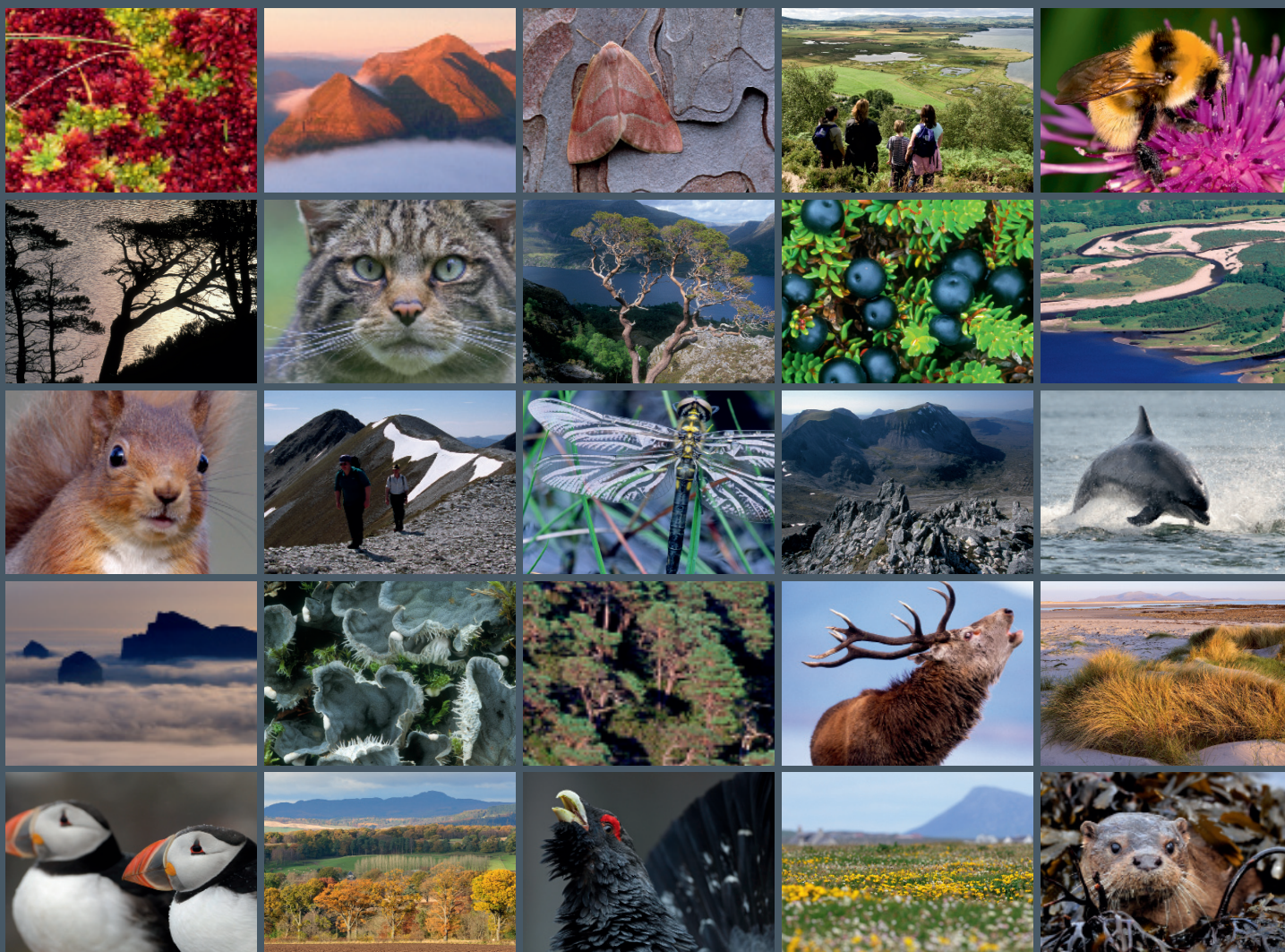


Waders and wildfowl on the Ythan Estuary 1993/1994





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Waders and wildfowl on the Ythan Estuary 1993/1994

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**WADERS AND WATERFOWL
ON THE YTHAN ESTUARY 1993/94**

By

Dr I. Paterson
University of Aberdeen

NE/93/204

August 1994

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NORTH EAST REGION
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Summary:

Counts of waders and waterfowl on the Ythan Estuary were made from 14 June 1993 to 26 May 1994, continuing the monitoring which was started in 1989/90 and using the same methods (Patterson and Laing 1992). Fortnightly counts and the distribution of birds over the estuary are shown in detail for each species.

The peak count of Eiders in spring decreased from 3,585 in 1992/93 to 2,811 in 1993/94, but there was an increase of about 10% in the spring numbers of other species.

