

Jersey's Fulmars



Fulmar - *Fulmaris glacialis*

A true bird of the open seas, Fulmars only show an interest in Jersey's steep and precarious sea-cliffs when breeding is about to take place.

This occurs during the month of May when a single white egg is laid and looked after by both its parents for a period of around fifty days - one of the longest incubations of all seabirds.

At first sight, Fulmars can quite easily be mistaken for an ordinary seagull although its compact body and gliding flight on still grey wings quickly show that the bird is rather different. It certainly has an unusual bill which, like its close relative the Albatross, has peculiar tubular nostrils.

The contact noise that it makes is very strange as well - a deep guttural sound that is often heard coming from their communal nesting sites.

The name Fulmar comes from the Norse 'foul mouth' and if you get too close to the birds nesting site you're likely to find out why! If you pose a threat then the entire fishy contents of its stomach is likely to be thrown all over you - foul mouth - Fulmar!

This is purely the bird's defensive mechanism which is sometimes used if other species of seabird get a little too close to the nest for comfort.

Fulmars are great scavengers and, throughout the long winter months, they often follow the fishing trawlers feeding on their discarded catches.



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- The first local sighting of Fulmars occurred in 1955.
- The first pair to breed in Jersey was in 1975.
- Fulmars are known as pelagic, meaning they only come ashore to breed.
- There are approximately 200 pairs in Jersey.
- The UK population is believed to be around 500,000.
- Fulmars can live for up to 50 years.
- They are not ready to breed, on average, until 6 years old.
- Fulmars sometimes mate for life although 2 or 3 partners are often taken during a lifetime.
- Length - 43-52 cm.
- Wingspan - 101-177 cm.
- Only a single white egg is laid each year.
- Incubation takes around 50 days.
- The young are fed fish, small crustaceans and squid.
- Both parents take responsibility for feeding the chick.
- Like all other petrels, Fulmars are ungainly when walking on dry land.
- Predators include man and - in northern areas - the Sea Eagle.
- Fulmars were once caught in large numbers in Iceland for food, oil and for their soft down.

