Night Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

Vagrant and escape
Native Range: Worldwide

A Night Heron, of unknown origin, was reported from Moors Valley Country Park in December.

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Vagrant and Escape
Native Range: Worldwide

Cattle Egret now appears to be fully established in the pages of the WeBS annual report. In 2009/10, the species was reported from eight WeBS sites. A group of three at Severn Estuary in September was followed by a scatter of records across southern England; Dungeness & Rye Bay, North West Solent (2), Tamar Complex, Kingsbridge Estuary (2), Somerset Levels (2) and Fal Complex (3). Notably, Northern Ireland registered its first WeBS record; a single at Loughs Neagh & Beg in November.

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

International threshold: 1,300
Great Britain threshold: 45
All-Ireland threshold: ?†

GB max: 4,719 Sep
NI max: 78 Oct

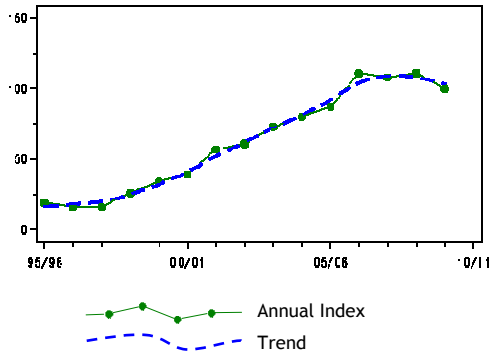


Figure 37.a, Annual indices & trend for Little Egret for GB.

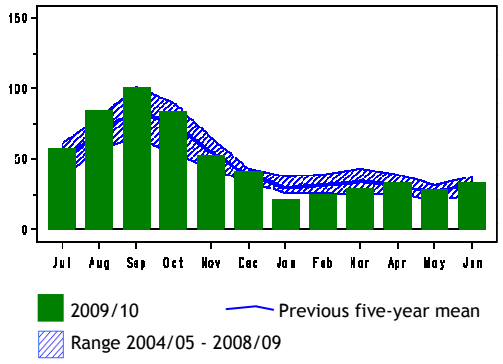


Figure 37.b, Monthly indices for Little Egret for GB.

A description of the well-documented rise in the Little Egret population requires little in the way of repetition here, it having become one of the most notable events within the UK's wetland avifauna during the last twenty years. Having expanded in terms of numbers and range, the species is now a familiar sight at wetlands, both coastal and inland, throughout the southern half of Britain. Little Egrets were recorded at 377 WeBS sites in 2009/10 with a record monthly maximum of 4,719 birds in September. The monthly peak of this species has now exceeded that for Grey Heron in three of the last four years! However, the annual indices show that the increase at WeBS sites has definitely slowed.

The latest population revision of Musgrove *et al.* (2011) lists a somewhat conservative 4,500 birds wintering in Britain. However, being based on WeBS data alone, this should clearly be treated as a minimum estimate as there is no account for birds present in the wider countryside. As yet there are no quantifiable data available for the latter contingent, but consideration of data from *Bird Atlas 2007-11* may help refine the estimate further. The largest inland WeBS site total in 2009/10 was from Somerset Levels (90, February), and such a total is probably an indication of significant numbers of birds

dispersed throughout the wider countryside in that part of southern England.

Among regularly counted sites, the September maximum at The Wash of 618 birds bolsters the site's position at the head of the sites table. Only time will tell if peak numbers there continue to rise, or whether the carrying capacity of the site has now been reached. A gradual expansion away from sites on the south coast continues; exemplified by all-time peaks at sites such as Dee Estuary and Morecambe Bay which now effectively represent the northern edge of the species' global distribution. Further north still, Little Egrets were seen at eight WeBS sites in Scotland during the year. In Northern Ireland, the maximum count was 51 at Strangford Lough in October.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean	
Sites of national importance in Great Britain								
The Wash	139	323	(319)	633	618	Sep	428	
Thames Estuary	260	316	277	421	383	Aug	331	
North Norfolk Coast	170 [12]	193	272 [12]	258	281 [12]	Sep	235	
Chichester Harbour	(206)	192	264	267	198	Sep	230	
Dee Estuary (England & Wales)	112 [12]	132 [12]	163	258 [12]	315 [12]	Sep	213	
Blackwater Estuary	133	(58)	245	221	(213)	Aug	181	
Poole Harbour	(112)	(84)	(79)	(136)	(146)	Sep	(146)	
Swale Estuary	(100)	(72)	(100)	(109)	139	Oct	139	
Jersey Shore		98	156				127	
Stour Estuary	102	143	102	102	184	Sep	127	
Lavan Sands	107	133	131	107	136	Sep	123	
Exe Estuary	107	116	135	103	137	Aug	120	
Tamar Complex	(129)	97	(126)	125	70	Oct	109	
Taw-Torridge Estuary	93	78	(121)	92	108	Aug	107	
Burry Inlet	108	86	87	156	99	Sep	107	
Langstone Harbour	91	77	76	112	135	Oct	98	
Crouch-Roach Estuary	(35)	102	100	83	104	Aug	97	
Hamford Water	72	135	95	70	(115)	Sep	97	
Severn Estuary	104	74	105	103	84	Aug	97	
Cleddau Estuary	83	(68)	120	(104)	69	Oct	94	
Breydon Water & Berney Marshes	61	71 [12]	126 [13]	114 [12]	81 [12]	Sep	91	
Camel Estuary	96	80	74	88	83	Sep	84	
Pagham Harbour	94	90	63	67	95	Aug	82	
Southampton Water	(44)	(80)	(24)	(40)	(67)	Aug	(80)	
Fal Complex	60	82	79	84	71	Oct	75	
Medway Estuary	(62)	(32)	(71)	(75)	(37)	Sep	(75)	
Carmarthen Bay	41	57	106	64	106	Oct	75	
Somerset Levels	(35)	64	73	90	90	Feb	70	
Portsmouth Harbour	45	96	111	49 [11]	51	Nov	70	
Kingsbridge Estuary	85	89	67	91	13	Jul	69	
Colne Estuary	(47)	(34)	64 [11]	(53)	(51)	Nov	64	
Fleet and Wey	56	59	67	66	58	Mar	61	
Pegwell Bay	56	71	33	79	62	Sep	60	
North West Solent	56	53	56	61	52	Sep	57	
Grouville Marsh	50	165		4	1	Dec	55	
Dengie Flats	45	51	58	63	59	Nov	55	
Alde Complex	44	56	66	50	51	Oct	53	
Newtown Estuary	(30)	52	41	41	71 [12]	Oct	52	
Humber Estuary	14	(36)	41	95	51	Aug	50	▲
Teign Estuary	59	49	69	45	24	Oct	49	
Dart Estuary	(39)	52	(37)	51	40	Aug	48	
Abberton Reservoir	(1)	(12)	12	31	97	Aug	47	▲
Avon Valley: Salisbury-Fordingbridge	48	57	46	41	40	Feb	46	
Morecambe Bay	10	28	(24)	56	69	Oct	45	▲
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/110 in Great Britain								
Ribble Estuary	5	(21)	31	50	86	Sep	43	
Leighton Moss	0	1	14	26	52	Dec	19	

