

TOS 104



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Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom 2012



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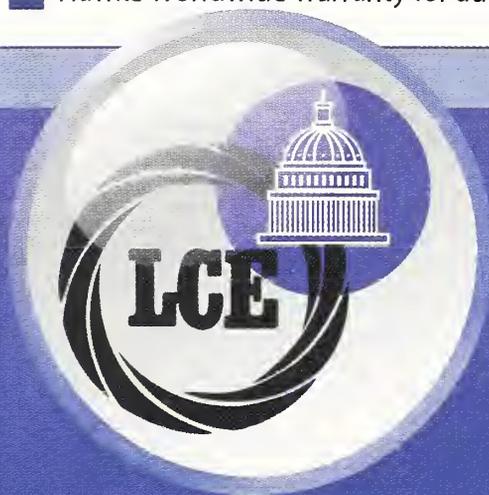
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# British Birds

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The RBBP report is always a fascinating digest of the fortunes of the UK's rare breeding birds. Since it takes two years to assemble the data, some of the headline acts will be old news, but seeing the results for all the species pulled together in one place is always enlightening. Coming at a time when there are breeding European Bee-eaters and Black-winged Stilts apparently thriving in southern Britain (see pp. 502), the flux in the UK's rarer species, many of them at the edge of their range, is more than ever a subject that birdwatchers want to know more about.

Here in Shetland we have enjoyed one of the better summers for seabirds since the turn of the century. And I really mean enjoyed – it was great to go back to Fair Isle and see clouds of Puffins wheeling over Sheep Rock and to see Kittiwakes with chicks in many of the places where I took them for granted 20 years ago. Of course, one good season will not repair a decade or more of breeding failures, even though it is obviously a step in the right direction. One problem is that we have very little understanding of why the 2014 breeding season was so different from that of 2013 – or indeed what the future might bring. It all boils down to the simple fact that more food was available, but understanding why is quite another matter.

So there is plenty of food for thought on the topic of marine research – and the associated issue of how that (and other environmental matters) might be affected by this month's vote on Scottish Independence, which is the subject for Chris Smout's *BB eye* editorial on pp. 498–499. Predicting what lies ahead for Scotland's birds has perhaps never been more difficult.

*Roger Riddington*



**British Birds aims to:** ❖ provide an up-to-date magazine for everyone interested in the birds of the Western Palearctic; ❖ publish a range of material on behaviour, conservation, distribution, ecology, identification, movements, status and taxonomy as well as the latest ornithological news and book reviews; ❖ maintain its position as the journal of record; and ❖ interpret scientific research on birds in an easily accessible way.

## The environment and the Scottish referendum

In this month's referendum on Scottish Independence, what would be the impact of a 'yes' vote on the conservation of the Scottish natural environment? What follows is just my personal opinion, albeit informed by discussion with others in the voluntary sector, the universities and the Scottish Government.

Surely the direct impact would be minimal, since care of the environment is already a devolved matter – it is already the Scottish Government that pays Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, dictates to the Forestry Commission what woodland policy to pursue, interprets European environmental law, determines implementation details in the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy (but only after the negotiations have been conducted at a UK level), and ultimately decides about the number and placing of windfarms and wave-energy installations. What happens in environmental policy is determined at government level by the quality and mindset of Scottish ministers and their civil service, not whether Scotland is a devolved or an independent state. In Scotland, as in the rest of the UK, the authorities in recent years have cut funding to the conservation agencies and shown little interest in those Pillar II aspects of the CAP which could be favourable to biodiversity. This is not likely to change in the short run, irrespective of the outcome of the referendum.

The indirect effects of independence, however, could potentially be serious. If Scotland suffers economically (as most independent forecasters, such as the *Economist* and the Office for Budget Responsibility, think), less money (in whatever currency) would become available for public services, including conservation. On the plus side, the Scottish Government has promised 'to enshrine environmental protection in a written constitution'. But the natural environment might nevertheless offer a soft target for cuts in bad times, especially since the Government seems to equate environmental

gain more with pursuing renewable energy and abolishing nuclear installations than with maintaining biodiversity. Indeed, the word 'biodiversity' does not occur in the Scottish Government's white paper on independence. If Scotland flourishes, more money might be available in theory – but there is no indication from its record as a devolved administration that any future Scottish Government would be likely to spend more on environmental conservation compared with, for example, windmills or trying to meet the pressing social problems posed by an ageing population.

There is a good deal of worry that a 'yes' vote might mean less money for science, since UK research councils and JNCC would not operate in Scotland – so less money would be available for biodiversity research, unless this is fully offset by increased funding from the Scottish state. Presumably, a Scottish Research Council would be established, to adjudicate grants as the Natural Environment Research Council and others do at present. Certainly, the Scottish Government has publicly undertaken to ensure that there would be no adverse funding impact on the universities from Scotland's transition to independence, though there is some scepticism about whether that could be achieved.

Uncertainties, at least in the short term, could affect several research units, though some, like the NERC Sea Mammal Research Unit at St Andrews, are already partly funded by the Scottish Government. The seabird work in Glasgow and ornithological and marine work at several other universities, such as Aberdeen and Stirling, might find things more difficult. The CEH station at Penicuik, along with its seabird monitoring work, might be in an awkward situation as it is also part of NERC. So might the Aberdeen office of JNCC, which operates under the auspices of Defra and also works on seabirds and cetaceans. These are clear instances of the Scottish Government needing to pick up the entire bill. The BTO in Scotland would also need to find new funding to replace their grants from the JNCC, and this

might threaten (at least in the short run) to disrupt their survey work. A question would arise over the National Biodiversity Network, at present organised entirely by JNCC, which is part of the more general and perhaps more important problem of how to co-ordinate biodiversity research across the border.

The Scottish Government ought to be willing to finance all this work, much of it of high international reputation and directly relevant to the sustainability of the Scottish environment. But it is at least possible, even if they maintained the level of university funding overall, that they would take the opportunity of a blank sheet to redistribute funding in some other way. The Scottish Government has shown itself thus far to be at least as dirigiste as the UK Government but then, devolved or independent, governments are always changing their minds. Scientists and voluntary bodies dependent on external funding learn to live with uncertainty.

The wider position of the main environmental charities would not be affected, as there is no constraint on the RSPB, the BTO or the Woodland Trust to confine their operations to the UK. On the other hand, there would be substantial administrative costs incurred by adjusting to operating in two different countries. The RSPB has taken a lead in declaring its neutrality in the debate.

The whole issue is vastly complicated by the uncertain future of Scotland and the UK in Europe. If we, the residents of Scotland, vote 'yes', we would have to apply for membership of the EU. Some countries (Spain, for example) might try to veto our entry (perhaps unlikely but not impossible), or (more likely) insist that we accept the euro, which if we refuse, means that, theoretically, we would be out of Europe for the foreseeable future. Certainly, the incoming president of the European Commission agrees with his predecessor, and with the president of the European Council, that an independent Scotland would find it 'difficult if not impossible' to get into the EU. But it is worth remembering that Sweden also promised to accept the euro 'when conditions allow', but in the judgement of Swedes they never do allow and yet Sweden is not punished. Scotland might

negotiate a similar fudge.

If we fail in the EU negotiations, however, and find ourselves outside, bang goes the CAP, the CFP, the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive, the Water Directive and more besides. We might not like all European policies, but all of our good environmental laws since the 1970s have also originated in Brussels, and Brussels has the power to enforce them even against the will of national governments.

If we vote 'no', we remain tied to a UK which, led by the Eurosceptic Conservatives and prodded by UKIP, is set on having a referendum on membership of the EU in 2017. Given the perceived weakness of the party leadership, Labour could either lose the next election or decide not to oppose such a referendum. Given David Cameron's evident inability to negotiate with Brussels or make any allies in Europe, it is quite likely that he will be forced into a corner where the Conservatives would officially recommend leaving the EU, egged on by the right-wing press. So it is quite possible that the UK would indeed vote to leave, when it would face the same predicament as Scotland if it could not join: outside the CAP and CFP, but having no safeguards about the environment that Europe might insist upon. We might then have a UK Government dedicated to dismantling much environmental planning as a hindrance to economic growth. Although the environment is indeed a devolved matter for Scotland, the Scots might follow suit in order not to leave Scotland at a disadvantage, and to prove that, in Alex Salmond's words before the Donald Trump affair, 'Scotland is open for business'.

In summary, while the direct effects of the Scottish referendum are unlikely to be great, there are substantial indirect and hypothetical risks whichever way the vote goes. Whatever happens, the outlook for an enlightened biodiversity policy is bleak unless voluntary bodies and individuals can force the issue of conservation significantly up the political agenda, not only in Scotland, but in the rest of the UK too. And there is a task for the readers of *British Birds*.

*Chris Smout*

What do you think? Join the debate at [www.britishbirds.co.uk/category/editorials](http://www.britishbirds.co.uk/category/editorials)

# News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

## Hen Harrier Day

'We're missing our Hen Harriers' was the message coming loud and clear from the three events that took place on northern English moorlands on 10th August.

The inaugural Hen Harrier Day was devised by Northumbrian birder Alan Tilmouth in collaboration with blogger Charlie Moores, who formed the new pressure group Birders Against Wildlife Crime ([www.birdersagainst.org](http://www.birdersagainst.org)). The campaign has had high-profile backing from former RSPB Conservation Director Mark Avery and broadcaster Chris Packham, both of whom attended the event in Derbyshire (plate 259). Despite the foul weather, more than 500 people turned out for the Derbyshire event, a clear demonstration of how seriously the public takes this issue.

Mark Avery has been highly successful at raising the profile of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* and their illegal persecution in the uplands of northern England and southern Scotland, the heartland of driven grouse shooting in the UK. Persuading Marks and Spencer not to stock Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* on its shelves was a major

coup. He wrote an open letter to M&S chief executive Marc Bolland, asking him not to sell grouse meat 'as it comes from an industry that reeks of criminality'.

M&S took note and their spokesperson said: 'We have not been able to secure sufficient numbers of responsibly sourced and third-party accredited Red Grouse so will not be selling any this year.' See [www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-28483764](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-28483764)

Further ratcheting up the pressure on the grouse-shooting fraternity, Mark Avery's e-petition on the Government website calling for an outright ban on driven grouse shooting had attracted over 13,000 signatures by Hen Harrier Day. If 100,000 people sign it by 31st March 2015, a Parliamentary debate will be triggered. <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/65627>

Meanwhile, the shooting community has launched its own e-petition, calling for Defra to publish the Hen Harrier Recovery Plan drawn up after discussions between conservation organisations and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and the Moorland Associa-

Andy Deighton



259. Chris Packham, Barry Gardiner MP (Shadow Environment Minister) and Mark Avery getting soaked in Derbyshire in the name of Hen Harrier Day.

tion: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/67527>. It has the same closing date as Mark Avery's petition but so far has attracted less than half the number of signatures. One of the ideas mooted in the (unpublished) recovery plan – and one that BASC is very keen to implement – is a so-called Brood Management Scheme. If a pair of Hen Harriers does nest on or near a grouse moor, then the eggs or chicks would be removed to be reared and released elsewhere.

This is what Martin Harper, Mark Avery's successor as RSPB Conservation Director, has to say: 'We have concluded that BMS may merit experimental investigation in England in the future, but only once Hen Harrier numbers have recovered to a pre-agreed level and less interventionist approaches, particularly diversionary feeding, have been widely attempted.

'It is regarding the conservation target that we and the shooting community differ. They would like to pilot the BMS now. We think this is not only premature but potentially not compliant with existing legislation. It would also send a terrible signal to nature conservation that it is appropriate to "manage" a highly threatened population of an iconic species.

'To survive in the 21st century, driven grouse shooting must be able to demonstrate that it can operate in harmony with healthy populations of

birds of prey like the Hen Harrier and that it can address the other negative environmental impacts associated with grouse-moor management. This is why we think it is timely to licence driven grouse shooting.'

Three pairs of Hen Harriers *have* nested successfully in England in 2014, with two of the nests on the United Utilities Bowland Estate in Lancashire where the shooting tenant paid for diversionary feeding (providing an alternative food source to grouse chicks). This is enlightened Hen Harrier/Red Grouse management – but there should be 300 pairs of harriers nesting in the English uplands, not three! It is a sad indictment of the interests ranged against the Hen Harrier that, on the 60th anniversary of the Protection of Birds Act, a round-the-clock guard has to be mounted to prevent the illegal destruction of these magnificent birds.

All the young harriers that fledged at Bowland have been fitted with solar-powered satellite tags weighing just 9.5 g, which have a three-year operational life. This will enable the young birds to be tracked to their wintering grounds and, hopefully, to their nest sites in the coming years. In 2012, a dead Hen Harrier that had been tagged in Bowland was discovered in North Yorkshire as a result of tracking work undertaken by Natural England. Post-mortem analysis revealed that 'Bowland Betty' had been shot.

## Neonicotinoid impacts on birds

The catastrophic impact of neonicotinoid pesticides on bees has long been suspected but now it's becoming clear that they are hitting farmland bird populations too.

Neonicotinoids are the most widely used insecticides in the world. They are toxic to most arthropods and they are widely applied as seed dressings because they act systemically, protecting all parts of the crop. Like so many pesticides used in the past, they can persist and accumulate in soils and leach into waterways.

As a result of many studies, both in the laboratory and in the field, there is a widespread view among entomologists that neonicotinoid use has – in combination with the loss of flower-rich meadows, disease and mite infestations – contributed to the decline of bee populations. They are much less toxic to vertebrates and until recently evidence of any impacts on birds has been merely suggestive. However, a recent paper by Caspar Hallmann and his colleagues in *Nature* has shown that decreases in bird numbers in the Netherlands shown by the Dutch Common Breeding Bird Monitoring Scheme have been most rapid in areas with highest environmental concentrations of neonics: see [www.nature.com/nature/](http://www.nature.com/nature/)

[journal/v511/n7509/full/nature13531.html](http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v511/n7509/full/nature13531.html)

See also Dave Goulson's paper on the pesticide link to bird declines: [www.nature.com/nature/journal/v511/n7509/full/nature13642.html](http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v511/n7509/full/nature13642.html)

Hallmann *et al.* suggest that birds have declined because neonics have reduced their insect food supply, not because they themselves have been poisoned (they found fewer insects in places with elevated levels of neonics).

Of course, the naysayers have already been at work: Prof. Ian Boyd, Chief Scientist at Defra, has blogged that 'correlation does not mean causation', omitting to mention that the authors of the *Nature* paper discussed this point. The conclusion that neonics have contributed to bird declines is strengthened because the Dutch analysis took into account a range of other measures of land use which are known to affect bird populations but none fitted the bird declines as powerfully as environmental neonicotinoid levels.

We have enough data on birds in Britain to replicate this study here, which would help to test the robustness of the Dutch conclusions. But have Defra been gathering the data on environmental neonic levels that would also be needed?

## Mediterranean breeders add colour to English summer

Following good numbers of European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* in Britain in spring 2014, a pair was discovered breeding on the National Trust's Wydcombe Estate on the Isle of Wight in mid July. Two other individuals at the site are helpers.

Ian Ridett, the NT ranger, told N&c that it was local dragonfly recorder Dave Dana who first noticed a Bee-eater on the estate. The birds were still there the following day and Ian began to suspect that they might be breeding. In a sandy bank, he noticed a perfectly circular hole, about 30 cm below turf level, which reminded him of a woodpecker or kingfisher hole. He took some photos and sent the images to the RSPB. 'The answer came back "protect immediately with an electric fence",' he said, 'which we did. Final confirmation that it was indeed a Bee-eater nest hole came when a Bee-eater was seen going into it.'

NT staff and volunteers rapidly teamed up with the RSPB, who provided advice, staff support and a

cabin from which to monitor the nest hole 24 hours a day. The initial concern was egg-collectors. 'When we began nest watching, visits were confined to four to five per day, presumably changeovers,' said Ian. 'Fortunately, we did not have to wait long as on 21st July we were seeing food being delivered. We believe that first hatching probably occurred on that day.' Once it was known that the young had hatched, plans were put in place to open a viewing area where visitors could see the birds at a safe distance from the nest hole. The site was opened to the public on 28th July and nearly 2,000 people had visited the site in the first two weeks.

On 15th August three young fledged, making this the third-known successful nesting attempt by Bee-eaters in this country. Two or more other young remained in the nest and continued to be fed by two of the adults. In 1955 two pairs of Bee-eaters in Sussex reared seven young to fledging, while a pair fledged two young from a nest at Bishop Middleham, Co. Durham, in 2002. Another nesting attempt, in Herefordshire in 2005, failed when the young were predated in the nest by Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*.

To read the NT warden's daily blog about the Bee-eaters, visit [www.facebook.com/IsleofWightNT](http://www.facebook.com/IsleofWightNT)

As well as the Bee-eaters, two pairs of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* have reared chicks successfully in southern England. The pair in Sussex (*Brit. Birds* 107: 387) fledged three young, but the Kent pair was unsuccessful. However, a pair in Suffolk that had remained 'under the radar' arrived at Cavenham Pits with four leggy young. The two successful pairs double the number of fledged British broods following nesting in Nottinghamshire in 1945 and Norfolk in 1987.

Andy Butler



**260.** One of the nesting European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* on the Wydcombe Estate, Isle of Wight, July 2014. Hot, dry weather has ensured good feeding conditions; the birds are taking large dragonflies and bumblebees most frequently, but also butterflies. On 7th August, adults were recorded visiting the nest hole with food on no fewer than 146 occasions over a ten-hour watch.

## New BirdLife chief executive

In a busy summer for BirdLife the organisation has announced its new chief executive. She's Patricia Zurita, currently the Executive Director of the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) and a Vice President of Conservation International. She takes up her new role in February 2015.

'Patricia is an outstanding conservationist with a strong track record of delivering global-scale conservation at a local level. It is this experience that

makes her a perfect fit for taking on the leading role in the BirdLife Partnership,' said Khaled Irani, Chairman of BirdLife's Global Council.

Patricia Zurita said: 'I am delighted to be taking on this new role as Chief Executive of BirdLife, leading the world's largest civil society Partnership for nature and people. BirdLife is recognised throughout the world as a conservation leader and is the acknowledged authority on the world's birds.'

## BirdLife boosts world bird list by 400 – with a quarter Red Listed

The 2014 IUCN Red List of the world's threatened birds drawn up by BirdLife has almost 100 new additions – because BirdLife has substantially boosted the world species list with its own new taxonomic treatment.

Among the non-passerine races/subspecies/forms upgraded to species status by BirdLife is Desertas Petrel *Pterodroma deserta*, which nests in the Madeiran archipelago. It becomes the newest species for the Western Palearctic and its tiny population goes straight onto the Red List as Threatened.

BirdLife, in collaboration with Lynx Edicions, publishers of the monumental *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, has devised a new taxonomic treatment for the world's birds which leans heavily on morphological, ecological and behavioural characters, rather than DNA analysis. Many birders will rejoice at this more 'old fashioned' approach, which is a return to the Biological Species Concept; many others will see it as a backward step.

The first fruit of the BirdLife/Lynx collaboration is the *Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World*; Volume 1 (non-passerines) was launched at the Birdfair last month. The new checklist contains 4,472 species, or about 10% more species than appeared in *HBW*. Many of the 462 'splits' moved straight onto the Red List with several of the new species now recognised as Critically Endangered. Among these is the Blue-bearded Helmetcrest *Oxygogon cyanolaemus*, a Colombian hummingbird that has not been seen for nearly 70 years (Bearded Helmetcrest *Oxygogon guerinii* was split into four species). Since 99 non-passerines have gone extinct since 1500, Blue-bearded Helmetcrest could make that 100.

That roughly 10% of the world's (non-passerine) avifauna has not had specific status until now has meant it hasn't received the conservation attention/action which *species* recovery plans bring. BirdLife's Nigel Collar, the lead author of the new checklist, hopes that the new taxonomic treatment will help to redefine bird conservation priorities.

The 2010 paper 'Quantitative criteria for species delimitation', by Joe Tobias *et al.* and published in *Ibis*, was the basis for the work leading up to the new checklist.

See [www.zoo.ox.ac.uk/egi/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Tobiasetal\\_Ibis2010.pdf](http://www.zoo.ox.ac.uk/egi/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Tobiasetal_Ibis2010.pdf)

And an explanation of how BirdLife has been redefining the world's avifauna can be found here: [www.lynxeds.com/sites/default/files/reviews/World-Birdwatch-Ringing-in-the-changes-HBW-Alive-June-2014.pdf](http://www.lynxeds.com/sites/default/files/reviews/World-Birdwatch-Ringing-in-the-changes-HBW-Alive-June-2014.pdf)

Here are two European examples cited by the checklist authors to illustrate why molecular analysis has taken a back seat in this work. The Common Swift *Apus apus* and Pallid Swift *A. pallidus* have different plumage, different breeding regimes and overlapping ranges, yet they are indistinguishable according to traditional genetic markers. Conversely, in a single country (Germany), populations of Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* are 5% different in the same genetic markers, yet interbreed completely and thus are clearly the same biological species.

Let the debate ensue. Less academically inclined birders will simply be glad to see that their (non-passerine) world lists have increased by 10% overnight.

## W. L. N. (Lance) Tickell (1930–2014)

Albatrosses and Lance Tickell are indelibly linked in the minds of all seabird enthusiasts and this was cemented by the publication of his book *Albatrosses* in 2000 (Pica Press/Yale University Press). This was his major and comprehensive contribution to the study of one of the most charismatic families of seabirds. It all started in 1958 with his fieldwork on four albatross species at Bird Island, South Georgia, which ultimately led to many papers including 'The biology of the great albatrosses', which was his dissertation for his ScD degree.

On returning to the UK, he became Warden Naturalist for the Nature Conservancy in Shetland and Orkney. He then held Lectureships in Zoology

at several African universities and also spent periods with the BBC Natural History Unit in Bristol contributing to three films about albatrosses. Twenty-nine years after completing his fieldwork on South Georgia, he returned as a producer of the acclaimed series *Life in the Freezer*. He retained his interest in albatrosses to the end and in 2012 he sent me a copy of his recent paper 'Plumage contaminations on the Wandering Albatross – an aerodynamic model' (*Sea Swallow* 60: 67–69). Inscribed on the back was a note: '9th May 2012. Robin: Definitely nothing more about the great birds! Lance.'

(Contributed by Robin Prytherch)

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# Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2012

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Alan Harris



Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*

**Abstract** This report documents the status of 94 rare or scarce species which were recorded breeding, or potentially breeding, in the UK in 2012. The year was marked by the first breeding by Great White Egrets *Ardea alba* and a significant influx of Baillon's Crakes *Porzana pusilla*, unprecedented in modern times. Late spring and summer were exceptionally wet, which hampered fieldwork and reduced productivity of some species.

This report marks 40 years of documenting rare breeding birds in the UK by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP). It includes details of 88 species or distinctive races that bred (or showed signs of breeding) in the UK in 2012. A further six potential breeding species are listed in Appendix 1. This total of 94 species compares with 96 (including eight potential breeders) in 2011. Back in 1973, when the Panel focused on rare or very rare species only, its 21-page first report covered just 40 species (*Brit. Birds* 68: 5–23).

Previously, this report has covered the four countries of the UK: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, plus the Isle

of Man since it is part of the same biogeographical area. From 2012 (and in this report), however, we shall also include the Channel Islands. This new unit (for which we shall still use 'the UK' as a shorthand reference) brings us into line with other reporting systems, such as the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS; e.g. Risely *et al.* 2013) and Birds of Conservation Concern (e.g. Eaton *et al.* 2009).

## Review of the year 2012

A defining feature of 2012 for many species was the impact of a wet and stormy late spring. The 2011/12 winter was milder than the three preceding winters, comparable to

those in the decade leading up to 2008. March was the warmest since 1957 but April and most of May were relatively cold. Northern Ireland and western Britain had a dry spring, but the east and south (and parts of Wales) were extremely wet, ending a long-term drought in these areas. The jet stream settled south of Britain, making the summer months generally cool – June was the coldest since 1991 – and damp. Across the UK it was the wettest June for 100 years, the only exception being northwest Scotland ([www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)). Many low-lying areas were flooded and there was storm damage to some trees, affecting species such as the Red Kite *Milvus milvus*.

Five species recorded in 2012 but absent from the 2011 report were Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*, Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*. Greater Scaup has not bred in the UK since 1999 so a female with a brood in North-east Scotland was one of the surprises of the year, but the habitat (a lowland farm pond) was atypical and the male parent may have been a Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*. Dry conditions in southern Europe apparently forced some typical Mediterranean species northwards, such as Baillon's Crake (at least six calling birds located) and Black-winged Stilt (two pairs attempted to breed). One pair of stilts laid eggs but deserted them in heavy rain. Perhaps the most surprising record of the year was the pair of Rough-legged Buzzards in Co. Durham; display and nest-building were seen in April, but both birds had departed by early May.

Although the anticipated colonisation by Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* following the first breeding in 2008 has not materialised, numbers of several related species continue to increase. Great White Egrets *Ardea alba* (two pairs) bred in the UK for the first time in 2012, in Somerset, where Little Bitterns *Ixobrychus minutus* (one pair) bred again and the numbers of Eurasian Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* reached another new peak (34 booming males in that county alone). More Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* nested in Britain than ever before (866 pairs), and four pairs in Co. Down were the first to breed in Northern

Ireland. Ten pairs of Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* bred at the colony in Norfolk where they have nested annually since 2010.

Stormy conditions in late May and early June affected the productivity of several raptors, and also limited the opportunities of fieldworkers to visit nests. The poor weather had a serious impact on both tree nesters (notably Red Kites and Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus*) and some ground-nesting species, including Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* and Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*.

The national Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* survey proved challenging: poor weather hampered census work and some sites were flooded and thus unsuitable for breeding. Nevertheless, it is thought that the 28 singing birds represent a fair estimate of the current population, which has declined substantially since the first survey in 1999. However, the fieldwork for this survey led to the discovery of Baillon's Crakes at three sites (at least). Other species that fared badly during the heavy rain and flooding included Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* (numbers fell to 481 pairs, the lowest for ten years) and the nominate race of Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa l. limosa* (only three young fledged from 51 pairs on territory). Reduced monitoring and consequent under-recording, especially in upland Scotland, probably explains the low numbers of some other species in the report, such as Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* and Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*.

