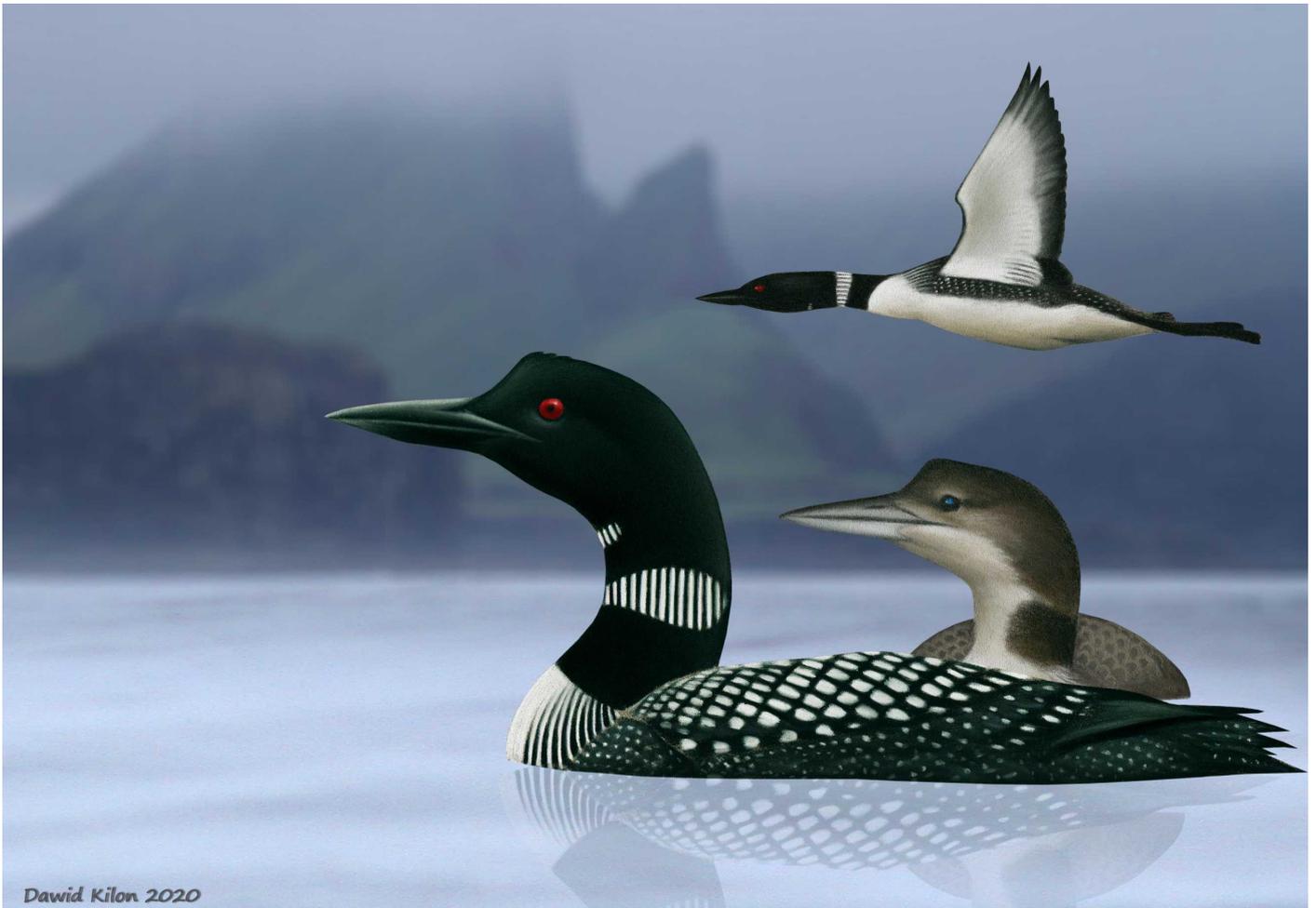


IMBRIMIL



JOURNAL OF THE NATURE OF FAROE ISLANDS

Edited by Jens-Kjeld Jensen

Volume 1

Number 1
Year 2020

JOURNAL OF THE NATURE OF FAROE ISLANDS

Volume 1, Number 1, 2020

Edited by Jens-Kjeld Jensen

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Prepress: Gramar, Spf.

ISBN: 978-99918-3-683-6

Traditions for puffin fowling in the Faroe Islands the last decades

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Jensen, Jens-Kjeld & Olsen, Bergur 2020. *Traditions for puffin fowling in the Faroe Islands the last decades*. Imbrimil Vol. 1. No. 1.

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Introduction

Seabird fowling has been a very widespread activity throughout the world but now traditional fowling (without the use of guns) has largely ceased, but in the Faroes, puffin *Fratercula arctica* fowling has been alive and in some places a valued part of local life. However, the fowling has changed from a hard daily work in the colonies to a leisure-time activity and for getting old traditional food, but early in this century there was a sudden drop in the hunting results due to many years of breeding failures, so fowling has stopped at least temporarily in most places.

The Faroe Islands is a group of 18 islands in the north-east Atlantic at 62° N and 7° W (Fig. 1). The tradition for seabird fowling has been well established and carried out up to recently (Müller 1862, Williamson 1970, Bjørk 1984, Baldwin 1974, 2005, Nørrevang 1977, 1979, 1986, Jensen 2010) and some of the traditions still exist (Olsen and Nørrevang 2005). Williamson 1970, and Nørrevang 1979 and Jensen 2010 describe the traditions in the past for seabird fowling, land tenor, fowling rights and sharing of seabird catches, and Olsen and Nørrevang (op.cit.) give an overview of recent seabird fowling. The simplest way to hunt puffins was to take the breeding birds or

