

CORMORANT
Phalacrocorax carbo

GB max: 16,243 **Oct**
NI max: 2,607 **Sep**

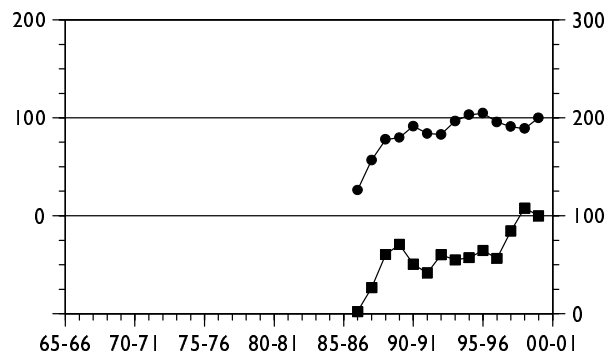


Figure 7. Annual indices for Cormorant in GB (circles, left axis) and NI (squares, right axis)

Peak counts of Cormorants in 1999-2000 were the highest on record, the British total surpassing the 15,752 counted in 1995-96, and the Northern Ireland total just two higher than in 1998-99. Annual indices jumped sharply in Britain after a consistent decline in recent winters, and both here and in Northern Ireland, values were close to the highest since Cormorants were included in WeBS.

Peak counts at the majority of individual sites in 1999-2000 were similar to their respective five year means. Although numbers dropped from the massive count in the previous winter at Loughs Neagh & Beg, the peak remained high and sufficient for the site to qualify as internationally important for Cormorants, the first site to attain this status in the UK. Numbers at two further sites in the province, Outer Ards and Strangford Lough, appeared to match this pattern, with higher than normal counts in the two most recent winters, although the converse

International threshold: 1,200
Great Britain threshold: 130
All-Ireland threshold: ?†

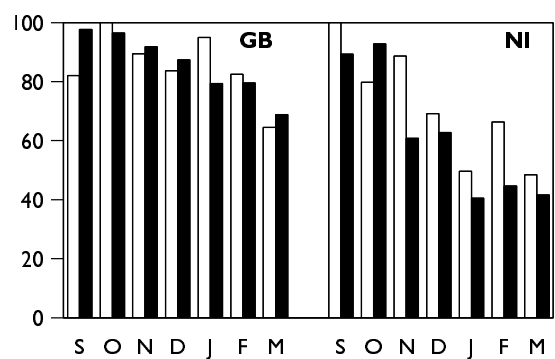


Figure 8. Monthly indices for Cormorant in GB and NI (white bars 1999-20000; black bars 1994-95 to 1998-99)

seems to have occurred at Belfast Lough. There is a reasonable degree of consistency in numbers between years at many sites in the table, though this does not apply to many sites in southeast England, particularly in the London area. High counts were made at Queen Mary, Hanningfield and Queen Mother Reservoirs, Wrasbury Gravel Pits and the Thames Estuary, yet much lower than normal numbers were found on Queen Elizabeth II and Wrasbury Reservoirs. Variation at these sites between years can be very large, with counts at Queen Mary Reservoir surpassing 1,000, yet failing to reach 100 in two of the last five years, and the fortunes of birds appear to vary markedly even on adjacent sites. Elsewhere, high counts were recorded at Loch Leven and on the Wash, whilst numbers at Poole Harbour, Blackwater Estuary, Dysynni Estuary and Inner Moray Firth were lower than expected, with general declines over the last five years apparent at the last two of these sites.

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Loughs Neagh & Beg	951	927	1,184	2,071	1,643	Sep	1,355 ▲
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Morecambe Bay	1,115	977	1,099	963	1,030	Sep	1,037
Abberton Reservoir	800	900	710	600	(520)	Mar	753
Forth Estuary	806	657	632	701	665	Sep	692
Solway Estuary	639	457	510	586	628	Sep	564
Alt Estuary	285	514	397	779	574	Jan	510
Clyde Estuary	464	404	610	470	466	Sep	483
Tees Estuary	676	471	320	444	451	Sep	472
Queen Mary Reservoir	387	1,050	91	59	678	Jan	453
Loch Leven	410	405	31 400	442	608	Dec	453
Dee Estuary (Eng/Wal)	460	253	374	613	541	Oct	448
Rutland Water	655	391	385	350	330	Sep	422
Walthamstow Reservoirs	300	450	430	430	0		403

