



Highland Bird Report 2022

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Gazetteer of place names
(see Website: <http://www.highlandbirds.scot>)

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Cover photograph: Short-toed Eagle in May in SE Sutherland c. Peter Stronach



Acknowledgements

The Highland Bird Report 2022 has been produced by the Highland Bird Report Editorial Committee on behalf of Highland Branch of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. This committee consisted of a team of 10 SOC Highland Branch members - David Bain, Brian Etheridge, David Galloway, Pete Gordon, Hugh Insley, Bob McMillan, Al McNee, Sean Morris, Bob Swann and Alex Joss (Editor).

The species accounts in the Systematic List were summarised by the following:

Geese to Ducks	Bob McMillan
Seaducks to Sawbills	David Patterson
Gamebirds to Grebes	Sue Sykes
Oystercatcher to Ruff	Alex Joss
Sandpipers to Greenshank	Dave Barnett
Gulls to Petrels	David Galloway
Fulmar to Gannet	Fiona Reid
Cormorant to Larks	Keith Barnes
Raptors, Owls, Falcons & Raven	Brian Etheridge & Adam Ritchie
Martins to Wheatears	Alex Joss
Dipper to Buntings	Pete Gordon

The Area Reviews were summarised by the following:

Sutherland	Bob Swann
Ross-shire	Andy Williams
Inverness District	Al McNee
Badenoch & Strathspey	David Bain
Lochaber	Sean Morris
Skye & Lochalsh	Bob McMillan

The Ringing Report was prepared and edited by Hugh Insley.

Reports on specific long-term studies were kindly contributed by the following:

Molly Doubleday	Capercaillie breeding summary
Kathy Fletcher & Simon McLaughlin	Black Grouse breeding summaries
Bob Swann & the recorders	Inner Moray Firth WeBS data
Shelagh Parlane & Kate Clarke	Corncrakes
Alison Phillip	Slavonian Grebe breeding summary
Kenna Chisholm	Wood Sandpiper breeding summary
Bea Ayling	Tern monitoring report
Bob Swann	Canna & North Sutor seabird data; Heronry counts; Sallachy wader counts; Invergordon Port

Location Reports were kindly provided by: John Chester (Eigg), Sean Morris (Rum), Rab Potter (Handa), Desmond Dugan (Abernethy), Catherine Owen-Pam (Insh Marshes) and Bob McMillan (Skye).

The photographs were kindly given by the photographers named on each image. Proofreading: thanks to Al McNee, Carol Miller, Roger Tozer & Hugh Insley.



Editorial

Unlike 2021, this year has seen major changes in the personnel who write the *Report*. Increasing work and other commitments left insufficient time for Jonathan Clarke and Colin Leslie to write the Waders and Gamebirds to Grebes sections, respectively, of the Systematic List. We thank them both for their fine, knowledgeable contributions over recent years. By dividing up some of the longer species sections, we were able to offer a more manageable workload to attract four new authors from within our membership. It is very gratifying that David Patterson, Sue Sykes, Dave Barnett and Fiona Reid all produced excellent first summaries and, even better, that they are keen to continue next year. Andy Williams very kindly volunteered to write the Ross-shire summary one last time, as thoroughly and efficiently as he has done over several years now. Sadly, David Galloway and Brian Etheridge have also decided to retire. Their knowledge and expertise in their respective subjects, Seabirds and Raptors, Owls, Falcons, Raven, have been a feature of our *Reports* for longer than I can remember. All three have earned their retirement and our gratitude, so the quest for replacement authors starts now, probably with an appeal to our Highland-wide membership. Brian involved Adam Ritchie in writing a few species accounts this year and he is interested in continuing if he gets the help of another member of the Highland Raptor Study Group. Fortunately, we still have a good core of experienced authors, Pete Gordon has continued as assistant editor, John Poyner as Recorder and Hugh Insley as author of the Ringing Report, enhancing it this year with an illuminating account of an annual ringing project at the Carse of Ardersier in autumn.

Continuity this year came courtesy of the BOU, which for once left the species order unchanged. Hopefully, we have at last reached a logical, stable order, based on good genetic evidence. BirdTrack remains our prime source of anecdotal records, but the apparently inexorable rise in the annual number of records has come to a halt. It had been suggested that travel restrictions imposed during the height of the Covid-19 epidemic in 2020 forced many people to pay more attention to the wildlife close to home and even report their bird records to the BTO. Perhaps enthusiasm to continue such active interest has waned, contributing to a fall in total BirdTrack records from 185000 last year to pre-2020 levels at 162250.

On a more favourable note, the disruption by Covid-19 restrictions to annual surveys carried out by BTO volunteers and local staff of the RSPB and SWT ceased, thus allowing us renewed access to those invaluable data on which we rely for information on breeding success and numbers of important Highland species. Unfortunately, one serious pandemic has now been replaced by another, avian flu, which has in turn closed access to a few study sites, e.g. seabird colonies. The difference with this pandemic, of course, is that it is the birds themselves, rather than their observers, that seriously suffer and this becomes apparent in the drastic effects we see in this *Report* on the breeding success of several species, such as some seabirds or raptors.

Alex Joss (Highland Bird Report Editor)
Email: ejoss99@btinternet.com



Guide for submitting bird records

Why submit records?

All acceptable records received directly by the Highland Bird Recorder or via BirdTrack are used to produce species summaries in the annual *Highland Bird Report*. This is intended to be the definitive historical record of birds occurring in Highland, open to comparison with previous years. It aims to give details of breeding performance, distribution, movements and between-year changes of common species, as well as providing a valuable record of rare and scarce species in the area. Submitting your records allows these summaries to be as accurate as possible. In addition, pooled knowledge of birds occurring at individual sites allows for an assessment of the ornithological value of sites. This can contribute towards decisions on development proposals, giving a real and immediate conservation value to your records.

To ensure that contributors and readers of the *Highland Bird Report* have confidence in its content, the Recorder is appointed by the committee of the Highland Branch of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. Where appropriate, records of rare and scarce species are assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC), the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) or the Highland Records Committee (HRC). It is important to remember that, when a record fails to pass this assessment process, it does not necessarily mean that a mistake in identification has been made. Far more often it means that the necessary standard of proof to permit a record to enter the permanent record has not been met.

Which types of record are most useful?

The annual *Highland Bird Report* is a summary of the ornithological year in the area and does not include every submitted record of every bird seen. Many of the records included involve systematic and coordinated counts, or careful observations of breeding performance. However, the report also tries to reflect other aspects of ornithology, such as the distribution of species in the area and the timing of migration, or the sighting of rare or scarce species. This last category is the one to which many eyes will be drawn initially, but these records are often the rewards of many days of hard fieldwork recording our regularly occurring or common species.

Please note that all records of birds in the Highland recording area are most welcome. You never know when your seemingly everyday record may be just the piece of information that we are looking for to use in the annual report. However, to give an idea of the types of records which prove most useful, we would especially welcome:

- o Arrival dates of summer visitors in spring.



- o First dates of inland-breeding species which desert the uplands in winter.
- o Last dates of summer visitors in autumn.
- o Arrival dates of winter visitors in autumn.
- o Last dates of winter visitors in spring.
- o Records of rarities and birds scarce in the area (including descriptions).
- o Counts of flocks of commoner species.
- o Comments on increases or decreases in any species in your area.
- o First dates of birds heard singing in your area.
- o Breeding colony counts and other appropriate breeding data; for example nest box schemes.
- o First dates of birds seen nest-building, feeding young or with fledged young.
- o Common species in unusual circumstances, or exhibiting unusual behaviour.

When submitting records, species sightings should, where possible, include the following details:

species, number, age and sex if known, direction of flight (if appropriate), date and location. **Ideally, the location should be given as a place name included on an Ordnance Survey 1:50000 or 1:25000 map, accompanied by a six-figure grid reference, but for many purposes a place name and four-figure grid reference is adequate.**

There are occasions when the locality of a bird record should be kept confidential. Examples are records of rare or scarce breeding birds. These records may be submitted to the Recorder in strict confidence and should be clearly marked as confidential. These will be stored separately from the main bulk of records. Records such as these will appear in the *Highland Bird Report* only as a brief summary and no specific localities will be published. Unless specifically requested



not to do so, breeding records for all species on the list of rare breeding birds, for which data are collected by the Rare Birds Breeding Panel (RBBP), will be submitted by the Recorder to the RBBP. These records are treated in strict confidence by RBBP and are only reported by county summaries in the annual report on rare breeding birds published in British Birds.

How to submit your records.

Whilst some observers prefer to send records in at the end of each calendar year, we strongly encourage contributors to register for BirdTrack on the BTO website. By doing so it is then very simple to submit records on an ongoing basis throughout the year, while the information is still fresh in the mind. At the end of the year, we can then pick up every record on one standard spreadsheet prepared by BirdTrack. The most important thing, however, is always to enter as much of the information that is requested in the section above as possible, **especially a grid reference**, as well as on occasion using the BirdTrack free text Comments box to add any interesting observations about a particular record.

For the few of you who as yet are not using BirdTrack, please send all records to the Highland Bird Recorder: John Poyner, 6 Mackenzie Crescent, Nethy Bridge, Highland PH25 3DU. Tel 07875 094666. The preferable way to communicate is via e-mail.

e-mail address: highlandrecorder@yahoo.com



Contributors to *Highland Bird Report 2022*

The following organisations kindly submitted records for inclusion within this Report. Sincere apologies for discontinuing the practice of listing the hundreds of individual observers who submit records each year, a list which required exhaustive updating every year, with the attendant scope for error, omission or duplication. Any observer who has submitted records, no matter how many, via the Highland Recorder, BirdTrack, eBird, or any of the organisations listed below, can be assured that their records have contributed to a significant degree in the preparation of this Report.

BirdGuides
BirdTrack
Colin Richards & Andy King Uplands Group
eBird
Eigg Bird Report
Facebook
Highland Birds Facebook
Highland Raptor Study Group
Highland Ringing Group
Moray Firth WeBS Counters
North Sutor Monitoring Report
RAF Ornithological Society
RSPB Highland Local Group
RSPB Insh Marshes
RSPB Scotland
Shiant's Auk Ringing Group
Speyside Black Grouse Study Group
Surfbirds
SWT Handa Island
SWT Isle of Eigg
www.cairngormscapercaillie.scot
www.highlandbirds.scot
www.skye-birds.com
www.Trektellen.org



Reporting rare or scarce species and recent rarity decisions

Descriptive evidence is required for the acceptance of the record of any rare or scarce bird in the Highland recording area. In some cases, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel may also require descriptive evidence. Below are guidelines on the types of records considered by each assessment committee and the species for which descriptions are required. It is very important that descriptions be submitted via the Highland Recorder, who will forward them to the relevant authority and notify the observer of the outcome of assessment. The bulk of the description should, where possible, be based on original field notes made before reference to books or other reference material.

It is important for observers to submit records with details of rare species to John Poyner at highlandrecorder@yahoo.com as soon as possible after a sighting. It is helpful if these records are submitted on a standard form (available from the Recorder or the relevant websites). Records will be judged locally or sent either to the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) or the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) as appropriate. All the forms are available to download on the www.highlandbirds.scot website. Alternatively, BBRC forms can be downloaded from www.bbrc.org.uk and SBRC forms can be downloaded from www.the-soc.org.uk. For local rarities, please use an SBRC form. Claims of rare subspecies should be accompanied by full descriptions and, preferably, photographs, and will be assessed by the appropriate committee.

It is always a good idea, however experienced an observer you are, to get somebody else to confirm your identification. We would also appreciate it if all occurrences of rare or scarce birds are reported to the Recorder as soon as possible, so that others may have a chance to see the bird as well (*see page 6 for details*). We fully appreciate that some sightings may be in sensitive areas and we will not inform the general birding community of the occurrence of a rare bird if this is in the bird's best interests or we are specifically requested not to do so.

British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC)

This committee is made up of nominated or elected experts in bird identification. It consists of 10 voting members and a non-voting secretary, who serve for a fixed term and adjudicate on all records of species, and some distinctive sub-species, which rarely occur in Britain (*see their website for full details*).

BBRC record pending for 2019:

[Grey-bellied Brant*]. Dalziel, Castle Stuart. 5-6 March & 26 November, and in the same area in 2020 until 23 December.

(*At the moment, it is still not recognised as a species or subspecies by the major taxonomic authorities and, as a consequence, records are not being formally assessed by BBRC.)

**BBRC record pending for 2021:**

Northern Eider* (drake). Coul Links. 18 April-17 May.

(*There has been no decision yet that records of this rare subspecies will be assessed by BBRC.)

BBRC record not proven for 2021:

Blue-winged Teal. Fort William. 2 October.

BBRC records accepted for 2022:

King Eider. Inverie, Knoydart. 16 March. M & M Kenway, J Ribbons & M Swann.

Pallid Swift. Brora. 3 November. Peter Stronach.

Pallid Swift. Carse of Ardersier. 8 November. Hugh Insley.

Baird's Sandpiper. Balnakeil. 15 May. Peter Stronach.

Bonaparte's Gull. Firemore Beach, Wester Ross. 5 July. John Simpson.

Short-toed Eagle (fourth-calendar-year). SE Sutherland. 24 May-5 June. Dean MacAskill *et al.* *This is considered to be the bird which was at this site in 2021.*

Franklin's Gull. Broadford Bay. 31 July. Martin Benson.

Pallid Harrier. Balnakeil. 17 May. Peter Stronach.

Fea's/Desertas Petrel. Helmsdale. 4 September. Peter Stronach.

Fea's/Desertas Petrel. Lothbeg Point. 4 September. Dean MacAskill.

Eastern/Western Subalpine Warbler. Raasay. 20 April. John Crane.

Please note that no records of species considered by BBRC will be published in the *Highland Bird Report*, or the BBRC Report on Rare Birds in Britain, unless they have been accepted by BBRC.

Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC)

The SBRC adjudicates on all records of birds which are rare in Scottish terms, but which are not included in the BBRC list. It has seven voting members and a non-voting secretary, and at least six members must vote in favour for a record to be accepted.

SBRC record accepted for 2003:

Rose-coloured Starling. Isle of Rum. June. Sean Morris.

Submitted retrospectively.

SBRC records not proven for 2021:

Serin. Midtown, Talmine. 17 May.

This previously accepted record is now not proven after a review.



SBRC records accepted for 2022:

Cory's Shearwater. Embo, Sutherland. 2 September. Dean MacAskill.
Cory's Shearwater (adult). Chanonry Point. 3 September. Steve Reddick.
Cory's Shearwater (2). Embo, Sutherland. 4 September. Dean MacAskill.
Cory's Shearwater. Lothbeg Point, Sutherland. 4 September. Dean MacAskill.
Great Shearwater (DNA analysis of corpse). Isle of Skye. 12 July. Sean Morris.
Great Shearwater (2). Helmsdale. 2 September. Peter Stronach.
Great Shearwater (6). Helmsdale (4) & Embo (2). 4 September. Dean MacAskill & Bob McMillan.
Great Shearwater. The Minch, Highland. 6 September. Andy Williams.
Great Shearwater. The Minch, Highland. 15 October. Alastair McNee.
Serin. Isle of Eigg. 21-29 November. Neil Robertson & John Chester.

SBRC records not proven for 2022:

Cory's Shearwater. Tarbat Ness. 18 June.
Black Kite. Glen Nevis, Lochaber. 14 October.
Red-rumped Swallow. Balintore. 9 November.

Please note that no records of these species will be published in the *Highland Bird Report*, or the SBRC Report on Rare Birds in Scotland, unless they have been accepted by the SBRC.

Species and [notable subspecies] for which SBRC requires a description, as of June 2023:

[Black Brant]	Red-footed Falcon
Red-crested Pochard	Woodchat Shrike
Apine Swift	Marsh Tit
Stone-curlew	Woodlark
Black-winged Stilt	Short-toed Lark
[Continental Black-tailed Godwit]	Red-rumped Swallow
White-rumped Sandpiper	Cetti's Warbler
Lesser Yellowlegs	Radde's Warbler
Caspian Gull	Dusky Warbler
Yellow-legged Gull	Greenish Warbler
White-winged Black Tern	Arctic Warbler
Wilson's Petrel	Melodious Warbler
Cory's Shearwater	Dartford Warbler
Great Shearwater	Nightingale (ssp. <i>megarhynchos</i>)
Night-heron	Red-flanked Bluetail
Cattle Egret	Citrine Wagtail
Purple Heron	Parrot Crossbill (Sutherland, Lochaber, Skye & Lochalsh only)
Montagu's Harrier	Serin
Black Kite	Ortolan Bunting
Little Owl	Girl Bunting
European Bee-eater	
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	

New additions in 2023



Highland Records Committee (HRC)

The Highland Records Committee (HRC) is tasked with assessing records of rare and scarce birds that occur in the recording area and making decisions on the content and order of the species list published within the *Highland Bird Report*. It will adjudicate on a variety of species, excluding those considered by the British Birds Rarities and Scottish Birds Records Committees (BBRC and SBRC), that are rare in, or new to, the recording area, or which may easily be confused with rare species. In the event of one of the HRC members being involved in the reporting of a bird which is being adjudicated upon by the committee, that person will not be allowed to vote upon the record and a probationary HRC member, due to start a term in January of the following year, will cast a vote in his/her place. In 2020, this change was introduced to preserve the independence of the Recorder in the voting process.

The composition of the Highland Records Committee which carried out most of the adjudications on the records of this *Report* was Al McNee (Chair); Kate Clarke; Dean MacAskill; Marcus Conway; Stuart Crutchfield; Simon Eaves. During the year, Steve Broyd substituted as an assessor whenever an HRC member was absent or involved in a record being assessed, as described above. Some late records were assessed in 2023 when Stuart Crutchfield or Pete Gordon became chair.

The HRC may also require a description for any record of a normally common species that does not fall within the normal pattern of occurrence, for example a Willow Warbler in winter. Any difficult or contentious decisions may be passed on to SBRC for adjudication. In many cases, all that will be required is a brief description based on the diagnostic features which establish a bird's identity. Photographs are acceptable and indeed helpful, but must be accompanied by a written statement describing the circumstances of the record.

Please note that no records of species which require consideration by HRC will be published in the *Highland Bird Report* unless backed up by a description which has been accepted by HRC.

If accepted, the record may be included in the *Highland Bird Report* for the year in which it was reported. Submissions received after the publication deadline for the year in which the record occurred will be held over and included in a following year's report. In the case of birds which are seen by many observers, please do not assume that others have reported the occurrence. Every year we are unable to include birds seen in Highland because no-one made a submission to HRC.

HRC considered 93 submissions for birds (31 species and three sub-species) seen in 2022. Of these, 84 were accepted and there were nine cases for which insufficient evidence was presented for the records to be accepted. Only those observers who submitted acceptable descriptions are listed below.

HRC record accepted for 1982:

Yellow Wagtail. Insh Marshes. 27 May. Zul Bhatia & Clive Barton.

Historic record, accepted by HRC chair without circulation, based on observer competence.



HRC records accepted for 2022:

Tundra Bean Goose (adult). Udale Bay. 2 October. Blair Whyte & Alan MacAskill.

European White-fronted Goose (adult). Shandwick Mains. 23 January. Steph Elliot

Russian White-fronted Goose (2 adults). Golspie. 10 December. Dean MacAskill.

Bewick's Swan (adult). Loch na Claise, Stoer. 17 April. Andrew Mackenzie.

Green-winged Teal (adult). Alturlie. 14-21 May. Sue Sykes, Jon Clarke & Matthew Broadbent.

Green-winged Teal (adult). Dalchork, Loch Shin. 22 June. Dean MacAskill.

Green-winged Teal (adult male). Tain Links. 23 October-31 December. Unknown, Bob Swann, Dave Tanner *et al.*

Ring-necked Duck (adult pair). Sutherland loch. 22 June. Peter Stronach.

Ring-necked Duck (2 female). Loch Lochy, Lochaber. 15 November-January 2023. David Whitaker.

Ring-necked Duck (female). Loch Morlich. 7 December-January 2023. Dave Pullan, David Miller *et al.*

Smew (redhead). Bogach, Strathspey. 18 October. Blair Whyte & Simon Eaves.

Turtle Dove (adult). Grantown-on-Spey. 5 May. Larry Reeve.

Turtle Dove (adult). Big Sands, Gairloch. 13-21 September. Isabelle Steel.

Per M McCullach, Gairloch & Loch Ewe Facebook Group.

Turtle Dove (adult). Red Point, Wester Ross. 15 September. Ines Steirmeier & Johannes Hohenegger.

Common Crane (2). Hilton of Cadboll. 31 May. Simon Levene.

Common Crane (adult). Ardverickie Estate, Loch Laggan. 24 October. Mike Coleman.

Red-necked Grebe (adult). Tarbat Ness. 20 March. Dave Tanner.

Red-necked Grebe (adult). Inverasdale, Wester Ross. 17-20 April. Dave Slater & Morag McCullagh.

Red-necked Grebe (adult). Embo. 21 November. Dean MacAskill.

Red-necked Grebe (2 adult). Ardmail Point, Wester Ross. 15 December. John Badley & Lauren Sharpe.

Temminck's Stint (adult). Balnakeil. 17 May. Mike Coleman & Bob McMillan.

Temminck's Stint (adult). Ross-shire loch. 7 June. Dan Owen, George Dunbar & Dan Hewitt.

Temminck's Stint (adult). Sutherland loch. 5 July. Peter Stronach.

Red-necked Phalarope (adult female). Location withheld, Sutherland. 1 June. Dean MacAskill.

Red-necked Phalarope (adult female). NW Sutherland. 17 June. Alan MacAskill.

Grey Phalarope (adult). Embo. 29 January. Dean MacAskill.

Grey Phalarope. At sea, The Minch. 15 October. Alastair McNee.

Grey Phalarope (adult). Embo. 11 November. Dean MacAskill.

Grey Phalarope (first-winter). Brora. 26 November. Dean MacAskill.



Grey Phalarope (2 adult). Kilmarie Bay, Loch Slapin. 27 November. Bob McMillan.

Sabine's Gull (adult). Balintore/Shandwick Bay. 18 September. Simon Levene.

Mediterranean Gull (second-year). Bayfield, Portree. 22-28 February. Neil Bennett & Seth Gibson. *Probably same bird seen again on 6 April.*

Mediterranean Gull (first-summer). Bayfield, Portree. 11 July. Neil Bennett, Bob McMillan *et al.*

Mediterranean Gull (first-year). Udale Bay. 15 September. Rob Hughes & David Douglas.

Mediterranean Gull (second-year). Loch Sligachan. 13 October. Bob McMillan.

Mediterranean Gull (first-winter). Firemore Beach. 30 October. Morag McCulloch.

Mediterranean Gull (second-year). Applecross Bay. 1 November. Bob McMillan.

Black Tern (2 juvenile). Dornoch. 23 August. Dean MacAskill.

Black Tern (juvenile). Chanonry Point. 12 September. Alistair Clunas, David Lindo & Simon Pawsey.

Long-tailed Skua (second-year). off Whiteness Head. 25 August. Charlie Phillips. *Identified by Peter Stronach per Twitter feed.*

Long-tailed Skua (2 juvenile). Embo. 25 August. Dean MacAskill.

Long-tailed Skua (2 juvenile). Helmsdale. 2 September. Peter Stronach.

Long-tailed Skua (juvenile). Embo. 4 September. Dean MacAskill.

Long-tailed Skua (juvenile). Waternish Point, Skye. 15 October. Ian Andrews.

White-billed Diver (adult). Embo. 3-11 April. Dean MacAskill.

White-billed Diver (adult). Tarbat Ness. 31 May. Dave Tanner.

White-billed Diver (immature). Embo. 19 June. Dean MacAskill.

White-billed Diver (adult). Brora. 10 November. Dean MacAskill.

White-billed Diver (adult). Tarbat Ness. 19 November. Alastair McNee.

Balearic Shearwater. Embo. 2 September. Dean MacAskill.

Balearic Shearwater. Helmsdale. 2 September. Peter Stronach. *Video also.*

Balearic Shearwater. Embo. 3 September. Dean MacAskill & Steve Broyd.

Balearic Shearwater (2). Lothbeg Point. 4 September. Dean MacAskill & Bob McMillan.

Balearic Shearwater. Brora. 24 September. Dean MacAskill.

Bittern (adult). Withheld, east Inverness-shire. 25 December. Archie Wotherspoon.

Great White Egret (adult). Loch Linnhe, Fort William. 30 June. Stuart Crutchfield.

Great White Egret (adult). Melvich. 12 August. Alasdair Mackie & Rob Foster.

Great White Egret (adult). Strath of Kildonan. 18-20 November. Tommy Bird & Dean MacAskill.

Great White Egret (adult). Loch Shiel, Lochaber. 29 November. Ewan Miles.

Wryneck. Dalnahaitnach, Strathspey. 15 May. Kathy & Rachel Sims.

Hobby (adult). Inverness. 3 July-6 October. Sam Borthwick.

Hobby (adult). Dornoch. 28 September. Dean MacAskill.

Red-backed Shrike (juvenile). Tarbat Ness. 7-8 September. Dave Tanner & Simon Levene.

Siberian Chiffchaff (ssp. *tristis*). Portmahomack. 17 January. Dave Tanner.



Blyth's Reed Warbler. Loch Borralie, Durness. 23 October. Peter Stronach & Dean MacAskill.

Reed Warbler (juvenile). Durness. 7 September. Peter Stronach.

Firecrest (adult female). Deer Park, Avoch. 25 November. Brian Etheridge & Mike Thompson.

Rose-coloured Starling (adult). Kinlochbervie. 28 May. Leslie Sheriffs, per Recorder. *From North Sutherland Facebook page.*

Rose-coloured Starling (adult). Scourie. 14-17 June. Mike Leeth & Stephen Kirkup. *Per North Sutherland Facebook page.*

Rose-coloured Starling (adult). Kyle of Lochalsh. 18-20 June. John Rooney & Bob McMillan

Rose-coloured Starling (adult). Eigg. 25 June. John Chester & Ben Cormack.

Rose-coloured Starling (adult). Balmaqueen, Kilmuir, Skye. 25 June-6 July. Margaret Learmonth & Bob McMillan.

Rose-coloured Starling (adult). Aultgrishan, by Gairloch. 28 June-2 July. Morag McCullagh, per Recorder. *Per Facebook.*

Rose-coloured Starling (adult). Bettyhill. 3 July. Penny Gardner.

Per North Sutherland Facebook page.

Rose-coloured Starling (adult). Kilchoan, Ardnamurchan. 24 August. Ricky Clarke & Richard Leybourne.

Water Pipit (adult). Dornoch beach. 12-31 December. Dean MacAskill.

Scandinavian Rock Pipit (ssp. *littoralis*, adult). Dornoch. 2 March. Dean MacAskill.

Scandinavian Rock Pipit (ssp. *littoralis*, adult). Brora. 10 March. Dean MacAskill.

Scandinavian Rock Pipit (ssp. *littoralis*, adult). Helmsdale. 13 March. Sharon Fennel. *Colour-ringed, confirmed as Norwegian by Kjell Mork Soot.*

Scandinavian Rock Pipit (ssp. *littoralis*, adult). Loch Fleet. 17 March. Dean MacAskill.

Scandinavian Rock Pipit (ssp. *littoralis*, adult). Portmahomack. 2 April. Dean MacAskill.

Common Rosefinch (adult male). Marybank. 7 June. Simon Cohen.

Common Rosefinch (juvenile). Tarbat Ness. 7 September. Bob Swann & Mark Warren.

Common Rosefinch (juvenile). Kilmuir, Skye. 29 November. Jonathan Jones.

HRC records not proven for 2022:

Taiga Bean Goose. River Ness, near Inverness. 23 April.

Common Crane (3). Dornoch. 14 March.

Grey Phalarope (adult). Littleferry, Loch Fleet. 9-10 January.

White-billed Diver. Lothbeg Point. 1 June.

Rough-legged Buzzard (second-year). Achilty, Easter Ross. 13 September.

Ring-necked Parakeet (2). Ness Islands, Inverness. 11 August.

Hobby. Coignafearn. 10 June.

Hobby. Marybank. 9 October.

Scandinavian Rock Pipit. Tarbat Ness. 15 October.



Species and [notable subspecies] for which HRC requires descriptions, as at January 2024:

[Dark-bellied Brent Goose]

Snow Goose

Taiga Bean Goose

Tundra Bean Goose

White-fronted Goose (European race)

Bewick's Swan

Egyptian Goose

Garganey (eclipse male, lone female
& juv. only)

American Wigeon

Green-winged Teal

Ring-necked Duck

Surf Scoter

Ruddy Duck

Smew

Nightjar

Turtle Dove

Spotted Crake

Great Crested Grebe (except Moray Firth)

Red-necked Grebe

Black-necked Grebe

Avocet

American Golden Plover

Little Ringed Plover

Temminck's Stint

Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Pectoral Sandpiper

Red-necked Phalarope

Grey Phalarope

Spotted Redshank

Sabine's Gull

Mediterranean Gull (immatures only)

Ring-billed Gull

[Kumlien's Gull]

Roseate Tern

Black Tern

Long-tailed Skua (juv. & imm. only)

White-billed Diver

Leach's Petrel (Inner Moray Firth only)

Balearic Shearwater

White Stork

[Continental Cormorant]

Glossy Ibis

Spoonbill

Bittern

Great White Egret

Honey-buzzard (except breeding)

Rough-legged Buzzard

Wryneck

Hobby (except breeding)

Ring-necked Parakeet

Red-backed Shrike

Great Grey Shrike

Golden Oriole

Chough

Willow Tit

Bearded Tit

Shore Lark

Pallas's Warbler

Blyth's Reed Warbler

Reed Warbler

Marsh Warbler

Icterine Warbler

Barred Warbler

[Siberian Chiffchaff]

Firecrest

Rose-coloured Starling (except adult-plumaged birds)

Bluethroat

Red-breasted Flycatcher

Yellow Wagtail (^)

Richard's Pipit

Olive-backed Pipit

Water Pipit

[Scandinavian Rock Pipit] (except coast north of Tarbat Ness)

Common Rosefinch

Parrot Crossbill (*)

Scottish Crossbill(**)

Lapland Bunting

Corn Bunting (***)

Little Bunting

Bold species delegated by SBRC

Red changes in 2023

* SBRC species for Sutherland, Lochaber, Skye & Lochalsh [Sonagrams required]

** [Sonagrams required. Submissions currently pended, awaiting clarification of identification criteria]

*** except in core breeding area east of Inverness

^ all races, excluding BBRC ssp.

Please study the HRC description list carefully as it is revised annually.



Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP): 2021 summary

An annual report on rare breeding birds in the UK is published by RBBP in British Birds. As well as records submitted through the County Records system, it includes additional information such as that obtained from Raptor Study Groups, Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1 Licence Returns and individual records submitted privately, and so it may be regarded as the definitive record of rare breeding birds. Every effort is made to ensure consistency between the Breeding sub-sections for rare breeding birds in the systematic list in our *Highland Bird Report* and what is published in the RBBP report for the same year. However, as successive issues of our report have been published on earlier dates each year, we now find that our publication date precedes that of the RBBP report by at least one year.

We detail below RBBP figures which differ from those given in the *Highland Bird Report* for 2021. As might be expected, for the reasons given in the paragraph above, all or some of the RBBP numbers quoted below for most species are larger than the equivalent numbers in our reports. In the very few instances where this is not the case, the *Highland Bird Report* figures are indicated in brackets. These mostly relate to birds of prey and it appears that the RBBP figures are incorrect, so they have been highlighted to the Panel, for correction. Species order follows that used in the relevant year's *Highland Bird Report*.

Whooper Swan: Four sites: two pairs bred, fledging two and one young; two probable breeding pairs.

Shoveler: Three sites: nine pairs in total.

Wigeon: 27 sites, two confirmed pairs, 59 pairs in total.

Common Scoter: Four sites: three confirmed pairs, 13 pairs in total.

Goldeneye: 32 confirmed pairs, 56 pairs in total.

Red-breasted Merganser: 22 confirmed pairs, 55 pairs in total, (estimate of 50-70 pairs).

Capercaillie: 35 leks were occupied by 137 males.

Quail: Eight singing males.

Corncrake: 15 singing males, five on Mainland and 10 on Skye. **(HBR also includes two calling on Canna.)**

Slavonian Grebe: 12 sites: 20 pairs, 23 young.

Dotterel: 15 sites: 16 confirmed pairs, 31 pairs in total.

Green Sandpiper: Three sites: (1) one breeding pair, nest with a clutch of four eggs, and six additional displaying males; (2-3) one singing male at each site.

Wood Sandpiper: 23 sites: six confirmed pairs, 47 pairs in total.

Greenshank: 81 pairs in total.



Little Tern: Two sites: three confirmed pairs, no young fledged. **(HBR: Unsuccessful breeding attempts reported at five locations.)**

Arctic Skua: No reports. **(HBR: 20 monitored nests on Handa, 22 young fledged.)**

Red-throated Diver: 14 confirmed pairs, 30 pairs in total.

Black-throated Diver: 15 confirmed pairs, 42 pairs in total. **(HBR: Breeding confirmed at 16 sites.)**

Great Northern Diver: one site: one mixed pair (Great Northern + Black-throated Diver).

Osprey: 55 confirmed pairs, 71 pairs in total, 50 young fledged. **(HBR: 74 pairs in total, 117+ fledged.)**

Honey-buzzard: Five confirmed pairs, 20 pairs in total, seven young fledged. **(HBR: six confirmed pairs, 16 occupied sites in total, one+ young fledged.)**

Golden Eagle: 74 confirmed pairs, 121 pairs in total, 56 young fledged. **(HBR: 141 pairs present, 96 pairs laid, 70 young fledged.)**

Goshawk: 14 confirmed pairs, 15 pairs in total, (estimated 30-40 pairs in total). **(HBR: 16 sites occupied.)**

Hen Harrier: 23 confirmed pairs, 30 pairs in total, 46 young fledged. **(HBR: 47 young fledged.)**

White-tailed Eagle: 54 confirmed pairs, 59 pairs in total, 35 young fledged. **(HBR: 56 pairs laid, 46 young fledged.)**

Long-eared Owl: 13 confirmed pairs, 21 pairs in total, (estimated 70-100 pairs in total).

Short-eared Owl: Four confirmed pairs, 15 pairs in total, (estimated 10-15 pairs in total).

Wryneck: One site: one singing male between 15 May and 30 June. **(HBR: record not proven.)**

Merlin: 26 confirmed pairs, 40 pairs in total.

Peregrine Falcon: 11 confirmed pairs, 25 pairs in total, (estimated 90 pairs). **(HBR: 12 pairs laid.)**

Crested Tit: 11 confirmed pairs, 30 pairs in total.

Fieldfare: One possible breeding pair.

Redwing: 11 sites: four confirmed breeding pairs, one probable breeding pair and nine singing males.

White Wagtail: Two sites: (1) female seen feeding young, male not seen so may have been mixed pair with Pied Wagtail, (2) two probable breeding pairs.

Brambling: One site: one singing male from 19 to 21 May.

Snow Bunting: Cairngorms: three confirmed breeding pairs, six probable breeding pairs and two possible breeding pairs. West Highlands: one probable breeding pair, two possible breeding pairs.



Reference:

Eaton, M. and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel 2023. *British Birds* 116: 615-676. Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2021.

Errata in 2021 HBR

Page 97: The **Wood Sandpiper** in the photograph has been mistakenly attributed to Dave Barnett. The photograph was taken by Dave Pierce.

Page 117: The four **Sooty Shearwaters** recorded on 7 August were not off Strathan in the west but off West Strathan on the north coast.

Page 205: Greenfinch TH96211 has not set a new longevity for the species, as claimed, because the ringer who found the bird in 2021 has withdrawn the record, recognising that a mistake had been made.



Highland weather in 2022

This information was gleaned from the Met Office website and its weather maps for the Highland region and the UK. The analysis relates to long-term means in this area for the period 1991–2020. In the UK's warmest year on record, mean temperatures in Highland were up to 1°C warmer throughout the region and over 1°C warmer in Lochalsh. Rainfall was lower than the long-term average in the east of the region, especially around the Moray Firth, and somewhat higher only on Skye and the Small Isles. Hours of sunshine were reduced by 5-10% on the islands and along the west coast, but normal elsewhere.

January It was warmer throughout Highland than the January average for the previous 30 years, by around 2°C in most of the region, and by over 2.5°C in Lochalsh. It was, however, a dull month in all but a few pockets in the east of the region and large parts of the west coast and islands experienced less than 50% of average hours of sunshine. Rainfall mostly matched the long-term average, although it was reduced by 25-50% in the east and patches of the west mainland.

February It stayed around 1°C warmer than average in February for most of Highland, apart from a few parts to the north and west. Weather continued to be dull, particularly in the western half of the region, but now it was accompanied by above average rainfall. Eastern Lochaber had less than half the usual hours of sunshine, while a sizeable area SE of Inverness had over 200% of usual rainfall.

March There was little change in mildness, except that mean temperatures 0.5-1.5°C above the long-term average now extended to all of Highland, apart from areas around the Dornoch Firth. In Scotland's sunniest March since 1919, all of Highland benefitted, but the most favoured parts were the north and west mainland, with 170% of usual hours of sunshine. Consequently, the north-west experienced between one third and one fifth of normal rainfall, or even less.

April Mean temperatures and rainfall in April were largely in line with the long-term average. Lochaber was the only area to be 0.5-1.5°C warmer than normal and part of it had reduced rainfall. Rainfall was about 50% above average around the Moray Firth and to a lesser degree in the far north-west. The north and south-east were a bit dull, but hours of sunshine matched the long-term average in the rest of Highland.

May Highland was uniformly warmer, by 0.5-1.5°C, and duller than average for May. Weather was largely unsettled and the western half experienced above-normal rainfall, exceeding 200% of the long-term average in Skye & Lochalsh.

June Mean temperatures in June continued to be 0.5-1.5°C above the long-term average everywhere in Highland, but the weather brightened to give normal hours of sunshine on the islands and considerably more, 10-50% above average, on most of the mainland. The area of excess rainfall contracted to the islands and a few pockets of the west coast, while the rainfall level around the Moray Firth fell below the long-term average, to as little as 20% in some parts.



July Duller weather again in the north-west and islands in July brought the mean temperatures there to around the long-term average, although small rises in the amount of rainfall were largely confined to pockets of the far north-west. Elsewhere, mean temperatures remained 0.5-1.5°C above the long-term average, with normal rainfall and, in the south-east, normal hours of sunshine.

August The pattern of mean temperatures in Highland in August was very similar to that of July but, apart from the north-west and islands, it was brighter than the long-term average, by about 20%. Like further south in the UK, it was a dry month, with 50-75% of average rainfall in most of the region and less than that around the Moray Firth.

September The weather continued to be 0.5-1.5°C warmer than the long-term average for September in most of Highland. Increased rainfall from the east only affected parts of Badenoch & Strathspey, but it was dull in most of the region, with sunshine duration only achieving normal levels in the south-west and islands. Rainfall was 25-50% lower than normal in Lochaber and pockets of the west mainland.

October Mean temperatures in October were at least 1.5°C above the long-term average in most of Highland. However, the below average sunshine affecting most of western Scotland extended to the southern half of Highland, especially Lochaber which, along with the islands, was the only part where rainfall was somewhat above normal.

November The warm theme continued in November, with mean temperatures still at least 1.5°C above the long-term average in all but the south-west of Highland. In the latter area, it was an unsettled month, with parts of Lochaber having less than 50% normal sunshine and parts of Skye over twice the normal rainfall. In contrast, most of the east around the Moray Firth and the north were brighter and drier than usual for the month.

December Finally, the temperature fell, as part of the UK's coldest December since 2010. Mean temperatures in Highland were below the long-term average, by more than -1.5°C in all but the islands and a few parts of the west coast. In the southern and central areas, it was dry, generally with only 50-70% of the usual rainfall, while the northern and western coastal areas had normal levels. Amounts of sunshine were patchy, above average in Lochaber and the southern islands, below average in the north-west, northern Skye and Badenoch & Strathspey, but normal elsewhere.



Review of the ornithological year 2022

In the annual turnover of rarer species recorded in Highland, 2022 lost more of the species seen in 2021 than it gained, resulting in a nett reduction of three species. The species total of 243 for 2022 includes 15 species not recorded in 2021 but 18 species on the 2021 list failed to reappear or be seen. The number of sub-species recorded, seven, remained the same as the number reported in 2021. There was in fact a nett reduction of one sub-species, because the 2021 total was miscalculated and should have been eight. The number of species proven or strongly suspected to breed remained unchanged at 158, with the usual suspicion that a few more species may have bred but there was no supporting evidence forthcoming. The three Records Committees had an onerous workload, assessing 117 records for 2022 (18 more than in 2021), involving 45 species and three sub-species. Some BBRC and SBRC submissions are still in circulation and decisions will be notified in our next *Report*.

Of the 18 losses to the 2022 list, six species were almost certainly to be expected: **Eyebrowed Thrush** (a first for Highland), **Cattle Egret** (a second record), **Spoonbill** (a third), **Cackling Goose**, **Black Scoter** and **Arctic Redpoll**, the last three all reported in about only four previous years. Another five species, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Pectoral Sandpiper**, **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, **Woodchat Shrike** and **Little Bunting**, have been seen almost as infrequently. Surprising omissions were **American Wigeon** (present in every one of the previous 10 years), **Great Grey Shrike** (present in 9/10 years), **Rough-legged Buzzard**, **Yellow Wagtail** (both in 8/10 years) and **Surf Scoter** (7/10 years), while somewhat less surprising failures to appear were **Bee-eater** (recorded in seven years this century) and **Black-headed Bunting** (recorded in six).

Of the 15 new species, compared to what was seen in 2021, **Pallid Swift**, was definitely a first for Highland, whereas we will never know whether the **Fea's/Desertas Petrel** was a first or second record. It would be a first if the actual species was different from the **Fea's/Zino's Petrel** previously recorded in 2013, but only a second if both were **Fea's Petrels**. Definitely a second for Highland was **Pallid Harrier**, while **Baird' Sandpiper** was a third (all seen since 2016) and **Franklin's Gull** a fourth. **Bewick's Swan** has been fairly commonly reported in most parts of Scotland except Highland, so 2022 was only the fourth year in the period 1987-2022 in which the species has been recorded. It is only the sixth year that **Bonaparte's Gull** and **Blyth's Reed Warbler** have been reported. Of the more frequently recorded species, this was the ninth year this century that **Bittern** has been seen, the sixth for **Great Shearwater**, the fourth for **Cory's Shearwater** and the third this century for **Subalpine Warbler**. Much more frequently present have been **Wryneck** and **Firecrest**, both recorded in six of the 10 years prior to 2022. **Water Pipit** had been found in four of these 10 years, but the 2022 record is only the 6-8th ever. Not in this list are **Serin** and **Short-toed Eagle**, for unusual reasons. A record of **Serin** featured in the 2021 list, but it has since been reassessed by SBRC and deemed to be not proven, so that the 2022 record in this issue is now a first for Highland. A **Short-toed Eagle** which made a first-ever visit to Scotland in 2021 made a remarkable return to the same area of Highland in 2022.



This was an outstanding year for shearwater sightings. In the case of the two species which had not been seen at all in most years this century, at least 11 **Great Shearwaters** and at least five **Cory's Shearwaters** were recorded in 2022. **Balearic Shearwater**, which can expect to be reported once or twice in most years, was recorded six times. **Sooty Shearwaters** appeared to be more numerous this year, with 100 or more birds counted from west coast ferries on three occasions, while counts of the common **Manx Shearwater** were recorded in the 1000s on four occasions, with the most notable sighting being a vast raft estimated to contain 10000 birds.

Sutherland

by Bob Swann

Winter: A **Great Skua** off Embo on 15 January (and possibly the same bird on 28 February) was an unusual winter occurrence. More typical were 19 **Little Gulls** at Brora on 18 January, whilst a **Little Egret** turned up at the Mound, Loch Fleet on 25 January for three days. A **Grey Phalarope** off Embo on 29 January was a good mid-winter record. At Scourie on 31 January, there were at least five **Chiffchaffs**, quite an impressive wintering total for one site. February was very quiet with no significant birds of note, the best record being 13 **Black-tailed Godwits** on the Kyle of Tongue on the 1st. On 6 March 65 **Velvet Scoter** were counted off Embo.

Spring: March was a good month for **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** sightings, with singles at Dornoch on 2 March, Brora on 10 March, Helmsdale on 13 March (a colour-ringed bird from a Norwegian scheme) and Loch Fleet on 17 March. An obliging male **King Eider** was found at the mouth of Loch Fleet on 22 March and remained in the area until 25 May. Up to three birds showing characteristics of **Northern Eider** were also present in the Loch Fleet flock. An early spring arrival was a **Hoopoe** on 2 April at Tongue. Then, from 3-11 April, an adult **White-billed Diver** was off Embo. Meanwhile, off Golspie, **Long-tailed Duck** numbers peaked at an impressive 1205 on 10 April. A **Bewick's Swan** on 17 April at Loch na Claise, Stoer was a very surprising record for north-west Sutherland. More typical was a **Hawfinch** at Kinlochbervie on 22 April. A very early **Little Tern** was back at Embo on 23 April and two early **Swifts** appeared in Dornoch on 30 April. Five **Tree Sparrows** at Durness on 30 April were probably spring overshoots. A **Green Woodpecker** at Migdale Woods on 7 May was likely to be the most northerly one in the UK and a very good Sutherland record. Three **Pomarine Skuas** flew north off Embo on 9 May and another **Hawfinch** turned up, this time at Gartymore, near Helmsdale on 11 May. On 12 May a pair of **Garganey** was at Durness. A very surprising modern-day record was a **Corn Bunting** at Embo, which was present from 13-15 May. From 15 May, Balnakeil became a bit of a hotspot when a **Baird's Sandpiper** turned up, to be followed two days later by a **Temminck's Stint** and Highland's second ever **Pallid Harrier**, then on the 19th two **Ruff**. A pair of **Canada Geese** at Bay of Culkein on 20 May is perhaps a sign of colonising birds pushing even further north. A major highlight was when the likely-returning



Short-toed Eagle was rediscovered in south-east Sutherland on 24 May. It remained in the same general area until 5 June and was widely twitched by a large number of birders. Spring drew to a close with a **Rose-coloured Starling** at Kinlochbervie on 28 May and a **Lesser Whitethroat** at Droman on 29 May.

Summer/Breeding: There were some interesting summer duck records, with **Gadwall** proven breeding at Balnakeil, where perhaps five pairs were present. A drake **Green-winged Teal** was at Dalchork on 22 June and a pair of agitated **Ring-necked Duck** was reported from a Sutherland Loch in late June, although they were not seen on a follow-up visit. Similarly, two intriguing **Red-necked Phalarope** records involved an adult female at one Sutherland site on 1 June and another at a quite different site on 17 June. A late **Long-tailed Skua** was heading north off Brora on 8 June. **Rose-coloured Starlings** were still around, with one reported from Scourie on 14-17 June and another at Bettyhill on 3 July. On 19 June a **White-billed Diver** was seen again off Brora. In July, a **Marsh Harrier** turned up at Balnakeil on the 2nd, a **Temminck's Stint** was found at an inland loch and there was a good count of 142 early returning **Sanderling** at Dornoch on 19 July. Another good count was 590 **Manx Shearwaters** off Brora on 25 July, although this was beaten by 1000 from Embo on 22 August. During August, even more birds had started moving and a **Great White Egret** turned up at Melvich on the 12th, **Marsh Harriers** at Stoer on the 14th and Clashmore on the 19th, two juvenile **Black Terns** at Dornoch on the 23rd and two juvenile **Long-tailed Skuas** off Embo on the 25th.

Autumn: Early September seabird movements involved some unprecedented counts of large shearwaters. On the 2nd, a **Cory's Shearwater** and a **Balearic Shearwater** were seen off Embo, with possibly the latter bird being seen the same day off Helmsdale, where two **Great Shearwaters** were also logged. The 4th saw even more activity, with two **Cory's Shearwaters** off Embo and another off Lothbeg, four **Great Shearwaters** off Lothbeg and two off Embo, two **Balearic Shearwaters** off Lothbeg and, most amazingly of all, a **Fea's/Desertas Petrel** off Lothbeg Point which was then seen off Helmsdale as it tracked north. On the same day at least 70 **Sooty Shearwaters** were also recorded heading north. More typical migrants involved a **Reed Warbler** at Durness on 7 September, five **Ruff** at Dornoch on the same day and two **Little Stints** with four **Curlew Sandpipers** at Dornoch on 12 September. On 13 September a **Leach's Petrel** was caught in a fish farm cage at Loch a' Chairn Bhain and released. A second sighting this year of a **Green Woodpecker** in Sutherland, this time in Strath Oykel on 24 September, may hint of a northward push from this normally very resident species. Late September saw a small influx of **Yellow-browed Warblers**, with one at Dornoch on the 26th, singles at Kyle of Durness and Durness on the 28th, when two were also present at Balnakeil. A bird at Scourie on 2 October was probably part of the same influx. On 28 September a **Hobby** was seen at Dornoch. On 7 October, 52 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were present at Tongue and, on 15 October, three **Ruff** at Balnakeil, where a **Lesser Whitethroat** was seen on the same day. A late **Garden Warbler** was at Melvich on 18 October and, on same day, a juvenile **Long-tailed Skua** was seen off Embo. A small fall on 23 October delivered a nice rarity



in the form of a **Blyth's Reed Warbler** to Loch Borralie, Balnakeil and two **Yellow-browed Warblers**, one at Balnakeil and the other at Melvich. On 24 October another **Balearic Shearwater** flew past Brora. One of the best records of the year was on 3 November when a **Pallid Swift**, part of a large UK influx, was recorded at Brora, a Highland first. On the same day a late **Ruff** was at Melness. On 6 November there was a high count of 29 **Little Gulls** at their Brora hotspot. A **Kingfisher** at Loch Culag, Lochinver on 8 November must have been at the extreme north-west of its UK range. Yet another **White-billed Diver** was recorded off Brora on 10 November. Staying offshore, single **Grey Phalaropes** were reported from Embo on 11 November and Brora on 26 November, and on 18 November there was a high count of seven **Pomarine Skuas** at Embo. From 18-20 November a **Great White Egret** was present in the Strath of Kildonan.

Early Winter: Part of a small influx, 28 **Waxwings** were reported from Bonar Bridge on 20 November and 12 at Brora on 1 December. A **Red-necked Grebe** was off Embo on 21 November. A wintering **Chiffchaff** was at Melvich on 5 December. The only "rare" geese of the year were two **European White-fronted Geese** at Golspie on 10 December. Finally, a **Water Pipit** was present from 12-28 December at Dornoch Point, making this one of the most reliable sites for this species in Highland.

Ross-shire

by Andy Williams

Winter: Wildfowl and seabird records predominated winter birding in the district. The 1st of January saw a drake **Green-winged Teal** off Tain links, with two drakes present there from 7-12 January. There were 20 **Black-throated Divers** in Gruinard Bay on 11 January. Tarbat Ness held six **Little Auks** on 15 January and, three days later, five **Velvet Scoters** were present at the same site. A **Ruddy Shelduck** was a nice find in Udale Bay on 22 January. The following day, a **European White-Fronted Goose** was noted at Shandwick Mains while, back at Tain Bay, the **Shelduck** flock stood at 289 birds. Nearby, there were 10 **Grey Plovers** at Tain Links. Other notable records for the day included 254 **Pintail** and 24 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** at Nigg Bay. A drake **Pintail** was in Ullapool on 26 January, there were 39 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** at Rosemarkie on 27 January and two **Long-tailed Ducks** in Loch Gairloch on 30 January. A nice flock of 105 **Barnacle Geese** was noted at Gruinard Bay on 1 February and a **Nuthatch** in Strathpeffer on 8 February. There were nine **Grey Partridges** near Tain on 11 February and, the following day, another **Nuthatch** was at Contin. **Common Scoter** occurs in very low numbers off the west coast of the district, so a single bird at Little Gruinard on 13 February was a welcome record. At Loch Eye on 16 February, the **Shoveler** count stood at 14 birds and, later in the month, on 24 February, an impressive count of 3000 **Pink-footed Geese** was made near Tarbat Ness.



SOC trip in January to Udale Bay c. Carol Miller

Spring: A good count of seven **Stock Doves** was made near Tain on 3 March. A **Little Gull** was at Tarbat Ness on 9 March and, the following day, the **Scaup** flock at Saltburn stood at 250 birds. There were 150 **Barnacle Geese** at Achiltibuie on 12 March. A **Red-necked Grebe** at Tarbat Ness on 20 March was a good record, as was a single **Pochard** seen at nearby Loch Eye the following day. Four **Greenshanks** at Loch Glascarnoch on 29 March heralded the return of birds from their wintering quarters elsewhere. A surprise **Magpie** turned up at Gairloch on 30 March, not necessarily one for sorrow, in consideration of the paucity of west coast records for this species. On 2 April a **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** was present at Portmahomack. **Scaup** numbers continued to build and on 11 April there was a



flock of 440 in Udale Bay. A long-staying female **Ring-necked Duck** was reported near Loch Kinellan until 17 April. A good record of a **Red-necked Grebe** was made at Inverasdale, Loch Ewe from 17-20 April. **Common Scoter** numbers peaked off Portmahomack on 30 April, with an impressive count of 1500 birds. On 14 May 26 **Purple Sandpipers** were at Tarbat Ness, an unexpected **Pied Flycatcher** was reported singing by Loch Broom on 20 May and five **Wood Sandpipers** were recorded three days later at a traditional, nearby breeding site. A **little Gull** was at Chanonry Point on 27 May. Bird movements became spicier towards the end of the month, with two **Common Cranes** over Hilton of Cadboll and a **White-billed Diver** past Tarbat Ness on 31 May.

Summer/Breeding: There was an interesting record of a **Green Woodpecker** at Kernsary in the west of the district on 5 June. Could this species theoretically push north and west, perhaps in a similar vein to Nuthatch? A singing **Common Rosefinch** was a nice find at Marybank on 7 June. A **Bonaparte's Gull** at Firemore beach on 5 July was a lovely surprise bird for the district. This was followed by more traditional fare, a singing **Quail** at Hilton of Cadboll on 14 July and a **Corncrake** at Achiltibuie the following day. On 15 July also, a **Honey Buzzard** was reported in the east of the district. This remains a scarce and probably overlooked/under-recorded species in the district. A **Little Stint** was at Cromarty on 3 August and four **Stock Doves** were at Udale Bay on 18 August. Seabird passage started to pick up later in the month, with a single **Pomarine Skua** reported from Tarbat Ness on 30 August. The same bird, or another, was seen at Chanonry Point the following day.

Autumn: Further seabird movements were noted, with three **Storm Petrels** off Hilton of Cadboll on 3 September. A **Great Shearwater** was seen from the Ullapool-Stornoway ferry. The same vessel was utilised by ardent sea-watchers on 7 and 10 September, when counts of a 100 or so **Sooty Shearwaters** were seen on both voyages. It was a good autumn in the Minch for pelagic shoals of baitfish and these were obviously a factor in holding good numbers of seabirds in situ for a protracted period of time. Also on 7 September, a juvenile **Common Rosefinch** was seen at Tarbat Ness. A **Glaucous Gull** was reported in Ullapool on 10 September. Two days later a juvenile **Black Tern** was seen at Chanonry Point. A **Turtle Dove** was a splendid record for the district, with a bird recorded at Big Sands, Gairloch from 13-21 September. A record of this species at nearby Red Point on 15 September may well have been the same roaming bird. An adult **Sabine's Gull** was a good record at Balintore on 18 September. On 24 September, there were two **Grey Plovers** at Peffery Point, Dingwall and a **Little Stint** at Tain. A productive sea-watch at Greenstone Point on 26 September turned up 500 **Kittiwakes**, three **Long-tailed Skuas** and a **Leach's Petrel**. Records of **Yellow-browed Warblers** appear to have dwindled over very recent years, so three birds at Tarbat Ness on 29 September was a welcome find. A **Tundra Bean Goose** was located at Udale Bay on 2 October. There were 14 **Long-tailed Ducks** off Chanonry Point on 6 October. In the west of the district, 15 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were seen on the following day near Gairloch. Also out west, a single **Great Shearwater** was a nice record from the Ullapool-Stornoway ferry on 15 October. Other



interesting west coast records included a single **Grey Plover** on Firemore beach on 24 October and two **Long-tailed Ducks** in Little Loch Broom on 29 October. Back east on 30 October, a lovely flock of 40 **Waxwings** was noted near Tain. These frequented the area for some time and were enjoyed by a number of birders. A **Mediterranean Gull** was a pleasing find in Applecross Bay on 1 November. The same site had a **Little Gull** on 8 November and, on the same day, there was also a **Velvet Scoter** further north at Poolewe. In the east, a splendid adult **White-billed Diver** was seen off Tarbat Ness on 19 November, a **Firecrest** was at Avoch on the Black Isle on 25 November and autumn closed with two **Pochards** on Loch Eye on 28 November.



SOC outing in December on Cromarty Firth c. Susan Seright

Early Winter: Three **Gadwall** were recorded at Tain on 11 December. The following day a splendid **Black Redstart** was found at Nigg Ferry. On 15 December, two **Red-necked Grebes** were off Ardmair Point, a very good west coast record. The final noteworthy birds of the year for the district were a single **Jack Snipe** at Tarbat Ness and 26 **Slavonian Grebes** in Udale Bay, both records occurring on 28 December.