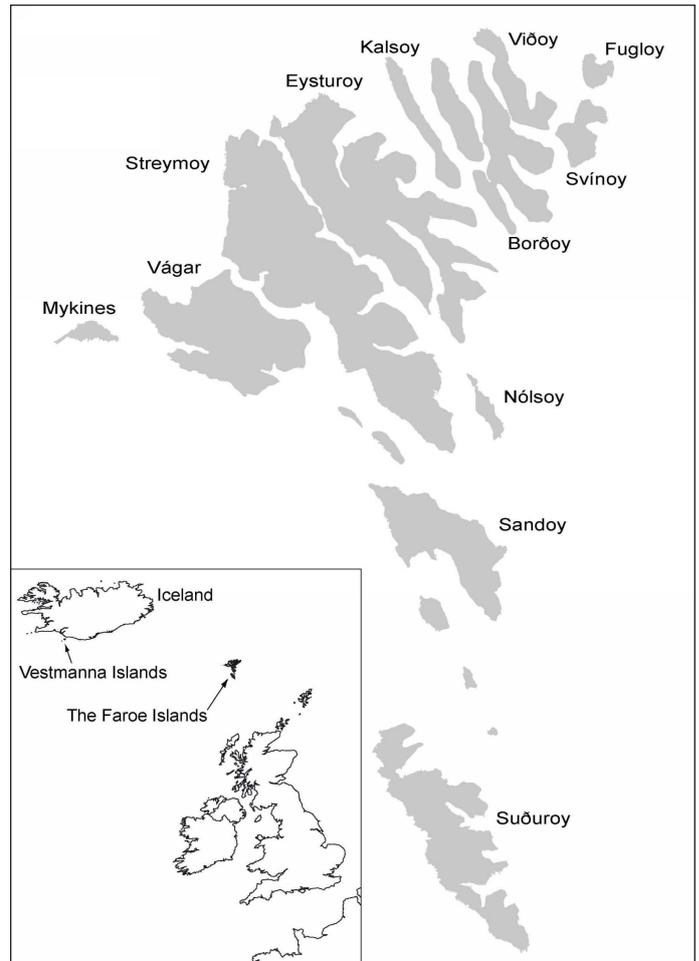


Fig. 1. Faroe Islands

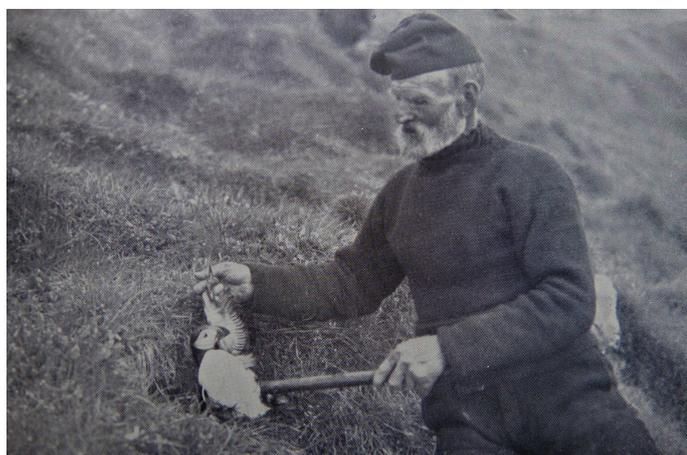


Fig. 2. Hans Pavli Hansen, Mykines (1934), with a puffin flushed out of the burrows (*dráttur*) with a hook. Photo Alwin Pedersen

nearly fledged chicks in their burrows. This method is called *dráttur* (Nørrevang 1977) and the puffins were either taken by hand, flushed out with a stick, preferable with a hook at the end, or they were dug out (Fig. 2). Dogs have also been used to find and take the puffins (Nørrevang 1977, Baldwin 2005, Sørinardóttir 2014). In 1939 Patursson (1939) interviewed fowlers on most of the islands and at that time it was still common to take breeding birds in their burrows, and about 20% of the harvested puffins were taken in this way. It was, however, realized, that *dráttur* was a devastating method and one of the reasons for the observed decline in the population at that time. *Dráttur* has therefore been banned since 1954, but dispensation may be given under certain conditions (Dam 1974). However, only few dispensations have been



Fig. 3. The Icelander Asgeir Halldórsson designed fowling poles of fibre glass in 1975. The Faroese Mikkjal Davidsen brought the first “Icelandic” fibre glass fowling poles with him from Iceland to Mykines in 1986.

given in the last decades, so fleyg is now the only method to take puffins on land. With this method the birds are caught with a fowling pole (fleygastong), (Fig. 3) a triangular-shaped net between two arms on a long pole. The fowler is sitting in a sessur; a catch location, (Fig. 4) in the colony where the birds are flying along, and with his fowling pole he deftly pluck birds out of the air. The method with the fowling pole may have been used since the 1600s (Claussøn Friis 1639, Wolf 1651, Debes 1673) or even since Viking Age (Jensen 2010). The fowling tool

has been the same although improved, as better material have become available for the pole, arms and net (Jensen 2010) (Fig. 3).

According to the hunting legislation (Dam 1974) puffins may be fowled in all colonies and it is allowed to hunt all days but not Sundays and other holidays. The fowling rights are closely connected to the ownership of land, and if nothing else is agreed it is the owner of the old registered inland, that has the hunting right in the puffin colonies. The unit of land is mørk (merkur in plurals)



Fig. 4. René Hansen with his fowling pole in a catch location.



The twelve catch locations in Urðin on Nólsoy all bear a name and a number

- 1: Niðarisessur í Hvíturðini
- 2: Ovarisessur í Hvíturðini
- 3: Bakkín
- 4: Jógvan í Lonsasessur / í Grátinum
- 4a: Bøkkur
- 5: Niðaratúgva
- 6: Getalágin
- 7: Klettur / Revur
- 8: Ovaratúgva
- 9: Jákupsessur
- 10: Roðin
- 11: Undir Tügvusteini
- 12: Urðarendi

Other named localities in Urðin

- A: Bólstaður
 B: Skraepubotnur
 - one of the locations, where the fowling poles are stored
 C: Í Maðkhalli
 - one of the locations, where the fowling poles are stored
 D: Undir Kvígnum
 - place for the boat, which collects the fowled puffins
 E: Undir Drongunum
 - the catch location Illahelvt
 F: Tjaldurstøð
 - landing place for boat

Urðin on the eastern coastline of Nólsoy

Fig. 5. Urðin with the 12 named catch locations used in the text.

which is a combination of the extent of an area and its quality, and this unit is used in the sharing of the fowling rights.

Some old fowling traditions have recently been criticized for being in conflict with the principles of sustainability even if they in practice have little significance to bird populations at large (Hallanaro 2005) and the puffin fowling in the Faroes, which occur in the breeding season, may locally have negative effect (Stempniewicz and Jensen 2007).

There is no hunting statistic in the Faroes, but the number of puffins that have been fowled during the last decades has been collated on a voluntary base (Olsen and Jensen in prep), and these results are used throughout this paper. The total number hunted each year has fluctuated and reached a maximum in year 1999-2001 where about 100,000 puffins were hunted each year. Since 2003 there has been a decline in the attendance of puffins in the colonies and the production of young has been extremely low. Dead chicks were found in the colonies, and in 2010 and 2011 most of the puffins left the colonies before the eggs hatched. This has drastically affected the fowling so it has ceased, at least temporarily, in most places.

There are rough desk estimates (+/-75%) from 1987 of the number of breeding pairs of puffins on each island (Grimmett and Jones 1989) and these figures are used throughout this paper, although we anticipate, that there has been a drastic decline in the puffin population since then. Counting of occupied burrows in two small colonies

on Skúvoy in 1993 and 2018 indicate a 50% decline (Olsen unpublished).

Here we describe traditions for puffin fowling in the Faroes at the end of the 20th century and the onset of the 21st century until the fowling stopped in most places. The island Nólsoy is used as an example, and afterwards we shortly describes the status on the other islands where puffin fowling has occurred in the last decades.

