seals were photographed in 2024. 24 seals with tags and scars were identified and catalogued, nine of which were reidentified from previous years. 11 seals were photographed with obvious signs of entanglement, six of them had distinct net scars.

The longest returning cow observed this year was 17.SC.RS.092.SBS, which was first observed on Skomer when pupping in 2017. None of the bulls observed in 2024 had been observed on Skomer Island before 2023. Three tagged seals were observed this year, one was known from previous years, and one could not be identified.

**Cetaceans**

Standardised two-hour-long cetacean watches were conducted from the Garland Stone and Skomer Head. These were carried out to CBMWC methodology by weekly volunteers. 13 surveys were carried out between 6<sup>th</sup> May and 16<sup>th</sup> September. Harbour porpoise were seen on six surveys and common dolphin were seen on three. No other species were seen on cetacean watches. The 2024 data was sent to CBMWC and the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) staff.

All cetacean sightings were also recorded in the daily wildlife log.

**Rabbits**

**RA 00/05 Annual rabbit census**

Monthly rabbit counts were carried out in the study plots on the central fields, the Wick grasslands and South Plateau. In 2024, the mean number of rabbits counted per hectare was the lowest since 2007. However, it should be noted that as Bracken encroaches on the study plots year on year, the view of each area becomes increasingly obscured so that there could easily be many more rabbits than counted.

	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>
<b>Plot</b>						
Plot 1+2+3	11	4	3	4	6	5
Plot 4	4	1	0	0	0	0
Wick Grassland	29	18	3	5	17	14
South Plateau	8	4	0	0	3	13

*Table 7 rabbit numbers*

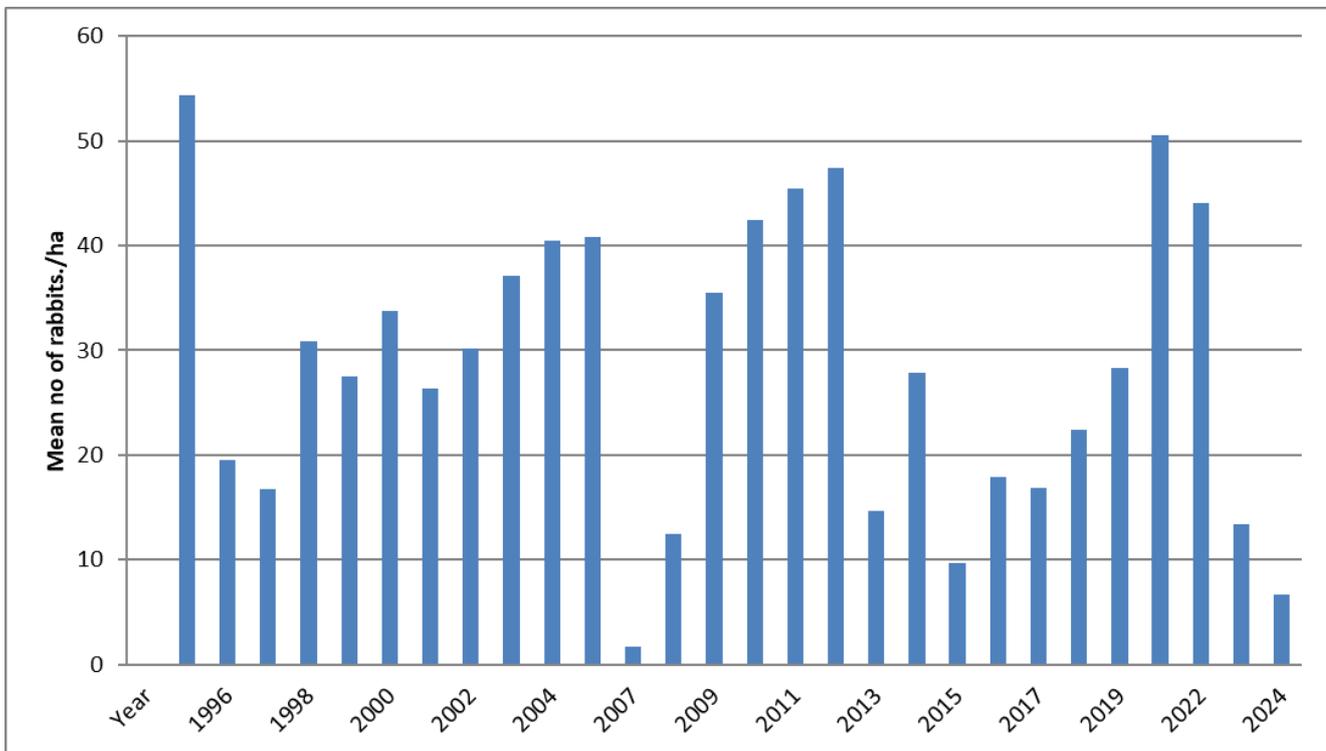


Figure 4 Mean number of rabbits per hectare. Not counted in 2020

## 2.4 INVERTEBRATES

### Feature: *Lepidoptera*

#### RA40/01 Annual butterfly transect

The island butterfly transect was carried out once a week between April and September when conditions were suitable. The butterfly transect data were submitted online to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. In total, 16 transects were carried out between 20<sup>th</sup> April and 18<sup>th</sup> September. It was a poor year for butterflies, particularly in early summer, with many transects yielding not a single individual. As with 2023, eight species were recorded. Small white, small copper, red admiral, painted lady, gatekeeper and meadow brown were recorded in both 2023 and 2024, but 2023's small tortoiseshell and peacock made way for green-veined white and large white in 2024. The total number of individuals was far fewer this year, with only 44 set against 2023's total of 144.

#### Moths

Due to power issues at the Farm, moth trapping did not begin in earnest until the summer. All moth records were saved on the Skomer Warden computer under Natural History/Invertebrates and were also sent to the county moth recorder. Highlights included a cream-bordered green pea on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, a shark on the 1<sup>st</sup> July – the first in several years – and a thrift clearwing moth spotted at Pigstone Bay on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

## 2.5 HERPTILES

Slow worms, common lizards, common frogs, common toads and palmate newts, as well as any small mammals found under the refugia, were recorded on two set transects throughout the season. The Farm transect has been going for many years and the wider island transect was set up in 2013 and has been continued since. Transects were carried out by weekly volunteers and the data sent to the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust by LTVs, who also took on responsibility for briefing weekly volunteers on transect methodology.

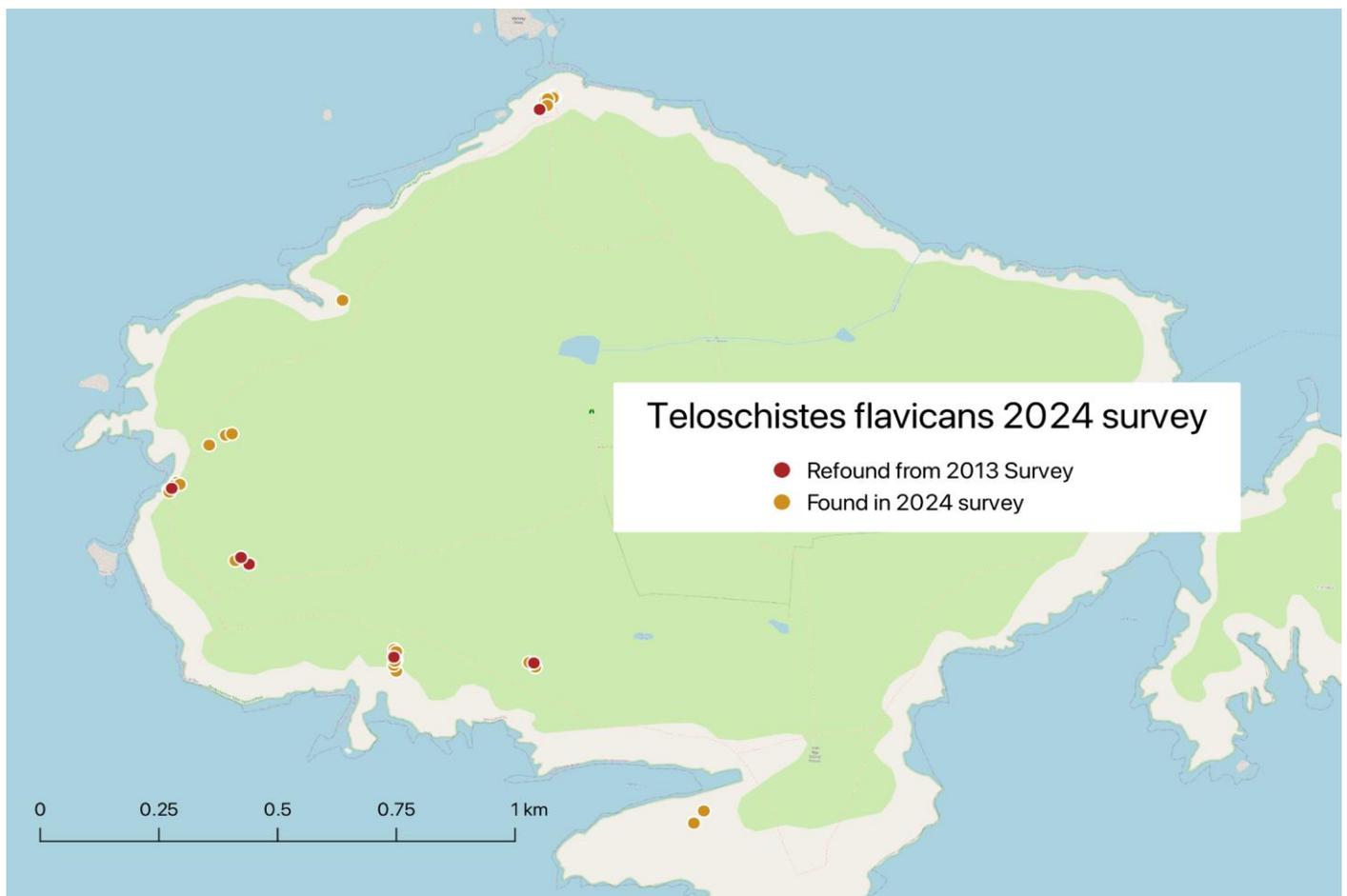


## 2.6 LICHENS

### **Feature: Lichen assemblage**

#### **RF50/01 Record rare lichens**

The population of *Teloschistes flavicans* on the island was mapped by long-term volunteers Nick Richards and Pete Richards. The following is taken from their report:



A total of eight sites were recorded. These included six sites relocated from descriptions and photographs from 2013, along with two new sites which were not found in 2010 or 2013: one at Bull Hole and the other to the East of Pigstone Bay. Where the photographed sites from 2013 were re-found, they were rephotographed to compare the distribution and conditions of the lichens.

Most of the sites recorded had an increase in distribution on both the small (on a single rock face/boulder) scale and large scale (in the surrounding area). It is unknown whether the newly recorded colonies within the same area were not found in previous studies or had grown in the last 11 years.

It is likely there are more undiscovered colonies of *T. flavicans* elsewhere on Skomer with the newly found site on the outcrops to the East of Pigstone Bay being of considerable size and having no previous records.

## 2.7 VEGETATION



### **RF00/01 Commission low-level, high resolution aerial photography**

Not required until 2027.

### **RF00/02 Record permanent vegetation quadrats**

Not required until 2026.

### **RF00/03 Photographic vegetation surveillance**

Not required until 2026.

### **RF00/04 Record of significant damage to vegetation**

No significant damage to vegetation was recorded.

### **RF20/01 Map distribution of species**

Tied to RF00/01 – Not required until 2027.

### **RF20/02 New potential invasive species**

No new potential invasive species were identified in 2024.

### **RF20/03 Surveillance – Rare higher plants and ferns (SSSI)**

Eight three-lobed water crowfoot (*Ranunculus tripartitus*) plants were found in Wick Stream on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

Portland spurge (*Euphorbia portlandica*) was surveyed on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of July. Plants were noted as present at previously known sites of South Castle, North Haven and Robert's Wick. They were also recorded at a

historic site above Amy's Reach Cave. New plants were also noted flourishing on the track to the boat shed on 15<sup>th</sup> November.



**RF20/04 Surveillance – Rare higher plants and ferns not SSSI features**

Not completed in 2024.

