

# Papa Westray

Marine Protected Area



A black guillemot also known as the tystie © Mark Lewis

A stronghold for the black guillemot

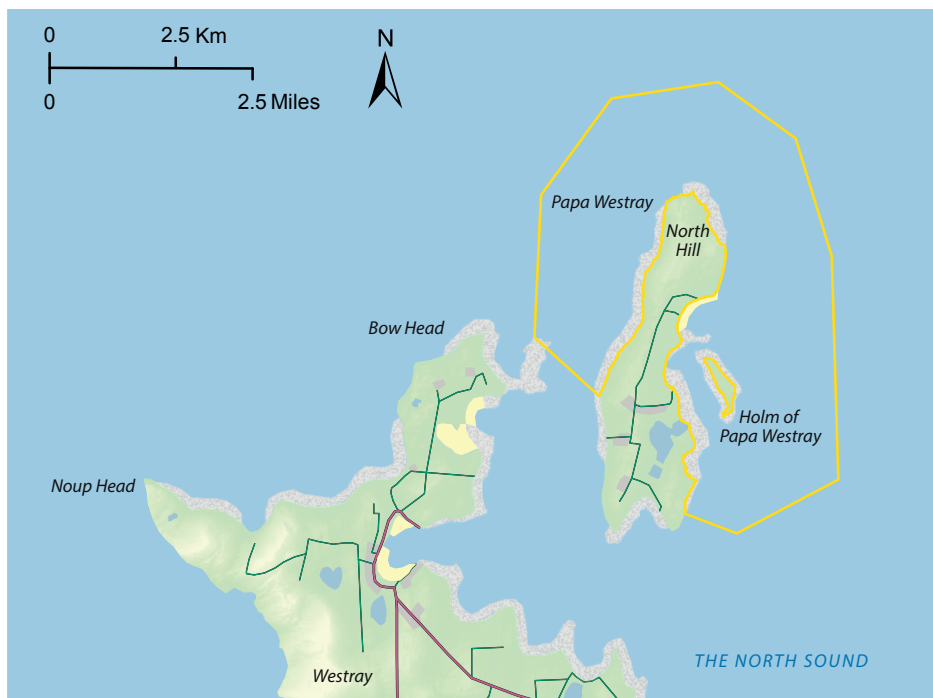
# Papa Westray

## Marine Protected Area

Orkney is a stronghold of the black guillemot. Each year more than 500 breeding birds forage in the shallow coastal waters of the Marine Protected Area (MPA), around the islands of Papa Westray and the Holm of Papa Westray. Locally these striking birds are known as “tysties”, from an Old Norse word describing their thin piping calls.



Tysties nest and raise their young in crevices and burrows at the top of the shore on both islands. Although these nesting areas are outside the MPA, tysties typically hunt fish to feed to their chicks within 2 km of their nest site and so need rich feeding grounds, such as kelp forests, close by. Tysties are easily recognisable in the summer by their bright red legs and feet. They are otherwise black apart from a large white oval patch on each wing. In the winter they turn white with black barring on their backs and black wings - a “salt and pepper” plumage.



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Location: 59° 22.121' N 002° 52.509' W

Area: 33 km<sup>2</sup>



## Tysties on the water

### Protected Features & Conservation Objectives

Biodiversity: black guillemot.

Geodiversity: Marine Geomorphology of the Scottish Shelf Seabed.

The aim is to **conserve these features** in order to make a long lasting contribution to the MPA network.

Tysties are cousins of the now extinct great auk, which last nested in Britain at North Hill on Papa Westray in 1812. The existing Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the Holm of Papa Westray provides protection for the nesting black guillemots and their chicks, and the MPA has been established to provide a 2 km wide marine extension around this site and another SSSI at North Hill. Black guillemots can dive to depths of up to 50 m, literally flying through the water in search of food. They have a varied diet although butterfish are a particular favourite in Orkney.

The MPA also lies within the Orkney carbonate production area. This is an internationally important example of a shelf carbonate system. The sand here is rich in calcium carbonate that comes from the eroded shells and skeletons of plants and small animals that once lived in or on the sea bed, such as maerl and bivalve molluscs. These remains of sea creatures supply the sandy beaches of Orkney and underpin the development of small areas of coastal machair; a rare and colourful type of grassland rich in spring and summer wildflowers.

# Further Information

Further information on Nature Conservation MPAs, the wider network and protected areas management is available at [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork)

For Nature Conservation MPA site documents and more on the fascinating range of marine life to be found in Scotland's seas, please visit

[www.snh.gov.uk/mpas](http://www.snh.gov.uk/mpas) - for territorial waters

[www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas](http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas) - for offshore waters



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JNCC  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Aerial view of the Holm of Papa Westray