Of the few seabirds in this report, Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus* continue to cause concern (just 29 fledged young reported in 2012) while, at the opposite end of the UK, Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* numbers continue to increase, with over 1,000 pairs noted for the first time.

There was no confirmed breeding of Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* for the third consecutive year. Over those same three years, Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* have bred in Devon, but in 2012 they were unsuccessful for the first time, another victim of the weather. After the run of colder than average winters, winter 2011/12 was generally

mild enabling populations of cold-weather-sensitive species to recover, for example Cetti's *Cettia cetti* and Dartford Warblers *Sylvia uudata*. Rarer warblers recorded in 2012 comprised two regular breeders (Savi's *Locustella luscinioides* and Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*) and two which have not yet bred in the UK: Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* and Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*.

### The 2012 report

This is the first RBBP report since the publication of *Bird Atlas 2007–11* (Balmer *et al.* 2013). The new national atlas presents the results of four years of fieldwork in the breeding season (2008–11) and the positive impact on the volume of data for rarer species has been referred to in previous RBBP reports. References to and comparison with these published atlas results are made throughout this report. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* enables comparison of distribution changes over both 20- and 40-year periods, and some are referred to in this report. For example, Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* showed a 40-year change of +475%, which means that the number of occupied 10-km squares increased by 475% between the first breeding atlas (Sharrock 1976) and *Bird Atlas 2007–11*.

RBBP data form one of the key resources used by Government scientists when making assessments of conservation policies in the UK, in particular the health of networks of conservation sites. These sites are 'classified' on account of their conservation importance and a review of them has been undertaken in the last 12 months. The 2012 report therefore includes summaries by species (where relevant) from this assessment, underlining the conservation importance of collating data on rare breeding birds. The section below gives more detail.

### Assessment of the UK SPA network for rare breeding birds

The protection and management of important breeding areas is a major element of the conservation of the UK's rare breeding birds. These areas are legally notified as SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) in Britain and as ASSIs (Areas of Special Scientific Interest) in Northern Ireland, and some are also classi-

fied as SPAs (Special Protection Areas) designated under the EU Wild Birds Directive. SPAs are classified for species (or subspecies) listed on Annex I of the Directive and for regularly occurring migratory birds. Selection of key sites for each relevant species gives a 'suite' of sites and together, across all species, these form the UK's SPA network, which currently comprises 269 SPAs covering 28,087.15 km<sup>2</sup> (about 11% of the area of the UK).

Stroud *et al.* (2001) gave the background to the selection of these areas. Not all UK rare breeding birds have an SPA suite. This is for a range of different reasons, but typically because they are neither listed on Annex I of the Directive nor migratory (for example Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*).

Following earlier reviews of the SPA network (Stroud *et al.* 1990, 2001), JNCC has co-ordinated a third ten-year review of the status of species within the network (JNCC 2014). For rare breeding birds, much of the data come from the RBBP archive and, with permission, we present summaries of status changes within relevant SPA suites in the appropriate species accounts below. For more detail and interpretation see JNCC (2014) – in particular, on the implications of changes in population sizes and distribution.

The proportion of UK populations within the SPA network are typically based on national population estimates presented by the Avian Population Estimates Panel (APEP; Musgrove *et al.* 2013). For species where APEP presents a population range, proportions are typically calculated against the minimum of that range, as undertaken by the second network review (Stroud *et al.* 2001).

The efforts of many UK birdwatchers to report rare breeding birds are central to the UK's ability to report on the status of birds within the SPA network. Of all the assessments needed (total number of sites classified for different individual species), 224 (or 14.5% of the whole network) relate to species on the Panel's list. Thus data actually or potentially collated by the Panel for these sites will continue to provide a significant element of future network assessments.

For the third SPA Review, a number of data issues relating to rare breeding birds

were encountered. Many of these were similar to those highlighted by Stroud *et al.* (2012) relating to Spotted Crakes in particular (a study initiated in the context of the SPA Review). These include:

- Lack of precise locations, such as four- or six-figure grid references for a significant number of records, greatly restricting their value.
- In some years, missing data from regular sites, with no indication whether this reflected a species' absence or simply a lack of survey counts.
- Assumptions about whether birds were present or absent in years lacking data introduced uncertainty to some conclusions about sites and species.
- Lack of data for whole sites – typically for some large sites classified for species such as Greenshank and other widely dispersed upland species.

### Data sources and submission

Data for 2012 were received in time for this report from all but two recording areas, one of the best returns ever. The missing areas are Berkshire and West Midlands, neither of which submitted data for the 2011 report either. We hope that the recorders or the bird clubs for these two counties will be able to provide data for these missing years, and for

future years, in due course. However, some data for these counties were available from other sources so the numbers of pairs of each species in this report are broadly comparable with those in other recent RBBP reports.

Bird-of-prey monitoring in many parts of the UK is achieved largely through the work of the various Raptor Study Groups (RSGs). In Scotland, these groups provided area totals, via the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme; in some cases these data cannot be matched with general bird recording areas, so the Scottish RSG areas are used instead. In much of northern England, mainly upland raptors are monitored by an array of groups operating under the Northern England Raptor Forum (NERF). Schedule 1 raptor data from Wales are collated by RSPB Wales under contract to Natural Resources Wales. No data were available from the Northern Ireland RSG, so totals for several raptors that nested in the province in 2012 will be underestimated, in particular Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Merlin *Falco columbarius* and Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus*.

Holling *et al.* (2013) suggested that survey work for *Bird Atlas 2007–11* boosted the number of records submitted to the Panel. In fact, the number of unique records submitted to the Panel by the end of June 2014 was



Robert Snell

**261.** White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Mull, Argyll, August 2012. It was another record year for breeding White-tailed Eagles in the UK since the re-establishment programme began.

almost 6,500, a welcome 12% increase over 2011. Less welcome was the fact that ten counties provided data only in the form of published bird reports – although useful, reports generally contain only summary data and we ask counties wherever possible to submit more detailed information, as outlined on our website ([www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-data-submission](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-data-submission)). Data from over half of all counties were also submitted past the deadline (31st December), putting pressure on the analysis and report writing stage, and meaning that this report is published in September rather than July.

Other data sources include the reports from Schedule 1 licence holders, Nest Record Scheme returns, national surveys and counts from RSPB reserves. An increasing number of records now come with site details including grid references: the inclusion of accurate grid references is *essential* for validation and eliminating duplicate records. Unfortunately, as in previous years, some otherwise good records could not be used because the location could not be verified. In addition, wherever possible, the number of pairs of less scarce species in a particular year should be based on birds recorded *in that year*, not estimates based on past surveys, since we would rather publish minimum data for the year under review.

Records should be submitted by the end of each calendar year, for the *previous year's* breeding season. Thus, data for 2013 should be submitted by 31st December 2014. The recommendations and guidelines introduced in 2009 (see [www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards)) have continued to help to improve the quality of information submitted, and we again refer observers to the scope for improvements in recording identified by Stroud *et al.* (2012). Species-specific recording guidelines are added to the RBBP website as they become available ([www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-recording](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-recording)). Anyone with particular experience in monitoring a rare breeding bird is encouraged to offer their expertise in compiling these guidelines. Finally, to help us to continue to maintain the definitive archive of rare breeding bird records, we always welcome any late submissions and updates to published records. Any additions, amendments and corrections to

published reports covering 2005–11 are made available on the RBBP website ([www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports)).

### **The RBBP List**

There was no change to the list of species covered by the RBBP in 2012, but in March 2014, the RBBP List was reviewed against the findings of *Bird Atlas 2007–11*. According to our current criteria for inclusion (see [www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp\\_species\\_selection\\_criteria.pdf](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp_species_selection_criteria.pdf)), any species with fewer than 2,000 breeding pairs in a typical year is eligible; species where the population now regularly exceeds this figure will no longer be considered. That review established that two species will be removed with immediate effect (i.e. from next year's report, covering 2013): Red Kite and Woodlark *Lullula arborea*. Other less scarce species whose populations may be close to or above 2,000 breeding pairs include Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, Hobby *Falco subbuteo* and Cetti's Warbler, but for the time being these will continue to remain on the RBBP list.

### **Conservation and other uses of RBBP data**

It is RBBP policy to make data available for relevant conservation uses, with appropriate controls. Site-specific information is used by JNCC and the country conservation agencies, and national datasets by the RSPB, for survey and conservation planning (as in the SPA Review, above). Over the last 12 months, requests for the use of RBBP data have been received for 11 species, mainly to support survey work.

The population totals published in the *British Birds* reports are also widely used by conservation staff at the RSPB, BTO, JNCC and the four country agencies. All but the most recent RBBP reports are available on the RBBP website ([www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports)); the 'Explore the Reports' feature ([www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-online-reports](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-online-reports)) permits access to those reports, firstly by species and then by year. We are keen to encourage individuals to use this to compile species reviews for potential future publication as stand-alone papers or within the annual RBBP reports – please contact the Panel Secretary. In all cases where RBBP data

are used we ask that the RBBP is acknowledged and that we receive copies of any new datasets compiled and papers published. Our data access policy is available at [www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-access-policy](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-access-policy).

### The Panel

The current membership of the Panel is: Mark Eaton (Chairman), Ian Francis, Simon Gillings, Andrew King, David Norman, David Stroud and Mark Holling (Secretary). Members serve in a personal capacity, but some also reflect the interests and requirements of the funding partners. The Panel is funded by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and the RSPB.

### Terminology

#### Recording areas

The recording areas used in this report are the same as in previous reports (see Holling *et al.* 2007 and [www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk)); these match the bird recording areas used by recorders across the UK, with Gower and East Glamorgan presented separately *contra* Ballance & Smith (2008). We attempt to collate all breeding records by recording area (usually 'county') wherever possible and urge contributors to submit records in the same manner, via recorders. In some cases, records are presented under different area groupings, for instance by Raptor Study Group (RSG) area, although it is our intention to summarise data by recording area wherever possible. Thus, the Central Scotland RSG covers an area roughly equivalent to the Upper Forth recording area, but does include parts of neighbouring recording areas including Clyde; the South Strathclyde RSG area includes both Ayrshire and Clyde and some of the Clyde Islands; and the Tayside RSG area equates approximately to the recording areas of Angus & Dundee together with Perth & Kinross. However, North-east Scotland RSG includes both that recording area and the eastern part of the Moray & Nairn recording area; and Highland RSG includes not only the Highland and Caithness recording areas but also the western part of Moray & Nairn. Scottish Raptor Study Group area boundaries are shown on their website: [www.scottishraptorstudygroup.org/aboutus.html](http://www.scottishraptorstudygroup.org/aboutus.html)

Records from the Greater London recording area, which covers all areas within a 20-mile radius of St Paul's Cathedral, are reported as follows, in order to reduce the possibility of duplication with surrounding county recording areas. Under the Greater London heading we list only records from

This year, for the first time, we also welcome a financial contribution from the BTO. Panel membership aims to achieve broadly representative geographic coverage and to include members who have active involvement in monitoring schemes and specialist research groups, or who participate in various external groups, to facilitate liaison between the Panel and conservationists, nest recorders, researchers, ringers, surveyors and others.

The RBBP twitter account was launched in April and you can keep up to date with the work of the Panel and changes to the RBBP website by following us at [@ukrbbp](https://twitter.com/ukrbbp), although we request that no sensitive data are broadcast via twitter.

the Inner London area and the old county of Middlesex. Records away from this area and within the counties surrounding London – Hertfordshire, Essex, Kent and Surrey – are listed under those county headings.

#### Species banners

For all regular breeding species (those which have bred at least once in the UK and have been recorded at least as present in eight out of the last ten years), we give four pieces of information:

1. An indication of population status in one of four categories:
  - very rare (<30 breeding pairs (bp) per annum);
  - rare (30–300 breeding pairs per annum);
  - scarce (301–1,000 breeding pairs per annum);
  - less scarce (>1,000 breeding pairs per annum).
2. A population estimate, based where possible on the mean maximum population size from the last five years and shown as '5-yr mean' (in this report the five years are 2008–12). In some cases, we show the totals estimated in national surveys, or, particularly for species with poor coverage, the best available national population estimate.
3. The degree of coverage, defined as follows:
  - near-complete (RBBP reports present more or less accurate annual totals);
  - high (a good estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, though a small but unknown proportion has not been recorded/reported);
  - moderate (a less accurate estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, which is

nonetheless a significant proportion of the total population);

- low (the quality of the data received is so poor that population estimates are of little value for conservation or status reviews; however, maintaining an archive of known sites is useful, and this information can be used in the design of future targeted surveys).

4. The population status as determined by Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (BoCC3) (Eaton *et al.* 2009).

The BoCC3 status can be Red, Amber or Green. The majority of Red- and Amber-listed species on the RBBP list are categorised as such because of some criteria related to their breeding status, whether it be population size (rarity or recent/historical decline), breeding range (localisation or decline) or international importance of the UK breeding population. Some Amber-listed species are also noted as being Species of European Conservation Concern (SPEC). The only species in this report which is Amber-listed for criteria that are not related to the breeding population is the Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*, which owes its status to the localised distribution and international importance of its wintering population.

Occasional breeding species are defined as having bred at least once in the UK but are not regular breeders. Potential breeding species have not previously bred in the UK but, in some years, show signs that they may do so (e.g. presence of singing males holding territory, pairs in suitable breeding habitat). New colonists are those species that first bred in the UK in 2012, or have been proved to breed in the UK subsequent to 2012.

#### Definitions of breeding evidence

The definitions of 'confirmed breeding', 'probable breeding' and 'possible breeding' follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Within tables, the

abbreviation 'Confirmed breeding pairs' means 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding'. Where tables show the number of occupied territories, these are the sum of confirmed and probable breeding pairs, as territorial birds are classed as being probably breeding, unless a nest has (at least) progressed to the stage where eggs have been laid, in which case the pair is classified as a confirmed breeding pair. It is important to note that confirmed breeding is *not* the same as successful breeding; nests that fail with eggs or with young still fall into the confirmed category. A successful breeding pair is one that fledges at least one young bird from a nesting attempt. In species accounts, the following terminology is used: *x* pairs bred (= confirmed breeding); *y* probable breeding pairs and *z* possible breeding pairs.

Readers should note that in all cases the identity of the birds has been confirmed; it is only breeding *status* that is possible/probable/confirmed. Probable breeding is as defined by EBCC (e.g. a pair holding territory), and does not mean that a breeding attempt probably (i.e. was likely to have) occurred.

The Panel does not routinely include breeding records of hybrids (where one of the parents is a species on the RBBP list) in its reports, e.g. mixed pairs of Black Duck *Anas rubripes* and Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, but where young are hatched they will be noted in an Appendix.

#### Definition of numbers used

Within each species account, numbers given in the format '1–4 pairs' indicate (in this case) one confirmed breeding pair and a maximum total of four breeding pairs (thus also including possible and probable breeding pairs). In the tables, 'n/a' indicates that no data were received from that county, but the species normally breeds there. For some species, estimated totals (in round brackets) are also included, where these have been provided by county recorders according to the criteria given on the RBBP website.

### Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 22 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Amber**

26 sites: 18–26 pairs, including one mixed pair. Over the last 40 years, RBBP reports have shown how the Whooper Swan has become established as a regular breeding species with the main population in Shetland, where in the last five years 6–9 pairs have bred (see Holling *et al.* 2010). *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows a 40-year change of +475%.

#### England, E

Norfolk One site: one pair bred. The same pair that bred in 2011, which included an injured female, again bred at Welney and this year fledged four young.

#### Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one pair bred. Clyde One site: one mixed pair bred. An injured female, which had

summered for the previous ten years, paired with a Mute Swan *C. olor*; eggs were laid but did not hatch.

Scotland, Mid

**North-east Scotland** One site: one pair, including an injured bird, summered but did not breed.

Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Two sites: two possible breeding pairs. **Caithness** One site: one probable breeding pair. **Highland** Four sites: two pairs bred and two probable breeding pairs. **Outer Hebrides** Two sites: one pair bred, hatching four but fledging only two young; one probable breeding pair. **Shetland** Eight sites: eight pairs bred. All eight pairs laid eggs, but eggs hatched at only four nests; two pairs fledged young successfully (one and four).

Northern Ireland

**Co. Armagh** One site: one pair bred, seen with one young. **Co. Derry** Four sites: three pairs bred, with broods of seven, six and three recorded; one probable breeding pair.

Summering individuals or late-staying pairs were also recorded in a number of counties, including Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Dumfries & Galloway and North-east Scotland. In addition, a naturalised pair bred in Bedfordshire.

## Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Rare: 5-yr mean 168 bp

Coverage: low

Amber

88 sites: 43–165 pairs. Just two SPAs are classified for breeding Eurasian Wigeons: the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands and the River Spey–Insh Marshes. Monitoring data are available from the latter site but no whole-site assessments exist for the Peatlands. Assuming that numbers there remain unchanged from the 1990s, a total of 60 pairs are thought to occur at these two sites – 20% of the lower estimate of the British breeding population (300–500 pairs; Sharrock 1976). Numbers reported to the RBBP are typically only about half of the lower end of the estimate and consistent under-recording of pairs in suitable breeding habitat is a problem, especially in the Scottish Highlands and islands and in the North Pennines.

England, SW

**Gloucestershire** Two sites: two possible breeding pairs. **Somerset** Two sites: four possible breeding pairs.

England, SE

**Essex** Two sites: one pair bred, one probable breeding pair. **Sussex** One site: one probable and one possible breeding pair.

England, E

**Cambridgeshire** Three sites: eight possible breeding pairs. **Lincolnshire** Three sites: one probable and three possible breeding pairs. **Northamptonshire** One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, C

**Nottinghamshire** One site: four possible breeding pairs. **Staffordshire** One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, N

**Cumbria** Five sites: five possible breeding pairs. **Co. Durham** Nine sites: four pairs bred (four broods with 12 young in total), three probable and three possible breeding pairs. **Northumberland** Two sites: two pairs bred.

**Yorkshire** Four sites: one pair bred (one brood of five), one probable and nine possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, S

**Borders** One site: one probable and one possible breeding pair. **Lothian** One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

**Angus & Dundee** Three sites: two pairs bred and two possible breeding pairs. **Moray & Nairn** One site: one possible breeding pair. **North-east Scotland** One site: one possible breeding pair. **Perth & Kinross** Two sites: one probable and one possible breeding pair.

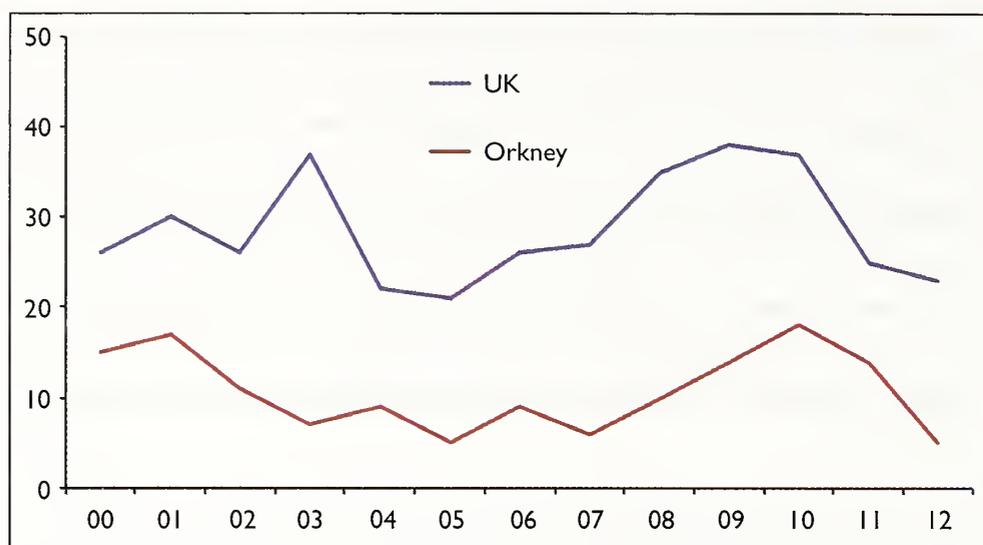
Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Three sites: one probable and three possible breeding pairs. **Caithness** Four extensive sites: nine probable breeding pairs. **Highland** 11 sites: six pairs bred, 31 probable breeding pairs and one possible breeding pair. **Orkney** Eight sites: 14 pairs bred, two probable breeding pairs. **Outer Hebrides** 11 sites: three pairs bred, one probable and 16 possible breeding pairs. **Shetland** Six sites: ten pairs bred, one possible breeding pair.

Records of summering birds and pairs that showed no evidence of breeding are not included in the totals. Such pairs remain together throughout the summer, often at lowland sites, which may occasionally be used for breeding. As well as the counties listed above, summering pairs were reported from Anglesey, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife, Kent, Lancashire & N Merseyside, Leicestershire & Rutland, and Norfolk.

**Pintail *Anas acuta*****Rare: 5-yr mean 32 bp****Coverage: high****Amber**

15 sites: 3–23 pairs. As few as three confirmed breeding pairs has been recorded only twice before in the 40 years of the RBBP, in 1973 and in 2001 – both years when there was little or no reporting from Orkney, the species' stronghold. A full survey in Orkney in 1994 revealed 17 pairs and nine other males. It is unlikely that many pairs have been missed in Orkney in recent years, so it is notable that



**Fig. 1.** The maximum total number of breeding pairs of Pintails *Anas acuta* in the UK and in Orkney, 2000–12.

there was no confirmed breeding there in 2012, for only the second time since 2001. Fig. 1 shows the sudden decline in Orkney; it remains to be seen if the current low numbers reflect just a temporary decline, similar to that a decade earlier. Counts of wintering Pintails in the UK have also fallen, by 50% between 2005/06 and 2011/12, and numbers are at their lowest level for 40 years (Austin *et al.* 2014).

England, SE

Essex One site: one possible breeding pair. Kent One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: two possible breeding pairs. Norfolk Two sites: two probable breeding pairs.

England, N

Co. Durham One site: one pair bred – female was found on a nest with five eggs.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: three possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two sites: two pairs bred (two broods, ten fledged young in total) and five probable breeding pairs.

Orkney Four sites: two probable and three possible breeding pairs.

**Garganey *Anas querquedula*****Rare: 5-yr mean 93 bp****Coverage: high****Amber**

52 sites: 13–83 pairs. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* confirms the difficulty in assessing the numbers of breeding Garganeys, as migrating pairs occur in potential breeding habitats. We check the dates of occurrence and the numbers of males and females present through the breeding season in making our annual assessment.

England, SW

Avon One site: one possible breeding pair. Cornwall One site: one possible breeding pair. Devon One site: one probable breeding pair. Gloucestershire One site: one possible breeding pair. Hampshire One site: one probable breeding pair. Somerset Three extensive sites: four probable and two possible breeding pairs.

England, SE

Buckinghamshire One site: one possible breeding pair. Essex Two sites: one probable and one possible breeding pair. Kent Three sites: three pairs bred, six probable breeding pairs. Oxfordshire One site: one probable breeding pair. Sussex Four sites: one pair bred, five probable breeding pairs.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three sites: one pair bred, eight probable and one possible breeding pair. Lincolnshire Five sites: eight possible breeding pairs. Norfolk Three sites: two pairs bred, one probable and one possible

breeding pair. Suffolk Three sites: one probable and two possible breeding pairs.

England, C

Nottinghamshire Two sites: two possible breeding pairs. Staffordshire One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one pair bred, three young fledged. Cleveland One site: two possible breeding pairs. Lancashire & N Merseyside Three sites: one pair bred and two possible breeding pairs. Yorkshire Seven sites: four pairs bred, five probable and five possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, S

Clyde One site: one probable breeding pair. Dumfries & Galloway One site: two possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides One site: one possible breeding pair.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: one possible breeding pair.

### Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,012 bp

Coverage: high

Amber

350–872 pairs. The Ouse Washes is the only SPA classified for breeding Shoveler and numbers there are well monitored by RSPB and WWT. Since the 1990s, numbers at all the UK's SPAs have increased from 155 to 169 pairs (based on counts of pairs or males; see Gilbert *et al.* 1998). This represents 54% of the minimum estimate of the British population (310 breeding pairs, based on a 5-year mean of the number of confirmed breeding pairs reported to RBBP). *Bird Atlas 2007–11* results suggest that some pairs go unreported to RBBP each year.

