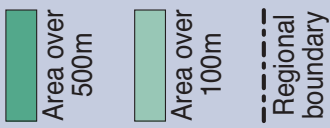
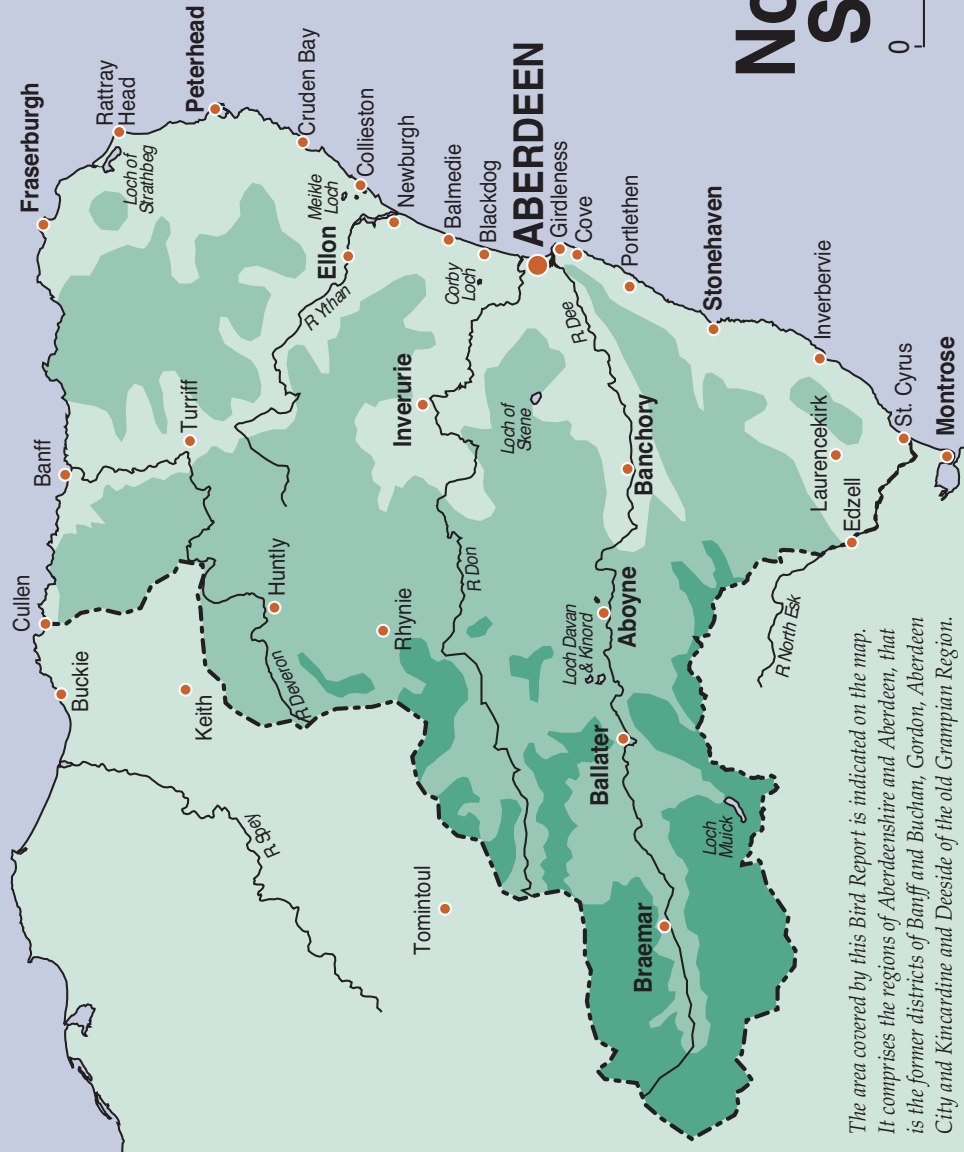
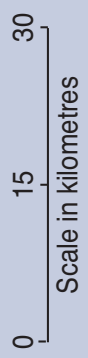


**2018** *North-East Scotland Bird Report*





# North-East Scotland



The area covered by this Bird Report is indicated on the map. It comprises the regions of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen, that is the former districts of Banff and Buchan, Gordon, Aberdeen City and Kincardine and Deeside of the old Grampian Region.

# ***North-East Scotland Bird Report, 2018***

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**Cover:** Sooty Tern, Ythan, July 2018 © *H. Scott*. The first for the region was found on 20 July and stayed into August.

# Useful Contacts

## Report Editor:

**Mark Sullivan**, 29, Earlswells Rd, Cults, Aberdeen, AB15 9NY  
Email: geolbird\_abz@btinternet.com

## Local Recorder:

**Nick Littlewood**  
Email: nick.littlewood@yahoo.co.uk

From 2019 the recorder is

**Ian Broadbent**, 18 Abbotshall Drive, Cults, Aberdeen, AB15 9JD  
Email: nescotlandrecorder@the-soc.org.uk

## Business Manager:

**Ian Middleton**, Flat D, 16, Roslin St., Aberdeen, AB24 5NX  
Email: balbridie@gmail.com

## Colour Selection and Print Preparation:

**Harry Scott**, 51 Charlton Crescent, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire, AB34 5GN  
Email: picades@ifb.co.uk

## Grampian Ringing Group:

**Raymond Duncan**, 1 Airyhill View, Newburgh, AB41 6DW  
Email: rduncan393@outlook.com

## North-East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC):

Specialist Services Team, Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House,  
Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB  
Email: nesbrec@aberdeenshire.gov.uk  
T: 01224 664164  
www.nesbrec.org.uk

## RSPB East Scotland Office:

10 Albyn Terrace, Aberdeen, AB10 1YP  
Email: esro@rspb.org.uk  
T: 01224 624824

## BTO Regional Representative:

### Aberdeen and North Aberdeenshire:

**Moray Souter**  
Email: bto\_aber\_rr@btinternet.com

### West and South Aberdeenshire:

**Claire Marsden**  
Email: fbears@me.com

# Mammals in North-East Scotland

## 2018 Systematic List, with Selected Earlier Records

Compiled and edited by Nick Littlewood & Alan Knox

Email: [a.g.knox@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:a.g.knox@abdn.ac.uk)

### Introduction

A total of 1,737 mammal records from Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire for 2018 were collated by NESBReC ([www.nesbrec.org.uk](http://www.nesbrec.org.uk)) up to when data were downloaded for this report in June 2019. These records form the core of the following species accounts, supplemented by records collated by Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels, Sea Watch Foundation, North East Scotland Bat Group, and information from published reports and papers.