Great White Egret

Ardea alba

Vagrant

Native Range: S Europe, Africa, Asia, N & C America

Great White Egrets were reported from 19 WeBS sites; the most ever in a year, providing further evidence of the species' slow expansion (and presumed imminent colonisation) in the UK. During 2009/10, typically most records involved single birds, exceptions being up to three at Somerset Levels and two at Ouse & Fen Pits, Morecambe Bay, River Avon (Fordingbridge to Ringwood) and Alde Complex. The only WeBS records outside England were birds on the Welsh side of Severn Estuary and at Ugie Estuary, the latter representing the fourth ever in Scotland.

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

International threshold: 2,700
Great Britain threshold: 610
All-Ireland threshold: 30

GB max: 4,390 Oct
NI max: 453 Oct

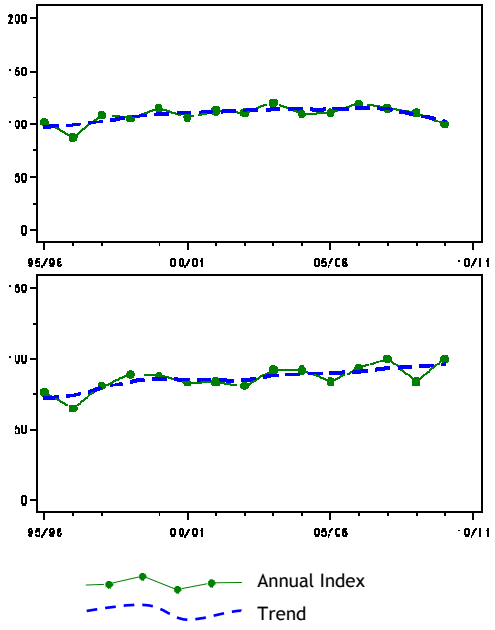


Figure 38.a, Annual indices & trend for Grey Heron for GB (above) & NI (below).

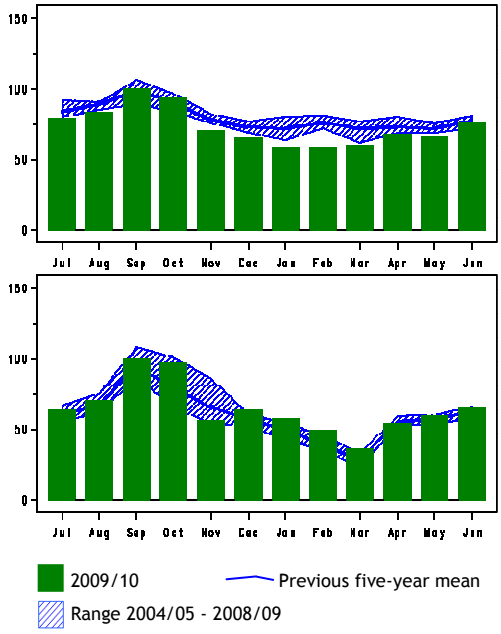


Figure 38.b, Monthly indices for Grey Heron for GB (above) & NI (below).

Despite being considered to be increasing slowly in terms of breeding population (Baillie *et al*. 2010), national WeBS indices for Grey Heron in both Britain show little in the way of variation from year to year; in fact the most recent three years indicate a very shallow decline. Although overall stability is consistent with trends from further east in Europe (e.g. Slabeyova *et al*. 2009), the species has increased markedly in The Netherlands in the last twenty years (Hornman *et al*. 2011).

