

the peak total has now dropped below 3,000 birds. Only further years of monitoring will determine if Scaup at Loughs Neagh & Beg return to the level that saw the species become the most abundant *Aythya* duck wintering there in 2008/09.

Away from the key sites, notable maxima from northwest England included 70 at Dee Estuary (Jan) and 44 at Morecambe Bay (Dec). The peak count at an inland site (other than Loughs Neagh & Beg) was 15 at Rutland Water (Feb) where the species is regular in winter.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	4,349	5,587	6,335	2,997	2,254	Mar	4,304
Solway Estuary	(1,060)	(499)	(257)	(4,000) <sup>12</sup>	(1,113) <sup>10</sup>	Nov	(4,000)
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Loch Ryan	1,047	1,654	705	800 <sup>12</sup>	885	Dec	1,018
Inner Loch Indaal	810 <sup>21</sup>	870 <sup>21</sup>		485	110	Oct	569
Inner Moray and Inverness Firth	690	148	493	386	410	Feb	425
Cromarty Firth	401	(516)	363	262	510	Jan	410
Loch of Stenness	429	259	276	197	173	Feb	267
Loch of Harray	306	67	(67)	149	223	Oct	186
Domoch Firth	222	280	108	174	37	Feb	164
Auchenharvie Golf Course	98	120	105	73	63	Mar	92
Montrose Basin	28	35	120	62	77	Nov	64
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Belfast Lough	849 <sup>10</sup>	1,895	1,334 <sup>10</sup>	1,950	(1,130)	Nov	1,507
Carlingford Lough	225	177	85	62	57	Jan	121
Strangford Lough	70	90	103 <sup>10</sup>	2	1	Oct	53
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2010/2011</b>							
No data: Firth of Clyde and Loch Ryan offshore							
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2010/11 in Great Britain</b>							
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	2	3	0	39	70	Dec	23

## Lesser Scaup

*Aythya affinis*

Vagrant

Native Range: N America

First recorded by WeBS in 1992/93, Lesser Scaup has featured in the annual report in virtually every year since then. In 2010/11, singles were seen at four sites: Cosmeston Lakes

(Jan-Mar), Dozmary Pool (Jan), Slimbridge, Severn Estuary (Jan-Apr) and Frampton Pools (Mar).

## Common Eider

*Somateria mollissima mollissima*

International threshold  
(N Europe population): 10,300  
Great Britain threshold: 550  
All-Ireland threshold: 30

GB max: 17,258 Mar  
NI max: 3,088 Mar

Common Eiders in Shetland form a closely related group with those from the Faeroes and southern Iceland (subspecies *faeroensis*) (Furness *et al.* 2010). As a result, birds from this population are listed separately in the subsequent account, whereas Common Eider at other sites in Britain and Northern Ireland are documented here.

The British trend for Common Eider over the course of the last twenty years has shown a

consistent decline. Elsewhere in northern Europe, a large decline has also been observed in the Baltic/Wadden Sea flyway (Ekroos *et al.* 2012). A wide range of theories have been suggested to explain changes in abundance of this species in northern Europe, ranging from diminishing food supplies (Coulson 2010), climate change (Lehikoinen *et al.* 2006, D'Alba *et al.* 2010) and thiamine deficiency (Balk *et al.* 2009).

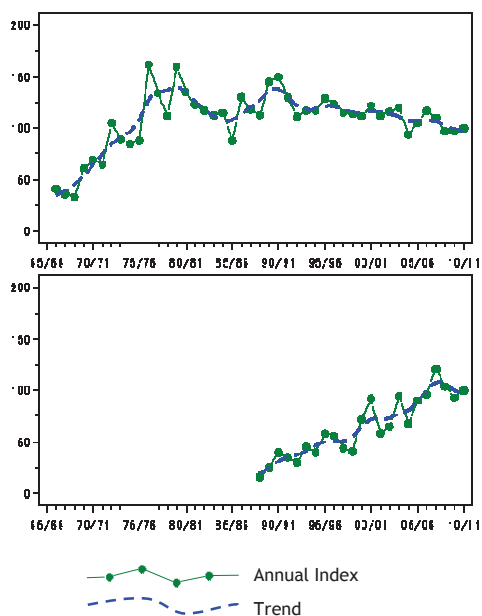


Figure 29.a, Annual indices & trend for Eider (non Shetland) in GB (above) & NI (below).

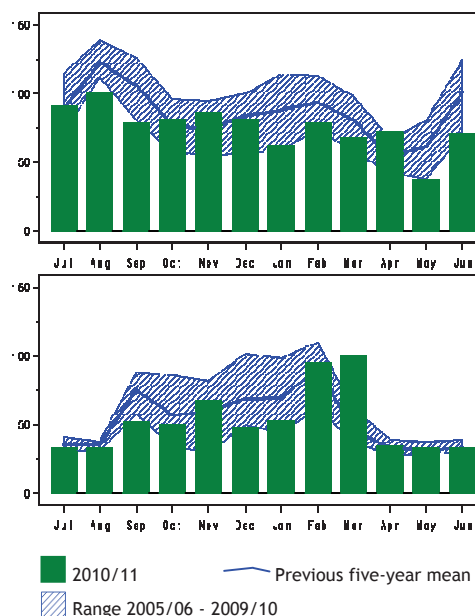


Figure 29.b, Monthly indices for Eider (non Shetland) in GB (above) & NI (below).

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Firth of Clyde	9,590 <sup>14</sup>	9,521 <sup>14</sup>	9,271 <sup>14</sup>	7,573 <sup>14</sup>	6,734 <sup>14</sup>	Sep	8,538
Tay Estuary	(9,164)	(7,500)	4,000	5,100	(1,450)	Nov	6,441
Aberdeen Bay offshore	6,269 <sup>39</sup>						6,269
Inner Firth of Clyde	7,274	6,918	5,700	4,078	4,736	Sep	5,741
Forth Estuary	5,646	4,571	5,925	(4,210)	5,065	Aug	5,302
Morecambe Bay	3,374	(2,138)	5,534	4,248	6,151	Dec	4,827
Ythan Estuary	(3,607)	(3,140)	3,351	3,079	2,326	May	3,101
Gare Loch	2,782 <sup>14</sup>						2,782
Montrose Basin	2,584	2,321	1,099	1,555	1,983	Jul	1,908
Dee Estuary (Scotland)	1,229	1,411	539	(1,417)	983	Jul	1,116
The Wash	491	125	1,438	2,970	519	Jan	1,109
Lindisfarne	(469)	619	(501)	1,074	962	Jun	885
Inner Loch Fyne	817 <sup>14</sup>						817
Loch Long and Loch Goil	796 <sup>14</sup>						796
Loch Ryan	(385)	772	429	1,025	937	Dec	791
Gourock to Largs	755 <sup>14</sup>						755
Don Mouth to Ythan Mouth	538	(111)	(132)	(794)	(133)	May	666
Holy Loch to Toward Point	634 <sup>14</sup>						634
Moray Coast (Consolidated)	603	683	939	303	(223)	Dec	632
Duddon Estuary	(715)	513	525	480	725	Oct	592
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Belfast Lough	1,482	2,675	2,062 <sup>10</sup>	2,352 <sup>10</sup>	2,372	Mar	2,189
Outer Ards Shoreline	976	1,255	491	252	792	Jan	753
Strangford Lough	728	551 <sup>10</sup>	784	613	463	Sep	628
Lough Foyle	528	37	407	452	206	Sep	326
Larne Lough	76	48	106	86	70	Mar	77
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2010/11 in Great Britain</b>							
Lochs Beg and Scridain (East End)	270		240	(0)	638	Sep	383

