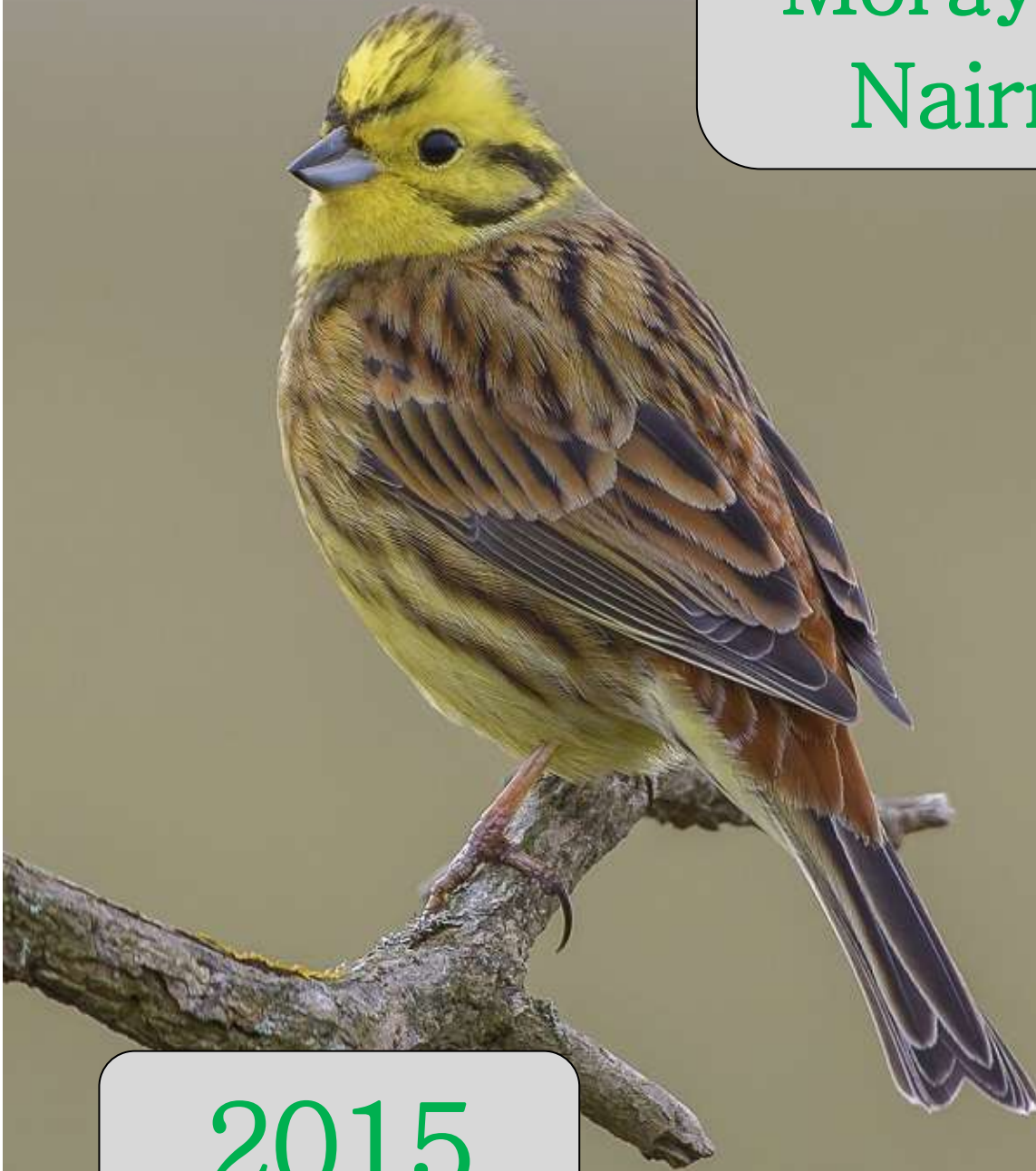


Birds in Moray & Nairn



2015

Birds in Moray & Nairn in 2015

MORAY & NAIRN BIRD REPORT
No.30 – 2015

Published at www.birdsinmorayandnairn.org in January 2017

CONTENTS

	Page
How to submit records	3
Assessment of rarity records	4
Observers contributing to Birds in Moray & Nairn 2015	6
Species accounts	7
Additions/corrections to previous Bird Reports	88
River Spey Breeding Bird Survey 2015 <i>Alastair Young & Melvin Morrison</i>	89
Ringling Report 2015 <i>Bob Proctor</i>	93
Grid references of localities mentioned in the species accounts	102

Edited by *Martin Cook* (Scottish Ornithologists' Club Recorder for Moray & Nairn).

Cover photograph: Yellowhammer at the Lossie estuary, 6 March 2015 (David Main).

Species account authors:

Mute Swan to Goosander (all wildfowl)	Bob Proctor
Quail to White-billed Diver (gamebirds and divers)	Bob Proctor
Fulmar to Shag (including shearwaters)	Richard Somers Cocks
Little Egret to Coot (herons, grebes and rails)	Bob Proctor
Raptors	Martin Cook
Oystercatcher to Snipe (all waders)	Duncan Gibson
Pomarine Skua to Great Black-backed Gull (skuas, auks, terns and gulls)	Richard Somers Cocks
Feral Pigeon to Corn Bunting (including pigeons, owls, crows, hirundines, tits, warblers, thrushes, chats, wagtails, pipits, finches and buntings)	Bob Proctor

This edition of Birds in Moray & Nairn, the 30th edition of the Moray & Nairn bird report, is available only online at www.birdsinmorayandnairn.org. For those who wish a hard copy, this can be printed from the website.

In addition to the species account authors, the editor would like to thank all those who have submitted their observations, and the photographers who have generously permitted the use of their images.

HOW TO SUBMIT RECORDS

There are two main ways in which you can submit your records:

1. To Birdtrack

The Scottish Ornithologists' Club is now a BirdTrack partner with the BTO, RSPB and BirdWatch Ireland.

BirdTrack is an exciting new web-based bird recording project that looks at migration movements and distributions of birds throughout Britain and Ireland. It provides facilities for observers to store and manage their own personal records as well as using these for the production of local bird reports, and to support species conservation at local, regional, national and even international scales.

The principle behind BirdTrack is that if you have been out birdwatching anywhere in Britain and Ireland, or merely watching birds in your garden, records of the birds you have seen (or indeed have not seen) can be useful data. Thus the scheme is year-round, and ongoing, and anyone with an interest in birds can contribute. Important results produced by BirdTrack include mapping migration timings and monitoring scarce birds. We know very little about the timing of arrival and departure of winter visitors and this is just one area in which BirdTrack will provide useful information. There are also many scarce birds where we would like to know much more about their populations. The SOC hopes that most birdwatchers in Scotland will soon adopt BirdTrack as their main bird recording and information sharing tool.

To find out more, or to register and get started, visit the BirdTrack website at www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack

2. To the Moray and Nairn Recorder

Records may be submitted periodically during the year or in one batch as soon as possible after the end of the year, and by the end of January at the latest. Although any format is acceptable, the Recorder would be very grateful to receive as many submissions as possible on Excel – a spreadsheet with appropriate headings may be obtained from the Recorder (see below). Minimum information required for each record should include species name, number, date and location (if possible with a 6-figure map reference, although a 4-figure map reference is often adequate).

More information on how, and where, to submit your records can be found in the ‘Submitting records’ section of the Birds in Moray and Nairn website at www.birdsinmorayandnairn.org/bird-recording/submitting-records/.

ASSESSMENT OF RARITY RECORDS

In order that an entirely accurate archive of records of rare and scarce species is maintained it is clearly important to apply consistent standards to the acceptance of such records. This is ensured through a system of assessment of written descriptions of the circumstances of the occurrence and of the bird itself. Those who make use of our reports in the future must have confidence that all published records have been scrutinised and considered acceptable by the birding community of today.

A three-tier system of record assessment exists:

British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) assesses records of extreme rarities, in a British context. The full committee contains ten voting members of which at least nine must vote in favour of a record for it to be accepted.

A list of species currently considered by BBRC can be found at www.bbrc.org.uk/currentrarespecies.htm

Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) assesses records of birds rare in a Scottish context but not sufficiently rare to be assessed by BBRC. The committee consists of seven voting members of which at least six must vote in favour.

A list of species currently considered by SBRC can be found at www.the-soc.org.uk/sbrc-list.htm

Moray & Nairn Rarities Committee (MNRC) assesses slightly less rare Scottish species and all other local rarities. The committee consists of five voting members of which at least four must vote in favour for a record to be accepted. Current membership of MNRC is Martin Cook, Roy Dennis, Duncan Gibson, Bob Proctor and Dave Pullan.

The following species are currently on the MNRC list:

Bewick's Swan	Bean Goose	American Wigeon
Green-winged Teal	Garganey (except adult male)	Ring-necked Duck
Ruddy Duck (except adult male)	Surf Scoter (except adult male)	Balearic Shearwater
Leach's Petrel	Red-necked Grebe	Black-necked Grebe
White Stork	Spoonbill	Bittern
Little Egret	Great White Egret	Honey-buzzard
Rough-legged Buzzard	Hobby	Spotted Crake
Corncrake	Crane	Avocet

Little Ringed Plover (except lower River Spey)	American Golden Plover	Temminck's Stint
Pectoral Sandpiper	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Red-necked Phalarope
Grey Phalarope	Long-tailed Skua	Sabine's Gull
Ring-billed Gull	Black Tern	Roseate Tern
Turtle Dove	Nightjar	Hoopoe
Wryneck	Green Woodpecker	Red-backed Shrike
Great Grey Shrike	Golden Oriole	Chough
Bearded Tit	Shore Lark	Yellow-browed Warbler
Reed Warbler	Icterine Warbler	Lesser Whitethroat
Firecrest	Nuthatch	Rose-coloured Starling
Bluethroat	Red-breasted Flycatcher	Black Redstart
Yellow Wagtail	Richard's Pipit	Water Pipit
Common Rosefinch	Hawfinch	Lapland Bunting

Other species recorded for the first time in Moray & Nairn, and not on BBRC or SBRC lists, are also assessed by MNRC.

If you find a rare species in Moray & Nairn, please contact the recorder (Martin Cook) who will provide forms and forward these to the relevant committee. Alternatively, further information and forms can be found and downloaded from the website at www.birdsinmorayandnairn.org/bird-recording/moray-nairn-rarities-committee/

Records of species on the lists of BBRC, SBRC or MNRC will only appear in *Birds in Moray & Nairn* following acceptance of the record by the relevant committee. It must be stressed, however, that the failure of a record to be accepted by a committee does not imply disbelief of the observer, or that the observer is mistaken in the identification; simply that not quite enough evidence has been assimilated by the observer in the time or conditions available.



Barnacle Geese on the Spey estuary, 6 October 2015 (Martin Cook)

OBSERVERS CONTRIBUTING TO *BIRDS IN MORAY & NAIRN 2015*

D Adams, G Aitken (GA), J Allison, S Ankers (SA), A Archer, R Arnold C Armour (CA), T Backx (AB), I Bailey (IB), L Bailey, M C Bale, C Ballinger (CB), K Barnes, I C Beaney (ICB), D Benison (DB), A Berryman (ABe), G Biggs (GB), JH Bingley (JHB), J Birkett, B Blackhall (BB), AC Blinston (ACB), D Buckingham, A Burgess, N Burgum, D Burkinshaw, ANM Burns, A Campbell (AC), R Carberry, B Chappell, S Chippendale, H Clark (HC), J A Clarke (JAC), K Clarke (KC), A J Clunas, M Coath (MCo), SH Cohen, D Colhoun, M Collins (MC), J Common (JC), M J H Cook (MJHC), B Cosnette (BC), J K Craib (JKC), G Cross, MG Crutch (MGC), K Cunningham (KCu), R Cush, R Dalziel, R H Dennis (RHD), D Derrick (DD), D Devonport, T Donaldson, A Douse (AD), JM Dowson (JMD), P Dryburgh (PD), K Duncan (KD), J Dyer, S Eaves, A Edward (AE), N Elkins, B Etheridge (BE), L G R Evans (LGRE), H Farquhar (HF), S J Foster (SJF), I Francis (IF), M Galloway (MG), NJF Gates, G George, C A Gervaise (CAG), D A Gibson (DAG), R Gomes (RG), A Gordon (AG), J D Gordon (JDG), P R Gordon (PRG), LJ Graham, M Grant, I Green (IG), T Green (TG), P Griffin, K Guthrie (KG), P Hampson, J Harrison, E Harwood (EH), M C Hay, I Hill (IH), A C Hilton (ACH), A Hogg (AH), J Hogg, M Holling (MH), J Hunter (JH), P P Hyvonen (PPH), R Ince (RI), H Inman, H Insley (HI), R J Irvine, A G Jackson, R Jackson (RJa), R Johnson (RJ), M Keighley (MK), AG Kennedy, M Kirkland (MKi), F Knowles (FK), C E Laurie, J D Law (JDL), A J Lawrence (AJL), C G Leslie (CGL), D Leslie, SA Leyland, N London, D MacAskill (DMA), A MacAskill (AMa), D Main (DM), T Main, J Mair (JM), R Mair, T Mair, G Marshall (GMA), P Martin, S Massie, D&T Masson (D&TM), RA Mavor, S McArdle (SM), R McFarlane, F McHugh (FM), R McIntyre, M Mackay (MMA), G McMullins (GM), A McNee (AM), M Merritt, P Message, A Millar (AMI), P Moore (PM), L Morrison (LM), R Morrison, W M Morrison (WMM), W Mulhearn (WM), S Murkin, M Murray (MM), R Nelson, F Newcombe (FN), S Nicolson, E Ogilvie (EO), J O'Hanlon, D C Orr-Ewing, A Palethorpe, J Parker, K Paterson (KP), N Penford, S Pianta-Scott (SP-S), D Pierce (DP), A Piccolo, R Picksley, D Pierce, R Piper (RPi), J Pott (JPo), R Potter, J Poyner (JP), R J F Prentice (RJFP), G Prest (GP), A Price (AP), R Proctor (RP), A Proud, D M Pullan (DMP), M Ranner (MR), G Rebecca (GR), S Reed, MA Reid, P Rhodes (PR), A Ritchie (AR), A&F Ritchie (A&FR), C Round, G Routledge, K Rylands (KR), K Sanderson, G E Scales, L Schofield (LSc), D Scobie (DS), E Seal, J&B Shackleton (J&BS), M Sharpe (MS), C&D Shaw (C&DS), V Sheach Leith (VSL), A Shepherd, M Shewry (MSh), A Shields, L Simpson (LS), S Skrivanos, A Smith (AS), G Smith, G&D Smith, R H Smith, R Somers Cocks (RSC), M M Souter (MMS), G Stacey (GS), B Storm, JA Sutherland, N Sutherland (NS), I S Suttie, J Sutton, P Sutton, P Swainson (PS), JL Swallow (JLS), W G Taylor, I Thomson, A Tissiman, F Todd (FT), A E Turner (AET), R Waldon, A Webb, T J Wells (TJW), C West (CW), S West, E Weston (EW), D Wheeler (DW), C White (CWh), M Whitton (MW), K Whyte (KW), A Wilkie, A Williams (AW), JL Wilson, A Young (AY), L Youngs.

Apologies to anyone accidentally omitted.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

The following terms are used at the start of each species account to denote relative abundance:

Breeding species:

Occasional	Has bred but none in most years
Rare	1-10 pairs in most years
Scarce	11-50 pairs
Fairly common	51-200 pairs
Common	201-500 pairs
Very common	more than 500 pairs

Non-breeding species:

Rare	1-20 records in total
Very scarce	Not rare but less than 10 in most years
Scarce	10-50 in most years
Fairly common	51-200 in most years
Common	201-500 annually
Very common	more than 500 annually

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Scarce resident breeder and short-distance migrant. Common in winter.

Breeding: A total of 16 apparently occupied territories was recorded in 2015, with 11 pairs producing 70 young; of these, a minimum of 38 appear to have fledged. The mean total of fledged young in 2015 is slightly lower than the mean of 4.2 fledged young for the last 10 years.

Mean number of young probably fledging from those pairs known to have produced young:

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Pairs	18	19	10	14	17	17	13	19	13	17	11
Young fledged	65	110	51	59	57	84	53	53	73	43	38
Mean	3.6	5.8	5.1	4.2	3.3	4.9	4.1	2.8	5.7	2.5	3.5

Maximum monthly counts of local flocks (excluding breeding birds in April-August) were:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Loch Flemington	16	8	6	6	4	4	12	2	19	58	70	nc
Nairn harbour	10	1	2	2		Breeders		8	7	8	7	nc
Loch Loy	9	0	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	0	7	0
Loch of Blairs	6	5	4			Breeders			8	8	8	8
Findhorn Bay	22	30	29	53	58	63	27	5	44	32	30	39
Lossie estuary	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Loch Spynie	57	22	9			Breeders			14	23	25	30
Cloddach	30	19	15			Breeders			nc	55	67	32
Loch Oire	2	2	3			Breeders			1	2	2	4
Loch na Bo	16	nc	2			Breeders			8	2	3	4
Spey estuary	2	1	3	4	16	16	8	2	5	4	1	5

nc = no count received

Coastal records (max. counts): 7 flying west Burghead Bay 29 Jan, 2 Portgordon harbour 8 Feb and 2 Buckie harbour 13 Dec.

Individuals in stubble fields were much more evident this year: 2 1st winter (1stW) East Mains (Gilston) 2-3 Jan, 1 1stW Gilston 2 Jan, 2 adults Ardivot 7 Feb, 5 Roseisle 26 March, 4 1stW Balormie pig farm 4 Apr, 1 1stW Scarffbanks farm 28 Oct and 1 1stW Mid Mains (Gilston) 29 Oct.

[Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

Escape.

One from 2014 remained in the area around Foresterseat (Lhanbryde), associating throughout its stay with Whooper Swans. It was only seen in January: 1st-5th at Foresterseat, 11th at Sheriffston and 17th at Barmuckity.

Previous records have occurred in 1994 (1 Findhorn Bay 18 Apr and 3 near Roseisle maltings 21 Apr-9 May) and 1996 (singles Lossie estuary 6 Mar, Findhorn Bay 11 Mar-11 May and Loch Spynie 17 Mar; probably two individuals involved.)

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter-spring: In Nairn four sites were used: Loch Flemington (1 on 1 & 4 Jan), Kinchyle (Little Kildrummie) (max. 36 on 10 Feb), Nairn (42 flew west on 22 Mar) and Cran Loch (7 on 18 Jan). The Kinchyle herd was counted on nine occasions (present from 6 Feb-29 Mar), and likely to be the group that is usually present at Loch Flemington. In Moray, the large number of sites used made assessment of individual flocks difficult; birds were recorded from 35 sites compared to 13 in 2014. It is unclear whether there were more flocks in 2015 or if a smaller number were present but more mobile. Areas containing flocks in the early part of the year were:

Findhorn Bay: A total of 26 records was submitted, of flocks present from 4 Jan-19 Mar, the largest was 68 on the bay at dawn on 20 Jan. A further six counts exceeded 50 individuals, all of which were recorded in Jan.

Roseisle: Present from 9 Jan-31 Mar, with flocks present at Roseisle, Hempriggs, Milton Brodie, Miltonhill, Easter Coltfoot, Bruntland and Alves. Of the 26 flocks reported only three exceeded 30 individuals; 54 Roseisle 23 Jan, 40 Hempriggs 2 Feb and 34 Roseisle 5 Feb.

Foresterseat: Present from 1 Jan-27 Mar. Flocks were recorded from Barmuckity, Calcots, Gordonsward farm, Lhanbryde, Loch na Bo and Sheriffston. A total of 27 reports, with 14 large counts consisting of over 60 individuals, mostly from stubble fields at Foresterseat. The largest count was 173 Foresterseat 4 Jan.

Duffus: Seven reports during a short period (2-17 Jan), the largest single count was 76 on 15 Jan, however, three consecutive counts at Surradale (60), East Mains (Gilston) (13) and Gilston (17) gave a total of 90 present in the area on 3 Jan; this gives an indication of the widespread nature of flocks in this period.

Loch Spynie: Present from 3 Jan-27 Mar. Counts from the loch and immediate area were low (less than 15), except for a large flock at Pitgaveny where seven reports received had counts over 50 on six occasions (max. count 93 on 24 Mar).

Flocks were reported from seven other sites, none were particularly large. Maximum counts from these sites were: 12 Portgordon 11 Jan, 18 Newton of Struthers 13 Jan, 16 Speyslaw 11 Feb, 17 Balormie pig farm 13 Mar, 31 west Portknockie 21 Mar, 22 Spey estuary 22 Mar and 6 Cloddach quarry 29 Mar.

Unusual during this period was 28 on the sea Burghead 13 Mar (MJHC) and a single east during a seawatch from Lossiemouth 22 Feb.

Spring: The largest flock during this period was 17 Pitgaveny 5 Apr. Elsewhere, none exceeded 15 individuals; 4 Nairn harbour 4 Apr, 15 Hempriggs 5 Apr, 15 Roseisle 7 Apr, 2-3 lingered Kinchyle (Little Kildrummie) 7-21 Apr and 15 Findhorn 21 Apr. In late spring one report of a single at Speyslaw 6 May.

Summer: No summer records were received.

Autumn: The first record for the autumn period was 3 Spey estuary 28 Sep, no other flocks were recorded until 16 Loch Spynie 5 Oct and 6 Spey estuary 9 Oct. Daily arrivals 10th-19th but flocks still fairly small until 17th when 174 Mid Mains and 126 Loch Spynie. Main arrival appears to have been similar to 2014 occurring from 21st onwards and concentrated around the Mid Mains area: 342 Mid Mains on 21st increasing to 505 Mid Mains/Westerfolds on 25th. Elsewhere, numbers much lower (max. counts); 12 Spey estuary 16 Oct, 2 Loch Flemington 17-18 Oct, adult Lossie estuary 19 Oct (9th record on the estuary), 25 Lower Hempriggs 31 Oct, 75 Burghead 31 Oct and 17 Loch na Bo 31 Oct. Inland were 2 Burnend Grange (Aultmore) 18 Oct, though 1 Loch Kirkaldy 26 Oct was well inland for this period and presumably using the loch as a stop-over. No repeat arrival of the unprecedented numbers seen last year in November. In November six sites held flocks over 100: 170 Pitairlie 7th, c.100 Scarffbanks 7th, 142 East Grange 11th, 300 Salterhill 11th, c.400 Hatton (Kinloss) 15th and 117 Clochan/Broadley 29th. Elsewhere in November, counts recorded (max. for each site) were more typical of a 'normal' year: 84 Loch Spynie 1st, 23 Roseisle 2nd, 11 Loch Oire/Loch na Bo 3rd, 6 south-east over Findhorn 4th, 60 Calcots 8th, 10 Muirhead (Kinloss) 10th, 17 west East Beach, Lossiemouth 12th, 13 Burghead 13th, 30 Sheriffston 13th, 12 Cloddach quarry 15th, 34 Cloves 17th, 30 Bishopmill, Elgin 17th, 1 Montgrew 18th, 46 Portgordon 19th, 57 Moyness 21st, 10 Spey estuary 24th, 10 Loch Flemington 29th and 32 Scotstonhill (Darkland) 29th.

Winter (December): In Nairn, birds were recorded at one site: Moyness 8 on 16th. In Moray, seen at seven sites: 79 Foresterseat 4th, 3 Cloddach quarry 6th, 8 Burghead 7th, 72 Clochan area 7th, 178 Fogwatt 9th, 27 Loch Oire/Loch na Bo 16th, 6 Spey estuary 19th and 30 flying north over Aberlour 31st.

Brood sizes reported in October-December 2014 and 2015:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
2015 Frequency	10	5	8	2	1	1
2014 Frequency	3	14	16	7	6	0

The mean from the 59 broods reported was 2.2 young, compared to 3.0 in 2014.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Very common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter (January-March): Reported at 17 sites from Nairn, with four flocks in excess of 1000: 1500+ Moyness 17 Mar (1000+ on 8 Feb), 1000 Crook Cottage (Nairn) 23 Mar and 1200+ Littlemill 23 Mar. Smaller flocks (max. counts) were seen at Cawdor (600 on 4 Jan), River Nairn (Nairn) (130 on 5 Jan), Househill (Nairn) (460 on 6 Jan), Kingsteps (45 on 30 Jan), Loch Dhu (650 on 6 Feb), Little Kildrummie (200 on 10 Feb), Kinchyle (4 on 16 Feb), Tomluncart (30 on 16 Feb), Achareidh (c.80 west on 25 Feb), Nairn golf course (9 west on 8 Mar), Balblair (c.700 on 14 Mar), Auldearn (80 on 18 Mar), Nairn Bar (120 on 19 Mar) and Little Aitnoch farm (1 on 27 Mar).

Similar to recent years in Moray where widely scattered flocks in the coastal strip, though seven flocks exceeded 1000 individuals this year (2 in 2014): c.1500 Drainie 3 Jan, c.2000 Alves 6 Jan, 7500 Windyridge 8 Jan, c.1500 Muirhead (Kinloss) 14 Jan, 2300 Foresterseat 6 Feb, 2500 Hempriggs 12 Mar and 4500 Findhorn Bay 25 Mar.

Ranges of other flocks (less than 1000) were:

	1-100	101-200	201-300	301-400	401-500	501-600	601-700	701-800	801-900	901-1000
2015	17	4	3	0	2	3	4	3	1	2
2014	30	7	1	2	6	3	2	3	0	3

Spring passage (max. counts): Typically the largest flocks seen during this period were from the Findhorn Bay area; 6000 Netherton 15 Apr (with a further 19 counts in excess of 1000 individuals). Other flocks in excess of 1000 were reported from Colthall (Forres) (1200 on 4 Apr), Keith (1200 on 11 Apr), Balmakeith industrial estate (Nairn) (2000 on 15 Apr), Coltfoot (c.1500 on 15 Apr) and Grangegreen (1100 on 23 Apr). Still large numbers passing through in late April (e.g. 800 on 27th & 600 on 29th) in Findhorn Bay but only one on 31st. Two late flocks at Findhorn Bay were 10 flying north-northwest on 4 Jun and 36 flying north on 5 Jun. Also 1-2 on 1 Jun and 3 on 2 Jun may have been late migrants.

Summer: One Lossie estuary 6 Jun and one around Burghead 10-24 Jul (6 sightings) and then again on 10 & 18 Aug. Present again in the Findhorn Bay area during the summer: a single from 1 Jun-10 Aug and 2 on 16 & 18 Jul. A total of two birds could account for these summer records.

Autumn: The first sighting during this period was 24 Findhorn Bay 13 Sep (a 'normal' arrival date). The next report was 23 Windyridge 17 Sep, then daily arrivals until the end of the month. Large arrival on 25th when 'strong passage south' noted over Cragganmore, 64 south, with 'more later', Achareidh (Nairn), 700 south Tomnamoon, 550 Findhorn Bay, c.1500 over Lossie estuary, 310 (4 skeins) over Elgin cemetery, 100 Quarrel Woods (Elgin), 'large arrival – flocks over all day' noted over Spey estuary, and 1120 (22 flocks) in off the sea at Portgordon between 16:00-17:00 hrs. The largest count in September was 5700 (roost) Findhorn Bay on 30th, only three other counts from Findhorn Bay exceeded 1000. Less frequent in September this year from the Findhorn Bay area: eight flocks contained less than 100 individuals and five flocks contained over 100 individuals (largest 600+ Kinloss). Another large arrival in early Oct: 400 south Cairngorms 1st, 1300 (3 skeins) Elgin cemetery 2nd, 100 Lossie estuary 2nd and 870 (6 skeins) Spey estuary 2nd. On 4th, 20,000 roosted in Findhorn Bay. At Findhorn Bay in October a further 22 counts exceeded 10,000 individuals, with two estimates of c.25,000 (10th and 17th) and six estimates of 20,000 (15th, and daily 17th-21st), many of these large estimates were flocks leaving the bay after roosting. Prior to these there has only been one larger record: an estimate in excess of 30,000 was made on 30 Oct 2005 in the Loch Spynie area.

Elsewhere, five sites reported counts over 1000: 2000 Nairn Bar 18 Oct, 1000 Loch Spynie 27 Oct, 1500 Mid Mains (Gilston) 30 Oct, 2180 Balliesland 30 Oct and 1500 Salterhill (Gilston).

In Nairn, another large count was 800 Culbin Bar 8 Oct. No other large flocks reported from Nairn.

In November, flocks over 1000 (max. counts) were seen at Boghole farm (Auldearn) (1000+ on 1st), Urquhart (1500 on 3rd), Buinach Hill (Kellas) (2000 on 5th), Kingsteps (1500 on 11th), Loch Spynie (1800 on 14th), Findhorn Bay (10,800 on 14th; seven further counts exceeding 1000), Montgrew (1000 on 18th), Binns (Garmouth) (c.1000 on 20th), Moyness (1740+ on 21st) and Broadley (Clochan) (1220 on 28th).

Similar to the summer records, a single was present in Burghead harbour during 9-18 Nov.

Winter: The largest flock recorded in December was 7300 on 8th, with eight other large counts (all over 1000) occurring in Findhorn Bay during December. Maximum counts in excess of 1000 also occurred at Burmuckity (c.2000 on 13th), Easter Hatton (c.5000 on 15th) and Moyness (c.1200 on 19th; a large count for Nairn).

Leucistic individuals were reported from Blervie (Forres) 16 Apr and 2 Hillhead (Forres) 3 Oct.

Unusual was a series of records on the Lossie estuary (only seven previous records): 2 on 23 Jan, 1 on 6 Jun and 1 on 11-13 Oct (with a damaged wing) which was joined by a second 12-13 Oct. Also unusual was a single on Loch na Bo 6 Dec and presumably the same Loch Oire 12 Dec.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Very scarce winter visitor.

Records assigned to the Greenland race *A. a. flavirostris*:

Moyness (Auldearn): a single on 17 Mar (A&FR). As there have only been six previous records for Nairn since publication of MNBR began (in 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 2006 and 2014) it seems likely that this is the 2014 bird.

Findhorn Bay area: 1 on 15 Apr (RSC), 1 on 2 & 5 Oct (RHD, GM) and 10 (see Loch Spynie record) on 15-16 Nov (RSC).

Loch Spynie: 13 on 14 Nov (JDL, GB) had dropped to only two on 15 Nov (JDL) and suggests that the other individuals went to Findhorn Bay.

Records not assigned to any race were: 19 Windyridge 8 Jan (CEL), 1 Findhorn Bay 28 Feb (ACB), 1 Muirhead 15 Oct (MGC) and 8 Tugnet 19 Nov (AG).

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Rare breeder and very common winter visitor.

Winter-spring: Flocks containing 500 or more birds were recorded at seven sites (four sites in 2014), maximum counts at each site were: c.800 Gilston 3 Jan, 750 Windyridge 8 Jan, 1000 Burnside farm (Mosstowie) 15 Jan, 550 Duffus castle 15 Jan, 650 Findhorn Bay 20 Jan, 760 Netherton 25 Jan and 2000+ Auldearn 5 Mar. Apart for the Burnside farm and Auldearn reports most counts are following the recent trend of lower maxima at sites. Twenty-seven other sites held small flocks (24 in 2014).

Range of all flock sizes reported containing less than 400 individuals January-April:

	1-100	101-200	201-300	301-400
2015	63	8	1	3
2014	41	10	1	3
2013	51	6	8	3
2012	39	7	3	1

Well inland, and probably part of the Dava breeding population, were: 50 Dava lochans 18 Mar, 2 Knock of Braemoray 8 Mar, 50+ Little Aitnoch farm 27 Mar, 2 Auchlochan (Knock of Braemoray) 28 Mar, 4 Bogeney (Knock of Braemoray) 28 Mar, 3 Shenvault (Knock of Braemoray) 28 Mar, 13 near Dunearn Lodge (Dulsie) 29 Mar and 4 lochans near Black Loch 29 Mar.

Summer: In the Dava breeding area early in the season were; 20 Black Loch (Dava) 2 Apr, 50+ Aitnoch 16 Apr, 17 near Dunearn Lodge (Dulsie) 1 May and 43 Little Aitnoch 16 May. Breeding confirmed at Aitnoch (5 young) and Black Loch (3 young) on 23 Jun (A&FR), with two well-grown young still present at the latter site on 27 Jun (MJHC).

Two groups were present at potential new sites, well away from the traditional Dava area, at Midfleenas (Achavraat) 25 on 7 Apr and 12 Whitefold (Loch of Boath) 21 May.

In the coastal strip; 5 Balormie pig farm 25-28 Apr (4 on 1 May), 2 Cloddach quarry 29 Mar & 17 Apr ('looking territorial') and one still present 9 Jun, 1 Lossie forest 23 May, 8 Loch Belivat 2 Jun. Breeding confirmed at Loch Spynie; following copulation observed on 17 Apr, a brood of 4 downy young was seen on 23-24 Apr (RP, CAG). A further four adults were present on 24 Apr (RP). This is the second confirmed breeding at Loch Spynie following a brood of five seen in 2013.

Non-breeding flocks were regular at Findhorn Bay between 6 Jun-31 Jul (eight counts in excess of 100; maximum 168 on 14 Jul). Wandering individuals or small groups were also at Spey estuary (2 on 25 May).

Late summer: Frequently seen around the Findhorn Bay area during August where counts over 100 were: 280 on 1st, c.100 on 2nd, 124 on 3rd, c.100 on 7th, 274 on 10th, 162 on 11th and c.180 on 13th. Elsewhere, 11 Hilton of Delnies 5 Aug, c.50 Meikle Kildrummie 6 Aug, 65 Drumduan 11 Aug, c.15 Auldearn 12 Aug and 500 Russell's Wood (Auldearn) 13 Aug. Inland after the breeding season were 4 Black Loch (Dava) 5 Aug and 50 Loch Kirkcaldy 6 Aug.

Autumn: Difficult to assess which are local birds and which are Icelandic breeders returning in September. Nine large counts recorded in early September (1st-10th) from Findhorn Bay: 650+ on 7th was the maximum count. Elsewhere, 13 Loch Flemington 2 Sep and 180 Auldearn 3 Sep. These are all likely to be local breeders as these dates are at least a week earlier than the expected arrival of the first Icelandic birds. Slightly later were: 180 Nairn/Culbin Bars 16 Sep, 3 west Tugnet 19 Sep, 528 Carse of Delnies 19 Sep and 670 Findhorn Bay 21 Sep. An unusual record was one standing in the observer's garden at Clochan 29 Sep then flew off strongly (MJHC). No count received for October exceeded 450 individuals; 436 Findhorn Bay

3rd, 45 Carse of Delnies 10th, 350 Wellhill farm (Kintessack) 12th, 1 Loch Spynie 18th, 42 Mid Mains (Gilston) 18th, 200 The Maggot (Nairn) 18th, 35 Loch Flemington 27th, 15 Tugnet 28th and 185 Duffus Castle 31st.

In November, flocks exceeding 100 individuals (max. counts) were: 200 Little Urchany 6th, 200 Scarffbanks farm 7th, 400 Salterhill (Gilston) 13th, 1500 Loch Spynie 14th, 180 Montgrew 18th, c.170 Moyness 21st, 100 Spey estuary 21st, 132 Findhorn Bay 25th, 770 Broadley (Clochan) 28th and 976 Drainie 29th. A family group of two adults and two juveniles at Cloddach quarry on 15th may have been locally bred.

Winter (max. counts only): Only one flock exceeded 500 (compared to six in 2014): 650 Ardivot 27 Dec. Four other counts exceeded 100: 435 Findhorn Bay 1 Dec, 330 Boadley (Clochan) 2 Dec, c.180 Moyness 19 Dec and 140 Cawdor 24 Dec. Low numbers at Findhorn Bay compared to earlier in the year: 36 on 6th, 33 on 15th and 96 on 26th, with six other counts under 10 individuals.

A hybrid of presumed Greylag Goose × Canada Goose parentage was seen at Aitnoch 16 Apr (A&FR) and on Findhorn Bay 26 Aug (MGC).

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

Rare visitor or escape.

One white morph in the Findhorn Bay area (MJHC, RHD *et al.*) from 4-17 Oct was seen at Findhorn Bay, Kintessack and Wellhill.



Snow Goose, Waterford (near Findhorn Bay) 7 October 2015 (Richard Somers Cocks)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Scarce migrant in summer, rare in winter.

Winter: No winter records received this year.

Spring (April-May): Two records, concerning the same individual, at Balormie pig farm 25 Apr and Loch Spynie 26-27 Apr, and a group of 11 Findhorn Bay 30 May.

Summer (June-July): Present in Findhorn Bay 4 Jun-31 Jul; groups present 4-8 Jun (12 on 4th, 8 on 5th, 48 on 6th, 66 (groups of 48 & 18) on 7th and 19 on 8th) then following a short period without records c.30 on 15 Jun and 23 on 16 Jun, before only a single almost daily from 23 Jun-31 Jul. Elsewhere, 28 Spey estuary 6 Jun, 16 Loch Oire 6 Jun and then the same group (?) of 16 Loch Spynie 8 Jun. Well inland were 13 Aldunie (Cabrach) 6 Jun.

Autumn (August-October): a single in Findhorn Bay 2-7 Aug was presumably the lone individual present throughout late Jun-Jul. Flocks arrived in Findhorn Bay from mid August; 14 on 17 Aug and 87 on 26 Aug. Away from Findhorn Bay were 1 Spey estuary 19 Aug, 84 Cothall (Alves) 26 Aug (presumably the Findhorn Bay flock) and 13 Loch Flemington 26 Aug. One report in September: 17 Carse of Delnies 19 Sep. In October, the only flocks were reported from Loch Flemington (14 on 15th, 10 on 16th & 13 on 18th). October records from Findhorn Bay were 2 on 8th and a single 17th-18th. Interestingly, a small individual was reported from Findhorn Bay on 2nd (RHD).

A hybrid of presumed Greylag Goose × Canada Goose parentage was seen at Aitnoch 16 Apr (A&FR) and on Findhorn Bay 26 Aug (MGC).

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor.

Winter-spring: Recorded at Findhorn Bay on 12 dates (7 Apr-31 May), with a maximum count of five on 18 Apr, otherwise singles at Hempriggs 12 Mar and Balormie pig farm 6 May.

Summer: A single Findhorn Bay 9 Jul (GM).

Autumn: The first were 22 Findhorn Bay 6-9 Sep followed by a single at Tugnet 30 Sep. The main arrival was in October with the first two sightings on 1st of c.50 east off Lossiemouth and 2 Spey estuary, followed by three large groups of 277 east Lossiemouth on 5th, 490 Spey estuary on 6th (still 478 there on 7th) and 105 west end of Culbin on 8th. In the Findhorn Bay area records from 3rd-26th: flocks seen in the early part of the month between 4th-11th followed similar sightings to the east but flocks were smaller: 10 on 4th, 62 on 5th, 16 on 7th, 39 on 8th, 28 on 9th, 37 on 10th and 22 on 11th, while groups consisting of less than 10 were seen on 26 occasions (max. 8 on 5th). Elsewhere sightings consisted of much smaller numbers: 8 Lossie estuary 5th, 3 Hillhead (Forres) 8th, 15 Loch Spynie 13th, 7 (max. count) Spey estuary 24th, 8 Tugnet 28th, 1 Bailliesland farm 30th and 4 Salterhill (Gilston) 31st.

