

The 1997/98 Non-Estuarine Coastal Waterbird Survey in Gibraltar

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One Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* was counted along the entire length of habitat available on Gibraltar's coast.

Length of non-estuarine coast	Coverage	Representative of	Winter	Population estimate	Reliability
12 km	100%	Whole country	1997/98	Complete count	Good

Introduction

The shoreline of Gibraltar is made up of a combination of sea cliff, rocky shoreline and narrow sandy beaches. On the western side, in the Bay of Gibraltar, the shoreline has been considerably modified by man, notably at the largely commercial quayside. Elsewhere in the bay limestone boulders edge the airfield and there are also more recent areas of land reclamation.

Gibraltar is not known for its waterbirds. The more common species that turn up on migration, and sometimes winter, are (in order): Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. Other species, including Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and Pied Avocet *Avocetta recurvirostra*, may be seen flying offshore on passage but there are no suitable habitats for them to stay for any length of time.

Methods and coverage

Given the small extent of Gibraltar's shoreline, the survey was carried out on just one day – 28 December 1997. The

whole shoreline (a total of 12 km), other than areas of vertical sea cliff, was walked.

Results and discussion

Only one Whimbrel was recorded during the survey, on an area of reclaimed land with an artificial rocky shore adjacent to a lawned garden.

However, given the very large number of anglers who were using all shoreline habitats as a base for their activity, this was not surprising. There is no control or licensing system for anglers in Gibraltar, a fact that is taken advantage of by enthusiasts from neighbouring Spain (where licences are required and strictly controlled) who crowd Gibraltar's seashore and disturb the wildlife.

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) is campaigning for the introduction of angling licences and a limit to the number of anglers in certain sensitive habitats.

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