

Criteria for categorising Arctic Skua breeding evidence in the UK

EBCC breeding categories	Specific interpretation for Arctic Skua	Notes/rationale
Possible breeding		
1. Species observed in breeding season in possible nesting habitats.	Arctic Skuas nest on coastal moorland, typically at lower altitudes than Great Skuas, and are restricted to the extreme north and west of Scotland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In most instances, records of breeding Arctic Skuas will relate to established colonies and will be recorded as Apparently Occupied Territories, equating to Probable breeding at least. ● However, single birds at potential moorland nest sites, which remain in the area if flushed, may indicate the presence of a nesting pair and could be logged as Possible breeding if the observer has reason to believe nesting has been overlooked at the site, but there is no further evidence.
2. Singing male(s) present (or breeding calls heard) in breeding season.	Not applicable.	
Probable breeding		
3. Pair observed in suitable nesting habitat in breeding season.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This will be the minimum requirement for an Apparently Occupied Territory. ● Note that the standard count unit for Arctic Skua is the Apparently Occupied Territory which is calculated from the total number of pairs/nests in a colony. ● Colonies should be counted as per Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) guidelines and counts submitted to the SMP as well as to RBBP. A web link is included at the end of these guidelines.
4. Permanent territory presumed through registration of territorial behaviour (song <i>etc.</i> on at least two different days a week or more apart at the same place).		
5. Courtship and display.		
6. Visiting probable nest site.		
7. Agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults.		
8. Brood patch on adult examined in the hand.		
9. Nest building or excavating nest-hole.	Not applicable.	
Confirmed breeding		
10. Distraction-display or injury-feigning.		
11. Used nest or eggshells found (occupied or laid within period of survey).		
12. Recently fledged young (nidicolous species) or downy young (nidifugous species).		

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13. Adults entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating occupied nest (including high nests or nest-holes, the contents of which can not be seen) or adult seen incubating.		
14. Adult carrying faecal sac or food or young.		
15. Nest containing eggs.		
16. Nest with young seen or heard.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Counts of young within a colony or a sampled part of a colony are useful to measure productivity. See the SMP Handbook.

Notes.

- Submissions to the Panel: counts of colonies should be submitted as the number of Apparently Occupied Territories as per these guidelines, with any productivity information available. Sites where there are only Possible breeding pairs (see above) should be submitted separately. For all colonies, please submit separate site details rather than county totals.
- To submit counts to the Seabird Monitoring Programme please use the web link <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4470> - this page provides a link to the online database or downloadable electronic data forms. Colony count data and breeding success data can be entered online. Surveyors should refer to the online SMP database re. existing colony areas in the database.
- Reference: Seabird Monitoring Handbook *. See section on skua monitoring within http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/pub95_SeabirdHandbook.pdf.

* Walsh, P.M., Halley, D.J., Harris, M.P., del Nevo, A., Sim, I.M.W., & Tasker, M.L. 1995. Seabird monitoring handbook for Britain and Ireland. Published by JNCC / RSPB / ITE / Seabird Group, Peterborough.