



The Herring Gull (left) is significantly decreasing while the Great Black-backed Gull (right) is on the increase. There is always food for a hungry Great Black-backed – in this case an Eider's egg. Photos: Jan Elmelid/N.

The largest colonies of breeding birds are found on Eskilstorps holmar, with approximately 220 pairs of Common Eider, just over 1,100 pairs of Great Cormorant and 440 pairs of Herring Gull. The first breeding Great Cormorants (three pairs) were found in 1993 and within four years had increased to more than 800 pairs! After a slight decrease in 1996-97, numbers have continued to grow. A similar pattern was initially observed for Herring Gull, with an increase until the mid-1990s (885 pairs in 1994 – birds from Måkläppen?), but since

then a significant decrease has occurred (440 pairs in 2003). This decline is on a large scale and is probably a result of limited food availability due to more rigorous refuse management and perhaps also to fewer fishing boats and therefore less fish offal.

By contrast, it is interesting to note that Great Black-backed Gulls are increasing and the difference in trends between the two species may be explained by the fact that Great Black-backed Gull is at the top of the food chain and will always find food. Furthermore, the



Common Eider is a common breeding bird on the islets. Several broods often gather in groups like this. Photo: Jan Elmelid/N.

Herring Gull's decline may actually benefit Great Black-backed Gull by reducing competition for food.

Common Eider also breeds on Näsholmarna (77 pairs), while Herring Gulls are fewer (45 pairs) at this site and Great Cormorants do not breed. Instead, there is a large Arctic Tern colony (80 pairs). Breeding bird numbers on Black vary widely from year to year on account of human disturbance, water levels, predation, etc. There were 20 pairs of Arctic Tern and ten pairs of Little Tern in 2002 but only a few pairs the following year

The fact that species like Common Eider and Herring Gull prefer to breed on islands is well illustrated by Måkläppen's transformation from island to peninsula. The large colonies of Common Eider (up to 500 pairs in the 1970s) and Herring Gull (up to 3,200 pairs in the 1970s) were already in decline when Måkläppen became connected to the mainland in 1990. After the connection was established the decrease intensified because predators were now able to make their way out the free lunches provided by eggs and nestlings. In 2003, just 19 pairs of Common Eider and 11 pairs of Herring Gull bred.

Right: Arctic Tern on nest. Below: Coastal meadow at Foteviken. Photos: Jens B Bruun and Jan Åke Hillarp.





Coastal meadow nesters

The birds that breed on coastal meadows are a large group that encompasses ducks, waders, gulls and passerines. All thrive on the grazed meadows found mainly around Foteviken (Gessie ängar, Eskiltorps ängar, Vellinge ängar and Lilla Hammars näs). On the Falsterbo peninsula, coastal meadows are found at Ängsnäset, the northern part of Flommen and the eastern part of Knävangen.

Some species, like Shelduck (approx. 100 pairs), Oystercatcher (110 pairs), Avocet (425 pairs), Lapwing (220 pairs) and Redshank (190 pairs) are common in most areas and add a physical and audible dimension to the coastal meadows. Mallard (approx. 90 pairs) is also abundant in all areas but its nests are hidden under a bush and not found on the open meadows. Less abundant breeding species include Gadwall, Garganey, Dunlin, Common Snipe and Curlew, most of which breed on the meadows at Foteviken. Typical passerines include Sky Lark, Meadow Pipit, Yellow Wagtail and White Wagtail.

Typical species on coastal meadows. To the left (from top): Shelduck, Oystercatcher and Lapwing. To the right: Yellow Wagtail. Photos: Jens B Bruun (Shelduck), Jan Elmeliid/N (Yellow Wagtail) and P-G Bentz (others).