

Castle and Hightae Lochs



Wildlife Report 2015

Castle and Hightae Lochs Wildlife 2015

Castle Loch is now owned by the local community and managed by a trust on their behalf.

The weather during 2015 was very unsettled. Temperatures never maintained high levels in the summer for any length of time, or stayed below freezing for long during the winter. The dominant feature of the summer was rain, which continued into autumn, with a series of storms sweeping the area. Substantial flooding occurred for a time and some damage was done to the woodland fringe around the lochs.

The Pink-footed Goose roost (international importance) and Greylag Goose roost (national importance) are now defunct, although feeding grounds around the area remain in use. The goosander flock that has been present in sub-nationally important numbers has reduced considerably.

This report is based on the WeBS counts conducted each month throughout the year by Andy Riches (AR) and additional records from other visits and observers. Many thanks to the following: Pete Antrobus (PA), Steve Cooper (SC), Kevin Findlater (KF), Darren Flint (DF), Ross Gemmell (RG), Brian Henderson (BH), Joyce Henderson (JH), Helen Kelly (HK), Jim Logan (JL), Richard and Barbara Mearns (R&BM), John Miles (JM), David Rose (DR), Paul Shimmings (PSh), Violet Sinclair (VS), Anna White (AW). Some old records have initials for the recorders: Iain Anderson (IA), Derek Bearhop (DB), Colin Bushell (CB), Stuart Graham (SG), Michael Granger (MG), John Miles (JM), Tristram Reid (TR), Paul Seddon (PSed), Freda Seddon (FSe), Angus Sloan (AS), Dawn Wright (DW).

In addition to providing his records, Richard Mearns provided historical information, support and advice without which this report would not exist.

The descriptions of status refer to status on the reserve only.

Species recorded in 2015 are listed in bold type.

In spite of the many regular contributors listed above new records are always welcome and should be sent to Andy Riches sloch69@aol.com as soon as possible after the end of the year. Thank you.

AMPHIBIANS

COMMON FROG: *Present throughout the year and probably breeds. Maximum count three on 8th September (DF). No breeding season counts conducted.*

COMMON TOAD: *Present throughout the year and probably breeds. Maximum count 13 on 6th August (DF). No breeding season counts conducted.*

PALMATE NEWT: *Present throughout the year and probably breeds. No breeding season counts conducted.*

MAMMALS

SOPRANO PIPISTRELLE BAT: *Present throughout the year and probably breeds.*

COMMON PIPISTRELLE BAT: *Present throughout the year and probably breeds.*

DAUBENTON'S BAT: *Present throughout the year and probably breeds.*

NOCTULE BAT: *Reported occasionally from Hightae Loch. Numbers reported have declined since 2002 when at least 22 were noted on 28th May. This may simply be due to lack of observers or possibly results from the clearfell in 2009. Last record 18th July 2006 (R&BM).*

PIGMY SHREW: *Present throughout the year and breeds.*

COMMON SHREW: *Present throughout the year and breeds.*

WATER SHREW: *Present throughout the year and breeds.*

WOOD MOUSE: *Present throughout the year and breeds.*

FIELD VOLE: *Present throughout the year and breeds.*

BANK VOLE: *Present in the Castle Woodland and breeds.*

WATER VOLE: *Present in the Castle Woodland and Valison Burn area and breeds.*

BROWN RAT: *Present throughout the year and breeds.*

RED SQUIRREL: *Present in Castle and Dalton Road Woodlands throughout the year and has bred.*

WEASEL: *Present throughout the year and breeds.*

STOAT: *Present throughout the year and breeds.*

AMERICAN MINK: *Present throughout the year and breeds.*

OTTER: *Present throughout the year at both lochs and breeds. Regular sightings by numerous observers. One animal dead on A709 road at Halleaths 15th April (DF).*

BADGER: *Regular visitor to Castle Loch and Hightae Loch woodland.*

RED FOX: *Regular visitor to Castle Loch and Hightae Loch woodland.*

ROE DEER: *Regular visitor to Castle Loch and Hightae Loch woodland.*

DRAGONFLIES

LARGE RED DAMSELFLY: *Present and breeds. Stronghold on the Valison Burn. Maximum number recorded: 16 on wing; nine in cop; four ovipositing (AR).*

BLUE-TAILED DAMSELFLY: *Present and breeds Stronghold on the Valison Burn. Maximum number recorded: 96 on wing; 14 in cop; 10 ovipositing (AR).*

COMMON BLUE DAMSELFLY: *Present and breeds. Stronghold on the Valison Burn. Maximum numbers: 110 on wing; 22 in cop; 12 ovipositing (AR).*

AZURE DAMSELFLY: *Present and breeds. Stronghold on the Valison Burn. Maximum numbers: 43 on wing; 10 in cop; seven ovipositing (AR).*

VARIABLE DAMSELFLY: *Present and breeds. Stronghold on the Valison Burn. Maximum numbers: 22 on wing; eight in cop; five ovipositing (AR).*

EMERALD DAMSELFLY: *Present and probably breeds. No records again this year.*

COMMON DARTER: *Present and breeds. Maximum numbers: 3 on wing; 1 in cop; 1 ovipositing. All at Hightae Loch (AR).*

FOUR-SPOTTED CHASER: *Present and may breed. Maximum numbers: three on wing at Castle Loch and four on wing at Hightae Loch (both AR).*

COMMON HAWKER: *Present and probably breeds. Maximum numbers: two on wing at Castle Loch, three on wing at Hightae Loch and one in cop at Hightae Loch (all AR).*

BLACK DARTER: *Visited and was seen apparently ovipositing in Valison Burn area in 2010 but the habitat preferences of this insect would suggest that this behaviour was an aberration. A single record of a male in 2011 (AR). No records prior or since.*