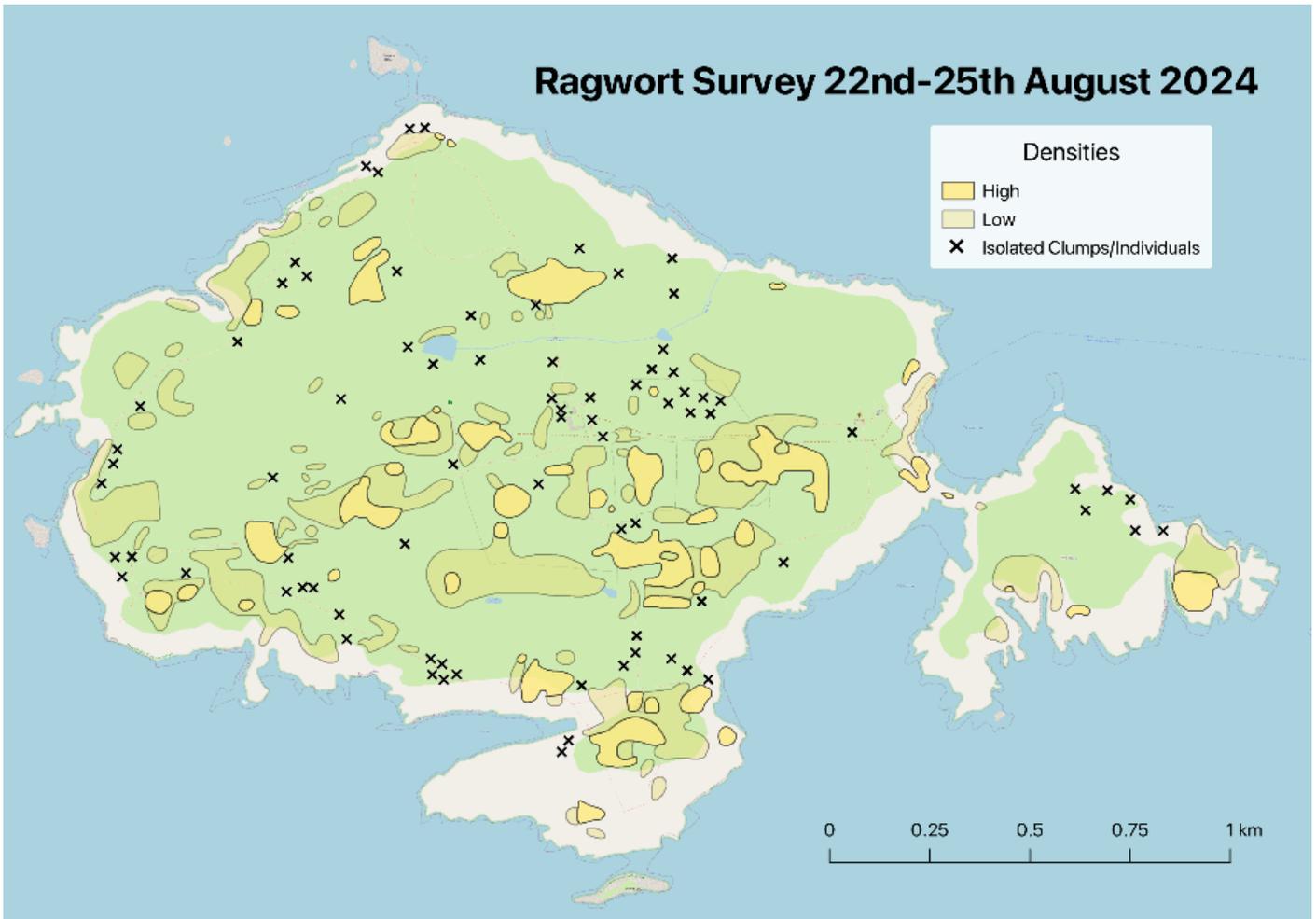
**RF20/03 Bracken invading colonies**

Not fully completed in 2024 although no vulnerable areas were identified.

**RF 20/04 Map ragwort**

Ragwort was mapped by long-term volunteers Pete Richards and Nick Richards, who also updated the mapping methodology.

## Ragwort Survey 22nd-25th August 2024



### RF20/05 Bramble

Bramble was removed from walls and buildings around the Farm to stop the encroachment onto the buildings, damaging historic features of the island, and in order to allow access to dig a hut soakaway. It was also removed within the rabbit enclosure at the back of the hostel to improve the habitat for the vegetation within this area. Control was carried out through a combination of scything, brush cutting and hand-pulling by staff and volunteers. Cutting works for a short period, whilst hand pulling, whilst more labour intensive, significantly reduces the rate of return.

### 3 Research

In 2024, Tim Birkhead's long term study (40+ years) on the breeding success and adult survival of guillemots on Skomer was continued, with fieldworker Molly Brown taking up the reins. The following is a summary of the guillemot season on the Amos written by Tim Birkhead.

After last year's double-whammy of bird flu and food shortage for Skomer's guillemots, I was keener than usual this year to see what was happening. What I discovered was a mixture of bad news tempered by some less bad news and moments of hope.

In contrast to last year when the guillemot breeding season was late, the timing of breeding in 2024 was average with a median laying date in early May. This gave me a glimmer of hope that the on-going rise in sea temperatures that we felt was responsible for last year's late breeding and poor chick development, was not going to have the same effect this year.

However, I was expecting breeding success to be lower than in previous years, for two reasons. First, with the additional adult mortality caused by last year's bird flu, the density of breeding birds was reduced, making their eggs and chicks more vulnerable to predation by gulls and ravens.

Second, an influx of younger birds taking the places of birds killed by bird flu. And indeed, lower breeding success was what we found.

As well as our regular monitoring, I was anxious to assess the impact of last year's bird flu outbreak during which several thousand dead guillemots (including some of our ringed birds) were found dead. In the forty years prior to 2023 we had had very few recoveries of ringed birds during July or August, yet in 2023 we had no fewer than six. This may not sound much, but it is many times more than previously and given that only a fraction of birds that die at sea, are washed up and found, it is indicative of a substantial mortality. The simplest measure of the effect of last year's bird flu is a comparison of the various census counts between 2023 and 2024. Somewhat to my surprise (at least initially), these showed that numbers in 2024 were not reduced as much as the bird flu outbreak had suggested.

But, for two reasons, that comparison requires some major qualification.

First, last year's census figures were artificially low because the shortage of food meant that birds spent much less time at the colony and more time at sea trying to find food. The low colony attendance in 2023 gave the impression that the population had decreased (by around 8%) when it hadn't.

Second, the more-than-usual-mortality of Skomer's guillemots due to bird flu, created space within the colony for young birds to move in. This phenomenon, referred to as 'compensatory recruitment' has been known for many years, especially after mass mortalities, due, for example, to oiling incidents in the past. Essentially, what happened on Skomer was that adult breeding birds died from bird flu and immature birds (of which there a lot because guillemots do not normally breed until they are seven), moved into the colony earlier than they would otherwise have done. These two effects resulted in the census counts being remarkably similar in 2023 and 2024, suggesting – superficially at least that the effect of the 2023 bird flu outbreak had not been as bad as predicted.

Our long-term study, however, meant that we are in a position in 2024 to gain a more nuanced and accurate estimate of the effect of the 2023 bird flu outbreak. The key measure here is our re-sightings of ringed birds in 2024 which turned out to be 20-30% lower than in previous years and indicating that this was the proportion of the adult guillemot population that died in 2023.

OxNav also continued their research which is summarised below:

The 2024 seabird season saw the return of OxNav's researchers as part of their ongoing project which aims to monitor and track the Manx shearwaters of Skomer. In addition to the regular overwinter tracking of adults using geolocators and the routine tracking of adults during incubation and chick-rearing (June and July/August), this year immature birds were also tracked in June, for the first time since 2014. Incubation and chick rearing tracking was conducted synchronously with the islands of Copeland and Rum. This year a full

switch was made to using Snapper GPS loggers, which are lighter and use less battery, allowing us to drastically increase the resolution of our data. OxNav also deployed new Ornitella remote-download GPS loggers on fledging Manx shearwaters, in order to track their movements after fledging and their first migration.

Outside of the routine tracking, this year brought several observational and experimental studies led by PhD and Masters students from Oxford University. PhD student Lewis Fisher-Reeves returned to study the consistency of routes taken by breeding adults as they return to their burrows, using an infra-red floodlight and camera to observe the birds on land. PhD student Patrick Lewin conducted a navigational experiment aimed at understanding the calibration of bird's endogenous compasses using magnetic cues. Concurrent with incubation tracking, a subset of adults were GPS tracked while carrying a small magnet, making use of the long incubation trips that the Skomer birds undertake to detect whether small navigational errors accumulate while out of sight of land.

MBiol student Bridget Harrington studied dual-foraging strategies during chick-rearing, by comparing meal delivery between short and long foraging trips to understand how adults allocate resources between self- and chick- provisioning. MBiol student Layla Sklar studied the differences in foraging strategy by life and breeding stage, using GPS data to compare the foraging behaviours of incubating and chick-rearing breeders with immature non-breeders, as well as trialling the tracking of sabbatical birds and failed breeders.

OxNav also welcomed Patricia Pereira Serafini, a PhD student from Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil, in order to study the biochemical and molecular responses of Manx shearwaters to environmental pollutants during the breeding period. This involved many hours spent walking the island in order to encounter intact and recently deceased Manx shearwaters, from which liver samples were taken for subsequent analysis of gene expression. Additionally, Melany de Boer, a Master's student from the University of Groningen, Netherlands, returned in May to help with incubation and immature GPS tracking, and to retrieve GLS from Annette Fayet's long-term carry-over effect study, which has now ended.

No puffin monitoring was conducted this year. Happily we recorded no observations of HPAI on the colony this year, and were able to work without restrictions.

# 4 Visitors

## 4.1 DAY VISITORS

Skomer was due to open to the public on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March for the Easter weekend but because of high winds we saw the first 189 visitors arrive on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March. The last boat of the season ran on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September carrying seven visitors.

Five boats a day ran from 29<sup>th</sup> March to 6<sup>th</sup> August, carrying up to 250 passengers daily, with reduced boats again running in August and September (see section 4.1.3).

A total of 22,449 people visited the island on day boats. This is a 3% decline on 2023. The drop is a result of very poor weather in April as 11/25 day trips (44%) were cancelled. Skomer saw only 2,206 day visitors in April 2024, a 48% decline on 2023's 4274 visitors. Without a poor start to the season, it is probable that 2024 would have again been record breaking as every month except May saw an increase in visitors this year.

170 private landers visited in their own boat in 2024. This is seven more than in 2023 and is the highest figure since 2018.

123 people visited us on a birdwatching trip in 2024. 117 of these people came on a Monday guided walk led by Dave Astins from West Coast Birdwatching. This represents a huge increase from 76 in 2023, a year where bad weather on Mondays cancelled almost half the guided walks. Six people visited on a Welsh learner guided walk led by long-time supporters of the island, Mari Elin and Gruffydd Jones. A second walk was scheduled for August, but due to a lack of demand this was cancelled.

When birdwatching trips, private landers and day visitors are combined, the total number of day visitors was 22,742, a drop of just over 750 from 2023. However, the six-year trend below shows that numbers remain high (Figure 5).

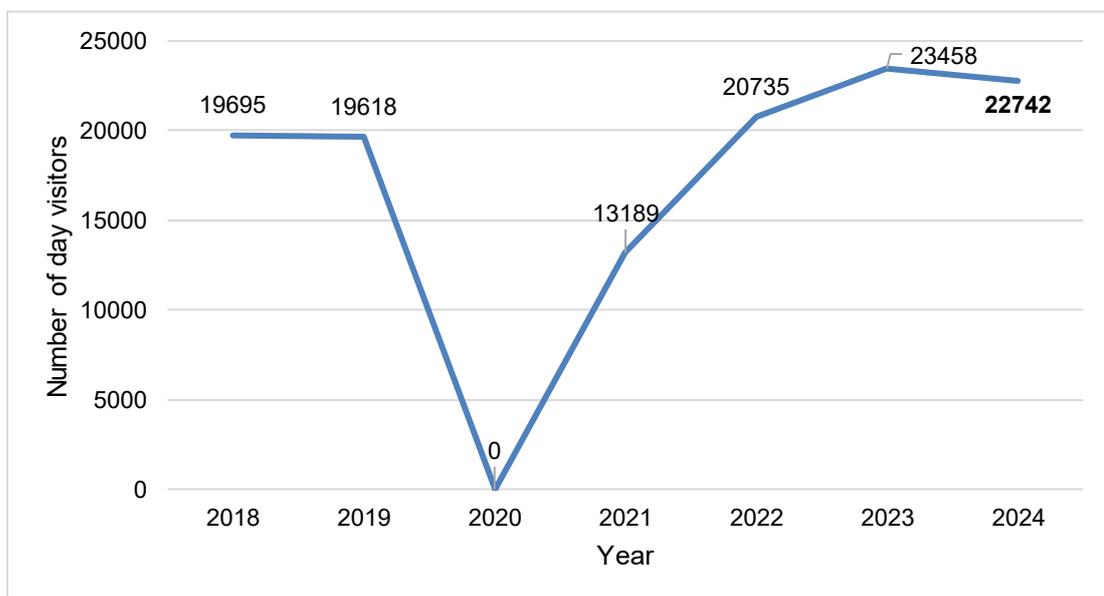


Figure 5 - Number of day visitors to Skomer from 2018 to 2024.

When added to 913 people staying in the hostel (see section 4.3), the total number of visitors to Skomer in 2024 was 23,655.

In previous years, hostel numbers have been calculated by number of beds sold (the total number of nights that all 16 hostel beds were occupied in the 2024 season). 2024 saw 2,261 beds occupied which gives a total of 25,003 visitors in 2024. This is a 4% decline on 2023 as shown in the graph below (Figure 6).

