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Environmental Impact Assessment Report
Volume 3, Appendix 23.5: Breeding Birds Report 2024

MarramWind Offshore Wind Farm

December 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 About this document

- 1.1.1 MarramWind Offshore Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as ‘the Project’) is wholly owned by ScottishPower Renewables UK Limited (SPR). MarramWind Limited, a subsidiary of SPR, is the Applicant for the Project.
- 1.1.2 MarramWind Limited (the Applicant) requires onshore ornithological surveys for the proposed onshore infrastructure associated with the Project, located 75 kilometres (km) off the north-east coast of Scotland.
- 1.1.3 This Report describes the methods used to gather and record information and summarises results of surveys in the second year of surveys designed to provide baseline information on breeding bird species, focussing on locations in proximity to the emerging infrastructure that were not captured during previous surveys in 2023.

1.2 Background and Scope

- 1.2.1.1 All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and there are no licensing provisions for development works that would otherwise result in an offence being committed. On this basis, appropriate measures to avoid the damage or disturbance of wild birds and their nests will require consideration.
- 1.2.1.2 Given the potential risk of disturbing nesting birds or damaging their nests as a result of development proposals, breeding bird surveys were undertaken to collect baseline data on the breeding bird community within the Study Area (as described in **Section 1.3**) during the breeding season. The aim of these surveys was to understand the composition, distribution and likely sensitivity of the breeding assemblage within the Study Area, with respect to any future proposals.
- 1.2.1.3 A first year of breeding bird surveys was conducted in 2023 throughout the Study Area with a second year of surveys conducted in 2024. The 2023 surveys were comprised of transect routes throughout the Study Area, covering a wider area than the following 2024 transect routes which focused on a more refined location within the Study Area in line with the likely locations of infrastructure following design refinement and optimisation.
- 1.2.1.4 Surveys focussed¹ on collecting information on the presence, abundance and distribution of breeding birds of conservation concern. These are species listed on Annex 1 of the EU Bird Directive, species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (WCA), and species on the Red and Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021).

1.3 Study Area Description

- 1.3.1.1 The Study Area (**Figure 1: Study area, Appendix C**) within which the eight transects were surveyed, is located in north-eastern Aberdeenshire. It covers 101km², much of which comprises agricultural land. This is split into cropland (e.g. potato farming) and pastures (typically for cows and sheep). Significant tracts of wetland, coniferous forestry, and broad-leaved or mixed woodland occur across the area, along with several villages and scattered farmsteads. The port town of Peterhead is located at the eastern edge of the Study Area.

¹ All species were recorded during surveys; however, the focus was placed on recording birds of conservation concern.

Coastal habitats and elements of tourist infrastructure are present along the North Sea coast in the east.

1.3.1.2 The transect locations for surveys in 2024 were revised from those during the 2023 surveys in order to better align with the locations of likely infrastructure within the Study Area.

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk-based Review

2.1.1.1 Baseline data collection and a review of literature have been undertaken to obtain information on the Study Area. Baseline data was gathered from within 10km of the Study Area as this is the maximum core range of key Scottish breeding species associated with designated area casework (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2016). Data sources included:

- Details of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar Sites within 10km, and ornithological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) within 5km of the Study Area;
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) for details on RSPB nature reserves within 10km;
- British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) data;
- North-East Scotland Biodiversity Record Centre (NESBReC), the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) North-East Scotland Bird Recorder, and other relevant bodies for species records within 10km;
- Scottish Ornithologists Club (2024). Online Scottish Bird Report;
- Francis, I & Cook, M, (2011). *The Breeding Birds of North-East Scotland Including Part of the Cairngorms National Park*. Scottish Ornithologists' Club; and
- Scottish Ornithologists Club (2024). 2022 North-East Scotland Bird Report. Published by the SOC, North East Scotland branch.

2.1.1.2 The potential breeding status of bird species recorded within the Study Area was assessed; this was based on:

- breeding status within North-East Aberdeenshire, and
- dates of record occurrence.

2.2 Consultation

2.2.1.1 Consultation was undertaken with NatureScot, Aberdeenshire Council and the RSPB in 2023, to agree the appropriate breeding bird survey methodology and coverage (**Breeding Bird Survey Report 2023**). **Table 2.1** details the dates and outcomes of consultation with Aberdeenshire Council in 2024.

Table 2.1 Consultation Details

Organisation	Date	Response	Outcome
Aberdeenshire Council.	19 December 2024.	<p>In response to the issue of an Ecology and Ornithology Update letter provided to the Council on 28 November 2024, the Natural Environment Team provided the following response: <i>“The ecological and ornithological surveys that have been carried out are comprehensive both in terms of the range of surveys and the number of years of survey work carried out. This will provide a solid baseline of data to inform the EIA and HRA and there are no further comments on this at this time.”</i></p>	Surveys followed the survey method statement as presented and detailed in this report, which reflects the methodology agreed with Aberdeenshire Council.

2.3 Field Surveys

2.3.1 Field survey overview

2.3.1.1 Generic breeding bird surveys were undertaken following an adapted method based on the BTO's Common Bird Census (CBC) methodology (Gilbert *et al.*, 1998), which aligns with NatureScot (2022) Standing Advice. Seven pre-defined transects (**Figure 2: Breeding bird survey transects, Appendix C**) were walked by experienced bird surveyors during the 2024 breeding season, including:

- South of Thunderton Transect;
- South East Land Parcel Transect;
- Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect;
- Tortorston Road Transect;
- Inverugie Transect; and
- North of Ugie Transect.

2.3.1.2 The transects were selected based on presence of publicly accessible land and representative coverage of the Study Area. Each transect was walked by an experienced bird surveyor, once per survey. Surveyors would periodically stop to scan habitats of particular interest, such as trees, field margins or ditches, as well as opportunistically throughout each field. Minor modifications to the transect route occurred where changes occurred to the access of certain areas (see **Section 2.3.3**). Transects were typically

surveyed at two or three-week intervals from late-April until mid-June, with one survey in April and early May, one in mid-May, and one in mid-June.

2.3.1.3 All surveys were planned for days with favourable weather conditions, avoiding periods of heavy rain, strong or cold winds, therefore minimising variation in bird activity levels due to weather conditions. All surveys were planned to commence at least an hour after dawn and to be completed no later than midday. The start point and direction of transects were altered between surveys, to ensure that certain parts of the Study Area did not receive systematically better coverage, due to a possible decline in bird song output later in the morning.

2.3.1.4 A custom-built, high-resolution digital map was designed for field use with ArcGIS Collector and Field Maps software. Surveyors used binoculars and a telescope, where relevant, to record birds and map these using a tablet with the appropriate software packages. The location of each bird detected (visually and / or aurally) was mapped using standard two-letter BTO Codes, and bird activity was recorded using standard behavioural code categories (Marchant, 1983).

2.3.1.5 Distribution survey dates, times, surveyors and weather conditions are detailed in **Appendix A**. Weather-related constraints are described in more detail in **Section 2.3.3**.

2.3.2 Analysis

2.3.2.1 On completion of the field survey, results were collated and analysed to provide maps of indicative territory centre-points, made across all the surveys. Territory mapping analysis involved the surveyor (an experienced ornithologist) looking for spatial groupings of song registrations and other indicators of breeding behaviour.

2.3.2.2 Territory locations were derived by looking at maps from the different visits in combination, as per the CBC methodology. It should therefore be noted that the locations do not necessarily represent specific nest locations, which is not the aim of this survey method. Instead, they provide a representative snapshot of the breeding assemblage across each of the areas surveyed.

2.3.3 Limitations

2.3.3.1 As access to private land was limited to less than half the Study Area at the time of survey planning, surveys were designed to provide representative coverage from publicly accessible transects, targeting the areas identified in **Section 1.3**. The survey therefore provides a broad sample of the breeding bird assemblage across the season, rather than a more standardised census provided by the CBC, where all habitats and habitat features (i.e. ditches, hedgerows, woodland, pools) are walked to within 50m. Nevertheless, the level of survey effort is considered appropriate to establish the breeding assemblage within the Study Area and provides a suitable baseline to inform the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report.

2.3.3.2 While surveys were planned for days with fair weather, actual conditions during surveys were not always optimal. The Tortorston Road Transect on 01 May 2024 suffered from reduced visibility due to foggy conditions at the start. On 29 May 2024 the South East land parcel Transect suffered from heavy rain at the start of the survey. However, in almost all cases, a full survey was completed without weather constraints.

2.3.3.3 The South East Land Parcel Transect, Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect, Tortorston Road Transect, Inverugie Transect, and North of Ugie Transect were surveyed four times over the course of the season. During the first and second survey visits on 02 and 16 May 2024, the South of Thunderton Transect was surveyed, but not on the following

two survey visits. In both instances, surveyors were re-deployed to other transects in order to prioritise coverage of emerging locations of the Project.

2.3.3.4 These limitations reduced the amount of data available to inform the baseline. However, the data set captured comprises 1,315 breeding bird records collected during 14 days of fieldwork in the 2024 breeding season. Performing three visits is standard industry practice for several UK breeding species, and it should be considered that some sites receive no targeted breeding bird surveys due to low potential interest. This extensive data set is therefore considered 'fit for purpose' in terms of providing a broad sample of the breeding bird assemblage across the Study Area.

3. Results

3.1 Desk-based Review

3.1.1 Designated Sites

3.1.1.1 Sites of ornithological interest, for which a breeding species or a breeding bird assemblage is a notifying interest feature, were identified within a 10km buffer of the Study Area. Designated Sites are detailed below and illustrated in **Figure 3: Designated ornithological sites, Appendix C**.

Table 3.1 Designated Sites

Designated site	Qualifying features	Distance and direction from the Study Area
Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA.	Qualifying features of the SPA: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seabird assemblage (breeding);• Black-legged kittiwake (breeding);• Common guillemot (breeding);• Herring gull (breeding);• European shag (breeding); and• Northern fulmar (breeding).	Adjacent
Bullers of Buchan Coast SSSI.	Qualifying features of the SSSI: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seabird colony;• Kittiwake (breeding);• Guillemot (breeding); and• Shag (breeding).	1.6km, south-east.
Loch of Strathbeg SPA and Ramsar.	Qualifying features of the SPA: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barnacle goose (non-breeding);• Greylag goose (non-breeding);• Pink-footed goose (non-breeding);• Sandwich tern (breeding);• Teal (non-breeding);• Whooper swan (non-breeding);• Goldeneye (non-breeding); and• Waterfowl assemblage (non-breeding). Qualifying features of the Ramsar site: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barnacle goose (non-breeding – wintering);• Pink-footed goose (non-breeding – passage); and• Whooper swan (non-breeding – wintering).	5.1km, north.
Loch of Strathbeg SSSI.	Qualifying features of the SSSI: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breeding bird assemblage;• Non-breeding goldeneye, greylag goose, pink-footed goose and whooper swan;• Eutrophic loch;• Fen meadow; and	3.8km, north.

Designated site	Qualifying features	Distance and direction from the Study Area
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal geomorphology of Scotland. 	
Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA and Ramsar.	<p>Qualifying features of the SPA site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwich tern (breeding); Common tern (breeding); Little tern (breeding); Pink-footed goose (non-breeding); Waterbird assemblage (non-breeding); Eider (non-breeding); Lapwing (non-breeding); and Redshank (non-breeding). <p>Qualifying features of the Ramsar site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pink-footed goose (non-breeding – passage); and Sandwich tern (breeding) 	6.5km, south.

Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA (including Bullers of Buchan Coast SSSI)

3.1.1.2 Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA is a stretch of southeast facing cliff in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. The 15km stretch of cliffs runs south of Peterhead, broken only by the sandy beach of Cruden Bay. The seaward extension extends approximately 2km into the marine environment to include the seabed, water column and surface. It is designated for breeding guillemot (8,640 pairs, 1.2% of Great Britain (GB) population), fulmar (1,765 pairs, 0.3% of the GB population), herring gull (4,292 pairs, 2.7% of the GB population), kittiwake (30,452 pairs, 6.2% of the GB population), shag (1,045 pairs, 2.7% of the GB population) and its overall breeding seabird assemblage of 95,000 individuals.

3.1.1.3 The Bullers of Buchan Coast SSSI is situated within the SPA further to the south of the Study Area, and is also notified for its breeding seabird colony, including kittiwake, guillemot and shag.

Loch of Strathbeg Designations

3.1.1.4 The Loch of Strathbeg SSSI is designated, in part, for its overall breeding bird assemblage (including mute swan, shelduck, redshank, teal, tufted duck, water rail, common tern, marsh harrier, sedge and grasshopper warblers and reed bunting).

3.1.1.5 The combined Loch of Strathbeg SPA and Ramsar designations comprise one of the most important sites for passage and wintering wildfowl in Britain. The numbers of whooper swan and greylag and pink-footed geese are of international importance, representing 1% of Icelandic, 6% of Icelandic and 25% of total Icelandic / Greenlandic populations respectively. In addition, nationally important concentrations of goldeneye frequently occur. Overall, the number of over-wintering waterfowl is of international importance.

Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA

3.1.1.6 Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA qualifies under Article 4.1 of the EU Birds Directive by regularly supporting populations of European importance of the Annex 1 species: Sandwich tern (1989 to 1991, up to 1125 pairs, up to 7% of the GB population); common tern (1989 to 1993, up to 265 pairs, up to 2% of the GB population); and little tern

(1989 to 1993, up to 41 pairs, up to 2% of the GB population). The marine component, immediately offshore of the terrestrial area forms the foraging zone for both Sandwich terns and little terns. The SPA further qualifies under Article 4.2 by regularly supporting populations of European importance of the migratory species: pink-footed goose; and its waterfowl assemblage.

Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch Ramsar

3.1.1.7 Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch Ramsar site is notified for its breeding population of Sandwich tern, as well as its non-breeding population of pink-footed goose and wintering waterfowl assemblage.

Desk Study Data

3.1.1.8 Data received from the NESBReC for the years from 2013 to 2022 (inclusive) are summarised in **Appendix B, Table B.1**. The birds recorded included 91 species; of these, 51 are considered potential breeders.

3.1.1.9 Data received from the BTO typically concerns wintering species. However, WeBS data from Peterhead Bay and Sandford Bay from 2016 to 2020 provided several records from the breeding season (taken as April to August inclusive). These are summarised in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2 Summary of BTO Breeding Season Records 2016-2020

Species	Total Counted	Potential Breeder at Peterhead or Sandford Bay
Bar-tailed godwit.	1	No
Black-headed gull.	502	Yes
Common gull*.	276	Yes
Common sandpiper*.	3	Yes
Common tern.	5	Yes
Common / Arctic tern.	7	Yes
Cormorant*	88	Yes
Curlew	41	Yes
Dunlin	4	No
Eider (excluding Shetland population).	280	Yes
Great black-backed gull*.	458	Yes

Species	Total Counted	Potential Breeder at Peterhead or Sandford Bay
Grey heron*.	21	Yes
Herring gull.	4,325	Yes
Lesser black-backed gull*.	16	Yes
Mallard*	8	Yes
Oystercatcher*	391	Yes

* Denotes species not noted in the NESBReC data search.

3.1.1.10 Out of the fifteen bird species and one species group recorded, fourteen were considered possible breeders. Eight species (all potential breeders) were not noted in the NESBReC data received. This brings the desk study species total to 109 species, including 69 known or potential breeders.

SOC Data

3.1.1.11 Data received from SOC recorders comprised 276 bird species / groups. Many of the species were vagrants recorded in small numbers and highly unlikely to breed in the Study Area. However, they also included fifty-four potential breeding species not already noted in designated site citations, NESBReC or BTO data. Records of these are summarised in **Appendix B, Table B.2**.

3.1.1.12 The Scottish Bird Reports returned a total of 330 bird species / groups from north-east Scotland during the period from 2013 to 2019 (the most recent year for which data was available). However, a large proportion of these species were vagrants with no likelihood of breeding in the Study Area.

3.2 Field Surveys

3.2.1.1 The 2024 breeding bird surveys recorded a total of 71 bird species. **Figures 4 to 9, Appendix C** show the distribution of Red and Amber-listed and Schedule 1 species (indicative breeding territory centres) on each transect.

3.2.1.2 **Table 3.3** summarises these results, indicating whether species are:

- listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive;
- listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) (WCA);
- a species of principal importance on the Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL); or
- Birds of Conservation Concern Species status under the latest UK Birds of Conservation Concern assessment (BoCC5; Stanbury *et al.*, 2021) is displayed as green, amber or red.

3.2.1.3 Species have been arranged alphabetically as opposed to taxonomically.

Table 3.3 Summary of Breeding Bird Survey Results April to July 2024

Species	Conservation Status*	No. of territories recorded during surveys	Summary	Breeding Status within Study Area [Confirmed breeder; Unconfirmed / likely; Unconfirmed / possible; Non-breeder]
Blackbird	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Frequent to abundant across Study Area.	Confirmed breeder.
Blackcap	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	One singing male on the Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect in May and two singing males on the Inverugie Transect and on the South East Land Parcel Transect in June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Blue tit	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Frequent across majority of Study Area.	Confirmed breeder.
Bullfinch	SBL, BoCC5 Amber List.	0	Single male recorded singing on the South of Thunderton Transect in May 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Buzzard	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	One adult recorded in flight being mobbed by carrion crows at the South East Land Parcel Transect in June 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Carrion crow	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Frequent to abundant across Study Area. One nest site confirmed on the Tortorston Road Transect in May 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Chaffinch	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Frequent across Study Area.	Confirmed breeder.

Species	Conservation Status*	No. of territories recorded during surveys	Summary	Breeding Status within Study Area [Confirmed breeder; Unconfirmed / likely; Unconfirmed / possible; Non-breeder]
Coal tit	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	One singing male on the South East Land Parcel Transect in April 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Common gull	BoCC5 Red List.	N/A (flocks) – negligible breeding evidence.	Frequent to abundant across Study Area with flocks of up to 133 in fields on Tortorston Road Transect on 01 May 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Curlew	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	2	Peak of 27 on the South East Land Parcel Transect in April 2024. Frequent throughout study area in May and June 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Dunnock	SBL, BoCC5 Amber List.	0	Frequent throughout Study Area in May and June 2024, often as singing males.	Confirmed breeder.
Feral pigeon	Feral	N/A	Flocks of four recorded in May and June 2024 and one individual feeding in June on the Inverugie Transect.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Goldfinch	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Occasional across the Study Area, usually as pairs in suitable nesting habitat. Peak count of five in mixed flock of adults and juveniles on the Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect in June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.

