

TOS. 104



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Non-native breeding birds in the UK in 2009–11

Scarce migrant birds in 2008–10: non-passerines



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Editorial

Roger Riddington
Spindrift, Eastshore,
Virkie, Shetland ZE3 9JS
Tel: 01950 460080
editor@britishbirds.co.uk

'News & comment' material to
Adrian Pitches
adrianpitches@blueyonder.co.uk

Subscriptions & administration

Hazel Jenner
4 Harlequin Gardens,
St Leonards on Sea,
East Sussex TN37 7PF
Tel & fax: 01424 755155
subscriptions@britishbirds.co.uk

Design & production

Mark Corliss
m.corliss@netmatters.co.uk

Advertising

Mathew Hance, Digital Spring Ltd,
Adam House, 7-10 Adam Street,
The Strand, London WC2N 6AA
Tel: 020 7520 9326
BB@digital-spring.co.uk

Guidelines for contributors

See www.britishbirds.co.uk

British Birds

Editorial staff Roger Riddington (Editor),
Caroline Dudley, Peter Kennerley
Editorial Board Dawn Balmer, Ian Carter,
Richard Chandler, Martin Collinson,
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Secretary Nigel Hudson, Carn Ithen, Trench
Lane, Old Town, St Mary's, Scilly TR21 0PA;
secretary@bbrc.org.uk

Notes Panel

Angela Turner (Chair), Will Cresswell,
Ian Dawson, Jim Flegg, Ian Newton,
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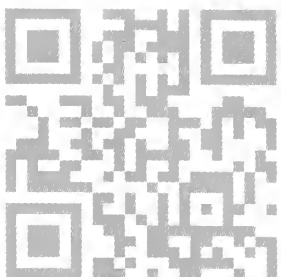
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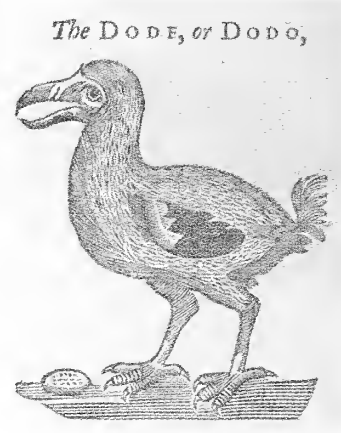
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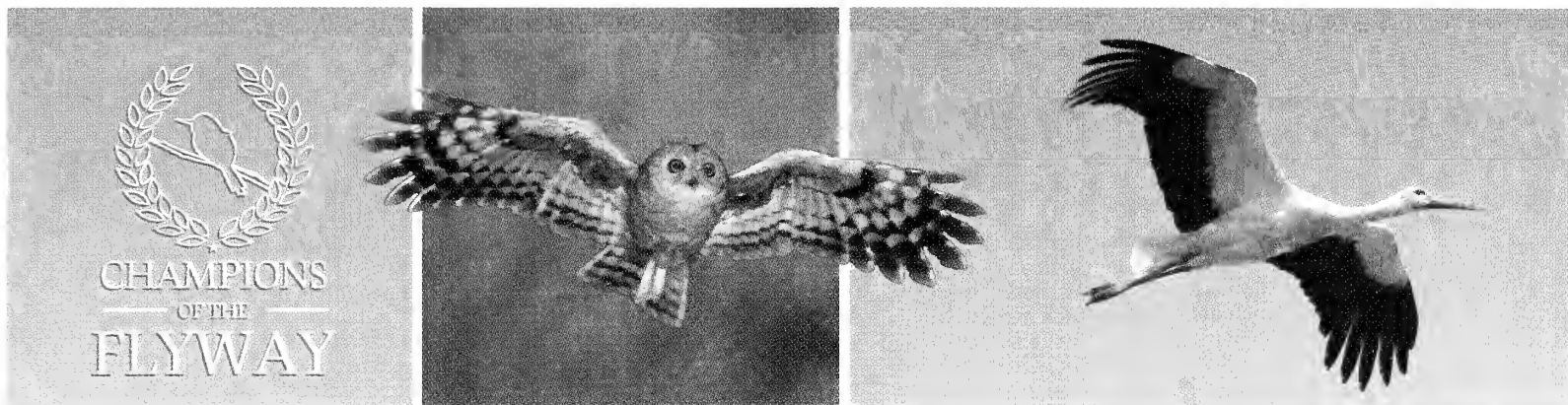
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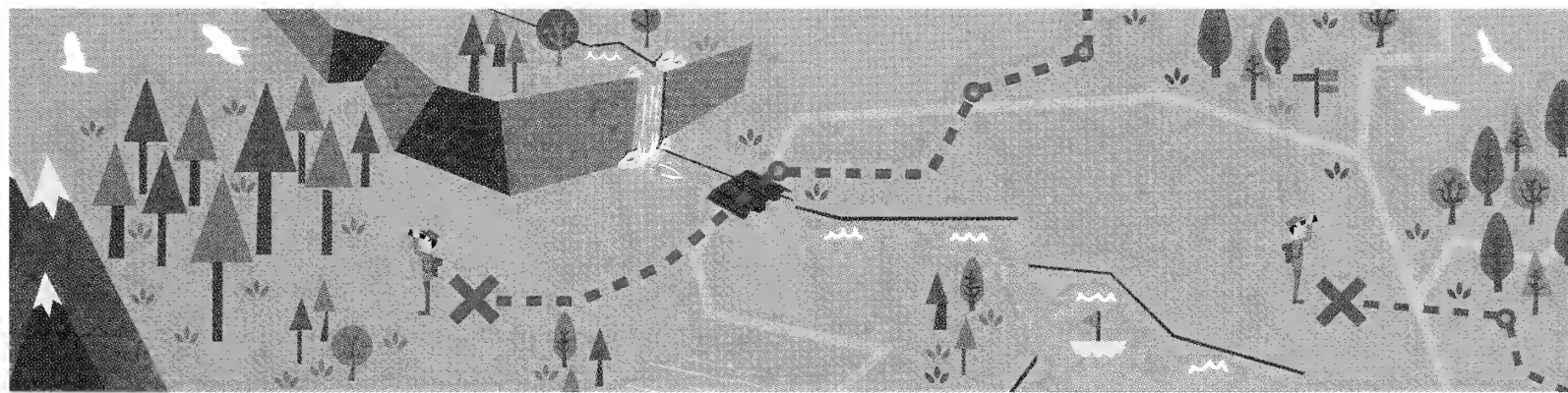
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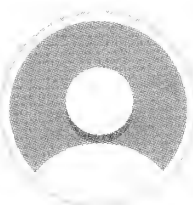
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British Birds

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With parts of southwest England and the Thames valley resembling a giant water park, the finger-pointing over the widespread flooding this winter has started in earnest as I sit writing this. It's hardly surprising that people whose homes and livelihoods are under threat are upset and angry. But the problems are far more complex than many of those who simply want a scapegoat proclaim. And, once the storms have eased, the clean-up begun and perhaps some lessons learnt, it will be a crying shame if the pioneering, landscape-scale conservation work on the Somerset Levels is knocked sideways.

This issue of *BB* brings you not one but two multi-year reports. The fate of our non-native breeders is now published regularly on a three-year cycle, but the scarce migrants report for 2008–10 should be the last of its kind once the passerine section for those years appears, later this spring. Steve White and Chris Kehoe have made tremendous progress in catching up with the backlog – we aim to publish 2011 and 2012, in separate reports that deal with all species, in the next 12 months or so. Once again, the extra costs of the larger issues in which these reports appear will not affect subscription rates. What is less easy to predict is whether the species which are gradually becoming rarer will once again be embraced as national rarities. Ferruginous Duck (which has always sailed back and forth across the threshold) and Night Heron are at the front of the non-passerine queue, while Kentish Plover is coming up fast on the rails. As climate continues to change, predicting bird population trends gets no easier.

Roger Riddington



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

In praise of... patchwork

In last December's *BB* there was a news item on patchworking, inviting readers to become involved in a competitive way (The Patchwork Challenge; *Brit Birds* 106: 707). Patchworking is compelling and addictive – and a concept that I readily endorse having been a patchworker myself since the 1970s. I have been lucky to find an occasional rarity; I particularly remember my first Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* – the first for the London area no less – back in 1976! This was the highlight of that patch, but I found lesser stars in other years, such as Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* and Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*. But the buzz of that Subalp *still* keeps me going!

Patchworking is not new; I remember being inspired by D. I. M. Wallace's account of birding in London's Regent's Park (*Brit. Birds* 67: 449–468). For my own part I worked the patch I have mentioned in the 1970s and 1980s, near my home in Kentish Greater London. My interest in that patch waned somewhat in the 1990s as the area became increasingly built up, and I had to compete with more and more dog-walkers, many of whom were out even before it was

light enough to birdwatch! Nonetheless, that patch was absolutely central to my birding education. In winter, when daylight was at a premium, I worked it only at weekends, but at other times of the year, when sunrise allowed an early start, I was out during the week. It was an area of oak *Quercus* woodlands, school playing fields, rough grassland and Jay-sown oak scrub, and I searched for both local breeding and migratory birds. I discovered that there is no better way to learn bird songs and calls than by hearing the unfamiliar and searching for the perpetrator.

In the first year or so I was learning all the time. A couple of years after I had sorted out the calls of Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* I went through my notebooks and extracted the Goldcrest records – many 'call only' – and then plotted them as a histogram of number of records against week of the year. The pattern was clear: a scatter of ones and twos throughout, a small peak of records in late March and April, but the vast majority of the records were from mid September to November. I had learnt something, and the interest, the value – and, yes, the thrill – of regular recording, particularly of migrant



Richard Chandler

65. A wisp of Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* on Richard's Northamptonshire patch, November 2012.

species, was brought home to me. Going back to the notebooks, I repeated the exercise with about a dozen other migrants and summer visitors. Some showed similar patterns to Goldcrests, as with Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, which in the autumn always seemed to appear first between 12th and 15th September, while other species, such as Wood Warblers *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* and Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus*, I saw only occasionally. What with the Subalpine Warbler and the regular, but differing timing of passage of commoner migrants, I was hooked on patchwork; and I have been ever since.

My present patch is along the banks of the river Nene in Northamptonshire, a few moments' walk from where I now live. Longish and narrow, about 20 ha in area, it is composed of the river, floodplain meadows, a small area of rather wet primarily willow *Salix* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* woodland, a little arable farmland, and the local water treatment works. The meadows were formerly intensively drained, but to attract breeding birds – particularly Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus* – the drainage has been blocked at strategic locations in a reasonably successful attempt to raise the water table. Sadly, the hoped-for breeding birds have not appeared, but passing Redshanks call in if there is standing water, particularly in spring, while both Common and Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* winter, sometimes in some numbers.

Working two different patches over a relatively lengthy timespan is also revealing, even if such comparisons break the first law of research – only change one variable at a time! In this case, there are, of course, two variables: time and place. For example, Green Woodpeckers *Picus viridis* were scarce initially on my Greater London patch, with only two or three records a year, but increased slowly in number up to the mid 1980s, when they started to breed. By the year 2000, not only were they breeding, but Ring-necked Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* had moved in and were taking over their nest holes! Here in Northamptonshire, Green Woodpeckers are now common but I have

yet to see one of those pesky parakeets on my patch. Though they are recorded from time to time in the county, will they eventually breed this far north of their current stronghold in the southeast?

Nor have I found a rarity on the Northamptonshire patch yet – I plan to keep working on that – but I have been rewarded by finding a few relatively scarce birds, such as Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Firecrest *R. ignicapilla* (which, surprisingly, I recorded before I had seen a Goldcrest), and perhaps even more surprising, a couple of Red Knots *Calidris canutus*. At the other end of the spectrum of general scarcity, just as surprising for me was to discover that, along the river, waterbirds such as Great Crested *P. cristatus*, Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* and Common Coots *Fulica atra* were only very occasional visitors. In a similar category of scarcity are Jays *Garrulus glandarius* and Skylarks *Alauda arvensis*, though I am reassured by the fact that Meadow Pipits appear in mid September, just as in Greater London, and that they winter in small (but variable) numbers.

The three filter beds of the water treatment works attract wagtails and Meadow Pipits in the winter; particularly in cold periods, when the filter beds remain unfrozen, the numbers of Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* can reach 100 birds. But the most unexpected discovery, for me, was that although the hoped-for snipe do not breed, they winter in surprising numbers if the meadows are wet. They are difficult to count – partly because I am never sure if I have disturbed the same birds more than once, and partly because I hate to disturb them too often – but there is no doubt that the numbers of Common Snipe exceed 150 on occasion, and that Jack Snipe are also regular.

These are some of the reasons why I am addicted to patchwork. If you don't already share my addiction, do try it, and perhaps sign up for the Patchwork Challenge to find out how your patch rates in the national scheme of things.

Richard Chandler

What do you think? Join the debate at www.britishbirds.co.uk/category/editorials

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

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

Conservation messages drowned out in Levels debate

It seems that farmers and politicians have been shouting loudest about ‘solutions’ to the winter floods on the Somerset Levels. The kneejerk response from Environment Secretary Owen Paterson was that the Rivers Tone and Parrett must be dredged, putting him at odds with the Government’s own Environment Agency, which has pursued a policy of sustainable water management since the dark days of canalising our rivers.

The Somerset Levels and Moors are the largest floodplain in England. They have flooded since time immemorial. Indeed, the name ‘Somerset’ is a derivation of the Anglo-Saxon ‘Sumersaete’ – land of the summer people – in other words ground that could only be accessed when the winter’s floodwaters had receded.

Those extensive wetlands were eventually drained, like the Fens of eastern England, and it is only in the past two decades that a consortium of conservation groups has begun to recreate the Avalon Marshes of yore, albeit in pockets of land abandoned by the peat extraction industry.

Notable successes for the RSPB and Somerset Wildlife Trust have included breeding records of

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Great White Egret *Ardea alba* and Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* in the recreated wetlands at Ham Wall and Shapwick Heath.

Following visits to the Levels by both Owen Paterson and Prince Charles, the Government announced an additional £10m of funding for urgent flood work in Somerset and a further £90m for repairs and maintenance of flood defences nationwide. Choosing his words carefully, RSPB Conservation Director Martin Harper said: ‘David Cameron’s commitment to extra funding is welcome, but the RSPB urges that this money will need to be incredibly well targeted to bring the greatest benefit to communities who have been affected. The Government has been warned by the Committee on Climate Change that it needs to refocus the flooding debate on prevention rather than cure. Dredging may be a part of the package on the Somerset Levels where the funding provides a key opportunity to make the agreed action plan happen, and give the area a safe and sustainable future, where the impact of extreme weather events is reduced by land and water management.’

Extreme ship assistance

On 19th July 2010, the UK Borders Agency was inspecting a ship at Tilbury Docks in Essex and found a dead bird in pretty good condition. It was



John Wright

66. Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*, Tilbury, Essex, July 2010.

given to John Wright, who photographed and measured it and sent all the details to BBRC. BBRC was happy with the identification as Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* but there was no consensus among voters on how the record should be published. (The species is, of course, already on Category A of the British List, from a bird found on Lundy, Devon, in April 1987.) It isn’t easy to prove or disprove that it was ever alive in British waters – though it was in good condition when found – and there is also no means of knowing whether it survived on the ship with human assistance. So, the record is in the BBRC database, but not counted in the statistics – which remain at just one record.

This is just one of many examples over the years of birds that have been found dead on board ships. However, a quick check of the travel history of this ship revealed an interesting story. The ship visited eastern ports in the USA (including New York, Baltimore and Jacksonville) in March 2010 before crossing the Atlantic to West Africa in April (visiting Senegal, Togo, Benin and Nigeria) and

docking at Antwerp, Belgium, in late April. It then returned to West Africa (Cameroon and Ivory Coast) during May before returning to Antwerp in early June. Yet another trip to West Africa followed in June and early July before the ship docked at Tilbury on 19th July. It seems highly unlikely that the phoebe hopped on board ship in West Africa

or Belgium and surely more likely that it had been on board since the east-coast ports of the USA in March – a trip totalling about four months. This may change our perception of what some ship-assisted birds are capable of!

(Contributed by Nigel Hudson)

Egg-collector jailed in Sweden following investigation in UK

An inquiry launched by the RSPB in the UK in 2009 involving the collecting and trading of wild birds' eggs has led to the conviction of three Swedish egg-collectors after a 23-day trial. One of the men was jailed for a year.

In February 2009, a collection of over 2,000 eggs was seized by police in Co. Durham. Associated documentation showed that the suspect was involved in exchanging birds' eggs with a ring of people in England, Scotland, Sweden, the USA and Australia. Andrew Seed, of Low Willington, Co. Durham, was convicted in December 2009 for keeping, trading and smuggling birds' eggs. He subsequently received a suspended jail sentence.

The raid in northern England led to further investigations centring on two men in Scotland. Two large egg collections were seized. One of the men, Keith Liddell from Inverness, was convicted in March 2013 of 13 charges relating to the trading in and possessing of eggs. He received 220 hours of community service.

Enquiries by the police and RSPB identified the link to egg-collectors in Sweden, and information was supplied to the Swedish authorities. As a result, three addresses were raided in Sweden in 2010, around 6,600 eggs were seized and three men faced over 100 charges in total: one received a one-year prison sentence, the other two received fines of around £1,100 and £3,800.

Guy Shorrocks, a senior RSPB investigations officer, said: 'This enquiry has unraveled an amazing web of people, as far away as the USA and Australia, involved in the taking, keeping and trading of birds' eggs. There has been a long history of the authorities and RSPB working to tackle egg-collectors in the UK. We suspect that egg-collectors in other countries may be below the radar of the authorities – for example, the enquiry in Sweden generated another enquiry in Finland leading to the seizure of another 10,000 eggs. The RSPB hopes this will send out a strong message to egg-collectors at home and abroad.'

Bewick's Swan 50th 'swanniversary'

One of the longest-running animal research projects in the world completed a half-century last month. The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's study of Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus* is unique as it's the only study in which researchers recognise individual birds by their faces, rather than by ringing.

The study started on 11th February 1964 when Sir Peter Scott, painting swans outside his window in Slimbridge, noticed each had a unique bill pattern. His young daughter Dafila helped to paint and name dozens more swans. As she grew up, she formalised her love for the birds into a scientific research project. After Dafila, each new WWT researcher has had to spend a winter learning the swans' faces before taking over the reins. More than 9,000 individual swans have now been identified.

Researchers have logged the gripping stories of generations of Bewick's Swans, such as how Casino lived to 27 years old and produced 34 cygnets; how Sarindi and Saruni got 'divorced' but now both happily share the lake at Slimbridge with their new partners; or how Derek – named after an invaluable volunteer – disappeared for five years before

mysteriously reappearing.

The study has spawned sister studies in five other countries. Together they've produced long-term data on how weather, climate and disturbance have affected the swans' breeding and survival rates, their choice of wintering sites and social dynamics. The study has led to an internationally binding Species Action Plan to maintain numbers, and statutory protection of key breeding sites in Russia and wintering sites in the UK – largely in and around the sanctuary of WWT Wetland Centres. This winter, transmitters are being fitted to a small number of birds to track their exact flight route and height across the North Sea, to inform plans for offshore windfarms.

Dafila Scott said: 'My father would have been very proud to see the scientific research still going strong, 50 years after we first started painting individual swans and giving them names. The study is everything my father set up WWT to be. Visitors and researchers watch the swans together, experiencing the magic of being close to them and following their loves, power struggles and tragedies from one generation to the next.'