Puffin fowling on Nólsoy

Nólsoy is an island situated at 61° 59'N and 6° 38'W in the centre of the Faroe Islands (Fig. 1). It is 10.28 km² and has been inhabited since the Viking Age (Brøgger 1937). During the last century the number of inhabitants has been largely stable, at around 220. The land area of Nólsoy has been valued at 48 merkur. Of these merkur, 35 are private and 13 belong to the state. The land area is divided into three parts: the northern part, Heimara Helvt, is 22 merkur, the middle part, Junkarshagin, is 14 merkur, and the southern part, Borðan, is 12 merkur (Jensen 2010). Around 30,000 pairs of puffins were breeding on the island in 1987. They are breeding along most of the coast but the highest concentration is in the colony of Urðin, on the east side of the island (Fig. 5). Urðin is a one-km-long boulder scree partly covered with turf and here the organised fowling takes place. Here, only the landowners can fowl, while on the rest of the island, Illa Helvt, all the inhabitants on Nólsoy are allowed to fowl, but the possibility of catching birds is not as high, so

Fleygalistin 2006

Eigarar, uppsitarar	Juli														August																			
	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	11	12	13	14	15	17	18	19	20	21	22	24	25	26	27	28	29	31	1	2	3	4	5	7	8		
	M	T	M	H	F	L	M	T	M	H	F	L	M	T	M	H	F	L	M	T	M	H	F	L	M	T	M	H	F	L	M	T		
Hans M. Hansen	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	
Mass I. Jensen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Kaj Olsen v/	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Hergeir Jacobsen (Hedvik)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Ásla Jacobsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Mikkjal Holm	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Páll Thomsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Heri Jensen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Marta Olsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ulla Nolsø	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Jan Kjell Jacobsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mina Wang	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sofus Danielsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Emil Thomsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Marnar á Skúr	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Karl Danielsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Marín Hansen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hergeir Jacobsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Michael/Jonn Thomsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Niels Danielsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Alexander Thomsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sonni Hansen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Axel Joensen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hilmar Joensen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Gabriel Hansen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Edmund Hansen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Leif Nolsø	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mortan J. Hansen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Jørgen Poulsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ingolf Jacobsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ytra Helvt	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Um einki annað er avtalað, verður lutur tikin suðuri í Dølum kl 0630, tó frá 16 juli kl. 0730.

Tab. 1. Catching list (fleygalistin) for Nólsoy by Hans Martin Hansen in 2006.

Tab. 2. The numbers and names of the catch locations in Urðin and the best wind directions for fowling.

No.	Name	N	NE	E	SE	S	SW	W	NW
1	Niðari sessur í Hvíturð						x		
2	Ovari sessur í Hvíturð	x			x		x		
3	Bakkin	x			x		x		x
4	Jógvan í Lonsasessur / í Grátinum				x				
4a	Bøkkur	x							x
5	Niðara túgva	x			x				x
6	Getalágin			X	x				
7	Klettur / Revur						x		
8	Ovara túgva	x			x				x
9	Jákupsa sessur	x			x	x			x
10	Røðin	x	X			x			
11	Túgvusteinar	x	X		x	x			x
12	Urðarendi	x				x			x

there fowling only takes place for a few days each year. In both Urðin and Illa Helvt the fowling now keep all the birds they fowl. In earlier times, one-third of the catch was given to the landowners while the fowling shared the rest.

Sharing of the fowling rights in Urðin

There are 74 land register on Nólsoy in different sizes, and their properties in the outfield are the foundation of the share of the fowling rights in Urðin. Some of the inhabitants own more than one register while many own only a small register. The small registers are grouped into larger units, and it is up to the main owner in these units to decide how they individually receive their portion of the fowling rights.

In 1917 it was decided on grannastevnu (see later), that only 12 men could fowl at the same time in Urðin (Sørinsdóttir 2014), so the landowners of the outfield have to share the days in which they can be in the catch locations. First, there is a rotation every second year, so only the landowners of half of the properties have the right to fowl each year. The island is valued at 48 merkur, and, in order to receive an equal share (24 merkur each year), Heimara Helvt which is 22 merkur gets one merkur from Junkarshagin (14 merkur) and one from Borðan (12 merkur). Secondly, the fowling days are shared in proportion to the size of each owner's land. For example, to receive the fowling right for one catch location each day during the summer, you need to own two merkur of land. Most of the properties are very small; so many owners

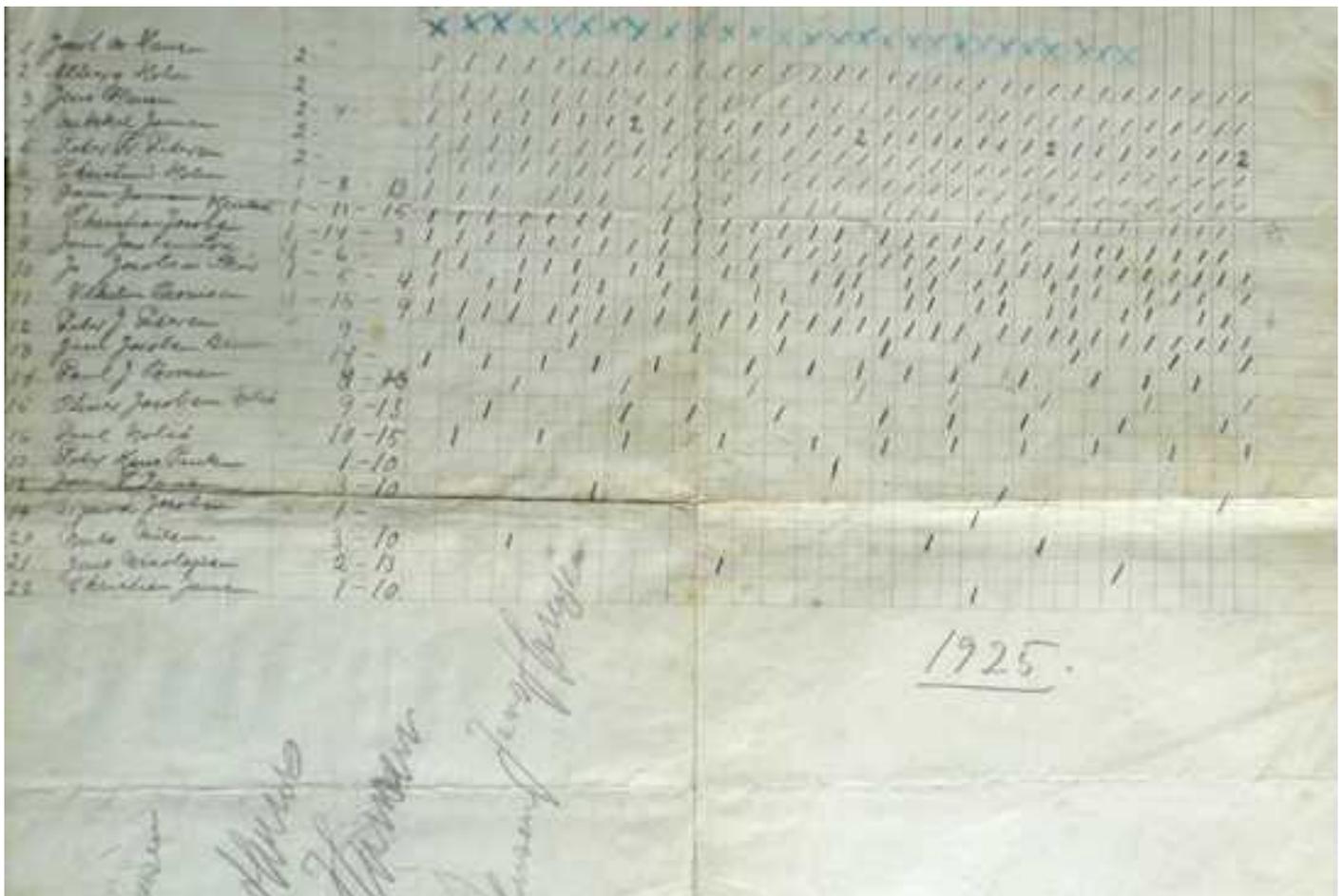


Fig. 6. Catching list (fleygalistin) for Nólsoy by Jens Hansen in 1925.

