

Birds in Northumbria

The 2015 Bird Report for Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside

Classified List compiled by

Steve Barrett, Graeme Bowman, Paul Buskin, Eddie Crabtree,
Tim Dean, Ian Kerr, Lindsay McDougall, Andy Mould & Mike Richardson

Edited by

Andy Mould

Illustrations by

Mike Carr, Alan Hart, Mike Henry, Stewart Sexton & John Steele

Photographs by

Chris Barlow, Jack Bucknall, Paul Buskin, Mike Carr, Alan Curry, Tim & Janet Dean,
Jonathan Farooqi, Ian Fisher, Alan Jack, Andy Mould, Heiko Peters, Michael Sanderson
& Gary Woodburn

Published by

THE NORTHUMBERLAND AND TYNESIDE BIRD CLUB

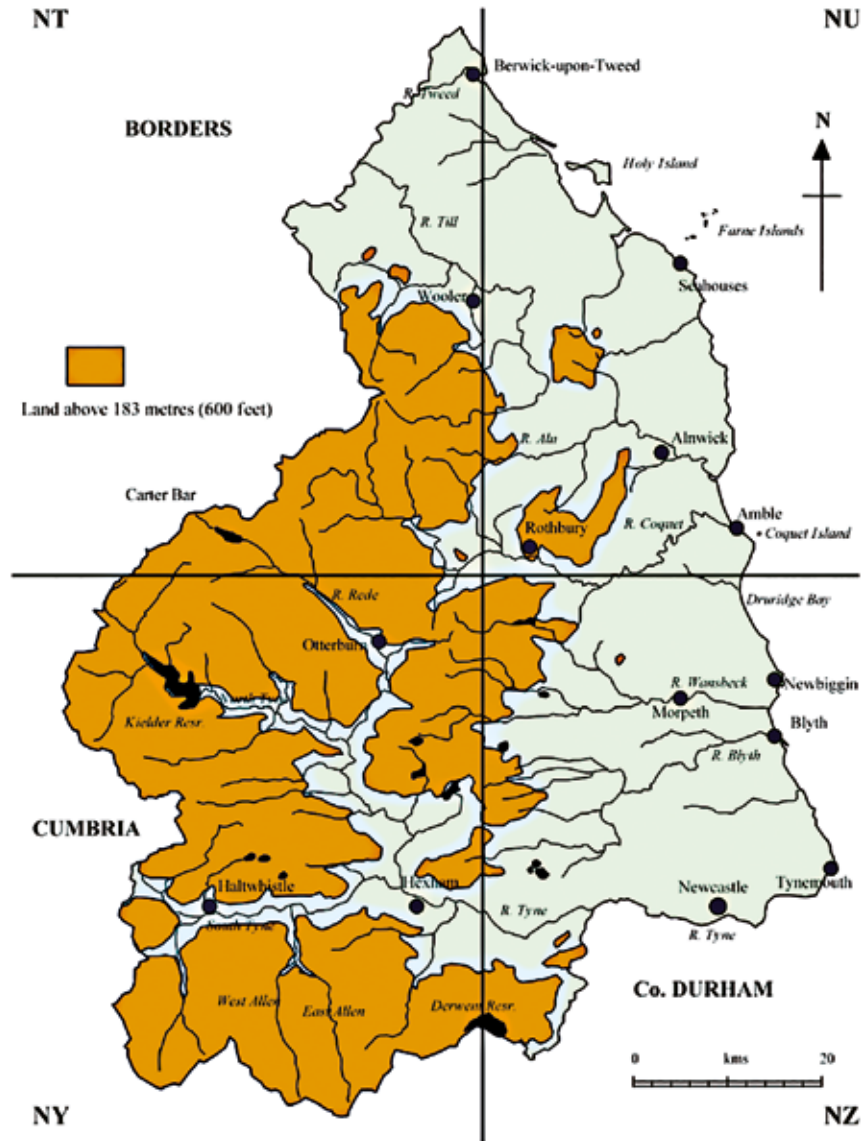
ISBN: 978-0-9557406-8-8

Registered Charity No: 517641

Designed and produced by: Differentia Design (differentia.co.uk)

© Copyright, Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club 2016

Map of Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club Recording Area



Map prepared by Mike Hodgson using Dmap software

Contents

Introduction	4
Acknowledgements	6
Status of Species	6
Species Accounts	7
Pallid Harrier - First for Northumberland	9
 Classified List / Authors	 12
Mute Swan - Brent Goose	Paul Buskin 14
Shelduck - Goosander	Graeme Bowman 21
Quail - Black-necked Grebe	Lindsay McDougall 44
Honey-buzzard - Snipe	Ian Kerr 61
Pomarine Skua - Great Skua	Steve Barrett 92
Puffin - Arctic Tern	Andy Mould 94
Kittiwake - Great Black-backed Gull	Mike Richardson 101
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) - Short-eared Owl	Andy Mould 112
Nightjar - Great Spotted Woodpecker	Steve Barrett 120
Kestrel - Peregrine	Ian Kerr 124
Ring-necked Parakeet - Bearded Tit	Mike Richardson 127
Skylark - House Martin	Eddie Crabtree 138
Long-tailed Tit - Reed Warbler	Ian Kerr 142
Waxwing - Dipper	Eddie Crabtree 152
Ring Ouzel - Wheatear	Steve Barrett 158
Dunnock - Rock Pipit	Eddie Crabtree 171
Brambling - Reed Bunting	Mike Richardson 179
Rare and Scarce species	Tim Dean -
Birds of Unknown Origin, Escapes and Hybrids	Tim Dean 188
 Reference Section	 190
List of Contributors	192
First & Last Dates of Summer Visitors in 2015	193
Last & First Dates of Winter Visitors in 2015	194
Additions and Corrections to Previous Reports	195
BBRC decisions and records under review	196
Ringing Recoveries Reported in 2015	198
Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) 2015	205
The County Records Committee 2015	215
Yellow-browed Warbler - A record year in the county	217
Birdwatching Sites XIX - Alnmouth - An insider's view	224
Birdwatching Sites XX - Backworth Pond & Area	229
Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club Development Fund Grants 2015	233
Secretary's Report 2015	234
Species on the County List not recorded in 2015	236
Glossary of Terms	240

Introduction

A very warm welcome to Birds in Northumbria 2015. The entries in this report cover all species found during 2015 in our recording area, which comprises the county of Northumberland and the districts of Newcastle and North Tyneside. We hope you enjoy reading the report.

Overview

A total of 268 full species were recorded in Northumberland in 2015. Pallid Harrier, long-awaited by many, was the only addition to the county list, which now stands at 413 species.

In addition to the returning Caspian Gull at Amble Harbour (second record) and the returning Bonaparte's Gull at the Farne Islands (sixth record), there were a further eight species in the Extremely Rare category (no more than nine records in total): 'North American Canada Goose' (second record), Black Scoter (second record), Black-winged Pratincole (second record), Terek Sandpiper (sixth record), Black Stork (seventh record), Red-flanked Bluetail (seventh record), Pallid Swift (seventh and eighth records) and Long-billed Dowitcher (eighth record).

Species and sub-species regarded as rare or scarce in 2015 included: 'Tundra Bean Goose', American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Red-crested Pochard, Surf Scoter, Smew, Great Shearwater, Leach's Petrel, Great White Egret, Honey-buzzard, Red Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Rough-legged Buzzard, Crane, Temminck's Stint, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Grey Phalarope, Gull-billed Tern, Yellow-legged Gull, Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Wryneck, Red-footed Falcon, Golden Oriole, Red-backed Shrike, Great Grey Shrike, Woodchat Shrike, Hooded Crow, Firecrest, Bearded Tit, Shore Lark, Greenish Warbler, Radde's Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Barred Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Rose-coloured Starling, Thrush Nightingale, Nightingale, Red-breasted Flycatcher, 'Channel Wagtail', 'Grey-headed Wagtail', Richard's Pipit, Water Pipit, Hawfinch, Ortolan Bunting and Little Bunting.

In addition, it was the best year on record for Yellow-browed Warblers, with an estimated 93 birds in the county; a paper at the back of this report documents the astonishing increase in numbers of this star Siberian species. Not far behind came Mediterranean Gull, with a record count of 92 individuals on 22nd September.

Breeding records included the second nesting of Little Egrets, with at least one pair raising two young at Druridge Pools. A record 111 pairs of Roseate Terns nested on Coquet Island and a first breeding attempt was made at the Farne Islands since 2009. With only six successful nests nationally, a bigamous male Hen Harrier was responsible for fledging five young at one site in the county and three young at another; a 'sky-dancing' male was noted at a third locality. Three pairs of Ospreys nested successfully at Kielder Water, fledging a total of six young, and three pairs of Mediterranean Gulls fledged four young on Coquet Island. Marsh Harriers were again successful at East Chevington and Goshawks, Avocets, Little Ringed Plovers, Little Terns and Barn Owls all had a particularly good season. Guillemots continued their incredible success at the Farne Islands and Bearded



Introduction

Tits bred successfully for the first time since 2000. A pair of Goldeneye raised two broods at a site in the north of the county used since 2010 and a pair of Black-necked Grebes hatched two young at a site in the south east.

Finally, an interesting record from Gosforth Park NR involved a singing male Golden Oriole heard on 3rd June and again on 16th July.

Acknowledgements

The following are all thanked for providing essential data for this report: David Roche of the National Trust (Farne Islands), Paul Morrison and the RSPB (Coquet Island), the Northumbria Ringing Group (raptor and owl breeding data), Ian Fisher (Ringing Report) and Dan Turner, Steve Holliday and Kathy Evans (Wetland Bird Survey-WeBS).

I would also like to thank all the illustrators and photographers who have once again produced a range of fine work. Appreciation is also extended to the authors of various papers and to Peter Fletcher, who compiled the 2015 records from monthly bulletins on to individual species sheets. The map of the recording area was prepared by Mike Hodgson.

The compilers of the monthly bulletins, which form the basis of this report, are also acknowledged. An annual report would not be possible without their contribution. In 2015, bulletin data was collated by Dick Myatt and prepared by the following authors: Trevor Blake, Graeme Bowman, Eddie Crabtree, Tim Dean, Peter Fletcher, Ian Forsyth, Steve Holliday, Alan Jack, Steve Laing, Lindsay McDougall, Mike Richardson and Mike Smith. David Sanders provided data from the North Northumberland Bird Club. The bulletin was edited by Steve Barrett and mail distribution was by Paul Stewart.

I am grateful to the many people who have answered numerous queries and questions in my first year as Editor; in particular I would like to thank Mike Richardson, Tim Dean, Steve Holliday, Graeme Bowman and Mike Carr. Finally, I would like to thank Tim Dean and Graeme Bowman for proof reading the report.

Status of Species

Status Headings:

- STATUS: Describes the current status of a species.
- BREEDING: Where appropriate, describes the current breeding status and year the species LAST BRED (including the current year). This heading may also be used to refer to recent changes in breeding status, and in some cases the year the species FIRST BRED, and any historical data.

Status Definitions:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Abundant: | 10,000 or more individuals per annum |
| Common: | 1,000 to 9,999 individuals per annum |
| Well-represented: | 100 to 999 individuals per annum |
| Uncommon: | 10 to 99 individuals per annum |
| Rare: | No more than nine individuals per annum |
| Extremely Rare: | No more than nine individuals in total. |

Breeding species: The same status definitions are used, but in reference to pairs rather than individual birds, therefore 10 to 99 pairs will be referred to as an 'uncommon' breeding species.

Irruptive species: The status of some species can fluctuate greatly between years e.g. Little Auk and Waxwing. The status illustrated signifies the norm; any irruptive behaviour during the current year will be referred to in the text.

Species Accounts

Tables: Where appropriate, tables are included to illustrate maximum monthly counts, breeding success, ringing group data and nest box data.

Observer Initials and the use of '*et al.*': Selected records within the Classified List are accompanied by observer initials. Since BiN 2005, the following simplified guidelines have been issued to section authors to maintain consistency in the use of observer initials:

1. All Category A, B and scarce sub-species i.e. those requiring written notes
2. Annual peak counts
3. Long-term studies such as monthly counts, nest box schemes, significant breeding data etc.

Within Category 1, readers are referred to the County Records Committee paper in the Reference Section of this report for an up-to-date list of species, sub-species, age classes etc. considered by the CRC (or see the club's website at www.ntbc.org.uk). Initials used in parentheses after sightings of some rare or scarce birds are not always fully understood. BBRC place them in alphabetical order, however we haven't followed this rule. Up to four sets of initials will continue to be used. From BiN 2015, the following criteria will also be applied:

If just one person sees a bird, theirs are the only initial, e.g. (TRD); if one person finds and identifies a bird, and then more than three other people see the bird, it will be (TRD *et al.*); if one person finds and identifies a bird and just two or three other observers see the bird, then all three/four initials will be used, e.g. (TRD/JD/STH); if one person finds a bird and another identifies it, the finder's initials will always be used first, followed by the identifier and any other observers or *et al.*, i.e. (JD/TRD *et al.*).

Within Category 2, a further explanation may assist readers. A small number of species may be classified as 'Rare' but are not considered by the CRC (e.g. Hoopoe, Wryneck, Red-backed and Great Grey Shrikes) and in some years initials may be applied. These are to reflect maximum counts and not rarity status of the species. Guidelines are introduced from BiN 2015 to determine when initials are to be used under Category 2:

1. Up to three sets of initials per species will be used to denote annual peak counts
2. Initials will not be used where there are four or more joint highest annual counts.

Andy Mould
Editor



Pallid Harrier at the Coquet Estuary: First County Record

By Mike Henry

This note attempts to put the Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* photographed by Michael Sanderson (MS) on the River Coquet near Warkworth on 9th September 2015, and only subsequently identified as the first for Northumberland from his excellent photos, in its European and British context.

Something extraordinary has happened to Pallid Harriers since the 1990s. Prior to the new Millennium, the only reliable places to look for Pallids in the Western Palearctic were Eilat (Israel) or the Straits of Messina (Sicily) in spring. Their circular migration route from their Asian heartlands (notably Kazakhstan) was well known by the 1960s and documented by Moreau (Moreau, 1972). Those that did not migrate south to India took a westerly route through the Middle East to Africa, where some headed south to the East African Savannahs, while others moved westwards through the Sahel, following locust hordes. These birds then headed north in spring, crossing the Mediterranean from Cap Bon in Tunisia to Sicily and Italy. Between 1953 and 1966, no less than 189 Pallid Harriers were ringed at Cap Bon providing recoveries from European Russia and Siberia (Moreau, 1972). Currently we know from satellite tracking that Montagu's Harriers breeding in eastern Europe follow a similar route across the Mediterranean, over Italy and the Adriatic and through the Balkans accompanied by a few Pallid Harriers: from a mean of 6.7 birds per year in the 1980s they increased to 49 per year in the 1990s and after 1998 over 100 per year, with an exceptional 132 in 2001 (Corso and Cardelli, 2004).

By way of contrast, in northern Europe, except in the invasion year of 1952, Pallid Harriers have been very rare. Leslie Brown in his 400 page *British Birds of Prey* (1976) devoted just one paragraph to it, alongside the Greater Spotted Eagle! He cited the three examples on the British list: a juvenile shot during a partridge shoot near Driffield on the Yorkshire Wolds in 1952 (possibly from one of the four Swedish nests in that invasion year) and two spring adult males, one on Fair Isle. An even better gauge of the status of Pallid Harrier can be gleaned from the Falsterbo (Sweden) statistics where raptors have been systematically counted since the early 1970s. Very little goes unobserved by the paid counters there, so the annual averages per decade are reliable: two to three in the 1970s, four in the 1980s and ten in the 1990s. Since Falsterbo funnels many raptors from Finland and the Baltic region, this suggests a steady increase but nothing spectacular (and the increase could partially be attributed to better optics and more confidence with juvenile and female plumages). However things were about to change, starting in Finland. In 1997, a record 33 Pallid Harriers were accepted and after 1999 adult males no longer required verification by the Finnish Rarities Committee. In 2001, no less than 57 were accepted by the Swedish Rarities Committee, including 11 passing Falsterbo. By 2003, Pallid Harriers were found nesting in Finland. Reverse migration, birds returning to Scandinavia, became apparent in Denmark at about the same time: 20 northern-bound birds were recorded at Skagen at the tip of Jylland (Jutland) in 1999-2002 compared with none in the previous 11 years. If anything the upsurge in records has accelerated: no less than 43 passed Falsterbo in 2011 (part of a bumper 191 accepted sightings) and that record may well be beaten in 2016 with 43 logged by the end of September.

Harriers are broad-front migrants, only a percentage passing through bottlenecks like Falsterbo or Messina and more Pallids are being seen in Norway too, like a Finnish ringed juvenile near Stavanger in August 2015, so it is perhaps not surprising that the Shetlands have been in the forefront of the recent upsurge in UK records. They have become almost annual there now, often with several individuals involved. As in Scandinavia, 2011 was a bumper year, with 29 records, including five on Shetland and Fair Isle; this being more than all the Pallid Harriers previously recorded in Britain put together. That year, a superb juvenile was photographed over Dorman's Pool (Teesside) and initially posted on the internet as a Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, but fortunately it lingered and delighted its many admirers, unlike the Coquet bird on 9th September 2015, which was seen by only two lucky observers. One of them (MS) fortunately captured it on film being mobbed by crows which eventually caused it to fly off south along the Coquet Estuary. The resultant images left no doubt: Northumberland had its first confirmed Pallid Harrier.

Why this sudden, real increase in records? And not just in Scandinavia but right across Europe from Poland to Spain (where in March 2015 a record 40 northbound migrants were observed, mostly along the east coast). One hypothesis relates to the fall of communism and the collapse of the Soviet collective farm model; that some arable has reverted to scrubby overgrown meadows. The collapse of the small breeding populations in Belarus, Moldova and the Ukraine was undoubtedly due to agricultural intensification (drainage, steppe grassland being converted to arable etc.), so there may be some truth in the suggestion. However, all harriers are nomads by nature, like owls, and their breeding success fluctuates with their prey (larks, susliks, grasshoppers etc.) and what can be demonstrated is that the Pallid Harrier breeding range has expanded both north and west in recent years. Harriers have bred recently in the Moscow region for the first time and territorial males were noted in Karelia (on the Russian/Finnish border), a good 700kms north of their traditional breeding grounds (Galushin, Clarke and Davygora). In 2015, two pairs bred successfully inland from Oulu (Finland) just 200kms short of the Arctic Circle and in recent summers adult males have been seen in Swedish Lapland, giving rise to speculation as to whether they may be breeding on the vast mires in the taiga belt. In 2014, this writer watched an adult male building two cock nests in silage and repeatedly 'sky dancing' over an adjacent rape field, where a Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* was nesting in an attempt to lure away the incubating female. This was on a Swedish Baltic island where an adult male has been present for at least three summers (personal observation). The breeding female from one of the Finnish 2015 nests was satellite-tagged and revealed a migration trail very similar to some German and Dutch Montagu's Harriers. She flew diagonally across Europe to France and Spain, crossing the Mediterranean from east of Malaga to Morocco, finally reaching Mauritania. Unfortunately, she stopped transmitting, so the return journey remains a mystery, but everything points to a new migratory route developing alongside the well-established loop from the Middle East to the Sahel and back to Europe via Italy. Britain appears to be benefiting from this new flyway; surely birds coasting along the Norwegian coast (one of which we know emanated from a Finnish nest), using Shetland as a staging post and then continuing along the English (and Irish) coastlines, are all part of the same movement. Before the Millennium, every authority indicated that the Pallid Harrier was in severe decline. Yet the many juveniles indicate successful breeding somewhere!

If Pallid Harriers continue to colonise the taiga belt, then there is no reason why this development should not continue, with the chance of more autumnal sightings. The Coquet bird was one of 11 accepted by BBRC in 2015, which in itself indicates the pace of change. However, unless a bird decides to over-winter, as one did in Norfolk in 2003, or to linger, as another did round the Wash in 2015, it remains an elusive species for most birders, so we in Northumberland should be grateful to Michael Sanderson for his historic photos taken on the Coquet.

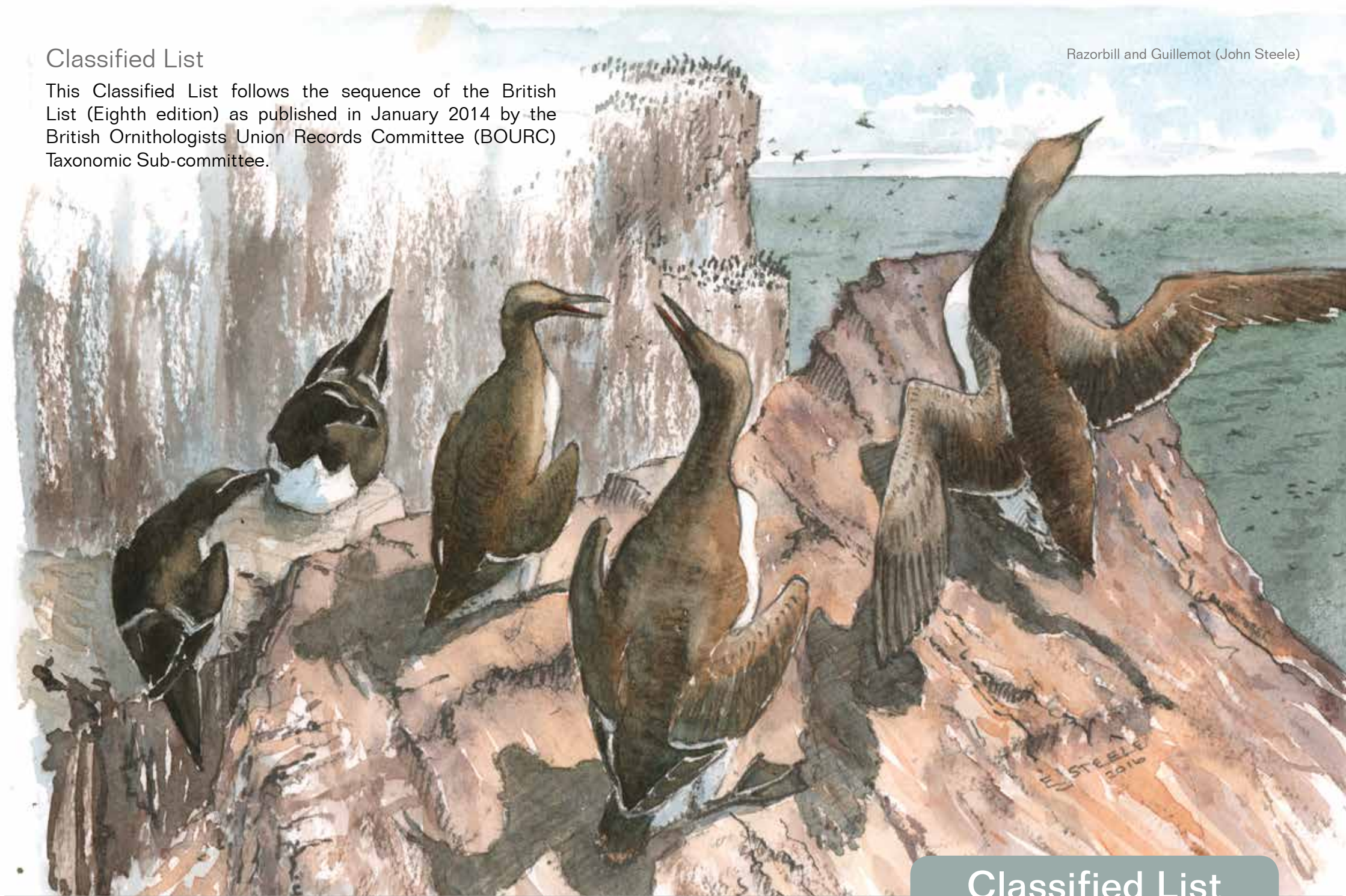
References

- British Birds - annual Rare Birds Report (especially British Birds 109, October 2016).
- Corso, A. and Cardelli, C. 2004. The Migration of Pallid Harriers across the central Mediterranean. British Birds, 97 2004.
- falsterbofagelstation.se (for migration counts).
- Fågelåret - the annual summary of birdlife in Sweden, Fågelåret.
- Galushin, V. Clarke, R. and Davygora, A. 2003. International Action Plan for the Pallid Harrier (Strasbourg 2003).
- Moreau, R. E. 1972. The Palaearctic-African Bird Migration Systems, Academic Press 1972.
- Rarebirdspain.net.
- www.luomus.fi (website for the satellite tracked female Potku).

Classified List

This Classified List follows the sequence of the British List (Eighth edition) as published in January 2014 by the British Ornithologists Union Records Committee (BOURC) Taxonomic Sub-committee.

Razorbill and Guillemot (John Steele)



Classified List

Classified List

This Classified List follows the sequence of the British List (Eighth edition) as published in January 2014 by the British Ornithologists Union Records Committee (BOURC) Taxonomic Sub-committee.

Readers are referred to the appendix at the rear of this report to view Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) tables covering many of our waterbirds, including waders and Kingfisher.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon to well-represented.

The largest gatherings were from four regular sites, where maximum monthly counts were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Capheaton Lake	93	79	57	42	39	56	75	-	96	44	103	92
Killingworth Lake	55	75	65	56	39	46	45	58	49	24	33	28
QEII CP Lake	93	93	69	91	61	-	75	-	82	90	114	126
Tweed Estuary	24	28	66	202	110	268	314	248	68	68	33	42

Elsewhere during January-April, there were ten to 29 at Big Waters, Bolam Lake, Bothal Pond, Budle Bay, Caistron, Castle Island, Cocklawburn Pond, the Coquet Estuary, East Chevington, Ladyburn Lake, Lindisfarne NNR, Low Newton and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Peak concentrations in May involved 12-27 at Amble, Big Waters, Caistron, Capheaton, Castle Island and East Chevington; while, in June, there were 60 at Castle Island, 27 at Caistron and 12 at the Coquet Estuary.

A total of 17 breeding pairs were reported from 15 widespread localities. Two broods were noted at Druridge Pools and Killingworth Lake, while single broods were reported from Big Waters, Bothal Pond, Broomlee Lough, Capheaton, East Chevington, Gosforth Park NR, Hauxley, Holy Island Lough, Ladyburn Lake, Linton Pond, Newcastle (Exhibition Park), Swallow Pond and Wallsend Dene.

The largest gathering of the year came from a WeBS visit to the Tweed Estuary on 16th July, when 314 were counted (MHu). Additional peak counts in July, other than those listed in the table, involved up to 75 at New Water Haugh (River Tweed), 48 at Castle Island and 28 at Caistron; while, in August, 12-29 were at Branton GP, Caistron, Castle Island and Widdrington Moor Lake. In September, 16-47 were at Bolam Lake, Budle Bay, Caistron and Lindisfarne NNR.

During October, there were 36 at Lindisfarne NNR, 30 at West Ord, 26 at Castle Island and 12-28 at Big Waters, Bolam Lake, Branton GP, Caistron, Fenham Mill and Howdon. In the final two months, there were counts of 49 at Caistron and 28 at Big Waters, while 11-20 were noted at Branton GP, the Coquet Estuary, East Chevington, Howdon and Warkworth.

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus*

STATUS: Increasingly rare passage and winter visitor. / LAST RECORD: 2014

There were only four reports during the year, beginning with a single bird noted during a WeBS count at Newton Pool on 18th January and an adult with 51 Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* at Widdrington Moor on 8th March. In the latter part of the year, two birds were at Widdrington Moor Lake on 30th (CDB/TB) and at Grindon Lough on 31st December (PRM).

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

In January, 20-58 were at Fenham Mill, Loanend (Horncliffe), the Warkworth-Birling Carrs area and West Ord, while one to 14 were at a further eight localities. During February, 22-78 were at Doddington, Horncliffe, Lindisfarne NNR, Warkworth, Warkworth Lane, West Ord, Whiteadder Point and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with three to nine at a further five localities.

Passage became apparent during March and included peak counts of 40 N at Tynemouth on 8th, with 34 N there on 17th, 17 N at Seaton Sluice on 17th and 16 NW at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) on 12th. The largest gathering involved 126 sheltering from a westerly gale on the flats and sandbars at Lindisfarne NNR on 8th (IK). Other peak counts in March involved 106 at East Chevington on 8th, 88 at Bothal Pond on 24th and 65 at Widdrington Moor Lake on 8th, with 22-52 at Branton GP, Cresswell Pond, Gosforth Park NR, Hadston, Horncliffe, Sweethope Lough and the Warkworth area, and one to 19 at a further 16 widespread localities. During April, 31 flew N at Seaton Sluice and seven to 23 were noted at Warkworth Lane, West Ord and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, while one to two were at a further seven localities. In May, singles were at Holy Island on 6th and 9th, Haughton Strother GP on 10th and the Tweed Estuary on 18th. A single individual was reported again at Lindisfarne NNR in June and the Tweed Estuary on 16th July.

Return passage commenced in October, when two groups totalling 60 birds flew over Boulmer on 25th. Elsewhere during the month, 13-36 were at Derwent Reservoir, Fenham-le-Moor and Widdrington Moor Lake, while one to 11 were reported from a further 15 localities. Southerly movements during November included a total of 154 at Seaton Sluice, 29-66 in the Druridge Bay area, 36 at Boulmer, 22 at Tynemouth and 12-14 at Cambois, Gosforth Park NR and Newbiggin. A group of 47 flew over Swallow Pond on 20th and 21 flew W at Alnwick Moor on 17th. Elsewhere in November, 20-38 were at Ashington, Bothal Pond, Goswick, QEII CP Lake, Shadfen (Morpeth) and Warkworth, while 11-19 were in the Druridge Bay area and at Gosforth Park NR, Holy Island, Horncliffe and Newham Bog, with one to nine at a further 24 localities.

Finally, in December, 13 flew S at East Chevington on 12th and six E at Humshaugh on 30th, while seven to 38 were at Branton GP, Cresswell, the Farne Islands, Lindisfarne NNR, Loanend, QEII CP Lake and Shortridge Hall (near Warkworth); one to three were at a further seven localities.

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

'Tundra Bean Goose' *A. f. rossicus*

STATUS: Rare passage and winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL /

LAST RECORD: 2014

A quiet year with few sightings. A juvenile was found near New Hartley on 4th January and remained in the area until 10th February (MPF/JPD/AS). Also in January, a group of five were found in the Druridge Bay area and remained there until 5th February (TRD *et al.*), with most views noted in the Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* flock between Druridge-Cresswell. A lone sighting involved one with 500 Pink-footed Geese at Newton Links on 24th January (JGS). The final observation for the early winter involved an adult seen at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 12th February (GS).

October revealed a party of five, which were seen flying NW over Holy Island towards Goswick on 4th (IBDa/KDa). Almost certainly the same group of five were located in Budle Bay out on the mudflats on 10th (ASJ).

There was also one noted at Hauxley from 3rd-27th February (IF *et al.*) but it could **not be determined to race**.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

STATUS: Common to abundant passage visitor and common winter visitor.

The largest gatherings in the first two months involved up to 4,300 at Elwick on 20th February, 4,000 in the Druridge Bay area in January-February, 3,000 at Beal and Ulgham Park in February, 2,750 at Prendwick in January, 2,000 at Budle Bay and Felton in January and 1,500 at Stobswood and 1,000 at Cheswick Sands. Elsewhere during January, 600 were in the Holywell Dene-Seaton Sluice area and 220-300 were at Berwick, Spittal-Cocklawburn and West Chevington. In February, 450-750 were at Fenham Flats, Holywell Dene and Lucker, while 110-300 were at a further seven localities. Peak counts in March involved 1,350 at Doddington, 800 at Bradford Kaims, 600 at West Stobswood, 300 at Harper's Heugh, 200 N at Tynemouth and 126 at Widdrington Moor.

Numbers declined sharply during April, with 120 at Fenham Flats on 2nd, 24 at Hauxley on 17th and up to ten in the Druridge Bay area, while one to three were at a further five localities. During May, ten were at Budle Bay on 20th and 22nd and five at Druridge Pools on 12th, while one to three were at a further three localities. A single bird was at Derwent Reservoir between 25th-26th August.

Return passage commenced in September and continued into December, with many flocks moving through the county. Numbers at Budle Bay increased to a peak of 1,600 on 26th September. Some notable flocks in October included 3,900 at Holy Island on 8th, 3,300 in an evening roost at Budle Bay on 4th, and still in the Goswick-Holy Island area on 29th, a total of 1,306 at the Farne Islands between 25th-26th, 1,200 at Cresswell on 13th and 1,100 at Smeafield and 1,000 at Bamburgh on 8th; 300 were also at Hauxley and Widdrington Station during the month.

Passage movement in November included 2,060 N at Berwick on 11th, 30 N and 1,278 S during the month at Seaton Sluice, including 498 S on 20th, and 1,000 over Berwick on 16th and W at East Ord on 18th. Elsewhere, a total of 4,400 lifted from the sands over Holy Island Causeway at dawn on 14th (ADM), 2,000+ were in Druridge Bay on 26th and 1,000 at Holywell Dene on 28th, with 500-600 at High Heaton and several flocks of

up to 500 at many other widespread localities. During December, 700 moved S at West Stobswood on 7th and up to 4,000 were in the Druridge Bay area all month, with 1,800 at Doddington, 1,100 at Fenham-le-Moor, up to 600 in the Seaton Sluice-Blyth area during the latter half of the month, 511 at Crow Hall Farm (Holywell Dene) and 500 at Widdrington Moor Lake; counts of under 500 came from a further five localities.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Eurasian White-fronted Goose *A. a. albifrons*

STATUS: Increasingly rare passage and winter visitor.

In January, individuals were at Big Waters on 2nd, East Chevington on 6th and Newton Scrape on 21st; while, in February, an adult was at Warkworth Lane between 7th-10th. Eight were noted at Lindisfarne NNR during a WeBS visit on 8th March (ACr).

There were only two reports in the final quarter, with one at Branton GP on 29th October and two adults at East Chevington north pool on 15th November.

Greenland White-fronted Goose *A. a. flavirostris*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor.

In January, four were at Bothal Pond on 15th, two at Ellington on 3rd, one to two at Warkworth Lane between 1st-3rd and a single bird at East Chevington on 20th. A notable flock of 22 was at Big Waters on 4th February (AJJ), 13 of which remained into March and one of which bore a neck collar from Loch Ken in winter 2011-12 (and noted in Scotland in subsequent winters and in Norway from 9th November-14th December 2014). Elsewhere in February, four to five (four adults) were at Warkworth Lane between 7th-10th. In March, six probable Greenland race birds were at Harper's Heugh on 5th and one was at Lindisfarne NNR during a WeBS count on 8th. At the traditional site of Grindon Lough, 14 adults were present on 12th March, with counts of at least four between 1st-29th March, and three birds were still present on 6th April.

In the second winter period, two adults were at Budle Bay on 5th and 10th and at Grindon Lough on 27th October; while, in November, five were at Grindon Lough on 17th and 22nd, with four adults at Kimmer Lough on 17th and an adult, probably of the Greenland race, was with Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* at Hauxley on 15th. Finally, in December, adult twos were noted at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 6th, at Grindon Lough on 8th and in the Druridge Pools area on 19th.

Birds **not assigned to race** involved singles flying S during November, at North Blyth on 10th and Cambois and Tynemouth on 15th.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon, although the feral population continues to increase.

The largest gatherings during January involved 600 at Farnham Moor on 6th, 300 at East Chevington and 168-220 at Big Waters, Budle Bay, Derwent Reservoir and Newton Pool, while 90-126 were at a further five localities. In February, 428 were at Harper's Heugh, 400 at Lindisfarne NNR and 199-200 at Earsdon and Hauxley, with 100-130 at a further

three sites. Peak counts in March involved 258 at Derwent Reservoir, 180 at Hauxley, 171 at Holywell and 69-93 at a further two localities.

Two large gatherings remained in the county during April, with 238 at Budle Bay on 6th and 148 at Holywell Pond on 4th, while 30-64 were noted at a further six sites. In May, 100 were at Derwent Reservoir on 13th and up to 81 were still present at Holywell Pond, while 16-52 were at a further 13 widespread localities. Peak counts in June involved 289 at Hauxley, 180 at Caistron, 116 at Branton and 13-67 at a further six sites. During July, 106 were at Branton GP and 62-75 at Bothal Pond, Caistron, and Marden Quarry, while 34-46 were at a further three localities. Peak concentrations during August involved 575 at Derwent Reservoir, 367 at Caistron, 283 at Whittle Dene and 224 at New Water Haugh (River Tweed), with 135-156 at a further five sites.

Breeding was confirmed at 15 localities (19 in 2014). There were 14 pairs on Coquet Island, where the first eggs were found on 29th March (RSPB). Elsewhere, there were five broods at Branton GP (32 young) and Newton Pool (24 young), four at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) (28 young) and Hedgeley GP (11 young) and three at Druridge Pools (21 young).

The largest gatherings during September involved 925 at Derwent Reservoir on 20th (PRM), 653 at Colt Crag Reservoir during a WeBS count on 24th, 529 at Branton GP during a WeBS count on 12th, 236 at Big Waters and up to 230 in the Lindisfarne NNR area, with 150-160 at a further three sites.

In October, peak counts were 537 at Hauxley on 9th, 371 at Branton GP, 350 at Derwent Reservoir and 203-244 at Big Waters, Budle Bay and Caistron, while 150 were at East Chevington. Peak counts in November involved 300 at Derwent Reservoir, 250 at Alnwick, 200 at Big Waters and Hauxley and 100-140 at a further four sites. Finally, in December, up to 750 were in the Lindisfarne NNR area, with 237 at Big Waters, 200 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 170 at Hedgeley GP and 100-110 at Haughton Strother GP and Holywell Pond.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon, although continues to increase.

Peak counts from four regular localities were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Grindon Lough	260	350	213	88	36	46	20	363	125	296	384	337
Bothal Pond	1	170	50	26	25	18	83	118	170	139	65	95
Caistron	180	170	6	40	46	50	96	263	0	39	34	2
Killingworth Lake	103	17	20	11	2	87	94	20	12	12	127	119

In addition to the above, larger concentrations in the first quarter involved 50-164 at Angerton Lake, Branton GP, Capheaton Lake, Colt Crag and Derwent Reservoirs, Gosforth Park NR, Hauxley NR, Hedgeley GP, Plenmeller Common, Warkworth Lane and Widdrington Moor. In April-May, away from the main sites, there were 40-66 at Branton GP, Capheaton Lake, Hauxley, Linton and Swallow Ponds and Tynemouth; while, in June, 60-102 were at Castle Island, Cresswell Pond, Hauxley NR, Hedgeley GP and Linton Pond. In July, 235 were reported from Colt Crag Reservoir on 5th and 70 were at Newcastle (Leazes Park) and QEII CP Lake.

A total of at least 46 breeding pairs (42 in 2014) were reported from 18 localities (18 in 2014). Ten pairs were noted at Coquet Island (11 in 2014), where first eggs were found on 27th March (RSPB). Other sites reporting multiple broods included Hedgeley GP with six broods, Branton GP with five and Castle Island and Linton Pond with four each.

Further sightings in August included 129 at Derwent Reservoir, 109 at Hauxley NR and 48-58 at Big Waters, Bothal Pond, Druridge Pools, New Water Haugh (River Tweed) and Yarrow Slake. In September, a decent total of 779 was noted at Colt Crag Reservoir during a WeBS count on 24th (RF), 300 were at QEII CP Lake, 244 at Derwent Reservoir and 125-164 at the Aln Estuary, Branton GP, Hallington Reservoir and West Ord.

Peak counts in October, in addition to those in the table, involved 256 during a WeBS count at the Aln Estuary, 146 at Airy Holm Reservoir, 103 at Hauxley, 94 at Capheaton and 77 at Greenlee Lough and QEII CP. During November, 175 were at the Aln Estuary and 80-127 at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and Rothley Lake. Finally, in December, 142 were still at the Aln Estuary, with 132 at Derwent Reservoir, 81 at Hedgeley GP and up to 75 at Big Waters.

‘North American Canada Goose’ *Branta canadensis interior* / *parvipes*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 1 / FIRST: 2013.

One was seen to fly into East Chevington north pool on 13th March (GS). It was photographed and there were further sightings up until 21st March. The record was submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) but was deemed ‘Not Proven’. The BBRC rarely accept sightings with no carrier wild geese accompanying. As this bird had joined Canada Geese *Branta canadensis*, it may explain why the record was not deemed acceptable.

The individual that was seen at Newton on 20th October 2013 was accepted by BBRC and was seen to arrive with Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*. The photos clearly show the East Chevington individual to be distinctly different in plumage, with a much darker feel and less of a white neck collar. Hence the CRC accepted on the basis of showing characteristics of the *interior* / *parvipes* group (‘Todd’s’ / Lesser Canada Goose).

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

STATUS: Common autumn passage and well-represented winter visitor.

The largest gathering in the first quarter involved up to 1,800 at Budle Bay on 7th February. Other peak counts from the same area included up to 830 in Lindisfarne NNR, 600 at Elwick and 205 at Harper’s Heugh. Elsewhere during the quarter, three were with Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* at East Chevington on 11th January and singles were at Bothal Pond, Caistron, Castle Island and Hauxley.

Singles were at three sites in April. During May, up to 130 were recorded at the Farne Islands between 7th-21st, 16 flew N at Seaton Sluice on 24th, while one to three were noted at Castle Island, Hauxley and New Water Haugh (River Tweed). Two late birds flew S at Holy Island on 6th June.

The first autumn arrivals were in September, with flocks of 46 SW at Prestwick Carr on 19th, 50 S at St Mary’s on 29th and ten to 20 at Lindisfarne NNR on 26th. Budle Bay held 450+ on 30th. Widespread passage was evident from 4th October, with 50 S at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 5th, 200 N then S at Seaton Sluice and 148 S at Berwick on 8th,

and 46 N and 192 S at Holy Island and 69 N at Stag Rocks on 22nd. Elsewhere during October, there were 3,500 at Budle Bay by 8th (CGK/GPK), 3,000 at Goswick on 9th, 1,000 at Holy Island on 8th, 340 at Harper’s Heugh on 14th and up to 193 at Elwick and 111 at the Farne Islands between 5th-21st. One to six were at Beal, East Chevington, Grindon Lough, Hauxley, Low Newton and Tynemouth.

In November, 600 were at Budle Bay on 25th and 48 N at the Farne Islands on 19th, while eight to nine were at Grindon Lough on 12th and 17th. In the final month, up to 1,500 were at Budle Bay on 15th-17th, with other counts of 400-536 in the Budle Bay-Harper’s Heugh area and Lindisfarne NNR, while two were at Druridge Bay on 2nd and 6th.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*
Pale-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. hrota*

STATUS: Common autumn passage and winter visitor.

Maximum counts from the regular and important site at Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct*	Nov	Dec
2,251	565	335	2	1	0	3	2	3,000	5,000	3,200	1,461

Away from Lindisfarne NNR, there were 12 between Budle Point-Seahouses on 17th January, nine between Seahouses-Beadnell on 20th and a single bird flew N at St Mary’s on 31st; while, in February, eight were between Budle Point-Seahouses on 10th, four flew N at Hadston Carrs on 1st and two were at Alnmouth. During March, 80+ were at Harper’s Heugh on 5th, consisting mainly of *hrota*, and singles were between Beadnell-Boulmer.

In September, passage movement involved 112 N at the Farne Islands on 5th and 46 N on 26th, 93 N at Seaton Sluice, including 68 on 18th, 11-20 N at Boulmer and Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 4th, 29 N at Newbiggin on 5th, 24 N at Annstead Point on 5th-6th and six N at Newton Point on 7th. Singles were at Newbiggin on 9th and Boulmer on 13th. During October, 13 flew N at Seaton Sluice between 4th-17th and seven N at Newbiggin and Tynemouth on 17th. A peak count of ca.5,000 came from Holy Island on 9th (TRD/JD) and a single bird was between Boulmer-Alnmouth on 23rd.

Further movement in November involved 36 N at the Farne Islands, 26 N at Seaton Sluice and 13 N at Newbiggin and Tynemouth on 21st, while a single was off Dunstanburgh Castle, with another at Hartley Bay and St Mary’s. Finally, in December, several counts were made in Lindisfarne NNR and 60 were at Harper’s Heugh on 21st.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. bernicla*

STATUS: Well-represented autumn passage and uncommon winter visitor.

Maximum counts from the regular and important site at Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
40	4	70	1	0	0	0	0	5	250	324	121

Elsewhere, single birds were at Alnmouth in February and at St Mary’s on 8th April.

In September, five to six flew N at Newbiggin and St Mary’s on 9th; while, in October, there were six at Seaton Sluice on 27th and one at Howick-Boulmer on 19th. In November, 324 were noted at Lindisfarne NNR during a WeBS count on 15th (ACr) and one to three were noted between Seaton Sluice-Boulmer.

Birds **not assigned to a race** involved four N at Seahouses on 3rd January; while, in February, there were 2,500 at Fenham Flats and 200 at Harper’s Heugh on 7th (mainly *hrota* but including some *bernicla*). In April, 90 were at Fenham Flats on 2nd and 60 also at Lindisfarne NNR on 5th.

On 22nd August, five were at Bradford Kaims (Hoppen Kiln). During September, there were groups of 15-16 N at St Mary’s and Tynemouth on 5th, 23 N at Newbiggin on 18th and three N at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 20th. In October, 2,900 were at Holy Island on 3rd; while, during November, four to six flew N at Cullercoats and Newbiggin on 21st, with two to four N at the Farne Islands between 12th-14th and a single N at Dunstanburgh Castle on 21st.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

STATUS: Common autumn passage and winter visitor. Less numerous in spring.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Peak numbers (including WeBS counts) at the principal site of Lindisfarne NNR were as follows (counts from the Budle Bay section in parentheses):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,560 (80)	1,500 (275)	1,044 (205)	301 (80)	256 (175)	166 (110)	158 (180)	63 (32)	464 (370)	556 (533)	1,050 (216)	2,201 (210)

Light movement involved four to nine N at Seaton Sluice and St Mary’s in January and two to eight N at Newbiggin, Seaton Sluice, St Mary’s and Tynemouth in February. The Blyth Estuary held respective peaks of 12, 57 and 81 in the initial three months. Elsewhere in the same period, 19-36 were at Howdon, ten to 17 at the Aln Estuary, Hauxley NR and Howick-Boulmer and five to nine at Bothal Pond, Castle Island, the Coquet Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Elswick-Scotswood and Widdrington Moor Lake, while one to four were at a further 16 coastal/near coastal localities. Inland, one to five were at Branton GP, Caistron, Grindon Lough, Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and Holystone in the first quarter.

At Seaton Sluice, a total of 14 flew N and one S in April and 11 N and eight S in May. The Blyth Estuary held 121 in April, when 53 were at Howick-Boulmer and 27 at Foxton. In May, 84 were at the Blyth Estuary and 31-38 at the Aln Estuary, Amble and Howick-Boulmer. Counts of ten to 19 came from Castle Island, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Hauxley NR, Howdon and Widdrington Moor Lake in April-May, when three to nine were at Bell’s and Bothal Ponds, Branton GP, Caistron, Charlton Mires, Elswick-Scotswood, Grindon Lough, Haughton Strother GP, Milkhope Lake, Newton Scrape, West Stobswood Pool and Yarrow Slake; one to two were at a further 21 widespread localities, including the Farne Islands.



Above: Bean Goose - Hauxley NR - February (Ian Fisher). Below left: Lesser White-fronted Goose - Hauxley NR - April (Ian Fisher). Bottom left: Ross's Goose - Stobswood - March (Alan Curry). Below right: Bewick's Swan - Newton Pool - January (Gary Woodburn).



Successful breeding was recorded at 15 localities (nine in 2014) between May-July, with the first brood (ten young) at Caistron on 16th May. Full details were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods/crèches	No. of young
Amble Braid-weir	4	12
Cresswell Pond	2	9
Boulmer	2	6
Branton GP	1	11
Newton Scrape	1	11
Caistron	1	10
Arcot Pond	1	9
Castle Island	1	9
Budle Bay	1	7
Hoppen Kiln	1	7
Blyth Estuary	1	6
Backworth	1	2
Bell's Pond	1	2
Grindon Lough	1	2
Hauxley NR	1	1

Arcot Pond and Grindon Lough were both new breeding sites (all nine young fledged at the former site). An additional nine pairs were on Coquet Island (16 in 2014) but no productivity details were received.

In June, 28-41 were at the Aln Estuary, Castle Island and Howick-Boulmer and ten to 19 at the Blyth Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools and Lynemouth; in July, a total of 14 flew N at Seaton Sluice, nine moved S at Whitley Bay and 14-16 were at the Aln Estuary and Elswick-Scotswood. Away from the breeding sites, one to six were at 12 other, largely coastal, localities in June-July. Typically low numbers (mostly juveniles) in August involved eight S at Seaton Sluice, four to eight at the Aln Estuary, Amble Braid, the Blyth Estuary, Castle Island and Cresswell Pond, with one to two at four further sites.

In September, eight to 12 were at the Aln Estuary and Cresswell Pond, with three to four at seven sites in the south east. Coastal movement at Seaton Sluice in the final quarter involved monthly totals of 34 N in October, 17 N in November and seven N and eight S in December. The only other October reports, away from Lindisfarne NNR, were of six at the Aln and Blyth Estuaries and one to three at three further localities. In November, 15 flew N at the Farne Islands, 13 flew N at Newbiggin and one S at Lynmouth; two to six were at the Blyth Estuary and Howdon. Numbers at Lindisfarne NNR increased to 1,050 in November and reached a peak of 2,201 during a WeBS count on 13th December (ACr). Also in December, 12-16 were at the Blyth Estuary and Howdon, with singles at two further sites. More unusually, up to eight were at Prestwick Carr, with one to three well inland at Branton GP and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.



American Wigeon - St Mary's Island - April (Alan Curry).

Goldeneye brood - North Northumberland - May (Tim Dean).



Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon, although increasing. A population in the North Tyne Valley, established from escaped captive stock, is now self-sustaining. / FIRST BRED: 1994

The bulk of reports came in the March-June period. One to three (including single pairs) were in the Blakehopeburnhaugh, Redmire and Ridley Stokoe-Smalesmouth areas in March and, in April, up to seven (five drakes) were at Ridley Stokoe-Smalesmouth (TRD/JD), with three at Harehaugh (Coquetdale), two at Bakethin Reservoir and single drakes at Catcleugh Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and Sharperton. Away from the north west of the county, a drake was at Stakeford on 7th-8th March and, in April, two drakes were at Warkworth Lane Ponds on 26th, with single drakes on the River Tyne at Bywell Haughs, on the River South Tyne at Melkridge and at Swallow Pond on single dates.

In May, up to four (three drakes) were at Ridley Stokoe, a pair was at Blakehopeburnhaugh, a drake was at Snabdaugh (North Tyne) and, on 16th, a female came off a nest in a tree at Low Carritheth (Hesleyside). In the south east, two drakes visited Druridge Pools on 29th-30th and single drakes were at Cresswell Pond, Howdon and Warkworth Lane Ponds on single dates.

The Tasset-Redesdale population continued to do well; a total of 33 pairs (33 nests in 2014) laid 303+ eggs (317 eggs in 2014). Nine nests failed, leaving 174+ young hatched from 24 nests (217 young in 2014). A further six Mandarin eggs were hatched by a Goosander *Mergus merganser* (MD/NRG). No data was received for the Kielder area in 2015. In addition, 14 eggs were laid in a nest box at Wallington and at least seven young fledged successfully (JCD).

In June, two drakes (in eclipse plumage) remained at Druridge Pools until 9th, when a duck was on the River Wansbeck at Low Angerton. Three were at Alnwick water gardens on 30th July. A drake, with Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*, came for bread at Tyne Green (Hexham) on 23rd October.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

STATUS: Abundant autumn passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare.

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows (counts from the Budle Bay section in parentheses):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
584 (400)	462 (210)	192 (0)	32 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	3 (3)	20 (14)	5,496 (1,500)	15,000 (1,200)	10,886 (1,100)	928 (750)

Away from Lindisfarne NNR, peak concentrations during the first quarter involved 1,000 at Cresswell Pond, 507 at Big Waters and Grindon Lough and 310-351 at the Aln Estuary and Capheaton Lake in January and, in February, 620 at Cresswell Pond and 393-466 at the Aln Estuary, Big Waters and Capheaton Lake. The largest gathering in March was 269 at Hauxley NR. During the period, counts of 200-250 also came from Beadnell-Howick, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Pools, Hoppen Kiln Flash, Low Newton and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with 101-193 at Amble Braid, Bothal Pond, Branton GP, Colt Crag Reservoir,

Howick-Boulmer, Warkworth Lane Ponds, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington Moor Lake. Smaller groups of 60-95 were at Gosforth Park NR, Linton Ponds and West Stobswood Pools and 45 flew N at Seaton Sluice on 27th January.

April peaks were 70 at Grindon Lough on 20th and 26-36 at Derwent Reservoir, Hauxley NR and Lindisfarne NNR and, in May, up to 22 were still at Grindon Lough, with ten at Derwent Reservoir and one to four at 11 widespread coastal and three inland localities.

Breeding was not recorded in 2015 (two broods in 2014).

In June, six to ten flew N at Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice on 23rd and 42 were at Grindon Lough on 12th. During June-July, counts of seven to 11 came from Broomlee Lough, Derwent Reservoir, Hauxley NR and St Mary's, with one to five at a further 12 sites. At Seaton Sluice, one N in July was followed by a total of 51 N on 31st August. Also in August, 64 were at Grindon Lough on 19th, with 14-24 at Big Waters, Budle Bay and Cresswell Pond.

Coastal passage at Seaton Sluice involved 630 N in September, 552 N and 403 S in October, including 202 N and 344 S on 29th, 378 N and 11 S in November, including 339 N on 21st-22nd, and 26 N and 15 S in December. Smaller numbers were also noted moving N at Annstead Point, Newbiggin, Stag Rocks, St Mary's and Tynemouth between September-November.

At Lindisfarne NNR, 5,496 had gathered by 12th September, increasing to a peak of 15,000 during a WeBS count on 18th October (ACr), before dropping to 10,886 on 15th November and below 1,000 in December. Additional peak September counts were 268 at the Farne Islands, 160-165 at East Chevington and Grindon Lough and 67-75 at Derwent Reservoir and Warkworth Lane Ponds. Peak counts, away from Lindisfarne NNR, in the final quarter involved 300 at Cresswell Pond in October and, in November, 310-545 at Capheaton Lake, the Coquet Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Derwent Reservoir and Grindon Lough; highest December counts were 354-600 at the Aln Estuary, Big Waters, Capheaton Lake, Cresswell Pond and Grindon Lough. Counts of 200-275 also came from Bell's Pond (Cresswell), Druridge Pools and the Farne Islands and 109-186 were at Bothal Pond, Boulmer-Alnmouth, Branton GP, Castron, Gosforth Park NR and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with 50-93 at Beadnell-Howick, Colt Crag Reservoirs, Hauxley NR, Howick-Boulmer, QEII CP, Warkworth, Warkworth Lane Ponds, and Widdrington Moor Lake.

American Wigeon *Anas americana*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1951 / LAST RECORD: 2014

A drake was found at Holywell Pond on 22nd April (AS *et al.*) and showed well there through to 4th May. It made a brief foray to nearby St Mary's Wetland on the morning of 23rd April (AC *et al.*) but was back at Holywell Pond that afternoon. An eclipse drake was also seen at Grindon Lough from 2nd-4th September (PRM *et al.*).

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.
BREEDING: Uncommon, increasing. / FIRST BRED: 1965
Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes broods):

Locality	Month	Count
East Chevington	Jan	40
Ladyburn Lake	Feb	27
Bothal Pond	Mar	24
Castle Island	Apr	54
Bell's Pond	May	66
Hauxley NR	Jun	66
Big Waters / Swallow Pond	Jul	12
Big Waters	Aug	27
Big Waters	Sep	78
Swallow Pond	Oct	135
Swallow Pond	Nov	105
Swallow Pond	Dec	35

In January, one flew N at Seaton Sluice and 21-31 were at Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Castron, Ladyburn Lake and Swallow Pond; 20 were at East Chevington in February and, in March, 23 were at Arcot Pond. Also in the first quarter, ten to 18 were at the Blyth Estuary, Castle Island, Hauxley NR, Holywell Pond, QEII CP Lake, St Mary's Wetland, the Wansbeck Estuary, Warkworth Lane Ponds and West Stobswood Pool. Smaller gatherings of five to nine were reported from Cresswell Pond, Gosforth Park NR, Lynemouth Flash, Newton Pool and Widdrington Moor Lake, with one to four at 15 further widespread localities as far west as Grindon Lough and as far north as Holy Island.

In April, 22 were at Hauxley NR and, in May, two flew N at Seaton Sluice and 26-34 were at Druridge Pools and East Chevington. Further counts in April-May involved ten to 16 at Arcot Pond, the Blyth Estuary, Bothal and Cresswell Ponds, East Chevington and Newton Scrape, with five to nine at Big Waters, Branton GP, Castron, Capheaton Lake, East Stobswood, Gosforth Park NR and Linton and Swallow Ponds, plus one to four at 17 further scattered sites. More unusual were three at Bolam Lake and two at Little Waters (near Big Waters).

A total of 41 localities (excluding coastal passage) held birds between April-July (36 in 2014). Successful breeding was noted at seven sites (nine in 2014) in June-July, with the first brood (six young) at Druridge Pools on 25th June. Full details were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Ladyburn Lake	3	12
Bothal Pond	2+	15
Castle Island	2	15
Holywell Pond	1	7
Druridge Pools	1	6
Big Waters	1	5
Swallow Pond	1	4

In June, 21-32 (including some fully grown juveniles) were at Castle Island, East Chevington, Linton Pond, Longhirst Flash, Warkworth Lane Ponds and Woodhorn Flashes, with ten to 14 at Arcot, Bell's and Bothal Ponds. The highest July count was 11 at Bothal Pond and, in August, 22-25 were at Arcot and Linton Ponds, with ten to 18 at Bothal Pond, Castle Island, East Chevington, Hauxley NR and Woodhorn Flashes. Between July-August, six to eight were also at Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools and Swallow Pond, with one to four at a further 12 localities. On 26th August, two flew N at the Farne Islands and a third landed with a group of Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*.

In September, one flew N and two S at Newbiggin and one N at Seaton Sluice; 46 were at Swallow Pond, 20-25 at Arcot Pond and East Chevington and ten to 19 at Bothal Pond, Castle Island, Gosforth Park NR, Hauxley NR, Holywell Pond and Widdrington Moor Lake. Swallow Pond held a site record of 135 on 21st October (GPK). Also in October, 29-51 were at Big Waters, Caistron, Druridge Pools, East Chevington and Gosforth Park NR; in November, 25-46 were at Big Waters, Caistron, East Chevington, Felton Lane and Gosforth Park NR and, in December, 25-30 gathered at Arcot and Bothal Ponds, Druridge Pools and Holywell Pond. Smaller final quarter counts involved 11-16 at Castle Island, Hauxley NR, Hedgeley GP, QEII CP Lake and St Mary's, with five to nine at the Blyth Estuary, Branton GP, and Cresswell, Holywell and Warkworth Lane Ponds; one to four were recorded at a further eight localities.

Teal *Anas crecca*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Maximum monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
208	272	69	121	14	8	11	200	900	1,050	283	650

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes coastal passage):

Locality	Month	Count
Big Waters	Jan	776
Whittle Dene Reservoirs	Feb	544
Whittle Dene Reservoirs	Mar	241
Lindisfarne NNR	Apr	121
Druridge Pools	May	20
Grindon Lough	Jun	25
Derwent Reservoir / Lindisfarne NNR	Jul	11
Budle Bay	Aug	200
Budle Bay	Sep	900
Budle Bay	Oct	1,050
Grindon Lough	Nov	600
Holy Island	Dec	650

Additional peak counts during January were 468 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and 235-306 at the Aln Estuary, Colt Crag and Derwent Reservoirs, Elswick-Scotswood (River Tyne) and Grindon Lough; whilst, in February, 201-371 were at the Aln Estuary, Big Waters,

Capheaton Lake, Colt Crag and Derwent Reservoirs, Elswick-Scotswood and Howdon. The highest count in March involved 230 at Howdon. Elsewhere in the first quarter, counts included 100-172 at Arcot Pond, the Blyth Estuary, Bothal Pond, the Coquet Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools and Warkworth Lane Ponds, with smaller groups of 50-89 at Hallington Reservoir, Hauxley NR, Holburn, Holystone, Hoppen Kiln Flash, Linton Pond, Lynemouth, Newton Pool and Scrape, the River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House), St Mary's Wetland and Swallow Pond. Display was noted at Swallow Pond in February.

Light coastal movement in April involved 26 N at Seaton Sluice, whilst 50-85 were at the Blyth Estuary, Druridge Pools and Howdon and 20-39 at Arcot and Bothal Ponds and Elswick. In May, up to 16 were at Grindon Lough, five to ten at Bakethin Reservoir, Bell's Pond (Cresswell), Big Waters, Gosforth Park NR and Low Newton and one to two at 11 further scattered sites.

Breeding was not recorded in 2015 (no broods in 2014).

In June, one flew N at St Mary's on 13th and, in July, a total of 101 flew N and 11 S at Seaton Sluice. Ten were at Derwent Reservoir and Wark in June. In June-July, one to eight were noted at Branton GP, Caistron and Plenmeller Common, plus 13 coastal/near coastal sites, including the Farne Islands. An above-average 1,227 flew N and 318 S at Seaton Sluice during August, including a site day record of 866 N and 35 S on 31st. Also in August, 120-135 were at Arcot Pond and Derwent Reservoir, with 65-91 at Bothal Pond and Grindon Lough. Coastal passage was again above average in September, with a total of 918 N and 60 S at Seaton Sluice and 427 N at Newbiggin. Numbers at Budle Bay rose from 250 on 14th to 900 by 28th; 320 were at Grindon Lough and 181-203 at Arcot Pond and Derwent Reservoir.

At Seaton Sluice, 197 flew N and 297 S in October, 98 N and six S in November, including 70 N on 22nd, and eight N and ten S in December. In October, Budle Bay held 1,050 on 11th (CGK/GPK), 400 were at Holy Island (Rocket Field) and 260-322 at Derwent and Whittle Dene Reservoirs but, away from Grindon Lough, there were no counts above 164 in November. In December, 650 were at Holy Island, 520 at Budle Bay, 330-400 at Cresswell Pond, Grindon Lough and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and 208-240 at the Aln Estuary, Druridge Pools and Howdon. Elsewhere during the final quarter, counts of 100-180 came from Arcot Pond, Big Waters, the Blyth Estuary, Branton GP, Colt Crag Reservoir, East Chevington, Elswick-Scotswood, Hedgeley GP, Prestwick Carr and Swallow Pond, with smaller gatherings of 50-98 at Bothal Pond, Caistron, Castle Island, the Coquet Estuary, Dunstanburgh, the Farne Islands, Gosforth Park NR, Hallington Reservoir, Holburn Moss, Lynemouth Flash, Monks House Pool, St Mary's Wetland, the River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House) and Widdrington Moor Lake.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1952 / LAST RECORD: 2014

A distinctive drake was located at Druridge Pools on 1st January and stayed through to 10th January (JFa *et al.*). At the very end of the year a drake was found at Howdon wetland on 28th-29th December (JBu/CB *et al.*). It was very well photographed close to the new hide.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

STATUS: Common resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Peak monthly counts (including WeBS counts) from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle

Bay) were as follows (counts from the Budle Bay section in parentheses):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
298 (210)	310 (130)	60 (0)	41 (30)	24 (20)	4 (0)	9 (0)	50 (39)	351 (250)	158 (150)	171 (150)	322 (200)

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes coastal passage):

Locality	Month	Count
Lindisfarne NNR	Jan	298
Lindisfarne NNR	Feb	310
Tweed Estuary	Mar	122
Bothal-Mitford (River Wansbeck)	Apr	97
Tweed Estuary	May	46
Castle Island	Jun	85
Big Waters	Jul	125
Derwent Reservoir	Aug	256
Lindisfarne NNR	Sep	351
Lindisfarne NNR	Oct	158
Lindisfarne NNR	Nov	171
Lindisfarne NNR	Dec	322

Other peak January counts were 267 at Derwent Reservoir, 193 at Big Waters and 103-129 at Airy Holm and Colt Crag Reservoirs, Howick-Boulmer, Killingworth Lake and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and, in February, 203 were at Derwent Reservoir, 182 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and 110-153 at the Aln Estuary, Big Waters, on the River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House) and at the Tweed Estuary. Elsewhere, smaller groups during the first quarter included 52-88 at Bothal, Cocklawburn and Cresswell Ponds, East Chevington, Grindon Lough, Longhirst Flash, Marden Quarry, Newcastle (Leazes Park), QEII CP Lake and Warden.

In April, 50-74 were at Branton GP and the Tweed Estuary, whilst 41 were at Castle Island in May. The first young were noted in April, with a single brood (ten young) at Rothbury on 18th and two broods (seven young) at Newcastle (Leazes Park) on 20th. New broods continued to be reported through to early September, but most were between May-July. The most productive localities were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Farne Islands	12	--
Ladyburn Lake	5	24
Arcot Pond	4	31
Derwent Reservoir	4	31
Branton GP	4	14
Capheaton Lake	3	19
Castle Island	3	18
Swallow Pond	3	14
Newcastle (Leazes Park)	3	13

One to two broods were also found at 30 further widespread localities. Most young at the Farne Islands didn't last more than a few days, although a late brood of seven on 9th September all fledged.

In June, 52-60 were at Big Waters and Warkworth Lane Ponds. During July, counts of 50-102 came from Branton GP, Caistron, Derwent Reservoir, Gosforth Park NR, Killingworth Lake and Swallow Pond and, in August, 98-159 gathered at Big Waters, Bothal and Linton Ponds and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with 50-89 noted at Branton GP, Caistron and Swallow Pond.

The largest concentration of the year involved 351 during a WeBS count at Lindisfarne NNR on 12th September (ACr). Fewer were noted elsewhere, with 150-185 at Derwent Reservoir and Holburn and 53-98 at Bolam Lake, Bothal Pond, Branton GP, Castle Island, Cresswell Pond, Jesmond Dene, Marden Quarry, St Mary's Wetland and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Light coastal passage at Seaton Sluice involved totals of 14 N and three S in October and 79 N and four S in November; while 29 flew N at the Farne Islands on 21st November, with one to 11 N there on five further dates between September-November.

Away from Lindisfarne, highest final quarter counts came from Derwent Reservoir, with 126 in October, increasing to 142 in November and 192 in December. Elsewhere, 120 were at Woodhorn Flashes in October, 108 at the Tweed Estuary in November and 110-176 at Big Waters, Druridge Pools, the Tweed Estuary and Whittle Dene Reservoirs in December. Lower counts of 52-98 during the final quarter came from the Aln Estuary, Bolam Lake, Branton GP, Castle Island, Cocklawburn, Colt Crag Reservoir, the Coquet Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Dunstanburgh, the Farne Islands, Greenlee and Grindon Loughs, Hallington Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), Howick-Boulmer, Jesmond Dene, Killingworth Lake, Linton Pond, Marden Quarry, Merryshields GP, the River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House), St Mary's, Tyne Green (Hexham) and Widdrington Moor Lake.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor. Less numerous in spring.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1945

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
256	266	14	1	0	0	0	0	23	99	96	157

The Fenham Flats section of Lindisfarne NNR held WeBS count peaks of 256 on 17th-18th January and 266 on 8th February (ACr). Most had departed by March, leaving 14 on 8th and four on 15th. Typically small numbers were noted elsewhere, with up to four at Grindon Lough in January and one to two at Big Waters, Budle Bay, Colt Crag Reservoir, Druridge Pools, East Chevington and Whittle Dene Reservoirs in the opening two months. Up to three visited Druridge Pools and East Chevington in March, when one was at Arcot Pond.

In April, two flew N at the Farne Islands on 20th, three to four were at East Chevington until 27th and one to two at Arcot Pond, Druridge Pools and Lindisfarne NNR. The last of the spring were in May, when a pair was at Arcot Pond on 24th-25th and singles at Druridge Pools and Low Newton up to 15th.

