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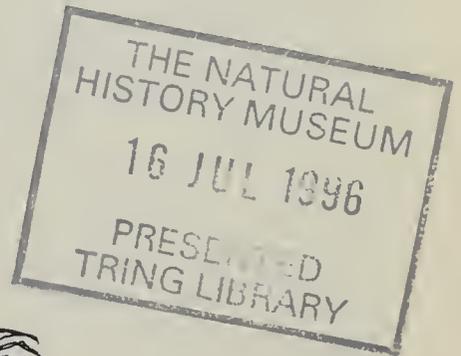
BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1996. Juvenile Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*
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(see pages 310-314)

Canon (UK) Ltd congratulates Roger Tidman on his achievement in winning this year's *British Birds* Bird Photograph of the Year competition



British Birds

Established 1907; incorporating 'The Zoologist', established 1843



Population trends of breeding birds in the United Kingdom since 1800

David W. Gibbons, Mark I. Avery and Andrew F. Brown

ABSTRACT Building on the extensive reviews by Alexander & Lack (1944) and Parslow (1973), a scoring system is used to assess the general population trend of each species that bred in the United Kingdom during the entire 196-year period 1800-1995. This semi-quantification of qualitative assessments allows comparison of trends between species. It is recommended that revisions of the Red Data List should consider those species which have declined dramatically over historical, as well as recent, time periods. The number of species that bred in the UK apparently increased by 19%, from 194 to 230, during 1800-1995, though nearly one-third of this increase was as a consequence of introductions (intentional or otherwise).

The composition of the breeding avifauna of the United Kingdom, and the status of individual species, has changed markedly during the last two centuries. Here we review changes in status of all breeding species in the UK since 1800, building on the earlier work of Alexander & Lack (1944), Parslow (1973) and Sharrock (1974), with a view to determining the general population trend of each species over this period of nearly two centuries.

Such a review has interest in its own right, but it could also help to determine today's conservation priorities. Species which have declined most are potentially those which are good candidates for future recovery programmes (see, for example, Anon. 1994). Candidates for such programmes are currently chosen, in part, from among those species whose populations have declined most over relatively short time periods of one (e.g. Mace & Stuart 1994) or a few (e.g. Batten *et al.* 1990, Tucker & Heath 1994) decades; thus, species which have declined over longer time periods may be overlooked. Whilst we acknowledge that for most taxa and most countries there are insufficient monitoring data to extend backwards the period over which the population decline is measured, we show here that this may not be the case for birds in the UK.

Methods

Sources of information

Though there is little quantitative information on population trends of breeding birds available before the 1960s, there have been several qualitative reviews of the status of British and Irish birds published this century. The three most important are those of Alexander & Lack (1944), Parslow (1973) and Sharrock (1974). A brief synopsis of each of these follows:

1. Alexander & Lack (1944): Changes in status among British breeding birds. This review covered the period from 1800 to 1940 and considered mainly British birds, though Irish populations received an occasional mention. The information was collated from county avifaunas and species monographs. Since most avifaunas were written in the second half of the nineteenth century, Alexander & Lack's review concentrated on the period 1840-1940, though they commented on marked changes before that period. Although the presentation of the review is rather poor, as it is simply an annotated list with few references to the original sources, the authors attempted to give some idea of the magnitude of changes in breeding status of each species by using such phrases as 'Huge and widespread decrease' through 'No evidence for change' to 'Huge increase and spread'.
2. Parslow (1973): Breeding birds of Britain and Ireland. This was originally published as a series of papers in *British Birds*, but was updated and published as a book in 1973. This review covered the period 1940-70, and in some instances improved on the information presented by Alexander & Lack for the period 1800-1940. For each species there is a simple summary, the first part of which repeats (almost verbatim) Alexander & Lack. This is useful because Parslow then adopted very similar terminology to represent population change, thus allowing comparison with Alexander & Lack.
3. Sharrock (1974): The changing status of breeding birds in Britain and Ireland. Using the two earlier reviews and other sources, Sharrock (1974) summarised

status changes in six time periods from 1800 to 1972 for 129 species that had shown marked changes, quantifying these changes with a ++, +, 0 or - scoring system. Sharrock was able to show that proportionately more of these 129 species had expanded in range or increased in numbers than had contracted in range or declined in numbers since 1800, and that, whereas the number of species breeding regularly in Britain and Ireland was fairly static from 1800 to 1949, there had subsequently been a net gain of about five species per decade, so that the total in the early 1970s was higher than at any time since recording began.

Table 1. Scoring system used to quantify population changes of UK breeding birds. The system is based on the terminology developed by Alexander & Lack (1944) and subsequently adopted by Parslow (1973). The terms 'decrease' and 'decline' were used interchangeably in both reviews, as well as here. Species which did not breed during a particular time period were noted as such. The minimum requirement to qualify as a breeding species within each time period was arbitrarily taken as a record of a single pair with eggs.

Score value	Positive score	Negative score
5	Huge increase. Spectacular increase.	Huge decrease. Spectacular decrease. Widespread decline . . . [to extinction or near-extinction].
4	Very marked increase. Very rapid increase.	Very marked decrease. Very rapid decrease. [Very] widespread decline . . . [though not to extinction]. Widespread decline . . . [to extinction in some areas].
3	Marked increase. General widespread increase. Great increase. Sharp increase.	Marked decrease. General widespread decrease. Great decrease. Sharp decrease.
2	Increasing. Steady increase. General increase. Continuing increase. Spreading.	Decreasing. Steady decrease. General decrease. Continuing decrease.
1	Probably increasing. Somewhat increasing. Small increase. Small (but steady) increase. Slowly increasing. Some evidence of an increase. Gradual increase. Increase with setbacks. Despite local declines continues to increase.	Probably decreasing. Somewhat decreasing. Small decrease. Small (but steady) decrease. Slowly decreasing. Some evidence of a decline. Gradual decline.
0	No marked change. No obvious trend. Little change. Fluctuates but no overall trend.	

Quantification of population changes

In this paper, we build on the ideas underlying Sharrock's (1974) review, though we have adopted a slightly different approach. We have attempted to quantify population changes in several time periods by using a simple scoring system built on the terminology used by Alexander & Lack and subsequently adopted (fortunately so for our purposes) by Parslow. Thus 'Huge and widespread decline' was ranked as -5, 'No evidence for change' was 0, and 'Spectacular increase' was +5. The scores we have used, and the way in which they relate to the terminology of Alexander & Lack and Parslow, are given in table 1 (see page 293).

The method adopted here differs from that used by Sharrock (1974) in a number of ways. First, all species that have bred since 1800 have been included. Secondly, we have attempted to score each species' trend in each time period into more categories (11 here, compared with Sharrock's four). Thirdly, these analyses update Sharrock by including a post-1970 period.

The time periods

We have split the historical data into four time periods: 1800-49, 1850-99, 1900-39 and 1940-69. Though these time periods are not of equal length, they reflect the time periods covered by the relevant reviews. A population-trend score was then allocated to each time period for each species. Where Alexander & Lack did not provide separate information for each of the first three time periods, the same value has been allocated to each. Where populations fluctuated *within* time periods, an approximate average value was allocated (e.g. an increase of +2 followed by a marked decline of -3 was rated as -1). We also took into account the proportion of the population which had changed, and downgraded the ranks by 1 where the change affected only part of the population. This was especially important for seabirds and widespread species. Thus, for some auks (Alcidae), a marked decline (-3) in southern English colonies but not elsewhere would have been ranked as -2, because most auk colonies occur outside these areas.

Wherever Parslow had improved upon or updated the information presented by Alexander & Lack for the period 1900-39, Parslow's data have been used.

A fifth time period has been added, 1970-95, and population-trend scores have been allocated by us to each species following the spirit of the two earlier reviews. The trend scores were based on both published and unpublished data from the existing monitoring schemes. The most widely used sources of information were from the Common Birds Census (e.g. Marchant *et al.* 1990, and more recent updates), the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (e.g. Ogilvie & RBBP 1995), the Seabird Colony Register (Lloyd *et al.* 1991) and the New Breeding Atlas (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Though we originally tried to allocate scores in a rigorous quantified manner (e.g. >90% decline = -5, >1000% increase = +5), it proved surprisingly difficult to do so for some species. For example, the White-tailed Eagle* has increased from zero to about ten pairs since 1970, and its increase is thus infinitely large and would score +5; this does not seem realistic as, by comparison with its historical population levels, it is only a modest increase (thus ranked +2). Scorings for 1970 to the present are, thus, subjective; but so were those for the earlier periods.

*Scientific names of all species are given in table 2.

Extinctions, colonisations and recolonisations

Species which began breeding during the 195-year period were allocated a score of 0 for the time periods in which they did not breed. Some species became extinct in the UK during the two centuries; amongst these, some remained extinct, whilst others subsequently recolonised or were reintroduced. For example, the Great Bittern declined to extinction extremely rapidly in the early 1800s, only to reappear as a breeder in the early twentieth century. During the period 1850-99, the Great Bittern thus did not breed as a consequence of its earlier extinction. Rather than score the period 1850-99 for this species as 0, we carried over the value from the previous time period (-5). We believe this makes sense, since otherwise the Great Bittern, which had declined rapidly to extinction just a few decades earlier, would score the same during 1850-99 as, for example, Temminck's Stint, which did not even begin breeding until a century later. A few other species which bred, declined to extinction and subsequently recolonised (Whooper Swan, Avocet, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Black Tern, Savi's Warbler and Brambling), were reintroduced (White-tailed Eagle) or remained extinct (Great Bustard and Great Auk) have been treated in the same manner.

Population trend during the period since 1800

A general population trend for the period 1800-1995 has been calculated for each species, taking the sum of the scores from all individual time periods. Though more sophisticated measures, taking into account differences in the length of each time period, could be developed, the data probably do not warrant such analyses. In addition, the same method has been used for each species and, despite its flaws, this makes the results comparable between species. The range of possible values across the entire period of 1800-1995 is -25 to +25.

Results

Table 2 documents trends for each period, species by species, and the general population trend for each across all periods. These vary from -19 for the Wryneck to +19 for the Tufted Duck. Table 3 documents the 20 species whose sum is -10 or less; these are the species that have shown the greatest declines over the period 1800-1995, though the -10 threshold is purely arbitrary. A comparison with the classification of Batten *et al.* (1990) shows that their threshold value of a 50% decline over 25 years for qualification as a declining breeding species on the British birds Red Data list pulled out only three of the species that have declined most since 1800 (Corn Crake, Red-backed Shrike and Great Bittern). In most cases, the reason for this was simply that the remaining species had not declined sufficiently (or in some cases had even increased, for example the Dartford Warbler) in recent years. Interestingly, three of the eight species that Batten *et al.* allocated to a 'Special Concern' category (i.e. which they had expected to qualify on the basis of population decline, but which did not do so for lack of data), Hen Harrier, Merlin and Black Grouse, are included in this listing, while a fourth, Barn Owl, comes close to inclusion.

Table 2. Historical population trends of UK breeding birds.

The manner of calculation of the population-trend scores is given in the text.

All scores are positive, except 0 and those preceded by a minus sign.

nb = did not breed in that time period and had not bred previously (effective score = 0).

nb* = did not breed in that time period, but had bred previously so allocated value from previous time period (see text for explanation).

Asterisked species are introduced, of domestic or non-native origin, with self-sustaining populations in the wild, as outlined in Gibbons *et al.* (1993).

Species	TIME PERIOD					Sum of periods
	1800-49	1850-99	1900-39	1940-69	1970-95	
Red-throated Diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>	-2	-2	1	1	1	-1
Black-throated Diver <i>Gavia arctica</i>	-1	-1	-1	1	-1	-3
Great Northern Diver <i>Gavia immer</i>	nb	nb	nb	0	nb	0
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	0	0	1	0	0	1
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	-3	3	3	2	1	6
Red-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	1	1
Slavonian Grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i>	nb	nb	1	1	1	3
Black-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	nb	nb	1	-3	1	-1
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	0	5	5	3	2	15
Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	-2	-2	0	0	-1	-5
European Storm-petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leach's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1
Northern Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	1	1	1	2	2	7
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	-1	-1	0	0	1	-1
Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	0	0	0	3	1	4
Great Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	-5	nb*	2	1	-4	-11
Little Bittern <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	0	0
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	0	0	0	0	2	2
Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	2	2	2	1	1	8
Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	nb	1	nb*	nb*	1	4
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	-2	-2	-1	0	2	-3
Canada Goose* <i>Branta canadensis</i>	3	3	3	2	3	14
Egyptian Goose* <i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	0	0	0	0	3	3
Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	2	2	2	1	1	8
Wood Duck* <i>Aix sponsa</i>	nb	1	1	1	2	5
Mandarin Duck* <i>Aix galericulata</i>	nb	nb	2	0	3	5
Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	4	4	4	-1	0	11
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	nb	2	2	2	3	9
Common Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	0	0	0	-1	-1	-2
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1
Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	nb	3	3	1	-1	6
Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i>	1	1	1	0	-1	2
Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	-1	5	5	1	-1	9
Red-crested Pochard* <i>Netta rufina</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	1	1
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	3	3	3	1	1	11
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	5	5	5	3	1	19
Greater Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	4	4	4	2	2	16
Long-tailed Duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	0	0	0	0	nb*	0
Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	nb	2	2	1	-3	2
Common Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	3	3
Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	4	4	4	1	0	13
Goosander <i>Mergus merganser</i>	nb	2	2	1	3	8
Ruddy Duck* <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	nb	nb	nb	1	5	6
Honey-buzzard <i>Pernis apivorus</i>	-2	-2	-2	0	1	-5
Red Kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>	-5	-5	-5	1	2	-12

Table 2 (continued).

Species	1800-49	1850-99	1900-39	1940-69	1970-95	Sum of periods
White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	-5	-5	-5	nb*	2	-18
Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	-5	-5	-5	0	3	-12
Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	-5	-5	-4	3	1	-10
Montagu's Harrier <i>Circus pygargus</i>	0	0	0	-1	-1	-2
Northern Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	0	0	0	1	4	5
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	-2	-2	-2	-1	3	-4
Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	-5	-5	3	1	1	-5
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	-4	-4	1	1	0	-6
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	-5	-5	-5	1	2	-12
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	0	0	0	-2	-2	-4
Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	-4	-4	-1	-3	2	-10
Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	-2	-2	0	0	3	-1
Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	-3	-3	-2	-1	3	-6
Red Grouse <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	0	0	0	-3	-1	-4
Ptarmigan <i>Lagopus mutus</i>	-4	-4	0	0	-1	-9
Black Grouse <i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	-4	-4	-4	1	-2	-13
Capercaillie <i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	1	3	-1	1	-3	1
Red-legged Partridge* <i>Alectoris rufa</i>	3	3	0	1	1	8
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>	0	0	-2	-3	-4	-9
Common Quail <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	-4	-4	-4	1	1	-10
Common Pheasant* <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	3	3	3	3	2	14
Golden Pheasant* <i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>	nb	nb	1	1	1	3
Lady Amherst's Pheasant* <i>Chrysolophus amherstiae</i>	nb	nb	1	1	-2	0
Water Rail <i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	0	0	0	0	-1	-1
Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i>	-3	-2	-2	1	-1	-7
Baillon's Crake <i>Porzana pusilla</i>	0	0	nb*	nb*	nb*	0
Corn Crake <i>Crex crex</i>	-4	-4	-4	-2	-4	-18
Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	2	2	2	0	-1	5
Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	2	2	2	0	0	6
Common Crane <i>Grus grus</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	1	1
Great Bustard <i>Otis tarda</i>	-3	nb*	nb*	nb*	nb*	-15
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	-2	-2	1	4	2	3
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	nb	nb	nb	0	0	0
Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avoetia</i>	-2	nb*	nb*	2	3	-1
Stone-curlew <i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	0	-2	1	-2	-3	-6
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	nb	nb	nb	4	2	6
Great Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	0	0	0	-3	1	-2
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	-2	-2	-2	-2	0	-8
Dotterel <i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	-3	-3	-3	-1	2	-8
European Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	-2	-2	-2	-2	-1	-9
Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	-3	-3	2	-1	-1	-6
Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	1	1
Purple Sandpiper <i>Calidris maritima</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	0	0
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-3
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	-3	nb*	nb*	1	1	-7
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	-2	2	2	-2	-1	-1
Woodcock <i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	3	3	0	1	0	7
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	-5	nb*	nb*	1	-1	-15
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	-3	-3	-3	2	2	-5
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	0	0	3	2	-1	4
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	-3	2	2	-1	-1	-1
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	0	2	0	-1	0	1
Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>	nb	nb	0	0	nb*	0
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	nb	nb	nb	1	0	1
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	0	0	0	-1	0	-1
Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularia</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	0	0

Table 2 (continued).

Species	1800-49	1850-99	1900-39	1940-69	1970-95	Sum of periods
Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	-3	-3	-2	1	-3	-10
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	-1	-1	1	2	3	4
Great Skua <i>Stercorarius skua</i>	-3	-3	3	3	2	2
Mediterranean Gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	1	1
Little Gull <i>Larus minutus</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	0	0
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	-3	-3	3	2	-1	-2
Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	4	4	4	1	1	14
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	2	2	1	1	1	7
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	2	2	2	3	-2	7
Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	-2	2	4	3	0	7
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	-2	-2	2	2	1	1
Gull-billed Tern <i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	nb	nb	nb	0	nb*	0
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	-2	-2	1	1	2	0
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	-3	0	3	1	-4	-3
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	-1	-1	1	-1	0	-2
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	0	0	0	0	-1	-1
Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	-2	-2	1	-2	1	-4
Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	-3	nb*	nb*	0	0	-9
Great Auk <i>Pinguinus impennis</i>	-3	nb*	nb*	nb*	nb*	-15
Common Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	0	0	-1	-1	2	0
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>	0	0	-1	-1	1	-1
Black Guillemot <i>Cephus grylle</i>	-2	-2	-2	1	2	-3
Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	-2	-2	-2	-1	1	-6
Pallas's Sandpiper <i>Syrhaptes paradoxus</i>	nb	0	nb*	nb*	nb*	0
Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	-3	-3	-3	0	-1	-10
Domesticated Rock Dove* <i>Columba livia</i>	?	?	?	?	3	3
Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>	3	3	2	-1	2	9
Wood Pigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	4	4	2	1	3	14
Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	nb	nb	nb	5	4	9
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	2	1	1	1	-2	3
Rose-ringed Parakeet* <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	5	5
Common Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	0	0	0	-1	0	-1
Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	-3	-3	0	-2	-1	-9
Snowy Owl <i>Nyctea scandiaca</i>	nb	nb	nb	0	0	0
Little Owl* <i>Athene noctua</i>	nb	3	3	-2	-1	3
Tawny Owl <i>Strix aluco</i>	-2	-2	2	0	-1	-3
Long-eared Owl <i>Asio otus</i>	0	0	0	-3	-1	-4
Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>	0	0	0	1	-1	0
European Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	0	0	-1	-3	-3	-7
Common Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	1	1	1	0	0	3
European Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>	nb	nb	0	0	nb*	0
Common Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	-2	-2	1	-1	-1	-5
Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	-4	-4	-4	-3	-4	-19
Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i>	0	0	1	3	1	5
Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>	-2	2	2	2	3	7
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	0	0	0	0	-1	-1
Wood Lark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	-3	-3	1	-2	-1	-8
Sky Lark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	0	0	0	0	-3	-3
Horned Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	0	0
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-4
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	-1	-1	-1	-1	-2	-6
House Martin <i>Delichon urbica</i>	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	-4
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	0	0	0	0	-1	-1
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	0	0	0	-1	0	-1
Rock Pipit <i>Anthus petrosus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2 (continued).

Species	1800-49	1850-99	1900-39	1940-69	1970-95	Sum of periods
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-5
Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	2	2	2	1	1	8
Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	0	0	-1	0	0	-1
Dipper <i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	0	0	0	0	-1	-1
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	0	0	0	0	2	2
Hedge Accentor <i>Prunella modularis</i>	0	0	0	1	-2	-1
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1
Rufous Nightingale <i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	-1	-1	-1	-2	-2	-7
Bluethroat <i>Luscinia svecica</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	0	0
Black Redstart <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	nb	nb	nb	1	1	2
Common Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	-3	-3	-3	1	-1	-9
Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-3
Common Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquata</i>	-1	-1	-1	-2	-1	-6
Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	-1	-1	-1	-3	-1	-7
Ring Ouzel <i>Turdus torquatus</i>	0	0	-2	-1	-2	-5
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	2	2	2	2	-1	7
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	nb	nb	0	1	1	2
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	0	0	0	-2	-2	-4
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	nb	nb	0	1	1	2
Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	4	2	2	1	-1	8
Cetti's Warbler <i>Cettia cetti</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	5	5
Grasshopper Warbler <i>Locustella naevia</i>	0	0	0	1	-2	-1
Savi's Warbler <i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	-3	nb*	nb*	1	0	-8
Moustached Warbler <i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>	nb	nb	nb	0	nb*	0
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	0	1	1	0	-1	1
Marsh Warbler <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	0	0	0	-3	-4	-7
Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1
Icterine Warbler <i>Hippolais icterina</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	0	0
Dartford Warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>	-4	-4	-4	-2	4	-10
Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>	1	1	1	0	2	5
Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>	0	1	1	-3	1	0
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	0	0	0	0	3	3
Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	0	1	1	0	0	2
Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	0	0	1	-1	-1	-1
Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>	2	2	2	2	-1	7
Firecrest <i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	nb	nb	nb	1	3	4
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	1	1	1	0	-3	0
Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	2	2	2	2	2	10
Bearded Tit <i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	-3	-3	1	2	2	-1
Long-tailed Tit <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marsh Tit <i>Parus palustris</i>	0	0	0	0	-1	-1
Willow Tit <i>Parus montanus</i>	0	0	0	-1	-1	-2
Crested Tit <i>Parus cristatus</i>	-1	-1	1	1	1	1
Coal Tit <i>Parus ater</i>	1	1	1	1	2	6
Blue Tit <i>Parus caeruleus</i>	1	1	1	0	1	4
Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>	1	1	1	0	1	4
European Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>	2	2	2	1	2	9
Eurasian Treecreeper <i>Certhia familiaris</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	0	0	0	1	2	3
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	-3	-3	-3	-4	-5	-18
Eurasian Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	-2	-2	1	2	1	0
Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>	-2	-2	2	1	3	2
Red-billed Chough <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	-2	-2	-2	0	1	-5
Eurasian Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>	2	2	2	2	3	11

Table 2 (continued).

Species	1800-49	1850-99	1900-39	1940-69	1970-95	Sum of periods
Rook <i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	1	1	1	2	1	6
'Black' Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone corone</i>	0	0	0	4	3	7
'Hooded' Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	-2	-2	-2	0	0	-6
Common Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>	-3	-2	2	1	-1	-3
Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	-3	2	2	1	-2	0
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	3	3	-2	1	-1	4
Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>	0	0	0	3	-4	-1
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	1	1	1	-1	2	4
Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	nb	nb	0	nb*	1	1
European Serin <i>Serinus serinus</i>	nb	nb	nb	0	0	0
Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>	1	1	1	1	-1	3
Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	-5	-5	3	1	-1	-7
Siskin <i>Carduelis spinus</i>	0	0	0	1	3	4
Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	-2	-2	1	-1	-3	-7
Twite <i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	-3	-3	-3	-1	0	-10
Common Redpoll <i>Carduelis flammea</i>	2	2	2	3	-1	8
Common Crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	3	3	3	1	3	13
Scottish Crossbill <i>Loxia scotica</i>	?	?	?	?	0	0
Parrot Crossbill <i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	0	0
Common Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	1	1
Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	1	1	1	3	-2	4
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	1	2	2	0	-2	3
Lapland Longspur <i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	nb	nb	nb	nb	0	0
Snow Bunting <i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	0	0	-1	-1	2	0
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	0	0	0	-1	-1	-2
Cirl Bunting <i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	1	2	1	-1	-3	0
Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	0	0	0	1	-2	-1
Corn Bunting <i>Miliaria calandra</i>	-3	-3	-3	-4	-4	-17

Table 4 documents the 18 species whose populations have increased most since 1800 (those whose sum was arbitrarily taken as +9 or more); a surprising number of these species (seven) are ducks. Several other species (Ruddy Duck, Collared Dove, Rose-ringed Parakeet and Cetti's Warbler) that have shown great population expansions recently are not included in the top 18 simply because they began breeding here only during this century.

Table 5 shows changes in the number of breeding bird species recorded in the UK since 1800, and the changing status of three separate groupings of birds: all species, birds of prey, and farmland birds. A total of 240 species of birds has bred in Britain since 1800, although 13 of these are naturalised species now with self-sustaining populations. The total number of species breeding in the UK has increased markedly since 1800, with 36 more species breeding in 1970-95 than in 1800-49, a 19% increase. This is despite the smaller number of years in the most recent time period. Most of this increase has occurred since 1940, as shown by Sharrock (1974). A quarter of this increase (nine species) is as a consequence of introductions (unintentional or otherwise), while the rest (27) is apparently due to the balance between natural colonisation and extinction being markedly in favour of colonisation. Table 5 also shows that, during the nineteenth century, the mean population-trend score for birds of prey was large and negative, while during the latter part of the twentieth century this had switched to a small positive value. For farmland birds, however, a mean score of just above zero at the beginning of the twentieth century has turned to a fairly large negative value in recent years.

Table 3. UK breeding species that have undergone the greatest population declines since 1800.

Only species whose sum of scores across all time periods was less than or equal to -10 are shown. See legend to table 1 for all other details. The 'RDB category' column lists the breeding categories within which each species qualified in the British birds Red Data list (Batten *et al.* 1990). BD = declining breeder; BR = rare breeder; BL = localised breeder; BI = breeds in internationally important numbers; SC = special category.

Species	1800-49	1850-99	1900-39	1940-69	1970-95	Sum of periods	RDB category
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	-4	-4	-4	-3	-4	-19	BR
White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	-5	-5	-5	nb*	2	-18	BR
Corn Crake <i>Crex crex</i>	-4	-4	-4	-2	-4	-18	BD
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	-3	-3	-3	-4	-5	-18	BD, BR
Corn Bunting <i>Miliaria calandra</i>	-3	-3	-3	-4	-4	-17	
Great Bustard <i>Otis tarda</i>	-3	nb*	nb*	nb*	nb*	-15	
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	-5	nb*	nb*	1	-1	-15	BR, BL
Great Auk <i>Pinguinus impennis</i>	-3	nb*	nb*	nb*	nb*	-15	
Black Grouse <i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	-4	-4	-4	1	-2	-13	SC
Red Kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>	-5	-5	-5	1	2	-12	BR
Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	-5	-5	-5	0	3	-12	BR
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	-5	-5	-5	1	2	-12	BR
Great Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	-5	nb*	2	1	-4	-11	BD, BR, BL
Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	-5	-5	-4	3	1	-10	SC
Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	-4	-4	-1	-3	2	-10	SC
Common Quail <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	-4	-4	-4	1	1	-10	BR
Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	-3	-3	-2	1	-3	-10	BR, BL
Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	-3	-3	-3	0	-1	-10	
Dartford Warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>	-4	-4	-4	-2	4	-10	BR, BL
Twite <i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	-3	-3	-3	-1	0	-10	BI

Table 4. UK breeding species that have undergone the greatest population increases since 1800.

Only species whose sum of scores across all time periods was equal to or greater than 9 are shown. See legend to table 1 for all other details.

Species	1800-49	1850-99	1900-39	1940-69	1970-95	Sum of periods
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	5	5	5	3	1	19
Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	4	4	4	2	2	16
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	0	5	5	3	2	15
Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	3	3	3	2	3	14
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	3	3	3	3	2	14
Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	4	4	4	1	1	14
Wood Pigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	4	4	2	1	3	14
Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	4	4	4	1	0	13
Common Crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	3	3	3	1	3	13
Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	4	4	4	-1	0	11
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	3	3	3	1	1	11
Eurasian Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>	2	2	2	2	3	11
Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	2	2	2	2	2	10
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	nb	2	2	2	3	9
Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	-1	5	5	1	-1	9
Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>	3	3	2	-1	2	9
Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	nb	nb	nb	5	4	9
European Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>	2	2	2	1	2	9

Table 5. Summary of number of breeding species and across-species population trends in the UK within each time period.

The mean score for each grouping in each period has been calculated as follows: (Total score for breeding species+Carried-over score from earlier extinctions) ÷ (Total number of breeding species+Number of species with carried-over score). Introduced species are as defined in table 2. Farmland species are as defined in Gibbons *et al.* (1993).

	1800-49	1850-99	1900-39	1940-69	1970-95	1800-1995
Total number of indigenous breeding species (A)	190	188	193	207	217	227
Total number of introduced breeding species (B)	4	6	9	10	13	13
Total number of breeding species ((A) + (B))	194	194	202	217	230	240
Total score for all breeding species	-123	-61	42	46	48	-
Mean score for all breeding species	-0.63	-0.31	0.21	0.21	0.21	-
Total number of breeding species of birds of prey (excl. owls)	15	15	15	14	15	15
Total score for all breeding species of birds of prey (excl. owls)	-47	-47	-27	-5	23	-
Mean score for all breeding species of birds of prey (excl. owls)	-3.13	-3.13	-1.8	-0.33	1.53	-
Total number of breeding farmland species	27	28	28	28	28	28
Total score for all breeding farmland species	-13	-6	9	-12	-29	-
Mean score for all breeding farmland species	-0.46	-0.21	0.32	-0.43	-1.04	-

Discussion

The scoring method

We have attempted to quantify qualitative descriptions of changes in status of UK breeding birds since 1800. As the scoring method we have adopted is not without its faults, we discuss the most important of these before considering the conservation implications of the results.

We have placed each species' trend in each time period into one of 11 categories, from -5, through 0 to +5. We believe that such a level of resolution is justified, despite the somewhat coarse quality of the data, but only because of the way it has been done (i.e. by allocating scores to the terminology of Alexander & Lack and Parslow). We could have chosen to ignore their terminology and come to our own assessment of the likely trend of each species in each time period. We feel, however, that this would have been even more subjective than the method we have adopted. Our scoring system simply replaces Alexander & Lack's and Parslow's words with numbers. Much of the subjectivity thus lies with those reviewers' assessments, particularly as it was reasonably straightforward to allocate scores to terms in a sensible manner (see table 1).

Despite this, although we tried to be rigorous in allocating scores for individual species, it was impossible to avoid some subjectivity on our own part as well, and it is likely that different analysts would come to subtly different conclusions for particular species in particular time periods. Owing to these two sources of subjectivity (that of the earlier reviewers and that of ourselves), these assessments can be considered only as semi-quantitative. Nevertheless, we feel that the errors introduced will be small when compared with each species' general population trend, thus allowing us to compare population trends between species reasonably

well, at least to the extent that we have been able to determine which species' populations have changed most over the 196-year period.

Our method does not allow a between-species comparison of numerical losses (or gains) in each time period. Thus, for example, during 1800-49 the number of pairs of breeding White-tailed Eagles lost from the UK would have been considerably less than the number of Corn Crakes lost at the same time. Despite this, the latter species has been allocated a smaller negative score than the former (-4 compared with -5). This is because the scores represent only probable proportionate losses (or gains) within time periods. We do not see this as a failing in the method, however, as species naturally live at different population levels and, from a conservation perspective, proportionate changes are more important than numerical ones.

The manner in which we have scored periods during which a species was extinct is perhaps the most contentious aspect of the methods. In principle, this could have been done in a number of ways: by scoring periods of extinction as 0; by carrying over the species' last extant score to its first extinct period only; or by carrying it over to all subsequent extinct periods, as we have done here. We have argued in the section 'Methods' why we believe that it is invalid to score periods of extinction as 0 and can see no logical reason for arbitrarily carrying scores over for only a single period. In practice, whether or not the score is carried over for one or many periods makes little difference to the final rankings of currently extant species. The only change to table 3, for example, would be that Black-tailed Godwit would fall off if scores were carried over for only a single period. We do, however, recognise that this particular problem is difficult to resolve and welcome alternative suggestions.

Finally, we chose to sum each individual time period to give a general trend for each species for the entire 196-year period. Theoretically, this may not yield a reliable estimate of a species' actual population trend over that period. For example, a species could have undergone a widespread decline in each of the four time periods up to 1969 and then recovered completely to its 1800 population level in the most recent time period. Though the species' population size would be the same in 1995 as in 1800, it would still have a large negative score. In practice, we think it unlikely that such an extreme example actually applies for any species. Though one potential candidate might be the Dartford Warbler, as its numbers have increased four-fold in the last decade, its distribution is still much reduced compared with that in the last century (Gibbons & Wotton 1996). Despite these problems, we feel that our method of summing across time periods is valuable for a number of reasons. First, it is simple. Secondly, it is comparable among all species. Thirdly, in the absence of population estimates for all species from 1800, we can think of no other way of estimating each species' trend during 1800-1995.

Implications for conservation priorities

We feel that this review has potential implications for assigning conservation priorities. Only species whose breeding populations declined by more than 50% over a 25-year period were included as declining breeders in the British birds Red Data list (Batten *et al.* 1990). Table 3 shows that only three out of the 20 species

which have declined most since 1800 fulfil the criteria of Batten *et al.* Eleven out of the same 20 species were classified by them as rare breeders (fewer than 300 breeding pairs). Our analysis suggests that these species may be rare as a consequence of widespread population decline during the last two centuries. In a recent review of the 'red listing' procedure, Avery *et al.* (1995) have suggested that, all other things being equal, species that are merely rare are not of such conservation concern as those that are in steep decline. We concur with this view, but are concerned that species which have undergone large historical declines have been overlooked compared with those that have declined recently, simply because they have declined over a longer time period during which there has been no continual monitoring. We recommend that most of the species listed in table 3 should be considered for addition to the list of declining breeders in any future review of the British birds Red Data list. The exceptions are the Rock Dove, because its genuinely wild population is now virtually inseparable from its feral population, which has increased markedly in recent years; the Great Bustard, which has been extinct in the UK for nearly 170 years; and the Great Auk, which is globally extinct.

Changes in species richness

The increase in number of indigenous species breeding in Britain since 1800 has been noted before (Sharrock 1974). The cause of the increase is, however, uncertain. Sharrock suggested that this was largely due to improved species-protection and site-protection, and we agree that for some species this is probably true. Attitudes towards conservation have changed so much over the last two centuries that the likelihood of a colonist being successful has improved markedly. Individuals of colonising species that would once have been shot or had their nests robbed are now afforded a much greater degree of protection. For some of the rarer colonists, the apparent increase is probably also due in part to the increasing numbers of observers. The increase in number of indigenous species (27 over 20 decades) is, however, probably too great to be explained by these factors alone.

Changes in status of taxonomic and ecological groupings

Although we have not attempted to examine status changes of different ecological or taxonomic groupings of birds in any great detail, we have presented two examples which show how the data can be used to highlight particular issues. The data confirm that the massive declines of birds of prey during the last century, largely a consequence of extensive persecution (e.g. Newton 1979; Cadbury 1980), have now been reversed and that most raptor populations are now increasing, even though most remain well below their former levels. The data also add further support to concerns about declining farmland birds (e.g. Marchant *et al.* 1990; Gibbons *et al.* 1993; Tucker & Heath 1994; Fuller *et al.* 1995).

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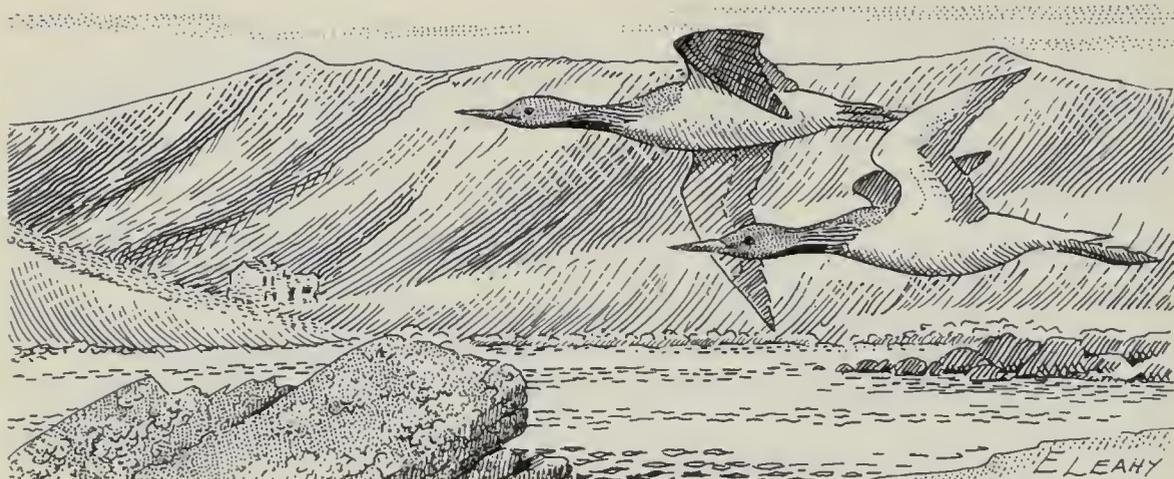
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LOOKING BACK

One hundred years ago: 'ORNITHOLOGICAL NOTES FROM ROMNEY MARSH AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD. BY BOYD ALEXANDER. "Times are not as they were" is a saying that might well be applied to this district as regards the numerical distribution of species of birds now breeding there, as compared with formerly. Disturbing influences of one kind and another have come about which have sadly thinned their number. Indeed, in the case of the Kentish Plover [*Charadrius alexandrinus*] and Thickknee [Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*], it well nigh approaches extinction, since the "Lydd Beach," the breeding resort of these species and of several others, has long been threatened . . . The direct causes may be attributed to the increased firing of both artillery and small arms during the height of the breeding season, and also to the Dungeness railway, which has opened out a considerable portion of it.' (*Zoologist* Third series 20: 246-247, July 1896)



Breeding success of raft-nesting divers in Scotland

T. D. H. Merrie

ABSTRACT A study in 1972-78 showed that Red-throated *Gavia stellata* and Black-throated Divers *G. arctica* nesting in an area of south Argyll, Scotland, where there was a shortage of island nest sites, suffered very low breeding success compared with other parts of Scotland. During 1976-80, eight artificial floating nest rafts were installed on lochs, and by 1993 breeding success had improved markedly, the productivity of Red-throated Divers being raised above the long-term average for Scotland. Nest rafts in sheltered locations were more successful and lasted longer.

During 1972-78, a study of the distribution and breeding success of Red-throated *Gavia stellata* and Black-throated Divers *G. arctica* in many areas of Scotland showed that the density of pairs was related to the area of suitable fishing water within a range of about 8 km of the nest site (Merrie 1978). Both species had a greater chance of success if they nested on an island (Merrie 1979), but fluctuating water levels could still cause extensive flooding of nests. A total of 114 summering pairs of Red-throated Divers produced an average of 0.33 young per pair, the average for 37 summering pairs of Black-throated Divers being 0.21.

In south Argyll, there was a shortage of island nest sites in an area with a regular population of four to six pairs of Red-throated and two of Black-throated Divers; both species suffered very low breeding success compared with other parts of Scotland. In 1976, two artificial floating nest rafts were installed at lochs in this area (Merrie 1979), although one of these disintegrated after two years. In 1979, with sponsorship from *BP Petroleum Development Ltd*, the lost raft was replaced and six more were installed, making a total of eight rafts, all on lochs where previous breeding attempts had been noted. In most cases, they were

rapidly accepted, usually within the first season, by both species.

These Argyll populations have been monitored since then (see below).

Study methods

All lochs with rafts were visited, and, where time permitted, other lochs were checked for signs of divers. Maintenance of rafts, when necessary, was done outside the breeding season. For some years, complementary information was provided by the RSPB.

Pairs of divers without young by the end of the third week of July were presumed to have failed. They would have insufficient time left to rear young.

Results

During 1973-93, Red-throated Divers in the study area produced 31 young from 70 pair-years, data being obtained in 18 of the 21 years (table 1). Over this period, the population probably declined from an average of 4.4 pairs in the first half to an average of 3.9 in the second half.

Table 1. Breeding success at six territories of Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* and two of Black-throated Divers *G. arctica* in study area in south Argyll, Scotland, 1973-93. Figures are for all years combined (data for three years unavailable).

	PAIRS		Rafts available	SITES USED			YOUNG RAISED		
	Summering	Nesting		Island	Shore	Raft	Island	Shore	Raft
Red-throated	70	53	83	3	12	40	2	0	29
Black-throated	16	6	27	0	0	6	0	0	2

In 1976-93, a total of 48 pairs of Red-throated Divers summered at lochs with rafts: 40 nested on rafts, two on the shore, and six did not nest; these 48 pairs produced 29 young, an average of 0.60 per summering pair. The remaining 22 summering pairs, at lochs without rafts, produced only two chicks, both from an island site. Such productivity must be taken as typical of south Argyll.

Although there was a minimum of 12 pair-years for Black-throated Divers, only six nests were discovered, all on the same raft.

Thus, in the period since rafts were installed, a total of 48 nesting attempts was made at such lochs, and only twice was the raft not used. During the same period, five attempts were made on the shore or island of other lochs; there was no evidence that the presence of a raft attracted a diver from a loch without a raft. Of the 46 known raft nests, young were successfully reared to at least the half-grown stage (successful fledging is then almost certain) from 24 nests.

Of the five (or six?) different pairs of Red-throated Divers involved over the study period, one pair alone produced 18 of the 29 young from rafts in 15 recorded attempts (six broods of one, six of two, and three failures). The four other pairs using rafts produced, respectively, six young (from eight attempts), four (from eight), one (from five) and no young (from four attempts). No adults were marked, but, on the basis of grouping of years of proved occupancy and breeding success, it can be surmised that one pair was probably resident for the full 18 years since the raft was installed, and that at three other sites there was a single change of pair in the same period.

The success of an artificial raft depends greatly on its location and little on its condition. Rafts in sheltered water less than 4 m deep produced young even when almost bare of vegetation, or when damaged so that they swung widely on a single anchor, or when reduced to a mere fragment. No divers nested on rafts in exposed situations (table 2), although Common Gulls *Larus canus* nested twice on exposed rafts and once on a moderately exposed one.

Table 2. Success rate of raft-nesting Red-throated *Gavia stellata* and Black-throated Divers *G. arctica* in relation to exposure, south Argyll, Scotland, 1976-93. Exposure of raft to wind and waves is rated on an arbitrary scale of 1 to 4: 1 = sheltered, 2 = moderately sheltered, 3 = moderately exposed, 4 = exposed.

Exposure rating	No. rafts	NEST ATTEMPTS		YOUNG PRODUCED	
		Red-throated	Black-throated	Red-throated	Black-throated
1	2	16	6	18	2
2	2	12	0	3	0
3	2	10	0	4	0
4	2	0	0	0	0

Discussion

Divers seem to be attracted to traditional nesting lochs (e.g. Okill & Wanless 1990; Gomersall 1986), and the presence of artificial nest sites at other waters is unlikely to lure them away. In south Argyll, the breeding population was not increased simply by the provision of a greater number of nest sites, as has occurred with many other species. It would have been interesting, however, had greater resources and effort been available, to have tested the response to a superfluity of nest rafts.

If raft-nesting produced a surplus of young, and if the productivity of divers in the surrounding country remained at the 1973-78 level (there were no reasons to expect an increase), then this surplus would merely have helped to redress the poor productivity at nearby lochs. Okill & Wanless (1990) found that young Red-throated Divers often returned to the vicinity of their natal lochs.

Black-throated Divers have shown a particularly low productivity. Provision of rafts did not improve on the figure of 0.21 young per summering pair, with only two young from 15 pairs (0.13), but for most of the study period only one pair was involved. A later and much more extensive RSPB project, however, showed that Black-throated Divers breeding on rafts produced about 50% more young than those on natural sites (*Black-throated Diver Raft Project Newsletters* 1993, 1994). The RSPB figures do not include summering pairs which do not breed, and it is most likely that the presence of rafts has induced more such pairs to breed; if this is so, the actual increase in productivity will be greater than 50%.

How do the results from the south Argyll project compare with natural productivity of stable populations, and would further nest-raft provision help to reverse a declining population trend? Cramp & Simmons (1977) quote figures which equate to 0.36 young per nesting pair in Shetland and 0.40 young per nesting pair in Finland. An extensive review of data on Red-throated Divers in Shetland from 1918 to 1982 (Gomersall 1986) showed an average productivity of 0.45 young per breeding pair, with little significant variation or trend. Since this is from a sample of over 1,100 pairs, and since Shetland holds the majority

of Scotland's breeding Red-throated Divers (Okill & Wanless 1990), 0.45 young per breeding pair must be regarded as sufficient to maintain a stable population if mortality levels and causes remain similar to those of the past 70 years.

For Red-throated Diver, it may be interesting to compare the above results with data supplied by the RSPB from surveys undertaken in 1988 in south Argyll (excluding the present study area) and in 1989 on Coll, in both cases at lochs without rafts, and with the results for 1980-92 from a single raft installed in a loch in Bute. Of 30 pairs breeding in south Argyll, eight were successful and produced eight young (= 0.27 per breeding pair); on Coll, 14 pairs summered, eight bred, and five of these were successful, producing six young (= 0.42 per summering pair, 0.75 per breeding pair). The raft on Bute produced a total of 13 summering pairs; 11 bred, and nine of these produced 11 young (= 0.85 per summering pair, 1.0 per breeding pair) (I. Hopkins *in litt.*).

The Argyll raft project has resulted in increases for Red-throated Divers: from 0.45 young per breeding pair, or about 0.35 per summering pair, to 0.75 and 0.63 respectively. This is consistent with the 50% or more increase noted for Black-throated Divers by the RSPB. In the study area, however, only two young Red-throated Divers resulted from 13 breeding attempts in natural sites, both islands.

The project has raised the productivity of a small population of Red-throated Divers from a level insufficient to maintain stability to one which may even provide a small surplus for recruitment elsewhere. There appears, however, to have been a decrease in number of breeding pairs. The project is probably not sufficiently extensive to affect the general picture of the mainland Argyll population, where natural sites are similar to those in the study area. Using Gomersall's (1986) productivity of 0.45 young per breeding pair, and assuming that 75% of summering pairs breed, it can be calculated that about 45% of all summering pairs in such a large regional population would need to be provided with nest rafts to bring total productivity up to the long-term Shetland norm.

Acknowledgments

It is not possible to name here all the people who have helped with this project. Among the main contributors are Major W. Warde-Aldam and E. McLean of Ederline Estate and S. Mawle of the Forestry Commission for access and support; R. L. Gooch, S. Howe and Dr D. R. Waugh for helping to launch the rafts; BP Petroleum Development Ltd and the British Trust for Ornithology for sponsorship; members of the Stirling, Aberdeen and Clyde branches of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club; and, not least, my wife and family for their forbearance, and especially my son Arend for maintenance work on rafts. Comparative information was kindly provided by staff of the RSPB, David Okill and Ian Hopkins. Contributors to the preliminary survey include S. M. D. Alexander, R. W. Burton, P. Corkhill, Dr R. W. Furness, A. G. Gordon, Dr P. Hopkins, R. L. McMillan, A. G. Mitchell, T. Paterson and J. H. Simpson.

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BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR

Canon

In 1996, its nineteenth year, and for the second year in succession, this competition was again sponsored by *Canon (UK) Ltd.*

It is remarkable that, year after year, we continue to see the same photographers reaching the short-list, though it is reassuring that there is also a steady trickle of new recruits to the top rankings.

When we judge the competition, we scan quickly through all the entries to get a 'feel' for the year's collection. Subsequently, in further projection runs, we gradually eliminate transparencies until a manageable short-list is produced on which we can vote. At no time, until the judging is over, do we have an inkling of the author of any particular entry, and such is the varied nature of chance and opportunity that photographers can rarely be identified by a particular style or approach. It is interesting, too, that during discussion, after the event is over, it usually transpires that none of the judges had finally settled on his winning photograph until forming the final order from the short-list. This, perhaps, is testimony to the very high general standard of the entries. It should also be stressed that the members of the judging panel do not try to manipulate an outright winner by discussion among themselves. Everyone makes his own private decision of their individual order of merit, and the composite scores determine the winner. Since, in the main, the same photographers figure in the short-list year after year, it is clear that luck is not the primary element in producing the BPY winners. If it is, the luck is made by application, skill, knowledge, and a lot of time spent 'out there'.

The very high standard of photographs submitted this year is indicated by the fact that the first selection of possible winners stood at 50 entries. Even after further severe pruning and the rejection of some superb shots, we were unable to reduce the final short-list below 25 submissions (Appendix 1).

The aim of the competition, however, is to find the single top Bird Photograph of the Year, exhibiting not only the essential technical excellence, but also originality, scientific interest, aesthetic appeal and artistic composition. After the independent vote, the prize-winners were:

- 1st **Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis* (plate 120) Roger Tidman, Norfolk
- 2nd **Red Grouse** *Lagopus lagopus* (plate 121) Wayne Richardson, Cleveland
- 3rd **Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* (plate 122, on page 313) Tony Hamblin, Warwickshire

Five photographers (Richard Brooks, Dr Mark Hamblin, Tony Hamblin, Alan Petty and Roger Tidman) had all three of their entries still surviving after the first weeding process, and eight others still had two retained (Alan Barnes, Neil Bowman, Dr Kevin Carlson, Peter Coe, Dr Edmund Fellowes, Bob Glover, Dr Henry J. Lehto and Ray Tipper). A few familiar names there, revealing consistently top-class work. All three of Alan Petty's transparencies were still in the reckoning in the final short-list of 25, as were two each by Neil Bowman, Dr Mark Hamblin and Tony Hamblin.



Plate 120. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1996. Juvenile Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*, Spain, July 1995 (Canon EOS 10; Canon 300 mm + 2× converter; 1/250th, f.8; Kodachrome 645 (Roger Tidman)

Plate 121. SECOND PRIZE: Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, North Yorkshire, April 1995 (Nikon F801; Sigma 400 mm APO; 1/500th, f.5.6; Fuji Velvia) (Wayne Richardson)



After the judging was over, we were delighted to find that this year's winning photographer was a previous Photographic Consultant to *BB*: Roger Tidman. He described the circumstances surrounding his Green Woodpecker photograph (plate 120) as follows: 'I constructed two pools in Spain during 1995—a year of exceptional drought there—and was lucky enough to have a juvenile Green Woodpecker come down to bathe on a few occasions. This particular time, it suddenly "started" for no apparent reason, but, on seeing the exposed film, I noticed a wasp or two which might have been responsible. Either way, I thought that the wasps added a little extra interest.' How right he was! His winning picture was a just reward for creating an opportunity which allowed Lady Luck to smile. The judges suggested that, if he had just held his fire for a moment longer, the bird would have licked the unfortunate wasp out of the air with its tongue, just like a chameleon.

The tremendous picture of a male Red Grouse (plate 121), 'shot' by Wayne Richardson, captures both the atmosphere of the moor and the jizz of the flying bird superbly—no mean feat. Wayne's comments were: 'This bird's territory straddled a section of moorland road in the North York Moors and it was conspicuous throughout that month. The female was exceptionally tame and this may account for the boldness of the cock gamebird.' A situation well observed and an opportunity superbly taken. The photographic judges could not recall a better photograph of a flying Red Grouse.

We had several Common Buzzards to look at among this year's entries, but the one in plate 122 was clearly the best. Again, it was not the product of a chance encounter by Tony Hamblin, another of those names which always figures high in the listings. Tony made the following remarks: 'During a long wet session in a hide on a Welsh hillside, this Buzzard came down to a Rabbit bait. Others were circling overhead and it mantled the Rabbit, showing aggression to the other Buzzards.'

Hot on father's heels, Dr Mark Hamblin achieved a double with his Common Buzzard (plate 123) and a Green Woodpecker in fourth and fifth places. His notes concerning the Buzzard are particularly interesting: 'I was staking out Rabbit carcasses as bait for the Buzzards, which were coming to feed in relatively high numbers. At first, I was simply obtaining shots of the birds feeding on the ground, using a 300-mm lens. However, on my last session in the hide, I thought I would attempt to obtain a much different image using a wide-angle lens. In the previous sessions, the Buzzards seemed to take no notice of the hide or of the noise of the camera, but I was unsure how they would react with a camera placed only two feet away! The camera and lens were mounted in a soundproof box and placed on a bean bag resting on the ground. I placed the Rabbit carcass centrally in the frame as I was unable to predict which side the Buzzard would feed. Focusing was also problematic and so I focused about one inch in front of the Rabbit and selected an aperture of F11 to achieve sufficient depth of field to cover the whole bird. It was also necessary to compensate the exposure for the inclusion of the sky in the picture since this would "fool" the camera's meter and under-expose the Buzzard. Finally, I switched the camera to auto-exposure and secured it in place. I entered the hide at 1.30 p.m. and it wasn't until 4.00 p.m. that a Buzzard landed about ten feet from the Rabbit carcass. Very gingerly it moved in and finally began to feed. I fired the remote control, which caused the



Plate 122. **THIRD PRIZE:** Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Dyfed, November 1995 (Canon T90; Canon 300 mm; 1/125th, f.4; Fuji Sensia 100) (*Tony Hamblin*)

Plate 123. **FOURTH:** Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Dyfed, September 1995 (Olympus OM2n; Zuiko 28 mm; auto, f.11; Fuji Sensia 100) (*Mark Hamblin*)



Buzzard to jump back a couple of feet. It returned quickly, taking no further notice of the noise. However, the sun had gone in and, although I took half a roll of film, these shots were too dull. Suddenly, the sun broke through the storm clouds and lit up the bird perfectly. I fired off the remaining fifteen shots on the film, of which this is my favourite.' Yet again, a fine result which is the product of work, patience and planning.

The three prize-winners and 18 runners-up and 12 other short-listed photographers will all be invited to attend the award presentations to be held in London in early July.

An analysis of the top winning entries shows that four out of the top six were taken with *Canon* cameras and through lenses with focal-length combinations from 28 mm to 700 mm. The predominating film stocks were a variety of *Fuji* products.

As always, the judges felt privileged to adjudicate on such a very high standard of entry and are looking forward to seeing next year's photographs.

DON SMITH, RICHARD CHANDLER, ROBIN CHITTENDEN, ROB HUME and J. T. R. SHARROCK

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Appendix 1. The top 25 entries.

- | | | |
|--------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1st | Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i> | Roger Tidman (Norfolk) |
| 2nd | Red Grouse <i>Lagopus lagopus</i> | Wayne Richardson (Cleveland) |
| 3rd | Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i> | Tony Hamblin (Warwickshire) |
| 4th | Common Buzzard | Dr Mark Hamblin (South Yorkshire) |
| 5th | Green Woodpecker | Dr Mark Hamblin |
| 6th | Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> | Mike Wilkes (Worcestershire) |
| 7th | Ptarmigan <i>L. mutus</i> | David Tipling (Kent) |
| 8th = | Mute Swans <i>Cygnus olor</i> | Bob Glover (Essex) |
| 8th = | White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> | Henry Lehto (Finland) |
| 8th = | Red Kite <i>Milvus milvus</i> | Howard Nicholls (Mid Glamorgan) |
| 11th | Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i> | Richard Brooks (Norfolk) |
| 12th | Common Buzzard | Mike Lane (West Midlands) |
| 13th | Grasshopper Warbler <i>Locustella naevia</i> | Peter Coe (Dorset) |
| 14th | Indian Roller <i>Coracias benghalensis</i> | Ray Tipper (East Sussex) |
| 15th | Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> | Alan Barnes (Kent) |
| 16th | Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> | Alan Petty (Kent) |
| 17th = | Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i> | Neil Bowman (Norfolk) |
| 17th = | Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> | Chris Knights (Norfolk) |
| 19th | Siskin <i>Carduelis spinus</i> | Tim Loseby (Kent) |
| 20th | Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> | Tony Hamblin |
| 21st | King Eider <i>Somateria spectabilis</i> | Dr Harry J. Lehto (Finland) |
| 22nd | Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i> | Eric Harvey (West Midlands) |
| 23rd | Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i> | Alan Petty |
| 24th | Water Rail <i>Rallus aquaticus</i> | Neil Bowman |
| 25th | Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> | Alan Petty |

Entries from the following photographers were also short-listed: Alan Barnes, Klaus Bjerre, Richard Brooks (2), Dr Kevin Carlson (2), A. P. Clarke, Peter Coe, Jens Eriksen, Dr Edmund Fellowes (2), Dr Peter Gasson, Bob Glover, Dr Mark Hamblin, Tony Hamblin, Paul Hopkins, E. Janes, Dr Harry J. Lehto, John Knight, Dave Robinson, Hans Schouten, G. P. Sutton, Roger Tidman (2), and Ray Tipper.



NOTES

Common Pheasant and Song Thrush feeding on roots of Lords-and-Ladies

At about 16.00 GMT on 16th February 1992, near West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* digging with its bill into a hedge-bank in a field; the thrush pulled out several root fragments of Lords-and-Ladies *Arum maculatum*, swallowed these, and flew off. The behaviour lasted about two minutes. At about 16.30 GMT on 25th February, in the same field, I saw a male Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* scratching with its feet and digging around with its bill near a group of newly emerged Lords-and-Ladies plants on a bank; again, portions of the tuberous roots were tweaked out and eaten. On several further occasions during February 1992, I saw a male Common Pheasant digging holes in my garden borders near clumps of the large Italian Lords-and-Ladies *A. italicum*, and then seizing and swallowing big pieces of the roots. Judging from the numbers of holes dug and of plants destroyed, probably more than one Pheasant was involved. So far, I have not seen a female Pheasant taking a similar diet.

I can find no reference in *BWP* to birds eating Lords-and-Ladies roots. In *The Natural History of Selborne* (1789), however, Gilbert White (letter XV to Thomas Pennant) described how the root of this plant was often scratched out and eaten in snowy weather; his observations showed that 'the thrush kind' was concerned, although individual bird species were not mentioned. No doubt Lords-and-Ladies roots and tubers are a valuable energy source, especially in winter, so perhaps it is surprising that they are not exploited more often by birds. While the leaves and shoots of the plant are unpleasant and acrid, certainly to Man, the tubers contain starch and have, in the past, been used as a substitute for arrowroot (Portland sago) and also for starching clothes in laundry work.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT It is interesting to note that the tubers of Lords-and-Ladies are poisonous, but the toxins, mainly oxalic acid, are neutralised by boiling, hence their use as arrowroot. Useful information on this is contained in the Collins' New Naturalist title *Lords and Ladies* (C. T. Prime, 1960).

Responses of Common Redshanks to attacks by Peregrine Falcons

On 20th February 1991, on the Mersey Estuary, Cheshire/Merseyside, a rapid scan of the mudflats revealed to MR that something had disturbed the many hundred Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* and Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus* that had been present shortly before on one of the counting areas. Only one Redshank continued to forage, and this was soon attacked by a large female Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. The falcon swooped, and the Redshank flattened itself against the mud with such vigour that mud was seen to fly. The Peregrine made two more attacks, with the same result. After a fourth stoop the wader moved a short distance,

repeating this movement after each attack while the Peregrine regained height for the next one. After the eighth stoop, the Redshank had managed to join four Common Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna* that had continued feeding, being large enough to be fairly safe from attack. The Peregrine continued to try to seize the Redshank, now in the middle of the ducks: during each stoop the Shelducks would lower their heads to the ground, then recover by shaking their tails and waddling a short distance; the wader continued to flatten itself against the mud, but stayed in the middle of the small flock. After the 14th stoop, the Peregrine gave up.

The Redshank's behaviour, staying on the ground at the cost of getting muddy rather than trying to fly away, is probably well adapted to such a situation, for the probability of its being caught when escaping by itself would be quite high. A Peregrine is probably unlikely to risk a mud bath for the sake of a meal, as this might severely curtail its powers of flight, so essential to its hunting success. Also of interest is the fact that the need to form a flock as an anti-predator response is so strong that the Redshank attached itself to a totally unrelated species.

On 16th December 1992, on a rising tide at Cardiff Bay, South Glamorgan, DT and SB observed a flock of 30 Common Redshanks flying from near the mouth of the bay, about 2 m above the water in a straight line towards a saltmarsh roost. Suddenly, the whole flock changed its flight pattern and flew steeply upwards, at which point a Peregrine Falcon was observed above the waders, flying in the opposite direction, 15-20 m above the water. The waders' flight course was directly towards the falcon, and the flock came within 2-3 m of the predator. After changing direction, the Peregrine attempted to take a single Redshank several times, but failed and gave up its chase. One possible explanation for the flock flying towards the Peregrine rather than taking other avoiding action is that the effective vertical distance between predator and prey was reduced, making it difficult for the raptor to gain enough speed for a successful strike.

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House Martins trapped in sewage sludge

In autumn, I have often seen groups of recently fledged House Martins *Delichon urbica* converge on a still occupied nest, calling excitedly and attempting to land at or enter the nest; sometimes as many as 40 are involved, all hovering within 1-2 m of the nest. With that in mind, I relate the following incident, which took place on or around 12th August 1992, in overcast conditions with frequent showers, at Rye Meads Sewage-works, Hertfordshire.

Ronald Mansfield was operating a machine which sprays liquid sludge on to drying beds. About 200 House Martins were hawking insects low over the beds when one alighted, for no apparent reason, on the newly laid sludge and quickly became engulfed. As RM contemplated saving the stricken bird, it or others began calling excitedly and many martins immediately gathered over the trapped

bird with much calling. Some alighted on the sludge. RM tried in vain to flush the birds away as the impending disaster unfolded. Despite his promptly wading into the shallow sludge to disperse the birds, within a minute or two 14 House Martins which had become entrapped were all dead.

Birds often drown in sludge. The feverish calling of these young House Martins caused them to behave apparently irrationally, leading to the multiple deaths.

ALAN HARRIS

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Many other species have succumbed in a similar manner (see, e.g., *Brit. Birds* 78: 666-667).

Black Wheatear killing lizard by dashing it against stone

On 14th July 1984, at Riglos, northern Spain, we saw a male Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura* catch a Wall Lizard *Lacerta muralis*, hold it in its bill, and kill it by banging it several times against a stone. This behaviour, reminiscent of that used by Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* when dealing with snails, appears not to be recorded in the literature; typically, Black Wheatears kill lizards with repeated blows from the bill.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Common Stonechats *Saxicola torquata*, Whinchats *S. rubetra* and a Northern Wheatear *O. oenanthe* were seen to use a similar technique to kill large caterpillars, which were held in the bill and beaten on the ground (*Brit. Birds* 71: 463).

Blackbird's behaviour when feeding on sunflower seeds

At irregular intervals during the winters of 1990/91 and 1991/92, in Bergen, Co. Hordaland, Norway, we observed an adult male Blackbird *Turdus merula* taking sunflower seeds at a birdtable. When occupying the table, which was designed for use by a single bird at a time, the Blackbird (it was not ringed, but its behaviour was very specific) would discard usually 5-10 seeds before a suitable one was found and eaten; no attempts were made to crush the seeds. The behaviour was then repeated. Normally 3-4 seeds were eaten before the Blackbird flew off, in most instances out of sight. This behaviour was observed several times a day, the Blackbird being totally absent from the area for various periods of time. Three or four Blackbirds were often present near the birdtable, but no others attempted to feed in the same way. Sunflower seeds were plentiful on the ground beneath the table, and several Blackbirds fed on these, but the individual with the unusual behaviour seemed to be less interested in these fallen seeds. Sunflower seeds were not mentioned in the diet of the Blackbird either by Simms (1978, *British Thrushes*) or in *BWP* (vol. 5).

No plausible explanation could be offered for the behaviour, but, since it was

employed frequently, the Blackbird presumably benefited from it. There seem to be no previous reports of Blackbirds behaving in this way.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT David Glue has commented: 'Sunflower seeds are regularly taken by Blackbirds at some Garden Bird Feeding Survey [GBFS] stations, often in small quantities, though not as preferred items. All types have been seen to be eaten, from plain and striped to black, though the small black "hearts" would appear to be the most favoured. Like some other species, including Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, Blackbirds will "flick", "push" and often "reject" individual sunflower seeds before consuming another. Whether Blackbirds have the ability to discern the quality of the seed within the husk from optically assessing shape, weight or "feel" is unknown, though possible, and worthy of testing. Blackbirds invariably reject a number of sunflower seeds before consuming one, followed by another, or more. This may be a physical need, a pause in order to allow space to permit more items to pass to the crop. Alternatively, this prolonged form of behaviour at the cramped birdtable may relate to dominance. Blackbirds will often visit tables for active spells during the day in winter, and consume items while other Blackbirds are excluded, and this may relate to an individual expressing physical dominance, birds later spending much of the remainder of the time elsewhere (see Snow & Snow, 1988, *Birds and Berries* for a description of territorial defence of food sources).'

Reed Warblers sunning

At about 08.00 GMT on 3rd August 1990, at Rainham Marsh, Essex, I observed at least two Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* sunning. Even at that time, the day was hot, with a temperature of about 25°C; conditions were very sunny and humid, with little breeze. The warblers were sitting on a gravel track, with wings outstretched and fanned and with bills slightly open; from time to time, they became aware of my presence and flew off into the reed-fringed dykes bordering the track, but always returned to their sunning position a few moments later. Another Reed Warbler was seen in a similar sunning position about 100 m farther along the track. Although I often saw Reed Warblers subsequently in fairly open situations, there was no further active sunning, despite several very hot days.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented: 'As I found when preparing my book *The Sunning Behaviour of Birds* (1986), the sunning habits and postures of warblers (Sylviidae) are poorly documented. With one possible exception, I do not know of any records for the Reed Warbler, so Mr Dennis's record for this species, of what I have called the "spreadeagle" posture, is most welcome, if not unexpected.'

Garden Warblers bathing communally with House Sparrows

During hot spells in the summer of 1990, in a rural situation near Carlisle,

Cumbria, a newly constructed garden pond drew a constant stream of birds to drink and bathe. During two days in late August, a few individuals of all four common *Sylvia* warblers were present. Most of these—Blackcaps *S. atricapilla*, Common Whitethroats *S. communis* and one Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca*—came out furtively from surrounding bushes, perhaps emboldened by the presence of other species bathing, but often ‘waited their turn’ until a space appeared in the line of bathing birds before bathing themselves.

The behaviour of two Garden Warblers *S. borin*, however, showed a different pattern. Their approach to the pond seemed to be triggered only by the presence of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*, which often bathed in dense, vigorously fluttering groups, making a considerable spray of water. Both warblers would approach across the pond margin, hopping eagerly, and then perch at the edge of, or actually within, the sparrow flocks, so as to get the full benefit of the shower; they would then either crouch quite still, allowing the water to cascade over them, or wing-flutter as if actually bathing in the water themselves. Only once did I see one bathe in the ‘usual’ fashion, on a vacant part of the water line. One Garden Warbler in particular seemed to be fascinated by the activities of the sparrows: several times while I was watching, it barged between the tightly packed group of bathing sparrows to reach the water’s edge, even when there was ample unoccupied space nearby, thus forcing them to separate to allow it room. On one occasion, it flew into the group, perching precariously on the back of one sparrow: the latter seemed to lack a strategy to deal with this circumstance, and for several seconds there was the incongruous sight of one bird, vigorously bathing, with another struggling to remain perched on its back. Finally, the warbler slid off, taking up a crouched stance alongside.

The impression of intent concentration and determined, almost reckless, behaviour on the part of the warblers was very striking. It reminded me of the determination of Blackcaps in previous winters in the garden to get a share of the available food at the birdtable, when they were capable of bettering House Sparrows and even Great Tits *Parus major* in confrontations.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented: ‘House Sparrows in my garden behave in much the same way while Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* (especially) or Blackbirds *Turdus merula* are bathing; they also often use other birds as “safety-markers” when waiting to come down for food on our patio: they wait until a Blackbird, Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis*, Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* or other bird has come down first.’

Two male Willow Warblers at same nest

On 7th June 1991, at Rodborough Common, Surrey, I located the nest of a pair of Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus*. The nest, containing seven young about six or seven days old, was being visited by an unringed female and a colour-ringed male; the male (*A*) had been ringed at the site on 13th May, although it had probably been present since late April. I then noticed a second male (*B*) carrying food very close to this nest; this male had been ringed there on 15th April, but had shifted his territory slightly after the arrival of male *A*. The nest was sited

roughly where the boundaries of these two adjacent territories merged.

During subsequent observations on 10th, 12th and 13th June, both males and the female were seen food-carrying and giving alarm calls near the nest. Only the female and male *A* were positively recorded visiting the nest, but male *B* was seen with food very close to the nest. The latter male seemed more wary than the other two birds and was difficult to observe. He may have slipped down to the nest unseen, as on two occasions he was lost from sight among the ground vegetation, re-emerging without the food; as there was no sign of another nest or another female, I assumed that he was visiting the same nest as male *A*. No hostility was observed between any of the warblers. The young fledged on 14th June, when only the female and male *A* were seen food-carrying, although male *B* was calling nearby.

Male polygamy has been recorded regularly among Willow Warblers in this area, but this is the first record of two males at the same nest. Extra-pair copulations may occur among this species, but whether or not these lead to successful fertilisations can be determined only by techniques such as DNA finger-printing, which was not possible in this case. The behaviour of the males, however, would suggest that each had reason to regard himself as a potential father of the brood.

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Long-tailed Tits apparently feeding young Great Spotted Woodpeckers

There are many recorded cases of birds feeding the young of other species (e.g. Mockler, 1982, *Birds in the Garden*, p. 63). Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* appear to be especially prone to this type of behaviour, for they are often observed assisting in the rearing of adjacent broods, particularly if they have recently lost their own (e.g. Perrins, 1979, *British Tits*, p. 80); C. Scott, for example, observed a Long-tailed Tit entering the nest hole of Great Tits *Parus major* and helping to feed the young (*Brit. Birds* 69: 34-35). The following observation is unusual in that it involves co-operative feeding between two very different species.

On 3rd June 1992, near Westbourne, West Sussex, at the nest hole of a Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* in an oak *Quercus*, I noticed a pair of Long-tailed Tits in the vicinity of the nest, clearly attracted by the loud and insistent calls of the woodpecker nestlings. Over a period of four hours, the tits frequently arrived with caterpillars, bent over right into the hole, and emerged without the caterpillars, having presumably fed the nestlings. The parent woodpeckers, which were also bringing in food, appeared to take no notice of the tits. This behaviour occurred only on the one day, and the tits were not seen again.

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LETTERS

Of Ospreys

Conservationists are considering a growing list of species for reintroduction into the United Kingdom. Whether this is 'a wise conservation measure' or 'a sensible use of conservation funds' has recently been queried by Scott & Dickson (1996). Their arguments appear to be based on emotion, and tar all reintroduction schemes with the same brush. Critical appraisal of each new reintroduction scheme is needed, not generalisation. The scheme which bears the brunt of Scott & Dickson's criticism is the reintroduction of Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* to Rutland Water, Leicestershire.

The main objection raised by Scott & Dickson is that natural recolonisation by Ospreys may occur. Although this is obviously a possibility, we do not know when, or indeed if, it will occur. Conservationists should aim to restore biodiversity now, and not in the (possibly) distant future. Scott & Dickson stated 'think how splendid natural colonisation would be' and 'artificial introduction would mean that we would never know what would have happened if we had not interfered.' These views suggest that wild birds are 'better' than reintroduced ones. Such opinions are subjective and self-centred. They are no more valid, and possibly less so, than those of the larger population of locals who regularly use the area. Locals may welcome a reintroduction scheme for spiritual and aesthetic reasons, as well as the possibility of increased tourism income. A desire to wait for natural recolonisation does not make sense from a strict nature-conservation viewpoint, and may also not be the preferred majority option.

Scott & Dickson also objected on the grounds that reintroduction schemes are a drain on important conservation funds. The internal budgeting of statutory conservation agencies may, however, mean that funds for one conservation project are not easily transferred to other projects. High-impact schemes such as reintroductions are very good at attracting media interest and funding partnerships with large corporations (witness the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* scheme). The involvement of Anglian Water suggests that this will be the case for the Ospreys.

Scott & Dickson correctly point out that any reintroduction scheme must meet the IUCN criteria. These were formulated in 1979 and can be summarised as follows:

1. There should be good historical evidence of former natural occurrence.
2. There should be clear understanding of why the species was lost to the area. In general only those lost through human agency and unlikely to recolonise naturally, within a reasonable time period, should be regarded as suitable candidates for reintroduction.
3. The factors causing extinction should have been rectified.
4. There should be suitable habitats of sufficient extent to which the species can be reintroduced.
5. The stock for reintroduction should be as genetically close to the native population as possible.
6. The stock used for reintroduction must not be taken from a population which will suffer as a result of removing some of its individuals.

These criteria suggest that natural recolonisation is preferable. As well as my above objections to this approach, who or what defines 'a reasonable time period'? Does the Osprey scheme meet the other criteria? Ospreys formerly nested in freshwater ecosystems in lowland England (Batten *et al.* 1990) and they nest in similar habitats elsewhere in their range (Cramp & Simmons 1980). It is uncertain whether Ospreys were native to Leicestershire, since when Ospreys were widespread there were no large natural waterbodies in the area. They may, however, have used large river floodplains which have since been lost. The question of nativeness is partly one of scale; on a broad scale, the Osprey was unequivocally native to the area in question (i.e. lowland England), and thus is a suitable species to consider for reintroduction.

The extinction of the UK Osprey population was due to human persecution (Batten *et al.* 1990). Persecution levels have since been much reduced, although not eliminated. In spite of some persecution, the breeding population of all lowland English raptor species is increasing. Ospreys may be expected to suffer less persecution than other raptor species as they are very unlikely to be poisoned at carcasses. This suggests that the factors which caused extinctions in the past will not affect the outcome of a reintroduction scheme.

The repeated presence of summering individuals and the occurrence of large populations of appropriate prey species suggest that the habitat at Rutland is capable of supporting a breeding population of Ospreys. Toxic algal blooms have, however, occurred recently at Rutland, poisoning large numbers of fish. Ospreys frequently scavenge on dead fish, so this will not affect food availability, but is it possible that Ospreys could be poisoned by feeding on these fish? Further, any population model would confirm that far more than a couple of pairs are needed to form a viable population. If Ospreys are to be reintroduced to lowland England, then a series of reintroductions at many sites, over a short time period, will be required.

Stock for the reintroduction scheme will come from Scotland. They will thus be genetically as close as possible to the present native population. Climatically, however, lowland England is more similar to Continental Europe. Birds from this region may thus be more adapted to lowland England than are the Scottish Ospreys (presumably Scandinavian in origin). Also, the Scottish population was derived from a small number of founders, so may have limited genetic variation. Using non-Scottish birds could be beneficial, as it would increase the genetic diversity of the UK population. The use of runt individuals, which rarely survive to adulthood, owing to sibling competition (Newton 1979), will ensure that the donor population is not disadvantaged by removing individuals. These runt individuals are created by reduced parental provisioning, so are not genetically inferior and would not compromise the long-term fitness of the newly created population.

There are additional reasons for proposing a reintroduction scheme. Large piscivores are natural components of lowland-lake ecosystems. We cannot claim to know enough about these systems to predict the consequences of the absence of one of their principal components. It is probably negligible, but it may not be.

More importantly, reintroductions can serve broader conservation issues than that of simply restoring a single species. Reintroduced species can act as flagships further to encourage conservation of habitats. They also send out a positive message. This helps to counter the negative image which conservationists are

forced to portray when campaigning against habitat damage. Finally, they have a massive conservation education potential. This is rarely fully exploited by conservationists. British citizens have largely grown used to a landscape with a much-reduced biodiversity. Reintroductions may help the public to realise what we have lost, and thus the importance of fully defending what remains.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT On behalf of the 'News and comment' team, Bob Scott has commented that 'Any reintroduction proposal will inevitably cause a drain on conservation funds, as the matter is debated and approved (or not) by the Statutory Conservation Agencies (English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage in the Osprey case) and opinions sought from other organisations such as the RSPB. I have been involved in conservation long enough to know just how much time (and as a result money) will be spent on this issue.'

Of Ospreys and Beavers

The proposal to introduce Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* to Rutland Water does not meet two of the internationally agreed criteria adopted by the Government nature conservation agencies and the RSPB. These criteria are intended to ensure that only suitable schemes are attempted, and were summarised in *British Birds* (Evans & Pienkowski 1991). The first criterion is that 'there should be good historical evidence of former natural occurrence', but there seems to be some doubt as to whether Ospreys have ever bred anywhere near the present site of Rutland Water. This would therefore be an 'introduction' rather than a 're-establishment', to use the terminology of Holmes & Stroud (1995). It also fails the second criterion, which is that the species is 'unlikely to recolonise naturally within a reasonable time' (Evans & Pienkowski 1991). As mentioned in the 'News and comment' lead story (*Brit. Birds* 89: 152-153), a number of immatures already spend the summer there, and Roy Dennis himself states in the *New Atlas* that such behaviour often precedes breeding attempts (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). It seems ridiculous to suggest removing chicks from Scottish nests for rearing at Rutland Water, because, by the time they will have reached maturity, the immatures currently present may have been breeding for some time. Surely nature should be allowed to proceed unmolested?

The proposal to re-establish the European Beaver *Castor fiber* to Britain should not be dismissed as a stalking horse for the return of the Grey Wolf *Canis lupus*. An initial study of the feasibility and desirability of this course of action has been published, and concluded that the proposal would have considerable benefits (Macdonald *et al.* 1995). Beavers are a keystone species, creating and maintaining areas of wetland, which would be beneficial to birds and other wildlife. Any re-establishment would initially take place in the Cairngorms, and the fact that

one of the authors is Dick Balharry, the senior Scottish Natural Heritage staff member for that region, surely lends weight to the proposal.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Bob Scott has commented: 'Phil Charleton's letter reinforces several of the doubts we expressed and indicates just how closely the licensing authorities (Scottish Natural Heritage and English Nature in the case of the Osprey) must examine such proposals. There may or may not be a case for re-establishing the European Beaver, but clearly the situation relating to mammals is very different from that pertaining to birds.'

Vagrant Lammergeier: correction

In his letter on the vagrancy likelihood of the Welsh Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (*Brit. Birds* 87: 613-622), Ricard Gutiérrez stated (*Brit. Birds* 88: 607-608) that a ringed Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* 'was seen in 1994 near Calais'. In fact, this bird was picked up from the seashore near Rochefort, Charente-Maritime, which lies on the Atlantic coast of France (and not near the Channel).

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LOOKING BACK

One hundred and fifty years ago: 'On the occurrence of the Australian Spine-tailed Swallow [White-throated Needletail Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*] in England. It was shot about 9 p.m. on the 8th of this month [July 1846] by a farmer's son, named Peter Coveney, in the parish of Great Horkesley, about four miles from Colchester; he saw it first on the evening of the 6th—he tells me it occasionally flew to a great height, was principally engaged in hawking for flies over a small wood and neighbouring trees; being only wounded, it cried very much as it fell, and when he took it up, clung so tightly to some clover (it was in a clover lay) as to draw some stalks from the ground.' (*Zoologist* 4: 1492-1493)



MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS



196 This is obviously a diurnal raptor, with the give-away short neck, long tail and broad wings which will cause other birds to raise the alarm and bring it to our attention. The wings are too broad and rounded at the tips for it to be a falcon and it is far too lean and long-tailed to be an eagle. So, we are left with a choice of hawk *Accipiter*, kite *Milvus* or harrier *Circus*. From its structure, it appears to be a biggish bird, too large for a Eurasian Sparrowhawk *A. nisus* and not bulky enough for a Northern Goshawk *A. gentilis*, for which the outer wing, the 'hand', is also too broad. Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* is broad-winged and can sometimes look very long-tailed, especially when gliding, but the outer wing of this bird is too broad: Common Buzzard has a more sleeked, almost pointed hand. Bear in mind that the bird shown is in wing moult: the wings would look 'fuller' if all the feathers were fully grown.

Perhaps it is a kite. Obviously it is not a Red Kite *M. milvus*: the tail would look much longer, even if the fork was not evident, and the pale panel on the under primaries would show up, as it might also on a Black Kite *M. migrans*. But is the tail a little too short, and why is there not even a hint of a fork? There would also be more general paleness on the foreparts of the body.

So, we have boiled it down to a harrier, but which one? It looks too big and broad-winged for the smaller species, and even Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* would show a slightly pointed 'hand'. It does look very dark on the underwing (even allowing for the silhouette effect of the photograph), too dark indeed for any male and for all the females and immatures except for Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*. If one looks carefully at the photograph, a pale crown and chin area clinches it positively as a female or a non-adult male Marsh Harrier. This one was photographed by Ian Carter on Texel, The Netherlands, on 25th May 1992.

ROBIN PRYTHERCH

A new series of 'Mystery photographs', in a new style devised by Peter Lansdown, will commence shortly.



REVIEWS

The Complete Garden Bird Book: how to identify and attract birds to your garden.

By Mark Golley, Stephen Moss & David Daly.

New Holland, London, 1996. 176 pages; 500 illustrations. ISBN 1-85368-581-X. Paperback £9.99.

The only thing wrong with this absolutely splendid book is its title. The book is, essentially, concerned with the identification and habits of 70 species of garden birds. David Daly's drawings (usually five or six of each species) are a sheer delight, capturing typical postures and characteristic habits as well as the diagnostic field characters in a way which will be invaluable to would-be garden birdwatchers. The 'how to attract birds to your garden' part of the book takes up a total of only about ten pages (half of which are pictures of birds), which might not receive too much criticism, even though it is inadequate in numerous respects, were it not for the emphasis put on this in the title. If the book had been called *How to Identify Garden Birds*,

it could have claimed to have been stunningly successful in its aim.

David Daly's paintings are so pleasing that there will be many who have progressed far beyond the beginner stage who will want to own this book for its artistic content.

The choice of species to be included in a book such as this will always be debated, but I have seen 64 of the 70 in my own garden, and the selection has clearly been made with care.

This is the ideal book for anyone wanting to identify the birds in their garden without the complication of all those which are unlikely ever to occur.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Oiseaux de Bruxelles: atlas des oiseaux nicheurs.

By Didier Rabosée, Hellin de Wavrin & Denis van der Elst.

Aves, Liège, 1995. 304 pages; 31 colour photographs; 48 black-and-white photographs; 106 distribution maps. Paperback BF895.

This breeding-bird atlas concerns the 162-km² area of Brussels, Belgium, being the results of a survey carried out during 1989-91 based on a grid of approximately 1-km squares. Brussels has a human population of around one million, but includes areas of rural countryside, forest and ponds, as well as urban areas. The maps use open circles, plus signs and minus signs (rather than decreasing sizes of dot) to show the categories of proved, probable and possible breeding.

The text is entirely in French, though there is a short English summary (less than

one page). A total of 101 species was proved to be breeding. Unexpectedly high numbers of raptors included 40-50 pairs of Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*, 40 pairs of Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* and 81 pairs of Long-eared Owls *Asio otus*. Magpies *Pica pica* and Wood Pigeons *Columba palumbus* are both very common. Introduced species currently increasing include Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*, Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* and Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

The Macmillan Birder's Guide to European and Middle Eastern Birds; including North Africa.

By Hadoram Shirihai & David Christie. Illustrated by Alan Harris.

Macmillan, London, 1996. 248 pages incorporating 90 colour plates. ISBN 0-333-58940-8. £17.99.

In 1989, *The Macmillan Field Guide to Bird Identification* was published. Its 'confusion species' concept was greeted enthusiastically

and its text, by Keith Vinicombe, and illustrations, by Alan Harris and the late Laurel Tucker, were highly acclaimed. In his review,

David Fisher mused 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if this volume was to inspire similar guides to difficult species in other countries as well?' (*Brit. Birds* 82: 421). Here is such a guide.

By again selecting a small page-size, a hard cover and an attractive dust-jacket, and by following a similar format, the publisher has created a companion volume. Like the earlier work, it treats the identification of difficult species and species-groups in great detail and makes the space to do so by excluding the more easily identified species, which are covered adequately in conventional field guides. Where the two volumes differ is in their zoogeographic scope; while the first restricted itself to species on the British & Irish List, this new book, with little overlap, extends the coverage to much of the Western Palearctic.

Nearly 900 illustrations and 66 chapters embrace over 200 species. The largest chapter deals with Spotted *Aquila clanga*, Lesser Spotted *A. pomarina*, Steppe *A. nipalensis* and Tawny Eagles *A. rapax*. It covers almost 16 pages with nearly 11 pages of text and five plates containing 61 illustrations. In contrast, just over half a page of text is devoted to Brown-necked *Corvus ruficollis* and Common Ravens *C. corax*, while the chapters covering Thrush *Luscinia luscinia* and Rufous Nightingales *L. megarhynchos*, Moustached *Acrocephalus melanopogon* and Sedge Warblers *A. schoenobaenus*, and Common *Sturnus vulgaris* and Spotless Starlings *S. unicolor* are each accompanied by a single plate with three illustrations. Further mouthwatering species examined in depth include Spectacled Eider *Somateria fischeri*, Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos*

tracheliotus, Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stemura* and Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*, while tricky groups include the harriers *Circus*, pratincoles *Glareola*, *Acrocephalus* warblers, *Hippolais* warblers (see *Brit. Birds* 89: 114-138) and *Ficedula* flycatchers.

There can be few birders who would not learn at least one new identification character from virtually every page of this splendid book. Hadoram Shirihai and David Christie's text is accurate, concise, readable and highly informative. With great expertise, it concentrates on the problematic age and/or sex of each species and on the most important features of separation from similar species, with comments on seasonal and racial variations where relevant. Alan Harris, who provides continuity from the previous volume, has made a prolific contribution, yet has invested precision and appeal in every illustration. His handwritten pointers to critical characters are invaluable for quick reference.

The relevant ground-breaking identification papers of recent years have obviously been carefully researched and their contents combined with considerable personal experience to produce a knowledge which, crucially, has been shared by the authors and the artist. Such thoroughness and teamwork are reflected throughout this gem of a book, which will surely be acquired by everyone with an interest in bird identification in the Western Palearctic.

PETER LANSDOWN



ANNOUNCEMENT

'Rare Birds Day by Day': EXCLUSIVE SPECIAL OFFER

Using the Rarities Committee database, a new T & A D Poyser book, *Rare Birds Day by Day* by Steve Dudley, Pete Fraser, Tim Benton & John Ryan, sets records out in calendar fashion, rather than species by species, so that one can see the annual patterns of occurrence, and perhaps even use it as a predictor of where and when rarities may turn up in the future.

Because of the close link with the BBRC, T & A D Poyser has made an exclusive special offer to *BB* subscribers, who can obtain the book *POST FREE* through British BirdShop for £20.00 instead of the usual price of £25.00. *This offer will remain open only until 30th September 1996.* Please use the British BirdShop form on pages ix & x.



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

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

Red Data birds and the funding for statutory conservation

We have commented in the past (*Brit. Birds* 88: 488) upon the delays associated with the production of a new British Red Data List for birds. Now we have *Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man*, which saw the light of day in late April and is the joint publication of eight non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As we have frequently done in the past, we must applaud the co-operative workings of a diverse range of voluntary environmental organisations: the RSPB, the BTO, BirdLife International, the Hawk and Owl Trust, the Game Conservancy Trust, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and the National Trust.

The new RDB list of birds of conservation concern divides the species into three categories. Red: 36 species of high conservation concern, namely Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, Capercaillie *T. urogallus*, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Corn Crake *Crex crex*, Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*, Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, Marsh Warbler *A. palustris*, Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, Twite *C. flavirostris*, Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*, Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*, Reed Bunting *E. schoenichus* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. Amongst these are some familiar, but rapidly declining species. Over the last 25 years, Tree Sparrows have declined by 89%, Grey Partridges by 82%, Turtle Doves by 77%, Spotted Flycatchers and Song Thrushes by 73%, and Sky Larks and Linnets by over 50%. There is clearly a need for a change in the recording patterns in many county bird reports. Flocks of Linnets or nesting Spotted Flycatchers, for example, are now records that should be submitted whenever encountered.

The remaining two categories are amber, with 110 species of 'medium conservation concern', and green, with 134 regularly occurring species of 'lower conservation concern, but which still require monitoring'. The new list does not have the answers to the problems of decline; it is intended as a tool to direct resources in the right directions so that the highest priorities are tackled. We look

forward not only to the publication in the not too distant future by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee of its contribution to this topic, but also to the provision by the Government of adequate funding for the statutory agencies (English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council of Wales), so that they can get on with the important task of tackling these newly identified priorities.

Copies of *Birds of Conservation Concern in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man* are available free of charge from Birds of Conservation Concern, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Sir William Wilkinson (1932-1996)

A successful and influential banker, William Wilkinson entered the conservation scene in his early thirties and, from then on until his untimely death at the age of 63, remained one of its heavyweights.

First, he became Chairman of the Ornithological Society of Turkey, then he joined the Council of the RSPB and was its Treasurer for ten years. In 1983, whilst on the Board of Kleinwort Benson, he was head-hunted by the Secretary of State for the Environment for the post of Chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council, which he held until 1991. Notable for ornithologists was his Chairmanship of the Board of West Palearctic Birds Ltd (probably, *BWP* would not have come to completion without William's financial skills). When he died, he was a Council Member (for the third time) of the RSPB, President of the BTO, and a Vice-president of OSME.

He was an excellent ornithologist and a brilliant conservation statesman. I remember him once saying to me 'If you want to find out about an organisation, don't just listen to the bosses, but find out what the junior staff think.' He had many words of wisdom.
(Contributed by Richard Porter)

Green Action plan

The RSPB has launched a 'Green Action for Wildlife' information pack to help people become more aware of the environment and the need to use resources wisely. It sets out a series of simple steps that can be taken towards a greener lifestyle, including saving energy in the home, reducing the impact of transport on the environment, saving water in the home and garden, encouraging wildlife into the garden, and re-use and recycling of a range of resources and products.

For a free information pack, write to the RSPB, Green Action for Wildlife Pack, Dept GM115, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

The Peter Conder archive

The field notebooks of the late Peter Conder (1919-1993), formerly Director of the RSPB, have been donated to the Alexander Library in Oxford by the Conder family. The notebooks cover the period 1937-92 and a wide range of subjects, including Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* (made while a prisoner of war) and Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* (on Skokholm). The cataloguing of the notebooks was funded by the RSPB. Anyone wishing to consult the notebooks should contact Dr Linda Birch on 01865-271143.

NRA out, Environment Agency in

On 1st April, the new Environment Agency took over. Welcoming it as a great step forward, Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer, said that 'Integration of the environmental protection bodies into a single organisation provides the opportunity for benefits to the environment, industry and society as a whole. The agency will be judged by its success in turning that opportunity into achievement.'

Encompassing the National Rivers Authority, HM Inspectorate of Pollution and the waste-regulation function of local authorities, it will

have an annual turnover of £550 million, nearly half of which will be spent on flood defence. The next biggest area of spending will be pollution prevention and control, followed by water resources, fisheries, navigation, conservation and recreation.

The Agency's first corporate plan will be published this summer. There is, however, already disquiet in some quarters that the Agency's remit will not be sufficient for it to continue to build on the good reputation that the National Rivers Authority had established. We intend to keep an eye on events.

All-Ireland Conference

The theme of this year's Irish Wildbird Conservancy (IWC) and RSPB Conference, hosted by the IWC in Wicklow on 30th-31st March, was 'Biodiversity - variety is the spice of life.' The event was attended by over 200 people and demonstrated yet again how closely the IWC and RSPB (both lead organisations with BirdLife International) work together for the protection of birds and their environment

throughout all Ireland. Amongst the many snippets of information to be presented during the weekend, by far the most exciting was that in 1995 there was evidence of a 35% increase in the numbers of Corn Crakes *Crex crex*, the first increase to be noted since recording began.

The 1997 conference will be hosted by the RSPB Northern Ireland, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 4QT.

Focus on White Storks

The results of the fifth international census of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* (1994-95), together with assessments of current population trends, ecological needs and conservation strategies, will be among the topics at the International White Stork Symposium to be held in the Zoological Institute of Hamburg

University during 26th-29th September 1996.

For details, apply to NABU Institute of Grassland Conservation and Research, Dr Holger Schulz, Goosstroet 1, D-24861 Bergenhusen, Germany.

Why not combine the Symposium with an October visit to nearby Heligoland?

Moorland birds and the Big Guns

Further news on this long-running subject (*Brit. Birds* 88: 336) is that the RSPB has requested that it retains a Holding Objection on the MoD's Notice of Proposed Development (NOPD) on the Otterburn Training Area (OTA) within the Northumberland National Park (NNP), pending its satisfaction of a number of issues. These include requiring that a *full commitment* be made to the implementation of comprehensive measures both to mitigate and to compensate for the impact of the NOPD on the nature-conservation interest of the OTA, and that full details of the scope and extent of the proposed monitoring of flora and fauna are supplied. It also requires to know the timescale for the development and implementation of the Integrated Environmental Management Plan, and whether this will include a nature-conservation strategy in addition to a landscape strategy, as well as an assessment of ways in which military and agricultural operations could be altered to benefit nature conservation within the area.

Voting for new Rare Man

The BBRC is inviting nominations for a new member to join the Rarities Committee in April 1997. Nominations should be sent (before 31st October 1996) to the Chairman, Rob Hume, 15 Cedar Gardens, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1EY. Anyone wishing to nominate an appropriately qualified person should first ascertain his or her willingness to serve on the Committee and to stand in the forthcoming election.

At its latest meeting, the BBRC updated the voting procedures for elections so that (1) for each county, the County Recorder and local Records Committee may cast up to five votes, and (2) for recognised Bird Observatories, the Warden and Records Committee may cast two votes. Thus, the votes cast would, with a 100% response, total 420. The BBRC has a high regard for the expertise of the local Records Committees, with which it has an excellent working relationship, and the aim of widening the electorate has been to involve individual members of these committees as well as the County Recorders and the Observatory Wardens.

Suffolk Birds 1995

Somewhat later than expected, *Suffolk Birds 1995* (covering 1994) has just appeared. In addition to the usual features, it contains a synopsis of papers presented at the Suffolk Naturalists' Society Conference on Breeding Birds of East Anglia, articles on the 1994 influx of Pallas's Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* and on weather trends and their effect on the county's avifauna, and descriptions of seven rarities, including the county's first Red-flanked

Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* and Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*.

With colour photographs of both rare and common species, and numerous drawings by various artists, this 178-page volume costs £7.50 (incl. p&p) and is available from the Suffolk Naturalists' Society, c/o The Museum, High Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 3QH.

New compensation for Cardiff Bay loss

After a year of uncertainty, the Welsh Office announced at the beginning of the year its new package in compensation for the barraging and consequent destruction of the Taff/Ely Estuary SSSI in Cardiff. The package involves the Welsh Office and Cardiff Bay Development Corporation buying two blocks of land and seeking management agreements over the intervening farmland. One of the blocks is redundant power-station land at Uskmouth near Newport, adjacent to the Severn estuary, where the old ash lagoons could be engineered into a large reedbed and open water. Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* are frequently recorded in a nearby dry reedbed. The second block being purchased is at Goldcliff, close to the seawall, where shallow lagoons will be created for waders.

The local Taff/Ely Estuary Wildlife Coalition Group has, however, expressed mixed feelings about the proposal and still, like many other people, deplores the deliberate destruction of this important estuary in the first place.

Welsh ornithologists in Aberystwyth

The annual conference and AGM of the Welsh Ornithological Society (WOS) took place in Aberystwyth on 23rd March, unfortunately overshadowed by the recent events resulting from the *Sea Empress* disaster. The retiring chairman, Graham Williams, read out a letter he had sent to the Prime Minister on behalf of the WOS, requesting an urgent public enquiry into all aspects of the disaster. At the time of the conference, some 7,000 dead or badly oiled birds, mostly Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra*, had been retrieved.

Topics of the day ranged from scarce migrants on Skokholm and Skomer to the changing fortunes of gulls *Larus* within the Principality, from wintering birds in Cardigan Bay (internationally important numbers of Common Scoters and Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata*) to the remote and inhospitable Ascension Island. The post-lunch bird quiz, both fun and taxing, was won by Peter Lansdown — no more than we would expect from an ex-Chairman of the BBRC.

International Biodiversity Projects

At the end of March, Environment Secretary John Gummer announced 34 projects aimed at helping to conserve international species as diverse as the Simien Jackal *Canis simensis*, lugworms, chameleons and sea-cucumbers, which will between them receive £3.2 million funding from the Darwin Initiative.

The objective of the Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species, announced by the Prime Minister at the Rio Earth Summit, is to

deploy Britain's scientific, educational and technical strengths to assist the conservation of the World's species. This new announcement brings the total number of projects to 116, with total funding of over £12 million. The majority of the new projects are in Africa, South America and Southeast Asia, and all will be directed by UK educational and scientific institutions.

BBRC files in National Archive

The long-term value of the Rarities Committee's files has been recognised by permission having been granted for them to be stored at The National Centre for Ornithology at Thetford. The BBRC is most grateful to the BTO for providing this facility. The several filing cabinets of documents have now been moved from their former home at The Natural History Museum in Tring, where they were maintained by Peter Colston.

The BBRC's official Archivist at Thetford is now former BBRC member John Marchant. Meanwhile, Peter Colston will continue in the second part of his dual role, as Museum Consultant.

Birds, Words and Images

Under the above title, the BOU, the Society of Wildlife Artists, the Natural History Book Service, the Devon Birdwatching Society and the Devon Wildlife Trust are jointly sponsoring a conference to be held at Dartington Hall, Devon, on 27th-29th September 1996. The provisional programme contains a host of well-known contributors, including Keith Shackleton (painting birds), David Parkin (splitting and lumping), Jeffery Boswall (broadcasting), Clem Fisher (skin collections) and Frank Gill (English bird names). Further details from the conference secretary, Gaye Callard, on 01453-843793.

Value of Spindle

As in other recent years, the breeding and then migrant Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* disappeared from the garden of Fountains at Blunham, Bedfordshire, in late September/early October 1995, but the species reappeared in November. From 12th November to 7th January 1996, up to three Blackcaps could be found, whenever I chose to look, in a single berry-covered Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. They appeared to spend all day every day in this one large bush, only very occasionally being seen elsewhere in the garden (on a berry-covered Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, berry-covered Ivy *Hedera helix* and a Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* with a few berries). During this period, the same

Spindle frequently attracted Blackbirds *Turdus merula*, Redwings *T. iliacus*, Robins *Erithacus rubecula* and tits *Parus*, but these were not ever-presents like the Blackcaps.

