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## White-rumped Sandpiper

*Calidris fuscicollis*

Vagrant  
Native Range: America

GB max: 1 Sep  
NI max: 0

A White-rumped Sandpiper was recorded at Lunda Wick on Shetland in September.

This species has now been recorded by WeBS in seven of the last ten autumns.

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## Pectoral Sandpiper

*Calidris melanotos*

Vagrant  
Native Range: America, N Siberia, Australia

GB max: 5 Sep  
NI max: 0

Pectoral Sandpipers were recorded at seven sites in England and two in Scotland, typically all in autumn. After one at Boddam in August, birds were seen in September at Pulborough Brooks, Balgray

Reservoir, Castle Lake, Clifford Hill Gravel Pits and Cliffe Pools. October records comprised singles at Pagham Harbour and Shapwick Heath NNR, and two together at Port Meadow in Oxfordshire.

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## Curlew Sandpiper

*Calidris ferruginea*

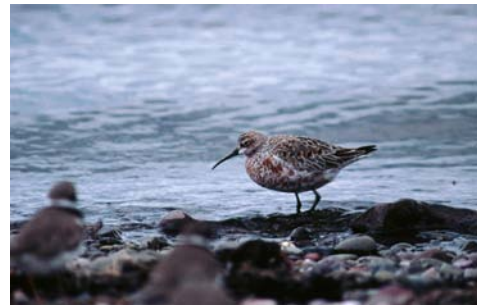
International threshold: 10,000  
Great Britain threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 201 Sep  
NI max: 5 Oct

Curlew Sandpipers are passage migrants to the UK, breeding in central Siberia with the bulk wintering in central and southern Africa. They are scarce here in spring, and numbers in autumn are largely dependent on the summer's breeding productivity.

Autumn passage spanned July to October, with the majority in September when a respectable total of 202 was noted and five sites recorded double-figure counts, the peak of which was a total of 24 across four locations on the North Norfolk Coast.

For inland WeBS counters this species represents an exciting find, and five at Nosterfield Gravel Pits and two at Upton Warren NR were notable, representing the first at those sites since 2001 and 1999 respectively. September also featured the only record from Northern Ireland during the year, at Belfast Lough.



*Curlew Sandpiper (Tommy Holden)*

Single wintering birds were noted at Farlington Marshes and Thanet Coast prior to the change of calendar year, and at Thames Estuary in January and February. Two were at North West Solent in April, followed by typical spring birds on the east coast at Minsmere, Titchwell and Spurn Head in May.

### Sites with ten or more birds in 2007/08<sup>†</sup>

North Norfolk Coast	24	Sep	Thames Estuary	12	Sep
Severn Estuary	17	Sep	Blackwater Estuary	11	Sep
Dungeness and Rye Bay	13	Sep	Humber Estuary	10	Oct

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

# Purple Sandpiper

*Calidris maritima*

International threshold: 750  
 Great Britain threshold: 180<sup>†</sup>  
 All-Ireland threshold: 35\*

GB max: 1,586 Feb  
 NI max: 71 Jan

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

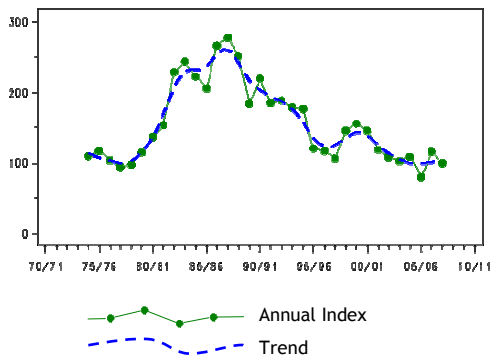


Figure 49.a, Annual indices & trend for Purple Sandpiper for GB.

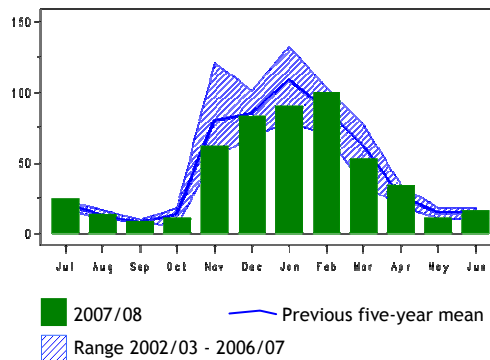


Figure 49.b, Monthly indices for Purple Sandpiper for GB.

The wintering population of Purple Sandpipers in the UK comprises birds which breed in Iceland, Greenland, eastern Canada, Scandinavia and Svalbard. In the UK, the majority are found on the relatively poorly-monitored rocky shores along the coastline of Scotland, covered more effectively by NEWS (Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey) last undertaken in 2006/07 (Austin *et al.* 2008b). The species has exhibited a decline in recent years, which may be attributable to a greater proportion of birds wintering further to the east and north (Delany *et al.* 2009).

The largest WeBS count in 2007/08 was 229 on Moray Coast in February which contributed to that month registering the

highest counted maximum of the year; an above average 1,586. Typically, concentrations gather during passage periods at either end of the species' migration to and from the breeding areas. In southern Britain, small winter aggregations tend to be centred on anthropogenic sites such as harbour entrances and sea defence structures.