RSPB rodent squad to return to Henderson Island

There is disappointing news for the RSPB following its £1.5m rodent eradication operation on the UK Overseas Territory of Henderson Island in the Pacific in August 2011: not all of the rats were killed by the poison bait and a second expedition will be needed to complete the job and safeguard the threatened endemic breeding birds.

It was the largest rat clearance programme on a tropical island ever attempted: two helicopters transported by ship to Henderson dropped poisoned bait across the entire 37-km² island but a follow-up trip last year revealed that some rats survived the operation.

Rats were introduced by Polynesian settlers and have gone on to decimate the four species of petrel that live there. The Henderson Petrel *Pterodroma atrata* is the most vulnerable because the island is its only known breeding site. Research has shown

that around 95% of petrel chicks are eaten alive by rats within the first week of hatching (c. 25,000 young birds) and numbers of petrels have dropped from millions of pairs 800 years ago to an estimated 40,000 now.

Weather and the rats' food preferences seem to have affected the eradication attempt: Henderson experienced a drought in early 2011 that broke shortly before the eradication attempt. This may have provided a large amount of food and as a consequence not all of the rats may have eaten the bait.

RSPB scientists are now planning a six-month expedition to Henderson in 2015. Part of the planned work will be to experiment with different bait flavourings so that every rat eats the bait in future. If this 'recce' is successful, the RSPB will draw up a detailed operational plan for a second eradication attempt to take place in 2018 or 2019.

MPs accuse UK Government of ignoring UKOTs

A cross-party group of MPs has accused the UK Government of failing to adequately protect the globally significant wildlife of the UK's 14 Overseas Territories (UKOTs).

The Environmental Audit Committee's report *Sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories* has been broadly welcomed by the RSPB. The Society's international director, Dr Tim Stowe, said: 'The UK's far-flung Overseas Territories are jewels of conservation, containing hundreds of threatened species – in fact they contain 90% of the UK's threatened wildlife. However, we agree with the Committee that rather than treasuring these jewels, the UK Government is avoiding its shared responsibility towards the wildlife of these exotic territories.'

'We believe the Government must heed this warning now and take the action necessary to protect the UKOTs' unique wildlife, honour its international obligations and play its part in curbing the current global extinction crisis.'

In a previous report, the RSPB showed that the UK Government needs to budget £16m annually over a five-year period to ensure the continued protection of hundreds of 'British' species in the UKOTs. Last year Defra spent only £1.5m (equivalent to 0.3% of its biodiversity conservation budget). There are currently 32 bird species that are recognised as facing extinction in the UKOTs (more than on the entire European continent): 21 of these are found nowhere else in the world.

UK Birdnet R.I.P.

A poignant final posting to the first e-mail discussion group about British birds and birding, UK Birdnet, posted by moderator James Cracknell: 'So long UKBN. Started in 1992 and hosted at BT Research at Martlesham Heath, Suffolk. Moved in the mid 1990s and hosted at Department of Computer Science at University College, London and then on Google Groups. Thanks to Jeff Higgott and Mick Farmer respectively for all their work. Sadly, Birdforum seems to be the popular method of communicating en masse.' UKBN was indeed a source of lively discourse until Birdforum, Facebook, Twitter, etc. became new platforms for discussion/ranting about British birding. Well done to all contributors to UKBN for keeping it going for more than 20 years.

Packham for President

Lifelong birder and BBC TV presenter Chris Packham was voted in as the President of the BTO at its annual conference, a position he will hold for the next four years. Chris commented: 'I have always respected the BTO enormously and I feel deeply honoured to take on the role of President. Andy Clements, Director of the BTO, said: 'There is no better ambassador than Chris to bring our science to society.'

Correction

In last month's paper on North American landbird vagrancy (*Brit. Birds* 107: 66–82), there is an error in table 1 in the data presented for Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*. The monthly totals for August–November should have read 1, 0, 10, 8 respectively, not 1, 10, 8, 0 as given. We apologise for this error. *Eds*

Cameron Bespolka Trust

A trust has been set up in memory of keen Hampshire birder Cameron Bespolka, who died aged 16 in a ski-ing accident in Austria in December. His family intends to make donations to assist teenage birdwatchers from less privileged backgrounds to pursue their interest in bird and wildlife conservation, for example by assisting with travel/accommodation costs for a volunteering holiday at a nature reserve. The trust website www.cameronbespolkatrust.com also includes links to the keen young patchwatcher's blog and an evocative essay about his local patch, Winchester Sewage-farm. There's a tribute to Cameron on the Next Generation Birders website: <http://nextgenerationbirders.blogspot.co.uk/2013/12/in-memory-of-cameron-bespolka.html>

Birdfair 2013 raises record sum

Birdfair co-organisers Tim Appleton and Martin Davies have presented BirdLife chief executive Dr Marco Lambertini with a cheque for £270,000 following last year's record-breaking fair. The donation will help to fund the Americas flyways project 'From prairies to pampas'. At the event it was announced that Birdfair 2014, at Rutland Water in August, will raise funds for BirdLife's marine programme.

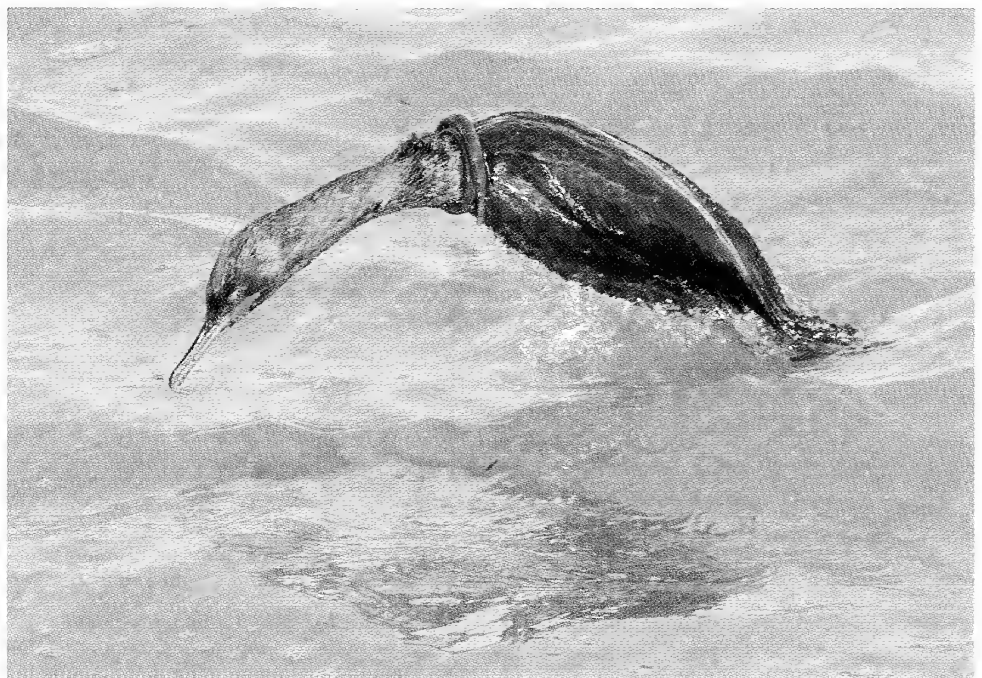
Dr Lambertini said: 'For 25 years, the Birdfair has funded and helped promote the BirdLife Partnership's work around the world. The £3.34m that Birdfair has raised over those 25 years has been used as start-up funds for so many innovative projects and ideas that its legacy is so much greater. There is no doubt that the event has become a major force for conservation.'

Dr Lambertini will be leaving BirdLife in May: he's been appointed Director General of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF).

Scottish Ornithologists' Club tops 3,000 members

Membership of the SOC (Scottish Ornithologists' Club) has just passed 3,000 for the first time in the Club's 78-year history. Scotland's bird club has gone from strength to strength in recent years, with the relocation of the headquarters to Waterston House in Aberlady in 2005; the magnificent *Birds of Scotland*, published in 2007; partnership in *Bird Atlas 2007–11*; and its widespread network of branches, conferences and more.

The Club's attractive quarterly journal, *Scottish Birds*, has been revamped – contact membership @the-soc.org.uk 01875 871 330 for a free sample issue. The Club's next conference, *Birds and people – a natural relationship?*, organised in partnership with the BTO, is on 22nd March 2014 in Aberdeen and includes some great speakers. Visit the Club's website at www.the-soc.org.uk to find out more.



Josh Reynolds

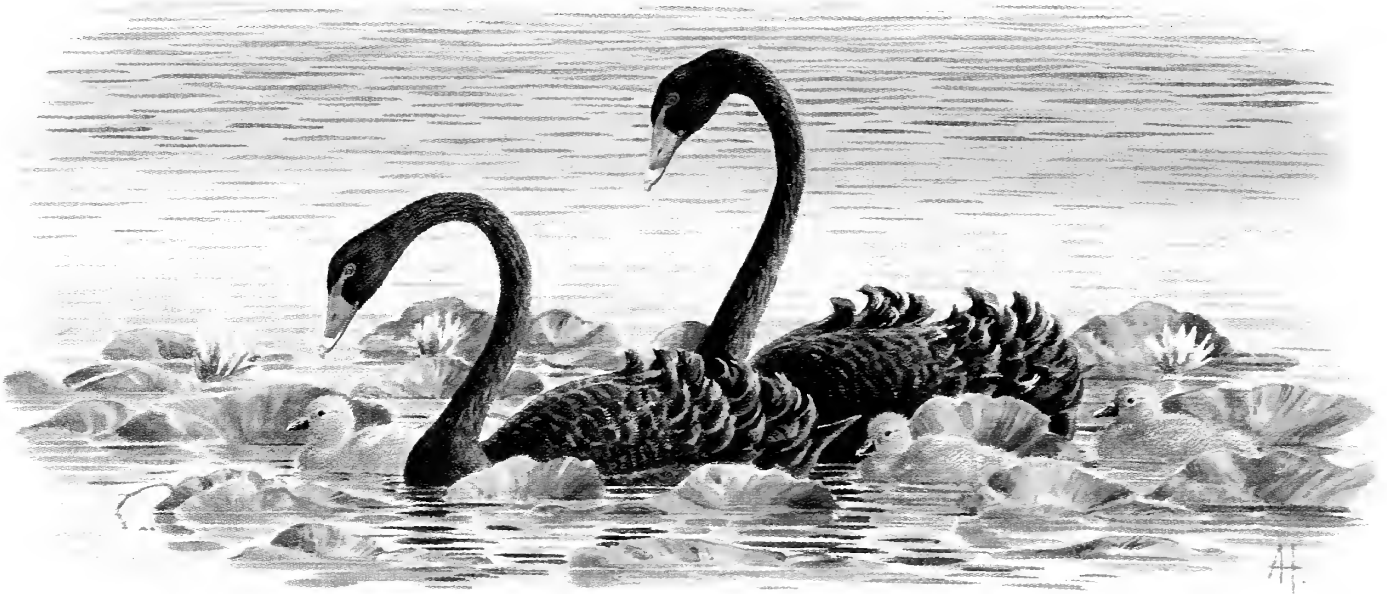
67. This adult Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* with a Snake Pipefish *Entelurus aequoreus* entwined around its neck was photographed on the Isle of Wight on 14th January 2014 by Josh Reynolds. Despite being difficult to handle and swallow, and of low food value, pipefish are eaten by seabirds. This Shag appears to have made rather a mess of eating this particular pipefish, which had adopted its normal defence posture of curling up, by luck just where a swimming bird cannot dislodge it. Snake Pipefish are normally rare in the northeast Atlantic but there was a dramatic increase in numbers in the early 2000s and by 2006–07 they were a major component of the diet of some British seabirds. Then followed a similarly impressive disappearance. The last records of seabirds eating pipefish known to Mike Harris (mph@ceh.ac.uk), who is interested in such things, are a single Shag and a single Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* on the Isle of May in 2010 and Mike would welcome any subsequent records via e-mail.

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Non-native breeding birds in the UK, 2009–11

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Alan Harris



Black Swans *Cygnus atratus*

Abstract This Rare Breeding Birds Panel report covers only non-native species recorded breeding in the UK during 2009–11. A total of 26 species was recorded breeding or potentially breeding during this period, two of them (Swan Goose *Anser cygnoid* and Speckled Teal *Anas flavirostris*) for the first time. Numbers of most species remain extremely small, but Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* and Egyptian Geese *Alopochen aegyptiaca* have increased rapidly.

This is the tenth report by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) summarising breeding reports of non-native species in the UK¹. To mirror other national reporting schemes, the geographical scope of the report includes Britain, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. A three-year period is used in an attempt to overcome the significant year-to-year variation in the availability of records of non-native species; reporting is considerably more sporadic and patchy than for native species. The RBBP has monitored the establishment and status of populations of rarer non-native bird species since 1996, but the period under review is the first to coincide with a national bird atlas project,

which had a beneficial impact on coverage.

The RBBP collates records of confirmed or potential breeding by non-native species where the total number of breeding pairs each year is fewer than 300. With effect from this report, we now include Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, which, following a national eradication programme (see Henderson 2009), now has a population of fewer than ten breeding pairs in the UK. Although both Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* and Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* are now believed to have breeding populations far in excess of 300 pairs, the RBBP is continuing to collate data for these species.

To provide a more complete overview of the UK's non-native avifauna, we have again

¹ In this report, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands are included within the term 'United Kingdom' in the title and as shorthand reference. Their legal status is complex, however, and further information is available at www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchUK/QueenandCrowndependencies/QueenandCrowndependencies.aspx

included short status summaries for the commoner non-native breeders, and we also present information on breeding non-native species in the Republic of Ireland for the same period (see below).

The current membership of the Panel is as follows: Mark Eaton (Chairman), Ian Francis, Simon Gillings, Andrew King, David Norman, David Stroud and Mark Holling (Secretary).

Rare non-native breeding birds in 2009–11

This report includes details of 26 species breeding or showing indications of breeding in Britain & Ireland during 2009–11. The review period coincided with the last three years of fieldwork for the BTO/BirdWatch Ireland/SOC *Bird Atlas 2007–11* (Balmer *et al.* 2013). Fieldworkers were strongly encouraged to note *all* bird species encountered and this report is greatly enhanced by records collected by the Atlas project. As a consequence, this report is our most comprehensive review of British and Irish non-native breeding birds to date.

Numbers of Black Swans *Cygnus atratus* were the highest ever recorded, with 25 confirmed breeding pairs in 2010 (although fewer were reported in 2011). The Black Swan remains the most widely distributed of the species in this report, with confirmed or probable breeding pairs in 28 counties in 2009–11. Seven species of non-native geese nested in 2009–11, with two (Barnacle Goose and Egyptian Goose) now estimated to number over 1,000 breeding pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013). We report the first ever breeding by Swan Geese *Anser cygnoid* in the UK and the first successful nesting by Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis*. It was a surprise when a pair of Snow Geese *A. caerulescens* began breeding on Orkney in 2009, with two pairs nesting there in 2011; the species no longer breeds in Hampshire but there is a small, stable population in Argyll.

Since its accidental introduction in the 1950s, the Ruddy Duck has nested in 63 counties. It was still sufficiently widespread in 2009 for confirmed breeding to be recorded in 17 counties, but by 2011 that had been reduced to just 12, while the number of pairs more than halved between 2009 and

2011. Other breeding ducks included the established Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* (up to 31 nesting pairs) and rather more sporadic Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* (up to 17 pairs). No other species of duck had more than three nesting pairs in any one year, but two separate records of breeding Speckled Teal *Anas flavirostris* represented the first for this species in these reports.

With the apparent demise of the Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae* population, Golden Pheasant *C. pictus* is the only remaining established rare non-native gamebird. Although this is a secretive species, it seems that numbers are stable, with the population concentrated in the East Anglian Brecks. Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* now seems to be more widespread, although reporting of this species is likely to have benefited from Atlas fieldwork.

There were breeding records of just one non-native diurnal raptor – Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*. This species, widely kept for falconry, has a tendency to pair up with Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* and these mixed pairs often fledge young successfully. Pairs of Eagle Owls *Bubo bubo* have bred in the wild since 1997 but the reported numbers remain low, at a maximum of three pairs. Monk Parakeets *Myiopsitta monachus* continue to breed in Hertfordshire and Greater London, though inconsistent recording obscures trends.

Only two species of non-native passerine have been proved to breed in the UK since 1996, but there are no reports since 2005. Red-winged Laughing-thrushes *Garrulax formosus* bred on the Isle of Man from at least 1996 until the late 1990s, but there have been no documented records since 2005 (Holling *et al.* 2011). There is one record of attempted breeding by Canaries *Serinus canaria*, in Co. Durham in 2005 (Holling *et al.* 2011). The Canary was the only non-native passerine recorded in the Atlas (Balmer *et al.* 2013), present in only six 10-km squares in the breeding season. Although songbirds do escape from aviaries, it seems they soon perish, perhaps quickly being taken by predators or succumbing to cold weather.

Unfortunately, despite the stimulus of fieldwork for the Atlas, many non-native species are still poorly reported by the bird-

watching community. Readers should be aware that the figures quoted in this report, from which we derive five-year means, should be treated with caution, since they are based solely on information supplied to the Panel. They are still, however, the best assessments available. We encourage birdwatchers to report all nesting and potential nesting pairs of the species covered in this report, and we hope that its publication will stimulate better recording. We welcome any records of breeding of non-native species from any year, including records that might have been overlooked from previous years. Our guidelines on recording rare breeding birds (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards) give more information. Because non-native wildfowl can occur widely but do not breed in most locations, for this group we aim to collect only records that would be categorised as probable or confirmed breeding. For other species, all records of birds in potential breeding habitat should be submitted. Further details can be found in the systematic list.

Why collect data on non-native species?

The data and information presented here help governments in Britain and Ireland to fulfil obligations under Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and other international treaties such as the EU Birds Directive.

In the UK, any deliberate release of a non-native species (apart from Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* and Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*) is illegal under either the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (in Great Britain) or the 1985 Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order. Most of what is reported here probably reflects the consequence of past deliberate or accidental releases prior to the current legal frameworks, although accidental escapes no doubt continue. For some species (e.g. Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* and Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii*) recent intentional releases may be continuing.

The impacts of non-native species are now recognised as a major driver of biodiversity loss worldwide and a significant issue for conservation (Millennium Ecosystem Assess-

ment 2005; Holling *et al.* 2011). Although some non-native species appear to be harmless, others are invasive and can have serious effects on native species – for example, through competition, displacement, hybridisation and modification of habitats. For these reasons, it is critical to report and monitor their occurrence and particularly any attempts at breeding.

The status of non-native breeding species as documented in these reports is also used by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) to assess inclusion of species on the British List. Non-native species with populations deemed to be self-sustaining are included in Category C of the British List (see Dudley 2005 and Holling *et al.* 2011). Non-native species where the populations are thought not to be currently self-sustaining are placed in Category E; those which have bred at some point within Britain are designated E*. The current BOU categorisation for all species in this report is included alongside the species headers (see BOU 2006 for definitions of these categories). These categories apply to Britain only, but similar categories apply to Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man, based on recommendations of the Association of European Records and Rarities Committees (see www.aerc.eu).

Further information on policy and the recording of non-native species of all taxa can be obtained from www.nonnative-species.org (Great Britain) and <http://invasivespeciesireland.com> (Ireland).

Population sizes of breeding non-native species in the UK

Table 1 shows all the non-native species that have been reported on by the RBBP since 1996, listed in descending order of population size.

