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# Marine and Coastal Birds 2025

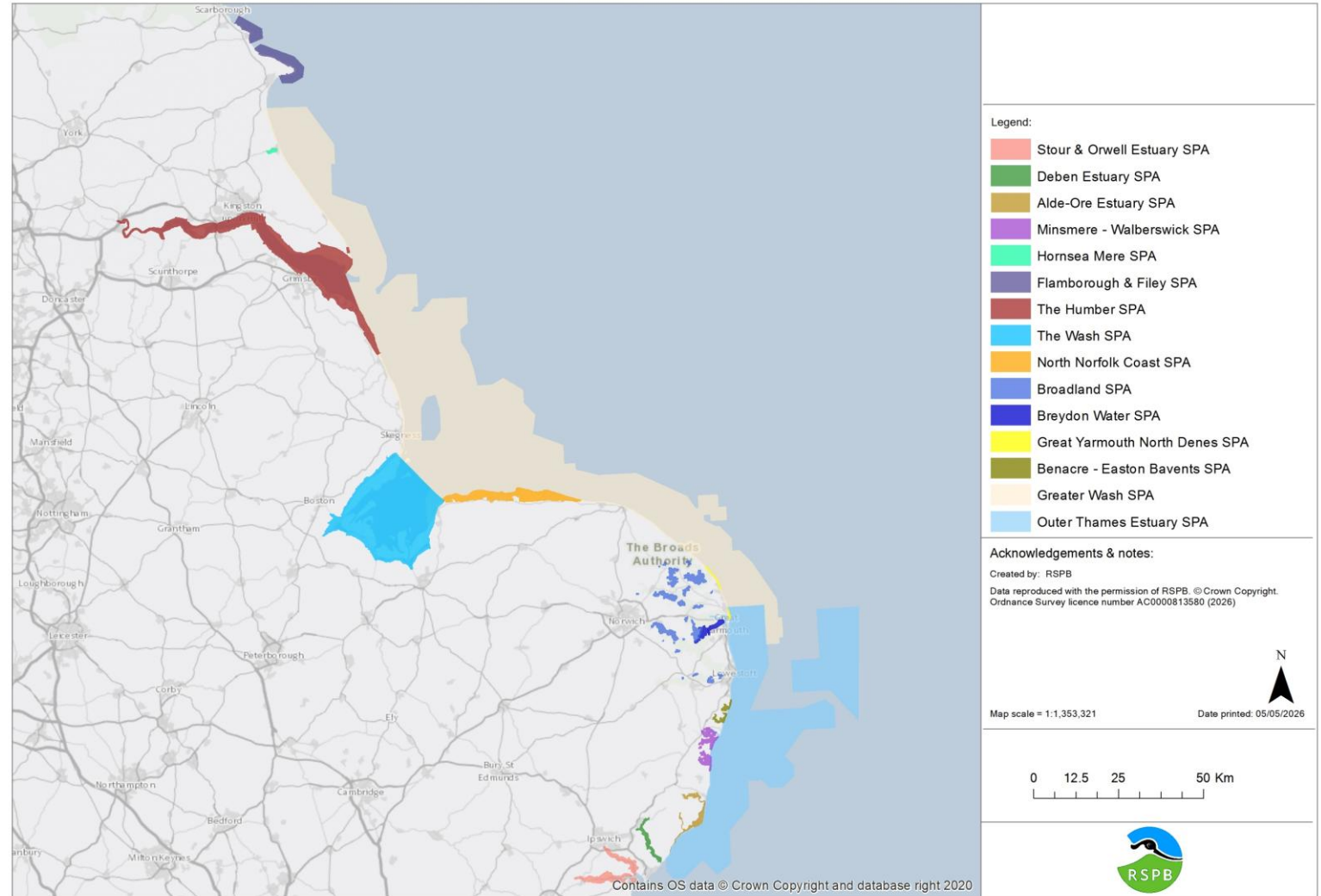


## East Marine Ecosystems

Reporting Annual Change in the  
East Region & Building Social Capital



# The SPA Network on the East Coast





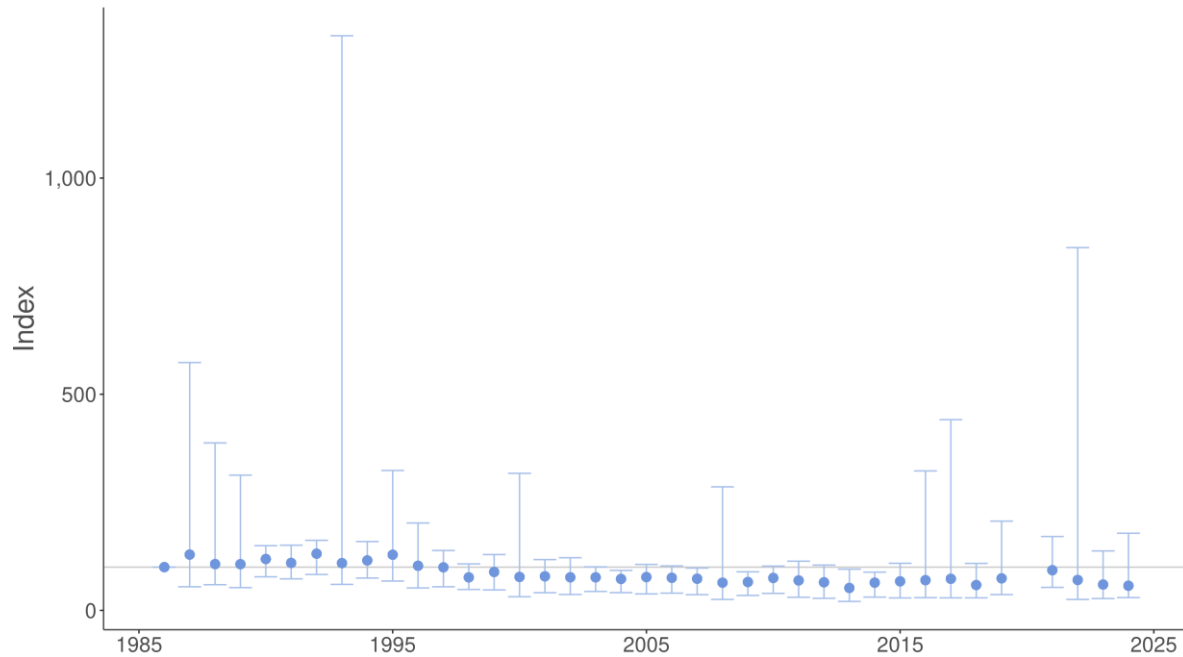
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# Regional Importance for birds

- Breeding Seabirds – largest UK mainland colony at Flamborough & Filey Coast SPA
- Wintering and passage wildfowl and wading birds – Humber, The Wash, Breydon Water, Minsmere-Walberswick, Alde-Ore Estuary, Stour & Orwell Estuary.
- Beach nesting birds – Humber, North Lincs Coast, Wash/North Norfolk, Suffolk.
  - In 2026 the region housed nearly 60% of Uks breeding little tern population

