

Birds in Moray & Nairn



2011

Birds in Moray & Nairn in 2011

MORAY & NAIRN BIRD REPORT

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Compiled by Martin Cook, Duncan Gibson, Andy Jensen, and Bob Proctor.

Edited by Martin Cook (Scottish Ornithologists' Club Recorder for Moray & Nairn).

Cover photograph: Common Crossbill near Keith October 2011 (David Devonport).

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 26th annual edition of *Birds in Moray & Nairn* – the second to be published online. This edition covers 2011, and the report for 2012 should appear in autumn 2013. The intention is then to produce each annual report by the autumn of the year following that to which it refers.

2011 proved to be a bird-rich year with 212 species recorded and as many as five new species added to the Moray & Nairn list. Probable over-shooting in spring brought Purple Heron and Golden Oriole to Loch Spynie, and two American waders in autumn, Long-billed Dowitcher and White-rumped Sandpiper, were not totally unexpected. Completely off everybody's radar though was the Brünnich's Guillemot which was photographed swimming in Burghead harbour in November. Accounts of the events surrounding the discovery of the five 'new' species can be found towards the back of this report.

Also unexpected was an exceptional arrival of Tundra Bean Geese and European White-fronted Geese in November – increasing the number of recent records of each species many fold. The list of other 'quality' birds in 2011 includes King Eider, Green-winged Teal, White-billed Diver, Long-tailed Skua, American Wigeon, Sabine's Gull, Surf Scoter, Little Egret, Great White Egret and Lesser Yellowlegs.

In addition to providing a vehicle for the annual *Birds in Moray & Nairn*, the new Birds in Moray and Nairn website www.birdsinmorayandnairn.org now contains a number of topical and informative features. 'Recent records' are frequently added and the excellent work of an increasing number of local bird photographers can be seen. All editions of *Birds in Moray & Nairn* back to 2001 can be accessed, and earlier editions will be added soon. Several new features are planned for the website in the future and all ideas and suggestions are welcome.

Readers of this Report may notice an increased use of the term 'Spey estuary'. It has been apparent for some time that a wader or duck on the mud or shingle near the mouth of the River Spey might have been recorded as present at Kingston, Tugnet or Speymouth. This would largely have depended on the location of the observer rather than of the bird, and would be a source of confusion for those people unfamiliar with the site. It has therefore been decided to use the term 'Spey estuary' in *Birds in Moray & Nairn* which includes all of the tidal area at the mouth of the River Spey. This is consistent with the use of 'Lossie estuary' to cover the tidal reaches of the River Lossie at Lossiemouth. There may of course continue to be instances where a record relates specifically to a site on one side of the Spey estuary – in such cases, terms such as Kingston or Tugnet will continue to be used.

The editor would like to thank Duncan Gibson, Andy Jensen and Bob Proctor for their continued assistance in writing sections of the report, and also all those observers and photographers who have contributed their records and generously permitted the use of their images.

HOW TO SUBMIT RECORDS

There are two main ways in which you can submit your records:

1. To Birdtrack

The Scottish Ornithologists' Club is now a BirdTrack partner with the BTO, RSPB and BirdWatch Ireland.

BirdTrack is an exciting new web-based bird recording project that looks at migration movements and distributions of birds throughout Britain and Ireland. It provides facilities for observers to store and manage

their own personal records as well as using these for the production of local bird reports, and to support species conservation at local, regional, national and even international scales.

The principle behind BirdTrack is that if you have been out birdwatching anywhere in Britain and Ireland, or merely watching birds in your garden, records of the birds you have seen (or indeed have not seen) can be useful data. Thus the scheme is year-round, and ongoing, and anyone with an interest in birds can contribute. Important results produced by BirdTrack include mapping migration timings and monitoring scarce birds. We know very little about the timing of arrival and departure of winter visitors and this is just one area in which BirdTrack will provide useful information. There are also many scarce birds where we would like to know much more about their populations. The SOC hopes that most birdwatchers in Scotland will soon adopt BirdTrack as their main bird recording and information sharing tool.

To find out more, or to register and get started, visit the BirdTrack website at www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack

2. To the Moray and Nairn Recorder

Records may be submitted periodically during the year or in one batch as soon as possible after the end of the year, and by the end of January at the latest. Although any format is acceptable, the Recorder would be very grateful to receive as many submissions as possible on Excel – a spreadsheet with appropriate headings may be obtained from the Recorder (see below). Minimum information required for each record should include species name, number, date and location (if possible with a 6-figure map reference, although a 4-figure map reference is often adequate).

More information on how, and where, to submit your records can be found in the ‘Submitting records’ section of the Birds in Moray and Nairn website at www.birdsinmorayandnairn.org/bird-recording/submitting-records/.

ASSESSMENT OF RARITY RECORDS

In order that an entirely accurate archive of records of rare and scarce species is maintained it is clearly important to apply consistent standards to the acceptance of such records. This is ensured through a system of assessment of written descriptions of the circumstances of the occurrence and of the bird itself. Those who make use of our reports in the future must have confidence that all published records have been scrutinised and considered acceptable by the birding community of today.

A three-tier system of record assessment exists:

British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) assesses records of extreme rarities, in a British context. The full committee contains ten voting members of which at least nine must vote in favour of a record for it to be accepted.

A list of species currently considered by BBRC can be found at www.bbrc.org.uk/currentrarespecies.htm

Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) assesses records of birds rare in a Scottish context but not sufficiently rare to be assessed by BBRC. The committee consists of seven voting members of which at least six must vote in favour.

A list of species currently considered by SBRC can be found at www.the-soc.org.uk/sbrc-list.htm

Moray & Nairn Rarities Committee (MNRC) assesses slightly less rare Scottish species and all other local rarities. The committee consists of five voting members of which at least four must vote in favour for a record to be accepted. Current membership of MNRC is Martin Cook, Roy Dennis, Duncan Gibson, Bob Proctor and Dave Pullan.

The following species are currently on the MNRC list:

Bewick's Swan	Bean Goose	American Wigeon
Green-winged Teal	Garganey (not ad.M)	Ring-necked Duck
Ruddy Duck (not ad.M)	Surf Scoter (not ad.M)	Balearic Shearwater
Leach's Petrel	Red-necked Grebe	Black-necked Grebe
White Stork	Spoonbill	Bittern
Little Egret	Great White Egret	Honey-buzzard
Rough-legged Buzzard	Hobby	Spotted Crake
Corncrake	Crane	Avocet
Little Ringed Plover	American Golden Plover	Temminck's Stint
Pectoral Sandpiper	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Red-necked Phalarope
Grey Phalarope	Long-tailed Skua	Sabine's Gull
Mediterranean Gull	Ring-billed Gull	Black Tern
Roseate Tern	Turtle Dove	Nightjar
Hoopoe	Wryneck	Green Woodpecker
Red-backed Shrike	Great Grey Shrike	Golden Oriole
Chough	Bearded Tit	Shore Lark
Pallas's Warbler	Yellow-browed Warbler	Reed Warbler
Icterine Warbler	Lesser Whitethroat	Firecrest
Nuthatch	Rose-coloured Starling	Bluethroat
Black Redstart	Yellow Wagtail	Richard's Pipit
Water Pipit	Common Rosefinch	Hawfinch
Lapland Bunting		

Please note the addition of Red-necked Grebe and Green Woodpecker to this list in 2011 and of Rough-legged Buzzard, Great White Egret and Water Pipit in 2012.

Other species recorded for the first time in Moray & Nairn, and not on BBRC or SBRC lists, are also assessed by MNRC.

If you find a rare species in Moray & Nairn, please contact the recorder (Martin Cook) who will provide forms and forward these to the relevant committee. Alternatively, further information and forms can be found and downloaded from the website at www.birdsinmorayandnairn.org/bird-recording/moray-nairn-rarities-committee/

Records of species on the lists of BBRC, SBRC or MNRC will only appear in *Birds in Moray & Nairn* following acceptance of the record by the relevant committee. It must be stressed, however, that the failure of a record to be accepted by a committee does not imply disbelief of the observer, or that the observer is mistaken in the identification; simply that not quite enough evidence has been assimilated by the observer in the time or conditions available.

OBSERVERS CONTRIBUTING TO *BIRDS IN MORAY & NAIRN 2011*

G.Addis (GAd), G.Aitken (GAa), F.Antley (FA), A.Backx (ABa), D.Baxter, G.Birnie (GBi), M.Boothman (MBo), A.Bowie (ABo), WRPBourne (WRPB), D.Bowker (DBo), S.Bradley (SBr), E.Bruce, A.Buxton, P.Campbell (RPC), B.Chappell, R.Christopher, F.C.Clark, (FCC), H.Clark (HC), J.Clarke, M.Coath, S.Cohen (SCo), G.Connell, J.Cook, M.J.H.Cook (MJHC), B.Cosnette (BCo), J.Cox, J.K.Craib (JKC), R.H.Dennis (RHD), D.G.Devonport (DGD), A.Douse (ADo), R.Eades, A.Edward (AE), C.Elder, N.Elkins, S.Elliott, C.Emson (CE), M.Esson, B.Etheridge (BE), H.Farquhar (HF), S.L.Fisher, R.Forbes, I.Francis (IFr), C.A.Gervaise (CAG), D.A.Gibson (DAG), P.Gordon Smith (PGS), M.N.Grant (MNG), I.Green, E.Griffith, A.Guthrie (AGu), K.L.Guthrie (KLG), T.Hall, J.Hammond, A.Harrison, E.Harwood (EH), T.Henton, R.Hewitt, P.T.Hirst, R.H.Hogg, H.Holbrook (HH), K.Horsfall, N.Hughes (NHug), P.Hyvonen (PH), D.C.Jardine (DCJ), O.Jenkins (OJ), R.D.Johnson (RDJ), J.Kamp, D.Kerr, S.J.Kerr, J.D.Law (JDL), A.J.Lawrence (AJL), R.Leverton (RLe), N.London (NL), M.Luckwell (ML), J.Lunn, R.Lyle, W.MacAlpine, K.McArdle, S.McArdle (SMc), J.&H.MacDonald (J&HMacD), M.Macgarvin (MMac), D.McGinn, F.McHugh (FMc), J.McKay (JMcK), T.Mackrill (TM), G.McMullins (GMcM), A.McNee, D.Main, V.Mayall, J.Milne, E.Mitchell, M.Morris (MMo), W.M.Morrison (WMM), S.Murkin (SMu), A.Murray (AMu), J.Murray (JMu), A.Musgrove, J.Mylne, S.Neal, D.Neville, D.Nicoll, D.Oakley-Martin (DO), R.Pell, D.Pierce, T.Poole, J.Pott (JPot), J.Poyner (JPoy), R.Prentice, D.Priddle (DPr), R.Proctor (RP), D.M.Pullan, S.Reed, S.Renwick, P.Roberts (PR), J.Ross, T.Rowand, L.Schofield (LSc), R.Scott, M.Sharpe (MSh), A.Shields, A.Sime (ASi), L.Simpson (LSi), S.Simpson, D.M.K.Slater (DMKS), R.Smith, M.Souter (MSo), J.Stewart-Smith, I.S.Suttie (ISS), P.Sutton (PSu), P.Swainson, W.G.Taylor, A.Tissiman (ATi), R.Tozer (RTo), A.E.Turner (AET), O.Vaughan, J.Watson, M.Weedon(MWe), E.Weston (EWe), D.Wheeler, M.Whitton, I.Wilde, J.Willet, A.Williams (AW), V.Wotton (VW), K.Yates, A.Young (AY).

Apologies to anyone accidentally omitted.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

The following terms are used at the start of each species account to denote relative abundance:

Breeding species:

Occasional	Has bred but none in most years
Rare	1-10 pairs in most years
Scarce	11-50 pairs
Fairly common	51-200 pairs
Common	201-500 pairs
Very common	more than 500 pairs

Non-breeding species:

Rare	1-20 records in total
Very scarce	Not rare but less than 10 in most years
Scarce	10-50 in most years
Fairly common	51-200 in most years
Common	201-500 annually
Very common	more than 500 annually

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Scarce resident breeder and short-distance migrant. Common in winter.

Breeding: A total of 18 apparently occupied territories was recorded in 2011, with 13 pairs producing 68 young; of these, 53 appear to have fledged. The mean total of fledged young in 2011 is slightly lower than the mean of 4.5 fledged young for 2001-2010.

Mean number of young probably fledging from those pairs known to have produced young:

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Pairs	12	17	11	13	18	19	10	14	17	17	13
Young fledged	54	56	52	67	65	110	51	59	57	84	53
Mean	4.5	3.3	4.7	5.2	3.6	5.8	5.1	4.2	3.4	4.9	4.1

Maximum monthly counts of local flocks (excluding breeding birds in April-August) were:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Loch Flemington	nc	48	nc			Breeders			nc	65	68	78
Loch Loy	nc	2	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	9	6	nc
Findhorn Bay	22	20	2	9	58	nc	nc	nc	22	2	8	3
Lossie estuary	0	0	0	2	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loch Spynie	64	41	38			Breeders			22	44	83	94
Cloddach	46	nc	24			Breeders			nc	43	25	nc
Loch Oire	6	6	4			Breeders			7	7	6	6
Loch na Bo	19	9	6			Breeders			4	7	7	15
Spey estuary	nc	2	nc			Breeders			12	2	4	3

nc = no count received

Other sites with counts of ten or more were 18 Moss of Barmuckity 3 Jan and 11 River Nairn (Nairn) 21 Sep.

Coastal records included 2 Delnies-Nairn 6 Feb. On 4 Sep, 4 flew in off the sea at Findhorn after apparently travelling from Easter Ross (RHD).



Mute Swan, Loch Spynie 2 July 2011 (Photo: Bob Proctor)

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter-spring: In Nairn District, two sites were used this year - Loch Flemington (14 on 5 Feb) and Cran Loch (11 on 19 Mar). In Moray, flocks were recorded at seven sites (six less than 2010), all were groups of less than ten except: 84 (largest count) Moss of Barmuckity 14 & 16 Feb, 73 Loch na Bo (10-11 Feb) and 21 Loch Spynie 11 Feb. Well inland during this period were two flying north Aldunie (Cabrach) 26 Jan.

Spring: The largest flocks during this period were 86 Loch na Bo 8 Mar, 51 Barmuckity 15 Mar, 32 Loch Spynie 22 Mar and 48 Pitgaveny 3 Apr. On 26 Mar, a line of 46 birds was flying north-west over the sea off Lossiemouth. In late spring, two were seen at Forres and Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 9 & 19 Apr, and one still present 1 May.

Summer: Three were in Findhorn Bay on 12 Jun (ISS). One was there on 6 Aug (DAG), and presumably the same seen on 2 Sep (MJHC), which suggests a summering individual rather than a very early migrant.

Autumn: The first flock, consisting of nine birds, was seen at Findhorn Bay 15 Sep; this is a typical arrival date. No other groups were reported in September. In October, 15 flocks were recorded; the largest group being in the Duffus Castle/Loch Spynie area where 327 were counted on 29th (this is the largest group ever recorded in the Moray & Nairn). In November, flocks with ten or more individuals were seen at 10 sites - the largest counts were 150 coming in to roost at Loch Spynie on 1st and 189 Lochhill on 17th.

Winter (December): In Nairn District, the only record was 30 Loch Flemington 11th. In Moray, seen at nine sites - the largest count being 95 Loch na Bo on 6th. One individual, flying up the River Spey at Aberlour on 6th, was well inland during this period.



Whooper Swans, Barmuckity 12 February 2011 (Photo: David Devonport)

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

Rare winter visitor.

An unprecedented influx of this species occurred from mid November onwards. Prior to 2011, there had been 11 records (involving c.38 individuals) of 'Bean Geese' since the inception of Moray & Nairn Bird Report in 1985. The vast majority of records in the current invasion related to Tundra Bean Geese *Anser fabalis rossicus*, which some authorities consider to be a separate species. There was one record of Taiga Bean Geese *Anser fabalis fabalis*.

Taiga Bean Goose

Tugnet: A group of four individuals was seen in a stubble field near Tugnet on 12 Nov (MJHC, RP, DAG).

Tundra Bean Goose

It is possible that one flock was responsible for the Gilston, Lochhill and Bogmoor records as a single Barnacle Goose was seen associating with the flock on several occasions.

Findhorn Bay: 2 Netherton area 1 Dec (RHD).

Gilston: A flock of 36 was seen in stubble at East Mains farm 13 Nov (RP, DAG, HF), dropping to 14 the next day.

Lochhill: 5 on 17 Nov (MJHC) increased to 42 on 18 Nov (ABa *et al.*).

Bogmoor/Byres: 5 on 22 Nov (MJHC) increased to 20 on 24 Nov (RHD, CAG).



Bean Geese, Tugnet 12 November 2011 (Photos: Duncan Gibson)

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Very common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter (January-mid March): Three flocks reported from Nairn District: 460 flew over Loch Flemington 5 Feb, 8 Nairn Bar 6 Feb and c.3000, including a leucistic individual, Broadley (Nairn) 2 Mar. Typically in Moray District, well scattered reports throughout the coastal area but only a small number of sites containing flocks over 1000 individuals, these included: 1000 flying west Elgin 20 Jan, 1000+ flying east over the sea at Spey Bay 24 Feb, 3500 Miltonhill 24 Feb, 8000 Miltonhill 2 Mar, 2000 Cloddach 3 Mar, 1800 Miltonhill 16 Mar and 2500 Ardivot 19 Mar. On 1 Mar, 9,700 came to roost in Findhorn Bay.

Spring passage (max. counts): The largest flocks seen during this period were characteristically in the Kinloss/Findhorn Bay area where 1800 Miltonhill 3 Apr, 1200 Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 14 Apr and 4000 Findhorn Bay 15 Apr where numbers fell to 800 on 5 May, 240 on 13 May and 36 on 20 May. Three injured birds were in Findhorn Bay on 23 Jun.

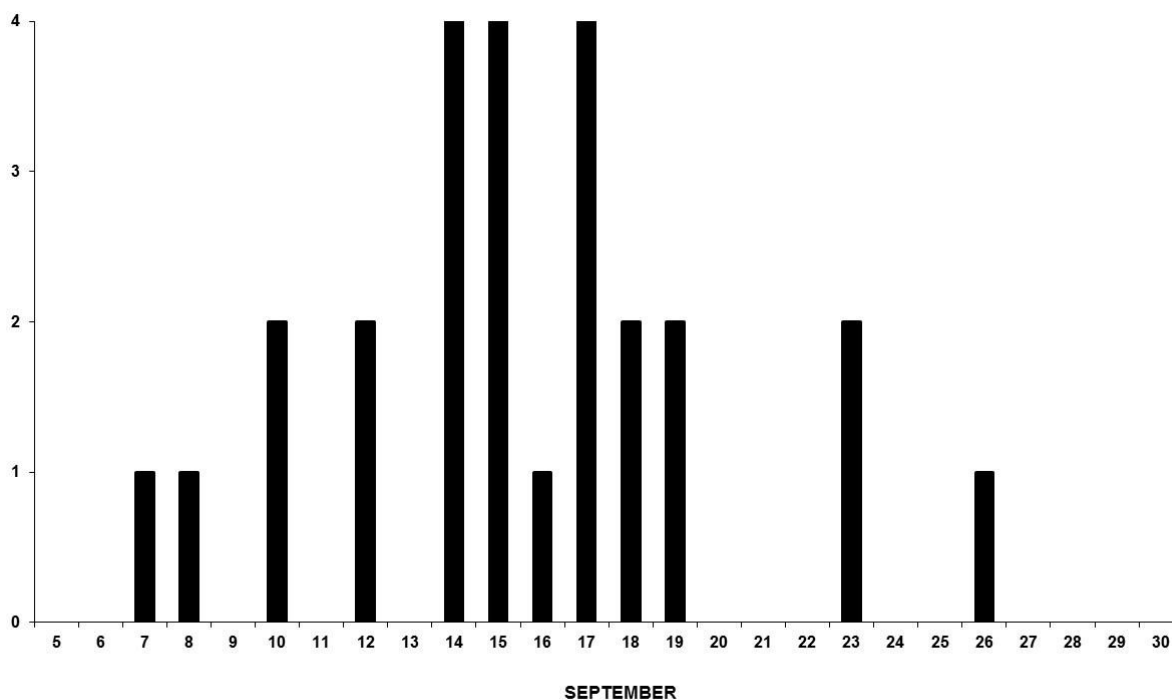
Elsewhere, numbers were usually much lower with the only sizeable flocks being 1000 flying west at The Lein (Kingston) 6 Apr, 3000 west of Nairn 8 Apr, 600 Dava 13 Apr and 1200 flying north Burghead 3 May.

Summer: Sightings at Findhorn Bay included 14 flying west on 26 Jun (IFr) – a very unusual date for so many birds in Moray, and two on 5 Aug (AJL). Another record from Findhorn Bay on 2 Sep (MJHC) is also likely to be a summering individual rather than an early returning bird.

Autumn: The first arrivals were three skeins on 10 Sep (very slightly earlier than the 'typical' mid-September arrival date): 54 over Conicavel, 60 Cummingston and 90 over South Darkland. A further seven

skeins arrived on 11 Sep and involved 142 (two groups) at Findhorn Bay, 194 (three groups) flying east and a single on the Spey estuary, 22 in from the north at Tugnet and 50 flying east at Clochan.

Frequency of arrival dates of first autumn flocks of Pink-footed Goose 1985-2011:



Between 13-29 Sep, a total of nine skeins were reported, with the largest numbers arriving on 23rd: Findhorn Bay (1400), Archiestown (1050 flying south-east in six skeins) and Elgin (150 flying south). On 17th, a stubble field at Easter Newforres contained 4600 and on 19th and 23rd 4000 were in Findhorn Bay. In October, the largest flocks were at Milltown airfield (c.8000 on 24th & 26th) and Findhorn Bay (c.9500 on 1st, c.6100 on 3rd, c.5200 on 8th and c.7000 on 24th). In November, flocks over 1000 were seen at Barmuckity (c.3000 on 19th), Lochhill (c.2000 on the ground and a further c.1000 flying east on 17th) and Bogmoor (c.2000 on 22nd and 24th). The largest flock in Nairn District in November was 550 Sunnyhillock on 5th.

Winter: Typically for recent years, only two large flocks reported during December, but unlike recent years both exceeded 1000 individuals: c.1200 Findhorn Bay on 4th and c.1000 Barmuckity on 11th and at nearby Easter Bauds on 15th.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Very scarce winter visitor.

No records relating to the Greenland race *A.a.flavirostris* were received.

An unprecedented influx of European White-fronted Goose *A.a.albifrons* occurred from mid-November onwards. These are the first records of European White-fronted Goose since 2004 when a single was seen at Windyridge, Wester Calcots and Barmuckity. It is difficult to accurately assess the numbers involved in the influx as flocks were mobile.

Tugnet: 15 in a stubble field on 12 Nov (MJHC, RP, DAG, EH), were the first to be found during the influx.

- Gilston area: A flock of 57 in a stubble field at East Mains farm 13 Nov (RP, DAG, HF), dropping to 20 the next day. A group of 10 were present at Loch Spynie 26 Nov (EH) with nine still present on 27 Nov (DAG).
- Lochhill: A group of 20+ seen on 13 Nov (HF) increased rapidly to 160 counted on the ground, while a further 139 circled the field but continued flying east with Pink-footed Geese on 17 Nov (RP). Away from the immediate area of Lochhill a flock included 24 Garmouth 17 Nov (CAG).
- Kinloss: 6 at Hatton 15 Nov (RHD).
- Barmuckity: An estimated 20 present on stubble 17 Nov (RP).
- Easter Bauds: 30 on 15 Dec (RHD).
- Bogmoor: A group of 76 on 22 Nov (MJHC) and 40 on 24 Nov (RHD).
- Findhorn Bay: 17 at Netherton 1 Dec (RHD).



White-fronted Geese (8) with a Greylag (centre), Pink-footed Geese and Whooper Swans, Lochhill 16 November 2011 (Photo: Tony Backx)

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Rare breeder and very common winter visitor.

Winter-spring: Flocks containing 500 or more birds were recorded at only two sites (six sites in 2010), maximum counts at each site were: c.500 Milntown 7 Mar and c.700 Ardivot 19 Mar. Thirteen other sites held small flocks, all under 350 individuals, confirming that this once common species is becoming more unusual locally as birds winter further north.

Range of flock sizes Jan-Apr 2011:

1-100	101-200	201-300	301-400
19	5	2	2

Summer: 3 Cloddach quarry 8 May, 1 Loch Spynie 9-10 May (2 on 1 Jun; may have involved the Cloddach quarry individuals), 5 Findhorn Bay 31 May and 6 flying west Archiestown 1 Jun.

Breeding: A new breeding site, and the first in the coastal strip, was found at Cunninghaugh pool; a pair present on 14 Apr was found to have produced three chicks (seen on 30 May, 27 Jun and 9 Jul) but only two appear to have fledged (seen 1 Aug) (MJHC). What was presumably the family group was seen on the Spey estuary on 17 & 28 Sep and Dallachy tip pool 22 Nov (MJHC).

Late summer: Reports from the coastal strip are increasing during this period, presumably as a result of local post-breeding movements. Records in July-early September (before the traditional arrival date for Icelandic breeders in late September) came from Whiteness Head (17 on 25 Jul), Loch Spynie (3 on 14 Aug; Cloddach quarry birds?), Nairn (6 on 19 Aug), Findhorn Bay (4 Aug-19 Sep [max. 180 on 19 & 27 Aug]), Burgie (c.150 on 7 Sep) and Clochan (11 south on 10 Sep).

Autumn: Now difficult to assess which are local birds and which are Icelandic breeders returning in late September. A hybrid of presumed Greylag Goose × Canada Goose parentage was seen on the Spey estuary 17 Sep (MJHC). The only large count during October was 100 Milltown airfield on 22nd. In November, six counts exceeded 100 from three sites; Lochhill (max. c.1000 on 17th), Urquhart (100 on 2nd) and Cloddach quarry (100 on 8th). The remaining eight counts in November did not exceed 30.

Winter (max. counts only): No flocks over 500 were recorded. The largest count in this period was 185 Findhorn Bay 4 Dec.



Greylag Geese, pair with brood of three young, Cunninghaugh 9 July 2011 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Scarce migrant in summer, rare in winter.

Spring: Singles were present at Loch Spynie on 24 Apr (DAG, RHD) and 13 May (CAG).

Summer and early autumn passage: In early June the first three flocks were seen at Clochan (40 flying west on 1st), Lossie estuary (16 on 1st) and Loch Spynie (14 on 1st). Over the following days, groups were seen on 2nd (9 Spey estuary), 3rd (7 Loch Spynie), 7th (single Dallachy tip pool), 9th (18 Loch Spynie), 10th (16 flying west Kingston), 11th (12 Spey estuary), 14th (12 Lossie estuary) and 19th (13 Spey estuary). Large numbers were seen in August at Findhorn Bay; 25 on 5th, 58 on 23rd, 88 on 27th, 32 on 29th and 28 on 31st. In September, 32 were still present in Findhorn Bay (11th).

