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Waders and wildfowl on the Ythan Estuary 1994/1995

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Waders and wildfowl on the Ythan Estuary 1994/1995

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WADERS AND WATERFOWL ON THE YTHAN ESTUARY 1994/95

A Report to S.N.H

By

I.J. Patterson and R.M. Laing

NE/94/002

SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE
NORTH EAST REGION
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Summary:

Counts of waders and waterfowl on the Ythan estuary were made from 9 June 1994 to 31 May 1995, 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 highest monthly mean count of Eiders in spring increased from 2,811 in 1993/94 to 3,063 in 1994/95, but there was no consistent change in the spring numbers of other species.

The overall mean numbers of birds other than Eiders over the autumn and winter (August to February) fell from 2,337 in 1993/94 to 1,754 in 1994/95.

There was some indication of a decrease in both duck and wader numbers between 1993/94 and 1994/95.

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SUMMARY

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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 9 June 1994 to 31 May 1995, using the same methods as in previous years (Patterson and Laing 1992, 1993, 1994).

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. The data are summarised and peak numbers are compared with those in the previous year.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
9	6	94	0	0	0	4	9	24	10	4	31	82
30	6	94	0	0	2	2	11	20	56	0	7	98
12	7	94	0	2	8	4	2	0	2	2	0	20
26	7	94	0	0	2	3	6	9	0	2	0	22
8	8	94	0	0	0	0	1	6	17	3	10	37
29	8	94	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
29	11	94	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
21	12	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
19	1	95	0	0	0	8	0	9	0	0	0	17
25	1	95	0	0	0	4	14	9	12	0	0	39
6	2	95	0	0	0	9	12	31	7	0	0	59
20	2	95	0	0	0	14	16	23	6	0	0	59
6	3	95	0	0	0	8	25	15	0	0	0	48
23	3	95	0	0	0	14	0	8	23	0	0	45
7	4	95	0	0	0	6	8	21	8	0	2	45
24	4	95	0	0	2	12	9	15	12	2	0	52
9	5	95	0	0	2	17	6	18	6	0	0	49
31	5	95	0	0	2	0	6	18	23	2	0	51

Shelducks were recorded in all months except September and October, but few were present in August, November and December. The peak count of 98 on 30 June was somewhat lower than the highest count of 111 in 1993/94. Most Shelducks 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 were not counted. The maximum count of fledglings was 28 on 8 August 1994.

Eider *Somateria mollissima*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Total
7	6	94	1231	117	279	0	57	10	1694
13	6	94	984	177	209	0	29	5	1404
23	6	94	639	22	74	0	37	10	782
27	6	94	281	287	154	0	35	0	757
12	7	94	669	32	148	17	0	0	866
27	7	94	368	43	12	0	0	0	423
2	8	94	402	34	8	0	0	0	444
24	8	94	223	0	0	0	0	0	223
7	9	94	116	1	2	0	0	0	119
30	9	94	1639	17	3	0	0	0	1659
5	10	94	503	11	115	0	138	0	767
18	10	94	685	314	51	0	23	0	1073
2	11	94	40	269	219	0	18	0	546
18	11	94	17	38	707	0	15	0	777
5	12	94	0	672	44	0	0	0	716
16	12	94	10	473	468	0	0	0	951
12	1	95	0	305	519	0	48	0	872
30	1	95	5	320	551	0	45	0	921
9	2	95	24	416	480	0	0	0	920
24	2	95	420	367	148	0	0	0	935
10	3	95	28	206	255	0	0	0	489
27	3	95	436	366	124	0	0	0	926
10	4	95	1280	0	190	0	64	0	1534
26	4	95	1556	121	384	0	16	2	2079
3	5	95	2653	250	207	0	53	0	3163
12	5	95	828	818	1025	0	35	11	2717
17	5	95	1093	1029	909	0	55	8	3094
25	5	95	1686	926	599	0	65	3	3279

