

# Doddington Pool



Bird Report 2014

## DODDINGTON POOL BIRD REPORT FOR 2014

*Details of all the water related birds and birds of prey that we have recorded have been included, together with most of the more noteworthy species.*

### **Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

An increase in breeding pairs with at least two on Main Pool and three or four on Lemon Pool but only three young seen. The maximum count was 16 in September.

### **Great Crested Grebe** (*Podiceps cristatus*)

A late breeding season as seems to be normal now, with young not seen until July but average numbers, with four broods on Main Pool and one on Lemon Pool. Peak count in the usual post breeding gathering in August and September was a very impressive 97.

### **Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Not recorded from April to June. During the other months usually less than ten, except for a yearly autumn surge in numbers, as usual during September and early October with a maximum of 26 in September and 55 in October but quickly down to six in November.

### **Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*)

Three were seen on 4<sup>th</sup> April.

### **Grey Heron** (*Ardea cinerea*)

The breeding colony started last year has continued this year with three nests in the blue cedar tree behind the hall and young seen in all of the nests. Details included in the BTO national heronry survey. Present all year with a maximum count of 13 in October.

### **Mute Swan** (*Cygnus olor*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington	18	0	0	2	19	35	40	27	5	13	33	7

The resident pair did not nest on the island as usual but in the quiet south east bay. Unfortunately that site was predated with broken egg shells seen nearby on 16<sup>th</sup> May.

### **Greylag Goose** (*Anser anser*)

Successful breeding again this year with seven adults seen with 12 young in June. Present every month and numbers were usually up to 13 but in September a roving flock (or flocks!) moved in and numbers totalled 220.

### **Canada Goose** (*Branta canadensis*)

Present all year in varying numbers as flocks move about. The peak was in October as it usually is, with a high maximum of 500. A count of 357 in September coincided with the 220 Greylag Geese and nearly covered the water with geese! Many pairs attempted to breed with poor success as usual but 87 adults with 38 young were seen in May.

### **Ruddy Shelduck** (*Tadorna ferruginea*)

A pair were present from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> November - presumably escapees from a collection. Also one flew in with Canada Geese in the afternoon of 10<sup>th</sup> December.

### **Shelduck** (*Tadorna tadorna*)

A few records in the early year with six in January, four in February and eight in April.

### **Wigeon** (*Anas penelope*)

A winter visitor of usually less than ten but with occasional high counts in mid-winter. This year gave a high count of 61 in September..

### **Gadwall** (*Anas strepera*)

Just one record of this uncommon duck with two present on 4<sup>th</sup> April.

**Teal (*Anas crecca*)**

Just two birds present from January to March. Then present from August to December with the highest count being 30 in September.

**Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)**

A very common resident, with over 600 counted on the two pools in autumn; many released, and many young seen.

**Pintail (*Anas acuta*)**

A single record for this scarce duck with one recorded in November.

**Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)**

Present from January to April with a maximum of just two, and from September to the year end with a maximum count of a low 21.

**Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)**

Numbers continue to decline for this species, see the attached note for historical data. A maximum of just five in the first winter period and 14 in November.

**Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)**

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington	47	36	99	100	46	58	42	39	120	122	54	36

A poor breeding season with only one brood noted on Main Pool and two broods on Lemon Pool.

**Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)**

A regular winter visitor and only present from January to April, maximum 19 in March, and November to December, maximum 10 in both months.

**Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)**

Just two singles recorded with one in January and a female in November.

**Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*)**

One on 24<sup>th</sup> June circled overhead for several minutes then drifted off north west. One on 19<sup>th</sup> August was seen flying over Walgherton and then probably the same bird on the 22<sup>nd</sup> appeared from the Walgherton direction, circled overhead for a few minutes and then returned.

**Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)**

Resident and breeds in the area.

**Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)**

The maximum count was 22 in February feeding in a fodder turnip crop field grazed by sheep.

**Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)**

Once again a poor year, with not a single record

**Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)**

Resident and breeds in the area.

**Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)**

Again a very poor year with just one record of a single on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

**Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)**

Several records of a single from March to May and also during October.

**Water Rail (*Rallus aquatica*)**

One was heard calling on 12<sup>th</sup> December by Lemon Pool.

**Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)**

Regularly seen in the area.

**Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*)**

None actually recorded.

**Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)**

Many reared by the shooting syndicate and released.

**Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)**

Always lower numbers than expected with a maximum of six seen on Main Pool and seven on Lemon Pool. (They prefer smaller waters).