In Northern Ireland, records were received from just three sites, with Outer Ards Shoreline again the principal site for the species. Eleven at Belfast Lough in September was the first double-figure count from there since January 2004; a site that formerly held up to 50 wintering birds throughout the 1990s.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Tiree			368 <sup>43</sup>				368
Island of Papa Westray	216	385	431				344
Farne Islands	307	375	116	(184)	(171)	May	266
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Outer Ards Shoreline	(83)	84	60	122	66	Jan	83
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 100 or more birds in Great Britain</b>							
Scuthvie Bay				(35)	164	Mar	164
Ardvachar Point (South Uist)	110	144	200	139	108	Nov	140
Island of Egilsay	195	81	130	(90)			135
Moray Coast	127	134	118	67	229	Feb	135
Dee Estuary (Scotland)	81	185	157	140	88	Jan	130
Howmore Estuary SSSI Coast	120 <sup>47</sup>						120
Bornish & Ormiclate Machairs SSSI	112 <sup>47</sup>						112
Forth Estuary	92	(93)	112	98	(83)	Oct	101
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain</b>							
Thurso Bay	97	120	28	50 <sup>13</sup>	160	Jan	91
Dornoch Firth	27	19	32	20	123	Feb	44

<sup>†</sup> as few sites exceed the British threshold a qualifying level of 100 has been chosen to select sites for presentation

**Dunlin**  
*Calidris alpina*

International threshold: 13,300  
Great Britain threshold: 5,600  
All-Ireland threshold: 880

GB max: 318,628 Jan  
NI max: 10,278 Jan

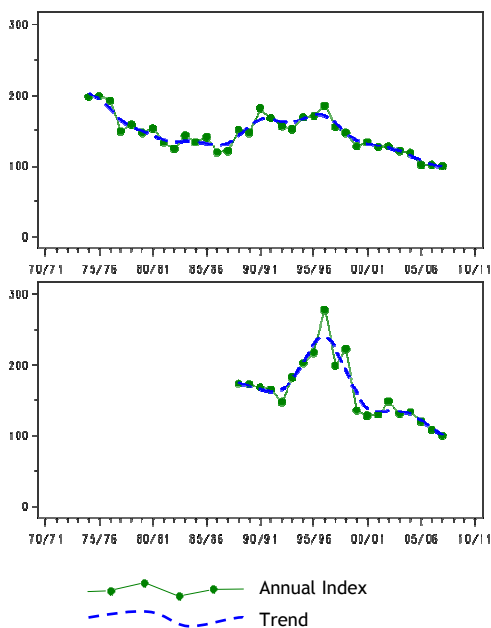


Figure 50.a, Annual indices & trend for Dunlin for GB (above) & NI (below).

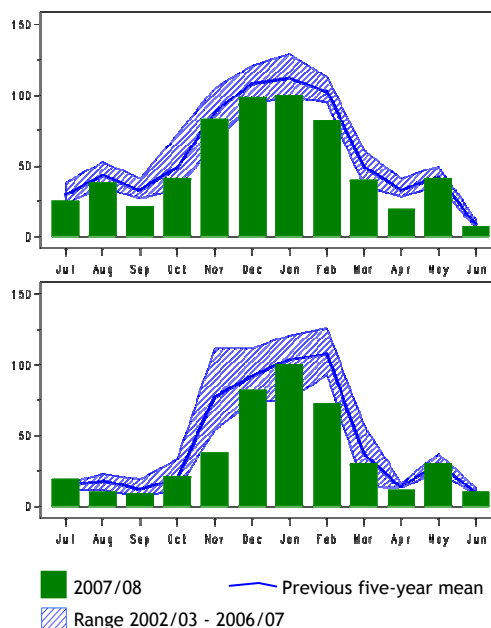


Figure 50.b, Monthly indices for Dunlin for GB (above) & NI (below).

Three races of Dunlin regularly occur in the UK. The nominate race, breeding from Scandinavia northwards and westwards, comprises the bulk of the wintering population, whilst during passage periods, birds of the *arctica* and *schinzii* races, also frequent UK sites.

The trends for both Britain and Northern Ireland illustrate the steady decline of the sites of international and national importance in 2007/08 concerns the Solway Estuary which dropped between the two lists following three relatively poor years. In Northern Ireland, the trend over the last four years has been a steady decline following a period of relative stability during the six years previously. In 2007/08, counts at individual sites, seven of which are classified as being of national importance, were generally low with several sites supporting numbers below their respective five-year averages.

Having reached its lowest ever point in 2005/06, the British index for Dunlin has remained at the same level since. It remains to be seen whether future years will show any improvement in the index, continued stability, or whether the overall trend will continue to be one of general decline in Britain. The only change to the sites of international and national importance in 2007/08 concerns the Solway Estuary which dropped between the two lists following three relatively poor years.