only have the right to fowl for a few days in a particular season, while some even have to accumulate their fowling rights over some years to get the permission to one catch location for one day. To put all this into some form of system, the inhabitants make a list, fleygalistin (hunting list) (Tab. 1 and fig. 6) each year, where the fowling rights are calculated for each property each day (barring Sundays) during the whole season, albeit without a consideration of whether or not it is possible to catch due to the weather on the allocated days. The list changes slightly each year as the smallest owners have to accumulate their rights over the course of some years to receive one fowling day. For this system to work correctly, it has to go in 40-year cycles before it starts again. Landowners may, however, exchange fowling days and also allow others to use their fowling days, and, in this way, individuals that do not have fowling rights may receive permission to fowl.

Sharing of the catch locations in Urðin

The quality of the 12 catch locations in Urðin is very different, as can be seen from the number of birds caught in each location from 2000 to 2006 (Fig. 7). The catch locations that were most profitable were: Undir Riv, Høvdið í Nýggjurð, Undir Drongum, Hásteinstangi, Urðin í Kálabergi and Undir Skrið.

Most important for the success of the hunt is the catch location itself, but the weather is also important. When flying along the coast the birds in the ring fly against the wind, therefore it is only in certain wind directions that the birds come close enough to be caught in a particular location (Tab. 2). Normally, a gentle wind along the coast is best, and, when there is no wind at all, the birds are not flying in circles. Other weather conditions such as wind velocity, fog, rain and even breakers also affect the fowling results. Often, it is not possible to fowl at all, and,

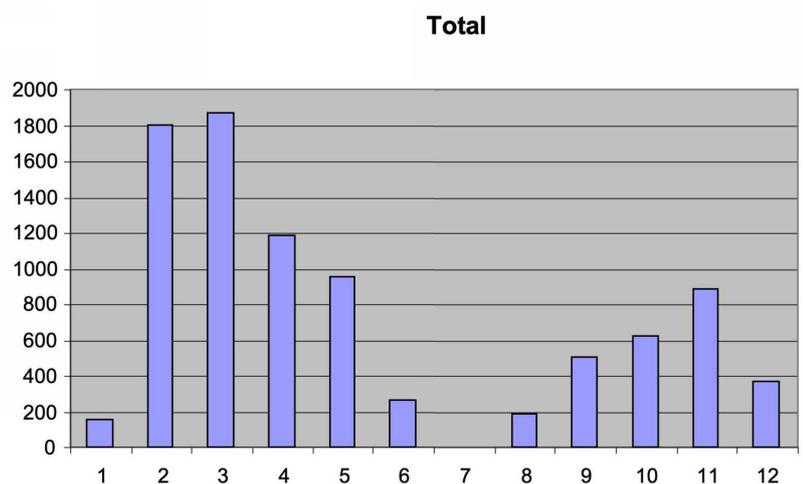


Fig. 7. The mean number of puffins fowled from 2000–2006 in the 12 catch locations in Urðin. Confer table 2 for the names of the catch locations and fig. 5 for the location.



Fig. 8. Meeting place Suðuri á Dølum (Kristin Holm, René Hansen and Hogni Niclassen) in 2005

even when possible, only two or three catch locations are really good, so therefore it is decided by chance which fowlers should be in each catch location. However, first the fowlers that will participate have to walk half the way to Urðin, to a place called Suðuri á Dølum (Fig. 8). Here, there is a plastic box under a stone, holding 12 papers with the number of each catch location on them. The youngest fowler puts the 12 papers in his hat and the fowlers then take one number each, starting with the oldest fowler. If there are less than 12 people, the oldest one starts again, and this continues until all numbers are taken. Each fowler, however, only has the right to one catch location, so he has to choose which to be in and leave the others up to other participants in case they are better than theirs. Those who do not receive a favourable catch location for the wind direction that day usually walk home again. The other fowlers go to their catch locations, but they have the possibility to move to the empty catch locations if they find them better, i.e. if the wind direction changes.

These rules should ensure a suitably respective share, but the bag the fowlers receive for their effort differs, as there is great difference between fowlers in their ability to catch puffins with the fowling pole, but it also depends on the prospect of catching birds on that day, it is their turn. In earlier times, the fowling on Nólsoy started at Syftun-søka, on July 2, and it was permitted to fowl as long as there were birds in the colonies. Since 1999, however, the

season has been limited, so it ends on August 7.

Until July 15, the drawing of lots takes place at 6.30 am, and after this date, it takes place at 7.30 am. The fowling starts about half an hour after the lots are drawn and it ends at around noon. However, late in the season, the fowling may continue for one or two hours more.

Regulation of the rules.

If the rules have to be changed, there are two options whereby the landowners can agree to make changes: 1) If the foremen for the landowners come to an agreement, they can decide upon the changes. For instance, these foremen can decide on which day the puffin catch has to stop, as they did in 1999. 2) If the foremen cannot agree on a certain matter, they can hand the sýslumaður a written proposal. The sýslumaður acts as a High Sheriff as well as working as a local judge and making local rules in cooperation with the inhabitants. Once a year, the sýslumaður can summon the landowners on grannastevna to discuss the proposal and vote on it. For the grannastevna to be valid, at least the owners of 24 merkur have to be represented. If the majority are in favour of the proposal it will act as a constitution. These rules, which have to be within the rules of the hunting legislation, are just as valid as the rules enacted by the Parliament. On the grannastevna in 2002, one of the proposals was to prohibit fowling in Illa Helvt, but only 12 owners, representing 17 merkur, attended, so they could not vote. In 2008, the

owners, however, decided not to fowl in Urðin, partly as a result of a very low production of young during the last few years and also because a part of the fowling area was badly damaged by a very strong surf late in January 2008 (Jensen 2010), when tree catch locations; Niðari sessur í Hvíturð (1), Bakkin (3) and Jákupsa sessur (9) were completely swept away.