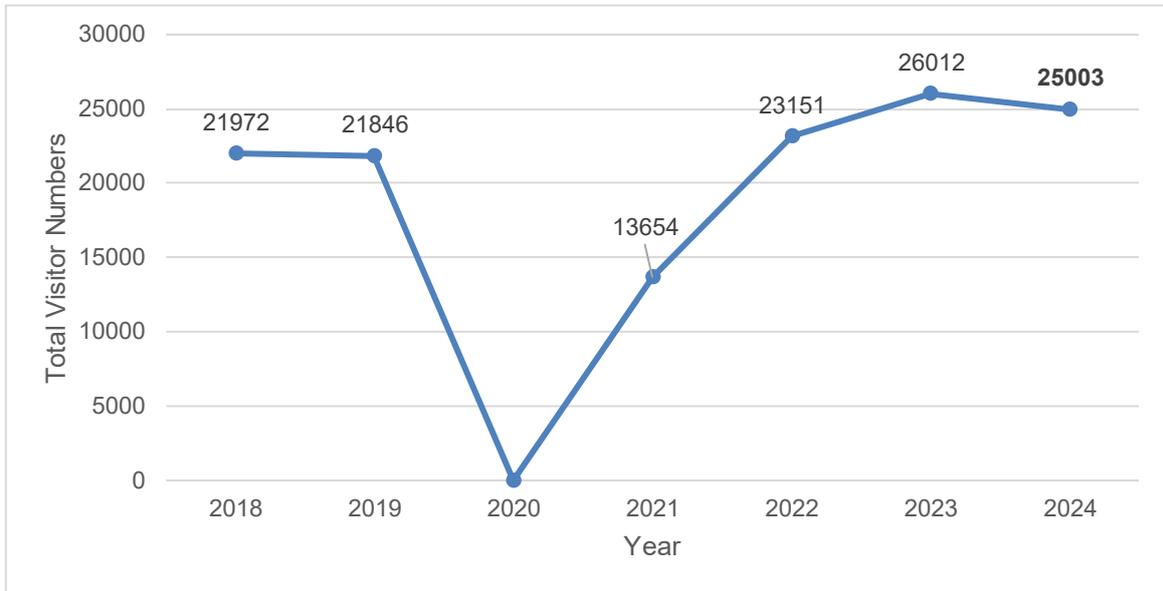


Figure 6 - Total visitors numbers to Skomer from 2018 to 2024.

As the number of maximum tickets available changes each year, the number of day tickets sold in 2024 (22,449) was calculated as a percentage of the maximum number of tickets available (25,000). This shows that although ticket sales declined in 2024 from 2023, the maximum number of tickets sold on boats that actually sailed increased to 90%, a record high (Figure 7).

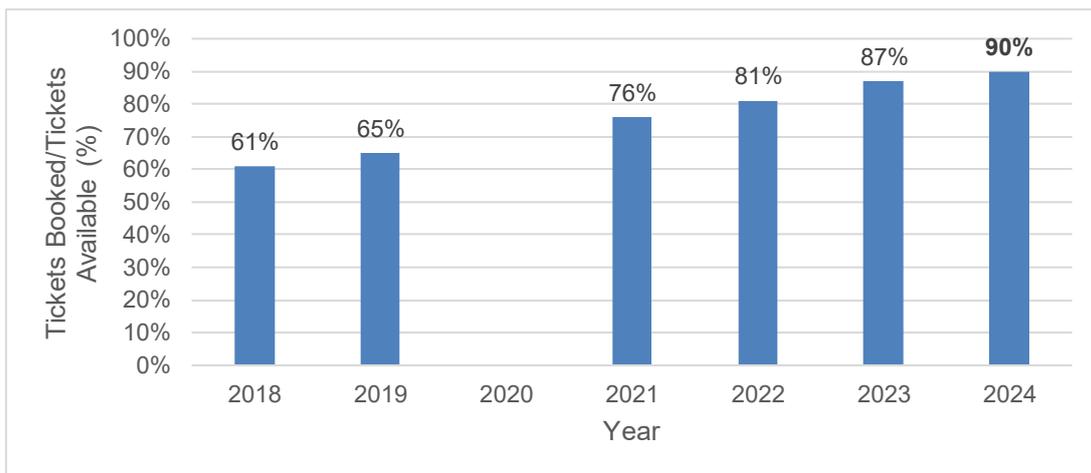


Figure 7 - A percentage of total day tickets booked compared to the total number of day tickets available from 2018 to 2024.

#### 4.1.1 Cancellations

Inclement weather conditions in 2024 caused us to cancel day boats on 34 days, a number fairly consistent with previous years (Table 8). We saw an unprecedented period of bad weather which caused us to cancel 11 boat days in April which accounted for over a third of all cancelled boat days in 2024 (Figure 8). Closed days stayed low from May to July (three, four and two respectively) with six and seven reported in August and September, as expected in the shoulder season.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	<b>2024</b>
Number of day boat cancellations	36	39	NA	32	35	26	<b>34</b>

Table 8 - Day boat cancellations from 2018 to 2024.

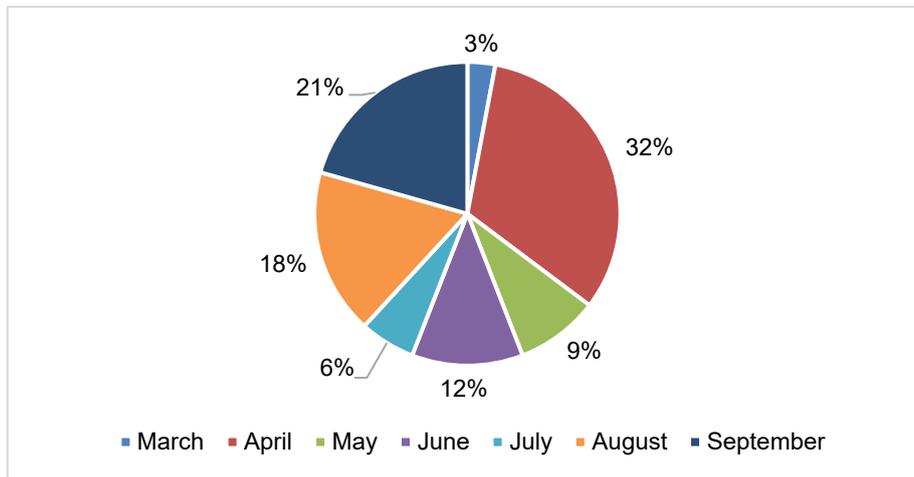


Figure 8 - The proportion of no boat days which occurred each month in 2024.

#### 4.1.2 Shoulder Season

In 2024, we again reduced the number of boats running in the shoulder season. Five boat days ended on 6<sup>th</sup> August and from 7<sup>th</sup> August to 14<sup>th</sup> August we ran three boats (150 people maximum). Two boats (100 people maximum) ran from 15<sup>th</sup> August to 28<sup>th</sup> August. From 28<sup>th</sup> August until the last boat of the season on 28<sup>th</sup> September, one boat per day with a maximum of 50 passengers ran. We continued the additional closure on Fridays in September which was introduced in 2023. This gave staff more time to work on larger island projects when the demand for boat tickets is not high and also served to boost numbers on other boat days, making them more fuel and cost efficient.

The number of August day visitors rose encouragingly from 1,739 in 2023 to 2092 in 2024 (Figure 9). This figure is the second highest on record behind 2021, where numbers were inflated by the easing of domestic lockdown restrictions.

September visitor numbers remained low at 206. There were seven no boat days due to bad weather and when added to Monday and Friday closures, we were only open for 14 days, which perhaps helps to explain this. The highest visitor number was 46 on the 4<sup>th</sup> September due to our new sellout archaeology walk (see section 7.4.2). On three scheduled boat days, no visitors turned up for the boat. It is clear that further work is needed in 2025 to boost September day visitor numbers.

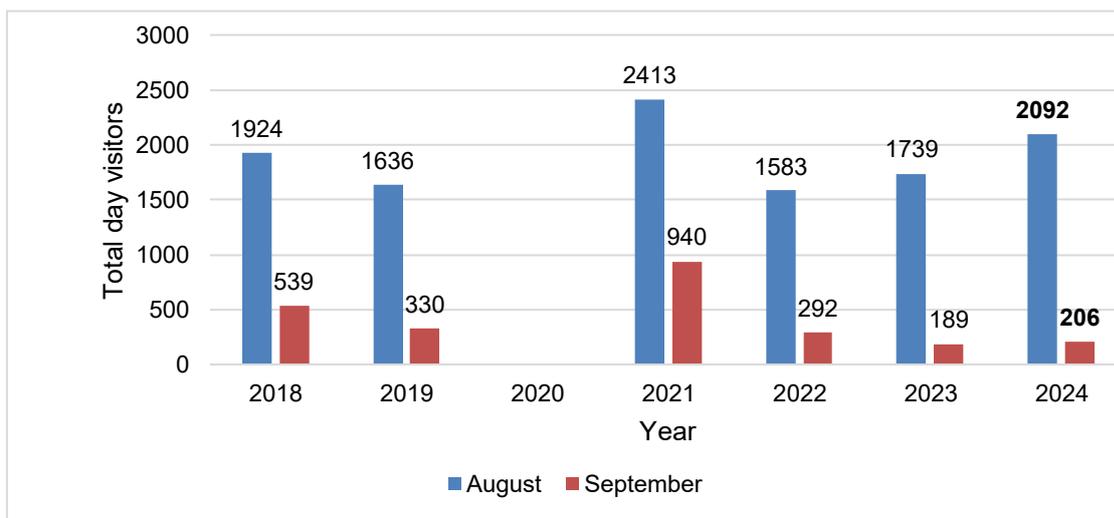
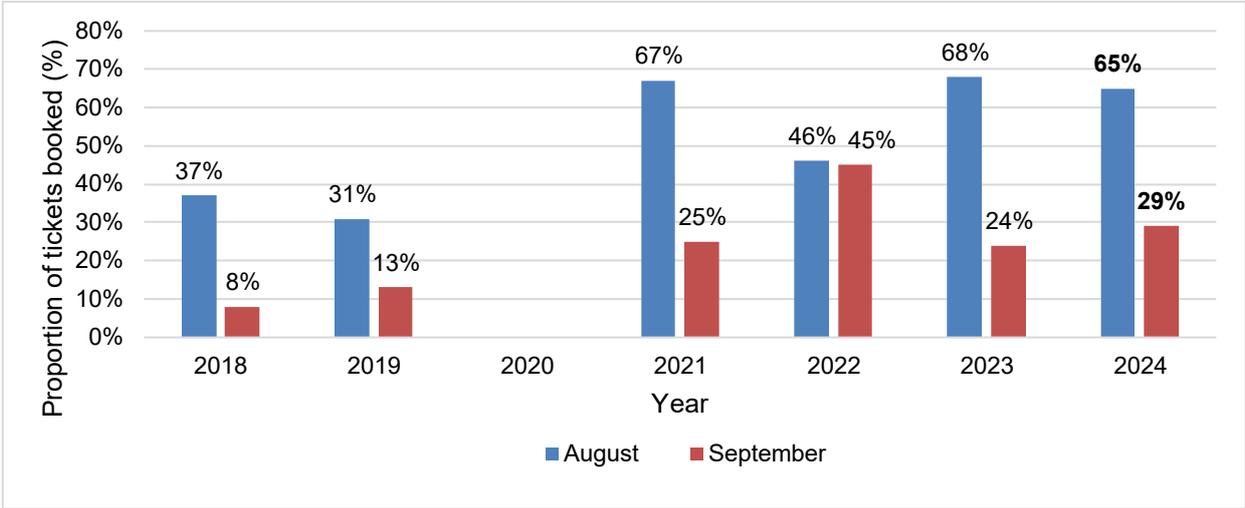


Figure 9 - Total day visitors in August and September between 2018 and 2024.

As the number of day tickets available each year is affected by bad weather and closed days, the number of tickets booked is presented as a proportion of those available below (Figure 10). 2024 percentages are very similar to 2021 and 2023, suggesting that sales are maintained despite differing sailing days.



## 4.2 EDUCATIONAL VISITS

After a reduction in education boat tickets was observed in 2023, education days in 2024 were shifted to Thursdays and Fridays to try and encourage more bookings. They ran throughout the season except for the three-week period over Whitsun. They run at a discounted rate for school and university groups to make education trips more affordable (see section 4.5).

586 people visited on education boats in 2024, a 30% increase on 2023 numbers. This brought visit numbers almost exactly in line with 2022 figures (Figure 11). This suggests that the Thursday and Friday education boats worked well. It should be noted that prior to 2020, five education boats a week were run.

