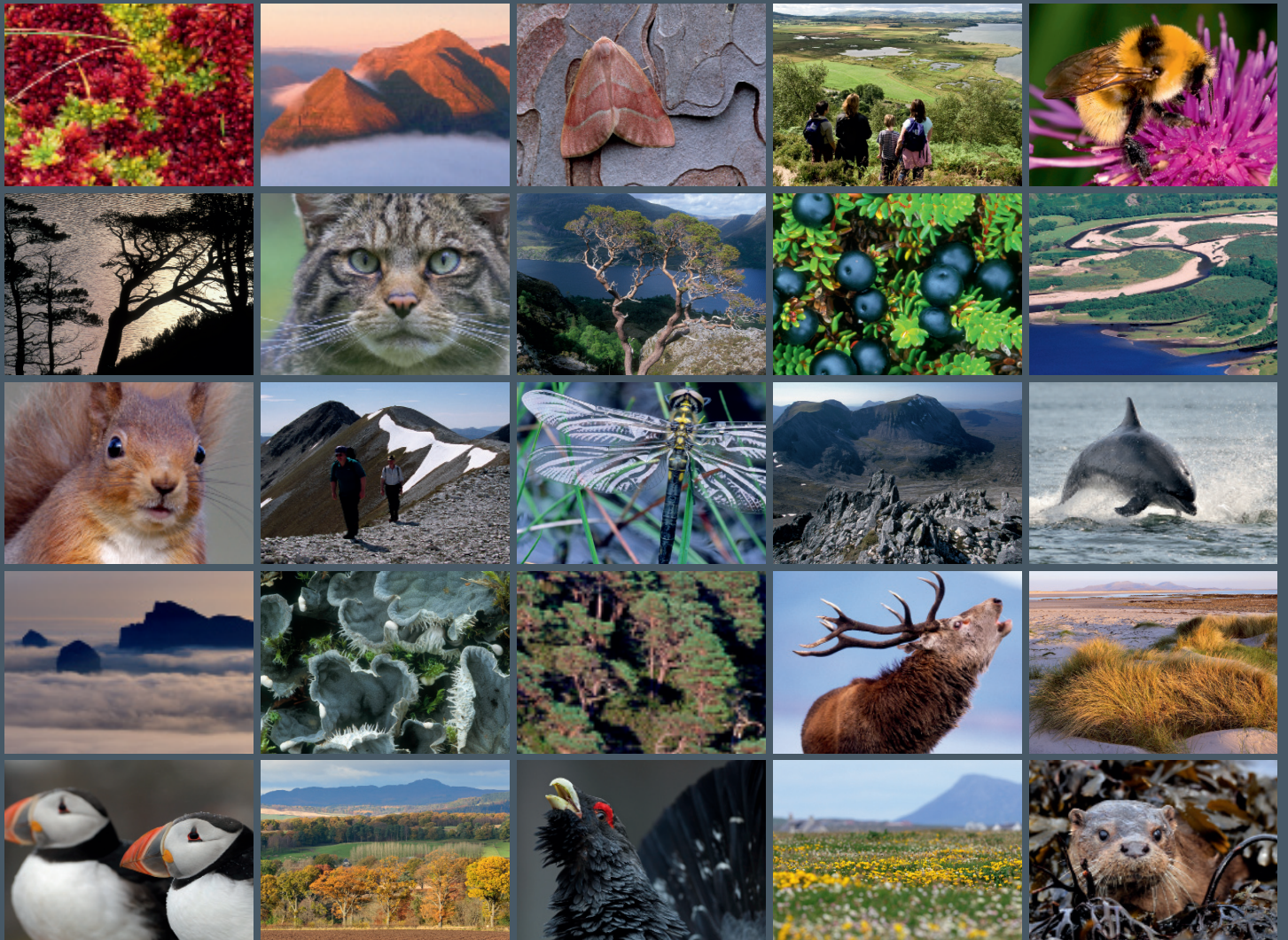


# Waders and wildfowl on the Ythan Estuary 1995/1996





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**Archive Report No. 005**

## **Waders and wildfowl on the Ythan Estuary 1995/1996**

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WADERS & WILDFOWL ON THE YTHAN ESTURAY  
1995/96

BY

ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY,  
DR I J PATTERSON & R M LAING

NE/95/020

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SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE  
NORTH EAST REGION  
COMMISSIONED RESEARCH

**Report No** : NE/95/020

**Contract No** : NE/S/20/94

**Date Received** : September 1996

**Report Title** : **Waders and Wildfowl on the Ythan Estuary 1995/96**

**Contract Title** : Wader and Wildfowl Counts, Ythan Estuary

**Nominated Officer** : Kenny Steele

**Contractor** : Aberdeen University,  
Dr I J Patterson and R M Laing

**Comments** : This report is preceded by equivalent annual reports since 1992.

**Storage Location of Additional Field data** : See earlier reports NE/94/002,  
NE/93/204, NE/92/200, NE/91/211

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2. Andrew Douse, Bonnington  
3. Mike Shepherd, Bonnington  
4. File x 3

**Summary** :

The wader and wildfowl counts in this report are a direct continuation of the series started in 1989/90. The birds in the estuary are counted twice monthly. The counts were carried out between June 1995 and June 1996, using the same methods as used in previous years.