There were no more reports until August, when one flew N at Newbiggin on 17th and six N at the Farne Islands on 18th. Also in August, eight at Arcot Pond on 20th was a site record, four were at East Chevington and one to two at Cresswell Pond, Derwent Reservoir and Hauxley NR, plus one N at Seaton Sluice. Northerly passage on 5th September involved up to 15 at Tynemouth and two to seven at Annstead Point and Newbiggin. Also in September, nine flew N at Seaton Sluice, 23 had returned to Lindisfarne NNR by 12th and

one to three were at Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Grindon Lough and Swallow Pond. Four to seven moved N at the Farne Islands on four dates in September-October.

In October, 18 moved S at Berwick on 6th, numbers at Lindisfarne NNR increased to 99, four to five were at East Chevington and Grindon Lough and one to two at Big Waters, Bothal Pond and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Light northerly passage during 21st-22nd November involved six at Hauxley NR and one to two at the Farne Islands, Seaton Sluice, Snab Point (Cresswell), St Mary's and Tynemouth. A total of 157 were counted at Lindisfarne NNR on 13th December. Up to six were also at Druridge Pools in November-December, when singles were at Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Cresswell Pond, Heugh Shiel (River Tweed) and Yarrow Slake. More unusual was one at Bolam Lake on 26th December.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

STATUS: Uncommon spring passage and rare summer visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2008

A drake in the Castle Island-North Seaton area on 10th April was the first arrival and was followed by a pair at Big Waters, a drake at Arcot Pond and a duck at Warkworth Lane Ponds on 12th. The Big Waters pair remained until 22nd and a drake visited Holy Island on 25th. A drake that flew N at Seaton Sluice on 9th May was a notable seawatching record. Also in May, two drakes were at Cresswell Pond and more frequently at Druridge Pools up to 28th, with single drakes at both of these sites, plus East Chevington and Monks House Pool, on several dates. A pair was further inland at Hedgeley GP on 19th. A drake at Holy Island Lough on 6th June was the last of the spring.

Autumn reports were few, with singles at Hauxley NR on 24th August and East Chevington on 27th September.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

STATUS: Uncommon resident and well-represented autumn passage visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2015

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes broods):

Locality	Month	Count
Swallow Pond	Jan	16
Druridge Pools	Feb	11
Swallow Pond	Mar	18
Druridge Pools	Apr	21
Druridge Pools	May	10
Monks House Pool	Jun	6
Bothal Pond / Druridge Pools	Jul	3
Bothal Pond	Aug	7
Bothal Pond	Sep	11
Swallow Pond	Oct	13
Swallow Pond	Nov	24
Swallow Pond	Dec	41

Additional peak counts in January-February were five to 11 at Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Bothal Pond, Cresswell Pond, Gosforth Park NR, Holy Island, Killingworth Lake, Linton Pond, and Monks House and Newton Pools. In March, 11-12 were at Druridge and Monks House Pools and six to eight at Gosforth Park NR, Holy Island Lough and Warkworth Lane Ponds. Three to four were also at Howdon, Lindisfarne NNR, QEII CP and Widdrington Moor Lake in the first quarter, when one to two were at Grindon Lough, Hauxley NR and Marden Quarry.

In April, Druridge Pools held a peak of 21 on 20th, ten to 13 were at Monks House Pool and Warkworth Lane Ponds and five to eight at Arcot, Cresswell and Ellington Ponds, Gosforth Park NR and Holy Island. One to four were at Big Waters, Branton GP, Capheaton, Castle Island, the Farne Islands, Grindon Lough, Holywell Pond, Howdon, Killingworth Lake, Low Newton, Swallow Pond, West Hartford and Widdrington Moor Lake in April-May. A pair roosting with Eiders *Somateria mollissima* at St Cuthbert's Island (Holy Island) on 24th May was unusual.

A total of 27 localities held the species during April-July (28 sites in 2014). There were no confirmed reports of breeding in 2015 (two broods in 2014), although a female was strongly suspected of breeding for a second year at the Farne Islands but no ducklings were noted.

A drake at the Blyth Estuary on 14th June was an unusual report. Three to five were at Bothal Pond, Druridge Pools, Lindisfarne NNR and Swallow Pond in June-July, when one to two were occasionally noted at Big Waters, Branton GP, Castle Island, Gosforth Park NR, Hauxley NR and Low Newton. In August, two flew N at Seaton Sluice, three to four were at Arcot and Cresswell Ponds, East Chevington, the Farne Islands, Grindon Lough, Holy Island and Swallow Pond, with one to two at six further coastal sites.

September counts included three to seven at Big Waters, Cresswell Pond, Gosforth Park NR, Grindon Lough, Hauxley NR, Linton Pond, Monks House Pool and Swallow Pond, with one to two at six other sites, as well as seven N at the Farne Islands and one N at Newbiggin. In October, a total of 14 flew N at Seaton Sluice, including nine on 29th, 12 were at Gosforth Park NR and eight to nine at Grindon and Holy Island Loughs. Additional November peaks were 21 at East Chevington and Gosforth Park NR and 12-13 at Bothal Pond and Holy Island Lough. In a year of modest peak counts, the largest concentration involved 41 at Swallow Pond on 20th December (GPK). Also in December, ten to 17 were found at Bothal Pond, Druridge Pools and Lindisfarne NNR and eight at Gosforth Park NR. In addition, three to five were at Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Cresswell Pond, the Farne Islands, Linton Pond, and Monks House and Newton Pools during the final quarter, when one to two were at six other localities including, unusually, a drake at Derwent Reservoir between 7th-11th November.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

STATUS: Rare visitor.

The first records since 2010 involved two drakes at Holywell Pond on 11th April (IJ/KWY) and a single drake at Hauxley NR between 29th June-2nd July.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor. Less numerous in spring. BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2015

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes broods):

Locality	Month	Count
Holywell Pond	Jan	29
Killingworth Lake	Feb	35
Holywell Pond	Mar	32
Killingworth Lake	Apr	20
Swallow Pond	May	14
Killingworth Lake	Jun	11
Widdrington Moor Lake	Jul	8
Bothal Pond	Aug	14
Widdrington Moor Lake	Sep	10
Druridge Pools	Oct	4
Swallow Pond	Nov	10
Widdrington Moor Lake	Dec	16

A cluster of wetlands in the south east held peak numbers during the opening three months. Killingworth Lake attracted 22-30 throughout, and a peak of 35 on 20th February (GPK), while 29-32 were at Holywell Pond, up to 22 at Swallow Pond and 11-16 at Bothal Pond and Widdrington Moor Lake. Seven to nine were found at Arcot Pond, Bakethin Reservoir, Lewisburn and West Stobswood Pool, four at Marden Quarry and one to two at Big Waters, Capheaton Lake, East Chevington, East Stobswood, Hartburn Reservoir, Hauxley NR, Ladyburn Lake, Lindisfarne NNR, Linton Pond, QEII CP Lake, Warkworth Lane and West Allotment Ponds and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

In April, 12-14 were at Arcot, Holywell and Swallow Ponds and six to nine were at Bothal Pond, Gosforth Park NR and Swallow Pond in May. One to five could be found at Big Waters, Capheaton Lake, Hauxley NR, and Holywell, Linton and West Allotment Ponds in April-May.

A total of 14 localities were occupied at various times between April-July (17 localities in 2014). Successful breeding was recorded at one locality (three in 2014) from 24th June:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Bothal Pond	1	4

Five to six adults were at Bothal Pond, Gosforth Park NR and Swallow Pond in June. In June-July, one to two were at Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Capheaton Lake, Cresswell Pond, Ladyburn Lake and Linton Pond. Three to five visited Holywell Pond, Ladyburn Lake and Linton and Swallow Ponds in August, when one to two were at Big Waters, East Chevington, Gosforth Park NR and Widdrington Moor Lake.

Five flew N at the Farne Islands on 5th September; the first there since 2011. Small numbers in September-October included eight at Holywell Pond, three to five at Bothal and Linton Ponds and one to two at Big Waters, Broomlee Lough, Derwent Reservoir, East Chevington, Gosforth Park NR, Kielder Water, Killingworth Lake, Swallow Pond and West Stobswood Pool. The species remained fairly scarce in November-December, when up to 14 were at Druridge Pools, three to seven at Capheaton Lake, Derwent Reservoir, Kielder Water, Ladyburn Lake and West Stobswood Pool and one to two at Big Waters, Bothal Pond, Colt Crag Reservoir, QEII CP Lake and West Allotment Pond.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes broods):

Locality	Month	Count
Killingworth Lake	Jan	185
Killingworth Lake	Feb	185
Killingworth Lake	Mar	147
Castron	Apr	75
Druridge Pools	May	49
Castle Island	Jun	80
Castle Island	Jul	69
Branton GP	Aug	51
Branton GP	Sep	48
Killingworth Lake	Oct	72
Killingworth Lake	Nov	80
Haughton Strother GP	Dec	81

As seen in the above table, Killingworth Lake again proved attractive, with peaks of 185 on 2nd January (DM) and again on 4th February (LJM). Additional large January counts were 151 at Ladyburn Lake, 45-85 at East Chevington, Hartburn Reservoir, QEII CP Lake and Swallow Pond and, in February, 40-73 at Castron, East Chevington, Hartburn Reservoir, and Ladyburn and QEII CP Lakes. During the first quarter, counts of 20-37 also came from Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Bolam Lake, Bothal Pond, Branton GP, Castron, Coanwood Pond, Hauxley NR, Holywell Pond, Newcastle (Exhibition and Leazes Parks), Rayburn Lake, Warkworth Lane and West Allotment Ponds, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Woodhorn Flashes.

Light northerly passage at Seaton Sluice involved a total of six in April-May and one flew S at the Farne Islands in April. Killingworth and QEII CP Lakes held 60-65 in April. Elsewhere, between April-May, 30-47 were at Bothal Pond, Branton GP, Capheaton Lake, Castle Island, East Chevington, Hauxley NR and Swallow Pond, whilst counts of 20-28 came from 13 further widespread localities.

A total of 51 localities (excluding coastal passage) held the species at various times between April-August (51 in 2014). Successful breeding was noted at just six localities (26 in 2014) between June-August (most in July), with the first broods (seven and eight young) at Capheaton Lake and Hauxley NR on 30th June. Full details are given below:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Ladyburn Lake	3	12
Capheaton Lake	2+	13+
Bakethin Reservoir	1	10
Hauxley NR	1	8
Shasun Pharma, Cramlington	1	1
Howdon	--	18

In June, three flew N at Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice and 41-54 were at Branton GP and Hauxley NR; whilst, in July, one to two moved N at the Farne Islands, Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice, with two S at Whitley Bay and 44-47 at Branton GP and Ladyburn Lake. Between June-July, counts of 22-30 came from Bothal Pond, Caistron, Killingworth Lake, Newcastle (Leazes Park) and Swallow Pond. In August, three flew N at the Farne Islands and Seaton Sluice and 26-35 were at Bothal Pond, East Chevington, Killingworth Lake, Linton Pond, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington Moor Lake.

Light coastal movement continued in September, with two to six N at Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice; five flew S at Seaton Sluice in October and one to five N at Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice in November. Modest numbers in September included 20-30 at Castle Island, East Chevington, Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and Newcastle (Exhibition and Leazes Parks). Peak counts in the final quarter were significantly lower than in 2014. Away from Killingworth Lake, 57 were at Castle Island in October, whilst 62 were at QEII CP Lake in November and 69 at Killingworth Lake in December. Elsewhere during the final quarter, 31-45 were at Bothal Pond, Branton GP, Cocklawburn Pond, East Chevington, Grindon Lough, Ladyburn Lake, Newcastle (Exhibition and Leazes Parks), Swallow Pond, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington Moor Lake. Counts of 20-27 came from Caistron, Capheaton Lake, Druridge Pools, Merryshields GP, Shield on the Wall and Woodhorn Flashes.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

The East Chevington-Ladyburn Lake area held up to three in January, when two were at Druridge Pools, one at Swallow Pond and one flew N at Seaton Sluice. Further inland, two were at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) in January, one remaining until 9th February, and one was at Sweethope Lough on 30th January. The only other February report was of one at Holywell Pond on 25th. In March, East Chevington held one on 1st and five on 21st and one was at nearby Ladyburn Lake. More unusual were two at Bolam Lake on 31st March. A drake flew S at Tynemouth on 12th April and, in May, one was at Druridge Pools up to 9th.

There were no more reports until July, when one was at East Chevington north pool on 3rd and four on the sea off St Mary’s on 15th later flew N. In August, singles were at Budle Bay on 21st and East Chevington on 27th.

There were no September reports. In October, four flew S at Tynemouth on 19th and three S at St Mary’s on 26th; singles were at Castle Island and Lindisfarne NNR. Seven moved N at the Farne Islands on 21st November (FIR), when five moved N at Tynemouth. In December, singles were found at Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Howdon and Widdrington Moor Lake on occasional dates, while one was further inland at Haughton Strother GP on 14th.

Eider *Somateria mollissima*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows (counts from the Budle Bay section in parentheses):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
286 (15)	250 (0)	272 (0)	166 (0)	231 (4)	146 (14)	186 (40)	267 (18)	236 (0)	572 (0)	468 (0)	532 (15)

Away from Lindisfarne, other large counts also came from the north of the county in the first quarter, with 298 between Seahouses-Beadnell and 110 from Budle Point-Seahouses in January, and 97 between Beadnell-Howick in March. Fewer were noted along other coastal stretches in the opening quarter, with 45-74 at Blyth Harbour, Boulmer-Alnmouth, Cocklawburn, North Blyth and Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) and 20-39 at Amble-Chevington, Berwick North Shore, the Coquet Estuary, Fenham Flats, Low Newton, Meadow Haven, Newbiggin, North Shields Fish Quay-Tyne Estuary, St Mary’s and Whitley Bay.

Seawatching in April produced 30 N and 13 S at Seaton Sluice and 220 were at the Farne Islands, with 160 between Amble-Chevington. In May, six flew N at Newbiggin, 264 were found between Budle Point-Seahouses, 230 drakes roosted at Black Law (Lindisfarne NNR) and a count of 93 at North Blyth contained 83 drakes. Counts of 50-64 came from Howick-Boulmer-Alnmouth, Seahouses-Beadnell and Spittal-Cocklawburn in April-May, while 30-40 were at Berwick North Shore, the Blyth Estuary and Stag Rocks.

A fall in breeding numbers was evident at the Farne Islands, with a total of 570 nesting pairs (639 in 2014), including 333 on Inner Farne and 162 on Brownsman. Hatching began on 17th May and productivity was good. A total of 935 young were counted from 382 monitored nests, giving a mean of 2.45 young per nest (2.59 in 2014) (FIR).

A total of 365 breeding females were noted on Coquet Island (349 in 2014), an increase of almost 5% on 2014. First eggs were noted on 27th April (28th April in 2014) and nest predation by a pair of Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* was evident (RSPB/PM). Monitoring of ducklings in Amble Harbour-Coquet Estuary resulted in a peak of 79 on 9th June (142 in 2014). An unusual number of small ducklings were present after monitoring ended on 31st July, some of which were notably small for the given period (HBC).

On the mainland, the first crèches were noted in May, with 11 small ducklings at Budle Bay on 22nd increasing to 42 young by 29th, followed by four young at Howick Bay on 26th and 25 young at Amble on 29th. In June, broods/crèches were noted at Holy Island (30 young) and the Blyth Estuary (one young) and, on 2nd July, broods/crèches of nine and two were noted at Cullernose Point and Newton Point respectively. Most or all of the above were thought to have originated from Coquet Island or the Farne Islands.

In June, 19 flew N and 22 S at Newbiggin. Peak counts (away from Lindisfarne NNR) in the June-August period involved 320 at North Blyth, 187-208 at Budle Point-Seahouses and North Blyth and 107-133 at Newbiggin and Seahouses-Beadnell. Counts of 27-53 came from Amble Harbour, Cambois, Cocklawburn, Howick-Boulmer, Snab Point (Cresswell) and St Mary’s during this period.

In September, 76 were in the Budle Point-Seahouses area, with 32-49 at four further coastal stretches from the Blyth Estuary-Spittal. In October, a total of 55 flew N at Seaton Sluice, the important Lindisfarne NNR held 572 during a WeBS count on 18th (ACr), 104 were between Seahouses-Beadnell and 57-65 at the Blyth Estuary-Seaton Sluice and Cocklawburn. Movement in November produced 103 N at the Farne Islands, but only a lowly 69 N at Seaton Sluice in a month typically good for coastal passage, whilst 27-30 past N at Newbiggin and St Mary’s. The peak counts in November were 115-170 at the Farne Islands and between Seahouses-Beadnell, with 52-77 at Blyth Harbour and Budle Point-Seahouses. In December, 295 were at Fenham Flats and 61-100 on the Budle Point-Seahouses and Seahouses-Beadnell stretches. Counts of 32-37 also came from Berwick North Shore, Boulmer-Alnmouth and North Blyth in the final quarter.

Long-tailed Duck Clangula hyemalis

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
21	26	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	40

As usual, the bulk of the wintering population was centred on the north of the county, where peak January counts involved 42 at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh), 21 displaying at Holy Island harbour and 12-20 off Cheswick-Goswick Sands. In February, 50 were off Cheswick on 21st (IJ), 41 at Stag Rocks, 26 at Holy Island harbour and 14 at the Farne Islands and, in March, 26 were at Stag Rocks on 15th and six to eight at Holy Island and Scremerston. Three to five were also at Beadnell and off Ross Back Sands in the opening quarter, when one to two were at East Chevington north pool, Fenham Flats and Newbiggin. Display was noted at Cheswick and Holy Island on several dates in January-February and one flew N at Seaton Sluice. A drake, first noted in March 2014, remained at Derwent Reservoir until 19th May, when it had almost moulted into full breeding plumage.

In April, four were at Stag Rocks on 16th, two at the Farne Islands on 20th and four at Cocklawburn on 21st. Aside from the Derwent Reservoir individual, there were no more reports until June, when an unseasonable pair flew N at Tynemouth on 23rd and one was off Newbiggin on 24th. In July, one was at East Chevington north pool on 6th and 12th and the drake reappeared at Derwent Reservoir on 10th, remaining there until 1st December.

There were no further records until October, when two were back at Lindisfarne NNR on 18th, one at Cocklawburn on 23rd, one N at Seaton Sluice on 24th and one at Holy Island on 31st. In November, a very strong movement at the Farne Islands involved a total of 108 N and one S between 21st-27th, including 80 N on 21st. Elsewhere in November, an above-average 38 flew N at Seaton Sluice during 20th-23rd, 23 moved N at Newbiggin and nine to 14 N at Holy Island, Snab Point (Cresswell) and Tynemouth on 21st and ten N at St Mary's on 22nd. Six were at Stag Rocks on 25th, with singles at Berwick and Cresswell Pond. A count of 40 at Holy Island harbour on 13th December included many pairs displaying in fine conditions. Also in December, 30 were off Ross Back Sands, 16 at Stag Rocks and twos at Cocklawburn and Fenham Flats.

Common Scoter Melanitta nigra

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor, present throughout the year.

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	240	101	26	60	0	46	23	0	89	2	30

Counts of 700-800 off Cheswick and Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) in January-February may have involved one mobile flock, while 150-400 off Cocklawburn and Goswick Sands likely involved birds from this flock. Few were noted elsewhere, with 12-35 at Boulmer, Druridge Bay and the Tweed Estuary, whilst three flew N at St Mary's. In March, 16 flew N and six S at Seaton Sluice, 60 were off Cocklawburn, 20 at Stag Rocks and three off East Chevington.

Light movement in April involved 39 N and four S at Seaton Sluice, but only three to five N at Newbiggin and Snab Point (Cresswell) in May. Also in April, 40-78 were at Cocklawburn, Spittal and Stag Rocks and, in May, 165-250 were at the Farne Islands

and Stag Rocks. Groups of 20-30 were off East Chevington and North Blyth in April-May. Coastal movement quickened during the summer months. At Seaton Sluice, a total of 680 flew N and 48 S between 22nd-24th June, a well-above average 3,800 N and 456 S (in 76 hours) in July, including 511 N on 2nd, and 491 N and 156 S in August, including 229 N on 14th. Smaller numbers were also noted on active passage at several sites between Whitley Bay-Berwick. A group of 200-400 was noted off Druridge-East Chevington and 100-141 at the Farne Islands and Whitley Bay in July; while, during June-August, 64-109 were noted off Berwick, Budle Point and Cocklawburn and 18-46 at North Blyth and St Mary's.

Active passage continued into September, with 1,223 N at Seaton Sluice, including 647 on 9th and 415 on 29th. Also on 9th, 1,072 flew N (in four hours) at St Mary's (JBu/DMcG), with 591-787 N at the Farne Islands and Newbiggin. In October, 445 flew N and 268 S at Seaton Sluice, where a well-below average 243 flew N and 60 S in November, and 12 N and 25 S in December. Aside from passage, 200 were off Druridge Bay CP and 39 at Cocklawburn in September. Few were reported in October-November, with 15-66 off Alnmouth, Cheswick, Cocklawburn, Ross Back Sands and Stag Rocks. In December, 300 were off Cresswell, 56 at Cocklawburn and 18-32 off East Chevington, Holy Island, Seaton Sluice and Stag Rocks.

Black Scoter Melanitta nigra

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 1 / FIRST: 2011

After the first county record in 2011, it was always thought likely for a repeat performance and this time a drake chose the scoter flock at Cheswick Sands, rather than the 2011 bird that preferred Bamburgh. It was well picked out amongst 800 Common Scoter Melanitta nigra on 20th January (RH et al.) and well observed by many up until 5th March, with one sighting thereafter, on 26th March. The record has been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Surf Scoter Melanitta perspicillata

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1946 / LAST RECORD: 2014

A sub-adult drake flew N through Staple Sound (Farne Islands) on 21st November (DR/TH/ET). It accompanied a female Velvet Scoter Melanitta fusca and was a late seawatch highlight for the islands.

Velvet Scoter Melanitta fusca

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in spring.

In January, five to seven flew N at Seaton Sluice and St Mary's on 31st and one was at Cheswick on 27th and, in February, singles moved N at Newbiggin and Snab Point (Cresswell) on 1st and further singles were at Bamburgh, Cheswick and Hadston Carrs on single dates up to 21st.

There were no further reports until three were off Whitley Bay on 25th May and one to two moved N at the Farne Islands and Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) between 22nd-29th June. These were followed in July by two to three N and one S at Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth on 25th-26th and, in August, a total of 18 flew N at Seaton Sluice, five N at the Farne Islands, while singles were off Druridge and North Blyth. One to three were noted at the Farne Islands on seven dates between 25th July-9th November.

Most September reports were of passage birds and involved one to two N at Newbiggin, Stag Rocks, St Mary’s and Tynemouth; one flew S at Seaton Sluice and one was at Holy Island. The October total at Seaton Sluice was 11 N and two S, while two flew N and three S at Newbiggin, two at Holy Island on 17th increased to four on 20th and one was in the North Blyth-Newbiggin area. In November, a notable 38 flew N at the Farne Islands on 21st-22nd (FIR), but a below-average 11 flew N and one S at Seaton Sluice, while three to six moved N at Cullercoats, Hauxley, Newbiggin, Snab Point, St Mary’s and Tynemouth, with one to two N at Berwick and Holy Island. One to two were off Newbiggin, Newton Point and Seaton Sluice on single November dates, but much more unusual was a drake at the River Blyth-Sleekburn confluence area of the Blyth Estuary on 30th. In December, two flew S at Seaton Sluice on 15th and singles were at the Blyth Estuary on 9th and Holy Island on 14th.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor, uncommon in summer.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / FIRST BRED: 2010 / LAST BRED: 2015

Peak monthly counts from the Tweed Estuary were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
112	184	104	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	124	56

Ten to 12 flew N at Seaton Sluice and St Mary’s in January, and 31 flew N at Newbiggin and six to ten N at Seaton Sluice, St Mary’s and Tynemouth in February. A total of 184 at the Tweed Estuary on 5th February was the largest congregation of the year (MHu). Up to 74 were also on the River Tweed at New Water Haugh during the first quarter. Away from this area, peak counts in the first quarter were 54-65 at Capheaton Lake and East Chevington, and 20-25 at Killingworth and QEII CP Lakes and Swallow Pond. Counts of ten to 19 also came from Beadnell-Howick, Big Waters, Bolam and Ladyburn Lakes, Branton GP, Caistron, Castle Island, Grindon Lough, Kielder Water, Lindisfarne NNR, Low Newton, St Mary’s and Whittle Dene Reservoirs in the same period, while five to nine were at the Aln Estuary, Ashington, Berwick North Shore, Bothal Pond, Hauxley NR and West Ord. Two Otters *Lutra lutra* panicked birds at East Chevington north pool in January and display was noted at Swallow Pond in February.

In April, 24 were at Swallow Pond on 5th, 11-18 at Bolam Lake, Branton GP, East Chevington, Lindisfarne NNR and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and five to eight at Bakethin Reservoir, Bothal Pond, Caistron, Capheaton Lake, and Grindon Lough. Few were left in May, with one N at Seaton Sluice and singles at Castle Island, Cresswell Pond and East Chevington. Breeding was again confirmed at the same site as used in recent years:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
North Northumberland	2	17 (13,4)

Both broods were first noted in May, with a brood of four young from 6th and a brood of 13 from 30th, and were reduced to three and eight young respectively in June (TRD/JD). Also in June, a drake flew N at Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice on 23rd and one was at East Chevington. There were no July reports. In August, seven were still at the breeding site on 9th, but only one by 20th, and one to two were found at the Blyth Estuary, Bothal Pond and Woodhorn Flashes. The only September reports were of four at Branton GP and one to two at Bothal Pond, Budle Bay and Kielder Water.

In October, 16 flew N and 31 S at Seaton Sluice, 25 were at East Chevington, 12 at New Water Haugh and five to nine at Alnmouth, Branton GP, Derwent Reservoir, Hauxley NR, Holy Island and Widdrington Moor Lake. Coastal movement peaked in November, when 217 flew N and 24 S at Seaton Sluice, including 210 N between 20th-22nd, when 129 also flew N at the Farne Islands and 45-47 N at Newbiggin and Tynemouth. Numbers at the Tweed Estuary rose to 124 by 12th November, 60 were at East Chevington and 38 at New Water Haugh. In December, the north pool at East Chevington attracted a peak of 78 and 30-32 were at Castle Island and Yarrow Slake. Counts of 20-29 came from Bolam Lake, Derwent Reservoir, Grindon Lough, the River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House) and Widdrington Moor Lake in November-December, while ten to 19 were also at Big Waters, Branton GP, Capheaton, Cocklawburn, Druridge Pools, Kielder Water, Killingworth Lake, Lindisfarne NNR, QE11 CP Lake and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with five to nine at 13 further widespread, largely coastal, sites.

Smew *Mergellus albellus*

STATUS: Rare passage and winter visitor.

A ‘redhead’ was at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 15th February (KD). The only other record, on 21st March, involved a drake that flew from Holy Island harbour and out over Fenham Flats until lost to sight (IK).

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / FIRST BRED: 1975 / LAST BRED: 2013

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
8	18	21	22	15	62	83	27	17	26	41	31

In addition to the above counts, peak gatherings in the opening quarter were 18 at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh), ten at Cocklawburn, Goswick Sands and Spittal, with five to seven at Cheswick, Meadow Haven and the Tweed Estuary. Good numbers could be found on several coastal pools and included peaks of 18 at Druridge Pools on 29th March, 15 at Ladyburn Lake and 11 at East Chevington north pool, while one to two were noted occasionally at Cresswell Pond, Ladyburn Lake, the River Wansbeck at Stakeford and Widdrington Moor Lake. More unusual was one well inland at Kielder Water on 18th January. Active display was noted at Druridge Pools and Ladyburn Lake in February. Three to four were also present at Beadnell Bay, Berwick North Shore, the Blyth Estuary, Boulmer-Alnmouth, Howick-Boulmer and Seahouses-Beadnell between January-March, with one to two at the Aln, Coquet and Wansbeck Estuaries.

At Seaton Sluice, seven flew N and two S in April and 11 N in May. A total of 40 were noted at Druridge Pools and off Druridge Links on 18th April. Also in April, 20 at the Wansbeck Estuary and ten at East Chevington included displaying birds, four to six were at Spittal Bay and the Tweed Estuary and two visited Widdrington Moor Lake. In May, up to 15 were off East Chevington and up to nine at the north pool there until 24th, ten were at Budle Bay and three to five at Cresswell Pond, the Farne Islands and Stag Rocks.

It was thought that two pairs bred at the Farne Islands, but no young were seen and both suspected nests were believed predated (breeding was also suspected there in 2014 but no young were seen).

In June, three to four flew N at Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth, 62 gathered at Lindisfarne NNR and one to two were noted at Cresswell Pond, East Chevington, the Farne Islands and Stag Rocks and, in July, seven flew N and four S at Seaton Sluice, with a further five N at Hauxley, while numbers at Lindisfarne NNR increased to 83 during a WeBS count on 19th and one to three were at the Farne Islands and Seahouses. In August, 130 were counted off Spittal Point on 27th (CL), two were off Druridge and, more unusually, one was inland at Grindon Lough on 16th.

Coastal movement at Seaton Sluice resumed in October, with six N and three S and, in November, 18 moved N and three S. Smaller numbers were also noted moving N at Newbiggin, St Mary's and Tynemouth in this period. Peak counts in October involved ten to 14 at Budle Bay, East Chevington and Holy Island. In November, 42 were off Dunstanburgh on 21st, while 30 at Holy Island included 23 off St Cuthbert's Island and, in December, 14 were at the Fenham Flats area of Lindisfarne NNR and ten at Ladyburn Lake. Seven to nine were also at the Blyth Estuary, off Druridge, Ross Back Sands, Spittal and Stag Rocks in the final quarter, when three to five were at the Aln Estuary, Boulmer-Alnmouth, Cresswell Pond, Howick-Dunstanburgh, Newbiggin and the Tweed Estuary. Smaller counts of one to two came from ten further coastal/near coastal sites, including Castle Island, Druridge Pools, the River Tweed (Paxton House) and Widdrington Moor Lake. Display was noted at Holy Island and Stag Rocks on single dates in November-December.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes coastal passage):

Locality	Month	Count
River Tyne (Wylam-Hagg Bank)	Jan	23
Whittle Dene Reservoirs	Feb	34
Whittle Dene Reservoirs	Mar	32
River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House)	Apr	17
Horncliffe	May	120
Holy Island	Jun	166
Berwick North Shore	Jul	246
Tweed Estuary	Aug	356
Holy Island	Sep	300
Branton GP	Oct	76
Wylam	Nov	14
River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House)	Dec	35

Further peak counts in the first quarter were ten to 12 at Branton GP and Killingworth Lake in January, 23 on the River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House-Lower Whiteadder) and ten at Broomlee Lough and Killingworth Lake in February, and 19 at Berwick and ten at Broomlee Lough in March. Counts of five to eight came from Horncliffe, Kielder Water, the Tweed Estuary, Wallington, Warkworth and West Ord and three to four were at 13 further widespread sites. Light, northerly passage involved twos on single dates at the

Farne Islands, Seaton Sluice and St Mary's in the opening quarter. More unusual were two on the shallow Hoppen Kiln Flash on 11th February.

In April, five to ten were found at Bakethin Reservoir, Corbridge, Derwent Reservoir, Heddon-on-the-Wall, the Tweed Estuary and West Ord and, in May, 22 were at New Water Haugh, 11-15 at the Tweed Estuary and West Ord and six to seven at Dilston and Warkworth.

Birds were recorded at a minimum of 53 widespread sites between April-July (49 sites in 2014). A total of six nests were located in the Tasset/Redesdale study area, 55 eggs were laid, all of which hatched (six occupied nest boxes, 44+ eggs, 41+ young in 2014). Four of these nests also contained Mandarin *Aix galericulata* eggs, of which six eggs hatched alongside Goosander eggs (MD). At the Kielder study area, three monitored nests contained 21 eggs, of which 16 hatched, and a further brood of five eggs were all addled and failed (six occupied boxes; unknown number of eggs/young in 2014) (MD). Away from these core areas, broods were noted at six sites in June-July (two sites in 2014), with the first brood (five young) at Derwent Reservoir on 5th June. Full details were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods/ crèches	No. of young
Blyth Estuary	1	27
Amble Harbour	1	13
Wark	1	11
Derwent Reservoir	1	5
Pauperhaugh (Rothbury)	1	5
Wallington	1	3

In addition, a female was seen flying into a nest hole at Warkworth in May.

Summer gatherings of moulting birds were again a feature in the north of the county. Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) attracted 84-166 between June-August; while, in July-August, 102-282 were in the Spittal-Cocklawburn area and 160-246 in the Berwick area (Meadow Haven and North Shore). A peak count of 356 was made during a WeBS visit to the Tweed Estuary on 13th August (MHu) and 126 were counted at New Water Haugh (River Tweed) on 28th. Modest counts elsewhere involved 23-30 at the Blyth Estuary and Castron, with 12-13 at Branton GP, Derwent Reservoir and West Ord. Five to six flew N at Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice and four S at Whitley Bay in July, and a total of 24 flew N at the Farne Islands in August.

In September, 33 flew N at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 4th and four to eight N at Annstead Point, the Farne Islands and Seaton Sluice; a flock of full-winged juveniles at Holy Island harbour peaked at 300, 163 were at the Tweed Estuary and 14-29 at Branton GP and Budle Bay. In October, Branton GP attracted 76 (a notable count for the site), 27-28 were at Tilmouth and on the River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House) and 11-15 at Castron, Cheswick, Killingworth Lake and Norham; in November, two to seven moved N at three coastal sites. Large counts were generally lacking in the final two months, with 28 at Horncliffe, 11-14 at Lindisfarne NNR and Wylam and five to six at Close House, Newcastle (Leazes Park), Ridley Stokoe, the Tweed Estuary, Tyne Green (Hexham) and West Ord.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

STATUS: Uncommon to rare summer visitor. Numbers fluctuate from year to year.

BREEDING: Rare. Difficult to prove and certainly overlooked. / LAST BRED: 2013

As with the previous year, 2015 was again poor for this species.

The first calling bird was heard at 03:30hrs at Pithouse Fell (Slaley) on 10th May. Another was at Brunton (Newton-by-the-Sea) on 14th. In June, two were heard throughout the month at Lucker and one at Adderstone, whilst singles were at Branton on 4th, Prestwick Carr on 19th, Hulne Park on 21st and Grindon Lough on 26th. Only two birds were heard calling in July; at Dinnington on 3rd and during the early evening at Budle Bay on 31st. The final records for the year were in August, when two were at Branton on 4th, a single bird called from a wheat field at New Haggerston on 2nd and six were at Lucker on 23rd (JHa).

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

STATUS: Common resident, sustained by frequent releases for sporting purposes.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The only January record was of three at Ingram (Breamish Valley); whilst, in February, 11 were seen near Eglingham, ten at Holburn village and nine at Rothbury, where the species is very unusual. In March, ten were again at Holburn and in the Harthope Valley. One to three birds were noted from at least six further locations in the first quarter.

The peak breeding season count was only 12 in the Harthope Valley in April, with up to eight birds being noted at 34 widespread locations, mainly in the north and south east of the county. Breeding was confirmed at Cambois, and in gardens at Red House Farm (Whitley Bay) and Rothbury.

In the final four months, the peak counts were 40 at Carey Burn (Harthope Valley) in November (AB/LB), 20 at Holburn Moss in September and 16 at Hartley West Farm (Holywell Dene), again in November. One to six were noted at eight further locations.

Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

The local strongholds for this species are the North Pennines and the Cheviots. In January, the peak counts were 200 in the Harthope Valley (JPD/AWS/TDag) and 62 between Wooler Common-Wester Tor. In February, 101 were counted on a six-hour circular walk around the Broadstruther-Harthope Burn area and, in March, 90 were in the Carey Burn area (Harthope Valley) and 50 were at Allendale. Up to 40 were noted in 13 further upland areas.

During the nesting season (April-July), breeding was confirmed at Blanchland, Plenmeller Common and in the Simonside Hills. Peak counts were 35 pairs on Hexhamshire Common, 36 birds at Plenmeller Common, 30 at Paxhill, 20 in the Harthope Valley and 17 at Coanwood Burn in April, 21 at Fellhouse Fell and 20+ in the Hawsen Burn area in May, as well as 20 in the Simonside Hills in June and 50+ at Newton Tors (Cheviots) in August. Up to six were noted in nine further upland areas.

In the final four months, the peak counts were 148 in five groups in the Simonside Hills in October, 100 there in September and 46 at Broadstruther in October. Up to seven were noted at five further localities.

Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The North Pennines area continues to be the stronghold for this species. In the first quarter, the highest counts were 12 at Slaggyford throughout March (IK), 11 at Swinhope Shield in February and eight at High Knock Shield Farm (Allendale) in March; one to seven were noted at 15 further locations, with only Birdoswald and Greenhead Bank located away from the North Pennines.

During the breeding season (April-June), the peak counts were eight (seven displaying males) on Hexhamshire Common, seven at Allendale, Carrshield Moor and near Derwent Reservoir and six at Swinhope Shield. One to three birds were seen at ten further locations, breeding being confirmed at Plenmeller Common. Records at Grindon Lough and Shield on the Wall Dam were the only ones away from the North Pennines. Few reports were received in the second half of the year. A female was at Burntshieldhaugh (Hexhamshire) in August, a lek of nine was noted at Sinderhope in October and one to two males were at three sites in the Coanwood area in December.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common, although declining in some areas.

The species continues to be well-reported. In January, the peak counts were low with nine at Beal Point, Fenham-le-Moor and Hemscott Hill (Cresswell); whilst, in February, 30 were at Lucker (per NNBC) and 16 at Townfoot (near Alnwick), but the March peak count was only four at Druridge Lane. In the first quarter, counts of up to eight came from 25 further localities, predominantly in the east of the county.

During the breeding season, up to ten adults were seen at 57 widespread locations, although predominantly in the south east. Breeding was confirmed at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield), Holywell Pond, Horton (Blyth) and Prestwick Carr.

In the final four months of the year, 24 were noted in two coveys at Chugdon Wood (Ellington), 14 at Waren Mill, 13 at Backworth and ten at Brenkley in September; whilst, in October, 29 were in two groups at Beal, 22 at Blyth Links, 15 at Holy Island (Chare Ends) and ten at Boulmer. The peak November counts were 21 at Chugdon Wood (Ellington), 12 at Bothal Pond and 11 at Beal and, in December, 16 were at Backworth, 13 at Chare Ends and 12 at Holy Island Causeway. One to nine were noted at 21 further localities.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

This species continues to be under-recorded, with reports predominantly coming from gardens. The only January report was of five at Hartley West Farm (Holywell Dene); whilst, in February, up to 11 fed on seed dropped by Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* in a Wallbottle garden. One to two were seen at three other locations. In March, up to 11 were at Hauxley NR, mainly at the feeding station. Two to four were at three other locations in the south east.

At Blagdon, 14 were present in April, with one to four birds noted at four further locations in the south east. Breeding was confirmed at Craster, East Hartford, Holy Island (Chare End dunes) and Lordenshaw (Rothbury). In June, one was calling at Jesmond Dene, a 'very unusual' location in the summer months.

In the final quarter, up to six were at three locations in October; whilst, in November, 47 were on Alnwick Moor on 22nd (JR), seven at Prestwick Carr and six at Hartley West Farm. In December, 30 (25 males) were at Whitfield and two to four at three further locations.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor, uncommon in summer.

Only light passage was noted in the first quarter. At Seaton Sluice, 12 flew N and six S between 24th-31st January; whilst, in February, seven flew N at Newbiggin on 1st, and four flew N and two S at St Mary's on 7th. The March monthly total at Seaton Sluice was 18 N and ten S. The largest offshore gathering in January was 40+ off Goswick Sands, with 15 noted at Cocklawburn and ten at Bamburgh. In February, the peak count in Druridge Bay was 78 on 7th (TRC), when 20+ were offshore at Cheswick, whilst the March peak count was only eight at Cocklawburn. During this period, up to six were noted at 21 further coastal locations.

In April, at Seaton Sluice, eight flew N and six S from 3rd-17th and one flew N at Newbiggin on 19th. In May, five flew N at the Farne Islands on 7th and one flew N at Newbiggin on 25th and, in June, singles flew N at St Mary's on 24th and 26th and Druridge on 26th, whilst one flew S at Seaton Sluice on 24th. The peak offshore count in April was 32 in Druridge Bay, with one to six noted at several other coastal locations and, in May, one to two were at four coastal locations.

In July, seven flew N and five S (in 74 hours of seawatching) at Seaton Sluice, with the only other record being a single at East Chevington on 6th. August passage at Seaton Sluice was above average for the time of year, with seven N and four S (in 58 hours). Offshore, five were noted at East Chevington, two at Birling Carrs and a single at Cheswick. Passage at Seaton Sluice was also above average for September, with 95 N and 99 S recorded. Elsewhere, on 9th, nine flew N and 18 S at Newbiggin and 26 were noted at St Mary's. Eight were in Druridge Bay on 9th and up to six were noted at many other coastal locations.

Passage continued to be noted at Seaton Sluice in October, with 54 N and 68 S (in 35 hours). Peak offshore counts were 51 at Druridge Links and 22 at Cocklawburn Dunes, whilst one to seven were noted at 14 further coastal locations. Large-scale movement was noted in November, with 86 N and 240 S (in 48 hours) at Seaton Sluice and, at the Farne Islands, 19 flew past on 14th and 74 from 22nd-24th. Elsewhere, 30 flew N (in two hours) at Tynemouth on 22nd and 14 flew N (in three hours) at Newbiggin on 21st, with nine N and one S there the following day. At St Mary's, six were noted flying N on both 21st and 22nd. One to seven were noted offshore at 11 further coastal locations. Numbers were lower in December, when 15 flew both N and S (in 17 hours) at Seaton Sluice. The peak offshore count was 12 in Druridge Bay on 11th and one to five were noted at a minimum of 12 coastal localities.

Diver sp. *Gavia sp.*

A large unidentified diver flew over Holy Island Lough on 13th October.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

Single birds were noted flying N at St Mary's on 16th and 25th January and at Seaton Sluice on 26th. Singles were also off Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 17th and 21st and at East Chevington from 11th-17th; the latter bird even noted on the north pool on 11th. In February, two flew N and one S at St Mary's on 7th and a single was at Tynemouth Pier on 5th. During the month, singles were noted offshore at Cheswick and East Chevington. No further birds were seen until 1st April, when one flew N at Cocklawburn. In May, two were offshore at Football Hole (Newton) on 25th and one at Holy Island on 13th.

In September, two flew N at St Mary's on 5th, when an adult in breeding plumage was noted passing Tynemouth. A single landed on the sea at Seaton Sluice on 2nd. There were four offshore records in October, at Cheswick Black Rocks and Holy Island on 16th, between Howick-Boulmer on 19th and between Boulmer-Alnmouth on 23rd.

The largest count of the year was recorded at Newbiggin on 22nd November when four flew N (ADM/SJM/GB). During the month, two flew N and two flew S at Seaton Sluice, singles flew N at Tynemouth and St Mary's on 22nd and Newbiggin on 23rd. Elsewhere, singles were offshore between Boulmer-Alnmouth on 26th, in the Blyth Estuary on 27th and on East Chevington north pool on 27th-28th, where one was again noted on 3rd-4th December. The final birds of the year were offshore at North Blyth on 11th, in the Stag Rocks area on 12th and at Holy Island harbour on 13th.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

Only singles were noted in January, when one flew S at Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) on 23rd and birds were offshore at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 3rd, 11th and 21st and at St Cuthbert's Island (Holy Island) on 17th. One was well inland at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) on 19th. In February, two flew N at Cheswick on 7th, when one flew N at St Mary's. Offshore, singles were noted in March, with one in Beadnell Bay on 6th and an immature in Low Newton Bay on 20th. Only a single was noted in April; offshore at Seaton Sluice on 2nd. In May, one flew S at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 10th, a single was noted off Holy Island on 13th and a much appreciated bird, in full summer plumage, was watched at Black Midden Rocks (Tynemouth) on 15th.

The next sighting was an unseasonable bird flying N at Seaton Sluice on 2nd July. This was followed by one seen on a pelagic trip from North Shields on 7th September. In October, singles flew S at Seaton Sluice on 26th and 29th. Singles were on Holy Island on 17th and 24th October, with two there on 19th, and one in partial summer plumage was offshore at Boulmer on 25th.

A new record count for November occurred at Seaton Sluice, with eight singles and 15 N during the month, including a day record count of ten on 22nd, when 11 also flew N at Newbiggin (ADM/SJM/GB), six at St Mary's and four at Tynemouth. Three flew N and one S at Snab Point on 21st, when three also flew N at Stag Rocks. Further singles flew S at Hadston Carrs and Tynemouth on 8th and into Spittal Bay on 9th, when a single flew N at Newbiggin; one was also noted feeding off Berwick Pier on 15th. In December,

two flew S at Holy Island (Castle Point) on 6th, and singles flew S at Seaton Sluice and Ross Back Sands on 28th; four were present offshore at the latter site that day. Two were offshore at Stag Rocks on 8th and a single was very close inshore at East Chevington on 6th. Other December singles were noted at Holy Island on 14th and, unusually, inland at Widdrington Moor Lake on 30th-31st.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

STATUS: Well-represented resident and common passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

In January, birds had returned to several breeding sites, with peak counts of 18 at Tynemouth Priory cliffs, 16 at Cullernose Point, 11 at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) and eight at Bamburgh Castle. One to five were noted at six further coastal locations. Numbers continued to increase at breeding locations in February, with 55 at Holy Island (Coves Haven Bay), 36 at Tynemouth Priory and 11 at Old Hartley cliffs. At Stag Rocks (Bamburgh), 13 were feeding on 3rd, with 12 at St Mary’s on the same date. One to five were noted at five further coastal locations. Passage at Seaton Sluice was poor in March, with a peak count of 30 N (per hour) on 21st. Elsewhere, 18 were at Old Hartley cliffs on 14th and 17 were at Rockcliffe on 15th. One to two were noted at three further coastal locations.

At Tynemouth Priory, 41 birds (15 pairs) were present in April, with 26 at Rockcliffe and five at Cullernose Point. Passage at Seaton Sluice was light in May, with a peak of only 30 S on 3rd. Unusually, two were noted in the Tweed Estuary on the WeBS count on 18th. A three-hour late morning seawatch at Newbiggin on 23rd June produced a total of 47 N, whilst in a similar two-hour stretch at St Mary’s, on the same day, 24 flew N.

At the Farne Islands, the number of breeding pairs declined to 209 (298 pairs in 2014), the second largest decline since records began in 1971, with the first chick noted on 9th July (FIR). At Coquet Island, 54 pairs nested (51 pairs in 2014), with the first eggs seen on 17th May (RSPB).

The table below details some sites with apparently occupied nests (AON) during the breeding season (DMT *et al.*):

Locality	No. of AON 2015	No. of AON 2014
Farne Islands	209	298 (151 chicks from 281 monitored nests)
Coquet Island	54 (37 young)	51 (30 young)
Needles Eye (Berwick)	12	12
Holy Island (Coves Haven Bay)	No data	ca.30 (10 visible young)
Dunstanburgh Castle cliffs	7 (1 young)	4-8 (0 young)
Snab Point (Cresswell)	No data	11 (3 young)
Old Hartley	20 (4 young)	15 (3 young)
Whitley Bay (High Point cliffs)	7 (2 young)	4 (1 young)
Whitley Bay (Brown’s Bay)	3 (1 young)	3 (1 young)
Tynemouth cliffs	22 (17 young)	36 (18 young)

Passage was light in July, with a peak of 51 N at Seaton Sluice being the only significant movement. In August, at Seaton Sluice, the largest movement was 120 S (in two hours)

on 18th, when a fully dark ‘Blue Fulmar’ also flew N. The largest movement in September was 220 (per hour) N at Emmanuel Head (Holy Island) on 5th (IK), with 49 flying N at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 4th. Although no movement was noted at Seaton Sluice, 120 were observed during a pelagic trip from North Shields on 7th.

In the final quarter, records were few, with singles N at Seaton Sluice on 3rd-4th October and three N there on 22nd November. Further movement was noted at Seaton Sluice in December, with 65 S on 30th. Birds were also noted returning to breeding cliffs, with 26 at Snab Point on 29th, 20 at Coves Haven Bay on 31st and 14 at Tynemouth Priory on 13th.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1936 / LAST RECORD: 2014

Two individuals were seen this year, with one past Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 1st September (DR) and another N past St Mary’s on 5th September (AC *et al.*), which was also noted past Newbiggin shortly afterwards (GB *et al.*). Isolated sightings such as these have been the norm in recent years.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

STATUS: Well-represented autumn passage visitor, uncommon in summer.

It was a poor year for this ocean wanderer, other than from around the Farne Islands.

The first bird of the year was one seen flying N at Hartley Bay (Seaton Sluice) on 15th June. In July, two flew N at the Farne Islands on 27th and one flew N at Seaton Sluice on 30th. Numbers remained low in August, with only singles seen flying N at Seaton Sluice on 23rd and the Farne Islands on 31st.

September was the peak month for the species. At the Farne Islands, 53 flew N on 5th, 50 on 7th and 25 on 6th; one to six were seen on eight further dates (FIR). Elsewhere, 26 flew N at Newbiggin (in 5.5 hours) on 5th, 14 flew N at Annstead Point on 6th and 12 flew N at Holy Island on 7th. Two flew S at Tynemouth on 12th and one flew N at Cresswell on 27th. Five were seen on a pelagic trip from North Shields on 7th and one was seen on a further pelagic trip from that destination on 13th.

October numbers continued at a low level, with nine N and three S at Seaton Sluice during the month and singles N at Holy Island, Newbiggin and Tynemouth on 17th and the Farne Islands on 24th.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

STATUS: Well-represented to common passage visitor, more numerous in summer.

The first sightings of the year involved single figure counts at the Farne Islands from 16th March. At Seaton Sluice, on 19th April, four flew N and on 30th four flew N at St Mary’s. In May, at Newbiggin, 19 flew S and seven flew N (in one hour) on 25th. Additionally, 18 flew N (in one hour) at Seaton Sluice on 14th, 13 were seen at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 4th and 12 passed Holy Island on 24th. One to three were noted at several other coastal locations. Passage was much more noticeable in June, with peak counts of 151 at the Farne Islands on 8th, 110 N at Tynemouth (in one hour) on 18th, 85 N, including a flock of 70, (in 1.5 hours) at Newbiggin on 8th, 56 N (in seven hours) at Seaton Sluice on 23rd and

50 passed St Mary's (in 20 minutes) and 37 N at Annstead Point (in 1.5 hours) on 8th.

Numbers increased overall in July. However, counts at Seaton Sluice were well below the monthly average, with 571 N and 48 S, including 191 N (in two hours) on 18th. Passage at Newbiggin peaked at 40+ (in 3.5 hours) on 28th, 37 N (in one hour 45 minutes) on 30th and 18 N (in two hours) on 9th. Similarly, the monthly total of 64 (62 N and two S) at Seaton Sluice in August was also well below the average for the month.

At the Farne Islands, 205 flew N on 5th September and 109 the following day; whilst, at Seaton Sluice, 73 flew N, with no birds being observed here after 5th. Other peak counts on this day, were 70 N at St Mary's (in four hours), 54 N at Annstead, 50 N at Newbiggin and 30 N at Tynemouth (in 2.5 hours). One to two birds were noted at several coastal locations, but none after 7th. A few were noted in October, with two N at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 18th and a single tracked moving N on 17th at Tynemouth, St Mary's and Newbiggin. The final birds of the year were singles N in November at Snab Point on 8th and at Seaton Sluice on 22nd.

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*

STATUS: Uncommon visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1860 / LAST RECORD: 2014

Increasingly regular now in the county, with 14 accepted sightings from late July-late November.

The first individual moved N off Newbiggin on 27th July (ADMc) and was also likely to be the same bird noted N past the Farne Islands the same afternoon (DR/TH). A gap then followed until the next sighting when one passed Newbiggin on 23rd August (JGS). In September, a single lingered off Newbiggin on 1st (JGS), with two individuals N past St Mary's on 5th (IJJ/AC *et al.*). Again, one of the same individuals was responsible for a further sighting the same day N past the Farne Islands (DR/TH). The next day saw a further sighting with one N at Tynemouth (DRW/MK) and, probably the same individual, N past Emmanuel Head (Holy Island) (MJC). Three individuals also moved N that morning at the Farne Islands (DR/TH), with probably the same three lingering birds responsible for further sightings on 7th September (DR/TH). Two moved N past Emmanuel Head, also on 7th (SR). The last September sighting involved one N at Tynemouth on 12th (DRW). Finally, a late individual moved N at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 21st November (JL).

Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

STATUS: Uncommon on passage in the summer and autumn, rarely seen from land and possibly overlooked.

One was watched feeding for 35 minutes in Inner Sound (Farne Islands) on 28th July. Nocturnal sound-luring sessions there caught five birds on 30th July, three on 11th August and four the following night (FIR). Away from the Farne Islands, the only records were of a single off Newton Point on 29th July and two seen on a pelagic trip from North Shields on 7th August.

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1828 / LAST RECORD: 2014

An un-ringed bird was trapped on the Farne Islands during a Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* tape-luring session in the early hours of 12th August (FIR). It was photographed and follows on from three individuals captured there in 2014.

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

STATUS: Abundant passage and non-breeding summer visitor, uncommon in winter.

Passage was light in January, with 26 birds noted at St Mary's on 31st, when 23 flew N (in seven hours) at Seaton Sluice. One to three were noted at two other coastal locations. Passage increased slightly in February with 36 N (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice on 5th and 17 N (in two hours) on 1st, when 12 were noted at St Mary's. A large feeding frenzy of 100+ was at Berwick Pier on 15th. In March, the peak passage counts were 560 N (in three hours) at Seaton Sluice on 21st and 300 S at Holy Island (Emmanuel Head). Passage movements of up to 30 were also noted at East Chevington and St Mary's. Offshore, 30 were in Spittal Bay on 3rd and 20 at Newton Point on 20th.

The largest movements in April were 1,220 N (in one hour) at the Farne Islands on 16th, 585 N (in three hours) at Seaton Sluice, 480 (per hour) S at Cocklawburn on 1st, 300 N at Hadston Carrs on 19th and 200 S at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 12th. On 3rd May, an impressive 1,220 (per hour) flew S at Berwick Pier. The only other significant movements were at Seaton Sluice, with 118 N (in one hour) on 14th and 100 S (in two hours) on 3rd. In June, the largest movements were at Seaton Sluice, with peak counts of 160 N (in one hour) on 14th and 140 N (in one hour) on 23rd. At Newbiggin, 89 flew N (in three hours) on 23rd. Up to 100 were noted throughout the month at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay).

Large scale, late-summer movements commenced in the second half of July, with peak counts of 1,500 S and 850 N at Berwick Pier on 29th and up to 400 (per hour) at Seaton Sluice on several dates. On 30th, an adult corpse was found, well inland, in rough pasture just north of Housesteads Roman Fort. Larger movements were noted in August at Seaton Sluice, with up to 1,340 (per hour) recorded. At Spittal Bay, 800 (per hour) flew S on 10th. Numbers further increased in September, with 2,065 N (in 3.5 hours) at the Farne Islands on 2nd, when 2,000 (per hour) flew N at Seaton Sluice. At Holy Island, 4,500 moved N and 150 S (in three hours) on 6th (MJC) and, at Newbiggin, 1,147 flew N (in one hour) on 7th. The largest inshore count was 320 in Spittal Bay on 24th.

During October, large feeding groups were noted around the Farne Islands and large movements involved 1,750, 1,200 and 1,100 past Holy Island on 16th, 17th and 18th respectively, 800 (per hour) S on 24th and 500 S (in one hour) at Spittal Bay on 6th, and 500 N and 30 S at Seaton Sluice on 29th, with the species being well recorded there from 24th-28th. Numbers fell in November, with combined counts of 261 N and 344 S during the month at Seaton Sluice, with a peak count of 105 N and 180 S on 6th. Elsewhere, the peak count was 15+ offshore at Lynemouth Power Station on 6th. December peak counts at Seaton Sluice were 27 N and 31 S from 28th-30th, with very few noted prior to this. At Holy Island (Castle Point), 20 fed offshore on 6th, with four noted here on 20th. Two juveniles were feeding off the pier at Meadow Haven (Berwick) on 6th and two flew N at East Chevington on 28th.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

STATUS: Well-represented resident and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Peak monthly counts at favoured coastal sites were as follows (DMT/STH *et al.*):

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne NNR	20	23	40	13	24	18	15	29	56	61	42	18
Coquet Estuary	22	11	-	-	-	-	23	66	43	18	12	21
Blyth Harbour	15	56	16	8	5	8	18	127	123	59	71	67
Tyne Estuary	79	80	55	13	12	18	16	47	-	93	55	69

N.B. Monthly systematic counts were not undertaken in Blyth Harbour during 2015.

In addition to the main roosts tabulated above, the peak coastal counts were 30 at St Mary’s, 17 in the coastal stretch from Seahouses-Beadnell, 15 at Berwick North Shore and 13 at Redheugh. Inland, 32 were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 22 near Bywell Church, 11-19 at Colt Crag Reservoir, Derwent and Hallington Reservoirs, QEII CP Lake and Tyne Riverside (Newburn). One to ten were noted at a further 13 coastal and 33 inland locations.

In April, peak counts were smaller, with 22 at St Mary’s, 17 at Derwent Reservoir and 16 at East Chevington; in May, the peak counts were 82 in the Tweed Estuary, 68 at the low-tide roost at New Water Haugh (River Tweed) and 27 between Budle-Seahouses. In June, 24 were at East Chevington, 20 roosted at Meadow Haven (Berwick), 15 were at Castle Island and 11 at Berwick North Shore. One to ten were noted at a further nine coastal and 13 inland locations in this period.

At the Farne Islands, the number of breeding pairs reduced to 81; this represents just 44% of the total in 2005. The largest nest count was on Big Harcar, an island only regularly colonised since 2008 (FIR).

On 8th July, 58 flew N and 28 S (in eight hours) at Seaton Sluice where, on 15th August, 42 flew N and 19 S (in four hours). In the July-August period, the peak count, and the highest of the year, was 127 in the Blyth Harbour evening roost on 28th (STH); other peak counts, in addition to those tabulated, were 81 at East Chevington, 78 at Castle Island, 59 in Druridge Bay, 40 at Derwent Reservoir, 38 in the coastal stretch from Spittal-Cocklawburn, 33 at Meadow Haven, 30 at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay), 29 at Berwick North Shore and Elwick, 22 at St Mary’s and from Seahouses-Beadnell, 20 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and 18 in the Tweed Estuary. One to 15 were noted at a further 17, mainly coastal, locations.

In September, at Seaton Sluice, 18 flew N and 15 S (in 2.5 hours) on 25th. During the month, the largest additional gatherings were 59 at Berwick North Shore, 41 at Derwent Reservoir, 37 from Spittal-Cocklawburn, 35 at St Mary’s and 27 at Castle Island. Ten to 18 were at Amble weir, Colt Crag Reservoir, East Chevington, Kielder Water, North Blyth and Widdrington Moor Lake. One to nine were noted at a further five coastal and ten inland locations.

Peak counts in the final quarter (October-December), in addition to those presented in the table, were 56 at Berwick North Shore, 46 in the Tweed Estuary, 40 at Derwent Reservoir, and 35 at Berwick Pier and St Mary’s and on the coastal stretch from Amble-Chevington. Elsewhere, ten to 17 were observed at Castle Island, Colt Crag Reservoir, East Chevington, East Howdon, Kielder Water, Meadow Haven, Stag Rocks (Bamburgh),

the Tweed Estuary, Whittle Dene Reservoirs, and the coastal stretches from Spittal-Cocklawburn, Seahouses-Beadnell, Newbiggin-Cambois and Whitley Bay-Tynemouth. One to nine were noted at a further 13 coastal and 27 inland locations.

‘Continental Cormorant’ *P. c. sinensis*

STATUS: Uncommon winter visitor.

Three adults were at North Shields Fish Quay on 27th January, whilst a single was on the River Coquet at Warkworth on 8th. Three adults were again at North Shields Fish Quay on 8th February and an adult was at Holy Island on 2nd and 17th. In April, three were at Bakethin Reservoir.

No further birds were reported until December, when two were at North Shields Fish Quay on 14th and one at Holywell Pond on 10th.

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

STATUS: Common resident and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

In January, a large gathering of 180 was at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 21st. On 27th, 20 were at Seahouses and ten were at Holy Island on 23rd. One to five were at four other coastal localities. Light N passage was noted in February, with two at Newbiggin on 1st and two at Seaton Sluice on 4th. Again, the peak count was at Stag Rocks, with 70 present on 7th. The March passage at Seaton Sluice was again light, with only five N and two S. One to six were noted at a further 11 coastal locations, mainly in the north of the county, during the first quarter.

Only two were noted flying N at Seaton Sluice during April. The peak counts were five at Cocklawburn on 1st and four at Berwick North Shore on 17th. In May, three immature birds flew N at Seaton Sluice on 14th, whilst 14 roosted at Meadow Haven (Berwick) on 17th and eight in Spittal Bay on 14th. In June, 14 again roosted at Meadow Haven on 21st; six were nearby at Berwick North Shore on 11th. One to five were at five further locations during this period.

On the Farne Islands, 720 pairs nested (795 in 2015). The first eggs were seen on 29th March and 374 monitored nests fledged 626 young, giving a good overall productivity of 1.67 fledged young per nest. A few late broods were noted well into October (FIR). Two nests were found at Needles Eye (Berwick) in May.

On 24th July, one flew S at Seaton Sluice and, in the Berwick area, 21 roosted at Meadow Haven on 31st and ten were at North Shore on 17th. Passage was more noticeable at Seaton Sluice in August, with a total of 126 and a daily maximum count of 43 N and 30 S on 31st. Elsewhere in August, WeBS counts included 78 in the Blyth Estuary and, in the Berwick area, 45 in Spittal Bay and 40 at North Shore, whilst 30 were at Stag Rocks on 21st. Ten juveniles were on the sea at St Mary’s on 13th. Light passage was noted at Seaton Sluice in September, mainly from 1st-2nd, with 47 N and eight S. Peak counts during the month were ca.100 at Stag Rocks and 16 at Berwick North Shore. One to seven were noted at seven further coastal locations.

In October, only three flew N and two S at Seaton Sluice during the month. Peak counts were 70 at Stag Rocks, 25 at Cocklawburn dunes, 22 at Berwick North Shore and 20 at Meadow Haven. November passage at Seaton Sluice was more noticeable, with 12 N and 32 S during the month; seven N and 22 S on 22nd-23rd were the peak numbers. Six

also flew N at Dunstanburgh Castle on 22nd November, when at least 100 were feeding offshore at St Cuthbert's Island (Holy Island), possibly being incomers after the gales of the previous day. Peak November counts in the Berwick area were 30 at Meadow Haven and North Shore and 25 in Spittal Bay. Seaton Sluice Watchtower recorded single-figure movements on most days in December, with a peak count of three N and 14 S on 29th. At least 100 were at Stag Rocks on 3rd, 40+ were offshore at Ross Back Sands on 28th and 19 were between Howick-Dunstanburgh on 9th. In the final quarter, one to 11 were noted at a further nine coastal locations, including a colour-ringed Green NRB, confirmed ringed as a chick on Inner Farne in summer 2015, which was the first seen by the observer in Blyth South Harbour for nearly three years.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

STATUS: Uncommon winter visitor, rare in summer.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1956

Up to three individual birds were seen at Gosforth Park NR during January-February (NHSH/IK/GPK), with at least one bird present there until mid-March. The individual seen at Swallow Pond in December 2014 remained until at least 10th January and it, or another, was watched on 3rd February sitting in a willow *Salix* tree, 3m above the ground, for 45 minutes and was seen to catch two fish in full open view on 10th.



Bittern (John Steele).

The first returning bird to Gosforth Park NR was seen on 2nd July and was reported sporadically throughout the month and then regularly in August until mid-month. A single was present here in September, with two birds present from mid-month. Up to three were noted at Gosforth Park NR during October–November and up to three were suspected of being present there in December (NHSH et al.). Elsewhere, singles were seen at East Chevington north pool on 13th September, 11th and 25th October, and 8th, 12th and 19th November.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

STATUS: Uncommon resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / FIRST: 2014 / LAST: 2015

Numbers seen in winter continue to increase, with peak counts of five at Fenham Flats on 4th January and three along the Horton Burn (Cramlington). Singles were noted in the Aln Estuary, Bedlington, Beehive Flash (Earsdon), the Coquet Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Holywell Dene and Seaton Sluice. The February peak count at Lindisfarne NNR was six during a WeBS count on 8th; elsewhere, singles were seen at Cresswell Pond, Holywell Dene, Horton Burn (Cramlington) and Seaton Sluice. Singles were at these sites in March, as well as at Holy Island Causeway and Stakeford.

In April, most sightings were in the south east of the county, with two at Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools on 20th; one to two were also at the Aln and Blyth Estuaries, Castle Island, East Sleekburn, Fenham-le-Moor, Holy Island Causeway, Holywell Dene, Horton Burn, Low Newton, Lynemouth Flash, the Wansbeck Estuary and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. In May, four birds were in the Aln Estuary and a maximum of four birds were noted in the Cresswell Pond-Druridge Pools area on 17th, with birds present there throughout the month. A colour-ringed individual noted here had been seen at Nosterfield (North Yorkshire) on 10th April and previously in North Yorkshire in 2014. One to two were noted at East Chevington, three locations at Lindisfarne NNR, the Wansbeck Estuary, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Woodhorn Flashes. The peak count at Lindisfarne NNR in June was 14; whilst, elsewhere, three were in the Aln Estuary during a WeBS count on 17th and two were regularly recorded at Cresswell Pond, East Chevington, the Wansbeck Estuary and Warkworth Gut. Colour-ringed birds were seen at Cresswell Pond on 10th and Druridge Pools on 19th June; the latter bird had been ringed as a fledgling in Lincolnshire in 2014. In July, up to seven were in the Castle Island area, with six in the Aln Estuary during a WeBS count on 22nd and at Lindisfarne NNR, five at Cresswell Pond on 31st and four at Arcot Pond on 10th and Druridge Pools on 3rd; one to three were noted at a further nine localities.

Breeding was confirmed at Druridge Pools, with two young ringed from one nest; it was suspected that at least one other pair bred as six adults and un-ringed, fledged young were noted (JF/IDR/IF).

Over 80 records were submitted in August, with peak counts of 13 in the Wansbeck Estuary and 12 in Budle Bay. Other large counts were eight roosting at the Butts (Warkworth), six in the Aln and Blyth Estuaries and four at Needles Eye (Berwick). One to three were noted at a further 12 locations all along the coastal belt. September peak counts were 12 in the Warkworth roost, 11 at Castle Island, nine in the Aln Estuary during a WeBS count, eight at Beal Point and seven in nearby Budle Bay. One to five were seen at a further ten localities.

In mid-October, 22 were at Fenham-le Moor, including 14-15 roosting in trees (IK). Seven

were in the Castle Island area on two dates and one to three were noted at 13 further localities in the coastal belt. Numbers in November were lower, with a peak count of eight at Lindisfarne NNR during a WeBS count on 15th. Three were in the Blyth Estuary on 26th and at Boghouses (Cramlington) on 28th. One to two were noted at 13 localities, including as far inland as Lemington Gut. The peak December count was eight in a field adjacent to Horton Burn on 6th; elsewhere, six were at Lindisfarne NNR and one to two at seven further sites.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1977 / LAST RECORD: 2014

An early sighting comprised one at Cresswell Pond on 6th February (TB), which flew S, unusually accompanying 400 Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus*. They circled the pond before flying off W towards Warkworth Lane. Next came one at Castle Island on 23rd March, which was in full breeding attire (JR/IF *et al.*). Further spring sightings were noted, with one at East Chevington on 11th April (TF/JFa) and again on 11th May (ADMc *et al.*), which frequented the east side of the north pool, and another at Newton Pool on 1st June (CGK/GPK). This latter sighting would definitely have been a different individual as it still showed a yellow bill.

Finally, a late sighting was at Branton GP on 19th November (IBDa/KDa). Certainly the species is much more frequent than a decade ago when any sighting could draw quite a crowd.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Peak counts for the Tweed Estuary were as follows (MHu):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
14	19	19	7	7	7	7	21	23	20	10	13

In addition to the above counts, the first quarter produced gatherings of 21 at Howdon and 16 at Berwick North Shore in February and seven at Gosforth Park NR in March. One to six were noted at 42 further widespread localities.