Numbers reported from the two most important British sites provide continued cause for concern, for differing reasons. The Firth of Clyde held a peak of over 17,500 birds just ten years ago, but the population has since crashed; reasons for the decline are being investigated but have not yet been confirmed (C. Waltho, pers. comm.). Meanwhile, it is important that incomplete coverage of Tay Estuary does not allow another possible crash in numbers to

occur undetected. Elsewhere in Scotland, peaks in 2010/11 were reasonably close to the recent average at most of the sites with complete coverage. An exception was the Ythan Estuary, where the peak of 2,326 (May) was the lowest since 2005/06. Further south, in England, the maximum recorded at The Wash (519, Jan) was typical for that site following the higher peak counts in both 2008/09 and 2009/10.

## Common Eider (Shetland)

*Somateria mollissima faeroensis*

International threshold (Shetland): 85  
Great Britain threshold: 55  
All-Ireland threshold: -

Furness *et al.* (2010) showed that Common Eiders from Shetland form a closely related group with those from the Faeroes and southern Iceland; subspecies *faeroensis*. Therefore, since Calbrade *et al.* (2010), the WeBS annual report has listed the two discrete populations present in the UK separately.

Sites on Shetland that are monitored routinely through WeBS (most of which are small lochs rather than open shoreline) support

relatively few Common Eiders, with a monthly peak of just 28 birds (in July) noted during WeBS counts in 2010/11. Thus, for a more representative picture of their status, the table below largely comprises coordinated counts undertaken by SOTEAG during the winter.

Shetland's Common Eider population has declined during the last forty or so years (Pennington *et al.* 2004, Heubeck & Mellor 2012), although causes are unclear.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
Bluemull & Colgrave Sounds	558 <sup>9</sup>	1,232 <sup>9</sup>		1,074 <sup>9</sup>			955
Burra, Trondra & Scalloway Islands		1,014 <sup>9</sup>		830 <sup>9</sup>			922
South Unst	601 <sup>9</sup>	450 <sup>9</sup>					526
Whiteness to Skelda Ness	179 <sup>9</sup>	178 <sup>9</sup>		201 <sup>9</sup>	169 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	186
Rova Head to Kirkabister	158 <sup>9</sup>	136 <sup>9</sup>	163 <sup>9</sup>	204 <sup>9</sup>	125 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	157
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
South Yell Sound	54 <sup>9</sup>	35 <sup>9</sup>	68 <sup>9</sup>	70 <sup>9</sup>			57

## King Eider

*Somateria spectabilis*

Vagrant  
Native range: Arctic

King Eiders at Moray Coast (Jan) and Ythan Estuary (May-Jun) were somewhat more typical

records than the bird which lingered off Minsmere earlier in the WeBS-year (Sep-Nov).

## Long-tailed Duck

*Clangula hyemalis*

International threshold  
(W Siberia & N Europe population): 16,000  
Great Britain threshold: 110  
All-Ireland threshold: +<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 1,011 Oct  
NI max: 15 Mar

Following a huge reduction in the number wintering in the Baltic Sea, Long-tailed Duck is now listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Skov *et al.* 2011, Birdlife International 2012) and the international population estimate has been revised

downwards by 20% (Wetlands International 2012). This trend mirrors the large declines also noted at key UK sites such as the Moray Firth.

Overall, the species was recorded at 100 sites around the UK in 2010/11, a typical total following a slight drop during the previous year.

The largest count, another low peak compared to just a few years ago, was again reported from Moray Firth. The precise extent to which the recent drop in numbers may be a result of reduced coverage, or the influence of sea conditions affecting visibility and location of birds on the Core count dates, remains unclear. However, given the situation in the Baltic, it seems increasingly likely that this is a genuine decline.

Elsewhere, the highest counts were both in March; 174 at Forth Estuary and 250 at The Ouse/Lairo Water, the latter an indication of the numbers potentially present along the extensive stretches of the Scottish coast that are not regularly counted for WeBS. Away from Scotland, the highest counts were 33 at Lindisfarne (Jan) and 14 at North Norfolk Coast (Dec).

Ground-based counts are not ideal for this species as it has a tendency to remain some distance from the coast, hence the drawing of meaningful conclusions from the totals listed below tends to be fraught with difficulties and probably best avoided. Despite these caveats, there is little doubt that Long-tailed Ducks have declined markedly in the UK since peaking approximately twenty years ago. This has occurred at the same time as numbers using traditional sites elsewhere in the species' European range have also fallen; for example the population within the Baltic Sea declined by 65% between 1992/93 and 2007/09 (Skov *et al.* 2011). Although a genuine decline in the species' overall population size is likely to be a contributory factor in these observations, some degree of shift in range in response to climatic

amelioration might also be involved – but there is no current evidence for this. However, the effects of climatic conditions on seaduck distributions in Arctic waters can be profound (e.g. Grebmeier *et al.* 2006, Zipkin *et al.* 2010).