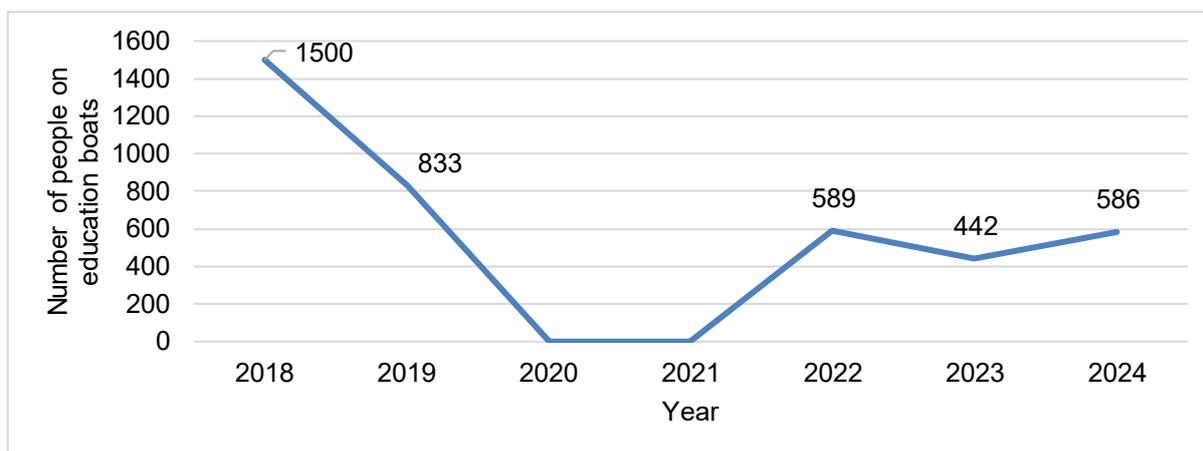


Figure 10 - The number of people on education boats yearly between 2018 and 2024.

June again saw the highest number of educational visits with 201 people. April was also pleasingly high with 188 visitors. Proportionally, only 33% and 50% of available tickets were sold respectively for May and July, suggesting further work is needed to boost uptake, for example during school enrichment sessions. No education boats were sold in August and September, presumably because most institutions are on a summer break (note, when education boats are not booked by education parties, they are re-opened for public sale.) Due to no uptake in August and September, the decision has been made not to run education boats in these months in 2025.

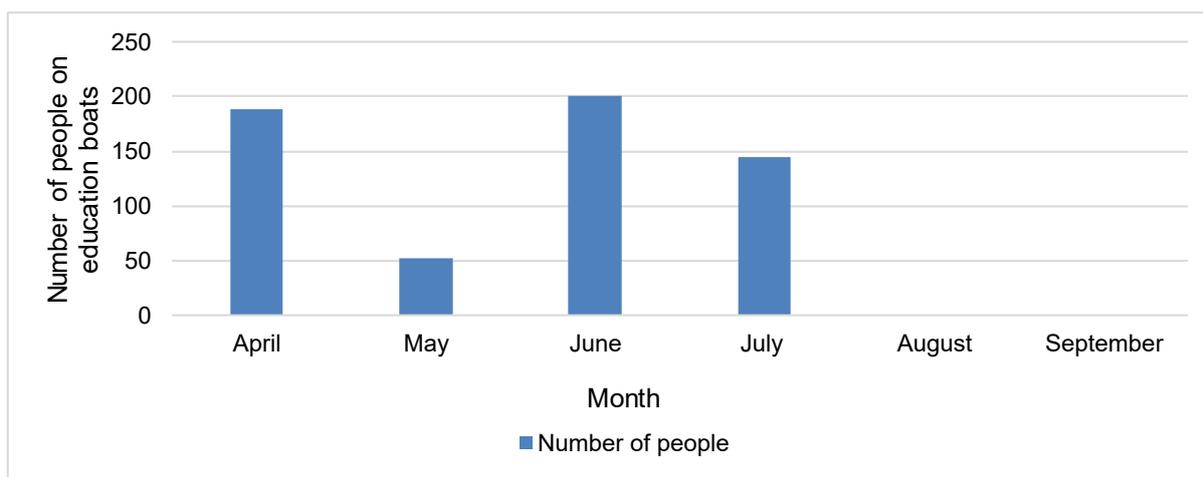


Figure 11 - The number of people on education boats each month in 2024.

## 4.3 OVERNIGHT STAYS

### 4.3.1 Bookings

Overnight bookings were taken for Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April to Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September, when the hostel closed for a work party. This was also the time scheduled to refit the hostel kitchen and bathrooms, which continued through October and early November 2024. Standard bookings of two-night stays Tuesday–Thursday and Thursday–Saturday and three-night stays Saturday–Tuesday were taken from Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April to mid-August. Thereafter, bookings consisted of event bookings and a mixture of one-, two- and three-night stays.

2,261 beds were sold in the hostel in 2024. Note, beds sold refers to the total number of nights that all 16 hostel beds were occupied in the 2024 season. This figure equates to 913 individuals staying. The graph below shows that bed occupation is around 300 lower than 2023 and the lowest since 2019 (discounting lockdown years).

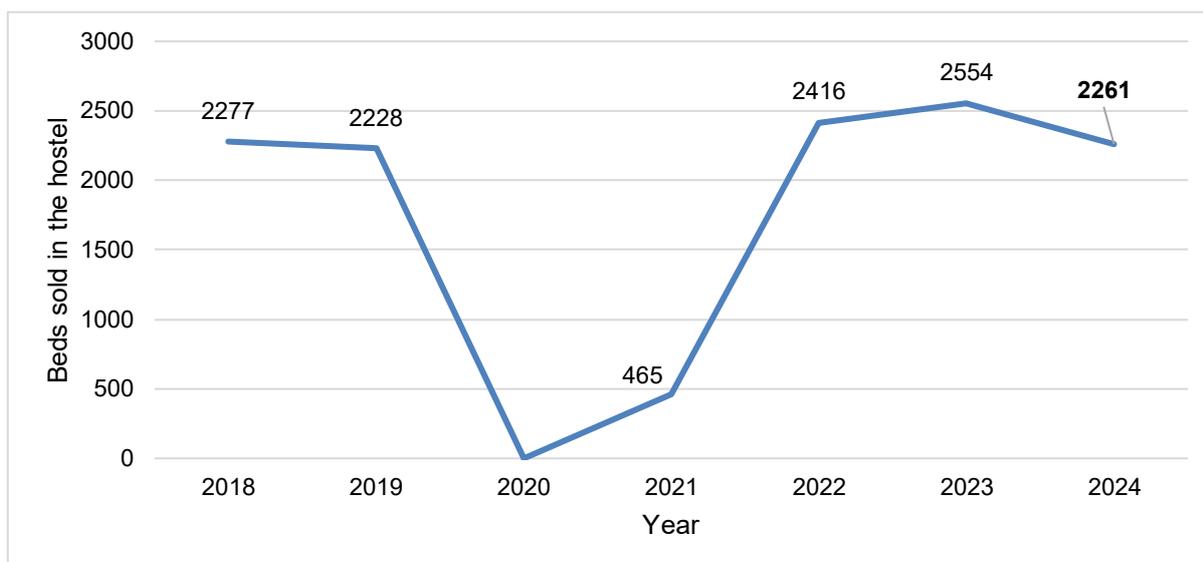


Figure 12 - The number of beds sold in the hostel yearly between 2018 and 2024.

Figure 13 shows the number of beds sold each month as a proportion of those available in 2023 and 2024. April saw only 59% occupation, a huge drop from 73% in 2023. However, without cancellations due to weather (see section 4.3.3), April would have seen its highest ever occupation at 93%. June also had a 10% decline in occupation due to weather, which suggests that without the impact of weather there would not have been a decline.

In total, 2,912 beds were available and 2,261 were sold which is 77% occupation. Whilst this is down 7%, we could have expected a far greater impact of weather. This smaller percentage perhaps reflects the increased number of people attending events softening the weather impact (see section 7.4.1), as August and September only saw a slight drop in occupation to 67% and 65% respectively despite weather impacts. This highlights why these events continue to fill beds in the shoulder season whilst also being vitally important for education and public engagement.

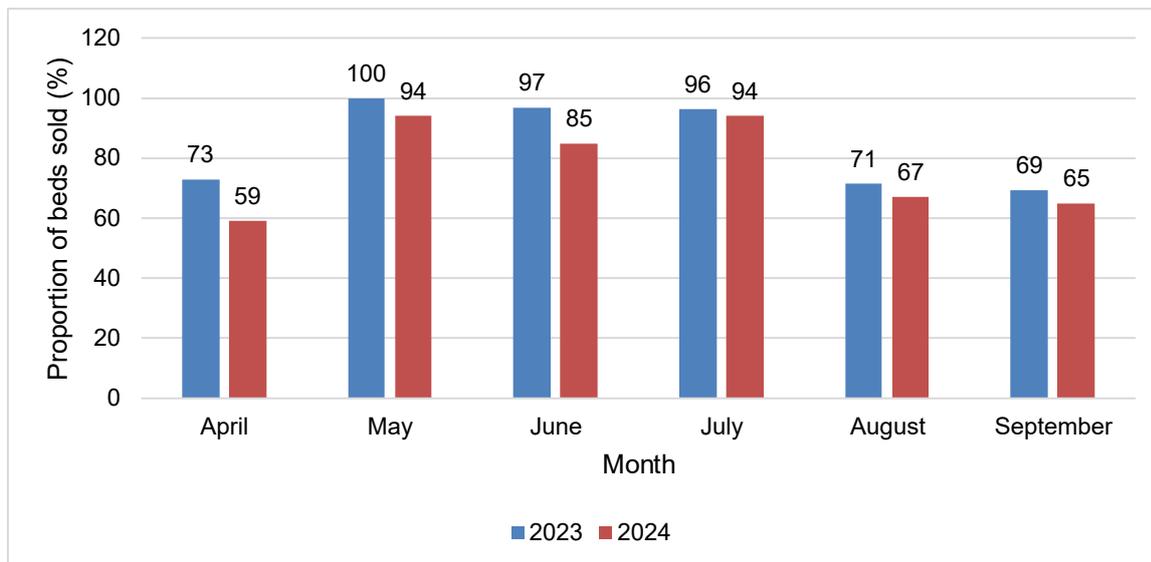


Figure 13 - The number of beds sold as a percentage of beds available each month in 2023 and 2024.

### 4.3.2 Feedback

Hostel feedback was not received in a quantifiable form in 2024, though comments were largely positive. A visitor book was added to the hostel lounge in 2024. Some guests' comments can be seen below.

*Magical island and as always incredible staff and atmosphere. Thank you for everything you do and sacrifice for the island.*

*Wonderful to be back on Skomer. My spiritual home, I would live here if able. Thank you to all the staff, both professional and volunteers, for helping to the stay memorable. My highlights – from the minute I got off the boat to when I left, one long highlight! Thank you.*

*May the Trust continue to share this special place for years to come. Thank you to the knowledgeable staff, wonderful volunteers and fellow guests who made this visit something so memorable. My first visit but hopefully won't be my last. So many wonderful memories.*

The only repeated concerns lay with the tired state of the hostel kitchen and bathrooms, both of which will be addressed with the refit in late 2024. We hope to address concerns about the dampness in the downstairs bedrooms in 2025 – this was moved from the 2024 work plan because of the refit.

### 4.3.3 Cancellations

43 full refunds were issued to hostel groups in 2024 as a result of inclement weather which is significantly higher than 27 refunds in 2023. 24/42 of these refunds occurred in April (Figure 14). No refunds were given in July or August.

61 partial refunds (leaving a night early because of incoming bad weather) were also issued, totalling 104 refunds offered to groups in 2024. This equated to 308 unoccupied bed spaces.

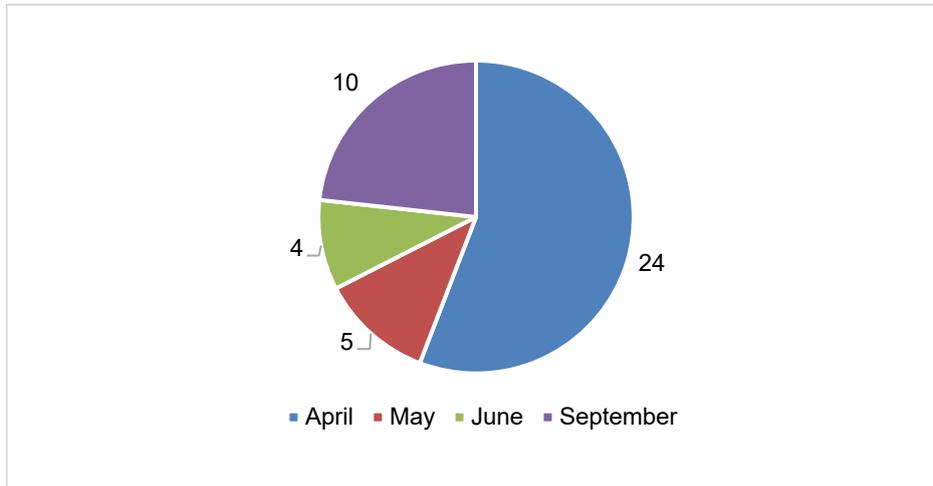


Figure 14 - The number of full refunds given each month to hostel groups in 2024 as result of inclement weather.