GOLDEN-RINGED DRAGONFLY: *Occasional visitor. Single male recorded at Castle Loch on two occasions in 2012 and a single occasion in 2013 (AR). Single record from Vendace Burn in 2014. No records this year.*

MIGRANT HAWKER: *First recorded in 2004. No records since 2013.*

SOUTHERN HAWKER: *First recorded with a single male seen at Castle Loch on 10th October 2014 (BH). A single male recorded again this year, patrolling the banks of the Valison Burn on 27th September (R&BM).*

HOVERFLIES

ARCTOPHILA SUPERBIENS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

BACCHA ELONGATA: *Present at both loch and breeds.*

CHRYSOTOXUM BICINCTUM: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

DASYSYRPHUS VENUSTUS: *Last recorded 16th May 1980 at Castle Loch.*

EPISTROPHE GROSSULARIAE: *Last recorded on 14th July 1979 at Castle Loch.*

EPISYRPHUS BALTEATUS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

ERISTALIS ARBUSTORUM: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

ERISTALIS HORTICOLA: *Present at both lochs.*

ERISTALIS INTERRUPTUS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

ERISTALIS PERTINAX: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

ERISTALIS TENAX: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

EUPEODES LUNIGER: *Present at both lochs and breeds at Hightae Loch.*

HELOPHILUS PENDULUS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

HELOPHILUS TRIVITTATUS: *Last record on 14th June 1980 at Castle Loch.*

LEUCOZONA LATERNARIA: *Last record on 4th August 1976 at Castle Loch.*

LUCOZONA LUCORUM: *Present at both lochs and breeds at Hightae Loch.*

MELANOSTOMA MELLINUM: *Last record on 16th May 1980 at Castle Loch.*

MELANOSTOMA SCALARE: *Present at both lochs and may breed at Castle Loch.*

MERODON EQUESTRIS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

MYATHROPA FLOREA: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

NEOASCIA PODAGRICA: *Last record on 16th May 1980 at Castle Loch.*

NEOASCIA TENUR: *Last record on 16th May 1980 at Castle Loch.*

PLATYCHEIRUS CLYPEATUS: *Last record on 16th May 1980 at Castle Loch.*

PLATYCHEIRUS FULVIVENTRIS: *Last record 14th July 1979 at Castle Loch.*

PLATYCHEIRUS PERPALIDUS: *Last record on 16th May 1980 at Castle Loch.*

PORTEVINIA MACULATA: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

RHINGIA CAMPESTRIS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

SCAEVA PYRASTRI: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

SERICOMYIA LAPPONA: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

SERICOMYIA SILENTIS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

SYRITTA PIPIENS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

SYRPHUS RIBESII: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

SYRPHUS TORVUS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

SYRPHUS VITRIPENNIS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

VOLUCELLA BOMBYLANS: *Present at both lochs and breeds at Castle Loch.*

VOLUCELLA PELLUCENS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

XYLOTA SEGNIS: *Present at both lochs and breeds.*

BUTTERFLIES

SMALL WHITE: *Maximum numbers 21 at Castle Loch (AR).*

LARGE WHITE: *Maximum numbers three at Castle Loch (AR).*

GREEN-VEINED WHITE: *Maximum numbers 26 at Castle Loch (AR).*

ORANGE TIP: *Maximum numbers four at Castle Loch (AR).*

PEACOCK: *Maximum numbers six at Castle Loch (AR).*

SMALL TORTOISESHELL: *Maximum numbers eight at Castle Loch (AR).*

RED ADMIRAL: *Maximum number seven at Castle Loch (AR).*

RINGLET: *Maximum number 14 at Castle Loch (AR).*

SMALL COPPER: *No records this year. One was seen on 2nd June 2010 (AR) which was a first record for the reserve.*

SMALL HEATH: *No records this year. There have only been four records in the history of the reserve.*

MEADOW BROWN: *Maximum number one at Castle Loch in 2012 which was only the second record for the reserve. No records since.*

COMMON BLUE: *One was seen on 1st July 2010 (AR) which was a first record for the reserve. No records since.*

PAINTED LADY: *Maximum number two at Castle Loch (AR).*

COMMA: *One seen at Hightae Loch on 17th March 2009 (AW). A first record for the reserve and a rarity in the region. No records since then.*

DAY- FLYING MOTHS

CHIMNEY SWEEPER: *Maximum number: two at Castle Loch 7th July (DF).*

BUMBLE BEES

BOMBUS PASCUORUM: *Maximum number: eight at Castle Loch (AR).*

BOMBUS LAPIDARIUS: *Maximum number: five at Castle Loch (AR).*

BOMBUS PRATORUM: *Maximum number: six at Castle Loch (AR).*

BOMBUS TERESTRIS: *Maximum number: 18 at Castle Loch (AR).*

BOMBUS LUCORUM: *Maximum number: eight at Castle Loch (AR).*

BOMBUS HORTORUM: *Maximum number: two at Castle Loch (AR).*

AQUATIC MOLLUSCS

LYMNAEA STAGNALIS: *Last recorded 2014 (JL). No records this year.*

LYMNAEA PEREGER: *Last recorded 2014 (JL). No records this year.*

ANISUS LEUCOSTOMA: *Last recorded 2014 (JL). No records this year.*

PHYSA FRONTINALIS: *Present during sampling on the following dates 31st October and 21st November (JL).*

PLANORBIS CARINATUS: *Present during sampling on the 31st October (JL).*

PLANORBIS VORTEX: *Present during sampling on the 21st November (JL).*

PLANORBIS Spp: *Present during sampling on the 31st October (JL).*

SPHAREUM CORNEUM: *Present during sampling on the 31st October (JL).*

GYRALUS ALBUS: *Last recorded 2014 (JL). No records this year.*

BYTHYNIA TENTACULATA: *Present during sampling on the following dates; 31st October and 21st November (JL).*

LYMNAEA PALUSTRIS: *Present during sampling on the following dates; 31st October and 21st November (JL).*

CRUSTACEANS.

