

Goosander

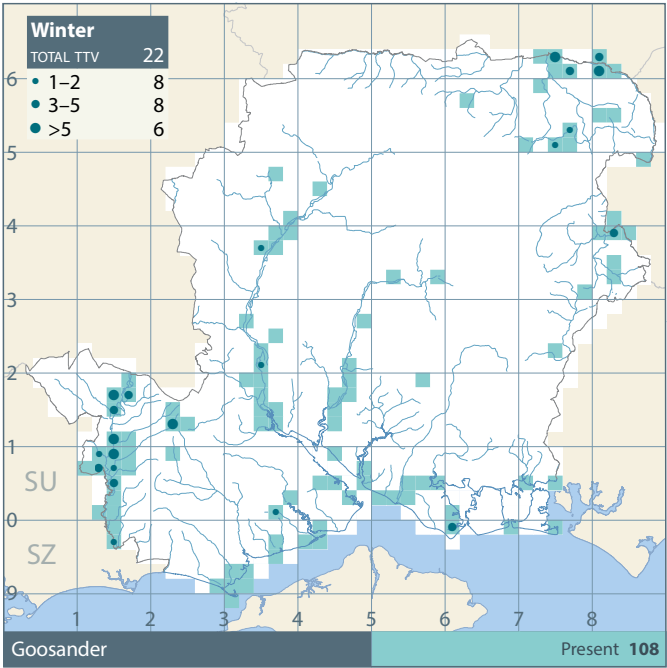
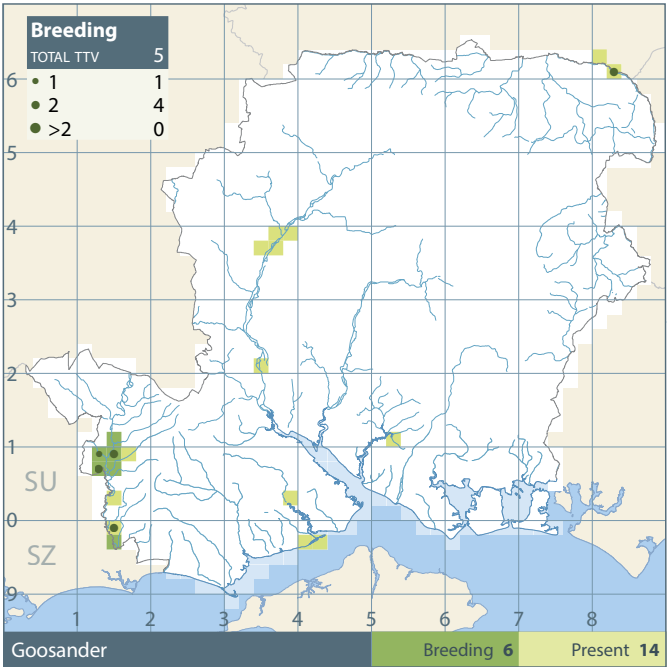
Mergus merganser

A moderately common winter visitor and very scarce breeder

K&M described the Goosander as a winter visitor, not uncommon during hard weather, and more frequent on inland waters. In the first seven decades of the 20th century they remained scarce and erratic in occurrence, with only one record of a double-figure count – 13 at Fleet Pond on March 1st 1936 – except in the notoriously severe weather in early 1963, when up to 100 gathered on the River Avon at Woodgreen and a further 90 were recorded elsewhere in the county.

Commencing in 1977/78, increasing numbers wintered in the north-east of the county, particularly in cold winters. Birds fed by day on still waters and rivers in the area, returning at dusk to a communal roost site. Initially this was at Wellington Country Park, but by the 1988/89 winter the main roost had largely shifted to a lake on the Berkshire side of the River Blackwater at Eversley Gravel Pit. Peak counts reached 26 in February 1979, 44 in February 1985, 79 in January 1994, 132 in February 1996 and 210 in January 1997, which comprised 184 at Eversley and 26 at Wellington Country Park. Mild winters in the succeeding decade produced five-yearly mean maxima of 68 in 1997–2002 and 39 in 2002–2007 but during the HBA period the mean increased to 70 largely due to a peak count of 118 during a cold weather influx in December 2010. High counts at feeder waters included 12 at Bramshill Police College Lake on December 9th 2007, 41 at Yateley Gravel Pits on December 12th 2008, 42 there on December 12th 2012, 15 at Tundry Pond on February 1st 2011, and a peak of 22 at a satellite roost at Bramshill Plantation on March 5th 2011.

Elsewhere in the county the species was scarce until a wintering flock gradually became established in the Avon



Goosander, Cadman's Pool New Forest, December 2014 – Martin Bennett

Valley, feeding by day on the River Avon and the New Forest ponds and roosting on Ibsley Water at the HIWWT Blashford Lakes reserve. Peak winter maxima were in the range 16–30 between 1995/96 and 2003/04, then rose to 60 in 2004/05 and, during the HBA period, to 92 in 2008/09, 103 in 2009/10 and 231 in 2010/11, before falling to 124 in 2011/12. As at Eversley, the peak count of 231 occurred during the cold weather in December 2010 with numbers remaining above 200 until early February 2011. Exceptional numbers occurred on the New Forest ponds in early 2010, with a maximum of 48 at Eyeworth Pond on February 6th, which presumably were attracted by a profusion of fish; generally numbers are much lower at individual ponds and parties of up to ten or more are scattered along the length of the Avon.

The HBA winter map shows the expected concentration of sightings in the north-east and south-west, but also a scattering of registrations elsewhere, particularly along the coast, in the Test and Itchen Valleys and on waters in the east. Small flocks were frequent between Fawley Reservoir (adjacent to Southampton Water) and the Test Valley up to Longstock, particularly in cold weather with, for example, maxima of 17 at Longstock on December 19th 2010, 15 at Fawley on December 30th 2010, 12 at Kentford Lake on January 29th 2011, 15 at Testwood Lakes on February 9th 2012 and 14 at Broadlands Estate on February 12th 2012. Nocturnal roosting at Testwood Lakes was confirmed in February 2012 (S. S. King *pers. comm.*). Other double-figure counts included ten at Wishanger near Frensham

on December 29th 2007, 11 at Sowley Pond on January 13th 2011 and ten at Sleaford Reservoir on February 23rd 2012. A few were also regular at sites such as Heath Pond (Petersfield) and Sinah Gravel Pit (Hayling), while opportunistic birds fed at small ponds at Newlands Farm (Fareham), Passfield and adjacent to a golf course and a cricket pitch at Eversley.

Goosander was perhaps one of the more surprising additions to the list of Hampshire's breeding birds. On July 1st 1998 John Arnold saw a female with six ducklings on the River Avon at Oakford Coppice below Ringwood. Birds were present in the Avon Valley in summer in the next few years and undoubtedly attempted breeding but success was not recorded again until 2004, when a female raised eight young from a nest in a hole in a tree in Somerley Park. Since then, successful breeding has been recorded annually from 2006–12, with two broods in most years. As the HBA summer map shows, most instances of confirmed breeding have continued to be in the well-watched Somerley Estate in the Blashford/Ibsley area. There was also one report of recently-hatched young from south of the Avon Causeway in 2008, and it is probable that other instances of breeding have been overlooked in the valley. Registrations elsewhere in the county refer to late-departing winter visitors (in early April) or wandering non-breeders, while some of those in the upper Test Valley refer to a resident individual.

John Clark

Sponsored by Ed Bennett



Goosander, Cadman's Pool New Forest, December 2014 – Martin Bennett

Red-breasted Merganser

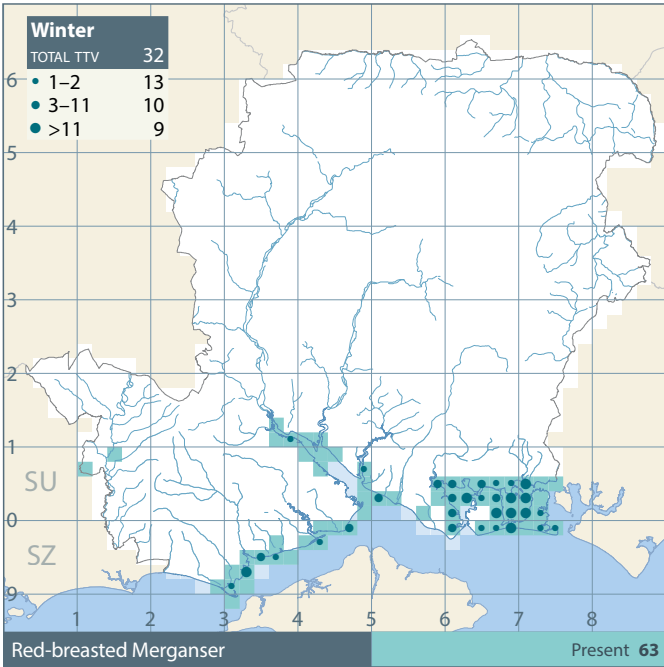
Mergus serrator

A moderately common but declining winter visitor and passage migrant; rare inland

An estimated 2,200 pairs of Red-breasted Mergansers breed in Britain (APEP3). Their breeding range is concentrated in Scotland and north-west England, extending southwards to north Wales although, during the 2007–11 national atlas, probable breeding also occurred on the south coast in Devon (Bird Atlas 2007–11).

In Hampshire it is largely absent during the summer, except for a few lingering non-breeders. The majority return to their wintering quarters from early November onwards, with numbers building rapidly throughout the month. There are rather few records of birds on visible migration and it is believed that this is conducted mainly at night. As the HBA map shows, in winter it is mostly confined to coastal waters, particularly in the eastern Harbours. It occurs only occasionally inland, most regularly at Blashford Lakes, where one may sometimes be found amongst the roosting Goosanders on Ibsley Water.

The number of Red-breasted Mergansers which over-winter in Hampshire increased steadily in the second half of the 20th century, probably due both to an expansion in the national breeding population and an increase in the number of Scandinavian birds wintering here. Numbers peaked in the 1990s and, more recently, have declined with the mean maximum WeBS totals falling from 415 over the 1997/98–2001/02 winters to 337 during the HBA period.



This is consistent with the national picture and may be a result of a long run of mild winters enabling a greater proportion of birds to winter farther north in Europe. Both Langstone and Chichester Harbours continue to hold nationally important numbers with peak counts during the HBA period of, respectively, 205 on March 10th 2012 and 221 on December 5th 2009. Most birds remain well into April by which time displaying males are a common sight up and down the coast.

Nick Montegriffo

Sponsored by Joanna Lowis

Red-Breasted Merganser, Pennington, March 2013 – Gareth Rees



Ruddy Duck

Oxyura jamaicensis

A declining resident and winter visitor

Following the first confirmed breeding in Hampshire at Fleet Pond in 1978, this North American species bred sporadically until a small resident population was established at Blashford Lakes in the mid-1980s. Breeding also occurred intermittently elsewhere in the county before Alresford Pond became the second regular breeding site from 1990 onwards. The decision to eradicate the species from Britain, to protect the threatened Spanish population of White-headed Duck Oxyura leucocephala, was confirmed in 2003 but, despite almost 2,700 Ruddy Ducks being shot in the UK between September 2005 and January 2007, it had little effect on the small Hampshire population by 2008, the first year of the HBA breeding survey. Thereafter, numbers dropped quickly following culls in 2010 and 2011. For example, the only significant count on Ibsley Water in 2011 was five on February 3rd but these had been eliminated two days later.

Small numbers continued to be seen in the county to the end of the HBA period but the species was, by then, in rapid decline. The Food, Environment and Research Agency (Fera) aimed that work to eliminate the remaining birds would continue in line with the commitment to eradicate Ruddy Ducks by 2015.

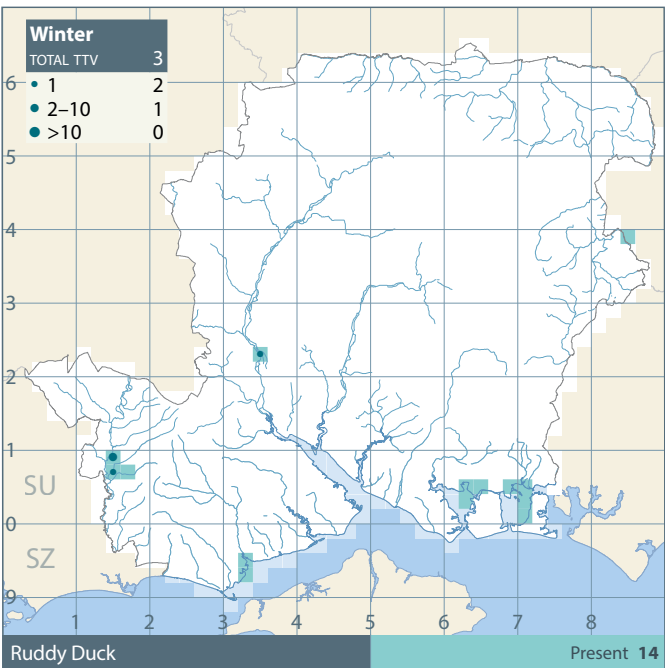
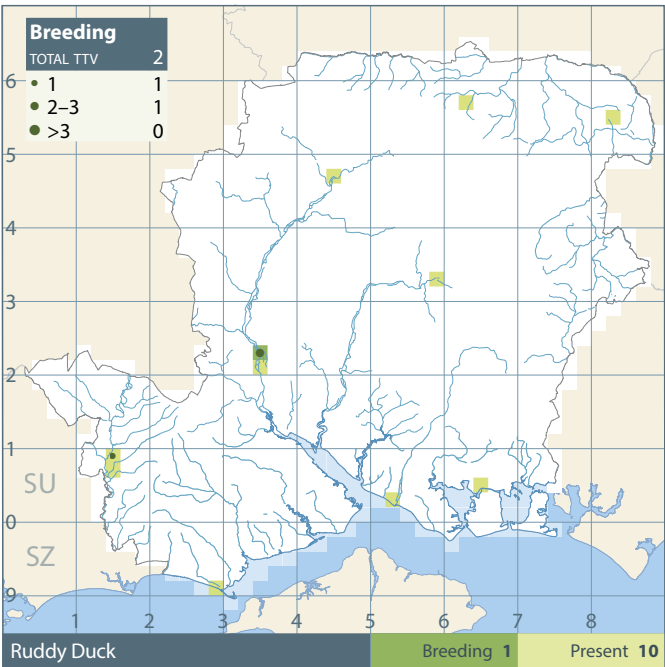
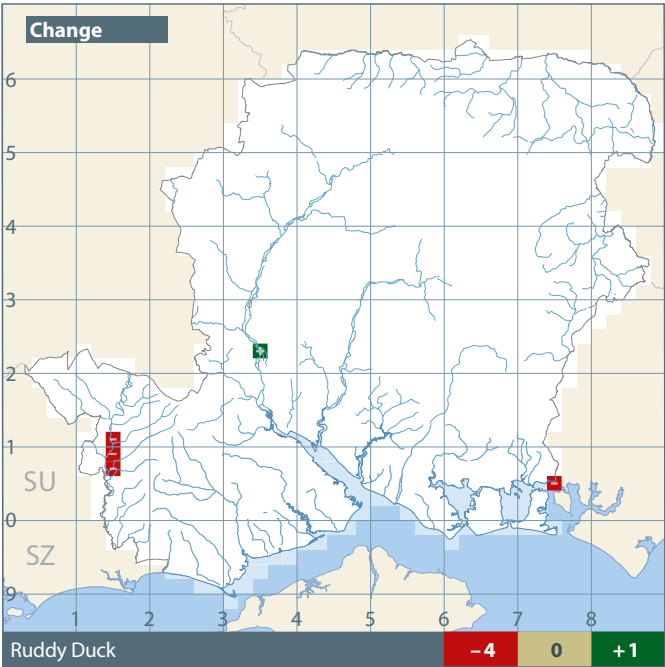
Since the eradication programme began, reports of birds in Hampshire made public were followed, a few days later, by them being culled. This outcome was not universally popular and, consequently, some observers withheld information about the occurrence of the species in the county. However, with so many observers and the speed of dissemination of news, it is most probably just a matter of time before the Ruddy Duck's relatively short history as a Hampshire resident draws to an end.

Nick Montegriffo

Sponsored by Tony Blakeley



Ruddy Duck, Blashford Lakes, March 2008 – Martin Bennett



Grey Partridge

Perdix perdix

A scarce and declining resident

The Grey Partridge is one of the most rapidly decreasing bird species in Europe. In the UK, the population has fallen by around 90% over the past 40 years. In Hampshire, a dramatic decline was already obvious at the time of the 1986–91 Atlas as described in *BoH*. This downward slide has continued to date. The HBA breeding and change maps show that the total of 602 tetrads where breeding was considered likely in 1986–91 plummeted to just 125 in 2008–2012, with confirmed breeding from only 11 tetrads. The species is now mainly restricted to limited areas on Martin Down, around The Wallops, Andover and Overton, East Tisted and on parts of the South Downs.

