

## Surf Scoter

*Melanitta perspicillata*

Vagrant

Native Range: N America

Typically, the Forth Estuary hosted two Surf Scoters during the winter. A further bird was present at the Exe Estuary in

December and January, only the third ever WeBS record in England.

## Velvet Scoter

*Melanitta fusca*

International threshold: 10,000

Great Britain threshold: 25

All-Ireland threshold: +<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 517 Oct

NI max: 0

WeBS counts in recent years indicate that the wintering population of Velvet Scoters in the UK is in decline. However, as is the case with most seaducks, grebes and divers, one should be aware it can be a difficult species to monitor and numbers recorded are often highly dependent on sea conditions. Furthermore, monitoring of this species undoubtedly suffers from the relatively poor coverage along parts of the Scottish coastline, particularly Orkney.

During 2009/10, Velvet Scoters were noted at 24 sites. The monthly peak of 517 birds in October is a somewhat poor reflection of the total number likely to be present in Britain during the winter (Musgrove *et al.* 2011). This discrepancy is partly due to the low total reported from Moray Firth, where as recently as 2002/03 over 4,000 were counted. As with other offshore species, it is unclear whether the apparent drop in numbers of Velvet Scoters at Moray Firth, as well as at other principal sites listed below, relates to a genuine decline in numbers or is an artefact of sea conditions and/or surveying practice. A response to climate change may be at least

partly responsible, as demonstrated in North America by Zipkin *et al.* (2010).



Velvet Scoter (Andy Musgrove)

The maximum number recorded during the year was 457 at Forth Estuary in May, typifying the decline noted there since successive peak counts of 1,000+ during the early 2000s. The only other three-figure count received was 150 at Burghead Bay in October. Typically, few were seen away from the Scottish coast; the peak count elsewhere being 27 at North Norfolk Coast in March. There were just two inland records; two birds at Grafham Water in January and a single at William Girling Reservoir in March.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Moray Firth	1,261	743	(74)	17	(62)	Nov	674
Forth Estuary	775	(928)	372	728	457	May	652
Lunan Bay	120	2	100	(240)	(40)	Oct	116
St Andrews Bay	8	(0)	176 <sup>43</sup>	70 <sup>43</sup>			85
Burghead Bay: Burghead to Findhorn			7	(0)	150	Oct	79 ▲
Aberdeen Bay offshore	89 <sup>39</sup>	28 <sup>39</sup>					59
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain</b>							
North Norfolk Coast	25	3	4	7	27	Mar	13

## Bufflehead

*Bucephala albeola*

Vagrant

Native Range: N America

The fourth WeBS record of a Bufflehead was noted at Fleet & Wey in March.

## Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

International threshold: 11,500  
Great Britain threshold: 200  
All-Ireland threshold: 95

GB max: 10,965 Feb  
NI max: 3,803 Jan

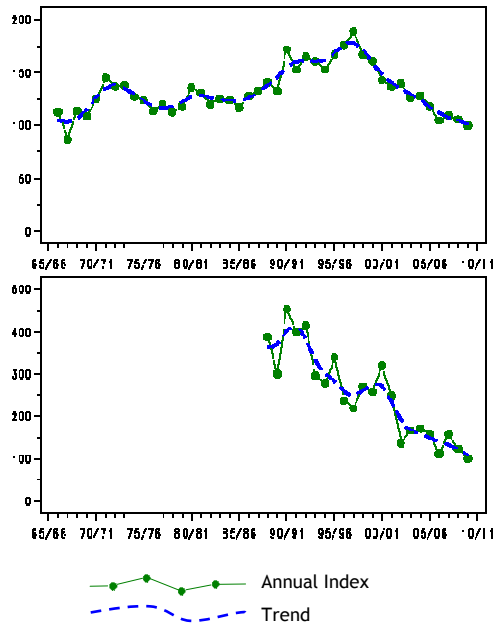


Figure 30.a, Annual indices & trend for Goldeneye for GB (above) & NI (below).

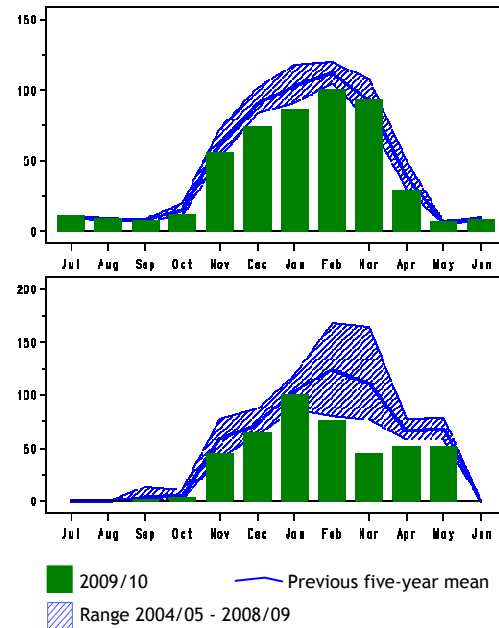


Figure 30.b, Monthly indices for Goldeneye for GB (above) & NI (below).

Since reaching a peak index value in 1997/98, the wintering population of Goldeneyes in Britain has fallen by approximately 40% and is now at almost its lowest ever point. This represents a profound case of 'boom to bust', with the decline having followed a period of consistent increase from the 1970s through to the mid 1990s. In view of this decline, Musgrove *et al.* (2011) revised the British winter population downwards by some 20%, to an estimated 20,000 birds.

The winter arrival of Goldeneyes, which are mostly of Scandinavian origin, is generally later than for most of the regular wintering duck species, with relatively few seen before November. The monthly indices for Britain depict something of an initial slow arrival, with numbers well below average during the period of December to January, before numbers approached more typical levels by March. It is tempting to speculate that this apparent shift during the second part of the winter may have

been initiated by the cold conditions across Europe at the time.

In contrast to the national trend, the maximum count of 1,340 at Forth Estuary in January represents the most recorded there through WeBS since February 2001. The historical maximum at the site is 5,063 in January 1973, however it should be noted that a total of 4,864 were logged there as relatively recently as December 1997. At other sites of national importance, peaks were close to or below recent averages, with the most marked declines being those at Inner Firth of Clyde and Humber Estuary.

The steep decline in Northern Ireland has taken place since the initiation of routine monitoring through WeBS. Numbers at the key site, Loughs Neagh & Beg, were below average once again, with the monthly maximum of 3,004 in January being the second lowest annual peak of the last ten years. The site was formerly recognised as being of international importance for this species, but a long term decline is evidenced by annual peaks of more than

13,500 in the early 1990s compared to the recent five-year mean of under 4,000 birds. The decline of this and other diving species at the site has been considered attributable to the effects of eutrophication (Maclean *et al.* 2007). In addition, as with other Scandinavian breeding species, it is likely

that recent milder winters have led to a north-east directional shift in terms of core wintering range. For example, in Sweden the estimated population of Goldeneyes in winter rose from 18,800 birds in 1971 to 75,000 in 2004 (Nilsson 2008).

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Forth Estuary	(379)	331	533	(431)	1,340	Jan	735
Inner Firth of Clyde	636	688	452 <sup>12</sup>	(215)	270	Feb	512
Loch Leven	289	517	302	683	415	Nov	441
Abberton Reservoir	588	478	332	299	413	Mar	422
Rutland Water	521	356	349	442	390	Feb	412
Humber Estuary	449	401	577	302	127	Nov	371
Morecambe Bay	249	191	(133)	290	242	Feb	243
Windermere	256 <sup>12</sup>	271 <sup>12</sup>	242	223 <sup>12</sup>	103	Feb	219
Loch of Skene	334	128	204	223	188	Feb	215
Loch of Strathbeg	202	334	146	159	217	Feb	212 ▲
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	5,688	2,780	4,648	3,684	3,004	Jan	3,961
Belfast Lough	103	(108)	226	233	(383)	Jan	236
Lower Lough Erne	254	169	267	(134)	(110)	Jan	230
Strangford Lough	187	83 <sup>10</sup>	237	181	139	Dec	165
Larne Lough	155	97	89	84	(116)	Feb	108
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2009/2010</b>							
Tweed Estuary	140	174	246	245	182	Feb	197
Hornsea Mere	280	91	260	98	230	Mar	192
Inner Moray and Inverness Firth	186	221	137	92	130	Feb	153
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain</b>							
Hornsea Mere	280	91	260	98	230	Mar	192

## Hooded Merganser

*Lophodytes cucullatus*

Vagrant or escape  
Native Range: N America

Two long-staying Hooded Mergansers featured in 2009/10. The drake remained at Radipole (Fleet & Wey) and a first-winter

drake was present at Saltholme Pools (Tees Estuary) from February to April.