Small numbers seen in November; 1 Loch Spynie 15th, 2 Montgrew 18th and 10 east Burghead 21st. Only one record in December: 1 Broadley (Clochan) on 17th.



Barnacle Geese, Waterford 7 October 2015 (Richard Somers Cocks)

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor.

There were multiple records of a lone Dark-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. bernicla* which is likely to be the same wide-ranging individual seen in 2014 at Lossie estuary 17-22 Oct and Nairn 27-30 Dec. It was seen at Nairn west beach during 2-12 Jan (BB, MJHC) and 21-29 Mar (SJF, BB, DMP). It, or another, was at Portannachy (near Buckie) on 9 Feb (HC). Another individual was seen later in the year at the Lossie estuary on 12 Dec (MS).

All other records related to Pale-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. hrota* particularly the regular flock in the Nairn area which was recorded from Delnies eastwards to the Culbin/Nairn Bars.

Winter: Present in the Nairn area from 2 Jan-29 Mar where max. monthly counts were 55 on 4 Jan, 55 on 21 Feb and 57 on 19 Mar.

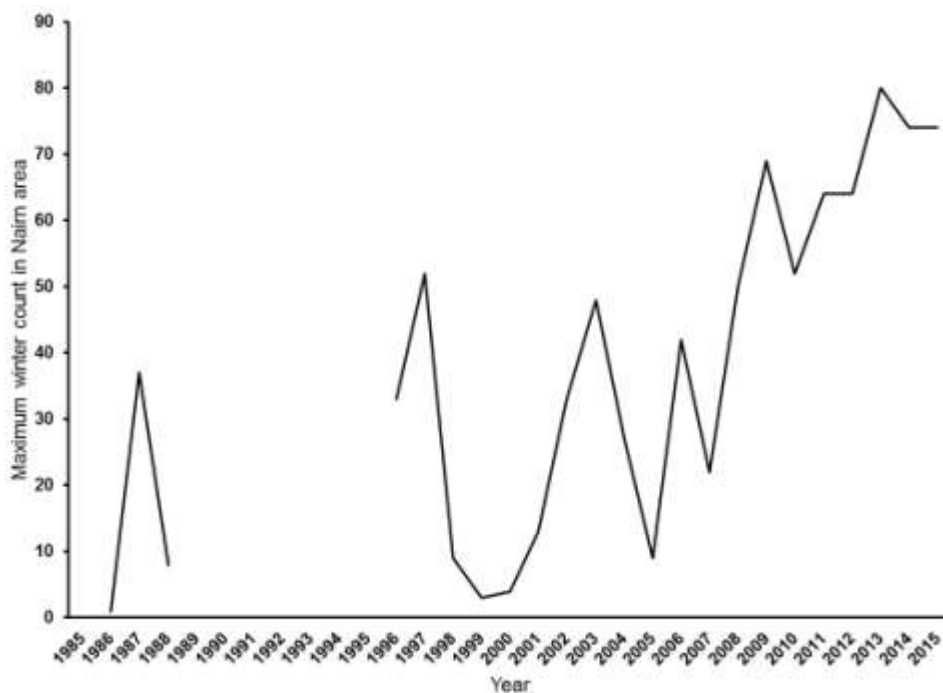
Two records away from the Nairn area were 4 Lossie estuary 23 Jan and a single flying east past Lossiemouth west beach on 9 Apr.

Autumn passage period (September-October): The first returning birds to the Nairn area was a group of 15 Carse of Delnies 10 Oct, which is slightly later than normal and was the only record from the Nairn area during this period.

Seen almost daily at the Lossie estuary from 14-30 Sep (and into the winter period). Four colour-ringed individuals aided the breakdown of groups (see 'Ringing Section'). Initially nine arrived consisting of two pairs and their broods (of 2 & 3) and were present from 14-18 Sep, 11 adults arrived on 18 Sep and joined the original family groups, though from 19-25 Sep only 7 adults were with the family groups. By 26 Sep the 7 adults had left leaving the two family groups on the estuary and by 30 Sep only one family group of adults and brood (of 2) remained. Another group, consisting of 4 adults with a juvenile arrived on 25 Oct. This juvenile may not have belonged to any of the adults that it arrived with on 25 Oct, as the adults had left by the 29 Oct. Interestingly, the lone juvenile remained on the estuary with the original family group; though it was never fully integrated into the group.

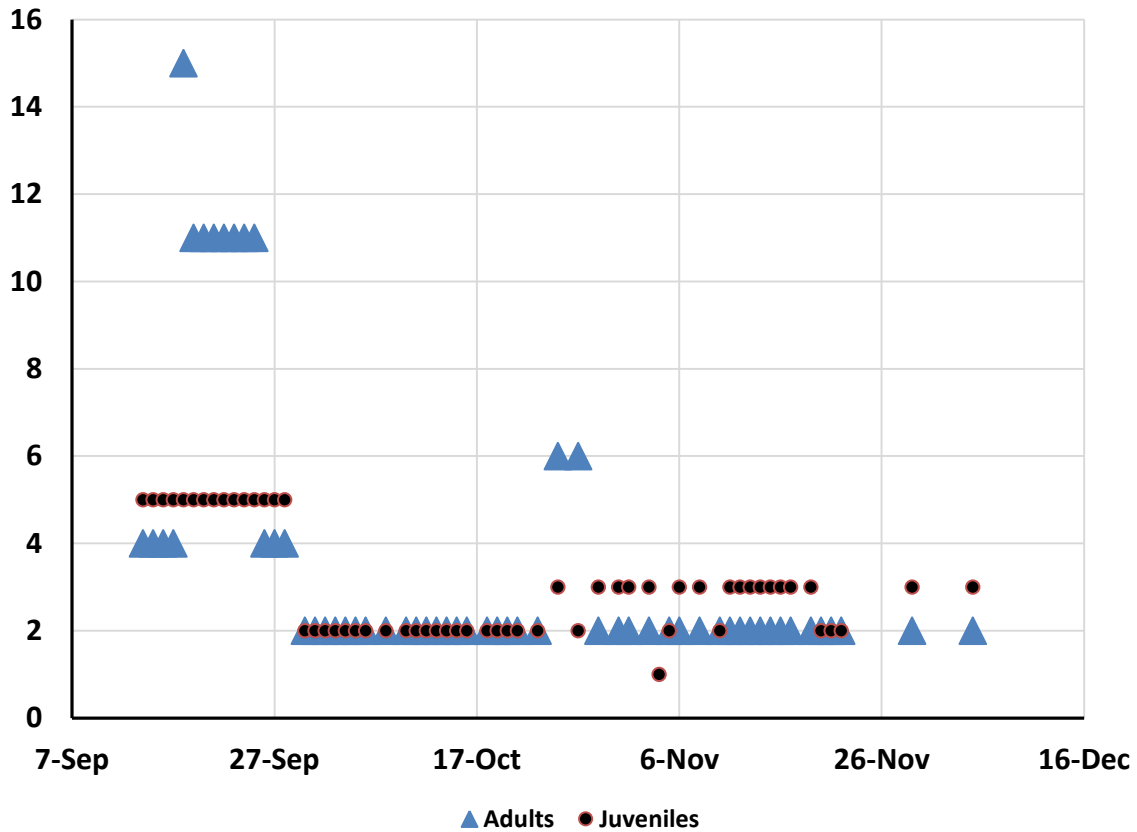
Winter: In Nairn area, only two reports in November, with a maximum of 23 on 28 Nov. More reports in December (17 counts) with the maximum count of 74 on 13 Dec.

Maximum winter count of the Nairn flock 1985-2015:



The family group remained on the Lossie estuary from 1 Nov-5 Dec, they were also seen on Lossiemouth west beach, Lossiemouth on 3, 16, 17 & 19 Nov, flying east at Lossiemouth harbour on 14 Nov and flying east during a seawatch on 5 Dec. The lone juvenile was also seen by itself on Lossiemouth west beach on 6 Nov and near the family group on 3, 16, 17 & 19 Nov.

Daily occurrence of groups at the Lossie estuary 14 Sep-5 Dec:



Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Fairly common visitor in winter and spring. Scarce breeder.

Breeding: A total of 25 reports of broods received although this total includes known duplicates. Distinct broods were reported from Findhorn Bay (broods of 7, 8, 10, 11, 13 & 16), Cloddach quarry (brood of 7) and the Spey estuary (broods of 4 & 6). These nine broods give a mean of 9.1 chicks. On the Spey estuary a brood of four was reported 16-27 Jul with the whole brood moving on to the sea on 30 Jul, 2 & 5 Aug. Seen in potential breeding areas at Hempriggs, Balormie pig farm (max. 5 on 25 Apr) and Burnside of Birnie pool.

Best monthly counts at coastal sites were as follows:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Nairn/Culbin Bars	131	91	nc	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	0	nc	76
Findhorn Bay	149	182	174	125	88	121	152	33	6	21	88	152
Lossie estuary	1	4	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Spey estuary	0	4	7	12	5	9	4	8	0	0	0	3

Elsewhere, 12 Carse of Delnies 27 Mar.

Exceptional numbers (for an inland site) at Cloddach quarry where 28 on 17 Apr (MJHC) and 30 on 1 May (MM).

Also inland, singles Loch Spynie 31 Jan & 25 Feb and Loch Oire 29-30 Apr (unusual here).

Offshore, a male flew west Burghead 22 Mar.

At Lossiemouth during seawatches: 3 west 7 Feb, 3 east 17 May and 2 west 14 Nov.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

Very scarce feral resident and occasional breeder.

Cawdor/Croy area: On the River Nairn, 2 Budgate 18 Apr and 2 Kilravock Castle 16 May. These were followed on the River Nairn, by the first confirmed breeding attempt locally when a female with seven ducklings was seen swimming up-river at Holme Bridge 14 Jul (GA) and a female with two well-grown young at Kilravock Castle 25 Jul (JAC).

Elgin: A single female/juvenile on five dates from 25 Jun-15 Jul, four males 2 Sep (dropping to 3 on 5 & 14 Sep) and then a single male on 22 Nov.

Loch Spynie: A male on 8 Apr & 14 Aug.

Loch Oire: Two females 16 Jun.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Very common winter visitor and rare breeder.

Breeding: At Loch Kirkaldy, a female with a duckling present with another female 27 Jun (MJHC). A pair Dulsie 13 May and a male near Dunearn 13 May (JAC) were in suitable habitat.

Non-breeders in summer (May-July): Present Findhorn Bay 2 May-25 Jul (max. count 61 on 2 May, but still c.40 on 27 Jun & 25 Jul), male Cloddach quarry 19 Jul and present Spey estuary 24 May-16 Jul (max. 13 on 14 Jun).

Winter: Monthly maximum counts at main coastal sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn harbour area	28	18	35	nc	nc	nc	90	nc
Nairn/Culbin Bars	500	200	58	nc	nc	354	nc	368
Findhorn Bay	559	530	358	216	1680	4300	4100	1550
Lossie estuary	1550	1500	1500	4	223	443	927	1148
Spey estuary	275	377	182	57	108	284	126	235

Other large coastal counts included c.200 on the sea off Lossiemouth east beach 3 Jan, 1700 Burghead Bay (off Findhorn beach) 1 Oct, 11 Gollachy Burn 18 Oct and 49 Carse of Delnies 13 Dec.

Regularly seen on seawatches off Lossiemouth harbour, especially in the autumn period: max. 17 on 12 Oct.

A single on the sea off Lossiemouth harbour 14 Feb.

On freshwater:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	10	21	11	nc	3	41	116	129	nc
Loch Loy	37	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	nc
Loch of Blairs	10	36	20	2	nc	3	11	nc	nc
Loch Spynie	310	25	nc	11	0	6	11	2	1
Cloddach quarry	450	574	96	nc	nc	nc	230	364	381
Nether Dallachy	nc	8	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loch na Bo	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Loch Oire	4	5	4	1	1	16	35	16	6

Other counts on freshwater included: 10 Cran Loch 18 Jan, 57 Miltonduff distillery 1 Mar, c.20 Loch Belivat 12 Mar, 106 Easter Bauds 25 Dec and 65+ Loch of Blairs 29 Dec. Well inland were 6 Loch Kirkaldy 6 Jan.

[Chiloe Wigeon *Anas sibilatrix*

Escape.

One was seen at Kingston 2 Feb (RHD). It is unclear if this record involved the regular individual last seen in 2010.]

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Very scarce visitor.

Loch Flemington: Seen in October-November; singles 27 Oct, 7 & 29 Nov (JDG), 2 on 10 & 25 Oct (JDG, T.J. Wells) and 4 on 18 Oct (KC, SW).

Findhorn Bay: A male in the Mosset Burn 7-8 May (RHD, RSC).

Loch Spynie: Pairs were seen on 17 Jan (DAG) and 19 Apr (HF). Otherwise, a single male 28 Feb, 20, 22 & 24 Mar (RG, CAG).

Lossie forest: A single on the gravel pit 23 May (MJHC).

Loch Oire: A male 2 Mar (EH).

Loch na Bo: A single male on several dates 1-27 Mar, and four males on 18 Mar (MJHC). A single male 16 Oct, 15 & 24 Nov and 6 Dec (MJHC).

Spey estuary: A pair 24 & 26 Apr (MJHC, KP) and a single on 25 Apr (RHD). During the summer, 4 on 30 May (MJHC) and 2 males on 18 Jul (AG). A single male 18 Sep (MJHC).

Teal *Anas crecca*

Scarce breeder and very common winter visitor.

Breeding: There were no records of confirmed breeding attempts this year.

Potential breeding sites occupied during the breeding season around the Dava included a pair Aitnoch 2 Jun, pair Burnside-Little Aitnoch 4 Jun, pair on a small pool Burnside 8 Jun, male Dunearn 14 Jun, two pairs Black Loch 16 Jun and a female Loch Allan 27 Jun. Away from the Dava area were 3 Lochs of Bogmussach 14 Jun. Earlier in the season at other potential breeding sites were: 5+ in a boggy area near Earlsmill (near Brodie) 17 Apr, a single on a lochan to the north of Black Loch 21 Apr and two Glen Brown 26 Apr.

Monthly maximum counts from main coastal/inland sites outside the breeding season were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	35	55	21	70	nc	12	4	28	nc
Carse of Delnies	nc	nc	6	nc	nc	200	50	nc	nc
Kingsteps	2	nc	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3
Loch Loy	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	nc
Cran Loch	450	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	190	nc
Lossie estuary	131	75	48	43	2	19	42	43	141
Loch Spynie	50	210	41	5	0	14	7	23	62
Spynie Canal	1000	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	500
Cloddach quarry	75	5	5	nc	nc	nc	32	60	10
Loch Oire	4	7	35	4	4	18	25	41	8
Loch na Bo	14	nc	79	nc	nc	0	1	12	11
Spey estuary	35	10	66	36	34	114	85	186	97

The estimate of 1000 at Spynie Canal 9 Jan was obviously the large congregation present on 14 & 22 Dec 2014. Previous large counts exceeding this were all at Loch Spynie: 1046 in 2000, 1700 in Nov 2002 and 1500 in Dec 2002.

Records received throughout the year (max. counts) at Findhorn Bay:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Findhorn Bay	76	109	180	268	56	18	12	68	440	80	93	152

Well inland during winter were 9 Rochuln (Loch Dallas) 21 Feb, 6 Loch Belivat 1 Mar and 2 Scootmore 7 Dec.

Other counts (max.): 200+ Hillhead (Forres) 27 Jan, 24 Dallachy pool 27 Jan, 8 Kinloss barracks 28 Jan, 117 Balormie pig farm 11 Apr, 12 Hatton pig farm 11 Sep, 170 Montgrew 15 Nov and 89 Easter Bauds 25 Dec.

Coastal records included: 5 Burghead 7 Mar, 4 Burghead Bay 11 Sep and 1 Portgordon-Strathlene 18 Oct.

A male showing mixed characters of Green-winged Teal × Teal was seen at the Lossie estuary on 31 Dec (DAG). A previous record of a male showing mixed characters was also on the Lossie estuary (10 Jan 2010).

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Rare visitor.

A male remained on the Lossie estuary between 15 Jan-14 Feb (TG *et al.*).

A male showing mixed characters of Green-winged Teal × Teal was seen at the Lossie estuary on 31 Dec (DAG). A previous record of a male showing mixed characters was also on the Lossie estuary (10 Jan 2010).



Green-winged Teal, Lossie estuary 16 January 2015 (Tony Backx)

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident breeder and very common winter visitor.

Breeding: The mean brood size from 10 broods was 7.4 chicks; the mean brood size for the previous 10 years is 7.0 chicks.

Inland: Breeding confirmed at Loch Stuart (Dava), Black Loch (Dava), Loch Belivat and on the River Spey (Aberlour-Laggan House). Also recorded in suitable breeding habitat at Loch Kirkaldy, Aldunie (Cabrach),

Auchmair (Cabrach), Ballindalloch, Carn Odhar (south of Assich Forest), Gallowhill Croft (Grange), Glen Brown and Glenlivet.

Coastal lowlands: Broods were seen at the Essil-Garmouth viaduct, Loch Flemington, Kingston, Loch of Blairs, Loch Spynie and Loch Oire. Also recorded in suitable breeding habitat at Budgate (Nairn), Nairn harbour, Lossie estuary, Spey estuary, Geddes House (Nairn), Househill (Nairn), Easter Lawrenceton, Tomnamoon and Balormie pig farm.

Best monthly flocks in regularly counted areas were:
Freshwater:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Loch Flemington	52	33	22	18	3	14	6	10	30	101	27	nc
Loch Loy	107	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	60	nc
Cran Loch	30	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	5	nc
Loch Belivat	nc	nc	20	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	40	39	nc
Loch of Blairs	30	nc	nc	nc	nc	9	24	23	10	70	nc	nc
Sanquhar pond	4	nc	nc	nc	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Cooper Park, Elgin	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	17	11	nc	10
Balormie pig farm	2	nc	12	21	41	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Loch Spynie	280	38	16	5	2	31	83	17	22	9	42	153
Cloddach quarry	226	127	37	nc	nc	nc	98	nc	nc	165	225	103
Loch Oire	2	67	51	13	14	41	58	nc	53	nc	9	25
Loch na Bo	250	nc	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	11	14	81
Nether Dallachy tip	11	2	nc	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

The 250 recorded on Loch na Bo 24 Jan is a very large count for the site. With the loch three-quarters frozen on the count day birds from others sites may have been concentrated on some of the only open water available locally.

Other freshwater sites holding more than 50 birds were: 100+ Loch of Blairs 3 & 10 Dec and 137 Easter Bauds 25 Dec.

Well inland in winter were: 2 Marypark (Blacksboat) 14 Feb, 2 Carron 24 Nov and 20 Scootmore 7 Dec.

Coastal sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	3	2	nc	nc	12	0	nc	16
Nairn	160	nc	56	84	48	154	127	nc
Nairn/Culbin Bars	81	6	68	nc	nc	108	nc	97
Lossie estuary	0	0	2	67	80	16	6	1
Spey estuary	46	22	nc	50	52	37	27	36
Strathlene-Portgordon	108	77	nc	nc	nc	85	nc	92

Maximum monthly counts throughout the year at Findhorn Bay were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Findhorn Bay	357	255	89	21	49	145	123	228	374	114	249	257

No other coastal site held more than 50 birds. Largest count was 36 Portgordon harbour 4 Jan.

A hybrid male Mallard × Pintail was present on the River Nairn 6 Sep and was different from the Mosset hybrid seen in late 2013 and early 2014 (AJL).

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Common winter visitor and migrant. Occasional breeder.

Loch Flemington: Two on 10 Oct (JDG).

Nairn: A male on five dates between 24 Sep-29 Oct around the Merryton Bridge and harbour area (RJFP *et al.*).

Loch of Blairs: A male 29 Dec (A&FR).

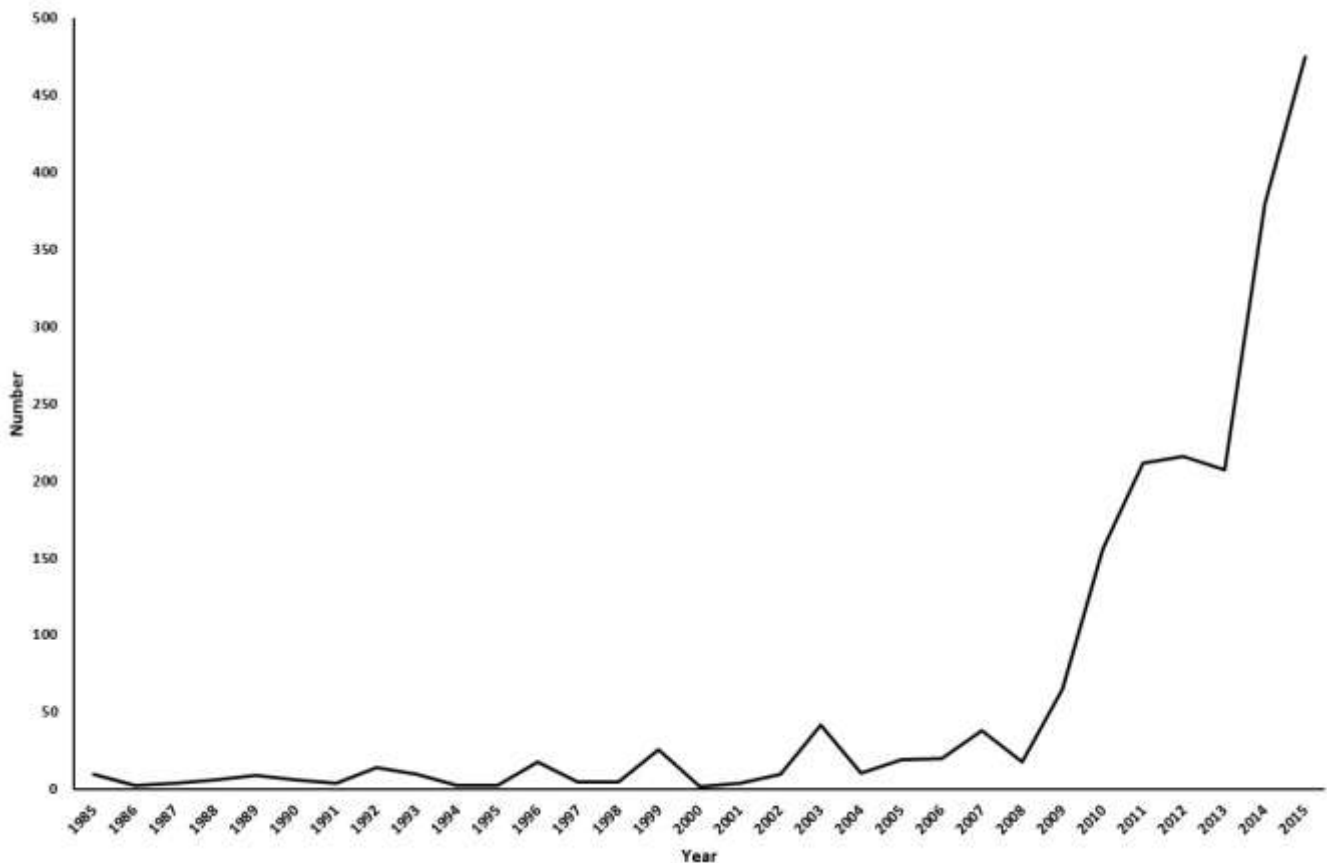
Findhorn Bay: The only month without a record was July. Present from 3 Jan-18 Jun and 17 Aug-31 Dec. With continued regular visits large numbers were again recorded during both periods providing 102 records in excess of 100 individuals, maximum count in each period was *c.*475 on 27 Feb (GM) and 368 on 28 Dec (GM). The estimate of *c.*475 now becomes the highest recorded total in Moray & Nairn with the previous highest, also from Findhorn Bay, being 380 on 7 Dec 2014.

Best monthly flocks in 2015 were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Maximum counts	368	475	377	95	6	1	0	2	49	191	340	368

(GM, RSC *et al.*)

Annual maxima of Pintail at Findhorn Bay 1985-2015:



Burghead Bay: Two on 16 Oct (TJW).

Cloddach quarry: A male on 8 Mar (HF).

Lossie estuary: Two on 25 Jan (PRG) and a single 31 Aug & 3 Sep (RP).

Loch Spynie: A female on 18 Jan and a male 13 Dec (JDL).

Spey estuary: A female present on three dates early in the year 17 Jan (RHD), 24 Mar and 16 Apr (MJHC) and two later in the year on 2 Oct (MJHC).

A hybrid male Mallard × Pintail was present on the River Nairn 6 Sep and was different from the Mosset hybrid seen in late 2013 and early 2014 (AJL).

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Very scarce migrant.

A male was present at the Mosset Burn on the south side of Findhorn Bay 14-16 & 25 Apr (AB, RSC, MGC *et al.*). Despite the nine-day gap, there is no reason to suspect that more than one bird was involved.



Garganey, Findhorn Bay 15 April 2015 (Tony Backx)

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Occasional breeder and scarce migrant.

Findhorn Bay: Present from 1 Jan-3 Feb (male), 5 May (pair), 7 Jul (3) and 7 Sep-31 Dec (max. 3 males & 4 females).

Cloddach quarry: A male on 17 Apr and a pair on 15 Nov.

Loch Spynie: A pair was present on 10 Jan and 18 Mar and one female on 18 Jan. Single birds of unknown sex were seen on 7 Feb, 13 Apr and 14 Nov.

Lossie estuary: An eclipse male 27 Aug was only the 11th record for the site.

Loch na Bo: A male on 18 Jan & 11 Feb and two females on 6 Dec.

Loch Oire: One on 14 Oct & 4 Nov, increasing to two on 26 Nov.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Very scarce winter visitor and occasional breeder.

Recorded at five sites: Loch Loy, Cloddach quarry, Loch Spynie, Loch na Bo and Loch Oire. Although seen at two more sites compared to 2014, this is still a scarce species in Moray & Nairn following the sharp decline in numbers from 2002 onwards.

Loch Loy: A male on 15 Nov (AD).

Cloddach quarry: A female on 11 Oct, and a male on 15 Nov & 13 Dec (MJHC, CAG).

Loch Spynie: A female reported on four dates between 3-29 Jan (RP, MK *et al.*) was the only record in the early part of the year. Later in the year, a male on 19 Sep (DAG) and two males 6-18 Nov (MJHC *et al.*), increasing to three males on 22 Nov (DAG) with only one remaining on 24 Nov.

Loch na Bo: Singles were seen on 18 Jan (female), 31 Oct and 15 Nov (female) (MJHC).

Loch Oire: One on 30 Jun and 17 Jul (EH).

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligala*

Scarce breeder and common winter visitor.

Breeding: Broods were recorded at Black Loch (Dava) (6 chicks), lochan opposite Black Loch (Dava) (5 chicks) and Loch Spynie (8, 6, 5 & 3 chicks), giving a mean of 5.5 chicks per brood.

The only other potential breeding site where birds were reported during the summer months was Loch Kirkaldy.

Monthly maximum counts (excluding ducklings) at main sites were:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Loch Flemington	4	1	11	4	1	6	5	5	4	6	11	nc
Loch of Blairs	nc	6	5	7	nc	nc	3	nc	nc	7	nc	8
Loch Spynie	50	48	60	69	11	17	53	40	88	78	84	53
Cloddach quarry	119	66	87	nc	nc	nc	14	nc	nc	42	35	24
Cooper Park	23	16	23	nc	nc	nc	nc	6	9	12	36	34
Nether Dallachy tip	5	7	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	0
Loch na Bo	24	nc	21	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	10	22	28	76
Loch Oire	9	17	45	50	30	49	60	36	59	10	21	11

Elsewhere, 6 Loch Loy 18 Jan (and 15 Nov), 5 in the quarry at Kingsteps 25 Mar, 4 Loch Belivat 7 & 17 Sep, 5 Brodie Castle pond 22 Nov and 15 Newmill ponds (Auldearn) 2 Dec.

A pair at Balormie pig farm 11 Jan.

Coastal records (max. counts) included: 12 Roseisle beach 1 Jan, 4 Wester Delnies 8 Jan, 14 Spey estuary 13 Dec (and 3 there 7 Nov) and a male Findhorn Bay 18 Jan-13 Feb & 29 Oct.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Scarce winter visitor.

Nairn: A female off the golf course on 9 Jan.

Findhorn Bay: A female on the bay 20 & 30 Jan and 9 Oct, and on the Mosset Burn 9-16 Oct.

Lossie estuary: A male on the estuary 8-11 Oct.

No inland records received and none recorded on seawatches off Lossiemouth.

Eider *Somateria mollissima**Scarce breeder, common offshore.*

Breeding: Two breeding records received; 6 ducklings at Portknockie on 11 Jun (KW) and a female with 3 ducklings at Findochty on 19 Jun (MJHC), giving a mean brood size of 4.5.

Regular counts (max.) from coastal areas:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Delnies area	7	nc	13	nc	nc	nc	9	24	11	14	nc	nc
Delnies-Nairn	13	43	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	10	78	nc	15
Nairn	17	12	6	9	4	nc	3	nc	nc	17	49	25
Culbin/Nairn Bars	3	6	4	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	nc	5
Findhorn Bay mouth	90	103	80	7	2	2	1	nc	nc	1	nc	nc
Burghead Bay*	104	80	68	12	7	nc	1	nc	51	38	222	17
Burghead*	30	12	95	75	nc	15	20	nc	25	93	250	221
Burghead-Hopeman	32	27	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	25	nc	263
Hopeman	8	nc	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	45	50+	12
Lossiemouth	20	50	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	nc	nc	100	nc	350
Spey Bay	17	8	3	11	nc	30	13	3	23	22	3	60
Portgordon-Strathlene	61	14	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	nc	23

* these counts often refer to the same birds which are sometimes off Burghead and at other times further west in Burghead Bay

Other counts were: 104 Portknockie 19 Mar and 34 Buckie harbour-Cullen 18 Apr,

In harbours (max. counts): c.30 Burghead 8 Jan and 52 Buckie 1 Feb.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis**Rare visitor.*

A male King Eider has been a regular winter visitor to the coast of Moray & Nairn since November 2009, with most records in the vicinity of Nairn or Burghead. Over the same period, a King Eider has been present in summer on the Ythan estuary in Aberdeenshire. Close examination of the dates of stay at these two locations shows no overlap and it is now considered that the same long-staying bird accounts for all records of King Eider since 2009. This position has been agreed by the SOC Recorders of Moray & Nairn and Aberdeenshire, and by Nigel Hudson, Secretary of British Birds Rarities Committee - and is set out in the Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2014 (*British Birds* 108:565-633).

In 2015, the King Eider was seen locally in Moray & Nairn initially off Kingston on 20 Jun (MJHC) having still been present at the Ythan estuary on the previous day. It was then seen intermittently off Carse of Delnies on 27 Jun (GP), 31 Jul (JAC) and 19 Sep (GP, JDG) before moving the short distance to Nairn 18 Jul (DMP, FT), 24 Sep (WM) and 16, 25 & 27 Dec (DMP, AJL, RG).

King Eider has now been recorded in Moray & Nairn in 24 of the last 40 years but, due to returning individuals, it is impossible to assess how many different birds have been involved.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis**Common winter visitor.*

Coastal records in summer (June-July): 1 female off Burghead maltings 12 Jul and 1 female at the river mouth on the Spey estuary 11-19 Jul.

Maximum monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	58	34	7	1	16	10	13
Nairn area	9	17	21	23	16	15	52
Nairn Bar	50	26	nc	4	63	nc	24
Culbin Bar	36	11	nc	nc	nc	nc	3
Off Findhorn	96	30	340	107	335	525	410
Findhorn Bay	2	2	2	2	5	6	0
Burghead Bay	96	84	36	121	1130	174	33
Off Burghead	40	75	169	150	79	169	100
Burghead-Hopeman	32	9	nc	nc	4	nc	16
Lossiemouth	17	38	41	296	63	72	96
Spey Bay	41	3	75	1100	25	30	121
Portgordon-Strathlene	9	14	nc	nc	1	nc	12

An exceptional spring build-up was noted in Spey Bay (off Tugnet). Numbers increased steadily from 75 on 3 Apr to 390 on 14 Apr, 980 on 21 Apr, 1030 on 28 Apr and a peak of 1230 on 5 May (MJHC). The flock dwindled rapidly thereafter.

Other counts (over 50): 94 Cullen 9 Apr and 60 Buckie harbour-Cullen 18 Apr.

Two (male and female) Burghead harbour 2-3 Apr and 2 Lossie estuary 6 Apr.

Inland: 1 Loch Spynie 2 Jan was the only record.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Common winter visitor, small numbers in summer.

Coastal records in summer (June-July): 7 Whiteness Head/Carse of Delnies 27-28 Jun, 12 Portknockie 11 Jul, 15 Burghead 17 Jul and 58 Burghead Bay 22 Jul.

Maximum monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	15	0	nc	nc	19	nc	8	1	2
Nairn Bar	64	2	7	nc	nc	nc	216	nc	387
Culbin Bar	9	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	13	nc	1
Off Findhorn	120	103	34	82	nc	37	100	9	82
Burghead Bay	74	150	250	68	75	160	65	75	11
Burghead	28	40	15	nc	6	12	28	17	30
Burghead-Hopeman	36	27	7	nc	nc	nc	0	20	46
Lossiemouth	4	5	10	37	15	12	13	17	4
Spey Bay (Boar's Head)	nc	20	nc	130	nc	6	390	362	430
Spey Bay (off Tugnet)	nc	nc	58	560	1	5	nc	nc	nc

A substantial late spring build-up in Spey Bay (off Tugnet) saw numbers rise from 80 on 14 Apr to 380 on 16 Apr, 560 on 21 Apr and 670 on 5 May (MJHC). Also 39 Lossiemouth 31 May.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

Fairly common winter visitor.

Another year with only low numbers reported.

Maximum counts for main areas were:

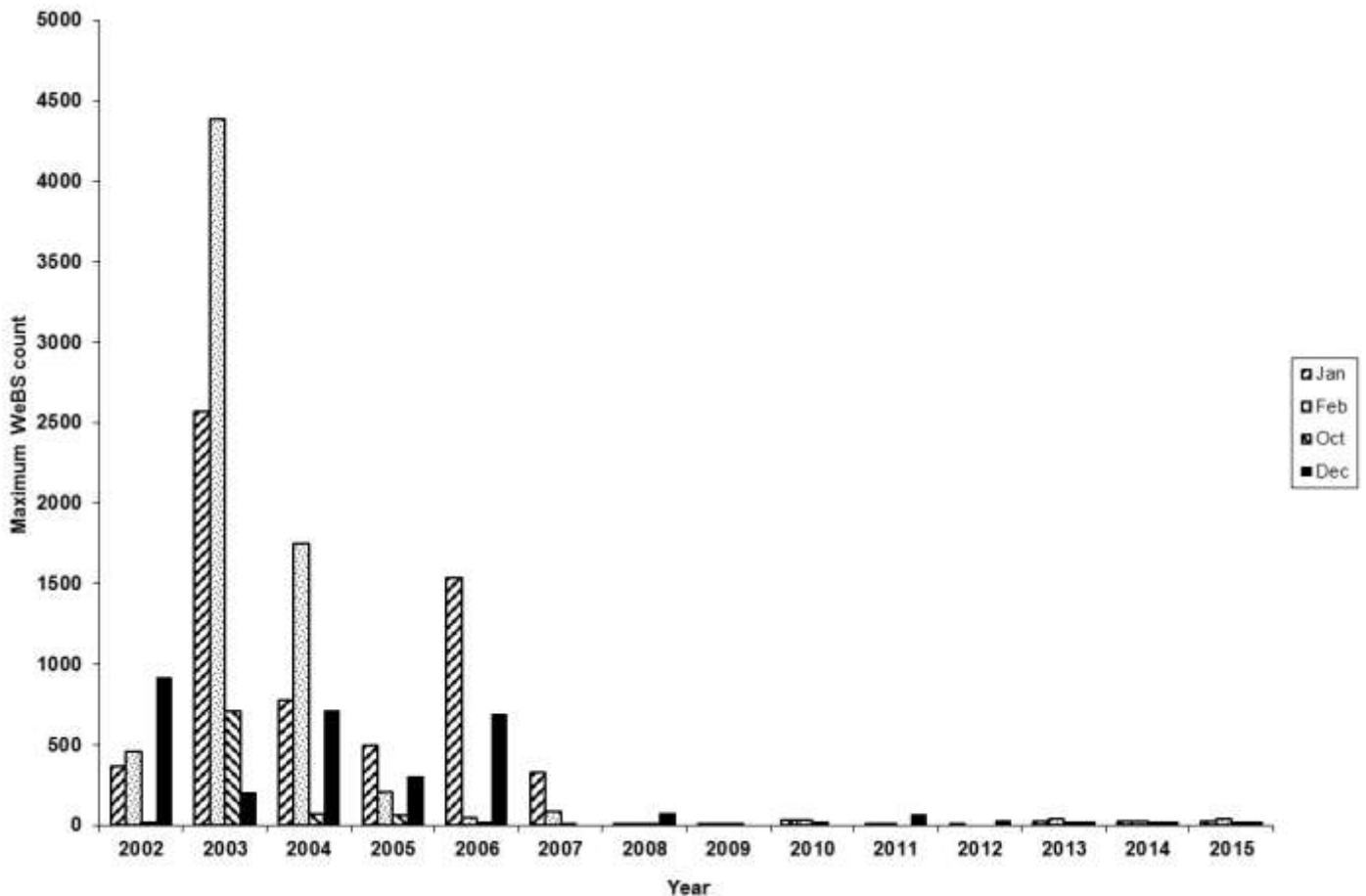
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn Bar	1	0	nc	4	nc	16
Off Findhorn	0	3	14	16	10	0
Burghead Bay	26	38	30	17	14	4
Burghead	5	1	nc	1	6	4
Lossiemouth	1	1	1	5	2	1

Elsewhere, a male Nairn 9 Nov.

In spring, there were 25 off Burghead 5 Apr, 6 Spey Bay (Tugnet) 6 Apr, 6 Burghead Bay 14 Apr, 3 Lossiemouth 15 Apr, 5 Boar’s Head Rock 17 Apr and 8 Spey Bay (Kingston) 25 Apr.

Summer records included 12 off Findhorn 20 May and 3 Delnies 28 Jun.

Recent WeBS counts show high numbers up to 2006 but very few from 2008 onwards (only two counts exceeded 50 individuals during this period: 75 Nairn/Culbin Bars Dec 2008 and 66 there Dec 2011):



Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Rare breeder and fairly common winter visitor.

Breeding: Nothing confirmed but a pair was on Black Loch (Dava) on 21 Apr (A&FR), and two juveniles on Loch Kirkaldy 30 Jul (MGC) may have been locally bred. Early in the season at potential breeding sites were a female Rochuln (near Loch Dallas) 21 Feb (MGC) and a female on the lochan opposite Black Loch 27 Feb (A&FR).