For further information about mammals in our region, please see the Atlas of Mammals in North-East Scotland and the Cairngorms (Littlewood et al. 2017). This maps the known distribution of all terrestrial species. There is still much to be learnt about the distribution of our mammals and observers are encouraged to continue submitting their records to NESBReC.

We know even less about the population sizes and trends of our mammals. However, revised figures for British populations of our mammal species have recently been published (Matthews *et al.*, 2018). There is considerable uncertainty regarding the accuracy of some estimates but they do provide a benchmark from which change can be assessed. A national mammal atlas is also in the late stages of production and will hopefully appear early in 2020. Data submitted to NESBReC are made available for such projects and, especially in less populated parts of the UK such as ours, every record really can help.

### Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

The native Red Squirrel remains widespread across the region and was the only squirrel species detected across Aberdeenshire during the 2018 surveys conducted by the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project. These results mirror the reported sightings from across the whole region and within Aberdeen City. During 2018, Red Squirrels continued to establish in and around the City and there are healthy populations in the woods at Countesswells, Hazlehead and Seaton Park. Deeside supports good numbers of Red Squirrels on both north and south sides of the river, with animals as far downriver as Banchory-Devenick and Robert Gordon University. The species is found in Donside right up to the edge of the City, with sightings increasing across the Bridge of Don area.

Survey results and public sightings show that work to protect Red Squirrels through the control of Grey Squirrels in the North-East is making a difference. Overall, Red Squirrel populations across Scotland have stabilised but, in the North-East, numbers continue to increase. These findings would not be possible without dedicated survey volunteers and members of the public who report their squirrel sightings at [scottishsquirrels.org.uk](http://scottishsquirrels.org.uk).

## **Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis***

The invasive Grey Squirrel continues to decline across the region, with none being detected in Aberdeenshire during formal 2018 surveys conducted by the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project with only remnant pockets and individual dispersers reported through casual sightings. Work to develop a monitoring and rapid response method within Aberdeenshire has resulted in remnant pockets being removed and control efforts now being concentrated in Aberdeen City to prevent further dispersal out into the countryside. Within the City, intensive monitoring has shown that Grey Squirrel densities are low across the south of the city (Cults and Hazlehead Park), but remain high in the north (Bridge of Don). With Grey Squirrel population density decreasing within the City it is hoped Red Squirrels will continue to return and establish over the coming years.

## **Water Vole *Arvicola amphibious***

Just three records were received by NESBRc; one at Tarland Burn, Coull on 28 April (PHi), one at Mains of Lesmoir, Rhynie on 3 August (WW) and burrows were noted at Gairnshiel on 23 July (SF). No signs of Water Voles were detected at any of the four sites in North-East Scotland that were surveyed in 2018 as part of the National Water Vole Monitoring Programme (Thomas 2018).

## **Field Vole *Microtus agrestis***

Twenty-two records were received, of which 12 were from camera traps and four were cat casualties. Dissection of Barn Owl pellets collected at Balnagower Cottage, Invercauld on 6 June revealed the remains of 21 adult and eight juvenile Field Voles (AGK). Other records were from scattered localities, though most were in the lower parts of Donside and Deeside, and three adjacent tetrads at and close to Forvie NNR in January (NAL).

## **Bank Vole *Myodes glareolus***

Just 15 records were received. Ten were camera trap records and three were recorded indoors. All were from the lower parts of Deeside or Donside or from close to the Ythan Estuary.

## **Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus***

Of 47 records received, 28 were of animals recorded on camera traps. Several others were of animals caught by cats or of mice removed from buildings. One, near Stonehaven, was identified from analysis of owl pellet contents (SWi), a technique that formerly might have accounted for a far higher proportion of records.

## **House Mouse *Mus musculus***

Seven of the nine records were from near Kirkton of Tough, between January and September, mostly trapped and/or photographed around farm buildings (TDM). Otherwise, one was live-

trapped and released at Hillside of Clatt on 2 December (MM) and six were released alive at Howburn Place, Aberdeen on 22 October after getting stuck in a bird seed container (JD).

## **Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus***

Thirteen records of singletons were received by NESBReC. These were fairly scattered, inland as far as Glenkindie – a road casualty on 9 March (IF) – and north to Gardenstown where the species was recorded tunnelling in flower beds in a garden and eating bird food (WM). Five of the records came from camera traps and five (including the Gardenstown record) were live sightings. One record comprised a clean skull found in a flowerbed in Cults on 20 April, which was presumed to have been transported to the site (AGK).

## **Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus***

There were 42 records, all of either one or two animals with the exception of three near Blairdaff on 6 May (DaB). Where details were provided, most records were sightings of live animals. Six were camera trap records and three were records of tracks. All records came from alongside or north of the River Dee.

## **Mountain Hare *Lepus timidus***



Although evidence published in 2018 points to a catastrophic decline in Mountain Hare numbers, especially on grouse moors (Watson & Wilson, 2018), the 14 records received by NESBReC (and

with nine from a single observer – IF) still represents a low level of recording. The highest count was of 10 at Beinn a' Chruinnich on 17 February (SeR). Away from their strongholds within the Cairngorms National Park, Mountain Hares continue to survive on the Bennachie range, with two seen on 22 May and droppings found throughout the year (DaB).

