

VSAS Survey report: Ullapool - Stornoway, August 10th 2019

Volunteer Seabirds At Sea (VSAS) surveys were carried out from the bridge of the Ullapool to Stornoway ferry on scheduled return crossings on 10th August 2019. Data were collected to European Seabirds At Sea (ESAS) standard, by trained volunteers, using the JNCC VSAS app to digitally record data in real time.

Environmental conditions were unsuitable for surveying for some of the duration of the crossing. Visibility was recorded as good to poor. Beaufort wind force ranged between two and five, and seastate ranged between two and six. Swell heights were recorded up to three metres.

A total of 103 observations were made of ten species of seabirds (and three 'species groups' where identification could not be made to species level) during the dedicated survey effort. No marine mammals were observed. Numbers of observations and total numbers of birds and mammals recorded are presented below in Table 1.

Species	Number of observations	Total birds observed
Fulmar	14	19
Gannet	31	39
Great Skua	1	1
Guillemot	12	26
Kittiwake	17	36
Manx Shearwater	1	1
Puffin	9	12
Razorbill	3	13
Shag	6	9
Storm petrel	1	1
Auk spp	5	20
GU/RA	2	2
Small gull spp	1	1

Table 1. Numbers of observations and totals recorded per species

Species accounts

See figures 1 - 5 for maps of observations

Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*)

19 birds were recorded over 14 observations. All records were from areas of open water in more eastern parts of the Minch.

Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) In total, 39 birds were recorded over 31 observations. There was a strong preference for the eastern side of the Minch, with relatively few records mid channel.

Manx shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*)
Just a single bird was observed mid channel.

Storm petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*)

A single bird was observed on the eastern side of the Minch in open water.

Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*)

Six records of nine birds, with all observations coming from waters south of Priest Island and the Summer Isles.

Great skua (*Stercorarius skua*)

A single bird was observed around the mouth of Little Loch Broom

Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*)

Seventeen records comprising 36 individuals. All records were mid channel or on the eastern side of the Minch.

Guillemot (*Uria aalge*)

The most numerous species of auk recorded, with 12 observations totalling 26 individuals. All records were mid channel or on the eastern side of the Minch.

Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

Three records comprising 13 individuals, with all birds noted mid channel.

Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*)

Nine observations that comprised 12 birds in total. All records were from mid channel.

Distribution maps

Figures 1 - 5 show the distributions of all seabird and marine mammal species recorded during the survey.

