

Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve

The Lindisfarne Wildfowling Management Group Report 2022/2023



Chris Rose 23

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

This report represents a comprehensive review of the work undertaken by the Lindisfarne Wildfowling Management Group (LWMG) over the past year, including wardening work undertaken by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) under contract to Natural England (NE).

This report contains information on the use of the reserve by wildfowling over the 2022-23 season, all bag return details, incident reports, wildfowl peak count data and records of permit uptake and returns.

The report also contains the views of those managing wildfowling on the site and suggestions for future improvements.

Chapter 2 - Season summary

Season overview.

Shaun McWilliams undertook his first year as the Lindisfarne NNR wildfowling warden. He was well supported by permit holders, BASC, NE, and individually by Colin Teago ensuring a seamless transition. A total of 379 wildfowling visits were monitored by the warden and only one incident recorded, this was quickly and professionally dealt with at the time by the warden and no further action was required.

New for 2022/23 season was the addition of bag spot checks, 49 were completed and recorded as part of the wardening duties, the bag was 100 per cent accurate against the submitted bag returns at the end of the season, however there were some discrepancies with the number of shots fired.

BASC trailed a new approach for first time permit holders. This ensured each new permit holder had an in-depth understanding of wildfowling law, legislation, best practice, quarry identification, and any Lindisfarne specific requirements. This program was a resounding success and will be developed further ahead of the 2023/24 season.

On 14 December 2022, due to a widespread sub-zero temperatures, BASC called for all shooters in the UK to exercise voluntary restraint in the shooting of ducks, geese, and waders wherever it was required. The situation on the ground wasn't concerning with plenty of open water and thawed feeding areas available. It was therefore deemed appropriate to allow permit holders to make their own mind up based on the conditions at the time. **The call for restraint was relaxed on the 21st December** following three consecutive days of thaw.

Avian influenza was identified again during the 2022/23 season, with a barnacle goose and a pink-footed goose found, and both testing positive for the H5N1 virus. Surveys and carcass removal continued throughout the season, but numbers affected were low and subsequently no further actions were required.

Count summary 2022/23 (Warden counts are just the shooting zones, WeBS includes the whole NNR inc. Budle Bay)

Wigeon

The Warden Peak count was 19,000, this was recorded in Oct 22, however the WeBS peak count was less at 16,431, and again recorded in Oct 22. The 2022 counts are down from the previous year where 23,000 were recorded in Oct 21. Due to the mild settled weather, it is thought that there was a protracted migration, so the peak counts were fewer but overall, the numbers were good.

Pink-footed

The Warden Peak count was 11,700, this was recorded in Oct 22, however the WeBS peak count was just 553 in Feb 23. This is down from 10,000 counted in Oct 21. The geese were here but it goes to show the importance of the warden counts to tell the full story with WeBS being a snapshot in time.

Greylag

The Warden Peak count was 400, this was recorded in Dec 22, however the WeBS peak count was less at 331, but recorded in Sep 22. This is up from 7 counted in Oct 21. This increase in abundance was also reflected in the Greylag bag totals. This increase is associated with a UK breeding population and not migratory Icelandic's.

Brent

The Warden Peak count was 3,900, this was recorded in Oct 22, however the WeBS peak count was less at 2,850, but recorded in Sep 2022. This is down from 3,500 in Oct 2021.

Permit review

- 111 wildfowling permits were issued, which is the lowest number to date. 106 were 'full' permits and 5 complimentary.
- 18 of the 106 were 'new' permit holders and all attended an online training session delivered by BASC, then met the wildfowling warden prior to their first outing on the reserve.
- Of the 111 permits issued, 101 permit holders visited the reserve during the 22/23 season.
- 92 permits (91 per cent of the 101) were checked at least once by the Wildfowling Warden.

Visit and bag return summary.

- 524 visits were made by permit holders to the reserve for the purpose of wildfowling.
- 280 visits resulted in a blank flight (no quarry taken), and on 193 of those blank flights no shots were fired.
- 31 permit holders submitted 'nil' returns (no quarry taken).
- 735 birds were shot: Wigeon 65 per cent (476), Teal 14 per cent (106), and Pink-footed geese 9 per cent (67) of the total bag.
- Zone 12 was the most visited shooting area with 134 visits and unsurprisingly recorded the largest bag return of 199 birds.
- October was the most visited month coinciding with peak counts for most species, and February was the least visited month, both of which are consistent with previous seasons.

Punt summary

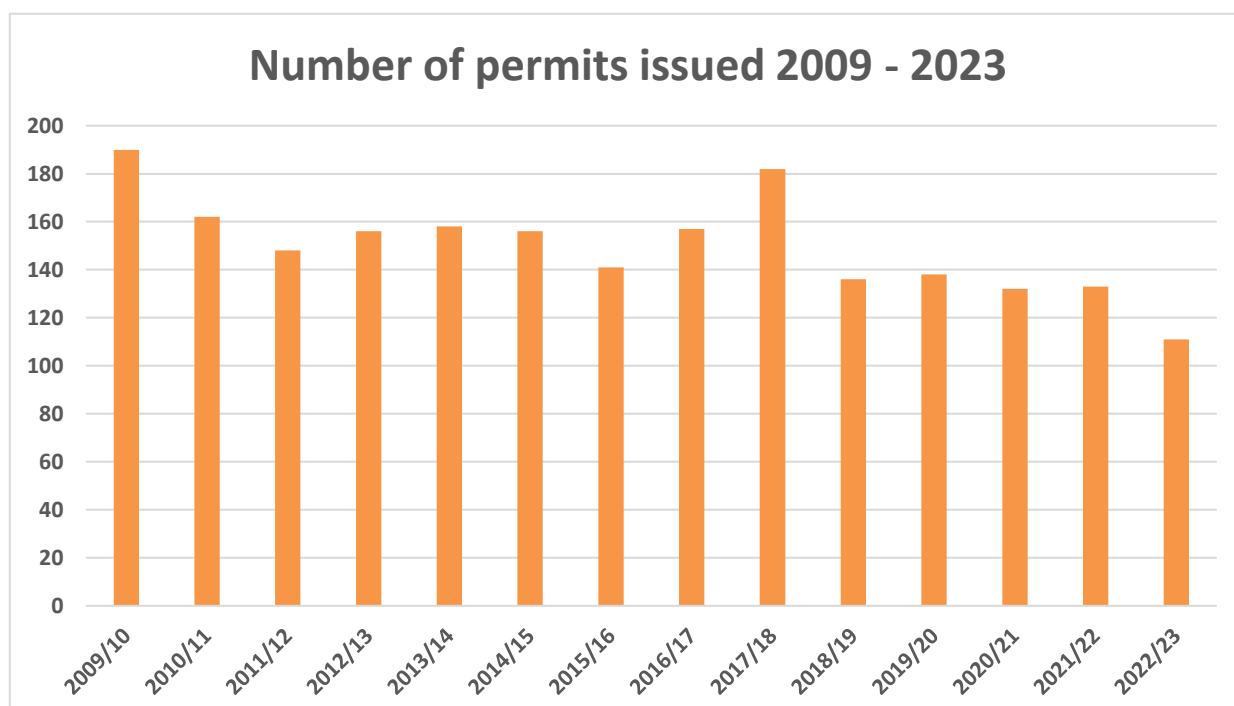
- There was a total of eight punt visits, six in October, and two in November.
- Two shots were fired, totaling 51 wigeon harvested.

Chapter 3 - Permits issued

Seasonal permits were issued on a block basis by the BASC wildfowl and wetlands team via application to Beal Station.

