

THE BIRDS OF THE LOSSIE ESTUARY

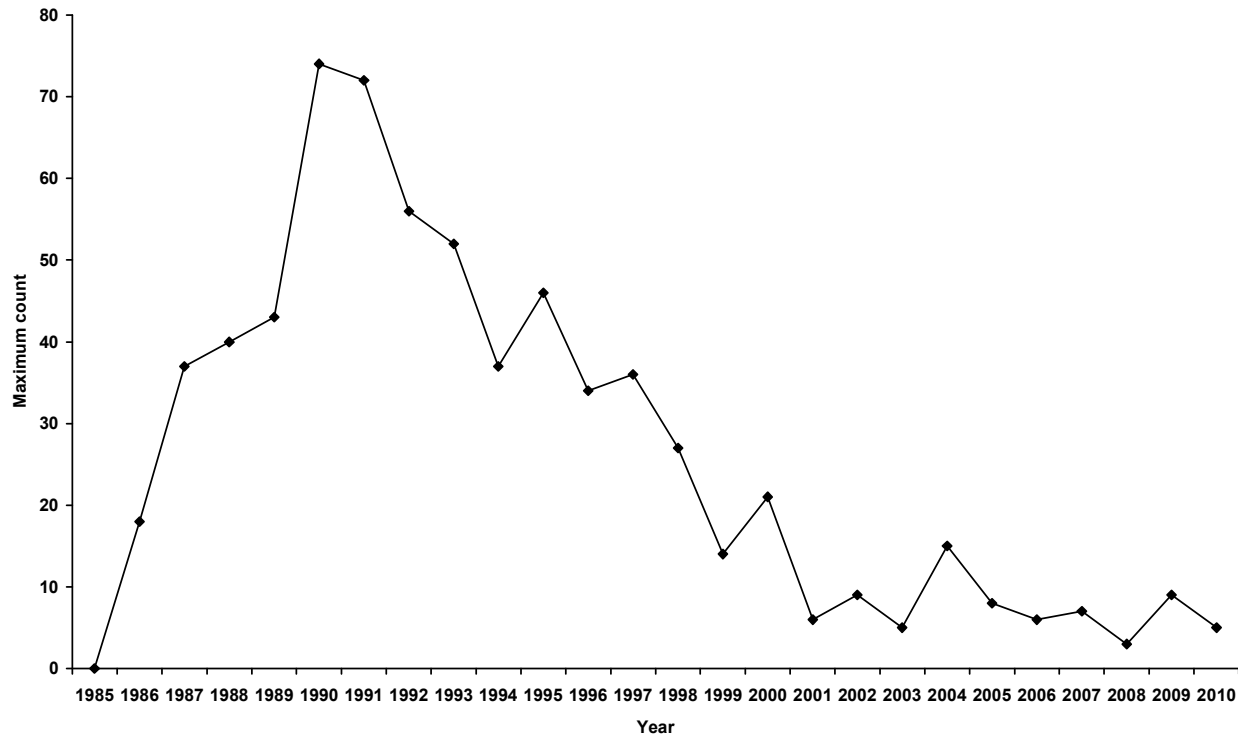
BOB PROCTOR

The Lossie estuary is situated to the east of the town of Lossiemouth. The area that this article covers is bounded by the dunes of the east beach to the north and the caravan park in the south, and extending from the footbridge over the River Lossie eastwards to the edge of Lossie forest. The information for this article has been taken from Moray & Nairn Bird Reports 1985-2010, personal observations and count data supplied to the BTO through the monthly WeBS survey. Historical references are taken from *The Birds of Moray and Nairn* (Cook 1992).

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

After a rapid increase in numbers in the late 1980s, the peak count of 74 was reached in 1990. Since then there has been a steady decline in numbers using the estuary. Some of the increase in the late 1980s may have involved local birds from Loch Spynie, however long-distance ringing recoveries to north-west England in subsequent years may suggest a short-lived period of immigration.

Number of Mute Swans at the Lossie estuary 1985-2010:



Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

The majority of Whooper Swans are seen flying over the estuary, particularly in autumn. There are only eight records of birds using the estuary.

In late spring, two adults were present on 12-27 May 1991.

Two records occurred during the autumn migration period and involved an adult on 9 Oct 1991 and four adults on 5 Oct 1996.

Five records in late winter and early spring, consisting of a first-winter 12 Jan-11 Feb 1988, a first-winter (coming to breed) 26 Apr 1992, 16 adults & two first-winters 15 Feb 1997, and then eight adults & two first-winters 28 Mar (possibly part of the earlier flock). Singles 12-14 Apr 2000 and 18 Apr 2009.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

This species is commonest during spring and autumn migration when the majority of flocks fly over the estuary. An assumed injured individual was present on 1 Jan 2009. Otherwise, sightings have been during the summer with singles (unless otherwise noted) seen on 10 May 1994, 12 & 22-23 Jun 2002, 7 Jun 2003 (three), 27-28 Jun 2008, 9 May 2009 and 15 May 2010 (four).

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Rare on the estuary: singles seen on the mud 17 Nov 1995 and 26 Dec 2010.

[Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Two escaped individuals were seen on 6 Jun 1991 having been seen earlier in the day at Loch Spynie.]

