

Red-crested Pochard

Netta rufina

GB max: 243 Oct
NI max: 1 Feb

Naturalised introduction
International threshold: 500
Great Britain threshold: ?[†]
All-Ireland threshold: ?[†]

Red-crested Pochard is a patchily distributed species throughout central and southern Europe where it is considered to be largely sedentary. Hence the majority of British records, including those pertaining to the ancestors of the core of the UK population at Cotswold Water Park, are generally considered to relate to escapes. Having undergone a doubling during the preceding four years, numbers counted during WeBS Core counts surprisingly took a small dip across most of the principal sites

in 2007/08. Cotswold Water Park remained the premier area in the UK maintaining a five-year mean peak of approximately 200 birds across the whole complex of gravel pits. The species was recorded at a further 52 sites elsewhere in England, five of which registered double-figure counts.

A single was recorded at Upper Lough Erne in February; only the second WeBS record for Northern Ireland, following one at the same site in February 2006.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites with mean peak counts of 10 or more birds in Great Britain[†]							
Cotswold Water Park (West)	114	81	119	207	170 ¹³	Nov	138
Cotswold Water Park (East)	33	48	70	106	72	Oct	66
Lower Windrush Valley Gravel Pits	6	19	41	26	(26)	Jan	24
Baston and Langtoft Gravel Pits	(23)						(23)
Arnot Park Lake	12	19	18	16	14	Sep	16
Sutton and Lound Gravel Pits	6	16	12	22	13	May	14
Hanningfield Reservoir	(7)	2	21	17	10	Apr	13
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain[†]							
Colne Valley Gravel Pits	2	3	8	23	10	Dec	9

[†] as no British or All-Ireland thresholds have been set a qualifying level of 10 has been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report



Red-crested Pochard (Neil Calbrade)

Pochard
Aythya ferina

International threshold: 3,500
Great Britain threshold: 595
All-Ireland threshold: 380

GB max: 23,601 Jan
NI max: 9,854 Jan

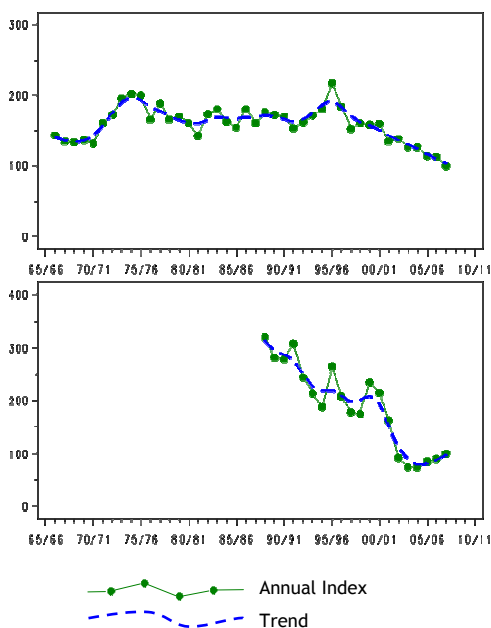


Figure 26.a, Annual indices & trend for Pochard for GB (above) & NI (below).

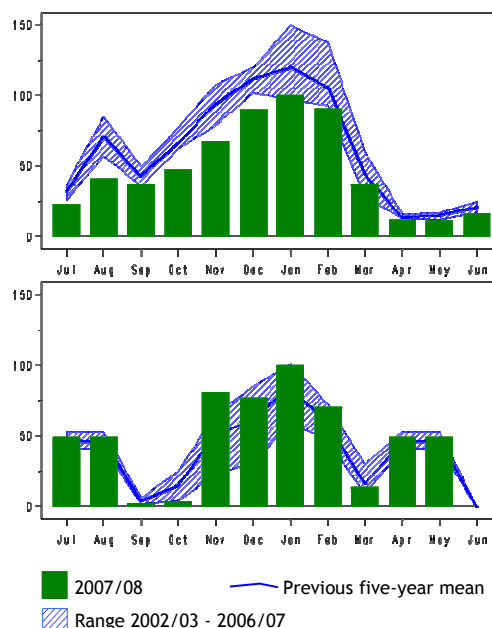


Figure 26.b, Monthly indices for Pochard for GB (above) & NI (below).

The annual index for Pochard in Great Britain fell to its lowest level ever in 2007/08, continuing a downward trend that began in 1996/97.

A feature of the decline in 2007/08 was the failure of any British sites to qualify as being of international importance for the first time since the relevant thresholds were introduced.

The five-year averages for Abberton Reservoir and Ouse Washes both fell by 10%, and of the eight other sites of national importance only Fleet & Wey and Cotswold Water Park (East) experienced what could be described as a relatively good winter for this species.

The decline experienced in Britain is likely to be attributable to recent mild winters which have led to an associated north-east shift in distribution (e.g. Maclean *et al.* 2008). For example, numbers have reached record levels in Sweden, where the species has traditionally been very sensitive to freezing conditions due to

its preference for relatively shallow water (Nilsson 2008).



Pochard (Neil Calbrade)

In Northern Ireland, counts from Loughs Neagh & Beg, the sole remaining site of international importance in the UK, again showed signs of a small improvement. The peak monthly count increased slightly for the third year in succession to the highest level since 2002/03.

However numbers are still considerably short of those present in the 1990s when, for example, an exceptional peak of 40,930 was recorded in December 1990.

As well as any climate-induced shift in range, the declines noted at Loughs Neagh

& Beg have been partly attributed to the effects of eutrophication which may have reduced the abundance of invertebrates fed upon by this and some other diving species (Maclean *et al.* 2007).

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	7,835	6,764	8,256	8,884	9,023	Jan	8,152
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Abberton Reservoir	5,290	3,188	2,852	3,167	2,355	Sep	3,370 ▼
Ouse Washes	3,304 ¹³	2,134 ¹³	1,227	4,197	2,987	Feb	2,770
Loch Leven	2,548	2,193	1,715	3,666	1,650	Nov	2,354
Hornsea Mere	1,325	1,150	1,150	710	650	Feb	997
Dungeness and Rye Bay	980	789	1,053	1,049	728	Aug	920
Chew Valley Lake	480	635	1,580	1,220	600	Dec	903
Fleet and Wey	850	746	682	879	980	Feb	827
Severn Estuary	905	652	760	786	570	Jan	735
Cotswold Water Park (East)	629	410	524	993	884	Dec	688 ▲
Loch of Boardhouse	705	770	709	623	441	Nov	650
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Upper Lough Erne	801	473	329	503	422	Jan	506
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2007/2008							
Nene Washes	66	32	88	57	462	Feb	141
Lower Derwent Ings	1,236	39	20	321	103	Jan	344
Brogborough Clay Pit	183						183
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain							
Middle Tame Valley Gravel Pits	(203)	(56)	(12)	296	773	Feb	535

Ring-necked Duck

Aythya collaris

Vagrant
Native Range: N America

GB max: 3 Nov
NI max: 1 Oct

Single Ring-necked Ducks were seen at six sites in England, four in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland in 2007/08. Long-staying birds, some of which are annual returnees, were at Loch Gelly in July and August, Avonmouth Sewage Works in

September and October, Lochs Eaval and Hosta (North Uist) between November and February, and Foxcote Reservoir between November and April.