In Northern Ireland, the trend over the last four years has been a steady decline following a period of relative stability during the six years previously. In 2007/08, counts at individual sites, seven of which are classified as being of national importance, were generally low with several sites supporting numbers below their respective five-year averages.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
Mersey Estuary	40,170	43,020	34,731 <sup>11</sup>	34,600	41,270	Nov	38,758
Thames Estuary	(27,318)	40,838	39,889	33,335	34,939	Dec	37,250
Ribble Estuary	24,445	(27,847)	29,305	(33,506)	52,551	May	35,434
The Wash	39,731	42,361	(35,468)	25,913	24,523	Dec	33,599
Morecambe Bay	(18,847)	17,848	(27,110)	38,248	21,743	Dec	26,237
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	41,679	16,878	19,867	35,834	12,094	Feb	25,270
Humber Estuary	19,182 <sup>11</sup>	(14,733)	(26,305)	(14,856)	16,730	Jan	20,739
Langstone Harbour	24,286	28,239	22,356	12,950	15,007	Feb	20,568
Severn Estuary	23,801	(16,069)	(19,561)	16,625	(16,072)	Nov	20,213
Blackwater Estuary	13,958	(16,007)	15,178	(5,472)	15,015	Dec	15,040
Chichester Harbour	12,552	12,651	12,989	14,152	(18,759)	Dec	14,221
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Solway Estuary	17,576	(14,628)	9,396	6,512	(7,194)	Jan	12,028 ▼
Duddon Estuary	7,680 <sup>11</sup>	6,970 <sup>11</sup>	8,741 <sup>11</sup>	6,542	14,523	Jan	8,891
Medway Estuary	(8,086)	9,373 <sup>11</sup>	7,367	(5,222)	(9,132)	Jan	8,624
Alt Estuary	12,743	8,540	5,184	7,630	7,652	May	8,350
Stour Estuary	9,268	(8,456)	7,019	7,231	8,150	Nov	7,965
Dengie Flats	2,700	8,254	13,018	(7,340)	6,116	Nov	7,522
Lindisfarne	(9,503)	5,885	(5,540)	6,951	(4,925)	Sep	7,446
Swale Estuary	6,346	9,181	7,830	5,706	(7,692)	Dec	7,351
Portsmouth Harbour	9,641	3,933	9,228	6,592	(7,002)	Dec	7,349
Burry Inlet	10,150	6,318	6,965	6,218 <sup>11</sup>	6,903	Jan	7,311
Poole Harbour	(5,463)	(7,026)	(2,182)	(2,196)	(2,350)	Feb	(7,026)
Forth Estuary	7,840 <sup>11</sup>	9,132	6,422	5,488	4,936	Jan	6,764
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Strangford Lough	4,967 <sup>11</sup>	4,934	7,669 <sup>11</sup>	3,151 <sup>11</sup>	4,115 <sup>11</sup>	Feb	4,968
Lough Foyle	4,212	1,688	3,334	1,592	2,028	Dec	2,571
Carlingford Lough	(2,339)	2,238	1,573	(2,185)	2,621	Dec	2,191
Outer Ards Shoreline	993	742	1,119	2,810	739	Jan	1,281
Belfast Lough	1,461 <sup>11</sup>	1,136 <sup>11</sup>	920	(1,712)	742	Jan	1,194
Dundrum Inner Bay	886	(497)	1,202	1,047	1,186	Feb	1,080
Bann Estuary	1,060	1,100	1,090	1,030	900	Feb	1,036
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain</b>							
Blyth Estuary	(280)	(432)	(1,228)	4,895	6,130	Jan	5,513
Breydon Water & Berney Marshes	4,100	4,387	5,510	2,970	6,650 <sup>11</sup>	Dec	4,724
Colne Estuary	4,411	3,359	5,323	3,756	6,716 <sup>11</sup>	Nov	4,713

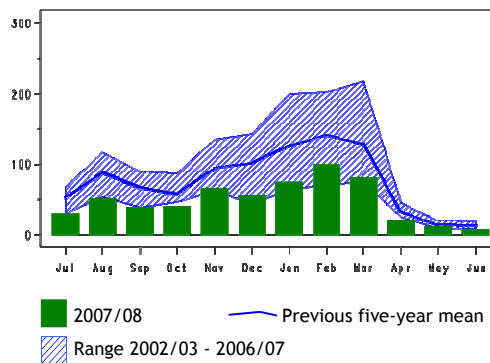
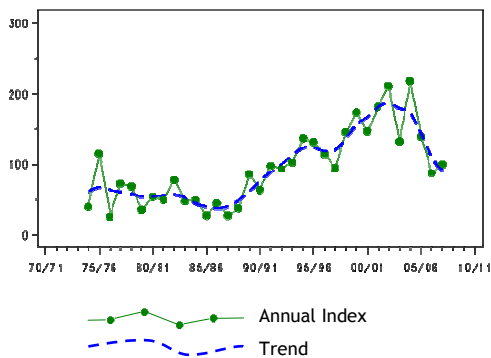
## Ruff

*Philomachus pugnax*

International threshold: 12,500  
Great Britain threshold: 7\*  
All-Ireland threshold: +†

GB max: 558 Feb  
NI max: 39 Dec

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold



The recent dip in the trend for Ruff was not reversed in 2007/08, with the British index similar to that for the previous year. Three sites maintained five-year monthly maxima averages of 100+, and a further 22 achieved double-figure counts during the course of the year, including Somerset Levels and Fen Drayton Gravel Pits from where all-time maxima were recorded.

The species was noted at four sites in Northern Ireland, including Belfast Lough from where a count of 39 in December represented the most ever in the province, surpassing 34 at Loughs Neagh & Beg in 2006/07.

Ruffs are recorded throughout the year in Britain. It both supports passage birds

most of which are recorded on the coast particularly in the autumn, as well as a wintering population that occurs largely at traditional inland wetlands and grazing marshes. The two most important sites in UK have tended to exemplify this seasonal contrast in recent years, with maxima at Ouse Washes consistently occurring in late winter whereas peaks on the North Norfolk Coast have been in the mid to late autumn period. However in 2007/08 both sites recorded their peak numbers in October. The degree of exchange between passage and wintering sites is unclear, but there are indications in Britain of a high degree of site fidelity to wintering sites between years (Smart *et al.* 2002).

