

HASTINGS PIER CHARITY

HASTINGS
PIER

Birds and Wildlife in Hastings



Seagulls in front of Hastings Pier 2016, (HPC014.058)



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The black headed gull (HPC014.075)

Depending on the season of the year determines what species are around in Hastings. The Sandwich Tern comes back from Africa in March and April and nests at a colony at Rye and Dungeness. They fly out past the Pier to fish for Sand Eels along the coast. When the young hatch, the adults carry fish back to feed them. The young and their parents often feed off the pier during the summer before they take their autumn migration journey to West Africa where they spend the winter.

The Fulmar is a true seabird, called a 'tubenose' as the bill is adapted to filter sea water. It is an oceanic bird able to glide in the strongest of gales. fulmars have colonised the cliffs at Hastings where they nest in cavities in the sandstone cliff faces.

The Cormorant swims and dives on the sea all year-round. In the Spring, they nest at Rye Harbour, building their nests in trees. They have started nesting in Alexandra Park. They have nested on the cliffs but not recently partly because of increasing rock falls.

The Pier is an excellent place to watch for the passage of migrating birds. The spring migration begins in late February and gets going properly in March. Autumn bird migration can be seen in September to November.

The passage of Brent geese in March and April can be striking. This small dark goose breeds in the Arctic of Russia and after wintering on the coasts of southern England and France it migrated northwards towards the distant breeding grounds. Flocks can pass quite close to the pier, occasionally flying right overhead as the birds navigate by following the coastline.

Winter sees the appearance of seabirds on the Channel with Great crested grebes, Common scoter, Red-throated diver and Gannet all regularly present and rarer species on the sea around the Pier include Red-necked and Slavonian grebes, Great northern diver, Red-breasted merganser and Long-tailed duck among other species.

Cormorants can be seen from the Pier all year around. They nest in colonies on sea cliffs and in trees during the spring and the adults search for fish offshore for their young. They like to rest on jetties and half-submerged trees when they are not actually swimming on the sea. Cormorants are a diving bird and catch their food beneath the surface of the sea.

In recent years' the cliff-nesting birds locally in Sussex have declined and tree-nesting Cormorants have appeared.

Other Wildlife



A starfish on Hastings beach (HPC014.068)

The **Common seal** *Phoca vitulina* and the **Grey seal** *Halichoerus grypus* are annual visitors to the Hastings coast and are usually seen singly. They will come quite close to the beach and may sometimes be seen eating fish such as Whiting.

The **Harbour porpoise** *Phocoena phocoena* is seen every year and recent records are from the early spring, when they pass by in small parties or as singles. It is possible that migratory porpoises from the Baltic Sea come to the Channel in the winter. There is also a widespread British population. Dolphins have been recorded on occasion off the pier over the years and more recording of marine mammals here will be needed to find out what species pass by and any pattern of occurrence.

Subtidal areas offshore from Hastings beach have the Bryozoan *Flustra foliacea* and *Alcyonium* sp. The American limpet *Crepidula fornicata* and the Ascidian *Dendrodoa grossularia*. Habitats offshore are shallow water areas of fine sand and coarse gravel beds and deeper water areas of

coarse sand and disturbed sandy gravels. It is this pattern of seafloor geology that provides different types of marine life community. The shallow sands are populated by Polychaetes such as *Spiophanes bombyx*, *Magelona johnstoni*, *Nephtys cirrosa* and *Aphrodita aculeata*. The Amphipod *Bathyporeia* and the Sand goby *Pomatoschistus*. Coarser sand and gravels maintain the fleshy coral *Alcyonium digitatum* (Dead man's finger), the Ectoprocts *Flustra foliacea* (Hornwrack) and *Schizomavella*, the Sea urchin *Psammechinus miliaris*, the Sea anemone *Metridium senile* the colonial hydroid *Sertularia cupressina* and the Polychaete *Pomatoceros triqueter*.

Areas of deeper water have a smaller population of polychaetes than shallower areas and typically support *Ophiura albida* and *O. ophiura* with smaller numbers of other species. Dredged floors have a population of *Hinia* Whelks.

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