Summer records in the coastal strip included a female Lossie estuary 2 May, a female Loch Oire 14-15 Jun and 1 Spey estuary 24 & 30 Jul.

Maximum counts on most frequented lochs were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	12	13	12	9	nc	4	6	nc
Loch Belivat	nc	2	6	3	nc	nc	2	nc
Loch of Blairs	3	10	15	nc	nc	nc	3	10
Loch Spynie	9	9	21	10	0	7	8	12
Cloddach quarry	0	4	2	nc	nc	0	0	1
Loch na Bo	8	0	34	nc	0	5	6	11
Loch Oire	1	2	2	1	0	7	6	3
Nether Dallachy tip	1	3	2	9	nc	nc	nc	0

Elsewhere, a female Sanquhar pond 18 Jan, 5 Loch Loy 15 Nov, 3 Lossie Forest gravel pit 12 Dec, 11 Easter Bauds 25 Dec and a single Cran Loch 18 Jan.

Well inland later in the year were a female Black Loch (Dava) 18 Sep and 3 Loch Allan 14 Nov (still 1 on 31 Dec).

Unusual was a female Balormie pig farm 25 Jan.

On the River Spey were 8 Aberlour 4 Feb (and 2 on 10 Dec), 4 Blacksboat 14 Feb, 6 Craigellachie-Arndilly 13 Mar and 3 Boat o' Brig-Orton 15 Mar.

Maximum counts at most frequented coastal sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	5	14	7	nc	6	6	10
Nairn/Culbin Bars	4	3	8	2	nc	nc	14
Findhorn Bay	35	45	31	31	10	18	28
Burghead Bay	1	1	nc	nc	3	nc	nc
Burghead	1	0	nc	nc	5	nc	4
Burghead-Hopeman	5	7	nc	nc	7	nc	2
Lossiemouth	4	2	nc	1	20	3	1
Lossie estuary	2	4	2	1	nc	1	3
Spey estuary	11	8	13	12	10	14	35
Portknockie-Strathlene	2	2	nc	nc	5	nc	1

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Scarce breeder, fairly common offshore.

Breeding: A total of four distinct broods were reported from Findhorn Bay, these contained 12, 10, 4 and 1 ducklings (GM, RSC), giving a mean brood size of 6.8. In potential breeding habitat were 8 River Findhorn 26 Apr, 6 Spey estuary 1 May and 2 River Nairn (Howford Bridge) 28 May.

Coastal records in summer (May-July): 39 Whiteness Head 28 Jun, 17 Culbin point 29 Jun and 2 Nairn 18 Jul.

Regular monthly maximum counts at Findhorn Bay and Burghead Bay:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Findhorn Bay	22	18	13	38	14	5	33	17	24	8	10	8
Burghead Bay	7	11	14	33	2	2	nc	nc	11	41	31	10

Maximum monthly counts at other sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies area	4	12	5	4	12	4	1	2
Nairn	5	4	4	3	1	7	11	300
Nairn/Culbin Bars	2	4	4	3	180	134	nc	122
Burghead	6	4	4	4	nc	nc	7	7
Lossiemouth/Lossie estuary	3	2	3	2	4	4	1	1
Spey Bay	nc	nc	5	nc	1	5	3	2
Spey estuary	5	3	3	11	0	7	4	10

The count of 300 off Nairn on 9 Dec was regarded as a minimum (AM). Other notable counts included 6 Bow Fiddle Rock 25 Mar, 40 Carse of Delnies 5 Aug and 19 Burghead-Hopeman 13 Dec.

Inland:

Two on the River Nairn (Howford Bridge) 1 Feb then flew upriver.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Scarce breeder and fairly common visitor.

Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at three sites: female with a brood of 13 on Corrie Burn, Auchanhandoch (Dufftown) 30 May (FM), female with a brood of two on the Spey at Delnapot 8 Jun (NS, CA) and a brood of one in Findhorn Bay 29 Jul (GM). This gives a mean brood size of 5.3 chicks.

Seen in potential breeding areas: pair River Spey (Boat o' Brig) 15 Mar, 1 Auchlochan 28 Mar, 2 River Spey (Culquoich) 17 & 19 Apr, female Bridge of Dava 1 May, male & 5 females River Spey (Knockando) 2 May, female River Findhorn (near Banchor, Dulsie) 9 May, 2 males River Spey (Aberlour-Laggan House) 9 May and a 'redhead' Cabrach 9 Jun.

Maximum monthly counts:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Nairn	2	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	1
Culbin	nc	nc	1	nc	32	nc	17	nc	12	3	nc	nc
Findhorn Bay	2	nc	5	17	75	35	31	24	24	17	6	nc
Burghead Bay	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	35	29	70	9	nc
Cloddach quarry	1	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	nc
Loch Spynie	1	nc	nc	nc	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	10
Lossie estuary	nc	nc	nc	nc	9	nc	nc	38	27	6	11	nc
Loch Oire	10	6	3	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	24	23
Loch na Bo	7	nc	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	10
Spey estuary	5	3	7	24	49	84	166	184	108	284	nc	10

One record from inside a harbour involved a male Nairn harbour 28 Jan.

Elsewhere, 2 Mosset pond (Forres) 1 Feb, 5 Sanquhar pond 30 Mar, 20 Buckie 10 Jul, 8 Burghead 14 Sep and 3 Cummingston 16 Nov.

Inland in autumn and winter were: 3 Ballindalloch 14 Feb, 2 females River Findhorn (Logie) 20 Feb, 1 Marypark (Blacksboat) 14 Mar, female River Lossie (Elgin Cathedral) 23 Sep, 3 Loch Allan 2 Oct, 15 Montgrew 18 Nov and a pair River Isla (Keith) 5 Dec.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Rare summer visitor and breeder, occasionally more numerous.

Singing reported from only three areas again this year, at Darkland between 14-19 Jun (JDL), Dipple Farm (Fochabers) 8 Aug (HI) and the southern edge of Findhorn Bay at Netherton 10 Jul (RSC, JDG). In recent years the total number of singing Quail has varied as follows:

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
8	8	4	4	2	9	0	0	3	3

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Introduced scarce breeder. Commonly released.

Breeding was confirmed at two sites - at Auchanhandoch (near Dufftown) a nest with 12 eggs was found in a private garden on 17 Jun and at least three chicks were later seen on 3 Jul (FM), and another brood, consisting of 13 small chicks, was seen at Wood of Allachie (Aberlour) on 18 Jun (RJa).

Very large numbers are being released by some sporting estates *e.g.* at least 500 along a single track at Drynachan on 6 Aug (JAC). Also 50 seen in the Glenconglass area 6 Dec (JDG).

Away from the immediate vicinity of known releases for game shooting, reports consisted of much smaller numbers (maximum counts): 4 Dunearn 8 Feb, 2 Ferniefield (Lochhills) 1 Mar, 2 Delachule (Tomintoul) 2 Mar, 1 Glenlivet estate 14 Mar, 2 Clochan 21 Mar, 3 Banchor 29 Mar, 1 Fornightly 4 Apr, 2 Refouble 21 Apr, 2 Bogmoor-Tugnet 1 May, 2 Aitnoch 7 May, 2 Johnstripe 24 May, 1 Little Kildrummie 25 May, 1 Cunninghaugh 8 Jun, 2 Burnside (Dunearn) 14 Jun, 1 Whiteford 17 Jun, 1 Dulsie 19 Jun, 1 Glenshiel Farm (Darnaway) 29 Jul, 3 near Dunearn Lodge 2 Oct, 3 Dunearn Farm 26 Oct, 3 Refouble Farm 26 Oct, 5 Keith 2 Nov, 3 Bogeney 8 Nov, 3 Little Aitnoch 19 Dec and 27+ Moyness 19 Dec.

Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*

Very common resident breeder.

As usual, only a few reports. Largest numbers reported were: 13 Carnbrallan 24 May, 10 Knock of Braemoray 11 Jan (and smaller numbers there in March, June & December), 10 Carn Guish 18 Aug and 10 Altyre 16 Oct. Smaller numbers elsewhere: 3 Auchlochan 24 Jan, 2 Black Loch (Dava) 27 Feb, 5 Badnafrave Farm 2 Mar, 8 Glenlivet estate 14 Mar, 1 Ferness 5 Jul, 3 Glenmulliach 31 Jul, 6 Dunearn 2 Oct, 2 Loch Etchachan 21 Oct and 3 Moss of Birnie 20 Dec. Still surviving on Ben Aigan where 3 on 17 Jan.

Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta*

Fairly common resident breeder.

The largest counts on Ben Rinnes were 23 on 10 Oct, 18 on 3 Nov and 17 on 18 Dec (AE, DM). Smaller numbers on other dates included 8 on 1 Jan, 2 on 4 May, 1 on 25 May, 5 on 30 May, 2 on 12 Aug, 8 on 9 Sep, 6 on 1 Oct, 5 on 12 Dec and 11 on 29 Dec. In the Cairngorms, the largest counts were 30 Cairn Lochan 25 Jun (JP) and 23 Stob Coire an t-Sneachda (RI), with five other counts over 10: 12 Cairn Gorm 28 Feb, 12 Cairn Lochan-Cairn Gorm 26 May, 12 Ben Macdui 13 Oct, 12 Beinn Mheadhoin 3 Nov, 11 Coire Domhain 13 Oct and 10 Cairn Lochan-Cairn Gorm 30 Jul. Lower numbers were recorded from these areas in March, April, August and October. Also 9 Ben Avon 2 Aug.

Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*

Scarce resident breeder.

Recorded at Aitnoh (2 on 21 May, 3 on 26 May & 4 on 12 Oct), Altavallie (1 on 30 Sep), Altyre (1 on 16 Oct), Auchmair (Cabrach) (4 on 19 Apr, 8 on 23 May, 8 on 5 Jun & 7 on 12 Jul), Badnafrave (7 on 2 Mar), Berryburn wind farm (6 on 17 Jan & 1 on 19 Mar), Carn Biorach (2 on 27 Sep & 6 on 21 Oct), Drynahan (1 on 15 May), Dunearn (1 on 19 Apr & 4 on 12 Nov), Glen Brown (6 on 26 Apr), Glenconglass area (2 on 6 Dec), Hill of Bank (Cabrach) (1 on 9 Jun), Inchnacape (1 on 10 Jul), Knock of Braemoray (3 on 11 Jan, 1 on 18 Jan & 3 on 24 Jan), Little Aitnoh (1 on 21 May) and Tomintoul (9 on 13 Apr & 8 on 5 May).

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

Scarce resident breeder.

Breeding: Birds persist at very low densities in Moray & Nairn, spread across a number of fragmented forests. Leks or single cocks were located in nine areas, containing a total of 16 males, similar to 2011-2014. (GMa, RSPB).

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

Fairly common resident breeder.

No records confirming breeding were received this year. In the breeding season (April-July), birds were seen at Roseisle maltings (4 on 4 Apr, 8 on 29 Apr, 2 on 2 May, 1 on 23 May), Grangegreen (2 on 13, 17 & 23 Apr), Netherton (2 on 14 Apr, 6 & 21 May and 1 on 4 Jun), Gilston (2 on 16 Apr), Forres (2 on 29 Apr), Kinnudie Farm (Auldearn) (4 on 8 May), Darkland (2 on 7 Jun), Kinloss barracks (2 on 12 Jun & 2 Jul), Moyness (3 on 23 Jun), Scarffbanks Farm (1 on 25 Jun), Easter Lochend (2 on 1 Jul) and Mill of Grange (1 on 22 Jul & 2 on 25 Jul). At other times, 1 Wester Moy 4 Jan, 4 Brodieshill 12 Jan, 14 Scarffbanks Farm 2 Feb, 2 Oldtown (Roseisle) 13 & 17 Feb, 1 Easterton 17 Feb, 2 Kinloss 19 Feb, 2 Wester Colfield Farm 19 Feb, 2 Glenburgie 28 Feb, 2 Grangegreen 9, 13 & 25 Mar, 2 Seafield (Forres) 17 Mar, 3 Moyness 11 Aug, 2 Findhorn Bay (Carse area) 8 Sep (5 there 14 Sep, 1 on 21 Oct), 8 Kinloss barracks 28 Sep (2 on 1 Oct), 9 Gilston 3 Oct, 2 Hillhead (Forres) 8 Oct, 3 Newton of Struthers 15 Oct, 1 Darkland 26 Oct, 1 Binsness 18 Nov, 1 Lake of Moy 18 Nov and 10 Kintrae 13 Dec.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Very common resident breeder.

Widespread. Broods of downy chicks seen upcountry at Auchanhandoch and Dunearn. Two in a private garden Altonburn Lane, Nairn 27 Mar.

[Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii*

Escape.

A single Strathavon Lodge on 26 Mar (JC).]

[Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*

Escape.

A male (wing-clipped) was photographed at West Park Court, Elgin on 14 Jan (A.McCook *per* RP).]

[Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

Escape.

A group of 7 were regular in fields near Blacksmith's Cottage, Spynie 5-18 Apr.]

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Rare breeder. Fairly common autumn and winter visitor offshore.

Summer: Present on one lochan in south Moray. Records involved 2 on 1 & 23 May and a single on 21 Jul, while later in the season a single was seen on the same lochan on 7 Sep (A&FR). There was no evidence of breeding.

Best monthly counts at main coastal sites were:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Nairn/Delnies	2	9	3	nc	nc	11	nc	nc	9	3	1	6
Burghead Bay	6	10	8	3	3	nc	2	2	3	8	6	10
Lossiemouth (flying past)	9	7	3	5	7	0	0	1	3	4	21	27
Lossiemouth (on sea)	4	7	3	1	6	nc	nc	nc	1	4	2	3
Spey Bay	21	2	2	5	12	1	5	0	13	137	5	52

The 137 in Spey Bay on 16 Oct comprised 70 off Tugnet and 67 between the Boar's Head Rock area and Lossiemouth (MJHC). Elsewhere, a few were scattered along the coast at all seasons. No count exceeded seven. Mid-summer coastal records included; 1 Spey Bay 1 Jun, 11 Carse of Delnies 28 Jun, 9 Whiteness Head 28 Jun, 1 Findhorn Bay 25-26 Jun & 27 Jul, 2 Burghead Bay 15 Jul (1 on 19 Jul) and 5 (max. count) Spey Bay 19 Jul.

Single birds were seen inside Findhorn Bay opposite Findhorn village on 25-26 Jun and 27 Jul.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Rare breeder. Scarce autumn and winter visitor offshore.

Upland lochs: One pair bred for the 9th successive year. On 19 May, one adult was incubating and the other adult was nearby. On 19 Jun, the nest had been predated - otter spraint was found close to the nest and no birds were on the loch. (IH, IF).

Best monthly counts at main coastal sites were:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Burghead Bay	4	3	4	10	nc	nc	2	nc	nc	12	28	15
Lossiemouth (flying past)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4*	0
Spey Bay	1	0	0	1	32	2	0	0	5	6	0	2

* In total, 11 birds were seen flying past Lossiemouth in November (RP).

The usual small spring build-up in Burghead Bay resulted in a best count of 10 on 26 Apr (JP), though more unusual were 32 in the Boar's Head Rock area of Spey Bay on 6 May (MJHC). Early winter counts off Findhorn beach exceeded 25 individuals on five days in Nov: 4th (27), 5th (28), 6th (28), 8th (28) and 11th (26) (RSC, MJHC, GM). Although not regular off Lossiemouth during seawatches, November was also the peak month for passage, coinciding with peak numbers off Findhorn beach (RP).

Maximum counts from other sites included: 2 Nairn-Delnies 22 Feb, 1 Portknockie 19 Mar (& 30 Nov), 1 West beach, Lossiemouth 9 Apr, 1 Buckie harbour-Cullen 18 Apr, 1 Carse of Delnies 31 Jul, 2 Burghead maltings 9 & 30 Nov and 2 Nairn 27 Dec.



Black-throated Divers, Burghead Bay off Findhorn 2 November 2017 (Richard Somers Cocks)

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Scarce visitor offshore.

January-March: In Burghead Bay, from Burghead headland, and off Lossiemouth harbour 1-2 were regularly seen on the sea, with similar numbers flying past Lossiemouth.

Spring: Good numbers, especially in east Moray. The largest counts were 21 Portknockie (just west of Bow Fiddle Rock) 17 Apr and 27 Spey Bay (in the Boar's Head Rock area) 6 May (MJHC). Off Cullen caravan park numbers were much lower compared to 2014; 8 on 17 & 23 Apr, decreasing to 3 on 29 Apr, 2 on 2 May and 1 on 22 May (MJHC). Highest counts elsewhere at this season were 6 flying west off Lossiemouth 10 May (RP) and 3 Burghead Bay 15 May (RSC).

Offshore during June-August: 3 Burghead 9 Jun (DMP).

September-December: Offshore movement was detected again by regular seawatches off Lossiemouth (RP) - slightly later compared to 2014 with singles on 18, 19 & 29 Oct, singles also regular in November and December. Larger numbers noted in November on 11th (4), 14th (5), 20th (2) and 21st (8). Elsewhere, 1 Delnies area 26 Sep (& 24 Dec), 3 Burghead Bay 27 Oct and 1 Strathlene 28 Oct.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*

Rare visitor.

The only record involved a single off the caravan park at Cullen 8 May (MJHC) and is the 8th successive year that the species has been recorded in Moray & Nairn.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Common breeder, very common offshore.

Breeding: Return indicated by 25 back on ledges at Portnockie on 17 Jan. Eight were also noted on cliffs at Cummingston on 9 Feb rising to 14 pairs on 10 Apr and around 30-40 on 23 May. At the end of the year at least 8 were seen back at Cummingston on 29 Dec.

Passage: Counts in spring and early summer were relatively low with the highest totals past Lossiemouth being 19 in 30 minutes on 21 Mar, 44 in 1 hour on 15 Apr and 49 in 1 hour on 16 May. Late summer and autumn passage was much higher with 246 in 1 hour on 23 Aug and 262 in 1 hour on 31 Aug. By far the highest passage though was observed on 5 Sep with counts of 1304, 627 and 271 during a total of 3 hours sea-watching (RP). Other counts at this time included 154 in 30 minutes off Strathlene on 1 Sep, 28 seen off Burghead on 3 Sep and 125 off Portnockie on 3 Sep.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

Very scarce migrant in late summer and autumn.

Only a few sightings this year with the first single bird seen off Lossiemouth 2 Sep. Sightings of single birds were subsequently made off Lossiemouth on 10, 11 & 19 Nov (RP). The only other sightings were at Burghead with two on 5 Sep (AB) and one on 19 Sep (MJHC), and at Hilton of Delnies with a single bird also on 19 Sep (GP).

Annual totals since 2005 have been as follows:

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
23	1	38	11	0	7	605	11	1	27	8

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Fairly common offshore in summer and autumn.

First sightings of the year were 29 off Lossiemouth 23 Apr. Regular passage was seen at Lossiemouth between mid May and early September with the highest counts being 14 on 16 May, 20 on 1 Jun and 19 on 2 Sep (RP). Other sightings included 4 at Burghead 3 Sep (JDG) and 15 at Hilton of Delnies 19 Sep (GP).

Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

Summer and autumn visitor offshore, probably very common at night.

A total of 47 birds was caught at night for ringing at Portnockie between 25th July and 25th August. A further 4 ringed birds were retrapped there. (AY).

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Very common offshore in summer and autumn, fewer in winter.

At the start of the year very few sightings were reported in the first 2 months, mostly single birds off Lossiemouth and in Burghead Bay. By March a few more were seen with 17 off Burghead on 7th, 8 off Findhorn on 8th and 28 off Lossiemouth in 30 minutes also on 8 Mar.

Passage recorded past Lossiemouth between April-November (RP). Best days in each month were:

April: 442 in 1 hour on 11th.
 May: 396 in 1 hour on 28th.
 June: 389 in 1 hour on 6th.
 July: no count.
 August: 192 in 1 hour on 23rd, 200 in 1 hour on 31st.
 September: 280 in 1 hour on 5th, 290 in 1 hour on 20th.
 October: 464 in 1 hour on 12th, 501 in 1 hour 28th, 310 in 1 hour on 31st.
 November: 198 in 30 minutes on 13th, 333 in 1 hour on 16th

Elsewhere in autumn, counts of 200 or more included c.420 feeding off Tugnet on 15 Oct (mostly juveniles), 349 passing there in 20 minutes on 28 Oct (MJHC), 309 past Portknockie in 30 minutes on 3 Sep (LS), 335 off Findhorn 24 Sep (RSC) and 500 off Culbin Bar 26 Sep (RHD).

In winter at the end of the year, sightings were more numerous than at the start with 70 off Tugnet 12 Dec (MJHC), 25 off Burghead 26 Dec (RHD) and 215 past Lossiemouth in 1 hour on 26 Dec (RP).

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Rare breeder and fairly common winter visitor.

Breeding: Seven occupied nests at the small Covesea colony on 23 Jun (MJHC).

Counts of 25 or more were 30 at Covesea in vicinity of nests on 4 Oct, 25 Burghead 17 Aug (31 there 21 Sep), 35 Burghead-Hopeman 18 Oct, 26 Culbin Bar 18 Oct (27 there 13 Dec), 40 on Halliman Skerries (Lossiemouth) 18 Oct and 30 Portgordon-Strathlene 4 Jan (66 on 13 Dec).

Large numbers gathered at the mouth of the River Spey in December, where counts included 79 on 4th, 88 on 12th and an exceptional 145 on 19th (MJHC). The pattern of occurrence at selected sites is revealed by maximum monthly counts:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Spynie	7	5	5	4	1	0	0	0	4	5	3	13
Tugnet (mouth of Spey)	8	4	0	2	0	0	2	0	12	41	19	145
Findhorn (mouth of Bay)	21	8	13	5	14	0	3	24	14	27	31	54

Inland: Mostly at Loch Spynie - see table above. Elsewhere, 1 Loch Flemington 22 Apr, and singles at Loch na Bo on 18 Jan, 30 Jan, 10 Sep and 24 Nov. On the River Spey at Aberlour, 3 on 5 Jan. Two were at Loch na Bo on 1 Mar including one of the Continental race *P. c. sinensis* (MJHC). Other *sinensis* were sighted at Loch Spynie with one on 3 Jan and two on 1 Mar (RP).

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Fairly common breeder and very common visitor, chiefly in winter.

Breeding: At Portknockie/Bow Fiddle Rock cliffs, numbers were slightly up at 77 occupied nests on 16 Jun. Numbers also increased to 80 occupied nests at Tronach Head on 19 Jun. Little change at Covesea, where 21 occupied nests were counted on 15 Jun (MJHC).

Over the last ten years the occupancy of the three colonies (apparently occupied nests) has been as follows:

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Portknockie	49	73	79	79	76	85	93	86	66	77
Tronach Head	nc	21	23	26	60	58	53	86	72	80
Covesea	13	13	11	14	14	17	14	16	18	21

Away from breeding colonies, highest counts including 140 Buckie-Cullen 18 Apr, 80 in flight off Burghead 10 Oct, 173 off Lossiemouth 18 Oct, and around 100 Nairn 3 Dec.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Rare visitor.

One on 25 Jan at the Minister's Pool (Kingsteps), in which area it remained until 15 Apr (BB, IT *et al.*). This was the 10th record for Moray & Nairn.



Little Egret, Kingsteps 23 January 2015 (Sandy Cumming)

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Fairly common resident breeder.

Heronries: Two active nests at Connage 2 May, though only 1 on 9 Jul (MJHC), and 7 Loch Spynie 21 May (RP). Two recently fledged young were at Lossiemouth cemetery 14 Jun, these were from a nest adjacent to the cemetery but not located (RP). Several pairs nested at Aberlour near Walkers Shortbread factory (AE). Fourteen were in the heronry at Findhorn Bay 7 Jul (RSC).

As usual, the largest congregations were on the three estuaries where best monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Findhorn Bay	3	5	16	5	12	14	14	16	15	9	5	3
Lossie estuary	3	1	nc	3	2	8	nc	12	9	13	3	6
Spey estuary	1	nc	nc	1	1	5	6	3	2	1	4	3

Best days at each site were 16 Findhorn Bay 11 Mar & 13 Aug (RSC), 13 Lossie estuary 10 & 19 Oct (RP) and 5 Spey estuary 15 Jul (MJHC).

Migration noted when 5 flew high from the east and continued west over the Lossie estuary 5 Oct (MJHC).

The only count of five or more elsewhere was 6 Burghead 3 Sep.

Well inland (max. counts) were: 1 Auchmair (Cabrach) 19 Apr, 2 River Spey (Craigellachie-Ardilly) 22 Apr, 3 River Spey (Aberlour-Laggan House) 9 May, 2 Loch Allan 22 Jun and 3 Tomnavoulin 17 Oct.

Frequently recorded on rocky shores such as those between Burghead-Hopeman, at Lossiemouth harbour and west beach, and at Buckie.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Rare visitor.

Another series of records from Findhorn Bay. Two were present from 17 Jun-1 Aug (GM, RSC *et al.*), representing the sixth occurrence in Moray & Nairn, and quickly following the three present at Findhorn Bay in Jun-Aug 2014, and singles at Culbin Bar on 19 Oct 1964, Findhorn Bay on 2 Jul 1977, Loch Spynie on 11 Jul 1984 and the Spey estuary on 18 Jun 2013. On 17 Jun one was seen to have been colour-ringed (see 'Ringing Section'), details received showed it to be a chick from Vlissingen, Zeeland, The Netherlands. The colour-ringed individual was then seen at Cresswell Point (Northumberland) on 5 Aug and Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 6 Aug.



Spoonbills, Findhorn Bay 5 July 2015 (Gordon McMullins)

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Scarce breeder, scarce on the estuaries in winter.

Monthly maximum counts on main freshwater sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	5	2	4	2	nc	3	7	12	19	20	4	nc
Loch of Blairs	nc	nc	6	3	4	13	12	9	5	4	2	nc
Loch Spynie	1	3	5	7	3	2	8	6	26	15	2	2
Loch Oire	0	1	6	5	4	6	7	8	7	12	2	1

Mid-winter: Elsewhere on freshwater in January and December were 2 Cloddach quarry 18 Jan, 1 Newmill (Auldearn) 2 Dec, 2 Loch Spynie 4 Dec (1 on 29 Dec), 1 Easter Bauds 25 Dec and 3 Loch na Bo 29 Dec.

Present in spring/summer (*italics* = proved breeding) at Black Loch (Dava), *Cloddach quarry*, *Loch Allan (Dava)*, Loch Belivat, Loch Flemington, Loch Kirkaldy, *Loch of Blairs*, Loch na Bo, Loch Oire, Loch Park and *Loch Spynie*.

At other times of the year, 1-3 Brodie Castle lake, Loch Loy, Roseisle and Hilton of Delnies, with largest post-breeding congregations in summer/autumn at Loch Spynie (26 on 24 Sep & 23 on 15 Sep), Loch Flemington (20 on 16 Oct), Loch Oire (12 on 15 Oct) and Loch na Bo (9 on 16 Oct).

Coastal in autumn-winter: Regular in Findhorn Bay (mostly around the creeks of the south and west sides) where the highest count was 14 on 27 Dec. Maximum monthly counts here were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	5	3	nc	1	nc	2	3	7	11	12	14

Less frequently seen on the Lossie and Spey estuaries where maximum counts in each month were:

Lossie estuary 4 on 2 Jan, 2 on 8, 11 & 14 Feb, 1 on 28-29 Nov and 2 on 12-13 Dec.

Spey estuary 1 on 19 & 22 Jan, 2 on 22 & 28 Feb, 1 on 30 Oct, 1 on 22 Nov and 1 on 27-31 Dec.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce offshore in winter, formerly rare breeder.

Breeding: The second year without any breeding attempts being recorded.

Coastal: In Burghead Bay, monthly maxima were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	5	5	1	3	18	18	8
(22nd)	(11th-12th)	(25th)	(2nd)	(16th)	(10th)	(5th)	(12th)

Also 2 Burghead Bay 31 Jul.

Elsewhere, 1 off Lossiemouth harbour 6 Jan, 1 Nairn Bar 17 Feb, 2 off Nairn harbour 19 Mar, 4 Nairn golf club 24 Mar, 5 Nairn-Delnies 26 Sep, 1 Kingston lagoon 7 Nov & 25 Dec and 1 Delnies 18 Dec.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Rare breeder.

The only record, close to the most recent breeding area, was of a single bird on 23 Jun (MGC).

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Occasional breeder, reintroduced in Highland and North-east Scotland.

Breeding: For the second successive year, one pair bred near Cawdor, successfully raising three young (BE). Spring-summer records of single birds were received from three other localities in west Moray & Nairn. In winter, 1 over Nairn 28 Jan (RHD), 1 Carse of Delnies 28 Jan (RHD), 1 Loch Flemington 7 Nov (JDG), 1 Howford Bridge 16 Nov (PS), 1 Blackmill 12 Dec (PS) and 1 Drynachan 29 Dec (RG).

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Occasional breeder and very scarce visitor.

The only records at Loch Spynie were of a female on 7 & 29 Apr (AJL, DD). Elsewhere, 1 Findhorn Bay 1-2 Aug (SM, ACH).

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Rare resident breeder, very scarce migrant and winter visitor.

Breeding: Eleven pairs were located of which eight failed and the three successful pairs raised ten young between them (JKC, GR). 'Ringtails' were seen in spring in three localities in east Moray but no breeding pair was found (IF, CB).

Outside the breeding season, 1 Roy's Hill (Ben Rinnes) 1 Jan (HF), 1 Tomnamoon 10 Sep (MGC) and 1 Littlemill (Nairn) 27 Nov (RP).

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Rare resident breeder.

Breeding: Six pairs were located in Moray, and the nests of three of them were found. Two young fledged from each of the nests (AY). Single birds were seen in spring or summer in three other localities.

Winter: Single birds were seen at Loch Romach 22 Jan (MGC), Clashdu 18 Feb (MGC), Lossiemouth cemetery 21 Feb (AY) and Badnafrave 2 Mar (KR).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Common resident breeder.

Breeding season (April-July) records included birds/pairs at Belivat, Cluny Hill, Craigellachie, Croy, Drummur, Findhorn Bay, Forres, Gallowhill, Glenmulliach, Kinloss, Loch Flemington, Portknockie, Spey Bay, Tomnamoon, Urquhart and Well of The Lecht.

Additional localities at other seasons were Altonburn, Ardgyle, Balormie, Brackla, Burghead, Cairn Guish, Clochan, Coltfoot, Craigroy, Cummington, Duffus Castle, Easter Lochend, Hopeman, Howford, Kingsteps, Loch Kirkaldy, Loch Spynie, Lossiemouth cemetery, Lossie estuary, Moyness, Nairn, Portgordon, Shempston, Tugnet and Windyridge.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Common resident breeder.

Groups of five or more together were 12 Shempston 12 Sep (and 10 on 31 Aug, 8 on 18 Oct), 8 Newlands of Moyness 13 Mar, 7 Drynachan 29 Dec, 5 Blacksboat 14 Feb, 5 Kinloss 31 Mar, 5 Slagachorrie 8 Mar and 5 Tomintoul 15 Mar.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

Rare visitor.

One was at The Eachrach (Glenlivet) on 20 Apr (KD). This is the 14th record for Moray & Nairn.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Rare resident breeder.

Breeding: At the three usual/most recent breeding sites: i) two immature birds on 21 Feb and a different two immatures on 20 Apr (KD), ii) a pair reared one chick (KD), iii) a pair occupied the site but no young were reared (EW).

Away from breeding areas, 1 over Tomintoul 15 Mar (DS).

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce summer visitor and breeder.

Late arrival with first back in Findhorn Bay, and at a nest, on 4 Apr. 1 Cloddach quarry 9 Apr. Only six of 12 nest sites checked on 10 Apr were occupied (RHD).

Breeding: In west Moray & Nairn, eight pairs nested and laid eggs. One pair failed, probably at the hatching stage, and the remaining seven pairs raised a total of 17 young, giving a productivity of 2.1 young per laying pair. In east Moray, six (possibly seven) pairs were located. Six pairs laid eggs but two failed during incubation, probably due to poor weather. The four successful pairs raised a total of nine young - a productivity of 1.5 young per pair. (RHD).

Largest congregations, as always, were in Findhorn Bay where highest counts were 6 on 31 Jul, 10-11 Sep and 14 Sep. Elsewhere, 5 Lossie estuary 4 May and 4 Spey estuary 1 May. Last of the year was 1 Findhorn Bay 24 Sep.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Scarce breeder and winter visitor.

Breeding: Detected in the breeding season only at Loch Spynie, where 3 calling on 24 Apr (RP). At other times, present all months at Loch Spynie with 1-2 visiting feeders close to the hide, though largest count was 5 on 9 Feb (CAG). Elsewhere, 1 Loch Oire 6 Aug (EH), 1 Loch Flemington 26 Sep & 16 Oct (RJFP, JDG), 1 Chapelton wetland (Forres) 2 Oct (J&BS) and 1 Mosset Burn (Findhorn Bay) 15 Nov (JH).

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Fairly common resident breeder.

Breeding proved (*italics*) or probable at *Loch Flemington, Loch of Blairs, Loch Oire, Loch Park* and Loch Spynie. All counts over 10 individuals occurred at Loch Flemington where highest was 21 on 18 Oct. Best counts elsewhere (over five individuals) were: 8 Gilston 25 Jan, 8 Loch of Blairs 12 Nov and 7 Loch Oire 8 Oct. Low numbers recorded elsewhere at Black Loch (Dava), Brodie Castle estate, Chapelton (Forres), Cloddach quarry, Earlsmill (Dyke), Kingsteps (Nairn), Loch Loy, Loch na Bo, Mosset Burn (Findhorn Bay), Nairn, Newmill (Auldearn) and Spey estuary.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Scarce resident breeder and winter visitor.

Breeding proved (*italics*) or probable only at *Loch of Blairs, Loch Oire* and Loch Spynie.

Maximum monthly counts on main lochs were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	20	4	nc
Loch Spynie	14	10	12	12	2	nc	1	1
Loch na Bo/Oire	2	1	9	3	2	1	nc	2

Elsewhere, 2 Loch Loy 15 Nov. Unusual was a single on the Cooper Park pond, Elgin on six dates between 20 Sep-29 Nov: previously only recorded in six years between 1987-2014 (RP).

Crane *Grus grus*

Rare visitor.

One was seen at Ardivot on 2 Nov (AJL) and 2 Craigellachie on 11 Dec (FM).

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Rare visitor.

Two adult birds were first seen at 8am on Lossie estuary on 16 Apr (EO). What is assumed to be the same birds were later re-located at 10:30am on a flooded part of Balormie pig farm to the west of Lossiemouth (RP, HF, MJHC, DM). This is the eighth record for Moray & Nairn. Apart from an old record from 1887, there have been five records in the period of 1969-86 and one from 2010.



Avocet, Lossie estuary 16 April 2015 (Elaine Ogilvie)



Avocets, Balormie pig farm 16 April 2015 (Bob Proctor)

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Very common resident breeder, winter visitor and migrant.

First inland, although still near the coast, was 1 Dallachy tip pool 27 Jan. The next inland record was of calling heard in Elgin on 12 Feb. Also in Elgin, a pair at Cooper Park 13 Feb and, in the Town Hall area, 1 on 15 Feb and a pair on 17 & 21 Feb. At The Wards (Elgin) were 2 on 15 Feb and 22 Feb. Reports during February from breeding sites: Forres Academy 16th, The Oaks (Elgin) 21st and Dr Gray's Hospital 25th. Breeding site records in the coastal fringe during March included two on the roof of Lidl's supermarket (Elgin) on 2nd and two on a demolition site near the old railway station in Elgin on the 11th and 25th. Other March records came from Mill of Tynet 2nd, Fochabers 3rd, Urquhart 13th & 25th, Forres 18th & 21st, Nairn 18th and North Crannoch 21st. During March, the tern nesting platform at Loch Spynie regularly held up to four resting birds.

First up-country were 1 Aberlour 13 Feb, 1 Balvenie (Dufftown) 16 Feb and 5 Aberlour 17 Feb. On 15 Mar one was on the banks of the River Spey at Blacksboat and a pair at Knockanioch. Pairs were reported north of Rothes 18 Mar, Bogeney 28 Mar, Auchmair (Cabrach) & Dunearn 29 Mar.

Pre-breeding inland flocks included 56 Cloddach quarry 22 Feb with 23 there on 29 Mar. At Balormie pig farm (Drainie) were 13 on 28 Feb, 22 on 13 Mar and 7 on 22 Mar. At Aberlour, 79 on 2 Mar. Eleven were at Lethen and 6 at Moyness 12 Mar. Loch Flemington held 12 on the 14 Mar and 23 on 22 Mar. Near Tomintoul there was a gathering of 25 on 22 Mar.

Breeding: In April, display flight noted Linkwood (Elgin) 3rd and a pair was establishing breeding territory at Tomnamoon on 4th. Copulation was observed at Balormie pig farm (Drainie) on the 16 & 19 Apr. At Elgin cemetery there was a clutch of two on 18 Apr and an adult still incubating there on 15 May.

Although Oystercatchers often visit the tern nesting platform at Loch Spynie prior to the breeding season this is the first time that they have actually nested there. A clutch of 2-3 eggs had been laid by 24 Apr and the pair with a young chick and an unhatched egg were noted between 19-31 May. On 4 Jun the chick had been left alone on the platform and was seen to be pecked by a Common Tern and Black-headed Gulls. On 6 Jun, both adults and chick had gone.

During May in the Nairn area, 7 Auchnaclioch, and piping heard at Little Kildrummie on 1st, 1 Maviston 20th, one adult incubating Old Newton of Budgate 20th, piping at Househill 22nd, an adult with one chick Balmakeith Industrial Estate 25th, single adults at Drumduan and Woodend 27th, and a territorial adult Brackla farm 29th. On the banks of the River Spey were four pairs between Essil-Garmouth viaduct on 5 May, two nests and one single bird between Garmouth viaduct-Tugnet on 8 May, and three pairs and two

single adults on the same stretch on 10 Jun. Further upstream, one pair between Aberlour-Laggan House 9 May. Elsewhere, there was an incubating adult at Broomhill (Duffus) 1 May, a brood of one chick at Moray College (Elgin) on 14 May and at Lossiemouth cemetery there was an incubating adult 16 May and adults with two broods 5 Jun. A pair nested at Lhandbryd Parish Church (clutch of two eggs on 6 Jun), a downy chick was close Elgin Town Hall on 29 May and two breeding pairs were at Garmouth on 7 Jun. Anxious pairs were at Kingston on 14 Jun and on the beach at Covesea on 23 Jun. At The Oaks (Elgin) a full-grown chick was still being fed by adults on 25 Jun. Up-country, a pair with a nest at Burnside 9 May, two pairs in the Aldunie to Milltown area (Cabrach) 7 Jun, a pair nesting beside the road at Little Aitnoch 8 Jun and two adults with a chick at Craigroy on 15 Jun.

Inland post-breeding flocks included 16 Loch Kirkaldy 11 Jun, 30 Marypark 19 Jun and 85 Cloddach quarry 19 Jul.