Coverage and data inclusion

The full list of non-native species considered by the RBBP is available at www.rbbp.org.uk but breeding attempts by any other rare non-native species will also be collected, archived and included in future reports. We collect records from the whole of the UK including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands (although no instances of breeding by rarer non-native species were received from the

Table 1. Breeding non-native birds in the UK, in descending order of population size. The population estimates for the commoner and scarce species are based on information from national monitoring programmes (see below), and from Musgrove *et al.* (2013). Other figures are the five-year means presented in this report (for details see the introduction to the species accounts).

	Population †		
Commoner non-native species		Ruddy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	1
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	2,300,000	Emperor Goose <i>Anser canagicus</i>	1
Red-legged Partridge <i>Alectoris rufa</i>	82,000	South African Shelduck <i>Tadorna cana</i>	1
Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	62,000	Swan Goose <i>Anser cygnoid</i>	<1
Rose-ringed Parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	8,600	Speckled Teal <i>Anas flavirostris</i>	<1
Little Owl <i>Athene noctua</i>	5,700	Red-breasted Goose <i>Branta ruficollis</i>	<1
Mandarin Duck <i>Aix galericulata</i>	2,300	Non-native species which have not yet been proved to breed in UK, but which are included in this report	
Scarce non-native species which bred in UK in 2009–11		Northern Bobwhite <i>Colinus virginianus</i>	
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	1,100	Reeves's Pheasant <i>Syrnaticus reevesii</i>	
Barnacle Goose <i>Branta leucopsis</i>	1,000	Non-native species which bred in UK during 1996–2008 but for which there were no breeding records in 2009–11	
Rare non-native species which bred in UK in 2009–11		Trumpeter Swan <i>Cygnus buccinator</i>	
Ruddy Duck <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	48	Bean Goose <i>Anser fabalis</i>	
Red-crested Pochard <i>Netta rufina</i>	28	White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons</i>	
Black Swan <i>Cygnus atratus</i>	25	Silver Pheasant <i>Lophura nycthemera</i>	
Golden Pheasant <i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>	12	Lady Amherst's Pheasant <i>Chrysolophus amherstiae</i>	
Muscovy Duck <i>Cairina moschata</i>	9	Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> (naturalised population)	
Monk Parakeet <i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>	8	Peach-faced Lovebird <i>Agapornis roseicollis</i>	
Indian Peafowl <i>Pavo cristatus</i>	6	Alexandrine Parakeet <i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	
Wood Duck <i>Aix sponsa</i>	4	Blue-crowned Parakeet <i>Aratinga acuticaudata</i>	
Snow Goose <i>Anser caerulescens</i>	3	Red-winged Laughing-thrush <i>Garrulax formosus</i>	
Wild Turkey <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	3	Canary <i>Serinus canaria</i>	
Helmeted Guineafowl <i>Numida meleagris</i>	2		
Harris's Hawk <i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i>	2		
Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> (naturalised population)	2		
Eagle Owl <i>Bubo bubo</i>	2		
Bar-headed Goose <i>Anser indicus</i>	2		

† Most recent population estimate (breeding pairs).

Channel Islands in the period under review). This report also includes available records from the Republic of Ireland, although other than *Bird Atlas 2007–11* there was no dedicated effort to collect data on non-native birds in the Republic during the review period. Information for this report was submitted by most county and regional recorders along with their returns for native rare breeding birds, some additional data were gleaned from annual bird reports and from individual observers, while about 25% of the total of all records were those submitted originally to *Bird Atlas 2007–11*.

Data submission was generally good in all three years. Altogether, almost 900 unique species/year/site records of breeding non-native birds were submitted in 2009–11 but

there were relatively fewer in 2011 (27.5% of the three-year total) than either 2009 or 2010 (each with 36.5% of the total), perhaps because 2011 was the final year of atlas field-work.

The status of commoner non-native breeding birds in the UK

Six species currently exceed the threshold used to denote a non-native breeder as 'rare', and some of them are among the commonest and most conspicuous species to be found in the country.

Of these six species, the three introduced most recently continue to increase in both numbers and breeding range. The Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* was considered a rare breeder three years ago

Jürgen & Christine Sohns/FLPA



68. The male Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* is a familiar sight around stately homes and ornamental gardens, but the less gaudy female is not as conspicuous. Breeding birds can be easily overlooked unless an incubating female is flushed by chance, or young birds are seen accompanying the female, as shown here in Germany in 2001.

Table 2. Commoner non-native breeding species in the UK.

	Date and location population established	Current breeding population ¹	Short-term population trend ²	Long-term population trend ³	GB range ⁴	GB range trend ⁵
Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	Late 19th century (England)	62,000	+57%	+303%	1,790	+49%
Mandarin Duck <i>Aix galericulata</i>	Early 20th century (England)	2,300	+122%	+144%	497	+121%
Red-legged Partridge <i>Alectoris rufa</i>	1770s (England)	82,000	+24%	-15%	1,645	+35%
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	11th century (probably England)	2,300,000	+32%	+74%	2,392	+5%
Rose-ringed Parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	1969 (England)	8,600	+1,057%	+1,047%	91	+43%
Little Owl <i>Athene noctua</i>	1842 (England)	5,700	-44%	-56%	1,238	-11%

¹ Number of pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013).

² Trend from BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey 1995–2011 (Risely *et al.* 2013), except for Mandarin Duck, from the BTO/JNCC/RSPB/WWT Wetland Birds Survey 1993–2011.

³ Trend from BTO Common Birds Census and BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey 1970–2011 (Eaton *et al.* 2013), or, for Canada Goose and Mandarin Duck, from UK Article 12 Report 2013 (period 1980–2010), or, for Rose-ringed Parakeet, from UK Article 12 Report 2013 (period 1983–2012).

⁴ Number of occupied 10-km breeding squares in *Bird Atlas 2007–11* (Balmer *et al.* 2013). Note that there are 2,876 10-km squares in Britain.

⁵ Percentage change in number of 10-km breeding squares since the 1988–91 breeding bird atlas (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

(Holling *et al.* 2011); the breeding population is now approaching 10,000 pairs and continuing to increase, although most of the population remains within Greater London. The estimate in table 2 for the Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* population is likely to be a substantial underestimate, given it refers to numbers in 1988. Since then reports by the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) have more than doubled, and *Bird Atlas 2007–11* indicated significant expansion into areas such as the Welsh Borders and northwest England since the 1988–91 breeding atlas (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Of the other species, data for both Common Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge are misleading since they do not include the huge number of both species released for shooting purposes. It has been estimated that 35 million Common Pheasants and 6.5 million Red-legged Partridges are released in the UK every autumn, of which around 40% are shot (15 million pheasants and 2.6 million partridges, PACEC 2006). It is likely that the total biomass of Common Pheasants in the early autumn comfortably exceeds the springtime biomass of all the UK's native breeding birds combined; the ecological impact of these birds on the UK's countryside and its biodiversity is poorly understood.

Non-native birds in Ireland

Ireland holds far fewer non-native breeding birds than Britain, but their status has not previously been reported by our partners in Ireland, the Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel. This report provides a baseline position from which their future status can be assessed.

Of the commoner non-natives in Ireland as a whole, only the Common Pheasant is widespread. Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* and Red-legged Partridge are more localised while Mandarin Duck is restricted to a handful of sites, mainly in the north. There are no breeding Rose-ringed Parakeets or Little Owls *Athene noctua*. Of the scarce and rare species described in the species accounts below, only the following bred during 2009–11: Black Swan (Republic of Ireland only), Barnacle Goose (Northern Ireland only) and Ruddy Duck (Republic of Ireland only).

Where breeding non-native species were

recorded in the Republic during 2009–11, the records are listed below those for the UK, but the number of pairs is not included in the headline totals. The only species thus affected are Black Swan and Ruddy Duck.

Species accounts

In this report we have introduced species banners similar to those now used in the main RBBP report (e.g. Holling *et al.* 2013). In these, alongside the species name, we give five pieces of information:

1. An indication of breeding status, based on the occurrence of confirmed breeding over the last ten years (in this report the ten years concerned are 2002–11):
 - Regular breeder – breeding has been confirmed in at least eight out of the last ten years;
 - Occasional breeder – breeding has been confirmed in 1–7 of the last ten years;
 - Former breeder – confirmed breeding occurred before 2002 but has not been recorded since;
 - Potential breeder – breeding has never been confirmed in the UK, but pairs or territorial birds have been recorded in potential breeding habitat.
2. A population estimate, based where possible on the mean maximum population size (in pairs or numbers of individuals) from the last five years (in this report the five years are 2007–11). In some cases where we believe this approach provides a substantial underestimate we show the totals estimated in the most recent report of the Avian Population Estimates Panel (Musgrove *et al.* 2013).
3. An indication of the population trend, whether increasing, stable or decreasing. Note that this trend is based only on the information received by the RBBP.
4. The category in which the species is placed on the British List by the BOURC.
5. An indication of the natural breeding range of the species.

In the heading of each species account, numbers given in the format '1–4 pairs' indicate (in this case) one confirmed breeding pair and a possible maximum total of four breeding pairs. Holling *et al.* (2007a) included the key to the geographical regions used in this report.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

Regular breeder (10/10)

5-yr mean 25 bp; stable/increasing

E*

Native to Australia

2009 18–28 pairs. 2010 25–34 pairs. 2011 10–17 pairs.

Black Swans remain widely distributed across many counties of England, with confirmed breeding reports from 19 English counties during 2009–11. Twenty-five confirmed breeding pairs in one year (2010) is the highest yet reported. The potential is certainly there for an increase in the population in the future, but only five sites supported breeding pairs in all three years: in Berkshire, Dorset and Yorkshire (three sites). The single pair in the Republic of Ireland also occupied the same site in all three years.

Fig. 1 shows that numbers have increased in most years since 2001. The apparent decline in 2011 may be a recording artefact, since fewer records overall were submitted in that year, but the decline is proportionately more than might have been expected. Interestingly, there has also been a decline in the number of birds reported on Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) counts since 2009 (fig. 1). Perhaps the run of colder winters in 2009–11 caused increased mortality, given that Black Swans will not be accustomed to long periods of frozen water in their native Australia. In the Netherlands, Beemster & Klop (2014) showed that a fall in the number of occupied atlas grid squares correlates well with the severity of winter weather.

Few records submitted made reference to the number of young fledged; such data would be invaluable to judge the productivity of nesting pairs, and whether established pairs are more successful than ‘new’ pairs. There are anecdotal reports of aggression by Black Swans towards Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* where the outcome is that neither species raises young (see also Blamire 2010).

Black Swan	2009	2010	2011
Total pairs			
England, SW	5	9	6
Devon	2*	3*	
Dorset	1	1	1
Gloucestershire	1	1	
Hampshire	1*†		
Isle of Wight		1*	
Somerset		1*	1*
Wiltshire		2*	4*
England, SE	11	12	4
Bedfordshire	1		
Berkshire	2*	6*	1*
Buckinghamshire	1*		
Essex	2*	1*	
Greater London	1*	1*	
Hertfordshire	1	1	1
Kent	1	1*	1*
Oxfordshire			1*
Sussex	2	2*	
England, E	2	6	1
Lincolnshire		4*	1
Norfolk	1*	1*	
Northamptonshire	1		
Suffolk		1	
England, C	1	1	2
Derbyshire	1*	1*	1
Warwickshire			1*
England, N	6	6	4
Cheshire & Wirral	1*	1*	
Cumbria			1
Lancashire & N Merseyside		1*	
Yorkshire	5*	4*	3*
Wales	1	0	0
Caernarfonshire	1		
Isle of Man	2*	n/a	n/a
UK (confirmed and total)	18–28	25–34	10–17
Republic of Ireland	1*	1	1*

* counties/years where confirmed breeding records occurred
 † mixed pairs with Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

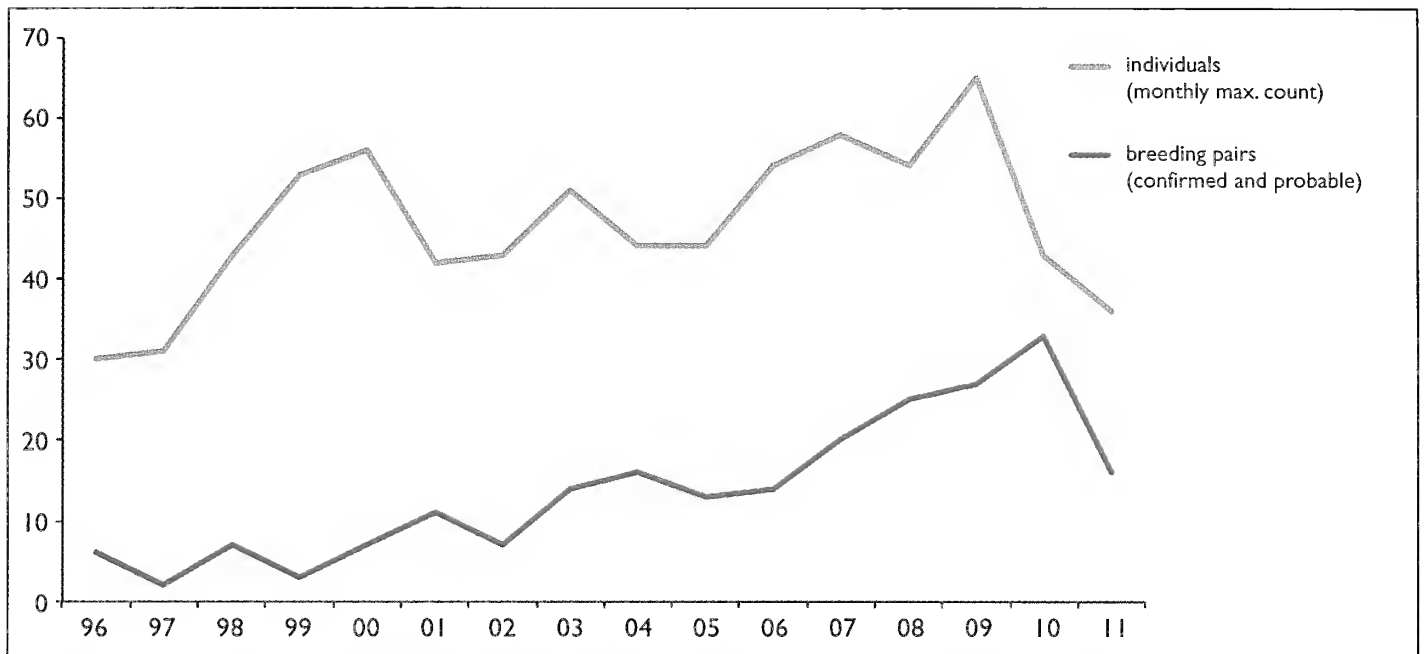


Fig. 1. Numbers of confirmed and probable breeding pairs of Black Swans *Cygnus atratus* in the UK, 1996–2011; and the total number of individuals recorded on WeBS counts during that period.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Regular breeder (9/10)

5-yr mean 2 bp; stable

AE*

Breeds mainly in Iceland, Fennoscandia and northern Russia, with small populations (5-yr mean 19 bp) in northern Scotland and Northern Ireland

2009 Two pairs. 2010 One pair. 2011 Two pairs.

In 2009, two naturalised pairs bred, in **Bedfordshire** and **Kent**. Both pairs laid eggs but there was no record of any young. In 2010 and 2011, breeding was confined to **Bedfordshire**. The nest in 2010 was deserted after heavy rain, but in 2011 two pairs attempted to breed. One pair hatched two young, though they failed to fledge, while the second pair had two failed breeding attempts.

Emperor Goose *Anser canagicus*

Occasional breeder (7/10)

5-yr mean 1 bp; stable/declining

E*

Breeds in Alaska and Siberia

2009 Two pairs. 2010 One pair. 2011 No breeding.

Pairs continued to nest on **Walney Island** in **Cumbria** until 2010. In 2009, up to 15 birds were present in the breeding season and two pairs bred, hatching three young, although none survived. A single pair bred in 2010, two young were hatched but again none fledged. The maximum count was 14 birds, including the goslings. There were no reports of breeding in 2011.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

Regular breeder (8/10)

5-yr mean 3 bp; stable

AC2E*

Breeds mainly in Siberia and Arctic North America

2009 Two pairs. 2010 One pair. 2011 Three pairs.

The population that formerly bred in **Hampshire** had died out by 2009. The last breeding recorded there was in 2005. The long-established **Argyll** birds bred again on **Coll**, with maximum counts of 25 adults and four juveniles in August 2009. There were no records in 2010, but breeding was assumed in 2011, based on the occurrence of two juveniles in October.

A new population became established in **Orkney**. A nest was found in May 2009 but the attempt failed. The pair renested in 2010; a brood of six goslings was seen in June and later three juvenile birds were recorded. In 2011, two pairs bred at separate sites, broods of

three and four were reported.

Given that the overwinter estimate for the numbers of Snow Geese in the UK is 180 birds (Musgrove *et al.* 2011), and even though this number includes some wild birds, it is possible that the breeding population of naturalised birds is higher than the five-year mean of three pairs. It may be that some nesting pairs in Argyll (and others elsewhere) are being overlooked, or going unreported.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Regular breeder (9/10)

5-yr mean 2 bp; stable

E*

Breeds central Asia

2009 One pair and one mixed pair. 2010 One pair. 2011 One pair.

In 2009, a pair bred at the London Wildfowl Centre, Surrey, where a family party was seen in August, while on Islay, Argyll, one bird paired with a domestic goose was seen with goslings in April. In 2010, a pair bred in Lancashire & North Merseyside and in 2011 a pair bred in Regent's Park, Greater London.

Balmer *et al.* (2013) showed that records of Bar-headed Geese are well scattered across England, with birds often associating with Greylag *Anser anser* and Canada Geese, but breeding remains rare. However, a naturalised breeding population of at least 100 pairs has become established in the Netherlands (Banks *et al.* 2008), so there is potential for this species to establish itself in Britain and it is important that records of breeding pairs are submitted to county recorders.

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoid*

Occasional breeder (2/10)

5-yr mean <1 bp; first bred in 2009

E*

Breeds central and eastern Asia

2009 One pair. 2010 No breeding. 2011 One pair.

A pair at Scaling Dam, Cleveland, present since 2006, bred for the first time in 2009 and raised two goslings. There were no breeding records in 2010, but in 2011, confirmed breeding was also recorded in Herefordshire.

These are the first breeding records of this species in the UK.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Regular breeder (10/10)

APEP estimate 1,000 bp; increasing

AC2E*

Breeds in Greenland, Svalbard, Arctic Russia and increasing rapidly in the Baltic

2009 A minimum of 168 pairs. 2010 A minimum of 162 pairs. 2011 A minimum of 164 pairs.

Musgrove *et al.* (2013) estimated that there were around 1,000 pairs of nesting Barnacle Geese in the UK, a figure that was derived from the numbers of apparently naturalised birds counted in the winter. RBBP data do not reflect this higher total, but we feel that breeding pairs in general are poorly reported, while there are no regular counts at a number of key sites, so an estimate of 1,000 breeding pairs is not unrealistic. Thus at Derwentwater, in Cumbria, 50 nests were counted on just one island in 2010, but the observer estimated that there may have been 100 pairs. Minsmere in Suffolk and Whitton Sands in Yorkshire are two other sites which regularly report over 20 pairs, and the large post-breeding flocks (133 in July 2011) at the Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire indicate a sizeable breeding population here too (although it is likely that some post-breeding flocks are quite mobile, making it difficult to determine the actual nesting sites).