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	Mon	Mean
Hanningfield Reservoir	211	223	272	758	539	Oct	401
Poole Harbour	471	375	400	440	298	Nov	397
Grafham Water	310	610	297	341	212	Dec	354
North Norfolk Coast	463	492	224	310	278	Oct	353
Wash	348	337	295	279	462	Sep	344
Ouse Washes	³¹ 429	391	³¹ 139	426	²⁴ 287	Mar	334
Ranworth & Cockshoot Broads	295	254	405	308	317	Jan	316
Dungeness Gravel Pits	186	144	330	550	344	Dec	311
Besthorpe & Girton Gravel Pits	255	262	236	453	323	Jun	306
Queen Elizabeth II Reservoir	169	380	268	360	172	Aug	270
Blackwater Estuary	249	348	273	278	190	Feb	268
Queen Mother Reservoir	105	600	46	7	535	Oct	259
Chichester Gravel Pits	²⁴ 265	²⁴ 346	²⁴ 213	²⁴ 252	²⁴ 216	Jan	258
Rostherne Mere	244	229	270	243	273	Jan	252
Irvine to Saltcoats	(250)	(230)	(230)	-	-		250
Medway Estuary	310	154	179	188	293	Oct	225
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	231	210	229	229	206	Jan	221
William Girling Reservoir	(200)	(91)	(180)	(200)	210	Sep	210
Pagham Harbour	204	246	183	177	234	Mar	209
Tay Estuary	245	212	³⁷ 234	134	196	Dec	204
Ardrossan-West Kilbride	-	-	-	-	194	Sep	194 ▲
Swale Estuary	174	200	187	(128)	203	Sep	191
Dysynni Estuary	248	214	173	(59)	129	Aug	191
South Stoke	²⁴ 105	²⁴ 332	²⁴ 187	²⁴ 136	-		190
Wraysbury Gravel Pits	206	169	105	180	276	Nov	187
Thames Estuary	205	164	150	162	248	Jan	186
Wraysbury Reservoir	241	142	479	16	39	Mar	183
Southampton Water	³⁷ 138	³⁷ 174	150	195	³⁷ 223	Nov	176
Middle Tame Valley Gravel Pits	157	(82)	150	171	207	Jan	171
Inner Moray Firth	388	133	99	³⁷ 153	71	Oct	169
Sonning Gravel Pit	72	150	312	161	140	Jan	167
Chew Valley Lake	250	170	190	90	120	Sep/Jan	164
Farmoor Reservoirs	225	185	120	168	109	Jan	161
Ribble Estuary	191	179	123	132	163	Jan	158
Rye Harbour & Pett Level	131	61	179	187	211	Aug	154
Blithfield Reservoir	88	323	77	92	146	Oct	145
Breydon Water & Berney Marshes	198	132	129	127	121	Sep	141
Exe Estuary	123	169	125	143	-		140
Stour Estuary	157	153	137	123	125	Aug	139
Alde Complex	191	121	120	104	150	Feb	137 ▲
Clwyd Estuary	123	255	84	50	146	Sep	132
Orwell Estuary	145	96	³⁷ 103	150	161	Nov	131 ▲
Attenborough Gravel Pits	121	181	137	103	112	Feb	131
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland †							
Belfast Lough	536	352	514	³⁷ 349	321	Sep	414
Outer Ards	147	152	158	359	303	Nov	224
Strangford Lough	180	167	164	300	285	Nov	219
Carlingford Lough	244	187	174	150	209	Sep	193

Internationally or nationally important sites not counted in last five years

Herne Bay

Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels

Draycote Water

Windermere

Coombe Country Park

Other sites surpassing table qualifying levels in 1999-2000

Middle Yare Marshes	210	Mar
King George V Reservoirs	180	Oct
Colne Estuary	(176)	Jan
Tyne Estuary	169	Jan
Tophill Low Reservoirs	148	Oct
Humber Estuary	139	Mar
R. Thames: Lea - Roding	131	Oct

† as no all-Ireland threshold has been set for Cormorant, a qualifying level of 130 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

BITTERN

Botaurus stellaris

International threshold: ?

Great Britain threshold: ?

All-Ireland threshold: ?

GB max: 16 Feb

NI max: 0

Following the previous year's record counts, numbers in 1999-2000 returned to more normal levels. The number of sites where two or more birds were recorded was fewer than half that of

the previous two years, with many traditional sites recording only one bird or none at all. The most surprising omission to this list is Leighton Moss which is usually the top site for Bittern.