ASELLUS AQUATICUS: *Present during sampling on the following dates; 31st October and 21st November (JL).*

GAMMARUS PULEX: *Present during sampling on the following dates; 31st October and 21st November (JL).*

INSECTS.

NEPEA CINEREA: *Last recorded 2014 (JL). No records this year.*

SIALIS LUTARIA: *Present in Castle Loch woodland during the summer (AR).*

PANORPA COMMUNIS: *Present adjacent to the Valison Burn during the summer (AR).*

PANORPA GERMANICA: *Present adjacent to the Valison Burn during the summer (AR).*

CHORTHIPPUS PARALLELUS: *Present on grassland at Castle Loch during the summer (AR).*

OMOCESTUS VIRIDULUS: *Present on grassland at Castle Loch during the summer (AR).*

CHORTHIPPUS BRUNNEUS: *Present on grassland at Castle Loch during the summer (AR).*

CALOSOMA VIOLACEUS: *Present adjacent to the Valison Burn during the summer (AR).*

STAPHYLINUS OLENS: *Present adjacent to the Valison Burn during the summer (AR).*

NICORPHORUS HUMATOR: *Present adjacent to the Valison Burn during the summer (AR).*

NICORPHORUS VESPILLO: *Present adjacent to the Valison Burn during the summer (AR).*

LIMNEPHILUS RHOMBICUS: *Last recorded 2014 (JL). No records this year.*

OTHER AQUATIC SPECIES.

POLYCELIS FELIX: *Last recorded 2014 (JL). No records this year.*

HAEMOPSIS SANGUISUGA: *Last recorded 2014 (JL). No records this year.*

LEECH: *Last recorded 2014 (JL). No records this year.*

BIRDS

RED-THROATED DIVER: *Rare winter visitor. Last recorded 12th November 1972.*

BLACK-THROATED DIVER: *Rare winter visitor. Last recorded 21st March 1984.*

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER: *Very Rare. No previous records. First record seen at Castle Loch on 17th November 2008 (CB). Seen thereafter by a number of observers until the end of the month.*

LITTLE GREBE: *Recorded most years but no evidence of breeding at Castle Loch. Maximum count: three at Castle Loch on 10th March (AR). Adult with three young at Hightae Loch on 22nd July (AR).*

GREAT CRESTED GREBE: *Regular breeder. First bred at Lochmaben in 1891. Maximum count: 6 adults on 22nd July (AR). Two broods of young seen at Castle Loch this. The decline in nest predation by mink continues but the unsettled weather presents problems during the breeding season. The return to previous population levels is taking longer than hoped. Nests may have been damaged by the summer storms and then abandoned.*

RED-NECKED GREBE: *Rare winter visitor. Last recorded 6th April 1992.*

SLAVONIAN GREBE: *Rare autumn/winter or early spring visitor. Last previous records one in October 2009 (BH) and two in November 2010.*

BLACK-NECKED GREBE: *Rare winter and summer visitor. Last recorded 6th October 1996.*

PIED-BILLED GREBE: *Rare American vagrant. One record 24-25th April 1981.*

GREAT CORMORANT: *Common resident. Last breeding records 1898-1903 (Sir Hugh Gladstone). Maximum count: 22 on 11th March (AR).*

EURASIAN BITTERN: *Rare vagrant. Unconfirmed report of four on 29th January 2006 (Birdline Scotland). Possible sighting on 6th December 2006 when a bird took off from shallow water amongst willows but was immediately lost to view (RM). Report (via TR) of a Northumbrian birder having "good views" of 2 birds in the reeds by the yacht club on 18th January 2008. Further possible sighting on 23rd June 2008 with a bird taking off from the reeds on the west side of Castle Loch but again being immediately lost to view (AR & DW). One seen on ice near the inflow of the Innerfield Burn on 24th December 2010 (AR) and again on 28th (DB). Single bird seen on 24th December 2011 (BH) and again on 27th and 28th December 2011 (BH, JH). Two birds present on 23rd December 2012 (BH). Single bird seen at Castle Loch on numerous occasions between 8th January and 5th March 2013 (BH). A single bird present on 6th and 26th December 2013 (BH). Single bird seen on a number of occasions in the Castle Wood area between 11th January and 27th February 2014 (BH). Single bird present in reeds on Lockerbie road side on 14th December 2014 (AR). Single bird present on 19th January (AR). Single bird seen briefly during count on 20th January (AR).*

LITTLE EGRET: *Rare vagrant. Last record was a single bird seen on 6th March 2011 near mouth of Valison Burn (BH).*

GREY HERON: *Regular Visitor. Maximum count: six on 9th of February and again on 6th March (AR).*

PURPLE HERON: *Rare vagrant. One record only 27th May 1975 at Hightae Loch.*

MUTE SWAN: *Regular breeder with two pairs fledging young again this year. The usual rise in numbers during the moulting period saw a maximum of 122 birds on 18th August (AR).*

BEWICK'S SWAN: *Rare winter visitor. Last recorded 20th January 1995. Three birds at Castle Loch on 15th December 2011 (BH) rising to five birds on 22nd December 2011 (BH). Five birds still present on 5th January 2012 (AR). No records in 2013 or 2014.*

WHOOPEE SWAN: *Irregular winter visitor. Numbers remain low this year. Maximum count: 22 on 19th January (AR).*

BLACK SWAN: *Rare vagrant. Last previous record of a single bird that arrived in early July 2010 and was in the area until mid-September of that year. Two birds present in sanctuary zone early on the morning of 5th March 2013 (BH). No records in 2014.*

