

**DEESIDE NATURALISTS
SOCIETY**

**BIRDS OF THE
CONNAHS QUAY CEEB RESERVE
and OAKENHOLT MARSH**



**A Report
on the Birds
recorded during 1988**

BIRDS OF THE CONNAH'S QUAY CEGB RESERVE AND OAKENHOLT MARSH

IN 1988.

Any summary of the most dramatic events on the Reserve in 1988 must begin with the successful conservation work carried out on the pools. The excavation and enlargement of the bunded pool, in particular, has been described as a "brilliant piece of civil engineering" and by early 1989 was attracting large numbers of blacktailed godwit and knot as well as increased numbers of mallard and teal and allowing excellent close-up views from the two hides. The less extensive work on the fly ash lagoon resulted in the growth of rushes on the fringes, which allowed a pair of moorhen to raise 5 young for the first time and may bring other breeding birds in coming years.

Breeding was proved for the first time also for the Lesser Whitethroat and Redshank, though both may well have bred in earlier years. The sight of the Redshank pair bringing their 4 chicks very close to the West hide will have been a memorable experience for many members. Three mallard broods were raised and wheatear, kestrel and shelduck may also have bred.

New birds this year were a Lesser Flamingo, an immature Common Scoter and a Garden Warbler, bringing the Reserve total up to 193.

The Reserve's important winter flocks of Spotted Redshank and Blacktailed Godwit did well, the latter increasing to a regular flock of around 800 in the 88/89 winter with a few counts of 1000, well over 10% of the British population. The Knot flock continues to grow with up to 2000 sometimes present and Great Crested Grebe numbers on the river were phenomenal.

There were excellent views of curlew sandpiper and ruff during the autumn passage, with up to 3500 redshank also present. A visit during NW gales would have produced both Great and Arctic Skua with Leach's Petrels, while a highlight of the spring was the rather tame adult Little Gull on the fly ash lagoon.

The reserve is now producing more seabirds in autumn and winter than ever, with frequent records of auks, divers, grebes and sea-duck on the river. Close attention to the main river channel during the 3-4 hours before the high tide seems to offer the best chance of seeing these species.

The five regular winter raptors were present in average numbers for recent years and the Reserve continues to be a good locality for seeing Peregrine and Merlin, especially during August-October. Winter finch flocks were almost non-existent in both winters.

CORRECTION TO THE 1985-87 REPORT.

Three records of Great Grey Shrike in 1982 were omitted in error, one in April and two (probably the same bird) in October.

LOGBOOK CONTRIBUTORS

It would be impossible to list everyone who has recorded birds in the logbooks. The following list is for identification of observers from their initials in the main text.

C Bennett	R. Birch	J Davidson	RW Evans
B Griffiths	NJ Holton	H Jones	G Morgan
GE Morris	R Plummer	MJ Ratcliffe	RA Roberts
G Robinson	TK Sykes	JC Weldrick	

SPECIAL RECORD SHEETS

These have been placed in the logbooks to encourage detailed recording of unusual species. Sheets for the following were completed during the year and are available for inspection.

Blackthroated Diver (CB)	Little Gull (GEM)
Slavonian Grebe (CB)	Longtailed Duck (CB)
Common Scoter (GEM) (1st record)	Glaucous Gull (CB)
Water Pipit (NJH)	Garden Warbler (GM) (1st record)
Siskin (GM)	

Other birds (e.g. Lesser Flamingo, Scaup) were described more briefly in the logbooks. Several records, including 2 rare waders, were rejected in the absence of description or even legible signature.

COMPARISON OF MAXIMUM NUMBERS OF WINTER (OCT-MAR) WILDFOWL AND WADERS ON THE RESERVE WITH COUNTS FROM THE WHOLE DEE ESTUARY.

Note: Dee Estuary counts are made as part of the B.O.E.E. Wildfowl and Wader Count and are taken from DNS Newsletters No. 51. Reserve counts are the highest for each winter and not necessarily made on the same day.

