Table 30. LIGHT-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE (SVALBARD POPULATION): MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Lindisfarne	1,440	1,865	+2,160	2,150	2,470	Nov	2,017

RED-BREASTED GOOSE
Branta ruficollis

Vagrant and escape
Native range: Asia and SE Europe

GB maximum: **2** **Sep**
NI maximum: **0**

The timing and location of the two records in 1995-96, both of singles at Coul Reservoir Sep and the Yar Estuary Sep, suggest that they relate to escaped birds, rather than genuine vagrants. Whilst a number of serious threats to the wild population remain (Heredia *et al.* 1996), surveys in the 1990s suggest that the world population numbers around 70,000 (Hunter & Black 1995), more than double the previous estimates.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE
Alopochen aegyptiacus

Naturalised introduction†
Native range: Africa

GB maximum: **228** **Sep**
NI maximum: **0**

The peak count in Britain in 1995-96 was the highest since 1991-92, when counts were first included in the WeBS report. Numbers decreased steadily during the winter, as in previous years, although this was not as pronounced as normal and 100 birds were recorded in February (Table 1). The count at Rutland Water was one of the largest of this species away from East Anglia, whilst twelve birds at Livermere in August was the only other count of 10 or more birds. Egyptian Geese were formerly much more widespread in Britain, following their introduction from South Africa in the late 1700s and early 1800s (Prater 1993). The range then contracted, but numbers have been growing gradually in recent decades, with a corresponding increase in records from other areas, and 906 were counted during the survey of feral geese in Britain in 1991 (Delany 1992).

Table 31. EGYPTIAN GOOSE: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain†							
North Norfolk Marshes	71	19	113	179	97	Sep	96
Pentney GP	88	32	-	-	-		60
Sennowe Park Lakes	-	58	-	-	-		58
St Benet's Levels	29	54	28	0	58	Feb	34
Didlington	-	-	-	-	28	Jul/Sep	28
Blickling Lake	23	14	16	-	-		18
Rutland Water	9	16	13	12	31	Jun	16
Nunnery Lake	2	7	15	16	24	Jul	13
Gunton Park Lake	11	8	12	-	-		10
R. Wensum: Fakenham - Gt. Ryburgh	7	12	11	10	-		10

† *as Egyptian Goose is an introduced species in the UK, site designation does not occur and the 1% criterion is not applied. A qualifying level of 10 has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report*

RUDDY SHELDUCK
Tadorna ferruginea

Escape
Native range: Asia, N Africa and S Europe

GB maximum: **11** **Nov**
NI maximum: **0**

Most of the 21 sites which held birds in 1995-96 were estuaries. Although the peak national total occurred in November, the count of 10 in late summer is notable, especially given the smaller number of sites covered at this time. Fiddlers Ferry Power Station Lagoons (5, Oct), Chew Valley Lake (4, Jul), Hayle Estuary (3, Nov), Mersey Estuary (2, Jul), Morecambe Bay (2, Jun/Aug/Oct), Poole Harbour (2, Nov), Severn Estuary (2, Oct/Nov/Feb) and Tring Reservoirs (2, Jul) all held two or more birds.

CAPE SHELDUCK
Tadorna cana

Escape
Native range: S Africa

GB maximum:	**1**	**Dec**
NI maximum:	**0**	

A single bird was seen at King George VI Reservoir in December, whilst one at Naseby Reservoir in April was presumably the same as that at nearby Sulby in November 1994.

PARADISE SHELDUCK
Tadorna variegata

Escape
Native range: New Zealand

GB maximum:	**1**	**Jul/Aug/Mar**
NI maximum:	**0**	

Birds were recorded at Chew Valley Lake (1, Jun/Jul) and Barton Pits (1, Mar).

SHELDUCK
Tadorna tadorna

International importance: 3,000
Great Britain importance: 750
All-Ireland importance: 70

GB maximum:	**77,890**	**Jan**
NI maximum:	**3,858**	**Jan**

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB	134	115	127	109	126
NI	113	102	120	130	155

January provided the peak Shelduck count in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as is often the case for this species, with that in Great Britain the highest since 1991-92. Indices have fluctuated around the 120 mark for over 15 years, peak values often coinciding with severe winters (see Ridgill & Fox 1990). The Northern Ireland figure is the second highest recorded by the count scheme, surpassed only by a count of 4,500 birds in 1988-89. There appears to have been an influx into the province between December and February (Table 4), coinciding with cold conditions over continental Europe and a run of easterly winds early in this period, which will have contributed to the high index value.

The premier site in the UK remains the Wash, although numbers in the last three years have been relatively low compared with the counts of 15-20,000 in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Twelve other sites hold internationally important numbers, with no changes to this list since the 1993-94 report. Counts on the Humber, Forth and Blackwater in 1995-96 were noteworthy, whilst there has been a sustained rise in numbers at Poole Harbour. Of the 19 other sites which hold nationally important numbers, counts on the Solway, Hamford Water, Orwell and Montrose Basin were higher than expected, as, in Northern Ireland, was the count at Belfast Lough, the first four-figure count at this site. No other sites recorded numbers exceeding the respective 1% thresholds in 1995-96.

Many of the birds that winter in the UK moult on the Wadden Sea, frequenting the German section in particular where numbers can reach in excess of 200,000 birds (Nehls *et al.* 1992). Swenner & Mulder (1995) noted a steady increase in the number of birds using Dutch sections of the Wadden Sea over the last forty years, though this has generally been in line with the population increase over this period rather than the German sections reaching an apparent carrying capacity. Their observations suggest that lack of human disturbance, rather than food availability, is the key factor rendering an area suitable as a moult site.

A recent study of Shelduck overwintering on British estuaries (Pettifor & Kershaw 1996) shows that the population has grown at an annual rate of 6.1% between 1960 and 1993, although at only 4.8% during the last ten years of this period. A detailed examination of 74 estuaries for which sufficient data were available for the period 1974 to 1993 showed numbers had increased significantly over time on 41 sites (13 of which were of international importance for Shelduck), whilst numbers had declined on 10 (only one of which, the Tees Estuary, was of national or international importance). Of the nationally and internationally important sites with sufficient data, four sites (the Swale, Medway, Crouch/Roach and Tamar) have increased at a rate equal to or greater than the overall population over the period 1984-93.

To reflect the increase of the Northwest European population as a whole, the international 1% threshold has been increased to 3,000 (Scott & Rose, 1996).

Table 32. SHELDUCK: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Wash	20,089	18,465	14,242	12,873	14,238	Dec	15,981
Dee (Eng/Wal) Est.	6,487	6,893	6,229	8,742	5,786	Nov	6,827
Morecambe Bay	6,972	5,178	5,734	8,524	6,098	Jan	6,501
Medway Est.	6,068	5,585	6,046	4,463	3,853	Nov	5,203
Mersey Est.	7,946	4,414	3,746	4,584	4,507	Jan	5,039
Humber Est.	4,680	3,971	4,481	3,383	5,240	Aug	4,351
Ribble Est.	4,849	3,040	5,230	3,278	4,523	Jan	4,184
Forth Est.	[1]4,420	4,414	1,560	5,337	5,077	Sep	4,162
Severn Est.	3,644	2,560	2,627	4,466	3,508	Dec	3,361
Blackwater Est.	2,960	3,356	2,749	2,570	4,356	Jan	3,198
Great Britain							
Poole Hbr	2,382	2,769	2,982	3,177	3,575	Feb	2,977
Thames Est.	2,515	3,097	2,923	2,539	2,469	Feb	2,709
Swale Est.	2,286	3,692	2,434	2,234	2,782	Jan	2,686
Stour Est.	2,822	2,272	2,967	1,963	2,297	Jan	2,464
Solway Est.	2,090	2,294	1,616	2,527	3,293	Nov	2,364
Colne Est.	1,942	2,337	1,122	1,533	2,017	Jan	1,790
Chichester Hbr	1,863	1,750	1,404	1,275	1,980	Feb	1,654
Hamford Water	1,202	1,423	1,710	1,508	2,146	Feb	1,598
Orwell Est.	1,026	1,411	1,320	1,221	1,989	Jan	1,393
Tees Est.	1,154	1,138	1,496	1,089	1,267	Feb	1,229
Eden Est.	1,590	1,133	1,031	952	930	Nov	1,127
Duddon Est.	865	770	1,362	1,567	974	Jan	1,108
Alde Est.	1,154	1,035	1,202	932	1,074	Jan	1,079
N. Norfolk Marshes	1,064	1,084	1,042	1,185	710	Feb	1,017
Burry Est.	1,504	991	1,062	608	695	Jan	972
Deben Est.	875	779	1,297	925	950	Mar	965
Langstone Hbr	740	1,017	661	698	1,477	Feb	919
Cleddau Est.	923	613	874	1,178	1,008	Feb	919
Lindisfarne	1,065	825	820	930	855	Dec	899
Crouch/Roach Est.	1,119	1,046	691	720	486	Feb	812
Tamar Complex	1,016	853	840	538	708	Mar	791
Montrose Basin	606	601	701	818	1,039	Dec	753
Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lo.	1,950	1,755	2,187	2,189	2,464	Dec	2,109
Belfast Lo.	467	287	509	621	1,062	Feb	589
Larne Lo.	225	248	247	373	371	Jan	293
Lo. Foyle	379	179	174	215	508	Dec	291
Carlingford Lo.	176	243	193	294	172	Dec	216
Lo. Neagh/Beg	159	189	121	193	236	May	180
Dundrum Bay	90	143	121	65	76	Mar	99

1 *Counts in August of moulting birds (D.M. Bryant,* in litt.)

MUSCOVY DUCK
Cairina moschata

Feral
Native range: S America

GB maximum: **100** Nov
NI maximum: **0**

The large November peak mostly comprised birds at Lothing Lake & Oulton Broad (95, Nov). Of other 14 sites to hold this species in 1995-96, Reddish Vale Visitors Centre (11, Feb) was the only one with more than 10 birds.

WOOD DUCK
Aix sponsa

Escape
Native range: North America

GB maximum: **4** **Dec**
NI maximum: **0**

Wood Duck were recorded at nine sites, four of which held two birds and one, the Cotswold Water Park East, which held three in July.

MANDARIN
Aix galericulata

Naturalised introduction†
Native range: Eastern Asia

GB maximum: **199** **Nov**
NI maximum: **0**

Total counts of Mandarin have remained reasonably constant during the 1990s, with most monthly totals exceeding 100 and occasionally 200. However, despite their obvious livery, the species' generally unobtrusive nature and its occurrence in wooded areas, albeit often close to 'parkland' lakes, means that only a small proportion of the probably quite large British population is ever counted. The sites listed in Table 33 provide a reasonable reflection of the species general distribution in the UK, but probably grossly underestimate the numbers even at these sites.

Mandarin feed on acorns and beech mast during winter months, and were aided considerably in their establishment in Britain by artificial feeding and the provision of nestboxes (Kear 1990). There appear to be no obvious deleterious effects on British wildlife; indeed, the only possible competitor suggested to date is another alien, the Grey Squirrel, given their similar feeding and nesting habits.

Table 33. MANDARIN: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain†							
Severn Est.	-	-	79	78	40	Nov	66
Cutmill Ponds	40	42	84	32	51	Feb	50
Virginia Water	37	15	-	74	-		42
Cannop Ponds	41	8	-	-	-		25
Woburn Park Lakes	53	44	4	8	7	Aug	23
Swanbourne Lake	11	31	34	15	-		23
Arun Valley	2	2	8	40	51	Nov	21
Busbridge Lakes	31	23	23	17	0		19
Panshanger Estate	-	-	-	-	18	Oct	18
R. Dee: Aldford/Eaton	-	-	-	0	34	Dec	17
Osterley Park Lakes	-	-	-	-	16	Jan	16
Paultons Bird Park	0	0	26	37	-		16
Witley Park	25	18	3	17	6	Aug/Sep	14
Fleet Pond	34	5	8	14	1	Sep	12
Fonthill Lake	15	12	14	5	10	Jan	11
R Wensum: Fakenham to Gt Ryburgh	15	4	14	7	-		10

† *as Mandarin is an introduced species in the UK, site designation does not occur and the 1% criterion is not applied. A qualifying level of 10 has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report*

WIGEON
Anas penelope

International importance: 12,500
Great Britain importance: 2,800
All-Ireland importance: 1,250

GB maximum: **347,552** **Jan**
NI maximum: **10,650** **Oct**

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB	137	133	134	151	153
NI	105	81	65	74	66

Wigeon are the most numerous wildfowl species recorded by WeBS, with Lapwing and Dunlin the only other waterfowl to occur in larger numbers in recent years. The January peak in Great Britain was almost 50,000 below the

record count in 1994-95, although index values, correcting for variation in coverage, suggest little change. Peak counts in Northern Ireland usually occur during autumn (Table 34), and the peak count in October exceeded 10,000 birds for the first time since 1992-93. Indices, however, show the Northern Ireland population to be relatively low compared with the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Only five sites in the UK hold numbers meeting the new threshold for international importance for Wigeon. A significant addition to this list since 1993-94 is the Somerset Levels, a large area of flooded grazing marsh now benefitting from sympathetic management (Evans *et al.* 1995). Such management has probably been the cause of large increases there in recent years, and also on the Nene Washes and Lower Derwent Valley. Numbers at Lough Foyle, which holds a large percentage of the Northern Ireland population, appear to have staged something of a recovery following a sharp decline in the early 1990s, though numbers remain well below the previous, regular counts of 10-20,000. Large counts in 1994-95 were made at a number of sites, including the second largest count in Europe on the Ribble, exceeded only by 114,000 birds at the Marismas del Guadalquivir in Spain (Scott & Rose 1996). Much higher than normal numbers were also recorded on the Mersey and the Dee Estuaries, and also on Lindisfarne in 1994-95, recalling the large numbers of 10 years ago at the latter site, although the count in 1995-96 at fell to a new low. Other noteworthy counts on nationally important sites included those on the Severn Estuary, continuing the rise of recent years, the Alde and the Arun Valley, though counts on the Fleet/Wey and Humber were well down. Other sites recording 2,800 or more Wigeon in 1995-96 were Dungeness Gravel Pits (3,919, Mar), Southampton Water (3,804, Jan), Hamford Water (3,785, Dec), Foryd Bay (3,740, Dec) and the Thames Estuary (3,043, Mar).

An analysis of count data for Strangford Lough suggests that the dramatic decline in peak Wigeon numbers between 1976-77 and 1988-89, at 12.2% per annum, during a period when numbers of Light-bellied Brent numbers remained high, was not the result of competitive interaction between the two species (Fox *et al.* 1994). In particular, Brent numbers had not increased in those sections of the Lough where numbers of Wigeon remaining into mid winter had declined significantly. Further, the decline was not related to changes either in the population as a whole or at other sites, and stable numbers at the site since 1980 suggest a new, lower carrying capacity for Wigeon, determined partly by food resources and perhaps increased human disturbance also. Studies on the Exe Estuary, where Wigeon numbers had also declined at the same time as Brent numbers increased, showed a clear separation in feeding habits (Fox 1996). Wigeon fed on *Zostera* leaves, especially those floating on water retained by the eel-grass beds after the tide had retreated, whilst Brents uprooted and consumed whole plants, especially in areas of soft substrate. It is possible, however, that competitive interactions had caused the initial decline in Wigeon numbers, but there is little evidence to suggest any current adverse effect on the population as a whole.

Table 34. WIGEON: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Ribble Est.	88,612	48,441	92,465	110,278	83,922	Dec	84,744
Ouse Washes	37,064	28,879	23,791	28,284	30,545	Jan	29,713
Dornoch Fth	17,637	15,091	14,501	10,911	12,540	Oct	14,136
N. Norfolk Marshes	14,898	9,881	13,631	16,471	14,377	Dec	13,852
Somerset Levels	3,480	10,253	8,880	21,290	24,302	Jan	13,641
Great Britain							
Swale Est.	9,731	12,422	9,262	15,039	15,906	Jan	12,472
Mersey Est.	11,500	9,235	9,121	17,650	11,254	Jan	11,752
Cromarty Fth	14,878	7,299	9,603	8,629	11,973	Dec	10,476
Lower Derwent Valley	4,000	7,500	11,650	14,140	-		9,323
Martin Mere	16,630	11,220	2,600	5,580	9,280	Feb	9,062
Inner Moray Fth	8,058	9,999	9,417	8,962	8,200	Dec	8,927
Nene Washes	2,050	4,708	11,909	11,302	11,526	Jan	8,299
Lindisfarne	9,580	5,845	6,724	13,476	3,662	Oct	7,857
Morecambe Bay	6,944	5,832	6,684	7,494	7,045	Dec	6,800
Middle Yare Valley	6,408	5,358	7,637	4,335	6,223	Nov	5,992
Fleet/Wey	8,245	5,804	4,783	5,013	2,957	Dec	5,360
Humber Est.	4,767	4,349	5,789	7,502	3,000	Feb	5,081
Severn Est.	3,910	3,838	4,015	5,689	6,267	Jan	4,744
Medway Est.	5,741	2,866	3,883	4,705	5,131	Nov	4,465
Alde Est.	3,293	2,893	3,473	6,345	5,827	Jan	4,366
Montrose Basin	5,456	3,555	3,600	4,233	4,856	Nov	4,340
Breydon Water	3,500	3,800	5,100	4,900	4,300	Feb	4,320
Rutland Water	4,270	3,877	4,160	3,859	5,014	Dec	4,236
Dyfi Est.	4,003	3,689	4,831	3,665	4,363	Nov	4,110
Dee (Eng/Wal) Est.	5,078	3,155	1,866	8,091	2,191	Dec	4,076
Arun Valley	2,522	3,176	3,753	2,054	5,138	Mar	3,329
Wash	5,441	3,203	1,361	3,621	2,580	Dec	3,241

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Stour Est.	3,018	3,757	3,027	3,951	1,958	Mar	3,142
Lo. of Harray	3,780	3,285	3,105	2,145	3,222	Nov	3,107
Thames Est.	3,875	2,570	2,359	3,539	3,043	Mar	3,077
Abberton Res.	6,936	1,746	1,864	1,861	2,032	Feb	2,888
Cleddau Est.	4,020	2,461	2,088	2,403	3,455	Dec	2,885
Northern Ireland							
Lo. Foyle	16,622	5,869	3,513	6,094	8,438	Oct	8,107
Lo. Neagh/Beg	3,203	2,849	2,633	3,669	3,229	Dec	3,117
Strangford Lo.	1,630	1,900	1,870	1,747	2,457	Dec	1,921
Upper Lo. Erne	-	592	1,744	1,707	1,692	Dec	1,434

AMERICAN WIGEON
Anas americana

Vagrant
Native range: North and Central America

GB maximum: **4** **Nov**
NI maximum: **0**

One of the more numerous North American vagrant wildfowl, reports were received from eight sites, predominantly in Scotland: Forth Estuary (1, Nov-Mar), Loch of Skene (1, Oct /Nov), Loch Ussie (1, Feb), Montrose Basin (1, Nov/Jan), Solway Estuary (1, Dec), Southampton Water (1, Jan), Conwy Estuary (1, Feb/Mar) and Barcombe Mills Reservoir (1, Jun).

CHILOE WIGEON
Anas sibilatrix

Escape
Native range: South America

GB maximum: **2** **Jul**
NI maximum: **0**

Two birds were recorded at Swan Pool, Falmouth, in July, with singles at Hurworth Burn Reservoir Sep, Priory Water Dec and Thrapston Gravel Pits Oct.

GADWALL
Anas strepera

International importance: **300**
Great Britain importance: **80**
All-Ireland importance: **+**[*†]

GB maximum: **10,526** **Dec**
NI maximum: **207** **Oct**

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB	488	503	603	693	752
NI	141	177	138	182	134

Numbers of Gadwall in Northwest Europe have shown one of the most sustained and consistent increases of any wildfowl species for available data (1960s onwards). This growth, at an average rate of between 8 and 10% per annum (Ruger *et al.* 1986; Rose 1995), has resulted in a revision of the population estimate to 30,000 birds (Scott & Rose 1996). Only six sites now qualify as internationally important, the Severn Estuary and Pitsford Reservoir not meeting the new threshold. Numbers in Great Britain have matched the international picture: national monthly totals only exceeded 2,000 in the late 1970s, and reached 5,000 for the first time in the mid 1980s; indices suggest that the population more than trebled between 1975 and 1985, with the 1995-96 figure being exactly double that again. Counts in Northern Ireland show a high degree of fluctuation, largely due to the small numbers involved, but with no obvious trend of increase in the last 10 years.

Gadwall generally occur in rather small numbers at individual sites, the number at Rutland being notable at an international as well as national level. Although numbers at some have shown obvious increases, this trend is by no means apparent at all sites in Table 35. Many now appear to show more fluctuating numbers, including Rutland Water which supports no more birds than 10 years ago, perhaps suggesting that the limit for these sites has been reached. Instead, further increase in the population is likely to be through colonisation of new sites. In 1992-93, 31 sites in Great Britain held an average of 80 or more Gadwall, compared with 51 sites in 1995-96. Numbers at several sites have undergone short-term declines but have since recovered to previous levels, e.g. Abberton Reservoir. Low numbers at Gunton Park Lake, previously of international importance, Hardley Flood and Thorpe Water Park may thus represent part of such fluctuations, rather

than indicate deterioration of the site. Much larger than average numbers were recorded at, amongst other sites, Burghfield Gravel Pits, Somerset Levels, Bewl Water, Colne Valley Gravel Pits, Cotswold Water Park East and surprisingly, given relatively low numbers of several other species of waterfowl at the site, Dungeness Gravel Pits. A large number of other sites, which may be potential candidates for national importance in the future, held 80 or more birds in 1995-96, namely Alton Water (197, Jan), Wellington Country Park (174, Feb), Longside Lake (168, Dec), Chichester Gravel Pits (161, Dec), Tophill Low Reservoirs (160, Oct), Earls Barton Gravel Pits (154, Dec), Tabley Mere (150, Dec), Meadow Lane Gravel Pits (149, Feb), Brent Reservoir (143, Dec), Rye Harbour & Pett Level (143, Dec), Marsh Lane Gravel Pits (125, Oct), Stanford Reservoir (120, Nov), Middle Tame Valley Gravel Pits (117, Jan), Benacre Broad (115, Dec), Grafham Water (114, Sep), Twyford Gravel Pits (110, Nov), Holme Pierrepont Gravel Pits (108, Jan), Fort Henry Ponds & Exton Park Lake (106, Feb), Baston/Langtoft Gravel Pits (104, Feb), Linford Gravel Pits (102, Jan), Stoke Newington Reservoirs (102, Nov), Sonning Gravel Pits (101, Jan), The Wash (94, Feb), Frampton Pools (89, Jan), North-West Solent (89, Mar), Clifford Hill Gravel Pits (83, Dec), Deeping St James Gravel Pits (83, Jan), Chilham to Chartham Gravel Pits (81, Jan) and Hilfield Park Reservoir (80, Dec). In Northern Ireland, Upper River Quoile (19, Oct) and Upper Lough Erne (18, Nov) were the only other sites hold more than 10 birds.