In Northern Ireland, one was at Lough Foyle in October.

Ferruginous Duck

Aythya nyroca

Vagrant and escape
Native Range: N America, Asia

GB max: 2 Sep
NI max: 0

Ferruginous Ducks were reported from four sites. In a remarkably similar pattern of occurrence to the previous year, one was at Chew Valley Lake between August and

November to be followed by another individual in the spring.

Others were seen at Somersham GP, Theale GPs and Woodsetts & Owdays Ponds in the period of September to February.

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

International threshold: 12,000
 Great Britain threshold: 901
 All-Ireland threshold: 370

GB max: 52,004 Feb
 NI max: 8,893 Jan

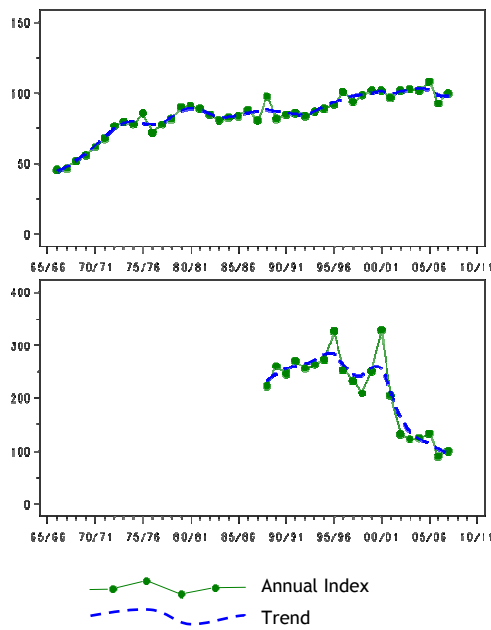


Figure 27.a, Annual indices & trend for Tufted Duck for GB (above) & NI (below).

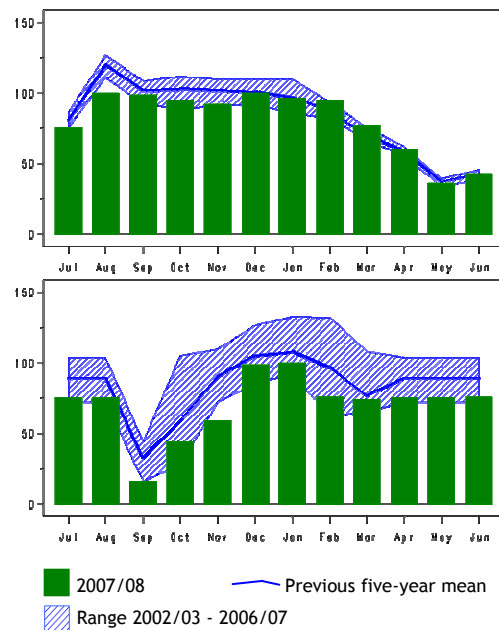


Figure 27.b, Monthly indices for Tufted Duck for GB (above) & NI (below).

Annual maxima and indices for Tufted Duck in Great Britain have exhibited very shallow increases over the course of the WeBS indexing period, and 2007/08 saw a slight bounce back from the drop in the index noted in 2006/07.

Elsewhere in northern Europe numbers have increased more significantly in recent decades, coinciding with the onset of milder winters (e.g. Nilsson 2008).

In Britain, the monthly maximum for Ouse Washes, where duck numbers of all species are highly dependent on the prevailing water levels, was the highest ever. However inland reservoirs fared less well: the peak count from Rutland Water was the lowest since 2001/02 and numbers at both Pitsford Reservoir and Walthamstow

Reservoir failed to reach four-figure levels for the first time since 1995/96. A marked drop was also noted at Hanningfield Reservoir, although peak counts do have a greater tendency to fluctuate there from year to year - perhaps as a result of exchange of birds between the site and Abberton Reservoir nearby.

There are no sites of international importance for Tufted Duck in the UK. Historically, Loughs Neagh & Beg qualified as such, but in common with other species of diving duck, the site experienced a crash in numbers from 2001/02 onwards. Although the rate of decline has slowed in recent years, the annual maximum in 2007/08 fell to its lowest ever level since monitoring of the site began in 1985/86.

Sites of national importance in Great Britain	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Rutland Water	6,818	6,488	8,487	9,758	5,134	Sep	7,337
Loch Leven	3,913	3,826	3,802	3,553	4,140	Oct	3,847
Abberton Reservoir	2,067	5,112	(4,857)	1,187	3,796	Oct	3,404
Ouse Washes	973 ¹³	2,251 ¹³	1,140 ¹³	2,057	3,328	Feb	1,950
Pitsford Reservoir	2,226	2,506	2,066	1,374	774	Sep	1,789

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Walthamstow Reservoirs	1,772	1,771	1,828	1,516	900	Jul	1,557
Hanningfield Reservoir	3,109	400	1,573	2,194	486	Mar	1,552
Staines Reservoirs	1,133	792	2,844	1,865	1,074	Aug	1,542
Chew Valley Lake	1,465	1,235	2,115	1,325	1,480	Sep	1,524
Middle Tame Valley Gravel Pits	(325)	(129)	(64)	1,243	1,766	Sep	1,505
Cotswold Water Park (West)	1,199	960	1,199	1,372	1,343	Feb	1,215
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	1,404	1,222	985	1,215	1,231	Dec	1,211
Grafham Water	815	824	1,337				992 ▲
Alton Water	1,440	644	1,063	1,008	664	Dec	964
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	8,999	9,277	7,871	6,441	6,076	Jan	7,733
Upper Lough Erne	1,236	1,295	1,457	1,478	1,772	Dec	1,448
Lower Lough Erne	580	674	575	705	638	Jan	634
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2007/2008							
Hornsea Mere	1,050	900	840	600	565	Oct	791
Wraysbury Gravel Pits	846	1,015	465	429	424	Dec	636
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain							
Cotswold Water Park (East)	468	713	522	731	954	Sep	678
Loch of Strathbeg	353	198	448	403	939	Aug	468
Draycote Water	1,251	122	1,010	680 ¹³	928	Nov	798
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lough	203	168	216	(141)	416	Dec	251