	1987/88	
	<u>Dee</u>	<u>Reserve</u>
Blacktailed Godwit	452	600(100%)
Spotted Redshank (Nov-Feb)	8	11
(Aug-Oct)	23	47
Lapwing	5490	2000(36%)
Redshank	10310	2000(20%)
Curlew	3840	150(3.9%)
Oystercatcher	28890	600(2.1%)
Knot	18860	400(2.1%)
Dunlin	19490	200(1.0%)
Teal	2780	1200(43%)
Pintail	9550	3000(31%)
Mallard	3880	350(9%)
Shelduck	4600	300(7%)
Wigeon	2720	40(1.5%)
Goldeneye	9	8

As the Table shows, the Reserve continues to be especially important for Blacktailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank, Goldeneye, Teal, Redshank and Lapwing, while Knot have crept in as a significant feature for the first time. The increasing numbers of Lapwing may be associated with increased use of the grazing fields by Welsh Water to deposit sewage to which they seem to be attracted. Pintail, as before, are an occasional spill-over from their regular roosts on Gayton Sands.

G.E. Morris, March 1989.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRDS

Birds recorded for the first time during 1988 are enclosed by asterisks.

REDTHROATED DIVER (Gavia stellata)

One on Feb 17th (GR) and another on Dec 6th, 10th and 11th (CB), carried up by the tide.

BLACKTHROATED DIVER (Gavia arctica)

The bird of Dec 1987 was seen again on Jan 8th (CB) and Mar 5th (JCW). One also occurred on Shotwick Lake during this winter.

LITTLE GREBE (Tachybaptus ruficollis)

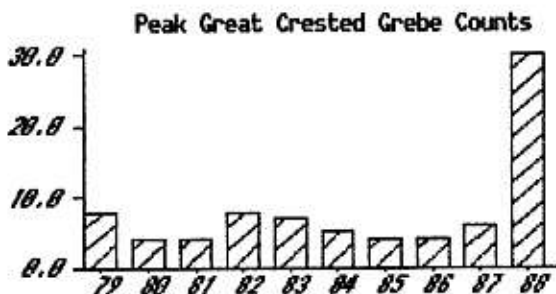
Two, sometimes three, birds which spent Sep and Oct on the fly ash lagoon account for the higher than usual total of 110 records.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (Podiceps cristatus)

An extraordinary year with many counts of over 20 birds on the river at high tide and a maximum of 30 on Nov 9th (CB). There were also records in every month for the first time.

MONTHLY PEAK COUNTS 1988.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
10	7	1	2	4	3	3	2	3	22	30	25



SLAVONIAN GREBE. (Podiceps auritus)

One was seen rushing up river on the racing tide on 4 occasions between Oct 8th and 16th (CB)

FULMAR. (Fulmarus glacialis).

One was found exhausted on the marsh road after gales on Sep 13th and died two days later on the reserve. Another was seen on Aug. 29th.

LEACH'S PETREL (Oceanodroma leucorhoa)

NW gales on Sep 12th brought many up the estuary and there were 6 sightings on the reserve (GEM,MJR,TKS,JD), including one of 2 birds together. Another was seen during gales on Oct 7th (NJH).

CORMORANT (Phalacrocorax carbo)

A maximum count of 121 on Dec 11th shows a recovery to the high levels of the early 1980s. Numbers had been higher throughout the year.

MONTHLY PEAK COUNTS

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
50	52	42	50	25	9	45	21	42	87	72	121

GREY HERON (Ardea cinerea)

Numbers were slightly down on 1986 and 1987 but still higher than in all previous years with a maximum of 24 on Oct 13th.

MONTHLY PEAK HERON COUNTS

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
5	4	4	6	2	7	12	20	12	24	13	8

LESSER FLAMINGO (Phaenicopterus minor)

This escaped bird was present almost daily between Jan 10th and Feb 25th, sometimes crossing the river to Burton Marsh. It was the first flamingo record for the reserve.

MUTE SWAN (Cygnus olor)

Larger flocks than usual on the Dee account for the high total of 69 records, scattered throughout the year (maximum of 12 on the river in May).

BEWICK'S SWAN (Cygnus columbianus bewicki)

The only record is of 2 adults with 3 immatures on the bunded pool on Nov 14th.

PINKFOOTED GOOSE (Anser brachyrhyncus).

Two birds were present on the marsh from Mar 4th to 20th and another was seen on Oct 30th.

GREYLAG GOOSE (Anser anser).