It seems worth drawing attention to the value of this common native bush (even within a garden which already has fruiting trees and shrubs), and to encourage the planting of it as a bird-attracting feature in gardens. Not only does it provide lots of food for birds in autumn, but its massed clusters of four-lobed bright pink fruits, which open to reveal orange arils, are visually very attractive for some four months from October to January. Spindle is very easy to grow from seeds, from cuttings or by layering. Go plant one! (JTRS)

New teenage RSPB club

'RSPB Phoenix' is a new club set up for teenage conservationists in the 13-year-old to 18-year-old age group. Born in March, it started its new life with 35,000 members formed from the existing teenage membership of the Young Ornithologists' Club, some of whom devised both the name and the logo. Its aim is to offer an exciting range of activities for teenagers, including projects, wildlife holidays and opportunities to do voluntary wardening on nature reserves.

To find out more, contact the RSPB Youth Unit, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. We wish RSPB Phoenix every success.

Good birdwatchers aged 21 or younger take note

If you know a birdwatcher aged 21 or less who you think might be good enough to win the title Young Ornithologist of the Year, please encourage him or her to enter the competition. Prizes and titles will be awarded within three age categories: 21 or under, 16 or under and 12 or under.

The prizes for the three winners are worth over £2,500, and all it takes to enter is a good field notebook (see *Brit. Birds* 88: 164 for the rules).

The closing date for entries is 1st September 1996.

Rarity descriptions now, please

It is very helpful if all observers of rarities send in their descriptions (preferably to the relevant county or regional recorder) as soon as possible after the sighting. It will speed up the decision-

making process if notes on all major spring rarities are submitted by mid July at the latest. Please do not wait until the end of the year. Thank you. (Contributed by M. J. Rogers)

Approach of the Bird Fair season

There is no need to explain to the thousands of birdwatchers who attend the annual national British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water (16th-18th August 1996) that it is one event not to be missed. Remember, however, that the Scottish Bird Fair (31st August to 1st September) is held at Vane Farm RSPB reserve (01577-862355) and the Irish Birdwatching Fair (7th-8th September) at Oxford Island National Nature Reserve (01238-562332).

Pinning down the terrapins

Exotic terrapins, some now the size of dinner plates, are wreaking havoc in ponds and rivers by devouring amphibians and young waterfowl. Many were purchased during the Ninja Turtle craze, then released by bored owners into the wild, and now have grown out of their cute baby stage into rapacious adults.

If you see any, send a note of the number and size of individuals, and the locality, with grid reference, to Trevor Weeks, 151 South Road, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 3NF.

New Portuguese journal

We are always very pleased to find space to welcome a new journal on the ornithological scene, particularly so when it originates from a country well deserving of our support. *Pardela* is the new magazine of the Portuguese Society for the Protection of Birds (Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves: SPEA). The recently published issue (no. 2) contains articles on the use of radar for the study of bird migration, the first record for Portugal of a Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* of the eastern race *maura*, and the possible obstruction to migrating birds created by wind-farms in Iberia. To accompany this issue of the magazine, the Society has produced a newsletter devoted to information on bird-of-prey migration at Cabo de S. Vicente, near Sagres. It is available from SPEA, R. da Vitória 53, 4° Dto., 1100 Lisbon, Portugal.

Gillmors at Cley

Robert and Susan Gillmor are exhibiting paintings of 'Norfolk wildlife and landscapes' at The Old Butcher's Gallery in Cley, during 3rd-22nd August 1996.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*

Tim Cleeves—*Northeast*

David Clugston—*Scotland*

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Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*

Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*

Don Taylor—*Southeast*

Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*

John Wilson—*Northwest*



MONTHLY MARATHON



That rock-perching bird (plate 118) was named as Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* (68%), Rock Pipit *A. petrosus* (29%) and also Buff-bellied Pipit *A. rubescens*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* and Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* (all less than 1% each). Since the photograph was taken by Dr R. J. Chandler in California, USA, in August 1992, it is easy to deduce that over 99% of entrants got it wrong. Indeed, only two got it right.

When setting this problem, we expected nobody to get it right (except by a gambling guess) and were prepared to have to accept entries naming the other two closely related pipits. The two successful entrants, however, are both highly skilled identifiers and their expertise deserves to be rewarded. Well done David McAdams (Germany) and Anthony McGeehan (Co. Down), who move on to four-in-a-row and eight-in-a-row sequences, respectively. Everyone else is now back at the starting line again. Will Anthony McGeehan slip up before winning his second 'Monthly marathon' SUNBIRD holiday prize? If not, this month's photograph (plate 125) will be the *first* in a new 'Marathon', and new rules will come into effect. In the ninth 'Monthly marathon' correct answers will be accumulated, but competitors will not need to get an unbroken sequence of right answers; this will make the occasional slip less of a disaster.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (01767) 682969.



Plate 125. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 121: First stage in ninth 'Marathon' (with revised rules, see page 333) or eleventh stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. *Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue*, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th September 1996.



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 13th May to 9th June 1996.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Near Bembridge (Isle of Wight), 18th May.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), from mid May to 9th June.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Isles of Scilly, mainly St Mary's and Tresco, 16th May to 5th June; Spurn (Humberside), 23rd May.

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* Skelberry (Shetland), 3rd-4th June.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Tacumshin, 25th-26th May; same individual, Kilicoole (Co. Wicklow), 3rd-5th June.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* Kilnsea, Spurn, 2nd-3rd June.

Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 1st-2nd June.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Bann Estuary (Co. Londonderry), 23rd-24th May.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Scatness (Shetland), 17th-18th May.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Topsham (Devon), 2nd June.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Minsmere (Suffolk), 3rd-9th June; Hornsea Mere (Humberside), 6th June; Breydon Water (Norfolk), 9th June.

Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis* Long-staying female returned to Inner Farne (Northumberland), 16th May.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Fair Isle (Shetland), 4th-6th June.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 23rd-26th May.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* Sumburgh (Shetland), 20th-21st May.

Black-headed Bunting *E. melanocephala* Skokholm (Dyfed), 22nd-24th May; Skomer (Dyfed), 8th June



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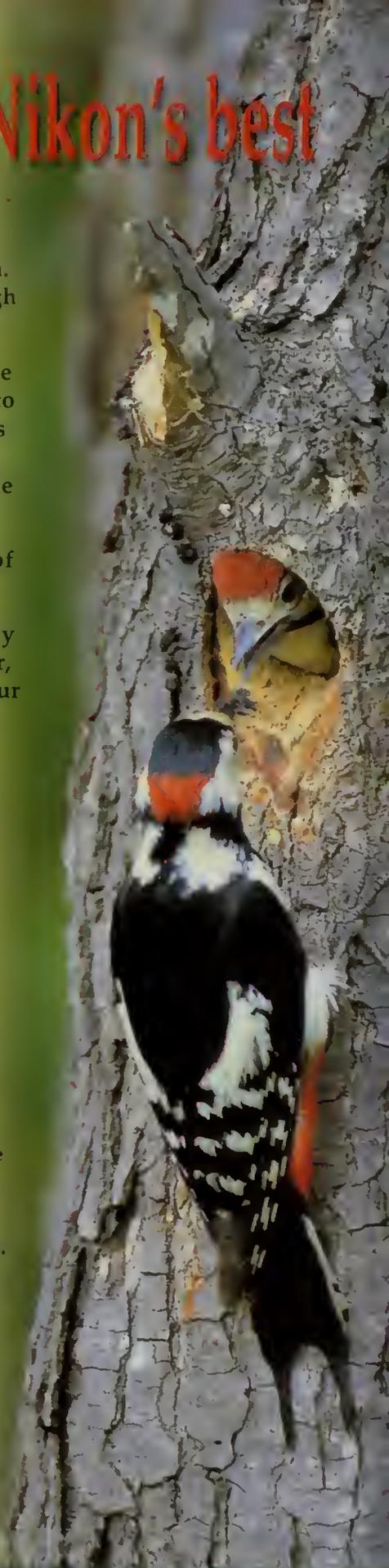


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The wasp in the top right hand corner of Roger Tidman's winning photograph of a Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* (plate 120 on page 311) was lost during trimming in many copies of last month's issue. Our printers, Newnorth Print Ltd, have, therefore, as a courtesy to our readers, reprinted the centre four-page section (pages 311-314) and inserted them into the centre of this issue, between pages 356 and 357. If you wish to do so, you can extract these and substitute them for the ones included last month.

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Bearded Tits in Britain and Ireland

Lennox Campbell, John Cayford and David Pearson

ABSTRACT A comprehensive survey of breeding Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* in 1992 estimated the total population in Britain and Ireland to be 339-408 pairs. A review of available data since 1947 was carried out and annual estimates, corrected for major sites not covered each year, were made of the population. Numbers increased steadily to an estimated peak of 665 in 1977, but have been much lower since. Severe winter weather is shown to have caused marked declines in the breeding population, the extent of the decline in the late 1980s and early 1990s perhaps reflecting the effects of a series of four severe winters between 1984 and 1992. There has been a tendency for an increased proportion of the population to be found at minor sites and away from the former stronghold in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Although considered to be of secure conservation status within Europe as a whole (Tucker & Heath 1994), the Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* is included in *Red Data Birds in Britain* (Batten *et al.* 1990) as a localised breeder and one of a group of birds, including Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, which, in the last 50 years in Britain, have made striking recoveries from national extinction or very low breeding numbers. It may therefore seem surprising that



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such a handsome, sexually dimorphic, species, with most of its strongholds in the south and east of England, should remain amongst the most poorly surveyed of the species on the British Red Data list. Its preference for areas of extensive and often inaccessible reedbeds, however, combined with the facts that it does not sing, is non-territorial, is probably multi-brooded and may move considerable distances within a reedbed between successive broods, means that it is not easy to count. Most previous counts of breeding Bearded Tits have been carried out by dedicated enthusiasts and those, such as reserve wardens, with an intimate knowledge of, and regular presence at, individual reedbed sites. No attempts have been made previously to co-ordinate such efforts.

The history and pattern of the Bearded Tit's recovery from only four pairs in 1947 to an apparent peak of over 590 in 1974 have been described by Axell (1966) up to 1965, O'Sullivan (1976) for 1966-74, and Bibby (1983, 1993) up to 1989. Apart from some of the earlier years when all known sites were counted annually, these authors were forced to rely mainly on published results collated from county bird reports, which, because not all sites were counted or reported on each year, allowed only minimum estimates of the breeding population to be made.

This paper presents the results of the first co-ordinated national count of breeding Bearded Tits in Britain, which was carried out in 1992. It also includes the results of an extensive review of published and unpublished counts during 1947-92; data for key sites in 1993 and 1994 have also been included.

Methods

The 1992 survey

As noted by Bibby *et al.* (1992), the Bearded Tit is amongst a small group of passerines for which, because of the nature of their preferred habitat, no reliable standardised counting method has yet been developed. Recognising the importance of local knowledge when surveying a difficult and potentially hazardous habitat such as reedbeds, it was decided that a co-ordinated survey would need to rely largely on existing reedbed-bird experts, rather than a small team of paid surveyors or larger numbers of enlisted volunteers. After consultation with key Bearded Tit experts, it was decided to adopt and test a two-phase counting procedure involving a preliminary survey in April followed by a more detailed survey in May.

Survey sites

A list was compiled of all reedbed sites in England, Wales and Scotland where breeding of Bearded Tits had been confirmed or suspected since 1947. Appropriate experienced local ornithologists were then contacted to undertake or arrange surveys of all the listed sites.

The preliminary survey

In order to identify the key areas for detailed surveys in May, observers were asked to visit each site or, on larger reedbeds, suitable sub-sites of about 300 m × 300 m, on three occasions in mid to late April to record, on 1:10,000-scale maps, the locations of all Bearded Tits heard or seen. Surveys were to be carried out within three hours of sunrise, preferably on clear windless days.

Detailed surveys

Bearded Tits tend to nest in drier parts of the reedbed where there is extensive litter or growth of sedges *Carex* (Bibby 1983). During the breeding season, they feed on adult and larval insects (Bibby 1981), which they obtain from wetter parts of the reedbed, especially at or close to the edge of open water. They usually, therefore, have to make regular flights, sometimes of several hundred metres, between feeding areas and their nests. The location, to within 5 m, of active nests can be determined comparatively easily by observing such repeat feeding flights.

Thus, to locate first-brood nests, observers were requested to spend at least one hour per week throughout May observing each reedbed (or each 300 m × 300 m sub-unit) from suitable vantage points, to detect feeding flights and map the destinations of adults returning with food. Since feeding adults remain active throughout the day, these observations could be made at any hour. Bearded Tits may move considerable distances to lay second and subsequent clutches, so data collected only during May were considered to relate to first broods. The importance of obtaining first-brood data at all sites was stressed, although observers were also encouraged to carry out further surveys to locate subsequent broods.

On larger reedbeds, where time constraints might result in incomplete coverage, observers were asked to give priority to areas of Bearded Tit activity identified in the preliminary surveys. They were also asked to record carefully the locations of all parties of newly fledged young during May, since these may provide further indications of additional breeding pairs, particularly in large or inaccessible areas of marsh which lack vantage points from which to detect feeding flights. Counts of such parties along the reed edge are known to be the only way of counting Bearded Tits on most of the important sites on the Norfolk Broads.

Walberswick (Suffolk), Easton (Suffolk) and Old Hall (Essex) were more intensively surveyed throughout the summer to enable comparisons to be made between estimated numbers at different stages in the season.

The historical review

As in previous published reviews, a detailed search was carried out of published records in county bird reports and avifaunas, backed by extensive verbal and written consultation with a range of ornithologists with access to previously unpublished data.

Results

The 1992 survey

Bibby & Lunn (1982) identified 109 reedbeds greater than 2 ha in extent, and this broadly coincides with the list of 92 sites that were the target of the full survey and which included almost all the sites where Bearded Tits were known or suspected to have bred since 1947. Although it was impossible to ensure that all sites received multiple visits, it is believed that all of the relevant sites were visited at least once during the breeding season to check for the presence of breeding Bearded Tits.

Table 1. Estimates of the total breeding population of Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* in Britain and Ireland in 1992.

Estimated total includes confirmed and probable pairs (see text). The names of all sites holding ten or more pairs in 1992 are given in table 4.

	TOTAL NUMBER OF PAIRS		No. of sites	Sites with ten or more pairs
	Confirmed	Estimated		
Norfolk	86	94-115	10	4
Kent	29	54-68	9	1
Suffolk	34	43-51	3	2
Essex	33	36-40	5	2
Yorkshire	27	31-36	2	1
Lancashire	21	30-35	1	1
Dorset	15	16-18	3	1
Hampshire	11	12-15	3	
Lincolnshire	7	7-10	3	
Sussex, East & West	6	7-8	2	
Somerset	4	5-7	1	
Scotland	2	2-3	1	
Cambridgeshire	1	1-2	1	
Totals	276	339-408	44	12

Breeding was confirmed at 44 sites and, at all of these, observers attempted, with varying degrees of success, to locate nest positions using the detailed survey methods described above.

Even at the best-covered sites, it was, however, not always possible to complete detailed surveys of all suitable habitat, so final estimates of the numbers of pairs present contained two elements. 'Confirmed pairs' were those where adults were seen to make at least three visits carrying food to the same position (about 10 m × 10 m) in late April or May, or where there were sightings in May or early June of recently fledged young. 'Probable pairs' includes others seen regularly in one location between mid April and late May, perhaps carrying nesting material or carrying in food only once or twice. For each county, the total estimated number of pairs and the total number of confirmed pairs are shown in table 1, together with the number of sites involved. In total, 276 confirmed pairs were recorded, and the population, including probable pairs, was estimated to be 339-408 pairs.

Six sites held about 48% of the British population and the 12 sites with ten or more pairs accounted for 65-70%. Twenty sites (45%) had fewer than five breeding pairs. Regional patterns of numbers and distribution are discussed in more detail in the section reviewing historical data. Four sites (Humber Pits, Lincolnshire; Horsey, Norfolk; Minsmere, Suffolk; and Murston, Kent) which have regularly held ten or more pairs in the past did not do so in 1992.

Comparison of estimates of breeding pairs at intensive survey sites

The results of the three intensive surveys (table 2) show that the estimates produced by the more generalised observations in April are comparable with those derived from intensive observations of adults feeding first-brood young during May, but both are of course lower than end-of-season estimates based on aggregated data.

Table 2. Comparative estimates of the numbers of breeding Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* at three study sites in 1992.

Site	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PAIRS		Total estimate (aggregated data)
	April surveys	'Confirmed'	
Walberswick, Suffolk	16-24	17	22-28
Easton, Suffolk	11-13	10	14-16
Old Hall, Essex	14-16	18	18-19
Totals	41-53	45	54-63

Historical review

Sources of data

Despite the fact that counts of Bearded Tits appear regularly in most county bird reports within its current range and have been summarised in some of the county avifaunas, there has been considerable variation in the ways in which the data have been presented, both within sites and between counties as recorders have changed. We attempted, therefore, wherever possible, to gain access to the original survey data on which these reports were based. In addition to consulting sources such as reserve reports, we were able to deal directly with a variety of key contacts and, on their advice, arrived at what we believe to be definitive estimates of numbers at all known sites. In some cases, these estimates differ from those published previously. A fully referenced database has been archived at RSPB headquarters and sent to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. Relevant parts have also been sent to county bird recorders and key contacts.

Despite the lack of a standard method, observers at individual sites have regularly made estimates of breeding numbers, based on cumulative observations throughout the breeding season and in some cases derived from late-summer counts of juveniles augmented by ringing and retrapping data. Whilst the ways in which these data have been obtained may have varied from site to site, depending on local topography and other constraints, there is no reason to suggest that such estimates cannot be used as a reliable index of relative abundance and annual trends at individual sites. Like previous authors, we also believe that these data can be used to provide broad estimates of the breeding population in Britain and Ireland as a whole. Counting at smaller sites with only a few breeding pairs is probably quite accurate, although these also tend to be the sites with the most incomplete records.

When published or other records are presented as a range estimate, we have taken the mid-point values (rounded upward to the nearest whole number if necessary) and used these in our assessment of the historical data. In a few cases, where data for one or more top sites were not available, we have instead used published estimates for counties as a whole.

Distribution of breeding sites

Since 1947, Bearded Tits have been reported as breeding in at least 112 sites (table 3). Unfortunately, in some counties, site names were kept secret and, in

Table 3. Regional summary for Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* of first breeding dates since 1947 at known sites and site occupancy in 1988-92.

County/region	Year first bred	BREEDING SITES	
		Total recorded	Used during 1988-92
Suffolk	1947	11	3
Norfolk	1948	36	10
Kent	1960	16	9
Essex	1962	10	5
Yorkshire	1964	6	2
Hertfordshire	1966	1	0
Hampshire	1966	4	3
Dorset	1967	7	3
Anglesey	1967	2	0
Lincolnshire	1968	3	3
Sussex, East & West	1972	5	2
Lancashire	1973	1	1
Cambridgeshire	1974	2	1
Glamorgan	1974	2	0
Devon	1981	1	0
Co. Wicklow	1983	1	0
Berkshire	1985	1	0
Somerset and Avon	1985	2	1
Scotland	1991	1	1

others, the site names used have been changed, or adjacent sites merged or split from year to year, so it is now impossible to provide a more accurate estimate.

The historical data show that, at most sites, only a few pairs have been recorded in any single year, in line with the results of the 1992 survey. At 28 sites, there are records of definite breeding in only one or two years. Twenty-five sites are reported to have held ten or more pairs. In 11 cases, this was in only one or two years, but, of the remaining 14 sites, ten still had ten or more pairs in the 1992 survey. The 14 sites which have held more than ten pairs for several years are referred to subsequently in this paper as the 'top sites'. More recent data for the years 1993-94 show that other sites, such as Easton, Suffolk, would now qualify as top sites, having recently had more than ten pairs for several years.

Trends at individual sites

Very few sites, other than some of the major reedbeds with ten or more pairs, have been counted on a regular basis (e.g. Leighton Moss, Lancashire: Wilson 1993). After a slow increase during the 1950s, the number of sites known at the time to have breeding birds built up steadily to a peak of at least 49 in the mid 1980s (table 4), sites ceasing to have breeding pairs being outnumbered by new sites. Although new sites have continued to be reported since then, breeding has apparently ceased at a slightly greater number, so the total number of sites now used is below the mid-1980s peak. The pattern at each of the 14 top sites is broadly similar, numbers rising to a peak and then tending to fall off in recent years, although the timing of the peak at each has varied considerably from the late 1970s to the late 1980s (table 4). Declines after severe winters, followed by recovery over the following years, are apparent for most of the major sites.

Table 4. Year of first breeding since 1947, peak numbers of breeding pairs each five years during 1966-90, and recent breeding numbers of Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* at 14 top sites.

x = no data available. Easton (Suffolk) and Ouzedam/Coryton (Essex) were the other sites with more than 10 pairs in 1992.

Site	First record	PEAK NUMBER RECORDED WITHIN FIVE-YEAR PERIOD					Annual totals			
		66-70	71-75	76-80	81-85	86-90	91	92	93	94
Walberswick, Suffolk	1947	80	100	100	60	90	9	25	28	30
Minsmere, Suffolk	1947	60	80	100	55	x	4	7	13	15
Hickling-Heigham, Norfolk	1948	85	80	111	102	36	10	35	45	33
Horsey, Norfolk	1950	30	30	50	30	15	3	4	6	5
Cley, Norfolk	1951	20	23	45	x	13	20	10	5	x
Stodmarsh, Kent	1961	20	30	50	60	65	30	35	45	x
Old Hall, Essex	1962	7	4	3	3	30	15	19	11	13
Blacktoft, Yorkshire	1964	x	75	110	95	100	25	33	40	50
Cantley, Norfolk	1964	2	4	12	10	x	1	13	x	x
Murston, Kent	1966	9	28	5	2	x	x	1	x	x
Radipole, Dorset	1967	3	10	34	16	30	8	12	11	5
Humber Pits, Lincolnshire	1968	3	18	20	35	12	2	6	6	4
Titchwell, Norfolk	1968	7	10	18	20	30	15	19	18	12
Leighton Moss, Lancashire	1973	0	6	40	40	28	30	35	40	40
Number of sites used in period		30	34	43	49	46	x	46	x	x
New sites used in period		10	10	8	13	7	x	4	x	x

The total population

Combining all available data on individual sites and incorporating published figures for whole counties and unspecified sites, it was possible to produce a total for the number of breeding pairs recorded in Britain and Ireland combined each year since 1947 (fig. 1). This shows that, after a gradual increase to around 100 pairs in the late 1950s, the recorded population grew more rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s to reach over 547 in 1976 and reached a peak of 592 in 1980. Thereafter, the population appears to have steadily declined. Superimposed on this general pattern are several more or less obvious fluctuations in which sudden decreases are followed by recoveries within the next two or three years. Interpretation of these fluctuations is complicated by the fact that coverage was incomplete, even at top sites, in most years. For example, during 1973-92 there were only three years when all the top sites were counted, and there were eight in which four or more were not covered.

To compensate for the main gaps in the data, estimates were made of the number of pairs present in each missing year at each of the 14 top sites. It was assumed that numbers either increased or decreased linearly over the period for which data were absent, and values for each missing year were calculated from the counts immediately preceding and following the gap in the data. This procedure will tend to have smoothed out any natural fluctuations, such as those in response to winter weather, that occurred in years of missing data. For each year, estimates for each missing top site were added to the British total actually

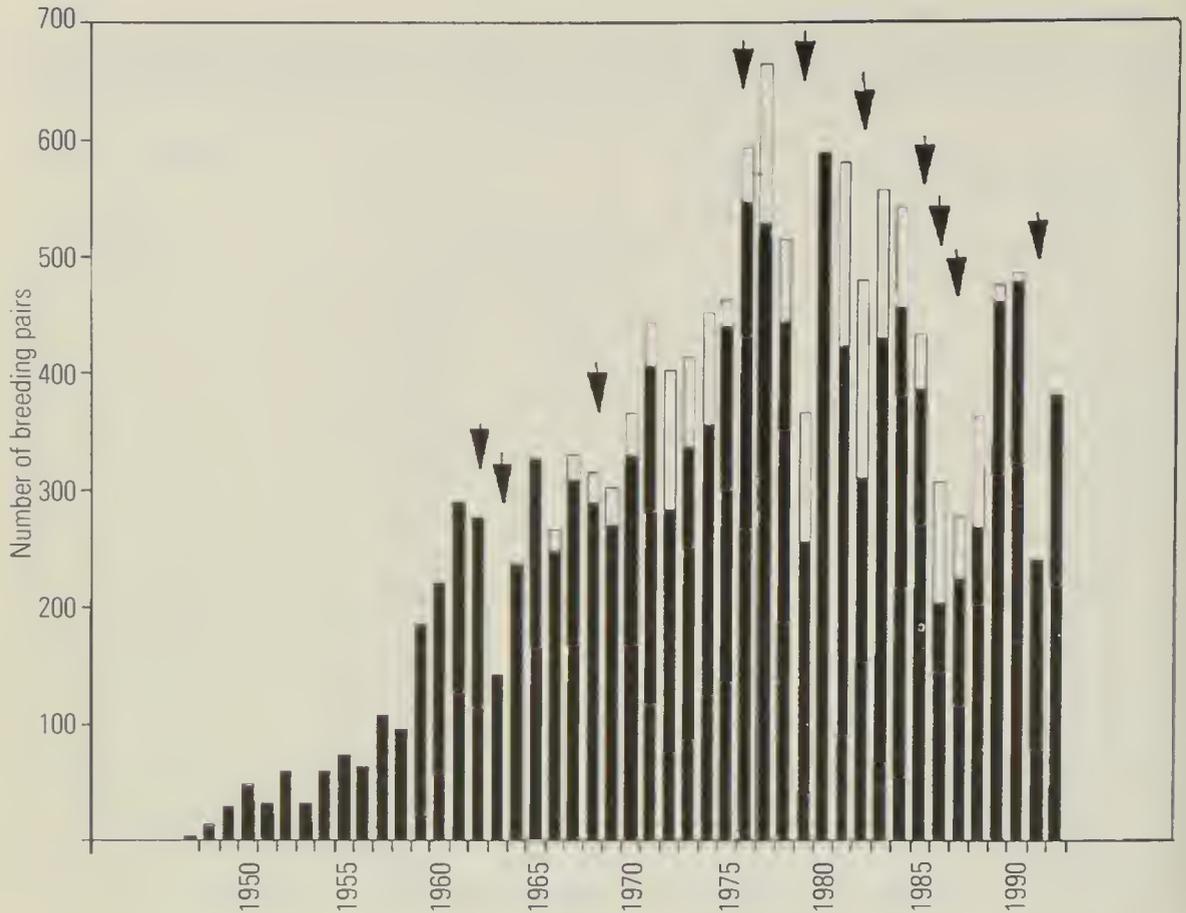


Fig. 1. Breeding population of Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* in Britain and Ireland during 1947-92.

Black = total counted. White = correction for uncounted top sites. Arrows indicate seasons preceded by a severe winter.

recorded to produce a corrected estimate of the population. Since no attempt was made to allow for numbers at uncounted minor sites, these estimates should still be considered as minima.

The general pattern of estimated totals is similar to that of the numbers actually recorded (fig. 1), but the estimated peak number of breeding pairs was at least 665 and occurred three years earlier, in 1977. The breeding population is estimated to have equalled or exceeded 450 in ten of the 11 years during 1974-84. Marchant *et al.* (1990) identified nine winters in which there were short periods of very severe or more prolonged periods of cold and wintry weather in December, January or February. The estimated breeding populations following these and the winter 1990/91, when there was a similar severe period, are also indicated in fig. 1. In nine cases, the estimated number of breeding pairs had decreased when compared with the previous year and, in general, the estimated population declined significantly more often following severe winters than after apparently more normal winters*. The year 1976 was the only one in which the numbers counted and the estimated total population did not decrease following a severe winter.

Unless followed by another hard winter, numbers increased again in the year following a decline and, despite a succession of three consecutive hard winters

*Fisher's Exact Test $P = 0.0002$.

which resulted in 1987 in the lowest estimated population since 1966, numbers had risen again to almost 500 pairs by 1990. The scale of the decline in 1991, which appears to have affected all the top sites on the British east coast, was surprising in that, although there were some relatively long periods of harder weather including unusually heavy snowfalls in February in Suffolk and Essex, that winter was not so notably severe as those, for example, of 1962/63 or 1985/86.

Our estimates of the population in the early 1970s are rather lower than those recorded by O'Sullivan (1976), largely, we believe, because he was less conservative in his estimates of the numbers present at sites for which data were not available. Our results also confirm Bibby's (1993) suggestion of a population of around 400 pairs in 1989, although we believe that he underestimated the number of sites being used (33, compared with over 44 in 1992).

Whilst trends in the total breeding population are largely influenced by the number of pairs counted (or estimated) at the top 14 sites, the number counted at minor sites appears to have been increasing steadily, from peaks of up to 44 in the early 1960s, to 64 in 1980, 82 in 1989 and 121 in 1992. Whilst part of this increase may simply reflect improved coverage of some of these sites, we believe that there has been a real increase in the numbers of Bearded Tits using such minor sites, at a time when numbers at the top sites have generally been tending to decline. This change is mirrored by the progressive decrease in the proportion of the population found in Norfolk and Suffolk, the core areas from which the population made its initial dramatic recovery. This has decreased from more than 80% in 1970, to 65% in 1980 and to just below 40% in 1992.

Discussion

In his review of the status of the Bearded Tit since the 1966-74 period covered by O'Sullivan (1976), Bibby (1993) suggested that the population reached a peak around 1974 and that such numbers were probably maintained until the mid 1980s. Our data suggest that the peak was actually not reached until 1977 and that there has been a 30-40% decline since then. As has been highlighted by most previous authors, hard winter weather, notably spells of snowfall and freezing conditions, has an obvious impact on breeding numbers the following spring, but the survivors have the capability of recovering rapidly in the following years. The effect of successive hard winters, as in 1984/85, 1985/86 and 1986/87, is obvious, but, with relatively high breeding-population levels and widespread distribution, it would seem that, at least in the short term, it is unlikely that hard weather alone will threaten the population, as was apparently the case in 1947.

Bibby & Lunn (1982) observed that the response to apparently hard weather was not always so obviously marked as expected, pointing out that in 1978/79, the next most severe winter after 1947 and 1963, there was no evidence of any impact. Our review suggests that in fact there was an impact in 1979, and that 1976 was actually a year when an expected effect after another relatively severe winter was not evident. On the other hand, the decline in 1991 seems to us to have been surprisingly large, bearing in mind that the preceding winter, whilst comparatively hard, was not so obviously severe as those in the mid 1980s. It would seem that, although there does appear to be a relatively clear and simple relationship between severe winter and subsequent breeding-population levels, the effect may be modulated by other factors which currently we do not understand.

Bibby (1993) speculated that successional changes in reedbed habitats might become important at some sites, and we believe that there are strong indications that this, or some other changes in habitat, perhaps relating to direct management or its absence, is happening. Five of the 14 top sites (Minsmere, Hickling-Heigham, Horsey, Humber Pits and Murston) have since 1985 never held more than one-third of the peak numbers previously recorded. The decline at Murston is known to have followed major and permanent flooding, but habitat changes at the other sites have been less dramatic and more subtle. It is tempting to suggest that the declines at Hickling-Heigham and Horsey may be related to the wider conservation threats, such as erosion, eutrophication and boating pressures, facing the Norfolk Broads. Broadland sites which continue to have thriving small or even increasing populations tend to be those, such as Strumpshaw, with greater protection from typical public pressure. Bearded Tits need a combination of drier and open-water/edge habitat to breed successfully, and successional changes or management that affect the relative abundance and juxtaposition of these features may have a major impact on breeding populations. It will be interesting to see whether management work at sites such as Minsmere, designed to increase the amount of water-edge for Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*, also favours breeding Bearded Tits.

Interpretation of the apparent general downward trend since the 1977 peak is complicated by the fact that in the 14 following years there have been six hard winters, compared with only three in the preceding 14 years. Recovery following three consecutive hard winters in the mid 1980s led to the population almost doubling in three years, before a further major set-back in 1991, and there seems no reason to believe that, given suitable winter weather conditions, the total population will not return to the peak levels previously recorded.

Several authors (e.g. Axell 1966; Pearson 1975) have discussed the irruptive behaviour of the Bearded Tit and in particular the role this played during the re-establishment of the population up to the mid 1970s, when immigrants from the increased population in the Netherlands may have helped to fuel the British expansion. There is little evidence to suggest that such immigration continues to occur on any significant scale. Up to 1992, there had been 21 recoveries in Britain of foreign-ringed Bearded Tits, 20 up to 1977 from the Netherlands and only one since, from Switzerland, in 1989. Prior to 1980, there had been 14 recoveries abroad of Bearded Tits ringed in Britain, of which five each were in the Netherlands and Belgium. Although the number ringed each year has roughly halved since 1980, there have been only three such recoveries since then, two of which were in the Netherlands (annual ringing reports, e.g. Mead *et al.* 1993).

Irruptive behaviour within Britain appears, however, to occur regularly each autumn, with Bearded Tits turning up at widely dispersed non-breeding sites in winter. The continuing colonisation of new sites and the abandonment of, or irregular breeding at, others is evidence of such mobility and the dynamic nature of the breeding population as a whole.

Elsewhere in this paper, we have highlighted the inadequacies of the recent historical database for the Bearded Tit and, whilst recognising the natural concern of some counters about providing site-specific details of a scarce breeding species, we strongly urge all counters and county recorders to make sure that future counts are directly attributable to identified sites, even if it is still felt necessary

(not a view held by the authors) to maintain strict confidentiality. Annual submission of all such data to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel will ensure that an accurate set of data is maintained. We would also like to suggest that, as this is a species dependent on a comparatively scarce and vulnerable habitat, it is deserving of more regular and systematic surveys. We strongly recommend that future monitoring at individual sites and planned national surveys should be based where possible on preliminary mapping in April, followed by detailed observations in May to locate first-brood nest locations, using the techniques developed for the 1992 survey and described above.

As a minimum, we would propose that annual counts should be carried out at all sites at which ten or more pairs have regularly or recently been recorded, since what happens at these sites is likely to have the greatest impact on the population of Britain and Ireland as a whole. Minor sites clearly hold an increasing proportion of the population, and we would encourage local recorders to ensure that these are all properly counted much more regularly and not less than once every five years. With this level of routine monitoring, comprehensive surveys of all potential sites would probably not be needed more frequently than every ten years. We suggest that a full national survey should be carried out in 2002.

Although clearly not amongst the most threatened species breeding in Britain and Ireland, Bearded Tits depend on a comparatively scarce habitat, which is itself vulnerable to a wide range of threats relating to the activities of man, as well as the natural threats posed by the processes of ecological succession. In the short term, there appears to be sufficient suitable reedbed habitat to sustain populations close to the peak levels previously recorded and, provided suitable conditions are maintained at all currently occupied sites, the population should be considered relatively secure. It is of some concern, however, that one third of the top sites, most of which are under some form of conservation management or protection, now have substantially reduced breeding populations and that an increasing proportion of the population now breeds on minor sites, where conservation protection is absent or beneficial management less likely. Re-establishment of strong populations at the top sites should be a priority conservation objective for this species, and further research into the reasons for the declines at these sites and the habitat requirements of breeding Bearded Tits may be needed.

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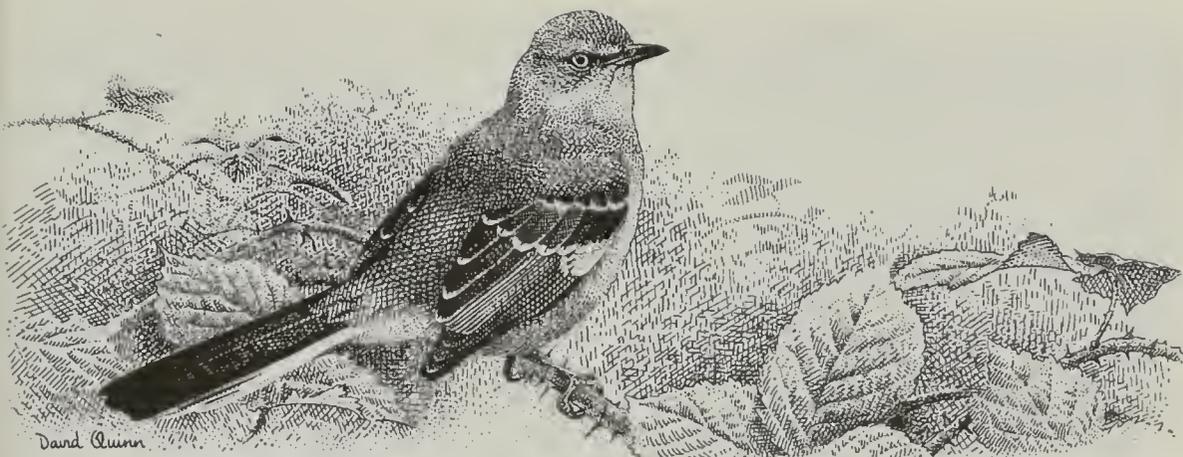
Dr Lennox Campbell, Dr John Cayford and Dr David Pearson, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL



LOOKING BACK

Fifty years ago: 'On 3rd August 1946, D. E. Sergeant and R. A. Hinde noticed an unfamiliar warbler in a willow bush on the edge of a large reed-bed. Only a few short views of the bird were obtained, but it was seen to have a very dark crown and a very conspicuous white supercilious stripe.' So began the account of what remains one of the most extraordinary, but (even by today's high standards) thoroughly well-documented first-for-Britain records: the pair of birds established to be breeding at Cambridge sewage-farm, for which the detailed account ended: 'In the above résumé of observations and opinions an endeavour has been made to include all that is pertinent for the establishment of the identification. That the birds were not Sedge-Warblers [*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*] is clearly established: that they were Moustached Warblers [*A. melanopogon*] seems inescapable.' (*Brit. Birds* 40: 98-104)

Twenty-five years ago, but still relevant today: 'The collection and analysis of records. Such a compilation [summarising the distributions of the breeding birds and analysing the patterns of migrants and vagrants] would not have been possible without the network of recording systems now operating . . . Invaluable as its foundation are the county and regional reports, without which the whole structure would fall, . . . complemented by that of such bodies as the Rarities Committee and the Irish Records Panel. . . there is clearly a large number of active birdwatchers who make observations that would be worth recording and yet do nothing with them . . . Laziness is tantamount to selfishness. We are spoon-fed these days by a battery of field identification guides and reference works, but these could not have been written if others in the past had not taken the trouble to put pen to paper. Thus, although many of the lazy ones will simply say that they watch birds for pleasure and not for posterity, they would do well to reflect whether their debt to the pioneers who paved the way is not such that they ought to put something back into their hobby in return . . . Would those who criticise the system prefer that all reports were accepted willynilly from everyone or can they suggest a better way of doing things? If the answer in both cases is no, they should think again and try to rise above their differences for the sake of advancing knowledge; such knowledge may in the end help towards the conservation of the birds themselves, which is what really matters.' (*Brit. Birds* 64: 337-338)



Northern Mockingbirds in Britain

P. R. Cobb, Philip Rawnsley, Harold E. Grenfell,
E. Griffiths and Simon Cox

ABSTRACT The identifications of four separate Northern Mockingbirds *Mimus polyglottos*—in Norfolk in August 1971, in West Glamorgan in July-August 1978, in Cornwall in August 1982 and in Essex in May 1988—have been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee. After assessing the relative likelihood of vagrancy and escape from captivity in each case, the BOU Records Committee assigned two to full inclusion on the British & Irish List in Category A (Cornwall and Essex), one to Category D (West Glamorgan) and one to no category, as a certain escape (Norfolk). This joint paper documents all four records.

Northern Mockingbird in Norfolk

The following account was submitted to the BBRC.

A Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* was present at Blakeney Point, Norfolk, during 22nd-25th August 1971. Its identity was never in doubt once we had the opportunity to check in an American field guide and discuss our observations with a lady familiar with the bird in the USA. Ted Eales took several hundred feet of film of it (so no written description was submitted to the Rarities Committee). It spent most of its time in or near the Tree Lupins *Lupinus arboreus* near the Lifeboat House, and occasionally visited the plantation or laboratory (like most passerine migrants, it found that the lupins in the fenced-off area near the Lifeboat House afforded the best protection from predatory gulls). Its plumage was not perfect, and we considered that it must have been a juvenile.

People who did not see the bird, or saw it only briefly, have dismissed it as an escape. Ted Eales and I had it living just outside our back door for four days, and

we spent many hours watching and filming it at close quarters from the lookout on top of the house, and we are convinced that it was a genuine wild bird (though ship-assisted passage cannot be ruled out), for the following reasons:

1. The species is rigorously protected in the USA, and its capture or export prohibited. Kelling Aviaries have, for instance, tried for many years to obtain one, without success.
2. It gave every impression of being a wild bird. It had no difficulty in feeding itself: it spent a lot of time picking over the kitchen refuse in our rubbish pit, and ate many Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* caterpillars that were on a clump of Common Nettles *Urtica dioica* among the lupins (it obviously disliked the spines on them, and would spend a long time bashing one on the ground before swallowing it), and it also ate a few of what looked like slugs.
3. It arrived in a general fall of passerine migrants, at a recognised migration arrival point, and in the main migration season.
4. The preceding weeks of westerlies were ideal for bringing a bird over from the USA.
5. There were a number of American birds in this country at the time [a Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* in Lancashire and two White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis* in Lincolnshire/Norfolk, *Brit. Birds* 65: 322-354].
6. When it arrived, it was very hungry and its plumage very tattered, as if from a long journey. Its first action was to start feeding, and it was feeding almost continuously for the first couple of days.

P. R. COBB

Northern Mockingbird in West Glamorgan

On 24th July 1978, whilst on holiday in the Gower area, my brother, G. J. Rawsley, and I visited Worm's Head, an island owned by the National Trust. The weather in the area during the preceding few days had consisted of strong southwesterly winds of almost gale force.

The Inner Head, a high rise of land with a steep northerly side facing the sea, and a more gentle southern slope which leads to the rocky causeway across to the mainland, is partly covered at its lower level with gorse *Ulex* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. As we approached the gorse area, we became aware of a bird, about the size of a Blackbird *Turdus merula*, sitting in the top of the bushes. It was generally grey in colour, with a long tail and some dark on the wings. I was at a loss as to what it was; my first thoughts were of shrike *Lanius*, Lesser *L. minor* or Great Grey *L. excubitor*, with neither of which I was familiar, but I began to discount shrike because the bird did not have a hooked beak and did not have a black eye-stripe. There were also Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* sitting in the same spot.

We were able to study the bird and make notes:

<p>Approximately size of Song Thrush <i>T. philomelos</i> or Blackbird (Linnets were nearby for direct comparison). Grey from head, down back and onto uppertail. Underparts creamy white; underside of tail white. No distinct eye-</p>	<p>stripe, but appeared to be slightly darker around the eye. Bill black, straight, not hooked. Wings appeared to be dark grey-brown, with some white specks and faint evidence of a double wing-bar when folded.</p>
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Plate 126. Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, Worm's Head, West Glamorgan, 29th July 1978 (Harold E. Grenfell)

When in flight, the white bands went *across* (rather than *along*) the wing and the wings were quite broad, 'fingered' towards the end. White sides to tail evident only in flight. The

length of the tail appeared to be approximately equal to the length of the bird's body. The legs were dark, and quite long.

We watched the bird through a telescope on magnifications of 45×, 30× and 15× at distances of as little as 6 m. The bird occasionally took insects while perched in the gorse; sometimes it perched high and at other times low down in cover. We also saw it running on the ground, snatching insects from the air and also pecking at the ground on the grassy slope directly in front of us, where it was almost too close to use binoculars.

When in flight, which was never for more than about 30 m, the bird hardly flapped its wings, but tended to glide with some slight undulation (perhaps caused by the gusty wind).

We watched the bird for approximately 30 minutes and were joined by the local Assistant National Trust Warden and a holidaymaker, but neither had any idea of what it was. We then left the headland.

The next day, we consulted books at H. E. Grenfell's house and were able to identify it as a Northern Mockingbird. We visited Worm's Head again on 28th July, 1st August and 3rd August. On these visits, we made further observations, noting that the bird had a yellow orbital ring around its black eye; that it often flicked its tail feathers outwards, in the manner of a wagtail *Motacilla*; and that the wings, when at rest, did not cross the back, but hung down at the sides of the tail. The amount of white showing on the wing when folded seemed to vary:



Plates 127 & 128. Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, Worm's Head, West Glamorgan, 29th July 1978 (*Harold E. Grenfell*)

sometimes just odd specks were visible, and on other occasions we could see a definite but faint double wing-bar.

PHILIP RAWNSLEY



Plate 129. Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, Worm's Head, West Glamorgan, 29th July 1978 (Harold E. Grenfell)

I returned home at Mumbles near Swansea late on 25th July 1978 to find that G. J. Rawnsley and Philip Rawnsley, birdwatchers from Yorkshire on holiday in the Gower Peninsula, West Glamorgan, had left a note for me claiming that they had seen a Northern Mockingbird at Worm's Head on 24th July. They had identified the species using American reference books in my library, to which my father had given them access.

On 27th July, S. Usher saw the same bird and took notes, but was unable to identify it. He telephoned D. O. Elias and described what he had seen. On the evening of 28th July, David Elias and I were able to visit The Worm (access had not been possible earlier, because of the tides). On the way, we met the Rawnsley brothers returning from the Head, and they told us that the bird was still there. We finally reached the patch of gorse scrub which they had described and were able to see the bird well and satisfy ourselves that it was indeed a Northern Mockingbird. I returned alone on the following evening and photographed it, approaching down to about 6 m (plates 126-129). The bird remained near the gorse on the Inner Head until at least 31st August 1978.

The following description is based on my own field notes and information sent to me by several other observers:

Brown-grey perching bird with long tail, reminiscent of large thrush *Turdus* or, in some views, a Great Grey Shrike. It was seen with Linnets, a family of Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* and a pair of Blackbirds. It was twice as big as a Linnet and about 12 mm ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch) longer than a Blackbird. The tail was approximately equal to the body length. The bill, rather fine in proportion to the head, was dark grey or black and the upper mandible was steeply curved at the tip, but not hooked as that of a shrike. The eye had a black pupil and pale yellow iris. The thin legs appeared very dark grey and the feet were those of a perching bird. It was not ringed. The forehead, crown, nape, mantle and rump were grey-brown (described as 'dark grey, recalling female Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*', by SU). The chin, throat, neck, breast and undertail were a much lighter brownish-cream or buff.

The upperwings and tail feathers were dark grey-brown except for some white spots or flecking visible on the secondary coverts. The wings, held loosely at the side of the body and tail, also showed evidence of a white wing-bar on the inner primaries. The tail, held horizontally or cocked upwards slightly (a posture reminding SU of a Magpie *Pica pica*), showed white outer feathers. A dark mark ran from the base of the bill around the eye, and a thin dark line extended vertically down the centre of the breast towards the belly. The crown was slightly domed. The darkest part of the folded wing was at the carpal joint and primaries. In flight, two white wing-bars were prominent on the primaries, which were fingered at the tips. The white outer tail feathers were also a feature when the tail was fanned.

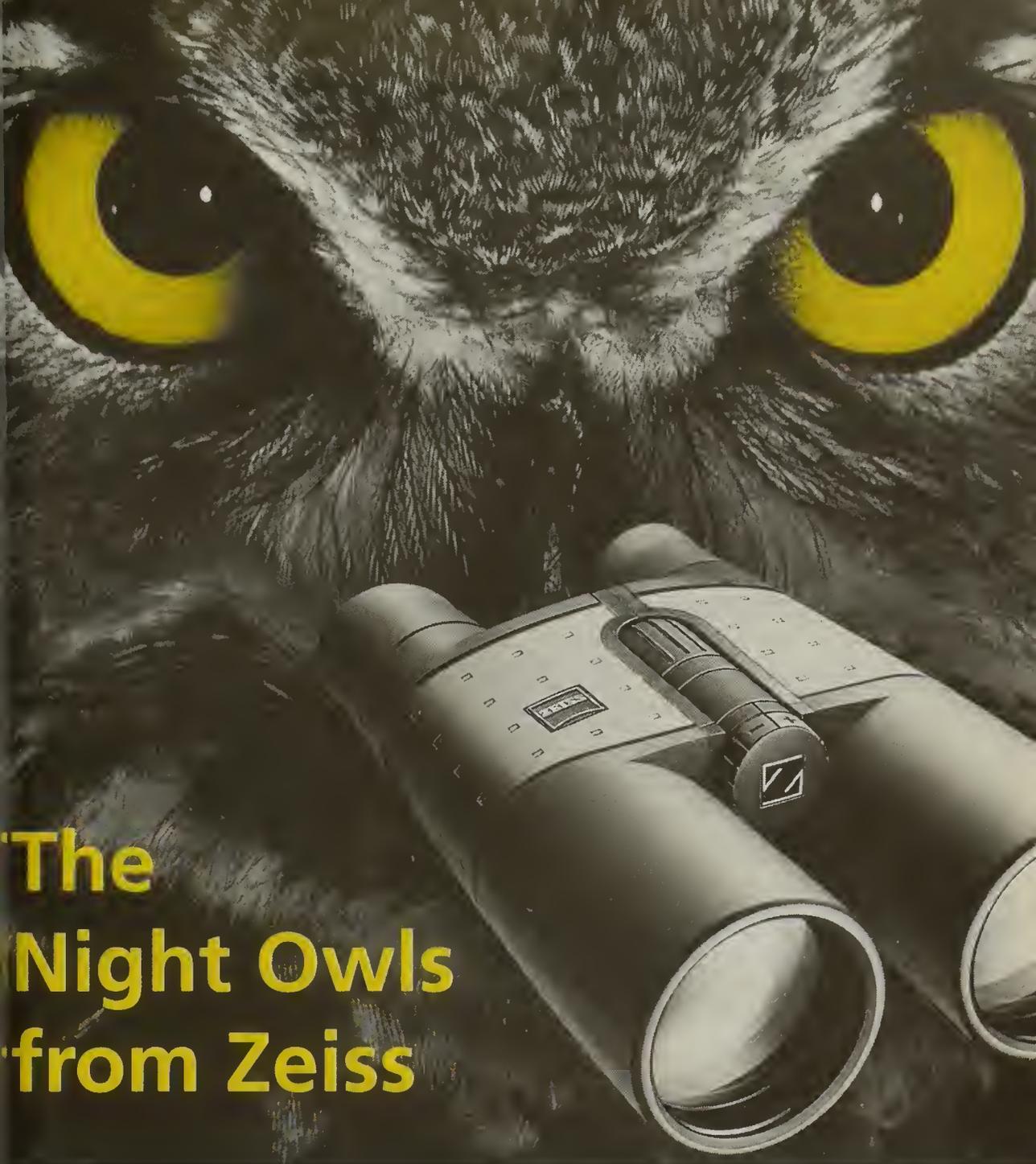
The bird was active and, most often, rather confiding, frequently flying from favoured perches in the gorse to the short turf and back again. It fed from the ground and from gorse bushes, snatched at insects in the air and spent time hidden from sight inside the scrub. It pursued one of the Blackbirds occasionally and was itself mobbed by Linnets and by the Blackbirds. When perched, it flicked its tail frequently. When it took short, clumsy, rather low flights, it fanned its tail, and the white wing-bars were very conspicuous when it turned before alighting.

HAROLD E. GRENFELL

The Woods, 14 Bryn Terrace, Mumbles, Swansea SA3 4HD



Plates 130 & 131. Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, Horsey Island, Essex, May 1988 (*Peter Loud*). (See pages 353-354)



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Northern Mockingbird in Cornwall

First seen at 07.30 GMT on 30th August 1982, flying down from a tall conifer from which it had been disturbed by a couple of Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*. It was about the size of a Blackbird, but with a slimmer body and a long tail, generally grey in colour, with whitish underparts and white wing patches. It called 'chack' a couple of times as it dropped into some small trees. In flight, it had broad rounded wings with large white wing flashes, white underparts, and a long narrow tail which from above was dark grey with white on the outer feathers, the white getting wider towards the distal third of the tail; below, the tail showed a lot more white than it did from above. The flight seemed slow. The bird settled in the lower part of an apple tree, about 1 m above the ground. I went on hands and knees to a small hedge and looked through, from which position I watched the bird at a range of about 4 m for four or five minutes.

When the bird was perched in the open on the lowest branch, I noted the following details:

Head, back and wings grey, with two white wing-bars and a white patch below the longest wing-bar near the edge of the wing; primaries blackish-brown. Underparts a dirty-white with a bit of a greyish wash across the breast and

on the flanks. Undertail-coverts white. Legs dark grey to blackish; eye dull yellow with dark iris. Bill black. The bird was slim and did not seem to be particularly long.

When the bird flew off, being chased by Magpies, the wing pattern was very striking, with a large white wing patch and white wing-bars; the amount of white in the tail suggested that it was on at least two and perhaps three of the outer feathers. Finally, it called two or three times, a harsh 'chack' as it was blown away over Saltash town by the force 7-8 northwesterly gale, and was not seen again.

E. GRIFFITHS

8 Hewitt Close, Saltash, Cornwall

Northern Mockingbird in Essex

On the early evening of 17th May 1988, I was telephoned at work by Malcolm Hutchings, who had been invited onto the privately owned Horsey Island, in Hamford Water, Essex, to try to identify a bird found earlier in the day by Joe Backhouse, who, with his mother, lived on and farmed the island. MH commented that it bore a superficial resemblance to one of the grey shrikes *Lanius*, but it was not a species with which he was familiar.

I had recently returned from Venezuela, where I had seen Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus*, and it occurred to me, as I drove with my wife to the site, that a member of this genus was a distinct possibility. These thoughts were rapidly confirmed as we watched the bird for about 15 minutes before it disappeared prior to dusk. After checking relevant field guides, I was confident that it was, in fact, a Northern Mockingbird.

Other than by boat, Horsey Island is accessible only via a 1-km-long, and potentially dangerous, causeway for about 2½ hours either side of low tide. Very valuable arab horses are kept on the island and several scarce bird species breed there. JB was asked about allowing others onto the island to see the bird if it stayed, and he kindly agreed to a return visit with an absolute maximum of ten people. I therefore took a group of experienced Essex observers over on 21st

May, when the bird performed well for an hour, and it was seen for the last time on 23rd by two other observers, one of whom, Peter Loud, took several photographs (plates 130 & 131, see page 352).

Over seven years on, I still sense occasional resentment and disapproval that details of the bird's presence were 'suppressed', but a landowner must surely retain the right to decide who visits his land.

The following description of the bird was compiled from notes made during the two visits outlined above:

Size and jizz Between Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and Magpie (both in vicinity) in size. When first relocated on 21st, passed off momentarily as Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*. Longish tail with rounded end and movements on ground somewhat reminiscent of large babbler *Turdoides*.

Plumage Crown, nape, mantle and rump grey. Narrow black loreal line. White supercilium generally indistinct and becoming extremely narrow over eye and for short distance to rear of it. Few faint dark streaks below eye, also narrow dark moustachial streaks just discernible at close range. White tips to median and greater coverts created double wing-bar, upper one narrower and broken. Base of greater coverts plus remiges black, though faint brownish tinge visible in some lights. Narrow, whitish fringes to tertials and impression of faint panel formed by abraded pale margins of secondaries. In flight,

extensive white on base of primaries created conspicuous white patches. Closed tail dark above with white edges. When spread, at least outer two feathers wholly white, remainder with white tips except for central pair, which were completely dark. Undertail white except for central dark area at tip. Underparts white and unmarked, breast slightly less pure white than throat and belly. Faintly creamy tinge to underparts in some lights.

Bare parts Bill dark, shorter than head length, with slight downward curvature of end of upper mandible. Legs dark grey.

Habitat and behaviour Spent much time on ground in grass field with horses and sheep, fairly frequently flying up to row of hawthorns *Crataegus* or to barbed-wire fence. Once chased off by a male Blackbird. Sometimes cocked tail; once sprang up from ground to catch an insect, like a large pipit *Anthus*. Not heard to call.

Northern Mockingbird originates from southern North America and Central America and was listed by Chandler S. Robbins (*Brit. Birds* 73: 448-457) as one of the Nearctic landbirds that might reach Britain. The Essex individual is the second fully accepted, Category A record on the British & Irish List, following the Cornish record in 1982 (above). Horsey Island is situated only 10 km from the port of Felixstowe, Suffolk, near to where there have been records of Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* from 30th June to 8th July 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 395-400) and White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* from 31st May to 8th June 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 530-531). That the Northern Mockingbird's arrival had been ship-assisted is obviously a possibility.

SIMON COX

754 St John's Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO16 8BN

EDITORIAL COMMENT Rob Hume, Chairman of the British Birds Rarities Committee, has commented: 'As there was no problem with the identification of these individuals, the only difficulty was deciding on their provenance, which became a matter for the BOURC.'

Dr David T. Parkin, Chairman of the BOURC, has commented as follows: 'A review of the literature and correspondence with North American ornithologists confirmed that Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* is fairly sedentary over much of its range but is a short-distance migrant in the northern areas such as Quebec. It has been recorded on Sable Island over 40 times, and also on

Bermuda. Apparently, at migration stop-over points, it is typically outnumbered by both Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* and Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*, and this imbalance is reflected in the observations of Durand (*Brit. Birds* 65: 436), who, on over 100 North Atlantic voyages during 1961-65, recorded both of these species, but no Northern Mockingbirds. Grey Catbird and Brown Thrasher have been recorded in Great Britain and Ireland once each, suggesting that Northern Mockingbird is a possible, but unlikely, vagrant.

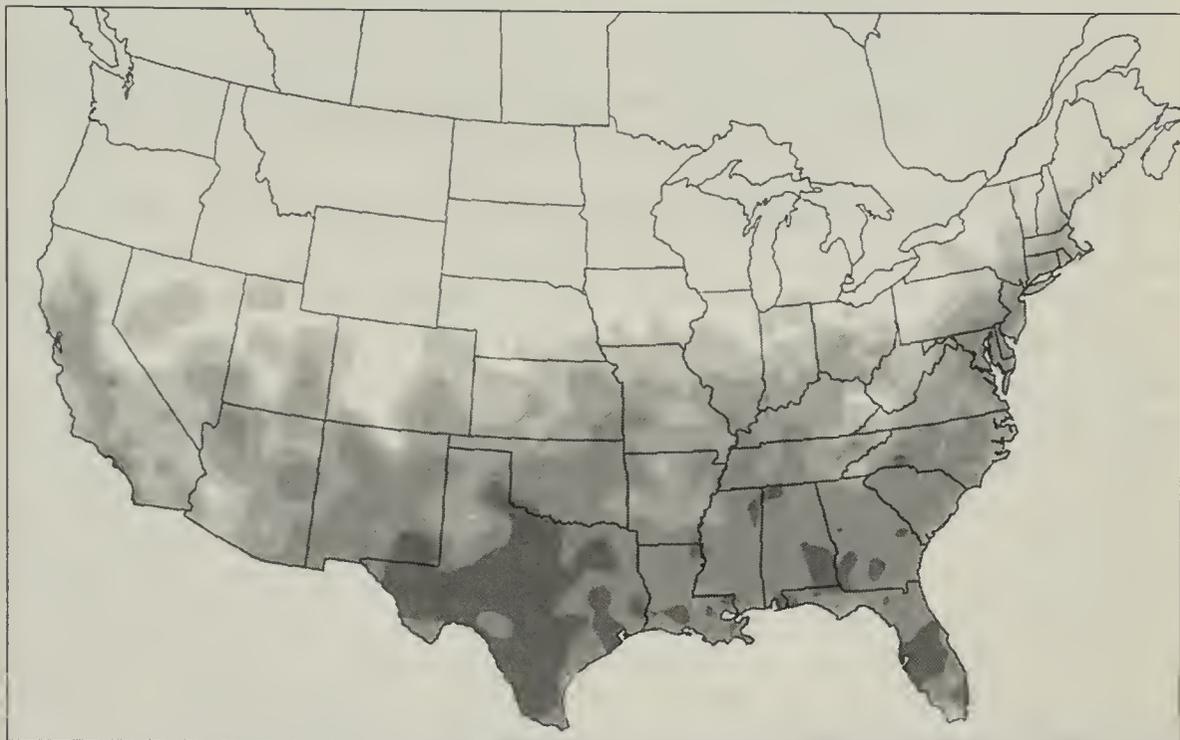


Fig. 1. Summer distribution of Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* (reproduced by permission of Academic Press from Price, Droege & Price, 1995, *Summer Atlas of North American Birds*)

The status of Northern Mockingbird in captivity varied between 1970 and 1990. It was advertised for sale in *Cage & Aviary Birds* until 1979, but not subsequently (Tim Inskipp *in litt.*). Advertisements for “mockingbirds” in the 1980s and 1990s are believed to refer to South American species. Applications were made to the Department of the Environment to import Northern Mockingbirds in the early 1980s, but apparently were not utilised. Imports of North American species, mainly through Mexico, became much rarer after the September 1982 Mexican export ban came into force, although imports into Belgium and the Netherlands may have continued, and some North American breeding species still find their way into the European cage-bird trade.

The bird seen at Blakeney Point in August 1971 was described by one observer as “tail and wings heavily abraded, and the forehead had feathers missing forming a bald patch just above the bill”. To most members of the BOURC, this suggested a period of captivity. The species was known to be in trade at the time, and the presence of Yellow-billed Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria* and a glossy-starling *Lamprolornis* nearby did nothing to help the scenario. The bird was not admitted to any category.

The Northern Mockingbird at Worm’s Head in July-August 1978 caused long and heated argument around the Committee. No-one seemed to believe that the

bird had arrived under its own steam: the debate centred upon the relative likelihoods of assisted passage and escape. In favour of ship-assistance were location (Worm's Head projects into the sea and is clearly visible from boats arriving from the west) and habitat (if an escape from captivity, why should it fly past extensive suburban gardens around Swansea, and land on a relatively inhospitable headland?). Against were the date, which was very early for an American vagrant (although the earliest Sable Island bird was on 17th August) and availability in captivity at the time. The plumage details were not sufficient for racial identity to be determined, so this could not help. The Committee was split and, although there was a majority for Category A, this did not reach the required two-thirds. Under the rules of the Committee, the bird was assigned to Category D.

'By the time that the Saltash bird was found, the species had become much rarer in captivity. It was found on 30th August (which is a more typical date for transatlantic vagrants), on the day after a Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* in the Isles of Scilly, two days before a Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* in Cornwall, and six days before a Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina* in Orkney. Ship-assistance was recognised as a possible source, but this does not prevent the admittance of the record to Category A.

'The bird found at Hamford Water in May 1988 differed in being a spring record. Again, the proximity to the major container ports of Essex suggested ship-assistance, and more recent records of White-throated *Zonotrichia albicollis* and Lark Sparrows *Chondestes grammacus* in the area are consistent with this explanation. The bird was also admitted to Category A.

'On the strength of the Saltash and Hamford Water records, Northern Mockingbird was admitted to the British & Irish List (*Ibis* 135: 496).'



Plate 132. Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*, Durlston Head, Dorset, 23rd November 1966 (*D. J. Godfrey*). Previously unpublished photograph of the first, and still the only, one to be recorded in Britain & Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 60: 323; 61: 349, 550-553).



'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'



and T & A D
POYSER

With a short-list of eight excellent, but extremely varied, sets of illustrations, the judges had — as usual — to resort to detailed voting to sort out the final placings.

The winners were as follows:

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1996

1st Dan Powell (Fareham, Hampshire)

2nd John M. Walters (Buckfastleigh, Devon)

3rd Chris Orgill (Chilwell, Nottingham)

David Cook (Cumbria) was placed fourth, and the following were also in the final short-list: Ernest Leahy (Hertfordshire), Simon Patient (Essex), Anthony Smith (Merseyside) and Michael Webb (Isle of Wight).

We usually receive only a handful of entries, and should like to receive many more, from artists aged 21 or under for the award set up in the memory of Richard Richardson, the Norfolk bird-artist. This year's winner, who was runner-up last year, was:

THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD, 1996

1st Simon Patient (Maldon, Essex)

The PJC Award, set up by David Cook in memory of his first wife Pauline, is for a drawing which particularly attracts the judges for some outstanding quality, artistic or ornithological, or, as in this case, both:

THE PJC AWARD, 1996

1st Dan Cole (Brightwalton, Berkshire)

Drawings by two other artists, Ernest Leahy and Michael Webb, were also short-listed for this award.

The work of the three leading artists provides a considerable contrast of styles. After two second and one third placings in the last three years, it was perhaps not surprising to find Dan Powell at last achieving the coveted first place, but it was no walkover. John M. Walters also has a very free energetic line, while Chris Orgill's drawings are more detailed and controlled. There were also excellent drawings among those of the short-listed artists and some of these will find their way onto, or between, the covers of *BB* in the coming year.



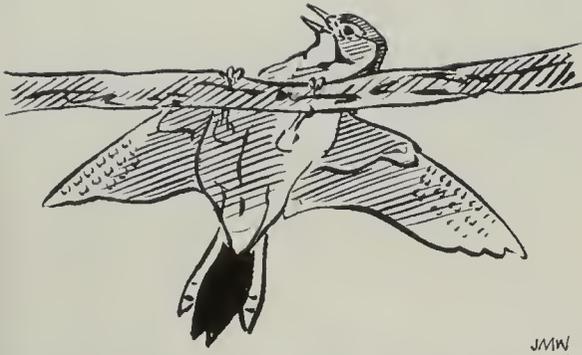
BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Lostanges, France
(Dan Powell)



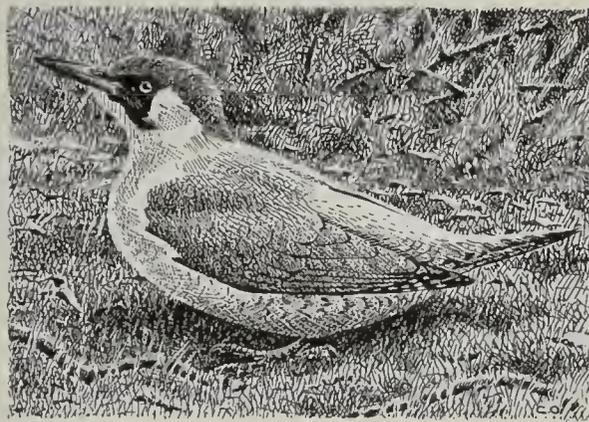
BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros*, Lostanges, France
(Dan Powell)



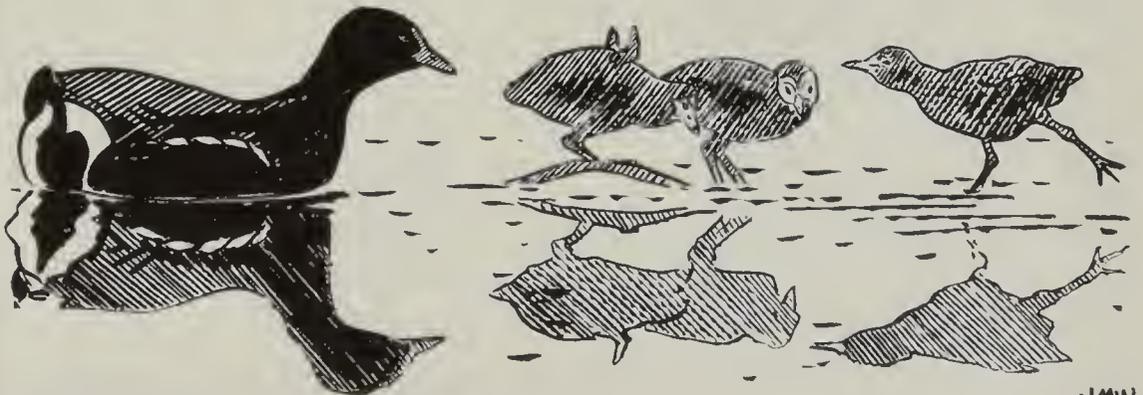
BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner:
Little Owl *Athene noctua*, Lostanges, France
(Dan Powell)



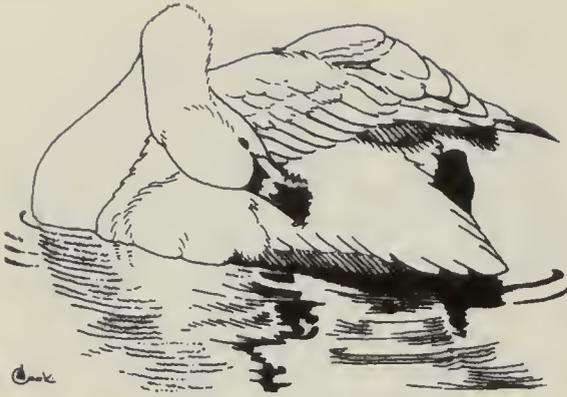
Female Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Dendrocopos minor displaying and calling,
Hembury Woods, Devon, February 1995
(John M. Walters)



Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*,
Attenborough, Nottinghamshire, 10th January
1996 (Chris Orgill)



Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus*, Lakeside, Hayling Island, Hampshire, June 1995 (John M. Walters)



Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* preening
(David Cook)



RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD winner: Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Beeleigh, Essex
(Simon Patient)



PJC Award winner: Little Owls *Athene noctua* (Dan Cole)

All the winning drawings, and many more, will be exhibited on the BIY display at the Society of Wildlife Artists Annual Exhibition at the Mall Galleries in London from 25th July to 9th August 1996, and at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water during 16th-18th August.

The regular judges were delighted to welcome Bruce Pearson (President of the SWLA) as a new permanent member of the panel.

We are extremely grateful to the new sponsors of BIY, *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser*, for their support of this long-standing and influential competition. We are delighted that this will continue for at least another two years.

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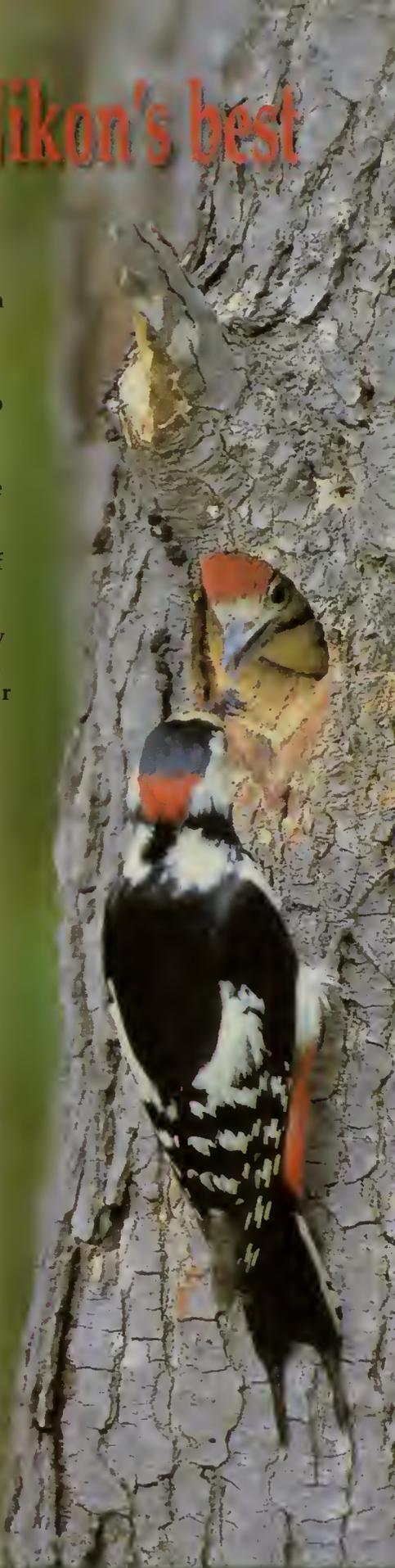


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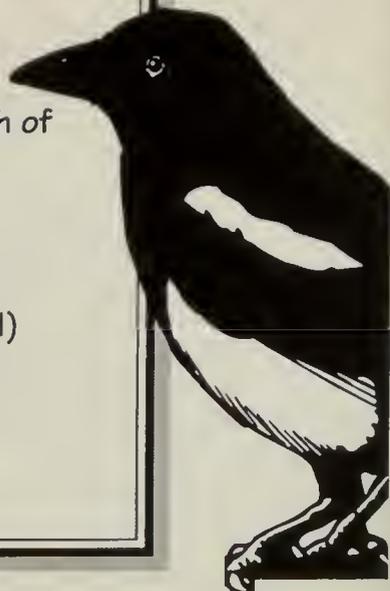
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MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS

The aims of this feature, which we inaugurated almost 20 years ago, in December 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 495), have been not only to provide an entertaining puzzle, but also to focus attention on a series of identification problems, with instructive and educational texts by a variety of experts. The idea has since been copied by a score of other journals and magazines worldwide — and we are appropriately flattered — so now, at the instigation of former BBRC Chairman, Peter Lansdown, it has been developed in a new format. Each month, we shall include two photographs for readers to study prior to reading the text, which will concentrate on the identification (and ageing whenever appropriate) of the species featured. The first such pair of photographs appears below.



Plate 133. Mystery photograph 197A.



Plate 134. Mystery photograph 197B.

197 In Britain and Ireland, Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* is best known as a scarce passage migrant, with most being observed in August, September and October. Its North American counterpart, Sora Crake *P. carolina*, was recorded here on 12 occasions up to the end of 1994; nine of the 12 individuals were discovered in late September and October. The two species are sufficiently alike to require close study to establish the identification firmly. Clearly, such scrutiny could pay dividends, especially in late autumn.

The mystery photographs were both taken by Robin Chittenden in October 1991 on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly: photograph A shows a first-winter Sora Crake and photograph B shows a juvenile Spotted Crake.

Sora and Spotted Crakes are often difficult to observe, and it is important to prioritise those characters on which to concentrate to achieve a positive identification. The base of the bill on first-winter and adult Sora Crake is a clear yellow and, at all ages, it lacks the orange or red possessed by Spotted Crake. Other than when in juvenile plumage, the rarer species shows some trace of the black facial patch which, on an adult Sora Crake, covers the forehead, lores and chin and sometimes extends to the throat and, in a contiguous stripe, the upper breast. It also shows a clean-cut, black central crown-stripe. Both features are

absent from Spotted Crakes of all ages. Unlike the commoner species, Sora Crake almost completely lacks white spotting and speckling on the head, neck, sides of the throat and upper breast. In early autumn, however, a worn, unmoulted adult Spotted Crake also lacks these markings.

Sora Crake's comparatively broader-based and deeper-based bill is of limited value in field identification in view of the variation in bill size between males and females of both species, and its longer and more pointed tail is a subjective character. The diagnostic tiny, white triangle immediately behind the orbital ring of Sora Crake is useful only at close range. That species' nearly unspotted, tawnier brown wing-coverts are a good distinguishing feature except when they are cloaked by the scapulars and/or the fluffed-up flank feathers, though a worn, unmoulted Spotted Crake similarly shows almost unmarked wing-coverts. Compared with the commoner species, Sora Crake has thinner, more delicate-looking white fringes to the feathers of its mantle and its scapulars, fewer white spots on its back, rump and tail, less white on its secondaries and tertials, darker and duller inner fringes to its tertials, and a narrower white leading edge to the wing. The off-white or pure white usually shown by Sora Crake on all but the basal portion of its undertail-coverts, though distinct from the normal buff of Spotted Crake, can be matched by a worn, unmoulted adult Spotted Crake.

In both species, juvenile plumage is of short duration. Because of the variation in the timing of the breeding cycle and because of second broods, however, a juvenile can be encountered at any time from late June to early October and, exceptionally, as late as December. The Sora Crake in photograph A can be aged as a first-winter by its yellow and green bill (lacking yellow on a juvenile and mainly yellow on an adult), its pale grey-brown head with buff supercilium and black crown-stripe (dirty, plain pale brown on a juvenile and contrasting blue-grey, rich brown and black on an adult), the black mark on its throat (absent on a juvenile and more extensive on an adult) and its leg colour (flesh-coloured to bright brownish on a juvenile and green to yellow-green on a first-winter and an adult). Were it visible, the Sora Crake's brown or red-brown iris (like that of an adult, but unlike the olive-green iris of a juvenile) would also have helped to determine its age. In autumn, juvenile, first-winter and freshly moulted adult Spotted Crakes are very alike. The Spotted Crake in photograph B can be aged as a juvenile by its leg colour (flesh-coloured, bright brownish, brownish-olive or dirty olive-green on a juvenile and invariably olive-green on a first-winter and an adult). Were all its features visible, its iris colour (olive-green on a juvenile, brownish on a first-winter and bright brown on an adult) and its less contrasting flank-barring would have assisted ageing.

PETER LANSDOWN

197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, Glamorgan CF2 6UG

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NOTES

Incubation period and nestlings of Dupont's Lark

BWP (vol. 5) gives the breeding season of Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti* as March-May, but does not describe the incubation period or the appearance of the nestlings.

On 18th June 1990, near Belchite, Spain, I found an adult Dupont's Lark incubating three fresh eggs. By about 06.00 hours on 29th June, the eggs had still not hatched, but around 07.00 hours on 30th I found three chicks in the nest; the incubation period is therefore 12-13 days, as for other West European larks. A photograph taken on 30th June (plate 135) shows that the nestlings have the same mouth pattern as all other European larks: yellow, with five black spots (one at each corner of the tongue in a triangular pattern, plus one inside each mandible tip), the size and shape of the spots varying with species.

In this part of Spain, several nests of this species have been found with young in April. Since there were many singing males in early June in this same area, it seems highly likely that the species is double-brooded.

PETER CASTELL

Fairlawn, 679 Chester Road, Great Sutton, South Wirral L66 2LN

Nestlings of Bimaculated Lark

Small nestlings of the Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* are described in *BWP* (vol. 5), based on information from Armenia, as altricial and nidicolous, with sparse straw-yellow down, yellowish-pink skin, pale brown bill, and pale yellow legs, feet and claws; a description of the mouth is not included.

In early June 1992, in central Turkey, I located several nests of this species at about 1,250 m near the town of Aksaray. On 18th June, the young at one nest were about two days old (plate 136): they had yellow mouths with five black spots, one at each corner of the tongue and one inside the tip of each mandible. This pattern of five black spots is common to all larks breeding in western Europe (and possibly in the Western Palearctic), the size and shape of the spots varying according to species.

PETER CASTELL

Fairlawn, 679 Chester Road, Great Sutton, South Wirral L66 2LN

Notes on the nesting of Green Warbler in northern Turkey

BWP (vol. 6), using data from studies in the former USSR and Iran, gives the incubation period of the Green Warbler *Phylloscopus (trochiloides) nitidus* as '14 days, perhaps 15-16 (1 nest), beginning with last egg', and describes the nestling as having light grey down and pale yellow gape flanges.

In spring 1992, in the area of Abant Gölü in northern Turkey, I located two Green Warbler nests on the ground on almost vertical banks in deciduous woodland, possibly the first nests of this isolated western population to be found. On 29th May, one nest (*A*) was complete and the other (*B*) almost so. On 3rd June, nest *A* had three eggs and the other held two. On 20th June,



Plate 135. Nest and nestlings of Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*, Spain, June 1990 (P. Castell)



Plate 136. Nest and nestlings of Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*, Turkey, June 1992 (P. Castell)



Plate 137. Nest and nestlings of Green Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Turkey, June 1992 (P. Castell)

there were six newly hatched young no more than one day old in nest *A*, while nest *B* held six deserted eggs. Two days later, the six young were still present, now estimated at three to four days old. Assuming that eggs were laid at daily intervals, with incubation commencing on 6th June, then incubation lasted a maximum of 14 days (possibly 13). The nestlings on 20th June had mouths wholly yellow, with the gape flanges a considerably paler yellow (plate 137).

PETER CASTELL

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Note that the Green Warbler, although treated as a full species by *BWP*, is now generally regarded as a subspecies of Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides* (e.g. *Ibis* 135: 221; *Brit. Birds* 86: 517).



LETTERS

Naturalised organisms: the role of time in the definition of re-establishment

The recent British Ornithologists' Union conference on 'Feral and introduced birds' prompted Holmes & Stroud (1995) to suggest a possible set of standard terms for describing the status of naturalised birds. Indeed, these terms could equally apply to other groups (e.g. plants, insects) as well as birds. This note is concerned with developing the term 'Naturalised re-establishment', which they defined as 'a successful re-establishment of a species in areas of former occurrence'. They went on to point out that such terms require a geographical reference. I suggest that a temporal reference is also needed.

For example, the Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* is currently recorded only as accidental in Britain (Cramp 1985), but is recorded from British Post-glacial deposits. For example, Bramwell & Yalden (1988) described it as occurring in Mesolithic deposits from Demen's Dale, Derbyshire. Should the introduction of a bird which occurred in Britain around 10,000-8,000 years ago be classed as naturalised re-establishment or as naturalised establishment.

Another interesting example is the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, which has been re-established in northwest Scotland, an area of Britain where it was quite common during the nineteenth century (Love 1993). This species did, however, formerly have a much wider distribution in Britain, remains having been found at an early Anglo-Saxon settlement in the Thames valley, dated to around the fifth century AD (Miles 1987). How should we describe an attempt to introduce this bird to southeast England?

What, therefore, should be the time limit for describing an introduction as a re-establishment? I suggest that the start of the Post-glacial (around 10,000 years

ago) would be the *earliest* appropriate date. Few conservationists would want to talk about the potential for re-establishing the Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius*, which occurred here in at least one previous interglacial (e.g. Stuart 1995), even if global warming created the correct conditions for it. A more recent cut-off point would be 5,000 years ago, which marks the completion of development of British woodland before human forest clearance started to open up the countryside (Bennett 1989). Such a definition would exclude the Eagle Owl record described above. A date of 5,000 years probably comes nearest to defining the 'natural' fauna and flora of Britain, although there have been some presumably natural changes since then. For example, Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* expanded northwards in Scotland for a short period about 4,000 years ago (Gear & Huntley 1991) and Beech *Fagus sylvaticus* and Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* reached Britain after that date (Bennett 1989). A working definition for re-establishment could be that an organism occurred in the area sometime during the last 5,000 years.

Taking 5,000 years ago as the cut-off date would mean that for mammals one could write of the re-establishment of the European Beaver *Castor fiber* or the Grey Wolf *Canis lupus*, but not of the Lynx *Felis lynx*, which probably became extinct early in the Post-glacial (Stuart 1995). The alternative approach would be to define re-establishment as the introduction of species *eliminated by Man* in the past. The problems associated with trying to demonstrate a human cause for extinctions based on the archaeological record (e.g. Diamond 1989) suggest that this would be a less useful approach than taking a given cut-off date. The cause of extinction should, however, be identified as clearly as possible before a decision to re-establish is made.

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Naturalised feral?

You invited comments on the terminology proposed by J. S. Holmes and D. A. Stroud to describe naturalised birds (*Brit. Birds* 88: 602-603).

Is there any process the name of which does not derive from a verb? I should be surprised if there were. After all, a process is something that happens. Have you ever seen a bird 'feralling'? 'Feral' is an adjective and describes not a process, but an achieved state, or, if you like, an outcome. An individual Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* might live in a feral state, but it must be naturalised in order to do so and the same goes for the species as a whole. As in the case of the 'feral domesticated' Rock Dove *Columba livia*, the *process* involved will have been introduction and the correct term of description would be the same as for Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*: 'naturalised introduction'.

To use 'feral' to describe the outcome of 'gone-wild' domesticated species when 'naturalised' is a sufficiently all-embracing term seems pedantic and possibly misleading since it might imply that feral birds are somehow not naturalised. That leaves two options: either to regard the term 'feral' as superfluous and to discourage its use altogether; or to accept its now common usage as a synonym for 'naturalised', even though this is wider than the dictionary definition. Would we really gain that much by restricting it to its original meaning? Occasionally it is worth conceding that English is a living language — especially bearing in mind that, whatever any committee decides, at the end of the day the birding community will do as it pleases.

JASON SMART

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Naturalised birds: feral, exotic, introduced or alien?

Since my name was included among the group who 'developed the suggestions presented in the letter' under the above heading (*Brit. Birds* 88: 602-603), may I please comment on, and disassociate myself from, some of the contents of that letter, which was written without my prior knowledge?

To accompany the term 'naturalised' with a qualifier such as 'feral', 'introduction', 're-establishment' or 'establishment' is, in my opinion, both wrong and tautological. The correct definitions of terms associated with non-native species (not only birds) are, I suggest, as follows:

ACCLIMATISATION Living in the wild in an alien environment or climate with the support of and dependent (e.g. for food and shelter) on Man. Grown or become habituated to a new climate.

ADVENTIVE An introduced animal or plant which is not as yet established in the wild.

ALIEN See Exotic.

ALLOCHTHONOUS See Exotic.

AUTOCHTHONOUS See Native.

COLONISATION See Naturalisation.

ESTABLISHMENT See Naturalisation.

EXOTIC An animal or plant native to an area outside, or foreign to, the one under discussion. An introduced species.

FERAL An animal that has reverted to the wild from domestication. 'Feral' should never be used to describe the naturalisation of a wild (i.e. non-domesticated) species.

INDIGENE See Native.

INTRODUCTION The deliberate or accidental release by Man of an animal or plant

into a country or geographic area in which it is not known to have occurred within historic times. The movement by Man, either deliberately or accidentally, of a living organism to a new location outside its current geographic range.

INVASIVE An introduced animal or plant. (Not necessarily one that has had a negative ecological impact).

NATIVE An animal or plant that is a member of the natural biotic community of the area under discussion.

NATURALISATION The establishment in the wild of free-living, self-maintaining and self-perpetuating populations of introduced animals and plants unsupported by and independent of Man.

REINTRODUCTION The deliberate release by Man of an animal or plant into a geographic area in which it was indigenous in historic times, but where it subsequently became extinct.

RE STOCKING The deliberate release by Man of an animal or plant into an area in which it already occurs, with the intention of augmenting the existing population.

STOCKING See Translocation.

TRANSLOCATION The deliberate (or more rarely accidental) movement by Man of an animal or plant from an area in which it is established, as either native or alien, to another area within the same geographic range.

TRANSPLANTATION See Translocation.

With reference to some of the other points mentioned in the earlier letter:

1. I agree that mere keeping in captivity does not constitute domestication, and that the 'Feral Pigeon' [Rock Dove] *Columba livia* and perhaps the Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* are the only British feral birds.

2. I do not agree that the term 'reintroduced' is incorrect because 'it implies that the species was *introduced* in the first place'. The relevant IUCN Species Survival Commission Specialist Group, of which I am a member, is the Re-introduction Specialist Group, and 'reintroduction' is the internationally accepted term. The term 'reclaimed' when applied to land acquired for cultivation does not imply that the land was *claimed* for that purpose in the first place.

CHRISTOPHER LEVER

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EDITORIAL COMMENT J. S. Holmes and David Stroud have responded as follows: 'It seems that we entirely misread Sir Christopher Lever's view of our proposals and have written to him to apologise for any offence which we may inadvertently have caused. The suggestions which we presented (*Brit. Birds* 88: 602-603) received general support during discussions at the Conference, but it was not our intention to imply that all those named in the acknowledgments, or present at the discussions, agree with them. The content of the letter was entirely the responsibility of the authors. The intention is not to impose our terms on everyone, but to suggest that they might be useful in aiding thinking about the problems by distinguishing between origin, process and outcome. This is an approach which we still believe is helpful.

'Whilst the term "reintroduced" is used widely, this does not imply that it is used correctly. "Re-establishment" is being used increasingly, and we feel that this is a more accurate description of the process, for the reasons indicated in our letter. Since the 1980s, the statutory nature conservation agencies have usually avoided the use of "reclaimed" precisely because it *does* imply "claimed again". When wishing to refer to the process of gaining land from, for example, the intertidal zone, the word "land-claim" is the more accurate term and is widely used by conservation organisations (as in, for example, the NCC's major volume on *Nature Conservation and Estuaries in Great Britain*).

'We do not agree that a whole species being naturalised is a prerequisite for an individual of that species to be considered as living in a feral state. Some Muscovy Ducks live in a feral state. The question is whether the species as a whole is naturalised (and hence a naturalised feral species).

'The apparently differing interpretations of "introduced" by two correspondents above are illustrative of the confusion that we were hoping to eliminate. Whilst our suggestions may not trip off the tongue in the way that many of the traditional descriptions do, and may risk being seen as tautological, we believe that they go some way towards clarifying the complex nature of such species.'



REQUEST

Photo requirements

For future features in *British Birds*, we seek original transparencies, colour prints or black-and-white prints of the following:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Dalmatian Pelican <i>Pelecanus crispus</i> (in flight from below) | Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i> (interesting behaviour) |
| Ruddy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i> (in recent 'invasion') | Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i> |
| Monk Vulture <i>Aegypius monachus</i> (in flight from below) | Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> (interesting behaviour) |
| Elegant Tern <i>Sterna elegans</i> (in Ireland) | Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i> (interesting behaviour) |
| Blue-cheeked Bee-eater <i>Merops superciliosus</i> (in flight from below) | Common Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i> (in UK) |
| European Bee-eater <i>M. apiaster</i> (in flight from below) | Cirl Bunting <i>Emberiza cirrus</i> (in UK) |
| Syrian Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i> | All 1995 rarities (see 'The Carl Zeiss Award' on page 371) |
| Cedar Waxwing <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i> (adult) | |

Please send transparencies or prints to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



RARITIES COMMITTEE NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



A vacancy for BBRC membership will arise on 1st April 1997. We have already requested nominations to be sent to me, with names and addresses of two supporters, by 31st October 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 176). The Committee itself does not propose to nominate anyone, in order to encourage nominations without a perceived fear of 'losing' to the 'official candidate'. Candidates should have a proven ability in the field and a wide experience of a substantial proportion of the species on the Committee's list; experience of record assessment, with an objective and fair-minded approach to the subject; knowledge of the national rarity scene; an ability to deal with paperwork in an organised fashion; and time to spend assessing reports, which will require several hours per week in most months of the year for several years.

In November 1996, a list of candidates will be sent to county/regional recorders and bird-observatory wardens, with a voting slip. In widening the electorate, the BBRC decided that the greater contact with more observers normally experienced at a county level should be reflected in a higher number of votes available to counties than to observatories. Many observatory wardens and some of their committees have regular contact with observers, but most birders who visit observatories no longer stay there, nor in many cases even enter the buildings or speak to the staff.

We propose, therefore, that each observatory may cast two votes, while each county or regional recorder shall have five votes. These may be allocated in any combination. We want to extend voting to regional record committees, bird-club committees and other interested parties who deal with the BBRC and observers. Rather than using a complex system of returns, however, we leave it to recorders and their respective clubs and committees to ensure that everyone is properly involved: a discussion at a committee meeting, or over a pint, might be the best way to decide the allocation of votes.

Our fear early in 1996 was that we would be swamped with difficult submissions of Arctic Redpolls *Carduelis hornemanni*. That we shall be swamped is beyond doubt; but, so far, submissions have been of a commendably high standard, to the credit of observers, and also of county recorders, who have helped greatly by sorting reports and submitting them in properly organised batches. Rather than heaps of reports from dozens of people reporting different numbers, on different days, from overlapping locations, it is immensely helpful to have received organised submissions that reflect the full picture at each site. It is all too easy to assume that 'someone else is doing it', so, if you have seen a rare bird that has not, to your knowledge, so far been submitted to us, or one from past years that has not appeared in a Report, please let us know, preferably via the appropriate recorder, so that the record can be made as complete as possible.

R. A. HUME

15 Cedar Gardens, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1EY



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Carl Zeiss Award



Thanks to *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, the winner of the Carl Zeiss Award will be able to choose as his or her prize a pair of traditional *Zeiss* 10 × 40 binoculars or 7 × 42 binoculars, or the new 'Night Owl' 7 × 42 binoculars.

The presentation will take place at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water in August, and the winner's travelling expenses will be paid by *Zeiss* so that he or she can attend the Fair.

The Carl Zeiss Award is presented annually to the person who supplies the most helpful, interesting and instructive photograph of a rarity taken in Britain and examined by the BBRC during a record circulation.

The four previous winners of the Award were Bob Proctor, Ren Hathway, Dr Adrian Wander and John Szczur. This year's winner will be announced next month.

Carl Zeiss Ltd also presents all runners-up—including everyone whose photograph or documentary drawing is used in the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain', or is published elsewhere in *British Birds* to document a rarity record—with a voucher for a free six-month subscription to *British Birds*. Contributions selected for publication in 'From the Rarities Committee's files' are also eligible. The aim of The Carl Zeiss Award is to encourage full participation in the work of the British Birds Rarities Committee and to reward those whose work helps the Committee to function effectively. We are most grateful to *Zeiss* for this support.

Any photographs (transparencies, colour prints, or black-and-white prints) of 1995 rarities which have not already been submitted should be sent now, please, to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Birding trips with 'BB'

The following trips are planned:

27th November to 8th December 1996 UAE/BAHRAIN with Colin Richardson and Paul Holt to see Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* and Middle East migration in full swing.

2nd-19th February 1997 THAILAND with Phil Round, Jon Dunn & Tim Sharrock, for Siberian winterers such as Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* and Siberian Blue Robin *L. cyane*, and local specialities such as Giant Nuthatch *Sitta magna*.

26th April to 6th May 1997 MALLORCA with Richard Bashford & Alan Harris, for specialities such as Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*, Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* and Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*.

Late May 1997 CANARY ISLANDS with Tony Clarke & Peter Lansdown, for seabirds and endemics such as Blue Chaffinch *Fringilla teydea*, Bolle's Pigeon *Columba bollii*, Laurel Pigeon *C. junoniae*, Tenerife Kinglet *Regulus teneriffae* and Fuerteventura Chat *Saxicola dacotiae*, Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* (perhaps a separate species from McQueen's Bustard *C. (u.) macqueenii* of Asia and the Middle East) and Pilot Whales *Globicephala melaena*.

15th-25th May 1997 POLAND with Steve Rooke & Gregory Lesniewski, visiting the Białowieża forest and seeking Great Snipe *Gallinago media* and Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*.

28th May to 7th June 1997 FINLAND with Dick Forsman & Killian Mullarney, aiming to see all of Finland's owls, and other specialities such as Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus*.

10th-17th July 1997 EGYPT PELAGIC with Hadoram Shirihai & Killian Mullarney, by boat to see Red Sea pelagic specialities and Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, with opportunities for snorkelling over coral reefs, and an overland trip through the heart of Sinai looking for Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii*, Sinai Rosefinch *Carpodacus synoicus*, and many desert species.

4th-11th November 1997 MOROCCO with Bryan Bland & Keith Vinicombe, to Agadir for Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegala*, Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri* and other North African specialities.

As usual, these trips have been planned jointly with the top bird-tour company SUNBIRD. *British Birds* subscribers may claim a 10% reduction on the normal price of all these trips. For more details and the finalised dates, please write, phone or fax to Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; phone Sandy (01767) 682969; fax Sandy (01767) 692481.



MONTHLY MARATHON



The eighth 'Marathon' has been won, and the ninth 'Marathon' has now started. The rules have now been relaxed (see *Brit. Birds* 39: 333).

The passerine in plate 90 was named by competitors as Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (50%), Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix* (24%), Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* (10%), Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* (8%) and Chiffchaff *P. collybita* (7%), with a handful of votes each for Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* and Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*. It was indeed a Willow Warbler, photographed by Dennis Green in Lancashire in June 1983.

The bird in plate 119 was named as half a dozen species, but the main choice was between Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (63%) and Common Gull *L. canus* (36%). Again, the favoured selection was correct; this Ring-billed Gull was photographed by Robin Chittenden in Cornwall in October 1989.

The leader of the pack, Anthony McGeehan, got both right, so has now won his second 'Monthly Marathon'.

The first hurdle in the new, ninth 'Marathon' was the flying bird last month (plate 125), but we have extended the closing date for entries to allow new participants to start on the race for a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday. The identities of the birds in last month's plate 125 and this month's plate 138 (below) may both be submitted on the same postcard, and the closing date for both answers is 15th September 1996. Enter now!

For a free SUNBIRD holiday brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (01767) 682969.



Plate 138. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 122. Second stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue and the amendment on page 333 in the July issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th September 1996.

Identification of 'Monthly marathon' Buff-bellied Pipit

With only two correct identifications of the bird in plate 89, other competitors may like to read how the two successful entrants came to the right conclusion.

Dave McAdams writes: 'I am no expert on Water *Anthus spinoletta* or Buff-bellied Pipits *A. rubescens*, and have never even seen Buff-bellied Pipit before, but the main reason I opted for Buff-bellied rather than Water was the very fine and clearly demarcated streaking on the underside, which is also more extensive than on a typical breeding-plumaged Water Pipit. I guess some Water Pipits are as richly and extensively pinkish buff on the underside as the mystery bird is, but the coloration struck me as being rather extreme and more typical of Buff-bellied. I am not sure as to how reliable or useful these features actually are, so there was indeed some guesswork in my answer.'

Anthony McGeehan writes: 'I could pretend that I didn't gamble on this one [plate 89], but the truth is that I was sweating! However, there is a bit more to it. I am very keen on Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* (a lovely species) and I always make a point of watching *any* I see in America or Canada. I'd love to find Ireland's second of this species, and it is a very likely candidate—which partly explains my fascination/love affair with them. So I was pretty sure the photo was of a spring adult Buff-bellied, but I was worried that Water Pipit *A. spinoletta*, a species I do not know well at all, could look like this. To make things even more complicated, any photos I checked of Buff-bellied, and several American birders that I casually spoke to, all pointed *away* from Buff-bellied. The problems were said to be: (1) too blue-grey on head, (2) too much pink in underparts colour, (3) flank streaking too fine, and (4) flank streaking too extensive on rear flank. Actually, I agreed with this, *but* last spring in New Jersey I'd watched a group of migrant Buff-bellieds (my first there in six trips) and taken as many notes as I could cram into 30 minutes. I was able to see more variation in their plumage tones than I'd expected and, among two pages of on-the-spot notes, had noted some with *all* the features of the "Monthly marathon" pipit. I made comments such as: "Back and nape a lovely 'morning suit' grey"; "Back quite plain, except fine blackish mantle streaks"; "Supercilium peachy-buff"; "Underparts buff or richer pink/peach suffused throughout lower belly to undertail".