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis**Scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

Winter-spring: Seen at three sites; Mosstowie (a single 27 Feb), Findhorn Bay (seen six times between 14 Apr-31 May, max. 7 on 3 May) and Burghead (2 on 13 May, these were probably part of the Findhorn Bay group as two were seen in Findhorn Bay 14 May).

Summer: On 26 Jul and 1 Aug, a group of 11 (3 adults, 8 juveniles) was seen at the Spey estuary (MJHC). This record suggests a feral origin, similar to that reported in MNBR 2009. Singles were then seen at the Spey estuary on 11, 13 & 16 Aug.

Autumn: First were 2 Findhorn Bay 23 Sep. 1 Milltown airfield 24 Oct and Spey estuary 26 & 31 Oct may suggest that the same long-staying individual was involved. Nine on the shingle at Spey estuary 4 Oct could refer to the presumed feral breeding group. Elsewhere in October, 6 Findhorn Bay 9th. In November, seen at three sites: East Mains, Gilston (12 on 13th and 11 on 14th), Lochhill (max. 15 on 16th, otherwise 1-2 individuals 13th-19th) and Bogmoor (single on 22nd & 24th).

Winter: No reports during this period.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla**Scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

All but one record was assigned to Light-bellied Brent Goose *B.b.hrota*.

Winter: Present in the Nairn area from 9 Jan-2 Apr; of the 15 counts submitted during this period nine exceeded 60 individuals (max. count was 64 on 9 Jan).

Spring: One Lossiemouth west beach 22 May.

Summer: A single Spey estuary 25 & 27 Jun (DAG, MJHC). Previous summer records have included one on 17 Jul 1984 at Lossiemouth and one Dark-bellied on 10-11 Jul 2002 at Lossie estuary.

Autumn passage period (September-October): Singles at Findhorn Bay 1 & 9 Oct, Spey estuary 7 Oct and Nairn Bar 16 Oct.

Winter: Present in the Nairn area from 1 Nov-11 Dec; of the six counts submitted during this period the max. count was 34 on 11 Dec. Elsewhere, 7 Lossie estuary 26 Nov.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *B.b.bernicla*: 1 Findhorn Bay 13 Sep (AJL).

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna**Fairly common visitor in winter and spring. Scarce breeder.*

Breeding: No details of individual broods were received. One crèche containing 20+ young was seen Findhorn Bay 31 May and on 23 Jun there were two crèches, of 18 and 8 young. Two well-grown young were seen at Tugnet 14 & 17 Jul, and juveniles were seen at Findhorn Bay 10 Aug and Spey estuary 31 Aug. In potential breeding areas were 'pairs' at Burnside of Birnie pool, Cloddach quarry, Lhanbryde, Loch Spynie and Lossie estuary.

Best monthly counts at coastal sites were as follows:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Nairn/Culbin Bars	109	133	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	56	93
Findhorn Bay	42	121	9	71	76	85	116*	12	nc	3	3	42
Lossie estuary	nc	2	2	2	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Spey estuary	nc	4	6	8	6	12	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

* including 18 large young

[Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata**Escape.*

A single was present throughout the year at the Cooper Park pond, Elgin (RP).]

Mandarin *Aix galericulata**Probable escape or feral origin.*

In the Elgin area, a single male was present at Burnside of Birnie pool 16 Mar (MJHC) and later in the year, a pair was present on the Cooper Park pond, Elgin 26 Dec (RP). 'Several', including a pair, were seen along the Budgate-Holme Rose (Cawdor) stretch of the River Nairn 7 May (GAa); these are likely to have escaped from a collection at Clava (per Hugh Insley).



Mandarins (male [left] and female), Cooper Park (Elgin) 26 December 2011 (Photo: Bob Proctor)

Wigeon *Anas penelope**Very common winter visitor and rare breeder.*

Breeding: No records received from the traditional Dava breeding area.

Non-breeders in summer (May-July): 2 Spey estuary 30 May, 3 Spey estuary 10 Jun and 1 Loch Spynie 8 May-10 Jul.

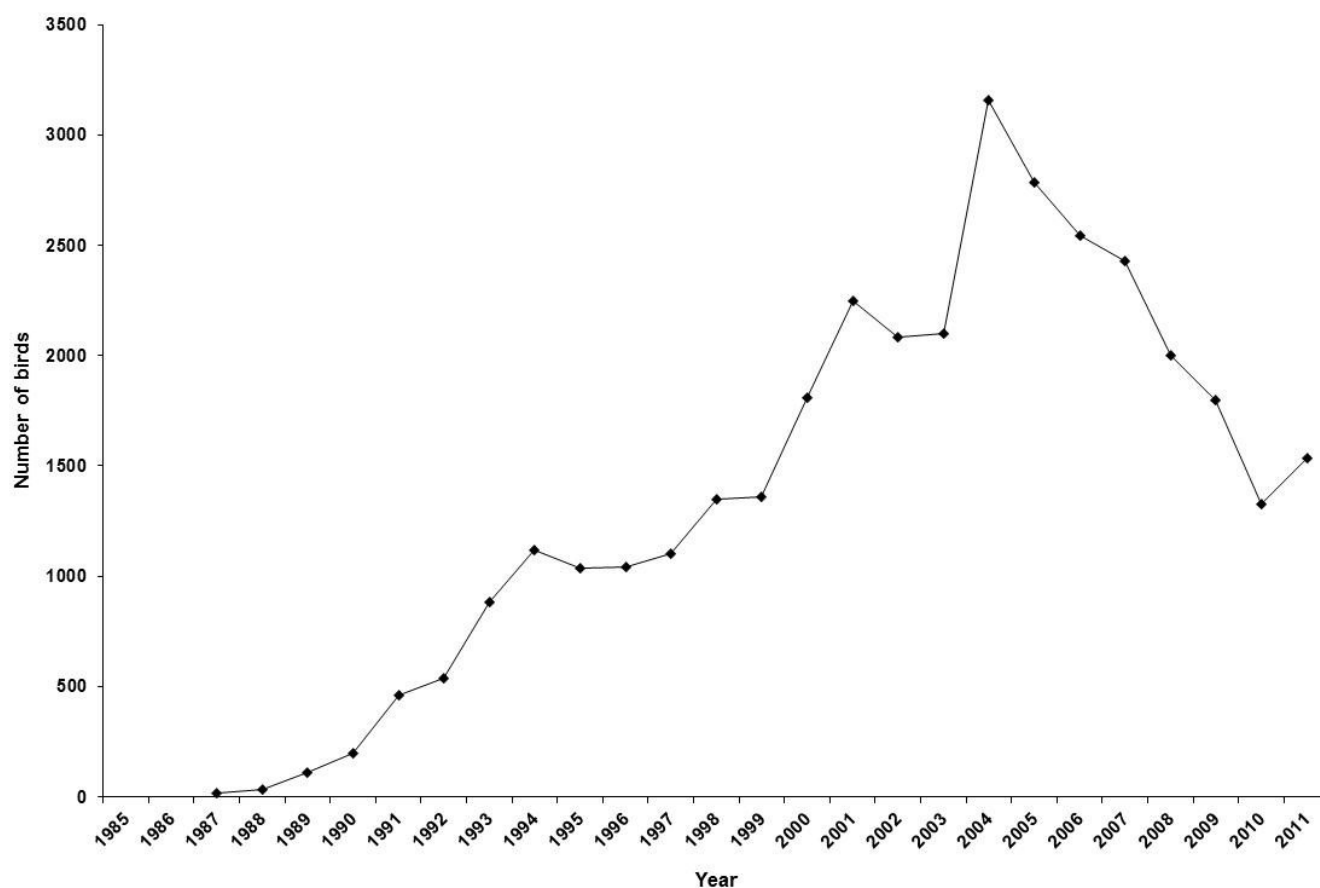
Larger counts in late summer included: 18 Spey estuary 8 Jul and 15 Loch Spynie 28 Jul.

Winter: Monthly maximum counts at main coastal sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	697	221	nc	nc	nc	506	nc	647
Findhorn Bay	580	713	5	nc	150	1268	900	429
Lossie estuary	1533	1130	552	23	122	536	760	1294
Spey estuary	150	146	62	10	66	100	130	160

Numbers of Wigeon using Lossie estuary increased for the first time in six years. The peak count of 3158 occurred in 2004.

Annual maxima of Wigeon at the Lossie estuary 1985-2011:



On freshwater:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	nc	37	nc	nc				nc	nc	115	160	44
Loch Loy	nc	25	19	nc				nc	nc	50	79	nc
Loch Spynie	11	nc	nc	2				1	nc	nc	4	3
Cloddach quarry	580	nc	300	7				nc	nc	110	124	nc
Loch Oire	33	105	32	3				nc	20	140	170	45
Loch na Bo	100	56	7	nc				nc	nc	5	8	150

American Wigeon *Anas americana*

Rare visitor.

An eclipse male was seen and photographed at the Spey estuary on 11 Sep (MJHC). This is about the 9th individual (not including known returning birds) for Moray & Nairn.



American Wigeon (eclipse adult male), Spey estuary 11 September 2011 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Scarce visitor.

Seen at seven sites (the same as in 2010).

Loch Flemington: 3 on 16 Oct (DCJ).

Findhorn Bay: 1 male 9 Oct (RHD).

Loch Spynie: A pair was present on 21 Apr (DAG, HF) and a male only on 25 Apr (DAG, CAG). Two were seen on 4 May (Spynie logbook), potentially the pair seen at Kingston.

Cloddach quarry: A male on 10 Apr (MJHC). A pair on 8 May (MJHC) may have been the pair seen earlier at Kingston and Loch Spynie.

Loch Oire: Recorded throughout the year. Singles were seen on 53 dates between 1 Feb and 30 Dec (submitted as a male on nine occasions – and most records are likely to refer to a single long-staying male). A pair was present on 14 dates between 20 Mar and 26 Apr (DAG, MJHC, EH, CAG), with two pairs on 3-12 Apr (MJHC *et al*).

Loch na Bo: A male on 24 Feb (RHD).

Spey estuary: A pair present 2 May (MJHC).

Teal *Anas crecca*

Scarce breeder and very common winter visitor.

Breeding: No confirmed breeding reports were received this year.

Potential inland breeding sites occupied during the breeding season included Black Hillock, Feith Musach (female) and Loch Kirkaldy (5 on 19 Apr).

Potential coastal strip breeding sites included Chapleton (max. 15 on 3 Apr), Burnside of Birnie pool (two pairs), Loch Spynie (pair), Spey estuary (max. 11 on 15 Jun), Cunninghaugh pool (pair) and Montgrew (two pairs).

Monthly maximum counts from main coastal and inland sites outside the breeding season were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	nc	120	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	17
Nairn/Culbin Bars	169	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	13
Cran Loch	nc	nc	60	nc	nc	nc	8	240	nc
Findhorn Bay	92	8	nc	4	nc	nc	1	nc	11
Lossie estuary	195	9	21	nc	17	2	7	17	58
Loch Spynie	414	28	100	4	nc	100	2	25	100
Spynie Canal	300	150	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	100	nc
Cloddach quarry	21	nc	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	10	nc
Loch Oire	9	13	3	1	nc	nc	5	25	14
Loch na Bo	25	5	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Spey estuary	235	26	74	26	90	165	210	110	85

Two other large counts: 94 Lake of Moy 8 Nov and 50 Chapelton marsh in mid February.

Interestingly, none were present on the Lossie estuary 1 Jan, despite 219 being present on 26 Dec 2010, though 195 had returned by 9 Jan (RP). Two were seen continuously diving in Spynie canal on 5 Nov.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Rare visitor.

A male Spynie Canal 2 Jan (MJHC) was initially seen here from 13 Nov-31 Dec 2010.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident breeder and common winter visitor.

Breeding: The mean brood size from seven broods was 9.4 chicks. All reported broods (mostly uncounted) were within the coastal strip at Loch Spynie, Loch Oire, Cunninghaugh pool, Dipple, Fochabers and Montgrew. Other potential sites occupied during the breeding season were Black Hillock, Knockando, Loch Kirkaldy and Lochindorb.

Regular counts from freshwater sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Spynie	187	41	5	2	4	nc	196	60	31	17	31	164
Loch Oire	120	142	20	8	18	57	80	28	15	14	18	58
Loch na Bo	195	75	24	3	5	2	20	7	8	2	12	87

Other counts from freshwater sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	nc	22	nc	nc	13	36	nc
Loch Loy	nc	60	15	nc	57	60	nc
Cran Loch	nc	nc	3	nc	nc	20	nc
Cooper park (Elgin)	29	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Cloddach quarry	155	nc	36	nc	80	181	nc
Burnside of Birnie	nc	nc	2	nc	nc	nc	nc
Dallachy tip pool	6	7	8	21	11	6	14

Coastal sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	450	4	nc	nc	nc	13	nc	204
Findhorn Bay	400	309	nc	144	300	48	nc	437
Lossie estuary	12	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	10
Spey estuary	nc	nc	nc	108	130	80	nc	4

Other coastal counts exceeding 50 birds included: 139 Portgordon-Strathlene 6 Feb, 86 Gollachy Burn (Portgordon) 23 Feb, 69 Lossie estuary 24 Jul and 58 Portgordon harbour 9 Jan.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Fairly common winter visitor and migrant. Occasional breeder.

Present at five sites (also five in 2010).

Spey estuary: 1 female on 5 Jun, 8 on 8 Sep and 1 on 11 Sep (MJHC).

Nairn Bar: 36 on 9 Jan (DCJ).

Nairn harbour: A male in the harbour in December (RPC).

Loch Loy: 2 on 16 Oct (ADo).

Findhorn Bay: Present from 2 Jan-9 Apr and 23 Sep-30 Dec. Another increase in numbers with ten records in excess of 100. The count of 212 on 6 Feb (ABa, BE) is the highest count ever recorded in Moray & Nairn, considerably exceeding the previous highest of 156 on 14 Feb 2010. On 28 Feb, 90+ were on the sea off the river mouth (RHD).

Maximum monthly counts at Findhorn Bay:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
88	212	123	8	66	140	145	120

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Very scarce migrant.

Only two records; a male at Loch Spynie 25 Apr (HF, DAG, CAG, RHD) and 2 Loch Flemington 11 May (per Birdguides).

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Occasional breeder and scarce migrant.

Seen at only three sites, four less than 2010.

Loch Spynie: Two males on 23 Apr (DAG, RHD). Single males on 3 Mar (MJHC, DAG) and 27 Mar (CAG, EMit). In autumn, a male and a female were present between 15-21 Nov (MSo, JDL, CAG *et al.*).

Spey estuary: Single males on 9 Apr (DAG) and 10 Jun (MJHC). Two males and a female were present on 11 Sep (RP).

Alves: A male was on a pool north of the village on 3 Apr (RHD).

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Scarce winter visitor and occasional breeder.

Recorded at five sites, three more than 2010.

Loch Spynie:	In the early part of the year only a single male on 27 Feb (DAG, CAG). In late summer a female was seen on 10 Jul & 6 Aug (DAG, MJHC, DCJ). In Oct, 6 on 1 st , 3 on 16 th and then only a single male from 18 th -26 th and a female on 25 th . Numbers were high in the second winter period for this site in recent years. In early November, a single male was present on 6 th . An influx appears to have occurred in mid November when seen almost daily from 12 th (14) to 28 th (11); max. count 20 on 15 th -16 th (MSO, CAG). In Dec, numbers fell slightly to a maximum of 11 on 6 th & 13 th .
Cloddach quarry:	A female on 20 Nov (MJHC).
Loch na Bo:	Seen in the second winter period; a male on 4 Oct, 6 on 15 Nov, 8 on 2 Dec, and then a single male on 27 Dec (MJHC).
Loch Oire:	A male on 14 Mar and one bird on 6 Oct (EH).
Dallachy tip pool:	A male on 3 Sep & 22 Nov (MJHC).

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligala*

Scarce breeder and common winter visitor.

Breeding: The mean brood size from four broods was 4.2 chicks. Broods were seen at Loch Flemington, Loch Spynie and Loch Oire. An Otter was seen eating one duckling at Loch Spynie on 31 Jul (DAG).

Other potential breeding sites occupied during the summer months included Burnside of Birnie pool, Cloddach quarry, Cunninghaugh pool, Dallachy tip pool, Dava lochans, Kingston, Kinloss, Loch Kirkaldy and Loch na Bo.

Monthly maximum counts (excluding ducklings) at main sites were:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Loch Loy	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	nc
Loch Spynie	82	51	16	80	27	9	25	19	18	36	76	68
Cloddach quarry	26	nc	35	6	18	nc	nc	nc	nc	15	19	nc
Cooper Park	69	38	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	21
Loch na Bo	31	9	33	2	3	nc	18	57	23	54	56	73
Loch Oire	17	82	85	61	33	36	43	34	46	10	6	1
Dallachy tip pool	10	22	5	3	11	nc	nc	nc	11	4	3	10

Elsewhere, the only other high count received was 15 Loch Flemington 5 Feb.

Coastal records included 18 River Nairn (Nairn) 7 Jan and 5 Kingston 11 Jan.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Scarce winter visitor.

At the coast, surprisingly scarce this year with only one record received: 1 Nairn Bar 9 Jan (DCJ).

Inland, seen at three sites:

Loch Spynie: In the early part of the year, a male and female were seen together on 11 dates between 17 Feb-20 Mar: the male was regularly seen alone from 22 Jan-30 Apr and the female was seen alone intermittently between 28 Feb-25 Apr. Unsexed singles were present on 12, 18 & 19 Feb, 27 Mar and 3 Apr, unfortunately it is unclear which individuals these records refer to. Two males present on 22 Apr (AJL).
Later in the year, a single male on 13 Sep was the only record until Oct when a female was present from 18 Oct-30 Dec. The maximum count for this period was three (male, female & first-winter male) on 12 Nov, with the female and first-winter male still present on 13 & 15 Nov.

Loch na Bo: A male on 12 Mar (MJHC).

Loch Oire: A small male present on 15 Feb (MJHC, RP) required Lesser Scaup to be eliminated.

Eider *Somateria mollissima**Scarce breeder, common offshore.*

Breeding: Four broods were seen in the Buckie area (Buckie harbour, Strathlene (2 broods) and Portknockie) giving a mean brood size of 2.8 chicks. The mean size from 1988-2010 is 3.0 chicks.

Regular counts from Burghead Bay:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burghead Bay	30	100	53	12	nc	15	42	95	184	535	270	86

Other counts included:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	3	34	2	nc	38
Nairn/Culbin Bars	13	31	1	nc	24
Burghead-Hopeman	158	106	7	nc	185
Portgordon-Strathlene	22	64	nc	nc	59

Maximum counts over 100 were: 500 off Kingston 23 Oct and 220 Nairn west beach 2 Aug.

Similar behaviour to last year saw large numbers inside Burghead harbour in winter. The largest counts were 114 on 1 Jan and 89 on 24 Dec (RP).

A male with 'sails' suggestive of Northern Eider *S.m.borealis* was seen off Burghead on 18 Dec (DMP) and 24 Dec (RP).



Possible Northern Eider *S.m.borealis* (top) with Eider, Burghead 18 December 2011 (Photo: Dave Pullan)

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*

Rare visitor.

Seen in both winter periods in the Burghead area, however, only one male was recorded this year.

Early winter period: Present from 1 Jan-14 Mar (MJHC *et al.*).

Late winter period: Present from 23 Sep-31 Dec (MJHC *et al.*). Recorded in eclipse plumage on four occasions off Roseisle picnic site between 23 Sep-23 Oct. Often seen in the harbour with Eiders between 12-30 Dec (DAG *et al.*).

King Eiders have now been seen in Moray & Nairn in 20 of the last 36 years, although the likelihood of returning birds makes any assessment of the number of individuals involved very uncertain. All have been males.



King Eider (eclipse male [right]), Burghead Bay 23 September 2011 (Photo: Martin Cook)



King Eider, Burghead 15 December 2011 (Photo: David Devonport)

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis**Common winter visitor offshore.*No coastal summer records (June-July) were received for the 4th consecutive year.

Coastal records in late spring were: 4 Burghead 2 May and 2 Spey Bay 2-3 May.

Maximum monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	13	47	nc	nc	20	nc	67
Nairn	nc	nc	nc	8	80	12	nc
Nairn Bar	8	6	nc	nc	22	nc	355
Culbin Bar	8	2	nc	29	32	nc	704
Off Findhorn	3	60	150	3000	nc	nc	nc
Burghead Bay	7	nc	139	nc	121	100	200
Off Burghead	11	nc	nc	530	9	nc	nc
Burghead-Hopeman	14	28	nc	nc	nc	nc	23
Portgordon-Strathlene	nc	35	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

No inland records were received.



Long-tailed Duck (male), Burghead 17 March 2011 (Photo: David Devonport)

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra**Common winter visitor, small numbers in summer.*

Maximum monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	nc	55
Nairn Bar	11	10	nc	nc	nc	190	180	420
Culbin Bar	5	7	nc	nc	nc	3	nc	240
Off Findhorn	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	120	5	nc
Burghead Bay	11	nc	17	150	125	300	215	94
Burghead-Hopeman	nc	15	nc	nc	nc	2	nc	19
Lossiemouth	nc	nc	nc	nc	23	nc	nc	nc

Other counts exceeding 50 individuals were 180 Spey Bay 14 Apr and 71 Burghead Bay 14 Apr.

Summer records included c.70 flying east off Lossiemouth 24 Jun (c.11 flying east 28 Jun) and 28 Burghead Bay 27 Jul.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata**Very scarce visitor.*

Culbin Bar: A male on 25 Apr (PH).

Burghead Bay: A male seen on 2, 8 & 25 Oct (MJHC *et al.*).**Velvet Scoter** *Melanitta fusca**Fairly common winter visitor.*

Maximum counts for main areas were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn Bar	4	8	nc		9	nc	47
Culbin Bar	1	3	nc	31	7	nc	70 (27 th)
Burghead Bay	135 (9 th)	nc	43	22	45	51 (6 th)	46

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula**Rare breeder and fairly common winter visitor.*

Breeding: No breeding records were received this year.

Display was noted at Loch Spynie (February) and Lossie estuary (March).

Spring records: A single remained at Loch Spynie 3-10 May and a male on the River Spey (Dipple) 11 May.

Coastal summer records included: 4 males Burghead Bay 27 May and a female Spey estuary 22 & 31 Jul.

Maximum counts on most frequented lochs were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	nc	17	nc	nc	nc	nc	9
Loch Loy	nc	nc	3	nc	nc	nc	nc
Loch Spynie	40	77	56	28	30	58	56
Cloddach quarry	2	nc	16	1	nc	2	nc
Loch na Bo	16	17	52	nc	2	4	11
Loch Oire	4	13	3	9	1	4	3
Dallachy tip pool	5	12	9	4	nc	3	11

The spring build-up in numbers was evident on Loch Spynie and Loch na Bo.

Seen on two rivers during the winter periods. On the River Spey, 3 on 9 Feb and 2 on 29 Dec at Aberlour, and 2 pairs on 30 Mar between Dipple-Craigs of Cuildell. On the River Lossie, 1 Elgin 11 Jan.

Maximum counts at most frequented coastal sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	9	24	nc	nc	nc	nc	2
Nairn/Culbin Bars	8	12	nc	nc	nc	nc	10
Findhorn Bay	10	21	nc	nc	nc	38	42
Burghead Bay	2	nc	6	nc	nc	4	1
Burghead-Hopeman	21	22	nc	nc	nc	nc	8
Lossie estuary	5	1	2	nc	nc	nc	1
Spey estuary	12	32	nc	16	18	59	6
Portgordon-Strathlene	6	22	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Scarce breeder, fairly common offshore.

Breeding: A female with a brood of nine young was seen on the River Findhorn at Darnaway in June (ISS).

Coastal records in summer (May-July): A pair Boar's Head Rock 2 May, 3 Spey estuary 6 May, 8 lower River Findhorn 20 Jun, 63 Burghead Bay 28 Jun and 10 Findhorn Bay 17 Jul.

Inland records: A male Spynie Canal 6 Feb (RP) and single birds at Gilston 12 Feb (DAG) and Loch Spynie 4 Jan (CAG), 18 Feb (Spynie logbook) and 20 Feb (DAG). These sightings could all relate to the same individual.

Maximum monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delnies-Nairn	nc	12	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	17
Nairn/Culbin Bars	3	5	nc	55	nc	95	nc	25
Findhorn Bay	1	8	nc	nc	15	nc	32	1
Burghead Bay	4	nc	6	82*	nc	37	38	2
Off Burghead	7	nc	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Burghead-Hopeman	6	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3
Spey estuary	1	3	4	3	nc	nc	12	2
Portgordon-Strathlene	nc	3	nc	nc	nc	4	nc	nc

* off Findhorn

A female was seen in Burghead harbour 1 Jan (RP) and a pair in Buckie harbour 27 Dec (HC).

On rivers in winter: 1 River Nairn 21 Sep.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Scarce breeder and fairly common visitor.

Breeding: No breeding data were received this year.

Seen in potential breeding areas were a pair River Divie 2 Mar, a female Achdregnie 22 Mar, a female River Fiddich 4 May, a pair flying downstream River Spey (Garmouth viaduct) 11 May, a female Black Hillock 12 Jun, 2 lower River Findhorn 12 Jun and a female River Spey (Fochabers) 20 Jul.

Coastal records in summer: 20 Strathlene skerries 19 Jul.

Maximum monthly counts around the mouth of the River Spey:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	1	1	30	45	82	105	137	154	nc	2	2

Elsewhere, the only maximum count exceeding 10 was 24 Lossie estuary 28 Aug.

Inland in winter: 3 Loch na Bo 17 Feb, a pair River Spey (Aberlour) 10 & 20 Feb, 2 Garmouth viaduct 6, 22 & 25 Nov and a female River Lossie (Cathedral weir, Elgin) 10 Oct. Five (2 males, 3 females) Cooper Park pond (Elgin) 31 Dec was a large count for this site.

Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*

Very common resident breeder.

Fresh droppings on 28 Feb indicate continued survival of a very small population on Black Hill (Aultmore) (MJHC). Around Lecht Ski Centre were 21 on 22 Feb.

Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta*

Fairly common resident breeder.

Present throughout on Ben Rinnes where best counts around Scurran of Lochterlandoch were 9 on 4 Jul (RLe), 10 on 28 Sep (AE) and 15 on 23 Nov (MMac).

Elsewhere, 4 pairs Barns of Bynack 12 Apr (AE), 14 Ben Avon 3 May (MBo) (and 10 there 29 Jul [DPr]), 3 Ben Macdui 23 Apr, 3 Cairn Gorm 11 May (and 2 there 15 Jun).

Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*

Scarce resident breeder.