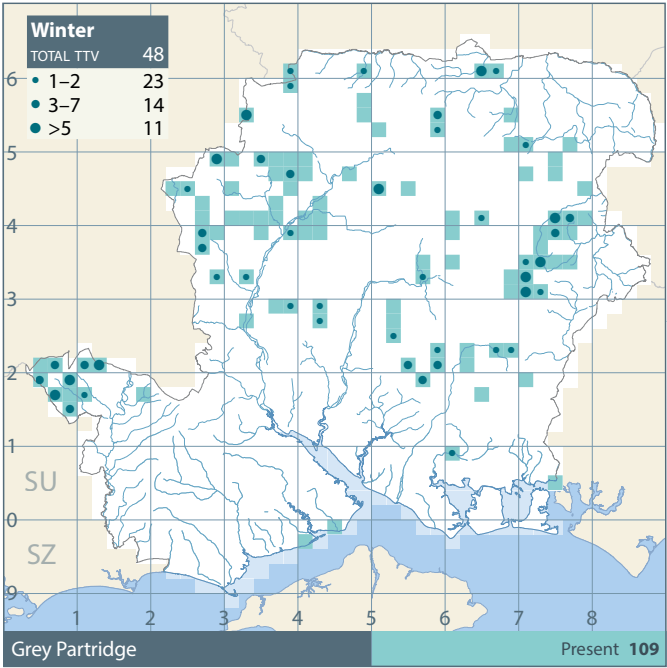
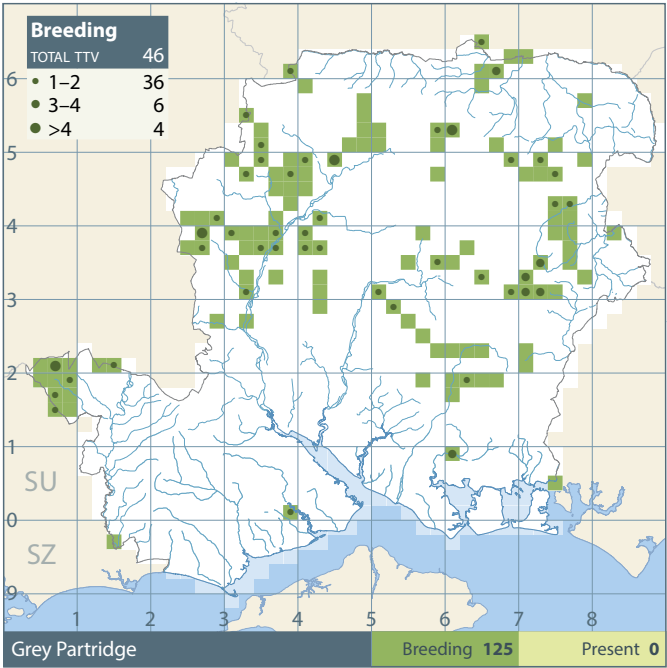
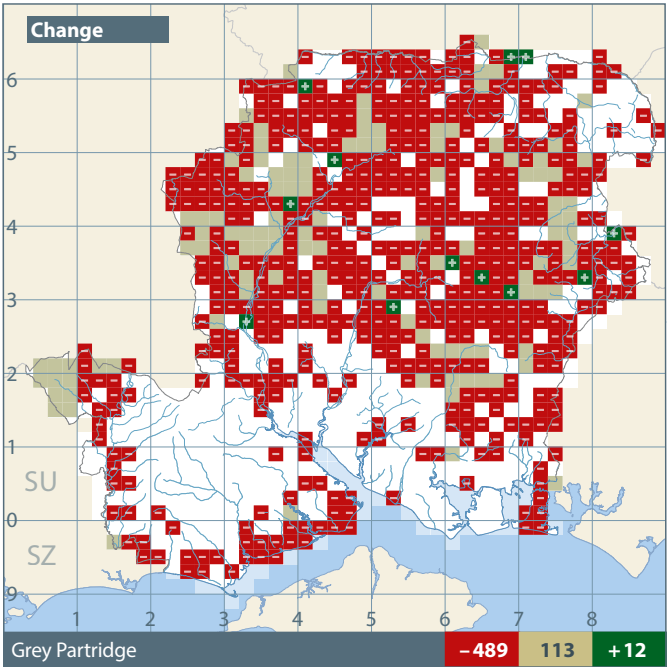
The primary reason for its decline is the deterioration of farmland habitat due to agricultural intensification. In particular the use of herbicides and insecticides has resulted in reduced chick survival because of decreased availability of invertebrate food (Rands 1985). Supplementary causes include loss of nesting cover through the removal of hedges, smaller broods because of subsequent increased predation, particularly by Foxes, and accidental shooting and disturbance during Red-legged Partridge shooting drives. There is no evidence that direct competition from Red-legged Partridges has affected Grey Partridges.

Despite the continuing downward trend in the population, the Environmental Stewardship Scheme currently provides payments for measures such as conservation headlands and beetle banks which should benefit these birds and other farmland species. At the Middleton and Portway Estate in the Longparish area, with advice from the GWCT, the number of breeding Grey Partridges has been increased from three pairs in 2007 to 32 pairs in 2012. Also in 2012 at the nearby Trinley Estate, 53 chicks were ringed. These encouraging results were obtained by providing insect-rich field margins and tussocky grass for nesting, as well as by sowing wild-bird seed mixes and supplementary feeding in winter. Such measures can also benefit birds such as Corn Bunting, Skylark and Lapwing.

Grey Partridge is a sedentary species so it is not surprising that its winter and breeding distributions are very similar. Family parties stay together through the winter. During the HBA the highest winter counts were between 20 and 30 in areas south-east of Alton, along the Berkshire border, west of Andover and in the Martin Down area.

David Minns

Sponsored by David Minns



Grey Partridge, Stockbridge, May 2012 – Mike Darling (above); north Hampshire, September 2011 – Martin Bennett (below)



Red-legged Partridge

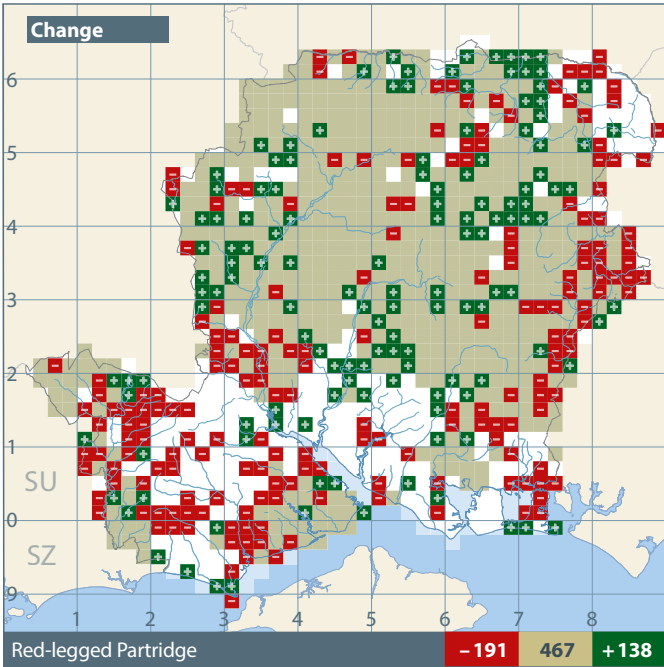
Alectoris rufa

A common resident, its numbers supplemented by releases

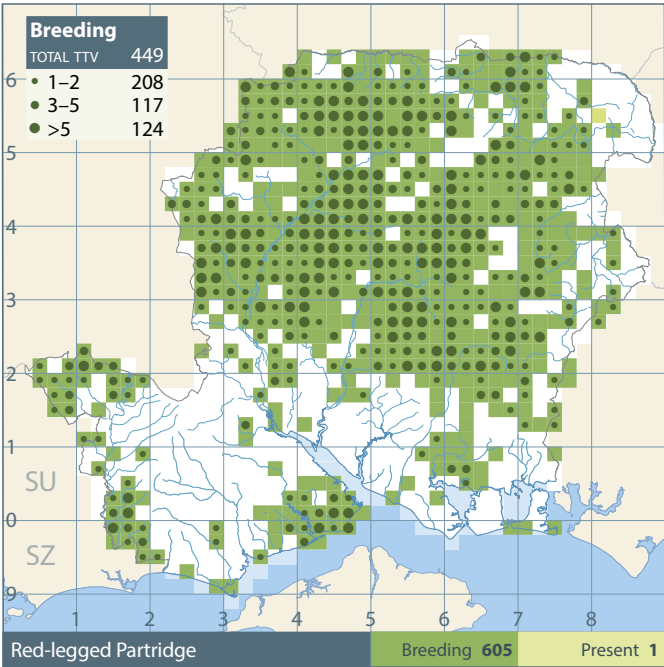
In 1972 C&T described the Red-legged Partridge as widely spread but generally much less common than the Grey Partridge. Today the situation has reversed with Red-legs now by far the more numerous of the two. Comparison of the HBA maps for the two species shows that Red-legs were found likely to be breeding in 605 tetrads (approximately 60% of the county) whereas the corresponding number for Grey Partridges was just 125 tetrads (approximately 12% of the county).

Regrettably, the reason for this reversal in fortunes owes more to the dramatic decline of our native species than to the success of its introduced relative. In fact the number of Red-legged Partridges has also been declining since the time of the 1986–91 Atlas. Over the intervening period, their population in England has fallen by 21% (*BirdTrends*) although for a species that is released in its millions every year, such trends may not mean a great deal.

In Hampshire, although the species remains widespread, its range has contracted by around 8% since the 1986–91 Atlas, with losses particularly in the New Forest and the eastern parts of the county. In contrast, some infilling has

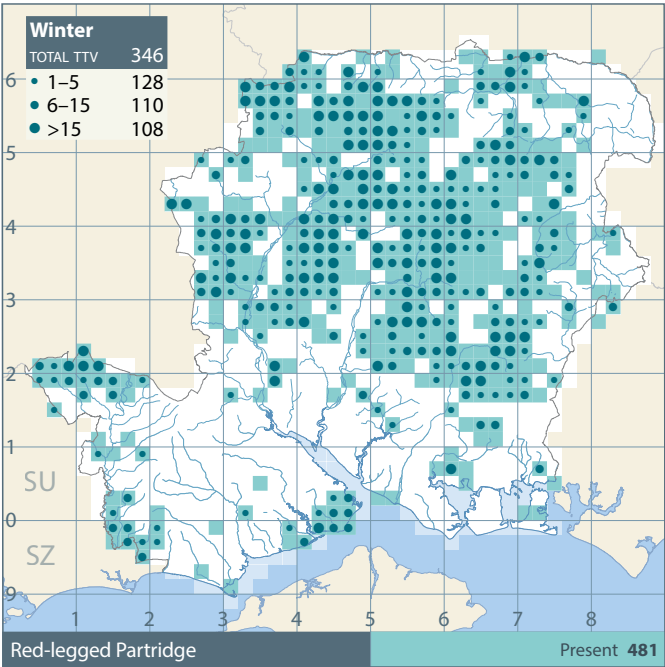


occurred on the central agricultural belt where breeding densities are generally higher. It is possible that this pattern of change is due to losses in the wild population and gains as a result of more widespread releases. However, given the vast numbers put down annually in the UK, it is perhaps more likely due to variations in locations and numbers of releases.



Red-legs can turn up anywhere, including unlikely locations such as parks, gardens and even busy urban areas, but are generally far more common in large open agricultural regions than in heathland and woodland habitats.

Red-legged partridges are essentially sedentary so it is to be expected that their winter distribution largely mirrors



that in the breeding season. The fact that fewer tetrads were occupied in winter than in summer, yet counts in occupied tetrads were higher, suggests that some local movements leading to concentration in better feeding areas may take place in winter.

David Minns

Sponsored by Geoffrey Farwell

Red-Legged Partridge, Cheriton Wood, September 2010 – Peter Thompson



Lady Amherst's Pheasant

Chrysolophus amherstiae

Golden Pheasant

Chrysolophus pictus

Very scarce and declining introduced residents

The first Golden Pheasants probably arrived in Hampshire from Dorset in the late 19th century but none were recorded during the 1968–72 Atlas. By the time of the 1986–91 Hampshire Atlas, however, following small-scale releases on several estates, there were apparently self-supporting populations in the Beaulieu and Exbury areas, a few parts of the New Forest and in the Queen Elizabeth Country Park. Most of these populations seem to have died out by the time of the HBA, with only two records obtained, both in 2008: one of two birds in the Kimbridge area in January and the other of an immature male at Ampfield Wood near Chandler's Ford in December.

Lady Amherst's Pheasants were released on the Exbury estate in the 1950s, with a flock of 11 recorded there in 1973. Occasional reports of pure Lady Amherst's continued



Golden Pheasant, Norfolk – Alex Berryman

to the time of 1986–91 Atlas but most records were of hybrids with Golden Pheasants and there is no evidence of a self-supporting feral population. Only one record from near Sherfield English in February 2008 was received during the HBA.

The continuing, occasional records of both species presumably refer to escapes from local collections.

David Minns

Pheasant

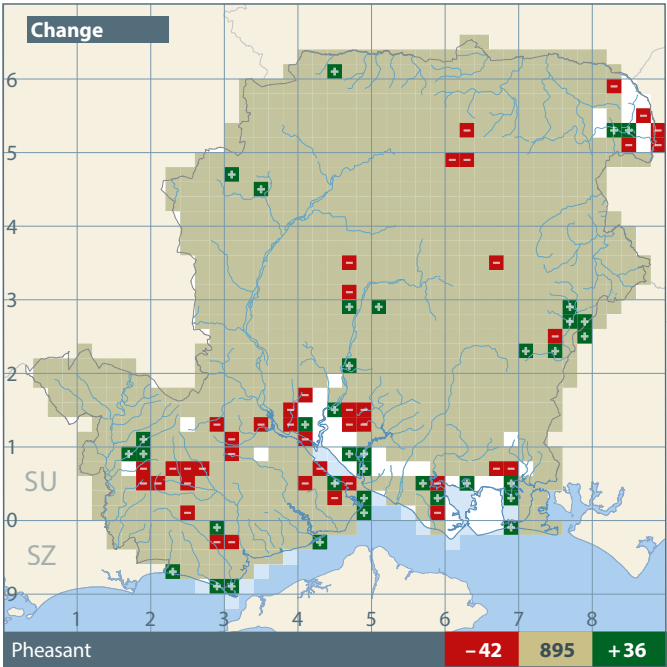
Phasianus colchicus

An abundant resident, the naturalised population being supplemented by releases

It is somewhat ironic that at a time when many of our farmland birds are in decline, the Pheasant, an introduced species which is bred to be shot, is one of the most common and best known birds in the British countryside. It is maintained as an abundant resident thanks to millions being reared and released each year. In autumn, following release, it contributes a greater avian biomass than any other ‘wild’ bird species in the UK. It qualifies as one of our best known birds because it is large, spectacularly-plumaged and conspicuous, its loud and distinctive call also making it hard to miss. In England, its population has almost doubled since the 1960s (*BirdTrends*) presumably as a result of larger numbers being released. In recent years the upward trend has peaked, possibly due to a reduction in demand for an expensive pastime caused by the economic slowdown.

This species is widespread across Hampshire, the main gaps in its distribution being in built-up areas such as Southampton, Portsmouth and in the north-east around Aldershot and Farnborough, although even in urban areas it sometimes turns up unexpectedly and naively in town parks and gardens. It is most common on the agricultural heartland of the county where it is found in woodland and farmland, particularly on shooting estates where it is bred for release and cover is provided for its benefit (and, one has to admit, for the benefit of many other species). During the HBA survey, the highest breeding season TTV count, no doubt based on insider information, was 2,500 on the Somerley Estate in the Avon Valley in July 2008. There has been little change in its distribution over the last 20 years, with a net loss of only six tetrads in the breeding season.

Although the Hampshire population is dependent on the annual release of huge numbers of birds, a smaller wild population exists. This is confirmed by the presence of



breeding birds in areas that are not shot over including both farmland and heathland habitats. How big this population would be without the annual replenishment provided by escapees from the cull is unknown, although one might speculate that it would reduce in line with many other farmland species without the regular injection of new blood.

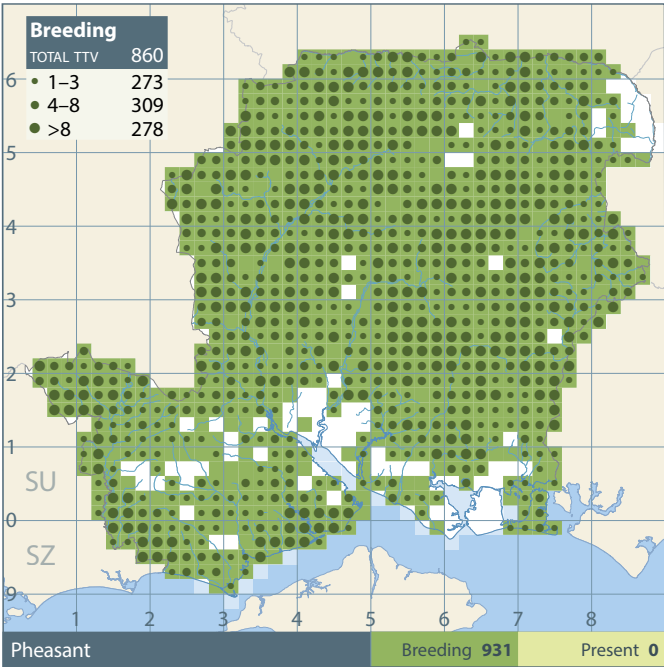
Pheasants are sedentary although they tend to form flocks in winter and may move in search of good feeding areas. Comparison of the HBA breeding and wintering maps shows similar distributions although with fewer tetrads occupied in winter than in summer. This is particularly noticeable in the New Forest where large areas are apparently devoid of birds in winter. This may be a result of the local population moving on to nearby farmland or because the birds become much less vocal outside the breeding season and are therefore less easy to detect.

