

Bridled Guillemot 1938-39 and 1948-1950

Title

Bridled Guillemot 1938-1939 and 1948-1950

Description and Summary of Results

In the 1930s there was a growing interest in variation within a species and one of the obvious variations which appeared to be in small but varying numbers and which was quite obvious in the field was the so-called "Bridled" variation of the Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*.

So a survey was organised for the breeding seasons of 1938 and 1939 with the intention of getting counts of the proportion of the bridled form in as many colonies as possible and scattered throughout the range in Britain and Ireland. Ten years later this was repeated (1948-1950) and ten years after that a request was put out to count again but not as a formal survey. (The last appears not to have been written up.)

In 1938-1939 the proportion of bridled birds was very small in all of England and Wales (less than 1%) with only one colony, the Farne Islands, showing a higher proportion than this. However moving north from about 56°N (Firth of Forth area) the proportion started to rise, more or less continuously along the east coast of Scotland reaching 10-13% in Orkney and Fair Isle (and similar in the Western Isles). However there was then a discontinuity with the proportion being 23-26% in Shetland. There was also a discontinuity along the west coast between Ailsa Craig and Islay. The proportion in southern Ireland was about 2% with the suggestion that it was higher to the northwest.

This increase with increasing latitude was similar outside of the British Isles: France and Helgoland had 1% or less bridled but to the north the Faeroes showed 34% bridled, Iceland >70%, Bear Island and Magero >50%, and Novaya Zemlya <40%.

The 1948-1950 survey showed no major changes. Thirty colonies were resurveyed, and only 7 showed any change (5 down, 2 up). Bridled birds appeared in clumps within colonies but there were difficulties as only 3 of 100 counts were found to be random within a colony. There was certainly some bias with some observers and, when possible cases were removed, only four colonies showed a decrease and one an increase in the proportion of bridled birds.

A large effort was expended with this survey to produce a very small change but lessons were learnt about the best way to do such surveys.

Methods of Data Capture

Observers were asked to count at least 200 individual Common Guillemots at a colony preferably covering a range of sites within the colony and to note the number (proportion) which were of the "bridled" form.

Purpose of Data Capture

To determine the percentage of bridled and non-bridled Guillemots in colonies throughout Britain and Ireland.

Geographic Coverage

All of coasts of Britain and Ireland where Guillemot colonies were present.

Temporal Coverage

The breeding season of 1938-1939 and the repeat in those of 1948-1950.

Other Interested parties**Organiser(s)**

H N (Mick) Southern

Current Staff Contact

archives@bto.org

Publications

The 1938-1939 survey was reported in:

Southern, H.N. 1938. Distribution of the Bridled form of the Common Guillemot. *Nature* 142: 951; Southern, H.N. 1939. The status and problem of the Bridled Guillemot. *Proceedings Zoological Society* 109: 31-41; and a more comprehensive and general report in: Southern, H.N. & Reeve, E.C.R. 1941. Quantitative studies in the geographical variation of birds -- the Common Guillemot (*Uria aalge* Pont.). *Proceedings Zoological Society series A* 111: 255-276.

There were some supporting notes in:

Huxley, J.S. 1939. Notes on the percentage of bridled Guillemots. *British Birds* 33: 174-183. The survey was also noticed in the *BTO Annual Report* numbers 4, 5 and 6; *BTO Bulletin* numbers 7, 11 and 12.

The follow-up survey of 1948-1950 was reported in:

Southern, H.N. 1951. Change in status of the Bridled Guillemot after ten years. *Proceedings Zoological Society* 121: 657-671.

This was noticed in *BTO Annual Report* number 16, and *BTO Bulletin* numbers 28, 32, 33 and 35.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

Nothing found.

Notes on Access and Use

Other information

Notes on Survey Design

Specific Issues for Analysis