Records from six localities: 1 male Ailnack gorge (Tomintoul) 29 Mar (MJHC), 2 chicks at the roadside Ballochford 12 Jun (MJHC), 3 (1 male, 2 female) Feith Musach 29 Mar (MJHC), 8 (6 male, 2 female) near Bogeney 17 Apr (RHD), 1 Glacks of Balloch 14 Apr (IFr), 1 male Dunearn 23 Apr (RHD), 4 males Glen Brown 13 Jul (AE) and 3 males Roy's Hill 5 Jun (MJHC).

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

Scarce resident breeder.

Breeding: 10 active leks were known, containing a total of 20 males (RSPB).

One male was seen at a different site on 19 Nov (MJHC).

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Introduced scarce breeder. Commonly released.

At Drynahan, 40+ on 29 Apr and hundreds of released birds in the area 14 Aug. Also 40 near Park (south of Nairn) 15 Nov. Still widespread around Glen Rinnes where 1-2 birds seen in May-June at Croftglass, Glenrinnes Distillery and Tomachar. Nearer the coast, 2 near Lhanbryde 14 Mar and 2 May.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

Common resident breeder.

In the breeding season, one pair bred unsuccessfully Auchinhandoch (Dufftown), 2 Findhorn Bay 31 May, a pair Foresterseat 4 May, 2 Kinloss 4 Apr and pairs at Tarras and Netherton. At other times, 11 Hempriggs 8 Nov, 10 Netherton 4 Nov, 9 Coltfoot 5 Nov, 6 Sherrifston 15 Oct, 6 South Darkland 3 & 23 Dec, 5 Lochhill 18 Nov, 2 Sunnyhillock (Nairn) 5 Nov and 2 near Lhanbryde on 9 Feb and 14 Sep.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Rare summer visitor and breeder, occasionally more numerous.

Records from seven localities in June-July, all of calling birds. At Clochan, one called almost daily between 6-22 Jul (MJHC). Others included 3 in the Drybridge-Hilton area 12 Jul (MJHC), 1 Easter Newforres 7-8 June (IW), 1 Inchbroom 9 Jun (MJHC), 1 Little Kildrummie (GAa), 1 Longmorn 11 Jun (DAG) and 1 North Darkland 16 Jul (JDL).

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Very common resident breeder.

Outwith usual habitats were 1 Culbin Bar 9 Jan and 5 Feb, and a male walking on the open mud of the Spey estuary at Kingston on 31 May.

[Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii*

Escape/released.

Single males were reported from Strath Avon on 18 Oct (NHug) and 28 Oct (DO). These birds originate from local releases. Several hundred were reared in 2010 and some survived through the winter into 2011.]



Reeves's Pheasant, Strath Avon 18 October 2011 (Photo: Nicky Hughes)

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Rare breeder. Fairly common autumn and winter visitor offshore.

Summer: One pair on a lochan in south Moray on 29 Apr (KLG) was not seen subsequently and breeding is unlikely to have occurred. On 9 Aug, 1 flew over Darnaway, heading towards the sea.

At the coast in the April-July period, 14 in Spey Bay 2 May (9 off Kingston and 5 near Boar's Head Rock). Also off Kingston were 8 on 10 Apr and 10 on 27 Jun. Elsewhere, 17 Culbin Bar 28 Apr, 10 Burghead Bay 18 Apr.

Best monthly counts offshore in each winter period were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Delnies	1	2	nc	nc	1	nc	0
Nairn/Culbin Bars	1	5	nc	nc	3	nc	4
Burghead Bay	2	11	4	4	6	4	0
Spey Bay	11	8	nc	2	3	45	nc

The gathering of 45 off Tugnet on 22 Nov (MJHC) is the most counted together in Moray & Nairn since 2002 when 51 were in Spey Bay in September and 54 were off Nairn/Culbin Bars in October.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Rare breeder. Scarce autumn and winter visitor offshore.

Upland lochs: For the fifth successive year, one pair bred - but the nest failed, for unknown reasons, as it has in each of the previous years (IFr,MJHC).

Monthly maxima in Burghead Bay were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	3	3	53	1	1	nc	2	2	4	5	0

(RHD, AJL *et al.*)

As usual, an impressive gathering in spring. The peak, off Findhorn, of 53 on 17 Apr dwindled to 36 on 23 Apr and 10 on 26 Apr (RHD).

Elsewhere, 5 Culbin Bar 28 Apr (RHD), 1 Lossiemouth 12 Mar (DAG), 1 Tugnet 24 Mar (MJHC) and 1 Nairn Bar 11 Dec (DCJ).

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Scarce visitor offshore.

The only records of more than one bird were 5 Burghead Bay 4 Apr (AW), 2 off Findhorn 23 Apr (RHD), 2 Culbin Bar 28 Apr (RHD), 4 Kingston 2 May (MJHC), 2 Tugnet 3 May (MJHC) and 2 Findhorn 23 Apr (PH). All other records related to single birds in Burghead Bay (Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr), off Culbin Bar (Oct), off Kingston (Apr, Nov) and off Nairn Bar (Dec).

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*

Rare visitor.

2011 was the fourth successive year in which White-billed Divers have been present off Burghead in spring. One was reported almost daily between 20 Apr-8 May (DBo, AJL, DAG *et al.*). Two were present on 23 Apr and 2 May (Birdguides) and three on 29 Apr (AGu).

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Common breeder, very common offshore.

Breeding: No reports of breeding were received this year, 'many' on cliffs at Portknockie 17 Feb indicated birds re-establishing nest sites.

Passage: Only one count exceeded 100 this year, 144 west past Portknockie in 30 mins 29 Aug (MJHC). Very few other records were received.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

Scarce migrant in late summer and autumn.

An exceptional year with 605 birds recorded on four dates between late August and early October. Prior to this year, the highest annual total was 57 in 2001, and less than 10 birds is the annual norm.

First records of the year were on 29 Aug with two west past Portknockie (MJHC) and three in Burghead Bay (AJL). Approximately 30 from a vessel approximately two miles off Buckie 15 Sep (DGD) was the precursor to a remarkable day three days later on 18 Sep, when in the afternoon off Lossiemouth, 563 passed the harbour in four hours (MJHC, RP, DAG). Numbers elsewhere in the North Sea were unexceptional at this time, so clearly this major movement was localised, perhaps reflecting good feeding conditions further offshore in the Firth, supported by the count off Buckie three days previous. The only other record of the year was seven off Lossiemouth 7 Oct (DAG).

Annual totals since 2002 are as follows:

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
3	3	0	23	1	38	11	0	7	605



Sooty Shearwater, c.2 miles off Buckie 15 September 2013 (Photo: David Devonport)

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Fairly common offshore in summer and autumn.

The annual total was 170 individuals, an average year. There is likely to be some duplication, as clearly many of these relate to lingering birds in the Moray Firth off Lossiemouth/Burghead in the late summer period. Estimated monthly totals were:

June	July	August	September	October
4	13	105	47	1

Spring: There were no spring records this year, the first blank spring since 2004.

Summer: In June, one record from Lossiemouth on 18th when four passed west. In late July, single figure counts were received from Lossiemouth (two dates) and Strathlene (one date).

Autumn: Peak numbers were recorded in August, with 105 birds on five dates. Most records were from Lossiemouth with counts also received from Burghead Bay, Findhorn, Portknockie and Strathlene. Highest counts were a feeding flock of c.50 off Findhorn 4th (RHD), 60 west past Burghead 28th (the highest count of the year) (RHD) and 24 Burghead Bay 29th. In September, the only record was 47 passing Lossiemouth in two hours on 18th (RP), on the date of the large Sooty Shearwater movement. The last of the year, in an unusual setting, was one found in Lossiemouth High Street (and taken into care) on 8 Oct (HF).

Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

Summer and autumn visitor offshore, probably very common at night.

Nine birds were seen in 2011, the best year since 2000 when 16 were tape lured at Strathlene. The best year for offshore counts on record, although this species is almost certainly under-recorded. In July, two off Strathlene 24th (MJHC) and, in August, singles off Lossiemouth 28th (RP) and off Portknockie and Strathlene 29th (MJHC). In September, three passed Lossiemouth 18th (RP). The final record of the year was a moribund bird found in Tesco's car park, Elgin on 22 Oct (ML), a late date.

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Very common offshore in summer and autumn, fewer in winter.

A reasonable year, with 11 counts of 100 or more in the late summer/autumn period.

In spring, 110 off Findhorn 29 Mar. Fishing flocks in May included 40 off Findhorn on 15th and 60 off Burghead on 26th. In late August, 50 Burghead 28th and 123 passed Lossiemouth on 29th. In September, high counts centred around Lossiemouth with 157 on 14th, 481 on 16th and 272 on 18th (RP). Elsewhere, 310 were off Portknockie 14th. In mid October, a series of large counts were recorded in the Moray Firth with an estimated 4000 over the whole sea visible from Burghead on 12th (RHD). There were 156 in Burghead Bay 16th, with 238 between Burghead and Hopeman and 141 off Culbin Bar the same day. Approximately 1500 were in Burghead Bay 23rd (AJL) with numbers down to c.500 two days later. The count of 23rd is the highest count of the species recorded in Moray & Nairn. A large number was noted fishing off Lossiemouth around the same time.

In the winter periods, an immature bird lingering from 2010 was seen off Lossiemouth 8 Jan, whilst one off Portgordon 20 Feb was perhaps an early returning bird. In the second winter period, three were seen from Lossiemouth west beach 31 Dec.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Occasional breeder and fairly common winter visitor.

Breeding: One pair raised a brood of three young on the cliff below the lookout hut at Covesea (MJHC). This is only the second confirmed breeding in Moray & Nairn – a single pair nested, also at Covesea, in 1962.

Counts of 25 or more were 75 Lossiemouth 30 Oct, 61 between Delnies and Nairn 11 Dec, 40 on Burghead harbour breakwater 27 Mar, 47 Burghead-Hopeman 11 Dec (also 32 there 9 Jan and 28 on 6 Feb), 35 Culbin Bar 16 Oct, 30 Portgordon-Strathlene 11 Dec and 25 at the mouth of the River Spey 18 Sep.

Inland: More than usual on the River Spey at Aberlour were 1 on 10 Jan, 3 on 13 Jan, 1 on 21 Oct and 5 on 20 Dec (AE).

Maximum monthly counts at Loch Spynie were:

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

More than usual at Loch na Bo where 1 on 27 Jan, 2 on 4 Feb, 5 on 16 Feb and 3 on 2 Dec. Unusual at Loch Oire where 2 on 30 Dec. Elsewhere, 1 Fogwatt 8 Jan and 1 on the River Lossie in Elgin also on 8 Jan.

There were no records of birds of the continental race *P.c.sinensis* this year, following a reduction in records in recent years.

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Fairly common breeder and very common visitor, chiefly in winter.

Breeding: Numbers increased at Portknockie/Bow Fiddle Rock cliffs, recommencing the trend of increasing occupation of this site after the relatively static population during 2007-10. On 11 Jun, 85 occupied nests were counted, many with large young (MJHC).

The number of occupied nests at this site since 2002 has been as follows:

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
40	43	47	49	49	73	79	79	76	85

Numbers increased slightly at Covesea with 17 occupied nests on 14 Jun (14 in 2010) (MJHC). At Tronach Head, 58 occupied nests were counted on the island and mainland cliffs in late May and early June, a slight decline from the 60 occupied nests at the same site in 2010 (MJHC).

Counts: 530 were at the Bow Fiddle Rock (Portknockie) roost on the evening of 22 Feb (IFr). This is the highest count at this site (and anywhere in Moray & Nairn) since 2004. Away from breeding areas, the only other counts of 30 or more were 92 between Portgordon-Strathlene 11 Dec (69 of these at Buckie shipyard), 40 Burghead 6 Nov, 36 at the mouth of the River Spey 14 Apr and 34 Delnies-Nairn 6 Feb.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Rare visitor.

One was found at Cloddach quarry on 20 Nov and remained until the end of the year (MJHC, DAG, CAG *et al.*). This is the 6th record for Moray & Nairn. Previous occurrences were in 1983, 2006, 2007 (2) and 2009. Months of discovery were June (3) and September (2). All have been in Findhorn Bay except one at Kingston.



Little Egret, Cloddach quarry 21 November 2011 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Great White Egret *Ardea alba**Rare visitor.*

The bird first found between Tugnet and Bogmoor in January 2010 remained in the area into 2011 and was seen near Tugnet on 7 Jan and 22 Feb (MJHC).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea**Fairly common resident breeder.*

Heronries: Nine occupied nests at Aberlour (AE) and 11 at Loch Spynie (MJHC).

Well up-country in summer were single birds at Easter Gaulrig (Glen Avon) and in Glen Gheallaidh.

As usual, the largest congregations were on the three estuaries where best monthly counts were:

Spey estuary: 10 on 26 Jun and 4 on 17 Jul.

Lossie estuary: 4 on 12 Jun, 3 on 31 Jul, 9 on 21 Aug and 8 on 4 Sep.

Findhorn Bay: 15 on 31 Jul and 6 on 4 Sep.

No groups of five or more elsewhere. On a rocky shore, 1 Portgordon 23 Feb.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea**Rare visitor.*

One was found at Loch Spynie on 19 Apr and proved very elusive during its stay until at least 23 Apr (DAG, ABo, HF *et al.*). This is the first record in Moray & Nairn of this visitor from southern Europe.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis**Scarce breeder, scarce on the estuaries in winter.*

Mid-winter: On freshwater in January and December were 1 Cloddach quarry 4 Jan, 1 Loch na Bo 1 & 18 Jan and 2 Dec, 1 Loch Oire 1 Dec, 2 Loch Spynie 13 Dec, 1 Spynie canal 28 Jan and 2 Garmouth viaduct 31 Dec.

Present in spring/summer (*italics* = proved breeding) at *Burnside of Birnie pool*, Cloddach quarry, Cunninghamhugh pool, *Dallachy tip pool* (2 pairs), Loch Flemington, Loch Loy, Loch na Bo, Loch of Blairs, *Loch Oire* (10 pairs with 6 visible nests 7 Jul [MJHC]) and Loch Spynie (2 pairs).

Largest post-breeding congregations in summer/autumn were at Loch Flemington (15 on 12 Jul), Loch Spynie (11 on 6 Aug, 10 on 16-23 Sep), Loch na Bo (8 on 4 Oct) and especially at Loch Oire where peak monthly counts were 20 on 24 Aug, 19 on 7 Sep and 14 on 10 Oct.

Coastal in autumn/winter: Regularly present only around the creeks in the south-west of Findhorn Bay, and at Spey estuary where the Kingston lagoon is the most favoured haunt. At Findhorn Bay, 3 on 28 Jan, 4 on 6 Feb, 5 on 31 Aug, 3 on 5 Sep, 3 on 4 & 8 Nov and 2 on 11 Dec were monthly maxima. At the Spey estuary, present in all winter months – often a single bird but 2 on 4 & 22 Feb, 18 Nov and 31 Dec, and 3 on 11 Jan and 31 Dec. Elsewhere, 1 Lossie estuary 24 Dec.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus**Occasional breeder, and very scarce offshore in autumn and winter.*

One on Loch na Bo on 15-16 Feb (CAG, ABa, MJHC) was probably the same bird which stayed at Cloddach quarry from 4-12 Mar (CAG, DAG *et al.*). Also a single coastal record of 1 Buckie harbour 30 Oct-1 Nov (HC, MJHC).

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegina**Very scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

As is often the case, all records came from Burghead Bay where singles were seen on 15 Sep (AJL), 8 Oct (DCJ), 5 Nov (DCJ), 12 Nov (ABa) and 12 Dec (ABa). In mid November, there were 2 on 6 Nov and 3 on 12 Nov (AJL).

Observers should please note that, from the start of 2012, Red-necked Grebe has been added to the list of species which will be considered by Moray & Nairn Rarities Committee. All records should therefore be supported by a written description.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Rare breeder. Scarce offshore in winter.

Breeding: One pair seen nest building but failed to breed.

Site 13 - One pair was present at this site where successful breeding took place in 2010. The birds were first seen on 4 Apr and nest building was observed on 18 & 25 Apr, with display on 1 May. They were last seen on 14 May and were absent on 22 May. Once again, Slavonian Grebe is on the edge of extinction as a breeding species in Moray & Nairn.

The only other inland record was 1 Loch na Bo 16 Apr (CAG).

Coastal: All records came from Burghead Bay where monthly maxima were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	5	14	2			2	23	43	25
(9 th)	(12 th)	(31 st)	(4 th)			(25 th)	(16 th)	(19 th)	(12 th)

Unusually numerous in November when counts were 36 on 5th (DCJ), 40 on 8th (MJHC) and 43 on 19th (DAG).

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Rare breeder.

One pair bred, raising one young, in the same Moray locality where breeding also took place in 2007-09. A second nestling was found dead on the ground below the nest (RHD).

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Formerly common breeder, reintroduced in Highland and North-east Scotland.

Single birds were seen drifting west high over Clochan 29 May (MJHC), over Half Davoch on 14 Jul and 12 Aug, over Creag a Bhothain (Drynachan) 14 Aug (MJHC), at Kinloss 16 Sep (AJL) and at Westfield 11 Dec (CE).

Still nothing to hint at a breeding colonisation.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Occasional breeder and very scarce visitor.

A pair was present in spring at one locality and the male was seen carrying nest material on 27 Apr. The female was last seen on 11 May, although a single much later record was on 25 Jun. The male remained until at least 14 Aug. If breeding was attempted it was certainly unsuccessful. (CAG, MJHC *et al.*).

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Rare resident breeder, very scarce migrant and winter visitor.

Breeding: Eighteen current and former sites were checked in west Moray and Nairn. Three sites were found to be occupied by pairs in west Moray (three fewer than in 2010) and none in Nairn. All three pairs laid eggs and two were successful, fledging seven young between them at a mean of 3.3 young per successful pair. The third pair failed due to predation of the young, probably by a fox (JKC).

No autumn/winter records were received.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Rare resident breeder.

Reported from only two potential breeding sites in spring/summer. Under-recorded to an unknown, but probably substantial, degree.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Common resident breeder.

Breeding season (April-July) records included birds/pairs at Forres, Kinloss, Loch Kirkaldy, Loch Spynie and Milnorduff.

One was hunting waders along the shore at Buckpool on 6 Feb and another was chasing Starlings at the Loch Spynie roost on 21 Oct.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Common resident breeder.

Groups of five or more together were six, presumably seeking worms, on newly ploughed land Lower Bogrotten 28 Feb and 5 Conicavel 6 Aug. Also following a plough, were 3 Clochan 17 Feb. A very pale bird was at Lower Hempriggs on 22 Aug.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Rare resident breeder.

Breeding: At the three usual/most recent breeding sites: i) no breeding activity in spring but a sub-adult bird was nearby on 26 Aug (MJHC) ii) no breeding took place (RHD), iii) a pair raised one chick (EWe). Elsewhere, 1 Balnught (near Drynahan) 1 May (DAG).

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce summer visitor and breeder.

Breeding: In a cold and wet summer, Ospreys had a poor breeding season over most of Scotland. In west Moray and Nairn, nine pairs nested and all were successful, rearing a total of 21 young – this was the most successful area in the country. Two other late pairs failed to breed. In east Moray, five pairs nested of which three were successful, rearing a total of six young – an average season (RHD).

Away from nest sites, most together at one time were 4 Findhorn Bay 23 Jun and 21 Aug, and 3 Spey estuary 23 Aug. At least one bird lingered late in Findhorn Bay where it was last seen on 30 Sep (AJL) – this equals the latest ever date in Moray & Nairn.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Scarce resident breeder.

Breeding season (April-July) records included birds/pairs at Craig Bhuilg (nest with young), Dava, Dulsie Bridge (pair with nest), RAF Kinloss (nest with five young) and Knockando.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Scarce resident breeder and migrant.

Breeding: 50 sites were checked; 15 of these were occupied by pairs and one site by a single adult. Eleven pairs laid clutches. Clutch size from three known clutches was 4.0. Nine pairs were successful, and these raised at least 25 young between them, at a mean brood size of 2.3 per laying pair (2.8 per successful pair).

Productivity was greater in west Moray and Nairn (3.3 young/laying pair) than in east Moray (1.9 young/laying pair). The recent low occupancy and patchy distribution in Moray was again apparent and breeding success was poor – as was the case elsewhere in North-East Scotland. To some extent at least, this can be attributed to the persistently cold, wet and windy conditions which prevailed through much of the breeding season. (BCo, JKC).

Outside the breeding season, single birds were seen at Clochan 9 Jan, Nairn Bar 9 Jan, Kinloss 14 Mar (also 23 Mar and 30 Aug), Hill of Towie 11 Aug, Achdregnie 26 Aug, Bachd Buidhe 26 Aug and Duffus Castle 26 Oct.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Rare visitor.

Two birds, believed to be a pair, were seen in breeding habitat in west Moray on 31 Jul (RHD) – they could not be relocated subsequently. This is the 11th record for Moray & Nairn.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Rare resident breeder.

Breeding: At least three pairs bred in lowland Moray, two of them successfully. In the uplands, one site was occupied by a pair early in the year but no young were reared. Several other moorland sites were checked and found to be unoccupied (JKC, MJHC, AE, RHD).

In late summer-winter, single birds were reported from Ballantruan (Oct), Findhorn Bay (Feb, Aug, Sep), Cassieford (Forres) (Dec), Clochan (Feb), Spey estuary (Feb, Aug, Dec), Kinloss (Dec), Loch Spynie (Jan, Apr, Oct), Lossiemouth (Sep, Oct), Nairn (Aug), South Darkland (Nov), Tugnet (Sep, Nov) and near Urquhart (Feb). There were two at Findhorn on 25 Sep.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Scarce breeder and winter visitor.

During the breeding season, 1 Burnside of Birnie pool 10 Apr (MJHC), 1 dead on the road Gilston 14 Jun (CAG), 1 Kingsteps (Nairn) 12 Jul and 2 Aug (DCJ), 1 Kinloss 13 May (with 2 on 25 May and 3 on 15 Jul) (AJL), 1 Lein (Kingston) 13 Aug (PGS), 1 Loch Flemington 12 Jul (DCJ) and calling several dates Loch Spynie (many obs.).

At other times, 1 Lein (Kingston) 25 Oct and 7 Nov (PGS), 1 Loch na Bo 26 Oct (EH) and several reports of calling birds at Loch Spynie in January and October-December (CAG *et al.*).

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Fairly common resident breeder.

Breeding proved (*italics*) or probable at *Burnside of Birnie pool*, *Cunninghaugh*, *Kinloss* and *Loch Oire*.

In icy conditions early in the year, large numbers were out on the ice at Loch Spynie e.g. 29 on 2 Jan and 35 on 14 Jan. Also at this time, 8 Cooper Park pond (Elgin). When Loch Spynie was again frozen on 21 Dec, 21 birds were counted on the ice. Other counts included 3 Cloddach quarry 20 Nov, 4 Cran Loch 20 Nov, 9 Loch Flemington 16 Oct (4 on 5 Feb and 11 Dec) and 11 Loch Oire 26 Oct (regularly up to six in autumn).

Coot *Fulica atra*

Scarce resident breeder and winter visitor.

Breeding proved (*italics*) or probable at *Burnside of Birnie pool*, *Cloddach quarry*, *Cunninghaugh (Nether Dallachy)*, *Culbin Forest*, *Nether Dallachy tip*, *Loch na Bo*, *Loch Oire* (at least 2 pairs) and *Loch Spynie*.

Unusual habitats were occupied by one on the River Spey at Aberlour on 8 May, and one on the Spey estuary at Kingston on 11 Jan where it had remained since 28 Dec 2010.

Maximum monthly counts on main lochs were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loch Flemington	0	1	nc	nc	1	nc	0
Loch Spynie	6	4	3	2	1	1	0
Loch Oire/na Bo	1	1	4	2	17	1	1
Cloddach quarry	5	0	2	nc	nc	nc	nc

Crane *Grus grus**Rare visitor.*

An immature bird was found on floodwater at Chapelton (Forres) on 3 Apr and remained until 11 Apr (ISS, AJL *et al.*).

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus**Very common resident breeder, winter visitor and migrant.*

Breeding: First inland were 4 Elgin (around the ASDA and Walkers Factory area) 12 Feb. Also in Elgin, birds were heard overnight on 14 & 15 Feb with one near the Police Station on 15 Feb. First one back at Elgin Academy 17 Feb and piping heard at Wards Road 24 Feb. There were nine records of birds on the nesting platforms at Loch Spynie between 19 Feb-5 Mar, max. 11 on 25 Feb. Also in the coastal plain, 1 Lhanbryde 16 Feb, a pair at Mosstowie 28 Feb and 5 Burgie pool 3 Apr. Moving inland, an early bird was at Rothes 13 Feb and on the banks of the Spey at Aberlour were 2 on 17 Feb and 7 on 19 Feb. Elsewhere a scattering of inland records included 1 Howford bridge (Nairn) 5 Mar and, on 19 Mar, a calling bird at Archiestown, a few at Inchnacape and one near Knockando. Also a pair at Suie 22 Mar.

During March, pre-breeding flocks included 64 Aberlour on 1st, 30 Craigellachie on 4th and at Cloddach quarry 120 on 3rd had increased to 225 on 6th. Also, 18 Miltonduff pool on 16th and 10 Achdregnie on 22nd.

Breeding activity was noted with a pair copulating at Lossie estuary on 15 Mar. At Tynet Chapel a pair started two nests during May but both were predated. A minimum of four pairs were noted at Cloddach quarry during May. At Moray College there was a brood of two on 28 May. One pair was nesting in the car park of the Moray Health Centre (Lossiemouth) 29 May and a “just flying” juvenile was seen at Elgin cemetery 22 Jul. At Chalcaidh quarry (Tomintoul) there were 6 on 27 Jun.

There were no records of any inland post-breeding assemblies.

Spring, summer and early autumn peak counts of ten or more at coastal localities:

Apr: 40 Findhorn Bay 1st, 21 Lossie estuary 12th and 27 Burghead 14th.

May: 62 Findhorn Bay 13th and 11 Lossie estuary 31st.

Jul: 94 Burghead 4th, 20 Spey estuary 7th and 73 Lossie estuary 31st.

Aug: 32 Spey estuary 3rd, 89 Lossie estuary 16th, 230 Findhorn Bay 17th and 580 Culbin Bar 21st.

Sep: 74 Lossie estuary 10th, 275 Findhorn Bay 28th and 18 Spey estuary also 28th.

Winter maxima at the coast were:

	Jan	Feb		Oct	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	510	470		721	789
Findhorn Bay	451	610		308	244
Burghead-Hopeman	240	168		250	191
Lossiemouth	23	97		70	65
Portgordon-Strathlene	82	76		50	96

This is the second year in succession where there have been no counts exceeding 1000 from the Bars or Findhorn Bay. Prior to this you have to go back to 1992 for maxima less than 1000.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius**Rare summer visitor and breeder.*

Recorded only on the lower River Spey. First of the year was 1 Spey estuary 10 Apr (MJHC) with singles there on 11, 15, 24 & 27 Jun (MJHC, RHD, Birdguides). One was behaving furtively on the lower River Spey shingles on 31 May and was seen at the same location on 15 Jun. Breeding was confirmed here on 1 Jul when a pair was found with one or two flying juveniles (MJHC).