## **Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus***

One of the more frequently reported species, with 77 records. These were spread across the region from St Cyrus north to Portsoy and inland to Glen Gairn and Glen Fenzie. The highest count was of 12 at Nigg, Aberdeen on 30 March (KMc). Records included live sightings, rabbits brought in by cats, road casualties, records of animals found dead due to unstated causes, camera trap records and rabbit droppings.

## **Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus***

Thirty-three records were received, including 13 of road casualties and two further reports of dead animals. Enthusiasm for Hedgehog recording in the Portlethen area resulted in eight records being collated from local residents (DeM). One in a Cults garden on 22 May was the first seen at that site for at least 10 years (AGK).

## **Mole *Talpa europaea***

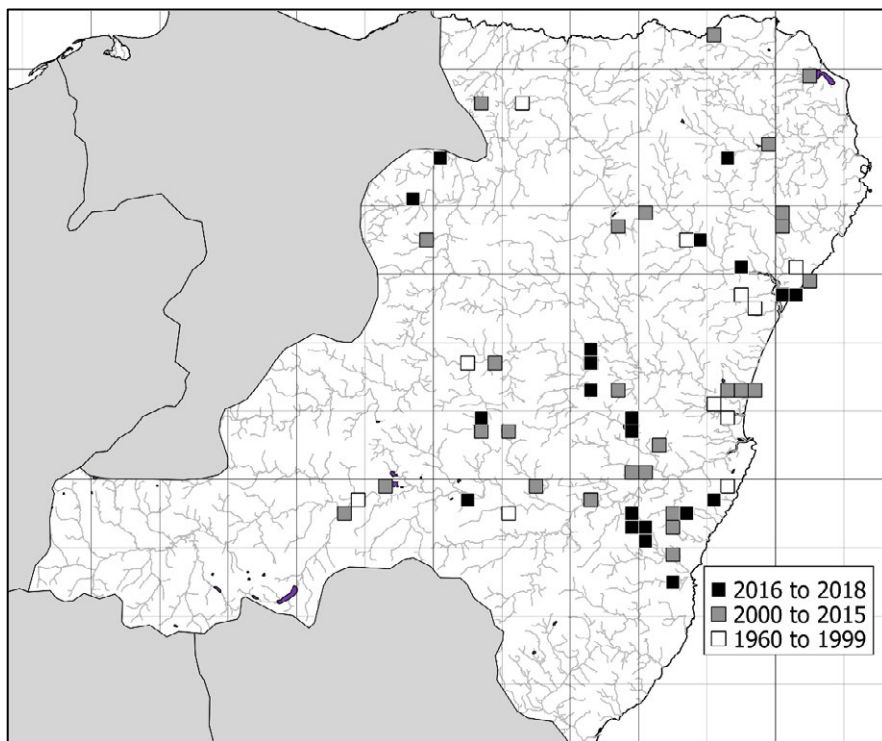
The 72 records were scattered across the region, although the majority were from Deeside, Donside and along the A96 corridor. There was also a cluster of reports from north of Mintlaw, reflecting a concentration of recording there. Inland, Moles were recorded as far upriver as Townamoine, Mar Lodge Estate on 6 May (NAL). The overwhelming majority of records were of molehills. Live sightings were made at Drumoak on 23 June (FMi), Banchory Devenick on 14 August (JH, LwM), and at St Cyrus NNR on 17 August (SRi).

## **Water Shrew *Neomys fodiens***

There were 12 records of this previously highly under-recorded species. Half were from camera traps, including those adapted for recording small mammals. Records came from four tetrads in the Durris Forest area (NAL) and two adjacent tetrads at Newburgh: (one seen crossing a path adjacent to the Ythan estuary, MGo) and one at Forvie NNR (NAL). The remains of two were extracted from owl pellets found near Stonehaven on 22 January (SWi). Elsewhere, individuals were recorded on a camera trap at Birse Forest (JD), dead at Portlethen Moss (TW), dead in Ellon (BD), seen running on a road at Maud (DJGG) and recorded at Craigievar Castle (RH).

Although records are still rather scattered, the number of tetrads with records in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City has risen sharply from 40 at the end of period covered by the Atlas (1960 to 2015) to 59 by the end of 2018.





**Water Shrew records across North-East Scotland. Records are mapped on a tetrad (2 × 2 km) scale and where the species has been recorded in a tetrad in more than one time period, newer records overlay older records.**

## **Common Shrew *Sorex araneus***

Twenty-three records of this abundant species were submitted. Typically, eight were found dead and an additional record was of a cat victim. Additionally, 13 were counted from owl pellets found at Feathers Farm, Stonehaven on 22 January (SWi) and three were identified in Barn Owl pellets found at Balnagower Cottage, Invercauld on 6 June (AGK). However, over half the records were from camera traps adapted for recording small mammals in baited boxes. Records came from Deeside, Donside and several sites on or close to the east coast.

## **Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus***

Despite their presumed abundance, Pygmy Shrews are difficult to record and there can be confusion with young Common Shrews. Ten of the 14 records were from using camera traps adapted for recording small mammals, all within a few miles of Aberdeen, and north to Meikle Loch (NAL). Owl pellets collected near Stonehaven on 22 January held remains of four Pygmy

Shrews (SWi). Otherwise, one was found dead in a mouse trap a few miles south of Alford on 14 January (EB), one was found dead near Ruthven on 19 March (AL) and one was seen alive at Torry, Aberdeen on 22 March (GRu).