Eiders were found on the estuary throughout the year, mainly downstream of Waterside Bridge, with a peak of 3,279 on 25 May 1995, which was similar to that of 3,192 in May 1994. (These totals do not include the birds on the sea coast between Collieston and the Ythan mouth). Numbers were low in July and August and were usually around 900 in mid-winter . Only one fledged duckling was found in late July 1994.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
21 10 94.	12	0	14	0	0	0	12	0	0	38
9 11 94	36	29	0	0	33	0	0	0	0	98
29 11 94	29	39	29	12	63	0	22	0	0	194
5 12 94	18	0	49	0	48	6	0	0	0	121
21 12 94	54	21	56	0	29	17	32	0	0	209
19 1 95	33	21	56	0	12	14	0	0	0	136
6 2 95	49	51	53	0	20	11	0	0	0	184
20 2 95	18	16	14	25	0	0	9	0	0	82
6 3 95	43	38	65	0	18	0	53	0	0	217
23 3 95	0	6	0	0	0	4	10	0	0	20
7 4 95	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	8

Wigeon were recorded only between October and April, the same period as in the previous year. The peak of 217 on 6 March was considerably lower than the highest count of 363 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	Total
9	6	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
26	7	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
8	8	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
8	9	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
28	9	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
21	10	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
9	11	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
29	11	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
5	12	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
21	12	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
19	1	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
25	1	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
6	2	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
20	2	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
6	3	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
23	3	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
7	4	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
24	4	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
9	5	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6

As in previous years, Teal were seen throughout the year in low numbers and only at Logie. The peak number of only 6 was lower than in the previous two years (15 in 1992/93 and 9 in 1993/94).

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
9	6	94	4	2	1	4	3	12	6	0	4	36
30	6	94	0	6	2	6	2	2	0	3	2	23
12	7	94	0	0	6	0	4	0	0	2	0	12
26	7	94	0	4	0	0	6	2	0	0	4	16
8	8	94	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	8	4	20
29	8	94	0	0	0	4	2	4	9	2	0	21
8	9	94	0	2	4	6	0	4	6	0	2	24
7	10	94	6	2	0	6	4	8	2	8	2	38
21	10	94	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	3	2	11
9	11	94	0	3	0	0	0	4	0	2	0	9
29	11	94	6	8	2	6	4	0	4	2	4	36
5	12	94	3	0	6	4	2	2	0	2	4	23
21	12	94	0	0	4	6	0	3	0	6	0	19
19	1	95	0	0	0	4	2	6	6	2	2	22
25	1	95	0	0	4	0	2	6	2	4	0	18
6	2	95	0	0	4	0	6	0	4	0	3	17
20	2	95	6	2	2	0	0	4	0	2	3	19
6	3	95	0	0	4	2	0	6	8	4	2	26
23	3	95	0	0	0	4	0	6	0	2	6	18
7	4	95	4	0	2	0	0	0	6	0	2	14
24	4	95	2	0	0	4	2	4	6	2	2	22
9	5	95	0	4	0	2	0	0	6	0	2	14
31	5	95	6	2	0	6	2	8	4	0	3	31

Mallard were recorded in fairly low and variable numbers in all months, in most sections of the estuary. The peak of 38 on 7 October was lower than the 1993/94 one of 43.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

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

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

As in the previous year, no Long-tailed Ducks were seen during the counts in 1994/95, following the decrease to only one recorded in 1991/92.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
29	11	94	4	6	4	0	6	4	8	0	0	32
5	12	94	6	0	3	0	2	2	4	0	0	17
21	12	94	0	0	2	0	6	2	0	0	0	10
19	1	95	0	0	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	8
25	1	95	0	8	4	0	4	2	0	0	0	18
6	2	95	0	3	4	0	0	6	6	0	0	19
20	2	95	0	3	4	0	2	2	4	0	0	15
6	3	95	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	4
23	3	95	0	3	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	9
7	4	95	4	2	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	11
24	4	95	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	6
9	5	95	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	4