In 2009/10 the monthly peaks in Britain and Northern Ireland occurred during the months of September to October respectively, somewhat typical of recent years. Seven sites held monthly peaks in excess of 100 birds, including an all-time maximum from River Avon (Fordingbridge to Ringwood) and the highest count from Morecambe Bay for 15 years. Reasons for the apparent sharp drop at Ouse Washes are unknown, but presumably water-level related.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	202	225	173	147	208	Oct	191
Strangford Lough	121 [10]	95 [10]	138 [10]	92	111	Sep	111
Carlingford Lough	41	51	62	(34)	(12)	Oct	51
Lough Foyle	34	42	44	42	30	Oct	38
Belfast Lough	36	(32)	43	35	39	Sep	38
Dundrum Inner Bay	37	36	41	27	34	Aug	35
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Northern Ireland†							
Larne Lough	19	30	20	22	37	Sep	26
Upper Lough Erne	18	28	16	22	37	Feb	24
Outer Ards Shoreline	16	35	24	18	31	Jan	25
Sites with mean peak counts of 50 or more birds in Great Britain†							
Somerset Levels	119	143	135	161	122	Mar	136
Avon Valley - Salisbury to Fordingbridge	106	114	144	92	118	Apr	115
Forth Estuary	108	111	125	102	99	Oct	109
River Avon: Fordingbridge to Ringwood	73	83	82	109	181	Sep	106
Thames Estuary	117	89	(91)	(63)	110	Oct	105
Morecambe Bay	88	105	(38)	107	115	Sep	104
Ouse Washes	36	55 [13]	143	199	39	Mar	94
Coombe Country Park	120	107	106	81	50	Apr	93
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	(48)	(66)	73	67	97	Sep	79
Humber Estuary	(29)	(33)	74	(48)	(33)	Sep	74
Inner Firth of Clyde	93	100	62	62	44	Aug	72
Severn Estuary	55	(43)	(47)	78	60	Oct	69
Wraysbury Gravel Pits	96	64	55				68
Tees Estuary	62	83	56	56	75	Aug	66
Cromarty Firth	58	64	58	(62)	67	Oct	62
Montrose Basin	32	55	54	82	72	Sep	59
Walthamstow Reservoirs	16	75	76	62		Feb	57
Inner Moray and Inverness Firth	68	68	61	38	50	Oct	57
Besthorpe and Girton Gravel Pits	(19)	96	(14)	16	(5)	Sep	56
Taw-Torridge Estuary	(29)	72	(70)	47	25	Dec	54
Colne Valley Gravel Pits	62	36	78	48	35	Mar	52
Ribble Estuary	45	(46)	37	59	61	Sep	51
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain†							
Beddington Sewage Farm	29	35	35	55	75	Jun	46
Swale Estuary	(43)	(23)	(33)	(24)	56	Oct	45
The Wash	52	59	39	34	51	Oct	47
Bough Beech Reservoir	13	54	(18)	54	50	Apr	37

† *as few sites surpass the British threshold (610), sites with mean peak counts of 50+ are also listed.*

White Stork

Ciconia ciconia

Vagrant and escape
Native Range: Europe, Africa, Asia

One noted near Blairdrummond Safari Park in February had, presumably, not travelled far…

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Vagrant
Native Range: S Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, N & C America

2009/10 was a record WeBS-year for Glossy Ibis. Following a July record at WWT Martin Mere, five sites hosted the species in September. These were North West Solent (six birds), Holland Marshes, Arun Valley, Teifi Estuary and Linne Mhuirich. The latter are the first WeBS records for Wales and Scotland. Three were seen at both Christchurch Harbour and Dungeness & Rye Harbour in October/November. A further four were at Somerset Levels (with three remaining until March) and singles were also noted at both Little Paxton Gravel Pits and Druridge Bay in October.

The recent increase in British records (e.g. Hudson *et al.* 2010) mirrors a rise in numbers breeding in the Camargue in southern France.

Spoonbill

Platalea leucorodia

International threshold: **110**
Great Britain threshold: **1**

Spoonbill *(Dawn Balmer)*

Spoonbills were recorded at 27 sites during Core counts, all in England with the exception of Cleddau Estuary (Wales). A WeBS monthly peak of 33 was noted in November. Most counts were of one to three birds, notable exceptions being a peak of 16 at Poole Harbour in November and nine at North Norfolk Coast in July. Inland records comprised birds at Chelmarsh Reservoir (Aug), Stodmarsh (Oct) and Somerset Levels (Mar).

Water Rail

Rallus aquaticus

International threshold: **10,000**
Great Britain threshold: **?**†
All-Ireland threshold: **?**†

GB max: **456** **Dec**
NI max: **3** **Dec**

Water Rails were recorded during WeBS Core counts at 382 sites across the UK in 2009/10. This represents an increase of 9% compared to the previous year, which may be attributable to the relatively cold winter rendering birds more visible than normal.