Inverness District

by Al McNee

Winter: In Inverness District 2022 began, somewhat inevitably, with some of the previous year's birds still present. So Merkinch's **Kingfisher**, Milton of Culloden's



Great Crested Grebe and Dalziel's putative **Grey-bellied Brent Goose** were each relocated early in January. The grebe was to prove a long-stayer. Coastal sites normally yield good January counts, but this did not generally apply, with only a few big numbers seen. These included 600 **Wigeon** at Alturlie on the 5th, 43 **Red-breasted Mergansers** off the Carse of Delnies on the 16th, 3000 **Pink-footed Geese** at Dalziel on the 18th, 80 **Black-tailed Godwits** in the Beaully Firth on the 23th, 240 **Redshank** at Clachnaharry on the 24th, 300 **Teal** at Alturlie on the 24th and 145 **Curlews** at Milton of Culloden on the 28th. Inland, a few notable January records concerned a **Merlin** on the 15th in Strath Dearn, a **Peregrine Falcon** near Fort Augustus on the 19th, a **Dipper** at Whitebridge on the same day and two **Stonechats** near Farr on the 25th, all perhaps related to less-than-average wintry conditions in these locations. **Bramblings** had their peak district appearances in January, with 81 at Ruthven on 24 January, 40 at Corrimony on the 21st and 30 at Loch Ashie on the 27th. Wintering **Waxwing**, **Blackcap**, **Snow Bunting** and **Redwing** numbers peaked mid-month at one, three, 43 and 117, respectively! February saw the district's only white-winged gull appearance, an immature **Glaucous Gull** at Alturlie Point. Some species were recorded in impressive totals in February, including 20 **Long-tailed Tits** at Carse of Ardersier on the 7th, 500 **Starlings** at Milton of Gollanfield on the 8th, 50 **Pied Wagtails** at Raigmore Hospital on the 10th, 60 **Yellowhammers** and 300 **Linnets** all at Ardersier on the 17th and 450 **Lapwings** at Easter/Wester Dalziel on the 25th.

Spring: Brent Goose numbers peaked at 44 at Whiteness on 10 March, when there were also 400 **Starlings** at Drumashie. On the following day, 60 **Pied Wagtails** congregated at Scretan Burn, Inverness and 14 **Goldeneye** were off Alturlie. The latter total is a reflection of how numbers of wildfowl have fallen hereabouts in recent years. A change was heralded by the arrival of four **Chiffchaffs** at Seafiel on the 14th, although the several hundred **Knot** there that day, and the 65 **Twite**, eight **Black-throated Divers** and two **Velvet Scoters** at Carse of Delnies on the 16th, indicated that many species were not yet ready to move on. Highland's first **Osprey** of 2022, at Errogie on the 18th, was an impressively early arrival. Next day, Whiteness Head had the only recorded **Grey Plover** for the district, plus over 200 **Gannets** and **Guillemots**. As March came to an end, two **Velvet Scoters** at Alturlie were a good find, this species being scarce in the district. April opened with a fine **White-fronted Goose** at Beaully and three **Peregrine Falcons** in Strath Dearn. The food-carrying **Song Thrush** in Inverness on 4 April reflected the importance of this period for resident species, but migration was soon evident with the first **Swallow** at Dores on 7 April. The first noted summer migrants in the district were also not particularly early, with **House Martin** in Inverness on the 17th, **Wheatear** in upper Strath Dearn on the 20th, **Whitethroat** at Fort George on the 23rd, **Swift** and **Garden Warbler**, both on 9 May in Inverness. Two days earlier, diligent record-taking had noted 17 **Tree Sparrows**, nine **Common Sandpipers**, 43 **Willow Warblers** and 12 **Cuckoos**, all in Strathfarrar. The **Marsh Harrier** at Alturlie on 1 May was an excellent find, as was the sole district drake **Garganey** at Alturlie Pools on 11 May. April's earlier total of nearly 70 **Black-tailed Godwits** at sites either side of Inverness had been reduced to a single, over-summering at Merkinch from early May. As the spring progressed, good totals of various species such as **Common Crossbills** at Blackfold, **Goosanders** off Milton of Culloden, **Mute Swans** at Milton of Culloden



and **Common Gulls** at Culloden were noted. Three stand-out species were also observed; the adult **Green-winged Teal** at Alturlie from 14-21 May and **Pied Flycatcher** in Strath Dearn on 27 May, for their relative rarity in the district, but also the singing **Corn Bunting** on 30 May at Gollanfield, proving this species was still, just, hanging on. A single **Quail**, calling near Beaully from 30 May to 1 June was the only record of this hard-to-see species in 2022.

Summer/Breeding: Once again the district proved to be a breeding hotspot, with species as varied as **Whooper Swan**, **Goosander**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Red Grouse**, **Grey Partridge**, **Water Rail**, **Woodcock**, **Long-eared Owl**, **Magpie**, **Skylark**, **Willow Warbler**, **Redwing**, **Tree Sparrow**, **Grey Wagtail** and **Corn Bunting** all confirmed as breeding successfully in 2022. Notable sightings in this period were of 140 **Swifts** over Whiteness Head on 29 June, an adult **Hobby** and several reeling **Grasshopper Warblers** east of Inverness. Towards the end of this period there were few records of note, although triple-digit numbers of **Goosander** at both Milton of Culloden and Fort George were an improvement on recent trends for this species. The district's peak of **Common Sandpiper** numbers was rather low at six at Fort George in early August. The reedbeds at UHI have developed well, and 200 **Swallows** and good numbers of **House Martins** there in mid-August supported this view. Perhaps the most unexpected record was the appearance of an immature **Long-tailed Skua** on 25 August at Whiteness Head.

Autumn: Arguably the most exciting period of the year began with solid counts of predictable species in the first half of September: 200+ **Sandwich Terns** at Fort George; 500 **Greylag Geese** in the Culloden area; 130 **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Ardersier; 150 **Mistle Thrushes**, 700 **Wigeon** and 820 **Oystercatchers** at Castle Stuart; 120 **Canada Geese** at Milton of Culloden; and 700 **Pink-footed Geese** at the Carse of Ardersier. Strath Dearn also was a September hotspot, with 100 **Meadow Pipits**, 80 **Mistle Thrushes** and 50 **House Martins** all seen on 14 September. Wader passage was modest, with three local sightings of both **Curlew Sandpiper** and **Ruff** from early September. The 11th was a late date for **Spotted Flycatcher** at Culloden and the 18th for **Redstart** at nearby Smithton. A wandering **Ruddy Shelduck** was noted at Ardersier on 20 September, a notable record of a species that might yet be categorized as wild. Over 500 of both **Starlings** and **Redshanks** were noted in Inverness in late September. Movements of waders continued, with the last **Common Sandpipers** seen at Moy on 26 September and incoming **Black-tailed Godwits** and **Lapwing** peaking at 42 and 300, respectively, on the Beaully Firth in early October. **Peregrine Falcons** were noted in Strath Dearn in early October, perhaps hunting the 150 **Redwings** and 50 **Goldfinches** there. Early October is the time for goose arrivals, with hundreds of **Greylag**, more than 50 **Brent** and a single **Barnacle** all seen in the east of the district at this time. Standout records for late October included 150 **Lesser Redpolls** at Wester Balbeg, 500 **Teal** at Seafield, 200 **Golden Plover** at Alturlie Point and the district's only two **Jack Snipe** near Dalcross. November is not the obvious month for the top district bird to be found, but the 8th was a red-letter day indeed, as a **Pallid Swift** was spotted at the Carse of Ardersier, associating with two **Swallows**. This bird just missed being a first for Highland, one having been seen at Brora five days earlier, and, unfortunately, it did not linger.



November also saw some 300 **Linnets** at Inverness Airport and Alturlie, a single **Pochard** at Bunchrew on the 14th, **Little Auks** off Fort George on the 19th, a **Goshawk** over Craig Phadrig/Dunain on the 21st and the presumed returning **Great Crested Grebe** at Alturlie next day.

Early Winter: This was a generally predictable spell, with good counts of regular species prevailing. This applies to the 33 **Mute Swans** at Milton of Culloden on 8 December and to the 15 **Rock Pipits** on 10 December, 5000 **Pink-footed Geese** on 15 December, 1210 **Wigeon** on the 15th and 400 **Greylag Geese** on the 16th, all at Alturlie. Two **Common Redpolls** were seen at Craig Phadrig/Craig Dunain on 12 December, with 20 **Waxwings** briefly gracing Inverness on 20 December. Even more unexpectedly, Christmas Day produced an outstanding record of a **Bittern** in the east of the district, unfortunately only noted via a camera trap. That day also had the district's top **Fieldfare** count of 300 at Drumashie. Finally, the **Kingfisher**, first noted returning to Merkinch in mid-August, was still present at the year's end.

Badenoch & Strathspey

by David Bain

Winter: The year began with reports of **Lapwing** already in the district; 20 birds were at Invertromie on the 1st! A **Merlin** was at Killiehuntly the same day, followed by another sighting, at Balgowan, the next day. Two **Golden Plovers** were at Dell of Killiehuntly on the 3rd. More surprisingly, one was seen on breeding grounds on Clach Meall Dubh, in the hills SE of Newtonmore, on the 13th, followed by seven there five days later! A **Grey Wagtail** was at Dell of Killiehuntly on the 3rd, with another seen at Loch Insh on the 7th. A big flock of **Bramblings**, feeding on wild bird cover at Nethy Bridge, numbered 480 on the 5th. Five **Jays** were seen at Grantown-on-Spey on the 9th. A report of two **Jackdaws** of the NE European race came from Aviemore on the 12th. **Nuthatches** were reported from Loch an Eilein on 13-20 January. On the 16th, 30 **Canada Geese** were at Dell of Killiehuntly and 12 **Cormorants** at Balavil, Insh Marshes. A single **Waxwing** was seen at Aviemore on the 17th and 30th. A **Kingfisher** was on the Spey at Revack Lodge, near Grantown-on-Spey on the 18th. The first returning **Oystercatcher** was at Grantown-on-Spey on the 30th, followed by seven more at Invertromie on 12 February. The **Snow Bunting** flock at Cairn Gorm car park peaked at 45 birds on 6 February. Three **Hawfinches** and three **Twite** were found at Nethy Bridge on the 14th, one or two of each staying until the 24th. Two **Curlews**, the first reported, were at Invertromie on the 17th, followed by 10 at Dell of Killiehuntly six days later. Soon, larger accumulations were seen, such as 150 at Dulnain Bridge on the 27th, before dispersal to the breeding grounds.

Spring: Four **Ringed Plovers** were found at Cluny Castle, Badenoch on 4 March, followed by two more at Loch Insh on the 12th. These reports were the first of an increasing number from inland sites. On the 11th 15 **Goldeneye** were at Loch Insh. The first recorded **Redshanks** back in the district were at Insh Marshes the same day, followed by five at Dell of Killiehuntly on the 13th. Loch Morlich hosted 61



Whooper Swans on the 18th. The first returning **Sand Martins**, two birds, were at Loch Insh on the 20th. Numbers soon built up to 60 at Boat of Garten on the 24th and 200 by the 30th at Loch Insh. Reports of **Ring Ouzel** came from Pitmain estate near Kingussie and the Cairngorm ski area on the 22nd. **Slavonian Grebes** returned to three lochs in Strathspey, the earliest on the 23rd. There were still **Brambling** flocks about, 200 in several flocks at Anagach, but the Nethy Bridge peak count was down to 57 birds, in a garden, on 31 March. A pair of **Shoveler** was at Insh Marshes on 2 April, followed by two pairs seen there on the 11th and 22nd. An early **Redstart** was at Allt Ruadh, Glen Feshie on the 5th, followed by records from Grantown-on-Spey and Loch Alvie 12 days later. Insh Marshes had a **Greenshank** on the 6th. As in 2021, **Redwing** song was heard at seven sites across the district, from 7 April to 21 June. On the 10th, 1390 **Pink-footed Geese** flew north through Glen Feshie. The first **Green Sandpiper** record was of two birds in Abernethy on the 12th. Other first reports were of a **Common Sandpiper** on the 13th at Easter Tulloch, Strathspey, a **Swallow** the same day at Drumguish and two **House Martins** on the 15th at Tulloch Klondyke in Strathspey. A **Whinchat** was reported from Cairn Gorm on the 18th. **Dunlin** were back on their breeding grounds two days later, when two birds were seen on Carn Tuairneir, Cromdale hills. Insh village had a male **Black Redstart** from 20-26 April. A **Fieldfare** at Drumguish from the 23-24th was the last spring record of the species, as were **Brambling** sightings at Anagach Woods and Drumguish on the 25th. The first report of **Dotterel**, on 1 May, was of a single bird on a mountain in the Cairngorms; six days later a pair was seen on a neighbouring summit. There were more BirdTrack records of **Pied Flycatcher** than in 2021 and from more sites. Craigellachie NNR at Aviemore was, as usual, the most prolific source, but the first singing male was at Ord Ban on 4-6 May, then others at Newtonmore on the 12th, Abernethy and Loch Vaa on the 15th. A **Turtle Dove** was seen in Grantown-on-Spey on the 5th. A pair of **Temminck's Stints** was found in the district on the 16th. A single male also turned up and singing, display and territorial defence was noted. No further evidence of breeding was obtained. There were 17 reports of **Quail** from Strathspey, 15 of those from Nethy Bridge between 26-31 May, of one or two birds in the same area. Birds were also heard at Delliefure Farm, Grantown-on-Spey on the 27th and 28th.

Summer/Breeding: The first food-carrying **Wheatears** were seen at two locations in the Lairig Ghru, on 6 May. The first **Goldeneye** ducklings were seen at Boat of Garten on 17 May and evidence of similar success for **Red Grouse** came from Meall Chuaich, near Dalwhinnie on the 20th. A **Whimbrel** was seen at a site in Badenoch, singing and defending territory, on 1 June. It had a mate by the 19th and the pair were seen with two chicks on 1 and 3 July. There was an unusual report of a single adult **Long-tailed Skua** present from 11-16 June at a lochan south of Newtonmore and possibly the same individual was recorded at Invertromie on 2 July. A notable sighting at Tullochgribban, Duthil on 12 July was of an adult **Quail** with 3 newly-fledged juveniles just about able to fly, flushed from barley fields. On the Cairngorm massif, 10 **Ptarmigan** were on Cnap nan Laogh, in the Moine Mhor on 14 July. Four **Magpies** were seen at Loch Garten on 12 August and a drake **Mandarin Duck** in eclipse plumage was present there from the 22-26th. Post-breeding assemblies of **Ring Ouzel** were noted in the same areas as in



2021, namely 13 birds at Loch Bhrodainn, Gaick on 31 August and four at Gaick Lodge on 2 October.

Autumn: The last sighting of a **Cuckoo** came from near Kingussie on 4 September. The last for the year also were 55 **House Martins** at Drumguish on the 7th. The **Hen Harrier** roost at Insh had 3-4 birds early in the month, rising to 10 on 2-5 October and again to 8-10+ between 31 October and 20 November. The big surprise of the month was the finding of two first-year **Ruffs**, near Carrbridge, which stayed from 14-16 September. Five **Sand Martins** were seen at Boat of Garten on the 24th, the last for the year. The first **Fieldfares** were reported from Gaick Lodge on 2 October. Later arrivals in the month appeared to occur on the hills around the Lodge, with 300 birds on Tom Reamhar on the 16th, 300 at the Lodge on the 21st and 23rd, and 100 on Bruach Dhu to the north on the 21st and 29th. Another last sighting for the year was of 70 **Swallows** at Drumguish on 4 October. On the 5th 21 **Ravens** were seen at Glenshero Lodge, Laggan. Invertromie had 40 **Whooper Swans** on the 8th. There were two late sightings of **Ospreys**, one at Nethy Bridge on the 10th and another at Rothiemurchus on the 14th. A female-type **Smew** (redhead) seen at Bogach on the 18th may also have been the bird reported from Loch Alvie. On the 18th, 22 **Golden Plover** were seen on Geal Charn, Drumochter and six **Jays** were reported from Loch Pityoulish. **Redwing** were reported from Dorback on the 21st and Glen Banchor on the 23rd, with flocks of 160 and 155 respectively. A male **Ring Ouzel** was seen with **Redwing** in upper Glen Tromie on 25 October. A **Common Crane** turned up at Ardverikie, Loch Laggan on the 24th and, two days later, a **Merlin** was seen inter-acting with four **Hen Harriers** at an Insh roost. Three **Twite** were noted at Grantown-on-Spey on 7 November. Loch Insh had four **Pochard** on the 8th and a single from 14-23 November. Two **Common Scoter** were there on the 15th. Twelve **Snow Buntings** were at the Cairngorm car park on the 16th and 10 were seen on Beinn Udlamain, Drumochter on the 28th. A **Nuthatch** was at Torr Alvie on 17 November.

Early Winter: The best counts of **Whooper Swan** included 48 at Balavil and 62 at Insh Marshes on 1 December. A female **Ring-necked Duck** was present on Loch Morlich from the 7th through to January 2023. Nethy Bridge had 50 **Waxwings** on the 17th and a **Green Woodpecker** was at Loch Garten on the 24th. Finally, as this summary opened with the report of 20 **Lapwing** inland at Invertromie on New Year's Day, it has to be mentioned that a few lingered in the district into winter, with the last, a single bird, seen at Insh Marshes on Christmas Day.

Lochaber

by Sean Morris

Winter: There were numerous reports from Rum in the first few days of the year, including five **Mistle Thrushes** on 3 and 9 January, three **Jack Snipe** on the 4th and 7th, and 11+ **Woodcock** on the 7th. On 11 January, wader counts in Kentra Bay included 12 **Knot** and 28 **Redshank**, and a **Grey Wagtail** was noted at Tulloch Station. Twelve **Purple Sandpipers** were noted in Mallaig on 12 January, then back over in Kentra Bay nine **Goosanders** were counted on the 13th. Another good sawbill count was 37 **Red-breasted Mergansers** on Loch Linnhe on 15 January.



Another large wildfowl count, on the 17th on Loch Arienas, was 140 **Canada Geese**, a species that continues to increase in numbers in the area. On 26 January 160 **Siskins** were reported at Dalnabreck. On the same date, a **Little Auk** was reported from Arisaig, while, interestingly, a dead one was also found in Roy Bridge during the month. Another **Little Auk** was recorded at Achabeag, Morvern during February. There were large counts of 37 **Great Northern Divers** and 40 **Slavonian Grebes** on Loch Linnhe on 28 January, followed by more large wildfowl counts of 232 **Canada Geese** and 214 **Greylag Geese** at Kinlochmoidart on 2 February. Sadly, a **Little Egret** that had been seen on Canna in early February was found dead there on the 13th, but it was a good record nonetheless. At Tulloch Station 25 **Coal Tits** were counted on Valentine's Day and there was a good count of 120 **Starlings** at Kildonan, Eigg on the 18th, as well as a **Long-eared Owl** at Dalnabreck the same day. A **Kingfisher** was seen at Morar on 26 February and the final wader counts of the month at Kentra Bay on the 27th included five **Greenshank**, 91 **Dunlin** and a **Grey Plover**.

Spring: A **Stock Dove** appeared on Eigg on 6 March, staying until the 12th; it was just the fourth record for Eigg and the first since 2012. On 7 March a **Magpie** was seen in Fort William and it, or different birds, were also seen there on 26 and 29 March, and 24 April. A reasonably large count of 346 **Herring Gulls** in the Fort William area on 10 March was followed by a count of 140 **Whooper Swans** at Dalnabreck on the 12th. There was a fantastic record of a **King Eider** at Inverie, Knoydart on 16 March and, on the same day, a **Wheatear** was seen on Eigg and **Water Rail** heard on nocturnal migration recording equipment on Rum. Further **Water Rails** were recorded on Rum during nocturnal migration on 25, 27 and 28 March, and 20 and 27 April, showing that the species is possibly a more regular migrant through the region than most folk might realise. **Nuthatch** continues to increase in numbers and range and there were numerous records from locations about the area, including Arisaig, Fort William and Kinlochleven, throughout the spring. On 24 March, a **Kingfisher** was spotted in Glen Nevis and a **Manx Shearwater** was sound-recorded at night calling over Rum. More spring arrivals were seen during the next few days, including a **Willow Warbler** on Cow Hill, Fort William on 25 March and a couple of **Sand Martins** at Morar on the 26th. On 26 March also, 20 **Greenshank** were at the west end of Loch Shiel and 73 **Goldeneye** at Dalnabreck. Another **Kingfisher** was seen at Morar on 27 March and a **Grey Plover** was still at Kentra Bay along with 60 **Redshank**. The next day 28 **Great Northern Divers** were counted off Arisaig. **Whooper Swans** were on the move in early April, with 40 logged in the Sound of Sleat on the 2nd, and the peak count of **White-fronted Geese** at Kentra Moss occurred on the 10th when 130 were counted. Nearby, in Kentra Bay 30 **Bar-tailed Godwits** and 63 **Curlews** were counted on the same day. The 10th of April was a busy day, as seven **Jays** were seen at Loch nan Eala and a **Blackcap** turned up on Eigg, with another on Rum the following day. The first **Swallows** of the year were spotted at Kilmory, Rum, where two were seen on 11 April, and an adult **Little Gull** was seen there the next day. A **Hawfinch** was on Rum on 17 April, but the star bird of the month was probably a **Hoopoe** on Eigg on 20 April, only the fourth record for the island and the first since 1986. Spring migrants continued to arrive, with a couple of **Redstarts** and six **Tree Pipits** at Strontian on 21 April, a **Wood Warbler** at Resipole on the 23rd, **Ring Ouzel** on Rum on the 26th and a **Sedge Warbler** at Loch nan Ceall, Arisaig on the



28th. **Whimbrel** passage was noted during April and May, with seven at Kentra Bay on 23 April, 12 at Arisaig on the 28th, 28 at Traigh on 6 May and a single on Canna on 29 May. A **Hoopoe** was seen at Sanna Bay, Ardnamurchan on 2 May; might it have been the same bird as seen on Eigg in April? There were two reports of **Sandwich Terns** from Ardnamurchan during May and a **Whitethroat** was seen on Eigg on the 4th. A **Little Egret** was spotted at Caol on 6 May and it was still there on the 16th, while a drake **Gadwall** was also at Caol on the 14th. A **Garden Warbler** was at Loch Sunart on 15 May, the same day as a **Long-tailed Skua** was seen off Muck. Tern numbers began to build during May, with 50 **Arctic Terns** counted from Muck on the 17th, the same date as a **Pied Flycatcher** was heard singing on the Ardtornish Estate. Wader counts during May included 20 **Dunlin** at Kilmory, Rum on the 18th, eight **Common Sandpipers** at Ardtornish on the 19th, 12 **Sanderling** at Kilmory on the 20th, 14 **Dunlin** on Eigg on the 21st and 70 **Oystercatchers** on Canna on the 24th. Finally for the period, a **Short-eared Owl** was seen on Eigg on 24 May and a **Magpie** on Canna the day after.

Summer/Breeding: **Tufted Duck** broods were recorded at Acharacle, **Eider** chicks were first recorded on Eigg on 29 May and a **Common Scoter** pair was observed on a Lochaber breeding loch on 8 June. Recently-hatched **Ptarmigan** chicks were seen on Ben Tee on 9 June and **Water Rail** were also observed with young on Canna on 28 June. Up to four **Corncrakes** were on Canna on 14 and 18 June, but breeding was not confirmed. A **Lapwing** nest with eggs was found on Rum on 12 April and there were 35 pairs on Eigg. Twelve pairs of **Ringed Plover** nested on Eigg, with the first eggs reported on 12 April. Two or three pairs of **Curlew** also bred on Eigg, with the first downy chicks noted on 30 May. There were 14 breeding pairs of **Great Skua** on Canna, but breeding productivity could not be monitored due to avian flu restrictions. However, a single pair on Rum failed to raise any young. There were 56 **Puffin** AOS on Canna on 15 May and 201 individual birds were counted the previous day but, on a downside, **Fulmar** numbers on Canna have decreased to very low numbers. **Long-eared Owls** bred on Eigg and **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** were confirmed breeding in Ardnamurchan. **Garden Warblers** were proven to breed at Garbh Eilean and Achabeag, while fledged **Nuthatch** were seen at Loch Lochy on 15 June. Four pairs of **Spotted Flycatchers** were present on Eigg, but there was no proven breeding, unlike the **Redstarts** in Kentra Bay which produced fledged young on 5 July. A **Pomarine Skua** was seen off Eigg on 2 and 5 June, and there was an impressive count of 10000+ **Manx Shearwaters** off Ardnamurchan Point on the 4th. Two **Short-eared Owls** were seen on Muck on 8 June and a single appeared on Rum on the 21st. A **Rose-coloured Starling** visited feeders on Eigg until 26 June, a **Magpie** was again seen on Canna on 28 June, but the find of the month was possibly a **Great White Egret** on Loch Linnhe near Fort William on 30 June. Return wader passage was noted from early July, with an impressive 54 adult **Black-tailed Godwits** in full breeding plumage in Kentra Bay on the 2nd. More waders at Kentra during July included a couple of **Whimbrel** on the 19th, 28 breeding-plumaged **Knot** on the 25th and 79 **Curlew** on the 28th. A **Little Egret** was a good find at Fort William on 29 July, as were two **Pied Flycatchers** at Glenuig the following day. There were 'autumn passage' records of **Curlew Sandpiper** from Morar, Traigh and Ardnamurchan, while the only record of **Green Sandpiper** was a nocturnal migrant caught on sound recording equipment on Rum on 14 August. On 24



August, there were 12 **Black-tailed Godwits** at the Linnhe/Lochy mouth and a drake **Gadwall** at nearby Caol. Meanwhile, possibly up to three **Rose-coloured Starlings** were on Ardnamurchan. Twenty **Storm Petrels** were observed from the Mallaig to Lochboisdale ferry on 27 July and a **Water Rail** was recorded on nocturnal migration recording equipment on Rum on the 29th. On the final day of August, a **Goshawk** was seen at Loch Oich and a **Little Tern** at Lochailort.

Autumn: **Manx Shearwaters** totalled 500+ on 1 September off Shamhnan Insir, Rum and 44 **Ringed Plovers** were counted on Eigg the next day. The final record of a **Cuckoo** for the year was a bird in Fort William on 3 September and a **Red Kite** over nearby Corpach and Claggan lingered until the 4th. A late **Whitethroat** was recorded on 9 September at Achabeag. There were a 146 **Oystercatchers** and 41 **Goosanders** in Kentra Bay on 12 September and, just over a week later, there were large counts of 121 **Shags** at Sallachan and 136 **Red-breasted Mergansers** at nearby Clovullin. **Whooper Swans** were on the move in late September, when 25 were noted over Arisaig on the 26th. Two days later a **Nuthatch** was seen at Kinlochleven and, on Rum, 94 **Great Black-backed Gulls** were counted on the 29th and over 12 **Snipe** the next day. There were six late **House Martins** at Corran Ferry on 1 October and a **Green Woodpecker** was noted at nearby Inchree on the 4th. There were more **Whooper Swans** on the move over Arisaig when 50 passed over on 10 October. Then it was rather quiet until two **Snow Buntings** appeared on Rum on the 20th. A **Chiffchaff** on Eigg the next day hung around until 4 November. On 26 October, 131 **Redshank** were counted at Kentra Bay and eight **Whimbrel** were at Acharacle, where three **Yellowhammers** were seen the next day. Eigg was the place to be at the end of October, when eight **Sooty Shearwaters** were recorded on the 28th and two **Long-tailed Ducks** the next day were the first for the island for 20 years! On 19 November, 11 **Greenshanks** were at Ardnamurchan, 12 **Snow Buntings** were on Stob Coire Easain and 125 **Canada Geese** were on Loch Shiel. The probable highlight of the month was a **Serin** on Eigg on 21-29 November, a first for Highland, although a **Great White Egret** at Acharacle on the 29th was a close second place!

Early Winter: More **Whooper Swans** were moving over Arisaig on 1 November, when 82 were seen. Then on the 4th migrating **White-fronted Geese** were picked up on nocturnal flight call recording equipment on Rum. Two **Ring-necked Ducks** found on Loch Lochy on 15 November remained there until the end of the year and the peak count of **White-fronted Geese** at Kentra Bay occurred on the 17th, when 96 were counted. Kentra Bay held 12 **Shelduck** on 23 November and 38 **Bar-tailed Godwits** on the 29th. There were 110 **Eiders** off Ardgour on 2 December, five **Reed Buntings** at Acharacle on the 4th and a **Nuthatch** at Highbridge, Spean Bridge on the 8th. On 19 December, a **Kingfisher** was at Lochaline and a **Little Egret** at Resipole, Loch Sunart. It was then fairly quiet for the rest of December, but eight **Purple Sandpipers** in Mallaig on the 27th, two **Yellowhammers** at Achabeag on the 29th and a pair of **Blackcaps** in Fort William on the 30th brightened up the end of the year.



Skye & Lochalsh

by Bob McMillan

Winter: Good numbers of **Iceland Gulls** were present throughout January, with perhaps 7 or 8 different birds in the Portree area. A dead **Little Auk** was found in Loch Brittle on 13 January. As well as several dead **Puffins**, a number of live birds were recorded on the west coast of Skye, which is extremely unusual in winter. The number of **Jays** reported in Skye & Lochalsh continues to increase and three together at Reraig on 21 January was unusual. **Little Egrets** remain scarce in the area and a single at Glendale on 1 February was an unusual winter record. An immature **Velvet Scoter** was off The Aird, Gedintailor on 14 February. There was an exceptional count of 80 **Snow Buntings** at Glen Elchaig, Lochalsh on 19 February. A **Little Auk** was grounded by storms at Greshornish on 24 February and another was in Broadford Bay the following day. A second-winter **Mediterranean Gull** was found at Bayfield, Portree on 28 February and remained there until 6 April.

Spring: The first **Wheatear** was noted at Lower Milovaig on 13 March. A **Jay** was recorded at Kinloch, Sleat on 27 March, the first of several throughout the year in that area, where birds are obviously now resident. There was a **Willow Warbler** at Ashaig, Broadford on 28 March. A **Nuthatch** visiting feeders at Aird, Sleat on 1 April was the only report of the year. A visiting birder found a **Subalpine Warbler** near Raasay House on 20 April, only the second record for Skye & Lochalsh. Just as rare for this area was a drake **Mandarin Duck** at Kilmarie, Strathaird on 21 April. There were three late **Brent Geese** at Neist Point on 7 May. **Black Grouse** are slowly re-colonising Lochalsh and birds were present at a lek in the area on 7 May. A pair of **Shovelers** in Broadford Bay on 14 May was clearly on passage north. Another **Jay** was reported at Braigh an Uird, Sleat on 25 May.

Summer/Breeding: On 18 June an exceptional count of 60 **Common Scoters** flew into Broadford Bay. **Greylag Goose** numbers continue to increase and, on 20 June, a count of 1000+, consisting of moulting birds and fledglings, was noted at Glas Eilean, Dornie. At Neist Point on 24 June, there was a report of 11 **Arctic Skuas**, but only a single **Great Skua**. A pattern was emerging of extremely low numbers in the breeding **Great Skua** population, and it was obvious from analysis of carcasses that highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was seriously impacting the population. A dead **Great Skua** was found at Tarscavaig in late June. For the remainder of the summer the reporting level of the **Great Skua** population was about 25% of normal. Large numbers of dead seabirds were subsequently washed up on the west coast of Skye and many of these originated in breeding colonies on Canna. Clearly a tragedy was unfolding. A wide range of species was affected and it was understandable that apex predators, which scavenge on dead or dying birds, were likely to fall victim. **Great Skua** was a prime example. It was later in the year before it was also established that both **White-tailed Eagle** and **Golden Eagle** were impacted, with mortality found in fledglings. On Skye, the average number of fledglings produced in the **White-tailed Eagle** population was 16 between 2017-2021, but reduced to five in 2022. It is also suspected that some juveniles died post-fledging. Poor productivity in **Golden Eagles** was found elsewhere, although unfortunately the Skye population is no longer monitored comprehensively and it



is difficult to make informed observations. **Rose-coloured Starlings** were reported at Kyle of Lochalsh and Balmaqueen in late June. A first-summer **Mediterranean Gull** was present in Loch Portree from 11 July. A recently-fledged juvenile was seen in Broadford Bay on 28 July and remained for several days before it was joined by another. More unusually, an adult **Franklin's Gull** was seen briefly in Broadford Bay with **Black-headed Gulls** on 31 July, and is the first record for Skye & Lochalsh. A **Kingfisher** was reported at Knott near Loch Snizort Beag on 6 August and may have remained in the area for several months, as there were reports at Skeabost on 26 October and Park Bernisdale on 25 November. August was a good month for wader passage and 220+ **Whimbrel** flew south from Broadford Bay on the 11th. On the same day, there were flocks of 85 **Black-tailed Godwits** between Broadford Bay and Loch Portree. On 13 August 150 **Black-tailed Godwits** were in Broadford Bay. The long-staying first-summer **Mediterranean Gull** at Portree remained, having changed into second-winter plumage, and at least two juveniles were in Broadford Bay until the end of August.

Autumn: A **Green Woodpecker** was reported at Kinloch, Sleat on 3 September, only the third record for Skye. Wader passage continued in early September, with several reports of **Little Stint** and **Curlew Sandpiper**. The best records were from Broadford Bay, with three **Curlew Sandpipers** on 6 September and six **Little Stints** on 9 September, probably a local record for us. An eclipse drake **Pintail** was at Loch Portree on 11 September and remained there until the end of October. During favourable winds on 26 September, seven **Sooty Shearwaters** were noted off Duntuilm, and 12 **Pomarine Skuas** and 10 **Arctic Skuas** were seen in Broadford Bay. There were two calling **Yellow-browed Warblers** in Broadford on 5 October. A drake **Gadwall** was in Broadford Bay on 12 October. There had been a steady passage south of **Whooper Swans** throughout October. Following a night of bad weather over 200 moved south on 1 November from Broadford Bay through the 'Kinloch Gap' to the Sound of Sleat. These birds are thought to winter in the Solway Firth. **Mediterranean Gulls** had been reported regularly since the summer from several sites. The majority of these were juveniles and Portree was the favoured location, where they joined the small gull flocks. Counts included four on 7 October and a site record count of six on 9 October. The last **Mediterranean Gull** was seen on 4 November. Single **Lapland Buntings** were reported at the Heaste Road on 10 November and at Harrapool on 18 November. There were two stormbound **Grey Phalaropes** at Kilmarie Bay on 27 November. A very late **Common Rosefinch** was caught and ringed at Kilmuir on 29 November.

Early Winter: It was a poor winter for **Waxwings**, with reports from Broadford, Isleornsay, and Lochlonghead, where a single bird remained for several days from 18 November. December brought several reports of **Snow Bunting**, from Dunvegan, Heaste Road and Strathaird, but all in small numbers. Most **Skylarks** depart our area for the winter, so a report of two at Neist Point on 4 December was unusual. The first **Iceland** and **Glaucous Gulls** were reported from Portree on 6 December.



Systematic list for 2022

This systematic list is in taxonomic order and uses the spellings of scientific names which were published on the BOU website www.bou.org.uk in December 2022. However, we prefer to retain the old English names for species, rather than use the standardised English names introduced in 2006 by the International Ornithological Congress. The term 'Inner Moray Firth' refers to that area of the Moray Firth that borders the Highland recording area coastline - from the Ord of Caithness to Whiteness Head. The 'Inner Moray Firth Basin' refers to the low-lying areas in SE Sutherland, Easter Ross (including the Black Isle) and Inverness District that surround the 'Inner Moray Firth'. Please note that the vast majority of records which are submitted from the Ullapool to Stornoway ferry and the Uig to Tarbert/Lochmaddy ferries do not specify whether the birds were seen in the Highland or Western Isles recording areas. They are published here in good faith, but may be duplicated in the Outer Hebrides Bird Report.

The following abbreviations have been used in the text:

Breeding and Surveys:

Apparently Occupied Nests	(AON)
Apparently Occupied Sites	(AOS)
Apparently Occupied Territories	(AOT)
Wetland Birds Survey	(WeBS)

Organisations:

British Ornithologists' Union	(BOU)
British Trust for Ornithology	(BTO)
Highland Raptor Study Group	(HRSG)
National Nature Reserve	(NNR)
Rare Breeding Birds Panel	(RBBP)
Royal Air Force Ornithological Society	(RAFOS)
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	(RSPB)
Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot)	(SNH)
Scottish Wildlife Trust	(SWT)
University of the Highlands and Islands	(UHI)

The following terms have been used to denote a species status, in suitable habitat, in Highland:

Abundant	Widespread and numerous
Common	Regularly encountered
Uncommon	Fewer than 100 records annually
Scarce	Annual in small numbers
Rare	Ten or more records since 1900, but not recorded annually
Vagrant	Fewer than 10 records since 1900

For some species, the number of records submitted through BirdTrack is given as a crude indication of abundance; many of these refer simply to presence on visit lists. A better picture of week-by-week abundance is shown in BirdTrack Reporting Rate graphs, some of which are shown by permission from BTO.



Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

Scarce but increasing migrant and winter visitor; regular autumn migrant on west coast, especially Skye; small population winters in Inner Moray Firth; scarce in spring.

[Pale-bellied race] *Branta bernicla hrota*

Winter/Spring: All winter reports were from the east coast and involved the Moray Firth wintering flock. January counts included 24 at Nigg Bay on the 23rd and 39 at Rosemarkie on the 27th. There was a report of 44 birds at Whiteness on 10 March. The best April counts were again at Rosemarkie, with 48 on the 8th and 30 on the 12th. The only spring record on the west coast was three birds at Neist Point, Skye on the late date of 7 May.

Autumn/Winter: The first autumn reports were of a single in Broadford Bay on 4 September and two birds at Helmsdale on 5 September. In general, it was a poor autumn in the west, both in terms of the number of reports and the overall size of the groups. The best of these were from Broadford Bay, with 46 birds on 23 September, 49 on 6 October and 45 on 10 October. On 7 October there was a report of 15 at Inverasdale, Gairloch. In the north, there was a count of 52 at Kyle of Tongue on 7 October. At Whiteness Head on 10 October, a flock of 53 included about 50% juveniles. Later reports from the east coast included 43 birds at Nigg Bay on 10 November and 11 at Rosemarkie on 18 December.

(Black Brant) *Branta bernicla nigricans*

Winter: The putative Grey-bellied Brant was reported at Dalziel on 12 and 24 January.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Well-established in Lochaber and spreading, now breeding in Badenoch; locally common summer moult migrant to Inner Moray Firth but scarce elsewhere; very localised in winter months.

Winter/Spring: There was a small wintering group in Badenoch & Strathspey, with 30 birds at Dell of Killiehuntly on 16 January. Otherwise, the main concentrations were recorded in Lochaber, with a peak of 232 at Kinlochmoidart on 2 February. Other reports from Moidart included 140 birds at Loch Arianas on 17 January and 106 at Achabeag on 6 February. From March smaller numbers were reported, as wintering flocks dispersed. Northward expansion of the Lochaber population continues each spring. There were several reports from Skye & Lochalsh, including 10 birds at Kirkton on 20 February, nine at Loch na Dal on 31 March and eight in Broadford Bay on 10 April. There were three April reports from Eigg. There were pairs at the Bay of Culkein, and at Avernish, Lochalsh, on 20 May and a report of seven birds at Loch Achanalt on 23 May.



Breeding: On 12 May, a pair was noted at Loch Carron and subsequently seen with a gosling on 4 June. It is suspected this is the first breeding record for Wester Ross. On 12 May there was a pair with three goslings at Loch Insh. A count of 90 at Lochailort on 15 June included 20 juveniles. In total, there were 10 reports of confirmed breeding.

Summer: The annual moult migration to the Moray Firth was evident from 1 June, with 33 birds at Alness Point, which had increased to 110 by the 13th. Numbers at Udale Bay peaked at 600 by 18 August. It would be interesting to establish whether the Lochaber population joins the moult migration flocks to the Moray Firth. Summer Lochaber counts included 179 at Linnhe mouth, Fort William on 30 June and 188 on 18 July.

Autumn/Winter: The moulting flocks remained into autumn, with 150 at Udale Bay on 4 September, 120 at Milton of Culloden on 11 September and 44 at Loch Eye on 15 October. The small population at Loch Insh peaked at 48 on 11 November. In Lochaber, the best winter counts were 125 at Loch Shiel on 19 November and 93 at Achabeag on 5 December.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Locally common winter visitor to north and west, scarce elsewhere.

With increasing numbers of feral birds roaming around the Inner Moray Firth, it is now very difficult to distinguish genuinely wild birds in the area. All those reported below are thought to have been genuine migrants from Arctic breeding populations. (*However, see the chapter on escapes and presumed feral birds.*)

Winter/Spring: Counts of wintering flocks on Skye included 58 at Balmaqueen on 16 January and 100 at Staffin Bay on 7 April. Reports from the west coast included 105 birds at Gruinard Bay on 1 February and 150 at Achiltibuie on 12 March. On the north coast, the most significant concentration was 600 at Balnakeil on 30 January. Other reports of note included 250 at Kyle of Tongue on 18 January, 170 at Talmine on 1 February and 454 at Tongue on 8 March, with 300 there on 8 April. Small numbers were reported regularly from the east coast, with 11 at Dalziel on 21 January. Stragglers included singles at Nigg Bay on 19 April, Alturlie on 16 May, and Waterloo, Skye on 29 May.

Autumn/Winter: The first reports were of singles at Alturlie on 2 October and Loch Eye on 3 October. There was a notable arrival on 7 October, with 120 at Gairloch and several skeins over Broadford Bay and Portree. There were reports from Skye for several days subsequently, but all involved small flocks passing through. Reports from the north coast included 70 birds at Melness on 18 October and 700 at Balnakeil on 30 October. On Skye, the best count was 200 on Isay on 11 November. Reports from Tongue in December included 300 birds on the 1st and 230 on the 23rd.



Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Locally common breeder in north and west and expanding range, especially into Badenoch & Strathspey; common migrant and winter visitor, especially in east.

Winter/Spring: The species is widely recorded throughout the area, with 2300 reports throughout the year, although on BirdTrack many are simply recorded as 'present'. It can be difficult to distinguish between resident birds and migrants, although the largest flocks are normally the latter. Winter counts included 430 at Balliefurth on 15 January, 528 at Carr Road, Strathspey on 9 February and 300 at Ballagan on 27 February. The best count from Lochaber was 214 at Kinlochmoidart on 2 February. There were surprisingly few large counts in March, the best being 200 at Inverbrora on the 17th and 150 at Loch Eye on the 27th.

Breeding: Multiple broods of small young were reported at Insh Marshes on 6 May. Also in Strathspey, 55 adults and 26 young were reported at Kinchurdy on 7 May. At Lochindorb, 262 adults and 42 goslings were reported on 4 June. At Avielochan there was a report of 122 with 34 young in a creche on 4 June. At Lochcarron there were 45 adults and 40 young on 19 June. It was a very successful season on Eigg.

Number of pairs of Greylag Geese breeding at Insh Marshes RSPB Reserve 2013–2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	68	78	56	45	83	74	*	113	135

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19

Summer: Some exceptional counts were reported, probably involving moulting birds. At Glas Eilean on Loch Alsh, reports included 1000 birds on 20 June and 600 on 13 July. There were 500 at Loch Loyal on 30 June, 1000 at Insh Marshes on 13 July and 410 at Balavil on 17 July.

Autumn/Winter: Good numbers were reported regularly from Culloden/Milton of Culloden, including 550 on 1 September and 700 on 3 October, with 600 at nearby Ashton Farm on 9 October. October reports included 270 birds at Loch Eye on the 15th and 350 at Loch Flemington on 17th. Numbers at Dell of Killiehuntly peaked at 800 on 25 October, with 440 on 24 November and 390 on 12 December. There were 400 at Alturlie on 16 December.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Common winter visitor, especially in east with a marked spring passage; occasional breeding by feral birds and once by wild birds.

Winter/Spring: Regular reports throughout January included 3000 birds at Dalziel on the 18th and 2000 at Tarbat Ness on the 5th, increasing to 3000 there on 24 February. Numbers started to build up in March, with 3000 at Balliefurth on the 21st and 3000 at Carr Road, Strathspey on the 28th. Peak counts were in April,



with 4000 at Tarbat Ness on the 10th and at Nigg on the 19th. Northward passage was first noted at Ardnamurchan on 26 March. There was a good movement north on 10 April, with several skeins totalling 1500 through Skye, and 1390 counted through Glen Feshie. There were still 2500 at Nigg Bay on 4 May, seven at Strath Brora on 31 May and five final stragglers at Balnakeil on 8 June.

Note: There was significant mortality on the east coast as a result of avian flu.

Summer: Small numbers were recorded throughout the summer. A number of single birds associate with resident Greylag flocks in the west. There were also regular reports from Udale Bay.

Autumn/Winter: The first report was of 12 birds at Udale Bay on 12 September. There were widespread arrivals by 13 September, with 700 in the Carse of Ardersier. At Plockton, over 1000 in 17 skeins flew south-east on 16 September. Other movements included 2050 in off the sea at Laide on 26 September and 1100 over Shieldaig on Loch Gairloch the following day. Wintering flocks included 2500 at Alness on 10 October, 2000 at Munloch on 27 October and a peak of 5000 at Dalziel on 15 December.

Tundra Bean Goose *Anser serrirostris*

Rare winter visitor.

Autumn/Winter: There was a report of a single at Udale Bay on 2 October.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Winter visitor in small numbers in west, scarce in east.

[Greenland race] *Anser albifrons flavirostris*

Winter/Spring: The wintering flock in North Skye survived, with a single count of eight birds on 16 January. There were no other reports from Skye. The Kentra Moss flock continues to thrive, with monthly counts between January and April of 87-93 birds. There was a peak of 130 on 10 April, which could have involved additional migrating birds. There were other reports of singles from Beaully, Udale Bay, Dornoch and Golspie, the last one reported at Udale Bay on 23 April. These normally associate with flocks of Pink-footed Geese.

Autumn/Winter: The first report was of a single at Udale Bay on 8 October, which was reported subsequently. There was also a single at Dornoch on 29 October. At Kinloch on Rum birds were recorded on nocturnal migration on 3 and 4 November. Despite several searches, the small flock at Kilmuir, Skye was not located. At Kentra Moss, the first sighting was of 19 birds on 11 October. The flock had increased to 69 on 14 November and peaked at 96 on 17 November. Other reports included 90 birds on 22 November and 84 on 8 December, so it is encouraging that this population is sustaining.



[European race] *Anser albifrons albifrons*

Winter/Spring: An adult bird was present at Shandwick Mains, Easter Ross on 23 January.

Autumn/Winter: Two Russian birds were reported at Golspie on 10 December.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Resident in east, but scarce in north and west.

Winter/Spring: Birds were reported widely, mostly in pairs but there were no concentrations of note on BirdTrack. Larger numbers were recorded during WeBS counts as shown below, but again these were not significant. Although there were several reports from Lochaber, there were no reports from Skye & Lochalsh, nor Wester Ross.

Breeding: The first report of successful breeding was of a pair with six cygnets at Beechwood, Inverness on 14 May, exactly the same site date as in 2021. Occupied nests were reported at several sites throughout April and May, but there were very few reports of successful breeding.

Summer: In the Inverness area, there were 20 birds at Milton of Culloden on 19 May, presumably non-breeding, and 18 at Alturlie on 14 August. The best count was 110 at Loch Eye on 21 August.

Autumn/Winter: There were few significant concentrations and, even at Loch Eye, the peak count was only 40 on 13 September. Regular counts at Seafeld, Inverness included 28 on 18 September and 25 on 16 December. Similarly, at Milton of Culloden, reports included 24 birds on 31 October and 33 on 8 December. Finally, there were 25 at Alturlie on 31 December.

Mute Swan - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Dornoch Firth	27	19	83	29
Cromarty Firth	10	14	16	11
Beaully Firth	12	14	1	1
Inverness Firth	2	2	40	26
Moray Basin Lochs	29	39	44	38
TOTALS	80	88	184	105

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus colombianus*

Rare winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: An adult bird was found at Loch na Claise, Stoer on 17 April.



Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Has bred and odd individuals summer (some local breeding events appear to involve feral birds); common migrant and winter visitor, mainly in east.

Winter/Spring: Few large winter concentrations were recorded. There were 61 birds at the Loans of Tullich, Easter Ross on 2 January. At Hilton of Cadboll, reports included 49 birds on 16 February and 64 on 7 March. Migration north has been getting earlier each year and 39 birds at Loch Suardal, Skye on 1 March was a reflection of this. There were 140 at Dalnabreck, Lochaber on 12 March, 48 flying west at Rogart on 16 March and 61 at Loch Morlich on 18 March. April reports included 40 flying up the Sound of Sleat and 50 at Loch Vaich, Easter Ross on the 2nd. Large numbers are often reported from Fearn, but the best count there was 50 on 10 April.

Breeding: In respect of the feral population, a pair was in Strathfarrar on 13 June and another in Strathconon on 19 June, but there was no information on breeding. A pair was observed displaying at Loch Achanalt on 23 May and was still present on 7 June, but no further information on breeding was available.

Summer: A single summered at Loch Suardal, Skye.

Autumn/Winter: The summering straggler at Loch Suardal was still present on 24 September. Early arrivals included three birds at Loch Eye on 13 September, three at Dornoch on 23 September and 25 over Arisaig on 26 September. There was a major movement south on 6 October, with widespread reports on the west coast. There were 40 birds at Invertromie on 8 October. On 10 October, reports included 50 birds over Arisaig and 77 at Skeabost, Skye. There were 50 at Portmahomack on 12 October. On Eigg, there were seven records of migrating groups between 6 October and 29 November. There were large counts at Loch Eye, of 250 on 15 October, peaking at 425 on 28 October. There were 220 at Arabella on 16 October. On 1 November, significant passage was recorded at Breakish, Skye, with combined counts of 227 birds, and 82 were also recorded over Arisaig on the same day. There was a report of 100 at Portmahomack on 15 November. There were few large concentrations recorded afterwards. The best December counts included 48 at Balavil and 62 at Insh Marshes on the 1st, and 67 at Loans of Fearn on the 28th.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Breeder, but scarce in north and west; common in winter in Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: The largest concentrations were on the east coast, with peak numbers reported from Tain Bay, of 289 on 1 January, 250 on 15 March and 200 on 9 April. At Udale Bay, there were 124 on 31 January and 95 on 12 February.



Other reports included 155 birds at Inver on 12 March and 100 at Nigg on 17 March. Significantly larger counts were recorded on WeBS visits, as shown below.

Breeding: There were few breeding reports, from only five sites, all on the east coast. A pair with eight ducklings was the earliest reported, at Udale Bay on 4 June.

Summer: On 8 July, 40 birds were noted at Munlochy Bay and 30 at Udale Bay.

Shelduck - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	95	151	0	41
Dornoch Firth	317	805	34	548
Cromarty Firth	676	570	46	582
Beauly Firth	7	8	8	0
Inverness Firth	212	180	0	73
TOTALS	1307	1714	88	1244

Autumn/Winter: There is a disconnect between the numbers recorded during WeBS and counts recorded on BirdTrack. Birds disappear on moult migration during autumn, so early October WeBS counts are low and there are often few reports from the west coast. Late October counts on BirdTrack included 34 on the 24th at Udale Bay and 170 at Tain on the 27th, which may indicate birds returning from moult. Peak counts were 512 at Tain on 19 December and 301 at Udale Bay on 28 December. In the west, there were singles at Kilchoan on 25 October and at Kentra Bay on 28 October. There were 12 at Kentra Bay on 23 November.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Rare visitor or escape.

Winter/Spring: A single bird was reported at Udale Bay on 22 January. Presumably the same bird was reported on the Cromarty Firth at other locations, including Culbokie, Cromarty Bridge and Dingwall. Two birds were reported at Evanton on 9 April. A single bird was reported at Mountgerald near the Cromarty Bridge, between 6-19 May.

Autumn/Winter: A single was reported at Fort George on 3 September and remained in the Ardersier area until 20 September. Thereafter, the bird moved to Udale Bay where it was reported until 1 November. There was a report of two birds at Udale Bay on 17 October.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

Small introduced population in Strath Nairn; rare elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: Birds were present on the Black Water at Garve from 3 January, with four pairs present on 21 January. There was still a single there on 21 May. It



has not been confirmed whether these birds were a recent introduction, although they were being fed on the riverside. There was a pair at Farr on 17 March and a single there on 30 March. A drake was at Tain on 10 April and, unusually, a drake was at Kilmarie, Skye on 21 April, only the third record for Skye & Lochalsh.

Breeding: There was a bird on a nest with eggs in Calrossie Woods, near Tain on 14 April and a pair near a known nest site at Littlemill, Strath Nairn on 24 April. On 12 May there were two drakes and a female on a stream at Muir of Ord. In the known breeding area on the River Nairn on 14 May, there were six drakes and a female at Balnafoich, and four drakes at Tordarroch, but no confirmation of breeding.

Summer: On 22-26 August there was a drake in eclipse on Loch Garten.

Autumn/Winter: Although it was speculated in the 2021 report that there might be a new wild population at Contin, the only report was of a drake at nearby Loch Achilty on 16 September. The status of this group is therefore uncertain. Surprisingly, there were no other reports.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

Has bred; scarce migrant, mainly in east.

Spring: There were only three spring reports. There were three birds (one male and two females) at Loch an Aigeil, Stoer on 29 April. A drake was at Alturlie Pools on 11 May. A pair was at Durness on 12 May.

Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Has bred; scarce migrant and winter visitor, mainly in Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: Winter reports were mainly from Tain, with peak counts of 21 on 1 January and 13 on 4 February, and Loch Eye, with peak counts of 14 on 6 February and eight on 26 March. There was a pair at Insh Marshes on 2 April, and two pairs on 11 and 22 April. There were four birds at Balnakeil on 12 May. A pair was on passage on 14 May at Broadford Bay.

Breeding: There was a report of three birds at Balnakeil on 2 July, but no reports of breeding attempts.

Summer: A single drake was at Insh Marshes from May-September.

Autumn/Winter: Almost all the reports were from Loch Eye, with monthly peaks of seven birds on 24 September, 30 on 25 October, 14 on 28 November, and 27 on 4 December, and Tain, where the best count was 18 on 25 December.



Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

Has bred; scarce migrant and winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: There were very few reports. There were four birds at Balnakeil on 30 January. Singles were found at Alness Bay on 2 February and Loch Fleet on 19 March.

Summer/Breeding: Reports from Balnakeil in May included three pairs on the 7th and five pairs on the 12th, and a nest with young was found on 8 June, the sole report of confirmed breeding anywhere. In Lochaber, a drake was present at Caol on 14 May and a drake was also reported in the same area on 24 August.

Autumn/Winter: Reports from Balnakeil continued, with five birds still present on 15 October. There was a single drake at Ashaig, Broadford on 12 October. The only other reports were from Tain, with three birds on 27 November and a pair on 11 December.

Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Uncommon breeder; common migrant and winter visitor, especially in Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: This is a widespread species in winter throughout the region, but all the major concentrations are in the east coast firths. January reports included 600 birds at Alturlie on the 5th, 500 at Milton of Culloden on the 7th, 500 at Tain on the 11th and 500 at Udale Bay on the 21st. The peak counts were 1060 at Milton of Culloden on 26 February and 600 at Nigg on 8 March. Larger concentrations were noted on WeBS, as shown below. There was still a count of 500 at Udale Bay on 7 April, but by this time many birds were starting to disperse to breeding sites. Many potential breeding birds were in territories in Badenoch & Strathspey by May.

Breeding: Two broods were noted at Loch Achanalt by 7 June and there was a brood at Craigellachie on the following day. Other than from Insh Marshes below, there were no significant breeding reports, although pairs were widely dispersed.

Number of Wigeon pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	26	35	29	26	22	15	*	15	17

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19

Summer: Reports of 25 birds at Alturlie on 16 August, and 50 there on 29 August, possibly involved returning migrants. There were 25 at Brora on 26 August.

Autumn/Winter: Numbers built up during September, with 300 at Dornoch Point on the 10th, 700 at Castle Stuart on the 11th, 800 at Seafeld, Inverness on the 18th and 1500 at Tain on the 28th. Numbers peaked in October, with 2000 at Udale Bay



on the 24th, 2700 at Tain on the 27th and 1120 at Milton of Culloden on the 31st. The best December count was 1210 at Alturle on the 16th.

Wigeon - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	1020	700	45	246
Dornoch Firth	3561	2037	10423	2948
Cromarty Firth	3504	2765	8153	4722
Beaully Firth	368	325	376	397
Inverness Firth	1627	2407	4393	2971
Moray Basin Lochs	398	242	61	201
TOTALS	10478	8476	23451	11485

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common breeder; common in winter, especially in Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: There were nearly 1000 records on BirdTrack from January-March, but the majority were of low numbers. The largest concentrations were found during WeBS counts, as shown below. The best reports were from the east in January, with 185 birds at Balgowan in Badenoch on the 1st, 106 at Loch Eye on the 3rd, 150 at Loch Fleet on the 11th and 194 at Loch Evelix on the 23rd. There were few large concentrations later, as birds dispersed to breed.

Breeding: The first brood was recorded at Whiteness on 21 April. There were reports of 43 broods on BirdTrack, including 23 young and 35 adults at Grantown-on-Spey on 16 June. There was still a brood of three small ducklings at Craigellachie on 13 August.

Number of Mallard pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013-2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	152	228	261	106	160	136	*	127	132

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19

Summer: At Fort William/Caol, there were 42 birds on 19 June and 56 on 18 July. The largest counts were in August, with 120 at Loch Insh on the 19th and 275 at Balgowan on the 21st.