Number of permits issued:

GROUP	ALLOCATION	NO. ISSUED
Northumberland & Durham Wildfowlers' Association (NDWA)	100	(Number issued included in LWMG total below)
Holy Island	40	7
Lindisfarne Wildfowl Management Group (LWMG)	200	99
Punt National	4	(4)
Punt Holy Island	4	(1)
Complimentary	10	5
Introductory	8	0
TOTAL	216	111



Number of permits returned 2022/23:

Season	No. issued	No. returned on time	No. returned late	No. not returned
22/23	111	103	8	0
21/22	133	116	14	2
20/21	132	120	12	0
19/20	137	125	12	0
18/19	134	129	5	0
17/18	183	178	5	0
16/17	155	155	0	0
15/16	142	142	0	0
14/15	153	148	0	5
13/14	157	157	0	0
12/13	153	149	0	4
11/12	148	131	0	17

There were eight late returns for the 2022-23 season. Permit holders were contacted by the wildfowling warden, the reasons for the late return discussed and the conditions of the permit reiterated. After the initial conversations and careful consideration, the warden took no further action. However, any repeated offences will not be looked upon so leniently. The eight late returns were received within five days after the deadline.

The number of permits issued has dropped from 133 in 2021 – 2022 to 111. This is a significant drop compared to the gradual decline over previous seasons.

Previous permit holders were contacted by the BASC wildfowling advisor and the reasons for not taking a permit was investigated. Of those, 18 responded, and the top three reasons for not renewing were:

- Concern about avian influenza.
- The loss of shooting at the north end.
- The increased cost of travel / fuel or accommodation.

Example of the 2022/2023 permit - front cover

<p>RESTRICTIONS & CONDITIONS</p> <p>You must abide by the current restrictions and conditions supplied with this permit.</p> <p>Your completed bag return must be returned by 7 March 2023 to: Lindisfarne Warden, Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, Beal Station, Beal, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2PB</p> <p>Beal Office: 01289 381 470 Warden: 07831 306 720</p> <p>ENSURE YOU ARE AWARE OF THE CHANGES TO THE SHOOTING ZONE PRIOR TO YOUR FIRST VISIT</p> <p>WHT Stamp 2022/23 Red Deer on Arran by David Parry</p> <p>The purchase of the Wildlife Habitat Trust's Habitat Conservation Stamp is a vital contribution to funds that are spent buying and managing land for the joint benefit of conservation and shooting.</p> <p>www.wht.org.uk</p>  	<p>Lindisfarne Wildfowl Management Group (LWMG) Acting on behalf of Natural England</p>	<p>WILDFOWL PERMIT</p> <p>Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve Northumberland</p> <p>PERMIT TO SHOOT 2022/2023 Valid from 1 September 2022 to 20 February 2023 MUST BE CARRIED AT ALL TIMES</p> <p>Signature: _____</p> <p>Permit No.: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>Issued by BASC in their capacity as members of the LWMG. Supported by Northumberland and Durham Wildfowling Association, together with Newcastle Wildfowling.</p>
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Example of the 2022/2023 permit – back cover

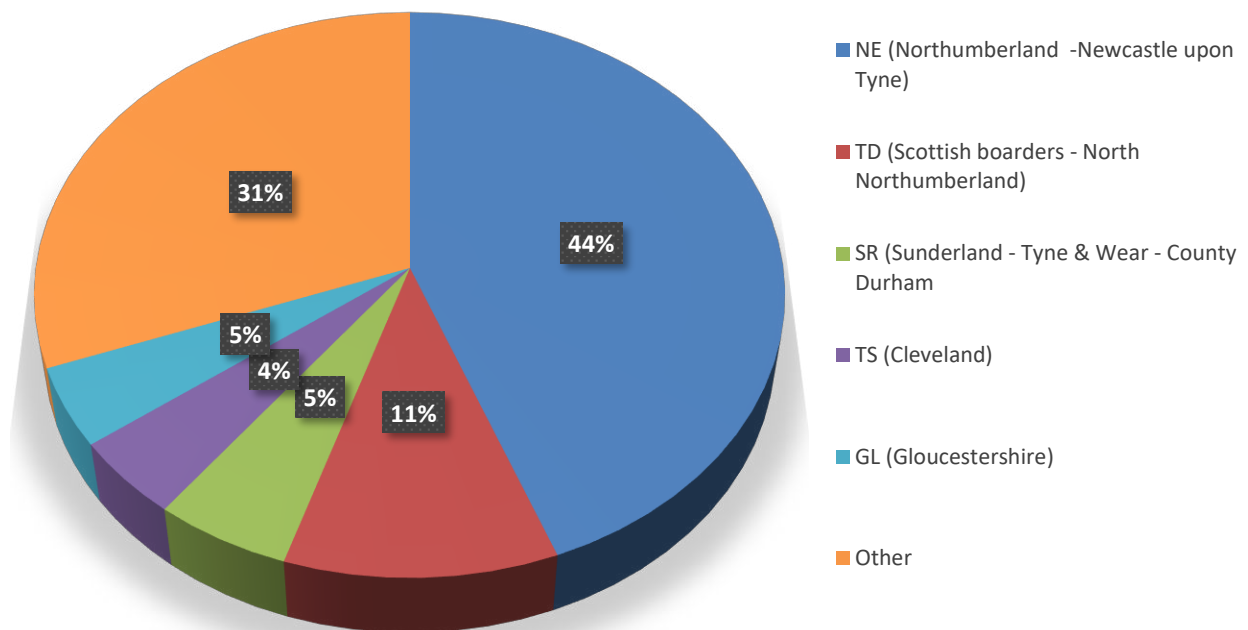


Left: The **no shooting zone** is clearly identified within the 2022/2023 permit application pack, to ensure all permit holders understood the new restrictions.

Any rules and booking-in amendments will also be agreed and incorporated for the coming season.