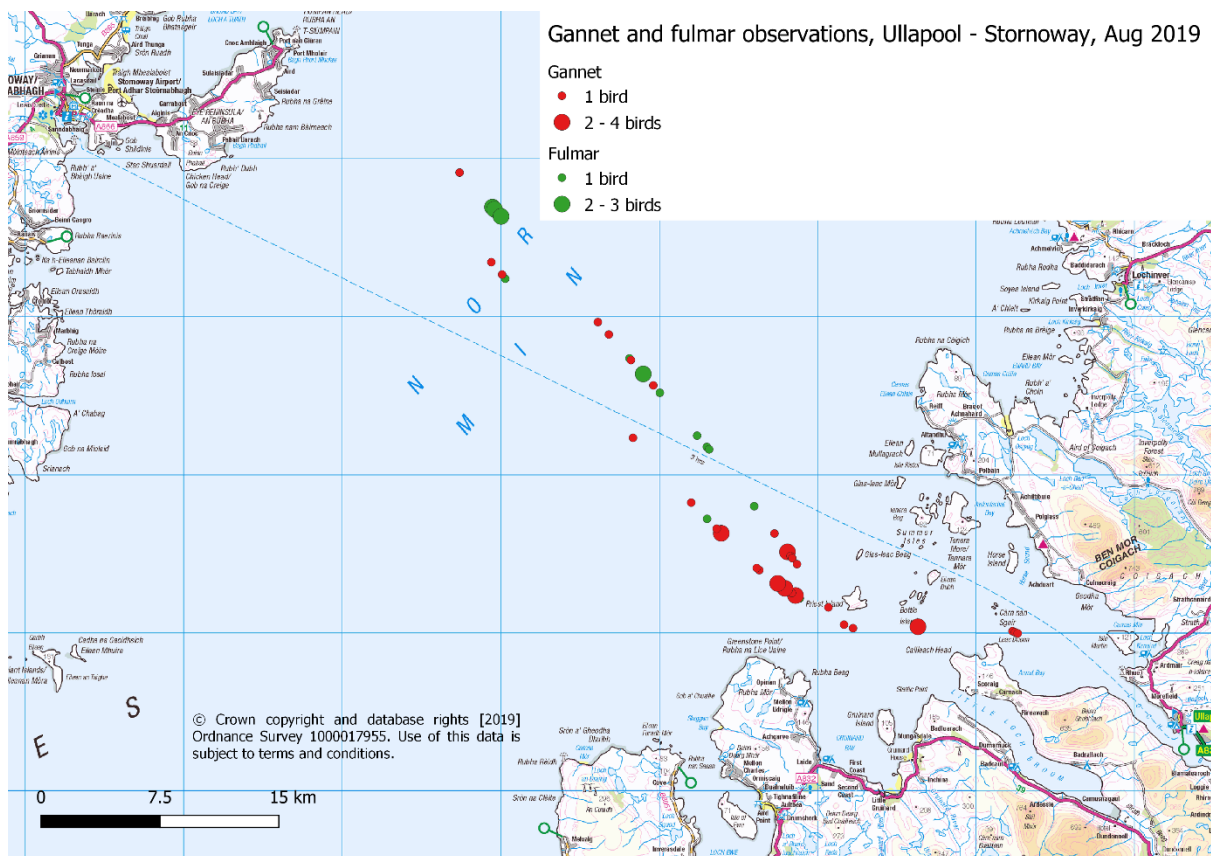


Figure 1. Observations of gannet and fulmar, Ullapool - Stornoway, August 10th 2019.