Favoured sites tend to be those with reedbeds and/or an extensive network of ditches. The species is inevitably under-recorded due to its secretive, generally unobtrusive, behaviour, and as a result any attempts to derive population estimates for this species are notoriously difficult (e.g. Musgrove *et al.* 2011). WeBS maxima this year were 33 at Somerset Levels (Nov) and 25 at Thames Estuary (Oct), presumably representing only a small fraction of the total number of birds present during the winter at both sites.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
Sites with mean peak counts of 10 or more birds in Great Britain†							
Somerset Levels	50	58	62	38	(33)	Nov	52
Grouville Marsh	30	(10)		15	20	Feb	22
Thames Estuary	10	19	8	47	(25)	Oct	22
Severn Estuary	25	13	23	(26)	19	Jan	21
Longueville Marsh	20	(10)		15	12	Dec	16
Southampton Water	20	10	(20)	19	9	Dec	16
Stanwick Gravel Pits Consolidated	(7)			(16)	(12)	Apr	(16)
Malltraeth RSPB	(4)	11	15	10	25	Nov	15
Chew Valley Lake	5	5	22	31	8	Feb	14
London Wetland Centre	13	17	16	12	10	Dec	14
Poole Harbour	(6)	(6)	(4)	(13)	(4)	Jan	(13)
Rutland Water	9	10	10	24	12	Jul	13
Chichester Harbour	14	15	10	12	7	Dec	12
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	10	8	(24)	13	7	Nov	12
River Cam - Kingfishers Bridge	22	15	7	7	6	Mar	11
North Norfolk Coast	15	7	16 [10]	7	10	Nov	11
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain†							
Dungeness and Rye Bay	8	10	7	8	14	Jan	9
Edderthorpe Flash		1	1	0	12	Dec	4
Fleet and Wey	7	3	2	3	11	Jan	5
Tees Estuary	6	2	(4)	(3)	10	Jan	6

† *as no British or All-Ireland thresholds have been set a qualifying level of 10 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report*

Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

GB max:	**14,063**	**Oct**
NI max:	**226**	**Oct**

International threshold:	**20,000****
Great Britain threshold:	**3,200†**
All-Ireland threshold:	**?†**

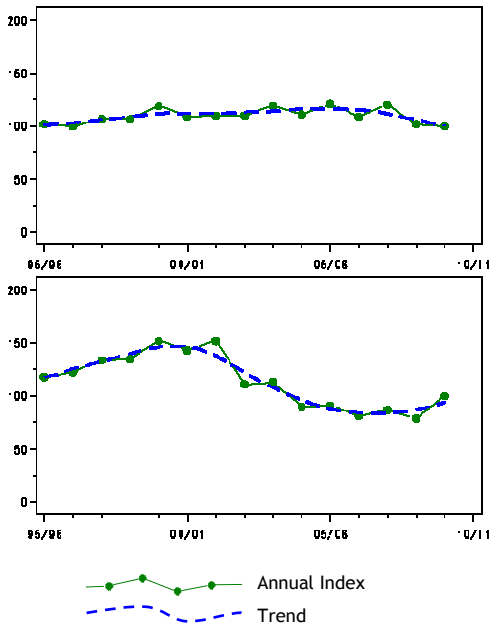


Figure 39.a, Annual indices & trend for Moorhen for GB (above) & NI (below).

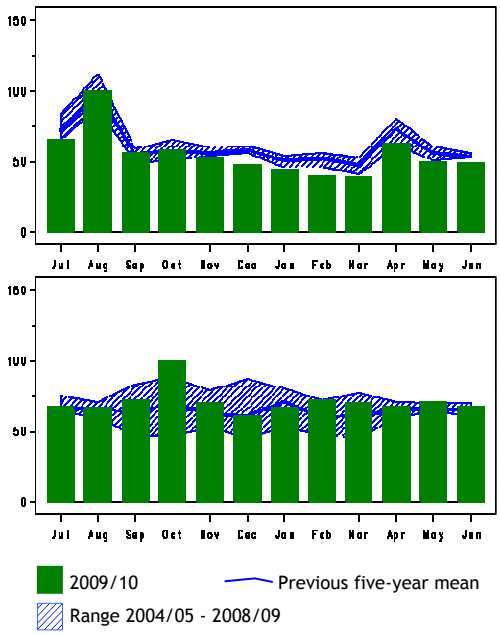


Figure 39.b, Monthly indices for Moorhen for GB (above) & NI (below).

Moorhens have a widespread distribution throughout the UK and occur in a wide variety of wetland habitats. As a consequence, compared to most waterbird species, they tend to be relatively poorly monitored by WeBS, and ideally require improved coverage of habitats within the wider countryside.

Moorhen *(Jill Pakenham)*

The WeBS trends are included in the annual report for the first time. They indicate that numbers at WeBS sites in Britain have been relatively stable over the course of the last fifteen years, while in Northern Ireland a shallow decline may have occurred during the last ten or so years.

The monthly indices for Britain are worthy of close scrutiny. They indicate that over the past six years, consistent peaks have occurred in both August and April. The increase in August is likely to be attributable to augmentation of regional populations with locally-bred juveniles, whereas might the apparent April peak be due to an increase in the detectability of Moorhens early in the breeding season? Alternatively, it is tempting to speculate that the slight increase in April relates to a flux of spring passage (e.g. Wernham *et al.* 2002). Future analysis of regional WeBS trends and monthly indices may elucidate this further. In Northern Ireland, where a relatively small number of Moorhens are counted during WeBS counts, it remains to be seen whether the October 2009 peak is repeated in future years. Consistent

counting effort of this species at WeBS sites is now especially important if valid inferences are to be drawn from the national trends.