## **Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii***

Waterway surveys (part of the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) co-ordinated by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)) were carried out by volunteers at four locations on or near the River Dee. Higher numbers of Daubenton's Bat passes were recorded at the sites towards the lower reaches of the river. Daubenton's Bats were caught and released at Inchgarth Reservoir, Meikle Loch and Loch of Strathbeg as part of a BCT Nathusius' Pipistrelle harp trapping project being carried out by the North East Scotland Bat Group (NESBATS; 'harp' is a type of live bat trap). Seven females and four males, including juveniles, were caught as they left Small Loch to forage over Meikle Loch. They were recorded at a further 13 sites, often in river valleys or near large areas of water such as the North Esk, South Ugie, Deveron and Water of Bogie. Other locations included smaller water bodies, such as at Arnhall Moss in Westhill. The earliest record submitted for the year was on 13 March and last on 16 October, both in a garden at Cults (AGK).

## **Natterer's Bat *Myotis nattereri***

Foraging Natterer's Bats were recorded near Rhynie on 7 August (SF) and Banchory on 21 August (ASa).

## **Leisler's Bat *Nyctalus leisleri***

In 2018 individuals were recorded at two sites: one near Rhynie on 7 August (SF) and another at Howe of Teuchar, east of Turriff on 12 August (JA).

The only other recent reports were recordings from Sand Loch at Collieston over four days in September 2015 (NESBATS); in 2016, singles were recorded by the River Dee at Banchory on 19 May (ASa), by the Dee at Birse on 11 and 25 August (AF) and at Lumphanan on 23 August (ASa). All recordings were verified by John Haddow. As more are recorded it may become clear if there is a seasonal bias to sightings which currently seem to be skewed to August and September.

## **Nathusius' Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii***

Nathusius' Pipistrelle echolocation calls were recorded at or near large waterbodies along the east of the county. Surveys as part of the BCT National Nathusius' Pipistrelle survey were carried out by NESBATS at five sites with a view to ringing any caught. A single adult male was caught and ringed at the north-west end of Meikle Loch on 7 September: forearm length 33.3 mm, weight 8.6 g, length of fifth finger 43 mm. On the same evening, social calling by an advertising male was recorded periodically between 21:40 and 23:06 on the north side of the loch. Male social calling was also recorded near Loch of Strathbeg Visitor Centre on 26 August. A single, partial social call was recorded at Sand Loch, Forvie on 26 September. This call was likely to have been made on the wing as there were no suitable roosting options nearby. As part of a project, calls were recorded

in June, July and August at five sites and the highest number of Nathusius' Pipistrelle calls were found at Meikle Loch, followed by Sand Loch (KB). There was no substantial difference in numbers of calls across the three months surveyed.

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Corby Loch						x		
Culterty Ponds							o	
Cults/ Inchgarth	x	x	x	x	x	x	o	x
Haddo Loch			o		x	x	o	
Loch of Skene					o		o	
Loch of Strathbeg		o	o		o	x	o	o
Loirston Loch				x	x	x	o	
Meikle Loch			o	x	x	x	x	o
Sand Loch		o	o	o	x	x	x	x

**Months in which Nathusius' Pipistrelle have been recorded at sites in North-East Scotland, 2015–2018. x: 2018 records; o: previously recorded 2015–2017. (Gaps may indicate gaps in recording effort rather than absence).**

## Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

There were 36 records from Braemar to Aberdeen and Auchenblae to Strathbeg. The largest roost recorded was a presumed maternity roost of over 20 bats at Aden Country Park (DGo). Other roosts were generally of individuals or low numbers in buildings, or singles in trees and bat boxes. Activity was mainly recorded between early March (8 March, AGK) and October (4 October, ASa) reflecting the period of most recording effort. However, echolocation calls were recorded on 26 January from within the known hibernacula at Drum Castle (ASa) and a single bat pass was recorded on a static detector at Cults on 31 December (AGK). Common Pipistrelles were caught and released at Inchgarth, Haddo Loch and Meikle Loch as part of the harp trapping project.

## Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Records for Soprano Pipistrelles covered 37 locations across the North-East and include foraging bats and those roosting in buildings, trees and bat boxes. There were roost counts of 48 (Fogue) and 17 (Lessendrum). The maternity roost at Castle Fraser is counted each year as a BCT Roost Count by National Trust for Scotland rangers: the highest of the two counts in 2018 was 232 in early June. Three other sites were counted by volunteers as part of the BCT NBMP programme. Soprano Pipistrelles were caught and released at Inchgarth, Haddo, Culterty, Meikle Loch and Loch of Strathbeg as part of the harp trapping project. Bat box checks in October at Leith Hall and Strathbeg found individual males with between two and six females in three of the bat boxes, suggesting they may have been using them as mating roosts. Four *Pipistrellus* sp. from Aberdeenshire were taken into care by a local BCT bat carer between February and August. Two died and two were successfully released after rehabilitation (JSi).

## **Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus***

Brown Long-eared Bats were recorded at 12 sites across the North-East, including Braemar, Dess, Banchory, Westhill, Portlethen, Cults, Ellon, Huntly, and Rhynie. Records were mainly of foraging bats recorded on bat detectors. A BCT Roost Count of 86 bats was made near Ballater. The first record for the year was on 23 April (SF) and the last was a bat found in a wooden lintel on 29 October (RT). A dead individual was found in a garden near Lumphanan (NSm) and an adult female was taken into care from a site near Finzean but later died (ASa).

## **Scottish Wildcat *Felis silvestris***

As usual, Wildcat records are complicated by problems of identification. With acknowledgement that wild-living cats in Scotland now sit on a genetic continuum that represents variation between domestic cats and historical wildcat museum specimens (Senn et al. 2019), it becomes even less appropriate to refer to “pure” Wildcats. Thus, reports submitted must be assumed to be of animals on the hybrid spectrum that nonetheless retain at least some appearance of Wildcats. Nine such reports were received, including two of the same radio-collared individual, around 4 km apart, within Clashindarroch Forest. As well as animals in this area, reports were received from Donside, and from Deeside, with a dead one found near Tarland on 27 December (KD).

