

# Birds in Moray & Nairn



**2004**

## Birds in Moray & Nairn in 2004

MORAY & NAIRN BIRD REPORT  
No.20 – 2004

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Compiled by Martin Cook, with assistance from Duncan Gibson, Andy Jensen (seabirds), John Mackie (waders) and Bob Proctor (wildfowl).

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

Cover photograph: Wood Warbler, Broom of Moy May 2004 (Duncan Gibson).

## INTRODUCTION

### Review of the year

The year 2004 saw another 8140 records added to the Moray & Nairn database, and from them the compilation of this, the 20<sup>th</sup>, annual report. The top 20 species and sites for which records were received are shown below, together with the monthly spread of records through the year.

	Species	Records received	Sites	Records received
1	Mallard	252	Loch Spynie	1309
2	Buzzard	249	Lossie estuary	963
3	Mute Swan	235	Kinloss	713
4	Tufted Duck	222	Nairn/Culbin Bars	387
5	Goldeneye	221	Findhorn Bay	329
6	Wigeon	196	Lossiemouth	285
7	Cormorant	193	Kingston	251
8	Whooper Swan	138	Burghead	223
9	Oystercatcher	137	Burghead Bay	206
10	Waxwing	130	Cloddach quarry	182
11	Eurasian Teal	129	Loch na Bo	174
12	Little Grebe	122	Elgin (except Cooper Park)	149
13	Coot	121	Loch Oire	114
14	Blackcap	114	Clochachan	94
15	Pink-foot. Goose	111	Portknockie	91
16	Ringed Plover	110	Loch Loy	90
17	Dunlin	108	Cooper Park, Elgin	83
18	Redshank	107	Tugnet/Spemouth	79
19	Goldeneye	104	Loch of Blairs	77
20	Curlew	101	Nairn	76

Monthly spread of records (as % of total records):

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
10.6	9.0	8.7	9.4	9.8	5.4	5.8	6.0	7.5	11.1	7.8	8.9

When compared with 2003, for which only the top 10 were included, there is strong similarity between the lists of most regularly reported species. The most notable addition is Waxwing, hardly a surprise in view of the unprecedented invasion in 2004. The only other passerine to feature is Blackcap, although this has fallen from 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> place. Observers are urged to continue to submit records of wintering Blackcaps – are they becoming scarcer than a few years ago? The rest of the list contains, as ever, a high proportion of water birds. A glance at the list of most popular bird watching sites gives a clear explanation for this. This situation, while understandable in terms of the range of species likely to be seen, leaves many species seriously under-recorded and observers are urged to submit more counts of, for example, finch and thrush flocks, and migrant arrival and departure dates.

The undoubted highlight, in an otherwise relatively quiet year, was the exceptional influx of Waxwings into the area in late October and early November. Nobody with even the slightest interest in birds can have failed to be impressed by the sound and spectacle of the 1225 Waxwings which gathered to feast on the berries at the west end of Forres. Every town and village seems to have been visited and, in order to maintain the most accurate picture of this invasion, the local bird recorder would be grateful to receive any further records which are not included in the species account later in the report.

2004 will not be remembered for its list of rare birds and no new species were added to the Moray & Nairn list. Nonetheless the year was enlivened by a selection of scarce visitors. In the early winter period our 4<sup>th</sup> Bittern of modern times visited Loch Flemington briefly and the first European White-fronted Goose since 1967 was seen. Green-winged Teals were at Culbin Bar and Loch Spynie and, on the Lossie estuary, gull-watchers found two Yellow-legged Gulls and a Kumlein's Gull. In spring our 3<sup>rd</sup> Ring-necked Duck spent three weeks at Loch Spynie where three Ruddy Ducks were also brief visitors. Summer migrant arrival dates continue to be pushed earlier and 2004 saw our earliest ever Swift and very prompt Sand Martins and Swallows.

During the breeding season many observers were busy with atlas fieldwork (see below) and this provided widespread reports of Blackcaps and Chiffchaff, and more Wood Warblers than usual. Green Woodpeckers were located in one site, two singing Quails were heard and, once again, there were Bearded Tits in the Spynie reedbeds. Razorbills bred for the second time at Portknockie.

Autumn wader passage began early with a Temminck's Stint at Kingston in July. A sprinkling of Curlew, Green and Wood Sandpipers and Little Stints represented a slight improvement on 2003. Seabird passage however was poor and only very small numbers of skuas and shearwaters were seen. Other notable events of the autumn were a freshly dead Wryneck on the Speyside Way at Bogmoor in late August, a Turtle Dove in Buckpool in October and a Lapland Bunting in November.

### The Breeding Bird Atlas

In conjunction with North-east Scotland, the Moray part of our recording area is taking part in a five-year project to map the distribution of our breeding birds. This project began in 2002 and therefore three seasons have been completed by the end of 2004. As soon as possible after the end of the project the intention is to publish a new breeding bird atlas. This is envisaged to be a book, though there may be web and CD-bases extensions. A team of local birdwatchers will write all the species accounts and other sections, and we hope to produce an attractive and informative local atlas.

The recording unit for the survey is the tetrad. This is a 2km x 2km square (i.e. 4km<sup>2</sup>). In total, 607 tetrads fall almost completely within Moray and this rises to 652 if tetrads containing only a little of Moray, and falling primarily within Aberdeenshire, are included. The task of visiting and recording in all of these tetrads is enormous. Nonetheless we are making very good progress and by the end of 2004, 437 tetrads have been at least partially surveyed and 221 can be considered as well covered. Statistics relating to the progress of the atlas work in Moray are as follows:

- Moray contains 607 tetrads
- 145 tetrad cards were submitted in 2002
- 169 tetrad cards were submitted in 2003
- 123 tetrad cards were submitted in 2004
- Of these 437 tetrads, 221 have been well covered and 159 others have been fairly well covered ('well covered' indicates more than 2/3 of expected species recorded and more than 1/3 of expected species

proved to breed. 'Fairly well covered' indicates more than 2/3 of expected species recorded but less than 1/3 proved to breed)

- 36% of the 607 tetrads have been well covered in three years and 63% well or fairly well
- 7244 records were submitted in 2002
- 6311 records were submitted in 2003
- 5556 records were submitted in 2004
- In total, 19111 records have been collected relating to the summer distribution of birds in Moray
- 37 observers took part in Atlas work in 2002
- 35 observers took part in Atlas work in 2003
- 39 observers took part in Atlas work in 2004
- Over the three years, 52 observers have contributed

Clearly an exceptional amount of effort has been put in so far and the project is well on course for completion. Already, with three fifths of the atlas project completed, the distribution maps are looking good for many species but some birds are quite under-recorded. Coverage also remains relatively poor for the uplands and for parts of eastern Moray. By the time this 2004 report is published the 2005 breeding season will have passed (and the good level of commitment and coverage has been maintained!) and only the 2006 season remains. To ensure that the atlas we produce is as complete as possible we do hope please that everybody will make a final redoubling of effort in the final season. If anybody has not yet been involved and would like to take part then they will be most welcome and should, please, contact Martin Cook, who is organising the Moray effort, or Ian Francis who is organising the rest of north-east Scotland.

#### Submission of records

The area covered by this Report is Moray and that part of Highland which corresponds to the former Nairn District. Lochindorb, formerly at the southern tip of Moray, now falls outside the revised Moray boundary which runs along the A939. A small part of the former Nairn District boundary lies along the western shore so records from the loch continue to be included in the Report.

All records for inclusion in the 2005 Report will be welcomed by the Moray & Nairn Bird Recorder at the following address:

Martin Cook  
 Rowanbrae, Clochan, Buckie, Banffshire AB56 5EQ  
 Tel. Clochan (01542) 850296

Please submit your records at regular intervals or in a single batch as soon as possible in January 2006.

The Editor is very grateful for generous financial support from Walkers Shortbread Ltd, Aberlour and from Dr Melvin Morrison, Keith.

The Editor gratefully acknowledges the help of Duncan Gibson, Andy Jensen, John Mackie and Bob Proctor in the preparation of the species accounts. Once again Bob has produced the Ringing Report. Thanks to Duncan Gibson and Andy Jensen for their photographs.

### ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL RARITY RECORDS

The Moray & Nairn Rarities Committee exists to consider records of local rarities which do not fall within the scope of the British Birds Rarities Committee or the Scottish Birds Rarities Committee.

There follows a list of those species (or subspecies) which are considered by the Moray & Nairn Rarities Committee. If you see one of these species please contact the area Recorder as soon as possible for a description form.

Black-necked Grebe	Crane	Richard's Pipit
Balearic Shearwater	Little Ringed Plover	Yellow Wagtail
Leach's Petrel	Temminck's Stint	Bluethroat
Bittern	Pectoral Sandpiper	Lesser Whitethroat
Little Egret	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Icterine Warbler
White Stork	Grey Phalarope	Yellow-browed Warbler
Spoonbill	Red-necked Phalarope	Firecrest
Bewick's Swan	Long-tailed Skua	Bearded Tit
Bean Goose	Mediterranean Gull	Red-backed Shrike
Green-winged Teal	Sabine's Gull	Great Grey Shrike
Garganey (not adult male)	Roseate Tern	Hawfinch
Ring-necked Duck	Black Tern	Common Rosefinch
Ruddy Duck (not adult male)	Turtle Dove	Lapland Bunting
Surf Scoter (not adult male)	Nightjar	
Honey Buzzard	Hoopoe	
Hobby	Wryneck	
Spotted Crake	Shore Lark	
Corncrake	Water Pipit	

Subspecies:

Cormorant (*P.c.sinensis*)                      Rock Pipit (*A.p.littoralis*)

Chiffchaff (*P.c.tristis/abietinus*)

Also records in the following categories:

All 'firsts' for Moray & Nairn

The first five records for any species in Moray & Nairn

Out-of-season records for a species (e.g. Willow Warbler in December)

Significant out-of-habitat records for a species (e.g. coastal Ravens).

### OBSERVERS CONTRIBUTING TO 2004 REPORT

I.M.Addis, E.Aitken, L.Allan, A.J.H.Anderson, B.Bates, S.Benn, W.R.P.Bourne, J.Brighthouse, H.Brown, D.Butterfield, T.Cameron, P.C.Campbell, M.Coleman, A.Comerford, M.J.H.Cook, B.Cosnette, J.K.Craib, J.Darroch, R.Dawson, M.Dearman, R.H.Dennis, I.Dillon, C.Donald, D.Dugan, J.Dunbar, S.Eaves, A.Edward, H.Farquhar, M.Finn, T.Finnemore, I.Ford, I.Francis, J.&M.Fraser, R.Fraser, M.Galloway, G.George, C.A.Gervaise, D.A.Gibson, P.Gordon, P.Gordon Smith, K.Guthrie, N.Hancock, E.Harwood, R.F.Hewitt, A.Hinchliffe, P.T.Hirst, C.Hunt, D.Jardine, A.Jensen, C.Jones, N.Keir, J.D.Law, A.J.Lawrence, A.Leitch, R.Lovell, J.&H.MacDonald, J.D.H.Mackie, P.McDonald, H.McIntosh, S.Maxwell, M.Morrison, R.Morrison, T.Murdoch, P.Murfitt, M.Newell, N.Nicolson, L.Patch, A.Perkins, I.Phillips, J.Poyner, R.Prentice, R.Proctor, D.M.Pullan, A.Robertshaw, C.Round, L.&R.Simpson, D.Slater, C.Smith, R.Smith, M.Souter, R.Suddaby, I.S.Suttie, G.Taylor, W.G.Taylor, M.Whitton, V.Wotton, A.Young.

### CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF THE YEAR

#### JANUARY

1<sup>st</sup> 1 Surf Scoter Burghead Bay (until 6 Apr), 1 Iceland Gull Loch Spynie (until 27 May), 2<sup>nd</sup> 1 Canada Goose Coltfoot, 1 Scaup Miltonduff distillery pond, 1 Greenshank Lossie estuary, 4<sup>th</sup> 1 Green-winged Teal Culbin Bar, 14 Pintail Nairn/Culbin Bars, 27 Grey Plover Nairn/Culbin Bars, 8<sup>th</sup> 1 Gadwall Loch Loy, 9<sup>th</sup> 2 Green-winged Teal Loch Spynie, 10<sup>th</sup> 5 Jack Snipe Kingsteps, 11<sup>th</sup> 1 Great Crested Grebe (until 14<sup>th</sup>), 14<sup>th</sup> 1 Green-winged Teal Loch Spynie, 20<sup>th</sup> 1 Lesser Black-backed Gull Elgin, 21<sup>st</sup> 10 Pintail Burghead Bay, 1 Raven Morinish, 22<sup>nd</sup> 11 Slavonian Grebe Burghead Bay, 1094 Eider Burghead-Hopeman, 25<sup>th</sup> 9 Pintail Findhorn Bay, 1 Surf Scoter Nairn/Culbin Bars, 4 Jack Snipe Kingsteps, 36 Snow Bunting Nairn Bar, 1 Lesser Black-backed Gull Culbin Bar, 70 Twite Nairn Bar, 27<sup>th</sup> 150 Snow Bunting Lossiemouth east beach, 29<sup>th</sup> 91 Snow Bunting Kinloss.

#### FEBRUARY

1<sup>st</sup> 27 Brent Goose Nairn, 1 Oystercatcher inland in Elgin, 1 Chiffchaff Nairn, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1 Bittern Loch Flemington, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1 Canada Goose Middlefield, 4<sup>th</sup> 1 Twite Kingsteps, 7<sup>th</sup> 5 Pintail Loch Spynie, 8<sup>th</sup> 15 Waxwing Elgin, 12<sup>th</sup> 12 Twite Netherton, 13<sup>th</sup> 1 Green Woodpecker Monaghty, 14<sup>th</sup> 1 Greenshank Garmouth, 15<sup>th</sup> 1 Scaup Loch Spynie, 16<sup>th</sup> 4 Shoveler Hillhead (Forres), 19<sup>th</sup> 200 Lesser Redpoll Elgin oakwoods, 20<sup>th</sup> 40 Snow Bunting Ben Macdui, 22<sup>nd</sup> 11 Pintail Findhorn Bay, 2 Surf Scoter Nairn/Culbin Bars, 28<sup>th</sup> 1 Glaucous Gull Loch Spynie.

#### MARCH

5<sup>th</sup> 1 Raven Badeach, 7<sup>th</sup> 1 Glaucous Gull Lossie estuary, 8<sup>th</sup> 1 Glaucous Gull Loch Spynie (until 5 Apr), 14<sup>th</sup> 1 European White-fronted Goose Windyridge, 15<sup>th</sup> 2 Bean Goose Culbin Bar, 18<sup>th</sup> 1 Sand Martin Loch Spynie, 2 Sand Martin Loch na Bo, 20<sup>th</sup> 1 Wheatear Birnie, 1 Wheatear Spey Bay, 21<sup>st</sup> 2 Scaup Loch na Bo, 4 Raven Aldivalloch, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1 Kumlein's Gull Lossie estuary, 23<sup>rd</sup> 1 Yellow-legged Gull Lossie estuary, 26<sup>th</sup> 5 Barnacle Goose Loch Spynie, 28<sup>th</sup> 2 Sandwich Tern Lossiemouth, 30<sup>th</sup> 2 Yellow-legged Gull Lossie estuary, 6 Raven Ladder hills, 31<sup>st</sup> 1 Yellow-legged Gull Lossie estuary.

**APRIL**

2<sup>nd</sup> 1 Yellow-legged Gull Lossie estuary, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1 Green Sandpiper Cloddach quarry (until 4<sup>th</sup>), 1 Swallow Loch Spynie, 4<sup>th</sup> 1 Ring-necked Duck Loch Spynie (until 25<sup>th</sup>), 9<sup>th</sup> 1 Iceland Gull Nether Dallachy, 11<sup>th</sup> 78 Black-throated Diver Burghead Bay, 5 Great Northern Diver Burghead Bay, 1 White Wagtail Lossie estuary, 17<sup>th</sup> 2 Arctic Tern Findhorn, 1 House Martin Lossiemouth, 18<sup>th</sup> 48 Goldeneye Speymouth, 1 Common Sandpiper Speymouth, 6 House Martin Loch Spynie, 19<sup>th</sup> 1 Swift Garmouth, 20<sup>th</sup> 3 Swift Elgin, 20 Corn Bunting Clochan, 21<sup>st</sup> 1 Common Tern Loch Spynie, 1 White Wagtail Nairn, 23<sup>rd</sup> 1 White Wagtail Scarffbanks, 1 White Wagtail Lossie estuary, 24<sup>th</sup> 2 White Wagtail Lossiemouth, 1 Sedge Warbler Cloddach Quarry, 1 Whitethroat Cloddach Quarry, 25<sup>th</sup> 3 Gadwall Loch Spynie, 26<sup>th</sup> 1 Whimbrel Lossiemouth, 1 Whimbrel Cullen.

**MAY**

1<sup>st</sup> 3 Whimbrel Lossiemouth, 4<sup>th</sup> 17 Black-tailed Godwit Findhorn Bay, 8<sup>th</sup> 1 White Wagtail Findhorn Bay, 9<sup>th</sup> 28 Black-throated Diver Burghead Bay, 3 Whimbrel Strathlene, 1 White Wagtail Strathlene, 1 Raven Cromdales, 10<sup>th</sup> 48 Red-breasted Merganser Burghead Bay, 1 Wood Warbler Broom of Moy, 13<sup>th</sup> 1 Wood Warbler Altyre, 1 Wood Warbler Limekilns, 14<sup>th</sup> 2 Ruddy Duck Loch Spynie (until 15<sup>th</sup>), 16<sup>th</sup> 4 Whimbrel Binsness, 19<sup>th</sup> 80 Red-breasted Merganser Burghead Bay, 2 Whimbrel Lossie estuary, 1 Iceland Gull Lossie estuary, 20<sup>th</sup> 1 Mandarin Tugnet, 1 White Wagtail Windyridge, 23<sup>rd</sup> 1 Wood Warbler Delavorar, 2 Raven Glen Builg, 3 Raven Cabrach, 24<sup>th</sup> 3 Mandarin Elgin, 1 Wood Warbler Cawdor Wood, 25<sup>th</sup> 1 Wood Sandpiper Miltonduff (until 29<sup>th</sup>), 30<sup>th</sup> 1 Quail Inchstelly, 1 Wood Warbler Bin of Cullen.

**JUNE**

5<sup>th</sup> 1 Quail Gilston, 22 Common Sandpiper Kingston, 6<sup>th</sup> 1 Wood Warbler St. John's Meads, 8<sup>th</sup> 1 Green Woodpecker Monaghty, 11 Canada Goose Miltonduff, 17<sup>th</sup> 2 Scaup Kingston, 19<sup>th</sup> 1 Ruddy Duck Loch Spynie, 23<sup>rd</sup> 8 Manx Shearwater Lossiemouth, 28<sup>th</sup> 21 Common Sandpiper Kincorth.

**JULY**

4<sup>th</sup> 11 Black-tailed Godwit Lossie estuary, 5<sup>th</sup> 1 Little Stint Kingston, 1 Temminck's Stint Kingston (until 6<sup>th</sup>), 6<sup>th</sup> 2 Ruddy Shelduck Kingston, 10<sup>th</sup> 1 Storm Petrel Kingston, 11<sup>th</sup> 3 Mandarin Elgin, 14<sup>th</sup> 1 Glaucous Gull Lossie estuary (until 12 Nov), 20<sup>th</sup> 13 Greenshank Binsness, 30<sup>th</sup> 4 Greenshank Garmouth.

**AUGUST**

1<sup>st</sup> 1 Little Stint Burghead, 1 Wood Sandpiper Loch Spynie, 3<sup>rd</sup> 6 Canada Goose Findhorn Bay, 4<sup>th</sup> 1 Ruff Lossie estuary, 5<sup>th</sup> 1 Green Sandpiper Cloddach Quarry, 8<sup>th</sup> 2 Green Sandpiper Lein, 5 Arctic Skua Lossiemouth, 10<sup>th</sup> 7 Ruff Kingston, 13<sup>th</sup> 2 Little Stint Lossie estuary, 1 Curlew Sandpiper Lossie estuary, 14<sup>th</sup> 21 Greenshank Findhorn Bay, 15<sup>th</sup> 1 Kingfisher Forres, 16<sup>th</sup> 4 Curlew Sandpiper Findhorn Bay, 19<sup>th</sup> 5 Great Skua Lossiemouth, 20<sup>th</sup> 3 Ruff over Loch Spynie, 21<sup>st</sup> 2 Ruff Findhorn Bay, 22<sup>nd</sup> 94 Sandwich Tern Tugnet, 23<sup>rd</sup> 1 Raven Kinloss, 24<sup>th</sup> 6 Black Guillemot Burghead, 25<sup>th</sup> 1 Wryneck Bogmoor, 27<sup>th</sup> 2 Little Stint Tugnet, 1 Curlew Sandpiper Lossie estuary, 28<sup>th</sup> 1 Green Sandpiper Cloddach Quarry, 30<sup>th</sup> 1 Pomarine Skua Spey Bay, 31<sup>st</sup> 2 Green Sandpiper Lein.

**SEPTEMBER**

1<sup>st</sup> 131 Sandwich Tern Tugnet, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1 Ruff Covesea, 4<sup>th</sup> 4 Grey Plover Lossie estuary, 1 Little Stint Kingston, 12 Curlew Sandpiper Lossie estuary, 1 Ruff Findhorn Bay, 2 Kingfisher Mosstodloch, 5<sup>th</sup> 25 Curlew Sandpiper Findhorn Bay, 4 Ruff Lossie estuary, 800 Guillemot Tugnet, 400 Razorbill Tugnet, 6<sup>th</sup> 31 Curlew Sandpiper Findhorn Bay, 30 Black-tailed Godwit Lossie estuary, 8<sup>th</sup> 259 Sandwich Tern Portgordon, 11<sup>th</sup> 2 Curlew Sandpiper Kingston, 1 Spotted Redshank Findhorn Bay, 12<sup>th</sup> 9 Canada Goose Findhorn Bay, 15<sup>th</sup> 1 Pomarine Skua Lossiemouth, 17<sup>th</sup> first Pink-footed Geese Ben Aigan, 18<sup>th</sup> 21 Little Grebe Loch na Bo, 20<sup>th</sup>

40 Brent Goose Lossie estuary, 1 Pomarine Skua Lossiemouth, 21<sup>st</sup> 1 Little Stint Lossie estuary, 22<sup>nd</sup> 7 Whooper Swan Loch Spynie, 23<sup>rd</sup> 1 Ruff Tugnet, 25<sup>th</sup> 10 Greylag Goose Loch of Blairs, 29<sup>th</sup> 4 Red-necked Grebe Burghead Bay.

### OCTOBER

2<sup>nd</sup> 2 Pintail Lossie estuary, 2 Grey Plover Kingston, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1 Kingfisher Loch Spynie, 1 Chiffchaff Clochan, 4<sup>th</sup> 21 Little Grebe Loch na Bo, 10<sup>th</sup> 12 Slavonian Grebe Burghead Bay, 34 Barnacle Goose Miltonhill, 5 Black Guillemot off Lossiemouth, 1 Swift Forres, 2 Twite Kingston, 11<sup>th</sup> 2 Red-necked Grebe Burghead Bay, 1 Pintail Portgordon, 570 Great Black-backed Gull Tugnet, 12<sup>th</sup> 14 Brent Goose Findhorn Bay, 15<sup>th</sup> 6 Pintail Nairn Bar, 10 Scaup Nairn Bar, 2 Jack Snipe Kingsteps, 1 Redstart Culbin Bar, 1 Chiffchaff Loch Flemington, 16<sup>th</sup> 1 Mandarin Elgin, 17<sup>th</sup> 10 Grey Plover Findhorn Bay, 3 Little Stint Findhorn Bay, 37 Black-tailed Godwit Findhorn Bay, 1 Glaucous Gull Findhorn Bay, 1 Little Auk Burghead, 22 Twite Findhorn Bay, 20<sup>th</sup> 24 Brent Goose Nairn, 17 Waxwing Clochan, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1 Surf Scoter Burghead Bay (until 19 Dec), 23<sup>rd</sup> 1 Mandarin Tugnet, 1 Jack Snipe Lein, 24<sup>th</sup> 50 Whooper Swan Milton of Grange, 1 Turtle Dove Buckpool (until 27<sup>th</sup>), 25<sup>th</sup> 10 Waxwing Mosstodloch, 27<sup>th</sup> 26 Waxwing Lossiemouth, 28<sup>th</sup> 40 Waxwing Duffus, 30<sup>th</sup> 3 House Martin Portknockie, 36 Waxwing Keith, 31<sup>st</sup> 2 House Martin Forres, 1225 Waxwing Forres, 250 Waxwing Kinloss.

### NOVEMBER

1<sup>st</sup> 200 Waxwing Buckie, 500 Waxwing Elgin, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2 Swallow Buckie, 1 Chiffchaff Portknockie, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1 Swallow Kinloss, 5<sup>th</sup> 78 Whooper Swan Bogmoor, 1400 Eider Covesea, 6<sup>th</sup> 1 Chiffchaff Covesea, 7<sup>th</sup> 2500 Greylag Goose roosting Loch Spynie, 1 Little Gull Lossiemouth, 9<sup>th</sup> 6 Woodcock Ben Aigan, 10<sup>th</sup> 1 Pintail Fochabers lake, 16 Moorhen Fochabers lake, 70 Waxwing Loch Oire, 20 Waxwing Urquhart, 11<sup>th</sup> 70 Whooper Swan Netherton, 32 Waxwing Aberlour, 20 Waxwing Dufftown, 13<sup>th</sup> 27000 Pink-footed Goose roosting Loch Spynie, 1 Canada Goose Duffus Castle, 14<sup>th</sup> 11 Twite Findhorn Bay, 1 Lapland Bunting Myreside, 120 Snow Bunting Westerfolds, 15<sup>th</sup> 12000 Pink-footed Goose Miltonhill, 16<sup>th</sup> 130 Scaup Nairn, 17<sup>th</sup> 1 Pintail Lossie estuary, 20<sup>th</sup> 200 Waxwing Kingsteps, 21<sup>st</sup> 1 Glaucous Gull Burghead, 23<sup>rd</sup> 4 Little Auk Nairn Bar, 27<sup>th</sup> 55 Jack Snipe Kingsteps.

### DECEMBER

1<sup>st</sup> 10 Slavonian Grebe Burghead Bay, 9<sup>th</sup> 1 Pintail Loch na Bo, 12<sup>th</sup> 7 Pintail Nairn Bar, 1 Pintail Portgordon, 218 Scaup Nairn Bar, 2 Surf Scoter Nairn/Culbin Bars, 12 Grey Plover Nairn/Culbin Bars, 1 Jack Snipe Kingsteps, 1 Jack Snipe Nairn Bar, 21 Twite Culbin Bar, 86 Snow Bunting Nairn/Culbin Bars, 19<sup>th</sup> 3 Pintail Loch Spynie, 20<sup>th</sup> 126 Snow Bunting Lossiemouth east beach, 24<sup>th</sup> 1 Iceland Gull Loch Spynie, 25<sup>th</sup> 1 Greenshank Lossie estuary (until 31<sup>st</sup>), 27<sup>th</sup> 1 Iceland Gull Loch Oire, 30<sup>th</sup> 2010 Shag Portknockie, 31<sup>st</sup> 1 Chiffchaff Portknockie.

## 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

### **Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata*

*Rare breeder. Common autumn and winter visitor offshore.*

Summer: In the traditional summering/breeding area were two adults on 8 May (GG) but these were not seen subsequently.