Goldeneye were found from November to April in the middle sections of the estuary, with none seen at Machar or Logie. The exceptional peak of 32 on 29 November was considerably higher than the highest count of 16 in the previous year.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
7	10	94	0	4	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	8
21	10	94	0	0	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	7
9	11	94	2	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	8
29	11	94	4	6	2	0	4	0	2	0	0	18
5	12	94	4	0	4	0	3	0	4	0	0	15
21	12	94	0	4	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	12
19	1	95	4	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	12
25	1	95	4	0	4	0	6	0	0	0	0	14
6	2	95	3	2	2	0	6	6	0	0	0	19
20	2	95	0	0	6	0	3	4	0	0	0	13
6	3	95	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5
23	3	95	0	4	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	8
7	4	95	4	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	8
24	4	95	0	4	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	8
9	5	95	0	0	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	8
31	5	95	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4

Mergansers were seen in low numbers from October to May, in all parts of the estuary except Tarty, Machar and Logie. The peak of 19 on 6 February was slightly lower than the 21 recorded in the previous year.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
9	6	94	12	6	6	4	6	6	3	4	1	48
30	6	94	11	19	12	6	12	7	6	0	0	73
12	7	94	65	26	8	2	3	8	2	6	0	120
26	7	94	43	36	12	3	0	2	3	0	0	99
8	8	94	189	64	41	6	43	29	0	0	0	372
29	8	94	245	123	14	2	14	12	14	9	2	435
8	9	94	163	81	29	9	21	6	0	0	0	309
28	9	94	149	133	47	0	9	6	0	4	0	348
7	10	94	199	78	21	10	42	6	0	0	0	356
21	10	94	71	49	21	16	6	9	0	0	0	172
9	11	94	151	86	37	45	20	3	0	0	0	342
29	11	94	69	68	29	0	9	12	0	0	0	187
5	12	94	75	41	33	0	12	0	0	0	0	161
21	12	94	76	61	44	0	23	12	18	0	0	234
19	1	95	171	63	25	0	12	0	0	0	0	271
25	1	95	84	38	21	0	18	14	0	0	0	175
6	2	95	153	33	34	9	14	16	0	0	0	259
20	2	95	43	18	23	11	43	6	0	0	0	144
6	3	95	39	36	25	15	23	18	21	0	0	177
23	3	95	49	29	20	21	14	14	16	0	0	163
7	4	95	25	10	8	0	0	6	8	0	0	57
24	4	95	23	15	19	6	4	21	6	0	0	94
9	5	95	12	6	14	4	4	3	0	0	0	43
31	5	95	9	12	6	7	6	9	6	0	2	57

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 435 in August was much lower than the highest count of 607 in 1993/94, but higher than the maximum 377 counted in 1992/93.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticus*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
12	7	94	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
26	7	94	0	0	0	0	6	7	5	0	0	18
8	8	94	0	12	14	0	0	3	0	0	0	29
21	10	94	0	0	0	0	0	7	12	0	0	19
21	12	94	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	14
6	2	95	0	0	0	0	9	16	5	0	0	30
20	2	95	0	6	0	0	0	16	17	0	0	39
24	4	95	0	0	0	0	0	12	3	0	0	15
9	5	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	10

This species was recorded mainly at Haddo and Snub, in only some months of the year. The peak of 39 in February was slightly higher than the highest count (34) in the previous year.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
29 8 94	0	0	0	0	30	12	0	0	0	42
28 9 94	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32
7 10 94	14	0	6	0	0	323	0	0	0	343
21 10 94	0	0	0	0	294	385	0	0	0	679
9 11 94	0	0	154	0	0	450	380	0	0	984
29 11 94	0	123	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	123
5 12 94	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	0	0	60
21 12 94	0	24	0	0	0	43	51	0	0	118

