

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Key to symbols commonly used in the species accounts.

As footnotes to thresholds:

- ? population size not accurately known
- + population too small for meaningful threshold
- * where 1% of the national population is fewer than 50 birds, 50 is normally used as a minimum threshold for national importance
- ** a site regularly holding more than 20,000 waterbirds (excluding non-native species) qualifies as internationally important by virtue of absolute numbers
- † denotes that a qualifying level different to the national threshold has been used for the purposes of presenting sites in this report

In tables of important sites:

- no data available
- () incomplete count
- † same meaning as used for thresholds
- ▲ site was of a higher importance status in the previous five-year period
- ▼ site was of a lower importance status in the previous five-year period
- ^{1,2} count obtained using different survey methodology from WeBS Core Counts (see table below)

To denote WeBS alerts status in headers:

- ++ >100% increase
- + 33-100% increase
- o stable trend
- 25-50% decrease
- >50% decrease

- S short term (5 years)
- M medium term (10 years)
- L long term (25 years or maximum period if <25 years)

Sources of additional information used in compiling tables of important sites are listed below. Non-WeBS counts are identified in the

tables by the relevant number below given in superscript following the count.

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 1 | RSPB/Talisman Energy studies, <i>e.g.</i> Stenning (1998) | 25 | Dorset Bird Report |
| 2 | M. Howe (<i>in litt.</i>) | 26 | Judith Smith, Gr. Manchester County recorder |
| 3 | WWT studies, <i>e.g.</i> Rees <i>et al.</i> (2000) | 27 | BTO/ Lucy Smith |
| 4 | Bean Goose Working Group, Simpson and Maciver (2004) | 28 | Paul Daw, County recorder for Argyll |
| 5 | RSPB (<i>pers comm.</i>) | 29 | Steve Percival's counts of Lindisfarne - Svalbard Light-bellied Brents |
| 6 | Lancashire Goose Report, <i>e.g.</i> Forshaw (1998) | 30 | JNCC report of aerial and shore-based surveys for seaducks, divers and grebes (Dean <i>et al.</i> 2004) |
| 7 | SNH 'adopted' counts | 31 | WWT report to DTI. Aerial survey of Thames strategic area. |
| 8 | WWT data | 32 | WWT report to DTI. Aerial survey of Greater Wash strategic area. |
| 9 | Greenland White-fronted Goose Study, <i>e.g.</i> Fox and Francis (2004) | 33 | All Wales Common Scoter Survey. WWT reports to CCW. |
| 10 | SOTEAG reports, <i>e.g.</i> Heubeck and Mellor (2005) | 34 | All-Ireland Light-bellied Brent Goose Census |
| 11 | WeBS Low Tide Counts | 35 | Cormorant Roost Survey 2003 |
| 12 | Roost counts | 36 | Scottish Bird Report records |
| 13 | Supplementary daytime counts | 37 | Worden <i>et al.</i> (2004) |
| 14 | WWT/JNCC National Grey Goose Census | 38 | RSPB data |
| 15 | Firth of Clyde Eider counts, <i>e.g.</i> Waltho, C.M. (2004) | 39 | SNH data |
| 16 | R. Godfrey (<i>in litt.</i>) | 40 | WWT UK-breeding Greylag Goose Survey |
| 17 | Argyll Bird Report | 41 | Frank Mawby (<i>in litt.</i>) |
| 18 | SNH Greenland Goose Census | 42 | Shetland coordinated swan count |
| 19 | R. MacDonald (<i>in litt.</i>) | 43 | CSL supplementary Ruddy Duck counts |
| 20 | Little Egret Roost counts | 44 | Winter Gull Roost Survey |
| 21 | D Carrington (<i>in litt.</i>) | 45 | BTO/CCW Carmarthen Bay surveys |
| 22 | P Reay (<i>in litt.</i>) | | |
| 23 | WWT unpublished data | | |
| 24 | Woolmer <i>et al.</i> (2001), Common Scoter count in Carmarthen Bay | | |

Red-throated Diver

Gavia stellata

International threshold: 10,000

Great Britain threshold: 49*

All-Ireland threshold: 10*

GB max: 456 Oct

NI max: 150 Nov

*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

The Red-throated Diver is a scarce breeding species in Scotland, but outside the breeding season is much more numerous and widespread, with numbers augmented by arrivals from northern Europe. However, our knowledge of the status of Red-throated Divers in UK waters has been changing dramatically in recent years. Always the most numerous and widespread of the divers, and by far the most likely to be encountered along the English east and south coasts and in the Irish Sea, the numbers now thought to be present offshore are much higher than previously imagined. Earlier hints of this came from sea-watching observations between Suffolk and Kent, later backed up by aerial and boat-based offshore surveys, which have revealed thousands of birds using the relatively shallow waters of the outer Greater Thames region. The same pattern, although involving smaller numbers, has also been found in the Irish Sea. For further details, see the previous volume of *Wildfowl and Wader Counts*.

Despite this discovery, numbers recorded during WeBS core counts in Britain during the 2003/04 winter were the lowest for some years. Conversely, the Northern Ireland peak was by far the highest to date. The extent to which WeBS totals reflect the actual numbers in UK waters is clearly very much open to question, given the fact that only a small proportion of the total is counted and that numbers counted on a given date depend so

strongly on the conditions at the time. Interestingly, the peak numbers were rather early, both British and Northern Irish peaks being in autumn rather than mid-winter as usual.

Looking at individual sites, counts at Cardigan Bay were very low for the second year running. Within this broad area, most birds are generally found off Borth and the mouth of the Dyfi Estuary. It is possible that the apparent decline is due to count conditions on the days in question, but with two years of poor counts further investigation may well be called for at this important location. Similarly low totals at Minsmere, Lade Sands and the Thames Estuary should not necessarily be considered an immediate cause for concern. Perhaps of more interest, though, is the low count on the Inner Firth of Clyde, which should be less affected by visibility issues. The most noteworthy high site count was at Lough Foyle, a site that also saw large numbers of other offshore fish-eating species during winter 2003/04. Loch Ryan and Lunan Bay were also sites at which numbers were above recent core counts. The highest count submitted to WeBS of this winter, however, has not been included in any of the above national totals or the table below; a series of counts off Ness House, Thorpeness (Suffolk) included an incredible peak of 4,710 flying past on 4th January 2004.

