

DODDINGTON POOL

BIRD REPORT 2015



DODDINGTON POOL BIRD REPORT FOR 2015

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.

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington	9	1	0	0	10	23	23	18	16	15	12	15

The resident pair nested and hatched six young. One disappeared quickly and another one later but four survived to fledging.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

One flew over on 27th December.

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

Only one pair bred, with six small young seen in June. An incredible increase in numbers from the autumn with 128 in August increasing to a record count of 347 in November which stayed to the year end. The previous record count was 220 in September 2014 but that was a one-off event.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

The usual numbers of under 200 in the early part of the year but in autumn numbers increased dramatically and stayed. The peak count in October was 512 and in November peaked at 644. There have been two higher counts with 829 in November 2004 and 1,215 in October 2007, but these were exceptional counts. Many pairs attempted to breed with poor success as usual but 55 adults with 26 young were seen in July.

Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

Only one record of a single this year from 25th to 31st July.

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

A winter visitor with a maximum of 6 in January and 11 in December.

Teal (*Anas crecca*)

A winter visitor with a maximum of 9 in January and 14 in October.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

A very common resident, with over 400 counted on the two pools in autumn and many young seen.

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Present from January to May with a maximum of 25 and from September to the year end with a maximum count of just seven.

Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

Numbers remain low for this once common species. Present from January to March with a maximum of 13. In the second winter period there was just one single in November and two males in December.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington	70	79	122	nc	34	44	33	41	85	69	49	18

A good breeding season this year with five broods noted on Main Pool.

Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*)

A male seen on 25th July. A scarce visitor here, the only two previous records were on 16th October 2005 and 16th November 1997.

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

A regular winter visitor and only present from January to March, maximum 13 in March, and October to December with a maximum of 21 in December.

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

Just two records with a pair seen in January and a female in December.

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.

Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Not recorded from April to July. During the other months usually less than ten, except for a yearly autumn surge in numbers, this year in October with 36 present but quickly down to 12 in November.

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

I had high hopes that they might breed this year when a pair were resident in the heronry from mid-May to early June but then they moved away. Just one other record on 17th July.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

The breeding colony has continued to grow with five nests this year, at least three of these were successful. Details were included in the BTO national heronry survey. Present all year with a maximum count of 11 in October.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Lemon Pool continues to be the main site for this species with probably five pairs holding territory in May, although only four young from three broods were seen in July. Two pairs and a brood of three new young seen on the Main Pool in August. The maximum count was 16 in October.

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

The breeding season on the Main Pool was later than ever but very productive with five broods seen in July and August, then in September three new broods each with three small young. On Lemon Pool one pair nested but were unsuccessful. The usual post-breeding flock did not gather this year so the maximum count in September was only 35 compared to 97 in 2014.

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Resident and breeds in the area.

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

Resident and common but no high counts seen this year.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Once again a poor year, with not a single record

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Resident and breeds in the area, one seen regularly carrying food in the summer.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

One was recorded on 2nd January.

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

Once again just a single record of one bird on 1st September.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

Just two records this year with one on 14th October and one on 12th November.

Water Rail (*Rallus aquatica*)

One was seen on 9th January at Lemon Pool. Probably the same bird that was recorded here in December 2014.

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Always lower numbers than expected with a maximum of seven seen on Main Pool, and eight on Lemon Pool, including two pairs each with two young. (They prefer smaller waters).

Coot (*Fulica atra*)

Numbers followed the usual pattern but although the autumn peak was lower with 284 in 2015 (329 in 2014, 427 in 2013 and 634 in 2012) the December numbers were higher, but see the attached report. Several pairs bred and many young seen.

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

The first birds returned on 30th January, earlier than usual. Once again two pairs bred, one with a nest on Main Pool island and the other on the flat roof of the yacht club. The island pair failed but the yacht club pair had at least one young seen amongst the parked boats, but not seen fledged.

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

A winter flock seen regularly over nearby fields with maximum counts of 200 in January and 170 in October. Now lost as a breeding species.

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

An excellent record of a single seen on the island on 19th December, alongside a Common Snipe.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Occasional singles in February, October and December.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

A group of six were watched on the island for 30 minutes on 13th April and a single was seen there on 20th July.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

The commonest wader and a regular visitor on passage. One or two on several dates between 13th April and 15th June. Then one on most dates from 4th July to 1st September.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)

A single bird on Lemon Pool on 3rd October.

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

A single bird seen on 17th July.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

Just two records on return passage this year with one on 12th July and two on 17th July.

Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

Numbers of most gull species seem to be back to normal levels this year and there were 8,000 in the roost in December.

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 1,000 in the gull roost in December.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

30 seen in the roost in December.

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

Seen regularly and the highest count recorded was 20 in December.

Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Very common but the largest flock size noted was just 300 in January.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

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

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)

Resident and breeds. Heard occasionally in early spring.

Common Swift (*Apus apus*)

The highest count noted was just 30 on 28th May.

Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Again no breeding season records but one or two seen regularly in February and March, and from August to November.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)

The commonest woodpecker and several pairs bred.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

Very common and many pairs breed in and around the hall. A maximum count of 300 in January.

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.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

Resident and breeds.

Willow Tit (*Poecile montana*)

Again just a single record, with one bird seen on 27th March.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Usually less than 10 birds present but on 6th February a huge flock of 150 was noted in the fields behind Lemon Pool.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

A flock of 10 was noted on 1st September.

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

The only flock size noted was 30 on 1st September. Several pairs nested in the old timber yard shed.

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)

The highest count noted was 20 on 1st September.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

A summer visitor.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

A summer visitor.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)

A summer visitor.

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)

A summer visitor.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Two singing males recorded from the yacht club bay from May to July.

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

Another increase in breeding pairs around Lemon Pool with nine singing males recorded on 21st May.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

A flock of 200 was regular during December.

Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*)

On 15th April we had cracking good views of a male for a few hours in the ploughed field along the drive .

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

As usual higher counts in the first winter period with a maximum of 330 In January and 90 in December.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

The highest count was 150 in January.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)

Although the regular nest site on the cottage was not used this year a pair with two young were seen on 24th August.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

Not recorded every year so one on 1st September was very welcome.

Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Just a single record in 2014 but in contrast an excellent year in 2015 for this passage migrant. Recorded regularly from 13th April through to 13th May with a peak count of eight on 1st May.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

The first record was one on 13th April. Once again a good year with males holding territory along the road to the units and later seen carrying food and dropping into the cereal crop in July.

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)

A strong presence of birds from March to June, mainly on passage, with a maximum of 10. There were four White Wagtail *M. a. alba* present on 15th April and singles on 13th and 22nd April.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

The only count noted was 15 on 25th February.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Once again no large flocks were seen, the largest being 70 in March.

Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*)

Present but no large winter flocks noted.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

The biggest flock recorded was just 30 in September, the usual month for peak numbers.

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)

Not recorded every year nowadays so a flock of 100 on 3rd October was a good record.

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Not common but recorded at both ends of the year.

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

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

Colin Lythgoe; SECOS Recorder; and David Meakin.

Coot (up to 2014)

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.

