



# MarLIN

## Marine Information Network

Information on the species and habitats around the coasts and sea of the British Isles

### Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

MarLIN – Marine Life Information Network  
Marine Evidence-based Sensitivity Assessment (MarESA) Review

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2008-09-24

A report from:

The Marine Life Information Network, Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom.

**Please note.** This MarESA report is a dated version of the online review. Please refer to the website for the most up-to-date version [<https://www.marlin.ac.uk/species/detail/2205>]. All terms and the MarESA methodology are outlined on the website (<https://www.marlin.ac.uk>)

This review can be cited as:

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Razorbills, *Alca torda*.  
 Photographer: Jack Sewell  
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See online review for  
 distribution map

Distribution data supplied by the Ocean  
 Biogeographic Information System (OBIS). To  
 interrogate UK data visit the NBN Atlas.

Researched by	Natalie Sweet	Refereed by	Admin
Authority	Linnaeus, 1758		
Other common names	-	Synonyms	-

## Summary

### Description

*Alca torda* is a rather large, heavily built auk reaching lengths of up to 43 cm with a wingspan of 69 cm. The head and upperparts are black, the underparts are white with the demarcation between the two well defined. The bill is heavy, deep and blunt tipped with diagnostic white stripes across the tip. In winter the throat and sides of the face are white. The tail is long and pointed.

### Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland

During breeding season razorbills are found on all British and Irish coasts except for east and southeast England.

### Global distribution

-

### Habitat

The razorbill inhabits both coastal and oceanic waters of the North Atlantic. Like all auks, this is a marine species only coming ashore to breed. They nest on cliffs and among boulders, often in large colonies with other seabird species such as guillemots and kittiwakes. Outside of the breeding season razorbills disperse widely at sea, south to the Bay of Biscay and the Mediterranean Sea.

### ↓ Depth range

## 🔍 Identifying features

- Up to 43 cm in length with a wingspan of 69 cm.
- Black head (only entirely black in breeding season) and upperparts, white below.
- Heavy, deep, blunt tipped bill with white stripe across the tip.

## 🏛️ Additional information

The diet consists chiefly of fish including herring, sprat, cod and sandeels but may also include crustaceans and polychaetes. Please note that distribution maps are compiled using records for both breeding and wintering populations. For more specific distribution and abundance records please refer to maps compiled by The British Trust for Ornithology, available at <http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/previous/index.htm>

## ✓ Listed by



## 🔗 Further information sources

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## Bibliography

- none -

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