The overall mean numbers of birds other than Eiders over the autumn and winter (August to February) rose from 1,561 in 1992/93 to 2,337 (1,953 if exceptional numbers, due mainly to Lapwings and Golden Plovers, in November are excluded).

There was no indication of any change in the numbers of ducks other than Eiders, but eight of the 12 common wader species increased in number, reversing a recent trend towards decrease.

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YTHAN ESTUARY 1993/94**

A REPORT TO S.N.H.

I.J. PATTERSON AND R.M. LAING

**ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY ZOOLOGY DEPARTMENT
CULTERTY FIELD STATION, NEWBURGH, GRAMPIAN**

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INTRODUCTION

The wader and waterfowl counts in this report are a direct continuation of the series started in 1989/90, with the same objective of monitoring the bird populations of the Ythan estuary by means of twice-monthly surveys of numbers and distribution. The counts were carried out from 14 June 1993 to 26 May 1994, using the same methods as in previous years (Patterson and Laing 1992, 1993). Data for 20 November were kindly supplied by Mr. N. Dayawansa.

RESULTS

a) Individual species

As in previous reports, the data are presented in separate species accounts, arranged in taxonomic order. For each species, a table shows the number of birds found in each section of the estuary from the mouth upstream (ie, Mouth, Inches, Quay, Tarty, Sleek, Haddo, Snub, Machar, and Logie), as defined in Patterson and Laing (1992; Fig 1), and the total on the whole estuary on each count date.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT	
14	6	93	0	1	0	28	2	12	11	2	0	56
28	6	93	0	0	6	23	24	32	8	0	18	111
9	7	93	0	0	0	4	20	22	36	0	16	98
23	7	93	0	0	0	0	16	0	4	0	20	40
19	8	93	0	0	4	0	7	0	0	0	0	11
26	8	93	0	0	0	0	5	4	9	0	0	18
6	9	93	0	0	0	0	4	0	6	0	0	10
20	11	93	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
16	12	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
20	1	94	0	0	0	18	0	10	0	0	0	28
31	1	94	0	0	0	2	28	6	2	2	0	40
2	2	94	0	0	0	12	12	22	9	0	0	55
18	2	94	0	0	2	18	14	25	2	0	0	61
3	3	94	0	0	4	4	32	14	0	0	0	54
22	3	94	0	0	0	20	6	28	0	0	0	54
13	4	94	0	0	0	8	16	33	6	0	0	63
20	4	94	0	0	0	16	12	28	6	0	0	62
11	5	94	0	0	0	18	8	21	9	0	0	56
26	5	94	0	2	2	6	6	12	15	12	18	73

Shelducks were recorded in all months except October and November, but few were present in August, September and December. The peak count of 111 on 28 June was considerably higher than the peaks of 80 and 70 in 1992/93 and 1991/92 respectively. Most were found in the middle sections of the estuary, with an increase in the upper reaches during the duckling period (May to July). As in previous reports, the counts do not include the whole local breeding population, since birds on freshwater pools, in the Forvie dunes and on the Ythan above Logie Buchan Bridge have not been counted. The maximum count of fledglings was 34 on 23 July.

Eider *Somateria mollissima*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
11	6	93	2471	851	309	0	17	0	0	0	3648
17	6	93	2255	459	158	0	51	0	0	0	2923
23	6	93	1102	228	66	0	29	0	0	0	1425
5	7	93	1080	24	63	0	0	0	0	0	1167
20	7	93	1206	0	106	0	0	0	0	0	1312
19	8	93	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	34
31	8	93	99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	99
14	9	93	1854	0	240	0	0	0	0	0	2094
28	9	93	1820	0	177	0	82	0	0	0	2079
11	10	93	715	322	75	0	0	0	0	0	1112
29	10	93	0	8	440	0	14	0	0	0	462
10	11	93	7	50	476	0	0	0	0	0	533
23	11	93	46	286	404	0	6	0	0	0	742
8	12	93	71	288	590	0	0	0	0	0	949
14	12	93	9	511	463	0	0	0	0	0	983
13	1	94	90	373	470	0	0	0	0	0	933
24	1	94	5	75	498	0	108	0	0	0	686
7	2	94	28	435	506	0	0	0	0	0	969
22	2	94	436	386	146	0	0	0	0	0	968
15	3	94	29	233	266	0	0	0	0	0	528
20	4	94	666	28	91	0	10	0	0	0	795
9	5	94	1490	772	451	0	64	12	0	0	2789
16	5	94	1551	836	478	0	59	13	0	0	2937
25	5	94	1309	167	704	0	133	14	0	0	2327
31	5	94	1600	942	592	0	49	9	0	0	3192
7	6	94	1231	117	279	0	57	10	0	0	1694