Scaup
Aythya marila

International threshold: 3,100
Great Britain threshold: 76
All-Ireland threshold: 45*

GB max: 2,447 Dec
NI max: 8,385 Feb

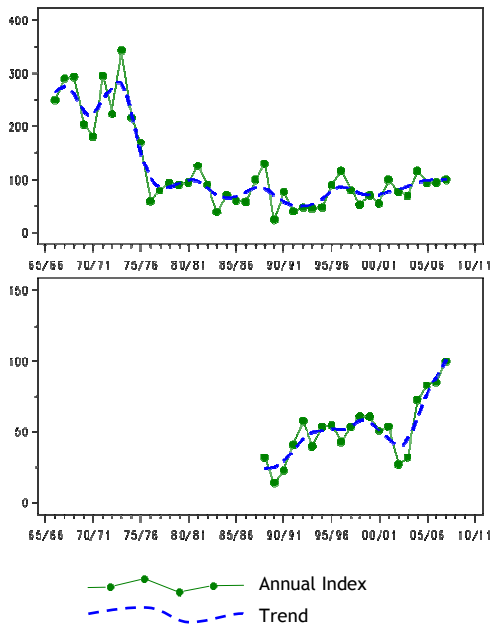


Figure 28.a, Annual indices & trend for Scaup for GB (above) & NI (below).

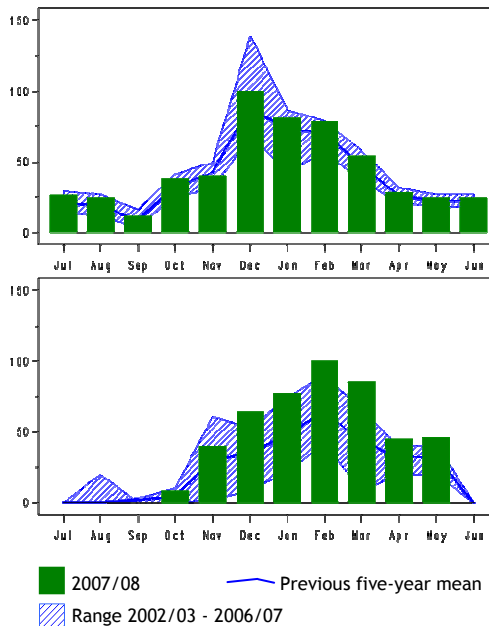


Figure 28.b, Monthly indices for Scaup for GB (above) & NI (below).

In 2007/08, the trend for Scaup in Great Britain remained relatively stable even though the monthly peak was 19% lower than that in 2006/07. Numbers in Northern

Ireland however increased again; the national index rising for the fifth year in succession.

The apparent shift in distribution is thought to represent a combination of more birds of Icelandic origin arriving to winter in Ireland.

The latest rise in the index for Northern Ireland was largely attributable to a maximum count from Loughs Neagh & Beg of 5,587 that was above the recent average, combined with the fact that Belfast Lough, as well as Strangford Lough, held more birds than in any previous winter. However it is perfectly feasible that some of the listed sites of national importance in the UK are linked, and large flocks of Scaup may utilise a network of sites (Solway Firth, Loch Ryan, Loch Indaal and Loughs Neagh & Beg, for example) during the course of a given winter.



Scaup (Tommy Holden)

Away from principal sites listed below, the highest counts were peaks of 29 at Alt Estuary in March, 17 at Poole Harbour in October and 10 at Rutland Water in December.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	2,674	5,144	5,826	4,349	5,587	Feb	4,716
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Solway Estuary	(1,782)	(4,610)	(575)	1,060	(499)	Mar	2,484
Loch Ryan	986	1,577	1,020	1,047	1,654	Dec	1,257
Inner Moray and Inverness Firth	518	2,641 ¹	576	690	148	Feb	915
Inner Loch Indaal	1,003	800 ²⁵	960 ²⁵	810 ²⁵	870 ²⁵	Dec	889
Loch of Harray	420	490	360	306	67	Oct	329
Loch of Stenness	266	315	306	429	259	Nov	315
Cromarty Firth	13	47	400	401	(516)	Jan	275
Firth of Clyde and Loch Ryan offshore			161 ²⁷				161
Dornoch Firth	70	150 ¹³	77	222	280	Jan	160
Auchenharvie Golf Course	145	107	97	98	120	Mar	113
Rough Firth	107	204 ¹¹			3	Mar	105
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Belfast Lough	669 ¹¹	1,224 ¹¹	833	849 ¹¹	1,895	Jan	1,094
Carlingford Lough	(158)	233	222	225	177	Jan	214
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2007/2008							
Ayr to North Troon	(12)	(14)					(14)
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain							
Loch Fleet Complex	5	0	0	0	190	Feb	39
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lough	3	3	0	70	90	Nov	33

Lesser Scaup

Aythya affinis

Vagrant
Native Range: N America

GB max: 4 Mar
NI max: 0

Formerly a major rarity in the UK, Lesser Scaup is now a regular feature of this annual report. In 2007/08, the species was recorded at four sites in England and three in Scotland, with birds noted in every month between October and April.

English records were from Blagdon Lake, Rutland Water, Draycote Water and Barrow Gurney Reservoir, those in Scotland from

Kirk Loch (Yell), Loch Fada (Benbecula) and Vale of Coustry.

Only one Lesser Scaup has ever been seen during WeBS counts in Northern Ireland (at Upper Lough Erne in 2005), which is somewhat surprising given the Nearctic origin of the species and the large 'carrier' flocks of diving ducks present at Loughs Neagh & Beg.