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

Two white morph adults were present on 5 May 1987.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Birds seen in late summer generally involve individuals migrating to the Beaully Firth moulting site. The largest flock was 33 on 7 June 1994. Other smaller groups have included 25 on 4 Jun 2010, 11 on 11 Aug 1990 (having previously moulted at Loch Spynie), five on 27 May 2006 and three on 5-6 Jun 1994. Singles have been seen on 19 Jul-24 Aug 1987, 6 Jun 1991, 19 Aug 1995, 22 May 1997, 12 Jun 2002 and 8 & 13 Jun 2009. There is one midwinter record of two on 6 Jan 1996.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Regularly observed during migration, large flocks may occasionally be seen flying past the estuary. Smaller numbers actually land and utilise the site: 10 on 9 Oct 1995, five on 5 Oct 2001, six on 27 Oct 2001, three on 5 Oct 2003 and singles on 28 Sep 1996, 29-30 Sep 2001, 28-28 Dec 2009 and 9 Oct 2010. An unusual midsummer record of an adult on 18-20 Jul 2010 may relate to a feral individual as successful breeding was suspected to have occurred just outside Moray in 2010.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

The vast majority of records concern the light-bellied race *B. b. hrota*. The number of individuals and length of time that birds remain on the estuary have increased in recent years, probably as a result of more food in the form of vegetation on the mud. Flocks have been seen during the winter but the main period for sightings is September-October. Flocks sizes are generally less than 10; only eight flocks have exceeded 10 birds, of which the largest was 72 on 22 Sep 2009. Colour-ringed birds have originated from the east Canadian population trapped in Iceland and one individual trapped in Denmark.

The dark-bellied race *B. b. bernicla* is the rarer of the two subspecies. Records involving single individuals have occurred on 20 Sep 1988 and 4-5 Feb 1994. Records in late 1994 on 11-19 Sep, 25 Sep-22 Oct and 16-17 Nov, probably relate to the same individual.

[Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

A single seen on the estuary on 1 Mar 2001 was probably from a group of six deliberately released in January at Loch Spynie.]

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

A pair was present on 4-5 Apr 1987.

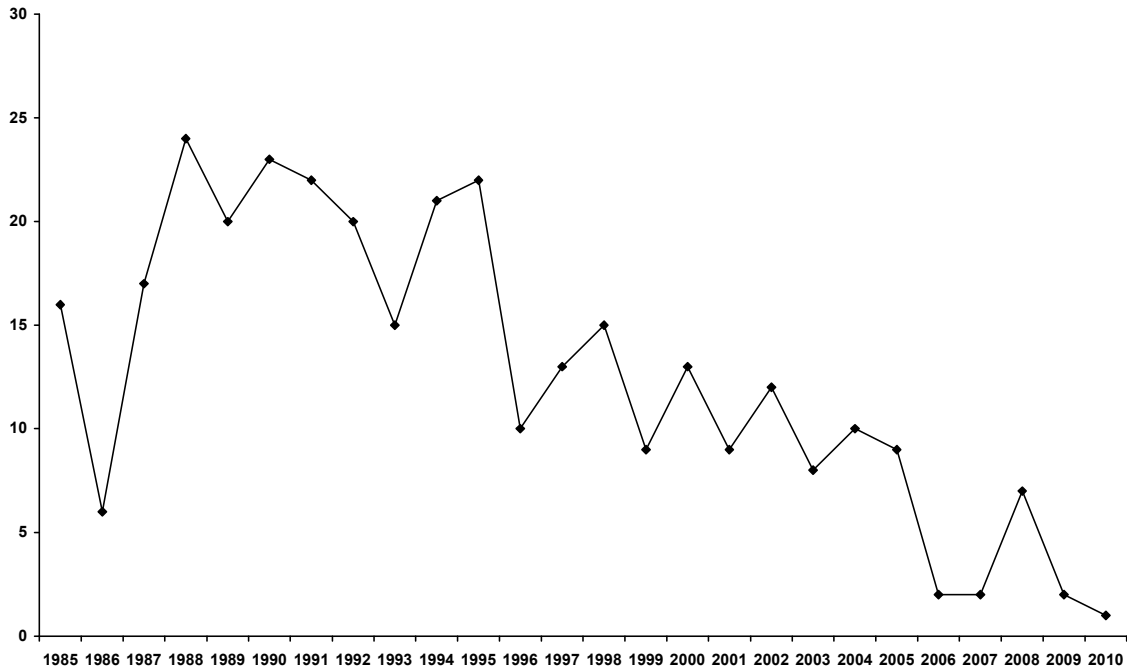
Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

The largest numbers are mainly seen on the estuary during January-April. Numbers decline through late spring and summer when they are usually absent or in very low numbers. Numbers have steadily declined since 1995.

Maximum monthly counts 1985-2010:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	22	24	22	5	5	3	1	0	2	3	4

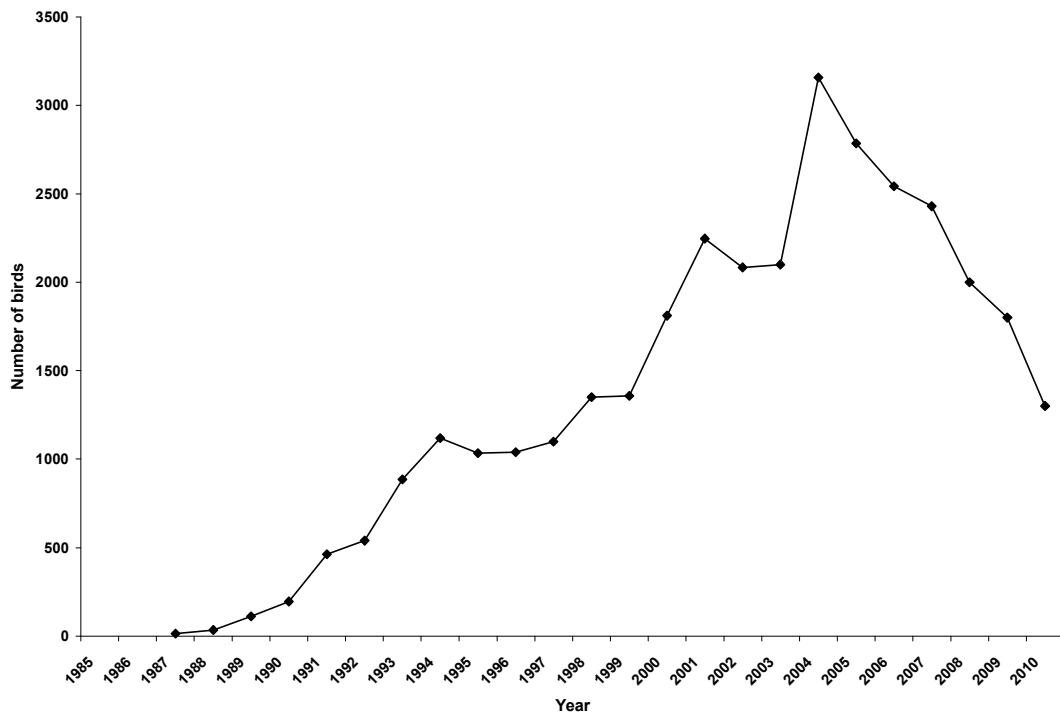
Number of Shelduck at the Lossie estuary 1985-2010:



Wigeon *Anas penelope*

A steady increase in numbers using the estuary from 1987 onwards; peaking at 3158 in December 2004. Numbers have declined annually since 2005.

Number of Wigeon at the Lossie estuary 1985-2010:



American Wigeon *Anas americana*

A first-winter male, initially found on 5 Feb 1998, returned as an adult annually until 2001. Another male was present from 21 Jan-3 Feb 2005.

[Chiloe Wigeon *Anas sibilatrix*

A single first-winter was present with Wigeon on 26 Sep 2004.]

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

A rare visitor to the estuary with only five records: 19 Feb 1991 (male), 18-22 Apr 1998 (male), 22 Apr 1999 (pair), 6-7 Feb 2010 (male) and 28 Apr 2010 (pair).

Teal *Anas crecca*

Recorded annually since the mid 1990s. The largest count was 35 on 13 Jan 2008 until a period of cold weather in December 2010 resulted in unprecedented numbers using the estuary: 162 on 20th was followed by a count of 219 on 26th. An adult male, showing characteristics of a hybrid Teal x Green-winged Teal, was present on 10 Jan 2010.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common throughout the year. Mostly up to 20 but records over 50 include 33 males & 26 females on 17 Jan 1999 and 31 males & 21 females on 6 Jan 2001.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

A rare visitor with only five records since 1991: female 17 Oct 1991, male 31 Oct 1991, female 10 Sep 1992, female 19 Oct 1998 and two females 2 Oct 2004 (singles on 10 Oct & 17 Nov).

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

A rare visitor to the estuary with eight records since 1991: 21 Sep 1991 (female), 22 Dec 1993 (female), 9 Jul 1998 (male), 13 Sep 1999 (female), 6 Oct 2001 (female), 5 Apr 2009 (male), 26-28 Dec 2009 (first-winter male) and 6 Sep 2010 (female).

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

A group of three on 19 Oct 1998 is the only record.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

A male, associating with Wigeon 18 Feb 1994, and another male 10 Jan 2010 are the only records.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Singles included a male 17 Feb 1991, female 26 Apr 1992, male 10 Feb 1996, female 19 Oct 2002 and a male 18 Aug 2006. Two groups were counted in 1996: 23 on 6 Jan and seven on 9 Feb. One summer record involved two males on 11-17 Jul 2007.

Eider *Somateria mollissima*

Rarely seen on the estuary, usually only when the East Beach area is affected during periods of rough seas. Recent records have included two on 20 Jan 1995, two on 3 Jan 1999 and one on 13 Jan 2002.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

Very rarely seen upstream from the footbridge: two on 16 Jan 1994, and singles on 9 Nov 1996, 20 Jan & 14 Feb 1999, 18 Mar 2000 and 28 Apr 2009.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

A female resting on the mud opposite the caravan site on 17 Nov 1995 is the only record.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

A regular winter visitor. Usually only 1-2 birds present but higher counts have included 14 (January 2010 – following a period of very low temperatures affecting freshwater sites), nine (February 2002) and eight (January 1998, January 2001, December 2009).

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Infrequently seen on the estuary. Usually single individuals recorded, but four (January 2002, April 2006), three (September 2000) and two (January 2003) were exceptions.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Regular on the estuary in recent years. Counts over 30 have included 37 (September 2006), 32 (September 2003), 31 (September 2008) and 30 (August 2001).

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Two individuals on 12 Nov 2006 and singles on 25 Nov 1995, 11 Jan 1998, 10 Feb 2002 and 11 Nov 2006.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Frequently seen in autumn and winter, particularly if freshwater lochs are frozen. Largest number together was three on 1 Jan 2009.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Seen throughout the year in small numbers; usually 1-2 individuals, with numbers increasing through late summer and autumn as adults and juveniles move to the coast following the breeding season.

Maximum monthly counts 1985-2010:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	1	2	2	4	5	11	12	13	9	2	3

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

This species is more frequently recorded at the river mouth and harbour areas. Usually only single birds are seen on the estuary; exceptions were two on 8 Oct 2004, 23 Jan 2005, 12 Nov 2006 and 9 Dec 2006.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

This species is more frequently recorded at the river mouth and harbour areas. On the estuary the largest number seen together was six on 17 Sep 2010.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Infrequently seen hunting over the dunes and estuary.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

An infrequent visitor between April-September. Usually only singles are seen - often fishing.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Infrequently seen hunting over the dunes and estuary.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Rarely seen hunting over the dunes and estuary.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Regularly seen, particularly in late summer and early autumn when juveniles are especially frequent.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common throughout the year. An obvious peak during spring passage in late April-early June, and a similar increase in late summer with the arrival of post-breeding flocks; these latter groups are frequently large. The largest flock, 1055 on 31 Jul 1998, contained only 16 juveniles and suggested a very poor breeding season caused by a wet summer. The only other substantial count also occurred in July: 1029 on 24 Jul 2009.

