

Lesser Black-backed Gull 1979

Title

Lesser Black-backed Gull 1979/80

Description and Summary of Results

Although some of both the national and local literature published up to 1910 described the species as resident, the Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* is normally thought of as a partial migrant which, until the 1960s, was known chiefly as a summer visitor to the UK. From the early 1960s increasing numbers were being seen in the winter, an increase which had been monitored in a series of BTO enquiries in 1953, 1963 and 1973. There was a particularly large increase between the latter two of these and this prompted an additional enquiry after a five year interval. It was also agreed to do a series of counts over a longer period which (it was hoped) would show movements during the whole of the nonbreeding season.

The coverage during this survey was less complete than in the inland wintering gull survey of January 1973, or indeed the later one of January 1983 with, in particular, several large roosts not counted. The totals recorded therefore were very low -- minimum midwinter total for England and Wales was 11895 birds and 18 in Scotland. However, coverage was consistent, with nearly every site which was counted being visited on or close to each requested count date. Therefore the seasonal changes in numbers were realistic for the sites visited.

It had been known for some time that parts of the English Midlands (outside the breeding range) held regular flocks of non-breeding or sub-adult birds during the breeding season, and the count requested for June 1979 was aimed specifically at discovering the extent of this summer roosting. However, numbers found were lower than expected, perhaps because not all birds resorted to reservoirs to roost at that time.

Reported numbers showed a continuous reduction through the non-breeding season, until the end of March, even through December and January when traditionally numbers were thought to remain relatively stable. An increase in March which might have been expected as return migration got under way was not revealed.

Methods of Data Capture

Observers were asked to make counts of Lesser Black-backed Gulls settling in to roost at inland reservoirs and lakes on or about the following dates: 30 June, 30 September and 31 December 1979; and 31 January, 28 February and 31 March 1980. Since the long series of counts requested would put some strain on observers, they were told that counts at dates approximating to the above would be acceptable.

Purpose of Data Capture

To determine the seasonal occurrence of Lesser Black-backed Gulls at roosts from the end of the breeding season to the end of March. The original plan was to get an estimate of the total numbers present but low coverage precluded that.

Geographic Coverage

All of the UK although in practice very few sites were counted in Scotland and none in Northern Ireland.

Temporal Coverage

The non-breeding season 1979/1980 with counts requested for 30 June, 30 September and 31 December 1979 and 31 January, 28 February and 31 March 1980 or dates as near as convenient to these.

Other Interested parties

The survey was organised and run by Ron Hickling with BTO support.

Organiser(s)

Ron A.O. Hickling as a volunteer.

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The report of the survey is:

Hickling, R.A.O. 1984. Lesser Black-backed Gull numbers at British inland roosts in 1979-80. *Bird Study* 31: 157-160.

The survey was noticed in *BTO News* numbers 97, 98 and 112.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

1 Folder contains the data and analyses.

Notes on Access and Use**Other information****Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**