**Coot (*Fulica atra*)**

Numbers followed the usual pattern but with lower numbers than usual. The autumn peak was just 329 in July, with 427 in 2013 and 634 in 2012, but see the separate report. Several pairs bred and many young seen.

**Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)**

The first birds returned on 21<sup>st</sup> February and once again two pairs bred, one with a nest on Main Pool island and the other on the flat roof of the yacht club, although only the island pair were seen with fledged young.

**Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)**

On 5<sup>th</sup> December three were noted in a huge flock of 1,300 Lapwing passing over.

**Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)**

Just one record, with a single on return passage on Main Pool on 16<sup>th</sup> July.

**Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)**

A winter flock seen regularly over nearby fields with maximum counts of that flock of 230 in February and 330 in November. But on 5<sup>th</sup> December a huge flock of 1,300 flew over heading north. Now lost as a breeding species.

**Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)**

Now reduced to an occasional visitor status so just one on 1<sup>st</sup> August was normal.

**Redshank (*tringa totanus*)**

A single bird seen on 4<sup>th</sup> August.

**Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)**

The commonest wader although fewer records than in 2014. Three records of one or two on spring passage from 18<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April; then just two singles on return passage on 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July.

**Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)**

A very marked reduction in the numbers of all species in the gull roost this year. A count on 31<sup>st</sup> December gave a total of 3,000 compared to 7,000 in 2013.

**Common Gull (*Larus canus*)**

A maximum count of around 30 in the gull roost in December (300 in 2013).

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

A maximum count of 300 in the gull roost in December (1,100 in 2013).

**Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)**

80 in the roost in December was similar to 2013.

**Yellow-legged Gull** (*Larus michahellis*)

One was seen in the early afternoon of 19<sup>th</sup> December on Main Pool, on its own and perched on a fallen tree trunk in the water, so giving good views.

**Common Tern** (*Sterna hirundo*)

Records on return passage with one or two seen on several dates from 26<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> August.

**Stock Dove** (*Columba oenas*)

Seen regularly but no counts recorded.

**Wood Pigeon** (*Columba palumbus*)

Very common with a large flock of up to 1,200 birds in January.

**Cuckoo** (*Cuculus canorus*)

A rare record for this now very scarce species with one heard singing in the distance on 18<sup>th</sup> May.

**Barn Owl** (*Tyto alba*)

Does breed and adults occasionally seen at dusk from the main road.

**Little Owl** (*Athene noctua*)

Reported as breeding this year.

**Tawny Owl** (*Strix aluco*)

Resident and breeds. Heard occasionally in early spring.

**Common Swift** (*Apus apus*)

A good count of 200 on 27<sup>th</sup> June.

**Common Kingfisher** (*Alcedo atthis*)

Again no breeding season records but one or two seen regularly in January and from July to the year end.

**Green Woodpecker** (*Picus viridis*)

One was seen on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** (*Dendrocopos major*)

The commonest woodpecker and several pairs bred.

**Sky Lark** (*Alauda arvensis*)

Three singing over a cereal field in March and April and probably just hanging on as a breeding species. Two regular in late winter.

**Sand Martin** (*Riparia riparia*)

First record on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. 100 feeding over the pool on 24<sup>th</sup> June.

**Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*)

First record on 27<sup>th</sup> March and the last on 8<sup>th</sup> October, but no big numbers were recorded. Several pairs have nests in the old timber yard shed.

**House Martin** (*Delichon urbica*)

20 over the water on 24<sup>th</sup> April.

**Meadow Pipit** (*Anthus pratensis*)

On spring passage 30 dropped in on 27<sup>th</sup> March. On autumn passage four were with wagtails on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

**Yellow Wagtail** (*Motacilla flava*)

The first record was four on 16<sup>th</sup> April. Once again a good year with probably three pairs breeding by the road to the units. Three males seen on territory and adults seen later carrying food and dropping into the cereal crop with young seen in late June. Last record on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

**Grey Wagtail** (*Motacilla cinerea*)

Just one record of a single on 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

**Pied Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba yarrelli*)

An excellent series of records from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> September with up to 21 Pied and one White Wagtail *M. a. alba* present, along with three Yellow Wagtails and four Meadow Pipits.

**Wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

A poor year with just a single on 31<sup>st</sup> August.

**Fieldfare** (*Turdus pilaris*)

A very high count of 450 in March but just 90 maximum in the second winter period.

