

Whooper & Bewick's Swan Census in Northumberland, 17th-18th January 2015

The latest International Swan Census took place in January 2015. Overall, the census is organised by the Wetlands International / IUCN SSC Swan Specialist Group, whilst the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (WWT) coordinates the British, Irish and Icelandic surveys. The priority count dates were arranged to match with the usual monthly Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) counts taking place and steps were taken to encourage information from all sources across the county; e.g. notices in the Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club (NTBC) monthly Bulletins and website, plus a series of targeted emails. I'm very grateful for all the information and assistance provided and the following table summarises the findings. Habitat information and the birds' activities (feeding, roosting etc) were also gathered and included on recording forms for each location.

Site	Whooper	Bewick's	Observers & Survey Date
Amble Braid (fields opposite)	23 including Broods 1, 1		Richard Poyer (18 th)
Angerton Lake	1 adult		Keith Buchanan (19 th)
Fenham-le-Moor	34 including Broods 3, 2, 2, 2		Steve Holliday & Dee McKeown (18 th)
Greenlee Lough	1 adult		Mike Smith (13 th)
Newton Pool	6 adults	1 adult	Kevin Redgrave (18 th)
Rayburn Lake	5 including Brood 3		Keith Buchanan (18 th)
West Ord	26 including Broods 3, 2, 2, 1		Malcolm Hutcheson (18 th)
Whittle Dene Reservoirs	4 adults		Steve Rippon (18 th)
TOTALS	100 birds including 22 young (22%)	1 adult	

NB Another semi-feral adult Whooper Swan was also present in the Berwick area during the winter.

The International wild swan survey has been undertaken on a 5-yearly basis on a number of occasions in the past and the total of 100 Whooper Swans is easily the poorest showing on record. Although some 58 Whooper Swans were noted at Horncliffe on the 25th (i.e. outside the survey dates) these birds may have included some of those in the table above and thus the 100 bird total for the survey weekend (bar one on the 13th) is probably a fair reflection of the current total wintering in Northumberland.

A comparison with previous 5-yearly Whooper Swan counts is as follows:

Year (January)	Total number of Whooper Swans	Comments
2015	100 (survey)	See above
2010	100 (survey)	The formal survey indicated 100 birds in 5 flocks but the detailed breakdown is unavailable (see <i>Wildfowl</i> (2012) 62:

	c.160 max (NTBC records)	73–96). NTBC: The monthly WeBS count for January numbered a meagre 45 birds, whereas ad hoc records suggest at best a total of c.160 (Ellington-Linton-QEII CP 61, Druridge Bay CP 40, Fenham Flats 34, Aln estuary 10 plus single figures at 6 sites (say 18) = 163)
2005	454 (survey) c.400-500 (NTBC records)	The formal survey indicated 454 in 10 flocks but the detailed breakdown is unavailable (see <i>Wildfowl</i> (2009) 59: 17–40). NTBC: Monthly peaks at 7 widespread county locations totalled 514 birds (see species account in <i>Birds in Northumbria 2005</i> p.20) however this included 266 at Norham on 30 th when only 102 had been present on 15 th . A further 60 were noted at Hartburn on the 8 th but not included in the 514 total.
2000	366 (survey)	Included 57 young (16.8%) and the total of 366 represented around 7%-8% of the wintering GB population (see International Whooper and Bewick's Swan Census by Roger Norman in <i>Birds in Northumbria 2000</i> p.145)

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