Sites with two or more birds in 1999-2000

Rye Harbour and Pett Levels	4	Feb/Mar
Kingsbury Water Park	3	Dec
Fleet Pond	2	Dec
LNER Ballast Pits Lincoln	2	Dec/Feb

CATTLE EGRET

Bubulcus ibis

Vagrant

Native range: SW Europe, Asia, Africa, Americas

Single birds were found at Henfield Brooks and at WWT Martin Mere during December, the latter also recorded in January and March.

LITTLE EGRET

Egretta garzetta

International threshold: 1,250

Great Britain threshold: ?†

All-Ireland threshold: ?†

GB max: 1,016 Sep

NI max: 0

Data collected during the 1999-2000 Little Egret Roost Survey has improved our knowledge of the abundance and distribution of this species. For example, it has shown that day-time WeBS counts at many sites have generally underestimated their importance for Little Egrets. The peak count for Great Britain during late summer was almost 30% higher than the previous year, probably reflecting both greater accuracy of the roost survey methodology compared with WeBS Core Counts coupled with an actual increase over that period. However, detailed consideration of numbers both at roosts and during the day suggests that the true total in

Great Britain in September 1999 may have been closer to 1,700 birds (A. Musgrove in prep). This species has never been recorded by WeBS in Northern Ireland, yet numbers continue to climb in the Republic of Ireland (Colhoun 2001).

All key sites currently surpassing the national importance threshold are located in the south of England with high numbers of roosting birds recorded at many sites. Numbers have increased markedly at the majority of these sites over the last decade as this species continues to colonise Britain and Ireland. Chichester Harbour remains by far the most important site numerically on the mainland.

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain †							
Chichester Harbour	99	74	¹² 130	134	¹² 271	Aug	142
Longueville Marsh	(82)	130	(98)	(125)	70	Oct	108
Poole Harbour	58	57	¹² 107	50	¹² 142	Sep	83
Tamar Complex	83	69	¹² 72	50	(95)	Sep	74
Kingsbridge Estuary	48	47	45	59	58	Feb	51
Camel Estuary	49	46	¹² 47	56	¹² 55	Sep	51
Exe Estuary	38	34	37	47	¹² 51	Oct	41
Medway Estuary	30	(17)	8	(21)	(71)	Sep	36
North West Solent	86	16	14	21	¹² 45	Aug/Sep	36
Taw-Torridge Estuary	22	23	19	32	¹² 77	Sep	35
Langstone Harbour	36	32	19	³⁷ 38	(51)	Oct	35
Fowey Estuary	30	35	27	39	¹² 40	Sep	34
Burry Inlet	23	³⁷ 11	14	32	(86)	Sep	33
Pagham Harbour	19	29	27	41	¹² 51	Aug	33
Newtown Estuary	(34)	21	34	26	¹² 46	Sep	32
Fal Complex	16	24	21	45	34	Aug	28
Teign Estuary	15	36	23	23	¹² 30	Aug	25
Portsmouth Harbour	10	0	³⁷ 15	17	(51)	Oct	23
Guernsey Shore	13	18	-	0	31	Mar	21
Fleet/Wey	8	18	(13)	6	30	Feb	16 ▲
Erme Estuary	17	13	13	12	¹² 26	Feb	16
Cleddau Estuary	9	14	21	21	(17)	Nov	16
Helford Estuary	11	7	7	(23)	(24)	Aug	14
Yealm Estuary	13	(11)	8	15	16	Sep	13 ▲
Thames Estuary	9	11	4	9	28	Aug	12 ▲
Avon Estuary	11	8	10	(12)	¹² 20	Aug	12
Beaulieu Estuary	14	21	9	11	7	Aug	12
Looe Estuary	9	17	6	8	(9)	Oct	10
Other sites surpassing table qualifying levels in 1999-2000							
Colne Estuary	¹² 27	Mar	Swale Estuary		¹² 10	Jan	
Rye Harbour & Pett Level	¹² 16	Sep	Severn Estuary		¹² 10	Aug	
Hayle Estuary	¹² 13	Nov					

† as no British or all-Ireland threshold has been set, a qualifying level of 10 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

GREAT WHITE EGRET

Ardea alba

Vagrant
Native range: S Europe, Africa, Asia, North and C America

Following a blank year in 1998-99, one was seen on the River Avon between Salisbury and Fordingbridge during September.

GREY HERON

Ardea cinerea

International threshold: 4,500

Great Britain threshold: ?†

All-Ireland threshold: ?†

GB max: 4,527 Sep

NI max: 463 Sep

The peak total for Great Britain was the highest recorded to date, up 22% on the previous year and having only exceeded 4,000 on one previous occasion (October 1995). The total would have been higher if counts had been received for Walthamstow Reservoirs, the top site. The 1999-

2000 peak was typically in autumn. In Northern Ireland, where the majority of birds occur at two key sites, numbers were also the highest to date.