## Smew

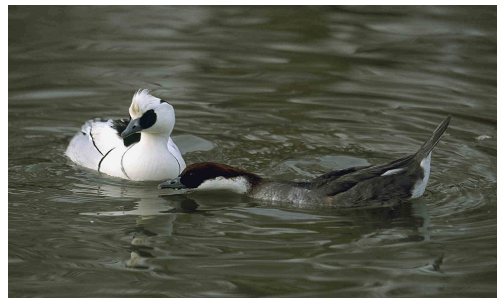
*Mergellus albellus*

International threshold: 400  
Great Britain threshold: 2  
All-Ireland threshold: +<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 199 Feb  
NI max: 2 Mar

The relatively cold spell of weather in January and February, at least in comparison to winters of the previous decade or so, resulted in a small increase in numbers of Smew at favoured sites during 2009/10. More marked however was an increase in the overall number of WeBS sites where the species was recorded; the total of 94 sites comparing well with an average of 58 sites over the previous three years. In general, lower numbers of Smew in recent winters have been associated with a shift in distribution towards the north-east of the wintering range; for example, in

Sweden wintering numbers increased from 400 in 1971 to 3,800 in 2004 (Nilsson 2008).



Smew (Jill Pakenham)

The counted maximum in the UK in 2009/10 was 199 birds in February; approximately double that of the three previous years; hence the long list of WeBS sites below that surpassed the revised 1% threshold during the course of the winter. Although Musgrove *et al.* (2011) estimate the typical British wintering population of approximately 180 birds to largely occur at well-covered WeBS sites, unfortunately, for the second year in a row, no Core counts

were undertaken at Wraysbury Gravel Pits. The network of gravel-pit sites in Cambridgeshire fared particularly well in 2009/10, with Ouse Fen & Pits (max. 27), Little Paxton (17) and Fen Drayton (19) all hosting more birds than normal. The majority of records away from sites listed below related to 1-3 birds, including the only record from Northern Ireland where up to two were at Loughs Neagh & Beg in January to March.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Wraysbury Gravel Pits	38	19	16	(10) <sup>12</sup>	(8) <sup>12</sup>	Jan	24
Cotswold Water Park (West)	33	13	19	16 <sup>12</sup>	18	Feb	20
Dungeness and Rye Bay	20	18	21	11	(14)	Jan	18
Ouse Fen and Pits	10	0	12	14	27	Feb	13
Rutland Water	14	5	2	12	18	Feb	10
Thorpe Water Park	20	3	3		8	Jan	9
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	9	7	7	4	12	Feb	8
Little Paxton Gravel Pits	5	4	12	2	17	Feb	8
Pitsford Reservoir	11	4	(2)	5	7	Dec	7
Fen Drayton Gravel Pits	5	3	2	1	19 <sup>12</sup>	Jan	6
Eyebrook Reservoir	7	4	6	7	5	Dec	6
Tophill Low Reservoirs	9 <sup>12</sup>	5 <sup>12</sup>	6 <sup>12</sup>	3 <sup>12</sup>	(2)	Nov	6
Seaton Gravel Pits & River	11	1	6	3	(3)	Dec	5
Abberton Reservoir	2	2	5	8	8	Feb	5
Grange Waters Complex	5						5
Deeping St James	8	2					5
Bedfont and Ashford GPs		1	6	1	(8)	Jan	4
Colne Valley Gravel Pits	6	8	4	1	1	Dec	4
Walthamstow Reservoirs	0	10	0	0			3
Blackwater Estuary	1	3	2	(1)	6	Jan	3
Minsmere	5	1	1	3	6	Feb	3
Nar Valley Fisheries Lakes					3	Feb	3 ▲
Sonning Eye & Henley Road GP		2		4	1	Dec	2
Earls Barton Gravel Pits	6	0	0	1	1	Feb	2 ▲
Stanwick Gravel Pits					(2)	Jan	(2) ▲
Grafham Water	1	0	3	3	2	Jan	2 ▲
Marsh Lane Gravel Pits	5	2	2	0	1	Jan	2
River Lane Gravel Pit				2 <sup>12</sup>	1	Jan	2
Holme Pierrepont GPs	5	1	0	1			2 ▲
Brandesburton Ponds West	6	0	0	(0)			2
Humber Estuary	(3)	(2)	(2)	(1)	1	Dec	2
Coombe Country Park				2 <sup>12</sup>			2 ▲
Aston On Trent Gravel Pits	2						2
Longtown Ponds and River	0	1	0	3	5	Feb	2 ▲
Castle Loch, Lochmaben		1	2 <sup>12</sup>	3	(0)		2
Loch Leven	0	6	0	1 <sup>12</sup>	2	Nov	2 ▲
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2009/2010</b>							
Whitemoor Haye	0	2	4	0	0		1
Belhus Woods Country Park	0				0		0
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain</b>							
Talley Lakes (5, Feb), Somerset Levels (4, Feb), Chew Valley Lake (3, Jan), Cotswold Water Park (East) (3, Feb), Ravenshorpe Reservoir (3, Feb), Colne Fen Gravel Pits (3, Jan), Martham Broad (3, Jan), Barton Broad (3, Jan), Whitlingham Country Park (3, Jan), Hornsea Mere (3, Mar), East Chevington Pools (3, Feb), Severn Estuary (2, Jan), Stodmarsh (2, Mar), Twyford Gravel Pits (2, Jan), Thrapston Gravel Pits (2, Feb), Clifford Hill Gravel Pits (2, Jan), Watermead CP North (2, Feb), Middle Tame Valley GPs (2, Mar), Croxall Pits (2, Mar), Crookfoot Reservoir (2, Nov), Talkin Tarn (2, Jan), Tindale Tarn (2, Feb), Kilmardinny Loch (2, Dec), Loch Shiel (2, Jan), Ranworth & Cockshoot Broads (2, Jan), Sywell Country Park (2, Jan), Hurworth Burn Reservoir (2, Mar)							

## Red-breasted Merganser

*Mergus serrator*

International threshold: 1,700

Great Britain threshold: 84

All-Ireland threshold: 35\*

GB max: 3,113 Feb

NI max: 614 Oct

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

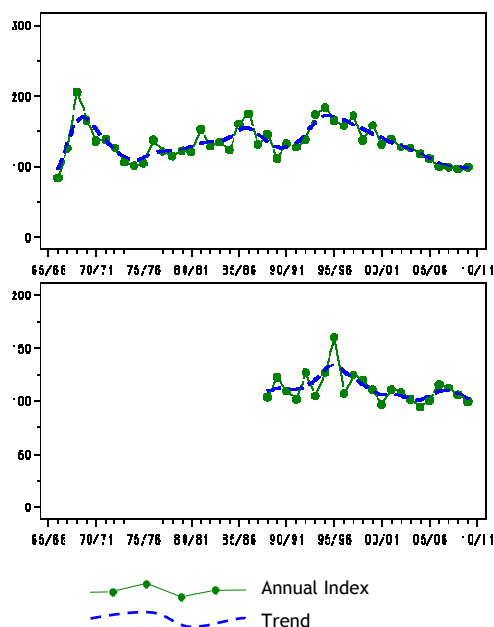


Figure 31.a, Annual indices & trend for Red-breasted Merganser for GB (above) & NI (below).

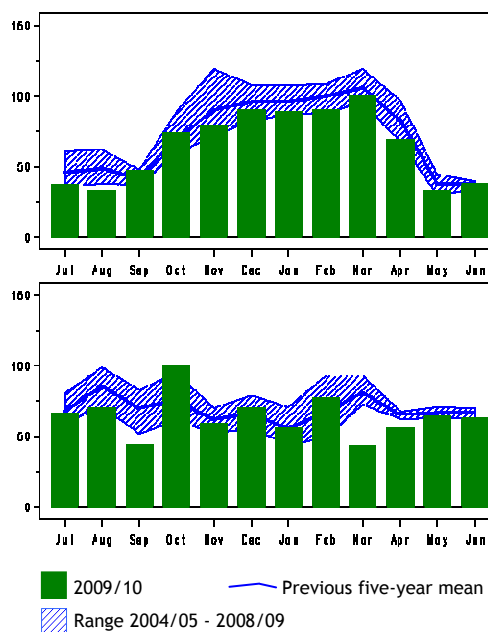


Figure 31.b, Monthly indices for Red-breasted Merganser for GB (above) & NI (below).

There are some signs that the steady decline in Red-breasted Mergansers around the British coastline may have slowed, with the index appearing to have stabilised at approximately the same level for the last four years. In contrast, over the course of the last thirty to forty years, numbers present wintering to the east of the UK have increased steadily (e.g. Nilsson 2008, Hornman *et al.* 2011), suggestive of a shift in range, perhaps induced by climate change.