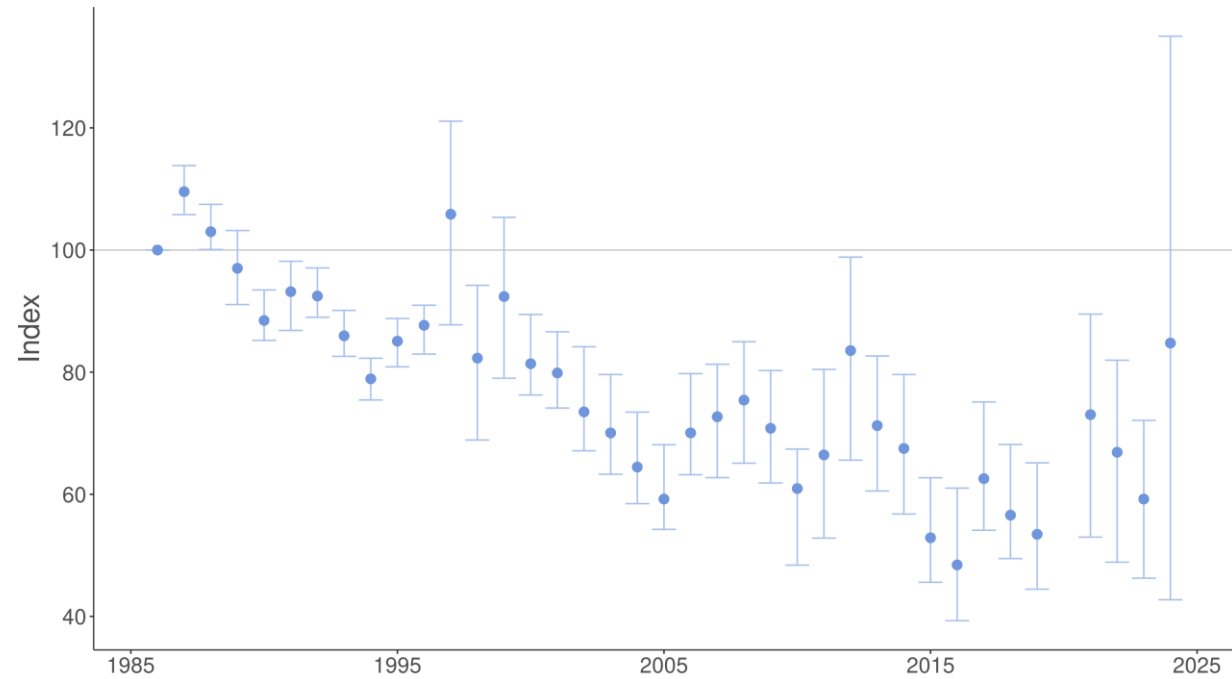
# Summary of species trends

Kittiwake population abundance in England  
Long-term trend at colonies



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Little Tern population abundance in England  
Long-term trend at colonies

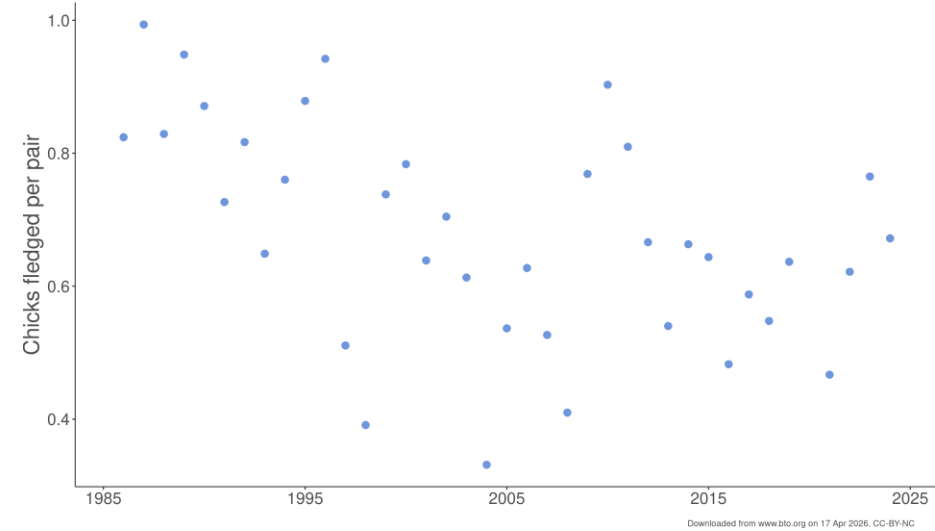


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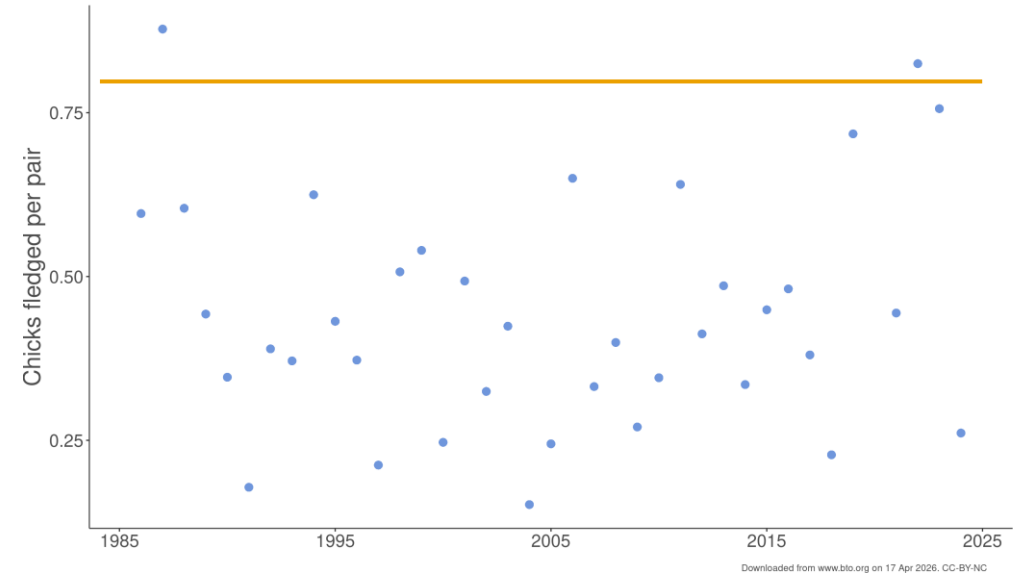
# Summary of species trends continued

Productivity needed to increase the population, not just maintain it.