This is the eleventh year that this species has been present in M&N since the first record in 1996.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Scarce resident breeder and very common migrant.

Breeding: Breeding birds are most likely being under-recorded with only four records received: a nesting pair at Kinloss 20 May (AJL), 1-2 pairs nesting on the beach shingle east of Lossiemouth 9 Jun (DAG) and there was a nest with a clutch of one at Strathlene on 30 Jun (MJHC). At the Lein (Kingston), a clutch of four eggs, found on 25 Apr, was predated by crows and a second clutch, of four eggs, found on 27 May had also disappeared by 6 Jun (PGS).

Winter maxima at the coast were:

	Jan-Feb	Nov-Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	9	26
Findhorn Bay	42	3
Kinloss	30	36
Burghead-Hopeman	3	0
Lossiemouth	1	0
Portgordon-Strathlene	4	16

The maximum count during October was 49 Findhorn Bay on 7th.

Spring passage (April-early June)

Findhorn Bay: in May there were counts of 336 on 21st, 306 on 25th, 1500 on 30th (RHD) and 940 on 31st (RHD, ABa). In early June, numbers reduced to 594 on 3rd and only 35 on 5th.

Lossiemouth: fourteen records received during May and April (no June records) with peaks of 62 on 19 Apr, 80+ on 20 May and 122 on 26 May.

Spey estuary: nine records during the period with a maximum of 64 on 30 May.

The maximum spring passage counts from the three locations are within an eleven day period between 20-31 May.

Not since 1987-92 have comparable spring numbers been counted in Findhorn Bay.

The massive flock of 900 at Findhorn Bay (ABa) is the highest count since 980 on 16 May 1993.

Autumn passage (July – September):

Poorly recorded this year. Highest counts in each half-monthly period were:

	July 1-15	July 16-31	Aug 1-15	Aug 16-31	Sep 1-15	Sep 16-30
Findhorn Bay/Kinloss	nc	nc	nc	20 (22 nd)	106 (4 th)	88 (30 th)
Lossie estuary	nc	nc	16	39 (16 th)	6*	2
Spey estuary	10	6	43 (3 rd)	35 (18 th)	1	3

* 18 were at Lossiemouth west beach on 9 Sep.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce summer visitor and breeder.

Three records were received from the Cairngorm breeding grounds: 2 Ben Avon 3 May (MBo), 7 near Cairn Gorm 11 May (MNG) and a male with two full grown young on Cairn Lochan 30 Jul (MJHC).



Dotterel (juvenile), Cairn Lochan 30 July 2011 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Golden Plover *Charadrius apricaria*

Common breeder, migrant and winter visitor.

Breeding: A disappointing year with only three records received from potential breeding grounds: One near Dunearn 3 Jun (MJHC), 5 Cairn Uish 20 Jun (CAG) and 6 Scurran of Lochterlandoch (Ben Rinnes) 13 Jul (MJHC).

The first post-breeding coastal record was of a single bird at Spey estuary 26 Jul.

Winter coastal maxima were:

	Jan	Feb		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Kinloss	65	nc		nc	32	68	145
Findhorn Bay	81	nc		34	107	61	127

It is likely that the same birds are often involved in counts at these neighbouring locations.

Elsewhere, the only flock was 60 flying north west of Clochan on 26 Nov.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor.

Records received from six locations.

Nairn Bar: 6 on 9 Jan, 5 on 16 Jan, 16 on 5 & 6 Feb, 21 on 16 Oct and 18 on 20 Nov.

Culbin Bar: 46 on 9 Jan, 17 on 5 Feb, 18 on 10 Feb, 9 on 16 Oct and 8 on 11 Dec.

Findhorn Bay: a single bird on 31 May was the only spring record received. Autumn-winter records on ten dates, with birds most numerous in September when 15 on 25th, 11 on 26th and 40 on 29th. In October, 11 on 26th.

Lossie estuary: single birds on three dates during February and two dates in September.

Spey estuary: two juveniles on 11 Sep.

The maximum count of the year of 46 is the highest count since 48 at Findhorn Bay on 7 Oct 2001.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Very common migrant breeder, small numbers in winter.

Breeding: The first record from up-country was 3 Archiestown 7 Mar. Pre-breeding flocks included 68 Miltonhill 2 Mar, 17 Suie 22 Mar and 14 were showing territorial behaviour at Inchnacape on 29 Mar. Subsequently, 1 Knockando 29 Mar, 4 Loch Kirkaldy 19 Apr (also 3 there 9 Jul), 2 Croftglass 1 May and 2 Cabrach House fields 10 May. Six anxious birds were noted at Tomachar (Glen Rinnes) 8 Jun. In the Forres area, two pairs at Netherton and one pair at Hillhead failed to rear any young - also 2 Chapelton Moss (Forres) 3 Apr.

Still up-country in late summer/early autumn were 4 Achdregnie 26 Aug and 27 heading east at Archiestown 15 Sep.

In the coastal fringe, post-breeding flocks of 30 or more were at Spey estuary, where 35 on 23 Aug, 38 on 27 Aug and 51 on 17 Sep, and at Kinloss where 45 on 26 Sep.

In the Loch Spynie area during October were 110 on 8th, 80 on 13th & 50 on 22nd. At Wester Cove sea there were 175 on 28 Oct.

Winter flocks (November-February) of ten or more included 36 Duffus 21 Jan, 21 near Portgordon 6 Feb, 18 Findhorn Bay 14 Feb, 45 Spey estuary 17 Feb and 15 Loch Spynie 18 Feb. In the second winter period, 60 near Loch Spynie on 5-6 Nov and 203 Balgreen. A larger flock in the Loch Spynie area peaked at 146 Scarffbanks 14 Nov and c.400 Muirton 21 Nov. Elsewhere, on 6 Dec, 25 Broadley (Clochan), 47 Findhorn Bay and 60 Philaxdale (Duffus).

Knot *Calidris canutus*

Very common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter maxima were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	1800	1670	100	nc	3400
Findhorn Bay	900	700	148	nc	9
Lossiemouth	0	0	0	nc	1

Outwith the above locations the only count over 100 was 145 at Nairn harbour 6 Nov. There was one March record of 48 Findhorn Bay on 3rd.

Spring records prior to migration included 25 Findhorn Bay 30 Apr and 23 there 6 May. Four were still in Findhorn Bay on 31 May and 3 Jun. The first records of birds returning from breeding grounds were 1 Lossie estuary 3 Jul, 2 Burghead 7 Jul and 5 Findhorn Bay 16 Jul. Eighteen August records were mostly in single figures, but 40 Findhorn Bay 28th and a very high count of 640 Culbin Bar on 21st. Among the eight September records, highest numbers were in Findhorn Bay where the maximum was 150 on 28th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Scarce migrant and fairly common but very localised winter visitor.

Monthly maxima at the two best sites were:

Winter-spring:

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Nairn/Culbin Bars	90	56	nc	21	nc
Lossiemouth	17	17	nc	12	40

Late summer-autumn:

	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	nc	56	nc	71	62	19
Lossiemouth	nc	27	43	12	nc	nc

Elsewhere, 42 between Delnies-Nairn on 9 Jan.

Unusually late on spring migration were 36 Tugnet 2 Jun and 2 Findhorn Bay 3 Jun. The first assumed to have returned from breeding grounds was of 1 Spey estuary 7 Jul.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Very scarce migrant, mostly in autumn.

Spring: 1 adult in breeding plumage Spey estuary on 9-10 May (DAG, MJHC, RHD).

Autumn:

August: 1 Spey estuary 4th (DAG), 10th (TM), 13th (MJHC) and 31st (MJHC), and 1 Lossiemouth on 26th (PSu).

September: 1 Spey estuary 3rd (MJHC) and 29th (MJHC, RHD) and, on the east side of Findhorn Bay, 1 on 15th and 2 juveniles on the 25th (DAG).

October: 1 Findhorn Bay on 1st and 2nd (DAG) and lastly 1 Nairn Bar on 16th (DCJ).

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Rare migrant, occasional breeder.

A single bird visited the Spey estuary on 14-15 Jun (DPi, MJHC). This is the first record for Moray & Nairn since 28 May 2005.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

Rare visitor.

An adult was feeding on the fringe of a muddy pool at Hopeman pig farm on 23 Sep (MJHC *et al*).

This is the first record of this North American species in Moray & Nairn.



White-rumped Sandpiper (adult, with 2 Redshanks), Hopeman 23 September 2011 (Photo: Dick Hewitt)

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea**Scarce migrant.*

A reasonable year by recent standards.

August: 1 Findhorn Bay 3rd (and 4 on 5th) (DAG) and 1 Spey estuary 4th (DAG).September: 1 Spey estuary 4th (MJHC), 9 Lossie estuary 10th (DGD) and singles at Lossie estuary on 13th & 15th (DAG). In Findhorn Bay, 4 on 5th (RHD), 2 on the 15th (AJL) and 17th (DAG), 3 on 18th (RHD) and 1 on 25th (DAG).October: 3 Lossie estuary on 5th (CAG).

© David Devonport

Curlew Sandpiper (juvenile), Lossie estuary 10 September 2011 (Photo: David Devonport)

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima**Fairly common winter visitor.*

Main winter site maxima were:

	Jan-Mar	Oct-Dec
Burghead-Hopeman	3	4
Lossiemouth	c.100	27
Buckpool	26	31
Portessie	10	20
Portgordon-Strathlene	42	2

In April at Lossiemouth there were 100 on 6th, 80 on 7th then 54 on 16th. The last spring record was 2 Burghead on 17 May.

The first autumn record was 2 Buckpool on the rather late date of 16 Oct.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Scarce breeder, very common migrant and winter visitor.

Winter monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb		Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	820	2450		420	nc	625
Findhorn Bay	1105	2400		20	900	620
Lossiemouth	90	64		11	60	116

The counts of 2450 at Culbin Bar occurred on the 5 Feb and the similar count of 2400 at Findhorn Bay was on the 6 Feb. It is conceivable that it is the same wintering flock of Dunlin.

In March, 600 Findhorn Bay 1st.

Spring passage indicated in May and June but not enough records to establish the timing exactly. However there were peaks of 58 at Lossiemouth on 26 May, 220 at Findhorn Bay on 25 May and 43 on 5 Jun at Kingston.

Autumn passage (July-September):

Findhorn Bay: Only four records received during this period with monthly maxima of 8 on 28 Jul, 9 on 3 Aug and 100 on 4 Sep.

Lossiemouth: Twenty-five records received with numbers fluctuating. Numbers in July did not reach double figures, but in August there was a peak of 35 on 7th and during September there were c.60 on 14th.

Spey estuary: Twenty-five records also received from this location, six of which were in single figures. During July there was a peak count of 46 on 19th. In August, 46 on 1st, a peak of 77 on 3rd, numbers reducing to 46 again on 6th and 18 on 11th. During September the maximum was 34 on 17th.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring.

No spring records. In autumn, first was 1 Lossie estuary 3 Aug with another (or the same bird) there on 7 Aug (DAG). At the Spey estuary there was 1 on 4 Aug and 3 on the 13 Aug (MJHC, DAG). In Findhorn Bay there were singles on 17 Aug (AJL) and 30 Aug (RHD), 2 on 25 & 28 Sep (DAG, RHD) and a last single on 2 Oct (DAG). Moving slightly away from the coast there was a juvenile male at Muirton on 3 Sep (RP) and two juveniles feeding around the muddy pool at Hopeman pig farm on 23 -25 Sep (MJHC *et al*).



Ruff, Hopeman 23 September 2011 (Photo: Dick Hewitt)

Jack Snipe *Limnocyrtus minimus**Scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

As in 2009 and 2010, 2011 was a poor year with only a handful of records. Single birds were in the Lossiemouth east beach dunes on 16 Mar (EH), at Nairn Bar on 16 Oct and 11 Dec (DCJ) and on the Lein (Kingston) on 11 Nov (MJHC).

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago**Common breeder and migrant.*

Breeding: Much drumming at Feith Musach (Tomintoul) on 29 Mar. One was at Braushie Cree (Glen Rinnes) 1 May with 2 displaying there 8 Jun. Elsewhere, 2 Loch Kirkaldy 19 Apr, 5 Auchmair 12 Jun and a drumming bird at Glen Rinnes distillery 2 Jul.

Winter-spring: Only a few records – nearly all close to the coast. There were singles at Clochan 8 Jan and Nairn Bar 9 Jan, and 2 Kingsteps 5 Feb and 2 Nairn Bar 6 Feb. At Spey estuary, 3 on 10 Apr, and one was flushed from the edge of the Spynie Canal on 23 Apr. A short distance inland, 14 Chapelton marsh (Forres) in late March.

Autumn-winter: Twenty-four records during this period of which twenty were in single figures. Records of 10 or more were c.20 Spey estuary 13 Sep, 45 Nairn Bar 16 Oct (15 there 11 Dec) and 18 Kingsteps 4 Nov. Elsewhere at the coast there were single figure counts from Binsness and Spey estuary, and inland at Barmuckity, Clochan, Montgrew and one flying high over Bishopmill.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus**Rare visitor.*

A juvenile was found feeding amongst other wader species on the fringe of Lossie estuary as the tide was falling on 2 Oct. It remained until the 6 Oct and was enjoyed by many local and visiting birders (DAG *et al.*). This is the first record for Moray & Nairn of this vagrant from North America.



Long-billed Dowitcher (juvenile), Lossie estuary October 2011 (Photo: Duncan Gibson)

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola**Common resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor.*

Early winter records of singles at Loch Spynie 3 Jan and up country at Tervieside (Glen Rinnes) 5 Feb. Three corpses were found during severe winter weather at the Lein (Kingston) 10 Jan (PGS).

Breeding: Roding noted at Sanquhar (Forres) 21 Mar, Dunphail 6 Apr, Carron on 14 Apr and Spynie Palace on 9 Jun. Elsewhere, 1 near Urquhart 14 Mar and 1 Elgin Oakwood 14 May.

The first autumn/winter record is of a single bird at Delfur on 23 Oct. During November, 1 Loch Spynie on 1st, 2 Newbold Wood (Forres) 7th, 1 Knauchlandon 8th, 1 Urquhart area 10th and 1 Ballantruan 19th. The only December record was of 2 Sanquhar Wood (Forres) on 18th.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa**Scarce migrant.*

Winter: At Findhorn Bay, 6 on 6 Feb (ABa, BE) and 1 on 20 Feb (DAG).

Spring: Early spring records at Findhorn Bay included 8 on 17 Apr, 11 on 21 Apr, 15 on 27 Apr, 14 on 30 Apr and a steady decline to the last 3 on 20 May (RHD, AJL).

Autumn: Thirty-seven records were received during this period, between 2 Jul-16 Oct. Most were in Findhorn Bay where 2 on 2 Jul (DAG), 27 on 26 Jul (AJL) 18 on the 5 Aug (RHD) and, during September, 19 on 2nd (MJHC), 29 on 5th (RHD), 11 on 15th, 13 on 17th (DAG), 25 on 25th (RP) and 24 on the 29th (ABa). In October, 18 on 2nd, 17 on 9th (DAG) and 2 on 16 Oct (ABa, BE). At the Lossie estuary, 1 on 18 Jul (AJL), 2 on 18 Aug (HF), 11 on 20 Aug, 15 on 21 Aug (DAG) and, lastly, 2 on 17 Sep (CAG). At the Spey estuary there was 1 on 31 Jul (DAG), 4 on 1 Aug, 3 on 3 Aug and 2 on 18 Aug (MJHC). The only other coastal localities were Nairn Bar, where 6 on 21 Aug (ISS) and Nairn where 3 on 3 Sep (RPC).

The only inland records were from Montgrew in mid July where there were 15 on 17th (WMM) and 1 on 19th (MJHC).

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica**Common winter visitor and migrant. Small numbers in summer.*

Monthly maxima at main sites were:

	Jan	Feb		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	49	97		nc	104	nc	116
Findhorn Bay	204	45		27	11	68	30
Burghead-Hopeman	26	9		nc	nc	nc	13
Lossiemouth	7	7		10	1	1	3

Another year of low numbers, although a little better than 2009 and 2010. The table below shows the maximum annual count at any site since 2001:

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Maximum count	351	255	265	420	215	300	436	198	75	107	204

The last maximum count exceeding 1000 was back in winter 1996-97.

The last spring record was 3 Findhorn Bay 29 Apr. A single bird at Nairn Bar on 12 Jul may have remained over summer or been an early return from the breeding grounds – 28 were there on 21 Aug.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus**Scarce migrant.*

Spring: First on passage was a bird flying west past Lossiemouth on 21 Apr, a typical date. At Findhorn Bay were 15 on 22 Apr, 1 on 4 May and 2 on 6 May. Later, 1 off Tronach Head on 7 May and single birds heading west past Lossiemouth on 3 Jun and the Spey estuary on 10 Jun.

Autumn: Extreme dates, both at Spey estuary, involved single birds on 3 Jul and 13 Sep. Thirty-four records were received during this period with a total of 117 birds, although duplication of counts is possible. Flocks of ten or more were 24 Tugnet 1 Aug, 12 heading west past Lossiemouth 16 Aug and 15 Spey estuary 26 Aug.

Distribution of flock sizes during autumn migration was:

Flock Size	24	15	12	9	8	6	4	3	2	1
No. of flocks	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	7	18

Curlew *Numenius arquata**Common breeder. Very common migrant and winter visitor.*

Breeding: The first records well inland were during March with 1 Archiestown 18th, 10 Achdregnie 22nd, 2 Knockando 29th and a pair at Inchnacape 29th. Subsequently, 1 Loch Kirkaldy 19 Apr, 2 Braushie Cree (Glen Rinnes) 1 May, 2 pairs were at Dunearn 1 Jun and 2 Chalcaidh quarry (Tomintoul) 27 Jun. On 26 Aug there was still four birds remaining at Achdregnie.

During spring, counts of 50 or more were 150 Cloddach quarry 3 Mar with 253 there 6 Mar, 50 Findhorn Bay 5 Mar, 200 Burnside of Birnie 1 Apr and 58 there on 10 Apr, and 80 Findhorn Bay 23 Jun.

Post-breeding flocks of 100 or more at the coast in summer/autumn were:

Jul: In Findhorn Bay, 210 on 10th, 236 on 16th and 220 on 26th. At Spey estuary, 100 on 17th and 26th.

Aug: In Findhorn Bay 235 on 3rd, 226 there on 6th and 480 on 22nd. At Spey estuary, 270 on 18th, 170 on 23rd and 250 on 31st.

Sep: 280 Findhorn Bay 5th (and 247 there 29th) and 280 Spey estuary 8th.

Coastal winter maxima were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	56	138	151	141
Findhorn Bay	319	347	613	110
Burghead-Hopeman	15	15	19	7
Lossiemouth	5	33	14	14
Portgordon-Strathlene	38	4	43	7

The flock of 613 in Findhorn Bay on 16 Oct is the highest count in Moray & Nairn since 650 at Lossiemouth in October 1978.

Counts of 100 or more from other locations during this period were 110 in the Spynie canal area 28 Jan, 159 at Hopeman (as opposed to the Burghead-Hopeman coastal count) 14 Feb, 160 Spey estuary 17 Feb and in the Loch Spynie area there were 100 on 17 & 28 Feb.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos**Common summer visitor and breeder.*

Arrival: First, in April, was 1 Archiestown on the early date of 12th, followed by 1 Dunphail 15th. No further reports until 1 Loch Spynie on 22nd, 23rd and 25th. Other singles also reported at Spey estuary on 23rd and Aberlour on 25th.

The first arrival dates since 2001 were:

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Date (April)	11 th	17 th	18 th	18 th	17 th	23 rd	15 th	20 th	9 th	17 th	12 th

Breeding: On the coast, anxious adults indicated probable breeding at Kingston on the Spey estuary. Other potential breeding habitat in the lowlands, occupied during April-June, included the lower reaches of the rivers Findhorn and Spey, Mosset Burn above Chapelton dam, Dallachy tip pool (2 in early May) and Cloddach quarry (one or two pairs). Further up-country records were received from Knockando, Craigellachie (River Fiddich), Drynahan, St John's Meads and Glenlatterach. Numbers at these locations did not exceed three.

Late summer/autumn: The only inland records were received from Montgrew on five occasions ranging from 19 Jul until 5 Aug with a maximum of 3 on 3 Aug. All other records were at or very near the coast from Findhorn to the Spey estuary. Twenty-five records were received during this period, twenty-one of which were from the Spey estuary where good numbers were reported e.g. 13 on 3 Jul, a peak of 32 on 8 Jul (MJHC), 8 on 22 Jul and 12 on 3 Aug. The final record of the year was 1 Spey estuary 28 Sep (MJHC), quite a late date.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Very scarce migrant, rare in winter.

Winter: Present in both winter periods at Cloddach quarry, where 1 on 16 Jan (MJHC) and 1 on 6 Nov (DAG). Possibly a returning bird was involved. These represent the first winter records since one almost certainly over-wintered, also at Cloddach, in 1998-99.

Late summer-autumn: At Montgrew, 1 on 17 & 20 Jul (WMM) and 2 on 3 Aug (MJHC). Elsewhere, 1 Mosset Burn (Findhorn Bay) on 4 Aug (RHD), 1 on the lower reaches of the Findhorn on 23 Aug (AJL) and 1 flying over Loch Spynie 1 Sep (ATi).

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Very scarce migrant.

In Findhorn Bay, 1 on 5 Aug (DAG) and 2 at Netherton (on the south side of the bay) on 2 Sep (MJHC). Subsequently, sightings of single birds in September on 5th, 15th, 17th, 25th & 26th and in October on 1st, 9th & 16th (DAG, MJHC, RHD) may all refer to the same individual.

At Lossiemouth estuary a juvenile remained from 15 Sep until 19 Nov (RP *et al.*). It is unusual to have a bird remaining into the winter months. The only previous winter record was in Findhorn Bay in January 2010.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Scarce migrant, very scarce in winter.

Winter: Seen in Findhorn Bay in both winter periods; 1 on 6 Feb (ABa, BE) and 1 on 26 Dec (AJL).

Spring (late March-June): In April, 1 Spey estuary 7th and 10th, 1 over Binsness on 11th, and at Loch Spynie 1 flew over on 16th and another was asleep on one of the old shooting butts on 27th. Furthest inland was one in breeding plumage at Cloddach quarry on 19 Jun.

Late summer-autumn (July-October):

Findhorn Bay: Twenty-three records between 4 Aug-30 Oct, fifteen of which were of single birds. Larger counts were 4 on 6 Aug, 7 on 23 Aug, 4 on 29 Aug, 3 on 2 Sep, 5 on 5 Sep and 3 on 28 Sep.

Culbin Bar: 2 on 21 Aug.

Lossie estuary: 1 on 4 Aug.

Spey estuary: Singles only, on 22 & 26 Jul, 13, 16 & 18 Aug and 8, 9, 11 & 29 Sep.

Garmouth viaduct: Two birds on 11 Aug.

The only inland record during this period was of one over Scarffbanks Farm (Loch Spynie) on 6 Aug.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

Rare visitor.

On the morning of 25 Sep one was on the east side of Findhorn Bay (DAG) and in the afternoon it was relocated at the south end of the bay (RHD, DAG). The next day the bird was again observed on the east side of the bay (AJL).

This is the third Lesser Yellowlegs to be seen in Moray & Nairn, following one on Carse of Delnies in September 1974 and another in Findhorn Bay in October-November 1998.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Scarce breeder, very common migrant and winter visitor.

Breeding: Well up-country was a pair at Inchnacape (Tomintoul) on 29 Mar and 1 Auchmair (Cabrach) on 12 Jun. At the coast, parental anxiety in June and July indicated breeding at the Spey estuary, and at Findhorn Bay three displaying birds were in the marsh on 21 Apr and two were seen at a potential nesting site on the saltmarsh on 10 Jun.

Spring (March-early June): At Findhorn Bay, 320 on 4 Mar, 100 on 5 Mar and a spring passage peak of c.1000 on 12 Apr. At Lossiemouth, 34 on 15 Mar, 49 on 20 Mar and 41 on 12 Apr. Maximum at the Spey estuary was only 5 on 10 Apr. Just inland were one on the old shooting butts at Loch Spynie on 20 Mar and 2 Chapelton (Forres) on 3 Apr.

Late summer/autumn (late June-September): Most records received during this period were from Lossiemouth where the first was a flock of six flying east past Lossiemouth on 28 Jun. During July the numbers rose from 3 on 2nd, to 4 on 3rd, 12 on 7th, 13 on 9th, and 22 on 10th to a peak of 37 on 11th, then reducing to 25 on 17th. In August, the highest count was of 30 on 7th and in September, 31 on the 4th. Elsewhere the highest counts during August-September came from Findhorn Bay where 140 on 2 Aug, 580 on 22 Aug, 550 on 4 Sep, 520 on 5 Sep and 630 on 27 Sep. At Nairn there were 45 on 21 Sep.

Interestingly, the muddy pools at Hopeman pig farm drew in Redshank to feed on several occasions during autumn and into winter between 23 Sep-7 Nov. This type of feeding habitat is sadly lacking in Moray & Nairn. Two at Garmouth viaduct on 12 Nov was unusual so far upstream at that time of the year.

Winter: Monthly maxima at the coast were:

	Jan	Feb		Oct	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	448	102		7	42
Findhorn Bay	500+	450		460	496
Burghead-Hopeman	10	70		71	5
Lossiemouth	14	43		74	34
Portgordon-Strathlene	48	51		54	57

Other notable winter counts were 33 Burghead Bay 9 Jan, 30 Spey estuary 4 Oct, 40 Nairn harbour 11 Oct (and 120 there 6 Nov) and 54 Burghead Bay 11 Dec.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Common winter visitor, small numbers in summer.

Winter monthly maxima at main sites were:

	Jan	Feb		Oct	Dec
Delnies - Nairn	6	24		37	9
Culbin Bar	15	51		29	31
Findhorn	44	13		5	9

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Dec
Burghead-Hopeman	18	58	34	15
Lossiemouth	c.90	nc	9	25
Portgordon-Strathlene	108	103	81	133

Outwith the above locations and months - 23 Cullen 1 Nov and 45 Findhorn 11 Nov. There was also one unusual sighting of a bird on the summit of Bow Fiddle Rock (Portknockie) on 17 Feb.

Late winter-spring: In late March, c.60 Lossiemouth 27th. Only two April records – 43 Burghead on 14th and 16 Lossiemouth on 16th. During May, 2 Spey estuary on 2nd, 2 in breeding plumage at Lossiemouth on 14th (one on the estuary and one on the north pier) and 1 Findhorn Bay 21st. Still 1 Findhorn Bay 3 Jun.