David Minns

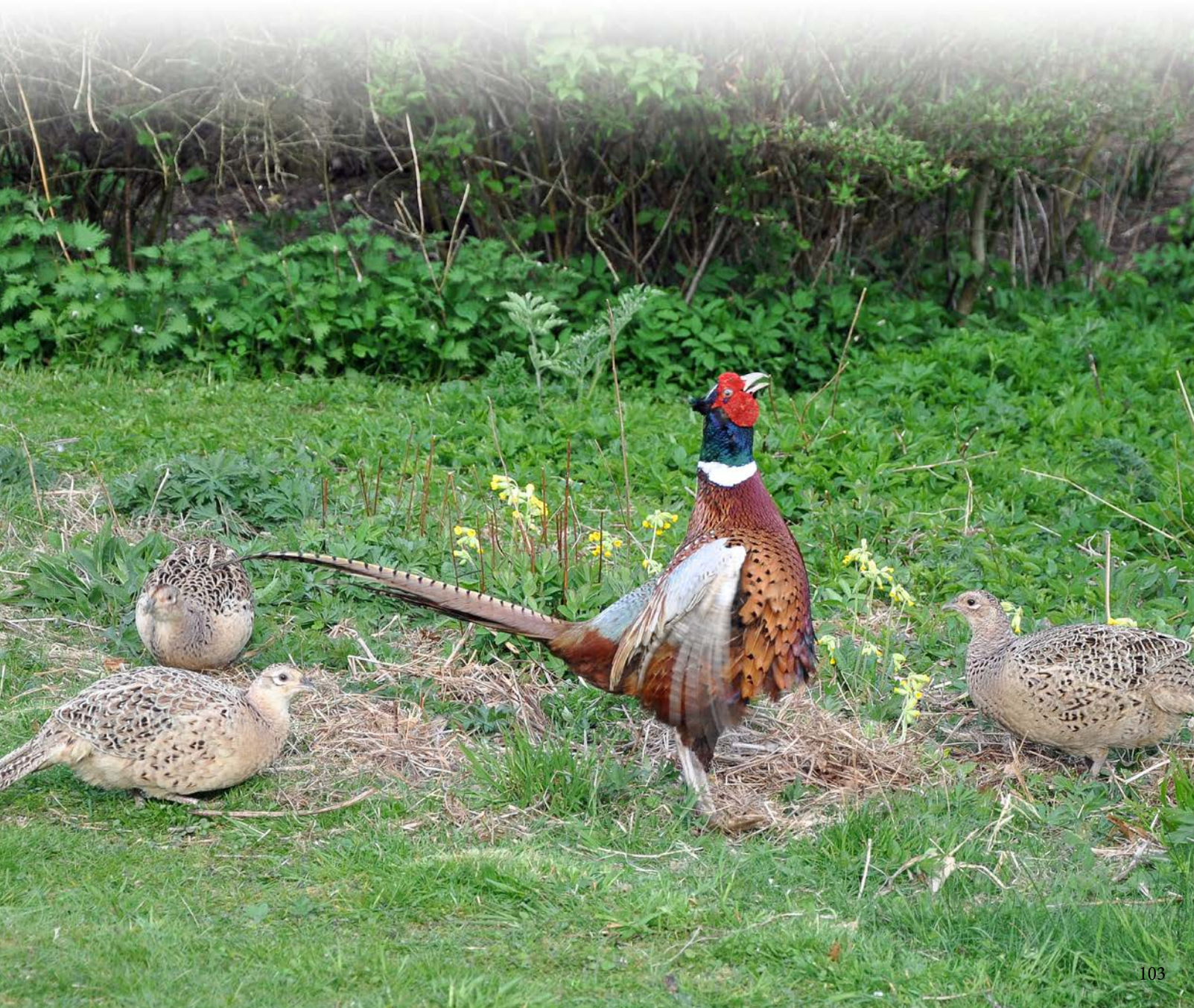
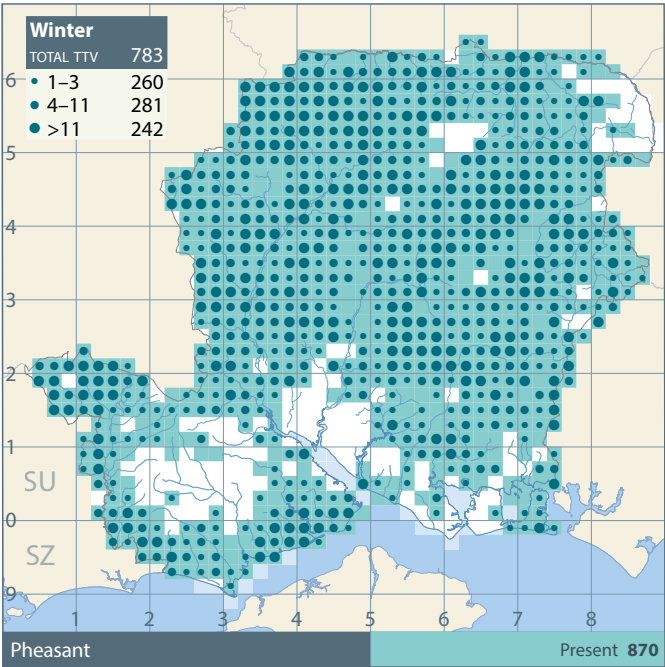
Sponsored by Geoffrey Farwell



Pheasant, New Forest, May 2010 – Martin Bennett



Pheasant, Cheriton, June 2010 – Peter Thompson



Quail

Coturnix coturnix

A normally scarce and erratic summer visitor; very rarely recorded in winter

Quails are summer visitors from southern Europe and Africa. Their distinctive song is heard in Hampshire most years, but obtaining breeding proof is notoriously difficult. During the HBA period there was no confirmed breeding reported although a young bird was rescued from the Cholderton Estate during harvest on September 16th 2011.

Numbers vary year to year, those recorded in any one year probably representing only a fraction of the total passing through the county. During the 2008–12 breeding seasons, Quail were recorded in between six and 24 tetrads each year, with a total of 55 different tetrads being occupied over the period. The number of singing males was more variable, from seven in 2009 to 61 in 2011. The latter year, a so-called ‘Quail year’ saw an exceptional record of 40 during harvesting on the Cholderton Estate on September 8th. The factors affecting how many reach the UK are complex, and include breeding success and weather conditions in southern Europe, conditions in the Sahel region of Africa, winter survival and weather at migration time. Observer effort also determines how many are located.

The majority of records are of singing males. With breeding success being so difficult to prove, the accompanying HBA breeding map has been based on those records received after May 15th being indicative of likely breeding. However, many of these records may refer to unmated males. The protocol of recording probable breeding based on the presence of a territorial singing male for a week or more may not be appropriate for this species as extended singing more likely indicates an unmated, rather than paired, bird.

Similar to Grey Partridge, Quail records were largely confined to certain areas of the chalk, in particular Martin Down, around the Wallops, Overton and Binsted, and other parts of the South Downs.

The change map shows a decline in likely breeding from 68 tetrads in the 1986–91 to 52 in 2008–12, but this should not necessarily be taken as indicative of a downward trend in the breeding population. It is possible that such changes may simply reflect the annual variance in numbers and recording effort, or that some likely breeding records, particularly from the first Atlas, were migrants. That said, in Europe, Quail populations declined significantly during 1970–90.

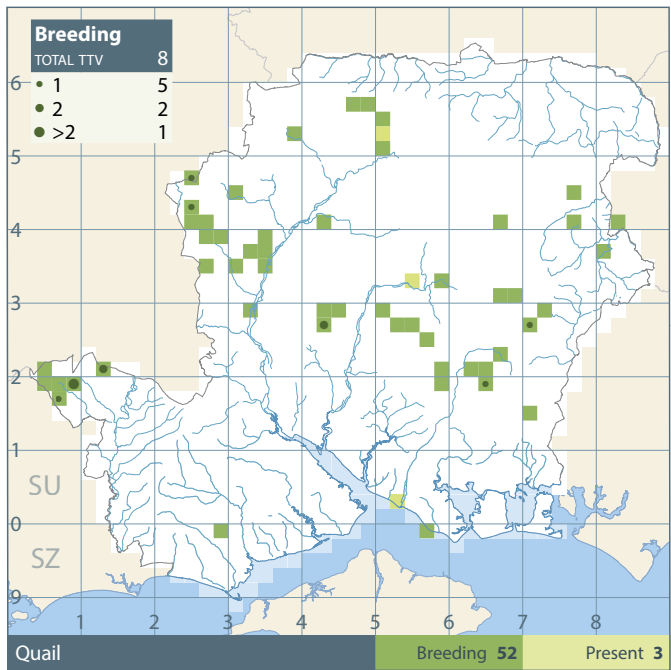
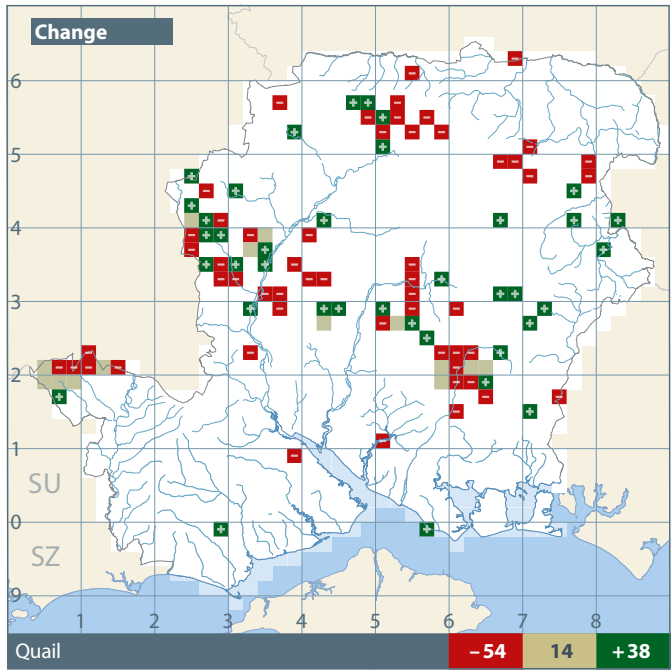
Birds occasionally winter in Hampshire (*BoH*), though there were no records during the HBA period. The most recent winter record was of one at West Hayling Local Nature Reserve in January 2003.

David Minns

Sponsored by Rupert Pyrah



Quail, Martin Down, May 2014 – Alan Lewis



Red-throated Diver

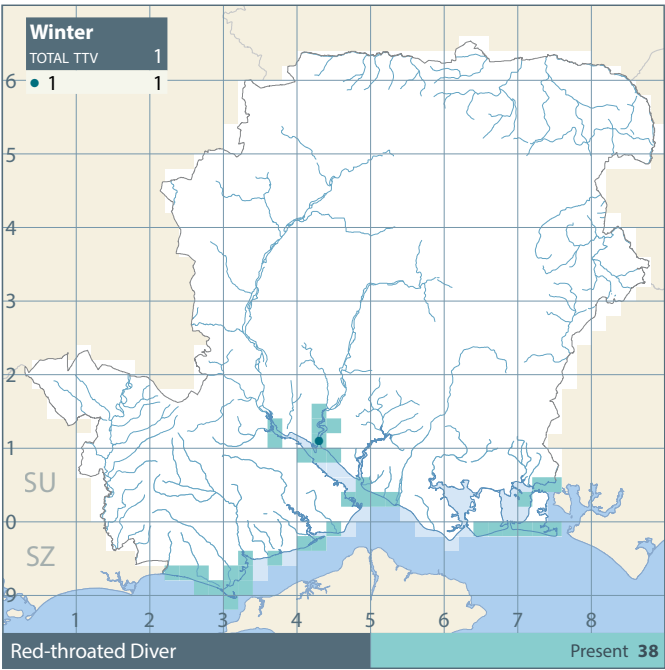
Gavia stellata

A scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

The Red-throated Diver has a circumpolar distribution, breeding on tundra lakes into the Arctic Circle as far north as the ice thaw will allow by late May. The world population is between 200,000–500,000. In Britain, 1,300 pairs summer north from the Scottish Highlands to the Northern Isles (*APEP3*). In autumn, West Palearctic birds migrate south to winter in tidal waters around the British and west European coasts and east along some north Mediterranean shores to the Black Sea. Evidence from aerial mapping suggests the British wintering population is a minimum of 17,000 individuals (*O’Brien et al.* 2008). The species is thinly spread in winter in shallow waters around the entire British coast, although now there appears to be significant offshore concentrations in the south-east.

Wintering patterns in Hampshire have changed substantially this century. Previously, it was at best a scarce winter visitor to sheltered coastal waters in the early winter but by mid-winter it was more likely to be reported from the open sea. From 1980–85 the five winter totals averaged 12 individuals. From 2007–12 numbers in sheltered coastal locations were of ones or twos in winter whereas during sea-watching at the east end, particularly, west of the county, far greater numbers were encountered than previously. During the HBA period the species was recorded in 38 tetrads. For the majority of these (25) there were only registrations in one or two months during the five winters and these normally of single or occasionally two individuals. These tetrads were all located within the inner Solent, the eastern harbours or Southampton Water and the same few individuals roamed between several tetrads. It suggests that these localities are only now used by weakened, or storm-driven, birds – in any case in lower numbers compared to the previous Atlas and prior periods. Certainly, fewer birds appear weakened by sea pollution as only two were reported oiled in the whole period.

Movements, however, were reported on 50% of winter months within the Solent between Hill Head and Chilling – exceptional counts being five east on November 15th 2007



and 11 west on December 15th 2010. On the open sea in the west of the county, from Hurst to Barton on Sea, birds were seen in all mid-winter months during the HBA period and in the east on most months across Hayling Bay (80%). At Hurst small flocks were occasionally seen settled on the sea or into the north-west Solent. Most observations were of movements, some off Hurst, which were particularly large and at previously unrecorded levels in Hampshire waters. These included an easterly movement of 71 on January 17th 2009 and a westerly movement of 394 from February 4th–7th 2011. Prevailing south-westerly winds up to gale force seem to precipitate these large movements consistent with the evidence above that the species winters out of visual range off the south coast.

Spring and autumn passage records over the calendar years 2007–12 were as follows. Light easterly spring passage totalled 201 individuals typically from late March to mid-May. By contrast very few were noted on return passage, just 16 individuals from 2008–2012 but an exceptional 16 in 2007 from September 18th into October.

Alan Cox

Sponsored by Jenny Jones

Red-Throated Diver,
Hayling Island, September 2009
– Richard Ford



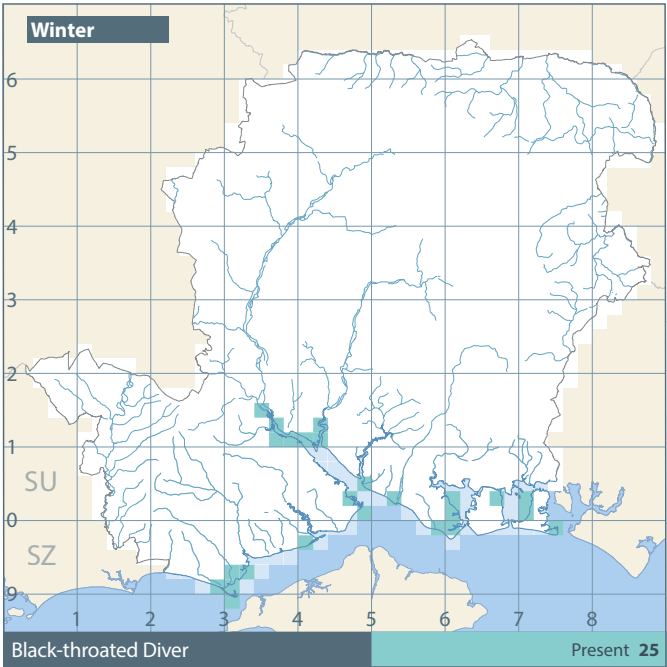
Black-throated Diver

Gavia arctica

A very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

The Black-throated Diver has a Palearctic distribution, breeding only at northern latitudes, reaching west to Scotland and Scandinavia. The West Palearctic population is between 120,000–230,000 individuals. In autumn, birds migrate south. In winter it is generally the commonest diver around European coasts from the North to the Black Seas. This is not the case in Britain where it is the least recorded of the three commoner divers with the wintering population estimated at 560 (*APEP3*).

It was a very scarce winter visitor to the county during the HBA; even movements off Hurst were much lighter than for Red-throated Diver, with an exceptional peak of six on December 7th 2008. The HBA map shows 25 tetrads where the species was recorded. Away from the Hurst area, all records were of singles, apart from two at Calshot and Sandy Point on single dates. Some individuals lingered for several weeks, for example ten of the 11 tetrad registrations in Southampton Water could have related to just three individuals, including one present from December 2011 until February 2012. At Hurst/Milford on Sea the species was recorded in 60% of winter months, mostly movements of one to three birds, but three settled on the sea there from December to January 2010–11. The species is hence a very scarce county winterer, as noted for the whole of Britain above, but long-staying birds make for easier viewing than



the greater, but more transient, numbers of Red-throated Divers.

It is more numerous on spring passage than in winter. During 2007–12 a cumulative total of 59 east between April 2nd and May 20th included 27 in 2011. Some of these lingered for several days including one into early June. By contrast only three were recorded in autumn including the earliest return ever on September 8th 2009.