In 2009/10, the counted British maximum was similar to that of recent years, with the highest site count being 359 at Severn Estuary in November. Numbers at virtually all of the principal sites were close to their respective five-year means, an exception being the conspicuously low peak at Chichester Gravel Pits for reasons unknown. Rutland Water recorded its highest monthly total ever, while in Northern Ireland, the peak at Loughs Neagh & Beg was the highest since 2002/03.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
Sites with mean peak counts of 130 or more birds in Great Britain†							
Severn Estuary	465	546	1,003	(473)	359	Nov	593
WWT Martin Mere	490	438	485	(375)	330	Nov	436
Thames Estuary	383	367	(300)	406	(355)	Jan	385
Somerset Levels	410	430	392	156	(281)	Oct	347
Lower Derwent Ings	366	321	268	341	256	Nov	310
Ouse Washes	111	201	557 [12]	(420)	163	Feb	290
Pitsford Reservoir	266	389	241	126	304	Oct	265
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	292	(300)	296	228	180	Nov	259
North Norfolk Coast	281	223	230	203	253	Jan	238
London Wetland Centre	239	218	203	229	200	Nov	218
Old Moor	(80)	(171)	(366)	136	184	Sep	214
Rutland Water	188	157	219	152	285	Oct	200
Arun Valley	175	246	(195)	164	190	Sep	194
R.Wandle - Carshalton to Wandsworth	178	193	186	180	191	Dec	186
Dungeness and Rye Bay	213	166	181	192	167	Sep	184
Stanwick Gravel Pits Consolidated	(51)			(63)	(147)	Sep	(147)
Grand Western Canal	137	178	134	124	146		144
Chichester Gravel Pits	228	139	174	(5)	31	Sep	143
Cotswold Water Park (West)	(132)	117	144	(116)	151	Oct	137
Medway Estuary	84	131	180	144	130	Jan	134
Sutton and Lound Gravel Pits	108	158	128	141			134
Humber Estuary	(142)	136	166	116	100	Nov	132
Sites with mean peak counts of 30 or more birds in Northern Ireland†							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	143	98	118	96	181	Oct	127
Belfast Lough	54	43	42	49	43 [10]	Dec	46
Upper Lough Erne	60	75	40	18	36	Feb	46
Lower Lough Erne	(10)	43	25	(6)	(3)	Mar	34
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain†							
Chew Valley Lake	80	90	55	70	180	Sep	95
Fort Henry Ponds and Exton Park Lakes	91	83	58	52	136	Oct	84
Ditchford Gravel Pits	50	62	103	102	132	Jan	90

† *as no sites exceed the British threshold and no All-Ireland threshold has been set, qualifying levels of 130 and 30 have been chosen to select sites, in Great Britain and Northern Ireland respectively, for presentation in this report*

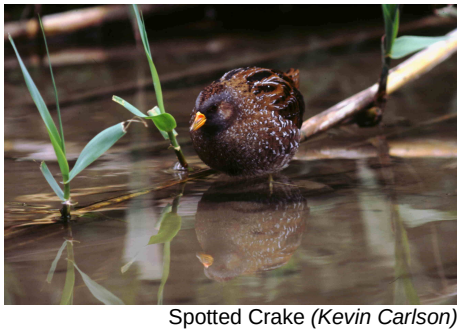
Spotted Crake

Scarce

Porzana porzana

Six Spotted Crakes were seen between August and September, representing the most records of the species in a WeBS-year since 2005/06.

They were at Camel Estuary, Stodmarsh, Edderthorpe Flash, London Wetland Centre, Wormleighton Reservoir, and Teifi Estuary. The latter is the first WeBS record in Wales.



Spotted Crake *(Kevin Carlson)*

Coot

Fulica atra

International threshold:	17,500
Great Britain threshold:	1,800
All-Ireland threshold:	330

GB max:	115,887	Nov
NI max:	2,322	Feb

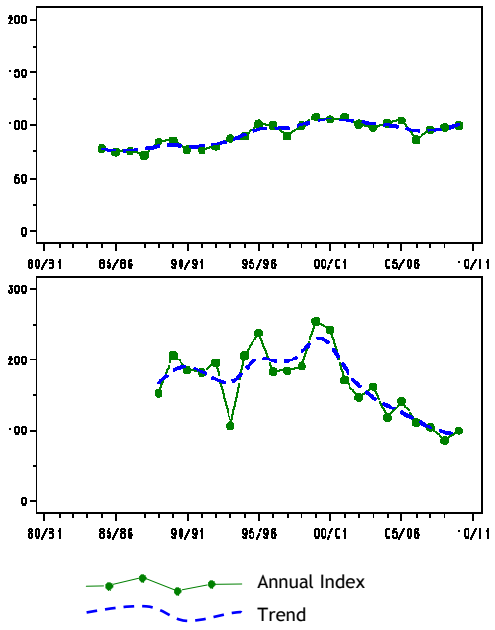


Figure 40.a, Annual indices & trend for Coot for GB (above) & NI (below).

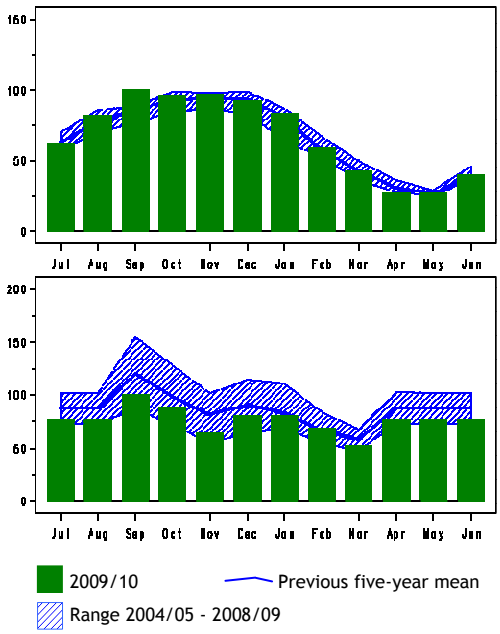


Figure 40.b, Monthly indices for Coot for GB (above) & NI (below).