Summer-autumn: The first to return (still in breeding plumage) were 4 Lossiemouth north pier 24 Jul, followed by 4 Findhorn 31 Jul. During August, four records were received from Lossiemouth, maximum 8 on 7th, and at Nairn there were 28 on 27th. Small numbers again during September, with highest counts of 14 Lossiemouth 9th and 9 Cullen 20th.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Very scarce migrant offshore in summer and autumn, rare in winter.

The annual total was eight birds, an average year.

In spring, one flew east past Burghead 26 May (RHD).

In the autumn period, one passed Lossiemouth 18 Sep (RP) with one off Strathlene the same day (MJHC).

The last record of the year, and the highest count was five off Lossiemouth 7 Oct (DAG).

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Fairly common migrant in summer and autumn.

The annual total was 71 birds, an average year. Estimated monthly totals were:

May	June	July	August	September	October
8	3	6	39	14	1

Spring: First records in May, with five birds off Lossiemouth on four dates, and three east past Burghead 26th.

Summer: June records comprised one Lossiemouth 3rd and two Portknockie 11th. July records were from Burghead, Kingston, Strathlene and Tugnet, all single birds aside from two Kingston 7th. Numbers peaked in August, with 13 birds on four dates off Lossiemouth, 12 on two dates off Strathlene including the peak day count of the year, eight on 29th (MJHC) and three off Portknockie on 29th. Also, 4 off Findhorn 6th and 3 off Burghead 28th. Singles were noted off Burghead Bay on two dates, off Tugnet on one date and Findhorn on one date.

Autumn: In September records comprised eight birds on four dates off Lossiemouth, two birds on two dates off both Strathlene and Burghead Bay and single birds off both Hopeman and Findhorn on single dates. Lat of the year was 1 Burghead 1 Oct.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Rare visitor.

In autumn, a juvenile flew past Portknockie 29 Aug (MJHC).

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

Fairly common migrant in summer and autumn.

The annual total was 54 individuals, an average year.

Estimated monthly totals were:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
1	6	1	0	38	2	6

Spring: In April, one was off Lossiemouth 23rd and in May, 2 off Lossiemouth 22nd (also 3 there on 28th) and 1 off Burghead 26th.

Summer: In June, one passed west off Lossiemouth 5th. In August, records centred around Lossiemouth with 18 birds on seven dates. Off Strathlene, 13 birds were recorded on two dates, including the peak count of the year of 11 on 29th (MJHC). Elsewhere, four birds were seen on three dates in Burghead Bay, 1 Culbin Bar 21 Aug and 3 off Portknockie 29 Aug.

Autumn: In September singles were seen off Lossiemouth on 9th and 18th. In October, 1 Burghead 1st, 4 off Nairn Bar 16th and the last of the year was 1 off Lossiemouth on 24th (MJHC).

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

Rare migrant.

A juvenile flew east past Lossiemouth 18 Sep (MJHC). The 12th record of this dainty gull for Moray & Nairn.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Very common breeder and migrant.

Breeding: A small increase in apparently occupied nests (AON) at both the Covesea and Portknockie colonies in 2011, continuing the upward trend at both these sites. There were 540 AON at Covesea on 14 Jun (MJHC), the highest count ever at this colony. On 11 Jun there were 360 AON at Portknockie with most at the egg/small young stage (MJHC). Numbers of AON in the past 10 years at these colonies are as follows:

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Covesea	369	347	397	302	437	474	420	468	535	540
Portknockie	110	122	109	158	246	238	263	332	355	360

Counts off Burghead included 250 on 26 May, 300 on 8 Jun and 370 on 12 Oct. Some good passage counts offshore this year in the autumn period. Off Lossiemouth on 29 Aug, 496 headed west between 17:45 and 18:45 (DAG), with 747 west between 18:15 and 19:15 (RP). Although there is obviously some overlap in these counts, these are the highest numbers since 2003, after a run of lean years for passage counts. A good proportion of juveniles were noted, perhaps from local breeding colonies. In September, 431 passed Lossiemouth in two hours on 18th (RP). Finally, 'hundreds' were noted off Culbin Bar 16 Oct (AY).

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Fairly common resident breeder and very common winter visitor.

Breeding: Numbers were down at Loch Spynie, with only five nests on the platform on 14 May, but no nests on 7 Jun (DAG, MJHC). It is unclear why nesting was unsuccessful at this site. Elsewhere, there were 25 adults at a colony in a small reedy pool at Dunearn Lodge on 3 Jun (MJHC).

Flock counts in excess of 300 birds were 388 Cooper Park pond (Elgin) 6 Feb, c.450 Findhorn Bay 3 Aug and c.470 Loch Spynie 20 Nov, with the latter site also hosting 414 on 2 Dec and c.400 on 18 Dec.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Very scarce visitor.

Birds were seen in and around Findhorn Bay on 11 dates between 9 Aug-8 Oct. Single juveniles were noted on 3 Sep (RHD), 25 Sep (RP) and 7-8 Oct (MJHC, DAG) and there were two juveniles on 27 Sep (MJHC).

Single adults were present on 9 & 31 Aug (AJL), 2 Sep (MJHC), 23 Sep (MJHC) and 2 Oct (DAG). A Little Gull was seen on 15 Sep (DMKS) but the age was not reported. Although it is impossible to be sure how many individuals were involved, there were clearly at least three and there must be a good chance that several birds passed through this site during the period.

Elsewhere, one adult Burghead 29 Jul (RDJ) and, at Nairn, one bird 20 Sep (RPC) and a juvenile on 6 Oct (VW).



Little Gull (adult, at front), Kinloss 9 August 2011 (Photo: Allan Lawrence)

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.

Breeding: Up country, first birds noted back in Dufftown 2 Feb and at Dunphail 27 Feb. The colony at Tips of Corsemaul held 500 pairs 3 May (WRPB) and some 460 birds were dispersed over the Hill of Macklea colony at Glass 21 May (IFr). At Dunearn Lodge, 242 birds were at a colony on 3 Jun (MJHC). A pair with two fledged young was on river shingle in Glen Avon 5 Jul. At the coast on 30 May, c.80 apparently occupied nests were on the Lossie Forest foreshore and 13 nests were on river shingle at Garmouth golf course (MJHC).

In Elgin, breeding was only reported from Moray College with two occupied nests 28 May.

Flock counts in excess of 400 away from breeding areas were 423 Loch Oire 27 Feb, 600 Culbin Bar 3 Jun, 698 Portgordon – Strathlene 16 Oct, 530 Spey estuary 9 Sep and 640 Spey estuary 20 Sep.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder. Very scarce in winter.

Wintering: Individuals were recorded in both winter periods. In the first winter period, an adult was at Loch Spynie 8 Jan (DAG). There has been an adult in the Lossiemouth/Loch Spynie area in the winter period in recent years and it is tempting to speculate that a returning individual is involved. An adult was at Delnies 9 Jan (DAG).

In the second winter period, an adult was at Nairn harbour 22 Nov (RP) – the Nairn area also appears to have regular wintering birds, perhaps the same individual. A second winter was also on the Lossie estuary 11 Dec (RP).

Arrival: Other than likely wintering birds, birds were noted from the last week of February onwards with first returning individuals at Loch Spynie on 22nd and Cooper Park pond (Elgin) on 25th.

Breeding: The only records were of two pairs at Duneart Lodge 3 Jun and a pair with young on Bow Fiddle Rock, Portknockie 11 Jun (MJHC).

No large counts were received this year – the most being 21 Lossie estuary 12 May.

No birds of the race *L.f.intermedius* were recorded this year.

A probable hybrid gull, assumed to be of Lesser Black-backed Gull x Herring Gull parentage (but closely resembling a Yellow-legged Gull) was seen on the Lossie estuary on 13 & 17 Sep (RP). This is a returning bird from previous years (it has a twisted right leg).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.

Breeding: Two reports of town breeding on 30 Jun - at Land Street, Elgin (three young) and St Peter's Road, Buckie. Clearly many more pairs are now breeding on roofs in several of our towns.

Monthly maximum counts on the Lossie estuary were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
121	127	47	47	89	171	222	500	c.1500	nc	350	1226

Approximate counts over 750 were 780 at Hopeman pig farm 2 Jan, 880 Loch Oire 31 May, 2900 Culbin Bar 3 Jun, 1100 Spey estuary 21 Jul (750 there 28 Jul) and 890 Hopeman pig farm 3 Aug. At Loch Spynie in December, 900 were present on 2nd, 1074 on 6th, 1400 on 18th and 780 on 31st.

Note mention of the hybrid gull under Lesser Black-Backed Gull.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*

Very scarce winter visitor.

As always with this species, duplication is impossible to discount fully as mobile individuals around the coastal strip may account for more than one sighting. A reasonable year but difficult to ascertain the exact number of birds involved - perhaps 11 or more.

In the first winter period, a bird of an unspecified age was at Delnies 9 Jan (DAG). At Loch Oire, an adult was present on numerous dates until early April (EH, MJHC, CAG). Also at this site, a 2nd winter bird was present on many dates in February and March (DGD, MJHC, EH) with two 2nd winter birds present on 12 Mar (MJHC). Individuals (likely to have been the Loch Oire birds), were seen around the Urquhart area on a number of dates (EH). A 3rd winter bird was on the Lossie estuary on 10 & 12 Feb (CAG, DAG) with perhaps the same 3rd winter individual present at this site on 22 May, although this could equally be a new bird with no sightings in the interim at this well watched site. An adult was at the Lossie estuary on three dates in February and March (DAG) with what was considered to be the same individual seen at Loch Spynie on 19 Mar. Elsewhere, two adults were at Spey estuary 16 Mar (MJHC) and a 2nd summer bird at Cullen on 11 Apr (DGD).

In the second winter period, an adult was in the Loch Oire/Urquhart area on five dates in December (EH). At Loch Spynie, a 3rd winter bird was seen on 17 Dec (DAG) and a 1st winter individual on 27 & 30 Dec (CAG).

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

Very scarce winter visitor.

Only three individuals recorded this year – the species has become increasingly scarce in Moray & Nairn in recent years. In the first winter period, a probable 3rd winter bird Spey estuary 24 Feb (MJHC, RHD), and a 1st winter bird Cullen 11 Apr (DGD).

In the second winter period, a 1st winter bird was at Burghead from 21 Nov until the year's end (RP *et al*).



Glaucous Gull (first winter), Burghead 30 December 2011 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Scarce resident breeder and common visitor.

Breeding: The only reports of breeding were a pair with young on Bow Fiddle Rock (Portknockie) on 11 Jun, a pair with one chick at Covesea 14 Jun and a territorial pair at Tronach Head on 28 Mar (MJHC).

Some high counts received this year. Monthly maxima on the Lossie estuary and at Speymouth were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lossie estuary	25	6	1	26	12	5	26	250	590	1	200	26
Spey estuary	nc	84	109	30	2	16	129	180	247	100	129	97

(RP, MJHC *et al.*)

The only counts exceeding 50 elsewhere were 130 Culbin Bar 3 Jun, 120 Strathlene 19 Jul (and 60 there 17 Sep) and 70 Culbin Bar 15 Oct. At Loch Spynie, 46 on 31 Dec (MJHC) was an unusually large number.

Up country, 2 Achdregnie 22 Mar and 4 Drynachan 14 Aug.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Very scarce summer visitor and rare breeder.

Breeding: Site 3 – At least one pair present in the area between 14 May and 23 June, with a maximum of five adults (showing display behaviour) on 14 & 21 May. A nest with two eggs was found on 9 Jun, but the attempt failed. This site suffers heavily from disturbance and from high tides (DAG *et al.*).

Site 4 – Four adults on 17 May and three on 28 Jun, but no indication of breeding at this site (CAG, MJHC).

At the Spey estuary, single adults were seen on 2 & 19 Jun (DMP,DAG) and 12 & 26 Jul (MJHC), and there were two adults on 14 Jul (MJHC).

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis**Very common summer visitor and occasional breeder.*

Arrival: The first records of the year, in late March, were of two flying west off Burghhead on 27th (DAG) and two off Nairn on 28th. First arrival dates in the last ten years have been as follows:

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
24 Mar	26 Mar	28 Mar	1 Apr	1 Apr	31 Mar	3 Apr	22 Mar	25 Mar	27 Mar

The main arrival followed from the first week of April onwards, when birds were widely spread along the coast. A good count so early in the season was 32 Findhorn Bay 1 Apr; later in month in Findhorn Bay were 80 on 17th and 300 on 21st.

Breeding: No breeding took place in Moray & Nairn again this year although a displaying pair was watched on the shoreline at Nairn on 10 Apr (DAG). Breeding was last confirmed in 2005.

First juveniles accompanying adults from outwith Moray & Nairn were noted from late June.

More numerous than usual in autumn. Half-monthly maximum counts of flocks on the shore at Burghhead Bay/Findhorn, Lossie estuary and Spey estuary in July-September were:

	early Jul	late Jul	early Aug	late Aug	early Sep	late Sep
Burghhead Bay/Findhorn	2	320	500	80	550	0
Lossie estuary	0	8	29	94	211	53
Spey estuary	2	5	60	425	153	1

Elsewhere, at Nairn and Culbin Bars, 140 on 12 Jul, 99 on 2 Aug and 120 on 21 Aug.

Counts of birds passing offshore were mainly off Lossiemouth where 105 (heading west in 60 mins.) 29 Aug, 87 (12 west, 75 east in 30 mins.) 11 Sep, 47 (38 west, 9 east in 60 mins.) 16 Sep and 37 (west in 60 mins.) 18 Sep (RP). At Strathlene, 50 flew east in 10 mins. on 18 Sep (MJHC) (note the contrast in flight direction with the birds off Lossiemouth on the same day – a curious feature of Moray seawatches which has been noted in past years).

In October, 21 flew east past Strathlene on 1st but otherwise only small numbers lingered, the last sighting of the year being two at Findhorn Bay 16 Oct, a typical departure date.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo**Summer visitor and fairly common breeder.*

Arrival: First, in April, were 4 Loch Spynie 22nd and 1 Spey estuary 23rd - typical dates.

Breeding: At Loch Spynie, 13-14 pairs bred on the platforms (DAG, MJHC, RP) but, as in 2010, no young fledged from this site. The maximum count of adults here was 34 on 14 & 18 May and on 3 Jun. At Garmouth river shingles, 14 nests on 30 May were subsequently deserted and c.20 apparently occupied nests were on a different island on 1 Jul – but few if any young fledged (MJHC). One pair bred at Cloddach quarry and were seen with three chicks on 19 Jun (DAG). Up to four birds were seen on the Spey at Aberlour in early May (and two again on 26 Jun) but there was no evidence of breeding (AE). Interestingly, two were seen on the roof of Walkers' factory on 5 May, which raises possibilities for the future – rooftop nesting has taken place recently at Dyce, near Aberdeen.

The largest flock on the estuaries in late summer (mingling with much greater numbers of Arctic Terns) was at the Spey estuary where 40 on 8 Jul, 30 on 17 Jul, 70 on 26 Jul, 23 on 1 Aug, 12 on 18 Aug and 12 on 3 Sep. Elsewhere, 40 Findhorn 6 Aug. The most at Lossie estuary was 13 on 7 Aug.

Last of the year were 2 Burghhead Bay 16 Oct, the latest in autumn since 2006.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea**Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: First returning birds were noted in May, with 4 Spey estuary 3rd and 10 Findhorn 15th.

Breeding: Four occupied nests on the bare Garmouth river shingles on 30 May failed but on 1 Jul c.50 birds had established a colony on a well-vegetated island a little further upstream and c.20 pairs were estimated to have bred (MJHC). On the Lossie Forest foreshore, 150-200 birds were present on 30 May, with c.85 apparently incubating adults. On 28 Jun, most nests held eggs or tiny chicks but by 11 Jul the colony had been abandoned (CAG, MJHC). At RAF Kinloss, 40-50 apparently incubating adults were counted in early June but all nests failed at the egg stage (AJL).

Large numbers were at the Spey estuary in July, when approximate peak counts were 150 on 8th, 95 on 9th, 500 on 12th and 200 on 26th (MJHC). On some days, no attempt was made to obtain separate counts of Common and Arctic Terns. Reasonably accurate July counts of this two-species flock at the Spey estuary included 198 on 8th, 119 on 9th, 187 on 10th, 526 on 12th, 310 on 14th, 132 on 19th, 390 on 21st and 270 on 26th. On every occasion Arctic Terns greatly outnumbered Common. If the composition of this flock represents the breeding success of the population then the fact that only 10 juveniles were contained in the flock of 526 birds is a concern. Elsewhere, 80 Findhorn shore 6 Aug, and 230 Common/Arctic terns at Culbin Bar on 21 Aug were mostly Arctic. The last record of the year was one at Spey estuary 9 Sep.

Guillemot *Uria aalge*

Very common offshore.

Despite the presence of 61 on the sea off the Bow Fiddle Rock on 11 Jun there was no suggestion of breeding there. At Tugnet on 27 Jun, 14 adults were accompanied by flightless young which must have swum a considerable distance, at least from one of the nearest breeding colonies, at Troup Head in Aberdeenshire or near Cromarty on the Black Isle.

Congregations of 100 or more on the sea included c.1500 Burghead 26 May (still 500 there 8 Jun) (RHD), 1300+ off Findhorn on 22 Aug (RHD) and c.200 Burghead Bay 24 Aug. Passing off Lossiemouth were 173 on 16 Sep and c.300 on 24 Oct.

'Hundreds' of auk sp. off Tronach Head on 11 Jun were a mixture of Guillemots (the majority) and Razorbills.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*

Rare visitor.

One was swimming in Burghead Harbour on 17 Nov (JPot, MWe). Sadly this bird, the first for Moray & Nairn, was not available for local birders - being retrospectively identified from photographs early in 2012!



Brünnich's Guillemot, Burghead harbour 17 November 2011 (Photo: Terry Hilsden)

Razorbill *Alca torda*

Scarce breeder, very common offshore.

Breeding: The Portknockie colony continues to grow. On 28 Feb, 34 were on the sea below the cliffs and a few were ashore on ledges by 28 Mar. On 11 Jun there were c.12 pairs on the cliffs (of which three pairs had a visible chick) and 55 on the sea (MJHC).

Away from breeding areas, counts above 50 birds were received only from Burghead/Burghead Bay where 70 on 29 Mar, 52 on 14 Apr, 100 on 15 Apr, c.600 on 26 May (RHD), 300 on 8 Jun, c.400 on 6 Aug (DCJ), very large numbers estimated at 1300+ on 22 Aug (RHD) and 60 on 24 Aug.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle*

Scarce breeder and scarce offshore.

Breeding: On the early morning of 28 Mar, 26 were counted on the sea below the cliffs at Portknockie, and 16 on the sea below the cliffs at Tronach Head (MJHC). Subsequently, best counts of adults were 12 Portknockie 11 Jun and 12 Tronach Head 6 Jul. Breeding was confirmed at Tronach Head where one chick was ringed in the usual crevice on 6 Jul (MJHC). Two were offshore at Covesea on 21 Jun (KLG) – possibly a potential breeding site in the future.

Away from breeding areas, best counts were 4 flying west in 30 minutes at Strathlene on 29 May and 3 Burghead Bay 23 Oct. Very few otherwise: 2 Burghead 12 Mar, 1 Burghead Bay 15 Oct, 2 Cullen 22 Aug and 1 off Lossiemouth 6 Nov.

Little Auk *Alle alle*

Very scarce visitor in autumn and winter. Occasionally more numerous.

Another poor year with only three records. Seven flew east past Strathlene 26 Oct (MJHC), one came ashore on Lossiemouth west beach on 26 Nov (EH) and one was off Burghead on 14 Dec (RHD). After only one record in 2009, and no records in 2010, this species has been very scarce in recent years.

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

Very scarce offshore.

Two flew past Portknockie 17 Feb (MJHC) and one was off Burghead on 12 May (MNG). After just four records in 2010, one record in 2009 and five in 2008 this species appears to have become very scarce, and/or underrecorded. It is however very likely that a greater number of birds pass offshore in summer but at a distance where they are not identified.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Very common resident breeder.

Largest flocks reported were 290 on the Bow Fiddle Rock (Portknockie) 23 Feb, 215 Scarffbanks 13 Nov, 90 Buckie shipyard 19 Dec and 60 Myreside 17 Sep.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Scarce resident breeder.

Breeding season: Records in the period late March-July included one singing Cawdor Wood 13 May and 3 Jun, 6 Cloddach quarry 8 May (and 2 there 10 Apr), 4 Kinloss 4 Jul (and 2 there 30 Jun), 1 Nairn Bar 12 Jul and 2 Glen Rothes 23 Mar.

Autumn/winter records from additional localities were 2 Innesmill 12 Jan, 1 Linksfield 14 Aug, 1 Loch Flemington 11 Dec, 1 Muirton 15 Sep and 1 Urquhart 14 Sep.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus**Very common resident breeder.*

Largest flocks reported were 1500 Clochan 9 Jan, 1000 South Darkland 27 Nov, 700 Orton 20 Jan and 150 Fochabers 16 Nov.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto**Very common resident breeder.*

Numerous in Clochan where ten or more between August-December, peaking at 19 on 27 Nov. Elsewhere, 20 Cloves (Alves) 22 Nov and 11 Buckie shipyard 11 Dec.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus**Summer visitor and fairly common breeder.*

Arrival: In April, first was a very early bird at Loch Kirkaldy on 19th (the earliest ever in Moray & Nairn, by one day) followed by 1 Aitnoch and 1 Knockando, both on 29th.

Subsequently seen or heard at Aberlour (a juvenile in the graveyard between 27 Jul-10 Aug, but no foster parent seen), Aitnoch (max. 3 on 11 Jun), Archiestown (May), Binn Hill (Garmouth) (Jun), Black Hillock (3 on 12 Jun), Colfield (Jun), Dallas Dhu-Stoneyford (Jun), Drynachan (May), Glen Gheallaidh (2 on 5 Jun), Kinloss (May, Jun), Loch Spynie (May) and Shenval (May).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba**Scarce resident breeder.*

Following a second successive severe winter in 2010-11, the Barn Owl population showed little sign of recovery from the serious decline evident in 2010.

Breeding: The only record during the April-July breeding season was 1 Lintmill (Cullen) 12 Jul (MJHC).

The number of occupied breeding-season localities reported in each of the past 10 years has been:

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
13	15	11	13	21	10	9	5	0	1

At other times of year, reports came from Mains of Struthers (Kinloss) (Dec), Archiestown (Sep), Bognafuaran (Nairn) (Nov), Clochan (Dec), Covesea (Nov), Craigellachie (Nov), Kirdelbeg (Knockando) (Nov), Loch na Bo (Nov), Lossiemouth-Elgin road (Mar), Lyne of Urchany (Aug), Knowhead (Mulben) (Nov) and between Rothes-Craigellachie (Nov).

The total number of localities from which Barn Owls were reported (at any time of year) since 2003 is:

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
33	31	27	31	21	40	20	11	13

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco**Common resident breeder.*

Breeding confirmed at Archiestown where two juveniles on 6 Jun.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus**Scarce resident breeder.*

Breeding: Confirmed by the presence of calling young at Tappoch (Roseisle) 9 Jun (MJHC). Also in the breeding season, single birds at Drainie on 9 Jun (MJHC) and at Newtack (near Keith) 14 Apr (IFr).

In winter, 1 Culbin Bar 18 Jan (per Birdguides).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Rare breeder and very scarce migrant.

Breeding: Present in breeding habitat in March-June at Dava 23 Mar (AJL), Duneart 2 Jun (PS), Kinloss 10 May (AJL) and Lower Cabrach 26 Jun (WRPB).

An exceptional autumn for migrants provided the following records: 1 Findhorn Bay 4 Sep (AJL), 1 flying over Findhorn 11 Sep (GMcM), 1 Tugnet 17 Sep (per MJHC), 1 Binsness 16 Oct (ABa), 1 Portknockie clifftop (before heading west over the sea) 30 Oct (DAG) and 1 in off the sea at Burghead Bay 31 Oct (SMc). In addition, as many as eight were disturbed from rough ground west of Alves by a shooting party on 27 Sep (per ISS).

In winter, 1 Kinloss 8 Nov and 1 Dec (AJL), 1 Findhorn Bay 4 Dec (AJL) and 1 Newton 17 Dec (AMu).



Short-eared Owl flying in off the sea, Burghead Bay 31 October 2011 (Photo: Seamus McArdle)

Swift *Apus apus*

Summer visitor and common breeder.

Arrival: First was an early bird at Loch Spynie on 23 Apr, 6 there on 8 May. Not seen elsewhere until well into May when 2 Forres 10th, 4 Aberlour 11th, 1 Lossiemouth 12th, 6 Elgin 13th and 2 Dulsie Bridge 15th.

Largest congregations of feeding birds were 40 Linkwood (Elgin) 2 Aug, 33 Loch Spynie 29 Jul, 30 Coleburn 20 Aug and 24 Elgin 9 Aug.

Last of the year were 1 Forres 29 Aug and 1 Mundole 2 Sep.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Very scarce visitor and occasional breeder.

Six reports: one in mid October on the Spey at Garmouth viaduct (OJ) and 1 Loch Spynie 17 Oct (Spynie logbook). Undated reports (per ISS) of birds seen on the Spey at Dandaleith and Fochabers, and at two sites on the River Lossie.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major**Common resident breeder.*

Records received from 32 localities. Notable reports were 5 in 70 minutes in the Urquhart area 11 Feb (and 4 there in 80 minutes on 27 Jan), 4 in two hours along the River Nairn near Howford Bridge 6 Aug and 3 Cluny Hill (Forres) 13 Feb. A thriving population around Forres, estimated at 20 pairs within a two-mile radius of the town (ISS).

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus**Rare visitor*

A male was seen and heard at Loch Spynie on 19 May (RP). This is the first record of Golden Oriole in Moray & Nairn.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor**Very scarce winter migrant.*

One in an area of forest clear-fell near Archiestown 12 Dec (DGD).

In the 40-year period 1951-90 there were 24 records, but in the 21-year period 1991-2011 only seven were reported.



Great Grey Shrike, Archiestown 12 December 2011 (Photo: David Devonport)

Magpie *Pica pica**Common resident breeder.*

Recorded from Allaloth, Broadley (near Clochan), Clochan, Coltfoot, Covelea, Cummingston, Nether Dallachy, Duffus, Essil Cemetery, Findhorn, Hopeman, Kingsteps, Kinloss, Kingston, Lossiemouth, Nairn Bar, Silverhills, Newton, Reclatich (Glen Rinnes), Salterhill, Shempston and Strypes.

Largest groups were 7 Shempston 28 Oct, 5 Lein (Kingston) 10 Aug, 4 Allaloth 20 Feb, 4 Hopeman 31 Jul and 4 Kinloss on 29 Apr, 22 Sep and 15 Nov.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius**Fairly common resident breeder.*

Breeding season: April-August reports came from Califer Hill, Carron, Cawdor Wood, Culbin Forest, Loch Spynie, Nairn, Urquhart and Wellheads (Clochan). Reported as widely distributed in forests in the Forres area.