Eiders were found on the estuary throughout the year, mainly downstream of Waterside Bridge, with a peak of 3,648 on 11 June 1993 which was somewhat lower than that of 4,324 in the previous year. (These totals do not include the birds on the sea coast between Collieston and the Ythan mouth). Numbers were very low in August but increased to just over 2,000 in September before falling again. Numbers in mid-winter were usually between 950 and 1,000. Only 48 fledged ducklings were found in late July.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
6	10	93	8	6	18	0	0	14	0	0	46
20	10	93	18	10	38	0	0	23	0	0	89
5	11	93	51	81	36	0	43	26	0	0	237
20	11	93	0	80	109	0	33	8	3	0	233
6	12	93	47	37	49	0	139	0	0	0	272
16	12	93	78	29	48	0	33	15	23	0	226
20	1	94	45	65	64	0	0	0	0	0	174
31	1	94	36	56	46	0	36	0	0	0	174
2	2	94	53	62	98	14	29	0	0	0	256
18	2	94	23	20	17	22	0	6	0	0	88
3	3	94	64	59	180	0	24	0	36	0	363
22	3	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	4	94	0	0	12	0	0	6	0	0	18

Wigeon were recorded only between October and April, a shorter period than in the previous year, when the species was absent only in August. The peak of 363 on 3 March was, however, higher than the highest count of 292 recorded in the previous year. The greatest numbers were found in the lower sections of the estuary, although there were occasional flocks on the Sleek, Haddo and Snub. As before, Wigeon were not seen at Machar and Logie.

Teal *Anas crecca*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
28	6	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
9	7	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
19	8	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
26	8	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
6	9	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
23	9	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
20	10	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	7
5	11	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
6	12	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
16	12	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
20	1	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
31	1	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
2	2	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
18	2	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
3	3	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	7
22	3	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
13	4	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
11	5	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
26	5	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5

As in previous years, Teal were seen throughout the year in low numbers and only at Logie. The peak number of only 9 was lower than in the previous two years (15 in 1992/93 and 28 in 1991/92).

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT	
14	6	93	0	6	2	2	0	0	3	2	6	21
28	6	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	6
9	7	93	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	3	2	9
23	7	93	0	2	0	6	0	0	4	0	4	16
26	8	93	0	0	0	6	6	0	8	2	0	22
6	9	93	0	0	0	0	2	0	6	0	3	11
23	9	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	8
6	10	93	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	3	13
20	10	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	4	12
5	11	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
6	12	93	0	6	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	16
16	12	93	0	6	0	4	0	0	8	2	0	20
20	1	94	0	0	0	6	7	2	8	2	0	25
31	1	94	0	6	0	8	2	3	6	2	4	31
2	2	94	0	6	0	0	0	4	2	0	4	16
18	2	94	0	0	4	6	4	0	6	0	0	20
3	3	94	0	6	3	8	0	4	6	8	0	35
22	3	94	0	0	6	0	0	2	4	0	0	12
13	4	94	0	0	4	0	2	0	0	4	2	12
20	4	94	2	0	4	2	4	0	6	2	0	20
11	5	94	0	0	4	0	0	0	8	0	4	16
26	5	94	0	0	3	4	8	4	8	8	8	43

Mallard were recorded in fairly low and variable numbers in all months, with most in the upstream half of the estuary. The peak of 43 on 26 May was higher than the 1992/93 one of 26.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

For the second year in succession, no Scaup were recorded in the estuary on any of the count dates.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

No Long-tailed Ducks were seen in 1993/94, following the decrease to only one recorded in the previous year.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
6	12	93	0	0	6	0	4	0	0	0	10
16	12	93	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
20	1	94	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	0	6
31	1	94	0	6	2	0	2	6	0	0	16
2	2	94	0	0	6	0	4	4	0	0	14
18	2	94	0	0	2	0	6	4	2	0	14
22	3	94	0	0	0	0	4	6	2	0	12
13	4	94	0	0	2	0	0	6	2	0	10
20	4	94	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4

Goldeneye were found from December to April in the middle sections of the estuary, with none at Mouth, Machar or Logie. The peak of 16 on 31 January was the same as in the previous year.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
19	8	93	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
26	8	93	9	0	3	0	4	3	0	0	19
6	9	93	6	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	14
23	9	93	0	12	2	0	0	0	0	0	14
6	10	93	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	6
20	10	93	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
5	11	93	4	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	10
20	11	93	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	4
6	12	93	0	6	4	4	0	0	0	0	14
16	12	93	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
20	1	94	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
31	1	94	6	0	2	2	6	0	0	0	16
2	2	94	8	4	4	3	2	0	0	0	21
18	2	94	0	2	4	6	0	0	0	0	12
3	3	94	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
22	3	94	3	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	9
13	4	94	2	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	8
20	4	94	3	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	7
11	5	94	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	6