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Ouse Washes	232 <sup>13</sup>	(431)	357 <sup>13</sup>	82 <sup>13</sup>	135 <sup>13</sup>	Oct	247
North Norfolk Coast	243	270	193	121	90	Oct	183
Lower Derwent Ings	99	73	50	148	129	Feb	100
Breydon Water & Berney Marshes	100	86	72	55 <sup>12</sup>	89 <sup>13</sup>	Jan	80
WWT Martin Mere	86	83	(50)	76	67	Jan	78
Humber Estuary	(110)	35	84	61	62	Aug	70
Swale Estuary	(54)	128	37	49	40	Feb	64
Morecambe Bay	(20)	(3)	4	92	(1)	Aug	48
Somerset Levels	33	10	(12)	29	96	Feb	42
Nene Washes	128	16	2	4	38	Mar	38
Middle Yare Marshes	17	53	40	27	21	Feb	32
Dungeness and Rye Bay	15	30	56	34	16	Mar	30
Rutland Water	52	20	32	29	15	Oct	30
Abberton Reservoir	51	6	36	(9)	21	Nov	29
Ribble Estuary	21	29	17	32	37	Mar	27
Tees Estuary	44	8	(29)	33	15	Aug	26
Arun Valley	52	24	6	10	(10)	Jan	23
Thames Estuary	43	28	38	3	4	Jan	23
The Wash	71	5	14	11	2	Sep	21
Fen Drayton Gravel Pits	7	0	1	33	60	Feb	20
Severn Estuary	18	13	16	33	14	Jan	19
Blackwater Estuary	19	24	18	(0)	15	Feb	19
Tophill Low Reservoirs	23	4	4	0	62 <sup>13</sup>	Aug	19
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	13	29	(10)	9	11	Oct	16
Hamford Water	20	17	18	5	14	Jan	15
Minsmere	18	9	12	20	10	Apr	14
Sandbach Flashes	16	13	13	14	12	Oct	14
Holland Marshes	12	14	10	17	7	Mar	12
Stour Estuary	1	3	55	1	1	Aug	12
Crouch-Roach Estuary	5	42 <sup>11</sup>	4	2	6	Oct	12
East Chevington Pools	13	12	28	6	1	Dec	12
Orwell Estuary	30	3	5	9	6	Aug	11
Nosterfield Gravel Pits	7	11	3	23	9	Sep	11
Loch of Strathbeg	8	7	21	8	6	Aug	10
Solway Estuary	29	2	8	3	1	May	9
Stodmarsh NNR & Collards Lagoon	10	2	14	5	8	Jan	8
Otmoor	0	4	0	31 <sup>13</sup>	3 <sup>13</sup>	Jan	8
Cresswell Pond	17	6	6	10	2	Oct	8
Micklemere					7 <sup>13</sup>	Sep	7 ▲
Hardley Flood	18	0	0	0	16	Feb	7
Forth Estuary	2	5	(9)	14	4	Sep	7

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2007/2008</b>							
R. Cam: Upware to Dimmocks Cote	13	8		0	1	Aug	6
Ouse Fen & Pits (Hanson/RSPB)	(21)	2	2	4	0		6
Pegwell Bay	2	3	11	7	0		5
Blithfield Reservoir	6	0			0		2
Ythan Estuary	0	(0)	7	0	0		2
Hagnaby Lock Fen	9	11	1	0			5
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 7 or more birds in Northern Ireland<sup>†</sup></b>							
Belfast Lough	2 <sup>11</sup>	3 <sup>11</sup>	4 <sup>11</sup>	1 <sup>11</sup>	39	Dec	10
Loughs Neagh and Beg	0	5	7	34	6	Oct	10
Lough Foyle	(7)	16	11	6	2	Oct	9
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain</b>							
Montrose Basin	3	(1)	2	1	9	Aug	4
Camel Estuary	2	1	(2)	1	8	Oct	3

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

## Jack Snipe

*Lymnocyptes minimus*

International threshold: ?  
Great Britain threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: 250<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 170 Feb

NI max: 1 Feb

Jack Snipe is notoriously difficult to census using WeBS methods and hence limited inferences can be drawn from analysis of the national dataset. However, deliberate standardised searches carried out at favoured sites are of huge value in assessing changes in status at the local level at least.

For WeBS counters, 2007/08 was a productive year for encounters with Jack Snipe. Nationally, double-figure counts

were received from twelve sites, the highest of these being 35 at Craigmarloch in November and 21 at Chichester Harbour in December. Only single figures were again reported from Doxey Marshes SSSI where 60+ were present in 2001/02 and 2004/05. For the second year running just one was noted in Northern Ireland; at Belfast Lough in February, the first recorded there for six years.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 5 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Doxey Marshes SSSI	16	61	18	9	6	Mar	22
Rumworth Lodge Reservoir				21 <sup>23</sup>			21
Bickershaw Colliery Area	11 <sup>23</sup>	14 <sup>23</sup>	18 <sup>23</sup>	32 <sup>23</sup>			19
Chat Moss	28 <sup>23</sup>	34 <sup>23</sup>	14 <sup>23</sup>	7 <sup>23</sup>	6 <sup>23</sup>	Nov	18
Chichester Harbour	7	6	18	37	21	Dec	18
Windlaw Marsh	15	18	22	25	12	Mar	18
Craigmarloch		2 <sup>13</sup>		15	35	Nov	17
Lower Derwent Ings	22	27	24	5	4	Jan	16
Severn Estuary	5	10	19	6	12	Feb	10
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	23	3	1	2	18	Mar	9
Kemerton Lake	9						9
Inner Moray and Inverness Firth	8	5	2	7	11	Oct	7
Langstone Harbour	0	12	9	0	13	Mar	7
Waulkmill Glen & Littleton Reservoirs	12	10	6	4	2	Mar	7
Boat of Garten Pools		6					6
Kinsham Pool	0	1	8	7	16	Jan	6
Ribble Estuary	(2)	4	(3)	8	(1)	Dec	6
Somerset Levels	(1)	2	3	9	9	Jan	6
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Loch Doilet and Polloch Bay	3	0	0	0	12	Jan	3
Malltraeth RSPB	(0)	0	1	0	10	Nov	3
Black Cart Water (Gryfe-White Cart)	0	2	0	0	8	Feb	2
Lacock GP	5	1	1	2	7	Mar	3
Furber's Flood				0	6	Nov	3
Upton Warren Local Nature Reserve	3	5	3	2	6	Feb	4