At other seasons, Jays were seen at the following sites: Aberlour (Mar), Bauds Wood (Feb), Black Hill (Aultmore) (Feb), Cabrach (Jan), Cranloch (Oct), Clarkly Hill (Nov), Dava (Dec), Elgin (Oct), Binsness (Nov), Grangehall (Kinloss) (Oct), Kinloss (Nov, Dec), Lake of Moy (Nov), Loch na Bo (Jan, Nov, Dec), Loch Spynie (Jan, Oct), Lochhill (Nov), Mayne (Elgin) (Dec), Midwood (Clochan) (Mar), Monahoudie Moss (Sep), Sanquhar (Forres) (Oct) and Westfield (Oct). Also, in October, in Newbold and Cathay woods (Forres) for the first time.

Largest groups were 6 Westfield (Duffus) 30 Oct, 4 flying high to the east over Clarkly Hill 21 Nov and 4 Urquhart area 11 Aug.

During the 5-year period 2007-11, Jays have been reported from 90 different sites – and this will fail to represent their full distribution. Compare this with an equivalent 5-year period 20 years ago, 1987-91, when reports came from only eight sites. The increase over this period has been dramatic.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula**Very common resident breeder.*

Counts of 50 or more included 500+ heading over Findhorn Bay to roost in Culbin Forest 26 Nov, 200 Howford (Nairn) 30 Jan, 124 Milltown of Edinville 17 Jan, 100 Blairnamarrow (Tomintoul-Lecht) 22 Feb, 60 Aldunie (Cabrach) 26 Jan, 60 Lake of Moy 5 Nov and 50 Craig Haulkie quarry (Tomintoul) 27 Jun.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus**Very common resident breeder.*

Breeding: Nest building noted Arradoul 28 Feb. Estimated rookery counts (number of nests) were 55 Dufftown (near Mortlach Church), 50 Loch Flemington, 30 Auldearn and 5 Forres (near Knockomie/Mannachie Road) (RP).

On 26 Nov, c.2000 flew from Findhorn Bay to roost in Culbin Forest. Other counts of 100 or more birds included 250 Milltown of Edinville 17 Jan and 200 Howford (Nairn) 30 Jan. Well up-country were 40 Aldunie (Cabrach) 26 Jan.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone**Very common resident breeder.*

One was gathering nest material in Forres on 27 Mar. Counts exceeding 20 were 69 Lossie estuary at dusk 31 Aug (65 there 5 Sep and 46 on 13 Sep), 43 Findhorn Bay 29 Jun and 21 Kingsteps 27 Sep.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix**Scarce visitor and rare breeder.*

Pure Hooded Crows (or Carrion x Hooded hybrids very closely resembling Hooded) included 1 Archiestown 8 Mar, 1 Cloddach quarry 16 Jan, 3 Nairn/Culbin Bars 9 Jan (and 3 on 5 Feb, 2 on 11 Dec), 1 Findhorn dunes 5 Mar (and 3 on 4 Sep), 2 Findhorn Bay 14 Feb (and 2 on 3 Aug, 1 on 27 Sep, 2 on 4 Nov), 2

Hopeman 3 Aug (and 1 on 2 Oct), 12 Kingsteps 27 Sep (DCJ), 1 Lossie estuary 26 Aug (and 1 on 5 Sep, 1 on 13-14 Sep), 1 Howford Bridge (Nairn) 30 Jan, 2 Nairn 15 Nov (and 1 on 7 Feb), c.10 Netherton 2 Sep (MJHC), 1 Scarffbanks 2 May, 1 Urquhart area throughout the year (2 on 9 Feb) and 2 Carse of Delnies 25 Jul.

Hybrids were widely recorded. Best counts were 14 Nairn/Culbin Bars 16 Oct and 8 Kingsteps 27 Sep.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Scarce visitor and rare breeder.

Breeding: At the coast, one pair nested again at Tronach Head and fledged two young (MJHC). An apparent territorial pair was in the Ailnack gorge (Tomintoul) on 29 Mar and two birds were there on 9 Aug but intervening events are unknown (MJHC).

Ravens have now become a relatively common sight and sound in many parts of the uplands. In 2011, reports (in addition to those above) were received from Achdregnie (Mar), Aitnoch (Apr), Aldunie (Jan), Auchmair (Jan), Ben Rinnes (Feb, Jul), Cairn Lochan (Jul), Carn Liath (Dec), Carn na Glascoill (Mar), Croftglass (May), Dava (Dec), Drynahan (Aug), Dunphail (Mar, Apr, Jul), Feith Musach (Mar), Lecht (Feb), Meikle Conval (Jan), Nether Bellandy (Jul), Reclétich (Jan), Suie (Aug) and Tervieside (Feb). It would not be justified to read too much into the geographical and seasonal distribution of these records – to a large degree they reflect the visits made to the upland areas by birders who report their sightings. The area around Glen Rinnes and the Ladder Hills features strongly however. Most groups were of 1-4 birds but larger groups were 10 Carn na Glascoill 22 Mar (MJHC) and 5 Lecht 22 Feb (FCC).

In the coastal lowlands, Ravens were seen over Clochan on three occasions – the first records in 35 years of observation there. One flew west, high and calling, on 30 Apr, one flew high towards the south-west on 30 May and three birds glided northwards in a group on 20 Jul (MJHC). At Nairn Bar the wing of a corpse was found on 16 Oct (DCJ).

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Very common resident breeder and scarce migrant.

First song Black Hill (Aultmore) 28 Feb. One in a central Elgin garden 24 Dec. On Nairn Bar, 5 on 16 Oct and 2 on 11 Dec.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Very common resident breeder.

Song at Linkwood (Elgin) as early as 12 Jan.

Nest boxes:

	Pairs	Mean clutch	Mean fledged brood (all pairs)	Mean fledged brood (successful pairs only)
Loch Spynie	29	8.9	7.0	7.8 (n=26)

(RP, CAG)

An average year at Loch Spynie for clutch size and fledging success. The proportion of juveniles caught per adult for ringing at the 'Constant Effort Site' was 6.3, a considerable improvement on 4.4 in 2010 and 1.4 in 2009 (RP). Elsewhere, in Newbold and Muiry woods (Forres), five boxes were occupied by Blue Tits from which 20 young fledged (ISS).

Great Tit *Parus major*

Very common resident breeder.

First song Lein (Kingston) 10 Jan and Dunphail 22 Feb. On 4 May, ten were singing along the old railway line between Craigellachie and Dufftown.

Nest boxes:

	Pairs	Mean clutch	Mean fledged brood (all pairs)	Mean fledged brood (successful pairs only)
Loch Spynie	11	7.8	7.0	7.7 (n=11) (RP, CAG)

A successful year at Loch Spynie, where clutch sizes were slightly above average and fledging success equalled the best ever. Productivity, as assessed by ringing at the 'Constant Effort Site', revealed 1.7 juveniles caught per adult, down slightly from 2.0 in 2010 (RP). Elsewhere, in Newbold and Muiry woods (Forres), five boxes were occupied by Great Tits from which 18 young fledged (ISS).

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*

Common resident breeder.

A good population on Hill of Mulundy where, on 19 Nov, Crested Tits were located in five areas – eight birds in total (MJHC). On Shaw Hill (Darnaway) birds were found in three areas on 5 Nov – five birds in total (MJHC). Out of the usual range were 2 Loch Kirkaldy 9 Jul (MCoA). Several reports from Culbin Forest, even on Culbin Bar where 1 on 5 Feb and 3 on 11 Dec (AY). Also 2 Roseisle Forest 5 Nov (FA).

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Very common resident breeder.

First song heard Clochan 8 Jan, Lossiemouth 17 Jan and Milltown of Edinville 17 Jan.

Very numerous at feeders at Kingston in October, outnumbering Blue Tits and Great Tits combined.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Very common breeder and migrant.

First song Findhorn Bay 20 Feb and Black Hill (Aultmore) 28 Feb.

No flock reports – largest group was 8 Kinloss 18 Apr.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Summer visitor and very common breeder.

Arrival: In late March, 5 Loch Spynie 26th and, on 27th, 25 Loch Flemington, 12 Loch na Bo, 8 Cloddach quarry and 8 Garmouth viaduct. Rapid increase in early April, leading to counts of 50 Loch na Bo 3rd, 30 Loch Spynie 3rd, 12 Nairn 9th, 25 Cummingston 9th, 200+ Drynahan 10th, 200 Findhorn Bay 12th, 40 Loch Oire 16th and c.300 Loch Spynie 19th.

Colonies: 800-1000 burrows in 'good condition' at Quarry Pool (on River Spey, near Fochabers) and a further 200-300 such burrows above the Spey at Ordiquish (MJHC) – without a great deal of time-consuming study the true size of these colonies (in terms of pairs of birds) remains very uncertain. It is undoubtedly true to say though that the lower Spey contains the largest concentration of Sand Martins in Moray & Nairn. Smaller colonies (apparently occupied burrows) included 30 in a sand pile at Cloddach quarry, 14 Elgin golf course, c.200 Glen Rinnes sandpit, c.5 Lossiemouth west beach dunes, 15 Milltown (Cabrach) and other uncounted (but probably small) colonies at the Burn of Tynet (Porttannachy) and Tomachlaggan (Strath Avon). Concentrations of birds in May-July in areas where no colony was found included 40 Milltown of Edinville and 6 Findochty.

On 27 June, in cool and calm weather, c.150 were hawking for food around the mouth of the Spey and out over the sea for c.100m.

Last of the year were 2 Loch Spynie 27 Sep.

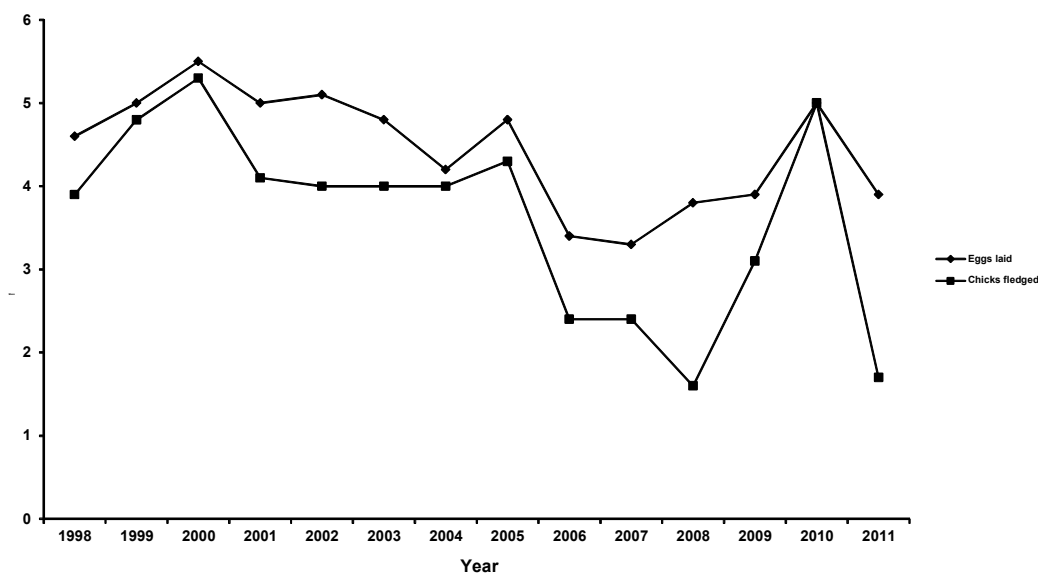
Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Summer visitor and very common breeder.

Arrival: More early records than usual. First, in April, were 1 Loch Spynie 3rd, 1 Lossiemouth 3rd, 1 Kinloss 5th, 1 Spey Bay 7th, 1 Bin of Cullen 9th, 1 Nairn 9th and 1 Blairfindy Lodge (Glenlivet) 9th.

Breeding: In the Lhanbryde barn, mean size of six first clutches and one second clutch was 3.9 eggs. Three of the first clutches were deserted, probably due to cold, wet weather. The four remaining clutches produced a total of only 12 fledged young – the second worst in 15 years (RP).

Productivity for Swallow nests at Lhanbryde with known contents



The mean number of eggs laid is slightly lower when compared to 2010, however, there have only been three other years with a lower mean number of eggs laid. There was a large drop in the mean number of chicks fledging to only 1.7 compared with the mean of 5.0 chicks recorded in 2010. This was the second worst year for fledged chicks, following the very poor year in 2008. This appears to be due to long periods of cold and wet weather throughout the summer.

Unfledged young were still in a nest at Archiestown on 8 Sep.

The only significant late summer/autumn gatherings reported were 60 Forres 25 Aug, 60 Findhorn 4 Sep and 54 Kinloss 9 Sep.

In October, 18 Achagour fishery 3rd, 3 Lein (Kingston) 3rd, 5 Fogwatt 5th, 4 Kinloss 6th and 2 Findhorn Bay 7th.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Summer visitor and common breeder.

Arrival: First, in April, were 1 Forres 9th, 1 Loch Spynie 11th.

Breeding: Counts of occupied nests included 1 Buckie High School 23 Jul, 15 Delnabo Lodge (Tomintoul) 5 Jul and 1 Portknockie seacliffs 11 June.

Large numbers gathered at Kinloss in August, prior to migration: flock estimates were 60 on 17th, 150 on 19th, 200 on 24th and 100 on 25th (AJL). Last of the year were 2 Archiestown 26 Sep and 4 Mosstodloch 4 Oct.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus**Very common resident breeder.*

The only reports of 10 or more together were 36 Loch Spynie 5 June, 16 Kinloss 10 Sep, 15 Kilravock 28 Nov, 14 Elgin 7 Dec, 13 Keith 16 Sep and 10 Loch Flemington 10 Nov.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus collybita**Summer visitor and rare breeder.*

One in Kellas oakwood 10 Jun (MJHC). Visits to Cawdor Wood, which formerly held the largest population in Moray & Nairn, in mid May and early June failed to reveal any Wood Warblers.

After a completely blank year in 2010, the situation in 2011 is no more encouraging.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita**Summer visitor and fairly common breeder. Scarce migrant and rare winter visitor.*

Arrival: In March, singing birds were 1 Muiry Wood (Forres) 22nd, 1 Loch na Bo 23rd, 2 Loch Spynie 26th and 1 Dipple (beside the Spey) 30th.

Subsequently, singers were found at Burnside of Birnie, Chapelton (Forres), Clochan, Cloddach quarry, Culbin Forest (3), Dallachy tip (2), Dipple ('several'), Dunphail, Forres (5 in Muiry and Newforres woods), Garmouth viaduct, Lein (Kingston), Loch na Bo (6), Loch of Blairs, Loch Oire, Loch Spynie (2), Lossie Forest, Monahoudie Moss, Mosstodloch, Mulben, River Findhorn near Forres (2), Roseisle Forest (3), St John's Meads and Urquhart area.

Breeding was confirmed at Dipple on 27 Jul when an adult was watched feeding newly fledged juveniles (MJHC). Although singing Chiffchaffs are widespread in lowland Moray, breeding is very seldom proved.

Autumn: 1 Dunphail 22 Sep, and 1 Clochan 3 Oct was the last of the year.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus**Summer visitor and very common breeder.*

Arrival: The first records, in April, were 1 Rafford 9th, 2 Cloddach quarry 10th, 1 Drynachan 10th, 'several' Loch Spynie 11th, 2 Loch na Bo 12th and 'several' Lein (Kingston) 12th. Birds were widespread by 14th.

Along the 5.5km stretch of old railway line between Dufftown-Craigellachie, 58 singing birds were counted on 4 May (MJHC). This is the same as in 2009, after a dip to 40 in 2010. Elsewhere, 15 Aitnoh 29 Apr and 8 singing Benrinnes Wood 4 May. Three singing birds near his garden in Forres, where only one in recent years (ISS).

Productivity, as measured by ringing at the 'Constant Effort Site' at Loch Spynie, was 2.2 juveniles caught per adult – slightly up from 1.9 in 2010 (RP).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla**Summer visitor and common breeder. Scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

January-March: In an Elgin garden, 1 female on 19 Jan, 25-27 Jan, 1 Feb, 12 Feb and throughout March, 2 females on 9 & 11 Feb, and on 13 Feb, 1 male and 2 females (CAG). Elsewhere, 1 Nairn 7 Jan (DBax).

Spring/summer: Highest densities of singing birds were 19 along the Dufftown-Craigellachie old railway line on 4 May (MJHC), 11 Loch Spynie (including six around the woods at the southern end of the loch and five in the woods at the north-east end) on 5 June (RP) and 8 along the lower River Findhorn near Forres on 24 Apr and 22 May (AJL). Other singers (singles unless stated) were found at Aberlour ('several'), Altyre, Binsness (2), Bishopmill (Elgin), Cawdor Wood (4), Clochan, Cloddach quarry, Dipple (2), Dufftown, Elgin (Wards Rd.), Forres (3), Glen Gheallaidh, Kinloss, Knockando (3), Lhanbryde, Linkwood (Elgin), Loch na Bo, Loch Oire, Lossie Forest, Mains of Morinish (Glenlivet), Mosstodloch, Nether Bellandy, Pluscarden, Sanquhar (Forres) (2), Spynie canal, St John's Meads, Tarras (3) and Tynet. Breeding confirmed at Mannachie (Forres) where a family party was feeding on Red Currants.

Autumn: 1 Archiestown 3 Sep, 2 Clochan 18 Sep, 1 Urquhart 19 Sep and 1 South Darkland 21 Sep.

Late November/December: 1 male and 1 female intermittently in a Buckie garden between 24 Nov-late Dec, (HC), 1 Cothill 22 Nov (PR) and 1 Forres 31 Dec (KLG). In an Elgin garden in December, 1 male on 3rd, 1 male and 1 female on 4th-10th, 1 female on 17th, 24th & 29th, and 2 females on 30th-31st (CAG).

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder.

Only four records: 1 Archiestown 8 Jun (NL), 1 Culbin Forest 30 May (AJL) and 3 singing in riverside woodland at Dipple 11 May (MJHC). Later, one trapped for ringing at Loch Spynie 26 Aug (RP).

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Summer visitor and very common breeder.

Arrival: First, in April, were 1 Findhorn 23rd (2 there on 27th), 1 Hopeman 24th, 1 River Findhorn near Forres 24th, 1 Elgin (Wards Rd.) 25th, 1 Loch Spynie 26th, 1 Urquhart 26th, 1 Scarffbanks 27th and 1 Aberlour 28th.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder.

Single singing birds were heard at Dipple 13 Apr (WMM), Hill of Mulundy 25 Apr (JMu), South Darkland 1 May (JDL), Spynie canal east of the Elgin-Lossiemouth road 23-25 Apr (DAG, CAG), Spynie canal west of the Elgin-Lossiemouth road 27 Apr (MJHC), Troves 9 May (KLG), Tugnet 6 May (MJHC) and Wardend (Fogwatt) 1 May (JDL).

Single birds were trapped for ringing at Loch Spynie on 29 Jun and 26 Aug (RP).



Grasshopper Warbler, Loch Spynie 26 August 2011 (Photo: Bob Proctor)

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus**Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: Two very early records, of singing birds at Loch Spynie on 12 Apr (the earliest ever in Moray & Nairn by three days) and Spey Bay on 15 Apr. Elsewhere in April, first song Lein (Kingston) 23rd and 1 Montgrew 27th. Five singing Tarras 11 May.

Well up-country was a singing bird at Croughly (Tomintoul) at an altitude of 330m.

At the 'Constant Effort Site' in the north-east fen at Loch Spynie the number of juveniles caught per adult was 1.3, down slightly from 1.9 recorded in 2010 (RP).

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus**Irruptive winter visitor, scarce in most years but occasionally common.*

Winter-spring: Following the influx of autumn 2010, a few birds were seen early in 2011. In January, 1 Lossiemouth 14th (MSh), 13 Forres 17th (RHD) and 3 Elgin 21st (CAG). In February, 7 Auldearn 6th-8th (MJHC, per Birdguides), 7 Nairn 7th (per Birdguides), 4 Rafford 7th (ISS) and 4 Forres 8th (CAG). In spring, 1 Culbin Forest 2 Apr (AW), 1 Forres 4 May (JMCK) and 1 South Darkland 10 May (JDL).

Autumn-winter: Only a very few were seen. First were 3 Nairn 2 Nov (per Birdguides) followed by 1 Elgin 11 & 19 Nov (RP, CAG), 2 Forres 17 Nov and 12 there 27 Nov (KLG). In December, 2 Elgin 3rd (ABa) and 6 Forres 5th (ISS).

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris**Very common resident breeder.*

Breeding confirmed at Cawdor Wood (adult carrying food 13 May) and Sanquhar (Forres) (family party 5 June).

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes**Very common resident breeder.*

First song Loch Oire 9 Feb and Lein (Kingston) 19 Mar. Despite a second successive cold winter, the breeding population in some areas appeared to have recovered to some degree since 2010. On 4 May, 26 birds were singing along the 5.5km section of the old railway line between Craigellachie and Dufftown – a considerable improvement over 14 in 2010 but still well below the 36 counted in May 2008 and 30 in May 2009 (MJHC). Elsewhere, 8 singing Sanquhar (Forres) 10 May. Still considered very scarce around Archiestown and Loch na Bo.

The proportion of juveniles to adults trapped at Loch Spynie 'Constant Effort Site' was 2.0, slightly down from 2.5 in 2010 (RP).

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris**Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.*

Nestboxes: Only four out of 14 boxes at Clochan were occupied. All were successful and mean brood size at fledging was 4.3 (MJHC).

A pre-roost gathering over Elgin contained 4,648 birds on 17 Feb (counted from a photograph by JDL). These birds were roosting in the old bakery building in Moss St. At other roosts, 1,000 Loch Spynie 27 Oct and 800 Buckie harbour 28 Jan. Away from roosts, the only flocks of 500 or more was 600 Hopeman pig farm 14 Feb.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus**Common resident breeder.*

Early song beside River Lossie in Elgin 11 Jan and at Howford Bridge (Nairn) 23 Jan. Two occupied nests at Altyre in mid April. Other reports from Aldunie (Cabrach), Black Hillock, Burnside of Enzie, Craigellachie, Dulsie Bridge, Garmouth viaduct, Forres (Mosset Burn), Barmuckity (on River Lossie) and Suie.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus**Summer visitor and scarce breeder.*

In Glen Avon on 5 Jul, 6 between Dalestie-Craig Bhuilg included a juvenile at Inchrory. In Glen Bhuilg, between Craig Bhuilg and Loch Bhuilg, no Ring Ouzels were found. (MJHC). Despite the late date of the 2011 visit, the decline has apparently been dramatic in Glen Bhuilg where previous one-day surveys located 16 pairs/singing males in 1989, 7 in 1995 and 8 in 2000.

Elsewhere, a pair on Ben Rinnes summit 24 Apr (ASi), 3 (including one adult male) Cairn Uish 20 Jun (CAG) and 1 male Eachrach 26 Aug (MJHC).

Blackbird *Turdus merula**Very common resident breeder, winter visitor and migrant.*

Breeding: First song Urquhart 9 Feb. Ten singing males along a 5.5km section of the old railway line between Dufftown and Craigellachie on 4 May – the same as in 2010 (MJHC).

Autumn counts which may relate to migrants were 18 Covesea lighthouse 30 Oct, 16 Clochan 3 Nov and 20 Pitairlie 13 Nov. On 8 Nov, at Burghead, one was seen far out to sea, flying low over the water towards the shore. The bird, presumably exhausted, flopped into the sea and drowned c.100m from land.

Highest mid winter count was 14 together in an Elgin garden on 10 Dec.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris**Very common migrant and winter visitor.*

Winter-spring: Flocks of 20 or more were 32 Nairn/Culbin Bars 9 Jan, 20 Rafford 7 Feb, 25 West Hardmuir 16 March, 20 Altyre 1 Apr and, last report of the spring, 30 Drummur 14 Apr.

Arrival: Quite late - first birds of the autumn, in late October, were 100 Archiestown 23rd, 6 Kinloss 24th, 4 Alves 26th and 1 Clochan 26th.

Autumn-winter: Largest flocks were in November when 90 Clochan 2nd, 50 Lake of Moy 5th, 100 Duffus 5th, 200 Findhorn Bay 6th, 150 Nairn 8th, 100 Kinloss 14th, 60 Duffus Castle 15th and 200 Glenmullach (Tomintoul) 24th. Few December reports, and no flock greater than 30.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos**Very common breeder and migrant.*

Mid winter: In January, 1 Urquhart 3rd and 1 Nairn 9th. In December, 5 Nairn/Culbin Bars 11th and 1 Urquhart 16th.

First song of the year, in late February, at Kingston on 25th, Clochan on 27th and Black Hill (Aultmore) on 28th. Not until 1 Mar at Dunphail.

Upcountry, 3 singing Allanreid 22 Mar and 11 Knowhead (Morinsh) 8 Jun. Three singing birds along a 5.5km section of the old railway line between Dufftown and Craigellachie 4 May – one fewer than in 2010 (MJHC).

In autumn, 1 Dunphail 23 Oct with an influx of Blackbirds.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus**Very common migrant and winter visitor.*

Winter-spring: Very few reports – largest flocks were 45 Dunphail 27 Mar and 70 Altyre 1 Apr.

Arrival: First, in October, were 2 Ballantruan (Strath Avon) 1st (also 7 on 9th and 12 on 13th), 3 Clochan 8th, 8 Elgin 13th and 9 Aitnoch 14th.

Autumn-winter: Only small numbers. The only flocks of more than 20 were 40 Kinloss 30 Oct and 32 Nairn 8 Nov.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Very common resident breeder and migrant.

On 3 Aug, at Sluie, 62 (in groups of 36, 12 and 14) flew up the Findhorn valley in 15 minutes (MJHC). Other flocks of ten or more were 30 Moniemouies (Teindland) 1 Sep, 15 Archiestown 24 Sep and 12 Kinloss 21 Nov.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Summer visitor and common breeder.

Summer reports from Braushie Cree (Glen Rinnes), Cabrach, Cawdor Wood, Dallas Dhu-Stoneyford, Delmore (Aberlour) (first of the year on 14 May), Kellas oakwood, Kinloss, Knowhead (Morinsh), Loch Oire, Morinsh Forest and Howford Bridge (Nairn).

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Very common resident breeder and migrant.

Breeding: Only four were singing in a 5.5km section of the old railway line between Craigellachie and Dufftown on 4 May (MJHC). The proportion of juveniles to adults trapped at Loch Spynie 'Constant Effort Site' was 3.0, well down from 5.7 in 2010 (RP).

Often present on the Nairn/Culbin Bars where 2 on 17 Jan, 1 on 14 Feb and 6 on 24 Oct.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus*

Rare migrant.