Mergansers were seen in low numbers from August to May, in all parts of the estuary except Tarty, Machar and Logie. The peak of 21 on 2 February was slightly lower than the 24 recorded in the previous year.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT	
14	6	93	36	60	4	27	4	4	2	0	0	137
28	6	93	3	36	9	14	4	12	6	0	0	84
9	7	93	6	12	24	23	6	19	4	0	0	94
23	7	93	96	36	12	9	12	6	2	0	0	173
19	8	93	285	184	40	23	23	21	29	0	2	607
26	8	93	247	105	33	12	58	23	12	0	2	492
6	9	93	61	17	26	15	33	21	8	2	0	183
23	9	93	245	37	23	14	16	12	13	0	0	360
6	10	93	59	49	24	14	3	0	0	0	0	149
20	10	93	69	56	23	12	0	12	0	0	0	172
5	11	93	256	99	12	15	22	0	0	0	0	404
20	11	93	71	113	44	6	35	5	3	3	0	280
6	12	93	163	72	9	0	6	15	19	0	0	284
16	12	93	179	63	23	0	14	0	16	0	0	295
20	1	94	162	79	30	12	6	0	0	0	3	292
31	1	94	114	36	23	0	24	28	28	0	2	255
2	2	94	160	24	41	15	12	12	6	0	0	270
18	2	94	56	29	28	14	32	14	2	0	0	175
3	3	94	41	36	21	29	28	21	24	0	0	200
22	3	94	45	33	18	19	20	24	11	0	0	170
13	4	94	21	6	5	0	0	3	14	0	0	49
20	4	94	21	6	18	9	9	14	12	0	0	89
11	5	94	12	3	12	2	6	5	2	0	0	42
26	5	94	14	9	2	7	2	6	6	2	0	48

Oystercatchers were recorded throughout the year, with the highest numbers in August and in winter. They were found in all parts of the estuary, but with very few at Machar and Logie. The peak count of 607 on 19 August was much higher than the peak of 377 on 5 August 1992 and the 486 recorded on 27 December 1991.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticus*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
14	6	93	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
23	7	93	0	4	10	0	4	6	0	0	24
19	8	93	0	14	0	0	0	6	12	0	32
26	8	93	16	0	0	0	0	6	9	0	31
6	9	93	0	0	0	0	9	12	6	0	27
23	9	93	0	23	0	0	0	14	0	0	37
6	10	93	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	12
20	10	93	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	12
20	11	93	6	13	21	0	4	7	0	0	51
16	12	93	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	18
2	2	94	0	22	0	0	0	12	0	0	34
18	2	94	0	9	0	0	0	14	11	0	34
20	4	94	0	0	0	0	0	9	6	0	15
11	5	94	0	0	0	0	0	4	12	0	16
26	5	94	0	0	19	0	0	0	12	0	31

This species was recorded mainly at Inches, Haddo and Snub, through most of the year (except November, January and March). The peak of 34 in February was very similar to the highest count (35) in the previous year.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
19	8	93	0	29	0	0	865	0	0	0	894
26	8	93	42	0	0	0	220	65	0	0	327
6	9	93	0	0	0	0	32	53	14	0	99
23	9	93	12	27	0	0	29	12	0	0	80
6	10	93	18	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	30
20	10	93	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
5	11	93	0	0	294	129	0	663	1980	0	3066
6	12	93	0	0	0	0	0	550	56	0	606
16	12	93	0	0	0	0	0	54	69	0	123

Golden Plovers were recorded from August to December, with the largest numbers on Sleek, Haddo and Snub. As in previous years, numbers were highly variable, with a peak of 3,066 on 5 November which was much higher than the 780 of 1992/93.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
14	6	93	0	0	0	0	2	6	6	4	18
28	6	93	0	0	0	0	18	0	3	0	21
9	7	93	0	0	0	12	14	0	2	0	28
23	7	93	3	0	9	12	19	6	12	6	69
19	8	93	0	0	316	56	129	408	143	47	1113
26	8	93	0	0	0	12	0	112	131	14	281
6	9	93	0	0	25	21	34	39	75	0	194
23	9	93	0	2	42	49	196	104	137	28	570
6	10	93	0	0	39	42	45	23	21	6	176
20	10	93	0	0	63	29	69	29	18	12	229
5	11	93	0	98	983	110	460	563	234	16	2464
6	12	93	0	0	137	24	157	0	105	0	423
16	12	93	0	0	56	25	38	73	103	12	313
20	1	94	0	0	0	0	0	24	6	2	32
31	1	94	0	0	67	20	120	136	54	0	400
2	2	94	0	0	0	0	87	109	54	0	258
18	2	94	0	0	14	0	184	136	16	0	350
3	3	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	3	94	0	0	0	0	0	59	6	9	74
22	3	94	0	0	0	0	18	15	21	0	54
13	4	94	0	0	0	0	6	7	4	0	17
20	4	94	0	0	6	8	6	18	12	0	50
11	5	94	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	0	9
26	5	94	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	3	9

Lapwings were recorded in all months of the year, in very variable numbers, highest in winter. The peak count of 2,464 on 5 November (the same day as the largest count of Golden Plover) was much higher than the peak of 575 in December 1992. As in previous years, the birds tended to occur furthest downstream in mid-winter.

