

VSAS Survey Report: November 2021

Summary

A single survey was carried out from the deck of the Ardrossan to Brodick crossing this month. Data were collected to European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) standards, by trained volunteers, using the JNCC VSAS app to digitally capture data in real time.

Environmental conditions were relatively stable, with a sea state of 3 throughout, although surveyors were exposed to heavy snow on the first crossing which cleared by the return journey. The first leg of the Ardrossan to Brodick route was used as a refresher so only the return survey is shown below. The apparent absence of birds on the west of the route is due to the survey being unable to commence until the ferry has exited the 'red zone', highlighting the importance of surveying in both directions to adequately sample the entire route.

A further survey scheduled for the 27th November was cancelled due to Storm Arwen.

Routes

Ardrossan to Brodick, 13th November 2021

A total of 28 observations were made of 7 seabird species (and three 'species groups' where identification could not be made to species level) during dedicated survey effort. No marine mammals were observed. Numbers of observations and total numbers of birds recorded are presented below (Table 1).

Species	Number of observations	Total birds observed
Black guillemot	2	2
Guillemot	2	3
Guillemot/razorbill	9	28
Shag	1	1
Black-headed gull	1	1
Small gull sp	1	2
Great black-backed gull	1	1
Herring gull	5	6
Lesser black-backed gull	1	1
Large gull sp.	5	7

Table 1. Numbers of observations and totals recorded per species

Distribution maps

Figures 1 to 3 show the distributions of all seabird species recorded during the survey.