A male at Portknockie on 4 May (LSi) was the 16th record for Moray & Nairn, of which 11 have been in the March-May spring period.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder. Very scarce migrant.

Breeding season: 1 male Little Aitnoch 3 Jun (MJHC), several Aitnoch 10 Jun (KLG), a pair feeding young Cawdor Wood 10 Jun (MJHC), 3 males singing along 800m of the road between Balnught-Banchor 15 May (DAG), 1 female and a male with fledged young (different sites) Glen Gheallaidh 5 Jun (MJHC), 1 juvenile Inchrory (Glen Avon) 5 Jul (MJHC), 2 Loch Kirkaldy 9 Jul (MCoa) and 1 fledged juvenile Nether Bellandy (Glen Rinnes) 2 Jul (MJHC).

An unusual record of 1 juvenile/female Bishopmill (Elgin) 7 Aug (SMu).

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Summer visitor and scarce breeder. Very scarce migrant.

The only record was of a male in scrub near the runway lights on the Findhorn Bay saltmarsh on 7-9 Oct (AJL,MJHC,DAG,RHD).

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Scarce resident breeder and migrant.

Following the fall in the breeding population after the severe winter of 2009-10, a second cold winter in 2010-11 resulted in a further population collapse.

Breeding season: Along the coast, only three pairs were located – in two sites. Two pairs were feeding young at Carse of Delnies on 25 Jul (LSc) and there was one pair near the Lein rifle range, west of Kingston (PGS) where four fledged young were seen on 2 Jul (DGD). A single bird was seen near Clashach quarry in late June (GBi). Inland, in the agricultural coastal lowlands where Stonechats are always scarce, a male and a female carrying food were seen on 10 & 26 Jun (DGD). Upcountry, 2 pairs bred in Glack Harnes (Ben Rinnes) (MJHC,RLe,AE), a male was in Glen Gheallaidh on 5 Jun (MJHC) and one was in the Half Davoch area on 24 Apr (RHD). A juvenile was at Netherton on 11 Aug but its origin is unknown.

These are some of the negative reports relating to formerly occupied breeding sites:

- none Lossie east beach or elsewhere (CAG).
- none despite searching in suitable habitats (ABa).
- first year I have NOT seen any Stonechats on Lossie heath east of the caravan park by the bridge since moving to Lossie 7 years ago (MMo).
- have not seen or heard one this year from the usual spots between Portknockie and Findochty or at the usual spots at Portknockie - went out today just to make sure and no Stonechats from Findochty to Cullen beach (LSi).
- none around Lossiemouth (MSh).
- I have not seen any Stonechats at Kinloss this year. Before, we had at least 4 pairs (AJL).
- no records for this year. Did not get one at Culbin where there is occasionally a pair. Did some atlas work at Loch Dallas and nothing there either (AY).
- nil report from Lossiemouth (DMKS).
- I don't think I've seen any Stonechats in the suitable places I have been to, e.g. Glenlatterach, shore at Lossie Forest or Covesea. Certainly none at South Darkland where they did occasionally turn up in recent years (JDL).
- I've not seen the few pairs which nest on the Hopeman coastline at all. It could well be they were not evident when we walked the paths where I've usually seen them, but... (PTH).
- I've seen one female stonechat this year, near Halfdavoeh. I reckon I'd usually have seen 10 - 12 pairs in the Findhorn catchment from Drynahan down to Dunphail and on the coast but only this single sighting (RHD).
- haven't seen any up country and none on the Culbin bar (ISS).
- cannot recall seeing any pairs of stonechats (up country) since the winter of 2009/2010 (JKC).

Additional localities in autumn/winter were 2 Hopeman 30 Sep (and 1 on 4 Dec), 1 near Burghead 18 Dec, 1 Covesea 18 Dec, 1 Findhorn Bay (east side) 1 Oct, 1 Kinloss 7-8 Nov and 1 Nairn Bar 11 Dec.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Summer visitor and fairly common breeder and migrant.

Arrival: Only two March records – at the coast, a single bird on the Lossie estuary on 25th and upcountry a pair in the Ailnack gorge on 29th. In early April, 1 Kingston 2nd-3rd and 1 Kinloss 4th. Best counts of spring passage birds at the coast were 8 Kinloss 18 Apr, 13 Kinloss and 6 Kingston 21 Apr, 7 east of Brodieshill 22 Apr, 7 Scarffbanks 23 Apr (Greenland race *O.o.leucorhoa*) and 8 Kinloss 27 Apr.

Breeding: Confirmed only in the Cabrach area where recently fledged juveniles in two sites on 12 Jun (MJHC). Birds were also seen in likely breeding habitat at Aitnoch, Auchmair, Ben Rinnes, Braushie Cree, Croftglass, Drynahan, Glack Harnes and Shenval.

Back at the coast from early July when 2 Kinloss 5th. Only small groups reported, max. 5 Kinloss 12 Sep. Late inland was 1 Dunphail 6 Sep. Last records, in October, were 1 Culbin Bar 16th, 1 Lossiemouth 22nd and 2 Duffus Castle 26th, and a very late November bird at Portknockie on 1st (MJHC).

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Very common resident breeder.

Singing in February at Loch na Bo on 9th, Dallachy on 22nd and Black Hill (Aultmore) on 28th.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Very common resident breeder.

Flocks of 25 or more were 60 Clochan 28 Jul and 30 Delnies 25 Jul.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus**Common resident breeder.*

Breeding: At Longmorn, 12 nest boxes were used, producing 15 broods with 40-50 young fledged (J&HMacD). At Clochan, 4 nest boxes were occupied, producing fledged first broods of 1, 3, 4 and 5 young (MJHC). Six nest boxes were occupied at Auchinhandoch (Dufftown) (FMc) and 5 nest boxes were occupied at South Darkland (JDL). Also present in the breeding season at Barmuckity where 20 on 2 Aug. At other times, 86 Dipple mid February, 32 Bogmoor 3 Jan (11 there 22 Feb), 20 South Darkland 29 Dec, 20 Upper Hempriggs 21 Dec, 14 Urquhart area 3 Jan, 9 Sherrifston 17 Oct, 6 Dufftown 4 Nov-31 Dec, 4 Midwood (Clochan) 22 Mar, 3 Cothill 19 Nov, 1 Scarffbanks 6 Feb, 1 Kinloss 26 Oct and 1 Kingston late Oct.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava**Rare migrant.*

A bird of the Continental race *M. f. flava* (Blue-headed Wagtail) was seen and photographed on the west beach at Nairn on 24 Apr (DCJ). This is the 15th Yellow Wagtail to be recorded in Moray & Nairn, and the first since 2003. It is the second documented record of the 'Blue-headed' race.



Yellow Wagtail (race *M. f. flava*), Nairn west beach 24 April 2011 (Photo: David Jardine)

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea**Summer visitor and common breeder. Very scarce in winter.*

Five territories were found on the River Spey between Dandaleith (Craigellachie) and the river mouth on 22 Jun.

Winter records included 1 on the Spey at Aberlour 7 Dec, 1 on the Spey at Craigellachie 8 Nov and 1 Glenallachie Distillery 12 Feb.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba**Very common breeder and migrant.*

Counts of 10 or more were c.100 to roost Loch Spynie 21 Oct, 70 in a stubble field Lhanbryde at dusk 12 Sep, 27 Nairn harbour at dusk 23 Jan, 24 Grant Park (Forres) 27 Aug, 20 Hopeman 23 Sep, 18 Kinloss 9 Sep (15 there 8 Aug), 15 Hopeman pig unit 24 Sep and 10 Findhorn dunes 4 Sep.

Passage: Most migrant 'White Wagtails' *M. a. alba* were recorded in spring between 5 Apr and 14 May – but a very early individual was at Lossiemouth on 19 Mar (DAG). Also at Lossiemouth were 2 on 5 Apr, 3 on 15-16 Apr, 2 on 18 Apr and 1 on 14 May (DAG,JPoy,MJHC). Elsewhere, 3 Burghead 15 Apr (1 on 20 Apr)

(HH,DBo) and singles at the Spey estuary on 9 & 14 Apr (DAG,MJHC). In autumn, 3 Spey estuary 11 Sep (1 on 9 Sep) (MJHC) and an unusual record of 1 Dunphail 28 Sep (RHD).

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Summer visitor and common breeder.

Arrival: 1 singing Drynachen 10 Apr (DAG) was very early.

Breeding: Reports in breeding habitat in spring and early summer included 1 Delmore (Aberlour) 26 Apr, 5 Knockando 29 Apr, several singing Drynachen 1 May, 1 singing Dufftown-Craigellachie old railway line 4 May, several Black Hillock (Cabrach) 12 Jun, 3 singing Califer Hill 1 May (and 1 on 19 Jun) and 1 Loch Kirkaldy 9 Jul.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Very common breeder and migrant.

In mid winter on the Nairn/Culbin Bars, 4 on 9 Jan & 5 Feb, and 14 on 11 Dec.

First song Achdregnie 22 Mar and many singing birds Feith Musach 29 Mar.

Counts of 20 or more were 70 Findhorn dunes 4 Sep, 43 Kinloss 18 Apr (also there: 27 on 8 Aug, 25 on 25 Aug, 34 on 30 Aug), 26 Bachd Buidhe (Glenlivet) 26 Aug, 25 Findhorn Bay 3 Sep, 20 Achdregnie 26 Aug and 20 Loch Kirkaldy 9 Jul.

Scarce on Cairn Lochan on 30 Jul when only two birds were seen in three hours.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Scarce breeder, fairly common in winter.

Breeding: Song and display noted at Lossiemouth west beach on 20 Mar. Also reported in the breeding season at Burghead and Lossiemouth harbour.

In autumn/winter, 8 Burghead-Hopeman 16 Oct, 2 Nairn Bar 5 Feb (and 1 on 11 Dec) and 5 Portgordon-Strathlene 6 Feb (16 along this stretch of coast on 11 Dec).

A Rock Pipit showing the features of the Scandinavian race *littoralis* was at Lossiemouth on 15 Apr (DMP, JPoy).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Very common resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor.

First song, in February, at Kingston on 7th, Loch na Bo on 10th, Cullen on 17th, several Nether Dallachy on 22nd and Linkwood (Elgin) on 23rd.

On 4 May, 36 singing males were counted along c.5 km of the route of the old Dufftown-Craigellachie railway line (MJHC).

Productivity at Loch Spynie Constant Effort Site was measured at 1.0 juveniles/adult – up from 0.4 in 2010 (RP).

Counts of 50 or more were 460 Dipple mid February, 300 Reclatich (Glen Rinnes) 17 Jan, 250 Tervieside (Glen Rinnes) 5 Feb and 110 Dunphail 27 Jan.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Fairly common winter visitor and migrant.

An occasional visitor to garden feeders, usually during spells of cold weather. In Archiestown, 5 on 2 Jan, 4 on 14 Mar (singles on other dates in March), 1 on 2 Apr and 4 on 20 Dec (singles on several other dates in December). In Clochan, 1-2 on several dates in January and on 10-11 Dec. In gardens elsewhere, 1 Buckie 23 Dec, 1 Elgin 1 Jan and 30 Dec, 2 Keith 19 Dec and 1 Lossiemouth 4 Jan.

In the countryside, 8 Reclatich (Glen Rinnes) 17 Jan, 16 Inchberry 12 Feb, 12 Byres 24 Nov, 1 Loch Flemington 11 Dec, 1 Urquhart 15-16 Dec and 1 Lhanbryde 15 Dec.

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris**Very common resident breeder.*

First song at Tugnet 20 Feb, Black Hill (Aultmore) 28 Feb and Kingston 22 Mar. Newly fledged young in Clochan on the late date of 8 Sep.

Few flock counts received: 46 Duffus Castle 26 Oct and, in less typical habitat, 13 Nairn Bar 9 Jan.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis**Very common resident breeder.*

Flocks of 10 or more were 40 Archiestown 1 Sep, 40 Lossiemouth 25 Dec (and 24 there 9 Dec), 30 Elgin (Academy St.) 13 Mar (and 24 there on 1 Jan), 18 Dunphail 30 Sep and 15 Nairn 23 Jan (and 14 there 9 Jan).

Siskin *Carduelis spinus**Very common resident breeder and migrant.*

Flocks of 20 or more were 100 Archiestown 18 Jul, 50 Black Hill (Aultmore) 28 Feb, 40 Chapelton Moss 1 Aug and 30 Forres in January.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina**Very common resident breeder.*

Highest flock counts were 320 (counted from photograph) North Darkland 10 Dec, 300 Lochyhill (Forres) late Nov, 150 Cunninghaugh (Spey Bay) 27 Oct, 130 Netherton 4 Dec, 50 Duffus Castle 28 Oct, 36 Drainie 6 Jan, 25 Kingston 7 Jul and 25 Portknockie 17 Feb.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris**Scarce resident breeder and winter visitor.*

In winter, only on the saltmarsh around the Nairn/Culbin Bars and Findhorn Bay, where numbers were higher than usual. At Nairn Bar, 85 on 9 Jan (DCJ), 11 on 29 Jan (MJHC), 25 on 17 Nov (RTo) and 55 on 11 Dec (DCJ), and at Culbin Bar, 60 in early November (ISS) and 2 on 11 Dec (AY). In Findhorn Bay, 60 on the marsh west of Netherton on 4 Nov (MJHC) and 16 here on 4 Dec (ISS). These records are mere snapshots of what is probably continuous winter presence on these marshes, which are infrequently visited by birders. Interesting information in the Ringing Report throws some light on the origins of these birds.

Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret**Common resident breeder and migrant.*

Breeding season records from Delnabo (at least 1 on 29 Mar), Black Hillock (Cabrach) (9 on 12 Jun), Braushie Cree (Glen Rinnes) (1 on 1 May), Delavorar (20 on 5 Jul), Glack Harnes (2 on 2 Jul), Glen Rinnes distillery (5 on 2 Jul), Glenlatterach (several pairs to the south and west of the reservoir on 19 Jun), Inchrory (20 on 5 Jul), Kingston (4 on Lein on 16 Apr), Loch Kirkaldy (12 on 19 Apr, 10 on 9 Jul), Tomachar (Glen Rinnes) (2 on 8 Jun) and Upper Blairnain (Edinville) (3 on 14 Jul).

Few reported in winter: 2 Kinloss 29 Jan, 1 at garden Niger feeder Clochan 9 Jan and 18-23 Feb, 2 Culbin Bar 9 Jan, c.20 Loch Oire 26 Jan, 2 on a garden feeder Nairn 9 Jan and 21 Altyre 8 Mar.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra**Common resident and irruptive migrant breeder.***Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica****Probable common resident breeder.*

Considered by the observers to be probable Common Crossbills were 15 Kilravock 28 Nov, 7 Knockando 29 Apr, 9 Braidbog 28 Feb, 4 Romach 13 Feb and 2 Meikle Firbriggs 5 Feb. Probable Scottish Crossbills were 8 Dunphail 23 Jan, 9 Cabrach 26 Jan and 6 Lethen 3 Mar.

Most reports were (sensibly) attributed to ‘crossbill sp.’ – counts of 5 or more were 6 Auchmair (Cabrach) 26 Jan, 20 Bin of Cullen 9 Apr, 6 Culbin Forest 10 Feb (and 8 on 27 Jun), 17 Dallachy tip 10 Nov, 5 Darnaway 10 Apr, 10 Hill of Delnapot 5 June, 5 Linkwood (Elgin) 4 Jul, 16 Loch Kirkaldy 19 Apr, 12 Loch na Bo 19 Jun, 10 Loch Spynie 31 May (and 5 on 5 Jun, 12 on 3 Jul), 5 high over Lossiemouth 9 Mar, 6 Pikey Hill 3 Jan, 16 Pluscarden 9 Nov, 15 Roseisle Forest 26 Oct, 12 over South Darkland 2 Oct, 8 Spynie Palace 7 Jun and 6 Tombae 27 Jun. Smaller numbers were reported at Archiestown, Black Hill (Aultmore), Califer, Covesea lighthouse (2 on 30 Oct), Drynachan area, Lossiemouth cemetery, Morinsh Forest, over New Elgin and Tervieside (Glen Rinnes).

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Very common resident breeder.

The only reports of 5 or more together were 5 Linkwood (Elgin) 5 Feb and 5 River Findhorn (near Forbes) 15 Dec.

The proportion of juveniles to adults trapped at Loch Spynie ‘Constant Effort Site’ was 4.0:1 (RP).

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Common winter visitor and rare breeder.

Summer: Only one report from the Cairngorms, of two birds on 23 Apr (GAd).

First coastal record in autumn was 20 Lossiemouth east beach 27 Oct (MSh).

Winter: Best monthly counts at regular sites on the coast were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Nov	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars (& E.Nairn)	0	0	0	nc	0
Lossiemouth east beach	0	12 (12 th)	20 (27 th)	c.50 (19 th)	c.20 (12 th)

(DAG, MSh, HF)

Most unusual for there to be no birds (or reports) at the Bars.

Elsewhere near the coast, at Findhorn, 13 on 30 Jan (AET), 5 on 6 Feb (ABa, BE) and 1 on 11 & 13 Nov (AJL, PH).

In the uplands in winter, 38 Aldunie (Cabrach) 26 Jan (MJHC), 80 Beinn a’ Chaorainn (Cairngorms) 5 Mar (DPr), 2 Ben Rinnes 20 Nov (MMac), 1 Cairn Gorm 22 Jan (IFr), 22 Lecht 22 Feb (14 on 23rd) (FCC) and 2 Meikle Firbriggs 5 Feb (MJHC).

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

Rare visitor.

In autumn one was on the Lein (Kingston) on 29 Sep (MJHC).



Lapland Bunting, Kingston 29 September 2011 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Very common resident breeder.

First song, in late February, at Dallachy tip on 22nd, Kingston on 23rd and Black Hill (Aultmore) on 28th. Still several in song along the River Spey at Dipple on 27 Jul.

Two very large flocks were encountered in 2011 – 270 Bankhead (near Brodie) 9 Jan (DCJ) and c.250 Clochan 9 Jan (MJHC). Flocks of 10 or more elsewhere were 18 Loch Spynie 22 Jan, 12 Bogmoor 22 Feb, 12 Dallas Dhu area (Forres) 23 Jan, 30 Foresterseat 4 Dec, 22 Kinloss 22 Sep (and 26 on 26 Oct), 90 Scarffbanks 6 Feb and 13 Tugnet 6 Nov.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Very common resident breeder.

Present in the breeding season at Aitnoch (on the moor near Dava), Archiestown, Kinloss, Kingston (where first song on 23 Mar), Lower Blairnain (Edinvillie), Loch Spynie and Tugnet.

The proportion of juveniles to adults trapped at Loch Spynie 'Constant Effort Site' was 1.4:1, up from 0.8 in 2010 (RP).

Autumn/winter groups included 25 Bankhead (near Brodie) 9 Jan and 40 Scarffbanks 6 Feb. On the Nairn/Culbin Bars were 1 on 16 Oct and 3 on 11 Dec.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Scarce resident breeder.

Singing birds were heard at Clochan, Portgordon, Porttannachy and Spey Bay (2).

Very few reports received for winter, the best being 12 Clochan 9 Jan. Otherwise only 5 Cunninghaugh 25 Nov and 1 Lochhill 21 Nov.

ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS TO *BIRDS IN MORAY & NAIRN 2009*

Page 167 Ringing report. Under Sanderling B03834, details of the sighting of this bird should read:

VV 27-280810 East beach, Lossiemouth

PURPLE HERON AT LOCH SPYNIE – NEW TO MORAY & NAIRN

DUNCAN GIBSON

In the early evening of 19 April 2011, I went down to Lossiemouth estuary to see what was on the go. The answer was - dog walkers with their prized bird scaring canines, not many birds and a really cold and damp wind off the sea! I only put up with conditions for a short while and then decided to head for the relative comfort of the hide at Loch Spynie.

At least at Loch Spynie there would be a possibility of early Garganey or Marsh Harrier. I had been in the hide for about 45 minutes with only 300 or so Sand Martins hawking low over the loch providing any interest. I was about to pack up when the door opened and Alan and Barbara Bowie came into the hide. I decided to stay a while and catch up with them. After about 15 mins, at about 7.15pm, Alan and I noticed an unusually coloured heron that was flying in a northerly direction on the western side of the loch. It was flying low over the loch at the edge of the reed bed.

In flight the reddish brown of the inner forewing and neck was quite obvious, with the rest of the wing (primaries and trailing edge) being dark. The bird flew a short distance and landed at the edge of the reed bed at the north end of the loch. After landing and settling itself, the heron then took a few steps and walked, in a rather ungainly manner, into the reed bed - occasionally with wings partially outstretched to balance itself, once again clearly showing the wing colouring and pattern.

Initially I viewed the bird in flight with my binoculars then I stood up and watched it through my scope with the bird still in flight then landing. My thoughts immediately went to Purple Heron. I had seen several Purple Herons on holiday in India fairly recently during January and February.

The heron then remained partially secluded in the fringe of the reed bed for a period of time and I kept my scope on the bird. Although the bird was there it was extremely frustrating that you could not get a better view of it. When you could see the head and neck, not much else of the bird was visible, the rusty brown colour was easy to pick up and there was no white visible in the head and neck at all. The bill looked slender and pointed.

Barbara kindly went back to my car to get my Collins Bird Guide for reference. When we all checked the Collins Guide it confirmed that we had all seen a Purple Heron. A joint “first for Moray & Nairn” for the three of us!

The bird was still partially visible in the fringe of the reed bed but the light was fading. We were all keen to get a better, or at least another, view of the bird possibly in flight, in order that we could confirm the identification 100%.

I decided that we should leave the hide and walk around to the north embankment of the loch towards where the bird had landed. We were keen to get other birders onto the bird but no local birders were contactable and available to join us in this exercise. Martin Cook and Bob Proctor were both on holiday and Charlie Gervaise’s phone was engaged, Charlie later blamed his wife Heather for blethering on the phone!

We walked quickly to the north end of the loch, in the haste Barbara got her feet wet crossing the burn, we then walked along the north embankment towards where we had last seen the bird. Teal, Mallard and Mute Swan were all spooked to some degree by our presence. We were all a bit frustrated that we could not find the bird again. Then at last, after about 15 mins the Purple Heron suddenly took off from the edge of the reed bed to our right and flew in an easterly direction from right to left gaining height. We all got our

binoculars onto the bird as it flew past us and away from us, clearly a smaller and much darker heron than Grey Heron. It then continued east over the loch and seemed to land in some pine trees near the edge of the loch, probably 100 metres or so from a Grey Heron colony. During this flight there was a Grey Heron in flight in the same area although not side by side. The lightness of the pale grey and the amount of white/pale plumage in the head, neck and breast of the Grey Heron was a striking comparison to the very much darker Purple Heron seen in flight at the same time.

The bird remained in the area over the next few days but was rather elusive. Only a few local and some visiting birders were lucky enough to get brief views of the bird in flight on a few occasions.

Description

Jizz - a large, long legged, wide and long winged, long necked bird – typical heron

Size – in comparison to a nearby flying Grey Heron, it was certainly a large bird but was probably slightly smaller and certainly slighter built than the Grey Heron. In flight the neck was kinked and the long legs trailed beyond the tail.

Plumage – the head was mainly rusty brown but a little black showing on the crown. There was a dark crest hanging down from the rear of the head. The neck was long with the same rusty brown colouring as the head. In flight the upper side of the wings was seen very well. The inner wing coverts and “back” were a mottled rusty brown but the rest of the wings, primaries and secondaries were very dark grey, “fingers” showing on the even darker wing tips. The underside of the wings looked dark. When the bird landed at the edge of the reed bed and had its wings closed it had a very dark grey appearance.

Bare parts – the bill was yellowish/pale brown long and tapering to a point. The legs were also yellowish/pale brown.

Call – not heard

GOLDEN ORIOLE AT LOCH SPYNIE – NEW TO MORAY & NAIRN

BOB PROCTOR

On 19 May 2011, I arrived at the north-east corner of Loch Spynie just before 6pm to check some nest boxes and to ring any chicks present. Just as I arrived at the second occupied tit box I realised that a Golden Oriole was singing in the tops of the birches nearby. Unfortunately I'd left my binoculars in the car! I recorded the song on my mobile phone, finished ringing the chicks and then tried to contact Duncan Gibson and Martin Cook - both unavailable on home phones and mobiles. I returned to the car to get my binoculars and re-found the bird by song. I had brief but satisfactory views of the bird in the top of a nearby birch.

It was slightly larger than a Starling, but appeared less rotund. The body plumage was golden yellow, with black wings and black tail. The tail had golden yellow at the tips of the outer 3-4 feathers and a small patch of golden yellow was present at the base of the primaries. The bill was dull red and fairly broad based.

I then lost the bird and returned home to try to contact others when Duncan Gibson phoned and we arranged to meet at the area. We waited for about 45 minutes without any sight or sound of it.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER AT HOPEMAN – NEW TO MORAY & NAIRN

MARTIN COOK

In 2011 I was attempting to see 200 species in Moray & Nairn in a single year. By 23 September I had seen 190 species and I was now out along the coast in search of the remaining ten species.

Having visited Lossiemouth, I decided that Burghead Bay was worth a try for Red-necked Grebe. My route to the west took me through Hopeman where there were fields of pigs beside the road. In one of these fields, close to the road was a shallow muddy pool – I glanced from the car and noticed a small group of waders. This was worth a look so I parked and walked across the road. Excellent – with the four Redshanks were two Ruffs. Not new for the year but nice birds.

Before heading back to the car I scanned around the margin of the pool and, at the far end, in some muddy ground where pigs had been wallowing, was a ‘dunlin’. But hang on, why has this ‘dunlin’ got such a prominent white supercilium? And surely its bill looks too short. And it’s got long wings with the tips projecting well beyond the tail. This is no Dunlin I realised – it has to be a Baird’s Sandpiper or a White-rumped Sandpiper. As Baird’s has already been recorded in Moray I rather preferred the option of White-rumped. But what were the differences? I couldn’t remember – obviously the white rump would be the clincher but this bird was walking around the mud, feeding, and showing no glimpse of the rump. After a while it stopped feeding and started to preen – surely it would soon stretch a wing and show the rump. And it did – and the rump was white! A White-rumped Sandpiper - 191 for my year list and a new species for Moray & Nairn.

Soon afterwards, a group of pigs headed across the pool towards the sandpiper but fortunately they changed direction before flushing the bird. It remained around the pool for the rest of the day allowing many observers the chance to see it. By the next day however it was gone.

The bird appeared roughly Dunlin-sized but slimmer in build due, probably, to the long wings. The bill was short, slightly curved and dark. The legs were also dark. The upperparts were greyish-brown, the coverts mostly pale but admixed with a few much darker feathers. The head, neck and breast were a similar pale grey-brown. The breast was finely streaked and a few streaks extended along the flanks – the underparts being predominantly white. On the head, a prominent white supercilium ran from the base of the bill to well behind the eye.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER ON THE RIVER LOSSIE ESTUARY – NEW TO MORAY & NAIRN

DUNCAN GIBSON

After an enjoyable birding trip to Findhorn bay on 2 October 2011, with sightings of Greenshank, Ruff, Little Stint and Little Gull, I headed back to my home town of Lossiemouth to finish the day.