Chapter 4 – Permit usage

Permits Issued By Postcode



Chapter 5 – Bag return information

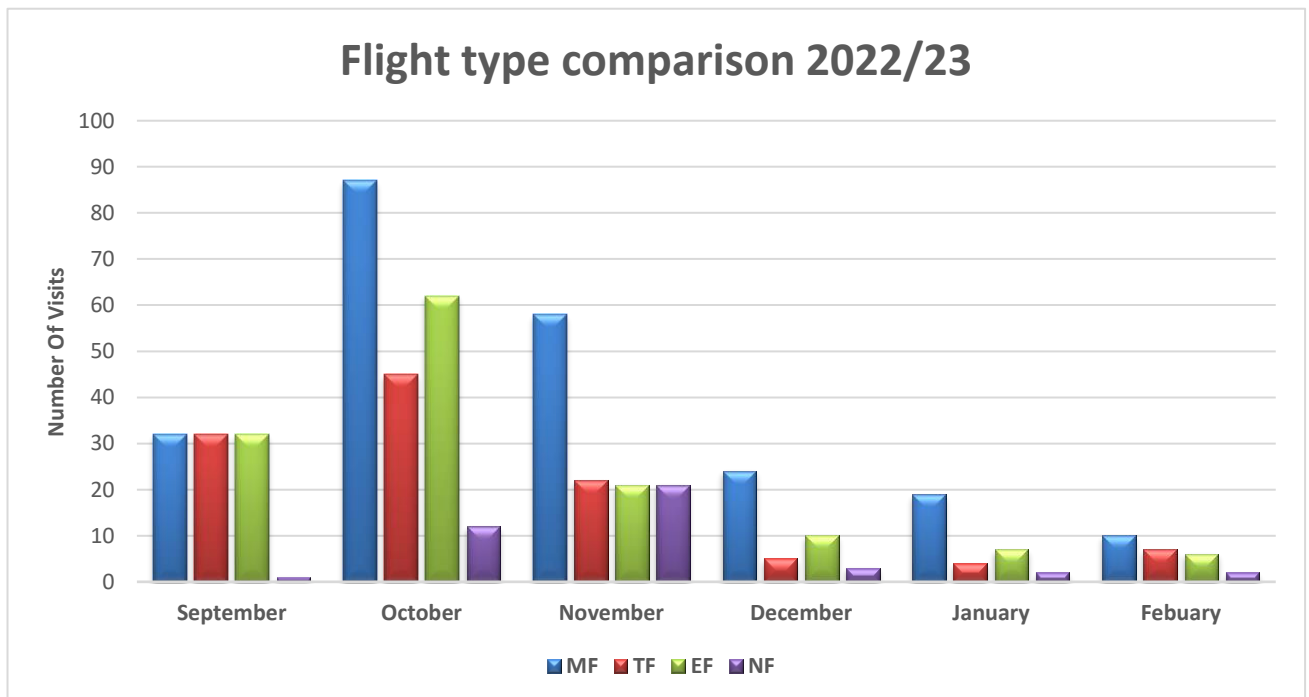
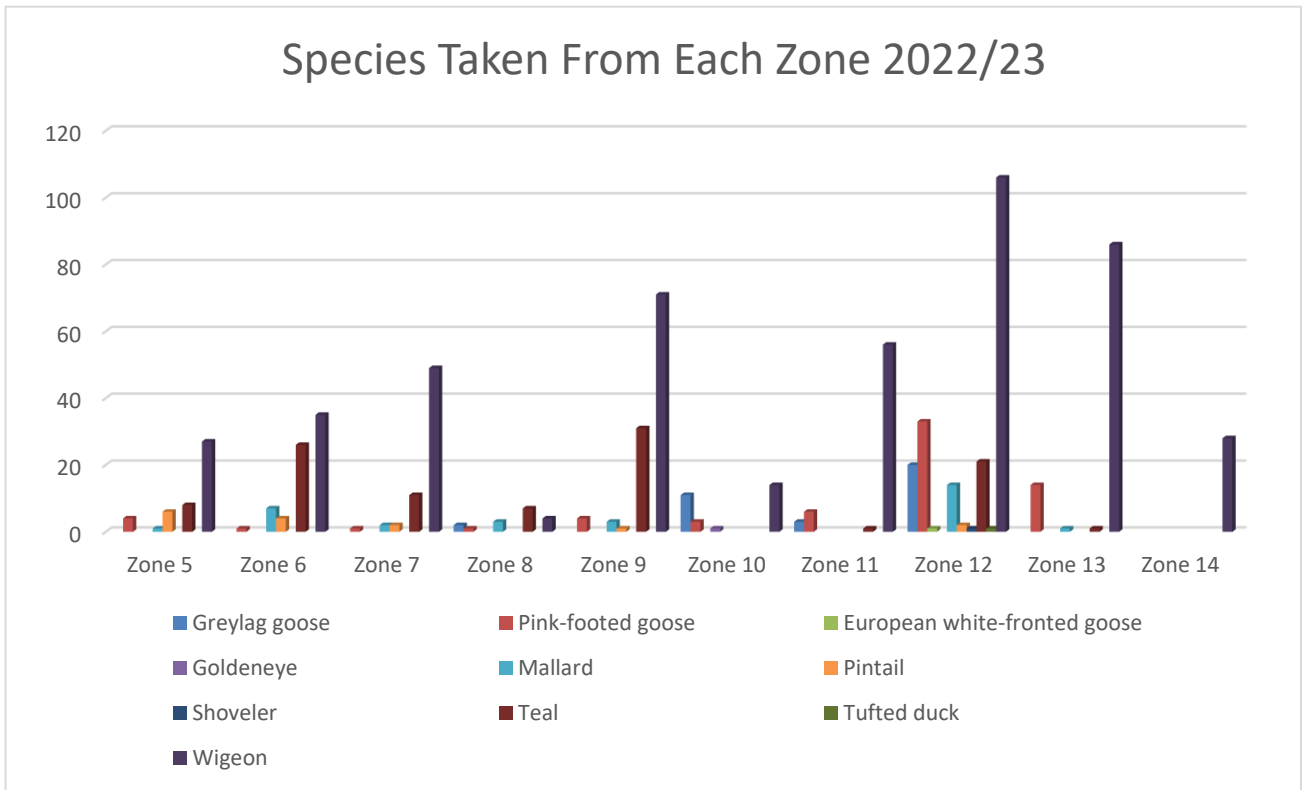
Breakdown of area visits and birds taken:

2022/23 season					2021/22 season				
Zone no.	Visits	Total birds	Avg quarry per visit	per cent of total visits	Zone no.	Visits	Total birds	Avg quarry per visit	per cent of total visits
5	63	46	0.73	12.02	5	64	51	0.797	13.28
6	73	73	1	13.93	6	83	59	0.711	17.22
7	53	65	1.226	10.11	7	53	49	0.925	11
8	21	17	0.81	4.01	8	18	14	0.778	3.73
9	55	110	2	10.5	9	36	101	2.806	7.47
10	29	29	1	5.53	10	24	22	0.917	4.98
11	26	66	2.538	4.96	11	27	25	0.926	4.98
12	134	199	1.485	25.57	12	113	112	0.991	23.44
13	60	102	1.7	11.45	13	62	105	1.694	12.86
14	10	28	2.8	1.91	14	2	0	0	0.41

The table above shows a breakdown of visits, birds taken, average birds per visit and overall visits per zone over the entire National Nature Reserve (NNR) for the past two seasons. This data is key to understanding how wildfowlers use the site. Permit holders are now fully aware of the parking procedures on the causeway and the area is being used with confidence, as can be seen by the visit increase to zone 12, which is accessed from the causeway. There seems to be a relatively broad distribution of visits to zones 5/6/7/9 and 13, as there are good parking options to allow for tide flighting. (i.e., not being forced to leave by an incoming tide due to parking area flooding). There has been a minor drop in visits to zone 6; however, those who did use this zone had better results than last season. Zone 14 is mainly used by punt gunners. The majority of zones are showing an increase in the average number of quarry taken per visit, with zones 11 and 12 standing out.



Below shows a breakdown of the species taken in visits from each zone. Zones 9, 12 and 13 have been the most successful for wigeon, with zone 12 being the most successful for pink feet and greylag. Zones 6 & 9 gave the best results for teal. The remaining areas and species were evenly distributed.