## **Feral Cat *Felis catus***

Camera trap records from Rob's Hill, Stonehaven on 4 February (GWi; SWi) and Crynoch Burn on 13 August (JD) and an animal found dead at Nigg Bay, Aberdeen on 16 February (JT) were all submitted as being Feral Cats.

## **Fox *Vulpes vulpes***

Most of the 135 reports came from lowland areas. As well as coastal records south to St Cyrus, and several records across Buchan, there was a substantial concentration in an arc from Oldmeldrum, through Alford to Cushnie and south-east to Banchory. An outlier record was of droppings found high on Ben Avon on 1 July (IF). A series of records from near Ruthven, north of Huntly (AL), were also some distance from the next closest reports but, given the widespread nature of records in the Mammal Atlas, this likely reflects observer coverage more than distribution patterns. A cluster of records came from Aberdeen City, including of four at Bridge of Dee on 27 May (KMc).

## **Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus***

Just 10 records were submitted to NESBReC, from Garron Point to Fraserburgh. One was in the River Dee at Riverside Drive on 2 and 22 January, and at Garthdee on 20 March (NAL).

Previous reports of the species at the Ythan mouth have under-estimated peak numbers there. Systematic counts show a continued increase (MS), making this the largest single haul-out in Scotland.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Count</b>
4 May 2010	446
9 August 2011	990
9 April 2012	1413
15 May 2013	1568
20 April 2014	2441
24 March 2015	3710
19 April 2016	3062
6 March 2017	3173
19 March 2018	4367

Pupping continues to be rare in the North-East and any reports of small pups with white fur will be welcome. Grey Seals have their pups in mid-winter in the northern North Sea and they are suckled for 15–21 days before being abandoned. They then fast from 9–40 days, mainly on land, and moult into a darker pelage. When they leave the natal beaches they can travel great distances very quickly. Recent tagging of Grey Seals in their first four months has shown newly-independent individuals from Orkney reaching Aberdeenshire and as far south as the Forth; others from the Isle of May range northwards to Aberdeenshire, Fair Isle and Norway and south almost to the coasts of the Netherlands (Carter et al. 2017). As a consequence, small seals on our beaches are unreliable indicators of local pupping unless they are in white fur.

About 60 to 80 Grey Seals, including many immatures, haul out in winter in Wine Cove, south of Stonehaven, with smaller numbers on rocks at Fowlsheugh and at Garron Point. A beach deep in another cave at Fowlsheugh has undetermined numbers (ABu).



Haul out of Grey Seals, Ythan Mouth  
© Mark Sullivan

## **Harp Seal *Pagophilus groenlandicus***

One was reported in the media as having been found dead at Balmedie on 31 July but on examination it was determined to be a Grey Seal with alopecia (ND).]

## **Common Seal *Phoca vitulina***

Only two single individuals were reported to NESBREc in 2018, from the Don and Blackdog, both in January, clearly under-representing the occurrence of this species. There were no counts of Common Seals in the sea or resting on the intertidal rocks along the shore between Fraserburgh and Rosehearty.

## **Otter *Lutra lutra***

The 43 records submitted were mostly of ones and twos though three were seen together at the Diamond Bridge over the River Don on 13 January (JH) comprising a male, a female and a four-month-old cub. Three were also thought to be present based on otter slides down a snow bank and otter spraints near Daldownie, Glen Gairn on 20 March (PHe). Unfortunately, roadkill animals were recorded on the A93 near Auchallater on 5 February (EH), the A97 at Yonder Bognie on 7 May (KRe), on a minor road at Raxton, Haddo on 26 October (JB) and near Marywell Pond, Aberdeen on 29 November (JM) and from two different locations at Pitcapple in December (RE, ASu).

## **Pine Marten *Martes martes***

Pine Martens are widely distributed across most of our region, though they remain scarce in Buchan, with none of the 155 records being from east of the A947 (Oldmeldrum to Turriff). The largest number of records were from lower- to mid-Deeside and Donside, with a handful north to Huntly. There were four records further north still, to Inverboynzie, where a roadkill animal was found on 4 December (MM). To the south-east, a notable record was of one dead, presumably a roadkill, on the A90 at Portlethen on 15 June (IM). Most records were of ones and twos. There was one report of three martens whilst four (including three youngsters) were seen at Laithers House, Turriff on 28 June (AO) and four were recorded the same day on a camera trap near Ruthven (AL). Around 75% of records were from camera traps, though this did include multiple reports from some locations over periods of time.

## **Badger *Meles meles***

With 297 records, Badger was the second most reported mammal species during 2018. The largest number of records was from mid- to lower-Deeside and Donside with a scatter of records south to Stonehaven and several from across Buchan. Further north-west, Badgers were also reported from the edge of the Bin Forest (IG), from near Ruthven (AL), from Culbeuchly (near Inverboynzie) (JR) and from near Bogton, north-west of Turriff (JR). Several were reported from around Aberdeen City, including an adult found dead on South Esplanade West on 1 September (LMi). The highest count was three records of five animals near Ruthven (AL). Sixty-one percent of

records were from camera traps, 11% were of setts, 7% were of dead animals (mostly roadkill) and the remainder, where specified, were live sightings, diggings, latrines or tracks.

## **Stoat *Mustela erminea***

Just five Stoat records were received. These were singles at Broomy Lea, south of Premnay on 12 January (IF), Auchallater, Glen Clunie on 25 April (PHi), Tarland Burn on 28 April (PHi), St Cyrus NNR on 29 April (SRi) and Sinnahard, Towie on 27 May (IF). The last was dead on the road; the others were stated or presumed to relate to live sightings.

