

Activity report 2015

Baltic Seabird Project



Ringed records for guillemot chicks on Stora Karlsö!

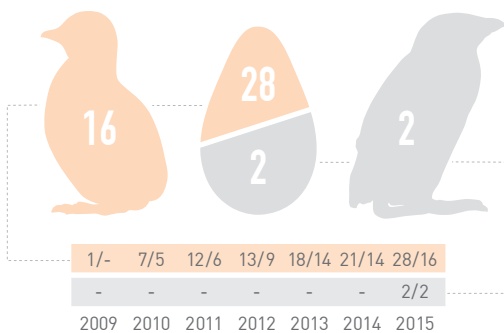
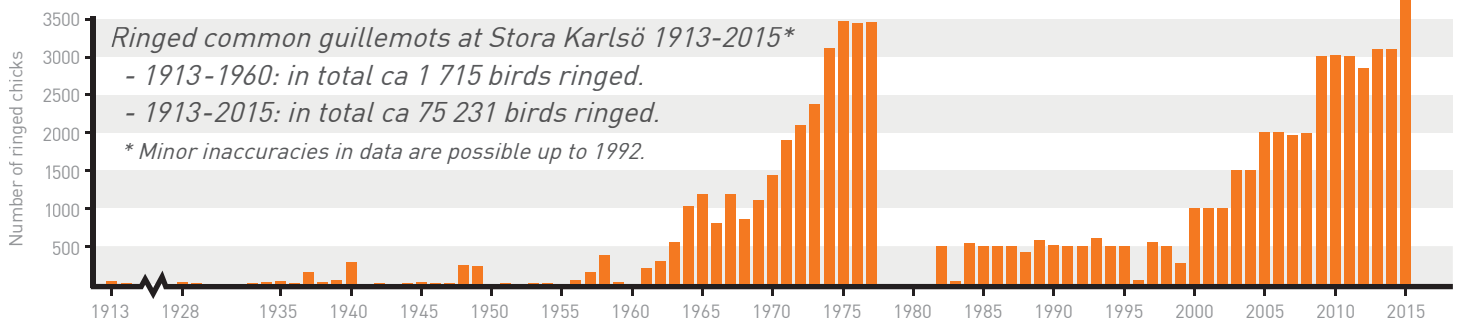
Nowhere in the world are as many common guillemots (*Uria aalge*) ringed as on Stora Karlsö, and 2015 has been a year of records with a total of 4937 chicks ringed with 753 of these from a single night!

The Baltic Seabird Project (BSP) has been ringing 3 000 chicks annually since 2009, but during three years, 2015-2018 we will ring as many chicks as possible from the colony at Västerberget at Stora Karlsö. The extended ringing effort will hopefully provide known aged breeders at the artificial breeding site, the Auk Lab, as well as a greater chance of resightings outside the island and possibilities to calculate the size of the breeding colony. Ringing is a central activity in our research and crucial to many of our studies.



Photo: Aron Hejdstrom

Ringed guillemot chick at the beach under Västerberget. 4937 chicks were ringed in 2015, an all-time-high record!



Eggs / chicks of guillemot (orange) and razorbill (gray) on Auk Lab since 2009.

Razorbills make Murre Lab an Auk Lab

During 2015 we had the pleasure to rename the artificial breeding ledge. The (now former) Murre Lab, originally built as a breeding site for common guillemots (common murre in Am. Eng.), has also attracted razorbills and two pairs started breeding in 2015! As both guillemots and razorbills belong to the auk bird family, the new name for the artificial ledge is naturally Auk Lab.

At the end of the season we successfully ringed adult guillemots directly from the artificial ledge for the first time. We hope to be able to do this with chicks as well in the future as it will give us great possibilities for future studies on the Auk Lab.

Baltic Seabird Project - BSP

The BSP was started in 1997, funded principally by WWF Sweden and Stockholm University. Through studying seabirds the project aims to gain insights into the Baltic Sea

ecosystem and its species. The project's scientific home is Stockholm Resilience Centre at Stockholm University, but closely collaborates with Lund University and has continuous collaborations with other researchers at an internation-

al level. The project's field studies are focussed mainly on Stora Karlsö island and the sea off the west coast of Gotland. This activity report for 2015 gives a summary of the activities and events during and before the 2015 field season.

Dr. Seabird - M. Kadin...

In November 2014 BSP had the pleasure to celebrate our co-worker Martina Kadin, who successfully defended her PhD thesis "*Seabirds as food for thought - An integrative study on seabird ecology and ecosystem services in changing marine systems*", at Stockholm University.

...and a new PhD to BSP

As a good way to start the 2015 season, we welcomed a new co-worker: Blanca Sarzo from Spain. Blanca started a PhD formed as a collaboration between the University of Valencia and Stockholm University. Blanca will do statistic analysis of existing data gathered by the BSP, but also spend time with fieldwork at Stora Karlsö.

