

Birds of the Spey estuary in 2012



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Martin Cook

This report is a compilation from records obtained during 142 visits to the Spey estuary in 2012. Most observations were made by the author but significant numbers of additional records were provided by Bob Proctor and Tony Backx, staff and visitors at the WDC Scottish Dolphin Centre and by other observers.

Mute Swan

Up to 4 until mid May when a small flock built up from 5 on 19 May to 10 on 11 Jun and 16 on 2 Jul. Often up to 12 over the summer and early autumn until mid October, when numbers fell from 12 on 15th to 3 on 26th and remained at this level for the rest of the year.

Whooper Swan

Although occasionally seen flying over the estuary in the two winter periods, the only records of birds on the estuary were 4 on 9 Oct, 18 on 19 Oct, 5 on 23 Oct and 5 on 26 Dec.

Pink-footed Goose

Flying overhead almost daily during the winter and spring/autumn migration periods. On the estuary were 4 on 6 May, 2 on 16 Sep, 81 on 10 Oct and a single bird on 23 Oct, 26 Nov and 17 Dec. The bird seen on the latter three dates was associating with Greylags on each occasion and was probably the same bird.

White-fronted Goose

Only one record – of a single bird on the unusual date of 31 May.

Greylag Goose

January-March: Often on the estuary in small numbers e.g. 26 on 26 Jan and 48 on 3 Feb. An increase took place in late March, when 86 on 22nd and 177 on 26th.

April-May: Always a few, maximum 7 on 1 & 16 May.

June-August: Mostly absent. The only records were 3 on 11 Jun, 1 on 28 Jun and 1 on 26-29 Jul.

September-December: First of the autumn were 7 on 12 & 19 Sep – 16 were present by 30 Sep

and numbers increased through the first half of October to 57 on 10th and 110 on 19th. A flock then remained around the estuary until the end of the year with peak counts of 106 on 15 Nov and 94 on 17 Dec. The flock was not always to be seen on the estuary – often leaving to feed in nearby stubble fields.

Canada Goose

Three on 28 Aug was the only record.

Barnacle Goose

A single bird was seen on the estuary on 8 & 26 May and 12 Jun. It was probably present throughout this period as it often remained concealed in vegetation. A flock of 12 stopped briefly on 14 Oct.

Brent Goose

One (of the pale-bellied race) was on the shore just west of the river mouth on the unusually late date of 8 May. It and the Barnacle Goose were present at the same time, but not associating together.

Shelduck

First back on the estuary were 2 on 7 Feb and up to 9 adults were present during March-May. Breeding took place and the maximum duckling count was 11 on 18 July. At least half of these fledged and 3-4 remained on the estuary throughout August with a single bird on 9-22 Sept being the last sighting of the year.

Wigeon

Numerous on the estuary in both winter periods. Peak counts early in the year were 210 on 16 Jan and 277 on 3 Feb, with a subsequent steady decline to 96 on 28 Feb, 66 on 22 March and 18 by 22 Apr. During May-mid August, up to 4 were seen on 15 dates. Numbers started to build again in late August when 14 on 29th. In September, there were never more than 22 until 42 on 29th. Further increase took place in October to 75 on 10th and 165 on 20th. Subsequently, numbers were variable with a November peak of 135 on 5th and still 96 on 12 Dec. Fewer were present after mid December storms with 59 the most seen in the second half of the month.

Gadwall

A pair was on the estuary between 27 Apr-1 May and, in autumn, there were 2 on 9 Sep.

Teal

Present all year with largest numbers in the two winter periods. In comparison with Wigeon, the autumn build up started earlier.

January-April: Highest count was 125 on 16 Jan but 50-100 was more usual. Still 33 on 16 Apr and 22 on 22 Apr.

May-July: 7 on 3 May then only 1-2 until 5 on 29 Jun, increasing to 10 on 9 & 19 Jul and 17 on 31 Jul.

August-September: Numbers had risen to 46 by 16 Aug and 117 on 29 Aug. The autumn peak was 173 on 9 Sep.