In April, away from breeding sites, the peak counts were eight at New Water Haugh (River Tweed) and six at Budle Bay and Holy Island. One to four birds were noted at 20 further locations. Breeding details were only received from three sites, with eight apparently occupied nests at Druridge Pools, three nests at Gosforth Park NR and two at Hauxley.

Larger gatherings were reported in the summer period (May-August), with 24 at Howdon, 23 at Needles Eye (Berwick), 15 at Lindisfarne NNR, 12 at Castle Island and 11 at Hauxley NR. One to ten were noted at 36 widespread localities in May-June and a further 33 localities from July-September. Some large counts occurred during September, with 25

at Howdon, 15 at Old Hartley, 13 at Hauxley NR and 12 in the Aln Estuary.

Some good numbers were reported in the final quarter, especially in October, when numbers at Howdon peaked at 27 on 25th (CB); elsewhere in the month, 20 were in the Tweed Estuary, 15 in the Blyth Estuary, 12 at Druridge Pools and 11 along the coastal stretch from Howick-Boulmer, at Kielder and Lindisfarne NNR. One to ten were noted at 55 widespread localities during this period.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 6 / FIRST: 1959 / LAST: 2013

A definite case of being in the right place at the right time saw a surprised observer sharing a farm track with a juvenile on 2nd August (JH). Luckily, phone pictures could be shared, which gave no doubt as to its identity. It eventually took flight and was mobbed by corvids, maybe resulting in it moving out of the area before any other birders could get to grips with this major rarity for the county. This national rarity was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

STATUS: Rare to uncommon passage visitor, mainly in the spring.

The first arrival of the year was at Fenham-le-Moor on 28th April. On 18th May, an adult was at New Water Haugh (River Tweed). All subsequent records came from the Cresswell/Druridge/East Chevington area. A juvenile, first seen at East Chevington on 17th May, remained in the above area until 26th. During June, two, an adult and an immature/second calendar year, remained in the area throughout the month, apparently asleep for much of the time! (TB/MSH/SRB *et al.*).

Two were at Cresswell Pond on 5th August (TRD/JD), one having been ringed at Vlissingen (Netherlands) on 31st May 2012. This bird had been seen in Findhorn Bay (Moray) on 17th June and again at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) after visiting Cresswell.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Castle Island held significant numbers throughout the first quarter, with peak counts of 23 in February and 19 in January, both coming from WeBS visits, and 14 in March. Elsewhere, in February, nine were in the Aln Estuary and at Caistron, eight were on the River Tweed (A1-Gainslaw House-Lower Whiteadder area) and seven at East Chevington, where six were present in January. Swallow Pond had a peak count of eight in March and seven were again in the Aln Estuary. Birds were seen at a further 28 predominantly lowland locations, with 'trilling' heard at many of these sites.

In April, the highest count was ten at Swallow Pond; whilst, in May, seven were at Swallow

Pond and six at Capheaton Lake and Gosforth Park NR.

A total of 45 sites were occupied during the breeding season (50 in 2014) with breeding confirmed at 14 sites (21 in 2014). Those with two or more reported broods are tabulated below:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Holywell Pond	6	17
Gosforth Park NR	3	6
Swallow Pond	3	6
Ladyburn Lake	3	6
Bothal Pond	2	4
Holy Island Lough	2	3

Single broods were also noted at Bank's Pond (Dinnington), Capheaton Lake, Linden Hall (first occurrence for this site), Linton Pond, Newton Pool, Reeth Pond (Newburn), Shield on the Wall and Woodhorn Flashes.

The highest August counts were 21 at Big Waters, 17 at East Chevington and Hauxley NR during WeBS visits, 11 at Bothal Pond and ten at Airy Holm Reservoir, Capheaton Lake, Druridge Pools, Newton Pool and Swallow Pond. Many high autumn totals came from WeBS counts; in September 34 were at Holywell Pond (LJM), 32 at Hauxley NR, 28 at Big Waters, 16 at East Chevington, 13 at Druridge Pools, 12 at Caistron, 11 at Airy Holm Reservoir and ten at Bothal Pond.

In October, the peak counts were 33 at Castle Island, 29 at Hauxley NR, 22 at Big Waters and 13 at Caistron. Numbers declined in November, when 18 were at Hauxley NR and nine at Ladyburn Lake. Counts in December were much lower still, with peaks of only five at Cresswell Pond, East Chevington and Ladyburn Lake. In the final quarter, one to eight were noted at 36 further sites.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Numbers in 2015 were slightly higher than in the previous six years. In January, two were at Caistron and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and singles were offshore at Druridge, amongst a scoter *Melanitta* sp. flock at Cheswick and Cocklawburn, and at Widdrington Moor Lake. Numbers increased in February, with peak counts of four at Killingworth Lake and three at Whittle Dene Reservoirs. One to two were noted at Cheswick Beach, Holy Island and Saltpan Rocks (Cocklawburn). In March, numbers rose to eight at Derwent Reservoir, six at Killingworth Lake and five at East Chevington and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Three were at Bothal Pond and QEII CP Lake, with one to two noted at ten further locations.

During April-May, peak counts were ten at Derwent Reservoir and East Chevington, seven at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and six at Airy Holm Reservoir.

A total of 18 potential breeding sites were occupied in 2015 (18 in 2014). Successful breeding was confirmed at only one site, East Chevington, where two pairs hatched four



Great White Egret - Newton Pool - June
(Gary Woodburn).



Bittern - Gosforth Park - November
(Mike Carr).

Little Egret - Druridge Pools - July (Ian Fisher).



young, one of which fell prey to a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
East Chevington	2	4

In June-July, 13 were at East Chevington (GB) and nine at Derwent Reservoir; whilst, in August, nine were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs. The peak September count was 11 at Widdrington Moor Lake.

Numbers were lower in October, with peak counts of six at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington Moor Lake, and three at Branton GP and Derwent Reservoir. One to two were noted at three further locations, including a juvenile offshore at Holy Island (The Heugh). In November, seven were present during the WeBS count at Lindisfarne NNR, three were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and two at Widdrington Moor Lake. Singles were at Derwent Reservoir and offshore at Fenham Mill, Holy Island and Tynemouth (King Edward's Bay). Passage was noted at Seaton Sluice in December, with singles S on 7th and 16th. The single at Derwent Reservoir stayed until 2nd December, a very late date for the site, and three remained at Whittle Dene Reservoirs during the month.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

STATUS: Uncommon autumn passage and winter visitor, rare in spring and summer.

This species continues to be scarce in the county, with very few records received.

One flew N at Seaton Sluice on 19th January and one was noted at Holy Island on 3rd January and 10th February. In March, singles were recorded at Budle Point on 4th and during the Lindisfarne NNR WeBS count on 8th.

No further birds were seen until 6th September, when one, presumably the same bird, flew N at Tynemouth and a little later at Newbiggin. On 31st October, two, one with a partial red-neck, were offshore at St Cuthbert's Island (Holy Island) (IK). One flew N at St Mary's and Seaton Sluice on 22nd November and two adults, still showing rusty lower breasts, were at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 11th (DHH), with one noted in the area during a WeBS count on 24th. The final record of the year was a single at Holy Island on 31st December.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor.

Peak counts from the regular wintering sites in the north of the county were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne NNR	6	6	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	8	5
Stag Rocks (Bamburgh)	6	10	11	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2

The highest count of the year was 11 at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 24th March (TRD/BRS) but the above numbers were slightly lower than in 2014. Away from these core sites, no further birds were seen until one was at the unusual location of Gosforth Park NR on 18th February.

An inland location provided the next record (away from the core area), with two at Widdrington Moor Lake on 18th October, where a single remained until well into December. Singles were seen on the sea at North Blyth on 10th November and during

the coastal WeBS count from Whitley Bay-Tynemouth on 13th. A single was noted at East Chevington from 23rd-28th December.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

STATUS: Rare passage, summer and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2015

A single was regularly seen at East Chevington north pool on many dates in January-February and remained until at least 18th March, by which time it was in partial breeding plumage. In January, singles were also noted at Seahouses harbour, Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) and Whitley Bay; whilst, in February, singles were again noted at Stag Rocks and amongst the scoter *Melanitta* sp. flock off Cheswick Sands. On 10th March, a single was again offshore at Stag Rocks.

A pair returned to a breeding site in the south east of the county in April, hatching two young, and remaining there until the end of August. Singles were seen at a site in mid-Northumberland in April-May, when a bird was also at a site in mid-eastern Northumberland.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2012

An adult male passed over Ashington (near the Cambois rowing club) on 25th August (TB). It was being mobbed by Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* and Jackdaws *Corvus monedula*, which made it come as close as 30m before moving off towards Ashington town centre. The unusual close views enabled the observer to note all the relevant detail of an adult male. There were three other claims during the year, but no documentation was forwarded.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

STATUS: Rare, although increasingly regular visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2010

Once again, there were numerous reports from the Tyne Valley and other localities adjoining the population stronghold of the species in the Derwent Valley and the area towards Blanchland and Derwent Reservoir. Elsewhere, they remained rare as detailed below.

During January, one flew alongside the A1 near Morpeth (High Clifton) and another was at Stagshaw. In February, singles were seen at Big Waters and, much farther afield, at Etal. During April, sightings of a single at Holywell Dene, Holywell Pond and Plessey Mill (Cramlington) may have involved the same wandering individual. Another was at Alnwick Moor.

During spring-early summer, individuals continued to be seen in potential breeding habitat in areas including Allendale, Druridge Bay, Stocksfield and Wylam, but there was no evidence of nesting in the county.

Outside our recording area, Friends of Red Kites (FoRK) reported a poor season. One

pair bred just outside the Northumberland boundary, but two well-grown young perished when they were blown from the nest during a gale. Illegal poisoning continued in game-shooting areas of North Durham and may be contributing to the species' failure to colonise Northumberland.

During the late summer, autumn and winter periods there were very few sightings outside the main population areas. Singles were at Staward Gorge in July, Chollerford, Cresswell and Yearle in August, Haydon Bridge in November and Deleval Hall and Holywell Dene in December.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2014

BREEDING: Historical.

An interesting observation of an immature watched flying over Woolhope Crag at the Cheviot on 13th June (GR) was likely to involve the offspring of one of the introduced adults in North East Scotland. It was dive-bombed by a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and a Raven *Corvus corax* before flying off.

Harrier sp. *Circus sp.*

On 12th October, a juvenile 'ringtail' harrier with orange under-parts flew through Chare Ends and over the Straight Lonnen to The Lough (Holy Island); while, on 25th, a large harrier sp., showing five visible primary tips, was glimpsed near Gloucester Lodge Farm (Blyth) before flying S.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and summer visitor, extremely rare in winter.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2015

The first spring appearances, in March, involved a female at Gosforth Park NR on 9th and a male back in the regular breeding area at East Chevington on 29th.

During April, two males and three females were at East Chevington and singles, perhaps from this group, were at Warkworth on 17th and Hauxley on 19th. The only inland record was a male at Bakethin (Kielder), also on 17th. During May, one male and two females remained at East Chevington and a female was at Gosforth Park. A pair was at a locality in the south west but after 'gamekeeper activity' there were no sightings after 20th.

In June, the East Chevington male and one of the females settled to breed. Elsewhere, singles visited Cresswell Pond, Ellington and Holywell Pond.

Success was shown in July when a female and five juveniles were in the air together at East Chevington on 22nd (IK), with sightings on several other dates. Members of this family were probably responsible for sightings during the month at Druridge Pools, Hauxley NR, Holywell Pond and Widdrington Lake. The male, female and one to two juveniles remained during August, when other migrants passed through. These included singles at Budle Bay, the Farne Islands, Gosforth Park and Holy Island.



Pallid Harrier - Warkworth Estuary - September (Michael Sanderson)



Sparrowhawk - Wallington - February (Mike Carr)



A single was on Holy Island in August; while, during September-October, sightings were confined to Druridge Bay, with wandering birds regularly reported. During November, sightings involved a female and juvenile at East Chevington on several dates. One visited Cresswell Pond and one flew S at Gosforth Park.

During December, a female was seen on three dates at East Chevington, where she settled to provide the county's first instance of a Marsh Harrier remaining throughout the winter.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2015

Between January-March, one adult male and several 'ringtails' were noted from confidential roosting areas, mainly in upland localities. Because of their extreme vulnerability to illegal persecution by gamekeepers, most observers were again reluctant to disclose detailed information.

Coastal movement was noted during April. A male was watched hunting at Druridge Bay on 2nd and a 'ringtail' flew NE over Holy Island on 18th.

During May, pairs were settled in potential nesting areas. One of the year's highlights was successful breeding, involving a bigamous male who provided for two females. At one nest, five eggs were laid. All hatched and three males and two females fledged. At the second nest, four eggs were laid and four hatched, with two females and one male fledged. A single male regularly 'sky-danced' at another locality. On one occasion he carried food, as if to a waiting female. No female was seen and it may have been a demonstration of his frustration. The male disappeared after two weeks (MD/IK/BG/PG). The importance of the local pairs can be judged by the fact that there were only six successful nests in England during the season; other sites almost certainly failing because of continued illegal persecution.

After the breeding season, wandering birds from the successful sites may have accounted for sightings from several other areas. During August, a 'ringtail' was seen on Holy Island and another was at a second coastal locality. Immigration was suggested in October with the arrival of a juvenile from the east at East Chevington on 31st. It hunted over the reedbeds before disappearing inland.

During the final two months, two 'ringtails' and one male were regularly noted at one upland roost. One to two birds were reported from three other confidential roosting localities. On 19th December, an adult male hunted alongside the road at Holy Island (Snook saltmarsh).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 0

The long awaited first sighting for the county came in the most unlikely of circumstances. The observers had stopped at the layby to watch the Coquet Estuary on 9th September (MS/GS) when their attention was drawn to a bird of prey that was being mobbed by crows. It landed on the dune bank immediately opposite the layby and several photos were obtained before it moved off after 15 minutes towards the estuary mouth. Sad to

say it was never seen again. The photos were eventually sent to the County Recorder and the record was accepted by the CRC unanimously. All relevant detail on a juvenile can be made out on the photos, including the distinctive boa and collar. Hopefully the next bird in Northumberland will be more obliging.

A paper documenting this remarkable record can be found at the front of this publication.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

STATUS: Uncommon resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Once again, because of the threat of illegal persecution facing this impressive raptor, very few observers gave site details. Birds were again confined almost entirely to upland forests or hunting areas on adjoining moorland. During January-February, five singles were seen at four potential breeding localities and another was at Grindon Lough.

The usual early spring display was recorded over breeding sites from 22nd February. During March, other displaying individuals were at four localities. In April, one was seen along Kielder Forest Drive and, much more unusual, was a bird flying S over Prestwick Carr. The only June record was an overhead bird at Rothbury.

During the breeding season, members of the Northumbria Ringing Group checked 57 sites and found 37 to be occupied, although at three localities only males appeared to be present. A total of 28 pairs went on to lay eggs, from which 22 hatched and 19 pairs eventually fledged at least 41 young (19 pairs and 44 young in 2014). One nest failed because of nearby forestry operations; an unusual occurrence now because of generally close co-operation with forestry groups (NRG).

During October, an adult male was at Billsmoor. Another single was seen over a forest area in November and there was another sighting from Prestwick Carr. The only December records involved one at Branton GP and a juvenile hunting around a moorland release site for Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

STATUS: Common resident, also a passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

During the first quarter, singles were at numerous widespread localities, including individuals hunting through gardens. Two birds visited a Cramlington garden within ten minutes in January and two were seen at Houghton Castle. During March, three were over Staward and two were at Prestwick Carr and Thrunton Woods.

With the start of the breeding season the species was less obvious. The only detailed data came from the Northumbria Ringing Group. A total of 35 known territories were visited and 26 were found to be occupied. Of these, 20 pairs laid eggs and 14 went on to fledge at least 28 young (NRG). Elsewhere, a pair was at a nest in Newcastle (Jesmond Dene) in May and two separate males were seen at Allen Banks. Two were also at Bellasis Bridge (Blagdon) in June and numerous sightings of singles in other suitable areas probably indicated local breeding. During July, singles continued to be seen in at least 12 widespread lowland localities and a female repeatedly chased Sand Martins, *Riparia riparia* at a colony on the River Tyne at Chollerford.

Family parties, during August, involved a pair with three young at Ellington Dene on 17th (MJC) and a female with three juveniles at Newbiggin on 15th; the usual post-breeding

drift towards coastal areas also produced three juveniles on Holy Island. During September, the species continued to be well-reported. Three were at Howdon on 4th, whilst three at Gosforth Park NR on several occasions tried to catch Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis*. Two were at Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay). A juvenile female was ringed at Bamburgh.

Coastal birds were prominent during October, probably attracted by the arrival of small migrants. Four were regular on Holy Island, three were around St Mary's and two were at Hauxley NR and Tynemouth. Singles were on the Farne Islands on six dates between August-October.

During November-December, they remained widespread at both coastal and inland localities. Two were at Derwent Reservoir, Ellington, Holy Island, Howdon and Prestwick Carr, with singles in at least 20 other localities.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

STATUS: Well-represented resident and a passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Their abundance was again demonstrated by sizeable parties in many localities during the first quarter. Larger concentrations included 12 at Holborn (MJC), nine at Harwood and Haughton Strother (Humshaugh), eight at Big Waters, Slaley and the West Simonsides and smaller groups in numerous other widespread areas.

Numbers remained high during April with, for example, nine over Deadwater Fell and, in lowland areas, seven attracted to a recycling plant at Blyth (Bebside) and six at Blagdon.

As the breeding season began, many suitable nesting localities were occupied with most detailed data received from the Northumbria Ringing Group. In the Border Forest, the population was estimated at between 80-90 pairs. A total of 57 nests were found, of which 21 failed; the other 36 pairs going on to fledge 54 young. At one nest, prey items included Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus scoticus*, Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* chick, Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*, and Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*. In the Otterburn Training Area-South Cheviots-Simonside study area, with 50 breeding pairs, it was noted that Buzzard was now the most common raptor. In the North Cheviots, 28 pairs were found and one nest was known to have fledged two young (NRG). Elsewhere, there was a fascinating history of a nest at Harwood. Two young were blown from a nest during a gale in early June. One died but the adults successfully reared the second on the ground, mainly on a diet of Mole *Talpa europaea*.

Family parties were prominent during July with, for example, two adults escorting three young at Ray Fell. Many other groups of three to six, noted during the period, probably represented successful breeding. Numbers remained high during autumn and winter, with peaks of six at Harwood in October, ten at Hulne Park in November and four at Prestwick Carr in December.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

STATUS: Rare winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1831 / LAST RECORD: 2014

Accepted sightings continue to be sparse, but four birds were located and well documented in the early spring, plus an autumn juvenile. In the Harthope Valley, one of the late autumn individuals of 2014 was picked up again in the Cold Law-Broadstruther area on 30th January (MDM). Again, the hovering behaviour was well noted. At Winter's Gibbet, at

the south west end of Harwood Forest, a juvenile was soaring on 4th March (RS). A juvenile was also picked up over Haltonlea Fell (Geltsdale) on 19th March (PH); although in Cumbria at first, it moved towards Byers Pike and then E into Northumberland. Luckily noted by a seasoned raptor specialist, all the diagnostic features were well described. The last sighting of the early spring involved one high over Low Cocklaw (near Berwick) over the observer's garden on 9th April (TBr). It glided in a thermal before moving W into Scotland after five minutes. Again, well described and documented.

Finally, on 12th October, a juvenile was seen at close range at Plenmeller Common (ER). Interestingly, it was seen near a dead sheep, associating with a Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, and enabled the observer to describe most of the key plumage differentiations. There were seven other claims during the year, with three being rejected by the CRC due to insufficient detail. It is often through no fault of the observers that not enough diagnostic detail can be gathered for acceptance, especially as sightings are often brief. Of more concern is the other four, where no documentation was forwarded, even after requests. Rough-legged Buzzard is genuinely scarce in Northumberland and confusion can occur with very pale Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / FIRST BRED: 2009 / LAST BRED: 2015

The first arrival, on 12th March in Upper Coquetdale, involved a single being 'escorted' northwards over Holystone by two Buzzards. Movement continued in April, with two flying NW across the Wanneys on 6th, one back at Kielder by 12th, followed by singles at Derwent Reservoir on 13th and Haughton Strother GP on 21st.

Passage continued during May, when two were at Derwent Reservoir by 10th. A single soared high southwards over Druridge Pools on 19th and another, pursued by gulls, moved fast northwards over Holy Island on 23rd. Other singles visited Big Waters and Gosforth Park NR on 30th-31st.

Four pairs settled at the only regular breeding area at Kielder. One pair did not lay, but the other three produced clutches. One pair had four eggs, the first occurrence at Kielder, while the others each had three eggs. At the nest with four eggs, one was dislodged by an intruding bird; the remaining three hatched and two young eventually fledged. At the other nests, both clutches of three hatched; each pair then lost one chick but succeeded in raising the others to give a final total of six young fledging (down on eight young in 2014) (MD). During summer, up to three birds frequented Derwent Reservoir, including one colour-ringed as a nestling at Kielder in 2011. A bird flushed from a tree roost at Slaley at 22:20hrs on 26th June, during a search for Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus*, was probably one of the Derwent birds. Also in June, one was vigorously driven off by Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* when it flew past their crag nest site.

Kielder and Derwent Reservoir continued to produce most sightings during August, when passage southwards was underway. Singles were at Seaton Sluice on 11th, Yearle on 25th, Woodhorn on 27th and Branton GP on 31st. A Scottish satellite-tagged individual lingered at Lindisfarne for four days from 30th; it spent most of its time fishing along the Pilgrims' Way, but flying to Killoe to roost.

The final records were during early September. One was still at Kielder on 2nd and two at Derwent Reservoir on 3rd. A single passed Newbiggin (Church Point) on 5th. The final

record involved a single which drifted W over the Farne Islands on 14th, heavily mobbed by gulls.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare, although undoubtedly overlooked.

Lowland waters providing food and concealment were well-occupied by wintering birds during the first quarter. At least four were at Gosforth Park NR, three at Cresswell Pond and Swallow Pond and two at East Chevington and Prestwick Carr. Singles were seen or heard in at least 13 other localities. During April, other areas holding one to two included Holy Island Lough, Newton Pool and West Hartford.

As usual, because of its skulking nature, breeding was difficult to detect. Up to seven birds, including three juveniles, were seen at Gosforth Park during July (NHSN/GPK) and a large juvenile was at Big Waters on 19th July. Probable breeding was indicated by the continued presence of birds from April-September at Arcot Pond, Branton GP, Cresswell Pond, East Chevington, Ford Moss, Grindon Lough, Holy Island Lough, Holywell Pond, Newton Pool, Swallow Pond, Warkworth Lane and West Hartford.

The arrival of continental migrants began on 12th September, when one was discovered sheltering from a storm in the cellar of the Inner Farne pele tower. When the weather improved, it was released into the cover of vegetation. Singles were also present on the islands on 30th September and 6th and 15th November. The arrival of other migrants increased occupancy in wetland areas during the final quarter, when at least four were at Cresswell Pond and three at East Chevington, Gosforth Park NR, Holy Island Lough and Woodhorn Flashes. Two were at Alnmouth, Big Waters, Holywell Pond and Howdon, with one to two in at least nine other widespread localities.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented, but very much under-recorded.

As usual, they were extremely widespread during the first quarter from the largest lakes to the smallest ponds. Larger waters held the main concentrations with, for example, 29 at Druridge Bay CP on 18th January (TB/DM/STH), 22 at Woodhorn Flashes, 20 at Killingworth Lake, 19 at Hauxley NR, 18 at Marden Quarry, 17 at Big Waters, 16 at Backworth Pond, 15 at Warkworth Lane and smaller groups at numerous other widespread, mainly lowland, localities.

Numbers fell during April as birds settled into breeding areas. The only firm breeding data came from Wallington Hall with 12 adults accompanied by five young, Gosforth Park NR with four adults and four young, and Big Waters, where a juvenile narrowly escaped an Otter *Lutra lutra* that bounded towards it over a scrape. Small groups and pairs frequented many other waters where breeding also occurred.

Post-breeding numbers rose during July-September, when 27 were at Big Waters, 22 at Druridge Bay CP, 18 at Backworth and Bothal Ponds, 17 at Gosforth Park NR, 16 at Arcot Pond and Newcastle (Leazes Park), 15 at Hauxley NR and Marden Quarry, 13 at Branton GP and Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and 12 at Woodhorn Flashes, with lesser gatherings at many other localities.

During the final quarter, birds were settled in many wintering areas. The largest counts involved 24 at Druridge Bay CP and Newton Pool, 20 at Marden Quarry, 19 at Woodhorn Flashes, 17 at Gosforth Park NR, 15 at Hauxley, 14 at Bothal Pond and Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), 13 at Castle Island and North Shields (Chirton Dene Park), 12 at the Aln Estuary and ten at Wallington. Single-figure counts came from at least a dozen other localities.

Coot *Fulica atra*

STATUS: Well-represented to common resident and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented, but under-recorded.

The largest groups were concentrated at four localities during the first quarter, with peaks of 183 at Swallow Pond, 179 at QEII CP, 110 at Warkworth Lane and 108 at Killingworth Lake. Elsewhere, 30-74 were at Big Waters, Branton GP, Caistron, Capheaton Lake, East Chevington, Marden Quarry and Woodhorn Flashes, with smaller groups frequenting numerous other widespread localities.

The departure of wintering birds led to a decline in April-May, when the largest groups were 53 at Woodhorn Flashes and 42 at Bothal Pond, with 30-36 remaining at Bothal Pond, Killingworth Lake and Swallow Pond.

The species continued to be well-reported at many sites during the breeding season. Five nests at Grindon Lough, and seven pairs at Angerton Lake, constituted the only breeding data received. Numbers rose in July-August, with substantial counts from several waters. For example, 133 were at Swallow Pond, 108 at Bothal Pond, 97 at Woodhorn Flashes and smaller concentrations elsewhere.

Numbers continued to rise during September when a bird, colour-ringed at Killingworth in December 2014, was found at QEII CP. It had also been seen during the breeding season on a lake near Copenhagen, Denmark, in May.

The arrival of wintering birds swelled the population during the final quarter, with the year's highest count of 332 at QEII CP on 12th December (CDH). During this period, 160 were at Swallow Pond, 91 at Big Waters, 86 at Capheaton Lake, 79 at East Chevington and many smaller groups were at other, mainly lowland, waters.

Crane *Grus grus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2014

A poor year for the species, with only four accepted records.

One was noted over Bell's Pond (Cresswell) on 4th May, where it came in from the N and circled the pond before moving off SW (GB). Two adults were also seen on the same day circling high over Grindon Lough for five minutes before moving off NE (PRM). Two adults were found at Cresswell on 2nd June, where they came in off the sea and moved W to Warkworth Lane to be located in a field, but were soon flushed after five minutes by a dog walker (TB). The final sighting was a close-range observation from a car at Hipsburn on 15th July, where an adult flew 20m away, at ten metres height, out towards the coast (TAC). The close proximity even ensured the observer views of the red forecrown.

In recent years it has been taken for granted that birds would linger for all to see, but obviously not in 2015.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Rare / FIRST BRED: 2011 / LAST BRED: 2015

The first indication of spring return was three at Cresswell Pond on 11th March. A single was at Lindisfarne (Guile Point) on 21st and another briefly visited Druridge Pools on 22nd. Six arrived at the Blyth Estuary on 28th, remaining until the following day, and two more briefly touched down at East Chevington on 29th.

Numbers built up during April, with a peak of 25 at Cresswell, the main population centre, on 19th (TB). Other peaks involved eight at Blyth, six at Bothal Pond, four at Castle Island, including a mating pair, and two were at a confidential site.

Up to 16 remained at Cresswell during May and there was a gradual build-up in nesting pairs. Six pairs produced eggs and the first chick was seen hatching on 31st. Birds continued to visit other localities during May, with one to five noted at Blyth, Bothal Pond, Castle Island, Druridge Pools, Earsdon (Beehive Flash), East Chevington, Ellington and Lynemouth Flash. Two remained at the confidential locality. By 2nd June, four more young had hatched at Cresswell, but then all the nests were predated by either a Fox *Vulpes vulpes*, present on 4th, or an Otter *Lutra lutra*, which was seen two days later. Some adults remained, but others wandered to nearby local waters, where the peak count was 11 at Castle Island on 17th. At the confidential site, there were nine adults and two young at the end of the month.

During July, only four remained at Cresswell, the last being seen on 22nd. Six visited Castle Island on 1st, with two remaining by 19th. Two birds were still at the confidential site early in the month.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
399	210	935	332	300	86	125	803	724	900	1,050	1,372

Although Lindisfarne held the greatest numbers during the first quarter, sizeable gatherings also occurred elsewhere, with the majority coming from WeBS counts. Peak counts were 204 at Beadnell-Howick, 190 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 180 at Whitley Bay-Tynemouth, 154 at St Mary's, 134 at Budle Point-Seahouses, 124 at Berwick (North Shore), 115 at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 107 in the Aln Estuary, 105 at Boulmer-Alnmouth, 84 at Cullercoats, 83 at Spittal-Cocklawburn and 80 from Amble-Chevington. Smaller gatherings were in numerous other coastal localities and, even during January, movement inland had commenced.

Movement inland continued during February and, by 12th March, an exceptional 212 were at Derwent Reservoir. Traditional pre-breeding gathering sites also held substantial numbers, with 60 at Brandon GP, 42 at Castron, 37 at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and smaller parties in at least 25 other waterside localities.

As birds settled at nesting sites, substantial numbers of non-breeders remained to summer

on the coast, as shown by the Lindisfarne table. There were also June-July peaks of 131 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 97 at Berwick, 80 at Castron, 64 at Hauxley NR and 45-74 at seven further localities. Breeding included 32 pairs on the Farne Islands (39 in 2014). There were 13 pairs on Coquet Island (15 in 2014). Family parties were recorded at Arcot Pond, Bothal Pond, Budle Bay (first proven record), Derwent Reservoir, Hauxley NR, Hedgeley GP, Holy Island, Plenmeller Common and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Breeding was also suspected at Airy Holm Reservoir and on the River Breamish. The presence of pairs in other suitable waterside localities also probably indicated breeding.

The big post-breeding return to coastal areas during August-September quickly increased numbers with, for example, 700 in the usual high-tide roost at St Cuthbert's Island (Holy Island), 210 in Budle Bay, 180 at Blyth, 147 at Howick-Boulmer, 141 in the Aln Estuary, 130 at Berwick (North Shore), Boulmer-Alnmouth and Seahouses-Beadnell, 117 at Whitley Bay-Tynemouth and lesser numbers elsewhere.

During the final quarter, Lindisfarne again held the largest population, peaking at 1,372 during a WeBS count on 13th December (ACr). Elsewhere, peak gatherings, which again mostly came from WeBS counts, included 234 at Beadnell-Howick, 170 at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 167 at Berwick (North Shore), 159 on the Farne Islands, 156 at Blyth, 153 at Berwick (Magdalene Fields GC), 151 at St Mary's, 142 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 141 at Whitley Bay-Tynemouth, 130 at Howick-Dunstanburgh, 125 in the Aln Estuary and 107 at Howick-Boulmer. Smaller gatherings occurred in numerous other coastal localities.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

STATUS: Abundant autumn passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,500	2,100	544	325	0	0	200	166	2,500	5,000	2,591	1,088

Away from Lindisfarne, the species was numerous and widespread during the first quarter. The largest flocks, many recorded during WeBS counts, involved 2,000 at Newbiggin, 1,300 in the Coquet Estuary, 1,122 at St Mary's, 1,000 at Blyth Links and many smaller groups elsewhere.

A male gave territorial calls over the snow-covered Otterburn Training Area in late January and a more general return inland occurred during February-March, with some large pre-breeding gatherings. Substantial flocks included 500 in Allendale, 227 at Plenmeller and 150 at Staward. In lowland areas, 600 near Bedlington, 300 at Lowick and 250 at Prestwick Carr were the biggest concentrations and mainly involved Northern race birds. The Prestwick flock moulted into breeding plumage, as did many Northern birds on Holy Island.

During the breeding season, singing birds occurred in upland localities, mainly in the North Pennines, but also in the Simonsides and Cheviots. In the Pennines, in April, ten pairs were found on territory during a 17km walk across Hexhamshire Common.

The usual very early return of Northern birds occurred during July, with 450 at St Mary's and 220 at Newbiggin, while 200 on Holy Island included many still in breeding plumage. Return movement gathered pace in August-September to give peaks of 2,500 at St Mary's, 1,000 on the Farne Islands, 520 at Newbiggin and 510 during a WeBS count at

Howick-Boulmer; while, inland, 275 were at Grindon Lough.

Passage peaked in October, when at least 5,000 regularly gathered at Holy Island (east end of Pilgrims' Way) (IK); 3,000 were at St Mary's, 1,500 at Longhorsley, 1,050 at Grindon Lough and 1,000 at Derwent Reservoir. Onward passage then reduced numbers, with noticeable declines, as shown by the Lindisfarne table, although 1,200 were at Grindon Lough, 900 at the River Blyth Estuary and 850 during a WeBS count from Boulmer-Alnmouth in November. During December, regular winter areas were occupied with, for example, 2,000 remaining at St Mary's, 1,500 at Low Newton, 500 at Amble and between Boulmer-Howick and much smaller numbers elsewhere.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor, some birds lingering into summer.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
260	500	370	325	607	0	4	220	508	88	258	461

Once again, Lindisfarne held the main population, with comparatively few occurring elsewhere. During the first quarter, other peak counts, many coming from WeBS visits, included 69 at Boulmer-Howick, 35 in the Aln Estuary, 30 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 22 at Beadnell-Howick, 21 at Boulmer-Alnmouth and one to 16 at many other coastal localities.

Birds in breeding plumage were seen during April-May, particularly at Lindisfarne, where one gathering on the Black Law involved 150 preparing to migrate. The species continued to be prominent at Lindisfarne in May, as migrants moved through the region, peaking at 607 during a WeBS visit on 17th (ACr), but was absent during June.

Very light return passage occurred in July, with breeding-plumage birds at Newbiggin, Seaton Sluice and St Mary's. Numbers increased slowly during August when, away from Lindisfarne, 22 in the Aln Estuary included some still in breeding dress. The only other reports involved single-figure counts at four localities. Return increased sharply in September, as shown by the Lindisfarne table, although elsewhere numbers remained modest, with 67 between Boulmer-Alnmouth on a WeBS count being the only double-figure record.

Again, during the final quarter, it was scarce except at Lindisfarne. Peak gatherings elsewhere mostly came from WeBS counts and included 22 at Berwick (North Shore), 21 at Boulmer-Alnmouth, 13 at Seahouses-Beadnell and 12 in the Aln Estuary, with single-figure counts coming from 11 additional coastal sites. Much more unusual was a single at Derwent Reservoir on 5th November; the year's only inland record.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

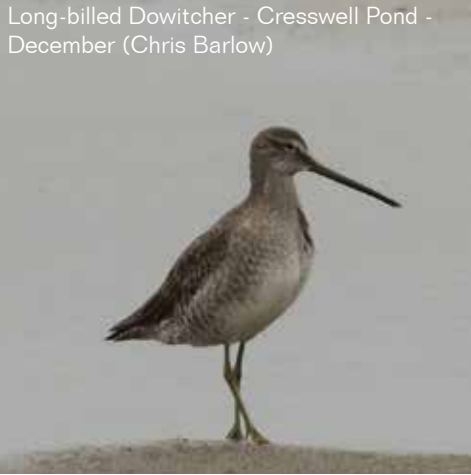
STATUS: Abundant passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
700	220	25	20	15	35	40	12	290	1,600	2,124	385

Numbers at Lindisfarne were lower than usual during the first quarter, when the area



was eclipsed by peaks of 1,800 at Laverock Hall (Blyth) and 1,000 at Druridge Pools; elsewhere, 600 were at Ulgham Park, with numerous smaller gatherings in lowland areas. During mild conditions in January, many had already returned towards inland breeding localities with, for example, 620 at Grindon Lough, 350 at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and up to 150 at Derwent Reservoir. This movement inland continued in February-March, with 600 at Staward, 455 at Haughton Strother GP, 400 at Acton Moor, 350 at Castron, 275 at Plenmeller, 200 at Spartylea and 100-160 at several other localities in the North Pennines.

Many pairs took up breeding territories during March and early April. Displaying males were prominent in many areas. Higher counts included 23 pairs near Blanchland, ten to 12 at Prestwick Carr and smaller groups in many other, both lowland and higher, localities. Counts during May involved up to 50 pairs on Acton Fell, demonstrating the great importance of the North Pennines. Pairs with eggs or young were reported from numerous localities, although on Holy Island it was a very poor season, with only five to six pairs breeding. At Prestwick Carr, a pair was watched driving off a Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, which had strayed near small young.

Post-breeding flocks formed from June, with 130 at Grindon Lough and more than 90 at both Castle Island and Cresswell Pond and, as usual, increased sharply during July-August to provide much more substantial counts. These included 1,850 at Derwent Reservoir, 800 at Whittle Dene, 600 at Airy Holm Reservoir, 520 at Grindon Lough, 405 at Bothal Pond, 380 on the River Tyne (Elswick area), 316 at Branton GP, 300 at Arcot Pond, Broomlee Lough and Castle Island, and between 100-262 at seven other localities, with smaller groups elsewhere. Numbers remained high during September, with additional counts involving 600 at Haughton Strother GP and 400 at Monks House Pool.

Large inland flocks continued to feature in October, when numbers at Derwent Reservoir reached a new high of 2,000 and the largest coastal group was 1,600 in Budle Bay. Arrival from the east was reported at Seaton Sluice in late October although, during November-December, onward movements appear to have reduced numbers in many areas. The largest concentration of the year involved 2,124 at Lindisfarne during a WeBS count on 15th November (ACr), with other notable flocks during the final two months including 1,000 at Grindon, 800 at Derwent Reservoir, 680 at Cresswell Pond, 500 on ploughed land near Kenton Bankfoot and at Prestwick Carr, 403 at St Mary's, 400 at Druridge Pools and numerous smaller flocks in other widespread localities.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and summer visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon. / FIRST BRED 1968

The first spring arrival involved four at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) on 10th April, followed by two at Cresswell Pond the following day. Other sightings quickly followed between 15th-30th, with two at Bothal Pond, Brenkley opencast, Derwent Reservoir, Hedgeley and Prestwick Carr, and singles at Backworth Pond, Branton GP, Colt Crag Reservoir and Low Newton.

By May, one to two pairs had settled to breed in at least four confidential localities; while, elsewhere, up to five remained at Haughton Strother GP during the month, four were at Derwent Reservoir, with up to four at Bothal Pond between 2nd-8th and three at Lynemouth Flash; one to two occurred at several other sites. Reports in June, from confidential sites, involved up to eight adults and three chicks at one location (obs.

withheld) and one to two adults at two further sites. Also during June, two adults were at Grindon Lough and singles at Alwinton, Arcot Pond, Backworth Pond, Bothal Pond and Druridge Pools. During July, pairs had young at all four known breeding sites, including a count of eight adults, still with three young, at one location (obs. withheld); an adult with a juvenile at another locality may also have involved local breeding. Elsewhere during July, one to two were at Bothal Pond, with singles at Charlton Mires, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Hallington Reservoir, Newton Scrape and West Hartford.

During August, two adults remained at one inland site, an adult and a juvenile were at Brenkley on 19th-20th and two juveniles at Grindon Lough on 24th provided the year's final record.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
39	64	211	59	2,294	180	21	292	102	70	96	59

In addition to the March count at Lindisfarne (above), the only other sizeable groups during the first quarter also came from WeBS counts and involved 109 in the regular rooftop roost at Blyth (Ferguson premises), 64 at Berwick (North Shore), 53 at Cresswell-Newbiggin and 52 at St Mary's. Numbers elsewhere along the coast were generally low.

Early breeding display was seen at Newbiggin (Beacon Point) in late March, when three were also back at Derwent Reservoir and a pair was on restored opencast land at Brenkley. Further breeding localities were occupied in April, with display at Chevington Burn and just inland at Hoppen Kiln Flash. Pairs were also at Blagdon (Milkhope Lake), Bothal Pond, Branton GP and Hedgeley GP, where a bird was incubating by 5th.

Coastal numbers rose sharply in May, with strong northerly passage. This was particularly noticeable at Lindisfarne, where numbers peaked at 2,294 during a WeBS count on 17th (ACr) and at Blyth, where numbers rose from 68 on 7th to reach a peak of 335 on 13th. Other influxes produced 166 in the Tweed Estuary on 31st, 136 at Seahouses-Beadnell on 28th, 97 moved N at Seaton Sluice on 9th, 62 at Howick-Boulmer on 18th and 50 visited Newton (Football Hole) on 29th. Inland passage was noted at several sites, including an exceptional 43 at Derwent Reservoir on 7th. Passage continued on a lesser scale in early June, with 180 in Budle Bay and 52 at Blyth.

Successful breeding occurred during June-July at both coastal and inland localities. In protected tern breeding areas at the Long Nanny Burn, 16 pairs fledged 12-17 young; while, at Lindisfarne, 11 pairs fledged at least 12 young. Six pairs on the Farne Islands were all unsuccessful, with eggs being predated or proving infertile. Two pairs used the area of beach at Chevington Burn, which was fenced for the first time. Two to three pairs were successful at Derwent Reservoir.

Post-breeding gatherings and return passage produced some good concentrations in August, many again coming from WeBS counts, including 160 in Budle Bay, 130 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 105 at Berwick (Little Beach), 53 in the Blyth Estuary and 50 at Snab Point (Cresswell). Larger counts, in September, included 101 in the Blyth Estuary, 74 at Cocklawburn, 60 in the Wansbeck Estuary and 56 in the Aln Estuary. Numbers

Curlew - Newbiggin-by-the-Sea - November (Heiko Peters)



dwindled further in October, with 96 at Berwick (North Shore), 75 in the Blyth Estuary and 55-60 at Berwick (Little Beach), Chevington Burn and Newbiggin.

Parties were settled in wintering quarters in November-December, when peaks included 90 from the Blyth Estuary-Seaton Sluice, 65 at Newbiggin, 57 in the Blyth rooftop roost and smaller groups in at least ten other localities.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, usually more numerous in spring.

The first spring record of north-bound birds involved two over Morpeth on 20th March. There was then a gap until 11th April, when two were at East Chevington, followed by four at Druridge Pools on 15th. Numbers then increased sharply, particularly on 30th, when 116 were at Druridge Pools (EB) and 12 at Boulmer. One to five visited, or overflew, at least ten other localities.

Strong passage continued during May. The large party at Druridge fell to 60 by 1st and 12 were grounded by bad weather at Newbiggin GC on 9th. There were also day counts of 12 at Budle Bay, ten at Tynemouth, eight at Fenham Flats, seven at St Mary's and three to six at Blyth, Boulmer, Prestwick Carr and Stobswood Pools, with one to two at nine other localities. As usual, onward passage reduced numbers into early June, when six were at Fenham Flats and one to three occurred at six coastal localities.

Return passage commenced in late July, with flocks of 20 at Seaton Sluice and 18 at St Mary's; additionally, 14 arrived high from the east at Berwick and there was a day peak

of ten in Budle Bay. Numbers increased during August, with 37 moving S at Seaton Sluice over a five-day period. Day peaks involved 22 at the Farne Islands, 12 in Budle Bay, 11 on Holy Island, eight at Newton, seven at Tynemouth and four at Bamburgh and the Blyth Estuary. One to two occurred at a total of 13 localities.

Passage dwindled rapidly in September, with only singles being reported from Blyth, Budle Bay, Newbiggin and St Mary's on six dates up to 29th. The final records, during October, involved late singles on Holy Island (The Snook) on 4th and on the Farne Islands on 28th.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

STATUS: Common resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
508	700	902	544	70	158	505	805	1,114	415	573	1,547

Lindisfarne held the highest numbers during the first quarter, when other sizeable flocks, often recorded on WeBS visits, included 300 at the Long Nanny Burn, 247 at Howick-Boulmer, 215 at Boulmer-Alnmouth, 212 in the Aln Estuary, 153 at St Mary's, 123 at Spittal-Cocklawburn, 112 at Howick-Boulmer and 98 wintering inland around Caistron. Elsewhere, parties of 50-85 occurred at Bamburgh, Berwick, Blyth Links, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Hauxley, Holystone, Howdon, Prestwick Carr, Seahouses-Beadnell, the Tweed Estuary and Whitley Bay links, with smaller groups in numerous other localities.

In mild conditions, an early return towards upland breeding localities occurred. A single was back at Grindon Lough on the very early date of 26th January. A much more general movement inland occurred during March, when 40 pairs were at Allendale (Acton Moor) by 22nd and pre-breeding flocks gathered in several areas. These included 51 at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), 36 at Whittle Dene, 31 at Plenmeller Common and 19 at Derwent Reservoir. Coastal passage was noticeable during April, with peaks of 100 at Boulmer, 79 at Foxton, 38 in the Tweed Estuary and 20-45 in the Blyth Estuary and at Druridge Pools, Hauxley, Howick-Boulmer and Newbiggin.

Between April-June, there were numerous reports of displaying birds on breeding territories, mainly in upland areas of their North Pennines stronghold, but also at the lowland localities of Brenkley and Longhorsley. Curlew was added during the year to the national Red List of birds of conservation concern because of the steep drop in breeding numbers.

As usual, groups of non-breeders remained on the coast, as indicated by the Lindisfarne table. Post-breeding flocks and coastal movement began during June, with 110 moving N at Seaton Sluice on 22nd-23rd and 150 gathered in Budle Bay on 26th. Numbers rose during July-September, with peaks of 166 at Howick-Boulmer, 160 at Blyth, 146 in the Tweed Estuary, 114 in the Aln Estuary, 112 on the Farne Islands and at Hauxley, 100 at Cresswell Pond, 53 at Hadston, 52 at Big Waters and numerous smaller groups in other, mainly coastal, localities.

During the final quarter, as flocks settled into wintering areas, peak numbers involved 1,547 during a WeBS count at Lindisfarne on 13th December (ACr), 464 on the Farne Islands, 280 at Boulmer, 202 at St Mary's, 138 in the Aln Estuary, 120 at Hauxley and Howick-Boulmer, 105 in the Coquet Estuary and smaller concentrations in at least 20 other localities offering feeding.



Little Stint - Holy Island - August (Heiko Peters).

Purple Sandpiper - Stag Rocks - October (Ian Fisher).



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, rare in winter.

The regular wintering site on Holy Island (Rocket Field Pools) held a peak of 14 during January-February; while, elsewhere, three visited Howdon, two flew past Fenham-le-Moor hide and singles occurred at the Blyth Estuary and Cresswell Pond.

Light movement was evident in late March, when singles were at Castle Island, Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools and, well inland, at Grindon Lough. Arrival increased during April, numbers at the Blyth Estuary rising from seven on 12th to 27 by 27th. At Holy Island, ten remained until the end of the month, Budle Bay attracted nine and two to three were seen at Castle Island, Druridge Pools and Fenham-le-Moor.

Numbers continued to increase during May-June, with many birds remaining to summer, some in breeding plumage. Druridge Bay attracted most of this summering population. There were peaks of 45 at Druridge Pools on 13th June (JBU) and a separate group of 42 at Castle Island on 14th. Additional sightings included 12 at Bothal Pond, eight at Arcot Pond and an inland single at Grindon Lough on 17th May. The species remained prominent around Druridge Bay during July, with parties moving around various waters. Farther away, there were counts of 27 at Arcot Pond, 17 at Low Newton and ten at Budle Bay. Numbers remained high, with birds present at many sites throughout August, with peaks of 42 at Blyth, 40 at Low Newton, 36 at Newton Scrape, 30 at Cresswell Pond, 25 at Arcot Pond, 18 at Lindisfarne during a WeBS count, 16 at Monks House Pool, 12 at Castle Island and ten in Budle Bay. There were single-figure counts from four other localities.

Passage southwards reduced figures during September, although 22 remained at Blyth until 27th and 17 were at Woodhorn Flashes during a WeBS count on 12th. Numbers at Arcot reduced from 17 to only one between 5th-16th. Elsewhere, 12 lingered at Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools and two to six at Budle Bay, Monks House and on the River Tyne at Elswick. Departure continued in October, when the highest counts involved 12 in the Aln Estuary, six in the Blyth Estuary and at Monks House, five at Newton Scrape and one to three at ten other localities.

During November-December, the only reports involved five still in the Aln Estuary, three remaining at Blyth and Cresswell and one at Woodhorn Flashes. Unusually, the Holy Island site failed to attract any wintering individuals.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor. Lindisfarne NNR supports a non-breeding summer population.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
665	1,500	1,350	400	210	200	300	600	571	1,000	818	859

As usual, away from their Lindisfarne stronghold, this species was scarce. Even at Lindisfarne, with a peak count of 1,500 on 7th February (ASJ), the lower occupation recorded in recent years continued - well down on the average of around 3,000 a decade ago. Elsewhere during the first quarter, WeBS counts produced 24 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 21 at Amble-Chevington and 18 at Boulmer-Alnmouth; there were only single-figure counts from 13 other localities. An unusual record involved three flying W at Swallow Pond on 24th February.

As birds departed for Arctic breeding grounds, the Lindisfarne figures fell sharply during April (see above) leaving the usual flocks of summering birds in winter plumage. Between April-June, few were seen elsewhere, but they included a summer-plumage individual at Cresswell Pond in late April, seven noted during a WeBS count from Seahouses-Beadnell on 28th May and seven moving N at Seaton Sluice on 23rd June.

The usual early return to Lindisfarne began in July, with ten still in breeding plumage back amongst the summering flock by 10th. Many others arrived later in the month. Elsewhere, return was indicated with two summer-plumage birds at Low Newton; one to two others were seen from Hartley, Seahouses and Whitley Bay. Return continued at Lindisfarne during August, with numbers at the St Cuthbert's Island roost rising from 200 on 17th to 600 by 30th. Seven were at Boulmer, five between Seahouses-Beadnell, three passed N at Seaton Sluice and singles visited Berwick, the Blyth Estuary, Cocklawburn, Hauxley, Newbiggin and St Mary's.

The only September report, away from Lindisfarne, was of two at Hauxley NR during a WeBS count on 25th. During the final quarter, virtually all of the wintering population was again confined to the NNR. Elsewhere, the largest gathering involved a group of 30 at Hauxley NR in mid-December, with counts of one to 15 coming from a further ten sites.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor, smaller numbers remaining in summer.

Rocky shore areas providing good feeding and roosting sites again held the main populations. During the first quarter, peak counts, many from WeBS visits, involved 135 at Howick-Boulmer, 108 at Berwick (North Shore), 107 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 93 at Lindisfarne, 75 on Coquet Island, 58 at Berwick (North Shore), 57 at Beadnell-Howick, 52 at Howick-Boulmer, 50 at Whitley Bay and lesser numbers at numerous other coastal localities. A more unusual record involved 13 feeding around North Shields Fish Quay.

Spring passage northwards was evident during April. A tight pack of 80 roosting at Holy Island (Sheldrake Hole) were probably migrants, as were a peak of 51 at St Mary's. A WeBS count between Cresswell-Newbiggin produced a good count of 118 on 18th. During May, 112 were between Howick-Boulmer, 69 at Budle Point-Seahouses and 44 at Tynemouth; 24 on rocks at Seaton Sluice was regarded as unusual and a party of 15 bathed at Cresswell Pond before moving on northwards after just five minutes.

Very few were present on the mainland during June, although 120 were on the Farne Islands. Return passage began in late July, with 54 between Seahouses-Beadnell the highest count, and increased during August, when by far the biggest count involved 426 on the Farne Islands (FIR). Elsewhere, numbers at the River Blyth Estuary rose from 73 on 6th to 102 by 30th. Other larger groups included 62 at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 54 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 41 at Snab Point (Cresswell), 38 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 35 at Tynemouth and 33 at Newbiggin. The highest September counts involved 97 at Newbiggin and 53 at Budle Point-Seahouses.

During the final quarter, wintering flocks were spread along the coast, again with some substantial concentrations in prime areas. These included 250 on the Farne Islands, 129 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 121 at Lindisfarne, 100 at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh), 88 at Berwick (North Shore), 80-85 at Newbiggin and St Mary's, 75 at Blyth and Budle Point-Seahouses and 64 at Hauxley.

Knot *Calidris canutus*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and common, but decreasing, winter visitor.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
120	700	1,006	160	132	0	142	331	1,330	2,500	115	1,378

Lindisfarne again held most of the wintering population. Elsewhere, between January-March, the only other double-figure reports involved WeBS counts of 27 at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 20 in the Coquet Estuary, 12 at Seahouses-Beadnell and ten in the Amble area; smaller numbers were recorded elsewhere.

Migration towards Arctic breeding areas quickly reduced numbers at Lindisfarne during April, as shown in the table. Also in April, 60 resting at Boulmer and 16 at Newbiggin (Beacon Point) were probably also migrating. During May, away from Lindisfarne, the only sighting involved three at Newbiggin. The species was absent in June, apart from a winter-plumage bird at Derwent Reservoir on 18th-19th.

Return passage, involving many still in red breeding plumage, commenced during July. Larger groups included 68 gathered in Budle Bay and 50 moving S at the Farne Islands on 27th. Much smaller numbers passed through other areas, including 15 flying S at Seaton Sluice and five to seven at Coquet Island, Cresswell-Newbiggin and St Mary's. Singles included one in breeding plumage at Derwent Reservoir, the year's second inland record from that locality. Passage increased during August, with 257 moving S past Seaton Sluice between 18th-31st. Again, the largest single concentration was in Budle Bay, with 140 present. Groups of 11-27 occurred at Low Newton, Newbiggin, St Mary's and Warkworth.

Onward passage increased numbers at Lindisfarne during September, although smaller numbers were recorded elsewhere; 28 at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) being the highest count. Unusually, one at Lindisfarne on 29th retained full breeding plumage. During the final quarter, the highest count of the year involved 2,500 in Budle Bay on 20th (JPL); away from Lindisfarne the only other sizeable groups were 63 at Stag Rocks in October, and 42 in the Coquet Estuary and 21 at Alnmouth South in November.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, mainly in the autumn, uncommon in winter.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1850s

A lone wintering bird was at Cresswell Pond during January-February. Typical light spring passage commenced from 27th March, when one visited a sewage works on the River Tweed. During April, four to five visited Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools. Eight were at Druridge Pools in early May, including three males in breeding plumage, when the only record away from that locality involved a single at Fenham-le-Moor.

The only June sighting was a single at Stobswood Pools on 30th; while, during July, light return movement was suggested by up to four at Newton Scrape, two at Hauxley NR and singles at Bothal Pond, Castle Island, the Tweed Estuary and West Hartford.

Much stronger passage occurred in August, with sizeable concentrations in prime feeding areas. These included 35 at Monks House Pool (TRD), 18 at Charlton Mires, 15 at Backworth, 14 at Druridge Pools and 12 at Bothal Pond, Budle Bay and Earsdon. The Earsdon party included a female which had been colour-marked in Scotland five days

earlier. Elsewhere, five to nine visited Arcot Pond, Blagdon, Castle Island, Cocklawburn, Cresswell Pond, the Farne Islands, Holywell Pond, Low Newton and Seaton Sluice, with one to four at a minimum of ten further localities. Occurrences farther inland involved four at Grindon Lough, three at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and two at Derwent Reservoir.

Onward movement reduced figures in September, with much smaller numbers involved. The month's peaks included seven at Bothal Pond, six at Castle Island, five at Monks House Pool and four in the Aln Estuary and at East Chevington; smaller numbers elsewhere included inland singles at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 13th and Grindon Lough on 24th and 26th. In October, three lingered at Monks House Pool until 5th, with one staying to 24th, and singles remained at Bothal Pond, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Grindon Lough and Hauxley NR.

During November, singles were at Cresswell Pond and Grindon Lough. During December, the sole record involved a single which settled in to winter at Cresswell Pond and was reported regularly until the end of the year.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented passage visitor, usually more numerous in the autumn.

It proved a very quiet year for this elegant northern wader.

Very light spring passage involved singles at Cresswell Pond on 25th April and Holy Island on 10th May, while another at Budle Bay on 3rd June was in full breeding plumage. The final single of spring was at Fenham Flats on 15th June.

Return passage was similarly light. In August, it involved a single at Hauxley NR on 20th and one in Budle Bay on 30th, increasing to two on 31st (GPK). During September, there were two records of juveniles; at Newton Scrape on 7th and Druridge Pools on 13th. The last sighting involved a juvenile at Grindon Lough on 11th October.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1832 / LAST RECORD: 2014

A group of four adults were located at Druridge Pools on 19th May (TF/JFa/ADMc *et al.*), with two staying the next day and one through to 21st May; a typical locality and date for the species. An adult was also noted at Derwent Reservoir on 25th June (IFo), where views were obtained from the hide. It proved to be another long stayer at this locality, with sightings through to 3rd July; almost exactly the same date and length of stay as in 2014, at the same locality, and hence very likely to be the same returning individual. A distinctly strange series of records and maybe even a potential sign of a breeding attempt nearby to come.

Another group of three were well-watched at Monks House Pool from 24th-26th August (DF *et al.*), with two staying until 31st August. The extended stay and ideal locality meant they were well-watched.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor, smaller numbers remaining in summer.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
79	39	109	30	11	58	12	42	227	68	57	70

Numbers at Lindisfarne were modest during the first quarter, with larger flocks in other localities. The majority of these came from WeBS counters and involved January-February peaks of 92 at Boulmer-Alnmouth, 82 at Berwick (North Shore), 76 at Amble-Chevington, 65 at St Mary's, 57 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 50 at Newbiggin and smaller groups in ten other coastal localities. As numbers at Lindisfarne rose during March, as a result of early movement northwards, peaks elsewhere included 120 at Howick-Boulmer, 85 at St Mary's, 73 at Beadnell-Howick, 72 at Cresswell-Newbiggin and 47 at Scremerston.

As usual, passage towards high Arctic breeding areas was more pronounced during April-May, with some large counts in suitable feeding and roosting areas. These included 112 at Amble-Chevington, 82 at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 77 at St Mary's, some of which were watched arriving from the south, and 75 at Boulmer, Hauxley and Newbiggin, with smaller groups visiting other localities. Overland movement was shown by two at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and one at Derwent Reservoir. Movement continued in June, with a migrating flock of 58 in breeding plumage on Holy Island.

Early return passage was evident from late July, when St Mary's attracted up to 80 and 55 were recorded from Cresswell-Newbiggin; both being WeBS counts. Elsewhere, 21 were at Chevington Burn, 15 at Hauxley, nine at Newbiggin and Low Newton and a notable inland single was on the River Tyne at Elswick on 28th. Numbers rose in August to provide a new maximum at St Mary's of 198, while 124 were at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 75 at Newbiggin and 20-30 at four other localities. Numbers remained high in September, with 227 at Lindisfarne during a WeBs count on 12th being the largest annual gathering (ACr); elsewhere, 132 were at Cresswell-Newbiggin and 80-90 frequented St Mary's and Whitley Bay beach.

During the final quarter, sizeable winter flocks were settled in several areas. The main concentrations involved 147 at Amble-Chevington, 124 at Newbiggin, 108 at Boulmer-Alnmouth, 100 at East Chevington and Hauxley, 94 at St Mary's and 70 on Holy Island (Sandham Bay), with smaller regular flocks at other localities.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

STATUS: Abundant passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,030	900	1,059	315	3,062	29	321	861	739	800	521	1,442

Once again, Lindisfarne attracted the high populations, although the decline in figures of recent years continued. Away from Lindisfarne, during the first quarter, good feeding areas also held large concentrations, the highest totals coming from WeBS counts. There were peaks of 343 in the Blyth Estuary, 298 at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 160 in the Coquet Estuary, 115 at St Mary's, 112 at Berwick (North Shore), 89 at Howick-Boulmer, 60 at East Chevington, 50 at Cresswell Pond and numerous smaller parties in other localities.

Movement of wintering flocks reduced figures during April, before they rose again steeply into May as birds which had wintered farther south passed northwards. Most were in breeding plumage. These included 800 moving N at Holy Island on 6th, followed by a concentration of 2,500 along the causeway on 12th and 3,062 from Lindisfarne NNR during a WeBS count on 17th (ACr). Another WeBS count produced a flock of 174 at Blyth

during this period, with smaller migrant flocks in other areas. Movement inland produced a peak of 14 at Grindon Lough, where display occurred, eight at Derwent Reservoir and a single at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh).

Numbers were generally low during June-July, as small parties remained to summer, but started to rise again during August with the start of return passage. This produced flocks of 450 in Budle Bay, 350 in the Coquet Estuary, 200 at Boulmer and 50-80 at the Blyth Estuary, Castle Island, Cresswell Pond, Low Newton and Monks House Pool. Movement included 90 S (in one hour) at Tynemouth. Onward passage reduced numbers slightly in September, when the largest group, away from Lindisfarne, involved 150 at Howick.

During the final quarter, excluding Lindisfarne, numbers were relatively modest. The Blyth Estuary attracted a late peak of 220 in December, when 133 roosted on the old coal staithes. WeBS counts accounted for the majority of other high totals during the quarter, with 89 at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 86 in the Coquet Estuary, 72 at Boulmer-Alnmouth, 69 at Howick-Boulmer, up to 60 at Cresswell Pond and 50 at Cullercoats and Tynemouth; only small groups were noted at other localities.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor, a few remaining in summer.

Coquet Island held the highest numbers during the first quarter, with 122 in March. The Farne Islands attracted 70 during the period, while the mainland stronghold, at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh), had a modest maximum of 45. Elsewhere, highest numbers often came from WeBS counts; 64 were at Beadnell-Howick, 61 at Seahouses-Beadnell, 40 below the pier at North Blyth was considered exceptional, 25 were at Low Newton and parties of ten to 20 at Alnmouth South, Amble-Chevington, Howick-Boulmer, Snab Point (Cresswell) and St Mary's. There were single-figure counts from ten other localities.

Passage northwards followed in April, when a WeBS count produced 136 between Seahouses-Beadnell and numbers at the Farne Islands peaked at 115. A gathering of 42 was at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 29 were at Newbiggin (Beacon Point), 13 at the Aln Estuary and Whitley Bay (Rockcliffe), nine at Seaton Sluice and eight on Holy Island and at Spittal-Cocklawburn. At Stag Rocks, up to 30 lingered into early May, when 18 were at Newbiggin and 13 in Budle Bay.

The species was absent in June. Very light return passage during July produced 30 at the Farne Islands, but only one to two at Newbiggin, Seaton Sluice, Tynemouth and Whitley Bay. Return remained very light during August, except at the Farne Islands, where there was a gathering of 121. On the mainland, 11 were at Lindisfarne, four at Tynemouth and singles at Cocklawburn and Newbiggin.

Light influxes during September produced 12 at Stag Rocks, ten at Blyth Harbour, eight at Newbiggin and three between Whitley Bay-Tynemouth. Return increased in October, with 130 at Stag Rocks on 20th rising to a late peak of 210 by 25th November (TRD). In other regular areas in the final quarter, there were late peaks, often from WeBS counts, of 115 on the Farne Islands, 80 in Budle Bay, 35 at Cresswell-Newbiggin, 30 at Berwick Pier, 24 at Low Newton, 19 at Amble-Chevington and Seahouses-Beadnell, 16 at Howick-Dunstanburgh, 15 at Whitley Bay-Tynemouth, 12 at Beadnell-Howick, 11 at Alnmouth South and ten at Snab Point. There were single-figure counts from six other sites.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, usually more numerous in the autumn.

Spring passage was typically light during May. One found at Widdrington Lake by a WeBS counter on 16th may have been responsible for sightings at Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools the following day. Another single was in Budle Bay on 20th. Four birds, all in breeding plumage, followed during June. One was at Newton Scrape on 8th-9th, two at Grindon Lough on 12th (PRM) and one at Derwent Reservoir from 19th-22nd.

Return passage, in late summer, was similarly light. During August, singles were at Newton Scrape from 20th-31st, Budle Bay from 25th-30th, Bothal Pond from 26th-31st and Boulmer on 29th. The last sighting involved a single in Budle Bay on 8th September.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1963 / LAST RECORD: 2014

October sightings are not unusual for the species and a fine adult was an excellent find at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) from 14th-21st (DF *et al.*). It was very obliging and allowed some excellent photos to be taken during its stay.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1853 / LAST RECORD: 2014

A typical year with records spread through from May-October. Another spring sighting for the species involved an adult at Newton Scrape from 11th-14th May (RS/AS *et al.*). This small wetland continues to draw in migrant waders, a sign of what one person's efforts can achieve. Another adult was seen there on 9th July (RS).

Autumn started with an adult at Bothal Pond from 6th-11th August (TF/JFa *et al.*) and then one at Holywell Pond from 20th-26th August (BB/AA *et al.*). Finally, one was located at Monks House Pool on 16th September (DF), with a late bird at Grindon Lough on 11th October (PRM).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1828 / LAST RECORD: 2013

Two sightings this year, with the first, an adult, on East Chevington north pool late evening on 2nd June (MSK). A smart female at Grindon Lough from 12th-21st June (PRM *et al.*) was well received as this is a difficult species to see in the county. Its extended stay gave rise to the possibility of a future breeding attempt if a male happened to pass by.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

STATUS: Rare passage and winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1823 / LAST RECORD: 2014

Only two claims this year, with both well documented. One was watched for two minutes slowly making its way N at Boulmer on 21st November during a strong sea passage (ME). The other sighting involved one at Meadow Haven (Berwick) on 6th December (MHu). It was well-watched feeding near the end of the pier and came close to the observer before moving back out to sea.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 5 / FIRST: 1986 / LAST: 2011

On a gloomy, damp morning on 4th July, JGS decided to check Newton Scrape and alighted upon this extreme rarity for the county (JGS/GW). One of those waders that is instantly recognisable and a real surprise considering the date. He managed to contact GW, who just managed to obtain some cracking photos, before the bird decided that enough was enough and headed out to the beach and was not relocated. This national rarity was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee and becomes the sixth for the county, following a popular bird at Hauxley in 2011.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

STATUS: Well-represented summer visitor and passage migrant, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

An early individual was calling at Kilham on 29th March, with the main arrival following during April. After a single at Berwick on 5th, the main influx occurred from 8th April, with sightings at Bywell, Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), Melkridge and West Ord. By mid-month, five were at Kielder, with the same number noted in the Tweed Estuary during a WeBS count, and one to two were established in 15 other widespread localities. By the end of the month, three pairs were displaying along 100m of the River Breamish and pairs were settled in breeding sites along other river systems.

During May, other pairs occupied breeding sites on many rivers, streams and other waters. Results from prime Cheviot areas included seven pairs in the Breamish Valley and four in the Harthope Valley. Single pairs were found in another 18 widespread riverside localities. The first young were seen in the Harthope Valley on 9th June and another juvenile was at Beanley on 30th. Pairs and family groups continued to be reported during July from regular and probable breeding areas.

Typical very early return passage was indicated in late June, when singles appeared at Bothal Pond and Castle Island on 28th. During July, while many remained in breeding areas, other records involved passage. These included 12 in the Aln Estuary during a WeBS count on 22nd, 11 at Castle Island on 23rd and one to three at seven coastal localities, with singles at five further sites. Stronger movement occurred during August to provide peak gatherings of 28 at Hauxley NR (Ponteland Pool) on 24th (TRD) and, from 23rd-25th, 18 in Budle Bay, 17 at Holywell Pond, 15 at Charlton Mires, 14 at St Mary's, ten at Castle Island and Monks House Pool and nine on the Farne Islands. One to seven occurred at 24 other localities.

Departure reduced numbers in September, when only two to three remained at the Aln Estuary, Bothal Pond, Cresswell Pond, the Farne Islands, the WeBS stretch from Whitley Bay-Tynemouth and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with singles at six other waters. The final record was a single still at Cresswell Pond on 25th September.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor; rare, although increasing, in winter.

The regular wintering locality of Whittle Dene Reservoirs held three birds during the first quarter. Singles were also on a stream at Bothal in late January-early February. Also in February, singles were at Branton and Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh); the latter

remaining into March, when two were on the River Breamish (north of Hedgeley) and another was at Big Waters.

In April, two lingered at Whittle Dene until 11th and one was at Haughton Strother until 18th. Other singles were at Doddington on 16th and Earsdon (Beehive Flash) from 28th-2nd May. The final spring records involved singles at St Mary's Wetland on 5th May and Capheaton Lake on 28th May.