'Hence I decided to believe my own field observations. However, what about Water Pipit (and its various subspecies)? Based on not very much evidence, I felt that the rather uniform intensity of underpart peachiness was wrong for Water, which should have been a purer pink on the chest and fading to whiter on the flanks. Equally, I felt the supercilium—which looked of equivalent shade to the underparts—was again not pale enough for a Water Pipit. Again based on my notes, I felt the chest and flank streaks were too fine for a Water and also too extensive on the chest. On Buff-bellied the buff/peach of the underparts seems to fuse into all pale plumage areas, so I reckoned even the weakly buff greater-covert tips were OK for Buff-bellied but wrong—not white or whitish—for a Water Pipit.

'Had the bird turned its head there would have been a lot more to identify it and even a spread tail may well have helped too. I think it's interesting that the considerable range of Buff-bellied Pipit plumage is perhaps not widely appreciated. Of course I'm guessing that this adult is *A. r. rubescens* and not *A. r. japonicus*.'



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

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

Poisoning: an international problem

The deliberate placing of poisons in the countryside with the intention of killing wildlife must be one of the most horrendous environmental crimes. A recent report by the Environmental Panel of the Pesticides Advisory Panel indicated that almost one-third of the investigated killings of wildlife and domestic pets in 1994 were attributed to poisoning. A Scottish gamekeeper was recently fined £2,500 for laying out hens' eggs containing alphachloralose and keeping a bottle with mevinphos in his unlocked vehicle. A Scottish farmer was found guilty of lacing a chicken carcass with strychnine in an attempt to kill Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*, but ended up killing a dog that ate the bait.

The problem is not just north of the border, however, and readers will be familiar with the recent cases where Red Kites *Milvus milvus* from the English release programme were found poisoned. Nor, regrettably, is it simply a British problem. The use of poisons is probably far more widespread than evidence suggests. In parts of Europe where Grey Wolves *Canis lupus* and Golden Jackals *C. aureus* still occur, there is little doubt that stock-owners will make use of poison for what they consider an easy option when 'protecting' their animals. The lack of a network of field naturalists and an imperfect legal system regrettably mean that very few examples come to light.

We have recently heard of one case that impacts on a small population of Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* in Bulgaria. In recent years, considerable work and effort by the joint Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme has resulted in a small but increasing nesting population of Griffon Vultures in the Eastern Rhodope mountains near the Greek border. The population has slowly risen to 16 pairs (*Brit. Birds* 89: 251) in 1995, but with an estimated 12 pairs in 1996. The decrease is the result of two dead, poisoned birds being found on their nests and a further two nests abandoned with suspicions that the adults had died. This can only be considered a very serious crime of international proportions when viewed against the considerable international effort and financial resources that have been directed to the programme.

The Advisory Committee report is available from MAFF Publications, London SE99 7TP, and details of the Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme from 38B Graf Ignatiev st., 1000 - Sofia, Bulgaria.

Chris Mead honoured

We are delighted to note that the British Ornithologists' Union has awarded C. J. Mead its prestigious Union Medal, for his

'24-hour a day selfless devotion to ornithology and the strong support that he has given to the Union over many years'.

Welcome back, Baltimore Oriole!

In its fortieth Supplement to the *Check-list of North American Birds* (Auk 112: 819-839), the American Ornithologists' Union has resplit Northern Oriole *Icterus galbula* into Baltimore Oriole *I. galbula*, Bullock's Oriole *I. bullockii* and Black-backed Oriole *I. abeillei*, which were lumped three decades ago. So the old euphonious names return. (Will we get the lovely Myrtle Warbler back one day?)

Other welcome changes include the harmonisation of AOU with BOU names: European (not British) Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Eurasian (not Northern) Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Red-necked (not Rufous-necked) Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, Black-headed (not Common Black-headed) Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Sky Lark (not Eurasian Skylark) *Alda arvensis*, Tree Pipit (not Brown Tree-Pipit) *Anthus trivialis*, Olive-backed Pipit (not Olive Tree-Pipit) *Anthus*

hodgsoni, Pallas's (not Pallas's Reed) Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* and Reed Bunting (not Common Reed-Bunting) *Emberiza schoeniclus*.

We welcome these further steps towards internationally recognised English names; in every case (except Pallas's Bunting, where we retain Pallas's Reed Bunting), these correspond to the names which we introduced in *British Birds* 3½ years ago.

The Supplement also confirms the split of Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* into Gray-cheeked (our Grey-cheeked) *C. minimus* and Bicknell's Thrush *C. bicknelli*, and splits Rufous-sided Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* into Eastern Towhee *P. erythrophthalmus* and Spotted Towhee *P. maculatus*.

British Birds will be adopting the names Baltimore Oriole and Eastern Towhee to accord with AOU practice.

BP Conservation Awards

This year's winners of the four £3,000 prizes are expeditions to Sangihe and Talaud, Indonesia, led by Jon Riley of the University of York; to Morant Cay, Jamaica, led by Catherine Michael of the University of London; to Zombitse Forest, Madagascar, led by Simon Mustoe of the University of East Anglia; and to the Negros and Panay islands in the Philippines, led by Daniel Bennett of the University of Aberdeen.

The major prize (£10,000), for the best follow-up plans submitted by a previous year's winning team, went to the Galápagos Marine Survey, led by John Brierly.

The awards, which were presented by Sir David Attenborough at a special ceremony at the Mayfair Intercontinental, were conceived by BirdLife International and Fauna & Flora International.

Winner of the BP Conservation Book Prize is *The Day before Yesterday* by Colin Tudge, published by Jonathan Cape.

New BOURC Hon. Sec.

Ian Dawson (RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL) has taken over from Tim Inskipp as Hon. Secretary of the BOU Records Committee. Tim, a member of the BOURC for nearly 20 years, recently retired in rotation.

RSPB helping Corn Crakes

The RSPB is once again appealing to its members for money, this time to go towards helping the UK's most endangered bird, the Corn Crake *Crex crex*. The sum of £300,000 is needed to purchase Onziebust Farm, which covers one-quarter (145 ha) of the Orkney island of Egilsay, and to acquire the lease of the Inner Hebridean island of Oronsay, both of which areas had singing Corn Crakes last year.

Ngulia records broken

In its best autumn ever, the Ringing Group at Ngulia, Kenya, ringed the grand total of 29,591 migrants of 39 species in 1995. The best single day was 20th November, with 3,131 birds (beating the previous best, 24th November 1990, by 699). Seven individual species records were also broken in that one session: 262 White-throated Robins *Irania gutturalis*, 1,408 Thrush Nightingales *Luscinia luscinia* (the highest ever one-day total for any species), 58 Olive-tree Warblers *Hippolais olivetorum*, 36 Barred Warblers *Sylvia nisoria*, 84 Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata*, 128 Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* and 109 Isabelline Shrikes *L. isabellinus*. Enough to whet the most jaded of appetites! (Contributed by Graeme Backhurst, Box 15194, Nairobi, Kenya).

Flanders Moss saved

Scottish Natural Heritage announced in May that Flanders Moss, the largest peat bog in the UK, has been saved from industrial peat extraction. Situated west of Stirling, this important area supports specialist plants including Bog-rosemary *Andromeda polifolia*, Labrador-tea *Ledum palustre* and various *Sphagnum* mosses, while from an ornithological standpoint it hosts internationally important numbers of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* and nationally important numbers of raptors.

XXII IOC

The next International Ornithological Congress will be held in Durban, South Africa, during 16th-22nd August 1998 (note slightly changed dates).

Flamborough Report very early

It is not very often that an annual report for the previous year crosses our desk as early as the beginning of April. *The Flamborough Bird Report*, however, has a certain reputation to live up to. In the *British Birds* Best Annual Bird Report Awards, Flamborough came 1st in 1993 and 2nd in 1994 in the small-membership category and has come up with another excellent publication for 1995. With 85 pages and 15 colour photographs, this is the most comprehensive report yet, detailing 245 species—a record year for Flamborough. Congratulations to all in the Flamborough Ornithological Group. Copies, price £3.40 (incl. p&p), from FOG, 55 Holt Park Crescent, Holt Park, Leeds LS16 7SL.

A late Hobby

Paul Castle, Editor of *Hobby*—the journal of the Wiltshire Ornithological Society, which has been in the top ten of the *British Birds* Best Annual Bird Report Awards for each of the past three years—commented, when sending us the latest issue (no. 21, including the Wiltshire Bird Report 1994): 'Production costs have soared, as you no doubt know only too well!'. Yes, we had noticed.

Later than usual, maybe, but as good as ever. Of special interest to outsiders will be the paper by Paul Castle and Roger Clarke outlining the conservation implications of the food and roosting requirements of the Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* wintering on Salisbury

ICI takes on Little Terns

This summer the Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* breeding at Teesmouth have had new guardians. With the abolition of Cleveland County Council, which previously paid for a full-time warden, the safety of the colony looked threatened. When the County Council took the problem to the Industry Nature Conservation Association (INCA) in Cleveland, however, ICI plc came to the rescue and agreed to support the Little Tern project for 1996 as part of its Nature Link programme, which encourages the conservation of wildlife on and adjacent to ICI sites worldwide. INCA has managed the project on behalf of ICI.

'Dorset Birds'

The 143-page *Dorset Birds 1994*, edited by Martin Cade, includes a spacious systematic list (very easy to scan or peruse), accounts of Dorset's first Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis* and Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* of the race *humei*, and the county's breeding Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* and Wood Larks *Lullula arborea*, and the complete Dorset List, with pre-twentieth-century species, Category D species and pending records listed separately. The front cover features a very attractive painting of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* by Hamish Murray.

The Membership Secretary of the Dorset Bird Club is Eileen Bowman, 53 Lonnen Road, Colehill, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7AT.

Plain (plenty of rough grass with weed seeds for Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis*, and plenty of Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and plenty of Brown Hares *Lepus capensis*, please); and the good news that, in the first of its four years, the WOS breeding-bird tetrad survey has achieved 38% coverage: no surprise when we note that the Chairman of the WOS Tetrad Atlas Group is James Ferguson-Lees, who was Chairman of both the first national *Breeding Atlas* (1976) and the national *Wintering Atlas* (1986).

The Secretary of the WOS is Miss Anna J. Grayson, Westdene, The Ley, Box, Chippenham, Wilts SN14 9JZ.

Bobby Tulloch MBE

Bobby passed away peacefully on 21st May, in hospital in Lerwick, having been in poor health for some while. He was known widely through his writing, photography, appearances on TV and radio, and leading tours all over the World for *Island Holidays*, the National Trust for Scotland and other organisations. It was Bobby who, in 1967, discovered the first British pair of breeding Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca*, on Fetlar. He played the fiddle, was both singer and songwriter, and was a great raconteur. Most of all, he was intensely proud to be a Shetlander. A full obituary will appear in due course. (WD)

'Self Portrait at 76'

Under that title, we received the following lines from Derek Goodwin, stalwart of the Behaviour Notes Panel, which it is only fair to share with all *BB*'s readers:

'There was an old man who said: "My!
What a beautiful bird I espy."
When they asked: "Is it rare?"
He replied: "I don't care,
So long as it pleases my eye."'

Beckoning booming Bitterns back

The Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation and its several partners have spent three years and £30,000 restoring a reedbed near Barton-upon-Humber in the hope of attracting Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*. In the not-too-distant past, up to ten pairs bred there, but since the beds began drying up no booming males have been heard. Now, with one of Britain's largest wetland restorations complete, it is hoped that the Bitterns will return in the next couple of years.

MM winner chooses SUNBIRD trip

At long last, the winner of the sixth 'Monthly marathon', Paul Archer, has selected his prize: a SUNBIRDER trip to Beidaihe, China. Other 'Monthly marathon' winners have chosen Thailand (Pekka J. Nikander and Hannu Jännes), Arctic Canada (Anthony McGeehan), Kenya (Ralph Hobbs), and Hong Kong (Martin Helin).

This month's 'Monthly marathon' is on page 372. Have a go! Maybe *you* will win a SUNBIRD birdwatching trip worth around £2,000.

The Gay Birders Club

The Gay Birders Club was formed in November 1994 and was officially launched at the British Birdwatching Fair in the following August. The Club holds birdwatching days and weekend trips, usually followed by an informal meeting and sometimes a slideshow. Its quarterly newsletter, *Out Birding*, keeps members informed of future events, and includes reviews, letters, ideas and comment. There is a network of Regional Contacts, and the Club is a member of the BTO Bird Club Partnership.

The GBC aims to play a positive role in birding life. The Club understands that, even in today's enlightened society, sexuality can still be a sensitive issue, and respects the need for discretion and confidentiality. Membership is open to all who wish to show their support, whatever their sexuality. If you are interested in joining the Gay Birders Club or would like to learn more, write to GBC, PO Box 9, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7YQ.

Weird & Wonderful

Weird & Wonderful Natural Sounds is the title of a cassette with over 30 truly astonishing noises of birds and beasts, produced by Nigel Tucker and Andrew Jones and available for a mere £1.99 from *BBC Wildlife* credit-card orders, phone 01483-268888 or fax 01483-268889.

BBC Wildlife is also making a special introductory offer of £10 off the usual subscription price (£19.95 for 12 issues, instead of the usual £30.00). Write to PO Box 425, Woking, Surrey GU21 1GP.

'Get into Purple'

Also to be known as 'National Heath Week', the aim of 'Get into Purple' during 7th-15th September is to increase people's awareness of the value of local areas of heathland and the importance of appropriate management in conserving these special areas for wildlife and recreation. The week is a joint initiative by English Nature, the RSPB, the National Trust, local authorities and other bodies. For details, write to English Nature, Unit 1B, Rural Workshops, St Dennis, Cornwall PL26 8DW, or phone/fax Ian Davis on 01726 824982.

Flourpower?

Frank Gribble spotted the reference to 'the high-powered flour-ite telescope' in a feature entitled 'Twitch, twitch' by Dan Glaister in *The Guardian*.

'Twitcher'

Incidentally, the derivation of the word 'twitcher' has recently again been the subject of conjecture, but *should* be universally known, having been thoroughly documented in print in 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 353-355).

Goodbye IWC, hello 'Wings'

Along with its own name change, from the Irish Wildbird Conservancy to IWC-BirdWatch Ireland, the IWCBI (as we suppose we should now call it) has changed the name of *IWC News* to *Wings*.

Change of Recorder's address

Iain P. Gibson, Recorder for Clyde (old counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Dunbarton and Stirling and Perth within Clyde drainage area) has moved to 8 Kenmore View, Howwood, Johnstone, Renfrewshire PA9 1DR.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*

Tim Cleeves—*Northeast*

David Clugston—*Scotland*

Dave Flumm—*Southwest*

Frank Gribble—*Midlands*

Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*

Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*

Don Taylor—*Southeast*

Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*

John Wilson—*Northwest*



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 10th June to 14th July 1996.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/P. feae/P. mollis* Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 11th June.

Frigatebird *Fregata* One from fishing boat east of Raven Point (Co. Wexford), 16th June.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 13th-17th June; Hengistbury Head (Dorset), 19th June.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* Ballycotton, 15th-16th June (first record for Ireland).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Hickling Broad (Norfolk), 10th-21st June.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Elmley RSPB Reserve (Kent), 18th June; Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 22nd-30th June.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* Nanquidno (Cornwall), 12th June; Folkestone (Kent), 13th July; Spurn (Humberside), 14th July.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Farlington Marshes (Hampshire), 6th-14th July.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* St Ouen's Pond (Jersey), 15th June (first record for Jersey).

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* Kielder Forest (Northumberland), 16th-30th June; Doxey Marsh (Staffordshire), 20th June to 14th July.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Fair Isle (Shetland), 12th-13th June.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* Tacumshin, 22nd-23rd June (second record for Ireland).

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* One on rig in Kinsale Gas-field (Co. Cork), 7th-13th June.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* Waterside (Cumbria), 14th July.



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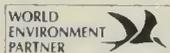
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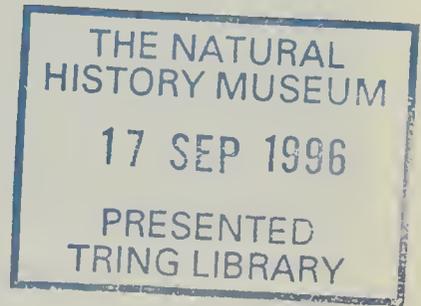
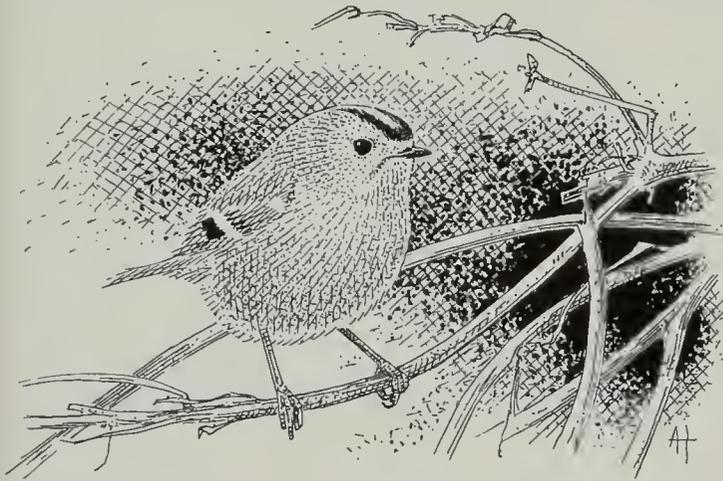
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Status and behaviour of the Tenerife Kinglet

Hans Löhrl, Ellen Thaler and David A. Christie

ABSTRACT The Tenerife Kinglet *Regulus teneriffae* appears to be a little-studied taxon, despite the fact that its taxonomic status has given rise to much debate. This paper summarises our knowledge of this attractive bird.

Over the years, the small kinglet *Regulus* which is endemic to the Canary Islands has been treated both as a subspecies of the Goldcrest *R. regulus* (e.g. Hartert 1932-38; Bannerman 1922, 1963; Cramp 1992) and as a subspecies of the Firecrest *R. ignicapillus* (e.g. Seebohm 1883; Volsøe 1951; Vaurie 1954, 1959; Etchécopar & Hüe 1967), the latter view being followed also, though with some reservation, by Nicolai & Wolters (1971), Mauersberger & Stübs (1971) and Niethammer & Wolters (1972). More recently, A. van Loon (in Cramp 1992) and Beaman (1994) included it as an island race of Goldcrest, though both admit that their decision is not incontrovertible, whereas Sibley & Monroe (1990) considered that these two forms were better treated as allospecies.

The current treatment by *British Birds* (86: 1-2) follows that of Sibley & Monroe (1990), the Canary Islands species being given the English name of Tenerife Kinglet *Regulus teneriffae*. This view is adhered to below, but the situation is by no means fully clarified.

Despite the interest in the taxonomy of this delightful little bird, very little appears to have been published on the species in the last few decades. Indeed, the only major paper of which we are aware is that by Löhrl & Thaler (1980), which detailed observations made on Tenerife and of a captive female. The present paper is largely a summary of that work.

General appearance

The immediate impression given by Tenerife Kinglet is that of a Goldcrest, but with a broad black band on the upper forehead joining the two black stripes that border the central crown, and with narrower pale tips to the tertials. It shares with Goldcrest a prominent, very broad pale surround to the eye and does, in fact, bear little resemblance to Firecrest, lacking that species' bold pale supercilium, black eye-stripe and obvious bronzy 'shoulder' patch.

Distribution

The Tenerife Kinglet is restricted to the outer islands of the Canaries: Tenerife, La Palma, La Gomera and Hierro. It appears to be not uncommon, at least in the Anaga mountains in the northeast of Tenerife, where it occurs in the region of the former laurel (Lauraceae) forests. This area is today dominated by the tree-heaths *Erica arborea* and *E. scoparia*, which would seem to be essential for nesting purposes. It becomes rare in the pine *Pinus* forest, where it occurs only in areas with tree-heath.

Not unexpectedly, the species appears to be wholly resident. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that a female reared in captivity demonstrated migratory restlessness, largely coinciding with the timing of autumn and spring passage periods of central European Goldcrests and Firecrests; its nocturnal unrest was less intense than that of Firecrest, but more continuous than that of Goldcrest. To what extent this single captive reflects the migratory disposition of a Tenerife Kinglet population remains to be seen. A more or less pronounced migratory disposition has, however, been confirmed also for Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* living in the same area (Berthold 1978).

Voice

Volsøe (1951) interpreted Lack & Southern's (1949) description of the Tenerife Kinglet's song as being typical of Firecrest, although he was probably unfamiliar with the latter's song. In playback experiments in Germany, however, Becker (1978) found that both Firecrests and Goldcrests showed little, if any, reaction to the song of Tenerife Kinglet, although Goldcrest reacted well to the kinglet's excitement call; the song was similar in structure to that of Goldcrest, though somewhat more variable.

Sonagrams showed the calls of the captive female Tenerife Kinglet to be Goldcrest-like, though somewhat lower in pitch; 63 Goldcrests and 18 Firecrests showed hardly any recognisable individual variations (Thaler 1979).

A clear difference exists, however, in the use of the 'short alarm-call'. This call, used very frequently by Goldcrests and Firecrests, apparently indicates low-intensity alarm when danger is not immediately threatening, and is given by both sexes in various other situations as an excitement call (Thaler 1979). In a densely occupied breeding area on Tenerife, males (apparently only males?) uttered it frequently at the start of the breeding season during territorial disputes, the call in this case probably having the function of deterring rivals ('rival-call': see Thielcke 1970). It seems that Tenerife Kinglets (especially females?) require a much stronger stimulus to utter the short alarm, which is clearly of lower threshold level in the cases of Goldcrest and Firecrest.



Plate 139. Captive female Tenerife Kinglet *Regulus teneriffae*, October 1983 (Ellen Thaler). Plumage of male is identical unless the crown feathers are raised.



Plate 140. Aggressive display by captive female Tenerife Kinglet *Regulus teneriffae*, March 1981 (Ellen Thaler). Male would show more orange in crown.



Plate 141. Captive female Tenerife Kinglet *Regulus teneriffae* wing-flicking while foraging on snow, January 1981 (Ellen Thaler). Note taxon's diagnostically broad black stripe on forecrown.

Breeding

Pre-laying period

At one site 725 m above sea level, a female was carrying nest material on 1st March; the following day, a completed nest was found. If nest-building takes 15-20 days (Thaler 1976), construction must have started no later than mid February, bearing in mind that building activity ceases in wet and cool weather (which at this time of the year is frequent in the breeding area). Another pair had fledged young on 7th April, which means that eggs were laid in the first few days of March. The breeding season is doubtless later at higher altitudes.

As with Goldcrest, the male shares in nest-building. During 1979-80, a captive female Tenerife Kinglet paired with a male Goldcrest was observed nest-building: all building activities were typical for Goldcrest, and the male prepared most of the foundation; the rapid 'vibrating' of the material that is characteristic of Firecrest (Thaler 1976: 135) was lacking, and the nest hollow was not arched over by a rim of inward-pointing feathers. The female kinglet spent a total of 4.5 days on the lining, somewhat shorter than observed among Goldcrests (minimum 5.5 days) and Firecrests (minimum 5 days), though this may be due to the smaller clutch (five, incubation from third egg); she used only 121 feathers, whereas captive Goldcrests used at least 1,151 and captive Firecrests at least 673 feathers.

Several nests, including two freshly built ones, were located on Tenerife, all suspended 4-7 m above ground in thin horizontal branches of tree-heath. Although tree-heath facilitates the construction of suspended nests in the same way as spruce *Picea* does, it offers little protection against rain; in addition, the nests are more visible. Completed nests are ball-shaped and, as with all *Regulus* nests, the entrance is at the top and not, as Bannerman (1963) suggested, at the side.

Both fresh nests were collected after use. One was still fully intact, and its attachment to the branches could be examined: two stronger branches (diameter 2-5 mm) passed along the interior of the nest wall for lengths of 50 and 70 mm respectively, and a further 17 twigs barely 1 mm thick were woven more or less horizontally into the wall.

Both were true 'suspended nests', ideally adapted to the growth habit of the tree-heath. In their horizontal suspension they differed clearly from Goldcrest and Firecrest nests, which (almost always) are interwoven into vertical side twigs of spruce branches (Palmgren 1932; Thaler 1976). The materials used, however, were very similar: about 80% spiders' web, moss and lichens, 5% other soft vegetable material (grass panicles, rootlets, fibres), and 15% soft lining. They were somewhat lighter (8.9 and 8.6 g) than Goldcrest or Firecrest nests, and contained fewer feathers in the lining (194 and 116 feathers, against average of 1,773 for Goldcrest and average of 618 for Firecrest), but more aerial seeds, especially long, silky thistle-down.

When the female was at or in the finished nest, the male often sang for 2-4 minutes at a distance of 1-3 m. The song was usually shorter than the territorial song, and always with a highly variable end section or terminal flourish. Sometimes only a few elements preceded this, so that the 'song' consisted almost wholly of the end section. For the Goldcrest, the terminal section plays a major role in 'intimate behaviour' between male and female (Becker 1976; pers. obs.).

When foraging during this period, most prey captured were minute insects. On

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one occasion, one of the kinglets spent much time searching moss-covered branches and narrow trunks in a high-lying misty area.

Incubation and fledging periods

During 41 minutes' observation on 18th March, incubation stints lasted for 12 and 11 minutes, with intervals of 10 and 8 minutes; and, on the following day, for 3, 10, 20 and 12 minutes, with breaks of 7, 13 and 10 minutes. On 21st March, after heavy showers, the female returned very hesitantly to the sodden nest: between 10.53 and 12.05 hours, she incubated for 11 and 24 minutes, with intervals of 13, 16 and 8 minutes.

During the incubation period, the male no longer sang near the nest, but always some distance away. Only when the female was reluctant to enter the nest after heavy rain did he sing from 3 m, but almost solely the end section of the song. When the parents appeared together and the female did not go straight to the nest, the male raised his crown feathers in a threat display: the female then perched on the nest rim, before finally entering; a few minutes later the male once more sang at 1 m from the nest.

The male never approached the nest itself, and during the whole period of observation never fed the female. Thaler (1979) found that mate-feeding was not performed by the Goldcrest, either, although it was by the Firecrest.

Feeding of the young was observed on 28th March, from 10.50 to 11.52 hours; the weather was very cool and windy, with clouds of mist sweeping over the site. During this period, both adults fed the young 13 times, and faeces were removed once. The young, probably only a few days old, were brooded three times by the female, for 1, 12 and 6 minutes. When the male arrived during brooding, the female left rather hastily, waited at 10-20 cm distance, and when the male flew off immediately resumed brooding.

Nest losses

Although both Goldcrest and Firecrest suffer nest predation, no nests appear to be lost through the effects of weather (Thaler 1979).

In the Canary Islands there are no natural nest predators, but introduced Common Rats *Rattus norvegicus* and House Mice *Mus musculus* are widespread and could possibly prey on nests. Domestic Cats *Felis catus* are present, but it is doubtful that they can reach kinglet nests; there appear to be no feral cats anywhere on Tenerife.

The weather, however, is a regulating factor. At one nest, following heavy downpours, the eight-day-old young perished. Around this age, Goldcrest and Firecrest chicks are no longer brooded by day, their spruce-tree nests offering sufficient protection against the weather; but not so with nests built in tree-heath, and at eight days chicks are still quite inadequately feathered. A few days later, young from another brood at the same place fledged intact; thus the degree of feathering was decisive, unless the second nest had been unusually well sheltered.

The last of these fledged young, not yet capable of flight, had landed on the ground and was taken into captivity (see over).

Nestling diet

The stomach contents of the four nestlings that died were examined, and in three of these the undigested constituents could be identified: the diet was dominated by adult and larval bugs (Hemiptera), but bush-cricket nymphs (Tettigoniidae) were also well represented (full details of analysis in Löhrl & Thaler 1980). Compared with the prey of central European Goldcrests and Firecrests, bush-crickets are notable as an adaptation to the different type of insect fauna. A corresponding preference for Orthoptera was shown by the captive female Tenerife Kinglet.

Development and behaviour in captivity*Development of young*

The flightless young which had been retrieved from the ground was reared in captivity. When it left the nest, at 19-21 days of age, its tail feathers extended only 1.8-1.9 cm out of the sheaths but nevertheless projected 0.8-1.1 cm beyond the remiges, which had not fully grown out. It looked plumper, more compact than Goldcrests or Firecrests of the same age, whose wings are longer compared with the (equally short) tail (Thaler 1979). The body feathers were largely grown.

The back and especially the head were greenish, brighter than on young European Goldcrest and more like a juvenile Firecrest. The head feathers, especially on the forehead, showed a distinct dark margin, corresponding to the black head markings of the adult. Goldcrest nestlings, however, sometimes also show an indication of a dark area on the forehead, even though no such marking is present on adults. The Tenerife Kinglet appeared darker and more 'colourful' than Goldcrest or Firecrest of the same age.

Behaviour of the fledgling

At first, the young kinglet refused food and had to be 'force-fed'. Subsequent development was typical for the genus, and the vocal repertoire continued to be Goldcrest-like. Independent foraging began on day 27, and on day 38 the juvenile song (see Cramp 1992) was heard for the first time; on day 45 post-juvenile moult started, this lasting for nearly 60 days, and the bird finally proved to be a female.

The Tenerife Kinglet differed from Goldcrest and Firecrest in its bathing behaviour, which was far more strongly pronounced. The kinglet became highly excited when confronted by wet twigs, always bathed in such circumstances, and as early as day 26 discovered bathing spots on the ground, where it subsequently bathed four or five times per day. (Goldcrests and Firecrests initially bathe only in branches made wet by rain or dew, and at most twice per day; ground water is not visited until much later: by Goldcrest, accompanied by parents, on day 48 at the earliest, otherwise on day 108; by Firecrest on days 52 and 114, respectively.) This behaviour is possibly determined by the environment, the frequently damp, heavily matted vegetation in its natural habitat enabling the Tenerife Kinglet to bathe safely at any time. For the Goldcrest and Firecrest, bathing in branches is dependent on weather conditions; ground bathing, being much more dangerous, is resorted to only by birds with full capacity for flight.

Behaviour following independence

After the post-juvenile moult, the kinglet continued to behave essentially like a Goldcrest: for example, it flicked its wings sideways, not upwards like a Firecrest.

In behaviour directed towards the mate-rival, it frequently gave a weak 'feather-ruffling display', as well as the Goldcrest-specific 'forward display' with head bowed and stiff bobbing movements. When inviting copulation, it sometimes (in first year of breeding) performed wing-quivering, but later (second year) more often did not.

In choice of prey the kinglet was less 'fussy' than its European congeners. Even when barely independent, it showed a liking for long-winged or long-legged insects; it was particularly fond of bacteriid larvae (Orthoptera: Bacteriidae), which are often shunned by Goldcrests and Firecrests. The preference for springtails (Collembola), so typical of Goldcrest, was not so pronounced; the kinglet did not bother with these tiny prey until winter and, later, the breeding season. This unusual selection perhaps reflects the availability of insects in its natural environment.

A particularly interesting behaviour, apparently unrecorded for other *Regulus* species, was seen at the start of the brood-feeding period. The kinglet parcelled up minute prey, especially spiders, until its bill was full, with items hanging out of both sides; it then placed its bill under its foot so as to rearrange the items, enabling it to retain the food in the bill. (This behaviour could subsequently be provoked by supplying similar food by hand.) Despite detailed observations of foraging and food-carrying Goldcrests and Firecrests, we have never seen them use this action, which is very similar to the habit of tits (Paridae) of clamping food under the foot. Further study is required to show whether an individual habit was involved or whether this is a behaviour specific to the Tenerife Kinglet. Interestingly, however, on 12th February 1980, on Tenerife, a wild female demonstrated this same behaviour while gathering nest material.

Hybridisation and behaviour in mixed flocks

At 11 months (January), the Tenerife Kinglet was placed with a male Goldcrest, but the pair failed to achieve sufficient synchronisation and did not complete nest-building. In the following year, however, synchronisation was complete: courtship (with strong pursuits), nest-building (initially with predominant male activity) and all aspects of pairing were typical of Goldcrest; at no point did either species show any of the paradoxical behaviour which is so striking in mixed pairings of Firecrest and Goldcrest. The nest was freely suspended in a spruce, which the kinglet accepted immediately (in the first breeding year it had shown less affinity to spruce than to juniper *Juniperus*).

During 21st-26th May, the female laid five eggs which were unmarked and Goldcrest-like, but paler-looking, almost pure white. All hatched after 16-17 days.

After the breeding season, the Tenerife Kinglet was placed with four Goldcrests and three Firecrests. Casual observations revealed that it behaved as a Goldcrest: it associated more closely with the Goldcrests, especially the females, than with the Firecrests (which are in any case less of a contact species), and roosted mostly with 'its own' male. It was, however, the most aggressive individual of the group and would violently attack another individual, especially a Goldcrest,

for no apparent reason, jostle it in flight, and seize it with its claws so that both fell to the ground. In such attacks, it showed no preference for any particular individual; certain confrontational situations, perhaps intrusions within individual distance, seemed to be enough. It remains to be shown how close Tenerife Kinglet flocks will approach each other when roving about outside the breeding season.

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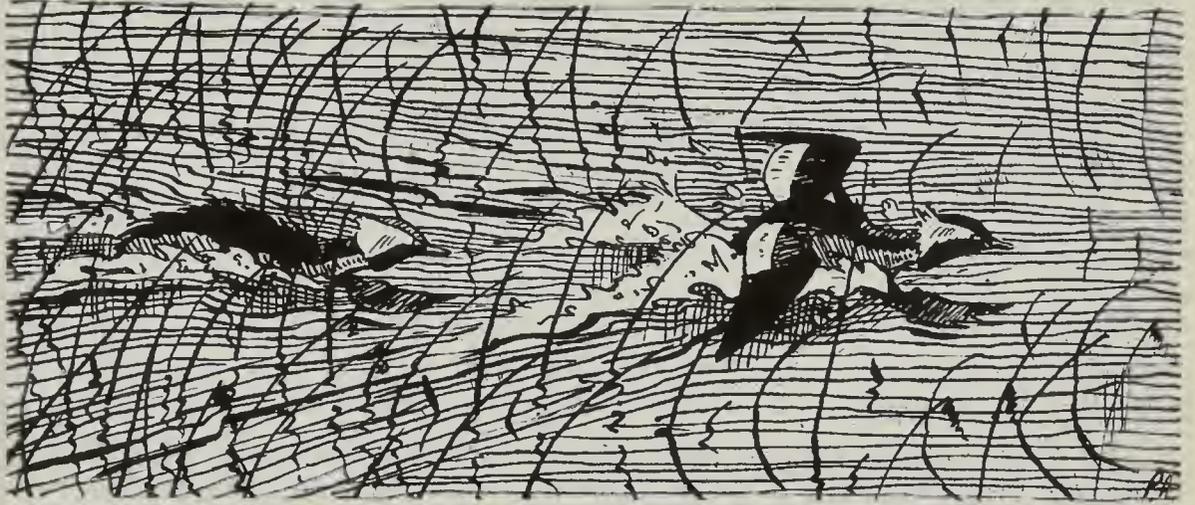
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Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1994

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



ABSTRACT In 1994, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's twenty-second year of operation, county coverage was complete.

It was a record year for breeding numbers of Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, and was also generally good for Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* and Hobby *Falco subbuteo*.

Among the rarer species, Common Crane *Grus grus* appears to be faltering; but Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* and Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* were successful; and Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* and Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* give hope for the future. Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Corn Crake *Crex crex*, Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus* and Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* all appear to be responding to research-based conservation measures.

This is the twenty-second annual report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. It contains information on the breeding in 1994 of the species on the Panel's list, whether proven, probable or possible. As usual, the amount of detail included varies according to the perceived sensitivity of the species to disturbance or to nest robbery. Thus, for the majority, the counties are grouped into the Panel's

ten regions (see below), though for some it is possible to list the actual counties. For a few species, only country totals are given.

As foreshadowed in the introduction to the report for 1993, we have been able to catch up further in our publishing timetable, so that this report appears only seven months after the previous one (*Brit. Birds* 89: 61-91). We gratefully acknowledge the help of county recorders and species co-ordinators in enabling this to be achieved.

The Panel

The current (September 1996) membership of the Panel is Dr L. A. Batten, Dr C. J. Bibby, Dr H. Q. P. Crick, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr K. W. Smith, D. A. Stroud and Dr M. A. Ogilvie (Secretary). The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but four of them are additionally able to reflect the interests and needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is supported financially by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies), with further contributions coming from the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*.

The Panel collects records from the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, but not from the Republic of Ireland. Coverage in 1994 was virtually complete, with records (or nil returns) received from every single county and region. There are still problems in getting comprehensive information for some species, and any known gaps are mentioned in the species accounts.

Review of the year 1994

The 1994 breeding season was certainly not affected by bad weather to the extent that occurred in 1993, but the spring was noticeably cool and wet in some areas, with heavy rains extending through May and into June, especially in southern Britain. Some species suffered losses of nests, eggs and young to storms and floods. The general effect was of a recovery of a number of species from last year's low point, though several did no better or even declined further.

Red-necked *Podiceps grisegena* and Black-necked Grebes *P. nigricollis* both recovered from last year's low numbers to reach new peaks, but there was a sharp decline in the number of pairs of Slavonian Grebes *P. auritus*, perhaps associated with late-winter mortality, and those that did breed were no more successful than in previous years. Numbers of Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* rose, although many records were only of sporadic 'booming' birds, while the number of young known to have fledged was still small.

Although the provenance of breeding Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* is sometimes suspect, it seems likely that those in the northern part of Scotland are most probably of wild origin and therefore the nesting of no fewer than three pairs, one successfully, is a cause for celebration. Numbers of Northern Pintails *Anas acuta* rose, though much of the increase was due to a full survey of those in Orkney, but Garganeys *A. querquedula* had a poor year, with a reduction in both numbers of localities and pairs. After a poor year in 1993, numbers of breeding Common Pochards *Aythya ferina* increased to a new record high. Over one hundred possible pairs of Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* were found.

Raptors mostly had a better season than in 1993, with more Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* breeding than ever before, though rearing no more young. The Welsh Red Kites *Milvus milvus* did very much better: although the onset of breeding was delayed by cool and wet weather in March, there were many fewer weather-induced losses of eggs or chicks. The re-established Red Kites in England and Scotland also did well, with the first nesting in both countries by birds reared there. Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* and, especially, Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* had their best season in recent times in terms of numbers of breeding birds, as did Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*. There was the first successful breeding of Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in Scotland for over a century.

More Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix* arrived than for some years. Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana*, however, followed their best year on record, with 31 singing males in 1993, with their worst for several years, with only 11, though for the second year running there was a proved breeding record. After very many years of decline, it is extremely pleasing to be able to report an increase in the number of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* in their main haunts on the Scottish islands, largely the result of conservation efforts by the RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Crofters' Union.

Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* continue to suffer high losses of eggs and young, particularly to predators, though there was a substantial increase in the number of breeding pairs. Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicephalus*, too, increased slightly in numbers, as they have done every year since 1988. Two pairs of Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* bred successfully, but numbers of potential breeders were down, and lekking was reported from only three localities. Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* showed only a slight recovery from last year's low point.

The rarer waders, Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii*, Purple Sandpipers *C. maritima* and Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola*, had a reasonably good season, with the last-named appearing at a record eight sites, with six pairs definitely breeding. Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* increased further on Fetlar and bred for the second time at a newly discovered site.

There were similar numbers of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* to last year, though with further hybrid pairings with Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*. Not only did the long-standing hybrid pair of Lesser Crested *Sterna bengalensis* and Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* nest, though without rearing a chick, but a hybrid adult also bred successfully with a Sandwich Tern, fledging one young, which is therefore one-quarter Lesser Crested. Roseate Terns *S. dougallii*, after three years of increase, fell back a little.

A survey of London, including the City centre, helped to produce a substantial increase in the numbers of reported Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros*. Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*, however, did no better than last year's disappointing results. Among the warblers, Cetti's *Cettia cetti* and, especially, Dartford *Sylvia undata* increased, the latter having been censused nationally by the RSPB and EN during the year, but Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* declined after last year's welcome increase. Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinioides* did a little better than in 1993, but only one pair was confirmed as breeding.

Several species of vagrant warblers sang while here in the spring, and, for the second year running, and in the same locality, a male Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* was seen carrying nesting material.

Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* suffered about the worst of any Panel species from bad weather, with heavy rain and bad storms destroying nests. Among the other passerines reported, numbers of Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus* were up, largely thanks to survey work in the New Forest, and Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirhus* continued to increase.

Three species are reported for the first time in these reports. A Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* bred with a Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, producing a brood of hybrid young. A Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* of the nominate race was seen possibly breeding with one of our native British race *M. a. yarrellii*, while no fewer than three Subalpine Warblers *Sylvia cantillans* sang after arriving in the spring. There was also a record of a displaying Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*, only the second time that this has been noted.

Conservation uses of Panel data

It is the policy of the Panel to make data available for conservation uses where this is compatible with the constraints of confidentiality. As well as site-specific information (e.g. for reviews of Special Protection Areas), national data sets have been used by the RSPB for planning surveys of Common Scoter and Cetti's Warbler. Panel data have also played a key role in reviews of birds of conservation concern and national population estimates.

Publications

The results of the national survey of the Dartford Warbler have recently been published (Gibbons, 1996, *Brit. Birds* 89: 203-212). The survey was planned with the aid of Panel information. The Panel is co-ordinating the production of a number of species reviews summarising data held on individual species. The first of these, on Temminck's Stint, was published last year (Mudge & Dennis, 1995, *Brit. Birds* 88: 573-577).

Acknowledgments

The Panel, and in particular its Secretary, very gratefully acknowledges the willing co-operation of the following in supplying information. We apologise for any inadvertent omissions.

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ISLE OF MAN Dr Pat Cullen.

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We should also like to express our sincere thanks to all the very many individuals whose field work produced the observations which make up this report.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

England, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isles of Scilly, Isle of Wight, Somerset, Wiltshire

England, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire and South Humberside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

England, Central Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire

England, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)

Wales All present-day counties (i.e. includes Gwent, the former Monmouth)

Scotland, S The regions of Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Lothians and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Lothian (East, Mid and West), Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Wigtownshire

Scotland, Mid The regions of Central, Fife, Grampian and Tayside, together with parts of Highland and Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Fife, Kincardineshire, Kinross, Moray, Nairn, Perthshire, Stirlingshire

Scotland, N & W Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, together with the greater part of Highland and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Argyllshire, Bute, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland

Northern Ireland Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone

Systematic list

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' used in the Panel's reports follow those recommended by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee (now part of the European Bird Census Council). Within tables, the abbreviations 'Confirmed (pairs)' and 'Possible/probable (pairs)' mean 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding' and 'Number of pairs possibly or probably breeding', respectively; 'Max. total pairs' is the sum of these.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

One locality: single bird.

Scotland, N & W One locality: single during the summer on a freshwater loch, where an individual also occurred for some time in summer 1993.

The 1993 record represents an addition to the 1993 report and is thus the first report since 1988.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

One locality: single (*Brit. Birds* 88: 497).

England, SW One locality: male, paired to a Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* at Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall; two clutches laid, the first producing three hybrid young, the second failing owing to falling water levels.

This is a new species for these reports and involves an individual which has been present at this locality since 1992. There has been a marked tendency for individuals of this species to stay for many years, though the chances of a male and a female getting together are probably still remote.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Ten localities in ten counties: pair built platforms.

England, SE Two localities: (1) single from November 1993 to November 1994; (2) single during 5th-15th June.

England, E Two localities: (1) one from 28th April to 5th November, calling during April and May; (2) one from 3rd May to 2nd August.

England, Central One locality: one in summer plumage on 24th April, and during 9th-11th July.

England, N Three localities: (1) single(s) on 8th May, 29th June and 18th July; (2) adult from 16th May to mid August; (3) fledged juvenile on 23rd July, definitely not bred at site.

Scotland, S One locality: pair at regular summering site from 15th March to 1st July, seen copulating and built nest platforms, but no egg-laying suspected.

Scotland, Mid One locality: six (ages unknown) on 18th September possibly summered at this potential breeding site.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	1	1	5	10	8	6	5	3	9	7	10
No. individuals	1	4	5	9	12	9	3	4	12	7	13
No. pairs	0	1	1	1	3	3	2	1	3	0	1

After a gap of one year, the southern Scotland pair was back and was observed copulating and nest-building, but, as usual, not progressing further. The fledged juvenile in northern England in July is early for a migrant.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

32 localities: 51-59 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid and N & W 32 localities: (1)-(32) total of 51 pairs bred, producing minimum of 30 young to near fledging; also eight singles.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	26	40	43	39	22	39	36	31	34	33	32
Confirmed (pairs)	39	63	68	33	31	70	74	61	72	73	51
Possible/probable (pairs)	21	18	19	6	6	8	12	13	5	4	8
Max. total pairs	60	81	87	39	37	78	86	74	77	77	59

There has been a substantial decline in the number of breeding pairs this year, which may, perhaps, be linked to the large-scale mortality of seabirds on the east

coast of Scotland in February-March 1994. The 30 young produced represented a production of 0.6 young per pair, which is close to the long-term average. (The Panel is grateful to the North of Scotland Regional Office of the RSPB for information on numbers and breeding performance.)

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

32 localities in 19 counties: 27-81 pairs breeding, hatching at least 46 young.

England, SW Two localities: 0-3 pairs.

DORSET Two localities: up to three pairs.

England, SE Three localities: 0-4 pairs.

HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: one. KENT Two localities: three singles.

England, E Five localities: 0-6 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: two singles. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Three localities: four singles.

England, Central Five localities: 0-6 pairs.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: two pairs, including display. LEICESTERSHIRE Two localities: two singles. WARWICKSHIRE Two localities: pair and one single.

England, N Ten localities: 26-41 pairs.

CHESHIRE Three localities: pair bred, three pairs and one single. GREATER MANCHESTER Two localities: five pairs bred, and one single. LANCASHIRE One locality: pair. NORTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: 14 pairs bred. NORTHUMBERLAND Three localities: six pairs bred, and nine singles.

Wales Two localities: 0-3 pairs.

CLWYD One locality: two singles. GWENT One locality: one.

Scotland, S One locality: 0-1 pairs.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: one.

Scotland, Mid Four localities: 1-17 pairs.

ANGUS One locality: 11 pairs, no breeding details. FIFE Two localities: pair bred, second pair possibly bred, and three singles. PERTSHIRE One locality: pair.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	17	17	15	19	22	19	19	25	29	31	32
Confirmed (pairs)	17	9	11	27	15	25	21	19	26	24	27
Possible/probable (pairs)	13	13	22	12	20	15	16	34	34	26	54
Max. total pairs	30	22	33	39	35	40	37	53	60	50	81

After last year's slight decline, the number of confirmed pairs equals the previous record total in 1987, while there has been a substantial increase in the number of possible pairs. There was, however, less breeding activity in the southern half of England than in recent years.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*

One locality: one in spring and summer.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

SHETLAND One locality: adult in gannetry, Hermaness, from 26th March to 24th July.

After becoming a little sporadic in its appearances, this year's stay was even longer than last year's. This individual has now been summering in British waters for 24 years, going missing only in 1988 and 1989.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

16 localities: minimum of 20 and maximum of 22 booming males, at least eight or nine young fledged.

England, SE One locality: booming male on 8th and 10th May.

England, E 12 localities: (1) two booming males and four females, two of latter probably did not breed, two broods seen, immature male also present; (2)(3) booming male and female at each site, bred and hatched two young; (4) booming male and female, laid but nest destroyed by predator; (5)(6) booming male and female at each site, probably had nests; (7) three or four

booming males, no breeding information; (8)-(10) single booming males, one on one date only; (11) one through winter and until 9th May, also an adult seen from 30th August to 10th September; (12) single in July.

England, N Three localities: (1) four booming males, a fifth in April/May was probably an immature; (2)(3) single booming males.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	18	15	12	17	14	14	12	13	14	13	16
Confirmed nests	5	0	0	1	2	3	3	4	4	5	5
Booming males	36	28	23	22	30	30	20	19	19	17	20

A slightly better year than in 1993, though some of the booming males were heard only very briefly and were away from the regular sites.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Two localities: three pairs.

England, SW Two localities: (1) two pairs in breeding season; (2) pair in breeding season.

There was no overt breeding behaviour observed this year, but these birds were obviously paired, in contrast to those in the many flocks now present in Britain throughout the winter. It can be only a matter of time before breeding is proved for this species.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

14 localities: five pairs breeding, two of which were wild; nine young reared.

England, SE Two localities: (1) released pair fledged five young; (2) released pair and three singles at 1992 and 1993 breeding site, but no attempt to breed this year.

Scotland, S Four localities: (1) pair, probably released, fledged three young; (2) pair, perhaps released, built nest, but abandoned it apparently without laying; (3) single summered, presumed injured; (4) adult on 26th June may have been injured.

Scotland, N & W Eight localities: (1) pair fledged three young; (2) pair laid four eggs, which did not hatch; (3) pair laid but nest robbed; (4) pair summered and may have attempted to breed; (5)-(8) singles summering.

It seems highly probable that the pairs breeding in north and west Scotland were all genuinely wild and make this year the best for this species since it was first included in the Panel's report for 1978. If this species has begun to colonise naturally, it is going to be made more difficult to monitor if, simultaneously, we are witnessing an artificial introduction.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

One locality: one.

Scotland, N & W One locality: one on 2nd June, apparently paired with a Greylag Goose *A. anser*.

It is likely that this individual was a genuinely wild bird belonging to the Greenland/Iceland population, which stayed on after the spring migration, perhaps because of injury.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

49 localities: 20-76 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: 0-1 pairs.

SOMERSET One locality: single male.

England, SE Eight localities: 0-9 pairs.

ESSEX Three localities: pair probably bred, one other pair and one male. **HERTFORDSHIRE** Four localities: pair and four single males. **KENT** One locality: pair.

England, E Four localities: 0-4 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: two pairs, one may have attempted to breed. SUFFOLK Two localities: two pairs.

England, N Four localities: 5-17 pairs.

CHESHIRE Two localities: at least 11 pairs, but no breeding evidence. CLEVELAND One locality: pair. YORKSHIRE One locality: five pairs fledged 24 young.

Wales Four localities: 4-8 pairs.

ANGLESEY Three localities: at least three singles. PEMBROKESHIRE One locality: four out of five pairs bred.

Scotland, S One locality: 0-1 pairs.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: single male.

Scotland, N & W 26 localities: 10-35 pairs.

ARGYLL Four localities: pair bred, two other pairs and two singles. ORKNEY 19 localities: a survey of Orkney revealed six definite breeding pairs, plus a further ten pairs, as well as ten additional males and a female. SHETLAND Three localities: three pairs bred.

Northern Ireland One locality: pair.

DOWN One locality: pair bred.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	15	17	14	16	20	16	20	28	23	23	49
Confirmed (pairs)	5	9	6	7	14	11	9	4	13	4	20
Possible/probable (pairs)	13	12	12	14	15	28	27	39	35	43	56
Max. total pairs	18	21	18	21	29	38	36	43	48	47	76

Much of the apparent increase in the number of localities and breeding pairs is attributable to a comprehensive survey undertaken in Orkney, although even without these there has been an increase. The survey confirmed the continuing importance of Orkney for this species, with figures that compare well with the 1991 census total of 22-26 pairs (Meek, 1991, *Scot. Birds* 17: 14-19).

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

65 localities: 13-111 pairs breeding.

England, SW 13 localities: 1-23 pairs.

AVON Two localities: two pairs and one male. DEVON Six localities: up to nine singles.

HAMPSHIRE One locality: pair. SOMERSET Four localities: pair bred, two other pairs and seven males.

England, SE 13 localities: 0-19 pairs.

ESSEX One locality: three pairs probably bred. HERTFORDSHIRE Four localities: pair and four singles. KENT Four localities: two pairs and five males. SUSSEX Four localities: pair and three males.

England, E 18 localities: 6-35 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: at least three pairs bred, 11 other pairs and one male.

NORFOLK Two localities: three pairs bred and a fourth may have done. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Three localities: pair and two males. SOUTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: single male. SUFFOLK

Nine localities: six pairs and six males.

England, Central Two localities: 0-2 pairs.

LEICESTERSHIRE Two localities: two males.

England, N Five localities: 3-16 pairs.

CHESHIRE Two localities: pair and three males. GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair. NORTH

HUMBERSIDE One locality: three of seven pairs definitely bred. YORKSHIRE One locality: four

pairs, no breeding information.

Wales Seven localities: 0-7 pairs.

ANGLESEY One locality: pair. REST OF COUNTRY Six records of singles.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: 0-2 pairs.

FIFE One locality: pair. PERTSHIRE One locality: single male.

Scotland, N & W Three localities: 1-4 pairs.

ARGYLL Two localities: pair bred and one male. ROSS & CROMARTY One locality: pair.

Northern Ireland Two localities: 2-3 pairs.

ARMAGH One locality: pair bred, and one male. DOWN One locality: pair bred.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	46	32	42	36	37	81	87	90	90	73	65
Confirmed (pairs)	4	4	8	8	11	18	14	12	16	14	13
Possible/probable (pairs)	53	36	47	37	40	80	97	82	144	149	98
Max. total pairs	57	40	55	45	51	98	111	94	160	163	111

A relatively poor year for this species, with fewer reported from almost all parts of the UK compared with 1993. The numbers of this species do tend to be highly variable from one year to the next.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

One locality: female possibly paired to Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata*.

England, SE One locality: adult female consorting with a male Northern Shoveler from 18th to 30th May.

This is the second year running in which this species has appeared in these reports and the third in all. On the two previous occasions, a male Blue-winged Teal has been paired to a Northern Shoveler, so it is interesting that the attraction works the other way around, too.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

158 localities or areas: 347-638 pairs breeding.

England, SW 15 localities: 19-65 pairs.

AVON One locality: ten pairs and three males, no breeding evidence. CORNWALL One locality: pair and one male. GLOUCESTERSHIRE One locality: pair bred, and two males. HAMPSHIRE Seven localities: 16 pairs bred, ten other pairs and two males. SOMERSET One locality: two pairs bred. WILTSHIRE Four localities: three pairs probably bred, five other pairs and nine males.

England, SE 48 localities or areas: 167-261 pairs.

BERKSHIRE One locality: one male. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Five localities: up to five birds at each, no breeding evidence. ESSEX Eight localities: 29 pairs bred, and 23 other pairs. GREATER LONDON Ten localities: 36 pairs bred, and one male. HERTFORDSHIRE Five localities: 10 pairs bred, and nine other pairs. KENT Nine localities or areas: 86 pairs bred, and seven other pairs. SURREY Eight localities: four pairs bred, 23 other pairs and four singles. SUSSEX Two localities: two pairs bred, and one other pair.

England, E 36 localities or areas: 85-138 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Seven localities: pair bred, 15 other pairs and two singles. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: 16 pairs bred. NORFOLK County survey: 65-68 pairs bred at minimum of 11 localities, though not all key sites in Broads area covered. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Ten localities: pair bred, at least nine singles. SUFFOLK Seven localities: two pairs bred, 11 other pairs and 13 singles.

England, Central 21 localities: 9-41 pairs.

DERBYSHIRE Seven localities: three pairs bred and at least four singles. LEICESTERSHIRE Seven localities: five pairs and 20 males. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Four localities: five pairs bred. WARWICKSHIRE Two localities: pair bred, one other pair and one single. WEST MIDLANDS One locality: pair.

England, N 20 localities: 50-86 pairs.

CHESHIRE Four localities: summering flocks only. CLEVELAND Two localities: seven pairs bred. CUMBRIA One locality: three pairs bred. GREATER MANCHESTER Three localities: four pairs bred, one other pair and six males. LANCASHIRE Three localities: 17 pairs bred. NORTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: 11 pairs, but no breeding information. NORTHUMBERLAND Four localities: 14 pairs bred. YORKSHIRE Two localities: five pairs bred, and 18 other pairs.

Wales Five localities: 8-17 pairs.

ANGLESEY One locality: pair bred, and nine other pairs. CARMARTHEN Three localities: four pairs bred. GLAMORGAN One locality: three pairs bred.

Scotland, S Six localities: 3-11 pairs.

BORDERS Five localities: two pairs bred, four other pairs and four males. LOTHIAN One locality: pair bred.

Scotland, Mid Five localities: 6-17 pairs.

ABERDEENSHIRE One locality: pair. ANGUS One locality: seven pairs. FIFE Two localities: five pairs bred. PERTSHIRE One locality: pair bred, and three males.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: 0-2 pairs.

CAITHNESS Two localities: two singles.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	68	63	138	116	133	161	145	117	158
Confirmed (pairs)	126	130	185	260	207	284	266	237	347
Possible/probable (pairs)	59	44	162	76	86	144	292	179	291
Max. total pairs	185	174	347	336	293	428	558	416	638

After last year's fall in numbers, 1994 was a much better year, with reports from many more localities and involving larger numbers, achieving the highest number of confirmed and total pairs ever recorded, reinforcing the dramatic increase of the last few years.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

One locality: pair.

Scotland, N One locality: pair on 25th May.

A minimal return after two blank years.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

47 localities: 5-84 pairs.

Scotland, S One locality: two in July.

Scotland, Mid Five localities: (1)-(4) minimum of four pairs and two males, but movement between sites obscured true total; (5) female on 27th June only.

Scotland, N & W 41 localities.

ARGYLL Two localities: (1) up to seven pairs and three males in June; (2) female with five young on 4th August. HIGHLAND 38 localities: (1)-(38) survey work by the RSPB revealed four broods, 57 pairs and two singles. SHETLAND One locality: pair, no young seen.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	9	25	35	15	36	7	9	14	32	38	47
Confirmed (pairs)	17	2	8	29	14	8	6	9	9	16	5
Possible/probable (pairs)	52	72	92	33	76	32	23	21	62	72	79
Max. total pairs	69	74	100	62	90	40	29	30	71	88	84

The increased total of localities almost certainly reflects an increase in fieldwork prior to a full survey in 1995, rather than a genuine increase.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Breeding predominantly in one extensive nestbox scheme for which only sample data are available, so there is no longer an estimate of the total number of breeding pairs. Increasing numbers are summering elsewhere, although no breeding has been proved as yet.

England, SW One locality.

DORSET One locality: male summered; one has been present for many years.

England, SE Three localities.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: female on 28th May only. HERTFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair stayed to mid May, with male displaying and female defending nestbox; (2) injured female summered.

England, Central Four localities.

LEICESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1) male from 14th May to 26th June; (2) male stayed until 31st May. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: (1) male summered; (2) female summered.

England, N Four localities.

CHESHIRE Three localities: (1)-(3) female in June and August, possibly the same individual.

LANCASHIRE One locality: at least one released pair bred, but success unknown.

Wales Three localities.

ANGLESEY Two localities: (1) female from 4th June to 29th July; (2) single on 27th June.

MERIONETH One locality: female remained until mid June.

Scotland, S Four localities.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Three localities: (1) two males and a female in mid May, with males remaining until mid June; (2)(3) two immatures seen at each site. LOTHIAN One locality: pair and an immature male stayed to 25th May.

Scotland, Mid Four localities.

CENTRAL One locality: female with six young. TAYSIDE Three localities: (1) two females with broods on 8th July; (2) several males and females throughout spring, females remaining into summer; (3) six immature males on 16th May.

Scotland, N & W Five localities.

ARGYLL One locality: female on 19th July. HIGHLAND Four localities: (1) 46 pairs attempted to nest in boxes, 16 of which hatched at least one young; (2) 27 pairs nested in boxes and one in a natural site, with mean clutch size of 7.86 (range 2-20); (3) 25 pairs in boxes and two in natural sites laid, with a mean clutch size of 8.07, and 16 pairs fledged 123 young (mean brood size 7.69); (4) single on 30th June.

The results from Highland Region refer to a sample only of the many boxes available to the species. Elsewhere, the successful breeding in Central Region is an indication of a slow spread southwards.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

22 localities in 12 counties: 9-28 pairs breeding; minimum of 11 young reared.

Great Britain 22 localities: (1)-(4) single pairs each raised two young, a second male was present at one site; (5)-(7) single pairs each raised at least one young, three unattached birds at one site; (8)(9) single pairs bred but nests probably destroyed by predators, second male also seen at one site; (10)(11) single pairs built nests; (12) two pairs in July and August, with some display; (13)(14) single pairs at possible nesting sites; (15)-(22) singles only.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Confirmed (pairs)	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	8	6	9
Max. total pairs	2	4	6	7	10	20	19	22	26	27	28

The long-term increase for this species has been sustained. The number of pairs confirmed as breeding is the highest ever, and while their production of 11 young is perhaps disappointing, even though it equals last year's record, it is probably quite reasonable for a large bird of prey.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

111 wild pairs reared 99 young, and 28 released pairs reared 50 young.

Wales 111 pairs were proved to breed, of which 70 were successful, rearing 99 young, all three totals being new records. In addition, there were a further 25 non-breeding pairs, while 94 unmated individuals were identified during the spring. The total population was estimated at least 465 in August, up by 68 on August 1993. Cool and very wet weather in March and early April delayed the onset of laying and also interfered with fieldwork, so that it is possible that a number of pairs were missed. (The Panel's thanks go to Peter Davis for his detailed report. His work is funded by the RSPB and the Welsh Office 'Kite Country Initiative', with additional support from the Countryside Council for Wales.)

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Total pairs	46	54	58	59	68	71	84	92	102	115	136
Breeding pairs	33	43	40	44	49	54	65	76	84	104	111
Successful pairs	13	19	23	27	27	33	47	41	60	61	70
Young reared	21	25	29	39	38	49	73	62	96	82	99
Young/successful pair	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.4

The re-established breeding populations in England and Scotland continued to make excellent progress and the Panel is grateful to Ian Evans, JNCC, and Lorcan O'Toole, RSPB, for the following information.

England 20 pairs bred, of which 17 were exceptionally successful, fledging a total of 37 young. One of the three breeding failures occurred during the early stages of incubation, the other two after hatching. For the first time, birds reared in nests in Britain themselves bred and reared young. A further 20 juvenile Red Kites were imported from Spain and released in southern England. The total August population of Red Kites in England was 128.

Scotland Eight pairs were proved breeding, of which six were successful, rearing 13 young. The two pairs which failed both abandoned their clutches during incubation; the female of one pair was the first Scottish-bred chick to attempt to breed, but was not successful. Three further pairs built nests and five single males held territory, including another Scottish-bred bird. There were no releases this year, and the total August population of Red Kites in Scotland was 54.

England	1991	1992	1993	1994	Scotland	1992	1993	1994
Total pairs	2	7	12	22	Total pairs	2	8	11
Breeding pairs	2	4	9	20	Breeding pairs	1	5	8
Successful pairs	0	4	8	17	Successful pairs	1	3	6
Young reared	0	9	14	37	Young reared	1	7	13
Young/successful pair	-	2.2	1.8	2.2	Young/successful pair	1.0	1.0	2.2

Correction to 1993 report: only one pair bred in Scotland in 1992, not two as shown in the table in that report.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Re-establishment.

Scotland Ten territories were occupied by territory-holding pairs, including one by a male with two females. Eight clutches were laid and five young reared from four broods, the same as in 1993. One clutch was laid by an immature male which is Scottish-bred; his adult female mate was also probably bred in Scotland, making this the first definite breeding attempt by Scottish-bred birds. An additional territory was occupied by a single female which laid an infertile clutch. Ten further immatures were brought from Norway and released.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Breeding pairs	2	4	5	6	6	6	9	8	9	6	8
Successful pairs	0	1	1	2	1	3	2	4	4	4	4
Young reared	0	1	2	3	2	5	2	7	7	5	5
Young/successful pair	-	1.0	2.0	1.5	2.0	1.7	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2

Although the number of breeding pairs has recovered from last year's drop, the success rate remains low. The Panel is grateful to the Sea Eagle Project Team for providing it with information. The Project is jointly supported by the JNCC, SNH and the RSPB.

Correction to 1992 and 1993 reports: seven young were reared in four broods, not three, in 1992.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

114 males and 129 females bred, rearing at least 255 young.

Great Britain The figures for breeding males and females shown in the table should be treated with caution as not all sex ratios are known in polygamous situations. The number of young reported to have fledged is easily another record.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Breeding males	27	29	26	40	42	58	73	83	92	84	114
Breeding females	32	31	32	46	56	66	110	91	107	110	129
Young	66	86	82	126	145	172	145	198	229	244	255

A welcome increase in the number of breeding adults, though their production of young per nest was slightly down on last year. (The Panel wishes to thank Bob Image for the continued provision of detailed information on this species.)

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

15 localities: seven males and 12 females reared a minimum of 13 young.

England, SW Three localities: (1) male with two females, one of which fledged three or four young, the other of which probably failed; (2)(3) individuals present but not known whether nesting occurred.

England, SE Two localities: (1) male with two females, one nest was destroyed by a predator, presence of a second nest was suspected; (2) summering adult male occasionally joined by immature female.

England, E Nine localities: (1) total of five males and nine females in one extensive locality fledged at least ten young, three nests were destroyed by predators; (2) displaying pair in early June; (3) pair; (4) displaying adult male; (5)-(9) singles, one female joined briefly by an immature male.

England, N One locality: one or two individuals, but no evidence of breeding.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	2	9	10	10	14	15	9	14	12	8	15
Breeding males	2	3	7	4	5	4	8	5	7	5	7
Other males	1	5	3	4	4	5	4	3	2	2	9
Breeding females	1	3	7	5	6	6	11	7	8	6	12
Other females	1	5	3	4	4	7	2	6	4	1	11
Young	3	7	13	13	17	14	20	14	12	9	13

A most welcome increase across the board, due mainly to a remarkable surge of breeding in eastern England, with the highest numbers in one area for 70 years. It remains to be seen whether this higher population can be maintained.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

At least 210 localities: 145-225 pairs breeding.

England and Wales Up to 156 localities in 28 counties: up to 105 pairs bred, of which 87 were reported as successful, fledging 183 young; 21 nests are known to have failed; an additional 55 pairs and 14 singles were reported.

Scotland At least 51 localities in four regions: 40 pairs known to have bred, of which 38 were successful, rearing at least 113 young; an additional eight pairs were reported.

Northern Ireland Three localities in one county: pair probably bred, and two single males, both displaying.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. counties	22	20	31	31	31	23	30	36	34	35	33
Confirmed (pairs)	36	36	57	54	108	112	93	158	150	199	145
Possible/probable (pairs)	42	39	59	40	68	54	79	71	93	100	80
Max. total pairs	78	75	116	94	176	166	172	229	243	299	225

Although the number of pairs has fallen, this may not reflect the true situation in view of the paucity of information from some areas. We would repeat our previous encouragement of observers and recorders to make every effort to record and report this species in order that we may obtain as accurate a picture as possible. The conservation response to the continued persecution of this species needs to be based on the best possible information.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

95 pairs: 83 pairs laid eggs, rearing 146 young.

England, SW One locality: single in late May.

England, Central One locality: two birds, probably first-year male and female, from late May to late August.

Scotland, S Three localities: (1)-(3) singles in summer.

Elsewhere in Scotland The number of pairs continues to increase, reaching 95, an increase of seven over 1993. 83 pairs laid clutches, of which 71 hatched, with 69 successful pairs rearing 146 young, an average of 1.54 per pair, the best success rate of recent years.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Pairs	31	34	42	50	53	58	62	73	76	88	95
Successful pairs	21	22	24	30	38	38	44	44	48	56	69
Young reared	47	53	48	56	81	81	90	82	101	111	146
Young/successful pair	2.2	2.4	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.1

A substantial increase in numbers of pairs. Several of the nest failures were due to strong winds, while predation by Pine Martens *Martes martes* was probably to blame in a number of cases. There was a single instance of probable egg robbery and another failure was attributed to human disturbance. (The Panel is grateful for the information supplied to it by Roy Dennis and his associates.)

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Minimum of 460 localities: 170-500 pairs breeding.

England, SW 45-122 pairs, 90 young reported.

AVON 6-11 pairs. CORNWALL 2 pairs. DEVON 15-20 pairs. DORSET 11-31 pairs. GLOUCESTERSHIRE 0-1 pairs. HAMPSHIRE 10-51 or more pairs. SOMERSET 1-5 pairs. WILTSHIRE 0-1 pairs.

England, SE 65-218 pairs, 60 young reported.

BEDFORDSHIRE 3-7 pairs. BERKSHIRE 5-10 pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 7-22 pairs. ESSEX 22-39 pairs. GREATER LONDON 10-29 pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE 1-33 pairs. KENT 1-18 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE 9 or more pairs. SURREY 7-41 pairs. SUSSEX 0-10 pairs.

England, E 27-60 pairs, 40 young reported.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE 1-5 pairs. LINCOLNSHIRE 5-10 pairs. NORFOLK 7-8 pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 7 pairs. SUFFOLK 7-30 pairs.

England, Central 22-78 pairs, 46 young reported.

DERBYSHIRE 10-24 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE 4-28 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 4-10 pairs. SHROPSHIRE 0-1 pairs. STAFFORDSHIRE 0-3 pairs. WARWICKSHIRE 1-6 pairs. WEST MIDLANDS 1 pair. WORCESTERSHIRE 2-5 pairs.

England, N 1-3 pairs, one young reported.

CHESHIRE 1 pair. NORTHUMBERLAND 0-2 pairs.

Wales 9-13 pairs, ten young reported.

BRECONSHIRE 0-2 pairs. CLWYD 1 pair. GLAMORGAN 1 pair. GWENT 4-6 pairs. MONTGOMERY 2 pairs. RADNORSHIRE 1 pair.

Scotland, S 0-5 pairs.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY 0-5 pairs.

Scotland, Mid 1 pair, two young reported.

FIFE 1 pair.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Confirmed (pairs)	93	98	91	108	103	140	154	159	255	152	170
Possible/probable (pairs)	116	148	202	164	226	250	287	310	327	341	330
Max. total pairs	209	246	293	272	329	390	441	469	582	493	500
Young reared (min.)	91	117	126	160	133	205	239	265	279	243	249

The reported numbers were closely similar to those in 1993, although as always this must represent a minimum estimate. The successful breeding of a pair in Scotland appears to be only the second such record for the country, the first having been in 1887. The other four Scottish records were of singles in June.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

At least 359 localities: 8-612 pairs breeding.

England, SW 94 localities: 4-181 pairs.

AVON Two localities: 11 singing males. CORNWALL Seven localities: pair and eight singing males.

DEVON 15 localities: 19 singing males. DORSET 11 localities: 14 singing males. GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Nine localities: ten singing males. HAMPSHIRE 14 localities: 29 singing males. SOMERSET Nine localities: four pairs bred, and 18 singing males. WILTSHIRE 27 localities: 67 singing males.

England, SE 51 localities: 1-91 pairs.

BERKSHIRE Two localities: 12 singing males. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Four localities: four singing

males. ESSEX Eight localities: 16 singing males. GREATER LONDON One locality: one singing

male. HERTFORDSHIRE Ten localities: 11 singing males. KENT Five localities: 11 singing males.

OXFORDSHIRE 12 localities: 26 singing males. SURREY One locality: one singing male. SUSSEX

Eight localities: pair bred, and eight singing males.

England, E 84 localities: 0-132 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE 17 localities: 30 singing males. LINCOLNSHIRE 12 localities: 12 singing males.

NORFOLK 30 localities: 55 singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 19 localities: 28 singing males.

SUFFOLK Six localities: seven singing males.

England, Central 50 localities: 3-75 pairs.

DERBYSHIRE 22 localities: two pairs bred, and 23 singing males. LEICESTERSHIRE Seven localities:

11 singing males. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Eight localities: 16 singing males. STAFFORDSHIRE Four

localities: 14 singing males. WARWICKSHIRE Four localities: pair bred, and three singing males.

WORCESTERSHIRE Five localities: five singing males.

England, N 35 localities: 0-73 pairs.

CHESHIRE Six localities: ten singing males. CLEVELAND Five localities: eight singing males.

CUMBRIA Five localities: seven singing males and three females flushed. GREATER MANCHESTER

Four localities: ten singing males and one female seen. LANCASHIRE Eight localities: 16 singing

males. NORTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: seven singing males and two females.

NORTHUMBERLAND Six localities: eight singing males and one bird flushed.

Wales 20 localities: 0-30 pairs.

ANGLESEY Four localities: five singing males. BRECONSHIRE Three localities: three singing males.

CAERNARVON One locality: one singing male. CARDIGAN One locality: one singing male.

CARMARTHEN Two localities: two singing males. CLWYD One locality: five singing males.

GLAMORGAN Two localities: five singing males. GWENT One locality: one singing male.

MERIONETH One locality: one found injured. PEMBROKESHIRE Four localities: six singing males.

Scotland, S 17 localities: 0-20 pairs.

AYRSHIRE One locality: one singing male. BORDERS Five localities: six singing males. DUMFRIES &

GALLOWAY Three localities: three singing males. LOTHIAN Eight localities: nine singing males

and one bird seen.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: 0-4 pairs.

ABERDEENSHIRE Two localities: three singing males. PERTHSHIRE One locality: one singing male.

Scotland, N & W Five localities: 0-6 pairs.

ARGYLL One locality: one singing male. CAITHNESS Two localities: two singing males. ROSS &

CROMARTY Two localities: three singing males.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	84	152	130	904	255	88	319	172	359
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	5	27	13	2	9	1	8
Possible/probable (pairs)	110	245	158	1,628	364	105	481	202	604
Max. total pairs	111	246	163	1,655	377	107	490	203	612

The numbers of this species are highly variable from year to year, but this year contains the most reports since the bumper total in 1989.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Five localities: 1-11 pairs breeding.

England, E One locality: four singing males in May and June, with at least one brood of young seen in June and July.

Wales One locality: three singing males.

Scotland, N & W Three localities: (1) two singing males from 31st May to 26th June; (2) male heard on 26th May only; (3) male heard on 21st June only.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. counties	3	2	3	4	5	7	6	5	9	12	4
No. localities	4	2	3	7	6	14	14	7	12	19	5
No. singing	10	3	4	18	10	21	21	14	14	31	11

A very disappointing year after the higher numbers in 1993, despite a rare confirmation of breeding by one pair for the second year running, with declines in all three countries.

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

30 'localities': 478 males singing.

England, E CAMBRIDGESHIRE One singing male from 13th to 17th June.

England, N NORTH YORKSHIRE Three singing males at one locality in early June, and one in July; two unsexed birds in same area.

Wales ANGLESEY Pair almost certainly bred at one site; singing male at second site in late June.

PEMBROKE Single singing males at two localities in April and May.

Scotland, S BORDERS Single singing males at two localities, one in May and June, one in July.

Scotland, N & W Totals of singing males: **HIGHLAND—CAITHNESS** 5, **HIGHLAND—INNER HEBRIDES** 14 (Skye 9, Canna 2, Eigg 2, Muck 1), **STRATHCLYDE—INNER HEBRIDES** 174 (Coll 25, Tiree 126, Mull 1, Iona 3, Colonsay & Oronsay 6, Islay 13), **ORKNEY** 20, **WESTERN ISLES** 255 (Lewis 89, Harris 7, North Uist 51, Benbecula 19, South Uist 49, Barra & Vatersay 40).

A total of 463 singing males was found by RSPB, SNH and Scottish Crofters' Union teams on the Scottish islands this year, a small but very welcome increase over the 446 found during the census year of 1993. Considerable effort and expense has been involved to secure appropriate management for Corn Crakes and it is to be hoped that the corner has been turned, just in time.

Corn Crake is one of the priority species for which an action plan has recently been published through the UK Government's Biodiversity Action Planning Initiative, whilst a Europe-wide recovery programme has recently been agreed jointly by the European Union and the Council of Europe's Bern Convention. All of these programmes stress the importance of monitoring, an area where birdwatchers can assist through continued provision of observations to the Panel.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

United Kingdom Three pairs bred, but no young were reared. One pair reared one young to

14 days, when it died. Two other pairs laid but did not hatch any eggs and may be infertile.

No young have been reared since 1988 and the prospects for this tiny breeding group look bleak, especially as it is suspected that two of the pairs are infertile.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

At least 29 localities: 623-669 pairs reared a minimum of 181 young.

England, SE 13 localities.

ESSEX Three localities: (1) 45 pairs bred, success unknown; (2) 14 pairs bred, ten nests destroyed by Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, six young fledged; (3) two pairs summered. KENT Nine localities: (1) 97 pairs laid, at least 35 nests hatched but only 28 young fledged from 14 broods, with failure probably due to high water levels and competition for food; (2) ten pairs bred in flooded fields after earlier failure, three pairs hatched but no young fledged; (3) 37 pairs present, but only five pairs bred and only three young seen; (4) five pairs fledged at least seven young; (5) two pairs fledged seven young; (6) pair fledged three young; (7) pair with single young; (8) pair on nest but not successful; (9) 21 adults present, but no nesting attempt. SUSSEX One locality: pair on nest, success unknown.

England, E 16 localities.

NORFOLK 11 localities: (1) 29 pairs bred, success unknown; (2) 25 pairs made 52 nesting attempts, but fledged only six young; (3) 11 pairs laid and all hatched young, of which at least 17 fledged; (4) ten pairs reared at least ten young; (5) pair bred, but nest flooded; (6)-(11) total of 133 pairs bred at these six localities, but no details available. SOUTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: two pairs bred, three young fledged. SUFFOLK Four localities: (1) 105 pairs hatched a minimum of 252 young but only 30 young fledged, with most losses due to predation; (2) 103 pairs fledged 35 young; (3) 22 pairs hatched 14 broods and fledged 24 young; (4) pair present, but did not breed.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	11	14	15	18	27	24	21	21	29	25	29
Confirmed (pairs)	237	269	255	341	389	521	355	448	492	436	623
Young reared (min.)	118	245	227	315	136	150	200	305	336	347	181

Information on the number of young reared is incomplete, but, even allowing for this, predation clearly remains a serious problem in some colonies, added to the more usual, and less controllable, losses due to high tides.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicanus*

Eight counties: 141-173 pairs.

England, SW & SE Five counties: 47-53 pairs, of which 46-52 were confirmed as breeding, fledging 34 young, plus an additional 13 singles.

England, E Three counties: 105 pairs, of which 95 were confirmed as breeding, fledging at least 57 young, plus an additional two singles.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Confirmed (pairs)	19	68	103	137	126	126	139	139	155	146	141
Possible/probable (pairs)	52	47	12	0	3	17	10	16	4	16	32
Max. total pairs	71	115	115	137	129	143	149	155	159	162	173
Min. no. of young fledged	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	62	79	112	123	111	101	91

Despite a slight drop in the number of confirmed pairs and relatively poor production, the situation continues to improve slowly, helped by continued research-based management undertaken by the RSPB and English Nature. (The Panel wishes to thank Dr Rhys Green, RSPB, for his assistance in compiling the data.)

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Two localities: two pairs breeding (excluding those in main Scottish breeding areas).

England, N One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: pair laid three eggs, two subsequently found broken in nest and fate of third unknown.

Scotland Pair reared three young at a site well away from the main breeding range.

The Panel seeks records only if away from the main breeding range, which lies north of a line from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Tay, and accepts that at least some of those on hilltops in southern Scotland and northern England will be on passage.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One locality: two pairs.

Scotland, N & W One locality: four adults seen, with two males displaying in late May and one in late June. It is thought that one pair probably laid but failed.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	1	4	2	2	1	0	1	2	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2
Max. total pairs	1	2	3	5	3	3	2	3	2	3	2

As mentioned in last year's report, a recent paper summarised the history of breeding in Britain by this species (*Brit. Birds* 88: 573-577).

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One general area: at least four pairs bred.

Scotland, N & W One general area: four adults, with young and giving distraction displays, at separate sites.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	3	1	1	4
Possible/probable (pairs)	1	2	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0
Max. total pairs	2	3	2	3	2	4	1	4	2	1	4

This species continues to be present in very low numbers. The apparent increase over last year may just reflect more observers being in the right place at the right time rather than a genuine increase in numbers breeding.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

13 localities: at least two pairs bred.

England, SE Three localities.

KENT One locality: five adults in spring but perhaps only migrants. SUSSEX Two localities: (1) two in April; (2) single in July; perhaps all migrants.

England, E Four localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) numerous on passage in April and May, with lekking at end of April, one male from lek staying until mid May; (2) many migrants in April and May, but no lekking seen. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) pair during 19th-30th June; (2) female on 20th June; perhaps all migrants.

England, N Six localities.

CHESHIRE Three localities: (1)-(3) present at all sites April to July, with maximum of 72 birds, but no lekking seen. GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: one with damaged wing, arrived with

migrants in April and remained until mid July. NORTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: up to 31 males and 12 females at leks; four females seen copulating; three just-fledged young (broods of two and one) with two females and seven males on 2nd July. NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: 12 males and at least 30 females at lek; one copulation seen.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	6	8	7	16	14	15	8	9	21	10	13
No. leks	1	3	3	10	6	6	1	4	7	7	3
Nests/broods	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	7	0	0	2
Max. no. females at leks	6	8	9	69	11	17	15	15	12	59	42

The first proven breeding after a couple of blank years, and lekking reported from a total of three localities.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

One locality: one displaying.

England, N One locality: bird performing evening display flights on 18th and 19th May.

While this can be presumed to be a migrant, this is rare behaviour for this country, the last occurrence in these reports having been in 1984.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

22 localities: 20-36 pairs breeding.

England, SW Four localities.

SOMERSET Four localities: (1) pair in suitable habitat; (2) adult displaying on 28th April; (3) pair in May and up to six birds in late May, but no display; (4) three adults in May.

England, SE Three localities.

KENT Three localities: (1) two pairs fledged five young, plus an unpaired adult; (2) pair fledged three young; (3) up to 12 adults, but no evidence of breeding.

England, E Five localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE. Two localities: (1) 14 pairs, of which ten definitely bred, and up to 12 young seen; (2) four pairs bred, of which three were successful. NORFOLK One locality: pair seen displaying and copulating, but no proof of breeding. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1)(2) single pairs displaying in May.

England, N Seven localities.

CHESHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) present at both sites throughout summer, with over 300 at each, but no signs of breeding behaviour. GREATER MANCHESTER Three localities: (1) present from 7th May to 2nd July, with peak of 33 on 18th May; some display flights seen; (2) up to nine in May; (3) up to four in June. LANCASHIRE One locality: pair displaying and copulating at potential breeding site. NORTH YORKSHIRE One locality: three pairs displaying, one bred but probably failed during incubation, the other two left in early May.

Scotland, N & W Three localities.

SHETLAND Three localities: (1) three pairs holding territory, of which one fledged two young; (2) pair fledged two young; (3) pair apparently breeding on 7th June, but not seen subsequently.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	12	11	19	13	17	14	16	18	24	16	22
Confirmed (pairs)	55	22	23	28	36	34	33	28	20	28	20
Possible/probable (pairs)	25	17	24	12	28	22	33	25	38	5	16
Max. total pairs	80	39	47	40	64	56	66	53	58	33	36

A generally poor year, with little recovery from last year's sharp drop in the number of pairs.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

No reports away from Orkney and Shetland.

For the third year running, no reports were received from areas away from the regular breeding area in the Northern Isles. We repeat our appeal for records of any summering or displaying elsewhere in the UK.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Eight localities: 6-11 pairs bred.

Scotland, N & W Eight localities: (1)(2) two pairs bred at each site and all produced young; (3)(4) single pairs bred at each site and produced young; (5) at least two pairs probably bred; (6)-(8) singles, one of which displayed.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	4	3	2	3	4	6	2	2	4	4	8
Confirmed (pairs)	4	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	2	6
Possible/probable (pairs)	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	5	6	5
Max. total pairs	5	3	3	4	4	6	2	2	6	8	11

This is the largest number of sites recorded since the Panel first reported in 1973 and the highest number of proved and total pairs since 1980.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Two localities: 33 males and 28 females reared at least 46 young.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) a complex of five sites where 30 males and 26 females were recorded, 23 of the males being known to have bred, producing a minimum of 42 young; (2) three males and two females produced four to six young.

The RSPB's ongoing management work on Fetlar, Shetland, has produced a slight increase over last year's 18-22 pairs, though the number of young hatched fell from 48-50 to 42. There was again breeding at the new locality first reported last year, but no return to either of the two most recently used former regular breeding sites.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

16 localities: 16-30 pairs, plus hybrid pair breeding.

England, SW Three localities: (1) two or three pairs bred; (2) pair holding territory; (3) up to four pairs present during breeding season, but no evidence of nesting.

England, SE Six localities: (1) five pairs bred, but nests washed out by high tide; (2) three pairs bred, with five large young in three broods seen; (3) three pairs laid but failed, fourth pair present; (4) pair hatched two young; (5) pair probably bred; (6) pair held territory, and single immature in April-May.

England, E Four localities: (1) pair raised one young; (2) pair hatched two young, which were taken by a predator, and a second pair did not lay; (3) pair copulated and built nest, but no eggs laid; (4) male paired to Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* hatched young, which subsequently died; two adult hybrids with Black-headed Gull were present all summer, one of which was paired to a Black-headed Gull.

England, N Three localities: (1) pair of displaying second-years in late May; (2) pair in April and May; (3) single in Black-headed Gull colony where hybrid pair bred in 1993.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	4	3	5	3	9	5	10	13	15	14	16
Confirmed (pairs)	4	3	1	1	5	6	11	15	19	15	16
Possible/probable (pairs)	1	5	4	2	10	3	5	8	12	17	14
Max. total pairs	5	8	5	3	15	9	16	23	31	32	30

A very similar year to last year, though with more hybrid pairs, and more hybrids, reported.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

One locality: single.

England, SE One locality: a first-summer stayed from May to the end of July.

In keeping with past policy, we are recording these occasional summering individuals and appeal for all observations to be sent in.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

One locality: one female bred with Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*; hybrid bred with Sandwich Tern.

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female bred with Sandwich Tern, laid one egg, which hatched on 10th July, but chick died on 15th; a hybrid adult, presumably one of the offspring fledged between 1989 and 1992, bred with Sandwich Tern, with one young, first seen on 15th July, fledged on 28th.

The situation gets a little more complicated, with young fledged from a pairing of a Sandwich Tern to a hybrid.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougalli*

14 localities: 74-98 pairs breeding, fledging at least 74 young.

England, SW Five localities: (1) up to four pairs, with three clutches laid, but all failed because of unknown predator; (2) pair laid two eggs, but nest destroyed by predator; (3) pair present, may have laid, but site flooded by high tide; (4) up to six adults (three pairs?) seen, but no proof of breeding; (5) pair in May and June, three pairs in July, no nests found.

England, N Three localities: (1) 38 pairs, of which 35 laid 68 eggs in 42 clutches (including seven re-layings) and fledged 44 or 45 young; (2) two pairs fledged four young, two other pairs present; (3) pair made scrape, but did not lay.

Wales Three localities: (1) 18 pairs hatched 21 young, of which 18 fledged; (2) two pairs laid clutches of two eggs, but eggs were taken by Stoat *Mustela erminea*; (3) three pairs, but did not nest.

Scotland, S One locality: two pairs bred, success unknown.

Scotland, Mid One locality: 14 pairs, of which seven laid nine eggs, eight of these hatched and seven young fledged.

Northern Ireland One locality: four pairs bred, but fledged only one young.

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	10	13	17	15	13	15	18	14
Confirmed (pairs)	169	164	172	93	52	62	84	74
Possible/probable (pairs)	164	33	5	31	5	10	21	24
Max. total pairs	333	197	177	124	57	72	105	98

The upward trend of the previous two years has been reversed, including the number of young fledged, which has fallen from about 110 in 1993. There is increasing evidence of movements between the Northeast Atlantic colonies, so that the UK birds form only a small part of the total population.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

No records received.

There were no confirmed sightings in Shetland this year, the first blank year since the early 1960s.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

One locality: pair.

England, Central One locality: pair heard and seen four times between early April and 5th June; may have bred, with possible juvenile seen in early June.

Scotland There were no sightings at any of the traditional localities.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	9	9	9	10	9	8	6	6	1	6	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	10	8	8	9	9	7	6	5	2	5	1
Max. total pairs	10	9	9	10	10	8	6	6	2	6	1

An even poorer year than 1992 and the worst since the Panel started in 1973. The regular haunts in Scotland were checked, so lack of coverage is not to blame for the low numbers.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

100-624 pairs breeding.

England, SW 28-202 pairs breeding.

DEVON Four localities: six breeding pairs or singing males. **DORSET** Whole county: 64 singing males. **HAMPSHIRE** A total of 131 counted or estimated from at least 24 localities, but coverage of the New Forest, where 109 pairs or singing males were found in 1993, was very poor.

WILTSHIRE One locality: pair present.

England, SE 17-132 pairs breeding.

BERKSHIRE Five localities: 19 breeding pairs or singing males. **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE** One locality: one breeding pair. **KENT** One locality: three singing males. **SURREY** 20 localities: 80 breeding pairs or singing males. **SUSSEX** 15 localities: 29 breeding pairs or singing males.

England, E 46-281 pairs breeding.

LINCOLNSHIRE Six localities: 12 breeding pairs or singing males. **NORFOLK** Two main areas: 108 breeding pairs or singing males. **SUFFOLK** Two main areas: 151-161 breeding pairs or singing males.

England, Central Nine pairs breeding.

UNNAMED COUNTY Two localities: nine breeding pairs.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993*	1994
No. counties	8	9	13	11	12	10	14	12	14	13	13
Confirmed (pairs)	16	5	47	28	88	156	64	39	124	213	100
Possible/probable (pairs)	185	122	181	165	157	54	272	303	535	408	524
Max. total pairs	201	127	228	193	245	210	336	362	659	621	624

A similar picture to that of last year.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Continental race *M. a. alba*.

One locality: one possibly breeding.

England, SE One locality: male holding territory on a building containing a wagtail nest, but not seen after 14th May.

A new species for these reports, although the observations are inconclusive.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

Two localities: three singing males (*Brit. Birds* 88: 531).

England, SE One locality: first-summer male in song at Dungeness, Kent, on 18th May, when trapped and ringed; second, different first-summer male in song during 2nd-9th June, also trapped and ringed.

Scotland, S One locality: male in song at Gullane, Lothian, on 25th and 26th May.

This is the second year running in which this species has appeared in the Panel's reports. The Panel is keen to monitor occurrences of all rare species that show even slight signs of breeding behaviour, which may be precursors to real breeding in the future.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

One locality: one singing male.

England, Central One locality: singing male of red-spotted race *L. s. svecica* on 22nd May only.

The first record since 1991.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

66 localities: 32-95 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities.

AVON One locality: female carrying food into suitable building. HAMPSHIRE One locality: pair fledged at least two young.

England, SE 36 localities.

BERKSHIRE One locality: pair feeding brood of three on 27th June. ESSEX Two localities: (1)(2) single males in suitable habitat in April and May. GREATER LONDON 18 localities: (1) pair bred, and additional singing male; (2)-(6) single pairs bred; (7) pair, and two additional singing males; (8) six singing males; (9) two singing males; (10)-(18) single singing males.

HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: pair with one young. KENT Six localities: (1) two pairs bred and two young seen; (2) pair fledged three young; (3) female carrying food into suitable building; (4)(5) single pairs; (6) singing male in April. OXFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) single pairs each fledged two broods of four young. SURREY Six localities: (1)-(3) single singing males; (4) adult in April and June close to suitable building; (5)(6) singles, perhaps on passage.

England, E 11 localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: first-summer male from 17th May to 12th June. NORFOLK Three localities: (1)(2) two singing males at each; (3) singing male. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: two pairs bred, fledging at least seven young, a third pair may have been present. SUFFOLK Six localities: (1) four pairs bred successfully, and an additional singing male; (2) two pairs, of which one was seen feeding young; (3) pair fledged three young, and additional four singing males; (4) pair bred successfully; (5) two singing males; (6) singing male.

England, Central 11 localities.

DERBYSHIRE Four localities: (1) three pairs fledged at least four young, and an additional two singing males; (2) pair fledged three young; (3) pair fledged two young; (4) first-summer male singing in May. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: pair and additional singing male in May to July. WEST MIDLANDS Six localities: (1)(2) single pairs; (3)-(6) single singing males.

England, N Six localities.

CHESHIRE One locality: two immatures on 16th July, definitely not bred there. GREATER MANCHESTER Three localities: (1) pair fledged three young; (2) singing male; (3) female visiting garden in July and August. LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1) pair raised at least one brood; (2) singing male.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	92	77	70	56	50	36	44	53	66
Confirmed (pairs)	81	46	54	36	28	23	14	32	32
Possible/probable (pairs)	38	63	58	46	46	46	57	44	63
Max. total pairs	119	109	118	82	74	69	71	76	95

Much of the apparent increase over 1993 results from a thorough survey, by members of the London Natural History Society, of the Greater London area, in particular the City centre, where there were 25 pairs or singing males within less than a mile and a half (2.4 km) of St Paul's Cathedral.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Five localities: 0-5 pairs breeding.

England, Central One locality: adult with two Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus* on 22nd June.

England, N Two localities: (1) adult carrying food in mid May; (2) adult feeding in same place during 23rd-29th May.

Scotland, S One locality: bird alarming and showing territorial behaviour, during 15th-18th May, but not seen subsequently.

Scotland, N & W One locality: adult carrying food into plantation.

SHETLAND Not seen at locality where bred in 1992 and 1993.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	4	3	2	7	7	12	12	13	7	5	5
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	2	1	2	3	5	2	2	2	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	4	3	0	6	5	10	7	11	8	3	5
Max. total pairs	4	3	2	7	7	13	12	13	11	5	5

The second poor year running, with no definite breeding, though two probables.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

15 localities: 4-19 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S One locality: singing male from 26th April to 2nd May.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males, between April and June.

Scotland, N & W 11 localities: (1) three pairs bred successfully, a fourth pair probably bred, and an additional singing male; (2) pair fledged at least two young; (3)(4) single pairs present and probably breeding; (5)-(11) single singing males.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	58	35	32	39	22	38	17	15	13	22	15
Confirmed (pairs)	31	12	20	9	10	12	6	7	9	5	4
Possible/probable (pairs)	48	23	26	41	30	39	15	13	15	22	15
Max. total pairs	79	35	46	50	49	51	21	20	24	27	19

This species is much under-reported; the numbers reported from north and west Scotland are thought to be only a small part of the estimated breeding population there.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

At least 101 localities: 14-332 breeding 'pairs'.

England, SW About 72 localities: 6-248 'pairs'.

AVON Two localities: two singing males. **CORNWALL** Six localities: 25 singing males. **DEVON** Eight localities: 51 singing males. **DORSET** 13 localities: 28 singing males. **GLOUCESTERSHIRE** Two localities: pair bred, and one singing male. **HAMPSHIRE** 27 localities: three pairs bred, two other pairs and 98 singing males. **SOMERSET** Ten localities: two pairs bred, 27 singing males, four males trapped in spring, female with brood patch trapped. **WILTSHIRE** Four localities: eight singing males.

England, SE Eight localities: 3-18 'pairs'.

BERKSHIRE One locality: pair bred. **KENT** Two localities: pair and three singing males. **OXFORDSHIRE** Three localities: ten singing males. **SUSSEX** Two localities: two pairs bred, and one singing male.

England, E Nine localities or arcas: 0-31 'pairs'.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: one singing male. **NORFOLK**. County summary: five main areas: 24-27 singing males. **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE** One locality: pair probably bred. **SUFFOLK** Two localities: two singing males.

England, Central Two localities: three 'pairs'.

WARWICKSHIRE One locality: pair bred. WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: male bred with two females.

Wales Ten localities: 2-32 'pairs'.

BRECONSHIRE One locality: one singing male. CARMARTHEN Five localities: 13 singing males.

CARDIGAN/PEMBROKE One locality: at least two broods and ten singing males. GLAMORGAN One locality: pair probably bred, and three singing males. PEMBROKE Two localities: single singing males.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. counties	13	13	11	14	14	15	21	17	18	21	23
Confirmed ('pairs')	78	59	4	31	24	12	19	27	15	11	14
Possible/probable ('pairs')	238	190	175	156	174	196	326	214	273	306	318
Max. total 'pairs'	316	249	179	187	198	208	345	241	298	317	332

The best year since 1990, with an increase in the number of localities as well as of pairs, and totals well exceeding those of the mid 1980s, before the population was hit by cold winters. The stronghold of the species is now in the southwest of England and Wales. The use of the word 'pairs' is normal in these reports, but does not reflect the true situation for this markedly polygynous species in which the females are extremely elusive.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*

One locality: one singing male (*Brit. Birds* 88: 538).

Scotland, Mid One locality: male in song at Clatto Reservoir, Fife, during 16th-25th July.

Reported for the second year running and for the third time in these reports.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Seven localities: 1-10 pairs breeding.

England, SE Two localities.

KENT Two localities: (1) two singing males, in July and September; (2) one singing male in late April and early May.

England, E Three localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: singing male on 17th Junc. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) three singing males; (2) one singing male.

England, N Two localities: (1) male in song from mid May, male and female trapped in late July and male in late August, and adult seen carrying food on 28th July; (2) singing male from 23rd to 26th April.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	10	12	9	16	10	13	5	13	13	5	7
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	1
Possible/probable (pairs)	12	14	11	20	13	17	9	16	20	4	9
Max. total pairs	12	15	12	20	13	17	10	16	22	8	10

In an otherwise poor year, the pair almost certainly breeding (treated here as confirmed breeding) in northern England is a welcome return northwards for the first time since 1991, when a pair bred in a different area in the same region.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

22 localities: 0-48 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.

England, SE 13 localities: (1)-(13) a total of six pairs probably bred, a further 27 pairs or singing males were recorded, plus a single female.

England, E Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.

England, Central Two localities.

WORCESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) a total of seven singing males was heard, but no females were seen at either site.

England, N Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.

Scotland, S One locality: singing male on 2nd June.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	28	23	18	11	13	10	12	15	13	15	22
Confirmed (pairs)	4	2	12	10	6	11	13	9	9	12	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	47	40	16	11	14	11	11	23	26	46	48
Max. total pairs	51	42	28	21	20	22	24	32	35	58	48

A disappointing year after the considerable increase in 1993, especially at the former stronghold in Worcestershire, where no females were seen at all. The number of localities again rose, however, and the total of pairs is still higher than for several years.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Five localities: five singing males, one carrying nest material (*Brit. Birds* 88: 538).

England, SE Two localities: (1) singing male at Elmley, Kent, during 12th-26th June, seen carrying nest material on 19th; (2) singing male at Dungeness, Kent, on 24th and 25th May.