Table 35. GADWALL: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Rutland Water	1,369	501	933	1,671	1,306	Nov	1,156
Avon Valley (Mid)	719	1,051	488	584	491	Dec	667
Abberton Rsr	218	358	517	668	829	Sep	518
Lee Valley GP	362	523	400	393	156	Mar	367
Ouse Washes	249	417	455	378	225	May	345
Wraysbury GP	116	404	426	307	389	Dec	328
Hornsea Mere	-	-	300	338	-		319
Great Britain							
Severn Est.	296	332	252	270	268	Feb	284
Pitsford Reservoir	119	49	82	627	471	Nov	270
Hampton & Kempton Rsrs	139	246	(46)	253	145	Dec/Jan	232
Gunton Park Lake	450	38	186	-	-		225
Hardley Flood	128	373	360	15	(0)		219
Chew Valley Lake	425	190	155	140	180	Sep	218
Seaton GP	-	163	293	194	(12)	Feb	217
Lo. Leven	120	200	262	252	230	Oct	213
Nene Washes	62	239	311	168	250	Mar	206
Fen Drayton GP	181	-	133	276	194	Dec	196
North Norfolk Marshes	123	133	260	267	193	Sep	195
Lackford GP	217	161	-	-	-		189
Thorpe WP	285	250	149	164	60	Dec	182
Buckden/Stirtloe GPs	209	144	133	147	236	Jan	174
Hollowell Rsr	24	89	212	281	245	Oct	170
Burghfield GP	-	46	121	112	393	Feb	168
Stoke Fleet	-	-	-	-	168	Mar	168
Eversley Cross/Yateley GP	113	175	151	193	184	Jan	163
Cotswold WP West	107	170	208	162	170	Jan	163
Thames Est.	83	133	228	179	177	Jan	160
Stanford Training Area	242	215	119	67	135	Jan	156
Somerset Levels	99	80	206	97	293	Feb	155
Sutton/Lound GP	-	110	-	152	191	Dec	151
Hanningfield Rsr	245	134	90	130	157	Sep	151
Fairburn Ings	55	70	128	168	239	Oct	132
Dungeness GP	112	51	58	165	260	Nov	129
Fleet/Wey	78	53	211	171	96	Jan	122
Thrapston GP	168	97	54	149	139	Dec	121
Tattershall GPs	62	160	160	96	-		120
Westbere Lakes	-	61	44	163	199	Nov	117
Bewl Water	64	68	60	222	173	Dec	117
Little Paxton GP	98	45	178	196	69	Sep/Feb	117
Ditchford GP	145	46	58	129	187	Feb	113
Colne Valley GP	42	34	66	173	237	Dec	110
Cotswold WP East	37	34	101	102	235	Jan	102
Rostherne Mere	110	131	18	92	156	Sep	101
North Warren/Thorpeness Mere	27	112	103	131	130	Feb	101
Dinton Pastures	145	50	95	102	101	Dec	99
Minsmere	90	82	99	141	68	Jul	96
Langtoft West End GP	113	54	59	-	152	Jan	95

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Swanholme Lake	129	72	86	82	79	Feb	90
Pen Ponds	123	-	119	60	49	Nov	88
Stodmarsh	94	31	86	142	71	Feb	85
Swillington Ings	100	82	91	91	54	Sep	84
Northern Ireland†							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	133	158	120	301	120	Nov	166
Strangford Lo.	106	114	112	124	82	Oct/Dec	108

† *as no threshold has been set for national importance for Gadwall in Northern Ireland, a qualifying level of 10 has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report*

TEAL
Anas crecca

International importance: 4,000
Great Britain importance: 1,400
All-Ireland importance: 650

			Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB maximum:	**128,569**	**Dec**	**GB**	**261**	**229**	**281**	**273**	**285**
NI maximum:	**4,745**	**Dec**	**NI**	**92**	**64**	**65**	**67**	**73**

Numbers of Teal in Great Britain grew steadily between the 1960s and early 1980s, followed by a brief decline. Indices for the 1990s show the population to have stabilised at a level slightly below the early 1980s peak. In Northern Ireland, index values dropped sharply in the early 1990s and have since remained at only around three quarters of the former level. Count totals in both countries mirror the trends to a large degree. In Northwest Europe as a whole, numbers exhibit a slow but long-term increase (Rose 1995).

Interestingly, for a mobile species known to react quickly to cold weather (Ridgill & Fox 1990), there is no evidence, either from count numbers or monthly fluctuations, that more Teal moved into the UK following cold spells on the continent in 1995-96. Indeed, data for Northern Ireland (Table 4) show that, following the peak count in December, numbers declined much more rapidly than usual. The most significant count in 1995-96 was that on the Somerset Levels, by far the largest at a single site in Britain since those on the Mersey in the early 1980s. Following the earlier indications that numbers on the Levels might be limited to around 15,000, it is unclear whether the site's importance will continue to increase, or whether the large count may result from birds having been displaced from elsewhere in the country by the cold weather. Numbers on the Mersey dropped sharply, whilst those on the Dee Estuary appear to have stabilised at relatively low levels. Peaks at Hamford Water, Abberton Reservoir, Loch Leven, Cleddau Estuary, Southampton Water and Rutland Water were all greatly elevated. Sites where 1995-96 totals were notably lower than their respective means were generally those with rather fluctuating numbers, although peaks at Loch of Strathbeg and the Arun Valley have declined continuously over a number of winters. Other sites to hold 1,400 or more birds in 1995-96 were Chew Valley Lake (2,190, Jan), Solway Estuary (1,942, Sep), Exe Estuary (1,901, Nov), Pagham Harbour (1,870, Dec), Poole Harbour (1,661, Dec), Tees Estuary (1,657, Nov) and Stanford Reservoir (1,600, Nov), whilst Upper Lough Erne (697, Dec) was the only other site in Northern Ireland to hold more than 650 birds.

Table 36. TEAL: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Somerset Levels	1,908	11,330	15,251	13,197	24,792	Jan	13,296
Mersey Est.	13,450	12,020	13,034	12,098	7,734	Feb	11,667
Ribble Est.	9,500	6,813	8,876	5,859	7,343	Nov	7,678
Dee (Eng/Wal) Est.	10,715	6,194	3,742	4,085	4,867	Dec	5,921
Lower Derwent Valley	4,000	4,132	8,231	7,050	-		5,853
Great Britain							
Hamford Water	4,048	2,184	3,807	2,746	5,283	Dec	3,614
Abberton Rsr	4,245	2,321	1,656	3,022	5,816	Dec	3,412
Severn Est.	2,711	1,986	3,778	4,288	3,806	Jan	3,314
Martin Mere	2,600	3,470	2,760	3,560	4,020	Nov	3,282
Ouse Washes	5,157	2,085	2,349	3,614	2,218	Mar	3,085
Swale Est.	1,311	2,057	5,027	4,278	2,174	Nov	2,969
N. Norfolk Marshes	2,740	2,779	2,698	2,888	2,665	Dec	2,754
Blackwater Est.	2,002	1,558	3,509	3,213	1,825	Nov	2,421
Inner Moray Fth	2,225	1,957	2,128	2,100	2,873	Feb	2,257

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Lo. Leven	1,873	1,850	1,233	2,200	3,884	Oct	2,208
Nene Washes	965	1,141	2,438	3,748	2,602	Mar	2,179
Morecambe Bay	3,036	2,349	1,334	1,967	2,127	Jan	2,163
Cleddau Est.	2,188	1,671	1,760	1,226	2,948	Dec	1,959
Alde Est.	2,378	1,420	2,054	1,497	2,306	Dec	1,931
Lo. of Strathbeg	2,931	2,160	2,050	1,145	1,205	Oct	1,898
Medway Est.	2,360	1,619	1,649	1,767	1,901	Nov	1,859
Arun Valley	2,286	2,760	1,565	1,356	1,277	Mar	1,849
Thames Est.	1,627	1,058	1,654	3,176	1,674	Feb	1,838
Dornoch Fth	1,406	1,682	1,782	2,303	1,759	Dec	1,786
Southampton Water	1,675	1,372	1,437	1,705	2,700	Dec	1,778
Humber Est.	2,480	1,405	1,898	1,200	1,376	Nov	1,672
Woolston Eyes	1,500	1,550	1,500	2,500	1,150	Jan	1,640
Mere Sands Wood	2,664	985	2,131	884	1,075	Jan	1,548
Rutland Water	1,917	910	978	805	2,491	Mar	1,420
Northern Ireland							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	1,805	1,669	1,481	1,801	1,227	Oct	1,597
Strangford Lo.	1,133	1,379	1,363	1,617	1,681	Dec	1,435
Lo. Foyle	1,003	492	403	1,007	852	Oct	751

SPECKLED TEAL
Anas flavirostris

Escape
Native range: South America

GB maximum: **1** **Jan**
NI maximum: **0**

Despite the relatively large number and diversity of escaped wildfowl in Great Britain, a single bird at Station Fields, Suffolk, in January is an unusual record.

MALLARD
Anas platyrhynchos

International importance: 20,000**
Great Britain importance: 5,000†
All-Ireland importance: 500

GB maximum: **148,459** **Nov**
NI maximum: **11,519** **Sep**

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB	76	75	68	66	67
NI	135	118	124	138	170

Following the decline of the late 1980s and early 1990s, numbers of Mallard in Great Britain have stabilised in recent years, albeit at the lowest levels during the 30 year period for which index values have been calculated. Mallard distribution is widespread, which presents difficulties in both monitoring the species adequately. Although the total counts represent only a small proportion of the true wintering numbers, thought to be as many as half a million birds, there is no reason to believe that the index calculated for Mallard is not representative of the population as a whole. Indeed, since the majority of WeBS count data are derived from the largest sites, many of which receive some form of protection and active management and on which the majority of most other duck species are increasing, it is possible that WeBS data are presenting a more favourable picture than is really the case. The current position emphasises the need for better monitoring of this species away from main resorts, such as might be achieved through sampling a random set of sites of all habitats, and for national statistics on numbers of released stock and hunting kills.

Numbers in Northern Ireland were the largest yet recorded by WeBS, fractionally higher than counts made in the early 1990s, whilst indices suggest a much more exaggerated rise. The greater variability in trends for Northern Ireland, as a result of the smaller numbers of sites and years for which data are available, allows only a tentative evaluation, but does not suggest a decline as in Great Britain.

Counts in 1995-96 at five of the 12 sites in Table 37 recorded noticeably fewer birds than the five year mean. The only count in Britain of 4,000 or more was at Tring, where numbers have increased steadily in recent years. The late summer total suggests that this is an important moult site or, alternatively, the release of large numbers of birds in the area. Numbers at Loughs Neagh & Beg were the highest numbers for at least the five winters. Rutland Water (2,179, Aug), Medway Estuary (2,027, Nov) and Upper Lough Erne (679, Dec) were the only other sites where counts exceeded 2,000 in Great Britain or 500 in Northern Ireland.

Table 37. MALLARD: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain†							
Ouse Washes	3,203	4,342	5,693	4,511	2,868	Dec	4,123
Morecambe Bay	3,504	2,780	3,563	4,456	3,798	Oct	3,620
Humber Est.	2,975	5,015	3,055	3,184	2,621	Jan	3,370
Wash	4,244	2,133	3,518	3,379	3,512	Dec	3,357
Severn Est.	4,864	3,277	3,145	2,870	2,383	Dec	3,308
Martin Mere	3,000	2,835	3,210	3,400	3,100	Dec	3,109
Lower Derwent Valley	1,050	3,600	4,000	3,100	-		2,938
Tring Rsr	1,812	1,404	2,736	3,250	4,000	Aug	2,640
Solway Est.	2,422	2,183	2,988	2,624	2,637	Sep	2,571
Forth Est.	3,020	2,432	2,717	2,648	2,003	Oct	2,564
Dee (Eng/Wal) Est.	3,720	2,681	1,306	1,814	1,425	Sep	2,189
Windermere	2,777	1,924	1,907	1,374	2,019	Jan	2,000
Northern Ireland							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	5,499	5,408	3,699	5,713	6,791	Aug	5,422
Lo. Foyle	1,799	1,596	2,166	1,699	1,755	Sep	1,803
Strangford Lo.	1,591	1,405	1,780	1,886	1,503	Oct	1,633
Belfast Lo.	621	737	659	517	533	Sep	613

† *as no site in Great Britain is of national importance for Mallard, a qualifying level of 2,000 has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report*

BLACK DUCK
Anas rubripes

Vagrant
Native range: North America

GB maximum: **1** **Oct**
NI maximum: **0**

A presumed genuine transatlantic vagrant was recorded on Tresco Great Pool in October.

PINTAIL
Anas acuta

International importance: 600
Great Britain importance: 280
All-Ireland importance: 60

GB maximum: **26,728** **Jan**
NI maximum: **177** **Dec**

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB	193	141	134	145	155
NI	160	121	119	79	87

Following several years in which peak counts reached just 20,000 birds, Pintail numbers rose again in 1995-96 to match those of the late 1980s. The count suggests that the WeBS network records the majority of British wintering birds. Indices show a rapid rise in the late 1960s, followed by a period of probable decline, although with fluctuating numbers, with current levels representing some of the lowest during the period. This agrees well with the international picture of a general decline in the population over a similar period, though the trend is not statistically significant (Rose 1995). Nevertheless, Pintail is one of only two wildfowl species for which the international 1% threshold has been reduced in the latest review (Scott & Rose 1996). It is likely that Britain alone supports around half the Northwest European population, the highest percentage of any duck species. Given that a high proportion of these birds are concentrated in Irish Sea estuaries, the UK clearly has an important obligation with regard to the protection of Pintail. Perhaps surprisingly, numbers in Ireland are low, although, as in Britain, the majority of birds are found at just a few sites. Strangford Lough supports nearly all of the birds recorded in Northern Ireland, whilst Dublin Bay held around one third of the 1,223 recorded by I-WeBS in the Republic in 1994-95 (Delany 1995).

The high proportion of sites in Table 38 that are of international importance further emphasizes the importance of the UK for Pintail. After the obvious cluster of sites in northwest England and southwest Scotland, smaller concentrations are apparent around The Wash and the Thames. Numbers at many sites appear to fluctuate quite considerably between years, although large counts on the Ribble Estuary and the Burry Inlet were notable. Numbers on the Solway have grown steadily whilst those on the Mersey have fallen to very low levels over the last five years. A relatively large number of other sites held over 280 birds in 1995-96: Tottenhill Gravel Pits (486, Nov),

Crouch/Roach Estuary (470, Jan), Cromarty Firth (367, Jan),Rutland Water (359, Oct), Dornoch Firth (350, Oct), Inner Moray Firth (350, Jan), Dyfi Estuary (330, Jan), Hamford Water (330, Dec) and Poole Harbour (301, Feb). No other site in Northern Ireland held more than 60 birds.

Table 38. PINTAIL: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Dee (Eng/Wal) Est.	10,001	7,605	4,566	4,891	5,425	Oct	6,498
Ribble	6,507	1,850	1,795	1,587	4,926	Dec	3,333
Morecambe Bay	3,979	2,115	2,027	3,427	2,575	Jan	2,825
Mersey Est.	6,089	3,504	1,636	1,620	873	Jan	2,744
Solway Est.	1,200	1,124	2,356	2,567	4,016	Oct	2,253
Burry Inlet	1,657	1,137	1,585	942	3,541	Jan	1,772
Ouse Washes	1,969	1,745	1,082	1,601	2,376	Feb	1,755
Duddon Est.	1,189	1,260	2,194	2,261	1,275	Nov	1,636
Nene Washes	55	970	2,313	2,569	1,342	Mar	1,450
North Norfolk Marshes	1,568	726	1,443	923	1,036	Jan	1,139
Martin Mere	612	2,940	424	416	499	Feb	978
Swale Est.	399	753	1,337	1,310	1,029	Jan	966
Wash	3,503	317	296	152	346	Feb	923
Medway Est.	1,233	473	399	622	1,214	Nov	788
Pagham Hbr	174	778	596	604	990	Dec	628
Great Britain							
Severn Est.	692	634	664	465	539	Feb	599
Orwell Est.	528	432	321	282	821	Jan	477
Stour Est.	362	380	811	425	397	Feb	475
R. Dee: Aldford/Eaton	-	-	-	351	500	Feb	426
Blackwater Est.	169	334	639	209	362	Jan	343
Abberton Rsr	469	361	225	242	316	Oct	323
Somerset Levels	76	205	286	611	433	Jan	322
Thames Est.	203	155	263	593	332	Feb	309
Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lo.	217	218	269	180	159	(Nov/Dec)	209

BAHAMA PINTAIL
Anas bahamensis

Escape
Native range: West Indies and South America

GB maximum: **2** **Apr**
NI maximum: **0**

There were three records in 1995-96, with two birds at Cotswold Water Park East in April, and singles at King George VI Reservoir Nov and Tophill Low Reservoirs Oct.

GARGANEY
Anas querquedula

International importance: 20,000**
Great Britain importance: +*
All-Ireland importance: +*

GB maximum: **66** **Aug** **Trend** **not available**
NI maximum: **0**

As usual, obvious peaks in numbers of Garganey were recorded in May and August, with birds more readily noticed when on passage than at breeding sites. The August total illustrates the secretive nature of Garganey, representing a relatively small proportion of the breeding population which is estimated to number 40-60 pairs in most years (Kirby 1993). Birds were recorded at 50 sites in 1995-96, with Fairburn Ings (12, Aug), Chew Valley Lake (8, Aug), North Norfolk Marshes (7, Aug), Mid Avon Valley (6, Aug) and Rutland Water (6, Aug) all holding five or more birds. Three of these five sites also feature in the five sites listed in 1993-94, indicating their probable use as breeding areas, and remarkably each held exactly the same number of birds in both years. A long staying bird at Brent Reservoir was the only record beyond October.

SHOVELER
Anas clypeata

International importance: 400
Great Britain importance: 100
All-Ireland importance: 65

			Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB maximum:	**12,153**	**Nov**	**GB**	**220**	**167**	**173**	**190**	**233**
NI maximum:	**283**	**Dec**	**NI**	**123**	**80**	**135**	**109**	**111**

The late autumn peak of Shoveler in Great Britain in 1995-96 was the highest WeBS count to date. This is also reflected in the indices, which, apart from a marked fall in 1992-93, show a steady rise since the mid 1970s. No obvious trend is apparent for the Northwest European population as a whole (Rose 1995), although trends are complicated by the exodus that occurs during harsh weather, when birds may move on to the Iberian peninsula (Ridgill & Fox 1990). It appears that this may have been the case in 1995-96, as a much smaller proportion of the peak count remained in Britain after December (Table 3). These movements suggest that birds in Northwest Europe are in fact part of the same population as the half a million birds that winter throughout Europe and much of north Africa (Scott & Rose 1996). The small numbers in Northern Ireland, which probably constitute local, Scottish or Icelandic breeders, fluctuate to a large degree between winters, with no obvious overall trend. Numbers in 1995-96 were about average.

Although Shoveler rarely occur in very large numbers, many sites support nationally important numbers; the list of 52 sites in Table 39 compares with 51 for Gadwall. Although the number wintering in Great Britain is almost certainly larger than the current estimate, an increase in the national 1% threshold by even a quarter would not reduce the length of the table to any great extent. Of those sites with 1995-96 counts markedly different to their five year average, most held higher than normal numbers. The spectacular count at King George VI Reservoir, which coincided with much reduced water levels, is one of the highest site totals to date in the UK, exceeded only by a count of 1,443 on the Ouse Washes in the late 1980s. The Ouse Washes in 1995-96, however, held fewer birds than at any time in the last decade, although it remains the most important UK site. Abberton Reservoir also held high numbers, as did the Somerset Levels for the second winter in succession, perhaps suggesting, given the new management regimes in the area and the intensive counting resumed only in recent years, that the importance of this site can be expected to rise in the near future. Numbers at Chew Valley Lake, the Burry Inlet, Wraysbury Gravel Pits, the Severn Estuary, an unprecedented count at Stanford Reservoir, the Tees Estuary and the Alde Estuary were all much higher than usual. Conversely, the counts at Blithfield in particular, the Lee Valley and Breydon Water were all below par. Other sites holding 100 or more birds in 1995-96 were Kings Dyke Pits (Whittlesey) (180, Jan), Aqualate Mere (135, Oct), Northwest Solent (134, Dec), Montrose Basin (133, Nov), Brent Reservoir (130, Oct), Ditchford Gravel Pit (125, Dec), Hollowell Reservoir (124, Oct), Stainhill Reservoirs (107, Jan), Marton Mere (104, Oct), Rostherne Mere (103, Aug) and Martin Mere (102, Oct). Belfast Lough is the only other site in Northern Ireland to hold appreciable numbers of Shoveler, with just over 50 birds in the last two winters.

Table 39. SHOVELER: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Ouse Washes	567	724	1,066	837	212	Oct	681
Abberton Rsr	608	520	606	598	937	Oct	654
Rutland Water	490	362	701	513	562	Nov	526
Lo. Leven	576	448	458	570	550	Oct	520
Somerset Levels	88	291	373	931	839	Feb	504
Chew Valley Lake	630	435	475	100	875	Nov	503
Swale Est.	447	591	436	530	357	Dec	472
Great Britain							
King George VI Rsr	117	201	153	246	1,134	Nov	370
Burry Inlet	219	226	193	395	745	Jan	356
Nene Washes	41	318	367	517	347	Mar	318
Dungeness GP	382	435	320	164	252	Dec	311
Knight/Bessborough Rsrs	-	160	90	434	237	Sep	230
Blithfield Rsr	441	146	329	172	11	Sep	220
Wraysbury Rsr	194	237	256	138	238	Sep	213
Fleet/Wey	208	121	223	296	183	Oct	206
Arun Valley	122	261	312	31	268	Jan	199
Lee Valley GP	237	174	225	248	98	Nov	196
Hanningfield Rsr	216	151	110	242	242	Dec	192
North Norfolk Marshes	139	173	162	279	206	Dec	192
Stodmarsh	132	300	71	199	240	Nov	188
Wraysbury GP	47	80	221	214	341	Sep	181
Thrapston GP	117	222	128	258	173	Sep	180

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Thames Est.	134	144	187	264	146	Mar	175
Woolston Eyes	420	68	56	126	152	Oct	164
North Warren/Thorpeness Mere	98	184	190	220	110	Dec	160
Leighton Moss	205	148	92	120	205	Sep	154
Poole Hbr	68	164	263	117	156	Jan	154
Fiddlers Ferry Lagoons	200	110	180	156	126	Oct	154
Severn Est.	73	95	160	168	270	Jan	153
Stanford Rsr	72	11	61	117	500	Nov	152
Hampton & Kempton Rsrs	219	121	(49)	142	123	Jan	151
Fairburn Ings	145	90	74	134	303	Nov	149
Avon Valley (Mid)	157	245	132	85	123	Dec	148
Pitsford Rsr	158	122	20	239	196	Sep	147
Ringstead GP	26	9	283	262	151	Nov	146
Lower Derwent Valley	60	100	251	163	-		144
Grafham Water	207	108	74	73	240	Nov	140
Breydon Water	216	107	120	213	46	Jan	140
Walthamstow Rsr	107	160	186	116	118	Sep	137
Barn Elms Rsr	116	98	135	197	-		137
Swithland Rsr	181	179	65	147	104	Nov	135
Middle Tame Valley GP	139	181	168	91	81	Jan	132
Tees Est.	98	86	108	122	232	Oct	129
Swillington Ings	173	92	94	204	70	Sep	127
Colne Valley GP	121	156	93	110	142	Feb	124
Attenborough GP	95	112	96	100	192	Dec	119
Rye Hbr & Pett Level	118	98	55	155	164	Dec	118
Blagdon Lake	64	144	96	160	115	Oct	116
Tophill Low Rsrs	51	148	172	100	100	Oct	114
Alde Complex	73	38	40	164	214	Dec	106
Blackwater Est.	80	119	100	128	101	Feb	106
Ashford Common Waterworks	-	100	-	-	-		100
Northern Ireland							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	126	56	319	103	213	Dec	163
Strangford Lo.	143	130	144	104	150	Nov	134

RINGED TEAL
Callonetta leucophrys

Escape
Native range: South America

GB maximum: **2** **Oct**
NI maximum: **0**

Two birds were recorded at Barcombe Mills Reservoir in October and one at Thrapston Gravel Pits in April.

MANED DUCK
Chenonetta jubata

Escape
Native range: Australia

GB maximum: **4** **Nov**
NI maximum: **0**

Otherwise known as Australian Wood Duck, four undoubted escapes were recorded at Barleycroft Gravel Pits.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD
Netta rufina

Vagrant and escape†
Native range: Europe and Asia

GB maximum: **109** **Nov**
NI maximum: **0**

With the absence of data from one of the key sites for Red-crested Pochard, most counts, particularly in mid winter, were considerably lower than in recent years. This considered, the November peak is thus very high, suggesting continuing growth in the population as noted at the Cotswold Water Park (Baatsen 1990). Lower counts in subsequent months may have been influenced by freezing conditions forcing birds to open waters, perhaps rivers, where birds are missed by WeBS. The only other site to hold 10 or more birds was Cotswold Water Park East (26, Mar).