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Baddiley Mere and Reservoir				2	5	Jan	4
Gwen Finch Wetland Reserve	0	1	0	0	5	Nov	1
Harelaw Reservoir (Barrhead)		0	0	0	5 <sup>13</sup>	Oct	1
Orchard Farm Pool	0	0	0	0	5	Feb	1
Ouse Washes	0	(1)	0	1 <sup>13</sup>	5	Oct	2
Pegwell Bay	0	(0)	0	5	5	Nov	3
St David's Airfield Heath SSSI	1	1	2		5	Jan	2
Welbeck Estate	1	1	1	1	5	Oct	2

† as few sites exceed the All-Ireland threshold and no British threshold has been set, a qualifying level of five has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

## Snipe

*Gallinago gallinago*

International threshold: 20,000?

Great Britain threshold: ?†

All-Ireland threshold: ?†

GB max: 9,175 Feb

NI max: 166 Feb

\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Numbers of Snipe breeding in Britain have crashed in recent years primarily due to habitat loss. The wintering population is found in a range of habitats, both inland and coastal, and is supplemented largely by birds from northwest Europe.

Despite being widespread and present at many sites monitored via WeBS in winter, owing to the difficulty in counting them accurately due to their secretive habits caution must be applied when interpreting figures for the species. Moreover, there are also many potential wintering areas such as grazing marshes and bogs that are not covered comprehensively by WeBS.

The largest Core count by a considerable margin during 2007/08 was 1,794 at Somerset Levels in February, representing the highest number recorded there since January 2001.

Elsewhere, over a thousand were also counted on the saltmarshes of the North Norfolk Coast during Low Tide survey operations. In general, numbers throughout Britain were favourable compared to a relatively poor year in 2006/07, with increased numbers registered at virtually all of the principal sites.

In Northern Ireland, the maximum of 110 at Loughs Neagh & Beg was the most there since November 2003.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 200 or more birds in Great Britain†</b>							
Somerset Levels	(308)	1,513	713	1,012	1,794	Feb	1,258
Lower Derwent Ings	269	3,125	1,182	193	302	Jan	1,014
Doxey Marshes SSSI	390	716	455	224	278	Mar	413
Severn Estuary	519	349	337	113	402	Feb	344
Malltraeth RSPB	54	570	251	261	573	Oct	342
North Norfolk Coast	121	81	155	96	1,225 <sup>11</sup>	Dec	336
Maer Lake	403	378	280	105	180	Dec	269
Morecambe Bay	(147)	(265)	304	(140)	107	Jan	225
Ouse Washes	233	306 <sup>13</sup>	247 <sup>13</sup>	60	170	Nov	203
Southampton Water	212	184	210	(66)	(34)	Dec	202
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 50 or more birds in Northern Ireland†</b>							
Belfast Lough	86 <sup>11</sup>	45 <sup>11</sup>	170	33	57	Dec	78
Loughs Neagh and Beg	151	22	31	33	110	Feb	69
Ballysaggart Lough	53						53
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain†</b>							
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	161	168	126	95	401	Jan	190
Duddon Estuary	20	96	226	20	283	Dec	129
Brading Harbour	155	66	68	134	236	Feb	132

† as no British or All-Ireland thresholds have been set qualifying levels of 200 and 50 have been chosen to select sites, in Great Britain and Northern Ireland respectively, for presentation in this report

## Long-billed Dowitcher

*Limnodromus scolopaceus*

Vagrant  
Native Range: America

GB max: 1 Feb  
NI max: 0

A single Long-billed Dowitcher was reported in 2007/08; it was seen on The Fleet in Dorset in February and represents

the first WeBS record for the site. This species has only failed to be recorded in two of the last fifteen WeBS-years.

## Woodcock

*Sclopax rusticola*

International threshold: 20,000?  
Great Britain threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: ?<sup>†</sup>

GB max: 46 Nov  
NI max: 0

*\*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold*

Due to its secretive habits and preference for non-wetland habitats, Woodcocks remain poorly monitored by WeBS Core counts. Records from 84 sites spanned all months from August to March, with a maximum of 46 birds noted in

November. The majority of records were of single birds, the highest counts being 13 at Loch of Strathbeg in October and nine at Arcot Pond in February, with a further five sites holding four or more birds. There were no reports from Northern Ireland.

## Black-tailed Godwit

*Limosa limosa*

International threshold: 470  
Great Britain threshold: 150  
All-Ireland threshold: 140

GB max: 30,347 Sep  
NI max: 1,422 Jan

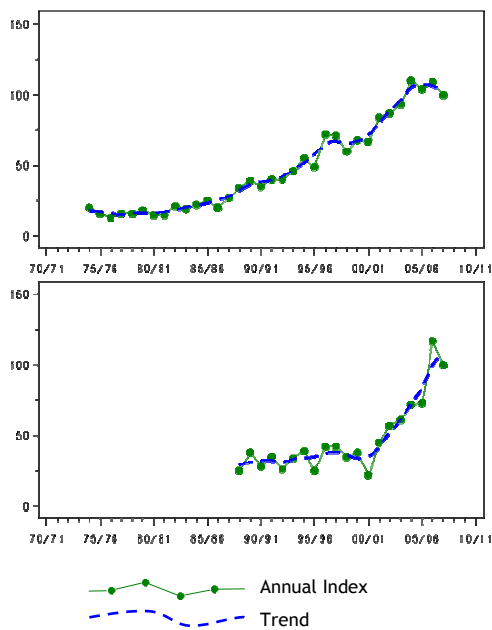


Figure 52.a, Annual indices & trend for Black-tailed Godwit for GB (above) & NI (below).