MF Morning flight

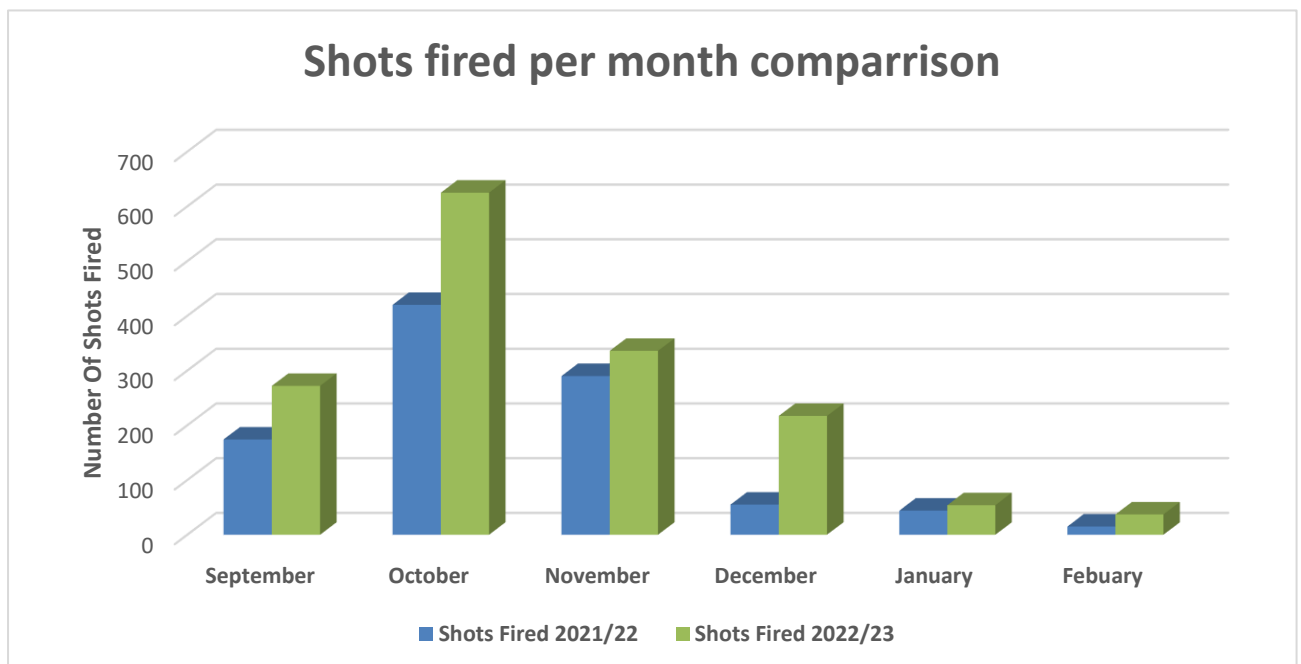
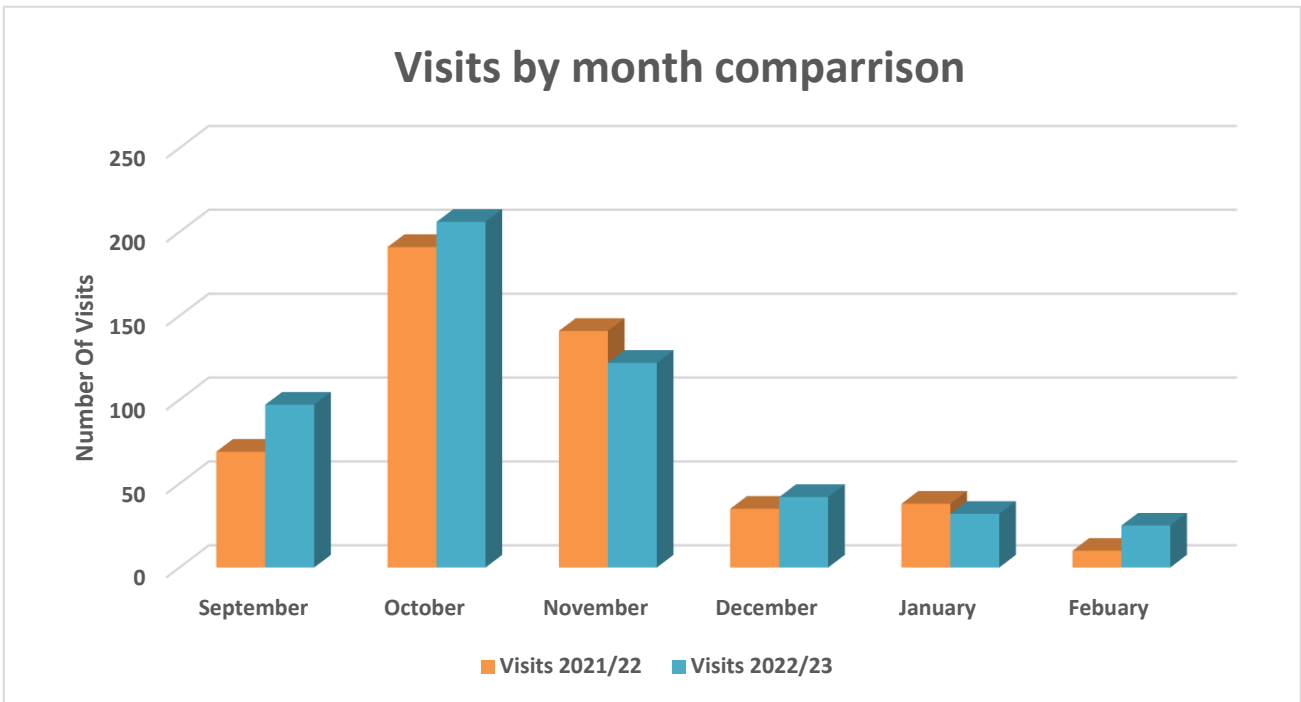
TF Tide flight

EF Evening flight

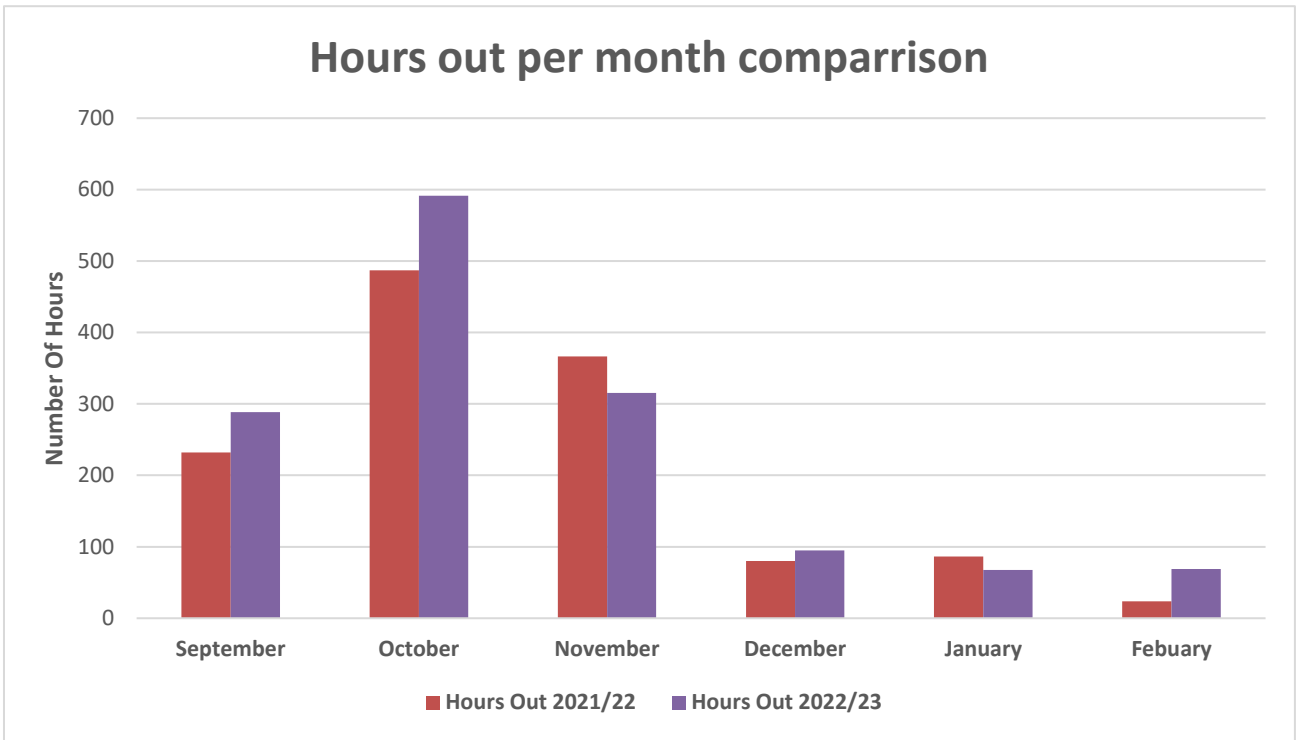
NF Night flight

The pattern of flight preference is consistent with other areas around the country. Morning flight tends to be most productive as bird movement often lasts longer and the light is increasing, providing more time for the traveling wildfowler. Whereas at evening flight the light fades, reducing visibility more quickly and making egress off the site and quarry retrieval more difficult.