Shoveler	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			Co. Durham	1	1
			Greater Manchester	0	2
England, SW	2	28	Lancashire & N Merseyside	29	29
Avon	0	1	Northumberland	1	1
Devon	0	3	Yorkshire	56	147
Dorset	0	1	Wales	6	22
Gloucestershire	1	5	Anglesey	1	12
Isle of Wight	0	1	Ceredigion	0	2
Somerset	1	16	Denbigh & Flint	1	3
Wiltshire	0	1	East Glamorgan	0	1
England, SE	64	131	Gwent	4	4
Bedfordshire	0	1	Scotland, S	0	11
Essex	30	44	Ayrshire	0	1
Greater London	0	1	Clyde	0	6
Hertfordshire	0	10	Dumfries & Galloway	0	3
Kent	33	50	Lothian	0	1
Oxfordshire	0	8	Scotland, Mid	9	34
Surrey	0	1	Angus & Dundee	0	5
Sussex	1	16	Fife	1	1
England, E	148	342	North-east Scotland	0	4
Cambridgeshire	35	91	Perth & Kinross	8	24
Lincolnshire	7	28	Scotland, N & W	20	75
Norfolk	104	105	Argyll	2	29
Northamptonshire	1	6	Highland	0	5
Suffolk	1	112	Orkney	15	18
England, C	6	22	Outer Hebrides	3	20
Leicestershire & Rutland	2	2	Shetland	0	3
Nottinghamshire	3	12	Northern Ireland	0	6
Shropshire	0	3	Co. Antrim	0	3
Staffordshire	1	3	Co. Armagh	0	2
Warwickshire	0	2	Co. Down	0	1
England, N	94	200	Channel Islands	1	1
Cheshire & Wirral	3	9	Jersey	1	1
Cleveland	3	10	TOTALS	350	872
Cumbria	1	1			

Dan Powell



Common Pochards *Aythya ferina*

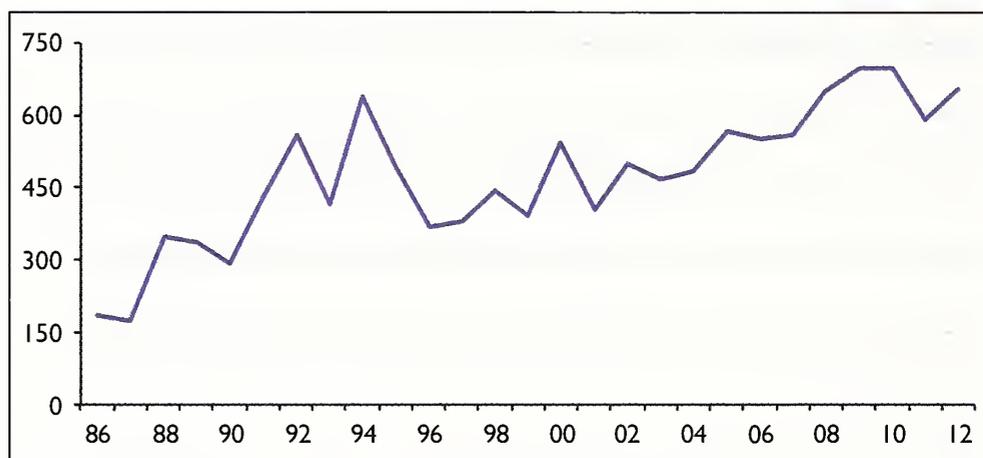
### Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 659 bp

Coverage: high

Amber

417–653 pairs. Following a sharp decline in 2011, the total number of breeding Common Pochards rallied in 2012. The trend in RBBP data since the mid 1990s has been one of steady increase (fig. 2), which contrasts with a 38% loss of breeding range in Britain since the 1968–72 Atlas. Much of the recent range contraction is in Scotland and central England.



**Fig. 2.** The maximum total number of breeding pairs of Common Pochards *Aythya ferina* in the UK, 1986–2012.

Common Pochard	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			England, E	52	107
			Cambridgeshire	10	40
			Lincolnshire	5	29
			Norfolk	33	33
			Northamptonshire	1	1
			Suffolk	3	4
			England, C	7	8
			Nottinghamshire	3	3
			Shropshire	0	1
			Staffordshire	1	1
			Worcestershire	3	3
			England, N	110	122
			Cheshire & Wirral	14	14
			Cleveland	15	15
			Co. Durham	1	1
			Greater Manchester	3	5
			Lancashire & N Merseyside	12	13
			Northumberland	7	7
			Yorkshire	58	67
England, SW	22	104			
Avon	4	4			
Devon	1	1			
Dorset	2	6			
Gloucestershire	2	2			
Hampshire	7	7			
Somerset	5	80			
Wiltshire	1	4			
England, SE	176	226			
Bedfordshire	1	1			
Essex	73	74			
Greater London	14	14			
Hertfordshire	13	39			
Kent	69	87			
Oxfordshire	1	6			
Sussex	5	5			

Common Pochard <i>cont.</i>	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs	Scotland, Mid	3	13
			Fife	0	2
			North-east Scotland	0	1
Wales	16	37	Perth & Kinross	3	10
Anglesey	4	25	Northern Ireland	31	31
Carmarthenshire	3	3	Co. Armagh	27	27
Gwent	9	9	Co. Down	4	4
Scotland, S	0	3	Channel Islands	0	2
Borders	0	2	Jersey	0	2
Clyde	0	1	TOTALS	417	653

## Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

### Occasional breeder

1–2 (mixed?) pairs. Greater Scaup was last proved to breed in the UK in 1999 (in Co. Armagh) and since then there have been several years with not even a fleeting presence in breeding habitats. The discovery of a female with a brood of six young on a farm pond in North-east Scotland in August was therefore a great surprise. The habitat was atypical for this species, however, and while the identity of the female was confirmed no male was ever seen, which raises suspicion about a mixed pairing, probably with Tufted Duck. There was a second record of a female, paired with a male Tufted Duck, at an inland site in Perth & Kinross in May.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross: One site: a female paired with a Tufted Duck in May. North-east Scotland One site: one pair bred, though no male seen. Six young seen with a female on 4th August; once fledged the brood moved to nearby pools.

## Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Rare: 52 bp (Eaton et al. 2008)

Coverage: moderate

Red

Seven sites: 10–39 pairs. With the classification of West Inverness-shire Lochs (Highland) in 2009, there are now three SPAs for Common Scoter, which hold most of the British population. The most important is the extensive Flow Country in Caithness/Highland, where reports indicate a continuing decline in the number of breeding pairs, but good survival of young once they are on the water.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross Two sites: one pair bred, four possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Five extensive sites. In the Flow Country (Caithness/Highland) at least seven pairs bred, with a further eight probable breeding pairs. A count of 17 fully grown young was made in early August. At another site in Caithness two pairs bred – nine small young counted and at least three young fledged. Elsewhere in Highland records were received from three sites, where there was a total of 17 probable breeding pairs.

## Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Rare: 5-yr mean 156 bp

Coverage: low

Amber

A minimum of 95 breeding females. The main population, in Strathspey, Highland, was again not monitored fully so totals are less representative than those prior to 2011. In Co. Antrim, four pairs summered at one site, and a record of four immatures in Dumfries & Galloway in late June suggests local breeding, but there was no other evidence. For the third consecutive year, successful breeding was confirmed in Northumberland.

England, N

Northumberland One site: one pair bred. A clutch of ten eggs was found and subsequently three well-grown young were seen.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Deeside: 43 pairs bred.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Badenoch & Strathspey: at least 51 pairs bred.

Pairs and individuals lingered into the summer in Bedfordshire, Fife, Leicestershire & Rutland, Northamptonshire and Yorkshire.

**Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix***

**Scarce: 5-yr mean 888 singing males**

**Coverage: high**

**Amber**

5–547 singing males or pairs. Compared with 2011, and a record total of 2,009 singing males (additional data were received after publication of the 2011 report), 2012 saw a return to average numbers of Common Quails. Relatively fewer Quails were recorded in northern Britain than in 2011 (35% of all records in northern England, mid and south Scotland, compared with 58% in 2011). There were records of confirmed breeding from East Glamorgan, Lothian, Northumberland and Yorkshire (two).

Common Quail	Total pairs or singing males		
		Greater Manchester	2
		Lancashire & N Merseyside	5
England, SW	121	Northumberland	14
Avon	4	Yorkshire	72
Devon	2	Wales	24
Dorset	5	Anglesey	2
Gloucestershire	24	Caernarfonshire	7
Hampshire	17	Ceredigion	4
Somerset	1	Denbigh & Flint	2
Wiltshire	68	East Glamorgan	1
England, SE	48	Montgomeryshire	1
Bedfordshire	3	Pembrokeshire	1
Buckinghamshire	9	Radnorshire	6
Hertfordshire	5	Scotland, S	48
Kent	4	Ayrshire	3
Oxfordshire	10	Borders	29
Sussex	17	Lothian	16
England, E	79	Scotland, Mid	19
Cambridgeshire	15	Angus & Dundee	2
Lincolnshire	26	Fife	2
Norfolk	32	North-east Scotland	12
Northamptonshire	6	Perth & Kinross	2
England, C	54	Upper Forth	1
Derbyshire	12	Scotland, N & W	29
Herefordshire	3	Argyll	11
Leicestershire & Rutland	8	Caithness	2
Shropshire	24	Highland	5
Staffordshire	5	Orkney	4
Warwickshire	2	Outer Hebrides	7
England, N	122	Northern Ireland	3
Cheshire & Wirral	7	Co. Derry	1
Cleveland	5	Co. Fermanagh	2
Cumbria	4	TOTAL	547
Co. Durham	13		

**Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*****Red****Rare: 5-yr mean 209 lekking males****Coverage: moderate**

113 leks were monitored, a further increase in the number checked since RBBP reporting began in 2003, but a similar number (71) were active and the 202 displaying males was a small decrease on the totals in 2010–11. The estimated number of individuals on a transect survey in the 2009/10 winter was 1,285 (see Ewing *et al.* 2012).

Five additional SPAs were classified for Capercaillie in the early 2000s, in Highland and Moray & Nairn (Anagach Woods, Craigmore Wood, Darnaway and Lethen Forest, Morangie Forest, and Novar) bringing to 11 the number of sites in the suite. Together, these held 125 lekking males in the 2000s (cf. 369 in the 1990s).

Scotland, S

Clyde Four leks monitored, no activity recorded.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn 11 active leks: 16 males. North-east Scotland 12 active leks: 19 males. Perth & Kinross Two active leks: three males.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 46 active leks: 164 males. In the Abernethy Forest recording area, 27 males and 24 females were counted but no young found.

**Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*****Amber****Less scarce: 1,255 bp (Dillon *et al.* 2009) Coverage: low**

Details were received for 324 nesting pairs, a fraction of the estimated 1,255 pairs breeding in Scotland (Dillon *et al.* 2009). In Orkney, 44 monitored sites on four islands produced 27 fledged young. In Shetland, a generally improved breeding season compared to 2011 was reported, although success was poor on Fetlar. For data in other regions, see below.

Ten SPAs have been classified for Red-throated Divers with the total in the 2000s (397 pairs) being similar to that in the 1990s, although an increase in the national population means that the SPA suite now represents a smaller proportion of the British population (42% cf. 30%).

Scotland, S

Clyde Islands On Arran and Bute, at least four pairs bred.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross Two pairs bred, with three young hatched, and one possible breeding pair. North-east Scotland One pair bred; two eggs were laid but the attempt probably failed.

Scotland, N & W

Highland At least 26 pairs bred with successful breeding at 13 sites at least and 14+ young fledged.

**Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*****Amber****Rare: 217 bp (Dillon *et al.* 2009)****Coverage: moderate**

18–32 pairs. A lack of monitoring effort affects the value of RBBP figures for this species. Twelve SPAs are now classified for Black-throated Divers with the addition of the West Inverness-shire Lochs in 2009. These sites held 100 breeding pairs in the 2000s (45% of the British population, cf. 61% in the 1990s, reflecting an increase in the population elsewhere). Poor breeding performance at some SPAs was reviewed by Brown (2010).

Scotland, S

Clyde Islands No details available, but pairs known to be present.

Scotland, Mid

One pair bred; failed at the egg stage. Also two probable and five possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Four pairs bred but only eight out of 13 traditional sites were checked for occupancy. No young known to have fledged. Caithness One pair bred, one young fledged. Highland 11 pairs bred, few data on

productivity; also two probable and one possible breeding pairs. Outer Hebrides Details received for just five pairs: one pair bred (fledging one young), three probable and one possible breeding pairs.

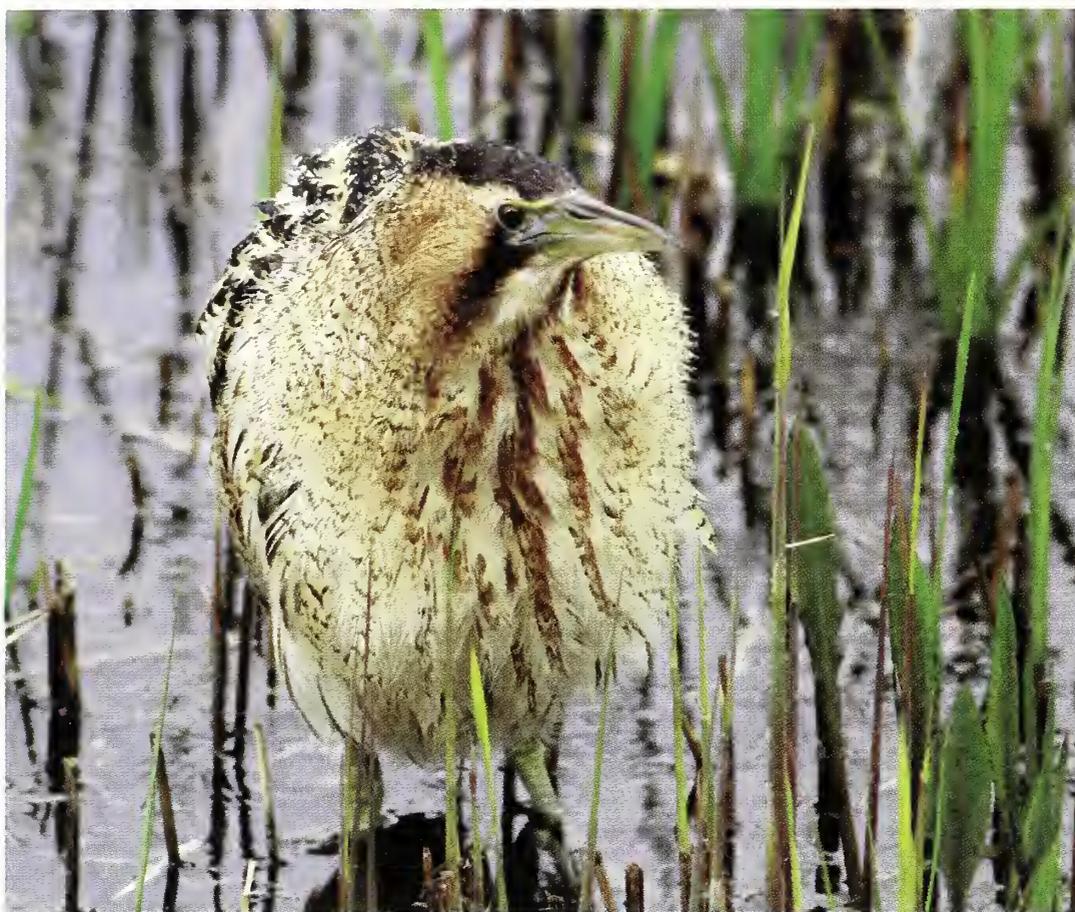
**Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris***

Rare: 5-yr mean 110 booming males

Coverage: near-complete

**Red**

Mark Rayment



66 sites: 106–129 booming males with at least 44 breeding attempts at 19 sites. Six SPAs are classified for breeding Bitterns, and following the addition of Humber Estuary SPA in 2007, they now hold 45 booming males (59% of the estimate for Britain). Proportionately, this is less than in the 1990s (18 males, 90%), which is a consequence of the welcome recovery of the population following major

262. Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Minsmere, Suffolk, April 2012.

Eurasian Bittern	No. sites	Minimum no. booming males	Maximum no. booming males	Minimum no. nests	Maximum no. nests
England, SW	11	30	36	14	17
Dorset	1	0	1	0	0
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	0	1
Somerset	9	29	34	14	16
England, SE	5	6	8	2	2
Essex	1	1	1	0	0
Kent	3	4	6	2	2
Sussex	1	1	1	0	0
England, E	35	57	67	21	26
Cambridgeshire	7	9	10	2	2
Lincolnshire	3	1	3	0	0
Norfolk	15	16	20	1	1
Suffolk	10	31	34	18	23
England, C	2	2	2	0	1
Nottinghamshire	2	2	2	0	1
England, N	12	11	15	7	7
Cleveland	1	1	1	0	0
Cumbria	1	1	1	0	0
Greater Manchester	1	0	1	0	0
Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	1	1	0	0
Yorkshire	8	8	11	7	7
Wales	1	0	1	0	0
Anglesey	1	0	1	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>53</b>

habitat creation and restoration efforts. The 5-year national mean tops 100 for the first time in the Panel's history and *Bird Atlas 2007–11* documents a 40-year range change of +134%.

These data are based on the RSPB's monitoring methodology; the minimum figure is the closest to the number of occupied territories. The minimum number of booming males is based on presence at a site for at least a week (although this may include some wintering birds early in the season), while the maximum figure includes males booming for shorter periods or where it was not possible to confirm that different males were involved.

**Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus***

**Occasional breeder; previously recorded in 1984 and 2010–11**

One site: one pair. Evidence that the Little Bittern is becoming established on the Somerset Levels is gradually mounting, with young being raised there in three consecutive years.

England, SW

Somerset One site: one pair bred at Ham Wall RSPB reserve. At least one brood of three fledged; there may have been a second brood, and there was some evidence that a second male was present.

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***

**Scarce: 5-yr mean 819 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

Amber

95 sites: 887–902 pairs. Contributors to the BTO's long-running Heronries Census provide many of the counts included here and without these our totals would be much poorer. Little Egret colonies can be difficult to survey and in some areas, notably southwest England, colonies are under-recorded or not counted. The number of sites is the same as in 2011, yet *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows confirmed breeding in 122 10-km squares; since egrets are site-faithful, it would seem likely that some colonies are not reported to the RBBP. Nonetheless, the total number of breeding pairs reported increased from 783 in 2011 to a new record of 902. Including colonies in the Channel Islands for the first time makes only a small difference and most of the increase was in eastern and northern England. Two colonies in Co. Down provide the first confirmed breeding records for Northern Ireland.

Little Egret	No. sites	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs			
			Lincolnshire	6	63
			Norfolk	6	114
			Northamptonshire	2	3
England, SW	26	182	Suffolk	8	43
Cornwall	4	8	England, C	2	3
Devon	6	61	Leicestershire & Rutland	2	3
Dorset	3	5	England, N	3	74
Gloucestershire	2	14	Cheshire & Wirral	1	70
Hampshire	4	49	Cumbria	1	3
Somerset	4	27	Yorkshire	1	1
Wiltshire	3	18	Wales	9	75
England, SE	24	310	Anglesey	2	13
Berkshire	1	2	Caernarfonshire	2	40
Buckinghamshire	2	5	Carmarthenshire	2	5
Essex	6	79	Ceredigion	1	4
Hertfordshire	2	7	Gower	1	12
Kent	5	171	Gwent	1*	1+
Oxfordshire	1	1	Northern Ireland	2	4
Sussex	7	45	Co. Down	2	4
England, E	25	237	Channel Islands	4	17
Cambridgeshire	3	14	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>902</b>

\* Colony at site but no count.

Alan Harris



Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

### Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

#### New colonist

One site: two pairs. With a large increase in the wintering population of Great White Egrets (records in 6% of 10-km squares in Britain in *Bird Atlas 2007–11*) and in the number of summering birds (Holt 2013), breeding was widely anticipated and two pairs in the Somerset Levels in 2012 were the first confirmed breeding records in the UK (Anderson *et al.* 2013).

England, SW

Somerset One site: two pairs bred fledging a total of four young.

### Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 5 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Amber

Two sites: 10–11 pairs. The breeding colony in Norfolk appears now to be a permanent feature of this report, and it seems likely that nesting elsewhere is to be expected. Indeed, the new RSPB reserve at Wallasea, in Essex, will include nesting lagoons designed for Spoonbills, based on experience of colonies in the Netherlands. Until 2007, there were only one or two colonies in Denmark, numbering up to 34 pairs, but in 2012 there were 103 pairs breeding in five colonies (Nyegaard *et al.* 2014) indicating the speed with which this species can become established.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: one possible breeding pair. Two birds were present for 11 days in May, one staying until late June. There was some indication of nest-building during this period.

England, E

Norfolk One site (Holkham): ten pairs bred; nine successful pairs fledged a total of 19 young.

### Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 27 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Amber

14 sites: 34 pairs bred; five sites produced a total of ten young. This is the lowest number of fledged young since 2007. The six Slavonian Grebe SPAs now hold just 14 pairs: a significant decline since the 1990s (37 pairs). In most years, the majority of the UK population (61% of the 2009 national survey total) occurs within the SPA network. This species' downward trend is the subject of continuing RSPB research.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

Highland/Moray & Nairn 14 sites: 34 pairs reared ten young. Loch Ruthven was again the major site with 13 breeding pairs but only two young fledged there.

**Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*****Rare: 5-yr mean 48 bp****Coverage: near-complete****Amber**

19 sites: 21–49 pairs. Martin & Smith (2007) showed that numbers rose from around ten confirmed breeding pairs in the early 1970s to 40–50 by the early part of the 2000s. Numbers have since declined, although *Bird Atlas 2007–11* still shows a 40-year change of +382% in terms of 10-km squares occupied. In 2012 only a single bird was recorded at a former breeding site in Scotland, the country that was once their stronghold in the UK.

England, SE

**Hertfordshire** One site: one pair bred, fledging one young; eight probable breeding pairs. **Kent** One site: one pair bred, one young probably fledged; six probable breeding pairs.

England, E

**Cambridgeshire** One site: one probable breeding pair, plus two other adults. **Lincolnshire** Two sites: (1) one pair bred, one probable breeding pair; (2) one pair bred.

England, C

**Nottinghamshire** One site: one pair bred, with three young fledged from four hatched; one possible breeding pair.

England, N

**Cheshire & Wirral** One site: 11 pairs bred and fledged 19 young; one probable breeding pair. **Northumberland** Three sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging two young, and one probable breeding pair; (2) one possible breeding pair; (3) one possible breeding pair. **Yorkshire** Eight sites: (1)–(4) one pair bred; (5) one probable and two possible breeding pairs; (6)–(7) one probable breeding pair; (8) one possible breeding pair.

Wales

**East Glamorgan** One possible breeding pair on 7th May; the birds moved to a nearby site where they displayed and stayed for a further two days.



Mike Lawrence

**263.** Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Bedfordshire, April 2012.

**Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*****Rare: 5-yr mean 43 bp****Coverage: high****Amber**

14–42 pairs and at least five territories with only single birds present; at least ten young fledged. The low number of confirmed breeding pairs resembles the situation in 2007 when there was also wet and windy weather in June and July, restricting fieldwork. In 2007 there were only 12 confirmed breeding pairs, but 23 young fledged. Success in 2012 was much poorer, perhaps because the cold, wet weather occurred earlier in the season, or because the weather prevented some nests being checked later in the season. These data suggest that many pairs did not attempt to lay eggs in 2012. Fieldworkers in Wiltshire reported that 2012 saw an almost complete absence of social wasps (a major food source) and this was the first year since 1975 that there was no confirmed breeding in that county.

The New Forest is the UK's only SPA for the Honey-buzzard, holding four pairs, 12% of the British population. Numbers and trends in this area over a 58-year period were reviewed by Wiseman (2012). The SPA Review highlights the continuing poor quality of surveillance data for this species and specifically requests the Panel to work with recorders to further develop our understanding of the population status and trends of the Honey-buzzard.

## England, SW

**Dorset** Two probable breeding pairs and a further territory with just a single bird present. **Hampshire** Four pairs bred, fledging a total of three young from two successful nests, and three probable breeding pairs. Two other territories occupied by single birds. **Wiltshire** Two probable and one possible breeding pair, and a further territory with a single bird present.

## England, SE

**Kent** One pair bred and fledged one young. **Surrey** Two probable breeding pairs. **Sussex** One pair bred, fledging two young, and six possible breeding pairs.

## England, E

**Norfolk** One pair bred, no young recorded but adults seen taking food into the nest site.

## England, C

**Nottinghamshire** One pair bred (young fledged but number unknown) and one territory with a single bird present.

## England, N

**Cumbria** One pair bred, one possible breeding pair. **Yorkshire** At least two pairs bred, with four young fledged; also two probable and three possible breeding pairs.

## Wales

One pair bred (which failed on eggs) and two probable breeding pairs.

## Scotland

**Dumfries & Galloway** Two pairs bred, but no young known to have fledged; also one probable breeding pair.

**Moray & Nairn** At least one possible breeding pair. **Highland** One probable and one possible breeding pair.

**Red Kite *Milvus milvus*****Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,121 bp****Coverage: moderate****Amber**

A minimum of 1,087 pairs. The weather had a major impact on the nesting success of Red Kites in many areas, with nests blown out and large chicks lost. For example, of 14 monitored nests in Pembrokeshire, several early clutches were lost to gales in late April and any remaining nests failed following the gales of 7th–8th June.

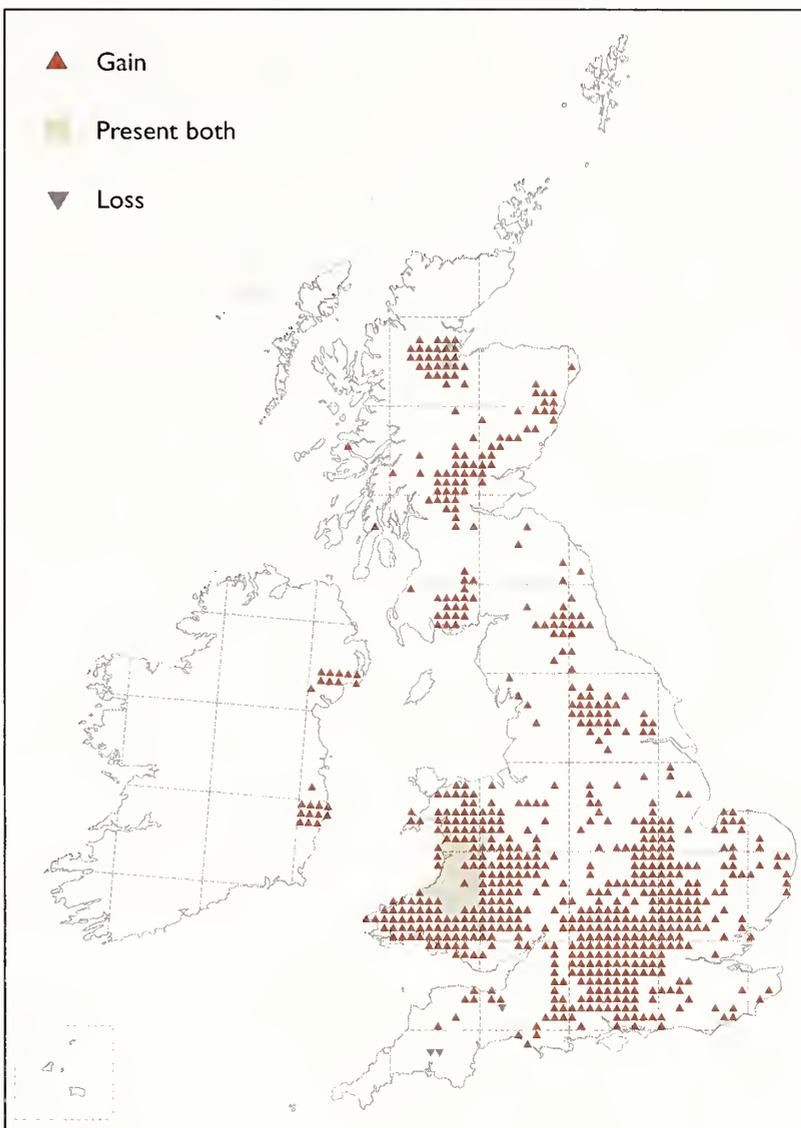
The maps in *Bird Atlas 2007–11* demonstrate very clearly the major range expansion of Red Kites, with a 40-year change of +1,971% and new populations established around the ten different re-establishment programmes in Britain & Ireland (fig. 3). The first modern breeding in Staffordshire was notable in 2012.