Eider
Somateria mollissima

International threshold: 12,850
Great Britain threshold: 730
All-Ireland threshold: 30*

GB max: 17,339 Nov
NI max: 2,880 Dec

*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

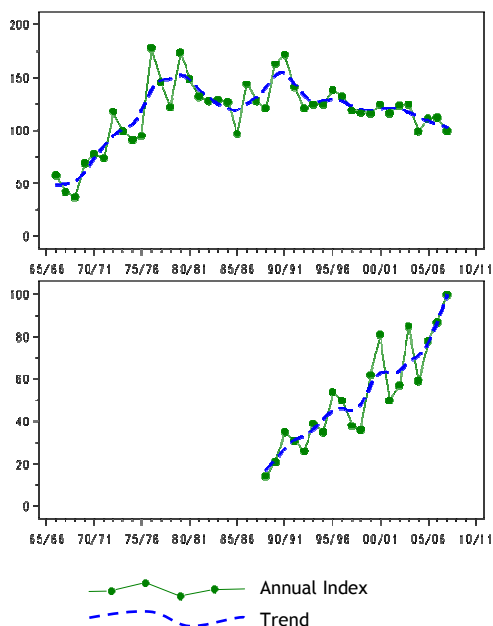


Figure 29.a, Annual indices & trend for Eider for GB (above) & NI (below).

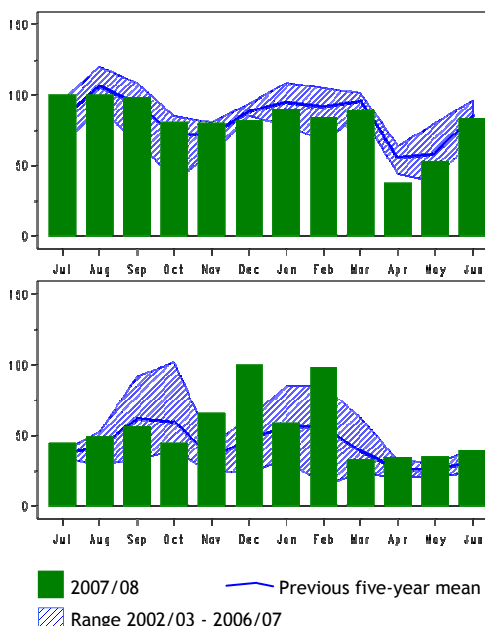


Figure 29.b, Monthly indices for Eider for GB (above) & NI (below).

The taxonomy of the Eider population is complex. On-going studies are being carried out which may indicate genetic association between discrete populations, such as those from the northern Isles and the Faeroes. Depending on results, these could have implications for the future setting of thresholds, and subsequent listing of sites of importance around the British coast.

The stark contrast between the indices for Britain and Northern Ireland continued in 2007/08. In Britain, the index returned to a low point reached three years ago and the counted maximum was the lowest in recent times. However in Northern Ireland the counted monthly maximum was the highest ever recorded, resulting in a further rise in the national index. This was largely attributable to the continued increase in numbers noted at Belfast Lough.

In Scotland, peak numbers using the Firth of Clyde were again made available for publication in this report, and are again tabulated both in terms of the whole and its constituent parts. There was no return to a status of international importance for this location which held a peak of over 17,500 birds as recently as eight years ago. In view of the increases noted in Northern Ireland it would appear there has been a westward redistribution of birds across the Irish Sea, although direct evidence for this is lacking at present.

No offshore surveys of Aberdeen Bay were carried out in 2007/08, which in conjunction with the adjacent Ythan Estuary potentially supports very significant numbers, although there is likely to be overlap in terms of use of the two sites.

Aerial surveys employing distance sampling

Area	Date	Counted	Estimate (confidence intervals)	Ref
Coll and Tiree	Mar	285	1,043 (495-2,201)	Söhle <i>et al.</i> 2009a

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
FIRTH OF CLYDE	15,276 ¹⁵	13,042 ¹⁵	8,055 ¹⁵	9,590 ¹⁵	9,521 ¹⁵	Sep	11,097
Tay Estuary	4,700	(5,636)	11,500	(9,164)	(7,500)	Nov	8,455
Forth Estuary	7,014	4,750	5,047	5,646	4,571	Aug	5,406
Aberdeen Bay offshore	1,756 ⁵¹	6,003 ⁵¹	5,302 ⁵¹	6,269 ⁵¹			4,833
Inner Firth of Clyde	6,194	4,152	3,837	4,881	3,960	Aug	4,605
Morecambe Bay	3,950	5,300 ¹⁵	3,815	3,374	(2,127)	May	4,110
Killantringan Bay		3,600 ¹⁵					3,600
Ythan Estuary	3,417	(4,212)	3,580	2,315	(3,140)	May	3,333
Gare Loch	3,263 ¹⁵	2,713 ¹⁵	2,582 ¹⁵	2,782 ¹⁵	2,470 ¹⁵	Sep	2,762
Montrose Basin	2,075	1,754	4,322	2,584	2,321	Nov	2,611
Irvine Bay		1,547 ¹⁵					1,547
Moray Firth	1,639	1,673	1,390	1,199	1,206	Oct	1,421
Loch Long and Loch Goil	1,390 ¹⁵	1,614 ¹⁵	1,458 ¹⁵	796 ¹⁵	1,174 ¹⁵	Sep	1,287
Dee Estuary (Scotland)	852	865	1,673	1,229	1,411	Jun	1,206
Holy Loch to Toward Point	1,114 ¹⁵	2,225 ¹⁵	766 ¹⁵	634 ¹⁵	676 ¹⁵	Sep	1,083
Loch Ryan	1,803	1,150 ¹⁵	539	(385)	772	Nov	1,066
Lindisfarne	1,241	1,202 ¹¹	1,097 ¹¹	469	(564)	Jul	1,002
Lower Loch Long		914 ¹⁵					914
Hacosay, Bluemull, Colgrave & Sds	790 ¹⁰	855 ¹⁰	992 ¹⁰				879
Gourock to Largs	2,220 ¹⁵	614 ¹⁵	370 ¹⁵	755 ¹⁵	371 ¹⁵	Sep	866
Inner Loch Fyne	956 ¹⁵	868 ¹⁵	759 ¹⁵	817 ¹⁵	533 ¹⁵	Sep	787
Sound of Barra	600 ⁴⁴	886 ⁴⁴					743 ▲
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Belfast Lough	1,813	1,490 ¹¹	1,839 ¹¹	1,482	2,675	Dec	1,860
Outer Ards Shoreline	(256)	271	335	976	1253	Jan	709
Strangford Lough	259	282	480	728	551 ¹¹	Dec	460
Lough Foyle	645	431	164	528	37	Oct	361
Larne Lough	55	69	67	76	48	Sep	63
Port Stewart - Portrush		34 ¹⁵					34
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2007/2008							
Girvan to Turnberry	330	1,500 ¹⁵	415	370 ¹⁵	233	Jan	570
The Wash	703	91	557	491	102	Feb	389

King Eider

Somateria spectabilis

Vagrant
Native Range: Arctic

GB max: 1 Feb
NI max: 0

Single King Eiders were seen at two sites; Murkle Bay in February and Taw-Torridge Estuary in March and April. The latter represents the first WeBS record away from Scotland since December 2004.

