

Scientists uncover impact of animal disease on others

DISEASE in wild animals can have a greater impact on the health of others than on infected individuals themselves, a study by experts in the Capital suggests.

Researchers at Edinburgh University said their work with families of wild seabirds had revealed how parasite infection in some can affect how well their relatives do.

It is not clear why infection in certain birds can affect others but scientists suggest it may impact on adults' ability to nurture their young, or that infected chicks may need more care.

Experts from Edinburgh University and the Centre For Ecology and Hydrology studied the effect of disease on families of cormorant-like birds, known as shags, on the Isle of May National Nature Reserve, off Scotland's east coast, during the breeding season.

Hanna Granroth-Wilding, who led the study, said: "Our study shows that we need to pay more attention to the broader consequences of disease to fully appreciate the role that it plays in wild populations, especially those whose numbers may be under threat."