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Cardigan Bay	(229)	460	732	32	22	Nov	312
Minsmere	717 ¹³	700 ¹³	4	3	57	Dec	296
Nigg Bay to Cruden Bay	(101)	(33)	(15)	(35)	225 ³⁰	Mar	225
Lade Sands	100 ¹³	0	800	100	10	Dec	202
Thames Estuary	(11)	13	(211) ³⁰	(344) ³¹	(16)	Dec	146
Moray Firth	103 ¹	(150) ³⁰	(74) ³⁰	126 ¹	166	Oct	136
Inner Firth of Clyde	123	145	112	151	54	Oct	117
Forth Estuary	75	104	93	106	(40)	Oct	95
Dengie Flats	92	145	51	114	50	Jan	90
Lavan Sands	(90)	72 ¹³	13	202 ¹³	30	Feb	81
Pegwell Bay	1	4	54	215			69
Loch Ryan	26	35	47	111 ¹³	89	Feb	62
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Lough Foyle	15	5	7	29	147	Nov	41
Belfast Lough	39	14	41	31	13	Oct	28
Strangford Lough	6 ¹¹		57 ¹¹	1 ¹¹			21

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004							
Alt Estuary	21	33	101	59	26	Oct	48
The Wash	24	14	3	11	6	Dec	12
Dundrum Bay	(0)	(1)	(0)	(0)	(1)	Nov	(1)
Other sites attaining table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004 in Great Britain							
Lunan Bay			30	20	50	Jan	33

Black-throated Diver

Gavia arctica

International threshold: 10,000

Great Britain threshold: 7*

All-Ireland threshold: 1*

GB max: 66 Mar

NI max: 3 Nov

**50 is normally used as a minimum threshold*

Black-throated Divers are relatively unfamiliar birds to most WeBS counters. Overall numbers in UK waters are low and birds tend to occur in a dispersed fashion along the coast, especially in the west and north, although unlike Great Northern Diver relatively few winter in Shetland. The large numbers of divers recently discovered offshore in the outer Thames do not appear to include many Black-throated. Although identification from the air is difficult, boat surveys have indicated that the majority are Red-throated. Our wintering Black-throated Divers are derived from a combination of Scottish and Scandinavian breeders and, although monitoring of this species is not straightforward, peak numbers

generally fall between November and March.

Several of the key sites in the table are only counted occasionally, due to their remote nature. However, regular monitoring at Gerrans Bay in south Cornwall has revealed consistently high numbers, although the 2003/04 peak was down from the high total during the previous winter. The high site count at the Moray Firth 'complex' in October included 36 at Inver Bay in the Dornoch Firth. At Girvan to Turnberry, the high peak of the previous year was maintained throughout the 2003/04 winter. In Northern Ireland, this species is most consistently recorded from Belfast Lough and the count of four here was the highest at the site to date.

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Gerrans Bay		35	33	53	37	Feb	40
Loch Ewe	(29)	(15)					(29)
Loch Gairloch	(5)	23					23
Moray Firth	14 ¹	17 ¹	9	18 ¹	48	Oct	21
Gruinard Bay	(14)	(11)					(14)
Bay of Sandoyne - Holme Sound	14 ¹³						14
Girvan to Turnberry	7	7	8	20	19	Mar	12
Forth Estuary	6	(2)	24	9	5	Nov	11
Red Point to Port Henderson	9	11					10
Little Loch Broom	1	17					9
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Outer Ards Shoreline	2	(3)		(0)	(0)		3
Belfast Lough	3	(2)	2	1	4 ¹¹	Nov	3

Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

International threshold: 50

Great Britain threshold: 30*†

All-Ireland threshold: ?†

GB max: 111 Jan

NI max: 50 Nov

**50 is normally used as a minimum threshold*

Great Northern Divers are an exciting find in the southeast of the UK but become a much more expected part of the offshore avifauna the further north and west one gets. Particular concentrations are found around the Northern Isles, west Scotland, Northern Ireland and, in smaller numbers, the southwest peninsula. Our wintering birds come from breeding grounds in Iceland and Greenland, most birds arriving

through October and numbers then staying at a relatively high level even as late as April; a handful even remain throughout the summer each year. Due to the variable nature of coverage of key sites coupled with the difficulties of surveying offshore waters, trends are difficult to detect for this species. However, peak counts were similar to the previous two winters in Britain, whereas the

peak Northern Ireland total was the second highest ever for the province.

The table shows that many of the key sites for this species are counted on an irregular basis, due to their remote nature and the need for specialist (often boat-based) surveys. A program of counts carried out by the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG) does provide regular information for some key Shetland coastal stretches. For example, the peak at Kirkabister to Wadbister Ness was the highest in the UK during winter 2003/04 and is a recovery of numbers after a low total the previous winter. In contrast, the numbers found between Whiteness and Skelda Voes were on the low side compared to recent years and just one was noted along the regular

Hacosay/Bluemull/Colgrave route. As with all offshore counts, numbers can be strongly affected by conditions on the day and longer-term trends are more important than one-off peaks and troughs. Moreover, some of the counts in the table below refer to aerial surveys flown using distance sampling methodology (Bibby *et al.* 2000, Buckland *et al.* 2001, 2004) and thus the numbers presented are very much underestimates. The key sites for the species during the standard core counts remain Loch Indaal (Islay), Broadford Bay (Skye) and the Moray Firth. There were high counts at both ends of the Northern Irish coast, at Carlingford Lough and Lough Foyle. Gerrans Bay in Cornwall and Portland Harbour in Dorset remain the top south coast sites.