Alan Cox

Sponsored by Ray Morley



Black-Throated Diver, Forton Lake, November 2008 – Steve Copsey

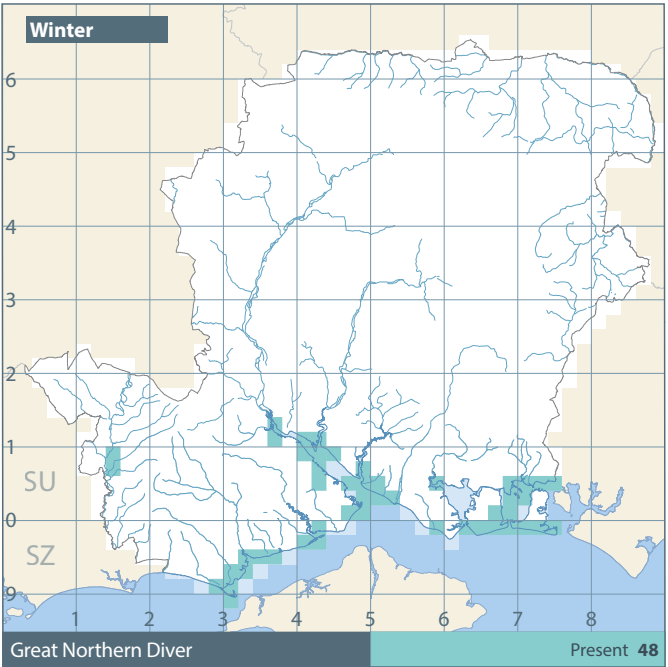
Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

A scarce but increasing winter visitor and passage migrant

The Great Northern Diver is essentially a Nearctic breeding species with a tiny footprint into the Palearctic, mostly by virtue of 100–300 pairs in Iceland. The North American breeding population is stated by Cornell Laboratories (2010) as 252,000–264,000 breeding pairs out of a total population of 607,000–635,000 individuals, the additional birds being first and second years, breeding not being attempted before the third calendar-year. Nearctic breeders disperse along both east and west North American coasts but there is also a trans-Atlantic passage (estimated at <1% of the population) to winter along European Atlantic coasts and even a small population off the French Mediterranean coast. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* noted registrations in a surprising 27% of British 10 km squares, with many inland records on scattered lakes and reservoirs boosting the predominantly coastal distribution. The British population is estimated at 2,500 (*APEP3*) with the main concentration wintering around the Northern Isles, the Hebrides and off the north-west coast of the Scottish mainland.

In Hampshire numbers increased from an average of seven in the five-winter periods from 1980–85, to 15 from 2007–12. As the map shows, there were registrations in 48 tetrads within 14 10 km squares, including three inland records of singles from Blashford Lakes. Most winterers arrive in late November or early December, including dramatic influxes of 17 and 24 in the winters of 2008/09 and 2009/10. Adults are flightless for a period in mid-winter and hence such arrivals generally lead to sightings of settled birds for several weeks when there are very few records of offshore movements. In consequence, most coastal localities recorded the species for more than 50% of mid-winter months in the five-year period. Southampton Water held a peak of at least ten in 2009/10 when county winterers



reached the record total of 24, approaching 1% of the estimated British wintering population. Elsewhere, peaks of three to four were recorded at five other coastal localities over the Atlas period. The species thus was the most likely of the three commoner divers to be encountered wintering within the county. It was often seen close to shore foraging for crabs.

Spring passage totalled 53 from 2007–12 but this is possibly an over-estimate as some individuals rested offshore for several days; indeed very few were reported moving purposefully east. Birds were present into late May in four years and one year into June (on 9th 2012 – the second ever record for the month). A total of just nine was recorded in autumn from 2007–12 between September 18th and October 30th; it is arguable that of these, three in late October were local winterers rather than on passage.

Alan Cox

Sponsored by Kate Allen



Great Northern Diver, West Hayling Island, January 2009 – Richard Ford

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

A scarce passage migrant most frequent in spring and early autumn

During the HBA period this species was regularly recorded during sea-watches on the open coast, particularly in spring and summer (April to August) off Hurst Beach and Sandy Point. Although this coincides with birds breeding on coastal cliffs in adjacent counties, the lack of records earlier in the year, when local breeders have already returned to their colonies, suggests that the spring peak in Hampshire may be due to non-breeders moving through the English Channel and visiting nearby colonies at that season. The influence of recording bias during spring sea-watching may also play a part.

Peak day-counts during the HBA period included 14 off Hurst on April 27th 2008 and 12 off Sandy Point on May 28th 2008. Smaller numbers were seen in the Solent, with a peak of four off Gilkicker Point on April 15th 2009. Birds were occasionally observed prospecting the cliffs between Milford on Sea and Barton on Sea during the spring and one was seen heading inland over Hill Head on June 5th 2009.

Few records were received in autumn and winter (September to March) with only single-figure day counts; this is when local populations disperse offshore. Overall, numbers of this species recorded in the county have shown a steady increase since the 1986–91 Atlas (*Figure xiv*), probably partly due to increased observer coverage.

Russell Wynn

Sponsored by Mike Adams

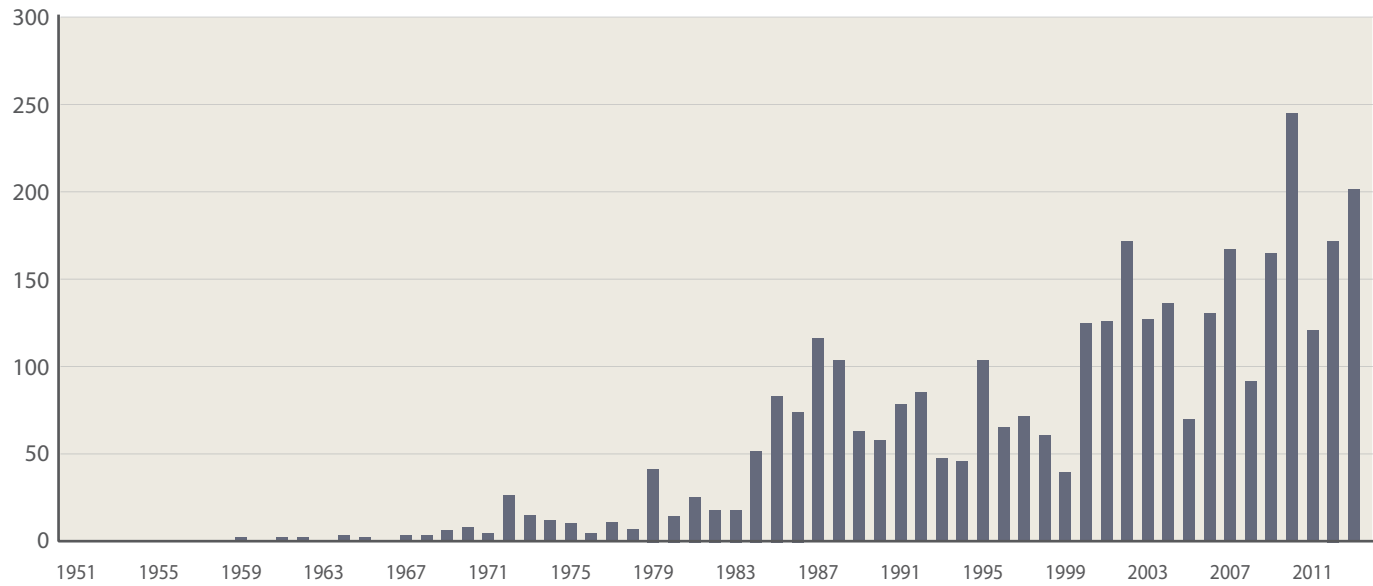


Figure xiv – Fulmar: annual totals 1951–2012.



Fulmar, off the Needles, July 2007 – Nigel Jones

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

A scarce, but increasing, passage migrant most frequent in spring

Most records of this species are received from open coastal sites between April and June. Peak day counts off Hurst Beach during the HBA period included 82 on April 24th 2009, 73 on July 17th 2009, 133 on June 18th 2011 and 152 on April 30th 2012. Relatively few were seen

in the August to October period, with a peak of 19 off Hurst on September 10th 2010. Sporadic records of birds picked up at inland sites in autumn presumably relate to recently fledged juveniles; recent examples included one in Basingstoke on September 19th 2011.

Numbers visiting Hampshire have dramatically increased since the 1986–91 Atlas, as indicated in *Figure xv*.

Russell Wynn

Sponsored by Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



Manx Shearwater, Milford on Sea, October 2009 – Nigel Jones (left and centre); Basingstoke, September 2011 – Charlotte Hellewell (right)

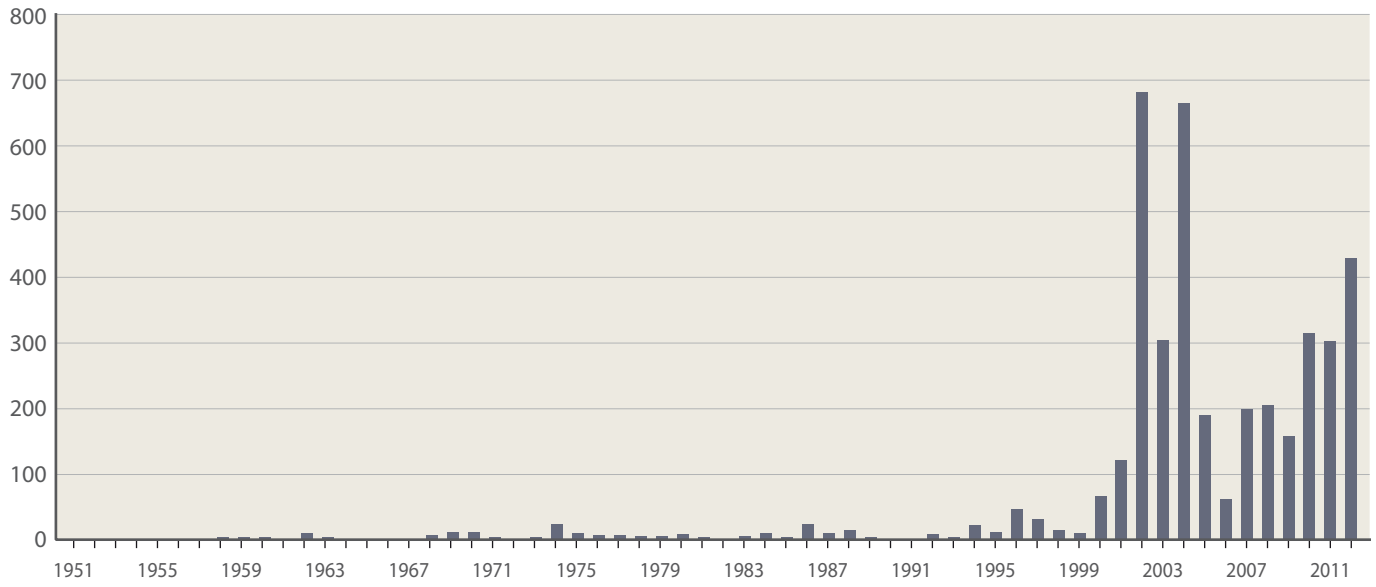


Figure xv – Annual totals of Manx Shearwaters 1951–2012.

Balearic Shearwater

Puffinus mauretanicus

A very scarce but regular passage migrant, mostly in late summer and autumn

Most sightings in Hampshire are of singles or small numbers seen during sea-watches from open coastal locations between late May and early October, particularly off Hurst Beach and Sandy Point. The peak day count in the 2007–12 period (although outside the HBA breeding and winter seasons) was eight (including a flock of seven) off Hurst on September 10th 2010. Annual totals ranged from ten to 34 each year from 2007 to 2012. However, calculation of accurate totals has recently become complicated due to birds lingering in Christchurch Bay for periods of a few days in summer and autumn.

Balearic Shearwater is Europe’s only Critically Endangered seabird, although numbers recorded during post-breeding migration in UK waters have increased dramatically since the mid-1990s. This situation is reflected in Hampshire, with only four listed in BoH in 1993, but a further 67 up to 2006 (including an exceptional count of 40 in 2001) and 114 from 2007–12. The increase is clearly shown in Figure xvi.

Russell Wynn

Sponsored by Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



Balearic Shearwater, Lyme Bay – Mark Darlaston

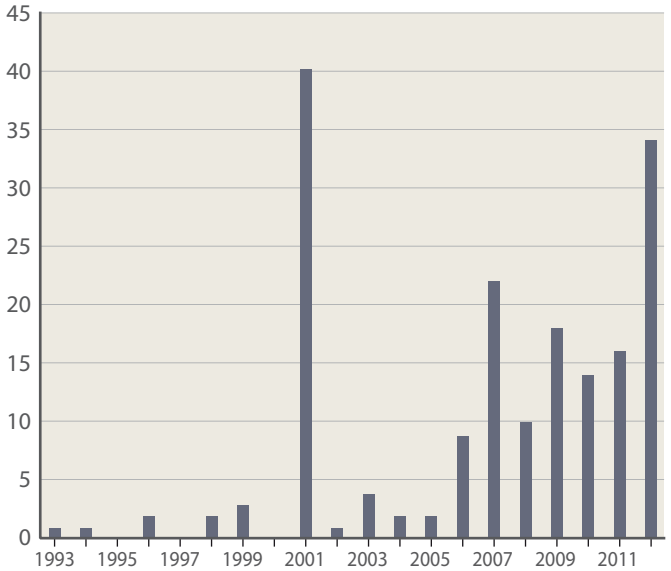


Figure xvi – Annual totals of Balearic Shearwaters 1993–2012.

Sooty Shearwater

Puffinus griseus

A rare passage migrant

The Sooty Shearwater breeds on sub-Antarctic islands and winters in the North Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

During the HBA period there were as many as 20 birds recorded, including a peak count of eight in 2010. Most records referred to single birds seen during autumn sea-watches in August–November and usually associated with south-westerly gales and rain. Exceptions included a late bird seen in Hayling Bay on December 1st 2007, five off Milford on Sea on September 10th 2010, three off Hurst on September 11th 2011 and one found exhausted on the tideline at Hill Head on June 13th 2011 that later died in care.

Sooty Shearwater was formerly a very rare visitor to Hampshire waters, with only one bird from 1974 listed in



Sooty Shearwater, Hill Head, June 2011 – Bob Marchant

BoH. From 1993 to 2006 there were a further nine records. The recent increase means that by the end of 2012, the county total stood at 30.

Russell Wynn

Sponsored in memory of Tim Lawman

Storm Petrel

Hydrobates pelagicus

A very scarce visitor usually seen after autumn gales

This species is rarely seen from Hampshire, although there are occasional large ‘wrecks’ in association with stormy weather, e.g. 126 birds from May 19th–29th 2006. The only notable influx during the HBA period was in 2008 with up to 17 birds recorded, including a total of 12 between July 8th–10th off Sandy Point and Hurst. The county total stood at 323 birds at the end of 2012.

Russell Wynn

Sponsored by Andy Collins

Storm Petrel, Lyme Bay – Mark Darlaston

Leach’s Petrel

Oceanodroma leucorhoa

A very scarce autumn and winter visitor, usually appearing after gales

This species is a rare visitor to Hampshire coastal waters, usually associated with severe and prolonged autumn and winter gales. However, during the HBA period a major influx occurred in 2009 with the likely total exceeding 100 birds. On November 29th at least 44 moved east off Hurst Castle, and birds were pushed well into the Solent with 20 off Hill Head and smaller numbers between Keyhaven and Beaulieu and in Southampton Water. At least seven were in the Hayling Bay and Chichester Harbour area, and three were seen inland. Many of the birds recorded during this influx were in a weakened state, with one taken into care, several pursued by gulls and Peregrines and one off Oxey Marsh consumed by a Great Skua. Outside of this influx, small numbers were recorded in most years at coastal sites between September and January.

Russell Wynn

Sponsored by Brian Leach

Leach’s Petrel, Hill Head, November 2009 – Steve Copsey (both images)



Gannet

Morus bassanus

A common non-breeding summer visitor; scarce but increasing in winter

Gannets are regularly recorded from the Hampshire coast, most commonly in spring and summer. During the HBA period, the highest spring passage count was 202 moving east off Milford on Sea on April 29th 2008. The largest concentrations were seen feeding off Hurst Beach between late May and early August. Peak counts each year included 350 on July 19th 2008, 408 on August 7th 2009, 166 on 14th July 2010, 334 on July 15th 2011 and 464 on August 15th 2012. These birds were typically concentrated over offshore gravel banks, where interactions between topography and tide provide optimal feeding conditions. Flocks comprised predominantly adult birds and recent tracking studies indicate that the origin of these birds is likely to be the breeding colony on Alderney in the Channel Islands.

A change in behaviour observed during the HBA period was the regular appearance of birds in Southampton Water.



Gannet, Lyme Bay – Mark Darlaston

Until 2010, records were less than annual but became almost daily in June 2011 (up to five) and 2012 when a maximum of 14 was seen from Weston Shore on June 22nd. The numbers observed off Hill Head have also increased with a maximum of 70 on May 17th 2009.

Small numbers were seen feeding off Hurst until October, although sporadic large movements associated with autumn storms included 575 off Hurst on September 5th/6th 2010 and 434 off Hurst on October 23rd 2011. Lower numbers were seen moving through the Solent, with a peak of 72 off Normandy Marsh on July 18th 2008. There has recently been a marked increase in winter records, with peaks of 116 off Hurst on December 25th 2008 and 260 west off Sandy Point on January 15th 2011.