After the all-time low reached at Forth Estuary in 2008/09 this year's peak count of 316 there in September represents a slight recovery, but is still below the recent five-year average and pales into relative

insignificance when compared to counts from the past. The historic maximum relates to an exceptional 4,290 in January 1969, while 750+ were noted as recently as October 2002 and March 2004.

Peak counts at most other sites of national importance were close to or below average, notable exceptions being Chichester Harbour where 253 in December represents the most ever logged, and 192 at Montrose Basin in June which is the highest count there since 1978.

Numbers at sites in Northern Ireland were variable. For example, whereas Belfast Lough held an above average peak, the maximum at Carlingford Lough was the lowest for nine years.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Forth Estuary	489	347	(261)	267	316	Sep	355
Fleet and Wey	438	284	307	341	233	Dec	321
Moray Firth	254	211	366	(195)	(246)	Oct	277
Poole Harbour	(250)	213	(117)	(241)	(120)	Dec	235
Morecambe Bay	263	(118)	(239)	188	176	Feb	217
Chichester Harbour	212	217	211	157	253	Dec	210
Inner Firth of Clyde	252	195	168	202	158	Jul	195

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
Whiteness to Skelda Ness	145 <sup>9</sup>	134 <sup>9</sup>	192 <sup>9</sup>		156 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	157
Langstone Harbour	187	159	169	114	128	Nov	151
Rova Head to Kirkabister	169 <sup>9</sup>	169 <sup>9</sup>	92 <sup>9</sup>	197 <sup>9</sup>	117 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	149
Montrose Basin	163	135	99	113	192	Jun	140
Loch Ryan	180	106	100	101	136	Oct	125
Duddon Estuary	(121)	106	123	92	141	Feb	117
Lavan Sands	196	81	110	68	131	Mar	117
North Norfolk Coast	132	92	131	94	107	Mar	111
Jersey Shore		126	90				108
Exe Estuary	78	139	79	140	86	Jan	104
Piltanton and Luce Estuaries					104	Aug	104 ▲
Tay Estuary	172	57 <sup>10</sup>	103	(47)	75	Apr	102
Loch Lomond	129	8	54	240	68	May	100
Sound of Gigha	34 <sup>21</sup>			57 <sup>12</sup>	(178)	Aug	90 ▲
Portsmouth Harbour	88	97	78	(89)	90	Dec	88
Blackwater Estuary	74	72	84	97	108	Feb	87 ▲
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Strangford Lough	263	390 <sup>10</sup>	(282)	(198)	257	Dec	303
Larne Lough	151	196	142	252	145	Oct	177
Belfast Lough	104	110	183	160	191	Oct	150
Lough Foyle	169	(35)	99	125	101	Oct	124
Carlingford Lough	118	171	106	29	24	Jan	90
Outer Ards Shoreline	31	108	38	45	14	Mar	47
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2009/2010</b>							
Inland Sea and Alaw Estuary		80 <sup>10</sup>		90	78	Sep	83
Arran	113	(129)	59	43	57	Feb	80
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain</b>							
Sullom Voe	28 <sup>9</sup>	39 <sup>9</sup>	72 <sup>9</sup>	65 <sup>9</sup>	130 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	67

## Goosander

*Mergus merganser*

International threshold: 2,700  
Great Britain threshold: 120<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: +<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 2,741 Jan  
NI max: 2 Jan

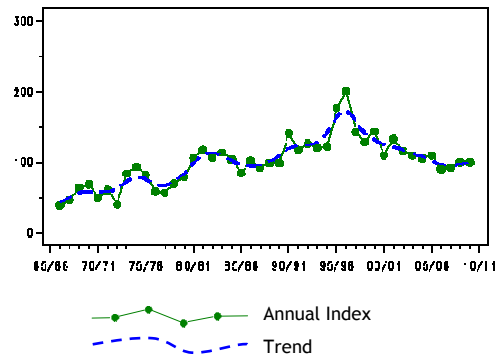


Figure 32.a, Annual indices & trend for Goosander for GB.

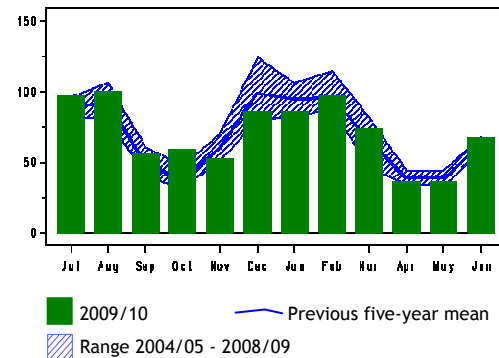


Figure 32.b, Monthly indices for Goosander for GB.

Goosanders that winter in Britain are considered to be largely derived from the breeding population, although many in the southeast are likely to originate from overseas populations, especially during cold weather on the continent. Numbers wintering in Britain have declined since a peak in the index in the mid 1990s, although the last four years have seen

relative stability. Typically, the monthly indices show that slightly below average numbers were present during the core winter period, presumably relating to a decreasing proportion of the wintering population originating from the continent. A more positive showing is apparent in summer; evidence of the increasing breeding population (Baillie *et al.* 2010).

Peak WeBS counts in 2009/10 were 205 at Tay Estuary and 205 at Tweed Estuary during late summer. The latter is the most ever noted at the site, the previous highest being 123 in August 2006. Further south, in lowland England where winter counts are more likely to part relate to continental immigrants, numbers were close to recent average. The highest counts were 101 at River Avon (Fordingbridge to Ringwood) in January, 64 at Chasewater, and 53 at Cotswold Water Park (West).

Goosanders are remarkably scarce in Northern Ireland; singles at Bann Estuary and Lower Lough Erne in January were the only records in 2009/10.

WeBS counters should be aware that numbers of Goosanders seen at favoured sites can vary according to the time day when the site is visited. During the winter, they tend to return to communal roosts late in the afternoon. Submission of roost counts from key sites, in order to supplement Core counts, is therefore welcomed.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Tay Estuary	153	313	(155)	232	(205)	Aug	233
Forth Estuary	119	119	(108)	(68)	(184)	Aug	141
Loch Lomond	19	261	36	217	161	Jul	139
<b>Additional sites with mean peak counts of 70+ birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Tynninghame Estuary	69	157	107	68	171	Jun	114
Tweed Estuary	64	123	42	85	205	Jul	104
Castle Loch Lochmaben	0	85	120	116	118 <sup>12</sup>	Feb	88
River Tweed - Kelso to Coldstream	113	74	90	49	111	Oct	87
Montrose Basin	60	57	59	116	131	Aug	85
Windermere	127	76 <sup>12</sup>	57	68 <sup>12</sup>	65	Jul	79
Acre Nook Sand Quarry	52 <sup>11</sup>	47 <sup>11</sup>	77 <sup>11</sup>	85 <sup>11</sup>	122 <sup>11</sup>	Feb	77
Loch Leven	20	39	151	68 <sup>12</sup>	97	Mar	75
Blithfield Reservoir			51	96 <sup>11</sup>	76 <sup>11</sup>	Dec	74
Ashworth Moor Reservoir	90 <sup>11</sup>	97 <sup>11</sup>	59 <sup>11</sup>	48 <sup>11</sup>			74
Eccup Reservoir	115	82	70	60	41	Jan	74
R. Severn & R. Vyrnwy Confluence	175	4	(24)	35	(15)	Nov	71
<b>Other sites surpassing national importance qualifying levels in Winter 2009/2010 in Great Britain</b>							
Inchgarth Reservoir	23	0	48	47	149	Oct	53
Auchenreoch Loch	11	32	59	0	140	Oct	48

<sup>†</sup> as few sites surpass the British threshold (120) and no All-Ireland threshold has been set, sites with mean peak counts of 70+ are also listed.

## Ruddy Duck

*Oxyura jamaicensis*

Naturalised introduction<sup>†</sup>  
Native Range: America

GB max: 322 Jan  
NI max: 11 Oct

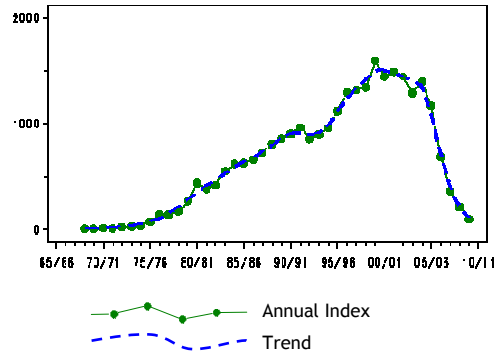


Figure 33.a, Annual indices & trend for Ruddy Duck for GB.

