This database was created as part of the Marine Ecosystem Research Programme (MERP), funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and aiming to integrate existing and new marine data sets with current models of marine ecosystem services to further our knowledge and understanding of the UK marine ecosystems. The aim of the Seabird Prey Database was to collate a new dataset from all known information on prey consumed by seabirds breeding in the British Isles. We have focused on the 10 most common seabird species by total biomass during the breeding season, accounting for 95% of biomass of seabirds consuming a marine diet in 2000. Thus the prey reflects the majority of marine prey consumed by seabirds in British waters.

Information was primarily gathered from the primary literature by searching the web of science for titles, abstract or keywords containing ‘diet’, ‘food’, and predator’s species name. Data are presented as the frequency of each identified prey taxon per colony and year; data for each prey taxon is entered as a separate record. The contribution of the prey to the diet in the study year and site is expressed in one of three currencies commonly used in seabird dietary studies (Duffy & Jackson 1986, Barrett et al. 2007): frequency of occurrence, numerical frequency and biomass frequency (see the data attributes table).