Glyn Sellors

There has probably never been a greater need for regular and comprehensive surveys of wintering seaducks, divers and grebes around the UK's coast. Such surveys would both assist in the estimation of abundance (e.g. Musgrove *et al.* 2011) and provide detail on spatial and temporal distribution. In order to ensure that priority activities are clearly set out, a review of key knowledge gaps and information needs in the UK is being undertaken; this will incorporate recommendations for priority monitoring and conservation research. For a concise review of the situation and pressures faced by Long-tailed Duck and other seaducks in the Baltic Sea, see Gotland University (2012); available via <http://seaducks.hgo.se/?q=node/14>.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 50 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Moray Firth	10,878	1,904	(690)	(759)	(561)	Oct	6,391
Loch Branahue (Lewis)				430 <sup>39</sup>			430
Forth Estuary	220	163	146	(195)	174	Mar	180
Melbost Sands (Lewis)	121	144	1	610	18	Jan	179
Quendale to Virkie		201 <sup>9</sup>		152 <sup>9</sup>			177
Don Mouth to Ythan Mouth	0	(8)	(25)	(574)	(139)	Nov	149
South Yell Sound		100 <sup>9</sup>	164 <sup>9</sup>				132
Burra and Trondra		126 <sup>9</sup>					126
Rova Head to Wadbister Ness		69 <sup>9</sup>	91 <sup>9</sup>	145 <sup>9</sup>	98 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	101
Rubha Ardvule to Ardivachar (South Uist)					97	Dec	97
Loch of Stenness	107	130	89	50	77	Nov	91
The Ouse and Laird Water	5	32	78	28	250	Mar	79
Burghead Bay From Burghead to Findhorn		15	70	62	136	Oct	71
Thurso Bay	200	30	26	20	32	Jan	62
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2010/11 in Great Britain</b>							
Water Sound	51	36	25	31	68	Feb	42

<sup>†</sup>as few sites surpass the British threshold, sites with mean peak counts of 50+ are listed.

## Common Scoter

*Melanitta nigra*

International threshold (W Siberia & N Europe population): 5,500  
Great Britain threshold: 1,000<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: 230

GB max: 19,588 Mar  
NI max: 13 Nov

<sup>†</sup>50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

The UK's Common Scoter population is relatively poorly monitored by WeBS. The total derived through WeBS Core counts is highly dependent on weather and the associated viewing conditions at the key sites at the time of the count. In addition, apparent increases or decreases at some sites may also be at least partly attributable to changes in counting effort. Therefore, in order to supplement information provided by WeBS, in this report we collate as much supplementary data (generally from aerial surveys) as possible. An extensive programme of aerial surveys in the last decade proved to be fundamental in improving the understanding of numbers and distribution of Common Scoter in UK waters.

The highest WeBS count in 2010/11 was an exceptional 15,000 Common Scoter present in

The Wash in March, considerably greater than the previous maximum recorded at that site through WeBS (4,089 in December 1985). This is presumably the same flock that tends to reside off the North Norfolk Coast, where the historical WeBS peak relates to a count of 8,008 in January 2002. Four other sites surpassed the threshold for national importance (currently 1,000 birds), including Carmarthen Bay, which is also of international importance and classified as a marine SPA due to the presence of such large numbers of this species.

Typically, there were also a small number of records of this species from scattered inland sites. These included three birds at both Haweswater Reservoir (Sep) and Hanningfield Reservoir (Apr).

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
Carmarthen Bay	14,412 <sup>28</sup>	6,189 <sup>28</sup>	22,930 <sup>29</sup>	43,000 <sup>29</sup>	34,049 <sup>29</sup>	Mar	24,116
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
North Norfolk Coast	4,960	3,530	2,040	6,679	(5,379)	Jan	4,518
The Wash	1,810	207	(641)	711	15,147	Mar	4,469 ▲
Towyn to Llanddulas	1,800	1,600	(23)	2,076	6,170	Feb	2,912
Alt Estuary	3,288	850	310	2,920	1,171	Nov	1,708
Forth Estuary	623	936	1,103	2,808	462	Jun	1,186
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 500+ birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Don Mouth to Ythan Mouth	(36)	500	300	590	1,086	Sep	619
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	2,009	297	141	168	400	Apr	603
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Dundrum Bay			1,637				1,637
Glyne Gap	(533)	544	(480)	610 <sup>12</sup>	(440)	Dec	577

<sup>†</sup>as few sites surpass the British threshold, sites with mean peak counts of 500+ are also listed.

## Black Scoter

*Melanitta americana*

Vagrant  
Native Range: N America

One was present between Seahouses and Budle Point (Northumberland) in April. This is the first WeBS record since a drake was

recorded off Lavan Sands in three consecutive winters in the mid 2000s.

## Surf Scoter

*Melanitta perspicillata*

Vagrant  
Native Range: N America

Four WeBS sites hosted Surf Scoters in 2010/11: Fishguard Harbour (Nov), Dawlish

Warren (Jan), Forth Estuary (Mar, May) and Loch Dhrombaig (May).

## Velvet Scoter

*Melanitta fusca*

GB max: 783 Jan  
NI max: 1 Oct

International threshold: 4,500  
Great Britain threshold: 25<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: +

<sup>†</sup>50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

As is typical for most seaducks, numbers of Velvet Scoter can be difficult to monitor with results often dependent on sea conditions. Furthermore, monitoring of this species undoubtedly suffers from the relatively poor coverage along some parts of the Scottish coastline.

However, WeBS counts in recent years provide a clear indication that the wintering population of Velvet Scoters in the UK has declined. This is in keeping with large decreases observed elsewhere in the wintering range, particularly within the Baltic Sea (Skov *et al.* 2011). As a consequence, the international population estimate for Velvet Scoter was recently revised significantly downwards, by 55% (Wetlands International 2012), and the species is now classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Birdlife International 2012).

During 2010/11, Velvet Scoters were noted at 31 WeBS sites in the UK. The monthly peak of 783 in December represents a small increase compared to the previous year, but is still only approximately one third of the estimated British winter population (Musgrove *et al.* 2011). The maximum recorded during the year was 338 at Forth Estuary in March, typifying the decline noted there since successive peak counts of 1000+ during the early 2000s. The only other three-figure count received was 135 at Burghead Bay (Jan). A low total was reported from Moray

Firth, where as recently as 2002/03 over 4,000 were counted.

Typically, relatively few were seen away from the Scottish coast. However, a count of 67 at The Wash in May represents the most at the site since 1993/94. The historical maximum there dates back fifty years; 185 birds in February 1961. There were six inland records of Velvet Scoter between November and April, four of which involved singles at reservoirs in the Greater London area.