England, E Two localities: (1) singing male at Rockland Broad, Norfolk, on 2nd May; (2) singing male at Cley, Norfolk, during 11th May to 26th June.

Scotland, N One locality: singing male at Geosetter, Shetland, on 22nd May.

This is the fifth consecutive year in which this species has been reported to the Panel and a new record total. For the second year running, there was a male at Elmley apparently building a nest. One cannot help wondering whether he had a secretive mate each time.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*

One locality: one singing male (*Brit. Birds* 88: 539).

England, SE One locality: singing male at Beachy Head, Sussex, on 5th June.

This is the second time that this species has appeared in these reports; there were two singing males in 1992.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Two localities: two singing males.

England, E One locality: singing male on 3rd July.

Scotland, S One locality: singing male on 7th June.

After last year's breeding record, in a different part of Scotland, these are the first singing males since 1989.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Total of 1,597 to 1,675 territories identified during national survey.

England, SW County totals:

CORNWALL 7, DEVON 156-165, DORSET 652-653, HAMPSHIRE 577-622, of which 98 were away from the New Forest, ISLE OF WIGHT 5-9, SOMERSET 7, WILTSHIRE 2-3.

England, SE County totals:

BERKSHIRE 2, SURREY 155-173, SUSSEX 34.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. counties	6	5	5	8	6	5	8	8	7	11	10
Confirmed (pairs)	11	26	15	8	26	23	55	67	63	93	n/a
Possible/probable (pairs)	429	368	293	239	616	499	873	634	863	1053	1675
Max. total pairs	440	394	308	247	639	522	928	701	926	1146	1675

The RSPB/EN national survey (Gibbons & Wotton, 1996, *Brit. Birds* 89: 203-212) carried out in 1994 was a considerable success, with excellent coverage in the most difficult areas in Dorset and Hampshire. It should be noted, however, that the national survey did not record any birds in Wiltshire. The population was shown to be at its highest ever. Even the estimate of 1,597-1,675 pairs may have been an underestimate; corrections for overlooked pairs suggested that the population may have been as high as 1,800-1,890 pairs. It would appear, therefore, that around 70% of the birds have been reported to the Panel over the last few years. The apparent range extension northwards into Suffolk in 1993 was not repeated this year.

The Panel wishes to thank Dr David Gibbons for the results from the survey.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Three localities: three singing males (*Brit. Birds* 88: 539).

England, SE One locality: singing male at Walthamstow Reservoir, Greater London, on 15th May.

Scotland, Mid One locality: singing first-summer male at Maryton, Tayside, during 12th-17th May.

Scotland, N & W One locality: singing male during 15th-17th May.

Larger numbers than usual were recorded in Britain in 1994, and these three singing males are the first mention of this species in these reports.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

41 localities: 4-66 pairs breeding.

England, SW 18 localities.

DEVON Six localities: (1)-(6) single singing males between 28th March and 20th May. DORSET Two localities: (1) singing male in May; (2) single on 19th August. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Nil return for first time since 1987. HAMPSHIRE Seven localities: (1) two pairs bred, plus seven singing males; (2) seven singing males; (3)-(7) single pairs or singing males. WILTSHIRE Three localities: (1) four singing males; (2) two singing males; (3) singing male.

England, SE 21 localities.

BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: pair. BERKSHIRE Two localities: (1) four singing males on 9th May; (2) singing male on 9th July. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair in April and May; (2) singing male on 11th June. ESSEX Two localities: (1) two singing males in May and June, one, apparently paired to Goldcrest *R. regulus*, seen feeding young; (2) singing male in late May. GREATER LONDON One locality: singing male in late April at past breeding site. KENT Two localities: (1) pair in early May; (2) singing male in mid June. OXFORDSHIRE One locality: two singing males in May. SURREY Five localities: (1) pair bred; (2) three singing males; (3)-(5) single singing males, April to June. SUSSEX Five localities: (1)-(3) single singing males during May to July; (4)(5) singles in April and May.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: singing male in early June.

Wales One locality.

RADNORSHIRE One locality: singing male in June.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	47	24	19	37	44	52	48	19	15	20	41
Confirmed (pairs)	4	5	1	8	11	19	9	2	3	3	4
Possible/probable (pairs)	78	41	28	74	72	112	88	20	16	25	62
Max. total pairs	82	46	29	82	83	131	97	22	19	28	66

A big increase in the maximum total is only partly accounted for by more detailed observations in the New Forest, which, while certainly incomplete, were more thorough than in several recent years.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

33 localities: 7-35 pairs breeding.

England, SE Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males, two of which were immature.

England, E 57 localities surveyed, of which 27 held none, and a minimum of seven breeding pairs found, which fledged only four to six young; six other pairs probably bred, there were also pairs or singing males at 17 sites, and singles at two others.

Scotland, Mid No report was received from the site where breeding has taken place in recent years.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	11	12	13	22	35	29	38	27	37	33	33
Confirmed (pairs)	4	4	5	11	16	15	10	16	14	14	7
Possible/probable (pairs)	14	11	11	20	25	22	32	12	23	19	28
Max. total pairs	18	15	17	31	41	37	42	28	37	33	35

A dismal year, when those attempting to breed in their main area in eastern England were very badly affected by appalling weather, including high winds, heavy rain and thunderstorms, during the critical periods of nest-building and egg-laying. The Panel is most grateful for the detailed information on the eastern England population supplied by the Golden Oriole Group.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Seven localities: 1-8 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality: male found dead beside road on 22nd June.

Scotland, S Two localities: (1) adult male took up territory briefly during 2nd-4th June; (2) male on 1st June, perhaps on passage.

Scotland, Mid One locality: pair fledged two young.

Scotland, N & W Three localities: (1) one or two males in late June and early July; (2) male on 22nd June; (3) single on 5th July.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	4	7	3	8	6	3	7	5	13	6	7
Confirmed (pairs)	6	6	4	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
Possible/probable (pairs)	4	6	2	11	6	6	7	4	12	6	7
Max. total pairs	10	12	6	13	7	6	8	5	13	6	8

A slightly better year than 1993, with one successful breeding pair and a scattering of other records, although those in England appear to have gone now.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S One locality: singing male on 11th May, in suitable habitat.

Scotland, Mid One locality: singing male on 10th June, in oak *Quercus* wood.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males in suitable habitat.

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
No. localities	10	3	1	3	2	1	1	2	2	2	4
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	8	3	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	1	4
Max. total pairs	9	3	1	3	2	1	1	2	3	2	4

More than for several years, as demonstrated by the table, included here for the first time in five years.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs.

England, SW One locality.

CORNWALL One locality: singing male on 1st May only.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: singing male during 6th-11th April.

A third successive poor year, with again none in Devon, the former most-regular area for the species.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Six localities: 0-8 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: two males together on 12th July.

England, SE One locality: singing (grey) male on 15th June.

England, E One locality: singing male during 3rd-6th June.

Scotland, S One locality: singing adult male during 25th May to 3rd July.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) singing male during 11th-22nd June, with probable second male on 11th; (2) singing male first seen on 5th June and singing on 9th, in arca where singing male has occurred before.

A similar picture to that of last year, with a number of singing males, not all adult, but no females reported.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Two main areas and four other localities: 7-27 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid and N & W Two main areas and four other localities: (1) at least 15 pairs, probably representing a slight increase over 1993, with some second broods fledged; (2) at least six pairs bred successfully and two singles seen; (3) pair with two recently fledged young; (4)-(6) single males in suitable habitat.

The information on this species will always be incomplete and patchy, but the Panel will always welcome reports, even if only of a single male seen once, so long as it is in potentially suitable habitat.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

43-412 breeding pairs.

England, SW

CORNWALL Eight localities: (1)(2) single pairs bred, two additional males seen at each site; (3)-(8) single males between April and June. DEVON Full county surveys have been undertaken since 1989, but, because of the recent increase in population, only a sample survey was conducted in 1994, designed to detect any increase in range. A total of 81 tetrads was surveyed and 247 males were located. Extrapolation from the sample put the county estimate at 370-400 pairs. A sample 41 pairs were monitored and managed a 67% success rate, considerably better than in 1993.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Confirmed (pairs)	36	48	98	113	92	43
Possible/probable (pairs)	83	85	143	207	269	369
Max. total pairs	119	133	241	320	361	412

There has been a further modest increase in numbers. This recovery could be due to several factors, including the advent of set-aside (which has provided winter foraging), RSPB and EN management advice, farms entering Countryside Stewardship or SSSI management agreements, and a run of mild winters.

The Panel wishes to thank Dr Andy Evans of the RSPB for this summary.

Dr M. A. Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN

The Rare Breeding Birds Panel is sponsored and supported by:



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LETTER

Of partridges

The comments under the title 'Of partridges, pheasants and White-headed Ducks' (*Brit. Birds* 89: 241) are, I submit, not worthy of your excellent magazine. Although the opinions are 'not necessarily those of "British Birds"', the complete lack of documentation or attribution sits uncomfortably alongside the evident care and scholarship found through the rest of the magazine. What use are opinions, however lofty, if they are not embedded in evidence?

To draw attention to the absurdity of a claim that the rearing and release of Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix* will assist declining stocks may be good knock-about stuff, but it is meaningless unless we know something about the claim, and the context of the claim; after all, the claimant may have been teasing.

To go further, however, and imply irreversible damage to Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* stocks in the UK arising from the release of Chukar Partridges *A. chukar* and *A. rufa* × *A. chukar* hybrids flies in the face of evidence to the contrary. The Game Conservancy Trust has done considerable research on this subject, which revealed that hybridisation between the two species was infrequent in the wild, and that released *A. chukar* and *A. rufa* × *A. chukar* hybrids had such low breeding success in the wild that they would virtually disappear within a couple of years of a ban on releasing them (Potts 1988). What is more, The Game Conservancy Trust recommendation in 1988 that the ban envisaged in the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 should be implemented was backed up by a prediction that the 'purity' of *A. rufa* would be quickly restored. The ban was implemented at the end of 1992 (Potts 1991) and continuous monitoring has borne this out, with the situation now all but restored (Potts 1996).

As if this were not enough, the 'news' that there are no longer any pure *A. r. hispanica* or *A. r. intercedens* in Spain and Portugal is simply incorrect. There is a problem in both countries through releasing inappropriate subspecies and hybrids in some localities, but many responsible hunters, aware of the dangers, are making appropriate and conscientious efforts to restore the situation (e.g. APROCA 1996).

Nor has the unique subspecies *P. p. hispaniensis* 'disappeared'. Those interested in the great efforts being made to improve the conditions for this subspecies should read, for the Cantabrian mountains, Lucio *et al.* (1992), and, for the Pyrénées, Blanc *et al.* (1986), Anon. (1988) and Ellison *et al.* (1994).

There are plenty of other media outlets for unresearched speculation; I hope that you can keep it out of *British Birds*.

G. R. POTTS

Director General, The Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF

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ANNOUNCEMENT

'Rare Birds Day by Day': EXCLUSIVE SPECIAL OFFER

Using the Rarities Committee database, a new T & A D Poyser book, *Rare Birds Day by Day* by Steve Dudley, Pete Fraser, Tim Benton & John Ryan, sets records out in calendar fashion, rather than species by species, so that one can see the annual patterns of occurrence, and perhaps even use it as a predictor of where and when rarities may turn up in the future.

Because of the close link with the BBRC, T & A D Poyser has made an exclusive special offer to *BB* subscribers, who can obtain the book *POST FREE* through British BirdShop for £20.00 instead of the usual price of £25.00. *This offer will remain open only until 30th September 1996.* Please use the British BirdShop form on pages v & vi.



LOOKING BACK

One hundred years ago: 'NOTES ON BIRDS IN KENT. BY BOYD ALEXANDER . . . Families of Red-backed Shrikes [*Lanius collurio*] are abroad. Stout hedgerows, whose outgrowing branches serve as perches, or the sunny portions of a wooden fence, are at this time favourite resorts. They flit in close company from bough to bough in front of an intruder, the male parent bird uttering frequently his brisk "chuck". Mimicry is also resorted to, the movements of the Spotted Flycatcher [*Muscicapa striata*] being then very closely imitated, and except for his red-brown mantle and inordinately long tail he might at first sight pass easily as that bird. When on a fence this Shrike will often turn backwards round its perch, and cling to the bottom of it, after the manner of a Titmouse. Several nests of this species may frequently be found in close proximity to one another. A "tiller," [local name given to a young oak-tree] or some other favourable position, not far from the nest, is always chosen as a look-out post, and this is resorted to for some time before building is commenced. Incubation is performed by the female, who leaves her nest and flies to the "tiller," and is there fed by the male.' (*Zoologist* Third series 20: 344-345, September 1896)

Also one hundred years ago: 'Icterine Warbler in Norfolk. On Sept. 7th [1896] I was fortunate enough to shoot an Icterine Warbler [*Hippolais icterina*] in the marram-bushes at Cley. It was too much damaged by the shot to determine the sex. The gizzard contained the remains of several earwigs. This makes the third specimen obtained in Norfolk. ROBERT GURNEY (Sprowston Hall, Norwich).' (*Zoologist* Third series 20: 378-379)

Twenty-five years ago, on 23rd September 1971, a Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon* was trapped on Whalsay, Shetland (*Brit. Birds* 65: 342), almost 16 years after the first (on Fair Isle in October 1955).



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

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

Boost for reedbeds

Perhaps as much as 40% of all British reedbeds has been lost in the last 50 years, and the quality of the remaining 60% has declined dramatically. One clear result of this is the Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* population declining to a mere 20 booming males in 1995. The warning bells have been sounded and various conservation bodies have placed reedbeds high on their lists of priorities. The RSPB, in conjunction with the Broads Authority, the British Reed Growers' Association and English Nature, has now produced a very full detailed handbook for managers of reedbeds. *Reedbed Management for Commercial and Wildlife Interests* by C. J. Hawke and P. V. José is intended as a practical guide that draws upon the experiences of reedbed-managers throughout the UK. It is a clear, easy-to-follow and easy-to-understand publication. Divided into four distinct sections, part one deals with planning for management and creation, part two with the actual management and rehabilitation, and part three with reedbed creation; part four is a series of case studies. The latter range from the Inner Tay in Scotland to Ham Wall in the Somerset Levels, from Stodmarsh in the southeast to Leighton Moss in the northwest. Anyone with an interest in or involvement with reedbeds will find the information crammed within the 212 pages fascinating and invaluable. Diagrams, line-drawings and photographs all aid the very practical nature of this publication. Here at last is something for the practitioner, not the theoretician, and one in a growing series of RSPB habitat-management handbooks that now cover rivers, gravel-pits, broadleaved woodland, farmland and invertebrates.

Reedbed Management for Commercial and Wildlife Interests is available, price £17.45 (incl. p&p), from the RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Count on Devon

Members of the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society have been busy this summer, with counts of Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*, House Martins *Delichon urbica*, Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti*, Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* and Rooks *Corvus frugilegus*: a mixture of local, national BTO and national RSPB-inspired censuses. This is typical, however, of the useful activities of county and regional bird clubs, and a good reason why we have always encouraged all *BB* readers to join their local birdwatching organisations and gain the pleasure of participating in useful co-operative fieldwork.

We note from the DBWPS newsletter, *Harrier*, that Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* have become so common that they are now deleted from the Devon 'List B' of species requiring descriptions, and Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* has gone from A to B, but Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* of the race *fuscus* and Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* of the race *tristis* are now both treated as major rarities, having been added to 'List A'.

To join the DBWPS, write to David Jenks, 27 Froude Avenue, Watcombe Park, Torquay TQ2 8NS.

Bernard Tucker Memorial Lectures

In one of the most appropriate of co-operative links, *British Birds* will be sponsoring the annual Oxford Ornithological Society Memorial Lecture in memory of Bernard Tucker, who was Assistant Editor and then Editor of *British Birds* from 1944 until his death in December 1950.

The annual lectures were inaugurated by Bernard Tucker himself in 1933, and he was President of the OOS from 1934 to 1950. The annual lectures were named in his honour in 1951, the first Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture being given by Philip Brown, on the subject of 'RSPB reserves'. The list of subsequent lecturers reads like a roll of honour of British ornithologists, including Bruce Campbell, Sir Hugh Elliott,

I. J. Ferguson-Lees, James Fisher, R. S. R. Fitter, Robert Gillmor, Jeremy Greenwood, R. A. Hinde, Eric Hosking, John Krebs, David Lack, R. M. Lockley, Chris Mead, James Monk, Ian Newton, E. M. Nicholson, Malcolm Ogilvie, John Parslow, Christopher Perrins, R. A. Richardson, Eric Simms, David Snow, Niko Tinbergen, W. H. Thorpe, Ian Wallace, George Waterston, Donald Watson, Kenneth Williamson and G. K. Yeates.

The next Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture will be given by Robin Prytherch, on the subject of his studies of Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, on 7th November 1996. For details, write to David Dunford, Hon. Secretary, OOS, 184 Botley Road, Oxford OX2 0HW.

'The Birds of Kielder'

Brian Little, David Jardine and Chris Probert have compiled and written a 32-page booklet on the birds of the Kielder Forest Park in Northumberland. The Forest was started in 1926, but the majority was planted after the Second World War, so an area of 50,000 ha of plantations is now being felled and restructured to create varied habitats, to the benefit of a range of birds, particularly raptors.

An exhibition on the birds of Kielder is on view at Kielder Castle Forest Park Centre, and the Bakethin Raptor Viewpoint provides opportunities to see most of the area's birds of prey, particularly in spring. Any *BB* subscriber who takes a copy of this issue to the Castle will be given a free copy of *The Birds of Kielder* booklet, which is published by Forest Enterprise, part of the Forestry Commission.

Army trip to The Gambia

A two-week Army Ornithological Society expedition to The Gambia and Senegal in February 1997 is open to all those who are serving or have served in the Army, the TAVR or Reserve forces in any capacity or who work or have worked as civilians for the Ministry of Defence, male or female. They do not have to be AOS members, but they would be expected to join if they wished to take part. For details, contact Major Timothy T. Hallchurch, MBE, MIMgt, AMBCS, MBOU, Millfield, 5 Mill Lane, Horton cum Studley, Oxford OX33 1DH; tel. 01865 358815 (home), 0802 202557 (mobile).

Rare breeding birds

Observers with information on rare breeding birds in Britain in 1996 are requested to send full details now to the relevant county bird recorder (or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN). *Please do not wait until the end of the year.*

Northumberland National Park and the Big Guns

This long-running and controversial saga (see *Brit. Birds* 89: 330) continues apace with Northumberland County Council deciding in May to object formally to the MoD's proposals for the development of military-training activities at the Otterburn Training Area within the Northumberland National Park (NNP), on eight different counts. These centre around the environmental impact of the increased military activity within the NNP, contrary to its aims and objectives. It is also of the opinion that the MoD has failed to demonstrate conclusively both the need for the total development and that there are not alternative locations or ways of meeting at least part of the MoD's needs.

The Secretary of State has been requested to order a Public Enquiry at the earliest opportunity at which to explore the issues, including possible alternative ways of meeting the MoD's requirements. This is likely to be a lively meeting with strong representations from both sides.

Raptor Conference

The Fifth World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls, of the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls (WWGBPO), will be hosted by the Raptor Conservation Group (RCG) and Vulture Study Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, and held during 4th-11th August 1998, in Midrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. For more information, please contact Robin Chancellor, Hon. Secretary, WWGBPO, 15b Bolton Gardens, London SW5 0AL; Dr Bernd-U. Meyburg, President WWGBPO, Wangenheimstrasse 32, 14193 Berlin, Germany; or Dr Gerhard H. Verdoorn, Chairman, RCG, PO Box 72155, Parkview 2122, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Dylan Aspinwall

We have recently received the sad news from Pete Leonard in Zambia that, in November 1995, Dylan Aspinwall, Chairman of the Zambian Ornithological Society, left home to buy a watch battery and never returned. His vehicle was recovered two days later, hidden in the bush some 150 km from his home. Since then, despite extensive searches, no other clues have been found. The most likely explanation is that Dylan was murdered by car-thieves.

Throughout his 30 years in Zambia, Dylan was very much the backbone of Zambian ornithology, working closely on the Zambian Bird Atlas Project and preparing a book on the birds of Zambia to be published later this year. Birders who have visited Zambia will know his name well and will feel particularly saddened by this tragedy.

XXII IOC



Gurney's Sugarbird *Promerops gurneyi* (*Penny Meakin*): the logo of the 22nd International Ornithological Congress, to be held in Durban, South Africa, during 16th-22nd August 1998.

For details write to Turners Conferences & Conventions (Pty) Ltd, PO Box 1935, Durban 4000, South Africa; phone +27-31-321451; fax +27-31-325709.

North of England Raptor Conference

The 1996 Conference will be held at the Novotel at Newcastle upon Tyne on Saturday 9th November 1996. The fee of £12.50 includes all refreshments, and is payable to North of England Raptor Conference. Details from and bookings to Tom Cadwallender, 22 South View, Lesbury, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 3PZ.

Fire Brigade to the rescue

A story with a happy ending from Simon Patient (YOY winner 1995 and RRA winner 1996) whilst he was on an Essex Birdwatching Society coach outing. When the party made a 'comfort stop' at Barton Mills, Suffolk, a member of the group spotted a Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* caught up by a thread high in a tree. The coach driver made a 999 emergency call and within a few minutes a fire engine arrived. Three firemen climbed the ladder, one cut the thread, a second caught the bird in a net and passed it down to the third. The thread was untangled and the thrush released, apparently none the worse for the experience. We hope the fire brigade used the exercise to gain some good publicity.

Pan-Asian Ornithological Congress

The PASOC and BirdLife Asia Conference will be held on 9th-17th November 1996 in Bangalore, India. It is being organised by the BirdLife Asia Council and the Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, and will evaluate the current status of ornithological research in Asia.

For further information, contact either Dr V. S. Vijayan, National Co-ordinator, Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Kalampayan PO, Coimbatore 641 010, Tamil Nadu, India; Phone (+) 091-422-807953, 807972, 807983; Fax (+) 091-422-807953; Email Centre@sacon.ernet.in; or BirdLife International, Asia Division, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA; Phone (+)44 (0)1223-277318; Fax (+)44 (0)1223-277200; Email Birdlife@gn.apc.org.

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(D469)

New editor for BOU Check-lists

The British Ornithologists' Union is justly proud of its steadily expanding 'Check-list' series. There can be few foreign-travelling birders who have not had cause to call upon at least one of these excellent publications at some time or other. A recent review (*Wilson Bull.* 108: 204) of the 1994 publication *The Birds of Nigeria* (BOU Check-list no. 4, second edition) sums up with the statement 'BOU's support of basic efforts like compiling check-lists worldwide may have more ultimate impact on protecting the earth's birdlife than any other modest single measure.'

Lew Grimes, author of check-list no. 9 (Ghana), has been editing the series for many years, and is currently steering St Lucia and Togo through the publication process. We hear, however, that the series is now to have a new editor, Janet Kear, Past President of the BOU and Editor of the *Ibis* in the 1980s. It is good to know that this excellent series will continue in safe hands. A price list is available from: BOU, c/o The Natural History Museum, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

Montejo Raptor Refuge

Recent publications from El Refugio de Rapaces de Montejo, Segovia, Spain, include one on the ecology of the Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, a species that has been studied there for more than 21 years, and a complete list of the vertebrates recorded in the refuge during 1975-92, including over 200 species of birds of which more than 100 nest. Both are in Spanish. Further details from Dr Fidel José Fernández y Fernández-Arroyo, c/Pensamiento, 15 - 3^oA, 28020 Madrid, Spain.

Taking it easy?

Taking it easy, in partial retirement, Eric Simms, the author and former BBC wildlife sound-recordist and television producer, now manages for the Lincolnshire Trust a 3-km-long wayside nature reserve of grassy verges and old railway embankments.

This reserve has already won three awards for environmental achievement and has recently been featured in *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *Reader's Digest International*, and on four TV and four radio programmes.

Always make a note of it

We were talking to the warden at an Italian nature reserve in January and enthusing about the House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* of the race *italiae*, and wintering Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* that we had been watching that morning. The warden was starting to show signs of boredom when, for no particular reason, Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* came into the conversation. His excitement to discover that we had recently seen one, a species that did not normally winter in this area, was a joy to behold. The lesson was learnt, particularly if you are in an area with which you are not familiar: record everything you see and make sure that you pass the records on to the appropriate recorder.

A. J. Smith (1926-1995)

Allan Smith was born in Gloucester but moved to Hereford in 1956. He was Recorder and then Chairman of the Herefordshire Ornithological Club, and, as County Organiser for Herefordshire, was a vital link in the team responsible during the late 1960s and early 1970s for the first *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*. Allan was a long-standing supporter of *BB*. A full obituary appears in the *HOC Annual Report* (5: 231-232).

Bonaparte's Gull comes home

A. A. Wright tells us that he 'spent most of the war years 1940-45 at an establishment that was largely flooded when Ogston Reservoir, Derbyshire, was constructed. The pub in the local village, Woolley, was called, believe it or not, "Napoleon's Home". How appropriate, therefore, that a Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* should be reported there (*Brit. Birds* 89: 50).'

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MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 142. Mystery photograph 198A.



Plate 143. Mystery photograph 198B.

198 Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* is a rare visitor to Britain and Ireland which has become even rarer in recent years. A total of 47 was recorded here up to the end of 1957, 67 during 1958-83 and just 14 from 1984 to the end of 1994. An individual of this species is best located by checking carefully through the wintering flocks of White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons*.

Juveniles of both species lack the name-giving white facial blaze and the black barring on the belly. By late winter, when they depart for the breeding grounds, first-winters possess a white blaze nearly as extensive as that of an adult, but only very limited black barring below. The mystery photographs, however, are of adults of these two similar species. Both were taken by Robin Chittenden: photograph A shows a Lesser White-fronted Goose at Alton Water, Suffolk, in April 1994, and photograph B shows a White-fronted Goose at Cley, Norfolk, in March 1992.

Even when the two are together, the rarer species' smaller size is of limited value to the observer, and its more rapidly delivered, higher-pitched call is for the practised ear only. The comparatively neater, more compact appearance of Lesser White-fronted Goose can, however, be vital in the initial discovery of an individual; no less important in the firm identification process are the various structural characters which contribute to it. These include the noticeably shorter, smaller bill with straight cutting edge to the upper mandible, steeper forehead, more generously rounded rear crown, shorter and thicker neck and greater projection of the wings beyond the tip of the tail at rest. The rarer species' faster walk, quicker feeding action and slightly more rapid wing-beats in flight further enhance its daintier look.

The brighter pink bill, darker head and neck and comparatively sparse barring on the belly of Lesser White-fronted Goose are valid identification features, but, because of the variation which exists among individual White-fronted Geese in these respects, they are best considered as features of secondary importance. More reliable characters are the rarer species' larger white facial blaze and its yellow orbital ring. Unlike that of the commoner species, the blaze extends to cover most of the fore crown, ending above the eye when seen in profile, and is less broadly round-ended when viewed head-on. The yellow orbital ring is thick and conspicuous except at fairly long range, though a pitfall is created in late winter by those few White-fronted Geese which show a slim, yellow orbital ring at close range.

The wild nature and unapproachability of geese often does not, however, allow all of the salient characters to be observed. The blaze and orbital ring, which are the most useful characters given good views, are superseded as such at greater distance by the structural and behavioural features. For a firm identification, though, structural characters alone are insufficient.

Both breeding and wintering numbers of Lesser White-fronted Geese in Europe have fallen alarmingly since about 1950. As a result, a re-establishment scheme was started in summer 1981 in Swedish Lapland. Each autumn thereafter, the young Lesser White-fronted Geese were guided by their foster parents, Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*, to the usual Barnacle Goose wintering areas in the Netherlands. Each spring, the Lesser White-fronted Geese returned to Swedish Lapland and, in time, a small breeding population was established there. Numbers wintering in the Netherlands increased gradually as a consequence and, in late 1992, a record 14 were present. In winter 1994/95, more than 35 were reported, so it would appear that the species' fortunes in western Europe have finally changed for the better. It is quite likely that the numbers of Lesser White-fronted Geese seen in Britain in winter will increase as a result.

PETER LANSDOWN

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REVIEWS

Collins Illustrated Checklist: birds of Eastern Africa.

By Ber van Perlo.

HarperCollins, London, 1995. 301 pages; 96 colour plates; 1488 distribution maps. ISBN 0-00-219937-8. £14.99.

Ber van Perlo is to be congratulated on this brilliant guide. There are colour illustrations of all 1,487 species recorded in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Socotra Island up to 1993. Females and juveniles are often illustrated, as well as males. For every species, there is a distribution map which also shows status, and there are several lines of text on salient distinguishing features, habitat and vocalisations.

Illustrations of closely related species are arranged one below the other. Inevitably, with so many species depicted, the illustrations are rather cramped, with 19 or 20, occasionally up to 25, on a plate. The text and maps are

likewise cramped (older birdwatchers will need their reading glasses). Two bonus points are that the text for each species is opposite its illustration and that sensible numbering of the maps enables quick and easy referencing.

This handy-sized guide fills a much-needed gap. It must be an essential item in the pocket of every birdwatcher bound for eastern Africa. My only regrets are that this guide was not available when I lived in Ethiopia in the 1970s and that I have not yet had the opportunity to test it in the field. Will separation of *Cisticola* species now be possible, using this book?

STEPHANIE J. TYLER

Songbirds of Turkey: an atlas of biodiversity of Turkish passerine birds.

By C. S. Roselaar.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1995. 240 pages; 145 distribution maps. ISBN 1-873403-44-5. Paperback £24.00.

Turkey is one of the countries most visited by ornithologists in the Middle East, yet it still has no contemporary avifauna. Whilst this book does not fill that gap, for breeding passerines it is the closest thing to it. Essentially, it is a clearly produced, comprehensive atlas of the distribution of song birds during the breeding season. But an atlas with a difference, for the maps detail range to subspecies level and are accompanied by informative texts on their identification. It will be, I am sure, a surprise to many that Turkey has, for example, six subspecies of Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, four or five of White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* and five of European Nuthatch *Sitta*

europaea. The collector's gun and the well-catalogued museums of the World have enabled this thorough treatment, though the data are much augmented by published field observations from over 100 years.

It is a pity, however, that the author did not make an appeal for information from the many birdwatchers who now visit Turkey. I, for example, would have gladly provided my unpublished breeding records from my travels in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, this is a really useful book. Let us hope Roselaar will now produce one for non-passerines; I have heard rumours that he will.

RICHARD PORTER

Nature Quiz Book. By Michael Chinery. (HarperCollins, London, 1995. 215 pages. ISBN 0-00-220039-2. Paperback £3.99) A total of 2,100 trivial-quiz questions, arranged in sets of 20 per page (with the answers on the backing page in each case). *BB* readers with natural-history interests outside ornithology will probably be able to answer at least 50% of the questions easily, but very few are likely to do better than 90%. Good fun.

JTRS

A Photographic Guide to Birds of India and Nepal. By Bikram Grewal. (New Holland, London, 1995. ISBN 1-85368-588-7. Paperback £7.99) This slim, genuinely pocket-sized guide is one of a new series of photographic guides. 252 species are covered (less than 20% of the region's avifauna), with two species per page. Each species is given a single photograph and a tiny map with rather faint shading. The book is clearly aimed at the beginner or first-time visitor and would be of

little use to serious birders. The photographs are, however, generally of excellent quality and a useful reference. Contrary to its caption, the cover photo shows a Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus*.

NIGEL REDMAN

Birds of Botswana. By Kenneth Newman. (Southern Book Publishers Ltd, Cape Town, 1989. ISBN 1-86812-194-1. Paperback £13.95) This book is strongly based on the author's well-known *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa*. Indeed, the illustrations all come from the latter, but have been re-arranged to exclude species not occurring in Botswana. Visitors to the country will certainly find this book useful, but probably no more so than the author's larger work.

NIGEL REDMAN

The Robin. By Mike Read, Martin King & Jake Allsop. (Blandford Press, London, 1995. 128 pages. ISBN 0-7137-2584-2. Paperback £9.99) For the general public rather than for ornithologists, but well written, interesting reading and well illustrated with colour photographs showing aspects of behaviour as well as pure portraits.

JTRS

A Photographic Guide to the Birds of East Africa. By Dave Richards. (New Holland, London, 1995. 144 pages. ISBN 1-85368-560-7. £7.99) This little gem of a book is part of a very successful series from New Holland. A book of this size cannot be comprehensive, but it does offer a good selection of the commoner birds of the region, so will be very useful to first-time visitors. Apart from an immature

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* labelled as 'male', there appear to be no glaring errors, and the succinct texts nicely complement the high-quality photographs. Well worth buying.

STEVE ROOKE

A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Australia. By Peter Rowland. (New Holland, London, 1995. ISBN 1-85368-599-2. Paperback £7.99) This pocket-sized guide contains photographs, average-length texts and distribution maps of 251 Australian species considered to be those most likely to be encountered by a novice birdwatcher in the most frequently visited parts of Australia. Although rather small, the photographs are of good quality and all appear to be correctly captioned. For a European birdwatcher, this is an appetite-whetter, rather than a useful reference for an Australian trip.

DAVID FISHER

Shrikes (Laniidae) of the World: biology and conservation. Edited by Reuven Yosef & Fred E. Lohrer. (Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Camarillo, 1995. *Proc. WFVZ* 6: 1-343. 343 pages. ISSN 0511-7550) The Proceedings of the First International Shrike Symposium, held at Archbold Biological Station, Lake Placid, Florida, USA, during 11th-15th January 1993, including 60 scientific papers arranged under evolution, systematics & biogeography; population status and trends; foraging ecology & habitat selection; reproductive ecology; captive breeding & techniques; and conservation & management.

JTRS

ALSO RECEIVED

Where to Watch Birds in Eastern Europe. By Gerard Gorman. Paperback edn. (Hamlyn, in association with BirdLife International, London, 1994. 214 pages. ISBN 0-600-57976-X. Paperback £16.99)(Review: *Brit. Birds* 88: 117)

An Atlas of Breeding Birds of Lancaster and District. Edited by Ken Harrison. (Lancaster & District Birdwatching Society, Preston, 1995. 132 pages. ISBN 0-9525871-0-6. Paperback £6.00)(Review: *Brit. Birds* 89: 198)

Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East. By Lars Jonsson. Paperback edn. (A & C Black, London, 1996. 560 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4422-2. Paperback £15.99)(Review: *Brit. Birds* 86: 23-24)

The Mitchell Beazley Pocket Guide to Wild Flowers. By Peter Moore. Revised edn. (Mitchell Beazley, London, 1996. 192 pages. ISBN 1-85732-773-X. £7.99)

The Mitchell Beazley Pocket Guide to Trees. By Keith Rushforth. Revised edn. (Mitchell Beazley, London, 1996. 192 pages. ISBN 1-85732-771-3. £7.99)

Lijst van Nederlandse Vogels (Checklist of Birds of the Netherlands). 1996. Fifth edn. By A. B. van den Berg & C. A. W. Bosman. (Arnoud B. van den Berg, Santpoort-Zuid, 1996. 75 pages. Paperback, f35.00)

The Mitchell Beazley Pocket Guide to Butterflies. By Paul Whalley & Richard Lewington. Revised edn. (Mitchell Beazley, London, 1996. 168 pages. ISBN 1-85732-772-1. £7.99)



MONTHLY MARATHON



The closing date for both the first and the second hurdles in current (ninth) 'Monthly marathon' (plates 125 and 138) is 15th September 1996. The third hurdle appears below (plate 144).



Plate 144. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 123. Third stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify both of the species. Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue and the amendment on page 333 in the July issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th October 1996.



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 15th July to 11th August 1996.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel
Pterodroma madeira/P. feae/P. mollis Galley
Head (Co. Cork), 27th July.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*
Tresco (Scilly), 5th August.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*
Breydon Water (Norfolk): 16th-19th July;
two, 20th-27th July; three, 28th-29th July;
four, 30th July to 2nd August; one, 6th-10th
August. Pegwell Bay (Kent), 26th July; Elmley
RSPB Reserve (Kent), 28th July; Montrose

Basin (Tayside), 31st July to 1st August;
Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 3rd August.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus*
scolopaceus Holland Haven (Essex), 1st-2nd
August.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Fetlar
(Shetland), 24th July.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*
Tresco, 2nd-4th August; Ballycotton (Co.
Cork), 7th-8th August (first record for Ireland).



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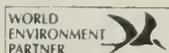
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Unequal sex-ratio, mortality causes and pollutant residues in Long-eared Owls in Britain

I. Wyllie, L. Dale and I. Newton

ABSTRACT Recent reports have indicated an uneven sex-ratio among wintering Long-eared Owls *Asio otus*, in favour of males in Norway and females in Britain. Harvey & Riddiford (1990) found a ratio of 28 ♀♀ : 8 ♂♂ among trapped autumn migrants on Fair Isle, Shetland, while Overskaug & Kristiansen (1994) found a ratio of 13 ♀♀ : 23 ♂♂ among winter accident victims in Norway. These findings suggest that female Long-eared Owls are more likely to migrate long distances than are males. This paper provides additional information on the sex-ratio of Long-eared Owls in Britain and data on causes of mortality of Long-eared Owls found dead in Britain over the past 33 years, and on trends in pesticide residues during 1963-95.

Records of migrant Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* on Heligoland, Germany, show that numbers passing through in autumn reach a peak irregularly at two-year to five-year intervals (Schmidt & Vauk 1981), while passage through Fair Isle, Shetland, reaches a peak every three or four years (Harvey & Riddiford 1990).

These fluctuations are thought to correspond with cycles in populations of voles *Microtus* in northern latitudes, with more owl migration in years when voles are scarce. There have been some notable autumn influxes of Long-eared Owls into eastern Britain in the past (Glue 1976; Cramp 1985; Glue & Whittington 1987), and ringing recoveries show that these birds originate mainly from the south Baltic, Germany and the Netherlands, with others from Fennoscandia.

Materials and methods

During 1963-95, dead Long-eared Owls were collected at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Monks Wood as part of a long-term pesticide-monitoring programme for predatory birds. Carcasses were sent in by members of the public in response to advertisements placed periodically in ornithological magazines and journals. The sex of each specimen was accurately determined on plumage characteristics (Baker 1983; Cramp 1985), and later confirmed by gonad inspection. Various size measurements were recorded from each specimen following a standard procedure. On autopsy, cause of death was established from the symptoms present and the circumstances described by the finder. Collision victims were typically badly bruised with broken bones and were mainly found by roadsides, indicating that they were traffic casualties. Starved birds were low in weight with wasted muscles, no body fat (including on the heart), reduced size of body organs and empty gizzards with blackened intestines. Diseased birds were also generally thin and showed lesions on liver, kidney or lungs, or contained obvious parasites. Gunshot victims contained lead pellets. One bird was killed apparently by an avian predator, possibly a Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*. Identification of organochlorine victims was dependent on chemical analysis of a portion of liver (for methods see Newton *et al.* 1993).

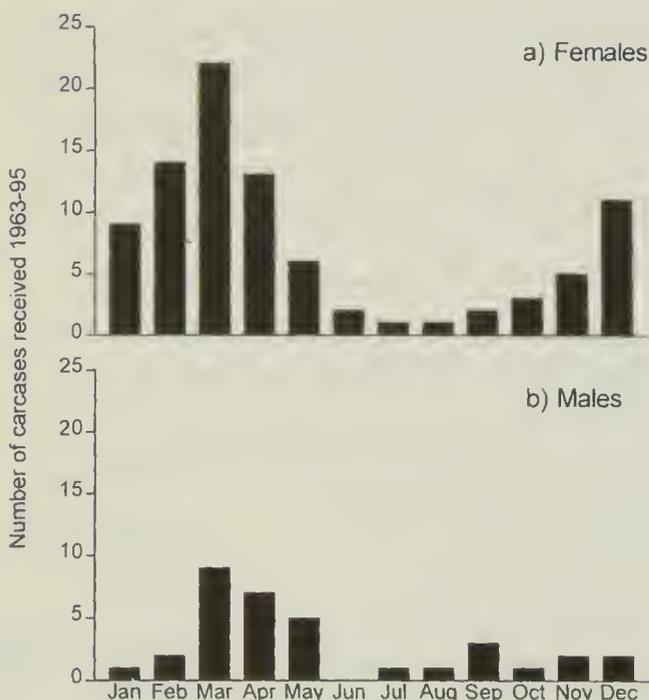


Fig. 1. Numbers of Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* found dead in Britain in different months, 1963-95 (excluding four unsexed; and one male, unknown date).



Fig. 2. Geographical distribution of carcasses of Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* received at Monks Wood, 1963-95.

Results

A total of 128 Long-eared Owl corpses was received over the 33-year period. Annual numbers varied from 0 to 13, and were generally too few to confirm cyclic influxes. Years when more than ten specimens were received (1986, 1990, 1992) were at two-year to four-year intervals, whereas years with fewer than four specimens (1981, 1984, 1989, 1995) were at three-year to six-year intervals. Deaths of Long-eared Owls occurred in all months, with the majority (82%) in October-April (fig. 1). Although the carcasses came from various parts of Britain, most were from northern or eastern areas (fig. 2).

Sex-ratio

The sex-ratio in the whole sample was significantly different from unity, at 89♀♀ : 34♂♂ (fig. 1). During the winter period (October-April), the ratio was 77♀♀ : 24♂♂ and differed significantly from unity¹, whereas in summer (May-September) the ratio was 12♀♀ : 10♂♂². The winter and summer ratios differed significantly from one another³. Restricting the winter sample to October-February, the sex-ratio was 42♀♀ : 8♂♂⁴.

Table 1. Measurements of male and female Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* found dead in Britain, winter and summer.

	WING-LENGTH (MM)		TAIL-LENGTH (MM)	
	Summer (May-Sep)	Winter (Oct-Apr)	Summer (May-Sep)	Winter (Oct-Apr)
Males	290.4 ± 6.00(9)	292.3 ± 7.65(17)	143.5 ± 3.84(4)	138.8 ± 2.32(5)
T-test	t = 0.605;	p = 0.551	t = 2.00;	p = 0.085
Females	292.8 ± 7.00(8)	299.2 ± 7.36(54)	138.8 ± 2.41(6)	142.7 ± 5.44(31)
T-test	t = 2.29;	p = 0.025	t = 1.68;	p = 0.102

Female Long-eared Owls found in winter in Britain were larger (both wing-length and tail-length) than females found in summer (table 1), whereas males found in winter were not larger than those found in summer. The mean wing-length (299 mm) of females in winter was similar to that found among Russian (Mikkola 1983) and Dutch (Cramp 1985) birds, but lower than that of those found on Fair Isle (Harvey & Riddiford 1990).

Causes of death

The sample of carcasses was probably not representative of all Long-eared Owl deaths in Britain, being biased towards those forms of mortality (accidents) most

Table 2. Mortality causes in Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* found dead in Britain, 1963-95.

* Includes collisions with trains, windows and wires.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Road casualty	5	8	14	4	4	2	0	1	2	2	2	5	49
Other accidents*	2	2	4	6	2	0	0	1	1	2	2	4	26
Starvation	1	1	3	8	2	0	0	0	2	0	2	4	23
Disease	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	5
Pesticides	1	2	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Predation	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Shot	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Unknown	0	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
TOTAL	10	16	31	20	11	2	2	2	5	4	7	13	123

1. ($\chi^2 = 27.81, p < 0.001$)

2. ($\chi^2 = 0.182, p < 0.67$)

3. ($\chi^2 = 4.88, p < 0.027$)

4. ($\chi^2 = 23.12, p < 0.001$)

likely to be found by people. Most of the owls received (61%) had died from collisions or other accidents, especially with motor vehicles (40%). Others were classed as having died from starvation, disease, pesticides, predation and gunshot (table 2). For six birds, no cause of death could be established because only part of the carcass was received.

Despite likely bias towards accident victims, the results suggest that the main period of mortality of Long-eared Owls is February-April, when more than half of reported deaths occurred. Collision with vehicles was the single most commonly recorded cause of death, with a peak in March.

Residue levels

About one-third of 30 dead Long-eared Owls analysed during 1963-77 had liver concentrations of organochlorine pesticides sufficiently high to suggest death by poisoning (Cooke *et al.* 1982). During that period, Long-eared Owls were among the most highly contaminated of 16 predatory species examined, with levels of DDE (the main metabolite of the insecticide DDT) and HEOD (the active ingredient of the insecticides dieldrin and aldrin) similar to those found in Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* and Merlins *F. columbarius*, species which suffered severe population declines in Britain during the main period of organochlorine-pesticide use. No dramatic decrease in the British population of Long-eared Owls was reported then, although the species is thought to have declined since the turn of the century, possibly through loss of rough grassland and associated voles.

Table 3. Pesticide residues in livers of Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* found dead in Britain, 1963-95.

Organochlorine ppm in wet weight; mercury ppm in dry weight; no mercury levels measured during 1963-77. Ranges are within one geometric SE.

	DDE			HEOD			PCBs			Mercury		
	No.	Mean	Range	No.	Mean	Range	No.	Mean	Range	No.	Mean	Range
1963-77	29	5.97	4.28-8.33	30	1.75	1.14-2.70	21	0.38	0.22-0.67	-	-	-
1981-85	27	0.98	0.61-1.57	27	0.11	0.017-0.16	27	0.51	0.31-0.84	27	0.26	0.18-0.39
1986-90	29	0.824	0.540-1.250	29	0.169	0.119-0.241	29	1.6	1.083-2.358	29	0.43	0.315-0.588
1991-95	25	0.27	0.177-0.411	25	0.049	0.037-0.063	25	0.736	0.505-1.072	25	0.395	0.307-0.508

During 1981-95, the livers of 81 Long-eared Owls were analysed, and the resulting mean concentrations of DDE and HEOD were considerably lower than during 1963-77 (table 3). At least two birds in 1981-95, however, contained concentrations sufficiently high to have caused death: one, from Kent in 1985, had 132 ppm DDE, and another, found dead in Shetland in 1986, had 429 ppm DDE. Another, found dying in Kent in 1976, was reported to contain 363 ppm DDE (Anon. 1976). These birds (like the others) could have been contaminated outside Britain, but DDT was still being used extensively in Kentish orchards up to that time. During the whole study period, the geometric mean residues of DDE and HEOD declined significantly, whereas levels of PCBs and mercury showed no long-term trends (fig. 3).

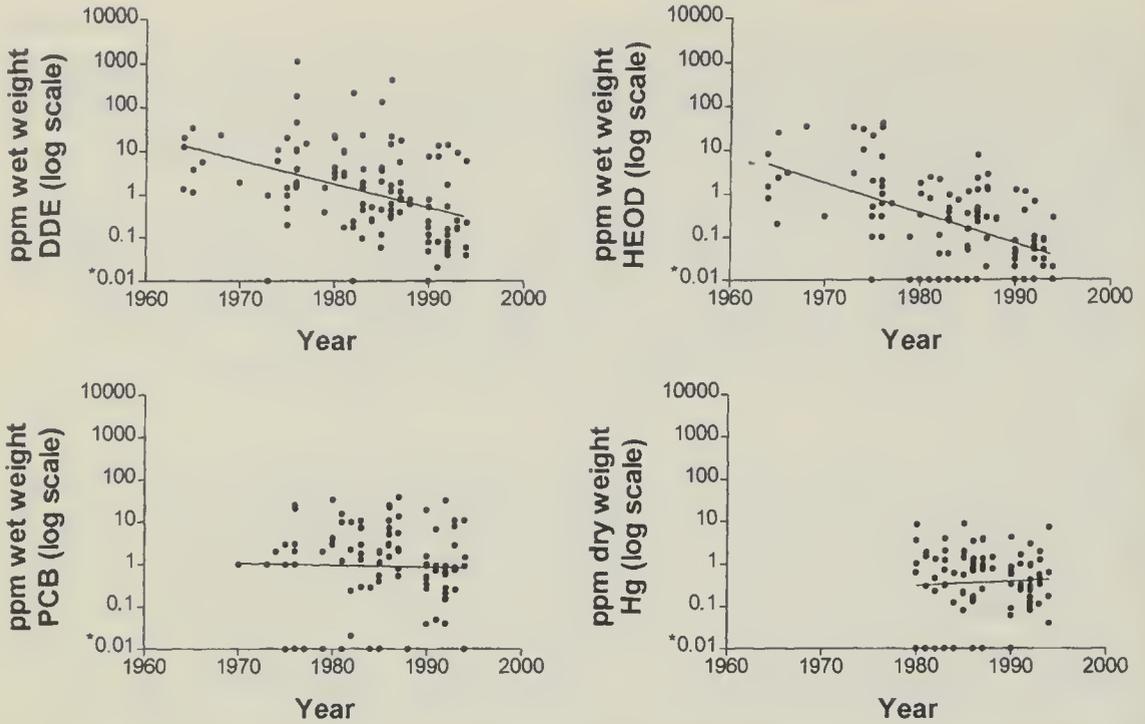


Fig. 3. Trends in residue levels in Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* found dead in Britain, 1963–95.

*An arbitrary value allocated when no residues were detected.

Discussion

Our results support previous findings of a preponderance of female Long-eared Owls over males in winter in Britain, but are based on a much larger and more widely distributed sample. The unequal sex-ratio could not have resulted from sexing errors because all were sexed by both plumage and gonad inspection. One explanation for unequal sex-ratio may be that female Long-eared Owls are more prone to accidental death than are males, but this is hard to believe, because the sexes are of similar size and hunt in similar habitats. Given the different roles of the sexes when breeding—the males hunt while the females tend the nest—one would expect higher mortality among males than among females in the breeding season.

A more likely explanation for the unequal sex-ratio is that more females than males migrate to Britain in winter. Males are thought to winter as close to their future breeding territory as possible, thus explaining the higher proportion in the Norwegian sample, whereas females travel farther, to avoid winter food shortages.

If winter immigrants to Britain originate in Fennoscandia, as is suspected, one might expect, following Bergmann's Rule, that these birds would be larger than residents. The wing-lengths and tail-lengths of female (but not male) Long-eared Owls in Britain (residents and immigrants) averaged larger in winter than in summer (residents only), suggesting that the difference was due mainly to immigrants in the winter samples of females. We found no evidence of significant difference in feather-wear between winter and summer specimens, and the seasonal difference in mean wing-lengths was, anyway, greater than would be expected from wear alone. Wing-lengths of the 28 females trapped on Fair Isle, where only migrants occur (Harvey & Riddiford 1990), averaged larger (306 mm) than in any other sample.

Ringing recoveries give direct confirmation of migration across the North Sea from Norway. At least some of these migrants move on to Continental Europe. Wijnandts (1984), however, working in the Netherlands, found similar numbers of owls at winter roosts as were breeding in the local environment, indicating little influx of migrants in winter. Furthermore, most recoveries of Dutch-ringed owls were within 10 km, although one winter-trapped individual was recovered 2,500 km away, in Russia. Clearly, at least some Long-eared Owls from the harsh climates of northern latitudes make long migrations.

Deaths of Long-eared Owls in our sample were due mostly to accidents, especially with traffic, and only 25% died from natural causes, mainly starvation. About half the birds which died from collisions were found during February-April, a period when immigrants are moving out of the country and residents are establishing breeding territories. Two other resident owl species in Britain, Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and Tawny Owl, also suffer heavy mortality at this time (Hirons *et al.* 1984; Newton *et al.* 1991). It would seem that all three owl species are more prone to accidental death in early spring than at any other time of the year. Barn Owls also show a high mortality of juveniles (about 70%) in autumn/winter.

The effect of organochlorine pesticides on the population level of British Long-eared Owls is difficult to evaluate. About one-third of Long-eared Owls received during 1963-77 were heavily contaminated, and a large proportion came from eastern areas, where pesticide use was greatest. Of these earlier birds, eight were judged to have been poisoned, compared with only two during 1981-95. Pesticides may therefore have affected regional population levels, either by causing direct mortality through poisoning, or by depressing reproductive success. In the absence of local population studies conducted at that time, it is not possible to check this. The results of further pesticide-monitoring of Long-eared Owls show a progressive reduction in the mean liver concentrations of DDE and HEOD to the present time, with no incidents of poisoning after 1986. That was the year when the final ban on the use of DDT, aldrin and dieldrin pesticides in agriculture was imposed and coincides with marked improvements in breeding success and population size of a number of other British raptors, including Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (Wyllie & Newton 1991). The population recovery of this latter species started earlier (late 1960s) in the west of Britain than in the east (1980s), associated with a west-east gradient in residue levels.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the many people who have, over the years, sent in carcasses for analysis, and to the chemists at Monks Wood who quantified the organochlorine and mercury levels.

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LOOKING BACK

One hundred years ago: 'THROUGH THE FOREST IN FINLAND . . . OWLS. We saw Owls flying on three occasions, but could not determine their species. Many are to be seen nailed to doors of houses, often too much spoiled for identification. We saw *Symium aluco*, *S. lapponicum*, and *Nyctala tengmalmi* treated in this way.' (*Zoologist* Third series 20: 370-371, October 1896)

Also one hundred years ago: 'Mr. Pashley, of Cley-next-the-Sea, sent me for determination a pretty little warbler which Mr. Gurney and I recognized as *Phylloscopus proregulus*, a finding which Mr. Dresser was subsequently kind enough to confirm; the latter gentleman also exhibited the little stranger at the meeting of the Zoological Society on December 1st. The bird, which was killed at Cley on October 31st last, is in perfect condition, and, I imagine, adult plumage . . . One can hardly conceive of this and other equally delicate Warblers straying such an immense distance from their native haunt, and how they can survive such a journey across the whole of Europe, finishing with the North Sea.' (*Zoologist* Third series 20: 466-467)

Twenty-five years ago, in October 1971: 'The largest flock of Shore Larks [Horned Larks] *Eremophila alpestris* appears to have been 155 counted on the South Side of Teesmouth (Yorkshire) on 25th, and the next largest 45 between Cley and Salthouse on 31st, but these were exceptional and elsewhere parties of up to 15 were seen at 20 or more localities as far south as Kent from 4th onwards, most arriving during 16th-25th. Inland reports came from Derbyshire (three together), Lincolnshire and Bedfordshire (singles).' (*Brit. Birds* 65: 43)

Also twenty-five years ago, D. I. M. Wallace was inspired to write the classic 'An October to remember on St Agnes in 1971' (*Brit. Birds* 65: 208-220), which encapsulated all the thrills of migrant-watching and 'the real sense of wonder that attaches to observations in Scilly.' It is worth reading it again now, 25 years on.



Identification of Chestnut Bunting

Steve Votier and Colin Bradshaw

ABSTRACT The Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila* has been recorded only five times in autumn in Western Europe, including once in Britain. It is potentially a more numerous vagrant to Britain and Ireland, but detailed information on non-adult-male plumage is lacking. This paper rectifies this situation and discusses the species' separation from other similar buntings, in particular the far more commonly recorded Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola*.

Potential vagrants to the Western Palearctic, and in some cases even confirmed ones such as the Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, are often poorly documented in the popular literature, perhaps more noticeably so when the species concerned is commonly held in captivity. Since many species breeding in the Transbaikalia area and wintering in Southeast Asia have been recorded as vagrants in the Western Palearctic, however, there is no reason why Chestnut Bunting should not also occur as a genuine vagrant (Wallace 1980).

Autumn Chestnut Bunting is similar to Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola* in all but adult male plumage, and at least two recent descriptions of claimed Yellow-breasted Buntings in Britain have mentioned a noticeable chestnut rump. Chestnut Bunting is possibly being overlooked in autumn, and a claim of a juvenile or first-winter individual in September-October is more likely to attract serious consideration than one of an adult in spring. Perhaps, as in the case of Black-faced Bunting *E. spodocephala*, a detailed understanding of the relevant identification features will increase the likelihood of the discovery of a genuine vagrant.

Status in Western Europe

Chestnut Bunting was formerly imported more commonly than it is now, with over 100 in 1980 and 200 in 1984, the species being advertised for sale in almost every year from 1980 to 1990 (T. P. Inskipp *in litt.*). Over the last three years, however, numbers imported have decreased substantially, with only six individuals being advertised for sale.

There are five autumn records of Chestnut Bunting from Western Europe. These are of a female in the Netherlands on 5th November 1937, a juvenile in Norway on 13th-15th October 1974, a first-winter male in the former Yugoslavia on 10th October 1987, a first-winter male on Malta in November 1983 (Alström *et al.* 1991), and an adult female in Britain on 2nd-5th September 1994 (Osborn & Harvey 1994; *Brit. Birds* 88: 556). In addition, there are four June-July reports from Britain, which are of more dubious origin; all five British records are currently placed in Category D (*Ibis* 134: 213).

Distribution and habitats

Chestnut Bunting is a fairly common breeder in the temperate forests of southeastern Siberia, from northwest Irkutsk region east to the Sea of Okhotsk, generally south of 60°N, and south to the Baikal region, northern China and probably Mongolia (Byers *et al.* 1995). It favours open forests of larch *Larix* and birch *Betula*, especially ridges and hillocks on mountainsides, and is frequently found singing close to firebreaks and power lines.

The species leaves its breeding grounds in August and is a fairly common migrant along the Yellow Sea coast during late August and September, with passage continuing into October; most pass through Hong Kong in the middle two weeks of November (Chalmers 1986). It arrives in its winter quarters during November-December.

The Chestnut Bunting's main wintering area is in central Burma, southernmost China, western Thailand, Vietnam and Laos; it is a rather local visitor to northeast India, perhaps as far west as Sikkim. In winter, it occupies open deciduous and evergreen forest, scrub, secondary growth and open areas, including rice stubble, usually feeding on the ground and flying into trees when disturbed (Cramp & Perrins 1994).

Northward migration starts in March, passing through Hong Kong in March-April and through northeast China and Korea during May, with arrival back at Lake Baikal by late May to early June. It is a scarce migrant in Japan, in both spring and autumn (Brazil 1991).

Identification

As most East Palearctic vagrants occur in Britain during September-November, in juvenile or first-winter plumage, we use autumn immature (juvenile to first-winter) as the benchmark. Differences between first-winter individuals and spring and autumn adults are outlined. The Chestnut Bunting is monotypic.

General impression

Chestnut Bunting is a fairly small bunting with a relatively short tail and a small, conical bill. It is intermediate in size between Little *E. pusilla* and Yellow-breasted Buntings, but, as most buntings, is sexually dimorphic (average wing length of males 72-79 mm, of females 67-73 mm: Svensson 1992), so size varies considerably.

Autumn migrants are rather secretive. An observer's views are often restricted to fleeting glimpses as the birds are flushed from ground cover, usually calling



Plates 145 & 146. Adult female Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila* (left) and adult female Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola* (right), Hebei, China, May 1993 (C. Bradshaw). Typical postures. Note relatively domed head, small bill and prominent submoustachial stripe and eye-ring of Chestnut, and relatively large bill, white wing-bar and prominent supercilium of Yellow-breasted.

loudly, before either pausing briefly in trees or bushes or dropping directly into low cover again.

In all plumages, the combination of lack of prominent white in the outermost rectrices and the presence of a distinct chestnut rump and yellow underparts (particularly undertail-coverts) sets it apart from most other buntings. The degree to which these features are exhibited does vary somewhat, however, making a full understanding of the salient characters important.

Moult

Juveniles undergo a partial moult during July-October (Cramp & Perrins 1994), considered by some authorities (Alström *et al.* 1991) to have been completed before the commencement of the southward migration. Other observations, however, suggest that many do not complete this moult before migration: individuals trapped in September in northeast China (well south of the known breeding range) were still largely in full juvenile plumage (Jari Peltomaki *in litt.*; personal observations), whereas specimens collected in southern China (north of known wintering range) in mid October had completed a partial moult of the head, body feathers and some lesser, median and greater coverts, plus one or two pairs of tertials. There is, therefore, some evidence indicating that the post-juvenile moult takes place in stages during the southward migration.

It is our impression that the moult pattern of the Chestnut Bunting is closer to that of the western, nominate race of Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. a. aureola*, which does not moult until reaching migration stopover sites in China. Vagrant Chestnut Buntings occurring in Western Europe during September-October may thus still be in predominantly juvenile plumage, as is the case with Yellow-breasted Buntings (Stresemann & Stresemann 1969; Harrop 1993). Indeed, the record (albeit rather late in the autumn, in mid October) of a juvenile Chestnut Bunting in Norway supports this.

Some first-summer males may undergo a partial pre-breeding moult of the head, nape and throat feathers, although much of the colour change in that area

is the result of abrasion (Svensson 1992). Adults have a complete post-breeding moult from August to September, which commences on the breeding grounds and may be completed during the autumn migration.

Juvenile plumage

HEAD PATTERN Crown and forehead olive/grey, with distinct fine streaks formed by narrow dark grey-brown to blackish centres to feathers. Streaking most obvious at sides of crown, contrasting with the relatively unstreaked centre which forms a pale median crown-stripe varying from narrow and indistinct to a striking broad pale band; differences are due to variation in the width of the dark lateral crown streaking and to the presence or absence of rufous fringes to the feathers (most apparent on males; see under 'First-winter'). Nape concolorous with crown centre, thereby contrasting with crown sides. Narrow, indistinct off-white eye-ring contrasts poorly with rest of 'face'. Prominent off-white or yellow supercilium, broadest behind eye and extending to nape (prominence reduced somewhat by presence of very fine dark brown streaking, particularly behind eye); lores unmarked grey/brown, making supercilium appear somewhat ill-defined in front of eye, whereas eye-stripe behind eye is generally narrow and dark brown to grey and enhances appearance of rear supercilium. This stripe extends around whole of ear-coverts, forming narrow but distinct moustachial stripe which reaches base of bill. Ear-coverts pale brown-grey, with contrasting dark border broadest at upper and lower rear corners, the space in between often appearing as diffuse pale spot; contrast between dark border and paler central ear-coverts reduced somewhat by narrow dark feather centres forming fine streaking. Distinct off-white or yellow submoustachial stripe from base of bill and curling to variable extent around rear of ear-coverts; on some individuals this area is relatively extensive, pale and unstreaked, while on others there is virtually no extension past lower corner and the area behind ear-coverts is heavily streaked. Dark grey to black malar stripe extends from base of bill to form distinct patch at throat sides which merges with breast streaking on some individuals, whereas others show a distinct cut-off.

UNDERPARTS Chin and throat off-white; remainder of underparts yellow, this colour strongest around undertail-coverts. Individuals vary, with some appearing bright yellow, but others having only a yellow wash. Distinct

gorget of dark streaks at top of breast extends along flanks, as far as sides of rump, this streaking broadest at centre of breast, becoming finer along flanks.

UPPERPARTS Mantle, back and scapulars olive-brown to grey-brown, with broad blackish centres to feathers forming rows of distinct streaking; mantle sides frequently show slightly paler edges to feathers, the paler area creating a subtle difference between mantle and scapulars which may appear as paler mantle 'braces'; on some males at least, there may be distinct but narrow rufous fringes to scapulars. Feathers of rump and uppertail-coverts rich chestnut with narrow blackish centres, these broad and teardrop-shaped on central rump and very fine at sides of rump and on uppertail-coverts. Remiges dark grey to black, with narrow yellow to pale yellow-brown fringes to primaries and olive-brown to chestnut fringes to secondaries.

TERTIALS Tertials dark-centred, with variably patterned chestnut edge and cream outer fringe. Inner web of each tertial largely blackish, with the tip pale chestnut, fading to white at extreme tip. Outer web shows a dark centre, but with complete pale surround which is sharply indented towards base of feather, before narrowing again to form a distinctive dark lobe (fig. 2). Chestnut Bunting shares this pattern with many other bunting species (Bradshaw 1992; Byers *et al.* 1995). In very fresh plumage, the surround is pale chestnut, bordered by a very narrow whitish-cream fringe which broadens with wear so that, by October, some individuals have lost virtually all chestnut in the tertials and replaced it with a broad creamy edge.

WING-COVERTS Lesser coverts olive-brown, with narrow black centres forming distinct streaking; some juvenile males show distinct rufous fringe to lesser coverts. Median coverts blackish-centred with sharply contrasting buff fringes (which fade to whitish with wear), the dark centre showing a marked 'thorn' almost reaching tip of feathers and separating the broad pale fringes into two partial or complete pale half-moons (fig. 3); this broadening of the pale fringe and the well-defined contrast

Chestnut Bunting
Spring adult female



Chestnut Bunting
First-winter male



Chestnut Bunting
Immature



Yellow-breasted Bunting
Autumn female/immature



Skakuj '96

Fig. 1. Chestnut Buntings *Emberiza rutila* (top three) and Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola* (bottom bird) (Mike Skakuj)

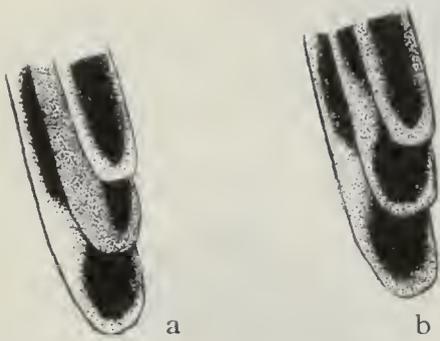


Fig. 2. Tertiary pattern of Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*. (a) First-winter: note replaced adult-male-type central tertial compared with retained juvenile tertials. (b) Adult female: extremely similar to juvenile, but often less contrast between dark centre (with chestnut fringe) and buffy surround.



Fig. 3. Variation in patterning of median coverts of Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*. (a) Juvenile type, outermost; (b) juvenile type, innermost; (c) adult type.

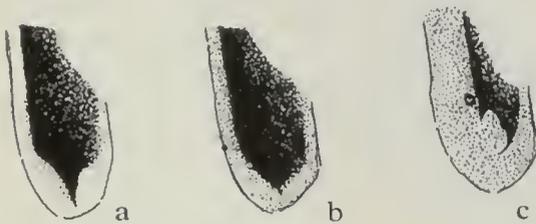


Fig. 4. Variation in patterning of greater coverts of Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*. (a) Juvenile type; (b) adult-female type; (c) adult male.



Fig. 5. Outermost two rectrices of Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila* (left three figures) and Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola* (right-hand figure). Note variation in extent of pale colour on Chestnut Bunting, which also shows intermediate patterns, all with similar frequency.

between light and dark create an upper wing-bar which varies in extent, being strikingly broad on some individuals (plate 147); the junction between dark centre and pale fringe is washed with deep rufous which varies considerably, some birds showing large amounts and others lacking rufous altogether

(on average, males tend to show larger amounts of rufous). Greater coverts, like medians, show a pale fringe to dark-centred feathers; the dark 'thorn' is less pronounced, but they also show marked contrast between dark centre and pale surround, which creates a second striking wing-bar; as on median

coverts, the greater coverts show a narrow chestnut fringe to the dark centre, which varies according to sex (fig. 4). Alula and primary coverts unmarked dark grey.

TAIL PATTERN In the field, Chestnut Bunting shows virtually no white in the outer tail. In the hand, however, all show some white on the outermost pair of rectrices and most also on the second-outermost pair. Pattern of white on outer pair varies considerably in extent and clarity, from being restricted to a broad bright

white tip to extending as a grey wash in a broad line down central shaft of feather and very occasionally a short way onto outer web. Generally, white on second-outermost rectrix is confined to a broad dull whitish-grey tip (see fig. 5). No white on third-outermost rectrix.

BARE PARTS Bill conical, fairly small, with straight culmen; greyish, with paler flesh-grey lower mandible. Legs and feet pale pink, with rather pale grey-horn soles and claws.

Other plumages

First-winter

In general, first-winter Chestnut Buntings are similar to juveniles (according to Alström *et al.* 1991, some first-winter males can apparently be very like adults, though we have no experience of such individuals). Given good views in the field, however, the ages should be separable.

Replacement of contour feathers and variable numbers of wing-coverts produces a reduction in amount of streaking in plumage; head pattern becomes much more pronounced, with supercilium paler and more distinct, and whole facial pattern generally paler. Mantle is less well streaked, and underpart streaking is reduced to a diffuse gorget in centre of breast, the flanks either unmarked or with much-reduced diffuse greyish streaking. Rump and back lack streaking, which may produce a slightly more obvious chestnut tone to rump, but differences are minimal. All lesser coverts are replaced with feathers lacking dark centres; a variable number of median and greater coverts are replaced in the post-juvenile moult.* Differences between juvenile and first-winter wing-coverts are quite apparent, the new feathers showing a more diffuse border to the dark centre and lacking the prominent dark 'tooth' shown by juveniles (figs. 3 & 4). Some individuals also replace a variable number of tertials, differences between the two generations of feathers usually being visible in the hand (and even noted on males in the field) (fig. 2). Underparts much more intense yellow than on juveniles, often with marked contrast between whitish chin and throat and yellow remainder of underparts; this contrast becomes even more apparent with wear, so that some look particularly striking by late autumn.

First-winter male Sexing of first-winters is based largely on amount of chestnut in the plumage. Excluding adult-male-type birds described by Alström *et al.* (1991), most first-winter males tend to show some chestnut streaking on centre of breast (often interspersed with the dark streaking already present) and usually some chestnut on ear-coverts, crown sides and a

small number of scapulars. Lesser coverts are variable: some males (about 20%), despite having replaced all lesser coverts, show only one or two chestnut feathers, whereas others show completely chestnut lesser coverts narrowly tipped olive. Replaced median or greater coverts tend to show more chestnut, some individuals having an adult-male-type

* We do not know whether some individuals may moult all juvenile coverts to produce a complete set of adult coverts; such birds, if they exist, should be aged by the other criteria described.



Plate 147. Juvenile Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, Hebei, China, September 1994 (F. Heitzenberg). Bright individual, showing more obvious median-covert bar than many; note also relatively dull supercilium and submoustachial stripe, and malar stripe reaching bill.



Plate 148. Left, adult female Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Hebei, China, May 1993 (C. Bradshaw). Typical individual, very similar to autumn immatures though less yellow below. Note broad white tips to median coverts, prominent supercilium, and large unstreaked pale area at rear of ear-coverts.



Plate 149. Adult female Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, Hebei, China, May 1993 (C. Bradshaw). Typical individual, with pale submoustachial stripe the most obvious feature of head pattern; note eye-ring, and chestnut rump and uppertail-coverts.



Plate 150. Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, probably first-summer male, Hebei, China, May 1993 (C. Bradshaw). Note chestnut lesser coverts, bright yellow underparts, and indication of chestnut showing through on (female-type) head.

pattern (chestnut tip to otherwise blackish inner web, entirely chestnut outer web). Any replaced tertials will be adult-male type, with extensive chestnut on outer web and chestnut reduced to a tip on inner web, which contrasts with the juvenile-type tertials.

First-winter female Absence of chestnut tones

indicates first-winter female. A small number of first-winters may show one or two chestnut feathers on crown sides or lesser coverts, but nowhere else; whether these are poorly marked males or well-marked females is debatable, and such individuals are probably best left unsexed (although supporting biometric data such as wing length may prove useful).

First-summer male

Similar to first-winter male, but noticeably more worn. Abrasion of the olive tips to otherwise chestnut feathers produces more chestnut on lesser coverts, head and breast. Some first-summer males may moult in new chestnut head and nape feathers.

Second-winter and second-summer males

According to Byers *et al.* (1995), individuals resembling non-breeding adult males, but with extensive dark bases and paler tips to median and greater coverts, may be second-winter males; while similar but more worn individuals (with worn tips to greater and median coverts producing slight wing-bars) may be second-summer males. We have no evidence to support either of these observations.

Adult male non-breeding

A very striking bird, with entire head, throat and upperparts, including wing-coverts, tertials, mantle, back and rump, deep chestnut. All feathers of head, upper breast and nape are finely tipped yellowish-buff; median and greater coverts have blackish inner webs, which are obscured so as to produce an all-chestnut appearance; tertials also have dark inner webs, which are readily visible. Apart from chestnut 'bib' on upper breast, remainder of underparts, including vent and undertail-coverts, bright yellow, flanks variously streaked dark grey.

Adult male breeding

Very similar to adult male non-breeding, but all pale tipping to head, nape and upper breast is lost through wear to reveal an even more striking appearance.

Adult female non-breeding

Essentially similar to first-winter female, but with slightly stronger head pattern. Supercilium and submoustachial stripe appear more striking, and many show a marked pale, sometimes diffuse, whitish eye-ring. Can also be aged by presence or absence of adult-type median and greater coverts (but see footnote under 'First-winter'): adult coverts lack a prominent dark 'tooth' and show diffuse contrast between dark centre and brownish fringe, compared with the clear-cut difference between dark centre and pale tip and fringe on juveniles (see fig. 3). Differences between adult female and juvenile tertials are so slight as to be of little use in ageing in the field (in the hand, the much poorer contrast between pale



Plate 151. Captive adult female Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, UK, February 1990 (C. Bradshaw). Note contrast between white throat and yellow underparts, white eye-ring, and absence of wing-bars.

fringe and darker centre on adults is noticeable). Adult females generally show more rufous in the plumage than first-winters, especially on crown sides, ear-coverts and lesser coverts.

Adult female breeding

Further wear results in greater contrast between the white throat and submoustachial stripe and the yellow upper breast, and the eye-ring becomes more obvious. The combination produces quite a striking facial pattern.

Call

The call, a high-pitched metallic 'tic', 'zitt' or 'zic', is very similar to that of Little Bunting, but is somewhat more harsh, with a higher-pitched, more metallic quality. The differences are extremely subtle, but Chestnut Bunting would appear to have one of the highest-pitched calls of all Eastern Palearctic *Emberiza* buntings.



Plate 152. Adult female Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, Hebei, China, May 1993 (C. Bradshaw). Note limited dark streaking across lower throat and breast sides.



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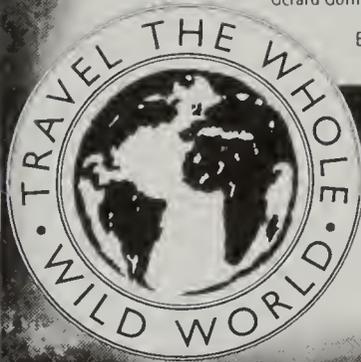
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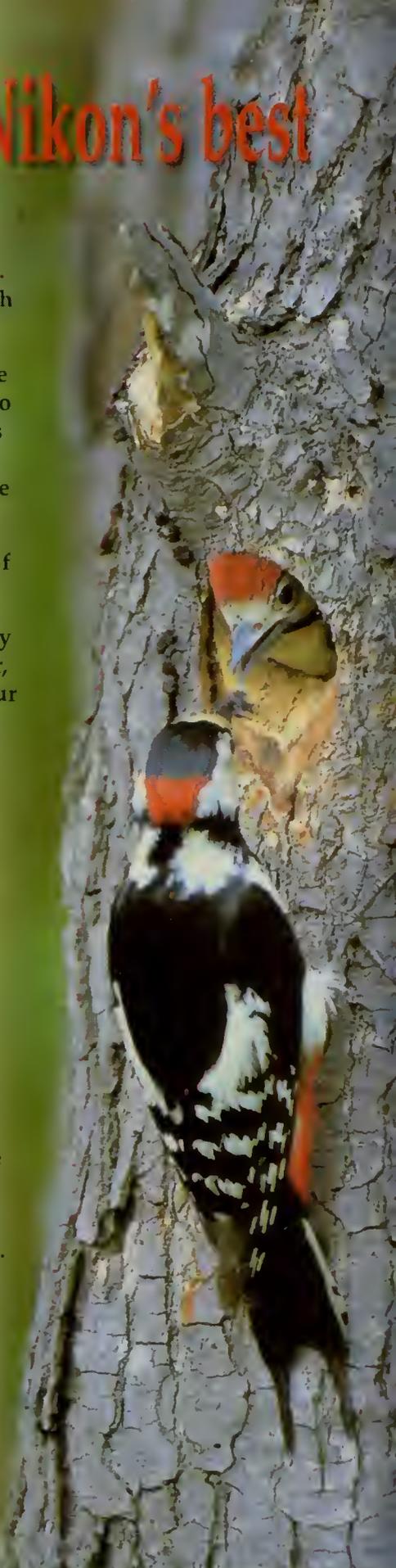


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Plate 153. Adult female Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, Hebei, China, May 1993 (C. Bradshaw). This individual does have a white median-covert bar, but it is very narrow.



Plate 154. Adult female Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Irkutsk, Siberia, June 1987 (C. Bradshaw). Note width of white median-covert bar even on this fairly dull individual.

Separation from other species

Yellow-breasted Bunting

Separation from Yellow-breasted Bunting should be relatively straightforward. Even non-adult-male Chestnut Buntings show the characteristic chestnut rump, relatively weak pale mantle 'braces', lack pure white in the outer rectrices, and have a different head pattern. Once aware of the salient differences, many birders would have no difficulty separating the two species, but there are some potential pitfalls which must be considered.

TAIL PATTERN Yellow-breasted Bunting shows a striking amount of pure white in the outermost two (rarely, three) pairs of rectrices, with most in the outermost and becoming progressively less towards the innermost, whereas Chestnut Bunting shows only very small amounts of diffuse whitish. Nevertheless, the exact tail pattern of buntings can be difficult to observe in the field. When flushed, Chestnut Bunting can sometimes appear to have white outer tail feathers, and on some well-marked birds this may seem quite obvious (even to the point that an observer could discount Chestnut Bunting as a possibility). On close examination, the differences would, however, be obvious.

HEAD PATTERN While Chestnut and Yellow-breasted Buntings both have prominent supercilia, pale-centred ear-coverts, a paler median crown-stripe and variable malar and submoustachial stripes, the head pattern is usually much better defined on Yellow-breasted, although individual variation produces some overlap. Yellow-breasted tends to show a

more prominent yellowish supercilium contrasting better with both the darker eye-stripe behind the eye and the darker crown sides; the median crown-stripe is more obvious, as are the pale centres to the 'cheeks'; and the malar stripe tends to be less pronounced (or even absent), does not reach the base of the bill and tends not to form a malar patch, thereby reducing the strength of the submoustachial stripe, which is prominent only around the rear of the ear-coverts, where there is an obvious pale unstreaked area. Thus, while most Yellow-breasted do show a more striking head pattern, poorly marked individuals are close to well-marked Chestnut Buntings, the best distinction being the relative strength of the malar stripe.

RUMP AND UPPERTAIL-COVERTS Lack of a rufous rump on Yellow-breasted Bunting usually separates it from Chestnut Bunting, but some Yellow-breasted show some rufous tones to the rump. It is, therefore, important to recognise that Chestnut Bunting has a deep chestnut rump which even the best-marked Yellow-breasted would never show.

UNDERPART COLORATION Yellow-breasted shows a predominance of yellow on the throat and upper breast, which fades somewhat to become largely whitish around the vent and undertail-coverts, some individuals having clear white undertail-coverts. Chestnut Bunting shows a deeper yellow coloration, strongest around undertail-coverts and vent, becoming paler on the breast, and, on most non-juveniles, the throat is clearly white or off-white.

UPPERPARTS A useful feature of Yellow-breasted is the broad pale feather fringes on the sides of the mantle which merge to form two prominent pale 'braces' down each side of the mantle to the lower back or rump. This pattern is present to a much lesser degree on juvenile Chestnut Bunting, rarely approaching even the most poorly marked Yellow-breasted. The median-covert wing-bar of many juvenile Yellow-breasted can be strikingly white, even by September, while on Chestnut Bunting in early autumn it is buffy, occasionally washed with chestnut; similar differences exist in

spring, although occasional female Chestnut can show a pure white median-covert bar. On first-winter male, adult female or even well-marked juvenile male Chestnut Bunting, rich rufous fringes to tertials (if adult type), wing-coverts, upper breast or crown sides and ear-coverts are almost always more extensive than on Yellow-breasted Bunting.

SIZE AND STRUCTURE Chestnut Bunting is smaller than Yellow-breasted, with a proportionately shorter tail and smaller bill, but the differences are slight and there is overlap between the two species. Yellow-breasted's powerful, rather bulbous bill, combined with its larger size, does, however, produce a big-headed and 'chunky' feel, compared with the conical bill and small head of Chestnut Bunting. Chestnut has a longer relative primary projection, with four evenly spaced primaries visible; Yellow-breasted has one primary falling level with the longest tertial, then a long gap, then two primary tips bunched together close to the wing-tip.

Other species

Although superficially similar to Chestnut Bunting in plumage, having deep yellow underparts and chestnut rump, Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* can be readily separated by its much larger size, proportionately longer tail, prominent white outermost two pairs of rectrices, and much coarser streaking below, which usually extends onto the undertail-coverts, at all ages.

Black-faced Bunting in juvenile plumage is possibly confusable with juvenile Chestnut, but its rather greyish-brown rump and uppertail-coverts, greyish nape, lack of strong yellow below, and extensive white in the outer tail should enable fairly safe identification.



Plate 155. Adult female Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, Hebei, China, May 1993 (C. Bradshaw). Extreme individual showing well-defined lines on mantle (most show much less obvious mantle lines).

The reduction of white in the outermost rectrices of Chestnut Bunting is shared by Red-headed *E. bruniceps* and Black-headed Buntings *E. melanocephala*, while male Red-headed's reddish-chestnut head and throat and bright yellow underparts could potentially lead to confusion with adult male Chestnut Bunting (and, indeed, has in the case of one British spring record). It is worth bearing in mind these two Middle Eastern species, but their large size, relatively plain head and upperparts and general paleness make confusion extremely unlikely.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank Paul Harvey, Urban Olsson, Jari Peltomaki and Keith Vinicombe for various forms of help with this paper; all those present at the meeting of the Association of European Rarities Committees in Hungary in 1995; the staff of the Natural History Museum, Tring; Felix Heitzenberg and Jari Peltomaki for their photographs; and Mike Skakuj for his fine paintings (fig. 1).

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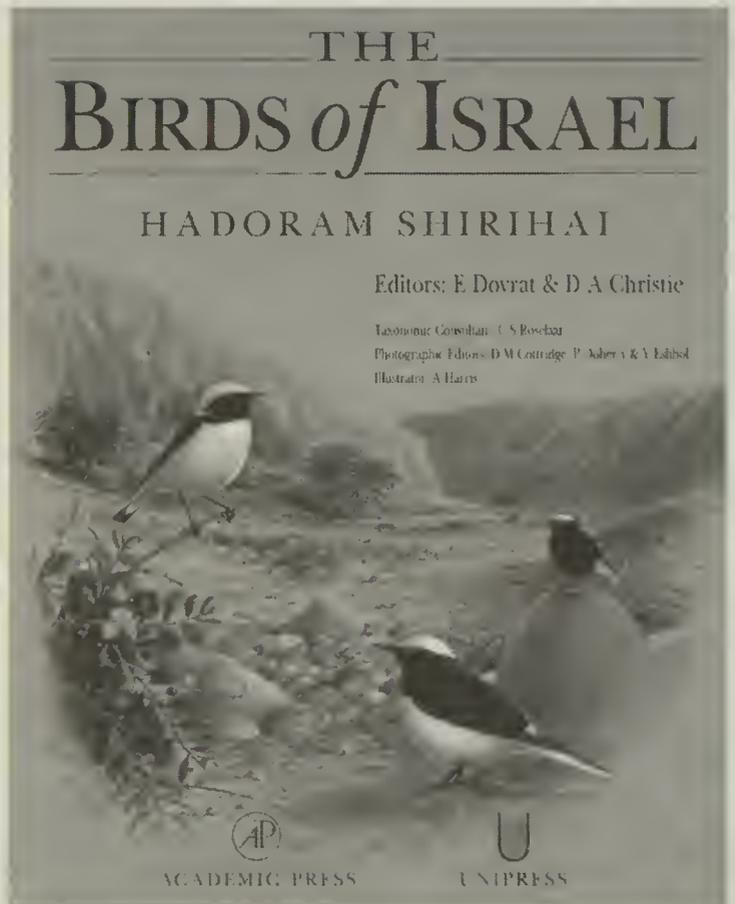


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Our choice for BEST BIRD BOOK OF 1996 is:

The Birds of Israel.
By Hadoram Shirihai.
Edited by Ehud Dovrat
& David A. Christie.
Illustrated by
Alan Harris.
Academic Press,
London, 1996. £75.00.
(Review: *Brit. Birds* 89:
282)



The Macmillan Birder's Guide to European and Middle Eastern Birds; including North Africa by Hadoram Shirihai & David Christie, illustrated by Alan Harris, published by Macmillan, was a very close contender and is also highly recommended (review: *Brit. Birds* 89: 326).



NOTES

Little Grebe chasing Pike underwater

On 21st June 1992, along the Basingstoke Canal, Hampshire, I came across a family of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. While watching the adults feeding their four young, I noticed a Pike *Esox lucius* about 30 cm long approach through the clear water from a clump of weeds; before the Pike had got within 6-7 m, one of the adult grebes dived and chased it off underwater. Although *BWP* (vol. 1) states that Little Grebes are active in the defence of their eggs and young, it makes no mention of underwater attacks on Pike.

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Eurasian Wigeons feeding on bird droppings

On 31st December 1992, near Star, Fife, I watched a flock of 16 Eurasian Wigeons *Anas penelope* apparently 'grazing' on an ice-covered reservoir. The area in which they were feeding was covered with feathers and other debris, and I assumed that they were consuming bird droppings, probably from the large flock of Black-headed *Larus ridibundus*, Common *L. canus* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* roosting on the ice; several Common Coots *Fulica atra* and two Greylag Geese *Anser anser* were also on the ice, with Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* and other duck species on a small area of open water nearby. Later that afternoon, at a small frozen loch about 9 km away, I noticed several Common Coots and Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* feeding similarly; the same species of roosting gull were present, along with Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus*. At neither water was the surrounding vegetation unreachable, although sub-zero ground temperatures over the previous 13 nights (falling below -10° C on several occasions about 20 km away) had perhaps affected the nutritive value of the grazing.

Common Coots and several species of waterfowl have been recorded feeding on goose and gull droppings (*Brit. Birds* 73: 410; 76: 410-411; 80: 573), which apparently provide some nutrition in times of scarcity of normal food, but I can find no reference to Eurasian Wigeon behaving in this manner.

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Wing 'flick' of Northern Goshawk

During the last few years, I have seen Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* fairly frequently, both in Scotland and on the island of Kefalonia, Greece. On a number of occasions, at different times of the year, I have noticed them flick the tips of their primaries, usually towards the end of an extended glide but also when soaring or circling on level wings. The action is sudden, brief (almost nervous in character) and not repeated, but it is visible at long range.

I now recognise this behaviour to be diagnostic of Northern Goshawk. I see Eurasian Sparrowhawks *A. nisus* almost daily and have never seen one flick its wing-tips. Abroad, I have extensive experience of all the medium-sized European raptors, including Levant Sparrowhawk *A. brevipes*, and of many African and west Asian species, including African Goshawk *A. tachiro*. I have never seen any of them behave in such a manner.

Although the chances are that any Northern Goshawk in view will *not* flick its wing-tips, knowledge of this characteristic can facilitate the long-range identification of this sometimes troublesome species. For example, I was scanning a distant ridge in Scotland, trying to find an eagle for a visiting friend, when I picked up a medium-sized raptor. It immediately flicked its primaries and I pronounced it as a Goshawk. Fortunately, for the benefit of my companion, it then crossed the glen and stooped at prey on the ridge behind us, giving us excellent views of the other diagnostic features.

It is hard to see what benefit the bird gets from such a limited action. It does not seem to be associated with any form of display. I have noted it on no more than one in ten sightings, so, given the limited experience most British bird-watchers have of the species, it is perhaps not too surprising that the characteristic has gone unrecorded here, although it might have been expected to have been observed on the Continent. There is no reference to it in *BWP*, *Flight Identification of European Raptors* or the more recent identification guides such as Lars Jonsson's *Birds of Europe*.

ALAN VITTERY

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr Steve J. Petty has commented: 'I have not noticed this behaviour in Northern Goshawks, nor has my colleague David Anderson. The two of us see a lot of Goshawks, but we do not spend a lot of time watching them in flight. Goshawks and Eurasian Sparrowhawks are fond of bathing and often shake themselves when in flight afterwards, but this action is far more pronounced than the wing flick described in the note.'

At Steve Petty's suggestion, we sent a copy of this Note to Mike Henry, who commented: 'I have been through all my field notes since the mid '80s and, despite pages of description of flight actions of Goshawks, including many sketches of flight patterns, I can find no record of observing the action which Alan Vittery has seen. This does not, of course, mean that it does not exist—but it suggests to me that it does not happen sufficiently often to be a significant diagnostic feature. Interestingly, Alan Vittery is at pains to eliminate other accipiters, but in my experience the key confusion species in the UK are Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* (a fast-flying, low Goshawk over moorland) or Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* (distant, soaring, or fast over clearfell in misty conditions). Incidentally, Hen Harriers flick their wings regularly (in a whole-body shake, especially males after a food pass, but also when soaring, for no particular reason), but what Alan Vittery is describing seems to be much briefer. I have no idea what it signifies, but I shall keep an eye open for it in future.'

Early copulation by Eleonora's Falcon

On 29th April 1992, near Tolo, Peloponnese, Greece, I was watching a pair of

Eleonora's Falcons *Falco eleonora* on a coastal limestone cliff. During my observation, the pair copulated twice, with an interval of 45 minutes between the two events. In view of the fact that breeding takes place during late July to September (*BWP*, vol. 2), I considered it surprising that mating should already have started before the end of April.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Early copulation as a form of pair-courtship well ahead of breeding is not unusual among falcons. *BWP* does not mention it specifically for Eleonora's Falcon, but under Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus* states that such behaviour is 'all important in strengthening pair-bond well in advance of laying'. The same applies to many other bird groups: for example, ducks often copulate in autumn, although they do not lay until March or April.

Razorbills with greyish flanks

During a 15-year study of breeding Razorbills *Alca torda* in the central Baltic Sea, I noted that some 20% of the colony-attending birds showed a more or less obvious sooty-greyish wash on the (lower) flanks. This plumage character was not related to sex or to age, as it was seen on males, females and all age groups (including first-summer). I have never seen this character depicted or even mentioned in any handbook, and it would be interesting to know if it also is present on British Razorbills.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Neither Dr M. P. Harris nor Professor T. Birkhead had noted this characteristic either personally in the field or mentioned in the literature.

Sand Martins eating lichen

On 16th August 1992, at Lisvane Reservoir, Cardiff, South Glamorgan, we watched a flock of some 30 Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* flying around rather excitedly and frequently landing on the stone embankment of the reservoir. We moved closer and, from some 30 m, through a 30× telescope, we could see several martins feeding on the ground. Initially, we thought that they must have found some insect life, but on closer examination it was clearly apparent that they were tearing off minute pieces of lichen and feeding these to juveniles. Although *BWP* (vol. 5) states that Sand Martins do occasionally feed on the ground, there is no reference to their eating vegetable matter. Turner & Rose (1989, *A Handbook to the Swallows and Martins of the World*) also indicated a strictly insectivorous diet.

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Sand Martin 'playing' with feathers

On 20th July 1991, at Parsonage Reservoir, Lancashire, J. Metcalfe and I saw a Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* arrive, fly low over the water and pick up a white

feather, of which there were many, from moulting gulls *Larus*. It rose 15-20 m in the moderate westerly breeze, dropped the feather, then flew down and caught it before it reached the ground. The martin continued this behaviour for a couple of minutes, before departing westwards. Feathers which it failed to catch ended up in the water; it left these and picked up another from the shoreline. The only reasons I can think of for the Sand Martin to behave in this way are that it was 'playing' with the feathers or that it was practising catching aerial objects.

ANTONY S. DISLEY

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Although similar behaviour has been recorded for other species, there appear to be no such records for Sand Martin. This 'play' may represent nesting behaviour at low intensity.

Tawny Pipit with abnormally long hind claw

On 11th August 1993, on the Causse Méjean, Lozère, France, we found the corpse of a juvenile pipit *Anthus* which had been killed by a Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*. This bird showed the plumage pattern of a juvenile Tawny Pipit *A. campestris*, but had exceptionally long hind claws (fig. 1), the same length as those of Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*; on the other hand, the tarsus length confirmed that it really was a Tawny Pipit (table 1).

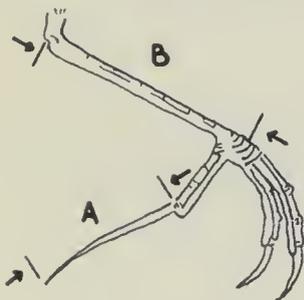


Fig. 1. Full-size drawing of right leg of the Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* found dead in France in August 1993. A = Hind-claw length of 18 mm. B = tarsus length of 23 mm.

Table 1. Measurements (in mm) of the Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* found dead in France in August 1993, compared with measurements for this species, Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae* and Blyth's Pipit *A. godlewskii* (from Svensson 1992).

	Causse Méjean specimen	MEASUREMENTS FROM SVENSSON (1992)		
		Tawny Pipit	Richard's Pipit	Blyth's Pipit
Hind-claw length (extremes)	18	7-12	13½-19 (12½-24½)	9-13½
Tarsus length	23	23-29	28-33½	23½-28

The rectilinear (not regularly curved) shape of the hind claws and the abnormal translucence of their distal half led us to suppose that we were dealing with an aberrant individual.

Clearly, the length of hind claw is not an absolutely reliable field identification criterion to distinguish juvenile/first-year Richard's Pipit from Tawny Pipit.

PIERRE-YVES HENRY and ELODIE GAZAVE

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Reference

SVENSSON, L. 1992. *Identification Guide to European Passerines*. 4th edn. Stockholm.

EDITORIAL COMMENT Members of the Identification Notes Panel have commented that this is another good example of the need to base identifications on combinations of features and never on a single characteristic. A similar cautionary tale, concerning a Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis* with a hind-claw length matching the length of a Richard's Pipit's, was reported by Tim Dean (*Brit. Birds* 79: 659).

Blackcap aggressiveness

In January 1972, a female Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* present at my birdtable for one day drove off all other small birds. In winter 1995/96, another female Blackcap was very aggressive during a fortnight's stay, driving away all the birds from my birdtable. After feeding, she would sit on a branch above the table and would dash at any birds that came near.

In over 27 winters, Blackcaps have come almost regularly, but only these two have been seen to behave in this manner. No male has shown any sign of aggressiveness.

I have recently heard of an exactly similar case of a very aggressive female in Co. Cork, but Frank King has written from Co. Kerry as follows: 'Some years I have had two Blackcaps at the feeder all winter. Where one was male and one female she *invariably* bullied him off the table and gave him a mighty chase . . . On the other hand, I find that males, when there is no female present, bully *all* small birds. *He often sits about even when finished feeding and lays into all comers!* Blackbird *Turdus merula* is about the first size it will respect.'

R. F. RUTTLEDGE

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Antagonistic behaviour of feeding Fieldfare

Ron Plummer's note on the antagonistic behaviour of feeding Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (*Brit. Birds* 89: 175-176) recalled a very similar observation of an unrelated species.



Fig. 1. Rear view of Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* displayed to another Fieldfare on its feeding area (Ron Plummer). Note great similarity to fig. 1 on page 175, depicting Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*.

During a spell of severe weather in early February 1991, a party of 15 Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* visited our garden feeding station in Clwyd, attracted by an abundant supply of apples. Blackbirds *T. merula* and Redwings *T. iliacus* were driven away and the Fieldfares then settled to eat their selected chunks of apple. If other Fieldfares approached, the males displayed aggression by fanning the tail, flicking open the wings and raising and presenting the breast to potential competitors, in much the same way as described in *BWP* vol. 5.



Plate 156. Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* displaying undertail-coverts to nearby Blackbird *T. merula*, Clwyd, February 1991 (Valerie Lynch)

An additional feature, however, which I have not found recorded in the literature, was the use of the undertail-coverts in this threat display. As these birds were feeding in a restricted area of some 25 m², there was obviously potential competition on all sides. During our observations, it became quite clear that, in addition to the forward display of the breast, and so on, the fanned tail over the strongly marked undertail, pale-edged with dark centre, gave a startling display of the rear aspect of the bird when its head was lowered (fig. 1 and plate 156). This was a clear deterrent to any individual approaching from behind.

This account, previously published in the 1990 *Clwyd Bird Report*, has been repeated here by permission of the editor, M. G. Neal.

CEDRIC LYNCH

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Great Grey Shrike eating Red-backed Shrike

On 29th June 1990, in Lower Silesia, Poland, I found a complete corpse of an adult male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* impaled about 1.5 m up on a

hawthorn *Crataegus* by a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*. On 26th June 1991, I watched a male Great Grey Shrike impale an adult female Red-backed on barbed wire 0.7 m above ground level, it having already eaten the victim's head at a site 300 m away; owing to difficulties in carrying such heavy prey in its feet, the Great Grey Shrike was frequently forced to use its bill to assist its grip in flight.

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Supposed hybrid House × Tree Sparrow in northern Italy

On 24th August 1990, along the banks of the river Noncello at Pordenone, Italy (45°57'N, 12°30'E), I saw a likely hybrid between House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Tree Sparrow *P. montanus*. Its general appearance was that of a Tree Sparrow, including smaller size, smaller black bill, brown rump, small broken black bib, and even the characteristic black spot on the ear-coverts. What seemed anomalous was the presence of a typical House Sparrow character, namely a grey band about 1 cm broad extending from the forehead to the nape, giving a bicoloured look to the head (a similar head pattern is illustrated in Harris *et al.* 1989 for another supposed hybrid between House and Tree Sparrows). There was also a large black spot on the breast, clearly separated from the black bib and also from a narrow black line running from the nape and down the neck side to the breast side, just above the folded wing. Unfortunately, I did not notice the presence or absence of a pale supercilium, nor was it possible to photograph the bird, which was feeding alone near riparian vegetation, with no other sparrows nearby.

The sparrow present in the urban habitat of the district is 'Italian' Sparrow *P. (d.) italiae*; Tree Sparrow is much less frequent in the towns, but common in the countryside, especially in cultivated plain areas (Parodi 1987). The House Sparrow is not present in the region except in the narrow zone of intergradation with 'Italian Sparrow' in the Alpine valleys (Summers-Smith 1988), so the individual observed had presumably dispersed from elsewhere.

Summers-Smith (1963) was initially sceptical about hybrids between House and Tree Sparrows reported in the literature (Nichols 1919; Meise 1951; Richardson 1957; Rooke 1957; Andersen 1978; Arnott 1981) and argued that they could be aberrantly plumaged individuals (based on the consideration that the opposite mates of the two species do not recognise each other morphologically as members of the other sex). Yet there is evidence of possible hybridisation in the wild (Albrecht 1983), and this suggests that there could be other factors (i.e. behavioural, ecological) leading to the breakdown of pre-mating isolating mechanisms.