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, Sleet, Haddo, Snub, Machar and

Logie) as defined previously by Patterson and Laing, 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.

**WADERS AND WILDFOWL ON THE  
YTHAN ESTUARY 1995/96**

**A REPORT TO S.N.H.**

**I.J. Patterson and R.M. Laing**

**Aberdeen University Zoology Department  
Culterty Field Station, Newburgh, Grampian**

**SUMMARY**

Counts of waders and wildfowl on the Ythan estuary were made from 5 June 1995 to 26 June 1996, 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 decreased from 3,063 in 1994/95 to 1,596 in 1995/96, but there was only a slight drop in the peak number of birds of other species, taken together (2,758 to 2,541).

The overall mean numbers of birds other than Eiders over the autumn and winter (August to February) changed only very slightly, from 1,754 in 1994/95 to 1,700 in 1995/96.

There was some indication of a decrease in the numbers of individual species of both ducks and waders between 1994/95 and 1995/96.

**WADERS AND WILDFOWL ON THE  
YTHAN ESTUARY 1995/96**

**A REPORT TO S.N.H.**

**I.J. Patterson and R.M. Laing**

**Aberdeen University Zoology Department  
Culterty Field Station, Newburgh, Grampian**

**INTRODUCTION**

The wader and wildfowl 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 5 June 1995 to 26 June 1996, using the same methods as in previous years (Patterson and Laing 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995). The extension of the reporting period to the end of June was designed to bring it into line with the contract period.

**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
5 6 95	0	0	0	2	27	22	30	0	3	84
30 6 95	0	0	0	8	2	4	2	2	0	18
7 7 95	0	0	0	6	6	8	3	1	0	24
21 7 95	0	0	0	2	3	6	4	0	0	15
11 8 95	0	0	0	0	0	8	14	3	5	30
25 8 95	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
13 9 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
27 11 95	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
15 12 95	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
27 12 95	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
11 1 96	0	0	0	0	0	10	11	0	0	21
24 1 96	0	0	0	0	0	8	6	4	0	18
20 2 96	0	0	0	0	4	4	6	2	0	16
26 2 96	0	0	0	12	8	12	0	0	0	32
8 3 96	0	0	0	12	14	0	12	0	0	38
26 3 96	0	0	0	0	12	6	18	0	0	36
9 4 96	0	0	0	3	4	12	9	0	0	28
26 4 96	0	0	0	4	14	16	0	6	6	46
7 5 96	0	0	2	6	18	14	0	10	2	52
24 5 96	0	0	0	4	22	18	12	8	2	66
7 6 96	0	0	2	0	16	15	6	0	2	41
26 6 96	0	0	5	4	15	3	5	0	0	32

Shelducks were seen in all months, except October, but few were present from August to December. The peak count of 84 on 5 June 1995 was lower than the peak of 98 in the previous year, which in turn had dropped from 111 in 1993/94 (Patterson and Laing 1995). Most Shelducks were seen in the middle stretches of the estuary. As in previous reports, the counts do not include the whole breeding population, since birds on freshwater pools, in the Forvie dunes and on the Ythan above Logie Buchan Bridge were not counted.

**Eider** *Somateria mollissima*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total	
28 9 95	726	533	421	0	40	0	0	0	0	1720	
9 10 95	1126	577	63	0	44	0	0	0	0	1810	
25 10 95	1145	466	75	0	35	0	0	0	0	1721	
3 11 95	837	677	65	0	38	0	0	0	0	1617	
22 11 95	1122	478	78	0	43	0	0	0	0	1721	
6 12 95	110	817	68	0	37	0	0	0	0	1032	
21 12 95	124	928	67	0	40	0	0	0	0	1159	
1 6 95	1768	620	107	0	65	0	0	0	0	2560	
9 6 95	2370	221	108	0	12	0	0	0	0	2711	
14 6 95	2498	95	120	0	9	0	0	0	0	2722	
10 7 95	1409	0	123	0	0	0	0	0	0	1532	
21 7 95	431	50	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	499	
9 8 95	361	329	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	690	
10 8 95	321	258	116	0	0	0	0	0	0	695	
24 8 95	76	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	
28 8 95	456	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	460	
19 9 95	1444	320	345	99	8	0	0	0	0	2216	
10 1 96				Not counted separately							696
22 1 96	63	376	159	0	16	0	0	0	0	614	
16 2 96	134	400	182	0	31	0	0	0	0	747	
27 2 96	37	202	298	0	15	0	0	0	0	552	
7 3 96	41	234	275	0	15	0	0	0	0	565	
22 3 96	470	394	42	0	35	0	0	0	0	941	
4 4 96	1066	169	0	0	47	0	0	0	0	1282	
19 4 96	481	0	417	12	32	0	0	0	0	942	
24 4 96	258	416	255	159	0	0	0	0	0	1088	
3 5 96	732	87	713	0	61	4	0	0	0	1597	
7 5 96	449	446	584	4	52	8	0	0	0	1543	
14 5 96	491	532	425	0	44	11	0	0	0	1503	
20 5 96	1077	359	401	23	46	0	0	0	0	1906	
28 5 96	354	371	402	19	26	0	0	0	0	1172	
3 6 96	880	633	227	10	9	0	0	0	0	1759	
14 6 96	1189	267	87	5	11	0	0	0	0	1559	
18 6 96	1133	291	98	13	9	0	0	0	0	1544	
27 6 96	1249	190	64	8	7	3	0	0	0	1521	

