

Power to the Puffin – puffin tops people’s poll in Scottish Seabird Centre survey

The puffin has reigned supreme in a special poll carried out by the Scottish Seabird Centre to find out the “People’s Big Five” species.

The poll was carried out in direct response to the Centre’s disappointment that no seabirds were included in Scotland’s Big 5 campaign, run by Visit Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage as part of the 2013 Year of Natural Scotland celebrations.

The conservation and education charity took matters into their own hands by asking visitors and fans of the Scottish Seabird Centre to vote for the People’s Big Five and unsurprisingly the puffin has topped the poll with a whopping 35% of the vote.

Tom Brock OBE, CEO of the Scottish Seabird Centre said:

“This clearly highlights that visitors to the Seabird Centre recognise the puffin’s importance as one of Scotland’s iconic wildlife species. I hope our poll has proven that the puffin deserved a place on the Big Five list. Scotland is home to almost half of Europe’s seabirds with a wide variety of iconic species and the world’s largest gannet colonies (St Kilda and the Bass Rock). It was very disappointing that none of Scotland’s seabirds made it on to the “official” Big 5 list” Wildlife fans were encouraged to vote for the “People’s Big Five” through the Scottish Seabird Centre’s facebook page, by email or by casting their vote in person at the Scottish Seabird Centre in North Berwick. They voted in their hundreds

and the results were as follows:

Puffin: 35.5%

Gannet: 12.4%

Harbour Seal: 8.1%

Deer/Stag: 5%

Otter: 3.1%

The omission of the puffin from the official Big Five list was a big disappointment to the Scottish Seabird Centre at a time when the species is under significant threat from lack of food and even an invasive alien plant. One of the UK's largest puffin colonies, on the nearby island of Craigleith, has seen its numbers crash from around 28,000 to just a few thousand because of the growth of a giant plant called tree mallow which volunteers at the Seabird Centre have been working hard to remove.

Tom Brock adds:

-“The solidarity shown to the puffin could not have come at more important time. While we are clearly disappointed that the puffin was not on the Big Five list, we have at least been able to use the campaign as an opportunity to raise public awareness that the puffin is in trouble and needs our help to survive. It's heartening to know that the public still hold this beautiful bird close to their hearts.”

Submitted by [Jean Devlin](#)