CARLO COSTANTINI

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EDITORIAL COMMENT In Appendix 8.1 of his book *The Tree Sparrow* (1995), Dr Denis Summers-Smith brought up to date the records of Tree Sparrow hybrids, listing 47 records (only one of which, incidentally, refers to 'Italian' × Tree Sparrow). A useful paper on hybridisation between House and Tree Sparrows was published by P. J. Cordero and J. D. Summers-Smith in 1993 (*J. Orn.* 134: 69-77).

Spanish Sparrows with pollen staining

On 29th March 1992, at Eilat, Israel, I noticed a group of eight Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* feeding in short grass. Of the five females, three had obvious greenish staining covering the face and upper breast. Over the previous ten days, I had noted a few among the many thousands of migrant passerines present with similar staining, notably Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* and Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia curruca*. Pollen staining has been recorded on insectivorous birds, including Chiffchaffs, and has been assumed to result from their feeding on nectar or insects found within flowers. I have found no reference to pollen-stained seed-eaters.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT This undoubtedly does occur more frequently than published records would suggest. Some seed-eaters, including House Sparrows *P. domesticus*, Common Redpolls *Carduelis flammea* and Siskins *C. spinus*, regularly feed from flowers, and an earlier paper on birds contaminated by pollen and other substances (*Brit. Birds* 54: 93-100) included references to Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Goldfinch *C. carduelis* and Siskin.

Goldfinch feeding on peanuts

On 19th March 1992, at Hemington, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, I watched a Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* fly directly to a suspended 7 × 7-mm wire-mesh birdfeeder and peck at the decorticated peanuts contained within it. Although Goldfinches are regular visitors to my rural garden, this was the first time that I had observed this behaviour. Over the subsequent two weeks a pair was present, almost exclusively in the vicinity of the nut-container; the two fed on the peanuts on several occasions until my supply of nuts was exhausted. The Goldfinches

were not deterred by the presence of other birds and aggressively 'saw off' House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*. I am uncertain whether more than one individual acquired this new feeding behaviour, but one was seen on top of the supporting post while the other fed on the nuts below.

In January 1986, a female Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, after its first attempt, took a fortnight to feed confidently at the feeder, and in 1989 a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* behaved similarly; both species are now regular visitors to the peanuts. I have not, however, seen Goldfinches at the feeder in the four years since my March 1992 observations.

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Goldfinches feeding in gardens

The Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* has what is, for a finch, a long narrow bill and it specialises in seeds of the Compositae family, notably thistles *Cirsium/Carduus*, teasels *Dipsacus*, dandelions *Taraxacum*, burdocks *Arctium*, and groundsels and ragworts *Senecio* (Newton 1972). Newton (in Lack 1986) commented that 'strangely, Goldfinches have not taken to visiting feeding trays in gardens'. The BTO's Garden Bird Feeding Survey (GBFS), which has been operating each winter since 1970, covering some 800 gardens, shows that Goldfinches will occasionally take seed-mixes and peanuts from the ground, raised birdtables and hanging containers. During 1970-80, Goldfinches took food items or water provided by householders in 3.1 % of all gardens under observation (Glue 1982). Over the 1991/92 winter, regular feeding on supplementary foods was reported widely, from Avon, Hampshire, West Midlands, Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The GBFS findings suggest that the habit either is being reported more regularly or is spreading.

Observations by GBFS contributors have shown some interesting facets of Goldfinch behaviour and provided clues to ways in which this finch might be attracted more regularly. Most gardens patronised have been rural in setting, with Goldfinch flocks feeding initially on adjacent ground with weed seeds (often rough pasture or semi-natural/abandoned areas); gardens in built-up surroundings are visited less frequently, the finches drawn first to neglected ground such as unkempt allotments.

Goldfinches generally first appear in gardens during late autumn (August-November), coming invariably for water to replace metabolic losses in hot dry weather. Flocks are often of a dozen or more and may exceed 50 individuals, with singletons just occasionally. In a garden at Saughall, near Chester, Cheshire, Sykes (1988) described a typical situation: a flock of 50-70 Goldfinches was attracted to adjacent fields, feeding chiefly on seeds from the flowering heads of teasel and Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*; on hot days, half of the flock would venture into the garden, taking moisture in the form of dew drops trapped on grass blades; regular watering of a patch of grass maintained their interest. Elsewhere, the species may be drawn in late autumn to conventional garden water receptacles and the fringes of ponds.

Once within gardens, Goldfinches have been reported most frequently taking the seeds of ornamental thistles, teasel, lavender *Limonium*, Cornflower *Centaurea*

cyamus, forget-me-not *Myosotis*, Mexican aster *Cosmos*, pansy *Viola* and evening-primrose *Oenothera*. When these and local natural sources of seed are becoming depleted, Goldfinches may switch to foods provided by Man, sometimes commencing in the New Year, but more often from late February through to early April, when they revert to dandelions and other 'wild' foods.

A typical situation was described by Maddock (1988). From the 1983/84 winter, a few Goldfinches were attracted to lavender bushes (deliberately left untrimmed in late autumn) and to dry teasel heads in a suburban garden in Headington, Oxfordshire; dusting the teasel heads with teasel seed (expensive but effective) maintained their interest. Over the following winter, up to 24 Goldfinches, at first attracted to teasel, turned to a cagebird seed-mix (canary seed, millet, niger), though the teasel plants remained an important attraction. By 1987, individual Goldfinches had turned their attention to hanging containers holding peanuts. This behaviour has been reported widely on a local scale.

The transition from consuming the seeds of low-growing wild plants to taking those of garden annuals and perennials, then turning to seed-mixes and peanuts taken from the birdtable and hanging basket is a logical one. Siskins *C. spinus* feed extensively also during the non-breeding season on seeds extricated from birch *Betula*, alder *Alnus* and Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* (Newton 1972). More recently, Goldfinches have been watched in dry weather feeding in the canopy of Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis* in Glentool Forest, southwest Scotland (Shaw & Livingstone 1991), clinging and perching on the open cones to extract seed, as well as taking it from the ground.

As natural sources of seed dwindle over the course of the autumn and winter, Goldfinches are well equipped to exploit seed-mixes and peanuts provided by householders. Whether this behaviour expands along the lines shown by Siskins only the future will tell.

I would be interested to receive additional observations that add to the situation described.

DAVID GLUE

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Over 30 years ago, in 1964, D. G. Lawson observed a Goldfinch feeding on a string of peanuts in his Lancashire garden (*Brit. Birds* 57: 302-303). It is interesting that the habit apparently did not spread to other Goldfinches at that time.



MONTHLY MARATHON



With the new relaxed rules (stumble and you now don't have to go back to the startline), the ninth 'Monthly marathon' has attracted many new entrants.

The flying bird (plate 125) was named as almost everything from diver *Gavia* to Superman, via Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, various Nearctic gulls *Larus* and seven species of raptor, but most people (69%) correctly identified it as a Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*; it was photographed in Abu Dhabi, UAE, in May 1994 by S. J. Aspinall.

That lone, shy goose (plate 372) was named as Bean *Anser fabilis* (40%), White-fronted *A. albifrons* (35%), Pink-footed *A. brachyrhynchos* (13%), Lesser White-fronted *A. erythropus* (10%) and Greylag *A. anser* (2%). The majority of entrants got this one wrong; it was an adult female Whitefront of the nominate European race, photographed in the Netherlands in February 1996 by Anthony McGeehan (who, after winning 'Monthly marathon' twice, has promised to call it a day).

The fourth hurdle on the route to a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday of a lifetime is shown in plate 157, below.



Plate 157. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 124. Fourth stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue and the amendment on page 333 in the July issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th November 1996.



REVIEWS

The Breeding Birds of the United Arab Emirates.

By Simon Aspinall.

Hobby Publications, Liverpool, 1996. 173 pages; 66 colour photographs; 100 breeding maps. ISBN 1-872839-04-5. Paperback £14.99.

Collating data collected over years of research for a number of projects, including the 'Atlas of Breeding Birds of Arabia', Aspinall's excellent book clearly and concisely details the status and conservation of all of the UAE's 101 breeding bird species. Brief introductory sections cover the area's history, geomorphology, climate and conservation initiatives. The species texts follow. Each account includes the species' Arabic name, and details of its World range, breeding season and the subspecies involved in the UAE. Habitat preferences and breeding status in the UAE are then described. Distributional information exists for 45 of the 48 50-km squares in the country and the now-familiar three sizes of dots clearly map breeding distributions. Population estimates are given for most species, these ranging from 'Nil ?' for

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* to '150,000-200,000' for the regionally endemic Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*. The regional and global significances of these populations are described and population trends highlighted. The conservation status of any site holding significant concentrations of any species is also discussed, as are any particularly urgent threats, along with some proposed solutions. The book has attractive maps and a number of equally clearly laid-out and informative tables. There are also ten habitat photographs and 56 first-class bird photos. Recommended to anyone with an interest in the birds of or conservation in this fascinating region.

PAUL HOLT

The Chiffchaff.

By Peter Clement.

Hamlyn, 1995. 126 pages; 17 colour plates; 4 colour illustrations; 16 line-drawings. ISBN 0-600-57978-6. Paperback £12.99.

I have to admit it at once: I am not the kind of person who instantly would buy a book dealing with one single species. For this pleasant little book, however, I would probably have made an exception. Not only is the Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* subject to one or several 'splits', but, once looked into, it also has most interesting habits.

The book deals thoroughly with identification, both racial and specific. There are four well-drawn plates, showing both races and confusion species (i.e. most Western Palearctic *Phylloscopus* warblers plus Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*), a number of

colour photographs and some drawings. Among the topics dealt with are distribution, habitat, food and foraging, voice, behaviour, territory, courtship, migration and mortality.

Although Swedish, I kept stumbling at a number of annoying misspellings; I cannot help wondering what a 'god covering of snowfall', the race '*canariensis*', etc., would look like. Apart from these trifles, I found the book very readable and recommend it highly to anyone wanting to dig the slightest bit deeper into the surprisingly fascinating subject of the Chiffchaff.

CHRISTIAN CEDERROTH

The Mitchell Beazley Pocket Guide to Garden Birds.

By Dominic Couzens. Illustrated by Mike Langman.

Mitchell Beazley, London, 1996. 160 pages; 350 colour illustrations. ISBN 1-85732-495-1. £7.99.

This is a splendid book for the kitchen window-sill. Each of 69 species is given a double-page spread of the standard Mitchell Beazley long-and-thin format (19.5 cm deep × 9.5 cm wide). The choice of species is good (I have seen all but seven in my own garden);

it is sensible to have included Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (though the old name of Ring-necked Parakeet is used), and I even approve of the inclusion of Serin *Serinus serinus*, since the text starts 'The serin is not a British bird, but is included here because it's a

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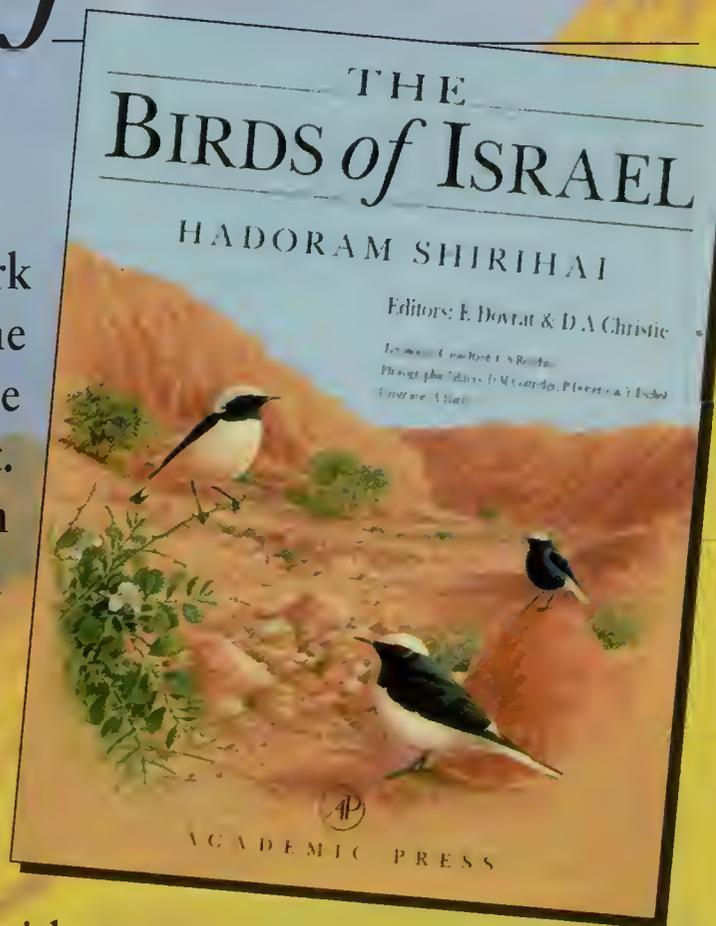
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familiar garden user on the Continent.' The paintings by Mike Langman are excellent, with usually at least five or six for each species, showing typical jizz, various aspects of behaviour, flight action diagrammatically, and so on: just the sort of things which the traditional hundreds-of-species field guides cannot find the space to include.

The texts are broken up into appropriate sections depending on the species (e.g. for

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* there is an 11-line introduction, followed by sections on voice, identification, young, flight, where found, display, drinking, rain-bathing, breeding, and garden tips).

Author, artist, designers and publishers all deserve congratulations. This is an excellent addition to the Mitchell Beazley Pocket Guide series.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Leks.

By Jacob Höglund & Rauno V. Alatalo.

Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995. 248 pages; 8 line-drawings; numerous figures and histograms. ISBN 0-691-03727-2. Paperback £18.95.

Leks are groups of displaying males from which females choose mates. Darwin suggested that females' mate preferences arose through aesthetic whims, while Wallace thought that females chose male characters which signalled success in male-male combat. An additional insight is that females may gain fitness benefits from making appropriate choices. Since fitness is difficult to define, let alone measure, it is perhaps not surprising that Darwin and Wallace did not

pursue this possibility. This treatise thoroughly synthesises the scientific literature on leks, leaving me more knowledgeable but little wiser.

If you are a student or professional biologist, here is a competent, well-balanced account which will help you to pass exams or to write papers. If you want a good read which reflects the romance of leks, look elsewhere.

ROBERT MOSS

Where to Watch Birds in Spain and Portugal.

By Laurence Rose.

Hamlyn, in association with BirdLife International, London, 1995. 214 pages; eight colour plates; 30 line-drawings; 49 maps. ISBN 0-600-58404-6. Paperback £14.99.

Where to Watch Birds in Scandinavia.

By Gustaf Aulén.

Hamlyn, in association with BirdLife International, London, 1996. 216 pages; eight colour plates; 30 line-drawings; 41 maps. ISBN 0-600-58459-3. Paperback £16.99.

Where to Watch Birds in Turkey, Greece and Cyprus.

By Hilary Welch, Laurence Rose, Derek Moore, Bill Oddie & Harry Sigg.

Hamlyn, in association with BirdLife International, London, 1996. 216 pages; eight colour plates; 30 line-drawings; 33 maps. ISBN 0-600-58232-9. Paperback £16.99.

These three additions to the Hamlyn 'Where to Watch Birds' series continue in the format established by John Gooders' *Britain and Europe* (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 79: 362-363; 82: 228) and followed by Gerard Gorman's recent *Eastern Europe* book (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 88: 117).

In each book, a brief introduction is followed by sections on each country, some general information on the region's importance for birds, the best times to visit, conservation, and 'getting there and getting around'. The bulk of each book is made up of relatively short site descriptions, highlighting a few key species. The guide to Spain and

Portugal has a useful index to the birding localities and major towns mentioned in the text, and all three have indexes to the bird names.

Laurence Rose's guide to Spain and Portugal covers almost 200 prime birding sites—109 in Spain, 16 in the Balearic Islands, 15 in the Canary Islands, 25 in Portugal, six in Madeira and 11 in the Azores. Most sites have a full page of text, with the Ebro Delta and Doñana each having over two pages. There are only 40 site maps.

The Scandinavian guide has 40 sites in Denmark well described by Klaus Malling Olsen, 40 in Finland described by Finnish

authors, 15 Icelandic sites described by five authors, 45 sites in Norway detailed by two authors, and details of 60 Swedish sites by Gustaf Aulén (the senior author). The individual sites are covered in slightly less detail than in the Iberian guide and, again, there are insufficient (36) maps. The sections on Denmark and Iceland are particularly well done, the others rather more poorly, containing several errors, omissions and oversights.

The guide to Turkey, Greece and Cyprus is also written by a number of authors. Hilary Welch details 74 sites in Turkey; Laurence Rose 63 in Greece (including Corfu, Crete, Lesbos and several other Aegean islands); and Derek Moore, Bill Oddie and Harry Sigg document 27 sites in north and south Cyprus. This latter section reads well and is full of detail, but there are no site maps whatsoever.

Although each of the books has its own

particular merits and strong points, they are all somewhat disappointing. Many of the site directions are too simplistic, there are far too few maps (less than one map for every five sites described), and much of the information is trivial (and occasionally incorrect). Only the 'Turkish' guide has an acceptable bibliography (even noting rival bird-finding guides, such as the excellent Gostour and Prion guides to Turkey). The Hamlyn Turkish guide, however, devotes six pages to giving the English and scientific names of species mentioned in the text, space that would have been better used on some additional maps.

All three books also include eight colour plates depicting 80 of the area's specialities. Although the illustrations are perfectly acceptable, better ones can be found in the comprehensive field guides, and their inclusion in site-guides seems pointless.

PAUL HOLT



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British Birds relies on subscription income, advertisement income, sponsorship support and donations. Anyone wishing to help *BB* can make a donation (small or large!) either for a specific purpose in *BB*'s current expenditure or for our Investment Fund, the interest from which is used to maintain the highest possible level of *BB*'s service to ornithology, by subsidising features, photographs and additional pages in the journal (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 479).

The Richard Richardson Memorial Award Fund is a registered charity, the interest providing a book and small cash prize each year for the top-placed artist aged 21 or under entering the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition. Donations to this Fund are also welcome.

Please make cheques payable to (1) British Birds Ltd, (2) British Birds Investment Fund, or (3) The Richard Richardson Memorial Award Fund. All should be sent to British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

May we also remind *BB* supporters that the Investment Fund is available for bequests, if any *BB* subscriber wishes to include mention of the journal in his or her will.

Thank you.



MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 158. Mystery photograph 199A.



Plate 159. Mystery photograph 199B.

199 In the Western Palearctic, Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* has an extensive range, throughout much of which the closely related Thekla Lark *G. theklae* does not occur. Crested Lark is absent from a few places, however, notably the Balearic Islands, where the less widespread species is present. Where both are found, in Portugal, Spain, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, and locally in southern France, northwestern Mauritania and northern Libya, they provide a testing identification challenge. Mystery photograph A, taken by Barry Mitchell, shows a Crested Lark in Cyprus in April 1994, and mystery photograph B, taken by Robin Chittenden, shows a Thekla Lark in Morocco in January 1989.

Cramp (1988) acknowledged 24 races of Crested Lark and six races of Thekla Lark in the Western Palearctic, of which nine and six races, respectively, were recognised in the areas of sympatry. The species' morphology, which, in the case of Crested Lark, is especially flexible, reflects the environment in terms of aridity or humidity, amount of sunshine and colour of soil. So, though the differences between the races in size and structure are slight, the variations in ground-colour and intensity of streaking are marked, and the identification process is further complicated by the effects of bleaching and wear.

Characters of separation which are independent of racial variation, or largely so, though of differing degrees of usefulness in the field, involve the bill, crest, first primary, primary projection, voice and habitat.

The small overlap in the bill lengths of the two species is unimportant, as it occurs in races from different regions. In any given area, the bill of Crested Lark is longer and more dagger-like than the comparatively stubby bill of Thekla Lark. Crested Lark has the top edge of its upper mandible curved throughout its length, though more steeply towards the tip, and a straight or slightly concave bottom edge to its lower mandible; Thekla Lark has a straighter top edge to its upper mandible, though curved towards the tip, and, in Europe especially, a convex bottom edge

to its lower mandible. Crested Lark's hindcrown feathers are elongated and form a long, spike-like crest; Thekla Lark, however, has both the hindcrown and central crown feathers elongated, and these form a slightly shorter but fuller, more fan-shaped crest. Determining crest shape is not always straightforward, though, and the use of this feature is further complicated by the effects of wear, but the basally restricted nature of Crested Lark's crest gives the species a longer-looking forehead than that of Thekla Lark. Taken in combination, the lengths and shapes of the bills and crests of the two species give Crested Lark the more aggressive countenance and Thekla Lark a gentler look. These differences are further emphasised by the slightly larger Crested Lark's rangier appearance in the field compared with the marginally smaller Thekla Lark's more compact proportions.

Thekla Lark's first primary, which is 4 mm shorter to 5 mm longer than its longest primary covert (3 mm shorter to 5 mm longer in Europe), is normally longer than Crested Lark's first primary, which is 8 mm shorter to 1 mm longer than its longest primary covert (8 mm to 2 mm shorter in Europe), while Crested Lark has the slightly greater primary projection beyond the tertials. These are fine distinctions, however, and the similarity in colour of the feathers and the restless nature of the species make them difficult to assess in the field.

Though the songs and calls of the two are similar, Thekla Lark usually has the faster, lower-pitched, more melodious song and the quieter, lower-pitched call. These are not wholly reliable characters of separation, though, as there are regional variations in the vocalisations of both species. Habitat selection is also prone to a degree of overlap, particularly in North Africa, but, generally, Crested Lark prefers flat or gently undulating areas of farmland, grassland and semi-desert, while Thekla Lark normally inhabits more rugged terrain, including rock-strewn hillsides with patches of low scrub and small bushes. Thekla Lark readily perches on such vegetation; Crested Lark does so much less frequently.

In central and southern Spain and Portugal, where many observers first encounter both species, each is represented by a single race: the nominate race of Thekla Lark and the *pallida* race of Crested Lark. Throughout this region, though separation of the two is far from easy, their differences are as clear and constant as they are anywhere. Comparatively, Thekla Lark has a darker bill, prominent black streaks on the forehead and crown, shorter but paler and more contrasting supercilia, more heavily marked ear-coverts, sides of neck and hindneck, wider and paler half-collar, slightly darker and browner or grey-brown upperparts, paler, cinnamon-toned lower rump and uppertail-coverts contrasting with the generally brown back, upper rump and tail-feathers, broader dark centres to the median coverts, darker and more distinctly pale-fringed tertials, slightly brighter rufous outer tail-feathers, dark-mottled lower throat, bolder and more sharply defined dark streaks on a cleaner-looking, paler breast with the streaking densest and most striking at the sides (not centrally, as on Crested Lark), narrow but distinct black streaking on the flanks, and duller, sandy-grey, not pale rusty-buff, axillaries and underwing-coverts.

In southern France and northern Spain, where the nominate race of each species occurs, the slightly darker and browner upperparts and paler underparts of Crested Lark prevent the application of some of the distinguishing characters which are useful farther south in Iberia. Most of the points of separation do, however, remain valid.

In the most northerly part of the two species' shared range in North Africa, in coastal Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, Thekla Lark is comparatively darker, browner and more heavily marked above and paler below than in central and southern Iberia, and with a slightly longer bill with a straighter bottom edge to the lower mandible. Crested Lark, compared with central and southern Iberian individuals, averages darker and is more contrastingly marked above and with heavier and more distinct streaks below, though on a cinnamon-buff ground-colour. Otherwise, the two species closely resemble their counterparts to the north. As in southern France and northern Spain, therefore, many of the distinguishing features valid in central and southern Spain and Portugal still apply in coastal North Africa.

Farther south in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, as well as in northwestern Mauritania and northern Libya, where the ranges of Crested Lark and Thekla Lark overlap, separation of the two is far more difficult, and is exacerbated by the plumage variations which exist among the various races of each species found in the region. Both species are longer-billed than they are in Europe, but, while Crested Lark still has the longer bill, Thekla Lark does not always have the convex bottom edge to the lower mandible which helps to distinguish it north of the Strait of Gibraltar. Crested Lark's upperparts vary from sandy-buff to warm buff-brown, often with quite inconspicuous markings, and those of Thekla Lark range from pale sandy-brown to warm brown and are also poorly marked. Some Crested Larks display a distinctly streaked breast, while many Thekla Larks, though very pale below, have thinner breast-streaking than their European counterparts. Furthermore, with Crested Lark possessing more-rufous outer tail-feathers and Thekla Lark failing to show a contrastingly brighter lower rump and uppertail-coverts, many of the distinguishing features so reliable farther north do not apply in this region.

Nowhere is it more vital, or more difficult, to observe several characters of separation before declaring a firm identification of a Crested or Thekla Lark than inland in North Africa, where some individuals are perhaps better left unidentified. Wherever one of the two is encountered, however, and especially within the areas of sympatry, it is necessary to base the identification on a combination of features.

PETER LANSDOWN

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This year's two finalists were:

Ren Hathway for Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* at the Great Pool, Tresco, Scilly, in August 1995.

Ms D. A. Jones for Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* at Seaforth, Merseyside, in July 1995.

As usual, the two judges assessed the merits of all the submitted photographs, together with comments made in writing during record circulation by individual members of the BBRC and by the Committee's Secretary, Michael J. Rogers. The identities of the photographers are not known to the judges until after the winner has been selected, so the fact that Ren Hathway won The Carl Zeiss Award in



Plate 160. Winner of THE CARL ZEISS AWARD: second-summer Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Seaforth, Merseyside, 30th-31st July 1995 (*D. A. Jones*)

1993 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 565-566, plate 196) did not influence the judges' final choice of Dot Jones's Gull-billed Tern as the winning picture.

This Gull-billed Tern stayed for a couple of days, and was seen by many observers as it flew back and forth over the freshwater pools at Seaforth Nature Reserve. This species is, however, often difficult to see in Britain, one-observer fly-by reports creating difficulties not only for the observer, and for would-be twitchers, but also for the BBRC when the inevitably brief notes are assessed. In this case, however, the excellent notes submitted by Terry Meehan and Gavin Thomas were augmented by Dot Jones's superb, pin-sharp flight shot (plate 160). Dot is a Multimedia Technician at John Moores University, but had not previously won a photographic competition.

R. A. HUME and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3N7



SHORT REVIEWS

Auguries and Omens: the magical lore of birds. By Yvonne Aburrow. (Capall Bann Publishing, Chieveley, 1994. 217 pages. ISBN 1-898307-11-3. Paperback £10.95) The author is clearly an expert on magic and folklore, with an interest in birds, rather than an ornithologist with an interest in superstitions and mythology. For instance, the illustration of a 'Robin' *Erithacus rubecula* actually depicts a male Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*.

JTRS

Birding in Lesbos. By Richard Brooks. (Brookside Publishing, Fulmodeston, 1995. 141 pages. ISBN 0-9527249-0-1. Paperback £14.99) If you plan to visit Lesbos, you should read this book. Masses of (rather small) type and clear maps pinpoint the special birds, the 'migrant traps' and other not-to-be-missed places. Information is included up to 1995 (some of it necessarily unconfirmed) and raises the possibility of yet more surprising Asian breeders. Ticking aside, there is solid stuff on distribution and behaviour, and even some ringing data, with plenty of other features, in a chatty style, plus some quality colour photographs and line-drawings.

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

Birdfinder: a birder's guide to planning North American trips. By Jerry A. Cooper.

(American Birding Association Ltd, Colorado Springs, 1995. 374 pages. ISBN 1-878788-10-8. Paperback \$17.95) No quaint British 'where to watch' this: straight into big lists, rarities and pelagic trips. The first thing on any trip is to ring the hotlines, not wasting a moment before twitching begins. Last days of itineraries are for hunting species missed to get all 'key' and 'probable' species (listed along with 'possibles', 'remotely possibles'). There are few maps but excellent detail, even to your food bill. Well produced, but the floppy cover and ring-binding are horrible.

RAH

Neotropical Birds: ecology and conservation. By Douglas W. Fitzpatrick, Theodore A. Parker III & Debra K. Moskovits. (University of Chicago, 1996. 502 pages. ISBN 0-226-77630-1. Paperback £29.96, US \$37.50) The bulk (330 pages) of this impressive work consists of a tabulated database in nine parts, which summarises all available knowledge of the distribution, abundance, habitats and conservation priorities of all bird species breeding in the Neotropics, and the distribution and habitats of migrants to the Neotropics. The authors stress in their introductory chapters that, as birds are good indicators of general biodiversity, the database should provide a useful basis for other conservation efforts in

the Neotropics, biologically the richest region on earth. This book is primarily for conservation workers and libraries.

DAVID SNOW

A Bird-Finding Guide to Ontario. By Clive E. Goodwin. (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2nd edn, 1995. 477 pages. ISBN 0-8020-6904-5. Paperback £16.00) A big book, for a huge province: four times the size of Britain, and one third bigger again than Texas. For the visiting birder, a guide such as this is vital, providing lucid and detailed descriptions of where to go to find birds, paying due attention to local trespass protocols and etiquette, and filled with sketch maps. Birding in the northern boreal forest can be frustrating, but the systematic list gives not only status but also likely habitat details and, essentially, peak times: there is an almost total turnover of species at each summer/winter transition, so what you see depends upon the time of year that you visit.

On a first birding trip to Ontario, I'd head for Point Pelee to catch the spring migration and radiate out from there. The sheer volume of birds is simply stunning and this book is an indispensable guide to their locations.

DON SMITH

Collins Wild Guide: birds of Britain and Ireland. By Peter Holden. Photographic consultant Paul Sterry. (HarperCollins, London, 1996. 255 pages. ISBN 0-00-220003-1. Paperback £6.99) Pocket-sized photographic guide for beginners, with a single photograph for each of 240 British & Irish species, augmented by two or three thumbnail-sized paintings (of the other sex, of relevant behaviour, of juveniles, of an individual in flight, or whatever).

JTRS

Bird Migration: Proceedings of the International Conference on Bird Migration 3rd-7th April '94. Edited by Yossi Leshem. (Laser Pages Publishing (1992) Ltd, Jerusalem, 1995. Special issue of *Israel Journal of Zoology*, vol. 41, no. 3. 522 pages. ISSN 0021-2210. Institutional rate US\$59 inc. airmail, personal rate US\$29.50) It has been estimated that 500 million birds migrate over Israel each autumn, including the entire European populations of Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes* and White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*. How appropriate, therefore, that

this conference should have been held in Israel, at Eilat. The 25 papers in this volume concern techniques, mechanics & energetics, ecology & evolution, and a symposium on radar studies* of bird migration in Israel. For the specialist.

JTRS

Dear Islandman. By Ronald Lockley. (Gomer Press, Dyfed, 1996. 250 pages. ISBN 1-85902-296-0. £8.95) A selection of letters between Ronald Lockley and his fiancée, Doris Shellard, in 1927-28.

Painting Birds in Watercolour. Video. Presented by Bruce Pearson. (Quay West Publishing, Plymouth, 1995. 60 minutes. £12.99) It is great fun to accompany Bruce as he explains the techniques of painting Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* and Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, and this will be helpful to budding artists, but I fear I can only watch in admiration as a master accomplishes that to which I cannot even aspire.

JTRS

Wildfowl: a World guide. By Eric Soothill & Peter Whitehead. (Blandford, 1996. 306 pages. ISBN 0-7137-2622-9. Paperback £14.99) A double-page spread, including one colour photograph (usually of a male, sometimes of a pair, often captive birds) for each species. When there is frequently half a page of blank paper, the publisher's decision not to illustrate females should be questioned; and when part of the head of the bird that is illustrated is cut off, perhaps that should also be the fate of the designer. (Previously published as *Wildfowl of the World*, reviewed *Brit. Birds* 73: 55).

JTRS

Ducks. By David Tomlinson. Illustrations by Nick Pike. (Whittet Books Ltd, London, 1996. 128 pages. ISBN 1-873580-24-X. Paperback £7.99) Like others in this publisher's long series of inexpensive natural history books, this is well written and comprehensive, covering the World's ducks, though with a British slant. The numerous line-drawings also follow the now well-established practice of mixing straightforward illustrations with cartoons. Nick Pike, twice a runner-up in the *British Birds* Bird Illustrator of the Year competition, has done a good job with both. Anyone wanting to learn more about this delightful group of birds will enjoy this book.

MAO



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

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

Bird-trade dilemma

We have all seen them, been shocked and horrified by them: pictures of hundreds of birds crammed into crates and cages arriving at airports in Europe—from Amsterdam to Heathrow. Over the years, we have probably supported the 'Ban the Wild Bird Trade' and quietly (or perhaps not so quietly) cheered as another airline announced that it was no longer prepared to carry live, wild-caught birds for the cage-bird markets. Life, however, is never quite that simple.

The conservation backbone for international trade is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which came into force in 1975 and is now signed by well over 100 countries. This is not surprising, for what government is likely to say that international trade in endangered species is acceptable? But remember, this deals only with international trade and has no bearing on the domestic trade in any species, endangered or otherwise.

Enforcement of CITES is a completely different story. The list of species covered by CITES is huge; and, remember, birds are just one element: it also covers plants, insects, mammals, reptiles, etc. Just how many Customs and Excise staff in the UK—let alone in some other countries of the EU or the developing world—can handle this. A publication by Johannes Erritzoe in 1993, *The Birds of CITES and how to identify them*, was an attempt to assist, but (to the best of our knowledge) has never been kept up to date, and several of the illustrations leave a lot to be desired.

But the Convention exists, and it is a good Convention. What have been the effects? Sadly, World-endangered species are still being threatened by the cage-bird trade. Collar, Crosby & Stattersfield (1994, *Birds to Watch 2*) indicated that 2.6% of the World's threatened species are under threat from 'trade'. This compares with 51.4% under threat from loss of habitat. Thus, even with CITES, we have trade still threatening the World's rare birds as the habitats in which they live continue to decrease. So, what is the solution? It has been suggested that a massive injection of resources to create captive-breeding programmes would remove the need to take birds from the wild. When did you last hear of a shipment of wild-caught Budgerigars *Melopsittacus undulatus* arriving in this country? This will do nothing, however, to protect the habitats and the massive diversity of fauna and flora that occurs there.

The main bird-importers are Europe, North America and Japan; the main exporters are the so-called 'Third-World' countries with their unique forests and wildlife. We have all seen the films of virgin forests falling to the chain-saws, and the slash-and-burn approach of temporary agriculture—but who are we to say what should or should not happen? We seek sustainability. 'Has this tropical hardwood come from a forest managed for sustainable production?' How about

'Has this macaw, weaver, parrot or hornbill come from a sustainable trapping programme?' It might not sound particularly pleasant, but could the trade be managed in a sustainable manner? By sustainable, we mean the sustainability of the habitat as well as the bird species removed from it. We remove fish from the oceans in a (non)sustainable manner, we crop game-birds (quite legally) in a sustainable manner, and the Norwegians argue for whaling in a sustainable manner—how about a bird trade in a sustainable manner, one that not only ensures the survival of threatened species in the wild, but also safeguards some of the unique habitats in which they, and countless other living organisms, live?

RSPB wins major conservation victory

The RSPB is accused, at times, of being too much part of The Establishment, and not prepared to ruffle a few feathers to achieve its conservation objectives. On some occasions this is just not true.

When the Government designated the Medway Estuary in Kent as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for its important bird populations, the conservation movement applauded. After all, for many months, if not years, complaints had been levied that the Government was dragging its feet in the designation of SPAs in the UK—a responsibility under the European Birds Directive. The Medway Estuary is important for, amongst other species, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* and Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*. There did, however, seem to be a rather strange omission. An area known as Lappel Bank had been excluded to enable a port development to

take place without the legal difficulties that SPA designation would have entailed. The RSPB took the rare step of challenging this decision through the courts to the European Court of Justice, claiming that if an area qualified for designation (and the criteria are well defined) as a SPA it should be so designated, and if people wish to destroy the site they must prove their case beyond doubt and provide suitable compensation for the habitats lost. In July this year, the European Court found in favour of the RSPB and, although Lappel Bank has now been destroyed, the pressure will be on the Government to provide compensation for its destruction.

The implications of this ruling are far-reaching throughout the European Union, and European conservation bodies will no doubt have many occasions on which to quote the Court's judgment.

Bird-of-prey persecution 1995

The RSPB has recently published its annual review of bird-of-prey persecution in the UK. This review, covering 1995, details the all-too-familiar pattern of poisoning, shooting, nest-robbing and nest destruction, with virtually every species of UK raptor involved. The RSPB stresses that it must be borne in mind that the review can deal only with incidents that are brought to the Society's attention, and that all the figures presented are an unknown proportion of the true extent of the persecution that takes place.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, all birds of prey and owls, and their nests, eggs and young, are fully protected at all times. Some of the rarer species, including Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, are additionally protected by special penalties. In 1995, a total of 157

incidents came to the attention of the RSPB. This compares with 114 in 1994, a worrying trend upwards. Forty-five were concerned with shooting, but an amazing 24 involved pole-traps, which have been illegal in the UK since 1904. Persecution is a nationwide problem, but is heaviest on grouse-moors and in areas where Common Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* are reared for shooting. Despite the Government-led campaign against illegal poisoning, at least 32 birds of prey, including 15 Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* and five Red Kites, died in 27 illegal poisoning incidents. An estimated 50 eggs or chicks were lost in 33 instances of nest robbery, including five Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* nests and one White-tailed Eagle nest.

Copies of the report are available from Angus Nurse, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

BirdLife in Europe

For six years, a newsletter entitled *European IBA News* has been produced by BirdLife International, with the aim of disseminating information around the BirdLife network and beyond, about the Important Bird Areas in Europe Programme. The scope of this newsletter is to be expanded, and the first issue of *BirdLife in Europe* (actually credited as vol. 7, no. 16, May 1996) has now appeared. It is full of updates from many countries and details of work on everything from Laurel Pigeon *Columba junoniae* and Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* to Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* and Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*; this first edition provides a mixture of some successes and some potential disasters. Clearly, there is still much to do in Europe. Details from BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

Game Conservancy Trust Review

As always, The Game Conservancy Trust annual review for 1995 contains much of interest for the birdwatcher. Over £1.1 million was spent on some excellent and exciting research during the year, ranging across subjects as diverse as pesticides and secondary poisoning to studies on the farm operated by the Trust at Loddington estate, Leicestershire. The results concern not only Common Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus*, Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix* and Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, but also Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos*, Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* and Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis*. For more information, contact The Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF.

Utsira Fuglestasjon

We doubt if many British birdwatchers would be able to pinpoint on a map the position of Utsira, unless of course they are devotees of the shipping forecasts. Now, however, a copy of *Utsira Fuglestasjon Årbok 1995* has arrived on the 'N & c' desk. Utsira is a small wind-swept island some 400 km east of Fair Isle, and 17 km off the southwest Norwegian coast between Stavanger and Haugesund. The report for 1995, with essential, comprehensive English summaries, contains a full systematic list for the year, totalling 211 species, the result of the island's bird observatory achieving 365 days' manning. Autumn coastal mist-netting resulted in the capture of 318 European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* and seven Leach's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*.

There is also a long list of mouth-watering rarities, combined with some fascinating snippets such as 'the local stock of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* is reduced from several pairs some years ago to only two remaining males.' Articles include details of the island's all-time 'big day' in October 1991 and the field identification of the three 'big' pipits, Richard's *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Tawny *A. campestris* and Blyth's *A. godlewskii*. Copies (price £10 including p&p) are available from Utsira Bird Observatory, PO Box 23, N-5515 Utsira, Norway. A similar sum will enroll you as a member of the Bird Observatory for 1996 and you will then receive the next yearbook automatically.

A Devon hoax?

On 4th June, the *Western Morning News* published a letter that immediately attracted the attention of several Southwest birders. Copies arrived at the 'N & c' desk with comments such as 'Horrify you', 'Disgraceful' and 'Twaddle'. The correspondent had made several claims, including 'Peregrine Falcons [*Falco peregrinus*] in their dozens circle high overhead all the time and hundreds of Sparrowhawks [*Accipiter nisus*] wreak havoc in our gardens' (at Torbay). The writer went on to say that personal observations included 'looking skyward . . . and seeing a flock of 26 Peregrine Falcons . . . swooping down and killing double that number of thrushes in less

than a minute.' The final paragraph read: 'Sparrowhawks outnumber sea-gulls in this area five to one, and just sit silently, in rows, in our garden waiting to kill song birds. Only last month, I watched them kill 52 Blackbirds [*Turdus merula*] in one week.'

Now just why this letter was written is not clear, and the true identity of the author is also a mystery, for the letter was signed 'Silvia Borin' (the Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*!). How many readers of the *Western Morning News* took this letter at face value and failed to realise that it was—presumably—a spoof? Were the newspaper's editors fooled, as were several of our correspondents?

'Managed retreat'

New expressions increasingly appear in the birdwatching and conservation vocabulary, and 'managed retreat' is one we shall probably be hearing more about in the coming months and years.

Acceptance that rising sea-levels will make it impossible to protect all the coastline of Britain, particularly in the south and east, has meant that the search has been on for some while to locate areas where the 'soft option' for sea-defence can function. Rather than creating solid sea-walls that are battered by every storm and high tide, soft coastlines of intertidal mud and saltmarsh take the sting from the force of the waves. By breaching some sea-walls, it is possible to create new estuarine habitats from

the previous arable land. One such scheme, operated jointly by English Nature and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is on the Blackwater Estuary, Essex, where deliberate breaching of the walls has flooded the farmland. Currently, only 21 ha are involved, but bird species are already responding, and the search is now on for larger sites. The personal satisfaction for those involved must be tremendous. Just imagine breaching a sea-wall and watching the tide coursing over areas of arable fields that have been virtually birdless since being claimed from the sea. Let us hope that some of the birding spectacles that must result from such work will be available for us all to enjoy.

Northern Ireland news

Some good news of the rarer breeding birds in 1996. Two pairs of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* nested in Co. Down, the first nesting record there since 1990; a pair of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* hatched young on Rathlin Island, the first nesting there since 1989; and numbers of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* showed a modest increase to 13 pairs in Co. Antrim. The somewhat delayed *Northern Ireland Bird Report 1994* has also now appeared. The comprehensive systematic list includes two new species for the Northern Ireland list: Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* and Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*. The report is available (price £3.50 including p&p) from the RSPB, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 4QT.

Sulawesi, Indonesia

BB has been pleased to be associated with the University of York Expedition to the islands of Sangihe and Talaud, Indonesia, which has recently produced its interim report for 1995. The 1996 follow-up work is in hand and the organisers are to be congratulated on being declared programme winners in the 1996 BP/BirdLife/FFI Conservation Awards. Highlights of 1995 included the rediscovery of Caerulean Paradise-flycatcher *Eutrichomyias rowleyi* and the subspecies of Red-and-blue Lory *Eos histrio histrio*. The expedition has made several recommendations for future research and proposals for an integrated conservation strategy for the islands. Further details from Jon Riley, Project Co-ordinator, c/o Department of Biology, University of York, Heslington, York YO1 5DD.

Record numbers in Kent

The Great Kent Bird Race on 11th May produced an amazing 170 species recorded in the county. The winning team clocked up 151—the first time the 150 barrier has been passed in Kent. The winners—Dave Wilson, Roger Thompson, Dave Morris and Trevor Man-ship—were presented with the John Willis Memorial Trophy in memory of John, a great fan of competitive birding, who died on a bird-watching trip to eastern Europe ten years ago.

Concern for Swifts

Modern building methods, changes in building regulations and better maintenance are all excluding Common Swifts *Apus apus* from their usual nesting places in roofs. They need help from property-owners, architects and builders.

A group of individuals and organisations has therefore joined in a new partnership, to be known as 'Concern for Swifts', to promote the conservation of nesting sites. The partnership has recently produced an informative leaflet with the help and support of the RSPB and the BTO. Telephone enquiries about the partnership should be directed to Jake Allsop, Project Co-ordinator, on 01353-740540.

Derbyshire Bird Report 1994

The latest Derbyshire report includes articles on a Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* at Drakelow, a new bird for the county, together with details of breeding Hobbies *Falco subbutco* and wader migration. Copies are available (price £5.50 including p&p) from Andrew Hattersley, 104 Longedge Lane, Chesterfield S42 6PQ.

Turtle Doves still being clobbered in France

From 15th March 1996, teams of observers from Ligue Française pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO) have been counting birds, including Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*, passing through the Pointe de Grave, a migration bottleneck at the north of the Médoc region. The first Turtle Dove was seen on 2nd April, with the peak of 1,022 coming on 19th April. Before the opening of the now-illegal shooting season on 1st May, some 11,448 Turtle Doves had passed, with a further 6,000 migrating in the first half of May. From 1st May, approximately 800 shooting platforms were occupied by the 'hunters', who were equipped with a CB network in order to warn each other of the arrival of the police, or anyone else, in the area.

LPO has been working hard to combat the

situation, but local authorities are reluctant to act. On 12th May, in one small area, the LPO team recorded 2,585 shots, whereas only ten reports have been recorded by the police. LPO is currently instituting legal proceedings at the Tribunal Administratif de Bordeaux in order to get the French State convicted for non-application of the law. The frightening aspect of this campaign is that throughout their visits to the region LPO staff have been accompanied by a large squad of security forces, an indication of the atmosphere that surrounds the whole affair.

If you have not already written to the French ambassador denouncing this illegal shooting, please do so. Further details from Ken Hall, LPO (UK), The Anchorage, The Chalks, Chew Magna, Bristol BS18 8SN.

Red-backed Shrike—Czech Bird of the Year

Early in 1996, the Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO) announced that the Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* was to be the Czech Bird of the Year. The Society is collecting all information that may be available on the species in the country, to improve the current knowledge of the biology of the Red-backed Shrike and then to develop a management programme for its protection, along with suitable habitat management in some areas. The species is listed as endangered under Czech law. Although there are still considered to be some 25,000-50,000 pairs in the Czech Republic, the species has undergone a marked decline in recent years, linked to agricultural changes, including a marked increase in the use of non-target insecticides. Anyone with information on Red-backed Shrikes in the Czech Republic is asked to contact CSO, Hornoměřolupská 34, CZ - 10200, Praha 10, Czech Republic.

'Zoology in the Middle East'

Most papers in *ZME* are in English (some in German), and the ten volumes since 1986 total some 1,300 pages, many devoted to birds. The current subscription rate is DM27.00 per volume; the complete set of volumes 1-10 is available for DM220.00. Write to Max Kasperek Verlag, Bleichstr. 1, 69120 Heidelberg, Germany; or ask for details of sterling prices from the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

A vision for Sussex

The Wildlife Trusts probably receive too little attention in 'N & c', but we could not ignore a recent publication that passed across our desk. *Vision for the Wildlife of Sussex* was recently launched by the Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) at its Woods Mill headquarters. The SWT's *Vision* is subtitled *A positive environmental agenda for the next 50 years*, and it is good to see a conservation body looking long term and not just at the next 5-10 years. Perhaps the days are not too far off when we shall see the conservation movement planning for 100 or more years ahead?

Vision sets out ambitious but probably realistic proposals for the conservation, restoration and expansion of habitats and species in Sussex. Andrew Lee (SWT Director) is hoping that this will mark the start of a collaborative and positive approach that will achieve targets and steer the Trust away from pursuing restrictions simply to prevent loss. Among the targets, we were pleased to see the creation of four new reedbed areas, each of at least 10 ha; the re-creation of 2,000 ha of grazing marsh from cultivated land; and target areas for the re-creation of two large near-natural wetland areas, totalling 1,000 ha. All the proposed actions clearly identify the Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations that the SWT will have to work with to achieve its targets. We wish them all success. It is ambitious, but if it is successful the bird life of Sussex will be measurably improved. For further details contact the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woods Mill, Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9SD.

Bulgarian Commission on Rare Species

The latest English-language information bulletin (*Neophron*) from the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) contains details of the formation of a National Commission on Rare Species (NCRS). At the end of 1995, 11 field-experienced ornithologists met at the BSPB headquarters in Sofia and agreed upon the formation of the Commission. It was agreed that the first tasks would be to prevent the publication of data that can be used against rare species, to verify new species recorded in Bulgaria, to work on the introduction of popular Bulgarian names

for species occurring in the country and to publish what will become the official Bulgarian list of birds. It was stressed that the NCRS was an independent body and its decisions are advisory only. We must hope that this is a precursor for a Bulgarian Rarities Committee, a body badly needed with the steadily growing numbers of Western birders now visiting the country.

Further details may be obtained from the NCRS, c/o BSPB: 'Dianabad', bl.49, et.5, ap.34, Sofia 1172, Bulgaria.

Alder disease spreading

It is now becoming apparent that the fungal infection Phytophthora Root Disease affecting Alders *Alnus glutinosa* (originally reported in this column in March 1995, *Brit. Birds* 88: 161) is much more widespread than previously thought. First identified in Alders in 1993, it is now widespread in much of England and Wales, but has not so far been found in Scotland, parts of northern England or the extreme Southwest Peninsula. As a result, landowners have been recommended to consider calling a temporary halt to all planting of Alders beside rivers and streams.

At present, it is unclear whether the disease is relatively new in this country, or has long

been present but recently exacerbated by changes in local conditions. It is much less common in trees growing beside small streams or in woodland, and there are some indications that flooded rivers inundating the bases of stems may be crucial to infection. There is also some evidence of an association between disease severity and high nitrate levels in the water, although diseased trees are also found beside streams of highwater quality. However you look at it, it is probably future bad news for wintering Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis*, Siskins *C. spinus* and Common Redpolls *C. flammula*, and for those of us who scan such flocks.

One bat may be two

The Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, perhaps the bat best known to most of us, may in fact be two different species. The latest research shows that those in Yorkshire and Lancashire squeak differently, the Yorkshire ones, sporting a more pointed snout, pitching their squeak at 45 kilohertz while the pinker-faced Lancastrians pitch theirs at 55 kilohertz. Following this discovery by Dr Gareth Jones of Bristol University, it has subsequently been found that the bats on different frequencies appear not to mate or to live with each other, and DNA tests on wing tissue have suggested that the two bats are genetically distinct and probably evolved into separate species about three million years ago.

If this discovery is confirmed, another rare event will have taken place: the first new British mammal species to be discovered since 1970, when the Whiskered Bat *Myotis mystacinus* and Brandt's Bat *M. brandti* were separated into two species.

Long-range planning by ABA

Birding, the journal of the American Birding Association Inc. (ABA), has just published (vol. 28: 184) a review of its long-term plans for the future, taking on board many messages received from its members. They have reaffirmed that they are, first and foremost, field birders and the ABA's efforts will be guided by that understanding. Secondly, its plans will concern birds and nothing but birds; and, thirdly, its greatest opportunities are in the areas of conservation and education. As a start in this direction, the ABA is joint-funding, with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a detailed study of the Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* in the Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge, North Dakota. Similarly, it has agreed to support a re-survey of the Snowy Plover *C. (alexandrinus) nivosus* around the Great Salt Lake, Utah.

Further details may be obtained from the ABA, PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, USA.

BOURC opens up at Cley

The much-publicised BOU Records Committee Open Forum (see, e.g., *Brit. Birds* 89: 285) took place at Cley Village Hall, Norfolk, on 13th July. 'Open' was the essential word, for the BOURC wants its work to be fully understood by the birdwatching public which it serves.

Recent publications, such as those concerning British records of White-winged Larks *Melanocorypha leucoptera* and Grey-cheeked Thrushes *Catharus minimus* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 365-371; 89: 1-9), and the regular explanations of the deliberations on birds new to Britain & Ireland (e.g. Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*, Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* and Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*, *Brit. Birds* 89: 12-24, 103-107, 157-161, 162-170) by the chairmen of the BOURC and the British Birds Rarities Committee have demonstrated the depth of research and wide consultation undertaken, and also the differing roles of the two committees. The other major areas of the BOURC's work are less well understood: the careful consideration and weighing of the evidence for possible taxonomic changes (including 'splits' and 'lumps') and the constant monitoring of the status of introduced species.

The meeting, attended by 47 people, provided an opportunity for the BOURC members to explain aspects of their work and then for them to be quizzed by those outside the Committee. To an outsider, it seemed that almost everyone present understood and appreciated both the work done by the BOURC and its problems, although two or three of the people attending frequently reiterated criticism of the Committee for the slowness of its decisions. Most, however, understood that judgments had to be based on all the available facts, and not consist of instant guesswork (or wishful thinking). Recent

'about-turns' (e.g. Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* and Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, *Brit. Birds* 88: 395-400; 89: 347-356) were quoted as examples of long deliberations that were no more accurate than instant guesses would have been, but the BOURC Chairman, Dr David Parkin, pointed out not only that the Committee had an international responsibility to provide reasoned and justifiable decisions, but also that publication could often then lead to additional evidence being supplied which enabled revisions to be made.

As the meeting drew to a close, it was clear that the BOURC had the support of the vast majority of the audience, which might have been expected to include its severest critics. Several useful points were taken away, to be discussed by the BOURC (and its sister organisation, the BBRC), including the possibility of giving annual updates on the progress (or otherwise) of long-awaited decisions and the reasons for delays; the consideration of the practicability of the BOURC and the BBRC working in parallel rather than in series (this *might* reduce delays; it would certainly introduce duplication of effort), though it strikes the writer that working in tandem might be a third and even better option; and the question 'Should the British OURC maintain a British (rather than a British & Irish) List?'

The three-hour meeting ended happily, with the presentation to the outgoing Hon. Secretary, Tim Inskipp, of a copy of the Christopher Helm book *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania*, and even the most vehemently critical section of the audience chatted on amicably as the gathering developed into an informal forum on an even greater variety of subjects. What a pity that a lot more people did not turn up to hear the BOURC explain its various roles. (JTRS)

BNHS 50

As part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society, the Bedfordshire Bird Club is holding a half-day conference at Silsoe Agricultural College from 12.30 to 17.30 GMT on Saturday 23rd November.

Tickets (£6) and further details are available from Paul Trodd, 186 West Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1NX; phone 01582 603067.

RNBWS 50

The Annual General Meeting marking the fiftieth year of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society will take place in London on the afternoon of Friday 6th December.

We at *BB* send our congratulations and best wishes to the RNBWS. The address of the Hon. Secretary is 19 Downlands Way, South Wonston, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 3HS.

MJR elected Honorary Subscriber

Mike Rogers, Secretary of the British Birds Rarities Committee for the past 19 years and founder of the Association of County Recorders and Editors (ACRE) has been elected an Honorary Subscriber to *British Birds*.

Mike's tact, persistence, care and authority are appreciated and respected by all those who have had contact with him in person, by phone or in correspondence, in the two roles noted above, and also when County Recorder for Sussex and for the Isles of Scilly.

His nomination was greeted with instant, enthusiastic and unanimous approval by the Editorial Board.

Mike joins Brian & Sheila Bottomley, I. J. Ferguson-Lees, P. A. D. Hollom, Guy Mountfort, E. M. Nicholson, Major R. F.

Ruttledge, Dr P. O. Swanberg, Prof. Dr K. H. Voous and D. I. M. Wallace, who are the journal's only other Honorary Subscribers.

In his letter of acceptance, Mike Rogers commented: 'It is now just 50 years since I first took up birding, mainly in Sutton Park, near Birmingham, but it wasn't until three years later that my first short note to *British Birds* was published ("Tufted Duck perching", *Brit. Birds* 42: 393) . . . I'll admit to a certain degree of pride at my work on the various hides on Scilly, the first of which I completed in sections back home in Sunbury-on-Thames and took down there to erect. I didn't actually construct the David Hunt Memorial Hide on Tresco, but it *was* quite a triumph of planning and design as it is mounted in five feet of mud!'

Dungeness revisited

At long last, after many years, one of us (BS) managed to find time to spend a weekend away at the Dungeness Bird Observatory, Kent. Keeping contact with a locality via committees and meetings is never a substitute for getting out on the ground, and it was sheer pleasure to wander over old stamping grounds.

The Observatory has recently published its annual report for 1995, and it is good to see an increased involvement with the entomology of the area and a co-ordinated approach from the many natural-history and conservation interests in that part of Kent and Sussex.

The 'Friends of Dungeness' goes from strength to strength, now with over 340

members, and a bargain at £5.00 per year (25 years ago, the subscription was £2.00, so hardly run-away inflation here!). For a member, the overnight accommodation is only £1.00—another bargain.

Dungeness Bird Observatory also awards grants towards research relating to the natural history of the Romney Marsh area and would be pleased to receive applications from anyone wishing to work in the area.

The Dungeness Bird Observatory Report 1995 is available (price £3.50 incl. p&p), together with all Observatory information, from David Walker, DBO, 11 RNSSS Cottages, Dungeness, Romney Marsh, Kent.

Bird clubs

From time to time in the course of meeting people, one hears that individuals do not belong to their local bird club because they have found it too unfriendly. Having made the decision to join, they did not renew their subscription for a number of reasons: no-one made the effort to look out for newcomers and make them feel welcome, and the club was too full of twitchers trying to outdo each other instead of helping the less experienced, are two of the excuses that one of us (WD) has heard in the not too distant past.

Many of today's ornithologists will have cut their birding teeth in their local club and been grateful for a helping hand when they started out. Surely, bird clubs should cater for everyone, no matter what their age, ability,

experience, or enthusiasm? No club should consider itself so elitist that it cannot accept less-experienced members. For some retired single people, perhaps new to an area, just making the effort of going along to their first meeting can be quite daunting enough. They may not ultimately contribute many records to the annual bird report, but, given some friendly encouragement, they could well contribute in other ways that might prove very valuable.

So, if your local club is not renewing membership as you think it should, or has a higher-than-expected rate of drop-out, is it time to ask why, and to see what can be done about it?

Birder or ornithologist

Recently, at the request of another natural history publication, the Editorial Board, after taking advice from various other people as well, has defined four commonly used terms describing those who watch birds. It may be of interest to put these on record as our views of the meaning of these words in mid 1996:

Twitcher – Someone who is willing to travel considerable distances, if necessary, to see rare birds already found and identified by other birders.

Birder – Originally an English term for trapper or shooter of birds, but now the American term for what we call a birdwatcher, and now also applied loosely in that way in Europe. More strictly, someone whose birdwatching activities are wholly or mainly concerned with identification and, often, with a bias towards observations of rare rather than common birds.

Birdwatcher – Someone whose interest in birds may include any or all of a variety of aspects, but will usually involve taking the hobby relatively seriously even if watching is restricted to a 'local patch' such as his or her own garden.

Ornithologist – Someone, either professional or amateur, whose interest in birds involves planned study and the collection of results at least for personal interest and probably for publication.

Two new professors

Congratulations to David Parkin, now Professor of Avian Genetics at Nottingham, and to Chris Feare, now Honorary Visiting Professor at the Department of Pure and Applied Biology at Leeds University.

Seabirds at Sea

The European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) database now contains over one million records, and a new research initiative is under way which aims to explore patterns of, and processes governing, seabird distribution at sea. The ESAS Co-ordinating Group is now inviting individuals or research institutes to take part in this initiative. The topics for study may be any aspect of seabird ecology. Anyone interested in using the ESAS data should make initial enquiries to Dr Jim Reid, Seabirds at Sea Team, JNCC, 17 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen AB1 1EX.

Brian Little MBE

Congratulations to Tyneside ornithologist Brian Little on being created a Member of the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's Birthday Honours for his services to ornithological research and his work in liaison with the Forestry Commission over the past 35 years.

Prof. Peter Evans honoured

We are delighted to note that the BOU has presented Peter R. Evans with its Godman-Salvin Medal for his key role in a whole range of ornithological studies (bird navigation and radar; Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* in the Forest of Dean; wader ecology, movements and conservation; pollution; sawbills *Mergus* and salmonid fish); and the training of students to further such work, at Durham University and more recently at Stockton College.

'Bob's your uncle'

Or so says *Bird Watching* magazine, which features a profile of Bob Scott in its July 1996 issue. Worth a read. In case you missed it when it came onto the bookstalls, back copies are available for £3 from Tower Publishing Services, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill Street, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9EF.

Change of Recorder's address

Dr C. J. Henty, Recorder for Central (Clackmannan, Falkirk, Stirling), has moved to Edgehill East, 7B Coneyhill Road, Bridge of Allan FK9 4EL.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*

Tim Cleeves—*Northeast*

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Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*

Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*

Don Taylor—*Southeast*

Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*

John Wilson—*Northwest*



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 12th August to 15th September 1996.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 22nd August.

Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/P. feae/P. mollis* Southwest of Bishop Rock (Scilly), 18th August; St John's Point (Co. Down) and Cape Clear Island, 22nd August; Peneen (Cornwall), 24th August; Newbiggin (Northumberland) and Cley (Norfolk), 13th September.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* Cape Clear Island, 17th August and 18th August.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Titchfield Haven (Hampshire), 27th August.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Poole Harbour (Dorset), 26th August to 2nd September.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* Monikie Country Park (Tayside), 14th-16th August; Leighton Moss (Lancashire), 25th-28th August.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* Summer-plumage adult, The Cull (Co. Wexford), 20th-21st August.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* Foryd Bay (Gwynedd), 25th-28th August.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 6th September.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* Foula (Shetland), 15th September.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Stronsay (Orkney), 24th August.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* St Mary's (Scilly), 25th August.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Rosslar (Co. Wexford), 24th August to 15th September.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Dornoch (Highland), 14th August to 13th September; Upton Warren (Worcestershire) 26th August to 2nd September.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) and other areas of Co. Wexford, 17th to end of August.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* Portland (Dorset), 13th September.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lauceolata* Fair Isle (Shetland), 13th September.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* Farne Islands (Northumberland), 20th-21st August; Fair Isle, 22nd-24th August; Gorleston-on-Sea (Norfolk), 4th September; Prawle Point (Devon), 12th September.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Sumburgh (Shetland), 13th-14th August; Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 15th August; Rattray Head (Grampian), 24th August; Spurn (Humberside), 6th-8th September; South Shields (Tyne & Wear), 7th-8th September; Margate (Kent), 7th September; Filey (North Yorkshire), 7th-12th September; Murrintown (Co. Wexford), 14th-15th September.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* Spurn, 7th September.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* St Mary's, 22nd-31st August; Kenidjack Valley (Cornwall), 26th-27th August.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* Burnham Overy Dunes (Norfolk), 5th-15th September.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* Dornoch, 12th-21st August; Montrose Basin (Tayside), 27th August; Sennen (Cornwall), 7th-9th September.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* Farne Islands, 20th-23rd August; Fair Isle, 23rd-24th August and 4th-5th September; Spurn, 4th September and 8th-11th September; North Ronaldsay, 4th-5th September; Filey, 8th September.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Fetlar (Shetland), 11th-20th August.



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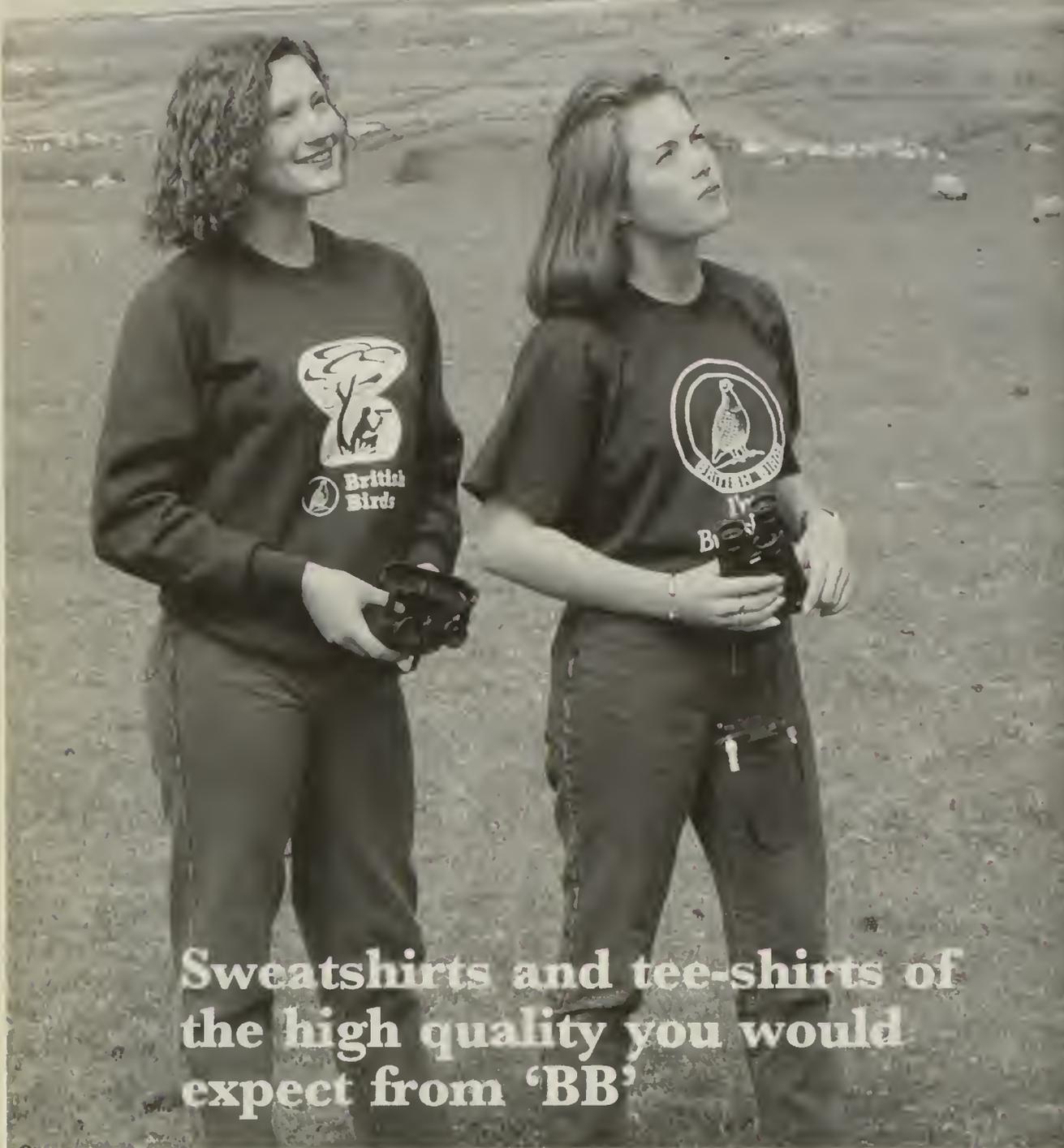


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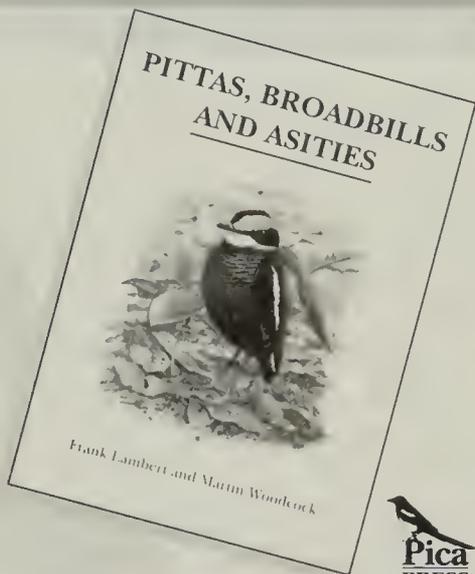
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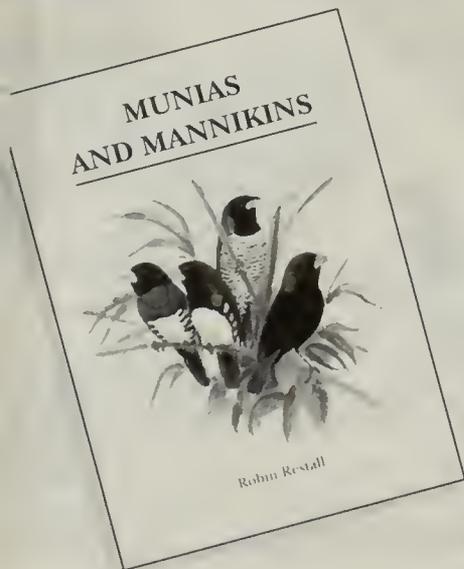
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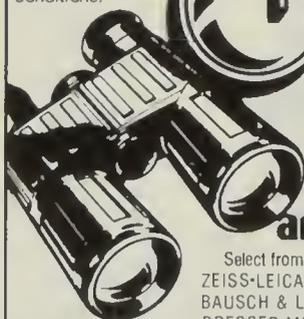
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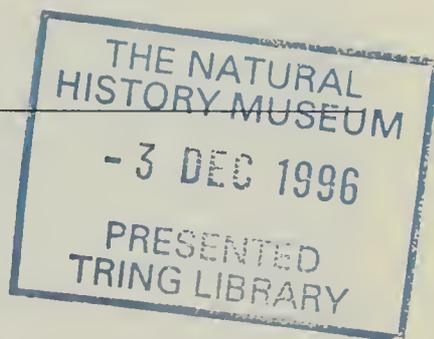


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British Birds

Established 1907; incorporating 'The Zoologist', established 1843



Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1995

M. J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee
with comments by K. D. Shaw and P. M. Ellis



After another year of excellent co-operation with many people, the British Birds Rarities Committee presents a comprehensive Report. The BBRC may be perceived as isolated and remote, but it is part of a network involving individual observers, county recorders, bird-observatory wardens, local recording groups, ringing groups and others, all intent on putting on record the *facts* about rare birds in Britain. The Committee works on their behalf and for the benefit of future analysts, as well as for people who simply want to know what was acceptable and what was not. The Committee and its members benefit from the best attributes of such bodies—corporate responsibility and aggregate knowledge—while retaining an independence of thought and action. If we are sometimes remote, it is largely because individual attention to hundreds of observers is impractical. We do our best to be open and accessible, and people wanting to know why, for example, a record of theirs has been rejected or 'pending' are encouraged to write to Mike Rogers.

The value of our Report, which inevitably appears some months after the end of the year in question, must rest with the way it is used and the opinions of our readers. Monthly and annual reviews published by *Birding World*, *Birdwatch* and *Bird Watching* and the '400 Club' lists of 'acceptances' and 'rejections' are produced with admirable speed; but none conforms to the long-established and carefully nurtured structure of county, regional and national recording, with elected bodies working independently and democratically to judge *evidence submitted by the observers in the case of every single record*, as does the BBRC. It remains to be analysed how many differences exist between the published reports of all these sources; meanwhile, we believe that the national record—for current use and for posterity—continues to be best served by a careful, considered, fair assessment process that is not influenced by commercial considerations or editorial whim. We are pleased that this is reflected in county and regional bird reports and avifaunas throughout Britain.

While we deal with birds, it must not be forgotten that we work with people:

with all their foibles, eccentricities, talents and faults (including those of our own members). Some send reams of paper with every record: we know where they were going, with whom, what they had for lunch, how late they were for work, what car they were driving, what life was like at home, but, sadly, little about the bird. Others write brilliantly concise descriptions of both bird and relevant circumstances. Some take perfect notes; others send illegible scribbles or awful descriptions that bear little relation to what they saw (photographs sometimes confirm the fact!). Our own comments in some files—on species such as Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*—have extensive discussions on identification; others—maybe species such as Black Kite *Milvus migrans*—have no discussion on identification features (which are well known), but consist entirely of an assessment of circumstances, quality of descriptions or observer ability. We try to present facts but we also deal in opinions.

Occasionally, a recorder finds that there is no time to do his or her job, or an individual observer is deeply offended by a rejection and refuses ever to submit reports again, and disagreements or personal antagonism can spill over into BBRC correspondence. There have been recurrent difficulties with small, but important, areas from which reports are not forthcoming or where relations have become strained, usually because of the rejection of a record or the pending of a particularly hard decision.

While we attempt to produce a scientifically correct, objective report on rare-bird occurrences each year, there are inevitably gaps and inconsistencies: finders of rarities are human, and rare-bird identification and submission sometimes become emotive. We do our best to remove these biases, but cannot guarantee freedom from them all. Given so many outlets for uncorroborated reports and instant knowledge of what is happening everywhere, 'gaps' are easier to spot than they were: 20 years ago, 99% of readers would have been unaware of an unsubmitted rarity; now, its absence from our report may be noticed by hundreds, who naturally wonder why. We respond to such changing circumstances but stick firmly to our principles on the strict and uniform application of standards to record assessment.

We have 41 records for 1995 which were received too late to be dealt with in time for this Report (plus seven for earlier years), but all records received in time were dealt with. Of these, 24 are circulating again for a variety of reasons and 88 others await further action after being pended for extra information. While the mail service is generally admirable, we did suffer a handful of losses in the post: we remain exasperated, too, by the effects of a past Committee member holding up a number of important circulations, for which we can only apologise.

Full co-operation with the Irish Rare Birds Committee continues, but 1995 Irish records were still in circulation to the IRBC when the typescript for this Report was being compiled. In consultation with the IRBC, it was mutually agreed that—even with multi-observer records or those supported by photographic evidence—unverified Irish records should not be published prior to the IRBC vote being established. The opportunity has been taken, however, to fill gaps in the published record, by including some accepted records which were omitted in previous years (but which had been included in the statistics in the species headings). The statistics in this report, therefore, do not include any 1995 Irish records (but are correct concerning the years up to and including 1994).

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank a number of individuals and groups for their assistance during the year. First and foremost, Mike Rogers stuck to his task yet again with remarkable skill and enthusiasm, dealing with hundreds of reports and mountains of correspondence. Pete Fraser gave special help in the compilation of the final typescript, clarifying numbers and locations. I must thank, too, the members of the Committee during the period, who worked so hard and with such skill: their names are listed on the verso of the title page in each volume and also on the inside front cover of each issue of *BB*.

The comments following each species' list of accepted records were compiled this year by Ken Shaw (non-passerines) and Pete Ellis (near-passerines and passerines), with additional contributions by Peter Lansdown.

Collaboration with the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee continued constructively, and we particularly thank its chairman, Professor David Parkin. Advice on identification matters was given by Per Alström, Richard Crossley, Michael Force, Dick Forsman, Simon Harrap, Dr Alan Knox, Krister Mild, Urban Olsson and Ron Pittaway, and on other matters by Colin Casey. Two respected past members undertook proof-reading of this report: grateful thanks go to Peter Lansdown and John Marchant for helping in this way. John also moved the BBRC archive files from the Natural History Museum, Tring, to the BTO National Centre for Ornithology at Thetford: thanks to him and to both organisations involved, and to Peter Colston for his past efforts as archivist.

We are most grateful to *Carl Zeiss Ltd* for continued sponsorship of the British Birds Rarities Committee, which started with the twenty-fifth Report, covering 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 475). Until this year, *Zeiss* support has included all the Committee's running costs, the printing costs of the Report, the cost of including numerous colour photographs, and the additional costs of producing such a lavish Report in a single extra-large issue of the journal. The sponsorship is now restricted to the first of these four items: the essential work of the Committee is still fully funded by *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, and standards of assessment and publication of records have in no way been compromised.

RAH

Highlights

The major events of 1995 were the largest-ever invasion of Arctic Redpolls *Carduelis hornemannii* (with 155 accepted individuals listed here); a good crop of Nearctic wood-warblers (Parulidae) in late autumn (six species in Britain & Ireland) and at least ten Red-eyed Vireos *Vireo olivaceus*; another influx of Rosy Starlings *Sturnus roseus* (27, following the record 29 in 1994); and a total of 32 Subalpine Warblers *Sylvia cantillans* (equalling the previous best annual total).

Extreme rarities listed in this Report include the first and second accepted British records of the *smithsonianus* race of Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* (1994 and 1995), of which there were 14 previous Irish records, and the following:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 2nd | Pacific Swift <i>Apus pacificus</i> (or 3rd, including the 1981 'at sea' record) |
| 2nd | Common Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquata</i> of the race <i>variegata</i> (1993) |
| 2nd | Chestnut-sided Warbler <i>Dendroica pensylvanica</i> |
| 2nd, 3rd & 5th | Blyth's Pipits <i>Anthus godlewskii</i> (1990, 1993 & 1994) |
| 3rd | White-crowned Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i> |
| 3rd & 4th | Cliff Swallows <i>Hirundo pyrrhonota</i> |
| 4th | Bulwer's Petrel <i>Bulweria bulwerii</i> (1990) |
| 4th | Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i> |
| 4th | Tennessee Warbler <i>Vermivora peregrina</i> |

5th	Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>
5th & 6th	Hermit Thrushes <i>Catharus guttatus</i> (1994 & 1995)
6th	Frigatebird <i>Fregata</i>
6th & 9th	Pallid Harriers <i>Circus macrourus</i> (1993 & 1995)
JTRS	

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 Report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1994 Report (88: 493-558). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if photographed or tape-recorded (and this evidence seen or heard by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) date(s); and (7) observer(s), normally up to three in number, in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this Report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of pratincoles *Glareola*, albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.
3. The sequence of species, English names and specific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds* (1993). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species' name refer respectively to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain & Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (i) to the end of 1957, (ii) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (iii) the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult and rather arbitrary, but the consensus of members is indicated by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in totals), or 'the same' when the evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of the same species recurring at the same locality after a lapse of time, including those which occur annually at the same or a nearby site. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee usually requires firm evidence before more than one is counted in the totals. A detailed breakdown of the figures for previous years is held by the Honorary Secretary.
5. Irish records, assessed and accepted by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, are included separately, by special permission of the IRBC, following the subheading IRELAND.
6. The breeding and wintering ranges are given in parentheses at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 146, 8)

Shetland Lunna, probably first-summer, 21st April (M. Heubeck, M. Mellor, J. Swale). Wats Ness, adult, 6th May (P. V. Harvey, H. C. Towll); adult, 13th May (H. R. Harrop, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Gulberwick, adult, 7th-12th May (R. M. & R. P. Fray *et al.*). Sand Voe, North Roe, adult, recently dead, 12th June, photo., now at National Museum of Scotland (P. V. Harvey, W. Macauley *et al.*). Fetlar, first-summer, 17th July to at least 30th September (F. & Mrs J. Davies, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

Western Isles Tiumpán Head, Lewis, adult, 8th-9th May (S. Hulka, J. Stirling *et al.*); first-summer, 8th May (P. K. Batchelor, P. Cunningham, D. R. Watson *et al.*).

1994 Grampian Findhorn, age uncertain, 27th May (I. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

(Arctic Russia eastwards to arctic Canada) With no Shetland records last year, there seems to have been an influx to those islands. We have been asked to point out that the delay in acceptance of the 1991 record in Hampshire (*Brit. Birds* 87: 508) was purely administrative and did not reflect any problems with the actual assessment.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 17, 0)

Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, adult, since 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 497), to 13th September; one hybrid young, reared in 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 497), to 28th March (per G. J. Conway).

Scilly Tresco, adult, since 11th November 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 497), to 15th April (R. J. Hathway).

(North and South America)

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 25, 0)

Shetland Hermaness, Unst, individual last recorded on 24th July 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 497), 3rd April to at least 7th July (per K. Osborn).

(Southern oceans) It has not previously been noted in these pages that one frequented a gannetry on Mygginaesholmur, Faroe Islands—at almost the same latitude as Hermaness—each year from 1860 to 1894, when it was shot. Did the shooter suffer the same fate as that of the Ancient Mariner?

Albatross *Diomedea* (3, 39, 1)

Orkney Off Hoy, 4th September (S. Tonge).

(Southern oceans) May have been the Shetland bird, but may have not. The totals include those specifically identified.

Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma madeiral/feae/mollis*

(0, 9, 0)

1994 Gwynedd Bardsey, 10th September (A. F. Silcocks, J. M. & K. A. Wilson) (fig. 1, on p. 486).

(Pacific, central and southern Atlantic and southern Indian Oceans) A little later than all other records, but seawatchers' awareness of the possibility of this species-group around our coasts is growing.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* (2, 2, 0)

1990 Cumbria South Walney, 17th April (Z. Dawson, T. Dean, A. Robinson).

(Atlantic and Pacific Oceans) An excellent, well-deserved prize, making the long hours of seawatching worthwhile. The Seabirds Advisory Panel and this Committee found the circumstances, structure and flight to be absolutely right for this species and to exclude all others, and to be appropriate for the time and distance of the observation.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (5, 88, 0)

IRELAND

1964 Dublin Malin Head, two, 22nd October (*Irish Bird Rep.* 12: 8-9).

1965 Kerry Brandon Point, two, 28th August (*Irish Bird Rep.* 13: 13).

1965 Mayo Annagh Head, 18th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 13: 13).

1966 Cork Cape Clear Island, 27th August; two, 29th August (*Irish Bird Rep.* 14: 13-14).

1966 Kerry Brandon Point, three, 2nd September; 4th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 14: 14-15).

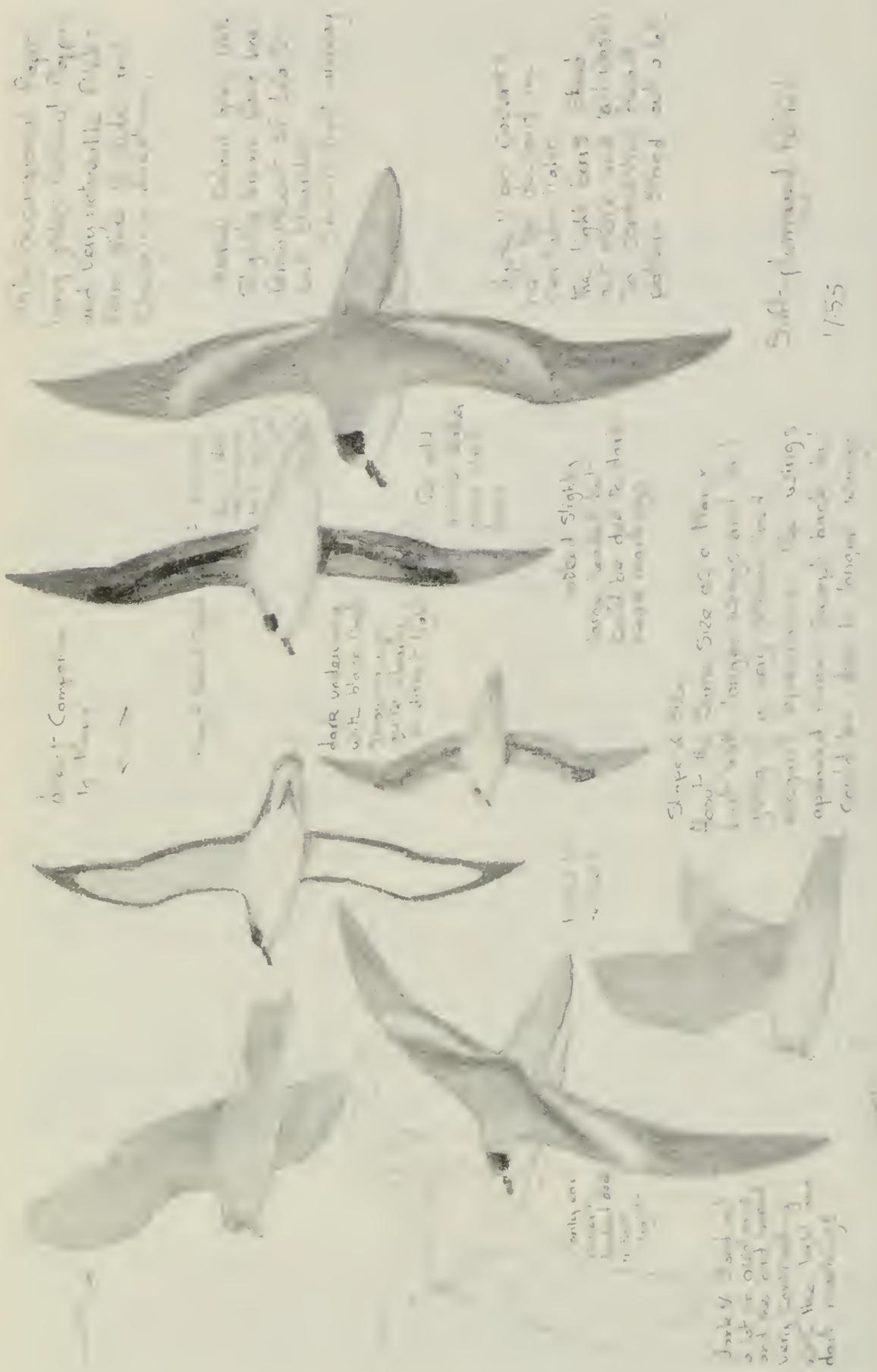


Fig. 1. Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis*, compared with Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma*

1967 **Cork** Cape Clear Island, 2nd June. Old Head of Kinsale, 7th August (*Irish Bird Rep.* 15: 17-18).

1967 **Kerry** Brandon Point, three, 3rd October (*Irish Bird Rep.* 15: 17-18).

1973 **Cork** Cape Clear Island, 6th September; 20th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 21: 8).

(Atlantic south from Madeira and Caribbean, southern Pacific and Indian Oceans).

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 13, 1)

Cornwall St Ives, 24th September (J. F. Ryan).

At sea Sea area Sole, 49°06'N 07°04'W, 20th August (J. F. Ryan, V. A. Stratton *et al.*).

(Southern oceans). Sightings from land are still very rare and a cool head is needed to concentrate on the important, clinching features.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* (0, 1, 0)

1989 **Cleveland** Charlton's Pond, 11th January to 21st April (*Brit. Birds* 86: 453), last noted 26th (T. J. Williams per G. Joynt).

(North America)

Frigatebird *Fregata* (1, 4, 1)

Cornwall Porthoustock, 13th June (R. Perham *et al.*); presumed same, Carrick Roads, 13th (G. Litherland, N. Lobb, J. B. Wheeldon *et al.*). Also in Dyfed.

Dyfed Skomer, 14th June (T. Lewis *et al.*). Presumed same as Cornwall.

(Tropical oceans) The five previous records of frigatebird species include one in 1989. The totals include the only one specifically identified, a Magnificent Frigatebird *F. magnificens* in 1953.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 181, 5)

Dyfed Cilgerran, near Cardigan, ♀, 6th May (P. E. Davis, M. Elliott, P. Woodley). Castle Martin, Pembrokeshire, ♂, wing only, still fresh, 2nd April, photo. (G. H. Rees *et al.*).

Greater London Hampstead Heath, ♀, 19th June (P. J. Chadder, M. A. Hardwick, A. S. M. Self *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, ♀, 23rd May to 4th June, photo. (G. Cook, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

Sussex, West Shoreham-by-Sea, ♂, 5th-9th April (Dr J. A. Newnham *et al.*).

1992 **Norfolk** Holkham, ♀, 30th May to 2nd June (V. Eve *et al.*).

1993 **Dyfed** St David's, Pembrokeshire, ♂, died, 12th April, photo., mounted specimen preserved (J. R. Hadfield, J. Harries).

1994 **Devon** Slapton Ley, ♀, 4th May (D. L. Buckingham).

(West Eurasia, Africa and Australia; winters Africa and southern Asia) An average showing. The 1992 record takes the total for that year to six, the best year in the 1990s, but in general this bird is less common than it was in the 1970s.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 353, 5)

Cumbria Little Salkeld, juvenile, 25th-26th December (M. Ausden, R. & Mrs S. Bottomley, S. Mellon).

Derbyshire Alvaston, first-summer, 7th-8th May, photo. (D. Amedro *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, adult, 11th May (D. J. Chown).

Gloucestershire Dowdeswell Reservoir, juvenile, 23rd November to 9th December, photo. (J. Coates, J. V. Miller *et al.*).

Strathclyde Stair, Ayrshire, juvenile, 3rd to at least 18th September, photo. (R. H. Hogg, I. Todd *et al.*). Irvine, 15th December (P. Cassidy, R. Kinnear, B. Orr); presumed same as Stair.

1994 **Scilly** St Mary's, adult, 2nd-4th May (J. Gregory *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas; European population winters Africa) It is difficult to judge the radius that the Edinburgh Zoo free-flying collection

'influences' (following records from that source in Lincolnshire in 1988 and Northumberland in 1990) and it is also less well known that there are other free-flying collections in the Midlands and Norfolk. An adult at Earsham, Norfolk, during 13th-18th May is considered to have been an escape.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 38, 1)

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, 19th June (L. G. Holloway).

(Southern Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) The recent peak was seven in 1994.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 75, 4)

Cambridgeshire Papworth Bridge, 14th November (D. Vaughan, G. Wetole).

Essex Abberton Reservoir, 15th June (A. Kettle *et al.*).

Kent Stodmarsh, 15th May (S. Hollands).

Norfolk Alby, 18th May, photo. (D. Alston, B. J. Murphy *et al.*); same, Broadland area, to 18th November (P. J. Heath, J. R. Whitelegg *et al.*).

1994 Warwickshire Arbury, 24th September to 23rd December, possibly since early September, photo. (D. Booth, R. Higginbottom, O. Stainthorpe *et al.*). Presumed same as Gloucestershire, Worcestershire (*Brit. Birds* 88: 499).

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics; nearest breeders in north of France) The Committee felt obliged to assume that a series of records in the London Home Counties area during the summer months related to one, possibly two, escaped birds, one certainly being of the eastern race *coromandus*.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 63, 8)

Borders/Northumberland Near Horncliffe, 26th May (S. Banks *et al.*).

Cheshire/Clwyd Inner Marsh Farm, juvenile, 25th, 28th July, photo. (S. & W. Bradbury, C. C. Schofield *et al.*). Also in Greater Manchester.

Clwyd See above.

Dorset Littlesea, 5th February, video-recorded (E. & M. Levy).

Dyfed Penlacwydd, Carmarthenshire, 27th June (B. Steward *et al.*).

Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, 27th August (H. F. Coats, P. Howlett *et al.*); same, Ogmere Estuary, 27th, photo. (R. G. Smith *et al.*).

Greater Manchester Ringley, juvenile, 30th July (P. Baron, P. & Mrs N. Johnson); same, Abram and Horrocks' Flashes, 31st July to 1st August (J. Jackson, Mrs A. J. Smith *et al.*). Same as Cheshire.

Kent Dungeness, 13th August (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price *et al.*).

Northumberland See Borders/Northumberland above.

Seilly Bryher, mid March, photo. (Mrs E. Steer).

Warwickshire Packwood, 28th July (per S. Haynes). Same as West Midlands.

West Midlands Meriden, intermittently, 24th July to 18th August, photo. (N. P. Barlow, A. Hands, S. Haynes *et al.*). Also in Warwickshire.

1994 Norfolk Feltwell Anchor, 22nd December 1993 to 13th February (*Brit. Birds* 88: 499), also Botany Bay, Suffolk, 1st January (N. Gibbons per D. F. Walsh).

1994 Suffolk See 1994 Norfolk above.

(Almost cosmopolitan, local in Europe) The bird in the Northwest visited several other sites and apparently frequented the Dee Estuary area from 3rd to 26th August, but full documentation has not been received.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (90, over 348, -)

1982 Humberside Southfield Reservoir, 26th August (*Brit. Birds* 78: 535), 27th (per M. R. Lambert).

(South-central Eurasia, north to the Netherlands, and Africa) The Committee no longer considers this species (but the old records keep on coming).

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 93, 14)

Cleveland Easton Nab, 8th July (P. J. & S. J. Hinley, G. Icton).

Cornwall St Buryan, 31st July (Mrs J. Lawman, I. McPherson). Wadebridge, adult, 8th-15th August, photo. (D. A. Conway, R. L. Smith *et al.*).

Cumbria Ennerdale Forest, 25th April (J. Shepherd). Presumed same as Lancashire.

Devon Lopwell, 10th June (P. J. Barden).

Durham Teesdale, 28th June, photo. (L. G. Waddell *et al.*). Durham City, 26th September (A. L. Armstrong).

Gloucestershire Near Cirencester, 14th-16th July (D. K. Bond, D. Savory, Mrs S. Watson).

Hampshire Tadley Common, 15th April (J. K. Andrews).

Kent Folkestone, 22nd June (J. H. van der Dol).

Lancashire Ellet, 23rd April (Mr Huddleston); same, Quernmore, 24th (P. Woodruff). Presumed same as Cumbria.

Orkney Rackwick, Hoy, 27th June (M. Gray *et al.*).Sussex, East Beachy Head, 13th August (R. K. Haggard, P. Neatherway *et al.*).

Wiltshire Longbridge Deverill, 18th May (R. H. Creighton).

Yorkshire, North Wykeham Forest, 19th June (C. Harris, G. Thomas)(fig. 2).

1993 Devon Aveton Gifford, 24th August (R. W. Bone). Probably same as Isle of Wight, 26th to 4th September (*Brit. Birds* 87: 512).

(Eurasia and southern Africa; winters Africa) Also one at Trinity, Jersey, Channel Islands, on 25th-26th July 1995. The second-highest annual total ever, bettered only by 1991 with 23 records. Details have still to be received of three reported over Widnes, Cheshire, in early May. Original descriptions are appreciated by the Committee: 'like an Oystercatcher on steroids' went down well.

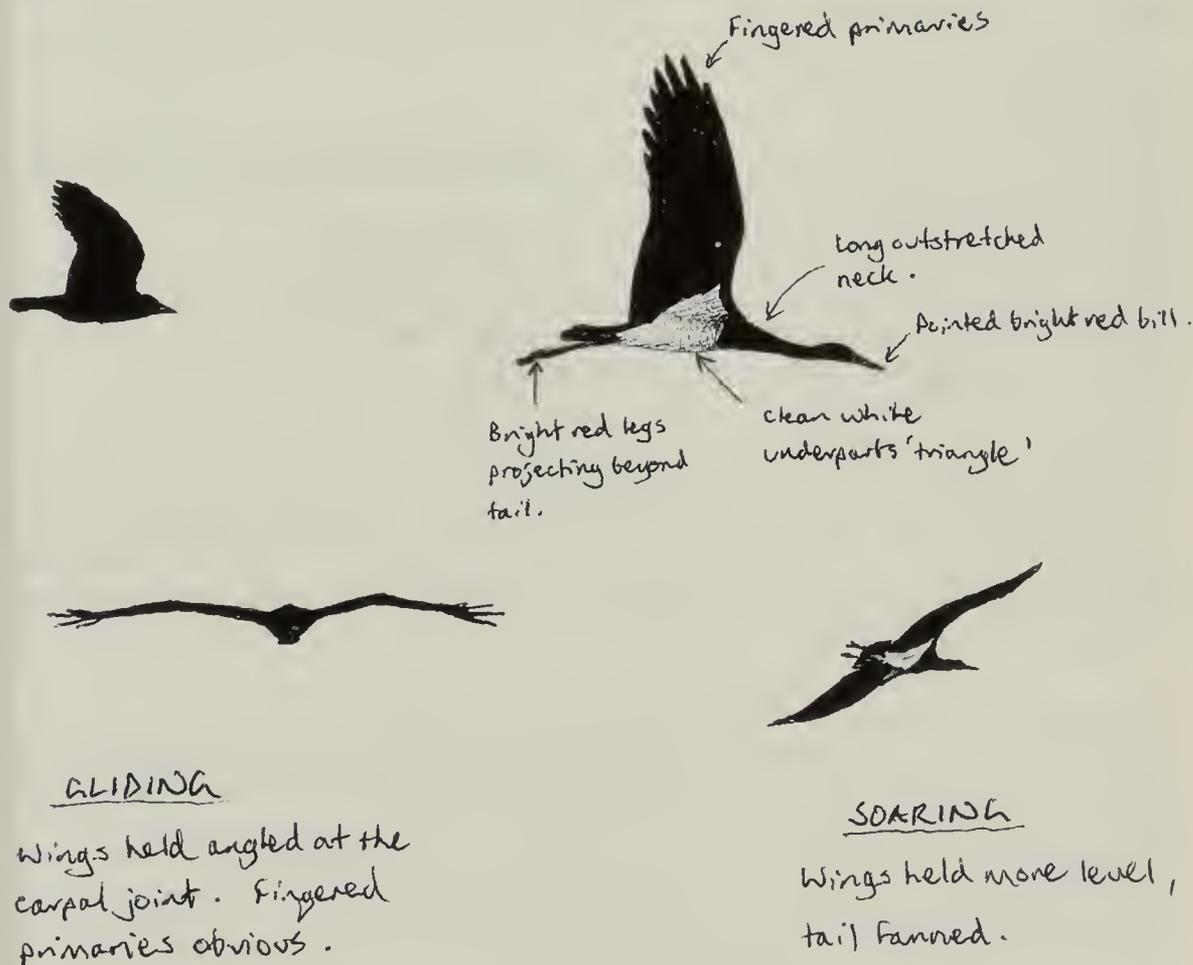


Fig. 2. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, Wykeham Forest, North Yorkshire, 19th June 1995 (G. Thomas). Compared with Rook *Corvus frugilegus*, but not observed side by side.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (70, over 223, –)

IRELAND

1974 Down Kinnegar, 26th May (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 7).

(Eurasia; winters from Mediterranean and Southern China south to South Africa) The Committee no longer considers this species.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 62, 1)

Lothian Musselburgh, 26th November (B. D. & M. Griffin).

1994 Cornwall Hayle, 23rd September (Mrs E. G. Gynn *et al.*). Same as Scilly, Cornwall (*Brit. Birds* 88: 500).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colonies in Balkans and irregularly Camargue, France) Scottish records are very rare, but this site has an awesome reputation—the same observers had a Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* nearby in 1994.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 81, 3)Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult, 26th January to 26th February, photo. (L. P. Alder, D. B. Paynter *et al.*).Norfolk Holkham, adult, 13th January to 25th April, photo. (A. I. Bloomfield, D. Foster, J. R. McCallum *et al.*). Cantley, first-winter, 28th January (D. J. Holman *et al.*); present 15th-29th.

(Northeast Europe and Siberia; winters Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) An adult reported from the Ythan Estuary, Grampian, during 16th-20th May 1995, was almost certainly not of wild origin. The late stay of the Norfolk bird might also attract suspicion.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla**B. b. nigricans* (1, 66, 2)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American and East Siberian race *nigricans* were recorded as follows:

Essex Leigh-on-Sea, adult, 30th October to 3rd November (D. Wood).

Kent Sittingbourne, adult, 15th January to at least 25th February (C. G. Bradshaw, P. K. Worsley *et al.*); presumed same, Reculver, 4th-5th March (M. J. Baldock *et al.*). Gillingham, adults: 25th November to 7th December; another, 26th November to 7th December; one or other to at least 7th January 1996, photo. (C. G. Bradshaw *et al.*).