Table 40. RED-CRESTED POCHARD: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain†							
Cotswold WP West	31	52	50	49	59	Nov	48
R. Wensum: Fakenham - Gt Ryburgh	33	48	41	44	-		42

† *as Red-crested Pochard is an introduced species in the UK, site designation does not occur and the 1% criterion is not applied. A qualifying level of 10 has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report*

POCHARD
Aythya ferina

International importance: 3,500
Great Britain importance: 440
All-Ireland importance: 400

GB maximum: **43,726** **Dec**
NI maximum: **29,029** **Nov**

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB	95	91	99	112	112
NI	140	102	89	85	121

After a period of sustained decline, numbers of Pochard in Britain have staged a recovery in the last three years, with the total comfortably exceeding 43,000, the first count of more than 40,000 since 1989-90, and the highest index values since the mid 1970s. Furthermore, the high values recorded for three consecutive years suggest this is not simply a result of a cold weather influx in 1995-96. Numbers in Northern Ireland also increased in 1995-96, though by no means matching the record figures of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The high index figure will have resulted partly from the unusually high number in November, being sustained through to mid winter.

The IJsselmeer in The Netherlands, a moult site in Lithuania, and Loughs Neagh & Beg are the three most important individual sites for Northwest European Pochard, each having held more than 10% of the population (Scott & Rose 1996).

Table 41 shows many sites in Britain exhibit large fluctuations in numbers, with around half those listed, even with relatively low averages, having held over 1,000 birds at some time in recent years. The Lower Windrush Valley, Chew Valley Lake, Hanningfield Reservoir and Staines Reservoir were the most notable examples in 1995-96. Numbers at Loch of Harray, Rutland Water and Loch Leven were high for the second season in succession. Unfortunately, no data were provided for the Lower Derwent Valley in 1995-96, following the largest count at an individual British site by far in 1994-95. Although this appears to represent a phenomenal rise in importance in just four winters, numbers of Pochard at this site fluctuate greatly from year to year as a direct result of the degree of winter flooding which can vary considerably. Other counts of 440 or more birds in Britain in 1995-96 included exceptional totals at King George VI Reservoir (1,541, Oct) and Balgray Reservoir (1,141, Feb), both coinciding with low water levels at these sites; numbers fell when the sites were re-flooded. Grafham Water (790, Nov), Orwell Estuary (615, Mar), Windermere (604, Nov), Woolston Eyes (582, Feb), Baston/Langtoft Gravel Pits (573, Feb), Little Paxton Gravel Pits (520, Oct), Wraysbury Gravel Pits (488, Dec), Loch Gelly (475, Sep), Leighton Moss (444, Oct) and Loch of Skaill (442, Oct) also held numbers above the 1% threshold in 1995-96 only.

Table 41. POCHARD: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	38,998	23,367	21,332	19,908	28,601	Nov	26,439
Great Britain							
Ouse Washes	1,596	3,279	3,087	3,786	3,929	Jan	3,135
Abberton Rsr.	2,058	1,420	3,240	2,014	3,247	Aug	2,396
Salford Docks	-	-	-	-	2,042	Jan	2,042
Lower Derwent Valley	26	140	2,785	5,184	-		2,034
Severn Est.	1,666	1,623	1,470	1,681	1,676	Jan	1,623
Lo. of Boardhouse	1,864	1,135	2,090	1,375	789	Oct	1,451
Cotswold WP East	1,462	691	1,988	1,690	1,394	Nov	1,445
Walton Lock	-	-	-	-	[1] 1,420	Jan	1,420
Rostherne Mere	635	466	749	1,186	[1] 2,200	Feb	1,047
Rutland Water	533	656	250	2,346	1,776	Sep	1,112
Nene Washes	84	1,014	1,675	2,094	528	Mar	1,079
Cotswold WP West	811	1,015	1,151	1,086	1,163	Nov	1,045
Humber Est.	429	900	2,017	700	1,000	Dec	1,009
Fleet/Wey	883	1,051	949	1,232	913	Dec	1,006
Middle Tame Valley GP	1,288	1,085	898	743	886	Dec	980
Lo. of Harray	846	452	298	1,081	2,070	Dec	949
Lower Windrush Valley GP	595	980	952	699	1,331	Nov	911
Dungeness GP	1,910	405	713	801	456	Jan	857
Lo. Leven	701	900	536	1,123	1,000	Nov	852
Chorlton WP	919	-	1,153	750	417	Feb	810
Chew Valley Lake	370	580	830	730	1,130	Oct	728
Poole Hbr	1,026	438	570	477	946	Feb	691
Cheddar Rsr	286	193	1,204	689	632	Dec	601
Eyebrook Rsr	373	1,313	118	630	463	Oct	579
Hanningfield Rsr	667	411	367	359	1,084	Dec	578
Avon Valley (Mid)	742	836	492	357	431	Jan	572
Lo. Watten	1,438	272	432	309	296	Sep	549
Fen Drayton GP	340	-	244	592	975	Oct	538
Martin Mere	373	398	513	508	786	Jan	516
Kilconquhar Lo.	752	253	-	412	646	Nov	516
Lo. of Hundland	250	229	160	1,540	308	Dec	497
Staines Rsr	284	55	70	669	1,285	Oct	473
Wraysbury GP	180	379	352	917	488	Dec	463
Alton Water	53	256	236	916	826	Dec	457
Thames Est.	232	432	576	472	494	Jan	441

1 *B. Martin (in litt.)*

RING-NECKED DUCK
Aythya collaris

Vagrant
Native range: North America

GB maximum: **2 Mar**
NI maximum: **0**

One of the more numerous vagrants from North America, many birds appear to take up residence in Europe, often returning to the same site in successive winters. Single birds were recorded at nine sites in 1995-96, notably including observations during summer: Ranworth & Cockshoot Broads (Apr), Southampton Water (Apr/Mar), Whinfell Tarn (Apr), Calf Hey Reservoir May and Holden Wood Reservoir (Jun), Killington Reservoir (May/Jun), Loch an Tiumpan (Sep-Dec), Loch Stiapavat Mar and Poole Harbour Jan.

FERRUGINOUS DUCK
Aythya nyroca

Vagrant
Native range: Southern Europe, Asia and Africa

GB maximum: **2** **Jan**
NI maximum: **0**

There were a reasonably high number of records in 1995-96, as might be expected during a cold winter, although several preceded the harsh weather. Two birds were at Middle Tame Valley Gravel Pits Jan, with singles at Kenwith Nature Reserve Sep, Cotswold Water Park West Oct, Tring Reservoirs Nov and Chilham to Chartham Gravel Pits Feb.

TUFTED DUCK
Aythya fuligula

International importance: 10,000
Great Britain importance: 600
All-Ireland importance: 400

GB maximum: **48,791** **Dec**
NI maximum: **25,751** **Jan**

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB	101	105	114	111	107
NI	118	109	112	111	133

Peak counts of Tufted Duck have shown remarkable consistency between years, fluctuating very slightly around the 50,000 number. This long-term stability is also reflected in the index values, which have varied between just 101 and 114 in all but three winters since the mid 1970s. Numbers in Northern Ireland show greater seasonal variation, with the influx of Scottish breeders producing a more obvious midwinter peak, but, as in Britain, the peaks are similar between years. By contrast, the 1995-96 Northern Ireland index value was the highest on record. This resulted result from the high numbers recorded in of January, which are included in calculating the indices, presumably as a consequence of the exceptionally cold conditions in Scotland forcing more birds to the province.

A re-evaluation of the international population size resulted in an increase of the 1% threshold for the Northwest European population from 7,500 to 10,000 (Scott & Rose 1996).

The maximum count at Loughs Neagh & Beg was the second highest reported by WeBS, exceeded only by a count of 29,393 in 1989-90. The count of over 3,300 at Staines Reservoirs was exceptional, whilst Rutland Water and Besthorpe & Girton Gravel Pits held noticeably higher than average numbers, and large counts were sustained at both Alton Water and William Girling Reservoir for the second winter in succession. Numbers at Wraysbury Gravel Pits and Pitsford Reservoir were only half that of 1994-95 and birds deserted Heaton Park Reservoir whilst it was drained. Other sites holding 600 or more birds in 1995-96 were Draycote Water (925, Nov), Fen Drayton GP (764, Aug), Cotswold Water Park East (711, Nov), Lower Windrush Valley Gravel Pits (709, Nov), King George VI Reservoir (704, Aug), Little Paxton Gravel Pits (696, Nov), Colne Valley GP (625, Dec) and Eyebrook Reservoir (623, Sep). Upper Lough Erne remains the only site of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland, with no other site holding over 400 birds in 1995-96.

Table 42. TUFTED DUCK: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	25,283	18,078	22,470	21,101	25,340	Jan	22,454
Great Britain							
Lo. Leven	4,064	2,500	3,481	3,800	3,000	Sep	3,369
Rutland Water	2,397	1,723	2,500	2,448	3,775	Aug	2,569
Abberton Rsr	2,428	1,724	2,126	1,803	1,356	Aug	1,887
Hanningfield Rsr	1,463	2,055	1,624	1,213	1,594	Aug	1,590
Lo. of Harray	1,570	1,920	774	1,202	1,625	Oct	1,418
Middle Tame Valley GP	1,247	1,546	1,411	1,162	1,368	Dec	1,347
Wraysbury GP	1,234	1,307	1,140	1,678	844	Dec	1,241
Pitsford Rsr	766	1,107	1,428	1,616	854	Nov	1,154
Staines Rsr	296	349	208	-	3,332	Sep	1,046
Ouse Washes	273	1,347	1,737	761	811	Mar	986
South Muskham/North Newark GP	884	689	760	782	1,075	Dec	838
Walthamstow Rsr	1,035	663	781	868	722	Dec	814
Windermere	889	948	802	682	727	Nov	810
Lee Valley GP	716	737	863	1,069	666	Sep	810
Severn Est.	786	967	571	662	1,004	Feb	798
Alton Water	170	324	463	1,682	1,331	Dec	794
Thames Est.	436	512	914	812	1,050	Feb	745

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
William Girling Rsr	280	385	313	1,331	1,300	Aug	722
Chasewater	-	488	792	855	723	Oct	715
Inner Moray Fth	595	800	704	595	547	Jan	648
Cotswold WP West	694	627	643	692	580	Jan	647
King George V Rsr	862	380	780	500	678	Oct	640
Besthorpe/Girton GP	678	509	452	635	913	Jan	637
Dungeness GP	1,220	395	454	608	342	Sep	604
Heaton Park Rsr	1,312	820	652	186	43	Sep	603
Northern Ireland							
Upper Lo. Erne	-	588	381	293	349	Feb	408

SCAUP
Aythya marila

International importance: 3,100
Great Britain importance: 110
All-Ireland importance: 30*
***50 is normally used as a minimum threshold**

GB maximum: 4,419 Jan **Trend: not available**
NI maximum: 5,092 Feb

Like most sea-ducks, Scaup are difficult to monitor at many UK sites. The peak count in Great Britain in 1995-96 was the highest recorded by WeBS since 1990-91, although the difference in counts could easily be attributed to variation in weather conditions at one or two key sites during the counts. It is for these reasons that indices are not calculated for sea-ducks. In Northern Ireland, the peak count exceeded 5,000 for the first time and bettered the Great Britain total for the third time in the last four years. Scaup numbers in the province peak late in the season, usually in February or March, apparently as Icelandic breeders, which form the majority of birds wintering in the British and Ireland (Scott & Rose 1996), gather *en route* during spring passage.

Loughs Neagh & Beg, having held large counts during the past two winters, is now the only site in the UK of international importance for Scaup. Conversely, the Solway Estuary, formerly the premier site in the UK, no longer holds such numbers as measured by the WeBS counts, although high-tide counts are known to have substantially underestimated numbers at this site (Quinn *et al.* 1996). Although numbers at Loch Indaal were the lowest for many years, counts at Loch Ryan, Loch of Stenness, the Forth Estuary, the Dornoch Firth and Belfast Lough were much higher than average. A surprisingly large number of other sites in Great Britain also recorded flocks of 110 or more birds, with counts at many surpassing this figure by a considerable margin: North Norfolk Marshes (517, Mar), Alt Estuary (369, Jan), Humber Estuary (353, Feb), Clwyd Estuary (271, Nov), The Wash (233, Feb), Dungeness GP (212, Feb), Rough Firth (188, Feb), Tees Estuary (143, Feb) and the Inner Moray Firth (120, Jan). The only other site in Northern Ireland to hold 30 or more birds was Strangford Lough (41, Jan). Sea-duck surveys of SE Scotland found 182 birds in St Andrews Bay in February (WWT, unpubl. data).

Table 43. SCAUP: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	3,516	3,384	2,632	4,934	4,022	Feb	3,698
Great Britain							
Solway Est.	[1]5,400	[1]3,680	2,084	2,007	1,300	Apr	2,894
Lo. Indaal	1,430	1,120	699	969	661	Dec	976
Lo. Ryan	300	500	350	[2]622	[2]916	Dec	538
Cromarty Fth	[3]211	293	[3]381	406	279	Dec	314
Lo. of Stenness	243	233	317	267	361	Jan	284
Forth Est.	185	188	135	77	[4]753	Feb	268
Lo. of Harray	95	132	175	194	191	Dec	157
Irvine to Saltcoats	-	113	70	158	160	Feb	125
Inner Clyde Est.	146	108	145	65	134	Mar	120
Dornoch Fth	140	[3]98	[3]42	[3]85	219	Dec	117

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Northern Ireland							
Carlingford Lo.	500	570	877	472	800	Feb	644
Belfast Lo.	74	121	103	186	247	Feb	146

1 *WWT/WAS studies*
2 *P. Collin (in litt.)*
3 *RSPB/BP studies (e.g. Stenning 1994)*
4 *SNH funded surveys of SE Scotland (WWT, unpubl. data)*

EIDER
Somateria mollissima

International importance: 20,000**
Great Britain importance: 750
All-Ireland importance: 20*
***50 is normally used as a minimum threshold**

GB maximum: 24,740 Jul **Trend: not available**
NI maximum: 1,338 Dec

Numbers of Eider in 1995-96 were similar to those of recent years: a late summer peak of around 25,000, declining gradually through the winter. As British birds are resident, this probably reflects the dispersal of large moult flocks from breeding areas to more remote sites, some degree of mortality, and worsening winter weather making counting more difficult. The peak count in Northern Ireland was second only to that of 1,382 in December 1990, although counts in other months were about normal.

Scottish Natural Heritage funded surveys of the Firth of Tay, St Andrews Bay and the Firth of Forth by WWT included several counts of the large Eider flock at the mouth of the Tay. The November figure was the largest of several similar counts in mid winter made using a number of different methods (WWT unpubl. data). Although it is possible that numbers present in late summer may have been higher, or that numbers in 1995-96 may have been unusually low, the site is no longer internationally important for Eider on the basis of these recent survey. Further counts, using appropriate methods, are required in future years to confirm this. Elsewhere, counts were about average, apart from a rather low count in Morecambe Bay and an exceptionally high one off Ayr. Numbers on the Ythan Estuary have shown an appreciable increase in recent years. Other sites holding 750 or more birds in 1995-96 were Dipple to Girvan Mains (1,475, Feb), The Wash (1,273, Feb) and Great Cumbrae (749, Dec).

Scott & Rose (1996) recognise three populations of Eider in Northwest Europe, corresponding to the morphologically different subspecies. Significantly, they group birds in the Shetland and Orkney Islands with those in the Faeroes as the *faroeensis* population, with a 1% threshold of 220 birds. No sites in Shetland or Orkney meet this level on a regular basis based solely on WeBS data, since few coastal areas are covered, although many sites, e.g. Scapa Flow, would undoubtedly qualify were this threshold adopted. Remaining birds in Britain and Ireland are classed as nominate *mollissima*. This population, which includes birds in continental Europe and western Russia, numbers around two million, thus the 1% threshold remains 20,000. Scott & Rose go on to suggest that the birds in Shetland and Orkney and those in the rest of Britain and Ireland might constitute separate subpopulations, of 12,000-13,500 and 65,000-75,000 birds respectively, on the basis that they are either sedentary or dispersive. Birds wintering in southeast England are thought to include wandering individuals from the Dutch Waddensea. Most populations are thought to have stabilised after a long period of increase.

Table 44. EIDER: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain							
Tay Est.	(5,000)	(250)	(0)	(4,200)	[1]12,250	Nov	12,250
Forth Est.	6,219	9,375	9,698	8,964	[1]9,764	Mar	8,804
Morecambe Bay	8,089	7,509	6,886	6,708	4,882	Jul	6,815
Inner Clyde Est.	4,164	2,584	3,450	3,638	4,238	Oct	3,615
Ayr Harbour to Troon	376	944	775	4,332	8,000	Aug	2,885
Don Mouth to Ythan Mouth	2,500	2,220	3,500	3,000	-		2,805
Ythan Est.	2,586	2,065	2,005	3,150	3,700	Aug	2,701
Lindisfarne	1,750	2,380	2,055	1,233	2,474	Sep	1,978
Montrose Basin	1,898	1,316	1,537	2,120	2,100	Oct	1,794
Seahouses to Budle Pt	3,200	1,642	1,520	396	1,221	Oct	1,596
Girvan to Turnberry	1,095	980	(160)	1,797	1,846	Feb	1,430
Lo. Fleet	[2]2,050	[2]1,067	[2]1,363	[2]569	(376)	Oct	1,262
Lo. Ryan	(130)	(137)	(93)	[3]893	[3]1,606	Jul	1,250
Irvine to Saltcoats	-	2,500	1,200	700	600	Jan	1,250
Irvine/Garnock Est.	1,600	1,500	845	800	1,200	Sep	1,189
Blyth to Newbiggin	-	900	-	-	-		900

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Northern Ireland							
Belfast Lo.	1,107	641	952	695	1,020	Dec	883
Outer Ards	299	166	362	360	255	Dec	288
Larne Lo.	88	59	16	61	157	Sep	76
Lo. Foyle	4	106	57	74	83	Jul	65
Strangford Lo.	11	12	33	26	34	Feb	23

1 *SNH funded surveys of SE Scotland (WWT, unpubl. data)*
2 *RSPB/BP studies (e.g. Stenning 1994)*
3 *P. Collin* (in litt.)

KING EIDER
Somateria spectabilis

Vagrant
Native range: Circumpolar Arctic

GB maximum: **2** **Sep/Jan**
NI maximum: **0**

Two birds overwintered with the large Eider flock on the Ythan Estuary.

LONG-TAILED DUCK
Clangula hyemalis

International importance: 20,000**
Great Britain importance: 230†
All-Ireland importance: +*†

GB maximum: **1,327** **Jan**
NI maximum: **31** **Dec**

Trend **not available**

The monthly totals of Long-tailed Duck in Britain in 1995-96 were slightly lower than normal compared with other counts this decade. The proportion of the British population recorded by the January peak count is one of the lowest for any species of wildfowl monitored by WeBS, and the low count on the Moray Firth illustrates the difficulties involved in monitoring this most pelagic of ducks without dedicated surveys. The number of stragglers reaching Northern Ireland was similar to that of recent winters. No sites, other than those listed in Table 45, held more than 30 birds in 1995-96.

In reviewing African and European wildfowl populations, Scott & Rose (1996) distinguish an Icelandic and Greenlandic population, numbering 150,000 birds, from the Western Siberia/Northwest Europe population, numbering 4,600,000, supported by several ringing records which demonstrate birds moving between Iceland and Scotland. Significantly, a 1% threshold of 1,500 birds would qualify the Moray as internationally important. However, the lack of sufficient ringing and count data mean that the boundary between two such populations is unclear, with a high probability of overlap in British waters. Further studies may help to clarify the situation and demonstrate whether high numbers of birds recorded in the Firth of Forth in spring (WWT unpubl. data) are Scottish birds migrating south, perhaps towards the Baltic, or perhaps birds wintering at undiscovered sites on the east coast of Britain migrating north to breed in Iceland.

Table 45. LONG-TAILED DUCK: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain†							
Moray Fth[1]	9,300	11,246	10,115	3,742	(335)	Dec	8,601
Forth Est.	640	491	942	1,057	[2]1,796	Apr 96	985
St Andrews Bay	-	[3]570	[3]341	47	[2]265	Nov	306
Water Sound	-	240	222	215	137	Jan	204
Lo. of Stenness	53	114	243	118	80	Feb	122
Sound of Taransay	-	112	-	-	-		112
Luskentyre	-	-	-	190	13	Mar	102
Broad Bay	12	80	400	6	1	Jan	100
North Norfolk Marshes	64	70	137	57	65	Dec	79
Lindisfarne	(42)	83	80	82	14	Feb	65
Lo. of Harray	53	57	33	82	26	Nov	50
Anstruther Hbr	1	2	-	-	90	Nov	31

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Northern Ireland†							
Belfast Lo.	40	30	31	28	30	Dec	32

† *as few sites meet the threshold for national importance for Long-tailed Duck in Great Britain and no level has been set for Northern Ireland, a qualifying level of 30 has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report. Only the top three sites in Table 45 meet the national 1% threshold*

1 *RSPB/BP studies, e.g. Stenning (1994)*

2 *SNH funded surveys of SE Scotland (WWT, unpubl. data)*

3 *L. Hatton (in litt.)*

COMMON SCOTER
Melanitta nigra

International importance: 16,000
Great Britain importance: 350
All-Ireland importance: 40*
***50 is normally used as a minimum threshold**

GB maximum: 18,623 Dec
NI maximum: 3 Dec

Trend not available

Relatively large numbers of Common Scoter were recorded by WeBS for the third winter in succession, the 1995-96 peak representing around half the estimated British population. In all three winters, the peak has occurred in December, with generally smaller numbers during the rest of the winter. Whilst it might be speculated that these peaks represent birds on passage to final wintering sites off the coasts of France and Portugal, variation in counts of sea-ducks prevents any proper interpretation of these figures as yet; conditions conducive to accurate counts may, by chance, have occurred only in December in recent years.

Much higher counts of sea-ducks, particularly Common Scoter, have been made in recent years by WeBS and by several local monitoring initiatives, no doubt galvanised by the increased pollution risk during this period. On 15 February 1996, the *Sea Empress* ran aground in the mouth of the Cleddau Estuary, spilling 72,000 tonnes of crude oil. Seven days later, some of the oil entered Carmarthen Bay, subsequently killing most of the 4,500 Common Scoter already present (SEEEC 1996). A further 10,000 birds entered the area three weeks after the spill and, although the effect on these individuals remains unknown, the conclusion must be that they also suffered deleterious effects, either at the time or in the future as a result of long-term contamination of this site. The decision by the Department of Trade and Industry to include many UK inshore coastal waters, including those with major estuaries for waterfowl, in a recent licensing round for oil and gas exploration, and the occurrence of a major oil disaster just three years after that of the *Braer* in the Shetland Isles, clearly emphasise the need for proper protection of marine areas and rapid containment of oil in the event of spillages. It is hoped that the EU Habitats and Species Directive, which will allow designation of Special Areas of Conservation beyond the low tide mark, the current limit of statutory site boundaries, may help in safeguarding these areas.

As part of the Sea Empress Environmental Evaluation Committee recommended work programme, WWT conducted an analysis of gut contents of dead Common Scoter recovered after the spill. Preliminary results, based on 200 birds, showed that nearly all (96% of birds) had fed on molluscs, mainly bivalves (93%) (Hughes *et al.* 1996). The two dominant species were *Pharus legumen* (59%) and Common Cockle *Cerastoderma edule* (21%). Although only a few major analyses of Common Scoter diet have been conducted, each has found different principal food items, although it is not clear to what extent the oil spill may have influenced the birds' diet in this latest study.