Upcoming focus on razorbills

The common guillemot (*Uria aalge*) is the main study species of BSP, but during 2015 we also put some focus to the closely related razorbill (*Alca torda*), which breeds in great numbers on Stora Karlsö. A total count of breeding pairs and a study on foraging movements has started in 2015 and will continue in 2016.

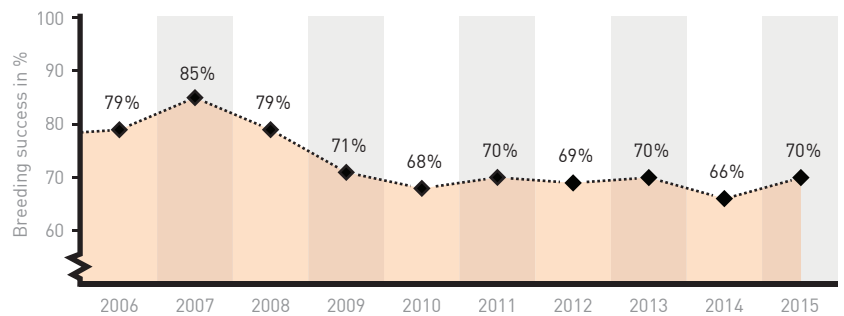
Outreach work 2015

- In connection to the political event *Almedalsveckan* in Visby, BSP and WWF Sweden jointly invited politicians and societal figures to talks and discussions on Stora Karlsö. A similar event was hosted in 2014 and the aim is to create a forum for dialogue about how we can together create a sustainable management plan for the Baltic Sea ecosystem.

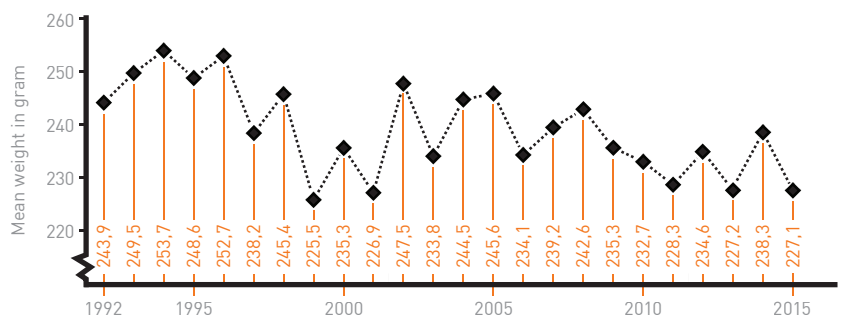
- During the late summer of 2015, a new exhibition about BSP and the seabird research at Stora Karlsö was opened in the museum at Stora Karlsö. One of the items that now meets the visitors is a scale model of the Auk Lab, showing how work looks like inside the world unique artificial breeding ledge.

- Representatives of BSP have met national and local media and given talks both on and off the island several times throughout the year. During the period of guillemot chick ringing, we met over 450 interested listeners to 20 talks on seabird research.

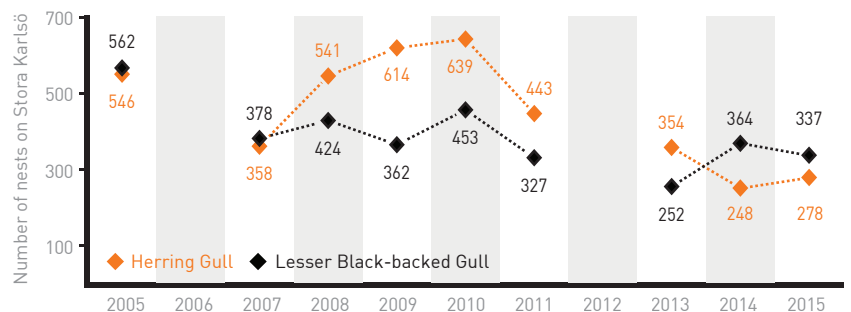
Results from 2015 in figures



The breeding success for guillemots in 2015 - 70% - is based on daily studies of 162 pairs on seven natural breeding ledges.



Mean weight of ringed guillemot chicks 2015 is 227,1 g.



Nest counts of herring gull (24-25/5 2015) and Lesser Black-backed gull (2-3/6 2015) are carried out annually by the BSP.

Record breaking old guillemots

A common guillemot with ring number 9045549 was sighted in a colony on Stora Karlsö on the 10th of June 2015. It transpired that the bird was ringed as a chick on the 29th of June 1972 - 42 years, 11 months and 11 days earlier! Considering the three weeks of age the chicks usually have when they are ringed, the resighting might have been on the 43rd birthday of the bird. This impressive age makes the guillemot the oldest known wild bird in Sweden and probably the oldest known guillemot in the world! It's not by far though, the last record holder, also a guillemot from Stora Karlsö, was only some weeks younger when it was spotted in 2008. Thanks to a great ringing effort in the 70's and the change from softer aluminium rings to steel rings, we expect more really old guillemots ahead. Another likely record from 2015 is a 38 year old guillemot that seemed to have succeeded with its breeding!