Black-legged kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* **breeding data recorded on the River Tyne during 2025**

A summary report for NHSN website (finalised 2 November 2025).

by Daniel M. Turner

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Note. This is version 6 ('six') of this form of report; last updated 2 Nov 2025.

These breeding data relate to surveys performed by the author only.

Key: **AON** Apparently Occupied Nest (a well-built nest capable of containing eggs, with at least one adult present. Repeated counts in late May to mid-June or a single count in early to mid-June).
Breeding Productivity Minimum number of young fledged per Apparently Occupied Nest.

Table 1. **2025** River Tyne kittiwake AON summary (Two Rounds: late May and early to mid June)

Location	**AON total Round 1 (May 24 to June 2)**	**AON total Round 2 (June 7 - 16)**	**Max AON, based on detailed notes from Rounds 1 and 2 comparing each ledge.**
1. Tynemouth cliffs (natural site)	Not counted	Not counted	Not counted
2. North Shields Ferry Landing (Ferry Mews)	15	16	16
3. Smiths Dock, North Shields	0	0	0
4. Akzo Nobel (Int. Paints, Felling)	192	249	251
5. Saltmeadows Tower (Gateshead)	122	135	138
6. H Nichol Tower (RWE Renewables), G/head	0	0	0
7. 200 metres E from Baltic FM, quayside	4	5	5
8. Baltic Flour Mill (Arts Centre, Gateshead)	132	158	158
9. Under HMS Calliope (Gateshead)	0	0	0
10. St Mary's Heritage Centre, Gateshead	5	5	5
11. Exchange Bldg., S face (top), NCL quayside	10	11	12
12. Lombard House (Newcastle quayside)	26	25	26
13. Queen Street north side (No 13, Newcastle)	45	47	47
14. Phoenix House (Queen St and Sandhill, Newcastle quayside)	12	10	12
15a. Tyne Bridge – North abutment, main	273	286	291
15b. Tyne Bridge – N, six mitigation ledges	9	11	11
15c. Tyne Bridge – N, unintended scaffolding ledges (temporary)	6	8	8
16. Tyne Bridge – North abutment girders	19	19	22
17a. Tyne Bridge – South abutment, main	266	270	277
17b. Tyne Bridge – S, gantry mitigation ledges	2	3	3
17c. Tyne Bridge – S, unintended scaffolding ledges (temporary)	0 (had been 2 in early May)	0	0
18. Tyne Bridge – South abutment girders	148	152	160
19. Guildhall (Newcastle quayside)	47	46	50
20. Bessie Surtees House (Newcastle)	1	1	1
21. Railway viaduct, Dean St. (Newcastle)	115	117	118
22. Newcastle quayside, miscellaneous, (Table 2)	23	24	25
23. High Level Bridge (south support in river)	20	20	22
Totals: River Tyne (excl. Tynemouth)	**1,492**	**1,618**	**1,658**

Table 2. Newcastle quayside miscellaneous buildings / structures, **2025** kittiwake AON summary and brood sizes (the young are generally well-grown at this date). See row 22 of Tables 1, 3 and 4.

Newcastle Quayside, Miscellaneous Location	**AON (May 31)**	**AON (June 12)**	**Max AON**	**Live chicks (July 19)**	**Brood sizes**
Vermont ApartHotel	4	4	4	2	2x1
Trap (between Vermont ApartHotel & Phoenix House)	5	6	6	3	3x1
Akenside Studios	3	2	3	1	1x1
Akenside Traders	3	4	4	3	1x1, 1x2
Vermont Hotel (main), Dean St	2	2	2	3	1x1, 1x2
On top of six street lamps, outside Guildhall	3	3	3	1	1x1
Floodlight structure off NE corner of Guildhall	2	2	2	0	---
Tortuga, E of Bessie Surtees, W end of gutter	1	1	1	0	---
1 Queen St corner block, Queen St / Sandhill	0	0	0	---	---
Exchange Bldg., Lombard Street (i.e. W face, top)	0	0	0	---	---
Totals	**23**	**24**	**25**	**13**	**9x1, 2x2**

Photo 1. Six main mitigation ledges (with kittiwakes) at scaffolding on south side of Tyne Bridge north abutment (Newcastle), facing the River Tyne, 22 May 2025, © Daniel M Turner.