October-December: Up to 100 were present throughout, with a brief increase to 147 on 20 Oct. On 12 Dec there were 88 but numbers dropped following mid December storms and 32 on 26th was the best count at the end of the month.

Mallard

Common all year, and breeding on well-vegetated parts of the estuary. Highest counts (excluding ducklings) were 39 on 2 Mar, 47 on 11 Jun, 51 on 2 Jul, 72 on 12 Aug, 101 on 2 Sep, 60 on 9 Oct and 30 on 5 Nov.

Pintail

Two (male and female) on 22 Mar – the only record of the year.

Shoveler

One on 5 Aug and 2 on 23 Oct.

Tufted Duck

Only seen on the lagoon on the Kingston side of the estuary. None were there during the first winter period. First record of the year was a single bird between 2-14 Jul. There were no further records until October, when 5 on 16th, 7 on 20th and 10 on 30th. Following an autumn peak of 12 on 2 Nov, numbers dwindled to 8 on 11 Nov, 7 on 20 Nov and the last 2 on 12 Dec.

Scaup

A female associated with the Tufted Ducks on the Kingston lagoon between 20 Oct-11 Nov.



Female Scaup (right) with Tufted Ducks, 2 November 2012 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Eider

On most days only a few were visible offshore but numbers were very variable. In the early winter period, 17 on 26 Jan was easily the most seen but a surge in numbers in mid March saw 57 on 15th and 176 by 26th. This large flock was short-lived and the best April count was only 9 on 11th. Apart from 7 on 16 May, no more than 5 (and usually fewer) were then present until 7 again on 23 Aug and 26 on 24 Aug. During September-December, numbers remained low with occasional larger groups such as 14 on 6 Oct, 16 on 10 Oct, 14 on 20 Nov, 19 on 12 Dec and 24 on 17 Dec.

Long-tailed Duck

Very small numbers offshore. Only seen once in January-February when 16 on 26 Jan. Continuously present in mid-late March with highest counts of 21 on 22nd and 22 on 26th. In April, 2 on 11th and 22nd. No further records until October when 1 on 15th and 6 on 20th and 23rd. Often up to 5 offshore throughout November-December, with 10 on 20 Nov. In late December a few, apparently storm-weakened, birds were often in the river mouth.

Common Scoter

Occasional offshore. The only records were 4 on 7 Feb, 8 on 26 Mar, 1 on 27 Mar, 12 on 11 Jun, 1 on 15 Oct and 1 on 30 Dec.

Goldeneye

Up to 16 on the estuary, Kingston lagoon or close inshore in the first winter period. Still 13 on 11 Apr, 10 on 20 Apr and 7 on 3 May, with 4 on 8 May being the last record of spring. No further presence until 2 on 30 Sep. In October, 5 on 9th, 10 on 13th and 12 on 19th. A marked

increase from late October when 19 on 30th. In November, 31 by 5th and 41 on 20th, with numbers staying high until a peak of 44 on 18 Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser

In the early winter period, 1-4 during January-March. A spring build-up took place in April with 6 on 11th, 11 on 13th, 14 on 17th-20th and still 14 on 1 May. During May, numbers dwindled from 11 on 3rd to 3 on 8th, 3 on 18th and, lastly, 1 on 21st. No further records until 4 on 17-20 Aug and 3 on 3 Sep. Continuous presence again from 30 Sep – usually up to 5 but 9 on 10 Oct and 29 Nov.

Goosander

One on 6 Jan but no further records until continuous presence began on 6 Apr when 4 were seen. Numbers rose to 19 on 16 Apr, 29 on 1 May and 56 on 16 May – staying around that level until a further increase to 86 on 22 Jun and 99 on 6 Jul. The flock of moulting females peaked at 121 on 23 Jul, 152 on 20 Aug and 133 on 3 Sep, before dwindling to 47 on 19 Sep, 16 on 30 Sep and 13 on 19 Oct. Only five records in November-December, all of single birds except for 3 on 5 Nov.

Pheasant

A frequent visitor to scrubby areas around the estuary.