Suffolk Felixstowe, adult, 12th-17th November (M. C. Marsh).

(Arctic North America and East Siberia; winters USA and East Asia) An individual resembling this race but with an incomplete neck-band was present from 13th February to 14th March at Thorney Deeps, West Sussex, this being the favoured haunt of an adult which visited the area from 1986 to 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 513). Four juveniles accompanying that bird in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 459) resembled *B. b. bernicla*.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 29, 2)

Kent Sittingbourne, adult, 14th-27th January (C. G. Bradshaw); same, Sheppey, 4th-5th February, photo. (P. K. Worsley *et al.*); presumed returning individual, Essex, Kent, 1993-94 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 501).

Norfolk Welney, juvenile, 12th November (J. B. Kemp *et al.*). Sea Palling and Waxham area, adult, 28th November to 9th December, photo. (M. Higgletton *et al.*).

1994 Cumbria Drumburgh, adult, 9th-26th March (S. J. Dodgson *et al.*) (fig. 3); same, Rockcliffe Marsh, 11th, 23rd April (per T. Dean); same as Dumfries & Galloway below.

1994 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock, adult, since 30th December 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 513), 2nd January to 21st February, 28th March to 2nd April (per P. N. Collin); also in Cumbria.

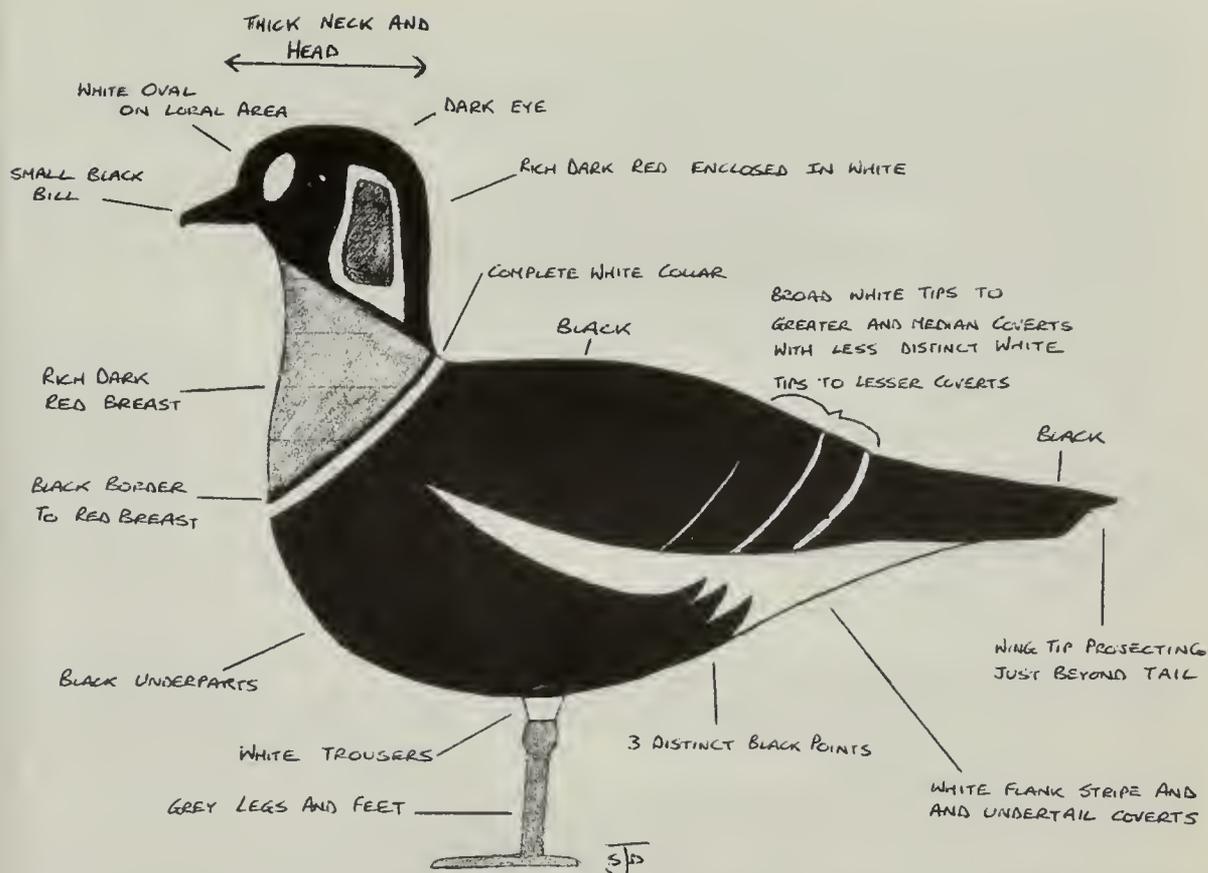


Fig. 3. Adult Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*, Drumburgh, Cumbria, 9th March 1994 (Steve J. Dodgson)

1994 Highland Insh Marshes, adult, 9th-19th March (J. Gordon *et al.*); same, Nethybridge, 22nd March to 4th April (per C. H. Crooke).

(West Siberia; winters Southeast Europe) The waters are now very muddied by obvious escapes, particularly on the South Coast, and the following refers to birds which were probably wanderers from captivity: Dee Estuary area, Merseyside, an adult from 30th September to 30th December 1991; near Chester, Cheshire, during 9th-11th January 1992; and at Coul Reservoir, Fife, during 8th-10th September 1995.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 261, 13)

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, ♀, 22nd February to 11th March (S. Busutill, M. Ward, K. J. Warrington *et al.*).

Cheshire Budworth Mere, ♂, 5th-8th October (J. Walsh *et al.*); ♂, 22nd October to 25th November (P. M. Hill, D. M. Walters *et al.*); presumed same, Rostherne Mere, 4th November (G. & S. Barber *et al.*).

Cheshire/Clwyd Inner Marsh Farm, ♂, 18th-26th February (G. & S. Barber *et al.*).

Clwyd See Cheshire/Clwyd above.

Cornwall Drift Reservoir, ♀, 28th November to 4th December (G. Hobin, J. F. Ryan *et al.*).

Cumbria Campfield Marsh, ♂, 9th-10th December (D. G. H. West *et al.*).

Gwynedd Conwy Estuary, ♂, since 1994 to 12th February, photo. (E. J. Abraham, A. Davies, O. Roberts *et al.*); presumed same, 6th November to 15th March 1996 (O. Roberts *et al.*). See 1994 Gwynedd below.

Hampshire Lower Test Marshes, ♂, 22nd October to 21st November (M. L. Edgeller, A. S. Rhodes *et al.*).

Lothian Aberlady and Gosford Bays, ♂, intermittently, 29th October to 22nd March 1996, photo. (A. Brown *et al.*).

Norfolk Berney Marshes, ♂, 15th-16th May (P. R. Allard *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, ♂ and ♀, 19th-22nd June, photo. (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway, D. Kent *et al.*). Burray, ♂, 7th-8th November (T. Dean *et al.*).

Tayside Montrose Basin, ♂, 5th November to 24th December (R. D. Goater *et al.*).

1993 Fife Stenhouse Reservoir, ♂, to 9th March only (*Brit. Birds* 88: 501), original last date, 13th, was correct (A. Brown).

1994 Grampian Loch of Skene, ♂, 6th-15th November, 11th December (G. F. Allen, Dr I. M. Phillips *et al.*).

1994 Gwynedd Conwy Estuary, ♂, 20th December to 1995 (E. J. Abraham, A. Davies, O. Roberts *et al.*).

IRELAND

1975 Down Castle Espie, ♂, 18th October (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 8).

(North America; winters USA and Central America) Another good year. The problem of hybrids has been mentioned before and, with the added problem of Eurasian and American first-generation and even second-generation hybrids, this Committee looks at every record very critically. Unfortunately, observers tend not to submit such a detailed description of a rare duck as they would for a nice juicy rare 'peep' or warbler.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 20, 0)

Seilly Tresco, ♂, since 1st April 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 502), throughout year (per W. H. Wagstaff) (fig. 4).

IRELAND

1966 Wexford Mayglass, ♀, 27th November (*Irish Bird Rep.* 14: 16).

(North America) 'Over-sexed, overstayed and over here!' Another generation of birdwatchers (and female Mallards *A. platyrhynchos*) gets its opportunity to enjoy this American.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 173, 6)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, ♀, 2nd-5th September (R. M. Andrews, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Cornwall Tehidy Country Park, first-winter ♀, 10th-14th October, photo. (M. J. Healan *et al.*).

Derbyshire Willington Gravel-pits, ♀, 25th September to 11th October, photo. (M. P. Radford, N. Topliss *et al.*).

Shetland Urafirth, first-winter ♂, 30th October to 2nd November (M. Mellor *et al.*); Tingwall, first-winter ♂, 2nd November; same, South Nesting, 3rd-11th (P. Sclater *et al.*).

Western Isles St Kilda, age and sex uncertain, 20th October (Dr I. R. Hartley).

IRELAND

1960 Offaly Banagher, 1st September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 8).

1973 Down Castle Espie, 9th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 22: 7).

1975 Cork Passage West Reservoir, 5th October (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 8).

(North America; winters south to Brazil) A typical spread of records.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 10, 1)

Humberside Barton-upon-Humber, first-winter ♂, 13th-15th February, photo. (G. P. Catley *et al.*).

Laneashire Dockacres Gravel-pit, first-winter ♂, 5th March to 18th April (S. J. Dodgson *et al.*). Presumed returning individual last recorded 31st December 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 503).

1994 Gloucestershire Edward Richardson Nature Reserve, near Lechlade, ♂, 12th November to 10th December (S. N. Thomson *et al.*). Also in Oxfordshire.

1994 Oxfordshire Little Faringdon Gravel-pit, ♂, 11th to at least 28th December (S. N. Thomson *et al.*). Same as 1994 Gloucestershire.

(Western North America; winters south and east to Colombia) Has not missed a year since its first appearance in 1987. This pattern of a run of records after a 'first' is not uncommon among non-passerines, Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* being a good example.



Fig. 4. Male American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*, Tresco, Scilly, from April 1994 and throughout 1995 (Ren Hathway)

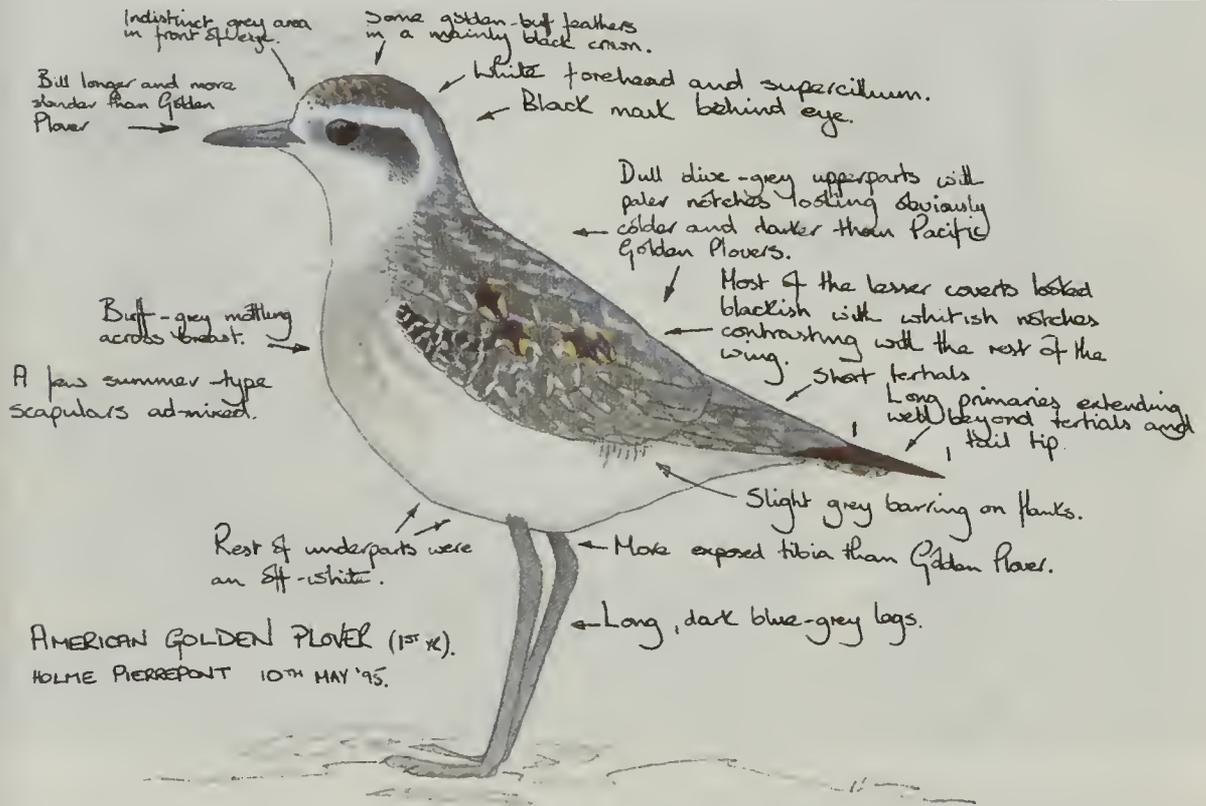


Fig. 5. American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* moulting from first-winter to first-summer plumage, Holme Pierrepont, Nottinghamshire, 10th May 1995 (Phil Palmer). See page 498.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 79, 6)

Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, ♀, probably first-winter, 3rd September to at least 4th March 1996 (B. Orr *et al.*).

Fife Tentsmuir Point, River Tay, ♂, 16th October 1994 to 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 513); same, Tayport, 25th February to at least 10th March (M. S. Scott *et al.*). Also in Grampian, Lothian.

Grampian Ythan Estuary, ♂, 22nd March to 10th July (W. G. & Mrs S. Johnston *et al.*); presumed returning 1994 individual (*Brit. Birds* 88: 503); same, Blackdog, 22nd June (Dr I. M. Phillips), 29th July (D. P. Appleton). Also in Fife, Lothian. Lossiemouth, ♂, since 9th October 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 513), 15th January, 14th February (per A. Webb); presumed same, Burghead, 12th November (D. M. Pullan). Rattray Head, ♂, 14th April (W. Dunlop); not same as Ythan Estuary.

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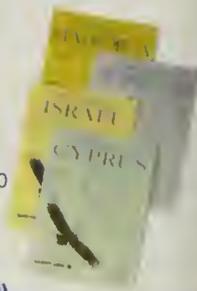
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Strathclyde Saltcoats Harbour, Ayrshire, ♂, 20th-22nd March, photo. (J. Johnstone *et al.*).

1994 Shetland Noss, first-winter/second-summer ♂, 14th May (C. Barton, S. Smith); previously at Lerwick, 11th (D. Coutts per D. Suddaby).

(Circumpolar Arctic) A familiar picture. A female in a new area is, however, still a very creditable find. Conventional ageing of non-adults can be anomalous (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 36-40).

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* (75, over 345, -)

IRELAND

1975 Clare Liscannor Bay, ♂, 26th-27th December (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 9).

(North America) The Committee no longer considers this species.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 223, 10)

Cornwall Land's End, 17th September (D. S. Flumm, B. K. Mellow, R. Wilkins).

Devon Sandford area, 31st March to 4th April, photo. (R. Burston, C. Lever *et al.*).

Gwynedd Aberdaron, Caernarvonshire, 4th June (E. J. Abraham, A. Lever, A. J. Vinson).

Humberside Kilnsea, 7th May (M. P. Lawlor *et al.*) (fig. 7); same, Spurn, 7th (D. R. & Mrs L. Middleton, P. Musgrave *et al.*).

Lothian Belhaven Bay, 7th April (C. N. Davison, K. Gillon).

Northamptonshire Long Buckby, 2nd May (G. M. Pullan).

Somerset Near Street, 15th April (A. J. Bundy).

Suffolk Walberswick, 7th May (C. Corrigan); presumed same, Benacre area, 8th (C. A. Buttle *et al.*).

Sussex, East East Dean, 7th May (N. J. Lever *et al.*).

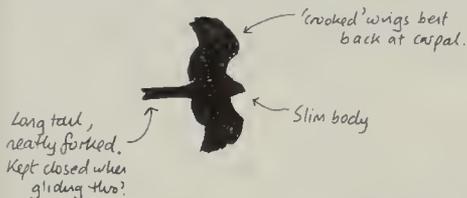
Yorkshire, North Wykeham Forest, 28th May (D. Bywater); presumed same, Filey, 29th (L. Gillard).

1994 Devon Plymouth area, 10th May (P. H. Aley, V. R. & Mrs S. Tucker *et al.*). Teignbridge area, 13th May (D. L. Buckingham).

1994 Kent Capel-le-Ferne, two, 9th May (D. A. Gibson).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia) The Kent record in 1994 is the first of more than one individual together, perhaps surprising with such a 'social' raptor.

1 Initial sighting - Flying past silhouetted against bright sky.



2 Gliding away, losing height



3. Banking round



4. Flapping down towards ground

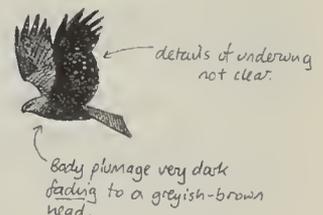


Fig. 7. Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Kilnsea, Humberside, 7th May 1995 (M. P. Lawlor)

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 24, 0)

IRELAND

1973 Fermanagh Garrison, 11th January (*Irish Bird Rep.* 21: 12).

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and northern Eurasia) In view of the current re-establishment programme, records only from outside Scotland are listed here.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (3, 5, 1)

Orkney Durkadale area, second-summer ♂, 18th April to 27th June (plate 163, on p. 527); also 13th September and possibly to November (K. Fairclough, E. R. Meek *et al.*).

1993 Humberside Pulfin Bog, ♂, probably second-summer, 9th September (D. G. Hobson).

(Eastern Europe east to Western China; winters from Europe south to Southern Africa and east to Southeastern China) The first long-stayer. This Orkney male and that in Tayside in 1993 were both on prime Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* heather-moorland sites.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo**B. b. vulpinus* (1, 0, 0)

The following records of the race *B. b. vulpinus* are now considered unacceptable:

1975 Cornwall St Ives, 27th October and 2nd November (*Brit. Birds* 69: 333).

1975 Kent Reculver, 12th January to 20th April (*Brit. Birds* 69: 333).

(Northern and Eastern Europe east to Central Asia; winters mostly East Africa) Both records involved individuals which would have had to belong to the grey-brown type, which, in the view of the Committee, cannot be safely distinguished in the field from some of those of the nominate form. A specimen record from Everley, Wiltshire, in September 1864, preserved at the Natural History Museum, Tring, remains extant (*Haudbook* vol. III, p. 55).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 545, 12)

Cambridgeshire Little Paxton, Huntingdonshire, first-summer ♀, 15th-18th June (G. Shorrocks *et al.*).

Cleveland Hartlepool, first-summer ♀, 24th May (C. Kehoe).

Dorset Ballard Down, ♀, 3rd-4th June (S. Robson); same, Durlston Country Park, 4th-10th, photo. (E. Brodie, T. Elborn *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, ♀, 10th May (W. Attridge, D. Walker).

Norfolk Hickling, ♀, 3rd-7th May (I. Smith). Paston and Mundesley area, ♀, 11th May (M. Fiszer). Holkham Meals and Overy Dunes, first-summer ♂, 24th-25th May, photo. (A. I. Bloomfield, G. C. Wright *et al.*). Warren Wood, Thetford, first-summer ♂, 20th June (R. Bashford, A. M. Wilson).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 28th-29th May, remains found 30th (P. J. Donnelly, T. Outlaw *et al.*).

Suffolk Dunwich, first-summer ♂, 29th May (K. Arber, B. J. Small).

Sussex, East Cuckmere Valley, ♂, 10th-11th May (P. James, N. J. Thomas, A. Wheeler *et al.*). Rye, ♀, 10th June (Miss C. Taylor).

1959 Dyfed Ramsey Island, Pembrokeshire, ♂, 24th May (H. E. Grenfell, J. Pingree, C. Stockton).

1992 Somerset West Sedgemoor, first-summer ♀, 19th June (C. A. Milburn, J. Oates).

1994 Borders Springhall, ♂, 14th-15th May (K. & R. Robeson).

1994 Norfolk Brettenham Heath, ♀, 14th-15th June (D. J. Holman, J. H. Marchant, R. J. Waters *et al.*).

(Eastern Europe to Central Siberia; winters Africa) The 'big year' for this species was 1992, for which the total now stands at 129. Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire, seems to hold a special attraction for this species.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 112, 3)

Durham Hunstanworth Moor, white phase, 21st November (A. S. Jack).

Grampian Linn of Quoich, near Braemar, intermediate phase, 24th April (J. Bowler, J. Hunter).

Western Isles St Kilda, white phase, 31st March (K. Douglas).

1994 Western Isles Drimsdale, South Uist, first-year ♂, white phase, 31st December (T. J. Dix).

(Circumpolar Arctic) The Western Isles has long been renowned for this species, but Grampian and Durham are the two counties with growing reputations. The acceptance of a 'non-white' individual is a great credit to the observers; the last accepted one in Britain was in Grampian in 1990, on 21st April.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* (many, 10, 2)

Cornwall Suthians Reservoir, ♂, 6th May, photo. (Mr & Mrs P. Clement *et al.*) (plate 166, on p. 527).

Devon Lundy, ♂, 15th-16th May, photo. (R. J. Campey).

(Eurasia, Africa and Australasia; European population winters Africa). Two typical records.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 197, 5)

Devon South Huish, two, 5th May (R. Burrige, M. R. Langman, P. G. W. Salaman *et al.*).

Essex Pitsea and Coryton area, two, 19th-22nd May (S. Clayton, A. J. Kane *et al.*). Also in Kent.

Kent Dungeness, 2nd May (S. P. Clancy). Eastborough Farm, two, 9th May (F. Barnard per P. Larkin); same, Cliffe, 10th-13th (P. Larkin, S. Rowlands); presumed same, 25th (D. Mercer). Also in Essex.

Norfolk Titchwell, since 17th September 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 508), throughout year.

1986 Cornwall Millbrook Lake, 13th-23rd June (*Brit. Birds* 80: 533), 24th (J. R. Smart).

1993 Gwynedd Cemlyn Bay, Anglesey, three, 10th-21st April, photo. (K. G. Croft, O. Roberts *et al.*). Presumed same as Cheshire (*Brit. Birds* 87: 521).

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, the Americas and Australia) There was also one at Vale, Guernsey, Channel Islands, from 28th April to 3rd May. The total is up on last year, but nowhere near the level of the record-breaking years of 1987 and 1990. Still a marvellous bird to have on your local patch.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* (27, 6, 0)

(Southwest Asia and North and East Africa) None in Britain and Ireland, but one at Grouville, Jersey, Channel Islands, from 30th September to 17th October (and probably since 5th September) was photographed. The last one in Britain and Ireland was in 1984.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (31, 50, 1)

Norfolk Titchwell, 3rd, 4th, 19th July, possibly since 30th June; same, Holkham, 6th; same, Cley, intermittently, 4th-23rd (per D. J. Holman).

(Southern Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) The dates and locations are sufficiently similar to those of the Norfolk 1994 bird (*Brit. Birds* 88: 509) to fuel speculation that the same individual may have been involved.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (5, 24, 0)

IRELAND

1974 Antrim Larne Lough, 5th August (*Irish Birds* 2: 210; 3: 335).

(West Asia; winters Africa)

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 41, 1)

Grampian Loch of Strathbeg, 13th-15th April (W. Dunlop, Mrs K. Mowat, P. Webster *et al.*).
1993 Gwynedd Trearddur Bay and Holyhead, Anglesey, 30th December to 2nd January 1994,
photo. (K. H. Jones, A. J. Perkins *et al.*).

1994 Gwynedd See above.

IRELAND

1975 Kerry Derrymore Island, 28th December (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 13).

(North America) Grampian has a good reputation for rare waders, although this bird probably crossed the Atlantic some time prior to its discovery.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (0, 29, 4)

Cleveland Greatham Creek and Reclamation Pond, adult, 5th-15th August, photo. (T. Francis, G. Joynt *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, adult, 17th-31st August, photo. (C. G. Bradshaw, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

Merseyside Seaforth, adult, 1st August, photo. (G. Thomas *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 16th-21st September (P. J. Donnelly *et al.*).

1990 Clwyd Oakenholt Marsh, 2nd-4th August (*Brit. Birds* 88: 509), had already been accepted (*Brit. Birds* 87: 524).

(North and Northeast Asia and Alaska; winters southern Asia, Australia and western North America) The pattern continues.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 183, 9)

Cleveland Greatham Creek, first-summer, 11th-13th June (C. Kehoe, C. Sharpe *et al.*).

Cornwall Hayle, adult, 12th November to 3rd December (N. J. Phillips, L. P. Williams *et al.*).

Grampian Ythan Estuary, adult, 9th-16th July (M. Darling, A. A. Murray, A. O'Connor *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Frampton Marsh, first-summer, 3rd September (L. James, S. Keightley).

Nottinghamshire Hoveringham Gravel-pit, first-winter/first-summer, 10th May; same, Holme Pierrepont, 10th-11th (M. D. Hodgkin *et al.*) (fig. 5, on p. 493). Besthorpe, first-summer/second-winter, 17th September to 5th October, photo. (J. A. Hopper, M. Kennewell *et al.*).

Also in South Yorkshire.

Scilly Tresco, adult, 23rd-25th August, photo. (R. J. Hathway *et al.*).

Strathclyde Maidens, Ayrshire, juvenile, 24th October to 1st November, photo. (P. Cassidy *et al.*).

Surrey King George VI Reservoir, adult, 2nd September (A. V. Moon *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South South Anston, first-summer/second-winter, 31st August to 6th September (J. Clay *et al.*). Also in Nottinghamshire.

1994 Lincolnshire Butterwick, Boston, adult, 8th-16th October (P. A. Hyde, S. Keightley *et al.*).

1994 Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 19th September (J. G. Badley *et al.*).

IRELAND

1966 Cork Lissagriffin Lake, 7th-9th September, presumed same, 16th-19th, 21st. Shannagary Marsh, 18th September. Douglas Estuary, 30th September to 8th October. (*Irish Bird Rep.* 14: 29)

1966 Roscommon Keenagh Turlough, 15th-16th October (*Irish Bird Rep.* 14: 29).

(Arctic North America and extreme Northeast Asia; winters South America) An average year. Another species with an increase in records from inland counties. The Nottinghamshire/South Yorkshire bird was first seen in Derbyshire, but documentation was not received in time for this report.

Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria* (5, 32, 1)

Dorset Radipole, Lodmoor and Poxwell, first-winter, 15th October (D. J. Chown, S. Robson, G. Walbridge *et al.*); same, Wareham, 16th (I. & Mrs D. J. Standivan); same, Brand's Bay, 18th (per S. Robson).

(Southeast Russia and western Central Asia) Three is the most in any one year and that has happened only three times.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 71, 2)

Hampshire Farlington Marshes, adult, trapped 3rd September, photo. (D. A. Bell, T. D. Codlin, G. Thompson *et al.*) (fig. 8).

Scilly St Agnes, adult, 29th August to 16th September, photo. (V. A. Stratton, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*); same, Annet, 18th (M. A. Hardwick, W. H. Wagstaff).

(North America; winters Central and South America) A typical year. This species has not 'drawn a blank' since 1979.

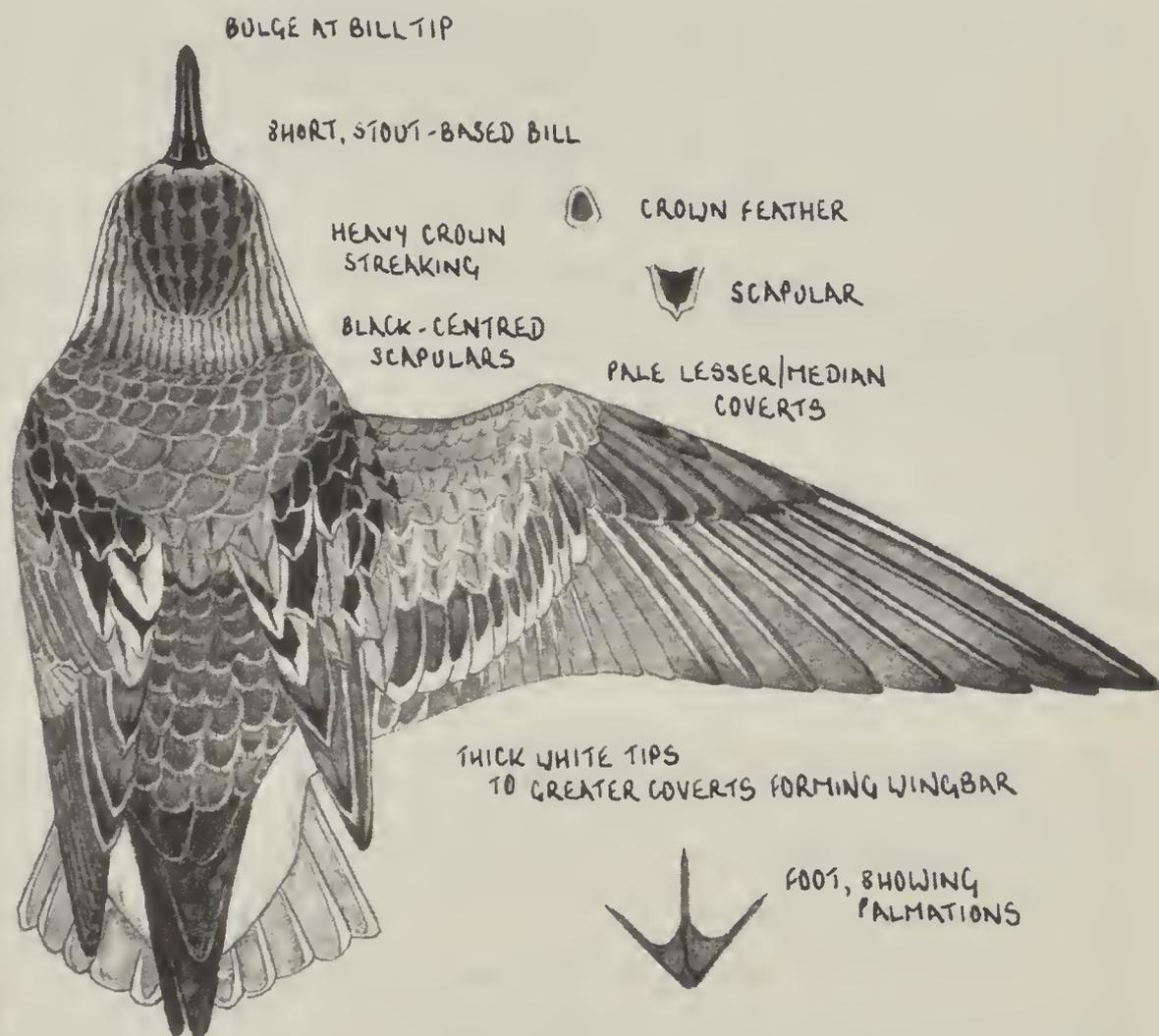


Fig. 8. Adult Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 3rd September 1995 (Guy Thompson)

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* (0, 3, 1)

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, adult, 12th-13th August, photo. (G. Bowman, R. Gajdus, L. Robson *et al.*).

(Siberia; winters Southeast Asia and Australia) Apart from a dead juvenile on Fair Isle, the three records are all of adults in July/August, in Humberside, Norfolk and, now, Northumberland. East Coast wader-watchers will need no further spur to start early. Yes, those far-off, bright, adult 'Little Stints' are worth checking more closely.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (6, 28, 1)

Sussex, West Sidlesham, adult, 19th-25th July, photo. (T. J. Edwards *et al.*).

IRELAND

1967 Cork Inchdoney, 9th-11th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 15: 30).

(North America; winters southern USA, Central and South America) Still not annual; on average there are records every other year. The years 1966 and 1988 provided the best counts, with four each. A great prize for dedicated rarity-finders; the best chance seems to be an adult in the second half of July, but within this period sightings are well spread geographically.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 341, 10)

Avon Severn Beach, adult, 20th-31st August, photo. (P. D. Bowerman, R. F. Reader *et al.*).

Cleveland Saltholme Pools, adult, 13th-19th October (J. Grieveson, P. J. Hinley, R. Little *et al.*).

Grampian Annachie Lagoon, adult, 30th July, photo. (Dr I. M. Phillips, S. A. Reeves *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, adult, 7th-18th August (T. G. Ball, D. Hobern *et al.*).

Humberside Beacon Ponds, Kilnsea, adult, 12th-16th August (J. Cooper, K. Dillon, F. X. Moffatt *et al.*).

Kent Reeulver, adult, 5th-6th August (C. H. Hindle, P. A. L. Millard *et al.*). Sandwich Bay, adult, 5th-8th September (D. R. Watson *et al.*).

Leicestershire Rutland Water, adult, 15th-17th September (A. H. J. Harrop, J. Wright *et al.*).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, adult, 24th-28th October (C. N. Davison, K. Gillon *et al.*).

Surrey Walton Reservoirs, adult, 30th August (D. M. Harris).

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1966 Cork Cape Clear Island, 8th September. Tivoli, 28th-29th September. Shanagarry Marsh, 1st-2nd October; presumed same, Ballymona, 9th (*Irish Bird Rep.* 14: 35-36).

1966 Kerry Akeragh Lough, 8th September; 29th October to 2nd November. Ballyheigue Strand, 27th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 14: 35-36).

1974 Kerry Akeragh Lough, two, 23rd October (*Irish Bird Rep.* 22: 13).

(Northern North America; winters southern South America) In Britain, every one an adult.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (5, 170, 7)

Cornwall Colliford Reservoir, juvenile, 23rd September (P. Kemp); same, Dozmary Pool, 24th (G. J. Conway *et al.*).

Cornwall/Devon Upper Tamar Lake, juvenile, 15th-18th September, photo. (J. Hawkey, G. P. Sutton *et al.*).

Devon See Cornwall/Devon above.

Norfolk Cley, adult, 30th July (S. Gillings *et al.*).

Seilly St Agnes, juvenile, 18th-28th September (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*); juvenile, 11th October, photo. (K. D. Shaw *et al.*), present, 10th-14th (per W. H. Wagstaff).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 8th May, photo. (D. Bywater *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Broomhill Flash, juvenile, 5th-6th September (J. Hewitt *et al.*).

1994 Highland Sandside Bay, Caithness, juvenile, 8th October (E. W. E. Maughan *et al.*).

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1974 Kerry Akeragh Lough, 23rd October (*Irish Bird Rep.* 22: 13).

1975 Londonderry Lough Beg, 15th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 15).

1975 Kerry Akeragh Lough, 3rd-5th June; 1st September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 15).

(North America and northeastern Siberia; winters South America) An interesting contrast to the previous species: the majority of records are of juveniles and are later in the autumn.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 158, 2)

Cumbria Bowness-on-Solway, 6th-11th May, photo. (Mr & Mrs T. D. Holden, D. West).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 15th-19th July, photo. (P. M. Troake *et al.*).

1993 **Humberside** Blacktoft Sands, juvenile, 15th September (G. Allison).

1993 **Kent** See below.

1994 **Kent** Shellness, 3rd May (*Brit. Birds* 88: 514), was in 1993.

(North Eurasia; winters southern Asia and Australia) A poor year.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (33, over 396, -)

IRELAND

1970 **Down** St John's Point, two, 9th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 16; *Irish Birds* 1: 96).

1974 **Cork** Cape Clear Island, 12th-15th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 22: 13).

1974 **Londonderry** Lough Beg, 15th-27th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 22: 13).

1975 **Dublin** North Bull, 7th-9th, 11th September, two 11th; another 21st; presumed same and three others, 25th to 1st October (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 16).

1975 **Londonderry** Lough Beg, 21st September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 16).

(North America; winters South America) This species is no longer considered by the Committee.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 79, 4)

Shetland Fair Isle, three: 31st August to 1st September (C. M. Hewson, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); 8th to at least 19th (I. Forsyth, F. X. Moffatt, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); 17th-23rd, photo. (C. M. Hewson, I. Wilson *et al.*) (plates 164 & 165, on p. 527).

West Midlands Sandwell Valley, 22nd August, photo. (P. M. Hackett, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

1979 **Greater Manchester** Greenfield, near Oldham, juvenile/first-winter, shot, 24th September, photo. (per J. H. Marchant, Mrs A. J. Smith).

1992 **Cumbria** Locality withheld, shot, September, photo. (per T. Dean).

(Northeast Europe and Northwest Asia; winters Africa) Fair Isle continues to dominate, but it is interesting to note that there has been a recent increase in records from elsewhere. The West Midlands record, on a typical date, does deserve mention: any reserve would be proud to have this species 'on its list'.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 174, 7)

Cornwall Marazion, juvenile/first-winter, 18th October (A. & G. Barrett, W. D. Neate *et al.*).

Porthgwarra, age uncertain, 21st October (J. D. Bryden, T. M. Carne, S. M. Christophers).

Grampian/Tayside River North Esk, Kinnaber, juvenile/first-winter, 22nd October to 21st February 1996 (R. D. Goater, M. S. Scott *et al.*).

Humberside Tophill Low, juvenile, 8th October to 29th December, photo. (G. P. Catley, P. Charlton, F. X. Moffatt *et al.*).

Orkney Firth, juvenile, 5th-6th October (E. R. Meek, C. Self *et al.*). **North Ronaldsay**, juvenile, 11th October (P. J. Donnelly, M. Gray *et al.*).

Shetland Nesting, juvenile, 3rd-4th November, photo. (W. Jackson, P. Sclater *et al.*).

Tayside See Grampian/Tayside above.

IRELAND

1972 **Kerry** Akeragh Lough, 12th-22nd June (*Irish Bird Rep.* 22: 11).

(North America and Northeast Siberia; winters USA and Central America) The best year since 1990; the North Esk bird was on the Grampian/Tayside boundary and was, of course, claimed by both regions.

Dowitcher *Limnodromus* (31, 267, 7)

IRELAND

1975 **Cork** Ballycotton, 13th-19th October (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 13).

(North America and Northeast Siberia; wintering USA, Central and South America) The totals include those of specifically identified individuals.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartrania longicauda* (15, 29, 2)

Cornwall Polgigga, 21st October (J. D. Bryden, T. M. Carne, S. M. Christophers).

Scilly St Mary's, 12th October, photo. (N. & Mrs F. Anderson, D. G. Lambert, A. Self *et al.*).

(North America; winters South America) The Committee sees no good reason not to treat these as two separate records.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 73, 6)

Cambridgeshire Near Upware, 23rd-24th July (R. J. Allison, O. & Mrs M. Marks *et al.*).

Essex Old Hall Marshes, 28th July (T. & Mrs V. Mendham); presumed same, 5th August (B. Churches).

Norfolk Cantley, three juveniles, 4th-13th August, photo. (D. J. Holman, B. Jarvis *et al.*).

Sussex, East Pett Pools, juvenile, 31st July (D. P. Bowtell, J. A. B. Gale *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe, West and East Asia; winters Africa, southern Asia and Australia) Erratic in its occurrence, but generally getting less rare. Three together must have been a wonderful, if slightly bemusing, sight for the finder but is, however, not unprecedented: three were seen by Eric Ennion near Southwold, Suffolk, on 5th-6th May 1947 (*Brit. Birds* 41: 156-157), and two were seen together by N. F. Ticehurst at The Midrips, East Sussex, on 26th September 1937 (*Brit. Birds* 31: 197-198).

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (12, 18, 1)

Norfolk Breydon Water, Berney Marshes and Burgh Castle, first-summer, 15th-18th, 22nd-25th May (P. R. Allard *et al.*). Also in Suffolk.

Suffolk Southwold, first-summer, 14th May (B. J. Small *et al.*). Same as Norfolk.

(North America; winters USA south to southern South America). With the 1994 records, this is the first time this species has appeared in two consecutive years since 1978-79. The second half of May seems to be a good time.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 195, 10)

Cornwall Drift Reservoir, juvenile, 25th August (G. Hobin, F. Potts *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 5th May, photo. (M. C. Buckland, R. J. Price, R. E. Turley *et al.*); juvenile, 26th August (P. G. Akers *et al.*).

Lancashire Leighton Moss, juvenile, 18th October (S. J. Dodgson *et al.*).

Leicestershire/Northamptonshire Stanford Reservoir, juvenile, 25th-27th September, photo. (S. C. Tilley *et al.*).

Norfolk Burnham Norton, 10th-12th, 16th-17th June (V. Eve, M. Ferrier *et al.*). Holme, adult, 2nd August (G. F. Hibberd, N. Lawton).

Northamptonshire See Leicestershire/Northamptonshire above.

Nottinghamshire Holme Pierrepont and Netherfield, first-winter, 25th November to 15th December, photo. (M. C. Dennis, J. A. Hopper, R. G. Woodward *et al.*).

Shropshire/Staffordshire Knighton Reservoir, Soudley, juvenile to first-winter, 11th-16th November, photo. (D. A. & Mrs M. Barnes *et al.*).

Staffordshire See Shropshire/Staffordshire above.

Suffolk Minsmere and North Warren, 6th-11th May (A. Gooding, R. N. Macklin, I. Robinson *et al.*).

(North America; winters southern USA, Central and South America) A good year. This species had some poor years in the mid to late 1980s. Interesting to see so many records from inland counties, including Nottinghamshire, whose reputation for rare waders and rarities generally continues to grow.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 37, 4)

Norfolk Breydon Water and Berney Marshes, 15th June (P. R. Allard, P. J. Heath). Snettisham, 14th-15th July (P. Fisher, D. May *et al.*).

Shetland Boddam, 11th-13th June, photo. (I. S. Robertson *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, 14th June (P. I. Holt, G. Lowe, B. Williamson).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia; winters Africa, South Asia and Australia) A better-than-average year; June and July are good months for this species. The Minsmere and Breydon records may refer to the same individual.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 103, 6)

Cleveland South Gare, 16th June, photo. (D. Cowton *et al.*).

Cornwall College Reservoir, first-winter, 5th-13th November, photo. (L. F. & R. C. James, A. R. Pay *et al.*).

Devon Stoke Gabriel, 21st April to 4th May (J. Gale, M. R. & Mrs T. Langman, B. Poley *et al.*)(fig. 9). Lopwell Dam, juvenile to first-winter, 4th November to 1996 (P. J. Barden, S. Bird, P. Edmonds *et al.*). Newton Abbot, adult, 13th December to at least 13th February 1996 (J. E. Fortey, K. Rylands *et al.*).

Norfolk Welney, since 18th September 1994 to 27th January (*Brit. Birds* 88: 517).

Nottinghamshire Holme Pierrepont, first-winter, since 17th December 1994 to 5th January (*Brit. Birds* 88: 517).

TAIL END OF BIRD CONSTANTLY BOBBED UP + DOWN. WALKING ACTION VERY DELIBERATE WITH LEGS BEING RAISED IN 'GOOSE STEP' LIKE ACTION.

I DID NOT OBSERVE BIRD SIDE BY SIDE WITH COMMON SANDS BUT IT LOOKED DUMPIER & SHORTER TAIL ENDED THAN CMSANDS

UPPER PART GROUND COLOUR OLIVE GREY. COLDER COLOURING THAN COMMON SANDPIPERS

STRONG SUPERCILLIUM
WHITEST IN FRONT OF E-E

MANTLE + ESPECIALLY SCAPULARS
HEAVILY MARKED WITH DARK
'ARROWS'. FROM DISTANCE LOOKED
SPOTTED.

PALE TIPS TO
TAIL FEATHERS

BILL MOSTLY
DARK WITH A
SLIGHT PINKISH
BASE

SHOULDER SMUDGE
CONTRASTED AGAINST
WHITE THROAT/CENTRE
OF BREAST.

BY 4/5 SPOTS HAD
INCREASED IN SIZE &
NUMBER ON SIDES OF NECK
BREAST TO SMALLER SPOTS
ON FLANKS AGAINST
WHITE GROUND COLOUR

3 PRIMARIES PROJECT
JUST BEYOND TERTIALS WHICH
ALSO HAD DARK MARKS - NOT
DRAWN IN

WING COVERTS QUITE WELL
BARRED WITH BLACK, PALE BUFF
AND OLIVE/GREY. SUGGESTING
1ST YEAR BIRD? NOTE LEG COLOUR

PALE LEGS YELLOWY FLESH IN COLOUR

UNDERPART GROUND COLOUR WHITE + VERY 'CLEAN' COMPARED TO
COMMON SANDPIPERS ALSO PRESENT

WINGS WERE ALWAYS HELD DROOPED, BELOW TAIL PERHAPS
EXPLAINING WHY TAIL PROJECTION LOOKED LONG FOR SPOTTED
SANDPIPER

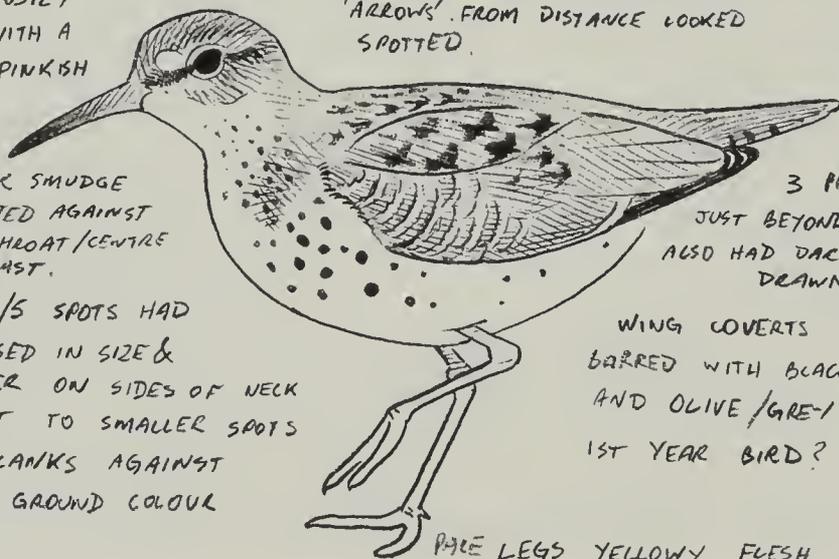


Fig. 9. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Stoke Gabriel, Devon, April-May 1995 (Mike R. Langman)

Suffolk Walberswick, 18th May (G. J. Button, E. W. Patrick, R. F. Tomlinson).

(North America; winters USA south to Uruguay) This species upholds its reputation for mid-winter and mid-summer records.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 257, 4) -

Essex Old Hall Marshes, ♀, 18th-27th June, 2nd July (P. Charlton, D. J. Holman *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 3rd October, photo. (D. & Mrs E. Price *et al.*). Treasco, adult, 5th October (R. M. & R. P. Fray, M. J. Lawson, A. J. Mackay *et al.*).

Somerset Porlock Marsh, ♀, 5th-9th June, photo. (I. & Mrs K. Bloomer *et al.*).

1988 Scilly St Mary's, 2nd September (V. A. Stratton).

1991 Gwynedd Glan Conwy, adult and first-winter, 28th September (A. Davies, O. Roberts).

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1975 Derry Lough Beg, 7th-13th September (*Irish Bird Rep.* 23: 17).

(North America; winters South America) If you find one in spring it is likely to be a female, making misidentification even less likely.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 63, 2)

Leicestershire Trent Valley Country Park, first-summer, 5th July (R. M. Fray).

Norfolk Salthouse, Cley and Blakeney Harbour, first-summer, 1st June, photo. (Mr & Mrs C. J. Mitchell *et al.*); presumed same as Suffolk.

Suffolk Minsmere, first-summer, 5th-6th, 8th July (D. Fairhurst *et al.*); same, Sizewell, 7th, 9th-11th, photo. (D. J. Holman *et al.*); same, Lowestoft, 8th (R. Fairhead, R. Wilton). Also in Norfolk.

(North America; winters USA to South America) The Norfolk and Suffolk records probably relate to the same individual. Both this and the next species are prone to providing mid-summer records.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 73, 3)

Derbyshire Matlock, adult, 13th December (R. J. Lowe *et al.*); presumed same, Ogston Reservoir, 14th-16th (Dr T. Sinnott *et al.*).

Glamorgan, South Taff Estuary, Cardiff, first-winter, 15th-21st April, photo. (P. Bristow *et al.*).

Merseyside Seaforth, adult, 15th May, photo. (A. J. Conway, M. A. Garner, S. J. White *et al.*).

1994 Cheshire/Clwyd Inner Marsh Farm, first-winter/first-summer, 12th June (P. F. Twist, R. Wilkinson *et al.*); present, 1st-14th (per E. J. Abraham).

(North America; winters USA to Mexico) Traditionally, Southwest England has been the best region for this species, with almost 50% of records, but in recent years the inland counties of England have 'come into their own'. This showing continues that trend.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

L. a. smithsonianus (0, 15, 1)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American race *smithsonianus* were noted as follows:

Merseyside Seaforth, first-winter, 26th March (T. Vaughan).

1994 Cheshire Neumann's Flash, first-year, 26th February to 4th March (P. I. Holt, P. E. Kenyon, D. Quinn). Also in Merseyside.

1994 Merseyside Otterspool, first-year, 6th March (M. A. Garner, G. Thomas). Presumed same as Cheshire.

(North America) On the strength of these records, this race has been accepted for addition to Category A of the British List by the BOURC. Both the BBRC and the BOURC congratulated the observers involved on their excellent, detailed reports. With 14 previous Irish records, the first for Britain were long overdue.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides**L. g. kumlieni/thayeri* (0, 35, 5)

Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the western races *kumlieni* or *thayeri* were noted as follows:

Dorset Abbotsbury, adult, recently dead, 10th April, photo. (S. A. Groves *et al.*).

Grampian Banff and Macduff, adult, 7th January to 24th February (P. D. Bloor, D. Suddaby *et al.* per A. Webb). Presumed same as 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 518).

Leicestershire Eye Brook Reservoir, adult, 19th December (A. H. J. Harrop, M. Ketley, J. Wright *et al.*)(fig. 6, on p. 494).

Merseyside Seaforth, adult, 7th, 24th January, 6th February (A. J. Conway, P. Kinsella *et al.*).

Shetland Lerwick, adult, 3rd-7th April, photo. (H. R. Harrop, F. J. Maroevic, M. Mellor *et al.*) (plate 161).

Western Isles St Kilda, adult, 22nd February to 8th March, photo. (K. Douglas, R. Eadie *et al.*).

1990 Yorkshire, North Bolton-on-Swale, adult, 17th-25th March (D. Beaumont, N. Morgan).

1992 Yorkshire, West Swillington Ings, adult, 5th January (M. P. Lawlor, A. J. Musgrove); previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 86: 538).

1993 Northumberland Tynemouth, first-summer, 13th-14th April (C. Bradshaw, A. Hutt).

1993 Shetland Hillswick, adult, 5th-6th, 25th-26th February (H. R. Harrop, P. V. Harvey, M. Mellor).

(Canada; winters North America). Nine records from current and past years remain under consideration.



Plate 161. Adult Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* of race *kumlieni/thayeri*, Lerwick, Shetland, April 1995 (Hugh Harrop/Wildshots of Shetland)

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 67, 4)

Cleveland Greatham Creek, adult, 12th-27th June, photo. (M. Leakey *et al.*). Also in North Yorkshire.

Devon Slapton Ley, adult, 18th-19th February, photo. (P. & Mrs C. Leigh *et al.*).

Lancashire Fleetwood, adult, 24th January (D. Hindle, P. Ross, R. Scholes). Also in Merseyside.

Merseyside Seaforth, adult, 30th January to 15th March, photo. (T. J. Meehan *et al.*). Presumed same as Lancashire.

Yorkshire, North Filey, first-winter, 30th January (L. Gillard, J. Sanderson, H. J. Whitehead); adult, 11th June (J. Sanderson, P. M. Scanlan); presumed same as Cleveland.

1994 Dyfed Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, adult, 30th December (C. Bird, T. Hobson).

(Northeast Siberia and Canada) Although it is difficult to judge exactly how many individuals there were, this was clearly a good year, although not so good as 1981, 1983 and 1993, in each of which there were eight.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 39, 1)

Highland Inverness area, adult, 18th-22nd July, photo. (R. Gallop, D. M. Pullan *et al.*) (plate 162).

(Arctic) A remarkable record. This is the first July record and a real surprise from a species whose appearances, unlike those of Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, have been almost restricted to November-February. The Longman Outflow, where the bird usually was, joins the tiny 'club' of sites which has had both Ross's and Ivory, although this site has done it the 'difficult' way, with first-winter Ross's and adult Ivory.



Plate 162. Adult Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, Inverness, Highland, 21st July 1995 (Dave Morgan)

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (52, 197, 7)

Cheshire Frodsham, 31st July (W. S. Morton). Presumed same as Merseyside.

Derbyshire Drakelow, 25th June (T. Cockburn).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult, 28th July (D. B. Paynter, M. McGill).

Humberside Flamborough Head, 27th May (D. Beaumont, B. Richards).

Merseyside Seaforth, second-summer, 30th-31st July, photo. (T. J. Meehan, G. Thomas *et al.*) (plate 160). Also in Cheshire.

Shetland Pool of Virkie, 25th June (A. D. & J. Clifton, G. Robertson).

Sussex, East Rye, two, 28th May (Dr B. J. Yates).

1993 Norfolk Burnham Norton, 6th August (*Brit. Birds* 88: 520), observers were V. Eve, J. Taylor.

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony is in Denmark; European population winters Africa) The 1980s was a poor decade for this species—in fact

there were several years with only one record. In comparison, this is a good year, but it does not compare with the best year (1967), when there were 17. A good spread of records, although, as usual, not many 'hung around'.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 205, 4)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 11th July (R. Howell *et al.*).

Hampshire Hill Head, 24th April (T. Carpenter *et al.*). Also in West Sussex.

Kent Bough Beech Reservoir, 30th April (C. Bond *et al.*).

Somerset Tealham Moor, 29th April (R. S. Cropper).

Sussex, West Selsey Bill, 24th April (T. J. Edwards, J. Faithfull). Presumed same as Hampshire.

1982 Yorkshire, North Catterick, 1st July, later dead in fishing line, now at Yorkshire Museum, photo. (per M. L. Denton).

1988 Suffolk Lowestoft, 29th April (R. Wincup); presumed same as Breydon, Norfolk, 29th (*Brit. Birds* 82: 530).

(Almost cosmopolitan except South America; European populations winter Africa) As in the last few years, evidence of 'one-day-stay tourists'.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* (0, 4, 1)

Cleveland South Gare, 14th-15th May, photo. (J. B. Dunnett *et al.*). Hartlepool, 11th June (C. Kehoe *et al.*); 15th July (G. Joynt *et al.*). Seal Sands and Seaton Snook, 12th-16th June (S. J. Hinley *et al.*). All same as Northumberland.

Dorset Hengistbury Head, 25th April (G. J. Armstrong).

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀, intermittently, 2nd May to 28th August, photo.; nested twice, first clutch abandoned, chick from second lost; all identical to Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*, but no mate identified (R. Archbold, A. Baxter, A. Chown *et al.*). Lindisfarne, 18th June (T. R. Cleaves). Cresswell Pond, 4th July, photo. (N. F. Osborne). Hauxley, 8th-9th July (N. F. Osborne). Tynemouth, 11th July (T. J. Tams), 29th-30th (C. G. Batty, A. S. Disley *et al.*). Long Nanny, 13th July (I. S. Davidson, K. A. Haysom). All presumed to relate to returning individual of 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 520).

1991 Cleveland Reclamation Pond, 16th June (J. B. Dunnett); presumed same as 1991 Northumberland (*Brit. Birds* 85: 530-531).

1994 Humberside Beacon Lane Ponds, 29th May to 3rd June (F. Baudet, J. F. Cooper), presumed same as 1994 Northumberland (*Brit. Birds* 88: 520).

(North and East Africa, east to Australia; winter quarters uncertain) She visits these old familiar places.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 23, 2)

Dorset The Fleet and other coastal localities, first-winter, 26th December to 10th February 1996, photo. (B. Spencer *et al.*).

Grampian Ythan Estuary, first-summer, 3rd May to 1st August (P. Doyle, R. McGregor *et al.*). Presumed same as Lothian.

Gwynedd Bangor Harbour, first-winter, 20th-24th January; same, Caernarvon, 3rd-9th February, photo. (M. Berw-Hughes *et al.*).

Lothian Musselburgh area, first-winter, intermittently since 16th December 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 522), coast from Portobello, Edinburgh, to Aberlady Bay, mainly Musselburgh, 21st February to 10th April, photo. (per I. J. Andrews). Also in Grampian.

(North America; winters USA and Mexico) This species has missed only one year (1981) since the first in 1980. The Lothian bird, it seems, moved up to Grampian for the summer—the farthest north yet.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* (3, 18, 0)

1994 Strathclyde Tiree, 30th June to 9th July, photo. (G. Evans *et al.*).

(Caribbean, West Africa, Indian and Pacific Oceans) May have been the Foulney Island, Cumbria, bird of 3rd-5th June (*Brit. Birds* 88: 522). This beauty

added a bit of excitement to a season's important work on the Corn Crake *Crex crex* at one of Britain's most beautiful and underwatched locations. There was indeed 'a stranger in paradise'.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 96, 4)

Cornwall Camel Estuary, 9th-28th May (G. J. Conway, D. I. Julian *et al.*).

Norfolk Breydon, 15th June (I. N. Smith *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, 12th June (P. Oldfield).

Yorkshire, North Wheldrake Ings, 29th-31st May (S. C. Minns).

1994 Cambridgeshire Barleycroft Gravel-pit and Fen Drayton, 13th July, photo. (D. & R. Frost, D. Garner, A. Payne *et al.*).

1994 Gwent Llandegfedd Reservoir, 11th-28th July (*Brit. Birds* 88: 522), to 18th only.

1994 Norfolk Cley, two, 22nd May (J. Frost *et al.*). Presumed same as Buckinghamshire, Norfolk (*Brit. Birds* 88: 522).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia; European population winters in Africa) This species is prone to 'slumps', but in the last couple of years it has picked up since its very poor years in the early 1990s, when there was only one record over a three-year period. The 1994 total now stands at nine, competing with the best years, 1987 and 1988.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 627, 14)

Cleveland Hartlepool, adult, 10th July (B. Beck, C. Kehoe *et al.*). Also in Northumberland.

Cornwall Hayle, juvenile, 18th October (S. & Mrs E. O'Donnell *et al.*). Presumed same as Scilly.

Hampshire Camp Farm Gravel-pits, Farnborough, juvenile, 8th September (K. B. Wills *et al.*); same, Fleet Pond, 9th-13th (J. M. Clark, J. Eyre *et al.*). Also in Surrey.

Kent Dungeness, adult, 13th-15th July, photo. (R. J. Price *et al.*); adult and juvenile, 23rd (J. & P. Chantler, R. Heading).

Northumberland Tynemouth, adult, 10th July (P. Charleton, T. J. Tams); same, Seaton Sluice, 10th (T. R. Cleeves). Same as Cleveland.

Orkney Loch of Hundland, adult, 27th July to 1st August, photo. (K. Fairclough *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, juvenile, 17th October (A. R. Dean *et al.*); same, Tresco, 17th (K. Cutting, B. Harding). Same as Cornwall.

Somerset Westhay Moor, juvenile, 23rd-29th October (D. J. Angel, A. M. Browne *et al.*).

Surrey Frimley Gravel-pits, juvenile, 9th September (S. Abbott); same as Hampshire. Staines Reservoirs, juvenile, 18th August (B. Milton, J. Winder *et al.*).

Sussex, West Thorney Deep, adult, 31st July (R. J. Senior); same, Chichester Gravel-pits, 3rd-6th August (T. J. Edwards, O. Mitchell *et al.*). Chichester Gravel-pits, juvenile, 27th-30th August (C. R. Janman, O. Mitchell *et al.*); juveniles, 18th-29th September, two, 18th-21st (T. J. Edwards *et al.*).

Tayside Montrose Basin, juvenile, 10th-13th September (R. D. Goater, R. Taylor *et al.*).

1994 Greater London Barn Elms Reservoirs, juvenile, 25th September (F. J. Maroevic, S. J. Spooner *et al.*).

1994 Humberside Barton-on-Humber, adult, 16th July (*Brit. Birds* 88: 522); same, Blacktoft Sands, 16th (D. Page).

1994 Norfolk Lakenheath Flashes, adult, 5th June (*Brit. Birds* 88: 522), also entered Suffolk (S. Evans per D. F. Walsh).

1994 Suffolk See 1994 Norfolk above.

(Southeast Europe, Asia and Africa; European population winters Africa) Also, a juvenile at St Andrews, Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 18th October. As last year, some very late records, including one on St Agnes, which was a new bird for Scilly for all present. July and August were, however, as always, good months for this species.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (2, 29, 1)

Shetland Gulberwick, taken into care, 4th January, released Wadbister Voe, 1st February, last noted 2nd, photo. (Dr C. F. Mackenzie *et al.*).

At sea North of Sea area Fair Isle, 62°41'N 01°34'W, 23rd January (P. D. Bloor).

1994 Lothian Musselburgh, 6th February (*Brit. Birds* 88: 523), locality was Seafield.

(Circumpolar Arctic) The percentage of 'live records' is slowly growing year by year, putting this species firmly on the top of rarity-finders' 'shopping lists'.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* (0, 1, 0)

1989 Man, Isle of Calf of Man, trapped 31st October, dead 1st November (*Brit. Birds* 86: 496), identifier was I. Fisher.

(North and Central America south to Panama) The first record for Britain and Ireland was a first-year, probably a male and probably of the eastern race *carolinensis* (*Brit. Birds* 89: 157-161).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (6, 32, 1)

Cleveland Greenabella Marsh, Hargreaves Quarry and Long Drag, juvenile, 2nd-9th July, photo. (I. J. Foster, J. Grieveson, A. Robinson *et al.*).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) Only the fourth mid-summer record.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 37, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 19th October, photo. (K. Blomerly *et al.*) (plate 193).

(North and Central America; winters south to Argentina) Recorded in consecutive years, following two blank years.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (64, 22, 1)

Cornwall Morwenstow, 9th-11th April, photo. (J. C. Pett *et al.*) (plate 191).

(South Europe, Russia, West Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) The first in Britain since 1990.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 115, 1)

Orkney Papa Westray, 1st-7th April, photo. (G. W. & Mrs R. D. Rendall *et al.*). North Ronaldsay, first-summer ♂, 11th-16th April (Dr L. McYntyre, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*); presumed same as Papa Westray.

Shetland Fetlar, first-winter ♂, since 25th October 1994 to 17th February (*Brit. Birds* 88: 526), to 13th May.

(Circumpolar Arctic; disperses south in some winters) The male originally taken into care on board a vessel and released on Fetlar in 1994 failed to find a partner there. One sitting on a roof-top in Gillingham, Kent, on 6th October 1994 was considered to be of uncertain origin.

White-throated Needletail Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus* (2, 6, 0)

1991 Derbyshire Near Belper, 3rd June (Miss S. L. Thorpe) (fig. 10, on p. 510); presumed same as Kent, Staffordshire, Shetland (*Brit. Birds* 85: 532-533).

(West Siberia to Japan, south to Northern China; winters south to Australia and New Zealand). This was probably the same individual as that which visited Blithfield Reservoir, Staffordshire, only 48 km to the southwest, on 1st June 1991 and was sighted by a number of lucky observers as it travelled between Kent and Shetland. The post-1957 statistics (*Brit. Birds* 85: 532) have now been revised. The first record for Sweden was during 22nd-27th May 1994 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 137).



A large swift-much larger than a Swift, half as large again. Appeared a dark brown/black swift with white markings on the head, back and under-tail.

Pale area on mantle, greyish/white.

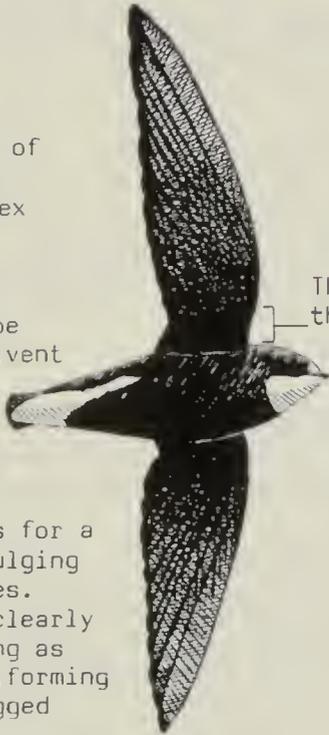


Trailing edge of primaries was slightly convex in shape.

White 'V' shape on under-tail, vent and lower flanks.

The 'wings' themselves looked very short compared to the flight feathers.

White throat.



Broadish wings for a swift, with bulging inner primaries. Each primary clearly visible in wing as a small bulge, forming a slightly jagged trailing edge.

Small white area on forehead, above the bill.



Glides on stiff wings, fast and easily.

Flew with rapid fluttery flaps and long glides. Looked very powerful

Fig. 10. White-throated Needletail Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*, near Belper, Derbyshire, 3rd June 1991 (Stephanie Thorpe). See page 509.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (0, 1, 1)

Northamptonshire Daventry Reservoir, 16th July (G. M. Pullan).

(Asia east from Altai to Japan and Philippines; winters Indonesia, New Guinea and Australia) The second British record, the first having been in Norfolk in 1993, with another at-sea record of one caught on a gas-platform 45 km off Norfolk in 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 43-46). A Staffordshire report in 1994 remains under consideration.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (150, 360, 9)

Devon Langerstone Point, 17th May (G. J. Conway).

Dorset Hengistbury Head, 12th October (E. D. Lloyd).

Essex Near Manwood, 10th April (R. Allen) (fig. 11).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven area, 4th June (D. Treacher *et al.*).Humberside Flamborough Head, 16th-17th April (B. J. N. Hill *et al.*).

Kent Folkestone, 10th July (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts).

Lothian Dunbar, 28th May (P. D. Keightley).

Scilly St Mary's, 8th October (S. Rock, T. J. Tams *et al.*); same, Gugh and St Agnes, 8th (D. Price *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, 3rd June (S. Wignill).

1988 Clwyd Rhuddlan, 19th April (S. Hughes).

1988 Sussex, East Beachy Head, 27th March (*Brit. Birds* 86: 497), already accepted (*Brit. Birds* 85: 533).

1991 Essex See 1991 Suffolk below.

1991 Suffolk Landguard, 11th July (*Brit. Birds* 86: 497), also Dovercourt, Essex (N. Odin *et al.*).

1992 Dorset Chesil Cove, 12th May (R. I. Morris).

1994 Hereford & Worcester Near Pershore, Worcestershire, 24th April (R. Prudden).

(South Eurasia, Northwest and East Africa; winters Africa) Similar numbers to those in 1994, but fewer than in the previous two years. One on Alderney, Channel Islands, on 13th and 15th September was the second record for the island (the first was on 29th March 1988).

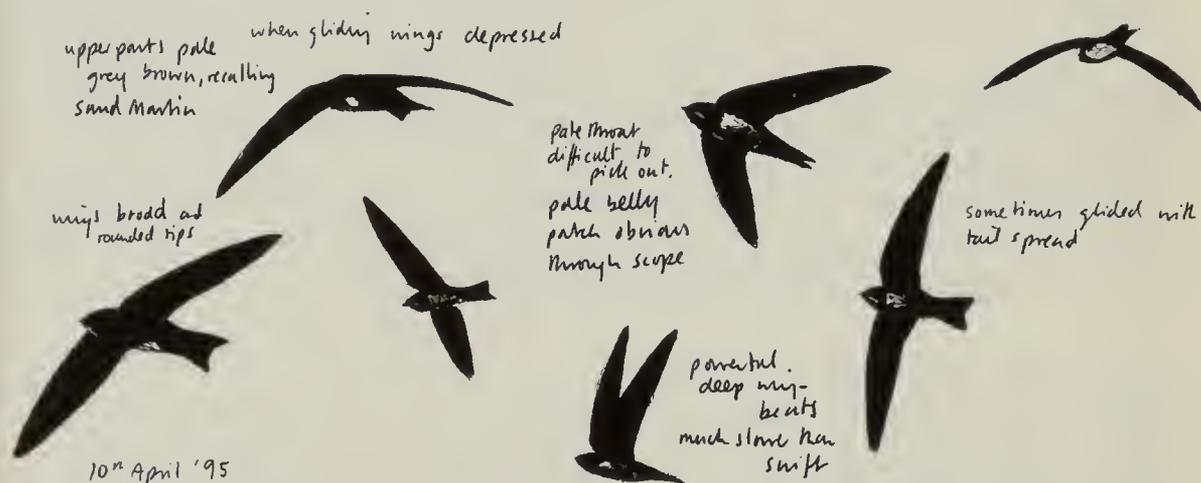


Fig. 11. Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, near Manwood, Essex, 10th April 1995 (Richard Allen)

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 90, 1)Highland Badicaule, Lochalsh, 23rd July (D. J. Holman *et al.*); present 22nd-25th, photo.

(Southern and Eastern Europe, Western Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) The last blank year was 1988; the current run of seven consecutive years equals the longest run since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 265, 12)

Cleveland Long Drag Pool, 10th September (R. Little).

Dorset Portland, 7th May (K. E. Vinicombe). Chesil Beach, 3rd May (R. I. Morris).

Dyfed Marloes, Pembrokeshire, 7th May (R. Stonier *et al.*).Grampian Loch Spynie, 12th-13th May (R. Proctor *et al.*).Kent Dungeness, 6th May (M. C. Buckland, M. Garwood, D. Walker *et al.*).

Norfolk Sheringham, 7th May (M. C. Young-Powell).

Nottinghamshire Attenborough, 10th September (S. A. Keller).

Suffolk Near Bramford, 18th-23rd May (J. Zantbeer *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 9th May (J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper *et al.*). Arlington Reservoir, 12th-15th May (C. F. Ball, N. A. Driver *et al.*).

Western Isles Stornoway, Lewis, 5th-6th April (P. Cunningham *et al.*).

1991 Greater Manchester Stretford, 6th May (L. Tattershall).

1994 Kent Foreness, 30th April (S. D. W. Mount).

1994 Norfolk Brancaster and other localities, three adults, 6th-11th November (*Brit. Birds* 88: 527), observers should include N. M. Lawton.

1994 Suffolk Southwold, 14th May (J. M. Cawston, S. J. Ling *et al.*).

(Southern and Eastern Eurasia and Africa; winters Africa) Quite a good year. The two additional 1994 records bring the total for that year to 22, the best year since 1990.

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota* (0, 2, 2)

Humberside Spurn, juvenile, 22nd-23rd, 28th October, photo. (L. J. Degnan, D. R. Middleton, P. Robinson *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, juvenile, 4th-5th December, photo. (R. Gleadle, R. J. Hathway *et al.*).

(North America; winters Chile, Brazil and Argentina) These are the third and fourth British records. Previous records were in Scilly on 10th-27th October 1983 and in Cleveland on 23rd October 1988. Cave Swallow *Hirundo fulva* is now becoming regular in small numbers on the eastern seaboard of North America, so care must be taken to note colour of forehead, throat and rump when confronted with a potential Cliff Swallow.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (135, over 1026, -)

1963 Greater London Brent Reservoir, 19th October (Dr L. A. Batten).

1970 Cleveland See Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* below.

(Western Siberia east to Mongolia and southeast to New Zealand, also Africa; northern populations winter Pakistan and India east to Southeast Asia) This species is no longer considered by the Committee.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 4, 0)

1990 Cornwall Skewjack, first-winter, about 22nd October to 1st November, photo. (C. D. R. Heard, G. Walbridge *et al.*).

1993 Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 31st October to 4th November, trapped 1st, photo. (G. Anderson, A. J. Leitch, B. Stammers *et al.*).

1994 Kent South Swale Nature Reserve, 7th November to 11th December, photo. (J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

(Southern Siberia, China and northeastern India; winters India, Sri Lanka and Andaman Islands) These become the second to third and fifth British records, with the one at Landguard, Suffolk, on 4th-10th November 1994 now becoming the fourth. Several records do, however, remain under consideration. This species must still be regarded as extremely difficult to identify, and can be problematical even in the hand.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (120, over 499, -)

1970 Cleveland Teesmouth (then Durham), 11th-18th October (*Brit. Birds* 64: 363), now considered to have been Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*.

(Northwest Africa and Western Europe east to Mongolia; the Western Palearctic population winters in the Sahel zone of Africa and in Saudi Arabia) This species is no longer considered by the Committee.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 192, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, trapped 24th April, taken by Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* 25th (Dr R. Riddington, K. A. Wilson *et al.*); 9th November (Dr R. Riddington, J. Watt *et al.*).

1991 Humberside Easington, 28th October (G. E. Dobbs, S. L. James).

1993 Shetland Norwick, Unst, two, 30th September, one to 3rd October (*Brit. Birds* 88: 529), already accepted (*Brit. Birds* 87: 542, where given observers correct). Additional record: Sumburgh, 3rd October (J. Coutts, J. M. & T. P. Drew, D. J. Rigby).

1994 Shetland Fair Isle, 10th-12th October (P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia; winters southern Asia) An even leaner year than 1994 and the lowest annual total since 1989. The additional records bring the 1993 total to 36 and the 1994 total to seven.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 42, 3)

Cornwall Near Nanquidno, 5th October (M. C., P. & Mrs S. M. Combridge).

Shetland Fair Isle, 13th-17th September (C. M. Hewson, K. Pellow, S. Rogers *et al.*). Foula, 21st-25th September (M. J. McKee, C. Turner, T. Warrick).

1994 Shetland Burrafirth, Unst, 16th-18th September (H. C. Towll *et al.*). Fair Isle, 25th September (D. M. Harris, N. C. Ward *et al.*).

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) Recorded annually since 1988. The additional record away from the Northern Isles is noteworthy.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (3, 294, 14)

Greater London Beddington Sewage-farm, 2nd November (S. J. Aspinall).

Merseyside Seaforth, 29th April (T. Vaughan).

Norfolk Titchwell, 19th May (D. & Mrs L. Bryant, D. Machin, R. Walker). Blakeney Point, two, 23rd-26th May (G. M. Cresswell, S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Sheringham, 24th May (D. H. Sadler, K. B. Shepherd, M. C. Young-Powell). Breydon, 15th May (P. R. Allard); 10th September (S. Smith *et al.*). Bacton, 10th September (M. Fiszer). Holme, 20th September (A. F. Brown).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 11th September (P. J. Donnelly); 15th (M. Gray).

Scilly St Mary's, 14th to at least 21st October (P. J. Lymbery *et al.*). St Agnes, 27th October to 1st November, photo. (N. Wheatley *et al.*).

1992 Humberside Sammy's Point, Easington, 23rd May (M. Coverdale, L. J. Degnan, D. Page).

1994 Greater London Barn Elms Reservoirs, 14th October (N. P. Senior).

(Arctic Eurasia; winters India and Africa) Another good year, particularly for North Norfolk, but a report on a second individual on St Mary's, Scilly, has yet to be received. The 1994 Greater London record brings the total for that year to 16 and is a sad reminder of the one seen by the late Rupert Hastings at the same locality on 13th May 1988.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 74, 10)

Cornwall Land's End, juvenile, 3rd September (R. Andrew, V. A. Stratton).

Norfolk Kelling, juvenile to first-winter, 17th September, photo. (P. A. J. Morris *et al.*) (fig. 12, on p. 514).

Scilly Tresco, first-winter, 27th-28th August, photo. (R. J. Hathway *et al.*) (plate 195); juvenile, 12th-15th September, photo. (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 17th August, photo. (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); first-winter, 6th September (K. A. Wilson). Fetlar, first-winter, 20th-24th September (D. Suddaby *et al.*). Seafield, Lerwick, first-winter, 26th-28th September (G. Ball, M. S. Chapman, K. Osborn *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, ♂, 10th May (G. R. Welch, R. Urquhart *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, first-summer ♂, 18th-19th June, photo. (P. M. Scanlan *et al.*) (plate 194).

1994 Shetland Quendale, 19th September (*Brit. Birds* 88: 530), finder was P. A. Dennis.

(Northeast and East Russia, West Siberia, West and Central Asia; winters southern and Southeast Asia) This is the highest-ever annual total, exceeding last year's record of seven. The last blank year was 1977. There are only three previous May records, two individuals in 1991 and one in 1993. A male photographed at Rue des Bergers Marsh, Guernsey, on 5th-6th May was the first for the Channel Islands.

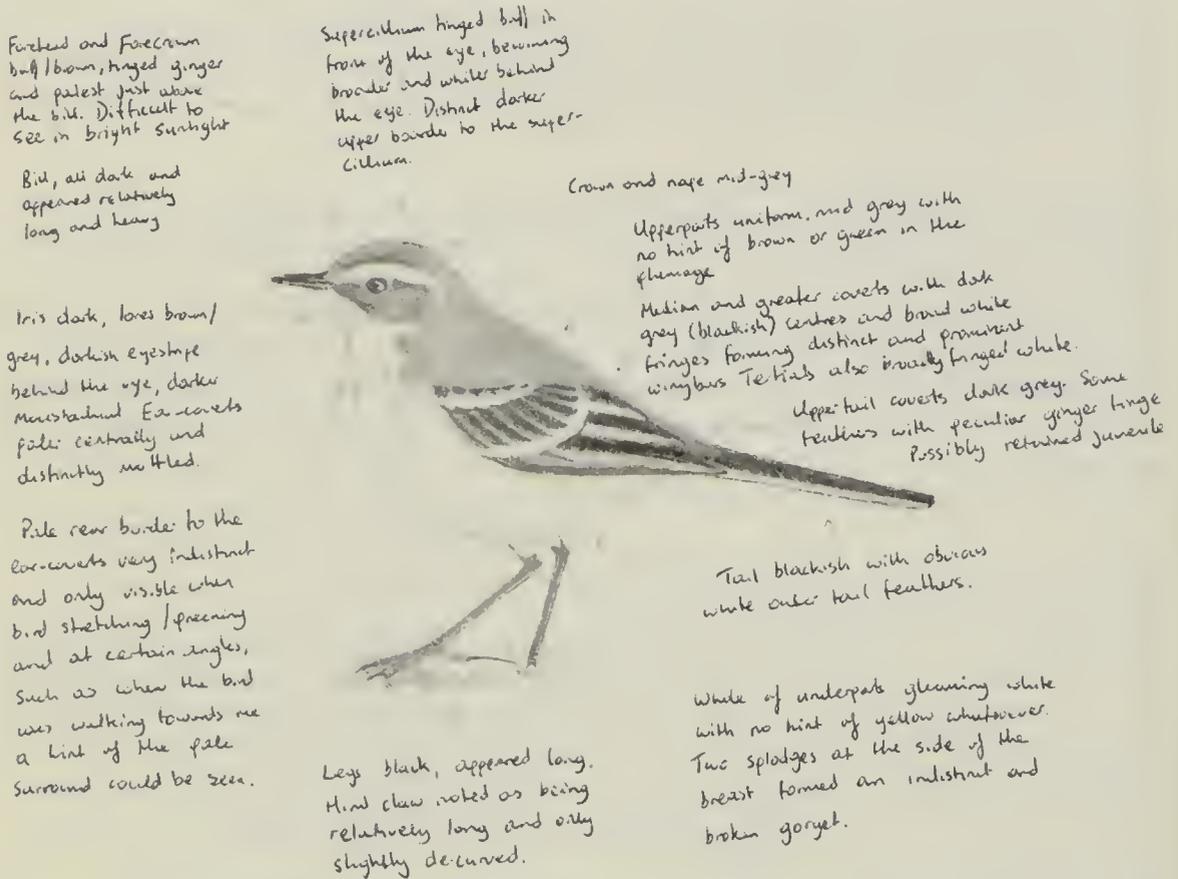


Fig. 12. Juvenile/first-winter Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Kelling, Norfolk, 17th September 1995 (P. A. J. Morris). See page 513.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 111, 3)

Orkney Kirkwall, adult, 18th-19th September, trapped 18th (E. J. & S. J. Williams).

Shetland Fair Isle, 25th May (C. M. Hewson *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, first-winter, 27th August to 15th September, trapped 27th, photo. (P. J. Holmes *et al.*) (plates 199 & 200).

(Scandinavia, East Europe and West Asia; winters Africa) A Humberside report remains under consideration. The first breeding record for the Netherlands was of five young fledged near Zeewolde, Flevoland, in June.

Field identification of this species can be extremely difficult and must be undertaken with great care, as discussed by Jon King and illustrated by Ian Lewington (*Birding World* 9: 179-189).

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyaneus* (3, 12, 1)

Northumberland Holy Island, ♂, 23rd April, photo. (T. Farooqi *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe across Asia to Japan; winters Southeast Asia) This species has now occurred for three years in succession after a four-year absence. Although this is the earliest British record, this species is an early migrant in China and it coincided here with Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* in Orkney,

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* on Fair Isle and Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* at Flamborough Head. There was no direct evidence of captive origin, although this species does feature in the cage-bird trade. The only previous spring record was of a male on Fetlar, Shetland, from 31st May to 1st June 1971. The first record for France was on Ouessant, Finistère, on 27th October 1993 (*Ornithos* 2: 13).

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

S. t. maura/stejnegeri (1, 230, 7)

Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the eastern races *maura* or *stejnegeri* were recorded as follows:

Norfolk Blakeney Point, ♂, probably adult, 9th-13th September (G. E. Dunmore, S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Cley, first-winter ♂, 28th September (D. J. Holman *et al.*); present, September to 5th October, photo.

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♀ or first-winter, 10th-12th September (P. J. Donnelly *et al.*).

Shetland Cunningsburgh, ♀ or first-winter, 12th-13th September (A. J. McCall *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, ♀, 2nd to at least 3rd October (P. Goddard, H. C. Towll *et al.*). Fair Isle, ♀ or first-winter, 14th-21st October (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, first-summer ♂, 30th April to 4th May, photo. (D. Bywater, D. A. Rushforth, Dr A. Sinnott *et al.*).

1991 Kent Folkestone, ♀ or first-winter, 13th October (C. D. & I. A. Roberts).

1991 Scilly St Mary's, ♀ or first-winter, 13th-18th October, photo. (Dr P. Gasson *et al.*).

1994 Dorset Portland, first-winter ♂, 30th September to 4th October (G. Walbridge *et al.*).

1994 Grampian Near Collieston, ♀ or first-winter, 8th November (I. Gordon, T. W. Marshall).

(White Sea, eastwards across Siberia; winters India, Southeast Asia, Philippines and Borneo) A poorer showing than in recent years.

S. t. variegata (0, 2, 0)

An individual showing the characters of the east Caucasus and north Iranian race *variegata* was recorded as follows:

1993 Suffolk Landguard, first-winter ♂, 11th September (J. M. Cawston, S. J. Ling *et al.*).

(Astrakhan Steppes east to northern Caspian, south to eastern Caucasus; winters Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia) The only other record of this race was at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 1st-4th October 1985.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 39, 0)

(Southern Europe, Northwest Africa and Southwest Asia, also Iran; winters Africa) We have been asked to point out that the non-accepted record of this species at Folkestone, Kent, on 1st October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 558) was clearly of either this species or Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka*, but defied specific identification despite the very full description provided.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 38, 0)

Cornwall Near Hayle, first-winter ♀, since 21st-24th December 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 534), 13th-14th, 30th January to 20th March, photo. (P. A. Rutter).

(North Africa, Northwest Arabia, east to Mongolia; winters Sahara, Arabia and Pakistan) The longest-staying individual in Britain previously was at Gorpel Reservoir, West Yorkshire, from 9th November 1949 to 22nd January 1950 (*Brit. Birds* 43: 179-183).

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (6, 8, 1).

Norfolk Hunstanton Golf-course, ♂, 22nd-25th May, photo. (K. Ellis *et al.*) (plate 196).

(Northwest Africa and southern Europe east to Mongolia; winters from the

Sahel zone of Africa south to Kenya) The first since 1989 and on a typical date.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* (0, 5, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 19th October, photo. (C. M. Hewson, Dr R. Riddington, K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

1994 Essex Chipping Ongar, taken into care exhausted, 28th October, released 2nd November, last noted 3rd, photo. (F. & N. Pepper).

(North America; winters southern USA south to Guatemala) Single records in the last three years bring the British total to six. All have been in October except the first, which was on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 2nd June 1975.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (1, 18, 1)

Devon Lundy, trapped 9th October, photo. (M. K. Ahmad, M. Gade, S. Wing *et al.*).

(North America; winters Central America south to Argentina) The first since 1993. The total remains at less than half that of Grey-cheeked Thrush *C. minimus*, which has now missed three years out of the last four.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (0, 15, 1)

Tayside Auchmithie, ♂, 28th-30th May, photo. (S. R. Green, T. Green *et al.*) (plate 198).

1991 Scilly St Mary's, 12th-13th October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 538), was first-winter. Tresco, 15th-16th October (C. McClure *et al.*), presumed same as above. St Mary's, first-winter, 18th October (M. Fiszer, R. C. Francis, K. Louth *et al.*), presumed same as above.

(Siberia and eastern Asia to Japan; winters China and Indonesia) Only the third spring record, the previous ones both having been in 1981, at Aldbrough, Humberside, on 16th-23rd April and at Newburgh, Grampian, on 27th May. The first record for Poland this century was on 13th April 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 39).

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 30, 2)

Orkney Stronsay, ♂, *T. r. atrogularis*, 24th-27th April, photo. (R. Goodwin, J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway, K. & N. Kent).

Shetland Sumburgh and Grutness, first-winter ♀, *T. r. atrogularis*, 1st October (P. V. Harvey, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

(Central Asia; winters northern India and China) The Orkney bird was the first spring record, although the Norfolk individual of early 1976 remained until 3rd April.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 55, 3)

Northumberland Farne Islands, first-winter, 16th-17th September, trapped 17th, photo. (N. A. Littlewood, S. J. McElwee, S. Patterson *et al.*).

Shetland Gott, first-winter, trapped, 10th September, photo. (F. J. Maroevic, J. D. Okill). Lamba Ness and Skaw, Unst, first-winter, 1st-3rd October, trapped 2nd, photo. (P. Goddard, H. C. Towll, H. T. & M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

1994 Gwynedd Bardsey, moribund, 8th October (K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from central Russia to northern Japan; winters Philippines and Southeast Asia) None was recorded on Fair Isle, Shetland, for the first time since 1983. The additional 1994 record was the second for Wales.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 17, 5)

Greater Manchester Scotsman's Flash, in song, 11th-12th July, photo. (P. J. Alker, D. P. Broome *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, trapped 15th September (M. Gray, N. E. Robinson, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 27th May, photo. (I. Barton, K. Rosewarne *et al.*). Lerwick, 14th September (J. Coutts, Mrs M. Leslie *et al.*). Sumburgh, first-winter, 15th-17th September, trapped 17th, photo. (R. J. Wardle *et al.*).

(Central and eastern Europe and west-central Asia; winters southeastern Africa) This was the highest annual total, following three in 1981 and 1993. The Greater Manchester bird was the fourth in July. A Cambridgeshire record, lost during circulation, remains to be dealt with. A record total of about 31 singing males was recorded in Denmark in spring 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 40).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 32, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 9th-17th September, trapped 11th, photo. (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

(South Russia and Asia; winters Southwest Asia and India) This represents a return to a more normal situation, following last year's record number.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 161, 4)

Cleveland Haverton Hole, in song, 22nd June to 4th July, photo. (B. Beck, D. Clayton, R. T. McAndrew *et al.*).

Norfolk Weybourne, 31st May to 4th June, trapped 31st, photo. (M. J. Preston *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 30th September (M. Quirie, Dr R. Riddington, K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

Sussex, East Icklesham, trapped 1st July, photo. (G. Dutson, D. J. Pankhurst, S. J. R. Rumsey *et al.*).

1993 **Kent Elmley**, 27th May to 11th June (*Brit. Birds* 88: 539), to 3rd July.

1994 **Norfolk Cley**, 11th May to 26th June (*Brit. Birds* 88: 538), 27th.

(Europe, Southwest and East Asia and North Africa; winters Africa) A fairly typical showing.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* (2, 13, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, 5th-13th June, trapped 5th, photo. (Dr R. Riddington, K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

Suffolk Benacre, 12th-13th August, photo. (C. A. Buttle *et al.*).

(Iberia, North Africa and the Balkans east to Pakistan and Kazakhstan; winters Africa south of the Sahara) The Fair Isle record is the first in spring. These are the first in Britain since 1985. Previous records of this species are currently under review. The pitfall of a Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta* lacking yellow and green tones always needs to be eliminated when considering the identification of this species.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 58, 3)

Durham Seaham Hall Dene, 21st September (P. Anderson).

Shetland Sumburgh, 7th-10th September, photo. (A. F. T. & G. J. Fitchett *et al.*). Fetlar, 11th September (T. Davies).

1990 **Humberside Kilnsea**, 23rd-24th September (N. A. Bell, G. E. Dobbs *et al.*).

1993 **Sussex, East Icklesham**, trapped 19th September (S. J. R. Rumsey, T. Squire, J. Willsher *et al.*).

(Northwest Russia east to Mongolia and south to Iran; winters India) A return to more-usual numbers after high totals in 1993 and 1994. There were only five prior to 1975, but 1986 was the last blank year. The additional 1993 record brings the total for that record year to 14.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia camillans* (12, 327, 32)

Cornwall Gwithian, ♂, 3rd May (P. A. Rutter). Church Cove, Lizard, ♂, 6th May (S. Kolodziejski).

Dorset Portland, ♂, 24th April (G. Walbridge). St Aldhelm's Head, ♂, 4th May (S. J. Morrison, P. A. Williams).

Dyfed Skokholm, ♀♀, 7th, 29th May (M. Betts, G. Thompson *et al.*).

Essex Priory Park, Southend-on-Sea, ♂, 29th September (B. Baldock, J. Saward).

Gwynedd Bardsey, first-summer ♀, 1st, 15th-18th May, trapped 15th, 16th, 18th, photo. (I. Fisher, R. Greenhalgh, A. F. Silcocks *et al.*).

Hampshire Farlington Marshes, ♂, 21st May (J. Crook *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, ♂, 6th-10th May, photo. (G. Vause *et al.*). Sammy's Point, Easington, age/sex uncertain, 19th-26th September (M. P. Lawlor *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, ♂, 13th-19th April (N. E. Wall *et al.*). St Margaret's, ♂, 2nd September (A. J. Greenland, I. Hodgson); presumed same, 9th-17th (J. R. H. Clements *et al.*).

Man, Isle of Calf of Man, first-summer ♂, 4th-5th May, trapped 4th, photo. (J. Bishop *et al.*).

Norfolk Sheringham, ♂, trapped 7th May, photo. (D. H. Sadler, M. C. Young-Powell).

Blakeney Point, ♂, 7th May (B. J. & Mrs J. Small *et al.*); ♂, 23rd May (G. M. Cresswell, S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*); ♀, 24th (R. Gilbert, J. R. McCallum *et al.*). Kelling Heath, ♂, 26th May (Dr M. P. Taylor *et al.*).

Northumberland Prior's Park, first-summer ♀, 8th May (C. Bradshaw, M. P. Carruthers, K. W. Regan *et al.*).

Orkney Windwick, South Ronaldsay, first-summer ♀, 25th May (E. J. & S. J. Williams).

Stronsay, ♂, 27th-28th May, photo. (J. F. Holloway *et al.*). North Ronaldsay, ♂, 14th-15th September, trapped 14th (S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 15th-20th October (M. Hepple *et al.*). St Mary's, ♂, 19th-31st October, photo. (B. J. Small *et al.*).

Shetland Fetlar, ♀, 26th-31st May (I. & N. Francis, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Whalsay, ♀, 26th May to 13th June, trapped 26th (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*).

South Aywick, Yell, first-summer ♀, 6th-8th June (J. P. Taylor *et al.*). Noss, ♀, 6th-13th June, possibly since 4th (P. V. Harvey, D. Hemsley *et al.*). Fair Isle, ♂, probably first-summer, 27th May (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); ♀, 13th June (C. M. Hewson, M. A. Newell, K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, ♂, 13th-18th October (C. C. Thomas *et al.*) (plate 167, on p. 528).

1989 Scilly St Mary's, age/sex uncertain, 2nd-5th October (P. A. Maker, J. P. Martin, S. Rogers *et al.*).

1990 Cornwall Caerthillan Cove, ♂, 30th March to at least 1st April (*Brit. Birds* 84: 492), to 20th.

1994 Gwynedd Bardsey, ♂, 16th-25th May, trapped 19th, photo. (A. F. Silcocks, K. A. Wilson).

1994 Kent Dungeness, first-summer ♀, 29th May, photo. (C. G. Bradshaw *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, western Turkey and Northwest Africa; winters northern and West Africa) An excellent total, equalling the record 32 in 1988. There was also a spring influx in Sweden (*Brit. Birds* 89: 40-41).

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 44, 5)

Cornwall Trevoze Head, ♂, 20th-25th April (R. Smaldon *et al.*).

Dorset Weston, Portland, first-summer ♂, 10th-11th April, photo. (G. Walbridge *et al.*); ♀ or first-winter, 12th October (P. Leigh, G. Walbridge).

Kent Dungeness, first-summer ♂, trapped 14th June (W. Attridge, D. Walker *et al.*).

Man, Isle of Calf of Man, ♀, trapped 6th May, photo. (N. Aspey, J. Bishop *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, Middle East and North Africa) This species has occurred in each of the previous five years, with five or more records in each of those years except 1991.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 248, 24)

Borders St Abb's Head, 17th-21st September (J. Landseer, O. J. Leyshon *et al.*).

Cleveland Hartlepool, 18th September (T. Francis).

- Gwynedd** Bardsey, first-winter, trapped 24th August, photo. (I. Fisher, A. F. Silcocks *et al.*).
Humberside Flamborough Head, 9th September (P. J. Willoughby *et al.*). Spurn, 23rd August (A. Dawson *et al.*); 11th-12th September, trapped 11th (D. J. Bowes *et al.*).
Norfolk Great Yarmouth, 17th August (J. Oates *et al.*). Cley, 19th August (Miss D. E. Balmer, Dr J. D. Wilson, R. J. Wilson). Blakeney Point, 2nd September (S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart). Happisburgh, 2nd-3rd September (Dr R. G. W. Heselden). Holkham Meals, 3rd September (M. D. Crewe, S. Gillings *et al.*). Cromer, 3rd September (D. J. Holman *et al.*). Overstrand, 4th September (B. J. Murphy).
Northumberland Prior's Park, 3rd-6th September (C. Bradshaw, M. P. Carruthers *et al.*). Low Newton, 8th-12th September (R. J. Lockwood, M. I. Thomas *et al.*). Bamburgh, first-winter, 16th-17th September, trapped 16th, photo. (J. C. Day, M. K. & M. S. Hodgson *et al.*).
Orkney North Ronaldsay, 8th-9th September (M. Gray, T. Outlaw *et al.*); 10th-15th (P. J. Donnelly *et al.*).
Shetland Fair Isle, three: first-winter, trapped 7th September, photo. (Dr R. Riddington, K. A. Wilson *et al.*); first-winter, 9th September (C. M. Hewson *et al.*); 18th September (Dr R. Riddington, S. Rogers, R. Wardle *et al.*).
Sussex, East Beachy Head, 10th September (M. E. Nolan, A. Quinn *et al.*).
Yorkshire, North Ffiley, 2nd-6th September (R. E. Harbird *et al.*); 17th-19th (L. Gillard *et al.*).
1990 Fife Fife Ness, trapped 28th July (J. Cobb, N. Mann, S. Rowe).
1994 Kent Cliffe, 1st June (*Brit. Birds* 88: 541), locality was St Margaret's-at-Cliffe.

(Eurasia east from northern Germany; winters Pakistan, India and Indochina)
 An excellent total, surpassed only by 29 in 1992. Reports of up to eight at Holkham Meals, Norfolk, during early September have yet to be fully substantiated.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 186, 10)

- Kent** St Margaret's, 14th October (J. & P. Chantler, R. Heading).
Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 3rd September (N. A. Lound, P. M. Troake *et al.*). Saltfleetby, 18th September (G. P. Catley).
Lothian Barns Ness, 29th-30th August, trapped 30th (S. Border, K. Gillon, C. C. McGuigan *et al.*).
Orkney North Ronaldsay, 13th September (T. Outlaw, S. D. Stansfield). Rendall, trapped 14th September (J. B. Ribbands *et al.*).
Shetland Fair Isle, three: trapped 27th June (C. M. Hewson, M. A. Newell, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); 2nd-3rd September, trapped 3rd, photo. (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); 14th September (Dr N. J. Watmough *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, trapped 30th August (G. Gray, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).
1993 Cornwall Porthgarra, 8th September (G. J. Conway *et al.*).
1994 Norfolk Holkham Meals, at least 2nd September (A. I. Bloomfield, S. J. M. Gantlett *et al.*).

(Northern Fennoscandia east to Alaska; winters Southeast Asia) There have been more than ten in each of the last three years, but the most recent year before that with a total greater than ten was 1984, when 11 were recorded. The late-June record on Fair Isle, Shetland, echoes records on 5th July 1975 at Titchwell, Norfolk, and on 3rd July 1982 on Fair Isle.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 148, 8)

- Cornwall** Porthgarra, 13th-14th October (D. P. Appleton).
Dorset Winspit, 12th-13th October (S. J. Morrison *et al.*).
Norfolk Great Yarmouth, 29th-30th October (G. M. Cresswell *et al.*).
Suffolk Landguard, trapped 15th October, photo. (P. J. Holmes, M. C. Marsh, S. H. Piotrowski *et al.*).
Sussex, East Icklesham, trapped 15th, 20th October (I. Hunter, S. J. R. Rumsey, T. Squire *et al.*). Beachy Head, 2nd-3rd November (A. S. Cook *et al.*).
Sussex, West Church Norton, 23rd October (C. R. Janman *et al.*).

Wight, Isle of St Catherine's Point, 29th October (M. Buckley, D. J. Hughes, K. Lover *et al.*).
 1994 Norfolk Holme, 10th-11th October (G. F. Hibberd, N. M. Lawton *et al.*).

(Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) This is the highest annual total since 1991.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 153, 10)

Cheshire Arley, trapped 19th November, photo. (J. Pearce-Higgins, Dr M. Woodhead).

Cornwall Bude, 11th January to 4th May (G. P. Sutton *et al.*). Kenidjack, 23rd-27th October, photo. (J. D. Bryden, T. M. Carne, S. M. Christophers *et al.*).

Devon Bideford, since 28th December 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 542, plate 180), to 30th April (A. M. Jewels *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, 29th October to 2nd November, trapped 31st, photo. (L. J. Degnan, D. R. Middleton, R. Rowland *et al.*).

Kent Sandwich Bay, first-winter, 30th-31st October, trapped 30th, photo. (P. A. Brown, D. R. Watson *et al.*); first-winter, 31st October to 5th November, trapped 31st, photo. (T. Bagworth, L. J. Hirst *et al.*).

Lothian Barns Ness, 11th-14th November (I. J. Andrews, A. Brown *et al.*).

Northumberland Low Hauxley, first-winter, trapped 4th November, photo. (M. J. Carr *et al.*).

Holy Island, 11th-12th November (G. Bowman, P. R. Davey, I. Kerr *et al.*).

Shetland Sumburgh, 25th-26th May (M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

1994 Norfolk Holkham Meals, 17th-20th October (*Brit. Birds* 88: 542), 21st (per M. E. S. Rooney).

(Central and northeastern to southern Asia; winters northern India and Southeast Asia) The two overwintering records and the spring record in Shetland recall the events of 1970, when one was ringed on the Calf of Man, Isle of Man, on 14th May and found dying in Co. Limerick, Ireland, on about 5th December.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 129, 4)

Northumberland Holy Island, 8th September (M. G. Anderson, P. R. Davey). Whitley Bay (formerly Tyne & Wear), 20th-29th September, photo. (M. P. Frankis, A. S. Jack, T. J. Tams *et al.*).

Scilly Bryher, 18th-26th October (F. White *et al.*).

Shetland Sumburgh, 13th-18th September, trapped 16th, photo. (A. Brown, J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper, I. S. Robertson *et al.*) (plate 168, on p. 528).

1993 Orkney Rousay, 17th May (M. Carr).

(Central, western and southern Europe, Levant and Northwest Africa; winters northern Africa) The record from Whitley Bay will be considered by the BOU Records Committee as a potential record of the eastern race *P. b. orientalis*, which has yet to be admitted to the British list. The taxonomic status of *orientalis* is under review by the BOURC, and this form may warrant specific status. It is important to record any calls given by further individuals, as this may help in assigning them to one or other subspecies/species.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 15, 2)

Norfolk Cley, ♂, 5th May (S. J. M. Gantlett, H. P. Medhurst, S. R. Perry).

Shetland Tresta, ♂, 5th June (H. R. Harrop, M. Mellor).

(Central and Southeast Europe and western Russia; winters Africa) The first records since 1992. Two in one year has been equalled only in 1979, 1984 and 1985. Even when confronted by apparent spring males, observers should be aware that hybrids with Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca* can cause identification problems (not to mention those presented by Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata*!). Females and immatures remain extremely difficult to identify. Three reports from previous years remain under consideration.

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis* (0, 1, 0)

1989 Norfolk Holkham Meals, 13th October to at least 6th May 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 495; 88: 150-153, plates 36-37), was first-year ♂ (*Brit. Birds* 88: 611).

(North America)

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 94, 4)

Cambridgeshire Somersham, first-winter, 28th-29th October (A. Hitchings *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, juvenile, 13th October (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price *et al.*); juvenile, 19th (D. Walker).

Sussex, East Icklesham, first-winter, trapped 14th October, photo. (P. Jones, T. Squire, J. Willsher).

(Western Europe to Manchuria; mainly resident, occasionally dispersive or eruptive) Although there are reports from Scilly yet to be submitted, this is a disappointing total in comparison with 1993 and 1994.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 39, 3)

Dyfed St David's, Pembrokeshire, first-winter, 27th October (D. J. Astins, J. W. Donovan *et al.*).

Norfolk Snettisham, ♂, in song, 2nd May (A. Bunting, N. Lawton, D. Snelling *et al.*).

Orkney Deerness, ♂, 10th-17th September (K. E. Hague, E. R. Meek *et al.*).

1989 Cornwall Zennor, 27th to at least 30th October (*Brit. Birds* 85: 547), 31st (J. R. Smart).

(South Asia to China; winters Northeast Africa) The Norfolk record is only the fourth in spring. The only previous singing male was at Sidlesham, West Sussex, from 1st March to 20th April 1975.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 119, 1)

Kent St Margaret's, adult, 13th-17th August, photo. (I. Hodgson, M. Stephenson *et al.*).

(Southern and eastern Europe and Southwest Asia; winters East and South Africa) The poorest showing since 1987.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 269, 27)

Cambridgeshire Wyton, Huntingdonshire, adult, 11th-12th July (R. Frost *et al.*).

Cornwall Helston, 17th June (E. C. & Mrs V. James). Penzance, juvenile, 30th September to 15th October (G. Dutton *et al.*). Maenporth, juvenile, 10th November (R. C. James).

Devon Bickington, adult, 28th November to 6th February 1996 (L. Lock).

Dorset Portland, adult, 23rd-30th August (D. & G. Walbridge *et al.*).

Durham Heighington, adult, 21st-22nd June, photo. (K. Baldrige, Mrs D. Butt, D. & Mrs A. Raw). Hetton-le-Hole, adult, 28th August to 11th September, photo. (C. & G. W. Wilson *et al.*).

Dyfed Strumble Head, Pembrokeshire, juvenile, 18th-19th September (C. Benson, G. Jones, G. H. Rees).

Grampian New Deer, adult, 5th-9th July, photo. (L. T. A. Brain *et al.*).

Gwynedd Dwygyfylchi, Caernarvonshire, adult, 12th July, photo. (E. J. Abraham, A. J. Vinson *et al.*).

Hampshire Headley, adult, 30th July, photo. (R. Dobbs).

Humberside Withernsea, adult, 11th June (H. & Mrs. M.-C. Frost). Spurn, juvenile, 10th October (A. Dawson).

Lincolnshire Chapel St Leonard's, adult, 18th-24th June, photo. (G. P. Catley, N. A. Lound *et al.*).

Orkney South Ronaldsay, juvenile, 13th-14th September (J. & Mrs R. McCutcheon, E. J. & S. J. Williams).

Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 17th-28th October (R. M. Fray, A. J. Mackay *et al.*). St Agnes and Gugh, juvenile, 17th-22nd October (C. Turner *et al.*).

Shetland Scalloway, adult, 7th June to 25th July (J. & Mrs B. Walterson *et al.*). Whalsay, adult, 22nd June to 1st July (J. L. & Mrs A. G. Irvine, Dr B. Marshall). Fair Isle, adult, 16th July to 1st September (J. Barker, I. R. Dickie, M. A. Newell *et al.*); juvenile, 8th-16th September (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

Strathclyde Largs, Ayrshire, juvenile, 17th October, photo. (Miss H. Clayton, Miss V. Firminger).

Suffolk Lowestoft, adult, 17th-27th June (A. Crutchley, R. Fairhead, J. Pilgrim *et al.*).

Sussex, East Coldean, adult, 12th-16th June, photo. (R. J. Fairbank, Mrs H. K. Hammond, A. D. & I. J. Whitcombe *et al.*).

Western Isles Drimsdale, South Uist, adult, 4th-16th September, photo. (T. J. & Mrs V. Dix *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Newby, Scarborough, adult or first-summer, 20th June (R. Monaghan, F. J. Thompson).

1987 **Yorkshire**, West Wakefield, adult, 23rd June (*Brit. Birds* 86: 525), same as Normanton, 23rd-24th June (*Brit. Birds* 85: 548).

1991 **Devon** Hope Cove, juvenile, 3rd-7th September (*Brit. Birds* 86: 525), 8th (J. R. Smart *et al.*).

1993 **Gwynedd** Bardsey, juvenile, 21st-29th September, photo. (Mrs J. L. Duffy, Mrs A. Normand *et al.*).

1994 **Dyfed** Ynyslas, Ceredigion, adult, 12th June (H. W. Roderick, B. G. Twigg).

1994 **Gwynedd** Moelfre, Anglesey, adult, 28th July, photo. (J. Barnes *et al.*); present 26th July to 21st August.

1994 **Norfolk** Winterton, adult, 7th June, photo. (P. Cawley *et al.*), presumed same as Sea Palling, 9th (*Brit. Birds* 88: 546).

1994 **Scilly** St Mary's, adult, 1st June (G. M. Cook).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) Another excellent year for this species. It is of note that large numbers bred in Bulgaria and Hungary in 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 42, 264). An adult photographed at Le Port, Jersey, on 25th June was the third record for the Channel Islands, the first and second having been in 1882 and 1993. The three additional records bring the 1994 record total to 29.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 78, 10)

Cornwall MV *Scilloman*, off Land's End, 30th September (M. A. Hardwick, A. V. Moon *et al.*). Pendeen, 15th October, photo. (G. J. Etherington *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, 9th October (M. K. Ahmad, J. R. Diamond).

Dorset Littlesea, 10th October (B. Spencer *et al.*).

Dyfed Porthclais, near St David's, Pembrokeshire, 18th-19th October (O. & Mrs G. Roberts *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 7th-14th October, photo. (M. Bishop, T. D. Codlin, D. Powell *et al.*). Trecco, 3rd to at least 10th October (P. A. Fraser, R. J. Hathway *et al.*). St Agnes, 15th to at least 21st October, photo. (P. Samson, J. W. Sykes *et al.*).

Suffolk Southwold, 12th-14th October (R. Walden *et al.*). Thorpeness, 12th-15th October (D. Fairhurst *et al.*).

(North America; winters Cuba and northern South America) The only higher totals were 14 in 1985 and 12 in 1988. The three accepted records for Scilly, however, are fewer than the number claimed to be present there during October. The unbroken run from 1980 is extraordinary for a Nearctic passerine.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 275, 155)

Cheshire Holmes Chapel, 26th December (P. M. Hill).

Cleveland Hargreaves Quarry, ♂, trapped 2nd November, photo. (M. A. Blick, C. Brown *et al.*). South Gare, 5th December; another, 6th (A. Feeney, R. C. Taylor).

Grampian Cruden Bay, first-winter, 12th November (C. Barton, J. R. W. Gordon, I. A. Roberts *et al.*); unaged, 10th December (P. D. Bloor, C. Cronin, Dr I. M. Phillips). Loch Kinord, 28th December (Dr I. M. Phillips, K. D. Shaw). Fraserburgh, 30th-31st December (I. Francis, Dr I. M. Phillips, A. Webb *et al.*). Loch Spynie, up to six, 23rd-30th December (M. J. H. Cook, C. A. Gervaise, R. Proctor *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, eight: first-winter, trapped 10th November, photo. (B. R. Spence); ♀ or first-winter, 11th-12th, photo. (J. M. Bayldon, D. Page *et al.*); 19th November (R. Meilcarek); 6th-7th December (L. J. Degnan, B. R. Spence, I. D. Walker); ♂, 8th-11th, trapped 8th (L. J. Degnan, B. R. Spence, I. D. Walker *et al.*); first-winter ♂, 9th-11th December, trapped 9th, photo.; ♂, 9th-11th, trapped 9th, photo. (B. R. Spence *et al.*); ♂, 10th-11th, trapped 10th (T. Collins, L. J. Degnan, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Lancashire Worsthorne, Burnley, at least two, 29th-31st December (P. Grice *et al.*).

Leicestershire Rushpit Wood, Rutland Water, up to five, 10th-26th December, two, 11th-15th, 25th, three, 16th-24th, including ♂, 16th-26th, two individuals to 1996 (A. H. J. Harrop, J. Wright *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Twelve: Donna Nook, first-winter, 12th November (G. P. Catley, J. R. Clarkson, A. C. Sims). Laughton Forest, seven, at least 27th December (G. P. Catley, N. Drinkall, J. T. Harriman). Swanholme Park, Lincoln, two ♀♀ or first-winters, 28th December, at least one to 30th; same, with two ♂♂, 31st; ♂ and another to at least 6th January 1996 (K. E. Durose, D. M. Jenkins).

Norfolk Fourteen: Blakeney Point, 18th November (M. I. Eldridge). Holkham Meals, at least 19th November (A. I. Bloomfield). Overstrand, 11th December (B. J. Murphy). Cromer, up to four, 20th December to 1996 (M. P. Lee, A. M. Stoddart, S. C. Votier *et al.*). North Wootton, ♂ and another, 20th December to 4th January 1996 (G. Brind, D. & M. Roberts *et al.*). Syderstone, ♂, 25th December, taken by Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*; four, 26th (A. I. Bloomfield).

Northumberland Eight: Holy Island, 12th November (M. P. Carruthers, T. Harris *et al.*). Inner Farne, 5th December (C. Drake, T. P. Drew, M. J. Pilsworth *et al.*); another, 6th (C. Drake, T. P. Drew, M. Hodges *et al.*). Brownsman, 5th-6th December, photo. (A. Baxter, N. A. Littlewood, S. McElwee *et al.*). Newbiggin, two, 9th December, one to 10th, photo. (T. R. Cleeves, J. G. Steele *et al.*). Felton Lane, 11th-14th December (N. Foggo). Corbridge, 15th December (M. Richardson).

Nottinghamshire Budby, ♂, 16th to at least 19th December (A. Critchley, P. Palmer *et al.*).

Orkney Forty: Stronsay, 7th November, photo. (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway, Mr & Mrs N. Kent, D. Peace); at least five, 13th-15th, three, 13th, five, 14th, three photo. (J. F. Holloway *et al.*); 1st December (J. F. Holloway); at least seven, 8th-9th, six, 8th, four, 9th, photo. (J. F. Holloway *et al.*). Stenness, 13th November (R. G. Adam, E. R. Meek); 9th December; another, 10th (E. R. Meek). North Ronaldsay, two, 13th November (M. Gray, T. Outlaw, S. D. Stansfield); first-winter, 13th-14th, trapped 14th (M. Gray, T. Outlaw, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*); another, 14th (T. Outlaw); first-winter, 14th-15th, trapped 14th, photo. (P. Donnelly, S. D. Stansfield, Mrs A. Tulloch *et al.*); first-winter, trapped 29th, photo. (A. E. Duncan, T. Outlaw, S. D. Stansfield); 6th December (A. D. Mitchell, T. Outlaw, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*); another two, 6th-8th (A. D. Mitchell, S. D. Stansfield); first-winter ♂, trapped 6th, photo. (A. E. Duncan, A. D. Mitchell, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*); two, 7th, including first-winter trapped (A. D. Mitchell, S. D. Stansfield); two first-winters, trapped 8th, one to 10th, both photo. (M. Gray, T. Outlaw, S. D. Stansfield); five others, 8th-9th, one to 10th, one to 14th (M. Gray, A. D. Mitchell, T. Outlaw). Stromness, 13th December (M. Gray). Burray, three, 15th-17th December (T. Dean *et al.*).

Scilly Samson, ♂, 5th December (M. Robins, P. J. Robinson).

Shetland Thirty-eight: Mid Yell, three, 4th November (Dr C. F. Mackenzie). Fladdabister, first-winter, 4th-5th November (G. W. Petrie). Kirkabister, 4th-6th November (M. Mellor, G. Robertson *et al.*). Skaw, Whalsay, ♀, 4th to at least 6th November, trapped 5th (J. L. Irvine, Dr B. Marshall); possibly same, 11th (H. R. Harrop, P. V. Harvey). Haroldswick, Unst, at least two, 5th November, probably since 4th, including first-winter ♂, trapped 5th (H. Laurenson, M. G. Pennington, J. Thomson *et al.*). Nesting, two, 6th November (K. Osborn). Skaw, Unst, 9th November, possibly same as Haroldswick (C. Donald, K. Osborn). Halligarth, two, 9th November (C. Donald, K. Osborn). Isbister, Whalsay, 11th November (H. R. Harrop, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Fair Isle, ♂, 11th November, presumed same, 13th; ♀ or first-winter, 5th December; ♀ or first-winter, 10th (Dr R. Riddington). Toab, ♂ and three others, 12th November, one to 13th, one to 16th (H. R. Harrop, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Tingwall, 13th-14th November (P. Sclater). Fetlar, 14th-15th November (D. Suddaby); presumed another, 19th (T. G. Davies). Baltasound, Unst, two, 15th November (P. V. Harvey); another, 17th-18th (M. J. MacLeod, M. G. Pennington); 6th-11th December; another, 11th (M. G. Pennington). Bressay, ♂ and two others, 17th November (C. Donald); presumed same and two others, 18th

(K. Osborn). Gulberwick, 2nd December (Dr C. F. Mackenzie). Sandwick, 6th December; first-winter ♂, 13th, 17th, trapped 17th (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey).

Staffordshire Hanchurch, ♂, 27th December (J. P. Martin).

Tayside Vane Farm, 24th, 28th December (D. Ogilvie, K. D. Shaw).

Yorkshire, South Four: Finningley Park, Doncaster, first-winter, trapped 9th December, photo. (L. J. Degnan, D. Hazard, N. P. Whitehouse); first-winter ♂, trapped 17th December, photo. (D. Hazard, P. Shawcroft, N. P. Whitehouse); first-winter, trapped 27th (D. Hazard). Broomhill, Barnsley, first-winter, 31st December to 3rd January 1996 (N. W. Addey, J. M. Turton *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Six: Wintersett Reservoir, ♂, trapped 15th November (A. Porter); first-winter, trapped 8th December, photo. (A. Porter, G. & P. Smith); first-winter ♂, trapped 9th, photo. (P. Harrison, A. Porter, P. Smith); first-winter, trapped 16th, photo. (J. M. Gardner, A. Porter, P. Smith *et al.*); first-winter, trapped 27th, photo. (T. Collinson, A. Porter, P. Smith *et al.*); another first-winter, trapped 27th, photo. (S. Denny, P. Smith, J. M. Turton).

1993 **Highland** Brora, 26th January (A. Vittery).

1994 **Grampian** Girdle Ness, 17th October (I. Gordon, S. A. Reeves).

(Circumpolar Arctic; spreads erratically south in winter) An unprecedented influx which continued into 1996. The previous highest annual total was 63 in 1991. The standard of submissions has been very high (only a handful so far have been rejected). The superb dossier submitted by S. D. Stansfield on behalf of the North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory deserves special mention. We request that any outstanding 1995 (or early 1996) records be submitted as soon as possible. A paper on the invasion is in preparation for publication in *British Birds*.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (10, 474, 2)

Lincolnshire Laughton Forest, two ♀♀, 8th March (G. P. Catley).

1991 **Hampshire** Bourley Hill, Aldershot, two ♂♂, at least one ♀, 29th March (K. Rylands).

(Scandinavia and western Russia; periodically spreads south and west in winter) There have now been single records in consecutive years, after two blank years following the high numbers in 1990 and 1991.

Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina* (0, 3, 1)

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, 20th September, photo. (T. J. Dix, K. J. Douglas).

(Canada and northern USA; winters Central America to Venezuela) Only the fourth record and again on a Scottish island: the previous records were on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 6th-20th September and 24th September 1975 and at Holm, Orkney, on 5th-7th September 1982.

Northern Parula *Parula americana* (0, 15, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 10th October, photo. (R. Andrew, T. M. Melling, K. D. Shaw *et al.*) (plate 169, on p. 528).

(Eastern North America; winters Central America) The first since 1992. More than half of the records have been from Cornwall and Scilly.

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* (0, 3, 0)

(North and Central America; winters south to Peru) The first and second for Ireland (the fourth and fifth for Britain & Ireland) were reported in autumn 1995; details are still on circulation to the IRBC. There has still been no English record.

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica* (0, 1, 1)

Devon Prawle Point, 18th October (A. S. & R. G. Brett, A. Dixon *et al.*).

(North America; winters Guatemala to Panama) Only the second record for Britain, the first having been on Fetlar, Shetland, on 20th September 1985.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* (1, 19, 2)Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 13th October, photo. (S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).Scilly Tresco, 12th October (Mrs E. G. Gynn *et al.*); present 4th-15th, photo.

(Northern and Central America; winters south to Panama) The Orkney record was the first for that archipelago. Two individuals in two consecutive years and records in three consecutive years, following a five-year absence. Co. Cork, with seven, stays ahead of Scilly, with five.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 32, 2)Cornwall Kenidjack, 29th October (K. W. Regan, K. E. Vinicombe, Dr N. J. Watmough *et al.*).Scilly St Agnes, 27th October to 6th November, photo. (S. G. Rowe, V. A. Stratton, D. F. Walsh *et al.*).

(North America; winters northern South America) These records were on more usual dates than last year's winter record and made up part of a remarkable variety of Nearctic landbirds which reached Britain in 1995. A record of Bay-breasted Warbler *Dendroica castanea* is currently under consideration by the BOU Records Committee.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* (0, 2, 1)Merseyside Seaforth, first-winter, 2nd October, photo. (C. J. Sharratt *et al.*).

(Northern and western North America; winters USA to northern Mexico) The site suggests that ship assistance must be considered a possibility for the third British record. The previous records were on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 15th-16th May 1977 and at Hornsea Mere, Humberside, on 22nd May 1977.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (1, 17, 0)

1972 Sussex, East Rye, 12th February (R. K. Haggard, R. E. Smith).

(North America) This is the first to be discovered in February, though long-stayers at Church Crookham, Hampshire, in 1987-90 and at Portland, Dorset, in 1989/90 were both seen in February; there have been singles first found in November, December and January, but all the other 14 have been in April-May.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 27, 3)Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, ♂, 29th-31st March, photo. (N. A. Lound, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).Norfolk Hopton, ♂, 28th October, also in Suffolk (R. Fairhead, J. Oates, R. Wilton *et al.*).Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 17th June (S. D. Stansfield, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*).Suffolk Corton, 28th October, same as Norfolk (R. Fairhead *et al.*).

(Urals, across Asia to Sakhalin; winters Middle East, India and China) Another good year, equalled in 1988 and exceeded only in 1987 and 1994. Hybrids with Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* can cause real problems: some can show all the characters of Pine Bunting, with the only Yellowhammer character being the presence of yellow tones in the fringes of the inner primaries. An apparent hybrid male showing yellow primary fringes was on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 29th October.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 293, 13)

Humberside Flamborough Head, ♀, 22nd April (D. Beaumont, P. A. Lassey, M. Newsome).

Northumberland Holy Island, 9th September (L. G. R. Evans, A. D. McLevy). Farn Islands, 1st October (S. J. McElwee, S. Paterson).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, three: ♂, 2nd June (J. H. Marchant *et al.*); ♂, 26th (P. J. Donnelly, L. Scott); 18th-19th September (S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).Scilly St Mary's, 23rd-27th October (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, five: sex uncertain, 29th to at least 30th May (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); ♂, 30th May to 1st June (J. Miller, B. Minshull, K. A. Wilson *et al.*); ♀, 31st May to 1st June (J. Mallord, M. A. Newell *et al.*); 2nd-4th October (I. Barton *et al.*); 8th-10th (M. A. Newell, A. Prior, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Out Skerries, 15th September (P. V. Harvey, J. D. Okill *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe across to North Asia; winters Turkestan to China and Japan) An average showing.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (93, over 528, -)

1992 Staffordshire Trentham, 8th November (S. Turner).

(Northeast Europe and northern Asia; winters Turkestan to India and Southeast Asia) This species is no longer considered by the Committee.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 163, 9)

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀ or first-winter, 13th September (A. Baxter, A. Chown, C. Drake *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, four ♀♀ or first-winters: 6th September (M. A. Newell); two 8th, one to 10th (M. A. Newell, K. A. Wilson *et al.*); 10th-19th (C. M. Hewson, K. A. Wilson *et al.*). Gletness, ♀ or first-winter, 7th September (J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper *et al.*). Out Skerries, ♀ or first-winter, 8th September (P. M. Ellis, P. Selater, E. Tait). Foula, ♀ or first-winter, 9th September (J. M. & T. P. Drew, N. Milligan, D. J. Rigby); ♀ or first-winter, 13th-14th (J. M. & T. P. Drew, D. J. Rigby).

1994 Humberside Spurn, ♀ or first-winter, 15th September (G. E. Dobbs, C. Roberts, J. P. Siddle *et al.*).

(Northern Europe across northern Asia; winters India and Southeast Asia) A good total, but the record is ten in 1977. The additional 1994 record brings the total for that year to six.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 112, 2)

Dyfed Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, ♂, 18th-20th May, photo. (J. Cleal, J. W. Donovan *et al.*).

Greater Manchester Bolton, ♂, 14th June (P. A. Garnett).

1994 Wight, Isle of Brook Green, ♂, 7th September (Mrs M. C. Markin, the late Miss L. Turkentine *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) Distinguishing females and immatures from Red-headed Bunting *E. bruniceps* remains a problem, with some individuals not specifically identifiable in the field. Four additional 1995 reports are yet to be submitted.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (0, 23, 1)

Wight, Isle of Ventnor, first-winter ♂, 30th October to 1st November (D. T. Biggs, J. M. Cheverton, S. Jones *et al.*).

(North America; winters Central America to Peru) The first since 1993.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 17, 1)

Seilly St Mary's, 20th October (J. Baker, B. Bland *et al.*).

(North America; winters Peru to southern Brazil and northern Argentina) The first record since 1992.

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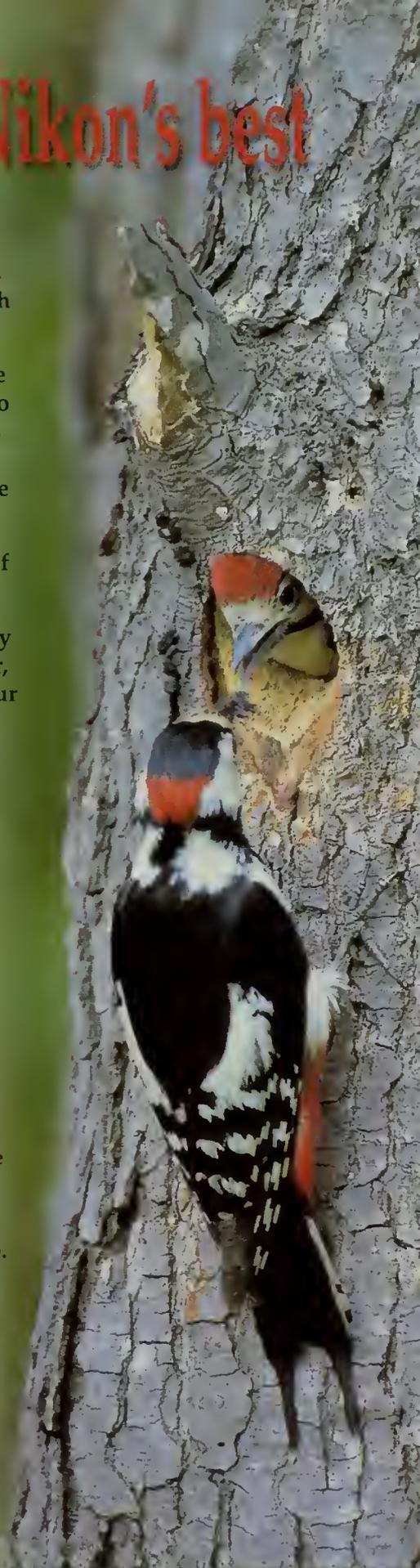


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Plate 163. Second-summer male Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Durkadale area, Orkney, June 1995 (George Reszeter). See page 496.



Plates 164 & 165. Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Fair Isle, Shetland, 17th-23rd September 1995 (left, Dennis Coutts; right, Simon Cox). See page 501.



Plate 166. Male Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, 6th May 1995 (P. Hopkins). See page 497.



Plate 167. Male Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Filey, North Yorkshire, October 1995 (Alan Tate). See page 518.



Plate 168. Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, Sumburgh, Shetland, 13th September 1995 (J. F. Cooper). See page 520.



Plate 169. First-winter Northern Parula *Parula americana*, St Agnes, Scilly, October 1995 (George Reszeter). See page 524.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Ibis* 136: 253)**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber**P. r. roseus* (–, 7, 0)

Essex East Tilbury, 29th April to 1st May (A. J. Kane); same, Abberton Reservoir, 29th–30th July (per M. K. Dennis); same as 1994 Essex below. Also in Kent, Suffolk.

Kent Cliffe, since 1994, to 10th March, 24th, 26th August, photo. (P. Larkin *et al.*). Same as Essex.**Suffolk** Minsmere, 27th May to 31st July (G. R. Welch *et al.*). Same as Essex, Kent.**1990 Lincolnshire** Witham Mouth, adult, 16th September, photo. (G. P. Catley, J. F. W. Knifton, A. C. Sims).**1990 Norfolk** Breydon, immature, 6th October (*Brit. Birds* 88: 555), first noted 5th (J. Oates).**1992 Avon** Chew Valley Lake, adult, 18th–21st January (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).**1994 Essex** Canvey Island, subadult, 17th October (J. Saward); same, East Tilbury, 9th November (A. J. Kane). Also in Kent.**1994 Kent** Cliffe, subadult, 21st October to 1995 (P. Larkin *et al.*). Same as Essex.(Old World race *P. r. roseus* breeds Mediterranean area, Africa eastward to India) Any past records firmly attributable to this race are still required.**Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata* (0, 12, 1)**Lincolnshire** Kirkby on Bain, ♂, 19th–21st February, photo. (D. Jenkins *et al.*).**1985 Nottinghamshire** Retford, ♂, 26th January, possibly since 13th (W. Simpson *et al.*).(Eastern Siberia; winters North India, Japan, Korea) In addition to the undocumented occurrences mentioned in the last Report (*Brit. Birds* 88: 555), it would appear that there were others in Suffolk in 1981, Cheshire in 1993 and Humberside in 1994. The Committee would welcome identification details of these in order to put them fully on record.**Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (0, 8, 0)**1990 Leicestershire** Rutland Water, 16th–20th June (*Brit. Birds* 88: 555), dead 21st (per R. W. Bullock).**1990 Northamptonshire** Stanwick Gravel-pits, 29th June to 3rd July (R. W. Bullock, M. I. Piercy). Possibly same as Warwickshire.**1990 Warwickshire** Kingsbury Water Park, 13th July to at least 19th August (*Brit. Birds* 88: 555).**1990 Yorkshire**, South Potteric Carr, 14th September (*Brit. Birds* 87: 566–567), to 27th October (per M. R. Limbert).**1992 Lincolnshire** Huttoft, 30th August (G. P. Catley).

(Mediterranean region of Europe, North Africa and Middle East; winters locally or south to Central and West Africa)

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

The list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include (a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Honorary Secretary; (b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; (c) those mentioned in 'The ornithological year' or 'Recent reports' in this journal if full details were unobtainable; or (d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced, on the evidence before us, that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

1995 Little Shearwater Pendeen, Cornwall, 26th August; Bardsey, Gwynedd, 27th October. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** South of Carn-du, Cornwall, 7th October. **Great White Egret** Swale, Kent, 12th March; Pylewell Point, Hampshire, 15th April; Rame Head, Cornwall, 29th April; Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 26th June; Thornton Reservoir, Leicestershire, 24th July. **Black Stork** Bristol, Avon, 30th May; Great Baddow, Essex, 30th August. **American Wigeon** Penally,

Dyfed, 16th November. **Black Kite** Blagdon, Northumberland, 6th April; Caister and Breydon, Norfolk, 24th April; Burnham Overy, Norfolk, 25th April; Stiffkey, Norfolk, 3rd May; South Walney, Cumbria, 4th May; Salcombe, Devon, 13th May; Stodmarsh, Kent, 14th May; Ravensworth Fell, Durham, two, 22nd May; Fulmodestone, Norfolk, 27th May; Butley, Suffolk, 24th June; Postcombe, Oxfordshire, 1st July; Eyemouth, Borders, 14th August; Atherton, Greater Manchester, 17th August; Glazebury, Greater Manchester, 10th September; Warrington, Greater Manchester, 11th September; Hope Carr, Greater Manchester, 16th September. **Pallid Harrier** Burwell, Cambridgeshire, 1st July. **Lesser Kestrel** Ramsey Island, Dyfed, 6th May. **Red-footed Falcon** Sandy, Bedfordshire, 9th May; Abberton Reservoir, Essex, 10th May; Stodmarsh, Kent, 14th May; Wimborne, Dorset, 17th May; Sanday, Orkney, 24th May; Sandwich, Kent, 25th May; Holkham, Norfolk, 2nd June; Capel Fleet, Kent, 15th June; Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, 16th June; Old Hall Marshes, Essex, 23rd June; Bradwell, Essex, 23rd September; Broomhill Flash, South Yorkshire, 11th November. **Sora Crake** Lydiate Ash, Hereford & Worcester, 22nd September. **Black-winged Stilt** York, North Yorkshire, 10th March. **American Golden Plover** Frampton Fen, Lincolnshire, 14th August; Witham Mouth, Lincolnshire, 29th August. **Pacific Golden Plover** Endrick Mouth, Strathclyde, 6th August. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Hickling, Norfolk, 25th July; Marshside, Merseyside, 10th September; Steart, Somerset, 5th November. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Dunster Beach, Somerset, 4th September. **Baird's Sandpiper** Cowpen Marsh, Cleveland, 29th June; Weir Wood Reservoir, West Sussex, 14th September. **Long-billed Dowitcher** Sunderland Point, Lancashire, 12th August. **Greater Yellowlegs** Stoke Lagoon, Kent, 4th May. **Terek Sandpiper** Camel Estuary, Cornwall, 4th May. **Bonaparte's Gull** Colwick, Nottinghamshire, 9th May. **Ross's Gull** Filey, North Yorkshire, 30th January; Oakenholt Marsh, Clwyd, 5th February; Flamborough Head, Humberside, 4th March; Marton Mere, Lancashire, 6th April. **Ivory Gull** Teignmouth, Devon, 1st March; Hunstanton, Norfolk, 1st October. **Gull-billed Tern** Chesil Beach, Dorset, 3rd May; Cley, Norfolk, 26th June; Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 12th July; Thorness Bay, Isle of Wight, 12th August; Mundesley, Norfolk, 27th August; Covehithe, Suffolk, 28th September. **Whiskered Tern** Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, 2nd August. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** Bamburgh, Northumberland, 15th July. **Common Nighthawk** Crosby, Lancashire, 5th July. **Pallid Swift** St Martin's, Scilly, 10th October. **Alpine Swift** Minsmere, Suffolk, 5th April; Drift, Cornwall, 8th April; St David's, Dyfed, 8th April; Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, 8th May; Aldenham, Hertfordshire, three, 11th May; Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, 19th May; Lodmoor, Dorset, 25th May. **Red-throated Pipit** Farne Islands, Northumberland, 16th September; Eye Brook Reservoir, Leicestershire, 21st September. **Citrine Wagtail** Sidlesham, West Sussex, 8th June; Elmley, Kent, 15th June; Musselburgh, Lothian, 4th September; Slapton, Devon, 5th September. **Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin** Near Fishguard, Dyfed, 18th October. **'Siberian' Common Stonechat** Flamborough Head, Humberside, 14th April; Dunwich Heath, Suffolk, 20th June. **Isabelline Wheatear** Lulworth, Dorset, 23rd September; Beachy Head, East Sussex, 12th October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Brentwood, Essex, 25th March; Larkhill, Wiltshire, 7th April. **Desert Wheatear** Cardigan, Dyfed, 19th May; Sandwich Bay, Kent, 15th October. **Rock Thrush** Milton, Cambridgeshire, 19th May. **Paddyfield Warbler** Lundy, Devon, 10th May. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Stronsay, Orkney, 9th September; South Ronaldsay, Orkney, 17th September. **Booted Warbler** Lizard, Cornwall, 14th-15th October; Tresco, Scilly, 23rd October; West Cross, West Glamorgan, 13th November. **Subalpine Warbler** Lowestoft, Suffolk, 19th May; Flamborough Head, Humberside, 19th September. **Greenish Warbler** Dungeness, Kent, 19th June; Landguard, Suffolk, 20th August; Scolt Head, Norfolk, 8th September. **Arctic Warbler** Hirta, St Kilda, Western Isles, 20th September; Wick, Highland, 1st October. **Radde's Warbler** Spurn, Humberside, 29th October. **Dusky Warbler** Holkham, Norfolk, 27th May; Isle of May, Fife, 5th June; Penlee Point, Cornwall, 3rd November. **Bonelli's Warbler** Parkhurst Forest, Isle of Wight, 20th August; near Canterbury, Kent, 3rd September; Aldeburgh, Suffolk, 10th September; Patcham, East Sussex, 3rd October; Exminster, Devon, 3rd-5th October; Caerthillian, Cornwall, 8th October. **Collared Flycatcher** Hartland Moor, Dorset, 9th-10th May; Whorlton, Durham, 1st June. **Short-toed Treecreeper** Elim, Anglesey, Gwynedd, 3rd-12th November. **Penduline Tit** Shibdon Pond, Durham, 6th August. **Nutteracker** Blackrod, Greater Manchester, 8th-10th February; New Barnet, Hertfordshire, 24th February; Nailsworth, Gloucestershire, late May; Hindley, Greater Manchester, 25th November. **Citril Finch** Newport, Isle of Wight, two, 3rd January. **Arctic Redpoll** Holt, Norfolk, 28th April; Fair Isle, Shetland, 12th November; Warham, Norfolk, 29th November; Attenborough, Nottinghamshire, 22nd December. **Two-barred Crossbill** Shanklin, Isle of Wight, 27th December. **Trumpeter Finch** Eastchurch, Kent, 6th August. **Rustic Bunting** Isle of May, Fife, 31st May.

1994 **White-billed Diver** Orphir, Orkney, 21st-22nd April. **Soft-plumaged Petrel** Flamborough Head, Humberside, 18th September. **Great White Egret** Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, 16th September. **Brent Goose** *nigricans* Cley, Norfolk, 9th February; Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 8th November. **Black Kite** Sharlston Common, West Yorkshire, 18th May; Lackford, Suffolk, 20th May; Tremethick, Cornwall, 22nd May; Heald Green, Greater Manchester, 30th May; Brede, East Sussex, 2nd June; Rye, East Sussex, 5th June; Gazeley, Suffolk, 10th June; Hanningfield Reservoir, Essex, 23rd August. **Red-footed Falcon** Hanthorpe, Lincolnshire, 11th May. **American Golden Plover** Kingsbridge Estuary, Devon, 3rd-4th May. **Marsh Sandpiper** Newport, Gwent, 14th September. **Bonaparte's Gull** Llyn Alaw, Anglesey, Gwynedd, 16th May. **Bridled Tern** Filey, North Yorkshire, 19th July. **Whiskered Tern** Cley, Norfolk, 11th June. **White-winged Black Tern** Leasowe, Merseyside, 28th August; Shoreham Harbour, West Sussex, 15th October. **Tengmalm's Owl** Kielder Forest, Northumberland, 3rd-12th July. **Alpine Swift** Norwich, Norfolk, 22nd May. **Eastern Phoebe** Hirta, St Kilda, Western Isles, 12th May. **Red-rumped Swallow** St Mary's, Scilly, 11th October. **Olive-backed Pipit** St Mary's, Scilly, additional, 14th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Whitby, North Yorkshire, 22nd May; Atherfield, Isle of Wight, 17th October. **Citrine Wagtail** Upton Warren, Hereford & Worcester, 13th May. **Thrush Nightingale** Whalsay, Shetland, 12th May. **Siberian Thrush** Sea area Forties, 3rd November. **American Robin** Hirta, St Kilda, Western Isles, 31st October. **Grasshopper Warbler** *straminea* Red Rocks, Merseyside, 12th October. **Greenish Warbler** St Margaret's, Kent, 20th September. **Arctic Warbler** Start Point, Devon, 11th September. **Bonelli's Warbler** Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 23rd August; Moreton, Merseyside, 11th September. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Winlaton, Durham, 22nd November. **'Steppe' Great Grey Shrike** Breydon, Norfolk, 3rd November. **Rosy Starling** Liskeard, Cornwall, 8th-9th October. **Rustic Bunting** Hanningfield Reservoir, Essex, 4th October.

1993 **Great White Egret** Butterstreet Cove, Dorset, 15th August. **Black Stork** Paignton, Devon, 25th August. **Black Kite** East Grinstead, West Sussex, 7th May. **Red-footed Falcon** Near Dunsop Bridge, Lancashire, 10th June. **Whiskered Tern** Needs Oar Point, Hampshire, two, 1st June. **Crag Martin** Rhuddlan, Gwynedd, 9th September. **Red-rumped Swallow** Fritcham, Norfolk, 26th April. **Arctic Warbler** Peterhead, Grampian, 7th September.

1989 **Ring-necked Duck** Rutland Water, Leicestershire, 30th September.

1988 **Sooty Tern** Farne Islands, Northumberland, 8th, 12th July.

1986 **Black-headed Bunting** Six Mile Bottom, Cambridgeshire, September.

1985 **White-rumped Sandpiper** Titchwell, Norfolk, 20th October.

1969 **Citrine Wagtail** Barcome Mills Reservoir, East Sussex, 20th April.

Appendix 3. List of records not accepted but identification proved

This list provides a permanent record of those occurrences which, usually on the grounds of likely escape from captivity, find no place in any category, but which may, at some future date, merit further consideration. It does not include (a) any record of a species for which natural vagrancy is wholly unlikely or (b) those records of presumed escapes already mentioned in the main text of this or earlier Reports. The decisions have been taken by this Committee unless otherwise shown.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* Holkham, Norfolk, 25th February 1989; presumed same, Chapel St Leonard's, Lincolnshire, 26th; Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire, 27th October 1990; Solway Estuary, Dumfries & Galloway, immature ♀, at least 4th-19th August 1995; presumed same, Loch Ken, 18th December; moribund, Ringford, 23rd, now at National Museum of Scotland. **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* Abberton Reservoir, Essex, ♂, 2nd January to 4th November 1995; Eye Brook Reservoir, Leicestershire, first-winter ♀, 13th-28th September 1995; presumed same, Rutland Water, 10th October; Chew Valley Lake, Avon, ♂, 11th November to 25th December 1995. **Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* Keynsham, Avon, 25th June 1984. **Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* St Kilda, Western Isles, 29th May 1995. **Long-tailed Rosefinch** *Uragus sibiricus* Drums, Grampian, 4th May 1995.



MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 170. Mystery photograph 200A.



Plate 171. Mystery photograph 200B.

200 Although the first Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* for Britain and Ireland was discovered as recently as March 1987, at Chasewater, Staffordshire, the species has been seen here subsequently in every year and has been recorded in several mainland European countries and in the Canary Islands. Nearly all of the records have involved first-year or adult males, identification of which requires the elimination not only of hybrids but also of male Greater Scaup *A. marila*. Mystery photograph A, taken by Steve Young, shows an adult male Greater Scaup in Merseyside in April 1987, and mystery photograph B, taken by A. Rogers, shows an adult male Lesser Scaup in California, USA, in March 1978.

As its name signifies, Greater Scaup is the larger, though it is only marginally so and the sizes of the two overlap. The bill of Greater Scaup is, on average, both longer and deeper than that of Lesser Scaup, and its neck is longer than that of the smaller species, but it is head shape that provides the most reliable structural point of separation. Greater Scaup's head is proportionally large, with a rounded forehead and a particularly smoothly curved nape. Its central crown varies with an individual's posture from almost flat to generously rounded. Lesser Scaup's head shape is characterised by a short, backward-protruding bump at the rear of the crown, though, sometimes, this manifests itself merely as an angular rear crown above a comparatively straight nape. Especially when alert, Lesser Scaup has a distinctly more oval head shape than does Greater Scaup, with an apparently lower, more centrally positioned eye. In more relaxed mood, its rear crown and/or central crown form the highest point of the head; the equivalent on Greater Scaup is the forecrown and/or central crown.

Some male hybrids between Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* and Common Pochard *A. ferina* closely resemble male Lesser Scaup. In such cases, a hybrid can usually be identified by the large area of black on its bill-tip. The two scaups possess very little black by comparison. On Greater Scaup, the black covers the nail and extends slightly each side so that, head-on, its width is approximately half of the bill's width. On Lesser Scaup, the black is confined to the nail, which comprises just less than one-quarter of the width of the bill.

A distinguishing feature visible only in flight, or during wing-flapping, is the length of the conspicuous, white wing-bands. On Greater Scaup, the band extends across the secondaries and all but the outermost four primaries; on Lesser Scaup, it is confined to the secondaries, and the inner primaries are pale grey. Furthermore, the upperwing-coverts of male Lesser Scaup are darker than those of male Greater Scaup and thus provide a greater contrast with the mantle and scapulars.

Male Greater Scaup has narrower and paler grey barring on the mantle and scapulars than does male Lesser Scaup, which gives its upperparts a generally paler appearance. Its fore flanks and rear flanks are normally unmarked, while those of male Lesser Scaup usually possess some light grey vertical barring. In favourable conditions, the black head of the males of both species shows an iridescent sheen: green in the case of male Greater Scaup and dark purple (though, in some lights, also green, on the cheeks and the sides of the neck) in the case of male Lesser Scaup.

Male Lesser Scaup can be distinguished from male hybrid Tufted Duck × Common Pochard by, in addition to the tiny amount of black on its bill-tip, the absence of a dark or dusky area at the base of the bill, yellow (not orange) eyes, the absence of a brown tone on the head, more coarsely marked upperparts and its two-tone wing-band. It is less easy to differentiate between male Lesser Scaup and male hybrid Tufted Duck × Greater Scaup, but the former's slightly more restricted black on the bill-tip, more coarsely marked upperparts, lightly barred flanks and two-tone wing-band are, particularly in combination, valid characters of separation.

PETER LANSDOWN

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LOOKING BACK

One hundred years ago: 'Nansen's Discovery of the Breeding Habits of Ross's Gull. The "Daily Chronicle" during the past few days has given us the first connected narrative from the pen of the "Hero of the White North". This account of the greatest adventure of the century, or perhaps of all time, in the fields of Polar research contains information long desired by ornithologists. To wit, the discovery of a breeding station for the rare circumpolar Gull, *Rhodostethia rosea*, Macgillivray. The small group of islands where Nansen discovered Ross's Gull in considerable numbers and evidently breeding, lies by his observation in 81° 38' N. lat. and 63° E. long.' (*Zoologist* Third Series 20: 436-437, November 1896)



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

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

'Birds' goes under wraps

When the latest issue of your favourite magazine arrives through the letter box, do you open it and promptly shake it over the litter bin? All those inserts are presumably disposed of immediately in countless households, at least judging by the comments we hear from many birdwatchers. The advertisers, however, must feel that the expense is justified or they would have stopped using inserts years ago. Now we have the 'exsert' or wrapper, successfully used by the *American Birding Association* for several years and now used by the RSPB for its autumn 1996 issue of *Birds* magazine. This is a wrapper with a difference; this is the RSPB's Election Special. It may just be a little early, in that the general election may come well after the next two editions of the quarterly magazine have been published, but the RSPB had to be safe rather than sorry just in case an early election was called.

Labelled 'Voting for a future' and 'The RSPB's manifesto for wild birds and the environment', the wrapper provides a range of questions that you may like to ask prospective Members of Parliament who come canvassing at your door. How about trying 'What commitment can you give to prevent developments from damaging our nationally important wildlife sites?' for starters? We particularly like 'How will you make sure that agricultural payments provide a better countryside for wildlife?'

If you would like more information and a copy of the RSPB's General Election Action Pack, write to Dept GE 123, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

News from France

A welcome first English-language occasional newsletter from the Ligue Française pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO) reached us in August, containing many interesting tidbits of news from across the Channel.

Wintering Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in the western Pyrénées in 1995/96 increased by 25% over 1994/95 to some 1,600 birds. Zitting Cisticolas *Cisticola juncidis*, severely depleted by cold winters in the 1980s, have steadily increased during the past decade and are now widespread up the western side of France. Meanwhile, 1996 saw a new colony of some 170 pairs of Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* appear at Platier d'Oye, close to Calais. With this species' main French breeding sites in Brittany, off the Bassin d'Arcachon and the Camargue, this represents a significant range extension. At the same site, six pairs of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* nested within the colony of

Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*. Little Bustards *Tetrax tetrax*, 80% down in France over the past 16 years, showed a slight increase this year in Anjou, possibly thanks to cereal fields entering into long-term set-aside. Lac du Der in the Champagne region is a well-known migration stopover for Common Cranes *Grus grus*, but increasing numbers now winter in the Landes area of southwest France. Local farmers there are working with the LPO Aquitaine group, hunting associations and other environmental bodies to ensure that they are left undisturbed. Finally, the migration watchpoint at the mouth of the Gironde estuary came up with a staggering total of 250,489 birds of 145 species between mid March and the end of May 1996.

If you would like more details about the LPO, its activities and its publications, please contact Ken Hall, LPO(UK), The Anchorage, The Chalks, Chew Magna, Bristol BS18 8SN.

British Birdwatching Fair better and better . . .

In aid this year of conservation in Vietnam (specifically, the Ke Go Nature Reserve Project), attendance at the Rutland Water annual gathering in August was once again higher than in the previous years: the official figure is approximately 13,000. Small wonder, with celebrities such as David Attenborough, Bill Oddie, Hadoram Shirihai and Tony Soper, and Vietnamese dancing on the programme, as well as all the usual attractions.

. . . and for us, too

The Rutland Fair was successful, too, for *BB*, with more than twice as many subscribers recruited as in 1995, and five times as many as in 1994.

Winners of the three mystery photographs competitions were M. Price, Robin Prytherch (embarrassingly, but he does deserve it for getting them all right) and Dave Morgan.

An ornithological library for top YOY in 1997

With ten co-sponsors of this annual competition, the winners in the three age-categories always receive superb prizes, including *Barbour* jackets and bird books from *Christopher Helm*, *Hamlyn*, *HarperCollins*, *Oxford University Press*, *Pan Macmillan*, *Pica Press* and *T & A D Poyser*.

The star prizes for the top junior and intermediate winners each year are superb *Swarovski* binoculars. The star prize for the senior winner, however, changes each year. In 1997, the winner should make special transport arrangements, for he or she will receive a copy of *every* field guide published by *HarperCollins* that is in print. On our calculation, this is currently over 70 books, making up a wonderful natural history library on everything from fungi, ferns and mosses to snails, fishes, insects and mammals, as well as the birds of everywhere from Europe to New Zealand.

Frankly, we wish we were under 22 and could try to win this prize!

As usual, we thank all ten sponsors, but, for the forthcoming 1997 competition, especially John Brinkley of *Swarovski* and Myles Archibald of *HarperCollins* for providing the icing on the cake for the three winners.

County Recorders will meet at Swanwick

At the joint invitation of ACRE, *BB* and the BTO, the County Bird Recorders will meet at the Annual BTO Conference at Swanwick in early December. Discussions will cover all topics of mutual concern. Any Recorder wishing to have an item put onto the Agenda should give Dr Derek Toomer a call on 01842 750050. We hope that there will be a very full attendance for this important get-together.

Co-operation in the East Midlands

As anyone who has been closely involved in the running of a county birdwatching society will know, the problems encountered can be many, varied and at times seemingly endless. It is particularly heartening to hear of a venture aimed at sharing those experiences and consequently trying to solve some of them. A joint meeting of representatives from the Derbyshire Ornithological Society, Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society and Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers was held at Loughborough earlier this year. The get-together was arranged with the specific intention of discussing matters of mutual concern and interest to the three neighbouring county organisations. Many ideas were exchanged and a good basis for future co-operation was established. Certainly, everyone who attended felt that it had proved to be a worthwhile exercise and that it should be repeated in 1997. (*Contributed by Andrew Hattersly*)

National Nest Box Week

The week beginning 14th February (St Valentine's Day, of course) will henceforth be designated National Nest Box Week in a new BTO activity, aimed at increasing public interest in birds and their conservation. We'll keep you posted . . .

Frank Gribble MBE

Belated congratulations to Regional News Team member Frank Gribble on his being created an MBE for services to nature conservation. His comment: 'It is nice to think that the "establishment" considers such voluntary work of value to the country and worthy of recognition in this way.' We agree!

Scotland in 1994

The *Scottish Bird Report* number 27, covering 1994, runs to a fact-packed 68 pages. An important change—to be welcomed by everyone concerned with facts—is that, with this issue, the *SBR* will henceforth contain ‘no records of rarities, local or national, . . . unless a description has been sent [to] and approved by either the British Birds Rarities Committee (for British rarities), the Scottish Birds Records Committee (for Scottish rarities) or a local records committee.’

Another important innovation is the introduction of an award for the ‘Best Artwork in a Scottish Local Bird Report’. The three winning artists in 1994 were Peter J. Donnelly, Steven Brown and Andrew Stevenson, with Pete Dennis also short-listed. Examples of their artwork enhance the 1994 *Report*.

Apart from well-known ‘British’ rarities such as the Burghhead Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*, notable events in Scotland

in 1994 included the first signs of spread by the tiny Borders population of European Nuthatches *Sitta europaea*, further spread and consolidation by Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis*, the approach of the 100-mark of pairs of breeding Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*, and breeding by a pair of Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* which fledged four young on the Isle of May, Fife. The invasion of Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* of the northern nominate race was concentrated during 20th–30th October, and involved minima of 300 in Shetland, 100–250 on Fair Isle, 250 in Orkney and a few in Caithness, in Sutherland and on Lewis, Outer Hebrides.

The 1994 *SBR*, edited by Ray Murray, assisted by David Kelly, Angus Hogg and Tim Stowe, is free to SOC members and may be purchased by non-members for £4.50. Write to the Scottish Ornithologists’ Club, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

Lucky Hants

The luck is not astrological, but the good fortune of having an able and willing team to produce such an excellent read as is provided by the *Hampshire Ornithological Newsletter*. Newsletter? It’s a 40-page magazine! Al Snook is the Editor.

Surely *every* birdwatcher in Hampshire is already a member of the HOS? If not, Peter Morrison, 7 Thornton Avonue, Warsash, Southampton SO31 9FL, will be delighted to receive your £9.00 p.a.

Rarity descriptions

It is very helpful if all observers of rarities send in their descriptions (preferably to the relevant county or regional recorder) as soon as possible after the sighting.

It will speed up the decision-making process if notes on all major autumn rarities are submitted by mid November at the latest.

Please do not wait until January. Thank you.
(Contributed by M. J. Rogers)

Devon news

We often seem to mention the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society, its magazine, *Devon Birds*, and its newsletter, *Harrier*, but they are so good that there is usually a newsworthy item which deserves attention. This time (vol. 49, no. 1), we recommend ‘Birdwatching on Lundy’ by Andrew Jewels and ‘The waders and wildfowl of Dawlish Warren’ by Ivan Lakin, if you have any intention of visiting either of these prime sites, and Jem F. Babbington’s contribution on ‘Yellow-legged Herring Gulls in Devon’.

The Lundy list currently stands at 301 species (with three additions pending). Among Lundy listers, only one person has seen over 200 species on the island: Mary Gade leads with 233 (77%; can anyone else match this for a top bird site?).

The good health of the DBWPS is

indicated, perhaps, by there being three nominees for a single vacancy on its Records Committee (other societies and clubs often have to press-gang new members!). Without naming names, one is aged 24, another 36 and the third 48: three generations of birdwatchers in one election. The result could be fascinating for a psychologist’s study of electoral preferences.

The Society’s Records Committee has also produced an excellent 24-page booklet, *A Checklist of the Birds of Devon and Guide to Record Submission*, by Ashleigh Rosier (with contributions from Rob Hume and Dave Smallshire), which could serve as a model for other county societies.

The Hon. Secretary of the DBWPS is Mrs S. McMahon, 72 Underwood Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 3SZ.

Avocets spread their wings

An Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* has been successfully fledged at Thames Water's nature reserve in a disused reservoir in Kempton Park, Hounslow, Greater London, the first time that this species has bred successfully in inland Britain. Thames Water's Conservation Manager, Mike Crafer, said it was very exciting news, and particularly encouraging to see them breeding right on the edge of the capital. Habitat creation on this reserve, due to be completed at the end of 1997, is clearly paying dividends. (A pair also nested and laid eggs at Rutland Water, in 1996, but the clutch was destroyed by a Common Coot *Fulica atra*; the pair made another nest, but did not re-lay.)

Making new beaches

Shingle and sand dredged from the channels serving the ports of Harwich and Felixstowe, which in the past has been used for landfill or dumped at sea, is to be used to help protect the Essex coast from erosion. Over the next three years, in a partnership between the Environment Agency and Harwich Haven Authority, some 230,000 tonnes will be taken by dredger and shot through a water jet to build up the foreshore at locations ranging from the Walton Backwaters and Jaywick to the Blackwater estuary. It is hoped that the new beaches will not only help prevent erosion, but will also provide nesting sites for birds, encourage marine invertebrates to colonise and thereby offer feeding areas for fish.

Binocular holsters

We have carried our binoculars on straps around our necks for so long (remember the old joke about telling a birdwatcher by the groove in the back of his neck?) that we wonder just how well the marketing of binocular holsters will go in Britain. They seem to have a limited sale in the USA, but obviously large enough to encourage *Leica* to market a holster for their Trinovid 8×32, 8×42 and 10×42 rangc. The holster is attached to the trouser belt and the binoculars are firmly held in place with, fortunately, a silent fitting that does not rely on noisy velcro.

We shall wait and see just how popular holsters turn out to be—perhaps the East Bank at Clcy will soon be full of budding John Waynes!—but we suspect that the new 'bungy-jumping' binocular straps may prove the more attractive alternative.

Shetland reports

Of all the county bird reports, perhaps that for Shetland makes southern birders the most envious of those, such as PME, PVH and ISR, whose initials are liberally scattered in support of a host of mouthwatering rarities. Shetland is, however, a strange place: the *Shetland Bird Report 1995* includes, for instance, only the fifth record of Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, but the fifteenth Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*; and the first Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, but the fifth Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*. To read of all the goodies (and about the commoner birds, too), get a copy of the *Report* from Ian Sandison, 9 Burnside, Lerwick, Shetland, or join the Shetland Bird Club (£6 p.a.): write, enclosing an SAE, to Paul Harvey, 29 Brentfield Place, Sandwick, Shetland.

Wildlife Newslines

Dave Holman and Robin Chittenden have established a new telephone service for anyone interested in wildlife news, especially in East Anglia and the Southeast, but also major events in the rest of Britain. This year's Clouded Yellows *Cotias croceus* and Painted Ladies *Cynthia cardui* have been featured, and news of mammals, including cetaceans and bats, amphibians, insects, including dragonflies and moths as well as butterflies, and so on will be covered as it occurs.

Wildlife Newslines is 0891 700 254 (charged at usual 0891 rates); sightings can be reported on 01603 763388; enquiries on 01603 633326.

Rare-bird references

A reminder, in this annual rarities issue, that *BB* subscribers can obtain Keith Naylor's *A Reference Manual of Rare Birds in Great Britain and Ireland* for £30 instead of the usual £40 (see page 449 last month).

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—Northern Ireland

Tim Cleeves—Northeast

David Clugston—Scotland

Dave Flumm—Southwest

Frank Gribble—Midlands

Barrie Harding—East Anglia

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Don Taylor—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

John Wilson—Northwest



MONTHLY MARATHON



The farther of the two birds in plate 144 was named as American Coot *Fulica americana* (80%), Red-knobbed (ex-Crested) Coot *F. cristata* (10%), Common Coot *F. atra* (7%) and Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (3%), and the nearer as Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* (61%), Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus* (11%), Slavonian Grebe *P. auritus* (10%), Red-breasted Merganser *M. serrator* (9%), Goosander *M. merganser* (8%), Black-necked Grebe *P. nigricollis* (1%) and Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* and Great Crested Grebe *P. cristatus* (both (<1%)).

Scarcely anyone got both right. David Fisher photographed this American Coot and Black-necked Grebe in California, USA, in September 1980.

Plate 172. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 125. Fifth stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify the species, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane,

Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th December 1996.



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 16th September to 13th October 1996.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* At least 11 up to 1st October, including three on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 20th September.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Dumbarton (Strathclyde), 22nd-30th September.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* Landguard (Suffolk), 2nd and 9th October.

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota* Pagham Harbour (West Sussex), 1st October.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* Fair Isle, 19th-21st September.

Buff-bellied Pipit *A. rubescens* St Agnes (Scilly), 30th September to 2nd October; another, Tresco (Scilly), 7th-13th October.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Church Hougham (Kent), 6th October.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* Bryher (Scilly), 29th September to 2nd October.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* South Uist (Western Isles), 6th October.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* Fair Isle, 17th September.

Lanceolated Warbler *L. lanceolata* Spurn (Humberside), 21st September; Rimac (Lincolnshire), 22nd September.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 22nd-27th September; Fair Isle, 24th September; Filey (North Yorkshire), 22nd-24th September; Warham (Norfolk), 25th-27th September.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* At least six, in Cornwall, Scilly and Co. Cork.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* Beachy Head (East Sussex), 2nd-3rd October; St Mary's (Scilly), 5th-13th October.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* Bardsey (Gwynedd), 27th September.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* Voe (Shetland), 27th September to 6th October.

Bobolink *Delichonnx oryzivorus* St Mary's, 7th-8th October.

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* Bryher, 30th September.



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533 Looking back

534 News and comment *Wendy Dickson*

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538 Monthly marathon

538 Recent reports *Barry Nightingale and*

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Salix on the brinefields, ICI North Tees site,
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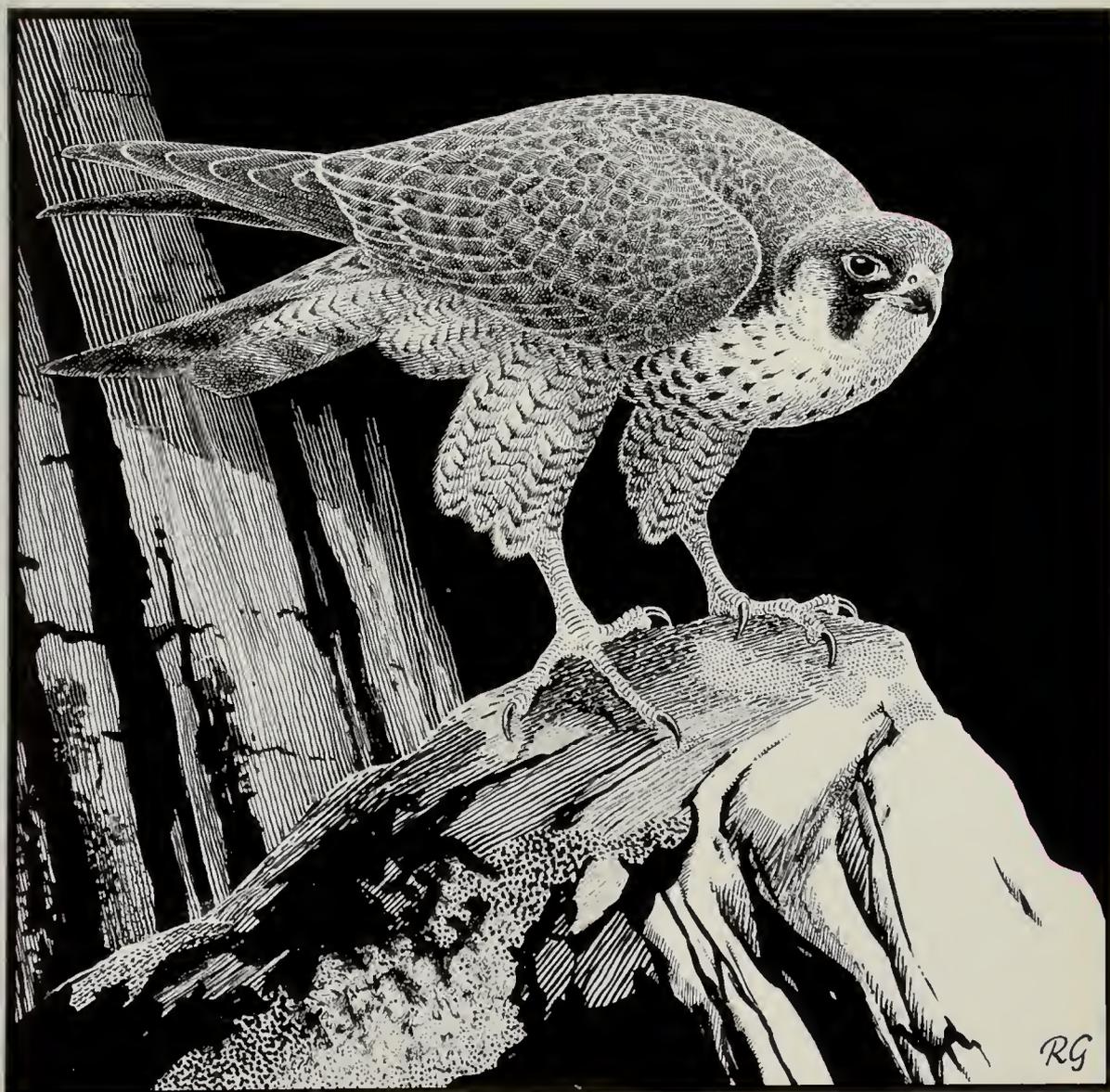


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The judges assembled again at 'Fountains' for another thoroughly enjoyable day of comparing and assessing the field notebooks (and more-permanent records) of some of the top young birders and birdwatchers in Britain and Ireland.

The standard of the leading entries is very high, and the notebooks provide interesting, often exciting (and sometimes highly amusing) reading, as bird behaviour, the discovery of rarities or minor catastrophes are described (and often illustrated) with skill, precision and (often) wit.

Sitting around a table covered in notebooks, the judges can relive the days spent in the field by the entrants.

This year's winners are:

INTERMEDIATE Matthew Harding (Blackburn, Lancashire)

(13-16 years)

Runners-up: Jonathan Dean and Alexander Lees

SENIOR Oscar Campbell (Lurgan, Co. Armagh)

(17-21 years)

Runner-up: Jane Reid

At the last minute, one of the six judges was unable to join the assessment panel, but subsequently approved the decisions made by his five colleagues, so this report is signed by all six judges. Some of the comments made by the judging panel will give an idea of the high standards achieved (each judge scored each entry out of 10):

MATTHEW HARDING 'Incredible industry; many volumes; all-round natural history interest, and considerable knowledge displayed, with volumes of follow-up notes, statistics, BTO survey records, etc.; purple passages.' 'Breadth of interest and willingness to question things and find out for himself.' 'Remarkably comprehensive; knowledgeable; painstaking; enquiring; full of analysis as well as fact.' 'Almost overwhelmingly comprehensive field notes and lots of personal interpretation—just what this competition is all about.' 'Extraordinary volume of material, with everything from genuine scruffy field notes, through careful handwritten transcription to high-quality typewritten prose.'

Scores 9½ 9 9 8 8, average 8.7

OSCAR CAMPBELL 'Very detailed notebooks.' 'Very thorough, with good sketches, complemented by diary written afterwards concentrating on the whole experience.' 'Full of enthusiasm, and meticulous notes. Detailed observations of plumages of individual birds.' 'Clearly enjoys being in the field, keeping meticulous notebooks which bring this to life (despite his almost unreadably small writing).'

'Very full personal field notes, with lots of counts of common birds as well as notes on the rarer or "more interesting" ones, plus diary-style accounts of each day, all carefully cross-referenced.'

Scores 9 9 8 8 7, average 8.2

Example pages from the winners' notebooks are shown opposite. (The judges make a conscious effort not to be swayed one way or the other by the obvious presence or absence of artistic talent, but do welcome attempts to illustrate behaviour, jizz or plumage detail by sketches as well as words.)

This year, there were no entries in the junior age-group (12 years and under). After discussion of the likely reasons for this, the judges decided that the age-groups should be changed for future competitions (starting with that for 1997), as follows: JUNIOR 14 years and under; INTERMEDIATE 15-17 years; SENIOR 18-21 years.

The rules for 1997 will be the same as in 1995 and 1996: entrants should submit actual field notebooks plus any additional records written up afterwards. Entries can relate to anything from ordinary birdwatching to special studies of defined areas or of individual species. The prizes will total over £2,500.

Acknowledgments

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J. T. R. Sharrock (BB), *Rob Hume (BBRC)*, *B. A. E. Marr (BOU)*, *Dr J. J. D. Greenwood (BTO)*, *Robert Gillmor (SWLA)* and *Peter Holden (YOC)*
c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3N7



LOOKING BACK

Twenty-five years ago, December 1971 'was a mild month with no real cold-weather movements and no large influxes of winter species.' Late migrants included three Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus*, a scattering of 20 Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos*, an Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* in Devon, a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* in Shropshire, several Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and House Martins *Delichon urbica*, a Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* in Kent, and a singing Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* and a Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* in Northamptonshire. (*Brit. Birds* 65: 135-136)



CONSERVATION RESEARCH NEWS

Compiled by Mark Avery, assisted by Rhys Green



This new feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic species which might otherwise escape the notice of *BB*'s readers. Each month, some of the most interesting recent scientific studies will be summarised here.

Counting Dunlins from space

The British uplands are big and hold important populations of birds, but have been relatively poorly covered by bird-monitoring schemes so it is difficult to know which are the most important sites to protect. Bird surveys of large upland areas would be extremely expensive. Dr Roy Haines-Young and Dr Chris Lavers of Nottingham University and Dr Mark Avery of the RSPB have shown that satellite imagery, once calibrated with bird-survey data, can be used to predict the relative importance for Dunlins *Calidris alpina* of different areas of the Flow Country of

Caithness and Sutherland. This area, the scene of the most acrimonious arguments between foresters and conservationists in the 1980s, is still under potential threat from further forestry and peat extraction. Good predictions can be made of Dunlin numbers over an area of 1,850 km², so we now know the importance of areas where bird surveys have not been done. Might this be a short-cut method with wider applicability? This really does remain to be seen: it would be rash to assume that this method would work for other, drier and more topographically variable areas.

LAVERS, C., & HAINES-YOUNG, R. 1996. Using models of bird abundance to predict the impact of current land-use and conservation policies in the flow country of Caithness and Sutherland, Northern Scotland. *Biol. Conserv.* 75: 71-77.

—, — & AVERY, M. 1996. The habitat associations of Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) in the Flow Country of northern Scotland and an improved model for predicting habitat quality. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 33: 279-290.

Corn Crakes in the long grass

The Corn Crake *Crex crex* once nested throughout the UK, but all this century its numbers have declined and its range contracted. Loss of hay-meadows and earlier cutting of grass have both contributed to this population decline. In a recent paper, the RSPB's Dr Rhys Green has shown that high densities of Corn Crakes occurred only where there was a combination of sufficient marshland vegetation (*Iris*, reeds and

reed-grass which provide cover in spring) with tall grass in summer, and where mowing occurred, on average, later than 22nd July. Corn Crakes had vanished or were at very low densities where any one of these habitat factors was deficient. These findings provide a sound scientific basis for management prescriptions for Corn Crakes on nature reserves and in agricultural payment schemes, such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

GREEN, R. 1996. Factors affecting the population density of the Corn Crake *Crex crex* in Britain and Ireland. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 33: 237-248.

Woods and bird populations

Not surprisingly, bigger woods hold more species than do smaller ones (although it would be possible to think of reasons why this might be untrue!), but the Institute of

Terrestrial Ecology's Paul Bellamy, Dr Shelley Hinsley and Prof. Ian Newton have provided precise figures for this relationship on the basis of surveying 151 woods in Cambridgeshire

and Lincolnshire. They distinguished between woodland species (e.g. woodpeckers *Dendrocopos/Picus*, tits *Parus*, European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Blackbird *T. merula*) and edge species (e.g. pigeons *Columba*, Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, sparrows *Passer*,

Magpie *Pica pica*). Area is the most important predictor of the number of breeding woodland species, whereas it is woodland perimeter which has a greater effect on edge species. A small part of a big wood will have fewer edge species and more woodland species than a small wood of the same size.

BELLAMY, P., HINSLEY, S., & NEWTON, I. 1996. Factors influencing bird species numbers in small woods in south-east England. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 33: 249-262.

Kites and forestry

The population of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in Wales continues to expand and Prof. Ian Newton and colleagues have updated their previous study of the effects of afforestation on these birds. In essence, there has been little widespread effect: a case of swings and roundabouts. Mature plantations (where kites cannot feed) often replace open sheep-walk (where they can), but forestry also has benefits

because foresters do not persecute kites (whereas some sheep-farmers do), and kites can feed in young plantations. The authors suggest that conservation effort should be directed towards dealing with the effects of human persecution on kites rather than on influencing land-use changes; and this indeed is where most conservation effort has gone.

NEWTON, I., DAVIS, P., & MOSS, D. 1996. Distribution and breeding of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in relation to afforestation and other land-use in Wales. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 33: 210-224.

Sea-eagle reintroductions

The reintroduction of the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* into Scotland has been a slow and rather unsure business. Between 1975 and 1985, 82 wild-bred Norwegian eagles were released on Rhum, but in 1992 only eight pairs occupied home ranges. Such a small population might be extremely vulnerable to chance events, which could prejudice the success of this costly reintroduction project. Some erudite modelling by Dr Rhys Green of the RSPB and Dr Mike Pienkowski and John Love of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee has shown that, given the current survival rates,

breeding success and age of first breeding of White-tailed Eagles, it is only twice as likely that the population will increase in numbers as that it will decrease. Chance events, such as the death of particularly productive individuals or failure of these widely distributed birds to find a mate, could slow the increase or prevent population increase. The Sea Eagle Project Team decided, therefore, to boost the population to a level where chance events would be less important. Further reintroductions are now being carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage, whilst the RSPB continues to monitor the population.

GREEN, R. E., PIENKOWSKI, M. W., & LOVE, J. A. 1996. Long-term viability of the re-introduced population of the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Scotland. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 33: 357-368.

Dr Mark Avery and Dr Rhys Green, Research Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL



OBITUARY

Roger Tory Peterson (1908-1996)

The death of Roger Tory Peterson at his home in Old Lyme, Connecticut, marked the end of the career of a man who can truly be said to have revolutionised birdwatching throughout North America and Europe. Until not long before the advent of his first book, *A Field Guide to the Birds* (of Eastern North America), published in 1934, the identification of small birds had mostly been made down the barrel of a gun. The many Peterson field guides that followed embodied his unique system of identification, using arrows added to his superb illustrations to indicate the main diagnostic features of each bird.

I first met Roger, appropriately enough, on Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania in 1949. I was using Roger's *Field Guide* and we fell into conversation. Within two hours we had decided to produce an equivalent European version, *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*. Knowing that Philip Hollom, already working on *The Popular Handbook of British Birds*, was thinking along similar lines, we decided to invite him to collaborate. Roughly speaking, the idea was that Roger should do the illustrations, I the text, and Phil the distribution details and maps.

Like its American counterpart, the book was an immediate success. It has since sold more than one million copies in 13 foreign-language editions.

Producing the European Guide involved a lengthy visit to Europe by the three of us, most notably to Spain when I organised an exploratory expedition to the Coto Doñana. Roger then settled down to begin painting the 1,250 required illustrations. He borrowed skins from the British Museum and I arranged for him



Plate 173. Roger Tory Peterson, flanked by *Field Guide* co-authors P. A. D. Hollom and Guy Mountfort, April 1983 (Eric & David Hosking)

to stay at my club in London. Roger was enthusiastic, dedicated and often not a little eccentric. He had very little regard for time. I used to drop in to see him on my way to work and, on several occasions, found him fast asleep on his drawing-board having been painting all night. His single-mindedness was remarkable. On the way to the Coto Doñana we had stopped at Seville to admire the magnificent cathedral. We all gazed up at the spires for several minutes. 'There are Lesser Kestrels nesting on those spires' said Roger. On another occasion, Eric Hosking took Roger and Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke to photograph shorebirds on Hilbre Island. In the evening, Lord Alanbrooke was halfway through describing his war-time discussions with Winston Churchill when Roger broke in: 'I guess Oystercatchers will eat most any kind of mollusc.'

Roger sometimes worried about his reputation as an artist, saying that he did not intend his illustrations for the *Field Guides*, which emphasised the diagnostic features of the species, to be 'pretty pictures' but that he could paint those as well. I consider his doubts to have been quite unjustified: all his work is of the highest artistic merit. I have seen much fine work done by him, and I treasure a delightful picture which he gave me years ago of a Grizzly Bear in a sunlit forest glade.

Roger Peterson's interests in birds were worldwide. He was a subscriber to *British Birds* ever since his visits to Europe in the 1950s, and he was elected an Honorary Subscriber in 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 430). He died loaded with honours of every description, including honorary doctorates, medals galore, and even the highest American honour, the Medal of Freedom, presented to him in 1980 by President Carter.

Having known Roger for more than 45 years, I am greatly saddened by his passing. He was a wonderful friend and his influence on birdwatching has been incalculable.

GUY MOUNTFORT



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MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS

201 In North America, the ranges of Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* and the more southerly distributed Cedar Waxwing *B. cedrorum* overlap at all seasons. Both species breed in southeastern Alaska, southwestern Canada and parts of Washington, Idaho and Montana, USA, and both occur in winter in the extreme south of Canada and in a broad band across northern USA from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Mystery photograph A, taken by Robin Chittenden, shows a Bohemian Waxwing in Norfolk in January 1991, while mystery photograph B, taken by Dr Kevin Carlson, shows a Cedar Waxwing in Canada in June 1995.

In direct comparison, the larger size of Bohemian Waxwing is readily apparent, both at rest and in flight, though size is a far less useful feature when only one species is present. The sleeker Cedar Waxwing has proportionally shorter wings and is browner, especially on the breast and upperparts. Immediately adjacent to its black mask, from above each eye and continuous across the forehead, runs a slim, white line which the larger species lacks. The call of Cedar Waxwing is a high-pitched hiss, while that of Bohemian Waxwing is a slightly lower-pitched, harsher trill.

The most eye-catching characters of separation, however, concern the underparts and the wing pattern. The belly, vent and flanks of Bohemian Waxwing are pale brown-grey and its undertail-coverts are deep rusty-chestnut; Cedar Waxwing has a pale yellow belly, vent and flanks and white or very pale buff undertail-coverts. The wings of Bohemian Waxwing are intricately patterned: apart from the red, waxy appendages, which project beyond the ends of the secondaries and tertiaries of both species, the larger waxwing has white tips to its greater primary coverts and its secondaries, which form two short, yet striking, wing-bars, and yellow and white margins to the tips of several primaries, which create a long, conspicuous wing-stripe at rest. Cedar Waxwing's wings are comparatively plain: in addition to the red, waxy appendages, there are broad, white inner margins to the tertiaries and slim, white outer edges to the primaries.

The sex and age of a Bohemian Waxwing can be determined in the field by close attention to its throat-patch and the tips of its primaries. A male has a black throat-patch, the lower border of which is sharply demarcated, while a female is black on the chin and upper throat and dark grey on the lower throat, where the dark grey merges gradually, though rapidly, into the grey-buff of the upper breast. The long wing-stripe of a first-year Bohemian Waxwing is largely pale yellow, while that of an adult is largely bright yellow; at all ages, it is white near the wing-tip. While a first-year's primaries are otherwise unmarked, those of an adult also possess white margins to the inner webs at the tips, which create a ladder-like pattern at rest. These white margins are longer and broader on males than on females, which, crucially, usually lack the feature on the longest primary. The Bohemian Waxwing in mystery photograph A is a first-year male.

It is far less easy to establish the sex and age of a Cedar Waxwing in the field. The glossy black throat-patch of a male is normally more extensive than a female's dull black patch, which is usually restricted to the chin and the sides of the throat, though overlap occurs, especially between first-year males and



Plate 174. Mystery photograph 201A.



Plate 175. Mystery photograph 201B.

adult females. The tip of the tail of first-year Cedar Waxwing is yellow, sullied with grey, while that of an adult is pure, bright yellow, as on the individual in mystery photograph B.

In the hand, additional features can be used to confirm age and sex. Examination of the shape of the tail-feathers of both waxwings quickly establishes age, while first-year and adult Cedar Waxwings also differ in iris colour. The sex of all Bohemian Waxwings and most Cedar Waxwings can be determined by a combination of the field characters, the known age, the width of the yellow tail band, the number of red, waxy tips to the secondaries and tertiaries and, for Bohemian Waxwing only, the length of the longest red, waxy tip.



Plate 176. Bohemian Waxwings *Bombycilla garrulus* and Cedar Waxwing *B. cedrorum* (right), Nottinghamshire, February 1996 (George Reszeter)



Plate 177. Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*, Nottinghamshire, February 1996 (Keith Stone)

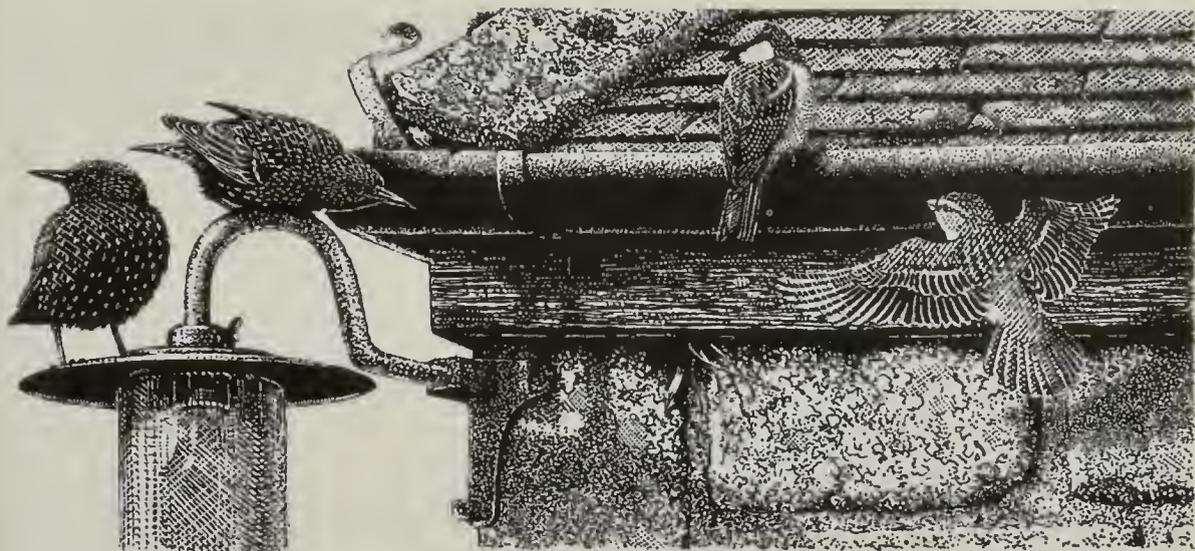
In February and March 1996, a first-year Cedar Waxwing joined several hundred Bohemian Waxwings in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire. Plate 176 shows the comparative sizes of the two species, and plate 177 shows the plain wings and pale undertail-coverts of the Cedar Waxwing. If the record is accepted, it will be the first Cedar Waxwing for Britain & Ireland and only the second for the Western Palearctic, following one in Iceland from April to July 1989. A record of one in Shetland in June 1985 currently resides in Category D of the British & Irish List.

PETER LANSDOWN

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Studies of West Palearctic birds[★]

196. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Chris J. Feare

The Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* is a member of a family of about 110 species whose distribution is entirely Old World, concentrated primarily in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. In its family, the Common Starling is unusual in that it has moved away from these main centres of distribution in the Afro-tropical and Indo-Malayan regions, and inhabits a huge geographical area in the Palearctic. This range extends from the Azores in the west to Lake Baikal in the east, and from Lapland in the north to Sind, Pakistan, in the south (Cramp & Perrins 1994). Northern and eastern populations are migratory, wintering to the south, southwest and west of their breeding areas, while some of the southern and western populations are resident. Dementiev & Gladkov (1957) provided a distribution map which showed, in addition to the range described above, an intriguing question mark in the east of the then Soviet Union. Since the 1970s, small numbers of Common Starlings have wintered in Hong Kong (Chalmers 1986) and Japan (Brazil 1990); the origin of these wintering birds in the far east is not known, but perhaps Dementiev & Gladkov's (1957) query over the existence of Common Starlings on the eastern seaboard of Russia has some foundation.

In addition to the geographical range outlined above, Common Starlings have proved to be eminently capable of establishing themselves in new environments following introduction by Man. They were successfully introduced to New Zealand by Acclimatisation Societies, whose aim was to provide new human immigrants with a taste of 'home' by attempting to establish wildlife common in England. Thomson (1922), however, claimed that some of the introductions were to control outbreaks of insects that occurred in the mid 1800s. Acclimatisation Societies were also responsible, along with private individuals,

[★]This paper, and others in this long-running *British Birds* series, will be published in a forthcoming HarperCollins book.

for introducing Common Starlings to Australia, some of the birds being taken there from New Zealand. According to Lever (1987), Common Starlings were taken from southern England to South Africa in 1897 by Cecil Rhodes and released in Groote Schuur, Rondebosch. In all of these countries the introductions have been successful, and in Australia and South Africa the birds are continuing to spread. In biological terms, perhaps the most successful introduction has been in North America. In the early 1890s, Eugene Schieffelin, an apparent eccentric who thought that America should have all the birds mentioned by Shakespeare, imported Common Starlings from England and released them into Central Park, New York. From this introduction, though apparently not from earlier or later attempts (Lever 1987), Common Starlings have within a century colonised North America. They now have a breeding range that extends from east-central Alaska through northern Manitoba to Newfoundland in the north, and to Baja California in Mexico, southern Texas and the Gulf coast to southern Florida in the south (AOU 1983), and are one of North America's most numerous birds. This colonisation of North America is all the more remarkable in that it has occurred in a continental environment which already possessed species with many apparently similar ecological requirements, notably various members of the Icteridae, such as the Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* and the Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* (Feare 1984). The Common Starling's success as an exotic is not confined to temperate regions, for it has also become established on the tropical islands of Fiji (Watling 1982) and Jamaica, where numbers have increased rapidly over the last 25 years (Downer & Sutton 1990).

Habitats and populations

Common Starlings are adaptable in their choice of habitats, appearing equally at home in farmland, open woodland and suburban gardens. Large summer feeding flocks are found on moorland and coastal saltmarsh, and city centres provide roost sites for spectacular numbers.

Common Starlings have powerful legs which are used for walking, rather than hopping, and the head and its muscles permit the use of a specialised feeding technique. This 'prying' (Beecher 1978) involves inserting the closed bill into the surface of a grass sward and then opening it using powerful protractor muscles, which in Common and related starlings are larger than the adductor muscles which are used to close the mandibles. This technique is used to expose invertebrates and sometimes seeds which lie among the grass roots or surface soil, and is a technique that superbly adapts Common Starlings to exploit extensive grasslands. Starlings also pry when selecting food items of a particular size from an apparent superabundance, for example when taking fragments of barley from cattle feed, and when searching for food among seaweed on the shore and among stones on the filter beds of sewage-treatment plants. The birds' feeding is not restricted to prying, however, and Common Starlings commonly forage in trees, both to eat fruit and, especially in summer, to exploit abundances of defoliating caterpillars (Feare 1984). They occasionally take nectar (Feare 1993) and hawk flying insects, especially when winged ants emerge. The Common Starling's consumption of fruit, cattle food, pig food and poultry food, and of germinating cereals has brought the species into conflict with farmers in many parts of its



Plate 178. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Worcestershire, December 1995 (*Mike Wilkes*). Although showing the white-tipped breast and belly feathers of winter plumage, the underlying iridescence is clearly visible.



Plate 179. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Norfolk, March 1983 (*Kevin Carlson*). In autumn and winter, body feathers are edged buff or white; these become abraded later, leaving the glossy plumage typical of the breeding season.



Plate 180. Male Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* singing, with throat, belly and rump feathers fluffed, and tail directed downwards, Netherlands, March 1992 (*René van Rossum*)



Plate 181. Male Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* carrying leatherjacket (larva of crane fly, Tipulidae), Tiree, Strathclyde, May 1992 (*Gordon Langsbury*). The pale feather tips have worn away, leaving brilliant glossy plumage. At this stage in the breeding season, the bill is yellow (with a steel-blue base in the case of males) and the legs and feet are pink.



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range (Feare *et al.* 1992), although some farmers consider that the bird's consumption of insect pests outweighs other problems (Feare 1984).

Although primarily adapted to feeding in grasslands, for which they show a marked preference in farmland (Whitehead *et al.* 1995), in the breeding season the birds' distribution is restricted by their requirement for nest sites, for they are cavity nesters. Here again, however, they show great adaptability and, while holes in trees comprise the most usual nest sites, they also use holes in cliffs, banks, walls, buildings and other man-made structures. They also occasionally nest underground, and have even been recorded burrowing their own nest holes in sand dunes (Summers 1989a) and in softer soils in cliff faces (Stevenson 1866).

At all times of year Common Starlings roost communally at night. These roosts are smallest during the breeding season, when they contain only non-breeding birds and some breeding males, and largest in winter (Eastwood *et al.* 1962). At the latter season, roosting assemblages can be spectacular, as huge numbers, occasionally a million or more in Britain, gather in nearby trees and fields. These birds depart for the roost site in vast flocks, and then often manoeuvre in cloud-like swirls before descending into the roost. The largest roosts are found in rural areas, usually in small woods or reedbeds, but impressive numbers can also be seen roosting on bridges, piers and other man-made structures, and especially on buildings or in trees in city centres. City-centre roosts promote mixed feelings in humans, for, while some like the spectacle of large numbers of birds in otherwise fairly birdless places, others complain of the noise made by the birds and the huge quantities of droppings they deposit. The latter can render paved surfaces dangerously slippery and buildings unsightly, and cleaning operations can impose expensive burdens on local authorities and others (Feare 1985). In large rural roosts, the weight of birds on tree branches can break them and this, combined with the huge quantities of droppings, is claimed to kill trees in plantations selected by the birds for roosting (Feare 1984). Reedbeds are also flattened by roosting Common Starlings, and, when reeds were regarded as a valuable resource for roofing thatch, this damage was regarded as economically serious (Gurney 1921).

The history of Common Starlings in Britain has been one of change. The presence of outlying populations of distinct subspecies and even a distinct species (the Spotless Starling *S. unicolor*) suggests that *S. vulgaris* once had a geographical range in western Europe at least as large as it is today, but that this range contracted at some stage (Feare 1984). In the early eighteenth century, the Common Starling had disappeared from many parts of Britain, being absent from much of western England and Wales, western Ireland and mainland Scotland, and was rare in northern England (Holloway 1996). From about 1830, the population began to expand and to recolonise areas that had been vacated, and this expansion continued to the 1960s (Parslow 1968). The reasons for these changes are unclear. Since 1962, we have had the advantage of the British Trust for Ornithology's Common Birds Census (CBC), which has given us a better, although not complete, picture of events up to the present day. High indices of the population in the early 1960s fell sharply in the latter part of that decade and recovered only slightly in the 1970s. Through the 1980s the indices for both farmland and woodland fell steadily, and by 1988 the farmland population had decreased by 50%, and that of woodland by 67%, from the levels of the mid 1960s (Marchant *et al.* 1990). These declines have continued in the

1990s, and by 1994 the woodland index had fallen to 25% of its 1980 value (Marchant & Wilson 1995). These figures may present a somewhat biased picture, since CBC sites tend to be concentrated in the south and east of England, where agricultural intensification has been particularly great. In addition, urban and suburban areas are not covered by the CBC, but, in suburban Surrey, a nestbox colony in which over 30 boxes were occupied in the 1970s declined to an occupancy of only seven boxes in 1994 and 1995, a 75% reduction (Feare, unpublished data).

That these declines are real and significant is supported by similar, and in some cases larger, declines in continental Europe. Colony reductions, and even extinctions, were first reported from Finland in the late 1960s (Ojanen *et al.* 1978), and subsequently from many other parts of northern Europe. This has had implications farther south, for the wintering populations of western Europe have also shown marked reductions, although precise data on their extent are lacking (Feare *et al.* 1992). The outcome of this is that agricultural damage, especially through the birds' consumption of cattle food, for which the birds were notorious in winters of the 1970s, has now diminished. The factors underlying these population changes are unclear, and climate, agrochemicals and changes in land use may all be involved. The last may be an important influence in the recent decline in Britain, where loss of grassland to cereal production and the switch from spring to autumn cultivation are likely to have reduced the Common Starling's winter food supply (Feare 1994). The species' decline seems to have spread beyond western Europe, however, for the numbers that winter in Israel have also fallen from an estimated 15 million in 1970 to one million in the early 1990s (Yom-Tov *in litt.*).

While northern Europe witnesses declines in the populations of one of its most serious agricultural pests, southern Europe is seeing the reverse, with potentially interesting consequences. In southwest France and northeast Spain, the ranges of starlings, both Common and Spotless, are expanding, and both species have crossed the Pyrénées (Peris *et al.* 1987; Cambrony 1990), resulting in the formation of some mixed-species pairs (Motis 1992).

Complexities of song

Common Starlings are not renowned as melodic songsters, but their capacity to mimic the calls of other species of birds, and even other sounds, is well known. Mimicry, however, forms only a small part of the song (Hindmarsh 1984), and what the song lacks in musical quality it compensates for in complexity.

Song is heard at its fullest as males seek mates before the onset of egg-laying and, after pairing, during the female's fertile period (Eens *et al.* 1994). The male delivers more than 95% of his song in bouts (more-or-less uninterrupted periods of singing) which can be long, sometimes lasting for more than a minute. Song bouts consist of a rapid succession of a wide variety of song types, and the number of song types used by an individual male comprises his repertoire. Recent studies of the organisation and variability of these song types, and of differences in repertoire size between individuals, have provided insights into the functions of song in Common Starlings.

Song types fall into four categories and these are delivered in sequence (Adret-Hausberger & Jenkins 1988; Eens *et al.* 1991a). A song bout usually begins with

relatively simple pure-tone 'whistles'; these are followed by complex 'variable' song types, which are in turn succeeded by 'rattles', and the bout finishes with 'high-frequency' song types. When individual Starlings omit one of the categories from a song bout, the bout always continues with the next category in the succession. In a study of the songs of 25 male Common Starlings in Belgium, Eens *et al.* (1991a) found that the majority of song bouts began with one or several 'whistles', but that individual males varied in their propensity to begin their song bouts with these song types. Different males had between two and 11 whistles in their repertoires.

'Variable' song types were much quieter than the 'whistles', but were much more complex and included the mimicked calls of other species. Different males had repertoires of ten to 35 song types in this category, and each of the song types was repeated before moving on to the next. 'Rattle' song types, involving a rapid succession of clicks, were also repeated, and males had between two and 14 of these song types in their repertoires. The loudest song types delivered in a song bout fall into the last category, the 'high-frequency' types, and individual males had between none and six of these in their repertoires, which again were repeated before moving on to the next. The 25 males revealed large differences in their repertoire sizes, varying from 21 to 67 song types between individuals, and those with the larger repertoires tended to have longer song bouts.

Some of the variability in both song-bout length and repertoire size has been found to be associated with the age of the males. Eens *et al.* (1992a) demonstrated that older Starlings had larger repertoires and longer song bouts than one-year-old birds, and Böhner *et al.* (1990) and Mountjoy & Lemon (1995) have shown that Common Starlings are able to learn new song elements as they become older. The latter authors found that between years some song types were dropped from the repertoires and others were modified, but that even four-year-old Starlings were capable of learning new song types and incorporating them into their repertoires. There is now evidence that some of the variability in song-bout length and repertoire size has a structural basis, for there are correlations between these song parameters and the size of certain song nuclei in the Starling's brain (Bernard *et al.* in press; Eens in press).

Mimicked sounds may be incorporated into the song bouts, in the 'variable' song (Eens *et al.* 1991a; also called the 'warbling' song by Adret-Hausberger & Jenkins 1988) and in the 'whistle' song types (Hausberger *et al.* 1991), and also in the small proportion (< 5%) of song that is delivered independently of song bouts (Eens *et al.* 1991a). The sounds that are mimicked are not necessarily those that are likely to be encountered most frequently in the birds' surroundings and there is clearly selection of sounds from those available to be copied (Hausberger *et al.* 1991). Among the whistled song types, selection of models to mimic seems to be related to the structure of the model's call rather than the particular species concerned; simpler calls, more like the Starling's 'whistles', are more likely to be copied than are other calls. The outcome of this is that the range of calls of other species incorporated into the whistled song types is restricted and bears similarities over large geographical areas (Hausberger *et al.* 1991). Mimicked sounds that are incorporated into the 'variable' song types are quieter but more complex, and structurally more similar to variable song types than to other song types found in

bouts, and include trills and sounds made up of several notes, often involving fragments of other species' songs. These mimicked sounds bear a closer resemblance to the Starlings' immediate environment (Hausberger *et al.* 1991), although Eens *et al.* (1992b) established that some mimicked song types were learned from other Starlings, rather than from the other species themselves. The complexity of song of the Common Starling, to which mimicry contributes, permits this song to contain both species-specific song types and song types that are unique to individual males.

Cuthill & Hindmarsh (1985) demonstrated that after pairing the amount of song delivered by a male decreases, indicating the role of song in mate acquisition. This was further demonstrated by Eens (in press), who found that unpaired male Starlings increased their song output in the presence of prospecting females, and often flew into their nest and sang there, in an apparent attempt to entice the female towards the nest hole. Eens *et al.* (1992a) found that, while the repertoires of 'whistled' and 'high-frequency' song types showed little difference between yearling and older males, the latter's repertoires of 'variable' and 'rattle' song types were approximately twice as large as those of the younger birds. These authors (Eens *et al.* 1991b) further found that males with longer song bouts and with larger repertoires attracted mates earlier, attracted more mates, and had higher breeding success than males with shorter bouts and smaller repertoires. Females thus appear to select preferentially those males with more complex songs, possibly because song provides an index of male experience or survivorship. In addition, Mountjoy & Lemon (1996) found that males with large song repertoires were in better body condition, allowing females to select mates which, on the basis of their song, are likely to be of higher quality. Mountjoy & Lemon (1991) also demonstrated a role of song in male-male interactions, showing that recorded playback of more complex song was more effective at deterring males from entering nestboxes than were simpler songs. This suggests that male Common Starlings might be able to assess the competitive ability of other males on the size of their song repertoires, and that song may therefore play a further role in territory defence.