Eiders were found on the estuary throughout the year, mainly from the Mouth to Waterside Bridge. The peak of 2,722 on 14 June 1995 was considerably lower than the highest count of 3,279 in May 1995. There was a further large drop to the next season, with a peak of only 1,906 counted on 20 May 1996. Numbers were mainly under 700 from late July, dropping to only 80 on 24 August 1995, but with a peak (possibly of passage birds) of 2,216 on 19 September. After a considerable improvement in nesting success, followed by a warm summer, 790 fledglings were reared in 1995.

**Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
27 9 95	0	12	0	0	47	14	0	0	0	73
11 10 95	12	12	0	0	0	0	21	0	0	45
26 10 95	14	12	13	0	0	0	16	0	0	55
1 11 95	16	12	12	0	0	0	23	0	0	63
27 11 95	18	34	0	0	34	0	48	0	0	134
15 12 95	40	76	97	14	12	23	0	0	0	262
27 12 95	56	43	83	0	0	43	27	0	0	252
11 1 96	38	58	8	0	117	4	0	0	3	228
24 1 96	42	53	29	0	73	21	0	0	0	218
20 2 96	28	31	0	0	36	23	0	0	0	118
26 2 96	29	36	0	63	16	0	43	0	0	187
8 3 96	23	28	36	0	0	0	37	0	0	124
26 3 96	0	0	4	0	0	0	6	0	0	10
9 4 96	0	0	0	0	2	0	6	0	0	8
7 5 96	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	10
24 5 96	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6

Wigeon were seen between September and May, with a peak of 262 on 15 December, an increase on the previous year's peak of 217, but still below the 363 recorded in 1993/94. The birds were seen throughout most of the estuary, apart from Machar and Logie, although (unlike previous years) there was one record of three birds in the latter area on 11 January.

**Teal** *Anas crecca*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
5 6 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
30 6 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
21 7 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
11 8 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
25 8 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
13 9 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
27 9 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
26 10 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
1 11 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
27 11 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
15 12 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
11 1 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	7
24 1 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
20 2 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
26 2 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
8 3 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
26 3 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
26 4 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
24 5 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
7 6 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
26 6 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2

As in previous years, Teal were seen throughout the year in small numbers and only at Logie. The peak number of eight birds was a little higher than in 1994/95 (six).

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
5 6 95	3	2	3	4	2	8	4	0	6	32
30 6 95	2	0	0	4	3	0	0	2	2	13
7 7 95	4	2	0	0	3	0	4	0	0	13
21 7 95	0	0	4	0	6	0	0	2	2	14
11 8 95	0	0	4	2	6	3	0	0	4	19
25 8 95	0	0	0	0	6	2	12	10	2	32
13 9 95	0	4	6	8	0	7	8	9	0	42
27 9 95	0	3	2	6	0	8	0	2	6	27
11 10 95	0	2	0	8	2	2	4	8	0	26
26 10 95	0	0	4	4	6	3	0	4	6	27
1 11 95	4	0	3	0	6	4	0	2	2	21
27 11 95	0	6	2	6	2	0	0	6	3	25
15 12 95	0	8	8	0	0	6	0	4	0	26
27 12 95	7	6	0	0	12	0	8	2	0	35
11 1 96	0	4	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	10
24 1 96	6	6	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	18
20 2 96	4	0	6	0	0	4	0	0	0	14
26 2 96	4	0	0	2	6	0	3	4	0	19
8 3 96	4	0	6	0	0	4	3	4	4	25
26 3 96	0	4	0	0	2	0	6	2	2	16
9 4 96	2	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	4	14
26 4 96	0	4	0	0	2	2	6	0	2	16
7 5 96	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
24 5 96	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	10
7 6 96	0	0	2	4	4	0	2	0	0	12
26 6 96	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	2	0	8

Mallard were seen in fairly low numbers in all months and throughout the estuary. The peak of 42 on 13 September was a little higher than the highest count of 38 in the previous year and virtually the same as the peak in 1993/94 (43).

**Scaup** *Athya marila*

For the fourth year in succession, no Scaup were recorded on the estuary.

**Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*

Two Long-tailed Ducks were recorded at Inches on 26 April 1996, but no others were seen. There were no records of this species in 1994/95.