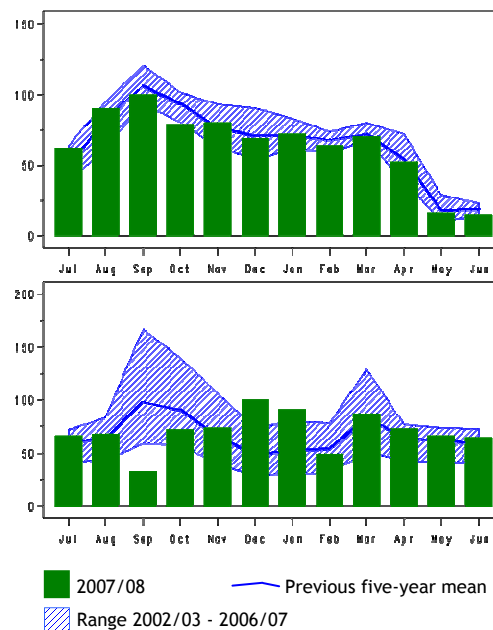


Figure 52.b, Monthly indices for Black-tailed Godwit for GB (above) & NI (below).



Most of the non-breeding Black-tailed Godwits that occur in Britain and Northern Ireland are of Icelandic origin. In addition, a small proportion of passage birds are of the nominate race which are mainly to be found in the south and east of England where a very small number also breed.

Stroud *et al.* (2004) estimated a 30% increase in the Icelandic population of this species between the 1980s and 1990s, during which period the British index of wintering birds rose significantly. In 2007/08 however, the index showed a small drop compared to the previous year, indicating that the trend of annual increases may have come to an end and the wintering population may now have stabilised. Further years data are required in order to ascertain whether this is genuinely the case.

The UK is of significant importance for this species, with twenty-nine sites qualifying to be of international importance in 2007/08. This represents an increase of three on the previous year, following the

inclusion of Nene Washes, Warton Floods and Deben Estuary. A further 17 sites surpassed the threshold of national importance. Of the most important sites, the peak count of the year was recorded at Thames Estuary where 8,081 in September resulted in the five-year average for the site rising by over 1,000 birds. Although WeBS has frequently shown marked annual variation in utilisation of some sites by this species, numbers at the major sites in 2007/08 were otherwise largely consistent with previous years. Lower numbers recorded at Ouse Washes may be associated with a redistribution of birds to nearby Nene Washes where numbers have increased considerably.

In Northern Ireland, the index fell slightly compared to the previous year but remained high in a historical context. Counts from Strangford Lough were similar to the previous two years, whereas low numbers were seen at Lough Foyle for the second year running.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
The Wash	7,635	5,546	8,205	8,090	(6,961)	Aug	7,369
Thames Estuary	(2,254)	3,757	5,221	4,893	8,081	Sep	5,488
Dee Estuary (England and Wales)	4,493	6,452	5,379	3,713	5,278	Nov	5,063
Ribble Estuary	(2,175)	2,936	(2,921)	5,095	3,913	Feb	3,981
Humber Estuary	2,108	2,435	3,296	5,323	4,554	Oct	3,543
Ouse Washes	3,137 <sup>13</sup>	3,424	4,154 <sup>13</sup>	1,790 <sup>13</sup>	761	Apr	2,653
Blackwater Estuary	(1,804)	2,356	(1,243)	(751)	2,387	Mar	2,372
Mersey Estuary	2,407	2,950	2,510	418	(339)	Jul	2,071
Poole Harbour	(2,133)	1,732	(1,431)	1,907	(1,413)	Nov	1,924
Breydon Water & Berney Marshes	1,630	1,612	1,675	1,421 <sup>11</sup>	2,469 <sup>13</sup>	Nov	1,761
Stour Estuary	1,717	1,972	1,507	1,215	2,148	Sep	1,712
Swale Estuary	1,511	1,782	(1,389)	1,396	(1,186)	Feb	1,563
Nene Washes	185	770	156	1,120	3,800	Mar	1,206 ▲
Medway Estuary	(398)	(518)	(190)	(1,120)	(490)	Mar	(1,120)
R. Avon: Ringwood to Christchurch	170	26	1	(3,000)	2,000	Feb	1,039
Exe Estuary	(1,079)	1,054	1,090	999	913	Nov	1,027
North Norfolk Coast	774	1,577	940	645	1,139	Aug	1,015
Alde Complex	600	298	1,181	1,385	774	Nov	848
Chichester Harbour	1,050	545	(995)	685	775	Nov	810
Orwell Estuary	768	(277)	975	523	845 <sup>11</sup>	Dec	778
Crouch-Roach Estuary	(261)	729 <sup>11</sup>	(265)	(554)	754	Feb	742
Belfast Lough	706	857	642	(586)	708	Jan	728
Pagham Harbour	541	664	340	(764)	1,100	Dec	682
R. Avon: Ford'bridge to Ringwood	0	(1)	0	(1,750)	888	Mar	660
Langstone Harbour	457	758	665	562	674	Nov	623
Morecambe Bay	403	722	747	928	290	Jun	618
Warton Floods					600	Jan	600 ▲
Deben Estuary	(466)	305	575	622	707	Apr	552 ▲
Burry Inlet	(410)	845	994	300 <sup>11</sup>	24	Oct	541
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Hamford Water	414	314	625	372	441	Nov	433
Portsmouth Harbour	(211)	360	(494)	(398)	371	Dec	406
Colne Estuary	253	472	171	(477)	617 <sup>11</sup>	Feb	398