**Redwing** (*Turdus iliacus*)

40 recorded in January and 80 in December.

**Reed Warbler** (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

The first record was one on 21<sup>st</sup> April. At least four pairs bred in the Lemon Pool reedbeds.

**Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

A summer visitor.

**Garden Warbler** (*Sylvia borin*)

A summer visitor.

**Whitethroat** (*Sylvia communis*)

A summer visitor.

**Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

A summer visitor.

**Willow Warbler** (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

No records this year.

**Goldcrest** (*Regulus regulus*)

Resident and breeds.

**Willow Tit** (*Parus montana*)

Now much reduced in numbers so a single on 19<sup>th</sup> December was a good find.

**Spotted Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa striata*)

After missing last year one pair nested successfully again on one of the cottages. In August two separate groups, a two and a three, were seen.

**Raven** (*Corvus corax*)

The resident pair were recorded in most months and seen guarding the usual nest site in Georges Wood, although no family group was seen.

**Starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

No large flocks noted this year.

**Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*)

I am not sure whether we are unlucky in not connecting with any large flocks of finches or whether there aren't any! The largest number of Chaffinches seen was 60 in January.

**Brambling** (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

If recorded at all, usually less than five so a huge roaming flock of 130 on 4<sup>th</sup> April was a good sight.

**Greenfinch** (*Carduelis chloris*)

Present but no large winter flocks noted.

**Crossbill** (*Loxia curvirostra*)

Almost the first birds seen in the year were amongst the best, with two seen perched on tree tops on 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

**Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*)

The biggest flock recorded was just 60 in September, the usual month for peak numbers.

**Linnet** (*Carduelis cannabina*)

Not recorded this year.

**Reed Bunting** (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

A few pairs breed, with two singing males around the yacht club and south bay in June and two on Lemon Pool. A few also remain for the winter.

Colin Lythgoe; SECOS Recorder; and David Meakin.

## STATUS OF COMMON WATERBIRDS AT DODDINGTON

For the past few years we have felt that numbers of the common waterbirds have been decreasing. So I have used some of the historical data to check the facts.

### Tufted Duck and Pochard.

These two used to be recorded in similar numbers but the impression now is that Tufted Duck have maintained their numbers but Pochard have gone down. Chart 1 shows the maximum count during the winter months of November to March in each year from 1986. It can be seen that during the 1980s and 1990s the numbers of each species were similar but since then Pochard totals have shown a steady decline. This reflects the national status which has shown a similar decline. In 2014 the maximum count of Tufted Duck was 99 but Pochard was just 13.

The cause is probably due to what is commonly known as “short stopping”. The main breeding grounds are on shallow lakes in eastern Europe and Russia, which freeze solid during the winter, forcing the birds away. The currently warming climate allows more lakes and rivers to remain ice free so Pochards do not need to move so far west. Tufted Duck breeds commonly in the UK and numbers are stable.