### 4.3.4 Member Bookings

Exactly 200 member bookings were taken for hostel stays in 2024, a huge rise from 113 in 2023.

### 4.3.5 Booking Timings

Table 9 shows the number of hostel stays which were booked in each month for the 2024 season, from the start of booking opening in October 2023 to September 2024 (this includes all bookings taken, regardless of whether refunds were subsequently offered). Of 423 total bookings, 283 (67%) occurred in October. Only 49 bookings (12%) occurred after the hostel opened in April. This highlights the pressure on the booking system in October each year and work is currently being done to review this before 2026 bookings open.

Month	Bookings Taken
Oct.23	283
Nov.23	28
Dec.23	21
Jan.24	19
Feb.24	11
Mar.24	12
Apr.24	10
May.24	8
Jun.24	7
Jul.24	9
Aug.24	12
Sep.24	3
Total	423

Table 9 - The number of hostel stays booked each month for the 2024 season. The shaded section indicates when the hostel was open.

## 4.4 HUMAN IMPACT

### 4.4.1 Visitors

The welcome talk to all day visitors and private landers remained unchanged in 2024 with the emphasis on remaining on the path at all times and minimising disturbance to wildlife by keeping their distance and letting nesting birds have priority. Visitors were asked to navigate the island in an anticlockwise direction to minimise pressure on the Wick and to avoid people passing on narrow paths. Hostel guests received a similar talk, split between the welcome point and the accommodation, with an extra emphasis on how to watch wildlife at night safely to avoid disturbance to Manx shearwaters, common toads and other nocturnal species.

During daylight hours, the island was regularly patrolled by staff and volunteers. Two weekly volunteers were always on “walk and talk” where they walked the island, spoke to visitors and helped to mitigate human impact where needed. During the puffin season, weekly volunteers were stationed at the Wick and also at High Cliff where increased puffin numbers has led to greater numbers of people off path on the banks. A greater staff and volunteer presence here somewhat alleviated the impact at High Cliff this year.

Disturbance is discussed daily at bird log and any disturbance noted by staff, volunteers or hostel guests recorded in the log. As with previous years, people off paths and collapsed burrows are the two most common types of disturbance noted.

#### **4.4.2 Seaborne disturbance**

There were multiple incidents of seaborne disturbance noted in 2024. These incidents consisted of passenger boats, fishing boats, jet skis, kayaks and tenders in too close to the breeding cliffs. Where possible, contact was made with the vessels to ask them to stay further away from sensitive areas in the breeding season. Several people were spoken to by staff whilst out on the island boat. In autumn, boats occasionally enter the voluntary no entry zones in South and North Haven but no major disturbance was noted. All seaborne disturbance data is made available to the NRW’s Marine Conservation Zone team at Martin’s Haven.

Marine disturbance observed and recorded by visitors, staff and volunteers at bird log included seal entanglement and boats too close to breeding seabirds and seals.

#### **4.4.3 Pollution**

No major pollution incidents were reported in 2024.

## 4.5 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESS

The Skomer team are pleased to have continued efforts to improve access to the island. We continue to work on a local level to tackle some of the barriers to inclusion and diversity which are often encountered across the conservation sector. More on our commitment to EDI and Accessibility can be found on [the Skomer website](#).

**Accessible boat trips:** Led by Lisa Morgan, we were excited to support the introduction of boat trips designed as an opportunity for disabled people, along with their carers and companions, to experience the islands' wildlife. These trips were funded by the Nature Networks fund and run in partnership with Pembrokeshire Islands. Due to weather conditions, only two of the four trips ran with 20 visitors, but these received hugely positive feedback. More events are planned in 2025. Thanks to Katie-Lee and Gareth from Dale Sailing; Grace Hunt; and volunteer guides Shirley, Mike, Dave, and Marianne. This scheme was awarded the Dame Mary Smieton EDI award in November for giving 'access to nature to a group where access was not possible at all before'. The prize money from this will go towards running these events in the future.

**Long-term volunteers:** In 2024 we continued to cover travel and parking expenses and provide kit for LTVs (introduced 2022). We continue to try to increase the accessibility of this opportunity for early career conservationists for whom finance could be a barrier. The early-season LTVs completed first aid training and ATV training, the seabird monitoring volunteer completed his RYA Level 2 Powerboat training and both late-season LTVs completed ATV training. In response to the increased cost of living and with information on LTV expenditure on basic living costs having been gathered over several years, we are grateful to the Friends of Skokholm and Skomer for increasing the bursary to £350 for the 3-month LTVs and maintaining the £250 bursary for the seabird monitoring LTV. All five long-term volunteers benefitted from the bursary on completion of a research project and report.

**Weekly volunteers:** Through the Skalmey Bursary, we continued to cover the volunteer fee for weekly volunteers who might not otherwise be able to afford to come. We ensured clear communication about this option and three volunteers benefitted from the scheme.

**Education boats:** We continued to offer boats at subsidised rates for schools and education groups. School-age child tickets (up to 16s) are £12 for a combined boat fare and landing ticket with accompanying adults paying £20. College and university student tickets are £20 per head. These were available two days a week outwith a three-week period over Whitsun.

**Black2Nature:** We ran the island's second Black2Nature residential, aiming to better understand and to help redress some of the barriers for people of colour in accessing the countryside. A group of 11 visibly minority ethnic young people aged between 10 and 18 spent three nights on the island, and engaged in activities including moth trapping, Manx shearwater chick weighing, small mammal trapping and more. The event was funded by the Nature Networks fund, subsidised by WTSWW, and supported by Marianne and Beth from Team Wilder, LTVs Nick and Pete, a stellar group of weekly volunteers, and Bridget, Layla and Lewis from OxNav.



**Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE):** We continued to work with the local DofE group and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) to encourage participation on Skomer as part of our aim to address barriers to access locally. Unfortunately, the scheduled volunteering day with Bronze and Silver participants was cancelled due to the weather. Six local DofE Gold participants completed weekly volunteering for the residential component of their awards. Priority is given to Pembrokeshire residents, particularly those for whom finance is a barrier to visiting Skomer.

**Young Birders' Week:** The team ran a second very successful Young Birders' Week for naturalists aged 18 to 25 years. Accommodation costs were subsidised by WTSWW. Additional funding from Pembrokeshire Bird Group and the Nature Networks fund, as well as reduced boat fees by Dale Sailing, allowed 16 young people to visit the island at a total cost of £50 for a three-night stay. Despite a tumultuous run of weather, those who were able to attend enjoyed Manx shearwater chick weighing, Skomer vole trapping, moth trapping, cetacean spotting and a bird race competition. Since attending, several participants have applied to return as weekly volunteers.

Had the cost been any more than it was I would have had to dream on... I would have no spectacular experience, no shearwater memories, or landscape photographs, without that initial overnight landing trip in 2023. Without the Young Birders I would feel much more alone in this niche field, much less qualified to talk all things bird – and have spent a lot more time stuck inside instead of on the island I most remember for its powerfully resetting nature – Ellie Holley

**Welsh language:** We continued efforts to improve and embed our use of the Welsh language on Skomer. AW Ceris Aston, Warden Leighton Newman and VO Rob Knott are all learning Welsh and the team continue to incorporate some Welsh into welcome talks and on social media. Mari Elin and Gruffydd Jones ran another Welsh learner guided walk on 22<sup>nd</sup> July which received excellent feedback.

**LGBTQ+ inclusion:** We held Skomer's first island Pride on 5<sup>th</sup> July, both as a celebration of the LGBTQ+ members of the island community, near and far, and as an affirmation of our stance against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Thanks to Brenna Jessie, SLC, for her support on this event. We continue to review job, volunteering and booking forms to ensure correct and inclusive terminology and make our inclusion more explicit. We received positive feedback about the inclusion of a pronoun category on forms from a non-binary volunteer. Team members opted to add pronouns to their email signatures signalling an LGBTQ+ inclusive workplace. Pronoun pins were made available to all staff, researchers and volunteers who wished to wear them.



**Digital accessibility:** Alternative text (alt text) describing images and captions on videos continued to be added to live media across social media channels and our island blog to make content accessible for those using screen readers.

**Physical accessibility:** We continued efforts to make Skomer more physically accessible. Written versions of welcome talks were introduced by VO Rob Knott this year. These were used frequently and received positive feedback in 2024 by visitors who were deaf and hard of hearing.

## 5 Staff and Volunteers

### 5.1 ISLAND STAFF

Warden Leighton Newman, Assistant Warden Ceris Aston, and Visitor Officer Rob Knott, moved out to Skomer on 28<sup>th</sup> February. Will Whittington joined the team on 17<sup>th</sup> April as Seabird Fieldworker and remained part of the team for the rest of the season, funded through the Shared Prosperity fund to assist with the capital works on the island. Rob left on 23<sup>rd</sup> October and Ceris and Will remained on the island until 16<sup>th</sup> November.



### 5.2 LOCKLEY LODGE

Chrissy and Gary Eade ran Lockley Lodge in 2024. The Lockley Lodge team worked extremely hard throughout the season and the island could not have run as smoothly without their hard work.

### 5.3 VOLUNTEERS

#### *Weekly vols*

We had a total of 140 volunteers over 27 weeks, carrying out public engagement, cleaning, lifting, shifting, maintenance, vegetation management, and wildlife monitoring throughout the season. We're incredibly grateful to the Skomer volunteers, whose hard work, humour and enthusiasm contribute not only to visitors' experience of the island but to the lives of all who live and work there.



## **Work parties**

Spring work party: From the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, a work party set to with a range of projects on the island. In just a week, the team successfully completed boardwalk and handrail construction at Moorey Mere, carried out extensive hide repairs at North Pond Public Hide, and created new seating at the landing area. Many thanks to Martin Pratt, Nigel Saverton, Dean Maiden, Gruffydd Jones, and Mari Elin Jones.



Autumn work party: From 21<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September, Leighton, Will and a team of volunteers were kept very busy preparing for the arrival of the builders. Concrete mortar was chipped out of interior walls in the hostel kitchen, bathrooms and upstairs corridor ready for replacement lime mortar which will allow the building to breathe and reduce the build-up of condensation. The hostel bathrooms, kitchen and the volunteer shower were gutted ready for refurbishment. At North Haven, all rotten timbers in the balcony were removed for replacement in the spring, and shelving was installed in the research accommodation. Extensive repairs were also carried out to the dam at Moorey Mere. A phenomenal effort all round – many thanks to Martin Pratt, Cliff Roe, Sabine Isaac, Frank Roe, and Myfanwy Jenkins.



## LTVs

2024 once again saw four long-term volunteers join us. Huia Wesling Macgregor and Michael Slack joined us from 23<sup>rd</sup> March to 6<sup>th</sup> July and Nick Richards and Peter Richards joined us from 6<sup>th</sup> July to Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September. They were involved in monitoring seabirds, seals, cetaceans, reptiles, moths and vegetation. In addition, they helped with a busy programme of public engagement, maintenance tasks, running events, supervising and instructing weekly volunteers and writing content for the blog and social media. Unlike previous years in which LTVs designed and ran their own projects, this year we pinpointed projects which would be of particular interest to the ongoing monitoring work of the island.

Huia carried out monitoring of the breeding curlew. Along with many solo curlew watching trips, she organised a whole island observation of breeding habitat to home in on breeders. She identified three definite nest sites. In addition to this project, she also assisted the Seabird Fieldworker with razorbill plots at Bull Hole.

Mike undertook two corvid monitoring projects. For jackdaw, he identified as many confirmed nest sites as possible around the island – a challenging yet informative venture which gave us a far better understanding of their numbers. He also mapped the chough roosts on Skomer and confirmed seven attempted nest sites.

Nick and Pete undertook joint island projects. They mapped the ragwort on the island and produced a useful record map. They also re-mapped golden hair lichen for the first time since 2013. In addition, they repaired and replaced the North Valley Willows boardwalk. This job took a lot of time to build, carry and fix pieces in the mud and was well executed.

We were also joined by seabird monitoring volunteer (SMV) Dylan Martin from 21<sup>st</sup> May until 23<sup>rd</sup> June. He was a valued member of the team, assisting with cliff-nesting species counts from land and sea and also carrying out Manx shearwater censuses. His help, enthusiasm and good humour were greatly appreciated during the busy seabird season.

The Friends of Skokholm and Skomer provide a grant upon the completion of a report. This year, they generously increased this to £350 for the four LTVs (with the SMV receiving £250 as before). This reflected the increased cost of living and aimed to offset the financial pressures of volunteering for a long period of time.

In addition to the grant, we were able to buy each LTV footwear and pay for travel expenses to and from the island. A certified training course was also booked for each volunteer. Michael and Huia undertook Sit-In ATV and First Aid courses, Dylan gained his RYA Powerboat Level 2 qualification and Peter and Nick took a Sit-In ATV course.

We are extremely grateful to all five volunteers for their enthusiasm and commitment – their help was vital in helping the island to run smoothly and they really embedded themselves well as part of the island team. We wish them all the very best for the future.