Mallard - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	36	102	122	108
Dornoch Firth	670	448	787	660
Cromarty Firth	417	146	247	397
Beaully Firth	276	140	238	374
Inverness Firth	184	130	123	175
Moray Basin Lochs	218	190	247	200
TOTALS	1801	1156	1764	1914



Autumn/Winter: In comparison to WeBS, peak counts elsewhere were again quite low, with 112 at Loch Insh on 3 September, 110 at Tain on 9 October, 140 at Alturlie on 12 October and, in November, 84 at Seafield, Inverness on the 4th and 95 at Loch Ruthven on the 19th. In Badenoch, there were 200 at Dell of Killiehuntly on 12 December and 166 at Luibleathann lochan on 18 December.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Rare breeder; locally common winter visitor in Inner Moray Firth, but scarce elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: Away from the east coast, there was a single drake at Kilmaluag, Skye on 27 February. At Ullapool, a drake was present on 26 January, then a pair from 2 February-22 March. The best concentrations were at Tain and Nigg Bay. At Tain, there were 225 on 7 January, 168 on 4 February, reducing to five on 6 April. Numbers peaked at Nigg with 254 on 23 January, reducing to 53 on 23 March. The last bird seen in spring was at Ullapool on 8 May.

Autumn/Winter: The earliest report was of a single at Fort George on 2 September, followed six days later by 12 at Dornoch Point. There was an eclipse male at Portree from 12 September to 15 October. At Tain, the largest concentrations were 170 on 8 October, 185 on 31 October and a peak of 342 on 16 December. The best count at Nigg Bay was 171 on 11 December.

Pintail - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Dornoch Firth	254	176	109	233
Cromarty Firth	254	100	0	171
Beaully Firth	86	89	11	44
Inverness Firth	4	1	2	1
Moray Basin Lochs	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	598	366	122	449

Teal *Anas crecca*

Widespread breeder in small numbers; common migrant and winter visitor, especially in Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: Only small numbers are recorded on the west coast, the most 60 at Loch Harport, Skye on 9 January and 46 at Loch Kishorn on 14 January. There were 160 at Insh Marshes on 15 January. All the significant counts are on the east coast, with a peak of 565 at Tain on 7 January. Other notable gatherings included 300 at Milton of Culloden on 7 January, 300 at Alturlie on 24 January, 400 at Udale Bay on 1 February, 250 at Balnabruach on 20 February and 400 at Loch Eye on 25 February. The numbers reported declined thereafter, although there were still 175 at Seafield, Inverness on 4 April.



Breeding: There were widespread reports from potential breeding sites in May, including 20 birds at Loch Achanalt on the 23rd. The first broods of five and two were reported at Knockarthur, north of Rogart on 24 May.

Number of Teal pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	81	88	84	55	66	58	*	62	64

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19

Summer: Any counts of note were in August, with 53 at Carr Road, Strathspey on the 20th, 30 in Strath Dearn on the 24th and 35 at Chanonry Point on the 31st.

Autumn/Winter: All the significant concentrations were on the east coast, with numbers building up in September. By October, reports included 450 birds at Milton of Culloden and 400 at Munlochy Bay on the 3rd, 700 at Tain on the 17th and 500 at Seafield on the 24th. The best November count was 400 at Seafield on the 24th. Finally, the peak December count was again at Tain, of 700 on the 19th.

Teal - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora–Dornoch	0	6	9	36
Dornoch Firth	911	664	897	2270
Cromarty Firth	408	347	531	638
Beauly Firth	316	738	336	344
Inverness Firth	156	206	1225	1010
Moray Basin Lochs	127	493	60	179
TOTALS	1918	2454	3058	4477

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Rare winter visitor, especially in Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: An over-wintering drake at Tain Links was recorded regularly from 1 January to 27 April, and two drakes were recorded at Tain between 7 January and 12 February. There was a single adult at Alturlie between 14 and 21 May.

Summer: Exceptionally, a drake was at Dalchork, Loch Shin on 22 June.

Autumn/Winter: A drake was at Tain Links between 23 October and 25 December.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Has bred; usually scarce migrant and winter visitor, mainly in Inner Moray Firth basin.

Winter/Spring: There was a single record at Loch Eye on 21 March.



Autumn/Winter: There were two reports from Loch Eye, of three birds on 15 October and two on 28 November. At Loch Insh, there were four on 8 November and a single between 14-23 November. The only other report was a single at Bunchrew, Inverness on 14 November.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* *Scarce North American vagrant.*

Winter/Spring: An overwintering first-winter female was present at Kinellan from January until 17 April.

Summer: An agitated pair was present at a Sutherland loch on 22 to 30 June, but not present on a subsequent visit.

Autumn/Winter: Two females were present on Loch Lochy in Lochaber on 15 November and another female was present on Loch Morlich on 7 December, with all three birds remaining into 2023.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* *Common breeder in most areas; locally common, but declining winter visitor, especially in Inner Moray Firth.*

Winter/Spring: At Loch Insh, there were several reports of good numbers, with a peak of 47 on 12 February. January reports from Loch Evelix, included 80 birds on 12 January and 38 on 23 January. Otherwise, the main concentrations were on Loch Eye, where counts included 45 on 12 February, a peak of 85 on 12 March, with 65 still there on 12 April.

Breeding: The earliest brood reported was at Deishar Pond, Boat of Garten on 14 June. There were also broods reported at Acharacle, Loch Croispol, and Merkinch.

Number of Tufted Duck pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013-2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	17	17	9	13	6	14	*	10	7

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19

Summer: The best count in summer was 26 at Loch Eye on 21 August.

Autumn/Winter: On Skye, the best count at Loch Mealt was 22 on 29 September. The largest numbers were again recorded on Loch Eye, where peak monthly counts were 112 on 24 September, 210 on 21 October, 185 on 1 November and 60 on 4 December. At Loch Insh, reports included 26 birds on 30 October and 30 on 14 November. Similar peaks were reported at Loch Kinellan, with 26 on 13



November and 30 on 26 November. Between Clachnaharry and South Kessock there was a report of 32 birds on 15 December.

Tufted Duck - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

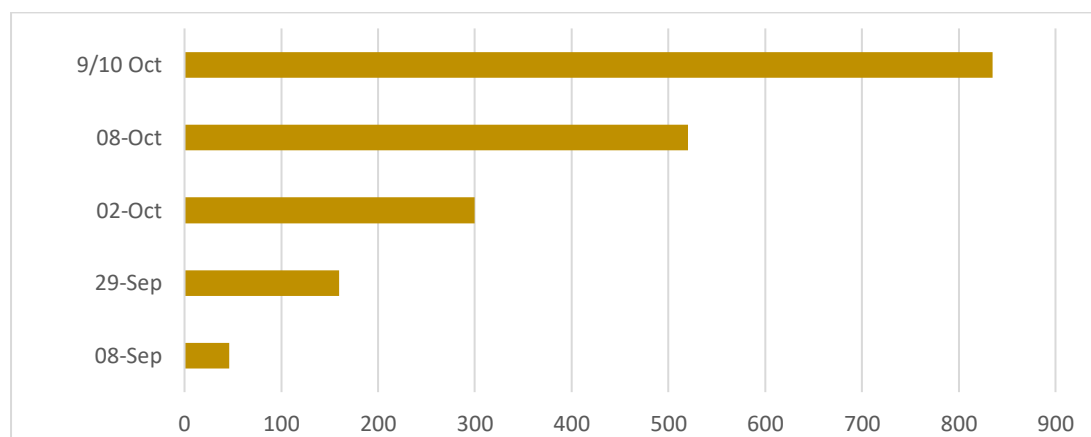
	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Dornoch Firth	44	49	7	103
Cromarty Firth	0	0	0	0
Beaully Firth	0	0	0	7
Inverness Firth	2	0	15	5
Moray Basin Lochs	112	93	108	156
TOTALS	158	142	130	271

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Has bred; locally common winter visitor in Inner Moray Firth, but scarce elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: The two main sites in Highland which this species uses are the Cromarty Firth and the Inverness Firth. In the former, 180 birds were noted during January and February, mainly off Saltburn, rising to 250 by 10 March. The spring peak occurred on 11 April, with 440 at Udale Bay, dropping to 125 there on the 29th. Inverness Firth held 100 on 31 January off Castle Stuart, rising to 130 on 19 February off Seafield, with 215 there on 14 March. On 15 April 200 were noted nearby off Milton of Culloden, but only 52 were there on 2 May. Dornoch Firth peaked at 73 in Edderton Bay on 1 March. A female was at Loch Kinellan, Strathpeffer from 15 January-17 April.

Summer: The only summer record involved about 40 birds on 16 August at Cromarty Firth Bridge.



Impressive autumn arrival of Scaup into the Cromarty Firth in 2022.

Autumn/Winter: In the Cromarty Firth, BirdTrack/WeBS data show an excellent arrival pattern, attracting high bird numbers involving an impressive October peak of 825 (see above). High numbers persisted all winter, with 810 still present



on 11 December. In contrast was an apparent poor showing within the Inverness Firth, with 29 birds on 2 November, peaking at 54 on 20 December.

Scaup - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	7	35	0	0
Dornoch Firth	27	59	0	0
Cromarty Firth	261	386	825	733
Inverness Firth	98	192	9	40
Inland Lochs	0	0	0	5
TOTALS	393	672	834	778

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*

Rare; increasing, not yet annual.

Winter/Spring: Following a trend of west coast late winter/spring records, a male was off Inverie, Knoydart on 16 March. A well-admired adult male enjoyed the Loch Fleet channel/Embo coastal zone from 22 March-25 May, fully integrating with the large Eider flock. This record is still pending acceptance by BBRC due to the exceptional circumstance of its original submission being mislaid by BBRC, leading to its very late re-submission.



King Eider in Eider flock in April on Loch Fleet c. Dean MacAskil



Eider *Somateria mollissima*

Common breeder; locally common in winter.

Winter/Spring: On the west coast, February flocks included 54 birds at Ullapool and 29 at Clashnessie on the 2nd, and 64 at Achabeag, Morvern on the 13th. At Tarbat Ness, 200 were counted on 25 February, rising to 250 on 6 March. An impressive spring flock of at least 800 frequented the Loch Fleet channel/Embo coastal zone on 23 March, where it remained until the 10 April, falling to 400 by the 22nd. Sadly, this species suffered mortality from avian flu, mainly during March and April, resulting in many individuals being washed-up along the coast of the wider Moray Firth, exact numbers unknown.

Breeding: Valuable monitoring work found the number of nests at the Invergordon colony to be down 23% (from 166 in 2021), most likely due to avian flu (*B. Swann & I. Brockway*). The first ducklings were noted on Eigg on 29 May, on Rum on 4 June (15 ducklings) and at Dornoch 10 days later (5). However, some females were still incubating on 16 June, at Loth, and 48 ducklings were recorded in June from five other coastal sites. Up until mid-July, ducklings were also noted at Linnhe/Lochy mouth (3) and Golspie coast (15).

Autumn/Winter: High numbers were recorded within the Cromarty Firth, with 1410 birds on 29 September and 1020 on 28 December. The Loch Fleet channel flock started to build again, with 430 birds on 13 November, rising to 520 by 17 December. On the west coast, there were 39 at Edinbane on Skye on 13 October and 85 off Fort William on the 29th. On 2 December 110 were noted at Ardgour.

[Northern Eider] *Somateria mollissima borealis*

Winter/Spring: Two individuals showing characteristics of the ssp. *borealis* were noted on 28 March, associated with the large Eider flock frequenting the Loch Fleet channel/Embo coastal zone, rising to three up until 23 April.

Autumn/Winter: The first bird of the winter showing characteristics of the ssp. *borealis* was identified on 17 December, associated with the same Eider flock.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

Uncommon winter visitor in Inner Moray Firth, but rare elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: Five birds were at Tarbat Ness on 18 January. On the west coast, a female/immature type was present at The Aird, Gedintailor on 14 February. Scattered birds made up the 65 off Embo on 6 March, with two at Carse of Delnies on the 16th. Five were off Tarbat Ness on 9 April, with two at Alturlie on the 29th. Seven were off Dornoch on 7 May, while the last spring bird was off Tarbat Ness on the 23rd.



Autumn/Winter: One bird frequented the Cromarty Firth, in Udale Bay, on 1 November until 28 December. On the west coast, one was noted at Scalpay Narrows on 7 November and one at Poolewe the next day. The Scalpay bird was last seen on 1 December.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce breeder in north and west; locally common in the wider Moray Firth during winter/spring, but scarce elsewhere; some over-summer.

Winter/Spring: Numbers of east coast birds were still low following exceptional numbers pre-2022 (see Patterson et al, 2023. *Scottish Birds*, 43: 16-22). Forty were off Tarbat Ness on 30 January, with 120 off Embo coast on 6 February, increasing to 150 there on 1 March. Only 29 were off Dornoch on 6 March. A noteworthy flock of 27 used Brora river-mouth on the 10th. On the west coast, four were off Clashnessie on 2 February, with one in Little Gruinard on the 13th. Heading into spring, singles were present at Badenscallie (Achilitibue) and Loch Kishorn on 2 and 8 April respectively. On 14 April 150 were still off Embo, increasing to 300 by the 17th. Thirty birds were seen flying NE past Brora on 15 April, whilst Balnabruach Bay/Portmahomack was back in full use, with 500 from 16 April, rising rapidly to 1360 by the 22nd, to peak at 1500 by the 30th, before falling away to 1190 by 7 May. Two birds flew past Alturlie on 2 May, 100 past Tarbat Ness on the 11th and 12 were noted off South Kessock the next day.

Breeding: Few records were forthcoming. On 4 May birds were back on territory in the Flow Country. A Lochaber loch supported at least one pair and a single male on 8 June.

Summer: On 21 June Portmahomack still supported 1000 birds. Small numbers were recorded off Tarbat Ness all summer, peaking at 70 on 8 July. In the west, Broadford Bay held 60 on 18 June, dropping to 25 by 3 July. Meanwhile, Staffin held 10 individuals on 22 July.

Autumn/Winter: On 31 August 100 birds were back at Portmahomack. An early flock, of females/immatures only, were off Loch Fleet channel/Golspie coastal zone on 19 September, with four flying past Chanonry Point on the 21st and 34 off Tarbat Ness on the 22nd. On the west coast, two birds were in Broadford Bay on 26 September, with 16 at Lub Score on the same day and eight in the Sound of Raasay on the 29th. Six were near Fasgadh, Portree on 12 October, with five in Gruinard Bay on 25 October. There was a welcome return to 'normal' numbers during the core late autumn/winter period. Dornoch held 200 on 11 October, rising to 1810 by the 29th. On 20 November, 180 birds were off Embo, with 71 noted off Tarbat Ness the same day, but the outer Dornoch coastal zone supported a minimum of 1520 on 3 December. Two were noted inland at Loch Insh on 15 November. During November, Loch Ainort held 16 birds on the 16th, whilst Broadford Bay peaked at 32 the next day and still held at least 14 on the 28th.



Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

Locally common in the wider Moray Firth during winter/spring, but scarce elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: Core winter numbers on the east coast remained very low. Elsewhere, noteworthy records included 18 birds in the Kyle of Tongue on 27 January, five at Balnakeil and two in Loch Gairloch, both on the 30th. Six were at Talmine on 1 February. Low numbers persisted into late winter, with only 73 off Golspie on 6 March. A small number of birds were reported dead around the Moray Firth coastline in March/April, presumably related to avian flu. On a more positive note, good numbers were recorded at spring 'stopover' sites. Golspie coastal zone supported 623 on 1 April, peaking at 1205 by the 10th. On 4 April 145 birds were off Brora, with 80 off Hilton of Cadboll the next day, and 70 were noted flying north past Brora on 15 April. Balnabruach Bay/Portmahomack supported a peak of 2100 on 22 April, with 570 still present on 7 May. Apparently, all departed by the 15th and the last bird was noted off Tarbat Ness on 31 May. In the west, a long-stayer graced Loch Shiel, Acharacle, last seen on 17 April.

Autumn/Winter: The first bird was noted off Chanonry Point on 12 September, with 14 there by 6 October. On 29 October 480 were recorded using the outer Dornoch coastal zone, with 25 off Embo on 4 November. Of particular note on the west coast were: one bird at Mellon Udrigle on 20 October; two off Eigg (first for 20 years!); two in Little Loch Broom, near Dundonnell on the 29th; and one at Achnahaird the next day. In December, a minimum of 340 birds continued to use the outer Dornoch on the 3rd and Alturlie supported 14 birds on the 9th. Golspie coast held 18 on Christmas Day and the year ended with 25 in the Cromarty Firth on the 28th. On Skye, one bird was at Greshornish on 16 November and two at Sconser Quarry on 1 December.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Scarce local breeder, mainly in Strathspey; locally common during winter/spring.

Winter/Spring: The highest counts for a single site came from Loch Eye; 84 on 3 January, 90 on 6 February and peaking at 105 on 5 March. On 8 January 38 birds were recorded between North Kessock and Kilmuir. Fourteen were off Alturlie on 11 March, with 15 at Loch Insh the same day. Numbers increased at Insh Marshes to 52 on 21 March. On the west coast, the highest winter count was 80 at Gairloch on 30 January, with 73 at Dalnabreck, Sunart on 23 March.



Breeding: Recorded breeding status records included 12 'possible', 50 'probable' and 24 'confirmed'. First clutches were noted on 30 April and the first ducklings on 17 May, at Boat of Garten. Ten broods were reported, involving a minimum of 43 ducklings.

Number of Goldeneye pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013-2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	5	8	6	9	8	9^	12^	*	5	nr

^ nest boxes with incubating birds

*count not done due to Covid-19

nr = not recorded

Summer: A peak count of 35 birds at Loch Insh on 19 August was of note.



Goldeneye in December in Inverness c. Al McNee

Goldeneye - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	0	7	0	15
Dornoch Firth	6	9	1	26
East Ross coast	0	0	0	0
Cromarty Firth	4	17	9	6
Beaully Firth	7	3	0	65
Inverness Firth	30	163	4	38
Moray Basin Lochs	97	123	0	111
TOTALS	144	322	14	261

Autumn/Winter: At Loch Insh, 26 birds were still present on 25 September. Peak counts from Loch Eye included 55 on 1 November and 95 on the 28th. Hilton of Cadboll held 32 on 14 December, with 39 off Alturlie two days later. An impressive



137+ individuals were off Craigton Point, North Kessock on 28 December. In the north-west, Loch na Claise, Stoer supported 16 birds on 19 December.

Smew *Margellus albellus*

Scarce winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: A female type (redhead) recorded at Bogach on 18 October may be the same individual which was reported on Loch Alvie on 18 and 20 October.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Widespread riparian breeder in small numbers; uncommon and local in autumn and winter.



Goosander in May at Clachnaharry c. Al McNee

Winter/Spring: Eight birds graced Camas an Lighe, near Kentra on 13 January. On Loch Ashie, 11 were noted on the 27th, with four at Bettyhill on the 31st. Three were at Loch Kishorn on 3 February and nine at Achabeag, Morvern on the 8th. Flocks dispersed into pairs/small groups moving to prospective breeding sites from mid-March. A group of 24 was off Milton of Culloden on 7 May, increasing quickly to 47 by the 12th, while 50 were noted off Alness Point on 24 May. In the west, seven were counted at Fort William/Caol on 14 May.

Breeding: Recorded breeding status records included 15 'possible', 28 'probable' and 12 'confirmed'. Six brood sizes were noted (16 June-21 August) at; Loch Brittle (3 ducklings),



River Spey near Boat of Garten (10), River Feshie (8), River Ness (12), Spey Dam (7) and River Spey, Catlodge (6).

Summer: As in 2021, some large counts were received during this period. Milton of Culloden peaked at 120 birds on 13 July, Alturlie held 85 on 29 July, while 100 were off Fort George on 31 August. In the west on 18 July, 35 were at Loch Portree and 33 at Fort William.

Autumn/Winter: Most reports involved small numbers, but the following stood out; 16 birds at Tain on 11 September, a peak of 41 the next day at Kentra Bay and 26 at Anagach, Grantown-on-Spey on the 14th. In November, 11 birds were noted at Greshornish, Skye on the 3rd and 43 were at Ardmair on the 12th. A peak of 30 birds enjoyed 'masses of small fish' utilising the near-shore zone of Inverkirkaig on 14 December. The year ended with eight birds, mostly males, using Loch Ashie on 23 December.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Widespread, mainly coastal, breeder in small numbers; locally common in autumn and winter, especially in Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: Loch Fleet held 36 birds on 11 January whilst, in March, 85 enjoyed the Golspie coastal zone on the 6th, 43 were at Carse of Delnies on the 16th and 47 at Loch Fleet on the 23rd. In the west, 37 were noted on Loch Linnhe on 15 January and 28 on Loch Ewe on the 31st. Later, 15 were at Traigh, Morar on 28 March.

Red-breasted Merganser - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	30	19	44	30
Dornoch Firth	4	5	6	3
East Ross coast	0	0	0	0
Cromarty Firth	13	13	36	41
Beaully Firth	1	3	10	14
Inverness Firth	22	5	16	31
Moray Basin Lochs	0	2	1	1
TOTALS	70	47	113	120

Breeding: Recorded breeding status records included 12 'possible', 32 'probable' and seven 'confirmed'. Seven brood sizes were noted (22 June-14 August) at; Whiteness (10 ducklings), Mound Lagoon (9), Kentallen (7 + 8), Lochlonghead (12), Achnahaird (2) and Loch Fleet (6).

Summer: A group of 94 moulting birds was noted off Alness Point on 17 May. Nigg Bay supported a raft of 87 on 17 June, with 55 off Dornoch on 2 July and an



impressive raft of 700 off Balintraid Pier on 6 July. On the west coast, 28 were off Inverasdale on 15 July.

Autumn/Winter: September reports included 130 birds at Ardersier on the 3rd, 300+ in Nigg Bay on the 9th and 195 at Loch Fleet on the 21st. On the west coast, an impressive flock of 136 was at Clovullin, Ardgour on 20 September. Moving into winter, it showed a relative decrease to 107 on 21 October, 52 on 16 November and up to 78 on 22 December.

Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*

Common resident on upland moors, especially in Badenoch & Strathspey.

Winter/Spring: Although numerous records were received from upland sites throughout the recording area, there were no high counts and many were in single figures. There were several reports of 10 or 12 birds and the highest count was 40 at Bad Each near Kingussie on 8 January. An interesting observation from Ben Wyvis was of two birds seen at the same altitude as two Ptarmigan on 22 May.

Breeding: There were several reports of courtship display, but only four records of proven breeding; a nest with eggs at Carn nan Tri-Tighearnan, near Daviot on 3 May and three of successful broods, the first on Meall Chuaich, Drumochter on 20 May. On Handa, two separate broods were identified on 1 July, the first chicks having been observed on 1 June.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Double-figure counts were only recorded in Badenoch and the highest were of no more than 17 birds at Bad Each on 17 November and at Bogha Cloiche, east Drumochter on 28 November. As noted in 2021, driven grouse shooting requires a density of at least 65 birds per square km, so these reports poorly reflect the actual numbers present in some active grouse-shooting moors.

Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta*

Locally common resident in upland areas.

Winter/Spring: Records were distributed across the recording area, including the Cairngorm NP, but it is remarkable that no double-figure flocks were reported. The highest counts were seven on Glun Liath, south of Oykel Bridge on 19 May, and five on Ben Mor Coigach on 15 January and in the Fannichs on 24 April.

Breeding: A nest with eggs was noted on Sgurr an Fhidleir, north of Ullapool on 12 May. There were six records of newly-fledged chicks: from Ben Tee, Glen Garry on 9 June; Cairn Gorm on 14 June and 11 July; A' Mharconaich, west Drumochter hills, where a predated



nest was also noted, on 14 June; and in the Fannichs, Wester Ross on Beinn Liath Mhor on 22 June and An Coileachan on 23 June. In addition, reports of fully-grown chicks with adults came from Toll Creagach, Glen Affric on 10 July and Scurr Mhor, Ardgour on 28 August. On Carn nan Gobhar, Mullardoch, 17 birds on 16 July included a family group of six birds and a pair doing distraction display.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were records from across Highland, with four reports in double figures, the highest being of 30 birds on Beinn Eighe on 4 November, including at least three well-grown juveniles. On the Cairngorm massif, there were 10 birds on Cnap nan Laogh, in the Moine Mhor on 14 July, 13 on Cairn Gorm itself on 16 November and 11 on Bogha Cloiche, east Drumochter on 28 November.

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

Restricted to coniferous forests, mainly in Badenoch & Strathspey; scarce and declining elsewhere.



Hen Capercaillie in April at Abernethy c. Desmond Dugan

Winter/Spring/Summer/Autumn: For the whole year, only 46 reports of sightings were submitted and an additional two of droppings seen. One sighting, on 22 August, was of a female accompanied by a juvenile bird. All reports were from Badenoch & Strathspey, apart from two from Easter Ross, on 2 March and 22 June.



Breeding: This was the first year since 2015 that there was a moderate increase in lekking males recorded in Strathspey. The total number of lekking males increased from 127 in 2021 to 132 in 2022. The number of leks occupied in Strathspey remained consistent with 2021, with 30 leks being reported over both years. Survey areas were reduced to be more targeted, with more historic leks being surveyed less regularly, unless signs indicated that they were being recolonised. There was a small reduction in total lekking males recorded in Easter Ross, with eight being recorded in 2022 compared to 10 in 2021, but the number of leks occupied increased by one, from five in 2021 to six in 2022. The survey effort has remained consistent here since 2014. As only a small number

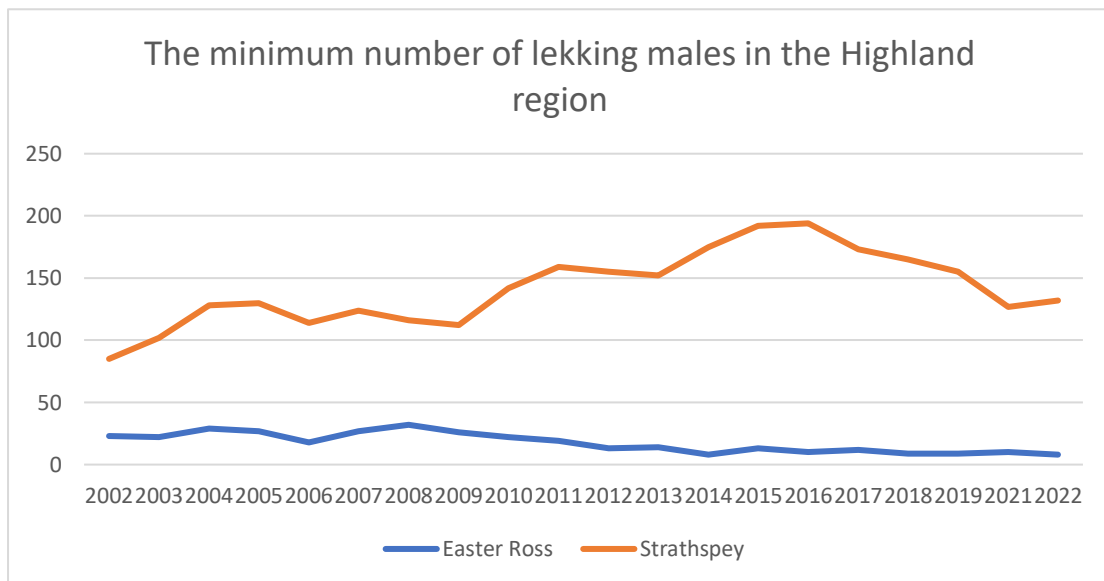


Figure 1 – The minimum number of lekking Capercaillie males recorded in Highland between 2002-2022 (2020 missed due to Covid-19 restrictions)

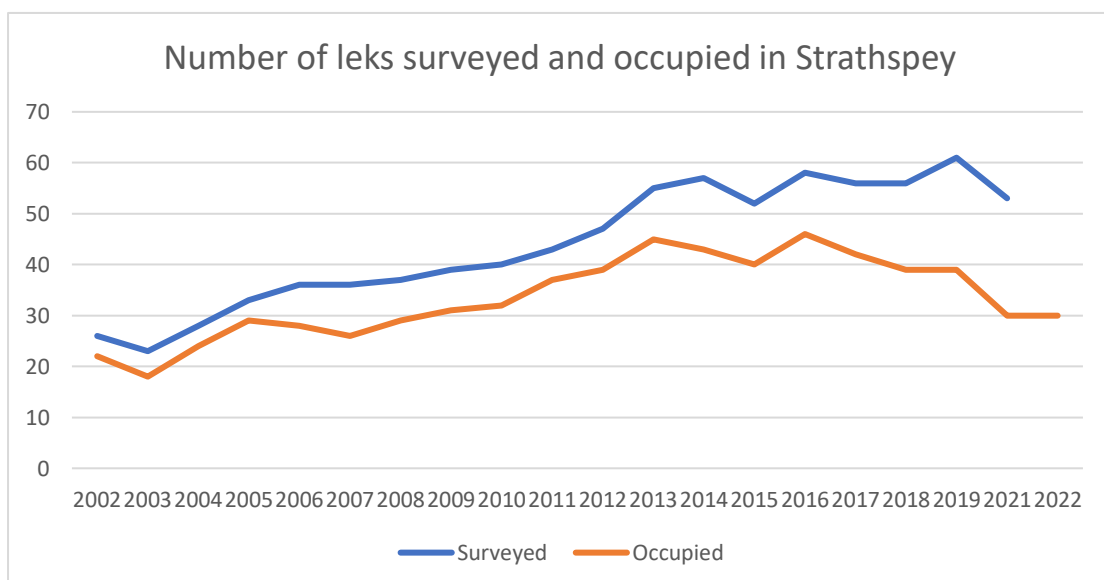


Figure 2 – The number of Capercaillie leks surveyed and occupied in Strathspey between 2002-2022 (2020 missed due to Covid-19 restrictions)

of brood counts are completed now, primarily as a way of monitoring specific conservation work, it is difficult to generalise from results. However, Cairngorms Connect



have also been trialling monitoring Capercaillie productivity using camera traps. Although the analysis of these data is ongoing, and this method is still in the trial stage, these cameras did record photos of well-grown Capercaillie chicks, which is encouraging. The latest Capercaillie National Survey was completed in the winter of 2021/22. Unfortunately, from the results of this survey it was estimated that only 542 Capercaillie remain in Scotland, which is approximately a 50% decline since the previous National Survey in 2015/16. The [Cairngorms Capercaillie Project](#), an innovative National Lottery Heritage funded partnership project, is finishing at the end of 2023. Conversations between Capercaillie stakeholders are ongoing to determine what areas of this project should be continued as part of its legacy and to finalise the next stage of Capercaillie conservation in Scotland.

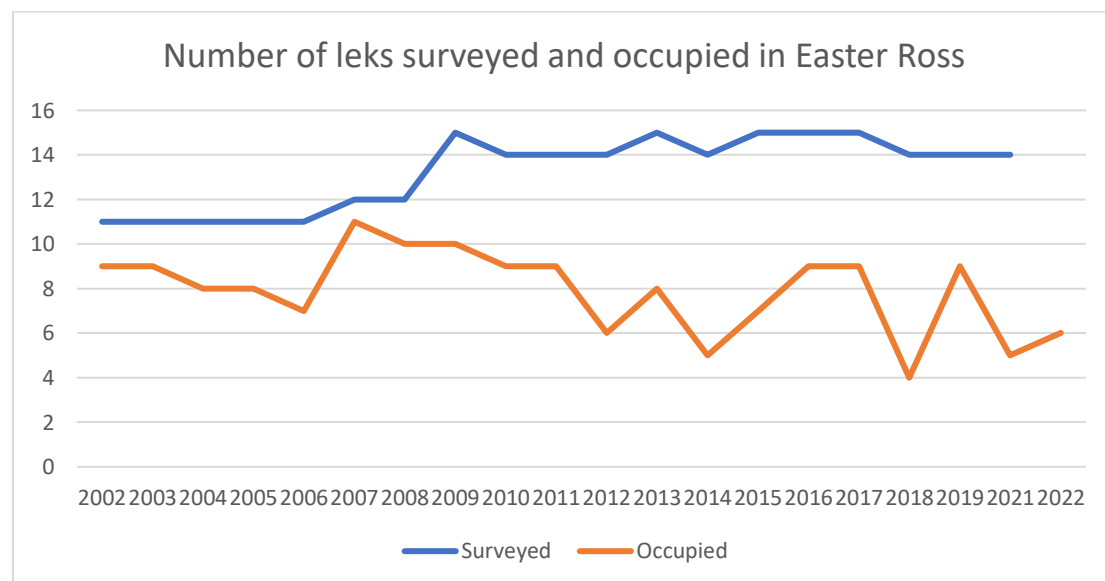


Figure 3 – The number of Capercaillie leks surveyed and occupied in Easter Ross between 2002-2022 (2020 missed due to Covid-19 restrictions)

Black Grouse *Lyrurus tetrix*

Locally common but declining resident in east, scarce elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: Counts of 10-12 birds came from eight sites. The first record of lekking came from Dava Moor on 25 January when 11 birds were present, and 11 were again recorded on this site on 11 February. The highest count came from Loch Treig, with 12 birds present on 16 March. While most records came from the usual sites in Badenoch & Strathspey, there was also a good number of reports from the north-west of the recording area.

Breeding: No records of successful breeding were received, although there was one report of distraction display at Drumguish on 23 June.

2022 Summary from the Speyside Black Grouse Study Group:

The Speyside Black Grouse Study Group recorded 477 displaying males on 97 lekking sites. The highest number of males on one site was 17 and 11 leks were attended by 10 or more males. For the 31 'core' leks on eight estates, there was a decline of 50% since 2001 when the Group began. On the estates surveyed in both 2021 and 2022, there was an



average decrease of 16% in the number of males (from 510 to 428), with the range in different estates varying between -50% to +56%. Any increase in numbers is probably linked to reduction of deer density so that woodland regeneration is encouraged.

Black Grouse Productivity at RSPB Corrimony:

	1997-2001	2002-2006	2007-2011	2012-2016	2017-2021	2022
Peak lek count	35	43	57	45	58	31
Productivity 5-year mean	1.82	1.76	1.82	1.16	-	-

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were very few sightings reported through the summer and early autumn, and all were in single figures until 13 males were recorded at Bruach Dhubh, Badenoch on 8 October. There were 14 birds at Bogha Cloiche, east Drumochter on 28 November and thereafter only seven reports up to the end of the year.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

Restricted to a few local breeding populations in Inner Moray Firth Basin; sightings elsewhere probably derive from released birds.

Winter/Spring: Most records came from the Fearn Peninsula area of Easter Ross, with many towards Tarbat Ness. Several reports also came from the Black Isle and the Moray basin east of Inverness. The highest count of nine birds came from the Tain area on 11 February. Sightings outside the core area came from Muck, Cromdale and Grantown-on Spey.

Breeding: There were reports of at least four very young juveniles at Gollanfield on 11 July, three juveniles at Tarbat Ness on 2 August and three juveniles with adults near Pitcalnie, Nigg on 17 September.

Autumn/Winter: Sightings were confined to the core area, with the highest number reported being of 12 birds near Hill of Fearn on 30 November.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Common resident, supplemented by huge numbers of released birds.

Winter/Spring: Over 500 records were submitted between 1 January and 1 May, the vast majority of which came from Inverness, Easter Ross and Badenoch & Strathspey. Only three records were of more than 20 birds. Birds were also common throughout the season on Eigg, with three males and a female coming to feeders, but reports were very rare from other islands or the west and north mainland.



Breeding: In May, nests with eggs were seen on Muck and at Auchnagallin, Grantown-on-Spey, and with young in Inverpolly. Thereafter, young birds were reported from eight sites, the earliest at Drumguish on 26 May and the latest six newly-hatched young at Dell of Killiehuntly on 6 September. Eigg had a poor breeding season, possibly due to adverse spring weather, and very few reports of young were received.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Two melanistic birds were seen at Dell of Killiehuntly in September. There were only five reports of more than 20 birds and most in were single figures. The highest count reported was 25 birds near Tain on 5 November.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Rare breeder; scarce summer visitor.

Spring/Summer: Of 24 reports received, 17 were from Strathspey, with 15 from Nethy Bridge between 26 and 31 May of one or two birds heard in the same area. In Strathspey also, one bird was heard at Delliefure Farm, Grantown-on-Spey on 27-28 May. Two birds were calling near Beauly on 30 May and 1 June. At Hilton of Cadboll, Easter Ross one bird was singing on 14-15 July.

Quail - 10-year summary of records of calling males 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Records	3	20	4	5	10	9	10	4	7	7

Breeding: A notable sighting came from Tullochgribban, Duthil, where one adult with three newly-fledged juveniles (just about able to fly) were flushed in barley fields on 12 July.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Released annually in very high numbers by main commercial shooting estates and then can be found quite widely dispersed; scarce elsewhere.

Spring/Summer/Autumn/Winter: Most records came from the usual release areas in Badenoch, Strathspey and east Inverness-shire. Elsewhere, one bird was noted at Embo Street on 28 March and three at Corrachie, near Munlochy on 3 April. On both east and west Muck, birds were present in mid-May. A regular count in Glen Tromie was made in April, May, June, July and September of one to three birds. There were only seven reported counts in double figures, of which the highest was 22 near Boat of Garten on 21 July.

Breeding: In Glen Tromie, birds were seen visiting a probable nest site on 29 April. There were three reports of newly-fledged young: from near Boat of Garten on 21 July; Drumguish on 1 August; and Street of Kincardine, where about eight juveniles were on the road, on 14 September.



Swift *Apus apus*

Locally common summer visitor & breeder in east, but usually scarce in north and west.

Spring/Summer: The first record was of two birds at Dornoch on 30 April, but the main arrival started on 9 May with several reports from Inverness. Thereafter, birds were reported throughout May and the summer months across the reporting area. The highest counts were of 140 birds flying north over Whiteness Head on 29 June, ahead of a weather front, 50 at Embo on 9 August, and 40 at Smithton on 29 July and on Insh Marshes on 31 July.

Breeding: The only report of possible breeding came on 17 July from Roy Bridge, where a group of 15 was assumed to include this year's young.

Autumn: Birds continued to be present throughout August. One bird was present at Invertromie on 5 September, while the five other reports in September were all from the west of the region, with the last two birds seen at Broadford river-mouth on 14 September.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

Vagrant.

Autumn: Birds briefly present at Brora on 3 November and Carse of Ardersier on 8 November were part of an influx brought to Britain by a strong southerly airstream. These are the first ever seen in Highland.



Pallid Swift in November at Carse of Ardersier c. Colin Leslie

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Common summer visitor & breeder.

Spring/Summer: The earliest record was from Elgol of one bird on 13 April. From the 14th to the end of April birds were reported from across the region, although initially mainly from the west. By the end of the month there had been several reports from the south and east. Throughout May, sightings of two and three birds were not uncommon and there were two reports of six birds in mid-month. A notable record was of a count of 12 birds in Strathfarrar on 7 May.

Breeding: Juveniles were recorded on seven sites between 7 July and 6 August. On Eigg, the last juvenile was seen on 13 August.

Autumn: There were eight reports of sightings in August, all of single birds, although only one of these specified a juvenile. The last birds were reported from Fort William on 3 September and from near Kingussie on the 4th.



Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Uncommon breeder in north and west; Feral Pigeons are more widespread.

Winter/Spring: There were 183 records covering the period January-May, with the highest counts being reported from Inverpolly, where there were 84 birds on 4 January. Sheigra, in NW Sutherland had 40 birds on 30 March, whilst Culkein Drumbeg and Shieldaig recorded flocks of 32 and 25 birds respectively. In the east, there were sporadic records of very small numbers, notably from Fort George, Inverness, the Black Isle, Tarbat Ness and the north-east coast.

Breeding: Young birds were first seen on Eigg on 30 April. On Skye, records were collected at Galtrigill of displaying birds on 1 March and of recently-fledged young on several occasions in May through to 22 June.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: On Handa and on Eigg, flocks of 30+ were regularly seen, with several Feral Pigeons present throughout the year with the Rock Doves. Good numbers were also reported from Inverpolly and Assynt. The highest counts were of 50 birds at Broadford Bay on 17 October and 47 at Culkein Drumbeg on 1 August.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Increasingly scarce breeder in Inner Moray Firth Basin; rare elsewhere, but increasing in Easter Ross and SE Sutherland.

Winter/Spring: There were only 13 records for January to May and these were mainly from the east of the region, with the exception of reports from Kylerhea on 30 March and at Loch Kishorn on 3 April. There were seven birds at Tain on 3 March, but only one to three elsewhere. Exceptionally, a bird was present at Kildonan from 6-10 March, only the fourth record for Eigg and the first since 2012.

Breeding: There were no breeding records, although agitated behaviour was observed at Drumguish on 25 April.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Eleven records were submitted, the most northerly being of one bird at Upper Loch Torridon on 28 June and one near Dornoch on 27 October. The highest count was four at Udale Bay on 18 August.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common widespread resident, mainly in east; locally common in winter.

Winter/Spring: Between 1 January and 16 March there were 14 counts of over 100 birds from Culloden, Easter/Wester Dalziel, Badenoch & Strathspey and on



the Black Isle. The highest counts were of 1300 birds at Allangrange on the Black Isle on 1 February and 500 at Culloden on 22 January. In the north and west, including Forsinard, Ullapool, Brora and the Isles of Rum, Skye and Eigg, there were very few counts in double figures.

Breeding: The first nest-building observed was on 31 March in Tain and Inverness. Late building was recorded at Ardersier on 7 July. There were reports of proven breeding from only five sites, although regular counts in an Aviemore garden through March-June, plus a late report from 27 October, included juveniles. Otherwise, the last recorded juvenile was at Smithton on 4 July. Broods were also raised on Eigg and Handa.

Autumn/Winter: The peak count was 120 at Grantown-on-Spey on 25 September and there were over 60 birds at Drummond, Inverness on 6 November. There were only 17 counts of over 20 birds anywhere in the region and sparse records from the west indicated small numbers there.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* *Scarce migrant and summer visitor.*

Spring/Summer/Autumn: At Grantown-on-Spey an adult bird was recorded on 5 May. There were five records of an adult at Big Sands, Gairloch from 13- 21 September and one of an adult at Red Point, Wester Ross on 15 September.

Turtle Dove - 10-year summary of occurrences 2013-2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Records	4	2	5	1	1	2	1	3	6	3

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* *Common widespread resident, mainly in east but increasing in north and west.*

Winter/Spring: From 1 January-30 April 547 records were submitted, of which only three were in double figures; 13 birds at Kylesku and 19 at Loch Ewe on 31 January, and 17 at Ullapool on 2 February. One bird was noted on Handa on 25 May. Other records came from across the area, including Skye, but with the majority still from the south and east.

Breeding: At Whiteness, nest-building was noted on 21 April and birds were mating at Alturlie on 2 May. On Eigg, one of two pairs bred successfully.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were 782 records from across the region, with the highest counts being in October, of 30 birds at Loch Eye on the 15th, 20 at Loch Flemington on the 17th, and 12 at Broadford on the 17th and at Inverewe on the 23rd. The only other count in double figures was of 11 birds at Carrbridge on 13 November.



Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Secretive, but widespread resident in suitable habitat.

Winter/Spring: Between 7 January and 29 April 30 records of single birds were received, including records of nocturnal flight calls heard on Rum on 16, 25, 27 and 28 March and on 20 and 27 April. At Bogach, Strathspey six birds were recorded on 11 April. In May there were an additional five reports of single birds.

Summer/Breeding: On Canna a nest with young was recorded on 28 June and juvenile birds were seen at Alturlie Pools on 3 August. An additional 12 reports were received of single birds from June to August, from Balnakeil, Alturlie, Abriachan, Invertromie, Canna and Rum.

Autumn/Winter: Nocturnal flight calls were again heard on Rum on 29 August and on 3, 5 and 23 September. From the beginning of September to the end of the year there were 32 records, including those from the north-west and north-east coasts, Skye and the UHI University campus in Inverness.

Corncrake *Crex crex*

Locally scarce summer visitor & breeder in north and west; rare elsewhere.

Spring: The first reports were on 14 May from Uig on Skye, of one bird heard, and from Canna. All nine subsequent reports in May, of between one and four birds, were from Canna.

Breeding: On Canna, four birds were reported on 14 June and some still present on the 28th were said to be visiting a possible nest site, but there was no confirmation of breeding. On Skye, there were 14 territory centres, an improvement of four on the 2021 total.

Corncrake - 10-year summary of calling males at Durness 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Calling males	8	11	8	13	6	7	6	6	5	3

Summer/Autumn: The only late summer reports were of one bird at Achiltibuie on 15 July, three at Durness on 23 July and one at Culkein Stoer on 9 August.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Scarce local breeder; rare elsewhere.

Spring/Summer: There was a report of a bird calling at a previously known site on Skye on 29 April.



Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Locally common resident in east, but scarce in north and west.

Winter/Spring: Most records came from the Black Isle, Easter Ross, Inverness and Strathspey areas, with highest counts being 13 at Scretan Burn, Inverness on 8 February and 12 at Balnakeil on 30 January. Elsewhere, birds were reported from the Durness area and the Flow Country in Sutherland.

Breeding: Nest-building was observed at Tain on 6 April and courtship at Alturlie Pools on the 29th. Proven breeding records came from 14 sites across the region, with the first record of chicks from Drummond, Inverness on 5 May, more than three weeks before the first record in 2021. The last recorded was at Milton Loch, Boat of Garten on 30 August.

Autumn/Winter: Highest counts in October and November were of 10-13 birds at Beechwood. Inverness and at Loch Flemington. During the Moray Firth WeBS on 9 October, 11 were counted in the Dornoch Firth. On 10 November, there were 11 birds at Tain and, in December, 15 at the UHI campus in Inverness on the 4th and 10 at Clachnaharry/South Kessock on the 25th.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Uncommon local breeder in east, but rare in west and absent from north; locally common in Inner Moray Firth Basin in some winters.

Winter/Spring: As with Moorhen, the main concentration was on lowland water bodies in the vicinity of the Moray Firth, with the key sites being Loch Flemington, Loch Eye and Loch Kinellan. Counts were lower than in the previous year, the highest being 48 at Loch Eye on 3 January. Birds were also regularly noted at Alturlie Pools and in Badenoch & Strathspey at Bogach and Milton Loch, Boat of Garten.

Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at seven sites, with a juvenile noted at Strathpeffer on 2 May being the first record of fledged young, while the last was recorded at Loch Flemington on 7 July.

Autumn/Winter: There were counts of between 10 and 23 birds at Loch Eye and Loch Kinellan, with the highest being at Loch Eye on 4 December.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Scarce migrant.

Spring/Summer/Autumn: Two birds were seen flying overhead at Hilton of Cadboll on 31 May. One bird was seen at Ardverikie, Loch Laggan on 24 October.



Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Widespread and increasing breeder in small numbers.

Winter/Spring/Summer: During the early part of the year records came from widespread sites and were of low numbers. Twelve birds were seen at Loch Kinellan on 26 March and 10 at Loch Vaa, Strathspey on 18 April. In the latter part of this period numbers were boosted by successful breeding, to 18 at Loch Vaa on 27 August and 19 at Loch Flemington a day later.

Breeding: Earliest records were from Strathspey, with birds observed on the nest near Boat of Garten on 1 May. The first chicks were recorded on Eigg on 19 May and at Loch Vaa and Avielochan on 22 May. Young were recorded across the area and the last chicks were seen on Loch Flemington on 28 August.

Autumn/Winter: After the breeding season, the highest numbers of birds recorded were in September, with 33 on Loch Eye on the 13th, 24 on Loch Flemington on the 18th and 25 on Loch Eye on the 24th. Low numbers, mainly in single figures, were recorded elsewhere and by the end of the year most birds were on coastal sites and on lochs near the coast.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisigena*

Scarce winter visitor.

Spring: In March, an adult bird was sighted at Tarbat Ness on the 20th. In April, there were three sightings of another adult from around Inverasdale, Loch Ewe in Wester Ross between the 17th and 20th.

Autumn/Winter: In November, an adult was seen at Embo on the 21st. Two adult birds were reported off Ardmail Point on 15 December.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Has bred; scarce visitor, mainly in autumn and winter, but summer records increasing.

Winter/Spring: Between 11 January and 16 May there were eight reports from the Moray Basin east of Inverness, from Alturlye, Milton of Culloden and Seafeld, all quite possibly of the same bird.

Autumn/Winter: The four reports between 22 November and 31 December were all from Alturlye, at the pools, the shoreline or the Point.



Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce local breeder; common in winter, especially in Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: The vast majority of records came from coastal sites and sea lochs. There were 40 birds on Loch Linnhe on 28 January and other high counts were 65 off Golspie on 6 March and 76 at Dornoch on 16 March, although the January and February WeBS counts only produced a total of less than 10 birds on the Dornoch, Cromarty, Inverness and Beauly Firths combined. Birds were also noted on Loch Ashie on 27 February. In spring, birds were reported at a small number of other inland sites, at Loch Ruthven from 21 March and at three lochs in Strathspey, the earliest on 23 March. One bird was seen further south in Badenoch on 16 May.

Breeding: Records of confirmed successful breeding on BirdTrack came from three or four sites, the first chick being seen at one of the Strathspey lochs on 30 May and the last two fledglings at the same site on 2 September. The overall summary in the tables below shows a continuing decline in the number of breeding pairs and the second lowest number of young fledged in the last 10 years. In a catastrophic fall in breeding success in Inverness south of the Great Glen, six pairs at Loch Ruthven fledged just one young.

Slavonian Grebe Productivity in Highland 2022:

		Occupied Lochs	Number of Pairs	Number of Young
Inverness, North of Great Glen		4	4	4
Inverness, South of Great Glen		4	9	1
Badenoch & Strathspey		3	2	4
Ross-shire		1	1	1
Total		12	16	10

Slavonian Grebe Breeding Productivity 2013 -2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Breeding Pairs	23	23	28	35	27	26	26	*	19	16
Young Fledged	15	37	14	21	7	14	15	*	23	10
Young per Pair	0.65	1.61	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.54	0.57	*	1.2	0.63

* not counted due to Covid-19 restrictions

Autumn/Winter: By the beginning of September birds were leaving the breeding lochs and throughout the period there were 10 counts of 10-20 birds at the usual coastal sites, building up to 38 off Embo on 12 November and 26 in Udale Bay on 28 December. Notable counts on the west coast were 20+ at both Little Gruinard and Inverasdale in Wester Ross on 25 October and 5 December respectively.



Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common breeder; abundant in Inner Moray Firth in winter, but uncommon elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: Concentrations of more than 125 birds in the Moray Firth were noted in January and February, the highest 450 at Udale Bay on 23 January, 483 at Tain Links on 23 January and 570 at Dornoch Point on 28 February. The maximum on the north coast was 74 at Tongue on 1 February and the highest count in the west was 70 on Canna on 24 May. The first bird recorded inland in Badenoch & Strathspey was seen at Grantown-on-Spey on 30 January, followed by seven at Invertromie on 12 February. Later higher numbers were 200 at Dulnain Bridge on 27 February, 130 at Balliefurth a day later and the maximum 440 at Broomhill on 7 March.

Breeding: There were 32 records of proven breeding on BirdTrack, spread across the region. The earliest nest with eggs was found at Ruthven on the Findhorn on 3 May and the latest at Loch Brittle on Skye on 19 July. The earliest fledged young were seen at Lurg Watchpoint, Nethy Bridge on 31 May. Egg had a very poor season, with very few large young seen, probably due to constantly dreadful weather in spring and early summer. Breeding was reported at five sites on Handa, including one where a chick was witnessed being predated by a Great Skua.

Number of Oystercatcher pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	42	37	42	34	40	41	*	34	35

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

Summer/Autumn/Winter: As expected, there were no large inland concentrations in summer. The earliest triple-figure count was 240 at Broadford Bay on 22 July while, on the east coast, 160 birds were at Castle Stuart on 29 July and 125 at Seafeld, Inverness on 31 July. In August, 200 were counted at Broadford Bay on the 23rd and 104–106 at Kentra Bay on the 23–24th, while most of the eight counts in the 100–250 range on the east coast were towards the end of the month. Thereafter, the highest of five counts of 500 or more on the east coast was 820 at Castle Stuart on 11 September. The maximum on the west coast was 146 at Kentra Bay on 12 September, but the few records from the north coast were all in single figures.

Oystercatcher - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	09 Oct	11 Dec
Brora–Dornoch	408	704	265	450
Dornoch Firth	1287	1022	364	641
East Ross Coast	42	69	23	76
Cromarty Firth	1921	1993	3214	2870
Beaully Firth	802	402	615	614
Inverness Firth	1454	1134	1388	1532
TOTALS	5914	5324	5869	6183



Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Common but declining breeder in east, but scarce elsewhere; locally common migrant, but can be uncommon in winter.

Winter/Spring: Thirteen three-figure counts around the Moray Firth included 300+ at Ardersier on 2 February and 450 at Easter/Wester Dalziel on 25 February. The maximum on the north coast was 60 on the River Halladale at Melvich on 13 February while, in the west, it was only 30 at Kilmuir, Skye on 27 February. There were six reports from Badenoch & Strathspey on 1-3 January, the highest count 20 at Invertromie. Concentrations increased to 103 at Invertromie on 31 January, 200+ at Nuide Farm, Newtonmore on 21 February and 346 at Insh Marshes on 3 March, the same day as the peak at 620 at Balliefurth. The last big inland count was 100 in Strath Dearn on 8 April, before flocks diminished as birds dispersed to breeding grounds.



Lapwing in March at Kincaig c. Al McNee

Breeding: There were 18 sites with proven breeding on BirdTrack, the first as usual a nest with eggs on Rum, this time on 12 April, four days earlier than last year. The first chicks were recorded at Highland Wildlife Park, Kincaig on 4 May, the same date as last year. Two-thirds of sites were in Badenoch & Strathspey, but none in Lochaber. An estimated 35 territorial pairs on Eigg was a similar number to that of 2021.

Number of Lapwing pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013-2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	61	57	58	59	77	70	*	84	93

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19 restrictions



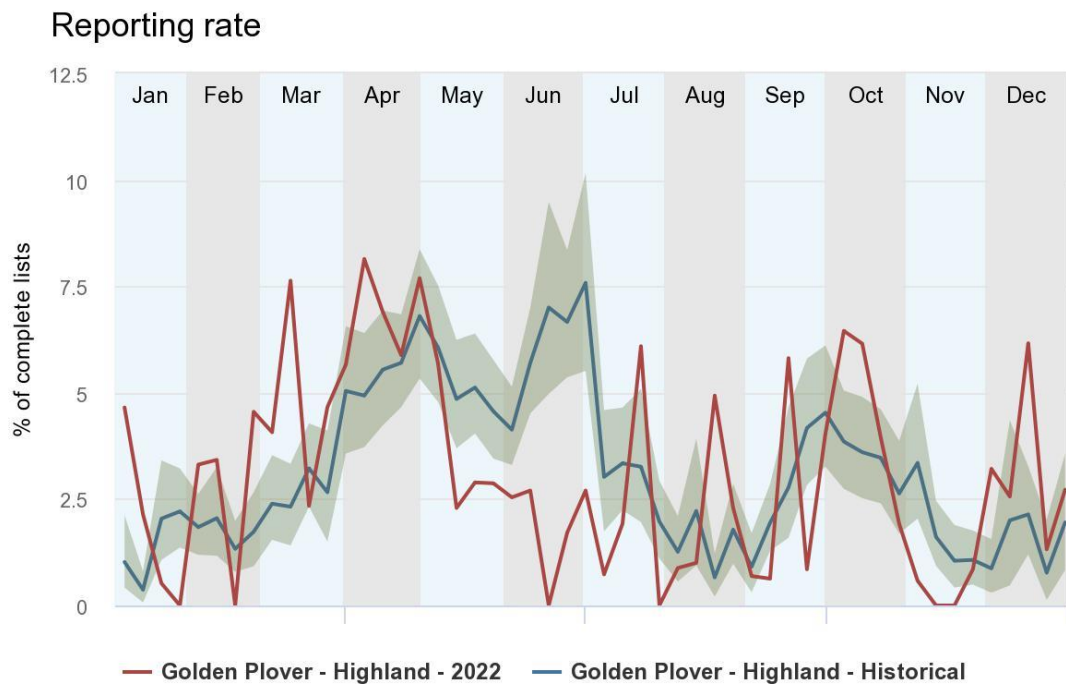
Lapwing - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	09 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	90	25	0	62
Dornoch Firth	58	52	8	72
Cromarty Firth	506	104	651	351
Beaully Firth	99	60	74	64
Inverness Firth	0	170	423	241
TOTALS	753	411	1156	790

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The earliest post-breeding flock on the Inner Moray Firth was possibly the 20 birds at Munlochy on 3 July. Numbers gradually built up at Alturlie, to 40 on 18 July and 63 on 3 August, followed by 90 at Loans of Tullich, Balintore on 8 August. In September and October, there were 15 three-figure counts in the area, the highest 300+ in the Beaully River estuary on 9 October, over three times the WeBS count for the whole firth on the same day. The highest count on the north coast was only 23, at Balnakeil on 15 October while, in the west, the maximum was 39 at Loch Caroy, Skye on 11 December. A few birds lingered in Badenoch & Strathspey into winter, the last recorded single at Insh Marshes on Christmas Day.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Locally common breeder; locally common migrant and uncommon winter visitor, mainly in east.