Balmer *et al.* (2013) showed that there has been an 88% expansion of the breeding range since 1988–91. The naturalised population seems to be well established and increasing, but firm evidence to provide an accurate estimate of the number of breeding pairs is lacking.

Barnacle Goose				England, N	67	90	83
Confirmed breeding pairs	2009	2010	2011	Cheshire & Wirral	1	2	1
England, SW	10	5	29	Cumbria	42	62	52
Avon	2	2	2	Lancashire & N Merseyside	1		9
Gloucestershire	5	1	25	Yorkshire	23	26	21
Hampshire	3	2 [†]	2	Wales	1	3	3
England, SE	28	3	8	Anglesey		1	2
Bedfordshire	13	1	8	Breconshire		1	1
Buckinghamshire	11			Ceredigion	1	1	
Essex		1		Scotland, Mid	1	1	0
Kent	2 [*]	1		Perth & Kinross	1	1	
Surrey	2			Scotland, N & W	2	2	0
England, E	52	53	37	Highland	1	2	
Cambridgeshire		1	1	Shetland	1		
Lincolnshire	1			Northern Ireland	1	1	0
Norfolk	3	3		Co. Down	1	1	
Northamptonshire	1						
Suffolk	47	49	36	Total	168	162	164
England, C	6	4	4				
Derbyshire	6	3	3				
West Midlands		1	1				

* includes one mixed pair with Greylag Goose
 † includes one mixed pair with Canada Goose

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

Occasional breeder (2/10) 5-yr mean <1 bp

AE*

Breeds in Arctic Siberia

2009 No breeding. 2010 No breeding. 2011 One pair.

A pair bred in 2011 in Essex; four young were fledged. This is the first known successful breeding of this species in the UK; the only other breeding record involved a clutch of eggs found in Yorkshire in 2003 (Holling *et al.* 2007b).

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Regular breeder (10/10) APEP estimate 1,100 bp; increasing

CIE*

Native to sub-Saharan Africa

2009 112 pairs. 2010 192 pairs. 2011 165 pairs.

Bird Atlas 2007–11 showed that Egyptian Geese occur in 8% of 10-km squares in Britain and that, in the last 20 years, the population has spread south and west from the strongholds in East Anglia, principally to counties around London. The numbers of pairs reported to the RBBP do

Egyptian Geese *Alopochen aegyptiaca*



Alan Harris

not in any way reflect the real abundance of this species, with the total of confirmed breeding pairs representing only 10–17% of the UK breeding population estimate. Taylor & Marchant (2011) estimated that there are 750–900 breeding pairs in Norfolk alone. The table shows only the number of confirmed breeding pairs, but in fact few other pairs are reported to the RBBP.

There is a large naturalised breeding population in the Netherlands (Gyimesi & Lensink 2010), which numbered c. 10,000 pairs in 2009.

Egyptian Goose	Confirmed breeding pairs	2009	2010	2011				
Oxfordshire							1	
Surrey						8	6	10
Sussex						1	2	1
England, SW	7	11	9					
Cornwall				1		51	89	91
Devon	2	1	2			1	1	1
Dorset			1	1		2	5	7
Hampshire	5	9	5			48	64	54
England, SE	39	70	46				1	
Bedfordshire			1				18	29
Berkshire	13	21	n/a			15	22	19
Buckinghamshire	1	5	8			2	2	1
Essex	2	7	6			10	17	15
Greater London	6	20	15			2	1	2
Hertfordshire			3			1	2	1
Kent	8	4	6					
Total						112	192	165

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Occasional breeder (6/10)

5-yr mean 1 bp; stable

BDE*

Native to North Africa, southeastern Europe, west and central Asia

2009 No breeding. 2010 One pair. 2011 One pair.

In 2009, two pairs were reported from three sites in Wiltshire, including a pair resident from March to August, but there was no evidence of a breeding attempt. However, a pair bred in that county in both 2010 and 2011, at the same site, using a nestbox provided for owls or Common

Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*. Ten young fledged in 2010 and 14 in 2011.

A female with three fledged young was reported from Buckinghamshire in August 2009 but it is not known from where these birds originated – it may not even have been in the UK, so this record is excluded from the statistics. There are naturalised populations in several countries in Europe including Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands.



Hans Schouten/FLPA

69. The Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* has become established as a breeding bird in neighbouring countries in Europe such as Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. These populations are of naturalised birds, which probably originate from wildfowl collections. Some of the Ruddy Shelducks recorded in Britain may be from these breeding populations, or from the few pairs that have bred in Britain.

South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana*

Occasional breeder (1/10) 5-yr mean 1 bp; stable

E*

Native to southern Africa

2009 0–1 pairs. 2010 One pair. 2011 0–1 pairs.

A pair was present in Breconshire in 2009 and bred in 2010, when nine ducklings were seen on 10th May. One of the adults may have been a hybrid South African × Australian Shelduck *T. tadornoides*. In 2011 there were up to four birds at this site but breeding was not repeated.

The only previous breeding records were in Surrey in 1997 and 1998.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

Regular breeder (9/10) 5-yr mean 9 bp; increasing?

E*

Native to central and South America

2009 16 pairs. 2010 17 pairs. 2011 Seven pairs.

Fieldwork for *Bird Atlas 2007–11* showed that Muscovy Ducks occur widely across England, and a number of breeding records were reported. Since many of these ducks are found close to human habitation, there is much doubt about how wild the individuals are and it is likely that many will have gone unreported or lacked appropriate breeding evidence. The only regular site remains the River Ouse at Ely, in Cambridgeshire.

Muscovy Duck				England, C	0	2	0
Confirmed breeding pairs				Derbyshire		2	
England, SW	3	1	1	England, N	1	0	3
Avon	2	1		Cleveland			1
Cornwall			1	Lancashire & N Merseyside			1
Devon	1			Yorkshire	1		1
England, SE	0	1	1	Wales	1	0	0
Berkshire			1	Gower	1		
Kent		1		Scotland, S	0	1	0
England, E	11	10	2	Lothian		1	
Cambridgeshire	10	10	2	Scotland, N & W	0	2	0
Norfolk	1			Highland		2	
				Total	16	17	7

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

Occasional breeder (7/10) 5-yr mean 4 bp; stable

E*

Breeds North America and Cuba

2009 Three pairs. 2010 Three pairs. 2011 Three pairs.

Breeding occurred in Wiltshire again in 2009 (two pairs), but not in 2010, and by 2011 only a single bird remained. A female with six ducklings in Norfolk in 2009 was evidence of confirmed breeding in that county, but it was not repeated. In Cambridgeshire, a pair bred in both 2010 and 2011; in both cases a nest with eggs was reported. Another nest with eggs was found in Nottinghamshire in 2010, while in 2011 a brood of young was reported in Berkshire. Also in 2011, a pair in suitable habitat was noted in Hertfordshire.

Speckled Teal *Anas flavirostris*

Occasional breeder (2/10) 5-yr mean <1 bp; first bred in 2009

E

Native to South America

2009 One pair. 2010 No breeding. 2011 One pair.

This species has not previously been recorded breeding in the wild in the UK, but *Bird Atlas 2007–11* fieldwork revealed breeding pairs in two counties. In 2009, a brood of young was recorded in Surrey in late April, while in late May 2011 another brood was reported from Hampshire.

These are the first breeding records of this species in the UK.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Regular breeder (10/10) 5-yr mean 28 bp; stable

AC2E*

Breeds patchily in central and southern Europe, east into central Asia

2009 15 pairs. 2010 27–30 pairs. 2011 31 pairs.

The numbers are similar to those shown in the last report. The majority of the small population occurs in two areas: the Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire, and at several sites in Greater London, such as Hyde Park, Regent’s Park and St James’s Park.



Mark Holling

70. Red-crested Pochards *Netta rufina* have become regular breeders in England with what now seems to be a stable population occurring mainly in the Cotswold Water Park (Gloucestershire/Wiltshire) and in Greater London. Proof of breeding is usually obtained as a result of sightings of females with broods of young; the ducklings shown here (in Germany, in July 2012) are well grown and approaching juvenile plumage.

Red-crested Pochard				Hertfordshire	2*	2*	1*
Total pairs	2009	2010	2011	England, E	2	4	1
England, SW	8	12	20	Lincolnshire	1*	1	
Gloucestershire	5*	4*	8*	Norfolk	1*	2	1*
Wiltshire	3*	8*	12*	Suffolk		1*	
England, SE	5	14	10	Confirmed and total			
Bedfordshire		1*	1*	breeding pairs	15	27–30	31
Buckinghamshire			1*				
Essex	1*	2*	1*	* counties/years where confirmed breeding			
Greater London	2*	9*	6*	records occurred			

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis***Regular breeder (10/10)****3-yr mean 48 bp; declining****CIE***

Native to North America

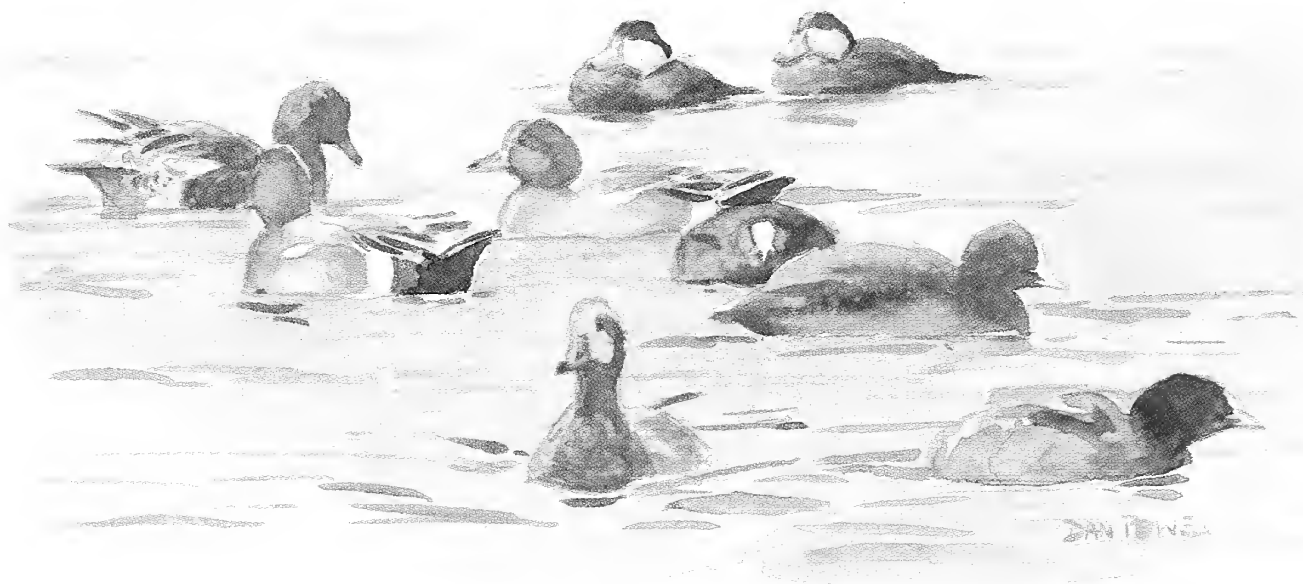
2009 46–70 pairs. 2010 34–41 pairs. 2011 24–32 pairs.

The Ruddy Duck was introduced into southwest England by a series of accidental escapes from WWT Slimbridge in Gloucestershire in the 1950s (Hughes 1996). The first confirmed breeding was at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, in 1960, heralding a rapid population increase as it spread across many counties of England, with breeding also recorded in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. Between 1960 and 2009, breeding was confirmed in a total of 63 recording areas: 39 in England, nine in Wales, 11 in Scotland, three in Northern Ireland plus the Isle of Man. Previous population estimates suggested 550 breeding pairs in 1991–92 (Stone *et al.* 1997) and 661–707 pairs in 1988–94 (Baker *et al.* 2006), but the estimated peak number of individuals was 6,000 in January 2000 (www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?pageid=244). Musgrove *et al.* (2013) gave no estimate of the breeding population, noting that the winter population was just 60 individuals (based on Henderson 2012).

The migration of some Ruddy Ducks from the introduced British population to Iberia resulted in mixed breeding with the native and endangered White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala*. To protect the latter species, a national eradication programme of Ruddy Ducks in Britain began in late 2005. By the winter of 2008/09 the UK population had been reduced by almost 90% (Henderson 2009). By that point, the number of breeding pairs had declined to the extent that they fell into the range considered by the RBBP, so breeding records were collected from the 2009 breeding season.

The areas where breeding was still recorded during 2009–11 were in northwest England, the English Midlands, south Yorkshire and Greater London, with an outlying population in Anglesey. Breeding has ceased in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Confirmed breeding was reported from 17 counties in both 2009 and 2010 but only 12 in 2011. Although it is clear that the population continues to decrease, the decline may be exaggerated to an unknown degree owing to deliberate under-reporting in some areas. The cull has continued and numbers are expected to continue to decline.

The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), part of Defra, is the Government agency responsible for managing the eradication programme. Iain Henderson of AHVLA brings us up to date on recent results: ‘Under the auspices of the Bern Convention, the UK and the other European states with viable populations (the Netherlands, France and



Dan Powell

Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* (with Eurasian Wigeons *Anas penelope* and Common Coots *Fulica atra*).

	2009	2010	2011		2009	2010	2011
Ruddy Duck				Wales	1	2	3
Total pairs				Anglesey	1	1*	3*
England, SW	6	1	2	Caernarfonshire			
Avon	1*		1*	Carmarthenshire			
Devon	1*			Denbigh & Flint		1*	
Dorset	1	1*	1	East Glamorgan			
Gloucestershire				Gower			
Hampshire	3*			Gwent			
Somerset				Montgomeryshire			
Wiltshire				Radnorshire			
England, SE	15	14	7	Scotland, S	0	0	0
Bedfordshire				Ayrshire			
Berkshire	2			Borders			
Buckinghamshire				Clyde			
Essex	2*	1*		Lothian			
Hertfordshire	5*	4*	1*	Scotland, Mid	4	0	0
Greater London	2	4*	3*	Angus & Dundee			
Kent	2	3	1	Fife	3		
Oxfordshire				NE Scotland			
Surrey		1*		Perth & Kinross			
Sussex	2	1*	2*	Upper Forth	1*		
England, E	12	6	4	Scotland, N & W	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire		2*	2*	Highland			
Lincolnshire	2*	1*	1*	Orkney			
Norfolk	9*	3*	1*	Northern Ireland	2	1	1
Northamptonshire	1			Co. Antrim	2	1	1
Suffolk				Co. Armagh			
England, C	10	6	2	Co. Down			
Derbyshire	1*	1*	1*	Isle of Man	0	0	0
Herefordshire							
Leicestershire & Rutland				Confirmed and total			
Nottinghamshire	2*	2*	1*	breeding pairs	46–70	34–41	24–32
Shropshire	1*						
Staffordshire	5*	3*		No. of counties with			
Warwickshire				confirmed breeding	17	17	11
West Midlands	1*						
Worcestershire				Republic of Ireland	1*		
England, N	20	11	13				
Cheshire & Wirral	4*	2*	4*	* counties/years where confirmed breeding			
Cleveland				records occurred			
Cumbria							
Greater Manchester	1*	1*		Ruddy Ducks bred in all the recording areas listed			
Lancashire &				prior to 2009 (39 in England, 11 in Scotland, nine			
N Merseyside	1*			in Wales, three in Northern Ireland and also the			
Northumberland				Isle of Man); those with no breeding records in			
Yorkshire	14*	8*	9*	2009–11 are shown in grey.			

Belgium) have agreed to aim for eradication of the species in Europe by the end of 2015. Since the period under review in this report (2009–11), the number of Ruddy Ducks and the number of breeding pairs in the UK have continued to fall as the eradication programme has progressed. The UK population now consists of a small number of regional populations comprising 4–8

birds each. In most of these regions there are only one or two adult females, and if these can be removed the eradication can be completed successfully. In 2013 it was thought that fewer than five pairs bred successfully. Removing breeding birds as quickly as possible will help the eradication programme to meet the 2015 target, costs will be reduced, and the number of birds which have to be culled will be minimised.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

Occasional breeder (6/10) 5-yr mean 2 bp; stable

E*

Native of Africa, largely south of the Sahara

2009 Two pairs. 2010 Two pairs. 2011 Two pairs.

There were two confirmed breeding pairs in each year but all the records were in different counties: Bedfordshire (2009), Gwent (2011), Hampshire (2009), Norfolk (2010), Sussex (2010) and Yorkshire (2011). This species is being increasingly recorded in the wild across many parts of the UK, though sightings are concentrated south of a line between the Severn and the Wash (Balmer *et al.* 2013).

Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus*

Potential breeder 5-yr mean <1 individual

E

Native to North America

2009 No reports. 2010 1–2 singing birds. 2011 One single bird.

In August 2010, singing birds were reported from separate sites in Cambridgeshire, although the sites were only 4 km apart so conceivably just one bird was involved. A single bird was seen in Cambridgeshire in 2011 but no singing was reported.

There have been two previous records of this species singing and appearing to hold territory, in the Isle of Man in 1998 and in NE Scotland in 2006.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

Occasional breeder (6/10) 5-yr mean 6 bp; stable

E*

Native to the Indian subcontinent including Sri Lanka

2009 Ten pairs. 2010 Nine pairs. 2011 Four pairs.

Fieldworkers for *Bird Atlas 2007–11* were encouraged to record all bird species they found apparently living in the wild and a surprisingly high number of Indian Peafowl were encountered: there were records from 289 10-km squares across the four-year period, although not all of these would have been in potential breeding habitat. Breeding was confirmed in 22 of these squares.

Indian Peafowl				Warwickshire	1		
Confirmed breeding pairs	2009	2010	2011	England, N	2	2	2
England, SE	1	0	1	Co. Durham	1	1	
Bedfordshire	1		1	Lancashire & N Merseyside			1
England, E	3	3	0	Northumberland	1	1	
Cambridgeshire		1		Yorkshire			1
Norfolk		1		Scotland, S	1	0	0
Northamptonshire	3			Dumfries & Galloway	1		
Suffolk		1		Scotland, N & W	0	2	1
England, C	2	1	0	Argyll		2	1
Leicestershire & Rutland		1		Isle of Man	1	1	0
Nottinghamshire	1			Total	10	9	4

Perhaps some of these birds are entirely dependent on food provided in ornamental gardens but it does seem that a number of pairs are nesting away from such places and successfully rearing young. In none of the counties where breeding occurred during 2009–11 did it occur in all three years, but this may be due to under-reporting. The habitat used by nesting pairs is not often reported, but it seems that breeding occurs mainly in lowland woodland and parkland.

Reeves’s Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii*

Potential breeder

5-yr mean 12 individuals

E*

Native to north central China

Minimum counts of individuals: 2009 5. 2010 35. 2011 17.

We continue to receive a small number of sightings each year but no indication of any pairs or breeding records. However, the Cambridgeshire population, although loosely ‘owned’ by a local farmer, seems to be largely self-sufficient, the birds returning only occasionally to the farmer’s garden for food. Two males were witnessed in an apparent territorial dispute in late March 2010. The large number in Suffolk in 2010 was the result of 10–20 pairs being reared and released by a landowner.