Long-tailed Duck

Clangula hyemalis

International threshold: 20,000
Great Britain threshold: 160
All-Ireland threshold: +†

GB max: 2,507 Feb
NI max: 29 Jan

Long-tailed Ducks were recorded at 104 sites around the UK. The British maximum was considerably lower than that of recent years due to the low total counted at Moray Firth. This low count may have arisen as a result of restricted coverage or the influence of sea conditions affecting visibility and the associated distribution of birds on the Core count dates.

The highest counts away from Scotland were 29 at Belfast Lough in January and 31 off Holme on North Norfolk Coast in February. Additionally, in Northumberland, 26 were counted from Spittal to Cocklawburn in February, with the same number at Farne Islands in April.

Inland records of Long-tailed Duck are always noteworthy, and a small number

appeared away from the coast in January. Four at Hanningfield Reservoir were particularly notable, increasing to five from February to May. Other long-stayers inland

included singles at Rutland Water (to February), Wimbleball Lake (to March) and Stratton Sugwas Sand Pit (to May).

Aerial surveys employing distance sampling

Area	Date	Counted	Estimate (confidence intervals)	Ref
North Orkney	Mar	159	not available	Söhle <i>et al.</i> 2009b

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites with mean peak counts of 50 or more birds in Great Britain†							
Moray Firth	5,446	6,402	11,565	10,878	1,904	Feb	7,239
Sound of Harris	230 ⁴⁴	500 ⁴⁴					365
South Uist West Coast	440 ⁴⁴	185 ⁴⁴					313
Broad Bay (Lewis)	300 ⁴⁴						300
Scapa Flow, Shapinsay & Deer Sounds			300 ²⁷				300
Loch Branahue (Lewis)		272					272
Hacosay, Bluemull, Colgrave Sounds	249 ¹⁰	303 ¹⁰	160 ¹⁰				237
Forth Estuary	249	240	237	220	162	Apr	222
Branahue Banks (Lewis)		196					196
Scapa Flow	210 ²⁷	146 ²⁷					178
South Yell Sound	201 ¹⁰	91 ¹⁰	169 ¹⁰		100 ¹⁰	Nov	140
Quendale to Virkie	103 ¹⁰	100 ¹⁰	57 ¹⁰		201 ¹⁰	Jan	115
Burra and Trondra	97 ¹⁰	117 ¹⁰	99 ¹⁰		126 ¹⁰	Feb	110
Sound of Barra (Barra)	132 ⁴⁴	80 ⁴⁴					106
Loch of Stenness	105 ¹³	89	96	107	130	Dec	105
Island of Papa Westray	184	102	10				99
Outer Tay & St Andrews Bay offshore	159 ²⁷	32 ²⁷					96
West Coast, Benbecula	92 ⁴⁴						92
Allasdale Bay to Borve (Barra)	112 ⁴⁴	68 ⁴⁴					90
St Andrews Bay	107	232	17	0	(0)		89
Thurso Bay	43	(40)	30	200	30	Jan	76
Scarp to Vatersay offshore	84 ²⁷	54 ²⁷	75 ²⁷				71
Bressay Sound	66 ¹⁰	90 ¹⁰	44 ¹⁰				67
Kirkabister to Wadbister Ness	73 ¹⁰	(4) ¹⁰	78 ¹⁰		50 ¹⁰	Feb	67
Dee Mouth to Don Mouth		84	37	(2)	(8)	Feb	61
Gulberwick Area			56 ¹⁰				56
Melbost Sands (Lewis)	0	0	11	121	144	Dec	55
Rova Head to Wadbister Ness	34 ¹⁰	21 ¹⁰	87 ¹⁰		69 ¹⁰	Feb	53
Water Sound	80	60	37	51	36	Feb	53
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain							
Dunnet Bay				24	72	Feb	48

†as few sites the British threshold and no All-Ireland threshold has been set, qualifying levels of 50 and 30 respectively have been chosen to select sites for presentation in this report



Long-tailed Duck (Ron Marshall)

Common Scoter

Melanitta nigra

International threshold: 16,000

Great Britain threshold: 500

All-Ireland threshold: 230

GB max: 5,434 Feb

NI max: 102 Jan

*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

Many larger flocks of Common Scoters tend to occur offshore, and as a result are generally poorly covered by WeBS. Consequently this annual report attempts to collate as much supplementary data as possible, often collected during aerial surveys aimed at monitoring this species.

For example, the annual survey of the Carmarthen Bay, classified as a marine SPA, yielded a total of 6,189 birds in February 2008 thereby maintaining the site's status as one of international importance. However this total represents a marked decline on the numbers counted in previous years, during surveys of Carmarthen Bay undertaken as part of continuing assessment of the site following the Sea Empress oil spill in February 1996.

Numbers recorded specifically during Core counts tend to be highly dependent on

weather and the associated viewing conditions at the key sites.

For the second year running the peak count was from North Norfolk Coast, albeit approximately 25% less than the figure for the previous year. Similarly numbers at Moray Firth were again down compared to the five-year average, but at a similar level to 2006/07. Cardigan Bay no longer qualifies as a site of importance almost certainly as a result of lack of coverage, and no offshore counts were carried out of Aberdeen Bay by JNCC this year.

Away from the current nine sites of national importance, more appear to be wintering in the shallow waters of the English Channel off the Sussex and Kent coastline; for the fourth successive year increased numbers wintered at both Dungeness & Rye Bay and Glyne Gap.