[gray-images.co.uk](http://gray-images.co.uk)

Improved monitoring of Moray Firth and other sites which have traditionally been used by this and other seaduck species, is required in order to be able to effectively assess the respective species' statuses in the UK. This is likely to be one of the key recommendations in a review of seaducks in Britain currently being undertaken.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Moray Firth	743	(74)	(17)	(62)	(11)	Feb	743
Forth Estuary	928	372	728	457	338	Mar	565
Lunan Bay	2	100	(240)	(40)	67 <sup>12</sup>	Nov	102
Burghead Bay		7	(0)	150	135	Jan	97
Aberdeen Bay offshore	28 <sup>39</sup>						28
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2010/11 in Great Britain</b>							
The Wash	2	(0)	2	(0)	67	May	24

## Common Goldeneye

*Bucephala clangula*

GB max: 12,564 Feb  
NI max: 3,829 Feb

International threshold  
(NW & C Europe population): 11,400  
Great Britain threshold: 200  
All-Ireland threshold: 95

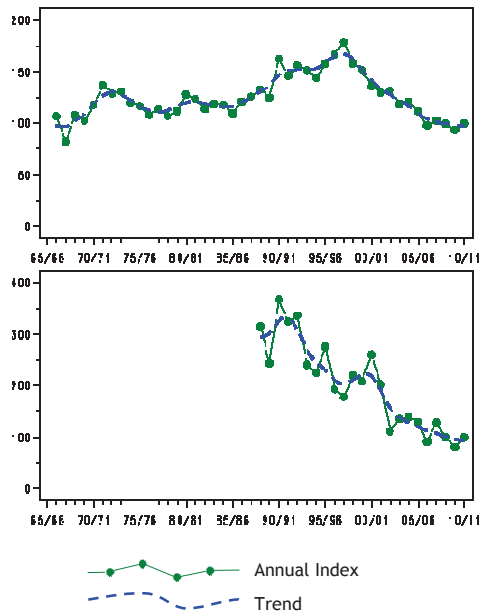


Figure 30.a, Annual indices & trend for Goldeneye in GB (above) & NI (below).

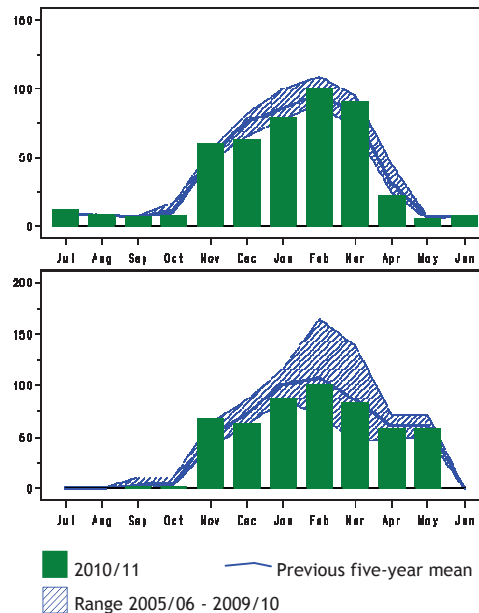


Figure 30.b, Monthly indices for Goldeneye in GB (above) & NI (below).

In light of the steady decline in Common Goldeneye wintering in Britain, the population estimate was revised downwards by 20% to 20,000 birds in 2011 (Musgrove *et al.* 2011). As with some other diving waterfowl of largely Scandinavian breeding origin, recent milder winters have led to a north-east directional shift in the core wintering range (Lehikoinen *et al.* in prep.). For example in Sweden, the estimated winter population rose from 18,800 birds in 1971 to 75,000 by 2004 (Nilsson 2008).

The monthly indices for Britain illustrate two distinct phases within the winter for this species. After below average numbers in December and January, there was evidence of an influx in February (perhaps associated with redistribution of birds following the freezing conditions prevalent over much of central and northern Europe in the midwinter period). Above-average numbers remained in Britain into March.

The steep decline in Northern Ireland has taken place since the initiation of routine monitoring through WeBS. In keeping with the

recent trend, numbers at the key site, Loughs Neagh & Beg, were below average; the monthly maximum of 3,388 (Feb) was the third lowest annual peak of the last ten years. Loughs Neagh & Beg were formerly of international importance for this species, but the long term decline there, with annual peaks of more than 13,500 in the early 1990s decreasing to the recent five-year mean of under 4,000 birds, means this is no longer the case. The decline of this and other diving species at the site has been well studied and seems most likely to be attributable to the effects of eutrophication (Maclean *et al.* 2006), and may well also involve impacts of climate change, as outlined above.

Away from Loughs Neagh & Beg, the maximum count during 2010/11 was 771 (Jan) at Forth Estuary. The historic maximum at that site is 5,063 in January 1973, where there was 4,864 as relatively recently as 1997/98. At other sites of national importance, peaks were close to or below recent averages, with the most marked declines at Firth of Clyde and Humber Estuary.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Forth Estuary	331	533	431	1,340	771	Jan	681
Loch Leven	517	302	683	415	692	Nov	522
Abberton Reservoir	478	332	299	413	556	Mar	416
Rutland Water	356	349	442	390	509	Feb	409
Humber Estuary	401	577	302	232	274	Jan	357
Tweed Estuary	174	246	245	182	306	Mar	231 ▲
Morecambe Bay	191	(133)	290	242	196	Dec	230
Inner Firth of Clyde	249	452 <sup>12</sup>	148	130	136	Dec	223
Loch of Strathbeg	334	146	159	217	244	Nov	220
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	2,780	4,648	3,684	3,004	3,388	Feb	3,501
Belfast Lough	(108)	226	233	(383)	184	Jan	257
Strangford Lough	83 <sup>10</sup>	237	181	139	471	Mar	222
Lower Lough Erne	169	267	(134)	(110)	(101)	Jan	218
Larne Lough	97	89	84	(116)	114	Feb	100
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2010/2011</b>							
Loch of Skene	128	204	223	188	244	Feb	197
Windermere	271 <sup>12</sup>	242	223 <sup>12</sup>	103	86	Feb	185
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2010/11 in Great Britain</b>							
Loch Ryan	97	95	137	175	302	Dec	161
Loch of Skene	128	204	223	188	244	Feb	197
River Eden - Grinsdale to Sandsfield	75	111	91	131	221	Dec	126
Grafham Water	57	140	96	102	220	Dec	123
Blackwater Estuary	96	64	160	(119)	(203)	Nov	128

## Hooded Merganser

*Lophodytes cucullatus*

Escape and potential vagrant  
Native Range: N America

The long-staying drake was at Radipole (Fleet & Wey) throughout the winter.

## Smew

*Mergellus albellus*

International threshold  
(NW & C Europe population): 400  
Great Britain threshold: 2  
All-Ireland threshold: +<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 232 Jan  
NI max: 3 Feb

<sup>†</sup>50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

The cold spell of weather in December 2010 to January 2011 led to an increased number of Smew in the UK, as birds fled even harsher conditions on the continent. Smew were seen across the UK at 103 WeBS sites, with typically the majority in England. Of course, it is worth noting that many WeBS sites will themselves have been frozen during the coldest period.