There appears to be no documented record of Reeves’s Pheasant breeding in the wild in the UK, so the categorisation by BOURC as E* may be incorrect. Any evidence of confirmed breeding by this species in the UK from any time in the past would be of great interest and very welcome.

Reeves’s Pheasant				Northamptonshire	2		
Minimum individuals	2009	2010	2011	Suffolk		20	
England, SW	3	7	4	Scotland, Mid	0	6	5
Dorset	3	2		Moray & Nairn		6	5
Wiltshire		5	4				
England, E	2	22	8	Total	5	35	17
Cambridgeshire		2	8				

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*

Regular (?) breeder (4/10)

5-yr mean 12 bp; stable?

CIE*

Native to central China

2009 3–8 pairs. 2010 0–13 pairs. 2011 1–27 pairs.

Golden Pheasants are typically incredibly elusive and special effort is required to find them in their favoured habitat of dense plantation. This may explain the variation in both numbers

Golden Pheasant				England, N	0	2	0
Total pairs	2009	2010	2011	Lancashire & N Merseyside		2	
England, SW	1	2	1	Scotland, Mid	0	2	0
Dorset	1*	2	1	Perth & Kinross		2	
Isles of Scilly	†	†	†	Scotland, N & W	0	0	0
Wiltshire			†	Argyll		†	
England, SE	0	2	0	Confirmed and total			
Buckinghamshire		2		breeding pairs	3–8	0–13	1–27
England, E	7	5	26				
Norfolk	5*	4	16*	* counties/years where confirmed breeding			
Suffolk	2	1	10	records occurred			
				† 1–3 individuals recorded, but no pairs or			
				breeding evidence			

reported and the level of breeding evidence obtained. We have assigned possible breeding to records of males in suitable habitat if there is some history of occupation in an area, and probable breeding if there is some evidence of territoriality (calling males at a site on more than one date), or if males and females are seen at the same site in the breeding season. Nonetheless, it is quite likely that even the maximum numbers reported here are underestimates.

Confirmed breeding is not recorded every year, though is assumed to take place annually; we have evidence from only four of the last ten years, including 2009 and 2011. In 2009–11 breeding was confirmed in just two counties: Dorset and Norfolk. Only in the East Anglian Brecks, Norfolk/Suffolk, and in northwest Norfolk have Golden Pheasants been recorded in all three breeding atlases, and there has been a 45% reduction in breeding range over the last 40 years, with losses from parts of central and southern England, Anglesey and southern Scotland.

Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

Former breeder

5-yr mean 4 individuals; declining

C6E*

Native to southeast Asia

2009 Two males. 2010 Three males. 2011 Three males.

The only county to report this species was Bedfordshire, always the stronghold of this introduced population. There were no records of confirmed breeding, and populations of this species are no longer thought to be self-sustaining. Balmer *et al.* (2013) showed a 46% reduction in breeding range over the last 40 years, although escaped individuals were also occasionally reported away from Bedfordshire. RBBP records show that the last time breeding was confirmed in the UK was in 1997, when a brood of two was seen (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999).

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo*

Occasional breeder (5/10)

5-yr mean 3 bp; stable

E*

Native to North America

2009 Two nests. 2010 Five nests. 2011 Two nests.

Wild Turkeys of the population that became established as a consequence of release into Lancashire & North Merseyside in 2007 continued to breed during the review period. A female with 11 young was seen in 2009 and in both 2010 and 2011 nests with incubating females were found. The birds are fed by gamekeepers and associate with released Common Pheasants. There was no information on breeding success but the maximum number reported was 20 in March 2011.

In Breconshire, Turkeys released at a pheasant shoot in 2008 bred in both 2009 and 2010, fledging six young in 2010.

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*

Occasional breeder (5/10)

5-yr mean 2 bp; stable

E*

Native to southwest USA, central and South America

2009 One mixed pair. 2010 One pair, two mixed pairs and one undetermined pair. 2011 One pair, one mixed pair and a further mixed, non-breeding pair.

In Devon, a mixed pair of Harris's Hawk and Common Buzzard bred in a town park in 2010, fledging two young. Although the pair was again present in 2011, breeding did not take place.

In Lancashire & North Merseyside, a pair of Harris's Hawks bred in both 2010 and 2011, but no information on the outcome of the breeding attempt is available.

In 2010, at a site in Kent close to a bird of prey centre, up to three birds were present and a pair was seen mating and nest-building, but no eggs were laid. It is possible that one of this pair was a Common Buzzard.

In Yorkshire, a male Harris's Hawk paired with a Common Buzzard bred in all three years at

the same site that was occupied in 2007–08. On all occasions two hybrid young fledged, although in 2011 the male Harris's Hawk was removed in May, leaving the Common Buzzard to rear the young on her own.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

Regular breeder (10/10)

5-yr mean 2 bp; stable

E*

Widespread in Europe, Asia and North Africa

2009 Three pairs. **2010** Three pairs. **2011** One pair.

In both 2009 and 2010 three pairs bred successfully. A pair in **Cumbria** fledged two young in both years, but was not reported at this site in 2011. In **Lancashire & North Merseyside**, two pairs nested in both 2009 and 2010, and at least one in 2011. The minimum number of young fledged in each year was one, three and four. These are the first records of three pairs breeding in any one year.

Elsewhere, there were long-staying, unpaired individuals in **Breconshire** (all years), **Fife** (2009 and 2010) and **North-east Scotland** (2011) and a few reports of other individuals in the wild seen on only one or two occasions. Fewer reports of Eagle Owls were submitted to the RBBP in 2009–11, but it is likely that there are more birds in the countryside and perhaps other pairs breeding. However, they go unreported because breeding Eagle Owls in Britain have tended to occur in more remote and inaccessible areas, and because this species is mainly nocturnal. A review of known breeding records of Eagle Owl since the first in **Moray & Nairn** in 1984 (Holling *et al.* 2007b) showed that breeding has occurred every year since 1997.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus*

Regular breeder (9/10)

5-yr mean 8 bp; stable?

E*

Native to South America

2009 Approximately 16 pairs. **2010** Minimum of ten pairs. **2011** 2–7 pairs.

Recording of Monk Parakeets is not consistent but it seems that there are two extant populations. In **Hertfordshire**, at Borehamwood, 33 birds using a large communal nest site were recorded in July 2009, but the number of nests was not noted. In 2010 there was no information on nesting but a maximum count of 33 birds was again recorded, in November. In 2011, six birds were nest-building on 5th June and 22 birds, including five dependent young, were seen on 6th July.

There is another population, in **Greater London**, on the Isle of Dogs. Although not recorded in 2009, 36 birds were counted on 31st October 2010 and on 23rd December 20 birds were seen visiting ten nest sites. In 2011, birds were noted at a nest site in April, while nearby a nest with young was recorded in June. The maximum count in this area was 23 in November.

There may also be a population in **Buckinghamshire**, as a wary, unringed pair was seen regularly at garden feeders in the summer of 2011.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to all County and Regional Recorders, bird report editors and others who supplied the information from which this report has been compiled. The recorders in particular played a valuable role checking a draft of the species accounts, and responding to specific queries on their non-native avifauna. Data from *Bird Atlas 2007–11* have been particularly helpful in enhancing our dataset on non-native species. Iain Henderson supplied supporting supplementary information on the monitoring of Ruddy Ducks. Chas Holt provided data on Black Swans from the BTO/RSPB/JNCC/WWT Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS).

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Mark Holling, The Old Orchard, Grange Road, North Berwick, East Lothian EH39 4QT;
e-mail secretary@rbbp.org.uk



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

Secretary Mark Holling, The Old Orchard, Grange Road, North Berwick,
East Lothian EH39 4QT; e-mail secretary@rbbp.org.uk

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Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2008–10

Part I: non-passerines

Steve White and Chris Kehoe

Abstract This report presents data on scarce migrant non-passerines for the years 2008–10. For most species, these three years continued trends identified in the last report, covering 2004–07. Most Nearctic waders, notably American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, Buff-breasted *Calidris subruficollis* and Pectoral Sandpipers *C. melanotos*, showed further increases. There were two apparently separate influxes of Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* in autumn 2008, in southeast England and western Scotland, which came close to doubling the previous highest national total of the species. Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* moved ever closer to national rarity status and two other species appeared to cross the national rarity threshold: Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* numbers averaged only ten over the three years and just two new Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* appeared in both 2009 and 2010. The recent increase in numbers of both Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* and Great White Egrets *Ardea alba* was sustained with numbers of the latter surpassing the previous peak in both 2009 and 2010. A record number of White-billed Divers *Gavia adamsii* was recorded in 2008, after which it was removed from the BBRC list, and two further high totals followed. After poor years in 2006–07, Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* numbers bounced back with 44 in 2008, although it remains one of the rarest of Britain's scarce migrants. The first wintering Black Kite *Milvus migrans* for Wales spent ten weeks in Radnorshire in early 2010 and was one of the most notable records for any species.

Introduction

This, the eleventh report on scarce migrants in Britain, covers the years 2008 to 2010. Collation of records for 2011 is underway and it is hoped that we may soon be able to get back to publishing reports with only a two-year gap.

This report provides no great surprises, by and large showing a continuation of trends reported for 2004–07 (Fraser 2013). It builds upon the existing database and, with a couple

of minor exceptions, presents the data in a comparable way to previous reports. Two new features have been included in the summary statistics for each species: trends in numbers recorded during the period 1990–2010 and the annual variation in numbers during the same period. Both should be regarded as indicative rather than definitive. Annual variation has been based on the calculation of coefficients of variation¹ but is expressed in purely descriptive terms.

¹ The mean number of individuals recorded divided by their standard deviation and expressed as a percentage.

The number of species in the national scarce-migrant database, including those previously considered by BBRC, has increased from 44 in 1958 to 67 (including subspecies) in 2010 and is set to increase further if more species are removed from the BBRC list. Over the same period the number of birds recorded each year has increased from around 150 to more than 5,000, with the average per species growing from single figures to roughly 80. More recently, average annual totals (of all species) have increased from 3,262 during the 1980s to 5,395 in the 1990s and 5,744 in the 2000s (fig. 1).

With so many records to handle, it is inevitable that some omissions and errors creep in. We are grateful for the comments provided by the Scottish Birds Records Committee on earlier drafts and would be happy to receive similar feedback from other recorders prior to publication of future reports.

The total of 11,001 records in 2008 was the highest ever, surpassing the 9,077 of 1998, but this was largely accounted for by unusually large influxes of two seabirds: Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis* and Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*. Totals reverted to a more usual 5,154 in 2009 and 5,981 in 2010. To some degree this increase is surely due to the growth in the number of birders and in their knowledge of identification issues rather than any increase in the number of scarce migrants reaching our shores. It is simply not possible to quantify the contribution of these 'observer effects' but it is safe to assume that species showing any decline in records over the past 20 years are declining in real terms too. Apparently stable species and some of those showing only moderate increases in records may in reality also be declining.

Where possible, only new birds have been included in the totals, and those believed to have been

returning from previous years or seen elsewhere in the same year (mostly in the same recording area) have been omitted. This applies almost entirely to non-passerines, some of which are highly mobile and extremely difficult to keep track of, so that national totals may be somewhat exaggerated.

Common Crane *Grus grus* has now been dropped from this report; the increasingly widespread natural colonisation, together with the reintroduction scheme on the Somerset Levels have made it increasingly difficult to distinguish migrants from breeding birds. Similar problems exist for some other species, such as Red-necked Phalarope *P. lobatus* and Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*, which are both migrants and British breeders, although in these cases it is more straightforward to exclude records of breeding birds.

Three species appear in this report for the first time, having been removed from the list of species assessed by BBRC at the end of 2008: White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* and Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*. Although a small population of Parrot Crossbills breeds in the Scottish highlands, elsewhere the species is a real rarity and many years can pass without any sightings, interrupted by an occasional influx – this seems destined to become the least frequently recorded species included in this report yet, with an estimated breeding population of 50 pairs (Holling *et al.* 2013), it is precluded from BBRC status. In addition to those species recently dropped by BBRC, two subspecies – Grey-headed Wagtail *Motacilla*

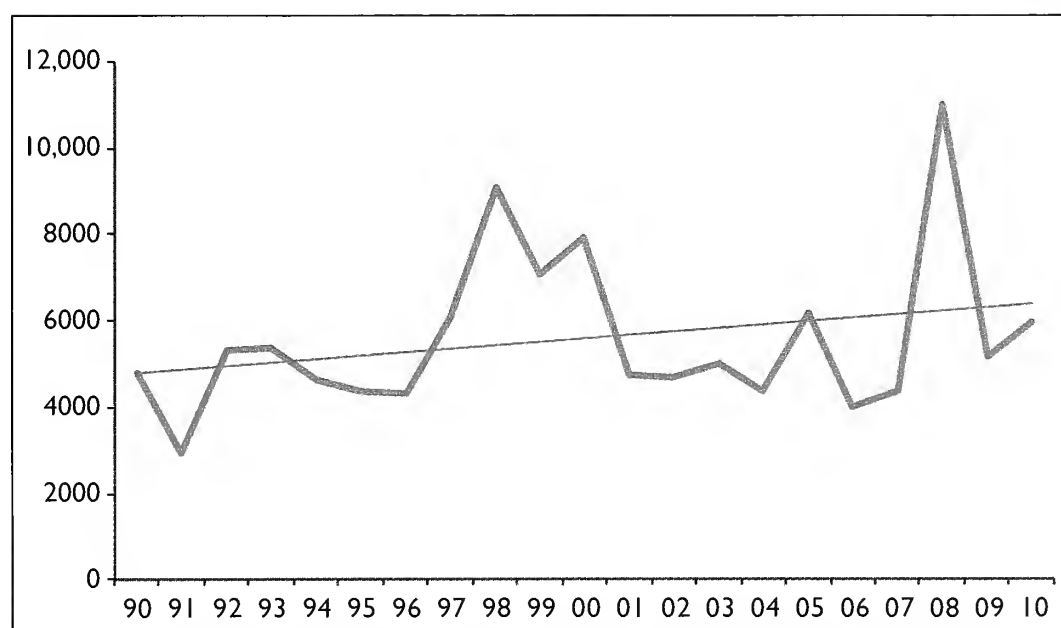


Fig. 1. Annual totals of scarce migrants recorded in Britain, 1990–2010.

flava thunbergi and Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis* – are included here for the first time in order to assess their status in Britain.

Records published in county reports were received from the vast majority of recording areas; these comprise more than 97% of those used. Coverage was almost complete in both Scotland and Wales, where the majority of species are assessed by the respective national records committees, but was less so in England. The majority of ‘missing’ English counties were inland and so their omission is unlikely to have had much impact upon the national totals. However, all records reported to the various bird information services were provided by Rare Bird Alert and were used to fill the gaps. All such records have been included in the totals with the exception of a) the very scarcest species such as Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, Tawny Pipit

Anthus campestris and Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (unless reported for more than one day) and b) difficult-to-identify species seen primarily as ‘flyovers’, e.g. Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* and Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* – as the inclusion of non-validated records would have been likely to affect national totals significantly.

Sharp-eyed readers will notice that the statistics in this report may not follow precisely from those in the report covering 2004–07 (Fraser 2013). In many cases this is simply because additional records for that period have been accepted and published by county committees. We believe that the data presented here are both accurate and comprehensive, but we welcome details of any omissions or errors. If new records for this period are published in subsequent county reports, these will be added to the totals in future scarce migrants reports.

‘Black Brant’ *Branta bernicla nigricans*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
284	28 (2)	10 (10)	16 (8)	2006/31/1	2002/24/3	Large increase	High

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 0
1960–69 0
1970–79 <1
1980–89 3
1990–99 5
2000–09 19

Keeping an accurate tally of Black Brant numbers involves the familiar difficulties associated with wintering wildfowl – excluding returning birds, and those moving between sites, counties and even countries within winters – and is compounded by the (relatively high) life expectancy of the geese. The last scarce migrants report included only first-winter Black Brants, those birds that county recorders believed to be new arrivals, and those occurring at new sites for the first time (*Brit. Birds* 106: 372). This resulted in a sharp decline in new occurrences, so a summary of all birds by county was also provided for winter-on-winter comparison. Partly because this approach is different from that adopted for other species and partly because it probably risks erring on the side of caution, we have produced annual totals (including records accepted by BBRC prior to 2006) by calendar year, while attempting to exclude birds present in previous years as far as possible. Nonetheless, the figures are best viewed as an indication of trends rather than an accurate reflection of actual numbers.

A total of 150 individuals was reported within the period (of which only 38 were reported as adults and just 23 as definitely having been seen in previous years), but after excluding known returning birds this drops to 54. For the vast majority of records the age was not specified but no first-winters were reported during 2008–10. The only birds outside the traditional wintering areas were singles in Devon, Somerset and Yorkshire. All records were in England and included estimated totals of 14 in Lincolnshire, 11 in Kent, seven in Essex and Norfolk, and six in Hampshire. The earliest appeared at Leigh-on-Sea (Essex) on 4th October 2010, and the latest was at Hoo Flats (Kent) on 1st–5th May 2008.

American Wigeon *Anas americana*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
470	10 (20)	15 (10)	12 (16)	2000/31/1	1998/27/2	Stable	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2009	
1958–59	1
1960–69	1
1970–79	4
1980–89	8
1990–99	15
2000–09	17

Numbers of American Wigeons were unexceptional in each of the three years but this species has probably always been significantly under-recorded. Locating a lone American among the largest flocks of Eurasian Wigeons *A. penelope* in winter can be extremely difficult, and generates the paradox that birds are perhaps reported less frequently at sites where they are most likely to occur. It is notable, for example, that none of the four records from Lancashire & North Merseyside during 2008–10 was seen on the relatively inaccessible Ribble Marshes, by far the most important site for Eurasian Wigeons in Britain and where peak counts averaged nearly 80,000 during this period.

As with other wildfowl, it is also tricky to assess the number of new arrivals with any degree of accuracy. Only eight out of the 45 birds reported were logged as returning individuals (and these are excluded from the annual totals) but it is conceivable that the majority of adults may have been seen in previous winters.

For example, the five records in Dumfries & Galloway may relate to just two males. Only nine first- or second-calendar-year birds were recorded – although some of the five females may also have been young birds – and these were the only definite new arrivals. Of the remainder, 24 were recorded as adult males; females remain significantly under-recorded.