Reporting rate: %age each week of BirdTrack lists with a report of Golden Plover



Winter/Spring: The first BirdTrack record of the year was of two birds inland at Dell of Killiehuntly, Badenoch on 3 January. On 13 January one was seen on breeding grounds on Clach Meall Dubh, followed by seven there five days later. Groups moving inland later were 90 at Carr Road, Strathspey on 25 February and 80 there on 31 March. Several large concentrations stayed at coastal locations during the first four months, with three counts in the 50-75 range at Tarbat Ness on 4-7 January, 70 in the north-west at Faraid Head on 2 February, 100 at Loch Dunvegan on 4 February, 132 at Golspie on 5 February, 100 at Tarbat Ness on 26 February and 150 at Seafield, Inverness on 21 April.

Breeding: There were only three records of proven breeding on BirdTrack, plus another eight of probable breeding, which is perhaps unsurprising given the inaccessibility of the upland breeding grounds to most observers. However, only 54 territorial pairs were found in the annual survey at Sallachy, Lairg, well below the average of 84 pairs in the years 2016-2021. The fall in the number of territorial pairs at this site is consistent with the significantly lower recording rate for Golden Plover in Highland during the breeding season. It is granted that the recording rate during this season is dependent on the number of observers prepared to visit and submit records from remote upland areas, but there was no obvious decrease in recording rate during the breeding season for Dunlin, which breeds in similar habitat and is arguably less likely to draw attention to itself than Golden Plover (*see page 87*).

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The first signs of significant post-breeding flocks returning to coastal locations were 33 birds at Dundonnell on 25 August and 33 at Ramasaig on the west coast of Skye on 27 August. Birds could still be encountered on high ground until October, including 90 on Beinn Bhuidhe Mor, Clava on 8 October and 22 on Geal Charn, Drumochter on 18 October. Later, Loch Dunvegan had 59 birds on 5 November, rising to 120 on 4 December. As usual, the largest concentrations were noted on the east coast. The highest count was 290 birds in two flocks at Hilton of Cadboll in Easter Ross on 28 September, followed by 200 at Alturlie Point on 26 October and 200 on 12 December at Tarbat Ness, where there were a further six three-figure counts between 2 October and 26 December.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Uncommon migrant, mainly in autumn in east, but scarce in winter.

Winter/Spring/Summer: There were only eight records, as follows. A single was found on 7 January at Borgie Estuary on the north coast. WeBS counts on the stretch from the Alexandra footbridge along Tain Links furnished 10 birds on 23 January and six on 20 February. At Dornoch Point, 12 were seen on 11 February and 15 on 25 February. Singles were found at Kentra Bay in Lochaber on 27 February and 27 March, as well as Whiteness Head on 19 March.

Autumn/Winter: There were 27 records in this period, from nine locations. The first record, from Dornoch Point on 29 August, preceded four records from Udale Bay, of singles on 22 September, 7 and 10 October, plus a final record on 5 November. On 24 September two birds were seen on the Peffery at Dingwall. The



remaining 13 east coast records were from Dornoch between 8 October and 24 December. They included seven counts in the three to seven range and peaks of 11 on 5 and 8 December. On Skye, a sighting of a single at Ardnish on 19 September was followed by three records from Broadford Bay, starting with two juveniles on 23 September and ending with a single on 1 October. Two birds were also noted at nearby Waterloo on 24 September, while singles were at Loch Eyre on 26 September and Ashaig on 14 October. In Wester Ross, there was a single on Firemore Beach on 24 October.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Widespread breeder on coast in small numbers, but scarcer inland; locally common in Inner Moray Firth in autumn and winter.

Winter/Spring: Winter reports from all around the coasts were generally in low double figures or less, the exceptions being a count of 400 at Loch Fleet on 11 January, the largest in the first half of the year, and 80 on 22 February in a ploughed field by Golspie Golf Club. Five triple-figure counts in spring included 225 birds at Inver on 12 March and 244 at Dornoch on 19 May. Flocks of 130 at Alturlie Point on 27 May and Milton of Culloden a day later were probably on migration, as the latter was reported to be virtually entirely of ssp. *tundrae* which breeds on Arctic coasts. On the north coast, the highest count was 42 at Kyle of Durness on 3 February during the RAFOS winter survey of the north-west coasts. In the west, 110 were counted in Broadford Bay on 18 April and 120 on 13 May. Four birds at Cluny Castle, Badenoch on 4 March and two at Loch Insh on 12 March were the first of an increasing number of reports from inland sites.

Breeding: Proven breeding was only recorded at 11 sites on BirdTrack, only two of which were inland in Badenoch, one each on the north and east coasts and seven in the west. Chicks were first seen on 9 June at Mellon Udrigle, while inland the first were not seen until 10 July at Gaick Lodge. On Eigg, there were again 12 breeding pairs, with the first clutch seen on 12 April, and at least two pairs were known to raise young. Breeding was also confirmed on Handa.

Ringed Plover - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	09 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	183	217	300	412
Dornoch Firth	50	24	0	13
East Ross Coast	8	5	19	12
Cromarty Firth	200	8	21	93
Beaully Firth	39	0	0	0
Inverness Firth	4	0	25	26
TOTALS	484	254	365	556

Summer/Autumn/Winter: An early sign of post-breeding flocks assembling on the coast was the rise in numbers in Broadford Bay from 30 on 27 July to 90 on 5 August, then five three-figure counts there between 9 August and 9 September, peaking at 150 on 25 August. The maximum on Eigg was 44 on 1-2 September. On



the east coast, 68 birds were counted at Dornoch on 10 August and 80+ at Whiteness Head a day later. On 9 September, there were 125 at Loch Fleet and 450, the largest count of the year, at Brora river-mouth. Brora later saw 250 on 6 November, after which numbers around the coasts reverted to low double or single figures.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Uncommon summer visitor & breeder in high upland habitat; scarce elsewhere in spring and summer.

Spring/Summer: There was a total of only 24 records on BirdTrack, including three of proven breeding. Most (14) were from the Cairngorms, plus six from the west Drumochter and south Laggan ranges. In the west, there were three records from the Affric range and one from the Fannichs. The first single was noted on 1 May on a mountain in the Cairngorms and, six days later, a pair was seen on a neighbouring summit. The west Drumochter records included a report on 12 June of five pairs in suitable habitat on one mountain and another on 1 July of 10 birds at a different location. The final record on 25 August was of a flock of six birds between two of the Affric peaks.

Breeding: Adults with at least six young were reported on three neighbouring peaks in the Cairngorms between 7 and 12 August.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Has bred; uncommon migrant but can be locally common.

Winter/Spring: The first bird was recorded on 11 April, the same date as last year, at Embo, where further singles were noted on 16 and 18 April. Meanwhile on Skye, singles were recorded at Ardnish on 13 and 15 April, and at Ashaig on 17 April, whereas two birds were seen at Ach na Cloiche, Sleat on 14 April and Loch Portree on 19 April. Thereafter in April, numbers were usually larger, with five birds at Portmahomack on the 20th, seven at Dornoch on the 22nd and Kentra Bay on the 23rd, eight at Stoer Head Lighthouse on the 24th, and 12 at Waternish Point, Skye and at Arisaig on the 28th. Subsequent larger counts were 20 at Red Point, Wester Ross on 1 May, 28 at Traigh, Arisaig on 6 May and 32 roosting on rocks at Balnakeil beach on 12 May. Probably the last spring migrant was seen on Canna on 29 May.

Breeding: As in 2021, a bird was seen at a site in Badenoch singing and defending territory on 1 June. It was seen to have a partner on 19 June and the pair was seen with two chicks on 1 and 3 July. According to *The Birds of Scotland Vol.1*, birds last nested in Highland in the mid-1990s, in Sutherland and Ross-shire, but never as far south as Badenoch.



Summer/Autumn: As in previous years, a small number of individual birds appeared to summer, more often at west coast locations. Two birds on 19 July at Camas an Lìghe, west of Kentra were possibly returning migrants, but three at Hilton of Cadboll in Easter Ross on 20 July and five in Broadford Bay a day later certainly were. Subsequent flocks were usually small and all bar one of the higher counts were on the west coast: at Ashaig, 39 birds on 24 July; in Broadford Bay, 27 on 6 August; 223 in two flocks on 11 August; 27 again on 25 August; and at Handa, 30 flying south on 12 August. The exception was 10 birds at Tarbat Ness on 18 August. After mid-September, there were only two records, of at least eight birds at Sanna Bay, Acharacle on 26 October and an exceptionally late one at Tarbat Ness on 11 November.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Common but declining breeder; common winter visitor in Inner Moray Firth, but uncommon elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: The 17 treble-figure counts were all in the Moray Firth in the first three months. These included 200 in Udale Bay on 3 February, 243 at Tain during WeBS on 23 January, 150 at Balnabruach on 23 January and 145 at Milton of Culloden on 28 January. Elsewhere, 200 birds were at Inver on 12 March and the top count was 580 at Loch Fleet on 23 March. The best count on both north and west coasts was 63, at Tongue on 3 February and Kentra Bay on 10 April. The first two birds seen inland in Badenoch & Strathspey were at Invertromie on 17 February, followed by 10 at Dell of Killiehuntly six days later. Soon, larger accumulations were noted, such as 150 at Dulnain Bridge on 27 February and 249 at Carr Road, Strathspey on 7 March, before birds dispersed to breeding grounds.

Breeding: There were only eight sites on BirdTrack where breeding was confirmed, seven of them in Badenoch & Strathspey or Strath Dearn. The earliest nest with young was found at Lochindorb on 21 May. Two of the three breeding pairs on Eigg were apparently successful in raising young, with the first small chick seen on 30 May.

Number of Curlew pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	103	94	95	99	72	83	*	79	87

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The appearance of significant numbers of post-breeding birds on coastal sites was evident from late June onwards, with 40 birds on a high tide roost at Kyle of Tongue on 30 June. A flock of 24 birds at Kentra Bay on 2 July increased to 33 birds on 22 July and 79 six days later. On the east coast, 70 birds were at Milton of Culloden on 7 July. The first three-figure concentration was seen on 27 July, when 176 birds were present at Loch Fleet. The WeBS total counts in October and December in the table below were significantly lower than those of January and February, suggesting that post-breeding flock sizes were smaller than might have been expected. There was only limited support for this suggestion in the BirdTrack data, in which 15 three-figure counts in the last six



months of the year compares with 17 in the first three, and the individual counts were not markedly lower. The most notable were at Castle Stuart, with 260 birds on 29 July and 350 on 11 September, at Udale Bay, where the best of five three-figure counts were 253 on 24 August and 215 on 15 October, and at Wester/Easter Dalziel, with 192 on 9 December.

Curlew - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	09 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	279	546	51	87
Dornoch Firth	1061	803	479	629
East Ross Coast	6	0	4	11
Cromarty Firth	1337	1287	923	756
Beaully Firth	366	260	87	258
Inverness Firth	744	537	638	500
TOTALS	3793	3433	2182	2241

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Common migrant and winter visitor in Inner Moray Firth, but scarce in north and west; locally uncommon in Inner Moray Firth in summer.

Winter/Spring: Inner Moray Firth WeBS total counts in January and February were significantly lower than their 2021 equivalents. In contrast, triple-figure concentrations in the Moray Firth were higher and more frequently seen than in 2021. The most notable were 300 birds at Tain Links on 11 January, 500 at Balnabruach on 23 January, three counts in the 200-350 range at Udale Bay between 1 February and 3 March, and 550 at Inver on 12 March. As usual, flocks were much smaller elsewhere. On the north coast, 12 birds at Kyle of Tongue on 27 January was the maximum. On the west coast, a double-figure flock at Kentra Bay, Ardnamurchan was regularly reported from January to April, but the peak was only 30 birds on 10 April.

Bar-tailed Godwit - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	09 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	23	3	0	0
Dornoch Firth	1311	272	27	890
Cromarty Firth	255	215	18	239
Beaully Firth	0	16	42	1
Inverness Firth	131	132	13	74
TOTALS	1720	638	100	1204

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The few counts in June and July were generally low, until 30 birds at Whiteness suggested the arrival of returning birds, which was confirmed at this site when numbers rose to 100 on 3 August and higher counts of 200 on 13 September and 10 October. Also, 54 arrived on 4 August at Udale Bay, which recorded later counts of 150 on 2 October and 100 on 11 November. Elsewhere on the east coast, Dornoch recorded 300 birds on 11 October and 200



two days later, but the only other three-figure count was 150 at Fort George on 15 December. These generally lower concentrations than those seen earlier in the year reflected the lower WeBS count totals in October and December. There were no records from the north coast, but the return of birds to Kentra Bay progressed from 13 on 8 August to 25 on 23 August and a peak of 38 on 29 November.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Uncommon but increasing migrant, scarce in winter, mainly in east.

Winter/Spring: From 1-17 January there were reports from six Moray Firth sites of one to six birds and one report from Ardnish, Skye on the 20th. Later in January, 32 birds were seen at Tain on the 21st, increasing to 41 on the 24th and on 7 February, 14 at Seafield, Inverness on the 24th and 10 at Avoch on the 30th. During the Moray Firth WeBS, 80 were counted in the Beaully Firth on 23 January and 29 on 20 February. On 1 February 13 were noted on the north coast at Kyle of Tongue. In spring, significant passage flocks involved 21 birds at Loch Eye on 26 March, 19 at Redcastle on 14 April, 50 at Loch Flemington on 19 April and 16 at Clachnaharry/North Kessock on 1 May. The latest spring passage sighting was of four birds at Balnakeil beach on 12 May.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: A single summered at Merkinch LNR from 8 May to 4 July. Another intriguing record concerned an adult with two fully grown chicks at Udale Bay on 14 July. Had they bred in Highland or managed to fly from somewhere further north? A group of 54 birds in full breeding plumage at Kentra Bay, Ardnamurchan on 2 July was the first significant sign of autumn passage. At Broadford Bay, a first single on 14 July was followed by a steady increase in numbers to 28 on 11 August and a peak of 150 on 13 August, before falling back to 12 on 24 August. Other notable counts were 57 at Loch Portree on 11 August, 12 at Linnhe/Lochy mouth on 24 August and 15 at Ardnish on 27 August. Early arrivals on the east coast were 10 birds at Munlochy Bay on 8 July and 13 at Alturlie on 16 August. At Tain, numbers increased steadily from 15 on 7 September to peak at 58 on 22 September, then fluctuated back to 17 on 24 October. During the Moray Firth WeBS, 42 were counted in the Beaully Firth on 9 October. On 20 November, 30 were counted at Munlochy. One Icelandic bird (ssp. *islandica*) was found in Nigg/Udale Bay on 16 August and one or two in Broadford Bay between 8 and 14 September.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Locally common winter visitor and migrant in Inner Moray Firth, scarcer elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: Reports came from all round the coasts, usually in single figures, although 17 counts were in the 10-20 range. The highest counts in the Moray Firth were 23 at Balintore harbour on 15 January, 60 at Embo pier on 25 January, 29 at Hilton of Cadboll on 16 February, 35 at Balnabruach on 20 February, 35 at



Balintore on 1 April, 25 at Chanonry Point on 7 April and 35 at Embo on 18 April. The highest north coast count was 20 at Kyle of Tongue on 27 January. In the west, maximum winter counts were in low double figures, but in spring 25 birds were seen at Kingairloch on 30 March, 21 at Resipole, Loch Sunart on 24 April and 27 at Loch Caroy, Skye on 15 May. The last sighting was of a single at Cromarty on 11 June.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The first returning bird was noted on 9 July at Tarbat Ness, where three birds in breeding plumage came in off the sea on 14 July. On the same day, the first two birds returning to Lochaber were recorded at Fassfern. All subsequent summer sightings were in single or low double figures. In autumn, higher east coast counts were 28 at Balintore harbour on 11 September and 8 October, 100+ on the Beaulay Firth just west of the canal entrance on 13 September, 25 at Ardersier on 17 and 27 October, and 26 at Hilton of Cadboll on 25 October and 28 there on 24 November. The only significant December count, of 24 at Dornoch on the 24th, was consistent with the low WeBS counts in that month. Numerous counts on the west coast were in the 10-20 range, the highest 19 at Fort William to Caol on 6 November and 20 in Broadford Bay on 16 November.

Turnstone - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	09 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	41	19	17	2
Dornoch Firth	1	42	18	28
East Ross Coast	9	22	42	0
Cromarty Firth	32	21	27	14
Inverness Firth	45	36	24	29
TOTALS	128	140	128	73

Knot *Calidris canutus*

Common migrant and winter visitor in Inner Moray Firth, scarce elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: Several large flocks were seen in the Moray Firth, such as 100+ at Tain Links on 10 January, increasing to 500 the following day, 300 at Munlochy on 16 January, 200 in Udale Bay on 21 January and 2-3 February, increasing to 800 on 3 March, WeBS counts of 300 at Balnabruach in January and 200 in February, 165 at Balintore on 19 February and what was probably the same flock of 200-400 moving between Seafeld, Inverness on 14 March, Castle Stuart on 20 March and Milton of Culloden on 6 April. On the west coast, a regularly reported flock at Kentra Bay, Ardnamurchan contained 12 birds on 11 January, but less than 10 thereafter. The larger flocks dissipated after early April and the last three birds of spring were seen at Tarbat Ness on 3 June.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The earliest sign of birds on return passage appeared to be the three at Broadford Bay on 22 July, which increased to seven two days later. At Kentra Bay, a flock of 28 adults in breeding plumage on 25 July had reduced to 15 by 28 July and low single figures thereafter. In the Moray Firth, a



flock of 12 birds on 28 July had increased to over 30 by 5 August, but only reached 100 on one occasion, on 10 October. Compared to earlier in the year, three-figure counts in this period were fewer and smaller, with 150 at Castle Stuart on 11 September, 150 at Tain on 14 September and 400 at Udale Bay on 14 November being the only ones of note. Likewise, the Moray Firth WeBS counts were significantly lower than in January and February. There were no records in the whole year from the north coast.

Knot - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	09 Oct	11 Dec
Brora–Dornoch	6	15	0	0
Dornoch Firth	1130	1297	127	1100
Cromarty Firth	442	1301	274	417
Beaully Firth	0	0	90	0
Inverness Firth	711	282	0	148
TOTALS	2289	2895	491	1665

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Has bred; has wintered, but usually scarce passage migrant, mainly in Inner Moray Firth.

Spring: Two birds appeared in the far north-west at Balnakeil on 19 May.

Summer/Autumn: The first returning bird was an adult male at Breakish Obbe, Skye on 16 July. The 14 records which followed included singles on the east coast at Udale Bay on 29 July, Seafeld, Inverness on 6 September, Whiteness Bay on 8 September, Brora on 9 September and Ardersier on 27 October. At Dornoch, five adults were seen on 7 September, reducing to three a day later, and one was present on 11 October. On Skye, two juveniles were in Broadford Bay on 8 September. On the north coast, three birds were found at Balnakeil on 15 October and one at Melness on 3 November. Unexpectedly, two first-year birds were found inland near Carrbridge on 14-16 September.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in Inner Moray Firth.

Autumn: There were 33 BirdTrack records from 14 locations (eight and three respectively in autumn 2021). In a short period of less than two weeks, birds were sighted on the west coast at Morar, Traigh and Kilmory in Ardnamurchan, and at four sites in SE Skye, while on the Inner Moray Firth there were reports from Whiteness bay, Alturlie, Castle Stuart, North Kessock and further north to Dornoch, Embo and Brora. All observations were during September, the first at Kyleakin in Skye of two birds on the 4th. Skye had the most records, with Broadford Bay having the most abundant sightings, including two juveniles on the



8th, but the highest count was five at North Kessock on the 5th. Dornoch had four birds on the 12th and the last single was at Embo on 16 September.



Curlew Sandpipers in September at Kyleakin c. Bob McMillan

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Rare passage migrant; has bred.

Spring/Summer: There were 11 BirdTrack records from four locations. The first sighting was of two birds in Badenoch & Strathspey on 16 May. Single birds were observed at Balnakeil on 17 May and at an inland Ross-shire loch in June and an inland Sutherland loch in July.

Breeding: There was evidence of probable breeding at an undisclosed site where, from 17 May and into early June, a pair and a single male were observed singing, displaying and defending territory. No further evidence of breeding was reported.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Uncommon but increasing migrant and winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: There were 205 BirdTrack records for the year at 83 locations. Birds were recorded in every month and, once again, most records were from the east coast, from Brora to Embo and Dornoch down the East Ross seaboard to



Rosemarkie and Chanonry Point on the Black Isle, with a few around Inverness. Monthly peak counts were 80 at Embo on 7 January, 60 at Brora on 11 February, 100 at Embo on 24 March, 25+ at Embo on 8 April and Dornoch had 95 on 9 May. Single birds were recorded at a few locations on the west coast until passage was noted in May at Balnakeil, Loch Ewe, Achilitibuie, Bay of Culkein and on Skye, Rum, Eigg, Canna, Muck and Handa. The maximum count was 12 at Kilmory/Shamhnan Insir on Rum on 20 May and at Laig Beach on Eigg on 22 May. Two birds at Dornoch on 22 June were probably the last of the spring passage.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Possibly the earliest returning autumn passage birds were two on Firemore Beach, Loch Ewe on 6 July. Overall, there were sightings at fewer locations than in spring, but again most were on the east coast of Sutherland and Ross-shire. An annual high count of 142 was observed at Dornoch on 19 July and the August high count was 64 at the same site on the 15th. Subsequent monthly maxima were all recorded at Brora. On 9 September 120 were at the river-mouth, in October numbers tailed off significantly to a high of only 30 on the 4th, but numbers recovered to 100 on 16 November and 120 on 10 December. In the west, there were sightings on Skye and Rum, but Eigg had a poor year, with only small numbers recorded twice in August. Handa also only had two sightings in August, in the company of Dunlin, with a high of eight birds.

Sanderling - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	14 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	88	46	115	173
Dornoch Firth	0	49	0	0
TOTALS	88	95	115	173

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Fairly common breeder in uplands; common migrant and winter visitor to Inner Moray Firth, but uncommon in north and west.

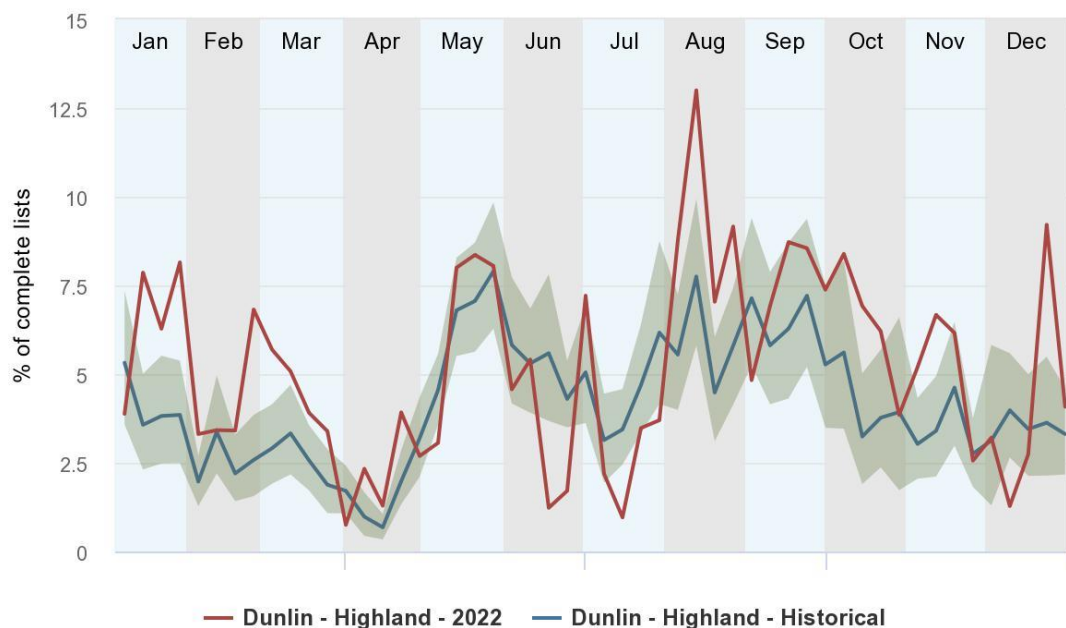
Winter/Spring: With 566 BirdTrack records, birds were widespread throughout the region and seen in every month of the year. Large counts were evident in the first three months, with highs in January of 800 at Tain and 500 at Tain Links on the 11th, and 500 at Embo on the 23rd, 1000 at Udale Bay on 1 and 3 February, and 800 at Loch Fleet on 1 March. The WeBS counts for the Inner Moray Firth had significantly higher numbers than 2021 for January and February. There was a significant drop off in April, with the highest count 27 at Whiteness Bay on 21 April. This coincided with birds dispersing to inland breeding grounds, like the two on Carn Tuairneir, Cromdale Hills on 20 April, although, interestingly, a bird had been reported at Loch Fannich in Wester Ross on 15 January. The first three months also had birds in smaller numbers throughout the west coast, from 10 at Ashaig in Skye on 17 January to 91 at Bay of Kentra, Ardnamurchan on 27 February. In May, the west coast topped the counts with 180 at Bay of Culkein, Assynt on the 20th. Other highs were 20+ birds at Kilmory, Rum on 18 May, with



25 on Firemore Beach, Loch Ewe and seven on Canna the same day, and 14 on Eigg on 21 May.

Breeding: Handa had regular sightings from May to August, with a maximum of 20 birds and potential juvenile sightings in late July and two in early September. Insh Marshes reported a juvenile in late July. No further evidence of confirmed breeding was reported. Sallachy open ground survey reported 54 occupied territories, the same as last year but down in comparison to the overall trend since 2016. There was a much less obvious decrease in the recording rate during the breeding season for Dunlin in Highland as a whole than there was for Golden Plover (*see page 77*).

Reporting rate



www.birdtrack.net

Reporting rate: %age each week of BirdTrack lists with a report of Dunlin

Dunlin - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	955	685	290	187
Dornoch Firth	794	1660	215	1099
Easter Ross	0	7	1	0
Cromarty Firth	1548	1658	868	2057
Beaully Firth	1301	1522	45	71
Inverness Firth	452	601	158	583
TOTALS	5050	6133	1577	3997

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Coastal numbers increased through summer, from 10 at Harrapool in Broadford Bay, Skye on 3 June to 50 on 24 July and 160 on 20 August, and at Dornoch from 23 on 22 June and 14 on 19 July to 90 on 10 August. Numbers leapt up again in the autumn, especially in the Moray Firth, to 720 at Dornoch on 11 September, then a year high count on 25 September of 1200 at Tain. During October, 300 were present at Redcastle on the Beaully Firth on the 9th and 400 at Inver on the 21st. In November, the high counts were 300 at Udale Bay on the 11th and 600 at Dornoch on the 28th. On 30 December 1000+ were



along the Tain seafront. The October WeBS total count for the Inner Moray Firth, at 1577 birds, was more than two and a half times greater than in 2021 and the December total of 3997 was similar to that of 2021. On the west coast, Sandwood Bay, north of Kinlochbervie had a very respectable count of 42 on 3 September and 250 in Broadford Bay on 7 September was the highest.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Has bred; scarce passage migrant and localised winter visitor to Inner Moray Firth, scarce in north and west.

Winter/Spring: There were 253 BirdTrack records for the year from 58 locations, with most birds seen during this period. Monthly high counts were 40 at Embo on 25 January, 49 at Embo on 6 February, 37 at Embo on 25 March, 30 at Balintore on 1 April and 26 at Tarbat Ness on 14 May. High counts at other locations included 12 birds at Mallaig on 12 January, 22 at Talmine, north Sutherland on 30 January, four at Neist Point, Skye on 24 March and 10 at Elgol, Skye on 23 April. The last two birds of spring were at Tarbat Ness on 26 May.



Purple Sandpiper in February at Brora c. Dean MacAskill

Breeding: No records of breeding were presented.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The first bird for the second half of the year was at Tarbat Ness on 2 July and thereafter monthly high counts were three birds at Tarbat Ness on 17 July, five at the same location on 3 August and two there on 25



September. On 26 October four birds were at Balintore, after which there was a large increase in numbers to 45 at Brora on 12 November and a year high of 61 at Brora on 6 December. Other location highs were all in winter, with 42 at Embo on 7 December and 32 at Balintore two days later. In the west, a single bird was at Rubha nan Sasan in Wester Ross on 6 November and Eigg had one November record. Winter counts on Skye, at Ashaig, Broadford and Neist Point, were all in the two to five range, while the top count was only eight, at Mallaig on 27 December.

Purple Sandpiper - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	09 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	8	18	0	85
Dornoch Firth	4	40	0	3
Easter Ross rocky shore	19	15	0	23
Cromarty Firth	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	31	73	0	111

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*

Vagrant.

Spring: A single bird was reported at Balnakeil on 15 May.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in Inner Moray Firth.

Summer/Autumn: There were 16 BirdTrack records from five locations, with the first bird reported from Cromarty on 3 August. A further August record was of a single bird at Staffin on Skye on the 15th, before more singles appeared at Broadford on 3-5 September and Dornoch on 7-8 September. A record count for Broadford Bay, of six birds, was observed on 9 September, with the last one seen there on 13 September. Two were at Dornoch on 12 September and a final single was reported at Tain on 24 September.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Uncommon and declining breeder; widespread migrant and winter visitor, especially in west, but under-recorded.

Winter/Spring: The first of 350 BirdTrack records for the year was a single bird at Evanton on 1 January and thereafter widespread sightings were reported from over the whole region. Birds were mostly in ones and twos, but consistently higher counts were noted on Rum throughout January and February, as high as 11+ on 7 January and at least six on 6 and 22 February. Ten birds were also seen at Borgie near Bettyhill on 13 January, while Easter Ross saw six birds at Ardrross on 3 February and at Morangie near Tain on 28 February. The March high count was



five at Erbusaig in Lochalsh on the 18th. Sightings dropped off in April and May, with a maximum of three birds seen at Grantown-on-Spey on 4 May.

Breeding/Summer: The first roding bird was heard on Rum on 27 March and thereafter birds were heard calling from April through to July in various locations such as Rum, Eigg, Grantown-on-Spey, near Dornoch, Slochd near Carrbridge and the Carse of Ardersier (including those reported as nocturnal audio recordings). No evidence of positive breeding success was reported. Only two records were posted during August, of single birds in Strathspey and on Eigg.

Autumn/Winter: There were no records in September, but a single bird was sighted at Tarbat Ness on 4 October and, thereafter, throughout the region, increasing in number and location throughout November and into December as continental birds arrived. Seven birds were seen around Loch Kinellan, Strathpeffer on 26 November and at least seven on Rum the day after. Ten were reported at Lairg on 1 December, six near Achiltibuie on the 12th and six near Ullapool on the 15th. Interesting counts of 42 on 19 December and 53 on the 20th were accumulated at night in fields near Hill of Fearn and Tain, respectively, while lamping.

Jack Snipe *Limnocryptes minimus*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor. Probably very under-recorded.



Jack Snipe in September at Kilmory, Rum c. Sean Morris

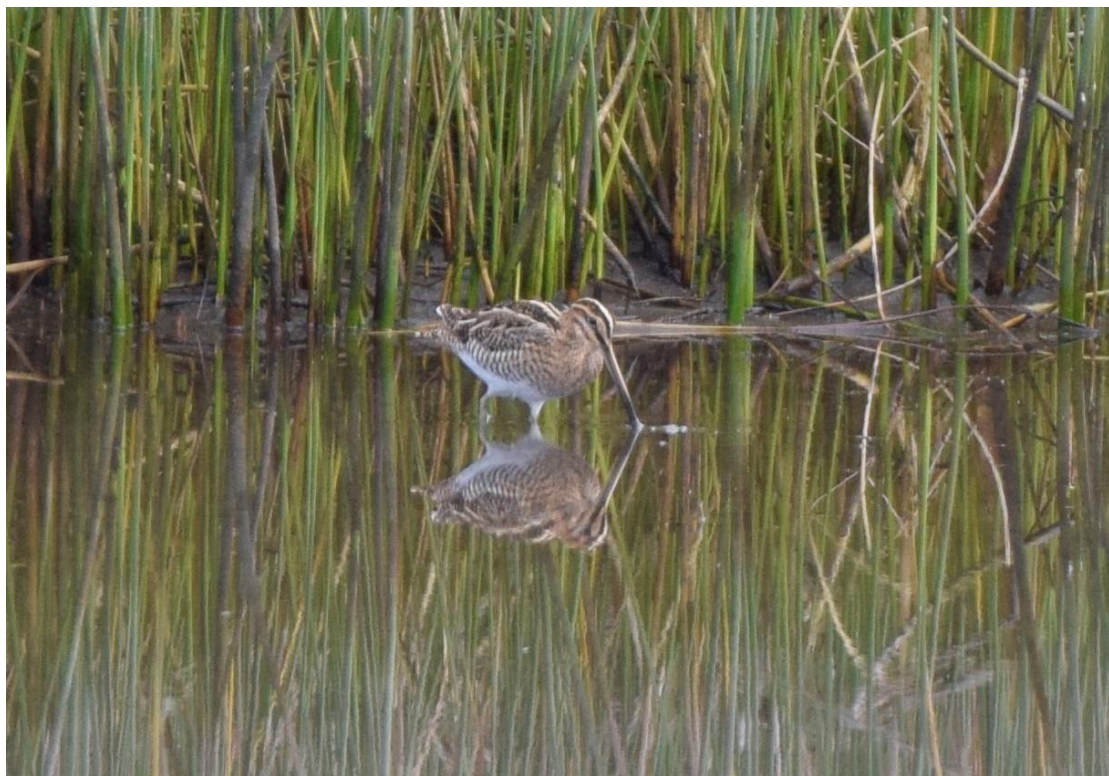


Winter/Spring: There were 43 records during the year and most in the first half were from Rum. The first reports were of three birds seen there on 4 and 7 January. Single birds were seen at two locations on Skye, two locations in Wester Ross and two locations in Badenoch. Another count of three birds was recorded at Skelbo, Dornoch on 1 March. The last sighting in the first half of the year was at Insh Marshes on 22 April.

Autumn/Winter: Again, most of the sightings were on Rum and the Small Isles, where the first singles were seen on 23 and 30 September, with others on Skye, in Badenoch, the Black Isle, Nigg Bay and at Tarbat Ness. One bird seen on Eigg on 14 October was the only record in a very poor year there for Jack Snipe, despite repeated checks on previous regular sites. Most records were of single birds, apart from two at Waternish on Skye on 23 October and two near Dalcross, Inverness on 24 October. The last record for the year was at Tarbat Ness on 28 December.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Common breeder; locally common migrant and winter visitor.



Snipe in September at Merkinch c. Dave Barnett

Winter/Spring: The 584 BirdTrack records for the year came from around the region, but very few from the north and north-west. Most involved low numbers, with monthly high counts of: in January five+ on Rum; in February six+ on Rum and eight at Harrapool, Skye on the 19th; in March five+ again on Rum; in April five on neighbouring Canna; and in May four at Moy near Inverness. North and north-west records were all in April/May, recording singles at Cape Wrath, Loch Eriboll, Kyle of Tongue, Bettyhill, Inverpolly, Ben Hope and Lochinver. The first



drumming bird was reported at Waternish in Skye on 14 March, but the next report was not until 13 April, from Ardnamurchan.

Breeding: Insh Marshes reported a reduced number of singing/displaying males and Eigg reported a very low breeding population, with only the odd drumming bird and few records from areas that previously held large populations. The Sallachy open ground survey reported three birds on territory, one less than in 2021. On Handa, birds were seen regularly round the island, chipping and drumming from March-June. Two chicks were seen on 21 May and two more on 5 August, but one was found dead on 26 June, although larger chicks were seen on a semi-regular basis. Records of proven breeding were submitted from only five sites on the mainland.

Number of Snipe males singing/displaying at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Males singing	^	175	177	186	168	130	147	*	136	112

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

Autumn/Winter: Widespread reports in low numbers continued from across the region. High counts were the exception; 12+ on Rum on 30 September, 17 at Balnakeil, Durness on 15 October and 19 at Nigg Ferry on 10 December. Birds were present on Eigg all year, with some autumn influx and a high of eight in October.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Rare passage migrant; has bred.

Summer: An adult female was noted at an undisclosed location in Sutherland on 1 June. An adult female was recorded at another site in Sutherland on 17 June.



Red-necked Phalarope in June at undisclosed site in Sutherland c. Dean MacAskill

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*
Scarce migrant and winter visitor.



Grey Phalarope in November at Kilmarie Bay, Loch Slapin, Skye c. Bob McMillan



Winter/Spring: An adult bird was seen at Embo on 29 January.

Autumn: One bird was sighted at sea on The Minch on 15 October and another at Embo on 11 November. A first-winter bird was at Brora on 26 November and two adults were seen at Kilmarie Bay, Loch Slapin on Skye on 27 November.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Common breeder, but absent in winter.

Spring: There were 745 BirdTrack records for the year and the first bird was reported at Easter Tulloch, Strathspey on 13 April. Thereafter, birds were recorded throughout the region and a high count of six birds was sighted at Lochindorb on 20 April, with a similar count at the west end of Loch Eil in Lochaber on 27 April. May high counts included eight at Kentra Bay in Lochaber on the 6th, nine at Strathfarrar on the 7th, and eight+ at Ardtornish Estate, Lochaber on the 19th.

Breeding: There were reports on BirdTrack of proven breeding at 13 sites, between 23 May, when fledged young were noted at Knockchoilum, near Whitebridge, and 14 July, at Invertromie. On Handa, a pair with two tiny chicks was seen on 28 June and another larger chick seen days earlier. On Eigg, the breeding population remained consistent at 10 pairs, which had a poor outcome with only three pairs with chicks. The Sallachy open ground survey recorded six pairs, which was the highest count in six years, in contrast to Insh Marshes which recorded its lowest count in many years.

Number of Common Sandpiper pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	12	16	18	14	9	14	*	10	4

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

Summer/Autumn: On 5 June nine birds were at Spey Dam, Badenoch and the same number at Achabeag, Morvern on the 15th, although the latter number was probably inflated by inclusion of some young. On 20 June, 11 were recorded at Achabeag and, at Ashaig on Skye, 10 on 26 June and 14 on 5 July, probably including some young in all three cases. Later high counts were 11 at The Mound, Loch Fleet on 17 July and six at Fort George, Inverness on 4 August. The last record for the year was of two birds on a hill above Moy on 26 September.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Rare breeder; scarce passage migrant.

Spring/Summer: The first record was of two birds in Abernethy region on 12 April and there were a further 18 separate sightings of one or two birds over the period to 29 June at 11 locations in Strathspey.



Breeding: At different times the birds were seen displaying, mating and alarm calling, but no definitive evidence of confirmed breeding was observed.

Autumn: No passage migrants were seen this year but flight calls were recorded over Rum on 14 August.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Uncommon breeder; common migrant and winter visitor in Inner Moray Firth, but uncommon elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: There were 1332 BirdTrack records for the year and, as in previous years, birds were found on the coast throughout the region in the first three months, with a bias to the east. High counts were 240 at Clachnaharry and Merkinch on 24 January, 200 at Udale Bay on 1 February and 400 at Nigg Bay on 8 March. The first recorded inland birds were at Moy Forest and at Insh Marshes on 11 March and five were at Dell of Killiehuntly, Kingussie on 13 March. Thereafter, significant flock numbers tended to decrease through April and May. In the west and north, lower numbers prevailed, with counts of 28 at Loch Kentra in Ardnamurchan on 11 January rising to 60 on 27 March. Eight birds were at Sallachan on Loch Linnhe on 8 January, nine at Laxford Bridge on 30 January and 20 on Loch Portree on 20 February. Wintering birds were present on Eigg until late April, with a high count of 15 on 19 April.

Breeding: Probable breeding on Insh Marshes was about average for recent years. Eigg repeated the success of last year, with one breeding pair managing to fledge at least one chick. One pair was recorded breeding at Ullinish on Skye and six recently-fledged chicks were reported at Dalchork on Loch Shin on 22 June.

Number of Redshank pairs breeding at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	81	102	83	47	75	76	*	97	75

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

Redshank - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora–Dornoch	153	168	161	170
Dornoch Firth	580	469	558	461
East Ross Coast	28	22	24	37
Cromarty Firth	1358	1184	1383	1247
Beaully Firth	646	655	919	294
Inverness Firth	803	495	927	825
TOTALS	3568	2993	3972	3034

Summer/Autumn/Winter: June was the quietest month of the year, with counts of no higher than three birds together. In July, numbers rose again as birds returned to the coast and a high of 77 was recorded at Milton of Culloden, Inverness. On Handa, the first two birds were recorded on 23 July and peaks of 20



were noted on 31 July and 13 August. By 17 August, 400 were at Udale Bay and an annual high of 520 was recorded at Clachnaharry and Merkinch, Inverness on 19 September, but down from the 2021 high of 850 on the Inverness Firth. Flock numbers remained in the hundreds at favoured locations through the autumn and into winter, with highs of 250 at Alturlie, Inverness and Tain in October, 200 at Udale Bay in November and 145 at Milton of Culloden in December. The last inland bird was reported on 21 August, north of Loch Glascarnoch. The high count on the west coast was from Kentra Bay, Ardnamurchan, with 131 on 26 October and, in the north, a count of 23 was reported from Kyle of Tongue on 30 November.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Rare breeder; scarce passage migrant.

Spring/Summer: Most of the 27 sightings, at about 17 different locations, were in Badenoch & Strathspey, the first on 29 April. A maximum of five birds were seen at a site in Ross-shire on 23 May, with regular sightings of one or two birds throughout May and June. NW Sutherland had a maximum of three birds on 12 May and Assynt had two on 7 June. A probable passage bird was recorded at Durness on 18 August.

Breeding: For the first time ever, breeding Wood Sandpipers were recorded at 30 sites in Scotland, 15 of which were in the Highland recording area (31 pairs, six new sites). There was an extensive survey of some of the peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland this year, which will undoubtedly have boosted records but, with so many new sites coming on stream each year, the evidence for an increasing population is getting ever stronger. Lochaber held one new site with one probable pair, quite close to a regular site. Ross & Cromarty's two regular sites held eight possible pairs and one confirmed pair. Badenoch & Strathspey had one new site with one possible pair and three regular sites held five possible pairs, one possible and one probable pair respectively. Another site had its first record since 2006, with one possible pair. There were four new sites in Sutherland holding, respectively, one possible, one probable, one probable and one each of possible and probable pairs. Three regular sites had one possible and one confirmed, one confirmed and five possible pairs.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Locally common breeder in suitable upland habitat; regular migrant in small numbers, but scarce in winter.

Winter/Spring: As in previous years, the majority of the 518 BirdTrack records were from the west coast, but the highest January count of six on the 11th was at Loch Fleet on the east coast. The February peak, on the 27th, was five at Loch Kentra on Ardnamurchan and March, on the 23rd, had an impressive 20 birds flying down the west end of Loch Shiel in Moidart. April's highest count was 15 in Trotternish, Skye on the 9th. Eigg had an overwintering bird which remained from October 2021 through to 21 March. In the north, there was a bird at Laxford Bridge in Sutherland on 22 March, two at Kyle of Tongue on 23 April and three at Cape



Wrath on 28 May. The first inland bird was at Lochan na Curra east of Loch Ness on 28 March and four were at Loch Glascarnoch a day later. Insh Marshes reported one bird on 6 April and two on 29 April, but no other records.

Breeding: Sallachy open ground survey reported 24 birds on territory, the same number as in 2021. A pair was recorded back on their breeding ground at Cove on Loch Ewe by 11 April. Quite a number of probable breeding records followed, but only three records of confirmed breeding, including an adult with at least two young seen west of Ledmore on 1 June and two adults with two juveniles at Udale Bay on 16 June.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: On 26 June a high count of 20 was recorded at Portree and the reliable site of Loch Kentra on Ardnamurchan recorded a region high of 38 on 4 July. The same Ardnamurchan site had highs for the region of 12 in both August and September. As in previous years, the numbers reduced through the autumn, but the east coast provided the month's top count of 13 at Redcastle on the Beaully Firth on 9 October. It was back to Ardnamurchan for the remaining monthly highs of 11 on 19 November and six on 1 December. Eigg reported an autumn passage, with six records of single birds from 8 July to late October, and a long-staying individual from early November to the year's end.

Greenshank - Inner Moray Firth WeBS Counts 2022:

	23 Jan	20 Feb	9 Oct	11 Dec
Brora-Dornoch	1	0	0	0
Dornoch Firth	1	3	8	5
Cromarty Firth	2	0	8	5
Beaully Firth	0	0	8	0
Inverness Firth	0	1	0	0
TOTALS	4	4	24	10

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Common but local coastal breeder; common migrant but scarce in mid-winter and rare inland.

Winter/Spring: January and February records stemmed mainly from Tarbat Ness, with high counts of 75 on 5 January and 23 February, plus records of small numbers from nine west coast locations, with a high of 40 off Portree. Numbers dramatically increased at Tarbat Ness in March, with 1500 logged there on the 3rd and 3000 at the month's end. Four-figure counts at this location continued through April and counts of 1000+ were recorded on 17 days during May. In the west, 47 were logged at Ardnamurchan Point on 9 April and an impressive 700 were noted on an incoming tide at Culkein Bay on 24 April.

Breeding: On Handa, in 11 monitored plots, 877 chicks fledged from 639 nests, giving a high productivity of 1.29 chicks per nest. The average productivity figure over the last 27 years was 0.79.

**Kittiwake breeding productivity in study plots at North Sutor 2013–2022:**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of AON	163	251	275	262	279	242	235	*	289	423
Young per nest	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.51	0.78	0.5	0.08^	*	0.8	1.1

^ Great Black-backed Gulls were observed predated nests

* counts not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

Kittiwake breeding productivity on Canna 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of AON	820	935	1141	1166	1260	1060	1457	*	1421	1497
Young per nest	0.5	Not	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.5	*	1.0	**
in study colonies	known									

* counts not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

** monitoring not done due to government restrictions

The number of young per nest at North Sutor was well above the long-term average of 0.5 and the number of AON on Canna was the highest count ever.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: In summer, 400 birds were noted off Rum in early June and, in NW Sutherland, 100 were at Faraid Head in July. Tarbat Ness produced records of 2000 from early July, with the first juveniles noted there on 24 July. After summer, 500 were recorded at Greenstone Point in Wester Ross on 26 September and at Inverkirkaig in NW Sutherland in mid-December.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

Scarce migrant.

Summer/Autumn: There was a single record of an adult, in breeding plumage, off Balintore Harbour on 18 September. Unusually, there were no records from the west or north coasts.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

Vagrant.

Summer: A single, unaged bird was recorded at Firemore beach, Wester Ross on 5 July.



Bonaparte's Gull in July at Firemore beach c. John Simpson

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common but rapidly declining breeder, now restricted mainly to Badenoch & Strathspey and Inverness District; common winter visitor in Inner Moray Firth and becoming commoner elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: The 500 mostly coastal records for the period January to March included larger counts of 73 at Fort William, 53 at Gairloch, 70 in Inverness, 40 inland at Loch Insh and 90 at Ardersier. The largest April count was of 700 at Easter Gallovie, Duthill on 11 April. In the north, 22 birds were noted near Durness on 12 April. Eight were logged at Achnahaird on 15 April, this noted as being an unusual record for the area.

Breeding: Small-scale breeding was reported from Insh Marshes in early May. On 6 May, 100 individuals were present at a Lynchat colony, with numbers there increasing to 200 by early June. A Grantown-on-Spey colony held 280 AON on 20 May. On 5 July, 50 recently-fledged young were noted at the Lynchat site and fledged young were also reported at Avielochan and Inverness in early July.

Pairs of Black-headed Gull breeding at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pairs	^	182	130	24	23	20	20	*	0 [£]	17

[^] count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

*counts not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

[£] colony moved to off-reserve location



Summer/Autumn/Winter: During July, 65 birds were noted at The Mound, Loch Fleet and, in the west, 17 at Kentra Bay. During September, 75 were logged at Whiteness Head and 62 at Fort William. An impressive 350 were recorded at Allanfearn on 26 December.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Scarce but increasing visitor from autumn to spring.

Winter/Spring: There were records from Brora on eight days during January, with a high count of 19 on the 18th. The majority were noted as immature birds. The four counts in February, all from Brora, peaked at four. Seven records for March, the highest a count of nine individuals, were again from Brora, with a single also noted at Tarbat Ness. There were three similar Brora records in April. Further afield, an adult was noted off Rum on 12 April and an unaged bird was at Portree 10 days later. The final record in this period was of an unaged at Chanonry Point on 27 May.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Unaged individuals were present at Brora, Udale Bay and Loch Fleet at the end of July, with a juvenile also logged at Tarbat Ness. During August, there were sightings of up to five at Golspie, Brora, Dornoch, Embo and Chanonry Point. Records on nine dates in September peaked with seven birds, including one adult, at Brora. The six October records included 14 birds at Brora on the 16th and a single first-winter at Broadford Bay. The highest count of the year was of 29 at Brora on 6 November. An adult was logged at Applecross two days later. Four adults were at Chanonry Point on 18 November and five adults at Tarbat Ness two days later. The eight December records included six adults at Brora and, in the west, a first-winter at Inverkirkaig. Once again, these records emphasise the importance of Brora to this species, for reasons that are unclear.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*

Vagrant.

Summer: A single adult was at Broadford Bay on 31 July. This is only the fourth record of this Nearctic species for Highland, the previous visits having been made to Canna in 1981 and 2014, and Assynt in 2011.



Franklin's Gull with Black-headed Gulls in July at Broadford Bay c. Martin Benson

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

Passage visitor.

Winter/Spring: A single second-winter bird was at Bayfield, Portree on three days between 22 and 28 February and on 6 April. This follows similar sightings at this location from August to October 2021.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Regular reports of one or two juveniles at Portree or Broadford recommenced on 11 July, with numbers increasing to four in October and continuing until early November. In mid-September a first-winter was noted at Udale Bay. A second-year bird was noted at Loch Sligachan, Skye on 13 October, a first-winter at Firemore Beach on 30 October and a second-year in Applecross Bay on 1 November.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Common and widespread breeder; common winter visitor, especially to Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: Between January and March, counts in excess of 100 were recorded on 14 occasions (22-23 in 2020/1). Counts of 500 were recorded near Inverness, at Fortrose and at Tarbat Ness. In the north, 124 birds were noted at



Durness and, in the west, 162 at Dundonnell. During April, 400 were at Culloden on the 22nd and 700 at Culkein Bay on the 24th.

Breeding: There were disparate records of breeding from 22 locations, the first of a nest with eggs at Invertromie on 1 May, and nests with young were noted there on 25 May. Fledged young were noted in the Findhorn valley on 16 June, at Fort William three days later and near Tain on 2 July. On 14 July 22 fledged young were reported killed on the road at Dava.

Autumn/Winter: Counts of 600 were recorded at Portree during September. October produced counts in excess of 100 at Whiteness Head, Udale Bay, Courthill, Applecross and Lochinver. Counts at Portree during November peaked at 1500 on the 27th, with 720 noted at Applecross in the same month. Tarbat Ness and Cromarty produced three-figure counts in December.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Common breeder; uncommon far inland, but regularly found in Strathspey.

Winter/Spring: Representative high counts during January were 39 at Fort William, 28 at Aviemore and 14 at Tarbat Ness. A series of visits, by RAFOS, to 25 sites from Melvich to Applecross, between 30 January and 4 February recorded a total of 352 individuals, with the highest count being 59 at Gruinard Bay. On Skye, 30 birds were noted at Portree on 20 February. During March, 30 were at Tarbat Ness, 18 at Fort William and 15 at Rum. On 25 April 57 were noted at Tarbat Ness.

Breeding: On Handa the seven nests all produced young. Fledged young were noted near Tain on 2 July.

Great Black-backed Gull breeding productivity on Canna 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of AOT	15	16	18	17	18	16	18	*	12	14
Young per AOT	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.3	1.4	0.5	0.8	*	1.5	**

* counts not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

** counts not done due to government restrictions

Summer/Autumn/Winter: At Fort William, 53 were noted in mid-August and numbers there increased to 73 by October. Near Melvaig, 100 were recorded on 27 August. Off Rum, 94 were noted at the end of September. At Kinlochbervie, 40 were seen in November. In the east, 13 were off Tarbat Ness and 29 at Loch Pityoulish at the end of December.



Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

Scarce winter visitor; rare in summer.

Winter/Spring/Summer: There were considerably more reports of this species than in previous years. During January, singles were noted at Clashnessie, Port Chaligaig and Eigg. February saw far more widespread reports, in the main of single immature birds. In the west, these came from Balnakeil, Durness, Clashnessie, Stoer, Portree and Broadford. There were also inland records from Aviemore and Boat of Garten. March produced records, again of single immatures, from Deishar Pools, Alturlie Point, Balintore, Muck and Ullapool. In April and May, single immatures were at Ullapool, Ardmore, Kilchoan and Clachtoll in the west, and Aviemore, Boat of Garten, Insh, Balintore, Embo and Tarbat Ness in the east. One or two immatures were noted at Brora on seven dates during June and July, as well as at Golspie and, finally, Tarbat Ness on 24 July. The sole west coast record in this period was of a single at Gairloch on 11 July.



White-winged trio of juvenile Iceland, juvenile Glaucous and adult Glaucous-Herring Gull hybrid (Viking Gull) in April at Ullapool. c. Andy Williams

Autumn/Winter: The first returnee, unaged, was at Ullapool on 10 September. There were two records from Skye of an unaged individual at the end of September. Juveniles were noted at Tarbat Ness, Embo and Lochinver during November. Single unaged birds were at Lochinver, Inverkirkaig and Portree in December. The sole reported adult was at Ullapool on 15-16 December. There is some scepticism that an adult would be present there at this time of year, especially when an adult Glaucous-Herring Gull hybrid (Viking Gull) had been recorded there on BirdTrack on 10 September and was seen on several occasions in late autumn and early winter (*Andy Williams; personal comm.*). The hybrid looks



very like an adult Glaucous Gull, aside from being generally on the small side, with a rather slighter bill.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*

Scarce winter visitor; rare in summer.

Winter/Spring/Summer: There were an unprecedented 200 records in this period. During January and February, the majority were from Skye, with records on 33 days from Portree. Up to five individuals of all age groups were noted there. Further records came from Fort William, Mallaig, Kylesku, Drumbeg and Ullapool in the west and, of singles, from Balintore, Tarbat Ness, Loch Fleet and Skelbo in the east. The 30 records in March, of up to three immatures, centred on Portree, Ullapool and Loch Fleet. The 20 records in April, of up to four individuals, came from Rum, Fort William, Ullapool and Skye, and, in the east, from Loch Fleet, Tarbat Ness and Helmsdale. There were a further five records in May from the east with, unusually, one noted west of Trantlemore in the Flow Country. Three records of singles during the summer included one from Brora river-mouth on 15 June.

Autumn/Winter: Singles were at Lochinver and Gairloch in late October. Ardmair hosted a juvenile on 9 and 13 November, and two were at Lochinver on the 14th. The first return to Portree was noted on 2 December and on four later dates in this month. Three juveniles were at Inverkirkaig on 14 December. In the east, singles were at Tarbat Ness in mid-November, and at Helmsdale and Shandwick during December.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common breeder around coasts; commonly encountered inland.

Winter/Spring: In the period January to April, there were 47 records of 100 or more individuals. These counts stemmed from 17 locations, 10 in the north and west, five in the east and two in Badenoch & Strathspey. The highest count was of 1000 at Tarbat Ness on 30 March. Other high counts included 425 at Aviemore on 12 January, 478 near Kylesku on 19 February and 346 near Fort William on 10 March. RAFOS conducted a series of visits, between 30 January and 4 February, to 38 locations, from Melvich to Applecross. They recorded a total of 1850 individuals, averaging almost 50 at each location.

Breeding: There were very few breeding records. Fledged young were noted on Handa on 24 June, but there were many deaths there, probably due to avian flu. Fledged young were noted near Tain on 2 July.

**Breeding productivity of Herring Gulls nesting on Canna 2013-2022:**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of AOT	95	75	85	96	97	63	109	*	87	66
All-island estimate of chicks per nest	1.6	0.7	0.7	0.9	1.2	1.1	1.4	*	1.4	**

* counts not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

** counts not done due to government restrictions

Autumn/Winter: At the end of August 250 birds were recorded at Tarbat Ness. During September, over 400 were logged at Fort William on the 2nd and 2000 at Hilton of Cadboll on the 22nd. Fort William, Tarbat Ness and Udale Bay recorded counts in excess of 200 during October, and 300 were noted at both Balintore and Fort William at the end of December.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Uncommon local breeder; uncommon spring and autumn migrant; scarce in winter.

Winter/Spring. The two January records were of a juvenile at Tarbat Ness and an adult at Aviemore. In Sutherland, three birds were noted at Tongue on 1 February and one at Clashnessie on the 4th, as well as a further report from Aviemore in this month. The main arrival began during March, with records of up to five birds from 10 locations in the west and seven in the east. In April, 64 records, mainly from the west, spanned Rum to Bettyhill and there was a count of nine at Helmsdale. A similar pattern continued in May, with high counts of seven on Skye, eight at Rum and six at Loch Kinellan.

Breeding:**Number of Lesser Black-backed Gulls breeding on Canna 2013-2022:**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of AOT	11	9	13	13	8	7	9	*	7	8

* counts not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The 180 records were mainly from the west. Larger counts were of eight at Loth in mid-June, 18 at Brora in July, nine at Am Faochagach, Strathvaich Forest in August, eight at Rum in September, and 10 at Mallaig and 11 at Sanna, Lochaber in October. The three December records were of singles at Lochinver and Mellon Udrigle, while four birds were at Loch Pityoulish, Aviemore on the 18th.



Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Has bred; common summer visitor and migrant in Inner Moray Firth but scarce elsewhere.