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Entrance Deer/Shapinsay Snids	375 ¹³	225 ¹³					300
Outer Hebrides					266 ³⁰	Feb	266
Coll/Tiree					175 ³⁰	Feb	175
Sound of Gigha	104 ²⁸						104
Scapa Flow	82			9 ³⁰	156 ³⁰	Feb	82
Moray Firth	12 ¹	38 ¹	(54) ³⁰	60 ¹	109 ³⁰	Feb	55
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Loch Indaal	31	19	74	68	18	Nov	42
Kirkabister to Wadbister Ness	45 ¹⁰	46 ¹⁰	49 ¹⁰	22 ¹⁰	50 ¹⁰	Jan	42
Broadford Bay			(25)	35	(43)	Feb	39
East Unst			37 ¹⁰				37
Whiteness to Skelda Ness	47 ¹⁰	30 ¹⁰	34 ¹⁰	34 ¹⁰	27 ¹⁰	Jan	34
Sites with mean peak counts of 5 or more birds in Great Britain[†]							
Scalloway Islands			58 ¹⁰		19 ¹⁰	Dec	30
Pontillyfni to Aberdesach					28 ¹³	Mar	28
Quendale to Virkie	15 ¹⁰	19 ¹⁰	30 ¹⁰	22 ¹⁰	24 ¹⁰	Jan	22
Rova Head to Wadbister Ness	18 ¹⁰	23 ¹⁰	38 ¹⁰	19 ¹⁰	30 ¹⁰	Jan	22
Scousburgh to Maywick	22 ¹⁰						22
Island of Papa Westray			6	20	22	Jan	16
Loch Eriboll	(15)	(1)					(15)
Gerrans Bay		13	6	17	15	Mar	13
Uyea Sound	26	13	6	10	5	Jan	12
Kirkabister to Dury Voe		11 ¹⁰					11
Island of Egilsay	6	28	4	3	(0)		10
Balnakeil Bay Durness					9 ¹³	Mar	9
Gruinard Bay	(9)	(7)					(9)
Little Loch Broom	2	16					9
West Whalsay and Sounds			9 ¹⁰				9
Fleet and Wey	8	14	5	4	3	Jan	7
Hacosay/Bluemill/Colgrave		10 ¹⁰	19 ¹⁰	3 ¹⁰	1 ¹⁰	Feb	7
Loch Ewe	8	6					7
Lunning and Lunna Holm		7 ¹⁰					7
Traigh Luskentyre	8	6	8				7
Burra and Trondra			10 ¹⁰		1 ¹⁰	Dec	6
Forth Estuary	17	2	4	2	(2)	Jan	6
Lochs Beg and Scridain (East)	(8)	4					6
South Fetlar			6 ¹⁰				6
South Havra			6 ¹⁰				6
South Unst			8 ¹⁰		5 ¹⁰	Feb	6
South Yell Sound	9 ¹⁰	6 ¹⁰	8 ¹⁰	7 ¹⁰	4 ¹⁰	Feb	6
Cleddau Estuary	(2)	7	1	7	3	Jan	5
Easting and Sand Wick	5						5
Kyle of Durness	(0)	5					5

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Quendale Bay			5 ¹⁰				5
Sullom Voe	8 ¹⁰	5 ¹⁰	5 ¹⁰	6 ¹⁰	4 ¹⁰	Feb	5
Sites with mean peak counts of 5 or more birds in Northern Ireland[†]							
Carlingford Lough	(7)	(16)	(3)	(15)	25	Nov	25
Lough Foyle	2	0	4	26	24	Nov	11
Strangford Lough	17 ¹¹	1 ¹¹		1 ¹¹	2 ¹¹	Nov	5

[†] as few sites exceed the British threshold and no All-Ireland threshold has been set, a qualifying level of 5 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

GB max: 5,162 Oct
NI max: 758 Dec

International threshold: 3,400
Great Britain threshold: 78
All-Ireland threshold: ?[†]

S M L
GB change: o + ++
NI change: o o +

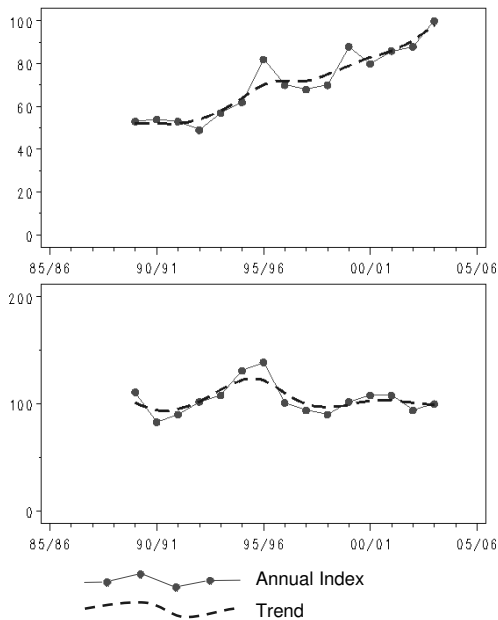


Figure 3.a, Annual indices & trend for Little Grebe for GB (above) & NI (below).

The Little Grebe is a widespread resident species in the UK, winter numbers being supplemented to an unknown degree by incoming migrants from northern Europe. Although many are recorded on WeBS sites, the species is widely dispersed on other small waterbodies and in riverine habitats and thus some care should be taken when interpreting national trends on the basis of WeBS data alone.

The British index shows a species which appears to be doing very well, numbers having roughly doubled since monitoring began and having increased by 14% since the previous year alone, although this was not reflected in the peak national recorded total which fell slightly since the previous year. Numbers

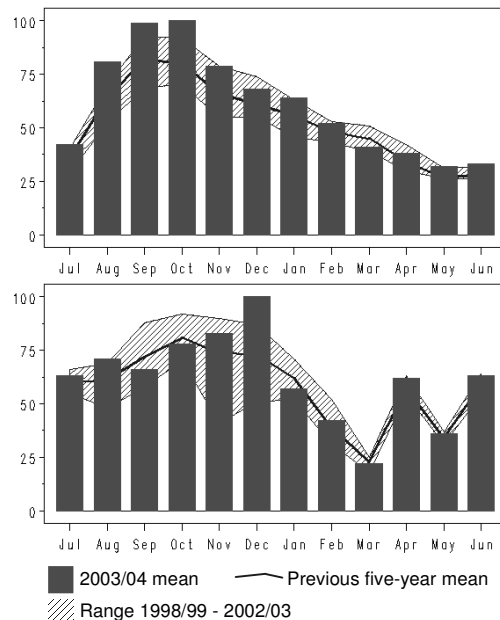


Figure 3.b, Monthly indices for Little Grebe for GB (above) & NI (below).

peaked in early autumn as usual. The Northern Ireland index is more stable, although fluctuating, whilst the peak recorded total for Northern Ireland was the highest ever for the Province.