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
11 10 95	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	6
27 11 95	3	0	4	0	2	3	4	0	0	16
15 12 95	6	0	8	0	6	6	0	0	0	26
27 12 95	6	0	0	0	5	4	6	0	0	21
11 1 96	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
21 1 96	0	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	9
20 2 96	4	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	11
26 2 96	0	0	4	0	2	7	0	0	0	13
8 3 96	0	0	0	0	4	3	3	0	0	10
26 3 96	0	3	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	9
9 4 96	0	0	2	0	2	4	0	0	0	8

Goldeneye were seen from October to April in all sections of the estuary, except Machar and Logie. The highest count of 26 on 15 December was lower than the exceptional peak of 32 in the previous year, but higher than the peak of 16 in 1993/94.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
11 10 95	0	6	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	12
26 10 95	3	4	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	15
1 11 95	0	0	6	2	2	4	0	0	0	14
27 11 95	0	2	2	0	6	4	0	0	0	14
15 12 95	6	6	4	0	3	8	0	0	0	27
27 12 95	6	2	0	0	6	1	4	0	0	19
11 1 96	2	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	10
24 1 96	0	4	0	0	6	3	2	0	0	15
20 2 96	2	4	0	0	4	3	0	0	0	13
26 2 96	0	0	3	0	4	4	0	0	0	11
8 3 96	0	0	4	0	3	4	0	0	0	11
26 3 96	3	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	7
9 4 96	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	4
26 4 96	7	7	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	22

Mergansers were recorded throughout the estuary, except for Machar and Logie, from October to April, with a peak of 27 on 15 December, somewhat higher than the highest count of 19 in the previous year.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
5 6 95	7	9	9	7	5	3	0	0	0	40
30 6 95	48	12	18	6	0	0	9	0	0	93
7 7 95	32	14	6	2	0	9	4	0	0	67
21 7 95	33	29	9	4	3	0	0	0	0	78
11 8 95	133	57	48	0	33	20	6	0	0	297
25 8 95	115	171	23	0	16	22	18	0	0	365
13 9 95	120	64	73	0	57	66	55	0	0	435
27 9 95	56	69	67	0	14	21	0	0	2	229
11 10 95	120	88	24	0	49	10	0	0	0	291
26 10 95	83	38	22	12	12	10	6	0	0	183
1 11 95	97	43	19	15	12	12	9	0	0	207
27 11 95	83	75	39	12	6	23	2	0	0	240
15 12 95	127	87	27	0	15	0	0	0	0	256
27 12 95	112	64	43	14	29	14	0	0	0	276
11 1 96	94	30	21	4	13	4	18	6	1	191
24 1 96	112	39	29	3	12	0	6	0	0	201
20 2 96	101	34	29	6	16	7	21	0	0	214
26 2 96	44	34	36	12	34	12	27	0	0	199
8 3 96	45	43	33	0	29	9	16	0	0	175
26 3 96	53	28	18	12	9	21	17	3	0	161
9 4 96	33	11	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	56
26 4 96	26	8	4	3	10	4	0	1	0	56
7 5 96	6	4	0	5	17	3	0	0	0	35
24 5 96	8	2	2	4	12	0	4	0	0	32
7 6 96	10	4	6	0	2	0	3	0	0	25
26 6 96	3	3	2	0	12	4	0	0	0	24

Oystercatchers were seen on the estuary in all months, with highest numbers in August and September, with a peak of 435 (on 13 September), exactly the same number as in the previous year. The birds were found throughout the estuary, although they were seen rarely and in very small numbers at Machar and Logie.

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticus*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
7 7 95	0	0	0	0	0	6	4	0	0	10
21 7 95	0	0	0	0	0	8	5	0	0	13
11 8 95	0	0	12	0	0	8	8	0	0	28
26 10 95	0	0	0	0	0	12	14	0	0	26
1 11 95	0	0	9	0	0	14	12	0	0	35
26 4 96	0	0	0	0	0	63	0	0	0	63
7 5 96	0	25	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
24 5 96	0	0	12	0	0	12	0	0	0	24
7 6 96	0	0	0	0	0	9	6	0	0	15
26 6 96	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	9

Ringed Plovers were recorded only at Inches, Quay, Haddo and Snub, in only some months of the year. The peak of 63 on 26 April was considerably larger than the highest count of 39 in the previous year.

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
25 8 95	0	0	0	0	28	43	15	0	0	86
13 9 95	0	23	0	0	14	33	15	0	0	85
27 9 95	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
11 10 95	0	0	24	0	0	71	0	0	0	95
26 10 95	0	0	63	0	0	75	38	0	0	176
1 11 95	0	0	0	0	0	161	49	0	0	210
27 11 95	0	0	0	0	0	112	0	0	0	112
15 12 95	0	0	0	0	0	850	450	0	0	1300
27 12 95	43	49	0	0	0	121	63	0	0	276
20 2 96	0	36	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	61