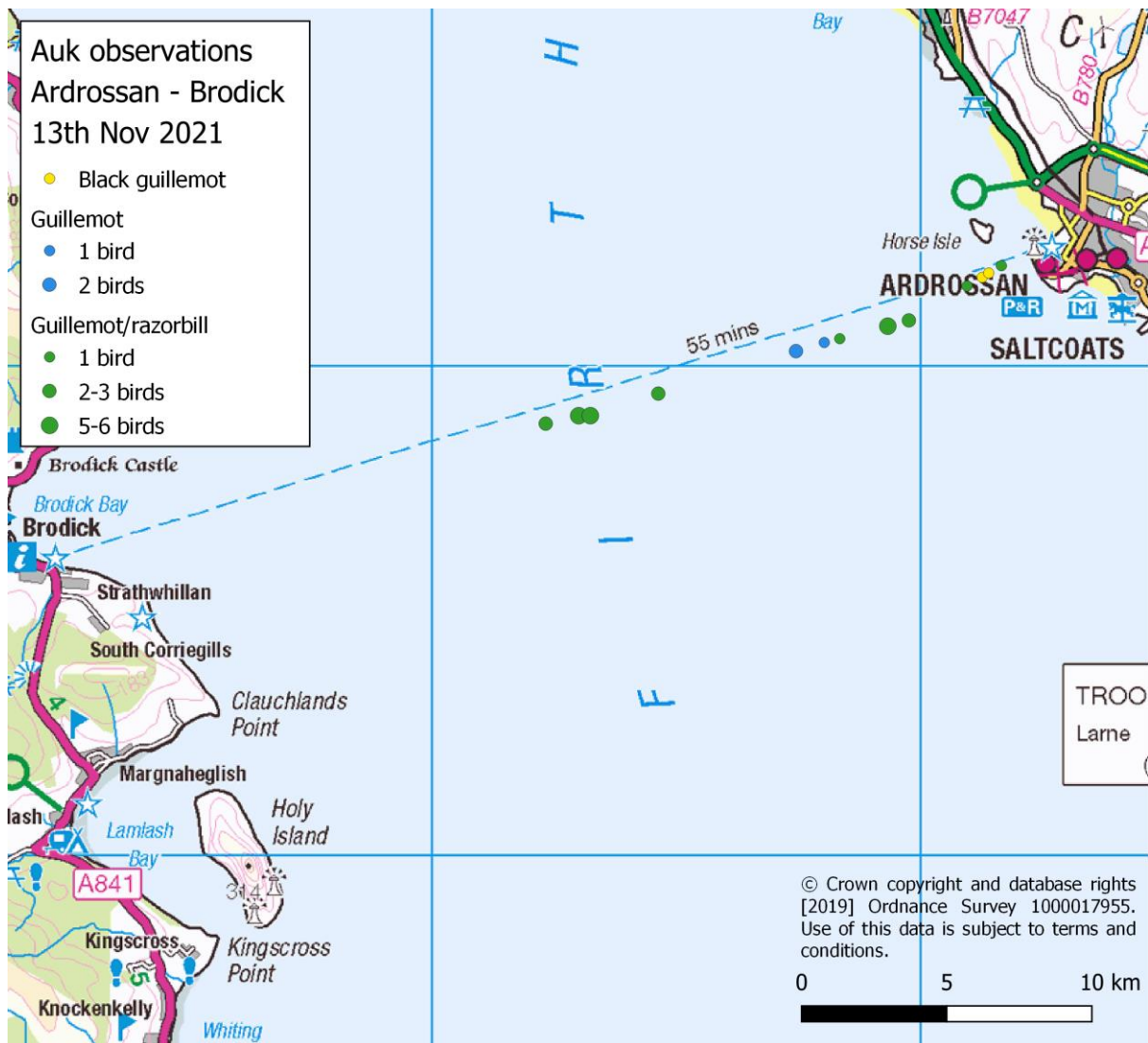


Fig 1. Auk observations recorded during the Ardrossan to Brodick survey, 13th November 2021

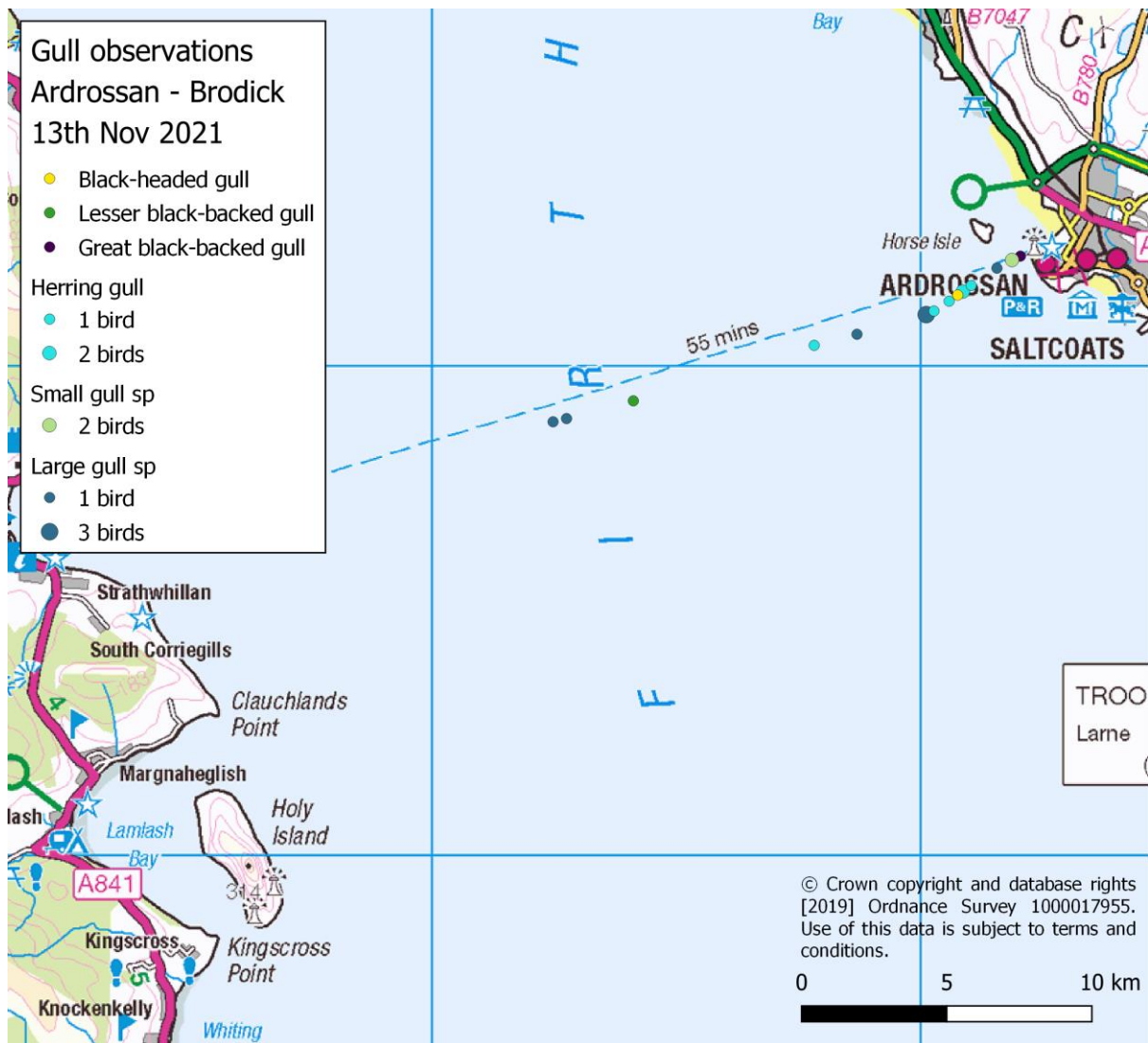


Fig 2. Gull observations recorded during the Ardrossan to Brodick survey, 13th November 2021