Species	Conservation Status*	No. of territories recorded during surveys	Summary	Breeding Status within Study Area [Confirmed breeder; Unconfirmed / likely; Unconfirmed / possible; Non-breeder]
Grasshopper warbler	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	0	Two singing males on the Tortorston Road Transect in May 2024.	Unconfirmed / possible breeder.
Great black-backed gull	BoCC5 Red List.	0	Individual in flight at Tortorston Road Transect in May 2024. One in flight on the Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield transect in June 2024.	Unconfirmed / possible breeder.
Great spotted woodpecker	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	One individual on the South of Thunderton Transect in May 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Great tit	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Frequent within the Study Area.	Confirmed breeder.
Greenfinch	BoCC5 Red List.	1	Two singing males and one pair on the Inverugie Transect in May 2024. One signing male on the Tortostone Road Transect in June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Grey Partridge	BoCC5 Red List.	0	One female in field on the North of River Ugie Transect on 31 May 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Herring gull.	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	N/A (flocks)	Sporadic throughout Survey Area and frequent in large numbers close to North Sea.	Confirmed breeder.
Hooded crow	BoCC Green List.	0	One on the Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect in June 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.

Species	Conservation Status*	No. of territories recorded during surveys	Summary	Breeding Status within Study Area [Confirmed breeder; Unconfirmed / likely; Unconfirmed / possible; Non-breeder]
House martin	BoCC5 Red List.	3	Fairly frequent across Study Area usually as groups in flight and foraging. Likely nests on Inverugie Transect and in barns on the North of River Ugie Transect in May 2024. Three confirmed nests on house in South East Land Parcel Transect in June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
House sparrow	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	N/A (colonial nesting) – breeding evidence present.	Fairly frequent across Study Area.	Confirmed breeder.
Jackdaw	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Frequent across Study Area. One nest site confirmed on Tortorston Road Transect. Peak flock count of 30 birds on the South East Land Parcel Transect in June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Lapwing	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	0	One in field on the Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect in June 2024.	Unconfirmed / possible breeder.
Lesser black-backed gull	BoCC5 Amber List.	0	One in flight on Tortorston Road Transect and one individual at Sandford Bay, and three loafing on island off Buchan Ness in May 2024.	Unconfirmed / possible breeder.

Species	Conservation Status*	No. of territories recorded during surveys	Summary	Breeding Status within Study Area [Confirmed breeder; Unconfirmed / likely; Unconfirmed / possible; Non-breeder]
Linnet	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	3	Occasional across north and west of Study Area. Usually recorded as pairs or singing males.	Confirmed breeder.
Magpie	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Occasional except in north-east of Study Area.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Mallard	BoCC5 Amber List.	0	One in flight on the South East Land Parcel Transect and four in pool on Land parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect in May 2024. One pair and one individual in flight on South East Land Parcel Transect, and one pair in flight on the land parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect in June 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Marsh Harrier	BoCC5 Amber List.	0	One male in flight on the North of River Ugie Transect on 16 May 2024.	Unconfirmed / possible breeder.
Meadow pipit	BoCC5 Amber List.	9	Frequent in open semi-natural and agricultural habitats across the Study Area.	Confirmed breeder.
Mistle thrush.	BoCC5 Red List.	0	One singing male on the South of Thunderton Transect on 16 May.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Mute swan.	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Four in flight on the Inverugie Transect on 1 May 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.

Species	Conservation Status*	No. of territories recorded during surveys	Summary	Breeding Status within Study Area [Confirmed breeder; Unconfirmed / likely; Unconfirmed / possible; Non-breeder]
Oystercatcher	BoCC5 Amber List.	0	Sporadic sightings within the Study Area.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Pheasant	Non-native species.	N/A	Two individuals recorded on South East Land Parcel Transect in April 2024. One individual and a group of three on the South of Flushing Transect and one on South of Thunderton Transect in May 2024. One individual on the South East Land Parcel Transect in June 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Pied wagtail	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Occasional throughout Study Area	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Reed bunting.	SBL, BoCC5 Amber List.	2	Occasional across Study Area in May and June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Robin	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Occasional across Study Area in May and June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Rook	BoCC5 Amber List.	N/A (colonial nesting) – breeding evidence present.	Frequent across Study Area. Largest flock comprised 250 birds on the South East Land Parcel Transect on 20 June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Sedge warbler	BoCC5 Amber List.	6	Frequent in May and June 2024, usually as singing males, primarily in north of Study Area.	Confirmed breeder.

Species	Conservation Status*	No. of territories recorded during surveys	Summary	Breeding Status within Study Area [Confirmed breeder; Unconfirmed / likely; Unconfirmed / possible; Non-breeder]
Skylark	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	49	Frequent to abundant across agricultural land within the Study Area.	Confirmed breeder.
Snipe	BoCC5 Amber List.	0	One on Tortorston Road Transect on 19 June 2024.	Unconfirmed / possible breeder.
Song thrush	SBL, BoCC5 Amber List.	3	Frequent on all transects in May usually as singing males. Two individuals on Tortorston Road Transect and Inverugie Transect in June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Sparrowhawk	BoCC5 Amber List.	0	Single adult recorded in flight on the South East Land Parcel Transect on 30 April 2024.	Unconfirmed / likely breeder.
Starling	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	1	Frequent on all transects. Maximum flock size of 57 birds on the Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect in June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Swallow	BoCC5 Green List.	N/A	Frequent on all transects with occupied nests on the South East Land Parcel Transect and likely nests in barns on the Inverugie Transect and the North of River Ugie Transect. Peak flock count of eight on the Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect in May 2024.	Confirmed breeder.

Species	Conservation Status*	No. of territories recorded during surveys	Summary	Breeding Status within Study Area [Confirmed breeder; Unconfirmed / likely; Unconfirmed / possible; Non-breeder]
Tawny owl	BoCC5 Amber List.	0	One male calling on the South of Thunderton Transect on 16 May 2024.	Unconfirmed / possible breeder.
Tree sparrow	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	N/A (colonial nesting) – breeding evidence present.	Occasional on all transects in May and June 2024, usually as pairs in suitable nesting habitats.	Confirmed breeder.
Wheatear	BoCC5 Amber List.	0	Group of eight on the South East Land Parcel Transect on 30 April 2024. One on the Inverugie Transect on 05 May 2024.	Unconfirmed / possible breeder.
Whitethroat	BoCC5 Amber List.	3	Occasional across the Study Area usually as singing males.	Confirmed breeder.
Whooper swan	Schedule 1, SBL, BoCC5 Amber List.	0	Three in flight on the South of Thunderton Transect on 02 May 2024. These are all likely to represent migrating or late wintering individuals.	Non-breeder
Willow warbler	BoCC5 Amber List.	4	Occasional to frequent throughout Study Area, primarily on the Tortorston Road Transect.	Confirmed breeder.

Species	Conservation Status*	No. of territories recorded during surveys	Summary	Breeding Status within Study Area [Confirmed breeder; Unconfirmed / likely; Unconfirmed / possible; Non-breeder]
Woodpigeon	BoCC5 Amber List.	N/A (flocks) – breeding evidence present.	Frequent across the Study Area with a peak of 4 birds on the South East Land Parcel Transect on 20 June 2024.	Confirmed breeder.
Wren	BoCC5 Amber List.	13	Frequent across the Study Area.	Confirmed breeder.
Yellowhammer	SBL, BoCC5 Red List.	17	Frequent across agricultural land within the Study Area usually as singing males.	Confirmed breeder.

*Annex 1 = EU Birds Directive Annex 1, Schedule 1 = Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 1, SBL = Scottish Biodiversity List, BoCC = Birds of Conservation Concern. Not counted for feral, non-native and Green-listed species, or certain species nesting colonially or occurring in large flocks that make it hard to assign accurate territories.

4. Summary

4.1 Designated Sites

- 4.1.1.1 As identified in **Section 3.1.1** the Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA lies directly adjacent to the Study Area within the intertidal environment (located at the Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS) line). However, the extent of SPA that incorporates terrestrial environment (supporting onshore habitat for nesting seabirds) lies 945m to the south of the Study Area.
- 4.1.1.2 The SPA is designated for five breeding species of seabird (black-legged kittiwake, common guillemot, herring gull, European shag and northern fulmar). Of these species only herring gull was recorded breeding during the surveys, with an active herring gull colony recorded at Buchan Ness as well as individuals and small groups frequently recorded loafing and foraging along the coastal strip and within open fields to the north of Peterhead.
- 4.1.1.3 Bullers of Buchan Coast SSSI lies approximately 1.6km to the south of the Study Area and supports a seabird colony, including kittiwake, guillemot and European shag. None of these species were recorded breeding during the breeding bird survey.
- 4.1.1.4 Loch of Strathbeg SPA / Ramsar / SSSI designations support Sandwich tern and Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA and Ramsar support Sandwich tern, common tern and little tern. None of these species were recorded breeding during the breeding bird survey.

4.2 Desk Study

- 4.2.1.1 Data received from NESBReC included 91 species, of these, 51 are considered potential breeders. Data received from the BTO typically concerns wintering species; however, of the fifteen bird species and one species group recorded, fourteen were considered possible breeders. Data received from SOC recorders and bird reports comprised 276 and 330 bird species / groups respectively. However, many of the species were vagrants recorded in small numbers and highly unlikely to breed in the Study Area.