Golden Plovers were seen from August to February, with the largest numbers at Haddo and Snub. The highest count of 1,300 on 15 December was higher than the peak of 984 in the previous year, but lower than the 3,066 seen in 1993/94.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
5 6 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	4	4	14
30 6 95	0	0	0	0	0	6	23	0	0	29
7 7 95	0	0	0	0	6	9	27	0	0	42
21 7 95	0	0	0	0	14	9	4	0	0	27
11 8 95	0	0	0	0	39	63	29	0	0	131
25 8 95	0	0	36	12	72	29	33	18	0	200
13 9 95	0	0	0	0	63	55	66	29	0	213
27 9 95	0	25	112	14	55	47	53	14	12	332
11 10 95	0	0	39	27	205	270	109	0	0	650
26 10 95	0	0	103	0	112	84	93	21	0	413
1 11 95	0	0	146	0	123	162	115	0	0	546
27 11 95	0	46	136	0	33	77	41	12	6	351
15 12 95	0	110	105	67	0	245	0	0	0	527
27 12 95	0	0	185	41	56	112	0	0	0	394
11 1 96	17	0	0	0	18	4	0	38	0	77
24 1 96	0	0	36	0	15	49	27	14	0	141
20 2 96	0	29	14	0	37	21	6	0	0	107
26 2 96	0	0	28	0	12	36	39	16	0	131
8 3 96	0	0	0	0	15	23	41	6	9	94
26 3 96	0	0	0	0	37	24	0	0	0	61
9 4 96	0	0	0	0	8	7	0	0	0	15
26 4 96	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
7 6 96	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
26 6 96	0	0	0	0	0	5	3	0	0	8

Lapwings were recorded in all months, in very variable numbers, highest in autumn and winter. The highest count of 650 on 11 October, in contrast to the two previous years, was not on the same day as the peak count of Golden Plovers, and was considerably lower than the peaks of 1,097 in 1994/95 and 2,464 in 1993/94. As in previous years, more of the birds were found nearer to the estuary mouth in mid-winter.

**Knot** *Calidrus canutus*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
25 8 95	12	0	14	0	0	22	0	0	0	48
13 9 95	0	0	0	0	14	21	12	0	0	47
27 11 95	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43
11 1 96	78	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	78
24 1 96	0	36	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	65
26 4 96	0	34	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	38

Knot were seen from August to April, although they were not recorded in October, December, February or March. The highest count of 78 on 11 January was very similar to the peak of 74 in the previous year. This species was found fairly widely on the estuary in the autumn, but was concentrated in the lower reaches in winter and spring.

**Dunlin** *Calidrus alpina*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
30 6 95	12	0	12	0	0	0	9	0	0	33
7 7 95	9	0	12	0	6	0	0	0	0	27
21 7 95	0	0	23	6	0	9	0	0	0	38
11 8 95	12	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	28
25 8 95	29	40	24	0	29	39	31	0	0	192
13 9 95	0	23	36	0	33	42	76	0	0	210
27 9 95	21	12	0	0	21	9	23	0	0	86
11 10 95	0	54	0	0	0	39	47	0	0	140
26 10 95	12	12	0	0	9	36	71	0	0	140
1 11 95	21	0	0	0	14	63	71	0	0	169
27 11 95	46	54	43	0	37	174	55	0	0	409
15 12 95	210	0	0	0	0	23	29	0	0	262
27 12 95	24	116	0	0	0	12	71	0	0	223
11 1 96	0	0	0	0	172	146	0	73	0	391
24 1 96	23	0	0	0	103	64	93	42	0	325
20 2 96	43	0	55	0	69	104	48	24	0	343
26 2 96	65	42	68	0	24	0	53	0	0	252
8 3 96	115	55	32	0	12	24	39	0	0	277
26 3 96	0	0	34	0	0	0	36	0	0	70
9 4 96	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	16
26 4 96	0	0	0	0	0	65	0	0	0	65
7 5 96	0	12	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
24 5 96	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
7 6 96	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6

Dunlin were found on the estuary in all months and in all areas except Logie, but were seen at Machar only in January and February. The highest count of 409 on 27 November was lower than the peak of 456 in the previous year, which in turn had fallen from 813 in 1993/94.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

As in the previous year, no Black-tailed Godwits were seen on any of the counts.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
5 6 95	0	0	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	8
30 6 95	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
7 7 95	2	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	7
21 7 95	2	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	8
11 8 95	3	2	2	6	0	8	2	0	0	23
11 8 95	3	2	2	6	0	8	2	0	0	23
25 8 95	0	0	4	6	4	9	6	0	0	29
13 9 95	0	0	0	3	6	6	9	0	0	24
27 9 95	0	4	4	0	2	4	0	0	0	14
11 10 95	0	4	0	0	2	4	2	0	0	12
26 10 95	0	0	4	3	6	6	4	0	0	23
1 11 95	4	4	0	3	6	2	4	0	0	23
27 11 95	2	4	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	14
15 12 95	0	6	9	0	9	6	4	0	0	34
27 12 95	4	0	6	7	4	0	3	0	0	24
11 1 96	0	4	0	4	12	3	0	0	0	23
24 1 96	2	0	0	0	4	14	0	0	0	20
20 2 96	4	6	6	2	3	0	9	0	0	30
26 2 96	0	4	3	0	0	6	4	0	0	17
8 3 96	0	4	3	2	0	2	2	0	0	13
26 3 96	2	0	4	0	3	2	4	0	0	15
9 4 96	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	5
26 4 96	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2

Bar-tailed Godwits were seen throughout the year, up to late April, with highest numbers from August to February and a peak of 34 on 15 December. This was higher than the peak of 20 in the previous year, but lower than the highest count of 43 in 1993/94. The species was found throughout the estuary, except for Machar and Logie.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

A total of 66 Whimbrel were seen at Quay, Tarty and Sleek (with 52 in the latter area), on 7 May, presumably while stopping off on migration, since none was seen on any other count. Eight were seen on one count in late May in the previous year.