Aerial surveys employing distance sampling

Area	Date	Counted	Estimate (confidence intervals)	Ref
Carmarthen Bay	Mar	5,873	13,076 (8,211-20,799)	Maclea <i>et al.</i> 2008

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites of international importance in the UK							
Carmarthen Bay	20,271 ³⁹	24,460 ³⁹	20,287 ³⁹	14,412 ³⁹	6,189 ⁵⁵	Jan	17,124
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Moray Firth	7,987	4,265	6,842	1,908	2,494	Feb	4,699
North Norfolk Coast	2,252	4,866	6,830	4,960	3,530	May	4,488
Aberdeen Bay offshore	2,922 ²⁷	3,475 ²⁷	3,514 ²⁷	1,525 ²⁷			2,877
Alt Estuary	2,169	3,000	4,300	3,288	850	Oct	2,721
Towyn to Llanddulas	(1,737)	(252)	(1,680)	1,800	1,600	Dec	1,712
Forth Estuary	1,349	(1,224)	(1,495)	623	929	Apr	1,124
St Andrews Bay	1,170	2,660	447	0	(0)		1,069
Durham Coast	(0)	(40)	685	(181)	(30)	Sep	685
The Wash	15	372	100	1,810	207	Feb	501
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2007/2008							
Cardigan Bay	198	183	339	(69)	(8)	Feb	240
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain							
Dungeness and Rye Bay	150	90	250	446	640	Dec	315
Glyne Gap	0	0	117	(533)	544	Nov	239

Surf Scoter

Melanitta perspicillata

Vagrant

Native Range: N America

GB max: 7 Feb

NI max: 0

Surf Scoters were seen at three sites in Scotland. Four were noted at Forth Estuary and three at Dornoch Firth in February, the

former site hosting a single throughout October to April. The other record was a single at Traigh Lusentyre in October.

Velvet Scoter

Melanitta fusca

International threshold: 10,000

Great Britain threshold: 30*

All-Ireland threshold: +†

GB max: 447 Mar

NI max: 0

**50 is normally used as a minimum threshold*

The east coast of Scotland represents the western edge of the European range of Velvet Scoter, a species which is a rare treat for most WeBS counters south of the border. Recent years indicate that the UK wintering population is in decline; however, as is typical of most marine wildfowl, it can be a difficult species to monitor and inevitably suffers from poor coverage around parts of the Scottish coastline, particularly Orkney.

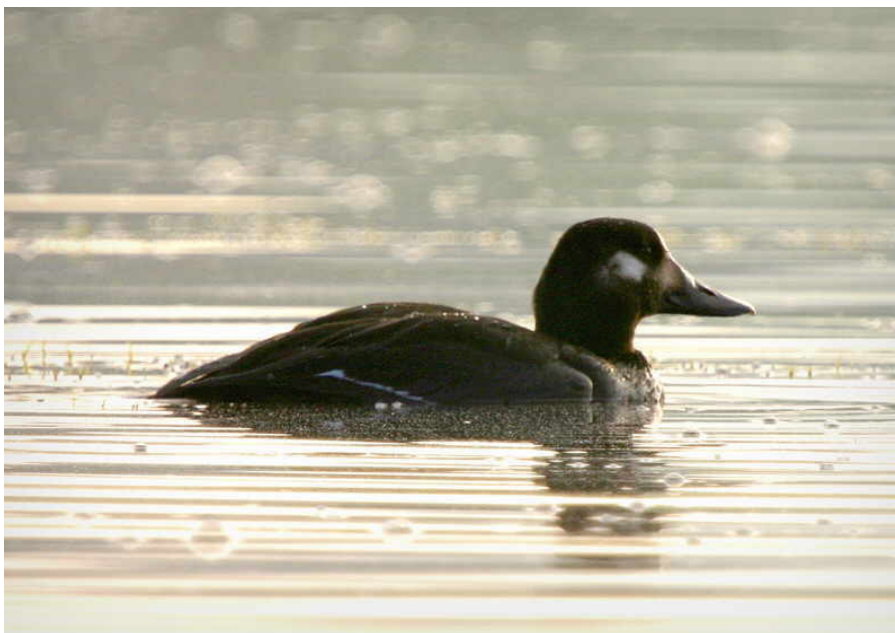
During 2007/08, Velvet Scoters were noted at 25 sites; 14 in England, ten in Scotland and one in Wales. The monthly peak was the lowest ever recorded by WeBS, partly due to incomplete coverage of some key sections of the Moray Firth where

over 4,000 were counted as recently as 2002/03. However, numbers at the Forth Estuary declined for the sixth successive year, the January total of 372 representing the lowest winter peak count at the site since 1992/93. The reason for the apparent disappearance of birds at St Andrews Bay in recent years is not known.

Of sites listed in last year's report, Dee Mouth to Don Mouth has now been combined with Aberdeen Bay offshore. The latter offshore area was not monitored in 2007/08.

The peak count away from the Scottish coast was ten at Taw-Torridge Estuary in February, the first time the species has been recorded there.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Moray Firth	2,103	1,169	1,261	743	(74)	Mar	1,319
Forth Estuary	1,008	1,007	775	(928)	372	Jan	818
St Andrews Bay	90	1,050	8	0	0		230
Lunan Bay	(300)	125	120	2	100	Aug	129
Aberdeen Bay offshore	17 ⁵¹	50 ⁵¹	89 ⁵¹	28 ⁵¹	(0)		46



Velvet Scoter (www.grayimages.co.uk)

Goldeneye
Bucephala clangula

International threshold: 11,500
Great Britain threshold: 249
All-Ireland threshold: 110

GB max: 12,611 Feb
NI max: 5,156 Mar

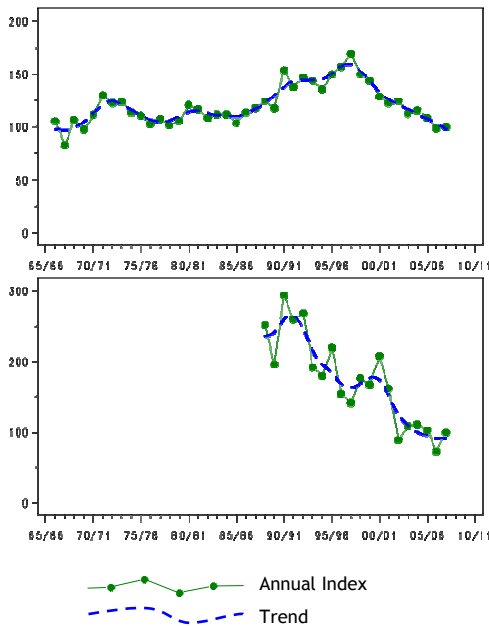


Figure 30.a, Annual indices & trend for Goldeneye for GB (above) & NI (below).