BEAN GOOSE: *Rare winter visitor. Last recorded 23-25th February 1983.*

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE: *Formerly regular winter visitor in internationally important numbers. Sadly, although the surrounding fields are still used by some geese for feeding, the roost on Castle Loch has collapsed. Although regularly monitored during the winter season, this Ramsar site is now completely defunct. Once again this year no night time counts recorded any birds roosting. Occasional use during the daytime noted but not in any numbers.*

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: *Rare winter visitor. Last recorded 16th February 1992.*

GREYLAG GOOSE: *Once a regular visitor in nationally important numbers. One pair was resident and bred. A second pair was occasionally present with their young. Once again this visiting pair are believed to have bred on Halleaths Oxbow on the River Annan. Broods were 3 and 4. No large gatherings of post breeding birds or Icelandic birds noted on the loch again this year although considerable numbers of Icelandic birds continue to use their traditional feeding areas around Lochmaben. No birds in the roost during the official count dates. Occasional dawn counts never made double figures.*

SNOW GOOSE: *Rare winter vagrant and uncommon escapee from wildfowl collections. Last recorded 14th October 1990.*

BAR-HEADED GOOSE: *Asiatic introduction. Now feral. One record of 11 birds on two dates in August 2001 (PSh).*

CANADA GOOSE: *North American introduction, now a common UK resident. Occurs throughout the year and is an irregular breeder on the reserve. At least two pairs bred this year with two broods of 5 young seen 20th August (AR). Maximum count: 142 on 20th October (AR).*

HYBRID GEESE (GREYLAG x CANADA GOOSE): *Single hybrid seen frequently throughout 2008. Last seen on 13th February 2009 (BH).*

BRENT GOOSE: *Rare winter visitor. Last recorded 12th January 2004.*

BARNACLE GOOSE: *Occasional winter visitor. Last record was a single bird overflying on 23rd January 2013 (BH).*

COMMON SHELDUCK: *Irregular breeder, usually one or two pairs only. Last recorded breeding 2007. No signs of successful breeding on the reserve again this year. The unsettled weather is causing particular problems for this species. Maximum count: six during WeBS counts in July and November (AR).*

RUDDY SHELDUCK: *Accidental from Asia or north-west Africa, or uncommon escapee from a wildfowl collection. One record 27th April 2004 (AR).*

MANDARIN DUCK: *Escape from wildfowl collections. Only recorded once on the reserve when a single bird was present on 10th October 2013 near Lochside plantation (BH).*

EGYPTIAN GOOSE: *Introduced now feral. Single bird at Castle Loch on 1st November 2011 (BH) and seen thereafter by a number of observers.*

EURASIAN WIGEON: *Regular winter visitor, scarce in summer. Maximum count: 390 on 10th February (AR). Maximum count during the second winter period was 520 on 16th December (AR).*

AMERICAN WIGEON: *Accidental from North America or escapee from wildfowl collection. There was an unconfirmed sighting in 2003 and a single male was present between early October and mid December 2009 (BH). A single bird was present from the 22nd January until 2nd February 2010 (BH). Single male at Castle Loch 22nd November 2011 (BH). This bird remained in the area alternating between Castle and Kirk Lochs until the end of the year being seen by numerous observers. A single male was seen in a flock of Eurasian Wigeon in the Castle Wood area on 5th April 2012 (BH). A further single male was seen in Vendace Bay on the 2nd and 5th of November 2012 (both BH). No records in 2013 or this year.*

GADWALL: *Occasional winter visitor or during spring passage. Records of a maximum of six birds during both winter periods in 2014 were not maintained this year with the maximum count in the first winter period being three on the 10th February (AR). Two birds were present on the 18th November (AR). This was the only report during the second winter period. No passage bird noted again this year.*

COMMON TEAL: *Regular winter visitor. Maximum count: 290 on 20th January (AR).*

GARGANEY: *Rare summer visitor. Last previous records 15th September 1991, 3rd June 2003 5th May 2006 and a single drake seen by numerous observers between 28th February and 30th March 2008. This bird was noted to have a yellow ring on the right leg (R&BM). This and the time of its arrival (rather early for a migrant) suggest that it might not have been a wild bird. A further sighting, of probably the same bird on 16th April (JB & G Garner).*

MALLARD: *Regular throughout the year and breeds. Numbers peaking at 324 during the moult gathering on 18th August (AR).*

NORTHERN PINTAIL: *Irregular winter visitor. A single bird was present on the 20th January (AR). Two birds present on 2nd December (AR).*

NORTHERN SHOVELER: *Irregular visitor, winter and spring. Maximum count: 10 on 25th October (AR).*

RED-CRESTED POCHARD: *Rare vagrant and uncommon escapee from wildfowl collections. Last recorded 9th September 1995.*

COMMON POCHARD: *Irregular winter visitor. Numbers around their usual levels with three on 19th January during the first winter period (AR) and a maximum count of five on 20th December (DF) during the second winter period.*

TUFTED DUCK: *Present throughout the year. Maximum count: 225 on 10th February (AR). Maximum count during second winter period 189 on 18th December (AR). Two young noted on 18th August. This is the first successful breeding since the four young seen during WeBS count on 29th August 2013 (AR).*

GREATER SCAUP: *Very occasional winter visitor. Single record from Castle Loch in 2010 and six in 2013. No records in 2014. Single female present on 22nd October (JM).*

LESSER SCAUP: *Rare transatlantic vagrant. Last recorded 26th January 2004 (IA). Bird with superficial appearance of Lesser Scaup seen by a number of observers in 2008. This appears to have been a hybrid although its exact nature has not been determined.*

LONG-TAILED DUCK: *Rare winter visitor. Last previous records 24th December 1994, 6th November-15th December 2002, 23rd January 2003, 8th and 12th December 2005 and 11th January-12th April 2006. Two birds present during the latter half of February 2008 and then again from 17th November until the end of the year. In 2009 a single male was present from 14th to 28th January 2009 and a female from 15th November until 16th December. One male bird was first seen on 1st November 2010 (BH) and remained until 5th being seen by a number of observers.*