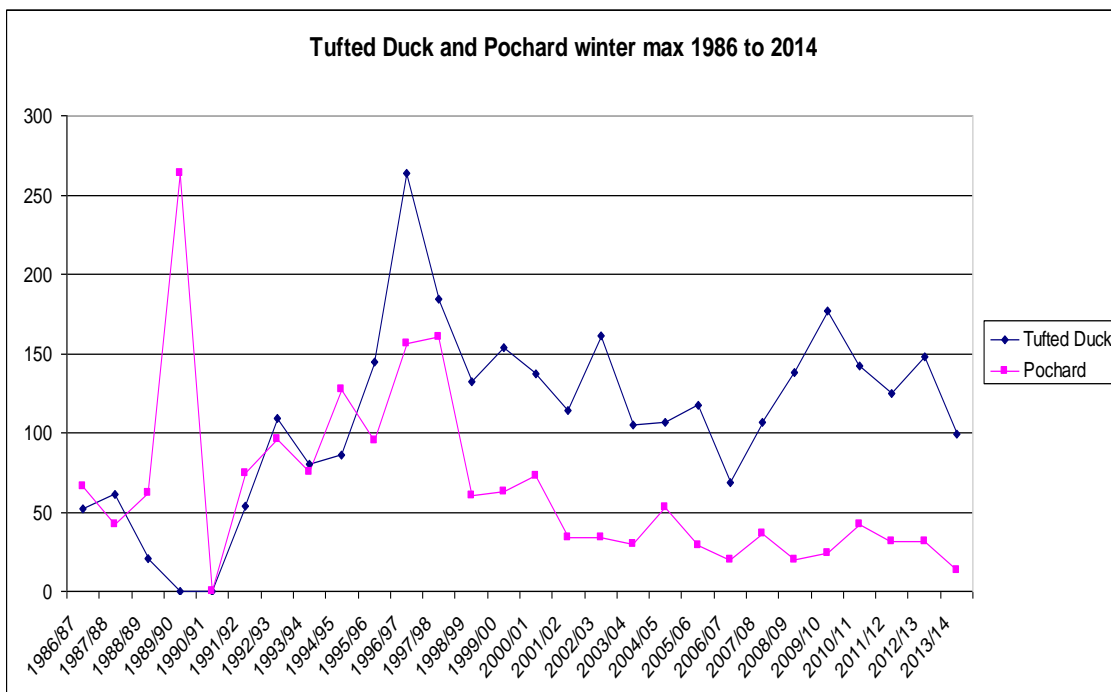


Chart 1: Tufted Duck and Pochard winter maximum 1986 to 2014

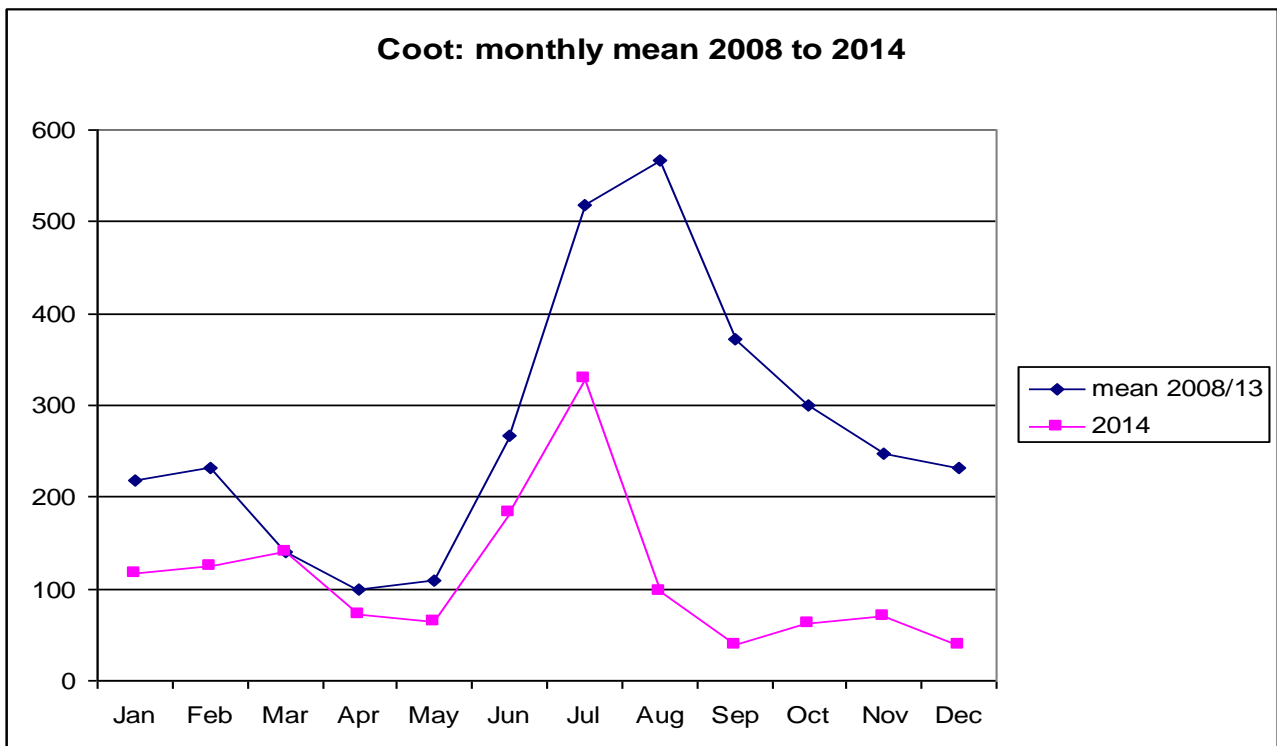


## Coot

The UK breeding population is augmented in winter with visitors from northern Europe. The total national population has increased by around a third in the past 20 years.