It is unclear at several sites in Table 46 whether the large fluctuations between years represent difficulties in counting or genuine changes in usage by Common Scoter. In excess of 80,000 birds frequent the waters off the Belgian and Dutch coasts in mid winter (Skov *et al.* 1995) and an influx of just a small proportion of these birds would have a significant effect on numbers at sites in eastern Britain. In each case, identifying just one or two counts in Table 46 as incomplete would significantly alter the average, and thus this figure should be treated with caution; no great emphasis should be placed on the relative positions of the sites in the table. Common Scoter favour the east coast of Scotland, from the Moray Firth to the Firth of Forth, and the Welsh coasts. The situation in Northern Ireland is less clear. North Norfolk has become considerably more important in the last two winters, with the high counts in late winter 1995-96 perhaps indicating passage of Scottish birds *en route* to the Baltic.

It is not clear whether birds at these sites, particularly those around Wales, represent discrete flocks or are the same birds moving between sites. Co-ordinated UK-wide surveys would determine whether the large counts in Colwyn Bay and the Clwyd Estuary represent different birds to those using Carmarthen and Cardigan Bays or even sites in Northern Ireland. No other site held more than 40 birds in Northern Ireland or 350 birds in Great Britain in 1995-96.

Table 46. COMMON SCOTER: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain							
Carmarthen Bay	[1]11,000	[1]6,500	5,012	[1]17,650	[1]10,631	Mar	10,159
North Cardigan Bay[2]	10,397	5,650	4,872	4,755	6,720	Feb	6,479
Moray Fth[3]	9,933	2,197	2,988	2,764	(250)	Jan	4,471
North Norfolk Marshes	3,207	764	276	4,750	5,549	Mar	2,909
Forth Est.	1,330	1,773	1,128	[4]7,304	[5]2,023	Feb	2,712
Eden Est./St Andrews Bay	(0)	[6]3,000	[6]4,420	1,410	1,810	Dec	2,660
Colwyn Bay	(0)	120	1,300	380	5,480	Dec	1,820
Clwyd Est.	640	14	3	100	7,000	Dec	1,551
Earlsferry to Anstruther	(5)	(0)	-	-	860	Nov	860
Don Mouth to Ythan Mouth	200	30	300	2,000	[7]1,500	Jul	806
Alt Est.	2	4	54	2,000	851	Sep	582
Graig Ddu	-	85	1,000	500	130	Mar	429
Northern Ireland							
Dundrum Bay	2,962	(498)	(36)	(0)	(1)	Jan	2,962

The Errata section of the 1994-95 report identified seven sites given in the 1993-94 report which, following the correction of the national 1% threshold from 230 to 350 birds, no longer qualified as nationally important. However, this list was also incorrect, and only two of the sites listed in the 1993-94 report (namely, The Wash and Red Wharf Bay,) no longer qualified as nationally important.

1 *Stewart (1996)*
2 *Data from Friends of Cardigan Bay, e.g. Green & Elliott (1993), and RSPB data (Reg Thorpe, in litt.)*
3 *RSPB/BP studies, e.g. Stenning (1994)*
4 *Due to some count sections of the Forth being covered on different dates, it is possible that 2,650 birds may have been counted twice. This would result in a 1994-95 figure of 4,654 and a five year mean of 2,182*
5 *SNH funded surveys of SE Scotland (WWT, unpubl. data)*
6 *L. Hatton (in litt.)*
7 *A. Webb (in litt.)*

SURF SCOTER
Melanitta perspicillata

Vagrant
Native range: North America

GB maximum: **8** **Jan**
NI maximum: **0**

Birds were recorded at the now traditional haunts in Fife, with counts on the Forth (8, Jan) and Eden Estuaries (6, Nov) undoubtedly involving the same birds moving between these adjacent sites.

VELVET SCOTER
Melanitta fusca

International importance: 10,000
Great Britain importance: 30*
All-Ireland importance: +*
***50 is normally used as a minimum threshold**

GB maximum: **1,112** **Nov**
NI maximum: **2** **Nov/Dec**

Trend **not available**

The east coast of Scotland, from the Moray Firth to the Firth of Forth, represents the most westerly outpost of the Northwest European population of Velvet Scoter. Although seeming to favour waters closer to shore than the Common Scoter (Madsen 1954), the species remains notoriously difficult to monitor, as do any sea-duck, without perfect weather conditions, days rarely come by in northeast Scotland. Even allowing for possible undercounting, the area supports only a small proportion of the total number in the North Sea west of Denmark (Skov *et al.* 1995), which in turn is almost insignificant compared with the enormous concentrations, amounting to around one million birds, in the Baltic Sea and Kattegat (Durinck *et al.* 1994). No sites additional to those in Table 47 held more than 30 birds in 1995-96.

Table 47. VELVET SCOTER: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain							
Eden Est./St Andrews Bay	(0)	[1]2,200	[1]1,568	280	1,000	Nov	1,262
Moray Fth[2]	487	1,039	1,063	540	(187)	Jan	782
Forth Est.	180	290	456	510	[3]1,051	Apr 96	497
North Norfolk Marshes	167	4	9	101	108	Dec	78

1 *L. Hatton (in litt.)*
2 *includes data from RSPB/BP studies, e.g. Stenning (1994)*
3 *SNH funded surveys of SE Scotland (WWT, unpubl. data)*

GOLDENEYE
Bucephala clangula

International importance: 3,000
Great Britain importance: 170
All-Ireland importance: 110

			Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB maximum:	**15,063**	**Feb**	**GB**	**122**	**119**	**123**	**120**	**109**
NI maximum:	**10,448**	**Nov**	**NI**	**107**	**94**	**65**	**69**	**71**

Since 1991-92, numbers of Goldeneye in Great Britain have been extremely stable, with the peak count in every winter except 1993-94 just exceeding 16,000. The maximum in 1995-96 was marginally lower, in close accordance with the index values. Goldeneye numbers remain at the highest levels for some 20 years, having shown a sustained increase over this period and mirroring the significant growth in the Northwest European population as a whole, thought to have increased by 50% during the last decade (Rose 1995). The index values for Britain remain below the record levels of the early 1970s, when counts on the Firth of Forth were around double the current number, associated with the discharges of grain from distilleries and of sewage.

Conversely, numbers in Northern Ireland have fallen markedly from the high levels in the late 1980s when they were little different from those in Great Britain. This has been largely influenced by the fall in maxima at Loughs Neagh & Beg, which support almost the entire number, although the count in 1995-96 showed a recovery after the marked drop in the previous winter. Remarkably, the peak was recorded in November with a gradual decline through to February (though with a rise again in March), in complete contrast to the usual pattern of a gradual build up in numbers to a January or February peak. Why this was so is unclear: there were no severe weather conditions in Britain or on the near continent to trigger large scale movements, whilst any birds arriving in Ireland must presumably pass through, or at least over, Britain *en route* from their Scandinavian or Russian breeding grounds, yet there is no obvious correlation with numbers in Great Britain as a whole or at individual sites to support either a large passage or a relocation of British birds.

Despite fewer birds overall in Great Britain in 1995-96, few sites held notably smaller numbers of birds, given that peak counts of Goldeneye fluctuate to a large degree between years at some. Girvan to Turnberry, the Tweed and Doon Estuaries and Irvine to Saltcoats all held above average numbers. Other sites holding 170 or more birds were Dipple to Girvan Mains (600, Jan), Morecambe Bay (504, Feb), Poole Harbour (220, Feb), Cotswold Water Park West (198, Mar), North Norfolk Marshes (182, Feb) and Orwell Estuary (178, Feb), whilst 188 birds were recorded on Loch Ryan in December (P. Collin *in litt.*). Other sites holding 110 or more birds in NI were Outer Ards Shoreline (122, Mar), Lough Money (116, Feb) and Lough Foyle (112, Dec).

Table 48. GOLDENEYE: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	13,565	13,748	10,085	6,712	9,793	Nov	10,781
Great Britain							
Forth Est.	2,451	2,167	2,771	2,369	[1]2,125	Dec	2,264
Inner Moray Fth[2]	718	820	552	757	579	Feb	685
Girvan to Turnberry	362	350	(100)	700	854	Dec	567
Abberton Rsr	673	547	(178)	431	488	Mar	535
Inner Clyde Est.	541	575	511	439	584	Feb	530
Tweed Est.	590	329	540	498	617	Jan	515
Doon Est.	401	530	438	460	607	Jan	487
Morecambe Bay	538	384	565	379	501	Feb	473
Rutland Water	412	369	401	448	366	Jan	399
Windermere	501	357	409	331	223	Mar	364
Lo. Leven	330	300	468	310	300	Dec	342

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
R. Tweed: Kelso to Coldstream	295	334	225	369	314	Dec	307
Tay Est.	677	274	121	157	208	Mar	287
Hornsea Mere	-	-	386	175	-		281
Blackwater Est.	236	330	261	254	289	Jan	274
Humber Est.	110	301	260	359	331	Dec	272
Lavan Sands	269	73	204	465	176	Jan	237
Irvine to Saltcoats	-	250	164	150	340	Feb	226
Lo. of Skene	144	404	250	150	160	Nov	222
Lo. of Stenness	225	242	247	191	191	Dec	219
Kilconquhar Lo.	46	177	-	210	370	Apr	201
Solway Est.	174	294	166	180	135	Mar	190
Fleet/Wey	259	122	243	136	175	Mar	187
Poole Hbr	111	213	132	201	220	Feb	175
Ayr to Troon	213	166	197	175	124	Jan	175
Cromarty Fth	148	212	[2]261	[2]139	115	Jan	175
Northern Ireland							
Belfast Lo.	283	375	544	977	549	Dec	546
Strangford Lo.	373	531	157	396	216	Dec	335
Larne Lo.	316	234	152	200	297	Mar	240
Upper Lo. Erne	-	156	96	104	149	Feb	126
Carlingford Lo.	46	82	143	154	150	Feb	115

1 *SNH funded surveys of SE Scotland (WWT, unpubl. data)*
2 *includes data from RSPB/BP studies, e.g. Stenning (1994)*

SMEW
Mergellus albellus

International importance: 250
Great Britain importance: 2*†
All-Ireland importance: +*
***50 is normally used as a minimum threshold**

GB maximum: 313 Feb
NI maximum: 3 Dec

Trend not available

Winter 1995-96 saw, by UK standards, a large influx of Smew, associated with cold weather on the near continent. The February total was the highest since the count of 390, also during a hard winter, in 1984-95. These were almost certainly arrivals from The Netherlands, where counts have numbered 3-5,000 birds in recent winters (Boele *et al.* 1996), with over 1,200 on the IJsselmeer alone. Surveys of the Baltic Sea during the 1990s have shown that a much greater number winter in this area than previously thought, particularly Szczecin Lagoon, Poland, which has held up to 30,000 birds, hence the revision of the Northwest European population estimate to 25,000-30,000 (Scott & Rose 1996).

The larger total in 1995-96 was manifest as small groups widely dispersed across with country, rather than considerably higher numbers at key sites, with records from 136 sites during the course of the winter, compared with just 77 in 1994-95. in addition to those in Table 49. 21 held five or more birds: Croxhall Pits (11, Feb), Fen Drayton Gravel Pit (11, Feb), Pitsford Reservoir (11, Dec), Cotswold Water Park West (10, Jan), Colne Valley Gravel Pits (10, Feb), Twyford Gravel Pits (10, Mar), Walthamstow Reservoirs (10, Jan), King George VI Reservoir (8, Dec), Trinity Broads (8, Feb), Abberton Reservoir (7, Feb), Alvecote Pools (7, Feb), Chew Valley Lake (7, Feb), Blackwater Estuary (6, Dec), Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir (6, Feb/Mar); Leybourne/New Hythe Gravel Pits (6, Jan), Lullingstone Castle Lake (6, Feb), Tophill Low Reservoirs (6, Feb), Middle Tame Valley Gravel Pits (5, Feb), Little Paxton Gravel Pits (5, Feb) and Martnaham Loch (5, Feb). Surprisingly, peak counts of 14 and nine in Scotland and Wales, respectively, were only similar to or slightly higher than normal, and four records of single birds in Northern Ireland were also unexceptional.

Table 49. SMEW: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain†							
Wraysbury GP	17	39	29	9	30	Feb	25
Dungeness GP	18	11	33	25	31	Feb	24
Rutland Water	1	3	7	15	12	Feb	8
Thorpe WP	3	0	3	5	20	Jan	6
Langtoft West End GP	7	4	6	-	8	Jan	6
Eyebrook Rsr	2	6	10	4	3	(Dec-Mar)	5
Earls Barton GP	3	3	5	5	7	(Jan/Mar)	5

† *as the 1% threshold for national importance in Great Britain is so small, a qualifying level of five has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report*

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER
Mergus serrator

International importance: 1,250
Great Britain importance: 100
All-Ireland importance: 20*
***50 is normally used as a minimum threshold**

			Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB maximum:	**4,135**	**Dec**	**GB**	**129**	**137**	**157**	**190**	**145**
NI maximum:	**850**	**Sep**	**NI**	**84**	**110**	**82**	**102**	**115**

Numbers of Red-breasted Merganser in Great Britain in 1995-96 fell from the high levels recorded the previous winter, which were due to large counts on the Forth Estuary and Inner Moray Firth (although the RSPB/BP count at the latter site is not included in the national totals, a high proportion were picked up during the WeBS count). This is corroborated by the index values, which otherwise show relatively stable levels during the 1990s. Count totals and indices for Northern Ireland in 1995-96 were similar to the highest counts made there in recent years.

The origin of birds wintering in Britain is thought to be similar to that for Goosander, with birds in the north and west derived from local stock, although augmented by Icelandic birds also, whilst those in the southeast originate from the major breeding area in Scandinavia (Scott & Rose 1996). Large counts in the Baltic, as the result of more intensive monitoring, have resulted in a new population estimate of 125,000 (Pihl & Laursen in press). Scott & Rose (1996) go further to suggest that birds in East Greenland, Iceland, Britain and Ireland may constitute a separate population to those on the continent. As with other sea-duck, examination of trends is problematic, and although population estimates for numbers in Northwest Europe as a whole and for Britain & Ireland have been revised upwards in recent years, this is thought to reflect better data, rather than a genuine increase in population size.

With the cessation of dedicated sea-duck counts by RSPB/BP in the Moray Firth area, the area will be far less accurately monitored; the 1995-96 counts of Red-breasted Merganser on the Inner Moray, and possibly other sites also, were well below the true number. Counts at many sites were similar to or higher than their respective five year means, with the exception of Loch Indaal, which held low numbers for the second winter in succession. Sites in southwest Scotland held higher than usual numbers, including those around Irvine and the Clyde. Counts at Langstone Harbour and Lough Foyle greatly exceeded those of recent years, whilst both Strangford and Larne Loughs held much higher numbers than normal. Other sites holding 100 or more birds were Montrose Basin (220, Jun), Irvine to Saltcoats (150, Jan), North Norfolk Marshes (141, Dec) and The Wash (104, Nov).

Table 50. RED-BREASTED MERGANSER: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Inner Moray Fth	[1]1,789	[1]1,315	[1]3,509	[1]1,544	(163)	Dec	2,039
Great Britain							
Forth Est.	459	726	348	1,053	665	Nov	650
Duddon Est.	291	431	365	538	424	Jul	410
Poole Hbr	389	380	366	375	448	Jan	392
Morecambe Bay	354	300	283	311	297	Jan	309
Fleet/Wey	260	242	417	245	329	Mar	299
Lo. Indaal	336	561	259	167	172	Aug	299
Lavan Sands	[2]136	[2]220	[2]380	159	266	Oct	232
Cromarty Fth	[1]227	[1]185	[1]347	179	116	Oct	211
Langstone Hbr	111	153	127	201	419	Nov	202
Inner Clyde Est.	146	181	109	127	292	Mar	171

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Lo. Fleet Complex	[1]156	[1]162	[1]172	[1]110	139	Oct	148
Chichester Hbr	135	134	129	176	120	Mar	139
Lo. Ryan	115	121	(48)	[3]132	[3]143	Oct	128
Exe Est.	158	111	164	95	114	Mar	128
Irvine to Saltcoats	-	68	90	150	150	Jan	115
Irvine/Garnock Est.	141	60	101	87	176	Oct	113
Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lo.	222	449	217	264	486	Sep	328
Larne Lo.	207	167	174	295	331	Sep	235
Belfast Lo.	142	173	144	265	180	Oct	181
Lo. Foyle	17	84	30	39	197	Dec	73
Lo. Neagh/Beg	33	33	101	29	33	May	46
Dundrum Bay	74	102	6	24	24	Oct	46
Outer Ards	52	29	54	32	34	Jan	40
Carlingford Lo.	30	35	24	25	29	Feb	29
Bann Est.	22	31	22	12	15	Jan	20

1 *RSPB/BP studies, e.g. Stenning (1994)*
2 *data from CCW*
3 *P. Collin (in litt.)*

GOOSANDER
Mergus merganser

International importance: 2,000
Great Britain importance: 90
All-Ireland importance: +*

GB maximum:	**4,260**	**Feb**
NI maximum:	**1**	**Feb**

Trend	**91-92**	**92-93**	**93-94**	**94-95**	**95-96**
GB	**136**	**132**	**123**	**124**	**194**

The numbers of Goosander wintering in Great Britain rose sharply in 1995-96. The national total represents the highest count to date, just surpassing the count of 4,200 in 1986-87, whilst three monthly counts of around 3,500 or more during 1995-96 (Table 1) compare with just one of over 3,000 birds since 1990-91. The 1995-96 index value suggests an increase of approximately 50% compared with recent years, and is only fractionally lower than highest values to date, recorded in the mid 1980s.

Peak numbers occurred rather later in the winter than normal (Table 3). Although cold weather in late December may have forced birds in more northern areas to move south, where the likelihood of being counted by WeBS is perhaps greater, it seems more likely that British numbers were swollen by immigrants from the continent also escaping the hard conditions. This is supported by the relatively stable numbers in Scotland throughout the winter, but a large increase in England (Appendices 4 & 5). Figure 10 shows the number of birds recorded by WeBS in southeast England (all counties south and east of Nottinghamshire) in the last two winters. The significance of larger numbers in the cold winter is unclear, since only two winter's data are presented, but the peak in February matches the pattern of national numbers of Smew, a species with similar ecology and distribution, and lends further weight to the theory of an influx coinciding with continental cold weather.

The 1995-96 total is perhaps all the more remarkable given that between 1,000 and 2,000 birds, amounting to half the national total, were regularly recorded by WeBS on the Inner Moray Firth alone during the 1980s. The decline in numbers at this, previously the only UK site of international importance for Goosander, is thought to be due to lack of food, since other piscivorous species at this site have declined also (e.g. Evans 1992). High numbers of birds were only recorded in one month in 1995-96, but fewer than 40 were counted in all others. This may result from the difficulties involved with surveying sea-ducks at coastal sites, or conversely may represent an influx from surrounding areas frozen during the cold weather.

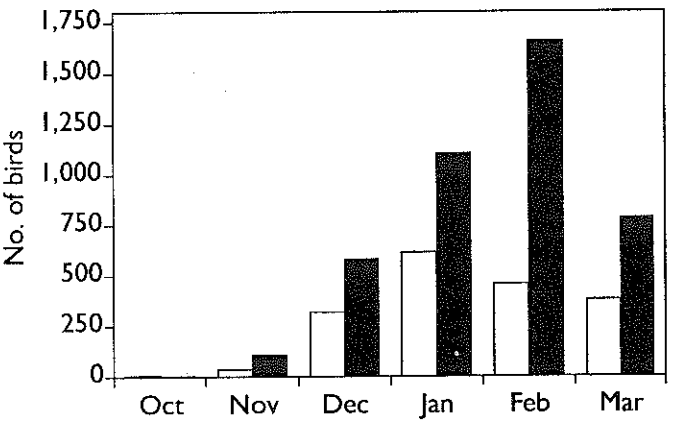

Figure 10. Numbers of Goosander in SE England in 1994-95 (open bars) and 1995-96 (solid bars).

Despite the general decline in numbers on the Beauly Firth in the 1990s, the national index values remain relatively

high, and a larger number of sites now regularly support over 100 birds (nine sites in Table 51, compared with less than five in the 1980s, e.g. Salmon (1982), Salmon *et al.* (1988)). Numbers at most are generally stable or increasing, with 1995-96 maxima at six of the seven sites exceeding their respective five year means. It is unclear whether this represents a redistribution of the Beauly birds to other sites in the UK, or is a result of the continued expansion and improved breeding success of the British population (Gregory *et al.* 1997). Other sites holding 90 or more birds were Abberton Reservoir (173, Feb), Eversley Cross & Yately Gravel Pits (165, Feb), Montrose Basin (156, Aug) and Tyninghame Estuary (93, Jun). A single bird on Lower Lough McNean was the first WeBS record in Northern Ireland for three years. Roost counts would undoubtedly record higher totals for many sites and must be a priority for proper assessment of the size and distribution of the UK wintering population.

Table 51. GOOSANDER: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain							
Inner Moray Fth	189	301	[1]341	[1]595	559	Dec	397
Hirsel Lake	170	360	-	172	180	Nov	221
Lo. Garten/Mallachie	-	-	226	201	-		214
Tay Est.	191	112	186	209	277	Aug	195
Chew Valley Lake	114	91	184	49	208	Dec	129
Eccup Rsr	85	112	125	141	178	Feb	128
R. Tweed: Kelso to Coldstream	109	75	119	153	149	Dec	121
Hamilton Low Parks	132	134	90	-	-		119
Hay-a-Park GP	165	137	69	24	120	Dec	103

1 *RSPB/BP studies, e.g. Stenning (1994)*

RUDDY DUCK
Oxyura jamaicensis

Naturalised introduction[†]
Native range: North and South America

			Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB maximum:	**3,107**	**Jan**	**GB**	**6,380**	**4,958**	**4,970**	**5,891**	**7,131**
NI maximum:	**73**	**Oct**						

Numbers of Ruddy Ducks in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 1995-96 were higher than any previous counts by the WeBS scheme. The three counts of more than 3,000 birds in Great Britain represent a considerable increase over those of recent winters, whilst the index value for 1995-96, also the highest to date, is much more consistent with the sustained population rise noted before the somewhat anomalous decline in the early 1990s.

Despite this increase, relatively few of the key sites held numbers in excess of those recorded in recent winters or their respective five year means. In particular, numbers have fallen more or less consistently over the last five years at Rutland Water whilst counts at Blithfield Reservoir have generally been much lower during this period also. In contrast, the count at Chew represents the highest since the peak of 1,064 birds in 1986-87. This was almost certainly a result of the cold weather in 1995-96, which is known to cause Ruddy Ducks to forsake the West Midlands area in favour of other areas, particularly the Somerset reservoirs (Vinicombe & Chandler 1982). Cold weather movements may also have influenced the higher than normal counts at some sites in the east of the country, e.g. Fairburn Ings, Hilfield Park Reservoir, Holme Pierrepont, Colwick Country Park and Abberton Reservoir. At Kilconquhar Loch, the high count in 1994-95 was repeated in 1995-96. In both years, numbers at this, the only Scottish site to feature in the table, fell markedly after the autumn peak, presumably as birds moved back south during the winter. A further 16 sites, around twice the number in recent years, held 30 or more birds. These were King George VI Reservoir (92, Dec), Church Wilne Reservoir (63, Mar), Pugney Water (50, Jan), Sir Edwards Lake (47, Oct), Sutton/Lound Gravel Pits (45, Sep), Combermere (42, Sep), Pennington Flash (41, Mar), Cotswold Water Park West (38, Feb), Rostherne Mere (38, Nov/Feb), Sywell Reservoir (36, Mar), Tophill Low Reservoir (35, Feb), Brent Reservoir (34, Oct), Loch Gelly (34, Nov), Cropston Reservoir (33, Feb), Marton Mere (33, Mar) and Llyn Coron (32, Nov). Loughs Neagh & Beg, the only Northern Ireland site in the table, held record numbers in 1995-96. As in previous years, the autumn peak was short-lived, with few birds remaining in mid winter Given the scarcity of Ruddy Ducks in the Republic of Ireland during winter (Wells & Smiddy 1995; Delany 1996), it might be speculated that these birds return to the core wintering area in Britain, as is suspected for Scottish breeding birds.