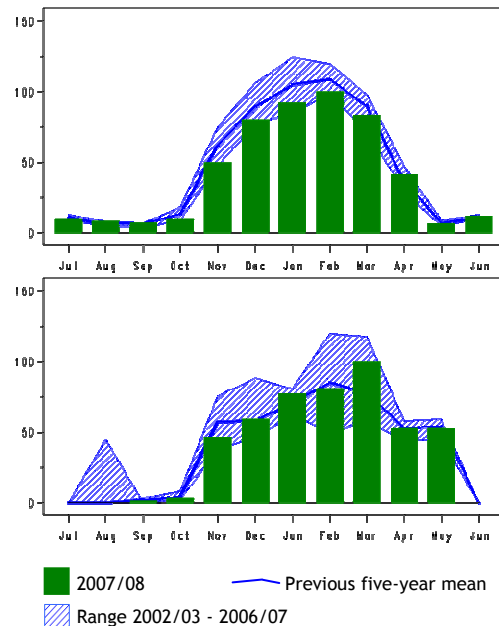


Figure 30.b, Monthly indices for Goldeneye for GB (above) & NI (below).

Goldeneye can be found throughout the UK during the winter months, on the coast as well as inland lakes and reservoirs. Arrival of wintering birds, mostly of Scandinavian origin, is generally later than for most of the species of regular wintering ducks, with relatively few seen before November.

Recent years have seen the indices of Goldeneye wintering in the UK show marked declines, however the index for 2007/08 suggests a possible 'bottoming out' in Northern Ireland. These declines are almost certainly associated with a north-east shift in wintering range resulting from climate change. In Sweden for example, the estimated wintering population increased from 18,800 in 1971 to 75,000 in 2004 (Nilsson 2008).

Within the UK, the outstanding site is Loughs Neagh & Beg in Northern Ireland. This site formerly held internationally

important numbers of this species but has experienced a long term decline; annual peaks in excess of 13,500 birds in the early 1990s now compare with a recent five-year mean of less than 5,000. However the latest major drop experienced in 2006/07 was reversed in 2007/08 with the peak count returning to close to the five-year average, accounting for over 30% of the March total across the entire UK.

Furthermore, similar reversals of fortune were noted at other important sites in Northern Ireland, with improved counts at Lower Lough Erne, Strangford Lough and Belfast Lough.

In Britain, counts from most of the principal sites were slightly below the five-year average, with the exception of the Humber Estuary from where the highest count of the year in Britain, 577, was logged in December.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Forth Estuary	(753)	879	(379)	331	533	Feb	624
Inner Firth of Clyde	514	159	636	688	452 ¹³	Mar	490
Inner Moray and Inverness Firth	709 ¹	1,165 ¹	186	221	137	Jan	484
Humber Estuary	296	595	449	401	577	Dec	464
Abberton Reservoir	431	394	588	478	332	Mar	445
Rutland Water	511	420	521	356	349	Feb	431
Loch Leven	86	385	289	517	302	Nov	316
Morecambe Bay	204	(297)	(249)	(191)	(121)	Feb	250
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Loughs Neagh and Beg	4,497	5,787	5,688	2,780	4,648	Mar	4,680
Lower Lough Erne	337	319	254	169	267	Dec	269
Strangford Lough	253	161	187	83 ¹¹	237	Jan	184
Belfast Lough	242 ¹¹	164 ¹¹	103	(108)	226	Jan	184
Ballysaggart Lough	118						118 ▲
Larne Lough	95	73	155	97	89	Feb	102
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2007/2008							
Hornsea Mere	235	325	280	91	260	Apr	238
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain							
River Tweed - Kelso to Coldstream	246	129	142	109	266	Jan	178
Hornsea Mere	235	325	280	91	260	Apr	238
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Northern Ireland							
Lough Foyle	93	100	47	39	118	Jan	79

Smew

Mergellus albellus

International threshold: 400
Great Britain threshold: 4*
All-Ireland threshold: +[†]

GB max: 109 Feb

NI max: 2 Feb

**50 is normally used as a minimum threshold*

Smew were recorded at 49 sites across the UK in 2007/08. The counted maximum of 109 in February was similar to the previous year, and hence considerably lower than the previous five-year average of 243 for the period 2001/02 to 2005/06. Lower numbers in Britain during recent winters are likely to be largely a result of the trend of recent mild winters and an associated shift in distribution towards the north-east of the wintering range. In Sweden for example, the wintering population increased from 400 in 1971 to 3,800 in 2004 (Nilsson 2008).

The three most important sites for this species in Britain are Wraysbury Gravel Pits, Dungeness & Rye Bay, and Cotswold Water Park, all of which maintained their records of having supported double-figure maxima for each of the last ten years. Even so, the last three years have seen numbers decline

significantly at Wraysbury; this year's maximum was in the order of 75% lower than a recent peak in 2004/05 which had marked the end of a nine-year period when annual maxima averaged 57 birds. Away from England, Smew occurred at nine sites in Scotland, one in Wales and two in Northern Ireland. All these records were of singles with the exception of three at Harperleas Reservoir in October.

Temporal changes in the use of sites by this species can be somewhat intriguing. The use of the network of gravel pit sites in eastern England is of particular interest; there is some indication that a steady decline in the number using Fen Drayton Gravel Pits may be associated with a gradual redistribution to other sites in the region, such as Little Paxton Gravel Pits and Ouse Fen & Pits.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Wraysbury Gravel Pits	55	68	38	19	16	Dec	39
Dungeness and Rye Bay	37	24	20	18	21	Jan	24
Cotswold Water Park (West)	20	18	33	13	19	Jan	21

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Thorpe Water Park	18	10	20	3	3	Jan	11
Lee Valley Gravel Pits	23	8	9	7	7	Jan	11
Thrapston Gravel Pits	11						11
Seaton Gravel Pits and River	14	8	11	1	6	Feb	8
Colne Valley Gravel Pits	8	7	6	8	4	Jan	7
Ouse Fen and Pits (Hanson/RSPB)	1	10	10	0	12	Feb	7
Little Paxton Gravel Pits	4	12	5	4	12	Feb	7
Rutland Water	8	4	14	5	2	Jan	7
Tophill Low Reservoirs	6	7	9 ¹³	5 ¹³	6 ¹³	Feb	7
Fen Drayton Gravel Pits	16	4	5	3	2	Jan	6
Belhus Woods Country Park	10	6	0				5
Abberton Reservoir	5	9	2	2	5	Jan	5
Pitsford Reservoir	3	3	11	4	(2)	Jan	5
Marsh Lane Gravel Pits		9	5	2	2	Feb	5
Deeping St James	6	2	8	2			5
Eyebrook Reservoir	3	3	7	4	6	Dec	5
Bedfont and Ashford Gravel Pits				1	6	Feb	4
Sonning Eye and Henley Road GPs	0	9		2			4
Blunham Gravel Pit	4						4
Sites no longer meeting table qualifying levels in WeBS-Year 2007/2008							
Fairburn Ings	4		1	(1)	1	Feb	2
Cassington and Yarnton Gravel Pits	10	1	5	0	0		3
Earls Barton Gravel Pits	7	0	6	0	0		3
Grange Waters Complex	0	5	5				3
Meadow Lane Gravel Pits	3	0	0	0			1
Sites below table qualifying levels but exceeding threshold in WeBS-Year 2007/08 in Great Britain							
Whitemoor Haye	0	2	0	2	4	Mar	2