Despite record national counts, relatively few of the key sites held notable numbers. Hanningfield Reservoir joined the list of key sites

following an exceptionally high January count, whilst numbers in the Avon Valley between Fordingbridge and Salisbury continued to

increase. Counts at Coombe Country Park peaked well below the levels recorded in recent winters.

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain [†]							
Walthamstow Reservoirs	200	300	280	330	-		278
Somerset Levels	100	115	(119)	(105)	143	Mar	119
Thames Estuary	119	98	92	89	98	Oct	99
Ribble Estuary	(40)	99	95	(54)	88	Sep	94
Coombe Country Park	31		169	144	31	Jun	94
Morecambe Bay	87	70	88	101	88	Sep	87
Taw-Torridge Estuary	78	125	94	47	78	Aug	84
Avon Valley: Salisbury to F'bridge	56	72	70	92	102	Feb	78
Dee Estuary (Eng/Wal)	73	58	76	(61)	80	Sep	72
Ouse Washes	39	63	57	133	61	Mar	71
Clyde Estuary	40	46	86	79	90	Nov	68
Tamar Complex	87	64	75	62	45	Jan	67
Severn Estuary	121	54	59	51	49	Jan	67
Besthorpe/Girton Gravel Pits	22	102	22	107	76	Jun	66
Montrose Basin	(74)	71	42	42	83	Aug	62
Wash	55	(35)	45	42	91	Sep	58
Alde complex	68	46	50	52	72	Oct	58
Hanningfield Reservoir	13	20	48	57	137	Jan	55 ▲
R. Avon: F'bridge to Ringwood	120	(9)	41	9	40	Oct	53
Burry Inlet	57	50	64	43	51	Sep	53
Durham Coast	49	40	58	50	60	Aug	51 ▲
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland [†]							
Loughs Neagh & Beg	76	197	217	359	269	Sep	224
Strangford Lough	87	79	87	85	96	Sep	87
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels							
Southampton Water							
Deeping St James							
Other sites surpassing table qualifying levels in 1999-2000							
Humber Estuary	85	Sep					
North Norfolk Coast	75	Sep					
Solway Estuary	63	Sep					
Chichester Harbour	59	Sep					
Tees Estuary	57	Sep					
Dornoch Firth	52	Oct					
Poole Harbour	50	Sep					

[†] as no British or all-Ireland threshold has been set, a qualifying level of 50 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

PURPLE HERON

Scarce

Ardea purpurea

One was recorded on the Thames Estuary in September.

WHITE STORK

Ciconia ciconia

Vagrant and escape

Native range: Europe, Africa and Asia

All records in 1999-2000 came from Harewood Park, where birds are known to be escapes. A maximum of three were present in November.

SACRED IBIS

Threskiornis aethiopicus

Escape

Native range: Africa and Middle East

A single on the River Avon: Salisbury to Fordingbridge during October may have been the

bird present in Surrey from December to March the previous year.

SPOONBILL

Platalea leucorodia

Scarce

GB max: 18 Jun

NI max: 0

Summed site maxima for 1999-2000 produced 37 birds, one less than in the previous year but long-staying and wandering birds will undoubtedly

cause some repetition. Birds were recorded at 19 sites with a notably high peak count from the North Norfolk Coast in June.

Sites with two or more birds in 1999-2000

North Norfolk Coast	7	Jun
Breydon Water & Berney Marshes	5	Jul
Alde Complex	3	Sep
The Wash	3	May
Dee Estuary	2	Apr/Oct
Ribble Estuary	2	Jun/Aug
Tamar Complex	2	Jan
Taw/Torridge Estuary	2	Nov/Dec/Jan

MUTE SWAN

Cygnus olor

International threshold: 2,400

Great Britain threshold: 260

All-Ireland threshold: 55

GB max: 19,616 Oct

NI max: 2,373 Sep

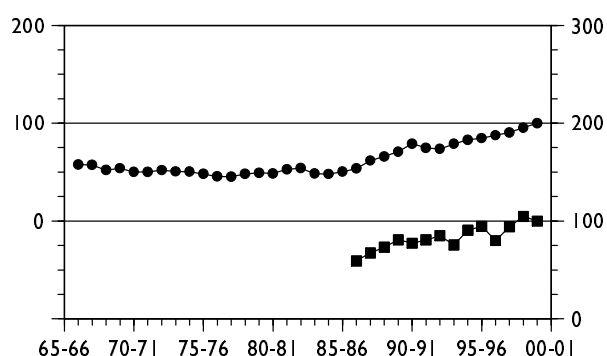


Figure 9. Annual indices for Mute Swan in GB (circles, left axis) and NI (squares, right axis)

The peak British count reached record levels, surpassing 19,000 in three separate months.

