

TWO CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF BREEDING FAILURE FOR EUROPEAN SHAGS *PHALACROCORAX ARISTOTELIS* IN BRITTANY, FRANCE

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As part of the seabird monitoring programme in Brittany, several breeding colonies of shags are censused regularly. Additionally, data on breeding success are collected on some of these colonies located in different parts of the region. In 2006, productivity ranged from 0.7 to 1.9 chicks fledged per breeding pair. In 2007, breeding success was much lower, generally ranging from 0.1 to 0.6 chicks per pair. A decrease in breeding numbers was also reported in 2007, as well as delayed laying, high proportion of well built nests without subsequent egg-laying and significant failure at the egg or chick stages. Since similar results were recorded all around Brittany, this suggested a large-scale environmental effect. The potential causes remain unknown but food shortage is strongly suspected. The 2007 breeding season was also a poor year for some other seabird species in Brittany. In 2008, a major storm occurred in mid-March, washing out many nests of shags and leading to the disruption of breeding for early breeders. Afterwards, results differed between colonies, with locally low breeding numbers and high rate of breeding failure. Mean productivity ranged from 0.3 to 1.9 chicks per pair. Again, the poor breeding season should probably be linked to unfavourable environmental conditions.