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 984 in November, which was much lower than the peak of 3,066 in 1993/94.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
9	6	94	0	0	0	0	4	16	3	6	2	31
30	6	94	0	0	2	3	9	47	36	6	3	106
12	7	94	0	0	0	2	1	0	65	1	0	69
26	7	94	0	0	0	6	12	9	0	0	2	29
8	8	94	0	0	19	0	49	63	36	12	6	185
29	8	94	0	0	21	12	64	16	19	24	12	168
8	9	94	0	0	6	0	12	0	0	10	9	37
28	9	94	0	0	234	21	23	34	63	18	12	405
28	9	94	2	0	4	6	3	0	6	1	8	30
7	10	94	0	37	49	33	231	516	32	12	16	926
21	10	94	0	0	57	0	73	53	29	6	0	218
9	11	94	0	0	306	40	295	196	260	0	0	1097
29	11	94	0	12	139	21	24	63	33	16	2	310
5	12	94	0	24	482	0	73	36	0	0	0	615
21	12	94	0	0	62	22	18	87	89	0	0	278
19	1	95	0	0	28	0	33	0	0	0	0	61
25	1	95	0	0	54	21	112	103	62	0	0	352
6	2	95	0	0	57	0	63	111	43	0	0	274
20	2	95	0	0	43	0	161	124	29	0	0	357
6	3	95	0	0	0	0	0	25	37	0	0	62
23	3	95	0	0	23	0	25	0	0	0	0	48
7	4	95	0	0	7	0	5	3	0	0	0	15
24	4	95	0	0	0	0	9	12	12	3	0	36
9	5	95	0	0	0	0	3	4	4	0	0	11
31	5	95	0	0	3	9	6	9	0	2	0	29

Lapwings were recorded in all months of the year, in very variable numbers, highest in winter. The peak count of 1,097 in November (as in the previous year, on the same day as the largest count of Golden Plover) was much lower than the peak of 2,464 in 1993/94. 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	Total
29 11 94	122	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	122
5 12 94	56	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	56
25 1 95	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	49
6 2 95	21	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35
23 3 95	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14

Knot occurred only from November to March, with a peak of 122 in November representing a considerable increase from the highest count of 74 in 1993/94. The birds were found mainly at the mouth of the estuary, apart from small numbers at Inches in February and March.

Dunlin *Calidrus alpina*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
9	6	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	23
30	6	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	12
12	7	94	18	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
26	7	94	0	16	29	10	0	0	0	0	0	55
29	8	94	0	0	0	0	0	18	24	0	0	42
8	9	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	12	0	36
28	9	94	23	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	41
7	10	94	110	0	0	0	0	0	63	0	0	173
21	10	94	14	0	0	0	0	32	65	0	0	111
9	11	94	55	0	0	0	0	160	177	0	0	392
29	11	94	0	65	74	23	42	210	42	0	0	456
5	12	94	31	0	48	0	24	0	65	0	0	168
21	12	94	63	37	36	0	0	0	64	0	0	200
19	1	95	23	19	130	0	0	181	66	0	0	419
25	1	95	43	14	36	0	0	201	18	0	0	312
6	2	95	141	33	64	12	17	34	51	0	0	352
20	2	95	18	0	14	0	0	29	38	0	0	99
6	3	95	205	85	50	0	0	0	73	0	0	413
23	3	95	23	0	24	0	0	21	29	0	0	97
7	4	95	0	0	0	0	12	15	0	0	0	27
24	4	95	0	0	0	0	18	23	16	0	0	57
9	5	95	14	12	0	0	0	12	14	0	0	52

Dunlins were found throughout the year and in all parts of the estuary except Logie. The peak count of 456 in November was much lower than the 1992/93 peak of 813.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

