

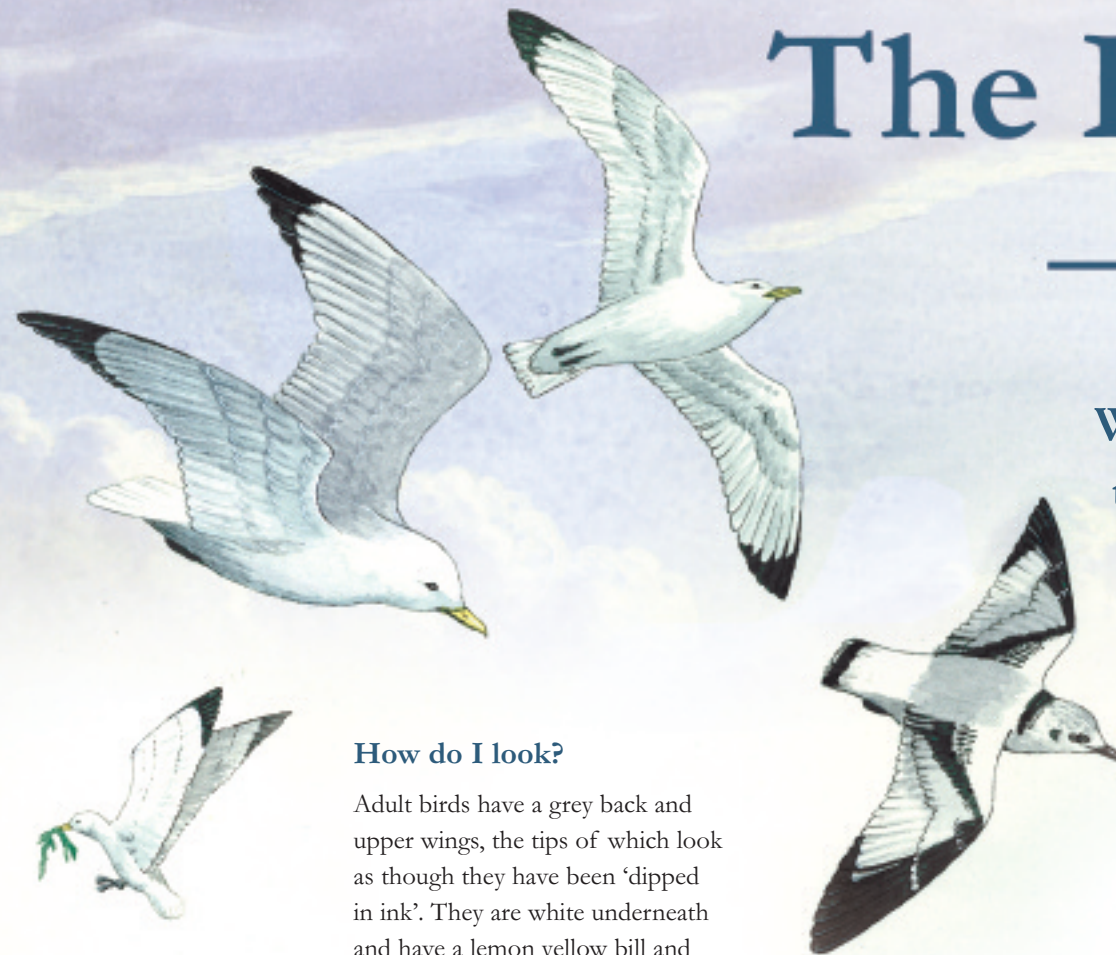
The Kittiwake Tower – high-rise haven!

Life on the ledge

Each spring Kittiwakes build a drum shaped nest made of seaweed and mud. The females lay between 1 and 3 eggs, which both parents incubate for around 4 weeks. These hatch into small white downy chicks, which are fed on a diet of regurgitated fish. At around 6 weeks the young fledge and by late August all the birds have left the river.

In recent years the number of Kittiwakes has declined dramatically. Many experts have suggested that rising sea temperatures, brought about by climate change, have led to a shortage of sandeels, the Kittiwakes favourite food.

It's important that we all help protect these ocean travellers for the enjoyment of future generations. Summers on Tyneside wouldn't be the same without the melancholy cries of Kittiwakes ringing out over the grey waters of the Tyne.



How do I look?

Adult birds have a grey back and upper wings, the tips of which look as though they have been 'dipped in ink'. They are white underneath and have a lemon yellow bill and short black legs. At their breeding grounds Kittiwakes make a loud kitti-wa-ak call.

Juveniles have a black zigzag across the wings, a black bill and a black half collar around the back of the neck.

Welcome to the Kittiwake Tower, home to some of the most inland breeding Kittiwakes in the world.

Kittiwakes are small, graceful gulls of the open sea that return to land to breed on coastal cliffs. In the mid 1960s a major change in nesting behaviour saw a breeding colony make its home on old riverside buildings at Gateshead quayside.

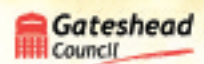
Tyne travel

The Baltic Flour Mills became home to Tyneside's largest colony of Kittiwakes. Its redevelopment in 2002, as a centre for contemporary art, meant the loss of the birds' favourite nest site. To provide the birds with an alternative home Gateshead Council built the Kittiwake Tower.

The tower is home to around 100 pairs of Kittiwakes that make the long journey from their winter fishing grounds, up the Tyne to Gateshead. To protect one of Tyneside's most unusual natural treasures the tower has been declared a Local Nature Reserve.



For more information please contact the Countryside Team at Gateshead Council on (0191) 433 3441.



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Kittiwakes nest in colonies, sometimes **thousands** of birds strong

$\frac{1}{2}$ million pairs breed around the coast of Britain

Kittiwakes can live for over **20 years**

Kittiwakes are protected under the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** making it an *offence* to harm them or their nests