Musgrove *et al.* (2011) estimate the wintering population of Coots to be in the order of 180,000 birds, thereby representing relative stability of a population that comprises residents augmented by winter immigrants from other parts of northwest Europe. In keeping with this, the index for Britain in 2009/10 was consistent with that of the last fifteen or so years. However, numbers in Northern Ireland continue to be in decline.

These national trends, when evaluated in tandem, continue to be suggestive of a possible shift in distribution in response to climate. In The Netherlands, the trend for Coot, although prone to fluctuations, has essentially been stable for a period of thirty years (Hornman *et al.* 2011), whereas further east in Europe numbers have been increasing, e.g. in Slovakia (Slabeyova *et al.* 2009). Similarly, in Scandinavia, numbers have increased in recent winters in response to milder climatic conditions (Nilsson 2008).

Scrutiny of the sites table indicates that Coot numbers at most UK sites in 2009/10 were relatively high compared to recent years. The counted monthly maximum was 115,887 birds (4% higher than the 2008/09 equivalent), and the top three sites all held peaks in excess of their respective five-year averages. The traditional autumn peak at Abberton Reservoir reached an impressive 12,188 birds, the most there since the all-time WeBS high of 18,632 in September 1994. The count from Rutland Water is the second most ever noted there, while the record peak at Cotswold Water Park (West) is further evidence of the increasing amount of wetland habitat there. While the monthly maximum at Chew Valley Lake was the highest for five years, that at nearby Blagdon Lake was the lowest since 1996/97.

In Northern Ireland, the monthly maximum at Loughs Neagh & Beg was again very low compared to the longer-term average at the site. In common with other diving waterfowl at the site, particularly Pochard, numbers have dropped steeply in

recent winters since a historical peak count of 8,848 birds in December 1992. Similarly, the peak at Upper Lough Erne, the other site of All-Ireland importance, was the lowest for ten years.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Abberton Reservoir	10,965	(2,088)	10,046	9,270	12,188	Sep	10,617
Rutland Water	3,490	6,233	4,284	4,792	6,277	Nov	5,015
Cotswold Water Park (West)	4,548	4,001	4,013	4,803	5,330	Nov	4,539
Ouse Washes	4,354	1,834	6,229	5,865 [12]	4,053	Feb	4,467
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	3,459	2,417	2,979	3,331	3,318	Nov	3,101
Cheddar Reservoir	3,140	3,380	3,324	2,222	2,977	Dec	3,009
Loch Leven	1,610	2,820	1,317	3,350	3,560	Oct	2,531
Fleet and Wey	2,699	2,650	2,337	2,291	2,397	Nov	2,475
Pitsford Reservoir	2,212	2,287	2,828	1,957	2,480	Oct	2,353
Dungeness and Rye Bay	1,768	2,421	2,280	2,162	3,123	Nov	2,351
Chew Valley Lake	2,205	2,360	2,095	2,020	3,050	Sep	2,346
Cotswold Water Park (East)	2,045	1,835	2,134	2,248	2,050	Nov	2,062
Carsington Water	1,614	2,136	1,880	2,175	1,770	Oct	1,915
Blagdon Lake	3,151	1,400	2,323	1,403	970	Aug	1,849
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	2,506	2,371	1,813	1,236	1,546	Sep	1,894
Upper Lough Erne	2,023	1,696	1,072	1,093	1,051	Feb	1,387
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2009/2010							
Lower Windrush Valley Gravel Pits	(1,338)	1,566	(1,327)	(366)	(1,802)	Jan	1,684
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain							
Stodmarsh	1,213	904	1,369	1,350	2,310	Oct	1,429
Humber Estuary	1,059	1,404	1,103	1,298	2,261	Nov	1,425
Grafham Water	1,234	1,454	1,628	1,796	2,252	Jan	1,673
Fen Drayton Gravel Pits	1,362	1,460	1,228	1,772	1,870	Nov	1,538
Tophill Low Reservoirs	615	540	315	(840)	1,857	Jan	833
Lower Windrush Valley Gravel Pits	(1,338)	1,566	(1,327)	(366)	(1,802)	Jan	1,684

An inland wetland *(Mike Toms)*
Waterbirds, particularly diving species such as Coot, are often displaced from small inland wetlands during freezing weather such as that experienced in January 2010.

Crane

Grus grus

Scarce

In 2009/10, Cranes were recorded at seven WeBS sites; the same number as the previous year. Four of these sites are in the Cambridgeshire/Norfolk fens and therefore may involve duplication of roaming birds. Elsewhere, four were at Kinnordy Loch in April, two at North Norfolk Coast in May, and one at Forth Estuary in June.

Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus

International threshold:	**10,200**	
Great Britain threshold:	**3,200**	
All-Ireland threshold:	**680**	

GB max:	**264,459**	**Oct**
NI max:	**17,064**	**Oct**

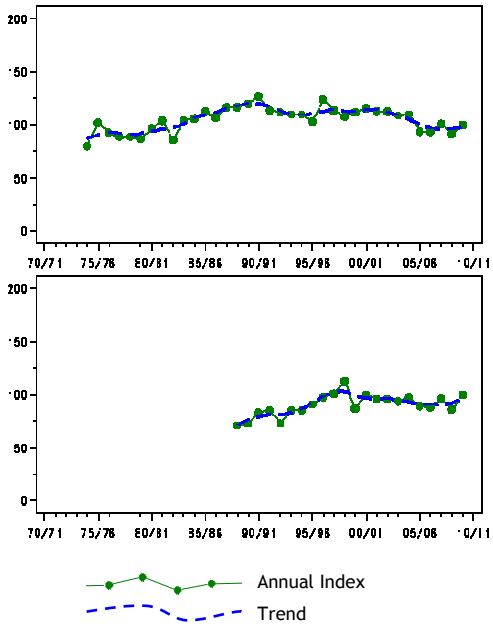


Figure 41.a, Annual indices & trend for Oystercatcher for GB (above) & NI (below).

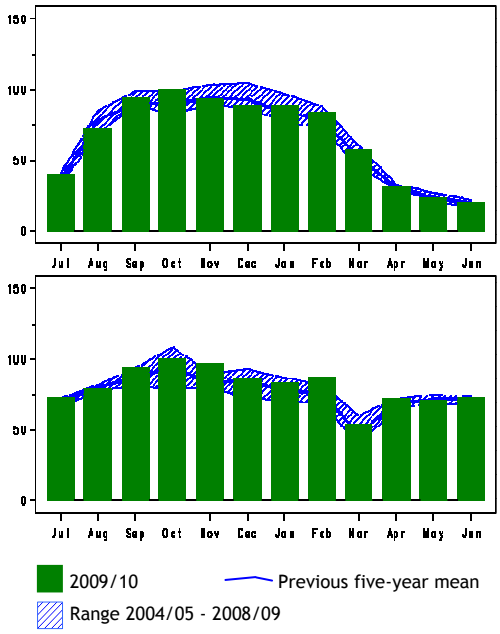


Figure 41.b, Monthly indices for Oystercatcher for GB (above) & NI (below).

Oystercatchers in the UK are from the *ostralegus* population, which breeds in north and west Europe and winters in west Europe and south to west Africa.

The British trend over the course of the last twenty years has been one of very slow decline, with the species now at the same level as when routine monitoring began over thirty-five years ago. In Northern Ireland however, numbers are stable and have increased slightly over the longer term. At the same time, the species has decreased at a faster rate in The Netherlands (Hornman *et al.* 2011).

Maxima at the sites of international importance were generally close to or above average compared to recent years. The only exception was Solway Estuary where, despite good coverage, the peak noted in October was considerably lower than expected. The principal site in the UK is Morecambe Bay, and following the second highest count ever there in 2008/09, the maximum in 2009/10 was again encouraging and evidence of thorough WeBS coverage at the site.

The peak at The Wash was close to average, the population having recovered following declines brought about by human over-exploitation of the shellfishery (Atkinson *et al.* 2010). As predicted in last year's report, Carmarthen Bay has now surpassed the qualifying threshold for international importance. Numbers there

have steadily increased in recent years, and reached a peak in January when 12,697 birds were counted during the Core count and 13,673 during Low Tide operations.

In Northern Ireland, there were no notable changes at the individual site level, although the peak from Lough Foyle was again relatively high following a similar peak in 2008/09.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Morecambe Bay	(46,760)	55,874	(41,199)	60,323	58,596	Oct	58,264
Solway Estuary	(34,542)	(35,571)	(31,091)	(25,417)	23,890	Oct	30,102
Thames Estuary	22,956	27,836	26,905	33,659	24,278	Sep	27,127
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	22,847	15,808	20,922	32,820 [10]	25,886	Jan	23,657
The Wash	18,677	22,963	19,626	17,788	19,232	Oct	19,657
Burry Inlet	11,728	15,110 [12]	13,257	13,980	15,957	Nov	14,006
Ribble Estuary	(6,378)	10,872	13,148	(9,524)	(8,518)	Sep	12,010
Carmarthen Bay	7,754	10,154 [10]	10,911 [10]	10,562	13,673 [10]	Jan	10,611
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Forth Estuary	6,598	8,235	7,230	8,046	(5,949)	Oct	7,527
Lavan Sands	5,926	9,587	5,783	5,611	6,129	Oct	6,607
Duddon Estuary	5,577	5,758	(4,251)	(7,296)	(3,444)	Sep	6,210
Inner Firth of Clyde	5,880	5,308	5,836	4,101	5,042	Feb	5,233
Inner Moray and Inverness Firth	4,930	(5,099)	8,003	3,883	3,547	Oct	5,092
Swale Estuary	5,011	3,762	4,106	3,293	(5,425)	Dec	4,319
North Norfolk Coast	3,707	3,238	3,954	5,111	3,936	Nov	3,989
Swansea Bay	3,511	4,430 [12]	3,150	3,743	(3,850)	Sep	3,737
Humber Estuary	3,468	2,942	(3,121)	(2,746)	(4,463)	Dec	3,624
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lough	6,861	(6,842)	8,689	9,575	8,513	Oct	8,410
Belfast Lough	4,756	(4,411)	3,580	3,624	3,798	Sep	4,034
Lough Foyle	(1,805)	(2,347)	2,837	3,629	3,647	Nov	3,371
Outer Ards Shoreline	1,747	1,825	1,515	1,622	1,569	Jan	1,656
Carlingford Lough	1,442	1,552	(1,446)	1,529	(706)	Jan	1,508
Dundrum Inner Bay	1,389	1,027	1,700	1,497	(1,635)	Feb	1,450
Newcastle Shore				1,331			1,331
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2009/10 in Great Britain							
Alt Estuary	2,193	(1,397)	1,236	1,115	3,661	Apr	2,051