Two were recorded on July 23rd (HJ).

CANADA GOOSE (Branta canadensis)

The winter flock built up to 35 during Jan/Feb and the same number reappeared briefly in September. They are only irregular visitors and probably the same birds which are seen at Shotwick.

BRENT GOOSE (Branta bernicla)

The only record was of 3 birds on Nov 20th.

SHELDUCK (Tadorna tadorna)

No change on previous years with a maximum of 400 in December and a substantial summer presence in June/July.

One pair was seen regularly with up to 6 young from July 31st to Sep 28th.

MONTHLY PEAK SHELDUCK COUNTS

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
300	200	100	110	83	155	200	10	342	120	180	400

WIGEON (Anas penelope)

Fewer than average, especially in the 87/88 winter, but a maximum count of 200 on Dec 17th.

MONTHLY MAXIMUM COUNTS

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
15	4	12	15	-	-	-	-	40	22	9	200

TEAL (Anas crecca)

Teal numbers were up again with 1000-2000 during the latter part of the year, but not yet back to the levels of 1983-85. The number using the improved bunded pool was notable, however, with regular counts of 400-600 in November and December.

MONTHLY PEAK TEAL COUNTS.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
900	600	330	80	2	3	6	60	1150	2000	1500	1100

MALLARD (Anas platyrhynchos)

Counts of 400-600 during Sep-Dec are an improvement on the previous two winters, though, as for the Teal, not as high as in 1983-85. A flock of up to 150 regularly used the banded pool after the improvements in August.

A good breeding season with 3 separate broods of up to 7 ducklings each appearing on the fly ash lagoon, the first as early as April 27th.

A large summering flock was noted in June once again though it tended to stay in mid-estuary, rarely coming closer to the reserve.

MONTHLY PEAK MALLARD COUNTS

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
350	300	100	25	70	500	80	250	600	500	400	600

PINTAIL (Anas acuta)

A typical year with mid-river flocks of up to 3000 occasionally coming across from Gayton Sands, though less often in the 1988/89 winter.

MONTHLY MAXIMUM COUNTS

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
3000	2500	1	-	-	-	-	-	80	25	300	25

SHOVELER (Anas clypeata)

Although the maximum count was only 7 on Mar 17th, males were present on the fly ash lagoon for most of February and March.

MONTHLY MAXIMUM SHOVELER COUNTS

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
-	1	7	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	3

POCHARD (Aythya ferina)

Only one record of a single on Nov 13th.

TUFTED DUCK (Aythya fuligula)

A typical year with a total of 17 records and a maximum of 5 on April 6th.

SCAUP (Aythya marila)

A female was brought close to the West hide by the high tides on several occasions between Jan 20th and Feb 22nd and one was seen again on Dec 10th and 11th.

LONGTAILED DUCK (Clanqula hyemalis)

An immature came up with the tide on Oct 30th and Nov 23rd and was joined by a second bird on Nov 24th (all records and a full description from CB). This species was being recorded elsewhere in the region during this period.

COMMON SCOTER (Melanitta nigra)

A female brought up by the tide on Oct 14th and again on Nov 28th was the first record of this species for the reserve (MJR,GEM), rather surprising since the much rarer Velvet Scoter (M. fusca) has already occurred.

GOLDENEYE (Bucephala clangula)

Another poor year with a maximum of 6, though they continue to be a virtual certainty on the bunded pool in November. Unusually, a late female stayed on the fly ash lagoon from May 26th-29th.

MONTHLY MAXIMUM GOLDENEYE COUNTS

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
4	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	6	5

GOOSANDER (Mergus merganser)

There were 5 records of single females from the West hide between August and December.

REDBREASTED MERGANSER (Mergus serrator)

A slight improvement this year with 4 records of 4 birds together.

MONTHLY PEAK MERGANSER COUNTS

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1	1	-	-	-	-	4	4	-	2	4	-

HEN HARRIER (Circus cyaneus)

Numbers remain low with only one male and four ringtails for the year.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	5

GOSHAWK (Accipiter gentilis)

There was a tentative description of an immature for November 10th, but identification problems make this a very elusive species. The possibility that this is an annual visitor to the Reserve remains to be confirmed.