Several locations across Britain were graced by the species for the first time during WeBS counts. Sites in Cambridgeshire and the Midlands fared particularly well, with several holding all-time WeBS peaks. For the third year in a row, the highest count of the year was at Ouse Fen & Pits (33, Feb).

This cold-weather influx contradicts the recent situation, which up until 2009/10 had seen a reduction in the number of Smew wintering at sites in the UK. This has probably been in response to climatic amelioration and the trend for milder winters, during which period several species of diving duck have extended their wintering distributions in a north-easterly direction. This has taken place in response to newly ice-free areas of the Baltic Sea (Lehikoinen *et al.* in prep.); for example, in Sweden, wintering Smew increased from an approximate 400 birds in 1971 to 3,800 in 2004 (Nilsson 2008).



	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Wraysbury Gravel Pits	19	16	(10) <sup>12</sup>	(8) <sup>12</sup>	(8) <sup>12</sup>	Jan	18
Ouse Fen and Pits	0	12	14	27	33	Feb	17
Cotswold Water Park (West)	13	19	16 <sup>12</sup>	18	16	Jan	16
Dungeness and Rye Bay	18	21	11	(14)	10	Jan	15
Little Paxton Gravel Pits	4	12	2	17	23	Jan	12
Rutland Water	5	2	12	18	23	Dec	12
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	7	7	4	12	17	Jan	9
Pitsford Reservoir	4	(2)	5	7	15	Jan	8
Fen Drayton Gravel Pits	3	2	1	19 <sup>12</sup>	15	Dec	8
Eyebrook Reservoir	4	6	7	5	19	Jan	8
Abberton Reservoir	2	5	8	8	8	Dec	6
Thorpe Water Park	3	3		8	5	Jan	5
Longham Lakes					5	Jan	5
Wraysbury Reservoir					5	Dec	5
Bedfont and Ashford GPs	1	6	1	(8)	10	Feb	5
Blackwater Estuary	3	2	(1)	6	(3) <sup>10</sup>	Dec	4
Sonning Eye & Henley Road GP	2		4	1	8	Jan	4
Ravensthorpe Reservoir	1	0	1	3	14	Feb	4
Minsmere	1	1	3	6	8	Feb	4
Nar Valley Fisheries Lakes				3	5	Feb	4
Tophill Low Reservoirs	5 <sup>12</sup>	6 <sup>12</sup>	3 <sup>12</sup>	(2)	2	Jan	4
Seaton Gravel Pits	1	6	3	(3)	(0)		3
Walthamstow Reservoirs	10	0	0				3
Colne Valley Gravel Pits	8	4	1	1	2	Dec	3
Grafham Water	0	3	3	2	7	Dec	3
Longtown Ponds and River	1	0	3	5	6	Dec	3
Somerset Levels	0	0	1	4	3	Jan	2 ▲
Twyford Gravel Pits	0	0	0	2	4	Mar	2 ▲
Thrapston Gravel Pits				(2)	1	Mar	2
Stanwick Gravel Pits				(2)	(2)	Jan	(2)
Stewartby Lake			0	(3)			2
Meadow Lane Gravel Pits	0			1	4	Dec	2 ▲
Pentney Gravel Pit				0	3	Jan	2 ▲
Covenham Reservoir				(0)	2	Oct	2 ▲
Swithland Reservoir	0	3	2	1	2	Jan	2 ▲
Holme Pierrepont GPs	1	0	5	3	2	Feb	2
Coombe Country Park			2 <sup>12</sup>				2
Tindale Tam	2	0	1	2	3	Jan	2 ▲
Castle Loch, Lochmaben	1	2 <sup>12</sup>	3	(0)	(0)		2
Loch Leven	6	0	1 <sup>12</sup>	2	2	Nov	2

**Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2010/11 in Great Britain**

Dorchester Gravel Pits (5, Jan), Lower Windrush Valley GPs (4, Feb), R.Avon (Fordingbridge to Ringwood) (3, Jan), Leybourne & New Hythe GPs (3, Jan), Hanningfield Reservoir (3, Dec), Ditchford Gravel Pits (3, Jan), Waterbeach Gravel Pits (3, Jan), Buckden & Stirlloe Pits (3, Feb), Yare Valley (Markingford to Bawburgh) (3, Jan), Tattershall Pits (3, Jan), R.Eden (Grinsdale to Stansfield (3, Dec), Southampton Water (2, Dec), Ruislip Lido (2, Feb), Colne Fen GPs (2, Feb), Ouse Washes (2, Mar), Deben Estuary (2, Dec), North Norfolk Coast (2, Jan), Besthorpe & Girtton GPs (2, Mar), Sutton & Lound GPs (2, Mar), Draycote Water (2, Feb), Crockfoot Reservoir (2, Nov), Whittledene Reservoirs (2, Mar), Lochwinnoch (2, Mar), Kilmardinny Loch (2, Feb), Burghfield GPs (2, Dec), Langford Lowfield GPs (2, Dec)



*Edmund Fellowes*



*Neil Calbrade*

## Red-breasted Merganser

*Mergus serrator*

GB max: 3,252 Mar  
NI max: 417 Nov

International threshold (NW & C Europe population): 1,700  
Great Britain threshold: 84  
All-Ireland threshold: 35\*

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

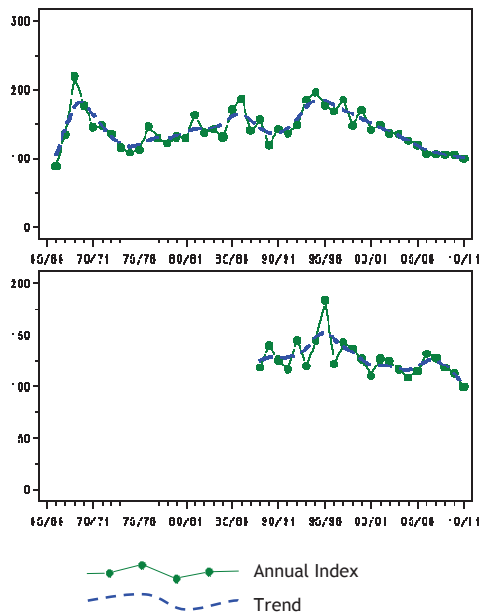


Figure 31.a, Annual indices & trend for Red-breasted Merganser in GB (above) & NI (below).