Inland records, mostly relating to juvenile or immature birds, included singles at Blashford Lakes on August 26th 2010 and Cheriton on September 26th 2010.

Russell Wynn

Sponsored by Doug Robertson

Shag

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

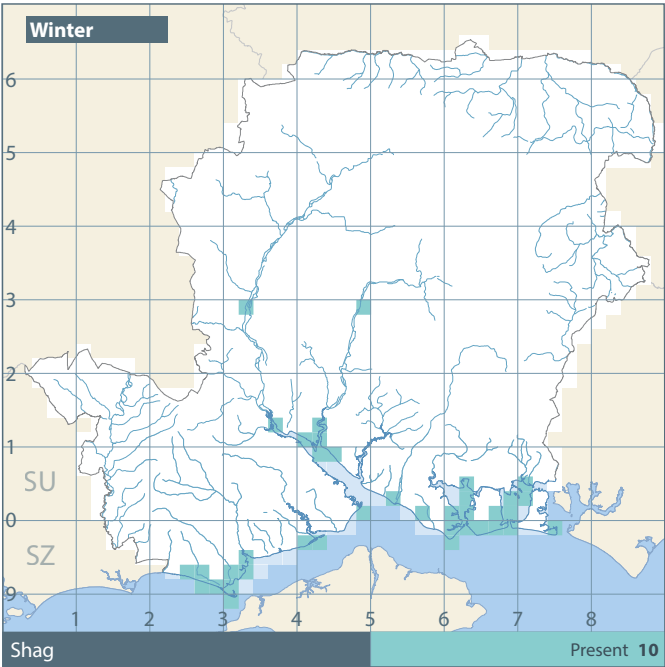
A scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

In Britain, the Shag is restricted as a breeding species mainly to the rocky coasts of the north and west. It is absent from much of eastern and south-eastern England with colonies on the Isle of Wight being the most easterly on the south coast. Although breeding adults remain close to their colonies throughout the year, immatures and non-breeders disperse so the species is seen more widely around the British coast in winter.

Prior to the 1950s, Shags were seldom seen in Hampshire but since then sightings have increased. Surveys during this period have shown that the national population has grown but, since around 1990, has been on a downward trend. This suggests that, in recent years, the increased number of Hampshire records is explained, at least in part, by the growth in sea-watching over the period.

The species can occur in any month of the year but is most numerous between September and November as immatures disperse from their natal colonies. They are seen most frequently at the eastern and western ends of the Solent – at Sandy Point and Hurst/Milford on Sea respectively. Most records are of ones or twos but high counts during the 2007–12 period included gatherings of up to 25 off Hurst Beach in October 2009 and 30 off Sandy Point in October 2011. As the HBA winter map shows, they also occur in the eastern harbours and at the head of Southampton Water, particularly as a result of stormy weather.

John Eyre



Shag, Winchester, December 2009 – Hilary Cornford

Shag, Port Solent, May 2009 – Trevor Carpenter



Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

A moderately common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

At the time of the 1986–91 Atlas, this species did not breed in Hampshire, the nearest breeding colonies being on the cliffs of the Isle of Wight and Dorset. The first tree-nesting colony in Great Britain had been founded at Abberton Reservoir, Essex, in 1981 and over the following 25 years increasing numbers of inland colonies were established, predominantly in east and central England. This change in behaviour from cliff-nester to tree-nester was most probably triggered by immigration of Continental birds of the race *P. c. sinensis* (Newson *et al.* 2007).

In 2006 two pairs attempted to nest at Fleet Pond. Both failed, but the following year two pairs raised five young at the same site, the first record of successful breeding by this species in Hampshire. In 2008 two pairs again nested successfully at Fleet Pond and a third pair bred at Ibsley Water, raising one young in a nest on the ground. Breeding was attempted, unsuccessfully, at Fleet Pond in 2010 but not in subsequent years. Given the current national policy, introduced in 2004, for controlling Cormorant numbers, it will be interesting to see whether the species succeeds in its bid to colonise Hampshire or whether its attempt during the HBA period proves to be a one-off and short-lived episode.

The number of Cormorants seen in the county has increased between the 1986–91 and 2007–12 Atlases. The mean maximum WeBS count over the HBA period was 720 whereas the total peak monthly site counts during 1986–91 were usually below 600. The numbers seen inland have also increased with a county record roost count of 450 in the Avon Valley in January 2011. This total involved birds feeding by day off the Dorset coast and flying inland to roost. Three-figure counts were also made at three other sites: Blashford Lakes, Fishlake Meadows and Eversley Gravel Pits.

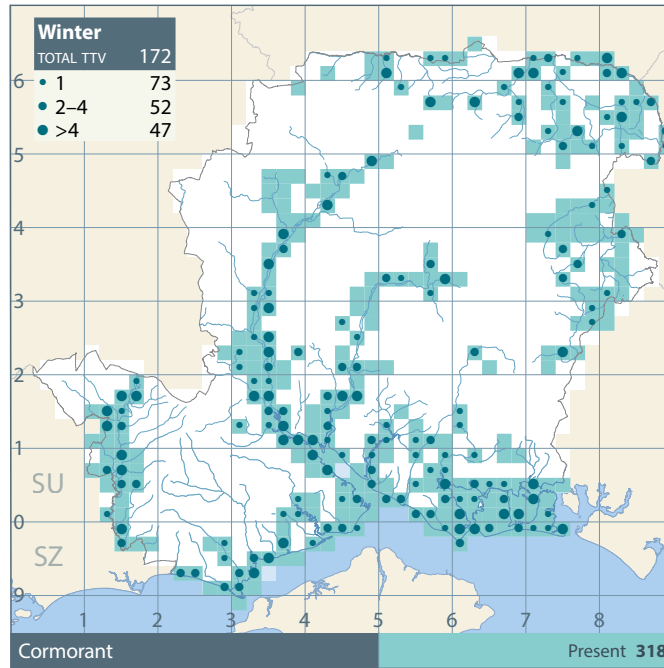
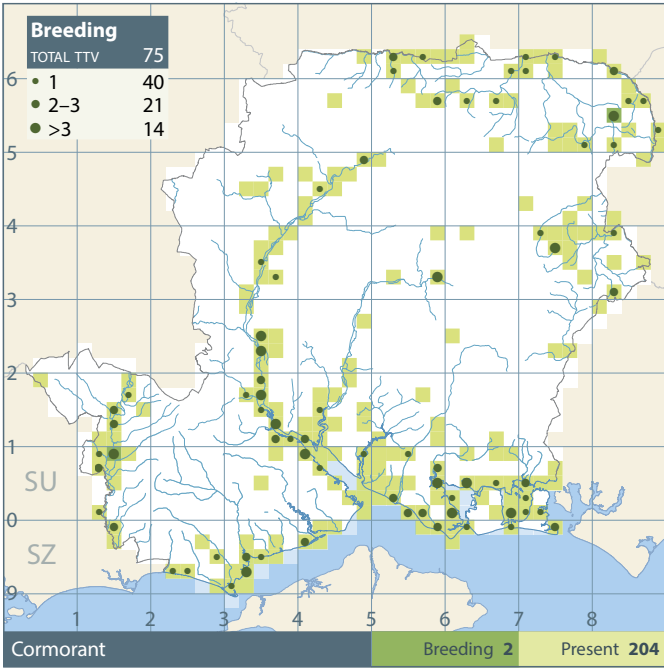
As the HBA winter map shows, the Cormorant is now commonly seen not only on the coast but in all the county’s main river valleys, the Thames Basin and the Weald. Ringing data has shown that the population is swelled in winter by immigrants from elsewhere in the British Isles and the near Continent. An example of such movements is illustrated by a bird ringed as a chick on 9th June 2011 at Maughold, Isle of Man and photographed four months later at Blashford Lakes (*facing page, top left*).

John Eyre

Sponsored by Peter & Pamela Strangeman



Cormorant, Blashford Lakes, October 2010 – Martin Bennett



Cormorant, Blashford Lakes, September 2011 – Martin Bennett (above); Titchfield, August 2013 – Mike Crutch (below)



Cormorant ssp. *sinensis*, Sandy Point, April 2009 – Andy Johnson



Bittern

Botaurus stellaris

A very scarce but regular winter visitor

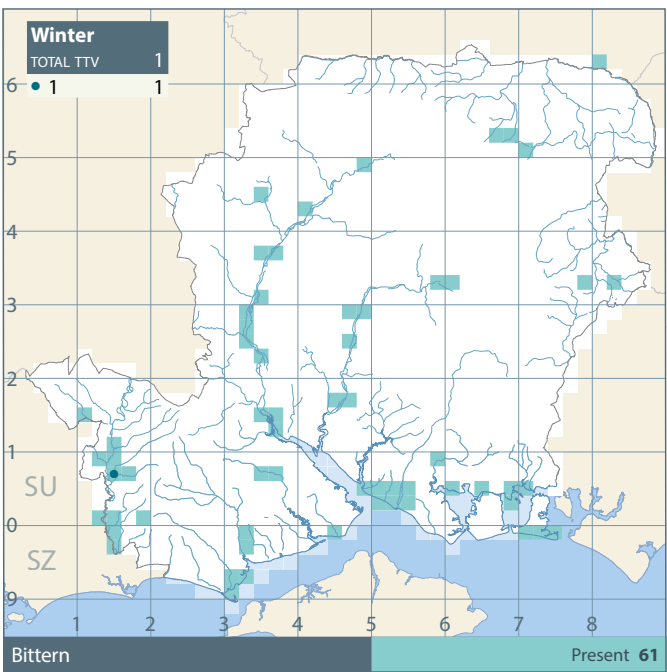
The Bittern is a species of temperate latitudes breeding across the Palearctic but wintering either in the extreme south, to India and sub-Saharan Africa, or to the far west in Europe where there is also a smaller resident population. It requires extensive reedbeds with large expanses of shallow water for breeding. In consequence it is localised over its summer range and in Britain is only successful in well managed, large wetlands where water is maintained at near constant levels. There were 110 territories in Britain in 2011 – an order of magnitude increase on the low point of just 11 in 1997 (Brown *et al.* 2012). The species does not breed in Hampshire although in 2012 there was a summering record.

In winter Bitterns are scarce visitors to the county. During the HBA period, overwintering occurred annually at Ivy Lake (Blashford) and Titchfield Haven where one to three individuals were present at each locality. Both reserves provide screened viewing of the reedbeds where the species appears to tolerate regular nearby human presence. Elsewhere, birds were certainly more difficult to locate, as they can hunt for small fish and amphibians amongst inundated reedbeds without breaking cover. In severe winter conditions, when shallower waters freeze over, birds are forced into the open and are recorded more widely.

During the HBA period the species was recorded in 61 tetrads with the most widespread occurrences in the severe winters of 2009/2010 and 2010/11. In the 2009/2010 winter, the British population was estimated at 600 (Wotton *et al.* 2011) of which at least 15 were present in the county. This represents perhaps a six-fold increase over the regular British wintering population. Such enhancements are probably the result of cold weather movements from the near Continent (Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium). By contrast, breeding birds from Sweden, the Baltic countries and farther east are thought to migrate earlier in autumn to southern Europe and Africa. In the 2010/11 winter period, after a cold spell in December, a record total of 27 was scattered across Hampshire at 18 localities in January. During the five winters 2007/8 to 2011/12, county peak wintering numbers totalled 67 (6, 10, 15, 27, and 9). This is higher than either of the five-winter peak count totals of 43 from 1980–85 (included two severe winters) and 27 from 1985–90 (one severe winter). The increased five-year total from 2007–12 is perhaps indicative of an increase in the north-west European breeding and wintering populations.

Alan Cox

Sponsored by Paul & Jan Craven



Bittern, Blashford Lakes, February 2009 – Richard Ford



Bittern, Blashford Lakes, February 2011 (both images) – Martin Bennett



Cattle Egret

Bubuculus ibis

A rare vagrant

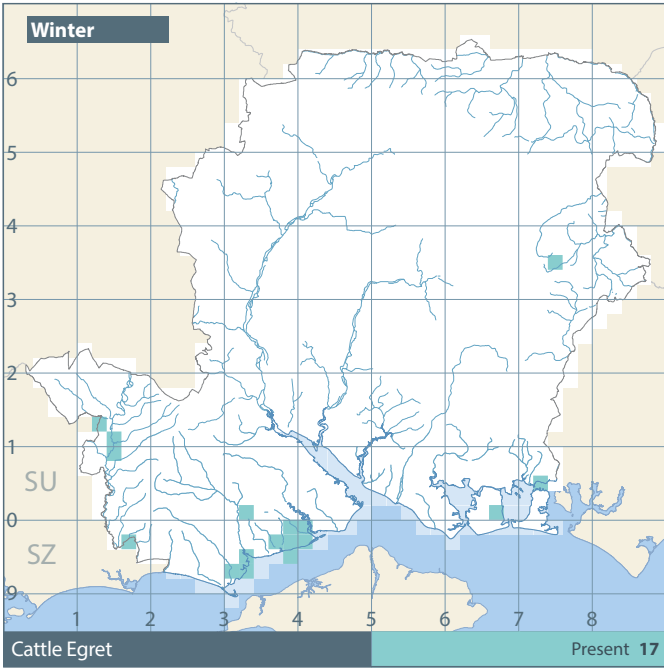
Unlike other herons the Cattle Egret is highly gregarious, often feeding away from water and, with a mainly insectivorous diet, regularly associating with cows and other farm animals. The breeding range of this cosmopolitan species has been expanding northwards in Europe reaching central France by the 1990s. During the 1986–91 Atlas, it was recorded in Hampshire for the first time and a further four records had been added to the total prior to the start of the HBA in 2007. Numbers were boosted by a small influx into Britain of approximately 23 which led to records of three in the county between January and May 2006 (BBRC). In December 2007, there was an unprecedented arrival of 80 individuals into Britain followed by subsequent smaller invasions in each of the HBA years.

As the map shows, registrations were made in 17 Hampshire tetrads during the winter Atlas recording period and the species was observed in every year. By 2012 the county total had increased possibly by 17 individuals with several overwintering and a few lingering into spring. It is not possible to be certain of numbers, as the species expands into the county from the near Continent; several individuals wander extensively in southern Britain and may in fact be annual returnees, as noted for colour-ringed Great White Egrets. There were also spring and autumn arrivals including five in August. One summer record at Titchfield Haven on May 29th 2008 coincided with first breeding in Britain on the Somerset Levels; another was found at Sandy Point Nature Reserve in early May the following year.

Alan Cox



Cattle Egret, Warblington, December 2011 – Richard Ford



Cattle Egret, Keyhaven, September 2009 – Mike Duffy

Great White Egret

Ardea alba

A very scarce visitor, recorded in every month

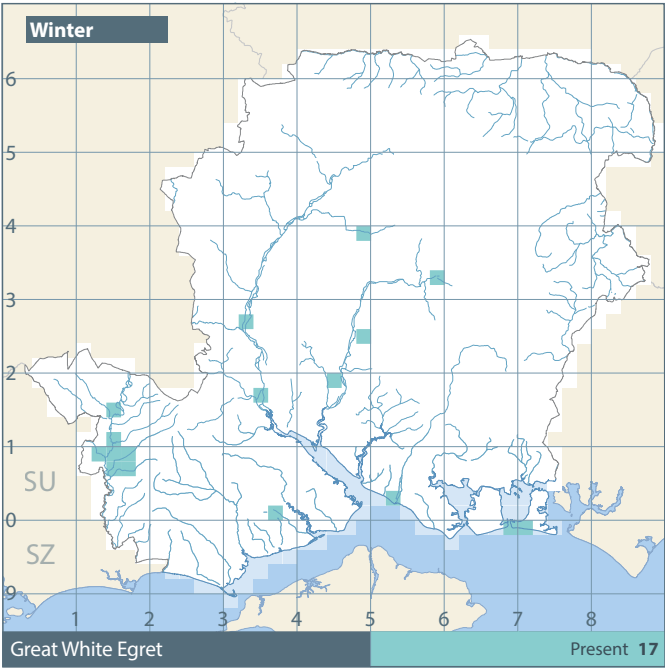
Until the 1990s, the nominate subspecies of the Great White Egret was confined as a breeding species to central Europe and Asia. As recently as 1992, the European breeding population, present from Austria to the Ukraine, was estimated at 550 pairs (HBW) but has recently been re-estimated as at least 10,000 pairs (Ławicki 2014). This huge increase is dominated by revised estimates for the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, which comprise 90% of the total but includes, for example, 200 pairs in France with initial breeding there as recently as 1994.

First breeding in Britain occurred in 2012. Even more surprising than the dramatic increase in European breeding numbers is a change in the species' wintering distribution. Until the 1990s, it was a rare winterer in central and western Europe as breeders migrated to the eastern Mediterranean and Africa. More recently birds have begun wintering in huge numbers in western Europe, a population now estimated as at least 11,200 (Ławicki 2014) and including some 6,300 in the Netherlands and France alone. In Britain, changes have been far more modest but the species has advanced from vagrant to now regular, but still very scarce, status. The wintering population of around 34 (APEP3) is confined to southern Britain with only scattered records farther north.