Maximum monthly counts 1985-2010:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
92	188	191	122	124	81	1055	368	172	215	131	190

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Seen throughout the year. Two obvious peaks occur during spring and early autumn migration. Occasionally breeds in the dune area on the north side of the estuary.

Maximum monthly counts 1985-2010:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
39	28	10	94	320	101	59	240	119	17	35	28

The largest flocks were 320 on 24 May 1997 and 262 on 30 May 1986.

Spring passage can be very short-lived lasting only two weeks (e.g. in May 1997: 58 on 13th, 145 on 16th, 122 on 19th, 320 on 24th and 32 on 31st).

Birds showing features of the northerly breeding race *C. h. tundrae* were seen in 2008 on 20 Aug (two) and 16-17 Sep.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Infrequently seen; usually only singles though two on 23 Jul 2005.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Regular in the autumn in small numbers (August onwards) and through the winter (to February-March), usually involving 1-2 birds.

Rare in summer: singles on 29 Jun-11 Jul 1995 and 13 Aug 2005 (in full breeding plumage).

An exceptional year in 1990, when birds were present continuously from 8 Sep-18 Nov, with large counts of 20 on 20 Sep and 25 on 16 Oct. Only one other large count has occurred: 20 on 17 Sep 1993.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Rarely seen using the estuary, more likely to be seen on farmland south of Lossiemouth.

Knot *Calidris canutus*

Common on the estuary though no large flocks have been recorded recently. Four records in summer: 1 Jun 1996 (two), 5 Jun 1994 (eight), 17 Jul 1995 (one) and 27 Jul 1995 (five).

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Only seen in small numbers on the estuary, as larger groups are generally present on the west and east beaches. The largest group recorded on the estuary was 127 on 26 Jul 1996. Other large groups have consisted of 97 on 26 Jul 1994, 41 on 12 Jan 2001 and 36 on 16 Dec 2000.

Late records: one on 9 Jun 1994 and two on 19-23 May 2001.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

A regular autumn migrant from mid August-mid October, though very scarce in some years. Generally seen in small numbers; 1-3 birds being recorded in most autumns. All records are of juveniles, except two adults on 30 Aug 1997. Two late records, involving single juveniles: 21 Oct 1999 and 26 Oct 2006. Exceptional numbers in August and September 1988 when a maximum count of 51 was recorded on 5 Sep.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One on 12 Jul 1994 is the only record.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

A juvenile was seen on 7-8 Sep 1988 during a period of exceptional wader passage.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Juveniles are regular autumn migrants, particularly on the mud just to the east of the footbridge. This is another species which can be very scarce in some years. Usually only seen in small numbers (less than five birds) from mid August-early October. Exceptional numbers recorded in August and September 1988 when a maximum count of 40 was recorded on 8 Sep. A late individual was present from 14-28 Oct 1990.

Only one spring record: a single bird, coming into breeding plumage, on 21-22 May 2007.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Very rare on the actual estuary, this species is more frequently recorded at the river mouth and harbour areas. One was seen on 4 Jan and 3 Feb 2008 feeding with Dunlin opposite the caravan park.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Common on the estuary, and frequently seen in all months throughout the year though only small numbers in summer. Usually two peaks noted, during spring and autumn passages.

Exceptional numbers in September 1988 when a maximum count of 552 was recorded on 19th. This arrival was slightly later than the record counts for Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper also in 1988.

A very pale leucistic individual was present on 29 Sep 1988.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

Only one record: an adult on 27 Jun 2006.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

A regular migrant recorded in the main passage period between mid July and early September – usually singles or small groups of less than five birds. Larger flocks (over five individuals) seen on 8 Aug 1986 (six), 6 Aug 1997 (six), 12 Aug 2000 (six), 27 Aug 1988 (seven) and 10 Sep 1995 (11). The majority of records relate to juveniles with only two exceptions: adult male 7 Sep 1997 and immature male 23-30 Mar 2003.

Rare in spring: immature male 23-30 Mar 2003 is only the sixth spring record for Moray & Nairn.

Latest record was one on 1 Nov 1999.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

A single on 12 Dec 1998 is the only record.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Very rare on the estuary with only five records, usually seen during periods of severe cold weather. Four present on 28 Dec 2000, though only one on 29th. Three on 24 Dec 2004. In 2010, two were seen on 3 Jan (and a single on 10 Jan when the estuary was completely frozen) and two on 20 & 26 Dec, while on 27 Nov six were present.

Migrants are occasionally seen flying over the estuary, such as three on 2 Sep 2007.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Very rare with only two records, of single birds, both during periods of severe cold weather - on 30 Dec 1995 and 1 Jan 2010. The latter individual flew south with a group of Curlew.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Seen in most years; though usually only in small numbers. All records are of the Icelandic race *islandica*, and commonest during late summer-autumn passage.

Unusual in spring: two on 3 May 2004 and 26 Apr 2005, and singles seen on 24 Apr & 8 May 1995 and 22 May 2007.

In summer: 12 in summer plumage on 23-24 Jul 1994, three on 30 Jul 2001, 31 on 27 Jul 2002, 11 on 4 Jul 2004 and 28 on 9 Jul 2010.

Records involving 10 or more birds in autumn include 11 on 14 Aug 1990, 16 on 7 Sep 2001 and 11 on 16 Aug 2002.