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
North West Solent	373	311	474	353	469	Jan	396
Severn Estuary	540	(450)	(435)	297	221	Sep	389
Southampton Water	(434)	291	489	295	(374)	Mar	377
Forth Estuary	478	348	380	348	280	Sep	367
Eden Estuary	403	374	181	294	318	Feb	314
Carmarthen Bay	331	307	237	101 <sup>11</sup>	(28)	Nov	244
Beaulieu Estuary	116	326	190	317	238	Jan	237
Newtown Estuary	(173)	(113)	374	(223)	89	Oct	232
Blyth Estuary	(25)	(76)	194	121	319	Feb	211 ▲
Leighton Moss	125	290	25	280	260	Jun	196
Sandbach Flashes	360	151	254	92	35	Apr	178
Solway Estuary	200	(275)	94	81	(43)	Apr	163 ▲
Ouse Fen and Pits (Hanson/RSPB)	135	1	0	187	450	Feb	155 ▲
Christchurch Harbour	174	169	93	32	300	Feb	154 ▲
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Strangford Lough	267	176	717 <sup>11</sup>	535 <sup>11</sup>	645	Dec	468
Lough Foyle	161	983	397	60	52	Dec	331
<b>Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain</b>							
Minsmere	62	53	43	177	217	Nov	110
Yar Estuary	73	83	171	94	204	Dec	125
Alt Estuary	134	52	116	241	194	Aug	147
Arun Valley	(8)	4	2	31	162	Feb	50

## Bar-tailed Godwit

*Limosa lapponica*

International threshold: 1,200  
Great Britain threshold: 620  
All-Ireland threshold: 160

GB max: 28,230 Jan  
NI max: 3,461 Jan

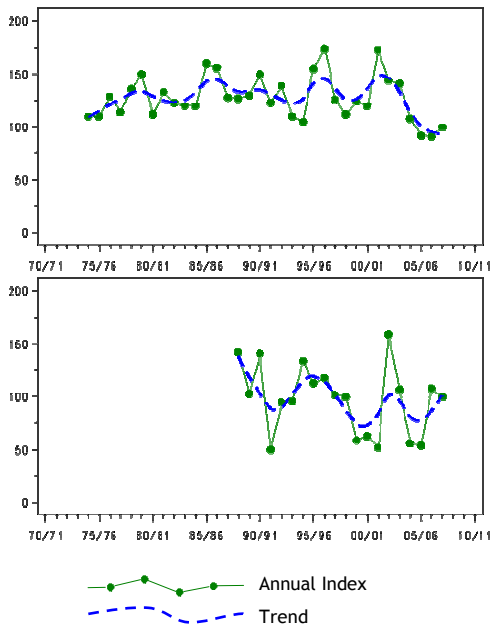


Figure 53.a, Annual indices & trend for Bar-tailed Godwit for GB (above) & NI (below).

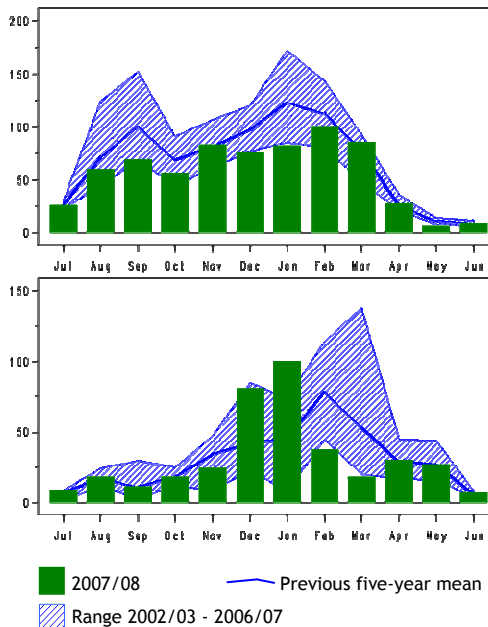


Figure 53.b, Monthly indices for Bar-tailed Godwit for GB (above) & NI (below).

The migratory feats of the Bar-tailed Godwit have been demonstrated by satellite-tracking of birds from New Zealand to Alaska ([www.prbo.org/cms/425](http://www.prbo.org/cms/425)).

Those wintering in Britain are of the nominate race *lapponica* whose breeding range extends from northeast Europe to western Siberia. Britain formerly supported

almost half of the *lapponica* population however the national index has fallen notably over the course of the last six years. In addition, many passage birds to Britain are of the *taymyrensis* race, which migrate from central Siberia to winter on the west coast of Africa.

The 2007/08 British index once again illustrates the low point reached by Bar-tailed Godwit as a wintering species in Great Britain. Despite the fact that the index shows a small improvement compared to the previous two years, the counted British maximum of 28,230 individuals in January was the lowest ever, 12% less than the previous low recorded in 2005/06.

In Britain, below average numbers were recorded throughout the year up until late winter when the monthly indices were close to normal. Wintering numbers in the UK are influenced by the weather conditions in, and the associated use of, the Wadden Sea and southern delta of the Netherlands. Despite a high degree of site fidelity to both staging and wintering areas in successive years (Scheiffarth *et al.* 2001) this has traditionally led to large annual

variation in numbers using UK estuaries, but recent mild winters are likely to have had a consistently negative effect on the number of Bar-tailed Godwits selecting sites on the British side of the North Sea. This is likely to have resulted in a gradual eastward shift of the wintering population as a consequence of "short stopping" (Maclean *et al.* 2008).

Numbers at virtually all of the 14 sites of international importance in the UK were below the respective five-year site averages, most notably at Thames Estuary and Alt Estuary where the peak counts were the lowest ever recorded.