Spring, summer and early autumn peak counts of ten or more at coastal localities:

April: 206 Findhorn Bay 1st & 21st, 10 Nairn harbour 4th, 12 Lossie estuary 5th, 24 Auldearn 7th and 100 Nairn Bar 13th.

May: 175 Findhorn Bay 5th.

June: 99 Findhorn Bay 24th.

July: 396 Findhorn Bay 29th, 18 Hopeman 13th, 27 Spey estuary 16th and 165 Lossie estuary 24th.

August: 350 Carse of Delnies 5th, 15 Spey estuary 7th, 560 Findhorn Bay 23rd, 38 Lossie estuary 24th, 1000 Nairn bar 27th and 32 Burghead 31st.

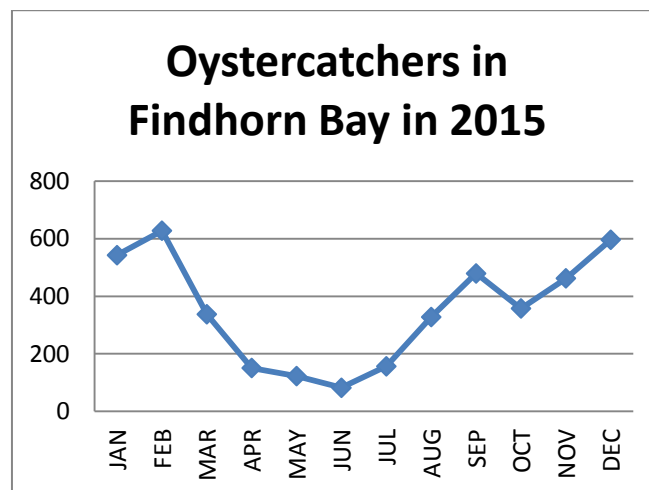
September: c.175 Burghead 11th, 15 Nairn 13th, c.140 Cummington 15th & 28th, 20 Carse of Delnies 19th, 52 Lossie estuary 19th and 758 Findhorn Bay 21st.

Winter maxima at the coast were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	701*	605*	1392*	1281*
Findhorn Bay	925	826	715	747
Burghead-Hopeman	105	77	182	223**
Lossiemouth	97	95	69	44
Portgordon-Strathlene	59	68	100	84

*Combination of Nairn & Culbin Bar counts – counting carried out concurrently. **Burghead only. Outwith the above dates there were maxima at Findhorn Bay of c.750 on 1 Mar and 930 on 15 Nov. Elsewhere, 101 Cummington 16 Oct and 800 east Nairn 27 Dec.

In Findhorn Bay, average daily maxima in each month were as shown below:



Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola**Scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor.*

Highest counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	20*	5	9	1	0	9
Findhorn Bay	0	0	17	14	0	0
Lossiemouth	3	3	2	1	1	1

*Combination of Nairn & Culbin Bar counts – counting carried out concurrently.

Notable counts were 20 Nairn/Culbin Bars 4 Jan (AY, GP) and, in Findhorn Bay, 17 on 25 Sep (GM) and 14 on 8 Oct (RSC).

The last record prior to departure to breeding grounds was 1 Findhorn Bay 24 Apr and the first back were 2 Nairn Bar 22 Jul.

2015 was another poor year with low numbers. The highest counts since 2005 have been:

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
30	18	17	20	24	11	46	27	16	16	20

The highest Grey Plover count in Moray & Nairn was 130 at the Bars on 14 Oct 1978.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria**Common breeder, migrant and winter visitor.*

Only one early up-country record, of a single bird at Ruthven Farm (Tomintoul) 8 Feb. No other reports until 5 Dunearn 16 Apr and 2 near Boghole Farm 17 Apr.

Small pre-breeding flocks were at Refouble Farm (11 on 1 May, 12 on 21 May) and at nearby Dunearn (8 on 7 May).

Breeding: At Cairnbrallan there was a nest with a clutch of three on 24 May; 4 other adults also noted nearby and at the same location were 5 adults on 5 Jul (FMc). Also 1 Whitefold 17 Jun. On the Cairngorms plateau, 2 were just south-west of Cairn Gorm on 27 May.

Spring passage: In April, a large flock built up around the southern side of Findhorn Bay, often in fields between Netherton and Grangegreen. Counts of this flock included 370 on 13th, 450 on 14th, 634 on 16th, 575 on 19th and 349 on 21st. Then a steady decline with few remaining by the end of the month. Elsewhere, 6 in a field at Tugnet on 24 Apr.

Post breeding flocks from up-country were 3 Cairn Lochan 13 Aug, 26 MacHattie's Cairn 20 Aug, 20 Ben Rinnes 19 Sep (and 15 on 1 Oct, 50 on 3 Nov), 16 Hill of Mackalea 27 Sep, 9 Corryhabbie Hill 30 Sep and a large gathering of 120 Corsemaul (Dufftown) 10 Oct.

The first back in Findhorn Bay (presumably returning from breeding grounds) were 3 on 16 Jul. Passage suggested by a flock of 60 which flew east past Lossiemouth on 1 Sep.

Winter coastal maxima were:

	Jan	Feb	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Kinloss	4	87	nc	12	55	nc
Findhorn Bay	142	151	82	298	c.465	248

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce summer visitor and breeder.

All records from the Cairngorms plateau area.

In the Cairn Lochan area, 2 on 23 May (PRG), one pair on the ridge and another on the summit 26 May (JLS). In the same area in June, 2 on 4th (ICB) and 3 on 25th (RPi). On 13 Aug one adult was seen there with three young (FN).

In the Lochan Buidhe area, 3 on 23 May (PRG) and 4 on 27 Jun (MKi). Around Cairn Gorm were 3 on 27 May (GS), 7 adults and 2 juveniles on 24 July (DM, DAG) and 1 on 20 Aug (GB).

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Scarce resident breeder and very common migrant.

Breeding: Inland, 2 pairs Newton Nursery 1 Jun (AY). At Lossiemouth east beach on 2 Jul were two pairs with a brood of two chicks each, then on 11 & 14 Jul there was one pair with four chicks (MS, DAG). Further east, one pair bred at the mouth of the Spey, raising one young (MJHC).

Pattern of occurrence in Findhorn Bay and at the Lossie and Spey estuaries (maximum monthly counts) was:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
F Bay	20	27	39	219	1200	156	6	238	51	36	41	24
Lossie	11	11	19	44	48	0	0	33	77	14	13	9
Spey	0	0	8	27	112	44	33	45	2	0	0	0

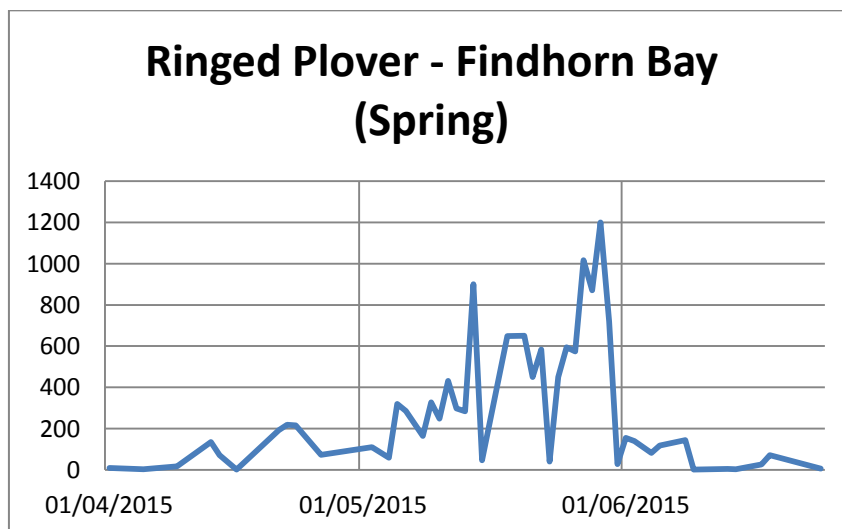
Winter maxima at the coast were:

	January-February	November-December
Nairn/Culbin Bars	17	34
Findhorn Bay	27	41
Kinloss	22	0
Burghead-Hopeman	6	7
Lossiemouth	11	13
Portgordon-Strathlene	35	16

Elsewhere, 42 Delnies 21 Feb.

Spring passage (April-early June)

Findhorn Bay: regular counts during this period are shown in the graph below indicating strong passage in the last three weeks of May with a peak of 1200 on the 29th.

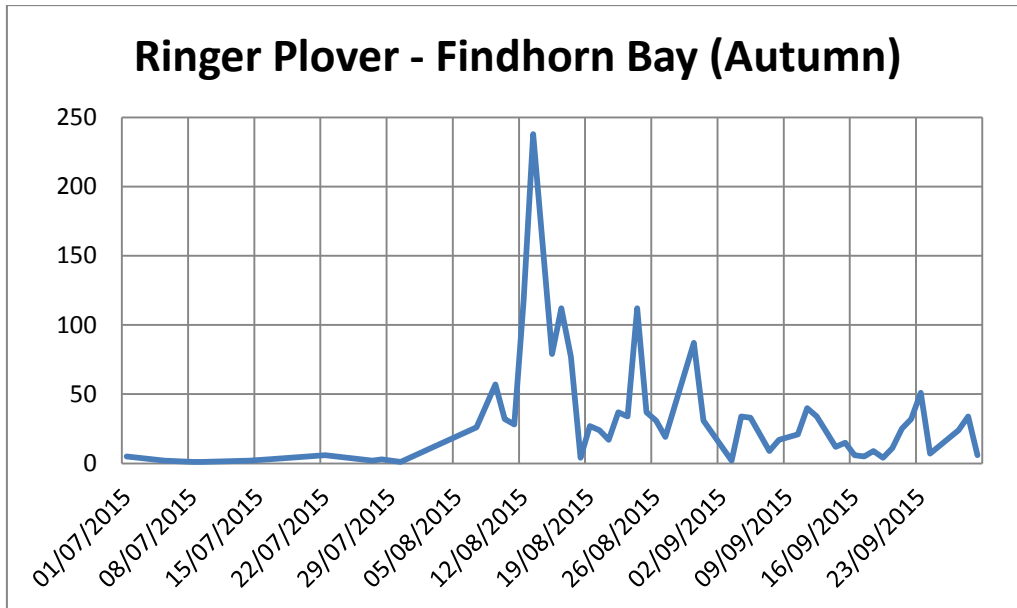


At the Spey estuary the highest count was 112 on 25 May and at Lossiemouth 63 on the 28 May, both corresponding well with Findhorn Bay.

Also in spring, sightings at Balormie pig farm included 3 on 8 Mar, 1 on 25 Apr, 2 on 30 Apr and 1 on 3 May. Ten flew west past Muirton on 24 May, probably heading to Balormie.

Autumn passage (July-September):

Findhorn Bay: regular counts during this period are shown in the graph below indicating peak passage in August, with a maximum of 238 on the 13th.



At the Spey estuary the highest count during this period was 45 on 7 Aug but at Lossiemouth the peak was during September, with 77 on the 18th.

There was a very unusual sighting of two near the summit of Cairn Gorm on 9 Aug (PRG).

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Rare summer visitor and breeder.

On the lower River Spey, a pair was seen on 23 May, and a juvenile was on the Spey estuary on 24 Jul (MJHC). Despite the absence of sightings during the intervening period, it seems likely that breeding took place here again, probably on a shingle island between the river mouth and Garmouth viaduct.

Elsewhere, in spring, 1 Findhorn Bay 4 May (AS) and 2 Speyslaw 6 May (MJHC).

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Very common migrant breeder, small numbers in winter.

First up-country were 3 Auchanhandoch 15 Feb.

Pre-breeding flocks up-country included 72 near Aberlour 19 Feb, 60 Upper Cabrach 9 Mar, 64 Glen Brown 15 Mar and 60 near Tomintoul 22 Mar. Small numbers were also reported at Shenvault 28 Feb, Bogoney 12 & 28 Mar, Coldburn 15 Mar, Black Loch (Dava) 17 & 29 Mar and Dunearn 29 Mar.

Breeding: In the coastal lowlands, breeding was confirmed at Newton Nursery (nest with four eggs on 14 Apr and two pairs on 1 June), four pairs on eggs at Roseisle Maltings 24 Apr and three downy chicks at Balormie 16 May. Up-country, territorial birds were at Tomnamoon 4 Apr, six pairs at Shenvault 25 Apr, three pairs Corglass (Knockando) 5 May, two pairs (including one with a brood of three chicks) at Balmore

9 May and one pair at Burnside 9 May & 4 June. Seven pairs were in the Aldunie/Milltown area of Cabrach 7 Jun. The only post breeding flock from up-country was 30 Ballindalloch 14 Jun.

During October, flocks of 100 or more included 180 Carse of Delnies and 130 at Hilton/East Delnies on the 10th and, in the Balormie/Silverhills area, 180 on the 19th, 330 on 21st, 149 on the 25th and 232 on the 28th. In mid-winter (January-February and November-December) the largest numbers were at Balormie/Silverhills where monthly maxima were 656 on 11 Jan (the highest count of the year), 396 on 1 Feb, 570 on 24 Nov and 520 on 4 Dec. Elsewhere, flocks of 100 or more were 300 Carse of Delnies 8 Jan, 100 Braes of Enzie 24 Jan, 120 Loch Dhu 6 Feb, 130 Glenburnie 26 Feb and 100 south-east of Lossiemouth 2 Nov.

The pattern of occurrence over the year at Findhorn Bay and the Spey estuary (maximum monthly counts) was:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
F Bay	0	5	2	10	8	4	19	8	179	67	0	c.70
Spey	12	0	0	0	0	14	48	c.150	4	2	45	65

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Scarce migrant.

Spring: First of the year was 1 Covesea 6 Mar (MJHC). This is the earliest ever record for Moray & Nairn and predates the previous earliest (8 Apr 2014) by more than one month. Although such early return dates have been noted before in Scotland, it is perhaps equally possible that this was an over-wintering bird that had remained previously undetected. The next record was a more typical first-arrival date of 19 Apr at Lossie estuary. Throughout April, May & June 28 coastal records were received from Findhorn Bay in the west to Cullen in the east. Twenty-four of these records were of one or two birds, the largest group being 4 Findhorn Bay 4 May.

The table below shows the spring arrival dates for the preceding ten years:

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
22 Apr	23 Apr	22 Apr	27 Apr	24 Apr	22 Apr	21 Apr	4 May	21 Apr	8 Apr

Autumn: Extreme dates of passage were of 2 on 3 Jul and 1 on 8 Oct, both in Findhorn Bay. Fifty-four records, mostly of one or two birds, were received but duplication is probable. The only two flocks of 10 or more were 10 Lossie estuary 19 Jul and 12 Spey estuary 5 Aug. A short distance away from the coast were single birds at Whiteash Hill Wood 21 Jul, Loch Spynie 2 Aug and Montgrew 12 Aug.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Common breeder. Very common migrant and winter visitor.

Breeding: A pre-breeding flock of 30 was at Tomintoul 22 Mar. Records from potential inland breeding grounds included 1 Moyness 17 Mar, 3 Auchmair 29 Mar (also 2 there 19 Apr and 6 on 5 Jun), a pair Tomnamoon 30 Mar, 2 Dunearn 16 Apr, 1 near Boghole Farm 17 Apr, 1 near Aberlour 13 May, several near Tomintoul 16 May and 2 Burnside/Little Aitnoch 4 Jun (also 4 there 14 Jun). In the Cabrach area, five pairs counted in the Aldunie area 6 Jun, a pair displaying Dykeside 9 Jun and, on 20 Jun, a pair with two chicks at Aldunie and a pair with three chicks at Torniechelt. Elsewhere inland, 1 Gallowhill 8 Jun, 3 Loch Kirkaldy 8 Jun, 1 North Crannoch 11 Jun and 1 Whitefold 17 Jun.

The highest counts of post-breeding flocks in early summer/autumn from the most popular coastal locations were:

	June	July	August	September
Findhorn Bay	213	504	430	453
Lossiemouth	0	0	58	32
Spey estuary	22	75	120	90

Coastal winter maxima were:

	January	February	October	December
Nairn/Culbin Bars	341*	135*	124*	209*
Findhorn Bay	423	297	512	310
Burghead-Hopeman	52	1	7	2
Lossiemouth	5	16	114	12
Portgordon-Strathlene	9	18	11	7

*Combination of Nairn & Culbin Bar counts – counting carried out concurrently.

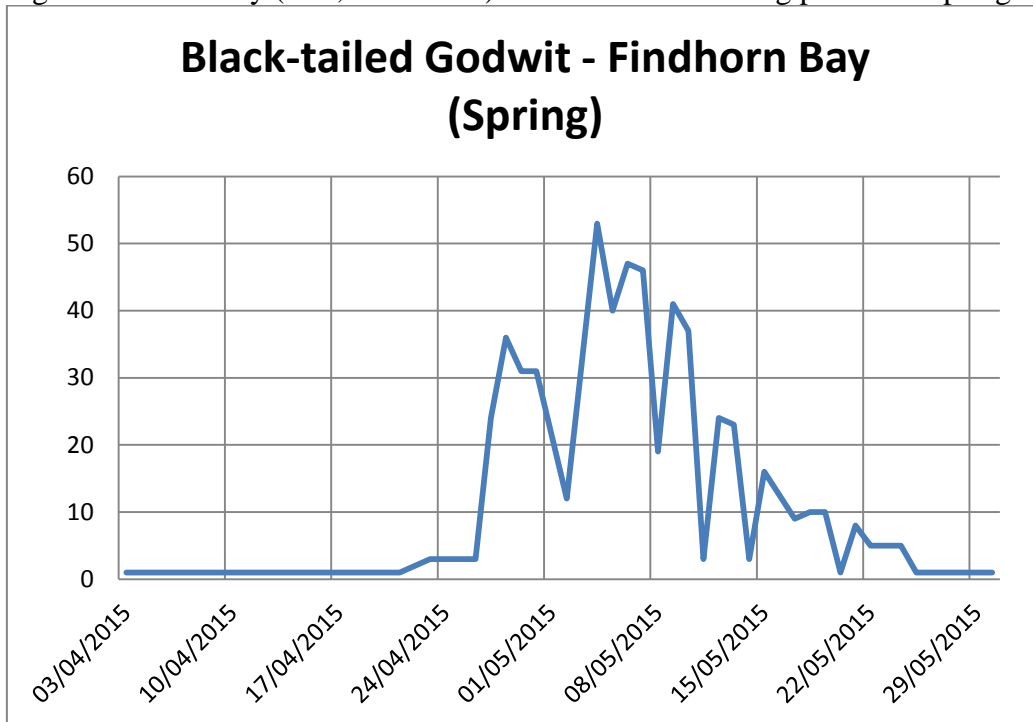
The only inland site to consistently hold large numbers in winter was Cloddach quarry where maximum monthly counts were 215 on 18 Jan, 243 on 22 Feb, 220 on 11 Oct and 16 on 6 Dec. Elsewhere, 53 Balormie pig farm 13 Dec.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Fairly common migrant, rare in winter.

Winter: The over-wintering bird first seen in Findhorn Bay in December 2014, remained there from January through to April.

Regular counting in Findhorn Bay (GM, RSC *et al.*) revealed the following pattern of spring occurrence:



The peak count was 53 on 4 May

Elsewhere, 1 Spey estuary 17 Apr and 6 Lossie estuary 12 May. A short distance inland, at Balormie pig farm, were 1 on 19 Apr and 7 on 25-26 Apr. Last in spring was 1 Findhorn Bay 30 May.
Autumn (July-November): First to return was 1 Spey estuary 2 Jul.

Monthly maxima from the main sites were:

	July	August	September	October
Findhorn Bay	1	16	18	13
Lossie estuary	0	4	0	2
Spey estuary	1	15	9	0

Elsewhere, c.15 Nairn 8 Aug.

Inland records: Eight or more were at Montgrew on 10 days in August with a maximum of 18 on 27th, also 1 on 2 Sep. Elsewhere in August, 6 Hatton pig farm (Kinloss) on 24th (and 2 on 21st and 26th). Still present most days in Findhorn Bay in early November with a maximum of 9 on 2nd and the last record being 4 on the 15th. A single bird was near the entrance to Roseisle Forest on the 10th.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Common winter visitor and migrant. Small numbers in summer.

Monthly maxima at main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	145*	107*	120	nc	59	nc	54*
Nairn	80	38	9	4	c30	8	30
Findhorn Bay	45	41	10	4	45	13	19
Burghead/Hopeman	9	50	nc	12	20	48**	37
Lossiemouth	9	8	9	2	4	3	4

*Combination of Nairn & Culbin Bar counts – counting carried out concurrently.

**Burghead west beach

Elsewhere, 85 Kingsteps 30 Jan.

Maximum annual count at any site since 2005 has been:

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
215	300	436	198	75	107	204	150	90	137	145

The last count exceeding 1000 was back in winter 1996-97.

During April & May, the only count of 10 or more was 10 Findhorn Bay 4-9 Apr. Last in spring was 1 Findhorn Bay 23 May and first back were 7 Findhorn Bay 3 Jul. The only count of 10 or more during July and August was 23 Nairn Bar 27 Aug.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Common winter visitor, small numbers in summer.

Winter monthly maxima at main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	18	4	nc	7
Nairn/Culbin Bar	nc	nc	34	nc
Findhorn	29	41	66	67
Burghead Bay	3	60	12	nc
Burghead-Hopeman	48	29*	57*	95*
Lossiemouth	1	12	nc	51
Spey estuary	8	nc	12	25
Portgordon-Strathlene	117	79	79	93

*Burghead only.

The highest counts in other months were at Burghead where 77 on 25 Mar and 106 on 2 Apr.

Spring: Last records were 31 Burghead 16 Apr and 12 there 19 May.

A flock of 19 at the Spey estuary on 16 Jun was perhaps composed of birds remaining locally through the summer - indeed 19 were also seen there on 14 Jul.

Late summer-autumn: Highest count in July was 21 Spey estuary on 19th. Numbers picked up a little during August with a peak of 35 on 29th-30th at Findhorn, and increased further in September with maxima of 55 Findhorn Bay on 25th and 40 Burghead on 27th.

Knot *Calidris canutus*

Very common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter maxima were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	4500	355	nc	15	nc	2230*
Nairn east beach	6300	2500	nc	1	c.300	1400
Findhorn Bay	86	2055	c.750	540	c.920	285

*Combination of Nairn & Culbin Bar counts – counting carried out concurrently.

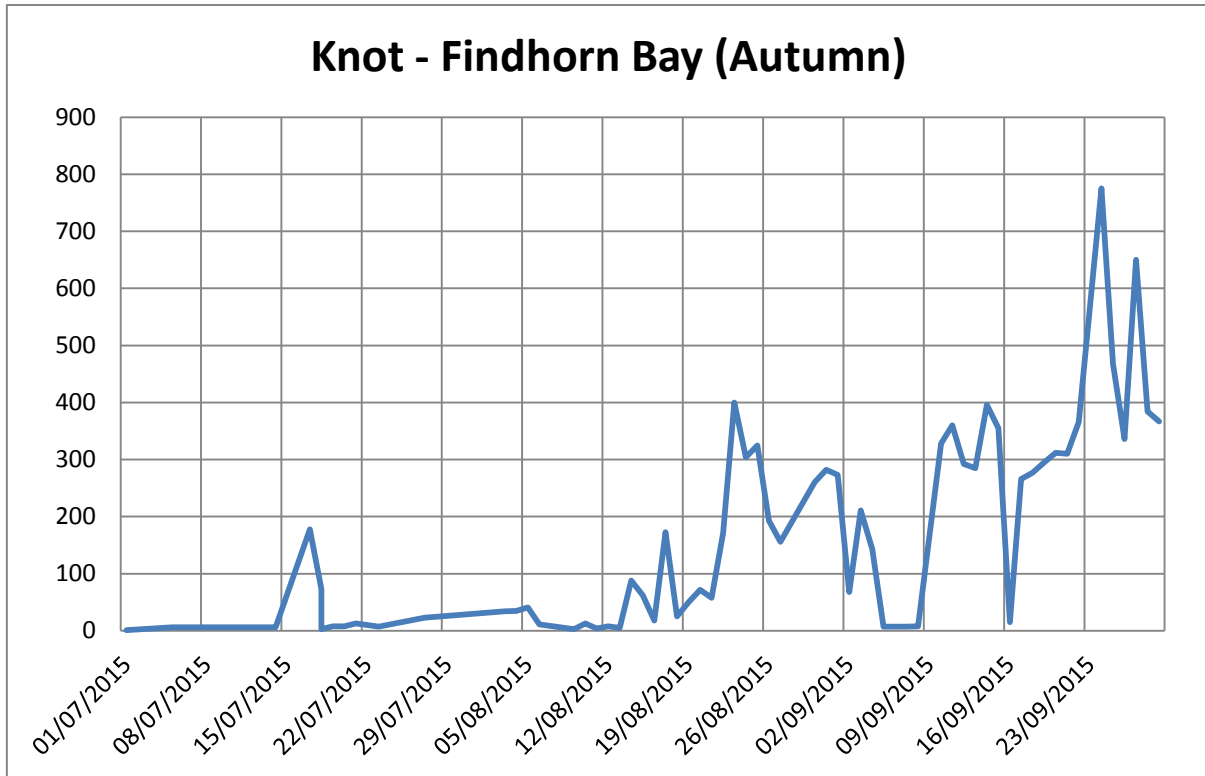
The Nairn east beach flock is the same as the flock around the Bars – its location depending largely on the state of the tide.

The count of 6300 at Nairn on 30 Jan is the highest since February 1997 when 7083 were counted there.

Spring: During April, numbers exceeded 100 in Findhorn Bay on most days until 24th - the highest count being 322 on 2nd. In May, 151 Findhorn Bay 18th was by far the highest count and the only June records, in Findhorn Bay, were 1 on 2nd and 6 on 13th.

Autumn: First was 1 Findhorn Bay 1 Jul and numbers remained low through July with the exception of a short-staying flock of 178 on 17th.

Although numbers fluctuate greatly, the graph below illustrates the pattern of autumn arrival in Findhorn Bay, with a peak of 775 on 24 Sep:



Elsewhere during this period, maximum site counts were 17 Spey estuary 18 Aug, 243 Culbin Bar 19 Aug and 40 Lossiemouth 25 Aug; all close to the timing of the Findhorn Bay August peak of 400 on the 23rd.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring.

An excellent year with over 50 records received from coastal estuaries and the flooded areas of pig farms which provide attractive feeding opportunities. All records were in autumn - the last spring record was in 2010.

Coastal:

First 2 Findhorn Bay 6 Jul were very early. More typical dates for first autumn migrant dates have been:

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
04/08	03/08	18/08	11/08	30/07	04/09	07/08	03/08	28/07	12/08	08/08

Only one other July record, of 1 Lossie estuary 31st. During August, birds were at the Lossie estuary on 6th, 7th (2), 9th, 12th (2), 18th, 19th (2), 21st (3) and 25th. Findhorn Bay held 2 on 11th, 1 on 19th and 1 (on the beach) on 26th, and there was 1 at Nairn Bar on 27th. During September, 5 Lossie estuary 5th, 11 flew west off Lossiemouth 12th, 3 Nairn 13th, 1 Findhorn Bay 21st and another single, which was the last record of the year, at Spey estuary on 28th.

Inland:

Hopeman pig farm: 23 on 16 Aug but only one next day. In September, 7 on 2nd-6th, 10-12 on 7th-13th, 6 on 14th, 3 on 16th and 5 on 18th.

Hatton pig farm (Kinloss): 5 on 20-21 Aug, 6 on 24 Aug and 3 on 9-14 Sep.

Balormie pig farm: In August, 3 on 23rd, 4 on 24th and 6 on 29th.

Montgrew: In August, 4 on 20th, 6 on 21st, 2 on 29th, 14 on 30th and 5 on 31st.

Dyke: 6 on 23 Aug.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus*

Rare visitor.

One in Findhorn Bay on 29 May (RHD, MJHC, GM, AS, AW) was only the 4th record for Moray & Nairn. Previous records, all of single birds, were at Lossiemouth in August 1967 and on the Spey estuary in July 1988 and June 1990.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Scarce migrant.

Spring: 1 Findhorn Bay 20 & 24 May (GM, RSC, NS, CA).

Autumn: The only records were 1 Carse of Delnies 26 Jul (JAC), 1 Hatton pig farm (Kinloss) 11 Sep (AJL) and 1 Lossie estuary 23 Sep (DM).



Curlew Sandpiper, Findhorn Bay 20 May 2015 (Richard Somers Cocks)

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Scarce migrant and fairly common but very localised winter visitor.

Monthly maxima at the four best sites were:

Winter-spring:

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June
Nairn/Culbin Bars	115*	65*	29	54	nc	10
Lossiemouth	37	21	nc	48	42	12
Findhorn Bay	13	18	16	18	31	0
Nairn	56	18	60	nc	nc	nc

*Combination of Nairn & Culbin Bar counts – counting carried out concurrently.

Late summer-autumn:

	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	58	210	103	110	nc	84
Lossiemouth	60	62	64	28	nc	12
Findhorn Bay	6	27	3	11	9	7
Nairn	nc	nc	10	c.70	nc	7

210 Culbin Bar on 21 Aug is the highest number since 226 at Nairn/Culbin Bars in Dec 2008.

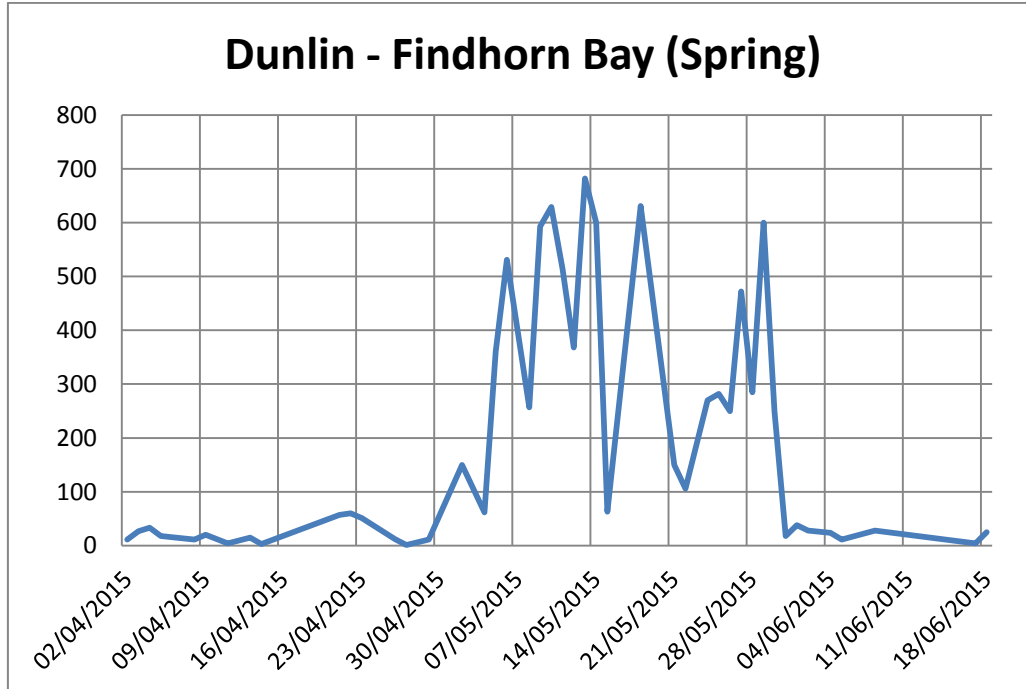
Last birds reported prior to departing to breeding grounds were on 21 Jun when 12 were at Lossiemouth west beach and three at the Spey estuary. First to return were 3 Lossiemouth east beach 11 Jul.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Scarce breeder, very common migrant and winter visitor.

Breeding: One pair on Dun Muir (Ladder Hills) on 9 May (AE).

Spring passage (April-June): Counts in Findhorn Bay are shown below:



Main passage took place during May with a peak number of 682 on 13th.

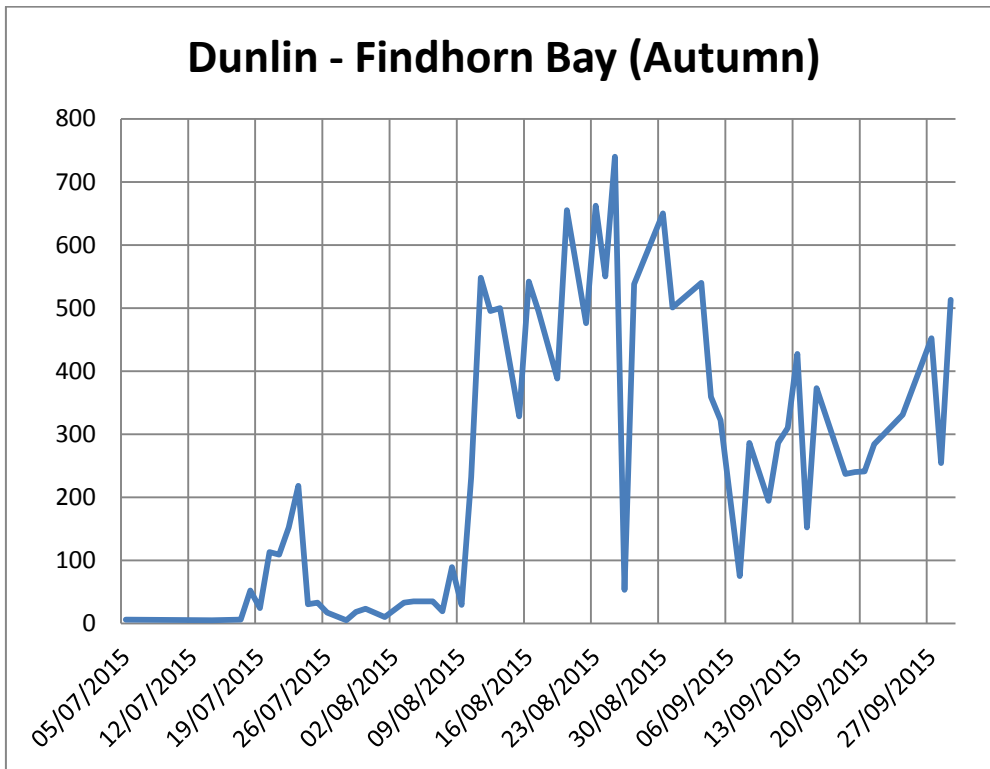
Elsewhere, at Spey estuary in May, there was 77 on 10th, 50 on 12th, 30 on 15th, 55 on 22nd and 87 on 25th.

Inland, Dunlin were seen at Balormie pig farm on several dates: 5 on 25 Apr, 1 on 29 Apr, 3 on 30 Apr, 6 on 1 May, 7 on 3 May and 8 on 7 May.

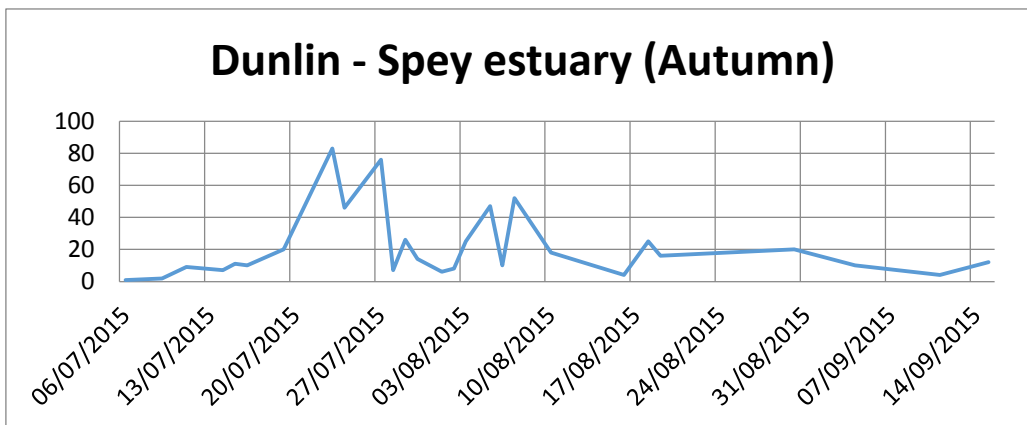


Dunlin, Lossie estuary 1 May 2015 (Mike Crutch)

Autumn passage (July-September): Counts in Findhorn Bay and the Spey estuary are shown below:



Peak autumn count was 740 on 25 Aug.



Autumn migration through the Spey estuary peaked during July, as in 2014. The maximum of 83 on 23 Jul coincides exactly with the small Findhorn Bay July peak when there were 218 on the 23rd. Dunlin in July and early August will be of race *schinzii* (which includes our Scottish breeding birds), all of which leave Scotland in winter. More northerly breeders, of race *alpina*, arrive from September and account for the steady increase in Findhorn Bay at that time. Findhorn Bay holds a sizeable flock of wintering *alpina* Dunlin, but there are usually none on the Spey estuary.

A short distance inland, 4 Balormie pig farm 24 Jul, 1-2 Hopeman pig farm 15-17 Aug and 2 on 9 Sep, 2-3 Hatton pig farm 20-24 Aug and 1 Montgrew 13 Sep.

Winter monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	January	February	October	November	December
Nairn/Culbin Bars	908*	625	83	nc	1100
Findhorn Bay	1350	1470	758	1200	1836
Lossiemouth	60	80	12	26	57

*Combination of Nairn & Culbin Bar counts – counting carried out concurrently.

The count of 1836 was the highest since 2180 in Jan 2012. The highest count during March was 1350 Findhorn Bay on 1st.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Fairly common winter visitor.

A slight improvement in numbers from the previous two years.

Main winter site maxima were:

	January-March	October-December
Nairn	11	12
Burghead-Hopeman	4	7
Lossiemouth	60	50
Portgordon-Strathlene	8	10

Outwith the above dates, still 60 at Lossiemouth 4 Apr.

Yearly maximum flock sizes since 2004 have been:

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
113	95	54	73	144	100	120	100	73	45	19	60

Last in spring were 41 Lossiemouth harbour 23 Apr and first in autumn were 3 Lossiemouth 27 Sep.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Very scarce migrant, mostly in autumn.

Spring: In Findhorn Bay (and the adjacent beach and dune area) were 1 on 18 May (RSC), 2 on 19-20 May (RHD, RSC), 1 on 24-25 May (RSC) and 1 on 18 Jun (RHD). At the Spey estuary, 1 on 6-7 Jun (DAG, JM) and 2 on 14 Jun (DAG).

Autumn: All records were during August. Well inland, at Montgrew (Keith), were 1 on 17th-22nd (WMM *et al.*), 5 on 25th (GB, DM) and 3 on 27th (GB). The last occurrence of a group as large as five was at Spey estuary in September 2008. At the coast, single birds on 25 Aug at Findhorn Bay (GM), Lossiemouth (JMD) and Spey estuary (DP). Last record was of 4 Spey estuary 30 Aug (MJHC).



Little Stints, Montgrew 27 August 2015 (Gordon Biggs)

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Common summer visitor and breeder.