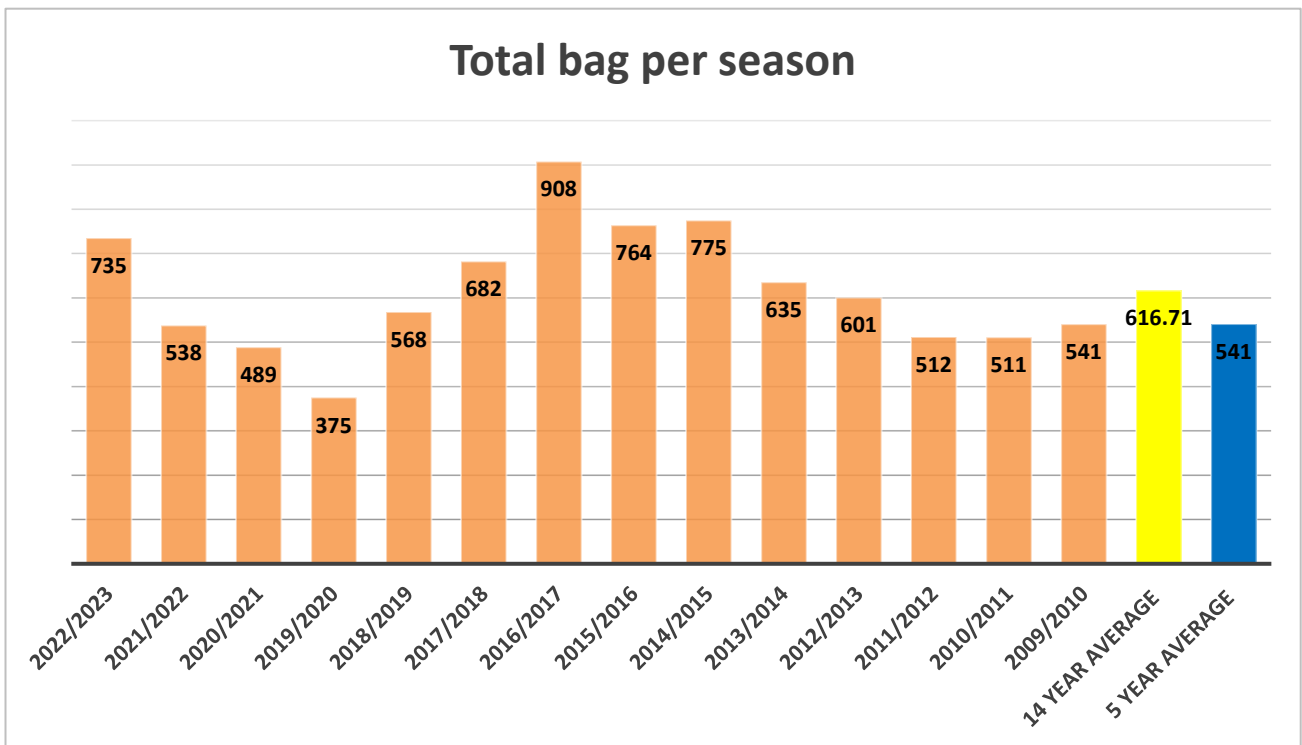
As can be seen below, 206 permit visits were undertaken in October, up from 191 visits in the previous October; the number of visits clearly correlates with the peak bird counts. The quietest month was once again February with 25 visits.



The number of shots taken was up in the 2022-23 season on all months compared to 2021-22.



The number of hours wildfowlers spent on the reserve in the 2022-23 season was up in all months except for December. There were 591.25 hours of visit time recorded in October.

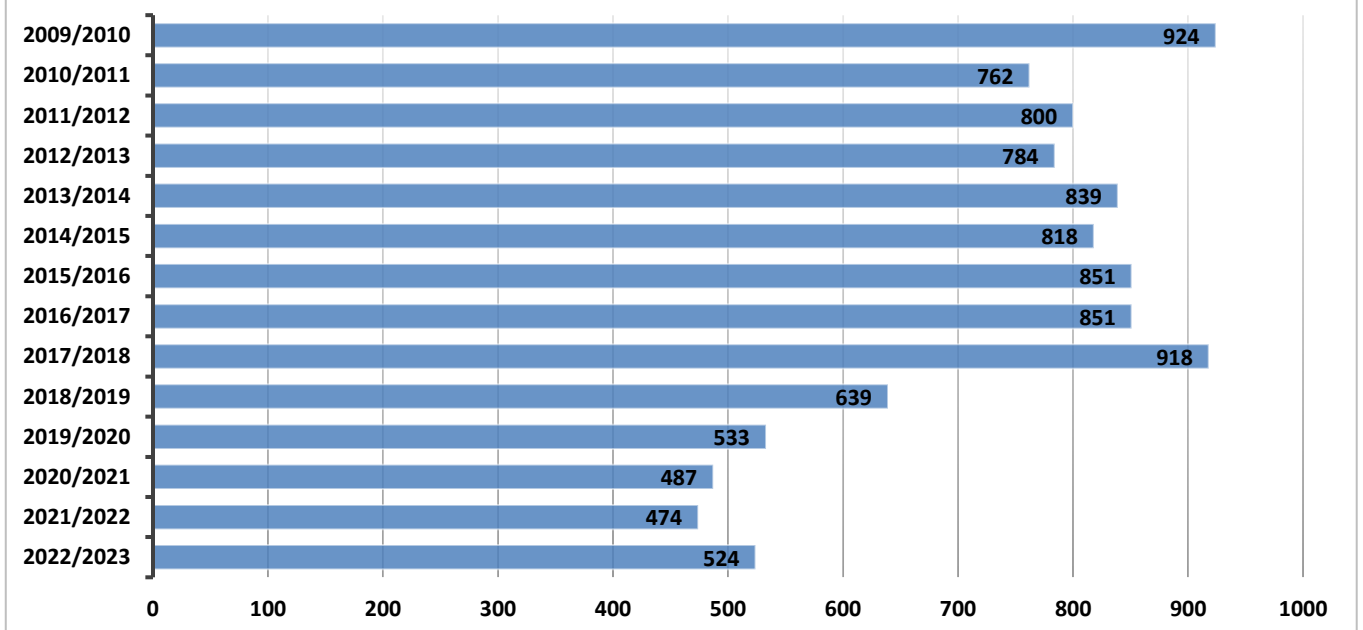


As can be seen from the graph above, 2022-23 was a successful season, with a total bag of 735 birds, higher than in the previous six seasons, with the total number above both the 5-year and 14-year average

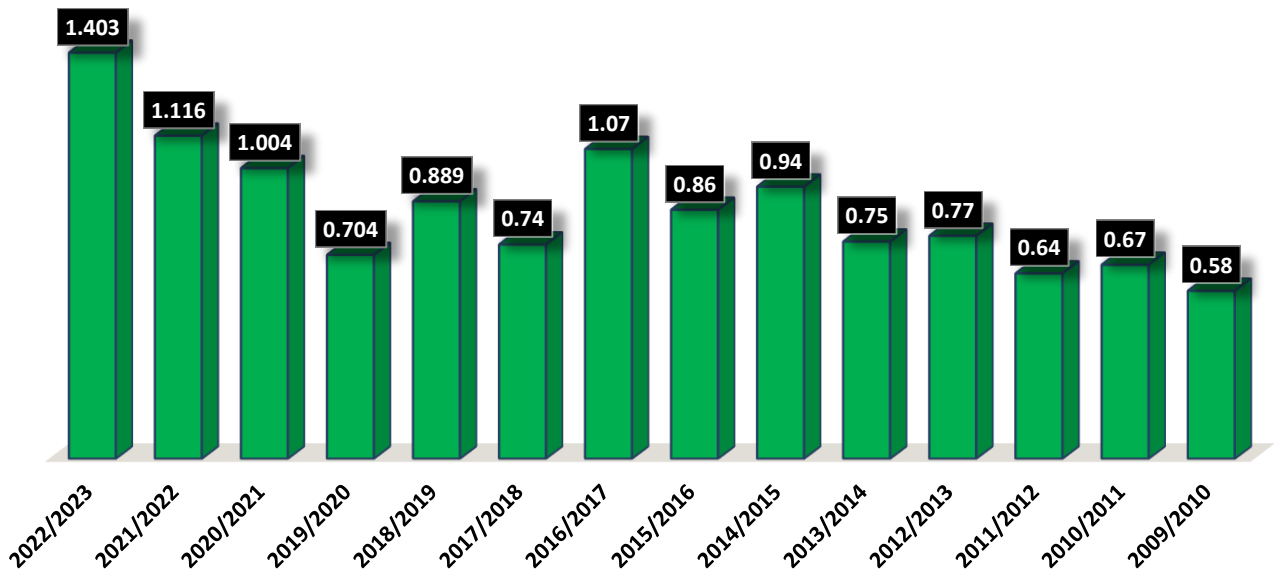
Bag breakdown 2022/23 season

01/09/2022 – 20/02/2023		per cent of overall bag
Canada goose		
Greylag goose	36	4.9
Pink-footed goose	67	9.12
European white-fronted goose	1	0.14
Coot		
Gadwall		
Goldeneye	1	0.14
Mallard	31	4.22
Moorhen		
Pintail	15	2.04
Pochard		
Shoveler	1	0.14
Teal	106	14.42
Tufted duck	1	0.14
Wigeon	476	64.76
Common snipe		
Golden plover		
Woodcock		
Total birds	735	
Total visits	524	
Individual visitors	99	
Visits without quarry	280	
Average quarry per visit	1.403	
Visits per km2 during the wildfowling season (173 days)	0.092057572	

Number of visits per season



Average quarry per visit



Although the number of permits issued is at an all-time low, the number of visits was up on the previous two seasons, as was the total hours spent on the reserve. Those venturing out benefitted from better shooting with the best quarry per visit ratio in the past 14 years. This could be in part due to only those who are particularly keen and efficient making the effort to get out, also increasing their visits and hours spent shooting, or there may be other reasons at play. We will continue to monitor this.