The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas of 2004 to 2007 cites Doddington Pool as the major site for Coot in Cheshire and Wirral with 884 birds counted in November 2004, not far short of the record count of 1,300 birds in November 2001. The next largest flock during the survey period for the atlas was 400 on Redes Mere with few other sites approaching 200.

Checking the data on my database I have tabulated the monthly mean for the years 2008 to 2013 and compared this to the 2014 monthly counts, see chart 2.



*Chart 2: Monthly mean 2008 to 2013 and count for 2014*

It shows that the counts in 2014 are much lower than the mean of 2008 to 2013, particularly in the second half of 2014. Comparing December counts gave a mean count of 232 in the years 2008 -13 and an actual count of 38 in 2014.

However, I then accessed the data on the British Trust for Ornithology database, where I have submitted counts since 1987 to the Wetland Bird Survey. The counts for the month of December from 1987 to 2014 are shown as chart 3.

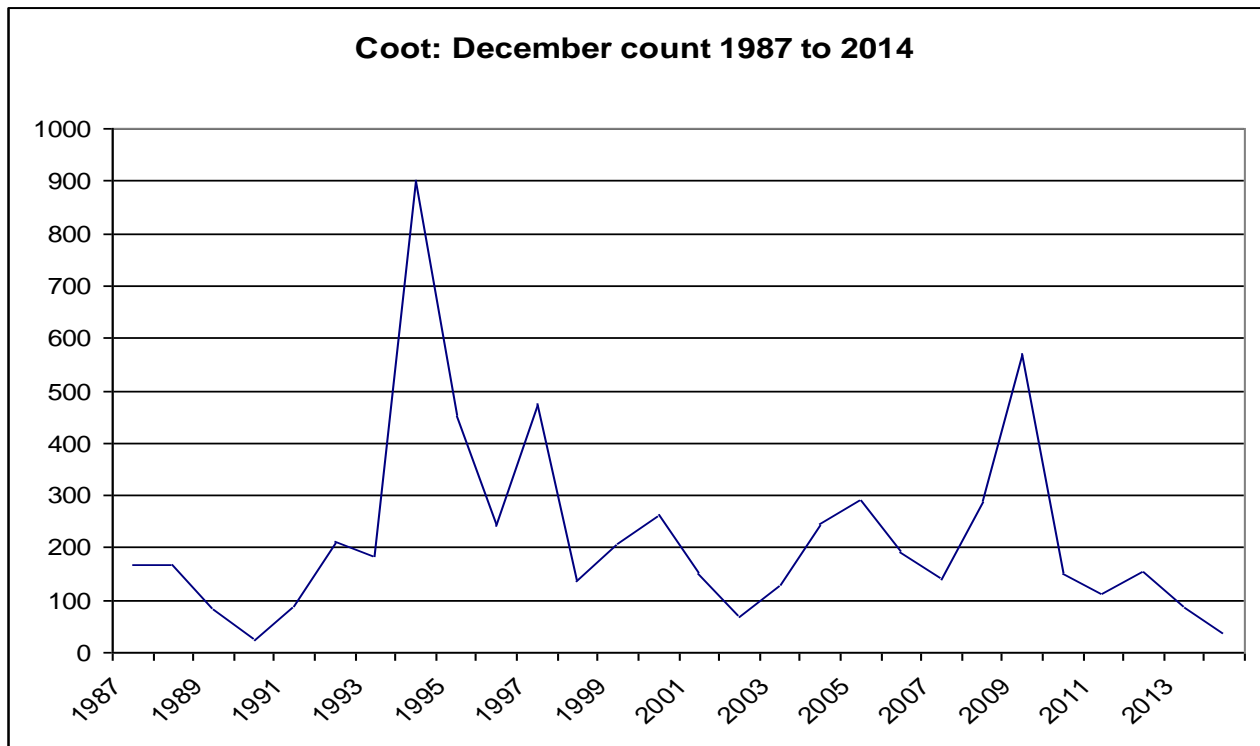


Chart 3: December counts from 1987 to 2014

This long term dataset presents a different view and shows that one of the occasional spikes in the population occurred in 2009, which biased the mean counts from 2008-13.

However, it does confirm that this winter's count of 38 is indeed very low but not quite the lowest, which was just 25 in 1990. The population quickly recovered from that low point and so we will have to keep counting for the next two or three years to check for a recovery from the current low.

Colin Lythgoe