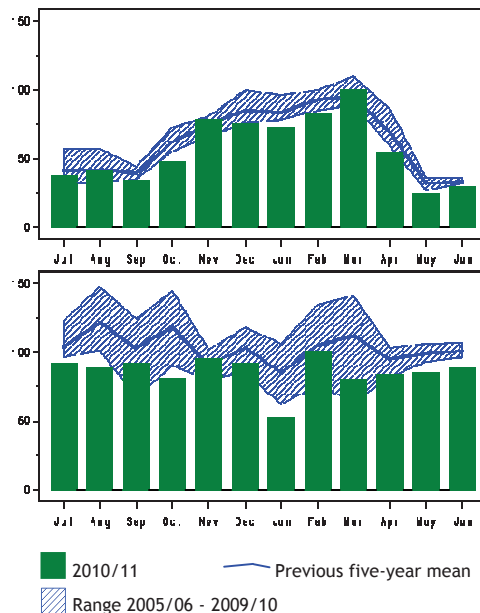


Figure 31.b, Monthly indices for Red-breasted Merganser in GB (above) & NI (below).

The steady decline in numbers of Red-breasted Merganser, which has been evident from the WeBS trend since the mid 1990s, has slowed in the last five years; following four years of stability in the period 2006/07 to 2009/10, the annual index dropped very slightly in 2010/11. It remains to be seen what will transpire for this species in the years ahead, as there appear to be contrasting trends to the east of the UK.

In the last thirty to forty years, wintering numbers have increased steadily in some areas, for example in Sweden (Nilsson 2008) and The Netherlands (Hornman *et al.* 2012). This is suggestive of a range shift perhaps induced by climate change. However, it is now clear that a large decrease has occurred in the Baltic Sea (Skov *et al.* 2011), implying a drop in overall population size.

The decline of this species, and other seaducks, in the UK and elsewhere has developed into an issue of real concern and

therefore should become a higher priority issue for researchers and conservationists.

For the first time, Fleet & Wey became the most important WeBS site in Britain for this species. Peak numbers have been largely stable there in recent years, and that site's promotion is just as much related to the decline that has taken place at Forth Estuary in recent years. The maximum there in 2010/11, of just 223 in March, somewhat pales into insignificance when compared to counts from the past; the historic peak is an exceptional 4,290 in January 1969, while 750+ were noted as recently as March 2004. Peak counts at most other sites which surpass the threshold for national importance were close to or below average, a notable exception being Blackwater Estuary where 142 (Mar) represents the most ever recorded.

Numbers at sites in Northern Ireland in 2010/11 were also disappointing, with most of the principal sites hosting maxima that were below average.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Fleet and Wey	284	307	341	233	289	Jan	291
Forth Estuary	347	(261)	267	(316)	223	Mar	288
Moray Firth	211	366	(195)	(246)	(50)	Dec	288
Poole Harbour	(213)	(117)	(241)	(120)	(145)	Jan	(241)
Chichester Harbour	217	211	157	253	213	Dec	210
Morecambe Bay	(118)	(239)	188	176	171	Nov	194
Inner Firth of Clyde	153	145	138	158	199	Aug	159
Langstone Harbour	159	169	114	180 <sup>10</sup>	137	Mar	152
Whiteness to Skelda Ness	134 <sup>9</sup>	192 <sup>9</sup>		156 <sup>9</sup>	83 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	141
Montrose Basin	135	99	113	192	(75)	Apr	135
Sound of Gigha			57 <sup>10</sup>	(178)	(150)	Aug	128
Loch Ryan	106	100	101	136	184	Nov	125
Rova Head to Wadbister Ness		72 <sup>9</sup>	157 <sup>9</sup>	117 <sup>9</sup>	116 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	116
Jersey Shore	126	90			127	Feb	114
Duddon Estuary	106	123	92	141	102	Mar	113
The Wash	70	(53)	(136)	(73)	126	Mar	111 ▲
Piltanton and Luce Estuaries				104	118	Feb	111
Exe Estuary	139	79	140	86	84	Feb	106
North Norfolk Coast	92	131	94	107	85	Mar	102
Blackwater Estuary	72	84	97	108	142	Mar	101
Lavan Sands	81	110	68	131	111	Mar	100
Stour Estuary	85	80	88 <sup>10</sup>	106 <sup>10</sup>	118	Mar	95
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Strangford Lough	390 <sup>10</sup>	(282)	(198)	257	213	Nov	287
Larne Lough	196	142	252	145	140	Feb	175
Belfast Lough	110	183	160	191	120	Oct	153
Lough Foyle	(35)	99	125	101	120	Mar	111
Carlingford Lough	171	106	29	24	(35)	Oct	83
Outer Ards Shoreline	108	38	45	14	22	Mar	45
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2010/2011</b>							
Portsmouth Harbour	97	78	(89)	90	59	Feb	83
Loch Lomond	8	54	240	68	42	Jul	82
Tay Estuary	57 <sup>10</sup>	103	(47)	75	34	Sep	67
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2010/11 in Great Britain</b>							
Lindisfarne	29	34	(55)	71	149	Aug	71
Inner Loch Indaal				37	114	Oct	76

## Goosander

*Mergus merganser*

GB max: 4,643 Jan  
NI max: 4 Feb

International threshold  
(NW & C Europe population): 2,700<sup>+</sup>  
Great Britain threshold: 120<sup>+</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: +<sup>+</sup>

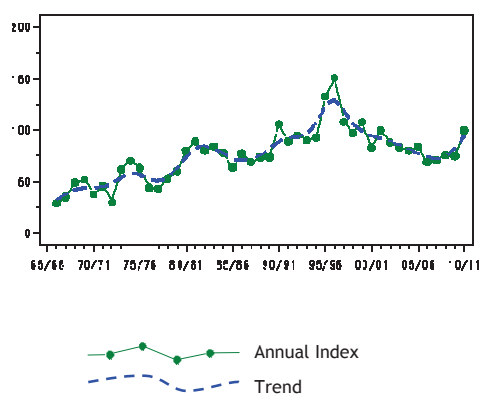


Figure 32.a, Annual indices & trend for Goosander in GB.

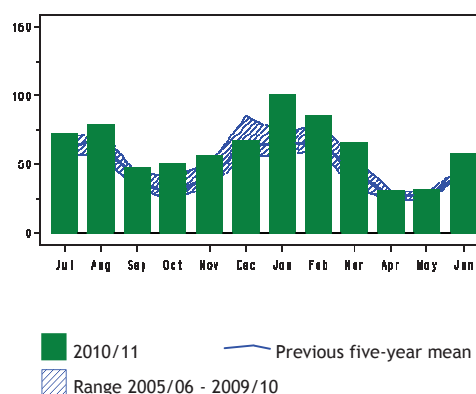


Figure 32.b, Monthly indices for Goosander in GB.