Arrival: On 17 Apr, 1 on River Spey at Tugnet and 1 on River Findhorn at Forres. On 18 Apr, 1 Bridgend of Glenlivet and 1 Craigellachie. On 19 Apr, singles beside the Spey at Culquoich and Knockando House, and 2 at Delnapot. Later in April, 4 Garmouth viaduct 22nd, 2 Spey estuary 23rd (and 3 on 26th) and 1 Findhorn Bay 26th.

The first arrival dates (in April) since 2005 were:

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
17th	23rd	15th	20th	9th	17th	12th	10th	15th	10th	17th

Breeding: During May and June many records from potential breeding sites along Spey and Findhorn rivers. The survey of breeding birds on the River Spey in Moray boosted the number of records with 57 probable, and 24 possible, territories recorded but no confirmation of breeding (see Survey Report on p.89). Recorded on the Findhorn from the lower reaches up to Balnught (Drynachan) where there was a pair with two chicks on 16 Jun. A few records from other rivers - Livet, Fiddich & Lossie. At Cloddach bridge on the River Lossie there was a pair with a clutch of four eggs on 16 May. At the nearby quarry pits, a pair was present on 8 May and 9 Jun.

The usual post-breeding assemblage on the Spey estuary included 7 on 26 Jun, 24 on 6 Jul, 19 on 15 Jul, 17 on 24 Jul and 8 on 7 Aug.

Last of the year was 1 Findhorn Bay 8 Sep.

Dates for 'last record of the year' have fluctuated greatly over recent years:

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
14 Sep	2 Sep	21 Sep	4 Sep	31 Jul	28 Sep	19 Aug	28 Aug	19 Sep	8 Sep

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Very scarce migrant, rare in winter.

January-March: Over-wintering suggested by 1 Wester Manbeen 10 Jan (DAG), at the same location as 1 on 18 Nov 2014. A very unusual record of 3 on the southern side of Findhorn Bay on 14 Mar (GM).

Autumn migration: Fourteen records of 1-2 birds on the southern side of Findhorn Bay (including near the mouth of the Mosset Burn) between 26 Jul-21 Oct (GM *et al*). Inland at Montgrew, 1 on 19 Aug (WMM, AB) and 2 on 21-22 Aug (WMM, DP, DMP). Also 1 Hatton pig farm (Kinloss) 24 Aug (AJL).

November-December: 1 Spey estuary 29 Dec (MJHC) was seen on only the one date and there was no evidence that it over-wintered there.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Very scarce migrant.

An unusual winter record of 1 Findhorn Bay 5 Jan (DP).

Spring: 1 Findhorn village foreshore 21-26 Apr (C&DS) and then it, or another, was in the southern end of Findhorn Bay during 2-12 May (AMa, RSC, RHD *et al.*).

Autumn: 1 Findhorn Bay 18 Oct (BE, GM, AR).

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Scarce migrant, very scarce in winter.

Winter (January-early March): An overwintering bird was seen in Findhorn Bay on 14 & 19 Jan, 17 & 18 Feb and 3 Mar (GM, RSC). This was presumably the same bird that was seen in the bay on 2 Dec 2014. Another was on the Lossie estuary on 15 Feb (RP).

Spring (late March-June): Inland, 1 Cloddach quarry 29 Mar (MJHC). In Findhorn Bay, 1 on 7 Apr, 2 on 19 Apr, 3 on 21 Apr and 1 on 2-10 May & 2 Jun. Last in spring was 1 Spey estuary 8 Jun.

Late summer-autumn (July-October): All records during this period were coastal. First arrival was 1 Findhorn Bay 1 Jul. Subsequently, 84 records were received, 65 of them from the well-surveyed Findhorn Bay area. Counts of five or more in the bay area were 5 on 30-31 Jul, 7 on 3 Aug, 5 on 4 Aug, 6 on 7 Aug, 8 on 12 Aug, 6 on 16 & 22 Aug, 6 on 8 & 19 Sep and 5 on 23 Sep. Highest numbers elsewhere were at the up-river end of the Lossie estuary where birds were present between 25 Jul-18 Sep, with a maximum of 4 on 18 Aug. Also, 2 Culbin Bar 21 Aug, 1 Cullen 13 Aug, 2 Nairn Bar 22 Jul and 1-2 Spey estuary 27 Jul and 4-7 Aug. Last of the year was 1 Findhorn Bay 18 Oct.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Very scarce migrant.

One on the muddy pools at Balormie pig farm 18 Jul (HF, DAG, DM). At Montgrew during August, 1 on 17th-20th (WMM, AB), 2 on 21st & 29th (WMM), 1 on 30th (DAG) and 2 on 31st (WMM). Last seen here was 1 on 2 Sep (WMM, MJHC). Presumably no more than two individuals involved in the Montgrew records.



David main

Wood Sandpiper, Balormie pig farm 18 July 2015 (David Main)

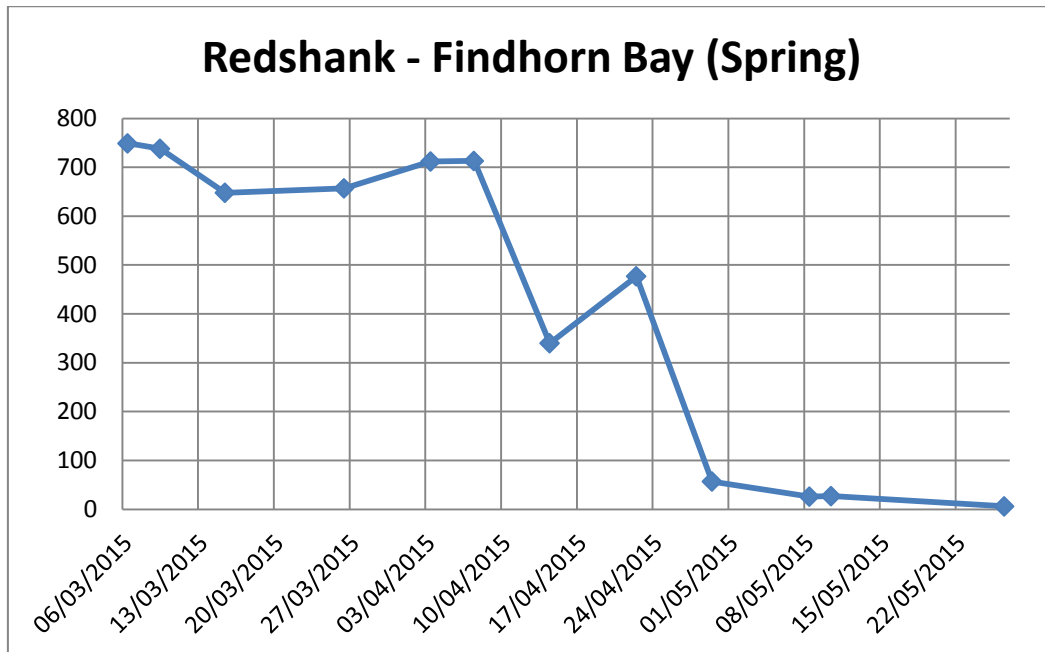
Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Scarce breeder, very common migrant and winter visitor.

Breeding: The only record from up-country was 1 Glen Brown 26 Apr. Breeding confirmed near the Mosset Burn at the south end of Findhorn Bay where an alarmed adult was flushed on 16 May and adults with one chick were found nearby on 13 Jul (RSC).

Spring (March-May):

Weekly maximum counts in Findhorn Bay (RSC, GM) revealed the following pattern of steady decline from early April onwards:



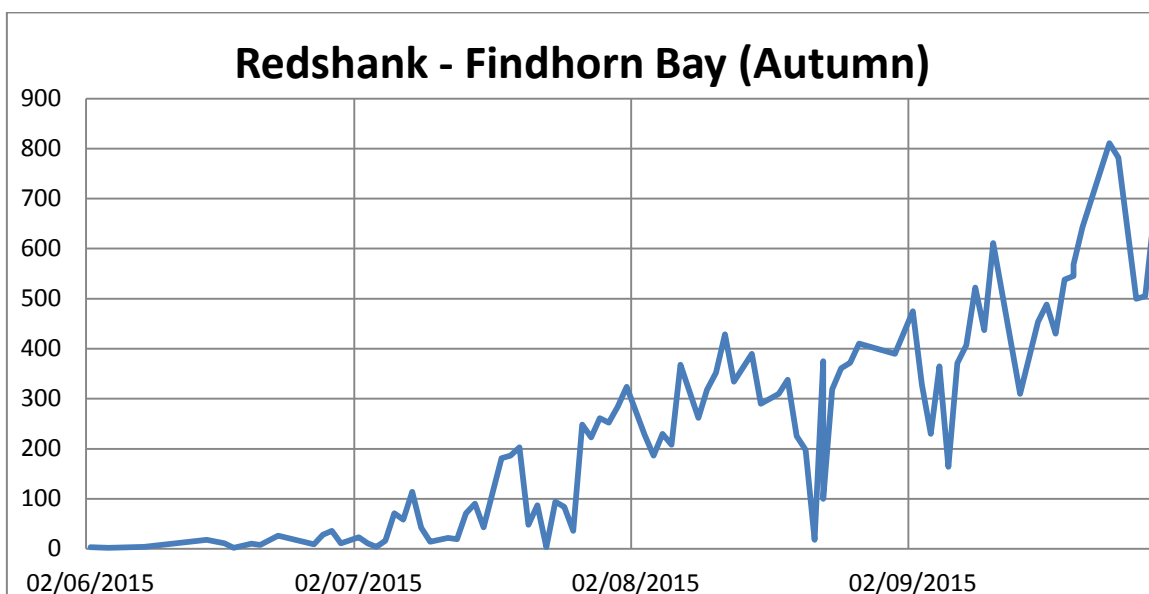
Peak counts were 657 on 26 Mar, 712 on 3 Apr & 713 on 7 Apr.

On the Lossie estuary, highest monthly counts were 50 on 7 Mar and 49 on 4 Apr. Only small numbers on the Spey estuary, including 7 on 13 Mar, a peak of 19 on 24 Mar and only 1 on 5 & 15 May.

Elsewhere 90 Carse of Delnies 27 Mar and 100 Nairn Bar 13 Apr. Slightly inland at Balormie pig farm, up to 10 were regularly present in April, with an exceptional 77 on 15 Apr.

Late summer-autumn (July-September):

The pattern of steady increase in Findhorn Bay is shown below:



The peak count during this period was 811 on 24 Sep.

Highest counts (monthly maxima) elsewhere were:

	July	August	September
Nairn	20	30	8
Lossiemouth	25	61	48
Spey estuary	38	2	28

Also 53 Carse of Delnies 5 Aug and 36 there 19 Sep.

Winter: Monthly maxima at the coast were:

	January	February	October	December
Nairn/Culbin Bars	63*	32*	32	232
Nairn	c.100	100	c.40	150
Findhorn Bay	845	808	794	768
Burghead-Hopeman	20	11	25	16
Lossiemouth	37	33	50	23
Portgordon-Strathlene	43	59	31	69

*Combination of Nairn & Culbin Bar counts - counting carried out concurrently.

Also, in Findhorn Bay, the November maximum was 618. Elsewhere, 141 Carse of Delnies 10 Oct.

Maximum winter counts in Findhorn Bay since 2006 have been:

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
636	905	1080	828	536	500	599	513	870	845

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor.

Records received from seven locations in the coastal margins.

First winter period: On 4 Jan, 7 Kingsteps and 1 Nairn Bar (GP). Kingsteps then had 1 on 22 Jan (AM), 4 on 8 Feb (GP), 2 on 10 Feb (AB), 3 on 14 Feb (LS) and 3 on 28 Feb (DM). The only other record was 1 Greenside Cottage (Windyridge) 8 Jan (CEL).

Early spring: 1 Kingsteps 15 & 29 Mar (AS, DMP), 2 Findhorn Bay marsh 19 Mar (RHD) and 1 Portknockie (opposite Bow Fiddle Rock) 20 Apr (LS).

Autumn-winter: 1 Spynie canal (opposite the Palace) 24 Sep (MJHC), 3 Kingsteps 18 Oct (and 2 on 13 Dec) (GP) and 1 Darkland 8 Nov (JDL).

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Common resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor.

Early winter: In the coastal lowlands during this period all records were of single birds - at Heathfield (Croy) 9 Jan, Mundole 11 Jan, Urquhart area 22 Jan, 11 Feb & 19 Mar, in a suburban garden Forres 24 Feb and Dalvey (Forres) 7 Mar. An unusual record concerned one by the path to Bow Fiddle Rock (Portknockie) 23 Mar. Moving further inland, singles were at Craigroy 13 & 24 Jan, Keith 25 Jan and Randolph's Leap 19 Feb. Also, 3 Little Mulderie (Mulben) 1 Feb and singles at Regaule 7 Feb, Lethen Wood 17 Mar and Tomintoul 22 Mar.

Breeding: Very few reports - roding noted only at Carron 25 Mar and Crooked Wood (Lhanbryde) 16 Jun. In potential breeding locations were single birds at Wester Regaule 8 Jun, Little Aitnoch 16 June & 9 July, Whitefold 27 Jun, Bogeney 12 Jul and Cloddymoss 7 Aug.

Autumn-winter: On the coast, 1 Portgordon 28 Oct and 2 Portknockie (opposite Bow Fiddle Rock) 30 Nov. Records were received from 17 other locations across Moray & Nairn during November, 12 of which were

of single birds. Multiple November sightings were 2 Altyre Wood throughout the month, 3 Mundole 8th, 3 between Achavraat-Dulsie Bridge 13th, 2 Ben Aigan 21st, 2 Craigroy 22nd and 2 Ordiequish Forest 22nd. During December, 1 Romach Hill 1st, 4 in the woods east of the bird hide at Loch Spynie 2nd, 1 Scootmore (Hill of Dalnapot) 7th and 1 Grange Hall (Kinloss) 26th. On 5 Dec, 2 near Buchromb and 3 in woods at nearby Knock of Buchromb.



Woodcock, Little Aitnoch 16 June 2015 (Frank Ritchie)

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Common breeder and migrant.

Breeding: Drumming heard Tomnamoon 31 Mar and Wester Regaule 20 Jun. Two pairs Shenvault 25 Apr. In June, in the Cabrach area, displaying birds included 1 between Aldunie-Milltown 7th, 1 Dykeside 9th, 2 Upper Howbog 9th, 2 Elrick 20th and 1 Torniechelt 20th. Breeding suspected Aitnoch 5 Jul.

Winter-spring: In the coastal fringes eighteen records in this period from Kingsteps to Portknockie of mostly small numbers. The only count in double figures was 13 Kingsteps 8 Feb. Five Lossie estuary 6 Feb was also notable. Up-country, 1 Tomnamoon 2 Jan, 3 Glen Brown 15 Mar and 1 Knock of Braemoray 28 Mar.

Autumn-winter: Inland at Montgrew, during August, 1 on 12th, 2 on 14th, 1 on 19th & 21st, 7 on 29th and 6 on 30th. One remained there on 13 Sep. Also, single birds Tomnamoon 9 Sep and Romach Hill 1 Dec. The remaining 30 records were from the coastal lowlands, 15 of which were of single birds. The only double figure counts were once again from Kingsteps with 15 on 18 Oct, 18 on 11 Nov, 10 on 13 Dec and 12 on 21 Dec.

Maximum winter counts since 2006:

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
67*	42*	55	41	60	45	6	83*	65*	13*

* at Kingsteps.

The largest congregation in Moray & Nairn was 134 at Culbin October 1995.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Very scarce migrant offshore in summer and autumn, rare in winter.

A few sightings again this year, mainly off Lossiemouth. Single birds were seen there on 29 Oct and 7, 13 & 17 Nov with a last sighting on 5 Dec (RP). Elsewhere, one juvenile Culbin Bar 26 Sep (RHD), 1 Burghead Bay 15 Oct (AB), 7 Burghead 31 Oct (TJW), 1 Burghead 19 Nov (DMP) and an unusual record of one in Findhorn Bay on 26 Dec (GM).

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Fairly common migrant in summer and autumn.

First of the year was a very unusual mid winter sighting of one flying west off Lossiemouth on 1 Feb (RP).

Spring: The only sightings in May were 1 off Findhorn dunes on 6th and 1 off Lossiemouth on 9th.

Summer: Only three records in June-July, of single birds at Lossiemouth on 1 & 2 Jun and 13 Jul.

Autumn: Numerous sightings at Lossiemouth between August and late November. High counts included 3 on 26 Aug, 4 in 1 hour on 31 Aug, 9 in 1 hour on 2 Sep, 5 in 1 hour on 5 Sep, 4 in 1 hour on 19 Nov and the last sighting of 1 on 21 Nov (RP). Elsewhere, single birds were seen off Burghead on 21 & 30 Jul, 3 & 14 Aug, 3 Sep and then two there on 5 Sep and 31 Oct. Singles were also reported from Findhorn beach 21 Aug, Portknockie 3 Sep, Hilton of Delnies 9 Sep and off Nairn & Culbin Bars 16 Sep. Two were off Strathlene on 3 Sep and five at Hilton of Delnies on 19 Sep.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

Fairly common migrant in summer and autumn.

Spring: All sightings were at Lossiemouth with 1 on 26 Apr, 3 on 26 May and 1 on 31 May.

Summer: In June-July, three records from Lossiemouth with 1 on 1 Jun, 3 on 2 Jun and 1 on 8 Jul. The only record elsewhere in July was a single bird at Burghead on 30th.

Autumn: In August-October, birds were seen off Lossiemouth on eleven dates. Most records were of only one or two birds but there was significant passage in early September with 5 in 1 hour on 2nd, 5 in 30 minutes on 3rd, and 9 in 1.5 hours on 5th (RP, DAG). At Burghead, sightings were 1 on 3 Aug, 3 on 3 Sep, 2 on 2 Oct and 1 on 8 Oct. Elsewhere, 1 Spey Bay 5 Aug, 1 Hopeman 3 Sep and 2 Portknockie also 3 Sep.

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

Very scarce offshore.

Seven sightings reported this year with the first being one off Culbin Bar 4 Jan (AY). Single birds were also seen off Portknockie on 12 Feb (LS) and Carse of Delnies (Nairn) on 19 Sep (JDG). All other sightings were single birds off Lossiemouth on 21 Mar, 31 May, 23 Aug and 6 Sep (RP).

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle*

Scarce breeder and scarce offshore.

Breeding: Highest count of adults on the sea below breeding cliffs at Portknockie was 16 on 19 Mar (LS). At Tronach Head the long-term traditional crevice was unoccupied and only 4 adults were on the sea below on 9 Jul (MJHC). Other counts early in the year included 19 on 4 Jan off Lossiemouth and 18 between Buckie and Cullen (which includes both breeding sites) on 18 Apr (LGRE). Away from the east Moray breeding area, most sightings were in autumn, notably 32 & 27 at Carse of Delnies (Nairn) on 19 & 20 Sep (GP), 14 at Lossiemouth 26 Sep (RP) and 8 at Spey Bay 21 Sep (MJHC). A significant passage took place past Lossiemouth in mid November, when 45 passed in 1 hour on 16th and 68 in 1 hour on 17th (RP).

Razorbill *Alca torda*

Scarce breeder, very common offshore.

Breeding: At Portknockie, 93 adults were at potential breeding sites on cliff ledges on 16 Jun (MJHC).

Higher numbers passing offshore in spring and early summer this year. Off Findhorn on 4 Mar counts of 928 in 20 minutes and 524 in 10 minutes were recorded (RSC, MJHC). High counts at Lossiemouth up to April included 272 on 8 Feb, 360 on 29 Mar, 931 in 1 hour on 11 Apr, 1653 in 1 hour on 12 Apr and 586 in 1 hour on 19 Apr (RP). Sightings at Lossiemouth during May-August included 580 on 31 May and 34 on 6 Jun. In autumn numbers only rose slightly with high counts at Lossiemouth of 38 on 11 Sep and 65 on 8 Nov (RP). Elsewhere, significant counts this year included 79 at Portknockie 12 Feb, 200 at Burghead 14 Feb, 68 Buckie to Cullen 18 Apr and 42 off Findhorn 26 May.

Little Auk *Alle alle*

Very scarce visitor in autumn and winter. Occasionally more numerous.

Another good year for sightings at both ends of the year:

January-February: Two flocks totalling 55 birds flew west off Nairn Bar on 4 Jan (GP) and a single bird was also seen at Culbin Bar on the same date (AY). At Burghead there was 1 on 17 Jan (MJHC), 3 on 18 Jan (RHD) and 1 on 23 Jan (C&DS).

November-December: At the end of the year there eight days with sightings at Lossiemouth with 3 on 12 Nov, 4 on 13 Nov, 2 on 14 Nov, 4 on 16 Nov, 3 on 17 Nov, 1 on 19 Nov and singles on 5 Dec and 13 Dec (RP). Elsewhere, single birds were seen off Burghead on 28 Oct (MGC) and 21 Nov (JDG), followed by 12 on 30 Dec and 2 on 31 Dec (RG). On 30 Dec, 41 flew east past Nairn (RG, JHB). Also 1 past Kingston 31 Dec (MJHC).

Guillemot *Uria aalge*

Very common offshore.

Many of the sightings in January-February came from the west of the area, particularly during the WeBS counts with 200+ on 4 Jan and 50 on 8 Feb off Nairn Bar, and also 24 on 4 Jan off Culbin Bar. Elsewhere, 2 on 31 Jan at Burghead and five sightings off Lossiemouth with the highest being 77 in 30 minutes on 8 Feb. By spring notable sightings included 9 off Burghead 24 Apr, 44 between Buckie and Cullen 18 May and 65 in 1 hour off Lossiemouth 31 May. Over the summer months, a few sightings of small numbers passing Lossiemouth, but the highest counts started to occur from mid September. These included 108 on 12 Sep, 205 on 22 Sep, 119 on 12 Oct and a remarkable 2195 (nearly all flying west) in 30 minutes on 8 Nov (RP). Best counts for the rest of the year at other sites included 36 off Findhorn 14 Sep, 110 off Burghead 1 Oct and 46 in Spey Bay off Kingston 31 Dec. Around 820 auks were seen off Burghead on 19 Sep with about 75% of closer birds identifiable as Guillemots.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Very scarce summer visitor and rare breeder.

First of the year were 2 Lossiemouth west beach 15 May. From late May until mid July adults were numerous on Lossiemouth east beach with the highest count of 38 on 10 Jul. Breeding was also evident with at least 3 apparent pairs of which at least two were confirmed to have bred but no young fledged (MS, DAG). Just after this site was deserted, numbers built up at the Spey estuary in the third week of July with the highest count of 23 (including a juvenile) on 19 Jul (MJHC). Elsewhere, 2 Findhorn Bay 5 Jul (RSC).

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Very common summer visitor and occasional breeder.

Arrival: First of the year was an exceptionally early bird at Nairn on 12 Mar (C&DS). First sightings at other locations were 4 Findhorn 4 Apr, 14 Burghead 9 Apr, 2 Lossie estuary 25 Mar and 1 Spey estuary 23 Apr.

First arrival dates in the last ten years have been as follows:

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1 Apr	31 Mar	3 Apr	22 Mar	25 Mar	27 Mar	18 Mar	3 Apr	25 Mar	12 Mar

First juveniles with adults from colonies outwith Moray & Nairn were noted from mid July. From the colour ringed birds observed at Findhorn most of the juveniles had come from the Forvie NNR on the Ythan Estuary. Some had also arrived from breeding sites on the Northumbrian coast. Counts over 100 observed at Findhorn in August-September included 120 on 4 Aug, 151 on 14 Aug and 106 on 15 Sep (RSC). Elsewhere high counts included 65 on Nairn Bar 23 Apr and 50 off Burghead 14 Sep.

Half-monthly maximum counts of flocks on the shore at Findhorn, Lossie estuary and Spey estuary in July-September were:

	Early Jul	Late Jul	Early Aug	Late Aug	Early Sep	Late Sep
Findhorn	10	35	151	63	106	103
Lossie estuary	0	1	15	18	8	0
Spey estuary	2	2	10	16	0	0

Best passage counts in late summer and autumn past Lossiemouth were 19 in 1 hour on 23 Aug, 11 in 1 hour on 5 Sep, and 6 in 1 hour on 12 Sep (RP).

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Summer visitor and fairly common breeder.

Arrival: On 19 Apr, one was off Lossiemouth and another inland on the River Spey at Rothes. Next were 4 Nairn 22 Apr.

Breeding: At Loch Spynie, there were 24 apparently occupied nests on the platform on 5 Jun but no young were reared. On the lower River Spey, 10 adults were flying around a possible colony on an island near Garmouth viaduct on 10 Jun - a few nests were probably concealed in the vegetation. On 27 Jul, 13 birds on the Spey estuary included 3 juveniles but it is not known where these were reared (MJHC). Inland, two pairs bred on the roof of Walkers factory in Aberlour - one more than in 2014 (AE). It is not known if any young were reared. Three adults were seen at Craigellachie on 16 Jun.

High counts on Findhorn beach included 108 on 11 Aug, 130 on 17 Aug and 124 on 17 Sep (RSC). Passage counts at Lossiemouth in late August to early September recorded 12 in 1 hour on 31 Aug, 12 in 1 hour on 6 Sep and 11 in 1 hour on 12 Sep (RP). Last of the year were 2 at Spey Bay 21 Sep.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Summer visitor and fairly common breeder.

Arrival: First returning birds were 2 at the Spey estuary on 24 Apr.

Breeding: The only confirmed breeding record was on the shingles of the Spey estuary where one pair nested unsuccessfully (MJHC). Although around 50 were recorded on 22 May and 30 on 14 Jul numbers remained low this season on the Spey estuary.

High counts from elsewhere included 20 at Lossiemouth 30 May and 24 on Findhorn beach 14 Aug. Good numbers of 'commic' (Common or Arctic) terns were also present at the Spey estuary for a short while in July with 132 on 23rd and 115 on 24th - when about half of these were Arctic Terns. The last of the season was one at Findhorn 20 Sep.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Very common breeder and migrant.

Breeding: A slight increase in apparently occupied nests (AON) at the Covesea colony but a fall at Portknockie in 2015. There were 627 AONs at Covesea 15 Jun and 260 AONs at Portknockie 16 Jun (MJHC).

Numbers of AONs in the past 10 years at these colonies are as follows:

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Covesea	437	474	420	468	535	540	590	425	569	627
Portknockie	246	238	263	332	355	360	365	233	336	260

Peak passage counts offshore this year were in late summer/autumn as is typical for this species. Counts passing Lossiemouth in 1 hour included 1460 on 2 Sep, 905 on 6 Sep, 272 on 12 Oct and 575 on 19 Nov (RP). At Portknockie, 532 passed in 30 minutes on 3 Sep (LS). High counts elsewhere along the coast included 750 at Burghead 3 Sep (JDG), 970 on Findhorn beach on 12 Sep (RSC) and 700 on Culbin Bar on 26 Sep (RHD).

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

Rare visitor.

An adult in winter plumage remained at the Lossie estuary during 4-14 Oct (DAG, RP, MJHC *et al*). This is the second record for Moray & Nairn, following a 1st summer bird at Loch Spynie and the Lossie estuary on 23-26 May 2007.



Bonaparte's Gull, Lossie estuary 6 October 2015 (David Main)

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Fairly common resident breeder and very common winter visitor

Breeding: Numbers at Loch Spynie were considerably down this year, with only 2 AONs in late May-early Jun (MJHC, RP).

Counts over 300 on Findhorn Bay included 308 on 16 Jul, 370 on 22 Jul, 491 on 30 Jul and 566 on 16 Aug (RSC, GM). From these counts it was estimated that 5-8% were juveniles. Elsewhere on the coast, counts were relatively low and site maxima included 80 Nairn 13 Sep, 100 Covesea 31 Jul, 48 Lossie estuary 18 Oct (RP) and 70 Spey Bay 13 Dec. Inland at Balormie pig farm (near RAF Lossiemouth) 140 were seen on 21 Oct and an estimated 400 on 12 Dec. Other notable counts from inland sites included around 400 at Wester Delnies (Nairn) 4 Jan and 500 on Loch Spynie 13 Dec. The highest count for Cooper Park pond (Elgin) was 65 on 22 Feb.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Very scarce visitor.

First sighting of the year was an adult at Nairn on 17 Jan (GP) and then a 1st winter bird was in Findhorn Bay on 5 Apr (PR). Between 9-14 Jul a 2nd summer bird was seen on several occasions at Lossie estuary (DAG). A 1st summer bird was on the Spey estuary on 19 Jul (DAG) and the last of the year were 2 juveniles at Hilton of Delnies (Nairn) on 20 Sep (GP).

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Very scarce visitor.

The recent trend of increased sightings continued in 2015 with numerous reports, all of which were from the Lossiemouth area. First was 1 adult Loch Spynie 28 Feb (RG), and a 2nd winter bird was seen here on 15 and 18 Mar (DM, AET). A 2nd winter reported from Lossie estuary on 12 Mar (DM) was probably the same bird. A 1st summer was also on the estuary on 12 Jul (DAG).

A 2nd summer bird, first seen on the Lossie estuary on 9 Jul, was reported regularly until the end of the year by which time it had developed adult plumage (DAG, RP, DM *et al.*). Two adults were present on 18 Oct (DAG) and one of these, presumably, was at Balormie pig farm on 21 Oct and 24 Nov (MJHC).



Mediterranean Gull, Lossie estuary 12 March 2015 (David Main)

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.

Breeding: The colony at Beinn a' Chruinnich (Lecht ski centre) held 700 birds on 2 Jul with more than 150 chicks (IF). At the Tips of Corsemaul site (east of Dufftown) around 400 were seen on 5 May (IF). On 7 Jun, ten pairs were nesting on Balvalley Moss (Cabrach) (IF). On 8 May there were 21 pairs breeding on shingle south of Garmouth viaduct and a further 22 pairs between the viaduct and Tugnet (MJHC). In Elgin, 150 adults were estimated at the breeding colony on the site of the demolished Hewdens buildings, between the old railway station and Linkwood Road (RP). Elsewhere, single nests were reported from Lossiemouth cemetery 31 May and Elgin cemetery 1 Jun (RP).

Significant flock counts away from breeding areas early in the year included 345 on Findhorn Bay 14 Jan, 1100 at Broadley (3 km south of Portgordon) 23 Jan, 310 at Spey estuary 4 Feb and an estimated 300 at Newton of Forgie (Keith) 15 Mar. High counts were reported again later in the year at Broadley with 800 on 28 Nov. Similar counts were also noted at Spey estuary with 850 on 11 Sep, 420 on 19 Oct and 470 on 19 Dec.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder. Very scarce in winter.

Wintering: Recorded in both winter periods. At the start of the year, the first sighting was 1 at Loch Spynie on 2 Jan (RHD) followed by 1 at Lossie estuary on 4 Jan (DAG). Subsequently, an adult was seen on a further eight occasions through Jan and Feb on the estuary. Possibly the same adult was seen at Balormie pig farm (RAF Lossiemouth) on 11 Jan and 14 Feb (RP). It is likely that the Lossie estuary bird was overwintering as one has been seen at this location in recent years. Other early sightings included 1 Cloddach quarry 18 Jan and 1 Spey estuary 28 Feb (MJHC). At the end of the year, 3 adults and a juvenile were on the Lossie estuary on 13 Dec and 1 adult on 31 Dec (RP).

Arrival: Although the February sightings mentioned above may have been new arrivals, March arrivals included 2 Loch Oire on 11th, 5 Elgin on 13th, 6 adults at Lossie estuary on 23rd and 2 at Spey estuary on 27th.

Breeding: Noted at two sites in Elgin: five apparently occupied nests at the site of the demolished Hewdens buildings, between the old railway station and Linkwood Road on 8 Jun and a brood with 2 downy chicks at Aldi on 24 Jun (RP). Elsewhere, 2 adults and a juvenile seen at Burnside (5 km south of Ferness) 21 Aug (A&FR).

High counts of the year included 28 Cloddach quarry 9 Jun, 41 Loch Oire 24 Jul and 12 Cooper Park pond (Elgin) 6 Sep.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.

Breeding: Several rooftop sites noted around Elgin but no systematic recording was done.

Monthly maximum counts on the Lossie estuary and at Cooper Park pond (Elgin) were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lossie estuary	45	193	453	196	185	148	nc	106	1267	862	469	1500
Cooper Park	88	54	88	nc	nc	nc	nc	78	132	63	105	103

Elsewhere, counts over 500 included 1000 Balormie pig farm 1 Mar and 1400 there 13 Mar, 600 Hopeman 7 Mar and 550 Loch Oire 13 Mar. At the Spey estuary, large numbers in the second half of the year included 1040 on 15 Jul, 1240 on 10 Aug, 1050 on 25 Sep and 950 on 19 Dec.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*

Very scarce winter visitor.

As always with this species, duplication is impossible to discount as mobile individuals around the coastal strip may relate to more than one sighting. Observers are requested to note the ages of individuals involved, and whether birds are considered the same or different to any others seen around the same period to assist in obtaining a full picture of the number of individuals seen.

Another good year, but once again difficult to ascertain the exact number of birds. It is possible that there were 20+ birds in 2015 compared to around 15 in 2014.

- Burghead: 2nd winter (2ndW) on 6 Mar (MJHC) and juvenile on 19 Nov (DMP).
 Hopeman pig farm: Fourteen sightings of a juvenile between 1 Jan and 8 Mar. Later in the year an adult on 25 Nov, a 2ndW on 30 Nov and a 3rdW on 21 Dec (many obs).
 Balormie pig farm: Adult on 2 Jan and a different adult 4-16 Apr. A juvenile on 28 Apr and possibly the same reported as a 1st summer (1stS) 3-10 May. An adult was also seen on 26 May (RP, DM, MJHC *et al*).

Lossie estuary:	Given the proximity of the Balormie pig farm to the estuary, many of the sightings from these two sites are likely to involve the same birds. An adult reported on numerous occasions 1 Jan - 2 May, with 2 adults on 14 Jan. On 8 Feb, two juveniles and a 2ndW were seen. Subsequently, many further sightings of these birds through to 9 May. From 1-7 Jun a 1stS was assessed to be different from the bird seen at Balormie pig farm in May. Later, a 2ndS seen on 19 Sep and an adult and up to two 2ndW present between 5-31 Dec (RP, DAG, DM, <i>et al.</i>).
Loch Spynie:	Adult on 21 Feb (LS), 1 & 29 Mar (MJHC, MH, HF) and on 15 Dec (RHD, CAG).
Gordonsward:	Adult on 1 Mar (MJHC, MH).
Llanbryde:	Adult on 21 Feb (EH).
Urquhart:	1stS on 23 May (MJHC).
Loch Oire:	Juvenile reported on 2 Feb followed by an adult 7 Feb-24 Mar, with 2 adult present on 13 Mar. Several sightings of a 1st summer 1-12 May (RHD, RP, EH).
Spey estuary:	Adult on 29 Mar, 2ndS on 15 Jul and a juvenile on 24 Nov (DAG, MJHC).
Broadley (Clochan):	One on 27 May (MJHC).
Findochty:	Adult on 1 Feb (MJHC).
Portknockie:	Adult on 5 Feb (LS).

Glauous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

Very scarce winter visitor.

Another year with an increased number of sightings.

Kinloss:	One at the Barracks on 7 May (AJL) and a juvenile at the pig farm on 13 May (RHD).
Burghead:	Juvenile flew west on 8 Feb (AM) and one was at the harbour on 6 Apr (JP). In autumn, a 2ndW on 17 Sep (RJ).
Hopeman pig farm:	1stS on 15 Aug (DAG).
Balormie pig farm:	Adult on 16 Apr (RP).
Lossie estuary:	Juvenile flew west off Lossiemouth on 10 Jan (RP). On the estuary, an adult on 31 Jan (DAG) and a 2ndW on 6 Feb (DM). Up to two juveniles were present during 7 Mar-1 May (many obs.) a 2ndS bird on 10-17 Jun (HF, DAG, CAG) and a 1stS on 25 Jul (DAG). In September, a 2ndW on 8th (DAG) and a juvenile on 16th (DM). Last sighting was a 2ndW on 21 Nov (DAG).
Loch Spynie:	Juvenile at Scarffbanks pig farm on 3 Apr (HF).
Gordonsward:	Juvenile on 30 Jan and 6 Feb (MJHC).
Spey estuary:	Juvenile on 1 Feb (DAG) and a different bird on 15 Jul (MMe).
Buckie:	A juvenile in the harbour on 1-2 Feb (HC, LS).
Portknockie:	An immature on 25 May (DMP).

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Scarce resident breeder and common visitor.

Breeding: The only report was a pair with a large chick at Portknockie on 9 Jul (MJHC).

Overall, numbers through the year were similar to 2014, although the maximum at Lossie estuary was much higher with 606 on 14 Sep (RP). At Spey estuary in late summer/autumn numbers peaked at 370 on 7 Oct (MJHC). These estuaries are only about 10 km apart and the extent of interchange between these two flocks is uncertain. Lesser numbers were also present at Findhorn which peaked at 103 on 21 Aug (RSC).

Maximum monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lossie est.	23	15	24	37	nc	9	nc	13	606	269	48	21
Spey est.	nc	32	2	80	64	71	365	210	340	370	90	55
Findhorn	21	14	15	24	12	21	16	103	56	27	8	24

The only other coastal counts to exceed 25 were 60, almost all immature, at Lossiemouth west beach on 15 Jun, 25 at Burghead 7 Aug and 34 at Nairn harbour 6 Nov. Loch Spynie held reasonable numbers early in the year with 30 on 5 Jan.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Very common resident breeder.

The only reports of flocks exceeding 100 were 285 Buckie harbour 18 Oct and 150 Nairn 18 Dec. Similar numbers are regular in central Elgin.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Scarce resident breeder.

Breeding season: No confirmed breeding records received. Reported in the period late March-July: 1 Loch Flemington 18 Mar, 1 Loch Spynie 5 Apr (also 1 on 5 Jun), 2 East Mains (Gilston) 5 & 18 Apr, 1 Easter Newforres 27 May, 1 Grangegreen 3 Jun, 2 Darkland 4 Jun, 4 Kinloss barracks 20 Jun, 1 Elgin 22 Jun, 5 (in dunes) Lossiemouth east beach 29 Jun and 5 Nairn Bar 22 Jul.

Autumn/winter records from additional localities were 1 Easter Calcots 1 Jan, 2 Roseisle maltings 5 Jan, 2 Gordonsward Farm 7 Feb, 2 Hopeman 13 Feb, 1 Brodieshill 1 Mar and 2 Drainie 29 Nov.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Very common resident breeder.

The early start to the breeding season indicated by singing at Randolph's Leap (Darnaway) 20 Jan, nest building at Kingston 22 Feb and a pair copulating in Elgin 28 Feb. An incubating adult Bishopmill, Elgin 18 Apr was the only confirmed breeding.

Flocks estimated at 100 or more in the early part of the year included: 300 Loch Spynie 3-4 Jan, 200+ Lethen (Nairn) 18 Jan and c.1000 Asliesk (Alves) 1 Mar.

