WORK ON NESTING SEA BIRDS

(1) Census of the South-West Sample Area

The figures of the census were obtained in the following manner:

Shag.—A doubling of the number of occupied nests in which eggs were laid.

Great Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gull.—A doubling of the number of nests counted during May and June.

Kittiwake.—A doubling of the number of occupied nests on June 9th.

Razorbill.—A count of adults present in area on May 26th between 0620—0700 hours.

Guillemot.—A count of adults present in area on June 9th, 0700 hours.

Puffin.—No evidence of breeding: two or four occasionally seen on water during June.

	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950	1949	1948	1942
Shag	94	92	106	100	108	26	30	50	32	43
Oyster Catcher	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	2
Gt Black-backed	20	24	24	16	18	13	27	27	20	16
Lsr Black-backed	8	14	16	8	6	12	12	21	14	1
Herring Gull	540	260	398	446	490	478	332	348	171	464
Kittiwake	126	122	84	98	84	54	32	0	0	84
Razorbill	290	195	188	128	228	211	408	415	290	364
Guillemot	42	50	53	51	83	72	68	137	116	265
Puffin	4	8	0	1	1	0	0	5	0	0

Discussion. The apparent increase in the Razorbill population was not reflected in the number of nest sites counted which was estimated to be between sixty-seven and seventy, little different from last year. The increase in the number of Herring Gulls has resulted in existing colonies being more closely populated without new areas being occupied. There has been an unusually heavy mortality of half fledged gull chicks in this area, as in other parts of the island, very possibly related to increased density.

(2) Census of Guillemots

A census was taken during June, all birds on the ledges and in the water being counted. A total of three thousand nine hundred and ten was compiled as compared to three thousand eight hundred and fifty in 1955, a surprisingly close figure when the inevitable difficulties and inaccuracies of a count are considered. In view of this result it is proposed to discontinue the general census next year in favour of a frequently repeated count of a restricted area to get an idea of the diurnal and monthly variations.

(3) KITTIWAKE

A count of occupied nests was made during June and early July. A total of 1,335 was compiled as compared with 1,308 in 1955.

Breeding Success

Kittiwake Gully

May 30th	214 occupied nests.
July 16th	132 chicks including 10 on the wing.

Puffin Gully

May 30th	338 occupied nest.
July 11th	234 chicks, six of which flew while we were in the area.

Shutter Gully

April 10th	65 occupied nests.
May 15th	8 nests with eggs, remainder without eggs.
June 9th	63 occupied nests.
June 29th	41 nests with chicks. 2 empty. 2 with single egg (occasionally left unattended). 15 with parents brooding closely therefore contents not seen.
July 13th	41 nests containing 48 chicks, 7 nests having 2 chicks, the remainder having one.
July 25th	48 young including 3 on the wing.

COMPARISON OF BREEDING SUCCESS, 1955-56

The following are the mean number of young fledged per nest during the two years :

	1955	1956
Kittiwake ...	.65	.62
Puffin Gully ...	.71	.69
Shutter Gully ...	.95	.76

The results for the two years are very similar with the gully suffering the least human disturbance having the highest rate of success.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The breeding season for auks and Kittiwakes appeared to be earlier than in the previous two years. For instance there were only three Guillemot chicks and one egg on the Devil's Chimney by July 12th. No attempt was made to assess the breeding success among the auks although it was apparent that late Guillemot chicks were unsuccessful.

A very small number of Puffins appear to have bred successfully. Five burrows in the Puffin Slope area were still occupied after mid-July. Three certainly containing young on July 16th. Two or three burrows may have been successful in the Long Ruse area.