Key Points:

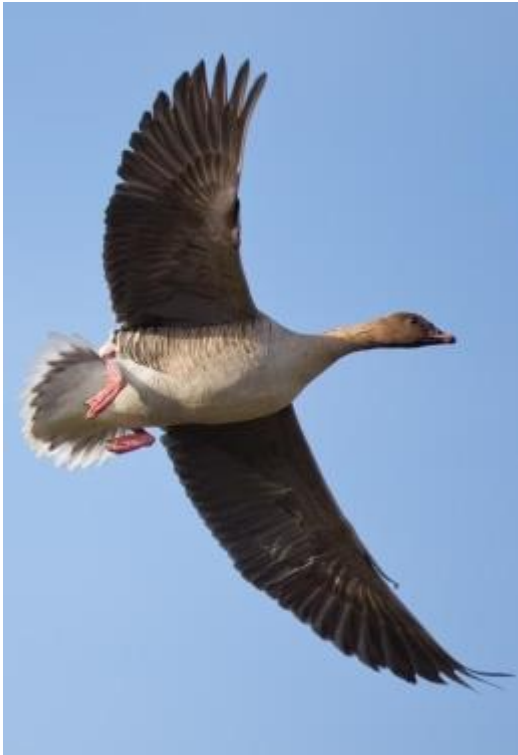
- There were 524 total visits by permit holders to the reserve for the purpose of wildfowling.
- Of these 524 visits, 280 visits resulted in blank flights (no quarry taken)
- 193 visits no shots were taken.
- 31 permit holders who visited the reserve submitted blank returns (no quarry taken over the 2022-23 season).

Punt bag composition 2022/2023 season

Month	No. of visits	Shots	No. of wigeon	Other birds
Oct	6	1	28	0
Nov	2	1	23	0

The punt permit scheme allows a total of eight permits to be issued every year. There are four issued nationally and four to Holy Island residents. Punt returns show five puntsmen took permits - four national and one Holy islander. Four puntsmen took the opportunity to visit Lindisfarne this season. On two occasions punts were not launched due to high winds.

The overall composition of the two main quarry species shot at Lindisfarne (wigeon and pink-footed goose) remains consistent with previous seasons.



Pink-footed geese	Bag composition
2022/23...67	9 per cent
2021/22...60	11 per cent
2020/21...90	18 per cent
2019/20...97	26 per cent
2018/19...108	16 per cent
2017/18...72	12 per cent

The visiting pink-footed goose population increased from a peak count of 10,000 birds last season to 11,700 in October of this season. This number of birds is the highest count in the previous ten years. High counts of 6,000 pink-feet in January and 5,000 in February shows that the birds used the reserve all winter.

The number of pink-feet harvested this season is up on last season from 60 birds to 67. However, the number of pink-feet harvested as a percentage of the total bag shows a downward trend.



Wigeon	Bag Composition
2022/23...476	65 per cent
2021/22...376	69 per cent
2020/21...343	70 per cent
2019/20...213	57 per cent
2018/19...377	66 per cent
2017/18...413	60 per cent

Peak wigeon counts decreased this season to 19,000, down from 23,000 birds recorded last October. However, there was a continued presence of good numbers of wigeon throughout the season, suggesting the visiting population was continuously 'topped up' as birds came

into the reserve over a protracted period. It is possible that the higher temperatures on the continent help retain birds which may have historically migrated earlier.

As mentioned in previous annual reports, it is very clear that the number of birds harvested each season fluctuates in line with site trend data as expected for both pink-footed geese and wigeon. Wigeon continue to make up most of the total bag at 65 per cent.

Chapter 6 - Wildfowl counts

The table below shows wildfowl counts for the 2022-23 season. The wildfowling warden conducted the counts at least twice weekly. The counts concentrated on gaining accurate peak counts for all species but focused on wigeon, pink-footed geese and brent geese.

Canada geese were not included in the twice weekly counts as the number of birds using the reserve remains low and local numbers in the area have remained stable, with no increase to be worried about. We will continue to monitor the area population.

The warden peak counts often differ from the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) counts because of the higher frequency of counting (WeBS is monthly) and is therefore a more sensitive measure of actual birds using the NNR. The NNR coordinated WeBS counts cover the whole NNR (In addition to Holy Island Sands & Fenham Flats, Goswick Sands, North Shore, Ross Sands, Holy Island and Budle Bay).

Wildfowl warden peak counts of quarry species 2022/2023

	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB
WIGEON	8,400	19,000	17,000	3,800	1,500	1,350
TEAL	160	160	160	240	220	260
MALLARD	12	45	15	24	6	9
GREYLAG	43	95	65	400	200	180
PINK-FOOTED	4,800	11,700	2,500	6,000	6,000	5,000
PINTAIL	47	90	130	150	200	210

As per the usual trend, October saw the peak migration for wigeon and pink-feet but a return migration peak in February for teal and pintail. Mallard numbers also peaked in October. greylag numbers are up from 140 last year to 400 birds this season.

Wildfowl warden peak counts of non-quarry species 2022/2023

	SEPT	OCT	Nov	DEC	JAN	FEB
BRENT	3500	3,900	3,500	2,200	1,300	1,300
WHOOPER	0	24	45	54	34	34
BARNACLE	600	2,600	1,500	1,300	1,000	750

October saw the peak counts for brent and barnacle while whooper numbers peaked in December.

Peak WeBS counts for Lindisfarne NNR in 2022/2023

SPECIES	BIRD COUNT	PEAK MONTH
Wigeon	16431	OCT
Teal	505	OCT
Mallard	95	JAN
Greylag	331	SEP
Pink-foot	553	FEB
Light-bellied brent	2850	SEP
Pintail	276	FEB
Barnacle	2850	OCT

Chapter 7 – Severe weather and waterfowl shooting

On **14 December 2022**, due to a widespread of severe weather, BASC called for all shooters in the UK to exercise voluntary restraint, wherever it was needed, in the shooting of ducks, geese and waders.

The call for such restraint was, for the first time in history, applied across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales at the same time. This was following seven consecutive frozen days across the UK. The species affected were geese, wild duck, released duck, woodcock, snipe, golden plover, coot, and moorhen.

The call for voluntary restraint continues to apply until three consecutive thaw days or until a statutory suspension is enacted following 14 days of severe weather.

On **21 December**, following a break in the freezing weather conditions, BASC lifted its call for restraint in the shooting of waterfowl in the UK.

The decision was made following three consecutive thaw days across the UK, allowing for the ground to unfreeze and feeding and roosting opportunities to open back up for waterfowl.

For further information about the severe weather' protocol, please click the links below or visit the BASC website.

[Waterfowl shooting and severe weather – voluntary restraint](#)

[Waterfowl shooting and severe weather – statutory suspension](#)

Chapter 8 - The wildfowling warden

7.1 Warden's duties

This season saw an enhanced role for the wildfowling warden as he was employed from 1 August to issue the allocation of permits from the Beal Natural England Office. The warden was also retained after the close of the season until 24 March to enter bag returns and assist with the development of the LWMG Annual Report. This is the first time the whole process has been done in such a linear way. It is felt that this oversight not only oversees the whole process but allows for a more streamlined service for all stakeholders.

Once the season was underway, wardening duties continued to include monitoring wildfowling activity, at least twice weekly bird counts, assisting with WeBS counts, monitoring bait-digging activity, and recording other disturbances on the reserve. The monitoring of wildfowling activity included locations, numbers of shots fired, birds retrieved, and time spent on the reserve. These duties were carried out in addition to routine work, such as checking permits, bag checks, ammunition checks and providing advice and information to wildfowling, meeting and briefing new wildfowling visitors to the reserve. As the warden is on the reserve, the role involves dealing with the public and educating them not only about wildfowling but the general interest of the site for nature conservation. Shaun has also been involved in avian influenza monitoring as well.

7.2 The warden's routine for policing wildfowling

The warden's routine involved checking wildfowl and permits and monitoring activity at Beal, Fenham Mill and Fenham-le-Moor access points. Wildfowlers were also observed from nearby vantage points. Following the morning flight, bag numbers were checked and recorded in the Warden's monthly reports. The same routine was repeated for evening flight. The warden also monitored wildfowlers decoying at tide flights from suitable vantage points around the reserve.

During the full moon period, the warden followed his regular routine returning to the marsh between 8.30pm and 11pm to check permits of 'fowlers remaining on the reserve. The warden had a responsibility to monitor and record incidents and take any appropriate action.

7.3 Use of the reserve by wildfowlers

As in previous seasons, September to November were the busiest months for wildfowling, with Fenham-le-Moor and Beal being the most popular areas.

7.4 Wildfowling reports

The wildfowling warden continued to submit comprehensive monthly reports throughout the duration of the 2022-23 season. Any incidents and permit checks are logged along with bag checks, plus the bird count data observed within this report. Mid and end of season reports are also delivered by the warden at the LWMG meetings.

Number of permits checked and monitoring visits by the warden – 2022-2023 season.

	Permit checks - total no.	Monitored visits
September	33	83
October	42	160
November	13	82
December	3	29
January	0	11
February	1	14
Total	92	379

The checking of permits remains a vital function of the warden. It allows him to check wildfowlers that are entitled to shoot on the site; make a note of any infringements and highlight any unlawful shooting. In addition to this it allows him to better assist the wildfowler with any queries they have on access and parking. Three access points are covered by the warden throughout the season. The Causeway, Fenham-le-Moor and Fenham Mill. These are the only vehicle routes and parking that can be used to access the shoreline in the shooting zones.

Number of bag checks monitored and recorded by the warden – 2022/2023 season.

	No. of recorded bag checks	Compliance on submitted return*
September	0**	N/A
October	21	100 per cent
November	17	100 per cent
December	6	100 per cent
January	1	100 per cent
February	4	100 per cent
Total	49	100 per cent

* The on-site recorded bag check is then followed up on the submitted bag return, checking both the number of birds taken and the species taken.

** Recorded bag checks not implemented until the October monthly report.

Wildfowling warden's observations (Shaun McWilliams).

My first season started amid a flurry of queries and concerns regarding avian influenza. Given that there were significant outbreaks on the Farne Islands throughout the spring and summer breeding season, this is of no surprise. However, these concerns were put to rest with the pragmatic approach being taken by Natural England on the reserve. The incidence of AI was monitored continuously throughout the season with regular shore walks and any carcasses found were collected up and reported to Natural England. There was an incident on 22 February where five dead geese floated in on the high tide at Beal North Shore, but thankfully this was the only case I saw where multiple carcasses were observed.

Wigeon were slow to build up through September, but bird numbers increased into October with the peak count of 19,000 at the end of the month. This high count was below recent years where 23,000 were counted in both October 2022 and October 2023. Initial thoughts were that AI may have affected the breeding population. However, with some basic research it became evident that temperatures had held up on the continent right throughout October and there may not have been the big jumps of birds as in previous years. What was noticeable this year is that wigeon remained on the reserve in good numbers right throughout the season. This may have been due to a drip-feed of birds coming over in smaller groups and therefore topping up the visiting population on a regular basis. There were still 1,100 wigeon on the reserve on the last day of the season.

Pink-feet arrived on 1 September following a period of strong north-westerly winds which brought the vanguard of pinks down along with good numbers of brent geese. By the start of October there were 9,000 pink feet geese using the Holy Island north shore roost and this number rose to a peak count of 11,700 by 11 October. The main flock then broke into four roosts, Holy Island north shore, Holy Island Sands, the Sandrig – north to Goswick, and Ross Sands. Again, pink-feet numbers held up throughout the season with 5,000 still using the reserve on 12 February.

Teal were on the flats early in the season, with just short of 100 birds being counted 6 September, rising to 160 on 10 September. This may have been down to the very dry summer where ditches and ponds had generally dried up, causing the teal to find other areas to frequent. However, the high count of teal was on 16 December following a period of cold weather, with 240 birds counted. Teal were regularly observed on the Rocket Field and flying into the Island Lough at dusk. Shoveler were also seen on the Rocket Field.

Pintail numbers built up throughout the latter part of the season, with counts of up to 200 birds in January and February; the pintail were regularly observed grouped together off Teal Hole Point and Harvey's Island.

This season saw a good presence of greylag on the reserve, albeit a rather transient population; their numbers peaked on 16 December, with 400 birds counted off. The greys tended to stick to one area of roost, which was on the flats just off the Cages and the Blacks; most birds departed their roost heading north over Beal, Goswick and heading towards Haggerston.

Small numbers of brent geese were on the reserve from 1 September, with numbers quickly building to 3,500 by the middle of September. The high count of brent was between 23-28 October, when 3,900 birds were counted on the reserve. Barnacle geese turned up on 19 September and mainly remained at the south end, where they flighted between Elwick and Budle Bay. There were 2,600 birds in late October. Barnacle geese could be heard beyond the north end, but it was difficult to get an accurate count. Whooper swans did not arrive until mid-October and quickly settled into a routine of using the rape fields behind the Beal Cast.

Weather this year was again variable with large temperature swings, some winter days above 8°C and then a prolonged period of cold weather. Thankfully we did not get the Atlantic storms as in previous years. As mentioned above, the temperature on the continent held up throughout September and October and as such seems to have influenced the wigeon migration. Obviously, this is my own observation and would need thorough scientific investigation before any conclusions can be drawn.

The winter saw a steady stream of visitors to the Island, the causeway being in constant use. There were several incidences of drone use over the flats, but most people were understanding when talked to about the importance of protecting the bird roosts. There is obvious fascination regarding the incoming tide, with many visitors taking the opportunity to exercise dogs both north and south of the causeway.

All in all an enjoyable first season, with great support from Colin Teago, the wildfowl and wetlands team at BASC and Natural England. It was a pleasure meeting the wildfowlers, all of whom were welcoming and supportive.

Lindisfarne wildfowlers' plastic pick 2022/2023

Sadly, the litter pick was not arranged for this season.

Chapter 9 – Natural England – wildfowling season weather review

Overall, the September to February period was characterised by being very dry, following on from a very dry summer. The temperatures throughout winter were average but with a couple of notable cold spells, particularly from early to mid-December.

There were a few windy days but nothing exceptional – in fact the Met Office has yet to name a storm during the 22-23 season for the first time since naming storms in 2015-16. The weather data used for this report is from a weather station managed by Natural England located on Holy Island.

Temperature

The most notable cold spell happened in December. For nine consecutive days the reserve experienced temperatures below 0 Celsius.

The winds were generally from the north-west and not out of the east, so the reserve didn't experience significant snowfall, but it was so cold that ice was freely forming on the causeway and many of the paths were covered in a thick sheet of ice for over a week.

The cold temperatures peaked on 13 December when the temperature bottomed out at -7.4 Celsius early in the morning, making it the coldest temperature recorded on Lindisfarne NNR in 2022.

The temperature then didn't exceed 0 Celsius all day making it the first 'frozen day' since the weather station was installed in November 2021. Another of our weather stations located roughly 5 miles inland recorded 11 consecutive days below 0 and generally a much deeper cold reaching -8.1 Celsius on 13th December and 2 consecutive ice days.

All inland scrapes and ponds were frozen for many days.

Outside of this cold spell the temperature remained average or even slightly above at times.

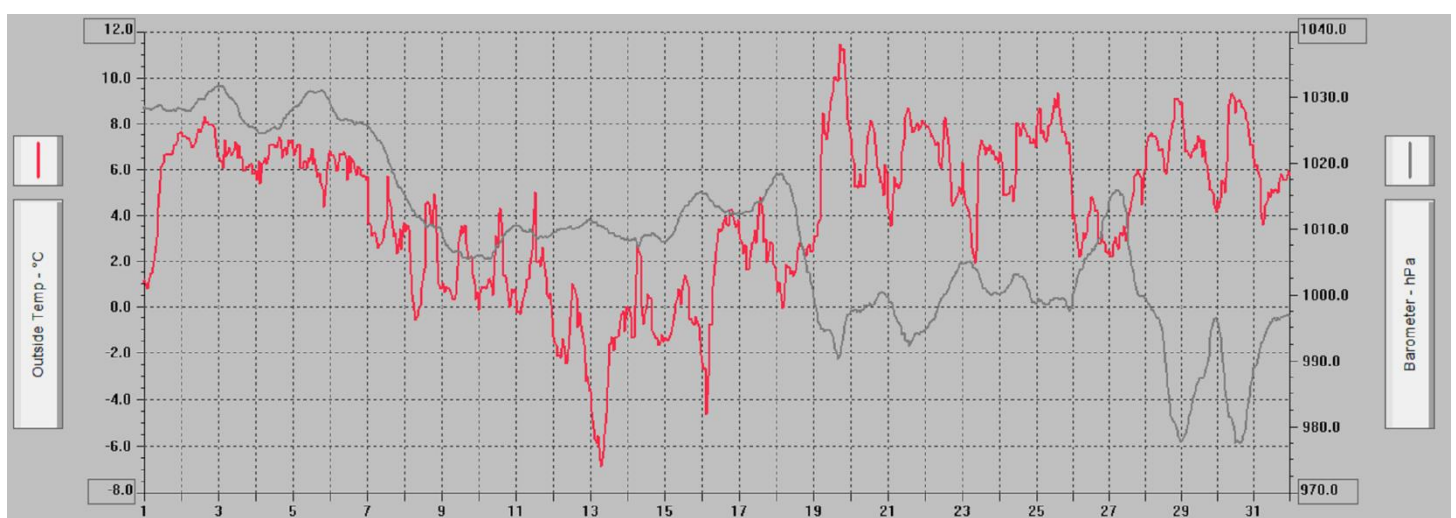


Figure 3: December temperature (Red) and barometer trace (Grey)

Rainfall

The wildfowling season got off to a wet start with 80mm of rainfall. This had followed a very dry summer. However, this wet spell was short-lived, as every month thereafter was drier than average and the drought actually intensified as we entered 2023, with only half the expected rainfall for both January and February.

High pressure has not been very far away during 2023, with the pressure peaking at 1046mb on 5 February. While this is not record-breaking, it is a very notable strong high pressure and has made it hard for any Atlantic weather fronts to progress, resulting in them being pushed over or under the UK and leaving us very dry.

Rainfall (mm)	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
Boulmer 30yr average	55.5	68.4	77.6	62.1	58	43.9	365.5
Lindisfarne NNR	80	45.4	70.2	52.2	26.4	27.1	301.3

Wind

Wind has been predominantly west/ north-westerly throughout the winter. Even during the cold spell, a north westerly wind was present, creating a bitter wind but very little in the way of the heavy snow that normally accompanies these cold temperatures when the wind sets up in the east.

High pressure has often been present to the west and north-westerly side, preventing any vicious Atlantic storms taking hold. It has also meant that Lindisfarne NNR was on the cold northerly airflow associated with being on the eastern side of a high pressure in the winter months.

While it has been breezy at times, there have been no major windstorms and we have enjoyed long periods of relatively slack winds for the time of year.

Chapter 10 - Lindisfarne Wildfowling Management Group - members' views of the season 2023/2023

Andrew Craggs - Natural England LNNR senior reserve manager

Avian influenza was identified again during the season, with a barnacle goose and a pink-footed goose both testing positive. Surveys and carcass removal continued throughout the season. During the grey goose roost count on 7 October, 11,060 pinks were recorded on Goswick Sands. Budle Bay remains the stronghold for both teal and mallard.

A project to formally document high tide roosts commenced at the south of the NNR, with plans to further develop this in the coming seasons.

We welcomed Shaun McWilliams as the new wildfowling warden – thanks again for your sterling work.

Northumberland & Durham Wildfowlers' Association – president Colin Teago

This past season started along the same lines as seasons past, with birds building up from September. Some of the diehard members were out on the 1st but most were waiting till later on in the season.

Bird numbers built up steadily, with what appeared to be huge influxes of birds but a steady trickle. This was also the same when they left. As a result, members were making a bag right through Christmas.

With geese taking over in the new year, geese did their usual disappearing act, being on the reserve in good numbers then away i land making use of the moon and flood water in the Tweed area. However, members did make bags of geese as well particularly at the north end of the reserve.

We did get some good seasonal weather, with strong winds, sleet and snow adding to an enjoyable season. Our thanks must go to the warden, BASC's wildfowl and wetlands team and NE for their work over the season.

Puntgunning – Holy Islander Colin Teago

Punting this season was totally influenced by the weather, with puntsmen on the shore waiting for the weather to change, sometimes gambling with the weather hoping to get a shot.

Of the eight trips taken, only two shots were made. Everybody enjoyed their days at least and hopefully will get some good conditions next season.

Northeast Joint Council of Wildfowling Clubs – Kenn Ball

Due to unforeseen individual circumstances, there is no report from Mr Ball.

BASC head of wildfowl and wetlands – James Green

The Lindisfarne permit scheme continues to go from strength to strength and should be seen as an exemplary model for the delivery of a sustainable wildfowling scheme. I am delighted with how the two new members of staff have supported each other to deliver a fantastic season with many positive changes implemented this year and more in the pipeline.

The new Lindisfarne wildfowling warden, Shaun McWilliams, has adapted to the role like a duck to water. Carrying on seamlessly from where Colin Teago left off, he quickly built a positive relationship with colleagues and demanded respect from the permit holders. He has proven to be a real asset to the scheme.

Chris Wright, the new BASC wildfowling advisor, has brought several new ideas, the induction process for new permit holders being a great example. He facilitated a dedicated online training session covering all aspects of law, legislation, best practice, and safety. All new permit holders were also required to meet with the warden ahead of their first visit to the reserve to ensure they were familiar with the reserve and were going to be positive ambassadors for wildfowling on the NNR. These additional steps have been positively received.

In the build-up to the season, it was very apparent that the uncertainty of avian influenza and its potential impact was causing real concern. It was clear there was nothing anyone could do other than to keep a close eye on proceedings and to be prepared. As the months went by, there were only a handful of findings and thankfully for the reserve and the wildlife that depend on it, the impact remained very low, and they remained isolated cases.

We are delighted with the proactive and positive working relationship that continues to be developed between BASC and Natural England and we look forward to building on this further in years to come.

Chapter 11 – Statement of accounts for wildfowl wardening scheme

August 2022 - March 2023

Income	£		Expenditure	£
Permit sales:			BASC contract	9,930
81@ £75	6,075		Stamp payment	555
17@ £90	1,530		Mobile phone	BASC no charge
7@ £65	455		Printing of permits	BASC no charge
5@ comp	0		Printing of annual report	BASC no charge
Subtotal: permits			Vehicle - fuel	NE no charge
			Vehicle - lease	NE no charge
			Vehicle - repairs	NE no charge
Total	8,060		Total	10,485
Total expenditure	10,485			
Less income	8,060			
Additional contributions by Natural England	2,425			