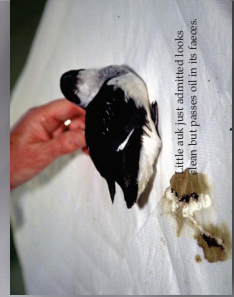


South Devon Seabird Trust

Specializing in the Treatment of Oiled Seabirds

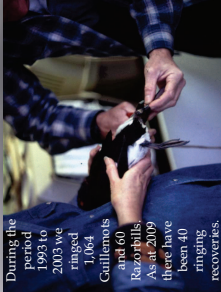
The Trust has a small rescue and rehabilitation centre close to one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, and has dealt with a variety of seabirds, from the tiny Storm Petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*) and Little Auk (*Plautus alle*) to the largest of the seabirds in UK waters – the Northern Gannet (*Sula bassanica*) and in doing so has learnt a lot from each species.



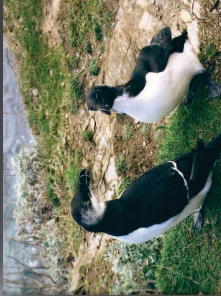
Little auk just admitted looks clean but passes oil in its faeces.



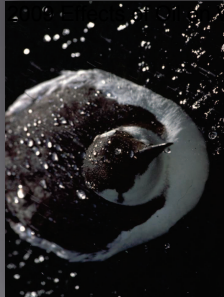
However, auks are the most numerous seabird casualties that the Trust is called upon to rescue from beaches along the coast of South Devon and neighbouring areas, and for which we have the most ringing data. Guillemots (*Uria aalge*) are the most abundant auks around the coast of Britain with a population of 1,400,000, Razorbills (*Alca torda*) number 190,000.



During the period 1993 to 2003 we ringed 1,064 Guillemots and 60 Razorbills. As at 2009 there have been 40 ringing recoveries.



Whilst in our care the birds can move freely between the indoor quarters, which are provided for comfort and safety, to the pool areas for bathing. Each bird is tested for waterproofing and fitness before release. They are not handled from the time of washing to time of release. Most auks that have been oiled spend a month in care.



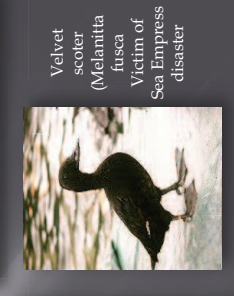
When a Ringing Scheme is commissioned to provide details of ringing recoveries from the data it holds (as it did after the Sea Empress disaster), the data provided will be general to that subject, unless specific details are requested. No breakdown of data is provided relating to specific rehabilitation centres, which is unfortunate as no two centres will have the same results.



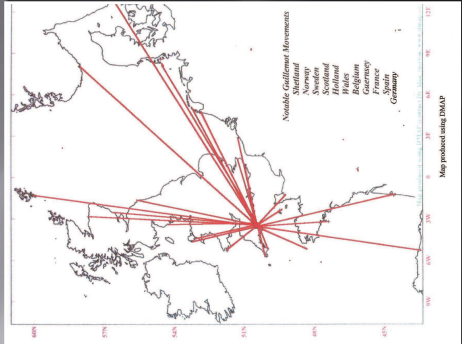
Common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) victims of Sea Empress disaster



Sea Empress



Velvet scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) Victim of Sea Empress disaster



2009 Effects of Oil on Wildlife Conference

Days Ascending (After 9 months)	Where found	Reason for finding	Km from oil spill from release site	Ring No.
6	Dawlish UK		6	X35755
6	Dawlish UK		6	X36013
7	Brixham UK	Found alive, oiled	13	X39810
7	GUERNSEY (CL)	Found alive, oiled	126	X39859
8	Darmouth UK		13	X6940
9	Lymington UK		21	X60433
10	Pige Nose Devon UK	Peregrin strike	31	R34320
10	Lands End UK		491	X60411
13	Dorset UK		66	R34346
20	Sussex UK		301	R05401
21	Cornwall UK	Freshly dead	109	R05345
27	Bessand UK	Freshly dead	25	X36022
28	Chichester UK		190	X39816
30	GUERNSEY (CL)		125	X36033
32	Exmouth UK		19	X35761
54	Dorset UK	Found alive, oiled	52	X39620
105	Anglesey, WALES		322	R05460
	Finistere, FRANCE	Found alive, oiled	249	R05449

Part 1 of a 2 part table, all of the ringing recoveries in this table are for Guillemots, and refers to those found within six months of release. It will be observed that only 8 of the 18 recoveries are less than 5 km from the release site, most had travelled considerable distances. 4 of these birds were found alive, but oiled again, and 3 of these were released after further treatment. 55% of ringing recoveries are over 9 months (Table 2)