No Black-tailed Godwits were found on any of the count dates.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
9	6	94	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
30	6	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	6	10
12	7	94	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
26	7	94	2	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	7
8	8	94	0	4	2	1	0	6	0	0	0	13
29	8	94	0	2	3	1	0	4	2	0	0	12
8	9	94	4	2	0	2	0	4	6	0	2	20
28	9	94	2	4	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	12
7	10	94	2	2	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	9
21	10	94	0	1	2	3	0	2	4	0	0	12
9	11	94	1	2	2	4	0	0	3	0	0	12
29	11	94	2	2	2	4	0	0	3	0	0	13
5	12	94	0	2	1	2	0	0	2	0	0	7
21	12	94	0	3	9	2	0	6	0	0	0	20
19	1	95	2	0	4	6	2	6	0	0	0	20
25	1	95	2	0	6	0	8	0	0	0	0	16
6	2	95	2	6	4	2	3	0	0	0	0	17
20	2	95	4	2	0	3	2	2	6	0	0	19
6	3	95	3	1	2	4	4	0	0	0	0	14
23	3	95	4	3	0	0	6	2	2	0	0	17
7	4	95	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	5
24	4	95	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	4
9	5	95	0	0	2	0	2	3	0	0	0	7
31	5	95	2	0	3	2	1	2	2	0	0	12

Bar-tailed Godwits were found throughout the year, with highest numbers in August and in winter, in all parts of the estuary. The peak count of 20 was much lower than the 43 recorded in 1993/94.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Eight Whimbrel were recorded on the estuary on 31 May. None was seen on any of the other count dates in 1993/94.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
9	6	94	2	1	3	7	5	12	6	4	0	40
30	6	94	1	21	4	2	9	19	21	3	6	86
12	7	94	11	8	4	6	3	1	0	12	0	45
26	7	94	6	5	4	3	4	2	6	1	0	31
8	8	94	2	56	10	6	23	27	12	9	2	147
29	8	94	3	57	12	6	16	14	23	10	6	147
8	9	94	14	39	4	9	6	33	31	12	6	154
28	9	94	12	34	19	6	9	12	23	1	3	119
7	10	94	14	42	14	12	6	24	14	2	6	134
21	10	94	3	31	6	11	3	12	5	1	3	75
9	11	94	7	8	14	12	10	9	37	2	2	101
29	11	94	14	43	9	12	12	14	8	2	2	116
5	12	94	12	21	14	11	8	6	18	6	1	97
21	12	94	12	33	9	36	12	14	21	2	0	139
19	1	95	12	44	14	21	18	12	16	0	0	137
25	1	95	8	39	9	28	54	29	21	0	2	190
6	2	95	11	86	39	36	25	33	16	0	3	249
20	2	95	9	21	14	9	12	12	29	0	0	106
6	3	95	12	29	24	31	41	40	23	0	0	200
23	3	95	9	25	15	12	14	12	21	0	0	108
7	4	95	3	3	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	12
24	4	95	4	6	0	4	0	23	21	2	1	61
9	5	95	6	3	4	2	9	11	14	0	0	49
31	5	95	2	6	6	4	37	12	37	3	4	111

Curlew were recorded in all months of the year in all sections of the estuary, with highest numbers in winter. The peak count of 249 in February was very much lower than the 1993/94 peak of 812, which occurred in August.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Date			Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
9	6	94	6	4	6	12	11	17	12	23	4	95
30	6	94	2	4	3	9	7	29	27	14	23	118
12	7	94	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	14	0	17
26	7	94	0	0	0	12	14	20	10	14	0	70
8	8	94	0	12	36	23	96	103	95	42	12	419
29	8	94	29	24	18	18	27	59	209	97	23	504
8	9	94	36	24	26	14	33	62	179	43	6	423
28	9	94	45	59	39	33	33	73	87	37	10	416
7	10	94	47	63	27	89	43	23	37	9	12	350
21	10	94	14	12	41	63	41	26	57	14	3	271
9	11	94	33	41	43	39	76	21	54	11	5	323
29	11	94	23	65	43	73	48	69	107	2	6	436
5	12	94	43	33	72	48	56	14	93	29	4	392
21	12	94	29	36	41	52	33	27	56	22	3	299
19	1	95	36	29	33	62	38	49	55	15	3	320
25	1	95	49	24	24	28	49	53	44	9	0	280
6	2	95	16	23	14	39	39	42	15	22	7	217
20	2	95	12	21	31	63	42	30	52	25	0	276
6	3	95	43	46	30	72	51	22	63	33	0	360
23	3	95	18	213	12	38	32	55	69	20	0	457
7	4	95	10	12	9	21	22	28	47	21	6	176
24	4	95	10	8	18	24	20	21	23	0	0	124
9	5	95	15	9	5	23	20	17	23	12	0	124
31	5	95	3	6	7	12	4	15	3	4	6	60