COMMON SCOTER: *Scarce visitor. Last previous record at Castle Loch on 13th March 2006 (RM). Single male present in Vendace Bay on 9th and 12th August 2013 (BH). No records in 2014.*

VELVET SCOTER: *Rare visitor. One record 18th October 2000.*

COMMON GOLDENEYE: *Regular winter visitor, sometimes remaining well into summer. Maximum count: 121 on 10th February (AR). As usual all birds had left by the end of March. The return was not as early as 2014 with the first birds recorded on 3rd October. The maximum count for the second winter period was 126 on 18th November (AR).*

SMEW: *Seen most winters in small numbers. Last previous records: three on 14th January 2009 (BH) rising to four on 5th February. Last sighting: one on 28th February. Single redhead at Castle Loch on 14th November 2010 (AR). Single female present at Castle Loch on 20th February 2011 (BH). Single female present at Dalton Road piers on 6th February 2012 (BH). Single female present in Innerfield Burn area 25th November 2013 (BH).*

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER: *Was once a fairly regular visitor in winter. Has declined substantially in recent years but probably slightly under-recorded. Record of a single male at Henderland Island, Castle Loch, on 21st April 2012 (BH). No records since.*

GOOSANDER: *Regular winter visitor. Breeds locally. Once present in sub-nationally important numbers. The increase in numbers noted in 2013 and 2014 tailed off this year with only occasional counts of over 100 birds. Maximum count during first winter period 102 on 20th January (AR). Maximum count in second winter period was 11 on 18th November (AR).*

RUDDY DUCK: *North American introduction. Occasional visitor. Last record is a pair at Castle Loch on 16th January 2006 (RM).*

RED KITE: *Rare vagrant. One record at Hightae Loch early 1990s (FSed).*

MARSH HARRIER: Scarce summer visitor. Last previous records a single on 20th May 1984 at Hightae Loch and a single at Castle Loch on 7th September 2010 (BH). Single bird quartering over the Vendace Bay reed beds on 13th August 2013 (BH).

HEN HARRIER: Scarce visitor. Last recorded 2nd March 1990.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK: Scarce local breeder. Last previous record: one flew over Castle Loch from the west, circled and then returned west on 17th March 2008 (AW).

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK: Resident, probably breeds in woodland on reserve. Seen regularly at both lochs by a variety of observers.

COMMON BUZZARD: Resident, has bred in woodland on reserve. Seen regularly at both lochs by a variety of observers. The area continues to be used by two pairs, one based in woodland to the East and the other in Castle Wood (AR). Maximum count: eight soaring on 16th September (AR).

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD: Rare winter visitor. Last recorded at Hightae Loch February 2004 (FSe).

OSPREY: Occasional on passage, spring and autumn. A single bird was seen in the Lochside Plantation area on the 8th and 9th of April 2013 and there was a further sighting of a single bird in the same area on the 9th and 10th of May 2013 (all BH). One at Castle Loch on 13th May 2014 (DF). No records this year.

KESTREL: Resident breeder. Seen regularly over sanctuary zone by a variety of observers.

MERLIN: Scarce visitor. Last recorded 8th April 2005 (but probably under-recorded).

HOBBY: Rare summer visitor. One record 17-18th July 1982.

PEREGRINE: Occasional winter visitor. Single flying over at Castle Loch on 24th February (BH). Last previous records were a single at Castle Loch on 6th September 2010 and a juvenile seen at Hightae Loch on 28th September 2011 (both BH).

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE: Sometimes reared and released in area. Single bird seen on entrance road to castle on 28th September 2012 (BH). No records in 2013 or 2014.

GREY PARTRIDGE: Declining farmland resident. Last recorded 1991.

COMMON PHEASANT: Resident breeder. Bred in Castle Wood.

WATER RAIL: Regular winter visitor but breeding has only rarely been confirmed. There were ten records in 2013, a considerable advance on 2012 in which there were only three. Numbers dropped in 2014 with only records of single birds, although they were recorded in all seasons. Single records of calling birds in all seasons again this year with 2 on 8th October, 3 on 9th October and 1 on 12th October (all PSh & SC). Once again no signs of breeding this year.

SPOTTED CRAKE: Very rare breeder in UK. Only record 26th August 2001 at Hightae Loch (PSh).

CORN CRAKE: Former resident breeder? Last recorded 1st and 2nd August 1980 (PSh and Dugald Black).

MOORHEN: *Resident breeder, in small numbers. Maximum count: 10 on 20th November (AR). Adult with three juveniles seen on 28th July (AR).*

EURASIAN COOT: *Winter visitor. Small numbers breed. Maximum count: 105 on 107th February (AR). Adult and five young seen on 28th July (AR).*

AMERICAN COOT: *Rare American vagrant. One record 10-17th February 2004 (AW).*

OYSTERCATCHER: *Irregular visitor in spring and autumn, sometimes breeds in or near reserve. A pair of birds was present in the reserve during the breeding season but once again no breeding was confirmed.*

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER: *Scarce summer visitor to Scotland. One record 18th May 1996 (RM).*

RINGED PLOVER: *Occasional passage migrant. Last recorded March and July 2005.*

GOLDEN PLOVER: *Occasional passage migrant. None on reserve since 8th September 1995. Large flocks still regular at Greenhill, near River Annan, where 650 on 5th April 2006 (PSh).*

NORTHERN LAPWING: *Irregular visitor in spring and autumn, sometimes breeding on or near the reserve. Serious decline in numbers in recent years. No breeding noted again in 2015. 74 birds overflying on 28th July (AR).*