Return passage commenced with a single at West Hartford on 28th June. Numbers rose in July, with up to three at Arcot Pond and Castle Island, two at Druridge Pools and singles at the Aln Estuary, Blagdon, Charlton Mires, Cresswell Pond and Linkhall Pool. More arrived in August, to give peaks of five at Whittle Dene Reservoirs (SR), four at Charlton Mires and Gosforth Park NR, three at Blagdon, two at Bothal Pond and singles at 14 other localities. Onward passage reduced figures in September, leaving three at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and singles at Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Blagdon and Bothal Pond.

During October, only singles were reported from Bothal Pond and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Two were noted at Hedgeley GP on 1st November. During December, three were settled to winter at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and singles were at Big Waters on 13th and Hedgeley GP on 15th.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, more frequent in the autumn and rare in winter.

Typical very light return passage produced a single, fading out of breeding plumage, at Cresswell Pond on 15th June and two at Fenham Flats on 20th June. Another single arrived in Budle Bay on 24th July for what proved to be a prolonged stay. Passage increased slightly during August, when two were at Bothal Pond, Holywell Pond and Lindisfarne (South Law) and singles visited Branton GP, Earsdon, Gosforth Park NR and Holy Island.

During September, the only sightings involved the individual at Budle Bay, which regularly used the same rock as a high tide roost. It eventually left on 8th October, after a ten-week stay, and may have been the individual seen on Holy Island three days later and which provided the year's final record.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, more numerous in the autumn, rare in winter.

One feeding on saltmarsh at Fenham Flats on 17th February was the only indication of wintering during the first quarter. Four in the same area on 19th March may have been early migrants.

Typical very light spring passage followed during April, with singles on 12th at Cresswell Pond and West Hartford and another at Cresswell on 17th. Two visited Castle Island on 23rd and singles were at Druridge Pools on 25th and Castle Island on 29th. During May, singles visited the Blyth Estuary, Bothal Pond, Budle Bay, Castle Island, Holy Island and Low Newton, with inland sightings at Grindon Lough and Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh). Up to seven were noted at Lindisfarne during June.

Return passage during July involved three in the Aln Estuary during a WeBS count on 22nd, two at Arcot Pond and Derwent Reservoir and singles at Branton, Budle Bay, Castle Island, Druridge Pools, Hauxley NR and St Mary's. Numbers rose during August-September, with small groups and singles in numerous localities. Peaks involved a high

count of 60 at Lindisfarne during a WeBS visit on 12th September (ACr), six at Castle Island and Foxton Bends, five at Hauxley NR and four at Grindon Lough and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Two to three were at Charlton Mires, Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Holy Island, Holywell Pond and the Wansbeck Estuary, with singles visiting at least 15 other localities.

Onward passage quickly reduced numbers during October, when five were in the Aln Estuary during a WeBS count on 20th and singles occurred at Branton GP, Budle Bay, Castle Island, the Farne Islands, Fenham Mill and Sleekburn. The final sighting was a single at St Mary's on 1st November.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 9 / FIRST: 1977 / LAST: 2014

An early morning visit proved fortuitous as finally the County Recorder managed to find a national rarity in the county for himself! (TRD *et al.*). This elegant wader was located on Newton Scrape on 11th May and was last seen on 13th May. Astonishingly, it was joined soon after being found by a Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* and photos were obtained of the two species feeding side-by-side; a definite first for North East England. Many observers enjoyed close views as it fed unconcernedly on this man-made scrape. Only the tenth record for the county and the record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1853

Spring passage began on 25th April, when one briefly visited Cresswell Pond and then flew northwards; it was probably the individual recorded at Druridge Pools the same day. Another single was at Arcot Pond on 28th-29th. Passage increased during May, with two at Druridge Pools on 4th and 17th and Charlton Mires on 8th; singles were seen at these localities on several dates during the month. Other singles visited Hoppen Kiln Flash, Newton Scrape and West Stobswood Pool. One on Holy Island on 30th May brought an end to spring movement.

Light return passage occurred during July, with singles at Low Newton on 7th, Bothal Pond on 13th and Cresswell Pond on 23rd. Movement increased slightly during August. Two were noted at Widdrington Moor Lake during a WeBS count on 16th and three calling birds flew over Hauxley NR on 23rd (NFO). Elsewhere, singles were at Blagdon, Bothal Pond, Budle Bay, Holy Island and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. The final record involved a single at Stobswood on 20th September.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
547	300	600	258	16	5	435	377	780	685	634	747

Although Lindisfarne held the largest concentrations during the first quarter, substantial gatherings were recorded at other prime roosting and feeding areas, often during WeBS counts. These included 344 at Howdon, 294 in the Tweed Estuary, 215 at Boulmer-Alnmouth, 212 in the Aln Estuary, 138 at Howdon, 126 at St Mary's, 108 at Whitley Bay-Tynemouth, 106 in the Blyth Estuary and 100 at Cullercoats. Smaller parties were in numerous other localities.

A return towards inland breeding areas was noticeable from 12th March, with nine at Grindon Lough, four at Derwent Reservoir, two at Holystone and one at Plenmeller Common. By 22nd, 40 were in Allendale (Acton Moor) and early display was seen. Movement inland continued in April, with groups and pairs occupying typical upland and waterside breeding localities, mainly in the west, but with pairs also at Bothal Pond, Druridge Pools and Hauxley NR. The first young were found inland in late June.

Post-breeding gatherings formed during the second half of July, when numbers at Lindisfarne rose quickly (see table). The biggest groups of the month included 210 feeding in Budle Bay on 18th and 367 gathered in the Blyth Estuary by 31st. Further movement swelled numbers during August, when the Blyth population increased to 464, 145 were in the Aln Estuary, 120 in the Tweed Estuary and 90 at St Mary's. Inland, 49 fed along the River Tyne at Elswick. During September, the increased Lindisfarne population, which peaked at 780 during a WeBS count on 12th (ACr), included 400 regularly roosting on Holy Island (Rocket Field Pools). Numbers remained high at Blyth, with a peak of 345, and steady in the Aln and Tweed Estuaries, with 148 and 102 respectively.

During the final quarter, away from Lindisfarne, the main concentrations were 288 at Howdon, 283 in the Blyth Estuary, with most roosting on the staithes at North Blyth, 250 at Cresswell Pond, 216 in the Tweed Estuary, 155 at St Mary's, 137 in the Aln Estuary, 120 at Howick-Boulmer, 114 at Hauxley NR and 104 at Whitley Bay-Tynemouth, with smaller flocks in numerous other areas. More unusually, a single was still inland at Grindon Lough on New Year's Eve.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor.

Typical wet feeding areas held wintering individuals during the first quarter. Two were seen at both Backworth and West Hartford and singles were resident at Arcot and Bothal Ponds, Chesterhill, East Chevington, Grindon Lough, Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), Holy Island and St Mary's.

Departure occurred during March and there were no further records until typical light return passage commenced with one feeding at a small puddle in horse fields at Shiremoor on 24th September. Another was at Big Waters the following day. Arrival increased during October, when two were found in the dunes on Holy Island, two were at Cresswell Pond and singles were at Big Waters, East Chevington, Fenham Flats, Haughton Strother GP, High Humbledon and Howdon. Seven singles were found on the Farne Islands during the month. One flew in from the east at St Mary's on 29th.

During November, singles were at Backworth, Beanley Moor and Woodhorn Flashes. During December, the Backworth bird had settled for winter and was seen regularly; other singles appeared at Callerton Pond and West Hartford. One at Howdon was watched sitting in the sunshine on the edge of a flooded reedbed on 16th December.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 7 / FIRST: 1959 / LAST: 2012

A juvenile was located at Cresswell Pond on 9th November (ADM/CDB *et al.*) and the mild winter encouraged it to linger. It completed a six month stay and was last seen on 27th April 2016. Unsurprisingly, it became the first to over-winter in Northumberland. It moved between Cresswell Pond, Bell's Pond and Druridge Pools throughout its stay. This record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.



Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

During the first quarter, three were at Swallow Pond and two at Belford Moor, Grindon Lough, Harthope Valley, Harwood (Steng Moss), Longhorsley and Prestwick Carr. Singles were noted in at least 26 other widespread localities. Among these were individuals resting in garden shrubbery at Berwick and one found dead in Newcastle city centre. The sole evidence of early spring passage involved a single flushed on the Farne Islands on 23rd March.

The first indication of 'roding' flights in breeding areas was in April, with display noted from Westburnhope on 5th, Grindon Lough on 18th and Harwood Forest on 23rd. Further display was seen during May-June, when four were 'roding' at Slaley Forest and two at Harwood Forest. Singles displayed in the Harthope Valley and Simonside Hills and one was at Beanley Wood. An unusual incident at Plankey Mill involved one interacting with a Noctule bat *Nyctalus noctula*; they almost collided and then chased each other around for a short period. After the display period ended, there were no reports during July-August.

In September, singles were at Grindon Lough and Newcastle International Airport.

Influxes of immigrants occurred during October, with one to three noted between 4th-11th at Cramlington, Holy Island and Tynemouth. A much heavier influx, during strong southeasterly winds and fog, produced 40 on Holy Island on 28th (ADM/BC) and at least 29 on the Farne Islands the next day. This was reflected elsewhere on 29th, with seven at Hauxley and six arrived from the east at Seaton Sluice. Eight were at Newbiggin on 30th. One to two appeared during this period at eight other coastal localities.

A lighter arrival occurred between 20th-23rd November, with four at Seaton Sluice and singles on Holy Island and at Newbiggin (Church Point). Elsewhere during the month, singles occurred at eight other coastal, and seven inland, localities. The only December records involved singles at Gosforth Park NR on 11th and flushed near Seaton Sluice watchtower in the early morning of 16th; the latter perhaps indicating arrival.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

STATUS: Common resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Prime feeding areas held some large concentrations during the first quarter, with 76 at St Mary's Wetland, 45 at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), 41 at Backworth, 40 at the Long Nanny Burn, 34 at Arcot Lane and smaller numbers at numerous other widespread wetland areas.

A return to breeding areas occurred during late March, with the first display, involving 12, at Acton Moor on 22nd and four at Knockburn by the end of the month. More breeding sites were occupied during April, with 'large numbers' displaying at Westburnhope, 12-15 displaying at Coanwood Burn, eight displaying at Carrshield Moor, seven displaying at Plenneller Common, five near Blanchland and smaller numbers, many also displaying, at several other sites. During May, six displayed near Lambley, up to six were at Plenneller Common, with four displaying, and one to two at Alnwick Moor, Fontburn, Harthope Valley, Shield on the Wall and Tasset, as well as lowland sites at Backworth, Druridge Pools and Prestwick Carr.

As the breeding season ended, small groups began to appear in August-September at lowland areas, including Arcot, Backworth and Bothal Ponds, Castle Island, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Hauxley, Holy Island, Holywell Pond, Monks House Pool, Swallow Pond and Warkworth. Immigration produced a modest peak of eight on the Farne Islands on 27th September.

During the final quarter, groups were once again concentrated at rich feeding localities. The highest counts involved 87 around three flashes at Callerton (MH), 62 at Haughton Strother, 54 at Cresswell Pond and 25 at St Mary's Wetland. Parties of 15-20 frequented Backworth, Eshot, Gosforth Park and West Hartford. Many smaller groups occurred at other widespread, mainly lowland, localities.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 1 / FIRST: 2014

After the brief stay in 2014, an adult was the focus of huge interest as it lingered at Bothal Pond from 29th May-1st June (DD *et al.*). The constant arrival of birders gave rise to another major county rarity being found as it shared the site with a Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*. Unfortunately, this was not so obliging, but the pratincole delighted

many observers with frequent flights low over the water. The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.



Stewart Sexton

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, mainly in the autumn, rare in spring.

Three unusual sightings were recorded early in the year. A juvenile flew N at Seaton Sluice on 19th January, followed by one N at St Mary's on 31st. Then another juvenile flew N at Seaton Sluice on 5th February.

In the spring, a dark phase adult flew N at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 14th May.

Autumn records began with singles N at Seaton Sluice on 19th and Newbiggin on 22nd August. An adult flew N at Tynemouth at 06:50hrs on 6th September, with possibly the same bird N at Annstead Point. Juveniles were off Tynemouth on 5th and 12th September and Newbiggin on 6th, while one was at Holy Island on 7th September. In October, an adult flew S at St Mary's on 7th, an adult and juvenile flew N through Inner Sound (Farne Islands) on 10th, two adults flew N at Newbiggin on 17th, three pale phase adults flew N together at Seaton Sluice on 26th (SSWT) and two pale phase adults were off St Mary's on the same day.

November began with a juvenile N at Tynemouth on 8th. A productive spell for seawatching in late November then produced two adults N at Tynemouth on 21st, followed by single adults N at High Hauxley and Newbiggin, an adult S through Inner Sound and a sub-adult N at Seaton Sluice all on 22nd and, finally, two N and one S through Staple Sound, including an immaculate full 'spooned' adult, the following day (FIR).

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, mainly in the autumn, rare in winter.

The first sighting of the year was a dark morph off East Chevington burn mouth on 23rd April and another flew N at Seaton Sluice on 25th. A dark morph adult flew N at Seaton Sluice on 1st May and one was chasing terns off Warkworth on 29th May. In June, singles moved N at Annstead Point on 8th and Warkworth Gut on 9th and two flew N at Seaton

Sluice on 23rd. At the Farne Islands, birds were noted on single dates in May and June.

Numbers built up as expected during the summer. At Seaton Sluice, 24 flew N and four S (in 74 hours) during July, described as below the July average. One to two were recorded on nine days in July along the coast from Bamburgh, Coquet Island, Hauxley, Newbiggin, St Mary's, Tynemouth and Whitley Bay, with the Farne Islands recording birds on four dates during the month. During August, 18 flew N and 13 S (in 58 hours) at Seaton Sluice, described as well below average. Elsewhere, four flew N at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 31st, two lingered in Druridge Bay on 11th, two were off Holy Island on 21st, singles were at Hauxley and Newbiggin and birds were recorded at the Farne Islands on five dates.

This pattern was repeated in September at Seaton Sluice, where 65 flew N and 11 S, including 50 N during 3rd-7th, again described as very low totals (SSWT). At the Farne Islands, peak counts were eight and 14 N on 6th and 7th September respectively and birds were reported on 16 days, including the first juvenile of the season on 19th. A run of records at Newbiggin involved six N on 5th, four there on 6th and ten N (in 30 minutes) on 8th. Elsewhere, four were off Annstead Point on 5th, six off Snab Point on 6th and eight moved S at St Mary's on 9th. One to two were seen at Blyth South Harbour, Boulmer, Druridge Bay and St Mary's before later birds off Cullernose Point on 14th and four N at Snab Point on 27th September.

In October, two moved N and two S at Seaton Sluice during 4th-5th, three flew N at Newbiggin on 6th, two of which had spent some time standing on a large piece of driftwood, and singles past Emmanuel Head (Holy Island) on 13th, 18th and 19th. Birds were recorded on three days at the Farne Islands. The last of the year were adults in November, moving N at Druridge Pools on 8th and N at Seaton Sluice on 21st, with birds at the Farne Islands on two dates, the latest on 22nd.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

STATUS: Uncommon to rare passage visitor, mainly in the autumn.

The first sighting involved an immature, either a first-summer or second-summer, N off Newton Links on 14th June (JGS). Next came a second calendar year, pale phase bird, which was tracked N on 23rd June at St Mary's (MSH), Seaton Sluice (TRC/MHp) and Newbiggin (STH). A sub-adult then flew N through Staple Sound on 26th June (FIR), a welcome record for the Farne Islands after a blank year in 2014; it had earlier been reported passing Newbiggin.

In another poor year for the species, there were no further records until the only August sighting saw a juvenile lingering off Seaton Sluice on 31st before moving off N (TRC/MHp/BB). A juvenile was seen at St Mary's on 5th September (AC/IJ) and another flew N at Annstead Point on 6th (CGK/GPK). The final report involved a juvenile N at St Mary's on 12th September (AC).

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, mainly in the autumn, rare in winter.

There were two sightings early in the year, with the first involving two N at St Mary's on 31st January, followed by another N at Seaton Sluice on 3rd February.

Spring records began with one at the Farne Islands on 20th April. A single flew S at Holy Island on 15th May, heavily mobbed by gulls, and three were off the island on 11th June. Two flew N at Seaton Sluice and Snab Point (Cresswell) on 23rd June, when singles were at Low Newton, Newbiggin, St Mary's and Tynemouth; all records may have related to

the same two birds. In the period May-June, birds were noted off the Farne Islands on five dates. In July, one moved N at Tynemouth on 9th, before a late influx involved 14 N at Seaton Sluice from 26th-30th, including eight on 29th, and singles off Tynemouth on 26th, St Mary's on 27th and Newbiggin on 28th. Another was observed chasing two Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* at St Mary's on 29th July. The Farne Islands recorded birds on five days during the month.

One N at St Mary's on 14th August was followed by five N at Seaton Sluice from 19th-31st and one off Bamburgh on 21st; birds were noted at the Farne Islands on four dates. Seven flew N and one S at Seaton Sluice during 1st-12th September; whilst, on 5th, ten flew N at the Farne Islands (FIR) (with birds noted on another nine days in the month), with four N at Annstead Point, three N at Newbiggin and three at St Mary's. Two were off Snab Point on 6th September, two were seen on an evening pelagic out of North Shields on 7th and one flew S at Newbiggin on 13th.

In October, singles moved N at Seaton Sluice on 5th and Newbiggin and Berwick Pier on 6th, with two N at Newbiggin on 17th; birds were reported on five days at the Farne Islands and Emmanuel Head (Holy Island) enjoyed a run of records, with six on 16th, nine on 17th and five on 19th. Tynemouth produced one N on 8th November and two S on 21st November and a single was at the Farne Islands the following day. The final records of the year involved a total of five N at Seaton Sluice from 28th-29th December; another on the latter date landed on the outer rocks at Snab Point before departing S.

Auk sp. *Uria* / *Alca* / *Fratercula*

Some large auk movements included 1,260 N (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice on 14th May (SSWT), 1,350 past Holy Island on 13th October and 120 S (in 2.5 hours) at Seaton Sluice on 26th October.

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

STATUS: Abundant summer and passage visitor, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Very few were noted at the start of the year, other than around the Farne Islands, where thousands were present on the water when the Rangers returned in mid-March and large numbers were at nesting areas from 25th March.

There wasn't a full breeding survey on the Farne Islands this year, where the first egg was noted on 15th May and birds were first seen bringing sandeels to burrows on 28th May. The first fledgling was found on 6th July and that night they were observed leaving burrows under the cover of darkness. Relatively poor productivity (0.46 chicks per pair) was linked to some torrential downpours, in particular over 2nd-3rd July, when 31.5mm of rain flooded burrows across the islands; subsequently many dead chicks were found outside burrows on Brownsman and Staple Island (FIR). Puffins were first noted back at Coquet Island on 20th March, but a census wasn't undertaken this year; the last full census was in 2013 (RSPB). Elsewhere, a single prospected nest sites at Needles Eye (Berwick) on 26th May.

Some modest mid-summer movements included up to 90 N (in one hour) at Seaton Sluice and 56 N (in two hours) at St Mary's on 23rd-24th June and 81 N and 50 S (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice on 14th July. Approximately 500 were resting on the sea at Hauxley on 15th June. Very few were noted to the year end, the last being two flying S at Seaton Sluice on 28th December.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 17th and possibly 18th centuries.

The first involved a single seen during a 'Serenity Tour' to the Farne Islands on 7th February. It, or another, was noted off Emmanuel Head (Holy Island) on 27th February.

It was a notably quiet season at the Farne Islands, partly due to limited coverage of the outer group in late November, when birds would normally be present around the islands. The only other records involved an adult off Inner Farne on 28th June and a winter-plumaged adult N through Staple Sound on 10th November, which then landed on the sea.

Razorbill *Alca torda*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The highest counts in the first quarter came from Seaton Sluice in March and included 73, mostly passing S, on 8th and 95 N (in two hours) on 9th. In April, 90 were on the sea and cliffs at Needles Eye (Berwick) on 10th and, in June, 140 moved N at Seaton Sluice (in one hour) on 23rd.

Birds were present at the Farne Islands when the Rangers arrived in mid-March. The first egg was found on 4th May and breeding pairs had decreased to 476 (down 5% from the 501 pairs in 2014). The first chick was noted on 4th June and productivity, at 0.61 chicks per pair, was slightly lower than the mean of 0.65 for the last five years (FIR). At Needles Eye, 27 nests were counted on 26th May (MHu) and at Dunstanburgh Castle birds were noted on the cliff ledges on 7th (JMA).

Sizeable autumn movements came from Seaton Sluice in September and involved 21 N on 20th, 520 N (in two hours) on 21st and 125 S (in 1.5 hours) on 29th. Small numbers lingered around the Farne Islands once breeding birds had departed, including at least 15 in Staple Sound on 3rd September. A few were noted in the north to the year's end.

Little Auk *Alle alle*

STATUS: Uncommon winter and autumn passage visitor. Weather dependant, can occur in large numbers after northerly gales.

A decent year began with three N on 19th and nine N on 31st January at Seaton Sluice. On the latter date, 15 moved N and five S at nearby St Mary's, whilst two singles flew N at Bamburgh on 30th. Fresh north-westerly winds at the start of February brought another influx into the North Sea, with birds reported from many coastal watch points. On 1st, 146 moved N (in one hour) at Snab Point (Cresswell), 87 moved N (in one hour) at Hadston Carrs, 110 moved N (in three hours) at Newbiggin and up to 17 were recorded at Beadnell Point, Holy Island, Newton Point, St Mary's and Tynemouth. From 2nd-5th, birds were still



moving N, although in smaller numbers, with a maximum of 17 at Tynemouth on 4th. In March, a single flew S at Tynemouth on 8th. Spring birds are rare in the county and the first April record since 2003 involved two in summer plumage flying N at Tynemouth on 18th.

No further reports were made until 12th November, when two singles and a group of three passed N through Staple Sound (Farne Islands). A short-lived northerly blow on 20th-21st November brought good numbers into the North Sea. At Seaton Sluice, a total of 350 moved N from 20th-23rd, with a peak of 328 (in seven hours) on 21st; other N movements on 21st involved 602 (in 7.5 hours) at the Farne Islands (with 301 the following day) (FIR), 243 (in one hour) at Snab Point, 206 (in three hours) at Newbiggin, 50 (per hour) at Emmanuel Head (Holy Island), 46 (in 45 minutes) at Dunstanburgh Castle and 40+ at Newton Point. Elsewhere during the period 20th-23rd, N movement included 53 at Tynemouth, with smaller numbers of up to 35 reported from Berwick, Cullercoats, High Hauxley, Holy Island Harbour and St Mary's. Stragglers were recorded to the end of the month and exhausted or dead birds were noted at Holy Island and Tynemouth. In December, small numbers continued to be seen at the Farne Islands until the Rangers left on 3rd, one flew S at Seaton Sluice on 7th and the last of the year was found during a BTO NEWS visit to Howick-Dunstanburgh on 9th.

Guillemot *Uria aalge*

STATUS: Abundant resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

The largest counts in the first quarter involved ca.400 N (in one hour) at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 1st February and, at Seaton Sluice in March, 350 N (in two hours) on 7th, 1,255 N (in two hours) on 9th and 275 S (in one hour) on 12th. In early April, 300 flew N (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice and the majority of 800 auks moving N there (in 1.5 hours) on 19th were identified as Guillemots. Similarly, in May, the majority of 900 auks that moved S (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice on 3rd were Guillemots.

At the Farne Islands, birds were back on the cliffs in their thousands as the Rangers arrived in mid-March and the first egg was noted on 19th April. Guillemot is fast on its way to becoming the most numerous breeder on the islands, now numbering an estimated 35,820 pairs (from 53,461 individuals), a 3% increase on 2014 and a massive 2,555% increase since records began in 1971. The first chick was recorded on 23rd May and the first 'jumpling', on Staple Island, on 9th June (six days earlier than last year) (FIR). At Needles Eye (Berwick), 132 nests were noted in May, with 110 birds resting on the sea on 26th (MHu).

On 23rd June, 600+ auks (per hour) moved N at St Mary's, most being Guillemots but including Razorbills *Alca torda* too, and 600 moved N (in one hour) at Seaton Sluice.

Further passage movements included 160 N (in three hours) at Seaton Sluice on 15th July and 200 at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 24th July. Thereafter, birds lingered around the Farne Islands, where 52 passed N through Inner Sound on 5th September and 500 moved N in northerly winds on 22nd November. Elsewhere, numerous counts of one to 40 came from many widespread coastal sites to the end of the year.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

STATUS: Well-represented summer visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The earliest ever returnee for the county was seen in the roost at Inner Farne on 14th April (smashing a 30-year record by beating the previous earliest by five days - an individual at Bamburgh on 19th April 1985). It, or another, was seen in the roost on 25th April. Another early record involved a single N at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 27th April and numbers rapidly built up at the Farne Islands from eight on 30th April to 22 on 1st May, 50 on 3rd May and a peak of 68 on 6th May (FIR). Elsewhere in May, counts included eight at Budle Bay on 9th, seven at the Long Nanny Estuary colony on 11th and ten on the beach at Ross Back Sands on 24th.

As a result of intensive management by the Ranger team, the Long Nanny Estuary site held a minimum of 27 breeding pairs, from which there were 72 breeding attempts, producing a total of 135 eggs (of these, 26 were predated, 34 deserted, 11 washed away by the tide and 16 disappeared, probably taken by a predator). The first eggs were laid on the evening of 18th May, the first losses occurred a day later when eggs were washed out by the following high tide. Twenty-five eggs and 16 scrapes were present on the spit by 1st June, but many were subsequently lost during strong winds that day and on 5th June. Many terns subsequently re-laid, with the first chick hatching on 12th June and fledging on 1st July; by this time, 18 chicks were present on the spit. From 3rd-9th July, encroaching high tides required the Rangers to intervene; all chicks and eggs were removed from the site for a total of 13 hours over the course of the week and 31 chicks were rescued. In total, 14-15 fledglings were recorded this year, giving a low productivity of 0.52 chicks fledged per pair (NT). Meanwhile, an encouraging 15-16 pairs successfully produced young at the Lindisfarne colony (IK).

Breeding data 2011-2015 is as follows:

Locality	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013	Pairs in 2012	Pairs in 2011
Long Nanny Estuary	27	30	17	40	38
Lindisfarne NNR	15-16	27	11	14	6

Summer counts were very low this year comprising five N (in three hours) at Newbiggin on 28th July, twos at Cresswell Pond, Holy Island and Low Newton and singles at the above sites plus Lynemouth before the last at Budle Point on 21st August.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: ca.11 / FIRST: 1955 / LAST: 2006

On the late evening of 29th May a few people were hoping to see the Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* at Bothal Pond, when a Gull-billed Tern materialised out of the blue and revealed itself to a select few (ME/NF/IF *et al.*). It was seen there the next evening, but with a major county gathering of birders on 31st it failed to show again. One of the hardest of rarities to see in Northumberland as many sightings are coastal fly-throughs. The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.



Alan Hart

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor.
The only spring records of this dainty marsh tern involved an adult flying S at Warkworth on the evening of 29th May and an adult at Whittle Dene Reservoirs from late evening on 30th May, remaining throughout the following day, with presumably the same bird reported again on 1st and 3rd June.

A moulting adult, discovered among large numbers of roosting Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* around Inner Farne jetty on 29th July, moved to Knoxes Reef the following morning. Five (one N and four S) passed Seaton Sluice between 20th-23rd August (SSWT). In September, an adult fed off Inner Farne on 3rd, a juvenile was at St Mary’s on 5th and a quiet year ended with an adult at East Chevington north pool on 15th.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.
BREEDING: Common.
The first returning bird of the year was heard calling over the beach at East Chevington on 22nd March and further singles were at Knoxes Reef (Farne Islands) on 26th and moving N at Seaton Sluice on 30th. Numbers increased rapidly during April, with maximum counts of 75 S (in one hour) at Seaton Sluice on 17th and 70 at St Cuthbert’s Island (Holy Island) on 18th. Some large counts in May included 70 N (in one hour) at Seaton Sluice on 1st, with 70 N and 74 S there (in two hours) on 14th. The largest concentrations were recorded at high tide roosts, with 800 at the Farne Islands on 7th May, 205 at Budle Bay on 22nd and around 80 at Cocklawburn on 7th and Berwick Meadow Haven on 10th. In June, 45 passed N and 95 S (in one hour) at Seaton Sluice on 24th.
Breeding began early at the two main colonies on Coquet Island, with a first egg date of 29th April and 1,624 pairs bred (a reduction of 7.4% on 2014 but still a good year) (RSPB). By contrast, the first egg on the Farne Islands wasn’t noted until the rather late date of 14th May and the colony dipped to 750 pairs (a reduction of 21.79% on 2014 and the second lowest count since records began; the lowest being the 544 pairs in 2011). The first chick was noted in mid-June, fledglings gathered from 10th July and breeding birds had departed by 31st July (FIR).
Breeding data 2011-2015 is as follows:

Locality	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013	Pairs in 2012	Pairs in 2011
Coquet Island	1,624	1,754	670	1,289	1,717
Farne Islands	750	959	824	966	544

Some heavy movements at Seaton Sluice in July included juveniles amongst 700 S (in two hours) on 13th. Juveniles were also noted at Budle Point in a gathering of 160, also on 13th, and counts of 140 came from Tynemouth on 24th and ca.100 throughout the month at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay). Passage continued to be well recorded at Seaton Sluice throughout August, with a maximum of 540 N and 267 S (in four hours) on 14th. Numerous reports from elsewhere included 170 in the gull roost on the River Tweed Estuary on 2nd, a peak of 120 at Tynemouth Battery Rocks on 8th and 108 at Saltpan Rocks (Cocklawburn) on 4th. The only other sizeable movements of the autumn came from Seaton Sluice and involved 69 N and 59 S on 1st September, with 62 S on 15th. Thereafter, numbers declined rapidly until the year closed with late singles at Snab Point (Cresswell) and Newbiggin on 21st November, feeding in Inner Sound (Farne Islands) the day after and during a WeBS count between Budle Point-Seahouses on 24th.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.
BREEDING: Common.
The first of the year involved one passing Seaton Sluice on 10th April, followed by singles at Coquet Island and East Chevington on 11th, Killingworth Lake on 12th and Swallow Pond on 13th, with two at East Chevington on 17th. Thereafter, numbers soon increased to a maximum of 30+ at East Chevington on 27th April and 26 at Druridge Bay CP the day before.
The first egg on Coquet Island was noted on the early date of 8th May, 1,160 pairs bred (a 3% reduction on 2014) and many successful re-lays were noted. With the combination of poor weather and predation, productivity declined to 0.47 chicks fledged per pair (1.5 in 2014) (RSPB). At the Farne Islands, the first eggs were found in mid-May, 98 pairs bred (an 11.37% increase on 2014) and fledglings were first noted on 10th July (FIR).

Breeding data 2011-2015 is as follows:

Locality	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013	Pairs in 2012	Pairs in 2011
Coquet Island	1,160	1,196	1,041	1,158	1,193
Farne Islands	98	88	94	88	101

Elsewhere, at least ten pairs were nesting at Gosforth Park NR and adjacent pond in May, with chicks noted from 12th June, but chick survival was poor (NHSN). Up to four pairs were on the raft at Whittle Dene Reservoirs in May, with three pairs at Holywell Pond. Big Waters held up to ten birds on 14th May, with eight adults and a downy young on the island on 5th July and nine adults and a juvenile on 14th July. At Arcot Pond, a single pair had eggs on 10th June and up to eight birds were noted in July, with a single juvenile representing the first breeding at the site. A possible breeding attempt by one pair was noted on the staithes in the Blyth Estuary, where seven birds were noted on 13th June, and a nesting report came from Bothal Pond in July.
Away from these confirmed and possible breeding sites, records of up to 25 birds came from several other widespread ponds. Maximum coastal counts included 75 at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) on 16th July and 53 at the Spanish Battery (Tynemouth) on 25th July. During August, numbers at Beacon Point peaked at 400 on 8th and other significant gatherings of 80-188 were recorded at St Mary’s and Tynemouth from 5th-29th. Notable autumn passage of 693 S (in 15 hours) was recorded at Seaton Sluice from 20th-23rd August. Counts declined during September, with the exception of 215 that appeared around Knoxes Reef (Farne Islands) on 16th, many still feeding in the area three days later. Only three were noted in October, the last being an adult in Budle Bay on 22nd.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor.
BREEDING: Uncommon.
One at Coquet Island on 15th April became the second earliest ever returnee for the county, only losing out to a bird at the same locality last year by two days. In May, an adult passed N at Seaton Sluice on 9th, two were at the Long Nanny Estuary colony on 14th, with a single there on 30th, one was at the Farne Islands on 16th, with up to four recorded from Inner Farne during the month, two were at Howick-Boulmer during a WeBS count on

18th and an adult was at Warkworth on 29th. Numbers remained modest into June, with five on Coquet Island on 4th, two on Inner Farne on 5th, three N in Hartley Bay on 7th, and singles at Cresswell Pond on 10th and East Chevington on 26th.

In a fantastic season on Coquet Island, a record 111 pairs bred (17 pairs more than the previous record total in 2006 and a 19.35% increase over 2014). The first egg was noted on 18th May, a day earlier than 2014. Of 160 eggs recorded, eight were missing/ predated, 15 failed to hatch, 31 chicks were found dead and four chicks were missing (presumed predated). A total of 102 chicks fledged, with productivity decreasing from last year to 0.92 chicks fledged per pair. The main cause of failure was mortality of young chicks: although boxes provided some shelter, 29 chicks aged one to five days perished as a result of two consecutive storms which brought high winds and driving rain to the island for several days; two older chicks died after these storms (RSPB). On the Farne Islands, a pair was observed briefly nest scraping outside Brownsman cottage on 11th June, with possibly the same pair creating a nest scrape on Ladies Path (Inner Farne) on 14th June; the following day the female was seen sitting tight and being brought food by the male. They were last seen at 09:30hrs on 22nd June, having defended their nest from Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* and any Rabbits *Orytolagus cuniculus* that strayed too close. Although the nest was probably predated, this represents the first breeding attempt since 2009 (FIR).

Breeding data 2011-2015 is as follows:

Locality	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013	Pairs in 2012	Pairs in 2011
Coquet Island	111	93	78	71	78
Farne Islands	1	0	0	0	0

Away from Coquet Island, five adults were noted moving N at Seaton Sluice during July and one to two, including juveniles, were reported from Cresswell Pond, Hadston Carrs, Newbiggin, St Mary's and Tynemouth. The first juvenile at the Farne Islands was seen on 30th July, though the usual roost held fewer birds, with a peak of only eight adults, seven juveniles and a first-summer on 31st July. Nine adults passed Seaton Sluice from 19th-24th August, where a single was on the rocks on 6th. Also in August, 12 were in the Aln Estuary during a WeBS count on 16th, at least ten were at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) on 8th, many were reported from Budle Point, peaking at eight on 23rd, and records of one to six, including juveniles, came from Cresswell-Newbiggin, Lynemouth Bay, St Mary's and Tynemouth. In September, three moved N at Newbiggin on 5th, one was seen from a North Shields pelagic trip on 7th and an adult and juvenile were together at St Mary's on 9th. The highest count of the year at the Farne Islands came on 18th September, when 12 adults and seven juveniles were around Knoxes Reef; the final record involved two birds there the following day.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

For the second successive year, birds returned on the early date of 13th April, with two flying past the dunes near Newton Pool, and singles on Coquet Island and the Farne Islands. The roost at the latter site held 65 birds on 24th April, increasing to 280 on 28th and 750 on 29th April, and peaking at 4,500 on 9th May (FIR). At the Long Nanny, in

May, numbers built up to a lowly total of ca.500 on 11th and 14th, but an estimated 2,000 were present by 4th June. Coquet Island held ca.100 birds on 4th June and Inner Farne ca.1,000 the following day. Elsewhere, the highest count was 60 at Hauxley NWT on 30th June.

On Coquet Island, an early first egg date was 10th May, 1,471 pairs bred (a 0.1% increase on 2014) and many successful re-lays were noted. With the combination of poor weather and predation, productivity declined to 0.59 chicks fledged per pair (1.3 in 2014). As part of a long-running study on the body condition of Arctic Tern chicks, initiated in 1995, body mass and total head length in a sample of chicks was measured: compared to the overall mean, 2015 was a relatively poor year and this suggests that, in addition to the weather, food availability may also have been a factor in low productivity (RSPB).

Scrapes were found at the Farne Islands on 9th May, with the first egg noted on 15th May and 1,688 pairs bred (a 23.7% reduction since 2014 and the lowest count for 13 years). A prolonged period of strong winds from 31st May-6th June may have made foraging difficult and a north-easterly Force 6 on 22nd June left many chicks and eggs on Brownsman abandoned. Survivors then endured 31.5mm of rain over 2nd-3rd July, causing flooding and egg and chick mortality, and resulting in low overall productivity of 0.21 chicks per pair (the five year mean for the islands is 0.65) (FIR).

Birds at the Long Nanny Estuary fared no better, with a first egg date of 15th May from the 1,957 pairs (down 19.9% on 2014, but still 196 pairs more than the mean of the last five years). Hatching began on 8th June and the first fledgling was noted on 27th June. In total, only 40 chicks fledged, giving a productivity of 0.02 chicks per pair; the lowest productivity of any year since Arctic Terns started nesting at the Long Nanny reserve in 1980. The bad weather could have contributed to the death of many chicks due to exposure, and Stoat *Mustela ermine* and Badger *Meles meles* caused significant predation (NT).

Breeding data 2011-2015 is as follows:

Locality	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013	Pairs in 2012	Pairs in 2011
Coquet Island	1,471	1,464	1,224	1,275	1,140
Farne Islands	1,688	2,212	1,921	1,923	1,830
Long Nanny Estuary	1,957	2,443	1,504	c.1,500	c.1,400

Only small numbers were noted at Seaton Sluice before 346 moved N from 27th-29th July. The Farne Islands roost peaked again at 2,700 on 29th July. Numbers elsewhere were unremarkable and included a peak count of 40+ at St Mary's on 5th August. Only three records were received after 13th September; one at the Farne Islands on 18th September, a juvenile fishing off Emmanuel Head (Holy Island) on 31st October and a very late individual noted during a WeBS count between Whitley Bay-Tynemouth on 13th November.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

STATUS: Abundant summer and passage visitor, uncommon in winter.

BREEDING: Common.

Typically scarce in January, the only reports were of three at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 3rd and a single in the Tweed Estuary on 16th. Very few were again noted in February, although 32 had returned to the Tyne Bridge (Newcastle) breeding colonies by the end of



Arctic Tern - St Mary's - July (Alan Curry).

Little Tern - Low Newton - May (Alan Curry).



Common Tern - St Mary's - July (Alan Curry).

Sandwich Tern - Low Newton - May (Alan Curry).



the month. Passage began in earnest during March, when 310 were noted from Beadnell-Howick during a WeBS count on 7th, 150 were at Cullernose Point on 20th and 100 moved N (in one hour) at Seaton Sluice on 21st; more unusual was a single well inland at Grindon Lough on 7th. Passage was again noted at Seaton Sluice in April, with 500 N (in three hours) on an unspecified date; 335 were noted between Seahouses-Beadnell during a WeBS count on 19th and another inland bird was found at Swallow Pond on 28th.

In addition to the above, 20+ back on breeding cliffs at Tynemouth on 17th March increased to 300 by 18th April. At Cullernose Point, there was an estimate of 180 breeding birds on 13th April and 200 pairs were noted at Dunstanburgh Castle in May. In June, two nests were found on Dean Street (Newcastle), a new site for the species. At the main breeding colony on the Farne Islands, the population declined slightly following the 21% increase in 2014. The first egg date was 8th May, with the first chick seen on 26th May and the first fledgling on 28th June; productivity was below average at 0.75 chicks per pair. Numbers were relatively stable at Needles Eye (Berwick), but continued their upward trend at Coquet Island, with a 13.2% increase on 2014. The first egg date here was 15th May, with productivity of 1.27 chicks per pair.

Breeding data from monitored colonies was as follows (FIR/MHu/RSPB/DMT):

Locality	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013	Pairs in 2012	Pairs in 2011
Farne Islands	3,956	4,175	3,443	4,241	3,976
Needles Eye (Berwick)	1,120	1,130	880	960	1,310
Coquet Island	326	288	185	215	193
River Tyne (Quayside)	159	80	55	67	46
River Tyne (Tyne Bridge-North)	378	377	312	300	317

Passage was noted on 3rd May, when 580 moved S (in one hour) at Berwick and 320 S (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice. At the latter locality, 255 flew N on 14th. Passage at Newbiggin in June included a peak of 246 N on 8th; while, elsewhere, 76 gathered at the Tweed Estuary gull roost on 26th. Peak movements in July were 1,160 S (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice on 2nd and 480 N at Berwick on 29th. At Cullernose Point, 750 were gathered on 2nd, some of which were still at nest sites with small young, while on the Tynemouth breeding cliffs 106 juveniles were counted on 22nd.

Very heavy passage was witnessed from mid-August, with peak counts at Seaton Sluice of 7,000 N on 19th (SSWT) and 2,000 S (in one hour) on 20th. Elsewhere, strong passage was noted at Newbiggin on 22nd, when 2,750 were at Tynemouth Pier, where large numbers continued to congregate during the last two weeks of the month. At St Mary's, 900 were noted on 22nd and 2,300 were on the sea on 30th. Nesting ledges were deserted at Newcastle Quayside by 8th September. Heavy passage continued to be a feature at Seaton Sluice in September, where the peak counts were 2,000 N (in one hour) on 1st and 3,000 N (in 0.5 hours) on 2nd. Hundreds also moved N at St Mary's on 12th, after a day of heavy rain and SE winds.

Numbers declined rapidly in October, with 40 moving S at Newbiggin on 6th the only notable count. In November, a total of 90 moved N (in seven hours) at Seaton Sluice and 70+ N (in 1.5 hours) at Cullercoats on 21st and 23 N at Berwick on 22nd. The only notable December counts were 26 feeding off Meadow Haven (Berwick) and ten likewise at Holy Island, both on 6th. Passage at Seaton Sluice was very light with 23 S from 28th-30th.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 6 / FIRST: 1955 / LAST: 2014

A return visit was unexpected and astonishingly at the same islands, on the same day, as seen in 2014. One was located on rocks at Knoxes Reef (Farne Islands) on 23rd November (DR et al.). It only stayed for 30 minutes, but the whole ranger team managed views. The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Maximum monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
26	240	356	120	76	193	221	4,000	3,200	1,800	874	259

Large gatherings during the first three months of the year included up to 540 roosting in the Tweed Estuary, 439 at QEII CP on 18th January, a peak count of 750 at Howdon on 7th February and an impressive 4,500 in the evening gull roost at Derwent Reservoir on 12th March, on which date a further 450 were roosting at Grindon Lough. Elsewhere, sizeable gatherings were noted in January on the River Tyne between Redheugh-Scotswood Bridges, where a WeBS count produced 428; while, in February, there were counts of 565 from the Blyth Estuary and 400 at Whitley Bay. A coastal WeBS count from Howick-Boulmer revealed a total of 650 on 9th March. An early spring roost at the Farne Islands numbered 1,250-1,300 from 14th-20th April.

The breeding colony at Coquet Island held 4,627 pairs (4,740 pairs in 2014), with the first eggs laid on 16th April (RSPB). On the Farne Islands, 475 pairs nested, with the first eggs found on 26th April and the first chicks on 29th May (FIR). At least 1,500 birds were counted in the regular colony at Plenmeller Common on 24th April and around 60 pairs, many of which were nest building, were at Holy Island Lough on 26th. A nesting platform at Gosforth Park NR supported 14 pairs, with a maximum of 24 chicks noted, some of which were blown off the platform during a storm and predated by Otters *Lutra lutra*. Seven occupied nests were on the raft and island at Swallow Pond. Hauxley NR held 350-410 birds in April-May, declining to 105 in June, when there was a notable WeBS count of 295 at the Blyth Estuary on 16th, rising to 343 by 21st July.

A roost at Budle Point contained 4,000 by 22nd August, numbers declining to 3,200 in early September and still further to 600 on 9th October. As numbers were building at Lindisfarne NNR in August, there were further notable gatherings of 619 at East Howdon on 31st and 500 at Holywell Pond and West Ord (Berwick). In September, 1,000 were at Linton Pond on 5th; while, elsewhere during the month, there were counts of 380-600 from the Blyth and Tweed Estuaries, QEII CP and Whitley Bay-Tynemouth. October produced counts of 500 at Elswick and 479 at QEII CP; while, at the Tweed Estuary, numbers peaked at 966 on 12th November. The Budle Point roost contained 850 on 17th December, 595 were at East Howdon on 28th and 306 between the River Tyne bridges (Redheugh-Scotswood) on 13th December.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented non-breeding summer and passage visitor, uncommon in winter.

An unusual winter record concerned a single at the Tweed Estuary on 22nd January. Singles (or the same) were at East Chevington on 27th April and at Druridge Bay CP on 30th. One was at the Farne Islands on 7th May, while a single at East Chevington on 10th May heralded the usual spring influx, which peaked at 13 during the final week of the month. Elsewhere, six were at Hauxley NR on 22nd, three flew S at Cresswell Pond on 25th, two flew S at Warkworth on 29th and six were at Ladyburn Lake on 30th, with singles also noted at Holy Island on 17th, Bamburgh on 22nd and the Farne Islands on 26th.

Numbers at the favoured East Chevington site increased to 18 by 13th June and peaked at 23 on 11th July (NFO). Elsewhere, during June, one to three were at Castle Island, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools and Spittal Bay. The peak count from Cresswell Pond was seven on 6th July, while one to two were also noted during the month at Budle Bay, East Chevington, the Farne Islands, Low Newton, Newbiggin, North Shields Fish Quay, St Mary's and Tynemouth; a total of nine moved N at Seaton Sluice from 27th-29th.

In August, one to four were noted at East Chevington on several dates to 17th, a total of four passed Seaton Sluice from 21st-23rd and singles were at Newbiggin, St Mary's and Tynemouth. September was another poor month with two S at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 6th and singles at the Farne Islands, Newbiggin, Seaton Sluice, St Mary's and Tynemouth on seven dates to 28th.

Two were at Snab Point on 4th October and singles at Tynemouth on 5th-6th and 12th October, and at the Farne Islands on 24th. Three adults fed offshore at Lynemouth Power Station on 6th November, while singles (or the same) were off Snab Point and Hadston Carrs on 8th, with another at Druridge Bay CP on 19th. In December, three adults were offshore at East Chevington on 6th, there was an unusual inland record of a single at Branton GP on 15th, and three adults moved S at Seaton Sluice on 30th.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / FIRST BRED: 2009 / LAST BRED: 2015

Maximum monthly counts from Newbiggin were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
14	10	1	0	1	3	56	50	92	7	12	1

In addition to the above, one to two were noted at Castle Island, Ellington, Holy Island Lough, Howdon, North Blyth, Seaton Sluice, St Mary's, Swallow Pond, the Tweed Estuary, Tynemouth, Widdrington Moor Lake and Woodhorn Flashes during the first quarter.

Very few remained following a spring exodus. In April, two were at Warkworth on 5th and two at Widdrington Moor Lake on 18th. The Newbiggin bird was the only May sighting. At least two different birds were at Cresswell Pond during June, when singles were also noted at the Farne Islands, Morpeth and St Mary's.

At the regular breeding site on Coquet Island, three pairs bred (four pairs in 2014), fledging four young, all of which were colour-ringed (RSPB). At the Farne Islands, a displaying pair

of second-summer birds frequented Inner Farne from 2nd-5th April (FIR).

As usual, numbers at Newbiggin increased significantly from late summer, with peak counts of 56 on 30th July, 50 on 6th August and a new county record of 92 on 22nd September (ADMc). Elsewhere during this productive period, and no-doubt involving some duplication, there were counts of 21 at Longhirst Flash on 23rd July, 19 at Cresswell Pond on 16th July, 14-15 at Ellington and Lynemouth in August and 12 moving N at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 20th September, with one to six reported from a further 15 mainly coastal localities, including the regular adult bird, ringed in Poland in 2010, at St Mary's on 19th September.

The sharp decline at Newbiggin in October (see table) was mirrored elsewhere, with five at Woodhorn Flashes and one to two reported from 13 mainly coastal localities, ranging from Elswick on the River Tyne to as far north as Holy Island. Although there were regular gatherings of nine to 12 at Newbiggin in November, and five at Cresswell-Newbiggin during a WeBS count on 14th, only one to three were reported from a further 13 widespread localities, including a Danish ringed bird at Swallow Pond. Two at Swallow Pond throughout December included the Danish ringed bird, while singles were also noted during the month at Big Waters, Cresswell Pond, Holy Island, Jesmond Dene, Newbiggin and St Mary's. At Seaton Sluice, four adults moved S towards a roost with Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* on 29th.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

STATUS: Abundant passage and winter visitor, less numerous in summer.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 2000

A roost at Kielder Water held 2,781 during a WeBS count on 18th January; whilst, in March, a regular roost at Derwent Reservoir was estimated to hold at least 11,500 on 12th (PRM). A relatively new wetland site at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) attracted gatherings of 550-800+ during the first quarter; these birds flying in from the direction of other favoured reservoir roost sites at Colt Crag and Hallington. Elsewhere during this period, the highest count was 213 at Lindisfarne from a WeBS visit and 100-200 were noted at Chirdon, Corbridge, North Charlton, Swallow Pond and the Tyne Estuary.

There was a noticeable decline in April, as numbers at Haughton Strother GP fell to 250 by 2nd, when 100 were at Alnwick. Adult birds had all but disappeared by early May, as a flock of 78 at Haughton Strother GP on 1st were all aged as first-summer; 18 first-summer birds were also at Budle Bay on 22nd. Very few remained in June, with the only noteworthy gathering being a WeBS count of 14 at Lindisfarne NNR on 14th; one to two were reported from a further ten localities. Lindisfarne NNR again attracted the largest count in July, when 64 were noted on 19th; eight were at the Aln Estuary on 22nd and 12 at Berwick Little Beach on 29th, with singles at only three further sites.

Return passage was evident in August, with counts of 1,000 and 1,500 at Budle Point on 8th and 22nd respectively and 125-130 at Pegswood Moor and West Ord (Berwick). Numbers continued to increase during September, as a strong passage of 530 moved ENE at Big Waters on 2nd. A roost in Budle Bay contained 3,200 on 5th, rising to 3,500 by 26th and 800-1,000 were noted at Whittle Dene Reservoirs from 10th-13th. Elsewhere in September, 327 were at Lindisfarne NNR on 12th and 213 in the Tweed Estuary on 9th.

The Budle Bay area again held the largest concentrations in October, with a peak count of 4,500 on 9th. Other large gatherings included 1,000 at High Hauxley and 800 at Haughton

Strother GP on 17th and 710 on the River Tweed and 530 at Bolam Lake on 18th. The highest November count was a modest 360 in the Tweed Estuary on 12th. The Budle Point roost increased still further to 6,700+ by mid-December, while 50-150 were noted at Beadnell-Howick, Capheaton Lake, Fontburn, Millfield, Otterburn Mill, Swallow Pond, the Tweed Estuary and Widdrington.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

STATUS: Common passage and summer visitor, uncommon in winter.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Regular wintering was again evident, with an unusually high total of 18 noted during a WeBS count at Lindisfarne NNR on 17th-18th January and singles at Cramlington on several January dates and on the River Tyne (Scotswood-Newburn) on 25th. The highest February count was six at Lindisfarne NNR on 8th; while, at Swallow Pond, a single on 22nd February increased to six by 28th; two were on the River Tyne at Scotswood on 21st and singles at a further seven localities. Birds, mainly adults, were arriving in good numbers during March, with a total of 50 moving N at Seaton Sluice from 15th; ten to 30 were reported from the Blyth Estuary, Budle Bay Jesmond Dene, River Tyne (Elswick-Newcastle BP) and Swallow Pond, with up to eight at a further 30 widespread localities. In April, 47 were on the River Tyne (Redheugh-Scotswood Bridge), the gathering at Swallow Pond increased to 42 on 8th, while up to 24 were at Blagdon on 18th, 22 at West Hartford on 20th and 20 were noted passing Seaton Sluice from 1st-6th.

No data was available from the large breeding colony on the Farne Islands (799 pairs in 2014), however 28 pairs bred on Coquet Island (26 pairs in 2014) (RSPB) and breeding was suspected at Plenmeller Common, where 11 adults were present on 20th May. At Blyth, there were five nests at Wimbourne Quay and two broods at Riverside Industrial Estate (LJM).

Data from the principal breeding sites was as follows (NT/RSPB):

Locality	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013	Pairs in 2012	Pairs in 2011
Farne Islands	No data	799	765	744	582
Coquet Island	28	26	22	29	31

Gatherings in May included 25-27 at Newcastle (Exhibition Park), Redheugh-Scotswood bridges and Swallow Pond, with 20 in the Blyth Estuary and 15 in the Tweed Estuary. A WeBS count at Redheugh-Scotswood bridges produced 63 on 21st June and 40 were at Budle Point on 26th; a count of 23 at Derwent Reservoir on 5th were mainly immature birds. On the River Tyne, at Newcastle, 29-32 were noted on 19th and 24th July, 33 were in the Blyth Estuary on 21st, when 14 were also at Derwent Reservoir. In August, 144 were on the River Tyne (Elswick-Newcastle BP) on 7th (DM) and 60 attended the gull roost at Budle Point on 22nd. The monthly total for Seaton Sluice in August was 52 N and 46 S.

The Budle Point roost contained 80 on 5th September, declining to 30 by 26th as the autumn exodus continued. Elsewhere, during WeBS counts, 44 were at Branton GP on 12th, 14 were at the Blyth Estuary on 24th and 11 at Lindisfarne NNR on 12th. In October, 18 were still at Branton GP on 18th, 11 possible migrant birds passed SW over Billsmoor on 1st, nine were in Budle Bay on 18th and one to four at a further nine localities. An unusually large gathering of 30 was in Budle Bay on 15th November during a WeBS count;

three to four were at Branton GP and Swallow Pond during the month and one to two at Cramlington, Derwent Reservoir, Ellington, the Tweed Estuary, Widdrington Moor and Woodhorn. Single wintering birds in December were reported from Cramlington, Elswick, North Seaton and Lindisfarne NNR.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus argenteus*

STATUS: Common resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented to common.

Maximum counts from five regular localities were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tweed Estuary	86	138	752	125	368	290	382	1,026	476	3,244	2,940	680
Lindisfarne NNR	298	182	254	147	53	270	17	2,000	1,700	1,500	374	150
Howick- Boulmer	102	14	135	45	65	82	--	--	322	185	--	109
Blyth Estuary	147	165	251	144	133	108	260	274	215	169	137	126
Tyne Est. - N/Shields FQ	915	348	425	189	238	164	426	475	1,500	--	88	79

Away from the above sites, in January, 129 were noted on the coastal stretch from Beadnell-Howick and 92 were at QEII CP. At least 700 were at Scotswood on 1st February and 134 in the Aln Estuary on 7th. Numbers at Beadnell-Howick increased to 183 in March, when 92 were again at QEII CP; Swallow Pond held 76-99 throughout January-March.

Some notable movement was witnessed at Seaton Sluice in April, where 345 flew N (in two hours) on 6th. There was a large roost of 320 on the sea at Newbiggin on 25th May and well inland a flock of 60+ moved E at Corbridge on 31st. In June there was a count of 230 from Goswick Sands on 27th.

Data from offshore breeding sites was as follows (FIR/RSPB):

Locality	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013	Pairs in 2012	Pairs in 2011
Farne Islands	No data	937	874	882	759
Coquet Island	1	2	2	1	2

In addition to the above, breeding data was also received from several sites in the Blyth area (LJM/STH). The Riverside Industrial Estate held 23 occupied nests in May, reducing to 18 (22 young) by June and 35 juveniles were noted there in July. There were 14 juveniles at Wimbourne Quay, three pairs bred at North Blyth Staithes, three nests (four young) were at South Harbour and one pair at Bates Staithes.

A roost of 276 had gathered at West Ord (Berwick) on 6th August; while, elsewhere during the month, 100-150 were noted at Amble, Holywell Pond and the River Tyne (Elswick-Newcastle BP). Swallow Pond continued to attract birds on a regular basis, with counts of 34-87 throughout the period March-September.

A WeBS count of 3,244 in the Tweed Estuary on 15th October was the highest gathering of the year (MHu); elsewhere in October, a WeBS count of 275 came from Seahouses-Beadnell on 12th, the evening roost at QEII CP held 210 on 26th, a flock of 200 was at Old Rugley (Alnwick) on 1st and 103 were noted on the River Tyne (Elswick-Newcastle BP). In November, 200-250 were at Amble, QEII CP and Tynemouth boating lake; while, in

December, 353 were along the coastal stretch from Beadnell-Howick on 14th, 200 were at Hebron on 17th and up to 190 at QEII CP and 60 at Caistron on 12th; 76-78 were noted at Swallow Pond throughout October-December.

‘Northern race Herring Gull’ *L. a. argentatus*

STATUS: Uncommon winter visitor.

Two were reported from North Shields Fish Quay in January and at least five were at Scotswood (River Tyne) on 1st February. There were no further reports of this race until October, when six were in the roost at QEII CP on 26th and two at Budle Bay on 23rd. In December, 12 were at Ladyburn Lake on 17th (PRM) and two at North Blyth on 11th.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1955 / LAST RECORD: 2011

An adult at Derwent Reservoir from 21st-25th July was well received as this is a very difficult species to catch up with in Northumberland (IFo/TA *et al.*). It was photographed at range and flight pictures were very useful in enabling the CRC to discount a hybrid. The first accepted sighting since 2011. Certainly adults should be easier to locate and their rarity here shows the species’ unwillingness to move this far north; they’re obviously happier with a Mediterranean climate!

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 1 / FIRST: 2007 / LAST: 2014

The returning, ringed individual was again seen at Amble Harbour on 26th July (STH *et al.*). This bird was ringed as a pullus in May 2011 in Poland and again proved popular with sightings through to 16th August. The yellow ring ‘PKCS’ is now watched for each year and hopefully it will continue to visit Northumberland.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

In January, at least two (first-winter and second-winter), and possibly three, birds were noted at North Shields Fish Quay on eight dates from 1st-17th (DM/DMT/SPP *et al.*); first-winters were at Tynemouth (Black Middens) on 27th and at St Mary’s on 31st and an adult(s) at Swallow Pond on 6th, 16th-17th and 24th. The latter bird was a regular, although brief, visitor throughout February, when first-winters were again noted at Tynemouth on 8th and North Shields Fish Quay on 17th. The Swallow Pond adult was last seen there on 2nd March, while juveniles (possibly the same) were at St Mary’s on 14th and North Shields Fish Quay and Tynemouth on 17th and two juveniles were at North Shields Fish Quay on 18th March (AC). Farther north, a first-winter was at Holy Island on 15th and two first-winters were at the Farne Islands on 22nd March (FIR).

An immature bird was noted regularly at St Mary’s from 3rd-26th April; while, in May, a first-summer was recorded almost daily at QEII CP from 4th-29th, with a first-summer, perhaps the same bird, at Walbottle on 13th May.

The species was very scarce during the second winter period, beginning with a first-winter moving N at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 21st November. In December, an adult flew N at Seaton Sluice on 23rd and a juvenile was in the Bell’s Farm-Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) area on 28th.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

In January, two different first-winter birds were at North Shields Fish Quay, one from 1st-2nd and another from 3rd-4th. Later in the month, first-winters were noted at Holy Island on 26th and at St Mary’s on 31st.

Immature birds were reported in April from St Mary’s on 10th, the Farne Islands on 15th, with another on 16th, on the sea at East Chevington on 17th and again at the Farne Islands on 17th, 20th and 29th, with another on 3rd May. More unusual was another immature moving S over Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) on 4th May and a rare summer sighting of a first-summer bird at Low Newton on 4th July.

First-winter birds (or the same) flew N at Seaton Sluice on 21st November and St Mary’s on 22nd. Another first-winter was at Tynemouth from 19th-20th December.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor, well-represented non-breeding summer visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon, regular at only one site.

Maximum monthly counts from four regular localities were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tweed Estuary	10	5	16	3	10	6	5	10	14	9	22	31
Lindisfarne NNR (incl. B/Bay)	32	7	1	5	6	17	193	75	110	75	47	25
Blyth Estuary	23	30	1	7	0	0	0	0	42	5	18	25
Tyne Estuary - N/Shields FQ	157	25	63	24	14	18	18	50	-	-	71	79

In addition to the above, 43 were between Whitley Bay-Tynemouth and 34 at Druridge Bay CP during WeBS counts in January and 28 were on the River Tyne (Redheugh Bridge–Newburn) in March. Also in March, 35 were gathered in the evening roost at Derwent Reservoir on 12th. Smaller numbers were noted from April-June, including WeBS counts of 24-27 from Seahouses-Beadnell in May-June.

The county’s only regular breeding colony on the Farne Islands increased to 20 pairs (17 in 2014) (FIR). In addition, there was a first breeding record for Needles Eye (Berwick), where a single nest was found on 26th May (MHu).

Increased numbers were reported in August, with 100 at Amble Braid on 6th and a noticeable movement of 96 S at Seaton Sluice on 24th. Coastal WeBS counts in September included 61 from Howick-Boulmer on 14th, 59 from Budle Point-Seahouses on 11th and 26 at the Aln Estuary, also on 11th. At East Chevington, 80 on 8th September declined to 47 by 18th October. A count of 210 around the outermost group of the Farne Islands, on 26th October, were attracted to afterbirth provided by newly born seal pups; elsewhere during the month, 48 were noted on the coastal stretch from Seahouses-Beadnell during a WeBS count on 12th and 35 were at Castle Island on 18th.

There was a huge gathering at the Aln Estuary in November, when 975 were noted during a WeBS visit on 21st (TAC). Movements in December included 165 S (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice on 19th and 41 SW-W at Big Waters during the morning of 27th. Larger gatherings during December, most from WeBS counts, were 116 from Beadnell-Howick on 14th, 82 from Whitley Bay-Tynemouth on 20th, 79 from Howick-Dunstanburgh on 9th and 40 at East Howdon on 28th.

Rock Dove [Feral Pigeon] *Columba livia*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

The only sizeable counts in the first quarter involved 43 in Newcastle (Denton Park Shopping Centre) on 23rd January, 120 in Newcastle on 4th February and 20 at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 8th March. The usual roost on the Environment Agency roof (Newcastle Business Park) held 57 birds on 2nd April, increasing to 63 by 21st August. A count of 56 was made at the Old Staithes (Blyth Estuary) on 13th June.

The largest count of the year involved 200 around the rail bridge at Stakeford on 1st August (GB). Blyth Harbour held 32 birds on 18th October, increasing to 75 on 27th November and 89 on 28th December.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

The year began with modest counts, including 20 at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) on 27th January and 15 at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) four days later. On 1st February, 18 were at Swallow Pond, with a peak of 17 at Chugdon Wood on 7th (increasing to 18 on 11th April). Howdon then produced some good counts, with a peak of 79 on 16th February, declining to 64 on 7th March (and 32 on 13th April). A weedy stubble field at Big Waters held 15 on 15th March.

In May, numbers at Ellington peaked at 28 on 9th but, elsewhere, no counts exceeded ten until June, when 13 gathered at Derwent Reservoir on 20th and 12 at Ellington on 22nd.

A breeding record from Wallington Estate involved a pair that laid two eggs in a nest box that were later found broken; Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* was suspected as the culprit.

Ten at Cresswell Pond on 12th August was the only double-figure count before October, when pre-roost gatherings at Howdon involved 68 on 2nd, 93 on 5th and 138 on 26th (CB). Elsewhere in October, 60 were at Holywell Pond on 25th, 50 in a mixed flock at Fourstones on 19th and 13 at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) on 13th. A few single-figure counts followed in November, including at Chugdon Wood, where greatly reduced numbers were attributed to local buildings works. In December, 20 were at Big Waters on 5th, and 40 at Howdon on 24th increased to 54 on 27th.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

STATUS: Abundant resident and a passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Some large counts in the first quarter included 1,000 at Milkwell (Corbridge) on 30th January, 1,700 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 4th February, with 1,000 coming in to roost at a nearby plantation two days later, and 500 at Staward on 21st March. Flocks of 100 or less were widespread, but more unusual were 74 flying in off the sea at East Ord (Berwick) on 28th January.

Light spring passage was again noted at the Farne Islands, with four singles from 16th April-16th May. In April, 500 were feeding in a field at Plessey North Moor (near Cramlington) on 1st and, in May, a school field at Monkseaton (Whitley Bay) attracted 550 on 25th.

Typically, numbers then remained low until around 800 were at Paxton Dene (Longhorsley) on 20th October, with 400 at Prestwick Carr on 26th October. In November, two flocks consisting of 850 birds flew W at East Ord (Berwick) on 11th, 400 were at Derwent Reservoir on 4th and 800 were at Rennington on 28th.

The largest flock of the year comprised 2,000 at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) on 20th December (TB). The final month also produced counts of 1,000+ at Crow Hall Farm (Holywell Dene) on 19th, 600+ at Bamburgh on 21st, 400 at West Hartford on 7th and 360 at Berrington on 10th.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

Numbers were low in the first half of the year, with the only double-figure counts being 13 feeding on the roadside near East Hartford on 2nd January and ten in a tree at Beaconhill (Cramlington) on 6th March. Always a scarcity on the Farne Islands, singles were on Brownsman on 3rd May and on Inner Farne on 17th May. Also unusual, was a record of two on the beach at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 4th May.

Breeding was confirmed at several widespread localities, including gardens in Gosforth and Kenton (Newcastle), Rothbury and Walbottle.

A spillage of grain on the road at North Blyth attracted a good summer count of 66 birds on 30th August. Some decent counts in October involved 65 on wires at North Moor Farm (Cramlington) on 20th, increasing to 97 on 29th (STH), 32 at Widdrington on 18th and 29 at Elwick on 31st. In November, a pre-roost gathering of 34 was noted at Callerton Village on 12th and 12 were at Wark (North Tyne) on 30th. The latter site produced the largest counts in December, with 13 on 15th, increasing to 15 on 29th. Ten were also noted in an Alnwick garden on 15th December.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

STATUS: Rare summer and passage visitor. / LAST RECORD: 2013

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1992

After a blank year in 2014 (the first ever recorded in the county) it was pleasing to see birds found in three months this year. The first involved one flying S over the Budge hide (Druridge Pools) on 10th May (GB/RSF/ADM). It was followed by a bird flushed at Swallow Pond, that headed NW, on 16th June (SPP). Finally, one was found east of Whalton on 9th July (ADM).

Turtle Dove



Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

STATUS: Well-represented summer visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The earliest returning bird in modern times (since Bolam) involved one at Rothbury on 7th April. The main influx commenced on 18th April, with one at Prestwick Carr, followed by twos at Quarry House Moor on 20th-21st, Longhorsley Moor on 21st and Harwood Forest on 23rd, with a peak of three at Beanley Moor on 23rd; singles were at nine other inland locations.

Well-reported in May, with a peak of six at Harwood Forest on 15th (STE), five at Tosson Hill on 17th, and three at Harthope Valley on 23rd and Wanneys (near Ridsdale) on 29th. Two were at seven to eight upland locations and at Budle Bay on 22nd, one of which was a hepatic female, with at least 24 widespread singles also reported.

In June, four were in the Harthope Valley on 11th, three at Beanley Wood on 9th and Grindon Lough on 11th, with two at Slaley Forest and Longhorsley Moor on 4th, East Chevington south pool on 5th, Halton Lea Gate on 10th, Druridge Pools on 14th, Grindon Lough on 16th and Simonside Hills and Lambley on 23rd; single reports came from many of these sites, as well as from at least ten further locations.

As usual, numbers dropped sharply into July, with singles at Sweetthope Lough on 3rd and The Whiggs (Great Whittington) on 6th, adults at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 11th and East Chevington on 22nd and a juvenile at St Mary's for four days from 24th. In August,



Cuckoo - Druridge Pools - June (Jack Bucknall).