Fewer pairs were reported than in 2011, despite the well-documented increases across most areas – the key exception being northern Scotland, where the small population continues to be constrained by illegal persecution, mainly poisoning (Smart *et al.* 2010). The abundance of this species as reported by the RBBP is underestimated because the main populations in Wales and

**Fig. 3.** Map showing changes in distribution in the breeding season of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* in Britain & Ireland between 1968–72 and 2008–11 (reproduced with permission from *Bird Atlas 2007–11*).

the Chilterns (marked with an asterisk in the table) are no longer monitored fully. The Welsh Kite Trust estimated that in 2011 populations in these two areas were over 1,000 and 800 pairs respectively, which means that the UK population is likely to be nearer 2,500 pairs.

For a number of years, the Red Kite has been monitored by the BBS, occurring on 104 survey squares in 2013 and showing a +805% change over the period 1995–2012 (Harris *et al.* 2014). The Red Kite now exceeds the criteria for inclusion on the RBBP list of monitored species and this is the last report that will include this species. There are still large parts of England and Scotland where the species has not yet bred, and we hope that the county



Red Kite		Co. Durham	
	Total pairs		
England, SW	66	Northumberland	1
Gloucestershire	5	Yorkshire	100
Hampshire	50	Wales	270*
Wiltshire	11	Breconshire	50*
England, SE	169*	Caernarfonshire	3*
Bedfordshire	2	Carmarthenshire	47*
Berkshire	2*	Ceredigion	51*
Buckinghamshire	77*	Denbigh & Flint	1*
Hertfordshire	26	East Glamorgan	2*
Oxfordshire	42*	Gower	15*
Surrey	5	Gwent	6*
Sussex	15	Meirionnydd	4*
England, E	163	Montgomeryshire	12*
Cambridgeshire	8	Pembrokeshire	44*
Lincolnshire	10	Radnorshire	35*
Norfolk	7	Scotland, S	73
Northamptonshire	137	Dumfries & Galloway	73
Suffolk	1	Scotland, Mid	101
England, C	43	Angus & Dundee	1
Herefordshire	12	North-east Scotland	19
Leicestershire & Rutland	3	Perth & Kinross	54
Nottinghamshire	1	Upper Forth	27
Shropshire	25	Scotland, N & W	62
Staffordshire	1	Highland	62
Worcestershire	1	Northern Ireland	12
England, N	128	Co. Down	12
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,087</b>

recording network will monitor the predicted expansion of range.

Elenydd-Mallaen SPA in mid Wales is the single SPA classified for Red Kite and numbers nesting there increased from 15 pairs in the 1990s to 18 pairs a decade later. However, given the major growth of the re-established population elsewhere, this now represents <1% of the British population.

### White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Rare: 5-yr mean 53 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Red

59–67 pairs; 60 young fledged. Following two re-establishment projects in western Scotland, the population reaches another new peak, with an additional ten confirmed breeding pairs compared with 2011. By 2012, no pairs from the more recent project in eastern Scotland had yet set up territories. However, if they are left unmolested, and if results in Denmark are any guide, we might expect the birds in eastern Scotland to do well. In Denmark, from one pair in 1995 there were 48 breeding pairs, which fledged 52 young, in 2012 (Nyegaard *et al.* 2014).

Scotland, N & W

Argyll 18 pairs bred, two further territorial pairs. Highland 23 pairs bred, and a further five territorial pairs. Outer Hebrides 18 pairs bred, and one other territorial pair.

### Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 363 bp

Coverage: moderate

Amber

272–336 breeding females/pairs. Marsh Harrier suffers from a lack of complete recording in the main part of its range (particularly East Anglia, Essex and Kent) so the figures here are an underestimate. The 2005 national survey found 429 breeding females/pairs (Holling *et al.* 2008) yet, without a full survey, 423 pairs were reported to us in 2007, indicating that numbers have continued to increase. Given the range expansion documented by *Bird Atlas 2007–11*, it is likely that the UK population falls in the range 450–500 pairs. To confirm this, it is essential that birders report all nesting Marsh Harriers to county recorders directly or via BirdTrack.

Ten SPAs are classified for breeding Marsh Harriers. No data were available to the SPA Review for four of these, but assuming that numbers there were unchanged from the 1990s, the suite total increased from 116 to 164 pairs (51% of the UK population, based on Musgrove *et al.* 2013).

England, SW

Dorset Two pairs bred although one nest was flooded out; also a displaying female. Somerset Four breeding females, but only one nest was successful.

England, SE

Essex 21 pairs bred, two probable and one possible breeding pairs. Kent Ten pairs bred, five probable breeding pairs. Markedly under-recorded, the county estimate is 100 pairs. Sussex Two pairs bred, eight young fledged.

England, E

Cambridgeshire 23 pairs bred and five probable breeding pairs, but a minimum of 24 other pairs were at least possibly breeding. Lincolnshire 33 pairs bred and 11 probable breeding pairs, but limited coverage around the Wash. Norfolk A minimum of 60 pairs bred, plus four probable breeding pairs but coverage incomplete, especially in the Broads. Suffolk 58 pairs bred and one probable breeding pair.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One pair bred, fledging two young, and one possible breeding pair.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One pair bred, fledging one young. Lancashire & N Merseyside Ten pairs bred. Northumberland Two breeding females, paired with one male: both laid eggs but only one was successful, fledging two young. Yorkshire 26 pairs bred, eight probable and one possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee Two pairs bred, one of which fledged two young. Fife One pair bred, fledging one young. Moray & Nairn One pair bred, fledging two young. Perth & Kinross Six pairs bred, and two successful pairs fledged seven young.

Channel Islands

Jersey Six pairs bred. Guernsey At least three pairs bred.

**Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*****Scarce: 662 bp (Hayhow et al. 2013)****Coverage: moderate****Red**

204–329 monitored pairs. From available data on the successful pairs, a minimum of 302 young were fledged (four in England, 23 in Wales and 275 in Scotland). There was only one nest in England, down from eight in 2011, mainly due to the lack of breeding pairs in the Forest of Bowland (Lancashire & N Merseyside).

With the classification of Antrim Hills, Slieve Beagh-Mullaghfad-Lisnaskea (both in Northern Ireland), Renfrewshire Heights (Clyde), and Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors (Highland) in the 2000s, there are now 17 SPAs for breeding Hen Harriers. Together, these hold 207 pairs (30% of GB and 19% of all-Ireland populations), only a slight increase from 201 pairs in the 1990s, despite the new classifications. This reflects the fact that there have been significant declines at several other sites.

Hen Harrier	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs			
			Dumfries & Galloway	2	5
			Scotland, Mid	29	47
			Moray & Nairn	4	9
England	1	1	North-east Scotland	0	1
Wales	32	40	Perth & Kinross	23	35
Breconshire	1	1	Upper Forth	2	2
Caernarfonshire	4	4	Scotland, N & W	126	212
Denbigh & Flint	7	8	Argyll	24	51
Meirionnydd	9	11	Caithness	3	14
Montgomeryshire	9	9	Highland	15	18
Radnorshire	2	7	Orkney	66	110
Scotland, S	8	15	Outer Hebrides	18	19
Ayrshire	3	3	Northern Ireland	3	4
Borders	2	4	Co. Antrim	3	4
Clyde	0	2	Isle of Man	5	10
Clyde Islands	1	1	TOTALS	204	329

**Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 14 bp****Coverage: near-complete****Amber**

Six sites: 6–9 pairs fledged a minimum of 15 young. Up to seven single birds were also recorded, two of those at former breeding sites in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. This is the lowest number of nesting pairs since 1999, when there were 4–11 pairs. The low numbers largely reflect the species' fortunes in East Anglia. It seems that birds returned to traditional areas but did not pair up, perhaps because of the inclement weather early in the season. Despite this setback, those pairs that did nest were all successful and 15 fledged young is only a little below the 5-year mean of 17.8 (2008–12).

England, S

Five sites: five 'pairs' bred (at one site a polygamous male paired with two females), 11 young fledged; one probable and two possible breeding pairs. Four single birds were associating with pairs or visiting former nest sites.

England, E

Lincolnshire One site: one pair bred, four young fledged.

**Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*****Scarce: 5-yr mean 464 bp****Coverage: moderate****Green**

363–514 pairs. This is the highest maximum total reported by RBBP in our 40-year history, but is still believed to be an underestimate. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* reports confirmed or probable breeding from 400 10-km squares, yet in some areas measured breeding density is much greater than one

pair per 10-km square. In 2012, 11 nests were monitored in a single 10-km square in the New Forest (Hampshire) while in Gwent one square held eight pairs.

Northern Goshawk	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			Northumberland	21	35
			Yorkshire	20	36
			Wales	64	100
England, SW	88	102	Anglesey	0	1
Cornwall	1	1	Breconshire	10	17
Devon	18	20	Caernarfonshire	0	4
Gloucestershire	29	30	Carmarthenshire	5	5
Hampshire	31	38	Ceredigion	2	4
Somerset	0	4	Denbigh & Flint	4	6
Wiltshire	9	9	East Glamorgan	3	5
England, SE	2	5	Gower	3	6
Essex	1	1	Gwent	24	24
Kent	0	1	Meirionnydd	0	2
Surrey	0	1	Montgomeryshire	5	5
Sussex	1	2	Pembrokeshire	0	3
England, E	8	11	Radnorshire	8	18
Cambridgeshire	0	1	Scotland, S	56	65
Norfolk	3	5	Ayrshire	1	5
Suffolk	5	5	Borders	28	31
England, C	34	56	Clyde	0	1
Derbyshire	10	11	Dumfries & Galloway	26	26
Herefordshire	5	20	Lothian	1	2
Nottinghamshire	7	8	Scotland, Mid	58	64
Shropshire	10	11	Central Scotland RSG	2	3
Staffordshire	1	3	North-east Scotland	50	53
Warwickshire	0	2	Tayside RSG	6	8
Worcestershire	1	1	Scotland, N & W	3	3
England, N	48	105	Highland	3	3
Cheshire & Wirral	0	1	Northern Ireland	2	3
Cleveland	0	1	Co. Antrim	2	2
Cumbria	3	12	Co. Down	0	1
Co. Durham	3	10	TOTALS	363	514
Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	10			

**Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus***

**Potential breeder**



Dan Powell

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

One site: 0–1 pairs. Rough-legged Buzzard has appeared in our reports on only two previous occasions: in 1975, nest-building and display were observed in Lincolnshire (Sharrock *et al.* 1978), while in 1987 a single bird was seen in woodland in June in Suffolk (Spencer *et al.* 1989). The 2012 record recalls the first of those but, as then, the birds left the area without progressing beyond nest-building.

England, N

Co. Durham One site: one probable breeding pair. Two birds present since October 2011 were seen displaying and nest-building in April, but the male was not seen after 22nd April and the female stayed only until 1st May.

**Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos***

**Scarce: 442 bp (Eaton *et al.* 2007)**

**Coverage: moderate**

Amber

171–311 pairs. Six new SPAs for Golden Eagles were classified in 2010: Cairngorms Massif, Foinaven, Glen Affric to Strathconon, Glen Etive and Glen Fyne, and Moidart and Ardgour (all Highland) and Jura, Scarba and the Garvellachs (Argyll). At the time of the 2003 national survey (Eaton *et al.* 2007), all 12 SPAs in the current suite held 124 pairs – 28% of the UK population and 2.4% of the European population.

Golden Eagle	Singles <sup>1</sup>	Probable breeding pairs <sup>2</sup>	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs	Min. no. young fledged
England, N	1	0	0	0	0
Scotland, S (mainland)	2	2	1	3	0
Scotland, S (Clyde Islands)	0	0	5	5	3
Angus & Dundee	0	1	4	5	5
Central Scotland RSG	0	7	3	10	2
North-east Scotland	4	5	9	14	10
Perth & Kinross	1	7	11	18	8
Argyll	0	27	35	62	22
Highland RSG	7	73	76	149	45
Outer Hebrides (Lewis & Harris)	0	7	17	24	11
Outer Hebrides (Uists)	1	11	10	21	6
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>112</b>

<sup>1</sup> Total includes home ranges occupied by single birds or showing signs of occupation but no pair seen.  
<sup>2</sup> May include some pairs that laid eggs but failed early, and pairs on territory that were not fully monitored, so evidence of egg-laying was not available.

**Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***

**Rare: 5-yr mean 208 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

Amber

192–209 pairs. A minimum of 300 young fledged. Summering or possible breeding pairs were also widely reported but are not included in these totals. Not all nests within the core area of central and northern Scotland are recorded each year, leading to a small underestimate, but newer populations in southern Scotland, England and Wales continue to increase slowly. Nine SPAs are classified for Osprey and these sites are used for feeding as well as nesting. In the 2000s, 17 pairs nested within these SPAs, although a much greater number (76 pairs or 38% of the UK population) use lochs within the SPA suite for some or all of their feeding requirements (i.e. those territories within c. 20 km of the nine sites).

England, E

Northamptonshire One pair bred, two young thought to have fledged.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland Three pairs bred, fledging seven young.

Dale Bentham



**264.** A migrant juvenile Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* in Yorkshire, August 2012.

England, N

**Cumbria** Three pairs bred, with three young known to have fledged from two of these. **Northumberland** Two pairs bred, each hatched three young but torrential rain ensured that only three fledged; one other pair on territory did not breed.

Wales

**Meirionnydd** Two pairs bred, fledging four young. **Montgomeryshire** One pair bred, three young were hatched but only one fledged.

Scotland, S

**Borders** Ten pairs bred; seven successful pairs fledged 16 young. **Clyde** Six pairs bred, five successful pairs fledged eight young; four other territorial pairs. **Clyde Islands** One pair bred, two young fledged. **Dumfries & Galloway** Six pairs bred, four successful pairs fledged six young. **Lothian** One probable breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

**Angus & Dundee** Nine pairs bred; eight successful pairs fledged 14 young. **Moray & Nairn** 11 pairs bred, nine successful pairs fledged 18 young. **North-east Scotland** 20 pairs bred, 15 successful pairs fledged 25 young; one other territorial pair. **Perth & Kinross** 32 pairs bred, 25 successful pairs fledged 44 young; two other territorial pairs. **Upper Forth** 17 pairs bred, 12 successful pairs fledged 22 young; two other territorial pairs.

Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** 17 pairs bred, 14 successful pairs fledged 39 young; two other territorial pairs. **Caithness** Two pairs bred fledging five young. **Highland** 49 pairs bred, 41 successful pairs fledged 81 young; four other territorial pairs.

**Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus***

**Less scarce: 5-yr mean: 1,184 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

Green

At least 340 sites: a minimum of 1,531 territories; 84 confirmed breeding pairs. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* confirms that the Water Rail is a widespread but local breeding species, which is difficult to record easily. The RBBP's records supplement the atlas maps with numerical data but this is compromised by uneven patterns of recording. We ask counties to provide data relating to the breeding season in question, but three counties had no detailed numbers for 2012 (these counties provided estimates based on survey work conducted in recent years – numbers given in parentheses in the table) and for three there were no site details. We ask all observers to report all records of Water Rails from the March to August period so that the national population estimate can be refined.

	Sites	Territories			
Water Rail			Co. Durham	8	8
			Greater Manchester	5	29
England, SW	32	234	Lancashire & N Merseyside	–	(175)
Avon	3	5	Northumberland	14	15
Cornwall	1	1	Yorkshire	22	68
Devon	6	6	Wales	25	48
Dorset	5	104	Anglesey	2	15
Gloucestershire	4	4	Breconshire	1	1
Hampshire	8	30	Caernarfonshire	1	4
Isle of Wight	1	4	Carmarthenshire	1	1
Somerset	2	78	Ceredigion	1	3
Wiltshire	2	2	East Glamorgan	6	6
England, SE	69	339	Gower	4	4
Bedfordshire	6	8	Gwent	1	6
Essex	6	20	Montgomeryshire	2	2
Hertfordshire	4	6	Radnorshire	6	6
Kent	38	(250)	Scotland, S	32	65
Oxfordshire	1	1	Ayrshire	3	4
Surrey	7	10	Borders	17	46
Sussex	7	44	Clyde	4	5
England, E	41	322	Dumfries & Galloway	7	9
Cambridgeshire	3	17	Lothian	1	1
Lincolnshire	11	13	Scotland, Mid	12	61
Norfolk	10	13	Angus & Dundee	2	2
Northamptonshire	2	4	Moray & Nairn	–	(40)
Suffolk	15	275	North-east Scotland	4	6
England, C	17	56	Perth & Kinross	6	13
Derbyshire	4	5	Scotland, N & W	28	35
Leicestershire & Rutland	1	5	Argyll	13	17
Nottinghamshire	5	11	Caithness	1	1
Shropshire	1	1	Highland	7	7
Staffordshire	4	20	Orkney	7	10
Warwickshire	–	8	Northern Ireland	1	1
Worcestershire	2	6	Co. Antrim	1	1
England, N	76	366	Isle of Man	1	1
Cheshire & Wirral	8	17	Channel Islands	3	3
Cleveland	10	42	Jersey	3	3
Cumbria	9	12	TOTALS	337	1,531

**Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 26 singing males**

**Coverage: moderate**



11 sites: 0–28 pairs/singing males. A national survey of Spotted Crakes was undertaken in 2012 and national organiser Sabine Schmitt supplied the following summary of the results.

‘During the second UK-wide survey of Spotted Crakes under the Statutory Conservation Agency and RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS), 28 singing males were recorded at 11 sites in Scotland and England, a decline of 65% since the first national survey, in 1999. Surveying aimed to cover all 135 sites where Spotted Crakes had been recorded in the breeding season between 1999 and 2011, but full coverage could not quite be achieved due to adverse weather conditions and subsequent flooding of sites – it is not thought, however, that many birds were missed. Some regular sites, such as the Ouse Washes, were completely flooded and so unsuitable for crakes in 2012, but this seems unlikely to be the cause of a decline of such magnitude; numbers reported annually to the Panel have declined steadily since 1999, which appears to represent a modern high point for Spotted Crakes in the UK. The reasons for the

recent decline are unknown; Stroud *et al.* (2012) presented evidence for the widespread loss of breeding habitat (land drainage and wetland conversion) being the cause of decline from a much larger population in the early nineteenth century.'

The SPA suite for Spotted Crake comprises four sites, and the number of calling males in these areas has declined from 23 to 11 (thought to represent 39% of the UK population in 2012).

England, SW

Somerset One site: up to four heard, with earliest on 16th May and last on 20th July.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) Nene Washes: up to three heard from 20th May to 27th June; (2) one heard from 26th June to 11th July. Lincolnshire One site: one heard between 11th and 21st May.

England, N

Co. Durham One site: one heard occasionally in early July. Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: two heard on 12th June. Yorkshire Three sites: (1) extensive site with eight singing males; (2) two heard on 21st June; (3) one heard for two weeks in early June.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee One site: up to four heard, between 9th and 25th May.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one heard on 2nd or 3rd May only.

### **Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla***

#### **Potential breeder**

Three sites: 0–6 pairs/singing males. The only previous entry for Baillon's Crake in the RBBP reports was in 2001, when a singing male took up residence in Kent for 11 days in late June/July (Ogilvie *et al.* 2003), although there was also a comparable record of one in song in 1999, also in Kent, from 6th June to 20th July (Rogers *et al.* 2000). Breeding occurred in England in the nineteenth century but has not been reported since (Brown & Grice 2005), so the mini-influx of 2012 was unprecedented, and may have gone unnoticed had it not coincided with extra fieldwork for the Spotted Crake survey, which required listening for singing birds in suitable crake habitats at night. At least six birds were identified and accepted by BBRC (Hudson *et al.* 2013) but there were also unverified reports from Somerset and Norfolk. For further details, see Ausden *et al.* (2013).

The nearest regularly breeding Baillon's Crakes are in southern and eastern Europe where the unusually dry conditions in spring 2012, particularly in southern Spain, may have encouraged migrating Baillon's Crakes to continue north in search of more suitable habitat. The very wet conditions in England and Wales in spring 2012 meant that many marshes were, at least initially, potentially more suitable for settlement than normal.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one heard from 7th to 19th June.

Wales

Anglesey One site: at least four (but possibly up to six) calling birds. The first was heard on 22nd May, and the last record was on 14th July. Ceredigion One site: one (but possibly two) calling birds from 25th to 28th June.

### **Corn Crake *Crex crex***

**Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,233 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Red**

1,280 singing males. Oronsay and South Colonsay SPA (Argyll) was classified for Corn Crakes in 2008 bringing the SPA suite for this species to 11 sites. Data from the 2009 national survey (Wotton *et al.* in prep.) shows that the full SPA suite now holds c. 350 calling males (29% UK), significantly more than the 204 in ten SPAs in the 1990s (then 42% UK). The increasing number and declining proportion reflect the welcome increase in numbers both inside and outside SPAs as a consequence of focused encouragement of appropriate agricultural habitat management.

The standard recording unit for Corn Crakes is the singing male and all counts below refer to the maximum total of singing males in each area.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One extensive site (Nene Washes): six. Lincolnshire One site: one.

Wales

Anglesey One site: one on 15th–23rd July.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: two from 16th May to 10th July.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Total 668: Coll 103, Colonsay & Oronsay 71, Iona 31, Islay 86, Mull 2, Staffa 2, Tiree 371, Treshnish Isles 2. Caithness Total 1. Highland Total 53: Canna 4, Eigg 1, Mainland 10, Skye 38. Orkney Total 32. Outer Hebrides Total 514: Barra and Vatersay 98, Benbecula 13, Berneray 6, Harris 11, Lewis 142, North Uist 131, South Uist 113. Shetland Total 1.

Northern Ireland

One site: one heard.

### Common Crane *Grus grus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 18 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Amber

Seven sites: 12–19 pairs. Thirteen young fledged. The breeding population seems to have stabilised yet there was a significant range expansion in 2012, with the first successful breeding in Scotland in modern times (breeding may have occurred in Caithness in 1997 but could not be confirmed; Forrester *et al.* 2007). The Great Crane Project, which has been reintroducing Common Cranes to the Somerset Levels since 2010, had its first success in 2014.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair bred and fledged one young; one probable breeding pair. Norfolk One extensive site (Norfolk Broads): six pairs bred, all were successful and nine young fledged; also one probable and two possible breeding pairs plus four other adults. Suffolk One site (Lakenheath): two pairs bred, each fledging one young.

England, C

Shropshire One extensive site: one possible breeding pair. What was presumably this pair was also seen at several locations in Cheshire & Wirral and Greater Manchester.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral/Greater Manchester See under Shropshire. Yorkshire Two extensive sites: (1) two pairs bred but no young were fledged; also one probable breeding pair; (2) one possible breeding pair and up to four other adults.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland: One site: one pair bred, fledging one young.

### Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Reintroduced population first bred in 2007

One extensive site: 1–2 pairs. After six years of breeding, young have fledged in only one year, 2009.

England, SW

Wiltshire One site: one pair bred and one probable breeding pair. At least one egg was laid in at least one nest but it was lost to a predator (possibly Fox *Vulpes vulpes*) before hatching.

### Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 396 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Amber

Seven counties: 473 confirmed breeding pairs fledged a minimum of 168 young. This is the highest number of breeding pairs of Stone-curlew reported by the RBBP. Porton Down, Salisbury Plain and Breckland comprise the SPA suite for Stone-curlew. In the 1990s, these sites held 157

pairs (84% UK) and by 2011 they held 230 pairs (66% UK). This reflects the increase in numbers away from these SPAs – the population increased by 84% between the five-year periods of 1994–98 and 2006–10 based on RBBP data, showing the impact of long-term focused conservation efforts.

Stone-curlew	Confirmed breeding pairs	Min. no. young fledged			
			Oxfordshire	4	0*
			Sussex	1	0
England, SW	125	61*	England, E	336	104*
Hampshire	28	8*	Norfolk	149	28*
Wiltshire	97	53	Suffolk	187	76
England, SE	12	3*	TOTALS	473	168
Berkshire	7	3			

\* Number of young fledged not based on all pairs present.

### Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

#### Occasional breeder

Two sites: 1–2 pairs. These are the first reports since 2008, when a pair unsuccessfully bred in Cheshire & Wirral. Only once before has there been more than one pair in a year in the UK, in 2005, but the two pairs in spring 2012 were part of a wider influx of at least 30 birds into England and Wales and also the Netherlands (Hudson *et al.* 2013). Drought conditions in southern Europe may have led to these birds moving north, but the wet summer in Britain caused the nest in Somerset to be deserted.

England, SW

Hampshire One site: one probable breeding pair. A female arrived on 27th May, joined by a male on 2nd June. Copulation and nest-scraping were observed, but no eggs were laid and the birds were last seen on 9th June. Somerset One site: one pair bred. Three birds arrived at Curry Moor on 2nd June and four eggs were laid, but the nest was subsequently deserted, probably due to the wet and cold conditions; the birds had already moved on by 9th June.

### Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,663 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Amber

At least 110 sites: 1,934 pairs. The Stour and Orwell, and Humber Estuary were added to the SPA suite in 2005 and 2007 respectively and bring the total sites classified for Avocet to eight. Together these sites held 885 pairs (59% UK) using RBBP data for the period 2005–09 (and making assumptions as to missing counts in some years). This is a substantial increase from the 1990s

Avocet	No. sites	Confirmed breeding pairs			
			England, C	4	16
			Leicestershire & Rutland	1	5
England, SW	6	36	Nottinghamshire	1	5
Gloucestershire	1	2	Staffordshire	1	1
Hampshire	4	33	Worcestershire	1	5
Somerset	1	1	England, N	22	240
England, SE	30	508	Cheshire & Wirral	2	27
Essex	14	178	Cleveland	2	28
Kent	10	273	Co. Durham	1	4
Sussex	6	57	Lancashire & N Merseyside	4	87
England, E	47	1,107	Northumberland	2	3
Cambridgeshire	1	29	Yorkshire	11	91
Lincolnshire	11	374	Wales	1	27
Norfolk	24	496	Gwent	1	27
Suffolk	11	208	TOTALS	110	1,934

when six of these sites held 549 pairs – 93% of the then UK total. This is a consequence of the significant spread in the last decade as well as increasing numbers at sites within the existing range (see fig. 4 in Holling *et al.* 2013). The rapid increase in the number of breeding pairs continued in 2012 with another new peak and the first breeding in Somerset and Staffordshire. Success generally in 2012 was poor because many nests were flooded out in heavy rain in the late spring.

**Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius***

**Scarce: 5-yr mean 611 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

**Green**

481 pairs. This is the lowest total for ten years, which reflects the unusually wet spring. In many areas, pairs arrived but did not settle and were therefore not included in county totals. A large proportion of those that remained lost their nests in floods; some nesting attempts had probably already failed before monitoring visits were made.

Little Ringed Plover	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs		
		Warwickshire	3
		West Midlands	3
		Worcestershire	8
England, SW	41	England, N	166
Avon	1	Cheshire & Wirral	16
Gloucestershire	11	Cleveland	5
Hampshire	18	Cumbria	10
Somerset	5	Co. Durham	6
Wiltshire	6	Greater Manchester	10
England, SE	60	Lancashire & N Merseyside	39
Bedfordshire	11	Northumberland	9
Berkshire	1	Yorkshire	71
Buckinghamshire	4	Wales	58
Essex	6	Breconshire	3
Greater London	8	Carmarthenshire	40
Hertfordshire	5	Denbigh & Flint	3
Kent	12	East Glamorgan	5
Oxfordshire	6	Gower	1
Surrey	3	Montgomeryshire	3
Sussex	4	Radnorshire	3
England, E	41	Scotland, S	4
Cambridgeshire	9	Borders	1
Lincolnshire	8	Clyde	1
Norfolk	14	Dumfries & Galloway	1
Northamptonshire	4	Lothian	1
Suffolk	6	Scotland, Mid	9
England, C	102	Angus & Dundee	1
Derbyshire	15	Fife	4
Herefordshire	5	Moray & Nairn	1
Leicestershire & Rutland	11	North-east Scotland	2
Nottinghamshire	12	Upper Forth	1
Shropshire	10	TOTAL	481
Staffordshire	35		

**Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus***

**Scarce: 423 breeding males (Hayhow *et al.* in prep.)**

**Coverage: low**

**Amber**

In 2012, data were received for 45 breeding pairs nesting within the main Scottish range, with records from mountain ranges within the recording areas of Angus & Dundee, Highland, North-east Scotland and Perth & Kinross. There were also records of two birds in likely nesting

habitat on Arran (Clyde Islands) and from Argyll, although the latter may have been late passage birds. In northern England, a male was recorded on two dates in June.

Eight SPAs have been classified for Dotterel. Although in the 1990s these held 469 'pairs' (56% of the UK total), the recent national survey in 2011 (Hayhow *et al.* in prep.) found just 241 'pairs' (38% UK).

**Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus***

**Scarce: 300+ bp (Jackson 2009)**

**Coverage: low**

Red

42–56 apparently occupied territories. The low total reflects the poor coverage and reporting from Shetland. Fetlar is the single SPA for Whimbrel and numbers there have fallen from 65 pairs in the 1990s to just 20 (mean of 2010–12 counts; 6% of the UK total). The decline on Fetlar mirrors declines elsewhere in Shetland (Jackson 2009).

Scotland, N & W

Orkney Two sites: two probable breeding pairs. Shetland Counts from Fetlar and Unst totalled 42 confirmed and 12 probable breeding pairs. Also present on Yell and Mainland, but no data submitted.

**Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa***

**Rare: 5-yr mean 61 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

Red

Ten sites: 52–55 pairs.

***L. l. limosa***

Seven sites: 48–51 pairs. The Nene and Ouse Washes are the two SPAs classified for breeding Black-tailed Godwits (*L. l. limosa*). Numbers there increased slightly from 42 pairs in the 1990s to 47 (87% of the UK total) in 2005–09. Although overall numbers in 2012 were virtually identical to those in 2011, success was very poor, largely due to flooding. Just three young fledged, at one site.

England, SW

One site: one pair bred, but was unsuccessful.

England, SE

Kent One site: one probable breeding pair.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) Nene Washes: 41 pairs bred but no young fledged; (2) Ouse Washes: one pair bred, the first for seven years, and fledged three young. Norfolk One site (Welney): five pairs bred, three young seen but none fledged.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: one possible breeding pair. Yorkshire One site: one probable breeding pair.

Alan Harris



Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*

***L. l. islandica***

Three sites: four pairs and one single. Only one young fledged from the Northern Isles in 2012.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney Two sites: (1) one pair bred, thought to have failed at the egg stage; (2) one pair bred and fledged one young. Shetland One site: two pairs bred, but both failed. Elsewhere, a single male held territory at a recently used site.

**Ruff *Calidris pugnax***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 9 females**

**Coverage: high**

Red

Four sites: 2–9 females. This year's reports include the first records from Wales in the RBBP era.

Four SPAs (Lower Derwent Valley, Nene Washes, Ouse Washes, and Ribble and Alt Estuaries) are classified for breeding Ruff, although only one of these reported breeding in the 2005–09 period. The long-term decline of the Ruff as a UK breeding species mirrors trends across continental Europe (Girard *et al.* 2009; Rakhimberdiev *et al.* 2011). Huntley *et al.* (2007) predicted that the Ruff would be extinct as a UK breeding bird by the end of the twenty-first century, which seems close to being realised already. Even in Denmark, where numbers of breeding pairs in the last five years have been stable at 36–69, the total is less than half that recorded in 2002 (124–126 pairs; Nyegaard *et al.* 2014). Austin *et al.* (2014) described how numbers of migrating Ruffs in western Europe have also decreased, indicating a decline in breeding populations and/or an eastwards shift in migration routes or breeding populations.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: a male and female were displaying on 29th May but all sites in the county were affected by flooding. Lekking males were also recorded in Norfolk but were present only briefly early in the season.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: 14 males and at least two females attended a lek in late April. The dominant male was seen to mate with two females on 2nd May. Two very small young were seen in August. Yorkshire One site: up to 15 males and four females were present at leks early in the season; three males and a single female remained into May. Four newly hatched young were seen on 7th June.

Wales

Denbigh & Flint One site: in late May, three males and two females attended a lek but no birds remained after 29th May. Larger numbers of birds at this site were recorded in April and early May, with up to 14 displaying males, but these had departed by 18th May.

**Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 1 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

Amber

One site: one pair. After a blank year in 2011, one pair was again reported in 2012.

Scotland, N

One site: one pair bred, fledging one young.

**Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 30 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

Red

17 sites: 33–39 breeding males. Fetlar is the only SPA classified for Red-necked Phalarope, and numbers there declined markedly from 30 'pairs' in the 1990s to 11 in 2005–09 (based on RBBP data). This currently represents about half of the British population. However, numbers at other sites in Shetland, and elsewhere in Scotland, have increased recently.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: two probable breeding males bred. Outer Hebrides One site: three breeding males.

Shetland 15 sites: 30 males bred, plus four probable breeding males.

**Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 4 bp****Coverage: high****Amber**

Three sites: 0–3 pairs. In Denmark, numbers have increased from 6–11 pairs in 2001 to 27–34 pairs (Nyegaard *et al.* 2014). The Scottish population is much smaller, but regular breeding began only in the mid 1990s, perhaps in response to factors similar to those affecting the expanding Danish population.

Scotland, N &amp; W

Highland Three sites: three possible breeding pairs.

**Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*****Less scarce: 1,080 bp (Hancock *et al.* 1997)****Coverage: low****Green**

Data were received for a minimum of 80 pairs (with at least 16 pairs confirmed breeding). Records came from five recording areas: Argyll (one pair), Caithness (24), Highland (46), Outer Hebrides (8) and Perth & Kinross (1). Without the rigour of fieldwork for *Bird Atlas 2007–11*, numbers are again low and quite unrepresentative of the population in northern Scotland, which has not been surveyed fully for almost 20 years.

Two SPAs are classified for Greenshank: the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands, and Lewis Peatlands. A survey in 2009 of the former (Bellamy & Eaton 2010) showed a significant increase there (256 to 653 pairs), while for Lewis there has been no recent survey. However, adjusting the 1990s Lewis total (152) by the (low quality) BBS trend of +12.3% for Greenshank would give a current total there of 171 pairs. Given these apparent increases, assessing either total against the sole population estimate from 1995 (Hancock *et al.* 1997) is problematic, but it is likely that these two major peatland SPAs hold a significant proportion of the British population.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 26 bp****Coverage: good****Amber**

14 sites: 5–32 pairs. In line with recent increases, 32 pairs is the largest number ever reported by the Panel, partly due to good coverage of sites in the main range. Three SPAs are classified for Wood Sandpiper and numbers within them have remained essentially stable based on RBBP data. The SPA total represented most (c. 80%) of the small UK breeding population, but recent increases may have reduced that proportion.

Scotland, N &amp; W

Caithness Two sites: one pair bred, one probable breeding pair. Highland Eleven sites: four pairs bred, 21 probable and four possible breeding pairs. Outer Hebrides One site: one possible breeding pair.

**Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*****Scarce: 2,136 bp (in 1998–2002)\*****Coverage: moderate****Red**\* (Mitchell *et al.* 2004)

207 apparently occupied territories (AOTs). At least 29 young fledged. Numbers remain similar to those in 2011, but not all sites (especially in the Northern Isles) are counted every year. Monitored nests confirmed the continuing low productivity.

Seven SPAs are classified for breeding Arctic Skuas. Numbers at these sites have decreased by over half, from 780 pairs in the 1990s to 343 pairs in the 2000s (most sites surveyed in 2010 and 2011). The 56% decline on SPAs is not dissimilar from the -61% national population trend shown by JNCC's Seabird Monitoring Programme between 1990 and 2011 (JNCC 2012), a rapid drop that led to the inclusion of Arctic Skua on the RBBP list from 2010.

Scotland, N &amp; W

Argyll Probable breeding was reported from Coll (three AOTs) and Oronsay (one AOT). Caithness Four AOTs

at two coastal sites. Fair Isle A further reduction in numbers: 20 pairs bred, and only one young fledged. Highland On Handa there were 13 AOTs; elsewhere there was one other probable breeding pair. Orkney A total of 74 AOTs were counted from 12 sites (not a full survey); at least 19 young fledged. Outer Hebrides Four AOTs were reported from North Uist, one nest with eggs on Lewis, two AOTs on St Kilda. Shetland A total of 84 AOTs were counted from ten sites. Four chicks fledged from the 37 nesting pairs on Foula, at least four fledged from a study area in north and west Mainland, and one chick fledged from a site in south Mainland.

**Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus***

**Occasional breeder**

One site: one bird.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: for the fourth year running, one adult held territory on East Burra, present from 12th May to at least 19th July.

**Little Tern *Sternula albifrons***

**Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,546 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**



Minimum of 1,676 pairs at 55 colonies. A minimum of 780 young fledged. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows a 40-year reduction of 30% in the breeding range of Little Terns, suggesting a shift into fewer, larger colonies. Most sites in England, and the single one in Wales, are wardened and

Little Tern	No. sites	Confirmed breeding pairs	Min. young fledged
England, SW	6	90	9
Dorset	1	21	9
Hampshire	5	69	0
England, SE	12	115	4
Essex	8	67	0
Kent	1	2	0
Sussex	3	46	4
England, E	13	951	643
Lincolnshire	*		
Norfolk	10	847	643
Suffolk	3	104	0
England, N	5	231	17
Cleveland	1	110	0
Cumbria	1	44	0
Northumberland	2	54	6
Yorkshire	1	23	11
Wales	1	140	37
Denbigh & Flint	1	140	37
Scotland, S	1	1	0
Lothian	1	1	0
Scotland, Mid	2	28	3
Moray & Nairn	1	1	0
North-east Scotland	1	27	3
Scotland, N & W	14	109	62
Argyll	7	73	58
Caithness	*		
Highland	3	16	4
Orkney	1	2	0
Outer Hebrides	3	18	0
Isle of Man	1	11	5
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>1,676</b>	<b>780</b>

\* Birds attended one colony but no eggs were laid.

counted each year; monitoring of some Scottish sites is less than annual, though there are few large colonies there. Norfolk remains the most important county with around 57% of all breeding pairs in 2012.

There are 27 SPAs classified for breeding Little Terns. These held 1,156 pairs in the 2000s (61% UK), an absolute and proportional decline from the 68% in the 1990s (1,629 pairs).

### Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

**Rare: 5-yr mean 83 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Red**

Four sites: 73 pairs and two mixed pairs. A total of 88 young fledged. No birds bred in Scotland for the first time since the mid 1980s.

Seven SPAs are classified for Roseate Terns. Numbers have increased in these sites from 56 pairs in the 1990s to 81 pairs in 2009–11. However, this increase has been at just one site, Coquet Island, with five other sites being abandoned and the sixth showing a major decline. Although small in absolute numbers, UK SPAs hold nearly 4% of the European population.

England, N

**Northumberland** One site (Coquet Island): 71 pairs raised at least 83 large young.

Wales

**Anglesey** Two sites: (1) one pair fledged two young; (2) two mixed pairs bred, each fledging one hybrid young; in both cases the Roseate Tern was paired with a Common Tern *S. hirundo*.

Northern Ireland

**Co. Antrim** One site: one pair bred, fledging one young.

### Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

**Scarce: 5-yr mean 812 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

**Amber**

32 sites: 1,028–1,047 pairs. This is the highest total reported by RBBP but includes only a minimum estimate for an important colony in Dorset. There was no significant range expansion in 2012, although *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows a 40-year increase of +6,500%. Mediterranean Gulls have shown one of the largest population changes within the SPA network. Numbers at the five classified SPAs have increased from 23 pairs in the 1990s to 145 pairs in 2003–07. As a proportion of the national total, that shows a decline from 74% to 24%, illustrating the growth and spread of this species in Britain outside the current SPA network.

England, SW

**Dorset** One site: at least 80 pairs normally breed, but there was no accurate count in 2012. **Hampshire** Four sites: (1) 58 breeding pairs at Langstone Harbour (a large decrease in numbers) and only two young fledged; (2) 66 pairs bred, fledging only two young due to the impact of high spring tides; (3) 28 pairs bred, success not known but believed to be poor; (4) three possible breeding pairs. **Isle of Wight** One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, SE

**Essex** Five sites: (1) two pairs bred, six possible breeding pairs; (2)–(4) two pairs bred at each; (5) one pair bred. **Kent** Two sites: (1) 597 pairs bred; (2) two pairs bred. **Sussex** Two sites: (1) 80 pairs bred; (2) 55 pairs bred and fledged ten young.

England, E

**Norfolk** Three sites: (1) 12 pairs bred and fledged a minimum of 40 young; (2) six pairs bred; (3) three pairs bred. **Suffolk** One site: four pairs bred, but no young fledged.

England, C

**Staffordshire** One site: one probable breeding pair.

England, N

**Cumbria** Two sites: one pair bred at each. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** One site: 15 pairs bred, three possible breeding pairs. **Northumberland** One site: one pair bred and fledged one young. **Yorkshire** Four sites: (1) three pairs bred; (2) one probable breeding pair; (3)(4) one possible breeding pair at each.

Wales

**Anglesey** Two sites: one probable breeding pair at each.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: six pairs bred, fledging four young. Co. Fermanagh One site: one pair bred.

In addition unpaired summering or displaying birds were present at Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* colonies in Lincolnshire and Shropshire.

### Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 4 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

Amber

Three sites: one pair plus 1–2 mixed pairs.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair bred, but no young fledged. Hampshire One site: one mixed pair bred; a Yellow-legged Gull paired with a Herring Gull *L. argentatus* fledged three hybrid young for the fifth year in a row.

Wales

Breconshire One site: one possible breeding mixed pair. A single Yellow-legged Gull, paired with a Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* summered but no breeding attempt was suspected.

### Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

**Scarce/Less scarce: 1,800–6,000 bp\***

**Coverage: unknown**

Green

\* (Musgrove *et al.* 2013)

176–401 pairs. There was a modest but welcome increase in the number of pairs reported but breeding was confirmed for only 26% of pairs, compared with 68% and 73% in 2010 and 2011 respectively. This was probably a reflection of the wet summer in 2012, which hindered recording, but is also likely to be a good indication of the low productivity of Long-eared Owls in poor weather. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows the main concentrations of Long-eared Owls in Britain in southern and eastern Scotland, northeast England and in a belt across England from Lancashire to Derbyshire and south Yorkshire. There are smaller concentrations in East Anglia and Kent. However, the Long-eared Owl is under-recorded to an unknown extent. Confirmed breeding is usually associated with records of squeaking juveniles, giving a bias towards successful breeding pairs.

In Britain, Long-eared Owls were detected in 18% of 10-km squares in the breeding season;



Jon Evans

**265.** Juvenile Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, Suffolk, June 2012.

but throughout Ireland, where there are no Tawny Owls *Strix aluco*, they were detected in 40% of 10-km squares (*Bird Atlas 2007–11*). In 2012 no records from Northern Ireland were submitted to the RBBP for this species.

Long-eared Owl		Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
				Wales	6	17
				Breconshire	1	1
England, SW	11	12		Ceredigion	1	1
Hampshire	0	1		Gwent	0	6
Isle of Wight	10	10		Meirionnydd	1	2
Somerset	1	1		Montgomeryshire	0	1
England, SE	7	9		Radnorshire	3	6
Essex	2	2		Scotland, S	7	18
Kent	4	5		Ayrshire	0	1
Oxfordshire	0	1		Borders	5	13
Sussex	1	1		Dumfries & Galloway	1	1
England, E	16	23		Lothian	1	3
Cambridgeshire	5	10		Scotland, Mid	16	59
Lincolnshire	3	3		Angus & Dundee	7	8
Norfolk	4	5		Fife	2	2
Suffolk	4	5		Moray & Nairn	0	40*
England, C	14	24		North-east Scotland	4	5
Derbyshire	2	5		Perth & Kinross	1	2
Leicestershire & Rutland	0	1		Upper Forth	2	2
Nottinghamshire	6	7		Scotland, N & W	4	14
Shropshire	1	3		Argyll	0	1
Staffordshire	5	8		Highland	3	6
England, N	83	206		Orkney	0	6
Cheshire & Wirral	2	2		Outer Hebrides	1	1
Cleveland	0	2		Northern Ireland	n/a	n/a
Cumbria	0	1		Isle of Man	1	1
Co. Durham	17	23		Channel Islands	11	18
Greater Manchester	10	14		Jersey	11	11
Lancashire & N Merseyside	7	75*		Guernsey	0	5
Northumberland	4	18		Alderney	0	2
Yorkshire	43	71		TOTALS	176	401

\* Estimate based on local atlas work.

### Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Scarce/Less scarce: 620–2,180 bp\*

Coverage: unknown

Amber

\* (Musgrove *et al.* 2013)

99–465 pairs. There was a widely reported influx of Short-eared Owls in autumn 2011, with higher numbers and a wider distribution than in most winters, and this seemingly resulted in more pairs remaining to breed. We received records from 47 counties (compared with 29 in 2010 and 30 in 2011) and the total number of pairs reported is 27% higher than in 2011. The wet summer of 2012 meant that many breeding attempts failed or were abandoned, or the outcome was unknown because of the impact on fieldwork.

Six SPAs are classified for Short-eared Owls, although site totals from the 2000s were available only for Skomer and Skokholm and the Forest of Clunie (Perth & Kinross). The SPA suite holds about 121 pairs or 18% of the UK population. This species remains one of the least tractable of the UK's birds to survey and monitor (Calladine *et al.* 2008).



Jon Evans

266. Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Suffolk, April 2012.

Short-eared Owl		Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
				Breconshire	0	1
				Carmarthenshire	0	1
England, SW	2	5		Ceredigion	1	3
Cornwall	0	1		Denbigh & Flint	0	2
Somerset	0	1		Meirionnydd	0	9
Wiltshire	2	3		Pembrokeshire	2	3
England, SE	3	5		Radnorshire	1	4
Essex	0	1		Scotland, S	8	33
Kent	3	4		Ayrshire	0	3
England, E	3	34		Borders	6	13
Cambridgeshire	0	1		Clyde	1	10
Lincolnshire	0	14		Dumfries & Galloway	1	5
Norfolk	3	16		Lothian	0	2
Northamptonshire	0	3		Scotland, Mid	9	59
England, C	10	19		Angus & Dundee	1	15
Derbyshire	9	10		Moray & Nairn	0	8
Nottinghamshire	0	1		North-east Scotland	4	15
Shropshire	0	1		Perth & Kinross	4	14
Staffordshire	1	4		Upper Forth	0	7
Warwickshire	0	3		Scotland, N & W	32	159
England, N	27	123		Argyll	5	19
Cleveland	3	3		Caithness	0	7
Cumbria	2	14		Highland	5	6
Co. Durham	4	7		Orkney	17	109
Greater Manchester	0	1		Outer Hebrides	5	18
Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	10		Northern Ireland	1	2
Northumberland	4	25		Co. Antrim	1	1
Yorkshire	13	63		Co. Down	0	1
Wales	4	24		Isle of Man	0	2
Anglesey	0	1		TOTALS	99	465

**Wryneck *Jynx torquilla***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 3 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

**Red**

Five sites: 0–6 pairs. Singing birds continue to be recorded occasionally in potential breeding habitat in northern Scotland, though with no further evidence of breeding. Six is the highest total since 2005.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Five sites: six singing males, between 7th June and 10th July.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor***

**Less scarce: 1,000–2,000 bp (Musgrove *et al.* 2013)**

**Coverage: low**

**Red**

23–526 pairs. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows concentrations of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers in south-east England and the Welsh borders. With breeding evidence in 560 10-km squares across the four breeding seasons of the atlas, and presence in winter in 615 squares, it is clear that the species suffers from under-reporting, and the 526 pairs noted here is an underestimate.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker				
	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs		
			England, C	1 51
			Derbyshire	0 10
			Herefordshire	0 14
			Leicestershire & Rutland	0 4
England, SW	6	123	Nottinghamshire	0 7
Avon	0	3	Shropshire	0 4
Devon	4	9	Staffordshire	0 4
Dorset	0	1	Warwickshire	0 5
Gloucestershire	0	9	Worcestershire	1 3
Hampshire	1	75	England, N	3 59
Somerset	0	15	Cheshire & Wirral	1 6
Wiltshire	1	11	Cumbria	0 1
England, SE	8	230	Co. Durham	0 5
Bedfordshire	0	1	Greater Manchester	0 1
Buckinghamshire	0	5	Lancashire & N Merseyside	0 5
Essex	1	6	Yorkshire	2 41
Greater London	0	6	Wales	4 31
Hertfordshire	1	15	Breconshire	0 1
Kent	0	(175)*	Carmarthenshire	3 4
Oxfordshire	0	1	Ceredigion	0 4
Surrey	5	13	East Glamorgan	0 2
Sussex	1	8	Gower	0 2
England, E	1	32	Gwent	1 5
Cambridgeshire	0	10	Meirionnydd	0 3
Lincolnshire	0	6	Montgomeryshire	0 2
Norfolk	1	4	Pembrokeshire	0 2
Northamptonshire	0	6	Radnorshire	0 6
Suffolk	0	6	TOTALS	23 526

\* Estimate based on local atlas work.

**Merlin *Falco columbarius***

**Less scarce: 1,160 bp (Ewing *et al.* 2011) Coverage: moderate**

**Amber**

275–346 pairs monitored. The Antrim Hills in Northern Ireland was classified in 2006, bringing the Merlin SPA suite to 15 sites. In total these held 246 pairs based on the 2008 survey (Ewing *et al.* 2011) or more recent data, a major decline from 425 pairs (on 14 SPAs) in the 1990s. SPAs currently hold about 22% of the British and 6% of the all-Ireland breeding populations.



Brydon Thomason

267. Female Merlin *Falco columbarius* feeding a prey item to a well-grown chick at a nest in Shetland, July 2012.

Merlin	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs			
			Radnorshire	1	7
			Scotland, S	26	35
			Borders	13	16
England, C	12	12	Dumfries & Galloway	4	6
Derbyshire	11	11	Lothian	2	3
Shropshire	1	1	South Strathclyde RSG	7	10
England, N	92	115	Scotland, Mid	67	76
Cumbria	5	5	Angus & Dundee	11	12
Co. Durham	31	33	Moray & Nairn	11	11
Lancashire & N Merseyside	6	10	North-east Scotland	34	35
Northumberland	17	21	Perth & Kinross	11	18
Yorkshire	33	46	Scotland, N & W	64	80
Wales	14	28	Argyll	2	2
Breconshire	6	8	Caithness	1	1
Caernarfonshire	0	1	Highland	26	31
Ceredigion	3	4	Orkney	8	14
Denbigh & Flint	0	1	Outer Hebrides	7	11
Meirionnydd	2	4	Shetland	20	21
Montgomeryshire	2	3	TOTALS	275	346

### Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,075 bp

Coverage: moderate

Green

243–1,097 pairs. Musgrove *et al.* (2013) extrapolated the estimates in Clements (2001) using BBS trends to provide a revised estimate of 2,800 pairs. BBS trends (fig. 4) show a gentle increase since 1994, but the sample size is small: in 2013 only 43 plots (Harris *et al.* 2014). RBBP data, based on nesting pairs, should be more robust, and these show a more consistent long-term upward trend in numbers, which is mirrored by the growth in the number of counties recording breeding Hobbies (fig. 5). In the first RBBP report, the Hobby was reported from just 16 counties; in 2012 it was reported from 49. In similar vein, *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows a 40-year change in distribution of +295%.

Simon Stirrup



268. Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire, May 2012.

Nonetheless, the maximum number of pairs for which we have received data in any one year is just 1,200, in 2009. Although the Hobby is grossly under-recorded in some southern counties, the level of uncertainty over the estimate by Clements (2001) adds some doubt to the current estimate. The Hobby thus remains on the RBBP list, in order to track the population and encourage more comprehensive recording across the range. Guidelines on recording Hobbies are available on the Panel’s website.

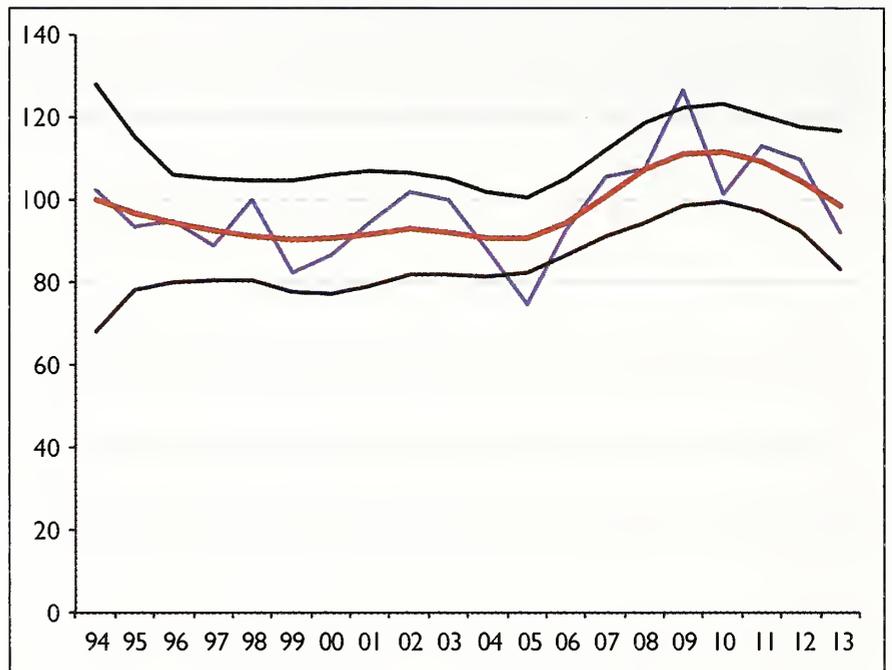


Fig. 4. The UK population trend for Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, 1994–2013, based on BBS data (Harris et al. 2014). The graph shows the annual index values (blue) and a statistically smoothed trend (red) with 85% confidence limits (black).

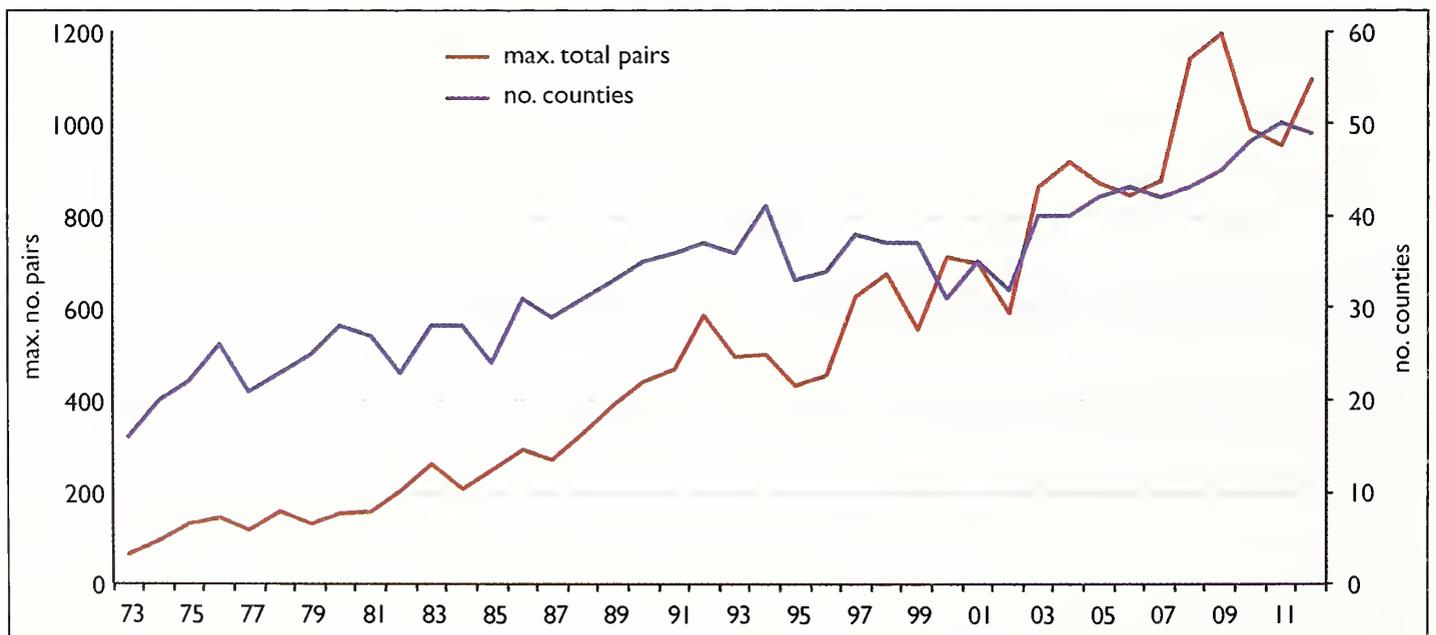


Fig. 5. The maximum total number of breeding pairs of Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in the UK, 1973–2012.

Hobby	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			Herefordshire	2	10
			Leicestershire & Rutland	0	22
England, SW	36	203	Nottinghamshire	9	11
Avon	1	7	Shropshire	4	37
Cornwall	2	2	Staffordshire	1	20
Devon	2	(30)*	Warwickshire	1	16
Dorset	4	20	Worcestershire	1	10
Gloucestershire	1	22	England, N	35	109
Hampshire	14	25	Cheshire & Wirral	17	38
Isle of Wight	0	6	Co. Durham	1	2
Somerset	4	24	Greater Manchester	2	7
Wiltshire	8	67	Lancashire & N Merseyside	2	15
England, SE	45	417	Yorkshire	13	47
Bedfordshire	2	3	Wales	9	33
Berkshire	n/a	n/a	Breconshire	1	13
Buckinghamshire	3	12	Carmarthenshire	2	2
Essex	14	14	Denbigh & Flint	0	1
Greater London	12	13	East Glamorgan	1	1
Hertfordshire	3	21	Gwent	3	6
Kent	0	(300)*	Meirionnydd	0	2
Oxfordshire	6	15	Montgomeryshire	0	2
Surrey	3	11	Radnorshire	2	6
Sussex	2	28	Scotland, S	0	1
England, E	55	162	Borders	0	1
Cambridgeshire	3	13	Scotland, Mid	2	3
Lincolnshire	7	80	Angus & Dundee	1	1
Norfolk	8	11	Perth & Kinross	1	2
Northamptonshire	21	27	Scotland, N & W	1	1
Suffolk	16	31	Highland	1	1
England, C	60	168	TOTALS	243	1,097
Derbyshire	42	42			

\* County estimates.

**Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus***

**Less scarce: 1,530 pairs (Banks et al. 2010)**

**Coverage: moderate**



736–1,093 pairs. The national survey in 2002 reported 1,530 breeding pairs (Banks et al. 2010); the latest survey was carried out in 2014, and results were unavailable when this report was being finalised. One trend apparent from RBBP data in the last decade has been the marked increase in the numbers of breeding pairs in lowland England, especially in east, southeast and central areas (which now account for 22% of the national total, up from 5% ten years earlier), often at well-watched urban sites. This reflects the changing patterns of distribution and abundance shown in *Bird Atlas 2007–11*: lowland increases offset by northern and upland declines.

Migneint-Arenig-Dduallt in mid Wales was classified as an additional SPA for Peregrines in 2003 bringing the total SPA suite to 11 sites. In 2002 these held 72 pairs (5% GB and 1% all-Ireland), a decline from the 1990s total of 106 pairs at ten sites.

Peregrine Falcon	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs			
			Gloucestershire	4	8
			Hampshire	14	14
England, SW	99	149	Isle of Wight	2	5
Avon	9	12	Isles of Scilly	2	2
Cornwall	26	38	Somerset	6	10
Devon	21	25	Wiltshire	4	8
Dorset	11	27	England, SE	45	118
			Bedfordshire	2	2

Peregrine Falcon <i>cont.</i>	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs			
			Ceredigion	4	4
			Denbigh & Flint	16	17
			East Glamorgan	19	31
Buckinghamshire	1	1	Gower	3	9
Essex	9	12	Gwent	4	8
Greater London	17	29	Meirionnydd	4	8
Kent	3	35	Montgomeryshire	3	4
Oxfordshire	2	3	Pembrokeshire	22	34
Surrey	5	6	Radnorshire	6	12
Sussex	6	30	Scotland, S	120	147
England, E	26	31	Ayrshire	17	22
Cambridgeshire	3	3	Borders	30	37
Lincolnshire	19	19	Clyde	3	4
Norfolk	2	2	Clyde Islands	6	7
Northamptonshire	0	2	Dumfries & Galloway	48	57
Suffolk	2	5	Lothian	16	20
England, C	72	96	Scotland, Mid	77	106
Derbyshire	24	24	Angus & Dundee	15	20
Herefordshire	0	12	Central Scotland RSG	13	19
Leicestershire & Rutland	6	11	Fife	8	9
Nottinghamshire	12	13	Isle of May	1	1
Shropshire	19	19	North-east Scotland RSG	24	36
Staffordshire	4	8	Perth & Kinross	16	21
Warwickshire	2	4	Scotland, N & W	44	65
West Midlands	1	1	Argyll	13	23
Worcestershire	4	4	Fair Isle	0	1
England, N	135	185	Highland RSG	12	19
Cheshire & Wirral	9	10	Orkney	13	16
Cleveland	3	3	Outer Hebrides	5	5
Cumbria	49	57	Shetland	1	1
Co. Durham	7	9	Northern Ireland	3	3
Greater Manchester	8	8	Co. Antrim	3	3
Lancashire & N Merseyside	16	22	Isle of Man	4	6
Northumberland	18	19	Channel Islands	12	14
Yorkshire	25	57	Alderney	0	2
Wales	99	173	Guernsey	4	4
Anglesey	1	9	Herm	1	1
Breconshire	7	13	Jersey	5	5
Caernarfonshire	5	12	Sark	2	2
Carmarthenshire	5	12	TOTALS	736	1,093

### Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 4 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Red

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. There have been no records of confirmed breeding since 2009 and the outlook for this species in the UK is bleak. Presumed migrants were also recorded singing for no more than two days in mid to late May in Cambridgeshire (3), Kent (1), North-east Scotland (1), Sussex (1–2) and Yorkshire (1).

England, E

Suffolk Two sites (1, Lakenheath): one probable breeding pair – two males and a female or immature male (carrying nest material) in June; (2) one male singing and cat-calling between 20th May and 20th June.

**Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 4 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

Red

Three sites: 1–3 pairs. Red-backed Shrikes bred in England for the third consecutive year in 2012 but were unsuccessful in the poor summer weather.

England, SW

Devon Two sites: (1) One pair bred. The pair made two nesting attempts but both failed before fledging. A second, unpaired male was also present. (2) A female was trapped in suitable breeding habitat in late May.

England, E

One site: one singing male on three dates between 30th May and 16th June.

**Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax***

**Scarce: 5-yr mean 406 bp**

**Coverage: high**

Amber

261–328 pairs. The five-year mean is only a little below the 429–497 pairs estimated in the last full survey in 2002 (Johnstone *et al.* 2007), a reflection of almost complete coverage. A repeat survey under the SCARABBS programme was undertaken in 2014.

Oronsay and South Colonsay, together with The Oa and Gruinart Flats (both on Islay) have been classified as SPAs for Chough since the 2001 SPA Review. In the 1990s the suite of nine SPAs (seven of those in Wales) held 122 pairs (36% of the UK total) while in the 2000s there were 149 pairs on the 12 sites (50% UK). This represents about 12% of the nominate race, which is restricted to the UK, Isle of Man and Ireland.

Red-billed Chough	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			Gower	4	6
			Meirionnydd	17	20
England, SW	5	7	Pembrokeshire	56	68
Cornwall	5	7	Scotland	27	27
Wales	204	261	Argyll: Colonsay & Oronsay	13	13
Anglesey	35	41	Argyll: Islay	14	14
Caernarfonshire	70	96	Northern Ireland	1	1
Ceredigion	21	27	Co. Antrim	1	1
Denbigh & Flint	1	2	Isle of Man	24	32
East Glamorgan	0	1	TOTALS	261	328

**Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla***

**Scarce: 5-yr mean 650 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

Amber

683 territories or singing males. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows breeding Firecrests concentrated in central southern and southeast England with the main populations in and around the New Forest, Hampshire. Firecrests may now be under-recorded in some areas where the species is perceived to be ‘common’, and this may explain the decrease in the overall total since the peak of 800 in 2010. A survey in Hampshire found 138 territories at 57 sites outside the New Forest, and a minimum of 135 territories within the Forest. In Kent, survey work found Firecrests to be more widespread than had been thought, with a conservative estimate of 100 territories. The Firecrest is still too scarce to be monitored by BBS, so RBBP data remain the main source of information on the population.

Firecrest	Singing males/territories		
		Hampshire	273
England, SW	359	Isle of Wight	1
Dorset	9	Somerset	22
Gloucestershire	8	Wiltshire	46

Firecrest <i>cont.</i>	Singing males/ territories	Suffolk	26
England, SE	210	England, C	2
Bedfordshire	5	Derbyshire	1
Buckinghamshire	40	Herefordshire	1
Hertfordshire	3	England, N	1
Kent	(100)	Yorkshire	1
Oxfordshire	5	Wales	5
Surrey	27	Gwent	2
Sussex	30	Montgomeryshire	2
England, E	100	Radnorshire	1
Cambridgeshire	4	Channel Islands	6
Norfolk	70	Jersey	6
		TOTAL	683

**Willow Tit *Poecile montana***

**Less scarce: 3,400 bp (in 2009)\***

**Coverage: moderate**



\* (Musgrove *et al.* 2013)

121–649 pairs. The national totals of Willow Tit pairs in the three years it has been monitored by RBBP have been similar, with a mean of 652. The distribution has been similar too, with most in central or northern England, a pattern confirmed in *Bird Atlas 2007–11*, which shows a 40-year distribution change of -55%. That loss has accelerated in the last 20 years, such that Willow Tits are now virtually absent from large parts of England south and east of a line from the Wash to Dorset, and the species has been lost from the northern parts of its former range in Scotland. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* explores some of the reasons why this might have happened, but as yet there are no clear answers.

Willow Tit	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			England, N	50	318
			Cheshire & Wirral	10	31
England, SW	32	64	Cleveland	1	1
Cornwall	1	1	Cumbria	0	5
Devon	1	6	Co. Durham	12	36
Gloucestershire	7	10	Greater Manchester	7	45
Hampshire	0	24	Lancashire & N Merseyside	0	50
Wiltshire	23	23	Northumberland	2	19
England, SE	2	3	Yorkshire	18	131
Berkshire	2	2	Wales	8	49
Oxfordshire	0	1	Anglesey	0	1
England, E	8	62	Breconshire	4	7
Lincolnshire	5	47	Carmarthenshire	0	17
Norfolk	3	5	Ceredigion	0	6
Northamptonshire	0	7	Denbigh & Flint	1	3
Suffolk	0	3	East Glamorgan	1	3
England, C	21	131	Gower	0	2
Derbyshire	3	22	Gwent	0	2
Herefordshire	0	20	Meirionnydd	1	1
Leicestershire & Rutland	3	25	Montgomeryshire	0	5
Nottinghamshire	6	18	Pembrokeshire	1	2
Shropshire	0	10	Radnorshire	n/a	n/a
Staffordshire	8	25	Scotland, S	0	22
Warwickshire	0	10	Ayrshire	0	2
West Midlands	1	1	Dumfries & Galloway	0	20
			TOTALS	121	649



Robin Chittenden

269. Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, Strumpshaw Fen, Norfolk, October 2012.

### Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 527 bp

Coverage: moderate

Amber

At least 63 sites: a minimum of 566 pairs. Breeding Bearded Tits are difficult to monitor and the total depends heavily on information from the main sites. Perhaps the largest UK colony is in the extensive Tay reedbeds (Perth & Kinross), where breeding was first recorded only in 1991. There was no count here in either 2010 or 2011, while in 2009 there was an estimate of at least 35 pairs. The figure of 130 pairs in 2012 was derived from ringing data. Numbers at this site fluctuate markedly but some estimates put the population at up to 250 pairs, over a third of the UK population. Reedbed management to maintain a mix of tall mature and short young and growing reeds is essential to support this population.

Bearded Tit	Minimum no. sites	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs			
			Lincolnshire	2	5
			Norfolk	14	87
			Suffolk	5	92
England, SW	10	26	England, N	3	66
Devon	1	1	Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	18
Dorset	3	10	Yorkshire	2	48
Hampshire	4	5	Wales	2	3
Somerset	2	10	Breconshire	1	1
England, SE	21	147	Gwent	1	2
Bedfordshire	1	1	Scotland, Mid	2	131
Essex	4	10	Angus & Dundee	1	1
Kent	13	125	Perth & Kinross	1	130
Sussex	3	11	Channel Islands	1	2
England, E	24	191	Jersey	1	2
Cambridgeshire	3	7	TOTALS	63	566

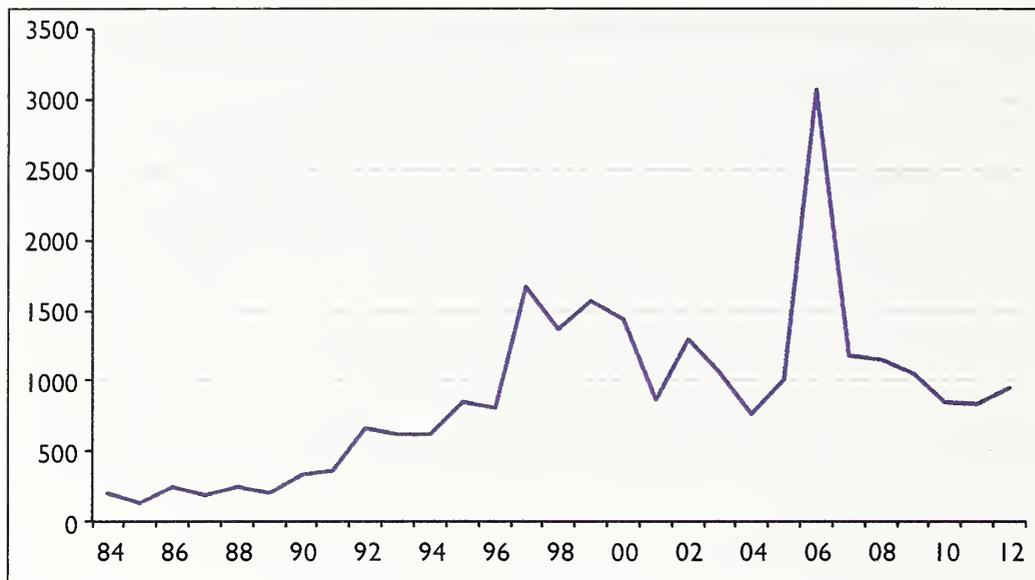
### Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

Less scarce: 3,064 bp (Conway *et al.* 2009)

Coverage: moderate

Amber

951 territories. The most recent survey of Woodlarks, in 2006 (Conway *et al.* 2009), found that the number of territories had increased by 88% since the previous survey, in 1997. Fig. 6 shows RBBP data on this species since 1984, which includes the 241 territories counted during a national survey in 1986. Numbers began to climb in the early 1990s and in the years following the 1997 survey fluctuated between about 850 and 1,550 territories (the peaks in 1997 and 2006



**Fig. 6.** The maximum total number of breeding pairs of Woodlark *Lullula arborea* in the UK, 1984–2012.

correspond with national survey years). The numbers reported to RBBP have declined since 2006 and the ten-year mean (2002–12, excluding 2006) was 1,012, about a third of the total derived from the national survey.

There is no indication that the population as a whole has declined since the last national survey, despite a run of colder winters.

Nonetheless, a stable population of over 3,000 territories is well in excess of the RBBP threshold of 2,000 pairs and this will be the last report to include this species. Adequate monitoring will continue because of the conservation interest in this species and its heathland/woodland sites, and it is likely that a repeat SCARABBS survey will take place in the future.

The SPA suite for Woodlark comprises seven sites, which held 1,102 pairs in 1997 (73% of the UK population), but had fallen to 960 pairs in 2006 (31% UK). Overall, this reflects the growth of the national population away from core sites. At site level there have been contrasting fortunes – increases at Minsmere–Walberswick, Dorset Heathlands and Thames Basin Heaths SPAs and declines at Breckland, Wealden Heaths, Suffolk Sandlings and the New Forest.

Woodlark	Singing males/ territories		
		Sussex	64
		England, E	332
England, SW	264	Lincolnshire	37
Cornwall	4	Norfolk	124
Devon	4	Suffolk	171
Dorset	30	England, C	45
Hampshire	223	Nottinghamshire	27
Wiltshire	3	Staffordshire	18
England, SE	279	England, N	31
Berkshire	13	Yorkshire	31
Buckinghamshire	1	Wales	0
Kent	11	Gwent	0
Surrey	190	TOTAL	951

**Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti***

**Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,873 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**



1,373 singing males or territories. The number of reported territories fell slightly from the 2011 figure (1,484), although in many counties where this species is numerous there is an element of under-recording, often in extensive wetland sites where access is restricted. In Kent, for example, just 53 territories were reported, but Kent Ornithological Society believes that the population is 500–1,000 territories (based on tetrad atlas fieldwork). It is likely that the real population in the UK is close to 2,000 pairs; numbers seem to be recovering after the recent colder winters, although there are no new counties in the table this year. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows breeding evidence for Cetti's Warblers in 15% of all British 10-km squares.



Nick Appleton

270. Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Hardley Marshes, Norfolk, April 2012.

Cetti's Warbler	Singing males/ territories		
		England, C	68
		Derbyshire	11
England, SW	420	Leicestershire & Rutland	11
Avon	25	Nottinghamshire	18
Cornwall	21	Staffordshire	6
Devon	37	Warwickshire	18
Dorset	59	West Midlands	1
Gloucestershire	16	Worcestershire	3
Hampshire	96	England, N	41
Isle of Wight	24	Cheshire & Wirral	26
Somerset	110	Cleveland	1
Wiltshire	32	Greater Manchester	1
England, SE	238	Lancashire & N Merseyside	6
Bedfordshire	8	Yorkshire	7
Berkshire	13	Wales	141
Buckinghamshire	5	Anglesey	8
Essex	38	Breconshire	4
Greater London	21	Caernarfonshire	8
Hertfordshire	21	Carmarthenshire	19
Kent	53	Ceredigion	2
Oxfordshire	8	East Glamorgan	19
Surrey	2	Gower	18
Sussex	69	Gwent	56
England, E	444	Meirionnydd	1
Cambridgeshire	72	Pembrokeshire	6
Lincolnshire	9	Channel Islands	21
Norfolk	164	Jersey	20
Northamptonshire	37	Guernsey	1
Suffolk	162	TOTAL	1,373

**Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*****Potential breeder**

Two sites: two singing males. There have been long-staying singing males in four of the last ten years. The 2012 records have been accepted by BBRC (Hudson *et al.* 2013).

England, SW

Cornwall One site: a male singing from 28th May to 24th June. Somerset One site: a male singing from 5th June to 29th July.

**Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*****Less scarce: 3,214 bp (Wotton *et al.* 2009)****Coverage: moderate****Amber**

832 territories. After two years with lower numbers, the total for 2012 increased, in part because of the inclusion of 70 pairs from the Channel Islands, although the increase may also herald a recovery from the effects of recent colder winters (see fig. 6 in Holling *et al.* 2013). However, comments from recorders in southwest England suggest that this may not yet be the case in that area.

There are six SPAs classified for Dartford Warbler and the numbers of pairs breeding within these has been stable: from 1,681 pairs in the 1990s to 1,654 pairs at the time of the 2006 national survey (Wotton *et al.* 2009). In the 1990s, these SPAs held essentially the whole UK population, but population growth elsewhere meant that by 2006 they held only about half (52%) the national total – a fascinating example of the changing conservation significance of protected areas at different stages in the growth of populations.

Dartford Warbler	Total pairs	Norfolk	3
England, SW	570	Suffolk	82
Cornwall	14	England, C	4
Devon	23	Staffordshire	4
Dorset	263	Wales	32
Hampshire	250	Caernarfonshire	4
Isle of Wight	8	Denbigh & Flint	1
Somerset	12	East Glamorgan	1
England, SE	71	Gower	15
Berkshire	9	Pembrokeshire	11
Surrey	52	Channel Islands	70
Sussex	10	Jersey	68
England, E	85	Sark	2
		TOTAL	832

**Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 5 bp****Coverage: near-complete****Red**

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. There were also short-stayers in Hertfordshire and Leicestershire & Rutland. The 2011 total was boosted by some late records, giving revised figures of five/six sites: 0–7 pairs, including three singing birds in Kent (Hudson *et al.* 2012). Savi's Warbler is a BBRC species and records will be included in this report only if they are accepted by BBRC; some records for 2011 and 2012 are still in circulation. To help RBBP to assess the numbers of breeding or potentially breeding Savi's Warblers accurately, it is essential that observers' submissions to BBRC contain sufficient detail about the circumstances of the observation, the previous experience of the observers, a detailed description of the song, and any other calls, plumage and structure if appropriate. Preferably, this should be accompanied by supporting evidence in the form of sound recordings and/or photographs. There have been recent examples of experienced observers confusing this species and Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia* in Britain, so BBRC takes a cautious approach to acceptance.