CURLEW SANDPIPER: *Rare passage migrant. One record 8th September 1999 at Hightae Loch (RM).*

DUNLIN: *Scarce passage migrant. Seen very occasionally, last previous records 10th May 1999, 29th April and 20th July 2003 with eleven birds seen on the latter date. Single bird at Henderland Island on 28th July 2013 (BH). No records in 2014.*

RUFF: *Scarce passage migrant. Very occasional, last previous record several autumn dates in 1995. Three present at Castle Loch on the 7th September 2010 and one on the 9th September 2010 (both BH).*

JACK SNIBE: *Scarce winter visitor. Last recorded 9th March 1986.*

COMMON SNIBE: *Common passage migrant and local breeder.*

WOODCOCK: *Occasional breeder and winter visitor. Last recorded roding 27th March 1990. Single records at both lochs in March 2004. Single at Castle Loch on 23rd and 24th December 2010 (BH). Two in Castle Woods on 23rd January 2013 (BH). Single in Castle Woods on 10th November 2014 (AR). Single in Castle Woods on 10th November 2014 (AR). Single again in Castle Woods on 20th November this year (AR).*

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT: *Scarce passage migrant. Last previous record 29th August to 1st September 2005. Single in the Sanctuary Zone at Castle Loch on 7th September 2010 (BH).*

BAR-TAILED GODWIT: *Scarce passage migrant. Last recorded 21st October 1983.*

WHIMBREL: *Scarce passage migrant. Last recorded 9th May 2006 (RM).*

CURLEW: *Regular passage migrant, sometimes in large numbers in spring. Breeds locally.*

SPOTTED REDSHANK: *Uncommon passage migrant. Last recorded 26th August 2001 (PSh).*

COMMON REDSHANK: *Irregular visitor to the reserve, usually in spring. Last records singles on 13th March 2006 and 13th July 2006 (RM).*

COMMON GREENSHANK: *Uncommon passage migrant. Last recorded 2nd-3rd September 2005.*

GREEN SANDPIPER: *Uncommon passage migrant. Two records of single birds on 21st October 1994 and 14th September 2013 (BH). No records in 2014.*

WOOD SANDPIPER: *Rare passage migrant. Last record 3rd September 2005.*

COMMON SANDPIPER: *Uncommon passage migrant, local breeder. An adult with three juveniles was present in Sanctuary Zone on 3rd July 2013 (BH) and this suggested breeding within the reserve. No records in 2014*

ARCTIC SKUA: *Rare passage migrant. Last recorded 8th October 1995.*

GREAT SKUA: *Rare passage migrant. Last recorded 27th April 1999.*

LITTLE GULL: *Scarce passage migrant. Last previous record 20th March 2004. Single in gull roost on 27th February 2014 (BH). No records in 2015.*

BLACK-HEADED GULL: *Common winter visitor; breeds locally. Maximum daytime count: 94 (AR). Winter roost remains irregular with numbers lower this year. Maximum count of 9,250 on 21st November (AR).*

MEDITERRANEAN GULL: *Rare vagrant. Only previous records: One bird on 15th March 2003 (Birdguides). At least one bird present in Castle Loch roost between 24th January and 12th March 2013 with two birds confirmed on the 3rd and 11th February 2013 and three on 14th February 2013. Two birds in the roost during the second winter period on 28th and 29th December 2013 (all BH). A single bird seen in the roost on each occasion it was checked in 2014 with two birds present on 19th February (BH). No records in 2015.*

COMMON GULL: *Mainly a winter visitor. The decline in numbers in winter roost which is now dominated by Black-headed Gulls, continued this year. Maximum count 120 on 21st November (AR).*

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL: *Most birds migrate south in winter. Usually at least one or two birds present throughout the year. Maximum count: 48 resting on Castle Loch on 7th October (PSh).*

HERRING GULL: *Seen regularly in small numbers in day time. Breeds locally. Present in roost. Maximum count in roost 100 on 21st November (AR).*

GLAUCOUS GULL: *Rare winter visitor. Last previous records 25th February 1974 and 11th January 1984 and first winter bird at Castle Loch 17 November 2008 (CB).*

ICELAND GULL: *Rare winter visitor. One record 25th February 1974.*

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL: *Scarce local resident, seen occasionally. Last previous records 40 in gull roost on 29th December 2013 (BH). Two seen in gull roost on 21st November 2015 (AR).*

KITTIWAKE: *Rare visitor. Last previous record 10th-15th January 1984. Two birds passed through on 19th February 2014 (BH).*

COMMON TERN: *Occasional on passage. Last recorded 19th August 2001, 26th August 2003 and 8-10 October 2006.*

ARCTIC TERN: *Occasional on passage. Last previous records singles on 26th September 2003 and 12th August 2011 (BH). Two at the Lochside Cottage area of Castle Loch on 3rd May 2012 (BH).*

BLACK TERN: *Fairly frequent on spring and autumn passage, most often seen second week of May to first week of June, and late August to early September. Last records 7th September 1998, a single at north end of Castle Loch from 8th –10th October 2006 (SG, RM) one at Castle Loch 16th May 2009 (BH) and other observers. A single bird was seen near the Lockerbie road on 8th September 2010 (BH).*

SANDWICH TERN: *Rare visitor. One record only 6th September 1973.*

COMMON GUILLEMOT: *Rare vagrant. Last recorded 26th December 1987 (two birds).*

LITTLE AUK: *Rare vagrant. Last recorded mid to late 1980s.*

ROCK DOVE/FERAL PIGEON: *Common local resident in and around farms and towns. Occasional visitor to reserve.*