Knot *Calidrus canutus*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
6	10	93	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
20	11	93	36	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	48
6	12	93	35	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	51
20	1	94	72	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	72
31	1	94	74	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74
2	2	94	33	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	45
22	3	94	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12

Knot occurred only from October to March, compared to August to April in the previous year, with a peak of 74 on 31 January representing a considerable increase from the highest count of 46 in 1992/93. The birds were found mainly at the mouth of the estuary, apart from single flocks at Inches and Quay.

Dunlin *Calidrus alpina*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
9	7	93	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	12
19	8	93	0	0	81	0	0	0	0	0	81
26	8	93	19	0	0	0	29	0	49	0	97
6	9	93	0	12	18	0	23	14	72	0	139
23	9	93	0	29	0	23	14	24	48	0	138
6	10	93	23	12	0	0	12	18	24	0	89
20	10	93	12	9	0	0	0	47	64	0	132
5	11	93	63	0	0	0	0	0	750	0	813
20	11	93	12	138	127	59	79	104	0	39	558
6	12	93	0	410	27	0	0	14	0	0	451
16	12	93	75	63	23	0	0	0	93	0	254
20	1	94	49	25	210	0	32	280	73	0	669
31	1	94	62	12	42	0	12	312	23	0	463
2	2	94	171	24	96	20	0	43	54	0	408
18	2	94	0	0	24	0	0	37	50	0	111
3	3	94	250	170	61	0	0	36	63	0	580
22	3	94	0	0	24	0	0	19	56	0	99
13	4	94	0	0	12	0	0	16	0	0	28
20	4	94	23	18	8	0	0	0	12	0	61
11	5	94	0	26	21	0	0	0	19	0	66
26	5	94	0	0	39	0	0	0	0	0	39

Dunlins were found throughout the year except in June and in all parts of the estuary except Machar and Logie. The peak count of 813 on 5 November was much higher than the 1992/93 peak of 599, which in turn was higher than the peak counts of earlier years.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

No Black-tailed Godwits were found on any of the count dates. (Only two birds were seen on one occasion in 1992/93).

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
28	6	93	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	8
9	7	93	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	3
23	7	93	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	8
19	8	93	0	2	2	0	4	2	0	0	12
26	8	93	6	2	3	14	9	7	0	0	43
6	9	93	0	0	6	6	2	4	0	0	18
23	9	93	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
6	10	93	2	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	7
20	10	93	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	6
5	11	93	2	2	2	0	2	4	0	0	12
20	11	93	0	9	8	3	4	2	0	0	28
6	12	93	0	3	0	4	0	2	0	0	9
16	12	93	0	14	6	0	2	4	0	0	26
20	1	94	2	24	0	6	2	3	0	0	37
31	1	94	0	12	0	0	2	0	3	0	17
2	2	94	4	2	0	2	6	6	0	0	20
18	2	94	0	0	7	11	0	4	2	0	24
3	3	94	0	6	2	4	2	0	0	0	14
22	3	94	3	0	0	6	0	6	4	0	19
13	4	94	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
20	4	94	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
11	5	94	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	4
26	5	94	0	0	0	2	3	1	2	0	8

Bar-tailed Godwits were found throughout the year, with highest numbers in August and in winter, in all parts of the estuary except for Machar and Logie. The peak count of 43 on 26 August was similar to the 40 on 12 October 1992.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT	
14	6	93	0	7	3	6	4	6	2	1	3	32
28	6	93	0	9	4	21	12	24	39	2	0	111
9	7	93	0	6	2	18	9	15	9	0	0	59
23	7	93	0	49	2	9	8	12	16	2	0	98
19	8	93	4	49	23	9	405	284	34	3	1	812
26	8	93	12	26*	6	6	450	115	24	3	4	646
6	9	93	2	16	7	12	64	14	33	2	4	154
23	9	93	7	62	6	9	28	63	23	3	3	204
6	10	93	10	14	10	29	14	9	15	1	3	105
20	10	93	2	23	9	19	6	12	11	2	0	84
5	11	93	6	12	6	12	9	12	40	4	1	102
20	11	93	7	50	19	0	57	2	0	128	0	263
6	12	93	36	21	12	96	37	20	37	1	3	263
16	12	93	26	28	12	29	16	19	24	3	1	158
20	1	94	23	39	12	23	16	15	12	2	0	142
31	1	94	6	54	7	37	87	21	14	2	1	229
2	2	94	9	136	21	72	12	33	12	2	0	297
18	2	94	6	24	12	6	9	12	37	0	2	108
3	3	94	6	43	14	34	87	43	19	2	3	251
22	3	94	3	22	9	14	16	18	19	3	1	105
13	4	94	1	7	3	2	0	0	12	1	0	26
20	4	94	3	2	2	6	2	48	10	2	1	76
11	5	94	3	2	2	1	14	9	20	2	0	53
26	5	94	2	3	1	2	3	9	6	6	3	35