Red-breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator

International threshold: 1,700

Great Britain threshold: 98

All-Ireland threshold: 35*

GB max: 3,362 Feb

NI max: 696 Feb

*50 is normally used as a minimum threshold

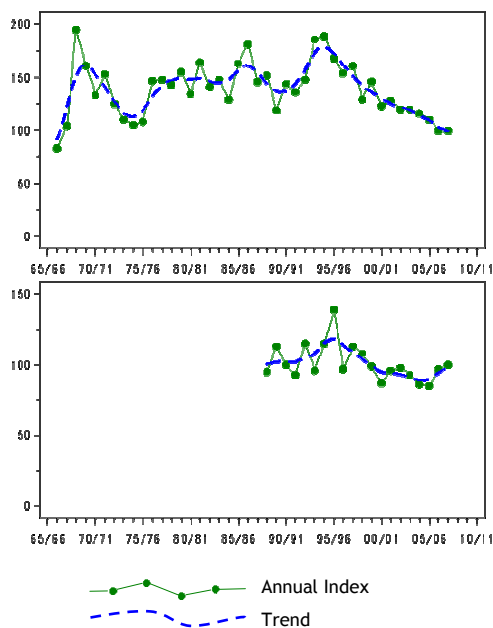


Figure 31.a, Annual indices & trend for Red-breasted Merganser for GB (above) & NI (below).

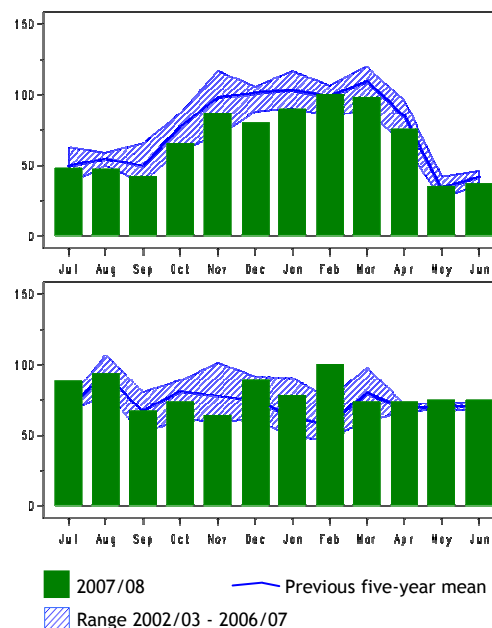


Figure 31.b, Monthly indices for Red-breasted Merganser for GB (above) & NI (below).

The British index for Red-breasted Merganser has shown a consistent decline over the last twelve or so years, probably associated with climatic amelioration enabling a greater proportion of the population to winter at sites further north in Europe. For example, numbers have increased steadily in Sweden over the course of the last forty years (Nilsson 2008). In Britain, results for 2007/08 showed no further decline compared to the previous year but it is unclear whether this merely represents temporary stability.

Undoubtedly the trend of most concern is that for the UK's most important estuary,

the Forth, where the monthly maximum of 259 in April was the lowest for over thirty years. As recently as October 1994, 1,000+ birds were logged at the site, where traditionally numbers peak in late autumn and early spring. It is hoped that this site does not replicate other estuaries, most notably The Wash, which have suffered dramatic declines in numbers of this species and consequently no longer qualify as sites of importance.

Typical numbers compared to recent years were recorded at all the principal sites in Northern Ireland where the index rose to its highest point for ten years.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Mon	Mean
Sites of national importance in Great Britain							
Forth Estuary	791	544	489	347	259	Apr	486
Fleet and Wey	425	413	438	284	307	Mar	373
Poole Harbour	(392)	315	(250)	(213)	(117)	Jan	354
Moray Firth	338	300	254	211	366	Oct	294
Morecambe Bay	(170)	167	263	(118)	(233)	Jan	221
Chichester Harbour	191	194	212	217	211	Feb	205
Inner Firth of Clyde	(164)	107	252	195	168	Aug	181
Lavan Sands	264	(211)	196	81	110	Mar	172
Langstone Harbour	127	128	187	159	169	Feb	154
Inner Loch Indaal	138						138
Duddon Estuary	167	152	(121)	106	123	Feb	137
Montrose Basin	139	(39)	163	135	99	Jul	134
Loch Lomond	(14)	(4)	(129)	(8)	(6)	Dec	(129)
Loch Ryan	74	179	180	106	100	Oct	128
Whiteness to Skelda Ness	91 ¹⁰	68 ¹⁰	145 ¹⁰	134 ¹⁰	192 ¹⁰	Feb	126
North Norfolk Coast	105	126	132	92	131	Feb	117
Loch of Tankerness		222	1				112
Jersey Shore				126	90	Mar	108
Sound of Barra (Barra)		106 ⁴⁴					106
Exe Estuary	(132)	82	78	139	79	Feb	102
Goring	(35)	(102)					(102) ▲
Arran	103	90	113	(129)	59	Apr	99
Tay Estuary	98	60	172	57 ¹¹	103	May	98 ▲
Sites of all-Ireland importance in Northern Ireland							
Strangford Lough	188	189	263	390 ¹¹	(282)	Dec	262
Larne Lough	135	211	151	196	142	Oct	167
Belfast Lough	216	91 ¹³	104	110	183	Feb	141
Lough Foyle	122	(52)	169	(35)	99	Nov	130
Carlingford Lough	40	154	118	171	106	Jul	118
Outer Ards Shoreline	48	54	31	108	38	Jan	56



Red-breasted Merganser (Jill Pakenham)