Mykines

The island Mykines with the islet Mykineshólmur is 10.05 km² and it is rat free. It is valued at 40 merkur; 27 private and 13 belonging to the state. They hold the biggest puffin colonies in the Faroes, estimated to about 125.000 pairs in 1987. The annual fowling in the late 1990s and early 2000s has been about 22,000 puffins, but since 2003 there has been a drastic decline which has resulted in a local fowling ban since 2011.

Mykines is the westernmost of the Faroese islands. It is very isolated and the number of inhabitants has declined dramatically during the last century; from about 180 to 14, so much of the land is owned by peoples not living on the island. The fowling right was earlier connected to small infield areas owned by many peoples, but in 1980 the ownership of these infield areas were rearranged to be more practice for cultivating, so strip holdings were exchanged for one compact holding. This was done without taking account for the fowling rights, which in many areas became disputable. These problems were taken up on the grannastevna in 1993 and new rules for the fowling rights were adapted to the changes, but the rules are complicated, as seen below, and not respected by some of the fowlers that still stick to the old rights. The owners met again in 2008 to discuss improvements, but it was only agreed on small regulations.

For example,

1) 27 small lots have the fowling right to the catch location Uppi undir líð just north of the village. The owners are grouped into three tærn (turns) which each get two days fowling a week. One representative for the 27 lots take care of when each turn has the fowling right, while the people in each turn has to decide internally how they share their rights.

2) In Íralíð, just east of the village, another principle, based on the number of fowled birds, is used. There are 4 catch locations and the owners are grouped into 5 turns. Each turn can fowl until they have got at least 200 puffins. If they do not catch 200 birds the first day they get the right to the next day with favourable wind direction until they reach at least 200, but as they get a whole day each time, it can result in more than 200 birds. If a turn is not fowling, when the weather permit, the next turn take over. The par-

ticipating fowlers share the catch each day.

3) A special agreement is for the fowling in Dalur, which is nearest to the village. Here all the landowners may fowl, but there is a quota, so they may not take more than 48 puffins for each mörk they own, and they have to pay 5 DKK to the hagastýrið, the outfield management, for each puffin.

4) In the other colonies the landowners of the infield decide themselves how they share the fowling rights for each area.

In colonies where all the inhabitants of Mykines were allowed to fowl, they had to pay landpart, a rent of their bag to the owners of the colony. This rent was highest in the colonies nearest to the village while the fowler was allowed to keep more of his bag from the more distant colonies. During the last decades, rent has only been paid in Lamba, which is the nearest colony apart from Dalur, which has a special agreement as told before. In Lamba the rent was half of the catch, if the bag was more than 30.

In all colonies there is a common rule for when to fowl. Fowling used to start in June 24 (Jóansøka) but after some years of very low production of puffin young the date was changed in 1993 so the fowling started the 7th of July, but later it was moved to the 2nd of July (Syftunsøka). At the start of the season the fowling begin at 6 am and stop at 12 am, but later in the season they begin later and can stay longer. After some years with exceptional low number of puffins in the colonies, it was decided in 2009 to restrict the fowling season from the 13th of July to the 8th of August, but as the situation did not improve, the puffins were totally protected in 2011 for a temporary period which still is effective.

Vágar

No regular fowling occurs on the island Vágar which is 176.38 km², but occasionally some puffins have been fowled in Gásadalur and Víkar. The brown rat arrived already in 1779 (Svabo 1976), but there have, although, been large puffin colonies on the island (Rasmussen 1949) and the population was estimated at 40,000 pairs in 1987. On the rat free islet Tindhólmur which is 0,65 km² there are still some fowling. It is valued at 2 merkur and the owners may fowl 150 puffins for each gyllin (1/16 mörk), so the maximum yield would be 4800 puffins. In the 1990s the mean annual number was about 2500 puffins. There are no certain rules for when the owners can fowl, so they have to discuss it with the foreman for Tindhólmur before they go. There are two huts where the fowlers can stay overnight.

Streymoy

No regular fowling occurs on Streymoy which is 374.17 km² and the largest of the Faroese islands. The brown rat arrived in 1769 (Svabo 1976) and diminished the puffin population, but there are still many small colonies on the steep northern cliffs and on some rat free stacks. In total about 20,000 pairs of puffins were estimated to breed in 1987. The only place where regular fowling has taken place the last decades is on the stack, Tjørnuvíksstakkur, where there are two catch locations. The fowling has been very variable from a few hundred a year up to the maximum of 7,000 in year 2000. Tjørnuvíksstakkur belongs to the village Tjørnuvík with 67 inhabitants and all the inhabitants may fowl and also allow guests to participate. There is a telpher (line) to the stack and a hut for the fowlers.

Kalsoy

The island Kalsoy is 30.62 km², it is rat free, and about 40,000 pair of puffins were breeding on the island in 1987. Fowling occurred close to the village Trøllanes that has 19 inhabitants. The catch locations are on Rókin, close to the village, and in 5 catch locations on Hvannrók on the north point of the island. Until 1981 the fowling rights were shared among the landowners of the infield, and 1/3 of the catch in Hvannrók had to be paid as rent. In 1981 strip holding was exchanged for one compact holding, so now the fowling right is shared among the landowners of the outfield, and no rent is paid. From 1994 to 2001 there were caught 1,000 – 9,000 puffins each year, but since then there has not been any fowling.

Viðoy

The island Viðoy is 40.67 km² and 25,000 pairs of puffins were breeding on the island in 1987. The brown rat was first seen on the island around 1905 and soon also in the birdcliffs Rivið and Torva in the northern part of the island. After that there was a steep decline in the number of puffins in these colonies (Kyrjarheygg 2002) where there used to be fowled 16,000 and 14,000 puffins respectively each year (Patursson 1939). Now the fowling only occurs in a steep rat free cliff Seyðtorva (Settorva) and in a scree called Urðin where rats have arrived recently. In Seyðtorva they usually fowled about 7,000 puffins and in Urðin about 3,500. The fowling rights belong to the village Viðareiði with 343 inhabitants but only a few participate in the fowling. There are 48 merkur in Viðareiði, shared equally among 3 býlingar (collection of houses forming one particular part of a village): Heygar, Ónagerði and Uppi á Bønum (Hansen 1975). There are a few large owners and many small ones. The fowling rights are shared among the three býlingar, so that each year two of them have the right to fowl on Settorva and one in Urðin,

and these rights rotate each year. The puffin colonies can only be reached by boat, and there is a little hut for the fowlers in each of them. On Seyðtorva there are 3 catch locations and normally 3 persons stay for 3-4 days each time, depending on the yield and the weather. Each second day the puffins are thrown down to the sea and picked up by a boat and brought home. This is called a kasting. In Urðin there are 4 catch locations and 3 men are hunting each time, and they stay for two days. There is no restriction on what date the fowling may start or what time of the day they may fowl, but they usually don't start before the 24th of June.

The landowners that have the fowling right get 1/3 in rent if the total yield in a fowling trip is more than 600 birds. A certain amount of the rent is paid to the man that maintain the hut, the rope etc. and for the boat, that bring the fowlers to and from the fowling place. In years when the catch is low most of the rent goes for that work. After the rent has been paid the fowlers share the rest equally. The puffin population in Urðin has declined drastically and so also the yield. The reason for that is mainly due to the brown rat and that Urðin is substantially diminished due to erosion from the sea.