At the coast, 6 Burghead Bay 29 Jul, 3 there 23 Aug and 1 past Lossiemouth 31 Jul.

Only small number seen in spring when best counts were 15 Spey Bay (off Lein) 10 Apr and 10 Burghead Bay 26 Apr.

Best monthly counts offshore in each winter period were:

	Jan	Feb	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn-Delnies</b>	1	nc	nc	nc	2	0
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	9	nc	nc	11	10	8
<b>Burghead Bay</b>	2	1	5	4	2	2
<b>Spey Bay</b>	nc	7	6	12	3	14

nc = no count received

As usual, only a few were found along rocky coasts away from the shallow bays, e.g. 4 Burghead-Hopeman 31 March, 4 Covesea 20 Dec, 2 Portgordon-Strathlene 12 Dec and 1 Portknockie 17 Jan.

### **Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica*

*Rare breeder. Scarce autumn and winter visitor offshore.*

As usual, most were to be found in Burghead Bay. Monthly maxima here were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	0	1	78	28	0	0	0	2	11	3	1

It has become apparent in recent years that a significant build-up takes place in spring in the western sector of Burghead Bay. Numbers present in 2004 were however unprecedented, peaking at 78 on 11 Apr and at least 28 on 9 May (DMP).

Other records were 1 Covesea 20 Dec, 3 Kingston 27 March (2 there 10 Apr), 1 Lossiemouth 25 Jan, 1 Portknockie 20 Apr and 1 Spey Bay 31 Aug.

### **Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer***

*Scarce visitor offshore.*

Reports of 3 or more together were 5 Findhorn 11 Apr (DMP), 3 Nairn 21 Jan (DB), 3 Culbin Bar 30 Jan (DB) and 3 Spey Bay 2 Feb (DB).

Otherwise 19 reports of 1-2 at eight coastal localities between Oct-early May.

### **Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

*Scarce breeder, scarce on the estuaries in winter.*

Mid-winter: In January and December inland reports were 1 Loch Flemington 25 Jan, 1 Loch Oire 15 Jan and 2 Sanquhar Loch 15 Jan. In the absence of ice, Loch na Bo has become a more regular mid-winter site and in Jan 2004 several were present all month, peaking with as many as 11 on 6 Jan (JDHM). There were also up to 5 there in December.

Present in spring/summer (*italics* = proved breeding) at Altyre, *Cloddach quarry (2 pairs)*, *Fochabers Lake*, *Garmouth pond*, *Inchstelly*, Loch Belivat, Loch Flemington, *Loch Loy (2 pairs)*, Loch na Bo, *Loch of Blairs*, *Loch Oire (3 pairs)*, *Loch Spynie*, Lossie Forest (south pool), Newton of Dalvey, Stoneyford Pond (Rafford) and *Windyridge*.

Best post-breeding congregations in late summer/autumn were at Loch na Bo (max 21 on 18 Sep and 4 Oct) and Loch Spynie (max 19 on 4 Sep). Also 6 Loch Park 26 Sep.

Coastal in winter: 9 Binsness 22 Feb and 12 Dec with smaller numbers throughout winter. Elsewhere, 2 Kingston 3 Jan and 26-30 Dec, 1 Lossie estuary 20-31 Dec (2 on 31 Dec) and 1-2 Nairn harbour in all winter months.

### **Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus***

*Rare breeder and very scarce offshore in autumn and winter.*

One Loch Spynie 11-14 Jan (many obs.) was the only record of the year.

### **Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegina***

*Very scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

Most records in Burghead Bay where seen on 29 Sep (4), 11 Oct (2), 20 Nov, 1 Dec and 12 Dec (AJL,SE,AJ). Also 2 Nairn 27 Jan (RPC), 1 Binsness 25 Nov (JDHM) and 1 Nairn Bar 4 Jan (AJL).

### **Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus***

*Rare breeder. Scarce offshore in winter.*

Breeding: 9 territorial pairs is one more than in 2003 but the continued dependence of the species on one main site remains a concern, as does the poor breeding success.

Site 1 - One bird 31 May-5 Jun.

Site 2 - First one back 21 Mar, 3 pairs by 1 Apr. Eight pairs were present – the best ever. Three pairs were successful, raising broods of 2, 2 and 3 young. Last bird seen 14 Oct.

Site 4 - One pair present in May-June but not successful.

Site 8 - One bird 23 Apr-9 Jun

Coastal: Monthly maxima in Burghead Bay were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
11 (22 <sup>nd</sup> )	5 (20 <sup>th</sup> )	5 (4 <sup>th</sup> )	3 (6 <sup>th</sup> )	6 (29 <sup>th</sup> )	12 (10 <sup>th</sup> )	3 (25 <sup>th</sup> )	10 (1 <sup>st</sup> )

(AJL et al.)

Elsewhere, 1 Burghead –Hopeman 22 Jan (DB), 1 Findochty harbour 10 Oct (MJHC), 1 Nairn 21 Jan (DB), 3 Spey Bay 2 Feb (DB) (2 there 27 Mar (TF)) and, off Nairn Bar, 1 on 4 Jan, 2 on 25 Jan, 3 on 30 Jan, 2 on 15 Oct, 1 on 23 Nov and 1 on 21 Dec (DB,AJL,ID,DJ,AL). Very curiously, 1 on a runway at RAF Kinloss 24 Nov (AJL).



Slavonian Grebe, Moray 24 Apr 2004 (© Duncan Gibson)

### **Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis***

*Common breeder, very common offshore.*

Breeding: no records were received this year.

Passage: no substantial passage was noted.

Peak counts were off Lossiemouth, around the outflow in the spring, where 300 on 28 Mar and 470 on 15 Apr (JDHM).

### **Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus***

*Scarce offshore in summer and autumn.*

Only 21 birds noted, making this a poor year. All records were from Lossiemouth, where peak counts were 8 flying east on 23 Jun and 4 west, 2 east on 12 Sep (RP). One bird was found in a lobster creel at Lossiemouth Harbour and released alive on 29 Sep (DAG).

**Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus***

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

One bird flying west past Kingston on the 10 Jul (AJ) was the only record.

**Gannet *Morus bassanus***

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

Only small numbers noted offshore this year. Peak autumn counts were 144 past Lossiemouth Pier in 1 hour on 1 Aug, 96 east past Portknockie 7 Aug and 78 off Culbin Bar 15 Oct.

**Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo***

*Scarce resident and common winter visitor.*

Breeding: No records were received.

Most numerous during the year at Halliman Skerries, with peak counts of 27 on 30 Jan, 44 on 20 Aug and 57 on 20 Sep. Along the Buckie foreshore between Portgordon and Strathlene monthly maxima were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
25	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	69	52	35	51

Inland, monthly maxima at Loch Spynie were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
11	12	10	4	0	0	3	5	2	5	7	8

Unusually numerous there early in the year. Birds showing characteristics of the continental race *P.c.sinensis* were again at the loch throughout the year, and the same individuals are likely to be involved. Single birds were present on 11 Jan, 5 Mar, 1 Aug, 15 Aug, 20 Aug, 8 Oct and 18 Oct with 2 individuals on 17 Nov, 18 Nov and 23 Nov (RP, AJ).

Elsewhere, inland birds (singles unless stated, were seen on the Spey between Carron-Craigellachie (Jan, Feb, Dec), Cloddach quarry (Jan,Mar), Newmill (Auldearn) (Aug), Gilston (often 1-2 in winter months, 3 on 2 Apr), Loch Flemington (2 on 19 Apr), Loch na Bo (often 1-2 in winter, 3 on 23-29 Dec), Loch Oire (Dec), Mundole (Jan) and Windyridge (Apr, Nov).

**Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis***

*Scarce breeder and common visitor, chiefly in winter.*

Breeding: Another small increase on the Portknockie cliffs with 47 occupied nests on 4 Jul (43 in 2003, 40 in 2002 and 31 in 2001). Ten occupied nests at Covesea on 13 Jun (up from 5 in 2003) and 7 nests on the stack at Tronach Head (up from 5 in 2003) (all counts MJHC).

Winter counts: In the first winter period, peak count was 966 coming to roost on Bow Fiddle Rock (Portknockie) on 17 Jan. The second winter period saw counts of 240 on 5 Dec and an exceptional 2010 on 30 Dec roosting at Bow Fiddle Rock (MJHC), the most since 1991 when 2084 roosted on 15 Jan.

**Bittern *Botaurus stellaris***

*Rare visitor.*

1 Loch Flemington 2 Feb (DB) was seen on the ground in the Nairn section of the loch surrounds, unlike the Jan 2003 bird which remained within Highland recording area. This is the fourth 'modern' record in Moray & Nairn, following single birds at Loch Park in Feb-Mar 1964, Loch Spynie in Jan 1985 and Cairnfield near Buckie in March 1996.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea****Scarce resident breeder.*

Heronries: Numbers of occupied nests were 3 Aberlour (AE,IP), 1 Auchbreck (IP), 3 Connage (MJHC), 7 Nether Dallachy (MJHC), 12 Loch Spynie (MJHC), 23 Binsness (in 3 groups of 15, 5 and 3) (IP), 2 Balnellan (Cragganmore) (IP), 23 Low Wood (Kingsteps) (IP), 5 Hillockhead (Keith) (IP) and 8 Kinermory (IP).

The Claggan (Elchies) site was deserted following the felling of the trees.

Monthly maxima on Lossie estuary were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	nc	2	1	nc	nc	8	9	8	5	7	4

Other counts of 5 or more together (away from heronries) were 7 Findhorn Bay 17 Oct with 8 there 12 Dec, 7 River Findhorn near Forres 8 Apr, 9 Kingston 5 July and 10 Aug, 5 Loch Flemington 22 Feb and 11 Loch Loy 12 Feb. At Burghead, 1 on the rocky shore 27 Apr and 1 flying east well offshore 30 Jul. Three flying over Portknockie 12 Feb and 14 Aug.

**Mute Swan *Cygnus olor****Scarce resident breeder and short-distance migrant. Common in winter.*

Breeding: A total of 25 pairs were reported apparently occupying territories. Of these, 13 produced 67 young; the majority of which appear to have fledged. A good breeding season, the mean number fledged has only been exceeded in recent years in 1992.

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

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Pairs</b>	14	10	14	16	15	15	15	12	17	11	13
<b>Young fledged</b>	61	24	35	50	31	68	51	54	56	52	67
<b>Mean</b>	4.4	2.4	2.5	3.1	2.1	4.5	3.4	4.5	3.3	4.7	5.2

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Loch Flemington</b>	8	5	nc			Breeders			nc	7	nc	4
<b>Loch Loy</b>	5	23	26	8	nc	2	2	nc	2	1	2	nc
<b>Findhorn</b>	10	6	4	nc	34	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3
<b>Lossie estuary</b>	3	2	3	2	15	0	2	2	0	3	4	5
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	74	76	52			Breeders			19	56	41	55
<b>Cloddach quarry</b>	13	nc	4			Breeders			5	nc	2	nc
<b>Kingston</b>	4	nc	nc			Breeders			nc	nc	nc	1

Good numbers at Loch Spynie reported for the second consecutive year, particularly from the early period. Regular high counts have not occurred here since the 1960s and 1970s when counts of over 100 were common. The maximum was 148 on 22 Dec 1973.

Non-breeding flocks were counted at Nairn (max. 30 Mar-May), Findhorn Bay (34 on 21 & 24 May) and Kingston (15 on 5 Jul). Unusual records included 5 Burghead Bay 15 Jan flying along the shore and 8 (7 ads, 1 1<sup>st</sup>-y) Milton Brodie 20 Oct on a flooded field.

**Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus***

*Common migrant and winter visitor.*

Winter-spring: In Nairn District, 5 sites were used; Loch Flemington (present from 25 Jan-25 Mar; max. 4), Nairn estuary (1 for 2-3 weeks in Jan), Loch Loy (present from 12 Feb-21 Mar; max. 12), Galford (6 on 5 Mar) and Penick (4 on 10 Mar). The last two sites are in the Auldearn area and probably relate to part of the same flock.

In Moray, flocks were present at 11 sites, all were groups of less than 10 except 12 Burghead Bay 14 Jan and 11 Salterhill 7 Feb.

Summer: No summer records were reported this year.

Autumn: First flock seen at Loch Spynie was 7 on 22 Sep, followed by 2 on 28 Sep at the Lein, Kingston. Two flocks arrived on 7 October: 5 Miltonduff and 6 Loch Spynie. Later in the month 10 flocks arrived, the largest of which were 20 Findhorn Bay 19<sup>th</sup> (25 on 26<sup>th</sup>) and 50 Milton of Grange 24<sup>th</sup>. In November, flocks with 10 or more individuals were seen at 10 sites: 78 Bogmoor 5<sup>th</sup>, 13 Clochan 7<sup>th</sup>, 29 Loch Spynie 7<sup>th</sup>, 45 Mill of Grange, Forres 8<sup>th</sup>, 35 Salterhill 9<sup>th</sup>, 57 Invererne, Forres 10<sup>th</sup>, 70 Netherton 11<sup>th</sup>, 24 Duffus Castle 13<sup>th</sup>, 38 Mid Mains 15<sup>th</sup> and 13 East Grange 29<sup>th</sup>.

Winter (December): In Nairn District, 2 sites held flocks; Loch Flemington (2 on 9<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>) and Loch Loy (max. 9 on 31<sup>st</sup>). In Moray, several flocks were reported from the Kinloss area: East Grange (max. 5 on 7<sup>th</sup>), RAF Kinloss (17 on 13<sup>th</sup>), Hatton (15<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>, max. 33 on 22<sup>nd</sup>) and Roseisle (max. 29 on 18<sup>th</sup>). Elsewhere in Moray seen at 3 sites: Loch Spynie (max. 25 on 12<sup>th</sup>), Gilston (14<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>, max. 24 on 19<sup>th</sup>) and Broom of Moy (4 on 18<sup>th</sup>). Migrating flocks in December included 10 in off the sea on 11<sup>th</sup> at Lossiemouth and 26 flying west on 12<sup>th</sup> at Culbin Bar.



Whooper Swans, Loch Spynie 2004 (© Andy Jensen)

**Bean Goose *Anser fabalis***

*Rare winter visitor.*

Two were seen on 15 Oct at Culbin Bar (DJa, AY). This is the 11<sup>th</sup> record for Moray since 1970.

**Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus***

*Common migrant, increasing in winter.*

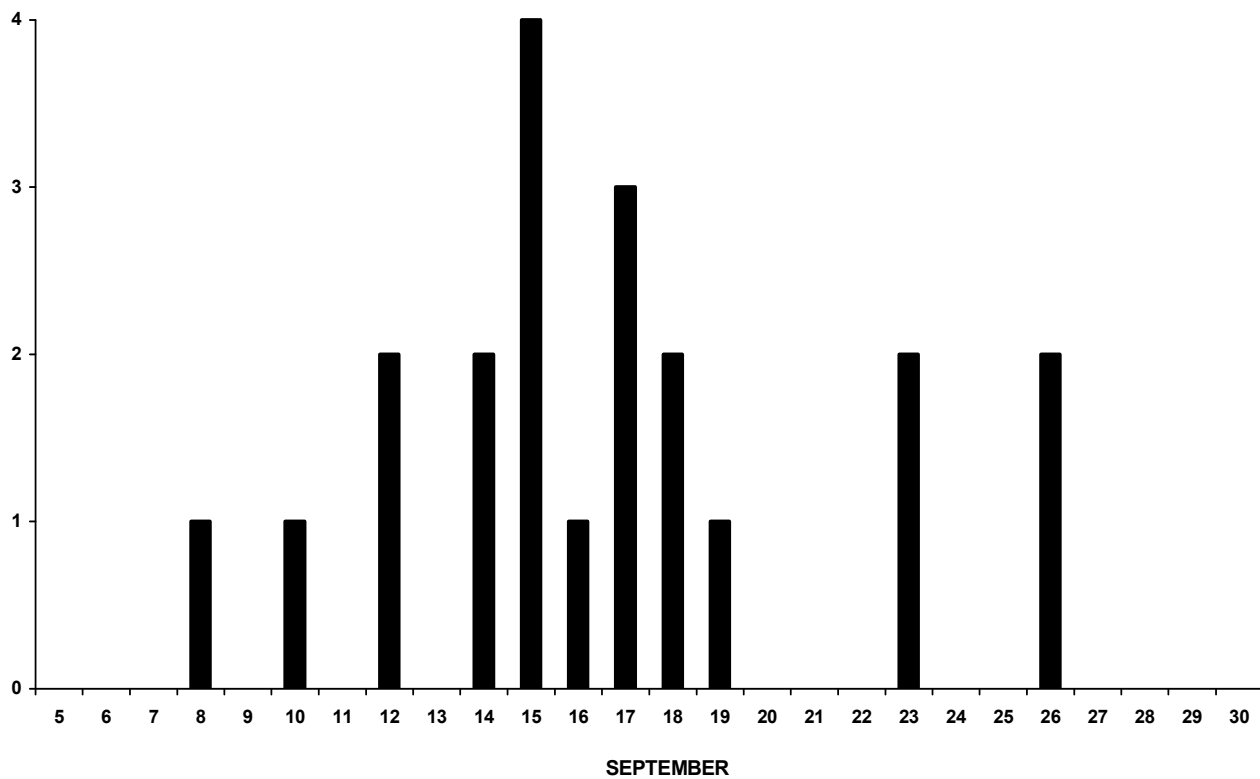
Winter (January-mid March): The only flock from Nairn District involved 11 Nairn Bar 25 Jan. In Moray large numbers were frequently reported. Flocks over 1000 included: 5000 Miltonhill 11 Jan, 4600 Burgie 10 Mar, 2500 York Tower 14 Mar (also 2000 on 22 Feb) and 1200 Cloddach quarry 7 Mar.

Spring passage: Migration was recorded from Ben Aigan (50 north-west on 11 Apr, with several flocks north-west on 12, 13 & 16 Apr) and 90 west Lower Bogrotten 25 Apr. The largest flock was 9000 roosting at Findhorn Bay 15 Apr. The only sizeable flock in May was 250 Findhorn Bay on 1<sup>st</sup>.

Summer: 1 Kingston 5 Jul-5 Sep.

Autumn: The first flocks were seen flying inland over Ben Aigan (but not counted) on 17 Sep.

Frequency of arrival dates for first autumn flocks 1985-2004:



A single was present on Loch na Bo 18 Sep. A further 18 flocks reported during the period 20-30 Sep, consisting of small skeins (largest 258 Kinloss on 24<sup>th</sup> and 254 flying south east on 29<sup>th</sup>). Main arrival in October: the largest count was 18000 Findhorn Bay 17 Oct. Other flocks consisting of 5000 or over were seen at Miltonhill (8000 on 10<sup>th</sup>), Calcots (5000 on 23<sup>rd</sup>) and Darkland (5000 on 30<sup>th</sup>).

No large counts from Loch Spynie during this period, though substantial roost counts in November:

November		
7 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>
14000	27000	2700

Winter: More large flocks are being reported during this period; 10000 Barmuckity 27 Nov (2000 there 28 Dec), 12000 Miltonhill 15 Nov, 10000 Westerfolds 6 Dec, 8000 Salterhill 9 Nov, 5000 Upper Unthank 16 Nov, 4000 Miltonduff 7 Nov and 2800 Lein, Kingston 30 Nov.

Interestingly, two records of orange-legged individuals: 2 Muiryhall, Miltonduff 1 Mar and 1 Burgie 10 Mar (RFH).

### **White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons***

*Scarce winter visitor.*

The first record of the European race *A.a.albifrons* since 1967 occurred at Windyridge 14 Mar (DAG), what was presumably the same individual returning was seen later in the year at Wester Coltfoot 9-10 Oct (RFH, RP) and Barmuckity 15 Nov (RFH). The 1967 individual was seen near Lhanbryde on 30 Dec. Prior to this small numbers may have wintered in the Districts in the 1930s, as this race was common in Tayside.

Records of the Greenland race *A.a.flavirostris* increased slightly, though numbers still remain low compared to the mid-1990s.

Winter-Spring: A welcome return to a series of multiple records from the Loch Spynie/Windyridge/Duffus area; 2 Wester Unthank 16 Feb, 2 Broomhill, Duffus 18 Feb and 4-5 Loch Spynie/Windyridge 8 Mar-13 Apr. Elsewhere, 1 Woodside, Newton 12 Jan & 13 Feb, 2 Middlefield, Forres 3 Feb, 1 Miltonhill 17 Apr and 1 west Portknockie 17 Apr.

Autumn: The only record was 1 Loch Spynie 19 Oct (RFH).

Winter: 2 Mid Mains, Elgin 14 Nov, with singles there on 12 Nov and Wester Manbeen 27 Nov (RFH).

### **Greylag Goose *Anser anser***

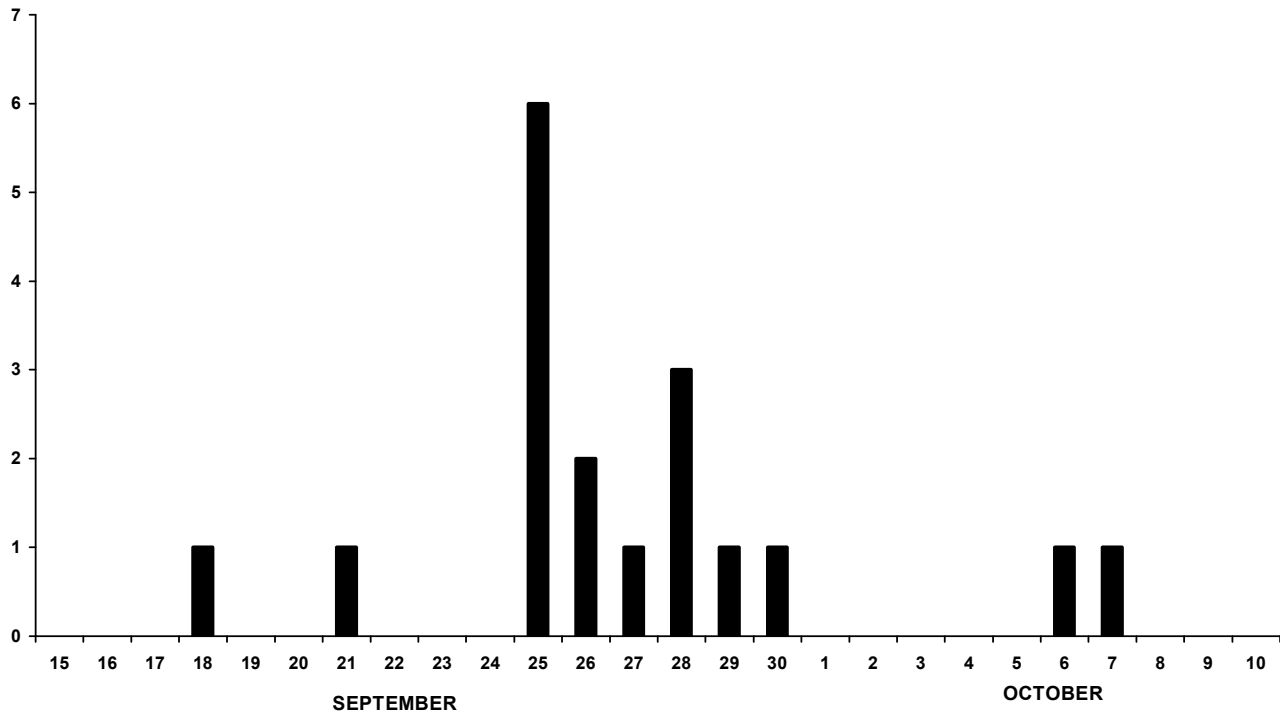
*Common winter visitor.*

Winter-Spring: Flocks containing 500 or more birds were recorded at 4 sites (max. counts only): 1600 Cloddach quarry 2 Jan, 800 Newton 14 Jan, 700 Roseisle 20 Feb and 1200 Windyridge 29 Feb.

Summer: Breeding occurred again at Lochindorb; 6 pairs with 18 young seen on 12 May, increasing to 80+ adults, 30+ young on 28 May (GG, VW). No breakdown of ages on 27 Jul, but 208 present (ISS). This is the 6<sup>th</sup> year since 1998 that breeding has been confirmed at Lochindorb. Elsewhere, singles or small groups were recorded at 2 sites: 1 Kingston 18 May-2 Oct and 5 Loch Spynie 3 Jul (1-4 present from 4 Jul-21 Aug).

Autumn: First flock was 10 Loch of Blairs 25 Sep. Recorded from 6 sites in mid-late October, though generally small groups. Flocks over 100 included 600 Windyridge 14 Oct, 178 Findhorn Bay 17 Oct and 4000 Loch Spynie 21 Oct.

Frequency of arrival dates for first autumn flocks 1985-2004:



Winter flocks over 500 occurred at 4 sites; 2000 Bogmoor 5 Nov, 1100 Findhorn Bay 14 Nov, 1000 Westerfolds 14 Nov and 500 Manbeen 28 Nov.

Numbers at the Spynie roost decreased quickly over two weeks:

November		
7 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>
2500	2000	600

**Canada Goose *Branta canadensis***

*Scarce migrant in summer, rare in winter.*

Winter-Spring: A single was present at Coltfoot 2 & 6 Jan and Middlefield 3 Feb (RFH). This was presumably the same bird.

Summer-early autumn: Migrants from the Beaully Firth moult area included 11 Miltonduff 10 Jun (DAG, CAG) and 6 Findhorn Bay 3 & 5 Aug (GG, ISS), 2 there 5 Sep (DMP), increasing to 9 on 12 Sep (ISS).

Winter: The only record concerned a single at Duffus Castle 13 Nov (CAG).

**Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis***

*Scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

Winter-spring: Seen at 6 sites, though only 2 main areas used. Therefore, some sightings will probably relate to the same birds:

Coltfield area – present from 1 Jan-15 Apr, max. 3 on 1 Jan at Coltfield and 1 Feb Standingstone.

Spynie area – present 24-29 Mar, max. count 5 Loch Spynie on 26 Mar and 5 Spynie canal area on 26-29 Mar.

Autumn: The largest group in October was 34 Miltonhill on 10<sup>th</sup>. Also recorded at Wester Coltfield (15 on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>), Findhorn Bay (6 on 17<sup>th</sup>) and Alves (1 on 27<sup>th</sup>).

Winter: Similar to recent winters with small groups or singles recorded; 4 Alves 5 Nov, 3 Coltfield 6 Dec, 3 Muirton 26 Dec, 2 Lower Hempriggs 27 Dec, and singles Loch Spynie 7 & 13 Nov, Findhorn Bay 14 Nov, Silverhills 14 Nov, Westerfolds 14 Nov, Miltonhill 7 Nov and Mid Mains 15 Nov.

**Brent Goose *Branta bernicla***

*Scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

The majority of records concerned the pale-bellied race *B.b.hrota*.

Winter: The regular wintering group was again present in the Nairn area during Jan-Mar. The maximum count was 27 on 1 Feb from the west beach. The same group was on the Nairn Bar on 25 Jan and 22 Feb when 26 birds were present.

Autumn passage period (Sep-Oct): Passage at the Lossie estuary took place in September; 2 on 14<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 40 on 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 17 on 22<sup>nd</sup> but all gone on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Elsewhere, 14 Findhorn Bay 12 Oct (9 on 17 Oct), 1 Nairn Bar 15 Oct and 24 Nairn (Kingsteps and west beach) 20-24 Oct.

Winter: A single on Nairn Bar 12 Dec and 3 Nairn west beach 24 Dec.

Two records concerned the dark-bellied race *B.b.bernicla*: 1 Burnside, Newton 11 Mar (RFH) and 1 Findhorn Bay 14 Oct (DMP).

**Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea***

*Vagrant or escape.*

Two immatures were seen at Kingston 6 Jul (RP, DAG). These are probably the same birds seen at Loch of Strathbeg and Ythan estuary earlier the same day. This is the 14<sup>th</sup> record (involving a minimum of 30 birds) for Moray. The only record for Nairn District involves a pair at Auldearn in 1987.



Ruddy Shelduck, Kingston 6 July 2004 (© Duncan Gibson)

**Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna***

*Numerous spring and summer visitor and breeder.*

Breeding: A brood of 6 was seen in Findhorn Bay 20 Aug. Two pairs were prospecting burrows at Tarras 24 Apr, with another 2 pairs in a suitable breeding area at Newton of Struthers 9 May.

Best monthly counts at coastal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	101	120	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	0	nc	22
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	8	75	152	8	8	94	nc	1	7	0	7	0
<b>Lossie estuary</b>	3	10	6	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Kingston</b>	2	nc	13	nc	18	nc	5	2	0	0	nc	nc

Inland: Seen at Cairnfield (3 on 1 May), Coltfoot (2 on 26 Mar & 3 Apr), Loch Spynie (1 on 17 Feb), Montgrew (8 on 24 Mar), Rafford (2 on 17 May) and Roseisle (present 26 Mar-13 Apr, max. 13 on 6 Apr).

**Mandarin *Aix galericulata***

*Escape or feral origin.*

Regular in Elgin since 2002: 3 males seen on the Cooper Park pond 24 May and 11 Jul (AJ, AJL), and a single on 16 Oct (JDHM). More unusual was a single male in the Garmouth viaduct – Tugnet area on four dates 20 May-23 Oct (TF, AJ, SE, CAG).

**Wigeon *Anas penelope***

*Common winter visitor and scarce breeder.*

Breeding: Five were seen in the west Moray stronghold, including a female with 2 young on 27 Jul (ISS).

Non-breeders in summer (May-Jul): At Loch Spynie regular counts throughout Jun-Jul, max. 16 on the loch 16 & 29 Jul, and interestingly 10 in the palace reedbeds 11 Jul. Also 2M Lossie estuary 8 Jun and 7 Kingston 5 Jul.

Winter: Monthly maximum counts at main coastal sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	366	358	nc	nc	nc	nc	567	nc	818		
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	2716	2505	nc	nc	nc	nc	1209	250	907		
<b>Lossie estuary</b>	300	2085	959	1	370	1117	2231	3158			
<b>Kingston</b>	410	nc	nc	11	106	450	nc	335			

The 'white-headed' female was present for its 4<sup>th</sup> winter at the Lossie estuary, it also visited Loch Spynie on 21 & 23 Jan.

On freshwater:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Loch Flemington</b>	321	401	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	nc	470
<b>Loch Loy</b>	nc	470	520	47	nc	nc	1	16	33
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	2000	520	380	15	20	153	2300	280	480
<b>Cloddach quarry</b>	278	nc	30	nc	nc	1	nc	285	nc
<b>Loch Oire</b>	59	nc	nc	nv	nc	52	98	64	26
<b>Loch na Bo</b>	154	72	101	nc	nc	nc	9	269	260

Maximum counts (over 100) at inland sites included; 320 Miltonduff distillery 2 Jan, 550 Tarras 11 Feb, 240 Gilston 6 Mar, 490 Hillhead, Forres 27 Mar and 420 Miltonhill 19 Oct

### **[Chiloe Wigeon *Anas sibilatrix***

*Escape.*

An adult male was on Loch Spynie on 7-8 Jul (CAG) and was then located with the Mallard flock at Kingston from 10 Jul until the end of the year (AJ,MJHC,RP et al.). Another was at Cloddach quarry between 2 May-18 Sep (DAG, CAG et al.). A Chiloe Wigeon amongst the Eurasian Wigeon flock at the Lossie estuary on 25-26 Sep (RP,CAG) was a first winter bird so at least three individuals were at large in Moray in 2004.]

### **Gadwall *Anas strepera***

*Scarce visitor.*

The stronghold for this species continues to be Loch Spynie, recorded regularly here from 25 Apr-24 Oct. Maximum count was 1M, 2FF on 25 Apr (HF, EH), otherwise mainly singles recorded. Elsewhere, a male Loch Loy 8 Jan (JDHM).

### **Teal *Anas crecca***

*Scarce breeder and common winter visitor.*

Breeding: Confirmed at Muckle Fergie Burn where a brood of ducklings were seen on 12 Jun (MJHC).

Potential breeding sites occupied during the breeding season included Cloddach quarry, Kingston, Loch Spynie, Lochs of Allt na Craoibhe-caorainn, Lossie Forest, Miltonduff and Rafford.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Loch Flemington</b>	4	12	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	nc	20
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	290	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	0	nc	113
<b>Loch Loy</b>	nc	88	36	8	nc	nc	nc	31	nc
<b>Loch of Blairs</b>	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	9	26	128
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	150	1950	nc	nc	nc	nc	950	nc	975
<b>Tarras</b>	124	76	26	6	nc	nc	72	nc	nc
<b>Lossie estuary</b>	0	0	30	0	0	8	8	0	20
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	580	nc	12	6	4	2	300	280	60
<b>Spynie Canal</b>	14	nc	86	34	nc	46	87	104	530
<b>Gilston</b>	152	258	72	5	nc	nc	nc	100	nc

<b>Cloddach quarry</b>	240	nc	40	24	7	14	nc	74	nc
<b>Loch Oire</b>	0	4	2	nc	nc	5	1	43	15
<b>Loch na Bo</b>	0	6	8	5	nc	0	0	0	0
<b>Kingston</b>	nc	nc	nc	20	90	60	470	nc	344

Numbers at Findhorn Bay continue to increase, with counts over 200 now regular since 1999. The Feb count is the highest to be recorded from there. Although much lower at Lossie estuary, numbers here have increased steadily since 1999.

Other sites holding over 50 birds were: Cran Loch (71 on 12 Jan), Tugnet (85 on 18 Sep) and the Lein, Kingston (80 flying over on 24 Nov).

### **Green-winged Teal** *Anas carolinensis*

*Vagrant.*

Seen annually since the first record in 2000.

Culbin Bar – a male on 4 Jan (CAG, DAG, AJL).

Loch Spynie – Two males present on 9 Jan (CAG), otherwise only a single reported from 10-14 Jan (many obs.). Details of these records have not yet been submitted to Moray & Nairn Rarities Committee.

These constitute the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> records, though the Spynie birds could be returning individuals.

### **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

*Numerous resident breeder and common winter visitor.*

Breeding: The mean brood size from 26 broods was 5.5 chicks. Well away from the coastal strip, broods were seen at Ben Aigan (on a garden pool) and Dufftown (distillery pool). A potential breeding site involved a record from the Cabrach.

Best monthly flocks in regularly counted areas were:

Freshwater:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Loch Flemington</b>	97	67	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	18	nc	17
<b>Loch Loy</b>	nc	31	28	26	nc	21	nc	nc	40	62	20	4
<b>Auldearn reservoir</b>	nc	36	4	6	nc	nc	nc	6	nc	64	nc	nc
<b>Brodie Castle</b>	50	28	30	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	86	nc	nc
<b>Loch of Blairs</b>	41	42	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	36	64	54	55
<b>Gilston</b>	nc	28	24	nc	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	40	24
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	279	35	4	nc	nc	108	532	298	12	90	100	14
<b>Windyridge</b>	62	28	nc	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	40	53	nc
<b>Cloddach quarry</b>	44	nc	20	nc	nc	nc	34	206	85	nc	85	nc
<b>Loch Oire</b>	36	99	14	13	8	12	24	31	34	25	nc	76
<b>Loch na Bo</b>	356	156	84	18	9	8	28	nc	29	34	70	87
<b>Fochabers Lake</b>	nc	nc	28	nc	nc	nc	nc	54	nc	67	92	nc

Other freshwater sites holding more than 50 birds were: Sanquhar Loch (Forres) (92 on 9 Jan), Cran Loch (92 on 12 Jan) and Glenfiddich Distillery pond (Dufftown) (59 on 1 Mar).

Sites used well inland in the early part of the year were: Garline (1M on 19 Jan, and a pair on 4 Feb), Rothes (2M, 2F on 10 Feb and 15M, 11F on 16 Feb) on small pools in flooded fields.

Coastal sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	27	62	nc					nc	nc	67	nc	2
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	120	265	nc					nc	nc	265	180	335
<b>Burghead Bay</b>	281	175	85					nc	nc	nc	188	nc
<b>Lossie estuary</b>	10	12	22					11	13	6	0	25
<b>Kingston</b>	65	nc	nc					60	65	62	nc	85
<b>Portgordon</b>	nc	36	14					4	5	nc	28	38

Other coastal sites holding more than 50 birds were: Strathlene (139 on 25 Jan) and Nairn (59 on 1 Oct).

### **Pintail** *Anas acuta*

*Scarce winter visitor and migrant. Has bred.*

Present at 10 sites.

Nairn Bar: 8 on 4 Jan (AJL), 6 on 15 Oct and 7 on 12 Dec (DJa).

Culbin Bar: 6 on 4 Jan (CAG).

Loch Loy: 2M, 1F on 12 Feb, otherwise 1M on 5 Mar and 10 Jun (JDHM).

Findhorn Bay: Max. 11 on 22 Feb (CD). Otherwise, 9 on 25 Jan (CD), 4 on 31 Jan (EH), pair on 16 May (DMP), 1F on 4 Sep (DMP) and a pair on 14 Oct (DMP, AJL).

Burghead Bay: 10 on 21 Jan (AJL).

Loch Spynie: Present from 10 Jan-15 Apr, max. 3M, 2F on 7 Feb (DAG). Later in the year present from 18 Oct-25 Dec, max. 2M, 1F on 19 Dec (DAG).

Lossie estuary: 2F on 2 Oct, and 1F on 10 Oct and 17 Nov (RP).

Loch na Bo: 1F on 9 Dec (JDHM).

Fochabers Lake: 1M present on 10 & 13 Nov (JDHM).

Portgordon: 1F was again present with Mallards at the mouth of the Gollachy Burn on 11 Oct and 12 Dec (MJHC). This individual has returned to this site for three successive years.

### **Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

*Rare breeder and scarce migrant.*

Best monthly counts at Loch Spynie for each sex are given below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Males</b>	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Females</b>	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
<b>Sex?</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Max. total</b>	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0

Numbers at Loch Spynie appear to have started to decline from 1994, though very low numbers have been apparent since 1998 when many months can be without any records.

Elsewhere, 4 on a flooded field at Hillhead (Forres) 16 Feb, dropping to 1 on 6 Mar.

**Pochard *Aythya ferina***

*Common winter visitor and occasional breeder.*

Maximum monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	11	10	7	2	1	nc	4	1	nc	7	17	10
<b>Cloddach quarry</b>	2	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	nc
<b>Loch na Bo</b>	3	2	7	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1

Winter maxima at Loch Spynie since 1987 are given below:

1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
33	54	58	36	65	65	99	56	64
1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
33	17	36	69	61	27	66	17	17

Elsewhere, singles seen at Loch Flemington 15 Oct, Gilston 30 Nov and Loch Oire 12 Jul.

**Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris***

*Vagrant.*

A female was present on Loch Spynie from 4-25 Apr (AJ *et al.*). This is the third record for the Districts following a male on the Dava lochans 5-6 Jun 1999 and a female on Loch Oire 16-20 Nov (then Loch na Bo 21-23 Nov) 2003.

**Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligala***

*Scarce breeder and common winter visitor.*

Breeding: The mean brood size from 13 broods was 5.5 chicks. Broods were seen at Auldearn reservoir, Cloddach quarry and Loch Spynie.

Other records during summer months were from Fochabers Lake, Kingston, Loch Loy, Loch na Bo, Loch Oire and Rafford.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Loch Flemington</b>	18	22	nc	10	nc	nc	nc	25	nc	13	nc	21
<b>Brodie Castle</b>	4	12	8	6	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	16	7	6
<b>Loch Loy</b>	7	2	23	40	nc	2	nc	nc	nc	13	5	11
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	118	24	52	72	60	30	54	107	57	84	160	29
<b>Cloddach quarry</b>	16	41	31	22	nc	nc	86	16	13	nc	23	nc
<b>Cooper Park</b>	19	27	21	11	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	21	10	44
<b>Loch na Bo</b>	120	135	120	23	nc	2	nc	nc	61	35	34	40
<b>Loch Oire</b>	16	nc	37	81	15	34	39	4	52	19	12	8
<b>Kingston</b>	1	nc	nc	8	2	nc	11	1	15	1	nc	nc
<b>Fochabers Lake</b>	22	5	3	nc	nc	2	nc	nc	nc	9	13	nc

Regular counts at the Cooper Park pond, Elgin have shown a steady increase over recent years. Similarly the very high counts at Loch na Bo in Jan-Mar are unprecedented at this site.

Maximum counts exceeding 10 individuals only occurred at one other site: 12 Miltonduff distillery 2 Jan.

### **Scaup *Aythya marila***

*Scarce winter visitor.*

Summer: A pair at Kingston 17 Jun (CAG).

Inland records: 1F Miltonduff distillery pond 2 Jan (MJHC), 1F Loch Spynie 15 Feb (DAG) and 2F Loch na Bo 21 Mar (AJ) and 1F there 27 Mar (AJ, MJHC).

Coastal records: 1 Nairn Bar 25 Jan (ID) and 10 there 15 Oct (DJa, AL). In Nov however, numbers at Nairn quickly increased to 130 (16<sup>th</sup>) and 120 (23<sup>rd</sup>) off Kingsteps. This increased further to 218 on 12 & 21 Dec (DJa, ID): this is the largest count recorded since the 1970s when 600+ occurred in Spey Bay (Jan 1979) and 400 off Findhorn (Dec 1972). Typically, much smaller numbers were recorded elsewhere: 2M Burghead Bay (off Roseisle) 4 Jan (DMP), 1F Burghead Bay 29 Sep (AJL), 5F Lossiemouth 12 & 16 Mar (EH, SE) and 1F Kingston 15 Sep (MJHC).

### **Eider *Somateria mollissima***

*Scarce breeder, common offshore.*

Breeding: Another 'decline' (at least in reporting) with only 3 broods reported, of which the mean brood size was 2.3 chicks.

Mean number of chicks calculated from distinct broods 1994-2004:

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Broods</b>	5	9	8	19	16	10	9	8	12	5	3
<b>Mean</b>	3.0	3.3	3.9	3.2	3.4	2.1	3.2	2.4	2.9	2.4	2.3

Counts of 100+ were 1400 Covesea 5 Nov, 1094 Burghead-Hopeman 22 Jan, 412 Burghead 23 Jan, 200 Burghead Bay 29 Jul and 100 Spey Bay 2 Feb.

### **Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis***

*Common winter visitor offshore.*

One summer record of a female at Kingston 5 Jul.

Maximum monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn Bar</b>	420	1620	nc	nc	65	512	394
<b>Culbin Bar</b>	335	155	nc	nc	5	88	540
<b>Burghead Bay</b>	468	10	12	nc	2	1375	2097
<b>Burghead</b>	2126	700	2070	850	300	849	2205
<b>Cummingston-Hopeman</b>	250	570	nc	nc	nc	15	142

Other sites holding over 100 birds included 200 Findhorn Bay 12 Dec, 103 Covesea 20 Dec and 310 Spey Bay 20 Dec.

The only inland record was 1F Loch Spynie 17 Oct.

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

Maximum counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn Bar</b>	3790	4277	nc	nc	nc	2895	1185	780
<b>Culbin Bar</b>	490	2600	nc	nc	nc	41	824	2850
<b>Burghead Bay</b>	497	nc	80	nc	620	750	150	95
<b>Burghead</b>	205	280	nc	nc	nc	100	6	41
<b>Cummingston-Hopeman</b>	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	33	171

The only other large count was 2210 Spey Bay 2 Feb.

**Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata****Rare, but regular, visitor.*

Several records, involving at least three males, in the Burghead Bay and Nairn/Culbin Bars areas. Females are very unusual although some may be overlooked in large scoter flocks in less than ideal conditions.

Burghead Bay: A single male present from 1 Jan-6 Apr then 22 Oct-19 Dec, seen off Findhorn dunes and off the Roseisle picnic area. A female off the picnic area on 22 Oct (VW) was the first record since 1994.

Nairn/Culbin Bars: Usually singles reported 25 Jan and 18-22 Feb, though 2M seen off Nairn Bar 22 Feb (AL) and 2M off Culbin Bar 12 Dec (AY).

**Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca****Common winter visitor.*

Maximum counts for main areas were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn Bar</b>	535	1200	nc	48	171	63
<b>Culbin Bar</b>	240	550	nc	19	29	650
<b>Burghead Bay</b>	1830	310	800	80	374	461

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

Breeding: No reports from the traditional breeding area received this year.

Inland summer records included: 1M Loch Spynie 4 May-19 Jun (seen displaying - sadly alone - on 27 May).

Maximum counts on most frequented lochs were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Loch Flemington</b>	4	10	nc	4	nc	4	nc	7
<b>Loch Loy</b>	nc	4	6	2	nc	nc	nc	2
<b>Loch of Blairs</b>	22	20	14	7	2	5	4	3
<b>Gilston</b>	nc	1	4	1	nc	nc	1	1
<b>Windyridge</b>	10	2	10	nc	nc	nc	13	3
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	10	10	24	28	3	22	8	11
<b>Cloddach quarry</b>	2	nc	3	nc	0	nc	0	nc
<b>Loch na Bo</b>	20	22	16	11	1	1	8	18
<b>Loch Oire</b>	3	4	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	2

Display amongst groups at Loch Spynie on 20 Feb (full) and 5 Apr (partial).

Other inland winter records were from Miltonduff (1 on 25 Jan) and Aberlour (1 on 3 Feb). Unusually 2 Cooper Park pond (Elgin) 21 Mar.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	7	6	nc	nc	1	nc	25
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	nc	21	nc	nc	0	nc	58
<b>Burghead Bay</b>	18	1	2	4	1	2	3
<b>Burghead-Hopeman</b>	9	nc	nc	nc	nc	0	5
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	17	12	4	nc	nc	nc	3
<b>Lossie estuary</b>	5	7	5	0	0	3	4
<b>Kingston/Tugnet</b>	5	nc	21	nc	2	nc	1

Other large coastal counts included: 18 Portgordon 13 Mar and 48 Speymouth 18 Apr.

### **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*

*Scarce local breeder and common visitor.*

Summer: Breeding confirmed at only one site for the fourth consecutive year; a female with a brood of 7 ducklings Binsness 20 Jul (JDHM).

Mean number of chicks calculated from distinct broods 1994-2004:

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Broods</b>	6	9	4	8	7	2	5	3	1	1	1
<b>Mean</b>	7.2	10.6	4.3	7.0	5.6	5.5	7.8	8.7	8.0	7.0	7.0

Display noted on 21 Mar at Tugnet (7M, 9F), 18 Apr at Waterford, Forres (3M, 2F) and 21 Apr at Burghead (3M, 3F).

At the coast in winter:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	15	2	nc	nc	nc	137	19	20
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	19	nc	4
<b>Burghead Bay</b>	10	nc	2	2	24	42	5	6
<b>Burghead</b>	2	2	1	6	nc	1	4	2
<b>Cummingston-Hopeman</b>	10	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	5
<b>Lossie estuary</b>	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Spey Bay</b>	nc	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	23	6
<b>Kingston</b>	6	nc	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

Large counts in May from Burghead Bay (48 on 10<sup>th</sup> and 80 on 19<sup>th</sup>) and the entrance to Findhorn Bay (23 on 2<sup>nd</sup>).

### **Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

*Widespread but scarce breeder.*

Breeding: No breeding attempts were recorded this year.

Birds in potential breeding areas included a pair Findhorn Bay 10 Apr & 2 May, 1M flying up the River Spey at Rothes 1 Mar, 8 Suie (Glenlivet) 18 Jun, 6 Tomintoul 25 Aug and Cawdor Wood 24 May.

Maximum monthly counts at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Cloddach quarry</b>	nc	nc	2	nc	nc	0	0	0	0	nc	0	nc
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	0	0	11	17	29	0	0	0	3	0	1	1
<b>Lossie estuary</b>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	23	22	7	3	1
<b>Speymouth</b>	1	nc	nc	20	66	nc	100	nc	117	nc	nc	nc

Well inland later in the year was 1 Glen Livet 13 Nov.

Peak counts of moulting birds at Speymouth 1986-2004 are:

1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
60	148	87	122	140	10	29	133	192	118
1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
62	125	59	158	93	100	98	108	117	

### **Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*

*Rare visitor.*

A pair was present at Loch Spynie 14-15 May (RS *et al.*), and a single female on 19 Jun (RS). Of the 20 previous records only 5 have involved a stay exceeding two days.

### **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

*Formerly common breeder, now being reintroduced in North Scotland.*

One in central Moray 8 Aug and one in north-east Moray 22 Dec were the only reports.

### **Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

*Very scarce visitor, usually in spring.*

Records from one Moray & Nairn locality between 3 Apr-20 Jun. Elsewhere, 1 male Findhorn Bay 4 May (DMP) and 1 male flying west Kingston 11 Jul (RP).

### **Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*

*Scarce resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor.*

Breeding: Nine pairs were located, all of which bred successfully, fledging 29 young between them at an above average mean of 3.2 young per successful pair (JC).

Records away from breeding areas (ringtails unless stated) were 1 Drum of Carron 6 Feb, 1 male RAF Kinloss 23 Feb and 1 Wester Coltfield 1 Feb.

### **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

*Rare resident breeder.*

Present in at least 7 localities in spring/summer with breeding proved in at least 2.

At other times/localities, 1 Kinloss 1 Mar (AJL), 1 Drybridge 21 Aug (L&RS) and 1 Nairn 27 Oct and 16 Nov.

**Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus***

*Common resident breeder.*

Breeding season (Apr-July) records included birds/pairs at Binsness, Brodie, Broom of Moy, Clochan, Forres, Kinloss, Loch Spynie, Lochindorb, Moidach More and St John's Meads.

Of special interest: 2 killed on successive August days against a conservatory in Cummington, a male in Lossiemouth town centre in Aug-Dec, 1 catching a Redshank on Lossie estuary 4 Sep and 1 flying in off the sea at Nairn 26 Nov.



Sparrowhawk with Redshank prey, Lossie estuary 4 Sept 2004 (© Duncan Gibson)

**Buzzard *Buteo buteo***

*Fairly common resident breeder.*

Now a familiar sight over much of lowland and forested Moray & Nairn. Most reported together were 8 Kinloss 22 March and 8 Ardivot/Salterhill 10 Dec (3 of these were following a plough and catching worms).

**(Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus***

*Rare winter visitor.*

Single birds were reported in Findhorn Bay in May and at Strathavon Lodge in Nov but unfortunately no details have been received of either record.)

**Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos***

*Rare resident breeder.*

The three usual/most recent breeding sites were checked: i) one bird 27 Jun but no sign of any breeding activity, ii) a pair reared two young, iii) no information received. (AE,MJHC).

**Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***

*Scarce summer visitor and breeder.*

First reported Speymouth 3 Apr although birds are likely to have been present a few days earlier at breeding sites. Heavy rain in late June caused the loss of several broods of young. Birds regularly fished the Spey, Lossie and Findhorn estuaries. No later records than 1 Findhorn Bay 12 Sep.

**Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus***

*Widespread but scarce resident breeder.*

Breeding season (April-July) records included birds/pairs at Benrinnes Wood, Binsness, Califer Hill, Covesea, Dava, Elgin (The Wards), Forres, Hillhead (Burgie), Kinloss, Lein (Kingston) and Loch of Blairs. One at Myreside (Elgin) carrying a Feral Pigeon as prey 20 Nov.

**Merlin *Falco columbarius***

*Scarce resident breeder and migrant.*

Breeding: 46 sites were checked; 22 of these were occupied by pairs and one by a single bird. The 22 pairs all laid clutches of which 16 hatched young. Only nine pairs were successful, raising a total of 24 young at a mean of 2.7 young per successful pair and a very poor 1.1 young per laying pair. Spring weather was less mild than in recent seasons leading to fewer pairs laying early. The weather in the hills during late June and early July was very poor with prolonged heavy rain causing the loss of many broods of young, leading to very poor overall breeding success (JC,BC).

Outside the breeding season, single birds were seen in the coastal plain as follows: Covesea 15 Aug, Grange Hall (Kinloss) 5 Feb, Lossie estuary 16 Sep, RAF Lossiemouth 1 Jan, Nairn Bar 15 Oct, Orton 15 Sep, Portknockie 16 Nov, Rafford 11 Feb, Scarffbanks 21 Jan, Tearie 19 Oct and Urquhart 23 Mar.

**Peregrine *Falco peregrinus***

*Scarce resident breeder.*

Breeding: Around 10 pairs are known to have attempted to breed but unfortunately no information was received on breeding success.

In the coastal plain, away from breeding sites, the seasonal distribution of records was:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
6	6	5	2	1	0	1	7	4	5	3	3

20 localities yielded records, with Findhorn Bay and Kinloss featuring most frequently.

**Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Resident on Ben Aigan where small numbers seen most months Mar-Dec, max. 6 on 27 July.

**Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta***

*Common resident breeder.*

28 Ben Avon 21 Aug was the only report received.

**Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix***

*Scarce resident breeder.*

In spring/summer, 4 (2M,2F) Beatshach 27 Apr (AE), 3F Ben Aigan 28 Apr (GG), Bogeney in May (ISS), 1 Delnabo 12 Jun, 1 Feith Musach (Tomintoul) 20 Apr (IF), 2 Loch Dallas 26 May, 2 (MF) Lochenoun 6 Jun, 3M near Lochindorb 28 May (GG) and 2M Tombreck (Glen Brown) 15 May.

At other times of year, 3 Ben Rinnes 20 Feb (GG) and 4 (3M,1F) Inchnacape 21 Jan (RD).

**Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus***

*Scarce resident breeder.*

In this and future Reports, Capercaillie records will be given under the broad geographical areas used in the 1999 Report. These areas will cover the same woodland blocks from year to year and will thus be comparable.

Area	Records in 2004
South-east Nairn	Min. 4M and 6F at one lek – possibly as many as 7M and 9F in the same area. 1F on a nest elsewhere
West Moray	5M and 2F at one lek, no males at two other recent leks
North central Moray	No records received
South central Moray	2 birds in one locality
East Moray	No records received

**Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa***

*Introduced scarce breeder. Commonly released.*

Spring/summer records were 2 Auchintae 2 May, 1 Bridge of Avon 13 May, 2 Clochan 16 May, 1 Conval Crofts 12 May, 1 Dufftown 15 May, 1 Hill of Menduff 17 Apr, 2 Letterfourie 25 Apr, 1 Lochhill 31 May, 2 Lynemore (Glen Rinnes) 15 May, 2 Speyslaw 31 May and 2 Succoth (Glen Rinnes) 16 May.

**Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix***

*Common resident breeder.*

Largest covey of the year by far was 24 Scarffbanks 16 Sep. Otherwise the only post-breeding counts of 10 or more were 12 Miltonhill 7 Nov and 12 Maviston 7 Dec, suggesting a poor breeding season.

**Quail *Coturnix coturnix***

*Rare summer visitor and breeder, occasionally more numerous.*

Only two records of single calling birds, at Gilston 5 Jun (JDHM) and Inchstelly 30 May (JDHM)

**Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus***

*Very common resident breeder.*

1M in central Elgin gardens Jan-Mar. 115 Innes House 21 Dec. Up to 8 round a bird table, Lein (Kingston) in Dec.

**Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus***

*Fairly common breeder and winter visitor.*

Heard in the breeding season at RAF Kinloss (AJL), Loch Loy (JDHM), Loch Spynie (JDHM,MJHC) and Stoneyford Pond (Rafford) (AJL).

Winter reports from RAF Kinloss, Lein (Kingston), Loch of Blairs, Loch Spynie and Shempston. Only at Loch Spynie (where 2-3 heard on several dates) was more than one bird detected.

**Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

*Fairly common resident breeder.*

Breeding proved (*italics*) or probable at Newmill (Auldearn), Fochabers Lake, *Forres (Mosset Pond), Forres golf course, Inchstelly*, Loch Loy, Loch of Blairs, *Loch Oire (2 pairs)*, Loch Spynie, *Milnorduff pool, Stoneyford Pond (3 pairs)*, Wardend House pool (Altyre) and Windyridge.

Best counts of full-grown birds were 16 Fochabers Lake 10 Nov (12 there 18 Feb), 8 Cooper Park (Elgin) 1 Feb, 6 Brodie Castle pond 16 Dec and 5 Gilston 21 Dec.

**Coot *Fulica atra***

*Scarce resident breeder and fairly common winter visitor.*

Breeding proved (*italics*) or probable at Newmill (Auldearn), *Cloddach quarry (2 pairs)*, Gilston, Loch Flemington (2 pairs), *Loch Loy (4 pairs)*, Loch na Bo, *Loch Spynie* and Newton of Dalvey.

Maximum monthly counts on main lochs were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>LochFlemington</b>	3	7	nc	2	nc	4	nc	4
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	92	42	41	23	40	29	90	62
<b>Loch Oire/na Bo</b>	2	nc	2	nc	13	4	4	14
<b>Cloddach</b>	23	nc	13	30	29	nc	10	nc

**Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus***

*Very common resident breeder, winter visitor and migrant.*

Breeding: First inland was 1 Myreside (Elgin) 1 Feb followed by 2 pairs Elgin Academy 11 Feb. On the Spynie Loch platform 1 on 13 Feb rising to 18 on 6 Mar, 8 Aberlour 25 Feb, display at Bridge of Avon on 11 Mar. Well inland were 6 Garline Farm 8 Mar. Pairs were on territory Standing Stones and York Tower 14 Mar. A pair was mating on the Lossie estuary 16 Mar.

Pre-breeding flocks were: 74 Cloddach Quarry 15 Feb rising to 214 by 7 Mar, 60 still there 27 Mar. Also 92 Mundole 5 Mar, 26 Gilston pools 26 Mar and c150 Myreside 19 Mar. 30 were at the entrance to Roseisle Forest picnic area 3 Apr.

Breeding success: Due to gull predation, 4 pairs Elgin Academy roof raised only 1 young (ISS). At Forres golf course a brood of 1 was reared from a nest beside a bunker (ISS).

The only significant post breeding flock was 260 Cloddach 11 Jul.

Spring, summer and early autumn counts at the coast were:

April: 58 Burghead (21<sup>st</sup>) 59 Lossie estuary (8<sup>th</sup>)

May: 64 Burghead (6<sup>th</sup>)

June: 26 Burghead (1<sup>st</sup>), 36 Lossie estuary (7<sup>th</sup>)

July: 86 Burghead (1<sup>st</sup>), 52 Covesea (6<sup>th</sup>), 137 Findhorn Bay (19<sup>th</sup>), 250 Findhorn Bay (29<sup>th</sup>), 563 Lossie estuary (25<sup>th</sup>)

Aug: 87 Lossie estuary (7<sup>th</sup>), 206 Portgordon (10), 370 Findhorn Bay (16<sup>th</sup>)

Sept: 67 Covesea (4<sup>th</sup>), 147 Lossie estuary (9<sup>th</sup>), 137 Burghead (13<sup>th</sup>), 640 Findhorn Bay (15<sup>th</sup>)

Winter maxima at the coast were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	763	703	545	614
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	670	867	1100	210
<b>Burghead-Hopeman</b>	133	178	nc	75
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	15	89	38	45
<b>Portgordon-Strathlene</b>	109	115	109	101

### **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

*Scarce resident breeder and very common migrant.*

Breeding: Proven at RAF Kinloss on 8 June with a brood of 3 (AJL). A nest with 7 juveniles on At Lossiemouth east beach, 2 pairs, one with 3 young in mid June (MJHC, JDHM, CAG). At the Lein, Kingston a pair bred but had two failures (PGS). In addition suspected breeding (or breeding attempts) were 2 pairs Cloddach Quarry 11 Jul, 2 pairs Covesea 18 Mar, 3 pairs west of the lighthouse at Covesea 6 Jul and 2 pairs Garmouth viaduct 21 Jun.

Winter maxima at the coast were:

	Jan-Feb	Nov-Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	8	nc
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	8	54
<b>Burghead-Hopeman</b>	8	5
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	26	23
<b>Portgordon-Strathlene</b>	24	nc

Other winter counts were received from RAF Kinloss where 43 on 26 Oct and 47 on 2 Nov (AJL).

Spring passage (April – early June) As usual, best monitored at the Lossie estuary where counts were made on 2 Apr (6), 13 Apr (8), 21 Apr (24), 26 Apr (64), 29 Apr (21), 5 May (56), 12 May (40), 13 May (104), 15 May (60), 17 May (117), 19 May (73), 23 May (143), 1 Jun (52), 18 Jun (14), 19 Jun (26), 20 Jul (47) and 24 Jul (8). At Burghead: 7 May (38), 15 May (21), 20 May (58), 25 May (62) and 27 Jul (36). At Kingston: 18 May (70). In Findhorn Bay: 8 May (54) and 21 May (91). At Spey Bay: 16 May (43).

Autumn passage (July – Sept): Lossie estuary 20 July (47) and 25 Aug (23). Kingston 5 July (17), 9 July (16), 10 Aug (7) and 28 Aug (1). At Portgordon, 66 on 10 Aug.

### **Golden Plover** *Charadrius apricaria*

*Common breeder, migrant and winter visitor.*

Breeding: 1 Fireach 5 May and 2 Glen Lochy 15 May (DAG). 1 Balnellan Burn (Cromdales), 5 Carn Eachie, 3 Craig an Tarmachan and 1 Creagan a' Chlaise (Cromdales) all 9 May (IF). Elsewhere, 1 Ben Aigan 26 Apr (GG), several pairs Ladder Hills 27 Jun (AE), 1 Scars Burn (Cabrach) 23 May (TC), 1 pair Falls of Feakirk 16 Apr (JDHM) and 2 pairs Lochindorb 28 May (GG).

Only report back at the coast in July was 1 Findhorn Bay 10<sup>th</sup>. In August, 8 Findhorn Bay (11<sup>th</sup>) and 24 there 16<sup>th</sup>, and over Strathlene minimum 60 on 25<sup>th</sup>. In September, 29 Findhorn Bay 1<sup>st</sup>.

Winter coastal maxima were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Kinloss/Findhorn Bay</b>	82	85	272	77	168
<b>Lossiemouth/Covesea</b>	62	80	nc	nc	nc
<b>Burghead</b>	12	nc	nc	172	nc
<b>Portgordon-Buckpool</b>	nc	nc	nc	377	17

Other winter counts were 115 west of Loch Spynie 3 Jan, 120 over Loch Spynie 17 Jan, 40 Sunbank Lossiemouth 24 Jan, 280 Muirton 27 Jan, 80 over Clochan 12 Oct and 48 Drainie 23 Dec.

### **Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola***

*Scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor.*

Nairn/Culbin Bars: 4 Jan (27), 25 Jan (16), 22 Feb (23), 15 Oct (11), 12 Dec (12)

Findhorn Bay: 17 Oct (10), 12 Dec (1)

Kingston: 2 Oct (3)

Lossie estuary: 4 on 4 Sep and single birds on 3 Oct, 8 Oct, 7 Nov, 12 Nov and 28 Nov.

As usual, most records from the Nairn/Culbin Bars. There were slightly more than in 2003 but not comparable with counts of 5 or more years ago. The best ever Grey Plover count was 130 at the Bars on 14 Oct 1978. Recently, nearly all maximum annual counts for Moray & Nairn have been at the Bars:

1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
72	73	41	101	59	61	42	114	71	55	60	23*	28	17	22

\* exceeded in that year by 48 Findhorn Bay in Oct.

### **Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus***

*Very common migrant breeder, small numbers in winter.*

Breeding: In March, 2 pairs Standingstone and 2 pairs York Tower 4<sup>th</sup>, 15 well inland Garline Farm 8<sup>th</sup>, 5 territorial pairs Salterhill 16<sup>th</sup> and 2 pairs Shempston 27<sup>th</sup>. In April, 5 pairs beside the flood water at Miltonduff 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3 pairs (fewer than usual) Bogeney 5<sup>th</sup>. At Hillhead Farm on 24 Apr, a nest had a clutch of 3 and there were another 2 pairs but on 30 May only one young -losses probably due to crows. Two pairs Chapelton 6 May.

Mid winter: In January, 39 Scotstonhill 1<sup>st</sup>, 12 Sunbank (Lossiemouth) 24<sup>th</sup>, 35 Findhorn Bay 25<sup>th</sup>, 16 Kinloss 30<sup>th</sup>, 70 Drainie 31<sup>st</sup>. In December, 147 Findhorn Bay 12<sup>th</sup>.

Pre-breeding flocks:

February: 650 Windyridge 7<sup>th</sup>, 40 Tarras 11<sup>th</sup>, 49 Duffus 13<sup>th</sup>, 480 beside road to Roseisle Forest 13<sup>th</sup>, 310 Findhorn Bay 16<sup>th</sup>, 48 Hillhead, Burgie 16<sup>th</sup>, 150 York Tower 22<sup>nd</sup> and 38 Kinloss 27<sup>th</sup>. At the Cabrach, 2 on 17<sup>th</sup>.

March: 25 over Loch Spynie 5<sup>th</sup>, 64 Miltonduff 6<sup>th</sup>, 32 Auchness (Dallas) 7<sup>th</sup>, 120 Salterhill 16<sup>th</sup>, 150 Aldivalloch (Cabrach) 21<sup>st</sup>, 40 Tarras 21<sup>st</sup>, 26 Nethererton 24<sup>th</sup> and 35 Cloves 27<sup>th</sup>.

Post-breeding flocks:

June: 26 Loch of Cotts 23<sup>rd</sup>.

July: 40 Loch Spynie 4<sup>th</sup>, 140 Kingston 9<sup>th</sup>, 22 Miltonhill 28<sup>th</sup>.

August: 250 Glenrinnies 4<sup>th</sup>, 308 Binsness 5<sup>th</sup>, 30 near Spynie Canal 15<sup>th</sup>, 35 Cloddach Quarry 29<sup>th</sup>.

September: 50 Spynie 2<sup>nd</sup> (125 there 8<sup>th</sup>), 120 Binsness 10<sup>th</sup>, 10 Kingston 11<sup>th</sup>, 70 Nether Bogside 12<sup>th</sup>, 18 Auchness (Dallas) 27<sup>th</sup> – late up country.

October: 70 Findhorn Bay 1<sup>st</sup>, 8 Kingston 2<sup>nd</sup>, 380 Windyridge 3<sup>rd</sup>, 40 Loch Spynie 8<sup>th</sup>, 350 Milton Brodie 10<sup>th</sup>, 52 Miltonhill 10<sup>th</sup>, 180 Windyridge 14<sup>th</sup>, 150 Loch Spynie 14<sup>th</sup>, 200 Miltonhill 17<sup>th</sup>, 203 Findhorn Bay 17<sup>th</sup>, 7 Miltonduff flood 22<sup>nd</sup>, 60 Muirton 23<sup>rd</sup>, 114 Tarras 31<sup>st</sup>.

November: 60 Loch Spynie 23<sup>rd</sup>, 75 Binsness 25<sup>th</sup>, 40 Miltonduff flood 28<sup>th</sup>.

December: 147 Findhorn Bay 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Knot *Calidris canutus***

*Very common migrant and winter visitor.*

Winter maxima were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	3180	2190	nc	872	nc	1925
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	250	152	nc	860	nc	575
<b>Burghead-Hopeman</b>	40	nc	nc	nc	nc	3
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	70	2	25	14	70	130

Counts in other months were:-

April: 30 Burghead 21<sup>st</sup>, 52 Lossie estuary 24<sup>th</sup>

May: 190 Burghead 2<sup>nd</sup>, 240 Burghead 6<sup>th</sup> – only 4 showing summer plumage.

June: 1 Lossie estuary 10<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>.

July: 3 Burghead 31<sup>st</sup>, 24 Findhorn Bay 29<sup>th</sup>, 1 Lossiemouth 17<sup>th</sup>.

August: 3 Burghead 1<sup>st</sup>, 220 Findhorn Bay 16<sup>th</sup>, 11 Kingston 28<sup>th</sup> and 41 Portgordon 10<sup>th</sup>. On the Lossie estuary, 3 in summer plumage 3<sup>rd</sup>, 15 in summer plumage 7<sup>th</sup>, 15 on 19<sup>th</sup>, 31 on 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Sanderling *Calidris alba***

*Scarce migrant and fairly common but very localised winter visitor.*

Monthly maxima at the two best sites were:

Winter:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	85	50	43	nc	90
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	63	43	68	30	56

Late summer to autumn: 6 Culbin Bar 13 Jul and at Lossiemouth 37 on 31 Jul, 18 on 21 Aug and 58 on 26 Sep.

Spring passage observed in Burghead in May was: 2 in summer plumage (sp) on 7<sup>th</sup>, 5 (2 in sp) 15<sup>th</sup>, 14 sp 20<sup>th</sup> and 17 sp 25<sup>th</sup>.

Autumn passage: In August, 1 sp Burghead 8<sup>th</sup> and 18 there 9<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, 6 Lossie estuary 19 Aug, 29 Covesea 19 Aug and 1 Kingston 28 Aug.

### **Little Stint *Calidris minuta***

*Scarce migrant, mostly in autumn.*

A typical year with 20 birds seen between 5 Jul-17 Oct and 6 areas visited. Records were 1 Kingston 5 Jul (MJHC), 1 Burghead 1 Aug (JDHM), 2 Lossie estuary 13 Aug (CAG), 1 Lossiemouth west beach 13 Aug (CAG), 1 Lossie estuary 14 Aug (JDHM), 2 Tugnet 27 Aug (DMP), 1 Kingston 4-5 Sep (MJHC,EH), 1 Lossie estuary 21 Sep (JDHM), and lastly, 3 Findhorn Bay 17 Oct (CD).

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii**Rare summer visitor and migrant*

One Kingston 5-6 Jul (MJHC, DAG, AJ, CAG) This is the first record since 1998. Since 1990, records have been 1 Kingston Jul 1991, 1 Lossie estuary Jul 1994, 1 Findhorn Bay Sep 94, 1 Findhorn Bay Jul 1998 and 1 Llanbryde pig farm Sep 1998.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea**Scarce autumn migrant.*

A considerable improvement on recent years, although records were confined to Findhorn Bay and the Lossie estuary.

Findhorn Bay: In August, 4 on 16<sup>th</sup> and 1 on 18<sup>th</sup> (AJL). In September, 25 on 5<sup>th</sup>, 31 on 6<sup>th</sup>, 9 on 11<sup>th</sup> and 1 on 12<sup>th</sup> (DAG, AJL).

Lossie estuary: 1 on 13 Aug, 1 juv on 27-29 Aug (CAG, AJ, EH, AJL), 12 on 4 Sep and 3 on 5 Sep (DAG, JDHM, AJL).

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima**Common winter visitor.*

Main winter site maxima were:

	Jan-March	Oct-Dec
<b>Burghead-Hopeman</b>	14	14
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	32	72
<b>Portgordon-Strathlene</b>	113*	51

\* The Portgordon count was of 73 Buckpool and 40 Portessie.

Extreme dates were 1 Lossiemouth 14 Aug and 12 there 2 May.



Purple Sandpipers, Lossiemouth 10 April 2004 (© Duncan Gibson)

**Dunlin *Calidris alpina***

*Scarce breeder, very common migrant and winter visitor.*

Breeding: One An Sgoran (Cromdales) 9 May showed alarm behaviour and was a possible breeder (IF), similarly 3 Ladder Hills 27 June (AE)

Winter monthly maxima at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	974	235	146	420
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	1150	1560	1070	1425
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	266	240	60	535
<b>Portgordon-Strathlene</b>	13	40	10	nc

Spring passage: Well monitored at the Lossie estuary where, in April, 2 on 24<sup>th</sup> and 19sp 28<sup>th</sup>. In May, 23sp on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 36sp on 5<sup>th</sup>, 21on 12<sup>th</sup>, 42 on 13<sup>th</sup>, 48 on 15<sup>th</sup>, 208 on 17<sup>th</sup>, 243 on 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, and 72 on 23<sup>rd</sup>. In June, 28 on 1<sup>st</sup> and 1 on 10<sup>th</sup>.

Less extensive were observations at Burghhead where 33 on 8 Apr and, in May, 36 on 7<sup>th</sup>, 52 on 20<sup>th</sup> and 10 on 25<sup>th</sup>.

In Findhorn Bay, 40 on 8 May, 278 on 21 May and 8 on 13 June. At Kingston, 244 on 18 May. Obviously peak passage was during the third week in May. Dunlin were scarce on the coast in June where 28 Lossie estuary 1<sup>st</sup>, 26 Lossie estuary 8<sup>th</sup>, 18 Findhorn Bay 13<sup>th</sup> and 21 Lossie estuary 19<sup>th</sup>.

Autumn passage: (July – Sept) Best noted in Findhorn Bay where 84 on 19 Jul, 165 on 20 Jul and 550 on 16 Aug. At Kingston in July 5 on 5<sup>th</sup> and 13 on 9<sup>th</sup>. Larger numbers were in August and Sept i.e. 46 on 14 Aug, 98 on 28 Aug and, in September, 44 on 5<sup>th</sup> and 15 on 11<sup>th</sup>. At the Lossie estuary frequent counts were made but totals were mediocre: In July, 12 on 10<sup>th</sup>, 2 on 12<sup>th</sup>, 42 on 20<sup>th</sup>, 18 on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 22 on 30<sup>th</sup>. In August, 14 on 23<sup>rd</sup> and, in September, 17 on 13<sup>th</sup>, 38 on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18 on 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Ruff *Philomachus pugnax***

*Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring.*

Recorded between 4 Aug-1 Oct. About the usual number of birds although scarce in Findhorn Bay. On Lossie estuary, singles in August on 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>. In September, 1 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4 on 5<sup>th</sup>, 1 on 13<sup>th</sup>, and 1 on 16<sup>th</sup> (many obs.) Elsewhere, 1 Tugnet 23 Sep (CAG), 1 Covesea 2 Sep, 7 Kingston 10 Aug and 2 there 11 Sep (MJHC). In Findhorn Bay, 2 on 21 Aug and 1 on 4 Sep (DMP). The only freshwater record concerned 3 over Loch Spynie 20 Aug (AJ).

**Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus***

*Scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

Winter-spring: At Kingsteps, 5 on 10 Jan (DMP), 4 on 25 Jan (DJ, AL), 1 on 4 Feb (DMP) and 1 on 22 Feb (AL).

Autumn-winter: 2 Kingsteps 15 Oct (DJ) and 1 there 12 Dec, when also 1 Nairn Bar (DJ). Elsewhere, 1 Lein (Kingston) 23 Oct (MJHC).

**Snipe *Gallinago gallinago***

*Common breeder and migrant.*

Breeding: 1 pair Aultnaburn 4 Apr, 2 Lein (Kingston) 6 Apr, 1 Suie (Glenlivet) 17 Apr and 1 Little Aitnoch 24 Apr. In May, 1 drumming Moidach More 9<sup>th</sup>. Later, several drumming Ladderfoot (Braes of Glenlivet) 6 Jun and 1 pair Glenlatterach 1 Jul.

Early year counts were 1 Sanquhar Loch 14 Jan, 1 Portknockie 17 Jan, 2 Lein (Kingston) 18 Jan, 36 Nairn Bar 25 Jan and 1 Binsness 31 Jan, 1 Lein (Kingston) 9 Feb, 3 Loch Spynie 21 Feb and 4 Spynie Canal 26 Feb. Autumn/winter counts: October – 1 Culbin Bar 15<sup>th</sup>, 35 Nairn Bar 15<sup>th</sup>, 4 Spynie Canal 15<sup>th</sup> and 19 Lein (Kingston) 23<sup>rd</sup>. November – 1 Binsness 25<sup>th</sup>, 55 Kingsteps 27<sup>th</sup>, 2 RAF Kinloss 15<sup>th</sup>, and 13 there 16<sup>th</sup>, and 3 Lossie estuary 24<sup>th</sup>. December – 1 Clochan 11<sup>th</sup> and 1 Culbin Bar 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola***

*Common resident breeder, scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

Breeding: 2 Cabrach 21 Mar, roding Carron 22 Mar and Woodside 26 Mar. First roding Newbold (Forres) 31 Mar and last noted 4 Jul. In May, 2 Aultnahurn 12<sup>th</sup> and 1 pair Delnabo 15<sup>th</sup> and 1 Kinloss 31<sup>st</sup>. Present Phones, (Drum Wood) in June. Reports from Loch Spynie area on 25 Mar, 15 May and 20 June.

Winter: Many flying over A96 at Ardgay into cover at 7.30 a.m. on 15 Dec. Other reports involved only small numbers: 1 Culbin Bar 22 Feb, 2 Loch Spynie area 16 Oct, 1 Windyridge 5 Nov, 6 Tanzie (Ben Aigan) 9 Nov, 2 Nairn Bar 12 Dec, 1 Caysbriggs 13 Dec, 1 Kirkhill Wood 19 Dec and 1 Sanquhar 20 Dec.

### **Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa***

*Scarce migrant.*

Spring: 2 Hillhead (Forres) 24 Apr (ISS), 17 Findhorn Bay 4 May (DMP), 2 Lossie estuary 3 May (AJ, EH, JDHM, CAG, DAG). Miltonduff flooded field held 1-2 birds on 9 days between 28 May-17 June (MJHC, JDHM, DAG, CAG).

Autumn: July – 11 flew over Lossie estuary 4<sup>th</sup> (DAG), 1 on the estuary 24<sup>th</sup> (DAG) and 11 flew over Cloddach Quarry 28<sup>th</sup> (AJ, DAG). August – 1 Lossie estuary 17<sup>th</sup> (CAG). September – 3 Lossie estuary 3<sup>rd</sup> (JDHM), 5 Findhorn Bay 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> (DMP,AJL), c30 flying over the Lossie estuary 6<sup>th</sup> (DAG) and 1 there 11<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> (DAG). October – 2 Findhorn Bay 14<sup>th</sup> (DMP) and 37 there 17<sup>th</sup> (CD). A late record of 1 Findhorn Bay 12 Dec (CD).

### **Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica***

*Very common winter visitor and migrant. Small numbers in summer.*

Monthly maxima at main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	395	360	nc	nc	4	nc	nc	234	nc	67
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	96	200	nc	nc	1	4	nc	420	nc	340
<b>Burghead</b>	33	33	14	1	11	nc	8	11	27	21
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	8	4	9	2	2	nc	5	6	4	4

Elsewhere, between Burghead-Hopeman 31 on 26 Jan, 2 on 2 Feb and 8 on 12 Dec. Also, 1 Kingston 21 Aug, 1 Covesea 4 Sep and 5 Hopeman 5 Oct.

### **Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus***

*Scarce migrant.*

Spring: More records than usual. In April, single birds (or conceivably the same one) were recorded at Lossiemouth and Cullen on 26<sup>th</sup>. In May, 3 Lossiemouth 1<sup>st</sup>, 1 over Lossie forest 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1 over Lossiemouth 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2 over Lossiemouth 8<sup>th</sup>, 3 Strathlene 9<sup>th</sup>, 4 Binsness 16<sup>th</sup> and 2 Lossie Estuary 19<sup>th</sup>. In early June, 5 resting on the shingle at Speymouth on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1 over Lossiemouth 3<sup>rd</sup> and another Lossiemouth 5<sup>th</sup>.

Autumn: 36 flocks were seen between 2 Jul-17 Oct, involving a total of 104 birds.

Distribution of flock sizes was:

Flock size	1	2	3	4	5	6	10	11	13
No. of flocks	18	5	2	5	2	1	1	1	1

The number of flocks and total birds in recent years has varied as follows:

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Flocks	25	31	34	50	36
Total birds	65	78	136	147	104

The steadily upward trend since 2000 has been reversed in 2004.

### **Curlew *Numenius arquata***

*Common breeder. Very common migrant and winter visitor.*

Breeding: 2 early upcountry at Tomintoul 10 Mar. In the coastal area, nesting Tarras and Hillhead (Forres area) 24 Apr and a pair near the floodland at Miltonduff 30 May. Up country, single pairs Edinvale, Scottackleys and Moss of Delnahaugh (Dallas area) 11 Jun. Highest density of breeding discovered was at Falls of Feakirk where 7 pairs 16 Apr. Also, 2 Aldunie (Cabrach) 3 June and 4 Cabrach 18 June.

Largest flocks in summer/early autumn were 137 Netherton (Findhorn Bay) 29 Jun, 42 Burghead 8 Jul, 48 Findhorn Bay 18 Aug, 73 Strathlene 25 Aug and 340 Kingston 28 Aug.

Coastal winter maxima were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Dec
Nairn/Culbin Bars	434	395	347	151
Findhorn Bay	156	237	354	295
Burghead-Hopeman	4	3	nc	2
Lossiemouth	5	175	115	8
Portgordon-Strathlene	61	28	7	10

Additional winter flocks were:

Jan: 305 Sunbank (Lossiemouth) 24<sup>th</sup>.

Feb: 100 Lossie estuary, 300 Windyridge 7<sup>th</sup>, 220 York Tower 22<sup>nd</sup>.

March: 117 Kingston 7<sup>th</sup>, 183 Lossie Estuary 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Oct: 46 Findochty 10<sup>th</sup>, 200 Loch Spynie 8<sup>th</sup>, 114 Lossie estuary 17<sup>th</sup>, 124 Tugnet 9<sup>th</sup>, 350 Windyridge 17<sup>th</sup>.

Nov: 104 Lossie estuary 15<sup>th</sup>, 68 RAF Kinloss 8<sup>th</sup>, 210 Loch Spynie 5<sup>th</sup>.

### **Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus***

*Very scarce migrant.*

1 Findhorn Bay 11 Sep (DAG) was the only record.

From 2000 to 2004 inclusive there have been only 4 records. The preceding 5 years produced 19 records of this species.

### **Redshank *Tringa totanus***

*Scarce breeder, very common migrant and winter visitor.*

Breeding: On territory in southern marsh of Findhorn Bay 27 Mar, possible breeding Windyridge 7 May and a pair in display Kingston 8 May. In likely breeding area at Hillhead, Forres 22 May. In the Findhorn Bay area, one pair on territory Kincorth, 24 May and 28 June, and breeding behaviour Netherton 29 June.

Late summer/autumn (July – Sept):

Lossie estuary: In July, 6 on 1<sup>st</sup>, 56 on 6<sup>th</sup>, 25 on 11<sup>th</sup> and 59 on 19<sup>th</sup>. Later, 61 on 7 Aug, 93 on 16 Aug, 70 on 21 Sep and 99 on 29 Sep.

Burghead: 20 on 28 Aug, 38 on 31 Aug and 58 on 3 Sep.

Findhorn Bay: 164 on 19 Jul, 207 on 28 Jul, 320 on 11 Aug, 430 on 1 Sep.