I went to the estuary to do some more birding as the tide was falling. Although the tide was still a bit on the high side, with nothing better to do with my time (leaving aside gardening and various household chores) I set up my telescope and settled down.

I kept scanning up and down the far bank of the estuary looking through the waders, gulls and wildfowl. At 17:30 I got my scope onto a group of Redshank to my far right that had come out of the grass/saltmarsh and

were standing on the edge of the mudflats. There was a smaller darker wader to the left of this group that was probing quickly with a long bill. I zoomed in on this wader and quickly ruled out Snipe and I thought it looked like a small dark Godwit like wader. I panned right to have a quick look at a Bar-tailed Godwit that I knew was standing there, the Bar-tail was obviously much larger and lighter in tone than the new wader. I got my scope back onto the wader that was still next to, and clearly smaller than Redshank, I then realised that I was looking at a Dowitcher sp. I moved a couple of hundred yards to my right to be opposite and closer to the wader and set up my scope again. After further studies and referring to my Collins Bird Guide for general ID characteristics I was reasonably happy with Dowitcher sp but not 100%.

I made phone calls to a few local birders to hopefully come and confirm the identification of the bird. When speaking to Martin Cook our local bird recorder, I remember him asking me “are you sure it is a Dowitcher?” and my answer was “no!” He did say he would drive over as soon as possible. I managed to get Charlie Gervaise on the phone but he confessed that he had enjoyed a few glasses of wine so driving to Lossie was out of the question! Hen Farquhar was first on the scene and had a good look at the wader. Neither of the two of us had previous experience of Dowitcher and was eagerly waiting on more experienced reinforcements to arrive for confirmation. Reinforcements arrived in the shape of Bob Proctor, and Bob confirmed the bird as a Long-billed Dowitcher, what a relief! Light was now fading, and after a while, and with smoking tyres, Martin Cook turned up and also enjoyed views of this American vagrant.

Elimination of Short-billed Dowitcher was based on the pattern of the tertials and scapulars which, on this individual, were unmarked greyish/brown without the obvious orange/brown fringing and internal markings shown by juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher (Bob Proctor).

Thankfully this interesting wader remained on the estuary for the next few days and was enjoyed and even photographed by local and visiting birders.

Description

Jizz – a smallish darkish long-billed wader, with the fast probing of its long bill just made it stand out a mile in the usual mix of waders.

Size – ignoring its long bill, for comparison it was smaller than Redshank and larger than Dunlin.

Plumage – the forehead and crown were dark blackish brown which then faded lighter down the nape. The throat and breast were light cream but had light grey and brown mottling. The side of the head showed a bright supercilium and a dark eye stripe starting at the bill. The under parts were pale but had noticeable barring/spots on the flanks. The mantle, scapulars and coverts gave an overall mottled look of dark brown, light brown and dark grey. There were light brown marking in the scapulars. The primaries and secondaries were dark grey/brown. White fringes showing on the scapulars, coverts, primaries and secondaries. In flight the barred tail and white patch from the tail extending up the back were clearly visible.

Bare parts – the bill was very long and dark. It was darker towards the end and the third nearer the base graduated into dark olive green. The eyes were dark/black. The legs were medium/long and olive green.

Call – not heard

BRÜNNICH'S GUILLEMOT AT BURGHEAD – NEW TO MORAY & NAIRN

JONNY POTT

On 17 Nov 2011, I was leading a Heatherlea Birdwatching group of about ten people on a short break at the end of the season. We had had some excellent birding over the last couple of days, however our primary objective when we turned up at Burghead harbour was to see the King Eider. To get ourselves to the best vantage point for the Eider flock we walked round to the far side of the harbour mouth. Despite all our greatest concentration working our way over and over again through the ducking and diving Eiders, “the King” was nowhere to be found.

As we searched we happened to look down to see this rather cute Guillemot bobbing about almost at our feet, and seeing he was so close to us a few of us took photos of our Guillemot, particularly as the Eiders were not quite as obliging.

I can remember thinking to myself at the time that it was a bit odd for a Guillemot to still have a dark face at that time of year. “Maybe it is a young bird that is a bit out of condition.” Juvenile it may have been, but it was not *Uria aalge*! Little did we know that there was no need for us to be looking any further than just below our feet for a major rarity to our shores.

It was during our Hogmanay “Last Birds, First Birds” week, that my fellow guide, Ian Ford thought he would have a look through my photos of the short break I had led in November. Ian’s keen eyes settled upon the Guillemot photo I had taken at the mouth of Burghead harbour and settled there. What was a photograph of a Brünnich’s Guillemot doing among photos of an autumn short break in Scotland? Surely, there must be some mistake? It will be a photo that had come from one of the Icelandic trips that had accidentally got slipped into the wrong folder! Or had Ian been drinking too much and his eyes were deceiving him?

Ian showed me the photo. It took me only a few seconds to remember taking the photo and its location. I also remembered that other members of the group had taken photos of the bird, and before long more photos of the same bird were emailed to me, most of which were of better quality than my own. However, it was decided that my photo was the famous one because it was the original photo of identification of a Brünnich’s Guillemot (*Uria lomvia*).

Just to go briefly through the key identification features of this bird; the shorter, stubbier beak, the faint light line on the upper mandible, ‘faint’ suggesting a younger bird, dirty white of chin and coverts, the dark colouring of cap extending as a line below the eye-line in winter, the absence of grey angled streaks on the flanks (as on Guillemot), a darker cap & mantle than Guillemot and very short tail.

So the lesson is, don’t be in a hurry over your guillemot ID and look through your photos!



‘That photo’ which led to the identification of a ‘first’ for Moray & Nairn – the Brunnich’s Guillemot in Burghead harbour on 17 November 2011 (Photo: Jonny Pott)

RINGING REPORT 2011

BOB PROCTOR

Numbers of birds ringed in Moray & Nairn during 2011:

	FG*	Pullus	Total		FG*	Pullus	Total
Common Gull		7	7	Wren	9		9
Black Guillemot		1	1	Starling		17	17
Great Spot. Woodpecker	4		4	Blackbird	26	5	31
Goldcrest	2		2	Song Thrush	2		2
Blue Tit	229	223	452	Robin	42		42
Great Tit	108	97	205	Dunnock	21		21
Coal Tit	65		65	House Sparrow	79		79
Swallow	1	11	12	Tree Sparrow	9	13	22
Long-tailed Tit	63		63	Chaffinch	32		32
Chiffchaff	13		13	Brambling	3		3
Willow Warbler	93		93	Greenfinch	156		156
Blackcap	14		14	Goldfinch	4		4
Garden Warbler	1		1	Siskin	31		31
Whitethroat	6		6	Bullfinch	10		10
Grasshopper Warbler	2		2	Reed Bunting	22		22
Sedge Warbler	58		58				
Treecreeper	6		6	TOTALS	1111	374	1485

*FG=full grown

Recoveries in 2011

All ringing recoveries reported for 2011 are included in this section with the more interesting ones given in full. Information was supplied by H.Clark, M.J.H.Cook, A.Edward, C.A.Gervaise, D.A.Gibson, R.F.Hewitt, R.Proctor and from Highland Ringing Group bulletins. Anyone finding a ringed bird in Moray or Nairn is asked to pass the details to Martin Cook.

Ringing details are given on the first line and recovery data on the second line. The age when ringed is given according to the EURING code, note however, that these numbers do not represent age in years:

- 1 Nestling or chick
- 2 Fully grown, year of hatching unknown
- 3 Hatched during year of ringing
- 4 Hatched before year of ringing, exact year unknown
- 5 Hatched in the previous year
- 6 Hatched before the previous year, exact year unknown

m = Male f = Female J = Juvenile CES = Constant Effort Site

Recovery symbols:	V	Caught and released with ring
	VV	Ring number read in field, or sight record of a colour-ringed bird
	VB	Breeding when trapped
	+	Shot or killed by man
	X	Found dead or dying (F = Fresh, L = Long dead)
	?	Unknown circumstances

MUTE SWAN

W20166	3	060706	River Avon, Fladbury	
	XF	171011	Findhorn Bay	622 km

Another unusual movement. This follows three previous long-distance movements to Cheshire (1997; 504km), Cumbria (2003; 384km) and Powys (2004; 636km).

WHOOPEE SWAN

3J34 was caught in 1994 at Geldingavatn, N-Mul, Iceland. Initially the main wintering area for this individual was around Lough Foyle and Lough Beg, however, it seems to have changed its wintering site to Moray having been seen annually around Loch Spynie, Easter Calcots and Loch na Bo from 2008 onwards.

J67 was ringed at Langavatn, S-Thing, Iceland in 2005. The only recent sightings have been Connagedale, Garmouth in 2007. It was seen in a field near Loch na Bo on 16 Feb 2011.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE

Two individuals ringed at Loch of Lintrathen in 2005 and 2007 were seen at Lochhill in November.

CORMORANT

5248723	1	130610	Glas Eilean, Port Ann, Loch Fyne	
	X	140111	Burghead	217 km

SHAG

1409053	1	280611	Badbea, Caithness	
	VV	111211	Buckie harbour	63 km
1416971	6	120609	Fidra, East Lothian	
	VV	231111	Buckie harbour	180 km
1418043	1	120609	Fidra, East Lothian	
	VV	111211	Buckie harbour	180 km
1418094	1	200609	Craigleith, East Lothian	
	VV	231111	Buckie harbour	181 km
1428388	1	190611	Bullers of Buchan, Aberdeenshire	
	VV	111211	Buckie harbour	74 km

Additionally, seven colour-ringed individuals in Buckie harbour had been ringed at breeding colonies on the Isle of May.

BUZZARD

GF81935	1	200610	near Hill of Fearn, Easter Ross	
	XL	240911	Lossiemouth	40 km

PEREGRINE

GF37645	1	230502	Ben Aigan	
	XL	190611	Kirkton, Golspie	70 km

HERRING GULL

ES006630	1	090798	Kandalakshskiy, Murmansk, RUSSIA	
(K811)	VV	080111	Lossie estuary	2082 km
NS002829	1	090706	Kandalakshskiy, Murmansk, RUSSIA	
(KX02)	VV	041211	Lossie estuary	2073 km
GR10294	1	010711	Badbea, Berriedale	
	X road	210811	Aberlour	79 km

K811 has been regularly seen around the Lossie estuary and Loch Spynie since 2004, unlike KX02 which wasn't seen in 2009 or 2010.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

3023290	1	240611	Orndalen, Tromso, NORWAY	
(JH740)	VV	291011	Lossie estuary	1708 km
MA12830	1	150607	Rothiesholm Head, Orkney	
	VV	070811	Lossie estuary	154 km

A total of 14 colour-ringed chicks from various Caithness colonies were reported, mainly at the Lossie estuary.

BLACK-HEADED GULL

6215032	6	250311	Breiavnet, Stavanger, NORWAY	
(JHZ3)	VV	310311	Breiavnet, Stavanger, NORWAY	
	VV	230511 –		
		180611	Ulsrudvann, Oslo, NORWAY	308 km
	VV	190811	Lossie estuary	544 km

This individual remained at the Lossie estuary into 2012.

GREAT TIT

V857566	6m	310511	Loch Spynie CES	
	XF car	090711	Pitairlie	1 km
TH87474	1	100611	Loch Spynie	
	XF car	090711	Pitairlie	1 km
TP56692	1	080610	Inverarnie	
	X	070311	Lossiemouth	61 km

WILLOW WARBLER

BKP003	4m	200407	South Walney, Cumbria	
	V	050611	Loch Spynie CES	404 km

This individual returned for its third breeding season.

SEDGE WARBLER

Y250515	4f	270711	Loch Spynie CES	
	V	140811	South Milton Ley, Devon	824 km
Y250529	3	270711	Loch Spynie CES	
	V	140811	Etangs de Romelaere, Saint-Omer, Nord, FRANCE	845km

These two individuals are typical of autumn movements from Loch Spynie. There are eight previous movements to the south coast of England and north-west France.

STARLING

LA55727	1	210510	Blairgorm, near Nethybridge	
	VV	071211	Elgin	48 km

BLACKBIRD

LA26829	6f	140311	Thornton, Merseyside	
	XF	201211	Findhorn	465 km

CHAFFINCH

L135826	5f	190210	Keith	
	X	250111	Drummuir	6 km

GREENFINCH

TK60842	3m	270910	Clochan	
	X cat	240411	Portgordon	4 km

SISKIN

X564810	6f	050510	Clochan	
	X	200311	Kintbury, near Hungerford	700 km
X564883	4m	240510	Clochan	
	V	130311	Drummond, Inverness	76 km
X877493	6m	280311	Inchberry, near Fochabers	
	XF car	240611	Eidem, More og Romsdal, NORWAY	760 km

TWITE

Colour ringed	3J	260810 or 240910	Clachtoll, Lochinver	
	VV	090111	Nairn Bar	
Colour ringed	?	winter 2009-10	Montrose	
	VV	090111	Nairn Bar	

Colour ringed	?	270210	Finstown, Orkney
	VV	090111	Nairn Bar

GRID REFERENCES OF LOCALITIES MENTIONED IN THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Aberlour	NJ2642	Bellie cemetery	NJ3561
Achnatone	NH9149	Ben Aigan	NJ3048
Achmore	NJ2631	Ben Macdui	NN9999
Ailnack	NJ1414	Ben Main	NJ3535
Aitnoch	NH9839	Ben Rinnes	NJ2435
Allaburn	NJ1961	Berryburn	NJ0545
Aldivalloch	NJ3626	Bin of Cullen	NJ4764
Aldunie	NJ3626	Binn Hill	NJ3065
Altnaglander	NJ1628	Binns	NJ3164
Altyre Woods	NJ0253	Binsness	NJ0362
Alves	NJ1362	Birchfield	NJ1614
Archiestown	NJ2344	Bishopmill	NJ2163
Ardelach	NH9545	Blackhillock	NJ2044
Ardgye	NJ1563	Blacksboat	NJ1838
Ardivot	NJ2267	Blackwater Lodge	NJ3328
Arndilly	NJ2848	Blinkbonnie	NJ3365
Arthur's Bridge	NJ2567	Boar's Head Rock	NJ2867
Auchenhalrig	NJ3761	Boat o' Brig	NJ3251
Auchindoun Castle	NJ3437	Boath	NH9155
Auchinhandoch	NJ3338	Boghole	NJ9655
Auchlochan	NJ0241	Bogmoor	NJ3562
Auchmair	NJ3828	Boldow	NJ1740
Auchnarrow	NJ2123	Bow Fiddle Rock	NJ4968
Auchroisk	NJ3351	Braes of Enzie	NJ3959
Auchtertyre	NJ1858	Braidbog	NJ4963
Auldearn	NH9155	Brandston	NJ2865
		Bridge of Avon	NJ1835
Badcheer	NJ3532	Bridge of Brown	NJ1220
Badentinan	NJ2957	Bridgend	NJ3731
Bailliesland	NJ2565	Broadley	NJ3961
Ballindalloch Castle	NJ1736	Brodie Castle	NH9757
Ballnellan Burn	NJ1326	Brodieshill	NJ1059
Ballochford	NJ3633	Broom of Moy	NJ0159
Balnacoul	NJ3146	Broombank	NH9255
Balormie	NJ2167	Broomton	NH9654
Balvalley Moss	NJ3725	Brown Muir	NJ2555
Balvenie	NJ3242	Buckie	NJ4165
Banchor	NH9140	Buckpool	NJ4165
Bank Farm	NJ3929	Burghead	NJ1169
Bankhead	NH9658	Burghead Bay	NJ0867
Bardonside	NJ2154	Burgie Wood	NJ0958
Barmuckity	NJ2461	Burnside of Birnie	NJ2259
Bauds of Cullen	NJ4766	Burnside of Dipple	NJ3256
Beatshach	NJ2737	Burnside of Enzie	NJ3960
Beinn a' Chaorainn	NJ0401	Burnside of Geddes	NH8851
Beinn a' Chruinnich	NJ2313	Byres	NJ3562
Beinn Mheadhoin	NJ0201		
Bellandy	NJ2832	Cabrach	NJ3827

Cairn Ballantruan	NJ1524		
Cairn Gorm	NJ0003	Dallas	NJ1252
Cairn Lochan	NH9802	Dallas Dhu	NJ0356
Cairn Uish	NJ1750	Dallas Lodge	NJ1052
Cairneyhillock	NJ2658	Dallasbraughty	NJ0346
Calcots	NJ2563	Darnaway Castle	NH9955
Cantsford	NJ0754	Dava	NJ0038
Cardhu	NJ1843	Delmore	NJ2442
Cardnach Fm	NJ1942	Delnabo	NJ1617
Carn Allt a' Chlaiginn	NJ3230	Delnies	NH8356
Carn Daimh	NJ1824	Deskford	NJ5061
Carn Liath	NJ2515	Drainie	NJ2168
Carron	NJ2241	Drumdivan	NH8454
Catherinebraes	NJ2544	Drumfurich	NJ2944
Caysbriggs	NJ2466	Drumin	NJ1830
Charlestown of Aberlour	NJ2642	Drummuir	NJ3844
Clackmarras	NJ2458	Drybridge	NJ4362
Clashach Cove	NJ1570	Drynachan	NH8639
Clochan	NJ4060	Dufftown	NJ3239
Clockeasy	NJ2962	Duffus	NJ1668
Cloddach	NJ1958	Duffus Castle	NJ1867
Cloddymoss	NH9860	Dulsie	NH9341
Clovenside	NJ0459	Dulsie Bridge	NH9341
Cluny Hill	NJ0458	Dunearn	NH9341
Cnoc Lochy	NJ1621	Dunphail Ho	NJ0047
Coire Raibeirt	NJ0003	Dykeside	NJ1159
Coldburn	NJ1449		
Coldhome	NJ3639	Earnhill Fm	NJ0160
Coleburn	NJ2455	Earnside	NJ1062
College of Roseisle	NJ1366	Easter Calcots	NJ2563
Coltfield	NJ1163	Easter Cloves	NJ1461
Conicavel	NH9953	Easter Gaulrig	NJ1514
Cook's Cairn	NJ3027	Easter Lawrenceton	NJ0858
Corbiewell	NJ3165	Easter Newforres	NJ0658
Covesea	NJ1870	Easterton	NJ2156
Covesea Skerries	NJ1971	Edinkillie	NJ0246
Coxton	NJ2660	Elgin	NJ2162
Coxtontower	NJ2660	Elginshill	NJ2663
Craigellachie	NJ2844		
Craigmill Lodge	NJ1052	Feakirk	NJ0344
Craigroy	NJ1250	Fèith Buidhe	NJ0909
Cran Loch	NH9459	Ferniefield	NJ3064
Croftglass	NJ2530	Findhorn Bay	NJ0462
Crofts of Dipple	NJ3259	Findochty	NJ4668
Cromdale Hills	NJ1226	Findrassie	NJ1965
Crooked Wood	NJ2762	Fochabers	NJ3458
Culbin Bar	NH9662	Fogwatt	NJ2357
Culbin Forest	NH9862	Foresterseat	NJ2562
Cullen	NJ5167	Forres	NJ0358
Cunninghamston	NJ1368		
Cunninghaugh	NJ3564	Garbh Uisge Mòr	NH9900

Garlinebeg	NJ1741	Kinermory	NJ2541
Garmouth	NJ3364	Kingsteps	NH9057
Garmouth viaduct	NJ3464	Kingston	NJ3365
Gateside	NJ3647	Kinloss	NJ0661
Gervally	NH9948	Kinneddar	NJ2269
Gilston	NJ2066	Kirdellbeg	NJ1741
Glack Harnes	NJ2836	Kirkhill	NJ2462
Glacks of Balloch	NJ3534	Knock of Braemoray	NJ0141
Glass	NJ4239	Knock of Gownie	NJ2942
Glen Avon	NJ1006	Kylnadrochit Lodge	NJ1419
Glen Gheallaidh	NJ1338		
Glen Latterach	NJ1951	Ladder Hills	NJ2719
Glen Lossie	NJ1347	Ladycroft	NJ2444
Glen Rinnes	NJ2834	Laggan	NJ2026
Glenallachie	NJ2741	Lecht Road	NJ2413
Glenfarclas Distillery	NJ2138	Leids Hill	NJ4126
Glenferness	NH9443	Lein	NJ3365
Glenlatterach Reservoir	NJ1952	Lethen	NH9351
Glenmullie	NJ1916	Lethenhill	NJ1058
Gollachy Burn	NJ4064	Lhanbryde	NJ2761
Gordonsward	NJ2564	Little Aitnoch	NH9640
Gownie	NJ2842	Little Pitlurg	NJ4245
		Loch Allan	NH9939
Half Davoch	NJ0451	Loch Belivat	NH9547
Hardmuir	NH9556	Loch Flemington	NH8152
Heldon Wood	NJ1257	Loch Kirkaldy	NH9641
Hill of Mackalea	NJ3638	Loch Loy	NH9358
Hill of Maud	NJ4662	Loch of Blairs	NJ0255
Hill of Mulundy	NJ1053	Loch Oire	NJ2860
Hillhead	NJ2058	Loch Park	NJ3543
Hillpark	NJ4360	Loch Spynie	NJ2366
Hills of Cromdale	NJ1226	Lochan Tùtach	NH9840
Hopeman	NJ1469	Lochbuie	NJ2153
Howford bridge	NH8753	Lochindorb	NH9736
Humbrack	NJ2556	Lochs of Bogmussach	NJ1347
Hunt Hill	NJ2346	Lochyhill	NJ0559
		Logie	NJ0150
Inchberry	NJ3155	Logieburn	NJ2656
Inchnacape	NJ2020	Longmorn	NJ2358
Innes House	NJ2764	Lossie estuary	NJ2469
Innesmill	NJ2863	Lossiemouth	NJ2370
Inveravon	NJ1837	Lower Auchenreath	NJ3763
Invererne	NJ0360	Lower Blairmain	NJ2738
Inverharroch Fm	NJ3831	Lower Bogrotten	NJ4861
		Lower Hempriggs	NJ1064
Johnstripe	NJ0447	Lyne of Knockando	NJ1745
		Lynemore	NJ1438
Keith	NJ4250		
Kellas	NJ1754	Macbeth's Hillock	NH9656
Kerrow	NH9941	Machattie's Cairn	NJ3547
Kilravock	NH8149	Mains of Kirdells	NJ1739

Mains of Moyness	NH9553	Ordiquish	NJ3357
Manachie Fm	NJ0356	Orton	NJ3153
Manbeen	NJ1959	Overton	NJ2745
Marypark	NJ1938		
Maviston	NH9458	Paddockhaugh	NJ2058
Meikle Balloch Hill	NJ3534	Parks of Innes	NJ2763
Meikle Coire Riabhach	NJ2513	Paul's Hill	NJ1140
Mid Mains	NJ1966	Penick	NH9356
Midwood	NJ4261	Philaxdale	NJ1667
Mill of Grange	NJ0460	Pitairlie	NJ2465
Millhill	NJ3158	Pitgaveny Ho	NJ2465
Milltown	NJ2758	Pittendreich	NJ1961
Milltown of Laggan	NJ2834	Pluscarden	NJ1456
Miltonduff	NJ1860	Portgordon	NJ3964
Miltonhill	NJ0963	Portknockie	NJ4868
Monadh an t-Sluich Leith	NJ2617		
Monahoudie Moss	NJ2243	Quarrywood	NJ1864
Monaughty	NJ1260		
Moniemouies	NJ2756	Rafford	NJ0656
Montgrew	NJ4551	Recletch	NJ2834
Moor of Tore	NJ1054	Redhill	NJ1661
Moss of Barmuckity	NJ2461	Refouble	NH9540
Moss of Birnie	NJ2051	Relugas	NH9948
Mosstodloch	NJ3360	Rhinturk	NJ3632
Moycroft	NJ2362	Rinour	NJ1740
Muir of Holmie	NJ4161	Rosarie	NJ3849
Muir of Miltonduff	NJ1859	Roseisle Forest	NJ1166
Muir of the Clans	NH8352		
Muirhead	NJ0863	Salterhill	NJ2067
Muirton	NJ2268	Sanquhar Loch	NJ0458
Muiry Wood	NJ0558	Scabbed Hill	NJ4160
Mulben	NJ3550	Scarffbanks	NJ2366
Muldearie Mains	NJ3950	Scaut Hill	NJ3331
Mundole	NJ0156	Scotstonhill	NJ2662
Myreside	NJ2164	Shaw Hill	NH9748
		Sheanspark	NJ3645
Nairn	NH8856	Shearleat	NH8641
Nairn Bar	NH9260	Shelter Stone	NJ0001
Nether Bellandy	NJ2833	Sherriffmill	NJ2062
Nether Birnie	NJ2059	Sheriffston	NJ2561
Nether Dallachy	NJ3663	Sluie	NJ0052
Nether Meft	NJ2764	South Darkland	NJ2661
Netherbyre	NJ1557	Spey Bay	NJ3564
Netherton	NJ0361	Speymouth	NJ3465
Newbold Wood	NJ0558	Spynie canal	NJ2366
Newforres Wood	NJ0657	Spynie Palace	NJ2365
Newton nursery	NJ1663	St. John's Meads	NJ0155
Newton of Darnaway	NH9853	Stoneyford pond	NJ0455
Newton of Innes	NJ2866	Strath Avon	NJ1425
North Darkland	NJ2662	Strathlene	NJ4467
		Stronachavie	NJ1318

Strondow	NJ1644
Strypes	NJ2758
Succoth	NJ2935
Surradale	NJ1665
Tanzie	NJ3146
Tapp	NJ1447
Tarras	NJ0659
Teindland	NJ2655
Tervieside	NJ2330
Tips of Corsemaul	NJ3939
Todholes	NJ1054
Tomachar	NJ2432
Tombreck	NJ1218
Tomcork	NJ1349
Tomintoul	NJ1618
Tomnavoulin	NJ2126
Tormore Distillery	NJ1534
Torrieston	NJ1658
Tronach Head	NJ4768
Troves	NJ2459
Tugnet	NJ3465
Tynet	NJ3861
Upper Bruntlands	NJ1943
Upper Dallachy	NJ3662
Upper Knockando	NJ1843
Upper Mulben	NJ3652
Urquhart	NJ2862
Waterford Fm	NJ0259
Wellheads	NJ3860
Wellhill	NJ0061
Wester Calcots	NJ2463
Wester Elchies	NJ2542
Wester Gaulrig	NJ1513
Wester Manbeen	NJ1960
Westerfolds	NJ1967
Westertown	NJ1925
Whiteash Hill	NJ3857
Whitefolds	NJ2425
Whitetree	NJ1156
Whitewreath	NJ2357
Yellowbog	NJ1448