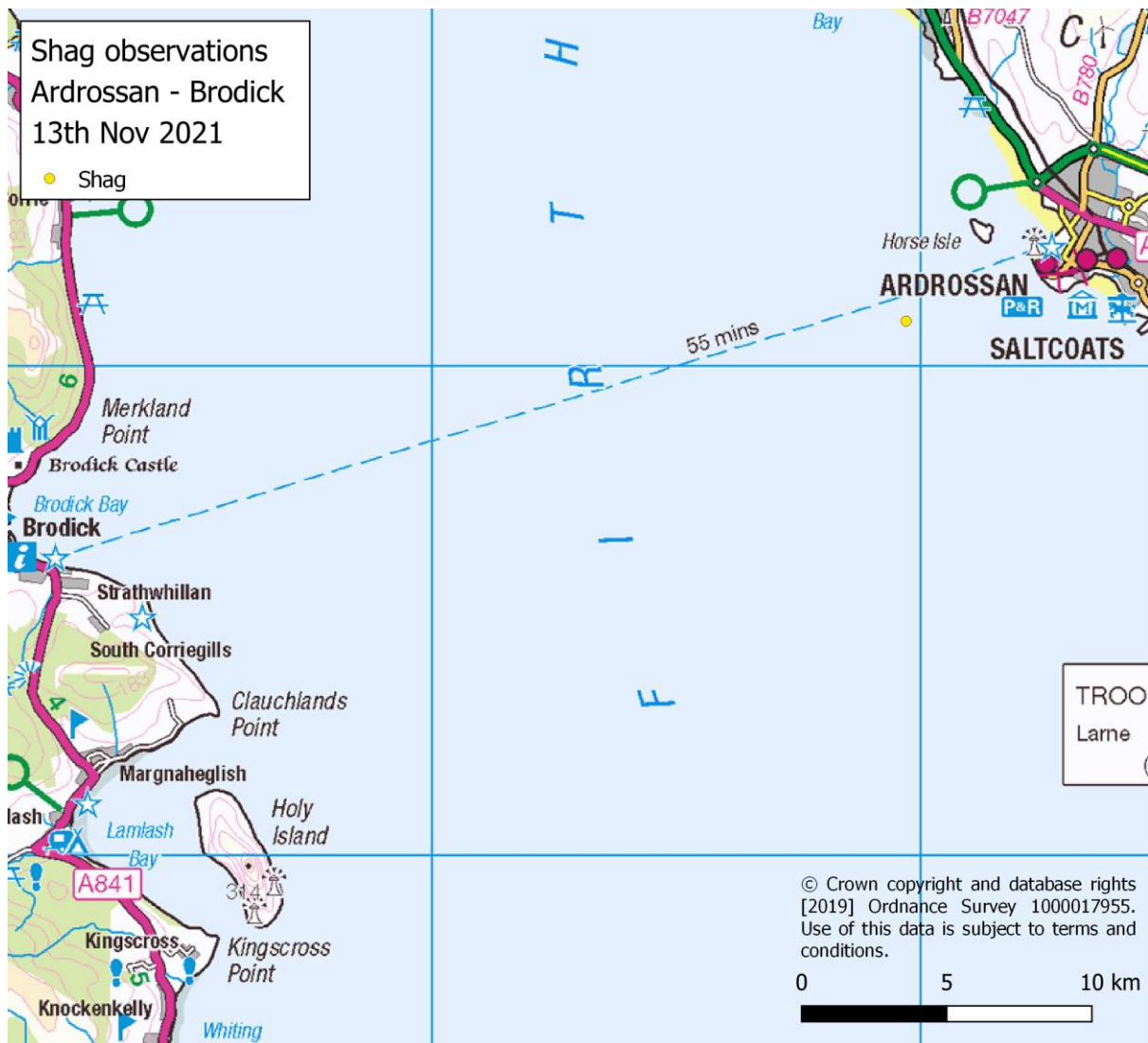


Fig 3. Shag observations recorded during the Ardrrossan to Brodick survey, 13th November 2021

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the volunteers who gave up their time to take part in this month's 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 ferries for welcoming the survey teams on board, and Klare Chamberlain and Ruth Rice at CalMac who helped with access and other arrangements.