In Hampshire, one individual has been wintering at Blashford Lakes since 2003, when it arrived as a juvenile, and still appeared there in 2013 for its 11th successive winter. This individual has been colour-ringed as a nestling making it possible to track its arrival, typically from mid-August through to its departure in late January. It was ringed on May 3rd 2003 at Lac de Grand-Lieu, Vendée, France where, by the end of the HBA period, 160 pairs were breeding. During the Atlas a further 24 records of the species were registered in the county of which five were in summer and nine in winter. The map shows that in the Avon Valley winter records were concentrated in a cluster of seven tetrads. These included the regular winterer and another un-ringed bird that was present from January until April 12th 2010. Away from the Avon Valley other individuals were registered in ten tetrads: seven located in the Test, Itchen or Meon Valleys, one at Hatchet Pond, New Forest and two spanning Sinah Gravel Pit, Hayling Island. There were three records of two to four day winter stopovers and the remainder were on single dates. Individuals were recorded in every month of the year, including six in September. No pattern emerged in the



Great White Egret, Blashford, September 2008 – Martin Bennett



timing of arrivals and all but one record, outside of winter, was on a single date, the exception being April records from the Avon Valley. Table 12 shows the cumulative monthly totals for the 22 years from 1985–2006 (first record June 15th 1985) and the 6-year 2007–12 period encompassing the HBA.

It is too soon to claim colonisation of the county, or indeed Britain, by this species, but a few pioneers during the Atlas survey and the rapid expansion of the near Continent population does suggest that may well be the case in the not too distant future.

Alan Cox

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1985–2006	5	1	0	1	0	2	6	7	2	4	5	7
2007–2012	9	6	4	3	3	1	4	7	15	11	7	10

Table 12 – Great White Egret: cumulative monthly totals in Hampshire.

Little Egret

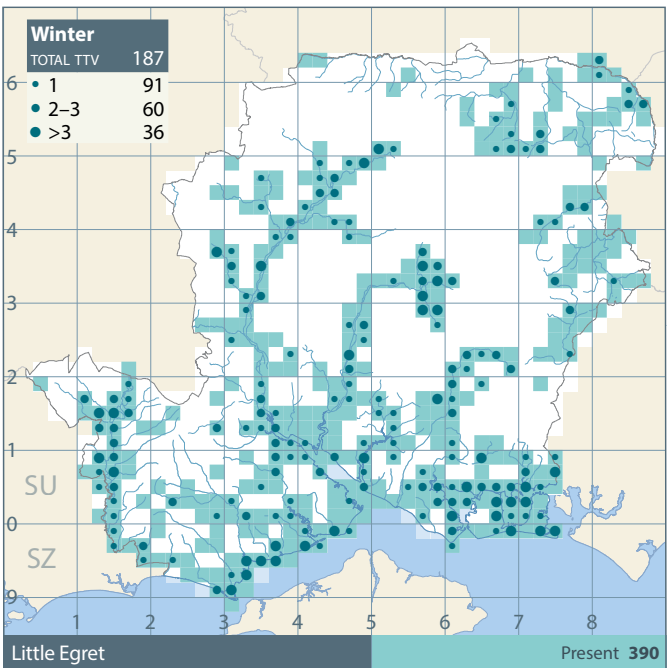
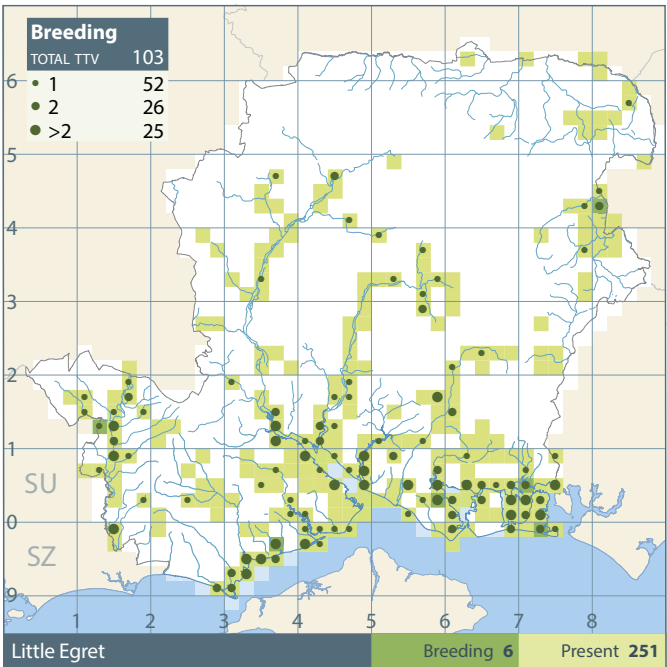
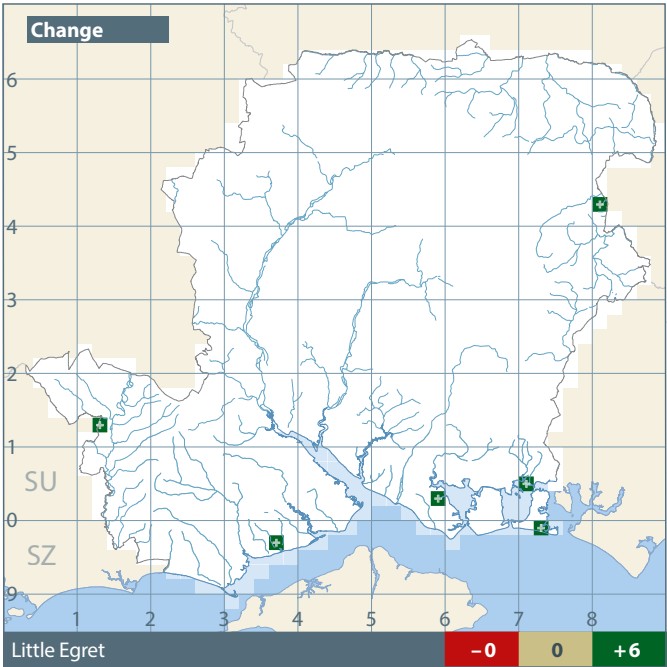
Egretta garzetta

A moderately common winter visitor, passage migrant and increasing breeder

The species has a global population estimated between 0.64–3.1 million pairs (Wetlands International 2002). The nominate subspecies is highly migratory and has a Palearctic-wide distribution but in Europe it was thinly distributed, confined to southern and eastern regions, until a westward expansion in the late 20th century. The colonisation of northern France occurred in 1974 when significant numbers arrived in the autumn followed by first breeding in 1978 (Carr 2009). Its expansion into southern Britain followed the same pattern. The breakthrough year was 1989 when coastal arrivals in Hampshire included a flock of 17 at Keyhaven and Pennington Marshes. Numbers of overwintering birds increased year-on-year with early autumn arrivals followed by spring departures. The autumn population totalled at least 138 in August 1995, monitored through two nocturnal roosts, one at Thorney Island, West Sussex where Hampshire birds roosted, and the other at Sowley Pond in the west. The first three-figure count was made on December 4th 1995 when a total of 109 birds flew from Hampshire to roost at Thorney Island. The following spring, breeding was confirmed at Brownsea Island, Dorset but a recently fledged juvenile was also present on the Hampshire coast, near an existing heronry. In 1998, breeding in the county was confirmed when two, of a total of ten known breeding pairs in Britain, were located at Fort Elson.

The early years of colonisation were dominated by coastal records but inland winterers along river valleys reached double figures in 1996. The first inland nocturnal roost of five birds was located at Alresford Pond in 1998. By 2000 small numbers were present throughout the year above Ringwood in the Avon Valley. Along the coast, a coordinated count of four nocturnal roosts on October 5th 2000 totalled 334 and a further 18 were seen to fly from the Lymington area to the Isle of Wight to roost. The Thorney Island roost when disturbed relocated to Tournerbury, Hayling Island and 223 were present there on October 26th. In 2002, the wintering pattern changed with far greater usage of the river valleys exemplified by a nocturnal roost of 56 at Alresford Pond on January 6th. A coordinated county-wide roost count was made on a monthly basis, beginning in 2004 when totals ranged from 53 (May) to 359 (September).

Little Egrets breed locally in colonies (in mixed or single-species heronries) but because of their late breeding (usually May in Hampshire) fully-leafed tree canopies make nest detection very difficult. Complete surveys of known colonies totalled 87 pairs in 2007 and again, during the HBA period, in 2008. Thus far four coastal and two inland



Great White Egret, Little Egret and Grey Heron, Blashford Lakes, September 2010 – Martin Bennett



Little Egret, Blashford Lakes, August 2009 (above); Blashford Lakes, September 2010 (below) – Martin Bennett

colonies have been confirmed. A colony near Ringwood (first breeding detected in 2004) was the first inland in Britain and one at Langstone Mill Pond was one of very few Little Egret colonies nationally to be exclusively of this species: it held 23 occupied nests in 2012. The breeding map shows birds summering in 25% of Hampshire tetrads, rising to 40% in winter; an extraordinary colonisation of virtually all suitable habitat in just over a decade. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows the breeding distribution of the species is principally confined to the Channel-coast counties and East Anglia.

Little Egrets occur typically in shallow wetlands feeding on large insects and their larvae, small fish and amphibians. The coastal WeBS data indicate a post-breeding dispersal when numbers along the coast build dramatically from July–August. A further surge occurs in October when perhaps the county population doubles in some years, as indicated by the winter distribution map. It seems likely that the increased early wintering population is of Continental origin and mainly transitory; however, some overwinter as indicated by the even denser distribution in winter along the river valleys and in the north-east of the county. Nationally, in winter, almost all 10 km squares in a line from Plymouth to mid-Lincolnshire were occupied during the 2007–11 national atlas period.

Alan Cox

Sponsored by Ian Calderwood



Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

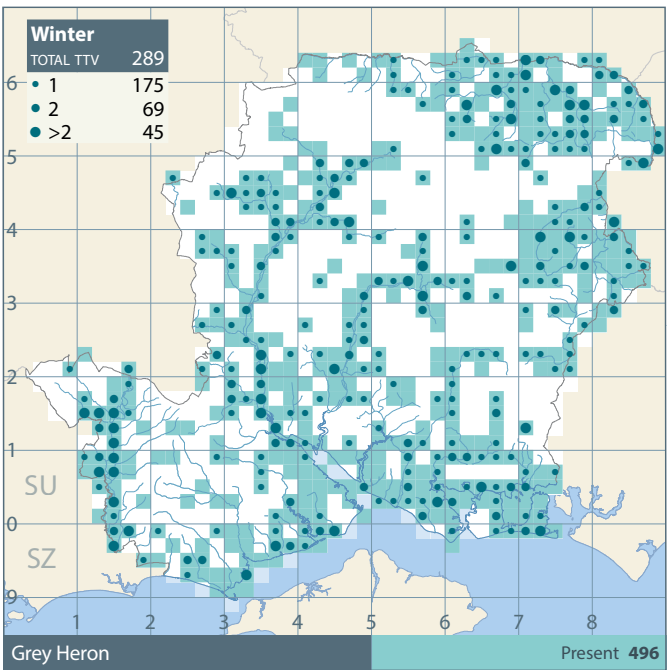
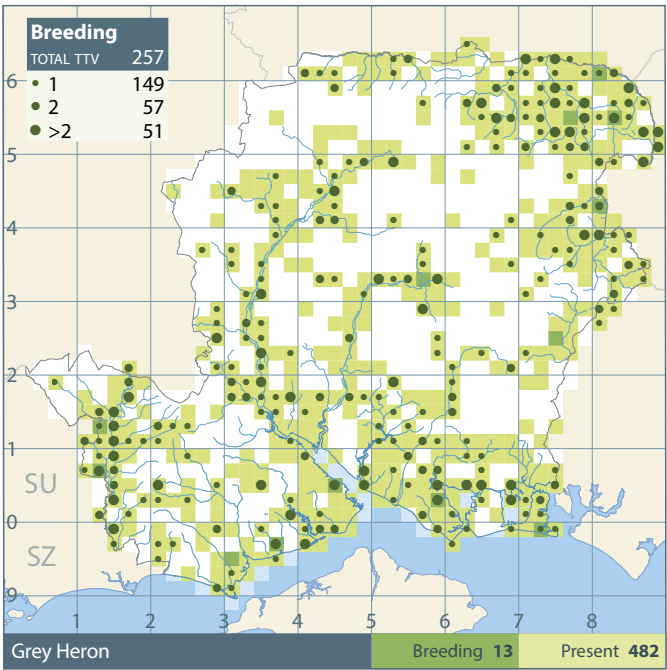
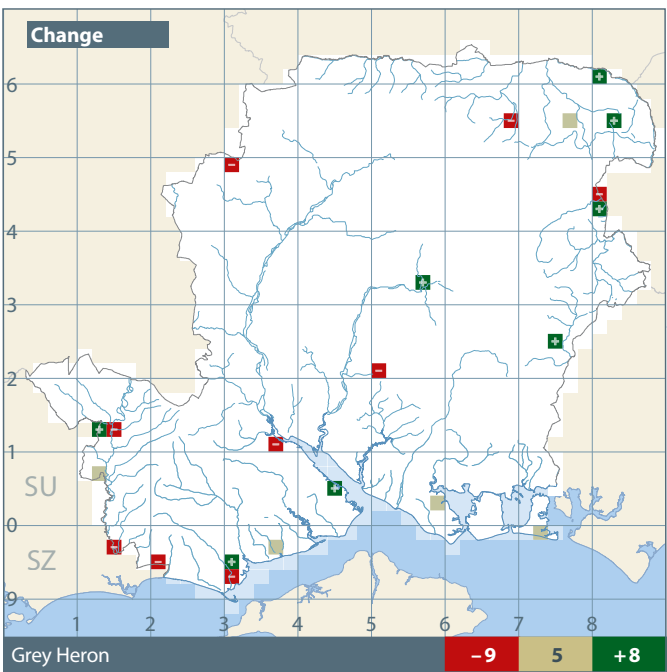
A moderately common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

The Grey Heron is the largest European heron. Its range spans the whole of Africa and the Palearctic, from Great Britain and Ireland in the west to the Far East including Java and Japan. The population density is highest in the temperate zones of its range. Grey Herons frequent shallow water bodies, either inland or coastal, feeding mainly on fish and amphibians. Migratory or dispersive movements are largely dictated by food supply. In Hampshire, light coastal movements are observed in spring and autumn suggesting small variations in summer and winter populations.

Grey Herons breed locally in colonies (heronries) but because of their huge size are easily detectable in flight to and from the heronry, leading to widespread reporting away from these localities. In Europe the Grey Heron population has increased rapidly since 1980 (PECBMS 2011a). Heronry censuses have been undertaken in Great Britain since 1928 (annually from 1954). Population estimates are based on nest counts and estimates of nest occupancy. Problems encountered with censuses are inconsistent year-on-year coverage and counting inaccuracies at heronries in heavily wooded areas. These censuses, nevertheless, have demonstrated a steadily increasing population, albeit subject to falls and recoveries following harsh winters. Increased numbers are due to:

- a) reduced persecution (see Witherby 1939 where human persecution is cited as a serious problem, naming a few counties, including Hampshire);
- b) higher breeding productivity of prey species such as freshwater fish through improved water quality;
- c) new feeding habitats created by fish farming with pond release of hand-reared fish.

In Britain and Ireland, the estimated breeding population increase has been slower than in Europe, numbers peaking at the beginning of the century at 13,000 pairs before, for as yet unexplained reasons, falling away slightly to 11,800 from 2007–2012. The county population has generally followed these national trends: 114 breeding pairs (occupied nests) in the first full survey in 1954, rising to peaks of 260 in both 1985 and 1998. The five-year means from 1999–2003 and 2004–2008 were 220 and 161–216 breeding pairs respectively. In 2009 there were 178–209 breeding pairs; unfortunately county records are incomplete from 2010–2012. The HBA change map is confined to confirmed breeding through observation of occupied nests. As the map shows, heronries were confirmed in 14 tetrads in the 1986–91 Atlas survey. These included 11 main heronries of which five are now extinct and a sixth, at Sopley, was abandoned in 1994 in favour of a new location nearby in Dorset. The remaining five traditional larger heronries at Somerley Park, Sowley Pond,



Grey Heron (with Sand Martin), Blashford Lakes, July 2011 – Martin Bennett

Fort Elson, Tournurbury and Elvetham were all occupied during the HBA period. In addition, larger heronries have developed at Arlebury Park (first breeding 1993) and at Midgham Wood in the Avon Valley (first breeding 2000). Smaller heronries, typically with single figure nest counts, were active during the HBA period in a further six tetrads contributing to a total of 13. The largest colony historically is on Crown land at Fort Elson at the edge of Portsmouth Harbour where numbers peaked at 85 pairs in 2004 and totalled 52 pairs in 2012. The only comparable heronry in size was at Midgham Wood where there were at least 61 pairs in 2009. Between the Atlas periods one to three Grey Heron pairs bred sporadically in a further five localities.

The winter map indicates increased numbers present in coastal estuaries and the Avon Valley, suggesting both local

movements and immigration into the county. The highest post-breeding counts during the HBA period were 152 in the Avon Valley between Ringwood and Fordingbridge in September 2009 and 120 nearby at Blashford Lakes in September 2010. The fish farm at Bickton was probably responsible for these concentrations. Severe winters, such as the one experienced in December 2010, caused significant but temporary reductions in the wintering population. Along the coast, the highest numbers are typically reported from Portsmouth Harbour, including 45 in January 2008. By February, birds are returning to their colonies as egg laying is at least a month earlier than 50 years ago.