Redshanks were recorded in all parts of the estuary throughout the year, although numbers were low in late May, in June and in July. The highest count of 504 in August was somewhat higher than the peak of 464 in the previous year.

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	Total
9	6	94	3	1	4	0	3	12	6	0	0	29
30	6	94	0	2	3	0	3	9	12	0	0	29
12	7	94	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
26	7	94	0	6	9	0	0	4	0	0	0	19
8	8	94	8	9	6	6	7	12	9	0	0	57
29	8	94	14	6	6	0	3	3	0	0	0	32
8	9	94	29	12	12	6	3	21	14	0	0	97
28	9	94	9	12	6	4	0	7	12	0	0	50
7	10	94	18	18	3	0	6	12	14	0	0	71
21	10	94	7	17	11	0	12	9	7	0	0	63
9	11	94	9	10	0	0	14	6	0	0	0	39
29	11	94	12	10	6	0	6	12	6	0	0	52
5	12	94	6	23	12	0	14	6	12	0	0	73
21	12	94	14	12	9	0	0	18	0	0	0	53
19	1	95	23	12	121	0	18	22	0	0	0	86
25	1	95	12	12	3	0	14	18	0	0	0	59
6	2	95	12	18	11	6	10	14	21	0	0	92
20	2	95	12	12	9	0	0	14	12	0	0	59
6	3	95	9	6	16	6	14	9	12	0	0	72
23	3	95	14	11	9	0	0	14	23	0	0	71
7	4	95	6	8	5	0	0	3	4	0	0	26
24	4	95	6	12	0	0	2	8	6	0	0	34
9	5	95	7	3	8	0	0	4	5	0	0	27
31	5	95	2	3	0	0	6	9	2	0	0	22

Turnstones were found in all parts of the estuary except for Machar and Logie and were recorded throughout the year. The peak count of 97 in September was higher than the 1993/94 peak of 81.

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
1994			
June	1,159	472	1,631
July	645	351	996
August	667	1,344	2,011
September	889	1,280	2,169
October	920	2,045	2,965
November	662	2,758	3,420
December	834	1,713	2,547
1995			
January	897	1,576	2,473
February	928	1,560	2,488
March	708	1,340	2,048
April	1,807	463	2,270
May	3,063	395	3,458

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 June and July, a peak of 3,420 in November, due mainly to birds other than Eiders, and another peak of 3,458 in May, composed mainly of Eiders (Figure 2). The unusual peaks in August and September of the previous count year were not recorded in 1994/95.

c) Comparison between 1994/95 and 1993/94

(i) Total number of birds.

The peak monthly mean total of birds (of species other than Eiders), at 2,758 in November, was lower than the equivalent value in the previous counting year (3,187 in August) but was very similar to that in 1992/93 (2,796 in December). However, as was stated in the last Report, 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 in birds of all species, of 3,458 in May 1995 was higher than the 3,236 recorded in May 1994, because of an increase in the number of Eiders from 2,811 to 3,063. The number of birds of other species decreased from 425 to 395 in May but increased from 375 to 472 in June between the two years.

The mean total of species other than Eiders in autumn and winter (from August to February), at 1,754, was considerably lower than the equivalent value for 1993/94 (2,337). There was thus evidence of lower numbers of birds (other than Eiders) in the autumn and winter of 1994/95 than there had been in the previous year. The mean total, however, was very similar to the mean in 1992/93 (1,561).