Cuckoo - Simonside - May (Janet Dean)



an adult was at Mindrum on 8th and juveniles were recorded from Chevington Burn on 12th, Holy Island on 23rd, Simonside on 24th and on the roof of the Drift Café (Cresswell) on 28th. In addition, a juvenile that arrived from the north at Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 23rd August was joined by a second the next day, with one then lingering to 30th August.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Well-reported in the first quarter, with a maximum of eight roosting on Holy Island during February (IK) and twos reported at many widespread localities. In January, a pair inspected a nest box at Holystone (Wallsend) on 9th and two were at Widdrington Moor on 17th. Two remained at Warenford throughout February, with two also reported from Cresswell Pond on 28th. March produced twos between Red Row and Widdrington on 2nd, at Beadnell on 13th, Eland Hall (Ponteland) on 15th and East Chevington on 26th and 29th. Numerous singles included birds at 19 widespread localities in March, with a road casualty on the A1 north of Morpeth.

In a good breeding year, Northumbria Ringing Group checked 122 sites in five study areas, from which 55 sites were occupied, with 51 nests containing eggs, 50 pairs hatching eggs and 45 pairs fledging a total of 145 young (NRG). A separate study of over 100 nest sites in the north of the county found only 21 successful nests and 52 owlets were ringed, mostly in June, with some females being underweight to breed (PH). Another study area at Wallington Estate revealed four broods, totalling 13 young, ten of which were ringed (JCD).

The pair at Cresswell was active from April-early May, two left their roost at Eland Hall on 8th April, three were at Druridge on 9th May and two at East Chevington south pool on 3rd June. Singles included road casualties on the A1 at Newham on 4th April and on the A1 slip road at Clifton (Morpeth) on 27th May. In July, two pairs fed young at Spindleston and another casualty involved one that hit a power line post on Holy Island; it had been ringed in 2012 at a mainland site 25 miles away.

Reports were fewer during August-September, but included twos at Spindleston, Waren Mill and Warkworth. Although three to four, most likely the resident pairs, were on Holy Island in October, breeding did not occur for the first time since re-colonisation in 2008, possibly due to a shortage of voles. One pair at this site was noted to the end of the year, with the only other reports of two coming from Doddington Bridge on 19th November and Fieldhead (Longhorsley) on 6th December. A scattering of singles during the autumn included further A1 road casualties at Northgate (Morpeth) on 4th October and Seven Mile House (Seaton Burn) on 3rd December.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Reports were meagre during the first four months, with the established pair seen at Shiremoor throughout, plus twos noted at Derwent Reservoir on three dates in January and at Druridge Lane on 21st and 26th February. In addition to these sites, singles were

seen at Prestwick Carr on 6th January, Stagshaw on 27th January, Big Waters on 21st March and 19th April, Backworth on 18th April and South Newsham (Blyth) on 26th April. Reports increased into May, with four at Shiremoor on 15th, with a family party noted there later in the month (CGK *et al.*), two at Backworth and a pair on territory at Brada Quarry (near Bamburgh) throughout the month and singles at Holywell Dene on 4th, near Prudhoe on 8th, at Green Pits (Allendale) on 10th, West Hartford on 15th, Druridge Pools on 19th and 24th-25th and Easington Grange on 29th. The family party remained at Shiremoor throughout June; whilst, elsewhere, singles were at Bamburgh all month, at Derwent Reservoir on 2nd and 4th and, for the first time since the bad winters of 2010-11, at the once-regular site of Dissington Lane on 17th.

The second half of the year began with a family party of four on territory at Backworth throughout July, when a pair were on territory at Waren Mill Caravan Park (near Bamburgh) and singles occurred at Great Whittington on 13th and 15th and at Derwent Reservoir on 18th-19th. In August, two were at Shiremoor all month (remaining to the end of the year) and two were at Derwent Reservoir on 28th, with singles there on five other dates, as well as at Great Whittington on 3rd; a juvenile at Backworth on 22nd was mobbed by a juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*. At Dinnington, one was seen from 1st-6th September and on 9th October.

Elsewhere in October, singles were at Derwent Reservoir on 1st and Beacon Lane (Cramlington) on 11th. In November, one was regularly noted at Derwent Reservoir, with another at Hemscott Hill Links (Cresswell) on 23rd. The year ended with one at Derwent Reservoir on 1st-2nd December, with the regular two at Shiremoor calling from 6th onwards, and one at Elwick on 13th. Birds were recorded at just 21 localities, the lowest annual total since the 19 sites in 1991.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

During the first quarter, three were at Holywell Dene on 13th January and calling throughout February at Capheaton. Two males also called at Sweethope Lough on 30th January. Otherwise, singles only were recorded from 21 widespread localities. In April, pairs called most nights at Rothbury and, on 23rd, at Harwood Forest, with singles at two locations.

Breeding evidence involved a pair at Gosforth Park with two chicks (four last year) during April (NHSN) and, on 26th, a female with two young at Hauxley Ringing Station and young calling from a garden nest box at Stamfordham. The Stamfordham pair fledged at least two young on 12th May; whilst, elsewhere in May, three were in the Pithouses Fell area (Slaley Forest) on 10th and twos were at Gosforth Park all month, at Aydon Castle on 10th and in a Fulbeck (Morpeth) garden on 15th, 21st and 25th, with singles at six sites, including a downy chick at Derwent Reservoir. In June, a maximum of three were at Fulbeck on 18th and Plankey Mill on 26th, a pair used a nest box at Waren Mill and two were at Alnham on 11th and Rothbury on 18th, with singles at a further seven sites. Northumbria Ringing Group checked 231 sites in five study areas, from which 75 sites were occupied, with 71 nests containing eggs, 67 pairs hatching eggs and 66 pairs fledging a total of 157 young. Data from Northumbria Ringing Group's long-term study is presented below (NRG).

Data from Northumbria Ringing Group’s long-term study (fledged young in parentheses):

Locality	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013	Pairs in 2012
Wark-Tarset-Redesdale	29 (72)	37 (91)	17 (31)	37 (84)
Kielder	32 (72)	34 (84)	16 (34)	67 (46)
Slaley-Healey	10 (12)	16 (34)	7 (11)	11 (11)
Linnels (Hexham)	1 (2)	1 (2)	--	1 (2)

Reports were fewer in July-August, comprising two at Blagdon on 9th July, a vocal group at Fulbeck on 25th July and singles at 11 localities. A male and female called at Prestwick Carr on 4th September and four singles were noted during the month.

In a quiet final quarter, three were at Hedgeley on 14th December, a pair called at Scremerston on 23rd October, a pair sat in a nest box in a Stamfordham garden on 3rd December, a pair was at Yearle on 27th December and singles were noted at ten other localities.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.
BREEDING: Uncommon.

An unremarkable year for the species began with singles at Felton Lane and Swallow Pond on 3rd January, with one to two birds heard around dusk at the latter locality two days later, two seen there on 3rd February and one calling there on 10th February. Elsewhere in February, one was singing at a confidential site on 15th and another roosted at ‘Northumberlandia’ (Cramlington) on 20th. In the second half of March, one called on several dates at a site in the south east of the county and one hunted near Holywell Dene on 28th.

A male called at Bakethin Reservoir on 17th April and, elsewhere in the month, birds were at confidential breeding sites in the south east on 6th and the east on 26th. One was regularly seen in the south east during May, with other singles at Cresswell Pond on 3rd, Grindon Lough on 9th and Derwent Reservoir and Pithouse Fell (Slaley) on 13th.

The Northumbria Ringing Group checked 21 sites, from which ten sites were occupied, with at least seven nests containing eggs and four pairs fledging at least four young. Nine of the pairs studied were in the Kielder Border Forest, where Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* preyed a breeding female at one nest and a male from another, a third nest collapsed and one nesting in a 2014 Buzzard *Buteo buteo* nest failed on hatching in heavy rain (NRG). Two recently fledged young were at Staward Gorge on 25th July.

A well-watched individual was seen at St Mary’s from 31st July-17th August, with possibly the same bird at nearby Marden Quarry on 23rd. A juvenile called at Wark (North Tyne) on 19th August. One on Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 31st August represented the only record of the year for the islands. Migrants in October were at St Mary’s on 10th, Holy Island (Lough on 18th and The Snook on 29th) and Howdon on 26th. The final records, in December, involved one at Wooler on 11th and two or more birds roosting in a hawthorn in North Tyneside from 27th-31st (CGK/GPK).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.
BREEDING: Uncommon.

In January, one to two hunted daily at Prestwick Carr from 4th-9th, two were at



Long-eared Owl - St Mary’s - August (Jack Bucknall).
Short-eared Owl - St Mary’s - November (Alan Jack).



Hartleyburn Common on 19th and one was watched being chased by young cattle in the dunes at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 3rd. Prestwick Carr held birds throughout February, peaking with four on 26th-27th, whilst two to three were at Warkworth Gut on 25th. The highest single-observer count of the year involved six at Quarry House Moor on 23rd March (AH), with a peak of four again at Prestwick Carr on 4th and 10th March, two in dunes at Warkworth Gut on 18th and singles at seven other localities.

Five birds were still at Quarry House Moor on 4th and 12th April, falling to three by 21st, two were at Plenmeller Common on 2nd and 4th and at Coanwood Burn on 8th, with singles at four sites, including one flushed by walkers from a nest scrape, without eggs, at Mohope Fell on 25th April. In May, four remained in suitable habitat at Quarry House Moor on 4th, reducing to three on 21st, two were at Fellhouse Fell (Plenmeller Common) on 21st-22nd and singles were at Monks House Pool on 7th, Grindon Lough on 9th, Holy Island (The Snook) on 16th and circling Inner Farne on 24th. On 3rd June, singles were noted at Cocklawburn and Currock Hill, with another at Beadnell on 22nd and, in July, one passed W over the outer Farne Islands on 12th, with singles at Swallow Pond on 22nd and hunting at St Mary's from 25th through to 1st August. On the latter date, one was in the Border Forest (Kielder) and, in September, singles were at Holy Island on 9th and St Mary's again on 12th.

An influx from the continent in October brought four to Holy Island and St Mary's, with two to three seen regularly at both sites, and singles at a further 11 coastal localities, including one in off the sea at Seaton Sluice on 9th, one found moribund and a road casualty. In addition, the Farne Islands enjoyed a good run of October records, starting with one on 13th, multiple sightings the following day, a combined total from the inner and outer group of 11 on 16th (surpassing the previous highest day count of eight in 2011) (FIR) and six moving W passed Brownsman on 29th.

Two remained in the St Mary's-Old Hartley area to 16th November, two were noted 'in off' at Tynemouth Haven on 2nd November, with further twos at Prestwick Carr on 14th and 21st, the Farne Islands on 15th, around the ramparts at Berwick Harbour on 21st, on Holy Island (Straight Lonnen) on 22nd and at Old Hartley on 27th. Singles were noted at most of the aforementioned locations throughout November, in addition to a further 12 sites. In December, four were noted at Holy Island from 4th, with at least four from 19th onwards, when a first-winter was found dead on the tide line, three were at Prestwick Carr on 13th, with two there regularly during the month; three were also at Swallow Pond on 13th and East Chevington north pool on 27th and two were noted at Bamburgh on 8th, Callerton Pond on 17th and Holy Island on 27th. Singles were at Cresswell and Little Beach (Berwick) throughout December, with others at 12 further widespread locations.

Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

STATUS: Uncommon summer visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

There were few records of the species during 2015, all coming in the month of June. Only one report was received from the favoured breeding area of Slaley Forest, with at least three present on 23rd (JL). Three were heard and two seen at Acton Burn (Harwood Forest) on 26th and 30th (EC/AJH) and, earlier, two were at Beanley Wood on 10th, with an active male noted in cold weather at Harwood Forest from 4th for the remainder of the month.

Swift *Apus apus*

STATUS: Common summer visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

This aerial master had an early first arrival, with one over Bakethin Reservoir (Kielder) on 17th April equalling the arrival date of a bird at Backworth in 2007. It was followed by further singles at Lynemouth on 24th, Corbridge on 25th and East Chevington and Holywell Pond on 27th, with eight at East Chevington on 30th being the only multiple report for April. Numbers built up in May, with several large gatherings over open water, including a peak of 400+ at Bothal Pond on 31st; 150+ were at Killingworth Lake on 17th and flocks of 15-60 were noted at 12 other localities.

Passage was observed at Cocklawburn on the morning of 24th June, with 200 N (per hour). Lighter movement was noted at the Farne Islands, with groups of ten and 12 S in late June. Elsewhere during the month, 200+ were at Swallow Pond on 13th, 100 at East Chevington on 14th, 50 at Bellasis Bridge on 15th and 40 at Stannington-Morpeth on 11th, Nedderton on 12th and Castle Island on 14th. Inland, nests were found at Kielder Castle and Lynnshield in July. Also during July, 800+ were feeding over fields at Old Hartley on 14th (ASJ/SPP), 400 were at Ellington on 2nd, 100+ at Holywell Pond on 22nd, 70 at Whitley Bay on 28th and 60+ at Arcot Pond on 22nd. Further movement was noted with 97 N at Seaton Sluice on 2nd, 27 S at Longhirst GC on 27th and 20 W at Brinkburn Priory on 29th July.

One flock of 86 at East Chevington and several flocks of up to 50 gathered at various widespread sites during August prior to departure. Heavy passage was witnessed at the Farne Islands late in the month, beginning with a late afternoon surge of 281 birds on 26th, 224 of which moved SW over Inner Farne (in one hour), and eclipsed by 424 moving SW over Staple Sound and the Inner Group throughout the following day. Smaller numbers were recorded over the next two days, with 41 W over the islands on 28th and 106 W on 29th August. In September, one was at Newcastle Great Park on 2nd, two at Budle Bay on 6th and a late single was over Holy Island village on 30th. The last of the year was a very late individual feeding over Inner Farne on the evening of 1st November.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 6 / FIRST: 2001 / LAST: 2005

Late autumn sightings are now expected in the UK and two were seen this year, with sightings at Newbiggin on 30th October (TRC/AP) and Tynemouth on 1st November (DRW/MK/AC). It is, of course, quite possible that the same individual was involved, although there is no evidence that this was the case. Both sightings were only of 15 minutes duration. The records were accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2013

There was one mainland report of this attractive migrant to maintain its recent pattern of occurring every other year. A single bird, found at Middle Duddo Farm (near Bellasis Bridge) on 24th May, was seen by a few lucky observers before vanishing (NF *et al.*).



Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 12 / FIRST: 1879 / LAST: 2010

One seen flying over East Chevington north pool on the evening of 17th June represented the 13th individual recorded in the county (PRM). Although looked for on the reserve, it was assumed to have continued flying south. 2015 was an influx year for the species nationally. There were three other claims during June in the county but no documentation was received.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

STATUS: Uncommon resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

During the first quarter, twos were recorded at Thrum Mill (Rothbury) in January, with possibly two at Gosforth Park NR and adjacent pool and Horton Burn (Cramlington) in the same month, and at Branton GP in February. Records of singles came from many suitable riverine, lakeside and estuarine localities throughout the county.

A pair was reported as nesting at Melkridge (River South Tyne) on 8th April, otherwise singles only continued to be reported throughout April and May in suitable habitat. Becoming slightly more conspicuous in June, an elusive group of three were at Reeth Pond (Newburn CP) on 13th (PCF), two singles were in Jesmond Dene on 28th and more than one was at Gosforth Park NR and adjacent pool, where at least two were reported in July. Two were also at Twizel (River Tweed) on 7th July. Reports increased in August, with records from 22 widespread localities of which one, St. Mary's, was coastal; a single remained here for four days from 19th. Two were at Whiteadder Water (Berwick) on 7th, Ellington Dene on 18th and Castle Island (River Wansbeck) on 22nd August. Three or more, including two juveniles, were at Gosforth Park NR during August and September. Elsewhere in September, three were at Scotch Gill Woods (Morpeth) on 8th (TB), two were at Low Angerton on 6th and 25th, Jesmond Dene on 14th, Corbridge on 15th and on rocks at St Mary's on 26th, with singles at seven other coastal and ten inland locations.

During October, at least two remained at Gosforth Park NR and two were at Furnace Bridge (Bedlington) on 19th. There were many reports of singles, with birds regularly at Boulmer, Budle Bay, Holywell Dene and Pond, Seaton Sluice and Wark (River North Tyne), along with 18 other widespread localities, including four singles during coastal WeBS counts.

Reports were fewer in the final two months, although three were at Horncliffe on 16th November (JDL), two were in a territorial dispute on the rocks at Seaton Sluice on 2nd November and two were also at Gosforth Park NR during the month, at Jesmond Dene during a WeBS count on 14th and at Corbridge on 18th. In December, two were found at Jesmond Dene on 15th and at Gosforth Park NR and Holywell Dene during the month.

Birds were reported from about 45 waterside locations during the year, chiefly inland. There were several coastal reports during the colder months.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

STATUS: Rare visitor.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1975

There was one sighting of this attractive woodpecker in the spring, with a single on Holy

Island (Crooked Lonnen) on 10th May.

Unlike 2014, the majority of records occurred in autumn and all were in August. The Farne Islands struck first with a hat-trick of records from the Inner Group during a favourable spell for scarce drift migrants, the first being seen briefly, skulking in the Inner Farne vegetable garden, on 14th. It was followed by a single the following day and then on 19th August one was flushed on West Wideopens. On Holy Island, one found at The Snook on 23rd August was joined by two others at the Excavations and Chare Ends on 24th (TF/JFa), on which date singles were also present at Budle Point and Newbiggin.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

This colourful and vocal species was reported in low numbers during the year in areas of suitable habitat. No birds were reported from upland areas, although there were reports well inland, for example at Bakethin, the Harthope Valley and Whitley Chapel.

The year began with singles reported throughout the first quarter in suitable habit; 'yaffling' was first reported in early February from Craggside (Rothbury) and Gosforth Park NR then, later during the same month, at a number of other localities. Records increased in April and included three at Kielder Water and Forest on 17th (PRM), a pair at Gosforth Park NR all month and two at Dukeshouse (Hexham) on 25th; singles were reported from a further 13 inland and three coastal localities. The pair at Gosforth Park NR remained throughout May and two were 'yaffling' at Dipton Wood on 10th May.

The Gosforth Park pair remained throughout the summer and an adult with two juveniles at the reserve in August provided the only confirmed record of breeding (NHSN). One in a Fulbeck (Morpeth) garden on 31st August was the observer's first garden record. Other garden reports included one eating ants on the observer's front lawn in Rothbury throughout September and again on 2nd October. A single at Morpeth on 10th October represented the final report of the year.

The species was recorded from a minimum of 34 widespread localities (44 in 2014), slightly lower than average for recent years, with the majority of reports coming from the southern half of the county.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

STATUS: Well-represented resident and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

This conspicuous and noisy species was present in all suitable habitats and was well-reported throughout the year.

Maximum counts during the first quarter involved six, including two 'drumming' birds, at Wallington on 17th January, six at Beanley Wood on 12th February and Derwent Reservoir on 25th March, five at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) on 24th January and 7th February, four at Spindleston on 2nd February and at Northumberland Park (North Shields) throughout the month and three at Cambo, Cherryburn NT, Gosforth Park NR, Holburn village, Jesmond Dene, Low Alwinton, Rothbury, Scotch Gill Woods (Morpeth) and Wallington, with reports of one to two at numerous other widespread localities.

Still conspicuous in April, six were at Harwood Forest on 6th, five at Gosforth Park NR all month and three at Arcot Pond, Chugdon Wood, Holywell and Jesmond Denes, Kielder Forest and Prestwick Carr.

Breeding evidence from May-July involved four feeding young at two nests in Northumberland Park, pairs feeding young in the nest at Harwood Forest, Haughton Strother (Humshaugh), Simonside and Swallow Pond and family groups seen and heard at Holywell and Jesmond Denes and in gardens at Old Hartley and Tynemouth.

One to three were noted at a scattering of sites in August-September, including a first sighting for Howdon NR on 2nd September. In October, four were at Harwood Forest, Scotch Gill Woods and Wallington, with three at Tyne Green (Hexham) and Tynemouth. Higher counts in November included five at Gosforth Park NR throughout the month, five at Wooler on 24th and four at Alnwick on 26th. Numbers were lower in December, but one to two were reported from 13 widespread, mostly inland, localities.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

STATUS: Common resident, also a passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Localities offering good hunting attracted small concentrations during the first quarter. Eight were seen between Heddon-Twice Brewed on 19th February (MH), six were at Widdrington Moor and gatherings of five at Felton Lane, Prestwick Carr, Seaton Sluice dunes and Sweethope Lough. Four frequented the Carey Burn and Holburn village and three were recorded at Once Brewed, West Hartford, Whittle Dene and Winter's Gibbet (Harwood Forest). One to two were reported from numerous other localities.

The species continued to be well-reported during the breeding season, when the Northumbria Ringing Group checked 68 sites in the Border Forest, Cheviots and Otterburn Training Area, of which 31 were occupied. A total of 22 pairs produced eggs, 19 hatched and 18 pairs fledged more than 50 young. At Otterburn, many areas previously used by Kestrels now have nesting Buzzard *Buteo buteo* (NRG). In other areas, pairs fed young in nests on cliffs at Needles Eye (Berwick), in woodland at Crooked Oak and on Lindisfarne Castle and Tynemouth Priory. Family parties were in the Breamish Valley and a pair with three juveniles at St Mary's indicated local breeding. The presence of three to four individuals in several other areas probably also indicated success.

Wandering post-breeding birds were prominent in August-September, with two to three at Bedlington, Cresswell, Ellington, Newton Tors (Cheviots), Old Hartley and Otterburn, with singles noted in numerous other widespread localities. The only suggestions of immigration came from the Farne Islands, with one to three birds on 38 dates between mid-July-late November. Four were present on 24th October, three of them watched moving westwards towards the mainland.

During the final quarter, birds were settled into regular wintering areas. Five were at Prestwick Carr and four on Holy Island, including two juveniles, probably from the local breeding site, which regularly hunted in close proximity. Three were at Derwent Reservoir, including a male which was watched eating a Great Tit *Parus major*. Three were also at Harwood Forest and Widdrington Moor and one to two were reported from many other suitable hunting localities.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 15 / FIRST: 1857 / LAST: 2014

One of the highlights of the year for those fortunate enough to catch up with this eastern falcon. A first-summer male was found at Bell's Farm (Cresswell) on 9th-10th September (FG et al.). It was very well photographed and performed admirably for many as it perched on hay bales and made aerial sorties along the coastal road.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Coastal areas provided the most regular sightings during the first quarter, with three to four at Lindisfarne (IK et al.) and one to two regularly on the Farne Islands. Other sightings on, or near, the coast involved singles at Boulmer, Cresswell and Lucker. Other singles remained inland at Castron, Cornhill, Norham and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

Coastal records faded, with only singles at Berwick and Holy Island in early April, as birds returned to breeding localities. Intensive monitoring by the Northumbria Ringing Group covered 73 known territories, of which 23 held pairs, but five failed at an early stage. In a poor season, 17 pairs laid and nine went on to fledge at least 26 young (13 pairs and 45 young in 2014). It was the worst recorded season in the Border Forest where only one chick fledged. Most nests failed in poor weather

at the egg stage. One nest was predated by a *mustelid* sp. And, at another, a single chick was taken by an avian predator. In another study area, where two pairs fledged nine young, less than a quarter of known sites were occupied, with poor weather being blamed (NRG). Singles seen in Allendale, on the Border Ridge and at Rothbury during June were probably from local breeding areas.

The usual early coastal appearance of juveniles commenced at Cresswell, with one present from 26th July. A more general return occurred during August. A juvenile male, found freshly-dead on Holy Island on 3rd, had been ringed as a nestling near Middleton-in-Teesdale (Co. Durham) on 2nd July. Two juvenile females were on Holy Island later in the month and two were found side by side on fence posts at Druridge Bay. Another single was at Monks House Pool and others were inland at Elsdon and Derwent Reservoir.



During September, three were resident on Holy Island, one was at Budle Bay throughout and the Monks House individual remained. Immigration was suggested by a single, which arrived from the east at Newbiggin on 5th and another appeared on the Farne Islands on 23rd.

During the final quarter, two to three were regular on Holy Island and two remained on the Farne Islands. Singles were also regularly seen at Cresswell and St Mary's. Other coastal records involved singles at Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Fenham Mill, the Tweed Estuary and Tynemouth. In mild conditions, others remained inland, with singles at Bellingham, Billsmoor Park, Ellingham, Kirknewton, Newcastle (Chapel House), Prudhoe and Wooperton.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

STATUS: Rare to uncommon, although annual, summer visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2011 (?)

Another sign of the growing number of sightings, with 11 of the 14 claims documented. A first-summer was the first record, at Allen Banks, on 23rd May (GB/LAR). It was thought to be 'hawking' St Mark's flies in fields to the west of the main area of woodland and was only present for five minutes. Next came an adult after hirundines over the observer's garden at East Ord (Berwick) on 28th June (MHu). Again, it was only present for a few minutes before leaving to the east. The following day another bird was located at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), with further sightings of the same individual there on 27th July and at Chollerford on 10th August (MR).

The next sighting was at Kielder Water on 6th July (MD), with another at Cresswell Pond on 12th July (ADMc). Again, it was present very briefly, but passed very close over the hide before moving off N. An adult at East Chevington on 6th August was more obliging, at least showing to four observers over the north pool, and it was photographed well before moving off SW after a few minutes (JFa/TF/TRC/MHp). Also in August, an adult was seen on Holy Island (The Snook) on 23rd (MJC); it headed E and was only visible for a minute. Inland, a juvenile was over Stamfordham briefly on 27th (EC) but at close quarters with views down to 15m. Finally, in September, a juvenile was seen well at Holy Island on 11th (SR) and an adult at Budle Bay on 14th (GPK).

The increase in records is noticeable and augurs well for breeding in the future.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Two to three were resident on Holy Island during the first quarter and probably accounted for other sightings across the Lindisfarne NNR (IK *et al.*). Singles were at Budle Bay, Cresswell Pond, Newcastle (Business Park and Redheugh Bridge), Seaton Sluice and Widdrington Moor Lake. Some remained inland. An interesting observation involved two males fighting near Longhirst.

A pair was back at a regular crag breeding site on 12th February, followed by a more general return to nesting localities during March. Singles remained on the coast in April

at Berwick, East Sleekburn, the Farne Islands, Holy Island and Seaton Sluice and one was at Prestwick Carr. Sightings during May-June included two, presumed non-breeders, regularly in Budle Bay and singles at Dunstanburgh, Embleton and Holy Island, where a sub-adult female took a wader at the high-tide roost on St Cuthbert's Island.

Monitoring of 32 sites by the Northumbria Ringing Group showed that 19 held pairs. Of these, 15 pairs produced clutches, 14 pairs hatched young and, in another poor year, 11 pairs fledged at least 26 young (12 pairs and 25 young in 2014). One clutch was stolen, showing that human interference remains a problem (NRG). For a second year, urban nesting occurred on the King Edward VII Bridge (Newcastle), presumably involving the pair whose eggs failed to hatch in 2014; a single chick hatched but disappeared, in unknown circumstances, at nine or ten days old. During the breeding season, a single regularly visited Coquet Island to prey mainly on Feral Pigeons *Columba livia*, but caused little sustained disturbance to tern colonies.

After breeding, birds quickly returned to lowland and coastal areas. During July, singles were at the Farne Islands, Holywell Dene, Howdon, Maidens Hall, Tynemouth and Widdrington Moor. In August, singles were at Budle Bay, Holy Island and Low Newton, together with several inland localities. Two were noted at Budle Bay throughout September.

During the final quarter, two were regular on the Farne Islands and Holy Island. An adult and a juvenile were together at St Mary's and two were at Newcastle (Elswick). Singles were in other typical coastal localities, including Berwick, the Blyth Estuary, Cocklawburn, Cresswell, Holywell, Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth. Inland singles occurred at Belsay, Big Waters, Bothal Pond, Derwent Reservoir, Fontburn, Howdon, Newcastle (Jesmond Dene and Kingston Park), Plessey Woods, Rothbury and Swallow Pond.

Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

STATUS: Added to the official county list in 2014; previously regarded as an escape, or of unknown origin.

The majority of records in 2015 were again from the favoured Byker-Heaton-Walker area of Newcastle upon Tyne. In January, one was seen at North Seaton on 3rd and two flew over Heaton Park on 14th and 27th.

Nine flew NW over Byker (McDonalds) on 23rd April (SPP) and two NW over Byker Fire Station by the same observer on 28th. In May, singles were seen and heard at Walker Riverside Park on 11th and Gosforth Garden Village on 29th and three flew over Heaton Road on 30th. Another flew N at Gosforth Garden Village on 5th July.

There were no further sightings until October, when seven were seen at Wallsend on 4th.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1821 / LAST RECORD: 2014

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 1999 (?)

A real surprise for a lone observer at Gosforth Park NR who heard a male singing in a remote section of the reserve on 3rd June (CW). The record became even more relevant to the county when it was heard there again on 16th July. Hence it may have been singing for a prolonged spell in the hope of attracting a mate.



Red-backed Shrike - Holy Island - August (Jonathan Farooqi).

Great Grey Shrike - Holy Island - October (Mike Carr).



Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

STATUS: Rare passage visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2014

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED 1977 (?)

There were three August sightings in 2015, beginning with a single on Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 15th (FIR); another was again on Brownsman from 23rd-24th (FIR) and a juvenile was on Holy Island (The Snook) from 23rd-31st (MJC *et al.*).

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

STATUS: Rare winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2014

The bird found in mid-December 2014, at West Hartford, remained in the area until the end of January. A relatively reliable site at Harwood Forest produced a bird on 22nd January with it, or another, near Winter's Gibbet (Harwood Forest) on 12th February. In March, one was at Aid Moss (Ridsdale) on 27th, while another was at East Ord (Berwick) on 9th April.

Return passage produced two singles on Holy Island in October. The first was found on the Straight Lonnen on 4th, with a second individual at various island sites from 11th-12th.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 19 / FIRST: 1859 / LAST: 2014

There were two more sightings this year after the popular birds in 2014. A fine adult male was photographed near Dunstan Square (Dunstanburgh Castle) on 11th June (HB); it was found by visitors from Norfolk, who watched it happily hunting from a fence. Later, on 25th June, a male was found in the dunes south of Newton Pool (JC). Again, found by visitors to the county (from Cambridge), it seemed content feeding in the area and may well have been the same individual. Unfortunately, in both cases, the observers assumed that the birds were known by local birders, but sadly this was not the case!

Magpie *Pica pica*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

During the first quarter, the largest reported gatherings were in the Cramlington area, with 34 noted at Valley Park in January (DM), 30 at 'Northumberlandia' (Cramlington) in February and 20 at Valley Park in March. Elsewhere during this period, there were counts of 13-16 from Big Waters, Howdon and Prestwick Carr, with seven to nine at Fawdon, Sheepwash and Walbottle.

The species was reported regularly from Jesmond Dene throughout the year, where the peak count was eight in February. A roost at Arcot Pond held 20 in April and 12-16 were at Howdon in April-May. A pre-roost gathering of ten was at Prestwick Carr in June and five were at St Mary's in August.

There was an October count of 18 from Howdon while, in December, 22 were at Beaconhill (Cramlington) and 14 at Mickley Square.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The species continues to be well-reported from suitable, mainly woodland, habitat. There were sightings from at least 80 widespread localities during the year, beginning with peak counts of five at Ellington on 25th January and seven in the College Valley (Cheviots) on 7th February. Four to six were at Gosforth Park NR throughout January-February, with four at Hedgeley in February. Four pairs were reported from both Woosington Hall on 30th March (SRB) and at Harwood Forest on 23rd April (STE).

Gosforth Park NR continued to attract the species throughout the summer months, with up to seven in April and six from June-August. Elsewhere, breeding was confirmed for the first time at Northumberland Park (North Shields) in May, while four were at Havannah NR and Arcot Hall in April, at least five at Scotland Gate (Morpeth) in July and four at Ellington Dene in August.

Five were noted at Harwood Forest in September, Wallington Hall in October and Holywell Pond in November. Four were at Bedlington in October and four to six at Gosforth Park NR from September-December. Perhaps more unusual, was a single flying W over the spine road at North Blyth on 14th November.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

A roost of 80 was at Warkworth in January and, at Prestwick Carr, a pre-roost flock numbered 56 on two dates in January-February. Considerably larger gatherings in March included 800 coming in to roost at Fawdon on 6th, 300 at East Shaftoe on 11th, 250 in the Warkworth roost on 3rd and 150 at Staward on 21st; counts of 90-100 came from Newcastle (Ouseburn mouth) and Radcliffe, while numbers at Big Waters rose from 50 on 1st March to 150 on 27th April and 500 by 14th July.

There was a steady build-up in numbers at Howdon during this period, rising from 74 in March to 122 in May, 182 in June and peaking at 188 on 5th July. In August, flocks of 100 were noted at Howick, Knowesgate, Minsteracres, Warkworth and Whitley Chapel, when 75 were also at Prestwick Carr.

Four broods, totalling 12 young, were fledged from nest boxes at Wallington Hall (JCD).

Numbers increased significantly during the final three months of the year. In October, a pre-roost flock in excess of 700 at Budle Bay on 22nd rose to 1,200+ by 17th December. Around 2,000 moved over Seghill on 29th November (IF) and a similar number gathered at nearby Gosforth Park NR during November-December (NHSN). Other large gatherings in December were 1,500 at Eglington, 1,000 at Big Waters and 892 at Red House Farm. Elsewhere during this final quarter, 100-500 were reported from Alnmouth, Coanwood Common, Corbridge, Derwent Reservoir, Elwick, Grindon, Lynemouth, Newbiggin and Warkworth.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

STATUS: Abundant resident.

BREEDING: Abundant. Some colonies have declined in recent years.

The largest first quarter gatherings were 250 at Warenford on 8th January and at Warkworth on 3rd March; while, elsewhere, 80-100 were reported from Backworth, Cresswell Pond, Holywell Dene, Longhirst and Staward.

Rookery counts included 83 nests at Backworth on 26th March, 34 at Holywell Dene on 28th March, ten to 12 at QEII CP on 17th April and 16 at Cramlington Hall, 14 at Ponteland and two at Craster Quarry in May.

Post-breeding gatherings were noted from mid-June, with counts of 100-200 from Grindon Lough, Mirlaw House and Wooperton. There were 78 at Derwent Reservoir in July and 100 at Howick, Knowesgate, Minsteracres and Warkworth in August.

Numbers continued to increase during the final three months of the year, with peak counts of 100 at Alnmouth in October, 800 SW over Seghill on 29th November (IF) and 500 at Warkworth on 3rd December. Elsewhere during this latter period, 250 were noted in Budle Bay, 140 at Gosforth Park NR and 80-100 at Chatton, Chillingham, Corbridge, Elwick, Fontburn, Grindon Lough, Hebron, Prudhoe and Wooperton.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

A pre-roost gathering of 22 was at Morpeth Common on 27th January; elsewhere in the month, 21 were at North Shields Fish Quay on 11th and 15 at Low Newton on 8th. The highest February count was 11 at Jesmond Dene; while, in March, 50 were at Cresswell on 3rd, 23 at St Mary's on 15th, 18 (possible migrants) at Holy Island on 17th and 14 at Weetslade Colliery CP on 14th. In April, 45 were at Blagdon on 18th and 38 flew E at Howdon on 9th.

Breeding records included a nest at the top of an electricity pylon at Wideopen in April and nesting pairs at numerous sites, including Buteland Fell (Redesmouth), Cramlington, Hareshaw Head (Bellingham), Longhorsley Moor, Makendon (Coquetdale), Otterburn and Sundaysight (Bellingham). Young were also fledged from nests close to human activity on Holy Island (at The Lough and Straight Lonnen). At Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), Carrion Crows were responsible for the predation of two Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* nests with eggs, two Lapwing chicks, an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* chick and a Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* nest with eggs. For the third year in a row, a pair attempted to breed on the Farne Islands (West Wideopens), where two eggs were laid by 20th May; there was no further activity beyond this date.

Numbers increased during the second half of the year, with peak counts of 55 at Prestwick Carr on 30th September, 67 at Whitelea Beacon (Cramlington) and 64 at Calot Shad (Tweed Estuary) on 4th and 9th October respectively, 63 at Sleekburn on 15th November and 70 at Budle Bay on 17th December (CGK). Elsewhere during the final quarter, there were regular counts of 20-40 at Hauxley and 26-34 were noted at East Cramlington, Fenham-le-Moor, Tynemouth and the Wansbeck Estuary. In addition, 26 flew E at Holy Island (The Snook) on 10th October.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

STATUS: Rare and declining passage and winter visitor. / LAST RECORD: 2014

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: Hybrid pair 1979

The only record during the first half of the year was a single in the Hemscott Hill-Bell's

Farm area (Cresswell) from 24th-30th April.

In November, one was at Tynemouth on 2nd and another was again at Hemscott Hill on 13th and 21st. What was presumably the latter bird was at Cresswell Pond on 16th December.

Raven *Corvus corax*

STATUS: Uncommon resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon, but increasing.

The continued expansion of this formerly rare resident continues apace. There were reports of one to four throughout the year from all typical upland areas, including the Cheviot Valleys, Ford Moss, Harwood Forest, Holburn Moss, Kielder, Kyloe Hills, the North Pennines, Otterburn Ranges, Simonside Hills and Upper Coquetdale.

The species continues to spread out towards the coast, with sightings from seven localities, mainly in the north of the county. The first, at the beginning of the year, was one at Ross Back Sands on 4th January. Also in January, there was a first site record for Swallow Pond on 29th; while it, or another, was seen at nearby Holystone (Wallsend) on 20th and throughout February. Another coastal bird was heard calling as it flew N over Blyth Power Station on 5th February. A large flock of 30 sub-adults were seen together over Kidland Forest on 21st February (BG). A single was seen at Holy Island on 25th March and, in April, singles were noted at East Ord (Berwick) on 1st and Longhoughton on 6th.

A total of 32 breeding sites were checked by the Northumbria Ringing Group, of which 26 were occupied (27 in 2014). At least 18 pairs laid eggs (21 in 2014) and 16 nests fledged 36+ young (49+ in 2014). There was evidence of continue persecution, as one nest was destroyed when it was pulled off a crag.

There were no further coastal sightings until one at Cocklawburn on 5th August and 14+ were gathered at the border path (Cheviot) on 26th August. Two at Spittal on 30th September was followed by a number of reports of one to two at Holy Island during the final three months of the year.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

STATUS: Abundant resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

During the first quarter, notable counts included at least ten at Swallow Pond on 29th January and ten in the Harthope Valley on 22nd March. Elsewhere during this period, four to five were reported from Devil's Water, Jesmond Dene, North Seaton Colliery, Scotch Gill Woods (Morpeth) and Winter's Gibbet (Harwood Forest). A typically large count of 40+ came from Kielder Forest on 17th April.

During the summer months, there were counts of five to six (some of which were family parties) from Ellington Dene, Fulbeck (Morpeth), Jesmond Dene, Valley Park (Cramlington) and Waren Mill.

In September, a light coastal passage produced 15+ at Newbiggin on 17th and 33 on Holy Island on 20th, when 18 were inland at Derwent Reservoir. On Holy Island, numbers fluctuated in early October, peaking at 36 on 6th. A more substantial arrival of continental immigrants occurred from mid-October, when 131-134 were on Holy Island from 11th-12th

(MJC/ADM), with smaller numbers ranging from 49-79 daily from 13th-18th; thereafter numbers quickly declined into single figures. Elsewhere, counts from the Farne Islands included peaks of 42 on 11th and 47-57 on 16th, 30 were at Hauxley NR on 10th, 25+ at Budle Point on 11th, 20+ at Bamburgh, St Mary's and Tynemouth from 11th-13th and 51 between Howick-Craster on 14th. Later in the month, a high inland count of 50 came from Wallington on 27th. The only significant count during the final two months of the year was ten to 15 at Wark (North Tyne) in November.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

STATUS: Rare, although regular, passage migrant and extremely rare winter visitor.

The only spring record involved one at Felton on 2nd April.

The first of the autumn was at Cresswell Pond on 13th September. In October, singles were at Hauxley RS, St Mary's and Tynemouth on 11th. The latter bird, or another, was at Prior's Park on 12th, with other singles at Holy Island (Bishop's Palace) also on 12th, Bamburgh on 13th, Holy Island (Straight Lonnen) on 16th and well inland at Burnfoot (Haltwhistle) on 27th.



Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

STATUS: Abundant resident.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Feeding stations were an attraction in January, with 30+ noted at Gosforth Park NR during the month, 13 at Widdrington Moor and ten at Valley Park (Cramlington). In February, a total of 74 were trapped and ringed during four sessions at Spindleston, 12 were at Holywell Dene and 11 at Prestwick Carr, while nine to ten were noted at Big Waters and Eachwick in March.

Details from nest box study areas were as follows:

Locality	Nests	Eggs laid	Young fledged	Productivity	Observer
Linnels	21	215	87	4.1	AM
Dipton Wood	18	--	19	1.05	SWA
Whittle Wood	14	--	44	3.1	DWN
Low Carriteth	10	55	18	1.8	JR
Kirkley Hall	8	--	c.57	--	IK
March Burn	8	73	38	4.75	RMH
Big Waters	7	54	35	5	JCD/AJJ
Wallington Hall	6	35	27	4.5	JCD
Dye House	5	41	18	3.6	RMH
Letah Wood	4	42	36	9	RMH
Hauxley NR	3	30	21	7	RMH
Fallowlees	3	22	18	6	JCD
Hall's Hill (Chesters)	2	17	14	7	JCD
Tarset	1	11	6	6	JR
Rothley Lake	1	6	4	4	JCD

Nest box productivity from most sites was regarded as poor, due to cold, wet weather during the nesting period. Further breeding observations in May-June included young being fed in nests at Big Waters, Fulbeck (Morpeth) and Newcastle (Exhibition Park) and two family parties at Prestwick Carr.

Following this rather disappointing season, the species was reported in smaller numbers than usual, although a post-breeding flock of 40 was at Waren Mill Caravan Park (Bamburgh) on 12th July (CGK/GPK).

The largest final quarter counts of 12 at Hauxley NR and Prestwick Carr in October and 13 at Humford (Bedlington) in November reflected a continuing paucity of records. Nevertheless, a total of 245 birds were ringed at Gosforth Park NR during the year as part of the Constant Effort Sites scheme.

Great Tit *Parus major*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

In January, feeders attracted 11 at Prestwick Carr, eight at Widdrington Moor and Jesmond Dene and six at Valley Park (Cramlington); more than five were in song at Gosforth Park NR by 25th. Four ringing sessions at Spindleston in February produced 50 birds, while an impressive 30 were noted at Letah Wood (Hexham) on 19th (AJH), 12 at Prestwick Carr and ten at Holywell Dene. In March, seven to ten were reported from Brenkley, Eachwick, Jesmond Dene and Prestwick Carr and 16 were noted at Attlee Park (Bedlington) on 26th April.

Details from nest box study areas were as follows:

Locality	Nests	Eggs laid	Young fledged	Productivity	Observer
Wallington Hall	36	194	103	3.2	JCD
Linnels	21	152	86	4.1	AM
March Burn	19	120	76	4	RMH
Tarset	18	104	63	3.5	JR
Rothley Lake	14	61	39	2.8	JCD
Kirkley Hall	12	--	c.63	--	IK
Whittle Wood	11	--	43	3.9	DWN
Dye House	8	51	21	2.6	RMH
Fallowlees	7	39	31	4.4	JCD
Colwell Hill (Chesters)	7	37	23	3.3	JCD
Hauxley NR	6	35	18	3	RMH
Dipton Wood	5	--	21	4.2	SWA
Hall's Hill (Chesters)	4	31	20	5	JCD
Letah Wood	2	15	13	6.5	RMH
Low Carriteth	2	15	4	2	JR

As with the previous species, nest box productivity from most sites was regarded as poor, due to cold, wet weather during the nesting period. At Big Waters, a pair raised a second brood, an almost unique event for this site. Prestwick Carr continued to be productive, with counts of six in June and ten in July.

The species is still regarded as something of a rarity on Holy Island, so reports of one to two in October and two for most of December were noteworthy. Elsewhere, 17 were at Humford (Bedlington) on 29th November and six at Eachwick and Jesmond Dene in December.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

STATUS: Abundant resident.

BREEDING: Abundant.

A total of 15 were ringed during four sessions at Spindleston in February. There were few other double-figure counts during the year, although the species obviously remains abundant in its favoured coniferous woodland habitat. An Old Hartley garden supported one to five throughout the year, with a peak in October.

A pair occupied a nest box at Dye House (Hexham), fledging young from all eight eggs laid (RMH).

Coastal movement was reported from mid-September, when a single was at Newbiggin on 17th; more unusual were two at Holy Island on 28th. In October, four to ten were noted at Hauxley RS from 3rd-18th, four were at Bamburgh on 8th, two at Holy Island from 12th-14th and 13 were noted between Howick Dene-Craster on 14th (MJC). Also in October, two at Howdon was a first record for the site. In November, a further coastal report involved four+ at Bamburgh on 5th, while inland there was a count of nine from Humford (Bedlington) on 29th.

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The table below would suggest distribution remains relatively stable (note that 2011 was a BTO Atlas year):

Year	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Localities	40	37	45	41	48

The most reliable site remains Prestwick Carr, where up to four adults were noted throughout the year. Other regular sites reporting one to three birds were Big Waters, Derwent Reservoir, Holywell Dene, Linden Hall (Longhorsley), Longhorsley Moor and Swallow Pond. During the first quarter, birds were also noted at a further 13 localities, including Arcot Pond, Branton GP, Ellington, Eshott, Lucker, Morpeth (County Hall), Redesmouth, Rothbury and Weetslade CP.

Evidence of breeding came from four localities. Pairs were excavating nest holes at Longhorsley on 27th March and nearby Longhorsley Moor on 7th April; at the latter site young were being fed in the nest on 7th May and 4th June (AB/LB). A pair were excavating a nest at Prestwick Carr on 6th April and feeding young near the nest on 15th May (PCF). A family party of eight, presumably locally bred, were at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) on 28th June (TB). Other sites occupied during the breeding season (April-August) were Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield), Backworth, Hagg Bank (Wylam), Havannah NR, Newbiggin, Old Hartley, Shotleyfield, South Snods (Allensford), Wallington Hall and, perhaps more unusually, Newcastle Quayside.

Three were at Lynemouth Dene on 18th September and two at Craster on 30th September and 14th October. Twos were at Newbiggin Ash Lagoons in October, Alnwick GC in November and Eshott, Linton Ponds and Tyne Riverside CP (Newburn) in December. Elsewhere during this final period, singles were noted at a further eight localities.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The table below would suggest distribution has levelled in recent years after an apparent contraction in earlier years (note that 2011 was a BTO Atlas year):

Year	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Localities	24	24	26	35	44

This is an essentially sedentary species and, as would be expected, many of its sites were regular haunts. Up to three were reported from Linden Hall (Longhorsley), New Mills Wood (Berwick), Scotch Gill Woods (Morpeth) and Thrum Mill (Rothbury) throughout the year and one to two were also noted regularly at Spindleston.

Elsewhere during the first quarter, up to two were noted at Mitford Village, Postern Woods (Morpeth) and Wallington, with singles also at Felton Lane, Jesmond Dene, Riding Mill, Wark (North Tyne) and Whiteadder Water (Berwick).

During the period April-May, up to two were at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), Fulbeck (Morpeth), Nunnykirk and Warkworth Lane (Ellington) and a single at Fontburn Reservoir. The only confirmation of successful breeding was an adult accompanied by two juveniles

at Rothbury on 7th June (JD).

In July, two were at Wallington and a single was at Chollerford; the latter the first sighting here for around four years, following the severe winters of 2010-11 and 2011-12. Perhaps more unusual was a single at Blakehopeburnhaugh (Kielder Forest) on 4th August, while another single was at Acomb on 29th August. On 6th September, a single was again found on higher ground, at Rowley Burn (Hexhamshire) and, in October, two visited garden feeders at Fulbeck (Morpeth) and a single was at Letah Wood (Hexham).

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / LAST RECORD: 2014

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / FIRST BRED: 1999 / LAST BRED: 2015

Records this year centred on East Chevington, where birds were noted on 14th March and from April-June and again in October. In April, three (two males and a female) were seen on 10th and 23rd, with two noted on 24th and throughout May, and singles on other dates.

On 14th June, a male and female were observed carrying food on five to six occasions in a 30 minute spell, indicating the first successful breeding in the county since 2000 (TB); the same observer had a single at Cresswell Pond on the same date.

The majority of records came in October, with four (two males and two females) at East Chevington north pool on 1st (ADMc), four flying S past Cresswell Pond on 4th (RD), three (two males and a female) at Holy Island (The Lough) on 13th, with one on 14th, and other singles at East Chevington and Hauxley on 31st; the latter being only the second site record after one in 1965. Finally, one was at Old Water (Warkworth) on 8th November.



Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

A small flock of up to 28 frequented 'winter wheat' fields at Beaconhill (Cramlington) in January and three birds sang at Marshall Meadows late in the month, with singles noted elsewhere at Cocklawburn, Cresswell, Holywell Dene and Lindisfarne NNR. The continuing benign weather in February brought in migrant birds, including ca.50 on stubble at Holy Island on 21st, birds having been absent there all winter, and 27 flew N at Cheswick late in the month. Other records from around mid-February included 25 on saltmarsh at Beal, 24 at St Mary's, 12 at Hemscotthill Links (Cresswell) and eight at Broadstruther (Harthope Burn); many of these birds were in song or involved in territorial display. Elsewhere, one to four were noted moving N, or singing, at ten further locations. In March, increasing numbers were noted as the seasonal movement gained strength, with small parties totalling 50 at Holy Island on 8th, 35 at East Chevington, 30 at Whitley Bay Links, 25 at St Mary's, 16 in the Holywell area and 12, many in song, at Beacon Lane. 'Many' were seen in misty conditions at Stobswood Opencast on 17th and one to five were at 12 other widespread localities.

During the breeding season, April-August, singing birds were recorded at 15 inland and five coastal sites, with maximum counts of 17 at St Mary's in April and 44 on the Simonsides in May. Other notable records from April-May were 15 at Acton Fell (Blanchland), 14 at Newcastle (Town Moor), 13 in the Holywell area and ten on moorland north of Alnham. Recorded sightings declined significantly in June-August, totalling only seven reports of one to four at Cresswell, Holy Island, Howick, Newton Links and Tughall; a juvenile on Newbiggin GC in August was the only record of successful breeding.

From early September, and increasingly in October, gatherings and movements S, SW and W were noted at many sites, including a maximum count of 109 S over Holy Island (The Snook) on 10th October (MJC). On other dates in September-October, there were counts of 50 at Hauxley, 35 at East Chevington, 30+ at Beacon Lane and one to 20 at East Cramlington, the Farne Islands, Grindon Lough, Newcastle (Town Moor), Prestwick Carr, Whitelea (Beacon Hill), Widdrington Moor and 12 other widespread locations.

Passage movement continued in early November, with 27 W over Whiteadder Point (Berwick), 38 gathering at Goswick Farm, 23 S over Gosforth Park and counts elsewhere of one to 12 at Alnwick, Amble, Arcot, Big Waters NR, Cramlington, Druridge, Hauxley and Inner Farne (Farne Islands). The highest December counts were 27 at Beacon Lane and eight at St Mary's, with one to two at three other sites.

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

STATUS: Rare winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2014

It was another disappointing year for sightings of this very attractive winter visitor, with only one record, a single at Blyth South Harbour from 12th-17th October (PCF). The bird was extremely confiding and proved a big attraction for many observers and photographers.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

STATUS: STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first arrival, in March, was a single at Cresswell Pond on 10th, an early date, which was followed on 15th by two flying N at the Farne Islands and singles at Whiteadder Point and Whiteadder Water (Berwick). Sightings of singles also came from the Carey Burn (Harthope Valley), East Chevington and Whittle Dene Reservoirs on dates from 22nd-29th and three were at East Chevington on 29th. The main influx came in April, with a steady movement of 100+ N at Bamburgh on 4th, 229 N (in one hour) in the far north of the county at Horncliffe on 9th and notable gatherings, on various dates from 9th-30th, comprising a maximum 400+ at Branton on 27th (IBDa/KDa), ca.200 at Druridge Bay CP and Killingworth, 180 at West Ord (Berwick), 140 at Bothal Pond, 120 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and over 100 at Big Waters, Castle Island and Kielder Water. Up to 85 were present elsewhere at 24 widespread localities.

A brief cold weather period during the first week of May resulted in concentrations feeding over water, including 200 at Branton GP, 125 at Castle Island and 100 at Big Waters, Derwent Reservoir and Killingworth Lake. At other locations in May, there were 70+ Apparently Occupied Nests (AON) at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh) and gatherings of 20-50 birds were recorded at Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Bothal Pond, Boulmer, Bygate (Upper Coquetdale), Ingram, Langlee, the River Pont near Ponteland and St Mary's Wetland.

In June, the colony at Haughton Strother GP had increased to an impressive 170 AON, with counts elsewhere of 25-30 birds at Castle Island, Gosforth Park and Langlee. Breeding evidence in July included 50+ pairs at nests in Sandy Bay (Newbiggin), 15 pairs at Chollerford, where a Spanish-ringed bird was caught, seven pairs fledging 18 young at St Mary's and a brood of four ready to fledge at Church Point (Newbiggin) at the month end. Elsewhere, gatherings of 40-60 were recorded at Arcot and Cresswell Ponds and the Long Nanny, with one to 20 in the Breamish Valley, Cullernose Point and Howdon.

Throughout August, pre-migration roosts were observed at Big Waters, with a maximum count of 150 on 4th, declining to 40 on 31st, and 125 were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 4th. At East Chevington, 20 moved S on 29th and a strong passage S was also noted at St Mary's on 16th. Early September records, from 2nd-13th, involved 40 at Alnmouth, 30 at Big Waters, ten at Widdrington Lake, four at Budle Point and two at Derwent Reservoir. Passage S of 50+ was recorded at Gosforth Park on 20th September, which was the latest sighting of the year, a somewhat early date, possibly resulting from the generally cool and wet late summer conditions which hastened the exodus.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

STATUS: Common summer and abundant passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

A slow return was evident during the first week of April, with the first bird noted at Berwick on 4th and up to four from 5th-9th at Backworth, Derwent Reservoir, East Chevington and Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), with singles at a dozen other widespread localities. At Big Waters, the first double-figure count, of 15, was recorded on 12th, rising to 30 the following day. Numbers rose rapidly thereafter, with 140+ and 100+ seen in cold conditions on 19th at Derwent Reservoir and West Ord (Berwick)



Shore Lark - Blyth - October (Alan Curry).

Shore Lark - Blyth - October (Heiko Peters).



respectively; other gatherings from mid-April onwards included 30 at Kielder, 45 at Arcot Pond and 70 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Light northerly passage was evident during May at Horncliffe and, mid-month, at East Chevington and Old Hartley. Brief cold periods again concentrated birds to feed over water, with 300+ counted at Killingworth Lake on 7th, 200-300 at Swallow Pond on 9th and 19th and 120+ at Bothal Pond on 31st May. Perhaps surprisingly, in view of the poor weather conditions during May, a very early breeding record came from Newcastle (Exhibition Park), where a pair fed young in the nest on 20th.

During the peak breeding season, June-July, gatherings of 150+ were recorded at St Mary's, 50 at Castle Island, 37 at Lynnhield, 20 at Arcot Pond and ten at Widdrington Village; a roost at Gosforth Park NR held 300+ at the end of July.

There were few records of actual breeding pairs and it was generally a poor year due to cold weather at the start and end of the season; a late record from Stamfordham involved a pair hatching their first clutch on 29th June and a pair at Holy Island, again using a natural nest site in a boulder clay bank, first reported in 2014, lost their young after heavy rain waterlogged the nest in June. A nest at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) held five young in early July and the public hide at Holywell Pond contained a nest with two chicks at the end of the month. The long-running ringing study at Holy Island also reported delayed nesting and an 'average' year, with only 55 pairs fledging ca.200 young, well down on 2014, when 260 were fledged (IK). A similarly disappointing season was also recorded from the Upper Coquetdale study area, where 28 pairs fledged 115 young (186 in 2014) (JR). However, more encouragingly, on the Farne Islands a record ten pairs nested, with a number of these producing double broods.

The first signs of return migration came at Budle Point in the early morning of 10th August, when 300 (per hour) moved S; strong passage S was also noted at St Mary's on 16th and 36-50 (per hour) moved S on 27th-30th at Berwick, Cambois and East Chevington. The evening post-breeding roost at Gosforth Park NR rose to 1,000+ towards the end of August (NHSN) and, elsewhere, gatherings of 218 were at Craster, 100 at Holy Island, 62 at Ancroft and 60 at Hauxley. At 16 other widespread localities, two to 40 were recorded and a pair at Deadwater Fell (Kielder) had a nest with young on 2nd. Maximum counts during September were 250 at Holy Island, 118 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 50 at Big Waters, Druridge Pools and Prestwick Carr, 40 at Wark (North Tyne) and one to 30 at 12 other widespread sites. A light movement S of ca.30 (per hour) was noted from Newbiggin on two days in late September and a nest at Exhibition Park fledged four young by mid-month; at Stamfordham a pair fledged three young from a second brood on 17th.

During the first week of October, 40 remained at Wark and seven were seen flying S at Big Waters, with seven also at Beaconhill (Cramlington) and Dinnington. One to three were recorded at Chollerford, Cresswell, the Farne Islands, Holy Island, Newbiggin and Tynemouth on various dates up to 25th, with another at Newton Scrape on 31st. Late records in November comprised singles at St Mary's on 10th, Druridge on 14th and Hauxley on 14th and 16th.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

A very early first arrival was a single at Gosforth Park NR on 2nd April, then it was almost a week later before the next sighting of two at Bamburgh on 8th; thereafter, a single was

at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 12th. The main influx commenced during the usual period of mid-late April, with ten at Swallow Pond and Rothbury on 19th and 28th respectively and four to six at ten other typical locations from 19th-30th. Intermittent cold and wet periods throughout May saw many birds resort to hawking over water; a maximum 200+ fed at Swallow Pond on 19th (SPP) with, on other dates, 140 at Bothal Pond, 100 at Killingworth Lake, 60 at East Chevington, 45 at Bothal Pond and East Ord (Berwick) and records of one to 35 at 16 other widespread localities. Six late migrants flew N through Inner Sound (Farne Islands) on 30th May.

Perhaps surprisingly, no breeding records came in June, but counts included 50 at Castle Island, 30 at Arcot Pond and Beacon Lane (Cramlington) and 20 at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) and Widdrington Village, with ten to 16 at Bolton, Cresswell, Gosforth Park and Newcastle (Town Moor). In early July, at least 25 occupied nests were recorded at Sandy Bay (Newbiggin) and gatherings elsewhere were 50 over fields at St Mary's, a maximum of 30 at Holywell Dene and 20 at Arcot Pond, with eight to ten at Beaconhill (Cramlington), Newcastle (Town Moor) and Spital Point (Newbiggin). Larger post-breeding concentrations noted in late August, indicative of successful breeding, comprised at least 80 over the Town Moor, 60 at Old Hartley and Haughton Mains, 25 at Ashington and ten to 20 at Gosforth Garden Village, Holywell Dene and St Mary's. Also at Gosforth, 12 migrants passed SW on 30th, the first record of return passage.

Visible migration was noted at Newbiggin on 20th September, when 76 moved S (in just under two hours) and counts of 30-50 came from Alnwick, Boulmer, East Ord (Berwick) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs on various dates during the month, along with one to 15 at nine other locations. In October, a late record of successful breeding involved a pair with three young which left a nest at Whitley Bay on 1st. Ten other sightings, all within the first week of October, comprised two to five at East Ord, Ellington, Hauxley, Low Newton, Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) and St Mary's and six over a garden at Fulbeck on 6th represented the final record of the year.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Roaming flocks were widespread during the first quarter, the largest groups being 22 at Tyne Green (Hexham), 12 at Rothbury and parties of ten at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), Holywell Dene and Marden Quarry. As usual, early breeding behaviour occurred during March, with nest-building at Haughton Strother on 16th and Longhorsley on 18th. By early April, two pairs were building at Haughton Strother and pairs were in suitable breeding sites at Newbiggin and Prestwick Carr. During May, family parties were at Falstone and Redmire Bridge and a pair fed young in a nest at Laverock Hall (Blyth). More family parties were seen in June at Byker (Lower Ouseburn), East Hartford and Jesmond Dene.

Sizeable post-breeding gatherings were prominent during July-August, with 32 at Waren Mill (CGK/GPK), 21 at Derwent Reservoir, 18 at Ellington and smaller groups in at least nine other areas, including an urban family party at Newcastle Quayside.

During September-October large groups continued to be seen, including 30 at Bamburgh, 20 at Hauxley NR and Humshaugh, 18 at East Chevington and lesser number at many other widespread localities. Transient coasting autumn flocks are regular on Holy Island but up to 20, which arrived during October, remained until late November, much longer than usual.

Elsewhere, during November-December, the largest groups included 19 at Wark, 16 at North Shields (Northumberland Park) and Prestwick Carr and 15 at Morpeth (Fulbeck) and Newcastle (Leazes Park).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

STATUS: Rare autumn passage visitor. Extremely rare in spring./FIRST RECORD: 1965/
LAST RECORD: 2014

Almost expected each year, with one turning up on cue on 15th August on Holy Island (The Snook) (MJC). It was only on view for ten minutes. The observer then moved to the Green Shiel excavations area and promptly found a different bird! This gave a different call to the first individual and also had slightly different plumage, hence there was no doubt that two birds were involved. Again at the excavations, another bird was found on 24th August (AIB/GB/LAR), which behaved well and was photographed. Always a bird of habit, with all autumn sightings between 13th August-21st September.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

STATUS: Uncommon autumn passage visitor, extremely rare in spring.

It proved to be a record breaking year for this charismatic Siberian species, with light arrival in late September and much larger numbers in October.

The first record involved two on the Farne Islands on 9th September; the earliest ever recorded in the county. A single followed on Holy Island on 11th, with two present on 12th-13th, when one was also at Cresswell. Two were at Newbiggin on 17th, with singles at Lynemouth on 18th and Druridge Bay on 19th, and further singles between 26th-30th at Bamburgh, Berwick, Budle Bay, Craster, Holy Island (fourth individual of the month), Whitley Bay Cemetery and Woodhorn Church.

The main arrival began on 4th October. Again, Holy Island was the epicentre, with 12 on 4th rising to 16 on 6th (ADM/MJC/AH/SR *et al.*), a day total only just exceeded by 17 on the island on 25th September 2013. Although local movements and fresh arrivals made calculations difficult, it was estimated that 19-22 individuals visited the island. On the Farne Islands, peak arrival, involving seven birds, was also on 4th. During autumn, a minimum of 19 visited the islands, the last on 18th October. Arrivals elsewhere continued until the end of October, with sightings from at least 21 coastal localities. Counts involved an estimated 13 in the Bamburgh-Budle Point area, at least four at Tynemouth-Prior's Park, at least two at Hauxley NR and two at Brierdene (Whitley Bay), Craster, Marden Estate (North Shields), St Mary's Island/Wetland, Whitley Cemetery and Woodhorn Church. Singles were at Blyth (Cemetery, Estuary and Ridley Park), Cresswell Pond, Cullercoats, Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Low Newton and Marden Quarry.

The autumn records involved a minimum of 93 individuals; a new record annual total for the county. A paper on the remarkable change in status of this species can be found towards the end of this publication.

An individual at Newbiggin on 28th-29th October showed some characteristics of Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* but did not call and was not positively identified (GB/LAR).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 19 / FIRST: 1976 / LAST: 2012

Another excellent find, with one seen at Holy Island (Chare Ends) on 8th October (SR *et al.*). It called and was seen briefly, but well, although was typically skulking.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 27 / FIRST: 1980 / LAST: 2014

A typical sighting was one located on Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 16th October (DR *et al.*). It stayed through to 18th October and was initially seen by the jetty, but seemingly preferred the nettles around the cottage over the next two days.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

STATUS: An increasingly uncommon summer and rare passage visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The rapid decline of this attractive visitor was again starkly evident, with only ten records between April-August, mainly from the predominantly Oak woodlands in the south west. For this once well-represented breeding visitor, this compares, for example, with at least 93 formerly rare Yellow-browed Warblers and more than a dozen records of Barred Warbler.

The first records were of singing males during April at Hareshaw Linn on 22nd and Branton GP on 27th-28th. During May, three sang at Allen Banks and along the Tasset Burn at Sidwood (EC/MD/IF/AJH *et al.*). Three males also sang in a 100-yard stretch of prime Oak woodland in the Derwent Gorge on the Durham boundary (IK). Singles were also found at Howburn Woods (Morpeth) on 6th and Matthew's Linn (Kielder) on 8th. A male continued to sing at Allen Banks into early June.

The only indications of passage were during August, when one was ringed at Hauxley NR on 19th and another was found on Holy Island (Chare Ends) on 24th.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Common.

Wintering individuals were recorded during January-February, with singles in Newcastle city centre, Tynemouth and Whitley Bay.

Spring arrival was evident between 7th-12th March, with singles at Big Waters, Cresswell Pond and Gosforth Park NR and others following from 14th-19th at seven further localities. The pace then quickened with singing males established in many areas by the end of the month.

Coastal passage peaked in April with 26 on Holy Island on 11th (ADM). The first single on the Farne Islands also occurred on 11th, followed by two to three on many dates until 16th June. Coastal movement during May included 14 on Holy Island on 9th and lesser numbers on several other dates. Three late migrants were present as late as 13th June.

In breeding areas, counts were numerous and widespread. They included 20 singing at Berwick (New Mills Wood), 17 between Arcot Pond-Arcot GC, 16 in Holywell Dene, 11 at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) and Newburn Riverside CP, and ten at Beacon Lane



Grasshopper Warbler - St Mary's - April (Alan Curry).

Icterine Warbler - Holy Island - August
(Mike Carr).

Radde's Warbler - Holy Island - October
(Andy Mould).



(Cramlington) and Jesmond Dene. Singing continued in several areas into July.

The first return passage birds occurred in August, with arrival on the Farne Islands from 7th. Eight were in Bamburgh dunes on 31st. Movement increased during September, with coastal day counts of ten at Budle Point, Craster and Holy Island and seven at Newbiggin. Heavier movements followed in October with, for example, peaks of 17 at Alnmouth and the Farne Islands, 16 on Holy Island, ten at Hauxley NR, nine between Howick Dene-Craster and five in Whitley Bay Cemetery. Inland movement was indicated by three in a Newcastle garden (Chapel House).

Much lighter passage continued during November, with late peaks of four at Alnmouth and Holy Island, two at Berwick, Brierdene (Whitley Bay) and Hauxley and singles at Bamburgh, Big Waters, Marden Quarry and Tynemouth. During December, wintering birds were at Prudhoe on 28th and at Tynemouth the following day.

Birds probably of other races are sometimes noted during the autumn and undoubtedly do occur in the county. A very pale Eastern-type bird was on Holy Island on 28th October (ADM).

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

STATUS: Abundant summer and common passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Arrival began from 9th April, when two were at Swallow Pond. Many others quickly followed to occupy breeding territories, including 14 at Ford Moss on 11th, 12 at Arcot on 16th, 13 at Kielder on 17th while, by the 18th, 32 were singing at Wingates and 21 at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley).

Coastal passage peaked with 40 on Holy Island on 25th April (ADM), when seven were on the Farne Islands. Passage continued in May on the Farnes, with a peak of ten on 5th, and birds were recorded across the islands until the final single, on Brownsman, on 6th June. On 7th May, a peak count at Holy Island involved 20 birds. A late single was on the island on 5th June.

Many reports of singing males in May included peak counts of 30 in the Harthope Valley on 23rd, 29 at Wingates on 30th and 20 at Beacon Lane (Longhorsley) on 23rd. However, despite these, and other reports of substantial numbers of singing males, some observers considered it a disappointing breeding year, blaming the poor weather.

Return passage built up during August, with high counts from Holy Island, including 12 on 15th, 17 on 22nd, 23 on 23rd and a peak of 39 on 24th. The autumn peak on the Farne Islands involved 18, also on 24th. More modest numbers occurred elsewhere, including eight at Druridge Pools, six at Budle Point and four at Bamburgh. Much lighter movement continued during September, including ten on Holy Island on 11th and seven at Holborn on 27th.

The final records, during October, were all coastal. One to two birds were on Holy Island between 3rd-8th and singles were at Bamburgh on 13th and the Farne Islands on 19th. The last was a single on Holy Island on 31st.