Autumn-winter: 200 Ballindalloch 9 Sep, 200 Loch Flemington 25 Oct and c.350 Salterhill (Elgin) 31 Oct. In November, a massive movement was recorded, particularly later in the month: c.700 Sheriffston on 13th, 250 Broadley (Clochan) on 21st, 300 Drainie and 500 Salterhill (Gilston) on 28th, 1000 Bishopmill (Elgin) and 700 Mains of Struthers on 29th were all a prelude to events on the last day of the month.

On 30 Nov, an unprecedented westward passage took place over Clochan, with a total of 10,640 birds counted in two hours. Of these, 8350 were counted between 09:20-10:20 and 2290 between 10:20-11:20 (MJHC). Also on 30 Nov, 250 over Easter Bauds and 500 over Mill of Tynet. Large numbers continued into December with 300 Bishopmill (Elgin) 5th, 400 Loch Spynie 21st, 600 Bishopmill 26th and, on 31st, 1000+ Moyness, 700 Burgie and c.400 Myreside (Elgin).

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Very common resident breeder.

Only five records were submitted: 4 Moray College (Elgin) 14 Feb, 2 Tomnamoon 14 Feb, 4 Elgin 28 Feb, 4 Burghead 16 Oct and 4 Nairn 18 Oct.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Summer visitor and fairly common breeder.

Arrival: First records were singles Cragganmore 22 Apr and Mulben 26 Apr. Breeding confirmed at Achagour when a juvenile, being fed by Meadow Pipits, was found on 31 Jul. Subsequently seen or heard in May-June at Aberlour-Laggan House, Aitnoch, Altyre Woods, Archiestown, Auchanhandoch, Auchmair (Cabrach), Balmore, Black Loch (Dava), Burnside, Burnside-Little Aitnoch, Banchor (Drynahan), Cairn of Ballindean, Dava Way, Dulsie, Findhorn, Gallowhill (Grange), Hill of Phones, Hillockhead (Dallas), Johnstripe, Lynethobair, Nether Birnie (Cloddach), Phorp, Spey estuary, Tapp Forest, Tomnamoon and Whiteash Hill Wood. Later in the year, 1 Fornightly (Darnaway) 11 Aug.



Cuckoo with Meadow Pipit, Aitnoch 7 May 2015 (Alison Ritchie)

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Scarce resident breeder.

Breeding season reports came from Brodieshill, Dalnihan Wood, Darkland, Forres, Fochabers, Grangegreen, Kinloss and Sheriffston.

The number of breeding season localities reported in the last 13 years:

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
15	11	13	21	10	9	5	0	1	9	5	9	8

At other times of year, reports came from the following additional sites: Alves (Aug, Sep), Archiestown (Dec), Ardwell [Cabrach] (Dec), Arradoul (Nov), Aultmore (Nov), Braes of Enzie (Nov), Brodies (Sep), Brodieshill cottages (Feb), Bruntlands (Nov), Burnside (Oct), Cawdor (Nov), Clochan (Feb, Oct, Dec), College of Roseisle (Feb), Covesea (Nov), Coxtontower (Jan), Craigellachie (Aug), Craigroy (Jan, Nov), Cranloch (Jan), Dandaleith (Jan), Dava (Nov), Dufftown (Oct), Dunearn (Jan), Easter Bauds (Jan), Easter Elchies (Oct, Nov, Dec [2 on 15 Dec]), Elgin (Nov, Dec), Geddes (Dec), Inchberry (Feb), Keith (Jan), Kinermony (Oct), Kirkhill (Feb), Lhanbryde (Feb), Longhillock (Nov), Moor of Tore (Sep), Newton (Nov), Oxhill (Sep), Portgordon (Dec), Rafford (Dec), Rothes (Nov), Scalan (Glenlivet) (Sep), Scotsburn (Feb), Spynie Care Home (Elgin) (Nov), Tomnamoon (Feb, Dec), Tomore (Dec), Corries (near Tormore) (Dec) and Waterloo (Jan).

The total number of localities from which Barn Owls were reported (at any time of year) since 2003 is:

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
33	31	27	31	21	40	20	11	13	21	12	30	47

Although the number of breeding season records remains disappointing, the overall number of localities which provided sightings is continuing to show signs of a healthy recovery after the weather-related population crash of 2009-11, and is the largest total since MNBR started in 1985.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Common resident breeder.

Records received from 13 typical localities. Breeding confirmed in two woods near Aberlour - up the Lour Burn and near Delmore (AE).

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Scarce resident breeder.

Breeding: The only confirmed breeding concerned two calling juveniles at Croy on 10 & 19 Jun (JAC). Shortly after the breeding season, in July, birds were recorded at North Crannoch (Grange) (1 on 11th) (VSL), Moyness (1 on 14th-15th) (A&FR) and RAF Kinloss (1 on 30th & 2 on 31st) (DW, JM). Singles were also recorded, in winter, at the A96 Findhorn Bridge 24 Jan and Rafford 2 Feb (MGC).



Long-eared Owl, Moyness 15 July 2015 (Alison Ritchie)

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Rare breeder and very scarce migrant.

Breeding: Present in summer in moorland breeding habitat were 1 Beatshach (Ben Rinnes) 4 Apr (IB), 1 Corsemaul 31 May (DW), 1 Dykeside (Cabrach) & 2 Hill of Bank (Cabrach) 9 Jun (IF) and 1 Cabrach 28 Aug (GB). Three other summer records were near the coast where breeding is unlikely though not impossible: 1 Cummington 3 Jun (DW), 1 Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 23 May & 3 Jul (MJHC, RSC) and 1 Portknockie 30 Jul (LS).

Autumn: Migrants were seen flying in off the sea at the Spey estuary on 28 Oct (and still on the saltmarsh on 30 Oct) (MJHC), Lossie estuary on 30 Oct (DM) and Burghead on 3 Nov (MGC). Another at Spey Bay 14 Nov (M. Collins) was flying along the shore and could have been another migrant or the Spey estuary individual. Other singles included birds at Chapelton (Forres) 13 Oct (J&BS), Findhorn Bay 17-18 Oct and 11, 15, 17 & 25 Nov (PPH, AJL, RSC, DM, MGC), Coltfoot 10 Nov (MGC) and Carse of Delnies 25 Nov (PRG).

Winter: 1 Portknockie 5-6 Feb (LS) and 1 Delnies 18 Dec (DP).



Short-eared Owl, Netherton 18 July 2015 (Richard Somers Cocks)

Swift *Apus apus*

Summer visitor and common breeder.

Arrival: A slightly earlier range of arrival dates in May compared to 2014 with singles at Seafield (Findhorn Bay) 4th, Elgin 5th, Nairn 5th and Loch Spynie 6th.

Breeding: Individuals were seen entering roof spaces in Elgin at Anderson Drive (New Elgin) 31 Jul and Reid Street (Bishopmill) 10 Aug.

Early-mid summer best counts were c.200 feeding over Gladhill 21 Jun and c.50 Loch Spynie 24 Jun.

Swifts become scarce in Moray after mid August and in 2015 there were no late August concentrations; largest was 36 over Elgin cemetery 7 Aug. Last of the year were 3 Loch Spynie 1 Sep and 1 Loch Flemington 2 Sep.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Very scarce visitor and rare breeder.

Breeding: Singles were seen in the breeding season at Barmuckity 8 May (IG) and Mosset Burn (Findhorn Bay) 25 Jul (GM). Birds were also reported on two stretches of the River Spey, between Fochabers Bridge and the Ordiequish Earth Pillars, and between Boat o' Brig and Aikenway (AY).

At other times, single birds were seen at Lossie estuary 21-25 Jan, 7 & 13 Feb, 8 Aug (GB, DM, DAG), Chapelton (Forres) 14 Feb (MSh), Tugnet 16 Mar & 5 Aug (MJHC, LS), Loch Spynie 4 Aug, 9 Sep (LS, DAG, LM), River Lossie (Elgin) 20 Aug, 22 Sep (MW, MMA), River Fiddich (Dufftown) 4 Sep (*per* DW), Aberlour (River Spey) 13 Oct (AE), Loch na Bo 31 Oct (MJHC), Burn of Aberlour 19 & 22 Nov (AE) and Loch Oire 24 Nov (MJHC). Regular around Findhorn Bay/Mosset Burn/Binsness in the autumn and winter period with sightings in August (16th & 22nd), September (6th, 11th, 18th), October (5th, 10th, 16th, 17th, 19th, 21st) and December (26th) (GM, RSC, RHD MGC) and also on the River Findhorn at Seafield (9th) (A&FR).

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Very scarce visitor.

Present again along the upper River Spey at Delnapot on 13 Apr and 8 Jun (NS, CA). Also heard in lower Moray at Phorp on 12 Feb (MGC) and seen there on 3 Apr (PRG).

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Common resident breeder.

Widespread in woodlands and visiting garden feeders.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Scarce resident breeder.

Breeding season (April-July) records included birds/pairs at Achagour, Ailnack gorge (pair), Allanbuie, Aulthuish, Balormie, Dava, Darnaway, Delnies, Dykeside, Elgin, Feakirk, Findhorn Bay, Forres, Hopeman, Kinloss barracks (pair bred), Little Aitnoch, Loch of Blairs, Loch Park, Lossiemouth east beach, Meikle Urchany, Middlefield, Mill of Grange, Portknockie (pair bred), Tapp (pair), Tomnamoon (pair bred), Tronach Head (pair bred) and Tugnet.

Additional sites, with birds seen in other months, were Altyre Woods, Ballindalloch, Ben Rinnes, Blackcastle, Bogheads, Broomhill Cottage, Burghead, Carn Biorach, Carse of Delnies, Clashach quarry, Clochan, Covesea, Cragganmore, Cullen, Dallas, Duffus Castle, Earnhill, Glenshiel, Grange, Hilton of Delnies, Kingsteps, Knock of Braemoray, Knockanrioch, Loch Flemington, Loch Spynie, Lochloy Wood, Lossie Forest, Maviston, Moyness, Nairn, Newton nursery, Oldtown, Rafford, Salterhill and Seafield.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Scarce resident breeder and migrant.

Breeding: 43 sites were checked and 18 of these were found to be occupied by pairs, 17 of which laid clutches. Eleven pairs were successful, and these raised 38 young between them. Mean brood size (fledged young) overall was 2.2 per pair, but better in east Moray, at 3.1 young per laying pair, than in west Moray (0.7) and Nairn (2.0) (BCo, JKC). Occupation and breeding success were both low in west Moray, where only two out of four nests were successful - two of them failed due to mammal predation (JKC). Predation also caused the failure of two of the Nairn area nests, where average clutch size (from a sample of four nests) was 4.3 (JKC). In relation to Moray east of the Spey, Brian Cosnette commented: "Occupation rate of the visited sites, 12 from 25 checked (48%), showed a further rise over recent years. Eventual breeding success of Merlins in [east] Moray this year was very good with few complete losses, despite appalling weather conditions during May and June".

Outside the breeding season, single birds were seen in the lowlands at Burghead 13 Jan, Covesea 9 Jan, Darkland 27 Dec, Easter Bauds 25 Dec, Lossiemouth 31 Mar, Scarffbanks 30 Sep, Tomnamoon 13 Sep and Urquhart 18 Feb. Further upcountry, 1 Ben Rinnes 1 Oct and 1 Glen Brown 15 Mar.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Rare visitor.

One was seen hunting Sand Martins around the Quarry Pool colony, on the Spey downstream from Fochabers on 18 Jun (AY). This is the 14th record for Moray & Nairn.

[Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*

Rare visitor and escape.

A white morph Greenland bird was found perching on a rooftop in Spey Bay on 28 Jul. It was wearing jesses and was clearly an escape from captivity. It eventually flew off strongly over the River Spey and away to the west. (MC, SP-S, MJHC.)



Gyr Falcon, Spey Bay 28 July 2015 (Sue Pianta-Scott)

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Rare resident breeder.

Breeding: Two pairs were known to have bred successfully. One pair raised three young and at least one young fledged from the second nest (MJHC).

In late summer-winter, single birds were reported from Burghead (Aug-Sep), Carn Biorach (Sep), Clochan (Jan, Aug), Easter Calcots (2 on 28 Dec), Findhorn Bay (Jan-May, Aug-Dec), Glenconglass (Dec), Johnstripe (Feb), Kingsteps (Jan), Kinloss barracks (Jan, Sep-Oct), Kintessack (Nov), Kynadrochit Lodge (Oct), Lossiemouth coast (Jul-Nov), Nairn Bar (Jan), Oxhill (Sep) and Spey estuary (Jul).

On 21 Nov, one flew east past Lossiemouth, well out over the Moray Firth (RP).

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Rare visitor.

A male was seen and heard singing in tall poplars and oaks beside the Muckle Burn at Grangegreen (Forres) on 2-4 Jun (AS, MJHC, MGC). The only other record in Moray & Nairn was a male seen at Loch Spynie on 19 May 2011.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Common resident breeder.

Recorded at Birnie church, Bishopmill (Elgin), Bogheads (Nairn), Broadley, Bruntlands, Burghead, Carse of Delnies, Chapelwell (Nairn), Clochan, Coltfield, Covesea, Crachies (Lethan), Crook Cottage (Nairn), Cullen, Cummington, Drainie, Drumduan, Earlseat Farm (Darnaway), Easter Lawrenceton, Easter Newforres, Findhorn, Findhorn Bay, Fochabers, Forres, Greenshiel Farm, Greenside Cottage (Windyridge), Hillhead (Forres), Hilton of Delnies, Hopeman, Johnstripe, Keith, Kingsteps (Nairn), Kinloss, Kinloss barracks, Knockando, Loch Flemington, Lossiemouth, Midfleenas, Milton Brodie, Moyness, Nairn Bar, North Crannoch, Plewlands, Rafford, RAF Lossiemouth, Raitloan (Nairn), Tarras (Forres), Wester Lawrenceton and Whitefold.

Frequency of group sizes reported:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58	48	9	1	1	2	2

Largest groups were 7 RAF Lossiemouth 10 Apr, 7 Clochan 24 Sep, 6 Newton of Forgie (Keith) 15 Mar and 6 Findhorn dunes 13 Oct. Uncommon well inland, therefore 1 near Banchor (upper Findhorn) 9 May was unusual.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Fairly common resident breeder.

Breeding season: April-August reports came from the Oakwood Motel (near Elgin), Aberlour-Laggan House, Binsness, Bognafuaran Wood, Brodie Castle, Darnaway, Roseisle, Farr estate, Loch of Blairs, Loch Oire, Loch Spynie, Loch Loy, Muirton, Newmill (Nairn), Newton, near Tomintoul, River Findhorn, Tapp Forest, Torrieston Wood, Wester Regaule and Whitemire.

At other seasons, Jays were seen at Aberlour, Altyre Woods, Bridge of Avon, Brodie, Clashach quarry, Coltfoot, Cothall, Cragganmore, Craighead Wood, Culfearn, Dalvey (Forres), Darnaway, Daugh of Edinville, Druim Farm, Easter Clune (Lethen), Easter Laurenceton, Firhall, Geddes House, Glenernie, Inchkeil, Inshoch Wood, Kinloss barracks, Knock of Gownie, Lethen, Loch Belivat, Loch of Blairs, Loch Flemington, Loch na Bo, Loch Oire, Loch Spynie, Logie, Lossie Forest, Moyness, Mulderie, Mundole, Regaule, Roseisle, Russell's Wood (Nairn), Scootmore, Shaw Hill, Shempston, Surradale, Tarras, near Tormore, Upper Auchenwreath and Woodend (Nairn).

The largest count this year was 9 Daugh of Edinville on 15 Dec.

Several seen in early autumn flying high over forests or across fields may suggest post-breeding dispersal or flights to gather acorns: 2 over fields Linksfield-South Lesmurdie (Elgin) 14 Oct, 1 across fields at Penick Farm, Hardmuir (Auldearn) 15 Oct, 1 high over Pluscarden village hall 23 Oct and 2 high over Morryston Road (Elgin) 24 Oct & 9 Nov.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Very common resident breeder.

Counts over 50 involved c.500 Bakebare 27 Sep, 400+ Dalvey Farm 25 Jan, 370 Ballindalloch 25 Jan, 120 Ailnack Gorge 25 Mar, 97 Portknockie 20 Mar, 70 Marypark 14 Feb and 66 Greenside Cottage 7 Jan.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Very common resident breeder.

One colony count received: 50 Kilravock Castle 16 May. Also a juvenile being fed on the ground below the small rookery at Pinefield (Elgin) 6 May.

Highest counts were c.300 Bakebare 27 Sep and 100 Roseisle 16 Oct. No other count exceeded 50.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Very common resident breeder.

Collecting nest material at Sunbank, Lossiemouth on 21 Mar.

Largest counts this year were 307 (pre-roost) Loch Loy 6 Mar (AY), 186 Hillockhead Wood 12 Feb (AY) and 175 Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 2 Mar (RHD). The count at Loch Loy is the largest ever recorded in Moray & Nairn. Counts on the Lossie estuary were infrequent this year; largest counts were 83 on 10 Sep and 72 on 30 Sep. Elsewhere, counts exceeding 20 were 86 Tynet 4 Mar, 50 Loch Spynie 7 Aug, 47 Spey estuary 28 Sep, 34 Kinloss 28 Mar, 25 Nairn Bar 13 Apr and 20 Portgordon 22 Nov.

In March and April, Carrion Crows were recorded on seawatches off Lossiemouth harbour, these were flying west well out into the Moray Firth, and may have been crossing to the other side: 3 on 29 Mar, 4 on 12 Apr, 12 on 15 Apr and 16 on 16 Apr (RP).

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Scarce visitor and rare breeder.

Slightly more encounters in Nairn, compared to Moray, of pure Hooded Crows (or Carrion x Hooded hybrids very closely resembling Hooded) where monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn	4	2	11	6	1	8	nc	9	4	10	4	17
Moray	4	3	19	2	nc	4	11	6	1	4	1	2

Nairn: One count exceeding five concerned 6 Loch Loy 6 Mar at a pre-roost gathering. Singles, unless noted, were seen at Bankhead, Brackley, Carse of Delnies, Culbin Bar (2 on 18 Oct), Farr estate (2 on 5 Jun), Inshoch Wood, Kingsteps, Loch Flemington, Nairn (max. 5 on 18, 24 & 27 Dec), Old Newton of Budgate, Wester Hardmuir and Woodend.

Moray: One count exceeding five concerned 6 Findhorn Bay 15 Mar. Singles, unless noted, were seen at Aberlour, Burghead (3 on 22 Jan), Dufftown, Easter Lawrenceton, Elgin, Hopeman (2 on 20 Dec), Kinloss (5 on 28 Mar), Loch Spynie, Lossie estuary (2 on 28 Aug), Netherton (Findhorn Bay) (5 on 2 Mar), Portgordon and Spey estuary.

Hybrids were numerous around Nairn/Nairn Bar area where the maximum counts were 27 at a pre-roost gathering at Loch Loy on 6 Mar, 12 Nairn Bar 19 Mar and 6 Nairn 27 Jan & 17 Feb, otherwise no other counts exceeding five individuals. Elsewhere, singles (unless noted) were recorded at Burghead (2 on 9 Nov), Earlseat Farm (3 on 12 Oct), Easter Glackton, Auchanhandoch (4 juveniles on 13 Jul), Auldearn, Elgin (2 on 18 Jan), Forres, Hillockhead Wood, Loch Flemington (2 on 24 Sep), Lossie estuary (5 on 12 Aug & 10 Sep), Mulben and Orton. In April one recorded on a seawatch off Lossiemouth harbour 16 Apr (see Carrion Crow).

Raven *Corvus corax*

Scarce visitor and rare breeder.

Breeding: A pair bred at the usual site at Tronach Head and raised three young (MJHC, JDL, LS). Four were present on 21 May (AG) and may have included recently fledged young. Additionally, a pair displaying at Covesea 26 Feb and a single there on 6 Mar (DM, MJHC). Breeding inland was confirmed at Parkmore Quarry (Dufftown) with a brood of four on 17 Apr (KCu) and on a hill south of Dufftown where the nest contained young on 22 Apr but was deserted by 17 May (AE). Reports elsewhere in the uplands included 4 Ailnack Gorge 25 Mar, 1 Badnafrave Farm 2 Mar, 4 Ballindalloch 8 Nov, 2 Ben Macdui 18 Apr, 2 Ben Rinnes 1 Oct & 12 Dec (1 on 9 Sep), 4 Cairn Lochan 17 Jan (2 on 25 Jun), 2 Cairnbrallan 24 May, 1 Cragganmore 25 Jan, 2 Drynachan 29 Dec, 3 Glenconglass area 6 Dec, 2 Glenmulliach Forest 22 Mar, 1 Lecht 15 May, 1 Loch Belivat 11 Nov, 1 Loch Romach 15 Feb & 2 Mar, 1 Regaule 24 Sep, 7 Tomintoul area 15 Jul and 2 Tomnamoon 16 Feb (1 on 29 Aug). In the agricultural lowlands, 5 flew west over Grange 22 Jul (MM).

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Very common resident breeder and scarce migrant.

Largest count was eight along the old railway line at Portknockie on 13 Oct, associating with a Yellow-browed Warbler. Next best count was 5 Knock of Braemoray 7 Dec.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Rare migrant.

One trapped and ringed at Greenside Cottage (Windyridge) on 6 Nov (FK) is the fifth record for Moray & Nairn. The previous four records concerned 3 Dorback Burn (near Relugas) 4 Oct 1970, and singles at Clochan 2 Nov 1980, Conicavel 15 Nov 2007 and Deskford 5 Dec 2009.



Firecrest, Windyridge 6 November 2015 (Fran Knowles)

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Very common resident breeder.

No reports received of first song. A pair seen nest building at Tomnamoon 4 Apr.

Nest boxes:

	Pairs	Mean clutch	Mean fledged brood (all pairs)	Mean fledged brood (successful pairs only)	
Loch Spynie	14	7.3	4.6	5.9 (n=10)	(RP)
Broadleaf sites*	16	6.5	4.4	5.4 (n=13)	(HC)
Conifer sites **	15	7.3	4.1	4.8 (n=13)	(HC)

* Broadleaf sites were at Keith, Cairnfield, Cloddach, Birkenhill and Pinefield (Elgin)

** Conifer sites were at Knauchland, Cloddach, Thomshill and Caysbriggs

At Loch Spynie, and the other broadleaf sites, clutch sizes were a little smaller than in 2014 (7.9 and 8.0) and fledging success also fell (7.5 and 6.8 in 2014). Mean clutch size in the conifer sites was slightly up from 2014 (when 6.8) but, in common with the broadleaf sites, fledging success was lower (6.5 in 2014). The proportion of juveniles caught per adult for ringing at the Loch Spynie Constant Effort Site was 0.9:1, down from 3.3:1 in 2014, indicating poor breeding output and/or post-fledging chick survival (RP). A poor breeding season for Blue Tits in Moray.

Two counts exceeded ten birds: 19 Ballindalloch 14 Feb and 18 Loch Spynie 18 Nov.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Very common resident breeder.

No reports of song in January; first was at Clochan 19 Feb.

Nest boxes:

	Pairs	Mean clutch	Mean fledged brood (all pairs)	Mean fledged brood (successful pairs only)	
Loch Spynie	7	2.3	2.0	4.7 (n=3)	(RP)
Broadleaf sites *	16	4.9	3.1	4.1 (n=12)	(HC)
Conifer sites **	13	5.0	3.7	3.7 (n=13)	(HC)

As with Blue Tits, it was a very poor breeding season, especially at Loch Spynie (a broadleaf site) where mean clutch size was much smaller than in 2014 (6.5) as was the average brood size of successful pairs (6.1 in 2014). Clutch and brood sizes were also well down in the other broadleaf and conifer sites. The poor productivity at Loch Spynie was underlined by ringing at the 'Constant Effort Site' there, where no juveniles were caught, a considerable decline compared to 3.8 juveniles per adult in 2014 (RP).

The only count to exceed ten birds was 11 Ballindalloch 14 Feb.

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*

Common resident breeder.

Nest boxes:

	Pairs	Mean clutch	Mean fledged brood (all pairs)	Mean fledged brood (successful pairs only)	
Lossie Forest	6	-	5.2	5.2	(MJHC)

Away from the coastal forests, reports from other areas were 1 Balloch Forest 28 Jan (AC), 2 Bantrach Wood 17 Oct (MJHC), 1 Bogeney 17 Oct (MJHC), 1 Dava moor 17 Nov (JDG), 3 Loch Belivat 11 Nov (JDG), 3 Loch Kirkaldy 27 Jun (singles 11 Jun & 6 Aug) (A&FR), 1 Scootmore 7 Dec (JDG), 6 singles Shaw Wood 2 Nov (MJHC), 2 Tapp Forest 14 Jun (CW) and 3 Tilliglens 27 Jul & 27 Nov (also 2 on 3 Nov) (MGC).

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Very common resident breeder.

First song Randolph's Leap 20 Jan.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Very common breeder and migrant.

First song Lossie estuary 26 Jan and Portgordon 27 Jan. Song reported from only five other localities in the first 2 weeks of February. Counts of exceeding 10 were received from: Calcots (20 on 17 Jan), Culbin Bar (14 on 8 Feb), Kinloss barracks (12 on 2 Mar & 23 on 16 Oct), Netherton Farm (Findhorn Bay) (18 on 12 Jul, 16 on 14 Jul, 11 on 12 Jul & 10 on 4 Oct) and RAF Lossiemouth (10 on 16 Apr). Migrants flying south included records from Bishopmill, Elgin (1 on 8 Sep), Loch Spynie (20 on 13 Oct, 11 on 14 Oct, 13 on 15 Oct & 7 on 16 Oct) and over the old railway Portknockie (11 on 13 Oct). Other potential migrants were 3 over the Spey estuary 4 Oct and 3 over Lhanbryde 9 Oct.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Summer visitor and very common breeder.

Arrival: Another very early arrival was 1 Loch Spynie 14 Mar (DAG), following the exceptionally early arrival in 2014 at Loch Flemington on 12 Mar (the earliest on record). Only small numbers arriving in early April until c.50 Loch Spynie 11 Apr and 45 Loch Flemington 12 Apr. Further inland, 6 Aberlour 12 Apr. Largest spring concentration was c.200 on the River Nairn near the harbour.

Colony counts (birds/holes): 3 birds excavating holes Kingsteps 13 Apr, c.200 birds at colony on the upper Findhorn River (Banchor) 9 May, 25 birds Half Davoch 9 May, c.20 holes River Spey (Carron) 9 May, c.10 birds Clashach quarry 23 Jun, 20+ holes Nairn east beach 26 Jun & 16 Aug, 12 birds River Divie (Feakirk) 5 Jul, 4+ birds (1 hole) Nairn golf course 8 Aug, 35 birds Findhorn dunes 10 Aug and c.50 holes Carse of Delnies 27 Aug.

The colony in the high bank on the west side of the River Spey about 2 km downstream from Fochabers is one of the largest in Scotland. Most burrows are eroded by the flow of the river during winter with only 7 holes remaining in April from the previous year. Therefore counts in spring and summer will mostly comprise newly-excavated burrows. A count in summer 2015 revealed 2594 such burrows with a high level of occupancy, although an accurate assessment of the number of pairs is highly problematic.

In mid summer, c.200 were feeding around the river mouth area at Spey estuary on 24 Jun. Last report of the year was c.50 Craighead 13 Sep.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Summer visitor and very common breeder.

Arrival: In early April, first individuals were seen on 9th (same as 2014) at Loch Spynie (3) and Cullen (single) with the individuals remaining the following day. These were followed over the next few days by small numbers: 2 Dyke 11th, 2 Aberlour 12th, 1 Grangegreen 13th, 1 Findhorn Bay 14th and 1 Spey estuary 14th.

Breeding confirmed at Branchill (Dallas), Edinkillie hall, Forres (Red Lion pub), Moyness, Redstone Farm and Tomnamoon.

Late summer flocks: 100 Burghead 11 Sep, 57 Half Davoch 19 Aug, 50 Carse of Delnies 27 Aug, 50 Tomnamoon 2 Sep and c.50 Nairn 7 Oct. Last record was 2 Findhorn Bay 25 Oct.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Summer visitor and common breeder.

Arrival: Mid April records were 1 Darkland 13th, 2 Cassieford (Forres) 18th and 3 Bishopmill (Elgin) 18th. The other April reports were slightly later: 2 Drumduan (Forres) 21st, 1 North Crannoch 22nd, 6 Urquhart 22nd, 3 Burghead 26th, 1 Lhanbryde 27th and 1 Burghead 28th.

Breeding: The Buckie High School colony had 6 occupied nests on 9 Jul (two more than 2014). Confirmed breeding was also recorded at Elgin (Marleon Field), Daltulich (2 fledged) on 9 Jul, Lettoch (Glen Rinnes) on 12 Jul and a nest still containing young at Tugnet as late as 25 Sep.

Late summer counts: At Kinloss barracks, 100+ on 17 Aug, c.100 on 7 Sep, c.200 on 8 Sep and c.100 on 30 Sep. The only other large counts were 100 Burghead 11 Sep and c.100 Forres 17 Aug & 8 Sep.

Last report was 5 Nairn 7 Oct.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Very common resident breeder.

The largest flocks reported were 36 Old Newton of Budgate 14 Jun, 26 Sanquhar woods 11 Oct, 20 Loch Spynie 2 Jan, 15 Tom na Bent 25 Jan and 12 Kinloss barracks 15 Jun. At feeders in gardens were 3 Achareidh (Nairn) 29 Jan, 4 Clochan 27 Feb and 2 Forres 4 Jan & 27 Feb.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Rare migrant.

One was along the old railway at Portknockie on 13 Oct (MJHC, RP) and a second was trapped and ringed at Loch Spynie 14 Oct (RP). These are the seventh and eighth records in Moray and Nairn.

Previous records, all of singles, have occurred at Lossiemouth (Oct 1998), Loch Spynie (Sep 2001), Portknockie (Oct 2005), Strathlene (Oct 2006), Lossiemouth (Oct 2014) and Covesea (Oct 2014).



Yellow-browed Warbler, Loch Spynie 14 October 2015 (Bob Proctor)

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Summer visitor and common breeder. Scarce migrant and rare winter visitor.

Arrival: First arrival dates in March were generally later in the month compared to 2014, with singing birds reported from; Waterford (Forres) 21st, Kintessack 23rd, 2 Loch na Bo 27th, Loch Oire 27th, Urquhart 27th (3), Brodie Castle 28th (3), Cloddach 29th (3), Dipple 29th (2) and Torrieston 29th. Notable amongst the 72 records in April were 7 singing Sanquhar Woods, 4 singing Woodside, 3 singing Lossie Forest and 3 singing Loch na Bo.

Recorded elsewhere through the summer, mostly singles, at 81 sites including: Aberlour, Achareidh, Altavallie, Altyre Woods (2), Balmakeith Industrial Estate, Blackhillock, Blarnafade, Blervie Castle (2), Boat o' Brig, Bognafuaran Wood, Brae of Tomnaughty (2), Brodie, Brodie Castle (2), Broom of Moy (2), Broomhill Cottage, Burn of Mosset, Chapel Well, Clashdhu, Corbie Craig, Crook Cottage, Dallachy tip pool, Dallas Dhu distillery, Darnaway (2), Easter Arr, Easter Balcroy, Easter Brightmony, Easter Lawrenceton, Fisherton, Fochabers, Forres, Half Davoch, Hillhead, Inchberry, Inshoch Wood, Kingsteps (Nairn), Kintessack, Knocknagillan, Laiken Brae, Lethen (3), Lethen Hill, Little Kildrummie, Loch Flemington (2), Loch of Blairs (several), Loch Loy, Logie steading, Lossie Forest (3), Margaret's Well, Maviston, Mains of Moyness, Meikle Urchany, Milton of Balnagowan, Muiry Woods, Muldearie, Nairn, Nairn Bar (2), Nairn golf course, Nairn east beach dunes, Netherton (Findhorn Bay) (2), Old Newton of Budgate, Oakwood (Elgin), Oxhill Walk (near Clochan) (2), Phorp, Pitgaveney, River Findhorn (Seafield) (2), River Findhorn (Grangegreen) (2), Rafford, Raitloan, Scarffbanks Farm, Smithstown Wood, Spindle Muir, Sunnyhillock, Tomnamoon, Torrieston, Tugnet, Wester Galcantray, Wester Ragaule, Wardend Woods, Whiteinch (2), Wood Park, Woodend and Woodside (4).

One retrapped at Clochan was 7 years 2 weeks old and is the second oldest Chiffchaff from BTO ringing.

Autumn records in September-October from: Altavallie, Altyre Woods, Broom of Moy, Burghead, Clochan, Croy, Easter Balcroy, Findhorn Bay (2), Half Davoch, Kingsteps (Nairn), Leitch's Wood, Loch Flemington, Loch Spynie (3), Loch Loy, Lossiemouth, Rafford, Sanquhar Woods and Tomnamoon.

One November record at Dailuaine (Carron) on 24th (PRG).

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Summer visitor and very common breeder.

Arrival: One at Loch Flemington 7 Apr (JDG) equalled the earliest recorded in Moray & Nairn (1996, 2002 and 2014). One other arrival in early April involved a single at Nairn Bar 13th. Widespread from 16th onwards (recorded at 23 sites) and at a further 45 sites by late April.

Subsequent counts of 10 or more were 20 Phorp 29 Apr (MGC) and 10 Burnside-Little Aitnoh (MCo).

Productivity, as measured by ringing at the 'Constant Effort Site' at Loch Spynie, was 0.7 juveniles caught per adult – down from 2.0 in 2014 (RP).

Last record was a single at Tomnavoulin 17 Oct (DB).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Summer visitor and common breeder. Scarce migrant and winter visitor.

January-March: Noted in gardens and at feeders in Elgin (up to 2 males and up to 2 females between 10 Jan-23 Mar), Forres (singles on 5 & 29 Jan), Nairn (single males on 1, 4, 5 Jan & 2 Feb and 19 Jan) and Buckie (1 male 2 Feb and 1 female 18 Jan).

Spring-summer: First singing male recorded on 17 Apr at River Findhorn (Forres). Other mid-late April records included singles at Kinloss and Tugnet 17th, Boat o' Brig, Bridge of Fiddich, Craigellachie, Grangegreen and Waterford (Forres) 18th, Delnapot, Mains of Moy and Rothes (song) 19th, Rosarie 20th, Auchindoun Castle, Chapel Well, Crook Cottage, Forres (song) and Inshoch Wood 21st, Garmouth viaduct (male), Maryfield (song), Nairn golf course, Pitgaveny (song), River Spey (4 Craigellachie-Arndilly) and Wester Galcantray 22nd, Achreidh (Nairn), Crook (3), Wester Moy and Scarffbanks Farm (song) 23rd.

Widespread across Moray & Nairn throughout May-July. A nest was found at Loch Spynie containing 3 chicks and an unhatched egg on 31 May, with the chicks fledging successfully in June (RP). A female was seen carrying food at Auchanhandoch 14 Jul (FM).

Productivity, as measured from individuals trapped for ringing at the 'Constant Effort Site' at Loch Spynie, was 0.5 juveniles per adult, down from the 6.0 recorded in 2014 (RP).

Autumn: Singles were recorded in September at Loch Spynie 14th and Blacksboat-Tamdhu 27th. In October, recorded from Tomnamoon (male) 10th, Lossiemouth (Quarry Road - male & 2 females) 13th-14th and Loch Spynie (male) 15th.

November-December: male in a garden Fulmar Road (Lossiemouth) 25 Nov & 3 Dec, male Scarffbanks Farm 11 Dec, male Alves 15 Dec and a male in a garden Forres 27 Dec.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder.

Recorded in the breeding season at 4 locations: singing Garmouth viaduct area 5 & 15 May (MJHC, PD), singing Broom of Moy (River Findhorn) 16 May (MGC), single Aikenway-Arndilly (River Spey) 24 May (JDL) and singing Chapelton (Forres) 5 Jun (MJHC).

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Rare migrant and occasional breeder.

Recorded again in the Nether Dallachy area where a singing bird was watched on 14-15 Jun (MG, MJHC, DAG). This follows a similar 'short-stay' sighting nearby in 2014.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Summer visitor and very common breeder.

Arrival: First, in April, was 1 singing Sunbank (Lossiemouth) 21st, then one Burghead-Cummingston 28th. In early May, 2 singing Urquhart 5th, 2 singing Grigor Hill (Nairn) 8th and a single Loch Flemington 8th. Widespread from 9th onwards. Collecting nest material Drummuir 30 May.

One on The Carse (Findhorn Bay) 16 Aug was the last report received.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder.

Recorded at only 7 sites (13 sites in 2014). Singles were heard 'reeling' at Spynie Canal 9 May, Balvenie (Dufftown) 14 May, Heathfield (Clephanton) 15 Jun, Rhinturk (Cabrach) 27 Jun, Loch Flemington 1 & 3 Jul, Coldhome (Dallas) 24 Jul and Glen Tauchers (Mulben) 9 Aug.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Summer visitor and common breeder.

Arrival: First was one Portknockie 22 Apr. Several singing birds were at Loch Spynie and Spynie Canal on 2 May. Slow arrival with only 9 sites recording individuals by mid-May.

Breeding: At the 'Constant Effort Ringing Site' in the north-east fen at Loch Spynie, the number of juveniles caught per adult was 0.3:1, much lower than 2014, and the second lowest ratio since 2000 (RP). A late recently-fledged juvenile at Loch Spynie 8 Aug.

Autumn: Last record was 1 Spey estuary 10 Sep.

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

Irruptive winter visitor, scarce in most years but occasionally very common.

Only small numbers were recorded this year.

Winter-spring: All records from Elgin where 1 on 9 Jan (Birdguides), 1 Lesmurdie Road area 12-25 Jan then 2 from 26-28 Jan (D&TM), 8 Pluscarden Road 30 Jan (CAG) and 1 Chandlers Rise 2 Feb (LS).

Autumn-winter: Only recorded from Pluscarden Road, Elgin when 8 on 14 Dec (AP) and just one remaining on the following day (LM).

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Very common resident breeder.

Notable records included a flock of 4 Craigellachie-Arndilly 13 Mar, 3 Nairn 6 Jan and 2 together Loch Belivat 27 Mar.

Breeding: Young seen near Loch Kirkaldy 5 Jul and Loch Romach 10 Jul.

One on a peanut feeder in a Forres garden on 21 Feb, follows a similar report in Forres 18 Jan 2014.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Very common resident breeder.

Breeding confirmed at Darnaway and Loch of Blairs. At Loch Spynie Constant Effort ringing site, the ratio of juveniles to adults was 1.9:1, well down from 5.6:1 in 2014 (RP).

Best winter counts were 23 Culbin Bar 13 Dec (AY), 6 Carron 24 Nov and 6 Nairn Bar 13 Apr.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.

Following the breeding season, a flock of juveniles estimated at 150 on 19-20 Jun at the south end of Findhorn Bay.

Autumn/winter flocks included c.2000 Balormie pig farm 14 Feb, 800+ Feddan Farm 17 Jan, c.525 Moyness 9 Nov and 350 Clochan 27 Dec.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

Common resident breeder.

Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at River Spey (Aberlour-Laggan, where juveniles at two locations), Bridgend of Glenlivet (adults carrying food) and Craigellachie (nest under main road bridge). Also, pairs seen at Cloddach and River Nairn (in Nairn). The River Spey survey, from Cragganmore to Tugnet, revealed 15 confirmed or probable, and eight possible, territories. Elsewhere in the breeding season, records received

from Chapelton (Forres), Clashdu, Dalvey (Forres), Drummuir station, Dulsie Bridge, Forres, Househill (Nairn), Kilravock Castle and Sanquhar pond. Records from upland areas included Ailnack Gorge, Tomintoul, Well of Lecht and Glenlivet.

At other times of the year, Dippers were seen at the following additional localities: Chapelton (Forres), Loch Belivat, Mannachie Road (Forres), Mosset Burn (Forres, Waterford & Findhorn Bay), Muckle Burn (Boghole Wood), River Divie (Logie), River Findhorn (Randolph's Leap), River Lossie (Elgin) and River Nairn (Holme Rose-Kilravock).

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder.

Breeding: 1 adult with 3 juveniles Lairig an Laoigh 20 Jun (ABe). At other potential breeding sites were 1 Scurran of Morinsh (Ben Rinnes) 22 Apr (AE), 1 Ben Rinnes 3 Jul (GB) and 1 Cairn Lochain 9 Aug (PRG). A first-year male in Altyre Woods 11 Oct (MGC) was probably a migrant.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Very common resident breeder, winter visitor and migrant.

Breeding: A female collecting nest material at Linkwood (Elgin) 3 Apr. Adults seen carrying food at Auchanhandoch, Bishopmill (Elgin) and Lossiemouth.

Counts of 10 or more included 23 (in garden) Forres 6 & 12 Dec (and 22 on 19 Jan), 16 Logie estate 31 Oct, and 15 Sanquhar Woods 4 May.

Migrants came in off the sea during a seawatch at Lossiemouth 29 Oct, when a group 10 and then a single arrived. Potential migrants included 10 Carse of Delnies 10 Oct, 6 Quarry Road, Lossiemouth 13 Oct and 2 Strathlene 28 Oct.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Very common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter-spring: A total of 47 reports of flocks of 20 or more were received from 31 sites, largest counts were 260 Pathside (near Fochabers) 6 Feb, 200 Elgin 4 Jan, 160 Foresterseat 11 Jan, 156 Tomnamoon 14 Mar and 110 Gordonsward 30 Jan. Last in spring were 4 Auchanhandoch 1 & 2 May.

Autumn: First were 4 Cloddach quarry 11 Oct, then 10 Burnside and 4 Waterford (Forres) on 12 Oct. Almost daily arrivals reported to the end of the month including 42 Spey estuary, 1 Burghead and 1 Lossiemouth seen arriving in off the sea on 28 Oct. Largest flock in October was 100 Salterhill 19th.

Winter: A total of 37 reports were received, with 20 reports of flocks containing 20 or more from 16 sites: c.160 Invererne 2 Dec, 150+ Kirkhill Farm 30 Nov, c.150 Netherton 2 Dec (120 on 26 Dec, 49 on 25 Nov), 76 Wellheads 29 Dec, 68 Craigroy 13 Nov (57 on 5 Dec, 23 on 25 Dec), c.50 New Elgin 2 Dec, 50 Loch Spynie 10 Nov, 52+ Earlsmill 30 Dec, 45 Delnies 2 Dec, 30+ Lethen 14 Nov, 30 Forres 22 Nov, c.25 Moyness 9 Nov (including a white-headed individual), 25 Clochan 7 Nov, 25 Kingsteps (Nairn) 11 Nov, 20 Easter Clune 5 Nov and 'hundreds' Glenlatterach area 20 Dec.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Very common breeder and migrant. Scarce in winter.

Mid winter: As usual, over-wintering birds were almost exclusively found, in very small numbers, in close proximity to the coast. In January, 2 Kilcluan (near Lhanbryde) 1st, 1 Loch Spynie 2nd, 1 Househill (Nairn) 6th (& 28th), 2 Kingsteps (Nairn) 8th (& 3 on 30th), 1 Broadley (Nairn) 9th, 1 Urquhart 9th, 1 Cummingston 12th (& 22nd), 1 Findhorn 13th, 1 Findochty 17th, 2 Kinloss barracks 20th, 1 Burghead 22nd, 2 Roseisle 22nd and 1 Elgin 27th. In February, largest count was 7 Portknockie 5th.

In November, 1 Auchloch (Knock of Braemoray) 8th was still well inland. At Portknockie 11 were counted between the harbour and Bow Fiddle Rock on 30th. In December, 1 Nairn west beach 13th, 1 Portgordon-Strathlene 13th and, very unusual in winter, 3 in a Clochan garden 20th.

First song Clochan 5 Feb. Upcountry, 2 Bogeney (Knock of Braemoray) 12 Mar and 3 Glen Brown 15 Mar.

Breeding: Birds collecting food seen at Nairn 15 Apr and Tomnamoon 29 Apr. First juvenile reported on 10 May at Tomnamoon.

Two at Scarffbanks Farm 13 Oct appeared to be Continental birds (RP).

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Very common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter-spring: Reports of flocks of 20 or more were received from 18 sites: c.200 Duffus 8 Jan (20 on 15 Jan), 120 Gateside (Keith) 7 Mar, 100 Roseisle Forest 3 Jan, 60 Logie 3 Apr, 57 Roseisle maltings 19 Feb, 43 Kingsteps (Nairn) 30 Jan, 40 + Firhall (Nairn), 40 Woodside (Lhanbryde) 11 Jan, 36 Greshop Wood 8 Feb, 36 Househill (Nairn) 4 Mar, 35 Mosset pond (Forres) 1 Feb, 32 River Findhorn 15 Mar, 30 Slagachorrie (Auldearn) 8 Mar, c.30 Aulthash (Ordiequish) 8 Mar, 28 Greenside Cottage (Windyridge) 10 Jan, 25 Nairn 1 Mar, 20+ Kronyhillock (Nairn) 20 Feb and 20 Tomnamoon 7 Feb. Last in spring were 5 Gallowhill 10 Apr.

Breeding: Two were seen near Tomintoul on 28 May (MMS), close to where a bird was heard singing in May 2013. Another perched on a fencepost near Bridge of Brown on 10 Jun (MR).

Autumn-winter: First in October were 30 Findhorn 8th, followed by 3 Tomnamoon 10th, 1 Cloddach quarry 11th, heard at night over Nairn 12th, 14 Alves 14th, 5 Kinloss barracks 15th, 18 Tomnamoon & 1 Altyre moor 16th, 6 Loch Flemington, 3 Tomnavoulin, 2 Logie estate, 1 Bogeney & 1 Findhorn Bay 17th, 13 Tomnamoon 21st, 15 Tarras & 14 Loch Flemington 25th, 10 Burnside 26th, 2 in off the sea Spey estuary 28th and 3 in off the sea Lossiemouth harbour 29th. At Loch Spynie, groups flying south were recorded on 10th (2), 13th (40), 14th (250), 15th (30) and 16th (160).

In the mountains, two were foraging among boulders, and a further five flying over, near Ben Macdui on 13 Oct (RI).

In November-December, flocks of 20 or more were 200 Myreside 3 Dec, 130 Craigroy 13 Nov, 80 Ben Aigan 21 Nov, 50 Tomnamoon 11 Nov, c.45 Loch of Blairs 29 Dec, 45 Keith 2 Nov, 40 Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 26 Dec, 32 Loch of Bairs 12 Nov (possibly the same 20 + Blairs home Farm 12 Nov), c.20 Logiebuchany 6 Nov and 20 Auchlochan 8 Nov.



Redwing, Garbh Uisge Beag (Cairngorms plateau) 13 October 2015 (Robert Ince)

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Very common resident breeder and migrant.

Breeding confirmed at Auchanhandoch (Dufftown) where adults carrying food 1 May and at least two young out of the nest on 3 May.

Late summer/autumn flocks of 10 or more (maximum counts at each site) were 61 Tomnamoon 21 Aug, 45 Gow Moss 20 Jul, c.40 Hill of Spynie 5 Sep, 40 Wellheads 3 Sep, 32 Scarffbanks Farm 4 Aug, 30+ Rafford 19 Jul, 30 Drumore 30 Jul, 30 Muirton (Kintessack) 8 Aug, c.25 Craghead (Nairn) 16 Aug, 20 Cullen 23 Aug, 20 Carron 19 Sep, 15 Gallowhill 10 Aug, 15 Altavallie 30 Sep, 15 Kinloss barracks 15 Oct, 10 Dufftown 19 Sep and 10 Roseisle 18 Oct.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Summer visitor and common breeder.

Arrival: First of the year was 1 Auchanhandoch (Dufftown) 12 May (FM). No confirmed breeding this year but one juvenile seen Altyre Woods 3 Aug. Suspected pairs were seen at Blacksboat-Knockando 17 May and Dalbuie 23 May.

Summer reports elsewhere came from Aberlour-Laggan House, Clashdu, Dalvey, Dunearn, Fornightly, Gallowhill, Glenlivet pack horse bridge, Holme Rose, Howford Bridge (Nairn), Kilravock Castle, Kinloss barracks, Knock of Braemoray, Loch Park, Loch Spynie, Lossie Forest, near Tomintoul, Netherton (Findhorn Bay), Phorp, Tilliglens and Well of Lecht. Last report Cairn Guish 10 Aug.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Very common resident breeder and migrant.

Winter-spring: Largest count was 8 River Findhorn 15 Mar.

Breeding: Productivity at Loch Spynie, as measured by ringing at the Constant Effort Site, was 2.0 juveniles per adult - down from 3.2 in 2014 (RP).

Autumn: 5 along the old railway line at Portknockie and 12 along Quarry Road, Lossiemouth 13 Oct, 9 The Maggot (Nairn) 18 Oct and 1 in off the sea Burghead 28 Oct.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Very scarce migrant, occasional breeder.

One male on the track to the viaduct at Tugnet 7 May (MJHC).

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Rare migrant.

One in Findhorn 24 Mar (AS). This is the 19th record for Moray & Nairn.

Monthly distribution of records is as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	4	7	3	0	1	0	0	2	1	1

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder. Very scarce migrant.

Breeding: Confirmed at two sites; Auchanhandoch (Dufftown) where a pair was carrying food on 28 Jun, and still attending young in a nest hole on 4 Jul (FM), and another male seen carrying food at Blacksboat 8 Jun (NS, CA). Pairs were also seen at Elchies 13 May (AY, DM), Ordiequish 1 Jun (AY) and Dulsie 27 Jun (GA) - where 1-2 birds were also seen on 9 May (DAG), 13 May (JAC) and 9 Jun (C&DS). Singing males were recorded at Knockando 2 May (2) (DAG), near Banchor 9 May (DAG), Hill of Phones 31 May (DAG) and Delmore (Aberlour) 3 Jun (MJHC). Elsewhere, a female Tearie Woods 9 May (A&FR), 1 Burnside-Aitnoch 4 Jun (MCo) and a male Loch Kirkaldy 27 Jun (MJHC).

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder. Very scarce migrant.

A single at Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 12 May (RHD) was the only record.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Scarce resident breeder and migrant.

Breeding season: Coastal: occupied sites (*italics* = confirmed breeding) were Burghead, Carse of Delnies, Clashach quarry, *Culbin Forest*, Cullen, *Cummingston*, Findhorn dunes, *Hopeman*, *The Lein (Kingston)*, *Kinloss barracks*, *Lossie estuary*, Lossie Forest, Lossiemouth golf course, Maviston, *Portknockie* and Strathlene.

Inland: Aitnoch, Altyre Woods, Berryburn wind farm, Carn nan Clach Garbha, Daless (Drynachan), Dava, Feakirk, Glack Harnes (Ben Rinnes), Half Davoch, *Little Aitnoch*, Moss of Rothes, Refouble Farm, *Shenvault*, *Tomnamoon* and Well of Lecht.

Birds were recorded in additional localities in autumn and winter as follows: Coastal: Cloddach quarry (Dec), Culbin Bar (Oct, Dec), Findhorn Bay (foreshore) (Jan), Hillhead (Forres) (Oct), Kingston (Oct, Nov), Loch Flemington (Jan), Loch Spynie (Oct), Lossiemouth west beach (Feb), Myreside (Elgin) (Nov), Spey Bay (Jan) and Spey estuary (Dec).

Inland: Dava (Nov), Dufftown (Sep), Hill of Mulundy (Feb), Knock of Braemoray (Jan, Oct, Nov) and Ordiquish Forest (Mar).

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Summer visitor and fairly common breeder and migrant.

Arrival: First was 1 Lossie estuary 23 & 25 Mar; no other March records received. Small numbers on the coast in early-mid April included 1 Burghead 6th (2 on 8th), 3 Kinloss barracks 9th, 2 Cummingston 10th, 1 Hopeman 10th, 1 Cullen 10th and 6 Lossie estuary 11th. By mid-late April a few more on the coast but several at more inland localities including Cabrach and The Lecht. Last coastal migrants were singles at Findhorn dunes and Kinloss barracks 29 May, 3 Findhorn dunes 5 Jun, 1 Kinloss barracks 12 Jun and 1 Spey Bay 4 Jun. A short distance inland was 1 Little Kildrummie 8 Jun.

Breeding: In upcountry breeding habitat were 1 Aldunie 5 Jun, 2 Auchmair (Cabrach) 5 Jun, 10 Cairn Lochan-Cairn Gorm 26 May, 1 Little Aitnoch 21 Apr, 4 Glenmarkie 26 Apr and 2 The Lecht 28 Apr.

No confirmation of coastal breeding; 1 Kinloss barracks 22 Jul and a juvenile at Lossiemouth west beach on 26 Jul were more likely to have moved down from the uplands.

In August and September, records usually consisted of 1-2 birds except 3 Kinloss 6 Aug, 4 Burghead 28 Aug and 3 Lossiemouth harbour 31 Aug. In October, singles were seen at Ben Rinnes 1st, Monaughty Farm (Alves) 3rd, Netherton Farm (Forres) 3rd, Nairn Bar 8th, Findhorn Bay 8th, Culbin Bar 18th and Moyness 18th.

Dunnoek *Prunella modularis*

Very common resident breeder.

First song, in February, at Forres on 8th, Cooper Park (Elgin) on 19th and Clochan on 20th. Recorded well inland: 1 Knock of Braemoray 24 Jan, 8 Mar, 7 Jun, 8 Nov & 7 Dec, 2 Well of Lecht 5 Jul, 2 Lettoch (Glen Rinnes) 12-13 Jul and 2 Tomnavoulin 17 Oct.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Very common resident breeder.

Unlike 2014, no flocks of 50 or over were reported. Largest counts received were 46 Hopeman harbour 9 Sep, 35 Hopeman 9 Jun and 30 Nairn 15 Aug. Upcountry, counts only received from Tomnamoon where 21 on 1 Oct.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Common resident breeder.

Breeding: At Clochan, six pairs bred in nest boxes. All successfully fledged first broods at a mean of 3.5 young/brood (MJHC). Breeding also confirmed at Auchanhandoch (Dufftown), where fledgings were seen on 25 May, and at Rafford where adults were feeding young on 29 Jun.

Elsewhere, maximum counts at each site in the breeding season were 3 Bishopmill (Elgin) 18 Apr, 1 Druim Farm 27 May, 2 Gallowhill 24 & 31 May, 2 Forres 5 May & 23 Jun, 5 Grangegreen 18 Apr & 3 Jun, 3 Loch Flemington 7 Apr, 10 Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 6 May, 2 North Crannoch 11 Jun, 11 South Darkland 22 May, 6 Spey Bay 15 Jul and 2 Tomluncart 7 Apr.

At other times, maximum counts at sites included: 40 Auchenreath 17 Jan, 4 Brodie 14 Mar, 8 Elgin 13 Mar, 10 Forres 30 Nov, 28 Greenside Cottage (Windyridge) 7 Jan (16 on 8 & 10 Jan), c.60 Haughs (Keith) 25 Jan, 50 Loch Spynie 2 Jan, 25 Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 4 & 28 Dec (22 on 11 Mar), 6 Pitairlie 18 Mar, 25 Scarffbanks Farm 14 Feb (22 on 7 Mar), 12 Seafield (Findhorn Bay) 7 Aug, 13 South Darkland 4 Mar and 2 Wellhill Farm 10 Oct.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Rare migrant.

A female was seen on the golf course at Garmouth on 8 May (MJHC). The race could not be determined with certainty. This is the 16th Yellow Wagtail to be recorded in Moray & Nairn; the last record was at Nairn in 2011.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Summer visitor and common breeder. Very scarce in winter.

Winter: Regular at Nairn (on the River Nairn) when a single seen on 8, 9, 12 & 22 Jan, 21 Feb, 25 & 30 Nov. Elsewhere, 1 Lingieston (Forres) 4 Jan, 1 Lossiemouth harbour 4 & 7 Jan, 1 Elgin (on Tyock Burn in Edgar Road) 5 Jan & 18 Dec, 2 Urquhart 26 Feb, 1 Lossie Forest 6 Nov & 12 Dec, 1 Calcots 8 Nov, 1 Loch Spynie 10-11 Nov, 1 Gallowhill 22 Nov & 17 Dec, 1 River Findhorn (Seafield) 4 Dec, 1 Lossiemouth 12 Dec, 1 Fornightly 23 Dec and 1 Burn of Aberlour 31 Dec.

Breeding: Occupied sites (*italics* = confirmed breeding) were Ailnack Gorge, Auchanhandoch, Aultahuish, Balmakeith Industrial Estate, Banchor, Bridge of Dava, Burn of Aberlour, Cooper Park (Elgin), Dalvenuan, Drummuir station, Fornightly, *Gallowhill*, Geddes House, Glenlivet, Muckle Burn (Grangegreen), Half Davoch, Loch Belivat, Loch Park, Mosset Burn, Relugas, River Findhorn (Broom of Moy, Banchor), River Lossie (Cloddach), River Nairn (Nairn, Budgate, Househill, Howford, *Kilravock Castle*, *Cawdor Burn area*, Firhall, Broadley), Sanquhar pond, Spey Bay, Tomcork, Tomintoul and Well of Lecht. The River Spey survey, from Cragganmore to Tugnet, resulted in an estimate of 57 territories.

At other times (max. counts): 1 Burghead 17 Aug, 1 Elgin (Moray Street) 30 Sep, 2 Findhorn Bay 22 Aug, 2 Fornightly 2 Aug, 1 Forres 2 Sep, 5 Gallowhill (Grange) 29 Aug, 1 Loch Spynie 16, 24 & 28 Oct, 1 Lossie Forest 16 Oct, 2 Mosset Burn 10 Oct, 2 Muckle Burn 16 & 23 Aug, 1 Nairn 3 & 24 Sep, 11, 18 & 27 Oct, 1 North Crannoch 9 Oct, 2 Spey Bay 16 Aug, 1 Spey estuary 6 & 10 Sep, 2 Tomnamoon 17 Aug and 1 Wester Laurenceton 4 Oct.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Very common breeder and migrant.

Notable counts of Pied Wagtails *M.a.yarellii* (exceeding 20 individuals) were 63 on Aldis roof (Elgin) 4 Mar, 44 Gordonstoun playing field 4 Sep, 28 Balormie pig farm 27 Apr (also 25 on 26 Apr, 22 on 25 Apr & 21 on 29 Apr), 28 Quarry Pool (River Spey near Fochabers) 5 Aug and 21 Spey Bay 1 Aug. A further 21 counts were in excess of 10 individuals. Inland, first back were at Half Davoch 15 Feb. Recorded well inland at Auchmair (Cabrach), Bogeney, Bridge of Fiddich, Glenlivet, Knockando, Lettoch (Glen Rinnes), near Tomintoul and Well of Lecht.

Passage: A good year for sightings of 'White Wagtails' *M.a.alba*, recorded at 8 sites. In spring, recorded at Balormie pig farm 18 Apr-8 May, with peak passage in late April: 14 on 25th, 17 on 26th, 29 on 27th, 31 increasing to 42 on 28th, 20 on 29th and 24 on 30th. Still good numbers present in early May: 11 on 1st, 10 on 2nd and 12 on 8th. Small numbers elsewhere (max. counts); 1 Burghead 23 Apr, 2 Spey estuary 24 Apr & 25 May, Knockando area 2 May, 5 Findhorn Bay 4 May, 1 Speyslaw 6 May and 1 Lossie estuary 24 May. In late summer/autumn, were 3 Hopeman pig farm 16 Aug, 2 Lossie estuary 5 Sep, 4 Spey estuary 6 Sep and 1 Findhorn Bay 6 & 9 Sep.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Summer visitor and common breeder.

Arrival: First reports, in April, were 1 Arndilly 18th and 1 displaying Easter Balcroy 28th (& also 1 May). Subsequent reports in breeding habitat were 2 Dulsie 9 May (1 on 27 Jun), 2 Laggan-Aberlour 9 May, 2 Darnaway 10 May, 1 Deer Park (Fochabers) 11 May & 4 Jun, 1 Kilravock Castle 16 May, 1 Tomnamoon 24 May, 1 Blairnafade 26 May, 1 Inshoch Wood 26 May, 2 Burnside-Little Aitnoh 4 Jun, 1 Lethen 8 Jun, 1 Ben Rinnes Wood 14 Jun, 1 Delmore 23 Jun, 7 Muldearie Wood 26 Jun, 1 Whiteash Hill Wood 28 Jun, 1 Romach Hill 10 Jul and 1 Grangegreen 8 Aug.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Very common breeder and migrant.

Winter: Inland in early winter were 2 Dunearn 12 Nov and 1 Berryburn 26 Nov. At the coast, c.40 Kinloss barracks 23 Jan and 12 Culbin Bar 4 Jan.

Spring: 5 Glen Brown 15 Mar, 1 Bogeney 28 Mar, 4 Shenvault 28 Mar and 4 Auchmair (Cabrach) 29 Mar (15+ on 19 Apr) were well inland in early spring. Two counts in late April suggest an arrival of migrants: 220 Nairn/Culbin Bars 23 Apr (AS) and 140 Findhorn Bay 27 Apr (RHD). Regular counts at Balormie pig farm 12 Apr-8 May were usually below 10, except in late April when 16 on 24th, 13 on 25th, 25 on 26th, 11 on 28th and 10 on 29th; these also suggest an arrival of migrants on similar dates to the large counts above. Other counts of 20 or more in spring were 34 Kinloss barracks 9 Apr (35 on 23 Apr), 27 Tomnamoon 30 Mar and 20+ Roseisle maltings 4 Apr. Regular on spring passage during seawatches off Lossiemouth harbour (all flying west): 7 on 29 Mar, 4 on 12 Apr, 13 on 15 Apr and 14 on 16 Apr; also during this period were: 4 west Burghead 29 Mar, 10 west Lossie estuary 5 Apr, and 1 in off the sea Lossiemouth harbour 29 Mar (RP).

Late summer-autumn: Counts of 20 or more were 100+ Nairn/Culbin Bars 16 Sep (32 on 22 Jul), 25 Kinloss barracks 17 Sep (32 on 21 Sep), 34 Half Davoch 19 Aug and 20 Bogeney 12 Jul. Migration suggested by single birds flying south over Bishopmill (Elgin) on 8 Sep and 5 Nov, Loch Spynie on 14 Oct, and 2 flying in off the sea at Lossiemouth harbour on 28 Oct (RP).

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Scarce breeder, fairly common in winter.

Breeding season: First song at Lossiemouth harbour 28 Feb, then 1 displaying there 7 Mar. Elsewhere in early spring and summer, 1 Findhorn Bay 9 Mar, 1 Nairn 18 Mar, 1 Findhorn dunes 5 Apr, 2 Buckie harbour-Cullen 18 Apr, 3 Burghead 9 Jun, 1 Covesea (carrying food) 15 Jun, 3 Portknockie (1 carrying food) 16 Jun and 2 Cullen 19 Jun.

Counts of 5 or more were 6 Lossiemouth west beach 8 Dec and, between Portgordon-Strathlene, 8 on 4 Jan, 24 on 8 Feb, 25 on 18 Oct and 21 on 13 Dec. Records received from 10 other coastal sites but generally only 1-2 individuals.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Fairly common winter visitor and migrant.

Uncommon this year, with only one large flock, of 45 Ordiequish Forest 17 Apr (AY). Otherwise only single birds were seen, at Fochabers 15 Mar (DB), Knockando 1 Nov (PM), Tomnamoon 7 Nov (male 25

Nov & 17 Dec) (MGC), Loch Belivat and Levrattich 11 Nov (JDG), with the only exception being 2 Easter Clune (Darnaway) 29 Nov (CW).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Very common resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor.

First song, in February, at Forres 8th, Wellheads 13th, Culbin Forest 14th and Lossie estuary 15th.

Breeding: Productivity at Loch Spynie, as measured by ringing at the Constant Effort Site, was 0.3 juveniles per adult, down from the 0.7 recorded in 2014 (RP).

Flocks of 30 or more included: 250 Craigroy 19 Oct, 200+ Roseisle 23 Jan, 100 Elgin 4 Jan, 80 Ballindalloch 14 Feb, 46 Easter Bauds 25 Dec, 35 Heathfield 6 Jan, 33 Carron 24 Nov, 30 Tomintoul 22 Mar and 30 Tomnamoon 30 Nov.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Very common resident breeder.

Groups of 10 or more included 12 Knock of Braemoray 24 Jan, 10 Dunearn Wood 10 Nov and 10 Phorp 25 Dec.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Very common resident breeder.

First song Cooper Park (Elgin) on 13 Feb. Flocks of 10 or more included 15 Loch Spynie 27 Oct (also 10 on 2 Jan), 13 Achareidh (Nairn) 8 Jan and 11 Elgin 19 Dec.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Very common resident breeder.

Flock counts of 50 or more were recorded at 21 sites. Largest counts (100 or more) were: 400 Darkland 26 Oct & 30 Nov (and 260 on 1 Aug), 400 Milton Brodie 1 Jan, 350 Spey Bay 22 Nov, c.300 Kilcluan 1 Jan, 250 Bogeney 24 Jan (and 210 on 8 Feb), 220 Kinloss 26 Dec, 200 Nether Dallachy 24 Nov & 2 Dec (included a white-headed individual), 180 Wester Greens (Half Davoch) 11 Mar, 150 Balormie 17 Oct, 150 Loch Spynie 4 Jan, 150 Spey estuary 4 Jul & 6 Sep (also c.100 on 5 Aug), 150 Urquhart 19 Jan, c.140 Netherton Farm (Findhorn Bay) 2 Dec, 120 Findhorn Bay 18 Jun (104 on 19 Oct), 100 Middlefield 29 Jan and 100 Portknockie 5 Feb.

Twite *Linaria flavirostris*

Scarce resident breeder and winter visitor.

Winter: A flock was present again around Findhorn Bay, ranging widely from the southern part of the bay (highest count 70 on 3 Jan) to the foreshore of the village itself (where 35 on 25 Feb and 23 perched on the roof of the Captain's Table café on 8 Mar). Monthly maximum counts of this flock were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
70	35	30	2	nc	nc	nc	21

(RHD, RSC, GM *et al.*)

Elsewhere, 16 Wellhill Farm 10 Oct (RP), 15 Burghead 26 Sep (RP), 1 Kingsteps (Nairn) 15 Mar (AS) and 1 Bogeney 17 Oct (MJHC).



Twite (front two birds), Findhorn 27 February 2015 (Richard Somers Cocks)

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

Common resident breeder and migrant.

Breeding season: Fledglings seen at Auchanhandoch 14 Jun (FM). Other records during the breeding season included 5 Burnside-Little Aitnoch 4 Jun, 2 Knock of Braemoray 7 Jun, 1 Garmouth (at feeder) 18 Jun, 50+ Loch Allan (Dava) 27 Jun, 1 The Lein (Kingston) 9 Jul, 1 Dava 11 Jul and 1 Lettoch (Glen Rinnes) 13 Jul.

At other times, some very large flocks were found in the forests including 1200 Ordiequish 28 Feb (520 on 22 Feb, 350 on 18 Jan), 360 Muldearie 21 Jan, 350 Monaughty Forest 26 Feb and 140 Teindland Forest 24 Jan (AY).

Common (Mealy) Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

Very scarce winter visitor and migrant.

Two caught and ringed Ordiequish 7 Mar (AY), 2 Lynavoir (Tomintoul area) 14 Mar (CWh), 1 Nairn 21 Jan & 3 Feb (GA) and 1 Redburn 11 Nov (JDG). These are 16th-19th records for Moray & Nairn.

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Common resident and irruptive migrant breeder.

Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*

Probable common resident breeder.

In view of the virtual impossibility of separating these species in the field without recording the calls, all crossbill records are combined.

Flocks of 10 or more (max. counts at each site) were: 40 Shaw Hill 2 Nov, 33 Tomnamoon 14 Nov, 25 Darnaway 8 & 16 Aug, 25 Tilliglens 8 Nov, 20 Torrieston 19 Nov, 18 Teinland Forest 24 Jan, 15 Romach Loch 22 Jan, 14 Deer Park (Fochabers) 4 Jun, 14 Hill of Mulundy 4 Dec, 14 Half Davoch 11 Dec, 12 Kingsteps (Nairn) 17 Oct, 11 Ordiequish 17 Apr (included 2 broods), 10 Darkland 15-16 Jun and 10 Culbin Forest 22 Jul. Smaller groups and singles recorded at Altyre Woods, Aulthash (Fochabers), Bin of Cullen, Binsness, Bogeney, Burghead Woods, Craigroy, Grangegreen, Glenmulliach, Holme Rose-Kilravock, Lethan Wood, Loch Kirkaldy, Loch Spynie, Muldearie Wood, Mundole, Phorp, Shenvault, Slughorrie, Tapp Forest, Tomintoul, Whiteash Hill Wood and Whitefold.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis**Very common resident breeder.*

Flocks of 10 or more (max. count at each site) included 77 Findhorn Bay 26 Dec, 62 Duffus Castle 31 Oct, c.50 Cummington 28 Sep, c.50 Darkland 30 Nov, 37 Tomnamoon 16 Sep, 40 Gallowhill 10 Oct, 30+ Conicavel 24 Nov, 25 Windyridge 10 Jan, 25 Kingsteps 30 Jan, 24 Clochan 28 Jan, 20 Craigroy 18 Jul, 18 Earlseat Farm 18 Oct, 17 Forres 17 Dec, 13 Nairn 22 Jan, 12 Balblair 2 Mar and 10+ Burghead 16 Oct.

Siskin *Spinus spinus**Very common resident breeder and migrant.*

Fewer than normal in Clochan during the early part of the year. Flocks of 20 or more (max. count at each site) included: 150 Blacksboat 25 Nov, 145 Whiteash Hill Wood 6 Feb, 70 Tomnamoon 25 Aug, 55 Darnaway 6 Aug, 45 Altyre Wood 12 Apr, 30 Carron 24 Nov, 20 Shaw Hill 17 Mar and 20 Lossie estuary 21 Dec.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis**Common winter visitor and rare breeder.*

Breeding: Present in four sites on the Cairngorms plateau. Birds reported on 24 Mar (5), 18 Apr (4 & 2), 23 May (4), 27 May (3), 25 Jun (1 & 2) and 27 Jun (3) (PRG et al.).

Winter: Inland records were 80 Ben Aigan 17 Jan (AE), 2 Auchlochan 24 Jan (PRG), 2 Hill of Towie 8 Mar (JDL), 5 Ben Macdui 3 Oct, 1 Lochan Buidhe (Cairngorm plateau) 3 Dec (PRG) and 16 Knock of Braemoray 7 Dec (PRG). On Ben Rinnes, 2 on 1 Jan, 3 on 1 Oct, 4 on 10 Oct and 12 on 3 Nov (AE, FN).

At coastal sites, monthly maximum counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars (and east Nairn)	48	17	8	nc	nc	1	9	104
Findhorn Bay area	c.100	1	0	0	0	0	11	3
Lossie estuary & east beach	20	88	6	2	2	nc	nc	33
Spey estuary area	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	4

Highest counts at each site were 104 Nairn/Culbin Bars 13 Dec (AY, GP), c.100 Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 17 Jan (JDL), 88 Lossiemouth east beach 6 Feb (MJHC) and 4 Spey estuary 13 Dec (DB).

Elsewhere, coastal (and nearby) reports included 1 flying over Clovenside cemetery (Forres) 13 Jan (RP), 20 Calcots 17 Jan (JDL), 1 west Lossiemouth harbour 8 Feb (RP), 2 Buckpool 24 Feb (KCu) and 2 Burghead 11-12 Nov (AB, MGC) (and 1 there on 24 Mar [AH] and 3 Nov [MGC]).



Snow Bunting, Lossie estuary 7 March 2015 (Mike Crutch)

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Scarce resident breeder.

In the early part of the year (January-March), singles were recorded near Muirton (7 & 22 Feb) and Kinneddar (singing 22 Mar).

Breeding season: Singles, unless otherwise noted, were seen or heard singing in the coastal lowlands at Balormie pig farm (singing on 16 & 19 Apr, 2 May, 4 Jun & 25 Jul), Broadley (4 Apr), near Mosstodloch (18 May), near Muirton (2 on 18 & 26 Apr, and singles on 5, 16 & 25 Apr), Essil-Garmouth viaduct (singing on 10 Jun), Garmouth (3 on 21 May), Portgordon (2 on 8 May), Roseisle maltings (8 May), Spey Bay (2 on 14 Jul, 1 on 15 Jul), Stynie Glebe (18 May) and Troves (2 singing 24 May).

In winter, 24 Clochan 12 Dec.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Very common resident breeder.

First song recorded on 19 Feb at Findhorn Bay.

Flocks of 20 or more were 42 Clochan 21 Jan, 40+ Nether Dallachy 24 Nov, c.40 Brodieshill 12 Jan, 33 Roseisle 2 Mar, 24 Croy 9 Feb, 24 Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 7 Apr, 20 Scarffbanks Farm 2 & 4 Jan, 20 Heathfield 6 Jan and 16+ Ruthven Cottage (Nairn) 8 Jan.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Very common resident breeder.

In January-March, flocks of 10 or more were recorded on four occasions: 15 Loch Spynie 2 Jan, 10+ Moyness 20 Feb, 10 Bogeney 8 Feb and 10 Scarffbanks Farm 14 Feb. Smaller groups or singles recorded at 12 other sites.

Breeding: Largest count during this period was 8 males on reed stems in Spynie Palace reedbed 3 Jul. Breeding confirmed at Tugnet 4 Jun (brood of 4) (MJHC). The proportion of juveniles to adults trapped for ringing at Loch Spynie Constant Effort Site was 0.0:1.0, down on 2014 (0.9:1.0) (RP). Present elsewhere in the breeding season at Auldearn, Black Loch (Dava), Bognafuaran Wood, Brackley, Chapel Well, Dallas Dhu distillery, Darnaway, Nairn (east beach), Easterton, Findhorn Bay, Gallowhill, Kinchyle, Loch Allan, Loch Belivat, Loch Flemington, Loch of Blairs, Loch Loy, Mosset Burn, Moyness, North Crannoch, River Findhorn (Seafield), River Spey (Craigellachie-Arndilly), Sanquhar pond, Spey Bay, Tomluncart and Wester Regaule.

The largest count received in the autumn was 8 Lossie estuary 20 Oct, while for winter c.10 Moyness 31 Dec.

ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS TO 2014 REPORT**Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra***

Two additional records involved singles on 21 May at Altnaglander Cottages (Strath Avon) and Findron Farm (Tomintoul) (MMS).

RIVER SPEY BREEDING BIRD SURVEY 2015*ALASTAIR YOUNG and MELVIN MORRISON****Introduction***

The River Spey is the main river system flowing north from the Central Highlands, reaching the sea at the Moray Firth. Within Moray it covers a length of 51.5 km from Cragganmore to the mouth at Tugnet, ranging from wooded valleys to open estuary. Over most of its length it is fast flowing and edged with woodland, only slowing and widening when it reaches the lower stretches close to the sea below Fochabers. The aim of the survey was to record the breeding status and number for a range of riverine species, which were expected to be present and for which useful data could be obtained.

METHODS

This survey was carried out by members of Moray Bird Club (the Moray branch of the SOC) during April-June 2015. The river within Moray was divided into 13 sections and a volunteer allocated to each. Two visits were undertaken, one between 15th April and 15th May, the second between 15th May and 15th June. Surveyors were asked to record sightings of the following species: Mute Swan, Mallard, Goldeneye, Goosander, Little Grebe, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper, Common Tern, Common Gull, Kingfisher, Sand Martin, Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail.

For each sighting, the map reference was asked to be noted along with the number of birds and breeding evidence.

The records were analysed by plotting the records on a map. Sightings near to the same place on both visits were considered to be evidence of a territory, as was confirmed breeding records. Sightings on one visit without probable or confirmed breeding evidence were noted as a possible territory.

The sections were:

- Tugnet to Bogmoor
- Bogmoor to Fochabers Bridge
- Fochabers Bridge to Earth Pillars
- Earth Pillars to Boat o' Brig
- Boat o' Brig to Aikenway
- Aikenway to Arndilly Farm
- Arndilly Farm to Craigellachie
- Craigellachie to Victoria Bridge, Aberlour
- Victoria Bridge to Laggan House
- Laggan House to Knockando House
- Knockando House to Knockando village
- Knockando village to Blacksboat
- Blacksboat to Cragganmore

RESULTS

The results were collated for each species and although the results do not give us breeding populations for all species, they give a good indication of what was present. The variability of experience and knowledge of observers did make some difference but it was clear that the overall results were valid. The limitation of two visits also reduced the number of proved breeding records and made it difficult to confirm territories but the survey provides us with a useful baseline for the birds found and the survey could easily be repeated in future years to identify changes in the birds breeding on the Spey. Results are summarized for each species.

Mute Swan

One territory, no other sightings.

The results are not surprising given the fast flowing nature of the river over most of its length. The single pair at Fochabers reflects the slower pace of the lower stretches near the sea. The birds were present on the first visit only and, with no sign of a nest, they may be the same as the pair at the pond at Gordon Castle nearby.

Mallard

A total of 11 broods was seen on eight sections, with 45 young. Ten other pairs were seen in possible breeding territories, and 142 other birds.

Mallards will nest in a variety of sites, often away from water, taking the young to the river once hatched. For this reason it was felt that little if any conclusions could be drawn from these sightings other than the fact that they were distributed along the entire length of the River Spey. There were no specific sections favoured by breeding birds but larger numbers of flocking and loafing birds were seen in the lower sections where you would expect non-breeders or failed breeders to gather.

Goldeneye

None recorded.

Goosander

Two broods with a total of three young were seen, and 14 other birds.

It is difficult to assess what this means as birds will nest away from the river and then move many miles on the river once they get there. This does however show there is a small breeding population on the Spey.

Little Grebe

None recorded.

Moorhen

None recorded.

For a species which is expected to be present it was surprising that none were found and is a reflection of a general reduction of numbers in recent years.