Consequently the national index rose by 5.2% to reach its highest level to date, the thirteenth increase in the last fifteen years. In Northern Ireland the peak was lower than the record 1998-99 count though around average for recent years, reflected by a slight fall in the index value.

Counts at most sites peaked near or above average, most notable being those at Somerset Levels, Rutland Water and Loch of Harray, the latter having shown successive increases for the last four years. In Northern Ireland the count at Strangford Lough was the highest at the site since the mid 1980s, whilst the inclusion of low tide counts for Belfast Lough revealed the site to be of all-Ireland importance.

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Fleet/Wey	1,151	1,185	1,313	1,141	1,177	Oct	1,193
Somerset Levels	608	731	734	733	1,011	Jan	763
Tweed Estuary	³¹ 450	664	544	615	580	Aug	571
Ouse Washes	³¹ 515	364	432	663	662	Dec	527
Abberton Reservoir	538	480	428	512	520	Aug	496

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	Mon	Mean
Rutland Water	295	396	485	465	617	Jul	452
Hornsea Mere	-	-	(49)	394	364	Aug	379 ▲
Loch of Harray	219	249	413	441	495	Nov	363
Montrose Basin	299	356	315	304	343	Sep	323
Stour Estuary	226	426	307	276	274	Dec	302
Morecambe Bay	285	281	237	269	333	Feb	281
Tring Reservoirs	156	201	329	310	342	Dec	268 ▲

Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland

Loughs Neagh & Beg	2,179	1,844	1,612	2,422	1,887	Sep	1,989
Upper Lough Erne	456	590	468	351	328	Jan	439
Strangford Lough	98	83	96	111	225	Sep	123
Castlecaldwell Refuge	-	-	116	-	-		116
Lough Foyle	104	130	110	115	115	Sep/Oct	115
Upper Quoile River	73	104	116	50	88	Oct	86
Broadwater Canal	-	78	66	71	-		72
Dundrum Bay	59	67	76	81	50	Nov	67
Lough Aghery	31	89	67	59	(54)	Nov	62 ▲
Belfast Lough	³⁷ 60	³⁷ 60	37	42	³⁷ 90	Feb	58 ▲

Internationally or nationally important sites not counted in last five years

Ballyronney Lake
Christchurch Harbour

Other sites surpassing table qualifying levels in 1999-2000

Loch Leven	406	Aug
Loch of Strathbeg	352	Aug
Fen Drayton Gravel Pits	316	Jul
Fisherwick & Elford Gravel Pits	301	Jan
R. Welland: Sp'ding to Borough Fen	287	Dec
Humber Estuary	271	Nov
Avon Valley: Salisbury to F'bridge	263	Oct

BLACK SWAN

Cygnus atratus

Escape
Native range: Australia

GB max: 53 Oct
NI max: 0

After a sharp rise in the previous winter, numbers of Black Swans recorded by WeBS jumped markedly for the second year. The British peak was slightly higher than the 43 recorded in 1998-99, but both the number of sites at which this species was recorded (82 *cf.* 59, 37 and 44 in the preceding three years) and summed site maxima (157 birds *cf.* 111, 67 and 62) showed marked

increases. Just one bird was recorded in Wales, and 12 singles at different sites in Scotland, the furthest north at Loch Harray, Orkney. Whilst it is likely that these figures relate to better reporting by WeBS, there are recent cases of breeding in the wild, and it is possible that Black Swans are fuelling their own increase in Britain.