Birds were seen in 21 recording areas, with five in Dumfries & Galloway, four in Lancashire & North Merseyside, and three in Gloucestershire, Outer Hebrides and Orkney. Single birds made up the remainder, which were widely scattered throughout Britain, but only two were found in southeast England. It is difficult to interpret why three birds occurred in June and one in August, since very few Eurasian Wigeons summer in Britain; perhaps, like some of the latter, they were sick or injured birds.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
927	50 (3)	49 (4)	25 (14)	2004/60/1	2002/59/2	Increasing	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2009	
1958–59	1
1960–69	3
1970–79	6
1980–89	12
1990–99	23
2000–09	46

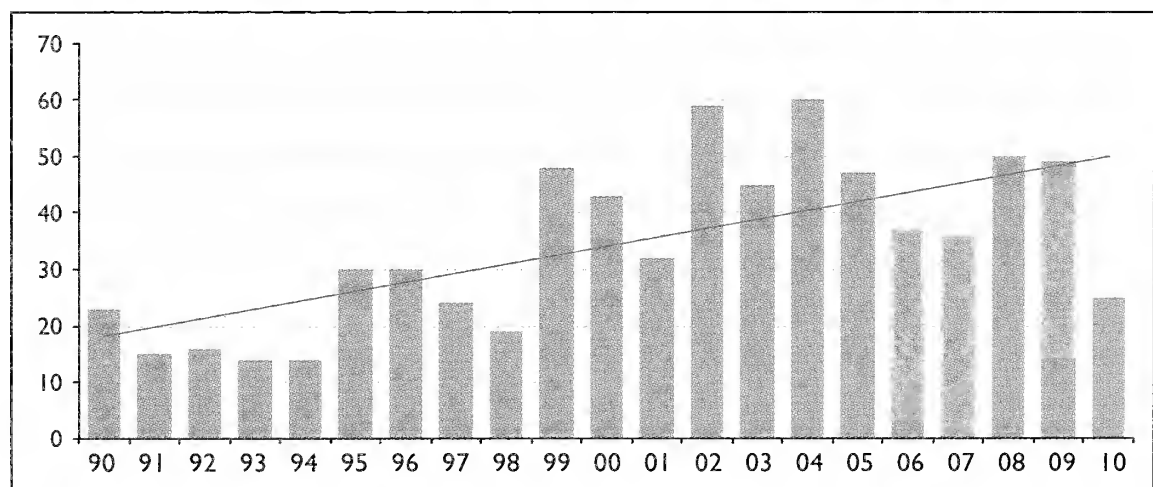


Fig. 2. Annual totals of Green-winged Teals *Anas carolinensis* in Britain, 1990–2010.

Assessing the frequency of occurrence of male Green-winged Teals is relatively straightforward, but putting a number to new arrivals is fraught with difficulty. In common with other wildfowl they are long-lived, known to return year after year, and prone to wandering within winters.

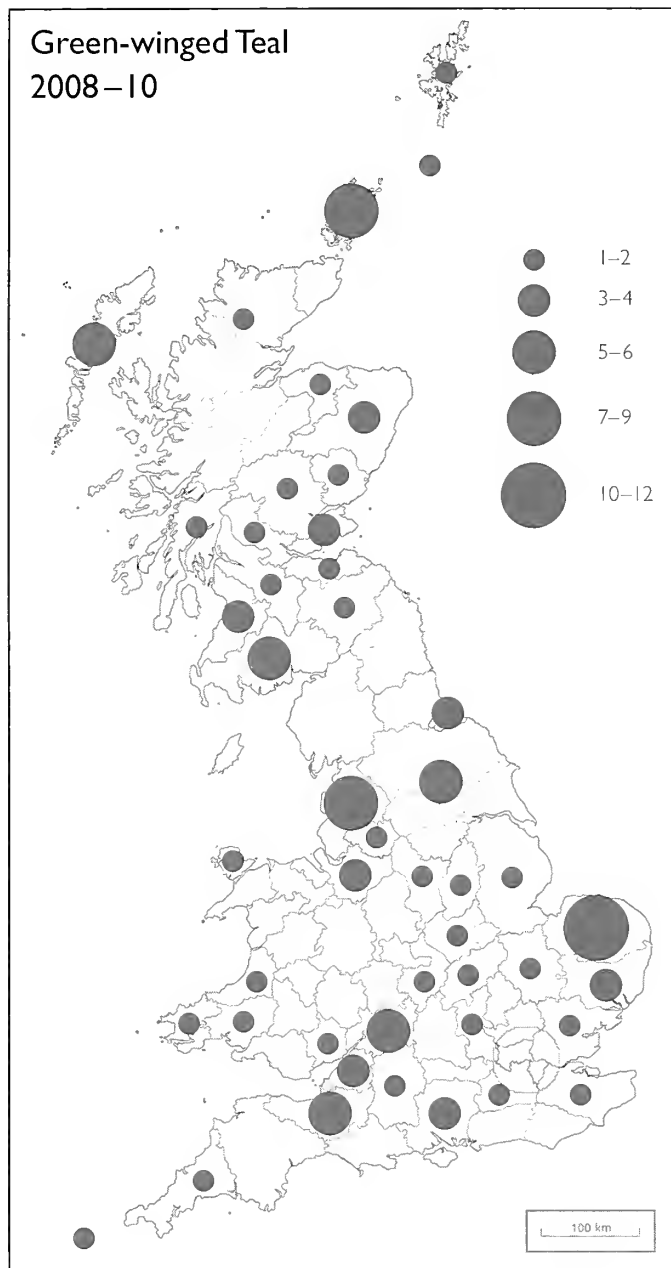


Fig. 3. Distribution of Green-winged Teals *Anas carolinensis* in Britain, 2008–10.

Norfolk, eight in Orkney, and seven in Lancashire & North Merseyside.

Green-winged Teals were recorded in all months except August (when males would be in eclipse plumage and not separable from Eurasian Teals *A. crecca*), including five in June and July. The earliest autumn record was a returning bird in Cumbria on 28th September 2009 but, as in 2004–07, the largest number of first reports was in January and February.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
679	26 (9)	22 (13)	13 (23)	2001/52/1	2002/42/2	Increase	Moderate

A total of 61 birds are treated as new arrivals for 2008–10. As with other wildfowl, only birds considered the same as those seen in previous years have been excluded from the annual totals, so the statistics include an unknown number of additional returnees. More than half of the 125 birds reported in the period were regarded as having been seen previously. Of the remainder, 16 were reported as immature, first-winter or juvenile; these averaged five a year during 2000–10, suggesting that the real total of new arrivals is significantly lower than indicated above (see fig. 4). Mean annual totals have increased markedly during the past half-century, which to some extent is in line with the 247% increase in the North American population over the past 40 years (Butcher & Niven 2007).

Added to this is the fact that no female has ever been identified in Britain (and it might be reasonable to assume that just as many females were actually present), while it is possible that some first-winter males may also remain undetected, at least early in the winter. Only one first-winter male was reported during the review period, on St Mary’s (Scilly) from 23rd November to 1st December 2009. This is clearly not an accurate representation of the number of new arrivals, so the figures here continue the practice of excluding only those birds reported as having been seen previously; this applied to almost half of all reports. Despite the caveats, it is clear that the number of Green-winged Teals recorded in Britain continues to increase: average numbers have doubled in each decade since the 1960s. High numbers were seen in both 2008 and 2009, but the 2010 tally was the lowest since 1998 (fig. 2).

Birds were seen in 47 recording areas, spread throughout Britain but with a notable absence in the northernmost counties of England. Very few were seen in either the southwest or the southeast of England, and just eight were seen in Wales (fig. 3). Unsurprisingly, the distribution of records largely followed that of the larger – mainly lowland – wetlands. All records were of singles with the exception of two at Loch Spynie (Moray & Nairn) on 13th December 2008. The largest county totals over the three years were 12 in

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59
1
1960–69
1
1970–79
8
1980–89
13
1990–99
13
2000–09
32

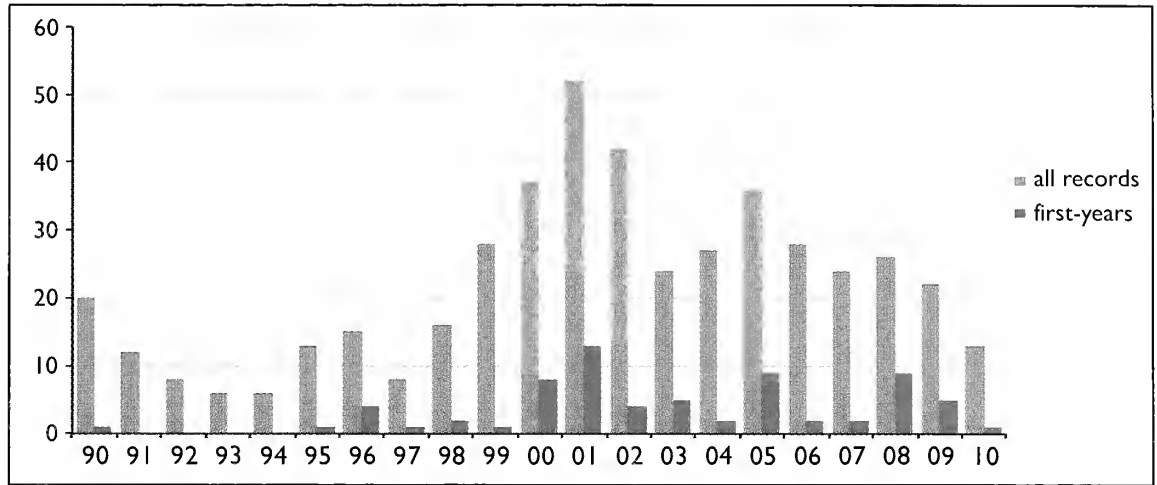


Fig. 4. Annual totals of all records of Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris* (blue), and first-winter birds (red), in Britain, 1990–2010.



Stef McElwee

71. Male Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*, Cowpen Bewley, Cleveland, February 2010.

Ring-necked Ducks were first recorded in all months of the year except June but three-quarters were first noted in winter (October to March). Of the 15 that arrived between July and October, nine were in Scotland. There was an extraordinary record of eight (six first-winter males and two females) at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 9th–11th November 2008; nothing has come close to these numbers before, in a British context (although a flock of 15 was recorded at Inishmore, Co. Galway, in October 2008 – could some of the Irish birds have moved on to Avon?). Otherwise, all records were of singles with the exception of two immature males on Tiree (Argyll) on 19th January 2009 and three on Barra (Outer Hebrides) on 26th October 2010. Occurrences were widespread, from Cornwall north to Shetland, and east to Norfolk (fig. 5). During the current review period, and looking at all reports not just new arrivals, 51 were reported as males (including first-winters) and 15 as females.

There was a strong positive correlation between the annual number of ‘immature’ birds and all other ages between 1990 and 2010 (fig. 4; $r_s = 0.72$, $P < 0.001$), suggesting that some common factor might influence the occurrence in Britain of the different age classes. It is unclear what the factor is but the possibility of regular transatlantic migration by part of the adult population cannot be ruled out.

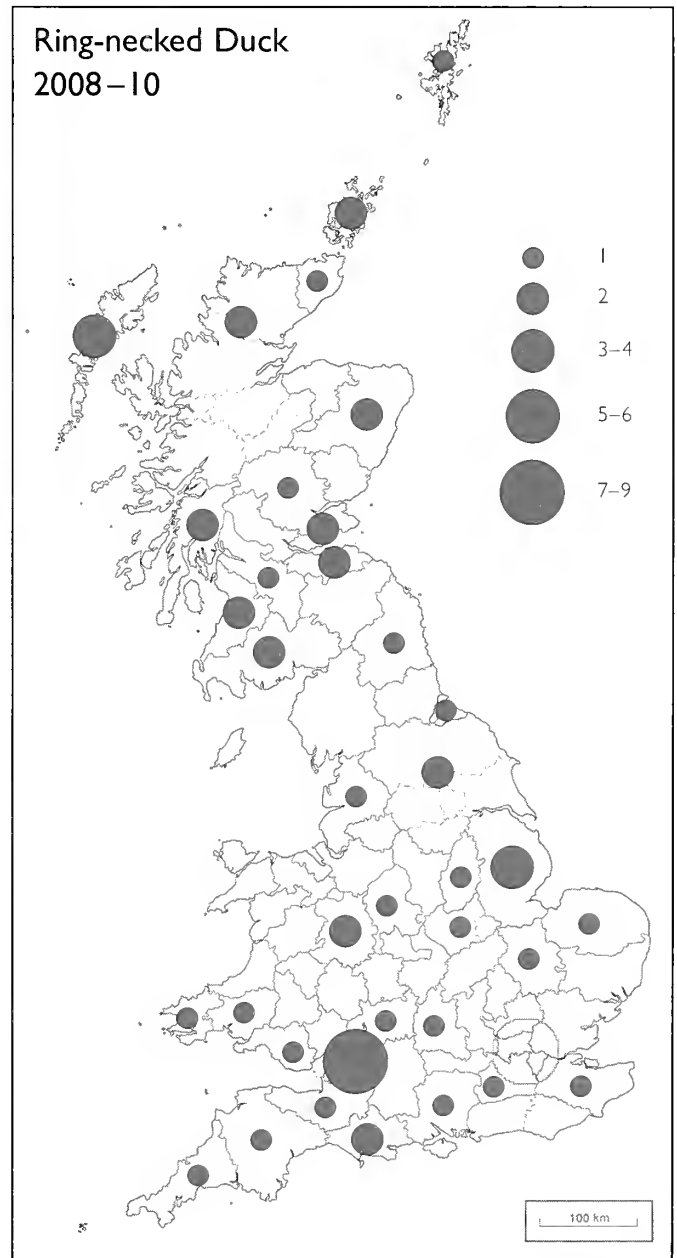


Fig. 5. Distribution of Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris* in Britain, 2008–10.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

Total 1986–2010	No. 2008 (rank/25)	No. 2009 (rank/25)	No. 2010 (rank/25)	Other annual maxima 1986–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
302	10 (14)	18 (4)	4 (25)	1987/27/1	1986/20/2	Stable	Low

Annual means 1986–2009
<u>1986–89</u> 18
<u>1990–99</u> 11
<u>2000–09</u> 11

Of all the records received, 23 were of known escaped or feral birds and a further 18 had been seen previously. Thus more than half of the records in the period were discounted, leaving a total of 32 during the three years under review, although no doubt some of these were also either escapes or returning birds. Only seven were recorded as first- or second-calendar-year birds, strengthening doubts about the number of new arrivals.

A male was paired with a Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* on the Avalon Marshes, Somerset, in May 2009 but no hybrids were reported subsequently. A juvenile at Chew Valley Lake in September 2010 was perhaps the offspring of the pair seen there for several years previously. Despite these caveats, it does appear that numbers of Ferruginous Ducks are at best stable and perhaps in decline, with annual totals in the past 20 years approaching national rarity status; the ten-year mean to 2010 is just under 11. The Ferruginous Duck is classified as Near Threatened globally and as Vulnerable in Europe, where the population declined by up to 45% during the 1990s (BirdLife International 2013).

Presumed wild birds were seen in 17 counties, mostly in England but including two in Wales (Cosmeston, East Glamorgan, from 15th November 2008 into 2009, and Llandegfedd Reservoir, Gwent, on 7th January 2008) and one in Scotland (Loch Gelly, Fife, from 26th July to 2nd September 2009). All records were of singles and were scattered widely throughout England including many inland counties, but the highest totals were five in both Lincolnshire and Suffolk, and three in Somerset. Birds were recorded in all months except May and July, but 19 of the 32 were first seen from November to March. Of those birds where the sex was reported, 21 were males and nine females.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
522	21 (4)	8 (29)	11 (21)	2003/30/1	1999/26/2	Increasing	Low

Annual means 1958–2009
<u>1958–59</u> 1
<u>1960–69</u> 2
<u>1970–79</u> 6
<u>1980–89</u> 12
<u>1990–99</u> 13
<u>2000–09</u> 18

The familiar problems of identifying new arrivals that apply to wildfowl in general are compounded for Surf Scoters because of their association with large, wide-ranging flocks of Common Scoters *M. nigra* that usually remain well offshore. While this may produce overestimates in areas where scoters are regularly seen closer to shore, it seems likely that significant numbers are overlooked elsewhere. For example, very few are recorded in the Lancashire & North Merseyside sector of Liverpool Bay, which holds the largest wintering flocks of Common Scoters in Britain – only one was confirmed there during the review period.

From a total of 112 records all but 40 had probably been seen previously, and more than half of the suspected new arrivals occurred in 2008. Only five birds over the three years, variously described as first-winter, first-summer or juvenile, were definitely new arrivals.

Most were seen between late autumn and early spring but there were 13 records (including birds seen previously) in summer – all of them were males in eastern Scotland, including five in the Blackdog–Murcar (North-east Scotland) scoter hotspot between 12th June and 2nd September – presumably joining moulting Common Scoters.



David Gifford

72. Male Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* with Common Eiders *Somateria mollissima*, Tronda, Shetland, June 2010.

More generally, there was a marked concentration of records in eastern Scotland throughout the year, including five in Shetland and North-east Scotland, four in Fife and Orkney, and three in Moray & Nairn. Nine were seen in six Welsh counties, including three in Denbighshire, but there were only five records in four counties in England (fig. 6). Twenty-two were reported as males and eight as females – as with other ducks, female Surf Scoters are probably regularly under-recorded.

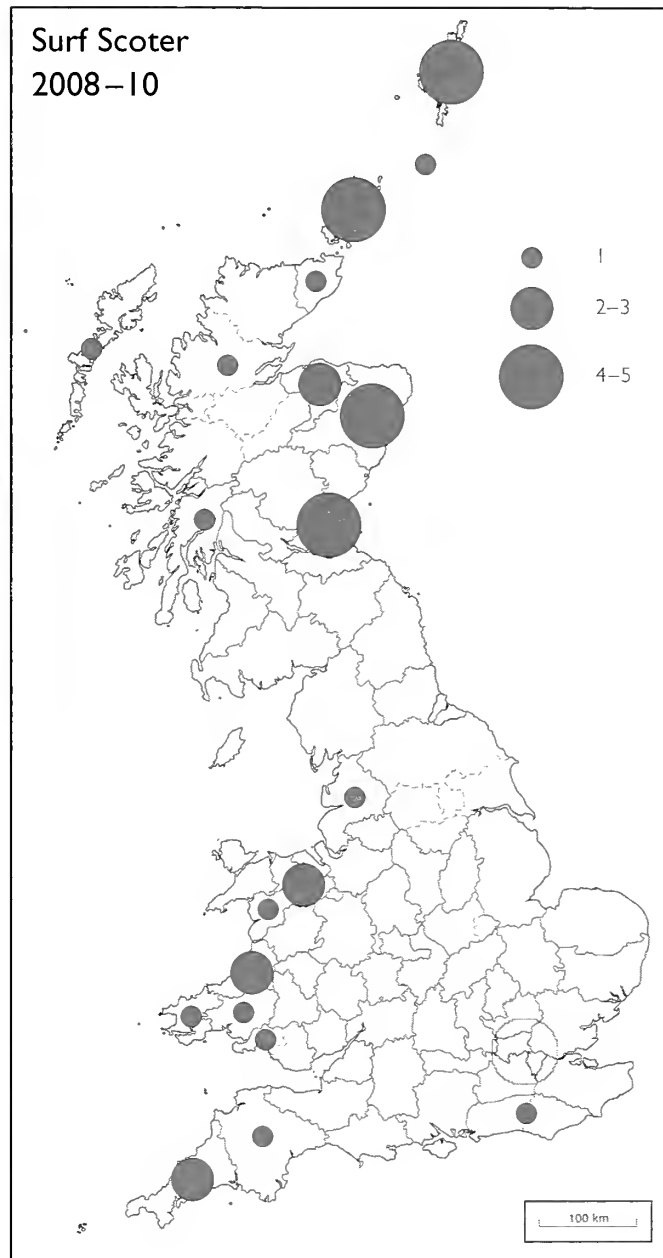


Fig. 6. Distribution of Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata* in Britain, 2008–10.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
390	33 (1)	17 (7)	21 (5)	2007/29/2	2005/27/3	Increasing	High

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 1
1960–69 1
1970–79 4
1980–89 6
1990–99 8
2000–09 18

The White-billed Diver was removed from the BBRC list at the end of 2008, following a record number of birds in that year. Two further good years followed yet these figures should be treated with a degree of circumspection. Estimating the winter population of any species of diver in British waters without employing dedicated aerial surveys is virtually impossible, more difficult perhaps than for most other seabirds owing to dispersal over such large areas (including those in deeper waters offshore). The statistics given here represent nothing more than an estimate of the numbers seen from shore, and occasionally – but increasingly – from boats; it is probable that they represent only a small fraction of the birds present off Britain’s coasts. They may, however, be a reasonably accurate guide to relative abundance between years, although whether the apparent increase is due to anything more than increased observer awareness and search effort is open to question.