Kittiwake breeding performance in England  
Long-term trend at colonies



Little Tern breeding performance in England  
Long-term trend at colonies



# Key observations – Black-legged kittiwakes



- Scarborough & Bridlington
  - 2128 nesting pairs in Scarborough, and 219 AONs in Bridlington. Productivity in the town centres down on 2024 (0.73 & 0.67 respectively)
  - Sites monitored 4 times a year between June & July by volunteers and staff
- Flamborough and Filey Coast SPA
  - For 860 nests monitoring across 16 plots, productivity was 0.51 fledged/nest, below the previous 10-year mean of 0.68
  - Sites are monitored weekly from May to July by staff and volunteers from Bempton Cliffs RSPB. This monitoring along with wider productivity monitoring at the SPA has been going on since 2009
  - Other Kittiwake monitoring includes an adult survival colour-ringing project in its 8th year and annual radio tagging of c.40 Kittiwakes in the chick-rearing period to give information on key feeding areas
- Lowestoft
  - 942 AONs recorded in 2025, with 872 chicks, giving a productivity of 0.93. This figure comes from a monitoring initiative launched by Scottish Power Renewables, but for many years monitoring has also been carried out by a local volunteer.

# Key observations – little tern

- Humber estuary
  - Beacon lagoons had its best season for breeding little terns with 105 breeding pairs (highest number on the Humber since early 1970's)
  - Productivity for 2025 was 1.02 with 5-year average of 1.19
- Lincolnshire Coast (Gibraltar Point)
  - Approx 15 pairs, trying to achieve a minimum of 0.5 chicks per pair
- North Norfolk Coast SPA
  - 361 pairs, 491 chicks fledged, 1.18 productivity
- East Norfolk
  - 270 pairs, 455 chicks fledged, 1.69 productivity
- North Suffolk
  - 134 pairs, 10 chicks fledged, 0.07 productivity – Kestrel predation and disturbance by photographers meant main colony failed. Diversionary feeding and additional warden/volunteer presence in 2026.



# Key observations – other species



- Razorbill and Guillemot both had low productivity at F&FC SPA in 2025
- Gannet – A trial of the use of drone photography for seabird population monitoring recorded 18,998 Apparently Occupied Sites, indicating a 5% increase on last year for Gannets, and continued recovery from the 2022 impact of bird-flu (HPAI)
- Ringed plover
  - Humber estuary – north bank 26 pairs and 24 fledged
  - Gibraltar point: 15 prs fledged and 30 juveniles
  - North Norfolk (all sites, inc. Blakeney Point) – 182 pairs, 226 chicks fledged, 1.24 productivity.
  - East Norfolk/north Suffolk - 34 pairs and 58 chicks fledged, 1.71 productivity.
- Redshank
  - Humber estuary – first full Redshank survey in 2024 and repeat surveys at Tetney reserve in 2025 show that the population has been resilient.
  - North Norfolk - 597 Redshank pairs were recorded in North Norfolk breeding on saltmarsh in 2024, 28 pairs on NT reserves. This builds on the estimated 1,074 pairs nesting on The Wash saltmarshes in 2022.



# Challenges

- Food Supply – sandeel availability &/or accessibility. Will we start to see improvements following the sandeel fisheries closure? Trawling continues to create challenges through bycatch and shrimp loss (little terns)
- HPAI (avian flu) – fewer issues this year
- Coastal change - loss of habitat, in effective beach nourishment schemes,
- Recreational disturbance – sea users, dog walkers, fishing, other recreational users
- Predation – diversionary feeding and fencing working well in some cases. No solutions yet identified for addressing Hobby predation on Little Terns in east Norfolk.
- Lack of spatial planning system to protect the best areas for marine and coastal species
- Challenges around urban breeding gulls and their acceptance by businesses and local communities

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# Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