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
5 6 95	3	2	4	6	12	6	9	2	4	48
30 6 95	6	12	9	0	3	9	2	0	0	41
7 7 95	6	4	0	9	6	0	12	0	0	37
21 7 95	3	2	6	3	6	0	4	0	0	24
11 8 95	9	39	14	16	19	23	14	6	0	140
25 8 95	12	63	14	9	29	16	41	12	2	198
13 9 95	23	43	29	17	31	27	62	9	0	241
27 9 95	18	36	25	2	14	22	18	2	0	137
11 10 95	9	51	20	14	12	31	19	4	0	160
26 10 95	6	29	12	9	11	21	9	2	0	99
1 11 95	12	23	14	11	29	18	24	6	0	137
27 11 95	23	55	10	4	10	10	6	3	0	121
15 12 95	2	15	9	0	0	16	15	3	0	60
27 12 95	12	34	12	3	9	11	17	0	1	99
11 1 96	19	36	0	103	14	1	27	14	0	214
24 1 96	14	39	6	2	67	21	49	9	3	210
20 2 96	21	42	7	64	22	18	38	12	0	224
26 2 96	9	34	18	42	28	36	10	2	0	179
8 3 96	14	33	18	22	36	39	15	3	0	180
26 3 96	12	33	17	21	9	6	5	2	0	105
9 4 96	6	3	0	0	7	2	0	0	0	18
26 4 96	0	12	0	0	6	3	0	0	0	21
7 5 96	0	2	1	1	4	2	2	0	0	12
24 5 96	0	0	6	3	3	0	4	1	0	17
7 6 96	0	2	2	0	4	2	2	0	0	12
26 6 96	1	0	2	1	3	1	3	0	0	11

Curlew were recorded in all months in all parts of the estuary, although very few were seen at Logie. The highest count of 241 on 13 September was similar to the peak of 249 recorded in the previous year, thus continuing the drop from 812 in 1993/94.

**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
5 6 95	7	3	5	9	6	5	7	11	10	63
30 6 95	0	0	6	0	12	3	14	6	0	41
7 7 95	4	6	0	4	10	4	6	2	0	36
21 7 95	0	0	9	9	12	18	8	12	0	68
11 8 95	12	14	27	19	69	97	84	55	14	391
25 8 95	36	28	24	26	31	55	181	63	12	456
13 9 95	42	23	36	33	42	69	129	54	23	451
27 9 95	54	43	29	36	47	63	112	16	9	409
11 10 95	28	38	31	59	39	36	42	12	0	285
26 10 95	23	14	31	41	33	19	49	12	6	228
1 11 95	27	16	17	52	41	14	16	6	0	189
27 11 95	22	73	49	62	33	41	88	3	3	374
15 12 95	37	25	24	57	50	0	67	7	3	270
27 12 95	53	33	19	61	52	22	53	2	0	295
11 1 96	10	14	3	43	37	16	11	28	2	164
24 1 96	6	12	6	51	39	21	9	22	1	167
20 2 96	12	16	9	51	33	21	14	18	0	174
26 2 96	52	28	33	61	36	18	49	23	0	300
8 3 96	29	31	46	63	62	21	42	39	0	333
26 3 96	21	16	16	43	41	49	55	12	0	253
9 4 96	9	15	10	17	31	32	33	11	9	167
26 4 96	0	16	14	22	77	50	60	60	0	299
7 5 96	0	0	0	5	7	0	15	0	4	31
24 5 96	0	0	10	9	6	3	0	7	6	41
7 6 96	6	10	3	9	4	4	4	0	2	42
26 6 96	2	0	4	5	9	3	0	6	2	31

Redshanks were seen throughout the year, in all parts of the estuary, with highest numbers in late August and in September. The peak count of 456 on 25 August was only slightly lower than the highest count of 504 in the previous year and very similar to the peak of 464 in 1993/94.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

