

Bempton Wild Things Visit April 2025



Bempton in nesting season is always thrilling, cacophonous and smelly, but today was exceptional as it was such a bright and calm day. There are about half a million birds here most years although the cliffs were less crowded this year due to bird flu.

Puffins always excite, and we were able to watch three of them through a volunteer's scope at the first viewpoint we stopped at. Puffins are not land-lovers, best seen out at sea, and unlike the rest of the sea birds here, they nest in burrows so are harder to spot. They mate for life and are sociable birds, always seeming to be in conversation when you do spot a group on the cliffs. The brilliant beaks are only swollen and colourful in mating season.





My favourites are the Northern Gannets, graceful and fierce, with beautiful markings and ice-blue eyes. I love watching their mating behaviours, when they display their gentler side, rubbing beaks, grooming each other, collecting and sharing grass to repair their nests. This is the only mainland colony of Gannets in England. They return to the same ledge every year, waiting patiently for their mate to join them, only finding a new partner if their mate doesn't return from migration.





They can also be aggressive if a rival gets too close (left).



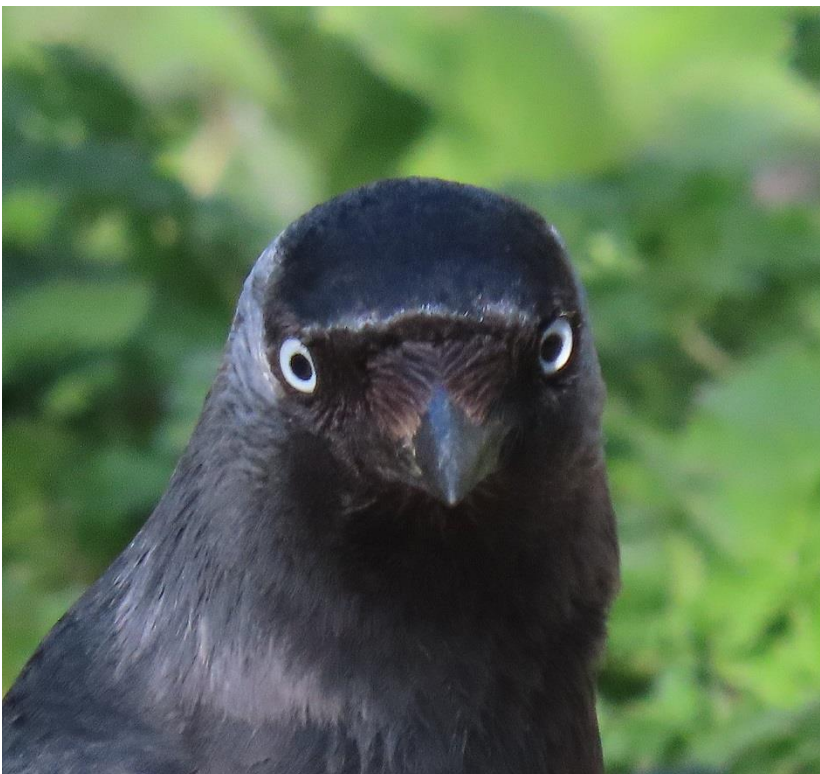
Razorbills are common here, taking up more nesting space than their relatives the Guillemots, which happily crowd together on tiny ledges. I love their yellow gape.

I managed to photograph pairs of Razorbills greeting each other, grooming and then mating (below and page 6).

It always seems impossible that the Guillemots can manage to protect their eggs and young on such a tiny space (pages 6 and 7).







As we drank coffee outside in the sunshine, Jackdaws scavenged for scraps. I love these intelligent birds with their stunning blue eyes.

We also visited the feeding station where the main attraction is the Tree Sparrow colony. These are on the UK Red List.



Red Campion and Primroses flowered on the cliffs.



Above: Kittiwake. Below: The group. Over: Kath by the Visitor Centre.





Chris sent me photos after I'd written this but they're great so I'm including some on the following pages. Interestingly, Chris thought the first photo was of a Gannet showing off, with the female showing disdain. He said it reminded him of the Shania Twain song 'He don't impress me much'. Nice theory but I have another one. Last time I was at Bempton one of the volunteers told me that when Gannets raise their heads it's a warning to neighbours that they're about to take off. We watched them for a while and it seemed to be true. I do, however, prefer Chris's theory.