Red-throated Diver

Regular offshore in small numbers in all months but June-August. Up to 3 on several dates in January-February and more regular in March-early April with maximum of 7 on 22 Mar and 6 on 11 Apr. Briefly numerous again in early May with maximum of 14 on 8th but then largely absent during June-August with only single birds recorded on 2 Jul and 24 Aug. Up to 3 on five dates in September but becoming more numerous in October when 6 on 10th, 17 on 21st and 19 on 23rd. In November, 7 on 7th, 10 on 15th and 20 on 20th but only 1-2 on subsequent dates until the end of the year.

Black-throated Diver

Two offshore on 13 Mar with one remaining during 15-27 Mar. Otherwise, 1 on 16 May was the only record.

Great Northern Diver

The only records were 2 on 3 May and 1 on 17 May.

Little Grebe

Up to 3 on the estuary in January-early March with no further records until 1 on 19 Sep. Up to 4 regularly present during October-December.

Slavonian Grebe

Seldom seen in Spey Bay so 1 on 7 Feb was unusual.

Grey Heron

None seen in January-March but regular in small numbers during the rest of the year. Most seen together were 6 on 11 Jun with 4 on 2 Jul, 23 Aug, 31 Aug and 28 Oct.

Fulmar

Small numbers passing offshore in summer and autumn.

Gannet

Not noted offshore until 21 May – regular thereafter in small numbers. Bigger fishing concentrations included 25 on 3 Aug and 50 on 12 & 22 Sep. One on 29 Nov was the only record in the last two months of the year.

Cormorant

Ten on 6 Jan but usually only 1-3 around the river mouth in January-April. Apart from one on 21 May, absent between May-July. A few in early-mid August but most numerous in late August and September when 11 on 25 Aug, 14 on 31 Aug and a peak of 28 on 2 Sep. Still 25 on 19 Sep and 19 on 4 Oct but never more than 10 for the rest of the year, and usually only 1-5.

Shag

Not unusual flying past but only occasionally mixing with Cormorants at the river mouth. Two on 3 Sep, 4 on 16 Sep and 3 on 15 Nov were the only records.

Sparrowhawk

Seen chasing small birds, including waders, over the estuary on 21 May, 6 Jul, 19 Jul, 16 Aug, 29 Aug, 31 Aug and 16 Sep.

Osprey

First back on the estuary in spring was 1 on 16 Apr. Not recorded on a daily basis until mid June. Last record on 13 Sep. No report of more than two birds at one time.

Kestrel

Single birds hunting over the estuary on 19 & 29 Jul.

Peregrine

Only two records, of a single bird on 22 Aug and 4 Sep.

Oystercatcher

Present all year though very scarce in winter.

January-February: 7 on 16 Jan and 14 on 28 Feb were by far the largest counts. Usually only 1-2.

March-April: A surge in numbers in March saw 13 on 2nd, 35 on 13th and 29 on 15th. Best subsequent counts were 18 on 16 Apr and 15 on 28 Apr.

May-June: Usually only up to 3, but 7 on 3 & 16 May and 12 on 11 Jun.

July-August: The months with greatest, but variable, numbers. A rapid increase in late July from 24 on 28th to 99 on 29th and 43 on 31st. In August, 52 on 5th. Thereafter, usually 20-30 but back up to 53 on 18th, returning to a maximum of 20 for the rest of the month.

September-October: Usually 10-15 with a maximum of 17 on 20 Oct.

November-December: Often absent, sometimes up to 3, and a maximum of 7 on 12 Dec.

Little Ringed Plover

Single birds were recorded on 11 Apr, 9 Jul and 16 Aug, with 2 on 2 Jul.

Ringed Plover

A passage and summer visitor to the estuary with peak numbers during brief passage periods.

Spring: First were 10 on 13 March with numbers remaining around that level until mid May when 74 on 16th, 38 on 21st and 34 on 26th.

Summer: Numbers very variable. Usually less than 10 in June (although 16 on 11th) but more in July when 28 on 2nd, 23 on 9th, 36 on 14th, 38 on 18th and 31 on 26th.

