

# Numbers of swans and ducks in Britain, 1980–1981

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Six species were recorded at record levels in 1980–1981: Bewick's Swan, with two-thirds on the Ouse Washes; Gadwall, a large proportion of which are originally of feral stock; Teal, with a quarter on the Mersey estuary; Tufted Duck; Goosander, for which the Beaulieu Firth is the only regularly important estuary; and Ruddy Duck, still most abundant in western England, but which has increased greatly since the 1978–1979 hard winter forced many into new areas.

Mallard have apparently recovered after a decrease during the 1970's. The decline in Scaup resulted from the disappearance of the huge flock in the Firth of Forth off Edinburgh, following the modernization of the city's sewage system. In the north of the firth, and elsewhere, the numbers have hardly changed. The reduction in Goldeneye was for the same reason, but on a much smaller scale. They were less dependent on the Edinburgh outfalls, and have increased at many other resorts. The 1975–

1979 average for Smew was affected by the hard weather influx of 1978–1979; a maximum of 50 has been usual since the decline which took place in the 1960's.

The four sites with the highest total for wildfowl in any one month were: the Mersey estuary; the Wash; Lindisfarne; and the Ouse Washes. This is the same four as in the previous winter, though in a different order.

At the time of going to press it had not yet been possible to analyse the wildfowl counts for 1981–1982. Preliminary indications suggest that during the two unusually severe spells in mid-December and early January there was a smaller influx of continental birds than in the last hard winter, 1978–1979. There were considerable local movements, however, largely to utilize the extensive floods which followed both thaws, and ringing has shown the usual exodus of Teal to western France during the coldest weather.

## Total numbers of swans and ducks counted in Britain, 1980–1981.

	Maxima 1980–1981		Highest single count	Av. max 1975–1976– 1979–1980
Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	7,450	J	Chesil Fleet (1,238 D)	6,187
Bewick's Swan <i>C. columbianus</i>	4,680	J	Ouse Washes (2,995 D)	3,501
Whooper Swan <i>C. cygnus</i>	2,320	N	Loch Eye, Highland (405 O)	2,044
Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	65,020	J	The Wash (19,010 J)	53,454
Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	176,390	J	Lindisfarne (30,000 N)	163,805
Gadwall <i>A. strepera</i>	3,130	N	Gunton Park, Norf. (503 O)	1,661
Teal <i>A. crecca</i>	89,030	J	Mersey estuary (25,850 F)	66,225
Mallard <i>A. platyrhynchos</i>	165,920	J	Humber estuary (6,430 J)	139,234
Pintail <i>A. acuta</i>	23,090	F	Mersey estuary (18,450 N)	17,981
Shoveler <i>A. clypeata</i>	6,340	N	K.G.VI resr., Surrey (488 S)	6,235
Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	39,440	J	L. of Stenness, Orkney (2,250 J)	36,251
Tufted Duck <i>A. fuligula</i>	50,900	J	L. Leven. Tayside (4,273 S)	40,169
Scaup <i>A. marina</i>	4,030	D	Firth of Forth (2,837 D)	7,077
Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	9,390	J	Firth of Forth (2,578 D)	9,403
Smew <i>Mergus albeola</i>	50	J/F	Dungeness, Kent (17 F)	88
Red-breasted Merganser <i>M. serrator</i>	2,800	O	Beaulieu Firth (2,250 D)	2,320
Goosander <i>M. merganser</i>	2,560	D	Beaulieu Firth (1,550 D)	1,706
Ruddy Duck <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	1,570	F	Blithfield resr., Staffs (630 J)	648