Curlew were recorded in all months of the year in all sections of the estuary, with highest numbers in August. The peak count of 812 on 19 August was very much higher than the 1992/93 peak of 377, which was in turn higher than the highest counts of most of the preceding years.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT	
14	6	93	0	0	4	0	6	0	9	32	6	57
28	6	93	0	0	6	12	4	0	14	42	0	78
9	7	93	0	0	0	12	6	0	10	47	0	75
23	7	93	6	4	2	12	24	21	28	38	6	141
19	8	93	2	12	26	47	29	39	64	23	6	248
26	8	93	29	33	29	37	79	125	76	26	3	437
6	9	93	6	21	17	24	39	14	61	29	0	211
23	9	93	12	49	29	36	49	29	59	26	6	295
6	10	93	22	8	18	69	29	18	73	14	2	253
20	10	93	12	4	29	62	33	26	68	21	0	255
5	11	93	55	56	24	36	91	24	67	12	0	365
20	11	93	6	25	76	38	86	72	60	101	0	464
6	12	93	18	24	12	45	37	39	40	2	0	217
16	12	93	43	29	36	49	25	42	43	6	6	279
20	1	94	47	38	24	57	43	63	79	33	6	390
31	1	94	55	26	36	34	49	74	54	12	2	342
2	2	94	12	25	12	49	39	46	19	23	2	227
18	2	94	18	23	26	72	31	25	78	23	6	302
3	3	94	36	38	29	67	64	47	79	39	6	405
22	3	94	12	18	10	34	31	49	73	18	0	245
13	4	94	6	14	16	36	30	25	77	3	2	209
20	4	94	12	9	22	16	11	26	19	2	2	119
11	5	94	21	6	9	32	19	21	36	17	6	167
26	5	94	6	6	3	6	12	0	12	24	18	87

Redshanks were recorded in all parts of the estuary throughout the year, although numbers were low in late May, in June and in early July. The highest count of 464 on 20 November was considerably higher than the peak of 319 on 30 October 1992 but was lower than the 551 found in 1991/92.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

As in the previous year, no Greenshanks were recorded on any of the counts.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

	DATE	MO	IN	QU	TA	SL	HA	SN	MA	LO	TOT
14	6	93	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
9	7	93	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	5
23	7	93	3	6	3	6	6	0	6	0	30
19	8	93	0	9	7	2	12	23	6	0	59
26	8	93	15	6	12	0	17	14	12	0	76
6	9	93	9	6	12	0	18	21	12	0	78
23	9	93	3	6	9	0	14	6	9	0	47
6	10	93	12	8	6	3	6	3	6	0	44
20	10	93	6	12	4	0	6	8	9	0	45
5	11	93	8	3	0	0	12	0	0	0	23
20	11	93	8	11	34	0	3	2	0	0	58
6	12	93	12	22	6	6	0	6	0	0	52
16	12	93	26	18	6	0	6	12	0	0	68
20	1	94	39	6	12	6	12	6	0	0	81
31	1	94	23	14	6	0	12	14	0	0	69
2	2	94	14	21	6	0	9	12	11	0	73
18	2	94	8	16	6	0	0	18	9	0	57
3	3	94	12	9	12	0	12	12	6	0	63
22	3	94	6	12	0	0	0	18	12	0	48
13	4	94	3	7	0	0	0	6	3	0	19
20	4	94	9	6	2	0	2	6	2	0	27
11	5	94	0	6	12	0	0	6	4	0	28

Turnstones were found in all parts of the estuary except for Machar and Logie and were recorded throughout the year. The peak count of 81 on 20 January was higher than the 1992/93 peak of 73 but was lower than the 93 recorded in 1991/92.

b) Total number of birds on the estuary

The total number of birds of all species was calculated for each count and the mean taken for each month. Since Eiders were so numerous, they were considered separately.

Month	Eiders	Other Species	Total
1993			
June	2,665	375	3,040
July	1,240	495	1,735
August	67	3,187	3,254
September	2,087	1,456	3,543
October	787	999	1,786
November	638	4,748	5,386
December	966	2,241	3,207
1994			
January	810	2,048	2,858
February	974	1,681	2,655
March	528	1,449	1,977
April	795	502	1,297
May	2,811	425	3,236

As in previous years, there was substantial seasonal variation in the total number of birds on the Ythan estuary (Figure 2). There were 2,000-3,000 birds present in most months, with lower numbers in July, October and April and a striking peak in November, due mainly to a large influx of Lapwings and Golden Plovers early in the month. There was an unusual peak of Eiders in September (2,087 compared to 705 in 1992/93) and one in other species in August (3,187 compared to 1,166 in 1992), leading to a high total number of birds of all species in these two months (Figure 2).

c) Comparison between 1993/94 and 1992/93

(i) Total number of birds.