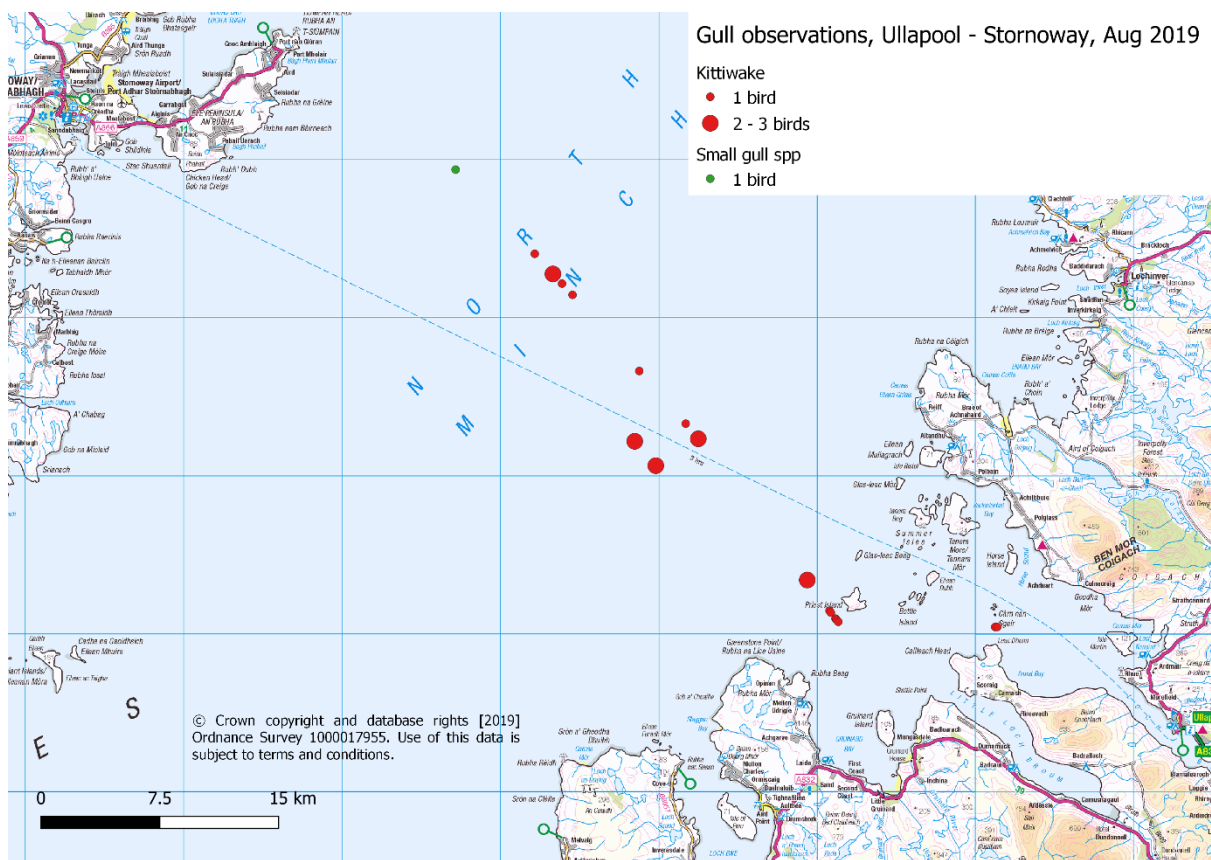


Figure 2. Observations of gulls, Ullapool - Stornoway, August 10th 2019.