In line with the increase nationally, numbers were higher than usual at several sites including the neighbouring sites of Chew Valley Lake and Blagdon Lake, as well as Old Moor, Draycote Water, Larne Lough and Upper Lough Erne. However, numbers remained low for the third year running at the Swale Estuary and were also disappointing at Holme Pierrepont. At Loughs Neagh and Beg, the most important site in the UK, numbers remained stable despite large declines in other species at the site in recent years.

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Thames Estuary	217	348	351	378	(198)	Oct	324
Swale Estuary	238	195	64 ¹¹	43	49	Oct	118
Holme Pierrepoint Gravel Pits	158	107			55	Jan	107
Chichester Harbour	58	78	150 ¹¹	111	125	Dec	104
King's Dyke Pits Whittlesey	92				(6)	Sep	92
Bewl Water	38	54	132	136	94	Aug	91
Chew Valley Lake	65	95	100	70	110	Sep	88
Rutland Water	120	87	77	58	87	Oct	86
Sutton and Lound Gravel Pits	45		109	86			80
Tees Estuary	56	82	(59)	104	70	Aug	78 ▲
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004							
North Norfolk Coast	74	77	100 ¹¹	42	60	Jan	71
Sites with mean peak counts of 30 or more birds in Northern Ireland[†]							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	413	400	412	430	430	Dec	417
Upper Lough Erne	67	94	122	75	131	Feb	98
Strangford Lough	87	72	103	113	83	Jan	92
Lower Lough Erne				39	(57)	Dec	48
Lough Money	55	48	53	41	39	Feb	47
Larne Lough	35	36	27	32	65	Oct	39
Hillsborough Main Lake	25	40	45	37	27	Sep	35
Belfast Lough	31	41	29	37	30	Oct	34
Other sites attaining table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004 in Great Britain							
Blagdon Lake	46	42	127	18	127	Aug	72
Old Moor	56	52	45	(49)	112	Aug	66
Hamford Water	41	52	105	68	(92)	Jan	72
Draycote Water	24	44	60	71	85	Oct	57
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	(37)	55	59	71	83	Sep	67
Blackwater Estuary	70	53	58	59	80	Sep	64

[†] as no All-Ireland threshold has been set a qualifying level of 30 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

GB max: 9,569 Oct
NI max: 3,571 Sep

International threshold: 4,800
Great Britain threshold: 159
All-Ireland threshold: 30*
S M L
GB change: o o +
NI change: o + +

*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Great Crested Grebes are a familiar sight throughout much of the UK. The species is widespread on inland waterbodies and rivers during the summer, but there is a tendency then for many birds to congregate at favoured sites, both inland and coastal, during the autumn and winter. There is known to be interchange between UK birds and those elsewhere in Europe, but the extent to which this occurs is not well understood.

The British index rose in 2003/04 to its second highest ever value, numbers peaking in the autumn as usual but again not quite breaking 10,000. In Northern Ireland, despite a greater level of fluctuation in annual indices the underlying trend suggests a stable picture over the last decade. However, the peak Northern Ireland total was the highest ever recorded in the province.

Notably in 2003/04, four-figure counts were recorded from four different sites. In Northern

Ireland, the usual key sites of Loughs Neagh and Beg (where there was the highest count since 1995) and Belfast Lough were also joined by an exceptional count at Lough Foyle, the highest ever here and linked to high numbers also of other fish-eaters such as Red-throated Diver, Slavonian Grebe and Red-breasted Merganser. The three key Northern Ireland sites peaked in separate months, suggesting that some of the same birds may have been involved. In Britain, peak supplementary counts at Lade Sands exceeded 1,000 for the fourth time in the last five years making this the top British site by a considerable margin. There were also high offshore counts at Minsmere and Rye Harbour but lower than average ones at Pegwell Bay, Lavan Sands and the Solway Estuary. However, at coastal sites birds may be present a fair way offshore which can have a major effect on the numbers recorded when viewing

conditions are anything less than ideal and such ups and downs should be treated with caution. Inland, the Pitsford Reservoir count

was relatively high but Chew Valley Lake numbers were much lower than normal.

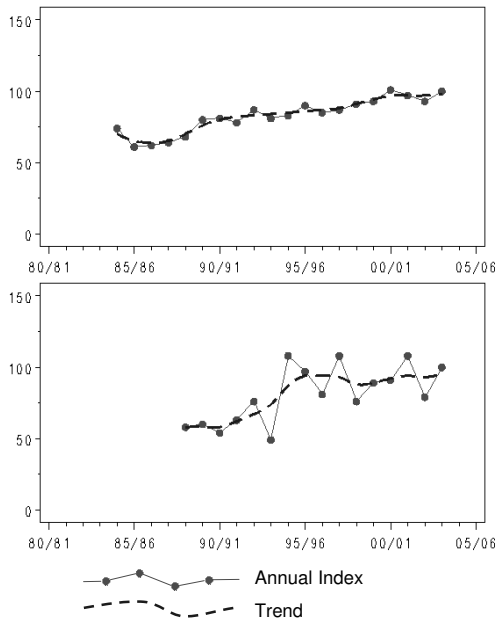


Figure 4.a, Annual indices & trend for Great Crested Grebe for GB (above) & NI (below).