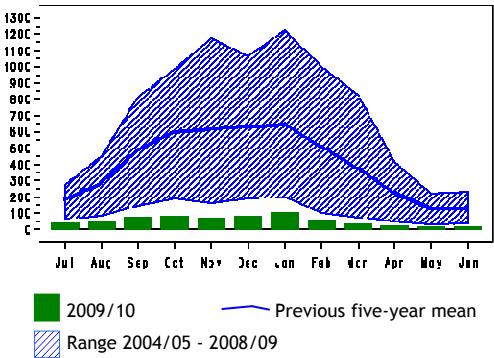
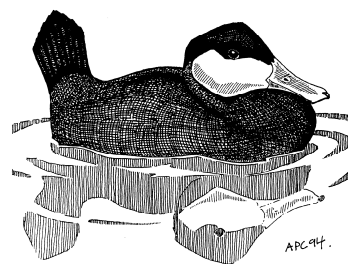


Figure 33.b, Monthly indices for Ruddy Duck for GB.

The Ruddy Duck has been the focus of a co-ordinated international programme to contain and eradicate this North American species in Europe, as part of the conservation of the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* in Spain and other parts of Europe. Despite managing to maintain a reasonably widespread distribution, the British index has inevitably dropped, particularly so since 2005/06.

A WeBS Core count of 31 Ruddy Ducks at Attenborough Gravel Pits in January proved to be the highest of the year across the UK. In contrast, 17 sites had held 30+ in 2008/09, compared with 27 sites during 2007/08, and 34 during 2006/07. In Northern Ireland, Loughs Neagh & Beg held a peak of just 11 birds, the lowest total there since routine monitoring began.



Ruddy Duck (Andrew Chick)

In January 2011, there were estimated to be approximately 90 Ruddy Ducks remaining in Britain (I. Henderson pers. comm., in Musgrove *et al.* (2011)), although presumably small numbers at some under-watched sites remain undetected.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 30 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Staines Reservoirs	521 <sup>30</sup>	277	72	69	10	Nov	190
Abberton Reservoir	455	261 <sup>30</sup>	49	96	24	Nov	177
Hanningfield Reservoir	330	276	45	36	9	Jul	139
Hilfield Park Reservoir	176	263	83	31	12	Oct	113
Dungeness and Rye Bay	257	193	73	31	6	Oct	112
Pitsford Reservoir	311 <sup>30</sup>	102	41	40	24	Oct	104
Chew Valley Lake	257 <sup>30</sup>	(130)	17	65	19	Dec	98
Carsington Water	182	101	132	17	25	Jan	91
Holme Pierrepont Gravel Pits	202	106	38	8			89
Blagdon Lake	172	85	103	36	4	Aug	80
Middle Tame Valley Gravel Pits	126 <sup>30</sup>	(16)	(38)	17	(0)		72
Anglers Country Park Lake	185	34	37	24			70
Tophill Low Reservoirs	131	85 <sup>30</sup>	63	38	15	Aug	66
Colne Valley Gravel Pits	215 <sup>30</sup>	99 <sup>30</sup>	4	4	4	Dec	65
Thames Estuary	85	79	73	40	22	Nov	60
Llyn Alaw	95	92	18	10			54
Walthamstow Reservoirs	86 <sup>30</sup>	74	38	7			51
Brent Reservoir	77	85	46	30	12	Nov	50
Thoresby Lake	42 <sup>30</sup>	52 <sup>30</sup>					47
Attenborough Gravel Pits	43	40	44	(56)	(31)	Jan	46
Mersey Estuary			85	6			46
Tees Estuary	63	111	13	36	8	Aug	46
Clumber Park Lake	41	66	82	22	8	Sep	44
King George V Reservoirs	83	45	15	42	30	Jan	43
Wigan Flashes		73 <sup>30</sup>	55	22	6	Jul	39
Colwick Country Park	51	37 <sup>30</sup>	27	38			38
Blithfield Reservoir	59 <sup>30</sup>	23 <sup>30</sup>	51	(38)	14	Oct	37
Knight and Bessborough Reservoirs	45	58	46	22	3	Sep	35
Hampton and Kempton Reservoirs	76	33	8	21	(1)	Oct	35
Sutton and Lound Gravel Pits	13	64	39	18			34
Cotswold Water Park (West)	59	34	23	11	(8)	Oct	32
Blackwater Estuary	39	56	15	17	(0)		32
Gailey Pools	49	31	(8)		15	Dec	32
Humber Estuary	(27)	59 <sup>30</sup>	(31)	(14)	3	Dec	31

<sup>†</sup> as no British or All-Ireland thresholds have been set a qualifying level of 30 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report



## Red-throated Diver

*Gavia stellata*

International threshold: 3,000  
Great Britain threshold: 170<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: 20\*

GB max: 623 Jan  
NI max: 132 Oct

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Although only a localised breeder in northern Scotland with strongholds on Shetland and Outer Hebrides (Dillon *et al.* 2009), Red-throated Divers are widespread at coastal sites throughout the UK during the winter. A wintering population of 17,000 in British waters has been estimated (O'Brien *et al.* 2008).

In 2009/10, the species was noted at 140 sites in Britain and a further six in Northern Ireland; a slight reduction compared to the last two years. No regularly counted WeBS sites currently qualify as being of international importance, although large numbers can be recorded during offshore surveys of favoured areas. However, no such data relating to 2009/10 were available for inclusion in this report, and for the third successive year no counts of Aberdeen Bay were undertaken by JNCC.

Significant concentrations can be seen from the coastline of southern Britain, depending on the prevailing weather and foraging conditions. The aggregation of

Red-throated Divers present in the Outer Thames Estuary is largely missed through WeBS, although depending on conditions, significant numbers sometimes occur within sight of land off Suffolk, Essex and Kent. The peak WeBS count in 2009/10 was 223 at Glyne Gap in January, which judging from WeBS data has proved to be an increasingly important stretch of the English Channel coast for this species in recent years.

Further north, numbers at traditional sites in Scotland appear to be largely as expected, whereas in Northern Ireland the maximum of 138 at Lough Foyle in October represents the second highest ever total for the site (c.f. Slavonian Grebe, page 92).

Relative to overall abundance, Red-throated Divers tend to be noted less at inland sites in southern Britain than their Great Northern, and even Black-throated, cousins. In that respect, two Red-throated Divers together at Rutland Water in November was notable.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Aberdeen Bay offshore	352 <sup>39</sup>	175 <sup>39</sup>					264
Glyne Gap	103	126	(109)	(343)	223	Jan	199 ▲
Inner Firth of Clyde	202	182	199	139	177 <sup>12</sup>	Apr	180 ▲
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Lough Foyle	98	13	53	81	128	Oct	75
Belfast Lough	30	22	67	20 <sup>10</sup>	(34)	Nov	35
Outer Ards Shoreline	8	64	22	12	27	Nov	27
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 100 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Pegwell Bay	5	12	11	517	83 <sup>12</sup>	Jan	126
Don Mouth to Ythan Mouth	163	(77)	70	(32)	131	Sep	121

<sup>†</sup> as few sites surpass the revised GB threshold (170), sites with mean peak counts of 70+ are also listed.

## Black-throated Diver

*Gavia arctica*

International threshold: 3,750  
Great Britain threshold: 6\*  
All-Ireland threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 199 Feb  
NI max: 2 Nov

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Black-throated Divers were recorded at 58 sites in the UK during WeBS Core counts. Sixteen sites surpassed the threshold for national importance, based on reaching the updated 1% threshold of six birds (Musgrove *et al.* 2011).

The premier WeBS site for wintering Black-throated Divers in the UK is Gerrans Bay in Cornwall. Following a series of years with peak numbers averaging 57 with relatively little inter-annual variation in maxima, the 2009/10 winter proved to be a record one for the species at the site. A

high count of 76 in December was surpassed by an unprecedented 124 in March; to put this into context, this is higher than the highest ever WeBS monthly maximum for the entire UK.

Further east on the English south coast, Glyne Gap again fared well for the region's scarcest diver, with a peak of five noted in January. The remaining small number of English records all related to observations of one or two birds at regular sites on the south and east coasts, with the exception of singles that strayed inland to Chasewater (Oct) and William Girling Reservoir (Jan).

There were just two records from both Wales and Northern Ireland, and typically

most sightings were in Scotland. Improved coverage of the coastline of northwest Scotland, such as that undertaken each February by the RAF Ornithological Society, would undoubtedly derive a truer picture of this species' winter status in northern parts of Britain. For example, it is likely that significant numbers winter off the remote west coast of Scotland; a targeted effort at determining the true status of this species (and Great Northern Diver) would generate invaluable data. The peak WeBS Core counts in Scotland this year were 25 at Girvan to Turnberry (Feb), 24 at Loch Ewe (Jan) and 17 at Loch Slapin (Feb).