Common Starlings also sing outside the breeding season; in fact, they sing for most of the year, ceasing only for a brief period during the moult (Feare 1984). Adret-Hausberger (1982) reported that different whistle types were sung in different flock sizes, and that a further whistle type was characteristic of song in roosts. Song outside the breeding season has been little studied, however, and its function requires further investigation (Eens in press). Female Common Starlings also sing and, according to Hausberger *et al.* (1995), they do so more in autumn and winter than in the breeding season. In the breeding season it was found that females sang when competition between females was intense and that song was directed at other females, rather than at males (Sandell & Smith in press; Eens & Pinxten 1996). Female song is not confined to aggressive situations, however, as Hausberger & Black (1991) observed two females of a polygynous male (see below) indulging in bouts of song-matching with no sign of antagonism. The function of female song outside the breeding season is, as with male song at this time of year, not understood, although both sexes sing during the occupation of roost perches and here song appears to have a role in roost-site acquisition and defence (personal observations).

Complexities of breeding

Common Starlings nest in holes in trees, buildings and other structures. The dispersion of nesting Starlings is determined by the availability of suitable holes, and nests may therefore be several metres or tens of metres apart. Despite the sometimes large inter-nest distances that are imposed upon the birds, Common Starlings behave as colonial breeders and the onset of laying each year is highly synchronised among nests. Although mainly under photoperiodic control, the time of breeding each spring is influenced by other factors, including temperature and food availability (Källander & Karlsson 1993; Meijer & Langer 1995). The fine tuning that facilitates the high degree of synchrony seen in Starling colonies probably results, however, from the birds' social behaviour within the colony, although this aspect of Starling behaviour has not been studied.

While at one time considered to be monogamous (Lack 1968), recent studies have shown that Common Starlings can sometimes be polygynous, that they frequently exchange mates, that some females lay their eggs in other Starlings' nests, that some females copulate with males other than their mates, and that occasionally two females may nest communally. These departures from strict monogamy are all facilitated by the synchrony of behaviour that accompanies the onset of each breeding season.

As described above, male song serves as a mate attractant. Paired males sing from song posts near their nests and this stimulates their mates to fly towards them and solicit copulation (Eens & Pinxten 1990). These authors also observed paired males attempt to stimulate the female mates of neighbouring males to copulate. In these instances, the paired males behaved differently, flying towards the non-mate



Plate 182. Male Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* singing and wing-waving, Western Isles, April 1989 (G. P. Catley). The wings are half extended and rotated about the shoulder. This behaviour is used primarily in spring, by a male trying to attract a female flying nearby.

females and singing close to them. On one occasion, a male was seen to copulate successfully with his neighbour's mate. The success of some extra-pair copulations has been confirmed genetically by Hoffenberg *et al.* (1988), Pinxten *et al.* (1993a) and Smith & von Schantz (1993). Cuckoldry represents a means whereby males may increase their output of offspring and mated males endeavour to protect their females, and thus their own paternity, by closely guarding their mates during their fertile period (Pinxten *et al.* 1987). Eens & Pinxten (1990) thought that polygynous males might be more susceptible to cuckoldry than monogamous males, but the studies of Pinxten *et al.* (1993a) and Smith & von Schantz (1993) provided no evidence for this.

In many colonies, Common Starlings lay two clutches each year; in other words, a female who has successfully reared one brood to independence returns to the colony and lays another clutch in the same year. The proportion of females that attempt to rear two broods varies both between years and geographically, with birds in the south and west of their range in Eurasia rearing two broods more often than their comrades in the north and east (Feare 1984). Between the two clutches, however, the females frequently exchange mates and nest sites (Feare & Burnham 1978), so that the progeny of a particular female during a year may be fathered by more than one male.

In colonies where two broods are reared, there are two peaks of laying: the first, highly synchronous peak at the beginning of the breeding season; and a second, smaller and less synchronous group of clutches initiated about 45 days later, although some of the clutches laid at this time are not second clutches, but first clutches of females that begin laying late. Between these two peaks, other clutches, usually termed 'intermediate' clutches, are laid. These include first clutches of females that do not lay until after the main peak of laying, replacement clutches of females that lose their first clutches, and clutches of females that are mated to males who already have a first mate incubating a first clutch (Pinxten *et al.* 1990). Some males, especially older ones, may have two females during the laying peak corresponding to first clutches. Such polygyny is now known to be widespread in Starlings and, at a colony in Belgium, Pinxten *et al.* (1989a) found that, over a four-year study, 20-60% of males were polygynous each year. While most polygynous males have two mates, exceptionally up to five females may be mated to one male (Merkel 1978; Pinxten *et al.* 1989b). Males which are polygynous produce more fledglings than do monogamous males (Pinxten *et al.* 1989a), but being the mate of a polygynous male seems to be disadvantageous for females, since they produce fewer young than do monogamous females (Pinxten & Eens 1990). This may result from a difference in the behaviour of monogamous and polygynous males, for polygynous males devote less time to the care of their eggs and young than do monogamous males (Pinxten *et al.* 1993b). The primary female (the first female) of a polygynous male can compensate for the reduced contribution of her partner by increasing her own contribution of food to the nestlings, but secondary females appear unable to do this and they fledge fewer young than do primary and monogamous females (Pinxten & Eens 1994). Some later-arriving females have little opportunity to be monogamous as, by the time of their arrival, all males already have mates, but there is clearly a conflict of interests between the sexes early in the breeding season. Males appear to benefit by seeking more than one mate, while females are disadvantaged if they mate with males who are, or are going to be, polygynous.



Plate 183. Male Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* arriving at nest with several food items in bill, Co. Cork, May 1987 (Richard T. Mills). Note pointed wings and short, square tail, which contribute to the species' characteristic flight silhouette.

Females attempt to defend their interests by discouraging their males from seeking other mates; females increase their attempts to solicit copulation from their mates when the latter encounter new females, and also act aggressively to new females (Eens & Pinxten 1995a, 1996), and primary females may even desert their clutches/broods, possibly as an attempt to force the male to care for the brood (Eens & Pinxten 1995b). Despite their lower productivity, however, some earlier-arriving females appear to choose to be polygynous, for reasons that are unclear (Pinxten & Eens 1990).

Intraspecific nest parasitism, where some female Common Starlings lay eggs in other Starlings' nests, was first recorded by Yom-Tov *et al.* (1974), but this behaviour has also proved to be common and widespread. In colonies that have been adequately studied, up to 37% of first clutches have been found to contain an egg that had not been laid by the female who owned the nest (Karlsson 1983; Evans 1988; Lombardo *et al.* 1989; Pinxten *et al.* 1991a; Romagnano *et al.* 1990). These authors identified parasite eggs by several methods: the appearance of two eggs within a 24-hour period, the presence of an egg that differs in colour, shape and size from other eggs in the clutch, and the presence of a chick whose blood biochemistry indicates that it is not related to the parents of the remainder of the brood. All of these techniques tend to underestimate the incidence of parasitism (Pinxten *et al.* 1991b), so that the recorded incidences of nest parasitism are minimum figures. (DNA fingerprinting will allow more accurate determination of the incidence of this behaviour, but studies have so far been limited to colonies where brood parasitism appears uncommon: Pinxten *et al.* 1993a; Smith & von Schantz 1993.) The frequency of this behaviour suggests that it is a strategy

adopted by some females, but an interpretation of the function of the behaviour requires identification of the females who parasitise, and this has proved difficult. Nevertheless, there is now sufficient information to show that females may become parasites for a number of reasons.

Evans (1988) found that the incidence of parasitism was greater when large numbers of females deserted their first clutches. Most of these desertions resulted from disturbance caused by catching nesting adults, and Feare (1991) showed that females whose laying in their own nest was interrupted continued to lay their remaining first-clutch eggs in other Starlings' nests. Parasitism thus enabled such females to give these remaining first-clutch eggs the chance of survival in other nests, and allowed these females to rear a replacement clutch of their own; this was more beneficial, in terms of chick production within the year, than continuing to lay in their own nests and rearing an unusually small first clutch (Feare 1991).

Evans (1988) also suggested that nest parasitism might be related to competition for nest sites, but the support for this is equivocal. Evans (1988) and Karlsson (1983) found higher levels of parasitism when a greater proportion of available nests was occupied, but Pinxten *et al.* (1991a) and Romagnano *et al.* (1990) recorded high levels of nest parasitism when nest-site occupancy was low, and in my own study colony parasitism still occurs each year despite a 75% fall in the breeding population but no reduction in nest-site availability.

Evans (1988) and Romagnano *et al.* (1990) suggested that some parasitic females might be unmated and were generally young birds which had been fertilised by an already paired male, but which did not possess nests of their own. Pinxten *et al.* (1991a) obtained circumstantial evidence that some parasitic females may fall into this category, but this possibility is difficult to test experimentally.

A further suggestion is that some female Common Starlings operate a mixed strategy, rearing a clutch of their own but also depositing an egg in another Starling's nest, thereby spreading their potential offspring and insuring against total failure of their own clutch (Møller 1987; Brown & Brown 1989). Evans (1988) recorded some females laying an egg in another Starling's nest while rearing a clutch of their own, and I have also recorded this in my study colony. It is, however, difficult to know whether this really represents a mixed strategy on the part of these females, or whether these observations reflect an extension of the parasitism that results from disturbance; females who are disturbed when ready to lay in their own nests may opt to lay this egg in another nest, rather than wait for the disturbance to pass and return to their own nest.

Intraspecific nest parasitism among Common Starlings is accompanied by behaviours that help to ensure the success of the parasitic female's egg, and that help potential hosts to guard themselves against parasitism. Feare *et al.* (1982) found that, while most Common Starlings laid their eggs during a restricted period in the morning, some eggs laid by parasitic females appeared in nests in the afternoon, suggesting that parasitic females may avoid the time when hosts are most likely to be in the vicinity of their nest. Pinxten *et al.* (1991b) were able to watch parasitic females and discovered that they laid their eggs remarkably quickly, which may also help to avoid the attention of potential hosts. There is also evidence that at least some parasitic females remove a host egg when they lay their parasite egg. Lombardo *et al.* (1989) reported that eggs

were removed more often from parasitised than from unparasitised nests, and found a statistical relationship between the deposition of parasite eggs and the removal of host eggs. Evans (1988), Pinxten *et al.* (1991a) and Feare (1991) also recorded egg removal from nests in which parasite eggs were laid, and Pinxten *et al.* (1991a) directly observed parasitic females removing host eggs at the time they laid their own. Egg removal, however, is also practised by hosts as a defence against parasitism, although hosts are unable to differentiate between their own and parasite eggs and remove the latter only if they appear in nests before the host has initiated its own clutch (Stouffer *et al.* 1987); both male and female remove such eggs, the female being more assiduous in the task. Power *et al.* (1989) suggested that a further defence against parasitism involved female Starlings laying fewer eggs than they could in practice raise to fledging; this provided an insurance against the eventuality that an extra parasite egg might be laid in their nest, but this hypothesis has been disputed by Rothstein (1990).

Communal breeding has been recorded twice for Common Starlings. Both instances involved two females laying in one nest, with both females and a single male assisting with incubation and feeding the young (Stouffer *et al.* 1988; Pinxten *et al.* 1994). In the latter instance, the paternity of the male in the clutches of both females was confirmed by DNA fingerprinting. This communal breeding by Common Starlings is probably rare, as unusually large clutches of eggs were involved, and it differs from the co-operative breeding by some other starling species (Craig 1987) in which a breeding pair is assisted in the raising of a brood by other non-reproductive conspecifics.



Plate 184. Juvenile Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* showing threat posture, with upright stance, raised crown feathers and fluffed belly feathers, but plumage otherwise sleeked, West Glamorgan, June 1986 (Harold E. Grenfell)

Roosting

The gathering of huge numbers of Common Starlings into night roosts is one of the most spectacular sights in ornithology. Most night roosts, and especially the larger winter roosts, are in rural areas, but city-dwellers can get a taste of the birds' behaviour as many city centres now host roosts, -sometimes containing many thousands of Starlings which spend the night on trees or on ledges of buildings. The behaviour of Starlings which roosted in central London was studied by Stanley Cramp and colleagues from the London Natural History Society in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Cramp *et al.* 1964). These authors found that the tens of thousands of birds involved were largely resident British Starlings that fed in the suburbs. The birds' assembly in the afternoon and their presence in the city centre, especially in Trafalgar Square, at night brought them to the attention of the public and the media. On 12th August 1947, assembling Starlings landed on the minute hand of Big Ben and the weight of birds involved was sufficient to stop the clock. This and other problems led to questions being raised in Parliament and, unique as an accolade to a British bird, the Starling became the subject of an episode of *The Goon Show!*

Common Starlings roost communally throughout the year, but during the breeding season roosts are small and are used by non-breeders and some breeding males (Cramp *et al.* 1964; Feare 1984). During the winter, when the largest roosts are observed, Clergeau (1993) found that large roosts in France were composed mainly of migrants; resident birds remained close to their nest sites throughout the winter and roosted nearby in small assemblages of five to 100 birds.

During the day, Common Starlings feed away from the roost and in winter have been recorded commuting up to 80 km each day to feed (Hamilton & Gilbert 1969), although most feed well within this range. Starlings can be remarkably faithful to a particular feeding area over long periods (Feare 1980;



Plates 185 & 186. Pre-roost mass aerial displays by Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, Lincolnshire, January 1979 (C. J. Feare)

Morrison & Caccamise 1985), although such fidelity may be a characteristic of older birds, first-winters having been observed to sample a wider range of feeding sites within a winter (Summers & Cross 1987). Morrison & Caccamise (1985) found further that Starlings remained faithful to their feeding areas, which these authors termed 'daily activity centres', even though the roosts to which the birds returned each night switched position periodically. During their return to a roost in the late afternoon, Starlings gather in large flocks, usually within 2 km of the roost site. In these 'pre-roost assemblies' the birds may sing, bathe and preen, but the main activity is to feed intensively, and the sites at which pre-roost assemblies form must thus represent good feeding sites. Summers (1989b) found that this was indeed the case, and pre-roost assembly sites were often traditional sites, used each evening, where food was superabundant, for example pig farms and cattle farms where food was put out freely for the stock.

Caccamise & Morrison (1986) considered that these sites, where Starlings could obtain a large amount of food just before entry into the roost, were the determinants of the locality of the night roost and that depletion of food at these assembly areas led the birds to change roost sites, while still remaining faithful to their daily activity centres. Fidelity to daytime feeding areas allows Starlings to learn where good-quality food can be most profitably obtained (Peach & Fowler 1989), for Starlings can be highly selective in the food that they take (Tinbergen 1981), and an adequate supply of invertebrates is essential for survival, even in winter (Feare & McGinnity 1986). At their feeding sites, Starlings also require daytime roost sites and drinking-and-bathing areas, and familiarity with the environs of the daily activity centre presumably enables the birds to learn where these activities can be undertaken with maximum safety from predators and shelter from adverse meteorological conditions.

The most spectacular part of roosting behaviour is seen after the Starlings leave the pre-roost assemblies and just before they descend into the roost site where



they will spend the night. At this time, huge flocks often fly over the roost site in swirling smoke-like or cloud-like masses, the birds in each large group appearing to act as a co-ordinated unit so that all members of a flock seem to change direction instantaneously. Flocks eventually approach the roost site and fly low over it but at the last minute fly up again to rejoin the main groups above. This gives the appearance of reluctance to enter the roost until sufficiently large numbers are prepared to do so at the same time. An occurrence that a group of colleagues and I witnessed at a winter roost provided anecdotal support for this idea. In this case, a flock of about 20 Starlings broke from the main groups and flew into the trees; as they entered the tree tops, four Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*, which had clearly been waiting in the wood, lifted from the trees and each took a Starling. Thus, 20% of this first flock that attempted to enter the roost was taken by predators. Large traditional Starling roosts are regularly frequented by a range of avian predators (Feare 1984) and the aerial displays performed by birds prior to entry into the roost may serve as a protection from predation.

Within the roost, the distribution of birds is not random. They segregate into age groups and sex groups, such that adult males tend to occupy central positions and younger birds, especially females, distribute themselves around the periphery (Summers *et al.* 1987). As birds settle into the roost each evening there is considerable jostling for position, accompanied by much singing, and dominant birds generally secure the preferred sites through competition. Starlings prefer more central and higher positions (Feare *et al.* 1995), and Yom-Tov (1979) demonstrated a disadvantage of lower positions where the plumage of lower birds became contaminated with droppings from birds above, reducing the waterproofing qualities of the feathers. The position secured by Starlings within a roost may also influence their susceptibility to adverse microclimatic factors, especially wind, and predation (Feare 1984). Normally, roosting Common Starlings maintain a distance of 15-20 cm between individuals, but during extreme cold they may huddle together (Peach *et al.* 1987).

Morning departure from a roost also has its characteristic organisation, with birds leaving in co-ordinated exoduses, rather than as a continuous stream of birds. Exoduses are on average about three minutes apart, and observations using radar indicate that birds from each exodus travel to the limit of the catchment of roosts (Eastwood *et al.* 1962), although observations from the ground show that many birds from each exodus stop at feeding sites closer to the roost. Summers & Feare (1995) found that, during departure, adult Starlings tended to leave in earlier exoduses and young birds left in later ones, but there was no difference in the distance that birds of different age/sex travelled to their daily feeding areas. There were, however, differences in the social structure of flocks that fed at different feeding sites, and Summers & Feare (1995) suggested that this was related to differences in the quality of food available at the different sites. These authors concluded that these departure patterns enabled dominant birds, mainly adult males, to secure the better-quality feeding sites, while later-departing subordinate and younger birds could judge the likely competition they might face as they overflowed these sites; they could then decide whether to attempt to feed there or to fly on to sites that were inferior but where they could feed in the absence of intense competition from more dominant individuals. The reason for the birds' departure in a series of well-co-ordinated exoduses remains unknown.

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LETTER

Attracting Ospreys

The introduction of Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* to Rutland Water, Leicestershire, is controversial and likely to be expensive (*Brit. Birds* 89: 321-324). In North America, where Ospreys are still increasing, they are attracted to nest on cartwheels, or similar platforms, fixed to the tops of poles placed in or near to water. These are a very cheap way to attract Ospreys to nest, and all that is needed thereafter is patience (though they are sometimes used soon after they have been erected).

DAVID SERGEANT

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NOTES

Fulmars feeding on jellyfish

In casual observations around the Calf of Man, Isle of Man, in May-July 1991, Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* were regularly watched destroying and consuming jellyfish, particularly *Aurelia aurita* and the much rarer *Cyanea capillata*; they were also seen to attack the large jellyfish *Rhizostoma octopus*, which can reach 60 cm in diameter, up to three birds tearing at it independently. On one occasion, a Fulmar feeding close to the shore caught and ate the ctenophore *Beroe*, which was present in large numbers among swarms of the much smaller *Pleurobrachia*. Fulmars could occasionally be seen 'guzzling' avidly in clear surface water, when close inspection revealed high densities of the transparent and nearly invisible *Pleurobrachia* just below the surface.

BWP (vol. 1) makes only brief comment on Fulmars eating coelenterates: the presence of *Beroe* among stomach contents from the Davis Strait between Greenland and Baffin Island, and Fulmars in west Spitsbergen feeding on floating refuse, jellyfish and other plankton when swarms of the crustacean *Thysanoessa* disappear in September. There is no reference to Fulmars feeding on coelenterates in British waters.

N. V. MCCANCH and M. MCCANCH

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On several days during 1st-19th August 1992, while working on a diving vessel alongside the production platform Beryl 'A' in the North Sea, I watched Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* regularly gather around floating jellyfish. They frequently defended these from one another with aggressive behaviour, which usually consisted of half-raising the wings and charging across the surface towards the other birds; this was normally sufficient to deter would-be competitors, but occasionally culminated in physical contact. The eventual winner of these disputes was always an adult (which I identified as those in moult, with missing primaries), and it would allow near it only one young Fulmar (which I identified by the fresh wing feathers), possibly its own. The adult would then defend the young while the latter pecked at the centre of the jellyfish. Usually 30-40 Fulmars were around the platform, but, when only a few were present, there was less squabbling and occasionally two or three would share a jellyfish without undue bickering. Only the centre of the jellyfish seemed to be consumed.

JULIAN BELL

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EDITORIAL COMMENT The late Prof. George Dunnet commented (verbally on 20th June 1995) that juvenile Fulmars are very difficult if not impossible to distinguish from adults (except for the softness of the base of the bill), and that very few are fledged before mid to late August; he had no recollection of any similar observations concerning (presumed) adults defending feeding (presumed) offspring. Jellyfish are listed as food in *BWP*, but the feeding technique is not described; there are also several references to the eating of jellyfish in James Fisher's *The Fulmar* (1952).

Melanistic Black-headed Gull

In early July 1996, farmers at Newark, Sanday, Orkney, told me that, while cutting grass for silage during the previous week or so, they had seen a very dark gull among the regular Common Gulls *Larus canus* and Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* following the tractors. On 7th and 9th July, I took some photographs of the bird (plate 187).



Plate 187. Melanistic Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* with normal Black-headed Gull, Orkney, July 1996 (Roderick H. F. Thorne)

The gull's plumage was sooty-black all over, though the head itself was distinctly darker. The legs were red. I presume that the bird was a melanistic Black-headed Gull.

RODERICK H. F. THORNE

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Rob Hume has commented: 'This gull is interesting. Genuine melanism is rare: there are a few records of melanistic or partially melanistic gulls, but not many, and none very well documented. In 30 years of hard gull-watching, I have never seen one.'

'The symmetry of pattern on this one (revealed by examination of all the available photographs) suggests melanism rather than some sort of horrible soiling. That is the problem: telling melanism from pollution. I could imagine, however, that if the gull had somehow become immersed in a dark liquid (but *what I can't* imagine) the underlying pattern might "shine through", as it does here. It would be like trying to dye a patterned T-shirt: it might take a few goes to wipe out the original pattern, which would still be discernible beneath a new colour.'

'So, although the pattern *is* symmetrical and does echo the normal pattern of an adult Black-headed Gull, it could *conceivably* be some sort of soiling. But it does look more like true melanism to me. It is interesting that the white nape—important in signalling among Black-headed Gulls—remains the palest part.'



RARITIES COMMITTEE NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



Files on three potential firsts for Britain—Redhead *Aythya americana* at Bleasby, Nottinghamshire, during 8th-18th March 1996, American Coot *Fulica americana* at Stodmarsh, Kent, during 16th-29th or 30th April 1996, and Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* at Nottingham, from 20th February to 18th March

1996—have been processed by the Committee and their straightforward identifications accepted by early August. All three are now with the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee for assessment regarding potential origins.

Blyth's Pipits

While the Committee has accepted a number of records of Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, there are still some decisions to be made. A well-watched, well-photographed and much-discussed pipit on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, during 20th-22nd October 1993 is popularly assumed to have been Blyth's, and most members accept it as such. Nevertheless, there are anomalies: in particular the fact that it was so pale and unlike any other Blyth's Pipit so far seen in Britain. Committee members with experience of the species in Asia at various times from early autumn to spring agree that none they have seen abroad has looked like this, either.

Blyth's Pipits may moult early or very late: if this individual had moulted late it would have been in very fresh plumage with extensive pale feather edgings yet to be abraded. This may explain its apparently abnormal colour: but has anyone seen such a pale individual abroad? Have you? If so, we would be pleased to hear of it, so that the file on this particular record can finally be closed.

Certainly the idea that Blyth's Pipit 'is sorted' is too simplistic. A 'diagnostic' call may be heard in different ways by individual observers, written down differently (sometimes with transcriptions matching those used for calls of Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*) and then reinterpreted in various ways by people who read the reports; in any case, calls of Richard's vary sufficiently to cause real confusion. While most Committee members agree that a suite of characters favouring Blyth's—given that there is none against—is sufficient for a well-observed and well-described individual to be accepted, one member still regards the only 'safe' Blyth's to be a trapped one. Future records will need to be as well documented as ever, since there will be no 'easy rides'.

South Polar Skuas

Less progress has been made with assessments of South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*. A number of files relate to reports which inevitably will be rejected; others look more hopeful. While we have taken full note of recent publications regarding the identification of the species, there is still no easy acceptance of any

of the submitted reports. Better knowledge does not necessarily help a past record if the description (or the view obtained) was inadequate (it can now never be improved), nor if the plumage as described does not fit known plumage patterns of South Polar Skua. Criticisms of the Committee for failing to come to quick decisions are inappropriate. We have preferred not to publish premature decisions, but hope to resolve the most promising contenders soon and, after the usual BOURC assessment, publish all the decisions together.

Black Kites

At a recent meeting, the Committee attempted to rationalise its approach to reports of Black Kites *Milvus migrans*. Records mostly fall into one of two categories: those seen well enough to obtain full details of plumage (but for which we would still expect some discussion of shape and flight action) and those in which plumage details were not seen. The latter require a more complete assessment of shape and proportion, flight action, wing set and so on. We will of course continue to take into account the circumstances, the observers and optical aids. A kite seen from the Big Dipper at Whitley Bay fairground by an observer on a visit with his family and without binoculars would receive a rougher ride (in more ways than one) than an individual watched by several observers at a visible-migration watchpoint.

Black Kites are still very rare birds in Britain. Of six BBRC members with 140 years of British birding between them, none had seen a fly-by Black Kite in Britain. While many of us see 'thousands' of them abroad on numerous foreign trips, the amount of really detailed study we make is probably small. Several of the members admitted making mistakes with Black Kite identification abroad, rectified only after prolonged study or closer views: many British reports do not have the luxury of a second look to ensure that a mistake has not been made. We are constantly surprised at the number of times a claimed Black Kite is described as 'all black' and, while we sympathise with people who genuinely have seen and studied scores of them abroad before claiming one in Britain, we will continue to demand higher standards of documentation than is frequently the case at present. We do expect some sensible discussion of alternatives and an idea of the quality of view and the details seen, even for this big, obvious 'easy' species.

RAH

The Carl Zeiss Award



All prints or transparencies of 1996 rarities sent to the Rarities Committee for circulation during record assessments will be eligible for consideration for The Carl Zeiss Award.

The year's winner will be able to choose a pair of Zeiss binoculars (10×40, 7×42 or Night Owl 7×45), and the runners-up (and all those whose rarity photographs are published in *British Birds*) will receive a voucher for a free six-month subscription to *British Birds*.

For circulation to the Committee, send prints or duplicate transparencies to M. J. Rogers, Hon. Secretary BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR6 3AZ.

For publication in *BB*, send prints or original transparencies to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



DIARY DATES

Compiled by Sheila D. Cobban

This list covers January to December 1997

3rd-5th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

31st January BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

7th-9th March RSPB/IWC-BIRDWATCH IRELAND ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE. Templepatrick, Co. Antrim. Details from RSPB, Northern Ireland Office, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT8 4QT.

8th March AFRICAN BIRD CLUB AGM. Friend's Meeting House, opposite Euston Station, London. Details from ABC, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

15th March JOINT SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB/BTO BIRDWATCHERS' CONFERENCE. Caledonian University, Glasgow. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

15th March BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

22nd March WELSH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM. Aberystwyth. For details contact Miss Jean Macbeth, Minas Tirith, Llanfihangel-y-Creuddyn, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 4LA.

4th-6th April JOINT BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND BTO WORLD BIRDING CONFERENCE (in association with the African Bird Club, the Neotropical Bird Club, the Oriental Bird Club, and the Ornithological Society of the Middle East). Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BOU, c/o The Natural History Museum, Akeman Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP, or BTO.

4th-6th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of Warwick. Details from Christine McDowell, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

24th July to 8th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

15th-17th August BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR. Egleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, Leicestershire.

24th August OBC MEETING. Blakeney Village Hall, Blakeney, Norfolk. Details from OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

28th-30th August EUROPEAN ORNITHOLOGICAL UNION FOUNDATION MEETING. Bologna. Details from Dr Fernando Spina, Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica, Via Ca Fornacetta 9, 40064 Ozzano Emilia (BO), Italy.

1st September YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

5th-7th September BOU AUTUMN CONFERENCE. Stranmillis College, Belfast. 'Bird science and conservation—a view from Ireland.' Details from Dr Julian Greenwood, Science Department, Stranmillis College, Belfast BT9 5DY.

5th-7th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BTO.

13th December OBC AGM. Zoological Society Meeting Rooms, Regent's Park, London. Details from OBC.

15th December THE BEST ANNUAL BIRD REPORT AWARDS: closing date for entries.

Mrs S. D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NF



MONTHLY MARATHON



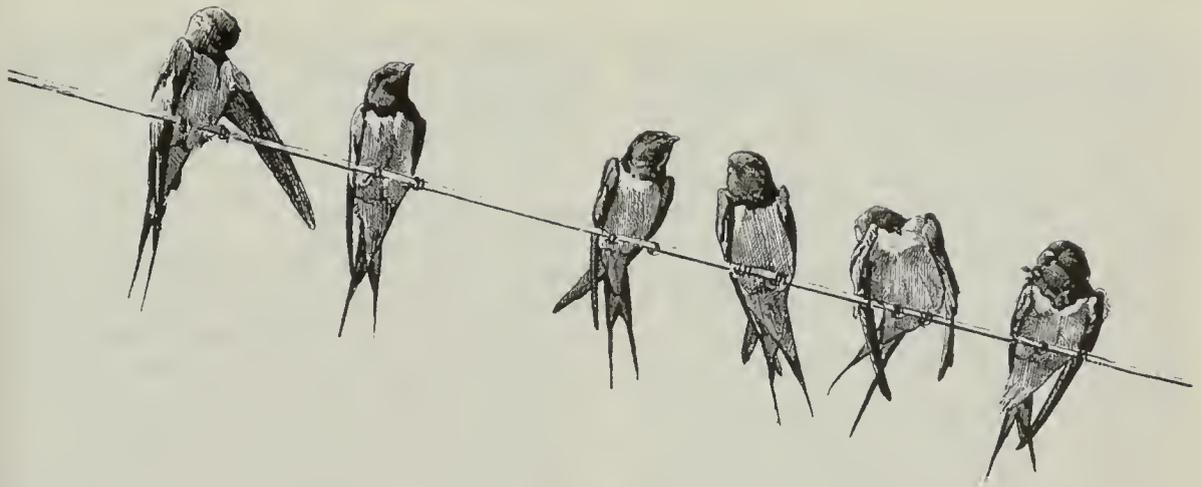
The fourth stage in the ninth 'Marathon', the long-winged bird perched on a twig (plate 157), caused few headaches for competitors. Some gambling longshots (e.g. Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*, Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*) did not pay off this time; 99% of entrants correctly identified it as a Spotted Flycatcher *M. striata*. It was photographed by Chris Steeman in the Isles of Scilly in September 1985.

To enter the 'Marathon', and perhaps win the prize of a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, America or Asia, identify the birds shown below (plate 188).

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (01767) 682969.



Plate 188. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 126. Sixth stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify the two species. Read the rules on page 24 of the January issue and the amendment on page 333 in the July issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th January 1997.



The ornithological year 1995

Barry Nightingale and Keith Allsopp

This report summarises the major bird movements and influxes of 1995, as well as including the rarity highlights. All the rarities noted here have been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee; reports still under consideration or not yet submitted are not included. Full details of all the major rarities can be found in the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain' in the November issue (*Brit. Birds* 89: 481-531).

A mild winter and few surprises

The first half of January was anticyclonic and the second half markedly cyclonic. It was westerly throughout, changeable and exceptionally wet after mid-month; it was, for instance, the wettest January in London since 1943. Mean temperatures were generally at or 1-2°C above normal.

With a quiet start to the year, it was the long-stayers from 1994 that retained the attention: **Pied-billed Grebes** *Podilymbus podiceps* at Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall) and Tresco (Scilly), the latter with an **American Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* for company; the **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* at Titchwell (Norfolk), which had been there since 1993; **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* in Nottinghamshire; **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* in Lothian; **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* near Hayle (Cornwall)—it was to be a very poor year for rare wheatears; and a **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* in Devon. Another eventually long-staying Dusky Warbler was found near Bude (Cornwall) on 11th January, but it was events from another quarter on that day that made the headlines. A deep depression over southern Sweden on 10th and 11th brought strong northerlies from the Arctic into the North Sea, and at Flamborough (Humber-

side) 10,900 **Little Auks** *Alle alle* flew north on 11th, including 7,000 in one two-hour spell, whilst next day 9,742 were counted there. Also on 11th-12th, at least 7,000 Little Auks went north past Hartlepool Headland (Cleveland) and 4,700 passed Seaton Sluice (Northumberland). On 12th, other large counts included 7,500 past Whitburn (Durham) and 6,800 at Cullercoats (Northumberland). The wind had moderated by 12th and by the next day had shifted to westerly. After that, reports of Little Auks returned to normal. Throughout this period, virtually none was seen south of The Wash.

Horned Larks *Eremophila alpestris*, too, were appearing in good numbers with over 80 reported (plate 201), including 18 at Minsmere (Suffolk) in mid January, 11 in Holkham Bay (Norfolk) and 20 near Staithes (Cleveland). During 6th-14th, there was a strong coastal passage of **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata*, including 559 at Dungeness (Kent) on 13th and 147 at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 8th. Later, there were 1,100 at Minsmere on 28th. Rare geese appeared, with a **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* at Holkham on 13th January, another at Cantley (Norfolk) on 15th and a **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* at

Sittingbourne (Kent). **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena* showed well, including up to 25 in Norfolk in January, and 15 **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* lingered in the same county. On the West Coast, a **Forster's Tern** in Bangor Harbour (Gwynedd) caused some excitement on 20th January. A **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* at Fleetwood (Lancashire), the second there in two years, moved to Seaforth (Merseyside) and stayed until March, proving a real crowd-pleaser. Another was to be found at Filey (North Yorkshire) on 30th January.

February was another very wet, very mild month with a southwesterly airstream prevailing during the period. Mean temperatures were above average except in the Western and Northern Isles, and in southern England it was the warmest February since 1990. Over England and Wales, it was the wettest February since 1990.

A **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* at Wells (Norfolk) on 4th February was unusual, and 140 **Corn Buntings** *Miliaria calandra* at Gibraltar Point was the highest count at that site since the 1970s. Good numbers of **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* appeared, too, reaching 60 at Copt Point (Kent) on 17th February. They were recorded from 22 sites in the London area, and unusual numbers were seen in Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Suffolk. Norfolk held 'exceptional' numbers, with about 20 reported, and 23 in Surrey was a record. **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* reached 636 off Southwold, a new Suffolk record. Inner Marsh Farm (Clwyd) and the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) both played host to **American Wigeons** *Anas americana*, and a **Ross's Gull**, the third of the year, appeared at Slapton Ley (Devon). Many areas were reporting very low counts of

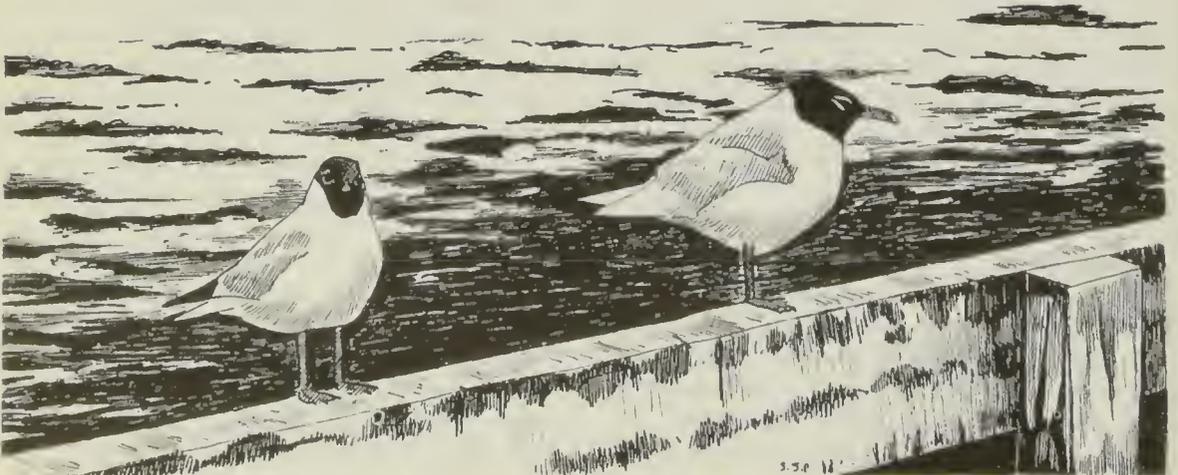
Redwings *Turdus iliacus* and **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris*, and it was a very poor winter for **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor*, with only about 12 reported.

Early spring arrivals

March on the whole was very sunny but with frequent wintery showers, particularly during the first eight days, when heavy snow spread quickly over much of England and Wales. Mean temperatures were within a degree of the long-term average. Over England and Wales as a whole, there have been only two sunnier Marches during the last 100 years.

With the arrival of March came the first spring migrants, and right on cue was a **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* on 1st in Humberside. It had, however, been beaten here by a **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* at Rye Harbour (East Sussex) on 17th February. By 5th March, further arrivals included a **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* on St Mary's (Scilly), **Northern Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* in Norfolk and West Sussex and a **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* in Nottinghamshire. **Red-throated Divers** were still working along the English Channel, with 502 at Dungeness on 9th March, and the next day the count of **Mediterranean Gulls** at Copt Point reached 104. **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* were on the move, too, with 112 past Beachy Head (East Sussex) and 65 at Dungeness on 10th. These movements followed a complete change in the weather, when a deep depression tracked eastwards into the Western Approaches and confronted a developing anticyclone over western Europe, giving warm southerlies.

The 11th was very warm in East Anglia and the southeast, where 16°C was widely reached. As a result, the first main arrivals of the spring



occurred, with 59 **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* landing at Dungeness, and good numbers of **Northern Wheatears** along the South Coast, including 45 at Portland (Dorset). Other early migrants included a **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* at Cley (Norfolk) on 14th, a **Common Swift** *Apus apus* over Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 15th, and **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava*, with three at Snettisham (Norfolk) on 18th and one at Gibraltar Point on 22nd, the earliest-ever there by 13 days. A westerly passage of **Stock Doves** *Columba oenas* was noted in Norfolk during 10th-22nd March, and as they moved through **Siskins** *Carduelis spinus* followed, particularly during 22nd-30th March, including 1,500 west past Holme (Norfolk) on 25th. More early birds included a **House Martin** *Delichon urbica* at Gibraltar Point on 25th, a **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* at Colwick (Nottinghamshire) on 29th and a **Common Swift** on St Agnes (Scilly), all setting new earliest records for their respective areas. A **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* at Gibraltar Point on 29th March ended a good month for that observatory, but March on the whole had been uneventful for the rarity-hunter. Two exciting raptors, however, finished the month off in fine style on 31st: at opposite ends of the country came a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* to Devon and a **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* to St Kilda (Western Isles). Continuing the raptor theme, 24 **Common Buzzards** *Buteo buteo* coming in off the sea at Benacre (Suffolk) on 1st April were unusual, and another 32 came in off the sea at Sheringham (Norfolk) on 24th April.

An interesting April . . .

The first fortnight of April was anticyclonic and there were frequent northerly and easterly winds. It was very warm and sunny for the first half, and dry, with cooler spells, in the second half. Mean temperatures were around 1°C above normal over much of the UK.

An old friend, the **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophris*, returned to Shetland on 3rd April, a **Common Crane** *Grus grus* appeared in Scilly on 4th, only the third record for the archipelago, and the next day there was a movement of 4,000 **Sand Martins** over Jersey and a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* on Lewis (Western Isles). Also on 5th, a live **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* performed well at Shoreham-by-Sea (West Sussex), after the remains of one freshly dead had been found in Pembrokeshire. The highlight of the spring for

many observers, however, was a **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops* which stayed from 9th to 11th April at Morwenstow (Cornwall) (plate 191).

Grey Wagtails *Motacilla cinerea* had been reported in above-average numbers all winter from many areas, and one on North Ronaldsay on 10th April was a scarce migrant for Orkney. At this time, there were strong westerlies across the north Atlantic and, probably a new arrival in Europe, a **Killdeer Plover** *Charadrius vociferus* at Loch of Strathbeg (Grampian) on 13th was typically the only one of the year of this still very rare vagrant, whereas a **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia caullians* at Dungeness on the same day was the first of many. Similarly, both **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* and **Black Kites** had bumper years and examples of both were found on 15th April, in Hampshire and Somerset respectively.

After the five records in 1993, perhaps the **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* found in the Durkadale area of Orkney on 18th April was not so much of a surprise, but unlike the 1993 records this was a long-stayer, to 27th June, with sightings in September and possibly to November. Twenty **Common Cranes** over Thursley (Surrey) on 20th was the largest flock seen in Britain for about ten years.

An area of low pressure which moved north from France brought widespread rain and hill snow during the weekend of 22nd-23rd April, and then a mainly northeasterly airflow became established during the last week of the month. After a veritable rush in the last two years, a **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* on Holy Island (Northumberland) on 23rd caused only a relatively minor stir, superb though it was, to be followed the next day by a flood of rarities, with **Gyr Falcon** in Grampian, **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* in Hampshire, **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* on Fair Isle (Shetland) and **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* on Stronsay (Orkney). Supporting these were arrivals on the South Coast of commoner migrants, including 600 **Willow Warblers** at Portland, and a steady trickle of **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* through the London reservoirs and the English midland counties. **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger*, by contrast, were generally scarce. A small influx of **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* occurred during 25th-30th April, with nine in Norfolk and eight elsewhere, and more falls of **Willow Warblers** on the South Coast included 1,000 at Portland on 26th. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* on South Ronaldsay on 27th April

was the first spring record for Orkney, and there was another on Rousay on 28th. Two **Little Buntings** *Emberiza pusilla* were found, at Belvide Reservoir (Staffordshire) on 21st and at Holme on 25th (plate 203). Good numbers of **Little Gulls** *Larus minutus* passed through, with 65 at King George V Reservoir (Surrey) on 28th and 186 at Staines Reservoir (Surrey) on 29th, when 26 **Mediterranean Gulls** passed Dungeness, and single **Caspian Terns** appeared at Tealham Moor (Somerset) on 29th and at Bough Beech Reservoir (Kent) on 30th.

. . . and a splendid May

May was dry and quite sunny, the second and third weeks with mainly northerly winds, followed by a week of southerlies. During the first week, most of Britain was sunny and very warm, the temperature reaching 27°C or more. With an anticyclone over western Europe, it was the second-hottest first week of May in 100 years. Mass arrivals which occurred included a heavy passage of **Yellow Wagtails** in Norfolk, with 450 at Holme and 100 at Sheringham on 1st, the first of ten **Subalpine Warblers** which came during 1st-8th May, and **Short-toed Larks** on Fair Isle and on St Agnes (there were to be three more in the next four days). Passage of **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* was at its heaviest during 1st-4th, with 115 at Dungeness, 69 past Selsey Bill (West Sussex) and 109 past Newhaven (East Sussex), all on 2nd. There were six **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* during 2nd-8th May and a total of 12 altogether in May, and an **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* at Snettisham and a **Blaek-winged Stilt** at Dungeness, both on 2nd, which was also an excellent day for Northamptonshire with a **Blaek Kite** over Long Buekby and two **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* at Ditchford. More multiple arrivals involved **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus*, with one at Hickling (Norfolk) on 3rd, and then seven more in May, and a **Red-rumped Swallow** in Dorset, the first of eight during 3rd-12th May. Two more **Blaek-winged Stilts** in Devon, an obliging **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Dungeness, and a less so **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* at Cley all appeared on 5th. Five **White-billed Divers** *Gavia adamsii* were found during 6th-13th May, typical dates in one of the best ever springs for this species, and then a whole surge of rarities included **Little Bittern** in Dyfed, **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* in Cornwall

(plate 166), **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* in Cumbria and **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* on Calf of Man (Isle of Man) on 6th, and three **Blaek Kites** and three **Red-rumped Swallows** on 7th. A **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Alvaston on 7th was the first in Derbyshire since 1976. Also in Derbyshire, on 8th, was a **Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*, the county's first spring record, and there was another on the same day at Blithfield Reservoir, the first spring record for the West Midlands area for at least ten years. A **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii*, also a rare spring arrival, was found at Filey, and two more **Blaek-winged Stilts** were in Kent on 9th. A **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* at Southwold on 14th, reappearing on and off in Norfolk until 25th May, was the third record of this species in four years. On 17th, a depression crossed southern Britain, bringing heavy rain and easterlies across the North Sea. With it came a good scattering of easterly drift-migrants to the Northern Isles, with about 90 **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica*, including eight on North Ronaldsay on 25th and seven on Fair Isle on 27th, 30 **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio*, and **Common Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus*, with seven at Sumburgh (Shetland) and seven on Whalsay, all on 26th, and 15 on Fair Isle on 31st May.

Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella naevia* are becoming searce in many parts of the country (for instance, only one held territory in Surrey), so one on Hoy on 20th May was a good record for Orkney. A **Subalpine Warbler** at Farlington Marsh (Hampshire) on 21st May was one of ten during 21st-29th, and a remarkable flock of ten **European Bee-eaters** flew over Anglesey (Gwynedd) on the same day. Further movements of **Pomarine Skuas** were also taking place, with 34 past Bowness-on-Solway (Cumbria) on 18th May, 41 past Wats Ness (Shetland) on 20th and 42 at Dungeness on 22nd, which gave that site a new spring record total for this species of 252.

A **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* at Hunstanton Golf-course, found on 22nd, proved very popular during its four-day stay (plate 196), and was the highlight for many of its admirers during an extremely interesting month. But there was more still to come, with three **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* in Norfolk on 23rd-24th May, six **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva*, mainly in the Northern Isles, **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* and **Dusky Warbler**, both in Shetland on 25th, **River**

Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* on Fair Isle on 27th, **Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* in Tayside on 28th (plate 198), and three **Rustic Buntings** *Emberiza rustica* on Fair Isle during 29th-31st May.

The excitement continues

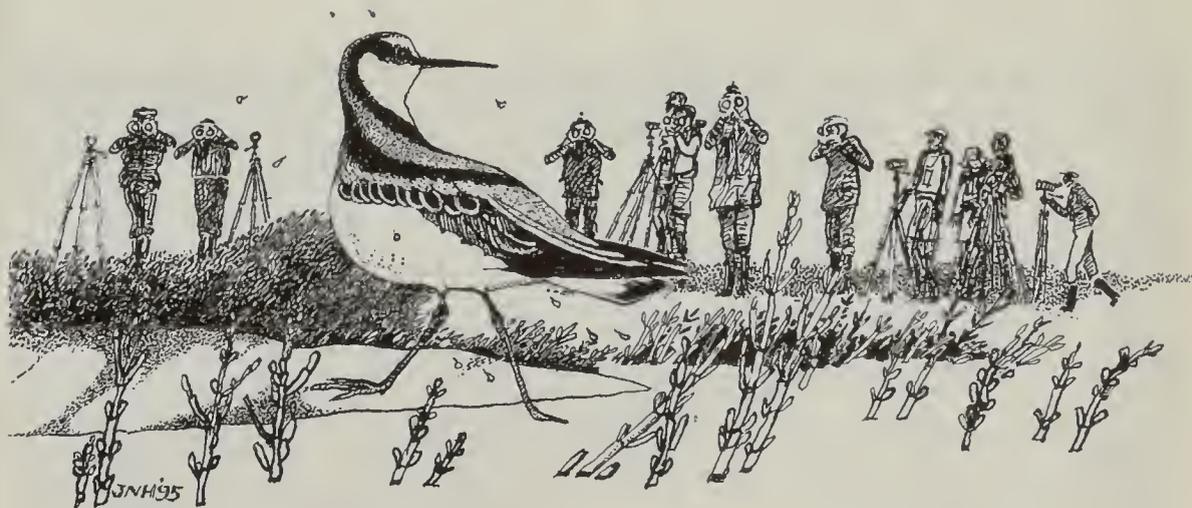
It was a cool, cloudy first half of June and warm and sunny in the second. Eastern districts were cooler than average, with mean maxima some 3°C below on the north Norfolk coast. It was, however, a rather warm month in the West and South. In the Glasgow area, it was the sunniest June since at least 1881; and again it was very dry.

Although there had been enough rarities to keep the wader enthusiast content, many of our more regular species had a poor spring. There was a dismal passage of **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* and **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola*, both in contrast to 1994, and **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* were scarce in many southern counties, as were **Common Greenshanks** *Tringa nebularia* and **Wood Sandpipers** *T. glareola*. A **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* at Williamthorpe on 5th June was the first in Derbyshire for ten years, and a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* in Somerset, an **Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* on Fair Isle and a **Collared Flycatcher** on Tresta (Shetland) was a rare, if somewhat odd, mixture to arrive on 5th June. A **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus* on Scalloway (Shetland) on 7th was the first of nine in June, another five appearing during July. Also from the east, there was a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* at Filey on 18th-19th (plate 194). Three **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus* during 11th-15th June, in Shetland, Norfolk and Suffolk, were on typical

dates, if somewhat surprising after the complete absence in 1994. A **Ross's Gull** on 12th at Greatham Creek (Cleveland) was not the first June record for that species, but an even greater surprise to the fortunate observers must have been the **frigatebird** *Fregata* seen off Cornwall from two locations on 13th June and then, presumably the same, off Skomer (Dyfed) on 14th. **Black Storks** in North Yorkshire and Kent were the fourth and fifth of the year and a **Little Bittern** on Hampstead Heath (Greater London) on 19th June was also the fifth.

With a northeasterly airflow during 23rd-29th June, much of Britain enjoyed several days of virtually unbroken sunshine. Eastern and Midland counties, however, had dull mornings, and on 24th low stratus was widespread and slow to clear. Seabirds which made inland appearances had probably just got lost in the murk; these included four **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* over Regent's Park (Greater London) on 24th and a **Puffin** *Fratercula arctica* at Eyebrook Reservoir (Leicestershire) on 25th; much rarer was the **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* in Derbyshire and another at Pool of Virkie (Shetland) on the same day.

If the end of June is still 'spring', then an **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* on 27th June on Fair Isle qualifies as Britain's first spring record, and two more **Black Storks**, in Orkney on 27th and in Durham on 28th, continued the upsurge in records for that species. By contrast, a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* in Cleveland on 2nd July was the only one of the year, as was a **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* at Titchwell on 3rd (it had possibly been present since 30th June and it stayed along the north Norfolk coast until 23rd July).



Some breeding successes

In Norfolk, there were signs of an increase in the numbers of **European Nightjars** *Caprimulgus europaeus*, whilst on the Brecks 106 pairs of **Stone-curlews** *Burhinus oedichenus* raised 101 young. Following the large wintering population of **Mediterranean Gulls** in East Anglia, two pairs stayed to breed in Suffolk. Other significant breeding records included the **Pallid Harrier** in Orkney (plate 163) which paired with a female **Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*; she laid five eggs, which were then taken by a predator, probably a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. Ironically, numbers of breeding Hen Harriers in Orkney were down, but **Merlins** *Falco columbarius* recovered somewhat from their low of 1994. **Marsh Warblers** bred in Surrey, the first there since 1958, and **Dartford Warblers** *Sylvia undata* on the western heaths of Surrey reached their highest level this century, with an increase of over 50% from last year. **Eurasian Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter nisus* bred for the first time in Jersey for over 30 years and **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus* bred in Leicestershire.

Sunny summer days

July was dry, sunny and hot. High pressure predominated and some places in the south exceeded 20°C every day. Mean temperatures were around 2-4°C above the average.

The first half of July saw a spate of unusual inland records. On 5th, a **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* appeared at Trent Valley Country Park (Leicestershire), there was a **River Warbler** in Greater Manchester on 11th and a singing **Common Rosefinch** at Beddington (Surrey) on 13th July, a **Black Stork** near Cirencester (Gloucestershire) on 14th and a **Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* in Northamptonshire on 19th. Two rare Arctic

visitors, seeming somewhat out of place in the high temperatures, appeared in the north, with a **White-billed Diver** off Fetlar (Shetland) on 17th, staying until 30th September, and an **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* near Inverness (Highland), which stayed for five days (plate 162). From another direction came a **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla*, at Sidlesham (West Sussex) on 19th July, a day when large numbers of **Sand Martins** were also on the move, with 1,330 at Dungeness and 5,630 south over Gibraltar Point, the highest daily count there. Highland caught the attention again on 22nd July when a **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* dazzled those at Lochalsh, and in a topsy-turvy period a **Fieldfare** arrived on 22nd and a **Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus* on 26th, both in Norfolk.

Very few large shearwaters were seen, with about ten **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* off east-facing coasts and about 15 off Devon and Cornwall. Just two **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* were seen, passing Cornish coasts on 27th-28th July. Up to three **Great White Egrets** *Egretta alba* showed during 24th-30th July and there were **Gull-billed Terns** at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) on 28th and at Seaforth on 30th (the latter providing the ideal subject for Dot Jones to win The Carl Zeiss Award, plate 160), and the first of ten **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis* for the autumn appeared at Annachie Lagoon (Grampian).

A record-breaking August

August was hot, dry and sunny and broke all sorts of records. The exceptionally hot weather at the end of July continued and it reached 34.3°C at Heathrow on 1st, whilst at Cape Wrath (Highland) 27°C was recorded. August, over the country as a whole, was probably the hottest and sunniest on record, and one of the driest.



It was to be an excellent autumn for finding **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana*, with about 40 in August. Nine appeared during 2nd-8th, no doubt aided by the hot easterly airflow over Britain, there were seven during 11th-14th, 16 during 16th-23rd, and eight during 27th-30th. Marazion Marsh (Cornwall) was particularly favoured, with up to four there, but generally the influx was noted right across Britain. **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis* also came 'en masse', with six in two weeks, including three together at Cantley on 4th. **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva* appeared on cue, in Merseyside on 1st and in Cleveland on 5th. During 6th-8th, there was a notable passage of skuas along the coasts facing the North Sea, first **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus*, with 350 past Chanonry Point (Highland), 140 past Hartlepool and 217 past Hound Point (Lothian), and then **Pomarine Skuas** on 7th-8th, with 130 past Hartlepool and 90 past Whitburn. The East Coast continued to attract the attention on 12th August, with a **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* in Northumberland, a **White-rumped Sandpiper** in Humberside and an **Olivaceous Warbler** at Benacre (Suffolk). On 13th, and for the second time this year, a **Great White Egret** and a **Black Stork** arrived on the same day, the former at Dungeness and the latter at Beachy Head, but the **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* at St Margaret's (Kent) arrived alone and was the only one of the year.

August is *the* month for **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* and six were found at Icklesham (East Sussex) on 13th. In total, about 50 were reported in the month, mainly along the South Coast, but there were seven at Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan) and up to eight at Marazion.

Generally, wader passage was poor. A **Pacific Golden Plover** at Elmley (Kent) on 17th August and a **White-rumped Sandpiper** at Severn Beach (Avon) on 20th both stayed until 31st August, but a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* at Sandwell Valley (West Midlands) on 22nd was, typically, a one-day bird. **Greenish Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* started to appear on 17th, and there were to be four during the next week, and then another small influx of **Rosy Starlings** began, with one at Portland on 23rd and another six by the end of September.

In Norfolk, 34 **Long-tailed Skuas** went past Mundesley on 25th August, 54 **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus* flew past Holme the next day, and 240 passed Sheringham on 27th, and 110 **Great Skuas** *S. skua* surged

past Weybourne on 28th. To round off an excellent period of seawatching along the Norfolk coast, a **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* went past Cley on 30th, the fifth in Norfolk during August. Reports of **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* included 600 past Flamborough Head between 26th and 31st.

During the last few days of August, a cold front moved through, ending the heatwave, and a northerly airflow covered the country. On 27th a **Citrine Wagtail** frequented the Great Pool on Tresco (plate 195), and on the same day a very popular **Thrush Nightingale** showed well at Landguard (Suffolk) (plates 199 & 200), staying until 15th September, in what was to be a quiet autumn for the latter site. Rare waders were still featuring, with a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* on St Agnes on 29th, a **White-rumped Sandpiper** in Surrey on 30th and the first of three autumn **Great Snipes** for Fair Isle on 30th August. An **Arctic Warbler** at Barns Ness (Lothian) on 29th August was the first of four to arrive by 3rd September, and three **Greenish Warblers** on 2nd were followed by another 17 by 18th September. **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* arrived in good numbers, with 39 in September, outnumbering the 20 or so **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis*, with the peak period for both during 7th-11th September. Another 40 **Long-tailed Skuas** were reported during 1st-11th September, including a very tame adult at Farmoor Reservoir (Oxfordshire) (plate 190).

September—a month of contrasts

After the excesses of temperature in the previous two months, September was dull, and very wet in the East, but dry and bright in the West. On 6th, an exceptionally deep depression moved into the Southwest Approaches and for a few days there was some very disturbed weather over Britain, with northerly winds and heavy rain. There was, too, a distinct easterly feel to the spectrum of species up to 21st September, and the list of arrivals included two more **Great Snipes** on Fair Isle (plates 164 & 165), three **Rustic Buntings**, a **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*, three **Bonelli's Warblers** *Phylloscopus bonelli*, four **Citrine Wagtails**, nine **Yellow-breasted Buntings** *Emberiza aureola*, three **Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata*, four **Red-throated Pipits**, two **Lanceolated Warblers** *Locustella lanceolata*, two **Pechora Pipits** *Anthus gustavi*, four more **Arctic Warblers**, three **River Warblers** and a **Thrush Nightingale**. Most of

these made landfall in the Northern Isles. The support cast was also impressive, with a **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Flamborough Head on 6th, the first of about 40 in September, about 100 **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina*, with half during 7th-10th, 15 **Little Buntings**, about 50 **Red-breasted Flycatchers**, including 13 during 9th-11th, and 200 **Wrynecks**, of which 60 arrived during 8th-10th September (plate 192). Movements of common migrants were also noticeable, including 1,000 **Sand Martins**, 1,000 **Barn Swallows** and 3,000 **House Martins** over Wraybury Reservoir (Berkshire) on 2nd, to be dwarfed by 30,000 **Barn Swallows** over Gibraltar Point on 9th and 5,000 **House Martins** over King George VI Reservoir (Middlesex) on 10th September. A fall on North Ronaldsay on 8th involved impressive numbers of **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis*, **Common Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, **Northern Wheatears** and **Willow Warblers**.

Those events were, however, totally eclipsed on 18th September by probably the largest fall in Norfolk of **Common Redstarts** since that of 'the great immigration' of 3rd September 1965 (*Brit. Birds* 59: 353-376). Counts included 550 at Holme, 700 between Overy Dunes and Wells and 700 at Sheringham. In total, 3,500 were counted along the Norfolk coast. There was also a good fall of this species in Suffolk, and 481 at Gibraltar Point was a Reserve record. Also involved were about 1,500 **Northern Wheatears** along the Norfolk coast and smaller numbers of **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* and **Garden Warblers** *Sylvia borin*, but it is likely that **Willow Warblers** outnumbered even the **Common Redstarts**.

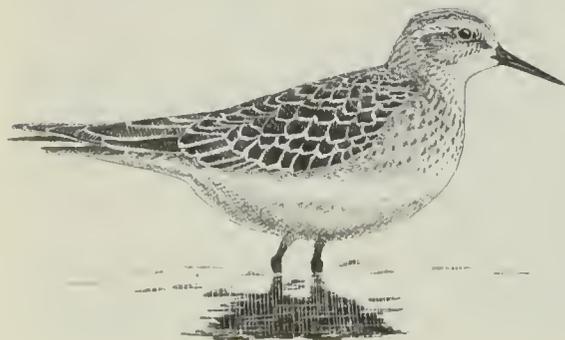
In the Atlantic, a narrow corridor of strong, warm westerly winds had developed by 19th September, sandwiched between an anticyclone to the south and cold air to the north. It stretched from Eastern Canada across to the north of Britain. Arriving before this, but setting the scene for the wecks to come, were **Baird's Sandpipers**, with one in South

Yorkshire on 5th, another at Upper Tamar Lake (Devon/Cornwall) on 15th, and a third on St Agnes on 18th. Despite all the eastern stars earlier in the month, it was the westerly airstream which brought the most coveted arrival in this whole period, a **Tennessee Warbler** *Vermivora peregrina* on St Kilda on 20th, only the fourth record for Britain. A quick reminder, in this month of contrast, of the winter to come arrived at Bennerley Marsh (Nottinghamshire) on 20th, with four **Whooper Swans** *Cygnus cygnus*, and there were more at Gibraltar Point on 24th, and the first returning **Pink-footed Geese** *Anser brachyrhynchus* to Norfolk, with 47 at Holme on 21st and 400 at Holkham by the next day. A **Black Stork** over Durham City on 26th was the fourteenth of the year (and the second for the county of Durham) and a **Citrine Wagtail** in Shetland was the year's tenth.

The Americans are coming

If September was dominated by easterly vagrants, then October 1995 will long be remembered as a classic for Nearctic passerines and near-passerines—12 species and at least 22 individuals, with more reports still to be dealt with. In contrast to September, October was also very warm and sunny, southwesterly weather predominated, and active depressions and fronts were rarely far from our northwestern seaboard. By 29th September, the warm-air corridor referred to earlier had moved slightly south, crossing southern Britain; it remained until about 13th, establishing again between 18th and 21st October.

The first of at least ten **Red-eyed Vireos** *Vireo olivaceus* appeared in rather unusual circumstances, landing on MV *Scillonian III* just off Land's End (Cornwall) on 30th September. Britain's third **White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys* stayed briefly at Seaforth on 2nd October before the spotlight focused firmly on Scilly, with two **Wilson's Phalaropes**, a **Red-eyed Vireo** and a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata*, all during 3rd-5th, the vireo feeding just a few metres away from a confiding **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* (plate 202), one of seven to appear on Scilly during October. A **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* in Orkney on 5th briefly diverted attention before a **Pechora Pipit** near Nanquidno (Cornwall) and another **Red-eyed Vireo** on St Mary's brought our attention back to the southwest. An **American Wigeon** arrived in Cheshire on 5th, followed by seven



more by the end of the year, and then it was the turn of Lundy (Devon) with a brace of goodies on 9th—a **Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* and yet another **Red-eyed Vireo**. St Agnes replied in kind the next day with a **Baird's Sandpiper** and a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* (plate 169), and a female **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* was found in Cornwall. Eastern species were still arriving, though, and of the 85 or so **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* in October many arrived during 10th-17th, while of the 100 **Yellow-browed Warblers** which landed in October half were in the same period. An **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* stayed all too briefly on St Mary's on 12th, but it was Dorset which stole the honours that day, with **Alpine Swift**, **Sardinian Warbler** and the first **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* of the autumn. Two **Red-eyed Vireos** worked their way through to the East Coast, appearing in Suffolk, a **Radde's Warbler** came in the opposite direction to land at Porthgarra (Cornwall) on 13th and the autumn's second **Yellow-rumped Warbler** appeared, on North Ronaldsay. Dorset continued its good run with a **Sociable Lapwing** *Chettusia gregaria* at Warmwell on 15th. Amidst all the rarities landing on Scilly a **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* caused some interest, only the third for that archipelago, almost eclipsing the two **Rosy Starlings** and the **Bonelli's Warbler** there. Much to the chagrin of the Scilly birders, however, the rarest bird of this exciting period appeared on the mainland, out of reach, at Prawle Point (Devon) on 18th: Britain's second **Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Dendroica pensylvanica*. It was not seen the next day, but some compensation came to Scilly with a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* on St Mary's (plate 193). Not to be outdone, Fair Isle replied with a **Hermit Thrush** *Catharus guttatus* the same day. A **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* on St Mary's on 20th was not obliging for the massed ranks of birders, and an **Upland Sandpiper** at Polgigga (Cornwall) also moved on very quickly. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, however, which arrived at Ventnor (Isle of Wight) on 30th October, lingered until 1st November.

By 22nd October, an extensive high-pressure system became established over Western Europe, with a southeasterly airflow around its flanks. From 22nd to 24th, strong southerly winds crossed Britain, and rain and gales spread to much of the country, particularly in western and northern areas. Huge numbers of **Redwings** arrived on the

East Coast during 21st-22nd October, although **Fieldfares** remained scarce, as did **Siskins**, and there was a noticeable influx into South Coast counties of **Ring Ouzels** *Turdus torquatus*, **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* and **Black Redstarts** *Phoenicurus ochruros*. During 20th-22nd, five **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** *Phylloscopus proregulus* arrived, with another 24 during 25th-31st October. They coincided with the appearance of a **Radde's Warbler** in West Sussex and a **Dusky Warbler** in Cornwall on 23rd. Two **Blackpoll Warblers** *Dendroica striata* showed at the end of the month, on St Agnes on 27th and at Kenidjack (Cornwall) on 29th, but by then the pendulum had swung decidedly to the east. A **Pine Bunting** was found in Norfolk, moving to Suffolk on 28th, and two **Radde's Warblers** were found, in Norfolk and in the Isle of Wight, and a **Dusky Warbler**, at Spurn (Humberside), on 29th. On that day, in calm conditions, 260 **Little Auks** passed Cley and a westerly arrival of **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* along the Norfolk coast revealed no young, indicating a very poor breeding season for that species.

More record-breaking influxes

From a weather point of view, November was a relatively quiet month, mild, with brief anticyclonic episodes alternating with longer cyclonic periods. There was a marked preponderance of southerly and easterly winds.

Another massive arrival of **Redwings** occurred on 30th October, noticeable in Orkney with flocks of 1,000 in several localities, and again in Norfolk on 1st November, with 6,000 at Hunstanton and 7,500 at Holme. **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** were still arriving, with 21 during 1st-6th and another 18 during 10th-15th November.

During 1st-3rd November, a high-pressure system between Scotland and Iceland and a low over the Baltic gave a strong flow of air from northern Norway south into the North Sea. For the second time in the year, enormous numbers of **Little Auks** were seen off the east-facing coasts. At Flamborough, 750 on 30th October were followed by counts of 432 on 1st November, 4,067 on 2nd, 6,200 on 3rd and 2,700 on 4th. At Spurn 1,500 passed between 1st and 4th (plate 189), and in Norfolk on 2nd 1,126 were counted past Cley, with 1,375 at Sheringham. In Lothian, 935 were seen off Dunbar on 6th and then 3,100 on 7th. There was something of a lull until 12th November, when counts included 1,790 past Hartlepool, 1,000 off Fife Ness (Fife),

4,000 past the Farne Islands (Northumberland) and then, on 13th, 2,253 past Flamborough. A total of 1,200 went past Whitburn on 18th and 3,200 passed Seacliff (Lothian) on 19th. Many were also found dead on the shoreline and there were several inland records. A few lingered along the more sheltered parts of the coast into 1996. This was one of the largest influxes of Little Auks ever noted in Britain, with perhaps 40,000 past Flamborough Head alone in the first half of November.

With all this excitement going on, little did we realise that an **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis homemanni* trapped in Hargreaves Quarry (Cleveland) on 2nd November heralded an unprecedented invasion of at least 150 before the end of the year. Two waves occurred, with 53 before 21st November, the majority in Shetland. After a brief quiet period, with just one new arrival on 29th November, there were another 58 by mid December, including seven in Shetland, 27 in Orkney and 17 in northeast England. A further 35 appeared in the second half of December, with the majority in Lincolnshire and Norfolk. Many associated with large flocks of **Common Redpolls** *Carduelis flammea* of the nominate 'Mealy' race. This situation was also mirrored in the countries bordering the North Sea, with tens of thousands of Common Redpolls in Denmark, and many thousands, probably hundreds of thousands, in southern Norway.

A **Long-billed Dowitcher** in Shetland on 3rd November was the seventh of the year and two **Spotted Sandpipers** were found in the West Country during 4th-5th November. In Scilly, a **Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* was the first record of this species for the archipelago for over 20 years. On typical dates, four **Dusky Warblers** arrived during 4th-19th November, sandwiching an **Olive-backed Pipit** on Fair Isle on 9th

November, only the second of the year, a very poor showing considering the number and variety of other eastern vagrants that reached our shores. A co-ordinated count of **Pink-footed Geese** in Norfolk on 20th November revealed over 32,000, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** in Nottinghamshire on 25th was the tenth for the year, and a **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** in Northumberland brought the year's total to about 80.

Although the opening period in December was mild and damp, an intense anticyclone developed over northeast Europe, and by 4th a cold easterly airflow set in. Snow fell frequently during the rest of the month and it was the coldest December since 1981.

A **Ring Ouzel** at Gibraltar Point on 3rd was only the fourth winter record there, and there were to be others on Tresco on 17th, and from 19th December up to five in Norfolk, coinciding with a large influx of **Fieldfares**. A **Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo pyrrhonota* on Tresco on 4th scarcely caused a flutter after the excesses of the previous few weeks, and certainly less so in Worcestershire than the **Dartford Warbler** on 8th, that county's first record this century. **Slavonian Grebes** *Podiceps auritus* were appearing in exceptional numbers in eastern counties, with 90 in northwest Norfolk alone, and at Welney (Norfolk) a count of 954 **Whooper Swans** was a new site record. **Pink-footed Goose** numbers in Norfolk reached over 50,000 by 22nd December and at a roost at Elmbridge (Surrey) the count of **Rose-ringed Parakeets** *Psittacula krameri* reached 770, an increase over 1994.

Finally, after just six **Bohemian Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* in November, about 80 were reported in December, mostly in East Anglia, including 23 in Sheringham on 30th. Little were we to guess of events to come, but that is another year's story.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to the numerous individual correspondents, national, regional, county and local societies, and bird observatories, whose information has been used to compile this summary. We are especially grateful to the British Birds Rarities Committee for complete information on its nationally accepted major rarities.

Barry Nightingale, 7 Bloomsbury Close, Woburn, Bedfordshire MK17 9QS

Keith Allsopp, 137 Redbridge, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 6DL

Appeal to all bird recorders, bird-club secretaries, and bird-observatory wardens

In order to make these annual reviews a complete reflection of the year's major happenings, and not just those associated with rarities, we should like to receive as many local reports, bulletins, newsletters and observatory reports as possible. Please send them to Barry Nightingale at the above address.

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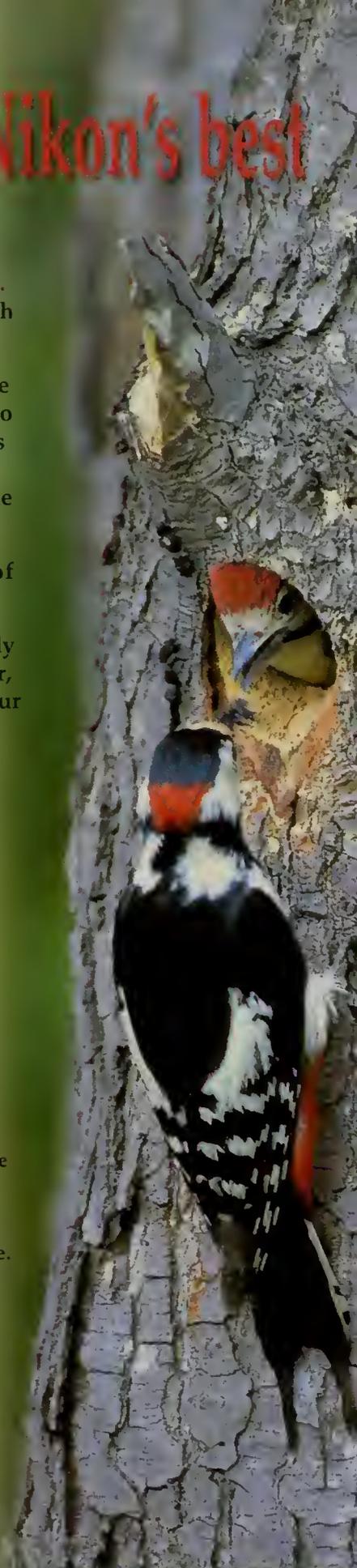


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Plate 189. Little Auks *Alle alle*, Spurn, Humberside, November 1995 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



Plate 190. Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire, September 1995 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



Plate 191. Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*, Morwenstow, Cornwall, April 1995 (Alan Tate)



Plate 192. Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Stiffkey, Norfolk, September 1995 (Robin Chittenden)



Plate 193. Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1995 (George Reszeter)



Plate 194. First-summer male Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Filey, North Yorkshire, 18th-19th June 1995 (Tony Collinson)



Plate 195. First-winter Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Great Pool, Tresco, Scilly, 27th August 1995 (Ren Hathway)



Plate 196. Male Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, Hunstanton Golf-course, Norfolk, May 1995 (J. Harriman)



Plate 197. First-winter Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, Co. Clare, 16th September 1995 (Anthony McGeehan). One of many Irish rarities in 1995 still being assessed by the Irish Rare Birds Committee.



Plate 198. Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, Auchmithie, Tayside, May 1995 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



Plates 199 & 200. First-winter Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Landguard Point, Suffolk, September 1995 (above, Reston Kilgour; below, Steve Young/Birdwatch)





Plate 201. Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*, Fairhaven, Lancashire, January 1995 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



Plate 202. Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, Tresco, Scilly, October 1995 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



Plate 203. Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, Holme, Norfolk, April 1995 (Alan Tate)



REVIEWS

Birds of Sussex.

Edited by Paul James.

Sussex Ornithological Society, 1996. 591 pages; 32 colour plates; over 60 black-and-white line-drawings; numerous histograms & distribution maps. ISBN 09528466-08. £23.00.

Getting one's hands on quality county avifaunas is a real pleasure, and Paul James and the Sussex Ornithological Society have come up trumps on this one. All the best points have been noted from other recent publications, and then improved upon. It is always easy to be enthusiastic about a county that you know, but, in my Kent days, Sussex was the cross-border rival, so I cannot be accused of patriotism.

Dipping into the systematic list, inevitably the bulk of the book, there are histograms and tables of status, and maps of distribution, which, together with some splendid line-drawings, present a superb visual image of the county's birds. John Reaney's artwork is excellent. Who could better the stooping

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* high over Brighton's West Pier? The introductory chapters are also succinct and relevant. Tony Marr's historical review is fascinating. The numbers of contributors to the county report during 1963-93 illustrate well, however, the dilemma facing county bird-recording. After an initial upsurge in the first seven years, numbers have remained relatively constant, some 300, against a background of greatly increasing numbers of birdwatchers.

Criticism? Yes, one point: the usual trap of including excellent photographic portrait studies of birds, when more views of Sussex, its landscapes and its habitats would have been far more appropriate.

BOB SCOTT

A Reference Manual of Rare Birds in Great Britain and Ireland. vol. 1.

Compiled by K. A. Naylor.

K. A. Naylor, Nottingham, 1996. 198 pages; black-and-white line-drawings. No ISBN. Obtainable only from K. A. Naylor, 24 Kendal Road, Cropwell Bishop, Nottingham NG12 3DX. £40.00*.

This is a remarkable book which will form an invaluable reference source for years to come. It covers the period from the early part of the nineteenth century up to 1957, the year before the British Birds Rarities Committee's first report, and lists *all* published records of rare birds in systematic and date order, with Irish records listed after those for Great Britain.

This is the first time that such a work has been produced which not only contains a comprehensive listing of all known records, but, most vitally, also includes full references to every record. Usefully, the compiler has also included (in square brackets) those records, such as 'the Hastings Rarities', which have subsequently been rejected. He has made no subjective decisions of his own as to what should be in and what should be out. The references, backed up by a full bibliography of

national lists, county avifaunas, county bird reports and journals, are there so that those who wish to assess the records anew can easily find the original details.

Three appendices list accepted subspecies (e.g. 'Green-winged' Common Teal *Anas crecca carolinensis*), Category D species (though note that 'At sea' records now placed in Category D are included in the main systematic list), and a selection of those species which have since proved unacceptable (though several have become accepted once more with post-1957 records).

A second volume, covering 1958 to the present, is promised. In the meantime, K. A. Naylor is to be congratulated on compiling, and privately publishing, an indispensable work for county recorders, avifauna authors and birdwatchers alike.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

* *A Reference Manual of Rare Birds in Great Britain and Ireland* (vol. 1) is available to *British Birds* subscribers at the exclusive reduced price of £30.00 post free (see page 449).

Pittas, Broadbills and Asities.

By Frank Lambert & Martin Woodcock.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1996. 271 pages; 24 colour plates; 21 line-drawings; 51 distribution maps. ISBN 1-873403-24-0. £26.00.

There is so much information packed into this book, surely one of the most eagerly anticipated 'family guides', that one is apt to forget that it covers only 51 bird species. What the 32 pittas, 15 broadbills and four asities lack in structural heterogeneity they more than make up for by their brilliant and varied coloration. It must be a bird artist's dream to receive an assignment like this, and Martin Woodcock has risen splendidly to the challenge of illustrating these gorgeous birds.

Many authors would also have welcomed the chance to write the text, but few would have coped as ably as Frank Lambert. The text is extremely detailed and well researched and, importantly, very readable. I liked the fact

that references were given immediately following the relevant text, rather than grouped together at the end of each species account, thus increasing the book's utility as an information source. As with other Pica Press books, though, a disconcertingly small type font is used. The distribution maps are placed in each species account and reproduced at a large enough scale to reveal much valuable range information. Liberal use is made of attractive line-drawings to show, for example, nests and display postures. If you birdwatch in Old World tropical forests, this is a book you will want to own.

PHILIP ROUND

Boxes, Baskets and Platforms: artificial nest sites for owls and other birds of prey.

By Sue M. Dewar & Colin R. Shawyer. (The Hawk & Owl Trust, London, 1996. 40 pages. ISBN 0-9503187-6-0. Paperback £3.75)

A well-illustrated, practical guide to providing artificial nest sites to augment natural ones. Anyone contemplating building an owl or raptor nestbox would be very silly not to consult this book first.

JTRS

Bibliographie d'Ornithologie Française 1966-1980.

By Yves Muller. (Service du Patrimoine Naturel & Société d'Études Ornithologiques de France, Paris, 1996. 407 pages. ISBN 2-9506548-3-5. FF230.00)

References listed alphabetically by author and cross-referenced to species (e.g. 11 references to Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* and 603 references to Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*).

JTRS

Oiseaux de Vaucluse et de la Drôme provençale.

By Georges Olioso. (CROP & CEEP, Grillon, 1996. 207 pages. ISBN 2-9506548-4-3. Paperback FF150.00)

Entirely in French, except for a useful 38-page section on 'Where to see the birds of Vaucluse' in English, covering 16 prime sites. With almost 100 colour photographs of typical birds (and some habitats), the book gives a good impression of this part of Provence lying inland from Camargue just east of Avignon, but the main interest to those not visiting the area will be the 167 breeding-distribution atlas maps, with confirmed, probable and possible

breeding shown by dark, medium and light shading of the whole square (six maps per page in a 28-page section towards the back of the book).

JTRS

Die Vogelinsel: künstlerische Impressionen von Helgoland.

By Christopher Schmidt. (Natur in Buch und Kunst, Neunkirchen, 1996. 80 pages. ISBN 3-931921-01-8. DM 39.80) The text is in German, but who cares, for the essence of this book is provided by the highly evocative paintings showing the scenery and habitats of that wonderful migration island Heligoland, and its birds, both residents and migrants.

The landscape format and spacious design make this book a delight for anyone excited by bird art or with memories of Heligoland. If you lack the latter, go there!

JTRS

Swans.

By Dafila Scott. (Colin Baxter Photography Ltd, Grantown-on-Spey, 1995. 72 pages. ISBN 0-948661-63-1. Paperback £9.95)

The successful formula adopted by this publisher combines an expert author, in this case Dafila Scott, who writes clearly and concisely, with superb photographs. This is an excellent introduction to swans. I have two, minor, grumbles. Some photographs could, with advantage, have been enlarged to fill their very wide borders, and there is none of Dafila's accomplished line-drawings (she won the PJC Award, for a line-drawing of outstanding merit, in the 1991 Bird Illustrator of the Year competition).

MAO



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

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

Breeding Bird Survey 1994-95

The BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the RSPB have recently published the first report of the new Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). The authors—Richards Bashford and Gregory—anticipate that future reports will be along similar lines and, as more and more information is gathered, the picture of trends in bird populations in the UK will become steadily clearer.

This first report details the history of bird-population monitoring and the gestation and birth of the BBS. Based upon the survey of randomly selected 1-km squares (over 1,500 squares were being surveyed by the second year), volunteers are asked to visit each square no more than three times in a breeding season and record the species seen or heard.

A total of 199 species was recorded in 1995, the most widespread being the Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* and the most abundant being the Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. Although it is still far too early to discuss trends with any degree of confidence, between 1994 and 1995 some of the largest increases concerned Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* and Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*; and largest decreases involved European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*.

We strongly encourage all birdwatchers to offer to take part in this survey. Further information from The Census Unit, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Spurn National Nature Reserve

Opening Spurn National Nature Reserve on 3rd September, George de Boer, Emeritus Reader in Geography at Hull University, commented that 'Spurn's strategic position at the mouth of the Humber Estuary made its importance to Man inevitable', and he noted that, since 1670, there have been 18 different lighthouses in different places at Spurn, reflecting the constant changing of the peninsula. 'It is a dynamic system,' he said.

Peter Pearson, Chairman of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, and of the Spurn National Nature Reserve management committee, said 'Today cements the already close working

relationship between the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and English Nature', and Dr Jeff Lunn, Manager of North & East Yorkshire team of English Nature, said 'National Nature Reserves are the finest examples of their particular habitat type in the country. The Humber is one of the top European estuaries for wildlife. As a representative of English Nature and a Yorkshireman, I am absolutely delighted and privileged to be here today to recognise the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's foresight, commitment and ability in managing this very special place on behalf of the nation.'

Belgian Corn Crake protection

Since 1994, the Belgian Association for Nature Reserves and Bird Sanctuaries (RNOB) has been implementing a programme to protect the Corn Crake *Crex crex*. One of the scheme's major objectives, funded by the EU 'LIFE' Programme and the region of Wallonia, is the acquisition of meadowland with a view to managing it to provide the best possible breeding conditions for this beleaguered bird. In 1995, 69 ha, mostly extensive hay meadows, were purchased and divided between eight nature reserves in Fagne-Famenne. By April 1996 the Corn Crake programme had already acquired further plots of land, totalling 29 ha, located in the Focant plain.

Irish WeBS

The results of the first winter of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey have just been published by IWC BirdWatch Ireland. Compiled by the national organiser, Simon Delany, it covers the winter 1994/95 and is the first of what is hoped will be the long-term monitoring of Ireland's waterfowl populations. The report contains not only national totals, but also maps indicating key sites and counts from the sites of national importance. The importance of looking at these figures from an all-Ireland viewpoint is discussed in the introduction, but regrettably the figures for Northern Ireland are not included as they are covered by the UK WeBS. Nonetheless, the figures are impressive. In January 1995, over 724,500 waterfowl were reported by the counters, including no fewer than 317 Great Northern Divers *Gavia immer*, 103,000 European Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria*, and 320 Common Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia*. This is clearly going to be a major contribution to the future monitoring of Ireland's birds.

Copies (price £10.00) available from IWC, Ruttledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

Australian wader success

Dr Clive Minton led the most successful northwest-Australian wader expedition to date, during March-April 1996. The 81 participants ringed a total of 8,092 waders, of 29 species, including 1,592 Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*, 1,582 Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris*, 1,354 Red-necked Stints *C. ruficollis* and 509 Red Knots *C. canutus*.

Foundation of EOU

The foundation of the European Ornithological Union will take place during 28th-30th August 1997, in Bologna, Italy.

The main programme will include talks by invited speakers covering a wide range of topics of relevance to European ornithologists. Plenary talks will be: Half a century with Great Tits *Parus major* (C. Perrins), The European-African songbird migration network: new challenges for large-scale study of bird migration (F. Bairlein), Ornithology and the European conservation agenda (C. Bibby), History and evolution of European bird faunas (J. Blondel), Sexual selection and birds: evolution, conservation, and avian models of humane nature (A. Pape Moller), Micro-evolution in reproductive traits in the Great Tit (A. van Noordwijk), The EBCC atlas of European breeding birds: a contribution to science and conservation (J. Greenwood & W. Hagemeyer), and Ecological, morphological and conservation aspects of spring songbird migration strategies across the Mediterranean (F. Spina & A. Pilastro).

There will also be six symposia on: Evolutionary biology and population studies, Behavioural ecology, Ecophysiology,

Migration and ringing, Atlas projects, and Conservation. In addition, there will be ample opportunities to offer poster papers on different subjects.

During the general assembly the Union will be founded formally; the statutes and aims of the Union, as well as its future activities, will be discussed and its official representatives appointed by the assembly.

The timetable of the Congress is as follows: 28th August 1997 assemble Bologna, 29th-30th August full days of meetings, 31st August full-day excursion, 1st September depart.

The official language of the meeting will be English; no translation will be available.

The proceedings will be published by the Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica as a volume of its series *Supplementi alle Ricerche di Biologia della Selvaggina*.

The organising secretary of the Conference will be Dr Fernando Spina, Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica, Via Ca Fornacetta 9, 40064 Ozzano Emilia (BO), Italia (tel. +39 51 65 12 111; fax. +39 51 79 66 28; e-mail: infsmigr@iperbole.bologna.it). (Contributed by the Acting President: Professor Christopher Perrins)

Canon Bird Photograph of the Year

We are delighted to report that full sponsorship by *Canon (UK) Ltd* has been confirmed for the 1997 competition.

The rules will be the same as in recent years (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 36; 89: 45, or request copies from BPY, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ).

Coming soon in 'BB'

Population estimates for all British breeding and wintering birds; How many rarities are we missing?; 'The *Chalice* petrel'; Identification of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachimans*; Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in Scotland and England; Identification of Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus humei*; Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* in Western Europe; Cirl Buntings *Emberiza ciris*; and much more.

BIY % *Pica* and *Poyser*

The Bird Illustrator of the Year reception was held, for the sixteenth consecutive year, at the Mall Galleries, in association with the Society of Wildlife Artists and the Federation of British Artists.

In 1996, BIY was co-sponsored by *Pica Press* and *T & A D Poyser*, and it is good news that this highly appropriate and happy association will continue for at least another two years.

The three 1996 BIY winners were presented with salver, cheques and book prizes by Christopher Helm of *Pica Press* (plate 204). The award for the top artist aged under 22, The Richard Richardson Award, was presented by Keith Shackleton, and, in its tenth year, the PJC Award was presented by David Cook.



Plate 204. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR 1996. Left to right, John M. Walters (second), Dan Powell (winner), Chris Orgill (third), Christopher Helm (Sponsor: *Pica Press*), Simon Patient (Richard Richardson Award winner) and Dan Cole (PJC Award winner) (*Peter J. Wilkinson*)

Percy Edwards MBE (1908-1996)

John F. Burton contacted us when he heard of the death of Percy Edwards (famous for his radio work as an animal mimic) to say that, although Percy may not have been known to the ornithological scene in the usual way, he was in fact a very keen birdwatcher.

John went on to say that he 'found Percy to be a delightful, homely and kind man in spite of his stage, radio and TV successes, and a true countryman.'

John also related the following story: on one occasion, Percy was offered a lift back to London in the late Peter Sellars' chauffeur-driven car. As they drove through the night, Percy noticed that the chauffeur was dozing at the wheel, and woke Peter to express his concern. The chauffeur assured them that he was awake and the journey continued. Some time later, however, the driver did fall asleep, the car overturned on the motorway embankment and all three occupants of the car were thrown clear, apparently unhurt. Peter Sellars reported that, as he picked himself up, he was concerned to see Percy crawling about on the grass, making the most weird and wonderful sounds, and was convinced that he had suffered serious head injuries. In fact, all was well: Percy was just checking that his powers of animal mimicry had not deserted him as a result of the accident.

Percy's MBE was awarded for 'services to ornithology and entertainment'. A full obituary appeared in *The Times* for 10th June 1996.

Susan Cowdy MBE (1914-1996)

With the death of Susan Cowdy in July, the conservation and ornithological world lost a great champion. The list of her achievements would fill volumes, but near the top must come the supreme efforts she made to raise the money necessary to buy Bardsey Island in the early 1970s and thus make possible a successful National Nature Reserve, Bird Observatory and the founding of the Bardsey Island Trust. Susan had first visited Bardsey in 1958 (as a cook) and promptly fell in love with the island. It is perhaps very typical of Susan that one of the best-known photographs of her is with her dog beside the Bardsey notice informing those that land that no dogs are allowed!

From 1950 onwards, Susan was Honorary Secretary of the BTO, member of the council of the RSPB, founder of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Naturalists' Trust, and the Bucks Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. The BTO awarded her the Tucker Medal, and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation the Christopher Cadbury Medal. She was created a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1981.

Charles Bennett OBE (1919-1996)

We were sorry to learn that Charles Bennett, for many years *the* 'birdman' in Cyprus, and stalwart of the Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957), died in February this year.

Could butterfly conservation help Nightingales?

The Forestry Authority has announced a Woodland Improvement Grant entitled 'Coppice for Butterflies'. Primarily intended to help such beleaguered woodland butterflies as the Heath *Mellicta athalia*, High Brown *Argynnis adippe*, Pearl-bordered *Boloria euphrosyne* and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries *B. selene*, and the Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina* and Wood White *Leptidea sinapis* in target woodland areas, mainly in southern England, surely this coppice restoration will also benefit the Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*.

For more details, contact Fred Currie, Wildlife and Conservation Officer, Forestry Authority (England), Great Eastern House, Tenison Road, Cambridge CB1 2DU, or telephone 01223 314546.

RAFOS Cyprus Report available

In 1995, the Royal Air Force Ornithological Society mounted an expedition to the Akamas Peninsula, Cyprus, and it has now published the final report. Interest in the ornithology of Cyprus has grown rapidly in recent years and RAFOS has a stated aim to raise the awareness of conservation needs on the island. It is, therefore, requesting a donation of £5 for each copy of the report sold and the money will be forwarded to the Cyprus Conservation Foundation. Readers wanting a copy of the report should send a cheque, made payable to Akamas '95, to 9 Dendys, Hemmingford Grey, Huntingdon, Cambridge. Further information on RAFOS is available from Chief Tech. John Wells, Chinook EDIT, RAF Odiham, Hook, Hampshire RG29 1QT.

1st NBC Conservation Award

The first Neotropical Bird Club Conservation Award will fund survey work as part of a project to create a protected area of *Polylepis* woodland at Abra Málaga in Cuzco, Peru, which harbours two of the six critically threatened bird species of Peru: Royal Cinclodes *Cinclodes (excelsior) aricomae* and White-browed Tit-Spintail *Leptasthenura xenothorax*. The project will work closely with the local community to prevent the cutting of the woodland, by supplying a replacement fuel: a reforestation scheme will use not only local *Polylepis*, but also other fast-growing tree species which can be used as firewood. The project has the potential to be self-financing by collecting a permit fee from birdwatchers visiting the forest.

Comeback for elms?

The legacy of Dutch Elm Disease over the past 30 years or so has significantly changed large parts of the British countryside as large numbers of Wych Elms *Ulmus glabra* and English Elms *U. procera* succumbed. A recent article by Dr Francis Rose in *Plantlife*, however, tells of the discovery of a large mature elm near Petersfield, totally free of disease when those around were long dead. This tree appeared to be a hybrid between the native Wych Elm and one of the *U. minor* group of smooth-leaved elms. Subsequently, up to maybe 1,000 cuttings were taken from this tree by Hampshire County Council for propagation.

Since then, further healthy mature hybrids have been located in various parts of Britain. Now, the Conservation Foundation is aiming to fund a scheme using these cuttings to repopulate British woodlands and hedgerows. If you know of any healthy large elms of native species that might be used for cuttings (with the landowner's permission), please send details, including a six-figure grid reference, to David Shreeve, Conservation Foundation, Kensington Gore, London SW7.

January issue

British Birds is usually mailed on the last Thursday of the month preceding the date of the issue (e.g. the November 1996 issue was dispatched on 24th October).

The January issue, however, will be dispatched on 16th January: first, so that the mailing list is as complete as possible (with late resubscriptions included) and, secondly, to take account of our printers' (and our own) Christmas holiday breaks.

The Carl Zeiss Award 1996

Dot Jones, who won the Carl Zeiss Award this year for her photograph of the Seaforth, Merseyside, Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (plate 160), chose a pair of Zeiss 10×40B/GAT Dials as her prize. The formal presentation was at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water in August (plate 205).



Plate 205. THE CARL ZEISS AWARD. Dot Jones, the 1996 winner, with (left to right) Herr Bergmann, Development Manager, Germany, John Cockerill, UK Managing Director, and Paula Lawrence, Marketing & Customer Services Manager of Carl Zeiss Ltd (Dave Cromack)

British BirdShop moves

Subbuteo Natural History Books Ltd has moved, so the address for British BirdShop is now Subbuteo Books, Pistyll Farm, Nercwys, near Mold, Flintshire CH7 4EW; new telephone number +44 (0)1352 756551; new fax number +44 (0)1352 756004; e-mail: sales@subbooks.demon.co.uk.

Change of Recorder's address

Keith A. Mason, Recorder for Herefordshire, has moved to Treetops, 14c Tillington Road, Hereford HR4 9JL.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—Northern Ireland

Tim Cleaves—Northeast

David Clugston—Scotland

Dave Flumm—Southwest

Frank Gribble—Midlands

Barrie Harding—East Anglia

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Don Taylor—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

John Wilson—Northwest



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 14th October to 10th November 1996. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

American Coot *Fulica americana* Stodmarsh (Kent), 10th November (the spring bird back?).

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* Lizard (Cornwall), 26th-29th October.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 18th October.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* Seal Sands (Cleveland) and surrounding areas, 13th October to 5th November.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* Firth (Orkney), 18th-25th October.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* Found dead, North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 26th October (first record for Scotland).

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* Sheringham (Norfolk), 14th-16th October; St Mary's (Scilly), 6th-10th November.

Pechora Pipit *A. gustavi* St Levan (Cornwall), 23rd-26th October.

Buff-bellied Pipit *A. rubescens* St Mary's, 23rd-28th October.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* Eype (Dorset), 25th-27th October.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Lizard, 29th October.

'Two-barred' Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus (trochiloides) plumbeitarsus* Wells (Norfolk), 15th-17th October.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *P. proregulus* At least 50 during second half of October.

Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* Galley Head (Co. Cork), 22nd October.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* Tresco (Scilly), 20th-25th October; Norwich (Norfolk), 9th-10th November.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* Stornoway (Western Isles), 27th October.

Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis* Portland (Dorset), 14th-17th October.

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* Ramsey Island (Dyfed), 19th-26th October.

Bobolink *Delichonx oryzivorus* Bryher (Scilly), 14th-15th October.



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CORRECTIONS

VOLUME 89

110-111 Obituary. G. K. Yeates died on 20th June 1994.

364 Plates 135 and 136 were accidentally transposed: plate 135 shows nest and nestlings of Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* and plate 136 shows nest and nestlings of Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*.

493 Fig. 5. Drawing of American Golden Plover is by Bill Simpson (not Phil Palmer).

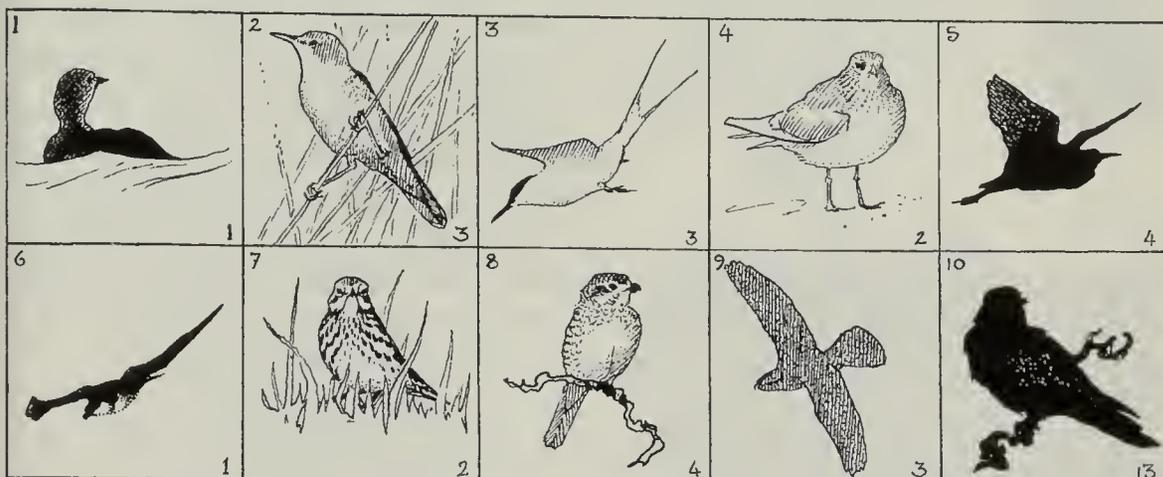


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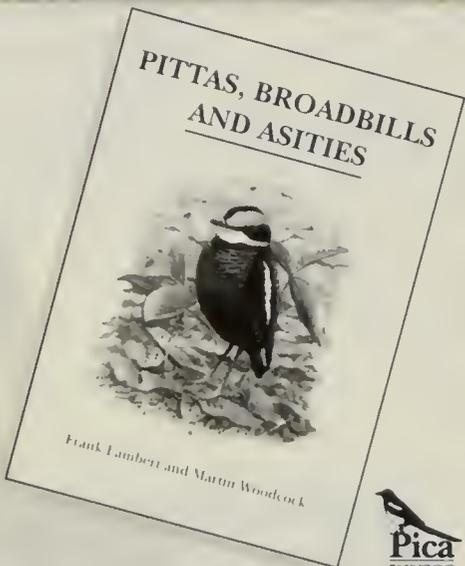
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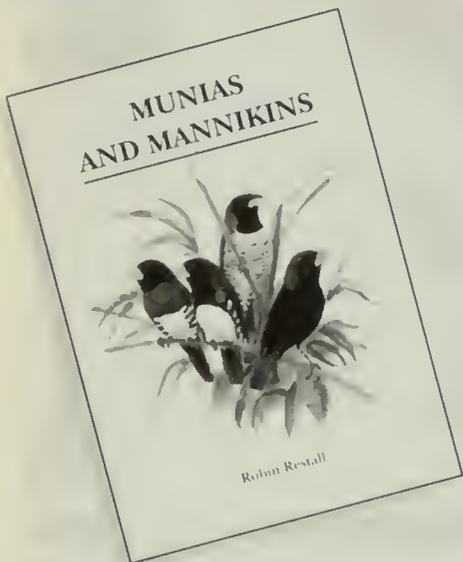
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