STOCK DOVE: *Resident breeder.*

WOOD PIGEON: *Regular breeder in the woods at both lochs.*

COLLARED DOVE: *Common local resident in and around farms and towns.*

COMMON CUCKOO: *Scarce summer visitor. Last recorded 10th May 2002.*

BARN OWL: *Scarce visitor, former breeder. Last previous record was a bird seen daytime flying in Castle Loch Woodland on 29th July 2013 (BH). Single bird seen over Sanctuary Zone field on 18th November (AR).*

TAWNY OWL: *Resident regular breeder.*

LONG-EARED OWL: *Irregular visitor. Last recorded at Hightae Loch 28th October 1978 (PSh).*

SHORT-EARED OWL: *Rare visitor. Last recorded 28th November 1985.*

COMMON SWIFT: *Common summer visitor, breeds in Lochmaben. Maximum count 69 hawking over Castle Loch on 28th June (AR).*

COMMON KINGFISHER: *Regular visitor, breeds locally. Maximum records this year two birds seen by several observers on a number of occasions. Once again no records of young.*

EUROPEAN GREEN WOODPECKER: *Scarce resident locally. Last recorded 31st May 1984.*

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER: *Resident regular breeder.*

EURASIAN SKYLARK: *Irregular visitor. Last record 3 on 13th June 2011 (AR).*

SAND MARTIN: *Regular visitor in spring and summer: breeds in banks of River Annan and at Applegarthtown Wildlife Sanctuary. First record of 16 on 9th April (AR). Maximum count: 220 on 21st April (AR).*

BARN SWALLOW: *Summer visitor, breeds locally.*

HOUSE MARTIN: *Summer visitor, breeds locally.*

TREE PIPIT: *Scarce summer visitor.*

MEADOW PIPIT: *Irregular visitor. No recent breeding records for the reserve. Last recorded 2003.*

YELLOW WAGTAIL: *Rare summer visitor. Last recorded 25th September 1981.*

GREY WAGTAIL: *Common local resident but irregular visitor to the reserve.*

PIED WAGTAIL: *Irregular visitor and breeder. Confirmed breeding for the fifth consecutive year. Two adults with four young seen at Bowling Club Car Park on several occasions in June (AR).*

WHITE WAGTAIL: *Last recorded 28th April 1995.*

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: *Irregular, rare winter visitor. Last previous record 15 by Lochmaben Kirk on 17th November 2008.*

WREN: *Present throughout the year and breeds at both sites. Breeding confirmed from five sites at Castle Loch and two sites at Hightae Loch.*

DUNNOCK: *Present throughout the year and breeds at both sites.*

ROBIN: *Present throughout the year and breeds at both sites. Young seen at both sites.*

COMMON REDSTART: *Scarce summer visitor and occasional breeder on the reserve. A pair present in Castle Woods on 9th May 2013 (BH). No records in 2014.*

WHINCHAT: *Scarce summer visitor. Last recorded 10th May 1982.*

COMMON STONECHAT: *Scarce local resident. No record for the reserve.*

NORTHERN WHEATEAR: *Occasional passage migrant. Last recorded 2nd June 1991.*

BLACKBIRD: *Resident throughout the year and breeds at both sites.*

FIELDFARE: *Regular autumn and winter visitor.*

SONG THRUSH: *Present throughout the year and breeds at both sites.*

REDWING: *Regular autumn and winter visitor. Maximum count 8 on 28th November (AR).*

MISTLE THRUSH: *Recorded in most years, breeds locally. No 2001 or 2002 records. A few records in 2003, 2004 and 2005. No reports for 2006, 2007 or 2008. Maximum count of three in 2010. Single singing in Castle Wood 2011. Single seen in Castle Wood in 2012. Three seen in boardwalk area on 21st September 2013 (BH). Pair present in Castle Wood in May/June 2014 but no proof of breeding found. Seen in Castle Wood on a number of occasions during, and outwith the 2015 breeding season, but once again no proof of breeding found.*

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER: *Summer visitor and irregular breeder. Last recorded on two spring dates in 1997.*

SEDGE WARBLER: *Summer visitor and regular breeder at both lochs. Breeding confirmed for one sites at Castle Loch and one site at Hightae Loch.*

REED WARBLER: *Summer visitor and recent breeder. Breeding confirmed for three sites this year.*

COMMON WHITETHROAT: *Scarce summer visitor. Last recorded 12th August 1996 and 19th May 2013 (BH).*

GARDEN WARBLER: *Summer visitor and breeder. No breeding confirmed this year.*

BLACKCAP: *Summer visitor and breeder. Breeding confirmed at two sites.*

WOOD WARBLER: *Scarce summer visitor. Occasional in spring. Last recorded 25th July and 5th August 2003.*

CHIFFCHAFF: *Regular spring and autumn migrant, occasional breeder. Confirmed breeding at two sites at Castle Loch and one site at Hightae Loch this year.*

WILLOW WARBLER: *Summer visitor and regular breeder. Breeding confirmed for three sites at Castle Loch and two sites at Hightae Loch.*

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER: *Scarce autumn visitor to Western Europe. A single bird, probably the same individual, was seen on three occasions in October 2013. These are the only records from the reserve.*

GOLDCREST: *Present throughout the year and confirmed breeder at both sites.*

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER: *Irregular summer visitor and occasional breeder. Last previous records: single at Castle Loch 25th August 2006 (RM), three at Castle Loch on 4th June 2009 (MG) and single at Hightae Loch on 13th May 2009 (JM).*

PIED FLYCATCHER: *Scarce summer visitor. Last recorded 9th August 1993.*

LONG-TAILED TIT: *Resident and breeds at Castle Loch. Maximum count 28 on 28th November (AR).*