Spring/Summer: The first record was of two birds at Dornoch Point on 24 March, slightly later than the average arrival date over the past six years. On the following day, two were noted at both Brora and Embo. Numbers built in this area in the latter half of March, with 11 at Loch Fleet on the 29th and 48 there on the 31st. Daily records from the Moray and Dornoch Firths continued during April, with a high count of 94 at Loch Fleet. In the north, there was a record of five birds at Portskerra Harbour on 18 April, eight were near Bettyhill in early May, and small numbers in the Flow Country and at Balnakeil. There were two reports from Ardnamurchan in May, and some from the Moray and Dornoch Firths. Four birds were in Broadford Bay in mid-June.

Breeding: Individuals carrying food were noted at Balnakeil on 8 June, but it is unclear whether breeding was attempted there.

Summer/Autumn: The first fledged juvenile was noted at Dornoch on 2 July. Two weeks later a count of 118 at Coul Links included 28 juveniles. Juveniles were also noted at Balintore and Hilton of Cadboll in the latter half of July. A peak count of 200 was made at Dornoch on 4 August and 100 were noted at Tarbat Ness on the 11th. High counts in September included 136 at Udale Bay, 200 at Fort George, 120 at Littleferry and 106 at Dornoch. The last record was of a single on 8 October at Balintore.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Scarce summer visitor & breeder in Inner Moray Firth; rare elsewhere.

Spring/Summer/Autumn: A single was noted at Embo on 23 April, a week earlier than in 2021 and three weeks earlier than the 2018-2020 average. Subsequently, four were noted at Brora on 8 May and at Embo on 14 May. There followed records, of up to 10 birds, from locations in the Inner Moray Firth until 9 October. A single was logged at Loch Ailort, Lochaber on 31 August.

Breeding: Small-scale successful breeding took place at a location in the Moray Firth, with three pairs hatching four young.

**Monitored Little Tern breeding success in Inner Moray Firth 2013–2022:**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of pairs	8	5	0	11	13	16	8	17*	8	6
No. of sites	2	1	0	4	3	3	4	4*	5	8
No. young fledged	2	0	0	3	2	0	5	8*	0	4
Young fledged per pair	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.27	0.15	0.00	0.65	0.47	0	0.65

* some site visits not done due to Covid-19 restrictions, so may be underestimates

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Common but recently declining breeder, now rare inland; common summer visitor and migrant around coasts.

Spring: Two birds were recorded at Chanonry Point on 17 April, very much in keeping with the first arrivals over the past four years. Six days later, 25 were logged at Avoch. In the west, 12 were at Clachtoll and six at Firemore beach at the end of April. There were records of single-figure numbers from east and west coasts and the Findhorn valley during May.

Breeding: Nesting on the Avoch rafts, for many years so productive, was virtually a wipe-out due to avian flu. Only four young were raised on the Foulis Ferry raft. Breeding at Invergordon port was, however, highly successful, with 186 pairs raising 160 young. In the west, 76 adults were present at a nest site in Sallachan Bay, Ardgour on 7 June, 50 adults with 17 young were recorded at Broadford Bay on 30 July and fledged young were noted on Rum on 1 August.

Common Tern breeding success in Inner Moray Firth 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Estimated no. pairs	354	584	603	601	511	627	533	533*	777	262
Occupied sites	5	5	6	3	5	6	6	8*	7	6
Young fledged	204	456	456	528	321	733	487	283*	692	168
Young per pair	0.58	0.78	0.76	0.88	0.63	1.17	0.91	0.53	0.89	0.64

Summer/Autumn: On 10 August, counts of 110 were recorded at Dornoch and 100 at Broadford Bay. In early September 50 were logged at Udale Bay. The last record was of four birds at Balnakeil on 15 October.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Common but declining breeder; locally common summer visitor and migrant.

Spring/Summer: The first sighting was of two birds at Balintore on 10 April, a similar date to the average of the past four years. The next report was from Rosemarkie on 13 April. More frequent and widespread records in May included counts of 12 at Brora, 50 off Muck on 17 and 19 May, 25 at Eigg on 28 May and 11 at Stoer.



Breeding: On Rum, small-scale nesting was noted from the end of May, with 10 fledged young there on 1 August. On Eigg, small-scale breeding was wiped out by bad weather during June. A few pairs also nested in Talmine Bay, Tongue in early July, but with no record of success. On Handa, 40 individuals were noted at a nesting site. Breeding success was recorded but with no definitive detail.

Arctic Tern breeding success in Inner Moray Firth 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of pairs	341	341	184	203	329	196	291	86*	143	153
No. of sites	3	4	5	6	7	2	7	6*	5	6
No. young fledged	90	15	56	64	162	72	185	45*	29	7
Young fledged per pair	0.26	0.04	0.3	0.3	0.49	0.37	0.64	0.52	0.2	0.04

* some site visits not done due to Covid-19 restrictions, so may be underestimates

These were by far the poorest breeding records in the past eight years.

Summer/Autumn: At Tarbat Ness, 75 were logged on 18 July and 200 at the end of the month. On 10 August 20 were at Broadford Bay. Reported numbers then declined on both east and west coasts, with a final report of a single at Staffin Bay on 9 November. Overall, this appears to have been a highly disappointing year for this species in Highland.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

Rare migrant.

Summer/Autumn: Two juveniles were noted off Dornoch on 23 August. A juvenile was present at Chanornry Point for several hours on 12 September.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

Uncommon but increasing local breeder in north and west; regular migrant in small numbers, mainly in autumn.

Winter/Spring: Unusually, singles were noted off Embo on 15 January and 28 February. During March, there were records of singles from Tarbat Ness and from Skye. More regular reports, of single figure numbers, began in April, with the majority from the west, spanning Rum to Handa. May produced records of nine birds at Staffin, seven at Rum, 12 at Tarbat Ness and 50 at Handa on 17 May.

Breeding: On Canna, 14 territorial pairs were present, the same figure as 2021. Monitoring of nests was not done due to Government restrictions. On Handa, 73 AOT were recorded; the comparable figure in 2018 was 283. There were no records of fledged chicks. Occupied nests with eggs were noted on Rum in late May.



Summer/Autumn: The 70 records from August to November were, unusually, all single figure counts. Seven birds were noted in the Minch from the Stornoway/Ullapool ferry on 7 September and, in the north, five were at Strathy Point on 13 September. These figures are a cause for concern, suggesting the severe impact of avian flu.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Uncommon migrant, mainly in autumn in Inner Moray Firth; rare in winter.

Winter/Spring: Three birds were off Embo on 9 May and a single was noted off Eigg on 2 and 5 June.

Summer/Autumn: Singles were recorded at Brora on 23 July and 12 August, at Tarbat Ness on 30 August and at Chanonry Point on 31 August. This latter location produced sightings, of up to five, on three days in early September. In the remainder of September, sightings were made at seven locations, three in the east and the remainder from Skye or the north coast. The high count was 12 at Broadford Bay on the 26th. During October, two were noted at Chanonry Point and four at Embo. The last four records, all from Embo in November, peaked at seven birds on the 18th, before the last single was seen on the 23rd.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Scarce local breeder in north and west; regular migrant in small numbers, mainly in autumn.

Spring: The sole April record was of a single between Canna and Loch Sunart on the 17th. The main influx began in May, with two birds at Neist Point on the 1st and, in the east and north, singles at Tarbat Ness and the Flow Country on the 4th. Later in May, 33 further records ensued, mainly from coastal locations, with highs of 14 and nine at Neist Point on 7 and 23 May respectively, and eight at Cape Wrath on 27 May. There was an inland record of a single at Loch Grudaidh, Strath Brora on the 28th.

Breeding: There were 25 AOT recorded on Handa. There was no record of productivity.

Summer/Autumn: Single figure counts, from east and west, continued from June to August. In mid-September 25 were logged at Strathy Point and 10 were at Broadford Bay at the end of the month. A high count of 42 was recorded at Brora on 18 October. Late records were noted at Embo and Tarbat Ness on 17-20 November, but the final single was at Loch Portree on the 27th.



Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Scarce migrant, mainly in autumn on north coast and in Inner Moray Firth.

Spring/Summer: The initial report was of a single adult off Muck on 15 May. Singles were recorded from the Uig to Tarbert ferry on 4 June and at Brora four days later. There was an unusual report of a single adult present from 11-16 June at a lochan south of Newtonmore. Possibly this same individual was recorded at Invertromie on 2 July.

Autumn: A second-calendar-year bird was at Whiteness Head on 25 August and two juveniles were noted at Embo on the same day. Single juveniles were at Helmsdale on 2-5 September and Embo on 4 September. Three birds were off Greenstone Point, Rubha Mor on 26 September. A single juvenile was seen from the Uig to Lochmaddy ferry, near Waternish Point, Skye on 15 October. Singles were twice seen off Embo, the final one on 18 October.

Little Auk *Alle alle*

Scarce, but occasionally common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: Six birds were recorded at Tarbat Ness on 15 January and a single at Arisaig on the 26th. Dead individuals were noted at Glen Brittle, Loch Pityoulish and Roy Bridge in this month. February saw singles at Achabeag in Morvern and on Skye, at Greshornish on the 24th and Ardnish the next day.

Autumn/Winter: A single was at Clashnessie on 28 September. More regular records, from the Inner Moray Firth, began in mid-November, initially from the Embo area. Counts of eight and 16 were made at Tarbat Ness on 19 and 20 November, and 10 were noted flying in two flocks off Fort George. A single was located at Loch Kishorn on 2 December. There were records of singles on four further December dates, from Tarbat Ness, Brora, Cromarty and Rosemarkie.

Guillemot *Uria aalge*

Breeding colonies mostly on north and west coasts; common offshore but less so in winter.

Winter/Spring: In January and February, 60 records, mostly in single figures, were noted on both east and west coasts. However, early March produced a count of 2500 at Tarbat Ness, with three-figure counts continuing there to the end of the month. On 19 March 250 were noted at Whiteness Head. In the west, the high March count was of 20 at Melvaig. Off Canna, 249 were counted on 19 April and 400 in mid-May.



Breeding: At North Sutor, 151 young were ringed on 9 June, a 35% drop relative to a similar exercise in 2021. On Handa, 2694 individuals were recorded in the 10 study plots, a further increase from 2021, and productivity was noted as 0.61 fledglings per nest. No breeding records were available from Canna due to Government restrictions.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: In early September 159 birds were noted at Helmsdale and 149 were at Balintore in the middle of the month. On 6 October 23 dead individuals were counted on Fortrose beach. Small numbers were noted on east and west coasts until the year's end.

Razorbill *Alca torda*

Breeding colonies mostly on north and west coasts; common offshore but less so in winter.

Winter/Spring: Very small numbers were recorded from coastal areas during January and February. During March, there were records of six off Rum and 18 at Ardnamurchan. In mid-April 29 were logged off Canna and 56 were recorded in the Little Minch on 21 May. East coast records were predominantly from Tarbat Ness, with a major increase to 1500 on 3 March rising to 4500 by mid-May.

Breeding: On Handa, 327 individuals were noted on the 10 study plots; the 2021 figure was 388. There was no information on productivity. Juveniles were first noted at Tarbat Ness on 15 August. Large numbers of adults with juveniles were noted off Eigg in August.

Razorbill breeding productivity at North Sutor 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Young per egg	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.4	*	0.7	0.7

* counts not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Early September records included counts of 67 at Helmsdale and 143 at Balintore. Totals in continuing regular reports from Tarbat Ness peaked at 3500 on 28 September. In the west, 200 birds were logged from the Uig to Lochmaddy ferry on 8 October and 300 were noted at Loch Portree on 29 November.

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*

Breeds in small numbers round most of north and west coast; scarce offshore away from breeding areas, mainly in winter.

Winter/Spring: There were 650 records for the year, 47 of which were in double figures. Widespread records from all coastal areas began from early January, with 28 birds noted at Loch Linnhe. On 3 February 36 were recorded at Kenmore, north Applecross. In March, 40 were logged at Borneskitaig, Skye and 16 at Tarbat Ness. In mid-April 30 were noted between Canna and Loch Sunart, with Tarbat Ness



numbers increasing to 26 at the month's end. Nine were noted off Canna on 15 May and eight at Balchladich Bay, Stoer on 17 May.

Breeding: There were sparse reports. Courtship display was recorded at Rum on 4 March. Fledged young were noted at Stoer on 10 July and near Glenborrodale, Loch Sunart on 23 August. On Eigg, several juveniles were seen during August.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: During late July, 20 birds were noted at Cove and 14 at Stoer. High counts at Tarbat Ness peaked with an impressive 80 on 22 August. On Skye, 10 were off Broadford at the end of September and 16 at Loch Portree at the end of November. In mid-December 12 were off Fort George.

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

Locally common breeder; uncommon away from breeding areas and scarce in winter.

Winter/Spring: A single was noted at Armadale, Skye in mid-January and dead individuals were located at Morar and Elgol in this month. The earliest east coast records were of singles at Tarbat Ness at the end of February. The first major counts were of 81 off Canna on 19 April and 86 from the Stornoway to Ullapool ferry on 30 April. On 26 May 250 were logged from the Uig to Lochmaddy ferry and 200 from the Uig to Tarbert ferry on 4 June.

Breeding: On Handa, 138 AOT were recorded on 7 May. An all-island count on 22 July recorded 722 individuals, a figure 30% below the similar count in 2021. On Canna, 56 AOT were noted on 15 May, with 201 individuals having been counted around the island on the previous day. Juveniles were noted off Eigg on 24 July. Records from Priest Island indicated only the presence of 30 individuals in early May.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Ten birds were recorded at Balnakeil on 2 July and 23 were off Neist Point, Skye eight days later. On 5 September 23 were at Helmsdale. Thereafter, only single figures were recorded from west, north and east coasts. The final record was of a single at Rosemarkie on 19 December.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Uncommon breeder; locally common offshore, especially in autumn.

Winter/Spring: There were almost 1000 records in the year. Small numbers were noted in the Inner Moray Firth, at Tarbat Ness and off Rum from the beginning of the year. Records from Tarbat Ness, on 25 dates in January, averaged seven individuals per visit with a high count of 19. A series of visits by RAFOS to 10 sites from Eriboll to Torridon in early February recorded an average of two individuals



per site. Two birds were off Embo in early March and 38 were off Golspie on 6 March. There were impressive counts of 62 at Dornoch on 16 March and 114 off Embo on 23 April. In the west, single figure records originated from Rum to Skye to Achnahaird. Inland records, commencing 7 April came from Loch Migdale, Loch Insh and Loch Garten.

Breeding: Courtship displays were noted at three sites in Badenoch & Strathspey and one in Lochaber in March and April. A pair with eggs was noted in Badenoch on 25 May and an occupied nest on Handa on 24 June. Fledged young were noted at three sites in NW Sutherland and one in Inverness-shire in June and early July.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Nine birds were logged at Stoer and 23 at Dornoch in mid-August. In early September 15 were noted at Inverasdale and 17 at Strathy Point in mid-September. Chanonry Point saw numbers increasing to 21 by 13 October. Off Skye, 11 were at Scalpay narrows in early November. On 20 November 25 were logged at Tarbat Ness. Single numbers were noted in coastal areas until the year's end.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Uncommon breeder in north and west; locally common offshore, especially on west coast.

Winter/Spring: A count of 20 was recorded at Gruinard Bay on 11 January. Visits to 18 sites from Eriboll to Applecross by RAFOS, between 30 January and 4 February, recorded a total of 108 individuals. The highest count was 23 at Loch Gairloch. Elsewhere, 31 were logged at Gruinard Bay on 13 February. In the east, nine were off Golspie on 27 February and eight at Carse of Delnies on 16 March. Frequent coastal records, of single-figure numbers, continued through April and May.

Breeding/Summer: The first record of a pair in suitable nesting habitat came from an inland Easter Ross site on 22 March. Further reports of birds on potential breeding locations came from eight widespread sites in April and subsequent reports of attempted breeding came from a further 12 locations, primarily in the west. Chicks were noted at three sites in June.

Autumn/Winter: A count of 15 was made off Firemore beach, Inverasdale on 2 September, with similar numbers noted at Gruinard Bay and Loch Slapin, Skye in mid-September. On 25 October 30 were recorded in the Gruinard Bay/Laide area, with 28 off Big Sands, Gairloch on 12 November. A high count of 40 was made at Inverasdale on 5 December. In the east, single-figure numbers remained in the Inner Moray Firth and at Tarbat Ness to the year's end.



Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Has bred; locally common offshore, especially on west coast, but scarce in summer.

Winter/Spring: There were 529 records in the period January to May. Less than 100 originated from the east of the region, with Tarbat Ness providing the majority. Nine birds were reported there on 14 April and 10 at Embo on 23 April. In the west, the peak count was 37 in Loch Linnhe on 28 January. In mid-January 18 were noted at Skerray and 14 were logged at Broadford on 22 January. A series of visits to 32 locations from Melvich to Applecross, by RAFOS between 13 January and 4 February, recorded the presence of 176 individuals, averaging over five per location. On Skye, 12 were at Broadford Bay on 5 March and 25 at Ardnish on 22 March. On the latter date 25 were also off Gruinard Island and, on 28 March, 28 were noted at Traigh, near Arisaig. April high counts included 25 near Stoer and 20 at Firemore, Loch Ewe. On 6 May 30 were at Inverasdale. Overall, however, reported numbers declined through this month.

Breeding: An adult Great Northern Diver was paired with a Black-throated Diver at an inland loch in Highland; it is not known whether there was a breeding attempt.

Summer: There were few records, all of small numbers, in this period.

Autumn/Winter: In the east, small numbers were noted at Tarbat Ness from the end of September. Larger counts recommenced with 20, mostly adults, at Gairloch and 30 at Gruinard Bay/Laide in late October. On Skye, 20 were located at Scalpay narrows in early November, and 25 at Lub Score, near Duntulm and, also, in Loch Bay near Isay on 12-13 November. The high December count was of 20 at Inverasdale.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: A single adult was recorded off Embo from 3-11 April. An adult, moving north, was noted at Tarbat Ness on 31 May. There was a record of an unaged individual at Brora on 19 June.

Autumn/Winter: Adults were recorded off Brora on 10 November and at Tarbat Ness on 19 November.



Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

Locally common breeder in north and west; uncommon migrant elsewhere.

Spring/Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were 45 records covering the period late May to mid-October. In the east, one or two birds were noted off Brora on 18 and 23 July and one or two were sighted off Helmsdale on five dates from 30 August to 6 September. Three were also logged off Hilton of Cadboll on 3 September. The majority of the west coast reports stemmed from ferry sightings. Higher counts included 23 between the Sound of Mull and Barra on 25 July, 20 between Mallaig and Lochboisdale on 27 August, 22 between the Sound of Mull and Barra on 5 September and 80 between Stornoway and Ullapool on 10 September. The last record was of a single off Waternish Point on 18 October.

Breeding: No monitoring took place on Priest Island. The next tape-response survey will be in 2024.

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Scarce migrant offshore (rare inland), mainly in autumn.

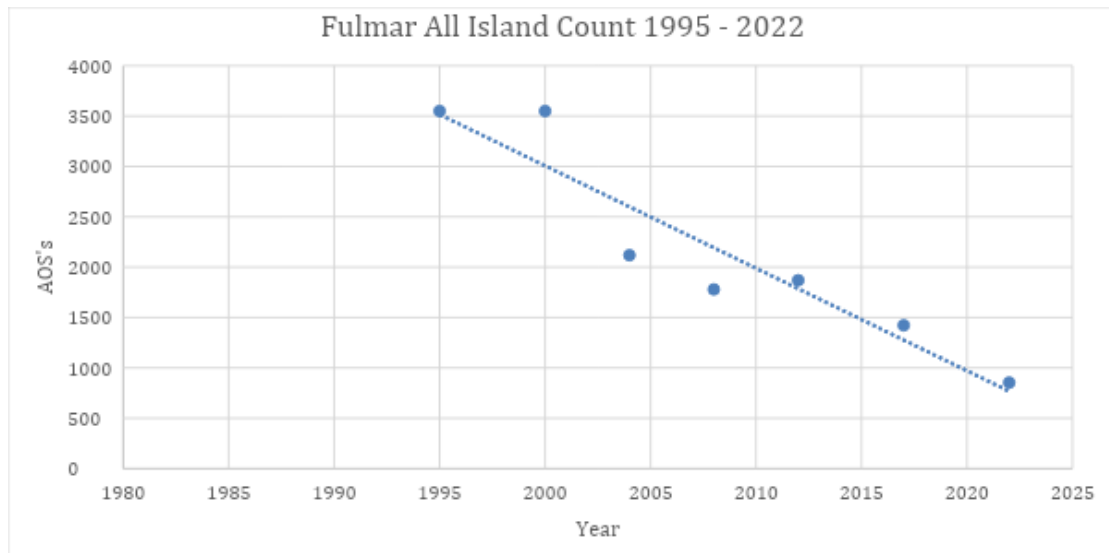
Autumn: There were three records, all of singles in September. One at Loch a' Chairn Bhain in NW Sutherland on the 13th was caught in a fish farm cage and released; the other two were in Wester Ross on the 26th, at Greenstone Point and off Cove.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Common breeder; common offshore, but uncommon in late autumn and winter.

Winter/Spring: The highest counts of this season were from the north-west, with 80 birds recorded at Skerray on 14 January and also at Handa on 31 May. On 2 February 66 were recorded at Durness. Tarbat Ness, which in 2021 saw counts in May ranging from 120 to 225+, only had regular small numbers throughout the season, with a peak of 17 birds on 21 April.

Breeding: On Handa, the all-island Fulmar count in July recorded 680 AOS, although this count was only possible from land due to windy conditions during the survey window. Productivity was 0.18 this season. An estimate made using sea counts from the previous all-island count suggests the total number of AOS may have been 854. This is the lowest Fulmar all-island count since 1995 by a considerable margin.



All-island Fulmar count trend, Handa Island, 1995-2022.

It should be noted that the count for 2017 was of individuals rather than AOS.

At North Sutor, full colony counts of Fulmars are not done on an annual basis, but counts done in May in productivity plots showed that Fulmars were present in similar numbers to those recorded in 2021.

Fulmar breeding productivity in study plots at North Sutor 2013-2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Young per AOS	0.0	0.0	0.18	0.05	0.08	0.0	0.0	0.0*	0.1	**

* counts only partially done due to Covid-19 restrictions (only per 22 AOS)

** no data

On Canna, monitoring visits in 2022 were severely disrupted due to the ban on entering seabird colonies due to avian flu. Counts that were completed showed a total of only 59 AOS in 2022, showing the Canna population continues to decline to the lowest number yet recorded since 1973. The decline is greatest at Geugasgor and Tialasgor, where numbers have dropped by 77% from 71 AOS in 2019 to only 16 AOS in 2022.

Fulmar breeding productivity on Canna 2013-2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of AOS	179	184	174	192	180	151	127	*	75	**
Young per AOS	0.37	0.23	0.44	0.40	0.20	0.20	0.10	*	0.1	**

* counts not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

** counts not completed due to avian flu

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The highest numbers recorded throughout this period were logged at Bun Ildh, Helmsdale, with a count of 4000 on 5 September. Other counts in the same area were 146 on 30 August, 104 on 2 September and 1200 on 4 September. This contrasts with the 2021 highest count of 300 at Neist Point, Skye on 4 July. Tarbat Ness had regular sightings, with a high count of 150 on 5 September, an increase from last year's maximum of 78 in June. At Loch Fleet on 10 September, 22 birds were found dead of suspected avian flu.



Fea's/Desertas Petrel *Pterodroma feae/deserta*
Vagrant.

Autumn: A single bird was recorded by two observers on 4 September, off Bun Ilidh, Helmsdale and nearby Lothbeg Point.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*
Vagrant.

Summer/Autumn: There were four accepted records this year, compared to none in 2021. In a short period of three days in September, off the east coast, single birds were seen at Embo on the 2nd, at Chanonry Point on the 3rd and at Lothbeg Point on the 4th, while two were seen at Embo, also on the 4th.



Cory's Shearwater in August at Chanonry Point c. Steve Reddick

Sooty Shearwater *Ardenna grisea*
Uncommon (but occasionally numerous) offshore in late summer and autumn, rare in spring.

Summer/Autumn: There were 59 records this year, with 21 of them from west coast ferries. The first sighting was of two birds from the Oban-Barra ferry on 25



July. High counts of 100 were seen from the Ullapool-Stornoway ferry on both 7 and 10 September. On the east coast, high counts were of 80 from Tarbat Ness on 3 September and 70 from Lothbeg Point on 4 September. The furthest north record was of 31 birds off Strathy Point on 13 September. Three October records were the first for Eigg for a good number of years, with a high of eight birds on 28 October. The year's highest count, on 15 October, was of an estimated 200 birds on the Highland side of the Ullapool-Stornoway crossing, out of a whole-crossing total of 900+ individuals. The final records of the season were of single birds from Embo and Brora on 15 November.



Sooty Shearwater with Manx Shearwaters in August in Minch c. Stephen MacDonald

Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis* *Vagrant.*

Summer/Autumn: There were an unprecedented six records this year, compared to none in 2021, and the total may be even higher, as the outcome of several late submissions to SBRC will appear in next year's *Report*. One was of a dead bird found with other avian flu casualties at Camasunary, Skye on 21 July, with its species confirmed by DNA analysis. In SE Sutherland in September, two birds were off Helmsdale on the 2nd, and four were off Lothbeg and two off Embo on the 4th. Single birds were seen in the Minch, Highland from the Ullapool-Stornoway ferry on 6 September and 15 October.



Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Locally common breeder in west on the Small Isles, with Rum holding the largest colony in the world; common offshore, but rare in winter.

Spring/Summer: The first observation of two returning birds was recorded on 8 March at Brora. On the west coast, the first sighting of one bird was from Rum on 24 March. Ardnamurchan Point saw records starting on 26 March with a single bird flying north, then counts of over 200 birds on 14 April, over 500 on 21 April and the highest record of the year on 4 June, of vast rafts totalling an estimated 10000 birds. Other notable high counts were: over 500 birds from Neist Point, Skye on 1 May; around 800 from Canna on 18 May; 590 from Brora on 25 July; 1000 from the ferry near Armadale on 30 July; 1000 from Embo on 22 August; and 1000 at Camusdarrach/Traigh/Morar on 23 August. An interesting set of observations came from Rum, with nocturnal night calls recorded daily from 24 March (three birds) until 25 September (one), with a high of 123 birds heard on 21 August.

Breeding: On Eigg, birds were present as usual at the breeding colony on the Cleadale cliffs, with large numbers reported there in mid-late July. First returned birds were heard on 24 March. On Canna for the first time, no occupied burrows, of 550 checked, were located in late May but, in late June, birds were heard coming into the cliff at Garrisdale. However, no breeding productivity could be gathered due to avian flu.

Autumn: The highest count came from Kilmory and Shamhnán Insir on Rum, where over 500 birds were reported on 1 September. The final record for the season was of two birds from Brora on 15 November.

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*

Very scarce autumn migrant.

Autumn: Unusually, there were six records this season, compared to one in 2021. All records were of one or two birds from the east coast between 2 and 24 September. The first records were of single birds on 2 September, seen from Embo and recorded on video from Helmsdale. Another single was seen from Embo on 3 September, two birds off Lothbeg Point on 4 September and a single on 24 September from Brora.

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Generally common offshore, but scarce in winter.

Winter/Spring/Summer: Birds were reported consistently throughout the period, with the first observation of two birds recorded on the first day of the year at Brora. The first high count of the year came from Whiteness Head, where 200 were recorded on 19 March. Tarbat Ness produced good counts throughout the season, with regular double-figure and occasional three-figure observations



throughout the period, peaking at 500 birds on 17 August. The year's first juvenile bird was recorded on the west coast at Ardnamurchan on 9 August. Other west coast records in the period were of 70 at Gairloch on 10 July and 55 at Broadford on 2 August. Casualties from probable avian flu were noted during this period on Handa, Balintore Bay and in the north at Talmine Bay.

Autumn/Winter: The highest counts of the season were from Tarbat Ness, peaking at 1500+ on 28 September. Tarbat Ness produced high counts throughout the period. In the west, 500 were recorded at Loch Dhrombaig on 7 October and 1000+ were observed at Achnahaird on 9 October in a feeding frenzy of possible whitebait. In the north, 65 were recorded at Melness on 3 October. The year ended with a single bird at Tarbat Ness on 31 December. Probable casualties of avian flu were six birds at Handa in August and six at Loch Fleet in September.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Breeding restricted to one large colony on Easter Ross and a few small colonies in north-west; common offshore but scarcer inland.

Winter/Spring: At Tarbat Ness, there were regular double-figure counts during the first three months, peaking at 32 on 26 February. In the west, the highest counts were of 13 at Ullapool on 2 February, with the same number at Applecross two days later. Inland high counts were of 12 at Balavil, Insh Marshes on 16 January and 10 on Loch Ashie on 27 January. WeBS counts for the Moray Firth totalled 111 in January and 99 in February.

Breeding: At the colony at North Sutor, the low figure of 1.7 young per nest is probably due to the situation of one group of nests which were amongst Guillemots. It appears that the Guillemots passed on the infection of avian flu to these birds, leading to the failure of all but one of the 19 nests.

Cormorant breeding productivity in study plots at North Sutor 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of nests	89	99	104	109	133	147	155	146	148	122
Young per nest	2.4	2.2	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.3*	2.3	1.7

* counts only partially done due to Covid-19 restrictions (young per 140 nests)

Summer/Autumn/Winter: High counts during the early part of this period were 30 at Lothbeg on 16 June and 20 at nearby Helmsdale on the same day. On the north coast, 20 were recorded at Skerray Harbour on 1 July. In the Inner Moray Firth, there were counts of 25 on 13 August and 52 on 11 September at Alturle and 20 at Chanonry Point on 13 October. At Littleferry, 25 were recorded on 17 September while, at Tarbat Ness, numbers were generally in single figures until mid-November, rising to a maximum count of 37 on 28 December. In the west, 60 were reported on Loch Dunvegan, Skye on 26 September and 30 in Gruinard Bay on 15 October. The highest inland count was of 13 at Insh Marshes on 13 October. WeBs counts for the Moray Firth totalled 288 in October and 123 in December.



Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Locally common coastal breeder; common offshore.

Winter/Spring: Most of the high counts came from Tarbat Ness, with a maximum of around 250 on 2 and 5 January, and regular records of over 100 through to the end of March, after which numbers fell away. In the west in January, 90 were reported at Loch Slapin, Skye on the 13th, 113 at Red Point on the 30th and 78 at Rubha Mor the following day. Later in this period, 80 were counted between Loch Sunart and Canna on 17 April, 70 at Stoer Head on 2 May, 57 at Canna on 15 May and 61 on Needle Stack, Handa two days later. WeBS counts for the Moray Firth were 34 in January and 37 in February.

Breeding: The 74 monitored nests at North Sutor produced 120 young, giving an overall productivity of 1.6 young per nest, just above the long-term average of 1.5. The breeding season on Castle Island, Eigg was described as successful, with good numbers of pairs present and many juveniles seen in late summer. Due to the NatureScot ban on accessing colonies, the counts on Canna could not be completed. However, counts done pre-ban showed a 15% increase in comparable colonies over 2021, suggesting that the population on Canna may have been at its highest level since 2004. Fledged young were reported on Isle Martin, Summer Isles on 27 July, at Cnoc Mor, SW Sutherland two days later and on Handa on 12 August.

Shag breeding productivity in study plots at North Sutor 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of nests	291	185	121	134	143	143	171	62*	205	227
Young per nest	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.6*	1.9	1.6

* counts only partially done due to Covid-19 restrictions

Shag breeding productivity in main study colonies on Canna 2013–2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of nests	255	191	336	290	301	280	440	*	437	^
Young per nest	1.0	1.2	1.7	1.8	1.3	1.2	1.6	*	1.9	^

* counts not done due to Covid-19 restrictions

^ count incomplete due to avian flu restrictions

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Triple-figure counts for the period were all in the west. On 13 August, 100+ birds were recorded at Sgeir Dubh, Skye and 138+ between Mallaig and Rum on the same day. At Sallachan, Loch Linnhe 121 were reported on 20 September, with 192 at nearby Clovullin on 22 December. The highest count for this period was of 400+ at Badentarbat, near Achiltibuie on 5 November. In the east, the maximum count was 92 at Brora on 21 August. Numbers at Tarbat Ness were much lower than in the early part of the year, peaking at 66 on 19 November. WeBS counts for the Moray Firth totalled 124 in October and 41 in December



Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Rare visitor.

Winter: One was recorded on a camera trap at a site in east Inverness-shire on 25 December.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Locally common breeder; commonly encountered in most areas.

Winter/Spring: The earliest count of note was of 14 at Merkinch LNR on 6 January. The RAFOS winter survey produced records of 11 birds at Gairloch on 30 January, 11 at Loch Ewe the following day, 33 at both Ullapool and Dundonnell on 2 February, 12 at Loch Eriboll on the same day and 13 at Kenmore on 3 February. On 7 May 14 were recorded at Milton of Culloden and 16 at nearby Alturlie on the 28th.

Breeding: Occupied nests were recorded at monitored sites in Easter Ross (see below) and Milton Loch, Boat of Garten; Kinloch, Rum; Garbh Eilean, Loch Sunart; and Poolewe. Newly-fledged young were recorded at Milton Loch on 8 June and Loch Arienas, Lochaber on 12 July.

Easter Ross Heronry counts 2015-2022:

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Clashmore	13	16	13	13	16	0	0	0
North Cadboll	6	5	2	0	0	0		
Tarrel						8	9	11
Hilton of Cadboll	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3
Arabella	16	17	17	23	18	22	17	11
Dalmore	14	10	12	12	9	15	15	17

Summer/Autumn/Winter: On 14 August, there were counts of 12 at Castle Tioran, Loch Moidart, 13 at Loch Fleet and 12 at Alturlie. On 19 August 16 were reported at Inverewe, 16 at Merkinch LNR on 12 September and 15 at Udale Bay on 22 September. The highest of several double-figure counts at Milton of Culloden was 22 on 28 September.

Grey Heron - Inner Moray Firth WeBS counts summary 2013-2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Jan	38	71	62	86	84	58	160	61	53	47
Feb	12	38	26	26	51	42	67	45	50	31
Oct	116	67	118	114	141	108	152	124	54	142
Dec	69	80	95	88	82	123	76	66	100	62



Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

Rare visitor.

Summer/Autumn: Single adult birds were recorded at Loch Linnhe, Fort William on 30 June and at Melvich on 12 August. There were later reports of singles in the Strath of Kildonan on 18-20 November and at Acharacle, Loch Shiel on 29 November.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Scarce, but increasing, visitor mainly in spring and autumn.

Spring/Summer: One recorded on the Ledmore River on 5 January was seen nearby at Loch Borallan nine days later, back on Ledmore River on 11 February and at Cam Loch on 19 February. One reported at Loch Eye on 18 and 21 January was presumably the same bird which was present at The Mound between 25 and 28 January. One was at Loch Pooltiel, Skye on 1 February. A bird which had been present on Canna was found dead on 13 February. In May, single birds were recorded on the shore at Caol on the 6th and at Kentra Bay on the 16th. Two were reported at Loch Ainort, Skye on 6 July and one at Fort William on 29 July.

Autumn/Winter: The only record for this period was of one bird at Resipole, Loch Sunart on 19 December.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Uncommon but increasing summer visitor & breeder in east; scarce elsewhere.

Spring/Summer/Autumn: There were 386 BirdTrack records submitted, well down on last year (511). The first record was from Errogie on 18 March. A second record of a bird circling in Strath Dearn on the 20th was followed by a further eight records until the end of March, all at or near to known breeding locations. The peak months for records were April (83), then a scattering of records before the main arrivals from the 15/17th until the end of May (83). Interesting westerly records in the 75 in June were from near Laxford Bridge on the 5th and Cape Wrath on the 30th. Thereafter, the number of records dropped markedly in July (51), including a westerly record from Cape Wrath again on the 5th, and in August (55), with another westerly record at Elphin on the 14th. Only 27 records during September included one westerly one at Stromeferry on the 9th. There were two late sightings in October, at Nethy Bridge on the 10th and Rothiemurchus on the 14th.

Breeding: Compared with 2021, there was a small decrease in the number of monitored sites with pairs present, and of pairs rearing young. There was a slight increase in



breeding success from 83% to 88%, so more of the young fledged, but the average brood size decreased from 2.2 to 2.0 young per successful nest.



Osprey in May carrying flounder in Beaully Firth c. Jim Christie

Osprey breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Pairs present	Pairs laying	Pairs fledging	Minimum fledged
Sutherland	31	27	23	46
Inverness-shire	12	12	10	21
Badenoch & Strathspey	9	7	7	16
Ross-shire	23	22	19	38+
Lochaber	5	5	5	7
TOTAL	80	73	64	128+

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Scarce summer visitor & breeder.

Spring/Summer: One bird was seen flying between the roadside and woodland in Easter Ross on 15 July.

Breeding: Fewer sites were checked than in 2020 and 2021, and, although there appeared to be fewer birds overall, there was a slight improvement in nesting success.



Honey-buzzard survey in Highland 2022:

	Sites checked	Sites occupied	Birds seen	Breeding confirmed	Min. young fledged
Sutherland	0	0	0	0	0
Ross-shire	3	1	1 pair	?	?
Inverness	11	9	3 pairs, 6 singles	2	3
Badenoch & Strathspey	2	1	1 single	0	0
Lochaber	2	0	1 single*	0	0
TOTAL	18	11	4 pairs, 8 singles	2	3

* thought to be possibly migrating

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

Vagrant.

Spring/Summer: A photographed bird was present from 24 May to 5 June in SE Sutherland near the site of the previous year's record. It represents a second record for Highland, following the first in 2021.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Widespread but scarce resident, mainly in the uplands.

Winter/Spring/Summer/Autumn/Winter: A total of 521 BirdTrack records was received. The majority consisted of a single bird or sometimes of two, but on seven occasions three were seen together, on 6 occasions there were four and on two occasions there were five. Most of these multi-records occurred in the late summer and autumn. Some were confirmed as an adult or pair with juveniles and were likely family groups. As in previous years, multiple sightings occurred in Strath Dearn.

Breeding:

Golden Eagle breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Nest sites monitored	Pairs present	Pairs laying	Pairs successful	Young fledged
Skye	4	4	2	1	1
Small Isles	5	5	4	2	2
Sutherland	24	22	9	3	3
Wester Ross	13	13	7	4	4
Easter Ross	8	8	4	3	3
East Inverness	22	16	9	5	5
West Inverness	9	9	4	1	1
Badenoch & Strathspey	23	21	16	11	17
Ardnamurchan, Ardgour & Morvern	22	19	5	0	0
TOTAL	130	117	60	30	36



In mixed spring weather, fewer sites were checked than in 2021. The average brood size at fledging was just over 1.0, slightly down on the past two years.



Golden Eagle juvenile in June in Inverness-shire c. Adam Ritchie



Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Fairly common resident in east, scarcer in north and west away from Skye & Lochalsh. Declining.

Winter/Spring/Summer: Although recorded daily across the whole region, as far west as Rum and Eigg, as far north as Melvich and as far south as Fersit, the number of BirdTrack records in the period January to June was only two-thirds of that in 2021. Virtually all reports were of single birds, but two were recorded at Kingussie on 18-19 March, Culloden Wood on 22 April, Rogart on 1 May and Whitebridge on 22 May. A further 116 records in July and August was 85% of the 2021 summer total. Prey chased or caught included Blackbird, Siskin, Great Tit, House Martin and, at Kentra Bay, Lochaber, waders.

Breeding: Despite an increase in coverage in 2022 compared to previous years, this species is still very under-recorded in Highland region. This increased coverage still likely represents less than 1% of the Highland population.

Sparrowhawk breeding success in Highland 2022:

District	Sites checked	Signs of occupation	Large young	Young fledged
Badenoch & Strathspey	3	3	7	7
Inverness-shire	17	14	33	22+
Ross-shire	1	1	0	0
Sutherland	1	1	3	3
TOTAL	22	19	43	32+

Autumn/Winter: There were 244 BirdTrack records, less than 90% of the 2021 total in this period. Three birds were seen at Tarbat Ness on 7 September, two on 23 September and one on 11 other dates in September-November, plus two at Alturlie on 16 November, which suggests immigration at these east coast promontories.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Scarce local breeder, mainly in east.

Winter/Spring/Summer: The number of sightings reported on BirdTrack in the period January to July was only 83, compared to 108 in the same period in 2021. Again, the great majority were in Badenoch & Strathspey or Strath Dearn, but six this year were in Easter Ross or SE Sutherland. Singles were seen at Brahan on 22 January, Scatwell, Contin on 27 January, Munloch on 14 April, Dalreavoch, Rogart on 1 June, Moy Wood, Tollie on 2 June and Strath Brora on 7 June.

Breeding: Fewer traditional sites were occupied than usual and, of those, fewer had laying pairs. The laying pairs, however, enjoyed good breeding success (78%), averaging two fledged young per nesting attempt.



Goshawk breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Sites checked	Signs of occupation	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs fledging young	Minimum no. young fledged
Sutherland	1	1	0	0	0
East Inverness	4	2	2	2	6
Easter Ross	1	1	1	1	2
Badenoch & Strathspey	9	8	5	3	8
TOTAL	15	12	8	6	16

Autumn/Winter: The 56 sightings on BirdTrack was very similar to last year's total in this period, but this time a higher proportion was from outside the core areas. Three birds were reported at Courthill, Kildary in Easter Ross on 4 August and one south of Loch Oich in Lochaber on 31 August. On Skye, one was seen seven times between 1 September and 5 October along Broadford Bay, and one near Portree on 14 September. In Sutherland, singles were in Dunrobin Glen on 11 October, at Balnacoil, Strath Brora on 6 November and at Torbreck, Rogart on 14 November. In Inverness, one was seen over Craig Phadrig/Dunain on 21 November. In the second half of the year, there were several reports of mobbing by other raptors; Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Kestrel and male Hen Harrier.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Has bred; scarce summer visitor, mainly in east.

Spring/Summer/Autumn/Winter: Although the 54 BirdTrack records were more than three times the 2021 tally, just as in that year there were no sightings of adult males nor breeding records. All were of single birds, the first at Alturlie on 1 May. From then until late August, there were eight reports from north and west Sutherland, three from Laid, Loch Eriboll on 7 and 12 May, two from Portskerra and Ben Griam Mor on 14 May, one from Balnakeil on 2 July, one from Raffin, Stoer on 14 August and one from Clashmore on 19 August. The RSPB Insh Marshes report recorded an adult female on 10-11 May. All but three of the 45 BirdTrack reports from 20 August until the end of the year were from Badenoch & Strathspey, usually around Insh Marshes and frequently involving juvenile birds. Elsewhere, there were sightings in NW Sutherland at Culkein Stoer on 25 August and Loch na Claise on 27 October, and in Easter Ross at Udale Bay on 1 November.



Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Uncommon breeder, mainly in east; scarce in winter. Declining due to persecution.



Hen Harrier in October at Durness c. Dave Barnett

Winter/Spring/Autumn/Winter: There were 409 BirdTrack records for the year, a drop of over 15% from 2021. As usual, the majority (63%) were from Badenoch & Strathspey, mostly from Insh Marshes. Roost counts at this site peaked at four to six, including two males, in February, although four to five, including two males, attended a second roost in January. Autumn roost numbers at Insh increased from three to four in early September to at least 10 on 2-5 October and again from 8-10+, including up to two males, between 31 October and 20 November. In addition, three ringtails and a grey male roosted at the second site on 20 November. This year, there were more sightings elsewhere in Highland, especially in Easter Ross and the west coast from Lochaber all the way to NW Sutherland. Sightings in east Inverness-shire were very sparse.

Breeding: Monitoring of known breeding sites was maintained at the 2021 level and gave very similar outcomes. The summary table below is almost identical to the one in the previous year's report.



Hen Harrier breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Sites checked	Signs of occupation	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs fledging young	Minimum no. young fledged
Sutherland	11	11	10	5	13
Easter Ross	3	2	2	1	3
Wester Ross	1	1	1	1	3
East Inverness	10	0	-	-	0
Badenoch & Strathspey	16	12	11	8	26
Lochaber	3	0	-	-	-
Eigg & Rum	2	1	1	1	2
TOTAL	46	27	25	16	47

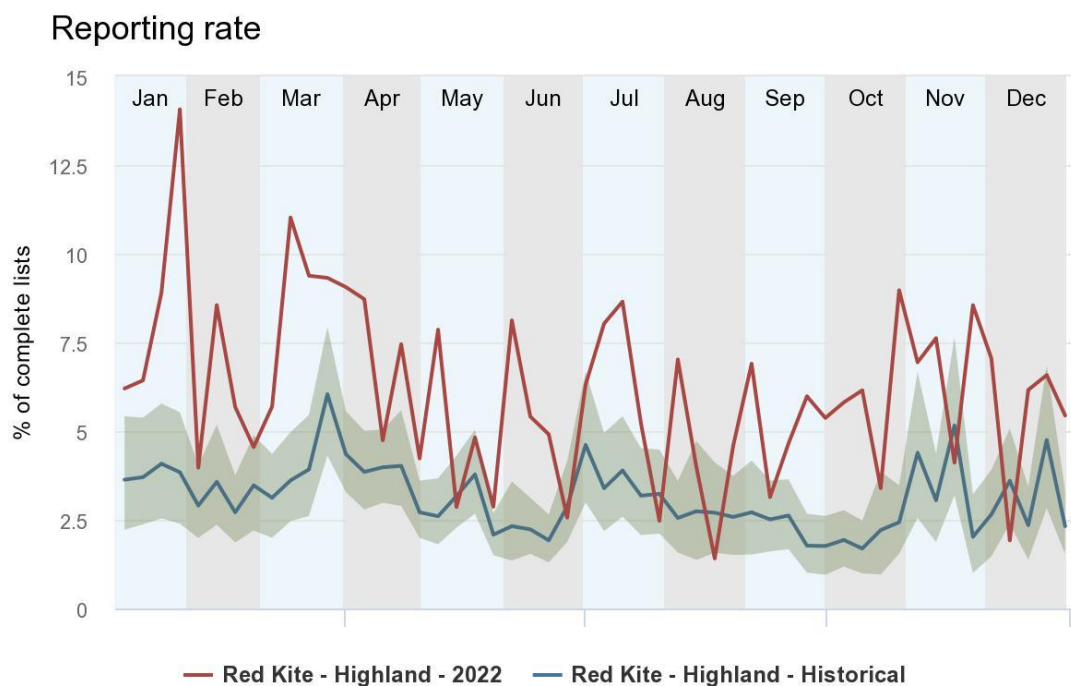
Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Vagrant.

Spring: One bird was noted at Balnakeil on 17 May. This species is increasingly seen in Britain, but the only other Highland record was nearly 10 years ago, also in NW Sutherland, at Sandwood Bay.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Re-introduced breeder; well established in east, but scarce elsewhere.



Reporting rate: %age each week of BirdTrack lists with a report of Red Kite



Winter/Spring/Summer: Another increase, by 6%, in the number of BirdTrack records, resulted in a total of 835 for the year. As usual, the core area stretched from SE Sutherland, including Achintoul, Forsinard on 22 August, down the east of the region, but was even more concentrated (88%) in Easter Ross, Badenoch & Strathspey and south of Inverness. Of only nine records from elsewhere in this period, most were from the glens just to the west, Cannich, Affric, Strathglass and Strath Bran, while the three from further afield were from wilderness SW of Rosehall on 27 March, Culags, Strathcarron on 28 March and Durness on 5 May. This year saw considerably larger winter assemblies, such as 16 birds at Dunmaglass on 13 January, 25+ at Brin House on 22 January, 12 at Heathmount, Tain on 4 February and 19 at Achavandra Muir, Dornoch on 10 February. The significantly increased reporting rate of Red Kite in 2022 reflects the general increase in numbers of this species throughout Scotland in recent years.

Breeding:



Red Kite juveniles in July on nest in Inverness-shire c. Adam Ritchie

Red Kite breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Sites checked	Pairs present	Pairs laying	Pairs success	Minimum no. young fledged
Sutherland	3	3	3	3	6
Easter Ross	24	23	14	11	17
East Inverness	13	11	9	8	15
Badenoch & Strathspey	4	2	2	2	6
TOTAL	44	39	28	24	44



The proportion of pairs laying was low compared to previous years. Breeding failure at an early stage was associated with finding of dead adults on or near the nest. It is assumed that these birds had contracted avian flu from feeding on dead, infected geese.

Autumn/Winter: Remote from the core area, a bird was sighted in the Fort William area on 3-4 September, at Corpach and Claggan. On 19 November, one was further afield at Borve on Skye. Only two double-figure groups were seen, 12 birds at a new roost near Dulnain Bridge on 5 November and 10 around a carcass in a clearfell area on Culloden Moor on 23 November. The next highest counts were eight in Strath Dearn and at Heathmount, near Tain.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Uncommon re-introduced breeder in west but scarce elsewhere.

Winter/Spring/Summer/Autumn/Winter: A total of 566 BirdTrack records for the year was a marginal increase on 2021 numbers. As in 2021 and previous years, just over 70% of records came from the west, including the islands, the full length of the west mainland, from Loch Linnhe to Cape Wrath and along the north coast to Melvich and Portskerra. Large soaring parties this year were fewer, with five the maximum number of birds seen, on Skye at Camustianavaig on 6 October and at Edinbane on 12 October, when the party comprised two adults and three juveniles. More than a quarter of the records came from the east of the region, particularly Badenoch & Strathspey, Strath Dearn and Strathnairn, with a notable focus around Whitebridge. More records than last year (28) were from the east coast firths, at Loch Fleet on several occasions, and one bird was observed chasing a Mute Swan at Pitglassie, Dingwall Bay on 13 November. Inland sightings between west and east coasts were reported at Roy Bridge on 5 January, at Kerrow Brae, Glen Urquhart (two birds) on 19 January, at Glencalvie Lodge, south of Croich on 5 May, at Glen Marksie, near Garve (two birds) on 8 May and in Glen Cassley, north of Rosehall on 20 November.

Breeding: Breeding success was poorer than in previous years, with less than half the nests in which eggs were known to have hatched going on to produce fledged young. Swabs from chicks which had recently died indicated that the cause of death was most

White-tailed Eagle breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Sites checked	Pairs present	Pairs monitored	Pairs laying	Pairs hatching	Pairs fledging	Minimum no. young
Badenoch & Strathspey	2	2	2	2	2	2	4
Inverness	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lochaber	16	14	14	14	13	5	5
Ross-shire	12	12	11	10	8	3	3
Skye							
(inc. Raasay)	29	26	23	14	11	4	6
Small Isles	4	4	4	4	4	3	4
Sutherland	7	6	6	6	6	3	3
TOTALS	71	65	61	51	45	21	26



likely to have been avian flu.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*
Common resident.

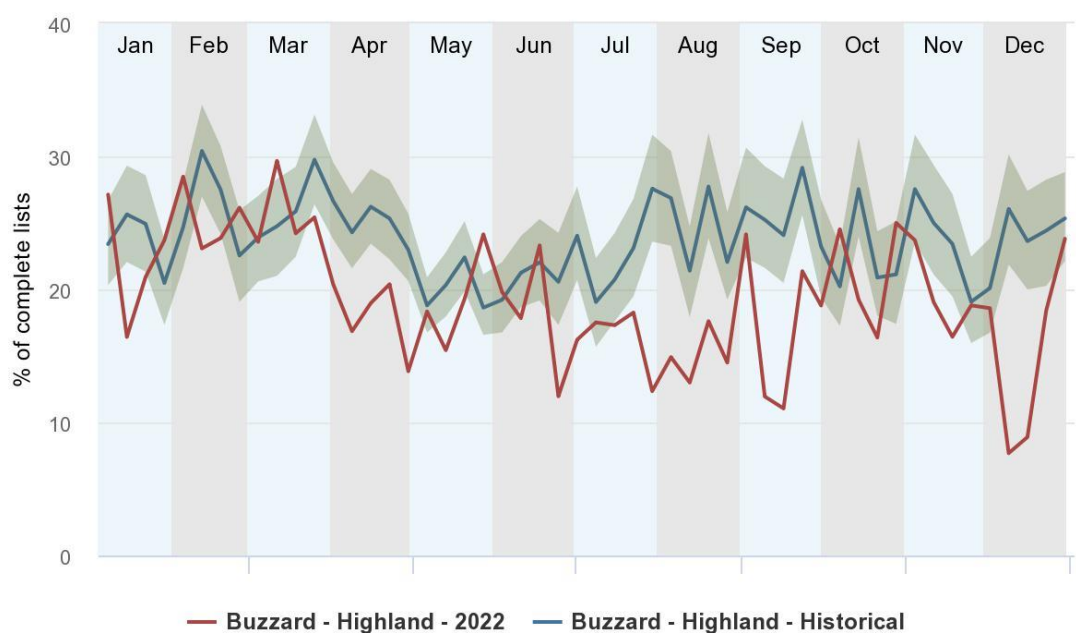


Common Buzzard in February in Inverness-shire c. Adam Ritchie



Winter/Spring/Autumn/Winter: There were 2082 BirdTrack records submitted on a daily basis throughout the year, an average of 173 per month. Peak months for recording were in spring from March to May (713 records), with a smaller autumn peak from September to November (512 records). Most of the sightings were of single birds (1565 records) or of pairs or two together (331). There were several high counts of 7 to 11 birds in early spring, when pairs are at their most territorial, and all were in Badenoch & Strathspey. Further high counts occurred at Balavil, Badenoch & Strathspey on 2 September (12 birds) and 27 December (11). The lower recording rate for Buzzard in 2022 shown in the graph below is consistent with reports of a decline in abundance of this very common raptor in Scotland in recent years.

Reporting rate



Reporting rate: %age each week of BirdTrack lists with a report of Buzzard

Breeding:

Common Buzzard breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Clutches laid	Clutches hatched	Nests with large young	Minimum no. young fledged
Badenoch & Strathspey	13	13	11	16+
Easter Ross (study area)	35	?	22	40
Easter Ross (other)	4	4	4	4
Inverness	12	?	10	16
Sutherland	3	3	3	7
Lochaber	17	17	16	35
TOTAL	84	37+	66	118+

In the Easter Ross study area, the number of occupied territories and clutches laid were 30% lower than in 2021. It is strongly suspected that this was due to avian flu infection



as the study area is close to spring feeding sites of geese, many of which were observed to be sick or dead in spring 2022.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Uncommon breeder, mainly in east but increasing in numbers in north and west.

Winter/Spring: A total of 76 BirdTrack records for the year was less than half the 2021 total. This year only 40% of the 37 records in this period came from east of the Great Glen, usually in Badenoch & Strathspey. Six were from Easter Ross and Sutherland, the furthest north at Bighouse, Melvich on 14 January and 8 February. Three birds were seen at Achavandra Muir, Dornoch on 8 February. The 16 records from the west included one each from Skye and Eigg, while the nine from Rum were boosted by seven nocturnal flight recordings.

Breeding: Data came from 67 sites, 49 of which were occupied. Early failures were unrecorded, as many sites only had one or two visits during the late chick rearing period.

Barn Owl breeding success in Highland 2022:

District	Pairs laying	Pairs fledging young	Minimum no. young fledged
Badenoch & Strathspey	2	1	3
East Inverness	4	4	11
East Ross	12	11	32
Sutherland	15	12	34
Lochaber & West Ross	9	7	16
TOTAL	42	35	96

Autumn/Winter: The number of records in this period (26) was 15 fewer than a poor total in 2021. Only eight were from east of the Great Glen, including one from Fersit, Lochaber on 30 October. Elsewhere, only one record was from Skye, three from Rum (nocturnal flight call recordings), four from Sutherland and seven from Easter Ross, including one of two birds at Rosehaugh, near Avoch on 28 December.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Scarce breeder, but very under-recorded; scarce migrant and winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: Single birds were recorded on 9 January at Kilmuir, Skye and on 13 January at Melvich in north Sutherland, where it was roosting in a lodgepole pine and subsequently seen regularly until 5 April. On 18 February one was unwittingly disturbed from a daytime roost in willows above a croft garden at Dalnabreck in Lochaber. In Strathspey, singles were reported at Lynchat on 19 March, Boat of Garten on 23 March, Ballinlaggan on 2 April and Balnacraig on 12



April. Further singles were noted at Little Garve on 19 April and on Rum on 27 April.

Breeding: In what appeared to be a poor year for the species, only four active nests were reported by HRSB (compared to 18 in 2018). All were successful, with two broods of one, one of two and one of three. There were casual records of proven breeding from Canna on 25 May, Dell of Killiehuntly in June, and Ardersier and Duntulm, Skye in early July. One pair bred and successfully fledged three young at Howlin, Eigg.

Autumn/Winter: Singles were recorded at Embo on 8 September, Tarbat Ness plantation on 21 October and Nigg Ferry on 10 December.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Increasingly scarce and local breeder; scarce migrant and winter visitor.

Winter: There were no BirdTrack records until late March.

Spring/Summer: One bird was seen at Torrin on Skye on 22 March, which was the date of the first sighting on the Isle of Ewe of a pair which was seen regularly through April, until one of them was seen visiting a nest site on 1 May. A pair was seen south of Lochindorb on 3 May, with one seen again on the 7th. In the west, there were sightings at Salen, Ardgour on 13 April, Quinag on 7 May, Achiltibuie on 14 and 16 May, on Eigg on 24 May, on Muck (two birds) on 8 June, on Rum on 21 June and 21 August, and on Skye at Heaste on 27 July. In the east, singles were seen at Dava on 10 May and 4 June, in Strath Dearn on 14 July and at Tarbat Ness on 31 July.