Alan Cox

Sponsored by Sarah & Martin Bredow

Night-heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

A rare vagrant

The Night-heron is widespread on four continents. The breeding population in south-east Europe is migratory, wintering in equatorial Africa. An increase in European wintering records, particularly from Belgium and the Netherlands (where it is a rare breeder) appears to involve birds that have escaped from collections. In France, a recent expansion northwards has resulted in good-sized colonies in the centre and west of the country. Nevertheless, it remains a rare vagrant in Hampshire, the three records during 2007–12 bringing the county total to 15:

- 2008: Adult east, Portsmouth, April 22nd.
Adult east, Chichester Harbour, September 27th.
- 2012: Adult, Pennington Marsh, on 17 dates June 2nd–August 19th.

Alan Cox



Night-heron, Pennington Marsh, June 2012 – Andy Johnson

Black Stork

Ciconia nigra

A rare vagrant

This elegant stork breeds across the Palearctic and migrates south in autumn, apart from a residential enclave in South Africa and part of the Spanish population. The European breeding population is small (approximately 7,800 pairs) but, nevertheless, comprises more than half of the total (Birdlife International 2004). In west Europe, where suitable open forest breeding habitat is scarce and local, the disjunctive population is largely confined to Belgium, France and Germany (390–430 pairs) and the Iberian Peninsula (400–1,100 pairs). In Britain migratory overshoots are rare, totalling 47 from 2007–2011 (BBRC) including two Hampshire records (one prior to the start of the HBA) as follows and bringing the county total to 11:

- 2007: One adult east, Steep, July 12th.
- 2011: One adult, New Forest, April 10th–22nd.

Alan Cox



Black Stork, Slufter’s Inclosure NF, April 2011 – Keith Betton

White Stork

Ciconia ciconia

A rare vagrant

This large stork breeds across the Western Palearctic and just beyond into the south-western region of the Eastern Palearctic. White Storks migrate in autumn principally to equatorial Africa and India but some are resident in southern Spain. The population in the 1980s was estimated at 150,000 pairs but by then White Storks were largely extinct in west Europe, apart from the Iberian Peninsula (HBW 1992). The west European extirpation was attributed to prolonged drought in the Sahel region in the 1960–70s and intensive hunting on both passage and wintering territories, particularly in Mali (LPO 2014). A re-introduction programme in the Netherlands and conservation measures in France have led to a remarkable comeback: in 2012 a total of 322 pairs raised 460 young in one French Atlantic coastal department alone. White Storks migrate at relatively low altitude but require thermals for soaring, thus, as is well known, they avoid large expanses of open water. Despite this, 53 individuals had been recorded in Hampshire by the end of 2012. Of these 28 were seen from 2000–12 of which 11 were during the 2007–12 period. This recent surge of records must surely reflect the growth of population along much of the French Atlantic coast. A summary of Hampshire records during 2007–12 is given below:

- 2008: One north, Little London, May 10th.
- One east then south, New Forest, May 20th.



White Stork, Ellingham, September 2010 – John Levell

- One south, Ibsley Water, May 30th (presumed same west, New Forest, May 31st).
- One in flight, Greatham, June 22nd.
- One, Avon Causeway, July 19th (presumed same, Ringwood, August 6th and Ibsley, 7th then New Forest 14th).
- 2010: One, Ellingham Bridge, Avon, September 21st/22nd.
- 2012: Five, Havant, May 4th (presumably from the same group two, Eldon, May 8th and three, Up Somborne, May 17th).

Alan Cox

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Previously a rare vagrant but annual records since 2008

Until the last decade of the 20th century the closest Glossy Ibis breeding population was around the Black Sea and, not surprisingly, Hampshire records totalled just four singles, in 1881, 1902, 1965 and 1977.

In 1996 a total of nine pairs first bred at Doñana, Spain in a new managed wetland area. Breeding success since then has been spectacular with several thousand pairs breeding by 2010 (Santoro *et al.* 2010). Post breeding the species is dispersive and highly nomadic. Following drought conditions in Doñana colonisation of the Camargue took place from 2006; by 2012 several hundred pairs were present. Further expansion has seen breeding for the first time in western France in 2011. In Britain the frequency of occurrences increased from 1996, including one briefly at Ringwood in 2004. Then, during *Bird Atlas 2007–11*, numbers rose dramatically, particularly in autumn. The national estimated cumulative total from 2007–11 was 132, including flocks of up to 25, compared with just 92 from 1950–2006. Many British records are of colour-ringed individuals and the ring codes suggest both the Doñana and Camargue colonies are represented.

None arrived in Hampshire in 2007 but there were annual records thereafter, including flocks of six in 2009 and 19

Glossy Ibis, Warblington, March 2013 – Alex Berryman



in 2010. In 2012 birds were present in Hampshire on 57 dates, scattered across eight months from February to December. Although most records occurred outside the HBA recording periods, a full summary of county records during 2007–12 is given below bringing the county total to 41 by the end of the period:

- 2008: Pennington Marsh, one first–summer, May 17th–19th.
- 2009: Pennington Marsh, six juveniles east, September 19th.
- 2010: Keyhaven Marsh, one, August 14th–15th.
- Keyhaven Marsh, 19 east, September 13th (same date earlier Devon, later Dungeness, Kent).
- Ibsley Water, one, September 18th (presumed same, Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, later September 18th–Oct 10th).
- Keyhaven Marsh, one east, September 26th (presumed same, later September 26th north, Titchfield Haven).
- 2011: Lymington, one, October 17th. (presumed same, October 21st–23rd, Titchfield Haven).
- 2012: Hamble Estuary, one west, February 11th.
- Keyhaven, two, April 7th (of which one presumed same, later 7th to 8th, Beaulieu Estuary).
- Hurst Beach, one, May 4th (possibly the same on 21 further dates until August 11th at three other localities – Keyhaven and Pennington Marshes, Needs Ore and Farlington Marshes).
- Keyhaven Marsh, one, October 23rd/24th.
- Avon floods at Bickerley Common, one, December 2nd into 2013.

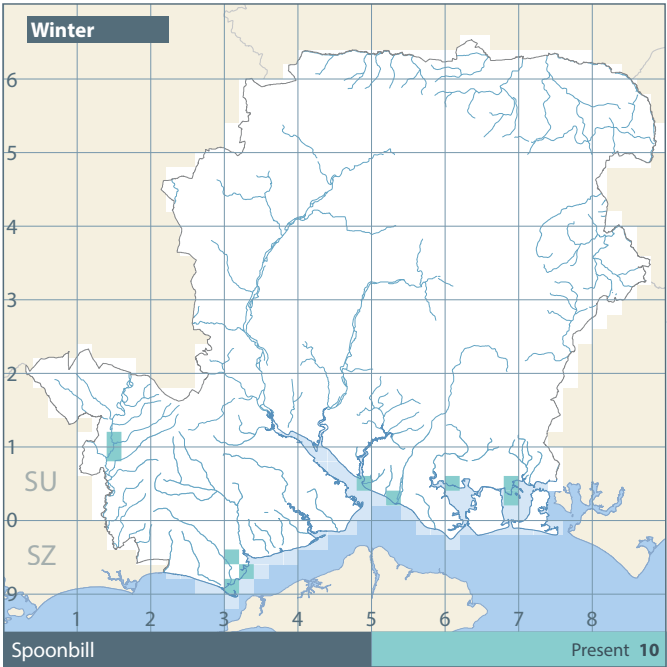
Alan Cox

Spoonbill
Platalea leucorodia

A scarce visitor
Spoonbills breed widely across the Palearctic. They nest colonially in extensive shallow wetlands, hence in Europe they are scattered across countries, dependent on the availability of suitable habitat. In the UK, a small breeding colony is now established in Norfolk and isolated breeding records have occurred elsewhere in the country this century.

Post-breeding dispersal occurs from August to October (from Spain several weeks prior to the Netherlands), most migrating to West Africa (Migration Atlas). Some birds, however, migrate much shorter distances and a small wintering population of around 20 individuals (APEP3) is now established in south-west England. Colour-ringed individuals indicate that this population is from the Netherlands where breeding increased from 150–200 (BWP) to an astonishing 2,300 pairs by 2011 (Ecomare). Presumably reflecting this population growth, the frequency of occurrences within Hampshire has increased significantly since the 20th century, as shown in Table 13 which compares the cumulative monthly totals for the 42-year period 1951–92 (BoH) with the 6-year period 2007–12.

Spoonbills were exceptional county vagrants in winter until 1994, never recorded in February and only two ever in March. Since then they have been recorded in ones and twos in March almost annually and the first ever February record was in 2000 at Needs Ore on 22nd. Although still scarce in winter, there is now evidence of a small late February-March movement through the county, staging at coastal wetlands. This included a county maximum of ten present at Needs Ore in late March 2012. Presumably, this movement is of birds wintering in Dorset, and farther west, returning to their breeding sites in the Netherlands. The only inland registration was at Ibsley Water on December 31st 2008, the second ever record in the Avon Valley. There is evidence of further passage in April-May (probably of equatorial wintering birds) and non-breeding or failed breeders into June-July. Return migration peaks in September but again numbers are much higher than previously. Regular stopover points in the county continue to be Titchfield Haven, Needs Ore and other suitable coastal wetland sites.



Alan Cox Spoonbill, Titchfield Haven, May 2007 – Richard Ford

Table with 13 columns: Month, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec. It compares cumulative monthly totals for the periods 1951–1992 and 2007–2012.

Table 13 – Spoonbill: cumulative monthly totals in Hampshire.

Red-necked Grebe
Podiceps grisegena

A very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant
The Red-necked Grebe has a circumpolar distribution. In Europe it normally breeds no farther west than Germany/Scandinavia and although one or two summered in northern Britain during 2007–12, breeding was not confirmed. Autumn migration occurs either singly or in small flocks. The West Palearctic population winters principally along the coasts of the Baltic and North Sea. At the time of the 1986–91 Atlas, the British wintering population approached four-figures and included double-figure totals along the Hampshire coast, with birds occasionally appearing at large inland waters. The same county distribution was maintained during the HBA, as shown on the map. There were records from 23 coastal tetrads and one inland record from Kingfisher Lake, Blashford on December 28th 2007. Nevertheless, numbers during 2007–2012 were far lower than earlier with no double-figure totals recorded in any of the HBA years (Table 14).

The same pattern of lower numbers was experienced in the rest of Britain compared to the earlier Atlas period. A total British wintering population of just 55 was estimated from 2005 to 2009 (APEP3). Across the county, over the five winters tabulated, only one or two individuals were ever present on any given date. Most bird-days (57%) were recorded in Hayling Bay from the Chichester Harbour entrance west to Eastoke. There were long-staying individuals here in both 2010/11 and 2011/12, including

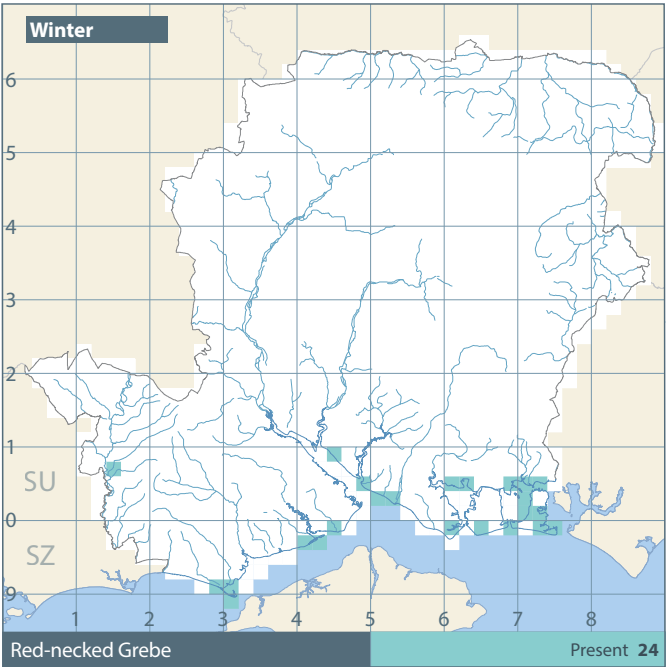


Table with 6 columns: Winter, 2007/08, 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12. It shows counts for Birds and Bird-days for the Red-necked Grebe over five winters.

Table 14 – Red-necked Grebe: counts and frequency of records during the five HBA winters.

the only record of two together (November 19th-December 2nd 2010); another, present from January 17th-March 5th 2012, was the only March record. One other coastal zone, from Gosport to Weston Shore, recorded birds in all five winter periods. Records were typically from late November to early February but there was one October record (presumed passage off Normandy, 13th/14th 2009).

Alan Cox

Red-necked Grebe, Oxon – Alex Berryman



Great Crested Grebe

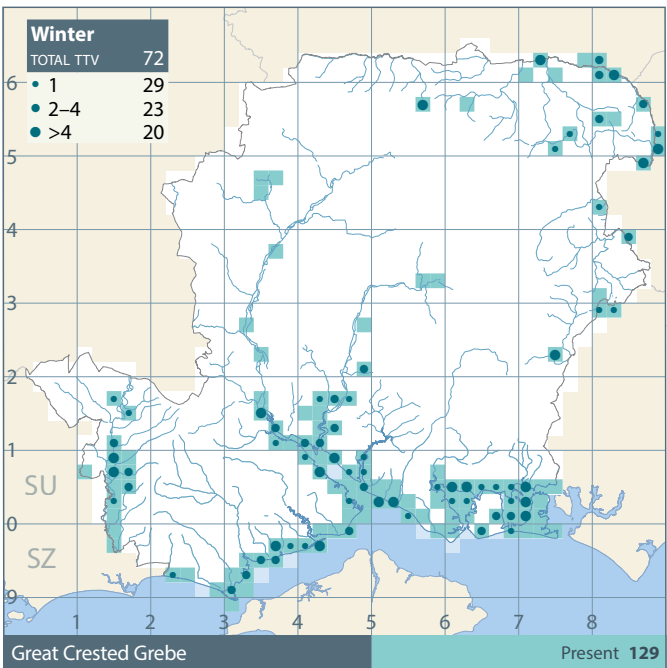
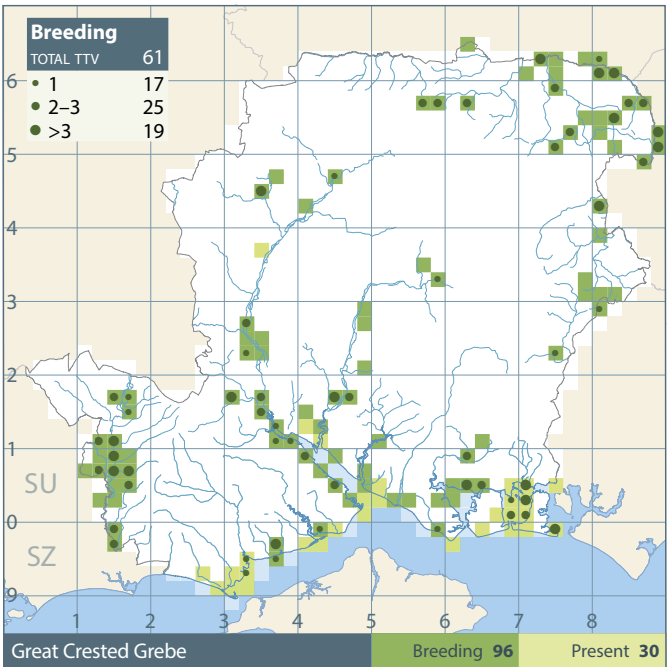
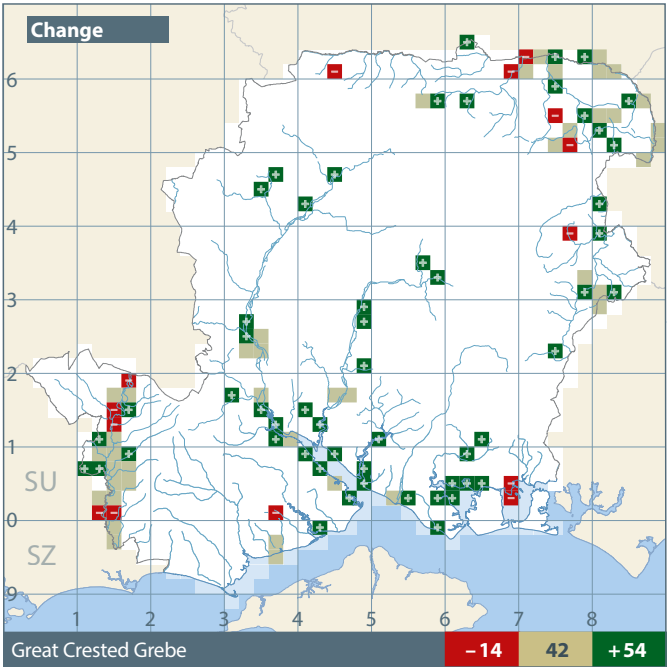
Podiceps cristatus

A moderately common resident and winter visitor

Although distributed across most of southern Britain, this species is thinly scattered outside a region bounded in the west by counties from Dorset to Cheshire and then east to south Yorkshire. It breeds only on fresh waters – reservoirs, gravel pits, larger lakes and slow flowing rivers. At the time of the first national breeding survey in 1931 there were just 15 breeding pairs in Hampshire. There was a steady increase in population in the second half of the 20th century, principally due to the suitability of newly-created gravel pits for breeding. By 1991 the county population had grown to 90–95 pairs of an estimated total summering population of 220 birds (*BoH*).