England, SW

Devon One site: one singing male, 11th–23rd June.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one singing male, 4th–20th May.

### Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 9 bp**

**Coverage: high**

Red

Six sites: 1–7 pairs. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* clearly shows that the majority of breeding-season records are in eastern England, from Sussex to Northumberland, with a separate cluster in Shetland. Although most of these relate to passage birds, this species has been proved to breed in these coastal habitats. There have been 20 records of confirmed breeding in the last ten years, and the disturbance to any areas containing a singing Marsh Warbler in spring or summer must be minimised. The breeding attempt in Sussex in 2012 was curtailed when the nest was destroyed by a mower before the young fledged.

England, SE

Essex One site: two singing males. Sussex One site: one pair bred, the nest destroyed before the young fledged (see above).

England, E

Lincolnshire One site: one singing male from 28th May to 19th June.

England, N

Northumberland One site: one singing male from 5th June to 10th July.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: one bird was trapped with a brood patch and was present for at least four days from 27th June. There was no indication that the bird had bred locally, but there were two singing males elsewhere in Orkney in June, although present for only one day.

Shetland One site: one singing male on 19th–28th June.

### Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

**Potential breeder**

One site: 0–1 pairs. Since 1990 there have been records of singing Great Reed Warblers in every year except 2002. We still await the discovery of a pair or, better still, a nest.

England, SW

Avon One site: one singing male from 19th May to 2nd June.

### Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

**Scarce: new to the list in 2012**

**Coverage: low**

Red

Short-toed Treecreeper remains a rare vagrant to Britain, with 27 accepted records to the end of 2012, all from England (Hudson *et al.* 2013). It is a common and widespread species on the Channel Islands, with the population on Jersey estimated to be 250 breeding pairs.

### Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 32 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

Red

The population of this endemic race is contained within the SPA on Fair Isle. Numbers there declined from a five-year mean of 37 pairs (in 1997) to 29 pairs (2007–11; Aspinall & Aspinall 2011). The all-island survey in 2012 produced a total of 38 territories, one more than in 2011 and the highest since 2006 when there were also 38. The first fledged chicks were seen on 10th June and fledged broods were noted in 18 of the territories.

**St Kilda Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*****Rare: 136 bp (1993 partial survey)****Coverage: low****Red**

Since this race was added to the RBBP list in 2009, there have been no all-island counts (the last census was in 1993). Forrester *et al.* (2007) considered the population to be 230–250 breeding pairs.

Shannon *et al.* (2014) considered the genetic relationships among island races of Wren in the northeast Atlantic and concluded that they were most closely related to mainland British and European (rather than Nearctic) populations.

**Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 3 bp****Coverage: moderate****Red**

Five sites: 2–5 pairs. The occurrence of potentially nesting Fieldfares is highly unpredictable and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish potential breeders from late migrants. Breeding has been confirmed in May, but often it is later, as illustrated by the two breeding records in 2012, both in Northumberland.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one singing male on 3rd June.

England, N

Northumberland Two sites: (1) One pair bred. A recently fledged juvenile was photographed on 5th–6th August. (2) One pair bred. One bird was seen collecting and carrying food into woodland on 27th May.

Yorkshire One site: one singing male on 8th May and then it or another bird seen feeding nearby on three dates until 27th May.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one possible breeding pair. A single bird was recorded from May through to October, with it or another reported from a nearby farm in summer (no dates).

**Redwing *Turdus iliacus*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 15 bp****Coverage: low****Red**

11 sites: 5–12 pairs. These are typical of the numbers reported annually to the Panel, though must under-represent breeding numbers in northern Scotland. *Bird Atlas 2007–11* showed confirmed and probable breeding records in 28 10-km squares, all in the northern or central Highlands, or in Shetland. The breeding pair in Perth & Kinross in 2012 (where there is only one previous record of confirmed breeding, in 2000) is thus unusual.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one pair bred.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Nine sites: four pairs bred, two possible breeding pairs and four singing males. Shetland One site: one singing male in June.

**Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*****Occasional breeder, last bred in 1995 (Red-spotted) and 1996 (White-spotted)**

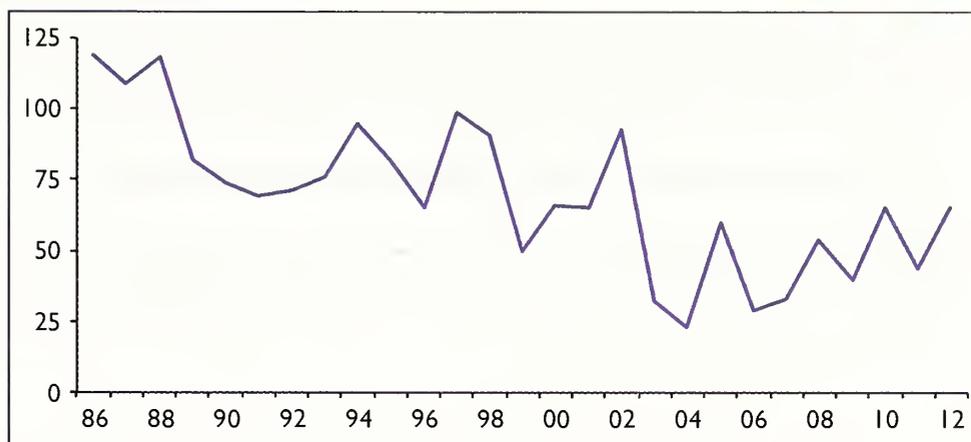
One site: one singing male. Given that there were 314 singing males of the White-spotted race *L. s. cyanecula* in Denmark in 2012, and that numbers there have increased by 133% since 2004 (Nyegaard *et al.* 2014), we might expect more records in the expanding fen habitats of East Anglia in the future.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one singing male of the White-spotted race present at the same site as in 2011, from 6th May to 15th June.

**Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*****Rare: 5-yr mean 54 bp****Coverage: high****Amber**

58 sites: 30–65 pairs. There has been a 40-year range change of +94% according to *Bird Atlas 2007–11*, but some sites are used only for a few years leading to some fluidity in the range. The trend from RBBP data (fig. 7) certainly shows a decline over the latter half of that period, and the slight recovery in recent years may be an artefact of atlas fieldwork. A few confirmed breeding records come from sightings of recently fledged juveniles in areas where there have been no records of adults, suggesting that breeding has occurred unnoticed. We have assumed that there is suitable breeding habitat in the area and included these records in our analyses.



**Fig. 7.** The maximum total number of breeding pairs of Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* in the UK, 1986–2012.

England, SW  
**Devon** One site: one pair bred, fledging three young. **Dorset** One site: one pair bred, fledging three young. **Hampshire** One site: one pair bred, fledging four young. **Wiltshire** One site: one pair bred, fledging two broods.

England, SE

**Bedfordshire** One site: one singing male. **Berkshire** One site: one pair bred with two broods (of four and of one) recorded. **Essex** One site: one pair bred, fledging two young. **Greater London** 20 sites: six pairs bred, two probable and seven possible breeding pairs, and five singing males. **Kent** 11 sites: 11 pairs bred, four probable breeding pairs. **Surrey** One site: one possible breeding pair. **Sussex** One site: one pair bred, fledging one young.

England, E

**Cambridgeshire** One site: one singing male. **Lincolnshire** One site: one possible breeding pair. **Norfolk** One site: one pair bred, two singing males. **Suffolk** Four sites: two pairs bred, three singing males.

England, C

**Derbyshire** One site: one singing male at a likely breeding site, but recorded on only one date. **West Midlands** One site: one singing male at a likely breeding site, but recorded on only one date.

England, N

**Co. Durham** One site: one pair bred: a recently fledged juvenile was seen in suitable breeding habitat in June but no adults were recorded. **Greater Manchester** One site: one singing male.

Wales

**Breconshire** One site: one singing male at the same site used in 2010 and 2011, but appeared to be unpaired. **Ceredigion** One site: one probable breeding pair. A recently fledged juvenile in August was believed to have fledged locally. **Denbigh & Flint** One site: one pair bred, fledging at least one young. **Meirionnydd** One site: one singing (immature) male, which held territory for three weeks in May and June.

Scotland, S

**Lothian** One site: one possible breeding pair.

Channel Islands

**Jersey** Two sites: one pair bred and one singing male.

**White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 2 bp****Coverage: high****Green**

Seven sites: at least 12 pairs and up to four mixed pairs. The inclusion of the Channel Islands in this report has led to considerably more records than normal, but elsewhere two pure and four mixed pairs is still the most we have ever reported. Channel Islands data for 2012 have not been included in the five-year mean.

England, SW

Isles of Scilly One site: one mixed pair bred, two young were seen on 28th July.

England, SE

Sussex One site: one pair bred, assumed to be a mixed pair. On 17th May a female *alba* was reported with three young; the male was not seen.

England, E

Suffolk One site: one mixed pair bred, seen feeding recently fledged young on 9th June.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: one probable breeding mixed pair. The pair was seen nest-building on 8th May but there was no further evidence.

Shetland One site: one pair bred, seen with three juveniles on 14th June.

Northern Ireland

Co. Derry One site: one pair bred, a female seen feeding recently fledged young on 22nd June and the male seen on 24th June. This is the first recorded breeding of White Wagtail in Northern Ireland.

Channel Islands

Approximately ten pairs bred on Jersey. White Wagtails also breed on Guernsey and Alderney but were not counted in 2012.

### **Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes***

**Less scarce: 5-yr mean 112 bp\***

**Coverage: low**

**Red**

\* 2011 estimate was 500–1,000 bp (Clements 2013).

23–182 pairs. This is the highest number of pairs reported by RBBP, perhaps because of surveys in two key areas for this species: the Forest of Dean and the New Forest, which together accounted for 102 pairs. There is clearly still a measure of under-recording elsewhere, especially in Wales, although *Bird Atlas 2007–11* shows records of breeding evidence in just 113 10-km squares. The breeding record from Dumfries & Galloway was unusual as there are no recent records from this area. This species is now very scarce in Scotland; it is known to breed in Perth & Kinross, but breeding records are infrequent.

England, SW

Gloucestershire A partial survey of the Forest of Dean located 22 probable and 21 possible breeding pairs.

Hampshire In the New Forest, 59 territories at 24 sites were located, including 15 confirmed breeding pairs.

Somerset One possible breeding pair. Wiltshire Two pairs bred and one possible breeding pair.

England, SE

Kent Based on previous survey work, the county population was estimated at 50 pairs. Sussex One possible breeding pair and one singing male.

England, E

Norfolk One pair bred and one possible breeding pair.

England, C

Derbyshire Two possible breeding pairs.

England, N

Cumbria One pair bred, with birds present at two other sites. Lancashire & N Merseyside Based on previous survey work, the county population was estimated at five pairs. Yorkshire One possible breeding pair.

Wales

East Glamorgan At least one probable breeding pair. Gwent Two pairs bred, three probable breeding pairs.

Meirionnydd One possible breeding pair. Radnorshire One pair bred, four probable breeding pairs.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair bred.

### **Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 5 bp**

**Coverage: low**

**Green**

Four sites: 4–7 pairs. The only clear pattern emerging from records of breeding Common Redpolls is that small numbers breed in most years on offshore islands, most frequently Shetland. But confusion with Lesser Redpoll *A. cabaret*, which also occurs in these islands (though it is the scarcer species in Shetland), means that some breeding Common Redpolls may well be overlooked.



Alan Harris

Common Redpoll *Acanthis f. flammea*

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair bred, fledging one brood of four in July and a second brood of two in August; also one possible breeding pair. Shetland Three sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging three young in July, plus two possible breeding pairs; (2) one pair bred, fledging three young; (3) one pair bred, fledging two young in July.

**Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus***

**Rare: 50 bp (Summers & Buckland 2010) Coverage: low**

Amber

Five sites: 1–6 pairs. These records represent only a small sample of the breeding population of northern Scotland.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one pair bred and at least one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Four sites: birds recorded in April to June, including a flock of 20 on 7th June.

**Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis***

**Rare: 79 bp (2011 survey)**

**Coverage: low**

Amber

Casual records from the main breeding areas of the Cairngorms (Highland/North-east Scotland) provided evidence of three confirmed and six other breeding pairs. On Arran (Clyde Islands) there was also a single April record from a mountain summit. This is only a fraction of the estimated 50–100 pairs, based on the 2011 survey.

**Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus***

**Scarce: 862 bp (Stanbury et al. 2010)**

**Coverage: low**

Red

A minimum of 122 territories. The addition of the Channel Islands to the area covered by the RBBP adds only one pair of Cirl Buntings – the species is now scarce on the islands, having undergone a substantial decline and a brief period of local extinction.

England, SW

Cornwall 44 territories including 37 confirmed breeding pairs, which fledged a total of 50 young. Devon Confirmed or possible breeding was recorded from 76 sites in south Devon, mainly in the coastal strip. Away from the coast, one singing male held territory between 2nd June and 1st July. Cirl Buntings were recorded from 4% of all BBS squares in Devon, the same proportion as in 2011.

Channel Islands

Jersey One pair bred.

## Appendix I. Other species considered by the Panel also recorded in 2012.

The following occasional or potential breeding species were recorded during the breeding season in 2012, but showed no further signs of breeding than are documented here.

### Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

In Highland, an adult associated with Black-throated Divers at an inland loch.

### White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

In Nottinghamshire, a lone male present from January to May was recorded nest-building. The origin of the bird is not known but it had a metal ring. Elsewhere, four birds toured Somerset during the summer months, being seen regularly at around seven different locations from 24th May until 17th August.

### Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

In its ninth consecutive year of residence, a single male was again recorded on several occasions at a site in Yorkshire, from 12th March to 23rd June. Another bird was present at a site in Cambridgeshire from 24th March to 24th August. This bird summered at the same site in 2011 (these details were not available for the 2011 report).

### Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

The only record submitted was of a single bird in Highland on 13th June. Although it was recorded on only one date and was away from former traditional sites, the habitat was suitable for breeding.

### European Serin *Serinus serinus*

In Devon, a male was singing at a coastal site for three days in May. This species last bred in the Channel Islands in 2001.

### Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

A female was noted in Moray & Nairn on 31st May only, but not from the formerly traditional breeding area in the Cairngorms.

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We would like to thank the many contributors who have supplied the data that this report is based on, either directly to county recorders or via BirdTrack. However, these records are made available only because of the hard work of county and regional recorders, and their assistants, who form a unique network of expertise across the whole of the UK. We are particularly grateful to those who have worked closely with the Panel Secretary in the past year, and they are named individually on our website. Most recorders also helped further by reviewing an early draft of this report.

Input from many specialist study groups, conservation organisations and numerous individuals means that the report can be even more comprehensive. Valuable supplementary data were submitted from a number of national monitoring schemes, which are referenced in the species accounts where appropriate. Information for many species was supplied via the Schedule I licensing system by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the BTO and the RSPB. Particular assistance from the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Group, the Scottish Raptor Study Groups, the Shropshire and Wiltshire Raptor Groups, the North of England Raptor Forum, and the JNCC/RSPB/SOTEAG Seabird Monitoring Programme is also recognised and appreciated. The BTO has allowed access to various datasets, including the BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC Wetland Bird Survey, the Nest Record Scheme and the Heronries Census. The RSPB also gave freely of its expertise in data management and species monitoring. We thank all the individuals in these organisations who provided friendly advice and information.

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The Rare Breeding Birds Panel is supported by JNCC, RSPB and the BTO

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# Short paper

## The Red-flanked Bluetail in Europe: range expansion and population trends

**Abstract** Data are presented to illustrate the population increase and expansion in the breeding range of the Red-flanked Bluetail in Finland during the past 40 years. The changing status of this species in the rest of Europe over the same time period is discussed also.

In 1973, HM drew *BB* readers' attention to the westward expansion of the Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (Mikkola 1973a,b). At that time, the regular breeding range extended west from the taiga zone of Siberia and the northern parts of European Russia to a small area of northeast Finland. Now, a little over 40 years later, it is clear that the species' range has continued to expand in a westerly direction, but also that the overall upward trend, in both numbers and range, masks a good deal of fluctuation. Indeed, the Red-flanked Bluetail remains vulnerable as a breeding species in Finland – its population size is still rather small and it is restricted to undisturbed, mature forests – and it remains on Finland's Red List of threatened species.

### A brief history of the Red-flanked Bluetail in Finland

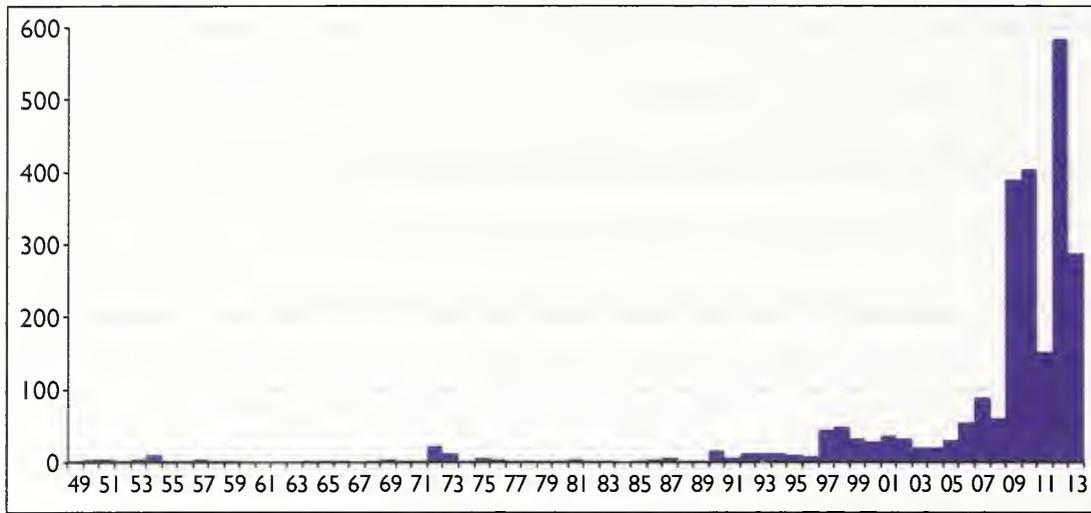
The Red-flanked Bluetail was first recorded in Finland on 4th July 1949 (Sovinen 1952) and by the mid 1950s the species was not difficult to find in the old-growth forests of eastern Finland, although by that stage no nests had been found. Mysteriously, by the early 1960s the species had all but vanished, although that proved to be only a faltering interlude in its progress and by the 1970s a new phase of range expansion was evident.

The first nest was discovered in Kuusamo, northeast Finland, in the summer of 1971 (Skoog 1973). The following year, 1972, HM and colleagues located no fewer than 22 singing/territorial males, while a second nest



Jari Peltomäki

271. Adult male Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, livaara, Kuusamo, Finland, June 2005.



**Fig. 1.** Annual number of Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* territories in Finland 1949–2013.

was found in 1973, close to the 1971 breeding site. The 22 territories in 1972 remained a record number for some years, as Red-flanked Bluetail once again became a rare species in the Finnish forests, and for a time only one or two territories were located each year.

By 1987, however, the population had begun to increase once again and in that year six breeding territories were found. In 1990 there were 17 territories, seven of which were very close to the site where nests were found in 1971 and 1973. In 1997, the number of territories finally exceeded the count of 1972, and no fewer than 44 territories were discovered that year (Rajasärkkä 1998). Up to the end of the 1990s, breeding was confirmed on just three further occasions, one at the same site as in 1971/1973 and two at new sites (in total, the five confirmed breeding records comprised four nests found and fledglings seen at one other site).

After 2000, the population began to

of the 1980s, encouraging signs that the population was beginning to stabilise at a new level.

Some 31 territories were discovered in 2005, but then in 2006 the population leapt to a new peak of 54 territories. This unexpected surge was maintained over the next few years: by 2009 the count was 390 (Rajasärkkä 2010) and by 2012 there were 584 known territories (Rajasärkkä 2013), although in 2013 numbers fell back somewhat to 288 territories (fig. 1). There is no doubt that there has been a real increase in breeding Red-flanked Bluetails in Finland, but the high numbers in the past decade also reflect the hard work and expertise of many enthusiastic ornithologists who have learnt how to search for Red-flanked Bluetail territories in Finland's forests.

Recent survey work based on line-transect studies on Finnish nature reserves suggests that the average population since the year 2000 is around 340–500 pairs, with a minimum of 100 pairs and a maximum of 6,500 pairs (Rajasärkkä 2013). Väisänen & Lehikoinen (2013) estimated that the growth of the Finnish population is currently more than 40% per annum, although this estimate is based on a very small sample. The present breeding distribution in Finland is shown in fig. 2. So far, some 130 breeding records have been confirmed, but only about 20 nests have been found, which emphasises the difficulty of finding the bird's well-hidden nests in the dense, hilly and rocky



Ari Rajasärkkä

**272.** Typical Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* breeding habitat, Paljakka, Puolanka, Finland. Fledged young were found here shortly before this photo was taken in July 2009.

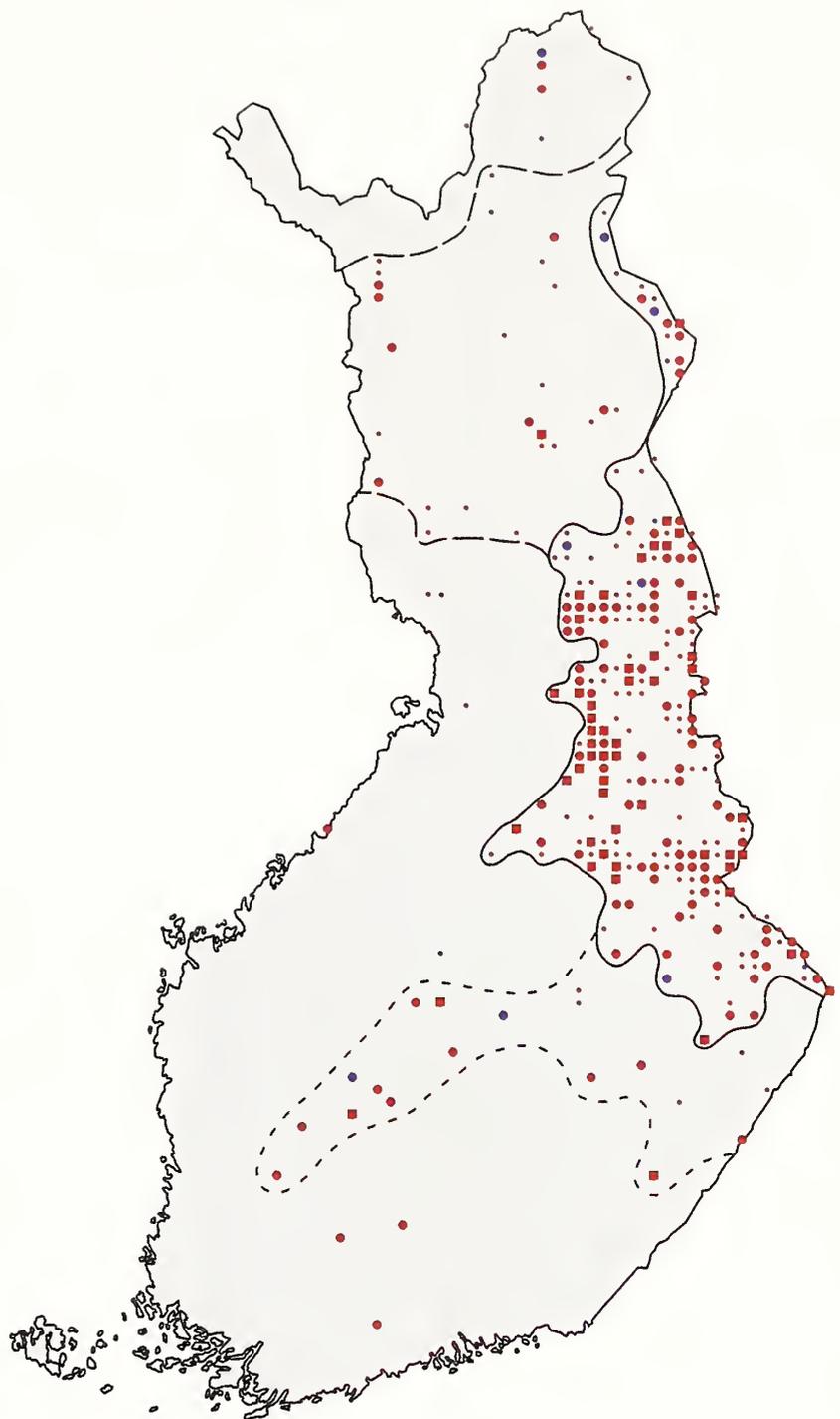
forests with myriad mosquitoes.

During recent decades, the species' habitat requirements have remained unchanged. The Red-flanked Bluetail is a bird of old-growth, mature coniferous forest, favouring areas with little or no human disturbance. Only seldom is it found in other habitats. Of all Finland's breeding birds, this species is perhaps the best single ecological indicator of pristine natural forest.

It is interesting that, despite the surge in the number of breeding territories, the number of Red-flanked Bluetails ringed annually in Finland has not shown a comparable increase. This is largely due to the extreme difficulty of finding nests, which means that most efforts are directed at mist-netting adults in their territories (rather than ringing the chicks before they fledge) – as well as capturing full-grown birds on migration. Table 1 shows these data, and also illustrates that 2013 was an unusually productive year for catching adults on breeding territories.

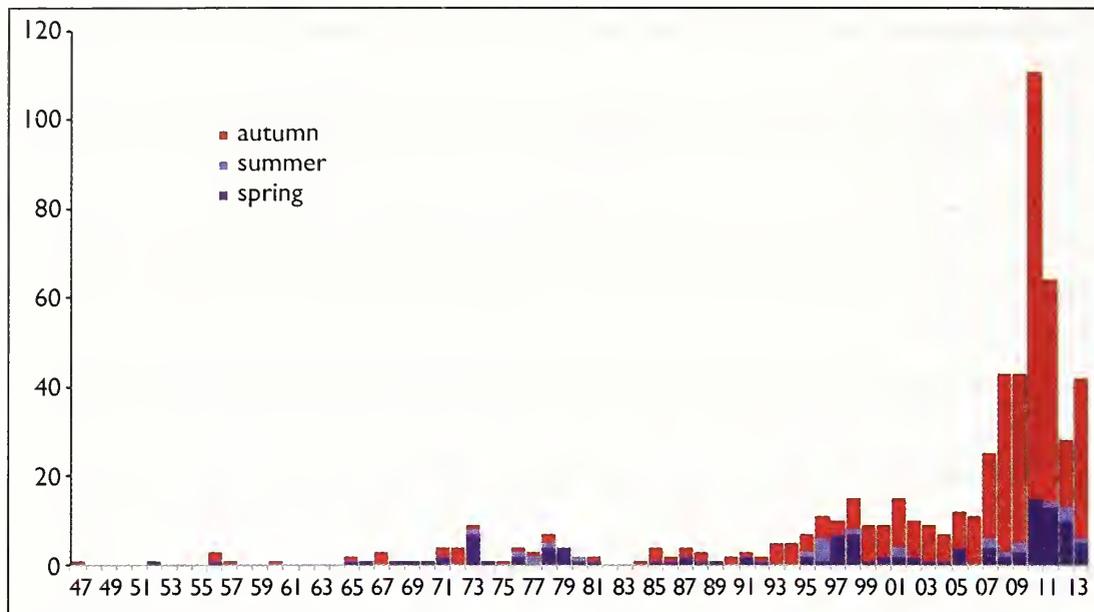
A first-summer male, ringed at its territory in 2012, was controlled one year later on the same territory (Roni Väisänen *in litt.*), which shows that at least some individuals are site-faithful. The same bird was controlled again in 2014 – this time in a totally different forest area, some 30 km NNW of the original territory! This bird remains the only true recovery of all the ringed Finnish Red-flanked Bluetails. Other 'controlled' birds have been observed at the ringing site only a couple of days after capture.

There is still no firm evidence to show where Finnish Red-flanked Bluetails overwinter but it is assumed that they migrate mainly to southeast China, Korea and Taiwan since there are no western ringing recoveries. It is interesting that the Asian birds are known to overshoot to the northeast and that there are now a few records of Red-flanked



**Fig. 2.** Distribution of the Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* in Finland based on 10-km x 10-km atlas grid squares. A red square denotes confirmed breeding, a large red dot probable breeding and a small red dot possible breeding from 1990; large and small blue dots show the same information before 1990. The solid black line indicates the regular breeding range, while two hatched lines indicate the two likely directions in which the breeding range is expanding (in the north there is plenty of suitable habitat but very limited ornithological monitoring; in the south, suitable breeding habitat is extremely fragmented). Blue and red dots beyond the areas enclosed by these lines are at present considered only as occasional breeding sites or territories of single males without females. Note that the dots are shown in the middle of the atlas grid square; although it appears that some cross the Finnish border, in reality all territories marked are in Finland.

Bluetails in westernmost North America, most in western Alaska, where the species is now a rare spring and autumn vagrant especially in the Aleutians, the Pribilofs and St Lawrence Island. The first record for the USA



**Fig. 3.** Records of Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus* in the Western Palearctic, 1947–2013. Summer = breeding territories found (excluding Finland and Russia), spring and autumn = numbers of individuals seen (including Finland). The few winter records are included with counts from the previous autumn.

beyond Alaska was a juvenile male ringed on Southeast Farallon Island, California, on 1st November 1989, while a second was photographed on San Clemente Island, off southern California, on 6th December 2011 (Runco 2013). The first for Canada overwintered in Vancouver from 13th January to 26th March 2013 (Toochin 2013).

### The Red-flanked Bluetail elsewhere in mainland Europe and the UK

Beyond the borders of Finland and Russia, the Red-flanked Bluetail has been confirmed to breed only three times in Europe. In 1980, a breeding territory was recorded in central Estonia (Rootsmäe 1981); in 1996, a pair



Ari Rajasärkkä

**273.** Typical Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* breeding habitat, Kuiriavaara, Puolanka, Finland. A singing male was found here shortly before this photo was taken in June 2013.

bred in northern Sweden, some 20 km west of the Finnish border (Patomella 1998); and in 2011, in Finnmark, Norway, young fledglings were seen close to the Russian border in the north and only some 15 km from Finland (Olsen *et al.* 2011).

Elsewhere, sightings of Red-flanked Bluetails have increased in spring and, especially,

during autumn migration beyond the areas where the species breeds. Excluding Finland and Russia, there are now 400 European records (table 2). The peak year so far was in 2010, when there were almost 100 autumn records (fig. 3). Note that some 91 spring and 80 autumn birds observed in Finland (away from breeding sites) during 1952–2013 are also included in fig. 3. Since there are just six late autumn/winter records from Spain and 12 from France, this does not give strong support for the theory that part of the population now winters in southern Europe. However, the only record from Portugal is a bird ringed in Sweden on 15th October 2011 and found dead in Boliqueime, Portugal, in January 2012 (Rajasärkkä 2012; Ullman 2012). This single bird prompted Hellström & Norevik (2013) to suggest that many of the recent records in western Europe are of birds from the western part of the breeding range.

In Britain there are 127 accepted Red-flanked Bluetail records to the end of 2013. This is more than for any other European country except Finland and comprises about one-third of the total in Europe (table 2). The vast majority (almost 90%) of these British birds have turned up between late September and early November, and more than 80% of

**Table 1.** Number of Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus* ringed in Finland 2004–13.

	Juveniles	Adults	Total	Recoveries	Total ringed 1967–2013	Total recoveries
2004	1	0	1	0	47	0
2005	5	0	5	0	52	0
2006	0	2	2	0	54	0
2007	0	1	1	0	55	0
2008	0	3	3	0	58	0
2009	0	11	11	0	69	0
2010	3	28	31	1	100	1
2011	7	13	20	0	120	1
2012	0	33	33	0	153	1
2013	20	59	79	3	232	4

all records are from Scotland, the northeast and East Anglia. Where the age has been established, almost all have proved to be first-winter birds.

It is tempting to suggest that some of the vagrants to Britain could originate from the expanding Finnish population, but at least some ringing data is required to establish whether this is true, or whether they originate farther east. The first Irish Bluetail (10th November 2009) was ringed, but sadly it was not possible to read the ring in the field (although the photos do show that it was not a Finnish ring). In Finland, Roni Väisänen began a colour-ringing project in 2013, which may tell us more about this species' movements.

### Discussion

Helminen (1958) illustrated how the range expansion of the Red-flanked Bluetail coincided with exceptionally warm springs in Finland, and in 1973 HM suggested that this would culminate in a genuine westward extension of its range. This westward expansion has indeed taken place, with climate change surely being at least partly responsible for this unobtrusive bird increasing from its early foothold of just a few pairs to hundreds if not thousands of breeding pairs in Finland. It seems likely that this trend could continue but we have relatively limited understanding of the many possible ways in which a changing climate may affect the Red-flanked Bluetail population. Similarly, we are only

**Table 2.** Records of Red-flanked Bluetails in Western Palearctic countries (excluding Finland and Russia); data from reports of the Rarities Committees in various countries, internet photos and the website [www.tarsiger.com](http://www.tarsiger.com) (accessed 27th July 2014). Observations of breeding birds (see text) are presented as a single record although more than one bird was seen.

	First record	No. of records		First record	No. of records
Italy	Nov 1879	15	Poland	30 Oct 1995	5
Great Britain	19 Sep 1903	127	Israel	1 Jan 1996	2
Germany	9 Oct 1956	28	Spain	17 Nov 1998	6
Cyprus	8 Nov 1957	4	Belgium	25 Sep 2001	6
Sweden	27 Dec 1965	94	Czech Republic	1 Oct 2007	1
Netherlands	16 Oct 1967	20	Lithuania	10 Nov 2008	5
Norway	31 May 1969	42	Faroe Islands	6 Oct 2009	3
Slovakia	28 May 1973	1	Ireland	10 Nov 2009	3
Denmark	22 May 1976	14	Hungary	12 Oct 2010	3
Channel Islands	31 Oct 1976	2	Portugal	19 Jan 2012	1
Estonia	May 1977	5	Malta	17 Nov 2013	1
France	27 Oct 1993	12	<b>Total</b>		<b>400</b>

scratching the surface in our understanding of the importance of this species' habitat preferences and the degree to which this will affect future expansion when presumably less and less pristine, old-growth forest will exist.

### Preliminary 2014 data

Spring 2014 was unusually good for Red-flanked Bluetails in Europe. A long-staying, perhaps overwintering, bird was seen in Gloucestershire between 3rd February and 9th March, while another was seen on Fair Isle on 30th March and 5th April. In May one was ringed in Poland (the sixth record for Poland) and another was photographed in Sweden. In Finland reports of 12 birds have been interpreted as spring migrants, including an exceptionally early individual photographed at Jurmo Bird Observatory, southwest Finland, on 29th March. On 7th April a leucistic bird, probably an adult male, was observed at Långskär Bird Observatory, southwest Finland (see [www.tarsiger.com/gallery/index.php?pic\\_id=muu1396974087&lang=fin](http://www.tarsiger.com/gallery/index.php?pic_id=muu1396974087&lang=fin)). None of these 2014 observations have yet been assessed by the respective rarities committees. However, by the end of July only about 140 Red-flanked Bluetail territories have been found in eastern Finland, which is the lowest number since 2008.

### Acknowledgments

We wish to thank Roni Väisänen, who is responsible for ringing more than half (120) of all Red-flanked Bluetails ringed in Finland and who secured the first nest-site control of a returning migrant. Our gratitude goes also to Jari Valkama and Seppo Niiranen from the Bird Ringing Centre in Finland, who facilitated the access to all of the Finnish Red-flanked Bluetail ringing results. Jeff Martin assisted a great deal in collecting together all published UK observations for this paper.

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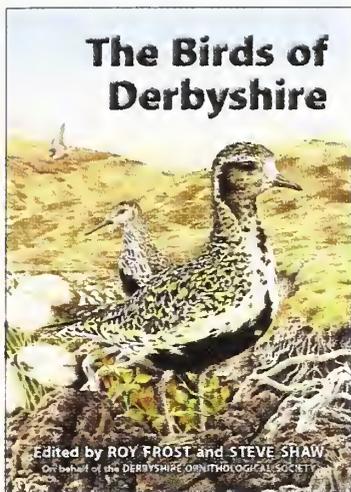
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Heimo Mikkola is a retired UN diplomat and part-time Adjunct Professor who started his birdwatching hobby at the age of 11 and saw his first Red-flanked Bluetail 45 years ago. Ari Rajasärkkä is a conservation biologist who has studied birds on Finland's nature reserves for over 30 years using line-transect censuses. The total length of line transects on which he has walked and counted birds is well over 3,000 km.



## The Birds of Derbyshire

Edited by Roy Frost and Steve Shaw

Liverpool University Press, 2013

Hbk, 376pp; colour and black-and-white photographs and illustrations, colour distribution maps

ISBN 978-1-84631-956-3 Subbuteo code M24337

£45.00 **BB Bookshop price £40.00**

This large-format book is another of the county atlases and avifaunas that

have emerged in the wake of the very successful national atlas. Beautifully presented, with clarity of format and layout, it opens with a historical review of birding and ornithology in Derbyshire, with brief life-histories of some of the leading personalities – not least Frederick Whitlock, a bank manager who absconded with the contents of the safe and fled to Australia. I never tire of reading that ‘he has a shifty expression when talking... usually converses on the subject (of birds) when in company’. Of how many contemporary birders does this also ring true? This entertaining and informative section is followed by an excellent and detailed description of the climate and major habitats of the county. For an inland county, Derbyshire has a wide range of these, from the moorland-dominated Dark Peak to the riverine gravel-pits and farmland of the Trent basin, with a diversity of birds to match.

Typically, a major part of the book is devoted to individual species accounts. The recent data for these is based upon a survey undertaken by the Derbyshire Ornithological Society between 1995 and 1999. The methodology was broadly comparable with BTO recording, using the familiar categorisation of possible, probable and confirmed breeding. For the commoner species, these data are presented as tetrad maps with different-sized squares showing the breeding status, and looking through these it is very clear how different the Dark Peak is from the rest of the county in species and abundance. Woodland birds such as Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*, Black-bird *Turdus merula* and so on are absent from much of the heather-dominated moorland, being replaced by European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Twite *Linaria flavirostris*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* and (of course) Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*.

As elsewhere in the country, there are declines in

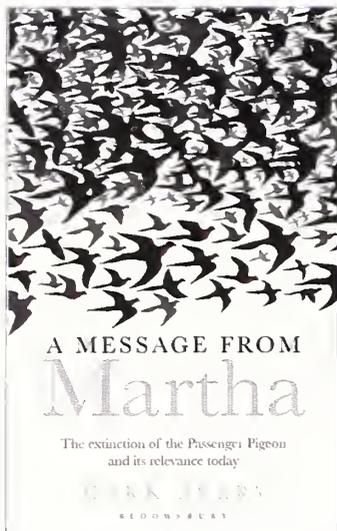
the populations of many woodland and farmland birds; the book documents most of these, with Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*, Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos minor* and Willow Tits *Poecile montanus* receiving particular attention. Efforts to protect breeding Ring Ouzels from disturbance by rock climbers are documented, and there are detailed accounts of the decline in Wood Warblers *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* and the increase of Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* (the last being largely due to the provision of nestboxes in their favoured Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea* woods). Shockingly (but these days perhaps not surprisingly), Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* and Corn Buntings *Emberiza calandra* seem to have disappeared from much of the southern part of the county. More happily, Common Ravens *Corvus corax* and Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* have recolonised Derbyshire, and Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* are firmly re-established. Red Kites *Milvus milvus* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* are recorded more frequently, leading to the hope that they may breed in the near future. Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* breed regularly and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* records have increased from one in 1998 to over 250 in 2011.

The rarities and scarcities also get attention, with an interesting list of the dates of first occurrence for many of these. As so often, this is littered with surprises: Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* was recorded before Red-necked *P. lobatus*; Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* was seen before Alpine *Apus melba* – and White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* before either of them!

There is an attractive series of photographs of habitats and birds, while many species are further illustrated by small vignettes that add significantly to the appearance of a book of which the Society in general, and the editors in particular, can be very proud. It should sit on the desk of every planner and in the library of every local government office across the county.

David Parkin





## A Message from Martha

By Mark Avery

Hbk, 304pp

ISBN 978-1-4729-0625-0 Subbuteo code M24309

£16.99 **BB Bookshop price £15.00**

By the time you read this, two centenaries will have come and gone. Everybody should know about the start of the First World War, but perhaps very

few people will have realised that 100 years ago, on 1st September 1914, Martha, the very last Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius* on earth, died in Cincinnati Zoo. This book is about this remarkable species and its demise – but, as its subtitle ‘the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon and its relevance today’ suggests, there is rather more to it than that.

The Passenger Pigeon was once the most numerous bird on the planet, probably by a huge margin. The statistics on population size, breeding colonies, roosts and migrating flocks are simply mind-boggling, completely dwarfing anything we can see today. There were almost certainly somewhere between five and ten billion Passenger Pigeons in North America early in the nineteenth century.

It is this incredible state of affairs that Mark Avery investigates in his early chapters, providing a very useful digest of the vast literature on the species and commenting on various aspects of Passenger Pigeon ecology as he goes along. A particularly important aspect of this is the bird’s virtually total reliance on native broadleaved forest and its mast production, especially from beech *Fagus grandifolia* and oak *Quercus*, but also from chestnut *Castanea dentata*. Another concerns population dynamics, where Mark makes a convincing case for the pigeons being double-brooded: the traditional assertion that they nested only once per annum would appear to be wrong, simply because the arithmetic behind it just doesn’t work.

The core of the book concerns the dramatic disappearance of this phenomenally abundant bird and the reasons for it. All the evidence points to the main cause being habitat loss – the vast reduction in the woodland on which the species was so utterly dependent – with the almost unbelievable slaughter of the birds (for food) in the second half of the nineteenth century then hitting an already declining population very hard. Mark does not think much of some of the theories

which have been put forward concerning, in effect, social pressures on a rapidly decreasing colonial species, but does advance the interesting idea that the birds’ new status may have made them more vulnerable to various common predators.

The story is a tragic one and it is well told. We move on to the author’s American travels in search of the places where the last pigeons lived and died, and what is left of their once widespread habitat. Anybody who has travelled in the USA should enjoy that chapter, but perhaps many, like me, may be a little uncertain about the one which catalogues the historical events and the enormous social changes which are, in so many ways, implicated in what was undoubtedly a man-made extinction. Of course, a vastly increasing nineteenth-century American population needs to be talked about, as do its appetites (in the alimentary sense) and its overall effects on a suddenly vulnerable environment, but a more succinct summary might have been better. Nevertheless, the point that it was the actions and attitudes of those people that resulted, accidentally or otherwise, in the extermination of the Passenger Pigeon is strongly made. Essentially, Martha’s message to us is that we should do our utmost to make sure that such an event cannot happen again. Personally, though, I could do without the hypothetical supporting speech from Barack Obama...

The end of the story finds us in Northamptonshire and on Mark’s home patch, where he muses on what he has learnt from his investigations and considers the plight of a once-common pigeon that has all but disappeared there, the Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. The ingredients seem familiar – habitat change and loss of important food plants, in this case the result of modern farming methods, and even increased pressure on a declining species from widespread (but this time unlawful) shooting. The attitudes of some in the farming community towards wildlife conservation frustrate and annoy him; he is positively scathing about the negativity of the National Farmers’ Union. Who can blame him? It is easy to say that the Turtle Dove will not become the new Passenger Pigeon – but can we be sure?

*Mike Everett*

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# Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Harry Hussey

This summary of unchecked reports covers the period from early July to early August 2014.

**Headlines** This period brought high-quality rarities, notably of seabirds and waders, with a returning Swinhoe's Storm-petrel on Fair Isle, several Zino's/Fea's Petrels, Great Knot and Franklin's Gull in Norfolk, one or two Stilt Sandpipers, two Pacific Golden Plovers, one or two Collared Pratincoles, plus single long-staying and wide-ranging Black-winged Pratincole and Bridled Tern. The Mediterranean weather, at least in southern England, no doubt encouraged a pair of nesting European Bee-eaters and helped Black-winged Stilts to raise two broods.

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* New arrivals: Loch Leven (Perth & Kinross), 8th July; Tittesworth Resr (Staffordshire), 10th July; Musselburgh (Lothian), 17th July. **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* Thurso Bay (Highland), 19th July.

**Zino's/Fea's Petrel** *Pterodroma madeira/feae* 6 km east of Easington (Yorkshire), 13th July; St John's Point (Co. Down), 14th July; 13 km off Galley Head (Co. Cork), 30th July; Malin Head (Co. Donegal), 3rd August; Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 5th August. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* On pelagics off Scilly, three on 14th July, singles on 2nd and 4th August. Irish pelagic trips yielded one off Blacksod Bay (Co. Mayo) on 19th July, four off Galley Head on 22nd July and five off Galley Head on 24th. **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* Fair Isle, trapped on seven dates between 9th July and 1st August.

**Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* New arrivals: Bough Beech Resr (Kent), 13th and

16th July; Nuneaton (Warwickshire), 21st July to 5th August. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Frampton-on-Severn (Gloucestershire), two 27th–31st July, three 2nd–3rd, one to 5th August; Susworth (Lincolnshire), 3rd–5th August; Sidlesham (Sussex), 31st July to 6th August. **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* Oulton Broad (Suffolk), 26th July; Claxton (Norfolk), 26th July; Salthouse/Cley/Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 1st August; Glynde (Sussex), 3rd August; North Curry (Somerset), 3rd and 6th August; Rockland Broad (Norfolk), 5th August. **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Records from Cambridgeshire, Cheshire & Wirral, Co. Cork, Cumbria, Dorset, Essex, Greater London, Lancashire & N Merseyside, Leicestershire & Rutland, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Perth & Kinross and Yorkshire.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* Ventnor (Isle of Wight), 10th July; Moor Green Lakes (Berkshire), 20th July; Stiffkey Fen (Norfolk), 31st July; Fakenham (Norfolk), 1st August; Colchester (Essex), 3rd August. **Short-toed Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* Long-stayer, Thursley Common (Surrey), 12th July.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Bracklesham Bay, two adults and three juveniles to 29th July; then Sidlesham Ferry and Pulborough Brooks (all Sussex) to 6th August; Cavenham, two adults and four juveniles 19th–28th July and 6th August, also seen Great Livermere and Livermere Lake (all Suffolk) in that period; Shapwick Heath (Somerset), 13th July; Blashford Lakes (Hampshire), 2nd



Will Soar

**274.** Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* (with Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*), Breydon Water, Norfolk, July 2014.



**275.** Adult Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*, Druridge Pools, Northumberland, August 2014.

August. American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Derrybeg (Co. Donegal), 29th July. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 23rd July to 6th August; Middleton Lakes (Staffordshire), 26th July to 2nd August. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* Breydon Water (Norfolk), 13th–15th July. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 29th July. Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* Hickling Broad (Norfolk), 11th July; Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools (both Northumberland), 29th July to 6th August. Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* Pennington Marshes (Hampshire), 23rd July. White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 9th–10th July; Cresswell Pond, 26th July, then Gibraltar Point, 28th–30th July, and 6th August; Pool of Virkie (Shetland), 29th–30th July; Snettisham (Norfolk), 31st July to 1st August; Hickling Broad, 1st–6th August; Frampton Marsh (Lincolnshire), 2nd–3rd August. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* Baron's Haugh (Clyde), long-stayer to 13th July. Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Frampton Marsh, 11th–26th July; Loch of Strathbeg (North-east Scotland), 29th July. Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* Minsmere (Suffolk), 15th–27th July; Ashington (Northumberland), 28th July. Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* Long-stayer at Seaton Delaval (Northumberland) to 7th July; presumed same Gibraltar Point 14th July, Cley 15th July, Stiffkey Fen 16th–17th, then Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) 19th July intermittently to 6th August; Cuckmere Haven (Sussex), 30th July.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* Farne Islands (Northumberland), long-stayer to 8th July; then Port Seton 9th and North Berwick (both Lothian), 10th July; Farne Islands 12th July; Whitburn (Co. Durham) then Seaton Carew (Cleveland) on 13th July and Winterton (Norfolk), 18th July. Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* Exmouth (Devon), 5th August. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Abberton Resr

(Essex), 11th–14th July; Saltholme (Cleveland), 12th and 26th–28th July.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* Oare Marshes (Kent), 17th July to 3rd August. Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* Bowling Green Marsh area (Devon), long-stayer to 2nd August. Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), long-stayer to 5th August. Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* Breydon Water, 1st August; Cley, 6th August.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Wydcombe Estate (Isle of Wight), up to four adults feeding young at nest 21st July to 6th August; Aberdeen (North-east Scotland), 9th July; Winterton, 10th July, Taynton (Gloucestershire), 23rd July; Margate (Kent), 31st July; Sea Palling (Norfolk), 3rd August; Rayleigh (Essex), two, 4th August. Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* Hickling Broad, 12th July; Minsmere, 31st July.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* Rainham Marshes (Essex/Greater London), 20th July. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Fair Isle, 6th August. Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* Rousay (Orkney), 7th July. Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* Portland (Dorset), 2nd August; St Mary's (Scilly), 2nd–4th August. Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* Lytchett Bay (Dorset), 25th July. Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus* Forss (Highland), 17th July. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* Unst, 5th August.



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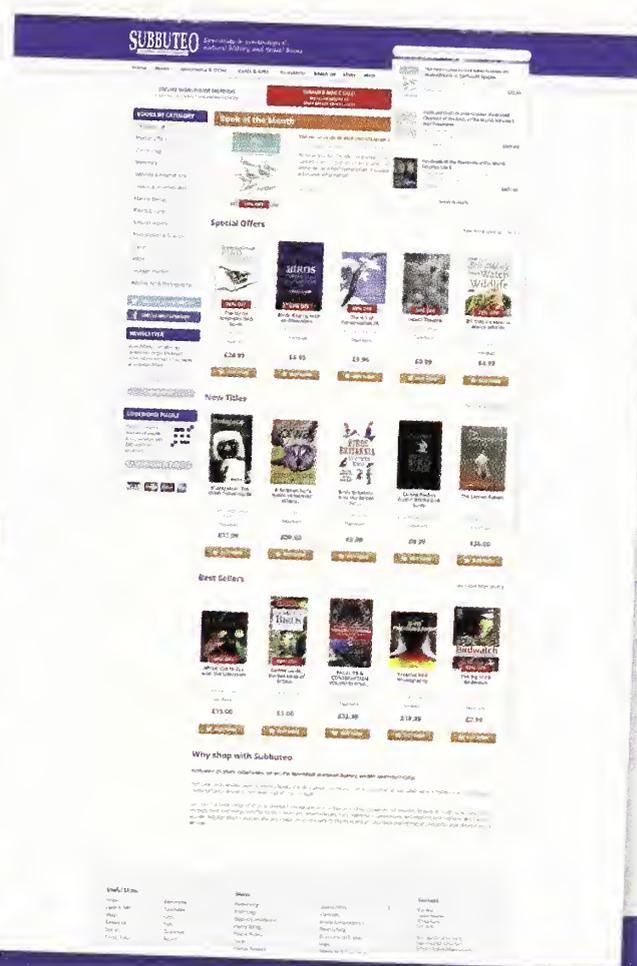
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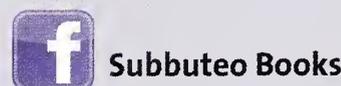
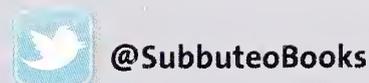
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