Breeding: The only record confirming breeding was in upper Glen Feshie, where a bird was seen carrying food on 15 June. Most of the sites regularly checked by HRSB in recent years appeared to be unoccupied in 2022.

Autumn/Winter: One bird seen in fields near Tarbat Ness lighthouse on 21 October was said to be part of a notable influx. The only other record in this period was of a single at Insh Marshes on 25 October.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Widespread breeder, but more localised in north and west.

Winter/Spring/Autumn/Winter: After a poor year in 2021, there was a further drop, of more than 20%, in BirdTrack records to 143. About half of these were from south of Inverness and Badenoch & Strathspey, over 20% from Easter Ross and almost 30% from the west, including Skye and Canna. Three birds were reported at Inverpolly on 29 April, Inverness on 26 August and Nethy Causer on 1 September.



Tawny Owlets in June near Drumnadrochit c. Carol Miller

Breeding: In the Easter Ross/SE Sutherland study area, 18 boxes were occupied, still well below the peak of 28 boxes occupied in 2014. Clutch size at 2.5 was below the long-term average of 2.7. Brood size at 1.8 was equal to the long-term average and, for the first time in this study, no nests failed, so the number of young reared per pair was well above the long-term average of 1.4. These figures suggest it was a relatively good breeding season for the species in this part of the HRSG monitoring area. Unfortunately, there were not enough data to make comparisons with other parts of the region. Of the 11 other boxes monitored, four failed and the rest produced at least 10 large young which, at 0.9 young per pair, was lower than in the East Ross study area.



Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Scarce migrant.

Spring: One was recorded at Tongue on 2 April. Another seen briefly on Eigg on 20 April was the fourth record for the island and the first since 1986. Possibly the same bird was then seen at Sanna Bay, Ardamurchan on 2 May.

Autumn: One, present at Polbain from 4 to 20 September, was last seen at Achiltibuie the following day.

Hoopoe presumed individuals per season 2013-2022:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Spring	1	3	2	4	0	2	0	2	4	3
Autumn	0	1	1	0	1	3	1	1	1	1

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce local breeder, mainly in Strathspey and the Great Glen; rare elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: In Inverness, single birds were reported from Merkinch LNR and the River Ness on 10 dates between 3 January and 26 February, and on 26 May. Records, all of single birds, also came from the River Spey at Revack Lodge on 18 January, Udale Bay on 18 January, 27 January and 19 February, Morar on 26 February and 27 March, Glen Nevis on 24 March, The Mound on 16 April and Loch Insh on 20 May.

Breeding: An occupied nest was found at Kingussie on 17 July and adults were recorded feeding young at the nest hole between 7 and 22 August.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The first record for this period was of one bird at Cannich on 18 June, followed by one at Drumnadrochit on 7 July. In Badenoch & Strathspey, records ranged from the River Truim near Dalwhinnie, through Kingussie, where two birds were reported on 23 and 30 August, to Grantown-on-Spey, where singles were recorded on 18 September and 7 October. Records of single birds continued to come from Merkinch LNR from 28 August to 15 December. In the east, single birds were recorded at Dingwall on 21 and 23 August, Loch Migdale, Bonar Bridge on 26 August and at Udale Bay on five dates between 7 September and 23 October. The most northerly record was of one at Loch Culag, Lochinver on 8 November. The west saw an increase in numbers over last year with 12 records, all of single birds, ranging from Flowerdale, Gairloch south to Loch Aline, where one seen on 19 December was the last record of the year.



Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Rare breeder; rare migrant.

Spring: A male was seen singing in a dead tree at Dalnahaitnach, Carrbridge on 15 May. Despite several return visits by the observer, there was no further sign.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Locally common resident in east, but less common in north and west.

Winter/Spring: The majority of records came from the south-east of the region, especially the woodlands of Badenoch & Strathspey. However, a significant number of records came from the west, ranging from Ardnamurchan to Lochinver, and the north, including one reported at Trantlebeg, eight miles south of Melvich, which was the most northerly record. The highest counts were of seven birds at Beachan Wood, Grantown-on-Spey on 13 March and five in Strathfarrar on 13 June.

Breeding: Confirmed breeding records, mostly of fledged young, came from 14 sites, including Ardnamurchan and Isle Ornsay, Skye in the west and Achininver on the north coast.

Autumn/Winter: The vast majority of records came from the south and east of the area. The most northerly record of the year was of a newly fledged bird at Achininver, north of Tongue on 10 July. There were several records of single birds from Inverpolly and Lochinver, one was reported at Portree on 31 August and 27 December, and one at Broadford Bay on 29 September.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Locally rare breeder, mainly in Badenoch & Strathspey; rare elsewhere.

Winter/Spring/Summer: There were 19 records during the period, all of single birds. Twelve records came from the area between Loch Alvie and Loch an Eilein, with the first being one at Kinrara on 27 February. There were three records at Beachan Wood, Grantown-on-Spey on 6 March, 13 March and 7 April. Elsewhere, single birds were reported at Boat of Garten on 30 January, Skibo on 2 April, Migdale Woods near Bonar Bridge on 7 May and, in the west, at Kernsary on 5 June.



Breeding: There were no records confirming breeding, although territorial behaviour was noted at Loch Alvie in late April/early May.

Autumn/Winter: Single birds were recorded at Kinloch, Skye on 3 September, Birchfield, Strath Oykel on 24 September, Inchree, near the Corran Ferry on 4 October and Loch Garten on 24 December.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common, but thinly distributed breeder; declining.

Winter/Spring: Last year's improvement in number of BirdTrack records did not last and this year's total of 492 for the year was only two-thirds of the 2021 total. In this period, there was a reduction in proportion of records from the core area of Badenoch & Strathspey, Easter Ross and around Inverness, from over 90% in 2021 to under 70% this year. However, there were also increases in sightings in the west mainland, from Ardnamurchan to Cape Wrath, and along the north coast to Melness, as well as on Skye, Rum, Eigg, Muck and Canna. One or two birds were cited in the great majority, but three were counted during the RAFOS annual winter survey of the north and west coasts, at Scourie on 31 January and Rubha Mor on 1 February.

Breeding: Monitoring showed a marked reduction in occupied territories compared with 2021, but a reciprocal increase in productivity per pair. Of 5-6 pairs on Eigg, one pair was known to fledge two young.

Kestrel breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Sites checked	Sites occupied by pairs	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number of young fledged
Sutherland	3	3	3	3	NK
Ross-shire	9	5	5	5	23
Inverness-shire	6	5	5	5	19
Badenoch & Strathspey	6	3	2	2	8
Lochaber	2	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	26	16	15	15	50

NK = not known

Autumn/Winter: The total of 182 records in this period was only 74% of the 2021 number. The nine records of two birds were mainly from Strath Dearn, where higher counts of three to five were made on 26-27 October and 13 November. Three were also seen at Inverness Airport on 26 November. Probable immigrants at Tarbat Ness were seen on 10 dates between 3 October and 28 November.



Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Uncommon breeder; scarce in winter.

Winter/Spring: Of the 70 BirdTrack records in this period, only 10 were in January and February. Surprisingly, four were from inland sites, at Dell of Killiehuntly on 1 January, Balgowan, Laggan on 2 January, lower Strath Dearn on 15 January and Carr Road, Strathspey on 28 February. Sixteen of the spring records were from coastal locations, including one from Tarbat Ness on 31 March and five from the Bay of Culkein/Stoer area in April and May. In a poor year for sightings on Eigg, singles were seen on 16 February and 23 May.

Breeding: Many fewer sites were checked than in 2021, especially in Sutherland. Eggs or small chicks were lost to predation at three sites and one nest was predated at the large young stage by a stoat.

Merlin breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Sites checked	Pairs present	Pairs laying	Pairs fledging young	Minimum young fledged
Sutherland	8	5	3	2	3
Ross-shire	1	1	1	1	3
Inverness	6	3	3	3	10
Badenoch & Strathspey	10	2	1	0	0
Isle of Rum	3	2	1	1	2
Lochaber	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	28	13	9	7	18

Autumn/Winter: In 14 records from late July to 31 August, six were back at coastal locations, at Stoer Head on 27 July, Culkein Drumbeg on 29 July, Tarbat Ness on three days from 30 July to 1 August and Traigh, Morar on 24 August. Of the 68 records thereafter, 18 were from Tarbat Ness, including sightings of two birds on 28 September and 24 November, and three juveniles on 13 November. A total of 22 were from inland sites, usually in Badenoch & Strathspey, to as late as 17 December at Invertromie. One juvenile was eating a Stonechat at Dava on 15 October and another bird was interacting with four Hen Harriers at roost at Insh on 26 October.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Scarce, recently colonised breeder.

Summer/Autumn: An adult bird was present at an Inverness-shire site from 3 July-6 October. Another adult was seen at Dornoch on 28 September.



Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Uncommon declining breeder; scarcer in winter, mainly in Inner Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring/Summer: The number of BirdTrack records for the year (187) was 15% down on the 2021 total. The 143 in this eight-month period included sightings of two birds on 10 occasions and of three in Strath Dearn on 1 April, at Rosemarkie on 11 April and at Cape Wrath on 3 July. As in 2021, over 70% of the records were from the east of the region, from Badenoch & Strathspey and Strath Dearn up to the east coast firths. Most of the remainder were from the west coast and islands, but there were inland sightings near Fort Augustus on 19 January, at Loch Beannacharain in Strathconon on 25 February, on Ben Loyal on 5 March, at Struie in Easter Ross on 31 May, in Strathfarrar on 13 June and in Gleann nam Fiadh, Glen Affric on 16 July.

Breeding: More clutches hatched and an increased number of young fledged than in 2021.

Peregrine breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Known sites checked	Pairs monitored	Single adults	Clutches hatching	Young fledged
Sutherland	15	1	0	1	3
Easter Ross	17	7	2	7	19
Wester Ross	33	0	3	0	0
West Inverness	17	0	1	0	0
East Inverness	26	2	4	2	5
Badenoch & Strathspey	23	3	5	3	8
Skye & Lochalsh	10	0	0	0	0
Ardnamurchan	18	0	2	0	0
TOTALS	159	13	17	13	35

Autumn/Winter: During this period there were 44 records, of which 40 were from the east of the region, where two birds were seen on six occasions and three in Strath Dearn on 5 October. Two birds were seen on Little Wyvis on 23 September and, on 15 October, one bird was seen from the Uig-Lochmaddy ferry to stoop and take a petrel.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Scarce migrant; has bred.

Autumn: A juvenile was present at Tarbat Ness from 7-8 September.



Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Scarce but increasing resident, spreading from south-west and Strathspey into Inverness and Easter Ross; scarce elsewhere, but increasing records from outlying areas.

Winter/Spring: The vast majority of 180 BirdTrack records came from the woodlands of Badenoch & Strathspey, Easter Ross and Lochaber. Outwith this area, singles were recorded at Rogart, Strath Fleet on 14 April and Loch Sletill, near Forsinard on 28 April, this being the most northerly record. High counts for the period were five at Grantown-on-Spey on 9 January, five at Brahan on 22 January, six at Craigdarroch, Contin on 27 March and seven at Loch nan Eala, Arisaig on 10 April.

Breeding: A bird was seen nest-building at Pitmain Lodge, Kingussie on 27 March. A pair was recorded feeding three fledged young at Culloden Wood on 18 May and fledged young were reported at nearby Culloden Moor on 5 July.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Distribution of most of the 200+ BirdTrack records was as earlier in the year. There were several records from the Lairg/Bonar Bridge area, including a report of four birds at Loch Migdale on 4 June. The most north-westerly record was of one at Kernsary, Poolewe on 5 June. High counts for the period were of six at Loch Pityoulish on 18 October, five at Bogach on 5 November and six at Granish, Aviemore on the following day.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Scarce resident, mainly in south and east; range expanding to west and north.

Winter/Spring: The highest counts for this period came from Whiteness, of 10 and nine on 16 and 24 January respectively. Five at the Heights of Dochcarty on 8 April was the highest number recorded at the site. Although most of the 105 BirdTrack records came from the area around the Moray Firth, there were increasing numbers from the north and west. There were six records from Melvich in January, February and April, with two birds being reported there on 24 April. Nearby, one was seen near Tongue on 17 April, one at Kirtomy on 20 April, and again the following day, and one was recorded at Durness village on 24 April and 20 May. In Lochaber, a single bird was recorded in or near Fort William on 7, 26 and 29 March, and 24 April. On Skye, there were records, all of single birds, from Lower Milovaig on 24 March and from Glasnakille, Achnacloich, Tokavaig and Isleornsay during the first two weeks of May. One was recorded at Gairloch on 30 March and one on Canna on 25 May.

Breeding: The only breeding record was of a bird seen carrying food or a faecal sac at Ballaggan, near Ardersier on 19 May.



Summer/Autumn/Winter: High counts for the period were four at Loch Garten on 12 August, five at the Heights of Dochcarty on 16 September, six at nearby Upper Dochcarty on 6 October and four at Loch Flemington on 12 November. There were several records away from the core area around the Moray Firth. In the west, the bird on Canna was seen again on 28 June, two were reported at Plockton on 31 July, one at Breakish, Skye on 13 August and one was recorded in the Stoer area on 10 July, 6 and 19 August, and 29 October. On the north coast, two were at Strathy Point on 13 September, one at Armadale on 15 October and one at Melvich on 18 December. Finally, a single bird was recorded at Achrimsdale, north of Brora on 4 and 5 December.

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Common resident in east, but scattered in west and largely absent from central mountain areas.

Winter/Spring: High counts for the period were of 450 at Easter and Wester Dalziel on 11 January, 1000 leaving a huge roost at Boat of Garten on the morning of 15 January, 150 near Grantown-on-Spey on 21 February and 350 at Boat of Garten on 12 March. Away from the south-east, a notable count in the west was 70 at Strathcarron on 2 February.

Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at eight sites. Occupied nests were first recorded at Tain on 24 April. The first record of fledged young came from the cliff colony at Cleadale, Eigg on 21 May.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The highest count during the early part of this period was of 200+ at Aviemore on 13 July. There was a large flock in the Tain area in September, peaking at 600 on the 16th, 300+ were reported at the Dell of Killiehuntly on 11 November and 1200 were recorded roosting at Milton Loch, Boat of Garten on 2 December. The highest count in the west was of 100+ at Gesto, Skye on 17 July.

[Nordic Jackdaw] *Coloeus monedula monedula*

Birds of this race were recorded at six sites. One was seen at Brora river-mouth on 1 January, 11 March and, in December, on the 8th and 23rd. There were five reports of one at Loch Portree between 17 January and 27 February, followed later in the year by four records from nearby Bayfield from 30 September to 9 October. There were five records of one or two birds in the Broadford/Harrapool area between 11 October and 2 December. Finally, one was reported at Golspie big burn on 8 December and one at Loch Fleet two weeks later.

[NE European Jackdaw] *Coloeus monedula soemmerringii*

Two birds of this race were reported at Aviemore on 12 January.



Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Common resident in east but local in west and absent from most upland areas.

Winter/Spring: Most of the high counts came from the east, with 250+ recorded at Tarbat Ness, 300 at Easter and Wester Dalziel, and 200 at Ashie Moor on 1, 11 and 27 January respectively, followed by 500 on the Black Isle at Munlochy on 20 February. In the west, 110 were reported at Ullapool on 2 February, 20 at Strathcarron the following day and there were regular records from the Portree area of Skye. The most northerly record was of one at Tongue on 1 February.

Breeding: Thirteen active rookeries were reported, with the only two outside Badenoch & Strathspey or Easter Ross being in Inverness and at Brora, where nest-building was reported on 17 March. Nest-building was first recorded on 14 January at Drummond, Inverness, where the maximum count of occupied nests was 90 on 24 April. The first record of newly fledged birds was at Boat of Garten on 21 May.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were several three-figure counts during this period. At Muir of Ord 100 were reported on 13 July, a large flock near Nethy Bridge peaked at about 200 on 16 September, while a flock near Tain peaked at 300 on the same day, and 200 were recorded at Beechwood, Inverness on 18 October. There were regular records from the west, especially the Portree area of Skye, but no large flocks were reported. Four birds were recorded at Bagh a' Ghallanaich, Muck on 29 June and 11 were seen flying low over the sea from Skye to Mallaig on 8 November.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Common resident in east; scarce in west.

Winter/Spring: High counts came from Merkinch LNR, where 60 were recorded on 12 January, 70 on 16 February and 40 on 30 March. Boat of Garten recorded 30 on 12 March and Aviemore tip 50 on 26 April. Away from the south and east, records were few, with reports, usually of one or two birds, coming in the west from Bay of Culkein, Achmelvich, Ullapool, Ariundle near Strontian, Plockton and Balmacara, where three were reported on 14 May. In the north, there were records on 30 March of two birds at Forsinard and two at Talaheel, while two were seen at nearby Dyke the previous day.

Breeding: Confirmed breeding records came from only six sites, all within the core area in the south-east of the region. One was recorded paired with a Hooded Crow in Glen Tromie on 21 April.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Counts in excess of 30 birds were regular at two sites; Merkinch LNR, peaking at 60 on 10 November, and the Heathmount area south of Tain, with a maximum of 36 on 1 October and 8 November. There were



very few records outside the core area, the only report of more than two birds being of at least five near Portree on 5 September.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Common resident, especially in north and west.

Winter/Spring: Counts of more than 20 birds came from nine sites, all in the north or west, with maxima of 28 at Loch Ewe on 31 January and 35 between Caol and Fort William on 14 May. In the east, there were many records of six birds in the Heathmount area south of Tain, with a maximum of eight recorded on 9 January.

Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at only six sites, mostly in the west and north, but included a record of newly-fledged young at Merkinch LNR on 13 June. A productive breeding season was reported on Eigg.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were 15 records of more than 20 birds from the Inverlochy area, with maxima of 43 on 18 July, 48 on 2 October, 58 on 6 December and 52 on 22 December. Elsewhere, around 20 were reported at Inverie on 6 October and 50 at Elphin on 21 December. The maximum count from the east was of 14 in the Heathmount area south of Tain on 8 November and 4 December.

[Hybrid Crow] *Corvus corone* x *Corvus cornix*

All double-figure counts bar one came from the Courthill/Heathmount area to the south of Tain, with maxima of 36 on 8 November and 42 on 4 December. The exception was a record of 15 at Corrimony East on 3 November. In the west, two were recorded at Clashnessie Bay on 3 January and single birds were at Ardelve on 8 February, Gruinard Bay on 25 October and River Lochy mouth, Fort William on 22 December.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Uncommon breeder in most areas.

Winter/Spring: The number of BirdTrack records for the year decreased by 20% compared to 2021. The great majority of the 663 in this period were in low single figures and extremely few significant assemblies were reported. The largest was of 46 birds at Shinness in Sutherland on 30 January. Ten were around a sheep carcass on 24 January at Ruthven, Findhorn, where an assembly of 25 was later noted on 15 February.

Breeding: The number of territories monitored dropped a little compared to 2021. As all but one of the pairs which were known to have hatched fledged young, it was concluded that avian flu did not have a significant effect on nestlings. On Eigg, three pairs were known to have bred and successfully raised nine young.



Raven breeding success in Highland 2022:

	Sites checked	Pairs monitored	Pairs laying	Pairs fledging young	Number of young fledged
Sutherland	2	1	0	0	0
Ross-shire	11	9	4	3	8
Inverness-shire	4	3	3	3	7
Badenoch & Strathspey	6	6	4	4	14
Lochaber	2	2	-	0	0
TOTALS	25	21	11	10	29

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The 631 BirdTrack records in this period, in complete contrast to 2021, contained no reports of assemblies of greater than 20 birds until 5 October, when 21 were seen at Glenshero Lodge, Laggan. All subsequent higher counts were also in Badenoch. A group of around 40 was noted in the Loch Bhrodain, Gaick Lodge and Bruach Dhubh area from 7-21 October, 30 were in Glen Banchor on 23 October and 30 at Laggan Bridge on 12 November, while the maximum was 52+ at Blargie Crag, Laggan on 13 November. Elsewhere, at least 15 were counted on Rum on 16 September.

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

Irruptive winter visitor in variable numbers.

Winter/Spring: One bird was recorded at Aviemore on 17 January, 30 January and 2 February, and one at Croy on 18 January. Up to three were reported in Grantown-on-Spey between 1 and 7 February. Four in Nethy Bridge from 9 February briefly became five on 5 March, then reduced to three from 19 to 22 March. The final record of the period was of one at Rothiemurchus on 22 April.

Autumn/Winter: Late October saw the start of a moderate influx, with single birds or single-figure flocks being recorded at scattered sites throughout the region. The largest flocks turned up in the east, with up to 40 birds being present in the Tain area from 30 October until the end of November. Nearby, at the Hill of Fearn, 10 and 12 were reported on 28 October and 20 November respectively. Ten were seen at Alness on 6 November, 28+ at Swordale Park, Bonar Bridge on 20 November and 11 at Arabella on 22 November. In December, 12 were reported at Brora on the 1st, about 20 at Muir of Ord on the 5th, 50 at Nethy Bridge on the 17th and 20 in Inverness five days later.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Abundant resident.

Winter/Spring: Of the 29 BirdTrack records of 20 or more birds, the majority were from the pine woods of Strathspey or the area to the south of Tain, with most coming during the first three months of the period. Away from these areas, 25



were recorded at Tulloch Station on 14 February, 28 at West Strathcarron woods, Ardgay on 23 April and 20 at Slochd woods three days later.

Breeding: Records of confirmed breeding came from 25 sites, most of which were in Badenoch & Strathspey. Many records were of newly-fledged young, the first being reported at Smithton on 28 May and the last at Loch Arienas, Lochaber on 12 July. The breeding season on Eigg was described as pretty successful.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were 26 records of 20 or more birds, mainly from sites in Badenoch & Strathspey or the area south of Tain, where the maximum count was 40 on 19 November. Away from these areas, the highest count was of 22 at West Strathcarron woods, Ardgay on 1 June. A bird of the continental race (ssp. *ater*) was reported on the feeders at Tarbat Ness on 7 December.

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*

Uncommon resident restricted to coniferous woodland mainly in Badenoch & Strathspey; very rare in north and west.

Winter/Spring: High counts for the period were of nine at Nethy Bridge on 5 January, nine in Abernethy Forest on 8 March and eight in Glenmore on 21 March. Away from Strathspey, two were recorded at Invercannich on 5 January, three and two at Blackfold on 11 February and 29 April respectively, one at Fyrish on 21 February, one in Millburn, Inverness on 28 February, two on the Black Isle near Munlochy on 2 March, two in Morangie Forest, Tain on 8 March and two at nearby Heathmount on 20 May.

Breeding: An occupied nest recorded in Abernethy Forest on 26 April was still active a week later. Newly-fledged young were reported at Uath Lochans on 5 June, Grantown-on-Spey eight days later, Loch Garten RSPB on 6 July and Anagach Woods on 24 August.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The highest counts during this period were of six at Rothiemurchus on 10 September, nine and eight at Abernethy Forest on 14 October and 12 November respectively, and seven at Craig Phadrig/Dunain on 24 December. Other records away from Strathspey were of one to four birds in Glen Affric on 17 June, 19 June and 1 July, one near Ardersier on three dates in July, with two there on 10 September, four by the River Grudie, Strath Bran on 18 July, one in Slochd woods on 27 August and two near Clava on 6 November.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Common resident in most areas.

Winter/Spring: There were 17 double-figure counts on BirdTrack, with a high of around 45 counted at Loch Insh over a 5.5hour period on 7 January.



Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at 35 sites, the earliest record being of an occupied nest at Achabeag, Morvern on 19 April. The first record of newly-fledged young came from Torbreck, Rogart on 29 May. The breeding season on Eigg was described as pretty successful.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were 19 double-figure counts during the period, with highs of 20 at Anagach Woods on 12 September, 25 at Kentra Bay on 28 October and 21 at Dorlin/Castle Tioram on 4 November.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Abundant resident in most areas.

Winter/Spring: There were 52 double-figure counts on BirdTrack, mostly from the woodlands southwest of Tain, with maxima there of 44 on 2 February and 33 on 20 April.

Breeding: Confirmed breeding records came from 45 widely scattered locations. The earliest was of a nest with eggs at Kinloch on Rum on 24 April. There was a very early record of an adult feeding newly-fledged young at Glen More, Lochalsh on 29 April, the next recorded fledging being over a month later at Smithton on 28 May. The breeding season on Eigg was described as successful.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: In contrast to the early months, there were only 13 double-figure counts on BirdTrack, with maxima of 16 in the Courthill area southwest of Tain on 12 June, 15 between Onich and North Ballachulish on the following day and 15 at Nethy Bridge on 29 December.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Common breeder; absent from most areas in winter.

Winter/Spring: Although there were few BirdTrack records during the first two months, February saw the two highest counts, with 257 recorded at Dornoch Links on the 6th and about 200 at Golspie on the 25th. The frequency of records increased from March onwards as birds returned to their breeding areas.

Breeding: Singing birds were recorded at over 100 widely scattered sites, with the first being at Easter/Wester Dalziel on 9 February. The only confirmed breeding records came from Armadale on the north coast, Coranstillbeg in Strathspey, Dunanellerich on Skye, Handa, Rum and Eigg, where a healthy breeding population and reasonably successful breeding season were reported.

Numbers of singing Skylarks at Insh Marshes 2013-22:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No.	^	6	12	21	11	18	18	*	18	13

^ count not done due to extensive, prolonged flooding

* count not done due to Covid-19 restrictions



Summer/Autumn/Winter: As the number of records fell through the autumn months, a few double-figure flocks were recorded, with highs of 40 birds at Loch Eye on 24 September and around 100 on 6 October.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Locally common summer visitor & breeder.

Spring: The first two birds were recorded at Loch Insh on 20 March, six days before west coast reports of two at Morar and three at Kensaleyre, Skye. Further March records came from Grantown-on-Spey on the 27th and Heights of Dochcarty on the 28th. Larger feeding groups in April included 100 birds at Kiltearn in Easter Ross on the 21st, 60 at Boat of Garten woods on the 24th and over 200 at Loch Insh on the 30th, then 500 at Insh Marshes on 12 May. Further north, 20 were at Brora on 15 April and two at Tongue on 20 April.

Breeding: Nesting colonies were reported at only 10 sites, including ones at Skerray on the north coast and at Laig on Eigg, where two pairs apparently bred successfully.

Summer/Autumn: Post-breeding flocks of 300 at Achanalt on 26 June and at Milton Loch, Boat of Garten on 25 July were six times larger than any other flocks reported in the same period. The number of reports fell from 56 in August to 14 in September. The latter included a group of 20 passing Corrieshalloch in Wester Ross in heavy rain on the 6th and the last five birds were seen at Boat of Garten on 24 September.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor & breeder.

Spring: The first bird was recorded at Dores on 7 April, a week later than the earliest in 2021. Two birds were noted at Kilmory on Rum on 11 April, one at Loch Eye on 12 April, one at Drumguish on 13 April, and singles at Drumfearn, Skye and Braeintrà, Lochalsh on 15 April, after which records came daily from multiple sites. The first bird recorded on the north coast was at Melness on 27 April. The first of very few double-figure counts in spring was 15 at Kinellan on 23 April, while the highest was 35+ at Loch Achanalt on 23 May.

Breeding: Breeding was proven at 27 sites throughout the region, at least three with multiple broods. The Eigg breeding population was again low compared to previous years, but very productive, with one pair at Cleadale successfully fledging five young on 16 July.

Summer/Autumn: Post-breeding, 60 birds at Muir of Ord on 14 July was the highest count until 140 were noted at Lairg on 13 August, over 200 in a large roost with House Martins at UHI, Inverness on 19 August, 100 at Nigg Fabrication Yard



on 26 August and 120 at Rymore Tulloch in Strathspey on 5 September. Subsequently, 50 birds were recorded at Drumguish several times before over 70 were seen there on 4 October. The monthly records total fell from 200 in September to 35 in October to just six in November, when one bird was seen at Shildaig in Wester Ross and two at Carse of Ardersier on the 8th, then singles at Scourie on the 14th, Tongue on the 17th and 18th, and Kilmuir on Skye on the 21st.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Locally common but declining summer visitor & breeder in east, uncommon in north and west.



House Martins gathering nest mud in May at Tulloch, Strathspey c. Desmond Dugan

Spring: The earliest bird noted was at Isleornsay on Skye on 14 April, at least a week later than 2021 early arrivals. Sightings of two birds at Tulloch Klondyke in Strathspey and one at Kinellan on 15 April, and at Loch Garten, Ruthven RSPB and the River Ness at Holm on 17 April preceded daily records at multiple sites. On 20 April a group of 30 was seen at Killilan, while 15 were at the Nigg hide on 4 May. Furthest north sightings were in the Flow Country near Trantlemore on 4 May and at Achfary on 31 May.

Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at 18 sites, half of them in Badenoch & Strathspey, between 21 May, at Kingshouse in Rannoch Moor, and 16 September, at Spey Way. Fledged young were recorded at Melvich on 14 July and the first breeding success on Eigg since 2008 occurred when a pair at Cleadale fledged four young on 27-28 July.

Summer/Autumn: The largest post-breeding assembly exceeded 300 birds on overhead wires on 12 August at Drumguish, where 100-110 were still present



from 19-28 August and 55 on 7 September. At Tarbat Ness, over 50 birds were noted on 29 July, 100+ from 1-5 August, 150+ on 8 August, 100 on 23 August and 1 September, and 45 on 10 September. On 14 September 50 were seen in Strath Dearn. In October, six were noted on the 1st at Corran Ferry and two flew over Inshes, Inverness as late as the 29th, possibly pushed back north by strong, warm southerly winds.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident in east, but uncommon in some parts of north and west.

Winter/Spring: The number of double-figure counts reported in winter (13) was only half that of 2021. The largest were 20 birds at Kincardine, Strathspey on 12 January and at Carse of Ardersier on 7 February. All nine records from across Sutherland were in single figures, the largest count (8) at Lochinver on 6 January. All three spring counts in double figures were in late May, by which time fledged birds were being noted.

Breeding: The 2-3 pairs on Eigg included one at Sandavore which successfully raised young. Also, breeding was confirmed at 13 sites elsewhere between 4 May, at Loch Ruthven, and 4 July, in Strathspey. Fledged young were noted at Portskerra, Sutherland on 3 June.

Autumn/Winter: Most double-figure counts in this period (45) were in the 10-20 range, but eight were higher. Counts of 30 were recorded in Anagach Woods, Grantown-on-Spey on 12 September and at Lower Milovaig, Skye on 25 September. Counts of 21 were recorded in Sutherland at Culkein Drumbeg on 23 September and at Loch Fleet on 1 November, and on Skye at Harrapool on 25 November. The frequency of double-figure counts peaked in November (21 of 97 records).

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Declining local summer visitor & breeder; scarce migrant.

Spring: The post-Covid-19 recovery in the number of records was not sustained, regrettably, with a spring BirdTrack total of 49 being nine fewer than in 2021. The earliest report came on 21 April from Struy in Strathglass, followed by ones from Resipole Oaks on 23 April and Strathconon on 28 April. Of the 46 May records, 17 were from Strathspey (all but two from Craigellachie NNR), 13 from Lochaber, six from Inverness-shire, five from Skye and two each from Wester Ross and Sutherland. The most northerly was from Achmelvich on 4 May.

Breeding: Singing was the highest evidence of breeding, recorded at only two sites in Strathspey, predominantly Craigellachie, but at 24 sites elsewhere, usually in the west of the region. Some singing was very probably territorial, at Craigellachie and, in the west,



at Glen Nevis, Loch Aline, Kentra Bay, Carr Brae near Dornie and Dog Falls/Coire Loch in Glen Affric.

Summer/Autumn: There were 33 records in June, three in July and two in August, the last of these of one bird at Duthil, Strathspey on 18 August. It was followed three weeks later on 7 September by coastal singles at Tarbat Ness and Balnakeil.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* *Scarce migrant.*



Yellow-browed Warbler in September at the pools, Tarbat Ness c. Dave Barnett

Autumn: The decline in records since 2020 continued, to just 15 from 11 sites, involving 15-17 birds. September records came from Dornoch on the 26th, Kyle of Durness, Durness and Balnakeil (two birds) on the 28th and Tarbat Ness (three) on the 29th. Sightings continued in October, from Scourie on the 2nd, Broadford (2-4 birds) on the 4th, 5th and 7th, Harrapool on the 7th, Cannich on the 12th and, finally on 23 October, from Balnakeil and Melvich, where the bird was trapped and ringed.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* *Abundant summer visitor & breeder; common migrant.*

Spring: A small increase in spring records on BirdTrack to 1242 (1197 in 2021), started on 25 March, 10 days earlier than last year, with one bird sighted at Cow



Hill, Fort William. A second was at Ashaig on Skye three days later, but the third was not noted until 9 April, at Insh Marshes. Multiple daily records started on 11 April, from Portree, Arisaig, Gortern near Loch Sunart and Craighill in Easter Ross. An influx on 15 April produced counts of 15 singing birds at Portree, 10 at Ord on Skye, 11 at Cow Hill and 10 in Sutherland at Inverpolly. Like last year, double-figure counts occurred thereafter in 7.8% of records, especially in late April and early May. In 85% of cases, they were in the 10-20 range, but were as high as 40 in Strathconon on 28 April, 44 around Cow Hill on 1 May and 43 in Strathfarrar on 7 May.

Breeding: The first record, of a bird carrying food at South Kessock on 8 May, was noted over three weeks earlier than the first in 2021. The last, of a further 26 reports, was the finding of fledged young on the Carn a' Chnuic track in Abernethy on 17 August. An adult with four young was seen on Handa in late July. As usual, breeding was extremely common and very successful on Eigg.

Summer/Autumn: The ringing study at Carse of Ardersier was more limited than in 2021, with 13 visits between 7 and 31 July, six visits in August and one on 10 September, catching a total of 554 birds. The top catches were 50 on 27 July and 67 on 13 August. No other site in this period reported a double-figure count. After 10 September, there were 13 records of singles, the last three from different sites in Easter Ross, on 28 and 29 September, and ending on 1 October at Courthill/Heathmount.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common local summer visitor & breeder, mainly in east but increasing in west; uncommon migrant but occasionally winters.

Winter/Spring: In contrast to the last two winters, there were several reports of solo wintering birds, at Nigg Ferry on 9 and 15 January, at Harrapool on Skye on 14, 23 January and 28 February, at Avoch on 13 February and, in addition, RAFOS counted five birds around Scourie on 31 January. Groups of singing new arrivals appeared on 14 March, two at Kinellan, four at Seafeld, Inverness, as well as singles on the Beaully Firth and at Tain and Brora. In all, 101 records in March equalled the combined totals for 2020 and 2021, and included ones from Rum, Skye and Melvich, Achininver and Borgie in north Sutherland. The graph below shows that birds were recorded more frequently than in past years not only in March but during the rest of spring, summer and early autumn. Birds were reported throughout the region, but over 70% of the spring records were from east Inverness and Easter Ross.

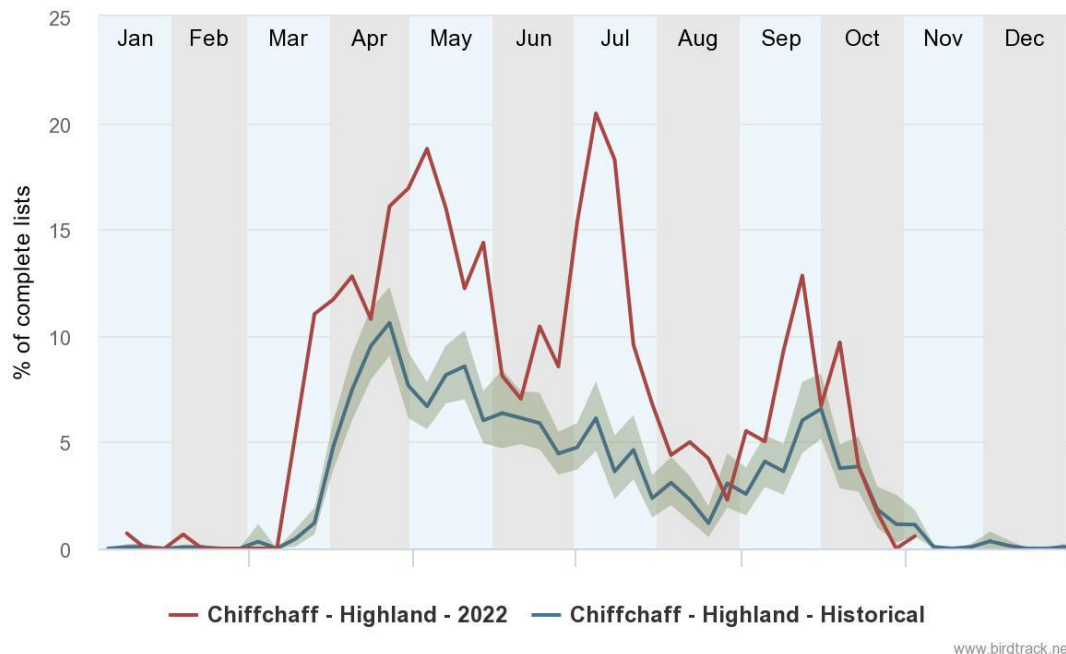
Breeding: As in 2021, one pair bred successfully in the Lodge grounds on Eigg. There were more records of proven breeding than usual elsewhere, with fledged young noted at five sites, the earliest at Kyle of Tongue on 30 June.

Autumn/Winter: There was again a surge in BirdTrack records in September, to 76, from 25 in August, falling to 30 in October and three in early November. The



last of these was a bird at the Lodge, Eigg from 21 October to 4 November. The only December record was from Melvich on the 5th. Lower numbers were caught and ringed at Carse of Ardersier this year, 29 in 10 visits in July, 23 in six visits in August and 12 in five visits in September. A fall of at least five migrants occurred at South Sutor, Cromarty on 4 September.

Reporting rate



Reporting rate: %age each week of BirdTrack lists with a report of Chiffchaff

[Siberian Chiffchaff] *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*

Winter: One bird was reported at Portmahomack on 17 January.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Locally common summer visitor & breeder; uncommon migrant.

Spring: There was another decrease in the number of BirdTrack records, to 160, 21% fewer than in 2021. The first two birds were reported at Tarbat Ness on 17 April, 11 days earlier than in 2021. Single singing birds were then recorded on Skye at Kilmuir on 21 April, Eynort on 26 April and Broadford Bay on 28 April, when one was also noted at Loch nan Ceall, Arisaig. Further April records came from Tarbat Ness, Bogach in Strathspey and Ariundle, Ardnamurchan. Distribution was widespread, with birds on Eigg by 3 May, Durness by 5 May, Rum by 7 May and 11 were noted at Tarbat Ness on 9 May.

Breeding: Good numbers of breeding pairs on Eigg probably had a reasonably productive breeding season. Breeding was confirmed at only two other sites on BirdTrack, when fledged young were noted at Morangie Forest on 7 July and near Tain on 7 August.



Number of male Sedge Warblers singing/displaying at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Singing males	^	87	112	74	99	83	87	*	66 [£]	73 [£]

^not counted due to extensive, prolonged flooding

*not counted due to Covid-19 restrictions

[£]pairs

Summer/Autumn: The number of BirdTrack records in this period, as in spring, was markedly reduced, with only 85 in June (224 in 2021), then 53 in July and 12 in August. The August records included two from Dornoch, of singles on the 4th and 10th, one of a single at Alturlie pools on the 14th and six from Hilton of Cadboll, Easter Ross, the last on 22 August.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* *Vagrant.*

Autumn: One bird was found at Loch Borralie, Balnakeil on 23 October.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* *Rare migrant.*

Autumn: One juvenile bird was found at Durness on 7 September.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* *Uncommon but increasing summer visitor & breeder, especially in west; scarce migrant.*

Spring: The earliest record was of a bird reeling near Tain on 16 April. Three days later came records from Skye, at Tote and Drumbuie, and Lochaber at Glenborrodale. More reports followed from Skye, at Broadford and Kilmore, on 20 April, as well as one from Quarryfield on the Black Isle. Despite the early west coast bias, the 64 spring records (six fewer than in 2021) were equally divided between west and east sides of the region. The furthest north in Sutherland was from Ardvar, near Drumbeg on 7 May.

Breeding: The sole confirmed breeding report was of a bird carrying food at Obinan, near Mellon Udrigle on 6 June.

Number of singing/displaying male Grasshopper Warblers at Insh Marshes 2013–2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Singing males	^	26	20	19	26	16	20	*	6	11

^not counted due to extensive, prolonged flooding

*not counted due to Covid-19 restrictions

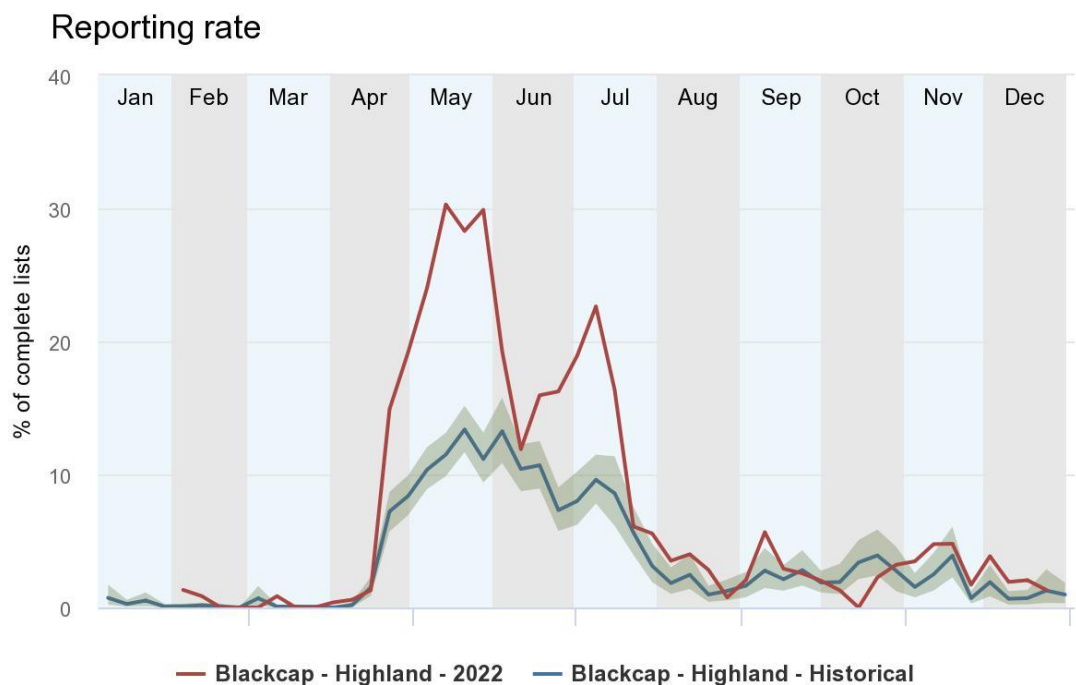


Summer/Autumn: The records total of 26 in June and July was considerably down on the 2021 equivalent (46). The last two reeling birds were heard on 28 and 31 July in the Smithton/Culloden area east of Inverness. Only one more bird was later recorded, on 26 August at Kinloch/Loch Scresort on Rum.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common summer visitor & breeder; uncommon migrant and scarce but increasing winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: In complete contrast to 2021, winter records were very sparse: one male at Kensaleyre, Skye on 9 January and one to three birds sighted in a garden in Inverness on four occasions between 30 January and 5 March. A male in another garden in Inverness on 23 March and a bird in Grantown-on-Spey on 27 March may have been early spring migrants, but the bird in song at Redcastle on 30 March and two in a third garden in Inverness on 3 April almost certainly were. A report from Eigg on 10 April and three birds in Rosemarkie, plus one at Kinloch on Rum, on 11 April seemed to be the start of the main spring arrival, at roughly the same date as last year. A total of 454 BirdTrack records in April and May (376 in 2021) were distributed throughout the region, although sparser in Sutherland (21 records). Birds had reached the north coast, at Melness and Borgie Breco, by 24 April. This is another warbler which, like Chiffchaff, has shown a remarkable increase in the frequency it is recorded during spring and summer, as demonstrated in the graph below.



Reporting rate: %age each week of BirdTrack lists with a report of Blackcap



Breeding: Despite a volume of singing and a number of reports of probable breeding, confirmation was only recorded at five sites, the same as last year. In addition, several of the 16 pairs on Eigg successfully reared young.

Autumn/Winter: The number of BirdTrack records dropped from 82 in July (121 in 2021) to 28 in September and 17 in October. Fewer migrants were caught and ringed than in 2021 on the coastal site of Carse of Ardersier, although visits were less frequent: 23 in July (eight visits); 24 in August (five visits); and eight in September (three visits). Many of the 44 records in November referred to birds apparently intent on staying into the winter. A male, first recorded in an Aviemore garden on 22 October, was noted there on 17 dates in November and five in December, often accompanied by another male and once by a female. There were reports from a Nethy Bridge site on 20 November and, later, on 15 December. Likewise, a male was present at an Inverness site on 16-17 November and 4 and 14 December. In Easter Ross, nine birds were caught for ringing between 8 and 15 December at Nigg Ferry and singles, usually female, were recorded at Balintore, Strathpeffer and Tain on 17, 20 and 31 December respectively. One bird was noted at Melvich, Sutherland on 5 December and, in Skye & Lochalsh, single males at Ord, Plockton and Kyle of Lochalsh on 4, 25 and 26 December. In Fort William, a male and female were feeding on suet in a garden feeder on 30 December.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Uncommon local summer visitor & breeder, mainly in east; scarce migrant.

Spring: The number of BirdTrack records in May and June continued to decline, to just 34 (42 in 2021). Distribution was restricted, by 3:1, to west of the Great Glen, with nearly 60% in Lochaber. The first bird was not recorded until 5 May, at Broadford, the second on 9 May in a garden in Inverness. Almost daily records started six days later, with reports from Glenmore Forest and Garbh Eilean, Loch Sunart on 15 May, then Ardtornish Estate and Achabeag, both in Morvern, on 17 May.

Breeding: Unusually, there were two records of proven breeding, at Garbh Eilean on 13 June and Achabeag on 20 June.

Summer/Autumn: Only two sites produced records in July, when two birds were singing at Inverpolly in Sutherland on 2 July. All subsequent sightings involved migrants at coastal sites, one at Tarbat Ness on 5 September, four there two days later and an unusually late bird at Melvich on the north coast on 18 October.



Lesser Whitethroat *Corruca corruca*

Has bred; scarce migrant.

Spring/Summer: One bird was very briefly sighted at Droman in NW Sutherland on 29 May. Another was at Ardgeal, Kinncraig on 6 June.

Autumn: All records were of migrants at coastal sites. Three, one, two and one birds were at Tarbat Ness on successive days from 7-10 September and one was at Balnakeil on 15 October.

Eastern/Western Subalpine Warbler

Corruca cantilans/iberiae

Vagrant.

Spring: One bird was found on Raasay on 20 April.

Whitethroat *Corruca communis*

Locally common summer visitor & breeder, mainly in east but increasing in north and west; uncommon migrant.

Spring: A total of 154 records on BirdTrack was within the range seen in recent years. The earliest were from around the Inner Moray Firth, at Balintore on 20 and 29 April, Fort George on 23 April, Udale Bay on 24 April, Quarryfield and Newhall on 27 April, and Culloden on 29 April. The first west coast report came on 1 May, of a singing bird at Portree, a day before the start of multiple daily records elsewhere. Distribution was even more concentrated around the Moray Firth (74%) than last year, while almost 20% of records came from the west coast and islands. Birds were present on Eigg from 4 May and as far north as Melness by 30 May.

Breeding: On Eigg, breeding was common and widespread. Several family parties were seen, including three young fledged at Howlin on 23 June, in a seemingly successful season. Proven breeding was only reported at seven other sites between 10 June and 21 July.

Summer/Autumn: The number of BirdTrack records in summer was 191, very close to that in 2021. Singles were noted at Tarbat Ness on successive days 25-27 August. Only six records in September (17 in 2021) included one from the west coast at Achabeag on the 9th and two from Tarbat Ness, of two birds on the 10th and the last bird, a female, on the 22nd.



Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce migrant.

Autumn: An adult female was trapped and ringed at Deer Park, Avoch on 25 November.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Abundant resident in coniferous woodland; common migrant.

Winter/Spring: A quiet winter for this species in 2021 was followed by even fewer BirdTrack records this winter (129). However, a remarkable total of about 45 birds was accumulated in Nethy Bridge woodland on 5 January and there were several other counts of seven or eight. Singing was first recorded on 19 January at Smithton, Inverness. There were more spring records (433; 298 in 2021) and high counts were 14 in Abernethy Forest on 9 April and 10 at Courthill, Easter Ross on 10 May. One was seen in the Handa plantation on 24 March.

Breeding: On Eigg, breeding was reasonably common and moderately successful. As last year, only four reports elsewhere confirmed breeding, in the narrow time interval of 21 June to 6 July.

Autumn/Winter: The migrant ringing project at Carse of Ardersier caught 208 birds in 22 visits between 7 July and 3 October, slightly fewer than in 2021, with a peak count of 48 on 29 September. On the same day, a small arrival of eight birds was recorded on the west coast at Opinan, although 12 were counted at nearby Laide Community Woodland three days earlier. The peak month for records was October (134), with double-figure counts at Culloden Woods on the 2nd (15+) and 12th (20+), Tarbat Ness (20 on the 21st) and Courthill/Aldie Burn (11 on the 25th).

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant resident.

Winter/Spring: The number of BirdTrack records (1752) in this period was similar to that in 2021. Singing was reported as early as 12 January in one garden in Inverness and more frequently elsewhere as winter progressed. Double-figure counts during walks (21) were reported from late March, the highest 27 birds in Moy Wood on 25 April. Birds were recorded throughout the Highlands and Islands, even on cliffs and geodhs on Handa, or upland ground such as Sgurr Choinnich Mor and Creag Meagaidh in Lochaber in mid-May.

Breeding: Successful breeding was common and widespread on Eigg, although one unfortunate nest in a cottage wall, containing eight eggs, was destroyed by gales on 11 May. Elsewhere, proven breeding was only reported at eight sites, between 24 May and 23 August.



Autumn/Winter: An average monthly reporting rate of 275 in autumn and 209 in December was not much lower than in 2020. The five highest counts were in the 10-11 range, including ones of 10 at Tarbat Ness on 21 October and Tulloch Station on 4 December.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Scarce visitor, recently less so; now breeding.

Nuthatch - Number of named localities by year 2013-2022:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Localities	2	1	9	4	8	8	9	18	21	15

Winter/Spring/Summer: The reduced number of locations at which birds were reported included Loch an Eilein on 13-20 January and 22 April, Strathpeffer on 8 February, Torr Alvie on 11 February and 11 March, Contin on 12 February, Arisaig on four dates between 18 March and 22 June, Loch Morlich on 26 March, Aird, Skye at bird feeders on 1 April, Loch Garten on 14 April, Invergordon on 28 April, the River Spey at Aviemore on 27 May, Fort William on 24 June and Kinlochleven on 29 July.

Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at only one site, at Clunes on Loch Lochy on 15 June, when fledged young were seen. However, breeding was probable at Arisaig, where two birds were seen visiting a probable nest site on 26 March and again on 14 April.

Autumn/Winter: Single birds were seen again at Kinlochleven on 28 September and Torr Alvie on 17 November. Five birds from the family at Clunes were feeding on beech mast on 25 November. The only birds at new locations were at Highbridge, Spean Bridge on 7-8 December, visiting a bird table, and at Insh House on 11 December.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident in woodlands throughout the region.

Winter/Spring: A total of 364 BirdTrack records in this period was lower than in recent years. As usual, it proved that this is very much a bird of the eastern side of the recording area, where 74% of records originated, with 50% from Badenoch & Strathspey alone. However, there were records from Skye, Rum and Canna, but not Handa. Only three were from the north coast, at Borgie Breco on 16 January and Tongue, twice, on 9 April. Rarely were more than one or two birds reported, the most six at Nethy Bridge on 5 January.

Breeding: Breeding was proven at 12 sites, the earliest a nest with young at Achabeag in Morvern on 3 May, the latest at Loch an Eilein on 7 July. In addition, a pair in the Manse Wood, Eigg successfully fledged young.



Treecreeper in February in Inverness c. Al McNee

Summer/Autumn/Winter: After July, the number of BirdTrack records per month was always in the 43-48 range, apart from in October, when there were 67. A count of 10 birds at Loch Garten on 4 July was the exception, as all other reports were of less than five. Three birds were noted at Balnakeil on 23 October.

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus*

Rare visitor.

Spring/Summer: It was again a good year for sightings, although at half the number of locations (10) as in 2021. The first bird reported was at Kinlochbervie on 28 May, the second at Scourie, recorded on three occasions from 14-17 June, and the third, an adult, at Kyle of Lochalsh from 18-20 June. On 25 June, singles were recorded at two sites on Skye, Kilmuir and Balmaqueen, where the adult was seen again on 28 June and 6 July, as well as at Cleadale on Eigg, where an adult was visiting garden feeders until 26 June. This was only the second record ever from Eigg, the first being last year, in exactly the same area. The last three singles were recorded at widely separated locations; at Aultgrishan, near Melvaig in Wester Ross on three occasions between 28 June and 2 July, at Bettyhill on the north coast on 3 July and at Kilchoan in Ardnamurchan on 24 August, when the observer commented that three birds had been spotted in the area in the previous few days. There were no reports from the east of the region. It might be estimated that a total of 8-11 birds was seen.



Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common breeder; common migrant and winter visitor, especially in east, but declining.

Winter/Spring: Slightly fewer BirdTrack records than in 2021 were listed; 282 in January-February and 752 in March-May, but more treble-figure groups were reported (16), all in the first three months. Unlike 2021, only one was in Badenoch & Strathspey, while 12 were in east Inverness-shire or Easter Ross. The largest involved 500 birds at Milton of Gollanfield on 8 February and 400 on improved grassland at Drumashie on 10 March. On the RAFOS winter survey of the north-west, 200 were counted at Sheigra on 30 January and 101 by Loch Ewe on 3 February. There was a count of 120 at Kildonan, Eigg on 18 February.

Breeding: This year there were only 31 different locations, but from all over the region, at which proven breeding was reported on BirdTrack, mostly in May, the first at Beechwood, Inverness on 6 May and the last at Ashton Farm, Inverness on 4 July. In addition, large numbers of young were raised on Eigg, so that 70 juveniles were seen being fed at Kildonan on 6 June, and a similar number was congregated on west Handa in late June. Breeding probably occurred in a hole in the mobile boarding stairs for passenger at Inverness Airport.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Unlike 2021, treble-figure counts in summer were few, seven in 452 BirdTrack records. Four were in Sutherland; 130 birds at Dornoch on 14 June, 250 and 225 at Clachtoll in early August and 140 at Achnahaird on the 24th. Alturlie had the highest summer count (300) on 16 August, while Kildonan on Eigg had 130 a day later. Autumn figures were similar to those of 2021, with 30 high counts in 549 BirdTrack records. Nine of these were from seven sites in Inverness-shire, with the highest counts at Beechwood (500+ on 29 September) and Corrimony (300 on 1 November). Eight were from five sites in Badenoch & Strathspey, including three in the 100-200 range in late September/early October of birds roosting at Insh. Three sites in NW Sutherland had flocks of 100-160 in September, while Culkein Stoer saw 200 on 5 November. Three counts from Tain and Alcaig in Easter Ross in the 150-250 range were all in September, whereas Tarbat Ness had nine three-figure counts, one on 18 August, six in autumn and two in early December. The peak count was 500 on 19 November.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Common breeder; common migrant but scarce in winter.

Winter/Spring: Monthly recording rates on BirdTrack increased dramatically from 35 records in January to 67 in February, 333 in March and 473 in May. Ten birds at Achabeag in Morvern on 20 January was the only double-figure count in winter and a singing bird was heard at Loch Arienas in the same area on 17 January, almost a month earlier than reported elsewhere. In spring, birds were recorded throughout the region, usually in small numbers, although during early morning walks in Easter Ross, 10-11 birds were counted in the Courthill/Kildary



area between 10 March and 20 April. Later, higher counts in woods further west peaked at 17 around Contin on 26 April. Twelve birds were noted around Elgol on Skye on 17 April.

Breeding: Recorded at slightly fewer sites (37) on BirdTrack than in recent years, the earliest proven breeding was food-carrying at Clachnaharry/South Kessock on 4 April and the latest was at Gesto on Skye on 17 July. A fairly successful season on Eigg included one pair at Laig which, unusually, used the same nest to fledge three young on 30 April then four on 12 June. Double broods were also suspected on Handa, between early June and late July.

Autumn/Winter: The BirdTrack reporting rate declined from almost 80 records per month in September/October to around 60 in November/December, when two thirds or more were from localities in the west. Low counts were the norm, but 10-11 birds were noted at Achavandra Muir on 23 October, Sanna in Ardnamurchan on 22 November and Nigg Ferry on 10 December. Sporadic song was heard at Poolewe campsite on 23 October and at Shielfoot on 18 November and 1 December.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Common and widespread resident.

Winter/Spring: The recording rate on BirdTrack in winter, at 115 records per month, was slightly lower than in 2021 (124) but it increased to 177 in spring. As usual, less than a quarter of sightings were in the west of the region and, in the first half of January, all these were on Rum, where at least five birds were noted at Kinloch on 3 and 9 January. By far the largest count was 37 at Whiteness Head on 20 February, while the only other counts of more than 10 were 16 at Ardersier on 8 February and at Duthil, near Carrbridge on 28 February, and 14 at one site in the Findhorn valley on 29 May. Song was first recorded at Loch Alvie on 12 January.