Autumn: Peak passage in mid August when best counts were 106 on 15th and 137 on 16th. Down to 44 on 17th, 37 on 20th and a steady decline until, in September, 23 on 2nd, 12 on 5th and only 1 on 12th – which was the last record of the year.

Golden Plover

Only one record – a single bird on 5 Sep.

Lapwing

Variable, usually low, numbers. Often absent.

January-March: 18 on 28 Feb, otherwise 1-3 on five dates.

April-July: 1-2 on four dates and 7 on 31 Jul.

August-September: 10-30 on eight dates in August but in September only 2 on 2nd and 4 on 5th.

October-December: Usually absent but occasionally a large flock. Seen on nine dates, when large counts were 80 on 4 Oct, 245 on 20 Oct and 43 on 9 Nov – 15 or less on the other days.

Knot

In spring, 1 on 19 Apr. On autumn passage, 6 on 24 Jul and 4 on 27 Jul. In August, 4 on 11th, 8 on 12th, 11 on 15th, 1 on 18th, 13 on 25th and 9 on 29th. No further records.

Sanderling

In spring, 2 on 21 May. First on autumn passage were 2 on 9 Jul followed by a year maximum of 6 on 23 Jul, with 2 on 27 Jul and 1 on 18 Jul. In August, 1 on 10th-18th (with 3 on 17th) and 2 on 21st. One on 5 Sep was the last of the year.

Little Stint

Two on 15-16 Aug with one remaining until 18th.

Temminck's Stint

A rare visitor to Moray. One visited the estuary on 18 May.

Curlew Sandpiper

In spring, 1 on 16 May. In autumn, 2 on 29 Aug and 1 on 9 & 12 Sep.

Dunlin

First of the year were 13 on 13 Mar, with only 3 remaining on 15 Mar. Only two subsequent records, each of a single bird, until the end of April. Variable numbers in May as spring passage proceeded, with highest counts of 44 on 16th and 26 on 28th. Up to 15 during June though usually only 2-4. Autumn passage began in early July with 21 on 9th and 31 on 14th. Peak passage occurred in late July when 41 on 23rd, 71 on 24th, 185 on 26th, 200 on 27th and 338 on 28th. Decline thereafter with 37 the highest count in the first half of August. A further surge of birds in the second half of August brought 65 on 15th-16th and 56 on 20th-22nd. Still 46 on 24 Aug but much smaller numbers through September when usually less than 20, with a maximum of

23 on 9th. Only seen on five dates in October, maximum 9 on 4th. One on 5 Nov was the last of the year.

Ruff

One on 28 Jul and, in August, 4 on 11th, 3 on 15th and 1 on 16th and 20th. Only one September record – of a single bird on 9th.

Jack Snipe

One flushed from rushes on the saltmarsh on 22 Apr was the only record.

Snipe

Often present in small numbers on the saltmarsh on the west side of the estuary – but usually remaining concealed unless they are flushed. Numbers and distribution through the year are therefore both likely to be under stated. First record was 1 on 11 Apr and no more until 2 on 21 Jul. Regularly 2-3 throughout autumn with a highest count of 9 on 9 Oct. Last record was of 2 on 5 Nov but birds are likely to have been present later in the year.



Snipe, 21 July 2012 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Black-tailed Godwit

Nothing on spring passage, with first record being 3 on 21 Jul. An exceptional flock of 66 was present for a few hours on 24 Jul and there were 8 on 28 Jul. Later records were of 9 on 29 Aug and, lastly, 1 on 16 Sep.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Always very unusual on the estuary. Just a single bird in 2012, on 25 May.

Whimbrel

Spring passage: 1 on 18 May and 2 on 26 May.

Autumn passage: Noted between 6 Jul and 25 Aug. Present on the estuary on 16 dates with numbers usually up to 5. Larger flocks, all in early August, were 37 on 3rd, 20 on 6th, 18 on 10th and 11 on 16th. Whether this represents one, gradually dwindling, flock or four separate flocks is impossible to be sure. Visits on intervening days failed to detect Whimbrel which are normally noisy and easy to detect.

