

Kittiwakes!

You don't need to look for our resident kittiwakes, you can hear them announcing themselves, with their cry of "Kitti-wake, kitti-wake!"

The walls of Dunbar Castle provide the perfect habitat for nesting. They closely resemble the sheer cliffs that Kittiwakes usually choose, with narrow ledges and niches, and supply of materials for nest-making close by.

Kittiwakes spend much of the year at sea, only coming in to nest on sea cliffs, never inland. They are usually here at the castle from late spring through to early autumn, but breeding can be delayed if food supplies are scarce.

Sadly, kittiwake numbers are declining, probably because of a lack of sandeels and other small-fish shoals. The birds have been placed on the amber list for conservation concern.

Kittiwake look-a-likes

Many seabirds have similar markings so they can blend in with their surroundings. Here are some other birds commonly found around the harbour. Notice how they're all just a bit different!



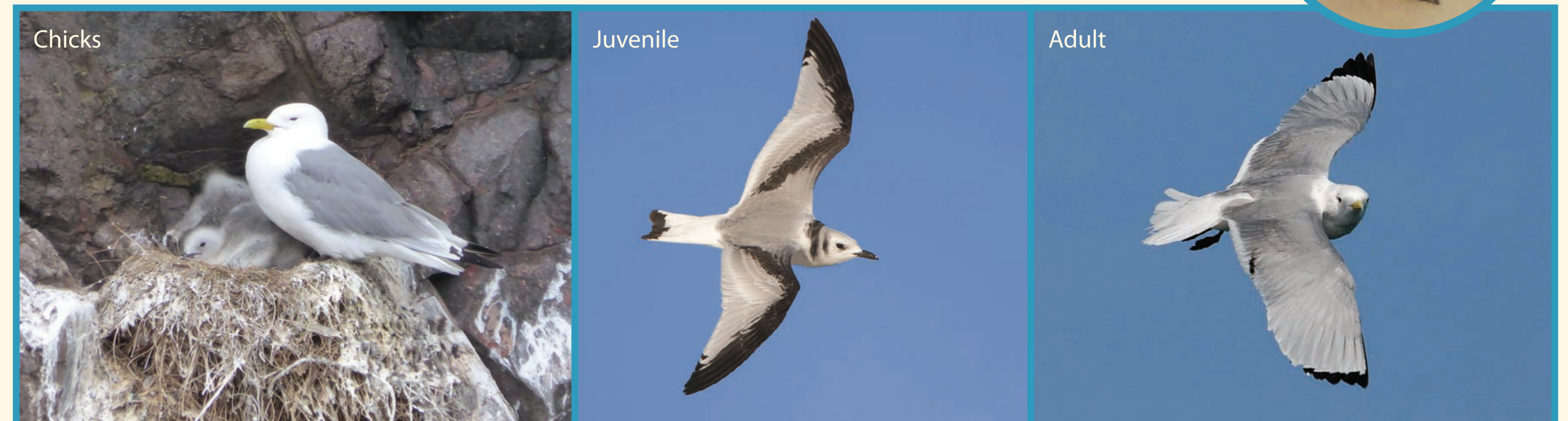
Up on the nests



Kittiwake eggs blend well into nests made from seaweed, mud and grass, but can you see the plastic debris they also use?

A growing bird

Can you spot the changes in a kittiwake's markings as it grows?



Kittiwakes have black legs. Seabirds generally have a fourth toe at the back of their foot, but the kittiwake's has disappeared. The scientific name for kittiwake is *Rissa Tridactyla*, meaning 'three toes'.