SPARROWHAWK (Accipiter nisus)

A sharp fall in records from last year's remarkable total of 70, but 43 is still respectable and more than in any year before 1987. Five kills were recorded, 4 starlings and one unidentified bird, all by females. Two of the starlings were taken by the same bird within an hour of each other.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
-	3	3	2	-	-	1	7	14	11	-	2	43

KESTREL (Falco tinnunculus)

A good year with 107 records and the number of summer records (Apr-Jun) suggests breeding nearby, probably on power station buildings. Birds were seen successfully taking voles on 3 occasions and on Feb 29th, one was feeding on a lapwing which had been dead for some time.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
1	7	2	5	15	11	16	20	12	6	8	4	107

MERLIN (Falco columbarius)

Records were slightly down this year at 46, compared with an average of 55 over the past 3 years. Two attacks on skylarks were recorded, one of them successful. On Oct 4th, a meadow pipit took refuge near the door to the West hide after a prolonged aerial chase. Too terrified or exhausted to fly, the pipit ran into the long grass when almost picked up by the observer.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
8	5	2	-	-	-	1	6	6	10	4	4	46

HOBBY (Falco subbuteo)

A bird was reported over the marsh in May, though it did not appear in the Reserve logbooks.

PEREGRINE (Falco peregrinus)

Numbers have been maintained with 46 records, including two records of three birds together on Aug 24th and Nov 11th. They reappeared somewhat earlier than usual in the autumn with most records in August. Prey items include stock dove, curlew and two unidentified birds.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
4	2	2	1	-	-	1	16	7	7	4	2	46

GREY PARTRIDGE (Perdix perdix)

Only an average year for breeding, in spite of the fine spring, with a largest covey of 12 birds in the autumn.

PHEASANT (Phasianus colchicus)

One record of a male on Oct 12th.

MOORHEN (Gallinula chloropus)

A dramatic change in status for this species, when a pair raised 5 young on the fly ash lagoon for the first time, encouraged by the new growth of rushes on the pool fringes after conservation work in 1987. The species had previously been quite a rare visitor to the reserve.

COOT (Fulica atra)

An immature spent a month on the fly ash lagoon from June 16th to July 17th.

OYSTERCATCHER (Haematopus ostralegus)

A few pairs nested again without evidence of success and 200-300 were present throughout the year. There was an early summer peak again with a maximum count of 1750 in May.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
200	300	400	400	1750	300	300	300	520	680	300	800

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (Charadrius dubius)

An immature was seen on July 28th (GEM), Aug 6th (NJH) and Aug 7th (CB).

RINGED PLOVER (Charadrius hiaticula)

The maximum count of 25 in August was typical but autumn records were much more frequent than usual and there was also a good spring passage with 10 on April 18th.

GOLDEN PLOVER (Charadrius apricaria)

Few this year. Maximum of 10 on Jan 2nd.

GREY PLOVER (Charadrius squatarola)

After 2 years absence, this species returned in mid-October as a regular visitor to the gulley near West hide. Usually 1-2 birds, but a maximum of 12 on Dec 11th.

LAPWING (Vanellus vanellus)

A count of 4000 on Dec 26th (RAR) is by far the largest number recorded on the Reserve and numbers were higher than usual throughout the year. Display was observed in April.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2000	1000	400	10	6	200	480	800	1200	1500	3000	4000

KNOT (Calidris canutus)

Knot returned in still greater numbers for the 1988/89 winter with around 1000 often present and a maximum of 2000 on Dec 13th. This can now be considered a well-established winter visitor to the Reserve and a welcome addition to the range of species it can offer to the birdwatcher in winter.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
400	400	100	45	-	-	1	1	80	800	1200	2000

SANDERLING (Calidris alba)

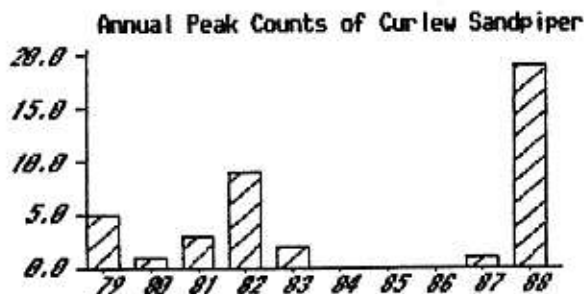
A single on July 27th (RAR) is the first record since 1984.