WILLOW TIT: *Resident and regular breeder. The Willow Tit (*Poecile montana*) is a scarce resident of Dumfries & Galloway, very close to the northern boundary of its range. In 2011 an annual survey was started at Castle Loch to monitor success and failure of breeding. Published studies have suggested that Willow Tit nest site preferences are for standing dead wood of between 2-4m in height, within an area of developed understorey and high soil water content. Because of this, locating suitable points within the narrow bands of woodland around Castle Loch is not a particularly difficult task. The methodology has been explained in previous reports but I explain it again here for those who are seeing a Castle Loch report for the first time. The technique is a simplified form of that used by Lewis et al 2009^l. The woodland strips to the west, south and east of the loch are walked in the early morning on several days of suitable weather during the period from 1st to 30th April. A recorded call is used at regular points 200m apart. The call is sounded for two minutes or until a bird responds, whichever is the sooner. When a bird responds, its location (ten figure grid reference) and the direction from which it came, are carefully recorded. All spontaneous calls and sightings are also recorded. Once territories are established they are monitored regularly during the breeding season to establish the success or failure of the breeding attempt. Five factors are monitored where possible although time constraints and other factors mean that it is unusual to be able to record all five for each particular territory. Although records of singing males*

were maintained this year only three successful broods were recorded. Some areas where this bird has previously bred successfully now experience much more frequent use by humans and dogs.

- 1) *Singing male*
- 2) *Female present*
- 3) *Nest building*
- 4) *Adults with food or faecal sacs.*
- 5) *Fledged young*

The maximum number of territories held at the start of the 2011 season was eight. The table below shows the results for the years 2011 to 2015.

Factors	Territories	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	2011	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	2012	X	X	X	X		X	X	
	2013	X	X	X	X	X		X	
	2014	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	2015	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
2	2011	X	X	X	X			X	
	2012		X						
	2013								
	2014		X		X		X	X	
	2015	X	X	X	X		X		
3	2011	X			X	X		X	
	2012		X						
	2013								
	2014		X		X	X		X	
	2015	X	X	X	X		X		
4	2011		X			X			
	2012		X						
	2013							X	
	2014		X					X	
	2015			X	X		X		
5	2011	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	2012	X		X		X	X	X	
	2013		X	X	X			X	
	2014		X	X	X			X	
	2015			X	X		X		

¹ Lewis, Alex J. G., Amar, Arjun, Daniells, Laura, Charman, Elisabeth C., Grice, Phil and Smith, Ken (2009) 'Factors influencing patch occupancy and within-patch habitat use in an apparently stable population of Willow Tits *Poecile montanus kleinschmidti* in Britain', *Bird Study*, 56:3,326 — 337

COAL TIT: *Present throughout the year and breeds at both sites.*

BLUE TIT: *Present throughout the year and breeds at both sites.*

GREAT TIT: *Present throughout the year and breeds at both sites.*

EURASIAN NUTHATCH: *Increasingly numerous resident in Dumfries and Galloway, having spread westwards from Cumbria and the Scottish Borders during the 1990s. First reserve record near the castle on 21st April 2003 (PSed). Single birds seen at a number of locations within woodland around both lochs (AR). Two birds seen at Castle Loch on 27th July and 20th December (both DF). No signs of breeding so far.*

COMMON TREECREEPER: *Present throughout the year and breeds at both sites.*

JAY: *Resident and confirmed breeder this year.*

MAGPIE: *Rare vagrant. Last recorded 24th March 1978.*

JACKDAW: *Resident breeder, supplemented by larger numbers coming to winter roost.*

ROOK: *Sporadic resident breeder supplemented by larger numbers coming to winter roost.*

CARRION CROW: *Resident breeder supplemented by larger numbers coming to winter roost.*

HOODED CROW: *Last recorded 1981.*

COMMON RAVEN: *Occasional visitor. Last previous record two birds overflying 2nd October 2008 and one on 25th December 2011. Two birds overflying on 4th January 2013 (BH). Two over Vendace Bay on 19th February 2014 (BH) and a single bird overflying on 13th October 2014 (AR). No sightings this year.*

COMMON STARLING: *Winter visitor and local breeder. The roost in the reeds around Vendace Bay reduced again this year. This seems to correspond with a general reduction in overwintering starlings in Dumfriesshire. The huge roost at Gretna was very much smaller this year. Maximum count: 1,100 on 28th November (AR).*

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING: *Rare Eurasian vagrant. One record late October 2003.*

HOUSE SPARROW: *Common resident in Lochmaben and at surrounding farms. Irregularly recorded on reserve. Maximum count 16 near Vendace Cottage on 28th November (AR).*

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW: *Scarce and declining resident on local farmland. Last record 1984.*

COMMON CHAFFINCH: *Present throughout the year and breeds at both sites.*

BRAMBLING: *Irregular winter visitor. Only a single record of two birds at feeders near Vendace Cottage on 28th November (AR).*

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH: *Present throughout the year, probably breeds. The slow increase in numbers seems to have stalled this year.*

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH: *Occasional visitor. Probably breeds in some years. Maximum count: six adults on 27th July (DF).*

EURASIAN SISKIN: *Winter visitor and passage migrant. Maximum count: 11 on 28th November (AR).*

EUROPEAN LINNET: *Scarce resident locally. Last recorded 30th August and 29th December 2003.*

LESSER REDPOLL: *Resident in wider vicinity, irregular on the reserve. Seven on 13th December 2013 (BH). No records in 2014*

COMMON CROSSBILL: *Irregular visitor. Probable breeder in conifer forests in vicinity. Last recorded 27th May 2003.*

EURASIAN BULLFINCH: *Irregular. May breed occasionally.*

YELLOWHAMMER: *Used to be a regular resident breeder. Last recorded 2003.*

COMMON REED BUNTING: *Regular resident breeder. Breeding confirmed for three sites again this year.*

CORN BUNTING: *Rare visitor (and now extremely rare resident in D&G). Recorded 26th February and 6th May 1978 at Castle Loch and at Hightae Loch on 2nd February 1980 (all records PSh).*