## **Weasel *Mustela nivalis***

Seven records were received. One was seen hunting at Nigg Bay on 4 August (JT). Other records came from lower Deeside and Donside, west to just beyond Lumphanan. Elsewhere, one was found dead on the road at Ellon on 9 February (DBr).

## **American Mink *Neovison vison***

The five records comprised two sightings from Rosehearty, on 19 July and 18 November (DCI), another coastal animal at Nigg Bay on 11 July (JT) and singles on camera traps at Forthie Water on 9 October (JD) and Loch of Park on 26 December (NAL). Monitoring and control of Mink in the region is currently coordinated by the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative. However, data from their activities were not available at the time of writing.

## **Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus***

With 353 records, Roe Deer was the most reported species in 2018, albeit many were reports on multiple dates from single camera trap locations. Most were recorded in low-lying areas and foothills around Aberdeen, south to the Stonehaven area and inland along Deeside to the Dinnet area. Other clusters of records came from between Inverurie and Inch, Bin Forest and at Forvie NNR. Records were scattered elsewhere in coastal areas, in the lower parts of Deeside and Donside and across Buchan. There were just two reports from close to the north coast, four at Blairshinnoch south of Boyndie on 4 February (JR, VK) and one near Towie on 21 January (RP). The highest count was of eight at Wartle on 19 October (GWr, PWr).

## **Red Deer *Cervus elaphus***

In contrast to the high recording level for Roe Deer, just 28 Red Deer records were received, probably reflecting that, although abundant, the distribution is mostly away from centres of population. The highest count received was of 210 on Hunt Hill, on the east side of Glen Muick, on 2 September (IF). An outlying record was of two fully-antlered stags by Toll of Birness on 27 May (TWM).

## Cetaceans

The records summarised here were received by the Sea Watch Foundation and NESBReC. Other bodies also collect data, but these are not represented below.

**Monthly total number of animals with number of records given in brackets:**

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	TOT
Minke Whale							6 (4)	17 (10)	3 (2)				26 (16)
Fin Whale								1 (1)					1 (1)
Humpback Whale							1 (1)						1 (1)
Short-beaked Common Dolphin								10 (3)					10 (3)
White-beaked Dolphin								5 (1)					5 (1)
Killer Whale						10 (3)	-						10 (3)
Bottlenose Dolphin	10 (1)		2 (1)	52 (17)	104 (26)	101 (33)	103 (32)	65 (11)	13 (1)	12 (1)			461 (123)
Harbour Porpoise		2 (1)					11 (6)	16 (8)				1 (1)	30 (16)
Unidentified Large Whale								1 (1)					1 (1)

### Minke Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

Most records were of one or two individuals, with three off Torry Battery on 21 July (LaW) and three several times off Collieston on 5 August (KSH). Most were observed feeding and they often stayed in the same areas for several hours. The earliest was off Pennan on 3 July (GS) and the last was off Aberdeen on 15 September (OP).

### Fin Whale *Balaenoptera physalis*

One observed off Macduff on 4 August (IW).

### Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*

One was seen travelling north some 4 km offshore from Torry Battery on 28 July (LaW).



## **Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis***

Two records were received: two off Macduff on 3 August (IW) and six reported in Inverbervie Bay on 5 August (GD).

## **White-beaked Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus albirostris***

The only report was a group of 5 very active animals approximately 1.5 km out from Collieston on 5 August (KSH).

## **Killer Whale *Orcinus orca***

In all, three records were received. Two records of presumably the same individuals observed on 9 June: initially three seen off New Slains Castle (LS) and later in the day, four (two adults and two juveniles) heading north past Boddam (LeW). The other record was of three fishing in Nigg Bay on 30 June (JT).

## **Common Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus***

Unusually in 2018, all but five records came from Aberdeen Bay and group numbers tended to be down in comparison with previous years. Group sizes ranged from two to 16 animals. The only winter records were 10 off Muchalls on 20 January (LA) and two off Aberdeen Beach on 24 March (MaD). In spring, records and numbers started to increase though mostly single-figure counts, other than 10 south past Easter Croft on 23 April (AGK), 12 heading north past Fowlsheugh on 6 May (IF) and 12 feeding in Aberdeen Harbour entrance on 18 May (DO). This level of activity continued through the summer, with a maximum of 16 (including three calves) in Aberdeen Bay on 2 August (ORCA). Numbers of reports and group sizes tailed off dramatically during the autumn, with groups of 12 off Portsoy and 12 off the mouth of the North Esk on 1 September (MC) and 20 October (FMo) respectively.

## **Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena***

This is one of the commonest and most widely distributed cetaceans in the region. Like the Bottlenose Dolphin, they are recorded year-round with the greatest abundance between July and October. During 2018, all records were in July and August, apart from two off Hackley Bay on 15 February and 1 off Blackdog on 28 December (NAL). Reports were usually of one to three individuals and came from Bullers of Buchan, Collieston and Torry Battery with four off Portsoy on 15 July (KG). Dead strandings were recorded on 26 February (two animals) and one on 1 September (NAL).

In addition, an unidentified large cetacean off Collieston on 5 August (KSH) fed in close proximity to the Minke Whales present that day. This may have been the Humpback Whale reported from Torry Battery the previous week or the Fin Whale seen the previous day off Macduff.

## Authors

Kevin Hepworth (cetaceans), Alan Knox (seals), Gwen Maggs (squirrels), Aileen Salway (bats). The other accounts were written by Nick Littlewood.

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## Observers

The following people either sent mammal records directly to NESBReC or to organisations that shared their records with NESBReC. The accounts here are based on records input to the NESBReC database by June 2019. Other observers may have contributed records to other recording projects that have been referred to here, and we are grateful to all for doing so.