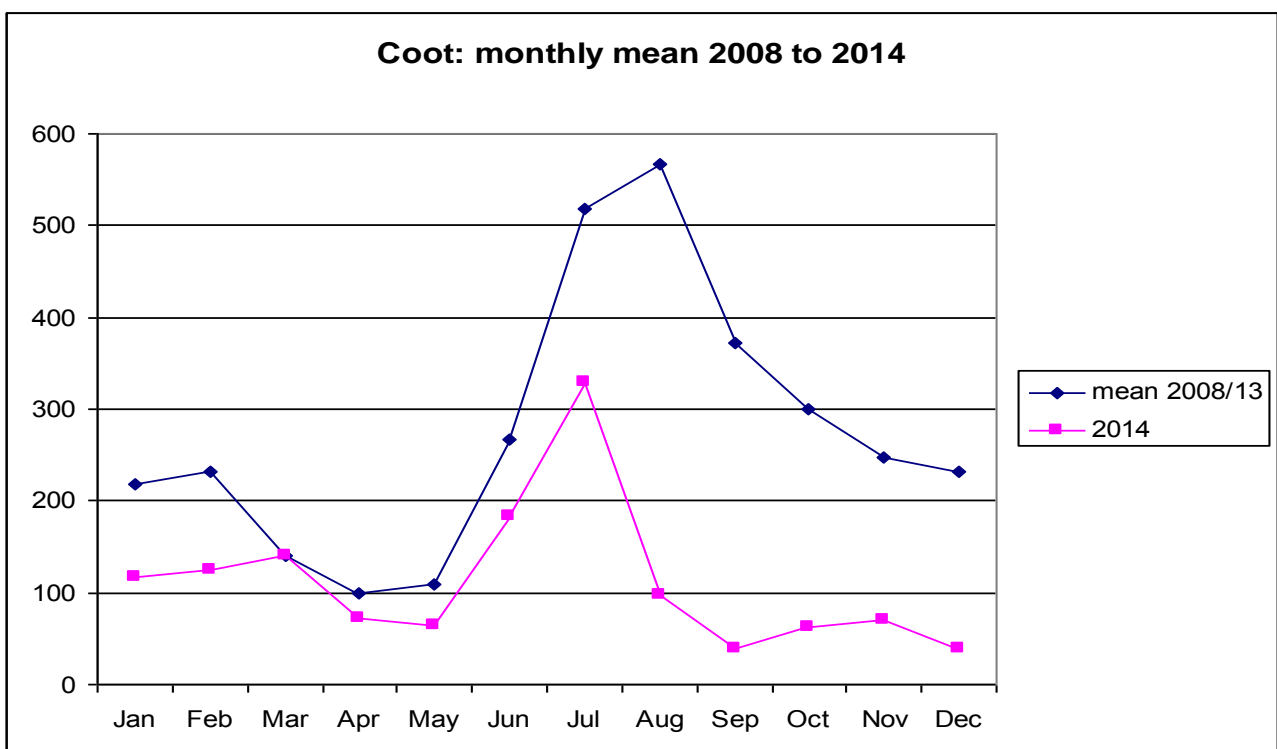


Chart 2: Monthly mean 2008 to 2013 and count for 2014

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.

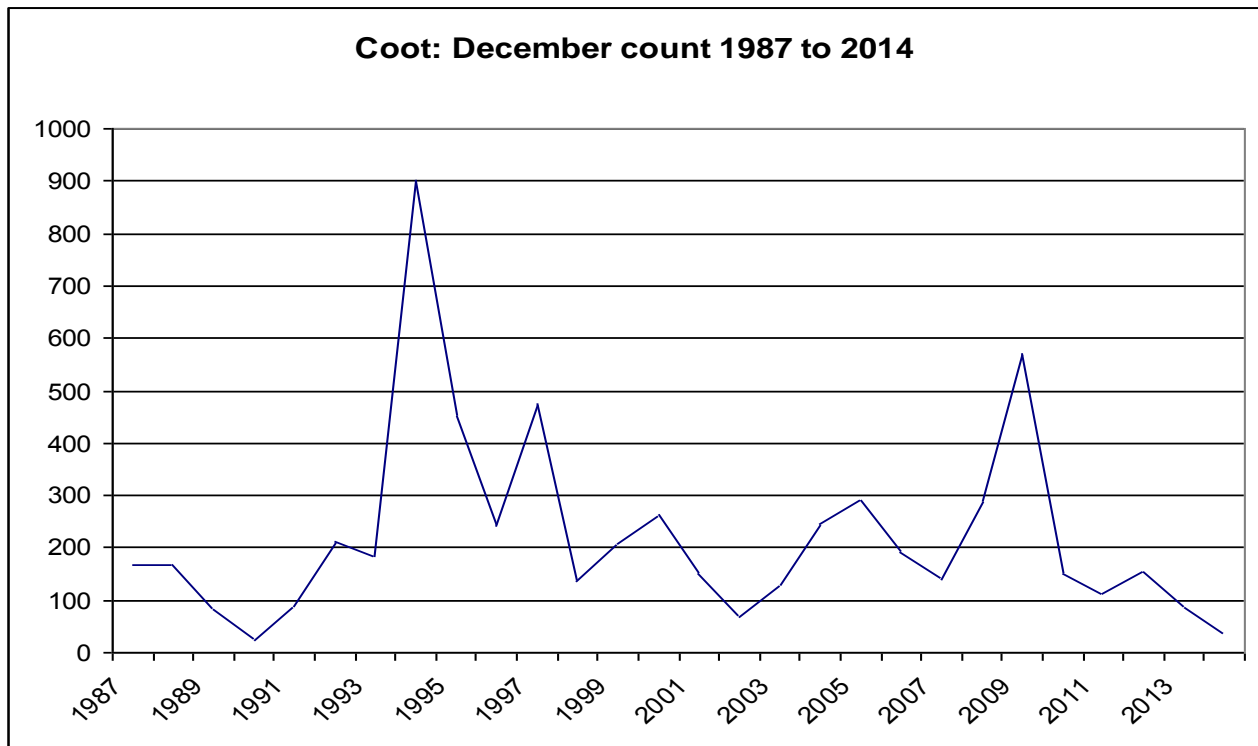


Chart 3: December counts from 1987 to 2014

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

2015 Update

The December maximum count for 2015 was 154 so there has been some recovery this year, although the autumn maximum was lower.