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Gerrans Bay	70	60	53	55	124	Mar	72
Loch Ewe	(3)	40	(11)	(11)	(33)	Feb	40
Sound of Barra (Barra)	35 <sup>33</sup>						35
Sound of Gigha				19 <sup>12</sup>	15	Apr	17
Bay of Sandoyne to Holme Sound					15	Oct	15 ▲
Moray Firth	19	9	(4)	(1)	(2)	Jan	14
Loch Gairloch	6	14	(14)	(10)	12	Jan	12
Loch Slapin	0	28 <sup>26</sup>	13 <sup>26</sup>	1	18 <sup>11</sup>	Feb	12
Girvan to Turnberry	5	1	7	16	25	Feb	11
Little Loch Broom	(10)	13	(16)	5	0		9
Applecross Bay	14	2	13	9	7	Feb	9
Red Point to Port Henderson	13 <sup>12</sup>	8	(1)	6	(0)		9
Glyne Gap	8	(9)	(9)	(10)	5	Jan	8
Gruinard Bay	9	6	8	4	13	Feb	8
Arran	4	1	(3)	(4)	13	Sep	6 ▲
Kilfinan Bay			11	5	3	Feb	6
Sand Bay	6	4	6	6			6 ▲
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 2 or more birds in Northern Ireland<sup>†</sup></b>							
Strangford Lough	0	3 <sup>12</sup>	0	4 <sup>12</sup>	5 <sup>10</sup>	Jan	2
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain</b>							
Loch Eriboll	0	2	5	2	12	Feb	4
Callakille	6	0	6	0	9	Feb	4

<sup>†</sup> as no All-Ireland threshold has been set a threshold of 2 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report



A Scottish shoreline (Graeme Garner)

Increased WeBS coverage of remoter parts of the Scottish coast would help to improve monitoring of divers, sea grebes and seaducks, as well as waders like Purple Sandpiper.

## Great Northern Diver

*Gavia immer*

International threshold: 50  
Great Britain threshold: 25\*  
All-Ireland threshold: ?†

GB max: 385 Feb  
NI max: 56 Oct

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Great Northern Divers were recorded at 159 WeBS sites in 2009/10. Following WeBS year 2009/10, just five areas of the Scottish west coast monitored through WeBS now surpass the threshold of international importance for Great Northern Divers, however this is largely based on data greater than four years old.

Hence further count data from sites along this stronghold of the Scottish coast are needed in to be able to continue to illustrate the true status of this species within UK waters. Dedicated surveys of this coastline with the aim of providing data on the abundance and distribution of divers and other marine waterbirds are therefore especially welcomed. In that respect, the dedicated survey efforts of the RAF Ornithological Society during expeditions to the coastline of northwest Scotland each February are particularly laudable. The

submission of counts made during other birdwatching trips to stretches of the Scottish coast would undoubtedly derive a truer picture of this species' winter status in Britain.

The peak counts received in 2009/10 were 55 at Loch Na Keal (Feb), 47 at Loch Ewe (Feb), 40 at Afon Llifon to Pontllyfni (Apr) and 39 at Loch Slapin (Feb). Elsewhere, the maximum in England was 24 at Gerrans Bay in March, thereby surpassing the previous site peak registered just the previous winter.

As in the previous year, 2009/10 was another good winter for inland records of Great Northern Diver, and included notable aggregations of six birds at King George VI Reservoir (Dec) and five at Grafham Water (Nov).

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
Scarp to Vatersay offshore	188 <sup>21</sup>						188
Sound of Gigha	203 <sup>21</sup>			217 <sup>6</sup>	19 <sup>6</sup>	Jan	146
Outer Loch Indaal	108 <sup>21</sup>						108
Scapa Flow, Shapinsay and Deer Sounds	85 <sup>21</sup>						85
Rova Head to Kirkabister	54 <sup>9</sup>	64 <sup>9</sup>	69 <sup>9</sup>	79 <sup>9</sup>	114 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	76
Coll and Tiree and west Mull offshore	51 <sup>21</sup>						51
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Loch Ewe	33	53	58	28	47	Feb	44
Gruinard Bay	40	37	68	29	35	Feb	42
Loch Na Keal		(0)	27	29	55	Feb	37
Burra, Trondra & Scalloway Islands	34 <sup>9</sup>		38 <sup>9</sup>		26 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	33 ▲
Fort Belan to Aberdesach	25 <sup>6</sup>		34 <sup>6</sup>		40 <sup>6</sup>	Jan	33 ▲
Traigh Luskentyre		58	6				32
Loch Eriboll	3	36	66	16	36	Feb	31 ▲
Luce Bay offshore	29						29
Quendale to Virkie	27 <sup>9</sup>		27 <sup>9</sup>				27
Loch Slapin	0	39	24	27	39	Feb	26
Broadford Bay	(20)	15	19	16	48	Feb	25 ▲
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 5 or more birds in Northern Ireland†</b>							
Lough Foyle	60	17	29	7	55	Oct	34
Carlingford Lough	17	(4)	1	15	(2)	Dec	11
Belfast Lough	19	7	1	(3)	(5)	Nov	9
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain</b>							
Lochs Beg and Scridain (East End)		8	17	25	37	Mar	22
Red Point to Port Henderson	22 <sup>6</sup>	4	(13)	6	(35)	Jan	16
Loch Buie		11	7	13	25	Mar	14
<b>Other sites surpassing table qualifying levels in Winter 2009/2010 in Northern Ireland†</b>							
Strangford Lough	2	4	0	3	7	Nov	3

† as no All-Ireland threshold has been set a threshold of 5 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

# **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

International threshold: 4,000  
Great Britain threshold: 160<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: 25

GB max: 5,996 Oct  
NI max: 580 Oct

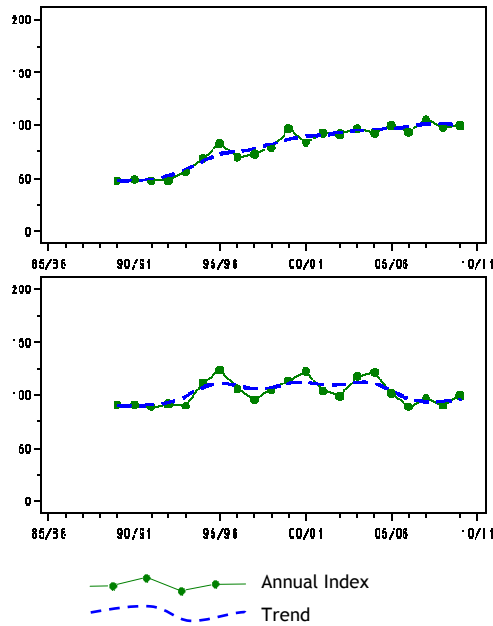


Figure 34.a, Annual indices & trend for Little Grebe for GB (above) & NI (below).

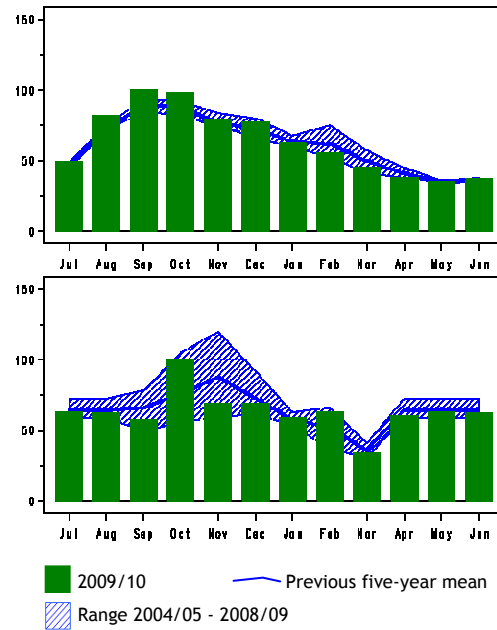


Figure 34.b, Monthly indices for Little Grebe for GB (above) & NI (below).

Little Grebes are widely dispersed on small water bodies, canals and riverine habitats throughout much of the UK. Thus, WeBS monitors a relatively small proportion of the total population and care should be taken if attempting to interpret national trends based on WeBS data alone. WeBS monitoring WeBS would benefit from long-term, improved coverage of smaller, dispersed wetlands within the wider countryside. Indeed, a long-term objective of WeBS is to integrate such an element of stratification into the monitoring protocol.

As evidenced by the annual indices, the slow but steady increase in Little Grebes in Britain began in the early 1990s soon after the species was first routinely monitored. This has continued in recent years, a period during which numbers have risen

concurrently in The Netherlands (Hornman *et al.* 2011).