Records presented here for the review period of 2008–10 have excluded birds certainly or probably seen within any one recording area earlier that winter or in previous

winters, but (apart from birds passing seawatch points in adjacent counties that were clearly the same) no attempt has been made to identify birds that may have moved between recording areas. Given the long list of caveats, the one certainty is that the White-billed Diver can no longer be regarded as a national rarity. Scottish records in 2008–10 included 24 in the Outer Hebrides, 11 in Highland and Shetland and ten in Orkney. Away from Scotland; however, White-billed Diver is still a real rarity and the only records during 2008–10 were three in Northumberland (two of which were also seen in Co. Durham), and singles in Yorkshire and Kent. Multiple records included up to seven together at Port of Ness/Skigersta, Lewis (Outer Hebrides) between 12th and 26th April 2009, and eight in the same area on 6th–25th April 2010; five at Loch Ewe (Highland) on 11th–12th April 2009; and two adults and a juvenile at Burghead Bay (Moray & Nairn) between 14th April and 3rd May 2010.

A large majority of those in the review period were first seen in April, with smaller numbers in March and May to July; more than three-quarters of all records were in spring, suggesting a passage movement close to shore, similar to that of other diver species. The earliest autumn record was at Hunda Sound (Orkney) on 5th October 2009.

Our knowledge of White-billed Divers in British waters is evolving rapidly. It is apparent that many more are present offshore than previously thought and that significant numbers probably remain undetected (see, for example, Baxter *et al.* 2011). One important issue that remains to be resolved is the whereabouts of the wintering grounds of the birds on spring passage off the Scottish coasts, and how these records relate to the significant passage off Norway.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
26,321	1,932 (5)	107 (19)	19 (34)	1998/5,116/1 1999/2,295/2	None	Very high

Annual means 1960–2009
1960–69 17
1970–79 18
1980–89 453
1990–99 1,519
2000–09 624

Cory's Shearwater numbers continued to show huge annual fluctuations, sometimes varying by two orders of magnitude: the total of 19 reported in 2010 was the lowest since 1976, whereas 1,932 in 2008 was the fifth highest on record.

More than 90% of all records came from south-west England, including 1,650 in Cornwall and three-figure counts in Devon, Scilly and Sea Area Sole, although there was no doubt some degree of duplication in these totals. Remarkably,

none was reported from Scilly or from offshore pelagics in 2010. Elsewhere, the species remains far less common with 20 records in Norfolk the only other double-figure total. A handful of records, all of single birds, came from Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Northumberland and Co. Durham, while just three were seen in Scotland: at Barns Ness (Lothian) on 1st September 2008, North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 14th September 2009, and Birsay (Orkney) on 29th October 2009. One off Swansea (Gower) on 12th August 2009 was the only Welsh record, and none was seen in the Irish Sea or



Joe Pender

73. Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*, passing Bishop Rock lighthouse, Scilly, August 2008.

the eastern end of the English Channel.

Cory's Shearwaters are rare in spring, when just eight were reported, the first being two off Spurn (Yorkshire) on 1st May 2010, with another five during May in the review period, while one off St Mary's Island (Northumberland) on 13th June 2008 was the only sighting in that month. In all three years, the first appeared in the southwest at the beginning of July, with numbers increasing steadily throughout the month. July accounted for nearly half of all records but sightings remained regular throughout August before falling sharply in September; just four were seen in October and three in November – all in 2010 – with the last off Berry Head (Devon) on 17th.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
650	20 (11)	75 (2)	15 (14)	1988/103/1 1987 & 2006/71/3=	Increasing	Very high

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 0
1960–69 0
1970–79 0
1980–89 19
1990–99 6
2000–09 38

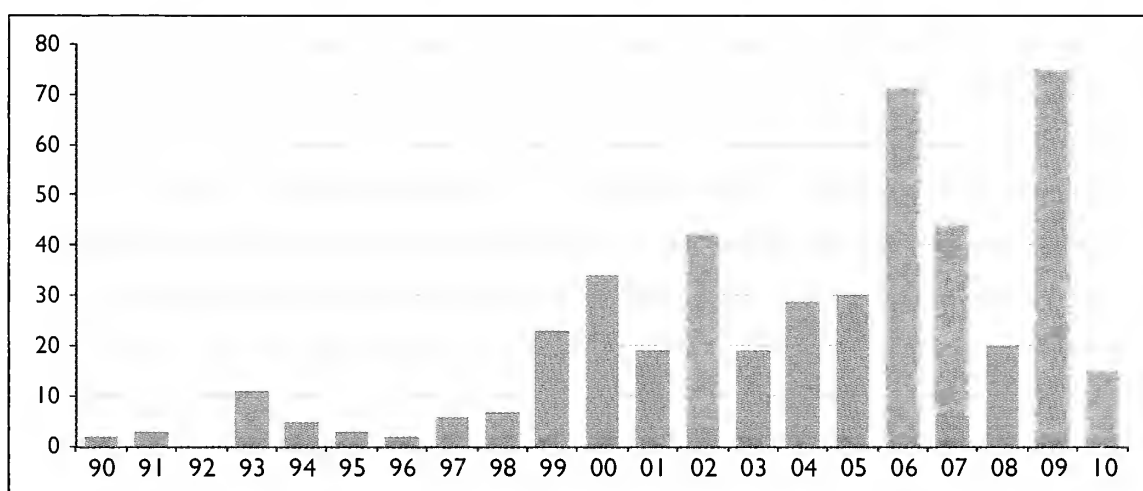


Fig. 7. Annual totals of Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* in Britain, 1990–2010.

Although two of the four highest annual totals were recorded way back in the 1980s, annual totals of Wilson's Storm-petrels have increased dramatically since 1999 (fig. 7), prompting the species' removal from the BBRC list in 2006. There is little reason to doubt that this is due to increased targeting of the species, especially on pelagic trips in the Western Approaches, rather than any real growth in numbers in British waters.

Uniquely among species considered in these reports, only a very small proportion of reports received had been validated by county or national recorders but there is little or no reason to doubt their veracity. All but four records were in southwest England. Pelagic trips off Scilly in Sea Area Sole accounted for 79 sightings with a further 19 seen off the Cornish coast in Sea Area Plymouth, either from the *Scillonian* or during pelagic trips from Padstow and St Ives. The remaining eight in the southwest were seen by shore-based seawatchers at Pendeen and Porth-gwarra (both Cornwall). Wilson's Storm-petrels remain extremely rare away from the far southwest with just four records during 2008–10, given below.

2009

Pembrokeshire Strumble Head, 1st August; from a pelagic trip off Strumble Head, 5th August.

Lancashire & N Merseyside Mersey Narrows, 5th September.

2010

Norfolk Cley, 23rd July.

The earliest report during the review period was in Sea Area Sole on 30th June 2008, and the latest in Lancashire & North Merseyside on 5th September 2009, but most occurred in July (33) and August (72). Most records were in low single figures but five or more were reported on five occasions, the largest count being nine in Sea Area Sole on 1st August 2009.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
536	14 (10)	2 (45)	2 (45)	1990/61/1	1987/53/2	Declining	High

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59
1
1960–69
3
1970–79
6
1980–89
13
1990–99
18
2000–09
12

Once three birds thought to be escapes by local recorders had been removed from the totals, the 14 recorded in 2008 collapsed to just two in both 2009 and 2010, the lowest annual totals since 1966. Despite the third-highest total on record, of 37 in 2006, the first decade of this century produced fewer records than either the 1980s or 1990s; the current ten-year mean stands at 11.5, below the threshold for a national rarity.

All records were of one or two birds and Night Herons turned up in 11 recording areas during the review period – eight in England, including two records each in Scilly, Hampshire and Suffolk, two in Scotland and one in Wales. Of the two birds on Fair Isle in April 2008, the first records for the island, one arrived on the 5th and remained to 13th (it was later found dead), while another was found freshly dead on 9th. The other Scottish records came from the Outer Hebrides, on North Uist on 8th May 2008, and Benbecula on 22nd–23rd June 2010, while the sole Welsh record was one at Sealyham

(Pembrokeshire) on 15th May 2008.

The two 2009 records were both on Scilly in June, while in 2010 records were at Dungeness (Kent) in late May and Benbecula (above). With the exception of singles at Chichester Harbour (Hampshire) on 27th September and West Hythe (Kent) from 22nd November into the New Year, the 2008 birds appeared in spring or early summer, the earliest on 5th April (Fair Isle and Far Ings, Lincolnshire), while a long-staying third-calendar-year bird at Ouse Fen (Cambridgeshire) remained until 10th July. In addition to this immature, three of the 2008 spring birds were aged as adults and two as first-summers.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
620	189 (1)	97 (3)	63 (4)	2007/102/2	2006/29/5	Large increase	Very high

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59
0
1960–69
1
1970–79
1
1980–89
3
1990–99
6
2000–09
43

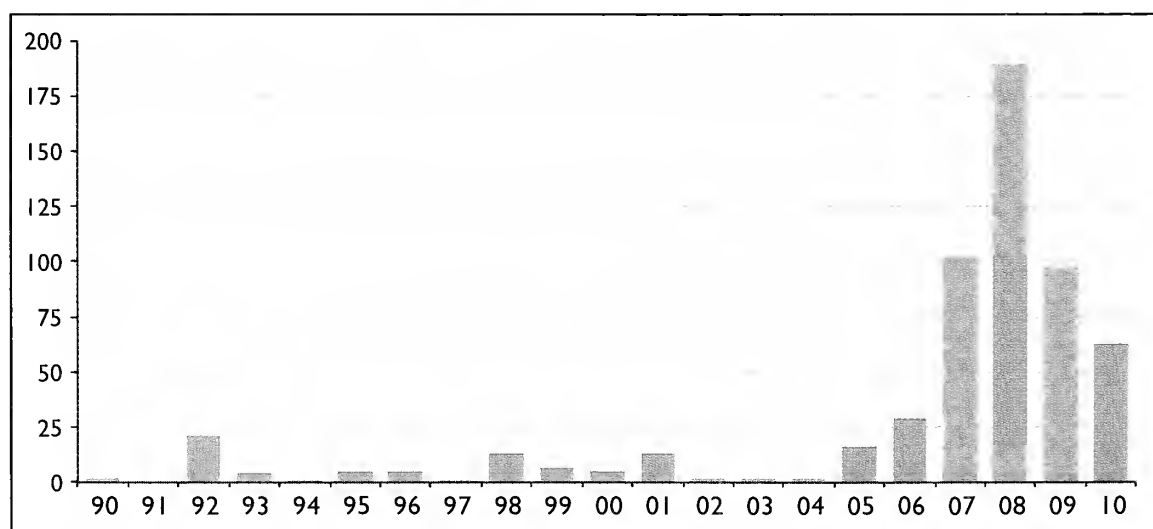


Fig. 8. Annual totals of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* in Britain, 1990–2010.

The transformation of Cattle Egret from national rarity to scarce migrant was both sudden and dramatic when numbers increased almost five-fold between 2006 and 2007; the five highest annual totals have all been in the past five years (fig. 8). A record 189 birds were accepted by

Gary Thoburn



74. Juvenile and adult Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, Chew Valley Lake, Avon, August 2009.

BBRC in 2008, after which the species was removed from the BBRC list. Currently, it appears that the enormous influx of 2007–08 may have been something of a one-off, but numbers certainly remained high during 2009 and 2010. Breeding was first recorded in Britain in 2008, in Somerset, and one or more pairs nested until 2010 (Holling *et al.* 2013).

The figures given here exclude overwintering individuals and also likely duplicates within recording areas (but not in different areas unless notified by recorders); the totals actually recorded were 180 in 2009 and 74 in 2010. Given that this is a mobile and eye-catching species, these figures are likely to be a little high.

Birds were reported in 32 recording areas during 2009–10, predominantly in southern England, including possibly as many as 45 birds in Cornwall (although there was probably some duplication), while eight in Lancashire & North Merseyside was the largest county total in northern England (fig. 9). There were nine birds in six counties in Wales but only one new bird in Scotland, on Islay (Argyll) from 23rd October to 6th November 2010 (although one remained at Cardoness, in Dumfries & Galloway, from 2007 to 15th January 2008). Almost all records were of single birds but groups of up to nine were seen at various Cornish sites during the winter of 2008/09; the largest presumed newly arrived group was up to four at Frampton (Gloucestershire) from 29th August to 25th November 2009.

Cattle Egrets were recorded in all months of the year. Of the presumed new arrivals during 2009–10, 66 occurred between November and February, 35 in March–April, 23 from May to July, and 36 between August to October, showing a remarkably even seasonal spread.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
808	86 (4)	158 (1)	138 (2)	2007/91/3	2003/52/5	Large increase	Very high

As discussed in the last report it is extremely difficult to keep track of the movements of Great White Egrets and to determine how many return in subsequent years. The species first attempted to breed in Britain in 2010 and records clearly associated with these attempts are excluded from

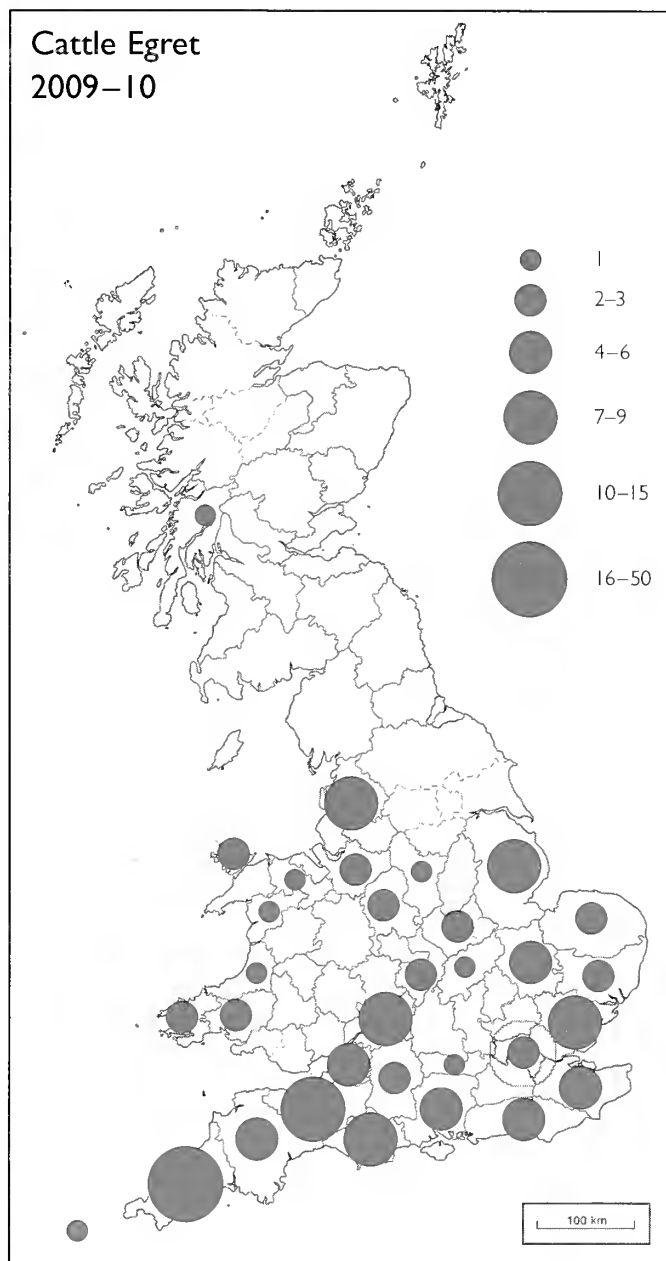


Fig. 9. Distribution of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* in Britain, 2009–10.

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 0
1960–69 0
1970–79 1
1980–89 2
1990–99 7
2000–09 57

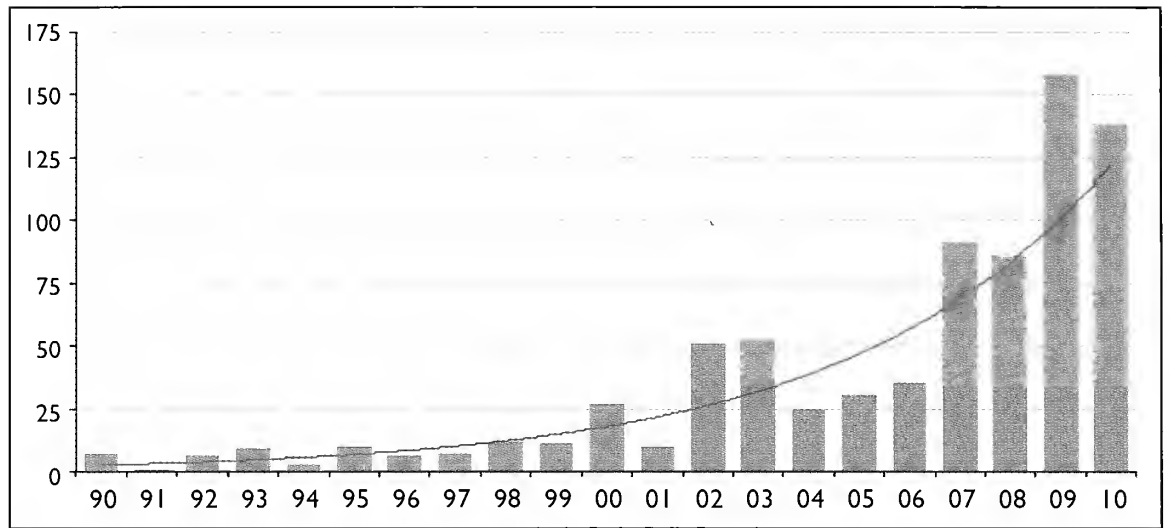


Fig. 10. Annual totals of Great White Egrets *Ardea alba* in Britain, 1990–2010.