Sites with three or more birds in 1999-2000

Fleet/Wey	10	Jun	R Kennet: Ramsbury to Chilton Foliat	4	Aug
Ramsbury Lake	9	Apr/Oct	R. Avon: West Amesbury	4	Dec
Woburn Park Lakes	8	Jul	Horrocks' Flash	4	Nov
Cotswold Water Park (West)	6	Jan	R. Avon: F'bridge to Ringwood	3	Jan
Avon Valley: Salisbury to F'bridge	5	Dec	Wicken Fen	3	Dec
Thorpe Water Park	5	Jan	Wigan Flashes	3	Mar
Deene Lake	5	Oct			

BEWICK'S SWAN

Cygnus columbianus

GB max: 7,101 Jan

NI max: 377 Jan

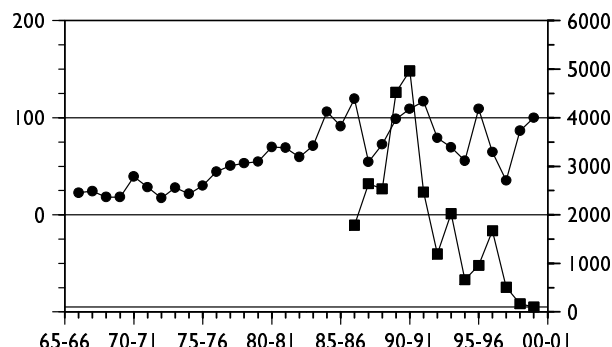


Figure 10. Annual indices for Bewick's Swan in GB (circles, left axis) and NI (squares, right axis)

Although WeBS counts for Great Britain were similar to those recorded in previous mild winters, national indices increased for the second consecutive year. Numbers recorded at the Ouse Washes were over 10% higher than in the previous year and this site remains the most important numerically for this species in the whole of northwest Europe (Delany *et al.* 1999). In contrast, as in 1998-99, peak counts at all other internationally important sites were much lower than their respective five-year means. The reasons underlying this redistribution of Bewick's Swans in Great Britain remain unclear but may be related, in part, to successful habitat management at the Ouse Washes by WWT and RSPB coupled with beneficially high water levels at this site. The international census of Bewick's and Whooper Swans throughout Europe in January 2000 recorded 400 more birds than WeBS (and Ouse Washes roost counts) in Britain, but substantially elevated the total in Northern Ireland from 21 to 377.

Monthly indices show that, after an early arrival of birds in November, peak numbers in

International threshold: 170

Great Britain threshold: 70

All-Ireland threshold: 25*

* 50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

% young: 11.1 brood size: 1.7

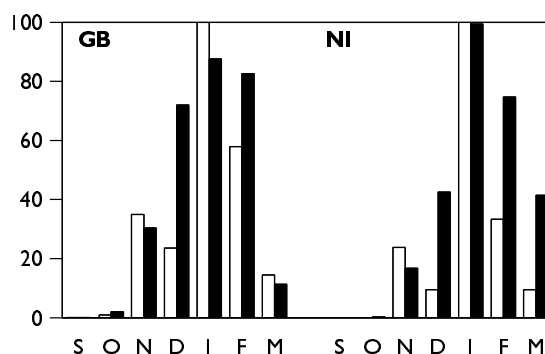


Figure 11. Monthly indices for Bewick's Swan in GB and NI (white bars 1999-2000; black bars 1994-95 to 1998-99)

Great Britain and Northern Ireland were recorded during January, with relatively low numbers in December and February. Productivity was average with 10.9% young birds in flocks at WWT Slimbridge, 15.3% at WWT Martin Mere, and 7.3% at WWT Welney (WWT, unpubl. data). Temporal changes in the proportion of juveniles recorded in flocks at these sites suggest that families return later in the season than do failed/non-breeders.

WeBS annual maxima and indices continue to fall in Northern Ireland, mirroring a similar trend in the Republic of Ireland (Colhoun 2001). The peak total for 1999-2000 was the lowest recorded since co-ordinated waterbird counts began. Particularly low numbers were recorded at the key sites in the province: Loughs Neagh & Beg and Foyle. The recent run of mild winters and hence favourable feeding conditions on the continent is probably linked to the reduction in the numbers of Bewick's Swans visiting Ireland during the winter. However, interspecific competition with increasing numbers of Whooper Swans in Ireland may be important and demands further attention.

	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Ouse Washes	4,830	³¹ 4,977	³² 4,257	³² 5,129	²⁴ 5,649	Jan	4,968
Nene Washes	1,025	863	2,585	723	327	Jan	1,105
Severn Estuary	³² 370	555	³² 393	³² 287	³² 216	Feb	364
Breydon Water & Berney Marshes	752	476	231	210	132	Feb	360
WWT Martin Mere/Ribble Est.	³² 350	³² 669	³² 368	²⁴ 144	³² 163	Dec	339
Walland Marsh	⁷ 327	324	306	256	64	Nov	255
St Benet's Levels	391	286	161	126	209	Feb	235
Somerset Levels	345	²⁴ 285	68	120	117	Jan	187