WWT has now completed research into the feasibility of control of Ruddy Ducks in the UK, as part of wider measures to conserve the globally threatened White-headed Duck. Population modelling suggested that control of Ruddy Ducks in the UK would be feasible by shooting birds during the breeding season (Hughes 1996). Summer shooting was at least 2.5 times as efficient as nest-trapping, and at least 3.5 times as efficient as egg destruction. Detailed studies of disturbance to other waterbirds suggested that effects were short-lived, that disturbed birds returned quickly, and that there were no declines in numbers over the course of the breeding season. The full

report also contains the results of surveys of feral Ruddy Ducks in the UK and of captive Ruddy Ducks in Europe. Copies are available, free of charge from: John Clorley, Department of the Environment, European Wildlife Division, Room 902E, Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol BS2 9DJ.

Table 52. RUDDY DUCK: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain†							
Chew Valley Lake	760	-	552	362	851	Dec	631
Blithfield Rsr	402	394	578	602	380	Jan	471
Rutland Water	756	550	304	311	231	Feb	430
Eyebrook Rsr	352	101	[1]442	73	151	Sep	224
Blagdon Lake	71	58	155	409	145	Mar	168
Swillington Ings	120	116	211	238	130	Jan	163
Middle Tame Valley GP	106	132	133	192	226	Nov	158
Swithland Rsr	192	284	145	76	73	Feb	154
Hanningfield Rsr	127	100	73	207	174	Dec	136
Pitsford Rsr	27	120	234	131	154	Mar	133
Hilfield Park Rsr	109	116	107	96	190	Jan	124
Stanford Rsr	110	190	104	86	107	Mar	119
Farmwood Pool	124	116	94	123	133	Dec	118
Clumber Park Lake	53	73	73	118	100	Dec	83
Llyn Traffwll	100	81	74	50	89	Dec	79
Llyn Penrhyn	-	46	86	103	-		78
Fairburn Ings	30	28	32	144	150	Dec	77
Abberton Rsr	24	52	76	77	135	Jan	73
Alaw Rsr	52	85	78	91	58	Jan	73
Belvide Rsr	109	38	24	110	(28)	Apr	70
Hollowell Rsr	64	21	27	169	38	Nov	64
Staines Rsr	64	105	19	38	67	Nov	59
Holme Pierrepont GP	41	39	36	73	101	Mar	58
Attenborough GP	55	36	81	70	49	Feb	58
Worsborough Rsr	39	36	37	65	90	Feb	53
Wath Ings	-	-	-	30	56	Mar	43
Ellesmere	38	29	30	32	74	Dec	41
Woolston Eyes	96	0	-	25	44	Jun	41
Avon Valley (Mid)	40	32	41	28	44	Mar	37
Colwick Country Park	30	11	34	13	88	Feb	35
Kilconquhar Lo.	4	4	-	66	62	Sep/Oct	34
Northern Ireland‡							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	38	37	59	45	73	Oct	50

† *as Ruddy Duck is an introduced species in the UK, site designation does not occur and the 1% criterion is not applied. A qualifying level of 30 has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report*

1 *B. Hughes, unpubl. data*

WHITE-HEADED DUCK
Oxyura leucocephela

Escape

Native range: Mediterranean and Western Asia

GB maximum: **1** **Dec**
NI maximum: **0**

A single bird of unknown provenance was found at Chew Valley Lake in December.

WATER RAIL
Rallus aquaticus

International importance: ?
Great Britain importance: ?†
All-Ireland importance: ?†

GB maximum: **430** **Dec**
NI maximum: **2** **Nov**

Trend **not available**

The 1995-96 national totals of Water Rails in Great Britain exceeded all previous counts by a considerable margin. Peak counts in November and December correspond with the main arrival of birds from the continent (Flegg 1986), although freezing conditions forcing birds from dense vegetation may also have contributed to birds being more visible. On the evidence of the last two winters, numbers at Grouville Marsh and the Somerset Levels match or exceed Stodmarsh, the most important site for which regular counts have been provided. Another 10 sites held 10 or more birds, namely Severn Estuary (22, Nov), Chichester Harbour (18, Jan), Humber Estuary (15, Aug/Mar), Altofts Ings (14, Sep), Alde Complex (12, Dec), Marton Mere (12, Dec), Taw/Torridge Estuary (11, Nov), Rutland Water (10, Nov-Mar), Upton Warren (10, Sep-Nov/Jan) and Fleet/Wey (10, Mar), although counts at all sites are probably conservative at best. The breeding population was recently estimated at 450-900 pairs in Britain and 850-1,700 in Ireland, having suffered large declines during the previous 20 years (Glue 1993).

Table 53. WATER RAIL: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain†							
Pannel Valley	44	-	-	-	-		44
Stodmarsh	100	20	14	28	30	Nov	38
Somerset Levels	24	27	24	36	46	Nov	31
Knockshinnoch Lagoons	-	-	-	(4)	28	Sep	28
Grouville Marsh	2	10	3	50	40	Feb	21
Christchurch Hbr	-	-	21	-	-		21
North Norfolk Marshes	-	-	-	15	23	Dec	19
Longueville Marsh	-	20	-	10	20	Jan	17
Leighton Moss	-	-	-	-	15	Jan	15
Southampton Water	-	-	(1)	(4)	(14)	Nov	14
Lower Derwent Valley	1	20	19	12	-		13
Fleet Pond	10	15	6	12	15	Nov/Dec/Jan	12
Poole Hbr	7	15	10	9	10	Aug/Sep	10

† *as no thresholds have been set for national importance for Water Rail, a qualifying level of 10 has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report*

SPOTTED CRAKE
Porzana porzana

International importance: ?
Great Britain importance: ?†
All-Ireland importance: ?†

GB maximum: **4** **Sep/Oct**
NI maximum: **0**

Around 20 singing males were recorded in the UK in the late 1980s, mainly in Scotland (Mead 1993). These, and perhaps birds from the continent also, are most easily seen on passage in autumn. Two were recorded at Marton Mere (Sep/Oct), with singles at Dunstable Sewage Farm Aug, Sandbach Flashes Aug, Fleet Pond Sep, Tophill Low Reservoirs Sep, Dee Estuary (Eng/Wal) Oct and Tresco Priory Pool Oct.

MOORHEN
Gallinula chloropus

International importance: ?
Great Britain importance: ?†
All-Ireland importance: ?†

GB maximum: **11,429** **Nov**
NI maximum: **323** **Sep**

Trend **not available**

National totals of Moorhen have risen steadily during the five years in which they have been counted by WeBS. The 10,000 mark was passed for the first time in 1994-95, and was exceeded in no fewer than five months in 1995-96 (Table 1). The index value for breeding Moorhen on rivers and canals, as recorded by the BTO's Waterways Bird Survey, increased by 13% in 1994-95 to reach an all time high (Marchant & Wilson 1996). However, both these

figures and those made by WeBS account for only a very small proportion of the British population, and it is not known whether the changes recorded by these schemes reflect those in the population as a whole or not. Cold weather may have resulted in an influx of birds from the continent and freezing waters may have forced birds into more open areas where they are more readily counted. However, the number of dashes in Table 54 indicates the problems involved in monitoring this species, and perhaps a consequent reluctance to make counts. The high 1995-96 figures may simply reflect increased effort and reporting.

Peak counts at individual sites show a fair degree of consistency between years. The 1995-96 count at Martin Mere is thus notable, whilst numbers on the Somerset Levels, Chichester Gravel Pits and Bewl Water have risen noticeably during the last five years. Many sites in Table 54 include WWT centres where birds appear to benefit from feed provided for the waterfowl collections. An additional 18 sites in Britain and one in the Channel Isles held more than 100 birds in 1995-96: Thames Estuary (184, Dec), Rutland Water (178, Sep), Pitsford Reservoir (163, Sep), Arun Valley (161, Nov), River Wye: Bakewell to Haddon (153, Jan), Grouville Marsh (130, Dec), Chilham to Chartham Gravel Pits (122, Feb), Welbeck Great Lake (122, Feb), Burry Inlet (121, Jan/Feb), Blackwater Estuary (113, Nov), Bosherston Lake (113, Nov), Alton Water (112, Dec), Alde Complex (110, Oct), Fairburn Ings (108, Sep), Fleet/Wey (108, Nov), River Derwent: Chatsworth (107, Feb), Ravensthorpe Reservoir (105, Sep), Baston/Langtoft Gravel Pits (104, Jan) and Sutton/Lound Gravel Pits (104, Nov). No other sites held more than 30 birds in Northern Ireland. However, with a tentative population estimate of more than a million birds in Britain and Ireland (Taylor 1986), it is unlikely that any of the sites listed in Table 54 would qualify as nationally important on the basis of WeBS counts.

Table 54. MOORHEN: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain†							
Severn Est.	750	-	701	-	-		726
Martin Mere	250	235	369	360	665	Jan	376
North Norfolk Marshes	-	-	281	234	332	Jan	282
Somerset Levels	166	135	228	285	356	Oct	234
Wantsum Marshes	-	195	-	-	-		195
Ouse Washes	117	102	158	269	241	Feb	177
Ash Levels	-	158	-	-	-		158
Durham Coast	132	194	121	137	176	Dec	152
Chew Valley Lake	150	110	160	155	180	Aug	151
Little Stour Valley	-	150	-	-	-		150
Leighton Moss	130	-	150	-	160	Jan	147
Lancaster Canal	157	120	143	128	147	Jan	139
Arun Valley	(140)	-	-	113	161	Nov	138
Abberton Rsr	-	-	-	(15)	119	Sep	119
Chichester GP	(24)	86	87	114	177	Feb	116
Clumber Park Lake	103	-	116	99	94	Jan	103
Bewl Water	22	14	80	200	196	Aug	102
Northern Ireland†							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	209	138	614	266	265	Aug	298
Upper Lo. Erne	-	88	100	174	70	Nov	108
Portavo Lake	51	40	47	42	43	Oct	45
Broad Water Canal	50	(6)	25	33	-		36
Upper Quoile	46	40	31	20	18	Feb	31

† *as no thresholds have been set for national importance for Moorhen, qualifying levels of 100 in Great Britain and 30 in Northern Ireland have been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report*

COOT
Fulica atra

International importance: 15,000
Great Britain importance: 1,100
All-Ireland importance: 250

GB maximum:	**107,376**	**Nov**
NI maximum:	**9,253**	**Oct**

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB	100	102	118	119	123
NI	114	126	68	110	153

Both the national total and the index value for Coot in Britain reached record levels in 1995-96, the third successive winter of sustained high numbers. This compares with roughly stable numbers in the Northwest European population as a whole during the last 20 years (Rose 1995). Although wintering birds in Britain include a

proportion of foreign breeders, with birds from the continent and Russia (Horsfall 1986), the peak in late autumn suggests the majority are of British stock. Given that the November count represented almost the total estimated British wintering population, and that a large number undoubtedly remained uncounted on rivers and other sites not covered by WeBS, it seems probable that there has been a genuine increase in numbers in Britain in recent years.

Numbers in Northern Ireland fluctuate more widely between years. The 1995-96 index value was the highest since extensive, regular counts began in the province in 1986-87, although the total was slightly lower than counts in both 1989-90 and 1992-93. As in Britain, numbers dwindle during the course of the winter. The count total in the Republic of Ireland of just 7,000 birds in January 1995 (Delany 1996), although lacking data for a key site, are so low as to suggest that either the all-Ireland estimate of 25,000 is too high or that, perhaps surprisingly for an area with such mild winters, birds migrate further south and west to winter.

Coot are not thought to show cold weather movements on a major scale (Ridgill & Fox 1990) and mortality is higher during cold winters, perhaps as a result of the reluctance to move. The much higher than normal numbers in Britain in February and March 1996, perhaps by as many as 20,000 birds (Tables 1 & 3), are thus interesting, as they suggest a cold weather influx, probably from The Netherlands, coinciding with an influx of Smew and Goosander almost certainly from the same country.

Almost half the sites in Table 55 exhibited increases, in some cases considerable: 1995-96 maxima at Rutland Water, Hanningfield Reservoir, Cotswold Water Park East and the Lower Windrush Valley Gravel Pits were all around 50% greater than the respective five year means. Only a handful of sites held notably fewer birds, and only on the Mid Avon Valley does it appear that there is a continuing decline. Abberton Reservoir, the most important UK site, held notably fewer birds than in 1994-95, although numbers were similar to the five year mean. Some of the Abberton birds may have been displaced to Alton Water, where there was an exceptional count of 2,845 in December. Other sites to hold 1,100 or more birds in Great Britain were Fairburn Ings (1,784, Oct), Sutton/Lound Gravel Pits (1,360, Dec), Little Paxton Gravel Pits (1,314, Jan), Baston/Langtoft Gravel Pits (1,210, Jan), Pitsford Reservoir (1,177, Nov), Chichester Gravel Pits (1,130, Dec) and Wraysbury Gravel Pits (1,126, Nov). No other site in Northern Ireland held over 250 birds.

Table 55. COOT: MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain							
Abberton Rsr	7,817	11,472	13,768	18,632	11,319	Sep	12,602
Rutland Water	3,639	2,785	3,036	4,165	6,184	Dec	3,962
Cotswold WP West	3,068	3,068	3,357	4,119	3,946	Nov	3,512
Hanningfield Rsr	2,870	2,105	1,941	3,300	4,540	Oct	2,951
Fleet/Wey	3,489	3,344	2,568	1,931	2,417	Nov	2,750
Cotswold WP East	2,645	1,613	1,953	2,185	5,199	Jan	2,719
Ouse Washes	1,940	2,289	3,182	2,225	1,755	Mar	2,278
Avon Valley (Mid)	2,784	2,583	1,664	1,828	1,509	Oct	2,074
Windermere	1,467	1,992	1,893	1,660	2,077	Nov	1,818
Chew Valley Lake	1,945	1,950	2,010	1,135	1,880	Aug	1,784
Hornsea Mere	-	-	1,650	1,722	-		1,686
Cheddar Rsr	1,085	918	2,066	1,967	2,381	Nov	1,683
Middle Tame Valley GP	1,330	1,378	1,560	1,497	1,781	Nov	1,509
Lower Windrush Valley GP	1,042	671	1,447	1,417	1,802	Nov	1,276
Stanford Rsr	1,800	1,000	610	1,430	1,200	Nov	1,208
Fen Drayton GP	1,300	-	804	987	1,528	Dec	1,155
Dungeness GP	1,919	933	911	1,112	805	Dec	1,136
Northern Ireland							
Lo. Neagh/Beg	7,097	8,848	3,134	7,222	8,788	Oct	7,018
Ballysaggart Lo.	400	400	-	-	-		400
Strangford Lo.	222	595	515	307	254	Dec	379

OYSTERCATCHER
Haematopus ostralegus

International importance: 9,000
Great Britain importance: 3,600
All-Ireland importance: 500

GB winter coastal max:	**215,687**	**Jan**	**Trend**	**91-92**	**92-93**	**93-94**	**94-95**	**95-96**
NI winter coastal max:	**16,218**	**Dec**	**UK**	**149**	**144**	**133**	**141**	**129**

In 1995-96 the UK winter index for Oystercatcher fell by 8% to reach its lowest level for 13 years, albeit only 20% below the all time peak attained in 1988-89. Many internationally and nationally important sites recorded peaks in 1995-96

that were below the recent average values, but at the Burry Inlet the 1995-96 winter peak was around 50% greater and numbers at Carlingford Lough also continued to increase. Declines at the North Norfolk Marshes and the Eden Estuary meant that these sites lost their nationally important status for this species. However, the Swale Estuary has maintained sufficiently high numbers over recent winters to now qualify as nationally important for Oystercatcher. On the Wash the long standing decline in wintering Oystercatcher continued with poor food supply, due to poor settlement of cockle and mussel spat, likely to be the main cause.

Table 56. OYSTERCATCHER: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Morecambe Bay	49,157	51,430	50,281	53,869	34,867	Dec	47,920
Solway Est.	36,533	(32,907)	33,240	41,344	31,031	Nov	35,537
Dee Est. (Eng/Wales)	35,681	34,610	24,809	26,658	(21,800)	Jan	30,439
Wash	(28,303)	26,618	25,382	22,300	(14,233)	Feb	25,650
Ribble Est.	16,290	22,219	9,620	(8,294)	12,048	Jan	15,044
Thames Est.	9,711	16,920	9,741	23,142	12,251	Nov	14,353
Burry Inlet	11,577	13,241	9,188	13,958	20,461	Jan	13,685
Great Britain							
Forth Est.	10,506	8,088	(8,509)	(8,851)	6,956	Dec	8,600
Duddon Est.	5,880	8,620	5,645	6,122	6,046	Nov	6,462
Carmarthen Bay	(3,309)	(7,334)	(5,545)	4,558	(2,202)	Dec	5,812
Inner Clyde Est.	6,215	5,962	4,838	4,796	(5,303)	Nov	5,452
Inner Moray Fth	5,246	5,430	4,962	5,419	(5,178)	Jan	5,264
Humber Est.	(5,687)	(5,795)	6,140	(3,329)	3,029	Dec	5,162
Lavan Sands	4,068	(2,820)	(5,055)	5,935	(3,621)	Feb	5,019
Exe Est.	3,899	3,989	4,502	4,202	4,733	Dec	4,265
Swale Est.	3,165	5,291	4,229	3,328	3,122	Nov	3,827
Medway Est.	3,377	3,559	4,986	2,732	(3,704)	Nov	3,671
Northern Ireland							
Belfast Lo.	5,787	7,583	6,349	5,573	4,814	Nov	6,021
Strangford Lo.	5,020	4,125	4,554	6,424	(6,091)	Dec	5,242
Lough Foyle	1,845	1,683	2,334	1,717	2,590	Nov	2,033
Dundrum Bay	1,241	1,748	1,524	(1,150)	1,553	Nov	1,516
Outer Ards	1,488	1,691	1,343	1,454	1,390	Dec	1,473
Carlingford Lo.	650	(878)	873	913	1,348	Feb	946

Also (not counted in recent years)
South Down (Northern Ireland) nationally important (last counted in 1989)

BLACK-WINGED STILT
Himantopus himantopus

Scarce

For the third year running this species was recorded at the North Norfolk Marshes, with just the one long-staying individual involved. In 1995-96 it was recorded from September to March although it did not appear for the January count.

AVOCET
Recurvirostra avosetta

International importance: 700
Great Britain importance: 10*
All-Ireland importance: +*
***50 is normally used as a qualifying level**

GB winter coastal max: 1,976 Nov
NI winter coastal max: 0

Trend not available

British totals for Avocet recorded in the 1995-96 winter were somewhat below those of the previous two winters, counter to the long term upward trend for this species, although the number of nationally important sites did increase by two, with two East Anglian sites, the Colne Estuary and Minsmere, joining the list. All sites of international and national importance are shown in Table 57. This shows that two East Anglian estuaries, the Alde complex and the North Norfolk Marshes, held far fewer birds than in recent winters. Again numbers on the Medway Estuary peaked before those on the Thames Estuary, with the Swale Estuary holding peak numbers even later in the winter. In the eighth supplement of the *Tamar Avocets* Reay (1996) interestingly explains how the

duration of the wintering season varies in SW England. He points out that Avocet spend more of the winter on sites that are further east. The 1994-95 counts revealed a very low maximum count of 81 for the Tamar complex, well down on the average of 201 birds for the site and well below the 1995-96 maximum of 272.

Table 57. AVOCET: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Alde complex	946	(633)	717	656	496	Dec	703
Great Britain							
Exe Est.	473	427	331	(260)	303	Dec	383
Poole Hbr	144	290	396	584	505	Nov	383
Thames Est.	137	230	341	647	367	Jan	344
Hamford Water	227	298	326	418	(249)	Nov	317
Swale Est.	136	(94)	218	329	285	Mar	242
Blyth Est. (Suffolk)	73	164	403	260	-		225
Medway Est.	215	(188)	285	130	(256)	Nov	221
Tamar complex	231	168	254	81	(272)	Jan	201
Wash	25	104	121	188	(106)	Mar	109
North Norfolk Marshes	93	56	(160)	194	41	Mar	108
Deben Est.	54	141	93	79	106	Feb	94
Colne Est.	1	19	(15)	139	203	Mar	90
Minsmere	-	-	25	115	(2)	Mar	70

STONE CURLEW
Burhinus oedicnemus

Scarce

One individual was recorded on the Alde complex in September.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER
Charadrius dubius

International importance: ?
Great Britain importance: ?
All-Ireland importance: ?

A typical value of seven sites recorded this species in the 1995-96 winter with nearly all birds counted in March. Greater than average numbers were recorded on passage, with 11 sites (all inland) recording counts above ten birds. The maximum was 26 at Barton Pool in July, this being greater than the total recorded at all British estuarine/coastal sites in that month.

RINGED PLOVER
Charadrius hiaticula

International importance : 500
Great Britain importance: 290
All-Ireland importance: 125

GB winter coastal max:	**10,082**	**Dec**
NI winter coastal max:	**704**	**Nov**

Trend	**91-92**	**92-93**	**93-94**	**94-95**	**95-96**
UK	**107**	**108**	**104**	**108**	**115**

The UK winter index for Ringed Plover increased by 6% in 1995-96, reaching its highest value for five years. The Colne Estuary in Essex recorded the largest increase in wintering birds for any of the sites listed in Table 58, with the 1995-96 peak 85% above that of the previous winter. Two new sites, the Wash and Berwick Little Beach, now have wintering populations of Ringed Plover which qualify as nationally important. However, reduced numbers at Lindisfarne, Southampton Water and the Guernsey Coast mean that these sites are no longer nationally important British sites for this species. In Northern Ireland Tyrella/Minerstown no longer qualifies in an all-Ireland context. Typically 15 sites recorded passage counts exceeding 500 birds and a somewhat high number of six sites recorded over 500 birds in spring. Sites recording more than 1,000 birds were Hamford Water (2,592 in Sep), Clwyd Estuary (1,710 in May), Solway Estuary (1,681 in May), the Wash (1,375 in Sep), Thames Estuary (1,279 in Sep), Medway Estuary (1,176 in Oct), Humber Estuary (1,055 in May) and the North Norfolk Marshes (1,043 in Aug).

Table 58. RINGED PLOVER: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Thames Est.	1,531	(803)	672	753	755	Jan	927
Medway Est.	581	770	599	1,206	(682)	Nov	789
Chichester Hbr	630	744	615	542	435	Nov	593
Hamford Water	346	548	(252)	641	(546)	Nov	520
Outer Ards	698	367	562	389	(317)	Nov	504
Great Britain							
Morecambe Bay	435	568	486	473	418	Dec	476
Orwell Est.	302	(352)	643	(372)	(411)	Dec	472
Stour Est.	336	756	382	502	306	Mar	456
Solway Est.	(340)	(232)	489	547	321	Feb	452
Colne Est.	275	212	(273)	382	707	Jan	394
Forth Est.	381	279	(400)	(291)	413	Dec	368
Langstone Hbr	344	(274)	(388)	224	519	Feb	368
North Norfolk Marshes	435	242	(317)	411	371	Nov	364
Blackwater Est.	(273)	(289)	220	474	(242)	Feb	347
ersey Coast	263	490	302	212	(446)	Dec	342
Humber Est.	(452)	290	229	(336)	316	Dec	324
Wash	221	190	330	375	390	Jan	301
Berwick Little Beach	-	-	(50)	(60)	(300)	Jan	(300)
Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lo.	257	415	218	313	253	Nov	291
Belfast Lo.	85	215	214	183	(135)	Dec	174
Carlingford Lo.	147	(62)	(376)	64	100	Jan	171

Also (not counted in recent years)
South Down (Northern Ireland) internationally important (last counted in 1989)
South Ford (Outer Hebrides) nationally important (last counted 1983)
Tiree internationally important (last counted in 1986)
Traighear (Outer Hebrides) nationally important (last counted in 1983)

KENTISH PLOVER — Scarce
Charadrius alexandrinus

Single birds were recorded at Chichester Harbour in June, Breydon Water in September and, more unusually, an overwintering bird was at Morecambe Bay in December, January and February.