Fugloy

The island Fugloy is 11.02 km² and it is rat free. It is valued at 47 merkur which are shared between the two villages Hattarvík and Kirkja with respectively 27 and 20 merkur. The number of inhabitants has declined dramatically from 227 in 1935 (Hansen 1971) to 37 in 2012. Of these 37 registered people only 20 live on the island (Zakarias Zakariassen pers. com.), so the old traditions cannot be held. The total population of puffins was estimated at 15,000 pairs in 1987, and most of them are breeding in Urðin Mikla, which is a boulder scree, that only can be reached by boat. There is a hut where 5 fowlers can stay for 2-3 days, and there are 10 catch locations. About 5,000 puffins were fowled annually with a maximum the last decades of 10,500 in 2001. Although more land belong to Hattarvík than Kirkja, the fowling right for puffins are shared equally, so the two villages has the fowling right in Urðin Mikla each second year. No rent is paid and the fowlers share the catch equally.

Koltur

Koltur is 2.31 km² and it is rat free. It is valued at 17 merkur, and about 20,000 pairs of puffins were estimated to breed on the island in 1987. The island belongs to the state and there has only been one farmer family on the island during the last decades. Now it belongs to the National Museum (Søvn Landsins), and one principal is living on the island. There are not any certain fowling

rules; fowling occurred from the 24th of June until the puffins left in August, and a few hundred puffins have been fowled each year until fowling stopped in 2007.

Sandoy

Sandoy is 111 km² and the puffin population was estimated at 70,000 pairs in 1987. It is the largest rat free island, but a subsea tunnel from the rat infested island Streymoy is planned to open in 2023, and this will seriously increase the possibility for rat invasion (Olsen 2006). There are 6 areas where fowling has occurred until recently; on the islet Trøllhøvdi, just north of the island, and in 4 colonies on the west coast of the island, and in one colony on the south coast.

Trøllhøvdi

Trøllhøvdi is a 0,2 km² islet just north of Sandoy. It is owned by the landowners in Kirkjubø on Streymoy, and 31 of the 39 merkur in Kirkjubø has the right to fowl. There is a hut on the islet, so the fowlers can stay a few days. There are 6 catch locations. No rent is paid and the fowl is shared equally among the fowlers for each trip, and the boat usually gets one part.

West Sandoy

In the northernmost colony Skorar there are 4 catch locations and in Lírabergr there are 5. These are mostly used by fowlers from Skopun. There used to be regular fowling and the catch was about 2500 puffins each year and there are no local rules. Lonin belong to the village Sandur and the fowling right belongs to some owners of the infield. It is very difficult to reach the colony so fowling stopped in 1939, but late in the 1990s a diesel engine with a hoisting apparatus was mounted on top of the 326 meters high cliff from where the fowlers can be lowered 280 meters down in the colony. Puffin fowling has however been much lower than expected; only up to about 100 puffins each year. On Salthøvdi all inhabitants in the village Sandur are allowed to fowl, but only few birds are caught. The fowlers share the catch and no rent is paid.

South Sandoy

The southernmost colony, Skorin í Dali, belongs to the village Dalur which is valued at 23 merkur. The number of inhabitants has been rather stable at around 50. Skorin í Dali hold a large puffin colony and the amount of puffins fowled varies from a few hundred up to 5,500. Since the 1970s it has been slackened on the fowling rules from the 1940s, but in 2004 the old rules were taken up again with some regulations, as there had been a rearrangement of the ownership of the infield in 1973 and of the outfield in 1981. For the fowling the owners are grouped in three groups hold. Each of these hold choose a foreman, which

has to control the fowling according to strict written rules. Each hold has two fowling days a week; Monday and Tuesday; Wednesday and Thursday, and Friday and Saturday. As Saturday is the most attractive day (on Sunday it is not allowed to fowl), there is a rotation of the hold each year. Those landowners that own less than 8 gyllin has the right for only one fowler for two days a week and those that own 8 ore more gyllin has the right for two fowlers for two days a week. The owners that will fowl in a certain year have to register all their fowlers by name to one of the foremen before the 1st of June. The fowling start at the 24th of June and end the 24th of August, and it is allowed to fowl from 6 am to 11 pm. The first 100 puffins a fowler gets each year are free from rent, but after that he has to let half of the catch as rent to the landowners.

Skúvoy

Skúvoy is 9.87 km². It is rat free, and valued at 60 merkur (private and state). There has been a decline in the inhabitants from about 140 to 30 during the last 50 years. The puffin population was estimated at 40,000 pairs in 1987 and they are breeding along the entire coast, but the highest number is found in the steep grass slope on the south coast of the island called Bergið. This is the only place where puffins have been fowled during the last decades, and occasionally Norði í Skorum in the north. They used to start fowling the 2nd of July and continue until the puffins leave the colony in August. The landowners and all the inhabitants may fowl, and they have to lay 1/3 of the catch in rent to the owners of the outfield, if they fowl more than 30 birds a day. The rent is delivered at Lundabýtið (puffin sharing) in the centre of the village, and here a man representing the owners of the outfield share the catch each fowling day, so the owners get their part according to land tenure. There are 16 catch locations in Bergið, and their "quality" is very different, so since around 2001 the fowlers have shared the catch locations by chance each time they go for fowling. This happens in the village at Áldarsbakka at 6 am, where a box is stored containing labels with the names of the 16 catch locations on. The yield has been a few thousand each year with a maximum of 7,800 in 1999. Since 2002 there has been a steep decline and no fowling has taken place since 2007.

Stóra Dímun

Stóra Dímun is a rat free island at 2.62 km². It is valued at 13 merkur, all belonging to the state, and it was estimated to hold about 40.000 pairs of puffins in 1987. There are only two families living on the island and they used to fowl about 1,500 - 3,000 puffins each year, but now they only occasionally fowl up to about 100 birds. They used to start fowling the 24th of June and fowl until