Goosanders that winter in Britain are considered to be largely derived from the breeding population, although some in south-east England are likely to originate from overseas. This is likely to be particularly the case during cold weather on the continent when influxes can occur; as experienced during the winter 2010/11 and evidenced by an associated increase in the national index value for Britain. The monthly indices illustrate elegantly an influx of Goosander into Britain in January, with numbers remaining above average thereafter for the rest of the winter. A positive showing is again apparent in the summer months; evidence of the increasing British breeding population (Baillie *et al.* 2012).

The high supplementary count of 547 birds at Solway Estuary in January is presumably linked, at least in part, to cold weather displacement from frozen water bodies inland. This count represents the highest number reported at a single site through WeBS since 550+ were at Inner Moray Firth in 1994/95 and 1995/96. Further south, in lowland England where winter counts are more likely to relate to continental immigrants, counts at some sites provided

evidence of an influx. After an exceptional peak of 238 at River Avon (Fordingbridge to Ringwood) in November, a number of further above-average counts were registered at sites in January and February. These included 238 at Stretton Sugwas Sand Pit, 152 at Hartleton Water, 53 at Chelmarsh Reservoir and 51 at Abberton Reservoir.



Tommy Holden

As ever, the submission of roost counts of Goosanders from all sites, in order to supplement Core counts, is welcomed.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Solway Estuary	(29)	(25)	50	(64)	547 <sup>12</sup>	Jan	299
Tay Estuary	313	(155)	232	(205)	(152)	Aug	273
Forth Estuary	(119)	(108)	(68)	(184)	225	Jun	225
Loch Lomond	261	36	217	161	153	Oct	166
Tynningham Estuary	157	107	68	171	223	Jul	145
Tweed Estuary	123	42	85	205	186	Oct	128
<b>Additional sites with mean peak counts of 70 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
River Avon - Fordingbridge to Ringwood	53	43	92	101	238	Nov	105
Castle Loch Lochmaben	85	120	116	118 <sup>12</sup>	64	Jan	101
Montrose Basin	57	59	116	131	85	Jul	90
Loch Leven	39	151	68 <sup>12</sup>	97	83	Jan	88
River Tweed - Kelso to Coldstream	74	90	49	111	102	Oct	85
River Tweed - A1 Bypass to Homcliffe					84	Apr	84
Bliethfield Reservoir		51	96 <sup>11</sup>	76 <sup>11</sup>	(100) <sup>11</sup>	Nov	81
Eccup Reservoir	82	70	60	41	135	Jan	78
Acre Nook Sand Quarry	47 <sup>11</sup>	77 <sup>11</sup>	85 <sup>11</sup>	122 <sup>11</sup>	36	Jan	73
Inchgarth Reservoir	0	48	47	149	122 <sup>11</sup>	Oct	73
<b>Other sites surpassing national importance qualifying levels in Winter 2010/2011 in Great Britain</b>							
Stretton Sugwas Sand Pit	0	18	20	28	160	Jan	45
Hartleton Water		0	0	9	152 <sup>12</sup>	Feb	40

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

## Ruddy Duck

*Oxyura jamaicensis*

Naturalised introduction

Native Range: America

GB max: 121 Oct  
NI max: 11 Oct

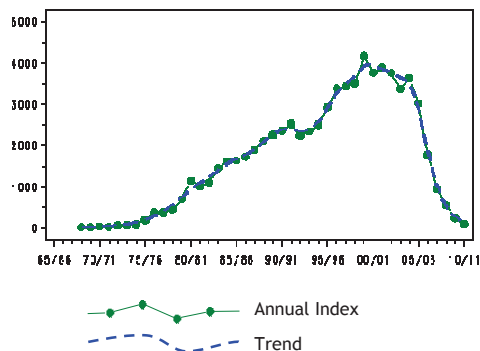


Figure 33.a, Annual indices & trend for Ruddy Duck in GB.

The Ruddy Duck has been the focus of a coordinated international programme to eradicate the species in Europe, as part of the conservation of the White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*).

Despite maintaining a reasonably widespread distribution, the British index has inevitably dropped sharply in recent years. In January 2011, there were estimated to be 150 Ruddy Ducks remaining in Britain (I. Henderson pers. comm., in Musgrove *et al.* (2011)). The peak counts during the year were at Rutland Water (23, Dec) and Dungeness & Rye Bay (16, Jan), the latter one of a small number of sites where the maxima was higher than that of 2009/10.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 30 or more birds in Great Britain</b>							
Abberton Reservoir	261 <sup>30</sup>	49	96	24	11	Oct	88
Staines Reservoirs	277	72	69	10	9	Dec	87
Hilfield Park Reservoir	263	83	31	12	4	Jan	79
Hanningfield Reservoir	276	45	36	9	9	Jul	75
Dungeness and Rye Bay	193	73	31	6	16	Jan	64
Carsington Water	101	132	17	25	9	Jan	57
Thoresby Lake	52 <sup>30</sup>						52
Chew Valley Lake	(130)	17	65	19	11	Feb	48
Attenborough Gravel Pits	40	44	(56)	(31)	(8)	Jan	47
Blagdon Lake	85	103	36	4	4	Nov	46
Mersey Estuary		85	6				46
Thames Estuary	79	73	40	22	10	Jan	45
Clumber Park Lake	66	82	22	8	(1)	Jul	45
Pitsford Reservoir	102	41	40	24	7	Dec	43
Tophill Low Reservoirs	85 <sup>30</sup>	63	38	15	2	Sep	41
Wigan Flashes	73 <sup>30</sup>	55	22	6	(1)	Oct	39
Brent Reservoir	85	46	30	12	15	Oct	38
Tees Estuary	111	13	36	8	0		34
Llyn Alaw	92	18	10	11			33
Holme Pierrepont Gravel Pits	106	38	8	0	2	Feb	31
Humber Estuary	59 <sup>30</sup>	(31)	(14)	3	(1)	Feb	31

## Red-throated Diver

*Gavia stellata*

International threshold: 2,600

Great Britain threshold: 170

All-Ireland threshold: 20\*

GB max: 638 Mar  
NI max: 48 Jan

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Although a localised breeder in northern Scotland (Dillon *et al.* 2009), Red-throated Divers are widespread at coastal sites throughout the UK during the winter, with an estimated population of 17,000 in British waters (O'Brien *et al.* 2008).