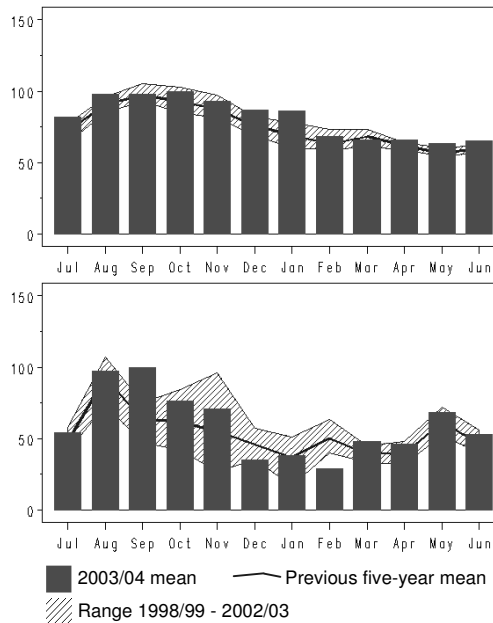


Figure 4.b, Monthly indices for Great Crested Grebe for GB (above) & NI (below).

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Lade Sands	1,100 ¹³	1,012 ¹³	755	1,600	1,080 ¹³	Jan	1,109
Rutland Water	726	997	600	607	619	Oct	710
Chew Valley Lake	550	690	480	320	330	Oct	474
Queen Mary Reservoir	312	246	671	267	495	Dec	398
Grafham Water	150	98	619	311	463	Jan	328
Forth Estuary	297	(290)	224	(389)	295	Sep	299
Cotswold Water Park (West)	(225)	306	(258)	(188)	244	Nov	275
Minsmere	500 ¹³	350 ¹³	5	19	463	Jan	267
Pitsford Reservoir	195	241	268	203	341	Jan	250
Pegwell Bay	68	370	146	604	20	Feb	242
Bewl Water	104	261	292	356	190	Jul	241
Loch Ryan	258	147	(121)	(300)	210	Dec	229
Morecambe Bay	239	245	222	187	218	Jan	222
Lavan Sands	165 ²	388 ¹³	113	308	114	Jan	218
Draycote Water	200	219	221	255	151	Jul	209
Swale Estuary	75	64	311 ¹¹	(42)	316	Jan	192 ▲
Solway Firth	251 ¹¹	336 ¹¹	164 ¹¹	119	88	Jan	192
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	201	191	181	169	204	Nov	189
Rye Harbour and Pett Level	299	68	160	48	365	Jan	188 ▲
Stour Estuary	290 ¹¹	222 ¹¹	139 ¹¹	136	139 ¹¹	Feb	185
Bliethfield Reservoir	240	231	110	98	202	Jul	176
Loch Leven	170	131	222	127	204	Sep	171 ▲
Abberton Reservoir	207	77	198	144	176	Oct	160
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Belfast Lough	1,508	1,338	1,995	1,214	1,832	Oct	1,577
Loughs Neagh and Beg	847	1,547	336	930	1,695	Sep	1,071
Lough Foyle	24	38	278	782	1,030	Nov	430
Carlingford Lough	249	326	284	174	184	Oct	243
Upper Lough Erne	243	113	190	110	112	Feb	154
Larne Lough	140	204	80	105	115	Sep	129
Lower Lough Erne				71	(66)	Feb	71
Outer Ards Shoreline	1	199		9	(7)	Jan	70
Strangford Lough	70	141	50	36	43	Oct	68

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004							
Wraysbury Gravel Pits	202	167	130	150	113	Oct	152
Dundrum Bay	(0)	(4)	(1)	(1)	(1)	Nov	(4)
Other sites attaining table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004 in Great Britain							
Poole Harbour	76	151	171	127	202	Jan	145
Bough Beech Reservoir	30	160	128	149	196	Sep	133
Staines Reservoirs	72	61	68	51	168	Sep	84
Blagdon Lake	(98)	80	110	113	161	Aug	116

Red-necked Grebe

Podiceps grisegena

International threshold: 1,000

Great Britain threshold: 2*

All-Ireland threshold: ?

GB max: 16 Aug

NI max: 0

*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Red-necked Grebe is a scarce wintering species in the UK. Unlike the other grebes, only sporadic attempts at breeding occur and the majority of birds are seen between August and March, originating from breeding areas in eastern and northern Europe.

By far the highest numbers in the UK occur at the Forth Estuary, mostly along the south side of the outer firth. As shown in the table

counts on the Forth were the lowest of the past five years, indeed the lowest since 1992/93. As a result, the total for Great Britain was similarly low. Elsewhere, the North Norfolk Coast remains the only other site to feature every year in the table, with no birds recorded from Lindisfarne for the first time. The lack of any records from Northern Ireland was not unusual.

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Forth Estuary	55	29	39	44	15	Aug	36
Bay of Sandoyne - Holme Sound	8 ¹³						8
North Norfolk Coast	6	3	9	2	(2)	Oct	5
Lindisfarne	2	3 ¹¹	5	4 ¹¹	(0)		4
Other sites attaining table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004 in Great Britain							
Loch Ryan	0	0	(1)	(0)	3	Dec	1

Slavonian Grebe

Podiceps auritus

International threshold: 35

Great Britain threshold: 7*

All-Ireland threshold: ?[†]

GB max: 227 Jan

NI max: 61 Nov

*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

The Slavonian Grebe breeds in the Scottish Highlands albeit in small numbers and is also scarce, but somewhat more widespread, in the winter. Although non-breeding birds have the potential to appear on many WeBS sites, there are certain favoured coastal sites that host high numbers of the species each winter. Interestingly, the key sites are found from the north of Shetland to the south coast of England, although more are in the north. Our wintering birds are thought to involve birds from a variety of breeding areas, with south coast birds thought to originate from Fenno-Scandia but the birds in the north being local breeders or from Iceland and Greenland.

The British peak of 227 was about average for recent years but the Northern Ireland peak

was exceptionally high, being almost entirely due to numbers at Lough Foyle, which following 103 at the same location in 1995 was the second highest ever total for a single Northern Irish site. The count from the Forth Estuary in November 2003, mostly involving birds along the south shore between Eastfield and Musselburgh, was the third highest site total ever recorded by WeBS. The Blackwater Estuary peak was almost twice as high as previous peaks whilst Pagham Harbour showed a recovery in numbers after recent poor years. There were few signs of clear declines anywhere, except perhaps Lindisfarne, although monitoring this species in choppy offshore waters can often be problematic.