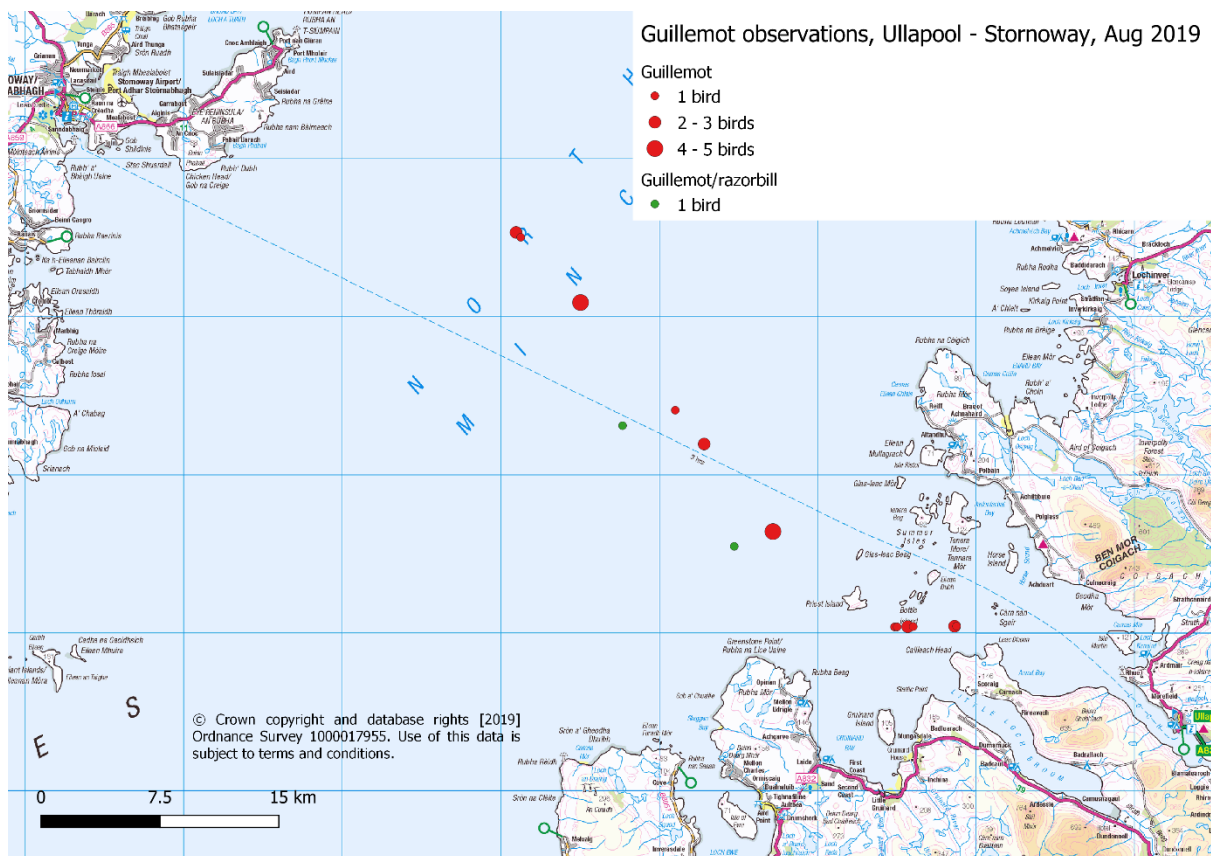


Figure 3. Observations of guillemot, Ullapool - Stornoway, August 10th 2019.

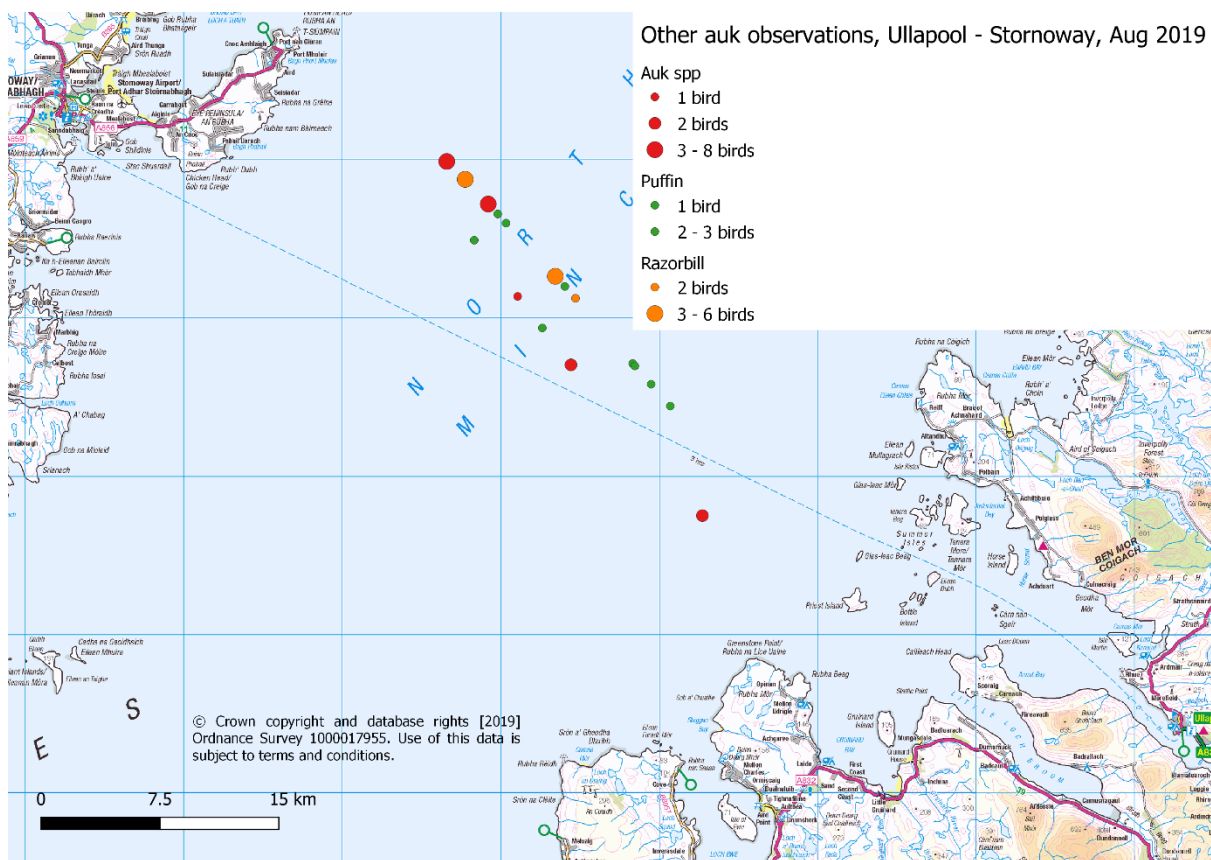


Figure 4. Observations of other auks, Ullapool - Stornoway, August 10th 2019.