Photo 2. Adult kittiwake with chick at nest, Baltic Art Centre, Gateshead, 16 July 2025, © Daniel M Turner.

Table 3. Main River Tyne buildings / structures, **2025** kittiwake chick totals and brood sizes (the young are generally well-grown at these dates).

Location	**Max AON (May 24 to June 16) (see Table 1)**	**Live chicks (July 14 to 20)**	**Brood sizes (broods of 1, 2 or 3 chicks)**
1. Tynemouth cliffs (natural site)	Not counted	n/c	n/c
2. North Shields Ferry Landing (Ferry Mews)	16	7	5x1, 1x2
3. Smiths Dock, North Shields	0	---	---
4. Akzo Nobel (Int. Paints, Felling)	251	242	132x1, 52x2, 2x3
5. Saltmeadows Tower (Gateshead)	138	114	99x1, 6x2, 1x3
6. H Nichol Tower (RWE Renewables), G/head	0	---	---
7. 200 metres E from Baltic FM, quayside	5	6	4x1, 1x2
8. Baltic Flour Mill (Arts Centre, Gateshead)	158	153	93x1, 30x2
9. Under HMS Calliope (Gateshead)	0	---	---
10. St Mary's Heritage Centre, Gateshead	5	5	1x1, 2x2
11. Exchange Bldg., S face (top), NCL quayside	12	8	6x1, 1x2
12. Lombard House (Newcastle quayside)	26	15	13x1, 1x2
13. Queen Street north side (No 13, Newcastle)	47	35	25x1, 5x2
14. Phoenix House (Queen St and Sandhill, Newcastle quayside)	12	0	0
15a. Tyne Bridge – North abutment, main	291	176	134x1, 21x2
15b. Tyne Bridge – N, six mitigation ledges	11	4	4x1
15c. Tyne Bridge – N, unintended scaffolding ledges (temporary)	8	3	3x1
16. Tyne Bridge – North abutment girders	22	12	12x1
17a. Tyne Bridge – South abutment, main	277	234	161x1, 35x2, 1x3
17b. Tyne Bridge – S, gantry mitigation ledges	3	0	0
17c. Tyne Bridge – S, unintended scaffolding ledges (temporary)	0	---	---
18. Tyne Bridge – South abutment girders	160	135	94x1, 19x2, 1x3
19. Guildhall (Newcastle quayside)	50	37	29x1, 4x2
20. Bessie Surtees House (Newcastle)	1	1	1x1
21. Railway viaduct, Dean St. (Newcastle)	118	93	67x1, 13x2
22. Newcastle quayside, miscellaneous, (Table 2)	25	13	9x1, 2x2
23. High Level Bridge (south support in river)	22	21	13x1, 4x2
Totals: River Tyne (excl. Tynemouth)	**1,658**	**1,314**	**905x1, 197x2, 5x3**

Photo 3. Akzo Nobel site, Felling Shore, south bank of River Tyne, 9 June 2025, © Daniel M Turner.

Table 4. **2025** River Tyne kittiwake AON (max.) and maximum breeding productivity (Prod'y) summary.