Comparison of the HBA breeding map with that published in *BoH* shows that there has been a significant range expansion between the two atlases with 58 occupied tetrads in 1986–91 increasing to 126 in 2008–12. The picture is complicated by significant coastal populations still present as late as April and returning as early as July. It is estimated that breeding territories were established in 96 tetrads during the five HBA summers and that the total summering population was at least 400 birds, of which probably 180 pairs attempted to breed. At Blashford Lakes, a peak total of 72 birds was recorded in summer but in the best year only 15 successful pairs were reported. By contrast, at Yateley Gravel Pits, the number of pairs present rose from seven to 12 over the HBA period and annual breeding success ranged from 60–90% of pairs.

Post-breeding dispersal occurs as early as July. On arrival in winter quarters birds immediately start their post-breeding moult, which is completed by October. This presumably has an important influence on the choice of winter localities since birds are virtually flightless during the moult period and hence require large water bodies or open sea to avoid predation. The HBA winter map shows inland distribution was slightly reduced but very widely distributed across coastal waters. This is in accordance with Dutch and Danish studies which suggest that 50–60% of breeding populations migrate to the coast (*Migration Atlas*). No discernible passage or dispersal pattern has been established in Britain but there is evidence of, presumably weather-dependent, fluctuating coastal numbers in winter months. A recent observation is of large wintering concentrations along the English Channel coast from Kent to Hampshire. A count of 380 was made along the Solent between Chilling and Hill Head in December 2008, contributing to a county total of 854. The large offshore counts appear to occur in cold north European weather: in January, of the exceptional cold winter of 2009/10, a total of 1,735 was at Rye Bay on the Kent/Sussex border and 576 were found in a coordinated count between Southampton Water and Hill Head. The county total that month was



Great Crested Grebe, Blashford, November 2008 – *Martin Bennett* (right); Lakeside, March 2010 – *Simon Ingram* (below)

757, of which only 49 were reported inland, where many waters were ice-covered. The cold weather peaks suggest significant net immigration even allowing for good numbers of county-reared young. Nationally, a decline has been noted in wintering numbers as monitored by the WeBS counts from the winter of 2010/11 to date which corresponds to findings in the Netherlands. It is too early to conclude that this is a function of climate change-induced milder winters, as is being noted for other waterbirds. Nevertheless, for a species, where there is clearly a balance between sedentary and seasonal movements, it would be logical to assume that breeding birds from the Baltic and eastern Europe are opting to winter within their breeding territories or in continental western Europe.

Alan Cox

Sponsored by John & Edith Welch



Slavonian Grebe

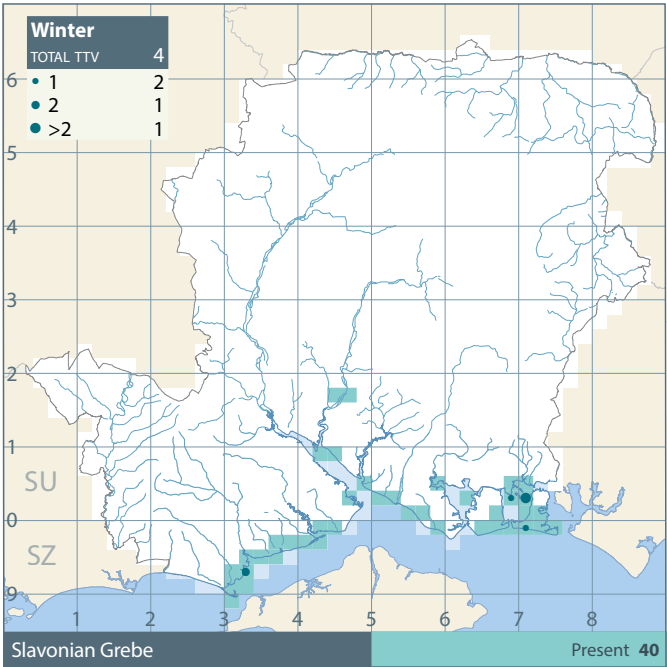
Podiceps auritus

A scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

The Slavonian Grebe has a near circumpolar range, breeding from Iceland in the west, through central Asia and North America, as far as the Great Lakes region. It has a small but declining Scottish breeding population, 34 pairs raising just ten young in 2012 (RBBP 2012). This downward trend is offset by a significant growth in the Icelandic population since a survey of 400 pairs in the 1990s (HBW). Both Icelandic and British breeding birds are slightly larger and heavier-billed than those of Fennoscandia/Russia and have been split by some authorities from the nominate auritus into a separate subspecies, arcticus (Fieldså 1973).

The most recent estimate of the British wintering population of 1,100 individuals (APEP3) has shown a dramatic increase since the 1981–84 Winter Atlas when it was estimated at 400. It suggests that winterers are principally of Icelandic origin because, in its more easterly European range at least, the population is thought to be in decline. These eastern birds also winter along the North Sea coasts including Britain. Numbers in wintering localities usually stay fairly constant from November onwards. Nevertheless the wintering distribution trends in Britain are indicative of two distinct populations with a marked increase in the Northern Isles and a decline along the south coast.

Hampshire winterers in the 1980s ranged from 20–40 (5–10% of the British population), larger numbers favouring Hayling Bay than elsewhere along the coast. There were a few records on larger inland waters but principally these were birds on passage. In the five winters of the HBA period annual maxima ranged from 21–37 with January and February averaging monthly maxima of 23 and 21 respectively. The map shows records from almost all coastal tetrads. Just one inland record was of a confiding individual, which made a 12-day visit in November 2007 to Lakeside, Eastleigh and presumably



mid-December. Birds wintered regularly in three localities (numbers in brackets are the rounded average monthly maxima over the five HBA winters followed by the peak month): Black Point/Hayling Bay (nine, January); Lepe/Needs Ore (four, February) and Lymington/Hurst (six, January). Flocks into double figures were recorded in four winters but each on a single date; all were at the Chichester Harbour entrance including 19 on February 1st 2009 when nine were also off Normandy, Lymington.

Passage was recorded during the summer HBA surveys on nine April and two May dates, including two at Keyhaven from April 3rd–5th 2009 and the latest, at Hayling Bay, on May 4th 2011. There appears to be little change in either county numbers (perhaps a small decline), distribution or wintering patterns between the two national winter Atlas periods. The fact that numbers have not increased in line with those farther north reinforces the proposal made by Musgrove *et al.* (APEP3) that the south coast population may originate from north-eastern Europe.

Alan Cox

Slavonian Grebe, Oxey Marsh, April 2014 – Marcus Ward



Black-necked Grebe

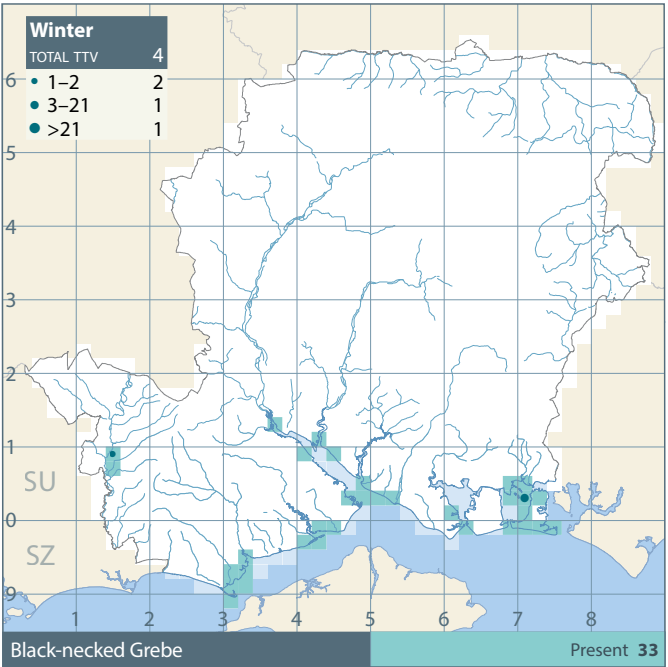
Podiceps nigricollis

A scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, rare in summer

Black-necked Grebes are scarce breeders in Britain. In 2010, during the national atlas period, there were just 38 confirmed pairs spread between north, central and south-east England (Bird Atlas 2007–11). During the HBA, there was no breeding, or summering, in Hampshire where breeding was last confirmed in 2004. Post-breeding dispersal is protracted from August to mid-October. Most west European birds are thought to winter on coastal waters from Britain (mainly along the Channel) through Iberia to the Mediterranean and also inland on larger ice-free lakes and reservoirs.

The British wintering population over the five winter period 2004–09 was estimated at 130 individuals (APEP3), little changed since the 1981–84 Winter Atlas (120). From 2007–11 individuals were located in 7% of British 10km squares, a 69% increase on the earlier Atlas with increased coverage in the east Midlands, East Anglia, the south-east and along the Channel coast. There were, however, only a few wintering concentrations at Langstone Harbour, Studland Bay (Dorset), Tor Bay (Devon), the Fal Estuary (Cornwall) and one inland at William Girling Reservoir (London). These five concentrations accounted for 80–90% of the UK wintering population.

Langstone Harbour has been a major site since recording began in the 1950s with a fairly stable wintering population of 35–39 in the ten winters from 1979–88 (BoH). Numbers build up in the harbour from November and are then fairly stable through to February. In the five winters of the HBA period peak numbers ranged from 17–26. The distribution map shows registrations in other sheltered coastal waters and inland at Blashford Lakes in some winters; annual county peaks ranged from 25–33. Thus numbers away from Langstone Harbour were always low, with most records of ones or twos but winter maxima of up to four recorded at



Blashford Lakes, Hayling Bay and also along the coast between Lepe and Needs Ore.

Whereas the county total remained stable during the HBA period, elsewhere along the Channel coast there was at least one notable January influx (2011) boosting the total population of the five main sites to 220. In addition national totals have exceeded 200 in each of the three winters since 2008/2009. This corresponds to the observations in Dutch coastal waters where there has been a marked increase this century. Unlike the rest of Britain, Hampshire has seen a decline in winter numbers between the two national winter Atlas periods, with no recent winter influxes (as seen nearby at Studland Bay), nor a surge in numbers since 2008/09. Such long-term fidelity to Langstone Harbour, of a group whose size runs counter to national trends, might suggest a unique population, perhaps originating from a specific, but yet unknown, breeding locality.

Alan Cox

Sponsored by Neil Luke

Black-necked Grebe, Blashford Lakes, February 2013 – Martin Bennett



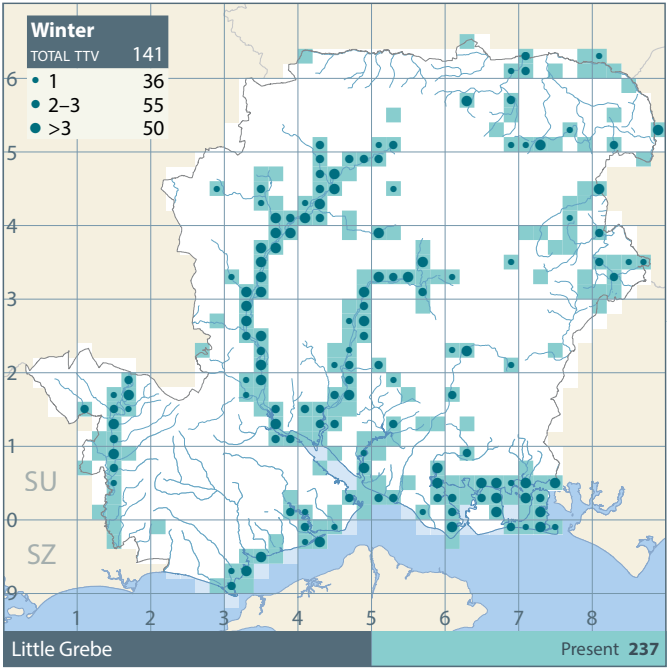
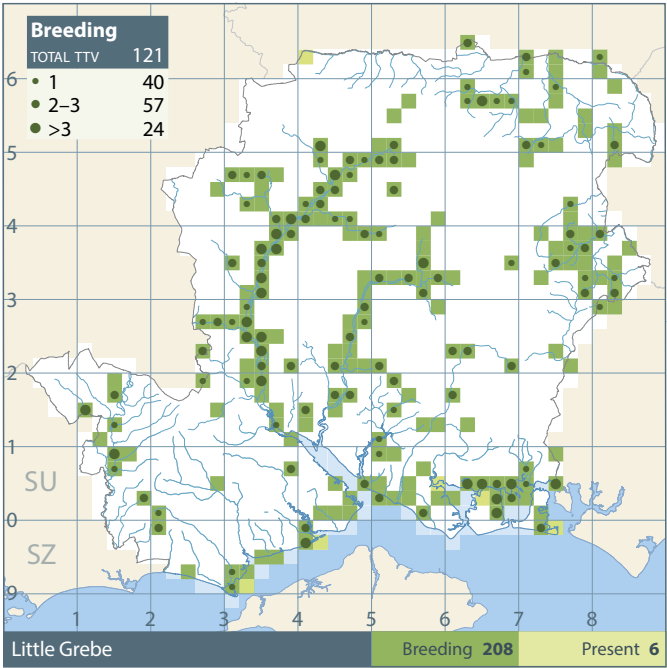
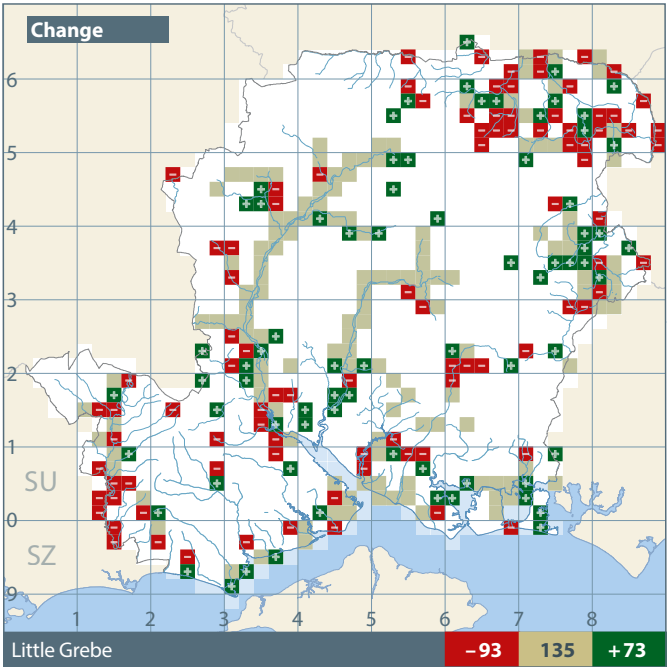
Little Grebe
Tachybaptus ruficollis

A moderately common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

Little Grebes require shallow still or slow-flowing freshwater for breeding; typically muddy-bottomed water bodies supporting vegetative life but additionally with an element of clear water nearby. Most of Hampshire's river systems, gravel pits, coastal lagoons and some ponds support breeding pairs, as shown by the HBA breeding map. Breeding distribution, although showing little overall change between the 1986–91 and 2008–2012 Atlases, does show some local variations. The total number of tetrads where breeding was considered likely during the HBA at 208 was 20 lower than during the 1986–91 Atlas but, of these, only 135 were common to both surveys. The variations are typically between adjacent tetrads and suggest local movements to maximise habitat suitability for breeding; this is particularly evident in the north-east of the county. There appears to have been a decline in the lower Avon Valley (Ringwood to Sopley) although it is doubtful whether the species ever bred on the river there. The highest breeding numbers were at Blashford Lakes where 50 territories were recorded.

An estimate of the county breeding population can be gained from maximum counts of adults at each of the tetrads over the Atlas period, which totalled 880. It is very unlikely that all individuals were seen or, conversely, that all seen were breeding, so 440 breeding pairs provides a rough median for the county (400 pairs 1986–91 (BoH)). Using statistical techniques, the British population has been estimated at 3,500–7,100 pairs (APEP3). Although this population is thought to have increased between the two survey periods, it is considered to be as a result of range expansion rather than increased breeding density.

Little Grebes are resident over much of their range but migrate typically east to west in autumn, leaving Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Most, if not all, of the UK population is thought to be sedentary. There are, however, significant local movements, particularly in hard weather, from smaller inland waters to sheltered coastal estuaries and harbours. From the winter map it can be seen that, in Hampshire, more tetrads were occupied in winter than during the breeding season. While most, but not all, inland waters still have birds present in winter, tetrads along the main river systems, in particular the Avon, are more widely frequented. Numbers inland, however, are reduced whilst coastal numbers increase. The highest densities along the coast are often in the eastern harbours, particularly Portsmouth, where a count of 104 was made in January 2009. Estimating the total winter population is difficult in that birds may leave their breeding territories as late as November and return as early as February as Table 15 shows.



WeBS county totals for 2007–12 show an upper limit of just 400 individuals during the core winter months of November-December. One objective of the Atlas was to give a much broader coverage than WeBS for surveying more widespread species such as Little Grebe. An analysis of the HBA data over the November-December period shows 189 tetrads were occupied and the population range can be estimated at 900–1,500 individuals. There is no current method for determining the origin of this population but at the lower limit of the range, it would suggest some dispersal out of the county. The upper limit is consistent with the post-breeding population but could possibly include some minor immigration into the county.

Month	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Mean 2007–2012	49	51	37	24	23	37	39

Table 15 – Little Grebe: WeBS counts for Blashford Lakes.

Evidence of immigration into Britain is slight but the few ringing recovery records do indicate birds of Baltic origin and there is visual evidence of cross-Channel movements (Migration Atlas).

Alan Cox

Sponsored by John Collman



Little Grebe, Blashford Lakes, August 2011 – Martin Bennett (above); Blashford Lakes, July 2010 – Martin Bennett (below)