(ii) Individual species

For each species, the mean of the three highest counts in 1994/95 was compared with the same measure for the previous year (Patterson and Laing 1994).

	Mean of the three highest counts		
Species	1993/94	1994/95	Change
Shelduck	91	80	-
Eider	3,259	3,179	-
Wigeon	297	207	-
Teal	9	6	-
Mallard	36	37	+
Scaup	0	0	=
Long-tailed Duck	0	0	=
Goldeneye	15	23	+
Red-breasted Merganser	19	17	-
Oystercatcher	501	388	-
Ringed Plover	40	33	-
Golden Plover	1,522	669	-
Lapwing	1,320	879	-
Knot	66	76	+
Dunlin	687	429	-
Black-tailed Godwit	0	0	=
Bar-tailed Godwit	36	20	-
Curlew	585	213	-
Redshank	435	466	+
Greenshank	0	0	=
Turnstone	78	92	+

Of the nine duck species, only two (Mallard and Goldeneye) increased in their peak numbers between 1993/94 and 1994/95, while five decreased. The Scaup and Long-tailed Duck remained unrecorded in both years. There was thus some indication of a decrease in duck numbers.

Similarly, only three of the 12 wader species increased in peak numbers, while six decreased. These data suggests some decrease in wader numbers between the two years.

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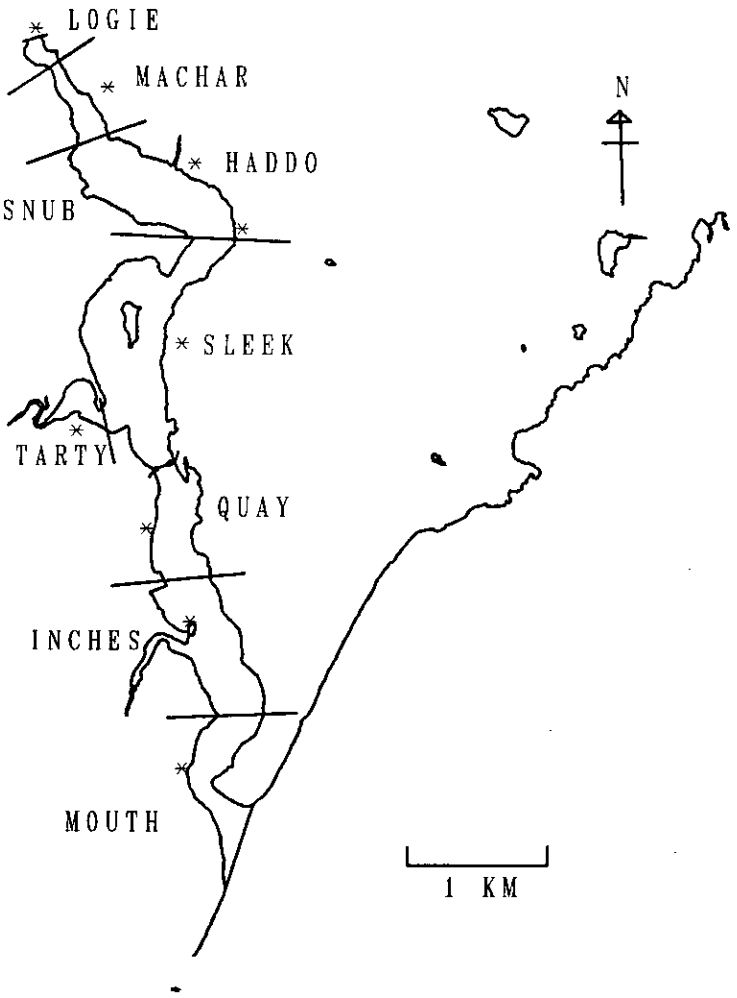

Figure 1. The Ythan estuary, showing the counting sections and count points (asterisks). The division between the Snub and Haddo areas is the centre of the low-tide river channel.