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

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

Date	Mo	In	Qu	Ta	Sl	Ha	Sn	Ma	Lo	Total
5 6 95	2	1	3	3	2	3	9	0	0	23
30 6 95	0	0	4	0	0	6	0	0	0	10
7 7 95	6	6	3	0	0	6	2	0	0	23
21 7 95	6	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	14
11 8 95	6	9	9	0	0	12	18	0	0	54
25 8 95	12	13	9	0	12	18	12	0	0	76
13 9 95	8	19	0	0	6	33	29	0	0	95
27 9 95	3	9	12	0	0	12	14	0	0	50
11 10 95	9	12	0	0	12	14	18	0	0	65
26 10 95	6	14	12	3	14	9	12	0	0	70
1 11 95	0	14	18	0	12	12	9	0	0	65
27 11 95	18	9	12	2	8	10	12	0	0	71
15 12 95	0	0	14	0	0	0	23	0	0	37
27 12 95	14	21	6	0	0	12	16	0	0	69
11 1 96	16	24	12	2	4	0	0	0	0	58
24 1 96	12	13	9	0	8	18	12	0	0	72
20 2 96	18	21	6	0	9	16	0	0	0	70
26 2 96	6	12	21	9	18	12	18	4	0	100
8 3 96	12	14	12	0	0	23	16	0	0	77
26 3 96	7	12	14	0	0	0	29	0	0	62
9 4 96	8	12	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	32
26 4 96	0	13	0	7	10	0	0	0	0	30
7 6 96	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	5
26 6 96	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4

Turnstones were seen in all months of the year, in all parts of the estuary, except Logie (with only one record of four birds at Machar). The highest count of 100 on 26 February was very similar to the peak of 97 in the previous year.

## 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
1995			
June	2,664	300	2,964
July	1,016	295	1,311
August	481	1,428	1,909
September	1,968	1,607	3,575
October	1,766	1,623	3,389
November	1,669	1,807	3,476
December	1,096	2,541	3,637
1996			
January	655	1,475	2,130
February	650	1,421	2,071
March	753	1,085	1,838
April	1,104	521	1,625
May	1,544	238	1,782
June	1,596	148	1,744

As in previous years, there was substantial seasonal variation in the total number of birds on the Ythan estuary (Figure 2). There were around 3,500 birds present from September to December, made up roughly equally of Eiders and other species, with a peak of 3,637 in December, made up mainly of species other than Eiders. For the rest of the year, numbers varied between 1,600 and 2,900, but were lower in July.

## c) Comparison between 1994/95 and 1993/94

### (i) Total number of birds.

The peak monthly mean total of birds of all species (including Eiders), of 3,637 in December, was slightly higher than the equivalent winter peak in the previous year (3,420 in November). Unlike previous years, there was no clear peak in May, since Eider numbers were much lower.

The peak monthly mean total of birds of species other than Eiders, at 2,541 in December, was a little lower than the equivalent value in the previous counting year (2,758 in November), which in turn was lower than that in 1993/94 (3,187 in August). However, as was stated in previous reports, 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 overall mean total of species other than Eiders over the autumn and winter (from August to February), at 1,700, was very similar to the equivalent value for 1994/95 (1,754).

(ii) Individual species

For each species, the mean of the three highest counts in 1995/96 was compared with the same measure for the previous year (Patterson and Laing 1995). A few uncommon species (Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Black-tailed Godwit and Greenshank) have been omitted, since their very low numbers prevent meaningful year-to-year comparisons.

Mean of the three highest counts			
Species	1994/95	1995/96	Change
Shelduck	80	67	-
Eider	3,179	2,664	-
Wigeon	207	247	+
Teal	6	6	=
Mallard	37	36	-
Goldeneye	23	21	-
Red-breasted Merganser	17	23	+
Oystercatcher	388	366	-
Ringed Plover	33	46	+
Golden Plover	669	595	-
Lapwing	879	574	-
Knot	76	64	-
Dunlin	429	381	-
Bar-tailed Godwit	20	31	+
Curlew	213	226	+
Redshank	466	439	-
Turnstone	92	91	-

Of the seven duck species, only two (Wigeon and Red-breasted Merganser) increased their peak numbers between 1994/95 and 1995/96, while four species decreased. Similarly, only three of the 10 wader species increased in peak numbers, while seven decreased. These data suggests some decrease in both duck and wader numbers between the two years, although some of the changes were very small (eg, a decrease of one bird in Turnstone) and can certainly be considered to be insignificant.

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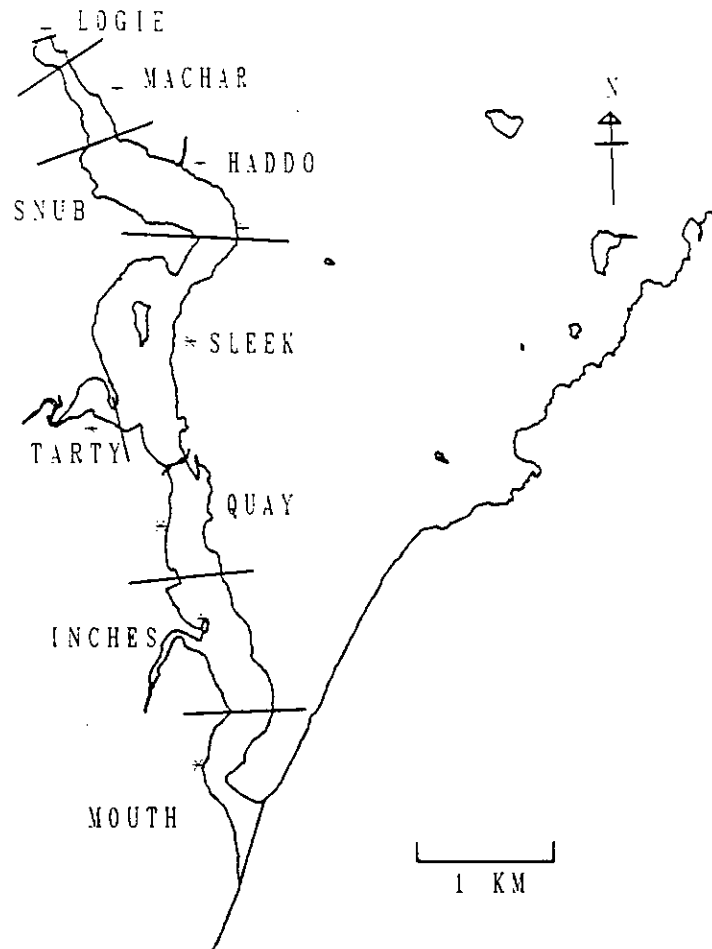