'Northern Willow Warbler' *P. t. acredula*

A late spring bird, photographed on Holy Island on 5th June, showed characteristics of the 'Northern' race *P. t. acredula* (ADM).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

STATUS: Common summer and well-represented passage visitor, uncommon in winter.

BREEDING: Common.

As usual, wintering birds were attracted to gardens. During January, a male and female were regular at Jesmond and Marden Estate (North Shields), two males were at Whitley Bay, two females at Northburn (Cramlington) and singles at Corbridge, Cresswell, Felton, Holywell Dene, South Gosforth and Warden. During February, four were at the Northburn garden, two at South Gosforth, a male was at East Ord and a female at Tynemouth. Three of the Northburn birds remained into early March, as singles continued to frequent Holywell and Tynemouth.

Spring arrival began from mid-April and provided counts of ten at Arcot, eight in Jesmond Dene, six at Bothal, Marden Quarry and Village Green (Cramlington), with lesser numbers at many other suitable breeding localities. Nest-building was noted at Wylam by 18th April. Coastal passage produced a peak of ten on Holy Island on 25th April. Passage was light on the Farne Islands, with peaks of three on 29th April and 3rd May.

Many more breeding areas were occupied during May, with numerous reports of singing males, while further coastal passage was indicated by ten at Tynemouth on 3rd. During the remainder of the breeding season the species continued to be well-reported, with singing extending into July at several localities.

Return passage commenced during late August, with singles on the Farne Islands, Holy Island and Low Newton. Light passage continued during September, before peaking in October, although no large numbers were reported. The highest October day counts involved 11 on the Farne Islands on 11th October (FIR), seven on Holy Island, six at Hauxley RS, five at Bamburgh and three at Seahouses and St Mary's Wetland. Late singles followed in November at Holy Island on 1st, the Farne Islands on 3rd, Hauxley on 7th and Holywell Dene on 24th. A single was still inland at Chollerford on 23rd.

During December, wintering birds included a female in a garden at Morpeth and a male was seen on two dates at Gosforth Garden Village.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Spring movements began in late April, with singles on Holy Island on 22nd and at Longhorsley Moor on 23rd. Breeding areas were slowly occupied during May, with three in song at Linden Hall by 7th. Later in the month, three were also found at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), Fontburn Reservoir and Wingates and two were seen at Allen Banks, Branton GP, Castron, Dinnington, East Ord, the Harthope Valley and Longhorsley Moor. Singles were at a further 27 potential breeding localities.

The only indications of very light coastal passage were two on the Farne Islands on 3rd May and three on Holy Island the following day.

Elsewhere, during the breeding season, singles were found at Bamburgh (Castle Wood), Big Waters, Derwent Reservoir, Lucker and Newburn CP in June. During July, singing singles were at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), Linton, Low Newton and Shotleyfield.

Return passage occurred during August, when three on the Farne Islands on 20th were followed by a 'fall' of 20 on Holy Island on 24th (TF/JFa). Two were at Budle Point



and singles at Bamburgh, East Ord and Newcastle (Exhibition Park) during this period. Movement continued in September with a peak of six on Holy Island on 13th. Elsewhere, the only reports involved singles at Waren Mill and again in Exhibition Park. The final record was a single on Holy Island on 26th September.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1913 / LAST RECORD: 2014

The annual deluge started mid-August and continued through to mid-October with, satisfyingly, 15 of the 17 claims documented and accepted. An initial first-winter was located at Holy Island (The Snook) on 19th August (IDa/KDa *et al.*), with a different individual present on 24th August (MJC/JFa). Further island individuals were located on 19th along the Straight Lonnen and at the excavations (IDa/KDa).

September started with one on 1st at Prior's Park (Tynemouth) (MK/DRW), which stayed through to 10th. Passage continued with singles at Lynemouth on 6th (JL), Holy Island (excavations) on 10th (PRM) and Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 15th (DR *et al.*).

In October, further first-winters were at Brierdene (Whitley Bay) on 1st (NPD *et al.*) and St Mary's on 2nd (ASJ). Arrivals continued with singles at Holy Island (The Snook) on 4th (MJC/ADM) and St Mary's from 6th-9th (NPD/AC *et al.*), with first-winters at Hauxley from 11th-18th (SWa/TG/IF), trapped and ringed at Bamburgh on 11th (MSH/JCD) and on Holy Island (churchyard) on 13th (ADM *et al.*), with two there on 15th and one staying through to 20th (ADM *et al.*). Finally, a first-winter was on Holy Island (Straight Lonnen) on 14th-15th (ADM *et al.*).

The species has now passed the CRC threshold of ten accepted sightings annually over a five year period so descriptions will not be necessary in 2016.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

STATUS: Well-represented summer, and uncommon to well-represented passage, visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Spring arrival commenced in April, with the first found at Tranwell on 20th. Others quickly followed at West Chevington on 21st, East Chevington and Castle Island on 23rd, Hartburn on 24th, Morpeth (Low Stanners) the following day and two were at East Chevington by 26th. Others arrived at Ellington and Swallow Pond by the end of the month.

Typical scrubby nesting areas were occupied in May, when three were singing at East Chevington on 4th (TF/JFa) and Holywell on 12th (ASJ) and two were in territory at Spindleston and Village Green (Cramlington). Singing singles were in at least 16 other suitable breeding areas.

The only indications of coastal passage were provided by one on the Farne Islands on 3rd May, followed by two during a small 'fall' of migrants on 5th, and two on Holy Island on 7th.

Territorial birds continued to be found in June-July in other areas, including Bank's Pond (Dinnington), Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), East Duddo, Kirkley, Linton Pond, Maiden's Hall, Middle Stobswood, Morpeth (Fulbeck), Redrow, Whalton and Wooler.

Typical light return passage was evident during August, with singles at Berwick, Budle Point and the Farne Islands; while, on 12th-13th September, two were on Holy Island. Singles followed at the Farne Islands on 14th, Craster on 19th and Holy Island on 26th.

The final records, during October, involved singles on Holy Island on 3rd, St Mary's and Tynemouth on 9th and Marden Quarry on 19th.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

STATUS: Common summer and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first spring arrival was at Cresswell Pond on 17th April, followed by further singles at Druridge Pools and East Chevington the following day. By the end of April, birds had taken up typical breeding territories in at least 15 other lowland localities with, for example, six singing around Arcot Pond and five at Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay).

Higher counts of singing males followed in May, with 12 at Village Green (Cramlington) on 15th (LJM), ten at Holywell on 27th, nine in the Breamish Valley and around St Mary's, six at Corbridge (Aydun) and Fenham-le-Moor and lesser numbers across many other areas.

Coastal passage on Holy Island produced three in late April and three to four during May, when two males also took up territories in suitable areas on the island. On the Farne Islands, singles were recorded on ten dates between 24th April-9th May, with three present on 5th May.

By early June, successful breeding was shown by four birds carrying food to nests at Prestwick Carr. Further evidence came in July, with six juveniles from two broods at Arcot Pond and a pair feeding young at Howdon. Birds continued to be found in numerous other areas where breeding undoubtedly occurred. One of the Holy Island males sang through until late July without attracting a mate.

The presence of coastal breeding pairs probably masked early return movements although, by late August, two probable migrants were on Holy Island and one at Beal Point. On the Farne Islands, the first returning individual was found on 13th August and two were present on 24th. Small numbers continued to occur along the coast in September, although others remained inland at Big Waters and in Newcastle (Exhibition Park). The final sighting was a single at St Mary's Wetland on 14th October, the only record for that month.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

A single at St Mary's on 16th April was the first indication of arrival. Other singles followed at Gosforth Park NR on 21st and Cresswell Pond on 24th, by which date three were at St Mary's. Others followed by the end of the month, with five at Arcot Pond and West Hartford and one to two recorded in at least ten other localities, including an upland individual at Harwood Forest.

'Reeling' males were widespread during May-June in suitable wetland and damp breeding areas. Five were singing in Gosforth Park during this period. There were also records, mainly of singles or pairs, from 15 other lowland localities and another upland site in the Cheviots (Broadstruther).

The most detailed breeding data came from the long-running Cramlington study area, where 21 territories were identified, including six at both Arcot Pond and West Hartford (STH/LJM *et al.*). During August, the only records outside the Cramlington area were a single at Prestwick Carr and a return passage individual on the Farne Islands on 24th.

The final records, in September, involved singles at Prestwick Carr on 5th and Arcot on 6th.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1889 / LAST RECORD: 2013

After an unusual blank year in 2014, it was almost a vintage year, with seven individuals, and it was gratifying that only one claim was not documented and accepted. Passage started on 19th August, with a first-winter trapped and ringed on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) (DR *et al.*), with another the same day at Holy Island (The Snook) staying to the following day (IDA/KDa *et al.*). Further individuals followed on Holy Island, with another first-winter at The Snook on 23rd, which unusually stayed through to 1st September (MJC *et al.*), one between Chare Ends and the excavations on 24th (TF/JFa) and a different bird at the 'Half-Moon Slack', also on 24th (MJC *et al.*).

September revealed single first-winters, again on Holy Island, with one at the 'excavations' on 9th-10th (MJC *et al.*) and, finally, one in the 'Vicar's Garden' on 11th (MJC).

The last prolific year was 2008, with 13 individuals, though they were split between spring and autumn.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

STATUS: Common summer and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Spring arrival began with a single at Branton GP on 10th April. Others quickly followed during the rest of the month, with counts of five at Arcot Pond and East Chevington, three at Cresswell Pond and one to two at Backworth Pond, Big Waters, Gosforth Park NR, Holy Island, Prestwick Carr, St Mary's and Warkworth Lane.

As usual, numbers rose sharply during early May with singing birds in numerous localities. The highest concentration was at Prestwick Carr, where 11 on 10th rose to 16 by 23rd (PCF) as more territories were occupied. Eight were at East Chevington, Low Newton and St Mary's and six at Arcot Pond and Bamburgh. Six were also on Holy Island where this species is the only regular breeding warbler, the presence of territorial birds obscuring migrant passage. Four were at Branton and one to three in 13 other widespread localities, including Shield on the Wall where it is regarded as a local rarity.

The only indication of coastal passage came from the Farne Islands, where singles were recorded in May on 3rd and 13th, with another following on 4th-5th June. During the breeding season, the most detailed results were from East Chevington, where it was regarded as another poor year with few males heard singing. It was also a poor year in Scotland, the probable origin of many of our migrants.

During July-August, 13 adults and 84 juveniles were ringed at East Chevington. Three of the adults were females, with brood patches indicating local breeders (IF). Breeding occurred in many areas, with birds feeding young at Arcot Pond, Cocklawburn, Holy Island Lough, Needles Eye (Berwick) and St Mary's. Small groups of adults and juveniles in other areas also indicated success.

There was little indication of return passage, with birds gradually disappearing during August. The only hint of coastal passage was provided by a single on the Farne Islands on 27th August. During September, the only reports involved a single on Holy Island on 10th and one to two still inland at Arcot Pond up until 13th and Corbridge on 15th.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1963 / LAST RECORD: 2013

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2013

The Farne Islands, unsurprisingly, featured the only record of the year, with a first-winter trapped on Inner Farne on 28th August (DR *et al.*). Sadly, something was amiss with its breathing and it died in the hand, which was decidedly unfortunate. There was no sign again this year of any singing adults in the Druridge Bay area, so the breeding in 2013 does not look like being replicated.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

A singing male at Gosforth Park NR on 16th April heralded spring arrival in regular and potential breeding localities. Other singles followed at Holywell Pond on 18th, East Chevington on 23rd, Big Waters and Druridge Pools on 25th, Cresswell Pond on 29th and Swallow Pond on 30th. Further arrivals were apparent in early May, with at least seven at Gosforth Park and three singing at Blyth (Bates minewater treatment works). Three were at Ellington, two at Big Waters and Low Newton and singles at ten other wetland and reedbed localities.

Coastal passage was observed on Holy Island. A drenched individual was in the Straight Lonnen after heavy rain on 5th May, with other singles in the Crooked Lonnen on 10th and at The Lough on 12th. Two males later settled at The Lough, and sang through until July, without apparently attracting females.

The species was well-reported in June, with at least seven at Gosforth Park, five at East Chevington and three in song at Big Waters. Breeding was confirmed at Gosforth Park, an adult was with two fledged juveniles at St Mary's Wetland and a pair carried food at Cresswell Pond. Others were in suitable breeding habitat at Druridge Pools, Ladyburn Lake, Linton Pond, Newton Pool, QEII CP and Woodhorn Flash. Detailed results from the important East Chevington site showed that, during July-August, 18 adults and 67 juveniles were ringed. Five of the adults were females with brood patches, so were probably local breeders (IF). A total of 60 birds were also ringed at Gosforth Park NR during the year as part of the Constant Effort Sites scheme.

Return movement was evident during late August, with two singles on Holy Island (The Snook), while one at St Mary's during the same period may have been on migration. On the Farne Islands, returning birds occurred on eight dates; sightings involved singles, except for two on 24th August. One was ringed at Bamburgh on 13th September and the last was a single at Holy Island Lough on 10th October.

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

STATUS: Uncommon winter visitor. Given to irruptive behaviour when, in such years, it may become more numerous.

Few birds were recorded during the first four months, following the virtual absence of any significant influx of this irruptive species during the autumn and early winter of 2014. In January, the only sighting was of 21 flying W in a blizzard over Chillingham Road (Heaton)



Waxwing - Ashington - November (Paul Buskin).

towards Heaton Park on 21st, but this flock was not relocated (ADM). February provided even fewer birds, with four at Houghton Strother GP (Humshaugh) on 6th and two at Coopies Lane (Morpeth) on 3rd, and regularly there from 18th-25th, the only records. In March, two were still at Coopies Lane during the first week and a single was at Alnwick (Chapel Lands) from 3rd-6th April.

For the second consecutive year very few arrived in the autumn, with the first sighting comprising a single flying over the Farne Islands on 26th November and, thereafter, a small flock of up to 11 was at Ashington ('Woodhorn Motors') from 28th-30th. In December, a maximum of 12 were still at Ashington from 1st-6th and, elsewhere, seven were in the Blyth area on 24th, five at Heaton on 12th and a single at Wark on 15th.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

During the first three months, the species was well-reported from a total of at least 30 localities, including typical woodland habitats such as Gosforth Park, Jesmond Dene, Plessey Woods and Scotch Gill Woods (Morpeth), but many were in more thinly wooded sites, mainly in the south east conurbation, with sightings also from areas farther afield such as Alnwick Garden, Humshaugh, Kielder Viaduct and Spindleston. The monthly peak counts were eight at Wallington Hall in January (MJC), six in Plessey Woods in February and four in Jesmond Dene in March. Singing birds were heard during each month, but with a notable increase in song from mid-February.

During the summer months, April-August, breeding was confirmed at Arcot Hall, Blagdon, Fulbeck (Morpeth), the Harthope Valley, Jesmond Dene, Kirkley Hall, Sidwood (Tarsset Burn) and Tarsset, where a pair fledged a large brood of six in July (JR). Elsewhere, pairs

fledged five young from nest boxes in Dipton Wood (SWA) and in Letah Wood (Hexham) (RMH). However, singles, pairs and up to seven were present in numerous other sites providing suitable habitat, including Allen Banks, Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), Bedlington, Bothal, Brenkley, Brierdene (Whitley Bay), Butteryhaugh, Derwent Reservoir, Ellington, Falstone, Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), Hesleyside, Hexham, Holywell Dene, Mitford, Newburn CP, Nunnykirk, Rothley, Sheepwash, Smalesmouth, Stamfordham, Thrum Mill, Wallington Hall and Yearle. A more unusual record was a calling bird at Prestwick Carr in late August; this being only the second record at this site for a regular observer.

The final four months, saw further records of one to three at 24 sites, including many of the aforementioned breeding localities, confirming the species largely sedentary nature. Jesmond Dene provided the maximum counts of three to five in each month of the period.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

STATUS: Common resident and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented to common.

During the first quarter, good numbers of this unobtrusive species were recorded, indicative of a healthy population, no doubt boosted by the benign winters of the past two years. Peak monthly counts were five in January at Wallington Hall, three at Holystone (Wallsend) in February and six in Scotch Gill Woods (Morpeth) and Staward in March (MJC). The latter month also saw five in Gosforth Park NR and four at Capheaton, the Harthope Valley and Prestwick Carr. Elsewhere, one to two were sighted in almost 30 widespread localities, with many heard singing during February and March. In April, five sang at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) and one to two were noted at Big Waters, Chirdonbridge, Close House (Wylam), Jesmond Dene, Kielder, Prestwick Carr and Warkworth Lane.

Successful breeding was evident in the summer months, May-September, when a pair fed three fledged young in early May in Holywell Dene and pairs carried food to nest sites in Slaley Forest and the Hawson Burn (Harthope Valley) in June. One to three birds were also recorded in potential breeding habitat at Allen Banks, Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), Berrington, Big Waters, Dipton Wood, East Hartford, Holborn, Newcastle (Exhibition Park and Jesmond Dene), Rothbury, Wark (North Tyne) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

In the period October-December, the species continued to be very well-reported, with counts of five from the favoured localities of Gosforth Park NR, Scotch Gill Woods and Wallington Hall, four at Berwick, three at Howick Dene-Craster and one to two at 28 further widespread sites, of which the following are additional to localities detailed above: Backworth, Bamburgh, Bellingham, Branton GP, Corbridge, Craggside, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Bay CP, East Cramlington, Ellington, Greenhaugh, Hauxley, Havannah NR, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Howick, Newcastle (Leazes Park), Tyne Green (Hexham) and Yearle.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

STATUS: Abundant resident and common passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Although this is a ubiquitous and abundant species, found in virtually all habitats from high moorland to inner city gardens and parks, it is much under-recorded, except perhaps when its loud song is heard in the breeding season.

Only ten sightings were reported in the first two months, with six birds found in January between Wooler Common-Wester Tor, which included one bird at 440m a.s.l. In February, eight were noted at Holborn Village and seven roosted together in an old Swallow *Hirundo rustica* nest on Holy Island; one to three were found at seven other mainland sites, all within the Newcastle urban area, or at Corbridge, and a small number also wintered on the Farne Islands. In late March, a high count was 18 in the Harthope Valley, comprising 12 in the Carey Burn and six in the Hawsen Burn and, elsewhere, four were on Inner Farne on 20th, probably wintering birds, with three in Jesmond Dene and Scotswood and singles at Big Waters, Eachwick and St Mary's Wetland.

At Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), 12 sang in April, a notable increase on recent years, following two mild winters which have allowed the population to increase. Ten were at Holy Island and Prestwick Carr, with six at Longhorsley Moor; up to five were at a further six localities, including the Farne Islands, where five were on Inner Farne on 6th.

During the summer period, May-July, monthly peak counts were 13 and nine at Prestwick Carr in May and June respectively and 24 singing males heard over a 4km walk from Humford Mill-Humford Bridge in July. Elsewhere, eight were in Jesmond Dene, six at Longhorsley Moor, four at Holy Island and one to two at four other sites. A nest with four eggs, found at Tosson Hill on 17th May, was the only confirmed breeding record. As few as five sightings came in August-September, with nine on Holy Island in late September and one to two birds in three suburban areas and on the Farne Islands.

Coastal numbers increased markedly in October as the usual autumn influx took place, at least some of which could be migrants from the continent; the numbers on Holy Island increased from nine on 4th to 23 on 14th-18th, with a second influx late in the month peaking at 26 on 29th (MJC). On the coast, from Howick-Craster, 16 were counted on 14th and five to ten were recorded at Alnmouth, Bamburgh Castle dunes, Budle Point and Hauxley, with 13 inland at Prestwick Carr. Numbers declined in November and the maximum coastal counts were 17 on Holy Island on 7th and 14 at Stag Rocks-Budle Point on 14th, with smaller numbers at Hauxley and North Shields. Inland counts of two, six and nine came from Jesmond Dene, Holywell Dene and Prestwick Carr respectively and a peak autumn count of 11 came from the Farne Islands in early November, where seven were still present on Inner Farne on 2nd December when the Rangers left. December produced only four reports, comprising six birds at Callerton Pond and singles at Eachwick, Gosforth and Jesmond Dene.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

The regular roost at Holy Island Lough, which had been present throughout late autumn 2014, increased to ca.10,000 in mid-January; it was noted that the roost had been maintained for a longer period than usual this winter. Numbers elsewhere were less impressive, with 250 at Big Waters and 100-250 at Christon Bank, Corbridge, Cresswell Pond and Haughton Strother (Humshaugh). In February, the largest gatherings were 2,000+ and 1,500+ on two dates at Ulgham Park, 400 at Stobswood, 210-250 at Dinnington and Humshaugh and 50-100 at Big Waters, Blyth Battery, Derwent Reservoir and Whitley Bay; two early birds carried nest material into a nest site at Fulbeck (Morpeth) from mid-month. By mid-March, the roost at Holy Island Lough still contained ca.10,000 birds and a smaller roost at Yearle held up to 2,000 during the month. Smaller numbers

frequented other localities in March, including 500 at Flotterton, 400 at Brunswick Green and flocks of 50-230 at Cresswell, Cullercoats, Derwent Reservoir, Elsdon and Plenmeller Common. By early April, the flocks had largely dispersed and 100 at Big Waters and 69 at Hauxley NR were the only significant groups, with up to 14 at seven other localities.

Records in May included breeding activity with nests and fledglings reported from five localities in Alnwick, a tree hole nest at Brenkley and young fledged from under eaves at Fulbeck and Stamfordham; at the end of the month, a feeding flock of 130 juveniles was at Prestwick Carr and juveniles were also noted at Brenkley and Darras Hall. Very successful breeding in nest boxes was reported from the Hexham area where, from a total of 44 boxes, comprising 40 around the observer's house at Acomb, and four at Hexham racecourse, 41 were occupied and 181 young were ringed (CE).

During June, small flocks were recorded, mainly juveniles, including 50 at Holy Island and 30-80 at Grindon Lough, Longframlington and Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay). Larger post-breeding flocks started to assemble in July, when 600+ gathered at St Mary's; whilst, at the other end of the county, 360 were reported from Berwick (Little Beach) and 50-100 were seen at Cullernose Point, Newton Scrape, Rockcliffe and Sandy Bay Caravan Park (Newbiggin). The Farne Islands also had frequent counts of 50-70 birds throughout July and August. Elsewhere, August saw maximum gatherings of 1,700 at Scremerston, 1,200 at East Chevington, 1,000 at Big Waters and 200-500 at Ancroft, Berwick GC, Blyth, Bothal Pond, Druridge Pools and Holy Island.

During September, the roost at Big Waters increased gradually to 2,000 on 26th and 2,000 also roosted at East Chevington at the month end, whilst 200-300 were counted at Old Hartley and Prestwick Carr. In October, migrant birds passed regularly over the Farne Islands in small numbers, often accompanying incoming thrushes, and during that month the roost at Holy Island Lough built up to reach an encouraging 8,000 by the month end (6,000 in 2014), although that at Big Waters remained static at ca.2,000. Groups of 100-200 were also noted at Derwent Reservoir and Newbiggin.

The last two months of the year saw the East Chevington roost peak at ca.12,000 in early November (PRM) and an increase in the Big Waters murmuration to 5,000 by the month end. At Brownieside, 2,500 were present on 5th, whilst flocks passing over Prestwick Carr at dusk from 8th-22nd numbered 850-1,200 and, at other localities, 100-400 were noted at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield), Alnwick Moor, Cresswell Pond, Elwick, Grindon Lough and Hemscott Hill (Cresswell). In December, the East Chevington roost had declined to 4,300 by 17th and that at Big Waters to 2,000 on 5th. Elsewhere, counts of 1,000 came from Newcastle (Chapel Park), with 500+ at Druridge, 300 at Cresswell Pond, Newcastle (Fawdon) and Prestwick Carr, 200 at QE II CP, 150 at Elwick and 20-80 from a further six localities.

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1818 / LAST RECORD: 2014

A resident of Prudhoe was soon contacting our BTO representative to notify him of a 'strange' bird in the garden. It had been seen locally, but never reported, since November 2014 and, after concerns were allayed as to misbehaving birders, news was released and the first-winter behaved admirably in the Oaklands Estate through to 9th February (RT/TAC/IF *et al.*). It spent much of its time on rooftops and enlivened the winter scene immeasurably.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

As always, this charismatic and iconic bird of the county's river systems was extremely well-reported throughout the year.

The first four months provided numerous records, with counts emanating from at least 34 widespread localities throughout the county, at both upland and lowland sites, namely Bedlington, Beltingham, Blakehopeburnhaugh, Bothal, Bywell Bridge, the College Valley, Corbridge, Felton, Ford, Glen Ridley, Hartford Bridge, the Harthope Valley, Haughton Castle, Hepple, Holystone (Wallsend), Holywell Dene, Humshaugh, Jesmond Dene, Lesbury, Melkridge, Mitford, Ovingham, Plessey Woods, Ponteland, Ridley Stokoe, Rothbury, Scotch Gill woods (Morpeth), South Gosforth, Thrum Mill (Rothbury), Wark, Warkworth, Whiteadder Water (Berwick), Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Wylam. During this period, singing birds were first heard on 1st February and nest building was well underway in Jesmond Dene by 18th.

Breeding activity increased significantly during March and, in the Upper Coquetdale study area, 12 pairs were located on 29th, seven of which had full clutches. In total, the 12 pairs laid 89 eggs, from which 54 young hatched and 44 fledged (73 fledged from 12 pairs in 2014); this includes eight pairs which had second clutches of which few were successful, this being the main reason for the poor productivity this year (JR). In the Rivers North Tyne and Rede study area, five nest boxes held a total of 33 eggs, from which 24 young hatched and fledged (19 fledged from five pairs in 2014) (JR).

Elsewhere, a total of 12 birds were counted in the Harthope Valley on 22nd March, where nest building was observed, and reports of nest building also came from four other sites. In April, two pairs fed young in Jesmond Dene, two breeding pairs were noted in Holywell Dene, with a probable two territories at Bedlington (Attlee Park).

During the summer season, May-August, pairs with juveniles were noted at Alwinton, Beanley, the Harthope Valley, Holywell Dene, Jesmond Dene, Lucker, the River Pont

Rose-coloured Starling - Prudhoe - January (Tim Dean).



Dipper - Coldgate Mill - April (Alan Curry).



at Eachwick, Warden and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. One to three were also reported at additional localities to those listed above, namely Allen Banks, Barrowburn, Chollerford, Coldgate Mill, Dilston, Ewartly Shank, Fulbeck (Morpeth), Hethpool, Howburn Woods (Morpeth), Pauperhaugh and the Tarsset Burn.

The species continued to be well-reported from September-December, with maximum counts of six birds at Middleton (Wooler) in December and four at Tyne Green (Hexham) in October; elsewhere, one to three were at 21 locations. The most unusual sighting came from Newcastle (Exhibition Park) in late September, when a single bird was on a boardwalk at the edge of the lake but after being flushed by a jogger it was not seen again. Presumably, this was a dispersing bird and, notably, the lake has neither an inlet nor an outlet stream.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The first birds of the year were single males singing at Hawsen Burn (Harthope Valley) and moving W at Hexhamshire Common on 25th March, the same first arrival date as 2014. Birds returned to breeding grounds in April, with up to six noted during the month in the Harthope Valley, four at Sipton Burn (Allendale) on 12th, a male at Goat Crag (Ford) on 18th and a female on the summit of Simonside on 23rd. Meanwhile, on the coast, five passage birds were on Holy Island on 20th April, with two there on 22nd.

In May, two were on Holy Island on 4th and 9th and another was at the unusual site of Beacon Lane (Cramlington) on 5th. At the Farne Islands, it was a quiet season, with a male on Inner Farne on 5th May the only spring record. At inland breeding areas, up to three were in the Harthope Valley, with singles at the Simonsides at Sipton Burn.

There were no further reports until a light 'fall' began on Holy Island in early October, with two on 4th, ten on 6th (nine on The Snook and one in the village) (MJC/ADM), nine on 11th and two on 12th. Elsewhere during the same period, two were on Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 5th, increasing to three the following day, five were at Craster and one at Budle Point on 6th, one at St Mary's on 7th, increasing to three on 8th, two at Budle Point on 9th and 11th and one to two at Tynemouth from 10th-12th. Later in the month, singles were at Holy Island on 17th, 26th, 28th and 29th and two flew W over Brownsman, as part of a significant thrush passage, on 28th. The sole November record was a single SE at Beacon Lane on 1st.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

In the first three months, modest counts were made from throughout the county with by far the largest flock being 54 at Swallow Pond on 14th February. A Corbridge garden produced a count of 15 on 17th January. A male was in song in a Newcastle (Chapel House Estate) garden at sunrise on 17th January, with more widespread singing noted from March onwards. A light spring passage peaked at nine birds on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 20th March, with the last of the spring seen on 5th May.

Nest building was observed in Newcastle (Kenton) on 13th March and two newly hatched young were abandoned in early April at Gosforth. Successful nesting was reported in May

and, on 4th June, a pair was building a second nest in a Kenton garden.

Unusually, no passage movements were reported in September. Autumn migration was particularly prominent towards the end of October. At Holy Island, numbers rose from 25-30 mid-month, to 290 on 26th, 700 on 27th, 1,840 on 28th (ADM) and 710 on 29th. Generally light passage was reported at the Farne Islands, with a notable peak of 310 W over Brownsman on 28th October and at least 150 there the following day. At Hauxley NR, small numbers were noted to 18th October, with 250-300 from 28th-29th and 130 present on 31st. Elsewhere, 130 were at Druridge Pools on 28th, 131 flew 'in-off' at Seaton Sluice on 29th and a 'steady arrival' was noted at Bamburgh on 31st; 45-51 were also noted at Budle Point, Goswick, Newbiggin and Tynemouth during this period.

Further immigration was noted during November, with 48 leaving Inner Farne at dusk on 5th, 40 at Hauxley on 7th, 93 W over Inner Farne, 25 at Dunstanburgh and eight 'in off' at Newbiggin on 20th, and four at St Mary's on 21st; small numbers were also noted 'in-off' at Seaton Sluice on 5th and 20th. A count of 20 at Alnwick on 26th November may also have been migrants and 11 were at Bedlington on 29th. The highest count in the final month involved 12 at Howdon on 13th December.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

STATUS: Abundant passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2012

Sizeable flocks were noted at a number of localities in January, with the largest gatherings being 235 at Haughton Strother (Humshaugh) on 21st, 300 at nearby Keepersshield on 24th, 170 at West Ord (Berwick) on 5th, 150 at Corbridge (Milkwell) and 120 at Prestwick Carr on 17th, 112 at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) on 1st and 110 at Grindon Lough on 19th. About 400 were feeding on sheep pasture at Greystead Church (North Tyne) on 20th February and, at Swallow Pond, numbers rose from 80-100 on 10th to 200+ by the end of the month. Elsewhere in February, 106 were at Berwick on 8th and 105 at Earsdon on 6th, with 75-100 at seven other sites.

In March, there was a general and widespread departure, as birds began moving through the county towards Scandinavian breeding grounds. The largest gathering was 500 at Tarsset Mouth on 29th. Elsewhere, 200-300 were reported from Caistron on 5th, nearby Flotterton on 8th, Fontburn Reservoir on 11th and Holystone on 27th, with flocks of 100-166 noted at eight localities. Several large pre-migration flocks were seen in April, including 240 at Kielder on 12th, 200+ at Grindstonelaw on 8th and 120-150 at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) and Elsdon. Two late birds were at Mounce's Viewpoint (Kielder) on 2nd May, with another two on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 5th May.

An intriguing report of one, perhaps two, came from near Langleeford Farm (Harthope Valley) on 6th June.

Single early autumn arrivals were at Inner Farne on 14th August and Holy Island on 15th and 23rd August. There were several arrivals in September, mostly from Holy Island, where three flew S on 13th and singles were present on 10th, 11th, 26th and 28th. Small numbers were noted from 6th October at ten, mainly coastal localities. A sizeable influx then began on 25th October, when 1,075 were on Holy Island. On 26th October, 1,321 moved W over Brownsman (Farne Islands) (FIR) and 230+ flew SW at QEII CP; 166 were noted at the Farne Islands on 27th, with 839 there on 29th, and counts of 225-417 came from Holy Island on several dates. Inland, 500 moved SE near Humshaugh on 31st



Blackbird - John Steele.

October. Elsewhere at the end of October, 130 were noted at Derwent Reservoir and 60 at St Mary's on 27th, 145 at Druridge Pools on 28th and 72 at Prestwick Carr on 31st.

The largest November gatherings were again at the Farne Islands and included 540 on 4th, most moving W over Inner Farne, and 580 on 5th, which included 380 over Brownsman, plus 180 at Berwick on 13th, 170 at Prestwick Carr on 8th, 150 near Stamfordham on 4th, 120 at Gainslaw on 15th and 110 at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 15th; additionally, 100 moved W in small groups at Melkridge on 4th. Larger December gatherings were 320 at Fenham-le-Moor on 14th and 110 at West Ord on 17th-20th; elsewhere, the species was reported as scarce.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

STATUS: Common resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Four were at Fenham-le-Moor on 3rd January; otherwise, only singles of this declining species were reported from four localities during the month, including birds in full song near Corbridge from 14th-29th and Newcastle (Leazes Park) on 19th. In February, six were feeding together at Carey Burn on 21st and, elsewhere, one to three were reported from nine localities during the month. During March, reports became more frequent, chiefly from breeding areas. Ten were singing at North Plantation (Longhirst-Ulgham) by 18th and six at Usway Burn (Upper Coquetdale) on 25th included one carrying nest material. There were counts of five from Cottonshope (Otterburn Ranges) on 29th March and Derwent Reservoir on 25th, with three (two singing) at Bothal Woods on 7th increasing to seven by mid-April.

Visible spring passage was almost non-existent and comprised singles on three dates from Inner Farne (Farne Islands).

Birds were reported nesting throughout the lowlands during April-June, with pairs feeding young at several localities. They were reported as 'common' at Sidwood Forest (Tasset Burn), where at least 20, including many family groups, were seen on 15th May. Also in May, eight were in the Harthope Valley on 6th and six singing males were at Ingram (Breamish Valley) on 23rd.

Autumn passage began with the odd bird on the Farne Islands in September. On Holy Island, 11 were noted on 11th September and six flew high SW over the island on 28th. Peak passage occurred during October, when an estimated 540 moved over Wark with Redwings *Turdus iliacus* on 31st (PRM). Counts from Holy Island included 20-24 on 3rd and 11th-12th, 55 on 6th and 10th and 180+ on 29th. A similar pattern at Brownsman (Farne Islands) produced consecutive day counts of 54, 38 and 26 from 6th October, with most heading W. Small numbers were recorded from Inner Farne during this period, with a peak of 20 on 7th October. On 11th October, a combined total of 117 moved over Brownsman and Inner Farne. Elsewhere, 85+ were noted at Budle Point and 40 at St Mary's on 6th. Other sizeable October counts involved 40 at Fenham Mill on 29th and 34 at Hauxley NR on 10th. Nine+ were at the Wansbeck Estuary on 10th, seven at Tynemouth on 11th and up to six at a further four localities.

Four to six, presumed migrants, were noted at Hauxley on 7th, Dunstanburgh on 20th and Cocklawburn on 26th November. During December, one to two were reported from eight inland localities, including birds in full song, and birds were still present on the Farne Islands when the Rangers departed, with three on 2nd December.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

STATUS: Abundant passage migrant and common winter visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 1985

In February, the largest flock of the first quarter involved 250+ at Holystone (Wallsend) on 28th, while 150-200 were at Humshaugh on 3rd-4th January. Elsewhere during January-February, counts of 80-100 came from Dinnington, Low Cocklaw (Berwick), Newcastle (Kenton Bank Foot), Swallow Pond and Tasset Burn, with smaller numbers at many coastal and inland localities.

On 23rd March, nine moved W over Inner Farne (Farne Islands). Flock sizes reduced during March-April, with the largest gatherings being 60 at Whorral Bank (Morpeth) on 2nd March, 52 at nearby Fulbeck on 1st March, and 50 at Knowesgate on 12th April. Thereafter, one to 20 were at four further localities, with the last bird, a single at Holy Island, on 18th April.

The first arrival of the autumn, in Holywell Dene on 7th September, was followed by one to two at five other localities during the month. As usual, the major arrivals were during October. Parties totalling 400 moved SW over Holy Island and 185+ arrived at Bamburgh on 5th and 301 were on Holy Island on 6th; smaller numbers were recorded over the Farne Islands. By 11th October, Holy Island held 1,523 and 500+ moved through Budle Bay, with 474 over the Farne Islands. A major arrival occurred from 26th October, when 1,197 passed over the Farne Islands, 730 came in off the sea at Seaton Sluice and 570+ were at QEII CP. Holy Island again attracted the largest numbers, with 2,015 on 25th, 1,045 on 26th and 950 on 27th October, increasing to 2,757 the following day in a strong SE wind and dense fog (ADM). At the Farne Islands, 322 were noted on 27th October, with 1,264 counted on 28th. Birds quickly moved inland with 800+ SE near Humshaugh on the morning of 31st October and 2,460 over nearby Wark (North Tyne) during the evening of the same day. Further sizeable gatherings at the end of October included 350 at Druridge Pools, 240 at St Mary's, 200 at Morpeth and 100+ at Tynemouth.

Lighter movement continued into November at the Farne Islands, with 100 over the islands on 5th being the largest count. Winter flocks were seen at various sites during November-December, with the largest concentrations being 120 at Corbridge Common on 19th December, 60 at Gainslaw on 15th November and 50-60 at Arcot Pond, Berwick, Derwent Reservoir, Stamfordham and West Ord.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

STATUS: Common resident and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The year started quietly with seven at Earsdon on 21st January the largest gathering of the month; five were also at Lynemouth and Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 24th and 30th January respectively, with three at Tasset Burn on 26th. A singing male was heard at St. Nicholas Cathedral (Newcastle) on 8th January. In February, five were at Jesmond Dene on 1st, Swallow Pond on 13th and the Hawson Burn on 21st, with smaller numbers at many widespread localities, including birds singing at Spindleston on 2nd and Dinnington on 15th. Three very active pairs were at Harwood Head on 18th March, six were reported from the Harthope Valley on 22nd, four were noted at Holystone and at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) and three in Jesmond Dene during the month.

At least 18 successful breeding attempts were recorded in the period April-July. In April,

two occupied nests were found in Northumberland Park (North Shields), a pair was feeding young in a nest at Marden Quarry, nest building was noted at Harwood Forest and a dead juvenile was found below a tree in Holywell Dene. Family parties were noted at Newcastle (Exhibition and Leazes Parks) in May, when two fledged young were at Low Carritheth and a bird was seen carrying food at Comb (Falstone) during the month. In June, a family party of seven (five juveniles) was at Longframlington; in July, a party of 11 was at Derwent Reservoir and ten on nearby Blanchland Moor on 3rd comprised two family parties with three immatures each. Elsewhere in July, two juveniles were at Cambois and Gosforth Park NR.

In late summer, parties in the countryside increased in size, with the largest being 24 at Toft House (Otterburn Ranges) on 23rd August, with 19 at Ancroft Mill on 2nd, 15 at Wooler Common on 16th and over 30 at Waren Mill throughout September (CGK/GPK). Inland in September, 23 were at Derwent Reservoir on 20th and 15 at Settlingstones on 19th. Thereafter, smaller flocks were noted to the year end, with one to eight recorded at over 20 widespread localities.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

STATUS: Common summer and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first arrival was on Holy Island on 4th-5th May, with widespread reports by mid-month. In woodland at Sidwood (Tasset Burn) it was described as 'common', with a maximum count of at least 15 on 15th May (EC). Up to six were in the Harthope Valley on 23rd May, with four at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) on 30th and three at Fontburn Reservoir on 25th.

Spring migrants were noted at Holy Island on five dates from 9th-30th May, with one to three late passage birds on the island from 5th-7th June. Unusually, the Farne Islands went through the whole of May without a single record before two birds appeared around the Brownsman pond on 13th June.

Also in June, an adult and three young were noted at Lucker on 2nd. Successful breeding reports in July involved a pair with four young at Branton all month, a pair with one or more recently fledged young in the Breamish Valley on 10th, three pairs feeding young at Blanchland on 11th and two family parties of four and five at Bamburgh on 13th, when an adult and two juveniles were at Bakethin Reservoir. In August, a family party of four was at Alwinton on 6th and a pair with four young that flew the nest were at Yearle on 24th.

Autumn passage began in August, with three possible migrants at Berwick on 7th and one to two on Holy Island on 15th, 21st and 23rd, with a peak of eight on 24th. Passage birds were noted at Newcastle (Exhibition Park), with an interesting run of records comprising two on 7th, six on 25th and one on 28th August. On the Farne Islands, migrants were recorded on nine dates from 18th August-12th September, with a peak count of three on 11th September. Peak September counts from Holy Island involved ten on 11th, six on 12th and four on 13th, when one was trapped and ringed at East Sleekburn. Inland, a single was at Craggside on 9th September and, at Big Waters, two were noted on 3rd, one on 4th and one on 18th September; the latter being the last of the year for the county.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

STATUS: Abundant resident and common passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

The year began with a decent count of 11 at Prestwick Carr on 4th January; counts of six came from Cocklawburn on 22nd January and Spindlestone on 21st February. By 22nd March, 12 were singing in the Harthope Valley and, elsewhere, five were in Jesmond Dene and four at Big Waters. In April, nine were singing at Longhorsley Moor.

Spring migration was unusually light this year, with maximum counts of eight on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 23rd March and seven at Holy Island on 11th April. Under-reporting during the summer months resulted in few breeding reports, although an adult was carrying food at Blyth on 14th May.

Early autumn movement was suggested by one on the Farne Islands on 8th August, with further singles almost daily from 4th September onwards. Some high inland counts at Prestwick Carr in September involved 11 on 19th and 16 on 23rd. Autumn passage gathered pace from late September, with counts from Holy Island including 33 on 26th, 32 on 27th and 16 on 30th. Elsewhere, 25 at Craster on 25th was the highest count. Further coastal arrivals in October produced a count of 52 in the Howick Dene-Craster area on 14th (MJC). On Holy Island, birds were present throughout the month, with peak counts of 42-43 on 6th, 11th and 12th, 31-35 on 8th, 13th and 28th and 17-23 on six further dates. Similar fluctuating numbers were apparent at Hauxley NR, where peak counts included 40 on 3rd, 36 on 10th and 23-24 on 9th and 31st, with seven to 16 on six further dates. Elsewhere, 14 was the peak count from the Farne Islands on 11th, 12 were at Budle Point on 29th, ten at Prestwick Carr from 25th-31st and four to seven at Alnmouth, Bamburgh, Druridge Pools, Newcastle (Jesmond) and St Mary's.

In November, counts from Holy Island included seven on 1st, 16 on 7th, nine on 10th, 12 on 14th and a peak of 21 on 21st; elsewhere, seven were at Stag Rocks-Budle Point on 14th and four in Jesmond Dene.

Numbers were significantly lower along the coast in December, with a maximum count of six at Holy Island on 20th. As usual, birds remained to winter on the Inner Farne Island group, with four still present on Inner Farne on 2nd December. Inland, four were again in Jesmond Dene on 15th December. Finally, three were singing after dark under the Christmas lights in Bamburgh on 17th December.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 10 / FIRST: 1965 / LAST: 2013
Yet another record of this species for the county, with a first-winter on Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 15th-16th August (DR et al.). It was trapped and ringed during its stay. This was the third for the islands, with previous records in May 2002 and August 2010. The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1893 / LAST RECORD: 2009
It is always a surprise when one makes it this far north and one on Holy Island (Chare Ends) on 18th April was just reward for many hours covering the island (ADM/IK et al.). It was stunningly well photographed. The last sighting was the well-watched bird at Bolam in 2009. The only other sightings this century were individuals on the Farne Islands and Holy Island in April 2000.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 6 / FIRST: 1960 / LAST: 2010
A lucky individual stumbled upon a female/first-winter at Newton (by the church) on 16th October (BJS). News was put out instantly, but it could not be relocated. It was thankfully documented and accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee and became the seventh record for the county.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1883 / LAST RECORD: 2014
Autumn passage started with a first-winter on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 11th September, which stayed through to 13th September (THi et al.). Its long stay allowed many visitors excellent views. It was not long before the Farne Islands registered their second, with one on Brownsman on 17th September (DR et al.). Into October and a first-winter was located by the 'tin' church at Newton on 5th (DF) and, finally, a first-winter was noted at 'The Bungalow' B&B in Holy Island village on 11th (ADM et al.).

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and passage visitor.
BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first of the year was a male at Windyhaugh (Upper Coquetdale) on 22nd April, followed by two males at Morrale Wood on 24th and another male at Dukeshouse (Hexham) on 25th April. During May, birds were well established in breeding areas, with up to four at Allen Banks, two at Nunnykirk and singles at Low Carritheth and Yardhope Oaks (Holystone). Migrants were at the Farne Islands on 5th and Tynemouth on 9th-10th May. By 3rd June, six were noted at Allen Banks.

A decent total of 56 young were fledged at Linnels, where all 56 pulli and nine adults were ringed. Of 12 recaptures, half had previously been ringed at Linnels, three at Hexham Racecourse, one at Dipton (previously recaught at Linnels in 2012 and 2014), one at Dye House (Hexham) and one at Greenhaugh. A bird ringed at Linnels on 15th June 2012 was found dead in the nest 236km SW at Pandy (Wrexham) on 4th June (AM).

Data from nest box study areas was as follows:

Locality	Nests	Eggs laid	Young fledged	Productivity	Observer
Linnels	12	80	56	4.7	AM
Dipton Wood	10	Not known	58	5.8	SWA
Kingswood Burn	7	Not known	Not known	4 successful nests	JS
March Burn	4	28	28	7	RMH
Low Carritheth	7	39	15	2.1*	JR
Dye House	2	14	14	7	RMH
Letah Wood	6	41	34	5.7	RMH

* The low productivity recorded at Low Carritheth was mainly attributed to predation by Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*, which have apparently learned to scoop the young out of the particularly shallow nest boxes at this site; a phenomenon rarely noted by the ringer elsewhere (JR).

During August, singles at Holburn Grange and East Holburn on 7th, Holy Island and St Mary's on 15th and Holy Island on 19th, preceded an influx that brought up to 20 across Holy Island on 23rd-24th (TF/JFa). Elsewhere on 24th, three were at the Farne Islands, two at St Mary's and singles at Druridge Pools and Tynemouth (these totals were in marked contrast to some other east coast counts, for example, the 230 recorded at Spurn, Yorkshire on the same day).

In September, 18 were at Holy Island on 13th, with ten on 11th, six on 12th and five on 11th. Elsewhere, between 10th-14th September, a peak autumn count of five were at the Farne Islands on 12th and singles were reported from Bamburgh, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools and St Mary's, while a further single was at the latter site on 18th, with one at Craster on 19th. The final bird of the year, was a single at Holy Island (Crooked Lonnen) on 20th September.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, rare in winter.

One remained at Sandy Bay (Newbiggin) from late 2014 until 27th January, whilst another was at Amble on 24th January. There were no further records until April, when 'female types' were inland at Chirtonburn Bridge on 5th, Holy Island (The Snook) on 8th, Tynemouth (Priory Haven beach) on 12th and Tynemouth (Spanish Battery) on 18th. A 'female-type' was at Druridge Bay CP on 3rd May, with one at Inner Farne lighthouse (Farne Islands) on the unseasonal date of 28th June.

The first of the autumn was a single on Holy Island (The Snook) on 10th September. In October, one was at Cresswell on 14th before a light influx at the end of the month produced a single at Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 26th, increasing to four on 28th (FIR), with another on Inner Farne, increasing to two there on 29th, plus singles at Tynemouth on 29th, Druridge Pools on 29th-30th, daily singles at the Farne Islands from 29th-31st and one at Holy Island and three at Hauxley NR on 31st

The Farne Islands continued to attract daily singles to 4th November, with another new bird present on Inner Farne on 8th November. Elsewhere, singles were reported in November at Hauxley Beach on 7th and Tynemouth (King Edward's Bay) on 25th. Four individuals were seen in December, with a male at Holy Island (Castle Point) on 6th, singles at St Mary's on 12th and Tynemouth Pier from 13th-29th, and a female/first-winter at Holy Island (east shore) on 20th.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

STATUS: Common summer and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first of the year was inland at Haughton Strother (Humshaugh), with a singing male present on 10th April, followed by another male at Derwent Reservoir on 11th. Up to four males and a female were at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) on 16th and, thereafter, numbers continued to build up inland, in addition to a scattering of coastal records. A May influx at Holy Island produced counts of 13 on 4th, four on 5th, 19 on 9th (ADM) and 11 on 10th, whilst single coastal migrants were at Hartley Bay on 7th and Newbiggin GC and Tynemouth on 9th. On the Farne Islands, three were noted on Inner Farne on 5th May, increasing to four the next day, with another on 25th May.

In breeding areas, six singing males were noted at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) on 20th May

and, between here and Simonside, a total of 11 singing males were heard. Four singing males, plus a female, were noted at Letah Wood (Hexham) on 26th and there were four established territories in the Haughton Strother area. Elsewhere during May, four singing males were reported from Allen Banks and Sidwood (Tarsset Burn), with three at Bolam, Fontburn Reservoir, Harthope Valley, Hesleyside, Holystone and Tosson Hill. One to two were also reported in other breeding areas. A female at Coronation Park (Berwick) on 22nd was a new record for the area.

Records of successful breeding were limited, with confirmed breeding noted from Derwent Reservoir, Longframlington and Whitechapel in June-July. There were no Redstarts breeding in nest boxes at Low Carritheth this year, although possibly two pairs bred in natural sites (JR).

Data from one nest box study area was as follows:

Locality	Nests	Eggs laid	Young fledged	Productivity	Observer
Tarsset	2	11	11	5.5	JR

During August, four passage birds were noted at Big Waters on 8th, with two on 13th, and the first of the autumn for the Farne Islands was on Brownsman on 19th. On Holy Island, there were counts of one to two on 15th, 20th and 23rd August, with two+ on 24th, whilst singles were also at Tynemouth on 23th-24th.

Coastal numbers peaked in September, with three at Holy Island on 10th, nine on 13th, six on 12th and five on 11th, as well as a peak of ten at the Farne Islands (six on Brownsman and four on Inner Farne) on 12th, two at Cresswell Pond on 13th and singles at four additional localities. Inland, a single was at Swallow Pond on 2nd, with two at Big Waters on 3rd. In October, also at Holy Island, there was one on 8th, four on 11th, eight on 12th and one on 13th. Elsewhere, two were at Ridley Park (Blyth) on 6th and on Inner Farne on 7th, with the last of the year being one at Cresswell Pond on 14th October.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first arrival was noted at Bygate (Upper Coquetdale) on 22nd April, followed by a single at Fenton Hill (Wooler) and a pair in the Breamish Valley on 23rd April. Coastal records during May involved singles on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) and Holy Island on 5th, Budle Bay on 6th, St Mary's (two) on 7th, Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 12th-13th and Amble on 13th. As usual, the upland areas produced the bulk of records with 16 (13 males) in the Breamish Valley by 23rd May (ASJ), nine (four pairs and a male) at Harwood Forest on 15th and up to six in the Harthope Valley. In Upper Coquetdale there were three at Makendon Bridge, two males at Alwinton and a male at Shillmoor. Three were at Simonside on 22nd May, two at Prestwick Carr on 7th and singles at Ewartly Shank and Hethpool.

The first breeding was noted in June, with a pair feeding five young in the nest at Harwood Forest on 23rd and four defended territories at Shillmoor on 29th. Further counts from Upper Coquetdale included six on 12th June, three at Usway Burn on 5th and two at Alwinton on 27th. Three were in the Harthope Valley on 8th June and a late migrant was on Holy Island on 5th. In July, two adults were feeding three recently fledged young at the Wanneys on 19th and five were in the Breamish Valley on 10th. A female was on the coast at East Chevington on 5th and a recently fledged juvenile visited Staple Island (Farne

Islands) on 24th. Further evidence of successful breeding came in August, with six (three to four juveniles) at Alwinton all month.

Autumn passage at the Farne Islands began on 14th August, with records on a further 22 dates, peaking with seven (four Inner Farne, three Brownsman) on 24th. Elsewhere in August, peak counts involved ten at Holy Island on 24th, two to three at Brenkley from 21st-23rd, two+ at Bamburgh-Budle Bay on 23rd and two at Cresswell Pond on 15th, St Mary's on 25th and Druridge Pools and East Chevington on 30th. Singles in August were also reported from Backworth, Big Waters, Cocklawburn, Lynemouth Bay and Snab Point (Cresswell).

A notable 13 were on Holy Island on 10th September, two were at Snab Point on 12th and singles at Boulmer, Ellington, Hadston and Tynemouth from 12th-13th September, with one to two at Cresswell Pond dunes on 26th-27th. In October, singles were at the Farne Islands on 5th and Holy Island on 7th, with the last of the year at St Mary's on 7th-9th.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

STATUS: Well-represented and increasing resident and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

During the first quarter, ten (five pairs) were noted at Druridge Pools on 15th March (TD), four+ were on Holy Island and four at Boulmer, Cocklawburn and Cresswell Pond, with three at Bamburgh, Blyth and East Chevington and singles and pairs at numerous other coastal and inland localities. A female on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 23rd March was a welcome surprise after a paucity of records since the cold winter of 2010. During April, a total of four pairs were noted between Druridge Pools-East Chevington.

Early breeding evidence in May-June involved three (one young) at Blyth on 13th May, two feeding young at the Long Nanny on 21st May, a juvenile at Tynemouth and four (two young) at Hawsen Burn on 23rd May, a family party of four at Ross Links on 24th May, three (one young) at Seaton Sluice on 25th May, six (four juveniles) at Bamburgh Castle Wood on 4th-5th June, three (one juvenile) at Hadston Carrs on 5th June, three (one juvenile) at East Chevington on 14th June, five (two juveniles) at Cocklawburn on 24th June and three (two juveniles) at Blyth on 29th June.

In July, five (two juveniles) were at Cocklawburn on 2nd, two (one juvenile) at Blyth on 6th, a family party of five at Budle Bay on 13th, two pairs (two juveniles) at Berwick (Little Beach) on 17th and four (two juveniles) at Newton on 31st. From July-August, two family parties at Druridge Pools comprised a pair with four juveniles and another pair with two juveniles (PRM) and, at East Chevington, a male with two juveniles was in fields near the south pool and a pair with three recently fledged young was also reported. Further breeding was confirmed with a male and two juveniles at Newbiggin on 1st August (remaining into September) and two fresh juveniles at Cresswell Pond on 12th. Inland, a pair was feeding young in the nest at Deadwater Fell on 2nd August. In September, seven were at Newton on 7th and five (two juveniles) were at Newbiggin on 17th and East Chevington on 20th.

Particularly well-reported in October, records came from at least 25 coastal and four inland localities. Three pairs were noted at Amble Links on 9th and Warkworth Gut on 20th. The highest count from Holy Island was five on 6th October, while counts of up to four came from Druridge Bay, Goswick, Hauxley, Newbiggin and St Mary's. Three were at Budle Point and Cocklawburn and two at nine coastal and two inland sites. Peak totals during November-December involved five from Budle Bay-Bamburgh, five still at Holy

Island, four at Low Newton and three at Cocklawburn and East Chevington, with many twos again reported on the coast and inland.

In another good year for this attractive chat, birds were reported from 40 coastal sites (33 in 2014) and 24 inland sites (33 in 2014).

'Continental Stonechat' *S. r. rubicola*

A pair holding territory in the Hawsen Burn (Cheviots) in late March showed many characteristics of the continental subspecies *S. r. rubicola* (MJC).

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first arrivals were relatively late, beginning with a male at Rowhope (Upper Coquetdale) on 21st March, followed by singles at Derwent and Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 24th, with reports from eight other localities by the end of the month.

Peak passage was recorded on 25th April, when 37 were on Holy Island (ADM), 18 at Cresswell Pond, seven at Prestwick Carr and five at Ellington and Holywell Dene. Earlier in April, an influx produced 11 at New Water Heugh (River Tweed) on 15th, ten at St Mary's on 17th and nine at Derwent Reservoir on 18th. Passage continued into May and included a peak spring count for the Farne Islands of five on Inner Farne on 3rd and 6th, with several reports from Holy Island, where an influx began with eight on 4th increasing to 20 on 6th, peaking at 22 on 9th, followed by ten on 10th, 12 on 16th and nine on 24th as birds moved inland. Elsewhere along the coast in May, six were at Newton Point, five at St Mary's and nine at Budle Bay; inland passage produced 11 at Brenkley on 10th and six to seven at Prestwick Carr from 4th-6th. Further coastal birds were noted at Cocklawburn on 3rd June, Holy Island on 5th and 7th (two) and Howick Bay on 12th June.

Inland reports were few during the breeding season, probably due to lack of observer activity. In May, up to two were in Upper Coquetdale and the Harthope Valley and singles at Bothal Pond, Derwent Reservoir, Ford Moss, Grindon Lough and Shield on the Wall Dam. Single juveniles were noted at Blanchland Moor on 3rd July, Cocklawburn Dunes on 23rd and at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 15th July. Two recently fledged juveniles were seen on Staple Island (Farne Islands) on 9th July. Two were at Windyhaugh on 8th August and Derwent Reservoir on 27th and singles were noted at Cairn Hill (Cheviot), Grindon Lough, Newcastle (Town Moor) and Upper Coquetdale on various dates from 22nd-28th August.

A trickle of coastal reports began on 12th August before autumn passage started in earnest in September, when an influx on 1st produced 26 on Inner Farne, 19 at Tynemouth, 18 at Newbiggin and eight at Cresswell Pond, with one to two at three other localities. A second September arrival brought 22 to the Farne Islands on 11th-12th and, from 12th-13th, three to five were reported from Annstead Point (Seahouses), Bell's Farm (Cresswell), Boulmer, Hadston, Holy Island, Newbiggin and Snab Point (Cresswell), with singles at Caistron and Ealinghamrigg Common (Bellingham) and a passage bird was at Town Moor on 14th. Meanwhile, a single was still on the Otterburn Ranges on 26th September.

Reports during October involved five on the Farne Islands on 11th, but otherwise were restricted to single widespread birds along the coast throughout the month. The last records of the year were singles at Holy Island on 1st and Alnmouth on 12th November.



Nightingale - Holy Island - April
(Andy Mould).



Black Redstart - Holy Island - October
(Alan Jack).

Grey Wagtail - Blyth Cemetery - October
(Ian Fisher).



'Grey-headed Wagtail' - Newton-by-the-Sea -
May (Gary Woodburn).



'Greenland Wheatear' *O. o. leucorhoa*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor.

A probable bird of this race was at Prestwick Carr on 27th April. In May, birds showing characteristics of the race included eight on Holy Island on 7th (IK), with three there on 25th, and singles at Cocklawburn on 7th, Berwick Little Beach on 15th and one inland at Stamfordham on 25th.

The final record of the year was a single at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 8th October.

Duncock *Prunella modularis*

STATUS: Common resident and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

This widespread, unobtrusive species, particularly numerous in urban and suburban garden habitats, was again generally under-recorded. Only two garden sightings came in January, comprising up to three at Old Hartley and a single in Gosforth. During early February, as birds started to sing in mild weather, 16 were heard during a 4km walk in Cramlington (LJM), 12 sang in Holburn Village and one to two were also noted at five other sites in the south east. In March, four sang along the River Blyth (near Bedlington), two frequented an Old Hartley garden, two were at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) and singles were singing at three other sites.

During the second quarter, the only significant record was of 12 at Prestwick Carr in early April and, elsewhere, three were at Laverock Hall Farm (Blyth) and Newcastle Civic Centre, with one to two at Eachwick, Brownsman (Farne Islands), Holywell, Jesmond Dene, a Marden Estate garden and Old Hartley. In July, the only reports of successful breeding comprised a group of six at Cramlington, which included two juveniles, and fledged young in a Marden garden. Elsewhere, in the late summer period, July-September, one to two were noted again at Holywell, Jesmond Dene and Old Hartley.

Passage and coastal movement was possibly the source of ten birds recorded at Hauxley on 10th September; later in the month, nine were at Prestwick Carr, with garden records of two at Marden and Old Hartley. One to four birds were present on the Farne Islands on a number of dates in October and two were still present on Inner Farne when the Rangers left in early December. Few records came from elsewhere in November-December, with one or two at Eachwick, Marden and Old Hartley and a single retrap at Hauxley.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

STATUS: Abundant resident.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Recent Annual Reports have noted that this species is often over-looked and therefore under-recorded; this year was no exception. Although still widespread, it occurs in much smaller numbers than was the case three or four decades ago.

The largest flocks during the first two months were 80 at Cramlington High School in January and 60 at Cullercoats Harbour and Low Cocklaw (Berwick) in February, with smaller gatherings of 20-40 at Battlesteads (Wark), Blyth (Asda supermarket), Blyth Battery, Chapel Park, Christon Bank, Cramlington (the Old Library) and Marden Estate (Cullercoats). Five to ten were also seen in an Alnwick garden, at Cresswell Pond, Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) and in a Walbottle garden. The size of the wintering flocks declined during March, when only four records were returned comprising a roost of 37

at Cramlington (Southland School) and 11 at nearby Valley Park, 30 at Cullercoats and four at Eachwick. In April, 36 birds were recorded along a 1km stretch of the Horton Burn (Cramlington) and up to 20 attended garden feeders on the Marden Estate; as did four in a Tynemouth garden.

During the summer period, May-July, breeding activity was reported at only three localities; juveniles gathered at a garden feeder on Marden Estate, a bird collected material for a second nest in Newcastle (Kenton) and an unusual nest site was on a statue of Christ at Holy Island church. A group of 20-25 were on feeders in a Marden Estate garden throughout the period and, in July, ten to 30 frequented gardens at Cullercoats, Kenton and Tynemouth.

A large post-breeding flock of 170 gathered to feed on a grain field at Needles Eye (Berwick) in August (MHu) and 140 were counted at Backworth, with smaller groups elsewhere of 64 at Meldon, 50 at Holborn Grange, 40 at Beacon Hill (Cramlington), Chatton, Dinnington and Newbiggin and 20-40 at a further three sites. In September-October, the largest gatherings were 150 at the Battlesteads Hotel (Wark), 100+ at Elwick, 65 at Church Farm (Earsdon), 60 at Hauxley and 15-40 at Alnwick Garden, Beacon Lane (Cramlington), Castle Island, Marden Estate, Old Hartley and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

The November-December period saw monthly counts of 60 at Cullercoats and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 50 at garden feeders in Beacon Hill (Cramlington) and on Whitley Bay sea front, 40 in a Marden Estate garden and ten to 30 at Eachwick, a Gosforth Garden Village garden, Killingworth Village and Pier Head (Berwick).

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The much-improved fortunes of this attractive little passerine over the past decade were again evident this year. During January-February, an impressive flock of 51 at feeders in a Walbottle garden provided an all-time record for the site and 50 were at Seahouses throughout February, with 25+ at Holborn and 20 at Cresswell. Elsewhere, ten to 17 were at Battlesteads (Wark), Big Waters, Branton, Brierdene (Whitley Bay), Cresswell, Low Cocklaw (Berwick) and Spindleston, with up to ten at Corbridge, Ellington, Holystone, Monkseaton, Pegswood, Tynemouth, Wallsend, Wark and a further ten countywide sites. Although flocks generally dispersed throughout March, 36 were still at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) on 29th and 20 were counted mid-month at Weetslade. Smaller gatherings of up to 12 were noted at 11 other localities, including birds still on garden feeders, and a pair inspected a nest hole at Morpeth.

In April, counts of 26 came from Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh), 20 were at Big Waters, 15 at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) and 12-13 were attracted to feeders at Cresswell, Old Hartley and Eglingham. One to seven were recorded at a further 22 sites, including seven at Linden Hall, and several observers noted an encouraging increase in numbers, with a pair prospecting potential nest sites at Beacon Lane (Cramlington) for the first time.

During the main breeding period, May-July, successful nesting was evident with juveniles being fed at Big Waters, East Cramlington, Hauxley, Linden Hall and Old Hartley. The highest count in May was 38 birds at Chugdon Wood, with six to 11 at Castle Island,

Cresswell, Druridge Pools, Great Whittington, Haughton Strother GP, Linden Hall, Spindleston and one to five at a further 16 widespread sites. Two birds visiting feeders at Melkridge in May represented the observer's first record there for 25 years. In June-July, three to five were recorded at Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Great Whittington and Old Hartley and one to two at five other sites, including Castle Island and Spindleston.

It was a poor year at Big Waters as a result of wet and cold weather during the breeding season, April-July, and due to Weasel *Mustela nivalis* predation, which resulted in the loss of ten first clutches. This has raised alarms about the colony's continued success over the next few years.

Breeding data from the important nest box colonies at Big Waters (JCD/AJJ) and Hauxley NR (RMH) was as follows (with 2014 figures in parentheses):

Locality	Boxes used	Clutches	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged
Big Waters	39 (42)	63 (69)	253 (309)	158 (204)	124 (186)
Hauxley NR*	17 (22)	-- (-)	81 (100)	-- (69)	65 (69)

*Hauxley NR recorded that some boxes were not accessible in 2015 due to building works on site. However, it appeared to be a slightly better year than 2014, with a similar number fledged from fewer recorded nest attempts.

Post-breeding concentrations in August-September included 75 at Chugdon Wood, 30+ at Waren Mill, 30 at Craster and Ellington and 21 at Holywell Grange, with smaller totals of one to ten at a further nine localities. The usual autumnal coastal passage became apparent in October, when 28 moved S at Tynemouth on 11th, with 55-60 at Fenham-le-Moor on 31st, up to 60 at Hauxley on several dates, 21 at Howick-Craster on 14th, 15 at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 10th and three W at Holy Island on 13th. One to ten were also noted at 17 other sites in October.

During the last two months, further passage involved 25 flying W at Tynemouth in early November and gatherings elsewhere in November included 80+ at Low Cocklaw on 4th, which had dispersed around the area by mid-month, 40 at Chugdon Wood (Ellington), 30 at Haughton Strother GP, 17 at QEII CP and one to eight at seven other localities. In December, encouragingly large flocks of 140 and 120 were recorded at High and Low Cocklaw (Berwick) (BWG) and 40 were at Fieldhead (Longhorsely), 30+ at Eshott, 25 at Ladyburn Lake and 16 came to feeders at Linden Hall; one to 12 were at 14 sites elsewhere.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

An eagerly awaited spring migrant, the first sighting was a single at Cresswell Pond on 12th April, with further singles noted from Whittle Dene Reservoirs, Derwent Reservoir, Grindon Lough and two other localities from 14th. Three were at Prestwick Carr mid-month, with two to six at Cresswell, Druridge, Low Newton, Ryal and Whittle Dene Reservoirs in the second half of the month. The main influx occurred in early May and maximum counts were 11 at Cresswell during the first week (IRD), ten at Whittle Dene, four at Old Hartley and three at Bothal Pond. Elsewhere in May, two were at Druridge Pools (Budge Fields), with singles at 12 further sites and, in the north, one to two were seen at Bamburgh, Bradford Kaims and Newton Scrape on several dates.

In June, the only confirmation of breeding came from Widdrington, where a pair carried food on 21st, but one to three birds were recorded from Bell's Pond (Cresswell), Brenkley (Blagdon), Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Great Whittington, Low Newton, Wark and Whittle Dene, many of which were almost certain to be breeding at those localities. Up to ten, including juveniles, were recorded at Cresswell Pond on several dates in July, when gatherings were noted at St Mary's on many days, with a maximum of five juveniles present on 28th; one to three adults, with juveniles, were recorded at a further 13 sites throughout the month, including Beal, Berwick (West Ord), Boulmer, the Druridge Bay area, Gosforth Park NR, Hallington Reservoir, Longhirst Hill, Low Newton and Ryal. A single passage bird was in Newcastle (Town Moor) on 29th July, a scarcity at this locality.

An adult and five juveniles frequented the favoured Cresswell Pond in mid-August and many other reports this month included three at Bank's Pond (Dinnington), East Chevington, Monks House and St Mary's, with one to two at 16 other localities, primarily those frequented in July. Four roosted at East Chevington on 15th September, one to two were at seven further sites on dates from 1st-19th, including singles at the Farne Islands on two dates, and the last record of the year was a single coming in to roost at East Chevington on 29th September.