Ackerman, N.	Gray, K. (KG)	Phillips, I.
Alampo, T.	Green, I. (IG)	Picozzi, N.
Allan, S.	Grundey, T.	Plant, E.
Allison, J. (JA)	Hamilton, M.	Redman, P.
Anderson, F.	Hamilton, R. (RH)	Redshaw, S.
Anderson, L. (LA)	Harrison, H	Reed, S. (SeR)
Appleby, R.	Hay, R.	Regan, K. (KRe)
Aspinall, M.	Henderson, C.	Rhodes, J. (JR)
Bacon, E. (EB)	Hepworth, K. (KSH)	Riddell, H.
Bain, D.	Herbert, C.	Ritchie, S. (SRi)
Bale, D. (DaB)	Heron, P. (PHe)	Roberts, G.
Barr, K. (KB)	Hickling, J. (JH)	Robertson, C.
Beaton, A.	Higson, P. (Phi)	Robertson, E.
Blow, C.	Hirst, D.	Rome, K.

Bone, R.  
 Bradshaw, J. (JB)  
 Breeman, A.  
 Brown, D. (DBR)  
 Brown, D.  
 Brown, G.  
 Buchanan, A. (ABu)  
 Buddendorf, B.  
 Burns, A.  
 Burns, W.  
 Callan, S.  
 Carrigan, C.  
 Carter, C.  
 Cartwright, M. (MC)  
 Cheyne, G.  
 Cinderey, R.  
 Clark, D. (DCI)  
 Clunas, A.  
 Coull, G.  
 Coventry, A.  
 Cowper, D.  
 Crawford, G.  
 Crawford, K.  
 Cumming, S.  
 Dailly, G. (GD)  
 Dale, K. (KD)  
 Davidson, C.  
 Davidson, I.  
 Davidson, J. (JD)  
 Davis, A.  
 Davis, B. (BD)  
 Davison, N. (ND)  
 Day, L.  
 Denby-Mann, Z.  
 Duck, C.  
 Dudley, C.  
 Duguid, M.  
 Duncan, A-S.  
 Dunlop, M. (MaD)  
 Eadon, R. (RE)  
 Easton, M.  
 Ferguson, A. (AF)  
 Ferguson, S. (SF)  
 Francis, I. (IF)  
 Fulker, C.  
 Garden, M.  
 Gill, D.J.G. (DJGG)  
 Gooday, D. (DGo)  
 Gorman, M. (MGo)  
 Grant, R.  
 Gray, A.  
 Hodgkinson, L.  
 Holland, C.  
 Holmes, E. (EH)  
 Hood, D.  
 Hutcheson, M.  
 Hutton, C.  
 Jones, G.  
 Joss, J.  
 Kapoor, V. (VK)  
 Knox, A.G. (AGK)  
 Laing, S.  
 Lamb, A. (AL)  
 Latimer, W.  
 Lea, B.  
 Leith, M.  
 Lindsey, S.  
 Littlewood, N.A. (NAL)  
 Lumsden, S.  
 Macdonald, L. (LwM)  
 Macdougall, A.  
 Mackintosh, M. (MM)  
 Majeed, A.  
 Mann, L.  
 Mann, W. (WM)  
 Marr, G.  
 Marshall, T. (TWM)  
 Martin, D. (DeM)  
 Martin, I. (IM)  
 Matheson, D.  
 McAbery, G.  
 McAbery, K. (KMc)  
 McArdle, D.  
 McArdle, T.D. (TDM)  
 McKay, N.  
 McNeill, D.  
 Melville, J. (JM)  
 Mercer, S.  
 Miln, L. (LMi)  
 Milne, F. (FMi)  
 Mitchell, K.  
 Morris, C.  
 Morrow, F. (FMo)  
 Murray, A.  
 NESBATS  
 O'Brien, S.  
 ORCA Oceanwatch  
 Ogg, A. (AO)  
 Ord, D. (DO)  
 Pelling, R.  
 Pettifer, O. (OP)  
 Rose, T.  
 Ross, K.  
 Rowe, R.  
 Ruthven, G. (GRu)  
 Scottish Wildcat Action  
 Salway, A. (ASa)  
 Schlueter, L. (LS)  
 Seal, N.  
 Shand, H.  
 Shire, G. (GS)  
 Sim, J. (JSi)  
 Smith, B.  
 Smith, K.  
 Smith, N. (NSm)  
 Smith, T.  
 Souter, M. (MS)  
 Stephen, D.  
 Strathdee, J.  
 Sutherland, A. (ASu)  
 Talboys, I. ( )  
 Taylor, D.  
 Taylor, M.  
 Thom, A.  
 Thow, J. (JT)  
 Thwaites, R. (RT)  
 Todd, K.  
 Torrance, M.  
 Van der Wal, R.  
 Watson, A.  
 Watson, D.  
 Watson, L. (LaW)  
 Watson, L. (LeW)  
 Watt, A.  
 Watt, P.  
 Watt, T. (TW)  
 White, M.  
 Whitworth, S.  
 Whyte, J.  
 Whyte, W. (WW)  
 Whytock-Celeste, J.  
 Wilkinson, G. (GWi)  
 Wilkinson, S. (SWI)  
 Williams, I. (IW)  
 Wills, J.M.  
 Wilson, A.  
 Woods, Richard  
 Wrangham, G. (GWr)  
 Wrahgham, P. (PWrr)  
 Wright, A.  
 Wright, J.