Curlew

Present in variable numbers at all seasons with peak numbers usually in August-September. The picture is confused by the fact that all or part of the flock often leaves the estuary to feed on nearby farmland.

January-March: 65 on 14 Jan and 109 on 16 Jan but otherwise less than 30.

April-June: Very few remaining on the estuary during the breeding season. Present in April on four dates (maximum 10 on 16th), in May on five dates (maximum 6 on 16th) and in June on three dates (single birds only).

July-September: The autumn build up began in July with 10 on 2nd, 27 on 6th and a rapid rise to 130 on 14th and 24th, and 181 on 31st. Over 200 were present throughout August with a maximum of 260 on 12th. Early September brought the highest numbers of the year with counts of 347-355 during 9th-19th.

October-December: Still 211 on 4 Oct and 183 on 9 Oct. A flock of 90-100 birds remained in the area from mid October until the end of the year.

Common Sandpiper

First spring arrivals were 2 on 16 Apr. During May and June up to 4 birds were regular around the river and at least one pair probably bred. Birds from inland breeding areas started to move down to the estuary in late June and 24 were present on 29th. The largest count was 42 on 2 Jul but 20-25 were present until 24 Jul after which numbers dropped below 10. After 6 Aug only a single bird remained, Last seen on 17 Aug.

Greenshank

Spring passage: 1 on 13 Apr was the only record.

Autumn passage: First 1 on 21 Jul but no further records until 1 on 6 Aug. One or two birds then continuously present until the last was seen on 5 Sep.

Wood Sandpiper

On spring passage, 2 on 26 May. During the autumn passage period a single bird was seen daily during 9-16 Aug – probably the same individual.



Wood Sandpiper, 26 May 2012 (Photo: Martin Cook)



Wood Sandpiper, 16 August 2012 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Redshank

Almost always present on the estuary, usually in small numbers but with short-lived increases during passage periods. During January-April there were regularly up to 10 but only 2 in May and June – a pair which probably bred. In the July-September period, numbers were usually

below 10 but evidence of passage included 25 on 18 Jul, a year maximum of 39 on 24 Aug and 21 on 29 Aug. In the October-December winter period, usually only 2-3 were present with a maximum of 8 on 28 Oct and 6 on 26 Dec.

Turnstone

Present throughout the first winter period with a highest count of 16 on 13 Mar. Between 22 Mar-20 Apr, numbers never exceeded 5 but a strong, short-lived passage brought 81 on 22 Apr, 70 on 27 Apr and 63 on 28 Apr. By 1 May only 8 remained, and 4 on 11 May were the last to be seen until 1 on 18 Jul and 2 on 24 Jul. In late August, up to 4 were regular but none were seen between 28 Aug-9 Oct. After 9 Oct, always present in small numbers until the end of the year – best counts were 21 on 20 Oct and 23 on 26 Nov.

Kittiwake

Common offshore during the summer months but only visiting the estuary between 21 Jun (13) and 12 Sep (36). Numbers varied greatly, with peak counts of birds loafing on the shingle during late August, when 150 on 16th, 120 on 25th and 81 on 29th. On other days, Kittiwakes were absent or only present in very small numbers.

Black-headed Gull

Present in all months, usually in small numbers. Never more than 50 until September onwards, when 63 on 9 Sep, 50 on 15 Oct, 63 on 23 Oct and 60 on 9 Nov.

Little Gull

One juvenile on 25 Aug was the only record.



Juvenile Little Gull (centre right) 25 August 2012 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Common Gull

Counts were extremely variable. Nearly always present, typically up to 50. Sometimes much larger flocks build up on the estuary and peak counts in 2012 included 140 on 28 Feb, 180 on 22 Aug, 462 on 12 Sep, 664 on 19 Sep, 430 on 7 Nov and a year's high of 750 on 9 Nov.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Scarce on the estuary. First in spring were 2 on 16 May, and 67 on 2 Jul was by far the highest count of the year. Otherwise numbers seldom exceeded 10 and none was seen after 12 Sep.