Based on the latest waterbird population estimates (Mugrove *et al.* 2011), Thames Estuary is the only site to surpass the threshold of national importance for Little Grebe in Britain. The monthly peak there (369, September) was slightly lower than the longer-term average, but numbers at twelve further sites with a five-year mean of 80+ birds were generally slightly higher than recent years. This was particularly the case at Rutland Water, Chew Valley Lake and Crouch-Roach Estuary, where all-time maxima were registered. In Northern Ireland, the highest number since 2004/05 was noted at Loughs Neagh & Beg, where the all-time WeBS peak count of 626 birds was recorded in September 1995.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Thames Estuary	377	499	315	474	369	Sep	407
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	330	278	396	318	410	Oct	346
Strangford Lough	75	80	79	76 <sup>10</sup>	94	Nov	81

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
Upper Lough Erne	78	106	53	78	46	Feb	72
Lower Lough Erne	54	78	50	(23)	(50)	Feb	61
Lough Money	48	40	51				46
Lough Foyle	32	28	28	26	35	Nov	30
Larne Lough	52	20	27	16	23	Dec	28
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 80 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Dungeness and Rye Bay	125	97	90	124	152	Oct	118
Rutland Water	96	67	93	116	164	Oct	107
Hamford Water	114	87	84	119	120	Dec	105
Portsmouth Harbour	(65)	(69)	(69)	104	(68)	Dec	104
Chew Valley Lake	95	80	80	70	180	Sep	101
Humber Estuary	64	94	(150)	(91)	99	Aug	100
Cameron Reservoir	60	133	122	56	68	Sep	88
Pitsford Reservoir	86	96	72	78	104	Oct	87
Severn Estuary	87	86	91	87	80	Aug	86
Crouch-Roach Estuary	33	44	81	115	146	Sep	84
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	77	126	82	80	53	Dec	84
Carsington Water	89	73	96	80	83	Oct	84
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Old Moor	55	45	(60)	91	122	Aug	78
Colne Fen Gravel Pits	19	24	42	64	91 <sup>12</sup>	Sep	48
<b>Other sites surpassing table qualifying levels in Winter 2009/2010 in Northern Ireland</b>							
Hillsborough Main Lake	21	28	17	24	25	Oct	23
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2009/2010 in Northern Ireland</b>							
Upper Quoile River	33	20	15				23

<sup>†</sup> as few sites surpass the threshold for national importance in Great Britain, a threshold of 80 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

## Great Crested Grebe

*Podiceps cristatus*

International threshold: 3,600  
Great Britain threshold: 190  
All-Ireland threshold: 55

GB max: 8,848 Sep  
NI max: 2,489 Oct

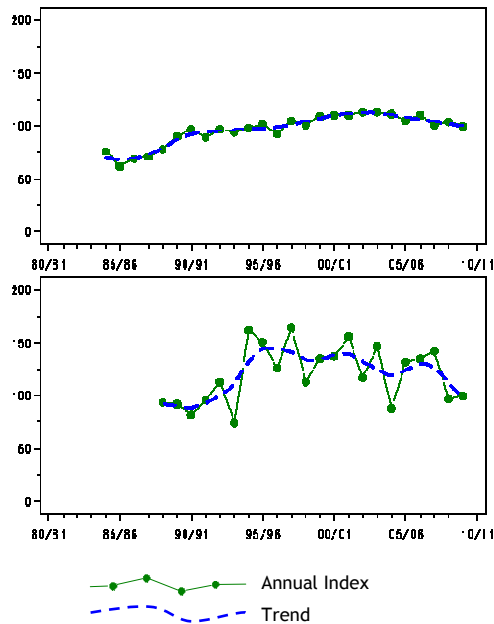


Figure 35.a, Annual indices & trend for Great Crested Grebe for GB (above) & NI (below).

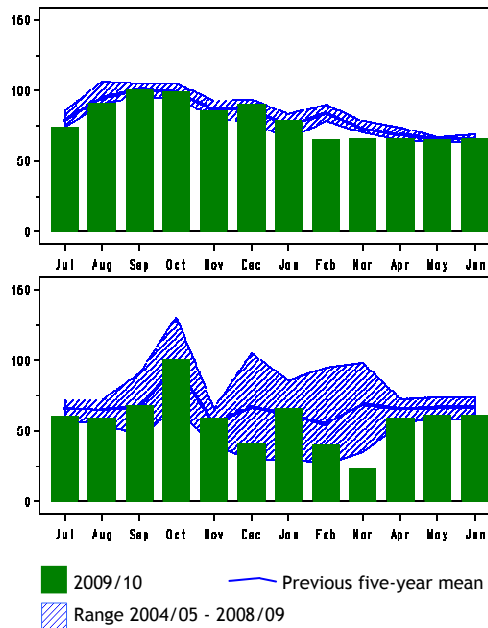
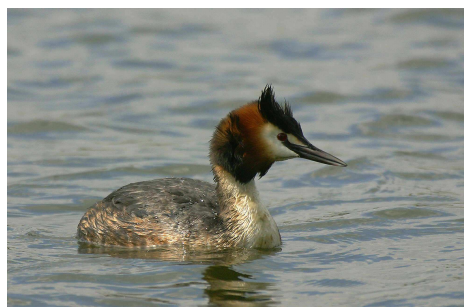


Figure 35.b, Monthly indices for Great Crested Grebe for GB (above) & NI (below).

During the winter months, Great Crested Grebes are found at both inland and coastal wetlands. At the latter however, birds are often difficult to monitor accurately particularly when frequenting open sea and/or in unsuitable weather conditions. In Britain, the most recent indices and associated trend hint at a slight decline, perhaps mirroring the current situation in The Netherlands (Hornman *et al.* 2011). Further years of data are required in order to ascertain whether this is genuinely the case.



Great Crested Grebe (Jill Pakenham)

In 2009/10, Dungeness & Rye Bay again hosted the largest aggregation of Great Crested Grebes during the year. A total of 1,735 in January represents the highest number ever recorded there, surpassing both last year's high total and the previous maximum of 1,667 from 2002/03. This is further evidence of the potentially increasing importance of the rich foraging available in the shallow waters at the east end of the English Channel.

In Northern Ireland, numbers at Loughs Neagh & Beg were fairly typical, but those at Belfast Lough were again low for the second year in succession. Among the principal inland wetlands in England, a highest ever WeBS total was reached at Cotswold Water Park (West), evidence of the increase in available habitat there. Peaks at both Rutland Water and Grafham Water were high compared to recent years, but fall considerably short of the respective all-time site maxima; 1,038 (in February 1991) and 950 (in February 1985), respectively.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Dungeness and Rye Bay	848	880 <sup>12</sup>	653	1,492	1,735	Jan	1,122
Rutland Water	771	655	441	584	970	Jan	684
Chew Valley Lake	275	430	665	690	665	Aug	545
Grafham Water	463	471	132	471	525	Dec	412
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	33	378 <sup>12</sup>	458 <sup>12</sup>	435 <sup>12</sup>	455 <sup>12</sup>	Jan	352
Cotswold Water Park (West)	354	284	309	317	365	Sep	326
Glyne Gap	(116)	213	(206)	515	224	Jan	317
Stour Estuary	157	124	232	708 <sup>10</sup>	327 <sup>10</sup>	Nov	310
Southampton Water	(58)	(47)	(216)	375	206	Dec	291
Pitsford Reservoir	308	267	312	186	267	Dec	268
Minsmere (offshore)	18	57	1,210 <sup>12</sup>	5	4	Jul	259
Swansea Bay	205	84	102	327	425	Dec	229 ▲
Pegwell Bay	38	48	110	300	585 <sup>12</sup>	Jan	216 ▲
Bewl Water	204	188	183	224	195	Aug	199
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Belfast Lough	2,095	1,482	2,150	1,156	1,175	Oct	1,612
Loughs Neagh and Beg	449	959	1,191	752	959	Oct	862
Upper Lough Erne	147	206	171	197	174	Feb	179
Carlingford Lough	246	116	93	146	186	Jan	157
Lough Foyle	169	116	116	49	160	Oct	122
Strangford Lough	82	65	137	145	87	Dec	103
Larne Lough	56	84	105	81	61	Sep	77
Lower Lough Erne	48	123	55	(23)	(34)	Oct	75
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2009/2010</b>							
Lavan Sands	57	329	260	124	106	Sep	175
Solway Firth							
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain</b>							
Queen Mary Reservoir	126	130	208	98	362	Jan	185
Loch Leven	150	198	141	157 <sup>12</sup>	266	Oct	182
Alton Water	86	113	105	169	218	Nov	138

## Red-necked Grebe

*Podiceps grisegena*

International threshold: 510  
Great Britain threshold: 1\*<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: ?

GB max: 16 Jan  
NI max: 0

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Red-necked Grebes were recorded at 26 WeBS sites in Britain during 2009/10, with a peak monthly total of just 16 logged in January. Musgrove *et al.* (2011) estimate the wintering population to be approximately 55 birds.

The fall in numbers registered by WeBS during winter in recent years is largely attributable to a long-term decline on the Forth Estuary, Britain's principal site for the species. The WeBS peak there this year was just seven birds, in January; as recently as 1994/95 numbers noted there through WeBS in winter were as high as 89 birds. Supplementary data for 2009 indicate that a sizeable aggregation still occurs during late summer, so whether the apparent drop in

winter numbers is due to a population decline or a distributional shift, either within or from the site, is unclear.

This is a species for which improved coverage of the coastline away from the priority wetlands would be beneficial, especially around the coastline of Scotland.

Elsewhere, with the exception of four birds at Gerrans Bay in March, all records of Red-necked Grebes on the coast in 2009/10 related to ones or twos at a scattering of sites mainly on the south and east coasts. Additionally, singles were recorded at nine inland sites during the course of the year, including spring sightings at Rutland Water and Catcleugh Reservoir.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 2 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Forth Estuary	32	4	12	10	51 <sup>47</sup>	Aug	22
Studland Bay	3 <sup>47</sup>						3
Glyne Gap	(1)	(2)	(3)	4 <sup>11</sup>	2	Jan	3
North Norfolk Coast	6	4	2	1	1	May	3
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Seahouses to Budle Point	(0)	(1)	0	0	2	Jan	1
Fal Complex	0	0	0	0	2	Dec	0

<sup>†</sup> a qualifying level of 2 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

## Slavonian Grebe

*Podiceps auritus*

International threshold: 55  
Great Britain threshold: 11\*  
All-Ireland threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 339 Feb  
NI max: 60 Oct

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Slavonian Grebes were recorded at 97 sites in the UK, including three in Northern Ireland. With the wintering population now estimated to be in the order of 1,100 birds (Musgrove *et al.* 2011), all sites with five-year means of 11+ birds are listed as surpassing the associated 1% threshold for national importance. Following a series of relatively poor years for the Forth Estuary and Moray Firth, the only coastal stretch which currently surpasses the threshold for international importance is Whiteness to Skelda Ness (Shetland).

This is another species for which improved coverage of the coastline away from the priority wetlands would be highly

beneficial, especially around the coastline of Scotland. Away from there, the peak WeBS Core count was 20 at Gerrans Bay in March, part of a strong showing by coastal grebes and divers in south-west England during winter 2009/10 (*c.f.* Black-throated Diver, page 86). In Northern Ireland, the maximum of 60 Slavonian Grebes at Lough Foyle is well above the recent average for the site, but short of the historic peak of 103 birds in December 1995.

Inland, there was the typical scattering of records from gravel pits and reservoirs during the course of the year, the most notable of which was five birds at Abberton Reservoir in October.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
Whiteness to Skelda Ness	52 <sup>9</sup>	67 <sup>9</sup>	68 <sup>9</sup>		77 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	66
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Inner Firth of Clyde	35	41	73 <sup>12</sup>	49 <sup>12</sup>	47 <sup>12</sup>	Feb	49
Sound of Gigha	30 <sup>11</sup>			89 <sup>12</sup>	27	Dec	49
Moray Firth	42	50	41	(23)	(6)		44
Rova Head to Kirkabister	42 <sup>9</sup>	32 <sup>9</sup>	42 <sup>9</sup>	43 <sup>9</sup>	49 <sup>9</sup>		42
Scapa Flow					37	Feb	37 ▲
Loch Ryan	23	39	19	40	46 <sup>12</sup>	Nov	33
Loch of Harray	24	16	52	23	45	Oct	32
Loch Na Keal		(0)	40 <sup>12</sup>	20	30	Feb	30
Forth Estuary	55	25 <sup>12</sup>	18	29	25	Feb	30
Sullom Voe	7 <sup>9</sup>	9 <sup>9</sup>	19 <sup>9</sup>	26 <sup>9</sup>	31 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	18
Inner Loch Indaal					16	Oct	16 ▲
Burghhead Bay			5	(0)	26	Feb	16 ▲
Gerrans Bay	26	5	4	13	20	Mar	14
Broadford Bay	(7)	13	17	7	17 <sup>11</sup>	Feb	14
Lindisfarne	22 <sup>10</sup>	(18)	4	9	7	Mar	12
Loch of Swannay	10	15	14	11	9	Dec	12
Loch Ewe	13	18	7	(5)	6	Feb	11 ▲
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2009/2010</b>							
Traigh Luskentyre		11	4				8
Gualan and Balgarva							
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 4 or more birds in Northern Ireland<sup>†</sup></b>							
Lough Foyle	42	4	11	31	60	Oct	30
Strangford Lough	5	0	(0)	22 <sup>12</sup>	22 <sup>10</sup>	Feb	12
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain</b>							
Loch Eriboll	0	4	21	5	20	Feb	10

<sup>†</sup> as no All-Ireland thresholds has been set, a qualifying level of 4 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

## Black-necked Grebe

*Podiceps nigricollis*

International threshold: 2,200  
Great Britain threshold: 1\*<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 57 Jan  
NI max: 0

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

During 2009/10, Black-necked Grebes were seen at 51 WeBS sites in the UK, including two in Wales and one in Scotland. Two of the locations featured in the key sites table below have been kept confidential following the advice of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and/or local counters.

Studland Bay rose to the top of the sites table below owing to a series of supplementary counts that indicate peak numbers may have increased in recent years (*per* [www.birdguides.com](http://www.birdguides.com)). Counts of birds offshore at this site are likely to be somewhat dependent on weather and associated sea conditions.

William Girling Reservoir continues to be one of the most important sites in the UK, by virtue of a winter maximum in 2009/10 of 28 birds in February, consistent with the average peak at the site in recent years. Double-figure counts were reported from

six further sites. This year, Black-necked Grebes were noted during WeBS Core counts at two traditional south coast locations; Fal Complex and Langstone Harbour - but supplementary data indicate that higher numbers were present at both these sites (as well as at Studland Bay) during the course of the winter. Interestingly, compared to The Netherlands where marked increases in Black-necked Grebes have been noted since the 1990s (Hornman *et al.* 2011), there has been relatively little inter-annual variation in maxima at the principal coastal locations in Britain.

Away from the main locations listed below, notable winter counts included eight at Fleet & Wey (Jan), eight at Abberton Reservoir (Mar) and five at Rutland Water (Nov-Dec). The sole record in Scotland during 2009/10 emanated from Loch Ryan (Oct).



	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 5 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Studland Bay	21 <sup>47</sup>	20 <sup>47</sup>	23 <sup>47</sup>	37 <sup>47</sup>	38 <sup>47</sup>	Jan	28
William Girling Reservoir	21	26	32	26	28	Feb	27
Fal Complex	56	4	5	32	17 <sup>47</sup>	Feb	23
Woolston Eyes	13	(35)	17	26	22	May	23
Langstone Harbour	20	24 <sup>12</sup>	5	16	42 <sup>10</sup>	Jan	21
Confidential Hertfordshire Site	10	9	12	18	14	Mar	13
Thames Estuary	9	4	4	4	38	Oct	12
Staines Reservoirs	11	9	9	7	11	Mar	9
Confidential Northumberland Site	16	10	8	6	0		8
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Fleet and Wey	7	3	0	1	8	Jan	4
Abberton Reservoir	2	3	4	2	8	Mar	4
Rutland Water	0	1	2	3	5	Nov	2
Lower Derwent Ings	0	2	0	0	5	Apr	1

<sup>†</sup> a qualifying level of 5 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

## Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax carbo*

International threshold: 1,200  
Great Britain threshold: 350  
All-Ireland threshold: 140

GB max: 17,234 Oct  
NI max: 2,256 Sep

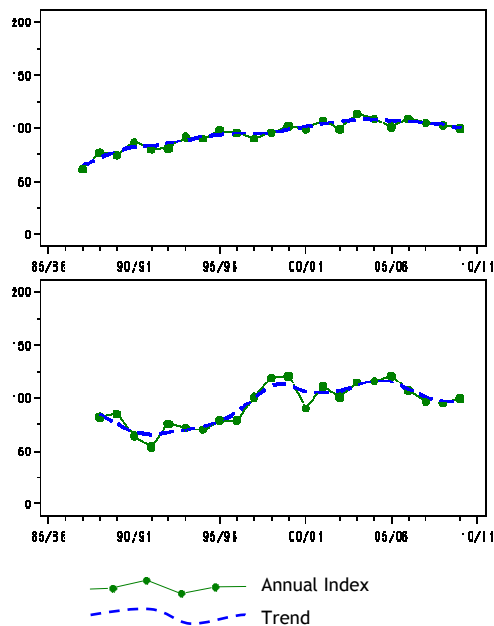


Figure 36.a, Annual indices & trend for Cormorant for GB (above) & NI (below).