LITTLE STINT (Calidris minuta)

A single was present on Sep 12th (MJR) and 13th (CB).

CURLEW SANDPIPER (Calidris ferruginea)

After 4 bad years, 1988 was an excellent year for this species on the Reserve, as elsewhere on the Dee. It was recorded regularly between Aug 27th and Oct 9th with a maximum count of 19 on Sep 12th.



A total of 90 birds were recorded during this period, three times more than the next highest running total which was 29 in 1979.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*)

Passages of 600 in May and 2,000 in July were about the average for recent years, but winter numbers have been a little higher than usual with 400-500 present in mid-December.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
200	-	22	15	600	25	2000	1000	90	200	450	500

RUFF (*Philomachus pugnax*)

An excellent year for this species with 2-3 birds present throughout October and a few Aug/Sep records, with a maximum of 4 on Oct 8th. They mainly used the banded pool and the grazing fields near the West hide, giving very close views of males and females together. Altogether there were a total of 54 birds recorded over the period.

SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*)

An average year with a total of 63 birds recorded and a maximum of 6 on autumn passage (Aug 27th and Oct 26th).

BLACKTAILED GODWIT (Limosa limosa)

NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT.

An excellent year with numbers returning to the phenomenal ones of 1983. At the end of the 87/88 winter (Jan-Mar) numbers increased to around 600 and there was a fine spring passage of 108 birds in summer plumage in April. Numbers were higher again for the 88/89 winter with 800-1000 regularly present Oct-Dec, often mixing with an equally large flock of Knot.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
600	600	600	108	25	-	5	10	72	750	1000	1000

BARTAILED GODWIT (Limosa lapponica)

Another good and prolonged autumn passage in Sep/Oct with a maximum of 120 on Oct 11th. Smaller numbers lingered to the end of they year

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	64	120	56	20

WHIMBREL (Numenius phaeopus)

Records in both spring and autumn with a maximum of 22 on Aug. 22nd.

CURLEW (Numenius arquata)

Numbers were higher than usual throughout the year with over 100 present in most winter months. The maximum count, however, was once again in midsummer, with 180 present in June.

SPOTTED REDSHANK (Tringa erythropus)

NATIONALLY IMPORTANT (10% of British Population)

The autumn passage peak of 42 on Oct 11th was typical of recent years, as was the winter maximum of 10-11 birds in both 87/88 and 88/89. Visitors to the Reserve would be unlucky if they didn't see this bird on any high tide from July to March and would be unlikely to find as many wintering birds together anywhere else in Britain.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
11	10	2	-	-	-	10	22	37	42	13	10

REDSHANK (Tringa totanus)

Breeding was proved for the first time this year when two adults were seen guarding 4 young on the marsh near the West hide between June 17th and 29th. Display over the marsh in spring had been no greater than usual, so it is likely that redshank nesting has previously gone unnoticed.

Passage numbers were very high from July to September and the maximum count of 3500 on Aug 10th (NJH) equalled the Reserve record.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
400	800	300	400	7	300	3000	3500	3000	1500	700	400

GREENSHANK (Tringa nebularia)

Another poor year with a maximum of 6 on Oct 12th. A single also occurred on spring passage which is unusual for the reserve.

GREEN SANDPIPER (Tringa ochropus)

There were 16 records, all from the autumn, with a maximum of 4 together on Sep 11th.

COMMON SANDPIPER (Actitis hypoleucos)

Another poor autumn with a maximum of 6 on July 13th. Spring passage was slightly better than recently with 9 records of 1-2 birds.

TURNSTONE (Arenaria interpres)

More records than usual this autumn with a high count of 4 on July 24th.

ARCTIC SKUA (Stercorarius parasiticus)

Four birds seen during NW gales on Oct 7th included 3 light-phase adults and one bird flew over the fly ash lagoon (NJH). There were further singles on Sep 13th and Oct 8th (CB).

GREAT SKUA (Stercorarius skua)

Three birds during NW gales on Oct 7th is only the second record of this species on the Reserve (NJH,GEM).