Breeding: Reports of proven breeding on BirdTrack came from even fewer sites (20) than last year, with the earliest record, of food-carrying, coming from Drumguish on 15 April and the latest on 9 July from the same site, presumably of a later brood. Fledged young were noted at Forsinard on 28 May. At least one of three territorial pairs on Eigg raised young, but there were no records at any time from Handa.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: The BirdTrack recording rate fell steadily, as usual, through summer, to just 20 records in August, but recovered to 99 in October. Early post-breeding flocks were all noted at Drumguish, from mid-July to the end of August, four in the 12-18 range and a peak of 35 on 30 August. Throughout the period, slightly more flocks of over 10 birds were reported than last year (28 vs 24), including some higher counts of 80 in Strath Dearn on 14 September, 50 there on 18 September and 50 at Loch Flemington on 14 October. The best of three counts over 10 in the north-west was 30 at Lubcroy Lodge, west of Oykel Bridge on 4 October. Just three raised counts in almost 200 records after October included flocks of 11 at Tarbat Ness on 28 November and 14 at Nigg Ferry on 15 December.



Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Scarce and declining breeder; usually common migrant, but sometimes scarce in winter.

Winter/Spring: The number of records in BirdTrack in January and February was lower than in 2021 (114 vs 127) and 85% involved small groups of less than 20 birds. However, 117 were counted at Loch Flemington on 18 January and 95 in a mixed flock with Fieldfares at Killilan in Lochalsh on 15 February. Wherever the massive irruption of autumn 2021 moved on to, it certainly did not return north via this region, as there were only 93 reports through March to May, only four of which involved more than 20 birds. The biggest flock, of 120 birds, was seen at Achavandra Muir on 11 April, while the next largest count comprised only 43 at Nethy Bridge on 9 April. The last migrant group of 15 birds was noted in Borgie Breco woods on 4 May. Four birds of the Icelandic race (ssp. *coburni*) were seen at Mellon Udrigle on 29 March, while at least five were thought to be at Shielfoot on 10 April.

Breeding: As in 2021, birds in song were recorded across the region, from 7 April to 21 June; at seven sites in Badenoch & Strathspey, two in east Inverness-shire, one each in Easter and Wester Ross, three in Sutherland, two in Lochalsh, one on Skye and one in Lochaber. However, breeding was only confirmed twice, by a bird collecting and carrying food to a suspected nest in Strathspey on 10 May and an adult with a recently-fledged juvenile in east Inverness-shire on 21 June.

Autumn/Winter: What began quietly with 10 records of small numbers in September, the first a bird calling at Dornoch on the 7th, evolved into an even bigger irruption than the one in 2021, with 50% more records (625). The great majority of sightings involved small numbers of birds, but scattered through these were 15 reports of triple-figure flocks, 10 in the east of the region and five on Skye. In the east: in October, 300 birds were seen at Portmahomack on the 13th, 350 in numerous small flocks in Strath Dearn on the 15th and another 150+ there on the 24th, 160 at Dorback on the 21st and 155 in Glen Banchor on the 23rd; in November, 100+ at Dell of Killiehuntly on the 3rd and 120 at Mains of Garten on the 15th; and in December, 400 at Nigg Ferry on the 15th, 180 on Fortrose Golf Course on the 17th and 209 there on the 18th. On Skye: in Glen Varagill 100 were seen on 23 October and 150 on 15 November; on Heaste Road 200 on 29 October and 300+ on 1 November; and by Drumfearn jetty, Loch Eishort 100 on 20 November. Five Icelandic/Faroese birds (ssp. *coburni*) were reported at Lubcroy Lodge, Oykel Bridge on 3 October, 20 at Broadford on 20 October and one at Loch Ashie on 10 November.



Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Locally abundant resident; common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: In almost 200 fewer BirdTrack winter records (548) than in 2021, the highest counts were 21 at Merkinch, Inverness on 31 January and 17 at Galtrigill, Skye on 4 February. In spring, seven counts of 21-23 were accumulated during walks from Courthill in Easter Ross between 20 March and 29 May.

Breeding: Proven breeding was recorded on BirdTrack at 45 locations throughout the region, from 16 April to 27 August, some with multiple broods. There were good breeding seasons on Eigg and Handa, with the first young seen on Eigg on 29 April and on Handa on 26 May.

Autumn/Winter: The number of records on BirdTrack rose from 132 in August to nearly 400 in November and December. Double-figure counts during walks were as high as 30 in Culloden Woods on 2 October and at Clachnaharry to South Kessock on 1 November. Significantly, on NE-facing coasts, counts of 25 were recorded at Tarbat Ness on 21 October and Hope Lodge on 19 November, while an obvious influx of wintering birds arrived on Eigg in October. In a ringing study at Carse of Ardersier, 50 birds were caught in seven visits in September/early October compared to 98 in five visits between 20 November and 22 December. On 31 December six birds were feeding on a red deer carcass at Inverpolly.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Rare breeder; common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: Among fewer winter records on BirdTrack than in 2021 (104 vs 216) were three high counts in the east of the region; 150 at Bindal Croft, Portmahomack on 21 January, 220 at Killen on the Black Isle on 13 February and 150 at Lurg, Strathspey on 14 February. Fewer records were from the west, with the highest count 66 at Loch Cill Chrìosd, Skye on 19 February. A flock of 350+ birds at Novar Estate in Easter Ross on 8 April stood out in the sparse total of 40 spring records, which ended when one bird was seen at Drumguish in Badenoch on 23-24 April.

Autumn/Winter: A larger influx than in 2021 (303 BirdTrack records vs 220) started when one bird was seen at Gaick Lodge on 2 October. Most of the action later that month seemed to occur at or on hills around this site, with 300 birds seen on Tom Reamhar to the east on the 16th, 300 at the lodge itself on the 21st and 23rd and, on Bruach Dhu to the north, 100 on the 21st and 300 on the 29th. In between, 200 were noted at Loch Vaa, Strathspey on the 20th and 110 at Smithton, Inverness on the 26th. Big November counts were 200 at Bruach Dhu on the 3rd, 150 at Ashton Farm, Inverness on the 4th, 200 in Glen Feshie and 150+ at Munloch Bay on the 20th, and 110 at Coire Bhealaich, east of Gaick on the 21st. The only large west coast count was the largest of all, 1000 at Balnacoil, NW Sutherland on 6 November. In December, 130 were at Nigg Ferry on the 10th and 500 on the 15th, 121 on Fortrose Golf Course on the 18th and 300 at Drumashie,



Inverness on Christmas Day. On Eigg, autumn migration of this normally numerous species was almost non-existent.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

Summer visitor, breeding mainly restricted to uplands in west and Cairngorms; scarce migrant throughout region.

Spring: The number of records on BirdTrack was slightly reduced from 2021 (85 vs 93), but an earlier arrival brought the first singles to Pitmain Estate near Kingussie and the Cairngorm ski area on 22 March. Six more records followed from around these parts before the first reports from west of the Great Glen, of three or more birds at Strath Vaich on 27 March and one at Mullardoch on the 30th. Later west Highland records included ones from the islands of Skye, at Quirang on 14 April, Raasay on 25 April, Rum on 26 April and the far north-west near Cape Wrath on 30 May.

Breeding: Compared to 2021, when breeding was proven at 12-15 sites throughout Highland, records were sparse this year, with just three from Badenoch & Strathspey and one from Skye.

Summer/Autumn: There were only 31 records in June and July, six in August, none in September and two in October. The notable records were from the same part of Badenoch where post-breeding assemblies were noted in 2021, namely 13 birds at Loch Bhrodainn on 31 August, four at Gaick Lodge on 2 October and one male in a flock of Redwing in upper Glen Tromie on 25 October.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Common but declining summer visitor & breeder; scarce migrant.

Spring: The number of BirdTrack records in spring (104) improved from a poor 78 last year to nearer the 2020 total. The first report, from Kingairloch on 7 May, was a week ahead of records from Aviemore, Tain and Achnasheen and multiple daily sightings thereafter. Like last year, over 70% were from the east of the region, but birds had penetrated as far north as Balnacoil, Cape Wrath and Melness by the end of May.

Breeding: Four territorial pairs on Eigg furnished no proof of any successful breeding. Breeding was proven at 15 sites elsewhere, fewer than in the previous two years. Food-carrying was first noted at Ballimore, Strathspey on 6 June and the last fledged young were seen at Loch Garten on 26 August.

Summer/Autumn: Fewer summer records than last year diminished in number from 86 on BirdTrack in June to 21 in August. There were seven records of one or two migrants at Tarbat Ness between 3 and 10 September, while single birds were seen at Drumguish in Badenoch on the 6th and Milton of Culloden on the 11th.



Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common resident; vacates uplands in winter; continental birds arrive in autumn, many of which winter.

Winter/Spring: There were fewer BirdTrack records in this period (2215) than in the last two years and only 15 counts in the 11-20 range. One was just over 20, in Aviemore/Craigellachie on 22 May.

Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at 54 sites, many with multiple reports. Fledged young were noted from 22 May, at Balchladich, Stoer, until 13 September, at Achilty. Breeding was common on Eigg, with young first seen in early June, as on Handa.

Autumn/Winter: Many more records on BirdTrack in autumn (2009 vs 1148 in 2021) and December (351 vs 259) included 24 counts of over 10 birds. The peak counts were 25 at Mellon Charles on 28 September and next day at Inverewe Gardens. Other coastal counts were 13 at Tarbat Ness on 21 October and 12, 11 and 20 between 20 November and 22 December during a ringing study at Carse of Ardersier.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Scarce summer visitor & breeder; scarce migrant.

Spring/Summer: There were more BirdTrack records than in 2021 (56 vs 47) and from more sites. Craigellachie NNR, Aviemore was, as usual, the source of most, but the earliest singing male was noted at Ord Ban on 4-6 May. Other sites in Badenoch & Strathspey with records were Newtonmore (singing male) on 12 May, Abernethy and Loch Vaa (singing) on 15 May, Kinncraig (four birds) on 25 June and Drumguish on 21 July, while one was singing in Strath Dearn on 27 May. Three birds were seen at Tarbat Ness on 14 May. In the west, singing was noted at Ardtornish Estate on 17-18 May and at Forest Way, Loch Broom on 20 May, followed by a report from nearby Lael Garden Forest on 17 June. Two birds were at Glenuig, Moidart on 30 July.

Breeding: A nest with eggs at Ord Ban on 23-30 May resulted in adults feeding six young on 9 June. An occupied nest was noted at Craigellachie on 8 and 14 June.

Autumn: Almost daily records at Tarbat Ness on 3-10 September saw a count of six birds eventually reduce to one.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor.

Spring/Summer: A male at Insh village was present from 20-26 April. A singing male was found at Cairn Gorm Ski area on 7 June.



Winter: One bird was seen at Nigg Ferry on 12 and 15 December.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Locally common summer visitor & breeder; uncommon migrant.

Spring: Almost 25% more BirdTrack records (114) were received than in any of the years 2019-2021, more than three quarters from Badenoch & Strathspey. An early arriver was at Allt Ruadh, Glen Feshie on 5 April, followed by records from Grantown-on-Spey and Loch Alvie 12 days later. Two birds were at Courthill/Kildary in Easter Ross on 20 April and two at Strontian a day later, the latter the first of only six records from the west. The most westerly bird was found at Ardtornish in Lochaber on 20 May, the same day as five were singing the furthest north at Tressady, Rogart.

Breeding: Only seven proven breeding records were reported, between 20 May, when a nest with eggs was found at Heathmount, Tain, and 5 July, when a fledgling was seen at Kentra Bay.

Summer/Autumn: The number of records in summer fell from 33 in June to nine in July and three in August. In September, however, one bird was seen at Achantoul, Aviemore on the 7th, then four, one, one and two were found at Tarbat Ness on successive days from the 7th-10th, and the last single was at Smithton on 18 September.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Locally common summer visitor & breeder in west but uncommon elsewhere; scarce migrant.

Spring: A continuing improvement in a low total of BirdTrack records to 48 started with a bird at Elgol, Skye on 17 April. A bird reported on Cairn Gorm on 18 April preceded three further records from Skye on 19-20 April, at Breakish, Ardnish and Harrapool. Overall, however, records were evenly divided between west and east of Highland. The only two singles seen in Sutherland were at Embo on 17 May and Croick on 18 May. Birds were recorded on Skye, Rum and Muck, but the absence of this once regular breeder on Eigg passed without comment.

Breeding: Seven sites with confirmed breeding was fewer than in the previous two years. Fledged young were recorded between 25 June, at Drumguish, Badenoch, and 1 September, at Harrapool.

Summer/Autumn: A poor return of 48 BirdTrack records all summer was almost half the 2021 total. In September, singles were seen at Harrapool on the 1st and 5th, two birds at Drumguish on the 3rd and up to three in six sightings at Tarbat Ness from the 4th-10th.



Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Common breeder; increasingly resident inland in winter.

Winter/Spring: A big drop in winter records on BirdTrack (91 vs 193 in 2021) was compensated by almost 100 more (428) in spring. In winter, other than a few sightings near Insh Marshes and along the River Spey, probably the furthest inland record was of two birds by the River Farnack near Farr on 25 January. Ten birds at Alladale Wilderness Reserve on 20 May was the highest count in many inland records in spring.

Breeding: Breeding was confirmed at over 60 locations throughout Highland between 27 April and 7 September, with multiple broods at several. In addition, young were seen on three of five territories on Handa and at least six pairs on Eigg had a quite successful season.

Autumn/Winter: The number of records on BirdTrack fell from a peak of 130 in October to 41 in December. Eleven birds were counted at Tarbat Ness on 10 September, but nine were seen on Bunachton Moor on 8 October and six were still at Lochindorb on 8 November.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Locally abundant summer visitor & breeder, although uncommon in east; common migrant.

Spring: Sightings started nine days earlier than in 2021, with birds seen in the Milovaig area of Skye on 13-14 March, then on Eigg and both mainland coasts, at Golspie Links and 600m above Loch Torridon, on An Ruadh-mheallan, on 16 March. Birds were on Rum by 18 March and at Loch Eriboll in NW Sutherland by 26 March. West coast sites predominated by 3:1 in the 48 records in March. Many were on Skye, where six birds were seen at both Lower Milovaig and Neist Point on 24 March. The eventual spring total of 418 records, however, was almost 200 down from 2021's exceptional number and fewer large counts were noted; 10 birds in upper Strath Dearn on 20 April, 11 at Sanna in Ardnamurchan on 25 April and, on Canna, 13 on 14 May and 22 on 24 May.

Breeding: Reports of confirmed breeding were back to 2020 levels (22 sites vs 35 in 2021). The first food-carrying was seen on 6 May at two locations along the Lairig Ghru and the last juvenile, at Scullomie, Tongue, on 1 August. On Handa, however, one was seen as late as September. The breeding population on Eigg was still greatly reduced from 10 years ago, but reasonably successful.

Summer/Autumn: Numbers of BirdTrack records fell steadily from 78 in June to 37 in September. The most notable count was 14 birds on Handa on 6 June. Ten were recorded at Achmelvich on 28 June and at Sanna on 9 August. All September records were of one or two birds and, in October, singles were seen at Portree on the 1st, Firebeag, Gairloch on the 5th, Fortrose Golf Course on the 6th,



Drumancroy, Portmahomack on the 9th and on Loch Dunvegan coral beaches on the 21st.

[Greenland Wheatear] *Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa*

Spring: Some of the 20 birds seen between Armadale and Achnacloich, Skye on 23 April were ssp. *leucorhoa*. One was noted at Tarbat Ness on 13 May and at least five at Mellon Udrigle on 14 May. On 26 May, two were on Laig beach, Eigg and there was a report from Elgol.

Autumn: On Skye, two birds were seen at Neist Point on 17 August and one at Heaste on 1 September. Singles were also noted at Ormiscaig and Greenstone Point in Wester Ross on 28 and 30 September respectively, and at Drumancroy on 9 October.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

Locally common resident.

Winter/Spring: Widely reported again, but there were only 97 BirdTrack records during January-March (158 in 2021). The largest counts of this very territorial species were five at Farr Bay, Bettyhill on 21 March, at least four at Loch Killin, Whitebridge on 19 January and three at Coire Dubh, Rum on 6 March.

Breeding: The first report of nest-building was at Nethy Bridge on 1 March, the first fledged young were seen at Little Garve on 24 April and breeding was proven at 11 sites (16 in 2022).

Autumn/Winter: The only record of three birds was at Strath Dearn on 28 December, but there were 129 BirdTrack records from 76 named sites during September-December.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Locally common resident in Inner Moray Firth; rare elsewhere.

Winter/Spring: During the first three months, monthly maxima were five at Loch Eye on 15 January, three at Munlochy on 20 February and four at Ashton Farm, Inverness on 14 March. Reports were received from 15 sites. These counts are exceptionally low, as flocks of up to 50 were noted in 2021, although larger numbers are probably lurking within the many reports of mere presence. However, birds were also noted at many fewer sites than the 47 in 2021 or 27 in 2020. Unusually, no birds were noted during this period away from the Moray Firth area or further north than Tain. Birds were noted at six additional sites in April, maximum 11 at Culloden on 26 April. Away from the core area, five were noted at Durness on 30 April and 17 at the east end of Strathfarrar on 7 May.



Breeding: An adult was carrying food/faecal sac at Culloden on 12 May and recently fledged young were seen at Hilton of Cadboll on 30 May, and at Ashton Farm on 16 July. Probable breeding was also noted at Alturlie, Beechwood Inverness, Sutors of Cromarty and Tain. In an ongoing nestbox study at Lonnie, there were 44 nesting attempts with an average of 5.07 eggs per clutch, resulting in 4.00 hatched chicks per brood (egg hatching success 78.92%), and a mean fledging success of 3.77 young per nesting attempt (hatching to fledging survival 94.32%). A total of 166 young fledged from the 223 eggs laid. After 2021 being the poorest year in the previous 12 seasons, at 74.44%, the egg to fledging survival rate in 2022 was again excellent.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Monthly maxima were 12 at Culloden on 1 September, 35 at Tarbat Ness on 16 October, three at Loch Flemington on 16 November and eight at Alness on 28 December. The only record away from the Moray Firth was from Lochcarron on 25 July. A possible hybrid Tree x House Sparrow was seen at Galtrigill, Skye on 15 November.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common resident but locally scarce in north.

Winter/Spring: in January-March there were only eight BirdTrack records of 20 or more birds (13 in 2021, 10 in 2020). Apart from a report of 66 on 31 January from a 10km square area at Loch Ewe during the annual RAFOS survey of the NW coast, maxima were 25 at Melvich on 28 February ("highest ever" there) and 24 at Mallaig on 28 March.

Breeding: Nest-building was first noted at Westhill on 30 January, but first fledged young were not seen until 1 May at Galtrigill, Skye. Two albino fledglings were noted at Drynoch, Skye on 26 May. A "very productive season" on Eigg included many pairs multi-brooded and leucistic chicks at Cleadale.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Maximum monthly counts were 26 at Fort William to Caol on 19 June, 52 at Muir of Ord on 15 July, 50 at Lairg on 11 August, 50 at Tarbat Ness on 29 September and 27 at Shielfoot on 26 October, but the only subsequent flocks exceeding 20 birds were 30 at Loch Flemington on 16 November and 54 at Merkinch LNR on 30 December.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Common resident.

Winter/Spring: Widespread reports included monthly maxima of five birds at Courthill, Kildary on 16 January, eight at Ballachullish on 25 February, six at Courthill on 6 March and nine there on 20 April.



Breeding: A bird was singing at Loch Flemington on 9 January, but the next was not until the rather late date of 25 February at Rogart. The first nest-building was at Tulloch on 22 March, but records of proven breeding started with fledged young seen at Croy on 14 May. It was a “successful” season on Eigg.

Autumn/Winter: All the highest monthly counts were made as part of a ringing study at Carse of Ardersier, with 15 there on 29 September, six on 3 October, 13 on 20 November and 11 on 22 December. There were no counts exceeding six birds from elsewhere. There was evidence of a late autumn influx on Eigg.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Locally common breeder, scarce in winter.

Winter/Spring: Singles were seen at 16 sites in January and at seven in February, all coastal apart from Dell of Killiehuntly on 3 January, Loch Insh on 7 January and Tulloch Station on 11 January. Reports of one or two birds became more widespread, including inland, from 36 sites in March. Four were at Achabeag, Morvern on 3 March and 18 March.

Breeding: The first bird seen at a nest was at Dochgarroch on 10 April, a nest with eggs was first noted at Ruigh Aiteachain, Glenfeshie on 14 May and breeding was proven at another 16, well-scattered sites. One was noted at 670m at a corrie loch on Meall nan Ceapraichean in Wester Ross on 18 July. At least two of up to five pairs on Eigg bred successfully.

Autumn/Winter: There were 58 BirdTrack records in September, 45 in October, 37 in November and 17 in December. Most were at or near the coast, apart from a few in Badenoch & Strathspey. Six birds were seen at Inverpolly on 1 September, at Ullapool on 11 September and also at Anagach Woods on 14 September, but no more than three were noted from October to the year’s end, apart from eight at Dingwall on 6 November.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Common breeder; uncommon or scarce in winter, especially inland.

Winter/Spring: In January-February, there were up to four birds at many sites, mainly around the Moray Firth but also on the NW coast and the Fort William area. Inland areas, however, were deserted, apart from singles at Loch Morlich and Inverton, near Newtonmore on 21 January and an early arrival of three at Torbreck, Rogart on 27 February. Peaks were seven at Loch Lochy on 20 January, an exceptional 50 at Raigmore Hospital on 10 February (presumably a roost gathering) and 13 at Dornoch on 25 February. The arrival accelerated in March



and inland areas were reoccupied, although the only double-figure counts were 13 still at Dornoch on 2 March and 60 at Scretan Burn, Inverness (surely the same as January's large roosting flock at Raigmore) on 21 March. Subsequent flocks were 20 at Portmahomack on 2 April and 11 on Canna on 18 April. On 20 April 35 unspecified Pied/White Wagtails were at Portmahomack.

Breeding: The first singing bird was heard at the Beaully Firth on 14 March, the first nest-building was noted at Anagach Woods on 3 May and the first fledged young were seen at Drumguish on 27 May. Breeding was proven at 24 well-scattered sites and probable at a further 23 sites. Low numbers bred on Eigg but were successful.

Autumn/Winter: Notable counts were 27 at Fort William to Caol on 18 July, and 41 there on 17 August, 40 at Nigg Fabrication Yard on 23 August, 23 at Rovie-Rogart on 16 September, 60 at Dornoch Point on 13 October but, after late October, maxima were four at Allanfeearn on 6 November and four in the Scretan Burn area on 4 December. A report of 35 Pied/White Wagtails at Brora on 22 September probably consisted mostly, or all, of this subspecies.

[White Wagtail] *Motacilla alba alba*

Spring: An early single was at Achabeag, Morvern on 19 March, next was an inland bird at Loch Ruthven on 1 April, but the main passage was from 11 April to 20 May, with the last bird at Oldshoremore Bay on 30 May. Peaks were 15 at Dornoch on 22 April, six at Bay of Culkein on 17 April and five at Alturlie on 29 April. The only other inland single was at Highland Wildlife Park, Kinncraig on 19 and 21 April.

Autumn: As usual, very few reports were received, perhaps due to identification difficulty at this time of year. Two birds were at Poolewe on 29 September, one at Inverkirkaig on 1 October, two at Reiff on 1 October and four at Scourie on 2 October.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Abundant breeder; uncommon in winter, when absent from most areas.

Winter/Spring: There were no BirdTrack double-figure counts until mid-March and only five records from truly inland sites in January-February. Ten birds were at Kentra Bay on 13 March and 10 at the River Mashie, Laggan on 24 March presaged a more general inland arrival, with a peak count of 30 at Forsinard on 30 March. There were 70 April counts of over nine birds, notably 125 at Drumguish on 7 April, 103 at Kingussie on 7 April and 100 at Kinloch/Loch Scresort, Rum on 30 April.

Breeding: The first song was heard on 16 March at Carse of Delnies and, although the first report of nest-building was not until the very late date of 29 April, on Rum, a nest with eggs was found in Badenoch at Meallach Mor on 2 May and, in the same area, on 9



May a bird was carrying food or a faecal sac at Phoinies and Loch Cuaich. A reasonably successful season occurred on Eigg.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Post-breeding, 75 birds were counted at Beinn a' Chlachair on 9 July and 100 at Ardverikie Forest on 18 July, but it is unclear whether these were flocks or cumulative counts over large areas. On 24 August a notable passage involving 100 birds was noted at Lochindorb and several large flocks totalling over 100 birds were reported on Ben Wyvis on 28 August. Subsequent peak counts were 100 in Strath Dearn on 14 September, 100 at Staffin on 15 September, 20 at Arisaig on 5 October and 26 at Portree on 29 November. In December, the maxima were only five birds, at four coastal sites, whilst inland there were only four reports of up to three birds.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Locally common summer visitor and breeder, but scarce in autumn.

Spring: A total of 326 BirdTrack records for the year is comparable with the totals for the past two years, but the species appears to be greatly under-recorded. (There are 200+ 10km square dots in Highland in the Bird Atlas 2007-11.) The first record, of presence at two Glenmore sites on 14 April, was slightly late. One to three birds were noted at 15 scattered sites until six were recorded at Strontian on 21 April. Peak counts were eight at Strathconon on 28 April, eight at Aviemore on 22 May, seven at Rothiemurchus on 16 May and six at Kinchurdy, near Boat of Garten on 7 May.

Breeding: Although proven breeding was noted at only six sites, probable breeding was noted at about 75 additional sites, with first fledged young seen at Craigellachie NNR on 17 May.

Autumn: There were only 11 July records, of one or two birds. Next month, three birds were at Fersit on 17 August, but there were only seven records of single birds, the last near Coylumbridge on 30 August. There were no coastal migrants reported.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Vagrant. Rare winter visitor.

Winter: One at Dornoch on 12 December was last reported on 28 December.



Water Pipit in December at Dornoch beach c. Dean MacAskill

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Locally common breeder; common winter visitor to wide range of coastal sites.

Winter/Spring: The highest counts were mostly from extensive co-ordinated coastal surveys by RAFOS; 40 at Clashnessie on 2 February, 14 at Loch Inver on 2 February and 12 at Kyle of Durness on 3 February. Elsewhere, 10 were noted on 9 January and 40 on 8 February at Bay of Culkein, while 22 were at Dornoch Point on 24 March. Several were seen 1000 feet up on Ben Buidhe top, Eigg on 7 March.

Breeding: The first song was heard at Dornoch Point on 28 February. Breeding was proven at eight sites, commencing with a bird carrying food/faecal sac on Muck on 19 May and first fledged young were seen at Loth on 16 June. A "reasonably successful" season was reported on Eigg and at least four pairs were on Handa.

Autumn/Winter: The only double-figure counts were 35 at Bay of Culkein on 27 December, 15 at the Cromarty Firth on 21 October, 15 at Alturlie Point on 10 December, 12 at Rhu Beach, Arisaig on 11 November and, on Skye, 10 at Hallin on 11 October and 10 at Ashaig on 14 October.



Rock Pipit in November at Lub Score, Skye c. Bob McMillan

[Scandinavian Rock Pipit] *Anthus petrosus litoralis*



Scandinavian Rock Pipit in March at Loch Fleet c. Dean MacAskill



Singles were found at Dornoch on 2 March, Brora on 10 March, Helmsdale on 13 March (a colour-ringed bird from a Norwegian scheme), Loch Fleet on 17 March and Portmahomack on 2 April.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant resident; common in winter, especially in east.

Winter/Spring: Unusually, there were no large flocks, with maxima only 71 on Cow Hill on 3 January, 70 at Heights of Dochcarty on 8 February and 60 at Drumguish on 12 March.

Breeding: First song was heard at Tain on 24 January and first nest-building noted at Clachnaharry on 4 April. First proven breeding was an adult carrying food/faecal sac at Blackfold on 29 April, with the first recently-fledged young at Culloden Wood on 18 May. A "good season" was reported on Eigg.

Autumn/Winter: The build-up of post-breeding flocks was shown by counts of 100 at Aviemore on 18 August, 70 at Dell of Killiehuntly on 20 August, 56 at Achabeag, Morvern on 12 September and 90 at Portree on 23 October. Subsequent three-figure flocks were 100 near Pityoulish on 2 November, 100 on Ben Wyvis on 25 November, 150 at Tulloch on 28 November, 100 at Carse of Ardersier on 8 December, 100 in an Aviemore garden on 11-31 December, and 210 and 100 at Nethy Bridge on 14 and 31 December respectively.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Rare breeder; uncommon migrant and winter visitor, but occasionally locally common.

Winter/Spring: The good numbers of 2021 continued with 306 BirdTrack records from about 65 sites. Although there were no records from mainland Lochaber, sightings were widespread, albeit mostly from Badenoch & Strathspey. The largest flocks were at Nethy Bridge, with a peak count of 480 spread across two fields of wild bird cover on 5 January. Elsewhere, 81 were at Ruthven, Findhorn on 24 January, 60 at Straanruie on 12 January, 40 at Corrimony West on 21 January and 30 at Loch Ashie South on 27 January. In February, the peak count at Nethy Bridge was 300 on the 6th, but this was eclipsed by a magnificent 2000 at Ruthven on the 1st, which fell to 1500 on the 9th and 40 on the 26th. On 24 February 180 were at Golspie, but no other site managed a count in triple figures. In Badenoch & Strathspey in March, there were still 200 in several flocks at Anagach, but the Nethy Bridge peak count was only 57 birds (in a garden) on the 31st. April peaks were 100 at Straanruie on 3 April, 59 at Forest Lodge on 13 April, 45 at Grantown-on-Spey on 1 April, 30 at Drumguish on 8 April, and up to 20 birds at 11 additional sites. Elsewhere, the only March records were singles at Cartomie



(13th), Melvaig (26th) and Alladale (27th and 31st). Last were singles at Anagach Woods and Drumguish on 25 April. An individual at Torbreck, near Lochinver on 25 May and a singing bird at Scotsburn Forest, Easter Ross on 22 June are best considered as summer birds.

Autumn/Winter: By contrast, numbers in this period were exceptionally low, with only 34 BirdTrack records from 17 well-scattered sites (218 and 79 respectively in 2021). An early bird was at Opinan in Wester Ross on 28 September, but next were two at Balnakeil on 15 October and four at Tarbat Ness on 20 October. Eight at Balnakeil on 23 October was the peak autumn count. One to four birds were subsequently noted elsewhere, with unusually few in Badenoch & Strathspey.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Has bred; scarce visitor at any time of year.

Winter/Spring: Three birds were found at Nethy Bridge on 14 February and one or two lingered there until 24 March but, typically, they were very elusive. Migrant singles were seen on Rum on 17 April, Kinlochbervie on 22 April and Gartymore, near Helmsdale on 11 May.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Locally common resident; recorded in all months of the year, normally in single-figure numbers.

Winter/Spring: Although widespread, numbers were low, with the only double-figure counts being five flocks totalling 48 birds near Carrbridge on 15 January, 15 birds at Glen Arroch, Skye on 11 January, 10 at Rothiemurchus on 5 January, and 10 at Inshriach on 19 January, with 13 there on 3 March.

Breeding: Proven breeding was noted at nine sites (only five in 2021), between 16 June, at Glenbeg near Grantown-on-Spey and at Holm by the River Ness, and 30 August, at Achfary.

Autumn/Winter: The first double-figure count was 14 at Clachnaharry on 27 October. Later, 14 were counted at Craig Phadrig/Craig Dunain on 29 October, 20 at Meall a' Bhuachaille, Glenmore on 2 November, 25 at Dava Moor on 12 November, 12 at Dalnahaitnach on 30 November, 10 in Strath Sgitheach on 1 December, 19 at Sluggan, Carrbridge on 2 December and 20 at Nigg Ferry on 10 December.



Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrina*
Scarce migrant.

Summer: A singing adult male was at Marybank on 7 June.

Autumn: Single juveniles were seen at Tarbat Ness on 7 September and at Kilmuir, Skye on 29 November.



Common Rosefinch juvenile in November at Kilmuir c. Jonathan Jones



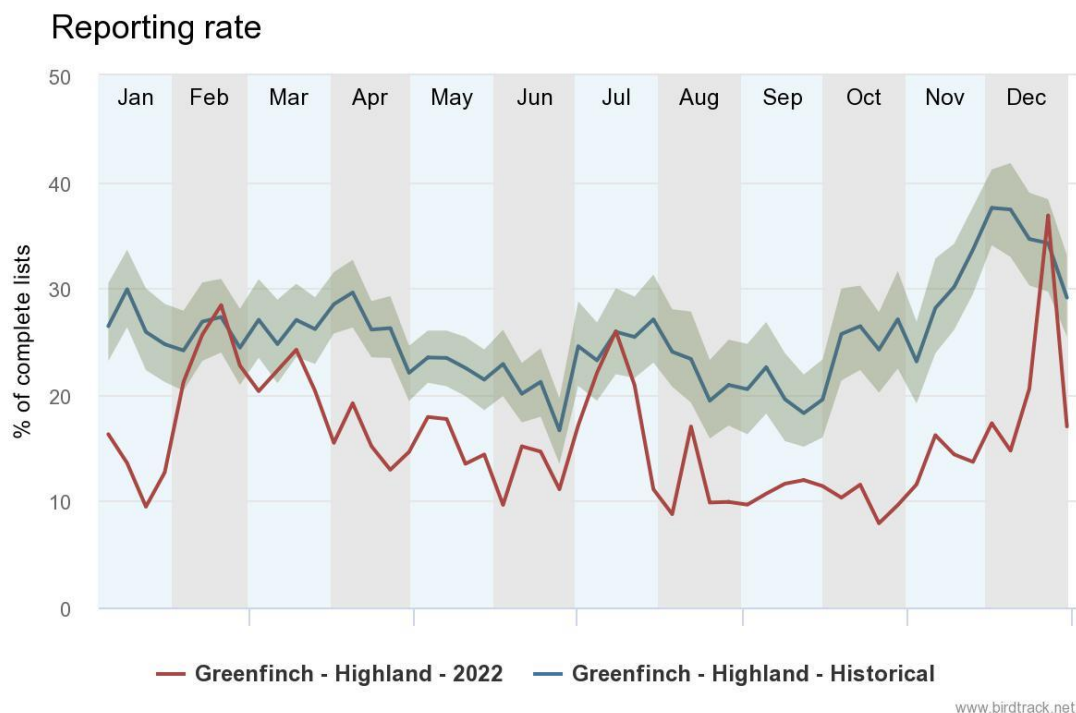
Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Common resident; locally common in winter in east, although much scarcer than in earlier years.

Winter/Spring: There were 1423 BirdTrack records in 2022 (1320 in 2021, 1714 in 2020). Numbers in the first three months were low, with counts of six or more birds made at only eight sites (13 in 2021, 15 in 2020). Peaks were 10 at Loch Ruthven on 20 and 26 February, eight at Newhall on 18 January and eight at Drumguish on 29 January. Records were widespread, however, including a single on Rum in January and March. Singles appeared on Muck on 17 and 19 May, and on Eigg on 21 May.

Breeding: The first song was reported on 24 January. Fledged young were noted at only eight sites, first at Culloden on 19 May. The population was much reduced on Eigg.

Autumn/Winter: Counts of six or more birds were made at 15 sites (10 in 2021, 15 in 2020). Peaks were 40 at Loans of Tullich, near Balintore on 8 August. 20 at Tulloch in Strathspey on 2 September, 40 at Dornoch on 26 October, 14 at Sallachy, Loch Long on 18 November and a superb flock of 140 at Dornoch on 14 and 16 December. There is still no sign of any population recovery, however, in the graph below.



Reporting rate: %age each week of BirdTrack lists with a report of Greenfinch



Twite *Linaria flavirostris*

Uncommon breeder; can be locally common in winter, especially in east.

Winter/Spring: There were rather fewer sightings in the period January to April, with 55 BirdTrack records from 34 sites (79 records from 34 sites in 2021). The largest flocks were of 75 birds at Tarbat Ness on 4 January, 65 at Carse of Delnies on 16 March, 41 at Dornoch Point on 28 February and 20 at Courthill, Kildary on 10 February. Most birds were around the Moray Firth or on the west coast, but three were at Nethy Bridge on 15 January, eight on Carn a' Choin Deirg, Alladale on 28 March and three singing at Bendronaig Lodge, Attadale on 16 April.

Breeding: Nest-building was noted on Canna on 18 May, and fledged young were seen there on 28 June and at Clashmore in NW Sutherland on 9 July. Breeding was now scarcer on Eigg, but a few pairs bred successfully.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were 181 BirdTrack records during the period May-December (180 in 2021). Monthly peak counts were 10 at Camas Shallachain in Lochaber on 5 July, 150 at Firemore Beach, Inverasdale on 20 August, 100 at Toravaig, Portree on 24 September, 50 at Firemore Beach on 5 October, 130 at Dornoch on 28 November and 200 there on 16 December. Other notable counts were 100 at Broadford on 10 August, 50 at Cove on 15 August, 50 at Stoer Head on 23 August, 100 at Ramasaig, Skye on 27 August, 60 at Flodigarra, Skye on 27 August, 85 at Sanna on 7 September, 40 at Heaste, Skye on 24 September and 30 at Bettyhill on 4 November. There were few inland records; "presence" in Strathdearn on 19 May and Millbuie Forest on 6 June, 28 birds on Am Faochagach, near Loch Glascarnoch on 21 August, three at Grantown-on-Spey on 7 November and a maximum of 20 in a large, mixed finch flock at Nethy Bridge on 14 December.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Common local resident, mainly in east; common in winter in east, especially about the Moray Firth.

Winter/Spring: Bird reports were rather fewer than in 2021 (885 vs 1126) and the peak count was 400 in wild bird cover at Nethy Bridge on 6 February. Other large flocks were 300 birds at Ardersier on 17 February, 120 at Bindal Croft on 21 January, 100 at Tarbat Ness on 3 February and 100 at Broomhill on 9 February. Subsequent numbers were lower, with peaks of 50 at Resolis on the Black Isle on 29 March and 60 at Boat of Garten on 24 April, although 100 were at Bishop's Walk, Nigg on 3 May. Low numbers were recorded away from the Moray Firth and Badenoch & Strathspey, with no more than six birds at any Sutherland site and one to four birds at a few Lochaber sites.

Breeding: Again, there were few records of proven breeding, with fledged young seen from 23 June, at Bunachton, to 12 September, at Achabeag, Morvern. Five of the six other



sites were on the Sutherland north coast. Breeding was “reasonably successful” on Eigg, with several families of juveniles seen.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: At Tarbat Ness, 500 birds were present by 14 July, 300 on 23 August and 10 September, 100 on 21 October but rather few thereafter. Wild Bird Cover at Nethy Bridge held 300 on 29 November and 600 on 31 December. Elsewhere, 350 were at Dornoch on 14 December, 300 at Inverness Airport on 13 November, at Alturlie on 25 November and at Dornoch on 28 November, 250 at Balintore on 5 October, 200 at Nigg on 15 August, 200 at Allanfeearn on 6 November and 100 or more at Portmahomack, Brora, Dornoch-Cuthill, Tain, Culloden and Udale Bay. Away from hotspots, there were nine at Bay of Culkein on 4 September, three at Sanna on 7 September and five there on 12 October, singles at Achabeag on 12 and 22 September, and 10 at Bettyhill on 4 November. On Skye, birds were present at Portree on 4 September, Harrapool (18) on 6 September and Ashaig on 14 October, while singles were noted on Rum on 13 September and 11 October.

Common (Mealy) Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor in variable numbers; may breed in small numbers.

Winter/Spring: One bird was noted at Nethy Bridge on 23 February and 3 March, and three at Portree on 11 May.

Breeding: At least eight Icelandic-types were displaying from pinewoods around Shieldaig on 22 March. One was singing at Cairngorm Mountain Garden on 20 April and a pair was still there on 3 May.

Autumn/Winter: Two birds were seen at Craig Phadrig/Craig Dunain on 12 December.

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

Common breeder; winters in variable numbers.

Winter/Spring: Better numbers were recorded in January-February than in 2021. There were counts of 100 at Ruthven, Insh Marshes on 6 January, at Strath Carnaig on 15 January, at Loch Killin on 19 January, at Kenmore, north Applecross on 3 February and at Erbusaig on Skye on 13 February. There were 80 birds at Newtonmore on 28 February and flocks of 20 or more at another 11 sites. Peak counts thereafter were only 50 at Drumguish on 13 March, 42 at Auchnagallin to Delliefure, in Strathspey on 18 March and 40 in Glen Varragill, Skye on 17 April. Records were more widespread than in 2021, especially in March and April and



dispersal of wintering flocks is evidenced by the largest May count being only 16 at Courthill, Kildary. In addition, records of unspecified Common/Lesser Redpoll included 60 birds at Loch Insh on 7 January and 20 at Fersit, near Spean Bridge on 18 April,

Breeding: Proven breeding was only reported at seven sites, with fledged young first noted at Tulloch on 15 May and ending with an adult carrying food/faecal sac at Ashaig, Skye on 22 July. In addition, this was a reasonably common breeder on Eigg, with several juveniles seen in summer. Seven pairs were counted on Insh Marshes.

Autumn/Winter: There were no counts of more than 12 birds until 20 were noted at Carse of Ardersier on 18 September, although 30 unspecified Common/Lesser Redpolls were recorded at Fersit on 2 September. Subsequent monthly maxima were 150 at Wester Balbeg, near Drumnadrochit on 22 October, 100 at Ben Wyvis on 25 November and 136 at Alness on 28 December, and there were counts of 20 or more birds at another eight sites.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Very local breeder in Strathspey, rare elsewhere.

No records of this species were submitted to HRC for consideration, but five claims were reported.

Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*

Uncommon local breeder; rare in far north and west.

No records of this species were submitted to HRC for consideration, but 29 claims were reported.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Widespread breeder in coniferous forests throughout the region; regular (irruptive) migrant.

Winter/Spring: There were 103 BirdTrack records from about 71 named sites, a marked improvement on 42 and 31 respectively in 2021. The few large counts were 18 in Strath Bran on 23 May, 16 at Blackfold on 28 April, 15 in Glen Kyllachy on 20 January and 10 near Bridge of Brown on 10 April. Five birds at Loch Borralan on 14 January and one at Lochinver on 18 May were the only records from the north-west and there were a few records from the rest of Sutherland, Wester Ross, Skye and Lochaber. Most reports were from Badenoch & Strathspey.



Breeding: The first song was heard at Achabeag, Morvern on 14 February and recently-fledged young were seen at Forsinard on 30 March, Blackfold on 28 April, Portree (two broods) on 8 May, Glenmore on 18 May, Rynettin, Abernethy on 25 May, Strath Dearn on 16 June, Carse of Ardersier on 28 June, Rosehall on 3 July and Glen Varragill on 21 July.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were 118 BirdTrack records from about 70 named sites. Counts over 10 were 35 at Glen Urquhart on 31 December, 25 in Glen Kyllachy on 5 October and 7 November, 20 at Nethy Bridge on 17 August, 17 at Abernethy on 28 September, 15 at Rosehall on 3 July, at Upper Tomvaich Wood on 14 September and Glen Kyllachy on 28 October, 14 at Loch Ashie North on 21 June and 13 in Strath Bran on 26 June. There were no records from N or NE Sutherland, few in Skye (maximum of seven birds at Portree on 10 September) and up to three birds at three Lochaber sites.

[Crossbill species]

Winter/spring: There were 161 BirdTrack records during January-April (only 51 in 2021), but the highest counts were 12 at Drumguish on 7 and 13 January, 12 in Strath Dearn on 8 April, 11 at Boath, near Ardross on 19 January and 10 in Strath Vaich on 27 March.

Breeding: Song was heard from 9 January at Tolquhonie Wood, Strathspey and breeding was proven at Balnafoich, River Nairn on 30 March and Tullochgrue on 20 May.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: There were 165 BirdTrack records during May-December (151 in 2021). The highest counts were 30 at Kincaig on 31 December, 24 at Carrbridge on 2 December, 16 at Drumguish on 9 November and counts over 10 at another four sites.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Widespread, often abundant, throughout the region.

Winter/Spring: Widespread and in good numbers, there were BirdTrack records of 10 or more birds from 47 sites; in previous years, such tallies were 30, 27 and 23 sites. Monthly maxima were 75 at Clachnaharry on 12 January, 70 at Hallin on Skye on 20 February, 30 at Aviemore on 9 March, 20 there on 4 April and 20 at Clachnaharry on 4 April.

Breeding: Singing was first heard, early, at Kinloch/Loch Scresort, Rum on 9 January and nest-building first seen on 30 April at Clachnaharry, where the first fledged young were noted on 22 May. Breeding was proven at only 12, widely-scattered, sites. A "good season" on Eigg resulted in numerous sightings of young birds.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Significant flocks comprised 25 birds at Achabeag, Morvern on 15 June, 40 at Beechwood, Inverness on 14 July, 40 at Portmahomack on 30 August, 101 at Duirinish, Lochalsh on 9 September, 150 at Tarbat Ness on



10 September, 20 at Sandavore, Eigg on 7 October, 50 in Strath Dearn on 24 October, 78 at Fort William to Caol on 6 November and 60 on Speyside Way on 9 December.

Serin *Serinus serinus*

Vagrant.

Autumn: One bird was present on Eigg from 21 to 29 November. Previous records in Scotland have been very rare and this is a first for Highland, as a record of a bird last year at Talmine in Sutherland has been reviewed and is now considered not proven.



Serin in November on Eigg c. Donald McLean

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

Common breeder and common migrant, but can be scarce in mid-winter.

Winter/Spring: In contrast to 2021, January numbers were very high. The peak count was 600 at The Mound Alder Woods on 14 January. Also, 300 were at Nethy Bridge on 4 January and Boat of Garten on 5 January, 150 at Inverton, near Newtonmore on 4 January and Dalnabreck, Loch Shiel on 26 January, 120 in Glen



Feshie on 13 January and 100 in Strath Carnaig on 15 January. Subsequent flocks were much smaller, with maxima of 70 at Kingussie on 4 February and 40 at Nuide Farm, Newtonmore on 4 March, but a resurgence in numbers, possibly of migrants passing through, followed with 341 at Forest Lodge, Abernethy on 13 April, 150 at Straanruie on 4 April and 100 at Aviemore on 13 April. Flocks dispersed thereafter, with a peak count of only 30 at Cartomie on 1 May.

Breeding: First song was heard on 19 February and the smaller flocks thereafter suggested early dispersal and breeding, although the first fledged young were not seen until 3 May, at Lairg. Breeding was proven at 14 sites. It was “probably a moderately successful season” on Eigg.

Summer/Autumn/Winter: Peaks in the summer months were all in an Aviemore garden, with 30 birds on 30 June, 40 on 2 July and 20 on 2 August. Autumn numbers were low; 40 in Aviemore on 25 September was exceeded only by 100 in Strath Dearn on 14 September, 40 at Fassfern on 29 October, 80 at Dell of Killiehuntly on 18 November, 50 at Loch Arkaig on 20 November, 100 at Ben Wyvis on 25 November, 50 at Skelbo on 7 December and 350 at Loch Evelix on 11 December.

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor.

Autumn/Winter: One bird in the Heaste Road/Harrapool area of Skye was seen intermittently from 10 November until 2 December.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Rare breeder; locally common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter/Spring: Despite the lessening of Covid-19 access restrictions, there were only 50 BirdTrack records up to 8 April (137 in 2021), of which 26 related to the environs of Cairn Gorm carpark (only three there in 2021). Peaks there were 27 birds on 5 January, 45 on 6 February, 28 on 3 March and 25 on 10 April. Elsewhere in the Cairngorms, there were 40 at Coire Garbhach on 21 March and one to four on An Lurg, Braeriach and Cairn Lochan. Elsewhere, 80 were in Glen Elchaig on 19 February, 43 in Glen Affric on 15 January, 12 on Ben Wyvis on 13 January and six on Canisp on 6 March. Up to five birds were noted at three inland and six coastal locations.

Breeding: The only proven breeding was a female feeding a chick on Cairn Gorm on 5 July. However, during the period mid-April to August probable breeding was noted at Monadh Mor, with a pair present on 3 June, Beinn Eighe and Ben Nevis, and possible breeding (singles) on Quinag in Assynt, Blaven on Skye, Beinn Dearg in Wester Ross, and Stob Choire Claurigh and Stob Coire Sgriodain in Lochaber.



Autumn/Winter: The first single was seen at Tain on 25 September, followed by one at Heaste Road, Skye from 19 October and two on Rum on 20 October. Twelve were at Cairn Gorm carpark on 16 November, 14 there on 21 December (including a bird ringed in Iceland in April 2020) and numbers increased to 21 on 30 December. Elsewhere, 12 were on Stob Coire Easain, Lochaber on 19 November, 10 on Beinn Udlamain, Drumochter on 28 November, 40 at Dornoch on 2 December, 15 at Gruinard Bay on 12 December, 11 at Embo on 25 December and 30 at Kincaig on 31 December. Up to seven birds were reported at an additional 12 sites.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Rare local breeder, now close to local extinction.

Spring/Summer: One bird at Embo on 13 May remained until 15 May and appears to have been a passing migrant. The tiny population near Inverness Airport survives, but only just. On 30 May, a bird was singing at Gollanfield and, five minutes later, what was probably a different, non-singing bird was seen a few hundred metres away. On 2 June a singing male was seen chasing a second bird.

Breeding: On 11 July a pair at Gollanfield was seen being territorial towards a third individual. One bird was carrying food or nesting material.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*

Locally common resident in east but declining, especially in Badenoch & Strathspey; scarce in north and west, but may be increasing, especially in west.

Winter/Spring: During the first four months BirdTrack records were received from about 92 named sites (116 in 2021). Monthly maxima were 80 birds at Baddock, Ardersier on 11 January, 75 at Loch Eye on 6 February, 25 at Munlochy on 5 March and 50 at Alturlie on 25 April. Other notable counts were 70 at Dairy Park, Golspie on 24 February, 60 at Hillhead, Ardersier on 17 February and 20 or more birds at Corrachie, near Munlochy, Cromarty, Eathie Mains, Tarbat Ness and Whiteness. Most records were from, or fairly near, the Moray Firth. The only record from the NW coast was of two birds at Lochcarron on 25 January. There were few records from Badenoch & Strathspey, maximum 12 birds at Dalfaber, Aviemore on 18 February and, in Lochaber, up to three birds were seen at Achabeag, Allt Fearn, Arisaig, Eigg, Inverroy, Loch Scresort, Shielfoot and Sonachan.



Breeding: First song was heard at Udale Bay on 2 March (late) but nest-building was reported near Nethy Bridge on 22 March (early). Proven breeding (fledged young) was noted in Lochaber at Achabeag, Allt Fearn and Laga Bay, and in Easter Ross at Balintore.

Autumn/winter: There were no counts exceeding 12 birds until 14 were seen at Tarbat Ness on 10 September, then 25 at Wester/Easter Dalziel on 24 October, 15 at Tarbat Ness on 9 November and 60 at Tain on 19 December. There were no records from the west coast save for three birds at Allt Fearn on 8 and 28 September, three at Acharacle on 27 October and a maximum of two at Achabeag on 29 December. They were very scarce, also, in Badenoch & Strathspey, with up to three birds at Nethy Bridge on 16 September and a single at Grantown-on-Spey on 13 October.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Locally common resident, particularly in east; scarce in uplands.

Winter/Spring: There were only three double-figure counts in January-April (20 in 2021, but only one the previous year); 16 at Dornoch on 6 February, 15 at Loch Eye on 6 February and 10 at Ariundle, Lochaber on 3 March. Away from the Moray Firth and Loch Ruthven areas, singles were seen at six NW Sutherland sites and up to two at six Skye sites, eight further Lochaber sites and 18 locations in Badenoch & Strathspey.

Breeding: The first report of singing was at Dornoch Point on 28 February. A bird was seen entering a possible nest-site at Inverness Airport on 18 May, but first proven breeding was at Loch Ruthven on 14 June. Recently-fledged young were seen at only four sites; Drumbuie, Drumguish, Knockchoilum, Loch na Thull. A count of 52 pairs was noted at Insh Marshes.

Autumn/Winter: There were 89 BirdTrack records from 45 sites during September-December (113 and 57 respectively in 2021). Numbers were again low, with monthly peaks of six birds at Drumguish on 6 September, six at Brora on 4 October, eight at Carr Road, River Dulnain on 16 November and 15 at Tain on 19 December. The only other double-figure counts were 10 at both Ballachroan, Kingussie on 3 December and Nethy Bridge on 14 December. As usual, most records were from around the Moray Firth. In NW Sutherland, birds (maximum three) were seen at six sites; on Rum, singles in October and December; on Skye, the maximum was five birds at Loch Scalpaidh on 2 November; in Lochaber, five at Fassfern on 29 October, five at Acharacle on 4 December and three at Fersit on 16 December. Rather few birds in Badenoch & Strathspey were only reported at seven sites.



Escapes and presumed feral birds

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Birds were reported at Cromdale, Insh Marshes and Balavil, plus one or two at various other sites in Badenoch & Strathspey, but the large flocks were present at Highland Wildlife Park, Kincraig and Dell of Killiehuntly. Numbers at the former site peaked at around 100 on 9 July, whereas at Dell of Killiehuntly they rose from 77 on 2 August to 137 the next day to peak at 160 on 18 August, then stayed in the 130-154 range until 9 September.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*

An adult male (un-ringed) was found on the lake at the UHI Inverness Campus on 21 March. It was still there on 16 April, but relocated to Milton of Culloden by the 26th, where it was seen displaying to a female Scaup. Thereafter, it moved between both sites and was last seen on 2 June. The bird was quickly traced to a local wildfowl collection, from which it had escaped. This attractive small duck has for many years been popular with wildfowl collectors. The possibility of escaped birds has increased substantially since the 1970s and, as a result, some birders consider that most occurrences will be escapes (*The Birds of Scotland, 2007. Vol 1, page 269.* Scottish Ornithologists' Club, Aberlady).

Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

There were reported sightings of a bird present at Dorback on 17 February and in Strath Dearn on 8 April, 1 May and 21 August. The species is now considered extinct as a wild bird in Britain.



First and last dates of common migrants 2022

Summer Visitors*	First	Last	Winter Visitors**	Last	First
Swift	30 Apr	14 Sep	Brent Goose	07 May	04 Sep
Cuckoo	13 Apr	04 Sep	Barnacle Goose	29 May	02 Oct
Whimbrel	11 Apr	11 Nov	Pink-footed Goose	08 Jun	12 Sep
Common Sandpiper	13 Apr	26 Sep	White-fronted Goose	23 Apr	08 Oct
LBB Gull	01 Feb	21 Oct	Whooper Swan	19 Apr	13 Sep
Sandwich Tern	24 Mar	08 Oct	Shoveler	14 May	25 Aug
Little Tern	23 Apr	09 Oct	Pintail	08 May	02 Sep
Common Tern	17 Apr	15 Oct	Pochard	21 Mar	15 Oct
Arctic Tern	10 Apr	09 Nov	Scaup	07 May	16 Aug
Great Skua	15 Jan	23 Nov	Long-tailed Duck	31 May	12 Sep
Arctic Skua	10 Apr	09 Nov	Turnstone	11 Jun	09 Jul
Manx Shearwater	08 Mar	15 Nov	Sanderling	22 Jun	06 Jul
Osprey	18 Mar	14 Oct	Purple Sandpiper	26 May	02 Jul
Sand Martin	20 Mar	24 Sep	Jack Snipe	22 Apr	23 Sep
Swallow	07 Apr	21 Nov	Glaucous Gull	24 Jul	10 Sep
House Martin	14 Apr	29 Oct	Iceland Gull	15 Jun	21 Oct
Wood Warbler	21 Apr	07 Sep	Little Auk	25 Feb	28 Sep
Willow Warbler	25 Mar	01 Oct	Waxwing	22 Apr	23 Oct
Chiffchaff	14 Mar	04 Sep	Redwing	04 May	07 Sep
Sedge Warbler	17 Apr	22 Aug	Fieldfare	24 Apr	02 Oct
Grasshopper Warbler	16 Apr	26 Aug	Brambling	25 Apr	28 Sep
Blackcap	23 Mar	22 Nov	Snow Bunting	08 Apr	25 Sep
Garden Warbler	05 May	18 Oct			
Whitethroat	20 Apr	22 Sep			
Ring Ouzel	22 Mar	25 Oct			
Spotted Flycatcher	07 May	11 Sep			
Redstart	05 Apr	18 Sep			
Whinchat	17 Apr	10 Sep	* excludes known wintering birds		
Wheatear	13 Mar	21 Oct	** excludes breeders, summering birds		
Tree Pipit	14 Apr	30 Aug	or birds of dubious origin.		



Bird ringing in Highland recording area during 2022

HUGH INSLEY

Just as we all started to emerge from the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions, bird ringing in Scotland was restricted yet again in 2022, with a complete suspension of all seabird ringing at colonies from 16 June. This decision was made by the country nature conservation agencies to avoid any possible exacerbation of the impact and spread of avian flu HPAI within colonies from disturbance during ringing.

Following the introduction of those restrictions, no or very few seabirds were handled in 2022, so that the only seabirds listed are those ringed before the ban. That restriction accounts for a large proportion of the 4600 fewer birds ringed in Highland in 2022 compared to the previous year.