Avocet

Recurvirostra avosetta

International threshold: 730
Great Britain threshold: 75

GB max: 7,387 Oct
NI max: 0

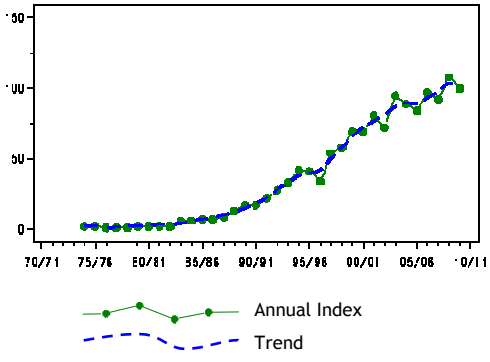


Figure 42.a, Annual indices & trend for Avocet for GB.

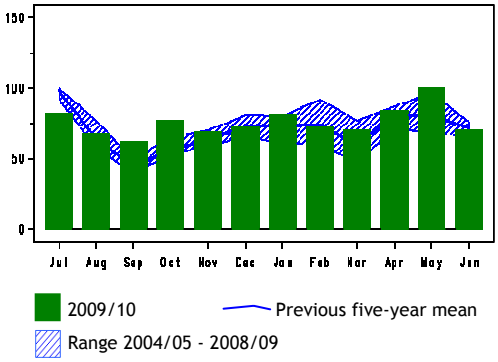


Figure 42.b, Monthly indices for Avocet for GB.

The wintering population of Avocets in Britain, considered in the most recent review of waterbird population estimates to be in the order of 7,500 birds (Musgrove *et al*. 2011), appears to be very effectively monitored by WeBS. Wintering birds in the UK are considered to comprise an increasing proportion of resident breeders and additional birds from the nearby Low Countries.

Although the rate of increase in the index has slowed slightly over the course of the last six years, there are no obvious signs of the trend doing anything other than continuing to steadily rise. Wintering numbers of this charismatic species appear to have not yet levelled off in Britain.

Avocets were recorded at 64 WeBS sites in 2009/10, all in England apart from single birds in January at Carmarthen Bay and Guernsey Shore. Peaks at the most important sites were generally close to or slightly above respective averages. The incomplete count of 1,553 at Poole Harbour in October represents the second highest ever there, surpassed only by the all-time WeBS high of 1,893 in February 2002. The 1,702 at Thames Estuary, also in October, represents the most ever noted there.

Perhaps the most striking feature of 2009/10 for Avocets in the UK was the marked increase recorded at Humber Estuary during the autumn period. The totals for August (1,153), September (903) and October (827) were all greater than the previous highest monthly maximum for the site. These observations and the record number noted at Ribble Estuary (where the species has only been an annual feature since 2002/03) are both an indication of the steady northward spread of this species in recent years.

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Thames Estuary	1,663	1,578	1,633	1,689	(1,702)	Oct	1,653
Alde Complex	1,392	1,383	1,465	1,419	1,373	Jan	1,406
Poole Harbour	1,387	(1,303)	1,068	(1,131)	(1,553)	Oct	1,328
Medway Estuary	(557)	(1,027)	(453)	(791)	(604)	Sep	(1,027)
Breydon Water / Berney Marshes	1,044	706	896 [12]	897 [12]	1,017 [12]	Sep	912
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Colne Estuary	570 [12]	720 [12]	586 [10]	750 [12]	613 [12]	Dec	648
Humber Estuary	374	652	529	486	1,153	Aug	639
North Norfolk Coast	617	645	556	674	538	May	606
The Wash	760	322	850	541	493	Mar	593
Hamford Water	488	(629)	537	729 [10]	564	Mar	589
Blyth Estuary	208	660	889	369	576	Feb	540
Swale Estuary	320	(363)	447	(586)	654	Oct	502
Blackwater Estuary	622	367	585	(508)	422	Mar	501
Tamar Complex	494	465	620	380	396	Jan	471
Exe Estuary	(500)	380	358	557	(440)	Jan	447
Deben Estuary	236	315	224	342	306	Jan	285
Stour Estuary	89	428	159	112	444 [10]	Nov	246
Minsmere	171	190	205	164	153	Apr	177
Orwell Estuary	162	105 [10]	134 [10]	161	(124)	Oct	141
Crouch-Roach Estuary	26	22	135 [12]	213	111	Feb	101
Ribble Estuary	38	76	110	71	111	Apr	81

Stone Curlew

Scarce

Burhinus oedicnemus

Stone Curlews were present at both ends of the WeBS-year at a site in eastern England, close to a known breeding location.

Oriental Pratincole

Vagrant

Glareola maldivarum

Native Range: Asia

An Oriental Pratincole was recorded at Frampton Marsh (The Wash) in May. Present for eleven days (*per* www.birdguides.com), it represents the second ever record for WeBS following the first on the North Norfolk Coast in 1993.