LITTLE GULL (Larus minutus)

There were excellent views of an adult which was present on the fly ash lagoon from April 21st to May 3rd.

BLACKHEADED GULL (Larus ridibundus)

Maximum count of 2700 on Sep 6th.

COMMON GULL (Larus canus)

Maximum count of 200 on Jan 20th.

LESSER BLACKBACKED GULL (Larus fuscus)

Maximum count of 600 on Sep 6th.

HERRING GULL (Larus argentatus)

Maximum count of 210 on Nov 17th. A yellow-legged bird was present on the bunded pool on Sep 24th.

[GLAUCOUS GULL (Larus hyperboreus)]

A bird was described in flight beyond Flint Castle on Aug 30th (CB), though this is hardly within the limits of the Reserve.

GREAT BLACKBACKED GULL (Larus marinus)

Maximum count of 26 on Nov 17th.

COMMON TERN (Sterna hirundo)

Maximum count of 130 on July 20th. A bird which brought two young onto the bunded pool from Aug 29th to Sep 2nd had no black tip to its bill and caused a certain amount of head-scratching amongst watchers; a reminder not to rely on this identification feature alone for the Arctic Tern. A late immature was present from Oct 12th-16th.

ARCTIC TERN (Sterna paradisea)

The only record is of 26 with 9 common terns on Sep 1st (NJH).

LITTLE TERN (Sterna albifrons)

A good year with 24 on Aug 12th, 7 on Aug 14th. 4 on Aug 19th, 2 on Sep 11th and a single on July 17th.

BLACK TERN (Chlidonias niger)

A second good spring in succession with 7 birds on May 2nd. There were also 4 records of 1-2 birds from Aug 20th-27th.

GUILLEMOT (Uria aalge)

Now a regular winter visitor with 3 singles in Oct/Nov and one found dead on Mar 4th.

RAZORBILL (Alca torde)

Two records of singles on the river on Jan 2nd and Nov 21st.

DOMESTIC/FERAL PIGEON (Columba livia)

Occasional records, Mar-Oct.

STOCK DOVE (Columba oenas)

A change in pattern for this species which is now more common in winter, the late summer flocks of yore having failed to appear. Maximum count of 20 on Jan 23rd.

WOODPIGEON (Columba palumbus)

Maximum count of 45 on Jan 2nd

COLLARED DOVE (Streptopelia decaocto)

One record of a single on Aug 30th.

CUCKOO (Cuculus canorus)

A typical year with only 5 records, though one was of a recently-fledged juvenile on June 22nd.

LITTLE OWL (Athene noctua)

Only one record of 3 birds on fence-posts on Aug 25th.

TAWNY OWL (Strix aluco)

No logbook records but one was seen near the railway line during the moth-trapping evening on Aug 27th (RWE).

SWIFT (Apus apus)

Present from May 2nd to Sep 4th with a high count of 100 on July 2nd.

KINGFISHER (Alcedo atthis)

There were 7 autumn records this year, a significant improvement over 1986 and 1987 but hardly back to normal.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopus major*)

Another good year with 12 records of singles from near the East hide. It may be worth reminding bird-sexers that it is the immature of this species that has the full red cap and the female no red at all on the head.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopus minor*)

The male which was seen twice in Dec 1987 was seen again in the willow screen on Feb 6th.

SKYLARK (*Alauda arvensis*)

Maximum count of 117 on Oct 7th (NJH) and one adult was recorded carrying food on June 17th, though many other pairs undoubtedly bred.

SAND MARTIN (*Riparia riparia*)

An excellent spring passage with 4 records in double figures and a maximum of 35 on the fly ash lagoon on May 2nd. Autumn was poor in contrast with records of only 1-3 birds. The extreme dates this year were April 18th to Sep 4th.

SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*)

Present from April 8th to Oct 26th with a maximum of 100 on Aug 10th.

HOUSE MARTIN (*Delichon urbica*)

Two were seen on May 3rd but then no more until May 18th when they began to be seen regularly. There was a record passage of 240 on Aug 10th and the last was seen on Sep 24th.

MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*)

Maximum of 20 on Oct 22nd and only one record of a bird in song on the marsh (July 3rd).