Very late records include two on 27 Nov 1994 and one on 11 Nov 2006.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Frequently seen on the estuary. Annual numbers were larger in the 1980s-1990s when counts of around 30-35 were frequent. Largest count was 236 on 27 Aug 1988. Numbers started to decline from 1995 onwards and latterly only singles seen. Monthly maxima since 2000 frequently involve between 1-5 birds.

Occasionally seen in full breeding plumage, including a male on 27 Jul 1996 and two males on 16 Jul 1999.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Only small numbers seen in spring: singles on 23 April 1985, 20 April 1988, 16 May 1993, 6 May 2000 and small groups on 1 May 1998 (two), 8 May 1994 (three), 19 May 2004 (two), 27 Apr 2004 (five) and 22 Apr 2010 (five).

Summer: singles on 12 & 18 Jun 1995.

Regularly seen in early autumn with returning birds often seen from mid July-September. Largest flocks were 14 on 11 Aug 1987 and 20 on 1 Sep 1997.

Scarcer from the late 1990s onwards with smaller numbers seen.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Regularly seen on the estuary throughout the year, typically largest numbers are seen during periods of migration, particularly post-breeding passage in the autumn. Usually only small numbers use the estuary for feeding, with much larger numbers loafing. Large flocks include 400 on 22 Sep 1992 and 320 on 2 Sep 2000.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Infrequent on the estuary - usually seen in very small numbers from spring to autumn. Spring arrivals from mid April.

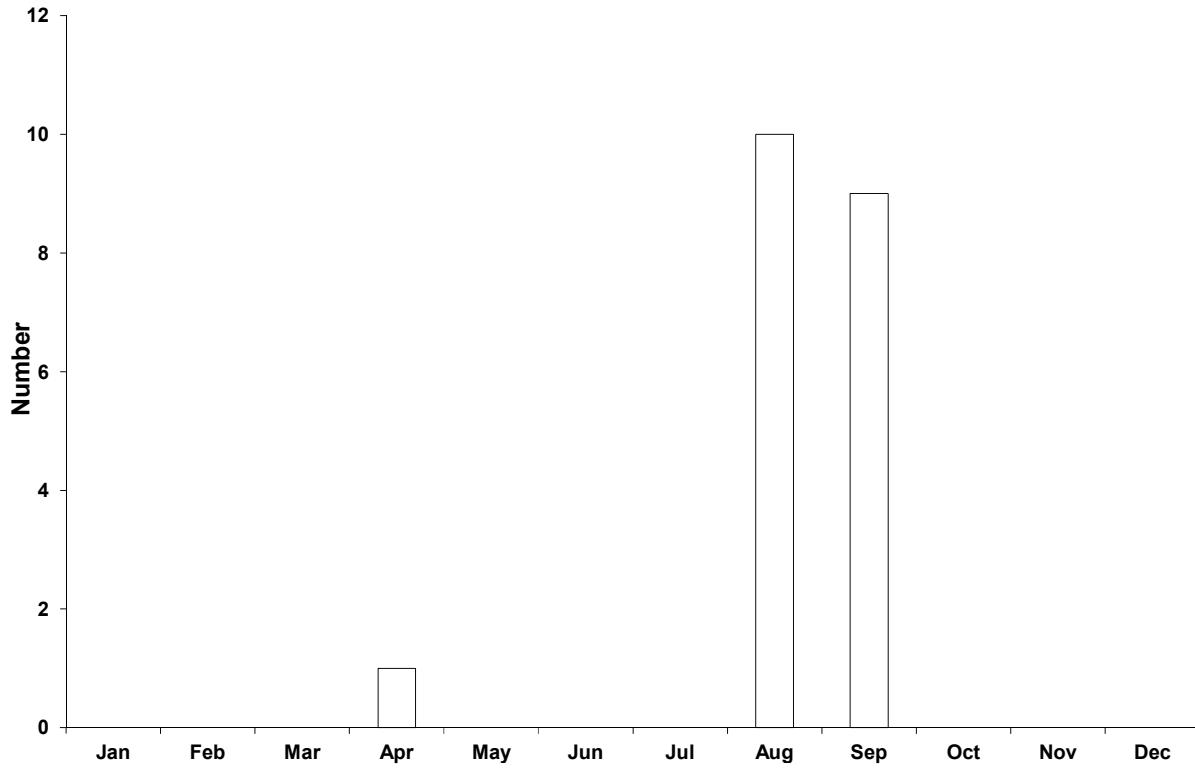
Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Four records of single birds on 15 Aug 1985, 23 Sep 1994, 2-4 Sep 1998 and 11 Sep 2010.