Winter: Monthly maxima at the coast were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars</b>	656	348	255	303
<b>Findhorn Bay</b>	225	230	461	635
<b>Burghead-Hopeman</b>	64	68	30*	40
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	122	89	155	62
<b>Portgordon-Strathlene</b>	125	122	104	173

\*only Burghead

### **Greenshank *Tringa nebularia***

*Scarce migrant, very scarce in winter.*

Spring: 1 Cloddach Quarry 10-11 Apr and 1 Loch Spynie 5 Apr. On the Lossie estuary, single birds in Apr on 9<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> (at least 3 different individuals during this period), 2 there 10 Apr and 1 on 6 May. Later, in June, 1 Cloddach Quarry 22<sup>nd</sup> and 1 Lossie estuary 30<sup>th</sup>.

Late summer/autumn (July – October):

July: In Findhorn Bay, max 13 Binsness 20<sup>th</sup>. 1 Kingston 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3 there 30<sup>th</sup>. 4 Garmouth 30<sup>th</sup> and on Lossie estuary, 1 on 16<sup>th</sup> and 2 on 20<sup>th</sup>.

Aug: In Findhorn Bay, 5 Binsness 5<sup>th</sup>, 21 (mostly on Meikle Burn) 14<sup>th</sup> and 3 on 16<sup>th</sup>. 1 Lossie estuary 5 dates and 2 on 13<sup>th</sup>. 1 Cloddach quarry 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2 Loch Oire 10<sup>th</sup> and 1 Spynie canal 15<sup>th</sup>.

Sept: 2 Findhorn Bay 10<sup>th</sup>, 2 Lossie estuary 5 dates and singles on 2 dates, 1 Cloddach quarry 15<sup>th</sup> and 1 Lein (Kingston) 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Oct: 2 Lossie estuary 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1 on 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

Winter: Early in the year, 1 Lossie estuary 2 Jan and 1 Garmouth viaduct 14 Feb. In November, 1 Lossie estuary 6<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> and 1 over Muirton 16<sup>th</sup>. In December, 1 Lossie estuary 25<sup>th</sup> -31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus***

*Very scarce migrant, occasional in winter.*

An unusual spring record was 1 Cloddach quarry 3-4 Apr (AJ).

In autumn, 1 Cloddach quarry 5 Aug (DAG) and 28 Aug (CAG). At Kingston, 2 Lein 8 Aug and 31 Aug (PGS).

### **Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola***

*Very scarce migrant.*

1 on floodland near Milnorduff 25-29 May (AJ, DAG, MJHC). In late summer, 1 flew east over Loch Spynie 1 Aug (AJ, RP).

### **Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***

*Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: First one Speymouth 18 Apr, a typical date, followed by a slight lull before 1 Fochabers 22 Apr and 5 Cloddach Quarry 23 Apr.

Breeding: 4 on River Findhorn at Forres 2 May and 13 June, 3 showing territorial behaviour Kingston 18 May, one pair Kincorth (Findhorn Bay) 24 May, 2 Lochindorb 25 May, 1 pair near Howford Bridge (River

Nairn) 28 May, 1 pair Glenlatterach reservoir 1 June, 1 pair Cloddach Quarry 2 June and 2 pairs there 11 July, and 1 pair Bodnastalker (Kellas) 4 Jul.

On passage, 1 Lossiemouth harbour 3 May.

Late summer/autumn: Best coastal aggregates, as usual, at Kingston (where 22 on 5 June reducing to 1 by 10 Aug) and Kincorth (Findhorn Bay) where 21 on 28 June. Elsewhere, 9 on the tern platform Loch Spynie 8 Aug and 1 Loch Flemington 17 Aug.

Last of the year were 2 Loch Spynie and 1 Kingston, both on 5 Sep. The latest final date has been 9 Oct (in 1991). A bird on the Spey at Fochabers on 28 Nov 1997 was probably overwintering.

### Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

*Common winter visitor, small numbers in summer.*

Winter monthly maxima at main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Findhorn</b>	51	nc	34	23	27
<b>Burghead-Hopeman</b>	36	55	4*	68**	33
<b>Lossiemouth</b>	7	19	68	30	13
<b>Portgordon-Strathlene</b>	134	152	126	nc	137

\* Burghead only    \*\*Hopeman only

Other winter counts: 11 Nairn 3 Nov, 17 Covesea 12 Oct, 13 Cullen 5 Dec.

Spring-summer:

April: 14 Lossiemouth west beach 2<sup>nd</sup>, 78 roosting Burghead 6<sup>th</sup>, 51 still there 21<sup>st</sup>.

May: 5 summer plumage Burghead 14<sup>th</sup>, 5 Covesea 25<sup>th</sup>.

June: 1 Burghead 1<sup>st</sup>, 5 Lossie estuary 19<sup>th</sup>.

July: 12 (summer plumage) Lossie estuary 20<sup>th</sup>, and at Burghead 9 on 21<sup>st</sup>, 15 on 27<sup>th</sup>, 16 on 30<sup>th</sup> and 26 on 31<sup>st</sup>.

Aug: 44 (summer plumage) Lossiemouth west beach 13<sup>th</sup>, 52 Burghead 28<sup>th</sup>.

Sep: 7 Tugnet 9<sup>th</sup>, 67 Burghead 13<sup>th</sup>, 25 Lossiemouth west beach 20<sup>th</sup>.

### Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

*Scarce migrant offshore in summer and autumn, rare in winter.*

A very poor year. Single birds on typical dates flew past Spey Bay on 30 Aug (EH) and past Lossiemouth on 15 Sep and 20 Sep (JP). The only worse year since 1985 was in 2001 where there were only two sightings.

### Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

*Fairly common migrant in summer and autumn.*

Single spring birds were seen off Lossiemouth on 3 May, Nairn on 4 May and in Burghead Bay on 8 May.

Autumn passage was light, with only 32 sightings, mainly off Lossiemouth, with a peak of 5 offshore on 8 Aug (DAG). Last of the year was one in Burghead Bay on 13 Oct (AJL).

### Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

*Scarce migrant in summer and autumn.*

In spring, single birds were seen off Lossiemouth on 25 Apr, 3 May and 8 May (DAG). Mid summer passage included 3 off Lossiemouth on 19 Jun and 2 on 25 Jun (DAG). Light autumn passage was noted, with 37 birds in total, the peak count being 5 off Lossiemouth on 19 Aug (DAG).

**Little Gull *Larus minutus***

*Very scarce visitor.*

The only record this was of a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird on the Lossie Estuary on the late date of 7 Nov (DAG). A very poor year.

**Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus***

*Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.*

Breeding: The only colony counts received were of c.7 nests on the tern platform at Loch Spynie, and 4 pairs at Lochs of Bogmussach (JDHM), where 21 pairs present in 2003. At Loch Dallas, c500 on 26 May (RFH) probably indicated a breeding colony there.

Flock counts in excess of 400 were 480 Loch Oire on 3 Jan, 460 Nairn Bar 25 Jan, c400 Loch Spynie 22 Feb and 560 Loch Spynie 14 Nov.

**Common Gull *Larus canus***

*Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.*

Breeding: 50 pairs RAF Kinloss, 4 pairs Cairnfield and “many chicks reared” at Newton Nursery were the only reports.

Flock counts in excess of 500 were 1050 Miltonhill 22 Jan, 610 off Tugnet 5 Sep, 580 Miltonhill 10 Oct and 720 Miltonhill 17 Oct. The peak count of the year was an impressive tally of 3000 flying inland at Gallows Hill on 27 Oct (RP).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus***

*Summer visitor and fairly common breeder. Very scarce in winter.*

Arrival: The picture was confused by wintering individuals. Likely wintering birds were at Elgin 20 Jan, Culbin Bar 25 Jan and 4 Bow Fiddle Rock (Portknockie) 11 Feb. In the spring, what was probably the same individual was an adult at Loch Spynie on four dates between 4 -14 Mar. An adult of the race *graellsii* at Lossiemouth on 5 Mar was the first of the spring there (with 5 adult *graellsii* race birds there on 23 Mar). In Elgin, three *graellsii* race birds were at Cooper Park on 14 Mar, with birds of an unspecified race being present in small numbers afterwards.

Breeding: The only proof of breeding was obtained at Bow Fiddle Rock, Portknockie with one pair with nest. However, as recent years, circumstantial evidence of breeding in Elgin, with birds present in Cooper Park and on rooftops throughout the spring and summer.

One possibly of the race *intermedius* was at Lossiemouth on 20 Mar.

**Herring Gull *Larus argentatus***

*Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.*

Breeding: Birds were noted in Forres, Elgin and Lossiemouth, although exact numbers and productivity was not noted.

Monthly maximum counts on the Lossie Estuary were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
71	1750	270	247	nc	1260	1090	1620	88	84	nc	1340

Elsewhere, large numbers were at Loch Spynie in the early part of the year, peaking at 3500 on 20 Feb. Elsewhere, 1200 Hopeman 13 Feb, 1040 Nether Dallachy 5 Jul and 2700 between Portgordon-Buckie 8 Sep.

Birds of Scandinavian/Baltic race *L.a. argentatus* were at Loch Spynie on 17 Jan (7), 23 Jan (2) and 5 Apr, and in the second winter period on 23 Dec (2). At Lossiemouth, single birds were present on 15 Aug and 14 Oct.

### **Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis***

*Rare visitor.*

Two individuals were seen on four dates on the Lossie Estuary in the spring. An adult was seen first on 23 Mar, and again on the 30 Mar when another individual was also present, an adult/4<sup>th</sup> winter. This individual was also seen on 31 Mar and 2 Apr (RP). Both records are awaiting adjudication from the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC).

### **Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides***

*Very scarce winter visitor.*

The wintering adult from 2003 was seen regularly on Loch Spynie or at the nearby pigfarm on many dates, and was last seen 27 May (many obs). This bird also visited Lossiemouth on many occasions throughout the period. What was perhaps a different adult bird was seen at Nether Dallachy on 9 Apr. A 1<sup>st</sup> summer bird was seen at Lossiemouth on 19 May (MJHC, DAG, AJ, RP). In the second winter period, what was presumably the returning adult bird visited Loch Spynie again between 24-27 Dec (MJHC, CAG, DAG, JDHM). A 2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird was at Loch Oire on 27 Dec (JDHM).

On 22 Mar, a 3<sup>rd</sup> winter/adult bird showing characteristics of arctic NE Canadian race *L.g. kumlieni* (Kumlien's Gull) was present and photographed on the Lossie Estuary (DAG).

A poor year, with perhaps only 4 individuals involved.

### **Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus***

*Very scarce winter visitor.*

Perhaps five individuals involved although interchange between sites is difficult to discount. In the first winter period, an adult was at Loch Spynie between 8 Mar - 5 Apr (many obs) and what was almost certainly the same individual was at Lossiemouth between 7 Mar - 6 Apr (many obs). An immature bird, probably 1<sup>st</sup> winter was at Loch Spynie on 28 Apr (CAG). A 1<sup>st</sup> summer/2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird was then at Lossiemouth between 14 Jul - 12 Nov (many obs). A 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird was at Findhorn Bay on 17 Oct (AJL) and possibly the same bird was at Burghead Pier on 21 Nov (CAG, DAG).



Glaucous Gull adult, Lossie estuary 3 April 2004 (© Duncan Gibson)

**Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus***

*Scarce resident breeder and common visitor.*

Breeding: One pair Bow Fiddle Rock (Portknockie) was the only report.

Counts: 110 Tugnet 5 Jul built up steadily to a peak of 570 on 11 Oct. Elsewhere, 272 Lossie Estuary 28 Sep and 326 Culbin Bar 15 Oct.

**Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla***

*Common breeder and very common migrant.*

Breeding: 397 apparently occupied nests Covesea 13 Jun (MJHC) was a welcome increase from only 347 AON in 2003, and reversed the decline shown in recent years at this site. This is the highest number reported at this site since 1995 (544 AON). At Portknockie, 109 apparently occupied nests on 4 Jul (MJHC) was down on last year, when 122 AON were recorded.

The only substantial passage offshore was on 7 Aug, when 250 flew east past Portknockie in 90 mins (LS)

**Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis***

*Very common summer visitor and occasional breeder.*

Breeding was not noted this year.

Arrival: The only March record was 2 off Lossiemouth on 28<sup>th</sup> (CAG,KG).

Peak counts later in the year were 94 Tugnet 22 Aug (CAG), 131 at the same site 1 Sep (MJHC) and 259 Portgordon 8 Sep (JDHM). Small numbers lingered at Lossiemouth into Oct with 2 on 6<sup>th</sup> being the last sighting of the year.

**Common Tern *Sterna hirundo***

*Summer visitor and fairly common breeder.*

Arrival: First was 1 Loch Spynie 21 Apr, with 3 present on 24 Apr.

Breeding: c19 nests were occupied on the platforms at Loch Spynie on 4 Jul (MJHC), with the only reports of young being 6 there on 14 Aug. No reports of breeding were received from elsewhere, although 4 birds on the River Spey at Aberlour between 17 May-3 Aug hints at possible breeding in that area (AE). Negative news from Mundole, where no birds were seen on 13 Jul (JDHM).

Only very small numbers were at the coast with 9 Tugnet 5 Sep being the highest count. Last of the year was one fishing on the Lossie Estuary on 19 Sep.

**Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea***

*Summer visitor and common but local breeder.*

Arrival: First back were 2 Findhorn 17 Apr, with 3 Spey Bay the following day.

Breeding: The main site at RAF Kinloss held 65 incubating adults on 29 May and 56 in a different area on 27 Jun (MJHC) – probably failed birds making a second attempt. At least 20 pairs attempted to breed on an island in the Spey close to Garmouth viaduct but were flooded out in early June (MJHC). The only other breeding reports were of 5 occupied nests on Lossiemouth east beach on 26 Jun (DAG) and 10 pairs apparently breeding on the shingle at the mouth of the Spey on 5 Jul (MJHC). No reports of young were received from any of the sites, although juveniles were present on the Lossie Estuary in late summer/early autumn, with one on 2 Oct being the last report of the year (DAG).

**Little Tern *Sternula albifrons***

*Very scarce summer visitor and rare breeder.*

Breeding: Site 3 – First 3 back on 3 May (the same date as in 2003). Numbers rose steadily to a peak of 17 birds on 9 Jul. A minimum of 6 nests was counted on 26 Jun, with at least 3 fledglings and one chick seen on 26 Jul (DAG et al.). There was no meaningful departure date, with the last report being of 10 birds on 31 Jul.

**Guillemot *Uria aalge***

*Very common offshore.*

Most numerous offshore in the autumn, with all counts of over 50 as follows. In Aug, 250 off Lossiemouth east beach 16<sup>th</sup> and 100 off Burghead 28<sup>th</sup>. In Sep, 800 off Tugnet 5<sup>th</sup> was the highest count of the year, and the highest count since 2001 (MJHC). In Oct, 60 off Lossiemouth 5<sup>th</sup> and 245 off Culbin Bar 15<sup>th</sup>. In Dec 167 off Culbin Bar 12<sup>th</sup>.

At other times, counts were generally small, with the exception being 170 Cullen Bay 14 Apr. No substantial passage counts were noted.

Inland: a single bird at the pools at Newmill (Auldearn), c4km from the coast, on 19 Oct (JDHM) was the first documented inland record since 1885.

**Razorbill *Alca torda***

*Very common offshore.*

Breeding: Following on from the breeding success of 2003, when Razorbills bred in Moray & Nairn for the first time, 8 individuals were seen on cliff ledges at Portknockie on 14 and 20 Apr (LS). Confirmed breeding attempts were noted at the 2003 site at the east end of the cliffs, with two birds incubating on 26 Jun, and on 4 Jul two birds incubating and a third pair with a small chick (MJHC). In addition, a further two birds (minimum) were present on the north side of the Bow Fiddle Rock on 26 Jun although breeding was not suspected.

Best offshore counts were 80 off Findhorn 1 Sep (JDHM), and c400 on the sea off Tugnet on 5 Sep (MJHC), the highest count in the county since 670 off Findhorn on 17 Aug 2001.

**Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle***

*Scarce offshore, rare breeder.*

Breeding: One pair bred in the usual crevice at Tronach Head, raising two young. This is the 19<sup>th</sup> successive year of breeding at this site. A second nest was again located 100m to the west of this traditional site, although breeding success was not recorded at this site. At Portknockie, there were 14 birds present on 5 Mar, building to 22 on 14 Apr, and peaking at 24 on the 24 April (LS). Breeding success was not reported from this site, although one individual was seen entering a crevice on the cliff on 26 Jun (MJHC).

Elsewhere, odd individuals were reported in all seasons, with the peak counts being 6 off Burghead on 24 Aug, and 5 on a boat trip off Lossiemouth on 10 Oct.

**Little Auk *Alle alle***

*Scarce winter visitor.*

A very poor year with only two records: 1 off Burghead 17 Oct (VW) and 4 off Nairn Bar 23 Nov (ID).

**Puffin *Fratercula arctica***

*Scarce offshore.*

A poor year. The only records were singles off Lossiemouth 21 Mar and 28 Jun, on a boat trip off Lossiemouth 15 Aug, off Portknockie 8 Dec and 2 off Culbin Bar 12 Dec.

Single tideline corpses were found on Nairn west beach 8 Oct and Nairn Bar 15 Oct.

### **Feral Pigeon *Columba livia***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Some very large flocks were found in 2004, most notably 707 Elgin town centre 31 Oct (counted from digital photos of rooftops) (MJHC), 600 Wester Kintrae 13 Feb (JDHM) and 400 Gilston 26 Dec (RP). The previous largest flock in Moray & Nairn was 410 Burghead 31 Jan 1982. Other counts of 50 or more were 310 Buckie harbour 22 Feb, 291 Portknockie (on Bow Fiddle Rock) 30 Oct, 270 Burghead maltings 6 Nov, 200 Linkwood 14 Feb, 180 Salterhill 10 Dec, 130 Ardivot 14 Oct, 130 Lossiemouth 16 Sep, 100 Keith 5 Dec, 100 Nairn 16 Dec, 100 Myreside (Elgin) 26 Dec and 80 Miltonhill 17 Oct.

One collecting nest material in Elgin as early as 25 Feb.

### **Stock Dove *Columba oenas***

*Scarce resident breeder, formerly common.*

Breeding season: Records in the period late March-July included birds at Calcots, Coltfoot, Convalleys (Glen Rinnes), Darklands, Darnaway, Dipple, Dyke, Easter Calcots, Edinkillie, Findochty, Findrassie, Garmouth viaduct, Inchberry, Kellas House, Kinloss, Kirkhill Wood, Lhanbryde, Loch of Cotts, Loch Spynie, Milltown airfield, Newton of Budgate, North Alves, Pitairlie, Pitgaveny Wood, Rafford, Spynie cemetery and Urquhart.

Numerous around Scarffbanks in Jan, when peak count 17 on 21<sup>st</sup> (RP).

### **Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Largest flocks reported were 650 Gilston 7 Jan, 500 Kirkhill (Alves) 31 Jan, 500 Longmorn 22 Jan, 400 Salterhill 19 Feb, 400 Standingstone 24 Mar, 300 York Tower 22 Feb and 175 Pluscarden 17 Jan.

On the Lein (Kingston) first song 24 Jan and nest building 23 Mar. At Loch Spynie, 8 nests found north-east fen in Aug, 2 of them only 20m apart.

### **Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Either scarce or poorly reported in 2004. Best flock was 20 Clochan 22 Feb and no other group exceeded 8. A nest with eggs Clochan 27 Mar; singing resumed here 11 Dec. Three pairs Mundole 5 Aug and 4 occupied sites Garmouth 31 May.

**Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur***

*Rare visitor.*

One in a Buckpool garden 24-27 Oct (RS,MJHC,RP). This is the 20<sup>th</sup> record for Moray & Nairn.



Turtle Dove, Buckpool 26 Oct 2004 (© Martin Cook)

**Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus***

*Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: No April reports. First few calling birds in May were at Lochenoun 3<sup>rd</sup>, Kinloss 4<sup>th</sup>, Brodie Castle 5<sup>th</sup> and Tom Mor 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Barn Owl *Tyto alba***

*Scarce resident breeder.*

Breeding: Confirmed breeding at 1 site and birds seen in 10 other localities in April-July.

Outside the breeding season, and away from known breeding sites, single birds were seen at Aberlour (Dec), Burniestrype (Oct), Burnside of Enzie (Sep), Clochan (Jan), Marypark (Feb,Sep,Oct), Hardmuir (Feb), Hillhead (Forres) (Mar), Inveravon School (Mar,Sep,Nov), Kinermory (Sep,Oct,Nov), Lochloy Farm (Dec), Longmorn (Oct), Lossie estuary (Dec), North Darkland (Jan), Rothes (Jan), Ryeriggs (Feb), South Darkland (Mar), Tomdow (Sep), Tomhommie (Jan), Duffus (Feb) and Wester Calcotts (Dec).



Barn Owl chick, Ballindalloch 30 May 2004 (© Martin Cook)

**Tawny Owl *Strix aluco***

*Common resident breeder.*

Clearly a very widespread breeder with territorial birds so far located in 207 out of 607 Moray tetrads for the Breeding Bird Atlas.

**Long-eared Owl *Asio otus***

*Scarce resident breeder.*

Breeding: Confirmed at Kinloss (nest with young 28 Jun (AJL)) and Muiry Wood (Forres) (young calling 30 June-12 July (ISS,AJL)). Elsewhere in the breeding season, 1 River Findhorn (Forres) 14 May, Aultmore Forest 12 May, Garmouth 18 Jun, Hillhead (Burgie) 29 Jul and Lein (Kingston) May-Jul.

**Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus***

*Rare breeder and very scarce migrant.*

Breeding: Five pairs were located on inland moors during the breeding season.

The only coastal report was 1 Findhorn Bay 31 Aug.

**Swift *Apus apus***

*Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: Following the first ever Apr records in 2003, the arrival in 2004 was even earlier. First was 1 Garmouth 19 Apr (AJ) followed next day by 3 Elgin 20 Apr (CAG). No more until 2 Loch Spynie 30 Apr and most observers reported their first birds in the second week of May.

No very large aggregations seen, best were c100 over Kinloss 20 Jul and over Elgin 21 Jul. Most left by late Aug. September records are unusual so 3 Elgin 10<sup>th</sup>, 3 Loch Spynie 13<sup>th</sup> and 1 Buckie 13<sup>th</sup> were noteworthy as was the exceptionally late bird over Forres on 10 Oct (AJL). There have only been 4 previous Oct records and 2 in Nov.

**Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis***

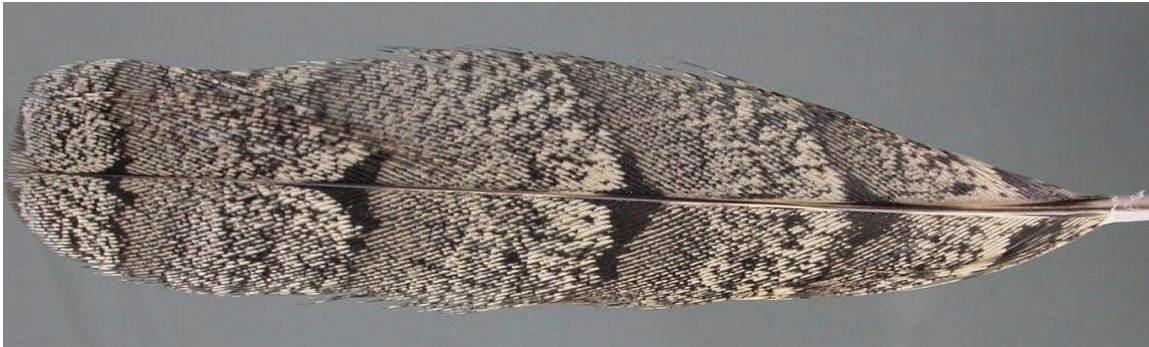
*Very scarce visitor and occasional breeder.*

On the River Spey, 2 near Mosstodloch 4 Sep and 1 at nearby Bogmoor next day (TF). On the River Nairn, several reports from Firhall/Nairn between Apr-Oct (per AJL,RPC). On the River Findhorn, 1 Forres 15 Aug (AJL). Elsewhere, 1 Loch Spynie 3 Oct (MJHC,JDHM).

**Wryneck *Jynx torquilla***

*Rare migrant.*

1 dead on the Speyside Way at Bogmoor 25 Aug (MG,MJHC), at a time when several other individuals were seen on the Aberdeenshire coast. This is the second record for Moray & Nairn following 1 Strathlene 21-22 Sept 2000.



Wryneck tail feather, from remains at Bogmoor 25 Aug 2004 (© Martin Cook)

**Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis***

*Very scarce resident, scarce breeder in recent years.*

The only reports were of a calling bird in the Heldon Hill area of Monaughty Forest on 13 Feb and 8 Jun (CAG).

**Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major***

*Common resident breeder.*

Drumming heard Sanquhar Loch from 14 Jan. Nest with 2 young RAF Kinloss 17 Jun. Several reports of birds visiting garden peanut feeders, most often in autumn.

**Skylark *Alauda arvensis***

*Common breeder and migrant.*

First song heard, in February, at Findhorn Bay on 5<sup>th</sup>, Longmorn on 11<sup>th</sup>, North Alves on 13<sup>th</sup> and Gilston on 19<sup>th</sup>. Counts of singing birds were 17 along Spynie canal between Gilston-Elgin/Lossiemouth road 16 Mar, 8 Gilston 19 Feb and 5 Lossiemouth east beach 8 Jun.

Largest autumn/winter counts were 90 Upper Meft 1 Jan, 40 Balormie 1 Feb, 130 Garmouth 2 Mar, 45 Gilston 15 Oct, 23 Portknockie 26 Oct, 30 Netherton 30 Oct and 42 Kinloss 16 Nov (25 there 24 Sep). Unseasonal singers were 1 Lossiemouth 18 Oct, 2 Netherton 30 Oct and 2 Barmuckity 19 Nov.

**Sand Martin *Riparia riparia***

*Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: Very early were 1 Loch Spynie and 2 Loch na Bo 18 Mar (2-3 there daily until 25<sup>th</sup>). More typically, 2 Loch Spynie 30 Mar and 12 Cloddach 1 Apr. Largest spring congregations were 100 Loch Spynie 18 Apr, 150 Findhorn rivermouth 25 Apr, 65 Kinloss 27 Apr, 56 Gilston 4 May and 400 Loch Spynie 29 Apr.

Colony counts (apparently occupied burrows) were 34 Bodnastalker (Kellas), 5-6 Corbiewell, 32 Half Davoch, 10 Kinloss dunes, c100 along the banks of the Spey downstream from Mosstodloch and 12 Tomcork. Other colonies reported near Dufftown golf course, Portgordon and Rothes Burn. Previously occupied colonies at Pittendrich and Woodside (Rafford) were deserted in 2004.

Last of the year were 3 Stoneyford pond (Rafford) 2 Oct.

**Swallow *Hirundo rustica***

*Summer visitor and very common breeder.*

Arrival: 1 Loch Spynie 3 Apr was very early. Main arrival was concentrated in mid Apr when observers reported their 'firsts' on 11<sup>th</sup> (1), 13<sup>th</sup> (2), 14<sup>th</sup> (3), 15<sup>th</sup> (1), 16<sup>th</sup> (1), 17<sup>th</sup> (1) and 19<sup>th</sup> (2).

Breeding: In the Lhanbryde barn, at least 4 pairs bred, and there were 9 active nests during the season. Mean clutch size was quite small at 4.2 but mean brood size at fledging (4.0) has remained fairly constant since 2001 despite the trend towards falling clutch sizes. The last brood fledged in late September (RP).