Figure 16 - 2024 Skomer LTVs. Left - Peter and Nick (second half LTVs). Middle - Michael and Huia (first half LTVs). Right - Dylan (seabird monitoring volunteer).

# 6 Reserve Administration

## 6.1 FINANCE

### 6.1.1 Landing Fees

Landing fees for hostel guests and private landers remained the same in 2024. These were paid in cash to a member of staff.

Category	Adult (12+)	Child (2 – 12)	Baby (0 – 2)	Members
Landing fee	£20	£15	Free	£20

Table 10 Landing fees for private landers and hostel guests in 2024.

Landing fees for day visitors were charged alongside the Dale Sailing boat fee, which changed depending on the month. These remained unchanged from 2023.

	April	May and June	July	August and September
Adults (12+)	£40	£44	£40	£30
Child (2-11)	£30	£30	£30	£24
Infants	Free (on the lap of an adult)			

Table 11 Day visitor fees in 2024.

### 6.1.2 Overnight Accommodation Fees

Accommodation fees for 2024 can be seen below. All prices saw an increase of £5 per night except the dorm price per person.

Hostel Prices 2024						
Prices are per person per night	Room					
	Curlew x2	Guillemot x2	Chough x4	Puffin x3	Shearwater x5	
	Two single beds	Two single beds	Two single beds + set of bunk beds	One single bed + set of bunk beds	Three single beds + set of bunk beds (price per person if booking whole room)	Dorm prices per person (if not booking whole room)
April	£65	£65	£65	£65	£65	£55
May-July	£90	£90	£90	£90	£90	£65
August	£55	£55	£55	£55	£55	£50
September	£55	£55	£55	£55	£55	£50
Children (12 and under)	Half price					
Single occupancy	Cost x 1.5	Cost x 1.5	Cost x 3.5	Cost x 2.5	Cost x 4.5	

Table 12 Hostel prices in 2024.

## 6.2 MEMBERSHIP

Active recruitment for WTSWW members did not take place on Skomer this year. 200 members made hostel bookings in 2024.

## 6.3 ISLAND SALES

£5556.75 in sales were made on island in 2024 (excluding private lander fees). This is a 12% increase on 2023. £119.17 were made in ad-hoc donations. The Visitor Centre box made £372.83 in water and postcard sales. A new postcard and guidebook display in the hostel earned £250.75.

812 pairs of binoculars were hired out for the day in 2024. These cost £5 a pair and included a voucher for a £5 discount on Opticron binoculars if bought subsequently in Lockley Lodge. July had the most pairs hired (200), followed by May (195) which had far higher demand for binoculars than in previous years. June saw 136 pairs hired.

September saw the highest percentage of visitors hiring binoculars (10%), followed by August (7%).

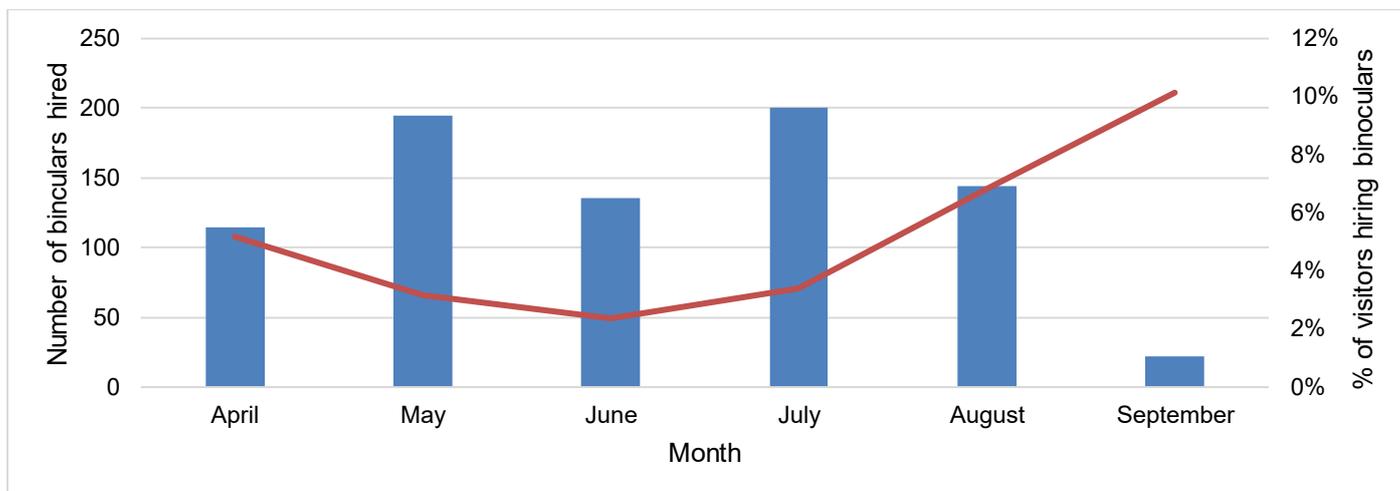


Figure 15 - The number of binoculars hired and percentage of visitors hiring binoculars in 2024.

483 bottles of water were sold in 2024 with a peak of 171 in June. These were sold for £1 each.

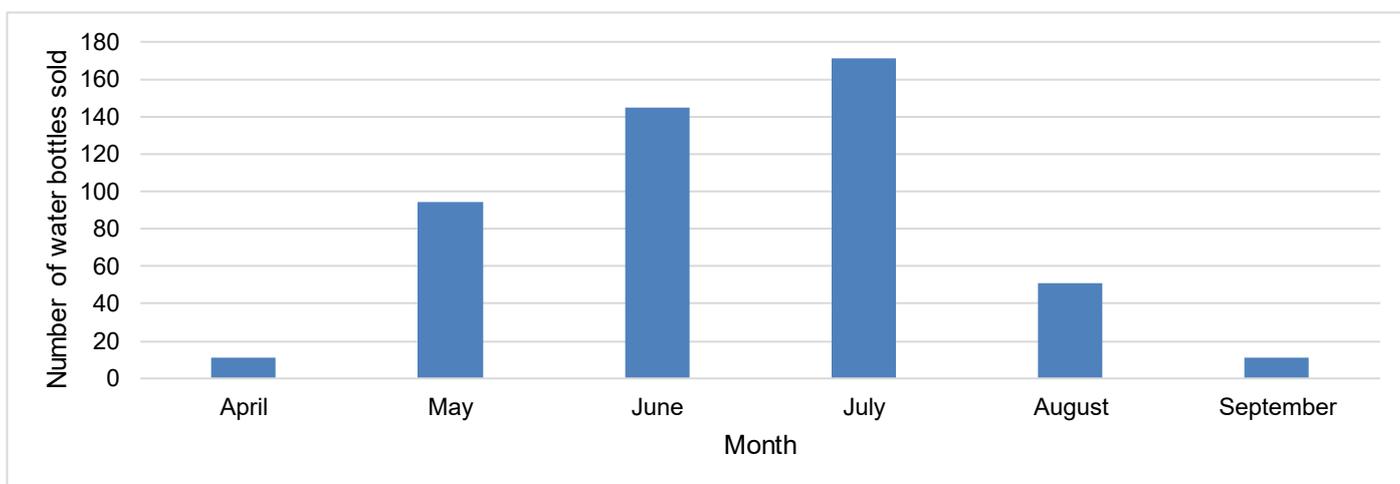


Figure 16 - Bottles of water sold in 2024.

40 guidebooks were sold in 2024 for £3 each, with copies available in English and Welsh. The peak of sales was in May and June.

## 6.4 COMMERCIAL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Commercial Operator Code of Conduct was continued in 2024. It helps us to manage the delicate balance between visitor experience and protecting Skomer's unique habitats and species by asking group leaders to work with us to ensure their groups behave in a responsible way and respect our expectations whilst on the island. Each company pays a £100 fee and signs the code of conduct, which permits them to operate on the island.

17 operators signed up for the 2024 season, of whom five were new. 27 overnight commercial operator groups booked into the hostel, six more than 2023.

## **6.5 TRAINING**

The following training was completed in 2024:

Rob: Sit-In ATV, Fire Awareness, EDI Training.

Leighton: Emergency First Aid, Fire Awareness, Day Skipper Theory, Essential Navigation and Seamanship, Line Management Training, EDI Training.

Ceris: Emergency First Aid, Fire Awareness, VHF.

Will: Emergency First Aid, ATV, Dumper Truck

LTVs:

- Huia and Michael – Emergency First Aid, Sit-In ATV
- Dylan – Powerboat Level 2
- Peter and Nick – Sit-In ATV

## **6.6 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

All accidents and near misses were reported in a timely manner using the correct procedure. There were five reports submitted this year. No helicopter or Coastguard assistance was required in 2024.

# 7 Media, Interpretation, and Events

## 7.1 MEDIA AND FILMING ON SKOMER

In 2024, we had 565 media articles about Skomer, a big drop from 1,233 in 2023. This is not unexpected as 2023 was an exceptional year with the release of David Attenborough's Wild Isles. 2024 articles generated an AVE (advertising spend) of £7.21m and an OTS (opportunity to see) of 389m people. This is fantastic for raising the profile of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales, Skomer Island and our conservation work.

72% of articles were web-based. This has been a growing trend over the past 10 years. As such, we will keep producing quality digital comms and socials.

A breakdown in the volume of articles throughout the season was recorded (Figure 18). The start of the season and mid-summer were the peaks for media. The peak in March coincides with our arrival on the island, whilst the large peaks in summer correspond with excitement around the webcams, puffins and other seabird numbers. Peaks towards the end of the season are focused with the events programme.

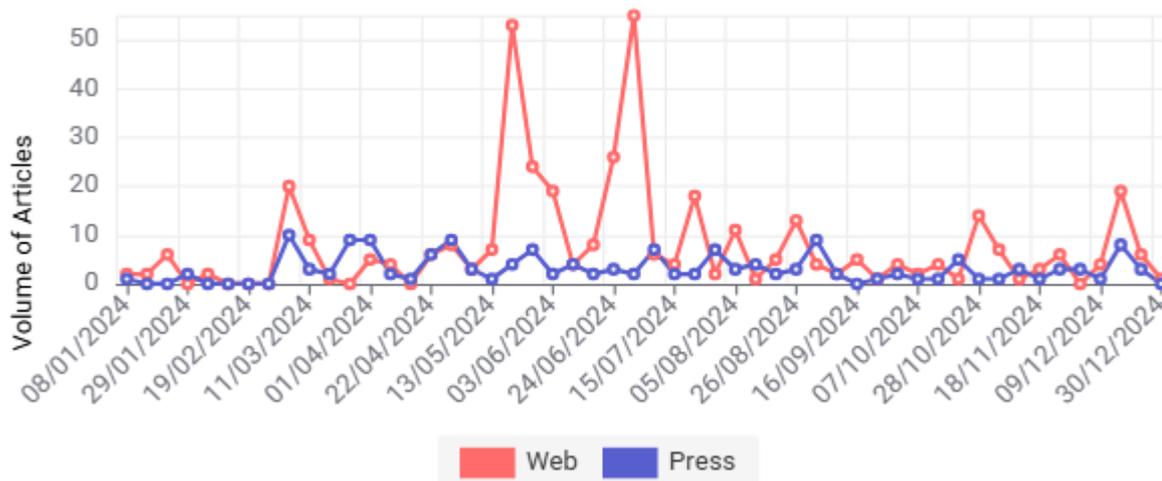


Figure 17 - The number of web and press pieces about Skomer produced throughout the 2024 season.

A word cloud of media outlets can be seen below.

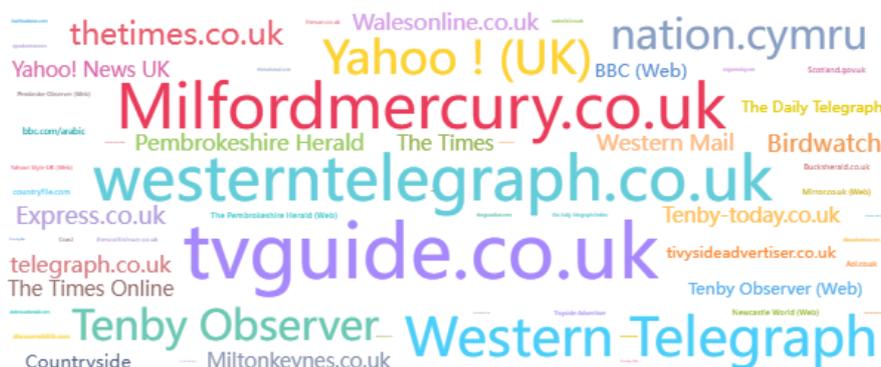


Figure 18 - A word cloud of Skomer media outlets in 2024.

There was filming for a variety of media outlets including BBC Springwatch and S4C which contributed significantly towards the AVE and OTS.

A media ban was in place from Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May until Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July to alleviate pressure from the busy seabird season.

## 7.2 MARKETING, PUBLICITY, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Our social media platforms and blog remained popular in 2024 and allowed audiences globally to engage with the island.