ROCK PIPIT (*Anthus spinoletta petrosus*)

More records this year, all in Oct/Nov, and a maximum of 6 on Nov 1st (NJH). This species is probably underrecorded because of the general identification difficulty with pipits.

WATER PIPIT (*Anthus spinoletta spinosus*)

Singles on Sep 17th and Dec 17th (NJH; description on record) are the first records since 1978, but again, identification of this species in winter plumage is not without difficulty and it may have been overlooked.

YELLOW WAGTAIL (Motacilla flava)

The decline continues unabated with a maximum count of only 2 birds in August and only 3 singles on spring passage (Apr/May).

GREY WAGTAIL (Motacilla cinerea)

A dramatic improvement this year so that this species was commoner than the yellow wagtail for the first time. There were 25 birds seen in total, including 3 birds together on Aug 6th (BG). All records are from Aug-Dec.

WHITE WAGTAIL (Motacilla alba alba)

One spring record of 4 birds on April 19th (a typical date) and a single on Oct 24th.

PIED WAGTAIL (Motacilla alba yarrelli)

Young birds first appeared on the fly ash lagoon on June 3rd. The highest count was of 8 birds several times in July.

WREN (Troglodytes troglodytes)

A common resident breeding bird.

DUNNOCK (Prunella modularis)

A common resident breeding bird.

ROBIN (Erithacus rubecula)

A common resident breeding bird.

REDSTART (Phoenicurus phoenicurus)

An early spring male was found near the middle hide on April 14th (RB).

WHINCHAT (Saxicola rubetra)

Fewer spring records than usual(4 entries totalling 6 birds) but an autumn juvenile was seen again in Aug/Sep.

WHEATEAR (Oenanthe oenanthe)

Once again this year, a juvenile was seen with 2 adults or a female on 6 occasions between July 20th and Aug 14th. It seems likely that a pair bred successfully on a remote part of the reserve. Passage was poor with a maximum of 4 birds in July.

BLACKBIRD (Turdus merula)

Breeding was proven and there was a maximum count of 11 birds on Nov 4th.

FIELDFARE (Turdus pilaris)

Small numbers (up to 25) occurred early in the year, but most were seen throughout November with a high count of 130 on Nov 17th.

SONG THRUSH (Turdus philomelos)

Maximum of 5 on Nov 4th.

REDWING (Turdus iliacus)

Nearly all records were in November, with the Fieldfare. Maximum of 50 on Nov 27th.

MISTLE THRUSH (Turdus viscivorus)

Maximum of 8 on Feb 5th.

LESSER WHITETHROAT (Sylvia curruca)

Breeding was proven for the first time on the Reserve when a family party with at least 2 young was seen and heard on June 13th. A male in song had been present since May 2nd and individuals continued to be seen until Sep 7th.

WHITETHROAT (Sylvia communis)

Breeding was proven near the railway line with a family party of 5 on July 31st and a male in song since June 1st. There were few records from traditional sites in the nature trail this year, however, possible the result of drastic tree pruning by the CEGB.

GARDEN WARBLER (Sylvia borin)

Long overdue, this new species for the reserve was recorded on the fence at the end of the nature trail on Sep 21st. A detailed description is on record (GM).

BLACKCAP (Sylvia atricapilla)

A male in song was recorded 4 times in May and June and a pair was seen on July 31st in the same area, but there is no further proof of breeding.

CHIFFCHAFF (Phylloscopus collybita)

The first spring migrant occurred on April 25th and song continued until June 6th, but breeding was not proven. The 87/88 overwintering bird was seen again on Jan 20th and Feb 17th and one returned for the 88/89 winter (Oct 1st, Nov 16th and 26th). These wintering birds are usually migrants from further north and not British breeding birds.

WILLOW WARBLER (Phylloscopus trochilus)

Males in song were recorded from April 13th to June 13th and July-Sep sightings included a juvenile, but still no proof of breeding.

GOLDCREST (Regulus regulus)

Singles on Mar 6th, Oct 24th and Nov 9th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (Muscicapa striata)

One spring record near the middle hide on May 11th (TKS).

LONGTAILED TIT (Aegithalus caudatus)

One on Mar 6th and frequent records between Sep 18th and Nov 27th (maximum of 15).

COAL TIT (Parus ater)

Singles on Nov 18th and 20th (JCW).