Location	Max AON (May 24 to June 16) (see Table 1)	Live chicks (July 14 to 20)	Prod'y. Chicks per AON	No. of failed nests	% of failed nests
1. Tynemouth cliffs (natural site)	Not counted	n/c	----	---	---
2. North Shields Ferry Landing (Ferry Mews)	16	7	[0.44]	10	[62.5%]
3. Smiths Dock, North Shields	0	---	---	---	---
4. Akzo Nobel (Int. Paints, Felling)	251	242	0.96	65	25.9%
5. Saltmeadows Tower (Gateshead)	138	114	0.83	32	23.2%
6. H Nichol Tower (RWE Renewables), G/head	0	---	---	---	---
7. 200 metres E from Baltic FM, quayside	5	6	[1.20]	0	[0%]
8. Baltic Flour Mill (Arts Centre, Gateshead)	158	153	0.97	35	22.2%
9. Under HMS Calliope (Gateshead)	0	---	---	---	---
10. St Mary's Heritage Centre, Gateshead	5	5	[1.00]	2	[40.0%]
11. Exchange Bldg., S face (top), NCL quayside	12	8	[0.67]	5	[41.7%]
12. Lombard House (Newcastle quayside)	26	15	0.58	12	46.2%
13. Queen Street north side (No 13, Newcastle)	47	35	0.74	17	36.2%
14. Phoenix House (Queen St and Sandhill, Newcastle quayside)	12	0	[0.00]	12	[100%]
15a. Tyne Bridge – North abutment, main	291	176	0.60	136	46.7%
15b. Tyne Bridge – N, six mitigation ledges	11	4	[0.36]	7	[63.6%]
15c. Tyne Bridge – N, unintended scaffolding ledges (temporary)	8	3	[0.38]	5	[62.5%]
16. Tyne Bridge – North abutment girders	22	12	0.55	10	45.5%
17a. Tyne Bridge – South abutment, main	277	234	0.84	80	28.9%
17b. Tyne Bridge – S, gantry mitigation ledges	3	0	[0.00]	3	[100%]
17c. Tyne Bridge – S, unintended scaffolding ledges (temporary)	0	---	---	---	---
18. Tyne Bridge – South abutment girders	160	135	0.84	46	28.8%
19. Guildhall (Newcastle quayside)	50	37	0.74	17	34.0%
20. Bessie Surtees House (Newcastle)	1	1	[1.00]	0	[0%]
21. Railway viaduct, Dean St. (Newcastle)	118	93	0.79	38	32.2%
22. Newcastle quayside, miscellaneous, (Table 2)	25	13	0.52	14	56.0%
23. High Level Bridge (south support in river)	22	21	0.95	5	22.7%
Totals: River Tyne (excl. Tynemouth)	**1,658**	**1,314**	**0.79**	**551**	**33.2%**

General Notes to Table 4.

- **What is a 'failed nest'**? This is an occupied nest on which the adults failed to rear (fledge) any chicks. So, the table records a short-hand term '% of failed nests' which represents 'percentage of pairs which fail'. 'No. of failed nests' is number of nests which failed to rear any chicks.
- Where there were less than 20 AON at any site, the figures for: a) minimum breeding productivity and b) % of failed nests, have been placed in square brackets [ ] due to small sample sizes.
- AONs at Phoenix House (Row 14) appear to have been interefered with during the nesting season.
- Due to the surveyor / author's progressing years the surveys at Tynemouth cliffs were omitted in 2025. Surveys at this location have always been the most difficult (least safe) for the author.
- Breeding productivity and chick numbers relate to those dates indicated.
- Many more data were collected and will be incorporated in a future more detailed report.
- On 14 July, 0 fledged juveniles were seen at / close beside Akzo Nobel.
- On 17 July, 1 fledged juvenile was seen at Baltic Art Centre and 3 beside Swing Bridge.
- On 19 July, 10 fledged juveniles were additionally recorded close to the Tyne Bridge.

Report Discussion

The first live River Tyne chicks of summer 2025 were seen in the nest on 7 June at the main nesting ledge on the north face of the Baltic Art Centre (Photo 2). There were two small singles, one in each of two nests towards the eastern end of the ledge. I also saw one small deceased chick on the paving at the base of the north face of the Baltic on the same day.