As well as the 24497 birds ringed in Highland, a further 6648 birds previously ringed were recaptured, taking the overall total handled to at least 31145. Arguably, re-trapped birds are more valuable in terms of the data they yield than birds caught and ringed for the first time. It is always interesting to watch our performance in Highland against the National ringing totals which, with the lifting of the Covid-19 restrictions, rose by just over 1% to 912160. Even with the Highland total down by 16%, our contribution to the National (GB&I) total was 2.6% in 2022.

As well as these fluctuations in the overall totals of birds ringed, those 11 species for which over 15% of the National total were in Highland (highlighted in **bold** in Table 1) contain some interesting additions in 2022. Possibly none are more so than **Woodcock** (21.6%) and **Fieldfare** (24.9%), both species which could readily be caught in good numbers in other recording areas, but for which the Highland totals in 2022 are exceptional, largely because of the enthusiasm of just one or two ringers.

The number of recoveries in Highland during 2022, 945, is significantly inflated by a project marking **Rock Doves** on Skye. In addition to that, the large number of ringed seabirds being killed by avian flu HPAI has also inflated the recovery rates, so that the number of recoveries in 2022 is not comparable with previous years' totals.

Table 1. Summary of Ringing Totals for the Highland Recording Area in 2022.

Juveniles are those birds identified as being in their first calendar year; adults are all birds in their second or later calendar years. Some birds cannot be aged by plumage characteristics. These unaged birds are tabulated separately and are included in the totals for the year. A few birds (mostly scarcer raptors) ringed at confidential locations have been excluded from the Highland totals but are included in the GB&I totals. Species highlighted in **bold** indicate those for which over 15% of the British and Irish total were ringed in Highland in 2022. Re-traps are birds recaptured at or close to the ringing site. Recoveries are birds reported from elsewhere or found dead.



English_name	Nestling	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	Highland	GB&I	Re-traps	Recovers
Wigeon	0	0	51	0	51	507	1	1
Mallard	0	1	7	0	8	469	0	0
Teal	0	5	38	0	43	1202	1	1
Eider	0	0	22	0	22	150	50	1
Goldeneye	0	0	4	0	4	14	0	0
Fulmar	0	0	3	0	3	22	4	0
Manx Shearwater	8	0	0	0	8	2888	0	1
Grey Heron	49	0	0	0	49	175	0	3
Shag	92	0	10	0	102	1748	10	10
Cormorant	41	0	0	0	41	317	0	3
Osprey	61	0	0	0	61	202	0	41
Golden Eagle	13	0	0	0	13	56	0	2
Sparrowhawk	21	9	9	0	39	686	4	0
Goshawk	5	0	0	0	5	281	0	0
Hen Harrier	11	0	0	0	11	385	2	1
Red Kite	17	0	0	0	17	156	0	4
White-tailed Eagle	16	0	0	0	16	48	0	6
Buzzard	38	3	0	0	41	322	4	3
Water Rail	0	0	1	0	1	100	0	0
Corncrake	0	0	2	0	2	113	0	0
Moorhen	0	0	1	0	1	282	1	0
Oystercatcher	15	0	23	0	38	1890	12	9
Lapwing	27	0	1	0	28	1655	0	1
Golden Plover	0	0	2	0	2	258	1	0
Ringed Plover	7	0	0	0	7	464	0	0
Curlew	10	0	7	0	17	714	1	1
Turnstone	0	0	4	0	4	191	0	0
Knot	0	0	61	0	61	498	7	14
Dunlin	0	20	112	14	146	6211	2	1
Woodcock	0	161	194	0	355	1640	19	7
Jack Snipe	0	0	3	6	9	562	1	0
Snipe	2	2	7	6	17	602	3	0
Common Sandpiper	5	0	3	0	8	87	1	7
Redshank	0	0	168	0	168	1791	78	1
Wood Sandpiper	4	0	3	0	7	8	0	2
Kittiwake	5	0	23	0	28	268	78	4
Black-headed Gull	0	0	6	0	6	3600	2	13
Common Gull	3	0	2	0	5	151	0	4
Great Black-backed Gull	3	0	0	0	3	449	9	0



Herring Gull	0	0	1	0	1	1344	0	7
Guillemot	129	0	42	0	171	974	324	199
Razorbill	30	0	2	0	32	561	4	4
Puffin	0	0	1	0	1	339	0	0
Rock Dove	0	16	15	11	42	305	4	317
Woodpigeon	0	7	39	0	46	1497	23	2
Collared Dove	0	0	5	0	5	461	0	0
Barn Owl	63	3	0	0	66	10571	1	4
Tawny Owl	45	0	1	0	46	1229	5	2
Long-eared Owl	0	1	1	0	2	136	0	0
Short-eared Owl	0	1	0	0	1	68	0	0
Swift	10	0	3	0	13	1077	0	0
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	15	18	1	34	1875	22	1
Kestrel	33	0	0	0	33	2624	0	0
Merlin	12	0	0	0	12	391	0	0
Peregrine	14	0	0	0	14	522	0	1
Jay	0	5	3	0	8	478	0	0
Jackdaw	0	2	27	0	29	2220	1	1
Rook	0	1	29	0	30	429	2	3
Carrion Crow	0	0	4	0	4	107	0	0
Hooded Crow	0	0	3	0	3	125	0	1
Raven	12	0	0	0	12	241	0	0
Waxwing	0	2	0	0	2	62	0	0
Coal Tit	15	573	391	17	996	9341	590	6
Crested Tit	6	11	9	0	26	40	6	0
Blue Tit	670	552	351	0	1573	1E+05	550	14
Great Tit	174	417	204	2	797	51660	372	5
Skylark	3	0	7	1	11	1507	2	0
Sand Martin	0	44	71	0	115	7309	5	1
Swallow	179	49	16	0	244	19072	0	1
House Martin	0	0	2	0	2	2155	0	0
Long-tailed Tit	0	18	59	252	329	16309	103	0
Willow Warbler	22	955	75	0	1052	25219	146	1
Chiffchaff	4	132	29	2	167	47916	31	0
Yellow-browed Warbler	0	0	0	1	1	129	0	0
Sedge Warbler	0	5	10	0	15	23729	3	0
Grasshopper Warbler	0	0	2	0	2	2176	0	0
Blackcap	1	119	27	2	149	66288	37	1
Garden Warbler	0	2	0	0	2	3669	0	0
Whitethroat	5	12	2	0	19	12224	5	0
Firecrest	0	0	0	1	1	874	0	0



Goldcrest	0	432	37	70	539	16006	171	0
Wren	0	119	26	2	147	16111	47	0
Nuthatch	0	1	1	0	2	2147	0	0
Treecreeper	0	21	19	24	64	1936	31	0
Starling	34	96	104	10	244	20357	5	3
Ring Ouzel	10	0	0	0	10	216	0	0
Blackbird	18	498	272	0	788	23877	419	6
Fieldfare	0	329	141	0	470	1887	32	0
Redwing	0	707	382	2	1091	19898	1	0
Song Thrush	21	51	23	0	95	5377	12	0
Mistle Thrush	4	14	10	0	28	200	0	0
Spotted Flycatcher	16	1	1	0	18	901	0	0
Robin	9	516	142	4	671	26791	393	1
Redstart	38	0	0	0	38	1826	0	0
Whinchat	0	1	0	0	1	710	0	0
Stonechat	0	78	0	0	78	2582	0	0
Wheatear	0	5	2	0	7	1031	0	0
Dipper	15	0	0	0	15	1941	2	0
House Sparrow	25	275	126	192	618	16595	69	12
Tree Sparrow	237	3	6	3	249	9298	3	0
Duncock	0	300	74	19	393	18193	293	2
Grey Wagtail	4	4	2	0	10	1303	0	0
Pied Wagtail	26	2	3	0	31	1927	0	0
Meadow Pipit	69	186	37	1	293	16413	1	0
Tree Pipit	0	1	2	0	3	968	0	0
Chaffinch	3	1582	1215	11	2811	25488	444	16
Brambling	0	1	533	0	534	7657	43	9
Bullfinch	0	55	38	0	93	5190	16	1
Common Rosefinch	0	1	0	0	1	18	0	0
Greenfinch	0	226	237	1	464	18031	62	3
Twite	0	17	136	0	153	394	131	9
Linnet	0	10	47	0	57	8651	8	0
Redpoll	0	1	2	0	3	380	0	0
Lesser Redpoll	0	232	365	11	608	10656	189	9
Goldfinch	5	374	730	9	1118	46424	240	16
Siskin	4	1335	3767	8	5114	35514	1484	45
Yellowhammer	2	13	34	0	49	5232	12	0
Reed Bunting	0	4	30	0	34	10260	12	0
Totals (Highland only)	2420	10634	10760	683	24497		6648	945

The Highland recoveries listed in Table 2 are just a selection of those listed in the online ringing report, the direct link for which is given below. In addition to the



details of recoveries during 2022 which, for Highland, range from a Canna **Kittiwake** shot in Greenland to a Rum **Manx Shearwater** washed up in Brazil, the information given also includes details of the longevity records for different species. Unfortunately, what was thought to be a new longevity record in 2021 for **Greenfinch**, involving a Highland ringed bird, has now been withdrawn from the database after it was discovered that the finder had misread the ring (*Highland Bird Report 2021, p.205*). The rules for inclusion in the longevity records are carefully set so, although the **Hooded Crow** found dead on Canna appears to set a new record, it has not been included. Only dead birds which are fresh when found are included to avoid any over-estimation of survival and this bird was long dead when found.

The winters of 2019/20 and 2021/22 were both 'good' for **Brambling** and the results of ringing during those winters have now begun to come through, with an interesting series of recoveries from both birds in Norway as well as individuals trapped in Highland, which had been ringed en route to us in the Northern Isles. One bird caught in a subsequent year wintering in the Borders had originally been ringed while wintering on Speyside.

Table 2. Selected recoveries of birds ringed or found in Highland recording area in 2022.

Barnacle Goose

The longevity record for this species is 26y 11m 11d set in 2004.

1509974 Adult M	12-07-2017	Highland Wildlife Park, Kincaig.	
Long dead (disease)	21-01-2022	Rockcliffe Marsh, Cumbria.	246km SSE

4y 6m 9d.

1509974 was among the feral Barnacle Geese rounded up at the Highland Wildlife Park during their annual moult, when the adults become flightless for a short period. This recovery, like the two reported on 2021, shows that at least some of these feral birds attach themselves to the wintering flocks of wild Barnacle Geese and revert to the original movement patterns of the different wild populations. The Caerlaverock flock encompasses the whole of the Spitsbergen breeding population.

1511738 First-year F	26-03-2017	Balnakeil Bay, Durness.	
Freshly dead (shot)	28-09-2022	Kvisker, Oraefi, Austur Skaftafells,	
		Iceland.	864km NW

5y 6m 2d.

Whooper Swan

The longevity record for this species is 28y 2m 10d set in 2009.

ISR	Adult M	28-08-2003	Ánavatn, Jökuldalsheiði, Miðhálandi,	
			Iceland.	
A6924	Long dead	29-12-2022	Portgower, Helmsdale.	1005km SE

19y 4m 9d.



Wigeon

The longevity record for this species is 34y 7m 0d set in 1996.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain and Ireland (more than 100km):

FJ05240 Adult F	06-03-2022	Slains Pool, Aberdeenshire.	
Freshly dead (shot)	22-10-2022	Munlochy Bay, Black Isle.	138km W

0y 7m 16d.

Teal

The longevity record for this species is 18y 20d set in 1988.

EL39642 First-year M	02-02-2021	Tain.	
Freshly dead (shot)	06-11-2022	Kalum Grøft, Brønderslev, Nordjyllands, Denmark.	834km E

1y 9m 4d.

Storm Petrel

The longevity record for this species is 38y 17d set in 2017.

2700116 Adult	29-07-2014	Eilean nan Ron, Bettyhill.	
Caught by ringer	05-08-2022	Sudur I Dolum, Nólsoy, Faroe Islands.	402km NNW

8y 0m 7d.

2761733 Adult	02-08-2021	Score Bay, near Duntulm, Skye.	
Caught by ringer	31-07-2022	Bólstaðlið, Nólsoy, Streymoy, Faroe Islands.	481km N

0y 11m 29d.

Manx Shearwater

The longevity record for this species is 38y 17d set in 2017.

EX93006 Adult	31-05-2012	Askival Clough's Crag, Rum.	
Caught by ringer	30-05-2013	Askival Clough's Crag, Rum.	
Caught by ringer	31-05-2014	Askival Clough's Crag, Rum.	
Long dead	25-10-2022	Barra Do Saí Beach, Brazil.	10037km SW

10y 4m 24d.

Gannet

The longevity record for this species is 37y 4m 16d set in 1998.

1466774 Adult	28-07-2011	Sule Skerry, Orkney.	
Long dead (leg only)	12-06-2022	Brora.	123km SSE

10y 10m 15d.

1466248 Nestling	25-07-2011	Sule Skerry, Orkney.	
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Freshly dead (disease) 01-07-2022 East Helmsdale. 116km SSE
6y 11m 2d.

1487479 Nestling 18-07-2015 Sule Skerry, Orkney.
Long dead (disease) 20-06-2022 Helmsdale. 116km SSE

1415704 Nestling 31-07-2005 Sule Skerry, Orkney.
Freshly dead (disease) 08-06-2022 Portgower, Helmsdale. 115km SSE
16y 10m 8d.

1488597 Nestling 22-07-2015 Sule Skerry, Orkney.
Freshly dead (disease) 27-06-2022 Navidale Farm, Helmsdale. 115km SSE
6y 11m 5d.

A series of Sule Skerry Gannets found dead along the north-east coast of Highland, showing the devastating impact of avian flu in 2022.

Cormorant

The longevity record for this species is 21y 6m 21d set in 1984.

5283655 Nestling 03-07-2021 Eilean da Chuain, near Morar.
Long dead 11-02-2022 River Garry, Blair Atholl, Perth & Kinross.
125km E
0y 7m 8d.

5160037 Nestling 22-07-1992 Longa Island, Loch Gairloch.
Unknown (ring only) 05-08-2022 Balmungie, Rosemarkie. 102km E
30y 0m 14d.
This recovery does not count as a longevity record because the date of death is uncertain.

Osprey

The longevity record for this species is 20y 11m 0d set in 2005.

The following bird was the oldest reported in 2022:

1408720 Nestling F 09-07-2008 Contin.
Alive (colour rings seen) 08-07-2017 Loch Fleet. 52km NE
8y 11m 29d.
Alive (colour rings seen) 14-07-2019 Skelbo, Loch Fleet. 52km NE
11y 0m 5d.
Alive (colour rings seen) 13-07-2021 Skelbo, Loch Fleet. 52km NE
13y 0m 4d.
Alive (colour rings seen) 03-08-2022 Skelbo, Littleferry. 54km NE
14y 0m 25d.
Alive (colour rings seen) 23-08-2022 Blithfield Reservoir, Staffordshire.
555km SSE
14y 1m 14d.

1489598 Nestling 09-07-2018 Monadh Mor, Black Isle.
Alive (colour rings seen) 09-08-2022 Randøy, Rogaland, **Norway.** 632km ENE
4y 1m 0d.



There have been previous records of Scottish Ospreys appearing to move across the North Sea and potentially start breeding in Scandinavia, although this individual is still marginal in terms of age for starting to breed.

Golden Eagle

The longevity record for this species is 31y 4m 11d set in 2021.

The following bird was the oldest reported in 2022:

ZZ0189 Nestling	10-06-1991	Confidential site, Highland.	
Unknown (ring only)	27-04-2022	Confidential site, Highland.	41km N

30y 10m 17d.

Oystercatcher

The longevity record for this species is 41y 1m 5d set in 2017.

The following bird was the oldest reported in 2022:

FA48408 Second-year	30-01-1993	Saltburn, Invergordon.	
Caught by ringer	12-10-2004	Saltburn, Invergordon.	
Caught by ringer	23-12-2006	Saltburn, Invergordon.	0km

13y 10m 23d.

Caught by ringer	02-03-2022	Saltburn, Invergordon.	0km
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29y 1m 0d.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain and Ireland (more than 100km):

FA71909 Adult	04-02-2018	Dawlish Warren, Devon.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	05-02-2018	Dawlish Warren, Devon.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	30-03-2018	Lochindorb.	754km N
Alive (colour rings seen)	26-07-2018	Dawlish Warren, Devon.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	27-02-2019	near Lochindorb Castle.	755km N
Alive (colour rings seen)	20-06-2019	near Lochindorb Castle.	755km N
Alive (colour rings seen)	29-07-2019	Dawlish Warren, Devon.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	17-01-2020	Starcross Golf Course, Devon.	2km
Alive (colour rings seen)	26-07-2020	Dawlish Warren, Devon.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	29-03-2021	Lochindorb.	754km N
Alive (colour rings seen)	25-07-2021	Dawlish Warren, Devon.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	16-04-2022	Lochindorb.	754km N
Alive (colour rings seen)	20-04-2022	Lochindorb.	754km N

4y 2m 16d.

Lapwing

The longevity record for this species is 21y 1m 15d set in 1987.

DB70377 Nestling	26-05-2001	Kingussie.	
Unknown (ring only)	19-05-2022	Ruthven, Kingussie.	1km

20y 11m 23d.

Knot

The longevity record for this species is 27y 3m 29d set in 2006.



The following bird was the oldest reported in 2022. It was one of 1722 Knot caught in the largest ever catch by Highland Ringing Group:

XR62957 Adult	07-01-2001	Munlochy Bay, Black Isle.	
Caught by ringer	22-01-2022	near Ardersier.	11km ENE

21y 0m 15d.

The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

SV70611 Adult	21-12-2021	near Ardersier.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	12-11-2022	Snettisham, Norfolk.	596km SSE

0y 10m 22d.

ST93235 First-year	22-01-2022	near Ardersier.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	14-08-2022	Snettisham, Norfolk.	596km SSE

0y 6m 23d.

SV53191 Adult	21-12-2021	near Ardersier.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	12-10-2022	Snettisham, Norfolk.	596km SSE

0y 9m 21d.

ST93119 First-year	21-12-2021	near Ardersier.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	11-08-2022	Snettisham, Norfolk.	596km SSE

0y 7m 21d.

ST93142 First-year	21-12-2021	near Ardersier.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	21-03-2022	Snettisham, Norfolk.	596km SSE

0y 3m 0d.

*This series of recoveries between Ardersier and Snettisham is typical for Knot of the race *Calidris canutus islandica*. It breeds in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic and flies south to moult on the Waddensee in Holland before dispersing to British Estuaries for the winter, with some moving further south along the coast of Europe.*

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2022:

SR75282 First-year	24-09-2018	Barbaraville near Invergordon.	
Freshly dead (shot)	08-08-2022	Oye-Plage, Pas-de-Calais, France .	848km SSE

3y 10m 15d.

Dunlin

The longevity record for this species is 19y 3m 26d set in 2010.

BT12509 First-year	03-02-2019	Dingwall, Cromarty Firth.	
Caught by ringer	18-07-2022	Ottenby, Öland, Sweden .	1269km E

3y 5m 15d.

BX16992 Adult	03-02-2019	Dingwall, Cromarty Firth.	
Caught by ringer	07-07-2019	Ottenby, Öland, Sweden .	1269km E

0y 5m 4d.

Caught by ringer	19-02-2022	Dingwall, Cromarty Firth.	0km
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3y 0m 16d.

SVS3578333 Adult	12-07-2015	Ottenby, Öland, Sweden .	
Caught by ringer	22-01-2022	near Ardersier.	1246km WNE

6y 6m 10d.



A series of recoveries of birds caught on passage at Ottenby, demonstrating the north-easterly origin of our wintering Dunlin, all of which belong to the race C.a.alpina.

Woodcock

The longevity record for this species is 15y 5m 12d set in 1937. Considering the rate of attrition of this species by hunters, it is not surprising that the longevity is apparently being held so low for the size of bird.

EY73982	First-year	19-12-2020	Aldie Farm, Tain.	
	Freshly dead (shot)	22-04-2022	Yakuty, Dzerzhinsk District, Minsk, Belarus.	1970km E
	1y 4m 3d.			
EF28438	First-year	29-12-2018	Loandhu, near Loch Eye.	
	Freshly dead (shot)	08-01-2022	Glesborg Kærvej, Norddjurs, Denmark.	897km E
	3y 0m 10d.			
EY73831	First-year	18-12-2020	Skelbo Muir, near Dornoch.	
	Freshly dead (shot)	16-04-2022	Mezhdureche, Kalingrad Oblast, Russian Federation.	1609km E
	1y 3m 29d.			

Kittiwake

The longevity record for this species is 28y 6m 5d set in 1993.

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2022:

EW24952	Adult	04-07-2011	Isle of Canna.	
	Freshly dead (shot)	09-10-2022	near Nunk, Greenland.	2527km NW
	11y 3m 5d.			

Black-headed Gull

The longevity record for this species is 33y 10m 9d set in 2012.

The oldest bird reported from Highland in 2022 was:

El02531	Nestling	26-06-2002	Abernethy Forest.	
	Alive (ring read in field)	10-03-2019	Linlithgow Loch, West Lothian.	135km S
	16y 8m 12d.			
	Alive (ring read in field)	21-06-2022	Loch Morlich.	5km
	19y 11m 26d.			

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

EL39249	Nestling	23-06-2021	Bonar Bridge.	
	Alive (colour rings seen)	06-05-2022	Rutland Water, Rutland.	625km SSE
	0y10m13d.			

Herring Gull

The longevity record for this species is 32y 9m 25d set in 2013.

GG99088	Nestling	10-07-2018	Sule Skerry, Orkney.	
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Alive (colour rings seen) 28-10-2020 Branderburgh, Aberdeenshire. 165km SSE
2y 3m 18d.

Alive (colour rings seen) 11-02-2022 Allt-na-Criche, Lynwilg, Highland. 213km S
3y 7m 1d.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

The longevity record for this species is 34y 10m 27d set in 2000.

ISR352434 Nestling 20-07-2020 Landey, Stykkishólmur, **Iceland**.
Freshly dead (disease) 18-07-2022 Lothbeg, Brora. 1263km ESE
1y 11m 28d.

Sandwich Tern

The longevity record for this species is 30y 9m 14d set in 1998.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

DE65695 Nestling 13-06-2013 Sands of Forvie, Newburgh,
Aberdeenshire.
Alive (colour rings seen) 27-08-2014 Salin Des Pesquiers, Hyeres, Var, **France**.
1683km SSE

1y 2m 14d.
Alive (colour rings seen) 12-09-2022 Dornoch Beach. 136km WNW
9y 2m 30d.

Common Tern

The longevity record for this species is 33y 6d set in 1996.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2022:

SV53534 Nestling 29-06-2000 Nigg Oil Terminal, Cromarty Firth.
Caught by ringer 13-06-2022 Rockabill, Dublin. 473km SSW
21y 11m 15d.

Arctic Tern

The longevity record for this species is 31y 18d set in 2012.

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

ST85173 Nestling 16-06-2019 Ardullie, Dingwall.
Caught by ringer 05-04-2022 la Langue de Barbarie, **Senegal**.
4746km SSW
2y 9m 20d.

Great Skua

The longevity record for this species is 31y 0d set in 2017.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2022:

HT88932 Nestling 19-07-2002 The Glen of Berry, Hoy, Orkney.
Dead (disease) 20-06-2022 Handa, Sutherland. 119km WSW
19y 11m 1d.



The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

HT94544 Nestling	08-07-2015	Isle of Canna.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	13-06-2020	The Sound, Isle of Man.	351km SSE
<i>4y 11m 8d.</i>			
Freshly dead (disease)	14-08-2022	Blackpool.	426km SSE
<i>7y 1m 6d.</i>			

Guillemot

The longevity record for this species is 40y 11m 23d set in 2019.

The following birds were among the oldest reported in 2022:

GJ75627 Nestling	06-07-1982	Isle of Canna.	
Caught by ringer	05-07-1986	Isle of Canna.	0km
<i>3y 11m 29d. Then caught in 12 more years until:</i>			
Caught by ringer	16-06-2022	Isle of Canna.	0km
<i>39y 11m 10d.</i>			

GJ50791 Nestling	06-07-1982	Isle of Canna.	
Caught by ringer	08-07-1993	Isle of Canna.	0km
<i>11y 0m 2d. Then caught in 4 more years until:</i>			
Caught by ringer	16-06-2022	Isle of Canna.	0km
<i>39y 11m 10d.</i>			

The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

R45331 Nestling	15-06-2003	Great Saltee Island, Wexford.	
Long dead (disease)	22-07-2022	Loch Brittle, Skye.	566km N
<i>19y 1m 7d.</i>			

T97567 Nestling	03-07-1991	Isle of Canna.	
Alive (ring read in field)	24-06-2022	Noss, Shetland.	470km NE
<i>30y 11m 21d.</i>			

T83209 Nestling	01-07-1991	Isle of Canna.	
Freshly dead	04-12-2022	Roonah Point, Mayo.	425km SSW
<i>31y 5m 3d.</i>			

R49549 Nestling	12-07-2006	Fair Isle, Shetland.	
Freshly dead (disease)	10-07-2022	Tarskavaig, Sleat, Isle of Skye.	371km SW
<i>15y 11m 28d.</i>			

Razorbill

The longevity record for this species is 41y 11m 23d set in 2004.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2022:

M88336 Adult	29-06-1999	Leac Buidhe, Cape Wrath, Sutherland.	
Alive (ring read in field)	11-06-2017	Leac Buidhe, Cape Wrath, Sutherland.	0km
<i>17y 11m 13d.</i>			



Alive (ring read in field) 03-07-2022 Carn an Leim, Cape Wrath. 1km
23y 0m 4d.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

K45717 Nestling 02-07-2021 Puffin Island, Isle of Anglesey.
Freshly dead 29-10-2022 Rubha Cuil-Cheanna, Highland. 385km N
1y 3m 27d.

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

K43825 Nestling 28-06-2021 Isle of Canna.
Freshly dead (in cage or net) 10-02-2022 Praia de Porto Dinheiro, Lisboa, **Portugal**.
1995km S

0y 7m 13d.

Woodpigeon

The longevity record for this species is 17y 8m 19d set in 1999.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2022:

FH05876 Adult 05-09-2011 Drummond, Inverness.
Caught by ringer 17-04-2022 Drummond, Inverness. 0km
10y 7m 12d.

Barn Owl

The longevity record for this species is 15y 7m 2d set in 2022.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2022:

GV02747 Nestling 30-05-2015 Ribigill, Highland.
Freshly dead (disease) 30-06-2022 Tongue, Sutherland. 2km
7y 1m 0d.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

GY37459 Nestling 26-06-2022 Inverpolly Estate, Wester Ross.
Caught by ringer 22-11-2022 Rashierieve, Newburgh, Aberdeenshire.
209km ESE

0y 4m 27d.

GY37459 is a remarkable coast to coast movement across the North of Scotland for this young Barn Owl ringed in a nesting box on Inverpolly Estate.

Peregrine

The longevity record for this species is 21y 10m 24d set in 2016.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2022:

GN69183 Nestling M 28-05-2006 Daviot Quarry.
Alive (transponder tag) 26-04-2016 Site confidential near Moffat, Dumfries & Galloway. 228km S

9y 10m 29d. Then detected in 4 more years until:

Alive (transponder tag) 23-04-2022 Site confidential near Moffat, Dumfries & Galloway. 228km S

15y 10m 26d.



GN69183 was fitted with a passive induction tag when ringed in 2006, which has enabled ringers in Dumfries & Galloway to record this bird, without the need to capture him, at his eyrie near Moffat over the past 15 years.

Hooded Crow

The longevity record for this species is 10y 5d set in 2017.

This recovery does not overtake that because it was long dead when found on the neighbouring island, so that the age at death is uncertain.

FH09703 Nestling	10-05-2009	Samhnan Insir, Rum.	
Long dead	21-02-2022	Isle of Canna.	10km W

12y 9m 11d.

Blue Tit

The longevity record for this species is 9y 8m 16d set in 1984.

Z033883 Adult	09-01-2015	Golspie.	
Freshly dead	07-02-2022	West Drummuie, Golspie.	1km

7y 0m 29d.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

AVF6109 First-year	31-12-2019	Fort Augustus.	
Caught by ringer	09-01-2022	Ravensroost Wood, Wiltshire.	641km SSE

2y 0m 9d.

Young Blue Tits disperse around the compass after fledging but, in terms of distance, this movement is extreme.

Sand Martin

The longevity record for this species is 9y 0d set in 1979.

ABZ3017 Juvenile	21-06-2022	River Lochy, Ft William.	
Caught by ringer	06-08-2022	Mars-Ouest, Saint-Philbert-De-Grand-Lieu, Loire-Atlantique, France.	1109km SSE

0y 1m 16d.

This recovery follows in a succession of similar movements between Highland and the Loire-Atlantique. This one is notably rapid.

Long-tailed Tit

The longevity record for this species is 9y 8m 20d set in 2021.

CXD295 Full grown	27-10-2017	Drummond, Inverness.	
Caught by ringer	10-02-2018	Drummond, Inverness.	0km

0y 3m 14d.

Caught by ringer	14-01-2020	Drummond, Inverness.	0km
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2y 2m 18d.

Caught by ringer	03-01-2022	Drummond, Inverness.	0km
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4y 2m 7d.

Both juvenile and adult Long-tailed Tits undergo a complete moult, so once this has been completed their age cannot be distinguished.



Willow Warbler

The longevity record for this species is 10y 11m 18d set in 2010.

LJL169 First-year	28-08-2019	Deer Park Forest Croft, near Avoch, Black Isle.	
Caught by ringer	02-05-2022	Portland Bill, Dorset.	793km S
2y 8m 4d.			
NBA222 Adult	03-05-2022	Hilbre Island, The Wirral, Merseyside.	
Caught by ringer	31-05-2022	Hungladder, Skye.	514km NNW
0y 0m 28d.			
KDL185 First-year	27-08-2019	East High Rigg Farm, North Yorkshire.	
Sick (cat)	23-06-2022	Duirinish, Wester Ross.	460km NW
2y 9m 27d.			

As so few Willow Warblers are recovered each year, all long-distance movements have been included here.

Sedge Warbler

The longevity record for this species is 8y 8m 8d set in 2001.

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

FRP8603834 First-year	02-08-2021	R��serve du Massereau, Loire Atlantique, France.	
Caught by ringer	09-05-2022	Melvich.	1263km N
0y 9m 7d.			

Blackcap

The longevity record for this species is 10y 8m 15d set in 1988.

ANR3832 Juvenile	31-07-2022	Deer Park Forest Croft, near Avoch, Black Isle.	
Caught by ringer	21-09-2022	Pett Level, East Sussex.	806km SSE
0y 1m 21d.			
AXK6928 First-year F	02-10-2021	Stanford Reservoir, Northamptonshire.	
Caught by ringer	27-04-2022	Fort Augustus.	572km NNW
0y 6m 25d.			
Caught by ringer	23-05-2022	Fort Augustus.	572km NNW
0y 7m 21d.			

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

NOS ES24747 First-year F	26-10-2022	Slevdalsvannet, Farsund, Vest-Agder, Norway	
Freshly dead	19-11-2022	Portree, Skye.	762km W
0y 0m 24d.			



Chaffinch

The longevity record for this species is 13y 11m 26d set in 2011.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2022:

D194590	First-year F	20-04-2013	Melvich.	
	Caught by ringer	04-04-2022	Melvich.	0km

8y 11m 15d.

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

AFV0495	First-year M	18-02-2022	Drummond, Inverness.	
	Freshly dead	13-07-2022	Ødemarksvegen, Hurdal, Akershus,	
			Norway.	935km ENE

0y 4m 25d.

Brambling

The longevity record for this species is 8y 7m 16d set in 1983.

The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

ARN5502	First-year M	27-10-2021	Fair Isle, Shetland.	
	Caught by ringer	07-01-2022	Straanruie, Nethy Bridge.	281km SSW

0y 2m 11d.

AEH6985	First-year M	20-10-2021	Finstown, Orkney.	
	Caught by ringer	09-02-2022	Ruthven near Moy.	189km SSW

0y 3m 20d.

AHH5218	First-year M	11-04-2019	Straanruie, Nethy Bridge.	
	Caught by ringer	21-03-2022	Garvald, Moorfoot Hills, Scottish Borders.	168km SSE

2y 11m 10d.

The following bird was found abroad and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such recoveries):

AFV0322	Adult Male	13-02-2022	Straanruie, Nethy Bridge.	
	Caught by ringer	25-09-2022	Orin, Verdal, Nord-Trøndelag, Norway.	1098km NE

0y 7m 12d.

The following bird ringed abroad was found here and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such records):

NOS ES38727	First-year Male	10-10-2021	Giljastolen, Gjesdal, Rogaland, Norway.	
	Caught by ringer	11-02-2022	Ruthven near Moy.	625km W

0y 4m 1d.

A series of recoveries mainly arising from birds caught during winter 2021-22. ARN5502 and AEH6985 reinforce the very direct route taken across the North Sea by Bramblings. Neither AFV0322 nor NOS ES38727 necessarily indicate their breeding areas since both were caught in Norway during the autumn migration period.



Twite

The longevity record for this species is 9y 5m 23d set in 2020.

The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

AAP1052 Adult Male	05-01-2022	Booth Wood Reservoir, Rishworth, West Yorkshire.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	29-03-2022	Portree, Skye.	497km NNW
2m 24d.			
AAR3266 Second-year M	01-05-2021	Portree, Skye.	
Caught by ringer	05-01-2022	Booth Wood Reservoir, Rishworth, West Yorkshire.	497km SE
0y 8m 4d.			
AKR7514 First-year M	04-12-2021	Seaton Snook, Stockton-on-Tees.	
Alive (colour rings seen)	24-04-2022	Lower Breakish, Skye.	411km NW
0y 4m 20d.			

Linnet

The longevity record for this species is 8y 3m 25d set in 1975.

ABV9375 First-year M	13-09-2021	Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney.	
Caught by ringer	06-01-2022	Duthill.	242km SSW
0y 3m 24d.			

Lesser Redpoll

The longevity record for this species is 6y 10m 11d set in 2016.

The following birds moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

ATT0859 Adult Male	12-03-2022	Blashford Lake Centre, Blashford, Hampshire.	
Freshly dead	25-04-2022	Harrapool, Skye.	755km NNW
0y 1m 13d.			
S021983 Adult Male	20-03-2021	MacKenzie Road, Thetford, Norfolk.	
Caught by ringer	21-04-2022	Hungladder, Skye.	737km NW
1y 1m 1d.			

The following birds ringed abroad were found here and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such records):

BLB16683372 First-year M	24-10-2020	Wibrin, Luxembourg, Belgium.	
Caught by ringer	15-01-2022	Deer Park Forest Croft, near Avoch, Black Isle.	1046km NNW
1y 2m 22d.			
BLB15122259 First-year F	17-02-2019	Devantave, Luxembourg, Belgium.	
Caught by ringer	08-04-2022	Morar.	1057km NNW
3y 1m 22d.			



Siskin

The longevity record for this species is 8y 6m 10d set in 2019.

The following bird was among the oldest reported in 2022:

Z444560 Juvenile	12-07-2016	Glebe Farm, Salsburgh, North Lanarkshire.
Caught by ringer	04-04-2022	Straanruie, Nethy Bridge. 155km N

5y 8m 23d.

The following bird moved the greatest distance within Britain & Ireland (more than 100km):

ALT6540 Juvenile M	12-09-2021	Brook Manor, Buckfastleigh, Devon.
Caught by ringer	07-07-2022	Grantown-on-Spey. 760km N

0y 9m 25d.

The following birds ringed abroad were found here and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such records):

SFH HE49544 First-year M	26-07-2021	Posio, Lappi, Finland.
Caught by ringer	15-01-2022	Golspie. 1876km WSW

0y 5m 20d.

NLA BN42832 Adult M	11-10-2021	Reddingbootpad, Vlieland, The Netherlands.
Caught by ringer	07-04-2022	Blairgorm, Highland. 702km NW

0y 5m 27d.

Snow Bunting

The longevity record for this species is 8y 11m 2d set in 2005.

The following bird ringed abroad was found here and reported in 2022 (countries with 20 or fewer such records):



Colour-ringed Snow Bunting in December at Cairngorm c. Ken & Sarah White



ISR926154 Full-grown M 03-04-2020 Vikingavatn, Grasida, Kelduhverfi, Nordur-Thingeyjar, **Iceland**.
Alive (colour rings seen) 21-12-2022 Cairngorm Ski carpark, near Aviemore.
2y 8m 18d. 1210km SE

As always, this report is just a synopsis of the online ringing report and those wishing to read more should access the report through the link given below.

Citation:

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A Serin on the Isle of Eigg from 21-29 November

JOHN CHESTER

Late November 2022 was not a particularly pleasant period weather-wise on Eigg. Winds, which frequently reached gale force or above, swung back and forth between SE & NE, and brought frequent prolonged spells of heavy rain. Birding throughout the period had been pretty uneventful, with only the odd passage wader and a lone Snow Bunting being in any way out of the ordinary. That however was all about to change!

On the afternoon of the 23rd I received an email from local crofter Neil Robertson, informing me that he had an unusual looking finch at his garden feeding station. The bird had been present since the 21st and Neil had initially dismissed it as an odd-looking Siskin. However, on consulting his field guide, he had begun to suspect that it was in fact a Serin, although he appreciated just how unlikely that seemed.



Serin in November on Eigg c. Donald McLean

On the following morning (24th), Neil called round and gave me a lift over to his house, where I was able to view his feeding station from the kitchen window. At first no birds were present, but Neil showed me a couple of record shots taken on his mobile phone and I could confirm that the bird was indeed a Serin. After a short wait, the Serin appeared in the company of a flock of Chaffinches and Greenfinches, and proceeded to feed on scattered seed below the feeders. In



typical finch fashion, the entire flock would feed for a short while, then fly up into the nearby bushes before returning a few minutes later to resume feeding. After observing the bird for a short while, I phoned local photographer, Donald McLean. He was able to get over to Neil's house and obtain a couple of photos of better quality.

The Serin continued to appear regularly in Neil's garden until the morning of the 29th, when the winds finally dropped. It was not seen at any of the other feeding stations in the area and, outwith the feeding visits, presumably took shelter with the other finches in some of the many areas of scrub and bushes in the croftland. During its stay it proved popular with many interested island residents, but sadly no non-island birders could get over to Eigg due to the continuing SE gales, which resulted in four consecutive days of ferry cancellations. The winds finally dropped off on the afternoon of the 28th and the Serin was last seen by Neil early in the morning of the 29th.

Field Notes

First impressions were of a small 'low slung' yellowish finch with a small stubby bill. It was dwarfed by the nearby Greenfinches as it fed on the ground below an assortment of garden feeders in association with Chaffinches and Greenfinches.

Notes

Crown and ear coverts were grey-brown, with a thin yellowish line bisecting the centre of the crown. Forehead and lores were bright yellow. Supercilium was bright yellow, extending downwards to border the rear edge of the ear coverts. Lower eye was bordered by a semi-circle of bright yellow. A pale off-white dot was on the ear coverts almost directly below the eye.

Throat and breast were yellow, with the breast lightly smudged with grey blotches. Flanks were white, heavily streaked with black. Mantle was grey-brown, tinged yellowish with heavy black streaking. Wings were grey-brown, with vague greyish wing bar showing on the greater coverts. Tertiaries were blackish with white edgings. Rump was vivid yellow. Tail was uniform brown.

Bill was small and stubby, and grey in colour. Legs were pinkish brown, and confirmed as unringed by Neil.

Background

Serins have always been extremely rare visitors to Scotland. From 1911 until 2018, there were only nine sightings. However, since then there have been six records, the latest on June 2022 in Kintyre, Argyll (Dickson 2022). This is essentially a European species, breeding in mainland Europe as far north as southern Sweden and Estonia, as far east as European Russia and the Middle East, and as far south as North Africa. The southern populations are sedentary, but the northern birds migrate to winter further south within the overall breeding range. As part of this movement, birds now regularly migrate to the south coast of England, where they occasionally breed. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that



the frequency of Scottish records is on the increase. The timing of this visit to Eigg is also not so surprising, given that the autumn records peak in England is in late October to early November. The persistent gale-force winds from a north- or south-easterly direction was probably the factor which decided the bird's destination on Eigg. As a result of an SBRC decision to re-evaluate a 2021 record from Talmine, Sutherland as not proven, this Eigg record is now a first for Highland.

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Autumn birds at the Carse of Ardersier

HUGH INSLEY & DAVID A. PHILIP

The Carse of Ardersier, which lies immediately behind Whiteness Head is not well known among Highland birders. It consists of a large area of pinewoods and several private properties surrounded by heathland scrub and is sandwiched between the Fort George military ranges and training area to the west and the Port of Ardersier development (previously the McDermott's Yard at Whiteness Head) to the east. The ranges are only open when not in use, and the port area is now completely closed off for public access.

The Carse of Ardersier has begun to appear more and more in the recent *Highland Bird Reports*, following the start of systematic trapping and ringing, especially during the autumn period. DAP first started ringing birds there between 2001 and 2010, one of his earlier catches being a **Barred Warbler** on 21 August 2006. Jon and Kate Clarke then restarted ringing at the site in 2016 and 2017, and this confirmed that the scrub surrounding the pinewoods behind Whiteness Head was a magnet for migrant birds, so after another series of exploratory catches in 2019, DAP and HI decided to start trapping birds at the site on a systematic basis during the autumn, from July to November, starting in 2020. The number and range of species caught since has been surprising and, in the case of **Willow Warblers**, amounted to over six per cent of all the birds ringed in Britain and Ireland in 2021. This short note describes the methods used and some of the results over the autumns of 2020 to 2022.



Methods and Results

As well as ringing during the autumn, we have started making catches every ten days through the winter period as part of the 'Nationwide Winter Ringing Project', which has been an exploratory programme to test whether systematic trapping of birds through the winter months can produce enough data to monitor some of the species not covered adequately by the breeding season 'Constant Effort Site' and 'Ringing Adults for Survival' monitoring. The WRP has involved the use of supplementary feeding to concentrate the birds and we have used only a few nets compared to the autumn, so that we can minimise the time that birds are held in the nets during low temperatures. The programme has run from November until the end of February in 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 so far but, after February, the site has been shut down until the end of June each year, mainly to allow the on-site breeding birds to do so without constantly being caught.

From the beginning of July until early November for the last three years, we have run up to nine 18m mist nets located in the same positions each year. These have been opened daily at dawn whenever the weather allowed. If there is rain or the breeze is more than slight, the nets either cannot be used or do not catch effectively. Most birds are caught in the first three or four hours each day, with activity and catches dropping away after mid-morning, or earlier if the sun is bright, until a further burst of activity in the evenings. No consistent attempt has been made to make evening catches.

The number of birds trapped during this three-year period has ranged from 5549 in 2020 to 4433 in 2022 and the species totals for the birds caught from 44 in 2020 to 50 in 2021. The site does not rank with the coastal observatories in terms of rarities but, during the early ringing mentioned above, DAP caught a **Barred Warbler** on 26 August 2006 and, in October 2020, we found a **Yellow-browed Warbler** in exactly the same ride after locating it by its 'Pied Wagtail like' call. Outside the ringing activities in 2022, a **Pallid Swift** joined two **Swallows** over the house on the site late in the afternoon of 8 November and, thanks to some fine photos by Colin Leslie, acceptance by BBRC of this bird was rapidly achieved. Other interesting birds caught have included a young female **Goshawk** in August 2021 which, having gorged itself on about seven of the nearby farm's young **Mallards**, was unable to gain enough height to clear the fence around the pen. After ringing and a post-prandial rest, it flew off without any difficulty, although, having discovered such a ready source of food, it hung around for several days before moving on. **Hen Harriers** have been caught at the site twice, with a young female trapped in October 2005 and a young male in November 2021.

Although our main target species have been warblers, each year the bycatch has included some less frequently ringed passerines such as **Tree Pipit**, **Redstart**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Grey Wagtail** and **Crested Tit**. The warbler and **Goldcrest** totals are summarized in Table 1.



	2020	2021	2022
Species			
Yellow-browed Warbler	1		
Willow Warbler	1306	1793	1044
Chiffchaff	180	162	113
Sedge Warbler		4	
Grasshopper Warbler	1		
Blackcap	117	160	114
Garden Warbler	1	2	
Whitethroat	6	29	18
Goldcrest	1493	317	415

Table 1. Total captures of warblers and Goldcrest by year at the Carse of Ardersier 2020-2022.

Timing of passage by Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Goldcrest

While we have deliberately avoided trapping at the site during the breeding season, autumn ringing has been started at the beginning of July each year. The number of birds caught annually while passing through fluctuates quite markedly, so to make comparison of the timing of passage between years easier, in the figures below the numbers of the three most frequently caught birds are expressed as percentages of the total within each year. Because catching had to be curtailed in 2022, the between-year comparison only covers three years for **Willow Warbler**. For **Chiffchaff** and **Goldcrest** only 2020 and 2021 are included in the comparison. The totals used are the total number of birds caught, including re-captures of those caught on previous days, so that the figures represent the numbers present on site at any given date, not just the number ringed.

Willow Warbler

Willow Warblers are the earliest of the three most common migrants to pass through the Carse of Ardersier each autumn, with numbers starting to build up at the beginning of July and reaching high numbers by the middle of the month (Fig. 1). Since they also breed on site it is difficult to set a precise start date for this passage, but it is clear that birds are moving through once July begins. The latest dates for **Willow Warblers** were 18 September in both 2020 and 21, but only 10 September in 2022. These dates compare with 14 October, 1 and 3 October as the latest dates for **Willow Warbler** in *HBR* for 2020, 2021 and 2022. While the vast majority of **Willow Warblers** and **Chiffchaffs** are easily separable, even in the nets, a small proportion, maybe 30 or 40 out of the more than 3000 individuals ringed in the last three seasons, are problematic and we check the identity of every **Willow Warbler** and **Chiffchaff** caught using the primary feather emargination. **Willow Warblers** are emarginated from the third to fifth primaries, while the sixth primary on **Chiffchaffs** is also emarginated. Many adults are in full moult when we catch them in August but, once this has been completed, it takes really careful examination to age the birds, the vast majority of which are juveniles. Just how difficult the ageing can be is shown by the bird ringed as juvenile at the



Carse in 2020, which was aged as a juvenile when re-caught on the south coast of England the following year!



Kevin Peace in August taking Willow Warblers from net at Carse of Ardersier
c. Hugh Insley

While Fig.1 gives a broad picture of the timing of **Willow Warbler** passage in each of the three years 2020 to 2022, a comparison of the dates at which 50% of all birds caught was reached gives an indication of the variation between years. For



Willow Warbler, this was 6 August in 2020, 13 August in 2021 and 27 July in 2022. In 2022, it was fairly obvious as we progressed through the season that movement was earlier and finished sooner, and we can only speculate that this may have been related to the long dry late summer conditions. Although we discontinued catching in mid-October 2022, this did not affect the measurement of **Willow Warbler** passage, with the last individual being caught on 10 September that year.

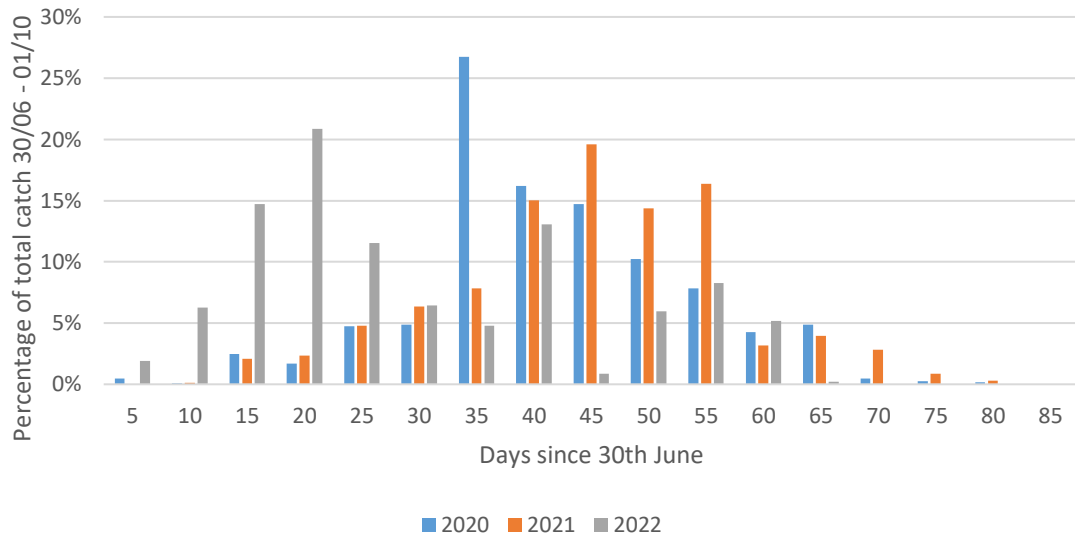


Figure 1. Timing of passage of Willow Warblers caught at the Carse of Ardersier 2020-2022.

Chiffchaff

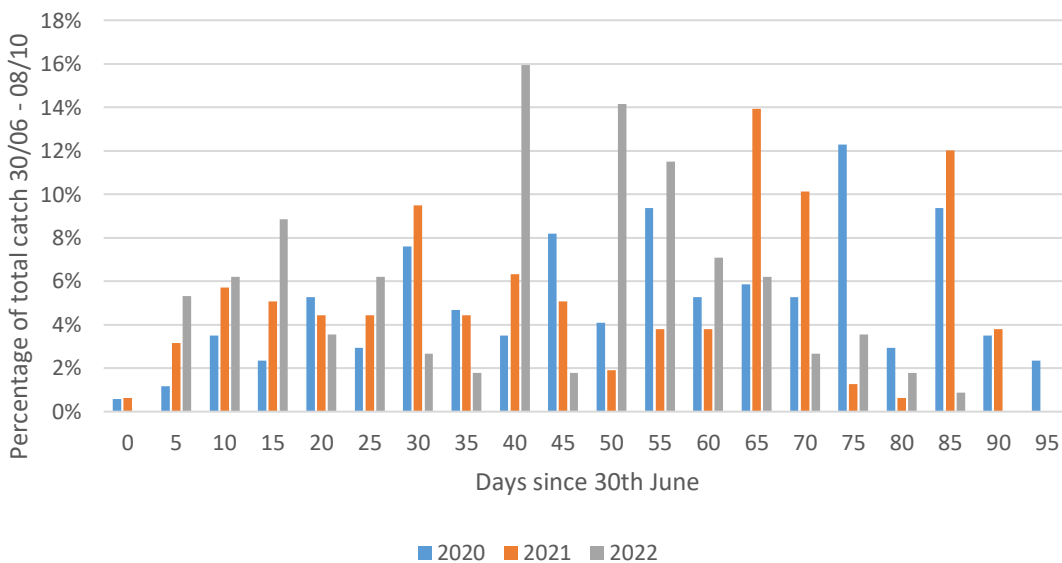


Figure 2. Timing of passage of Chiffchaffs caught at the Carse of Ardersier 2020-2022.



Chiffchaffs start passing through the site at around the same date as **Willow Warblers**, but they do so in only about a tenth of the numbers and their migration is spread over a much longer period, with 50% of the birds caught being reached on 25 August in 2020 and 22 August in 2021, compared with 6 and 13 August for **Willow Warbler**. Because catching had to be curtailed early in October 2022, we have not included that year in this calculation for **Chiffchaff** and **Goldcrest**. In 2020 and 2021, the last date on which **Chiffchaffs** were caught was 8 October. While some **Chiffchaffs** remain in Highland through the winter, it is clear from Fig. 2 that passage is all but complete by the end of the first week of October.

Goldcrest

Goldcrests were present in catches from the start of July and these earliest birds were almost certainly the result of local breeding. **Goldcrests** have the most drawn-out and latest passage of these three common migrants at the Carse, with 50% of the total catch not being reached until 6 October in 2020 and 2021, 95 days after the 30 June, in both 2020 and 2021. This compares with 55 and 50 days, respectively, for **Chiffchaff**, and 40 and 45 days, respectively, for **Willow Warbler**. **Goldcrest** passage continued throughout October and November, and only tailed off during the final week of November in 2020 and 2021. Unlike **Willow Warbler** and **Chiffchaff**, for which there is no evidence that the birds caught are anything other than birds bred in Highland, **Goldcrest** numbers clearly peaked on overcast mornings following overnight easterly winds, suggesting that many were immigrants.

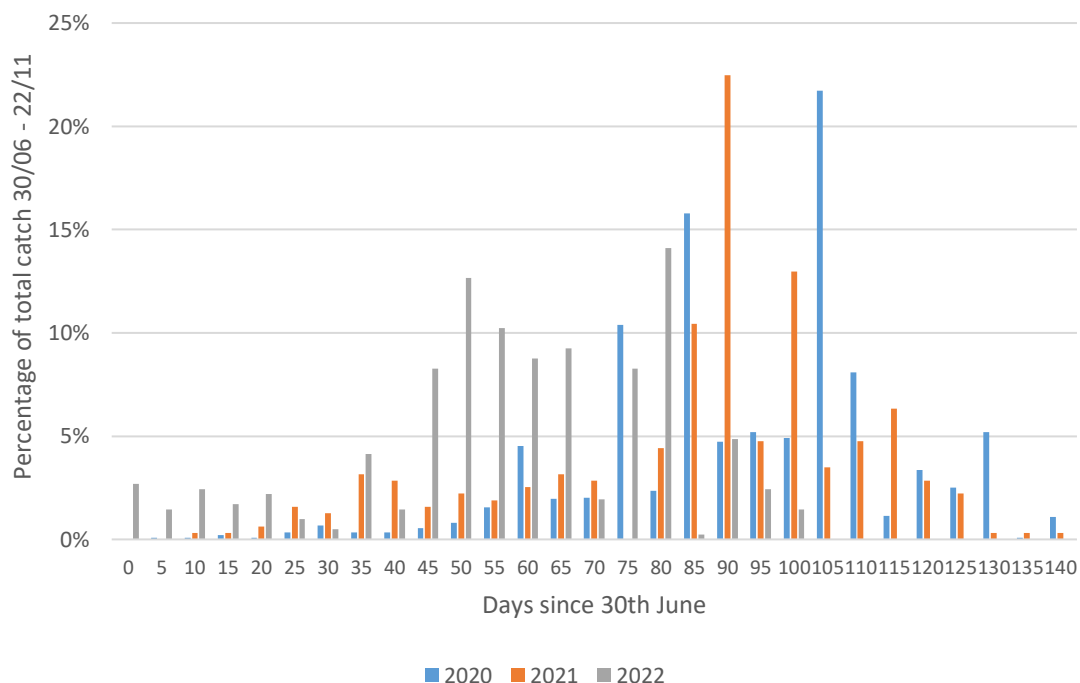


Figure 3. Timing of passage of Goldcrests caught at the Carse of Ardersier 2020-2022.



Discussion

The three species highlighted here are the smallest regularly caught and ringed in Britain and Ireland. Not surprisingly, the reporting rate of ringed individuals is extremely low (for **Goldcrest** less than 0.04% in 2021) and derives mainly from birds re-caught by other ringers. Apart from a handful of short-term exchanges with the ringing site at Deer Forest Croft behind Avoch (10km west of the Carse of Ardersier), the only recoveries from the trapping have been a single **Goldcrest** ringed on 2 October 2019, which was re-caught 51 days later on 22 November at Woolston Eyes near Warrington, Lancashire. Just two **Willow Warblers**, both juveniles ringed in August 2020, have been recovered further than 20km from the Carse of Ardersier. One caught on 24 August was caught at Filey Brigg in North Yorkshire, 440km SSE seven days later, and the other ringed on 15 August was re-caught the following autumn at Pett Level in West Sussex, 802km SSE, on its second autumn migration.

In contrast to **Willow Warblers**, **Chiffchaffs** are relatively short distance migrants and those which do migrate are generally much later. Two, ringed at the Carse of Ardersier in 2020, were re-caught by other ringers over 500km south of the site. One, ringed on 25 August, was at Slapton Ley, Devon 811km S on 16 October. The other, ringed on 8 October, was caught at a sewage works at Stanley Downton, Gloucestershire, 660 km S on 2 November. The number of **Chiffchaffs** now over-wintering in the South of England might suggest that these were both birds which were going to remain in Britain.

Our summary of the bird ringing at the Carse of Ardersier over the last three years has focussed on just the three most commonly caught migrants. A number of other species have been caught in sufficient numbers to offer future opportunities to analyse their movements. Not least among these is **Dunnock**, which is not widely recognized among birders as a migrant. From the numbers caught each autumn at the Carse of Ardersier, it appears clear that at least some of the birds being caught must be continental migrants, with catches into double figures on several days in the autumn, when other more widely recognized migrants have also been arriving. The species is a notable short distance migrant in Europe, and we hope to return to that subject at a later date.

Bird ringing studies, such as this one, are about much more than simply trying to achieve recoveries. As already mentioned, the main species being monitored at the Carse of Ardersier have extremely low rates of return when it comes to recoveries but, carried out as consistently as possible, such studies are invaluable when monitoring the effects of climate change.

Acknowledgements

Most of the land on which this programme was carried out belongs to the Cawdor Estate, to whom we are grateful for permission to operate there. Over the three-year period reported on here, the authors were regularly supported by several other ringers, whose help in safely handling the number of birds caught was invaluable. The most regular of these were Kevin Peace, Hannah Humphreys,



Brian S. Milligan, Benjy J. Wilcock and Archie Wotherspoon, to whom we extend our gratitude. Finally, we are indebted to Tim Hounscome for his help in translating a bewildering number of records into the figures used in this short note.

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*** BBRC species

** SBRC species

* HRC species

[...] subspecies

^^^ last recorded in 2019

^^ last recorded in 2020

^ last recorded in 2021