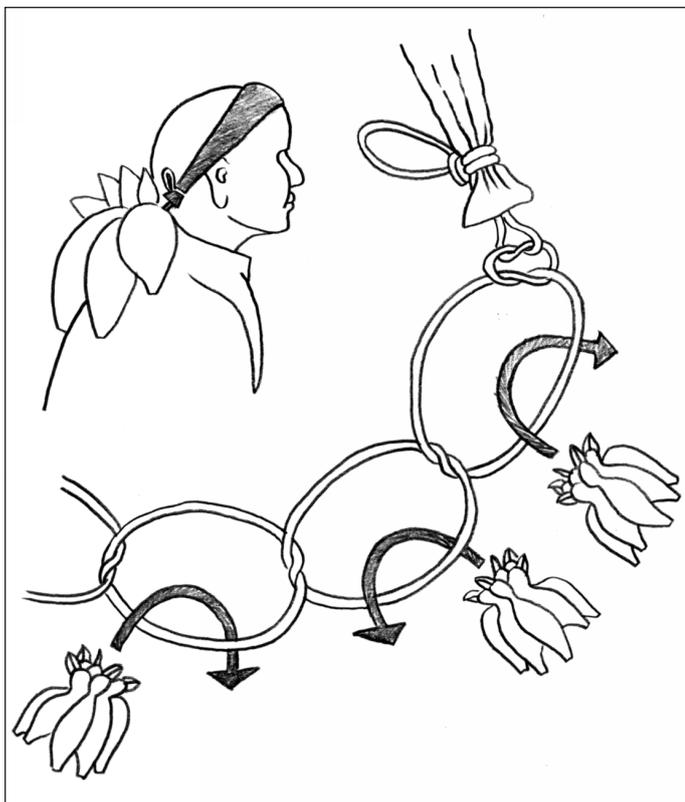


Fig. 9. The puffin bundles are tied with a half-knot around their necks with the heads alternately up and down in order to take up as little room as possible. Drawing by Ole Wick

the puffins leave in August.

Lítla Dímun

Lítla Dímun is a rat free island at 0.84 km² and it has never been inhabited. It was estimated to hold about 10,000 pairs of puffins in 1987. It is private and belong to the village Hvalba on the island Suðuroy. Lítla Dímun is valued at 1½ mørk equally shared between the parts of the outfield in Hvalba called Skálar, Giljar and Tunnan. About 5,000 puffins have been fowled each year with a maximum of 7,140 puffins in year 2000. The fowling season start the 24th of June and continues as long as there are puffins. There are 9 catch locations and there are two huts where fowlers stay up to 4 days each time. There used to be a rotation among the owners for each fowling trip, but now the only rule is that one of the fowlers has to be an owner with knowledge of local condition. No rent is given, but the boat is paid 50 puffins, and each participant pay 250 DKK for the hut.

Suðuroy

The island Suðuroy is 164.71 km² and it was estimated to hold about 20,000 pairs of puffins in 1987. Here the first rats were seen in the Faroes. It was in 1768 (Svabo 1976), and the island has been infested since then, so the puffins are only breeding in steep cliffs, boulder scree, and on rat free stacks around the island. The only place where

fowling occur today is in a bolder scree on the west coast called Tofturð belonging to the village Hvalba. It is rat-infested, but the rats are diminished with poison. There used to be hunted around 3,000 puffins each year, but in 2000 there were hunted 6,980 puffins, which is the maximum. Since then the yield has declined as in the other islands. There are no rules for who can fowl, but normally the fowlers make an agreement with the owners of a hut in the colony. There are 5 catch locations and the fowlers share the catch.

Treating of the harvest

Transporting the harvest

Fowled puffins are normally tied up in bundles with 5 birds in each bundle, called a vørða. When carried home, these bundles are tied on a rope and carried on the back with the carrying strap over the forehead. The part of the rope that is fitting on the forehead is often sealed with a cloth, or substituted with a cloth (Fig. 9 and 10). Nowadays the birds often are taken home in a bag, but still carried on the back with the carrying strap over the forehead (Fig. 11).

In some old pictures e.g. Pedersen (1935), Petersen (1950) and Nørrevang (1977) fowlers pose with a fowling pole and puffins hanging under the belt around the waist (Fig. 12), but this method was mostly used when puffins were taken in their burrows and carried a short distance in the colony. But this way of carrying the Puffins was only at request of the photographer.

If many birds are caught they may be taken home with a boat if the weather permits. In some colonies there are landing places as Tjaldursstøð (Fig. 5) on Nólsoy, where the boat can be anchored, but in places like Skúvoy and Viðareiði, where the boat cannot land, mobile phones are used to arrange the boat transport. The birds are then thrown down to the sea where they are taken up into the boat.

Plucking

Traditionally it was the women that plucked the birds by hand, but now it is mostly done by the fowlers themselves using electrical plucking machines. The first plucking machines were imported in the middle of the 1970s (Jensen 2005).

Use of the birds

Most of the fowl is for private use, but some fowlers sell the birds. The puffins are normally served boiled with potatoes and sometimes they are filled with cake dough with raisins (Jensen 2010), but now it is also common to fry the birds according to recipes used for fowl abroad.



Fig. 10. Torlakkur Hansen carried puffins on the back with the carrying strap over his forehead in 2003



Fig. 11. Kristin Holm carried puffins in a sack on the back with a carrying strap over his forehead in 2005

Discussion

Most fowling occurs on the rat free islands, while on the islands with rats most of the fowling has been on steep cliffs and stacks without rats. In the last decades puffin fowling has occurred in 13 out of the 18 Faroese islands. In the remaining 5 islands, Eysturoy, Kunoy, Borðoy, Svínoy and Hestur there used to be some fowling in earlier times, but only in small scales. The first three of them are rat infested while the last two are rat free.

Sharing of the fowling right

Puffins have been a valued food supply, so strict rules have been about who could fowl in the different puffin colonies. In the latest hunting legislation from 1954 it is stated in part one, § 2, that it is the owner of the land that has the fowling right and in § 3, that if nothing else is agreed, it is the owner of the old registered inland, that has the hunting right (Dam 1974). As the old registered inland became split up in small hereditary shares, the sharing of the fowling rights became difficult, but the fowlers adapted their fowling accordingly. But when the ownership of these areas were rearranged from strip holding for one compact holding, to make the agriculture more effective, but without taking account on the fowling rights linked to the different shares, it became really complicated and impossible to administrate. In most places no attempts have been made to rearrange the fowling right accordingly, and the fowlers continue in the same way as



Fig. 12. Bird catchers posing for the photographer in Mykines in 1934. Photo Alwin Pedersen.

before, but the new generations will probably lose these privileges and rights to the owners of the outfield where the puffins are breeding, as it is stated in §2. In some of the villages e.g. Trøllanes this has already happened, as the fowling right has been shifted from the owners of the infield to the owners of the outfield after the rearrangement. Where all the inhabitants and landowners have the right to fowl e. g. on Skúvoy and in Illa Helvt on Nólsoy, the sharing of the infield has not had any influence on the fowling rights, and neither in areas where the fowling right is linked to the outfield as in Urðin Mikla on Fugloy and in Urðin on Nólsoy.

Sharing of the catch locations

Fowling with the fowling pole needs skill, and it is a hard job when there are many birds. Therefore there are great differences among the fowlers in how many birds they get. When fowling is in common, as it is e.g. on Seyðtorva and L. Dimun, the best man usually get the best catch location to be most efficient. Nevertheless, on Nólsoy they started around 1915, when fowling still was in common, to decide by chance in which location the man has to sit in (Sörinardóttir 2014). One reason for that may simply have been to avoid disputes about where to sit. When the fowlers on Nólsoy stopped sharing the catches in the early 1960s they also stopped to decide by chance where to fowl. This resulted in competition for the

best catch locations, as it was in most places, so fowlers e.g. went out very early and even slept in the catch locations. On Nólsoy they come over this by reassuming to share the catch locations by chance among the fowlers each morning, and this idea has recently been copied by the fowlers on Skúvoy.

