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Photo: G. Gélinas

Every five years, the kittiwakes of Cap-Bon-Ami are counted, a job for Parks Canada ecologist Daniel Sigouin.

## Forillon's kittiwake colony now the largest in Eastern Canada

● **Geneviève Gélinas**

**CAP-BON-AMI:** - The cliffs of Forillon Park are home to the largest colony of black-legged kittiwake in Eastern Canada. Next summer tourists will once again be able to admire them from a boat.

While other colonies of marine birds, such as those on Bonaventure Island, are experiencing difficulties, the Cap-Bon-Ami colonies are prospering.

In 2013 a total of 12,708 pairs of black-legged kittiwakes nested in Forillon Park, according to a count by the Canadian Wildlife Service. That's fewer than in 2008, but 27% more than in 1999.

"Because of the decrease in several other colonies, our status as the largest colony in Eastern Canada was accentuated," explained Daniel Sigouin, ecologist at Parks

Canada. "We believe that changes in the temperature of sea currents make their food - sand eels and capelin - travel," he added.

These changes would favour the Cap-Bon-Ami marine birds, including razorbills and common murres. From 2008 to 2013, the number of razorbills has almost tripled at Cap-Bon-Ami, reaching 1,138 birds. Last year the common murres count was 2,235, nearly

twice the previous count.

At the end of February, the kittiwakes come to the cliffs after having spent time offshore. They nest on cliffs of Forillon, in Cap-Bon-Ami, because of the quality of the habitat, explained Mr. Sigouin. "We have really steep cliffs, which limits access from predators, and the cliffs have a lot of crevasses for their nests."

The two to three eggs laid in May hatch by mid-June. The

young are ready to fly away by August.

Up until 2008, a private company offered excursions at the foot of Cap-Bon-Ami cliffs. When the company left, Parks Canada didn't launch a new call for tenders. "We suspended the excursions at that time to do repairs to the Cap-des-Rosiers Wharf," explained Forillon Park Director, Stéphane Marchand.

The \$4.5 million work at the wharf (an amount which includes repairs to the nearby bridge) is almost complete. Parks Canada should launch a call for tenders this winter, for a return of the excursions next summer.

It will be a good thing, said Mr. Marchand, because several typical elements of Forillon, such as the marine birds, geology and arctic-alpine plants, can be better appreciated from the sea.



Photo: Parks Canada

The black-legged kittiwakes - not to be confused with gulls - live at sea, and come to land only for the nesting period.