The evaluation of the peak number of species other than Eiders is complicated by the exceptional value of 4,748 for November, referred to above. However, the next highest peak, of 3,187 in August, was considerably higher than the highest peak in 1992/93 (2,796 in December). In contrast, the mean for December 1993 was only 2,241. It may well not be meaningful to compare such peak monthly values between years, since they may be affected by year-to-year differences in the extent and timing of migratory movements.

The spring peak of 3,236 in May 1994 was lower than the 3,973 recorded in May 1993, because of a substantial drop in the number of Eiders from 3,585 to 2,811. This large overall drop concealed a moderate increase in the number of other species from 388 to 425 in May and from 335 to 375 in June between the two years.

The mean total of species other than Eiders from August to February, at 2,337, was considerably higher than the equivalent value for 1992/93 (1,561), and was still 1,935 when the exceptional mean for November was excluded from the calculations. There was thus evidence of larger numbers of birds (other than Eiders) in 1993/94 than there had been in the previous year.

(ii) Individual species

For each species, the mean of the three highest counts in 1993/94 was compared with the same measure for the previous year (Patterson and Laing 1993).

Species	Mean of the three highest counts		
	1992/93	1993/94	Change
Shelduck	78	91	+
Eider	3,855	3,259	-
Wigeon	289	297	+
Teal	14	9	-
Mallard	25	36	+
Scaup	0	0	=
Long-tailed Duck	1	0	-
Goldeneye	14	15	+
Red-breasted Merganser	22	19	-
Oystercatcher	321	501	+
Ringed Plover	28	40	+
Golden Plover	442	1,522	+
Lapwing	521	1,32	+
Knot	39	66	+
Dunlin	704	687	-
Black-tailed Godwit	<1	0	-
Bar-tailed Godwit	38	36	-
Curlew	334	585	+
Redshank	331	435	+
Greenshank	0	0	=
Turnstone	71	78	+

Of the nine duck species, four increased in their peak numbers between 1992/93 and 1993/94, while four decreased. The Scaup remained unrecorded in both years. There was thus no indication of any overall change in duck numbers.

Eight of the 12 wader species, however, increased in peak numbers, several of them substantially, while only three (Dunlin, and the two Godwit species) decreased. Even in the latter, the Black-tailed Godwit can be discounted since only two birds were counted in 1992/93 and the reductions in the other two species were rather small. These data suggests a consistent increase in wader numbers between the two years and some reversal of the recent trend towards decrease.

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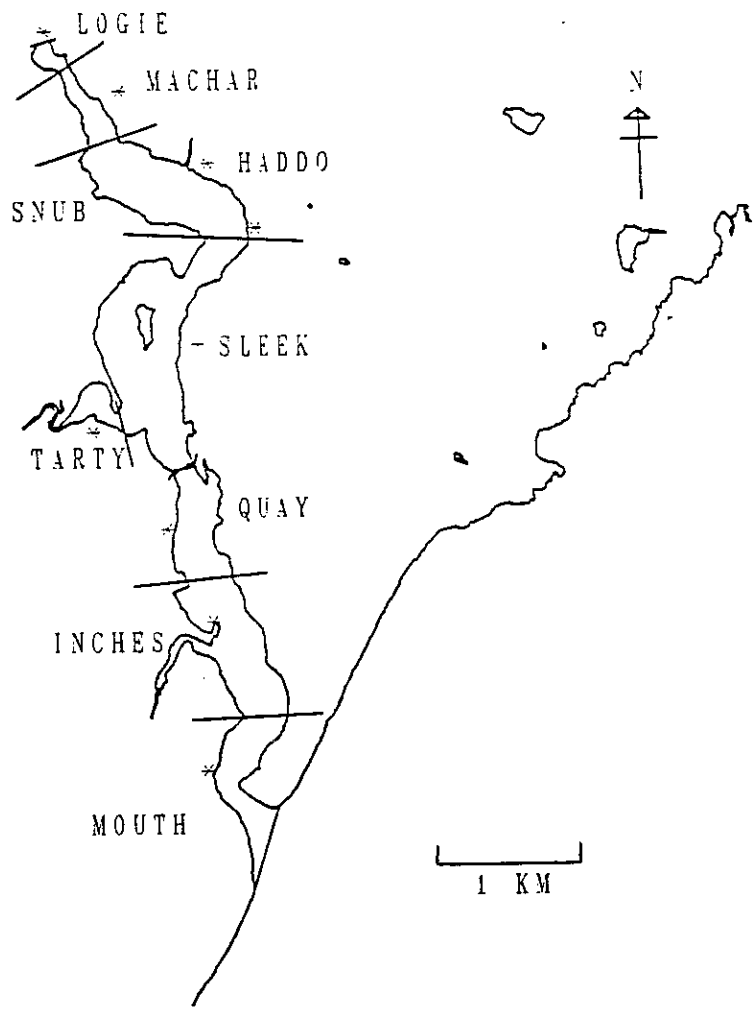