Daubenton's Bat, Meikle Loch, August 2018 © NES Bats



Roe Deer, Aboyne, June 2018 © Harry Scott



Soprano Pipistrelle Bat, Strathbeg, October 2018  
© A Salway





Otter, Cairnbulg, January 2018 © Mark Sullivan



Stoat, Aboyne, November 2018 © Harry Scott



Wood Mouse, Cults, August 2018 © John Holmes



Brown Hare, Aboyne, July 2018 © Harry Scott



# Amphibians and Reptiles in North-East Scotland

## 2018 Systematic List

Compiled and edited by Trevor Rose & Alan Knox

This is the second report on the reptiles and amphibians of North-East Scotland. All are very under-recorded and we urge observers to submit records to NESBReC, either on a spreadsheet (email to [nesbrec@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:nesbrec@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)) or via the online form ([www.nesbrec.org.uk/recording-services/online-form](http://www.nesbrec.org.uk/recording-services/online-form)) which includes an interactive map to help you find grid-references). Maps showing the distribution of the various species listed below can be found on the NESBReC website or through the NBN Atlas <https://nbnatlas.org>. Further details about all these species (and more) can be found in *The Amphibians and Reptiles of Scotland*, by Chris McInerny and Pete Minting (2016), which can be downloaded free of charge from [www.glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk/books.html](http://www.glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk/books.html).

### Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

Very common throughout the county from the coast to 700 m, and the most frequently recorded amphibian in the North-East. For 2018, 65 new records were received, spanning all months except January and December. The first of the year were three in Seaton Park on 1 February (DM, JH) and the last was rescued from a road grid at Drum Castle on 27 November (TG). The first spawn was reported at Futtie Park, north of Lumphanan on 12 March, though some frogs must have spawned considerably earlier as the earliest tadpoles were reported on 1 March. The last spawn was reported on 16 April. Most reports of adults were of single individuals, with no large counts from breeding ponds. A few were reported at up to 660 m east of Glen Muick in May and September (SC, IF).

### Common Toad *Bufo bufo*

In 2018, just 29 records were received. Anecdotally, numbers within local populations are dwindling but there is a lack of good data. In 2018 the first was seen on 23 March at Garthdee (LB) and the first spawn at Scotstown Moor on 16 April. Other reports through the year were mainly of single animals, through to late September with only a single record in October and the last of the year on 22 December, found dead on the road near Ruthven (AL).

### Palmate Newt *Lissotriton helveticus*

Palmate newts are common throughout Scotland due to their tolerance of slightly acidic pH and preference for montane habitats. In 2018, twenty-nine records were received. The first was on 14 April at Keig (FS) and there were reports every month until the end of September, with the last being 12 found while digging out a dragonfly pond at the Muir of Dinnet on 27 October (KM).

Most reports were of small numbers but an evening count of a pond at Fetteresso on 1 June found an estimated 1,000 adults present.

### **[Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*]**

Several unverified records of 'Smooth Newt' were received. This species has yet to be recorded in Aberdeenshire. In 2018 two remnant populations were discovered in Angus close to the Aberdeenshire county boundary (TRi).]

### **Adder *Vipera berus***

Nineteen records were received in 2018 - all from well-known Adder territory. There were no records from Donside or the north of the county, or from north of the Dee to the east of the Dinnet crossroads. South of the Dee the most easterly were three reports from Glen Dye. At Dinnet, male emergence from hibernation was reported on 22 February; females were seen from 18 April, males shedding their skins on 22 April and mating 24 and 25 April; the first two young from 2017 were also seen on 25 April (CR). There were only two reports after the end of July, the last being on 8 September at Braemar (AW).

### **Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis***

Poorly recorded, with just six records in 2018, from 12 May to 10 October, at Glen Tanar (two on 12 May, possibly mating, another in July), Mill of Dinnet, Muir of Dinnet (a young one on 10 October; SG), the Burn o' Vat Visitor Centre (three), and one at Brathens, rather further east (DC). There was an interesting anecdotal report of others 'often' being seen on the old railway track near Brathens as well, but no details or dates were available. Placing refugia discretely in suitable habitat (deep, variable and extensive vegetation) is a good way to detect the presence of Slow-worms.

### **Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara***

Twenty-nine reports were received in 2018, from 20 April (Clashindarroch; IF) to 12 September (near Braeroddach; IG). There were no counts greater than two individuals. Most reports came from the expected moorland areas, many from mid-Deeside and mid-lower Donside, with records from near Ruthven in the north, from the Geldie Burn in upper Deeside eastwards to Fetteresso, and at up to 640 m above the east of Loch Muick in May (SC). On lower ground, there were three records from Castle Fraser (TW), two from Collonach Moor, by the Loch of Park (FM), and two from Elrick Hill, near Clinterty (SW). There was only one coastal record this year, from Rattray on 19 May (TS).

## 2018 Contributors

With apologies for any omissions.

Back, L. (LB)

Bacon, E.

Buddendorf, B.

Butchart, A.

Carrigan, C.

Carroll, C.

Clunas, A.

Coe, D. (DC)

Corcoran, S. (SC)

Francis, I. (IF)

Fulker, C.

Gandy, S.

Gooday, D.

Green, I (IG)

Grundy, T. (TG)

Guthrie, S. (SG)

Hickling, J. (JH)

Hunter, S.

Knox, A.G.

Lamb, A. (AL)

Littlewood, N.

MacGregor, C.

Marr, G.

Martin, M.

McAbery, K. (KM)

McConnachie, A.

McDonald, K.

McGorum, D. (DM)

McIntosh, K.

McKay, L.

McLeod, C.

McNeill, D. (DM)

Miles, A.

Milne, F. (FM)

Picozzi, N.

Reid, C. (CR)

Ricketts, T (Tri)

Roberts, G.

Rose, T. (TR)

Rosie, P.

Rowe, R.

Rowe, H.

Shannon, T. (TS)

Smith, D.

Stewart, R.

Strachan, D.

Strachan, F. (FS)

Sutherland, A.

Urquart, J.

Warrander, R.

Watson, A.

Watt, T. (TW)

Whiteley, E.

Whitworth, S. (SW)

Whyte, B.

Whyte, J.

Wilkinson, G.

Wren, A. (AW)

Wright, A.

Wright, J.