In 2010/11, the species was noted at 150 WeBS sites, a typical showing, of which three currently qualify as being nationally important. However, large numbers occur further offshore, but surveys in these areas are not annual. For example, significant concentrations can be

reported from coastal areas of southern Britain, depending on prevailing foraging conditions; indeed the Outer Thames Estuary was designated an SPA due to its wintering numbers of Red-throated Divers. This aggregation is largely missed during WeBS counts, although large numbers sometimes occur within sight of land off Suffolk, Essex and Kent, depending on

conditions. The importance of south-east England was evidenced in 2010/11 by high counts noted at Glyne Gap (Sussex) and Pegwell Bay (Kent). Further north, numbers at sites in Scotland appear to be largely as expected.

There were no inland records away from northern Scotland during 2010/11.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Glyne Gap	126	(109)	(343)	223	(181)	Jan	218
Pegwell Bay	12	11	517	83	338	Jan	192 ▲
Aberdeen Bay offshore	175						175
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Lough Foyle	13	53	81	128	19	Mar	59
Belfast Lough	22	67	20	(34)	21	Nov	33
Outer Ards Shoreline	64	22	12	27	31	Jan	31
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2010/11 in Great Britain</b>							
Minsmere	56	143	10	3	200	Mar	82

## Black-throated Diver

*Gavia arctica*

International threshold: 3,500  
Great Britain threshold: 6\*  
All-Ireland threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 78 Mar  
NI max: 0

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Black-throated Divers were recorded at 50 sites in the UK during WeBS Core counts. Fourteen of these qualified as being nationally important. The premier WeBS site for wintering Black-throated Divers in UK continues to be Gerrans Bay (Cornwall); after an impressive peak of 124 birds noted there in 2009/10, this year's maximum of 58, in March, was more typical.

As usual, most sightings of Black-throated Divers were in Scotland. The peak Scottish WeBS

Core counts this year, all during October-December, were 19 between Bay of Sandoyne and Holme Sound (Orkney), 15 off Arran, and 15 from Girvan to Turnberry. Improved coverage of the coastline of north-west Scotland in particular (such as that undertaken voluntarily by the RAF Ornithological Society each winter) would inevitably derive a truer picture of this species' winter status in northern Britain.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Gerrans Bay	60	53	55	124	58	Mar	70
Loch Ewe	40	(11)	(11)	(33)	(0)		40
Sound of Gigha			19 <sup>12</sup>	15	(8)	Apr	17
Bay of Sandoyne to Holme Sound				15	19	Oct	17
Loch Slapin	28 <sup>26</sup>	13 <sup>26</sup>	1	18 <sup>26</sup>	14	Dec	15
Girvan to Turnberry	1	7	16	25	15	Dec	13
Loch Gairloch	14	(14)	(10)	12	(4)	Jan	13
Arran	1	(3)	(4)	13	15	Nov	10
Little Loch Broom	13	(16)	5	0	(0)		9
Glyne Gap	(9)	(9)	(10)	5	(3) <sup>12</sup>	Jan	8
Applecross Bay	2	13	9	7			8
Red Point to Port Henderson	8	(1)	6	(0)	(0)		7
Grainard Bay	6	8	4	13	2	Feb	7
Kilfinan Bay		11	5	3	4 <sup>12</sup>	Nov	6
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2010/2011</b>							
Sand Bay	4	6	6				5
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 2 or more birds in Northern Ireland<sup>†</sup></b>							
Strangford Lough	3 <sup>12</sup>	0	4 <sup>12</sup>	5 <sup>10</sup>	0		2

<sup>†</sup> as no All-Ireland threshold has been set, a threshold of 2 has been selected for presentation in this report.

## Pacific Diver

*Gavia pacifica*

Vagrant

Native Range: N America

One was seen during the WeBS Core count at Gerrans Bay in November. It, or another, was

present off Cornwall throughout the 2010/11 winter (*per* birdguides.com).

## Great Northern Diver

*Gavia immer*

International threshold:

50

Great Britain threshold:

25\*

All-Ireland threshold:

?<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 215 Nov

NI max: 9 Mar

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Great Northern Divers were recorded at 114 WeBS sites, a lower total than previous years. Following 2010/11, just two areas of the Scottish west coast monitored through WeBS (Sound of Gigha and Loch Na Keal) now surpass the threshold of international importance for Great Northern Divers.

Hence, further count data from sites along this stronghold of the Scottish coast are needed in order for WeBS to be able to illustrate the true status of this species within UK waters. It has long been true that dedicated surveys are required to effectively monitor wintering divers and grebes around the Scottish coastline, but it

is clear that this has never more been the case than now. At sites on the west coast of Scotland, this species can form significant aggregations at sites used for roosting (D. Shackleton, pers. comm.). Surveys at dusk therefore represent an opportunity to gather additional data for this species.

The peak counts received from Scottish waters during 2010/11 was 64 at Loch Na Keal. Elsewhere, the maximum in England was 20 at Gerrans Bay in February, another good showing for that location, comparable to those of recent winters.

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
Sound of Gigha			217 <sup>6</sup>	19 <sup>6</sup>	29 <sup>6</sup>	Oct	88
Rova Head to Wadbister Ness		36 <sup>9</sup>	31 <sup>9</sup>	113 <sup>9</sup>	45 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	56 ▲
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Loch Ewe	53	58	28	47	(15)	Jan	47
Loch Na Keal	(0)	27	29	55	64	Feb	44
Kirkabister to Wadbister Ness		33 <sup>9</sup>	48 <sup>9</sup>				41
Outer Loch Indaal					40	Nov	40 ▼
Loch Eriboll	36	66	16	36	(2)	Feb	39
Gruinard Bay	37	68	29	35	21	Feb	38
Caernarfon Bay		68	8	40	28	Dec	36
Traigh Luskentyre	58	6					32
Quendale to Virkie		27 <sup>9</sup>		30 <sup>9</sup>			29
Loch Slapin	39	24	27	39	13	Dec	28
West Loch Tarbert					27	Nov	27 ▲
Lochs Beg and Scridain (East End)	8	17	25	37	36	Mar	25 ▲
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2010/2011</b>							
Broadford Bay	15	19	16	48	13	Dec	22
<i>No data since 2006/07: Luce Bay offshore; Coll, Tiree &amp; west Mull offshore; Scarp to Vatersay offshore; Scapa Flow</i>							
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2010/11 in Great Britain</b>							
Whiteness to Skelda Ness	14 <sup>9</sup>	23 <sup>9</sup>		15 <sup>9</sup>	26 <sup>9</sup>	Jan	20
Loch Buie	11	7	13	25	30	Mar	17
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 5 or more birds in Northern Ireland<sup>†</sup></b>							
Lough Foyle	17	29	7	55	9	Mar	23
Carlingford Lough	(4)	1	15	7	(0)		8

<sup>†</sup> as no All-Ireland threshold has been set, a threshold of 5 has been selected for presentation in this report.