Herring Gull

Often present in large numbers at all seasons – sometimes only a few if the flock was feeding elsewhere. Highest monthly counts usually exceeded 400, and highest numbers were present in April (500 on 27th), July (770 on 31st) and August (590 on 28th).

Iceland Gull

Three records in the first winter period – a 1st winter bird on 6 Jan and a different immature bird on 22 & 28 Feb.

Great Black-backed Gull

Usually 50 or less in the winter periods but sometimes much larger numbers in summer and autumn. Highest monthly counts included 240 on 18 Jul, 259 on 24 Aug and 560 on 12 Oct.

Little Tern

First of the year were 3 on 27 Apr, with 1-2 on several dates in May and June. Unusually numerous in early July when 11 on 9th and 13 on 14th – but numbers quickly declined and the last was 1 on 21 Jul. All were adults.



Little Terns, 12 May 2012 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Black Tern

An adult on 6-7 Jul was the first on the Spey estuary since 2006.



Black Tern, 6 July 2012 (Photo: Benedict Stewart)

Sandwich Tern

First 3 on 13 Apr and 8 on 22 Apr. Common offshore thereafter but only occasional birds on the estuary. Numbers on the estuary increased rapidly in early August when 57 on 6th, 130 on 9th and 239 on 10th. After this peak, numbers remained high throughout August (e.g. 64 on 20th, 105 on 23rd and 92 on 25th) but quickly declined in early September to 25 on 3rd and then no more than 4 until last 2 on 28 Sep.

Common Tern

First 1 on 19 Apr and 6 on 27 Apr. Often seen flying up and down the river but in smaller numbers than Arctic Tern. Most counts were of Common and Arctic combined - highest counts of definite Common were 25 on 21 Jul and 13 on 20 Aug. Last 2 were seen on 3 Sep.



Common Tern, 12 May 2012 (Photo: Martin Cook)

Arctic Tern

First 1 on 13 Apr. A common sight flying up and down the river in spring and early summer. In late June-early July, large numbers were resting on the shingle bars near the river mouth. Although most counts were of Arctic and Common Terns combined, the great majority were Arctic. Of 185 terns on 21 July, 160 were Arctic and 25 Common. The Arctic Terns departed earlier than the Commons and none were seen after the end of July.

Common and Arctic Tern

Most mid summer counts were of these two species combined, with Arctic usually very much in the majority. In May, 84 on 16th and 64 on 18th were unusually large flocks for the time of year. From the last days of June, and through July, large numbers were often resting on the estuary. Peak counts were 182 on 29 June, 120 on 6 & 9 Jul, 160 on 18 Jul, 185 on 21 Jul, 280 on 24 Jul and 180 on 28 Jul.

Guillemot

Very scarce. Two on 17 Apr was the only record until late summer-early autumn. A few were seen offshore on several dates between 20 Aug-7 Oct, with a maximum of 13 on 24 Aug.

Razorbill

More numerous than Guillemot. One or two on several dates in January-February with a few more in late March-early April, peaking at 16 on 26 Mar. No further records until August when 7

on 5th and good numbers for the rest of the month, with peak counts of 55 on 9th, 41 on 20th, 48 on 24th and 38 on 31st. Fewer thereafter with 12 on 9 Sep, 5 on 30 Sep and last 1 on 19 Oct.

Feral Pigeon

A small flock was seen on the river shingles several times during the year – biggest group was 23 on 9 Sep.

Stock Dove

One on 9 Sep was the only record.

Woodpigeon

Common around the estuary.

Short-eared Owl

One hunted regularly over the rough grassland on the west side of the estuary between 5-16 Aug. It then departed before making a one-day reappearance on 25 Aug.

Swift

Seen over the estuary regularly between May and August.

Kingfisher

One on 29 Jun was the only record.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Heard several times in the riparian woodlands.

Jackdaw

Regular on the estuary in small numbers in the second half of the year. Largest count was 35 on 7 Nov.