Figure 1. The Ythan estuary, showing the counting sections and count points (asterisks). The division between the Snub and Haddo areas is the centre of the low-tide river channel.

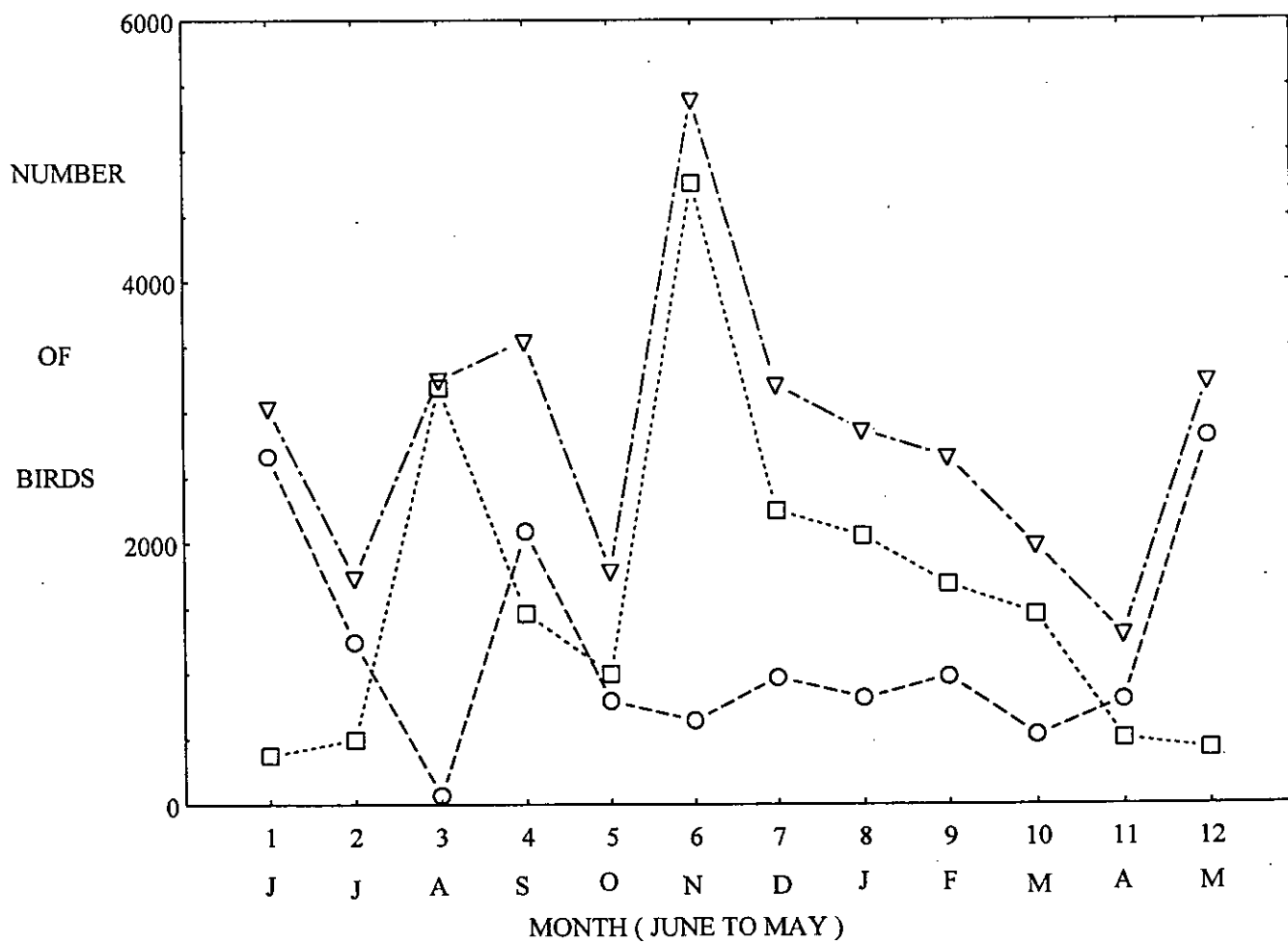


Figure 2. The mean number of Eiders (circles), birds of other species (squares), and the total of birds of all species (triangles) on the Ythan estuary in 1993/94.

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