In Northern Ireland, the particularly high level of annual variation shown by the index is typical. Numbers at the two key sites, Lough Foyle and Strangford Lough, fared relatively well compared to the important sites in Britain. In addition, Belfast Lough qualified to be a site of national importance for the first time. However, in contrast to the monthly indices for Britain, notably high numbers were present in Northern Ireland during the months of December and January.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites of international importance in the UK</b>							
The Wash	21,086	11,268	(9,849)	11,900	10,755	Feb	13,752
Thames Estuary	8,989	6,595	6,613	8,629	3,711	Mar	6,907
Ribble Estuary	11,301	4,657	(3,510)	4,628	5,162	Nov	6,437
Alt Estuary	8,120	4,138	4,221	4,100	2,939	Mar	4,704
Humber Estuary	4,291 <sup>11</sup>	(2,460)	(2,227)	(1,865)	(1,490)	Jan	4,291
North Norfolk Coast	7,429	1,360	3,273	2,990	1,783	Jan	3,367
Lindisfarne	(4,078)	2,900	1,787 <sup>11</sup>	2,535	(2,170)	Sep	2,825
Morecambe Bay	4,424	1,752	2,158	(2,157)	(407)	Mar	2,778
Cromarty Firth	3,439	2,311	651	803	(707)	Dec	1,801
Lough Foyle	1,019	(630)	1,133	(2,672)	2,300	Jan	1,781
Tay Estuary	2,664	(1,680)	1,050	1,002 <sup>11</sup>	(1,000)	Mar	1,599
Forth Estuary	1,750 <sup>11</sup>	1,599	1,188	1,502	(921)	Aug	1,510
Dengie Flats	1,550	1,250	1,550	1,062	(1,500)	Jan	1,382
Strangford Lough	2,019	1,422	1,378	529	1,305	Dec	1,331
<b>Sites of national importance in Great Britain</b>							
Hamford Water	803	(647)	(657)	(1,239)	1,255	Jan	1,099
Dornoch Firth	1,068	1,495	1,681	541	301	Oct	1,017 ▼
Chichester Harbour	(910)	863	(1,200)	630	(1,228)	Feb	966
Solway Estuary	1,572	1,050	958	529	473	Sep	916
Inner Moray and Inverness Firth	830	901	770	785	390	Oct	735
South Ford	950	1,040	422	782	454	Feb	730
Loch Bee SSSI Coast	713 <sup>47</sup>						713
Swale Estuary	462	922	481	585	750	Feb	640 ▲
<b>Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland</b>							
Belfast Lough	154	180 <sup>13</sup>	139	(159)	212	Sep	171 ▲

## Whimbrel

*Numenius phaeopus*

GB max: 1,284 Aug  
NI max: 37 May

International threshold: 6,800  
Great Britain threshold: +<sup>†</sup>  
All-Ireland threshold: +<sup>†</sup>

A small number of Whimbrel breed in the far north of Scotland, but most birds recorded in Britain are those which breed in Iceland, Scandinavia and western Siberia migrating to the principal wintering areas in west Africa.

Owing to the fact that many sites are not counted during the April/May and July/August migration periods, the species is relatively poorly-monitored by WeBS. Furthermore, spring passage of the species tends to peak specifically in late April and early May whereas Core count dates tend to be nearer mid-month. A small number of individuals winter on favoured British estuaries annually.

Whimbrels were recorded at 102 sites throughout Britain and a further five in Northern Ireland. For the first time since 2001 the monthly peak occurred in August. This was due to a relatively poor spring passage and owed much to the maxima for The Wash (324), North Norfolk Coast (257) and Chichester Harbour (209), the three largest counts of the year, all occurring in August. The latter two counts represented the largest ever for the respective sites, but all were some way short of the highest

ever WeBS count of 1,812 from the Severn Estuary in May 1977.



*Whimbrel (Ron Marshall)*

Nineteen sites, the majority of which are estuaries on the south coast of England, held birds during the core winter period of December to February. Most records were of one or two birds, the exceptions being peaks of four at Fal Complex and three at Southampton Water in December, and four at Chichester Hbr in January.

One was at Outer Ards Shoreline in January, the sixth year out of the last eight that the species has been recorded wintering in Northern Ireland.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
<b>Sites with mean peak counts of 50 or more birds in Great Britain<sup>†</sup></b>							
Barnacre Reservoir & Grizedale Lea	575 <sup>48</sup>	553 <sup>48</sup>	270 <sup>49</sup>				466
The Wash	86	(414)	292	233	324	Aug	270
Dungeness and Rye Bay	214 <sup>42</sup>	373 <sup>42</sup>	222 <sup>49</sup>	246 <sup>12</sup>	(8)	May	264
Brockholes Quarry	329 <sup>49</sup>	289 <sup>49</sup>	154 <sup>49</sup>				257
Severn Estuary	(240)	(197)	101	186	85	May	162
North Norfolk Coast	141	166	129	70	257	Aug	153
Burry Inlet	110	175	111	223	40	Jul	132
Exe Estuary	298	42	(48)	109	60	Jul	127
Chichester Harbour	142	143	78	31	209	Aug	121
Langstone Harbour	(62)	78	96	58	84	Aug	79
Swale Estuary	(77)	(13)	(17)	(20)	(11)	Jul	(77)
Morecambe Bay	(54)	(182)	60	(53)	16	May	73
Humber Estuary	(53)	(82)	(107)	(78)	36	Aug	71
Lower Derwent Ings	35 <sup>45</sup>	139 <sup>45</sup>	95 <sup>49</sup>		1	Apr	68
Southampton Water	(33)	(29)	63	(27)	(7)	May	63

<sup>†</sup> as no British or All-Ireland thresholds have been set a qualifying level of 50 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report