Across Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly known as Twitter), Skomer now has 49,412 follows, a 7% increase from 2023. Facebook follows rose to 21,625 in 2024 (an 8% rise) and account for 44% of our follows. Instagram follows continued to rise fastest to 12,601 (a 20% rise). X (Twitter) follows dropped for the first time ever to 15,186 (a 4% decline). This perhaps reflects that there are now fewer conservationists on the site as more people deactivate accounts.

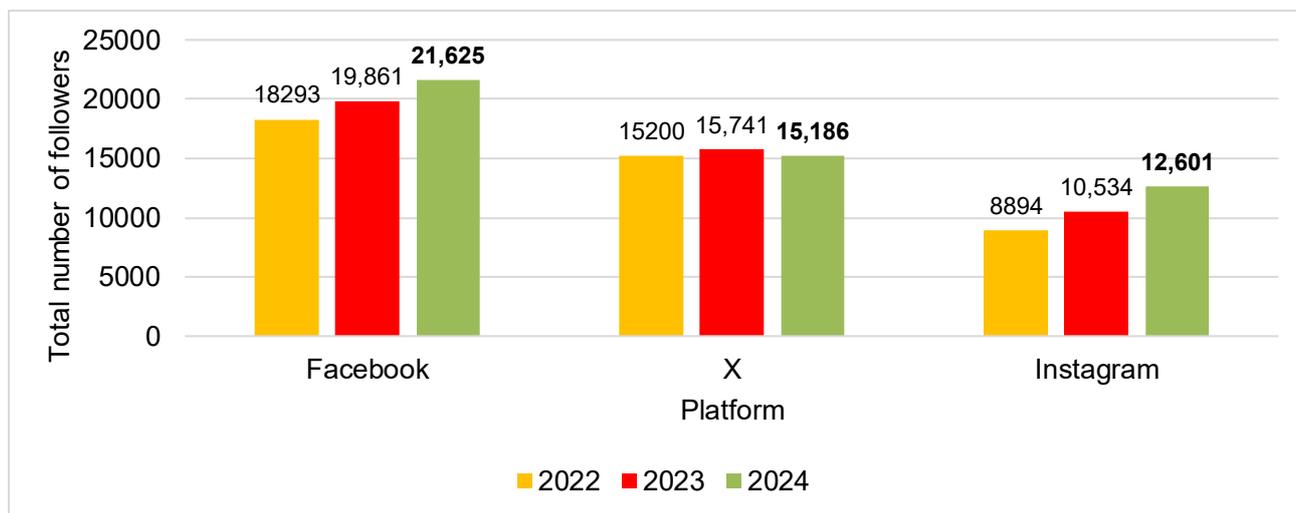


Figure 19 - Figure 17 - The total number of followers on Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

### 7.2.1 Facebook

Facebook analytics are not available for the period before 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024. Between this date and 31<sup>st</sup> December, our content reached 225,757 accounts which is well up from 67,337 during the same period in 2023. Our page was visited 11,817 times.

87 posts were published in 2024. Our most reached post was a short video with shots of Skomer in the fog which reached 108,392 people. Posts about our accessible boat trips, puffin counts and leaving Skomer were also popular, along with the first episode of Skomer Stories (see section 7.2.6). This suggests that the video format is popular with viewers and we will continue this in 2025.

Our most reacted to post on Facebook was once again the announcement of puffin numbers on 18<sup>th</sup> April. It had 1,314 reactions, 117 comments and 152 shares.

71.1% of our followers identify as female and our top five countries for followers are the UK, United States, Taiwan, Australia and Germany.



*Figure 20 - A puffin on the Wick. This photo accompanied the announcement of puffin numbers on social media and was our most popular post on Facebook. © Huia Wesling Macgregor, Skomer Long-Term Volunteer 2024.*

### **7.2.2 X (Twitter)**

We posted 112 on X this year. The most liked posted was a post on 18<sup>th</sup> April about puffin numbers with 1800 likes.

Analytics are no longer available and so no further statistics can be produced.

### **7.2.3 Instagram**

Instagram analytics are not available for the period before 19<sup>th</sup> July. Between this date and 31<sup>st</sup> December, our content reached 15,346 accounts which is an increase from 12,464 during the same period in 2023. Our page was visited 3,639 times.

70 posts were published. Our post with the most reach on Instagram was one to promote our webcam fundraiser on 21<sup>st</sup> January which reached 10,564 people. Our most reacted post was one about the puffin count. It received 1,525 likes, 35 comments and 37 shares.

69.4% of our followers identify as female and our top five countries for followers are the UK, United States, Germany, Australia and the Netherlands.

### **7.2.4 Skomer Island Blog**

We published 15 blogs over the 2024 season. Frequency of blogs varied over the season depending on staff availability.

The blog was viewed 112,000 times in 2024, over double that of 2023 (46,900) with most people finding the blog from Google. Interestingly, our top three countries are Singapore (38,500 views), Hong Kong (30,900 views) and the UK (17,800 views).

The most viewed post on the blog was about our return to Skomer, published on 4<sup>th</sup> March and viewed 1,404 times.

### **7.2.5 Skomer Webcams**

Three new webcams were installed for the 2024 season and were made live to the public on 23<sup>rd</sup> April (viewable on YouTube and linked on our website and social media).

**Camera 1, Colony Cam** – This was installed on a gimble which could be controlled remotely. It focused on the nearby puffin colony but could be used to watch the boat landing stage when needed. 2024 views were 88,744.

**Camera 2, Bank Cam** – This was a fixed camera looking at a bank often covered in puffins. 2024 views were 27,744.

**Camera 3, Burrow Cam** – The last to be installed, this infrared camera was inside a Manx shearwater burrow. 2024 views were 3,735.

Total webcam views were 120,223 which is great for the first year of the new cameras. We will continue to use them for visitor engagement in 2025.

### **7.2.6 YouTube**

A trial episode of Skomer Stories, released on social media, was uploaded on to the WTSWW YouTube channel. It was well received and viewing figures were high across the social media platforms for this and other video content. As such, more videos and podcasts will be made in 2025.

The Skomer YouTube channel remains dormant. The aim is to shut this down in 2025 after content has been moved over to the main WTSWW channel.

## **7.3 INTERPRETATION**

The History Trail Garland Stone loop re-opened in mid-2024. It provides an alternative route past archaeological sites and a different perspective on the island.

Signage round the island and at the Farm remained largely unchanged. Signs at the sales point were changed, with a focus on accessibility options available on the island, including hard copies of the welcome talk, a scannable link to the welcome talk and a link to translate the talk. These were well used and we had lots of feedback from visitors praising these new measures. Event information was also posted there along with recent sightings.

## **7.4 EVENTS**

### **7.4.1 Overnight Events**

Eight overnight events took place in 2024. 144 individuals stayed, up from 132 last year. Event feedback was not formally collected for 2024.

**Spring Migration** – This event ran between 13<sup>th</sup> April and 16<sup>th</sup> April and was attended by 10 people. Dave Astins from West Coast Birdwatching led the event. Guests were led round the island birdwatching and adding to their year lists, whilst looking for spring migrants. Due to inclement weather, some of the group left a day early whilst some stayed an extra day.

**Black2Nature** – This event ran between 13<sup>th</sup> August and 16<sup>th</sup> August and was attended by 11 young people. Ceris Aston (AW) led the event. Please see section 4.6 for details.

**Skomer Art** – This new event ran from 18<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> August with 13 participants. It was run by Linda Norris, a local artist. Participants stayed in the hostel and enjoyed getting creative with many different forms of media, whilst taking inspiration from the natural colours, forms and beauty of the island. A celebration of everyone's work on the final night at a 'private view' was a great way to top it off. Feedback from the event was highly positive, with many planning to return for 2025.

*These island days have been an otherworld, liberating experience. Thank you for removing the critic (inner and outer) from what we have been doing. The colour and gesture work were wonderful and so freeing, you made us really see and feel the island and its colours, weather, wildlife. The time just looking was very important and, because of it, I'll never forget this place in fact, I'm sure I'll be back, sooner or later, one way or another.*

– Harriet, a participant

**Skomer Music** – Another new event, this ran from 21<sup>st</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> August with 13 participants. It was run by Seth and Chris, together known as Filkin's Drift, a successful English-Welsh folk duo. This was the first ever music retreat on Skomer. Using its landscape as inspiration, the musicians composed their own songs and tunes whilst also learning Welsh tunes and developing playing techniques. It was amazing to hear these sounds echoing in the courtyard and the evening sessions saw the whole island turning up for a jam. Feedback from the event was very positive and we were surprised and pleased to see how well this and Skomer Art ran as first time events. We will be running both events again in 2025.



Figure 21 - Skomer Music participants performing their compositions at the end of the retreat in the ruined farmhouse.

**Shearwater Week** – In its tenth year, we ran three sessions of this event: 25<sup>th</sup>–27<sup>th</sup> August, 27<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> August and 29<sup>th</sup>–31<sup>st</sup> August. It was almost sold out with 44 attendees. The event was led as a joint effort between Rob, Ceris, Leighton and the LTVs. Activities included a night walk, a look at rafting shearwaters at dusk, an evening talk and chick weighing with a member of OxNav. We are grateful to OxNav, particularly Sarah Bond, for their assistance with this event.

**Yoga** – We ran three sessions of this event: 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> September, 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> September and 19<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> September. A fourth event 17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> September was cancelled due to a lack of demand. Four sessions had been scheduled after selling out fast in 2023 but demand was lower this year. 25 people attended the events led by Catrin Norris and Ady Hayhoe. Yoga sessions were run in the courtyard and at the Garland Stone in the morning and evening, with participants given time to explore and reflect around sessions. The third yoga event was the last hostel stay before the hostel closed for the autumn work party.

**Young Birders' Week** – This event was supposed to run two sessions, 5<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> September. However, due to inclement weather, 13 participants came on the first session for one night (7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>) and three participants came 8<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup>, totalling 16 participants. Rob Knott (VO) planned the event, whilst Ceris Aston (AW) led with support from previous VO Beth Thompson. Please see section 4.6 for details.

**Autumn Migration Week** – After reduced interest last year, this event ran one session this year, 14<sup>th</sup> September–17<sup>th</sup> September and was attended by 12 people in total. Dave Astins led the guests round the island birdwatching and adding to their year lists, whilst looking for autumn migrants.

#### **7.4.2 Day Events**

123 individuals visited the island in 2024 as part of an organised day trip.

- 9 Monday guided walks were planned in collaboration with Dave Astins from West Coast Birdwatching: 13<sup>th</sup> May, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 10<sup>th</sup> June, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 8<sup>th</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> July. Eight of these went ahead, with 10<sup>th</sup> June cancelled because of inclement weather. These trips ran from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Two Welsh learner guided walks were planned for 22<sup>nd</sup> July and 19<sup>th</sup> August. Six people attended on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, but due to a lack of demand, the walk on 19<sup>th</sup> August was cancelled. This event was led by long-time supporters of the island, Mari Elin and Gruffydd Jones. It received very positive reviews from participants and we will be running one walk in 2025.

In addition to these organised trips, an additional 30 visitors attended an archaeological walk on Skomer on 4<sup>th</sup> September (note, as these visitors came on a scheduled day boat, they are already included in visitor numbers). The walk was led by Louise Barker and Dr Toby Driver, archaeologists from the Royal Commission, and Tomos Jones from PCNPA. They were shown Bronze Age burial cairns, prehistoric roundhouses and well-preserved field boundaries. The event was very popular and sold out in hours. Feedback was very positive and we will be running this again in 2025.

We also facilitated accessible boat trips round Skomer and Skokholm for the first time this year (see section 4.5). 20 people benefitted from these trips (note, numbers are not included in our totals as they did not land on the island) and they received good reviews. We aim to run these again in 2025.

# 8 Reserve Management

## 8.1 MANAGEMENT PLAN

Species monitoring was carried out according to the management plan. Any adjustments to the management plan were checked in accordance with WTSWW and NRW and through the Island Conservation Advisory Committee (ICAC) advisory system.

## 8.2 SPECIES AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Apart from work on the footpaths and clearance of rosebay willowherb, no other habitat management was carried out. No species management other than controlling the productivity of Canada geese was carried out.

### **MS01/01 Control rosebay willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium***

Rosebay willowherb control started in mid-July. Whilst plants were found in all four of the controlled patches from 2021 and 2022, fewer than 20 plants were found at North Valley Rise, a similar number at South Stream, and only one plant was found in the North Valley Rise plot. All but the South Park patch were cut only once during the summer with any plants left after the last cut being hand pulled. The larger South Park plot required multiple cuts. All patches were cut before going to seed. There were no extra patches identified in 2024.

### **MS01/02 Licence to control Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*)**

A licence (Ref: S090161/2), provided by NRW, is held to control the breeding success of Canada geese on Skomer. In total, seven nests were treated.