BLUE TIT (Parus caeruleus)

Maximum count of 16 on Nov 18th. Two family parties in the willow screen on Jun 10th.

GREAT TIT (Parus major)

An adult was seen feeding a juvenile in the willow screen on Jun 10th. Maximum counts of 4 on Sep 1st and Nov 20th.

TREECREEPER (Certhis familiaris)

A single at Rockcliffe on Nov 4th (JCW).

JAY (Garrulus glandarius)

Records were up yet again with a total of 30 birds seen throughout the year.

MAGPIE (Pica pica)

Maximum count of 16 on Mar 20th. Breeding was proven.

JACKDAW (Corvus monedula)

Counts of 10-30 as usual in April and 1-3 birds in October.

ROOK (Corvus frugilegus)

Three singles in Sep and Nov.

CARRION CROW (Corvus corone)

Breeding proven and a maximum count of 45 on Oct 23rd.

RAVEN (Corvus corax)

There were 3 January records and then singles or pairs were recorded on 23 occasions from Aug 11th to the end of the year, with a record of 4 together on Oct 14th.

Although there are no Reserve records from Feb-July, a pair is known to have bred not far from the Reserve this year, an unusual event at sea-level, to say the least, but the species now seems to be well-established.

STARLING (Sturnus vulgaris)

Maximum count of 1500 on Aug 3rd. Postbreeding flocks of juveniles appeared early (May 24th), another sign of the fine spring.

HOUSE SPARROW (Passer domesticus)

Only 5 entries of up to 6 birds in May/June, all from the reserve entrance or railway line. The low number is not because they are overlooked, since some of us are careful to record all sightings of this uncommon species !

CHAFFINCH (Fringilla coelebs)

Virtually absent in the 87/88 winter and only small flocks in November (maximum of 50 on Nov 18th). A male sang at Rockcliffe from April 5th to June 13th. There were no records at all of Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) or Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) this year.

GREENFINCH (Carduelis chloris)

A pair bred near the railway line. Records of up to 4 birds, Oct-Dec.

GOLDFINCH (Carduelis carduelis)

Flocks of up to 60 in Sep/Oct and present in smaller numbers throughout the year.

SISKIN (Carduelis spinus)

A single in the nature trail on Sep 21st was the first record since 1983 (GM)

LINNET (Carduelis cannabina)

Present throughout the year with males in song and small winter flocks of up to 50.

TWITE (Carduelis flavirostris)

There were 9 birds near the West hide on Feb 20th, a flock of 50 on Oakenholt marsh on Nov 26th and a further flock of 15 on Dec 11th.

REDPOLL (Carduelis flammea)

One single on Feb 27th

BULLFINCH (Pyrrhula pyrrhula)

May have bred since pairs were seen twice near the East hide in June and a family party of 4 was seen on July 31st. Only 7 logbook entries.

SNOW BUNTING (Plectrophenax nivalis)

A male near the West hide on Nov 13th (RP,NJH,CB) was the 4th Reserve record.

REED BUNTING (Emberiza schoeniclus)

A male sang in May but no proof of breeding this year. 1-3 birds were seen several times in Oct/Nov.

CORN BUNTING (Miliaria calandra)

A single on July 6th was the only record and the first since 1985 (GEM).

CORRECTION TO THE 1985-87 REPORT.

Three records of Great Grey Shrike in 1982 were omitted in error, one in April and two (probably the same bird) in October.

LOGBOOK CONTRIBUTORS

It would be impossible to list everyone who has recorded birds in the logbooks. The following list is for identification of observers from their initials in the main text.

C Bennett	R. Birch	J Davidson	RW Evans
B Griffiths	NJ Holton	H Jones	G Morgan
GE Morris	R Plummer	MJ Ratcliffe	RA Roberts
G Robinson	TK Sykes	JC Weldrick	

SPECIAL RECORD SHEETS

These have been placed in the logbooks to encourage detailed recording of unusual species. Sheets for the following were completed during the year and are available for inspection.

Slavonian Grebe (CB)	Longtailed Duck (CB)
Common Scoter (GEM) (1st record)	Glaucous Gull (CB)
Water Pipit (NJH)	Garden Warbler (GM) (1st record)
Siskin (GM)	