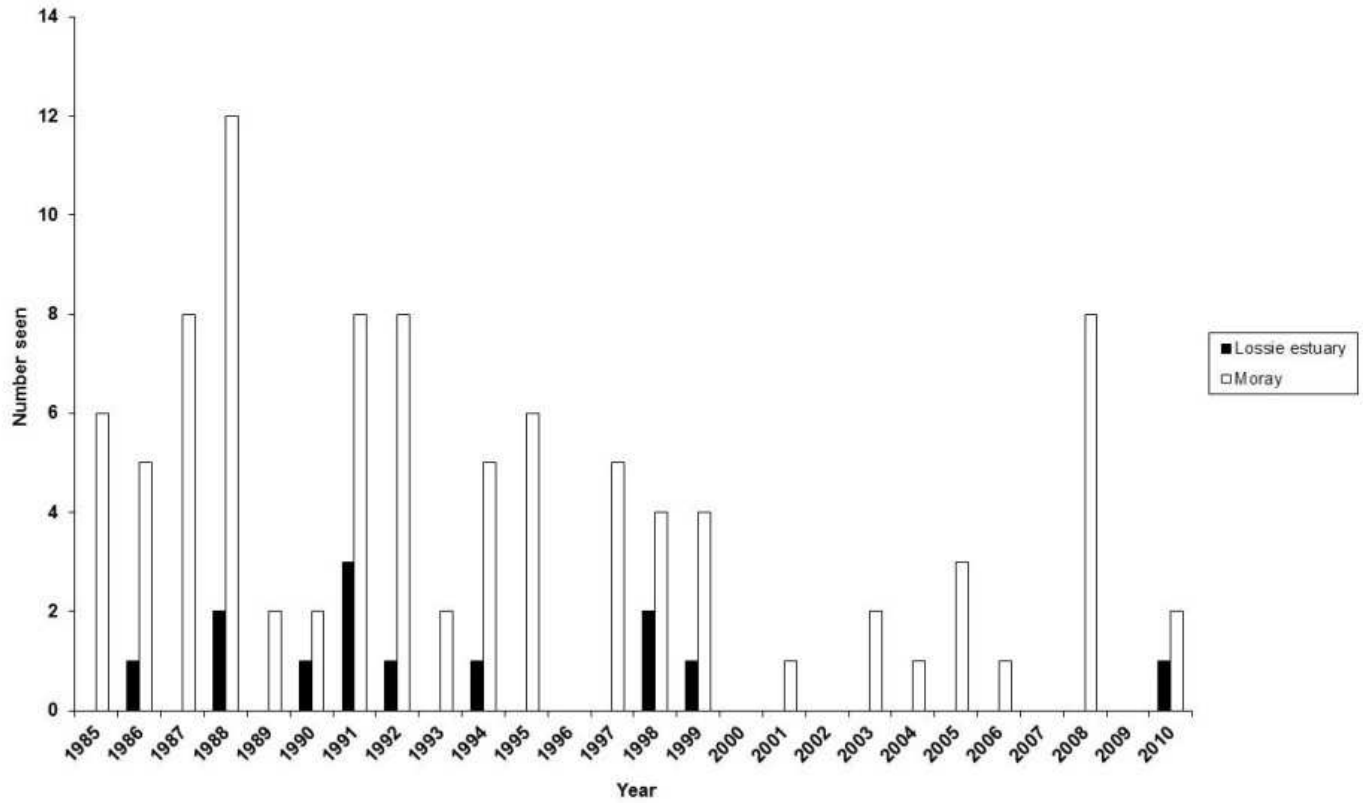
Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Single juveniles are usually seen in August-September, but much more regular prior to 2000. Unusually, a juvenile remained on the estuary from 22 Aug-31 Oct 1990. Rarely seen in spring, with only one record; a single on 28 April 1993.

Monthly totals of Spotted Redshank seen at the Lossie estuary 1985-2010:



Annual totals of Spotted Redshank in Moray and the Lossie estuary 1985-2010:



Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Regular in small numbers, with the majority of records relating to singles between early July and late September. Larger counts include: eight on 23 Aug 1990, five on 2 Aug 1991 and five on 2 & 5 Aug 1995. Unusual in spring, singles only being recorded on five occasions: 7 Apr & 2 Jun 1995, 20 Apr 2001 and 9-24 Apr (involved 3 individuals) & 30 Jun 2004. Two records of overwintering probably involved the same returning individual: 25 Sep 2004-27 Mar 2005 and Nov 2005-26 Mar 2006.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

One was present near the footbridge from 20-23 April 1984. This was the third record for Scotland.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

A juvenile photographed on 9 Sep 2010 is the only record.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Common throughout the year.

Maximum monthly counts 1985-2010:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
82	96	245	308	8	4	91	130	161	65	200	163

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Small numbers - usually less than 10 present, as most birds frequent the east and west beaches. Frequently seen in breeding plumage. One count over 10 individuals involved 17 on 17 Sep 2005.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Rare on the estuary with only four individuals recorded when they were seen harassing small gulls and terns. Only singles have been recorded: 13 Nov 1994 (adult), 2 Sep 1995, 4 Sep 2005 and 26 Sep 2009. The adult in 1994 was particularly late.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

A juvenile on 17 Oct 1991 and an adult, in off the sea and continuing south, on 12 Sep 1994 are the only records.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

Rare on the estuary with only five individuals recorded, usually seen harassing gulls: 2 Sep 1995, 6 Sep 1996, 14 Aug 2005, 19-20 Aug 2008 and 5 Sep 2010.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

Three records: a first-summer on 25 and 28 Jun 1994, a juvenile on 14-15 Sep 1994 and a first-summer on 27 Aug 1995.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Usually seen on the estuary in autumn when flocks over 1000 were common up to the mid 1990s. Largest count of loafing birds was 7000 on 24 Aug 1978. Large loafing flocks started to become rare from 1996 onwards, presumably as a result of poor breeding seasons around the North Sea.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

A first-summer bird, originally seen at Loch Spynie 23-26 May 2007 was also seen at the estuary on 25 May.