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Forth Estuary	67	44	61	80	110	Nov	72
Moray Firth	29	86	75	69 ¹	62 ¹	Dec	64
Whiteness to Skelda Ness	30 ¹⁰	43 ¹⁰	29 ¹⁰	55 ¹⁰	55 ¹⁰	Jan	45
Loch Ashie		41 ¹³					41
Traigh Luskentyre	38	48	19				35 ▲
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Sound of Gigha	44 ²⁸	9 ²⁸					27
Loch Ryan	10	19	31	31 ¹³	32	Feb	25
Inner Firth of Clyde	22	20	10	45	(20)	Jan	24
Loch Indaal	27	23	11	31	30	Oct	24
Loch of Harray	(24)	8	25	25	23	Nov	21
Jersey Shore		5	(31)				18
Blackwater Estuary	8	9	22	9 ¹¹	41	Jan	18
Pagham Harbour	34	1	6	6	28	Jan	15
Scapa Flow	14						14
Kirkabister to Wadbister Ness	11 ¹⁰	23 ¹⁰	5 ¹⁰	13 ¹⁰	17 ¹⁰	Jan	14
Lindisfarne	1	9	14	23 ¹¹	(2)	Jan	12
Rova Head to Wadbister Ness	4 ¹⁰	5 ¹⁰	15 ¹⁰	11 ¹⁰	6 ¹⁰	Jan	10
Lavan Sands	(4)	6	(4)	15 ¹³	6	Jan	9 ▲
Upper Loch Torridon	(0)	9					9
North West Solent	(8)	8	10	(4)	5	Dec	8
Broadford Bay			8	10	6	Nov	8
Sullom Voe		8 ¹⁰	8 ¹⁰	6 ¹⁰	6 ¹⁰	Feb	8 ▲
Loch of Swannay	3	7	4	10	11	Dec	7
Sites with mean peak counts of 4 or more birds in Northern Ireland[†]							
Lough Foyle	2	9	6	13	61	Nov	18

[†] as no All-Ireland threshold has been set a qualifying level of 4 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report



Black-necked Grebe (Mark Collier)

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

GB max: 40 Nov
NI max: 0

International threshold: 2,800
Great Britain threshold: 1*[†]
All-Ireland threshold: ?[†]

*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

The Black-necked Grebe is a scarce wintering species in Britain and is generally absent from Northern Ireland. Although most wintering birds occur in coastal areas, at many inland sites the species is more likely to be recorded on spring or autumn passage. Although WeBS is primarily concerned with non-breeding waterbirds, the submission of summer counts

from many sites does mean that breeding locations for this rare species are included within the database. The only such sites published in *Wildfowl and Wader Counts* are those where the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (Ogilvie 2004) and/or local counters have deemed it acceptable to do so.

The British peak of 40 was the lowest since 1992/93. This total seems to have been driven by low site counts at several south western sites, notably the Fal Complex, Tamar Complex and the Fleet and Wey. Whilst this species can be easily overlooked on offshore waters and even within Estuaries, the geographical location of these declines is worthy of note and it will be interesting to see

if this trend continues into 2004/05. Further along the south coast, at both Poole Harbour and Langstone Harbour, numbers were also below average. William Girling Reservoir, in contrast, supported its highest ever numbers in October 2003 and now becomes the top-ranked site in the country. As usual, the species was not recorded in Northern Ireland.

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
William Girling Reservoir	11	14	16	16	21	Oct	16
Langstone Harbour	12	15	22 ¹¹	15	11	Nov	15
Fal Complex		(1)	16	15	7	Jan	13
Woolston Eyes	15	1	41	6	1	Mar	13
Holme Pierrepont Gravel Pits	14	10			0		8
Confidential Northumberland site			2	11	10	Jul	8
Fleet and Wey	11	9	13	3	1	Jan	7
Confidential Hertfordshire site	7	5	8	7	9	Jul	7
Kilconquhar Loch	5	8	8	6	2	Jul	6
Tamar Complex	(6)	9	3	6 ¹¹	2	Jan	5
Other sites attaining table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004 in Great Britain							
Gerrans Bay		0	4	5	6	Feb	4
Abberton Reservoir	2	2	2	1	5	Sep	2

[†] as the British threshold for national importance is so small, and as no All-Ireland threshold has been set a qualifying level of 5 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

GB max: 18,792 Oct
NI max: 2,843 Sep

International threshold: 1,200
Great Britain threshold: 230
All-Ireland threshold: ?[†]
S M L
GB change: o o +
NI change: o + +

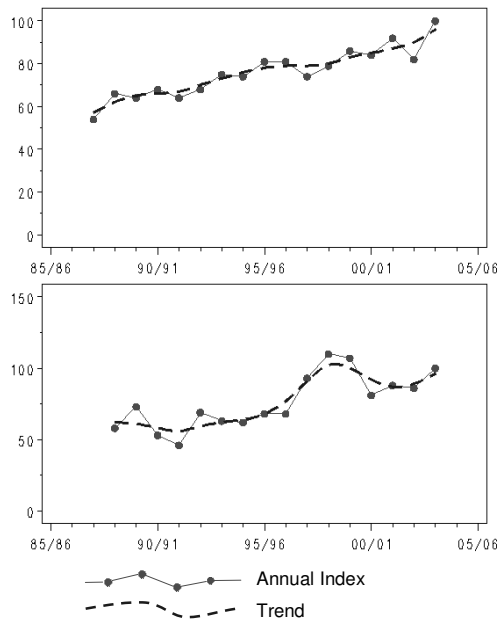


Figure 5.a, Annual indices & trend for Cormorant for GB (above) & NI (below).

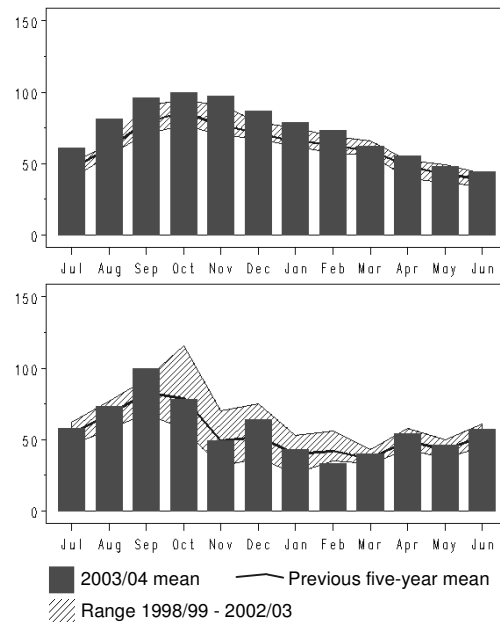


Figure 5.b, Monthly indices for Cormorant for GB (above) & NI (below).

Cormorants are a widespread and familiar waterbird throughout the whole of the UK. Traditionally thought of as a coastal bird, Cormorants have increasingly been using inland habitats in recent winters. This is due in part (although not entirely) to an expansion of the more typically freshwater continental race *sinensis*, both as a breeding and non-breeding bird. However, the native *carbo* certainly does occur inland also.

The British maximum of 18,792 was the highest on record, albeit only about 3% higher than in autumn 2002. However, the British annual index showed a much larger increase, also to its highest ever value. Recent work (Baylis *et al.* 2005) has been carried out to clarify the Cormorant index in the early years following its inclusion as a WeBS species, as variable timing of take-up by different counters caused particularly low (and incorrect) index values for 1986/87 and 1987/88. This problem has now been addressed and it has been found most sensible to remove the value for the first of these winters, due to low coverage of Cormorants then, and to correct the value for 1987/88, as shown in the plot above. Clearly, there has been a substantial increase during this period, the British index increasing by 85% during the period 1987/88 to 2003/04. The Northern Ireland maximum was the second highest on record and the annual indices appear to show a generally increasing trend in the province also; the initial decrease is probably an artefact relating to a very small number of sites being involved. However, as with all WeBS species to a greater or lesser degree, it is important to remember that the indices refer only to sites counted for WeBS and not necessarily for the

British or Northern Ireland populations as a whole, as many Cormorants occur on sites not counted for the scheme.

In Britain, monthly indices suggest that numbers peaked in September 2003, a month earlier than usual (and earlier than the peak actual count, due to lower coverage in September). January counts were also particularly high compared to previous years but there was then a major decline to February with more typical numbers present from then on. A similar pattern, of an autumn peak and declining numbers from February, was also seen in Northern Ireland.

Only one site, Loughs Neagh and Beg, currently supports internationally important numbers of Cormorant and numbers here remained at a high level. Numbers at Carlingford Lough were possibly higher than shown below but due to a January count of 234 involving unidentified Cormorant/Shag, these were not included in the table below. At the top British site, Morecambe Bay, low numbers were probably more a result of incomplete coverage in the peak month. Individual sites that supported notably high counts included the Tees, Exe, Ribble, Blackwater and Colne Estuaries, Rutland Water and a cluster of west London sites: Wraysbury Gravel Pits, Wraysbury Reservoir, Staines Reservoirs, Queen Mary Reservoir and Queen Elizabeth II Reservoir. Whilst these latter sites may have been sharing birds over different months, there was certainly evidence of an increase in this general area. There were relatively few sites exhibiting sizeable declines, such as those at Abberton Reservoir and the Firths of Clyde and Forth.

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	1,643	1,416	722	1,383	1,468	Sep	1,326
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Morecambe Bay	1,030	1,223	398	(657)	(539)	Sep	884
Forth Estuary	681	(744)	761	(982)	595	Oct	753
Dee Estuary (England/Wales)	541	864	(692)	668	718	Oct	698
Alt Estuary	574	574	960	569	(456)	Jan	669
Thames Estuary	(437)	(740)	578	722	591	Jan	658
Solway Estuary	(628)	(678)	378	500	(591)	Nov	555
Walthamstow Reservoirs	580	551	(531)	570	505	Jul	552
Tees Estuary	451	647	429	438	773	Aug	548
Abberton Reservoir	600	318	780	600	420	Mar	544
Rutland Water	330	425	520	529	788	Aug	518
Inner Firth of Clyde	466	606	528	553	425	Oct	516
Queen Mary Reservoir	678	112	580	342	768	Nov	496

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Poole Harbour	298	338	585	558	(412)	Sep	445
The Wash	462	401	233	502	449	Sep	409
Hanningfield Reservoir	539	221	585	189 ³⁵	411	Oct	389
North Norfolk Coast	278	294	(268)	581	(276)	Sep	384
Loch Leven	608	488	421	68	310	Nov	379
Besthorpe and Girton Gravel Pits	304	(10)	386	415	364	Mar	367
Ribble Estuary	(163)	219	358	398	(456)	Dec	358
Dungeness Gravel Pits	344	294	625	235 ³⁵	251	Feb	350
Little Paxton Gravel Pits	303 ¹³			362 ³⁵			333
Wraysbury Gravel Pits	276	264	306	181	607	Nov	327
Ranworth and Cockshoot Broads	317	298 ¹²	398 ¹²	270 ¹²	324 ¹²	Dec	321
Blackwater Estuary	190	(209)	450	104	473	Jan	304
Rye Harbour and Pett Level	211	324	218	340	382	Aug	295
Staines Reservoirs	39	499	77	41	773	Sep	286 ▲
Ouse Washes	287 ¹²	225 ¹²	213 ¹²	347	252	Feb	265
Colne Estuary	(176)	103	(151)	(29)	423	Jan	263 ▲
Queen Mother Reservoir	535	360	50	91			259 ▲
Pagham Harbour	234	244	247	240	303	Nov	254 ▲
Herne Bay		250 ¹³					250
Wraysbury Reservoir	39	59	93	132	899	Sep	244 ▲
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	206	220	271	231	286	Dec	243
Medway Estuary	(271)	220	167	(136)	305	Oct	241 ▲
Thorpeness Offshore					239	Dec	239 ▲
Rostherne Mere	273	281	31	293	306	Jan	237 ▲
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004							
Grafham Water	212	71	204	349	193	Feb	206
Sites with mean peak counts of 130 or more birds in Northern Ireland[†]							
Belfast Lough	321	499	528	388	348	Oct	417
Outer Ards Shoreline	303	121		652	563	Oct	410
Strangford Lough	285	275	245	358	400	Oct	313
Carlingford Lough	(209)	(166)	208	206	154	Oct	194
Dundrum Bay	(90)	(120)	(104)	(124)	(162)	Sep	(162)
Upper Lough Erne	104	109	199	124	225	Dec	152
Other sites attaining table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2003/2004 in Great Britain							
Exe Estuary	113	140	209	199	415	Oct	215
William Girling Reservoir	210	60	95	240	400	Aug	201
Queen Elizabeth II Reservoir	172	90	115	308 ³⁵	340	Aug	205
Inner Moray and Inverness Firth	71	88 ¹	90	236	276	Oct	152
Loch Kindar	64	41	46	3	247	Dec	80
Tay Estuary	196	165	197	233	236	Oct	205

[†] as no All-Ireland threshold has been set a qualifying level of 130 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report

Shag

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

International threshold: 2,400

Great Britain threshold: ?[†]

All-Ireland threshold: ?[†]

GB max: 2,903 Oct

NI max: 434 Jan

The Shag has only recently been added to the list of standard WeBS species, although some counters have recorded them for some time now and the species is also well covered by supplementary surveys such as those around Shetland and in the Moray Firth. Shags are almost entirely restricted to coastal waters, being scarce both inland and far offshore. Globally, the species' distribution is limited with the UK supporting approximately one-third of the total world population. Movements tend to be relatively local although birds from

northern Norway and Russia are truly migratory.

In 2003/04, Shags were recorded from 93 different sites during WeBS Core Counts, with further important sites recorded by non-WeBS surveys. There is a clear concentration in the north, particularly Shetland. Overall UK core count numbers peaked in October when 3,183 were noted. Clearly, WeBS only covers a relatively small proportion of the population. The number of Shags wintering around the UK coast is not well known, but likely to be of the

order of 100,000 birds. On this basis, the Forth Estuary and South Yell Sound would both be nationally important for the species. Moreover, the counts from the Forth Estuary to date are only just below the level of international

importance. Numbers at Carlingford Lough were possibly higher than shown below but due to a January count of 234 involving unidentified Cormorant/Shag, these were not included in the table below.

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	Mon	Mean
Sites with mean peak counts of 50 or more birds in Great Britain†							
Forth Estuary				2,315	(1,664)	Oct	2,315
South Yell Sound	1,419 ¹⁰	1,006 ¹⁰	1,690 ¹⁰	710 ¹⁰	893 ¹⁰	Dec	1,046
Hacosay/Bluemill/Colgrave		301 ¹⁰	1,132 ¹⁰	423 ¹⁰	709 ¹⁰	Feb	559
North-west Yell Sound	561 ¹⁰	620 ¹⁰	495 ¹⁰				559
Scalloway Islands			760 ¹⁰		424 ¹⁰	Dec	480
Burra and Trondra			478 ¹⁰		476 ¹⁰	Dec	465
Moray Firth				636 ¹	413 ¹	Dec	413
West Whalsay and Sounds			383 ¹⁰				383
West Yell			349 ¹⁰				349
North Bressay	198 ¹⁰			53 ¹⁰			326
Widewall Bay				68	580	Dec	324
Kirkabister to Wadbister Ness	100 ¹⁰	355 ¹⁰	73 ¹⁰	172 ¹⁰	778 ¹⁰	Jan	296
Bressay Sound		282 ¹⁰	657 ¹⁰	114 ¹⁰	100 ¹⁰	Jan	285
Kirkabister to Dury Voe		250 ¹⁰					250
East Unst			246 ¹⁰				246
South Havra			428 ¹⁰				244
Quendale to Virkie	360 ¹⁰	98 ¹⁰	605 ¹⁰	123 ¹⁰	176 ¹⁰	Jan	243
South Unst			339 ¹⁰		206 ¹⁰	Feb	203
Anstruther Harbour		4	639	64	8	Oct	179
Inner Firth of Clyde			139	(213)	(159)	Sep	170
South Yell			157 ¹⁰				157
Lunning and Lunna Holm		156 ¹⁰					156
Rova Head to Wadbister Ness	200 ¹⁰	214 ¹⁰	83 ¹⁰	166 ¹⁰	132 ¹⁰	Jan	154
Broadford Bay				150	(100)	Nov	150
Scousburgh to Maywick	144 ¹⁰						144
Linga Beach			133 ¹³				133
Whiteness to Skelda Ness	101 ¹⁰	51 ¹⁰	142 ¹⁰	149 ¹⁰	169 ¹⁰	Jan	125
Ayr to North Troon			63	184	(26)	Jan	124
Island of Papa Westray			47	107	210	Mar	121
South-east Yell			120 ¹⁰				120
Arran			86	100	125	Dec	104
Girvan to Turnberry			111	80	117	Dec	103
Thurso Bay					100	Dec	100
Camas Shallachain			90				90
Sullom Voe	81 ¹⁰	62 ¹⁰	50 ¹⁰	106 ¹⁰	104 ¹⁰	Feb	89
Lindisfarne		27 ¹¹	118 ¹¹	156 ¹¹	48 ¹¹	Nov	87
South Fetlar			84 ¹⁰				84
North Fetlar			79 ¹⁰				79
Loch Ryan		30	(90)	(110)	79	Dec	77
Island of Egilsay				78	62	Jan	70
Hunterston Sands					64	Oct	64
Kingsbridge Estuary			60	47	(72)	Dec	60
Quendale Bay			60 ¹⁰				60
Ardrossan-West Kilbride			53	78	41	Feb	57
Sites with mean peak counts of 50 or more birds in Northern Ireland†							
Outer Ards Shoreline				227	187	Jan	207
Strangford Lough	44 ¹¹	17 ¹¹	166	193	226	Jan	129
Carlingford Lough			294	48	37	Mar	126
Belfast Lough		39 ¹¹	30 ¹¹	215	194 ¹¹	Dec	120

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