### **MH1/01 Bracken control along the history trail**

To comply with our glastir contract, bracken was cut back along the history trail on the 1<sup>st</sup> July. It did not need a full second cut this season, but was cut and track repairs carried out on 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

### 8.3 BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

	<b>North Haven</b>	<b>Farm</b>
External infrastructure	<p>All library windows (21) were replaced in May along with the two living room windows in Warden's accommodation. Whilst carrying out this work, the back wall was noted as being rotten and was also replaced.</p> <p>Work on replacing the Warden's balcony began and will be finished in 2025.</p>	<p>New doors and windows installed in staff kitchen.</p> <p>Hut renovated – new shiplap boards on centre window section at back, structural work inside to make compliant for fire safety, and kitchen installation including new plinth for gas bottles to rear of hut. New soakaway to take water from roofs away from building.</p> <p>New fuel store constructed by Martin Pratt.</p> <p>Door to LTV room leaking when rain comes from the east.</p> <p>Doors to hostel leak when rain driving from the north. Hostel doors will need replacement soon.</p> <p>Lintel in visitor centre needs replacing.</p> <p>Ongoing track repairs.</p> <p>Guttering needs some repairs in spring 2025 following storm damage.</p>
Internal infrastructure	<p>New storage shelves were installed in the research accommodation.</p>	<p>New hostel kitchen and bathroom units installed.</p> <p>Hostel kitchen, bathroom and upstairs corridor walls lime pointed.</p> <p>New storage shelves built in the previous battery storage room by Martin Pratt.</p> <p>New lamps purchased for research kitchen, and soft furnishings donated by Mike and Ted Wallen. New shelf built by Cliff Roe and sofa moved to research kitchen.</p> <p>Where necessary painted staff block, volunteer kitchen and bedrooms, hostel in spring 2024.</p> <p>Several slats replaced on beds in the hostel. Beds in Chough treated for woodworm in autumn 2024.</p> <p>Mattresses, pillows, and bedding replaced in hostel/volunteer block as necessary.</p> <p>Attempted mouse proofing in hostel kitchen (should be fine after refit) and hostel corridors.</p>

Broadband/Webcam infrastructure	Connection was lost on 27 <sup>th</sup> September and not regained before moving off.	Sales point satellite dish rusted through, causing a drop in connection temporarily. A temporary fitting was added.
Water supply	Well dug out in November to remove silt.	No water shortages this season.
Water	Water treatment serviced by Penstar on 11 <sup>th</sup> May  Water was tested by Pembrokeshire County Council on 6 <sup>th</sup> August and no issues were found.	Water treatment serviced by Penstar on 11 <sup>th</sup> May.  Water was tested by Pembrokeshire County Council on 6 <sup>th</sup> August and no issues were found.
Plumbing	OK	New water pumps (one loft, one Curlew) installed to increase water pressure in hostel building October 2024. New hostel sinks, toilets and showers plumbed in.  Water tank in downstairs hostel leaked in March 2024 and needed repairs and water damage treated.
Septic tank	OK	OK
Compost toilets	OK – Ian Sutcliffe fitted lights in spring 2024.	Strong smell on several occasions, despite extractor fans being on for most of the day.  Otherwise, OK. Bracken added weekly.
Solar hot water	Replaced in late March and in full working order.	Hostel solar hot water serviced in August 2023. Still non-functional in staff block.
Chlorine drip	n/a	OK
Gas boilers	Serviced in March	Serviced in March  Hostel gas boiler fine. Staff gas boiler timer not working, but works fine.
Immersion Heaters	OK	Immersion heaters in all buildings worked well. Adjustments were needed to make sure they didn't run simultaneously to avoid power tripping.
Gas cookers	OK	New gas cooker installed in hut. New gas system (cooker hoods, CO2 detection system, gas shut off) and external cage installed in hostel.  Repairs needed to volunteer oven in 2025.
Photo-voltaic	OK	OK
Batteries	OK	Replaced with lithium batteries in spring 2024 as they were no longer holding charge.
Electrics	OK  New light installed in workshop and compost toilet.	Lights and plugs installed in hut. New light installed in staff block bedroom. Electrical work to ensure compliance in new hostel kitchen.  Compost loo light timers fixed.

		<p>Several light fittings changed. Water-logged light fitting in downstairs compost toilet removed.</p> <p>Old electrics in VC removed.</p>
Fire alarm	OK. Serviced on 14 <sup>th</sup> May and 19 <sup>th</sup> September.	<p>Serviced on 14<sup>th</sup> May and 19<sup>th</sup> September.</p> <p>Several parts replaced, including sounders and beacons.</p> <p>Weekly tests undertaken and repairs logged.</p> <p>New sounder needed in compost loo.</p>
Internal fireplaces	Serviced 13 <sup>th</sup> April.	Serviced 13 <sup>th</sup> April. Wood burner in staff block frequently belches smoke into the room, becoming worse. Hostel stove door broke and was replaced.
Landing	OK – maintenance carried out to the handrails with some uprights replaced, new seating installed in spring. Remedial track work required where water has washed away earth to produce a pronounced step. Proposal to fit a board at base of railings to reduce path erosion.	
Boat Shed	OK	

Table 13 Overview of maintenance work carried out in 2024.

## 8.4 MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT

	North Haven	Farm
Generator	OK	<p>The generator was used intensively until new batteries were installed in late spring 2024 and then the generator was hardly used until autumn.</p> <p>The generator was used significantly in the autumn due to a run of dull weather. It was less effective in charging batteries than expected, meaning the hot water system was turned off in all buildings and power usage was kept to a minimum.</p> <p>The generator bed is filled with a mixture of rain water and diesel.</p> <p>Rainwater is finding its way through the generator shed roof.</p> <p>Fuel leak possibly from injectors? Generator seems to be using more oil than in previous years.</p> <p>A solar panel was added to the roof to keep the battery from going flat.</p>
Dumper Truck	<p>Weekly checks were carried out by the VO – this included checking levels, checking the oil, topping up fuel, checking tyre pressures and checking the treads.</p> <p>Gearbox issue in May was fixed.</p> <p>The boat launching A-frame broke and was repaired – it now needs to be kept in the boat shed and only attached for boat launch.</p> <p>Mice had chewed through a tyre air cap in winter 2023 causing a very slow puncture to one of the tyres. There are now slow punctures on three tyres.</p> <p>Serviced on 17<sup>th</sup> May.</p>	
Mule	<p>Serviced on 17<sup>th</sup> May.</p> <p>An ongoing issue with starting. In November it refused to start, left in North Haven garage awaiting repair. Starter motor issue suspected – to sort in spring 2025.</p>	
Boat engines	<p>OK</p> <p>Both engines serviced and winterised on 22<sup>nd</sup> November.</p>	
Boat	<p>OK</p> <p>Replaced bow floor – timber section.</p>	
Mainland boat trailer	<p>Boat was towed on trailer to storage facility on Dale Airfield on 6<sup>th</sup> December. New lightboard bought December 2024.</p>	
Boat trailer	<p>OK</p>	
Cage Generators	<p>OK</p>	

Table 14 Overview of machine maintenance

## 9 External groups and liaison

### **ICAC**

The Islands Conservation Advisory Committee (ICAC) meetings were held on 7<sup>th</sup> March (VC), 1<sup>st</sup> May (Skomer), 29<sup>th</sup> August (VC) and 25<sup>th</sup> November (VC). The seabird monitoring subcommittee was also held on 25<sup>th</sup> November (VC). Minutes were taken and are kept in the island files.

### **Friends of Skokholm and Skomer**

The Friends of Skokholm and Skomer reunion was held on 18<sup>th</sup> February. Warden Leighton Newman and Visitor Officer Rob Knott attended, presenting a riveting island update, and also pre-recorded a talk for online viewing.

### **Marine Conservation Zone MCZ**

Especially strong links are maintained with NRW staff at the MCZ office at Martin's Haven. The MCZ team are extremely generous and helpful to the island, and we would not be able to run so smoothly without them. The MCZ team were instrumental in facilitating our autumn beach cleans of the Wick and South Haven.

### **Natural Resources Wales (NRW)**

The island has obvious and important links with NRW and Paul Culyer has helped source items of equipment and kit funded by NRW.

### **Dale Sailing**

Another good year working with Dale Sailing. Good communication was maintained with all skippers and boat staff and especially with Gareth Reynolds.

### **UK Seabird Monitoring Programme**

Skomer staff attend the annual SMP Key Sites review meeting and the SMP Advisory Group Meeting, coordinated by The British Trust for Ornithology. We contribute to SMP multi-partner working groups as required.

### **Others**

Links were maintained with a wide range of external groups including NRW, the National Trust, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Black2Nature, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the RSPB (especially Ramsey Island and the Biosecurity for Wales team), H.M. Coastguards and Pembrokeshire Bird Group.



# 10 Grants and Donations

## Grants received in 2024:

**Nature Networks Fund** – Round Two (a Welsh Government grant administered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in Wales.) Project Reference Number NL-22-00097.



Grant funding was received as part of our three-year project entitled ‘#NNF2 Marine Indicator Species – Understanding populations of marine top predators and increasing awareness of their importance in Welsh Marine Protected Areas.’ Funding covered the following items:

- Subsidising our Young Birders’ Week events
- Covering costs of Black2Nature residential
- Delivery of accessible boat trips from Dale out to the islands to view seabirds
- Staff and volunteer training; Powerboat Level II, navigation,
- Volunteer expenses, including travel to and from the island
- Staff expenses to attend conference and training events
- Branded clothing for volunteers
- Pre-season works to island boat and boat equipment: servicing and winter storage
- Boat kit – waterproof boat clothing for staff and volunteers, life jackets and PPE
- Fieldwork survey equipment and IT equipment
- Help towards the costs involved in providing accommodation on the island for volunteers and seabird fieldworkers
- Staff time to deliver seabird monitoring objectives – fieldwork, data entry and report writing
- Staff time to support island operations – grant management and reporting, finance and publicity

**Shared Prosperity Fund** – WTSWW received funding from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The UKSPF was one of the UK Government funds replacing European funding streams that were no longer available after Brexit. It was also part of the UK Government’s levelling-up agenda.



Funded by  
UK Government

WEDI’I YRRU GAN      POWERED BY  
**FFYNIANT LEVELLING**  
**— BRO —      — UP —**

Our project titled ‘Sustainable and Resilient Skomer and Skokholm Islands’ (Project reference number: PS073) allowed for major upgrades to Skomer’s buildings and infrastructure:

North Haven staff and research base:

- Replacement solar hot water system
- Replacement windows in library
- Purchase of materials to replace external balcony

Skomer hostel

- New battery storage for solar energy
- Visitor kitchen refit and two replacement bathrooms
- Hostel building survey – heat and damp issues

### Skomer staff and volunteer accommodation

- Complete rebuild of overspill accommodation, new kitchen, windows and doors.
- Refit volunteer bathroom

### Transport of building materials to island – specialist barge and crane

- Accommodation on island for contractors and volunteers during work
- Boat transport of volunteers and contractors to island
- Staff time for project delivery; warden, assistant warden and project officer
- Staff time for project support; grant management and reporting, finance and publicity

### Research and Monitoring contracts

Skomer receives a partial funding contribution from the JNCC Support Company, via the British Trust for Ornithology for delivering our Seabird Monitoring Programme objectives. The Seabird Monitoring Programme is funded jointly by BTO and JNCC, in association with RSPB, with fieldwork conducted by both non-professional and professional surveyors.

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and University of Gloucestershire wish to acknowledge this financial contribution. It allows both organisations to employ dedicated seabird field assistants each year.

Skomer is one of four key sites for seabird monitoring in the Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) and the only one in Wales. Fair Isle, Canna, Isle of May and Skomer all deliver an enhanced level of seabird monitoring each year, including studies of abundance and breeding success, but also adult survival, phenology and diet.



### Donations

**The Friends of Skomer and Skokholm** (a local supporters group of WTSWW) continue to raise funds for items needed on the islands. Skomer were very grateful for the following in 2024:

- Bursary for five long-term volunteers, to help cover their costs including food during their stay.
- Headtorches – for use by volunteers and guests
- Bamboo canes – for marking study plots in the long vegetation



**The Pembrokeshire Bird group** (a local supporters group of WTSWW), made a financial contribution towards the cost of our two Young Birders events in 2024. Skomer staff are again very grateful for this help which further reduced the cost of island accommodation and boat transport for the 18–25-year-old participants.

# 11 Acknowledgements

Thanks go to many parties and individuals that helped with the successful running of Skomer Island in 2024. Apologies to anyone left off this inevitably incomplete list.

Many thanks go to all staff and volunteers (long-term, work party and weekly volunteers and anyone drafted in at last minute to help us); staff at the MCZ and Dale Sailing; Chrissy and Gary at Lockley Lodge; Lisa Morgan (Head of Islands and Marine Conservation for WTSWW), all staff at Cilgerran and Tondu; Lucy and Sash Tusa; Anna and Steve Sutcliffe; The Friends of Skokholm and Skomer; HM Coastguard and the R.N.L.I.; all contractors; all members of the ICAC and other helpful wildlife consultants; Dave Astins; Izzy Burns; Beth Thompson; staff and students at Oxford, Sheffield and Gloucestershire Universities; and finally to all of the visitors that came and enjoyed the island.

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