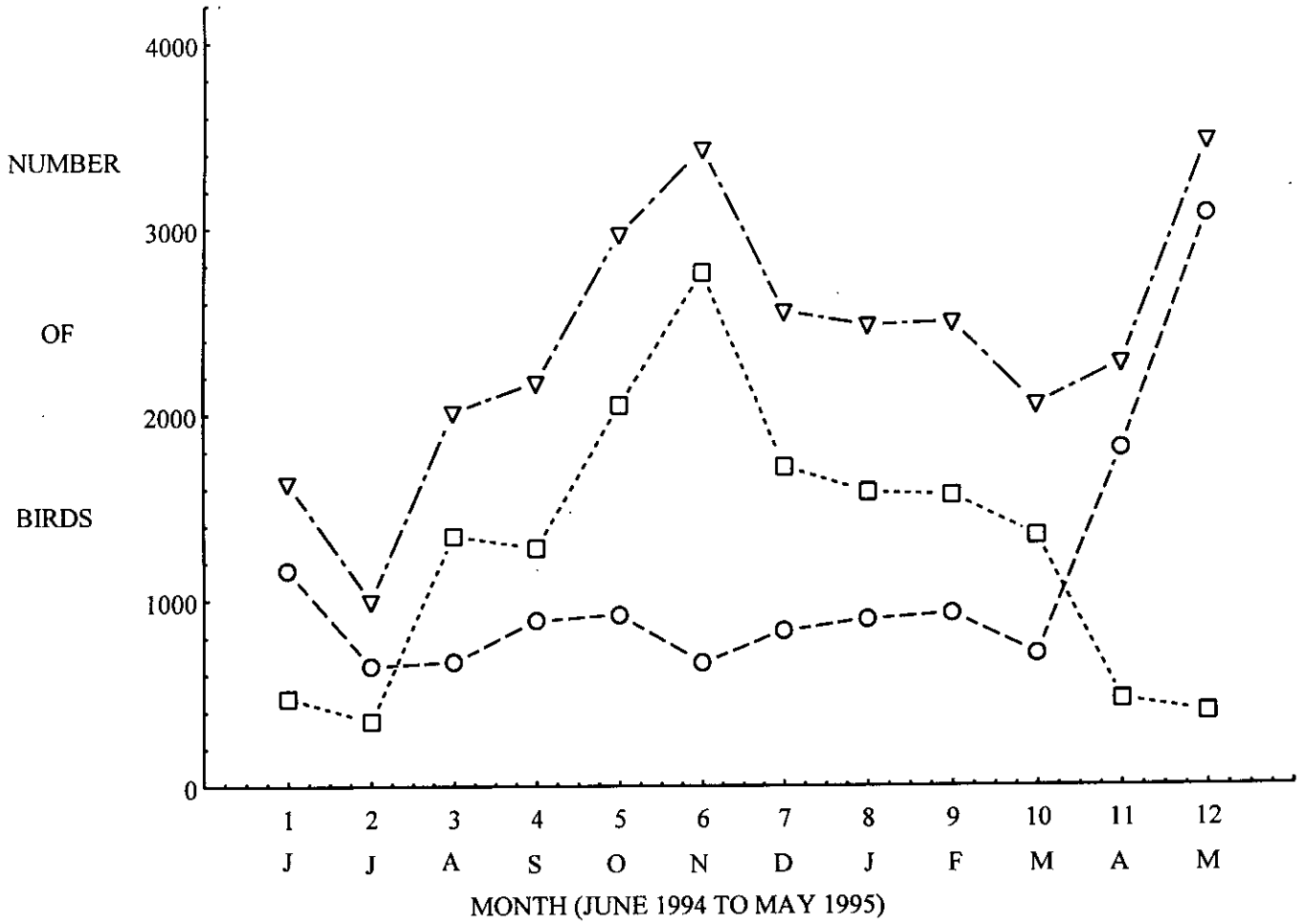

Figure 2. The mean number of Eiders (circles), birds of other species (squares), and the total number of birds of all species (triangles) on the Ythan estuary in 1994/95

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