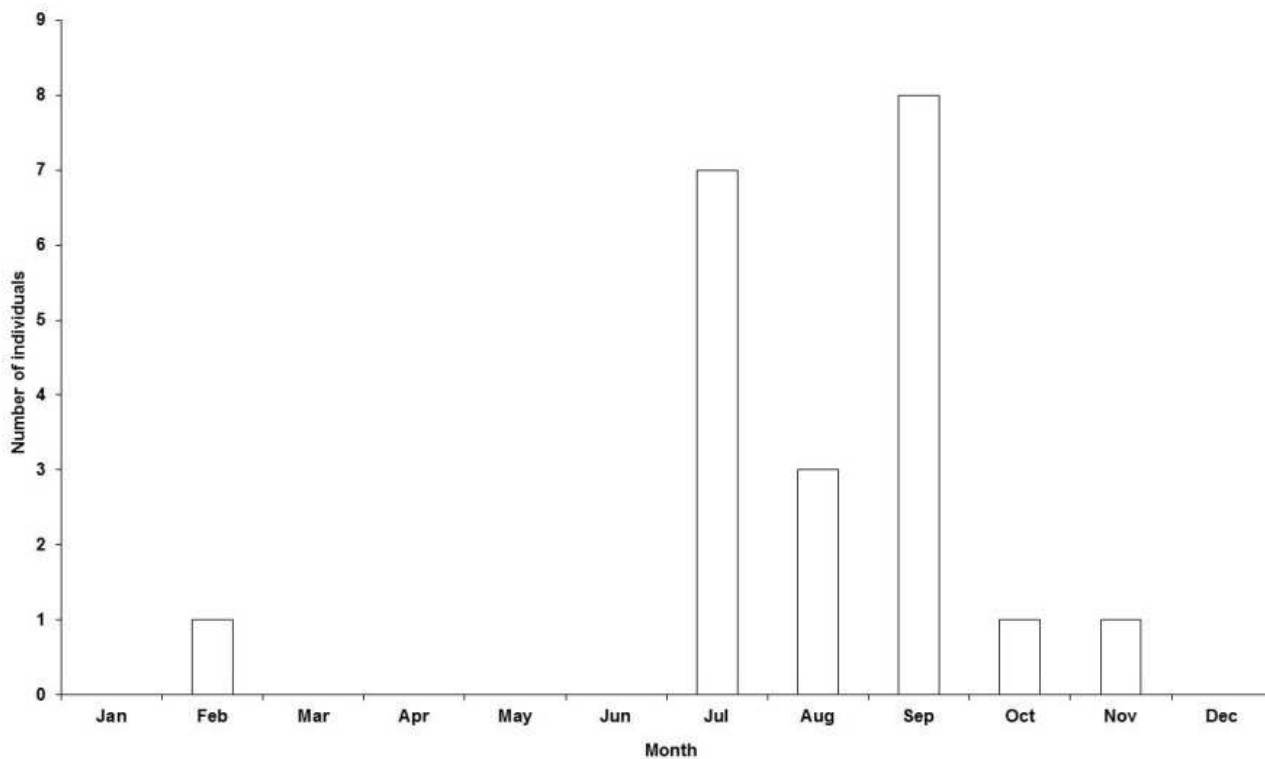
Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Present throughout the year, with larger numbers from autumn to spring.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

A regular visitor, particularly between July-September, with 22 individuals recorded. Singles usually seen except two adults 17 Jul 1987 and two first-winters 2 Sep 1997. Only one early spring record, on 16 Feb 2000.

Number of Little Gulls at the Lossie estuary 1985-2010:



The July peak consists of adults, while the September peak is predominately juveniles/first-winter individuals.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Seven records. A juvenile moulting into first-winter plumage was seen on 2 Apr and 11 May 1989. Three single first-winters: 31 Oct-1 Nov 1998, 11 Nov 2006 and 20 Sep-21 Oct 2007. A first-summer was seen on 18 Jun 2007. Two second-winter birds were seen in 2001: on 13 Dec and a differently marked individual from 16 Dec to 23 Feb 2002.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Seen throughout the year with larger numbers from autumn to spring.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

An adult on 9 Jan 1986 was probably the same individual seen at Kingston on 29 Dec 1985. (see Appendix).

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Present throughout the summer. Numbers generally small (*i.e.* less than 20), though larger counts can occur, such as 89 on 16 Jun and 153 on 24 Jul 2001. Certainly increasing in number from the mid 1990s, probably through a combination of birds using pig farms for food and local roof-top breeding.

Frequently seen in early spring (late February-early March) before the main arrival takes place. Can also be seen into late autumn, but rarely overwinters. Significant late records include singles on 10 Nov 2002, 18 Nov 1995, 25 Nov 1986 and 30 Dec 2000.

Individuals showing characteristics of *L. f. intermedius* (all singles unless noted) were seen on 10 Mar 1985, 15 Mar & 26 Sep 1986, 8 Jun 1987, 4 Jul 1988, 12 Jul 1990 (two), 9 Aug 1992, 27 Mar & 28 Aug 1995, 16 Apr 1997, 8 Jul 2003, 17 Sep 2005 (three), 18 Mar & 24 Apr 2006, 10 Aug 2010 and 22 May 2010 (colour-ringed at Vest-Agder, Norway).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Very common on the estuary throughout the year. Substantial numbers use the estuary for bathing, preening and loafing. Large numbers in early 1980s were due to nearby land-fill sites. However, in the 1990s-2000s large numbers were associated with feeding flocks at pig farms and roof-top breeding colonies in nearby towns. In winter, northern *L. a. argentatus* individuals frequently seen. Hybrids of presumed Herring Gull x Lesser Black-backed Gull (resembling Yellow-legged Gull) and Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull have also been seen.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Rare. Numbers confused by regular sightings of hybrid Herring Gull x Lesser Black-backed Gulls which can resemble this species. Documented by photographs were: two adults 29 Jun 2006, with possibly a different adult seen the following day.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*

Frequently seen, usually only 1-2 individuals per year, though occasionally 4-5. Recorded in all months. Kumlien's Gull has been recorded on two occasions - on 6 Jan 2001 and 22 Mar 2004.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

Frequently seen resting on the mud with other gulls. Five or more individuals are sometimes recorded in a year and records come from all months. Largest number together were five in 1985.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Regular throughout the year, though an obvious increase in numbers during the late summer-autumn period.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Annual in summer since 1986, though numbers using the estuary are very low and only 1-2 are usually seen. Largest count was 18 on 18-19 May 1995.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

A single on 20-22 Sep 1991 is the only record.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

After arriving in March-April usually only 1-2 birds seen on the estuary, until post-breeding groups arrive in late summer. Numbers then build up rapidly with adults and fledged young moving in from nearby breeding sites, such as Forvie Sands. Large late summer counts: 33 on 20 Sep 1992, 40 on 20 Aug 2001 and an unprecedented 134 on 2 Sep 2010.