Figure 1. The Ythan estuary, showing the counting sections and count points (asterisks). The division between the Snub and Haddo areas is the centre of the low-tide river channel.

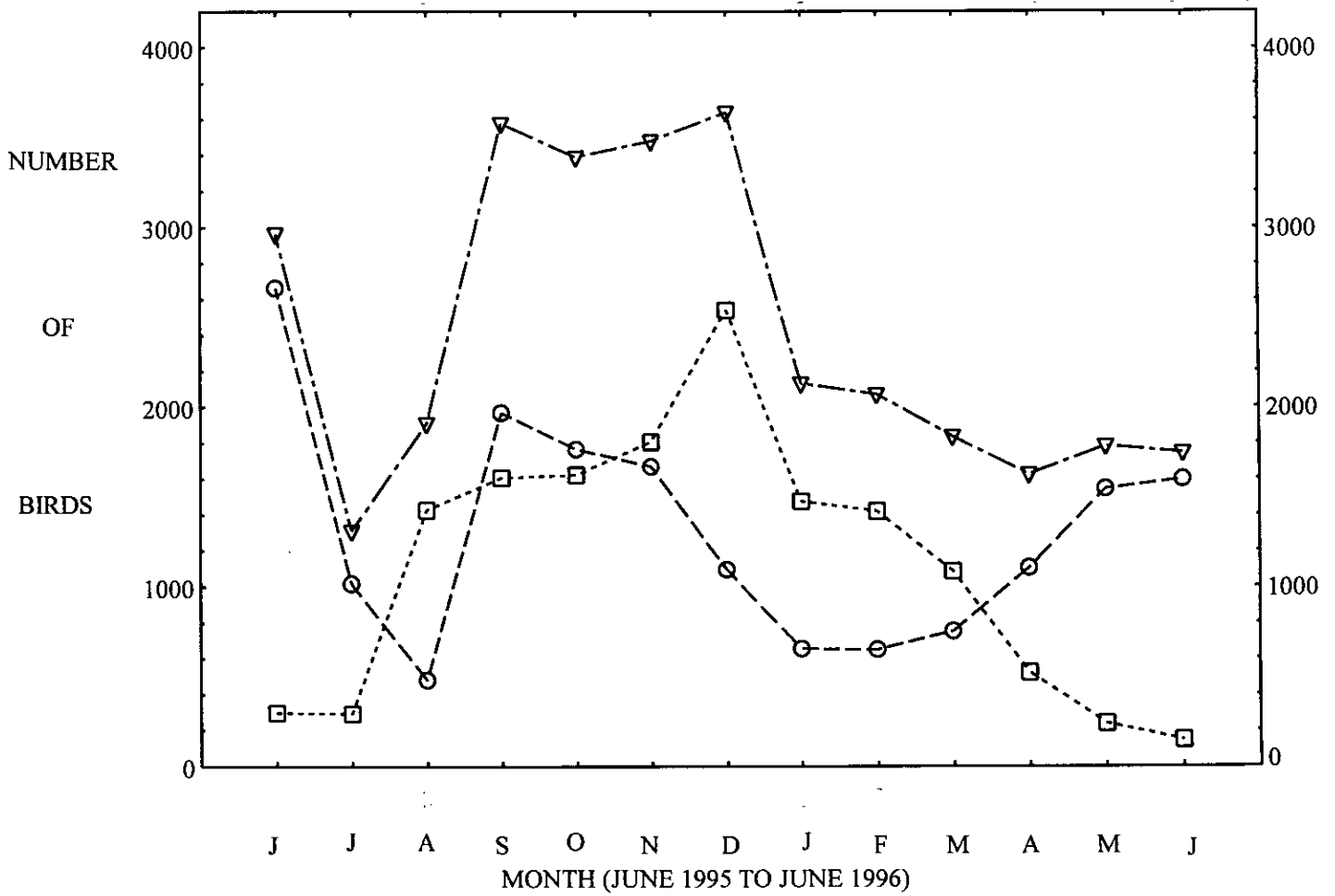


Figure 2. The mean number of Eiders (circles), birds of other species (squares), and the total number of birds of all species (triangles) on the Ythan estuary in 1995/96

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