Maximum AON of 1,658 for the River Tyne is down (by 18.3%) on the peak of ca. 2,030 in 2022 and mainly on account of the ongoing Works on the Tyne Bridge (see later paragraphs) and to a lesser extent perhaps a follow-on from summer 2023 when many died from bird flu and from which decrease the colony is likely still recovering. Breeding productivity for the river as a whole was 0.79 well-grown chicks per AON which was also a reduction on more usual years for the Tyne. Productivity was good at Akzo Nobel (0.96; Photo 3), Baltic Art Centre (0.97) and High Level Bridge (0.95), but reduced in the Newcastle Quayside and the Tyne Bridge area (see Table 4). It is uncertain why there was such a reduction in productivity after it held up well in 2024 (overall 1.02 for the Tyne; Turner 2024) after bouncing back from the impact of bird flu in 2023 (0.69 productivity; Turner 2023). The nesting season did bring hot spells, but no excessive rainfall while bird flu this season did not appear to feature on the river (see later paragraph). Therefore these two factors should not have impacted breeding productivity in any marked way. It has often been the case, based on my annual surveys over many years, that breeding productivity is found to be similar at many of the different river nesting sites in any one year. Offshore food supply must have been good, particularly due to the relatively high breeding productivity noted above at Akzo Nobel, Baltic Art Centre and High Level Bridge. These three sites accounted for 431 AON in 2025 which is 26% of the nesting population and produced 31.7% of the well-grown river nestlings. At the Marsden Bay cliffs coastal kittiwake colony, South Tyneside (a short distance of 4.7 km south from the mouth of the River Tyne; Photo 8), my observations there at four study plots showed the following numbers of AON and breeding productivity: Plot 1 (central site; 74; 1.04), Plot 2 (North, mid-way to edge; 55; 0.80), Plot 3 (North, edge; 58; 0.34), Plot 4 (slightly South from centre; ca. 69; 0.96). If these four sample plots are totalled and averaged they provide 256 AON and 207 chicks showing an average productivity of 0.81 well-grown nestlings per AON which is comparable to the 0.79 productivity recorded overall for the River Tyne (Table 4). An additional rough estimate of productivity on the standing and isolated Marsden Rock itself (from samples viewed on the north, south and west faces and where kittiwakes have long nested; Photo 8) seemed to show a much reduced productivity of 0.1 to 0.3 well-grown nestlings per AON from a sample total of approximately 274 AON. My visits to Dunstanburgh Castle (mid-Northumberland coast) this year provided figures of 347 AON and a breeding productivity of 0.90 which is 13.9 % above the River Tyne. Perhaps a closer proximity to feeding areas from this site is a factor in its heightened productivity when compared to the Tyne.

2025 brought the second year of the four-year programme of Major Maintenance Works (MMW) to the Tyne Bridge (which crosses the Tyne between Newcastle and Gateshead). As a member (and Acting Secretary) of the Tyne Kittiwake Partnership (TKP) and long-term Tyne Kittiwake surveyor I attended regular meetings, along with the TKP Chair (Prof. Helen Wilson), with a group which included the bridge engineers and ecologists from the City Council and WSP. The intention of my attendance was to provide advice and updates on the behaviour of the Tyne Bridge kittiwakes and information on their use of the mitigation ledges and all other aspects of the bridge. I was also asked to feed back on any issues I had noted which may have been caused by the Works. Due to my extra monitoring in this period, I carried out weekly bridge surveys from February as well as my usual AON and chick surveys. Based on my monitoring I prepared monthly reports for presentation at the meetings with the bridge engineers and ecologists. Based on my surveys in previous recent years the Works were estimated to displace approximately 330 nesting pairs during 2025 because of the location of scaffolding placement and its encapsulation. As a consequence, Esh Construction built temporary mitigation ledges of approximate total length 176 metres (see Tables 1&3&4, rows 15b and 17b) to help cater for those displaced pairs. In the event, I recorded fourteen AON on these mitigation ledges during the 2025 nesting season i.e. 4.2 % of those displaced pairs. In addition, I recorded eight AON on unintended scaffolding board ends protruding from the Works (Tables 1&3&4, rows 15c and 17c) and a dozen AON near the top of the south face of the Exchange Building (Tables 1&3&4, row 11) just to the east