4.3 Species Summary

- 4.3.1.1 A total of 32 confirmed breeding species (out of 69 recorded species) (See **Table 3.3**) were recorded within the Study Area during the 2024 breeding bird surveys; 17 unconfirmed / likely breeding species; 11 unconfirmed / possibly breeding species; and nine non-breeding species.
- 4.3.1.2 Two Schedule 1 species (which are legally protected) were recorded within the Study Area (red-throated diver and whooper swan) but were considered to be non-breeders.
- 4.3.1.3 Transect surveys within the Study Area recorded 13 Red List BoCC species and 16 Amber-listed BoCC species recorded as likely or confirmed breeders, including small populations of the following declining farmland species: curlew (2 territories), tree sparrow (eight pairs recorded), linnet (three territories), and reed bunting (two territories), as well as larger populations of the following species: skylark (49 territories), yellowhammer (17 territories) and meadow pipit (nine territories).
- 4.3.1.4 Assemblages of greatest diversity (which included a combination of red and amber BoCC species) were found to occur within the vicinity of the following locations:

- North of Blackhills on the Tortorston Road Transect – whitethroat (BoCC Amber list), sedge warbler (BoCC Amber list), meadow pipit (BoCC Amber list), willow warbler (BoCC Amber list), reed bunting (BoCC Amber list), wren (BoCC Amber list), starling (BoCC Red list), oystercatcher (BoCC Amber list), grasshopper warbler (BoCC Red list), skylark (BoCC Red list), and yellowhammer (BoCC Red list);
- Hillhead of Cocklaw on the South East Land Parcel Transect – willow warbler (BoCC Amber list), oystercatcher, house sparrow (BoCC Red list), tree sparrow (BoCC Red list), wren (BoCC Amber list), starling (BoCC Red list), skylark (BoCC Red list), house martin (BoCC Red list), and yellowhammer (BoCC Red list);
- Blackhills Nature Reserve on the South East Land Parcel Transect – whitethroat (BoCC Amber list), willow warbler (BoCC Amber list), swallow (BoCC Amber list), reed bunting (BoCC Amber list), meadow pipit (BoCC Amber list), wren (BoCC Amber list), and skylark (BoCC Red list); and
- North of Inverugie on the Inverugie Transect – greenfinch (BoCC Red list), yellowhammer (BoCC Red list), sedge warbler (BoCC Amber list), wren (BoCC Amber list), willow warbler (BoCC Amber list), house sparrow (BoCC Red list), song thrush (BoCC Amber list), dunnock (BoCC Amber list), linnet (BoCC Red list).

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Appendix A

Survey Dates, Times, Conditions

Table A.1 Breeding Bird Walkover Survey Dates, Times and Conditions

Date	Transect	Timings	Surveyor	Weather Conditions
30/04/2024	South East Land Parcel Transect	06:21-08:36	J Everett	30% cloud cover, 8°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 3 south
01/05/2024	Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect	05:46-07:31	J Everett	100% cloud cover, 9°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 3 south east
01/05/2024	Tortorston Road Transect	07:42-10:37	J Everett	100% cloud cover, 9°C, foggy, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 3 south east
02/05/2024	South of Thunderton Transect	08:36-10:07	J Everett	40% cloud cover, 11°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 2 east
14/05/2024	Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect	05:41-07:08	D Locke	100% cloud cover, 11°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 3 south east
14/05/2024	South East Land Parcel Transect	07:14-09:00	D Locke	100% cloud cover, hazy, 12°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 3 south east
15/05/2024	Tortorston Road Transect	06:01-08:00	D Locke	100% cloud cover, 11°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 2 south east
16/05/2024	South of Thunderton Transect	05:45-06:40	D Locke	100% cloud cover, hazy, 7°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 1 east

Date	Transect	Timings	Surveyor	Weather Conditions
16/05/2024	North of River Ugie Transect	06:59-07:34	D Locke	0% cloud cover, slight haze, 11°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 1 west
29/05/2024	South East Land Parcel Transect	06:37-09:23	A Kekewich	100% cloud cover, 11°C, heavy rain, Beaufort wind force 0 north east
30/05/2024	Tortorston Road Transect	06:22-09:15	A Kekewich	100% cloud cover, 11°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 5 north west
31/05/2024	Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect	06:13-08:08	A Kekewich	90% cloud cover, 11°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 3 north west
31/05/2024	North of River Ugie Transect	08:44-09:45	A Kekewich	70% cloud cover, 12°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 4 north west
19/06/2024	Tortorston Road Transect	05:44-09:12	A Kekewich	100% cloud cover, 7°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 1 west
20/06/2024	South East Land Parcel Transect	05:33-08:20	A Kekewich	60% cloud cover, hazy, 12°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 2 south west
21/06/2024	Land Parcel South of Longside Airfield Transect	05:41-07:25	A Kekewich	100% cloud cover, 14°C, no precipitation, Beaufort wind force 3 south

Survey personnel and years of professional ornithological survey experience:

- Jamie Everett: 6 years
- Alex Kekewich: 7 years
- David Locke: 7 years

Appendix B

Data Search Records

Table B.1 Summary of NESBReC Records 2013-2022

Species	No. of records	Potential Breeder
Arctic skua	29	No
Arctic tern	32	Yes
Barn owl	45	Yes
Barnacle goose	136	No
Bar-tailed godwit	54	No
Bean goose	44	No
Bearded tit	243	Yes
Bewick's swan	9	No
Bittern	33	No
Black-headed gull	321	Yes
Black-tailed godwit	294	No
Black-throated diver	7	No
Brambling	25	No
Brent goose	8	No
Bullfinch	110	Yes
Canada goose	53	Yes
Common scoter	24	No
Common tern	104	Yes
Cuckoo	34	Yes
Curlew	412	Yes
Dotterel	31	No
Dunlin	380	No
Dunnock	339	Yes
Eider	193	Yes

Species	No. of records	Potential Breeder
Garganey	128	Yes
Goldeneye	191	No
Goshawk	5	Yes
Grasshopper warbler	48	Yes
Great northern diver	44	No
Green sandpiper	47	No
Greenland white-fronted goose	28	No
Grey partridge	23	Yes
Grey phalarope	10	No
Greylag goose	188	Yes
Hen harrier	196	No
Herring gull	507	Yes
Hobby	5	Yes
Hooded crow	58	Yes
House sparrow	557	Yes
Kestrel	144	Yes
Kingfisher	18	Yes
Lesser redpoll	56	Yes
Linnet	353	Yes
Manx shearwater	22	No
Marsh harrier	505	Yes
Merlin	61	No
Osprey	326	Yes
Peregrine	260	Yes
Pink-footed goose	312	No
Pochard	46	Yes
Purple sandpiper	63	No
Red grouse	1	Yes

Species	No. of records	Potential Breeder
Red kite	6	No
Red-backed shrike	7	Yes
Red-necked grebe	7	No
Redshank	342	Yes
Red-throated diver	43	No
Redwing	54	No
Reed bunting	380	Yes
Reed warbler	3	Yes
Ring ouzel	1	No
Roseate tern	9	Yes
Ruff	314	Yes
Russian white-fronted goose	4	No
Sandwich tern	75	Yes
Savi's warbler	14	No
Scaup	68	No
Short-eared owl	33	Yes
Siskin	153	Yes
Skylark	481	Yes
Slavonian grebe	37	No
Smew	27	No
Snipe	276	Yes
Snow bunting	25	No
Song thrush	224	Yes
Spotted crake	4	No
Spotted flycatcher	36	Yes
Starling	539	Yes
Swift	122	Yes
Temminck's stint	7	No

Species	No. of records	Potential Breeder
Tree sparrow	406	Yes
Turtle dove	1	Yes
Twite	4	No
White-fronted goose sp.	72	No
White-tailed eagle	4	Yes
Whooper swan	298	No
Wood sandpiper	77	No
Wood warbler	1	Yes
Woodcock	40	Yes
Wryneck	2	Yes
Yellow wagtail	7	No
Yellowhammer	602	Yes

This table lists 91 species and one species group (white-fronted goose sp.). All white-fronted geese in this group would be either European or Russian white-fronted geese, both species that were recorded within the total of 91.

Table B.2 Summary of SOC Potential Breeding Species Records 2013-2021

Species	Minimum Total Count
Black guillemot	31
Blackbird	638
Blackcap	101
Blue tit	463
Buzzard	458
Chaffinch	507
Chiffchaff	136
Coal tit	137
Collared dove	335
Crossbill	3
Common gull	416

Species	Minimum Total Count
Common sandpiper	9
Coot	98
Cormorant	515
Corn bunting	162
Feral pigeon	432
Gadwall	166
Goldcrest	81
Goldfinch	496
Great tit	394
Greenfinch	233
Grey wagtail	17
House martin	177
Little grebe	75
Little ringed plover	17
Long-eared owl	3
Long-tailed tit	26
Magpie	309
Meadow pipit	322
Mistle thrush	23
Moorhen	135
Mute swan	451
Pheasant	330
Pied flycatcher	31
Puffin	27
Quail	8
Raven	24
Razorbill	61
Red-legged partridge	5

Species	Minimum Total Count
Robin	529
Rock pipit	226
Rook	394
Sand martin	64
Sparrowhawk	120
Stock dove	23
Stonechat	213
Swallow	463
Tawny owl	4
Tree creeper	23
Wheatear	137
Whitethroat	146
Willow Warbler	271
Woodpigeon	604
Wren	515

Excludes species already listed in **Table 3.1** and/or **Appendix B, Table B.1**. Total count is given as a minimum as some records only refer to a species as 'present.'

Appendix C Figures



