Autumn: 6 on 6 Oct 1998.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Most frequent in late summer during post-breeding passage, although flocks are often small. Rarely, post-breeding flocks can be large e.g. 92 on 23 Jul 2009.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Two records: a single adult on 24 Aug 1986 and two adults on 9 Aug 2008.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Recently started to nest in the dune area to the north of the estuary and therefore small numbers are commonly seen throughout the summer. Rarely, post-breeding flocks can be large *e.g.* 125 on 10 Aug 2008 and 144 on 23 July 2009, increasing to 206 the following day. A late record of a first-winter on 6 Oct 1996.

Guillemot *Uria aalge*

Occasionally seen on the estuary during periods of stormy weather.

Razorbill *Alca torda*

Occasionally seen on the estuary during periods of stormy weather.

Little Auk *Alle alle*

A group of eight was seen on the estuary at high tide on 6 Jan 1996.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Occasionally seen on the estuary in small numbers (usually less than 40). Large flocks over the estuary from nearby Seatown were 153 on 20 Sep 1995 increasing to 180 on 31 Oct.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Infrequently seen on the exposed mud at low tide *e.g.* three 23 Sep 2004.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Infrequently seen on the exposed mud at low tide *e.g.* two 15 Jul 2007.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Singles seen on 5 Sep 2005 and 2 Nov 2008.

Swift *Apus apus*

Commonly seen feeding over the estuary during the breeding season. The latest record involved two birds feeding over the dunes and estuary until 15 Sep 2008.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Infrequently seen on the estuary. Singles occurred in 1986 (24 Aug), 1994 (19 Aug), 1995 (20-22 Oct & 25 Nov), 2002 (4 Jan, 4 Sep, 1 & 29 Oct and 5 Nov), 2005 (7 Oct) and 2008 (13 Oct & 2 Nov).

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Breeding birds from nearby Seatown are frequently seen in small numbers throughout the year feeding on the exposed mud. Larger numbers have included 17 on 27 Sep 2008.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Occasionally seen in small numbers on the mud of the estuary *e.g.* 31 on 15 Sep 1991 and 30 on 3 Oct 2003. Largest count was 394 on 17 Dec 1987.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Although birds are present throughout the day in small numbers, larger numbers are frequently seen as pre-roost gatherings at dusk. The nearest roost site appears to be in Lossie Forest.

Maximum monthly counts 1985-2010:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
127	91	55	35	69	80	112	54	127	76	154	90

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Since 2002, Hooded Crow has been considered a full species. Some Carrion x Hooded hybrids can look very similar to Hooded Crow, but the summary table indicates that pure Hooded Crows are only seen in small numbers.

Maximum monthly counts of 'pure' Hooded Crows 1985-2010:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3	1	3	3	2	3	3	3	6	8	2	2

Maximum monthly counts of Carrion x Hooded Crow hybrids 1985-2010:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
9	7	9	4	8	7	16	9	14	6	8	5

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

One flew over the estuary on 30 Dec 2000.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Territorial birds regularly seen and heard in the breeding season.

Flocks using the estuary included 57 on 27 Dec 1995 and 45 on 3 Jan 2010.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Frequently seen feeding over the estuary from spring to autumn.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Very common over the estuary during the summer. Post-breeding flocks feeding over the estuary can be large e.g. 52 on 19 Sep 2005.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Frequently seen feeding over the estuary in spring-autumn.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Regularly seen on the estuary in small numbers. Larger flocks are seen in late summer when juveniles have fledged and move onto the estuary to feed.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

A single was on the estuary on 28 Dec 2009, during a prolonged period of cold weather.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Frequently seen in the dune and whin areas surrounding the estuary.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Regularly seen in small numbers from April to October.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Rare on the estuary: singles recorded on 15 Aug 1987 and 1 Jan 1994.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Regular, with counts usually in the region of 10 individuals.

White Wagtail *M. a. alba* is infrequently seen, small numbers occurring during both spring and autumn migration. In spring, numbers are usually less than five, though 14 together on 5 May 2010. More unusual in late summer (singles on 8 Aug 1998 and 13 Aug 2003) and autumn (singles on 17 Sep 2002, 9 Sep (2) & 15 Sep 2003).

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Singles usually seen feeding along the northern and southern shores. Occasionally large flocks are recorded during autumn passage e.g. 109 on 4 Sep 2005.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Singles usually seen feeding along the northern and southern shores of the estuary.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Flocks are frequently seen in the dune area and on the estuary e.g. 30 on 27-28 Sep 1996.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

Rare on the estuary. In recent years only one flock, consisting of five on 6 Jan 2006.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Regular around the dune area although few flocks exceed 50. However, during the late 1980s, bait was placed in the dunes at the eastern end of the estuary. Flock sizes quickly increased to a maximum count of 200 on 29 Dec. Results from ringing indicated that the species moves widely within coastal areas in winter with movements to or from Wick, Dornoch, Ardersier and Newburgh. Two of the trapped birds were later caught in Iceland.

APPENDIX

This section gives details of historical records where the location was only recorded as 'Lossiemouth' though the species may have been recorded on the estuary.

[Chilean Flamingo *Phoenicopterus chilensis*

One on 16-17 Oct 1976.]

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

A single bird on 17 May 1969.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*

A single present on 29 Aug 1967.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

An adult on 5 Feb 1979.

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Two records. Two birds seen on 26 Nov 1972 and three on 21 Apr 1978.