

Brent geese top charts in local wildlife survey

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Brent geese have scooped the top spot in this year's Great Solent Birdwatch count with more 2,000 spotted by volunteers during the research project.

Now in its third year, this annual research programme takes place on the Solent coastline with members of the public recording their shorebird observations over a 60-minute period. The results were revealed today by Bird Aware Solent, the organisation which aims to raise awareness of the wealth of birdlife on the Solent shores: from the New Forest to West Wittering in West Sussex and the northern Isle of Wight.

Other shorebirds hitting the high numbers include more than 1,400 black-headed gulls, 1,000 oystercatchers and over 500 wigeon. Rarer sightings include 6 white-tailed eagles, which have been recently reintroduced to the Isle of Wight, and a single whimbrel: a wading bird on the highest conservation priority list.

Councillor Seán Woodward, Chairman of the Partnership for South Hampshire, the body that oversees Bird Aware Solent, said: 'This valuable project highlights the wealth of protected species that makes their home on our coastline. Raising awareness helps to ensure people share our shores with birds and give them space to feed and rest without being disturbed.'

Great Solent Birdwatch results

	Top ten coastal birds	Numbers	Conservation status
1.	Dark-bellied brent goose	2,092	Amber
2.	Black-headed gull	1,418	Amber

3.	Oystercatcher	1,070	Amber
4.	Wigeon	555	Amber
5.	Dunlin	535	Red
6.	Canada goose	324	None
7.	Black-tailed godwit	254	Red
8.	Turnstone	237	Amber
9.	Redshank	235	Amber
10.	Golden plover	110	Green

Dark-bellied brent geese are much loved winter visitors to the Solent with 10 percent of the entire global population visiting the area during the colder months. The birds fly over two thousand miles in family groups to get here from Siberia in Russia.

Brent geese are among a number of amber listed birds observed during the survey: the second most critical list in terms of conservation. Dunlin and black-tailed godwit, also spotted by volunteers, are in the most critical category.

A total of more than 9,000 birds were spotted during the event with the next Great Solent Birdwatch scheduled to take place from 22 to 30 October 2022.

Bird Aware Solent is a partnership of local councils, the RSPB, the Wildlife Trust and Chichester Harbour Conservancy. It raises awareness of the ducks, geese and wading birds that spend the winter on the Solent coastline, an area of worldwide importance for wildlife.