DOTTEREL — Scarce
Charadrius morinellus

This approachable species was recorded at Blackmoorfoot Reservoir (three in May), Nocton/Dunston Fen (three in Aug), North Norfolk Marshes (one in Sep) and Newbiggin-Cresswell (one in Sep).

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER — Scarce
Pluvialis dominica

One individual was recorded on the Tees Estuary in June.

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER — Scarce
Pluvialis fulva

This species was also recorded on the Tees Estuary during 1995, with one bird seen in August. Amazingly this was one of three vagrant wader species reported from this carefully watched estuary during the 1995 summer.

GOLDEN PLOVER
Pluvialis apricaria

International importance: 18,000
Great Britain importance: 2,500
All-Ireland importance: 2,000

GB winter coastal max: 104,421 Nov
NI winter coastal max: 12,730 Dec

Trend not available

Recorded British totals of Golden Plover in 1995-96 showed a very distinct peak in November at both inland and coastal sites, but the maximum occurred later in the winter in Northern Ireland. Throughout the winter, numbers overall were around average for recent years. The relatively large number of inland wetlands in Table 59, reflects the tendency of this species to be one of the few wintering in large numbers on both inland and tidal wetlands, as well of course, with substantial numbers on non-wetland habitats e.g. agricultural land. The Colne Estuary showed the biggest change in numbers since last winter with a 84% decline, although the 1994-95 count at this site was unusually high. The number of sites now qualifying as nationally important for this species has increased since the 1993-94 WeBS report, with the addition of three estuaries (Mersey, Colne and Camel), three inland sites (Abberton Reservoir, Fairburn Ings and Crowdy Reservoir) and an Irish non-estuarine site (Outer Ards). The only site which has lost this status is the River Idle: Bawtry-Misterton.

Table 59. GOLDEN PLOVER: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Humber Est.	25,946	16,969	(29,201)	60,661	(32,532)	Jan	34,525
Great Britain							
Wash	(2,202)	7,657	(4,591)	(12,535)	(12,919)	Nov	11,037
Solway Est.	3,137	(12,321)	2,132	7,464	7,049	Nov	6,420
Carmarthen Bay	(2,000)	(8,500)	3,000	(9,080)	2,300	Mar	5,720
Lindisfarne	(2,250)	6,050	(2,805)	(3,180)	4,580	Dec	5,315
Breydon Water	2,300	5,100	6,400	6,100	5,300	Dec	5,040
Lower Derwent Ings	-	6,800	4,000	4,300	-		5,033
Blackwater Est.	961	(9,620)	1,752	(9,543)	2,055	Mar	4,786
Ribble Est.	5,503	6,362	3,823	(4,017)	2,347	Dec	4,508
Morecambe Bay	2,339	(3,128)	6,961	4,223	3,616	Nov	4,284
Hamford Water	4,417	3,274	3,417	4,411	5,073	Mar	4,118
Sutton/Lound GP	-	6,200	-	3,000	3,000	Nov	4,066
Somerset Levels	(2,372)	(2,609)	(2,265)	4,024	(3,024)	Mar	4,024
Thames Est.	2,063	(4,241)	1,449	(8,887)	2,515	Nov	3,831
Abberton Rsr	-	-	815	5,778	4,550	Nov	3,714
Clifford Hill GP	3,000	5,000	3,000	5,000	2,400	Jan	3,680
Fairburn Ings	-	-	31	3,800	7,000	Nov	3,610
Netherfield GP	3,000	6,000	1,100	3,000	3,000	Nov	3,220
Mersey Est.	1,900	5,000	2,278	2,323	3,850	Nov	3,070
St Benet's Levels	-	-	3,000	4,000	2,200	Jan	3,066
New Road Pits	-	-	3,000	-	-		3,000
Forth Est.	2,007	2,012	1,897	(3,080)	(5,260)	Nov	2,851
North Norfolk Marshes	3,274	3,151	1,990	2,121	3,258	Nov	2,758
Colne Est.	1,156	2,478	(1,680)	6,302	1,034	Mar	2,742
Swale Est.	1,968	(4,930)	2,183	3,132	1,393	Nov	2,721
Camel Est.	3,000	3,000	1,510	3,600	2,475	Nov	2,717
Crowdy Rsr	-	-	2,000	4,000	1,500	Nov	2,500
Northern Ireland							
Lo. Neagh/ Beg	10,025	4,613	(1,805)	(5,758)	(4,470)	Nov	7,319
Strangford Lo.	7,416	8,226	3,123	6,420	(7,444)	Mar	6,525
Lo. Foyle	5,095	5,700	(7,006)	4,605	2,050	Dec	4,891
Outer Ards	1,565	1,340	2,290	1,684	3,517	Jan	2,079

;REY PLOVER
'luvialis squatarola

International importance: 1,500
Great Britain importance: 430
All-Ireland importance: 40*
*50 is normally used as a qualifying level

;B winter coastal max:	**45,823**	**Jan**	**Trend**	**91-92**	**92-93**	**93-94**	**94-95**	**95-96**
II winter coastal max:	**250**	**Dec**	**UK**	**477**	**445**	**524**	**621**	**587**

ı 1995-96 the winter index for Grey Plover fell by 5% but emains above the value of two years before. The greatest ecline in numbers was noted on Strangford Lough where ıe 1995-96 winter peak was 69% down on the previous /inter. In contrast, on Hamford Water the peak for 1995-96 /as 270% greater than in 1994-95. During the 1994-95 /inter the numbers of Grey Plover doubled on the Ribble stuary to nearly 11,000, but returned to more typical levels during 1995-96. Two new sites, Langstone Harbour and Lindisfarne, achieved international importance for this species although the Humber Estuary has declined in importance and is no longer internationally important. Numbers at both the Exe Estuary and Carlingford Lough have increased to nationally important levels, but there have been declines at the Burry Inlet and the Jersey Coast, neither of which now qualify as such.

Table 60. GREY PLOVER: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
ıternational							
Vash	10,100	6,799	6,840	17,404	(7,396)	Mar	10,285
hames Est.	6,170	5,005	7,419	(7,344)	(7,515)	Feb	6,690
ibble Est.	4,148	2,655	5,178	(10,802)	(3,211)	Feb	5,695
ledway Est.	4,803	(4,619)	2,605	2,994	(1,899)	Nov	3,755
lackwater Est.	2,549	2,521	6,609	2,442	(4,230)	Dec	3,670
:our Est.	4,279	3,152	2,424	(4,253)	3,249	Nov	3,471
:amford Water	1,083	3,161	1,618	2,207	(8,186)	Nov	3,251
.hichester Hbr	3,901	2,272	2,862	3,629	2,060	Mar	2,944
·engie	2,800	1,745	1,800	3,300	1,560	Mar	2,241
/ale Est.	2,097	2,699	1,336	2,425	1,543	Mar	2,020
·ee Est. (Eng/Wales)	3,420	1,471	1,552	886	(2,567)	Jan	1,979
lorecambe Bay	1,714	1,747	2,000	2,189	1,559	Dec	1,841
ıngstone Hbr	1,682	997	1,821	2,802	1,266	Dec	1,713
ndisfarne	(1,531)	1,334	(1,545)	(1,810)	(1,728)	Jan	1,589
;reat Britain							
umber Est.	(1,338)	(1,123)	1,662	1,231	1,533	Dec	1,475
lorth Norfolk Marshes	1,226	1,145	779	1,766	850	Nov	1,153
olne Est.	1,294	944	(1,016)	1,198	1,050	Mar	1,121
ıgham Hbr	825	1,266	1,023	1,624	1,120	Dec	1,117
lt Est.	1,051	(830)	896	983	1,456	Jan	1,096
lersey Est.	902	981	2,100	663	417	Jan	1,012
ılway Est.	809	931	(843)	1,215	614	Feb	892
eaulieu Est.	750	850	830	833	1,021	Feb	856
den Est	579	506	(800)	1,403	510	Jan	759
ɔrth Est.	(521)	1,033	605	592	(730)	Mar	743
evern Est.	449	894	(647)	767	368	Jan	625
‹e Est.	490	460	385	508	513	Mar	471
lorthern Ireland							
:rangford Lo.	67	48	138	549	170	Nov	194
arlingford Lo.	6	75	63	89	80	Feb	62

APWING
anellus vanellus

International importance: 20,000**
Great Britain importance: 20,000†**
All-Ireland importance: 2,500

;B winter coastal max:	**249,804**	**Nov**	**Trend**	**not available**
I winter coastal max:	**24,944**	**Nov**		

s with Golden Plover, recorded British totals of Lapwing ıowed a very distinct peak in November at both inland nd coastal sites, but in Northern Ireland overall maximum umbers were reached later in the winter. Total numbers in Northern Ireland were rather higher than the typical values of recent winters. The five internationally important sites (which now include Breydon Water), plus those sites in Britain whose average peaks now exceed 5,000 birds are

listed in Table 61. In comparison to the 1993-94 WeBS report, there are now 11 more sites which hold an average of over 5,000 Lapwings, although numbers at the Forth Estuary and the North Norfolk Marshes have fallen below this level. Also given are the five Northern Ireland sites which qualify in an all-Ireland context, of which Lough Foyle is an addition since the 1993-94 WeBS report. At the Swale Estuary the winter peak of 2,995 birds is 84% below the highest count of the previous winter, although it should be noted that this species is prone to exhibit wide fluctuations in numbers due to local, national and international movements.

Table 61. LAPWING: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Somerset Levels	(16,301)	(46,771)	(26,131)	(53,202)	(42,824)	Jan	(53,202)
Humber Est.	(15,009)	13,544	(22,954)	90,288	(23,827)	Jan	51,916
Wash	5,785	74,281	13,102	24,225	(24,773)	Nov	29,348
Breydon Water	18,000	14,700	36,000	32,000	24,000	Dec	24,940
Ribble Est.	27,444	28,802	6,495	(22,308)	28,270	Dec	22,753
Sites in Great Britain with more than 5,000 birds†							
Morecambe Bay	18,857	23,309	12,502	16,161	24,293	Dec	19,024
Arun Valley	-	-	9,795	24,457	(9,402)	Mar	17,126
Blackwater Est.	2,179	(32,700)	14,355	(12,186)	(5,280)	Nov	15,355
Severn Est.	(3,962)	(5,716)	(6,359)	16,251	10,956	Nov	13,603
Thames Est.	9,643	13,659	15,723	(18,365)	8,347	Nov	13,147
Mersey Est.	12,500	8,584	9,036	16,601	(11,137)	Dec	11,680
Swale Est.	8,202	11,113	9,079	18,424	2,995	Nov	9,962
Pulborough Levels	-	-	(0*)	9,080	-		9,080
Solway Est.	9,697	(9,022)	3,354	9,067	13,609	Nov	8,949
Ouse Washes	-	-	2,021	15,591	8,155	Nov	8,589
Crouch/Roach Est.	5,053	12,534	9,970	(7,480)	5,964	Jan	8,380
Colne Est.	2,074	11,114	(10,067)	9,510	8,222	Nov	8,197
Dee Est. (Eng/Wales)	7,734	5,663	5,300	11,514	(9,590)	Nov	7,960
Nene Washes	-	-	(3,705)	7,932	(7,190)	Mar	7,932
Carmarthen Bay	(4,200)	(4,216)	1,967	13,777	(963)	Jan	7,872
Abberton Rsr	-	-	2,600	6,861	12,425	Nov	7,295
Hamford Water	2,079	4,694	11,635	7,059	(6,335)	Nov	6,366
Lower Derwent Ings	-	-	5,200	7,400	-		6,300
Stour Est.	2,910	11,813	1,621	8,210	4,228	Nov	5,756
Poole Hbr	1,212	6,005	10,454	4,583	5,907	Jan	5,632
Inner Clyde Est.	9,616	5,570	2,462	2,647	(2,506)	Nov	5,073
Rutland Water	-	-	1,300	10,396	3,525	Nov	5,073
Tees Est.	1,325	2,452	3,416	7,363	10,505	Dec	5,012
Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lo.	9,074	9,591	3,779	8,266	(11,086)	Dec	8,359
Lo. Neagh/Beg	13,501	5,595	(3,042)	5,832	(6,758)	Nov	8,309
Outer Ards	9,070	8,280	2,592	3,070	(3,776)	Nov	5,753
Lough Foyle	1,985	1,850	1,078	4,105	7,370	Nov	3,277
Belfast Lo.	3,059	3,449	1,819	2,443	(1,981)	Dec	2,692

† *as few sites meet the qualifying level for national importance for Lapwing in Great Britain, a threshold of 5,000 has been used as the basis for selecting sites for presentation in this report. Only those British sites listed under international importance meet the qualifying level also for national importance in Great Britain.*

KNOT
Calidris canutus

International importance: 3,500
Great Britain importance: 2,900
All-Ireland importance: 375

GB winter coastal max: 231,775 Feb
NI winter coastal max: 15,322 Feb

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
UK	90	94	78	83	83

The 1995-96 winter index for Knot remained at the same value as the previous year. Eighteen sites now qualify as internationally important for this species, with the Swale Estuary, Inner Moray Firth, Lindisfarne and the Tees Estuary being new additions to this list. Two new sites, the Stour Estuary and Cromarty Firth, now qualify as being nationally important for Knot. Despite the unchanged UK winter index value compared to the previous year, many of these major resorts recorded sizeable increases or decreases in 1995-96. This is not surprising, however, in view of the highly mobile nature of this species. In a comprehensive booklet comparing trends in wader numbers on the Solway

vith regional and national figures, Blackledge *et al.* (1996) liscovered an interesting finding for Knot. In contrast to he stability shown by the national index over the past ten ears, numbers on the Solway have increased significantly ver the same period. The numbers of Knot on the Dee stuary (England/Wales) declined over two winters, reaching a low of just 9,500 in 1994-95, but showed a marked recovery to 18,500 in 1995-96. Conversely 1994-95 saw a 37% increase in numbers on the Ribble Estuary compared to 1993-94. However, numbers were down by 42% in 1995-96, dropping below the average for the site.

Table 62. KNOT: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
nternational							
Vash	154,315	186,892	(110,841)	(79,194)	(47,775)	Nov	170,603
ibble Est.	42,644	54,400	44,510	61,054	(35,321)	Feb	50,652
hames Est.	35,650	(44,034)	50,690	(31,936)	47,191	Nov	44,510
lumber Est.	(37,093)	(45,273)	(24,698)	34,663	28,076	Dec	36,276
lorecambe Bay	29,408	30,765	30,282	26,722	37,871	Mar	31,009
)ee Est. (Eng/Wales)	21,016	37,700	11,725	9,545	18,520	Mar	19,701
lt Est.	20,001	(801)	17,832	15,020	18,002	Feb	17,713
olway Est.	11,604	7,652	14,923	16,661	10,516	Nov	12,271
)engie	11,700	9,000	(5,550)	6,820	6,050	Mar	8,392
orth Est.	6,743	5,730	12,688	5,488	8,950	Jan	7,919
trangford Lo.	8,155	4,200	6,301	7,369	(13,444)	Feb	7,893
lorth Norfolk Marshes	6,142	6,822	6,223	6,467	5,930	Nov	6,317
wale Est.	5,555	2,189	6,431	6,406	2,517	Mar	4,619
lontrose Basin	3,500	(3,100)	3,500	(1,500)	(6,500)	Jan	4,500
)uddon Est.	2,743	8,000	3,650	6,520	1,562	Jan	4,495
ıner Moray Fth	1,201	9,183	1,491	3,441	(2,491)	Jan	3,829
indisfarne	(2,100)	5,650	(2,770)	2,022	3,810	Feb	3,827
'ees Est.	3,403	5,938	2,050	2,577	5,122	Dec	3,818
Great Britain							
tour Est.	3,290	2,778	2,650	3,365	4,748	Jan	3,366
Cromarty Fth.	663	350	4,782	(2,997)	(6,600)	Feb	3,078

SANDERLING
Calidris alba

International importance: 1,000
Great Britain importance: 230
All-Ireland importance: 35*
***50 is normally used as a qualifying level**

			Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB winter coastal max:	**6,583**	**Dec**						
NI winter coastal max:	**27**	**Jan**	**UK**	**116**	**81**	**74**	**109**	**92**

The 16% fall in the UK index in 1995-96 follows a huge 47% ise in the 1994-95 winter. With the majority of the UK opulation wintering on open coasts, the 1997-98 Non-stuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey should provide more omplete population data for this species. Numbers on the ibble Estuary were around only 25% of the values ecorded in the previous four years. None of the nationally nportant sites, as listed in Table 63, registered sizeable leclines or increases in 1995-96. However, four new sites Lade Sands, Lindisfarne, Tees Estuary and Berwick Little Beach) passed the level for national importance, although the Tay Estuary, Swansea Bay and the Clwyd Coast no longer qualify.

Peak passage counts exceeding 1,000 birds were recorded during 1995-96 at the Ribble Estuary (7,157 in May), Morecambe Bay (2,519 in May), the Wash (2,375 in Aug), the Alt Estuary (1,879 in May) and the North Norfolk Marshes (1,598 in Sep). During 1994-95 the Ribble also held the peak passage numbers with 4,718 birds in August. The Humber Estuary (2,463 in May), the Alt Estuary (2,033 in May), (2,027 in July), the Wash (2,027 in July), and the Duddon Estuary (1,120 in May) also recorded passage counts exceeding 1,000 birds in 1994-95.

Table 63. SANDERLING: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
nternational							
ibble Est.	2,856	2,744	2,780	3,655	750	Dec	2,557
Great Britain							
)ee Est. (Eng/Wales)	1,581	421	624	1,180	(208)	Jan	951
)uddon Est.	600	425	923	700	965	Dec	722

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Humber Est.	761	(537)	460	665	413	Mar	574
Durham Coast	559	(292)	(151)	(0)	(255)	Dec	559
Alt Est.	391	(320)	507	500	607	Mar	501
Thanet Coast	610	(488)	(501)	262	-	-	465
Carmarthen Bay	(654)	(218)	(398)	374	323	Mar	437
North Norfolk Marshes	339	320	286	681	507	Nov	427
Wash	378	140	250	(467)	(539)	Nov	354
Lade Sands	-	-	187	-	475	Feb	331
Jersey Coast	260	277	449	240	(130)	Dec	306
Lindisfarne	(72)	300	(145)	(153)	(154)	Jan	300
Solway Est.	300	213	(195)	316	(216)	Mar	276
Tees Est.	175	105	(255)	298	465	Dec	260
Berwick Little Beach	-	-	92	100	(580)	Dec	257
Morecambe Bay	494	164	137	132	312	Mar	247
Chichester Hbr	325	149	308	87	309	Feb	235
Thames Est.	(262)	(185)	(161)	190	246	Nov	232

Also (not counted in recent years)
South Ford (Outer Hebrides) nationally important (last counted in 1983)
Tiree nationally important (last counted in 1986)

LITTLE STINT
Calidris minuta

International importance: 2,100
Great Britain importance: ?
All-Ireland importance: ?

GB winter coastal max: 44 Nov **Trend not available**
NI winter coastal max: 0

More than two birds were recorded during the 1995-96 winter at the Thames Estuary (6 birds), the Humber Estuary (3 birds) and Newtown Estuary on the Isle of Wight (3 birds) with all counts being made in November. Passage waders were up on the average of the previous five years with September typically recording the peak count of 382 birds. Sites recording more than 20 birds during passage periods were the Humber Estuary (47 birds), Thames Estuary (46 birds), Tees Estuary (31 birds), North Norfolk Marshes (30 birds) and the Wash (24 birds), with all these peak counts made in September.

TEMMINCK'S STINT
Calidris temminckii

Scarce

Two birds were recorded on the Blackwater Estuary and one on the Blyth Estuary (Suffolk), both counts being made in May. One was also recorded at Rye Harbour/Pett Level in September.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER
Calidris fuscicollis

Scarce

Two singletons were recorded, with one at Southampton Water and one on the Humber Estuary, both being seen in August.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER
Calidris melanotos

Scarce

This species was recorded on the Medway Estuary and Slapton Ley (both in Aug), the Fleet/Wey in September and at Morecambe Bay in October. All records refer to single birds.

CURLEW SANDPIPER
Calidris ferruginea

International importance: 4,500
Great Britain importance: ?
All-Ireland importance: ?

GB winter coastal max: 7 Nov
NI winter coastal max: 0

Trend not available

Four sites recorded Curlew Sandpiper during the 1995-96 winter. The Cefni Estuary again held the greatest number with five birds in November. In addition, lone birds were recorded on the Colne Estuary Nov, Red Wharf Bay Nov and the Mouth of River Lochy Jan. Passage counts exceeding 25 birds were made only on the Humber Estuary. Thirty two birds were recorded in September on this estuary, which also held the greatest number of birds in 1993-94.

PURPLE SANDPIPER
Calidris maritima

International importance: 500
Great Britain importance: 210
All-Ireland importance: 10*
***50 is normally used as a qualifying level**

GB winter coastal max: 1,149 Jan
NI winter coastal max: 71 Jan

Trend not available

For the third successive winter, recorded national totals were rather low for Purple Sandpiper. Much of our wintering population occurs on open coasts which are not counted for WeBS, but will be included in the 1997-98 Non-estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey. Counts exceeding 100 birds were made in the 1995-96 winter at the Moray Coast (268 in Jan), Budle Point-Seahouses (252 in Nov), the Tees Estuary (177 in Nov), Stevenston (150 in Jan), the Durham Coast (150 in Jan) and the North Berwick shore (139 in Dec).

DUNLIN
Calidris alpina

International importance: 14,000
Great Britain importance: 5,300
All-Ireland importance: 1,250

GB winter coastal max: 475,680 Jan
NI winter coastal max: 19,975 Feb

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
UK	99	83	86	96	90

In 1995-96 the UK winter index decreased by 6% on the previous winter, although it was still higher than that for 1993-94. The 14 sites of international importance are unchanged from those listed in the 1993-94 WeBS report. The further 18 sites important in an all-Ireland or Great Britain context are also largely unchanged, although Poole Harbour is an addition, whereas Portsmouth Harbour and Dundrum Bay have ceased to be nationally important for the species. Compared to the average counts, the greatest changes recorded in 1995-96 were on the Dengie Estuary, where a 46% decline was noted, and on the Severn Estuary, where there was a decline of 36%. Most of the other main resorts recorded only minor changes.