Oystercatcher

The early visit indicated that there are a number of pairs breeding along the length of the river, but this visit also included a number of other birds which were either not yet on territory, off-duty birds from nearby farmland or were non breeding. By the second visit, the records were scattered along the entire length and

several loose flocks had formed by that time. This makes it difficult to estimate the number of pairs but we identified at least 20 territories distributed along the entire length of the river.

Common Sandpiper

57 probable and 24 possible territories were identified although breeding was only proved in one section.

As expected, Common Sandpipers were regular along the entire length of the river with up to 81 territories recorded. This gives 1.5 territories/km, which is the same as the average given in '*The Breeding Birds of North-East Scotland*', from several stretches of river surveyed in Moray between 1999 and 2006. The number of territories per kilometer also ties in with the estimated average density for Scotland in '*Birds of Scotland*' of 1.6 pairs/km. This indicates a healthy and stable population on the Spey.

Common Tern

Birds were recorded on five sections from the lower Spey to Blacksboat.

Breeding was not recorded on any stretch and the birds recorded may include migrants. See Appendix for further information obtained outwith the survey visits.

Common Gull

44 birds were seen on the first visit with breeding proved in two sections, between Tugnet and Bogmoor, and between Fochabers Bridge and the Earth pillars.

They were mainly concentrated in the lower stretches with the breeding records below Boat o' Brig. With colonies in the surrounding hills, and birds ranging many miles, it is probable that many of the birds were simply visiting the river rather than breeding.

Kingfisher

Only one bird was seen during the survey (Laggan House to Knockando House section). See Appendix for further information obtained outwith the survey visits.

Sand Martin

This is a relatively common bird along the lower stretches of the river. Away from the main colony at Fochabers, 201 birds were seen on the first visit and 290 on the second. Birds were generally restricted to the sections adjacent to colonies and it is likely that the distribution is limited by suitable nest sites. Four breeding colonies were located; at the Victoria bridge to Laggan House (3+ prs reported at colony but no count of holes provided), Sandyhillock, Aikenway to Arndilly Farm (20 apparently occupied nest holes [AON]), Tofthead, Fochabers Bridge to Earth pillars (38 AON), and the very large colony at the Quarry Pool, downstream from Fochabers. See Appendix for further information about the Fochabers colony, obtained outwith the survey visits.

Dipper

15 probable/proved and 8 possible territories were recorded giving an estimated 23 territories.

This gives a density of 0.45 pairs/km or 1 pair every 2.24 km. The only comparable study was on the River Clyde where densities varied, dependant on the size of the river, but were similar to the Spey, ranging from 0.3 to 0.7 pairs/km (A. Young pers. comm.). Many of the pairs nest on the small streams and rivers which run into the Spey so it is possible that some birds have been missed. Every section had at least one sighting with proved breeding in two.

Grey Wagtail

Present throughout the whole length of the river with probable or proved breeding at 35 locations with another 22 possible breeding locations, suggesting 57 territories.

Birds were present on all stretches but were more frequent on the upper stretches of wooded, fast-flowing river with 40 of the 56 territories upstream of the Boat o' Brig. This gives a density of 1.11 pairs/km or 1 pair every 0.9 km. This compares with 1.2 pairs/km recorded for Moray in '*The Breeding Birds of North-East Scotland*'. It also compares well with the rest of Scotland where recorded densities were 0.4-0.5 pairs/km over 80 km of river in the Lothians, 0.9 pairs/km over 68 km of the Clyde and up to 1.3 pairs/km in Tayside ('Birds of Scotland'). We clearly have a healthy population.

Pied Wagtail

Present on most sections but few birds seen on the second visit.

This is not strictly a river species and therefore it was not possible to identify a population tied to the river.

APPENDIX

Common Tern

In 2015, two pairs nested on the roof of Walkers factory at Aberlour. The adults from these pairs fed along the Spey and are likely to account for some of the sightings on the river.

Kingfisher

Separate reports were received about sightings on two other sections of the river, between Fochabers Bridge and Earth Pillars, and between Boat o' Brig and Aikenway. This indicates a small population on the river of 1-3 pairs.

Sand Martin

The colony in the high bank on the west side of the river about 2 km downstream from Fochabers is one of the largest in Scotland. Most burrows are eroded by the flow of the river during winter with only 7 holes remaining in April from the previous year. Therefore counts in spring and summer will mostly comprise newly-excavated burrows. A count in summer 2015 revealed 2594 such burrows with a high level of occupancy, although an accurate assessment of the number of pairs is highly problematic.

RINGING REPORT 2015

BOB PROCTOR

Numbers of birds ringed in Moray & Nairn during 2015:

	FG*	Pullus	Total		FG*	Pullus	Total
Brent Goose	5		5	Yellow-browed Warbler	1		1
Fulmar	4		4	Chiffchaff	18		18
Storm Petrel	47		47	Willow Warbler	111	12	123
Shag		2	2	Blackcap	25	3	28
Hen Harrier		14	14	Sedge Warbler	60		60
Goshawk		2	2	Treecreeper	14		14
Sparrowhawk		4	4	Wren	74	5	79
Oystercatcher		3	3	Starling	91	13	104
Lapwing		10	10	Dipper	8		8
Curlew		1	1	Blackbird	124	17	141
Kittiwake	4		4	Fieldfare	26		26
Common Gull		1	1	Song Thrush	26	11	37
Herring Gull		7	7	Redwing	14		14
Woodpigeon	2		2	Spotted Flycatcher	2	4	6
Collared Dove	7		7	Robin	155		155
Tawny Owl		2	2	Stonechat	1		1
Great Sp. Woodpecker	49		49	Dunnock	95		95
Kestrel		6	6	House Sparrow	260	19	279
Merlin		10	10	Tree Sparrow	120	60	180
Jay	1		1	Pied Wagtail	25	3	28
Jackdaw	1		1	Meadow Pipit	14	4	18
Carrion Crow		1	1	Brambling	3		3
Goldcrest	67		67	Chaffinch	344		344
Firecrest	1		1	Bullfinch	10		10
Blue Tit	459	261	720	Greenfinch	355		355
Great Tit	279	139	418	Linnet	15		15
Crested Tit	6	31	37	Lesser Redpoll	1091		1091
Coal Tit	192		192	Common Redpoll	2		2
Skylark	1		1	Goldfinch	269		269
Sand Martin	458		458	Siskin	158		158
Swallow	89	32	121	Yellowhammer	38		38
House Martin	1		1	Reed Bunting	64	4	68
Long-tailed Tit	94		94	TOTALS	5390	681	6071

*FG=full grown

From: Robinson, R.A., Leech, D.I. & Clark, J.A. (2015) The Online Demography Report: Bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2014. BTO, Thetford (<http://www.bto.org/ringing-report>, created on 11 Aug 2016).

Recoveries in 2015:

All ringing recoveries reported for 2015 are included in this section with the more interesting ones given in full. Anyone finding a ringed bird in Moray or Nairn is asked to pass the details to Bob Proctor or Martin Cook.

Ringing details are given on the first line and recovery data on the second line. The age when ringed is given according to the EURING code, note however, that these numbers do not represent age in years:

- 1 Nestling or chick
- 2 Fully grown, year of hatching unknown
- 3 Hatched during year of ringing
- 4 Hatched before year of ringing, exact year unknown
- 5 Hatched in the previous year
- 6 Hatched before the previous year, exact year unknown

m = Male f = Female J = Juvenile CES = Constant Effort Site

Recovery symbols:	V	Caught and released with ring
	VV	Ring number read in field, or sight record of a colour-ringed bird
	VB	Breeding when trapped
	+	Shot or killed by man
	X	Found dead or dying (F = Fresh, L = Long dead)
	RO	Ring Only
	?	Unknown circumstances

MUTE SWAN

U1158	6	251191	River Lossie, Lossiemouth	
	V	070293	Ness Mouth, Inverness	63 km
	V	060715	Garmouth	14 km

This individual was taken into care on 6 July and then released on 20 August 2015. At around 24 years it is a little short of the UK longevity record of 29 years.

WHOOPEE SWAN

A7688	1m	040806	Glaumbaeyjareyja, Glaumbaer, Langholt, ICELAND	
	X wire	161115	Burnside of Dipple Farm, Fochabers	1237 km
A9030 (BYL)	1m	290813	Halldorsstadir, Bardardalur, S-Thing, ICELAND	
	VV	010115	Foresterseat, Calcots, Elgin	
Z6A	Ad. f	170211-240311	Caerlaverock, Dumfries	
	VV	181111-150312	Caerlaverock, Dumfries	
	VV	210213	Caerlaverock, Dumfries	
	VV	081213-050214	Caerlaverock, Dumfries	
	VV	220214	Montrose Basin, Tayside	
	VV	070215	Foresterseat, Calcots, near Elgin	
	VV	150215	Wester Calcots, Elgin	

ZY2383 (Z9C)	VV	290212 191115	Caerlaverock, Dumfries Broadley, near Buckie
ZY2628 (APU)	VV	060314 050115	Caerlaverock, Dumfries Foresterseat, Calcots, Elgin
ZY8739 (YHS)	VV	250215 251115	Caerlaverock, Dumfries Broadley, near Buckie

GREYLAG GOOSE

AZU	VV	220312 211115	Dell of Killiehuntly, near Kingussie Moyness
-----	----	------------------	---

LIGHT-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE

3 6 - Seen at the Lossie estuary 14 Sep-5 Dec with its mate and brood of two, with the final sighting on 6 Dec at the West Beach, Lossiemouth. 3 6 was ringed as a first-year male at Dundrum Bay, Co. Down on 9 Jan 2008 and the vast majority of sightings have come from the original ringing area. It was seen in Iceland in May 2009 and 2012 en route to its breeding ground in Arctic Canada.

C 4 - This individual joined the original group on 18 Sep but not seen subsequently. It was ringed as an adult female on 11 Feb 2010 at Baldoyle Bay, Dublin and seen annually in winter around this area until being resighted at the Lossie eatuary. On three dates in Apr-May 2010 it was seen in Iceland en route to its breeding grounds in Arctic Canada.

H 2 - This individual joined the original group on 18 Sep and remained on the estuary until 25 Sep. It was ringed as an adult male on 11 Feb 2010 at Baldoyle Bay, Dublin and seen annually in winter around this area until being resighted at the Lossie eatuary. It was back in Ireland at Strangford Lough from 12 Oct. It has been seen once in Iceland in May 2013 en route to its breeding grounds in Arctic Canada.

D I - This individual joined the original group on 25 Oct. It was ringed as an adult female on 5 Mar 2013 at Baldoyle Bay, Dublin. Similarly, it was seen around Baldoyle Bay and Dublin Bay during the following winters. It was seen on two occasions at a stop-over site at Snæfellsnes, Alftafjörður, Iceland on 24 May 2013 and 21 May 2015. On 11 Jun 2014 it was recorded within the Arctic Canadian breeding grounds at Nasaruvaalik Island, near Bathurst Island, Canada. It was back in Ireland at Strangford Lough from 15 Nov.

STORM PETREL

2351390	4 V	250715 100815	Tronach Head, Portknockie Eilean nan Ron	128 km
2351397	4 V	260715 030815	Tronach Head, Portknockie Utsira, Rogaland, NORWAY	486 km
2642354	4 V	120715 100815	Eilean nan Ron Tronach Head, Portknockie	128 km
2715098	4f V	230715 260715	Souter Lighthouse, Tyne & Wear Tronach Head, Portknockie	320 km
2657918	4 V	090716 080815	Girdleness, Aberdeen Tronach Head, Portknockie	82 km

CORMORANT

5236344	1	240606	North Sutor	
	X	110715	Oathillock, Moray	70 km

SHAG

1406504	1	140710	North Sutor	
	X	070415	Cullen	72 km

SPOONBILL

8056350	1	310512	Sloegebied, Vlissingen, Zeeland, THE NETHERLANDS	
	VV	170615	Findhorn Bay	830 km
	VV	050815	Cresswell Point, Northumberland	544 km
	VV	060815	Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire	291 km

This individual quickly follows the colour-ringed individual from Schleswig-Holstein seen on the Spey estuary on 18 June 2013.

HEN HARRIER

FV82581	Ad.f	120702	Lyde, Orkney	
	V	271003	Milldoe, Rendall, Orkney	4 km
	VV	160105	Rendall, Orkney	3 km
	VV	250415	Cabrach	189 km
	VV	201115	Holm, Orkney	20 km

OYSTERCATCHER

FH45913	8	021212	Pen-Y-Parc, Beaumaris, Anglesey	
	VV	310714	Lossie estuary	500 km
FP21382	3	300900	Culbin Forest, near Forres	
	V	171015	Alness Point	35 km
FP56279	8	121003	Whiteford Sands, Gower, Swansea	
	VV=B	270714	Moray College UHI, Elgin	672 km
	VV=B	140515	Moray College UHI, Elgin	672 km
FP75683	6	151005	Wig, near Bangor, Gwynedd	
	VV=B	180415	Elgin cemetery	492 km

RINGED PLOVER

8B45160		270814	Makkevika, Giske, Møre og Romsdal, NORWAY	
(NLZ)		120914	Findhorn Bay	759 km

KNOT

131359863	2	060607	Alert, Ellesmere Island, CANADA	
	V	290814	Findhorn Bay	3355 km

Another foreign ringed individual was originally colour-ringed at Griend, Texel, The Netherlands on 24 Mar 2015. It was resighted in The Netherlands on 12 & 18 Sep 2015 before moving north to the Lossie estuary on 31 Dec 2015.

DUNLIN

JT57204 (SY1)	3 VV	210915 201215	Ujście Wisły, Pomorskie, POLAND Portgordon harbor	1405 km
------------------	---------	------------------	--	---------

REDSHANK

DD01758	3 V	190914 020815	Findhorn Bay Montrose Basin	121 km
---------	--------	------------------	--------------------------------	--------

Another was killed by a cat at Portgordon seven years after ringing.

GREENSHANK

A colour-ringed individual, ringed in Sutherland on 29 May 2010, was seen in Findhorn Bay on 2 July 2015. Each year since ringing this individual has been seen in spring/summer in Sutherland and in Essex each autumn/winter. Presumably Findhorn Bay was a stop-over before an onward flight to Essex?

SANDWICH TERN

Orange V36	1 VV	summer 2015 170915	Griend, NETHERLANDS Findhorn	
White NV5	3 VV	July 2013 170915	Scheelhoek Eilanden, NETHERLANDS Findhorn	
White UAV	? VV	050715 290715	Coquet Island, Northumberland Findhorn	287 km

ARCTIC TERN

XR25345	1 V	160787 240715	RAF Kinloss Ythan estuary	100 km
---------	--------	------------------	------------------------------	--------

This individual is only three years short of the UK longevity record.

COMMON GULL

JZJS	VV	280511 210915	Ortuvannet, Bergen, Hordaland, NORWAY Lossie estuary	570 km
------	----	------------------	---	--------

HERRING GULL

E22518 (8JA0)	3 VV VV	241113 251014 April '15	Ty Coed, Vale Marais, Guernsey Lossie estuary THE NETHERLANDS	915 km
FA33108 (J3741)	5m VV VV	010114 040415 271215	Brekne, Faesund, Vest-Agder, NORWAY Lossie estuary Lossie estuary	584 km 584 km

FA42106 (J969H)	1 VV	100714 160815	Storholmen, Sande, Møre og Romsdal, NORWAY Lossie estuary	692 km
GK35150 (1H2B)	3 VV VV	291011 010215 070415	Blackborough End, Norfolk Gibraltar Point NNR, Skegness, Lincolnshire Lossie estuary	46 km 606 km
GR59160	1 VV VV	290614 061214 0101-140215	Inver, Dunbeath Cooper Park pond, Elgin Cooper Park pond, Elgin	66 km
GR64100 (T:245)	10m VV	230811 170515	Fish Market, Aberdeen Lossie estuary	
T:04P	1 VV VV	300614 241214 130715	Whinnyfold Stack, Aberdeen Lossie estuary Lossie estuary	
GR90736 (T:47P)	1 VV	300614 070315	Whinnyfold Stack, Aberdeen Lossie estuary	

ICELAND GULL

GR88272 (T:12H)	5 VV VV	190415 110715 021215	Arbroath Harbour, Arbroath Lossie estuary Abb Site Compound, Spittal	137 km 220 km
--------------------	---------------	----------------------------	--	------------------

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

HW93612 (3G2B)	6I VV	200212 060915	Daneshill Landfill Site, Nottinghamshire Lossie estuary	505 km
MA39248 (0W6B)	1 VV	080715 050915	Garbh Eilean, Western Isles Lossie estuary	184 km

A total of 19 colour-ringed individuals from various Caithness colonies were reported, mainly from the Lossie estuary. Another individual (T:011) ringed at Fraserburgh on 8 Feb 2012 was seen on 12 Oct 2015 at Lossie estuary.

BLACK-HEADED GULL

S3253 (KAA3)	1 VV	260614 171015	Lake Babīte, near Lāči, Riga, LATVIA Balormie pig farm, near Lossiemouth	
EY34829	1 VV	250613 190115	Tomintoul Loch Leven NNR, Kinross	119 km

S3253 is the first from Latvia, though a similar record from Vaasa, Finland to Elgin occurred in 1995.

GUILLEMOT

T45443	1 RO	050786 150615	Isle of Canna Burghead	196 km
--------	---------	------------------	---------------------------	--------

X74570	1	150697	Castle Craig, North Sutor	
	RO	130515	Carse of Delnies, near Nairn	13 km
N06317	1	150615	Isle of May	
	XF	120915	Lossiemouth	176 km
BARN OWL				
GV02005	1m	060714	Tullo Farm, near Old Meldrum	
	XF	300715	Marypark	62 km
GV05839	1	150814	Site Confidential, Cumbria	
	XF car	121215	Lossiemouth	331 km
BLUE TIT				
D043072	3	150912	Cairnfield, Buckie	
	X cat	280215	Elgin	22 km
GREAT TIT				
L473230	3J	290711	Clochachan, Buckie	
	XF cat	060615	Dubford, Aberdeen	71 km
Y250948	4m	310712	Loch Spynie CES	
	V	030214	Greenside Cottage, Lossiemouth	
	V	070815	Greenside Cottage, Lossiemouth	
	V	180815	Greenside Cottage, Lossiemouth	2 km
TR88949	1	080613	Oakenhead, near Lossiemouth	
	V=m	210213	Coral Cottage	3 km
TX65909	1	170514	Loch Spynie	
	V=f	061115	Greenside Cottage, Lossiemouth	2 km
TX65969	1	240514	Loch Spynie	
	V=f	030415	Greenside Cottage, Lossiemouth	2 km
TZ72784	1	100615	Caysbriggs	
	V=m	101015	Loch Spynie	3 km
CRESTED TIT				
Z428029	1	210515	Lossie Forest	
	V	190915	Lossiemouth cemetery	5 km
SAND MARTIN				
Z614298	3	280815	Kingston reedbed	
	V	010915	Rye Meads, Hertfordshire	685 km
Z614312	3	280815	Kingston reedbed	
	V	070915	Water Eaton, near Cricklade, Wiltshire	676 km

SEDGE WARBLER

D634261	3	100914	Loch Spynie	
	V	160815	Noyant, Soulaire-et-Bourg, Maine-et-Loire, FRANCE	1139 km

STARLING

CT05485	3m	191202	Bishopmill, Elgin	
	RO	250115	Hill of Spynie, Elgin	3 km
CT27602	5f	300103	Bishopmill, Elgin	
	RO	140715	Duffus	7 km

Both of these were found as 'Ring Only' by metal detectorists.

REDWING

9X22775	3	251010	Merksplas, Antwerpen, BELGIUM	
	V	180115	Clochach, Buckie	860 km

HOUSE SPARROW

TX85625	3J	220614	Clochach, Buckie	
	V	070415	Meiklemoss, Collieston, Aberdeenshire	69 km
TS71759	4f	070214	Buckie	
	X	050914	Fordyce, Aberdeenshire	13 km

TREE SPARROW

TT84649	1	020613	Lonnie, near Newton	
	V	090515	Invererne	32 km

GOLDFINCH

Y795436	5m	070514	Invererne	
	V	111215	Barrow, Suffolk	656 km

LESSER REDPOLL

D398356	5	240414	Dalcharn, near Tongue	
	V	070315	Ordequish Forest, Fochabers	125 km
D743319	5f	130514	Bettyhill	
	V	280215	Ordequish Forest, Fochabers	126 km
Y882798	5m	240314	Padworth Common, West Berkshire	
	V	280215	Ordequish Forest, Fochabers	701 km
Z396092	3	141014	East Lamington, Morangie Forest	
	V	020315	Ordequish Forest, Fochabers	66 km
Z528572	4	020315	Ordequish Forest, Fochabers	
	V	270415	Morar	178 km

SNOW BUNTING

SY54730	5f	020215	Plage de l'hoverport, Calais, FRANCE
(White 31)	VV	280315	Lossie estuary

An unprecedented movement from France. Most reports from the Continent to the UK usually involve short-distance movements across The Channel.



Buzzard, Clochan 5 January 2015 (Martin Cook)

GRID REFERENCES OF LOCALITIES MENTIONED IN THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS
--

Aberlour	NJ2642	Balormie	NJ2167
Achagour	NH9346	Balvalley Moss	NJ3725
Achareidh	NH8656	Balvenie	NJ3242
Achavelgin	NH9150	Banchor	NH9140
Achavraat	NH9148	Bank Farm	NJ3929
Achdregnie	NJ2424	Bankhead	NH9658
Achnatone	NH9149	Bardonside	NJ2154
Achmore	NJ2631	Barmuckity	NJ2461
Ailnack	NJ1414	Barns of Bynack	NJ0405
Aitnoch	NH9839	Bauds of Cullen	NJ4766
Allaburn	NJ1961	Beatshach	NJ2737
Aldivalloch	NJ3626	Beinn a' Chaorainn	NJ0401
Aldroughty	NJ1862	Burnside of Geddes	NH8851
Aldunie	NJ3626	Beinn a' Chruinnich	NJ2313
Alltachbeg	NJ3626	Beinn Mheadhoin	NJ0201
Altnaglander	NJ1628	Bellandy	NJ2832
Altyre Woods	NJ0253	Bellie cemetery	NJ3561
Alves	NJ1362	Ben Aigan	NJ3048
Archiestown	NJ2344	Ben Avon	NJ1302
Ardclach	NH9545	Ben Macdui	NN9999
Ardgye	NJ1563	Ben Main	NJ3535
Ardivot	NJ2267	Ben Rinnes	NJ2435
Arndilly	NJ2848	Berryburn	NJ0545
Arthur's Bridge	NJ2567	Bin of Cullen	NJ4764
Auchbreck	NJ2028	Binn Hill	NJ3065
Auchenhalrig	NJ3761	Binns	NJ3164
Auchindoun Castle	NJ3437	Binsness	NJ0362
Auchinhandoch	NJ3338	Birchfield	NJ1614
Auchlochan	NJ0241	Birkenhill	NJ2260
Auchmair	NJ3828	Bishopmill	NJ2163
Auchnarrow	NJ2123	Black Loch	NJ2163
Auchroisk	NJ3351	Blackhillock	NJ2044
Auchtertyre	NJ1858	Blacksboat	NJ1838
Auldearn	NH9155	Blackwater Lodge	NJ3328
		Blairnafade	NH8451
Backlands	NJ1469	Blinkbonnie	NJ3365
Badcheer	NJ3532	Boar's Head Rock	NJ2867
Badentinan	NJ2957	Boat o' Brig	NJ3251
Badnafrave	NJ2015	Boath	NH8845
Bailliesland	NJ2565	Bogeney	NJ0243
Balblair	NH8051	Bogheads	NH9155
Ballcorach	NJ1526	Boghole	NJ9655
Ballindalloch Castle	NJ1736	Bogmoor	NJ3562
Ballnellan Burn	NJ1326	Bognafuaran	NH8954
Ballochford	NJ3633	Boldow	NJ1740
Balnacoul	NJ3146	Bow Fiddle Rock	NJ4968
Balnaspirach (Nairn)	NH8654	Braes of Enzie	NJ3959
Balnught	NH8840	Braidbog	NJ3561NJ4963

Brandston	NJ2865	Clackmarras	NJ2458
Bridge of Avon	NJ1835	Clarkly Hill	NJ1368
Bridge of Brown	NJ1220	Clashach	NJ1570
Bridgend	NJ3731	Clochan	NJ4060
Broadley	NJ3961	Clockeasy	NJ2962
Brodie Castle	NH9757	Cloddach	NJ1958
Brodieshill	NJ1059	Cloddymoss	NH9860
Brokentore	NJ1854	Clovenside	NJ0459
Broom Knowe	NJ1059	Clunas Reservoir	NH8646
Broom of Moy	NJ0159	Cluny Hill	NJ0458
Broombank	NH9255	Cnoc Lochy	NJ1621
Broomton	NH9654	Coire Raibeirt	NJ0003
Brown Muir	NJ2555	Coldburn	NJ1449
Bruntland	NJ1264	Coldhome	NJ3639
Buckie	NJ4165	Coleburn	NJ2455
Buckpool	NJ4165	College of Roseisle	NJ1366
Budgate	NH8349	Coltfield	NJ1163
Burghead	NJ1169	Conglass Water	NJ1916
Burghead Bay	NJ0867	Conicavel	NH9953
Burgie Wood	NJ0958	Cook's Cairn	NJ3027
Burnside	NH9440	Corbiewell	NJ3165
Burnside of Birnie	NJ2259	Corryhabbie Hill	NJ2829
Burnside of Dipple	NJ3256	Cotts of Innes	NJ2766
Burnside of Enzie	NJ3960	Coulmony	NH9747
Burnside of Geddes	NH8851	Covesea	NJ1870
Byres	NJ3562	Covesea Skerries	NJ1971
Cabrach	NJ3827	Coxton	NJ2660
Cairn Ballantruan	NJ1524	Coxtontower	NJ2660
Cairn Gorm	NJ0003	Crachies	NH9453
Cairn Lochan	NH9802	Craigellachie	NJ2844
Cairn Uish	NJ1750	Craigmill Lodge	NJ1052
Cairneyhillock	NJ2658	Craigroy	NJ1250
Cairnfield	NJ4162	Cragganmore	NJ1636
Calcots	NJ2563	Cran Loch	NH9459
Cantsford	NJ0754	Croftglass	NJ2530
Cardhu	NJ1843	Crofts of Buinach	NJ1855
Cardnach Farm	NJ1942	Crofts of Dipple	NJ3259
Carn a' Chrasgie	NJ1942	Cromdale Hills	NJ1226
Carn a' Gharbh-ghlaic	NH8935	Crook	NH8854
Carn Allt a' Chlaiginn	NJ3230	Crooked Wood	NJ2762
Carn Daimh	NJ1824	Croy	NJ1657
Carn Liath	NJ2515	Cruats Farm	NJ4968
Carn Mor	NJ2618	Culbin Bar	NH9662
Carn na Sguabaich	NH8736	Culbin Forest	NH9862
Carron	NJ2241	Cullen	NJ5167
Carse of Delnies	NH8356	Cummingston	NJ1368
Catherinebraes	NJ2544	Cunninghaugh	NJ3564
Cawdor	NH8449	Dallas	NJ1252
Caysbriggs	NJ2466	Dallas Dhu	NJ0356
Charlestown of Aberlour	NJ2642	Dallas Lodge	NJ1052

Dallasbraughty	NJ0346	Fèith Buidhe	NJ0909
Darkland	NJ2662	Ferness	NH9644
Darnaway Castle	NH9955	Ferniefield	NJ3064
Daugh of Kinermony	NJ2441	Findhorn Bay	NJ0462
Dava	NJ0038	Findochty	NJ4668
Delmore	NJ2442	Findrassie	NJ1965
Delnabo	NJ1617	Fochabers	NJ3458
Delnapot	NJ1737	Fodderletter	NJ3458
Delnashaugh	NJ1835	Fogwatt	NJ2357
Delnies	NH8356	Fords of Avon	NJ0403
Deskford	NJ5061	Foresterseat	NJ2562
Dounduff	NH9949	Fornighty	NH9350
Drainie	NJ2168	Forres	NJ0358
Drumdivan	NH8454	Foynesfield	NJ0358
Drumduan Mill	NH9156		
Drumfurrich	NJ2944	Garbh Uisge Beag	NH9900
Drumin	NJ1830	Garbh Uisge Mòr	NH9900
Drummuir	NJ3844	Garlinebeg	NJ1741
Drybridge	NJ4362	Galcantray	NH8148
Drynachan	NH8639	Garmouth	NJ3364
Dufftown	NJ3239	Garmouth viaduct	NJ3464
Duffus	NJ1668	Gateside	NJ3647
Duffus Castle	NJ1867	Geddes	NH8852
Dulsie	NH9341	Gervally	NH9948
Dulsie Bridge	NH9341	Gilston	NJ2066
Dunearn	NH9341	Glack Harnes	NJ2836
Dundurcas	NJ2950	Glacks of Balloch	NJ3534
Dunnyduff Wood	NJ4449	Glass	NJ4239
Dunphail	NJ0047	Glen Avon	NJ1006
Dyke	NH9858	Glen Gheallaidh	NJ1338
Dykeside	NJ1159	Glen Latterach	NJ1951
		Glen Lossie	NJ1347
Earnhill	NJ0160	Glen Rinnes	NJ2834
Earnside	NJ1062	Glenallachie	NJ2741
East Mains	NJ2066	Glenfarclas Distillery	NJ2138
East Meur Gorm Craig	NJ1504	Glenferness	NH9443
Easter Allanaha	NJ1062	Glenlatterach Reservoir	NJ1952
Easter Calcots	NJ2563	Glenmarkie	NJ3837
Easter Cloves	NJ1461	Glenmullie	NJ1916
Easter Galcantray	NH8148	Gollachy Burn	NJ4064
Easter Gaulrig	NJ1514	Gordonstoun	NJ1869
Easter Greens	NJ0449	Gordonsward	NJ2564
Easter Lawrenceton	NJ0858	Gow Moss	NJ3853
Easter Newforres	NJ0658	Gownie	NJ2842
Easterton	NJ2156	Greenside	NJ2656
Edinkillie	NJ0246		
Elchies	NJ2245	Half Davoch	NJ0451
Elgin	NJ2162	Hardmuir	NH9556
Elginshill	NJ2663	Heathfield	NH8050
		Heldon Wood	NJ1257
Feakirk	NJ0344	Hempriggs	NJ1063

Herricks	NJ4549	Kronyhillock Wood	NH8349
Highland Boath	NH8844	Kylnadrochit Lodge	NJ1419
Hill of Glenroads	NJ3031		
Hill of Mackalea	NJ3638	Ladder Hills	NJ2719
Hill of Maud	NJ4662	Ladycroft	NJ2444
Hillhead	NJ2058	Laggan	NJ3436
Hill of Mulundy	NJ1053	Lagganauuld	NJ2026
Hillpark	NJ4360	Lagganvoulin	NJ1817
Hills of Cromdale	NJ1226	Laikenbuie	NH9052
Hilton of Delnies	NH8456	Lecht	NJ2413
Holme Rose	NH8048	Leids Hill	NJ4126
Hopeman	NJ1469	Lein	NJ3365
Househill	NH8855	Lethen Bar	NH9351
Howford	NH8753	Lethenhill	NJ1058
Humbrack	NJ2556	Lhanbryde	NJ2761
Hunt Hill	NJ2346	Lintmill	NJ5165
		Little Aitnoch	NH9640
Inchberry	NJ3155	Little Pitlurg	NJ4245
Inchbroom	NJ2566	Little Urchany	NH8748
Inchnacape	NJ2020	Loch Allan	NH9939
Inchrory	NJ1708	Loch Belivat	NH9547
Innes House	NJ2764	Loch Dallas	NJ0947
Innesmill	NJ2863	Loch Flemington	NH8152
Inshoch Wood	NH9558	Loch Kirkaldy	NH9641
Inveravon	NJ1837	Loch Loy	NH9358
Invererne	NJ0360	Loch Noir	NJ0945
Inverharroch Farm	NJ3831	Loch of Blairs	NJ0255
Inverlochy	NJ1324	Loch of Boath	NJ0255
		Loch of the Clans	NH8353
Johnstripe	NJ0447	Loch Oire	NJ2860
		Loch Park	NJ3543
Keith	NJ4250	Loch Romach	NJ0652
Kellas	NJ1754	Loch Spynie	NJ2366
Kerrow	NH9941	Loch Trevie	NJ0944
Kilravock	NH8149	Lochan Buidhe	NJ2366
Kilravock Castle	NH8149	Lochan Tùtach	NH9840
Kinermony	NJ2541	Lochanan a' Ghubhais	NH9840
Kingsteps	NH9057	Lochbuie	NJ2153
Kingston	NJ3365	Lochindorb	NH9736
Kinloss	NJ0661	Lochs of Bogmussach	NJ1347
Kinneddar	NJ2269	Lochyhill	NJ0559
Kinnudie	NH9055	Logie	NJ0150
Kintessack	NJ2269	Logieburn	NJ2656
Kirdellbeg	NJ1741	Longmorn	NJ2358
Kirkhill	NJ2462	Lossie estuary	NJ2469
Kirkmichael Church	NJ1423	Lossiemouth	NJ2370
Kirkton	NJ2462	Lower Auchenreath	NJ3763
Knauchland	NJ5651	Lower Blairnain	NJ2738
Knock of Braemoray	NJ0141	Lower Bogrotten	NJ4861
Knock of Gownie	NJ2942	Lower Dallachy	NJ4861
Knockanbeg	NJ2632	Lower Hempriggs	NJ1064

Lyne of Knockando	NJ1745	Nairn	NH8856
Lynemore	NJ1438	Nairn Bar	NH9260
Macbeth's Hillock	NH9656	Nether Bellandy	NJ2833
Machattie's Cairn	NJ3547	Nether Birnie	NJ2059
Mains of Kirdells	NJ1739	Nether Dallachy	NJ3663
Mains of Balnagowan	NH8154	Nether Meft	NJ2764
Mains of Moyness	NH9553	Netherbyre	NJ1557
Manachie Farm	NJ0356	Netherton	NJ0361
Manbeen	NJ1959	Newbold Wood	NJ0558
Maryfield	NJ2364	Newforres Wood	NJ0657
Marypark	NJ1938	Newton nursery	NJ1663
Maviston	NH9458	Newton of Darnaway	NH9853
Meikle Balloch Hill	NJ3534	Newton of Innes	NJ2866
Meikle Coire Riabhach	NJ2513	North Darkland	NJ2662
Meikle Conval	NJ2937		
Meikle Kildrummy	NH8553	Oldtown	NJ1367
Mid Mains	NJ1966	Ordiquish	NJ3357
Middlefield	NJ0360	Ordbreck	NH8747
Midwood	NJ4261	Orton	NJ3153
Mill of Grange	NJ0460	Overton	NJ2745
Millhill	NJ3158		
Milltown	NJ2758	Paddockhaugh	NJ2058
Milltown of Laggan	NJ2834	Parks of Innes	NJ2763
Milton Brodie	NJ0962	Paul's Hill	NJ1140
Miltonduff	NJ1860	Penick	NH9356
Miltonhill	NJ0963	Philaxdale	NJ1667
Monadh an t-Sluich Leith	NJ2617	Pitairlie	NJ2465
Monahoudie Moss	NJ2243	Pitchroy	NJ1738
Monaughty	NJ1260	Pitgaveny	NJ2465
Moniemouies	NJ2756	Pittendreich	NJ1961
Montgrew	NJ4551	Pluscarden	NJ1456
Moor of Tore	NJ1054	Portgordon	NJ3964
Morinsh Forest	NJ2330	Portknockie	NJ4868
Moss of Barmuckity	NJ2461	Porttannachy	NJ3864
Moss of Birnie	NJ2051		
Mosstodloch	NJ3360	Quarrywood	NJ1864
Mossyards	NJ1566		
Moycroft	NJ2362	Rafford	NJ0656
Moyness	NH9553	Recletich	NJ2834
Muir of Holmie	NJ4161	Redhill	NJ1661
Muir of Linksfield	NJ2264	Reekimlane	NJ3625
Muir of Miltonduff	NJ1859	Refouble	NH9540
Muir of the Clans	NH8352	Relugas	NH9948
Muirhead	NJ0863	Rhinturk	NJ3632
Muirton	NJ2268	Rinour	NJ1740
Muiry Wood	NJ0558	Rosarie	NJ3849
Mulben	NJ3550	Roseisle Forest	NJ1166
Mulderie Mains	NJ3950		
Mundole	NJ0156	Salterhill	NJ2067
Myreside	NJ2164	Sanquhar Loch	NJ0458

Scabbed Hill	NJ4160	Tomintoul	NJ1618
Scalan	NJ2419	Tomnamoon	NJ0450
Scarffbanks	NJ2366	Tomnavoulin	NJ2126
Scout Hill	NJ3331	Tormore Distillery	NJ1534
Scotsburn	NJ2760	Torrieston	NJ1658
Scotstonhill	NJ2662	Tronach Head	NJ4768
Seafield	NJ0261	Troves	NJ2459
Shaw Hill	NH9748	Tugnet	NJ3465
Sheanspark	NJ3645	Tynet	NJ3861
Shearleat	NH8641		
Shelter Stone	NJ0001	Upper Bruntlands	NJ1943
Sherriffmill	NJ2062	Upper Dallachy	NJ3662
Sheriffston	NJ2561	Upper Knockando	NJ1843
Sluie	NJ0052	Upper Mulben	NJ3652
South Darkland	NJ2661	Urchany	NH8748
Spey Bay	NJ3767	Urquhart	NJ2862
Spey estuary	NJ3564		
Speymouth	NJ3564	Wallfield	NJ2965
Speyslaw	NJ3465	Waterford Fm	NJ0259
Spynie canal	NJ2366	Waukmill	NJ2362
Spynie Palace	NJ2365	Well of The Lecht	NJ2315
St. John's Meads	NJ0155	Wellheads	NJ3860
Stob Bac an Fhurain	NJ1303	Wellhill	NJ0061
Stoneyford pond	NJ0455	Wester Calcots	NJ2463
Strath Avon	NJ1425	Wester Delnies	NH8355
Strathlene	NJ4467	Wester Elchies	NJ2542
Stronachavie	NJ1318	Wester Gaulrig	NJ1513
Strondow	NJ1644	Wester Manbeen	NJ1960
Strypes	NJ2758	Wester Newforres	NJ0657
Succoth	NJ2935	Westerfolds	NJ1967
Suie	NJ2724	Westertown	NJ1925
Surradale	NJ1665	Whiteash Hill	NJ3857
		Whitefolds	NJ2425
Tanzie	NJ3146	Whitetree	NJ1156
Tapp	NJ1447	Whitewreath	NJ2357
Tarras	NJ0659	Windyridge	NJ2367
Teindland	NJ2655	Wood of Mulderie	NJ3751
Tervieside	NJ2330		
The Scalp	NJ3636	Yellowbog	NJ1448
Thief's Hill	NJ3654		
Thomshill	NJ2157		
Tips of Corsemaul	NJ3939		
Todholes	NJ1054		
Tom nan Clach	NH8634		
Tomachar	NJ2432		
Tomachlaggan	NJ1522		
Tombreck	NJ1218		
Tomcork	NJ1349		