Post-breeding flocks were 120 Clochan 16 Aug and 100 Darkland 8 Sep. A rapid departure took place in the third week of September. Late birds, from mid Oct onwards, were several Dufftown 19 Oct, 1 Roseisle 22 Oct, 2 Buckie 2 Nov and 1 Kinloss 3-5 Nov.

**House Martin *Delichon urbicum***

*Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: First, and quite early, were 1 Lossiemouth 17 Apr, 6 Loch Spynie 18 Apr and 1 Forres also 18 Apr. Later in Apr were 1 Lossiemouth 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1 Rothes 25<sup>th</sup> and 1 Loch Oire 28<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding: A slight improvement at Buckie High School where 13 occupied nests 11 Jul. Several occupied nests Delnabo (Tomintoul) mid May.

In late summer, good numbers on wires in Forres where 63 on 29 Jul, rising to 250 on 17 Aug and still 100 on 1 Sep. Best elsewhere was 40 Clochan 16 Aug and 85 there on 10 Sep. Last to depart were 3 Portknockie 30 Oct and 2 Forres 31 Oct – the latter birds mixing incongruously with the huge Waxwing flock.

**Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis***

*Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: First records, in April, were 2 Cragganmore 20<sup>th</sup>, 1 Little Aitnoch 24<sup>th</sup> and 1 Wood of Conerock 25<sup>th</sup>.

Other breeding habitat records came from Benrinnes Wood (feeding young on 26 Jun), Blue Hill (Aberlour), Craigroy (Ballindalloch). Delavorar, Glenlatterach Woods, Hill of Sneishin, Phones, Scoot More, Soccach, Tomcork and Whiteash Hill (carrying food 5 Jun).

**Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis***

*Very common breeder and migrant.*

Breeding: First 2 singing Covesea 18 Mar. Back on breeding grounds up country were 43 Bantrach-Cairn Eney 16 Apr and 20 Suie (Glenlivet) 17 Apr. Later, birds at 10 sites along the east side of Glenlatterach Reservoir 1 Jul and 14 pairs Moss of Delnahaugh (Dallas) 11 Jun. At the coast, 2 singing Covesea 18 Mar and 8 pairs Lossiemouth east beach 8 Jun.

A group of 15 were feeding together in a field at Cairnfield (Buckie) 1 May and, in mid summer, 52 Kincorth (Findhorn Bay) marsh 20 Jul.

Autumn/winter counts were made at RAF Kinloss where 45 on 29 Jan, 48 on 27 Feb, 68 on 1 Mar, 87 on 21 Apr, 10 on 2 Sep and 34 on 21 Dec. Elsewhere, 47 Nairn/Culbin Bars 15 Oct and 46 Netherton 1 Feb. Still inland on 12 Dec was a flock on the moorland edge at Ben Aigan.

### **Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus***

*Scarce breeder, fairly common in winter.*

Breeding: Four singing birds between the harbour and the Beach Bar, Lossiemouth 30 Mar. Other song reported at Burghead 21 Apr and at Covesea where 2 pairs 25 May.

Winter counts: Along the rocky shore between Portgordon-Strathlene were 18 on 25 Jan, 20 on 11 Oct and 18 on 12 Dec – scarce compared with many years. Elsewhere, 9 Covesea 12 Oct, 6 Hopeman 5 Oct, 16 Lossiemouth west beach 13 Oct and 6 Nairn/Culbin Bars 15 Oct.

### **Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***

*Summer visitor and common breeder. Scarce in winter.*

Widespread on freshwater in spring-autumn but very scarce in winter when the only records were 1 Aberlour 12-24 Jan, 1 Findhorn Bay 22 Jan, 1 Cooper Park (Elgin) 18-25 Feb, 1 Fochabers 22 Feb, 1 Forres 22 Feb and 1 (unusually on the shore) Portessie 22 Feb. Still well up country was 1 Burn of Favat (Glen Rinnes) 17 Nov.

### **Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba***

*Very common breeder and migrant.*

Passage: 'White Wagtails' *M.a.alba* (singles unless stated) were seen in spring at Findhorn Bay 8 May, Scarffbanks 23 Apr, Lossie estuary 11 Apr and 23 Apr, Lossiemouth breakwater (2) 24 Apr, Nairn harbour 21 Apr, Strathlene 9 May and Windyridge 20 May. There were no autumn reports.

Counts of Pieds were 31 Burghead 13 Sep, 48 Forres (Grant Park) 18 Aug, 47 Forres (Bogton Road) 13 Sep, 120 to roost Loch Spynie 25 Mar, 34 Nairn rivermouth 3 Oct and 21 Wester Greens 24 Jan.

### **Waxwing *Bombus garrulus***

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

Winter-spring: The only record in the early winter period was of 15 Elgin 8 Feb (CAG).

Autumn-winter: The best ever winter for Waxwings in Moray & Nairn began with the arrival of extraordinary numbers in Forres in late Oct/early Nov. Subsequently birds became widely distributed across the area with most towns and villages hosting parties of birds on berry-bearing trees and shrubs. Records are listed below according to locality although of course there will be some degree of overlap between adjacent localities and between different towns as birds deplete the berry crops in and move on.

Aberlour: 11 on 6 Nov rising to 32-33 during 11-18 Nov (AE,MJHC).

Broadley (Clochan): 2 on 8 Dec (EA).

Buckie: 80 on 27 Oct rising to 200 on 1 Nov (RP,MJHC).

Roseisle Forest: 1 in off the sea 20 Nov (AJ).

Burgie: 2 on 5 Dec (AJL).

Clochan: 17 on 20-24 Oct (MJHC).

Cummingston: 2 on 27 Oct (PTH).

Dufftown: min. 20 during 11-14 Nov (WRPB).

Duffus: 40 on 28 Oct, 2 on 2 Dec (MD).

Elgin: The presence of large flocks in different parts of the town at slightly different days/times makes it impossible to be certain how many birds were present in total. First were 6 in Chandlers Rise 24 Oct. Thereafter numbers increased rapidly and only counts of 50 or more are given below, in date order: 100 The

Wards/Edgar Road 25 Oct, 75 The Wards 27 Oct, 60 Academy St. 28 Oct, 500 Elgin Academy area 1 Nov, 200 railway station 1 Nov, 110 Moss St. 1 Nov, 100 Bishopmill 1 Nov, 100 Moray College 1 Nov, 50 The Wards 1-2 Nov, 328 Academy St. 2-3 Nov, 250 Bishopmill 2 Nov, 200 Moray St. 2 Nov, 60 New Elgin 2 Nov, 300 Asda store area 3 Nov, 100 The Wards 3 Nov, 100 Bishopmill 4 Nov, 400 The Wards 5 Nov, 300 Elgin Academy area 6 Nov, 64 Laighmoray Hotel 7 Nov, 60 Comet store 8 Nov, 150 Cathedral 9 Nov, 53 Pinefield 9 Nov and 50 Cathedral 16 Nov (CAG, AJ et al.). There is clearly a lot of overlap in these counts and it is certainly not justified to add the counts of any one day to obtain a total. However the largest single flock of 500 on 1 Nov represents a minimum for the town. By mid Nov large flocks had moved on and last group was 22 New Elgin 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Fochabers: 120 in early Nov (TM).

Forres: Here the largest numbers gathered and were largely concentrated in the Pilmuir area at the west end of the town where berries were especially plentiful. First 150 located 25 Oct, thereafter 250 on 28 Oct, 500 on 29 Oct, 840 on 30 Oct and 1225 on 31 Oct (many obs. - the 31 Oct count was made from digital photographs by MJHC). In Nov, still 1200 on 1<sup>st</sup> but the flock then rapidly dwindled as the berries were exhausted. Later in the year, 20 on 24 Dec and 60 on 27 Dec.

Keith: 36 on 30 Oct, 6 on 3 Nov and 5 on 10 Nov (AJHA,IF).

Kingsteps: c200 on 20 Nov (per RPC).

Kinloss: In Oct, 123 on 25<sup>th</sup>, 118 on 26<sup>th</sup>, 150 on 27<sup>th</sup>, 110 on 28<sup>th</sup>, 120 on 29<sup>th</sup> and 250 on 31<sup>st</sup>. In Nov, 86 on 1<sup>st</sup>, 110 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 52 on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 40 on 5<sup>th</sup> and last 6 on 11<sup>th</sup> (AJL,PTH et al.).

Kingston: 3 on 11 Dec (PGS).

Loch Oire: 3 on 5 Nov, 1 on 8 Nov and 70 on 10 Nov (EH).

Loch Spynie: 30 flying over 27 Oct (CAG).

Lossiemouth: 26 on 27 Oct (PTH).

Mosstodloch: 10 on 25 Oct (MJHC).

Nairn: 6 on 22 Nov (RPC).

Urquhart: 20 on 10 Nov (EH).



Waxwings, Forres 31 Oct 2004 (© Martin Cook)

**Dipper *Cinclus cinclus***

*Common resident breeder.*

Reports received from Broom of Moy, Burn of Tervie, Cloddach, Craigroy (Dallas), Forres (Mosset Burn), Howford Bridge, Romach Distillery and Rothes.

**Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Nine occupied sites in 1 mile between Inchbroom-Cotts of Innes 23 Jun. First juveniles noted Tanzie (Ben Aigan) 18 Jun. Counts were 20 Knockando 15 Jul, 10 Loch of Blairs 1 Dec and 12 along River Findhorn at Forres 23 Nov. Seen or heard in 17 places around Loch na Bo 12 Jul. On the Nairn/Culbin Bars, 2 on 25 Jan, 11 on 15 Oct and 23 (13 Culbin, 10 Nairn) on 12 Dec.

**Dunnoek *Prunella modularis***

*Very common resident breeder.*

First song Elgin 9 Jan and Kingston 16 Mar. First juveniles Tanzie (Ben Aigan) 22 May. Seven Nairn Bar 15 Oct (and 6 there 12 Dec) and 6 along River Findhorn at Forres 12 Apr.

**Robin *Erithacus rubecula***

*Very common resident breeder and migrant.*

First spring song Lein (Kingston) 23 Jan and first juveniles Tanzie (Ben Aigan) 22 May. Counts were 10 in coastal gorse Findochty 10 Oct, 19 along 2 miles upriver from Tamdhu Distillery and 12 Loch of Blairs 18 Oct.

**Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus***

*Summer visitor and scarce breeder. Very scarce migrant.*

Located in the breeding season at Creag an Iaruinn (Bridge of Brown) (2 singing), Aitnoch (1M), Banchoir (2M), Benrinnes Wood (1 singing M), Craigroy Farm (Ballindalloch) (a pair), Delnabo (fledged young), Glen Rinnes Home Farm (1 singing M), Little Conval Wood (a pair), Loch Belivat (song), Lynemore (Delnapot) (1 pair and 2M), Phones (Drum Wood) (1F) and Scoot More (a pair – carrying food) (JB et al.). The only coastal migrant was 1 Culbin Bar 15 Oct (AY).

**Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra***

*Summer visitor and scarce breeder. Very scarce migrant.*

In breeding habitat were 1M Bantrach 22 May, 1 Ben Aigan 28 Apr, 1 pair Bogeney 26 Jun, 1M Glenlatterach Reservoir 1 Jul and 1 Inchnacape 14 Jun.

**Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus***

*Scarce resident breeder and probable migrant.*

Breeding: Inland moorland pairs (or territorial males) located at Allt Mor (Cromdales), Ben Aigan, Bogeney, Dava, Glack Harnes (Ben Rinnes), Hill of Menduff, Hill of Sneishin (Beachans), Lochenoun and Old Fir Hill.

Coastal/lowland pairs at Findhorn, RAF Kinloss (3 pairs), Lein (Kingston) (6 pairs only produced 3 broods of young) and Strathlene.

Inland in winter, 1 Knock of Braemoray 11 Feb and 2 Lochindorb 28 Feb. Reported in coastal areas from 8 sites in winter.

**Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe***

*Summer visitor, fairly common migrant and local breeder.*

Arrival: Very early, on 20 Mar, were 1M Hillhead (Birnie) (AE) and 1 Spey Bay (NN). Only once, at Kingston on 15 Mar 1997, has there been an earlier record. Also in March, on 31<sup>st</sup>, were 1 RAF Kinloss and 1 Lein (Kingston). Coastal migrants later in spring included 9 Kingston 20 Apr, 10 Portknockie 20 Apr, 7 Strathlone 25 Apr and 7 there again 9 May.

Pairs reported during the breeding season at Aldunie (Cabrach), Ben Avon, Ben Rinnes and Lochenoun.

Several late summer/autumn coastal migrants. Most together were 6 Kingston 7 Sep and 4 Lossiemouth 11 Sep. Last of the year was 1 RAF Kinloss 4 Oct.

**Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus***

*Summer visitor and scarce breeder.*

Occupied sites in the breeding season, mainly located during fieldwork for the Breeding Bird Atlas, were: 1 Allt Mor (Cromdales) 9 May (IF), fledged young Allt na Kyle (Tomintoul) 12 Jun (MJHC), 1 pair Blackstank (Ben Rinnes) 27 Apr (AE), 5 pairs Glen Builg and 1 pair Inchrory 23 May (MJHC) and 3 pairs Muckle Fergie Burn (Glen Avon) 12 Jun (MJHC).



Ring Ouzel nest, Muckle Fergie Burn (Glen Avon) 12 Jun 2004 (© Martin Cook)

**Blackbird *Turdus merula***

*Very common resident breeder, winter visitor and migrant.*

Two males in full song Elgin 12 Jan; no full song at Lossiemouth until 12 Feb and Clochan on 13th. Nest building Elgin on 8 Apr and food-carrying on 29<sup>th</sup>.

Autumn/winter counts of groups included 14 Nairn 20 Sep, 18 Kinloss 29 Oct, 11 Cooper Park, Elgin 29 Oct (and 13 there 17 Nov) and 15 Stonewells 21 Dec. Quiet sub-song noted Lossiemouth 3 Jan and 2 Dec.

**Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris***

*Very common migrant and winter visitor.*

Winter-spring: Flocks of 30 or more were 120 Brodie 8 Jan, 30 Craigroy (Dallas) 14 Jan, 34 Sanquhar Mains 17 Jan, 30 Roseisle 21 Jan (and 31<sup>st</sup>), 31 Portknockie 24 Jan, 50 Wester Coltfoot 1 Feb, 120 near Spynie Palace 7 Feb, 50 West Mains 13 Feb and 30 Dallas 10 Apr. Last in spring were 2 Portknockie 22 Apr.

Autumn: First of the autumn were 2 Elgin 4 Oct and there were 30 near Brodie 10 Oct and 30 Clochan next day. No significant arrival, until 19-22 Oct when Fieldfares became numerous in the countryside. Largest flocks between mid Oct-mid Nov were 50 Alves 22 Oct, hundreds Dufftown 23 Oct, 50 Forres 25 Oct, 50 Westerfolds 30 Oct (60 there 9 Nov), 470 Ryeriggs 31 Oct, 64 Kinloss 2 Nov, 100 Wester Moy 3 Nov, 200 Urquhart 8 Nov and 100 Lochhills 16 Nov. Flocks of 30 or more from mid November onwards were 32 Duffus 20 Nov, 200 Clochan 21 Nov, 250 Pitairlie 22 Nov, 41 North Alves 6 Dec, 70 Westerfolds 6 Dec, 250 Kellas oakwood 15 Dec, 70 Dallas 15 Dec, 140 Standingstone 22 Dec and 30 Forres 25 Dec.

**Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos***

*Very common breeder and migrant.*

First song earlier than usual, from mid January, when heard in Elgin 16<sup>th</sup> and Forres 17<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, song first noted Kingston 6 Feb, Clochan 11 Feb and North Alves 13 Feb. Food-carrying noted Elgin 21 Apr, Kingston 26 Apr and first juveniles Tanzie (Ben Aigan) 12 May. A bird with a white neck band was present here all summer.

December records of apparently over-wintering birds were 6 around Portknockie harbour 8<sup>th</sup>, 2 Nairn Bar 12<sup>th</sup>, 2 Portgordon 12<sup>th</sup>, 1 Gilston 21<sup>st</sup> and 1 Kingston 31<sup>st</sup>. As usual. most such birds were very close to the coast.

**Redwing *Turdus iliacus***

*Very common migrant and winter visitor.*

Winter-spring: Only small numbers present in the area with best counts 24 Kinloss 14 Jan and 12 Cooper Park (Elgin) 10 Feb. Last in spring was 1 Addie Hill 17 Apr.

Autumn: Well ahead of the main arrival were 15 Elgin 4 Oct, others overflying South Darkland 9 Oct and 5 Clochan 11 Oct. More numerous from mid month, especially inland where hundreds on Rowans around Dufftown between 18-23 Oct and a large flock feeding on Rowans on Ben Aigan 21 Oct. Other flocks of 50 or more were 50 Culbin Bar 15 Oct, 70 Alves 22 Oct, 58 Kinloss 28 Oct, 60 Forres 30 Oct, 50 Maryfield 20 Nov, 50 Kirkhill Quarry 19 Dec, 100 Westerfolds 21 Dec and 120 Standingstone 22 Dec.

**Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus***

*Common resident breeder and migrant.*

Best flock counts of the year, mostly in the late summer/early autumn post-breeding period, were 28 Bogeney 26 Jun, 20 Kinloss 19 Aug, 20 Ben Aigan 25 Aug and 50 there 19 Sep, and 21 Sluie 24 Dec.

**Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia***

*Summer visitor and scarce breeder.*

Considerably fewer records than in 2003 but this is likely to be explained in terms of the nature of observer coverage rather than, necessarily, a population decline. Single singing birds were heard at Saughs 25 Apr (MJHC), Connage 28 Apr (MJHC), Binsness area 25 Apr and 8 May (AJL,GG), and Tanzie (Ben Aigan) 31 May (GG).

**Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus***

*Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: April singers were 1 Cloddach 24<sup>th</sup>, 1 Kingston 26<sup>th</sup> and 1 Spynie canal 28<sup>th</sup>. Good numbers Spynie area by 7 May.

Five singing birds located along 3km of River Spey at Rothes 4 Jun.

At Loch Spynie 'Constant Effort Site' 20 adults were trapped for ringing – fewer than the previous 4-year average of 28. The estimated number of adults using the north-east fen during the breeding season was 35, substantially more than the 15 in 2003 but fewer than the 54 estimated in 2000. The juvenile/adult proportion was 1.3 (RP).

**Whitethroat *Sylvia communis***

*Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: First was a very early bird at Cloddach on 24 Apr. No others until early May when 2 Salterhill 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 Clashach Quarry 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1 Findhorn and 1 Lein (Kingston) 4<sup>th</sup>, 5 Maryfield-Windyridge 7<sup>th</sup>, 4 near Forres 8<sup>th</sup>, 1 Strathlene 9<sup>th</sup>, 1 Kinloss 10<sup>th</sup> and 1 Aberlour 11<sup>th</sup>.

Noted as common around Aberlour where none were found in 2003 (AE). No autumn reports later than 1 Lochhill 9 Sep.

**Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin***

*Summer visitor and scarce breeder.*

Singing birds (singles unless stated) were located at Aberlour 23 May, Craigellachie 21 May, Dyke 10 Jun, River Findhorn below A96 bridge 2-14 May, River Spey near Fochabers 3 May, Garmouth viaduct 31 May, Howford 28 May, Innes House 12 May (2), Kellas House 23 May, Lhanbryde 11 May, Loch na Bo 11 May, Spynie canal 3 Jun, St. John's Meads 6 Jun and Waukmill 27 May.

**Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla***

*Summer visitor and fairly common breeder. Scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

January-March: 1F Bishopmill (Elgin) 12-17 Jan. In an Academy St. (Elgin) garden, 1M regularly throughout the period (and during Apr) with 2M on several dates and 3M on 8 Feb; also 1F on 4 dates in Jan (and on 17 Mar) and 2F on 5 Jan. Elsewhere, 1M Forres for 2 weeks in mid Jan.

Spring/summer: An unprecedented total of 125 singing birds were found, in 61 localities. Singing birds were found at Aberlour, Allaloth, Altyre, Brodie Castle lake area (4), Burgie distillery, Cairnfield (4), Cloddach quarry, Cotts of Innes, Craigellachie, Dalvey, Darnaway, Delnapot, Dufftown golf course, Duffus, Dunphail House, Dyke, Elginshill, Findhorn, Findhorn River between A96-Findhorn Bay (10), Findrassie, Fochabers (upstream) (4), Garmouth viaduct (4), Half Davoch, Hazelbank, Howford Bridge-Nairn (5), Innes House (10), Kellas oakwood, Kellas (3), Kincorth, Kincorth-Binsness (3), Kinermony, Kinloss, Kirkhill (Glen Rinnes), Kirkhill Wood area (3), Lethen, Lhanbryde, Limekilns (6), Little Bin Hill, Loch Loy (2), Loch Oire, Loch na Bo (5), Loch Spynie area (5), Maryfield, Millbuies (2), Milltown airfield, Miltonduff, Moy House, Nether Dallachy, Newmill (Auldearn) (2), Orton, Phones (Drum Wood), Pitgaveny, Pluscarden, Rothes (along River Spey) (4), Rothes (Glen Grant Gardens) (3), St. John's Meads, Scottackleys, Spynie Palace, Stoneyford pond (Rafford) (2), Wallfield (2) and Woodside (Rafford) (2).

Autumn: Coastal migrants were 1 Hopeman 13 Oct, 2 Portknockie 18 Oct (1 on 28 Oct), 1 Strathlene 21 Oct and 1 Findochty 30 Oct. Inland, 3 ringed Clochan 28 Aug-5 Sep, 1 Urquhart 9 Oct and 20 Oct

Late November-December: 1F Academy St., Elgin 19-31 Dec, 1M1F Chandlers Rise, Elgin 24-31 Dec.

**Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix***

*Summer visitor and scarce breeder.*

A good year with singing birds in several sites where they have not been reported previously. Single singers were in Altyre Woods 13-15 May (JB), Bin of Cullen 30 May (KG), Broom of Moy 10-20 May (JDHM,AJL,DAG, AJ), Cawdor Wood (a traditional site) 24 May (JB), Delavorar 23 May (MJHC), Limekilns Wood (Mundole) 13 May (JDHM) and St. John's Meads 6 Jun (AJL). None found Kellas oakwood 21 May.



Wood Warbler, Broom of Moy 16 May 2004 (© Duncan Gibson)

**Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita***

*Summer visitor and scarce breeder. Scarce migrant and rare winter visitor.*

Winter: 1 Nairn 1 Feb (PCC).

Arrival: First song, in March, was heard at Culriach Wood 29<sup>th</sup>, Maryfield 30<sup>th</sup> and Lein (Kingston) 31<sup>st</sup>.

In another bumper year a record total of 96 singing birds were found, in 44 localities. Singing birds were heard at Altyre (5), Braidbog, Brodie Castle lake area (3), Cairnfield (2), Califer Hill, Cappieshill Wood (Milltown airfield), Charlestown (Roseisle Forest) (3), Cloddach quarry, Cloddymoss (2), Craigellachie, Dallas Dhu, Fairy Wood (Forres), Fochabers (upstream) (4), Forres (River Findhorn) (2), Garmouth viaduct,

Hill of Maud (2), Innes House (4), Kingsteps, Knockomie, Lein (Kingston) (7), Limekilns Wood (Mundole) (5), Little Bin Hill, Loch na Bo (6), Loch of Blairs (3), Loch Spynie (2), Lossie Forest (3), Maryfield-Spynie Palace (2), Monaughty Forest (5), Muiry Wood (Forres), Newbold (Forres), Pindlers Croft (3), Pitgaveny, Rafford-Pluscarden (4), Sanquhar Woods (2), Saughs, Smithy Croft (Forres), Snab of Moy, St. John's Meads (3), Tearie, Torbain (Glen Avon) (2), Wellhill, Wester Newforres and Woodside (Rafford).

Still singing strongly on 7 Sep were 2 Loch na Bo and 1 Loch Spynie; the latter, and another at Maryfield, was still singing on 14 Sep.

In autumn, 2 ringed Clochan 4 Sep and another on 3 Oct, and 1 Loch Flemington 15 Oct. Coastal migrants were 1 Portknockie 2 Nov and 1 Covesea 6 Nov. An overwintering bird Portknockie 31 Dec (L&RS).

### **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

*Summer visitor and very common breeder.*

Arrival: Unusually late with none reported until 1 Loch Flemington 19 Apr. Rapidly widespread thereafter with observers reporting their 'firsts' on 20<sup>th</sup> (5), 21<sup>st</sup> (1), 22<sup>nd</sup> (3) and 24<sup>th</sup> (5).

Information relating to the breeding season was 14 singing along River Findhorn between A96 bridge and rivermouth in May (AJL), 8 along 1.5 miles of the Spey upstream from Fochabers 22 Apr, 27 singing Innes House 12 May (JDHM) and 10 Stoneyford pond (Rafford) 10 May.

At Loch Spynie 'Constant Effort Site' the number of adults ringed was 15 (up 5 from 2003) but survival of ringed adults from 2003 to 2004 was a low 9.1%. The proportion of juveniles to adults showed a continuing increase since 2002 to 2.8.

Last of the year were 1 Elgin 6 Oct and 1 Findochty 10 Oct.

### **Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

*Very common resident breeder and scarce migrant.*

In the breeding season, 5 singing Bantrach Wood 9 May, 5 singing Brodie Castle lake 5 May, 12 singing in 5km in Monaughty Forest 26 May and 6 singing in c1km of woodland Woodside (Rafford) 21 Jun. Still 1 singing Garmouth 9 Sep.

On Nairn/Culbin Bars were 14 on 15 Oct and 13 on 12 Dec. Evidence of possible migrants were 6 feeding in sycamores Findochty 10 Oct. Flocks, usually associated with tits, included 10 Loch Oire 9 Feb and 10 Maryfield 11 Dec.

### **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*

*Summer visitor and common breeder.*

Arrival: First was 1 Kinloss 10 May.

Reported in the breeding season (proved breeding in *italics*) at *Aultahurn (Dallas)*, *Balmorlich (Strath Avon)*, *Bantrach*, *Benrinnes Wood*, *Cnoc Fergan (Strath Avon)*, *Howford*, *Kellas House*, *Kinloss*, *Loch Oire*, *Lochloy Wood*, *Nairn*, *Tomintoul*, *Portknockie*, *Scarffbanks* and *Scot More*.

### **Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*

*Rare breeder.*

At least 2 males and a female carrying food in Loch Spynie reedbeds in July (AJ), and birds seen most months in the area until the end of the year (MJHC, DAG et al.).

### **Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*

*Very common resident breeder.*

Flocks of 15 or more were 47 Loch Loy 8 Jan (and 33 there 3 Nov), 36 Cloddach quarry 25 Sep, 28 Dava 11 Jan, 25 Longmorn 8 Nov, 24 Loch of Blairs 15 Nov, 24 River Findhorn near Forres 14 May, 23 Kirkhill quarry 19 Dec, 22 Loch Spynie 16 Aug, 21 Fochabers Lake 20 Oct, 21 Pitgaveny 5 Nov, 19 Garmouth viaduct 2 Dec, 17 Lein (Kingston) 23 Oct, 17 Loch na Bo 4 Oct, 17 Stonewells 16 Nov, 16 Elgin 19 Nov, 16

Portknockie 25 Nov and 16 Kincorth (Findhorn Bay) 25 Nov. Birds were noted on peanut feeders in gardens in Aberlour, Clochan and Elgin. Near town centres were 5 Academy St., Elgin 30 Dec and 5 Clifton Road, Lossiemouth 11 Dec.