Table 64. DUNLIN: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
nternational							
Morecambe Bay	72,113	49,285	45,346	58,529	41,886	Mar	53,431
Mersey Est.	55,000	30,000	32,000	64,000	40,501	Feb	44,300
Severn Est.	42,056	(35,611)	(44,209)	50,638	26,150	Jan	40,763
Ribble Est.	39,832	30,862	51,415	(41,532)	34,215	Jan	39,571
Wash	43,768	29,680	24,930	38,235	(41,487)	Nov	35,620
Medway Est.	28,607	(29,753)	23,550	30,300	(17,232)	Nov	28,052
Thames Est.	38,556	(22,968)	16,882	(26,368)	26,933	Jan	27,457
Langstone Hbr	34,500	31,250	23,294	25,054	21,144	Feb	27,048
Humber Est.	25,604	(27,075)	22,975	20,145	27,600	Dec	24,679
Blackwater Est.	20,900	(26,425)	25,621	21,960	(27,345)	Jan	24,450
Dee Est. (Eng/Wales)	31,368	21,223	16,378	25,383	(24,695)	Jan	23,809
Chichester Hbr	13,972	21,721	(19,038)	26,087	22,590	Jan	21,092
Itour Est.	17,412	19,902	18,241	(16,024)	15,343	Nov	17,724
Solway Est.	14,404	9,572	18,795	18,498	11,688	Feb	14,591

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Great Britain							
Swale Est.	11,785	12,988	(8,176)	12,302	10,971	Mar	12,011
Colne Est.	12,092	10,190	(10,316)	9,810	13,000	Jan	11,273
Duddon Est.	8,923	10,782	8,460	14,790	10,370	Nov	10,665
Forth Est.	11,095	6,912	9,886	7,824	13,830	Dec	9,909
Orwell Est.	6,786	8,300	9,900	(6,196)	11,565	Feb	9,137
Lindisfarne	(5,800)	(6,742)	8,224	8,027	(7,031)	Jan	8,125
Dengie	9,100	8,450	(6,600)	9,600	4,200	Feb	7,837
Hamford Water	4,508	6,762	5,918	5,789	(10,113)	Nov	6,618
Burry Inlet	4,255	2,811	8,736	8,787	6,966	Jan	6,311
Poole Hbr	5,618	5,458	6,222	(5,963)	6,424	Jan	5,937
Tamar complex	5,468	5,539	(7,130)	5,503	(4,414)	Dec	5,910
Inner Moray Fth	6,097	4,205	5,494	(3,805)	(7,226)	Jan	5,755
Exe Est.	7,577	4,117	4,813	7,270	4,922	Dec	5,739
Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lo.	5,010	2,403	4,347	6,506	(8,317)	Feb	5,316
Lough Foyle	(3,000)	5,170	4,622	4,417	7,025	Feb	5,308
Outer Ards	2,493	1,744	2,288	1,955	1,709	Jan	2,037
Belfast Lo.	2,416	1,659	1,681	1,774	(1,811)	Feb	1,882
Carlingford Lo.	1,670	(688)	(2,410)	650	1,616	Feb	1,586

RUFF
Philomachus pugnax

International importance: ?
Great Britain importance: 7*
All-Ireland importance: +*
***50 is normally used as a qualifying level**

GB winter coastal max: 231 Feb
NI winter coastal max: 1 Nov

Trend: not available

Recorded UK totals of Ruff during the 1995-96 winter were around the average values of recent years. At individual sites, counts exceeding 50 birds were made at the Ouse Washes (139 in Nov), Hamford Water (81 in Feb), the Swale Estuary (76 in Mar), Nene Washes (71 in Jan), North Norfolk Marshes (58 in Feb), Abberton Reservoir (53 in Nov), with five other sites recording peak winter counts between 20 and 50 birds. Passage counts greater than 50, all made during autumn 1995, were recorded at the Alde Estuary (266 in Sep), Abberton Reservoir (159 in Sep), the Humber Estuary (152 in Sep), the Ouse Washes (103 in Oct), the Blackwater Estuary (71 in July), North Norfolk Marshes (68 in Aug), the Ythan Estuary (62 in Oct) and Rutland Water (59 in Sep).

JACK SNIPE
Lymnocryptes minimus

International importance: ?
Great Britain importance: ?
All-Ireland importance: 250

GB winter coastal max: 50 Nov/ Mar
NI winter coastal max: 2 Mar

Trend: not available

On estuarine/coastal sites numbers recorded during the 1995-96 winter were somewhat higher than in recent years but numbers on inland sites were lower. It should however be remembered that this is perhaps the most difficult wader to count accurately. Chichester Harbour again recorded the greatest count with 17 birds in January, whilst further sites holding 10 or more birds were the Severn Estuary (10 in Nov) and Drakelow Gravel Pit (10 in Nov).

SNIPE
Gallinago gallinago

International importance: 10,000
Great Britain importance: ?
All-Ireland importance: ?

GB winter coastal max: 3,140 Jan
NI winter coastal max: 273 Dec

Trend: not available

On estuarine/coastal sites, recorded British totals of Snipe in the 1995-96 winter remained close to the high levels of the previous winter, but were lower on inland sites compared to 1994-95. In Northern Ireland, numbers were

well up on both inland and estuarine sites. As with Jack Snipe, caution must be applied when interpreting these figures, due to the difficulty of counting this species in the field and the fact that many potential wintering areas, such as wet fields, are not covered comprehensively by WeBS. Again, the Somerset Levels recorded the greatest count (1,849 in Dec) with two other sites holding more than 500 birds: Maer Marsh (650 in Dec) and the Ouse Washes (546 in Mar). Peak winter counts of between 200 and 500 birds were made at eight sites, of which five were estuarine/coastal.

GREAT SNIPE **Scarce**
Gallinago media

This species was recorded at the Crouch/Roach Estuary where one was reported in March.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER **Scarce**
Limnodromus scolopaceus

Singletons were recorded at the Exe Estuary in February and Tophill Low Reservoirs in November and December.

WOODCOCK
Scolopax rusticola

International importance: 20,000**
Great Britain importance: ?
All-Ireland importance: ?

Seventy nine sites recorded this species in 1995-96, the very great majority of the counts being made in the winter months. More than ten birds were noted at Longueville Marsh (22 in Jan), and Grouville Marsh (15 in Dec, Jan and Feb) both being inland sites on the Channel Isles. A further eight sites recorded three or more Woodcock in 1995-96.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT
Limosa limosa

International importance: 700
Great Britain importance: 70
All-Ireland importance: 90

			Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB winter coastal max:	**11,384**	**Jan**						
NI winter coastal max:	**236**	**Jan**	**UK**	**174**	**184**	**242**	**261**	**238**

In 1995-96 the winter index for Black-tailed Godwit declined by 9% on the previous year, this being the first decline since 1990. Twelve sites now qualify as internationally important with only the Ouse Washes being inland; four of these sites (Chichester Harbour, Southampton Water, the Wash and the Medway Estuary) are new additions to this category. All are listed in Table 65, together with 24 sites of national importance in Great Britain and Belfast Lough, the only site of importance in an all-Ireland context with Strangford Lough no longer qualifying. In Britain, the Beaulieu Estuary and the River Avon: Ringwood also no longer qualify as nationally important for the species, but new sites which do are Abberton Reservoir, the Burry Inlet and Dengie Flats. The most noteworthy count in 1995-96 was perhaps 3,848 birds on the Stour Estuary in January. This is more than double the previous average peak count on this site and is one of the highest ever winter counts of this species anywhere in the UK. In the passage periods, counts exceeding 700 birds were made at the Ribble Estuary (3,812 birds in Aug), the Wash (2,788 in Sep), the Dee Estuary (England/Wales) (1,510 in Oct), the Stour Estuary (1,273 in Oct), Poole Harbour (889 in Oct), Hamford Water (806 in Oct) and the Thames Estuary (717 in Aug). Chichester Harbour and the Medway Estuary both recorded above average numbers of birds during the 1994-95 winter. On both estuaries the wintering populations more than doubled but both of these sites showed large declines to near average levels in 1995-96.

Table 65. BLACK-TAILED GODWIT: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Stour Est.	2,169	1,007	1,889	(1,882)	3,848	Jan	2,228
Dee Est.(Eng/Wales)	1,617	1,760	2,033	1,428	1,862	Dec	1,740
Swale Est.	2,115	1,394	1,636	1,910	637	Mar	1,538
Poole Hbr	1,280	1,423	(1,447)	2,046	1,194	Feb	1,485

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
Ouse Washes	1,432	692	1,016	2,068	509	Mar	1,143
Hamford Water	1,254	1,899	241	1,977	236	Jan	1,121
Ribble Est.	561	(38)	1,690	(845)	(180)	Feb	1,121
Blackwater Est.	1,132	1,167	(630)	956	920	Mar	1,043
Chichester Hbr	536	451	664	2,139	551	Dec	868
Southampton Water	305	876	801	(1,450)	(594)	Feb	858
Wash	321	854	650	(705)	(1,764)	Feb	858
Medway Est.	274	856	380	1,795	(902)	Feb	841
Great Britain							
Orwell Est.	700	597	270	728	615	Nov	582
Exe Est.	480	450	737	479	520	Jan	533
Mersey Est.	278	(120)	21	580	494	Nov	343
Thames Est.	559	54	(19)	585	109	Nov	326
Nene Washes	5	58	(472)	626	(398)	Mar	311
Langstone Hbr	460	305	(276)	284	154	Feb	300
Abberton Rsr	-	-	0	158	724	Nov	294
Colne Est.	147	499	(82)	227	219	Nov	273
Blyth Est. (Suffolk)	193	156	430	225	-		251
Breydon Water	6	44	591	437	122	Nov	240
NW Solent	150	468	110	(120)	200	Nov	232
Alde complex	364	160	55	558	12	Nov	229
Newtown Est.	181	230	212	151	(365)	Feb	227
Pagham Hbr	60	16	466	260	100	Mar	180
Crouch/Roach Est.	212	173	163	(261)	68	Feb	175
Eden Est.	208	159	(154)	(116)	128	Nov	165
Deben Est.	112	72	43	111	267	Mar	121
Christchurch Hbr	7	180	135	(0)	-		107
Tamar complex	91	103	78	100	156	Nov	105
Fal complex	129	123	71	89	69	Dec	96
Burry Inlet	101	63	76	86	87	Jan	82
Dengie	32	162	(1)	126	0		80
Morecambe Bay	52	71	12	205	56	Jan	79
Humber Est.	39	(95)	(80)	83	(57)	Feb	74
Northern Ireland							
Belfast Lo.	286	330	370	359	235	Jan	316

HUDSONIAN GODWIT
Limosa haemastica

Scarce

One bird of this extremely rare Nearctic species, which normally winters in South America, was reported from the Tees Estuary in September.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT
Limosa lapponica

International importance: 1,000
Great Britain importance: 530
All-Ireland importance: 175

GB winter coastal max: 56,136 Feb
NI winter coastal max: 2,712 Feb

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
UK	104	104	94	93	124

Despite a 33% increase over the previous year, the winter UK index for Bar-tailed Godwit remains below the value for 1990-91. As usual for this highly mobile species, some sites recorded well above average counts, whilst at others numbers were well down. On the Dee Estuary (England/Wales) numbers were about 138% up, whilst on the neighbouring Ribble Estuary the 1995-96 peak was 56% down, suggesting local movements may have occurred, although the counts concerned are regarded as minimum figures. The Swale Estuary and Belfast Lough newly qualify for national importance for Bar-tailed Godwit, although Langstone Harbour's numbers no longer reach this level. The numbers of birds recorded on the Eden Estuary over the past five years now exceed the qualifying level for international importance.

Table 66. BAR-TAILED GODWIT: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Ribble Est.	18,775	(10,412)	16,195	(7,100)	(7,693)	Feb	17,485
Wash	9,807	11,098	(11,132)	8,987	(15,227)	Feb	11,280
Thames Est.	3,969	(9,530)	5,626	(3,547)	11,684	Mar	7,702
Alt Est.	2,934	(3,913)	138	5,511	5,488	Jan	3,596
Lindisfarne	(3,590)	(3,515)	(3,243)	3,324	2,769	Dec	3,288
Morecambe Bay	1,886	2,736	925	4,358	2,985	Jan	2,578
Solway Est.	1,536	(1,940)	(2,407)	3,192	2,331	Feb	2,366
Forth Est.	3,075	2,260	2,298	1,560	1,988	Feb	2,236
Inner Moray Fth	2,030	2,374	1,411	1,541	(2,649)	Feb	2,001
Lough Foyle	1,115	2,140	1,656	2,428	2,140	Feb	1,895
Humber Est.	(1,837)	(1,711)	994	1,233	(2,199)	Feb	1,594
Tay Est.	2,296	1,310	(1,387)	537	1,520	Jan	1,415
Chichester Hbr	954	1,267	1,431	1,992	1,250	Jan	1,378
Dengie	1,200	1,180	(601)	1,500	1,300	Feb	1,295
Cromarty Fth	913	1,231	1,055	(2,069)	(1,193)	Jan	1,292
North Norfolk Marshes	1,225	852	(1,592)	1,205	1,338	Feb	1,242
Dornoch Fth	995	1,050	1,243	(707)	1,520	Jan	1,202
Eden Est.	490	1,461	1,370	1,231	672	Dec	1,044
Great Britain							
Dee Est. (Eng/Wales)	837	(1,181)	22	168	(2,012)	Jan	844
Swale Est.	480	584	350	603	696	Mar	542
Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lo.	291	836	1,542	843	898	Nov	882
Belfast Lo.	136	196	126	572	(132)	Mar	257

WHIMBREL
Numenius phaeopus

International importance: 6,500
Great Britain importance: +*
All-Ireland importance: +*

GB winter coastal max: 15 Mar
NI winter coastal max: 2 Nov

Trend not available

Typically around a dozen birds were recorded throughout the UK during the winter of 1995-96. Passage counts exceeding 100 birds were made at the Wash (839 in Aug), the Burry Inlet (142 in June), the Humber Estuary (119 in Aug), the Severn Estuary (104 in May) and Langstone Harbour (101 in July).

CURLEW
Numenius arquata

International importance: 3,500
Great Britain importance: 1,200
All-Ireland importance: 875

GB winter coastal max: 59,493 Mar
NI winter coastal max: 5,257 Jan

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
UK	146	150	135	168	124

The 1995-96 UK winter index for Curlew fell substantially by 26% on the previous year. Table 67 lists all internationally and nationally important sites and those important in all-Ireland context. The list of sites classified as internationally important for Curlew remains the same as published in *Wildfowl & Wader Counts 1993-94*, but five new nationally important sites, Cromarty Firth, Carmarthen Bay, Chichester Harbour and the Ribble Estuary, now qualify. Conversely, the Mersey Estuary, Whitemoor Reservoir and Ouse/Lairo Water have ceased to be nationally important for Curlew. Perhaps the most noteworthy 1995-96 winter peak counts were recorded on the Solway Estuary, where numbers were 44% below the average for the site, and at Carmarthen Bay where numbers were 62% down. During the 1994-95 winter, the winter maximum was more than doubled on both the Wigtown Estuary and Carmarthen Bay. However, both sites held far fewer birds in 1995-96, with a six-fold decrease on Carmarthen Bay.

Table 67. CURLEW: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Morecambe Bay	12,970	14,538	11,445	15,554	14,905	Mar	13,882
Solway Est.	7,360	(5,345)	5,826	7,562	3,348	Feb	6,024
Severn Est.	(3,328)	4,555	(3,846)	5,307	2,682	Nov	4,181
Dee Est. (Eng/Wales)	5,331	4,209	3,414	4,127	3,538	Dec	4,124
Wash	(3,727)	4,396	3,079	3,920	(3,945)	Mar	3,835
Great Britain							
Thames Est.	3,311	2,380	2,632	4,239	3,006	Mar	3,113
Humber Est.	3,414	2,344	2,913	2,654	(1,973)	Jan	2,831
Inner Moray Fth	2,520	2,491	2,200	(2,600)	1,303	Dec	2,222
Duddon Est.	2,094	2,342	1,935	2,571	2,019	Nov	2,192
Forth Est.	2,520	2,859	2,113	1,460	1,607	Dec	2,111
Blackwater Est.	2,706	1,622	2,366	2,271	1,226	Mar	2,038
Medway Est.	1,986	1,932	1,883	2,118	(1,474)	Nov	1,979
Orkney (Water Sound)	-	-	1,600	1,900	(360)	Jan	1,750
Poole Hbr	1,768	1,912	1,913	1,723	1,428	Feb	1,748
Orkney (Widewall)	2,200	-	(1,100)	(900)	1,030	Feb	1,615
Swale Est.	1,749	1,495	1,892	1,599	832	Jan	1,513
Cleddau Est.	1,304	1,724	1,311	1,732	1,436	Nov	1,501
Wigtown Est.	845	1,592	1,183	3,003	656	Feb	1,455
Stour Est.	1,735	1,475	1,544	(1,560)	912	Jan	1,445
Cromarty Fth	1,404	1,263	1,462	(986)	1,434	Dec	1,390
Carmarthen Bay	591	(651)	927	3,246	504	Mar	1,317
Chichester Hbr	1,052	1,152	1,338	1,694	1,296	Feb	1,306
Ribble Est.	1,665	1,015	931	(1,816)	1,020	Mar	1,289
Inner Clyde Est.	1,198	1,555	1,183	1,201	1,135	Mar	1,254
Burry Inlet	1,767	779	1,180	1,454	1,044	Nov	1,244
Lavan Sands	(1,220)	(1,197)	1,276	1,063	(1,412)	Feb	1,233
Northern Ireland							
Lo. Foyle	1,982	2,439	1,829	1,710	2,231	Nov	2,038
Strangford Lo.	1,575	2,467	1,483	1,922	2,107	Jan	1,910
Belfast Lo.	1,440	1,096	881	1,004	751	Dec	1,105
Outer Ards	1,793	758	683	473	774	Mar	896

SPOTTED REDSHANK
Tringa erythropus

International importance: 1,500
Great Britain importance: +*
All-Ireland importance: +*

GB winter coastal max: 90 Nov
NI winter coastal max: 1 Mar/Dec/Jan

As typical of recent winters, the Medway Estuary (24 birds in Nov), Dee Estuary (England/Wales) (21 in Nov) and the Tamar Estuary (20 in Dec) were the only sites with winter counts reaching double figures. Only the Wash (68 in Sep) recorded more than 50 birds during passage periods and again this is a typical site for large numbers of Spotted Redshank.

REDSHANK
Tringa totanus

International importance: 1,500
Great Britain importance: 1,100
All-Ireland importance: 245

GB winter coastal max: 77,838 Nov
NI winter coastal max: 7,980 Nov

Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
UK	109	100	102	120	99

In 1995-96, the UK winter index for Redshank fell 18% below the value of the previous year, reaching its lowest level since 1986. Recorded British totals dropped steadily as the winter progressed. This may, at least partly, be due to the cold spells experienced around the turn of the year and in February, since this species is known to be particularly vulnerable to cold snaps. All sites of international and national importance are listed in Table 68, together with those important in an all-Ireland context. The numbers of Redshanks at six estuaries (Stour, Duddon, Colne, Orwell, Alt and Swale) have increased such that these sites now become internationally important for the

species, and the Tees and Eden Estuaries now qualify as nationally important. However, the Tay Estuary no longer qualifies as internationally important and Lindisfarne, which was listed as internationally important in the 1993-94 WeBS report, is no longer even nationally important. Amongst the main resorts there is an almost even mix of above and below average counts but no obvious geographical pattern to this. The number of Redshank on the Colne Estuary more than doubled during 1994-95, with a maxima of over 5,000 birds. This sudden increase was not sustained, as numbers returned to near average during 1995-96.

Table 68. REDSHANK: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Dee Est. (Eng/Wales)	9,322	7,174	7,583	5,435	4,651	Dec	6,833
Morecambe Bay	5,756	7,272	6,337	7,336	7,027	Nov	6,745
Humber Est.	4,219	(6,777)	3,437	4,896	(4,085)	Jan	4,832
Mersey Est.	4,578	3,823	5,433	4,901	4,710	Nov	4,689
Forth Est.	4,526	3,895	4,190	3,941	5,205	Dec	4,351
Medway Est.	5,355	3,073	3,026	3,264	(3,731)	Nov	3,689
Wash	2,391	3,787	(2,046)	3,814	(2,726)	Nov	3,330
Solway Est.	(3,127)	(3,192)	(3,012)	2,588	3,746	Nov	3,175
Thames Est.	(4,014)	2,567	2,076	(3,940)	(2,558)	Feb	3,031
Inner Moray Fth	3,538	3,194	2,657	2,452	2,580	Dec	2,884
Strangford Lo.	2,345	2,336	2,449	2,817	3,281	Nov	2,645
Severn Est.	(2,841)	2,924	(1,710)	2,032	2,526	Nov	2,580
Stour Est.	1,279	1,331	1,917	4,178	3,392	Jan	2,419
Duddon Est	1,319	1,639	2,249	2,348	3,888	Nov	2,288
Colne Est.	1,332	1,391	(1,071)	5,115	1,221	Nov	2,264
Montrose Basin	2,202	2,049	1,780	3,500	1,766	Nov	2,259
Ribble Est.	2,013	1,909	2,781	(2,238)	2,129	Mar	2,214
Inner Clyde	1,817	1,998	1,790	2,829	2,532	Dec	2,193
Belfast Lo.	2,188	2,061	2,245	2,577	1,634	Nov	2,141
Blackwater Est.	1,728	(1,925)	2,000	2,653	1,651	Mar	2,008
Alde complex	1,114	2,259	1,697	2,292	2,233	Jan	1,919
Orwell Est.	1,531	862	1,315	2,320	2,485	Nov	1,702
Alt Est.	1,300	763	1,960	1,950	1,600	Feb	1,514
Swale Est.	1,817	1,463	1,174	1,757	1,325	Mar	1,507
Great Britain							
Hamford Water	717	1,260	2,011	1,906	1,413	Jan	1,461
Deben Est.	1,089	1,432	1,590	1,574	1,558	Jan	1,448
Chichester Hbr	759	1,388	1,421	1,987	1,287	Dec	1,368
Poole Hbr	1,300	1,433	1,172	1,356	1,111	Nov	1,274
Tay Est.	1,152	2,236	(961)	705	950	Nov	1,260
Tees Est.	986	960	(806)	1,087	1,824	Nov	1,214
Cromarty Fth	1,634	1,339	970	1,422	701	Dec	1,213
Eden Est.	767	873	(797)	1,955	838	Nov	1,108
Northern Ireland							
Outer Ards	737	779	766	1,271	(773)	Nov	888
Lough Foyle	(735)	634	(386)	656	1,147	Nov	812
Dundrum Bay	707	1,049	(694)	(699)	608	Nov	788
Carlingford Lo.	388	688	642	693	(789)	Dec	640
Larne Lo.	390	429	(172)	377	(360)	Dec	398

Also (not counted in recent years)
South Down (Northern Ireland) nationally important (last counted in 1989)

GREENSHANK
Tringa nebularia

International importance: 3,000
Great Britain importance: +*
All-Ireland importance: 9*
***50 is normally used as a qualifying level**

GB winter coastal max: 303 Nov
NI winter coastal max: 95 Dec

Typically around 200 birds were recorded in the UK through most months of the 1995-96 winter, with most by far on coastal/estuarine sites. Peak winter counts of more than 20 birds were recorded at five sites, all typically in SW England or Northern Ireland: the Tamar Estuary (39 in Nov), Lough Foyle (36 in Dec), Strangford Lough (33 in Jan),

Kingsbridge Estuary (23 in Nov) and Dundrum Bay (22 in Nov). Passage counts exceeding 50 birds were made at 14 sites with more than 100 birds noted at the Wash (284 in July), the Blackwater Estuary (209 in Sep), Chichester Harbour (165 in Aug), the Thames Estuary (137 in Sep) and Hamford Water (108 in Oct). Typically these passage "hot-spots" have a more easterly bias than the main wintering sites.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS **Scarce**
Tringa flavipes

One bird was noted at Holme Pierrepont Gravel Pits in December.

GREEN SANDPIPER
Tringa ochropus

International importance: ?
Great Britain importance: ?
All-Ireland importance: ?

GB winter coastal max: 41 Nov
NI winter coastal max: 0

Recorded British totals in 1995-96 were around the average value. Winter counts of five or more birds were recorded at 12 sites, of which only three were estuarine. The largest count was of ten birds at the River Avon (Britford) with eight counted in November on the Thames Estuary, and seven at Stamford Reservoir, Tame Valley GPs and at the Somerset Levels . British passage totals typically peaked in August for both inland and estuarine/coastal sites. As usual, no Green Sandpiper were counted in Northern Ireland in any month during 1995-96.

WOOD SANDPIPER **Scarce**
Tringa glareola

As usual, no winter records of Wood Sandpiper were received for 1995-96. During the spring the Blyth Estuary (Suffolk) (2 in May), Breydon Water (1 in May and June), the Tees Estuary (1 in May) and the Burry Inlet (1 in June) were the only sites recording this species. Typically, autumn records were more widespread, being noted at 46 sites. More than two individuals were seen at the Thames Estuary (4 in Aug), Filey Dams (4 in Aug), Breydon Water (3 in July), the Wash (3 in Sep) and Hickling Broad (3 in Aug).