Blue-headed Wagtail *M. f. flava*

STATUS: Rare passage visitor, which appears in small numbers in most springs and has bred. / FIRST RECORD: 1880 / LAST RECORD: 2014

There were no records of *M.f. flava* this year, but a bird of the 'Channel' hybrid variety (*flava* x *flavissima*) was at Cresswell on 22nd April (PRM).

'Grey-headed Wagtail' *M. f. thunbergi*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1923 / LAST RECORD: 2013

A fine male was well photographed at Newton Scrape on 27th-28th May (GW *et al.*).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, and uncommon passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Sightings in the first two months came mainly from the south east conurbation, with maxima of three in Jesmond Dene in both months and two along the Horton Burn (Cramlington) in January. Elsewhere, singles were noted at some 30 localities, including their regular Newcastle city centre wintering quarters; records from sites away from the conurbation included Berwick, Bywell, Chevington Burn, Druridge, Haughton Castle, Rothbury, Tweedmouth, Wark (North Tyne) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. From mid-March-April, a noticeable increase in inland sightings occurred, as a return to the main breeding areas took place, with 12 in the Harthope Valley, seven in Upper Coquetdale, four at Bedlington, Bothal and Morpeth and two to three in a further 17 potential breeding areas in the Rivers Coquet and Tyne catchments. Singles frequented a further 20+ sites, mainly in the south east of the county. Breeding was first recorded at Linden Hall in mid-April, where a pair carried food, and at Attlee Park (Bedlington) later in the month, where two pairs were nesting.

During the summer period, May-August, four birds in Newcastle (Leazes Park) at the

end of May was an unusual record. Elsewhere, many reports came of successful nesting, including from the Harthope Valley, where 11 birds were counted in late May, consisting of three pairs and five fledged young. Two to six fledged young were also at Allen Banks, Eachwick (River Pont), Jesmond Dene and Spindlestone and singles/pairs, some at nests, were in breeding habitat at Alwinton, the Breamish Valley, Chollerford, Craggside, Derwent Reservoir, Furnace Bridge (Blyth), Hareshaw Linn (Bellingham), Jesmond Dene, Rothbury, Wallington, Warden and Wark. In July, three were on the shore in the Seaton Sluice Estuary and post-breeding gatherings in August included ten at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, eight at Alwinton and one to three at 14 other localities, mainly lowland sites in the south east.

In excess of 30 records came in September, with three at Jesmond Dene and Newbiggin but, elsewhere, sightings were of one to two, all at localities in the south east, except for Bamburgh, Beanley, Grindon Lough, Rothbury and Wark, reflecting the movement of the species away from the higher elevations of the north and west towards lower ground. Similarly, the 40+ records in October came mainly from the south east, with a few sightings at inland localities, including the Harthope Valley and Kielder Forest; birds seen flying S/SW both inland and at the coast were indicative of light autumn passage. This seasonal movement was also evident on the Farne Islands, where one to three were present from late September-early October.

During November, the Holywell Dene area held up to six and five were seen along a 1km stretch of the Horton Burn (Cramlington), with one to two at eight other localities, including inland records at Black Heddon, Whittle Dene and Wooler. December provided records from 14 sites, with two birds still well inland at Wark and singles in the inner urban areas of Newcastle city centre and Gosforth High Street.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

STATUS: Common resident, well-represented in winter.

BREEDING: Common.

A large proportion of the summer population vacates the county in winter for warmer climes to the south and, accordingly, relatively few records are received during the first two months. Only four reports came in January, including a pre-roost gathering of 24 at Morpeth Common, eight at Druridge Lane, six at Berwick and a single inland at Derwent Reservoir. Three sightings in February involved six birds at Chevington Burn, two at Bothal Pond and a single at Big Waters.

A significant increase in numbers was noted from mid-March onwards, as birds returned in anticipation of the breeding season, with counts of 32 in fields at Holywell, 25 at Backworth and 23 seen on a 17km walk in Upper Coquetdale; additionally, six moved W over Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 26th, nine were at Hauxley and eight roosted in a reedbed at Gosforth Park NR. In April, spring passage N was witnessed on Inner Farne during the first half of the month but, apart from a flock of 20 at Branton, only a few other sightings were reported, consisting of just one to two at seven sites in the south east. An early sign of breeding came from Shillmoor (Upper Coquetdale), where a pair had three eggs in a nest on 26th April. May records included a roost of 40 at Newcastle International Airport on 18th, which declined quickly thereafter, and five were noted at Alwinton mid-month. Breeding was observed at Laverock Hall Farm (Blyth), where a pair was seen carrying food, and at both St Mary's and Whitley Bay sea front, where pairs were observed feeding fledged young. On the Farne Islands, the breeding population

increased to a record nine pairs and fledged young were first seen during the first week in May. A family group of eight was at Prestwick Carr in June, where 26 gathered in late July and, elsewhere during these two high-summer months, a roost of 13 was counted in Gosforth Park NR and two to three were at Allen Banks and Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay).

In August-September, large post-breeding flocks at a number of sites were indicative of a successful breeding season and the monthly maxima were 67 at Bamburgh Castle Green in August (CGK/GPK) and 50 at Grindon in September. Elsewhere, concentrations noted in August comprised 46 at Derwent Reservoir, 32 at Inner Farne and Prestwick Carr, 28 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 26 at St Mary's, 18 at Bothal Pond and 16 at Kielder Water; in early September, 33 were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 25 at Derwent Reservoir and Holy Island, 21 at Bothal Pond and five to 17 at four other sites.

Flock sizes decreased rapidly in October as birds departed for their winter quarters; the maximum counts were 22 in Holy Island village, 13 at Waren Mill and eight at Newbiggin, with one to six at a few other, mainly coastal, localities. Mild weather conditions in the last two months encouraged birds to remain in the county and, in November, small flocks were recorded, including 17 at Prestwick Carr and 13 at Gosforth Park NR. In December, a notable count of 31 came from Prestwick Carr; whilst, elsewhere, 15 were in a sheep field near Alnwick, ten at East Chevington Burn mouth and eight at Gosforth Park, with one to four at a further five sites, both on the coast and in the Newcastle conurbation.

White Wagtail *M. a alba*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, mainly in the spring, although autumn birds may be overlooked.

The first sightings, in March, were two at Holywell Grange on 27th and a single at Lynemouth Flash on 31st. A modest influx was recorded in April, when one at Cresswell Pond on 15th was joined by an incoming flock of ten (MRS) and, at Derwent Reservoir, three seen on 10th increased to seven by 14th; one to two were noted at a further 12 coastal, or near coastal, sites, with a single bird inland at Haughton Strother GP (Humshaugh). Numbers reduced in May, when three frequented Bothal Pond on 4th, with two at Cresswell Pond the same day, a single at Ellington on 11th and two at Low Newton on 14th. Singles were at these, and six other, coastal sites on subsequent dates throughout May, with a last sighting of two at Newton Scrape on 28th.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1831 / LAST RECORD: 2014

Two late September sightings involved singles at the Farne Islands, with birds on Inner Farne on 27th (DR) and Brownsman on 28th (DR). The Inner Farne bird was seen to land, but could not be relocated, with the Brownsman individual being more obliging and landing briefly at 30m range. Early October saw another influx, starting with one over Newbiggin on 4th, which landed briefly and gave close views in flight, before moving off inland (JGS). Then one was located at Cocklawburn beach on 6th (CBr) and another flew S through the dunes near Bamburgh Castle on 9th (CAH). With all records, the distinctive call was well described.

The five sightings represents one of the best years for the species in the county, with similar influxes in 2001 and 2012. There were another two claims in October, but no documentation was received.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first arrival flew N at Grindon Lough on 2nd April; a very early first date for this species. Thereafter, sightings came from a further eight localities later in the month, the second report being three to four birds song-fighting at Beacon Hill (Cramlington) on 21st and, on the same day, two were in the Harthope Valley and at Longhorsley. On 23rd April, a large count of 20 came from the Harthope Valley (PHH), by which date eight were singing in Harwood Forest and one to two were at a further three sites.

By mid-May, singing and displaying birds were well-established, with three in the Simonside-Tosson Hill area on 10th, five there on 17th, four over an 800m stretch of Slaley Forest on 15th and at least three singing in woodland along the Tasset Burn on 13th. Two displayed at Acton Fell (Allendale), Beacon Hill, Comb, Holystone, Ros Castle (Hepburn), Slaley and Sweethope Lough, with singles watched at seven further inland sites; passage birds were also noted during the first week in May on Holy Island and at Newbiggin GC. In June, records of singing birds on breeding territories included three in Slaley Forest, two at Holystone and one at Dilston (Corbridge), with one to two also seen at three other sites. Fewer records came in July, as breeding display declined, and sightings were limited to a probable family party of five at Rayburn Lake on 20th and a single at Beacon Hill.

Passage birds were noted in August, including two at Tynemouth on 22nd, one at Brenkley on 19th and up to three on a number of dates on Brownsman and Inner Farne (Farne Islands); the only September records comprised one to two on three dates mid-month on Holy Island. The last mainland sighting of the year was one flying S at St Mary's on 3rd October but, on 6th, a single was recorded on Inner Farne.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

STATUS: Abundant resident and passage visitor, less numerous in winter.

BREEDING: Abundant.

The relatively benign conditions during the first two months ensured that good numbers remained in the county. In January, seven were seen at Fenham-le-Moor, while West Hartford supported a feeding group of 12-30 all month; birds noted farther inland included at least eight in the Wooler Common-Wester Tor area, five at Harehope-Bewick Moor and one to two at Colt Crag, Derwent Reservoir, Grindon Lough, Otterburn, Padon Hill and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Winter flocks, described as 'above average', were found in mid-February, with 45 at Prestwick Carr and 38 at West Hartford. Elsewhere, 14 were at Holywell Grange, seven at St Mary's, five at Holystone (Wallsend) and three at Newcastle (Town Moor).

Numerous sightings came in March and April. The commencement of northerly passage was much in evidence in March, with the largest counts of 990+ and 375+ noted at Berwick and Cocklawburn respectively on 27th (PRM). Smaller numbers were noted passing N/NW at Bamburgh, Big Waters, Cullercoats, the Farne Islands and Seaton Sluice, with one to eight at five further sites. From mid-month, very significant numbers had returned to inland breeding areas, including 65 at Staward, 45 in Allendale, 37 in Upper Coquetdale, 36 at Bothal Pond, 20 in the Carey Burn and Hawsen Burn valleys and, along the coast, many small feeding flocks were present on Holy Island and at St Mary's; many of these birds were singing and song-fighting. In early April, birds were further reported

from breeding territories, notably 30 in the Harthope Valley, 24 on Longhorsley Moor, 14 at Prestwick Carr with, elsewhere, 50-60 passage birds heading N at Branton GP, Grindon and Seaton Sluice. A large flock of 150 at Ridley Stokoe on 12th April was grounded by heavy spring snowfall and 100 were at Deadwater Fell (Kielder) the same day.

Records of breeding pairs in mid-May included 40 at Simonside, many of which were feeding young in nests, and 17 pairs in the St Mary's area, where fledged young were also being fed; the species was reported as common in the Cheviot valleys and at Sweethope and Longhorsley Moor. Surprisingly, no records came in June, with few in July, comprising eight nesting pairs feeding young early in the month at Gloucester Lodge (Blyth) and one to two at four further localities. August saw two post-breeding flocks totalling 70 on Holy Island, 35 were brought down by heavy rain at Brenkley and one to 15 were at six localities elsewhere.

Throughout September, gatherings and passage movements S/SE were observed at a number of sites, including Holy Island, where counts of 204, 134 and 50-65 were recorded from 6th-10th; additional groups included up to 78 at Marden, 52 at Grindon, 50+ at Bamburgh, 22 at Berwick, 14 at North Shields and 136 flying N on 20th at Newbiggin; the latter possibly a local weather-related reverse movement. Other smaller counts included birds moving SW at Monkseaton, six coming in off the sea at Whitley Bay and one to eight at a few other localities. Generally light autumn passage was observed on the Farne Islands, but with a peak count of 67 S on the morning of 13th September. Passage continued into October, with 97 flying S at Holy Island (The Snook) on 10th, 37 doing likewise at the same site on 29th, 30 per hour S at Harwood on 1st, up to 22 on the Farne Islands on many dates and 20 at West Chevington on 20th, with smaller numbers at Arcot Pond, Cramlington and St Mary's.

Wintering flocks were present at a number of sites during the last two months, with maximum November counts of 26 at Blagdon, 22 at Prestwick Carr and ten to 12 at East Cramlington, St Mary's and West Hartford. In December, the peak count was 37 on a kale field at Shipley (Alnwick), with 20-30 at Big Waters and Prestwick Carr and one to ten at six other lowland sites.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

At the start of the year, the largest gathering was seven at Low Newton in late January; whilst, earlier in the month, counts of three came from Seahouses Harbour, with twos at Hauxley, Holy Island, Newbiggin and Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) and singles at Boulmer, North Shields Fish Quay and Whitley Bay. In late February, seven fed around seaweed debris on the beach at Bondicarr (Hauxley) and throughout the month one to three were recorded at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay), St Mary's and Tynemouth Pier. Records in March were three to four at Boulmer, Cocklawburn and Rockcliffe, with singles at three other sites.

Additional birds had returned to breeding sites by early April and at least ten were at Magdalene Fields (Berwick); with, elsewhere, four at Berwick Harbour and Berwick Little Beach and three at Holy Island and Rockcliffe. During May, five were at Rockcliffe, two pairs fed young at St Mary's and one to two were noted at Holy Island and Newbiggin. A count of eight came from Holy Island on 20th June, where a pair also carried food into a nest at the Heugh, and two probable family groups made up a group of six at Rockcliffe.

At the latter locality, two active nests were found in July, with a maximum of eight birds noted there during the month. On the Farne Islands, a total of 17 pairs bred on nine islands, a decrease from the 28 pairs in 2014, and fledglings were first seen on 29th May.

The few September records comprised five at Hauxley and St Mary's, two at Blyth and Rockcliffe and singles at three other sites. From mid-October, counts in double-figures were indicative of the usual coastal passage as northern birds returned to wintering territories, with an aggregate of 40 from several Holy Island sites on 31st (ADM), 11 from Howick Dene-Craster, nine at St Mary's and one to five from ten other localities along the coast from Berwick to Whitley Bay. Late October saw autumn passage movement on the Farne Islands, with two groups of five and nine heading W, seen during a period when a notable thrush passage was also occurring.

In the last two months, the November maximum was 22 on Holy Island and, in December, a count from Howick-Craster included 18 birds; elsewhere double-figure records were 12+ at Whitley Bay and 11 at Newbiggin, with eight at Low Newton and one to five at Blyth South Harbour, Fenham-le-Moor, Hauxley, North Blyth, Stag Rocks (Bamburgh), St Mary's and Tynemouth.

'Scandinavian Rock Pipit' *A. p. littoralis*

STATUS: Uncommon visitor, mainly in the spring.

Sightings of this race comprised three at East Chevington (ADMc), two at Hadston and singles at Berwick Little Beach, Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) and St Mary's on dates from 14th-22nd March.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1956 / LAST RECORD: 2013

It was a typical location for the first sighting, with one along the shoreline at Low Newton on 31st October staying until the following day (JGS *et al.*). Then two birds were seen from 13th December, just east of East Chevington's south pool, mainly keeping to the edge of the coastal track (DE/CDB *et al.*). They over-wintered, being seen through to 3rd February 2016, though they wandered as far as Druridge Pools.

Increasingly scarce in recent years, with the only sightings over the last four years being singles at Newton in November 2011, Old Hartley in April 2012 and Prestwick Carr in May 2013. The splurge of 25 sightings between 2007 and 2010 seems a distant memory.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

The species was extremely scarce during the first winter period, with 38+ at the much favoured Grindon locality on 11th January, by far the largest gathering reported; only ten remained here the next day. Elsewhere during the first three months of the year, one to two were noted at Big Waters, Druridge Bay CP, Holywell Dene, Humshaugh, Kielder Castle, Ridsdale, Rothbury and Wallington. The final reports were in April, with singles at Harwood on 6th, Holywell Pond on 9th, Holy Island on 12th and the Farne Islands on 17th. The first returning bird was at Tynemouth on 3rd October. At Holy Island, three on 4th October rose to 52 by 6th, with 45 still present on 11th. During the same period, smaller numbers arriving at the Farne Islands included 12 on 5th, 16 on 6th-7th and 19 on 11th. A second influx later in the month produced 148 at the Farne Islands on 26th (FIR) and up

to 120 on Holy Island by 28th. Elsewhere, 11 were at Tynemouth on 11th, 11+ at Grindon on 18th and ten at Woodhorn on 27th, with one to nine at a further 22 localities. Numbers declined rapidly during November, with one to two at only seven localities. In December, a flock of 50-70 was found at Middleton Hall on 27th; elsewhere, only singles were noted at four further localities.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Peak counts during the first quarter were modest, with 24 at Derwent Reservoir on 2nd January, 50+ at Spindleston on 11th February and 65 at Holystone (Coquetdale) on 3rd March.

This abundant species was certainly under-recorded during the summer period, with 12 in the Harthope Valley on 6th April being the largest count posted. There was some evidence of light coastal passage in October, when five to 12 were noted at Hauxley NR on several dates. In December, there was a sizeable gathering of 100 at Longwiton on 17th (JMA), 50 were feeding on stubble at Haughton Castle (Humshaugh) on 13th and 24-25 were noted at East Ord (Berwick) and Elsdon.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

STATUS: Rare resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2005 (?)

There were only three records in 2015. The first was at Holy Island (Straight Lonnen) on 6th October (SR), with another on the island (in gardens near Chare Ends) on 7th November (ADM). Perhaps more unusual was a single bird at Seahouses on 7th December (JPL).

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Some sizeable gatherings were reported during the first quarter, the largest of which was 20 at Howick on 27th February, rising to 50 by 8th March; the latter one of the highest counts ever recorded in the county (NNBC). Elsewhere, from January-March, 12-13 were reported from Kimmer Lough, Rothbury, Slaley and Wark (North Tyne) and five to eight from Barrowburn (Upper Coquetdale), Holywell Dene, Horncliffe, Morpeth, Old Hartley, Plessey Woods, Swallow Pond, Tyne Green (Hexham) and Wallington Hall.

In April, four pairs were seen at Derwent Reservoir and three pairs at Scotland Gate (Morpeth). The species was typically less conspicuous during the summer months, with higher counts including three pairs at Holywell Dene, six in gardens at Fulbeck (Morpeth) and Old Hartley, and up to six birds at Howdon, Sheilow Wood and West Ord (Berwick). Fledged young and family parties were reported from Bamburgh, Fulbeck and Marden Quarry. Peak counts during this summer period were in August, with ten+ at Dipton on 1st and seven at Prestwick Carr on 30th.

Three pairs were again present in the Holywell Dene area in September; while, in October,

seven+ were at Grindon Lough and six birds were at Harwood Forest, Prestwick Carr and Scotch Gill Woods (Morpeth). In November, nine were noted at Branton GP on 8th and five to six were reported from Arcot Pond, Beacon Hill (Cramlington), Derwent Reservoir, Gosforth Park NR, Old Hartley and Prestwick Carr. The species was reported from 25 localities in December, including 11 at Tyne Riverside CP (Newburn) on 22nd and ten at North Seaton (Ashington) on 13th. Up to seven visited an Old Hartley garden during the month, six were at Gosforth Park NR and five at Backworth and Howdon.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

STATUS: Common resident and a passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

It was another relatively poor year for this familiar species. Peak counts during the first half of the year were seven at Beacon Hill (Cramlington) on 3rd January, 16 at Howdon on 21st February, 11 singing males along the Waggonway at Monkseaton-Whitley Bay on 20th March, and 16 at Howdon on 2nd April and again on 6th May. Further counts included five to seven at Alnwick Garden, Gosforth Garden Village and Walbottle in February, and eight at Ellington and five at Holywell Dene in March.

In September, 16 were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 10th. Larger numbers were reported during the final three months of the year. In October, a huge gathering of 200 was attracted to rose hips at Tynemouth (SPP/ASJ); elsewhere, up to 30 were noted at Hauxley NR on several dates, 20 were at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) on 2nd and 15 at Snab Point (Cresswell) on 10th. Ten remained at Hauxley NR on 4th November, when a single was at Derwent Reservoir, where the species is regarded as scarce. The Tynemouth flock had dispersed by November as a result of the rose hip bushes being pruned low by council workers. Up to 15 were at Gosforth Garden Village in December and seven were again at Beacon Hill (Cramlington) on 16th.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

STATUS: Common resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

There were several large gatherings during the first quarter, with peak counts of 120 at Holywell on 1st January, 150+ at Old Hartley on 3rd February and, in March, 200 at Fenham-le-Moor and Sharperton on 15th and 120 at Berwick on 16th. Elsewhere during this period, 30-45 were noted at Big Waters, Boulmer, Ellington and Swallow Pond. Some sizeable flocks were still in evidence during the spring, including 55 at Needles Eye (Berwick) on 22nd April and, in May, 50 at Stag Rocks on 4th, 100 at Waren Mill on 9th, and 64 at Cocklawburn and 40 at Ross Links during the final week of the month.

Post-breeding flocks were gathered by the end of July, when 180-220 were at Cresswell Pond, 150 at Greenhaugh and 65 at Backworth. Numbers at the latter locality increased to 180 by the end of August and, in addition, 120 were at St Mary's during July-August. A large gathering of 350 was at Waren Mill on 26th September. Elsewhere during the month, 200 were at Cresswell Pond on 24th, 90-100 remained at St Mary's throughout and 70-80 were noted at Bothal, Cocklawburn and Holy Island.

October flocks included a total of 530 (in three flocks) at Holy Island on 3rd (ASJ), 190-250 in the Budle Bay-Waren Mill area on 9th-10th and 200 at Longhoughton Steel on 9th;

there was also an inland gathering of 70 at Chollerford on 3rd. During the final two months of the year, the largest flocks were 100-130 noted at Boulmer, Goswick and St Mary's, 86 at the Farne Islands, 75 at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) and 40-45 at Brenkley and Fenham Flats.

Twite *Linaria flavirostris*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED 2008 (?)

Typical localities were again occupied during the first winter period, with 80-100+ in the Beal area during January-February (ASJ *et al.*) and up to 60 at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) from January to mid-March. There was an interesting inland occurrence of a single at Harehope (Eglingham) on 17th January. In February, groups of 50 were at Ross Back Sands on 25th, 30 were at the Long Nanny Estuary throughout the month and 28 were at Scremerston Station on 11th; ten to 26 were also noted in the Fenham-le-Moor area during January-February, with two still present here on 3rd March. A wintering flock of 36 on Coquet Island remained into March.

The only report during April was five at Cresswell Pond on 15th. Unusually, another inland bird flew S at Grindon Lough on 15th June.

Birds returning to traditional wintering areas began with 46 at Ord Moor (Berwick) on 11th October, followed by 52 at Cocklawburn on 16th. During the final few days of the month, there were counts of up to 50 from Holy Island on 30th-31st, five were at Newbiggin on 30th and two at Fenham Mill on 29th. In November, five were at Fenham Flats on 8th, 20 at Hemscott Hill on 15th, 35 at Goswick Farm (Norham) on 24th and 50 at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 28th. Numbers continued to increase in December, with up to 50 at Fenham-le-Moor by mid-month. There were numerous counts from the Druridge Pools-East Chevington area, where the peak count was 44 at East Chevington Burn mouth on 18th.

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

STATUS: Common resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

In January, there were flocks of 30 at Derwent Reservoir, 25 at West Chevington, 15+ near Humshaugh and ten at Grindon Lough. Up to five were attracted to garden feeders at Gosforth Garden Village during January-February; while, elsewhere in February, more than ten were noted at Holburn by 26th. A very large flock of around 120 was at Dipton Woods on 15th March (DLe). Birds were reported from at least 12 wooded upland areas during March, including 12 at Staward on 21st and singing males in young conifers at the Wanneys and Harwood Forest.

In April, counts of four (including display) came from Grindon Lough, Harthope Valley, Longhorsley, Simonside and Sweethope. The species was thought to be breeding in good numbers at the Wanneys by May, where much singing and display was noted, while numbers in the Harthope Valley had increased to 14 (at Langleeford) by 15th. In addition to the aforementioned sites, breeding activity was also evident at Fontburn, Holystone, Ingram and Wingates, as well as from several sites within the Kielder Forest complex. In June, a flock of 12 was at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) on 28th and single birds passed S at the Blyth Estuary on 13th and W at Budle Bay on 27th. A post breeding flock of 30 was at

the Wanneys on 19th July and 20 birds were at Derwent Reservoir on 14th.

Further coastal movements were noted in August, with four S at East Chevington on 29th and 11 S at Holy Island on 31st. In September, six moved over Cambois on 16th, 21 flew S at St Mary's on 26th and six over Bamburgh on 30th, while October produced 19 S at Holy Island on 10th and 20+ S at East Chevington on 31st. The only sizeable inland gatherings during the final three months of the year were 35 at Whitley Chapel on 11th October, 12-13 at Prestwick Carr from 26th October-3rd November and an impressive 19 on garden feeders at Mickley Square on 19th December.

Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

STATUS: Uncommon to rare passage and winter visitor. Given to irruptive movements from Northern Europe, when, in such years, it may become more numerous.

One was present on garden feeders at Gosforth Garden Village on 17th and 24th January (MJC).

There were two autumn records from the Farne Islands; the first was from Big Harcar on 14th October (FIR) and the second coming from Inner Farne on 2nd November (FIR).

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

STATUS: Common to well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor. Given to irruptive movements from Northern Europe, when, in such years, it may become very numerous.

BREEDING: Common to well-represented.

Breeding activity was noted from the beginning of the year at Bakethin (Kielder), where 12 on 18th January included a pair displaying and, at the same locality, 13 on 21st February included three singing males. There was a count of 23 from Sweethope Lough on 30th January; while, elsewhere, smaller numbers were reported from typical coniferous breeding habitat at Blakehopeburnhaugh, Catcleugh and Colt Crag Reservoirs, and Tarsat Burn. Small groups, totalling around 50, were in Harwood Forest on 5th March, ten were at Leaplish (Kielder) on 14th and an immature bird was found dead at the base of a nest tree in Thrunton Wood on 24th.

Harwood Forest remained a reliable site in April-May, with ten to 20 on several dates. Eight were noted at Slaley Forest and five at Blakehopeburnhaugh during this period and groups of two to six were in at least four localities within the Kielder Forest complex, with a pair also at Sidwood (Tarsat Burn).

Some movement was evident in June, with at least seven W at Belford on 16th, 11 W at Widdrington on 21st and 17 W at Budle Bay on 27th. In breeding areas, 14 were at Slaley Forest on 4th June. In July, 12 flew S at Gosforth Garden Village on 5th and 73 flying W at Fenwick on 15th had presumably arrived in off the sea (MJC). Elsewhere during the month, ten were at Thrunton Wood on 12th, eight at Derwent Reservoir on 24th and 23 at Staward Gorge on 25th; while, in August, 18 were at Blakehopeburnhaugh on 4th, 11 at Sweethope Lough on 22nd and ten flew W at West Hartford on 8th. In September, 16-28 were at Holburn, 15 at Dukeshouse (Hexham) and seven at Craggside. Further coastal movements began with 13 N at Bamburgh on 25th September, where there were seven N on 5th October and 25 N on 8th; 25 S at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on the same day possibly referred to the same birds. Two also flew over Holy Island on 8th October, with three there on 10th; eight flew S at Little Waters on 11th and 14 S at Holywell on 25th.

Light movement was again noted in November, with two S at Gosforth Park on 1st and single migrants at Holy Island on 7th-8th and Alnmouth on 12th. Inland flocks, during October-December, included up to 30 at Widehope, 20 at Blakehopeburnhaugh, 15 at Harwood Forest and 12 in Dipton Wood.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

STATUS: Common resident and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

January counts included 60-66 at Berwick, East Ord, Hepburn Steads and Holywell and 50 at Cramlington. Another flock of 50 was at Druridge Pools in February, when 40 were also at Howdon. The largest March gathering was 32 at Humshaugh. Elsewhere during the first quarter, 'charms' of 20-30 were noted at Cresswell dunes, Haughton Strother (Humshaugh), Hauxley, Jesmond Dene, Prestwick Carr and Wallsend.

Apart from a sizeable coastal gathering of 50 at Holy Island (Chare Ends), flock sizes declined somewhat during April as birds dispersed and breeding territories were established.

Some very large post breeding flocks were evident during the second half of the year, with 100-135 (including many juveniles) at St Mary's throughout July-August. Elsewhere in August, 200 were at Bamburgh, 150 at West Hartford, 105 at Prestwick Carr, 75 feeding on thistle heads at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) and 70 at Cresswell.

The largest gathering of the year was at Cocklawburn, where 320 were noted on 28th September (MHu). In a very good month for the species, further flocks included 200 at Arcot Pond and Budle Bay, 150+ at St Mary's and 100-125 at Druridge Pools, East Holywell, Prestwick Carr and Stag Rocks (Bamburgh).

Some dispersal was noted in October as the Cocklawburn flock declined to 110 by 8th, only 60+ remained at St Mary's by 9th and, at Budle Bay, numbers reduced to 140+ on 23rd; 94-100 were also noted at Hauxley NR and Prestwick Carr during the month. The largest November gathering was 120 at Arcot Pond on 15th. At East Chevington, there were counts of 50-150 on several December dates and 66 were at Tweedmouth on 10th. A flock at Druridge Pools, counted from a photograph, numbered 293 on New Year's Eve.

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

STATUS: Common to abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common to abundant.

Peak counts during the first quarter were 100+ at Haughton Strother (Humshaugh) on 12th January (MR), 40+ at Wark (North Tyne) on 21st February and 90 in Dipton Woods on 5th March. Elsewhere during this period, 50 were in the Harthope Valley, 30 at Big Waters, Holystone and Rothbury, 25 at Harwood and Hulne Park (Alnwick) and 20+ at Wooler Common.

In Kielder Forest, 35+ were noted on 17th April, while 30 were at Tasset Burn on 28th May. Smaller numbers were noted in other favoured coniferous breeding habitats at Catcleugh, Harthope Valley, Harwood Forest, Ingram, Simonside, Upper Coquetdale and Wingates.

Early coastal movement was detected at Budle Bay, where seven flew W on 27th June. In August, a total of 102 moved S at East Chevington on 29th (IF), and 59 flew S at Gosforth Garden Village and 36 S at Cambois on 30th. Further lighter movement in

September included 13 W at Tynemouth on 12th, 20 S at East Chevington on 13th and 13 S at Newbiggin on 20th. Elsewhere during the month, there were counts of 14-24 from Derwent Reservoir, Linden Hall and Prestwick Carr. East Chevington again witnessed movement in October, when 40+ flew S on 31st; 30 were at Hauxley NR on 17th and light passage was also noted at Blyth, Holy Island and Whitley Bay.

Peak counts during the final two months were 50 at Kimmer Lough on 17th November, and 50 at Branton GP and Harthope Valley on 16th and 18th December respectively. Elsewhere during this period, 20-25 were noted at East Chevington Burn mouth, Marden Quarry, Stag Rocks (Bamburgh), Wark, West Hartford and Wooler.



Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

STATUS: Well-represented autumn passage and winter visitor.

Good numbers were noted during the first two months of the year, with 30 at Boulmer on 4th January and 28 at Longhoughton on 30th almost certainly referring to the same flock (RB/MB/TRD). Another flock of 25 was noted at Cambois on 10th January, when 17 at nearby North Blyth may also have involved the same birds. The latter gathering peaked at 19 from 20th-24th and 17 were again present on 31st. Elsewhere in January, singles were at Stag Rocks (Bamburgh) on 3rd and St Mary's on 4th; more unusual were two well inland on the Otterburn Ranges on 24th. In February, the North Blyth flock was again variously reported at 17-19 from 7th-11th; while, in the Lindisfarne NNR area, there were reports of 22 on Holy Island and 11 at Guile Point on 8th, and 11 at nearby Ross Back Sands on 11th. Elsewhere, four were between Craster-Dunstanburgh on 25th, six at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 27th and five flew N at Cheswick on 28th.

Three were still at North Blyth on 4th March, two at Berwick Little Beach on 22nd, with singles at Tynemouth on 8th, St Mary's on 14th and Holy Island on 25th; two were also inland at Hepburn Moor on 16th. During the final week of March, four to five frequented Chevington Burn mouth from 26th-31st.

An unusual summer record involved a male photographed at the Simonsides on 24th May. The first returning individual was noted moving S at Holy Island on 9th September. Small

numbers were reported in October, beginning with two at Holy Island on 11th, followed by two at Blyth Beach on 24th and a single at St Mary's on 26th. On the Farne Islands, three moved W over Brownsman on 27th October, another was there on 30th and a single on 5th November. Eight to 12 were noted at Ross Back Sands from 1st-14th November, six were on Inner Farne on 12th November (five of which moved S), with singles there on 27th and 30th, and one to four were noted at Blyth Harbour, Druridge Pools and Goswick Farm (Norham) between 24th-27th. In December, 11 were found on Holy Island on 14th and singles were noted at Druridge Bay CP, Stag Rocks and Warkworth Gut.

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

STATUS: Uncommon autumn passage and winter visitor.

All reports in 2015 were from the end of the year, beginning with one or more singles at Holy Island and Guile Point from 4th-18th October; two flew SE over Holy Island on 10th October (MJC) and another was at St Mary's on 11th. The Farne Islands attracted a single on 20th October, on Brownsman. The only other confirmed record was a single at Chevington Burn mouth on 17th December.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

Sizeable counts in January-February included 35+ at Holburn, 35 at the Beehive Flash (Earsdon), 33 at Holywell, 28 at Cramlington, up to 26 in a Corbridge garden, 14 at Wooler, 12 at Boulmer and ten at Cresswell. Numbers at Cresswell increased to 22 during March, when 45 were also at Bamburgh, 32 at Middle Ord (Berwick), 16 at West Ord and 15 at Bothal. Smaller numbers elsewhere included several singing males from early in the month. In April, 11 were at Whitelea Paddock (Cramlington) on 5th and seven at Hartley West Farm (Seaton Sluice) on 7th.

Counts of singing males during the breeding season (April-July) included up to eight at Holywell, seven at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) and six in the Breamish Valley. On 19th May, one observer conducting surveys by cycle recorded a total of 37 singing males in the Ponteland-Black Heddon-Wallridge-Ingoe-Matfen-Stamfordham area and 23 singing males from Stannington-Tranwell, via Bellasis Bridge. Elsewhere, two singing males and a female with nest material were noted at Ford Moss, three were singing at Fenham-le-Moor, High Horton (Blyth) and Longhorsley Moor and two singing males were in the Harthope Valley, where the species remains scarce. Singing continued to feature at many of these sites during June-July; additionally, eight were singing at Holywell Pond on 22nd July and a 25km cycle ride in the Matfen-Black Heddon area on 30th July revealed 16 singing males. Smaller numbers were reported in August-September, the highest counts being seven at Budle Bay and six at Craster.

In October, there were gatherings of 22 at Elwick and 20 at Budle Bay on 31st, and 27 were at Felton on 22nd November. An impressive flock of 100-120 was found in stubbles at New Mousen (Belford) on 22nd December (MH/AA); elsewhere during the month, 40+ were noted at Branton GP, 30 at Football Hole (Low Newton), 20+ at Eshott, 14 near Humshaugh, and 12 at Fenham-le-Moor and Longhorsley.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1945 / LAST RECORD: 2014

The Farne Islands and Holy Island have a virtual monopoly on this species, with another sighting this year, this time on Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 23rd August (DR *et al.*). It proved exceptionally tame, with Rangers having to ensure they did not step on it! Almost annual in the county, but nearly all sightings are single day records.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1920 / LAST RECORD: 2014

Again, with this species, most sightings are on the Farne Islands with records this year of one on Brownsman from 5th-7th October (ET *et al.*) and a further individual on 11th October on Inner Farne (THi *et al.*). They were both seen very well, at close range, and seemed unfazed by the Rangers. Almost annual now on the Islands. Encouragingly, Bamburgh Ringing Station had a welcome surprise with two first-winters ringed and released there on 11th October (MSH/JCD). They were only seen briefly after release.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

STATUS: Well-represented resident and a passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Five to nine were noted at Cocklawburn, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Pools, Gosforth Park NR, Holywell Pond and Prestwick Carr in January-February. The largest gathering during this period was 15 at Catcherside (Harwood) on 6th February. In March, there was a count of ten from Fomart Knowe (Chillingham) on 16th; nine were at Prestwick Carr and St Mary's and eight on Holy Island.

Numbers at Holy Island increased to 17 by 17th April and eight were noted at Cocklawburn on 21st. Breeding activity (April-July) was reported from East Chevington, with up to 14 singing males; Gosforth Park NR, where 13 territories were established; St Mary's, where up to 12 singing males were noted; and Cresswell Pond, with eight singing males. In addition, up to seven singing males were reported from Prestwick Carr and West Hartford, two pairs bred in an oilseed rape field at Berwick and two pairs were feeding young at Howdon; one to three singing males were also reported from the Alwin Valley (Upper Coquetdale), Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Pools, Grindon Lough, Newton Pool, Sweethope Lough and Warkworth.

Numbers increased at coastal localities in September, with five birds passing S at Newbiggin on 20th, 45 were at Holy Island by 26th and 22 at Budle Point on 28th. Counts from Holy Island peaked at 50 on 11th October (MJC/ADM), while a more unusual record came from Newcastle (Exhibition Park), where a single on 8th was only the observer's second site record in six years. The final two months of the year included counts of 12-13 at St Mary's, eight at Cocklawburn, seven at Gosforth Park NR and six at Druridge Pools. The highest concentration was 15, with Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella*, at Football Hole (Low Newton) on 31st December.

Birds of Unknown (although presumed not wild) Origin, Escapes and Hybrids.

The identity of some of the species below has not been verified by the CRC and are presented as a record as to what is being found in Northumberland.

Birds of Unknown Origin:

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

One was noted at Widdrington Moor during a WeBS count on 8th March.

Escapes:

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

A welcome attraction was one found at Bothal Pond from 24th-29th March, where it was originally seen flying in with Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus*.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*

The long-staying individual was again seen at Hauxley on 3rd February, with further sightings during a WeBS count on 11th March, on 5th April, during WeBS counts on 17th April, 30th June, 24th August and 9th October and at East Chevington on 25th October.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Two were at East Chevington from 11th January-8th March, with occasional visits to Hauxley. Presumably the same two were located flying SW over Harwood Forest on 15th March. Seven found at Derwent Reservoir on 20th June stayed until 11th July, with a visit to nearby Airy Holm Reservoir on 30th July. Two were found at Hauxley during a WeBS visit on 24th August.

In September, a group of six were present at East Chevington between 19th-29th and a group of four at Widdrington Moor Lake on 13th were likely to have been part of the same group. Further sightings in October involved four at Derwent Reservoir on 1st, with two remaining to 19th. Three were also noted during a WeBS count at Hauxley on 9th-10th, with one also seen overhead there on 15th. One bird remained at Derwent Reservoir from 2nd-11th November.

It is interesting to speculate on where these birds originated from as there have been instances in the UK of feral breeding.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

Five were present at Bothal Pond on 24th-25th July, presumably birds from a local farm. A single was noted at QE 11 CP during WeBS visits on 20th November and 12th December.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

One with jesses became entangled in a tree at Gosforth Park NR on 9th September. It was released and the owner traced.

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*

The individual seen in 2014 at Swallow Pond was seen there again on 15th-16th January. Presumably the same individual was nearby at Jesmond Dene on 24th January and from 1st-8th February. It was notable that there were no jesses on this individual. One was noted again at Jesmond Dene on 2nd December.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

One was originally located flying over the observer's garden at Tynemouth on 22nd March and, presumably the same individual, was briefly present for five minutes at Swallow Pond on 28th March before being mobbed and chased off.

Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*

One survived an attack by three Magpies *Pica pica* in a garden at Southfield Lea (Cramlington) on 18th April. Another was in a hedgerow at Beacon Lane (Cramlington) on 27th August.

Hybrids:

Canada Goose x Greylag Goose *Branta canadensis* x *Anser anser*

Singles were seen at Killingworth Lake during a WeBS count on 17th May and at Swallow Pond on 26th May.

Mallard x Wigeon *Anas platyrhynchos* x *Anas penelope*

An unusual hybrid was at Cresswell Pond from 8th-19th February.

Wigeon x Chiloe Wigeon *Anas penelope* x *Anas sibilatrix*

One probable of this hybrid was at Cresswell Pond during a WeBS count on 8th February.

Tufted Duck x Pochard *Aythya fuligula* x *Aythya ferina*

One was occasionally noted at Holywell Pond from 23rd January-4th March. Probably the same individual was seen at Swallow Pond on 19th February and at Woodhorn Flashes on 14th March. It was still being seen at Swallow Pond on 4th May.

Aythya hybrid *Aythya* sp

The hybrid at Killingworth Lake was noted again on 2nd January. The exact parentage is uncertain but it appears Scaup-like. A putative hybrid was seen at Howdon Wetland on 29th December. The most common of these is Tufted Duck x Pochard, but other species are sometimes involved.

Glaucous Gull x Herring Gull *Larus hyperboreus* x *Larus argentatus*

An interesting first-winter hybrid was noted at North Shields Fish Quay from at least 2nd-13th January. These two species hybridise in Greenland and Iceland where they are known as 'Viking' Gulls.

Carriion Crow x Hooded Crow *Corvus corone* x *Corvus cornix*

A possible hybrid, showing black flecking, was noted at Tynemouth on 13th July.



List of Contributors

A.Adams, A.Allen, J.M.Almond, S.W.Anderson, T.Armstrong, C.D.Barlow, S.L.Barratt, S.R.Barrett, D.G. & R.H.Bell, H.Bell, R.J. & M.Bentley (RB/MB), N.Bidmade, D.H.W.Blair, T.Blake, L.Blakely, J.S.Booth, C.Boothby (CBo), A.I.Bowman, G.Bowman, C.Bradshaw, C.Bradshaw (CBr), T.Brewis (TBr), A. & L.Brunts, J.Bucknall (JBu), M.J.Carr, H. Brooker-Cary, B.Chambers, T.R.Cleeves, M.N.Coates, J.Common, M.J.Cook (MJCo), E.Crabtree, A.Craggs (ACr), J.Croxall (JCr), A.Curry, D.Dack, R.Dack, T.Daley, N.P.Dales, R.Davies (RDa), I.B. & K.Davison (IBDa/KDa), M.Davison, K.Dawson, J.C.Day, T.R. & J.Dean, J.P.Dobinson, H.Dodds, I.R.Douglas, C.Duncan, R.Dunn (RDu), M.Eaton, G.Eden, J.Edwards (Jed), S.T.Elliott, K.Evans, P.R.Fairhurst, J.Farooqi (JFa), T.Farooqi, J.Finan, I.Fisher, P.C.Fletcher, D.Forshaw, N.Foggo, R.S.Forster, I.Forsyth (IFo), M.P.Frankis, B.Galloway, P.Galloway, T.Gibson, P.Gilbert, F.Golding, A.Hall, C.D.Hampton, E.Harrison (EHa), J.Harrison, S.Harrison, A.S.Hart, M.Heal (MHe), T.Hendry, M.Henry, M. Hepple (MHP), A.J.Hewitt, P.H.Heyland, T.Hibbert, S.J.Hingston, M.S.Hodgson, S.T.Holliday, J.Holmes, C.A.Holt, R.Hopson, P.Howard, D.H.Howey, A.Hutcheson (AHu), M.Hutcheson (MHu), A.S.Jack, A.Janes, I.J.Johnson, M.Kerby, I.Kerr, M.S.Kitching, V.Knight, C.G.Knox, G.P.Knox, D.Leat, W.Legg, J.Littlewood, C.Lockyer, J.D.Lough, D.Lovatt, J.P.Lumby, J.Malloy, P.R.Massey, S.V. & A.J.McCormick, L.J.McDougall, S.J.McElwee, D.McGibbon, D.McKeown, A.D.McLevy (ADM), E.McNab, A.Middleton, M.D.Middleton), G.Milward, T.Mitcham, I.Morgan, A.D.Mould, R.Narraway, M.Natrass, A.J.Newson, C.Nicholson, D.Oliver, N.F.Osborne, R.J.Pannell, S.P.Parnaby, A.G.Pitches, M.Potts, S.Priestley, J.W.Proudlock, M.Puxley (MPu), H.Reid, A.J.Richards, J.Richardson, M.Richardson, A.Rickeard, S.Rippon, D.Robinson, E.Robson, L.A.Robson, D.Roche, D.Rodgers (DRo), S.M.Rodriguez, G.Rogers (GRo), G.Russell, K. & L.Russell, M.Sanderson, M.R.Smith, R.Smith, A.Spedding, B.Steel, J.G.Steele, P.Stewart, R.Stonehouse, G.Storey, A.W.Swan, A.Tilmouth, A.L.Todd, E.Tooth, D.M.Turner, D.R.Watson, T.Watson, S.Westerberg, T.Wiffen (TWi), N.Wilkie, A.Wilson, G.Wolverson, C.Wren (CWr), C.Wright, D.Wynn, K.W.York.

Bamburgh Ringing Station, Berwick Wildlife Group, Farne Islands Rangers, Hauxley Ringing Station, Natural History Society of Northumbria, North Northumberland Bird Club, Northern Experience Wildlife Tours, NTBC Field Trip (BCFT), Seaton Sluice Watch Tower.

Apologies for any accidental omissions

First and Last Dates of Summer Visitors 2015

Species	First Date	Last Date
Garganey	10th April	27th September
Quail	10th May	23rd August
Marsh Harrier*	9th March	16th November
Osprey	12th March	14th September
Little Ringed Plover	10th April	24th August
Common Sandpiper	14th March	25th September
Little Tern	14th April	21st August
Sandwich Tern	22nd March	24th November
Common Tern	10th April	22nd October
Roseate Tern	15th April	19th September
Arctic Tern	13th April	13th November
Cuckoo	7th April	30th August
Swift	17th April	1st November
Sand Martin	10th March	20th September
Swallow	4th April	31st October
House Martin	2nd April	6th October
Wood Warbler	22nd April	24th August
Willow Warbler	9th April	31st October
Garden Warbler	22nd April	26th September
Lesser Whitethroat	20th April	19th October
Whitethroat	17th April	14th October
Grasshopper Warbler	16th April	6th September
Sedge Warbler	10th April	15th September
Reed Warbler	16th April	10th October
Ring Ouzel	25th March	1st November
Spotted Flycatcher	4th May	18th September
Pied Flycatcher	22nd April	20th September
Redstart	10th April	14th October
Whinchat	22nd April	9th October
Wheatear	21st March	12th November
Yellow Wagtail	12th April	29th September
Tree Pipit	2nd April	6th October

*Winter record omitted (see Classified List for specific records)

Some obvious species such as Blackcap and Chiffchaff have been omitted from this table as the presence of wintering birds may obscure the first and last dates of summer visitors.

Last and First Dates of Winter Visitors 2014

Species	Last Date	First Date
Bewick's Swan	8th March	24th December
Whooper Swan*	18th May	7th October
Bean Goose	27th February	4th October
Pink-footed Goose*	25th May	7th September
White-fronted Goose	6th April	5th October
Barnacle Goose*	26th May	19th September
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	26th March	4th September
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	8th April	9th September
Long-tailed Duck*	19th May	18th October
Black-throated Diver	25th May	2nd September
Great Northern Diver	2nd July	7th September
Red-necked Grebe	8th March	6th September
Slavonian Grebe	24th March	17th October
Jack Snipe	19th March	24th September
Black Guillemot	28th June	10th November
Little Auk	18th April	12th November
Iceland Gull	29th May	21st November
Glaucous Gull	4th July	21st November
Waxwing	6th April	26th November
Fieldfare*	5th May	14th August
Redwing	18th April	7th September
Brambling	17th April	3rd October
Twite*	15th April	11th October
Snow Bunting	31st March	9th September
Lapland Bunting	- -	4th October

*Obvious summering records omitted (see Classified List for specific records)

Additions and Corrections to Previous Reports

2014

Additional Records:

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*

The individual accepted in BIN 2014 on 19th August was also seen at Snab Point (Cresswell) (BB/ADMc).

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

Additional record accepted with one at Arcot Pond on 9th April (JM/STH) which was only present for ten minutes before flying off south.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

An additional record involved potential breeding in the Border Forest of Kielder with two adults seen on 16th July (MD). A food pass was observed before one adult moved off up the valley and was lost to view. The second bird sat and preened for 20 minutes on a clear felled area before also departing. Further visits to the area revealed no further sightings. The last breeding attempt was in 2011.



Great White Egret (Gary Woodburn)

BBRC decisions and records under review

2014

'Northern Eider' *Somateria mollissima borealis*

Amble Harbour - 27th-28th August Decision Awaited

Fea's / Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma feae / madeira*

Farne Islands - 21st September Accepted

2013

'North American Canada Goose' *Branta canadensis interior / parvipes*

Low Newton - 20th October Accepted

'Northern Eider' *Somateria mollissima borealis*

Seahouses (2) - 15th March-2nd April Decision Awaited

'Ashy-headed Wagtail' *Motacilla flava cinereocapilla*

South Newsham Flash - 28th April-1st May Decision Awaited

2012

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

Budle Bay (2) - 2nd-23rd September Decision Awaited

2010

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

Doddington - 8th-10th March Decision Awaited

'Ashy-headed Wagtail' *Motacilla flava cinereocapilla*

Whitley Bay - 29th April Decision Awaited

2009

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*

Grindon Lough - 3rd-12th April Decision Awaited

'Steppe Lesser Whitethroat' *Sylvia curruca halimodendri*

St Mary's - 17th October Decision Awaited

2007

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*

Linton Pond and Bothal Pond - 6th January-24th March Decision Awaited

2006

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*

Woodhorn Flashes - 22nd-24th November

Same East Chevington - 20th-30th December Decision Awaited

2005

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*

Holy Island and Budle Bay - 6th-13th October Decision Awaited

'Eastern Whitethroat' *Sylvia communis rubicola / volgensis*

Brownsman (Farne Islands) - 2nd November Decision Awaited

2002

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

Budle Bay - 5th October Decision Awaited

1992

'Siberian Common Tern' *Sterna hirundo longipennis*

The Long Nanny, Newton (2) - 25th May Decision Awaited

1986

Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*

Tynemouth - 8th August Under Review

Although the identification is not in doubt both Ross's Goose and Lesser Canada Goose have yet to be accepted onto Category A of the British List by the British Ornithologists Union, hence are not included in the official County List. The BOURC are still debating as to whether these records are of wild origin.

Ringing Recoveries reported in 2015

By Ian Fisher

Key to symbols and terms used:

- Age: terminology as applied at the time of ringing
- 1 - nestling or chick not yet able to fly
 - 2 - fully grown, year of hatching unknown (current year not necessarily excluded)
 - 3 - definitely hatched during current year
 - 4 - hatched before current calendar year, exact year unknown
 - 5 - definitely hatched during last calendar year
 - 6 - hatched before last calendar year, exact year unknown

- Sex: M - male
F - female

- Manner of recovery:
- R - caught and released by ringer
 - VV - sight record (ring read in field, or a colour-ringed bird)
 - + - shot or killed by man
 - X - found dead or dying
 - XL - long dead
- () - caught or trapped alive and not released, or released but with ring removed
- /?/ - manner of recovery unknown

Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>			
Z87646	6 F	06/07/96	Berwick upon Tweed
	R	06/05/15	Cowbit Road, Lincolnshire

Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>			
5234367	4	18/10/05	Mount Eagle, Loch Eye, Highland
	VV	05/05/08	Holtakot, Ljosavatnsskard, Sudur-Thingeyjar, ICELAND
	VV	15/04/15	Brierdene Farm

Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>			
FH65602	1	30/07/14	Wheldrake Ings, York
	XF (shot)	09/01/15	Pegswood

Storm Petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>			
2434621	4	11/07/94	Tynemouth
	R	20/07/15	Sule Skerry, Orkney
2349672	5	11/08/00	Snook Point, nr Seahouses
	R	03/07/15	Lunga, Treshnish Is, Argyll & Bute
2642267	4	12/07/15	Eilean Nan Ron, Highland
	R	07/08/15	Druridge Links
2703114	4	26/07/15	Malin Beg, Do. Donegal
	R	12/08/15	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
2630849	4	11/08/15	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
	R	17/08/15	Porth Iago, Llangwnnadi, Gwynedd

Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>			
1343178	1	03/07/97	Staple Island, Farne Islands
	VV	22/07/15	Brownsman, Farne Islands

Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>			
GR37165	1	09/05/14	North Cotes, Lincolnshire
	VV	22/07/14	Cresswell Pond
	VV	26/05/15	Cresswell Pond
	VV	19/06/15	Druridge Pools
GR37108	1	20/05/15	North Cotes, Lincolnshire
	VV	16/07/15	Cresswell Pond
GR37120	1	25/05/15	North Cotes, Lincolnshire
	VV	14-15/08/15	Warkworth

Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			
8056350	1	31/05/12	Sloegebied, Vlissingen, NETHERLANDS
	VV	17/06/15	Findhorn Bay, Moray
	VV	05/08/15	Cresswell Pond
	VV	06/08/15	Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire

Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			
FH53187	1 M	01/07/14	Seaside Dyke, Errol, Perthshire
	VV	04/06/15	Big Waters NR

Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>			
1408621	1	13/07/05	Ynys Fer-Las, Afon Glaslyn, Gwynedd
	VV	09/04/15	Kielder
1408626	1	19/06/07	Ynys Fer-Las, Afon Glaslyn, Gwynedd

	sick	23/03/13	Blagdon Lake, Somerset
	VV	02/04/15	Kielder
1439554	1	26/06/10	Tainfield, nr Tain, Highland
	VV	02/05/15	Kielder
1412484	1	14/07/11	nr Kenmore, Perthshire
	VV	16/04/15	Kielder
1439838	1	21/06/12	Calrossie Wood, nr Tain, Highland
	VV	19/05/15	Kielder

Peregrine <i>Falco peregrinus</i>			
GR18831	1 F	21/05/12	Norwich, Norfolk
	VV	19/05/14	Newcastle upon Tyne
	VV	06 & 17/04/15	Newcastle upon Tyne

Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>			
GR34822	3	17/11/12	Killingworth
	VV	13/12/15	Southport Marina, Merseyside
GR81336	3	28/12/14	Killingworth
	VV	09 & 26/05/15	<i>Gentofte Lakes, København, DENMARK</i>
	VV	09/09/15	QE II CP

Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>			
EG06025	1	20/06/99	Upper Barden Res, North Yorkshire
	XF	16/07/15	nr Hexham
6142906 White J72J	4	05/04/05	<i>Nidaro, Trondheim, NORWAY</i>
	VV	27/07/05	Amble
	VV	19/07/14	Elliot Links, Angus
	VV	03/01/15	Amble
3618734	1	04/06/06	<i>Veluwemeer, Harderwijk, NETHERLANDS</i>
	VV	06/01/07	North Shields
	VV	02/11/08	North Shields
	VV	01/01/15	North Shields
S2640	6	27/03/12	<i>Riga, LATVIA</i>
	VV	19/11/13	Brier Dene
6128331 White J4CC	8 M	06/04/12	<i>Molledammen, Time, NORWAY</i>
	VV	23/02/15	Killingworth Lake
K00082 White J9CE	8	10/04/12	<i>Molledammen, NORWAY</i>

	VV	03/03/15	Brier Dene
	VV	16/07/15	St. Mary's Island
IA144927 Black X3C1	4 M	17/05/13	<i>Riether Werder, GERMANY</i>
	VV	03/03/15	Brier Dene
5154623 White J5HJ	1	20/07/13	<i>Brunnavika, Sola, NORWAY</i>
	VV	22/02/15	Killingworth Lake
K04339 Green JC59	4 F	05/05/14	<i>Ostensjovannet, Oslo, NORWAY</i>
	VV	16/07/15	St. Mary's Island
VA0162	1	08/06/15	<i>Hirsholm, DENMARK</i>
	VV	19/11/15	Amble Harbour

Mediterranean Gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>			
387164	1	23/06/11	<i>Bugyi (Kavics Union), HUNGARY</i>
	VV	17/09/11	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea
	VV	23/06/12	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea
	VV	04/10/14	Cresswell Pond
E933559 White E913	1	23/06/12	<i>Total Colony, Antwerp, BELGIUM</i>
	VV	22/08/14	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea
	VV	03/11/14	Hayle Est, Cornwall
	VV	16/07/15	Cresswell Pond
EY77110	6	30/11/13	Great Yarmouth, Norfolk
	VV	09/11/15	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea

Caspian Gull <i>Larus cachinnans</i>			
DN27681	1	26/05/11	<i>Zb.Kozielno, Paczkow, POLAND</i>
	VV	03/07/12	Cley Marshes, Norfolk
	VV	27/07/13	Amble
	VV	09/08/14	Warkworth Est
	VV	18/07-01/08/15	Amble

Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>			
3047803 Black JT192	1	27/07/14	<i>Svinoya, More og Romsdal, NORWAY</i>
	VV	03/01/15	North Shields
	VV	09/05/15	Arbroath Harbour, Angus
	VV	22/07/15	Seahouses

Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>			
5T62997	4	29/05/94	Zeebrugge, BELGIUM
	VV	28/05/15	Coquet Island
DB20870	1	26/06/96	Brownsman, Farne Islands
	VV	07/06/05	Heist, BELGIUM
	R	29/07/15	Thyboron Kanal, Vestervig, DENMARK
DB36077	1	28/06/98	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
	XF (hit by car)	10/08/15	High Street, Kirk Steeple, Montrose, Angus
DD92345	1	26/07/13	Coquet Island
	VV	05/01/15	Walvis Bay Oyster Beds, NAMIBIA

Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>			
SX99639	1	09/07/98	Rockabill, Dublin
	VV	07/05/15	Coquet Island
SR37102	1	07/07/05	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
	VV	18/07/14	Coquet Island
	R	27/08/15	Wigeon Hide Pools, Montrose Basin

Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>			
SX85528	1	23/06/96	Coquet Island
	R	18/07/15	Isle of May, Fife
SX62593	1	13/07/96	Long Nanny Estuary
	X	06/07/15	Lindisfarne NNR
ST35559	1	29/06/13	Long Nanny Estuary
	XL	24/10/15	Sankt Peter-Ording, GERMANY

Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>			
T22255	1	29/06/91	Whinnyfold, Aberdeenshire
	XF	29/10/15	Druridge

Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>			
EY63354	1	21/07/13	Brownsman, Farne Islands
	XF (shot)	06/01/15	Leirviksfj?r?ur, Eysturoya, FAROE ISLANDS

Tawny Owl <i>Strix aluco</i>			
GN65035	1 M	28/04/07	Rufford Abbey CP, Nottinghamshire
	R	07/05/14	Kielder Forest
	R (transponder tag)	25/04/15	Kielder Forest

Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>			
ENN073	5 F	12/04/13	Bardsey Island, Gwynedd
	R	19/07/14	Howick Hall
	R	17/10/15	Howick Hall

Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			
HEL426	3J	14/07/15	Bamburgh
	R	03/10/15	Languard Point, Suffilk
HEL428	3	14/07/15	Bamburgh
	R	04/10/15	Oorderen, BELGIUM

Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			
V876039	4 M	08/08/08	Low Hauxley
	R	24/04/11	Saltholme, Teeside
	R	26/04 & 05/07/15	Saltholme, Teeside
D264113	3 M	16/10/14	Bamburgh
	R	05/06/15	Gelenau, Erzgebirgskreis, GERMANY

Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>			
X962375	3	31/08/11	Cardiff Wetland Res, Cardiff
	R	31/07/12	Bamburgh
	R	28/07/14	Bamburgh
	R	25/07/15	Bamburgh

Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>			
V364185	3 M	08/07/07	Gosforth Park
	R	21/06/15	Gosforth Park
X799268	4 F	17/06/10	East Chevington
	R	19/08/11	Titchfield Haven, Hampshire
	R	27/05/12	Gosforth Park
	R	26/07/15	Gosforth Park
D489315	3	14/09/14	Hauxley NR
	R	13/05/15	Pepingen
Z686316	4	22/07/15	Hauxley NR
	R	16/08/15	Noyant Soulaire-Et-Bourg, FRANCE

Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>			
LE20083	3 F	23/10/12	Low Hauxley
	R	06/04/13	Bardsey Island, Gwynedd
LC08198	4 M	30/10/14	Bamburgh
	XF (hit by car)	21/03/15	Bradwell, GT Yarmouth, Norfolk

Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>			
Z016437	1	27/07/14	Old Quickening Cote
	R	19/02/15	Waterham, Kent

Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			
D264038	4 F	29/09/14	Bamburgh
	XF (hit glass)	08/08/15	Nannes Vei, Vestby, NORWAY

Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>			
Z606657	3 M	30/06/15	Fontburn NR
	Alive (trapped)	29/11/15	Valdefuentes, Arroyomolinos, SPAIN

Acknowledgements:

Most of the above was gleaned from the British Trust for Ornithology's website (link below) and the work of the Northumbria Ringing Group and Mike Hodgson/Bamburgh Ringing Station. My thanks are due to all the observers who keep reporting colour ringed birds - please keep it up!

References:

Robinson, R.A., Leech, D.I. & Clark, J.A. (2016) The Online Demography Report: Bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2015. BTO, Thetford (www.bto.org/ringing-report, created on 28-April-2016).

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) 2015

By Daniel M Turner, Steve Holliday and Kathy Evans

The following tables summarise Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) counts for selected species in 2015.