### **Crested Tit** *Lophophanes cristatus*

*Fairly common resident breeder.*

Nest boxes:

	Pairs	Av. clutch	Av. fledged brood/successful pair	
<b>Lossie Forest</b>	3	6.0	5.5	(MJHC)

A very disappointing year with only 2 successful pairs, the third failing at the egg stage.

Outside 'core' areas in the breeding season were 1 Dallasbraughty (Dunphail) 7 Jun and 1 juv there 25 Jul (JB). Later, 4 Loch of Blairs 18 Oct (JDHM).

### **Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*

*Very common resident breeder.*

Largest flock counts made during the year were 30 Craigroy (Dallas) 26 Oct and 30 Loch Loy 16 Dec.

### **Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

*Very common resident breeder.*

Nest boxes:

	Pairs	Av. clutch	Av. fledged brood/pair	
<b>Lossie Forest</b>	9	7.8	?	(MJHC)
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	9	8.3	6.8	(RP,CAG)

Clutches and broods fairly typical of recent years. As always, clutches larger in the deciduous woodlands of Loch Spynie than in the coniferous Lossie Forest.

First song noted Brodie Castle lake 8 Jan, Bishopmill (Elgin) 10 Jan and Lein (Kingston) 3 Feb (nest building there 13 Apr). Interesting events in Elgin where a nestbox contained a nest with 4 fresh eggs on the exceptionally early date of 13 March (CAG) and a bigamous male in New Elgin was paired with two females (RP). Largest groups in tit flocks (excluding newly-fledged broods) were 18 Loch of Blairs 15 Nov and 10 near Forres 15 Aug.

### **Great Tit** *Parus major*

*Very common resident breeder.*

Nest boxes:

	Pairs	Av. clutch	Av. fledged brood/pair	
<b>Lossie Forest</b>	10	6.4	?	(MJHC)
<b>Loch Spynie</b>	12	6.7	4.8	(RP,CAG)

At Loch Spynie, one clutch was deserted and two broods of chicks died for no very obvious reason.

First song Elgin 9 Jan, Loch of Blairs 9 Jan, Loch Spynie 17 Jan, Clochan 1 Feb and Lein (Kingston) 2 Feb.

**Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Coming to garden feeders were 1 Elgin 21 Dec and 1 Urquhart 22 Dec.

**Jay *Garrulus glandarius***

*Scarce resident breeder.*

Breeding season: April-July reports came from Darnaway, Daugh of Edinville, Elgin, Little Bin (Cullen), Little Conval Wood, Loch na Bo, Loch Spynie, Lochloy Wood, Mains of Kirdells, Mundole, Shiel Muir, Stoneyford Pond (Rafford) and Wood of Allachie (Aberlour).

At other seasons, Jays were seen in the following additional sites: Arndilly (Oct), Binn Hill (Kingston) (Sep), Craigroy Farm (Dec), Cran Loch (Jan), Findhorn Bay (Oct), Fochabers Lake (Nov), Inchberry (Oct), Knock of Gownie (Jan), Limekilns (Oct), Loch Loy (Jan,Sep,Nov), Loch of Blairs (Oct,Dec), Loch Oire (Sep,Oct), Maryfield (Nov,Dec), Quarrelwood (Jan,Oct), Scarffbanks (Nov), Scoot More (Jan), Sound Moor (Sep,Oct), Spynie Palace (Oct) and Westerton (Jan). Largest groups were 5 Loch na Bo 8 Oct and 6 Loch Spynie woods 21 Aug.

**Magpie *Pica pica***

*Fairly common resident breeder.*

Largest groups reported were 8 Lein (Kingston) 12 Feb, 6 Drybridge 21 Aug and 5 Covesea 10 Oct.

**Jackdaw *Corvus monedula***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Away from the vicinity of night roosts, the largest flocks were 350 Stonewells pig farm 21 Dec, 300 Parkmore quarry (Dufftown) 5 Dec, 200 Forres 25 Jan, 120 Dyke 17 Aug and 118 over Portknockie 31 Dec.

**Rook *Corvus frugilegus***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Arradoul rookery held 32 apparently occupied nests 1 May. Another small rookery North Alves caravan park 12 Apr. Nest building Loch Oire 21 Feb and fledged young Kinloss 14 May.

**Carrion Crow *Corvus corone***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Best monthly counts on the Lossie estuary were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
66	54	47	24	15	64	62	nc	27	76	44	28

Inland, 43 Pitairlie 7 Nov.

First nest building seen Lein (Kingston) 2 Apr.

**Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix***

*Scarce visitor.*

Hooded Crows or hybrids were seen on the Lossie estuary as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Hooded	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1
Hybrid	3	3	3	1	3	2	4	0	3	2	2	2

Other Hooded Crows (singles unless stated) were seen at Ardivot 19 Feb, Auchness 27 Sep (2 there 26 Oct), Auldearn (3) 18 Oct, Ballachraggan (2) 4 Apr, Binsness (2) 28 Jun and 14 Aug, Brodie 21 Mar, Burghead 5 May, 27 Jul and 6 Nov, Burghead Bay 9 Oct, Cooper Park (Elgin) 6 Oct, 17 Nov and 23 Dec, Covesea 7 Dec, Culbin Bar 15 Oct (2 on 12 Dec), Drum of Carron 1 Mar, Dufftown 18 Jul, Earnhill 3 Nov, Bishopmill (Elgin) 4 May, Findhorn 6 Apr and 1 Sep, Findhorn Bay 20 Feb and 8 May, Kinloss 2 May and 8 Sep, Nairn 12 Dec, Nairn Bar (6) 12 Dec (1 on 15 Oct), Portknockie 1 Feb and 10 Feb, Roseisle Forest (picnic site area) 3 Apr and 12 Apr, Roseisle maltings 13 Jun and Ryeriggs 31 Oct.

### **Raven *Corvus corax***

*Scarce visitor, formerly widespread breeder.*

More records than usual. In the Morinsh area, 1 flying west Bluefolds 21 Jan (RD), 1 (the same?) flying south-west Carn Tighearn 21 Jan (RD) and 1 Bادهach 5 Mar (WRPB). Also in south-east Moray, 4 Aldivalloch (Cabrach) 21 Mar (TC), 6 feeding on a sheep carcass Carn Mor (Ladder Hills) 30 Mar (AE), 2 Glen Builg 23 May (MJHC) and 3 Scors Burn (Cabrach) 23 May (TC). Elsewhere in the uplands, 1 Creagan a' Chlaise (Cromdales) 9 May (IF).

An exceptional coastal record concerned 1 flying east over Hatton, Kinloss, mobbed by crows, on 23 Aug (AJL).

### **Starling *Sturnus vulgaris***

*Very common resident breeder and winter visitor.*

Nestboxes: A poor year at Clochan where only 4 out of 9 nestboxes were occupied, with one brood fledging from each. Average brood size at fledging was 4.0, a typical number for recent years (MJHC).

First nest building noted Elgin 5 Mar and Clochan 8 Mar.

As usual, thousands roosting Loch Spynie in autumn – estimates 2000 on 26 Sep and 3000 on 18 Oct. At Portknockie 500 went to roost in cliff caves 5 Dec. Largest feeding flock counts were 1000 Miltonhill 17 Oct, 700 Duffus 2 Nov, 700 Maryfield 5 Nov, 600 Easter Coltfoot 31 Oct, 300 Hopeman 13 Feb, 200 Aldivalloch (Cabrach) 21 Mar and 140 to food in a Lossiemouth garden 12 Mar. Also 40 Nairn Bar 25 Jan.

### **House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Nestboxes: 5 out of 10 boxes occupied Clochan, but only 2 pairs successfully raised first broods, of 2 and 3 young respectively (MJHC).

Flock counts: 60 Cummingston 14 Aug (40 there 21 Jun), 41 Clochan 25 Jan (35 on 31 Dec) and 14 Auchnarrow (Glenlivet) 29 Jun.

### **Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus***

*Fairly common resident breeder.*

Breeding season: At Longmorn, nest building commenced late March and nine nest boxes were occupied. First hatching noted 28 May. Thirteen broods of 2-3 young were fledged. First young fledged 28 May and second broods fledged by early August. No eggs or dead young were found in boxes at the end of the season (J&H MacD). Elsewhere, 2 pairs bred successfully in boxes in Clochan and 4 pairs at South Darkland where one brood was still in a nestbox on 22 Aug (JDL). Elsewhere, 2 family parties Cairnfield (Buckie) 7 Jun, 1 pair Duffus Castle 9 Jun, possible breeders at 2 sites Gordonstoun 8 May and 1 pair Windyridge 7 Jul.

Flock counts were 30+ Longmorn during autumn and up to 24 regularly at bird tables in winter, 20 Lochhill 9 Dec, 15 Broom of Moy 18 Dec, 13 South Darkland 18 Apr, 7 Linkwood 21 Nov, 6 Wester Greens 4 Dec, 10 Forres (Seafield) 12 Sep, 4 Pitairlie 22 Nov, 4 Cranloch (Lhanbryde) 30 Dec and 4 Westerfolds 10 Dec. Up to 3 also recorded at Clochan (Jan-Feb, Oct-Dec), Duffus (Oct-Nov), Pitgaveny (Dec), Salterhill (Feb) and Tugnet (Oct).

**Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs***

*Very common resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor.*

First song, in Feb, heard at Garmouth 14<sup>th</sup>, Forres 15<sup>th</sup> and Lein (Kingston) 18<sup>th</sup>.

Flock counts of 100 or more in winter/spring were 150 Monaughty Farm 13 Jan, 150 Lochhill 20 Jan, 130 Maryfield 7 Feb, 100 Cran Loch 12 Jan, 100 Windyridge 24 Jan and 100 Wester Coltfoot 1 Feb. In late summer/autumn/ winter, counts were 200 Lochhill 21 Dec, 150 Loch of Blairs 1 Dec, 120 Pluscarden 26 Aug and 120 Scarffbanks 23 Dec.

**Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla***

*Fairly common winter visitor and migrant.*

Winter-spring: 3 Aberlour (at a birdtable) 1 Jan (and regularly thereafter until 23 Apr), 1 Elgin (in a garden) 17 Jan, 15 Shenval 21 Jan, 3 West Buthill 27 Jan, 1 Urquhart 28 Jan (3 on 4 Feb, 2 on 10 Feb and 1 Mar, 1 on 4-10 Mar), 3 Clochan (also at a birdtable) 1 Feb (5 on 25 Feb, 1 on 17-18 Apr, 2 on 22 Apr – often on peanut feeders), 1 Longmorn (at a birdtable) 2 Feb, 1 Duffus 7 Feb, 6 Glenlivet (at a birdtable) 23 Feb, 1 Bishopmill (Elgin) 26 Feb, 17 Garmouth 2 Mar (feeding in wild bird cover crops), 1 Dufftown (in a garden) 3 Mar, 1 South Darkland (bird table) 13-14 Mar, 30 Montgrew in March (no date – still 12 in April), 7 New Alves 20 Mar, 1 Culriach Wood 3 Apr and, last in spring, 1 Shielburn 25 Apr. It is clearly worth looking out in any garden, following snowfalls, for a Brambling among the Chaffinches coming to food.

Autumn-winter: 1 Urquhart 20 Oct, a large flock estimated at 100 birds around the garden centre car park in Fochabers in mid Nov, 15 Portknockie 16 Nov and 10 Logiebuchany 9 Dec.

**Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris***

*Very common resident breeder.*

First song, in Feb, was heard at Lein (Kingston) 2<sup>nd</sup>, Clochan 7<sup>th</sup> and Dalvey 11<sup>th</sup>.

No large flocks reported – best were 65 Buckpool (feeding on rosehips) 11 Oct, 60 Pitairlie 5 Feb and 20 Gilston 19 Nov.

**Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis***

*Common resident breeder.*

No very large flocks located in 2004. Counts of 10 or more together were 65 Hillhall (Archiestown) 1 Nov, 51 Portgordon 18 Jan, 50 Findrassie 10 Jan, 50 Nethererton 14 Mar, 48 Clochan 14 Nov, 45 Muirton 27 Jan, 42 Maryfield 11 Dec (40 there 7 Feb, 37 on 20 Nov), 30 Scarffbanks 16 Feb, 30 Shielburn 8 Apr, 30 Cummington 10 Apr, 30 Windyridge 15 Aug (17 there 23 Oct), 30 Brodie 19 Oct, 17 Longmorn 16 Oct and 11 Kinloss 26 Aug (14 there 28 Oct). Small numbers are now common visitors to garden feeding stations; Nyjer seed has a magnetic attraction!

**Siskin *Carduelis spinus***

*Very common resident breeder and migrant.*

Very numerous Clochan in spring where 330 ringed (the best in 29 years), mostly in the period mid Mar-late May. Flocks of 10 or more elsewhere were 120 Dallas (in riverside alders) 15 Dec, 80 Bodnastalker 15 Dec, 60 Spynie Palace 20 Nov, 50 Limekilns 1 Dec, 40 Brodie Castle lake 8 Jan, 30 Loch of Blairs 18 Oct (10 there 11 Jan), 27 Kinloss 18 Mar, 18 Forres 8 Feb (and 10 along River Findhorn 8 Apr) and 10 Sanquhar Loch 14 Jan.

The breeding population in the forest around Tapp on 23 May was c25 pairs.

**Linnet *Carduelis cannabina***

*Very common resident breeder.*

Flocks of 100 or more were 150 Kinneddar 1 Feb, 150 New Alves 20 Mar, 120 Covesea 21 Jul, 100 Shielburn 25 Apr, 100 Lossiemouth east beach 11 Jul and 100 Roseisle 17 Aug. Much of the country around the Cabrach is more suggestive of Twite habitat so 3 Linnets at Aldunie 3 Jun is of interest.

**Twite *Carduelis flavirostris***

*Scarce resident breeder, a few on the coast in winter.*

One pair Burn of Little Fergie (Glen Avon) 23 May (MJHC) was the only breeding season report. Also up country were 20 Aldivalloch (Cabrach) 21 Mar (TC).

At the coast between Nairn-Findhorn Bay, in winter, were 70 Nairn Bar 25 Jan (DJ,AL), 22 Findhorn Bay 17 Oct (CD) (11 there 14 Nov (AJL)), 21 Culbin Bar 12 Dec (AY), 12 Netherton 12 Feb (JDHM) and 1 Kingsteps 4 Feb (DMP). Further east, 2 Kingston 10 Oct (EH).

**Lesser Redpoll (Redpoll) *Carduelis cabaret***

*Common resident breeder and migrant.*

Reported in the breeding season at Ballachraggan (Dallas), Cragganmore, Craigellachie, Delnabo, Hill of Stoneyslacks, Lochenoun, Lynemore (Delnapot), Moss of Delnahaugh (Dallas), Stripe of Knockyfin (Beachans), Tips of Clunymore and Wood of Belnain (Beachans).

Flocks at other times were 200 in larches Elgin Oakwood 19 Feb, 40 Quarrelwood (Elgin) 22 Jan, 40 Shielburn 8 Apr, 30 Loch Oire 3 Jan (20 there 22 Jan), 20 Sanquhar Woods 1 Jan, 15 Garmouth (feeding in wild bird cover crops) 2 Mar, 15 New Alves 20 Mar, 14 Forres 8 Feb, 12 Aberlour 12 Feb and 3 Mar, 10 Loch na Bo 24 Mar, 7 Findhorn Bay 23 Nov, 6 Lhanbryde 29 Jan and 6 Netherton 20 Feb.

**Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra***

*Irregular scarce visitor and probable scarce breeder.*

**Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica***

*Probable common resident breeder.*

Crossbills, mostly indistinguishable as to species, have been recorded during the first three years of breeding season fieldwork for the Atlas in 116 out of 607 Moray tetrads.

Groups of 10 or more were 20 Longmorn 15 Feb and 10 Little Bin (Cullen) 2 May.

Considered certain Common were 2 Assich Forest 15 Sep (DJ) and certain Scottish were 2 Morinsh Forest (tape recorded) 21 Jan (RD).

**Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula***

*Common resident breeder.*

In the breeding season, 4 pairs Innes House 12 May, 3 pairs Knockando 15 Jul, 5 pairs in 5km in Monaughty Forest 26 May, 2 pairs Mundole 5 Aug and 3 pairs Charlestown (Roseisle Forest) 6 May (all JDHM).

Nationally a substantial influx of Bullfinches of northern (Scandinavian) race *P.p.pyrrhula* took place in late October/early November, at the time of the huge Waxwing invasion. Indeed, one Bullfinch uttering the distinctive call of Northern birds was accompanying the Waxwings in the Forres flock on 31 Oct (CAG). Three other records of Northern birds were claimed around this period – 8 Spey Bay 24 Oct (CJ), 3 Roseisle Forest 16 Nov (BB) and 19 there 22 Nov (NH), but descriptions of these birds have not been received. Later in the winter, 5 near Knockomie Hotel, Forres uttered atypical calls for local birds and may have been a group of Northern birds (KG).

Groups of local birds were 17 Balloch Wood (Keith) 7 Mar, 10 Kinloss 23 Feb (7 there 15 Jan), 7 Roseisle 26 Nov, 6 Lein (Kingston) all Dec and 5 South Darkland 26 Dec.

**Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus**Rare visitor.*1 Myreside (Elgin) 14 Nov (AJ). This is the 11<sup>th</sup> winter record for Moray & Nairn.**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis**Common winter visitor and rare breeder.*

First back in autumn (quite early) were 2 Lossiemouth east beach 24 Sep. Elsewhere, 10 Nairn Bar 15 Oct.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Nairn/Culbin Bars (&amp; East Nairn)</b>	57 (25 <sup>th</sup> )	69 (22 <sup>nd</sup> )	nc	10 (15 <sup>th</sup> )	nc	86 (12 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>Lossiemouth east beach</b>	150 (27 <sup>th</sup> )	55 (13 <sup>th</sup> )	38 (6 <sup>th</sup> )	40 (24 <sup>th</sup> )	200 (16 <sup>th</sup> )	126 (20 <sup>th</sup> )

Elsewhere, in the lowlands, 120 Westerfolds 14 Nov, 91 Kinloss 29 Jan (16 on 10 Nov), 60 Aultmore 12 Nov, 37 Kingsteps 10 Jan, 30 Lein (Kingston)

13 Nov (13 on 26 Dec), 21 Nairn 7 Dec (11 there 10 Jan), 20 Duffus Castle 14 Nov, 11 Garmouth 2 Mar, 2 Drainie 1 Nov, 2 Portknockie 3 Nov (1 on 31 Oct) and 1 Dava 28 Feb.

In the hills, 40 Ben Macdui 20 Feb and 2 Knock Hill summit 13 Feb.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella**Very common resident breeder.*

First song Garmouth 4 Mar.

Flock counts were 50 Garmouth 14-17 Feb, 45 Windyridge 8 Feb (14 on 14 Oct, 43 on 5 Nov), 40 Kinloss 4 Jan (10 on 2 Nov), 40 Portknockie 29 Feb, 40 Netherton 30 Oct, 19 Scarffbanks 23 Dec and 15 Maryfield 14 Sep.

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus**Common resident breeder.*

First song Loch Oire 17 Mar.

Flock counts were an impressive 58 feeding in wild bird cover crops Garmouth 2 Mar, 10 Scarffbanks 16 Feb, 7 Spynie canal 19 Feb and 7 Spynie Palace 20 Nov.

**Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra**Scarce resident breeder.*

Singing birds were located at Alves, Brandston, Cummington, Nether Dallachy, Portgordon and Waterscott (Lochhill). Other occupied localities in the breeding season were Buckpool, Portknockie, Spey Bay and Urquhart.

Flocks were only noted around Clochan where 13 on 8 Apr, 20 on 28 Apr, 17 on 7 May and 16 on 12 Dec.

**ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS TO 2002 REPORT****Mandarin *Aix galericulata***

Para 2 should read 'These are the fourth and fifth occurrences.....'

**ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS TO 2003 REPORT****Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus***

Add: One pair bred successfully Ben Aigan. Steady decline there since the early 1990s when regularly 8-10 pairs (GG).

**Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa***

Add: Adult with 2 young Tanzie (Ben Aigan) 13 Jul.

**Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus***

The age of the Corskie bird should read 3<sup>rd</sup> winter/adult.

**Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia***

Add: 1 singing Tanzie (Ben Aigan) 2 Jun.

**Raven *Corvus corax***

Carn Mheadhoin is not within the Moray & Nairn recording area.

<b>DECISIONS OF BRITISH BIRDS RARITIES COMMITTEE</b>
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The following record **has not** been accepted:

Gyr Falcon	The Buck, Cabrach	Jul 2003
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<b>DECISIONS OF MORAY &amp; NAIRN RARITIES COMMITTEE</b>
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The following records **have** been accepted:

Bittern	Loch Flemington	Feb 2004
(This record was submitted to, and accepted by, Highland Rarities Committee, in whose area the bird spent most of its time)		
Bean Goose (2)	Culbin Bar	Oct 2004
Euro.W-fronted Goose	Windyridge	Mar 2004
Euro.W-fronted Goose	Wester Coltfoot	Oct 2004
Euro.W-fronted Goose	Barmuckity	Nov 2004
Ruddy Shelduck (2)	Kingston	July 2004
Green-winged Teal	Culbin Bar	Jan 2004
Ring-necked Duck	Loch Spynie	Apr 2004
Surf Scoter (female)	Burghead Bay	Oct 2004
Temminck's Stint	Kingston	Jul 2004
Turtle Dove	Buckpool	Oct 2004
Wryneck	Bogmoor	Aug 2004
Lapland Bunting	Myreside	Nov 2004

<b>GRID REFERENCES OF MAJOR LOCALITIES MENTIONED IN THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS</b>
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Aberlour	NJ265428	Hopeman	NJ145695
Auldearn	NH918555	Invererne	NJ033606
Ben Rinnes	NJ255355	Kellas	NJ172543
Binn Hill	NJ305655	Kellas oakwood	NJ157540
Bin of Cullen	NJ480643	Kinermory	NJ254420
Binsness	NJ030628	Kingsteps	NH903573
Bogmoor	NJ357629	Kingston	NJ337655
Bow Fiddle Rock	NJ495688	Kinloss	NJ065618
Brodie	NJ978572	Kinneddar	NJ223693
Broom of Moy	NJ020593	Knockando	NJ182429
Buckie	NJ425657	Lecht	NJ245133
Buckpool	NJ412653	Lein, Kingston	NJ334657
Burghead	NJ114689	Lhanbryde	NJ275615
Burghead Bay	NJ080670	Loch Flemington	NH810520
Burgie	NJ093595	Loch Loy	NH933587
Cabrach	NJ385270	Loch na Bo	NJ283600
Califer Hill	NJ083570	Loch of Blairs	NJ023557
Carron	NJ222414	Loch Oire	NJ886608
Cawdor	NH845500	Loch Spynie	NJ235665
Caysbriggs	NJ248669	Lochindorb	NH975365
Clochan	NJ402608	Lossie estuary	NJ243700
Cloddach quarry	NJ200591	Lossie Forest	NJ270680
Cloddymoss	NH982599	Lossiemouth	NJ235710
College of Roseisle	NJ138665	Milltown airfield	NJ265655
Coltfield	NJ117637	Milton Brodie	NJ092627
Covesea	NJ186705	Miltonduff	NJ182599
Craigellachie	NJ290450	Miltonhill	NJ099630
Cran Loch	NH945590	Monaughty Forest	NJ132595
Culbin Bar	NH965627	Montgrew	NJ453517
Culbin Forest	NH990620	Nairn	NH883567
Cullen	NJ513671	Nairn Bar	NH922603
Cummingston	NJ133690	Pitgaveny	NJ240652
Dava	NJ005387	Portgordon	NJ395642
Delnies	NH845563	Portknockie	NJ490685
Drainie	NJ215687	Roseisle	NJ138666
Drynachan	NH865397	Sanquhar Loch	NJ041581
Dufftown	NJ325400	Scarffbanks	NJ237663
Duffus	NJ170688	Spey Bay	NJ354653
Dulsie	NH932416	Speymouth	NJ345656
Elgin	NJ215625	Strathlene	NJ449674
Findhorn	NJ040645	Tarras	NJ062597
Findhorn Bay	NJ045625	Tomintoul	NJ170185
Findochty	NJ463680	Tugnet	NJ348655
Fochabers	NJ345585	Urquhart	NJ286627
Forres	NJ035585		
Garmouth	NJ338644		
Hempriggs	NJ103638		

**THE STATUS OF BIRDS AT LOCH SPYNIE  
PART 1 – DIVERS TO AUKS**

*MARTIN COOK*

Of all bird watching sites in Moray & Nairn, Loch Spynie is probably the most visited and the most closely watched. In most, if not all, years more records are submitted to the local recorder from the loch than from any other site. The status of most species that use the loch and its surroundings is now reasonably well known although much more quantitative information is required for many of the more numerous breeding species.

The purpose of this article (and Part 2 in *Birds in Moray & Nairn 2005*) is to summarise the status of all species which are known to have occurred at Loch Spynie, based on available information until the end of 2004.

**Red-throated Diver**

One on 19 April 1998.

**Great Northern Diver**

One found dead on 21 February 1988.

**Little Grebe**

Breeds in small numbers. Easiest to see in autumn when best recent counts have been 21 in September 1999 and 22 in September 2003.

**Great Crested Grebe**

Single pairs have bred in 1913-1929, 1954-1956, 1984-1987 and 1990-1998. In some other years, single birds have been present in summer, most recently in 2003. Autumn or winter records are unusual; most recently, singles in February 1996, October 2000 and January 2004.

**Red-necked Grebe**

Five records, each of a single bird, on 18 May 1993, 6 March-12 April 1994, 23 March-2 April 1996, 10-29 December 2000 and 19 October 2002.

**Slavonian Grebe**

An uncommon visitor, although seen in most years. Since 1990, recorded in 12 years and in every month except July and December. Mostly single birds but two in April 2000, two in August-September 2001 and three in April 2002. Stays are usually brief although one remained for six weeks in January-March 1996, one for six weeks in April-June 2004 and another for seven weeks in August-October 2001.

**Black-necked Grebe**

One in June 1919.

**Gannet**

One on the canal on 20 February 1987.

**Cormorant**

Can be seen at the loch in all months although fewer in mid summer. The maximum count on any one day in recent years has increased as follows:

1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
1	3	3	5	3	7	6	4
1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
7	10	6	11	9	8	12	

Birds of Continental race *P.c.sinensis* have been seen in nine years since 1994. There are usually only one or two but as many as six in February 2002.

**Bittern**

There are historical records from 'before 1863' and in February 1879. More recently, one on 24 January 1985.

**Grey Heron**

The heronry moved to the trees at Loch Spynie from Caysbriggs in 1975. There are usually 10-12 nests, maximum 14 in 2003. One pair nested in the reed bed in 1981.

**Glossy Ibis**

Two birds stayed for several weeks in April-June of either 1936 or 1937.

**Spoonbill**

One on 11 July 1984.

**Mute Swan**

At least two pairs breed annually and there were four in 1999. Wintering numbers exceeded 100 in the 1960s and 1970s (maximum 148 in December 1973) but in recent years 25-50 has been the usual range. Best recent counts have been 79 in January 2003 and 76 in February 2004.

**Bewick's Swan**

There have been no confirmed sightings since the historical record of two in March 1853.

**Whooper Swan**

An annual winter visitor in varying numbers. They arrive from late September and autumn numbers tend to be highest; largest flock to visit the loch in recent years was 87 in November 2002 but around 20 is a more typical maximum. They roost on the loch, feeding in nearby fields. Usually very few in late winter.

**[Black Swan**

An escaped bird visited the loch on 17 March 1996.]