COMMON SANDPIPER
Actitis hypoleucos

International importance ?
Great Britain importance: ?
All-Ireland importance: ?

GB winter coastal max: 26 Nov
NI winter coastal max: 0

During the winter months of 1995-96, the British totals recorded for Common Sandpiper were around 30 birds, which is close to the previous average. Typically none were recorded in the winter in Northern Ireland. Individual sites holding more than two wintering birds were the Tamar complex (9 in Nov), the Solway Estuary (6 in Mar), the Braint Estuary (5 in Dec), the Cleddau Estuary (3 in Nov) and the Thames Estuary (3 in Feb). Passage counts typically greatly exceed those made during the winter and more than 50 birds were noted at the Wash (79 in Aug), Abberton Reservoir (72 in Aug) and the Severn Estuary (53 in July).

SPOTTED SANDPIPER **Scarce**
Actitis macularia

An overwintering bird was present on the Tamar Estuary at Lopwell Dam (Nov, Dec, Feb and Mar). In addition, one was noted on College Reservoir in November.

TURNSTONE
Arenaria interpres

International importance: 700
Great Britain importance: 640
All-Ireland importance: 225

			Trend	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96
GB winter coastal max:	**13,613**	**Nov**						
NI winter coastal max:	**1,931**	**Jan**	**UK**	**146**	**129**	**126**	**129**	**116**

The UK winter index dropped by 10% in 1995 to reach its lowest level since 1982. This inevitably raises concern for this species, although the 1997-98 Non-estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey should provide more comprehensive data, since many coastal areas currently uncounted by WeBS will be included. All internationally important sites and those of importance in an all-Ireland context are listed in Table 69: there are no further British sites of national importance. Numbers of Turnstones wintering on the Alt Estuary have increased to reach internationally important levels in recent years, although the Guernsey Coast no longer qualifies as such. In fact, numbers on the Guernsey Coast, as well as the Jersey Coast and the Medway Estuary have ceased to qualify as nationally important.

Table 69. TURNSTONE: WINTER MAXIMA AT MAIN RESORTS

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	Month	Average
International							
Morecambe Bay	1,721	2,086	1,294	1,696	1,340	Dec	1,627
Thanet Coast	1,342	949	(884)	(697)	-		1,145
Outer Ards	(1,207)	1,163	1,151	1,074	750	Jan	1,069
Forth Est.	1,082	1,066	(1,091)	957	918	Jan	1,022
Thames Est.	1,379	(665)	479	(740)	1,034	Nov	964
Belfast Lo.	476	770	1,147	984	(678)	Dec	844
Alt Est.	510	(800)	939	850	(425)	Nov	774
Dee Est. (Eng/Wales)	780	765	623	383	1,243	Mar	758
Wash	896	457	499	1,016	(637)	Nov	717
Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lo.	346	312	537	439	369	Jan	400

Also (not counted in recent years)
Tiree internationally important (last counted in 1986)
South Down internationally important (last counted in 1989)

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE
Phalaropus lobatus

Scarce

Counts of individual birds were received from one estuarine/coastal site (Thames Estuary) and one inland site (Maer Marsh), with both birds seen in September.

GREY PHALAROPE
Phalaropus fulicarius

Scarce

Two singletons were recorded, at Gresford Flash (Oct) and South Milton Ley (Sep).

PRINCIPAL SITES

Table 70 lists the principal sites in terms of overall waterfowl numbers in the UK as recorded by WeBS, including all internationally important sites. All sites regularly holding a total of at least 10,000 waterfowl (including divers, grebes, Cormorant, herons, wildfowl, waders and rails, but excluding) and all sites supporting internationally important numbers of one or more species (see Appendix 1), according to average winter maxima calculated over the five-year period 1991-92 to 1995-96, are included. All estuaries are also included. Sites are ranked according to their average winter maxima over the five-year period 1991-92 to 1995-96. Gull and tern numbers are not included in these totals due to the different coverage these species received (see *Data Presentation*).

It is important to note that the ranking of sites given in Table 70 relates to waterfowl numbers, rather than conservation importance (see *Interpretation of Waterfowl Counts*). Also, some sites which may be of critical importance to certain waterfowl species or populations will not be included in this list, for example, sites that are important only in times of severe weather or during migratory periods, or sites that are not covered by WeBS. The locations of the sites in Table 70 are given in Appendix 2 and Figure 3.

The peak counts at each site are calculated by summing the highest count for each individual species during the winter season, irrespective of the month in which it occurred. The table shows the average peak counts at each site over the period 1991-92 to 1995-96, and the peak counts of all waterfowl, wildfowl and waders[1] in 1995-96 in successive columns. For most inland sites, the numbers of waders present has only been recorded for the past four years. A number of wildfowl species, e.g. rare grebes, have also only been recorded for the past four years. Only WeBS Core Counts and the censuses of Pink-footed and Greylag Geese, Greenland White-fronted Geese and Barnacle Geese are included in calculating totals. Additional counts, such as those of sea-ducks on the Moray Firth, made using different methodologies, are not currently incorporated into the WeBS databases. Thus, it should be borne in mind that other sites that are important for certain waterfowl species are not included in the table, whilst the sites listed may be of greater importance for the species listed if additional data were included. The number of Internationally Important Populations (IIP) at each site, and corresponding species codes, are given in the final two columns.

Though the table requires careful interpretation, it does serve to identify many of the UK's important wetlands, and some of the species for which these sites have special value. Readers should refer to the sections on *Interpretation of Waterfowl Counts* and *Data Presentation* for further guidance.

Around 80 WeBS sites continue to hold, on average, more than 10,000 waterfowl and at 53 of these the peak waterfowl total in 1995-96 was above the average of the past five winters. Careful interpretation is needed to distinguish real trends as opposed to short term fluctuations. Some of these fluctuations might be of considerable magnitude. Of those sites now averaging 20,000 waterfowl five registered counts that were at least 30% above or below these averages in 1995-96: the Burry Inlet(+43%), Carmarthen Bay (-54%), Dinnet Loch (+34%), Hamford Water (+50%) and the Tees estuary (-47%). Increases and decreases in the numbers of Oystercatcher and Knot were responsible in part for the unusually high or low counts at the Burry Inlet and Carmarthen Bay. Knot is a species prone to large annual fluctuations. The numbers of species such as Golden Plover and Lapwing vary at many sites in response to weather conditions. At Carmarthen Bay and on the Tees, one or both of these species was responsible for unusually high counts in 1995-96. On Hamford Water, Grey Plover and Dunlin were well up on the five year average for this site.

Of those sites averaging between 10,000 and 20,000 waterfowl, five recorded 1995-96 counts more than 30% above their average value, whereas four registered counts more than 30% above this average. Three of these sites (Slains Loch, Wigtown Bay and Hule Moss) all hold nationally important numbers of Pink-footed Geese. The higher than average counts at these sites were a result of changes in the numbers of geese recorded. Very large numbers often occur at some sites shortly after their arrival in Scotland and increased site counts are to be expected given the continuing growth in population. However, these transitionary birds rarely remain at the site for long, and are easily missed unless the site is constantly monitored during the autumn. Portsmouth Harbour also recorded a large increase over the five year mean, with average counts 53% higher , mostly as the result of an increase in Dark-bellied Brent Geese.

1 "Wildfowl" in Table 70 refers to wildfowl and allies (i.e. including divers, grebes, Cormorant and rails), and "waterfowl" refers to summed counts of wildfowl and waders only (i.e. excluding herons, terns and gulls).

Table 70. PRINCIPAL WATERFOWL SITES IN THE UK, 1991-92 TO 1995-96

based on WeBS Core Counts and surveys of Pink-footed and Greylag Geese only

Site name	5 Yr Mean Waterfowl	1995-96 Waterfowl	1995-96 Wildfowl	1995-96 Waders	IIP†	Species codes
Wash	322,522	263,090	89,078	174,012	14	PG, DB, SU, PT, OC, L., GV, KN, DN, BA, CU, RK, TT
Ribble Est.	269,132	239,441	111,938	127,503	16	BS,WS, PG,SU, WN, T.,PT, OC, L., KN, SS, DN, BW, BA, RK, GV
Morecambe Bay	221,251	202,486	31,128	171,358	11	PG, SU, PT, OC, GV, KN, DN, BA, CU, RK, TT
Humber Est.	161,973	144,256	17,641	126,615	6	SU, KN, DN, BA, RK, GP
Thames Est.	151,578	148,417	23,748	124,669	8	DB, OC, RP, GV, KN, DN, BA, TT
Solway Est.	136,132	140,072	54,370	85,702	10	WS, PG, KN, DN, BA, BY, PT, OC, CU, RK
Dee (Eng/Wales) Est.	123,855	117,591	26,151	91,440	11	SU, T., PT, OC, KN, DN, GV, BW, CU, RK, TT
Lo. Neagh/Beg	102,541	108,023	95,951	(12,072)	5	WS, PO, TU, SP, GN
Mersey Est.	99,448	89,494	26,151	63,343	5	SU, T., PT, DN, RK
Somerset Levels	92,077	(102,806)	54,479	(48,327)	5	BS, WN, T., SV, L.
Forth Est.	86,212	88,340	37,805	50,535	7	SZ, PG, SU, KN, BA, RK TT
North Norfolk Marshes	83,590	84,087	58,870	25,217	5	DB, WN, PT, BA, KN
Severn Est.	80,481	70,510	23,319	47,191	5	BS, SU, KN, CU, RK,
Blackwater Est.	77,252	67,916	20,559	47,357	6	DB, SU, GV, DN, BW, RK
Medway Est.	68,634	56,185	18,610	37,575	8	DB, SU, PT, RP, GV, BW, RK, DN
Swale Est.	67,877	58,562	31,169	27,393	6	PT, SV, GV, KN, BW, RK
Ouse Washes	67,771	63,030	52,639	10,391	7	BS, WS, WN, GA, PT, SV, BW
Strangford Lo.	60,422	76,114	22,499	53,615	3	PB, KN, RK,
Chichester Hbr	54,748	56,266	16,997	39,269	6	DB, RP, GV, DN, BW, BA
Montrose Basin	53,527	43,487	28,564	14,923	3	PG, KN, RK,
Lo. of Strathbeg	51,325	59,946	56,557	3,389	4	WS, PG, GJ, BY
Stour Est.	50,219	48,649	9,599	39,050	5	BW, CU, DN, RK, GV
Langstone Hbr	46,225	41,330	10,656	30,674	3	DB, GV, DN
Hamford Water	44,853	67,248	28,158	39,090	4	DB, RP, GV, BW
Dupplin Lo.	43,300	35,000	35,000	-	1	PG
Breydon Water	43,281	45,679	7,694	37,985	2	BS, L.
Inner Moray Fth	43,243	40,528	18,386	22,142	5	BA, RK, KN, GJ, RM
Cromarty Fth	41,738	48,720	30,927	17,793	3	WS, PG, GJ
Lindisfarne	41,443	37,281	12,641	24,640	5	PB, GJ, KN, BA, GV
Abberton Rsr	39,763	47,153	29,156	17,997	2	GA, SV
Colne Est.	39,258	37,527	8,985	28,542	2	DB, RK,
Duddon Est.	38,672	35,639	8,121	27,518	3	PT, KN, RK
Lower Derwent Valley	38,089	-	-	-	1	T.
Lo. Foyle	36,575	45,708	19,898	25,810	3	WS, PB, BA,
Burry Inlet	35,709	51,046	9,387	41,659	2	PT, OC
Lo. Leven	32,096	32,413	31,416	997	2	PG, SV
Alt Est.	31,588	40,475	4,888	35,587	4	KN, BA, RK, TT
West Water Rsr	31,406	31,500	31,500	-	1	PG
Dengie Flats	30,112	21,724	3,324	18,400	3	GV, KN, BA
Dornoch Fth	29,636	26,894	18,733	8,161	3	GJ, WN, BA
Poole Hbr	29,156	30,571	11,789	18,782	1	BW
Dinnet Lo.	28,603	37,970	37,970	-	1	PG
Arun Valley	26,197	20,851	10,807	10,044		
Nene Washes	26,176	28,065	18,876	9,189	2	BS, PT
Crouch/Roach Est.	25,849	21,130	7,953	13,177	2	DB, BW,
Martin Mere	25,587	28,672	28,672	-	3	BS, WS, PG
Alde Complex	25,137	29,659	13,306	16,353	2	AV, RK
Rutland Water	25,038	31,570	26,273	5,297	2	GA, SV
Orwell Est.	24,445	30,624	9,157	21,467	1	RK
Exe Est.	23,807	26,161	7,603	18,558		
Inner Clyde Est.	23,167	22,436	8,041	14,395		
Ythan Est.	22,817	26,490	22,910	3,580	1	PG
Carmarthen Bay	22,553	10,338	1,460	8,878		
Belfast Lo.	21,347	16,240	3,273	12,967	2	RK, TT
Tees Est.	21,312	31,336	7,517	23,819	1	KN,
Tay Est.	20,196	17,140	9,582	7,558	2	GJ, BA,
Hule Moss	19,957	26,108	26,108	-	1	PG
Southampton Water	19,536	23,634	12,528	11,106	1	BW
Fleet/Wey	19,433	16,532	13,344	3,188	1	DB

Site name	5 Yr Mean Waterfowl	1995-96 Waterfowl	1995-96 Wildfowl	1995-96 Waders	IIP†	Species codes
Cameron Rsr	18,383	13,392	13,055	337	1	PG
Pagham Hbr	16,695	17,990	8,999	8,991	1	PT
Eden Est.	16,415	17,132	6,639	10,493	2	GJ, BA,
Lo. Eye	15,836	17,390	17,350	40	3	WS, PG, GJ
Deben Est.	15,710	15,733	6,429	9,304		
Cleddau Est.	15,473	19,550	8,578	10,972		
Outer Ards	15,431	14,235	1,031	13,204	3	PB, RP, TT
Carsebreck/Rhynd Lo.	15,408	18,554	17,171	1,383	1	PG
Lo. of Skene	15,140	15,105	15,105	-	2	WS, GJ
Slains Lo.	14,825	25,000	25,000	-	1	PG
NW Solent	14,771	14,763	6,538	8,225	1	DB
Wigtown Bay	14,577	19,454	9,201	10,253	1	PG
Tamar Complex	13,235	11,778	2,739	9,039		
Beaulieu Est.	12,375	15,144	4,708	10,436		
Taw/Torridge Est.	12,271	14,727	3,642	11,085		
Portsmouth Hbr	11,830	18,041	4,599	13,442		
Dyfi Est.	11,541	12,487	7,950	4,537		
Lo. of Harray	11,365	11,846	10,094	1,752	1	GJ
Chew Valley Lake	10,981	7,344	7,344	-	1	SV
Lavan Sands	10,953	9,977	1,928	8,049		
Blyth (Suffolk) Est.	10,873	-	2,541	-		
Avon Valley (Mid)	10,303	8,972	6,250	2,722	1	GA
Thanet Coast	10,289	-	-	-	1	TT
Irvine Est.	9,644	8,472	3,222	5,250		
Rye Hbr/Pett Levels	9,135	10,674	3,156	7,518		
Lo. Fleet Complex	9,064	6,915	3,640	3,275	1	GJ
Camel Est.	8,937	7,713	675	7,038		
Dundrum Bay	8,606	8,652	721	7,931		
Newtown Est.	8,443	8,996	4,623	4,373		
Upper Lo. Erne	7,842	6,019	6,019	-	1	WS
Pegwell Bay	7,313	5,150	913	4,237		
Lo. Spynie	7,212	6,664	6,662	2	1	GJ
Castle Lo., Lochmaben	7,205	1,903	1,903	-	1	PG
St Benet's Levels	7,088	11,076	3,830	7,246	1	BS
Tyninghame Est.	6,837	6,481	1,883	4,598		
Fala Flow	6,764	2,437	2,437	-	1	PG
Drummond Pond	6,754	2,852	2,812	40	2	PG, GJ
Foryd Bay	6,038	8,471	4,752	3,719		
Lo. Indaal	5,913	4,836	2,386	2,450		
Lo. of Kinnordy	5,778	1,265	1,173	92	1	PG
Hayle Est.	5,720	7,916	2,432	5,484		
Lo. of Lintrathen	5,695	5,555	5,406	149	1	GJ
Christchurch Hbr	5,686	-	-	-		
Carlingford Lo.	5,545	6,853	1,031	5,822	1	PB
Clwyd Est.	5,386	10,255	8,564	1,691		
Haddo House Lo.	5,295	6,321	6,321	-	1	GJ
Inland Sea	5,058	5,599	1,519	4,080		
Wraysbury GP	4,819	4,920	4,917	(3)	1	GA
Lee Valley GP	4,721	3,420	3,420	-	1	GA
Lo. Ryan	4,710	4,556	1,994	2,562		
Hornsea Mere	4,704	-	-	-	1	GA
Cowgill Rsr	4,656	4,560	4,560	-	1	PG
Bann Est.	4,451	5,543	690	4,853		
Fal Complex	4,393	4,036	923	3,113		
Kilconquhar Lo.	4,324	3,861	3,694	167	1	GJ
Gladhouse Rsr	4,227	4,507	4,479	28	1	PG
Kingsbridge Est.	4,108	4,066	2,146	1,920		
Conwy Est.	4,076	3,997	1,045	2,952		
Larne Lo.	4,011	4,080	2,298	1,782	1	PB
Crombie Lo.	3,917	-	-	-	1	PG
Swansea Bay	3,802	5,073	36	5,037		
Traeth Bach	3,686	4,379	2,318	2,061		
Glenfarg Rsr	3,600	(0)	(0)	-	1	PG
Lower Bogrotten	3,600	3,000	3,000	-	1	GJ
Lo. Tullybelton	3,519	1,395	1,395	-	1	PG
Adur Est.	3,395	3,224	118	3,106		
Guernsey Coast	3,124	3,512	215	3,297		

Site name	5 Yr Mean Waterfowl	1995-96 Waterfowl	1995-96 Wildfowl	1995-96 Waders	IIP†	Species codes
Irt/Mite/Esk Est.	3,035	853	228	625		
Lo. Gruinart	3,032	2,585	459	2,126		
Holburn Moss	2,966	2,870	2,862	8	1	GJ
Brading Hbr	2,947	1,616	1,481	1,385		
Stranraer Lo.	2,841	1,574	1,573	1	2	NW, GJ
Hightae Lo.	2,800	(586)	(585)	1	1	PG
Cuckmere Est.	2,794	2,887	2,031	856		
Killough Hbr	2,705	-	-	-	1	PB
Dysynni Est.	2,689	3,863	2,917	946		
Auchencairn Bay	2,645	2,267	731	1,536		
Ardoch Lo.	2,621	(1)	(0)	1	1	PG
Luce Bay	2,533	1,566	158	1,408		
Braint Est.	2,517	4,309	735	3,574		
Cefni Est.	2,478	2,514	1,033	1,481		
Red Wharf Bay	2,414	2,642	615	2,027		
Gadloch	2,398	1,100	1,100	-	1	GJ
Yar Est.	2,378	3,089	2,342	747		
Lo. Ken	2,291	1,699	1,602	97	1	NW
Mawddach Est.	2,190	2,290	1,398	892		
Tweed Est.	2,085	2,585	1,268	1,317		
Hunterston Est.	2,021	-	-	-		
Rough Firth	2,020	1,698	531	1,167		
Hoselaw Lo.	2,010	458	458	-	1	GJ
Carlhurlie Rsr	1,975	1,431	1,422	9	1	GJ
R. Spey: Boat of Balliefirth	1,943	-	-	-	1	GJ
Corby Lo.	1,818	-	-	-	1	GJ
Lo. Insh & Spey Marshes	1,797	2,026	1,613	413	1	WS
Coquet Est.	1,744	2,659	457	2,202		
Lossie Est.	1,596	2,196	972	1,224		
Lo. Garten & Mallachie	1,578	1,987	1,987	-	1	GJ
Blyth (N'berland) Est.	1,486	1,919	328	1,591		
Medina Est.	1,436	942	365	577		
Dee (Scotland) Est.	1,403	1,197	537	660		
Ballo Rsr	1,386	1,272	1,272	-	1	GJ
Kirkcudbright Bay	1,386	1,477	581	896		
Axe Est.	1,341	271	90	181		
Newhaven Est.	1,324	1,551	38	1,513		
Plym Est.	1,309	3,341	161	3,180		
Rhunahaorine	1,199	1,360	1360	-	1	NW
Teifi Est.	1,160	1,261	848	413		
Lo. Gilp	1,150	395	233	162		
Fincastle Lo.	1,136	-	-	-	1	GJ
Machrihanish	1,124	1,339	1339	-	1	NW
Alnmouth*	1,108	1,196	279	917		
Otter Est.	1,105	1,168	965	203		
Ogmore Est.	928	402	355	47		
Dulas Bay	778	630	52	578		
Deveron Est.	774	853	180	673		
Yealm Est.	746	913	775	138		
Afan Est.	736	1,043	80	963		
Wootton Est.	699	586	334	252		
Fleet Bay	691	800	401	399		
Tyne Est.	670	686	125	561		
Erme Est.	663	742	664	78		
Artro Est.	638	734	441	293		
Avon Est.	620	830	550	280		
Don Est.	551	623	296	327		
Gannel Est.	497	471	276	195		
Nyfer Est.	491	543	139	404		
Spey Est.	417	-	-	-		
Black Cart Water	377	306	289	17	1	WS
Teign Est.	363	576	151	425		
Fowey Est.	282	-	-	-		
R. Foyle: Grange	270	287	287	-	1	WS
Helford Est.	214	207	107	100		
Looe Est.	195	285	124	161		
Dart Est.	156	166	122	44		

Site name	5 Yr Mean Waterfowl	1995-96 Waterfowl	1995-96 Wildfowl	1995-96 Waders	IIP†	Species codes
Danna/Keills	0	0		-	2	NW, BY
Bute Lo.					1	GJ
Caithness Lo.					1	GJ
Islay					2	NW, BY
SW Lancashire					1	PG
Tiree					3	NW, GJ, BY
Colonsay					1	BY
Orkney					1	GJ
Tay/Isla Valley					2	PG, GJ
Walland Marsh					1	BS
Coll					2	NW, BY
Moray Firth					1	SZ

Note that no count data are presented for the last 11 sites in Table 70. These are areas important for geese or swans, but for which WeBS data is not regularly received. Data for any important WeBS sites within these areas, e.g. Lochs Gruinart and Indaal on the island of Islay, are presented separately in Table 70.

- *indicates that no count is available*
() *indicates that no complete count was obtained during 1994-95 and that the count presented here is incomplete*
† *Internationally Important Populations*
NB *Not every species covered by WeBS has a corresponding qualifying threshold for international importance (see Appendix 1). Hence these species do not feature in this table*

Species codes

AV	Avocet
BA	Bar-tailed Godwit
BS	Bewick's Swan
BW	Black-tailed Godwit
BY	Barnacle Goose
CA	Cormorant
CG	Canada Goose
CO	Coot
CU	Curlew
DB	Dark-bellied Brent Goose
DN	Dunlin
E.	Eider
EW	European White-fronted Goose
GA	Gadwall
GD	Goosander
GG	Great Crested Grebe
GJ	Greylag Goose
GN	Goldeneye
GP	Golden Plover
GV	Grey Plover
KN	Knot
L.	Lapwing
LG	Little Grebe
LN	Long-tailed Duck
LP	Little Ringed Plover
MA	Mallard
MS	Mute Swan
NW	Greenland White-fronted Goose
OC	Oystercatcher
PB	Light-bellied Brent Goose
PG	Pink-footed Goose
PO	Pochard
PT	Pintail
RK	Redshank
RM	Red-breasted Merganser
RP	Ringed Plover
SP	Scaup
SS	Sanderling
SU	Shelduck
SV	Shoveler
T.	Teal
TT	Turnstone
TU	Tufted Duck
WM	Whimbrel
WN	Wigeon
WS	Whooper Swan