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Mute Swan												
Inland	423	383	311	125	125	160	167	168	402	345	426	384
Lindisfarne	1	2	27	4	6	4	2	7	47	36	5	3
Open coast	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	7	1
Estuaries	40	27	62	225	139	285	318	290	134	103	52	49
TOTAL	465	414	400	354	270	449	487	467	585	485	490	437

Bewick's Swan												
Inland	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Whooper Swan												
Inland	17	6	211	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	59	4
Lindisfarne	0	22	74	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	21	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0
TOTAL	17	28	306	0	1	1	1	0	0	22	62	4

Pink-footed Goose												
Inland	316	110	733	24	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	123
Lindisfarne	1,415	600	207	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	4
Open coast	280	0	90	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Estuaries	0	85	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	95	75	1
TOTAL	2,011	795	1,030	24	0	0	0	0	0	104	83	128

White-fronted Goose (Greenland)												
Inland	0	13	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
TOTAL	0	13	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0

Greylag Goose												
Inland	726	494	541	204	170	628	296	803	1,433	1,851	656	695
Lindisfarne	0	400	9	0	0	0	0	0	1	230	100	341
Open coast	5	7	6	9	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Estuaries	1	0	0	0	3	0	1	156	26	5	3	47
TOTAL	732	901	556	213	173	628	297	959	1,460	2,087	760	1,083

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Canada Goose												
Inland	1,168	1,016	645	299	305	504	484	1,005	1,464	982	711	871
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0
Estuaries	3	83	22	13	16	22	48	56	192	256	184	151
TOTAL	1,171	1,099	667	312	321	528	532	1,061	1,666	1,238	895	1,023
Barnacle Goose												
Inland	3	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	3	9	0
Lindisfarne	830	700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	800	6	400
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	833	701	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	803	15	400
Dark-bellied Brent Goose												
Lindisfarne	16	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	5	34	324	70
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0
Estuaries	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	16	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	5	35	328	70
Light-bellied Brent Goose												
Lindisfarne	2,251	565	335	2	0	0	3	2	1,277	3,000	3,200	1,461
Open coast	21	10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
TOTAL	2,272	575	337	2	0	0	3	2	1,277	3,001	3,201	1,461
Shelduck												
Inland	11	15	63	53	54	42	16	7	6	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	1,560	1,500	1,044	301	256	166	158	63	464	556	1,050	2,201
Open coast	0	14	25	74	33	35	0	1	0	3	0	0
Estuaries	21	76	106	85	116	60	30	9	10	12	8	16
TOTAL	1,592	1,605	1,238	513	459	303	204	80	480	571	1,058	2,217
Wigeon												
Inland	3,211	2,422	1,518	86	14	27	8	48	291	654	2,084	2,465
Lindisfarne	584	462	192	32	0	0	0	8	5,496	15,000	10,886	928
Open coast	157	396	40	0	1	0	0	0	2	17	30	332
Estuaries	372	477	249	0	4	2	0	0	34	216	585	354
TOTAL	4,324	3,757	1,999	118	19	29	8	56	5,823	15,887	13,585	4,079
Gadwall												
Inland	194	140	193	155	85	151	37	94	199	337	211	170
Open coast	10	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	16	10	0
Estuaries	15	18	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
TOTAL	219	158	193	159	86	151	37	94	199	353	224	170

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Teal												
Inland	2,247	1,979	756	223	13	11	14	126	755	978	1,760	1,606
Lindisfarne	208	272	69	121	14	8	11	14	349	450	283	282
Open coast	56	38	53	6	0	0	8	0	10	8	42	26
Estuaries	874	933	363	89	0	0	0	8	71	251	321	558
TOTAL	3,385	3,222	1,241	439	27	19	33	148	1,185	1,687	2,406	2,472
Mallard												
Inland	1,484	1,413	783	264	249	365	581	771	1,326	1,434	1,293	1,394
Lindisfarne	298	310	60	41	24	4	9	50	351	158	171	322
Open coast	252	33	58	29	8	7	2	5	45	50	73	225
Estuaries	243	420	247	140	121	134	36	113	276	219	313	421
TOTAL	2,277	2,176	1,148	474	402	510	628	939	1,998	1,861	1,850	2,362
Garganey												
Inland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Pintail												
Inland	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	8	0	2
Lindisfarne	256	266	14	1	0	0	0	0	23	99	96	157
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	257	268	14	4	0	0	0	1	24	107	96	160
Shoveler												
Inland	40	30	41	29	15	4	5	6	38	52	32	67
Lindisfarne	4	2	4	8	0	4	4	4	2	0	12	11
TOTAL	44	32	45	37	15	8	9	10	40	52	44	78
Pochard												
Inland	41	68	43	12	14	21	9	17	22	4	18	36
Lindisfarne	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	42	68	43	12	14	21	9	17	22	4	18	36
Tufted Duck												
Inland	727	742	647	399	317	290	280	242	441	561	484	562
Lindisfarne	3	3	4	10	6	3	4	3	0	4	9	5
Open coast	4	0	10	2	0	1	0	0	0	26	31	11
Estuaries	15	0	0	2	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	749	745	661	413	325	294	284	249	441	591	524	578
Scaup												
Inland	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Eider												
Lindisfarne	286	250	272	166	231	146	186	267	236	572	468	532
Open coast	652	488	358	465	393	414	260	205	341	445	497	302
Estuaries	113	62	98	47	25	20	21	4	66	56	71	57
TOTAL	1,051	800	728	678	649	580	467	476	643	1,073	1,036	891

Long-tailed Duck												
Inland	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	16	6	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	9
Open coast	18	22	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1
TOTAL	34	29	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	10

Common Scoter												
Lindisfarne	5	240	101	0	0	0	0	23	0	89	2	0
Open coast	91	980	0	26	165	34	86	64	43	45	164	64
TOTAL	96	1,220	101	26	165	34	86	87	43	134	166	64

Goldeneye												
Inland	234	190	208	45	0	0	0	1	6	24	158	269
Lindisfarne	6	12	7	10	0	0	0	0	6	3	18	9
Open coast	16	22	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	34	7
Estuaries	116	162	116	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	138	87
TOTAL	372	386	342	66	0	0	0	1	12	35	348	372

Red-breasted Merganser												
Inland	2	2	13	12	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
Lindisfarne	8	18	21	22	15	62	83	27	17	26	41	31
Open coast	9	13	15	8	1	1	3	0	0	5	11	11
Estuaries	3	3	19	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3
TOTAL	22	36	68	47	17	63	86	27	17	33	58	47

Goosander												
Inland	30	5	62	4	2	3	0	23	27	21	11	24
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	1	0	11	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	37	247	294	10	4	1	0
Estuaries	2	22	11	27	11	20	109	420	39	29	13	41
TOTAL	32	27	73	31	13	60	358	742	77	54	36	65

Red-throated Diver												
Lindisfarne	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	5
Open coast	17	12	15	8	0	0	0	0	42	22	29	10
Estuaries	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	18	16	16	8	0	0	0	0	43	25	30	15

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Great Northern Diver												
Inland	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	1
TOTAL	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	2

Black-throated Diver												
Inland	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Open coast	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1
TOTAL	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1

Cormorant												
Inland	76	41	79	19	15	34	40	77	99	102	55	49
Lindisfarne	20	23	40	13	24	18	15	29	56	61	42	18
Open coast	47	60	80	49	38	36	96	103	171	157	141	100
Estuaries	96	124	99	36	133	56	51	201	181	116	168	153
TOTAL	239	248	298	117	210	144	202	410	507	436	406	320

Shag												
Lindisfarne	0	2	3	2	1	0	2	4	6	4	3	3
Open coast	65	57	13	5	15	8	15	86	31	42	54	34
Estuaries	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
TOTAL	69	63	20	7	16	8	17	90	37	46	58	39

Bittern												
Inland	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1
TOTAL	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1

Little Egret												
Inland	0	0	0	1	6	0	6	3	6	9	2	2
Lindisfarne	0	6	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	1	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	6	0	3	12	0	6	3	6	9	2	2

Grey Heron												
Inland	26	21	32	18	18	17	35	35	64	65	24	41
Lindisfarne	6	0	5	6	15	5	12	8	6	11	7	8
Open coast	10	19	4	11	10	5	7	12	21	38	30	31
Estuaries	16	15	22	16	22	22	16	51	44	52	26	20
TOTAL	58	55	63	51	65	49	70	106	135	166	87	100

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Little Grebe												
Inland	58	62	41	38	31	34	41	98	200	157	73	40
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	1
Open coast	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1
Estuaries	2	17	7	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	11	5
TOTAL	61	79	49	38	31	34	43	99	204	167	86	47

Great Crested Grebe												
Inland	4	0	14	27	28	25	17	18	18	15	5	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	7	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	4	0	16	27	28	25	19	19	18	15	13	0

Red-necked Grebe												
Lindisfarne	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Slavonian Grebe												
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Lindisfarne	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	3
Open coast	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
TOTAL	6	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	9	3

Black-necked Grebe												
Inland	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Open coast	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Water Rail												
Inland	3	8	7	1	2	1	2	6	7	12	7	12
Estuaries	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	4	8	7	1	2	1	2	6	7	12	7	12

Moorhen												
Inland	256	152	162	85	62	52	64	99	227	234	171	168
Lindisfarne	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2
Open coast	9	8	7	1	1	0	4	2	4	5	4	4
Estuaries	23	26	5	5	8	6	6	4	15	19	6	12
TOTAL	291	188	176	93	73	61	77	107	249	261	184	186

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Coot												
Inland	741	740	541	197	282	207	255	359	657	674	648	591
Lindisfarne	3	0	3	3	3	3	4	4	2	1	2	2
Open coast	1	1	3	5	0	0	2	0	3	3	0	3
Estuaries	0	0	2	2	4	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
TOTAL	745	741	549	207	289	212	261	363	662	680	650	596

Oystercatcher												
Inland	64	63	219	108	85	97	178	52	39	50	3	15
Lindisfarne	399	210	935	332	174	86	125	803	724	529	1,050	1,372
Open coast	1,238	1,132	916	271	158	233	311	404	877	1,179	1,166	1,210
Estuaries	199	169	173	55	38	108	63	77	244	206	172	144
TOTAL	1,900	1,574	2,243	766	455	524	677	1,336	1,884	1,964	2,391	2,741

Golden Plover												
Inland	129	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	290	500	2
Lindisfarne	350	2,100	544	325	0	0	5	166	800	2,318	2,591	1,088
Open coast	463	1,328	107	41	0	0	408	501	2,547	3,830	3,204	2,822
Estuaries	1,351	1,100	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	500	353	0
TOTAL	2,293	4,528	651	366	0	0	413	667	3,419	6,938	6,648	3,912

Grey Plover												
Lindisfarne	260	500	370	247	607	0	4	220	508	88	258	461
Open coast	68	106	79	2	0	0	0	4	21	50	53	96
Estuaries	1	41	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	12
TOTAL	329	647	449	250	607	0	4	224	529	140	311	569

Lapwing												
Inland	1,532	1,337	829	133	73	265	978	1,822	2,919	1,174	1,938	844
Lindisfarne	146	220	25	9	15	6	40	12	290	148	2,124	385
Open coast	415	372	160	67	4	0	297	91	339	713	883	894
Estuaries	369	188	75	8	22	75	301	474	1,039	1,106	567	415
TOTAL	2,462	2,117	1,089	217	114	346	1,616	2,399	4,587	3,141	5,512	2,538

Little Ringed Plover												
Inland	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0

Ringed Plover												
Inland	0	0	3	5	7	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	39	64	211	59	2,294	36	21	292	102	70	96	59
Open coast	238	163	60	94	225	8	32	202	100	239	159	227
Estuaries	114	79	3	2	337	0	1	85	177	75	36	47
TOTAL	391	306	277	160	2,863	47	54	579	380	384	291	333

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Whimbrel												
Inland	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	2	3	4	6	11	2	0	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	4	0	3	19	7	2	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	8	3	7	31	19	4	0	0	0
Curlew												
Inland	219	46	257	17	8	3	189	62	154	154	103	221
Lindisfarne	508	700	902	544	70	158	505	805	1,114	415	573	1,547
Open coast	411	618	476	60	13	37	71	77	325	400	471	727
Estuaries	79	107	279	91	26	35	237	271	192	362	220	464
TOTAL	1,217	1,471	1,914	712	117	233	1,002	1,215	1,785	1,331	1,367	2,959
Black-tailed Godwit												
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	42	4	2	25	4	1	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	18	0	1	0	0
Open coast	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Estuaries	2	0	0	7	0	0	1	44	27	21	6	0
TOTAL	2	1	0	7	0	42	9	64	55	26	7	0
Bar-tailed Godwit												
Inland	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	665	1,000	1,350	248	55	0	9	528	571	785	818	859
Open coast	21	57	50	4	9	1	2	7	11	18	16	29
Estuaries	3	6	6	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	1
TOTAL	690	1,063	1,406	253	64	2	12	535	587	803	834	889
Turnstone												
Inland	9	11	0	0	0	0	4	0	26	53	0	0
Lindisfarne	93	32	54	13	19	7	5	21	27	121	42	130
Open coast	500	429	379	324	186	7	96	125	282	537	872	608
Estuaries	21	17	33	9	2	0	4	6	8	24	22	18
TOTAL	623	489	466	346	207	14	109	152	343	735	936	756
Knot												
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	73	700	1,006	146	132	0	142	331	1,330	587	115	1,378
Open coast	51	11	27	75	0	0	11	27	29	35	22	28
Estuaries	20	10	0	0	0	0	0	6	21	2	0	0
TOTAL	144	721	1,033	221	132	0	153	365	1,380	624	137	1,406

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ruff												
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	15	10	4	1	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	15	15	4	1	0
Sanderling												
Inland	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	79	39	109	30	11	0	12	42	227	68	57	58
Open coast	332	320	357	238	55	17	130	186	216	136	488	120
Estuaries	3	27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26
TOTAL	416	386	467	268	66	17	142	228	443	204	545	204
Dunlin												
Inland	34	0	2	0	9	10	1	13	15	21	0	0
Lindisfarne	1,030	900	1,059	315	3,062	29	321	861	739	695	521	1,442
Open coast	557	284	254	26	60	0	30	137	80	52	241	233
Estuaries	445	533	25	1	174	0	8	89	155	153	148	110
TOTAL	2,066	1,717	1,340	342	3,305	39	360	1,100	989	921	910	1,785
Purple Sandpiper												
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0
Open coast	172	118	82	199	14	0	0	0	3	40	280	99
Estuaries	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	172	119	86	199	14	0	0	11	3	40	280	99
Common Sandpiper												
Inland	0	0	0	5	2	2	10	26	6	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	8	0	0	14	1	3	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	13	2	2	24	28	11	0	0	0
Green Sandpiper												
Inland	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	6	1	0	4
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	4	6	1	0	4
Greenshank												
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	9	1	0	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	60	0	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	6	5	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	13	75	6	0	0

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Wood Sandpiper												
Inland	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Redshank												
Inland	24	65	35	70	15	37	18	25	94	175	47	21
Lindisfarne	547	300	257	258	16	5	435	377	780	685	634	747
Open coast	581	418	377	256	0	1	98	162	451	496	747	593
Estuaries	400	561	392	352	2	6	198	433	646	405	504	418
TOTAL	1,552	1,344	1,061	936	33	49	749	997	1,971	1,761	1,932	1,779
Jack Snipe												
Inland	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1
Woodcock												
Inland	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Snipe												
Inland	74	74	64	21	1	1	3	20	54	122	75	88
Lindisfarne	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	8
Open coast	5	11	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	20
Estuaries	4	4	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	8	1	0
TOTAL	85	89	67	26	1	4	3	20	54	134	86	116
Kingfisher												
Inland	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	6	8	5	6
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
Estuaries	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1
TOTAL	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	7	14	6	7

Acknowledgements

That this information could be compiled is a tribute to the dedication of all volunteers who have covered our inland waters, coasts and estuaries. Credit is also due to Kevin Redgrave and team, of the National Trust, and to Andrew Craggs and his counters for the Lindisfarne data. With grateful acknowledgement to all WeBS contributors during 2015, comprising the names listed below, with apologies for any accidental omissions:

P.J. Allott, M.G. Anderson, N. Anderson, I. Armstrong, W. Banks, S.L. Barratt, J. Bentley, T. Blake, G. Bowman, K. Bradshaw, T. Brewis, K.V. Brooks, A. Brunt, K. Buchanan, M.L. & T.A. Cadwallender, R. Chilton, A. Craggs, A. Curry, T. Daley, I.S. Davidson, K. Davison, M. Davison, J. Dean, T.R. Dean, W. Dickson, A. Donnelly, K. Evans, I. Fisher, P. Fletcher, R. Forster, I. Forsyth, M.P. Frankis, C.D. Hampton, S.T. Holliday, M. Hutcheson, M. Kerby, M.S. Kitching, C.G. Knox, J. Lancaster, J. Littlewood, L.J. McDougall, D. McKeown, A.D. McLevy, S.P. Parnaby, R. Poyer, K. Redgrave, M. Richardson, S. Rippon, I.D. Robson, J.A. Roper, M.R. Smith, J.G. Steele, D.M. Turner, T. Watson.

The County Records Committee 2015

By Tim Dean

In 2015, the County Records Committee (CRC) consisted of the following members:

Tim Dean (Chairman), Duncan Watson, Gary Woodburn, Alan Curry and Martin Kerby. Each member (apart from the Chairman) serves on the committee for a maximum of four years (and is ratified by the main committee each year). Alan Curry at the end of his term stepped down after his stint and was replaced by Graeme Bowman in December 2015.

The CRC meets three times a year and discusses all records of rare and scarce birds that have been supported by written notes/photographs. They also look at any record of a common species in an unusual context, i.e. large numbers at an unusual time of year, early or late dates, or a species well out of its normal range/habitat.

During 2015, 167 records of 61 species/sub-species were considered for publication in Birds in Northumbria. Of these, 151 (90%) were accepted, with 16 (10%) found to be not proven. Those reports not accepted fall into many categories with some just falling short of acceptance, some by non-birders with inadequate detail, but increasingly a number via experienced birders, but with too brief a plumage description. In these latter cases the identification is rarely in doubt, but the historical record will only show the details given, which need to be comprehensive enough to support the identification.

A further 63 records were not submitted for adjudication by the CRC. The majority of the non-submitted claims this year appeared to be mainly due to views not being conclusive enough for submission. A wide variety of species were involved. Certainly the situation has improved on 2014 when 100 claims were not submitted for assessment. However, it has to be noted again that a number of major rarities in 2015 were only accepted due to them being documented by observers other than the finder. Descriptions are always welcome, even if the observer is not the finder, to make the report comprehensive. A full list of all records considered in 2015 is available via the club website: www.ntbc.org.uk under the Recording subsection of Members' Resources. The right-hand column gives links to all CRC Work in Progress files from 2013 onwards. Those records not submitted are shown as 'Awaiting description', where the observer(s) are known. However, an increasing problem for all County Recorders are those sightings which are only submitted to the Bird News Services, e.g. Rare Bird Alert and BirdGuides, without any follow-up to the County Recorder. These are listed separately at the end of the report if no observer details could be verified. The County Recorder would gratefully receive any outstanding descriptions from 2015 for future deliberation by the CRC and possible inclusion in future Annual Reports.

The following is a list of species for which documentation is required. Schedule A species require full notes (preferably on a record form - available from the County Recorder), Schedule B species brief notes and for scarce sub-species we require notes as appropriate to confirm the identification of the race concerned.

1. Schedule A

All species and sub-species considered by the BBRC.

Any species or sub-species removed from the BBRC list after publication of these notes.

Any species or sub-species not previously recorded in Northumberland.

Any record for which the CRC have requested full notes.

The following: American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Ferruginous Duck, Surf Scoter, White-billed Diver, Cory's Shearwater, Great Shearwater, Balearic Shearwater, Wilson's Petrel, Night Heron, Cattle Egret, Great White Egret, Purple Heron, White Stork, Glossy Ibis, Honey-buzzard, Black Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Rough-legged Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Spotted Crane, Corncrake, Crane, Stone Curlew, American Golden Plover, Kentish Plover, Temminck's Stint, White-rumped Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Grey Phalarope, White-winged Black Tern, Sabine's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Yellow-legged Gull (all races), Caspian Gull, Alpine Swift, Bee-eater, Red-footed Falcon, Hobby, Woodchat Shrike, Chough, Crested Tit, Woodlark, Short-toed Lark, Red-rumped Swallow, Cetti's Warbler, Greenish Warbler, Radde's Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Aquatic Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Rose-coloured Starling, Nightingale, Richard's Pipit, Red-throated Pipit, Water Pipit, Parrot Crossbill, Serin, Ortolan Bunting and Little Bunting.

2. Schedule B

Bean Goose (both races), Snow Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Green-winged Teal, Leach's Petrel, Goshawk (coastal records only), Dotterel, Long-tailed Skua (juvenile birds only), Black Guillemot (away from Farne Islands and Holy Island), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Bluethroat (autumn only), Icterine Warbler, Pallas's Warbler (Inland or Spring birds only), Yellow-browed Warbler (Inland or Spring birds only), Red-breasted Flycatcher, Golden Oriole, Common Rosefinch and Corn Bunting.

3. Sub-species

Lesser Black-backed Gull - sub-species other than *L. f. graellsii*, Herring Gull - sub-species other than *L. a. argentatus* & *L. a. argentatus*, Kumlien's Gull - *L. g. kumlieni*, 'Northern' Great Spotted Woodpecker - *D. m. major*, Yellow Wagtail - Sub-species other than *M. f. flava* & *M. f. flavissima*, White Wagtail - *M. a. alba* (Autumn only), 'Black-bellied' Dipper - *C. c. cinclus*, 'White-spotted' Bluethroat - *L. s. cyanecula*, Lesser Whitethroat - Sub-species other than *S. c. curruca*, Chiffchaff - Sub-species other than *P. c. collybita*, Northern Willow Warbler - *P. t. acredula*, 'Northern' Treecreeper - *C. f. familiaris*, Jackdaw - Sub-species other than *C. m. spermologus* and 'Northern' Bullfinch - *P. p. pyrrhula*.

Note: The County Recorder can ask for documentation of any record at any time for species not listed above.

Yellow-browed Warbler - A record year in the county

By Andy Mould



Yellow-browed Warbler on Holy Island - Andy Mould

Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* breed commonly across Asia from the Urals in the west to Kamchatka and eastern Siberia. The species winters from Nepal in the north to tropical south-east Asia and can cover up to 5,000km on its annual migration. Much has been written and speculated about the reasons for the ever-increasing numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers that reach western Europe, anytime from mid-September to mid-November. In Britain too, we have witnessed a staggering rise in the number of Yellow-browed Warblers reaching our shores. The species shows a clear peak arrival time in the middle fortnight of October.

In the 1970s the average number occurring annually in Britain was 76, but in the 1980s and 1990s it rose four-fold to 320. 1988 was a record year with 739 recorded and, in 2005, October alone produced at least 1,250 of an autumn total of 1,450 birds. All of these totals were eclipsed in 2013, when a record 2,191 were logged; a near 30-fold increase since the 1970s. It has even been suggested that a degree of 'reporting fatigue' may be setting in, with many recording areas where the species has become commonplace, now providing only estimated monthly or seasonal totals; it is thought some may err on the side of caution (White and Kehoe, 2016). But where have these birds come from, how do they get here and where do they go next? Many theories have been proposed for the exponential occurrence rate of Yellow-browed Warbler, including reverse migration, genetic mutation, range expansion, natural dispersal and a subtle shift in wintering range. Early theories involved meteorological conditions, such as strong easterly winds coinciding with high pressure areas above central Siberia, which forced birds to drift west of their

normal range (Williamson, 1959; Baker, 1977; Howey and Bell, 1985; Baker and Catley, 1987; Elkins, 1988). There is a large body of evidence that contradicts such theories; for example, unusual weather during migration simply wouldn't explain the annual arrivals and the similarity in timing, year-on-year, of such movements (e.g. Alerstam, 1990; Van Impe and Derasse, 1994; Thorup, 1998; Elkins, 2002).

Some alternative explanations assume that birds arriving in Europe are misorientated, defective individuals. For example, the "reverse migration" theory, proposes that the birds have a defect in their sense of orientation, perhaps due to reversed polarity, making them fly in the opposite direction to that required to reach the wintering areas in south-eastern Asia (Rabøl, 1969 and 1976; Thorup, 1998 and 2004). However, these theories are not supported by the substantial numbers of birds involved (Phillips, 2000), nor by the continued and very strong temporal increase in records, given that the reversed flight directions would imply the death of the birds involved in the Atlantic (Cottridge and Vinicombe, 1996) and therefore the extinction of their defective trait. It has also been suggested that the geographic pattern of occurrence in Europe that promoted the reverse migration theory, i.e. with most records in the northwest of the continent and the British Isles, could simply be an artefact reflecting the uneven distribution of potential observers (Phillips, 2000). Genetic variation in the innate migration heading would happen at random, so that the individuals involved would fly in every possible direction, but only those moving to where they can temporarily survive and be discovered by birdwatchers would be recorded (Alerstam, 1990). However, this idea again fails to explain why records have increased so much during recent years.

Within the British Isles, the first autumn records usually come from the Shetlands, where September records predominate, while in October most are from England where they appear earlier in the south-east than in the south-west (Sharrock, 1972; Dymond *et al.*, 1989; Howey and Bell, 1985; Baker and Catley, 1987; Millington, 1994; Fraser and Rogers; White and Kehoe, 2016). All this favours the idea of a slow progressive southward movement and contradicts the hypothesis of misorientated vagrants, which would be expected to appear at more or less the same time at all those European coasts located at similar distances from the Siberian breeding areas.

De Juana (2008) examined the theory of southward movement by mapping coverage of the Iberian Peninsula and associated islands by ringers and birdwatchers and found that the geographical distribution of Yellow-browed Warbler records, with a strong concentration on eastern and southern coasts, did not support the hypothesis that the birds reaching Scandinavia and Britain keep heading west. He found that occurrence patterns in England, France, eastern and southern Iberia, and the Canary Islands, as well as the fact that their arrivals in these areas are far from synchronous, make it apparent that most birds must at some point change their flight direction to head south. In general, they first arrive in Scandinavia from late August onwards, where Ullman (1989) has pointed out that the Swedish records of Yellow-browed Warblers are a week earlier on average in the north than in the south of the country. Subsequent peaks are witnessed on Heligoland and along the North Sea coast. We believe that these birds continue on their south-westerly journey, as evidenced by slightly later average arrival dates in Britain and Ireland, and as supported by ringing recoveries (for example, an adult female ringed in Norway on 21st September 1990 and recovered 786km WSW on Fair Isle five days later and a first-year ringed in The Netherlands on 3rd October 2007 and found freshly dead 851km WSW in Truro, Cornwall on 17th April 2008; BTO, 2013).

What we don't (yet) know is the final destination of the majority of Yellow-browed Warblers

that arrive in north-west Europe. Evidence of final destination comes with, for example, a bird ringed on Heligoland in autumn 2013 and subsequently photographed 3,479km SW in Lanzarote in January 2014. Another individual wintered in Lanzarote from 18th January to 10th March 1997 (Martín and Lorenzo, 2001; de Juana *et al.*, 2002) and, in total, there are 22 accepted records for the Canary Islands, together with an unprecedented 30-40 that overwintered in 2013-14 (de Juana and Garcia, 2015). Birds were also recorded in the Azores in 2001 and 2014 (de Juana, 2008; birdingazores.com). Others have recently been recorded wintering in Spain and Portugal and there are five accepted records for Morocco, three for Algeria and single records for Egypt, Libya and Senegal (de Juana 2008; de Juana and Garcia, 2015). Maybe the birds we are seeing in Britain and Europe are using a new migration route, perhaps with an alternative winter range somewhere in Africa slowly evolving? (e.g. Gilroy and Lees, 2003).

There are a small number of intriguing spring records from the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, including a few from Sicily (e.g. one at Pantelleria, 9th April 1931; Iapichino and Massa, 1989), Malta (20th February and March 1913, Sultana and Gauci, 1982) and Greece (16th April 1976 and 19th May 1992; Handrinos and Akriotis, 1997) which could suggest a return to Siberian breeding grounds by a more easterly route. However, in total, the above wintering and spring records account for just a tiny fraction of the birds we might expect to see from an overwintering population in southern Europe and Africa (de Juana, 2008).

This prompted de Juana to ponder whether, after first visiting northern Europe, birds may fly later in the autumn to the already known wintering grounds in Asia (de Juana, 2008; de Juana and Garcia, 2015). Autumn movements in which birds fly initially in one direction and then, after a given date, migrate in an almost opposite direction are known for other species, for example Adelheid Studer-Thiersch showed that many juvenile Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* fledged in Switzerland migrate up to 500km to the northwest into Germany, the Low Countries and northern France, before moving south in autumn to winter in northwest Africa or Spain (Studer-Thiersch, 1969). This kind of migration, termed *Zwischenzug* by German authors and 'exploratory migration' by Baker (1978), also seems to occur, albeit on a smaller geographical scale than would be required with Yellow-browed Warbler, in Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*, Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* and Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, that regularly visit the British Isles during the autumn, but whose nearest breeding areas lie in Central Europe (Berthold, 1993; Wernham *et al.*, 2002). Their occurrences almost exclusively involve juvenile birds, in large numbers, and with regular arrival and departure dates. Like Yellow-browed (and Pallas's *Phylloscopus proregulus*) Warblers, these species have similar occurrence patterns in Scandinavia, Britain and France (Dymond *et al.*, 1989; Dubois *et al.*, 2000), while in Spain there are very few records, and most of them relate to the eastern seaboard of the Iberian Peninsula and to the Balearic islands (de Juana, 2006).

Perhaps the most likely scenario is a combination of some of the above theories. It is tempting to speculate that the sheer number of birds involved must point towards a purposeful and intended attempt at establishing a new winter range, perhaps in response to (unknown) issues in the species normal migration and wintering areas. Although relatively few birds are recorded in western Scotland, Ireland and the coasts of south-western Europe, it seems likely that a high number of birds do indeed perish in the North Atlantic. Records from the Canary Islands and Azores do support a more south-westerly route taken by at least some of the migrating population. Those birds that opt for a southerly direction, after reaching Britain and western Europe, may encounter many of the same issues involving land use and climatic changes in the Sahel that have decimated

populations of many of our commoner songbird migrants. It seems feasible that both scenarios could result in the small number of wintering birds, and even smaller number of returning spring migrants, that we are currently aware of.

A local perspective

Whatever the factors responsible for the arrival of these Siberian gems, Northumberland has a long association with the species - one shot by Hancock at Hartley in September 1838, and in the Great North Museum: Hancock collection, was for 30 years the only British record (Bolam, 1912). Over 80 years elapsed before W. G. Watson collected four on Holy Island in the autumns of 1922 and 1923 (Galloway and Meek, 1978-1983). It was not recorded again until September 1944 when two were on Holy Island and 13 years then passed until a single was at Fenwick in December 1957 (Galloway and Meek, 1978-1983). Northumberland has also played host to several recent record breaking years, culminating in a new high of 93 birds recorded in 2015. The accompanying table shows estimated annual totals recorded in the County from 1962–2015. Figures are best estimates because of the possibility of duplication at certain sites, but what is clear is the upward trend from the 1970s and the recent surge in records from the mid-2000s. In fact, the pattern shown in the table is remarkably similar to that recorded in the table for Britain over the same period (e.g. White and Kehoe, 2016). In the case of Northumberland, the years 1975, 1993, 2006 and 2011 are relatively good years, with 1997 a relatively poor year, compared to the national picture.

The increase is equally stark when viewed per decade (see table below). Numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers have at least doubled in each decade/part decade, with the exception of the 1990s when numbers levelled.

Average number of Yellow-browed Warblers in Northumberland per year by decade:

	1962-69*	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-09	2010-15**
No. recorded	3	6	15	15	30	60

* Eight year period

** Six year period

So, what does the future hold? It seems highly likely that the 100-per year barrier will soon be broken. And that would have seemed inconceivable as recently as 1983, when just two Yellow-browed Warblers were recorded in the county! The earliest arrival date is gradually moving forward too, with birds now recorded from 9th September (Farne Islands in 2015) onwards. There is an increasing tendency for birds to remain into late November, although there is only one December record (a single at Fenwick from 14th-15th December 1957). However, two interesting records in April 2008 (one at Swallow Pond on 1st and another on Brownsman, Farne Islands on 27th) prompted speculation over whether they might have wintered locally. Certainly the species is recorded wintering in southern Britain with increasingly regularity, no doubt in response to milder climatic conditions, and it seems probable that we will witness further winter records.

It is likely that the majority of readers, at least those who spend some time on the coast in the autumn, will have found their own Yellow-browed Warbler. If not, finding one may depend upon a trained ear locating their strident call in suitable habitat, or a keen eye

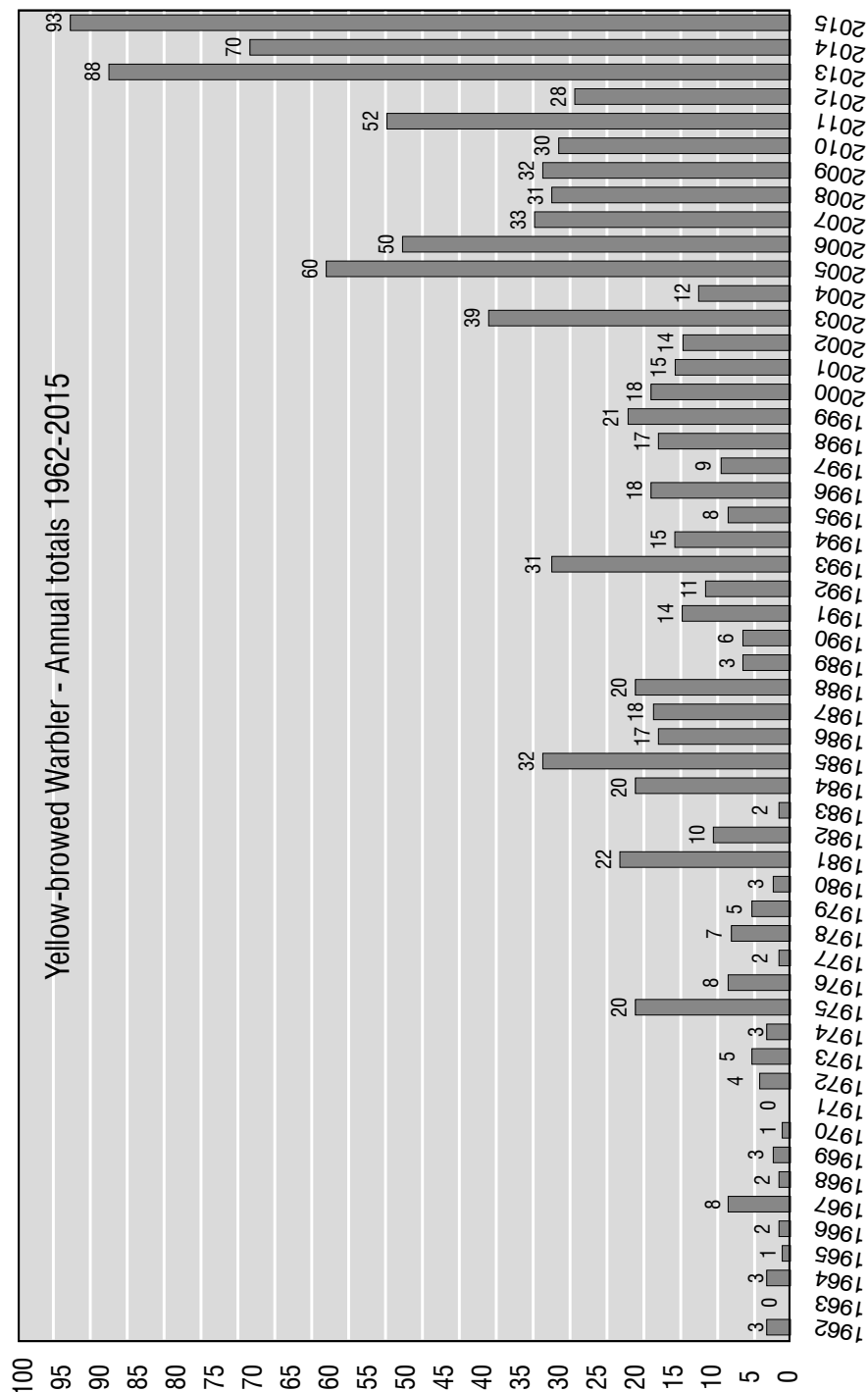
detecting their dashing movements as they actively forage in a treetop canopy. Any area of coastal cover, no matter how small, may conceal a newly arrived Yellow-browed Warbler but the table below gives an indication of the most likely localities to head for, based upon county records this century (again, figures are best estimates).

Number of Yellow-browed Warblers per locality, 2000-2015:

Position	Site	No. of Yellow-browed Warblers
1.	Holy Island	165
2.	Farne Islands	118
3.	St Mary's and Whitley Cemetery	65
4.	Bamburgh to Budle Point	51
5.	Newbiggin and Woodhorn	43
6.	Newton	38
7.	Hauxley	37
8.	Tynemouth and Prior's Park	27
9.	Craster	20
10.	Marden Quarry and Estate	11
=11.	Blyth	10
=11.	Briardene	10
=11.	Druridge	10
14.	Howick	8
15.	Cresswell Pond	7
16.	Berwick	6
=17.	Alnmouth	4
=17.	Longhoughton	4
=19.	Boulmer	3
=19.	Cambois	3
=19.	Scremerston	3
=22.	Budle Bay	2
=22.	Cullercoats	2
=22.	Holywell Pond and Dene	2
=22.	Seahouses	2
=26.	Beadnell, Castle Island, East Chevington, Embleton, Goswick, Hexham, Killingworth, Longbenton, Lynemouth, Northumberland Park, QEII CP, Seaton Sluice, Swallow Pond, Wansbeck Estuary.	1

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mike Carr and Mike Hodgson for comments on a partial earlier draft of this article and Mike Hodgson for use of his graph.



References

- Alerstam, T. 1990.** *Bird Migration*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- Baker, J. K. and Catley, G. P. 1987.** Yellow-browed Warblers in Britain and Ireland, 1968-85. *British Birds*, 80: 93-109.
- Baker, K. 1977.** Westward vagrancy of Siberian passerines in autumn 1975. *Bird Study*, 24: 233-242.
- Baker, R. R. 1978. The evolutionary ecology of animal migration. Hodder & Stoughton. London.
- Berthold, P. 1993.** Bird migration: a general survey. Oxford University Press. Oxford.
- birdingazores.com
- Bolam, G. 1912.** The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders. H. H. Blair. Alnwick
- BTO, 2013.** BTO Bird Ringing - 'Demog Blog'.
- Cottridge, D. and Vinicombe, K. 1996. Rare birds in Britain and Ireland - a photographic record. Harper Collins. London.
- De Juana, E. et al. 2002.** E. Y el Comité de Rarezas de la Sociedad Española de Ornitología 2002. Observaciones de aves raras en España, año 2000. *Ardeola*, 49: 141-171.
- De Juana, E. 2006.** Aves raras de España. Un catálogo de las especies de presentación ocasional. Lynx. Barcelona.
- De Juana, E. 2008.** Where do Pallas's and yellow-browed warblers (*Phylloscopus proregulus*, Ph. inornatus) go after visiting northwest Europe in autumn? An Iberian perspective, *Ardeola* 55(2), 2008, 179-192.
- De Juana, E. and Garcia, E. 2015.** The Birds of the Iberian Peninsula. Christopher Helm. London.
- Dubois, P. J., Le Marechal, P., Olioso, G. and Yesou, P. 2000.** Inventaire des oiseaux de France. Avifaune de la France métropolitaine. Nathan. Paris.
- Dymond, J. N., Fraser, P. A. and Gantlett, S. J. M. 1989.** Rare birds in Britain and Ireland. T & AD Poyser. Calton.
- Elkins, N. 1988.** Weather and Bird Behaviour. Poyser. Calton.
- Elkins, N. 2002.** Weather and bird movements. In, Werham, C. V., Toms, M. P., Marchant, J. H., Clark, J. A., Siriwardena, G. M. and Baillie, S. R. (Eds.). 2002: The Migration Atlas: movements of the birds of Britain and Ireland, pp. 38-43. T. & A.D. Poyser. London.
- Fraser, P. A. and Rogers, M. J. 2006.** Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2003. Part 2: Short-toed Lark to Little Bunting. *British Birds*, 99: 129-147.
- Galloway, B. and Meek, E. R. 1978-1983.** Northumberland's Birds. Trans. Nat. Hist. Soc. Northumbria 44 (1-3): 1-195.
- Gilroy, J. J. and Lees, A. C. 2003.** Vagrancy theories: are autumn vagrants really reverse migrants? *British Birds*, 96: 427-438.
- Handrinos, G. and Akriotis, T. 1997.** The Birds of Greece. Christopher Helm. London.
- Howey, D. and Bell, M. 1985.** Pallas's Warbler

- and other migrants in Britain and Ireland in October 1982. *British Birds*, 78: 381-392.
- Lapichino, C. and Massa, B. 1989.** The birds of Sicily. BOU Checklist N° 11. British Ornithologists' Union. Tring (Reino Unido).
- Martín, A. and Lorenzo, J. A. 2001.** Aves del Archipiélago Canario. Francisco Lemus, Editor. La Laguna.
- Millington, R. 1994.** Pallas's Warbler in autumn 1994. *Birding World*, 7: 438-439.
- Phillips, J. 2000.** Autumn vagrancy: "reverse migration" and migratory orientation. *Ringing & Migration*, 20: 35-38.
- Rabel, J. 1969.** Reversed migration as the cause of westward vagrancy by four *Phylloscopus* warblers. *British Birds*, 62: 89-92.
- Rabel, J. 1976.** The orientation of Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* in Europe. *Dansk orn. Foren. Tidsskr.*, 70: 5-16.
- Sharrock, J. T. R. 1972.** Scarce migrants in Britain and Ireland during 1958-67. Part 8. Yellow-browed Warbler and Richard's Pipit. *British Birds*, 65: 381-392.
- Studer-Thiersch, A. 1969.** Das Zugverhalten schweizerischer Stare *Sturnus vulgaris* nach Ringfunden. *Ornithologische Beobachter*, 66: 105-144.
- Sultana, J. and Gauci, C. 1982.** A new guide to the birds of Malta. The Ornithological Society. Valletta. Malta.
- Thorup, K. 1998.** Vagrancy of Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* and Pallas's Warbler Ph. *proregulus* in north-west Europe: misorientation on great circles? *Ringing & Migration*, 19: 7-12.
- Thorup, K. 2004.** Reverse migration as a cause of vagrancy. *Bird Study*, 51: 228-238.
- Ullman, M. 1989.** Varför är nordliga taigasångare *Phylloscopus inornatus* och kungsfågelsångare Ph. *proregulus* tidigare än sydliga? [Why are northern Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* and Pallas's Warblers Ph. *proregulus* earlier than southern?]. *Vår Fågelvärld*, 48: 467-475.
- Van Impe, J. and Derasse, S. 1994.** De recente toename van Bladkoninkje *Phylloscopus inornatus* en Pallas' Boszanger P. *proregulus* in Europa: zijn dwaalgasten werkelijk dwalende vogels? [The recent increase of Yellow-browed Warbler and Pallas's Warbler in Europe: are vagrants really wandering birds?]. *Oriolus*, 60: 3-17.
- Wernham, C. V., Toms, M. P., Marchant, J. H., Clark, J. A., Siriwardena, G. M. and Baillie, S. R. (Eds.). 2002.** The migration atlas: movements of the birds of Britain and Ireland. T&A.D Poyser. London.
- White, S. and Kehoe, C. 2016.** Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2013, *British Birds*, Vol. 109, 69 - 134.
- Williamson, K. 1959.** The September drift movements of 1956 and 1958. *British Birds*, 52: 334-377.

Birdwatching Sites XIX

Alnmouth - An insider's view

By Tom and Muriel Cadwallender

OS Landranger: 1:50000 SHEET 81

Atlas tetrad: NU21 K

Looking at pre-Second World War Natural History Society of Northumberland and Durham (NHSND) bird reports you can see that birds at Alnmouth were regularly recorded, albeit by what appears to have been one observer, Harry Tully (who was the then Chairman of the ornithological section of NHSND). Even today, Alnmouth is still not over-run by birdwatchers.

However, going back to ancient times, well at least to 30th August 1908, Alnmouth was to make a significant contribution to Northumbrian ornithology when a flock of five Glossy Ibis were 'stoned' by a group of local youths as they rested on the beach. Four of those birds were 'collected', the fate of the fifth is not known. Another important ornithological milestone was made at Alnmouth later in the 20th Century, when a female or immature Snowy Owl was found on 16th May 1942. So, historically, Alnmouth did, occasionally, come up with the goods.

Every birdwatcher that comes to Alnmouth agrees that there is such a diversity of habitats, only missing a large body of standing freshwater; indeed so much habitat that rare or scarce birds must turn up. Therein lies the frustration. Can there really be too much 'interesting' habitat? Really, is there too much cover? It often feels like that.

Occasionally, over the years, we've witnessed 'falls'. One in particular sticks in the mind. In late autumn, after a 'classic scenario' of easterly wind combined with a little rain, thousands of thrushes were grounded. The 'Horse field' near the 'Trig. Point' was carpeted by a mass of Blackbirds, Fieldfares and Mistle Thrushes, with the odd Ring Ouzel mixed in; we counted eight Ouzels but there could have been more. Exciting experiences like that are, sadly, not too common.

In modern times, rare birds have turned up at Alnmouth but they have always been difficult to find. However recent highlights have included two Marsh Sandpipers and a Spotted Sandpiper at Foxton, Citrine Wagtail on the golf course found by Alan Tilmouth, two brief Alpine Swifts found by Paul Massey, a Great White Egret near the Duchess Bridge, a Night-heron discovered by a lady walking her dog along the River Aln and a Green-winged Teal found by Cain Scrimgeour in January 2016.

Every year a selection of scarcities are also found from Wryneck, Shore Lark and Snow Bunting to Yellow-browed Warbler and Spotted Redshank. Ring Ouzel and Common Sandpiper have been known to winter. So much potential!

The 'bread and butter' or day-to-day birding in the area is always rewarding (but you shouldn't set your target too high), whatever time of year. In winter, there can be flocks of over 300 Curlew and 200 Redshank, and flights of Pink-feet overhead, but it's Wigeon and Teal that dominate, with peaks of over 500 of both species. Flocks of wintering Twite, Yellowhammer, Tree Sparrow and Reed Bunting are regular on farmland. However, spring and autumn have passage waders, with gatherings of Greenshank and Common Sandpiper

at Foxton, when numbers often reach eight to ten. A tern roost, on the south beach, of either passage or RSPB Coquet Island breeding birds, can feature Little or Roseate, plus all three of the other terns.

Small birds are difficult to find during passage but Bracken Hill, which over-looks the golf course, and the woodland that encircles the village pond, has Blackcap, Sedge Warbler and Whitethroat during the breeding season.

One thing is for sure, even if you don't find anything exciting, all the while you are out birding here, no matter what the weather, you will always have the backdrop of fantastic landscape and seascape.



Alnmouth Estuary - looking north (Tom Cadwallender).

Key locations

The river mouth and shore

The name Alnmouth obviously refers to the mouth of the River Aln as it flows into Alnmouth Bay. The sandy shore of the south side of the river provides a roosting and feeding site throughout the year, at mid-tide, which is enjoyed by a range of species. During spring, summer and early autumn all five species of UK breeding terns regularly 'loaf out', only disturbed when walkers get too close. In winter, a significant number of waders gather there, including Grey Plover, Sanderling and Turnstones. Birling Carrs, the only rocky outcrop south of the River Aln mouth, attracts small numbers of Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone.

Saltmarsh

On the south side of the estuary there is a saltmarsh, which was the 'old' course

of the River Aln until a great winter storm re-routed the river in December 1806. This occasionally attracts migrants such as Little Ringed Plover, Wheatear, Snow Bunting and Shore Lark. Broods of Eider are seen here during the breeding season. It is thought that these ducklings, even though they may be tiny, were bred on Coquet Island as no evidence of successful nesting has been found in the area.



Saltmarsh – south side of Estuary (Tom Cadwallender)

Southern dunes

Running south from Church Hill, which can be an excellent vantage point for observing 'vizmig', there is a floristically-rich dune system; this area is managed by the National Trust and known as Buston Links. A small reedbed straddles the approach track and here Sedge Warbler and, recently discovered, Reed Warbler breed. At the southern end of the dunes there is a semi-permanent dune-slack that regularly attracts Garganey in early spring. In winter, the sympathetically managed nearby farmland can hold flocks of wintering finches, buntings and sparrows.

Riverside

In 2006, an ambitious project, led by Environment Agency and Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership, to remove the flood defences on the west side of the Aln Estuary was completed. This project allowed tidal water to flood onto adjacent farmland once more to create extra mud and saltmarsh. Several scrapes were made at this time; these, in combination with the 'rig and furrow' (undulations left by ancient ploughing) that also fill with tidal water, provide welcome muddy wet areas that can be attractive to waders and wildfowl. This area is best viewed from the cycle track/Northumberland Coast Path that runs south from opposite the Cricket Ground.

Estuarine mud

The area of tidal estuarine mud attracts waders during passage and winter, occasionally hundreds of Curlew, Lapwing, Redshank and Oystercatcher gather, particularly at high-tide and their numbers can be supplemented by Dunlin and Ringed Plover. In recent years, a small flock of Black-tailed Godwit has summered. A rising tide is always best for viewing waders and the aforementioned cycle track/Northumberland Coast Path, on the west shore, is an excellent viewing location.

Fields next to Alnmouth and Lesbury Cricket Ground

The flooded 'rig and furrow', which has become more attractive with the removal of the flood defences, close to the river near Alnmouth and Lesbury Cricket Ground, is worth checking in winter and spring for waders. Occasionally, Black-tailed Godwit and Little Ringed Plover are seen but usually by summer the grass is too long to find or see anything.

Sewage works

Also on the west of the river, along from the Cricket Ground, a sewage treatment plant provides a little 'woodland oasis' in the flat flood plain. Access inside the sewage works is restricted, but screening trees can be viewed reasonably well from the track outside.

Foxton

As the River Aln meanders below Foxton (known as Foxton Bend), the slow moving river exposes small muddy shores from low-tide until mid-tide; these, combined with saltmarsh and recently created scrapes in the fields, are favoured areas for passage waders such as Greenshank and Common and Green Sandpiper. In winter, Wigeon, Teal and Curlew are all found here, and on the river small numbers of Goosander, Red-breasted Merganser and Goldeneye can be seen. This area is best viewed from the Alnmouth-Boulmer road. Birds can be a little distant but at least disturbance is kept to a minimum.

East Shore

'Lover's Walk', a path which follows the course of the east bank of the river south from Duchess Bridge towards Alnmouth, passes a small scrubby area, known as 'Pan Leazes', is worth checking for migrants at the appropriate times. Then, adjoining this, is a small section of saltmarsh, which in the past was a favoured area of Jack Snipe. The path is also a good vantage point for views of the mud on the western shore of the estuary, particularly in the mornings.

Alnmouth Village, Pond and Bracken Hill

There are many tall trees within the village, restrictively, almost all in private gardens. However, on the east of the settlement, sandwiched between the edges of the village and the golf course there is a tree and scrub lined pond. Some of the trees are fairly mature and the scrub is quite thick in places. These provide what looks like an inviting habitat for any rare migrant or breeding bird. The pond itself doesn't usually have muddy shore, so is not so attractive to waders, though snipe can sometimes be seen. Ducks do drop in and Little Grebe breed.

Close by the pond is Bracken Hill with plenty of tree and scrub cover; this area looks like it could have been a 'raised beach', and leads to even more tree cover at Foxton. A range of footpaths cross Bracken Hill and one leads through more trees and scrubby cover across the 'Trig Point' fields onto the Foxton road. Common migrant passerines are regularly recorded through here and a number of them breed.

WARNING. Whenever you are in the vicinity of the golf course please beware of flying golf balls.

Seawatching

The sea off Alnmouth Bay generally is not too good for passage seabirds, as Coquet Island seems to push out north flying birds. Also, the promontory of Seaton Point at Boulmer appears to have the same effect on southern flyers. Just occasionally, during passage, the 'odd' skua or Little Auk will manage to find its way into the bay; indeed, two

Great Shearwaters were seen off Birling Carrs in 1983.

During winter, offshore, there is a regular small flock of Common Scoter, with the occasional Velvet mixed in, and there was a record of a single Surf Scoter in 1989. All three diver species are recorded, although Red-throated is by far and away the most common with, sometimes, 30-40 birds seen within the whole bay. Only small numbers of Great Crested and Red-necked Grebes are seen, in contrast with historical records. In 2014, a Grey Phalarope caused great excitement when it dropped briefly into a small flock of Common Scoter before heading north.

In summer, Alnmouth Bay can be alive with seabirds, with thousands of Puffin, scores of Guillemot and Razorbill, thousands of terns and Fulmar from Coquet Island and beyond. Sometimes the bay can be filled with frenzies of diving Gannet from Bass Rock or lines of Kittiwakes heading north. Usually, there can be plenty to see.

Seawatching vantage points are at a premium, but over the years the 'big dune' on Buston Links has become a favoured spot as it provides some height and much of the bay can be seen from here. Other places may be more convenient, such as the car park adjacent to the golf course, where divers and grebes can sometimes be seen in the surf close to shore, but generally visibility is limited as birds can be a long way offshore.

Access

There are regular train and bus services to the Alnmouth area. So good transport links, combined with a fine network of paths, tracks and roads, make it relatively easy to explore. Recently, access was made easier by the installation of the Cycle track/Northumberland Coast Path on the west of the estuary. The cycle track also allows a safe walking and cycling route south to Buston Links.

Alnmouth became 'our patch' when we moved into the area in 1989. Although a small team of us had a nest box line in the late 1970s-early 1980s 'up the hill' at Bilton. Since moving here we've managed to refine the 'patch' to include most, if not all, of what we would term as the 'prime habitat', which can be covered with several walking loops or 'drop ins'. Currently our 'patch list' stands at 204 species; the 204th being four Avocets on the estuary on 16th September 2016.

Whenever we return from travels we cannot believe our luck, we still get a thrill - we live here, this is our patch!

And what a 'patch'.

References

Galloway, B. & Meek E, R. *Northumberland's Birds*, Natural History Society of Northumbria Transactions Vol 44 1978-1983.

Kerr, I. *Northumbrian Birds* NTBC 2001.

Temperley, G. W. Various Ornithological Reports of Natural History Society for Northumberland and Durham Transactions Natural History Society of Northumberland and Durham 1936 - 1946.

Birdwatching Sites XX Backworth Pond & Area

By Chris Knox



The main pond looking North East (Chris Knox)

OS Landranger: 1:50000 SHEET 75

Atlas tetrad: NZ37 B

For local patch purposes 'Backworth' fits nicely into the NZ37 B tetrad, an area bounded by Shiremoor to the south, Earsdon to the east, Holywell to the north and the village of Backworth to the west and is located 2.5km north west of Whitley Bay and 17km north east of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Backworth has a mosaic of habitats within a couple of miles of the coast and, although coverage by birders is often overshadowed by nearby sites like Holywell Pond (NZ320753) and St Mary's Island (NZ353755), watching by a handful of regulars continues to turn up good birds. Mining dominated Backworth until the closure of Eccles Colliery in 1980 which ended 165 years of this industry and until a very recent regeneration scheme the area was essentially an industrial wasteland centred on the overspill pond (formerly referred to in Birds in Northumbria as Fenwick Pond) which still forms the centre of the patch today.

The area has an established birding history in the county, with an impressive list of scarce and rare birds observed, including 'Tundra Bean Goose', Green-winged Teal, Ferruginous Duck, Great White Egret, Red-footed Falcon, Common Crane, Stone Curlew, several Pectoral Sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs, Red-necked Phalarope, several Hoopoes, a Bee-eater, a handful each of Great Grey and Red-backed Shrikes, a spring Lesser Grey Shrike and a singing Common Rosefinch.

Those of us who remember the pond during the 1980s and 90s could argue that it has had its heyday as bulrush has increased and mud margins, beloved of passage waders, have slowly declined. The ending of landfill at nearby Seghill Tip has massively reduced the number of loafing and bathing gulls, and the area is now increasingly under threat to development. A recent attempt to tamper with the water levels and the ponds lifeline, the Brierdene, was only thwarted by the action of local birders.

Nevertheless, regular watching has shown that passage waders will and do use the pond, albeit in smaller numbers than in the past and, because of the area's mining heritage, subsistence 'flash ponds' (and waders) appear anywhere after rain. One of these is known as Backworth Flash (NZ306727), just off the Backworth-Earsdon Road which, in recent years, has produced some good birds. There is, however, more to Backworth than passage waders, illustrated by seasonal totals during fieldwork for the recent 2007-11 BTO Atlas, with 89 species recorded for the breeding season and 76 during the winter.

The following circuit makes a pleasant hour or two's birding in any season and could produce a list of 40-50 species. The walk could also be fitted into a longer day to include Holywell Pond and St Mary's Island.

1. Start by parking at the West Holywell kennels at the eastern side of Backworth Village (NZ306724). From here, walk through the complex via the public footpath, past the yapping dogs, to come to a bridge overlooking the western end of the pond at NZ309724. The stream entering the pond here is the Brierdene Burn, which eventually enters the sea south of St Mary's Island and the bridge is a good spot for Kingfisher. Viewing from here should also allow views of any wildfowl or waders present and the horse field adjacent to the pond can be good for pipits, wagtails and larks. It is a regular spot for Stock Dove and the adjacent hedgerow holds breeding Tree Sparrow.

The fields in the area still hold a regular flock of geese, which include regular records of White-fronted Goose; several Tundra Bean Geese have occurred and, in the winter of 2015-16, both Barnacle and Brent Geese were observed. Whooper Swan still occurs in smaller numbers, but gone are the days of the 70s/80s when Bewick's Swan was regular.



2. Walk along the southern edge of the pond overlooking the reedbed and rough fields to the north and listen for Reed Warbler in late spring. A pair of Water Rail usually breed,

although it is often easier to see and hear this species during the winter. In winter, the field edge here can also hold double-figure counts of both Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting, and Mealy Redpoll has been noted on several occasions. Hen Harrier has been observed coming into the reedbed to roost.

3. This path eventually meets the so called eastern waggonway at NZ311725. The small copse that grows over the Brierdene Burn is attractive to migrants and is the most reliable site for Willow Tit and Lesser Whitethroat, both of which probably breed in the area, and roosting Woodcock in winter. On meeting this raised path, turn left (north) for 75m or so to an opening that allows a view of the rough (often wet) fields to the north of the pond, which usually hold a pair of breeding Redshank and a walk in any season should produce Common Snipe and Jack Snipe, the former can reach double-figure counts in the winter. The field here is a traditional North Tyneside wintering site for Short-eared Owl.

The rough fields are a good place to look and listen for Grasshopper Warbler during the breeding season, Grey Partridge and Stonechat throughout the year and, in spring, the short turf here has produced passage Ring Ouzel.



4. Continue north on this track until it meets the main road at East Holywell (NZ311729), cross and view the derelict buildings, which are a reliable site for breeding Little Owls; although, as I write, this site is threatened with development.

The fields behind the old school building are a regular site for Red-legged Partridge, which are best observed in early spring. These fields are regularly flooded in winter and offer gull-watching and, if wet during passage periods, can be excellent for waders.

Fenwick Spoil heap has recently been capped and seeded with a combined mix of wildflowers and shrubs which, in future years, may well prove attractive to a good variety of species. Above all else, the mound allows elevated views of the area and is a good spot for visible migration during spring and autumn mornings; both Common Crane and Rough-legged Buzzard have been observed flying over the area from here.

5. Retrace your steps and continue back south along the track until another small reedbed comes into view at NZ311724. At the crossroads, follow the raised Waggonway west,

checking the fields either side for pipits and Wheatears in spring, and thrushes, Golden Plover and Lapwing in winter. From here, one can get a panoramic view of the whole area and it is worth a scan for raptors. Peregrine, Merlin and Buzzard are regular and Hobby, Marsh Harrier and Hen Harrier have all been recorded a handful of times. In winter, this is a good place to look in late afternoon for hunting Short-eared Owl and to witness the movement of thousands of corvids flying to their roost in Backworth Village, off to the west.

6. Continue along this embankment to yet another crossroads at NZ309721 and, by turning right/north, you will eventually come to a small bridge over the Brierdene Burn; look left and the marshy field is good for wintering Jack Snipe (NZ308723). Grasshopper Warbler breeds in this field and the surrounding copse holds common breeding birds and, in early May, is reliable for singing Garden Warbler, normally a scarce bird in this area. Continue for a farther 50m and you pass a bungalow on the right. Check the feeders as Willow Tit, Siskin and the occasional Brambling have been seen. Continue for a short while and you eventually return to your starting point.

7. Before leaving the area, check the enclosure to the north of the kennels and, opposite the scrapyard/garage, an area of grassland and copse known as Bottle Diggers among locals. This will offer an alternative view of the main pond and the flash pool, if present. The enclosure offers most common birds of the area, but is also an excellent site for Willow Tit and wintering owls.

The above circuit can also be easily accessed by public transport by taking the Metro towards the coast and alighting at Shiremoor and walking north into the area. Latest timetables can be obtained from Nexus.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Mike Hodgson for advice and encouragement to write this article.

Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club Development Fund Grants 2015

By Jo Bentley

The Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club's Development Fund was set up to support the development of the club, not including its day to day running. The fund is intended to promote education and ornithological studies. It is also intended to support conservation activities linked to ornithology and related aspects of natural history. The club's committee welcomes applications from members to support projects that they are involved with.

During 2015, the club supported a number of conservation projects, both local and farther afield.

We made a donation towards the Bird Life International Flyways project, supporting the protection of safe routes for migratory birds. Closer to home, we funded the installation of Swift boxes in the Morpeth area and we will be hoping to extend the project next year.

On the coast, we funded fencing for a project encouraging and protecting breeding colonies of birds. The fencing protects an area of foreshore at Chibburn Mouth, within the Northumberland Coast AONB, during the breeding season. A small grant was provided to a farm in the Hexham area to install a Barn Owl box following the observation of a pair of birds around the farm.

Work on the Northumbria Bird Atlas was completed and the Atlas launched at the club's April meeting. Supported by funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund the club contributed towards the production of the Atlas and the formal launch events. These well attended events celebrated the dedication of the County's birdwatchers in collecting the data and the work of the Atlas sub-committee in collating the final publication. The Atlas has been very favourably reviewed and has maintained and enhanced the County's reputation for quality publications.

Applications for grants should be addressed to the Honorary Secretary.

Secretary's Report 2015

By Andrew Brunt

The trustees of the charity forming the club committee during 2015 were Martin Davison (Chair), Jo Bentley (Treasurer), Tim Dean (Recorder), Steve Lowe (NWT/HLF Rep.), Trevor Blake (Sales), Steve Anderson (Field Trips), Steve Barratt (Bulletin Editor) and Andrew Brunt (Secretary). The committee functioned with a member short for the year and Martin Davison took on the work of planning and booking speakers for the Indoor Meetings. The membership of the club peaked at 220 during this period.

The programme of Indoor Meetings began in January with Tristan Reid, the 'Inked Naturalist', describing the conservation strategy for a genetically distinct population of Bald Ibis in Turkey, along with the Turkish Government's plans for their country's waterways. In February, the inside information on RSPB Saltholme was presented by Dave Braithwaite, RSPB Senior Reserve Manager, who was definitely 'in the know' since he was at the reserve from its inception. Research into migrant birds was the March subject of Phil Atkinson, Head of International Research at the BTO, and he described the use of geolocators in revealing the migration behaviour of birds like Nightingale, Cuckoo and Swift. The meeting in April was one part of our launch day for the Northumbrian Bird Atlas and Adrian Pitches gave us some exciting birds, scenery and some droll humour on his subject of Birding on the Roof of the World. In September, Tim Dean entertained us mightily with the Birds of North Peru, covering the huge range of habitat types to be found in that region. Illustrated with slides of his notebook pages, Stewart Sexton, in October, took us on a tour of his notebooks and sketches he has made over the last 30 years, involving a discussion of notebook versus digital media for recording observations. The identification pitfalls and crucial field marks of juvenile white-headed gulls in the North East, was one of the issues dealt with by Andrew Kinghorn in November, including a look at gulls yet to be recorded in the North East. A range of highly appealing birds, seen in highly unappealing surroundings, was a feature of a talk by Colin Bradshaw in December, when his account of a trip to China successfully targeting the Spoon-billed Sandpiper also tested his groups' digestive capabilities to the extreme.

A varied programme of Field Trips, coordinated by Steve Anderson, began with a trip to Ross Back Sands in January, continuing a long tradition, but a trip to Langholm was wet and snowy. Eight members went to Sidwood and Kielder in May with Martin Davison and, in June, a visit was made to the Long Nanny to view the tern colony. An October visit to Lindisfarne, led by Trevor Blake, had sightings of Barred and Yellow-browed Warblers and a group made the journey to Musselburgh in November and had both good visibility and sightings of sea duck and roosting waders.

A major part of committee business during 2015 has been taken up with the production, storage, distribution and sales of the Northumbrian Bird Atlas. Thanks have already been made elsewhere to the Atlas Committee and all others involved, but Steve Barratt displayed much initiative and energy and took on coordination of the distribution and promotion of the Atlas. Over 1,200 copies were sold during the year, 34 copies donated to local libraries, 6 copies to the British Library and other National Libraries, and 77 to local schools.

Progress with the production of the current BiN is always an agenda item and the work of a team of authors and the editorship of Mike Richardson ensured Birds in Northumbria 2014 was published to a very high standard. Mike resigned as editor after the 2014 edition and the committee thanks Mike for his excellent input into the production of the report. We also thank Andy Mould for his willingness in taking over the role of editor for the next report. The monthly bulletin continued to be produced regularly by a dedicated team of writers under the guidance of Steve Barratt, and Steve also recruited new writers to the cause, and has successfully developed a 'pool' of reserve writers. An essential part of both publications is the role of Data Manager, our warm thanks to Alan Tilmouth for his role in managing the monthly input of records in the past, and we are grateful to Tom Brewis for volunteering to take over this role.

The committee is always supported by the work of other club members, none more so than John Day, who over a period of 7 years has sorted and classified the records of the club's first 50 years of existence. This includes Mastercards for the earlier Atlas publications, papers from Records Committee meetings and a collection of occasional publications and breeding survey results. This was done to such a standard that the Great North Museum (Hancock) has taken on custody and care of the collection, and the club is very appreciative of the care and dedication shown by John on this task.

Several queries for survey data for use in development planning resulted in administration charges contributing to club income, thanks being due to Dick Myatt, the lynchpin of this process, who is managing the database for us.

The Development Fund has assisted with habitat management costs at St Mary's Wetland, additional funding for Swift nest boxes in the Morpeth area and a camera box was purchased for a primary school.

A lock change at SSWT went ahead and a few more members went through the induction process to gain access to Howdon Wetland, courtesy of Northumbrian Water.

Species on the County List not recorded in 2015

The following table contains details of the species currently on the county list which *do not appear in the Classified List* in this report. They are included here to make each *Birds in Northumbria* as complete a record of the county's birds as possible.

- Column A
- The year the species was LAST recorded.
- Column B
- TOTAL number of records in the extremely rare category.
- Column C
- The year the species was FIRST recorded.
- Column D
- The year the species LAST BRED.

		A Last	B Total	C First	D Bred
Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>	1978	2	1886	-
Snow Goose	<i>Anser caerulescens</i>	2012	-	1891	-
Red-breasted Goose	<i>Branta ruficollis</i>	1991	2	1818	-
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	2014	-	-	-
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	2014	-	1800s	-
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	2014	7	1948	-
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	2010	-	1977	-
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	2014	-	1800s	-
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	2012	2	1999	-
King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	1997	-	1861	-
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	1886	1	1886	-
Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	2002	1	2002	-
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	2013	-	1964	2008
White-billed Diver	<i>Gavia adamsii</i>	2010	-	1829	-
Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	1973	2	1965	-
Fea's/Zino's Petrel	<i>Pterodroma feae/madeira</i>	2014	-	1993	-
Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris borealis</i>	2014	-	1962	-
Macaronesian Shearwater	<i>Puffinus baroli</i>	1989	2	1986	-
Wilson's Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	2002	1	2002	-
Swinhoe's Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma monorhis</i>	1994	3	1989	-
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	2014	8	1810	-
Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	2013	-	-	-
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	2010	4	1874	-
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	2014	3	1986	-
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	2013	7	1963	-
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	2000	-	1766	-
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	1994	1	1992	-
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	2014	9	1829	-
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	2014	-	1866	-

		A Last	B Total	C First	D Bred
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	2011	-	-	1992
Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	1885	1	1885	-
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	2013	-	-	?
Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	2013	-	-	Historical
Little Crake	<i>Porzana parva</i>	1956	1	1956	-
Baillon's Crake	<i>Porzana pusilla</i>	1942	1	1942	-
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	2014	-	-	1992
Sandhill Crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>	2011	1	2011	-
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	1937	5	ca.1820	-
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>	1871	1	1871	-
Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	2010	-	1800s	-
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	1993	4	1954	-
American Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	2013	-	1982	-
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	2009	3	1991	-
Sociable Plover	<i>Vanellus gregarius</i>	1971	1	1971	-
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	2012	-	1918	-
Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	2014	-	-	Historical
Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	1879	1	1879	-
Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris falcinellus</i>	2014	5	1961	-
Stilt Sandpiper	<i>Calidris himantopus</i>	2014	2	2012	-
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	1995	1	1995	-
Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>	2012	6	1967	-
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<i>Calidris subruficollis</i>	2012	-	1968	-
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	2009	3	1992	-
Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	2008	7	1964	-
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	2013	3	2001	-
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	2011	1	2011	-
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	1999	4	1955	-
Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>	2008	-	1822	-
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	2014	3	1966	-
Cream-coloured Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	1870	2	1846	-
Great Auk (Extinct)	<i>Pinguinus impennis</i>	1767	-	-	-
Brunnich's Guillemot	<i>Uria lomvia</i>	1977	4	1883	-
Aleutian Tern	<i>Onychoprion aleuticus</i>	1976	1	1976	-
Sooty Tern	<i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i>	1988	2	1966	-
Bridled Tern	<i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>	2014	5	1988	-
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	2007	2	1880	-
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	1997	5	1938	-
White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	2013	-	ca.1879	-
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	1997	1	1984	1997 Hybrid
Ivory Gull	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>	2013	7	1800s	-

		A Last	B Total	C First	D Bred
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>	2014	-	1920s	-
Ross's Gull	<i>Rhodostethia rosea</i>	2008	-	1960	-
Laughing Gull	<i>Larus atricilla</i>	1999	4	1975	-
Franklin's Gull	<i>Larus pipixcan</i>	2005	1	2005	-
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	2006	-	1985	-
<i>Kumlien's Gull</i>	<i>L. g.kumliemi</i>	2007	3	1993	-
Pallas's Sandprouse	<i>Syrrhaptes paradoxus</i>	1969	-	1863	-
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	1870	1	1870	-
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	1995	1	1995	-
Snowy Owl	<i>Bubo scandiacus</i>	1973	6	1823	-
Tengmalm's Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	1995	7	1812	-
Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>	1856	1	1856	-
Chimney Swift	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	2005	1	2005	-
Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	2010	-	1882	-
Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	2006	-	1800s	-
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	2014	-	1800s	1999 (?)
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	1963	1	1963	-
Eleonora's Falcon	<i>Falco eleonora</i>	2006	1	2006	-
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	1845	1	1845	-
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	2014	2	1988	-
Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	2006	3	2000	-
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	2013	-	1952	-
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	1976	1	1976	-
Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	1958	2	1819	-
Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>	1984	1	1984	-
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	1999	1	1999	-
Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	2012	-	1976	-
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	2010	-	1827	-
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	2012	-	1977	-
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	2011	2	2010	-
Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>	2012	-	1924	-
Pallas's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	2014	-	1951	-
Hume's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	2014	-	1970	-
Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	2006	4	1967	-
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>	2014	2	1995	-
Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>	2004	1	2004	-
Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	2013	-	1963	-
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella certhiola</i>	2001	2	1985	-
Lanceolated Warbler	<i>Locustella lanceolata</i>	2009	3	1984	-
River Warbler	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	1996	2	1996	-
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	1992	2	1977	-

		A Last	B Total	C First	D Bred
Booted Warbler	<i>Iduna caligata</i>	2013	5	1990	-
Sykes's Warbler	<i>Iduna rama</i>	2010	1	2010	-
Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	2010	1	2010	-
Aquatic Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	1958	1	1958	-
Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	1981	2	1974	-
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	2013	-	1912	-
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	2014	9	1990	-
<i>Black-bellied Dipper</i>	<i>C.c.cinclus</i>	1989	2	1987	-
White's Thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>	2012	2	1914	-
Black-throated Thrush	<i>Turdus atrogularis</i>	2006	2	1979	-
Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	1956	1	1956	-
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	2014	-	1826	-
<i>White-spotted Bluethroat</i>	<i>L.s.cyanecula</i>	2012	7	1953	-
Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	2013	1	2013	-
Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>	2014	-	2014	-
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	1980	1	1980	-
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	2012	6	1997	-
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	2012	5	1979	-
<i>Spanish Wagtail</i>	<i>M.f.iberiae</i>	2010	1	2010	-
<i>Ashy-headed Wagtail</i>	<i>M.f.cinereocapilla</i>	1998	3	1983	-
<i>Black-headed Wagtail</i>	<i>M.f.feldegg</i>	2009	2	1985	-
<i>Syke's Wagtail</i>	<i>M. f.beema</i>	1992	1	1992	-
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	2014	-	1967	-
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	1998	6	1954	-
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	2014	-	1986	-
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	2009	-	1963	-
Common Rosefinch	<i>Erythrura erythrura</i>	2014	-	1913	-
Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	1975	1	1975	-
Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	1987	1	1987	-
Arctic Redpoll	<i>Acanthis hornemanni</i>	2011	-	1962	-
Two-barred Crossbill	<i>Loxia leucoptera</i>	2001	4	1972	-
Parrot Crossbill	<i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>	1991	5	1954	-
Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	2002	4	1956	-
White-throated Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	2007	1	2007	-
Black-faced Bunting	<i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>	1999	1	1999	-
Pine Bunting	<i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	1992	3	1990	-
Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>	2014	-	1972	-
Yellow-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza aureola</i>	2013	-	1972	-
Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	2013	7	1971	-
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	2012	-	-	2005
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	2009	1	2009	-

Glossary of Terms

A number of standard abbreviations and terms have been used throughout this report to avoid any confusion their meanings are described below:

AON	Apparently Occupied Nests
a.s.l.	above sea level
BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee
BP	Business Park
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
CP	Country Park
Controlled	a ringing term - a ringed bird is a control, rather than a retrap, when caught again at a point more than 5km from the locality where it was first ringed.
CRC	County Records Committee
<i>et al.</i>	and others
FIR	Farne Island Rangers
GC	Golf Course
GP	Gravel Pits
km	kilometre
m	metre
NEWS	Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey
NNBC	North Northumberland Bird Club
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NR	Nature Reserve
NSFQ	North Shields Fish Quay
NT	National Trust
NTBC	Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club
Pullus	a nestling or chick
RS	Ringing Station
WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey