Duck Nest Monitoring Project

Annual Report 2025



Waterfowlers' Network

BASC

Project overview

The duck nest monitoring project, run in collaboration with the Waterfowlers' Network, aims to improve waterfowl breeding success by installing and monitoring artificial duck nest structures across the flyway. By collecting consistent data on nest occupancy and hatching success, we can evaluate how artificial nests contribute to waterfowl productivity and broader waterfowl conservation.

Mallard and other ground-nesting waterfowl are vulnerable to harsh weather, predation and disturbance, all of which affect breeding success. Breeding mallard populations in the UK have declined since the early 2000s, and low breeding success across the flyway is likely a contributing factor. Artificial nests can help counter these pressures by offering shelter and protection. As one of Europe's most popular quarry species, it is crucial that the shooting sector helps to maintain healthy waterfowl populations, acting as custodians of the species and their habitats.

Anyone with a duck nest tube is encouraged to report its use and success (or failure) via our online form at the end of the breeding season (late August to September). If you have a suitable site and would like to participate in this project, you can request free materials and installation support through your regional BASC team. More details about the project can be found here.

Spotlight on 'DucklingWatch'

We also encourage participants to report any fledgling sightings to 'DucklingWatch', a PhD research project led by Hannah Coburn at the University of Essex investigating duckling survival. The project is seeking more observations from rural areas to ensure their dataset is representative, and your sighting can make a meaningful contribution to this work, which is partially funded by BASC. For more information see this blog or visit the DucklingWatch webpage.

Waterfowlers' Network findings

Across Europe, nearly 5,500 nests were installed and monitored at 778 locations between 2021 and 2023. Data provided by participants indicate that:

1. **Occupancy** of artificial nests is influenced by nest type (tube or basket), prior breeding activity at the site and duration the nest has been in place.
2. **Hatching success** of occupied artificial nests is influenced by nest type and whether avian predators are controlled.

Overall, these findings suggest that artificial nests, supported by consistent, long-term site management, provide measurable benefits for breeding ducks. These effects may not be seen in the first year but often improve over time as birds become more familiar with the structures.

As data collection continues, we aim to better understand how artificial nests contribute to increased productivity and how surrounding habitat can be best managed for waterfowl.

2025 breeding season results

Nest deployment

In 2025, BASC regional staff distributed another 65 nest tubes, bringing the total number supplied by BASC to 550 since 2021. Many more have been made and installed independently by individuals, clubs, and shoots – approximately 359 based on data submissions.

Reporting rates

Of the approximately 900 nests installed by 196 participants (through BASC and independently), data were submitted for 40% of these in 2025. Although this is an improvement on recent years, it remains lower than the first year of the project (57% in 2022). We encourage anyone with a nest, whether it was used or not, to submit data using the online form.

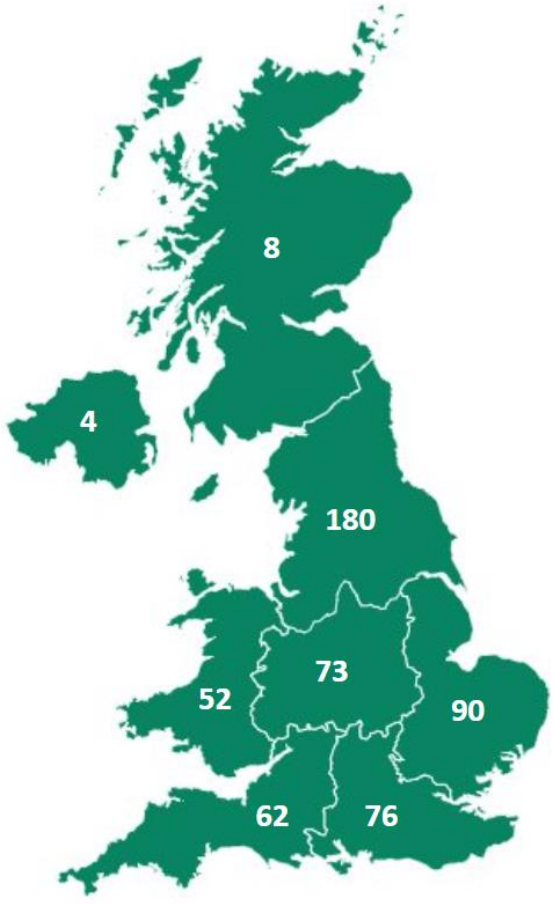


Figure 1: The number of nests installed by BASC across each region of the UK between 2021 to 2025.

Nest use and success 2025

A total of 365 nests were monitored by 53 participants, all but two of whom were active shooters. Notably, 47% of respondents had placed nests on behalf of a club or organisation, highlighting the shooting community's continued commitment to conservation.

Of the monitored nests:

- 344 were nest tubes, of which 70.6% were occupied (higher occupancy than previous years).
- Mallards accounted for 94% of occupied nests.
- 65% of occupied nests hatched successfully, a slightly lower success rate than in previous years.
- Other species recorded in smaller numbers included common moorhen, tufted duck, common coot, Egyptian goose, mandarin, and teal.

Project improvements

New data submission form

While the project is still a collaboration with the Waterfowlers' Network, the UK form has now moved directly to the BASC website and includes several improvements to reduce the number of questions you need to answer, while improving the detail of the information we receive:

- Site information only needs to be completed once (first time submitting the form), unless changes to the site management occur.
- Participants can choose to report either overall occupancy and success totals (number of nests and how many were occupied and successful) or provide individual nest-level data, which is recommended if nests have been installed in different years.

Nest ID tags

To improve tracking and accuracy, particularly where sites contain nests placed in different years, we have introduced nest ID tags. Over 100 tags have already been distributed. Those who have installed nests independently can create their own simple nest ID system (e.g. initials followed by a three-digit number, such as JD001, JD002, JD003 and so on).



Figure 2: Image of nest tube being placed after maintenance and nest ID tag added. Credit: King's Lynn & West Norfolk Wildfowlers Association.

Prize draw

Last year's winner, King's Lynn & West Norfolk Wildfowlers Association, now has its trail camera set up and ready to monitor activity around its nests.

To be entered into this year's prize draw, remember to monitor your nests and submit data here at the end of the breeding season (August to September). Details on the prize will be announced in spring.

Get in touch

For any queries on nest use reporting, contact us at monitoring@basc.org.uk.

If you would like help acquiring a nest tube for your site, contact your local regional officer.