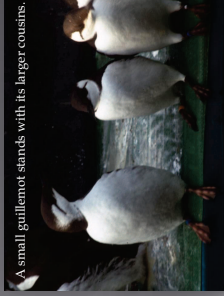
2009 Effects of Oil on Wildlife Conference

It is only by ringing oiled seabirds upon release that a rescue centre can -

- judge the efficiency of its rehabilitation methodology,
- be educated as to the problems creatures encounter post release,
- build up a data base of ringing recoveries,
- be able to challenge reports that denigrate the work of giving creatures a second chance



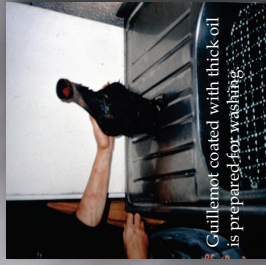
We have no doubt *at all* that oiled seabirds can be successfully rehabilitated - an average of 74% are returned to the wild, and a current median time of 315.5 days and a mean of 776.4 days confirms that they are successful. 55% of the ringing recoveries for our auks are over 9 months).



A small guillemot stands with its larger cousins.



Kitwake is held upside down to show its breast thick with oil. It survived and was released after treatment.



Guillemot coated with thick oil is prepared for washing.

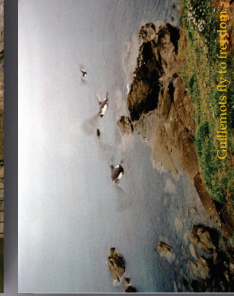
All the birds admitted to our centre have the same opportunity of treatment, irrespective of weight or degree of oiling. Some people have considered weight to be an important factor and have destroyed small birds. But we have had excellent ringing recoveries for 2 of our small guillemots - X59860 was found alive 423 days post release - a victim of the Erika disaster. R05426 was found alive, oiled again 690 days post release. Both weighed just 700g, when they were released.

Days Ascending (After 9 months)	Where found	Reason for finding	Km	Ring No.
290	Jullandsøp, HOLLAND		630	X35788
307	Kristiansand, NORWAY	North Sea wreck	1134	X20125
324	Gulberwick, SHETLAND	North Sea wreck	1,089	X20114
340	Culpego, Oviedo, SPAIN		788	R34345
385	Grand, FRANCE	Died in trap for other creatures	672	X36060
423	Sauson, FRANCE	ERIKA victim - alive - died in care	343	X39860
587	Thurleston, Devon UK	Alive Oiled, re-released	33	X39837
608	Fowey, Cornwall UK	Alive oiled	82	R20666
670	Budleigh, Devon UK	Oiled, dead	24	R20606
690	Lydd, Kent UK	Alive oiled	315	R05426
751	Skomer, WALES	Seen alive on Colony	190	X60428
1302	Manche, FRANCE	SHOT	207	X34079
1321	Falmesid, SWEDEN	Alive oiled, died in care	1280	X36072
1408	Anglesey, WALES	Died during violent weather	304	X36009
1585	Cullen, SCOTLAND		805	X60485
1758	HOLLAND	RAZORBILL - oiled, dead	615	M89576
2057	Northumburford UK	Freshly dead	578	R20570
2147	Ostende, BELGIUM	Oiled freshly-dead victim TRICOLOR	457	X60475
2436	Cornwall UK	Freshly dead	131	R34259
2926	Breen, SCOTLAND	Dead on tide-line with others	841	R05429
3390	GERMANY		811	X60481
4596	Cumbria UK	Alive - injured wing	458	X36046

In 1996 the first of two damning reports was published. These reports questioned the value of treating oiled seabirds. However, the problem lay mainly in the fact that some centres were releasing their birds prematurely. These reports had a devastating affect on most rehabilitation centres in the UK consequently many oiled seabirds were destroyed needlessly. The reports, however, did not faze us as although we had been ringing for only 3 years we already had sufficient evidence from our ringed birds to know that they were surviving post release.



Birds are not released.



Guillemots fly to feeding.

There will always be some 'quick' ringing recoveries for both rehabilitated birds and those ringed in the wild. However, birds released in areas of high human population density close to rescue centres are much more likely to be found than those ringed in remote sparsely populated areas. This is an important factor when *trying* to make comparison between rehabilitated birds and those ringed in the wild.



Each one of our rescued birds leaves with a wish for a long and fruitful life. The ring it bears may bring some news one day.

We are still getting ringing recoveries for our rehabilitated birds and each one adds weight to our claim that these birds are worth saving and are excellent subjects for treatment and rehabilitation.