**Bean Goose**

Apparently common autumn and spring migrants to the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, they are now very scarce. The only recent occurrence at the loch was of a single bird on 29 April 1993.

**Pink-footed Goose**

These geese use the loch as a night-time roost. Until the mid 1990s most Pink-footed Geese passed through Moray rapidly on autumn migration and usually only a few hundred roosted on the loch in October, with very few later in the winter. Since that time, much larger flocks have remained to feed in the area through October-November with, as a result, a much larger roost on the loch. The peak late autumn roost count in recent years has been:

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
3000	?	2300	2000	?	8000	?	11700	12000	23000

Numbers using the loch later in the winter remain very much smaller although numbers over-wintering in Moray continue to increase. There may be some resurgence in March-April when flocks pause on northward migration. Stragglers, perhaps injured birds, sometimes remain into summer e.g. three in July 1992, two in June 1993 and three in June-July 1999.

**White-fronted Goose**

A scarce species in Moray which often over-winters in very small numbers with other geese in the Lossiemouth area and roosts on the loch. Since 1990, the number of birds involved has been less than five in four winters, and between five and ten in six winters. The best winters were 1989-1990 (up to 17 birds), 1992-1993 (up to 14) and especially 1995-1996 when up to 27 were roosting on the loch in October-November and this rose to 39 by February-March.

**Greylag Goose**

Greylags, together with Pink-feet, comprise the vast majority of geese using the autumn-winter roost. By contrast with Pink-feet, however, Greylag numbers have declined to the level of the early 1980s after a substantial increase during the decade from the mid 1990s. During 1970-1985 late autumn numbers at the roost seldom exceeded 2000 but during the late 1980s there was a dramatic increase to a maximum of over 13000 in October 1988.

Since then, numbers have been much reduced and the norm for recent years has been 2000-4000. In many years, one or more birds linger around the loch all summer.

**[Bar-headed Goose**

Two escaped individuals were seen on the loch on 6 June 1991.]

**Snow Goose**

One roosted on the loch with other geese between 6-20 October 1990.

**Canada Goose**

Occasionally one or two birds join the goose flocks in winter and roost with them on the loch; this has happened in five winters since 1990. Another source of birds is flocks from England making their annual summer moult migration to the Beaully Firth and stopping off en route at the loch e.g. 12 on 6 June 1993, 10 on 16 June 1994 and 15 on 30 May 2003. Exceptionally, in July-August 1990, 11 birds stayed at the loch to moult.

**Barnacle Goose**

In most years a very few accompany the local goose flocks in autumn-winter and roost on the loch. Sometimes rather more appear e.g. 12 in October 1991, 13 in October 1993 and up to 20 in October-

November 1997 but these migrant flocks seldom linger. A flock of 450 flew over the loch on 30 September 2001 but did not land.

### **Shelduck**

A scarce visitor to the loch, seen in 12 years since 1990. Most occur in March-May, with two records in January, one in February and one in June. Usually only one or two birds but four in March 1993 and May 2001, and six on 10 March 2002.

### **Mandarin**

A male present between 29 Apr-4 May 2003 is the only record.

### **Wigeon**

A winter visitor with large numbers sometimes on the loch between October and March. Fewer in early autumn and spring and only occasional birds in summer months. Average winter maximum during the 1960s was 378, during the 1970s it was 628 and during the 1980s it was 733. Then, as now, numbers fluctuated considerably and, exceptionally, around 3000 were counted in October 1978.

Peak counts in each three-winter period since 1990-91 have been:

1990/1-1992/3	1993/4-1995/6	1996/7-1998/9	1999/00-2001/2	2002/3-2003/4
800	1170	1200	1400	2500

This increase is related to the substantially larger flock now present on the Lossie estuary, from where birds regularly move to the loch.

### **American Wigeon**

Single males have visited the loch on three occasions, between 19-26 June 1999, between 1-3 Jan 2000 and on 11 Feb 2001.

### **Gadwall**

A regular visitor in very small numbers in most months of the year. The largest groups to have been seen together were seven on 17 Feb 1980 and five on 16 Sept 1973, although 1-2 is more normal. Birds have been seen in 12 years since 1990. A pair displayed briefly in June 1999 but there has been no suggestion of breeding.

### **[Baikal Teal**

A female was shot on 5 Feb 1958 but it is now considered that the bird was likely to have been an escapee from captivity.]

### **Teal**

A common winter visitor although true numbers can be hard to ascertain as many birds frequent the reeds in preference to open water, and flocks often move from the loch onto the canal. During the 1990s the highest count in each winter ranged from 220 to 820 (average 427) but since then numbers have been higher with 1046 in Dec 2000 and 1700 in Nov 2002. Although a few are sometimes seen in summer there has been no evidence of recent breeding.

### **Green-winged Teal**

Formerly considered to be the North American race of our 'Eurasian' Teal, Green-winged Teal is now treated as a full species. The first occurrence at the loch was a male from 18 Nov-23 Dec 2000 with another

from 10 Nov-8 Dec 2001. In 2002, single males were seen on 12 & 21 Feb, 12 May and 1-2 June. There were three on 2 Nov, one of which remained until 1 Dec. In 2004, two males were present on 9 Jan with one staying until 13 Jan.

### **Mallard**

Common on the loch in all seasons. During 1960-1990 the average maximum in winter was 467 (with an exceptional peak count of 1360 in Oct 1981) and since then it has been a little lower, at 356. Many pairs breed and a large mid summer moulting flock often assembles – 200-300 in most years with 610 in 1991.

### **Pintail**

There is one old record of breeding (prior to 1914). Pintail are now annual visitors in very small numbers, usually in winter but with a scatter of records in most months. A notable exception was in 1995 when a flock of 23 on 20 Sept increased to 86 by 7 Oct before dwindling to two by the end of the month.

### **Garganey**

A spring migrant to the loch, which has been seen in seven years since 1990. There has been a total of 10 birds of which nine have been males. All have been seen in the period 7-22 May.

### **Shoveler**

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were apparently regular breeders but the only recent evidence was a female with ducklings in 1989. Most Shovelers are seen in late autumn and in spring with fewer in most years in mid winter. During the early/mid 1990s the most seen together in any winter was 10-15 but they have been less regular and usually in smaller numbers since then. Autumn 1995 (as with Pintail) saw unprecedented numbers on the loch, with 49 on 19 Sept, 61 on 24 Sept and 71 on 20 Oct with a rapid decline thereafter.

### **Red-crested Pochard**

One male from 19-22 Sept 1992.

### **Pochard**

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Pochard were regular breeders with as many as 10-12 pairs in 1920. The most recent breeding took place in 1977 and 1978, and only occasional birds are now seen in summer. Pochards are now winter visitors, seen mostly between September and March. Peak numbers are usually present in October and November, but can be later if the loch remains unfrozen. During the period 1960-1974 the average annual peak was 52 (range 7-141) but during 1975-1989 the average was 118 (range 32-380) with a record high of 380 on 12 Nov 1978. The current situation resembles the earlier period with the 1990-2004 average being 49 (range 9-99).

### **Ring-necked Duck**

A female of this North American species was present between 4-24 April 2004.

### **Tufted Duck**

During most of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century they were rare visitors to the loch but they subsequently increased and were breeding regularly by 1936, as they do today (probably 5-10 pairs). They are often numerous on the loch in late summer with counts of 150 possible (max. 179 in Aug 1999). The average maximum count in winter between 1960-1990 was 88 (range 35-194) but since then they have increased with the average winter maximum between 1991-2004 being 143 (range 54-274). The record is 274 in Dec 1998.

**Scaup**

Prior to 1990, visits to the loch by this sea duck were extremely rare. Since then however they have been annual in very small numbers. They can occur in any month, usually only one or two individuals at a time but there were five in Sept 1992 and four in Oct 1999. Early 1992 was exceptional when a flock built up on the loch in late winter and spring; 17 on 22 Feb increased to 22 by 7 March. A slow decline saw 18 on 22 March, 13 on 26 Apr and three on 18 May.

**Long-tailed Duck**

Since the first record in Oct 1981, Long-tailed Ducks have visited the loch on a further 14 occasions in ten winters, all in the period Oct-Jan except one in March-April 1987. Three of the records concern two birds, otherwise only singles. A few individuals have stayed for several weeks, others for only one day.

**Common Scoter**

One male 19 May 1973 and a pair, occasionally displaying, from 9 Apr-6 May 1989.

**Goldeneye**

Winter numbers seldom exceed 20 (often fewer) but autumn (Oct-Nov) and spring (March-Apr) passage brings most Goldeneye to the loch. Since 1990 the spring peak has averaged 51 (range 27-79) and the autumn peak has averaged 33 (range 9-70). Display is commonly seen in spring but breeding has not taken place.

**Smew**

Formerly a very uncommon visitor to the loch but now more regular. Since 1990 single 'redhead' (female/juvenile) birds have been present in five winters, often staying for several weeks or even months.

**Red-breasted Merganser**

A rare visitor although a little more frequent since the late 1990s, with 1-2 annually since 1999. Mostly females.

**Goosander**

A sizeable wintering flock was regular during the 1980s and early 1990s; 30-40 were usual, sometimes 60+. An exceptional 114 gathered in late Nov 1994. Since then numbers have dwindled and 29 on 5 May 2004 was the first count of more than 10 in any year since 2000.

**Ruddy Duck**

First seen on 6 May 1984 and again in May 1992. Since then they have been recorded in six years, a total of 18 birds (some remaining for several weeks), mostly in the period April-July. Most together were three males and one female on 6 May 1999.

**Marsh Harrier**

First recorded in 1969. Migrants are now seen in most years.

**Hen Harrier**

Occasionally seen hunting over fields around the loch but less than annual in recent years. Usually in winter but 1 on 20 July 2001. Two roosted in the reedbed for several weeks in Jan-March 1982.

**Goshawk**

A very uncommon visitor. Single birds have been reported on 25 Feb 1979, 4 Nov 1995, 21 Nov 1996, 18 Oct 1999, 14 Jan 2001 and 9 March 2002.

**Sparrowhawk**

Breeds in woods near the loch. Seen frequently at other seasons, often hunting the pre-roost flocks of starlings.

**Buzzard**

Breeds in woods near the loch, soaring overhead in suitable weather. On 19 Sept 1995 as many as 18 were visible over various woods at one time.

**Osprey**

An infrequent visitor between April-September, occasionally stopping to fish.

**Kestrel**

Sometimes seen hunting over adjacent farmland.

**Merlin**

A very scarce winter visitor to the vicinity of the loch, seen in only six years since 1990.

**Peregrine**

A regular but infrequent sight flying over the loch and occasionally pursuing prey. Usually, but not exclusively, seen in winter.

**Grey Partridge**

Coveys (max. 24 in 2004, 18 in 1990 and 1997) can be seen in surrounding fields where a few pairs breed.

**Quail**

Single birds were heard calling from fields close to the loch in the summers of 1989 and 1990.

**Pheasant**

Very common breeder in surrounding countryside.

**Water Rail**

Numerous breeder in the reedbeds but very secretive and seldom seen. Around the loch were 12 pairs in 1996 and 10 pairs in 2000. In 1999 there were 15 pairs in the marsh below the palace. So 25-30 pairs in any year seems a realistic estimate. An unknown number is present in winter but birds can often be heard calling from the reeds.

**Spotted Crake**

Single calling birds were heard on 9-10 June 1997 and 25 May 1999. The species may be more regular than these two records suggest as it normally only calls in the middle of the night and can easily remain undetected in daytime hours.

**Corncrake**

Formerly widespread in the area, the most recent record is of one in marshy ground on 29 Sept 1982.

**Moorhen**

Resident breeder in small numbers; up to six pairs in 1996. Best winter count is 14 on 10 Nov 1997, but secretive nature makes an accurate census very difficult.

**Coot**

A few pairs breed but most numerous in winter when largest flock counts since 1990 have usually been around 100 each year. In the 1970s and 1980s flocks were frequently closer to 200 with best counts of 256 on 4 Jan 1976 and 270 on 18 March 1979.

**Oystercatcher**

A common sight flying over the loch, sometimes in small groups. Most frequent in late winter and early spring when they may gather on the tern platform e.g. 25 on 9 March 2002 and 20 on 25 March 2004. Breeds in local fields.

**Pratincole**

A pratincole of undetermined species was seen at the loch on 17 Aug 1923.

**Golden Plover**

Flocks of 100 or more are regular in the Lossiemouth area and occasionally fly over the loch or rest in nearby fields. Most recently, c100 flew over on 17 Jan 2004.

**Grey Plover**

Seen at, or over-flying, the loch on three occasions – in 1906, c10 on 5 Oct 1967 and a single bird on 20 Sept 2000.

**Lapwing**

A few pairs sometimes breed in neighbouring damp fields. Late summer-autumn flocks of 100 or more gather in the same fields, sometimes remaining into winter.

**Dunlin**

Only two records, both of single birds flying overhead, on 30 Sept 1994 and 18 Dec 1996.

**Ruff**

Recorded only twice, 2 on 15 Sept 2001 and 3 flying over on 20 Aug 2004.

**Jack Snipe**

The only documented records since 1990 are of singles on 12 Nov 1993, 6 Dec 1996 and 18 Dec 2002. The species is however very secretive and is only flushed by a close approach so it is likely that birds are present in marshy areas in winter a lot more regularly than the few records would suggest.

**Snipe**

Common in autumn and winter in marshy ground. Highest count was 12 on 6 September 1997.

**Great Snipe**

Two historical records concern birds shot in nearby marshes on 15 Oct 1898 and 20 Oct 1915.

**Woodcock**

The 'roding' display flight over the treetops can be seen at dusk in loch-side woods during spring, starting in early March. Often present in the same woods in winter especially following periods of cold weather.

**Black-tailed Godwit**

Four recent records, all of birds flying overhead: 1 on 2 May 1976, 2 on 29 Apr 1979, 2 on 18 Aug 1991 and 12 on 25 Aug 1995.

**Whimbrel**

An uncommon, but annual, passage migrant. The distinctive stuttering whistle attracts attention to over-flying birds, usually one or two together in late summer or early autumn (max. 5 on 25 Aug 2004). There have been three spring records, of singles on 26 Apr 1993, 12 May 1995 and 1 May 1998.

**Curlew**

A flock of 100-200 (max. 250 on 26 Aug 2002) is regular in damp fields near the loch in late summer-autumn, and sometimes in winter also.

**Spotted Redshank**

One flew over the loch on 9 July 1989.

**Redshank**

Considering how common Redshanks are at nearby Lossiemouth it is surprising that the only recent records at the loch are 2 on 19 Dec 1999, 3 on 24 Feb 2000 and 1 on 23 Aug 2002.

**Greenshank**

An uncommon, but almost annual, passage migrant. All records are of one or two birds except three on 14 Aug 2002. Of 21 birds since 1990, 17 have occurred between 14 July-31 Aug. In addition, there have been two spring records (2 on 17 May 1998 and 1 on 5 Apr 2004), one in mid-summer (25-27 June 1999) and one in autumn (12 Oct 2002).

**Green Sandpiper**

A very scarce migrant on passage in spring (1 on 14 Apr 1989 and 1 on 26 May 2003) and autumn (1 on 15-17 Aug & 7 Sept 1985 and 2 on 8 Aug 1996). Birds have been seen around the loch margins or along the canal.

**Wood Sandpiper**

There are two records of birds flying over the loch, on 4 Aug 2002 and 1 Aug 2004.

**Common Sandpiper**

This common summer visitor to Moray's rivers is only occasionally seen around the loch margins. Exceptionally, one pair bred in 2003.

**Spotted Sandpiper**

On 25 May 1999 a summer-plumaged bird of this American species spent several hours around the rocks immediately in front of the hide.

**Arctic Skua**

In 1994, two flew over the loch on 29 Apr and another was on the canal on 15 Sept.

**Mediterranean Gull**

An adult was on the loch with Black-headed Gulls on 29 March 2003.

**Little Gull**

The six records are 1 (shot) April 1847, 1 on 28 Sept 1987, 1 on 7 Sept 1991, 1 on 2 June 1999, 2 on 2 June 2002 and 1 between 21-31 Aug 2003.

**Black-headed Gull**

Formerly the loch was the site of a huge breeding colony with mention of 'great numbers' and 'thousands' in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1885, 1200 eggs were reported to have been collected in one day. There were still 500 pairs in 1938 but this declined to 100 pairs in 1958 and only 20 pairs in 1988. Following desertion of the reed bed colony, a few pairs have recently returned to breed on the platform in front of the hide. Numbers here have increased from two pairs in 1994 to eight in 1999 and 17 in 2000, though there have been fewer in recent years. The largest flocks counted in winter have been 900 on 17 Dec 1992 and 775 on 23 Nov 2003.

**Common Gull**

A frequent visitor to the loch, usually in small numbers but sometimes more e.g. 500 on 16 Feb 2003.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull**

A scarce summer visitor although numbers have increased a little with the onset of breeding in Elgin. Highest count to date is 12 on 28 June 2003. One winter record, of a single bird on 13-22 Dec 2003.

**Herring Gull**

Although always common flying over the loch and resting in adjacent fields, large flocks roosting on the water have been a recent consequence of nearby pig farming operations. There were 420 on 17 June 2002, 1900 during March-April 2003 and as many as 3130 on 29 Jan 2004. A few darker birds of the Scandinavian/Baltic race can often be seen among winter flocks.

**Iceland Gull**

Prior to the year 2000 the only records were of single birds on 6 March 1983, 5 Feb 1984 and 30 Dec 1992. Since that time individuals have appeared more regularly, accompanying the Herring Gull flocks, sometimes for extended periods: 1 on 21 Feb 2000, 1 on 29 Dec 2001, 1 on 11 Apr & 22 June 2002, 1 between 9 Jan-22 Apr 2003, 1 between 13 Dec 2003-27 May 2004 and one from 24 Dec 2004 until the year's end and beyond.

**Glaucous Gull**

Not recorded until 1990 when one was seen on 18 Nov. No further occurrences until 2003 when an adult was present intermittently between 19 Jan-30 Apr. In 2004 there was an adult during 8 March-11 Apr and an immature bird on 28 Apr.

**Great Black-backed Gull**

A scarce but regular visitor, usually in very small numbers.

**Common Tern**

Only an occasional visitor to the loch until the mid 1990s when the platform was built in front of the hide. Initially breeding was prevented by the presence of Black-headed Gulls but in 1999 two pairs bred after the gull colony had departed, and 17 adults were present on 23 July. Since then numbers have increased steadily to 5 pairs in 2001 and 17-18 pairs in 2002-2004, with as many as 50 adults present on 12 July 2002.

**Arctic Tern**

Two adults among the Common Terns on 7 July 2002 is the only record.

**Black Tern**

One on 5 Oct 1967.

**White-winged Black Tern**

The first, on 15 May 1993, was followed a year later by another on 20 July 1994.

**Little Auk**

One storm-driven bird was found near Pitgaveny, presumably at or near the loch, in 1879.

The second part of this article, covering pigeons to buntings, will appear in *Birds in Moray & Nairn 2005*

## RINGING REPORT

### *BOB PROCTOR*

Numbers of birds ringed in Moray & Nairn during 2004:

	Full grown	Pullus	Total			Full grown	Pullus	Total
Dunlin	10		10		Goldcrest	21		21
Redshank	36		36		Long-tailed Tit	23		23
Turnstone	29		29		Crested Tit		11	11
Black Guillemot		2	2		Coal Tit	6		6
Sparrowhawk	2		2		Blue Tit	112	76	188
Woodpigeon		4	4		Great Tit	40	66	106
Collared Dove		1	1		Treecreeper	4		4
Barn Owl		2	2		Jay	1		1
Grt.Spot.Woodpecker	1		1		Jackdaw	1		1
Swallow	4	39	43		Starling	133	16	149
Wren	14		14		House Sparrow	35	4	39
Dunnock	5		5		Tree Sparrow	2	4	6
Robin	28		28		Chaffinch	56		56
Blackbird	19	3	22		Greenfinch	65		65
Song Thrush	8		8		Goldfinch	11		11
Blackcap	8		8		Siskin	384		384
Chiffchaff	11		11		Bullfinch	17		17
Willow Warbler	205		205		Reed Bunting	15		15
					GRAND TOTAL	1306	228	1534

Recoveries in 2004:

All ringing recoveries reported for 2004 are included in this section with the more interesting ones given in full. Information was supplied by M.J.H.Cook, D.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

**SHAG**

1379131	1	260603	North Sutor	
	X	020504	Buckie	61 km
1388543	1	260602	Isle of May	
	X	180204	Portessie, Buckie	169 km

A large series of colour-ringed individuals from the Isle of May were recorded in late 2004. Sightings were from Portknockie (14), Lossiemouth (4) and Burghead (1). These involved distances of 170, 177 and 179 km respectively. The oldest individual was a chick from 1989.

**MUTE SWAN**

U3580	1	091193	Findhorn	
	V	270904	Brecon, Powys, Wales	636 km
U5955	6	010396	River Lossie, Lossiemouth	
	X wires	180204	Brodie	30 km

U3580 is the longest movement by a Moray-ringed Mute Swan so far recorded. The previous longest movements, also involving a south-westerly direction, were to Cheshire (504 km) and Cumbria (384 km).

**GREYLAG GOOSE**

'ABC' & 'ACL'	301103	Lintrathen Loch, Tayside
VV	191004	Loch Spynie

**WIGEON**

FP10982	5m	180201	Loch Flemington	
	X shot	200804	Lemu, Turku-Pori, FINLAND	1518 km

**SPARROWHAWK**

DA67712	6m	191000	Clochachan, Buckie	
	X	100304	Buckie	6km

**MERLIN**

ET50149	1f	230601	Glenlivet	
	X nest	270603	Glen Tanar	44 km

**OYSTERCATCHER**

FA48213	8	281292	near Castle Stuart, Inverness	
	XF	road 280504	Lossiemouth	52 km

Two local recoveries were reported, less than 50 km: 7 km and 47 km.  
An individual was found dead two years after being ringed.

**REDSHANK**

DK99794	3	131297	Buckpool, Buckie	
	X	120703	Olafsvik, Snaefellnes, ICELAND	1363 km

**BLACK-HEADED GULL**

ES72774	6	130397	Loch Flemington	
	VV	010104	Nairn harbour	6 km
ET72723	1	170699	Kirbister, Orphir, Orkney	
	VV	010104	Nairn harbour	159 km

The ringed individual EP47881 from Elgin, seen in August 2003, was seen again at the Lossie estuary on 21 August 2004.

**HERRING GULL**

ES006630	1	090798	Kandalakshskiy Nature Reserve, Murmansk, RUSSIA	
	VV	230304	Lossie estuary	2080 km

Wearing a white colour ring: K811

GN32899	1	230703	Berriedale	
	VV	020404	Cooper Park, Elgin	59 km

The Russian individual is another *argentatus* subspecies, and is the first from Russia.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL**

347782	Ad	280501	Sleneset, Luroy, Nordland, NORWAY	
	VV	181003	Lossie estuary	
	VV	171004	Lossie estuary	

The Norwegian bird was resighted on the Lossie estuary a day earlier than in 2003!

HT69344	1	300699	Nigg Ferry	
	X	270604	Lossiemouth	57 km

Another series of colour-ringed individuals seen at the Lossie estuary. The furthest movement was a chick from North Rona (June 2001). Four originated from the Caithness colonies Berriedale (2), Badbea (2).

**GUILLEMOT**

R31241	1	030702	Fair Isle	
	X	290902	Lossiemouth	223 km

R03327	1	160603	Isle of May	
	X	020504	Buckie	169 km

**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER**

CT13819	2f	301103	Clochan, Buckie	
	X	070404	Midwood, Clochan	3 km

**PIED WAGTAIL**

R795650	3	111003	Slapton Ley, Devon	
	XF	100504	Birnie, near Elgin	812 km

Was this individual wintering in Devon, or migrating through the area? If it was migrating through Devon it may have been heading toward France or Spain: both regular wintering areas for northern birds.

**BLACKBIRD**

RH87074	3m	141003	Lossiemouth	
	X	140204	Lossiemouth	local

**SEDGE WARBLER**

R777736	3J	160704	Loch Spynie	
	V	310704	Elburg, Korte Waarden, Gelderland, NETHERLANDS	819 km

This is the first Moray-ringed Sedge Warbler to be found in The Netherlands. Nationally, it is only the 15<sup>th</sup> to be found there.

**WILLOW WARBLER**

ADA743	4	110504	Isle of May	
		VB(=f)170803	Loch Spynie	171 km

**STARLING**

CT36192	3f	071003	Bishopmill, Elgin	
	X	110604	Stirling	175 km

Another individual appearing to winter north of its breeding site. Three others were found dead close to their ringing sites.

**GREENFINCH**

VJ25950	5m	040301	Lossiemouth	
	XF	260404	Lossiemouth	Local

VT58266	6m	140203	Clochan, Buckie	
	V	140204	Leanach Quarry, Culloden	68 km

**GOLDFINCH**

P788999	3f	261202	Clochan, Buckie	
	V	030404	Newburgh, Aberdeenshire	68 km

**SISKIN**

R101627	5m	030103	Bishopmill, Elgin	
	V	030403	Logie Hill, near Kildary	47 km
	V	260503	Logie Hill, near Kildary	
	XF	120404	Bell Wood, near Aboyne	73 km
P311058	4m	240400	Loinnbuie, Loch Eye	
	V	060404	Clochan, Buckie	62 km
T162008	5f	200404	Rafford	
	V	280404	Logie Hill, Kildary	37 km
R860418	5f	120404	Clochan, Buckie	
	X	190704	Alford, Aberdeenshire	46 km
R668343	5f	300304	Llangynidr, Powis, Wales	
	V	240404	Clochan, Buckie	639 km
R804156	6m	110404	Llwynmawr, Clwyd, Wales	
	V	300404	Clochan, Buckie	523 km
P639441	4f	290304	Meols, Wirral, Merseyside	
	V	110404	Clochan, Buckie	471 km
P906898	5f	130303	Bourne Wood, Lincolnshire	
	V	100404	Clochan, Buckie	564 km
R072529	5f	050203	Fleet, Hampshire	
	V	080404	Clochan, Buckie	719 km
R606327	6f	040404	Dronfield, Derbyshire	
	V	180404	Clochan, Buckie	489 km
R662701	6f	180703	Breakachy, Highland	
	V	060404	Clochan, Buckie	96 km
R879252	6F	050304	Sheringham, Norfolk	
	V	080404	Clochan, Buckie	585 km
R879276	5m	050304	Sheringham, Norfolk	
	V	110404	Clochan, Buckie	585 km
T055822	5m	010404	Stocksfield, Northumberland	
	V	120404	Clochan, Buckie	306 km
N666935	5m	280400	Stocksfield, Northumberland	
	V	080404	Clochan, Buckie	306 km

P333243	5m V	040404 120404	Catterick, North Yorkshire Clochan, Buckie	370 km
N646939	5m V	180204 180404	Amberley, Gloucestershire Clochan, Buckie	660 km
T016685	5f V	280204 110404	Grimston, Norfolk Clochan, Buckie	584 km
R435749	4m X	240403 220204	Clochan, Buckie Spey Bay	6 km
8023506	6f V	100202 240403	Oost-Vlaanderen, BELGIUM Clochan, Buckie	863 km

This impressive series of controls clearly demonstrates the wintering areas of many of our locally breeding Siskins; some at least venture as far as continental Europe as 8023506 attests. Note also the speed of northward migration of several of these birds, and the two Sheringham birds that were ringed at the same site on the same day and controlled in Clochan only three days apart. Perhaps they were paired in Norfolk and travelled north together.