Rook

Small numbers were not unusual in the second half of the year – most together were 36 on 9 Sep.

Carrion Crow

A few were often to be seen around the estuary, and occasionally a larger flock e.g. 23 on 28 Apr and 26 on 9 Sep.

Hooded/hybrid Crow

One hybrid on 9 Sep – but no pure Hooded Crows were seen.

Blue Tit

Frequent around Tugnet.

Great Tit

Frequent around Tugnet.

Coal Tit

Frequent in riparian woodland.

Skylark

Singing over the marsh in spring where at least one pair probably bred.

Sand Martin

First 16 on 17 Apr, rising to 30 on 20 Apr. A few were often around the estuary thereafter but 90 on 31 Aug was exceptional – there were none the following day and this was the last record of the year.

Swallow

First 1 on 19 Apr and regular thereafter around the Tugnet buildings. Highest count of the year was 13 on 8 May, and last of the year were 5 on 19 Sep.

House Martin

Occasionally accompanying Sand Martins and Swallows over the estuary. In the Kingston car park, several birds collected mud for their nests in early summer.

Willow Warbler

First song on 20 Apr. Numerous in the riparian woodland.

Sedge Warbler

First song on 6 May. A regular songster in the rank vegetation at Tugnet where at least one pair bred.

Whitethroat

One sang near Tugnet on 6-11 May but was not heard thereafter.

Wren

Common in scrub.

Starling

Often around Tugnet in small numbers between early spring and autumn. Largest flock was 31 on 19 Sep.

Dipper

One on the shingle near the river mouth on 17 May was unusual.

Blackbird

Frequent around Tugnet.

Song Thrush

The only record around Tugnet was 1 on 2 Nov.

Robin

Frequent around Tugnet.

Wheatear

Unusually scarce in 2012. On spring passage single birds were seen in May on 8th, 16th and 18th. In autumn, there was 1 on 29 Aug and 1 on 19 Sep.

Dunnock

Frequent around Tugnet.

House Sparrow

Numerous around habitations near the estuary.

Pied/White Wagtail

Pied: No records in January-February and, in the second winter period, 1 on 9 & 16 Nov. In spring and early summer a few were regular on the estuary and around Tugnet. Numbers on the estuary increased substantially in July-September with 20-40 often present.

White: Exceptional numbers were recorded during both spring and autumn passage periods. In spring the first bird appeared on 17 Apr and up to 4 were regularly seen until the last on 19 May. A remarkable influx of 43 birds was counted on 16 May. In autumn, the first 2 arrived on 22 Aug and there was continuous presence until 22 Sep. Only 1-2 were seen on most days but there were 8 on 29 Aug, 11 on 3 Sep, 19 on 9 Sep and 8 on 22 Sep. As in spring, there was a short-lived peak in the passage when 43 (co-incidentally the same as the spring peak) were counted on 16 Sep.

Meadow Pipit

Very few in winter but usually up to 10 around the estuary from spring until late autumn.

Rock Pipit

Only one record, of a single bird near the river mouth on 17 Dec.

Chaffinch

Frequent around Tugnet.

Greenfinch

Frequent around Tugnet.

Goldfinch

A flock built up around Tugnet in late summer between 23 Aug-22 Sep. At its peak (on 1 Sep) the flock contained c40 birds.

Siskin

Four flying over Tugnet on 19 Oct – the only record of the year.

Linnet

A sizeable flock formed around Tugnet in late summer when highest counts were 60 on 18 Aug, 90 on 1 Sep and 75 on 9 Sep. Only small numbers thereafter until 40 on 9 Nov.

Lesser Redpoll

A flock of 12 flew west over Tugnet on 3 May but there were no further records.

Snow Bunting

Three records, each of a single bird, around the river mouth on 22 Sep, 27 Oct and 5 Nov.

Yellowhammer

Common around Tugnet, breeding in the gorse.

Reed Bunting

In both winter periods, 1-2 were seen on several occasions in the rank vegetation around Tugnet.