- A lot of successful stakeholder engagement over the past year across all sites
- Work is going into communication tools – i.e. Little Tern in North/East Norfolk
- Continue to collaborate and discuss opportunities with BTO (key data collation platform)
- Continue to work closely with other non eNGO stakeholders, including EA, NE, local authorities, business, farming sector, universities, and local interest groups
- I.e - RSPB Bempton team have been working with Natural England over the past few years to look at a comprehensive monitoring system that looks at all the different parameters affecting the health of the colony, and Oxford Uni Drone use.
- Ongoing work across the East Atlantic Flyway to explore stakeholder engagement as part of the World Heritage Site bid

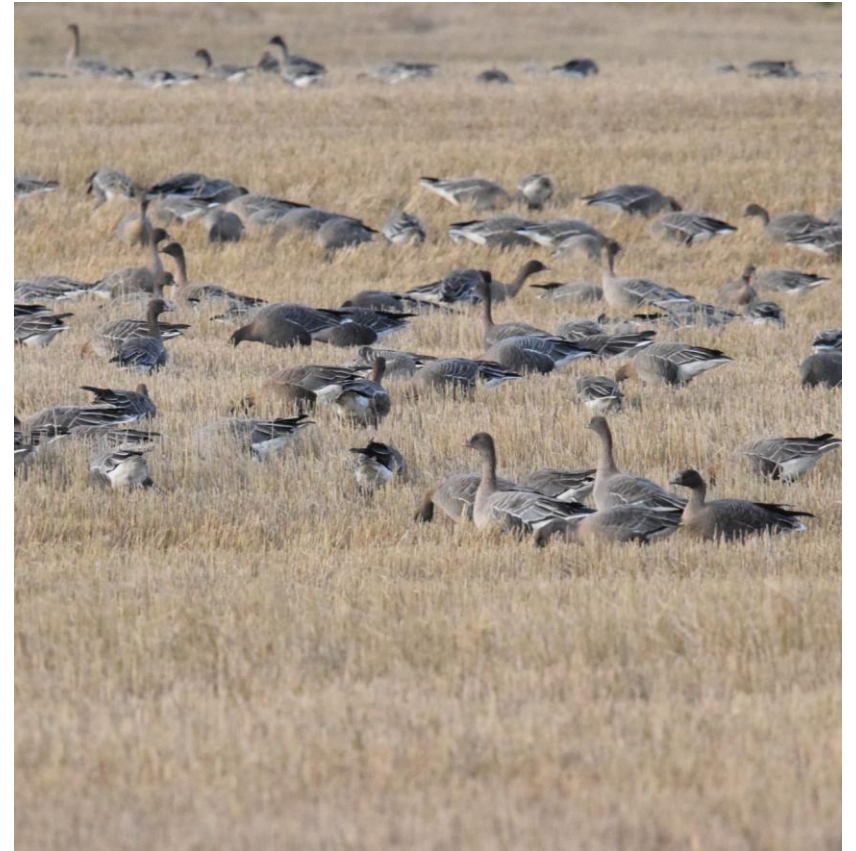
# Communication and Community Outreach

- Community engagement recognised as a key part of the puzzle
- Norfolk has dedicated community engagement staff; Gibraltar Point have an engagement team to discuss the risk of disturbance with visitors; there are field and engagement staff at Spurn/Beacons Lagoons; and Bampton continues to attract significant numbers of visitors every year.
- Tern Around Project (east Norfolk & north Suffolk) – 80 volunteers and over 3100 volunteer hours in 2025
- Plovers in Peril (West Norfolk) – 35 Volunteers gave 1381 hours in 2025.
- Spurn Peninsula – volunteers helping to erect predator fencing and monitor plovers and little tern
- Wardens – volunteers supporting with wardening at Blakeney Point, Beacon Lagoons, and East Norfolk



# Next steps – future management and research

- More resource and funding needed for staff to deliver the work or run volunteer teams.
- Greater survey effort to provide appropriate coverage and ensure significant numbers of birds are not being overlooked. Innovation may be required.
- Review current survey approaches and assess effectiveness.
- Importance of developing individuals with the right skillset to undertake surveys e.g. WeBS can be particularly challenging given the time needed to develop expertise in bird counting and ability to id birds from distance.
- Continued policy support to protect and improve offshore foraging areas.
- Ability to create new habitat and enhance degraded habitats to give space for coastal birds will be important to reflect in coastal adaptation planning, and shoreline management plans.



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**Lincolnshire**  
Wildlife Trust



**Birds**  
**Science**  
**People**