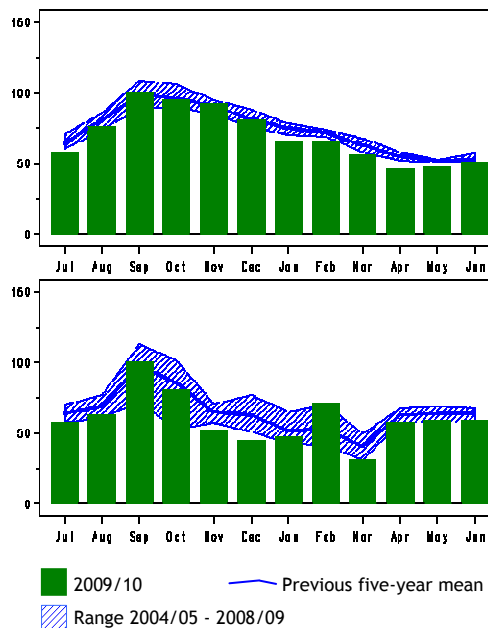


Figure 36.b, Monthly indices for Cormorant for GB (above) & NI (below).

Cormorants increased steadily in Britain and Northern Ireland up to the mid 2000s. This was in part due to the expansion of the more typically freshwater race *sinensis* from the continent, both as a breeder and non-breeder, supplementing the UK population of the native *carbo* race. The most recent years however have indicated an apparent levelling off in the Cormorant index for Britain, potentially in response to

increased culling effort nationally. The breeding population fell by 7% between 2000 and 2010 (JNCC 2011).

In Northern Ireland, the index has remained relatively stable for three years. This was at least partly attributable to a rise in the maximum at Loughs Neagh & Beg, following the relatively low peak recorded there in 2008/09; this remains the

only site of international importance for Cormorants in the UK.

Following the revision of waterbird population estimates (Musgrove *et al.* 2011) the threshold for national importance in Britain has been increased by over 50%, to 350 birds. As a result, the table below is now trimmed to 19 sites, significantly fewer than have appeared in recent years. The peak from Dee Estuary fractionally surpassed that from Loughs Neagh & Beg for

the second year in a row, but a number of other principal sites for Cormorants registered below-average maxima. These included, for example, The Wash (lowest peak since 2001/02), Alt Estuary (2002/03) and Dungeness & Rye Bay (2003/04). At Abberton Reservoir, the autumn peak was approximately half that of the previous year, yet in keeping with the longer-term average for the site.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	1,490	1,665	1,396	990	1,297	Sep	1,368
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Dee Estuary (England & Wales)	623	1,003	1,133	1,160	1,323	Oct	1,048
Alt Estuary	1,079	1,168	937	1,142	762 <sup>12</sup>	Oct	1,018
Morecambe Bay	655	641	937	669	814	Sep	743
Dungeness and Rye Bay	929	717	684	616	581	Jul	705
Forth Estuary	713	653	477	(507)	(483)	Sep	614
Abberton Reservoir	324	342	639	1,157	565	Sep	605
Rutland Water	825	918	396	326	470	Oct	587
Inner Firth of Clyde	(740) <sup>11</sup>	875 <sup>11</sup>	389	555	327	Sep	577
Solway Estuary	(357)	530	497	(406)	(486)	Nov	514
Ribble Estuary	293	316	504	600	515 <sup>10</sup>	Nov	446
Walthamstow Reservoirs	306	640	433	395			444
Ranworth and Cockshoot Broads	310 <sup>11</sup>	348 <sup>11</sup>	287 <sup>11</sup>	582 <sup>11</sup>	629 <sup>11</sup>	Mar	431
The Wash	371	467	453	495	370	Oct	431
Thames Estuary	526	434	(211)	398	344	Sep	426
Poole Harbour	408	374	(254)	(349)	457	Sep	413
Humber Estuary	(93)	(108)	(156)	(219)	(408)	Feb	(408) ▲
Hanningfield Reservoir	318	500	215	600	245	Sep	376 ▲
Tees Estuary	511	329	378	306	284	Aug	362
Blackwater Estuary	224	200	279	(674)	380	Oct	351 ▲
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Strangford Lough	455	422	286	(443)	359	Sep	393
Belfast Lough	378	350	312	267	286	Oct	319
Outer Ards Shoreline	455	397	177	153	105	Nov	257
Carlingford Lough	238	230	142	98	(70)	Oct	177
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain</b>							
Stodmarsh	102	200	62	229	440	Feb	207
Alde Complex	99	206	226	421	415	Mar	273
Queen Mary Reservoir	85	88	295	211	406	Jan	217
South Yell Sound	40 <sup>9</sup>	54 <sup>9</sup>	464 <sup>9</sup>	335 <sup>9</sup>	361 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	251
<b>Other sites surpassing table qualifying levels in Winter 2009/2010 in Northern Ireland</b>							
Dundrum Inner Bay	102	33	101	117	197	Sep	110
Upper Lough Erne	107	106	114	150	158	Feb	127

## Shag

*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

GB max: 2,137 Feb  
NI max: 712 Nov

International threshold: 2,000  
Great Britain threshold: 1,100<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>

The UK's breeding population of Shags, which account for approximately one third of the species' global population, is well-monitored by the JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme, the results of which indicate a decline of 15% between 2000 and 2010

(JNCC 2011). However, wintering numbers are relatively poorly covered by surveys such as WeBS. Coverage would benefit from more counts of the Scottish coastline in particular; currently the counts table below

is largely populated with data collected by SOTEAG in Shetland.

In 2009/10, Shags were recorded during WeBS Core counts at 224 sites across the UK. The largest aggregations noted during the year, typically in Scotland, were 424 at Forth Estuary and 218 at Inner Firth of

Clyde, both in September. In Northern Ireland, the peak was 334 at Outer Ards Shoreline, while in England numbers recorded at coastal sites were close to average. Typically, there were a small number of scattered inland records.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 100 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
South Yell Sound	790 <sup>9</sup>		1,065 <sup>9</sup>	886 <sup>9</sup>	1,047 <sup>9</sup>		947
Burra, Trondra & Scalloway Islands	892 <sup>9</sup>		553 <sup>9</sup>		904 <sup>9</sup>		796
Bluemull and Colgrave Sounds	625 <sup>9</sup>	891 <sup>9</sup>	846 <sup>9</sup>		365 <sup>9</sup>		682
Forth Estuary	420	719	(384)	(456)	(424)	Sep	570
Rova Head to Kirkabister	497 <sup>9</sup>	852 <sup>9</sup>	436 <sup>9</sup>	543 <sup>9</sup>	507 <sup>9</sup>		567
Moray Firth	308 <sup>1</sup>						308
Quendale to Virkie	503 <sup>9</sup>		102 <sup>9</sup>				303
Widewall Bay	150	390	800	70	50	Dec	292
South Unst	246 <sup>9</sup>						246
Inner Firth of Clyde	115	197	297	223	218	Sep	210
Island of Egilsay	47	230		286	161	Nov	181
Arran	304	123	(104)	120	115	Nov	166
Moray Coast (Consolidated)	33	193	347	(132)	42	Feb	154
Island of Papa Westray	150		92	146	(190)	Nov	145
Sullom Voe	68 <sup>9</sup>		219 <sup>9</sup>	145 <sup>9</sup>			144
Gerrans Bay	101	86	328	128	28	Feb	134
Loch Ewe	115	261	(98)	76	82	Feb	134
Red Point to Port Henderson	246	105	(68)	52	(74)	Jan	134
North Bressay	128 <sup>9</sup>						128
Thurso Bay	20	170	70	262 <sup>12</sup>	106	Feb	126
South Havra	125 <sup>9</sup>						125
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 100 or more birds in Northern Ireland<sup>†</sup></b>							
Outer Ards Shoreline	236	284	317	437	334	Nov	322
Strangford Lough	(295)	(291)	(156)	247	(277)	Nov	278
Belfast Lough	49	191 <sup>10</sup>	107	90 <sup>10</sup>	139 <sup>10</sup>	Nov	115
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Loch Fleet Complex	78	(73)	98	40	181	Oct	99
Durham Coast	26	(76)	(1)	28	(160)	Nov	73

<sup>†</sup> as few sites surpass the GB threshold and no All-Ireland threshold has been set, a threshold of 120 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

## Bittern

*Botaurus stellaris*

International threshold: 65  
Great Britain threshold: 6

Bitterns were recorded at 81 WeBS sites in 2009/10, with a monthly maximum of 82 birds in January. These highest ever totals are likely to be largely the result of the arrival of a number of continental immigrants during the cold conditions in mid winter, set against the background of an increasing UK breeding population. Singletons were widespread during the winter, and several sites also hosted multiple birds. Site maxima were five at

Kenfig Pool in February and Somerset Levels in March, while counts of four were received from a further seven sites including, perhaps most notably, Loe Pool in Cornwall.

The British wintering population of Bitterns is now estimated to be in the order of 600 individuals, of which more than 200 comprise the UK breeding population (Wotton *et al.* in press).