of the bridge north abutment. These additional nesting pairs (which were likely displacements from the Tyne Bridge as they were so close beside and at similar heights to where they would normally nest) accounted for 20 AON (8+12) i.e. 6.1% of the total 330 pairs displaced this year. There are questions over where other displaced birds might have gone, while some are likely to have adopted a non-breeding year. On 28 May there were 137 adult kittiwakes standing on the mitigation ledges while on the scaffolding poles beneath the Tyne Bridge on 22 May, 105 adults were noted and on 31 May there were 94 adults at south top of Exchange Building (Tables 1 & 2 in Turner 2025). The numbers at these locations had steadily built to these peaks from zero since early March and were checked regularly. These may have been some of the kittiwakes displaced by the MMW. If these displaced gulls were present at the bridge and close beside (while their previous partners may have still been in the Greater Tyne area) at the end of May without nests then it is unlikely they would have bred on the Tyne or elsewhere during this season. Such numbers of birds resting on the scaffolding poles, mitigation ledges and Exchange Building would account for a fair proportion of the kittiwakes displaced by the MMW and could mean that many of the displaced birds did not breed this year.

During this year my surveys showed a total of 772 AON on the Tyne Bridge (a not unsubstantial number. The equivalent in 2024 was 992 AON) with a productivity of 0.73 well-grown nestlings observed per nest (0.99 in 2024). From these Tyne Bridge nests, 37.2% were observed to have raised no chicks to fledging. Nests which raise no chicks along the Tyne are an annual occurrence (see Table 4 right-hand column), for example from Turner (2024) it can be calculated that in 2024 on the Tyne Bridge 26.2% of nests failed to raise chicks to fledging. Mitigation ledges have been in place for a single nesting season in each of 2024 and 2025 (at different positions between the two years) and numbers of kittiwake pairs nesting on them in each year has been low (19 AON in 2024; Turner 2024). A length of 126 metres (six mitigation ledges; Photo 1) will remain from the 2025 season into the 2026 nesting season and it will be interesting to see if more pairs are attracted to nest there in their second year of presence when the gulls may be more accustomed to them.

Based on the engineering plans for scaffolding placement for the duration of the 2026 nesting season, my observations and records over previous recent years indicate this will mean 396 nesting pairs will be displaced from the bridge during that year. Since some of the scaffolding and encapsulation will be present at the same positions during 2025 and 2026 this will mean that 235 pairs will be displaced from their usual nest sites for this full period of two years. The further 161 nesting pairs will be displaced mainly from the south face of the bridge south abutment and those girders running southwards from there. As well as the six ledges (Photo 1) which will remain from the 2025 nesting season into the 2026 nesting season the engineers / scaffolders will plan and build several further additional mitigation ledges to be present during 2026.

With the assistance of Esh Construction, fourteen fallen & deceased nestlings and one recently-fledged deceased juvenile were collected during the period 7 June to 5 August, also one adult. Three of these nestlings had fallen at the Baltic Art Centre while the rest were from the proximity of the Tyne Bridge and Lombard House. Most of these individuals were collected from me for bird flu testing by DEFRA / APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency). Results have been received for eight of these nestlings and the single juvenile, all of which tested negative for bird flu (HPAI, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza). The deceased adult which was collected (30 June) had died some weeks earlier and was not suitable for HPAI testing. A small number (ca. three) of live fallen chicks from Tyne Bridge environs were collected by Esh Construction and handed to Blyth Wildlife Rescue for care.

An increase in nesting at No. 13 Queen Street by 15 AON compared to 2024 may be partially accounted for by a displacement from nearby Phoenix House, which held 34 AON in 2024 and only 12 in 2025. Increasing deterrent measures taken at Phoenix House was the reason for this reduction in nesting presence and led to a total failure at the site to raise any chicks in 2025.

Recent related publications

On 14 June 2024 Welsh author Jon Gower came to meet me, tour the quaysides and discuss Tyne Kittiwakes. We had several interesting hours together. He was working on a book '*Birdland: On the Wing around Britain*', to be published by Harper Collins in April 2025. On 18 April, I received an ordered copy of

Birdland. It was a great read and I was particularly pleased to see chapter eleven '*Kittiwake City, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*' (Photos 4 and 5).

