

In England Norfolk is perhaps the most productive county with nine birds in all and five since 1990. In the northeast, there have been four birds each from Northumberland and Yorkshire. The Midlands has fared well over the years, with nine birds from seven counties.

In the southwest, four records are spread across Dorset, Somerset and Devon. There have been two from the northwest. One from Denbighshire in March 1991 represents the only recent record for Wales.

When: On the Scottish islands the earliest ever was a male shot on North Ronaldsay on 12th June 1894. The only other June sighting was a male on Fair Isle on 13th June 1908. The earliest of the modern recording era was an adult female on Fair Isle on 4th July 1953. Modest numbers have been recorded on the islands in July, but the vast majority produces a remarkably steep peak in mid-to-late August (Figure 92). Arrivals diminish during September and just one has been seen in October (Fair Isle on 20th in 1990).

Away from the Scottish islands, there is remarkably no evidence of a similarly or closely timed peak in sightings, a testament to the difficulty of finding a rare congener among its much commoner carrier species away from treeless landscapes.

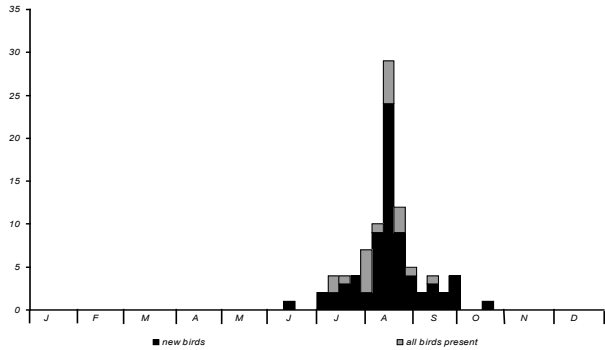


Figure 92: Timing of Two-barred Crossbills on the Scottish islands, 1900-2007.

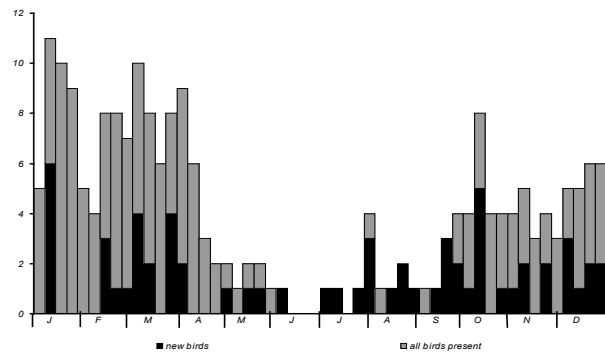


Figure 93: Timing of Two-barred Crossbills away from the Scottish islands, 1900-2007.

Discussion: Two-barred Crossbill feeds primarily on larch, especially so in the northern taiga zone. Larch cones remain on the tree with some of their seeds unshelled for two to three years. Thus, compared with Common Crossbill, Two-barred is rendered less prone to extreme fluctuations in food supply. This may explain why Two-barred Crossbill is much less irruptive in the Western Palearctic, appearing infrequently in small numbers south of the boreal zone with