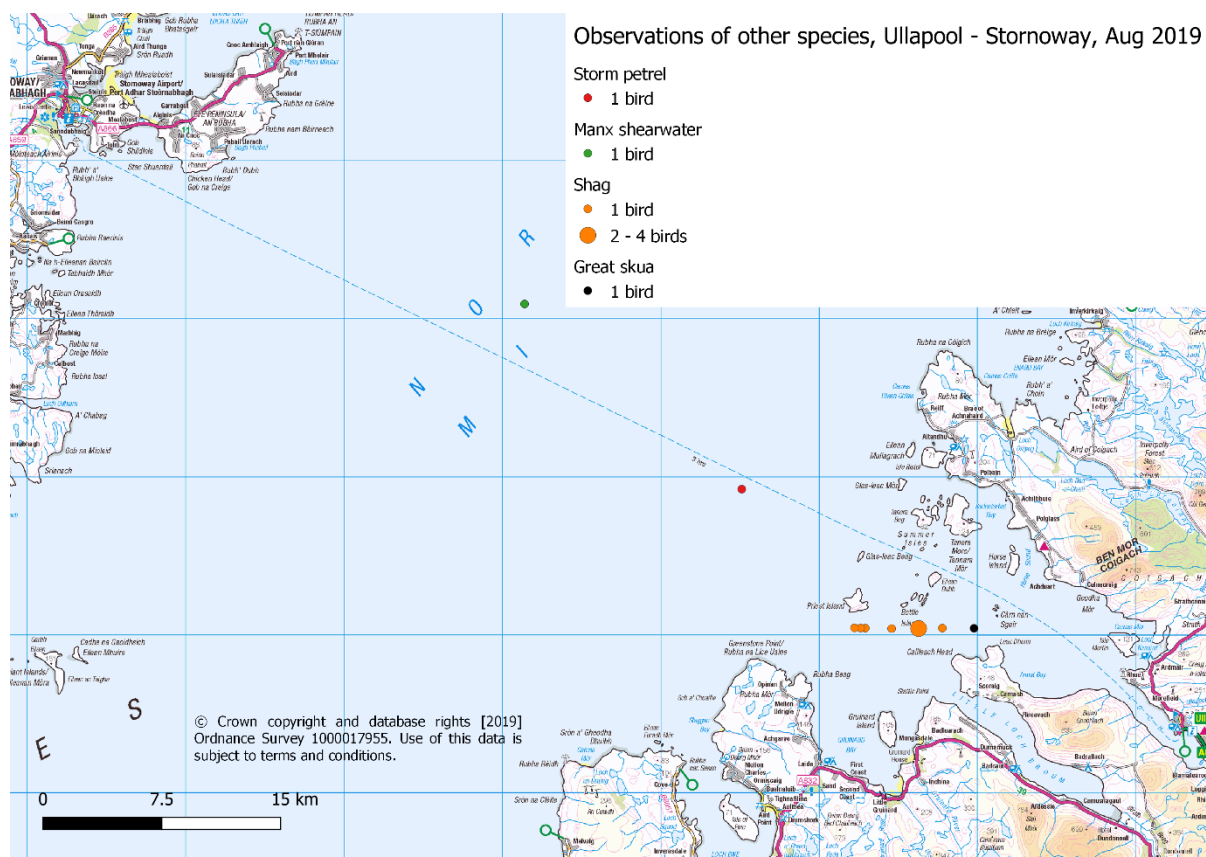


Figure 5. Observations of other seabirds, Ullapool - Stornoway, August 10th 2019.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the volunteers who gave up their time to take part in this survey – we hope this report serves as a useful reminder of your time on board! We would also like to thank the Captain and crew of the Ullapool - Stornoway ferry for welcoming the survey team on board, and Klare Chamberlain and Ruth Rice at CalMac who helped with access and other arrangements. Finally, thanks to Simon Pinder and Rob Petley-Jones at MARINElife for coordinating volunteer effort.