At the beginning of August, the summer magazine of the Natural History Society of Northumbria (NHSN) appeared. On page 8 it includes a brief article *Caring for Tyne Kittiwakes* (Photo 9) which I had penned.

In early August, the September edition of *Bird Watching* magazine came out (Photo 6). I purchased a copy. The four-page magazine article '*The pride of Newcastle'* by Dr Amanda Tuke features our Quayside kittiwakes along with discussions about the Tyne Bridge maintenance works, amongst other things including the Ouseburn, Jesmond Dene and Wild Intrigue. Amanda had come to see the Quayside kittiwakes in early March - when we met for a tour and discussion together.

Seabird Group Newsletter 160 (October 2025) includes a short report (pages 17-18) '*Tyne Kittiwakes'*. This discusses the Tyne Bridge Major Maintenance Works and impact on the nesting kittiwakes, mentions figures from Dunstanburgh Castle (Northumberland coast) and summarises some regional breeding fulmar data.

I have left a copy of Jon Gower's book *Birdland*, the September 2025 issue of *Bird Watching* magazine (with Dr Amanda Tuke's article) and the NHSN Magazine (Summer 2025) in the reception area at Lombard House for visitors to peruse. Each item mentions our kittiwakes, the TKP (Tyne Kittiwake Partnership) and the Tyne Bridge Works. Lombard House is on Lombard Street, Newcastle Quayside, and is the base for the engineering staff working on the Tyne Bridge Major Maintenance Works.

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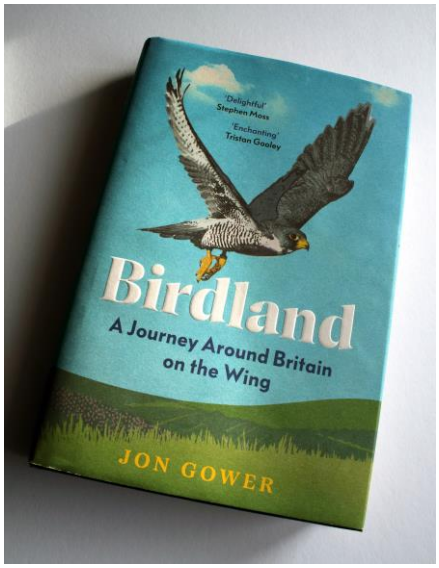

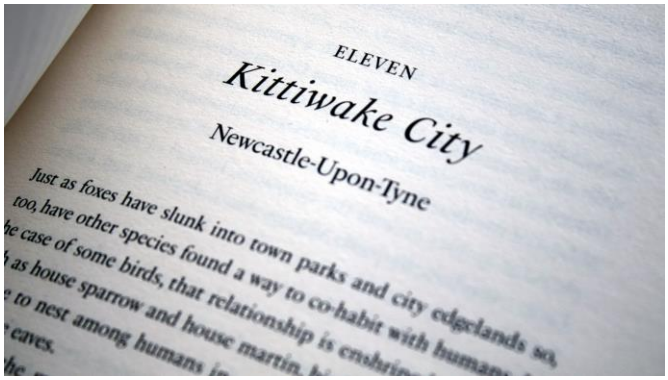
ELEVEN

Kittiwake City

Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

Just as foxes have slunk into town parks and city edgelands so, too, have other species found a way to co-habit with humans. The case of some birds, that relationship is enduring. Such as house sparrow and house martin, [illegible] to nest among humans in caves.

Photo 4. Birdland (306 pages), by Jon Gower, published 2025 by Harper Collins. (photo 1-11-2025)

Photo 5. Birdland, Chapter Eleven, Kittiwake City

Photo 6. Bird Watching magazine, Sept 2025.

Photo 7. North Shields ferry landing (Ferry Mews) with nesting kittiwakes, 2 June 2025, © Daniel M Turner

Photo 8. Marsden Rock and Cliffs, Marsden Bay, South Tyneside, 29 June 2025, © Daniel M Turner

Photo 9. Article in NHSN Newsletter for Summer 2025