Sharing of the catch

In most places there are rules that secure the owners right. On Nólsoy e.g. the fowlers now keep all the catch in Urðin, but there are strict rules, so that only the landowners can fowl according to their land tenure, which is accurately stated in the fleygalistin (Tab. 1). On Skúvoy, on the other hand, where all residents on the island are allowed to fowl, all have to give 1/3 of the catch to the landowners of the outfield if they catch 30 or more birds, like they did in Nólsoy before 1970.

The part of the catch that has been kept by the fowlers has been increasing, and during the last decades, where the rules have been slackened, there has been a tendency for the fowlers to keep all the catch, as it happened in Illa Helvt on Nólsoy already in the 1930s and for Urðin on Nólsoy in the 1970s. Until the 1970s all the fowlers in Urðin on Nólsoy shared equally the catch for each day, however, if one fowler only had got a few birds, he normally did not take part in the share. The sharing was done in a place called á Kelduni in Bólstaður (Fig. 5), just

north of Urðin. In this way all had to carry the same weight home. When arriving in the village, one third of the catch was given to the landowners of the outfield that had the fowling permission that year. However, if there were less than 30 puffins for each fowler, no rent was given (Hermansson 1972). The rent was placed beneath Botnagarður, which is one of the meeting places for the inhabitants. Here a representative for the owners shared the puffins according to land tenure.

Normally there is no limit for how much can be fowled, but in a few places there is a quota on the fowl, e.g. on Tindhólmur and in one colony on Mykines. Up to the Second World War there also was a quota in Skorin í Dali, where it was allowed to take up to 25 puffins for each gyllin, giving a total of 9200 puffins a year, but this maximum was hardly reached.

Decline in the puffin population

The distribution of puffin colonies has shrunk during the last centuries, and the number of puffins fowled has declined (Patursson 1939, 1946, Jensen 2010, Olsen and Jensen in prep). The main reason for the decline the last centuries is the brown rat, which was first introduced in Suðuroy in 1768 and then soon spread to other islands (Svabo 1783; Bloch & Fuglø 1999). Now there are almost no puffins on these rat infested islands, but the puffins survive on steep cliffs and stacks without rats.

Overexploitation, and land slope may be other reasons for the decline (Patursson 1939), and the decline may also have been accelerated due to natural reasons as the fluctuations in the production of puffin young in the 1990s can be related to fluctuation in the primary production within the Faroe plateau (Gaard et. al. 2002). The drastic decline since 2002 is in an order, that has not been described before, and it is mainly caused by a collapse in the breeding performance due to food shortage in the breeding season (Gaard et. al. 2002, TemaNord 2008, Frederiksen 2010, Olsen and Jensen in prep).

Ringling results indicate, that puffins are very faithful to the area where they grow up, as hunting with a fowling pole especially takes birds grown up in the area close to the catch location (Stempniewicz & Jensen 2007, Hammer et. al. 2014). Therefore an intense fowling may have devastating effect for the puffins breeding in the colonies, where fowling occurs, and especially for the birds close to the catch locations. The rat free island Nólsoy may be an example of such an overexploitation, as the highest number of puffins that are left in Urðin, is in the part of the colony that is farthest away from the village. It may therefore be especially harmful to fowl in small colonies, as it is now for most of the catch locations in Illa Helvt on Nólsoy. Therefore one of the objects for the grannastevna on Nólsoy in 2002 was to stop fowling in

Illa Helvt. However, too few owners attended, so no decision could be taken. The protection of Urðin on Nólsoy in 2008 put an extra load on Illa Helvt, as this is the only place where it has been allowed to fowl since 2008.

The sustainability of puffin fowling

There are zooarchaeological evidence for puffin exploitation in the Faroes in the Viking Age (Brewington and McGovern 2008), and it has probably been carried out as long as there have been people on the islands. As the puffins only come on land for breeding, the exploitation had to be in the breeding season, so eggs, chicks and breeding birds have been taken from the nests. Now only hunting with a fowling pole is allowed in the colonies, but as it also has to be in the breeding season, it is in conflict with the principles of sustainability. It has, however, been anticipated, that hunting with a fowling pole is a sustainable method as it especially takes immature birds, that fly in a ring in the colony while the breeding birds fly more directly to and from their burrows, and puffins that bring food in their beaks are not taken (Nørrevang 1977, 1986, Olsen and Nørrevang 2005, Baldwin 2005). Also the number of birds caught is highly reduced in years with low production, as fewer birds attend the colonies in these years. But although immature birds usually dominate in the fowl, the proportion of adults is quite high but variable, both during the season and between seasons (Olsen and Jensen in prep.). Feeding of the chicks is most intense in the morning at the same time as most fowling occurs, and this increase the chance for catching breeding birds, when the proportion of immature is low. This knowledge can be taken into use to make the fowling more sustainable. Fowling in the morning could be reduced and fowling could e.g. be stopped a particular season, if the proportion of breeding birds became too high after certain days of fowling. Although the effort spent on fowling and the numbers fowled is much lower than previously, precaution should be taken to secure, that it will not be too high for the present population, and therefore a hunting statistic should be introduced. Comparing the population estimate of half a million pairs in 1987 with the 100,000 puffins hunted per year around year 2000 indicates a critical overexploitation, or that the population estimate is too low. A census of the total puffin population, followed up by regular monitoring of the number of breeding pairs and their breeding success are therefore highly recommended.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people that supplied us with information on the respective colonies. Nólsoy: René Hansen, Kristin Holm† and Hergeir Jacobsen. Mykines: Oskar Joensen and Esbern í Eyðansstovu. Vágoy:

Jógvan Heinesen and Andreas F. Poulsen. Streymoy: Jógvan Magnussen. Trøllanes: Jógvan Joensen. Viðareiði: Niels Jákup Absalonsen. Fugloy: Eivind Jacobsen and Símun Gullaksen†. Koltur: Bjørn Patursson. Hestoy: Hjørleiv Poulsen. Trøllhøvdi: Jóannes Patursson. Sandoy: Harald Jensen, Hilmar Joensen, Páll í Dalsgarði†, Laura Joensen, Karlot Petersen, Maria Djurhuus and Jóanes Johannesen. Skúvoy: Óla J. Hentze and Meinhard Hentze. Stóra Dímun: Óla J. úr Dímun. Lítla Dímun: Signar Olsen. Suðuroy: Signar Olsen and Aksal Poulsen. A special thank to René Hansen for the hunting results for Nólsoy in 2000-2006. We would also like to thank Annika Gulklett†, Marita Gulklett, Anna Kathrina Holm, Ivan Holm, Margretha Jacobsen†, Richard Jacobsen†, Rúni Poulsen, Jógvan Mørkøre and Jógvan Thomsen for their valuable help. Thank to Anfinn Frederiksen, Atlantic Airways for photo. Thanks also to Jan van Franeker, for commenting on an earlier draft.

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