

Dovekie Wreck (Dec 2010)

During the major windstorm that hit PEI before Christmas, dozens of dovekies were blown on shore. As these little sea birds cannot walk on land, they rapidly become exhausted and die. More than 20 birds were brought to the Teaching Hospital and received intensive care until the storm ended. A team composed of veterinarians, technicians and students helped to take care of those cute little birds over five days. Thanks to their dedication and to the financial support of the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre, we were finally able to release the dovekies back into the wild!!!



The Little Auk, or Dovekie (*Alle alle*), is the only Atlantic auk of its size, half the size of the Atlantic Puffin at 19–21 cm in length, with a 34–38 cm wingspan. There are two subspecies: *A. a. alle*, and *A. a. polaris*. Adult birds are black on the head, neck, back and wings, with white underparts. The bill is very short and stubby. They have a small rounded black tail. The lower face and fore neck become white in winter. These birds forage for food like other auks by swimming underwater. They mainly eat crustaceans, especially copepods, but also other small invertebrates along with small fish. They collect in large swarms before leaving their breeding rocks to head out to sea for food as well as when they return. Little Auks produce a variety of twitters and cackling calls at the breeding colonies, but are silent at sea. Their breeding habitat is coastal mountainsides, where they have large colonies. They nest in crevices or beneath large rocks, usually laying just one egg. They move south in winter into northern areas of the north Atlantic. Late autumn storms may carry them south of their normal wintering areas, or into the North Sea. Large numbers of Little Auks have been killed in several oil-spill incidents. But climate changes (warming) in Southern Greenland and Iceland seems to be the reason for the decreasing populations. (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)