

28 October 2021

Compiled by NEBBS
group coordinator



Beached guillemots and razorbills during September 2021

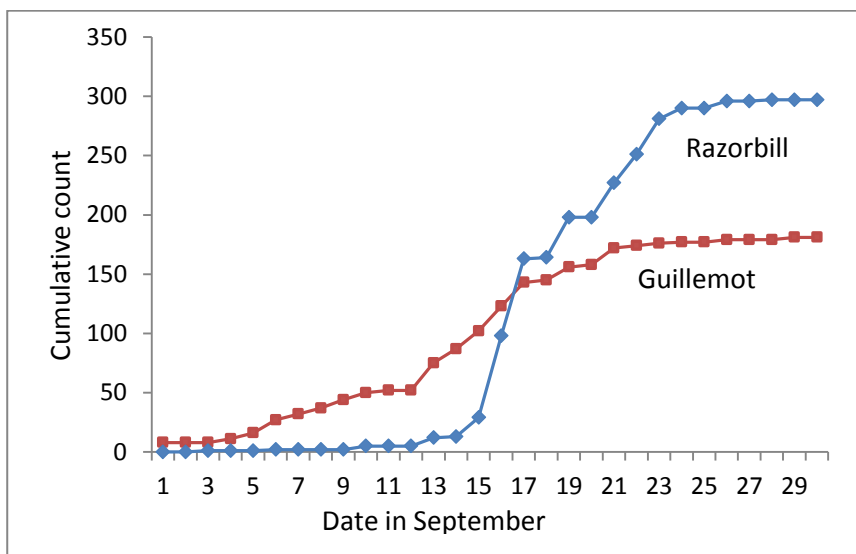
An incident developed from early September especially with guillemots and razorbills beaching along the east coast of England and Scotland, from at least Orkney to Norfolk. No specific disease or illness has been identified at this time. During October the incident has reached south Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium with many beached guillemots in particular in those countries.

In our northeast England region at first the beaching and deaths involved guillemots, to be joined and then augmented by increasing numbers of razorbills. Table 1 (below) shows incidence and frequency of corpses along 66 km of NE England coastline surveyed during September 2021.

Species	Number of corpses	Corpses per km
Guillemot	181-182	2.74 – 2.76
Razorbill	297	4.50

Table 1. These data are mostly derived from surveys completed by the NEBBS Group with a few additional records from other sources.

The total length of northeast England coastline is approx. 160 km, but not all is suitable for survey and not all of suitable coast has surveyors. So from 160 km total length, surveyed shore was approx. 66 km (some sections may have been surveyed on more than one occasion in this period).



These data show higher than normal numbers for these two auk species. The majority of the beached razorbills were at least older than one year, which is unusual for such an incident. Of those individuals examined externally by the NEBBS group coordinator, each was obviously emaciated. During September the NEBBS group collected and stored four guillemots and five razorbills, with a further two guillemots collected in October.

Figure 1. Running totals of corpses and remains of guillemot and razorbill found in northeast England during September 2021.

Auk deaths in October 2021 are very much reduced compared to September 2021 figures, however there continues to be a presence of these two species close inshore – and observed actively diving and in congregations together, some travelling kilometres upriver (notably at the River Tyne). These inshore sightings of substantial numbers of live individuals are most unusual.

Please continue to monitor your beaches, and more frequently at this time of the auk incident. Be cautious in handling the birds and consider wearing protective gloves. Please keep me informed of your findings. Please age the auks – and ask for details on methods (specifics should be noted).

In conclusion Please continue to return your regular survey reports. I send thanks for your continuing involvement. Laboratory work is underway with opportunities to observe and assist.

Kind regards, Dan Turner (Group coordinator). Email dan.m.turner@btinternet.com