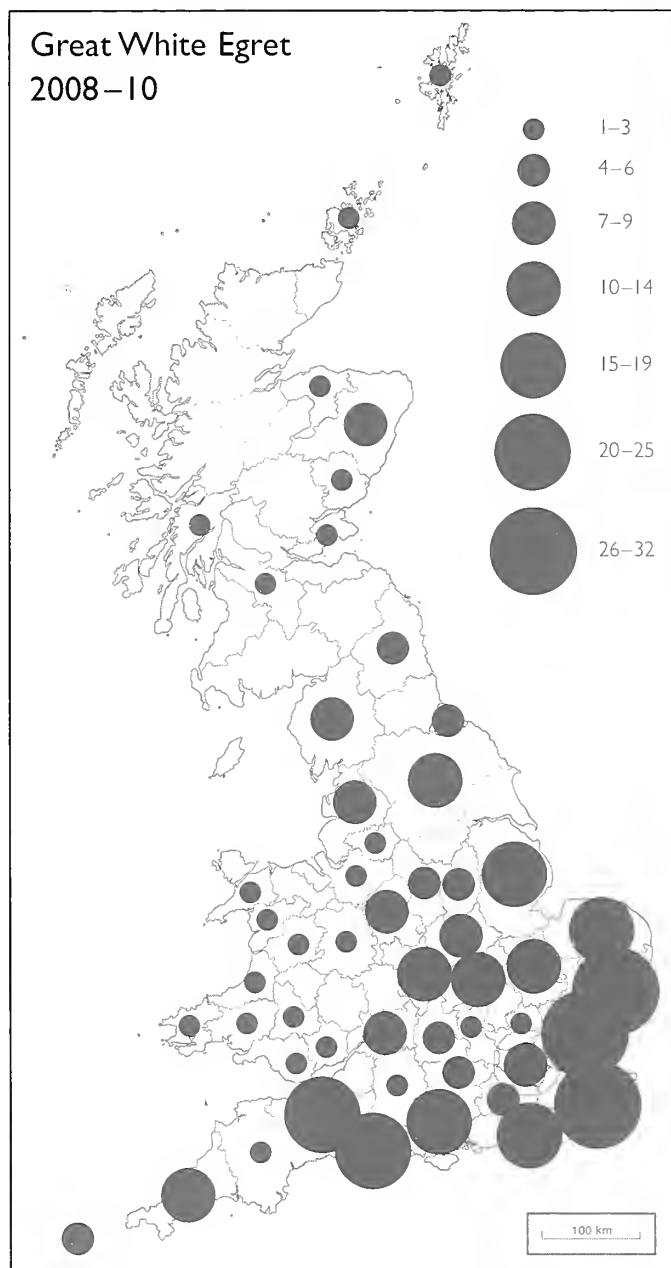


Fig. 11. Distribution of Great White Egrets *Ardea alba* in Britain, 2008–10.



Gary Thoburn

75. Great White Egret *Ardea alba*, Chard Reservoir, Somerset, August 2009.

the totals, along with birds noted by recorders as having been seen in previous years. While the data undoubtedly still contain a significant number of duplicate records, it is clear that numbers are continuing to increase, with all of the highest annual totals since 2007 (fig. 10). This reflects a general increase in the species' traditional range in eastern Europe and expansion westwards, both as a regular migrant and as a breeding species (Ławicki 2014).

The Great White Egret is now one of the most widespread of any species considered in these reports, being reported in 52 recording areas (70% of the total; fig. 11). As in previous years the majority were widely scattered across England with still relatively few in Wales (12 records of single birds in nine counties in 2008–10) and in Scotland (21 records of singles

in eight recording areas, including nine in North-east Scotland and three in Shetland).

Most were seen in coastal counties from Dorset to Lincolnshire, including 32 in Suffolk, 26 in Essex and Kent, 21 in Somerset and 20 in Dorset. Almost all records were of singles but larger groups included eight at Blakeney (Norfolk) on 14th October 2009, and four at both Brandon Marsh (Warwickshire) on 16th October 2009 and Cheddar Yeo (Somerset) on 5th December 2010. Records were spread throughout the year with peak arrivals in winter (162 during November to March), 95 presumed overshoots in spring (April to June), 95 dispersing post-breeding birds in autumn (September and October) and 30 summering birds during July and August.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
905	17 (28)	15 (32)	22 (14=)	1987/35/1 1999 & 2006/32/2=	Stable	Low

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 5
1960–69 7
1970–79 19
1980–89 21
1990–99 20
2000–09 19

Although it has been suggested that this species is likely to benefit from the effects of climate change, and despite the first confirmed nesting attempt in Britain in 2010 (at Dungeness; these birds are deleted from the totals given here), the annual number of Purple Heron sightings has barely changed in 40 years. Given the huge increase in sightings of most other scarce migrants during this period, which is likely to be at least partially due to increased observer effort, it seems likely that numbers of Purple Herons may actually be declining.

After a small influx of 32 in 2006, subsequent years have produced only moderate totals, and with 187 recorded in the ten years to 2010, Purple Herons are in reality close to national rarity status. Spring records predominated, with 43 from March to June (the earliest at Narberth, Pembrokeshire on 22nd–27th March 2010), including 13 in April and 22 in May. Eleven of the spring records were aged as adults and 11 as immatures or subadults. Purple Herons were much scarcer in autumn, when eight out of a total of 13 were aged as juveniles or immatures and just one as an adult. One at Earls Barton GP (Northamptonshire) on 25th–27th July 2010 was the only record in that month, but four were seen in August, six in September and singles in both October and November, the latest at Meadows Fisheries (Northamptonshire) on 4th November 2010.

The most favoured counties were Suffolk, with ten records, Cornwall (seven), Kent (five) and Scilly with four – a typical concentration in southern England. None was seen in Scotland – the most northerly records were two each in Lancashire & North Merseyside, Yorkshire and Cleveland, and the Pembrokeshire record (above) was the only one in Wales.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
1,004	58 (4)	22 (17)	27 (15)	2004/77/1 2005/67/2	Increasing	High

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 0
1960–69 3
1970–79 16
1980–89 15
1990–99 21
2000–09 43

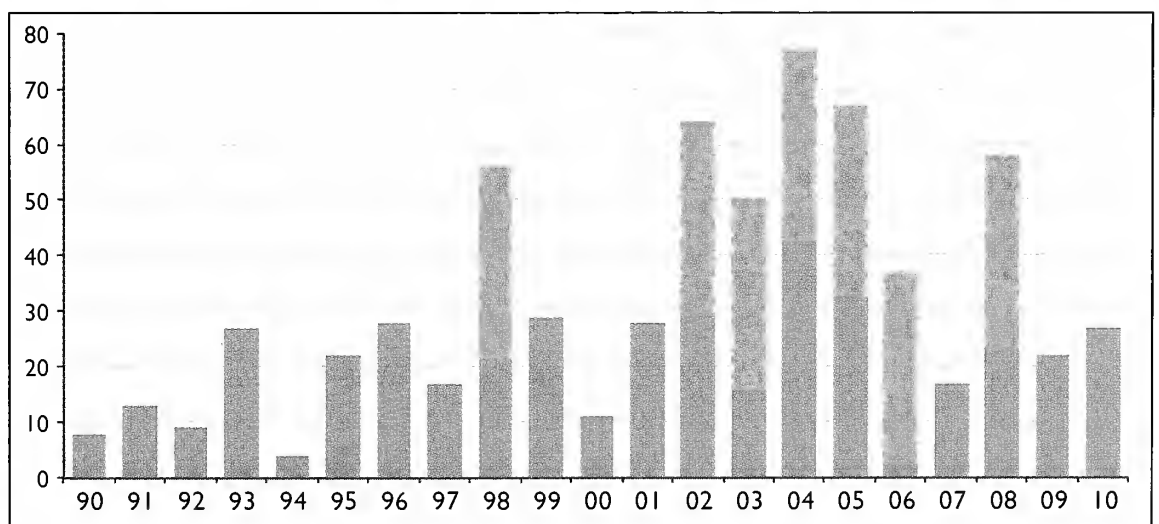


Fig. 12. Annual totals of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* in Britain, 1990–2010.

The wanderings of both genuinely wild White Storks and birds from collections continue to confound the picture yet, even when probable duplicates and escapes are excluded (as here), there is little doubt that numbers have risen in recent years. The free-flying birds that have their

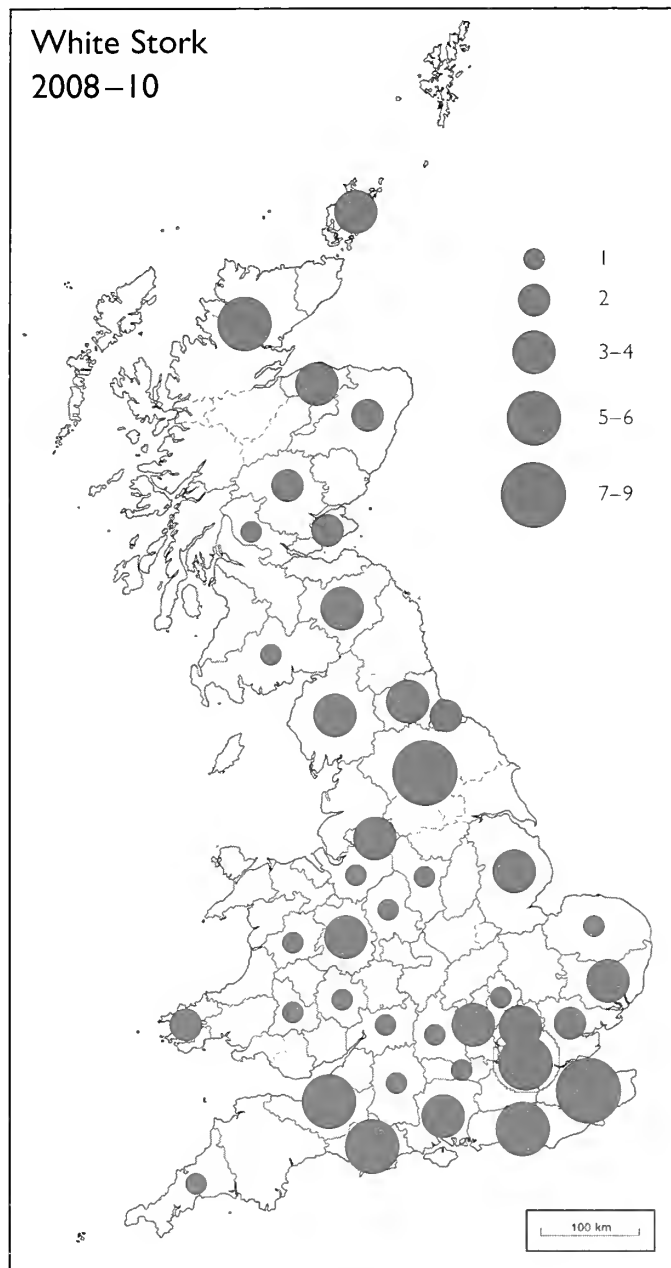


Fig. 13. Distribution of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* in Britain, 2008–10.

base camp at Harewood House near Leeds (Yorkshire) continued to muddy the waters in parts of northern England and perhaps farther afield, and it is likely that this issue is dealt with differently in different counties – for example, the lack of records in Lancashire & North Merseyside in fig. 13 reflects the adoption of a ‘guilty until proved innocent’ policy. Even so, twice as many were seen in the last ten years as in the 1990s; neither 2009 nor 2010 was anything special in the recent context but 58 in 2008 was the fourth-highest annual total, following on from similar high counts in 2004 and 2005 (fig. 12). Birds were recorded in 40 areas, but mostly in the south and northeast of England, with relatively few in Wales or central Scotland.

The largest numbers were in Yorkshire and Kent with nine and seven respectively. Although most records were of single birds, there were five instances of two together and six of three. There were eight midwinter records, some of which may have involved escaped birds, but seven in March almost certainly included the first genuine migrants. These were followed by 38 new arrivals in April, 21 in May and 11 in June. Autumn records were far less frequent with 22 individuals between the beginning of July and the end of October.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Total 1986–2010	No. 2008 (rank/25)	No. 2009 (rank/25)	No. 2010 (rank/25)	Other annual maxima 1986–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
6,012	789 (2)	189 (7)	175 (8)	2000/2,188/1 1999/203/3	Fluctuating	Very high

Annual means 1986–2009
1986–89 61
1990–99 125
2000–09 435

The Honey-buzzard is perhaps the species most frequently found to be ‘not proven’ by local records committees and for that reason no unchecked records are included here (e.g. 54 reported to the bird information services from Essex and 48 from Greater London), although no doubt some were identified correctly. Wherever possible, records relating to breeding birds have also been omitted.

Although 2008 was the second-highest year on record, and by some margin, numbers were still less than half the 2000 total. The autumn influx in 2008 began in mid to late August, but no less than 85% of the annual total appeared in September; passage continued at a much reduced rate into October, with the last of the year on 12th November at Barkston Heath (Lincolnshire) – the only November record during any of the three years. Overall numbers were much lower during 2009 and 2010 but the timing of the autumn passage was similar to 2008, peaking in September (fig. 14).

Birds were reported in 50 recording areas, with the east coast of England seeing the majority: 296 in Norfolk, 126 in Kent and 96 in Lincolnshire (fig. 15). There were 60 records of presumed

Graham Catley



76. Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Thornton Abbey, Lincolnshire, September 2008.

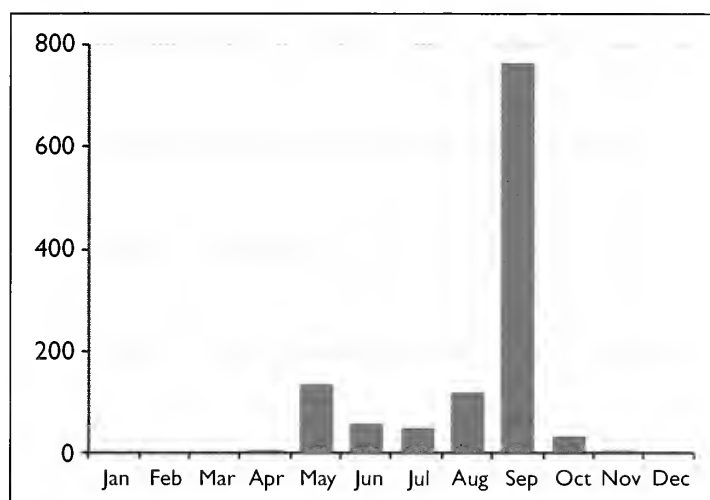


Fig. 14. Arrival dates of Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in Britain by month, 2008–10.

migrants in Scotland, mostly in Shetland and North-east Scotland, but only 15 or so in Wales – emphasising the Honey-buzzard’s status as a primarily eastern species as a migrant in Britain. Numbers on spring passage were essentially similar in all three years: 64 in 2008, 74 in 2009 and 51 in 2010. One on 27th April 2008 at Winterton (Norfolk) was the only April record, and around 70% of all spring records were in May.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
477	31 (3)	32 (1=)	16 (9)	1994/32/1= 2003/24/4	Stable	Moderate

Like Honey-buzzard, Black Kite is a difficult species for records committees to deal with and thus reports from the bird information services for counties that did not supply validated records are excluded from this analysis, with the exception of those that were reported for more than one day.

After the 31 in 2008, the 32 in 2009 equalled the record for this species set in 1994. As in previous years, the bulk of records came from southern and eastern England, mainly the coastal counties from Scilly to Lincolnshire (fig. 16). Compared with the previous report, when only

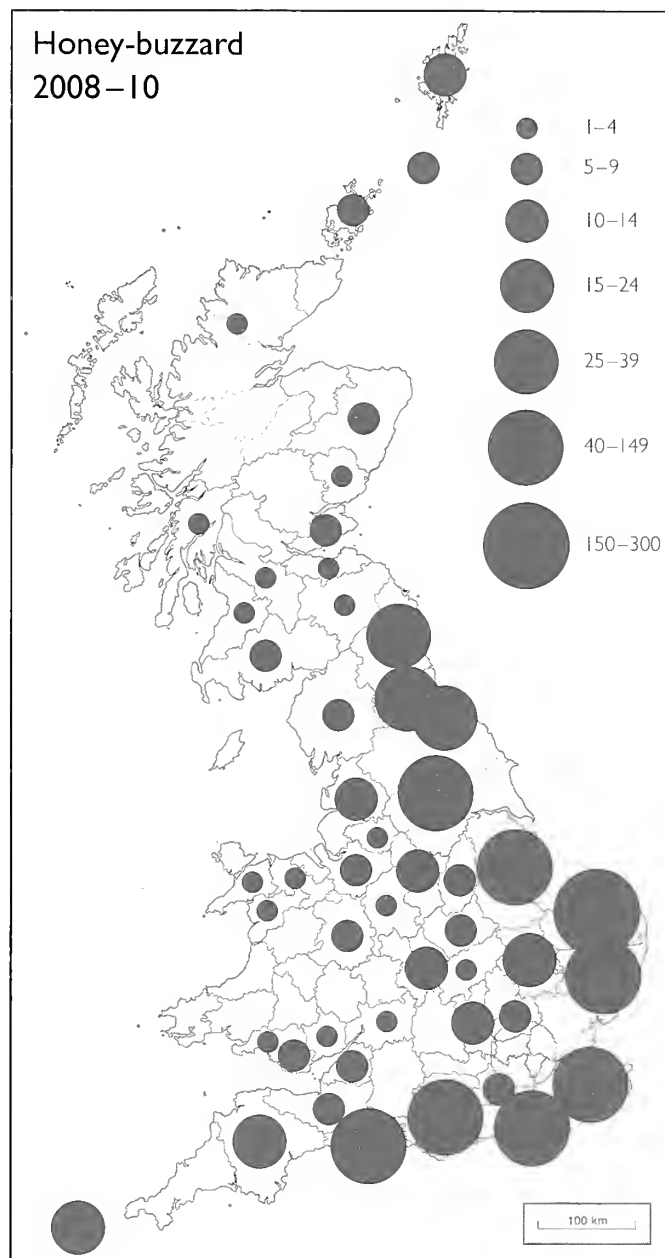


Fig. 15. Distribution of Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in Britain, 2008–10. (Note: breeding birds and unchecked reports from Essex and Greater London are omitted).

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 0
1960–69 0
1970–79 3
1980–89 10
1990–99 15
2000–09 15

three were reported north of a line between the Humber and the Mersey (and none in Wales), a few more were seen farther north and west. Birds were seen in 24 recording areas; Kent topped the list with 11 followed by Cornwall and Norfolk both with ten, then Suffolk with seven, Hampshire with six and Lincolnshire and Sussex both with five. Sightings from more unexpected locations included an adult at

Marlborough (Wiltshire) on 13th July 2008, one at Bedfords Park (Greater London) on 5th–7th May 2009, a first-summer on Inner Farne (Northumberland) on 1st June 2010, and two in Lancashire in May 2008.

The most unusual record came from Wales, when a juvenile arrived at the Red Kite *M. milvus* feeding station at Gigrin Farm (Radnorshire) on New Year’s Day 2010, and continued to be seen most days until 15th March, providing many birders with a rare opportunity to catch up with this often elusive species – brief encounters being the norm. There were two other Welsh records: at Carmel Head (Anglesey) on 4th May 2008, and on Bardsey (Caernarfonshire) on 26th October 2009 (the latest record anywhere during the survey period). In Scotland, Fair Isle notched up its first ever with an adult on 7th–10th May 2008, while single adults were seen in Mainland Shetland from 27th April to 5th May 2009 and 19th May 2010. The remaining Scottish records were all in 2010: a first-summer at Peterculter (North-east Scotland) on 23rd May, one on Skye (Highland) on 30th May, and an adult at Dalmally (Argyll) the following day (conceivably the same individual).

Spring overshoots predominated, with three arrivals during March, followed by 19 in April, 38 in May and five in June – hence the peak arrival period was a little later than early/mid April (as shown in the previous report). Autumn was much less productive with just four in July, one in August, seven in September and one in October.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

Total 1986–2010	No. 2008 (rank/25)	No. 2009 (rank/25)	No. 2010 (rank/25)	Other annual maxima 1986–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
1,549	77 (5)	61 (9)	173 (2)	1994/255/1 1998/111/3	Uncertain	Very high

Annual totals for Rough-legged Buzzard vary enormously between years, as the population responds to fluctuations in availability of its small mammal prey on the breeding grounds. Although there is a hint of a cyclical occurrence pattern in the annual totals in Britain, no clear picture emerges (fig. 17), and other factors are presumably important too – prevailing westerly winds that coincide with the main passage period are likely to deter many from crossing the North Sea.

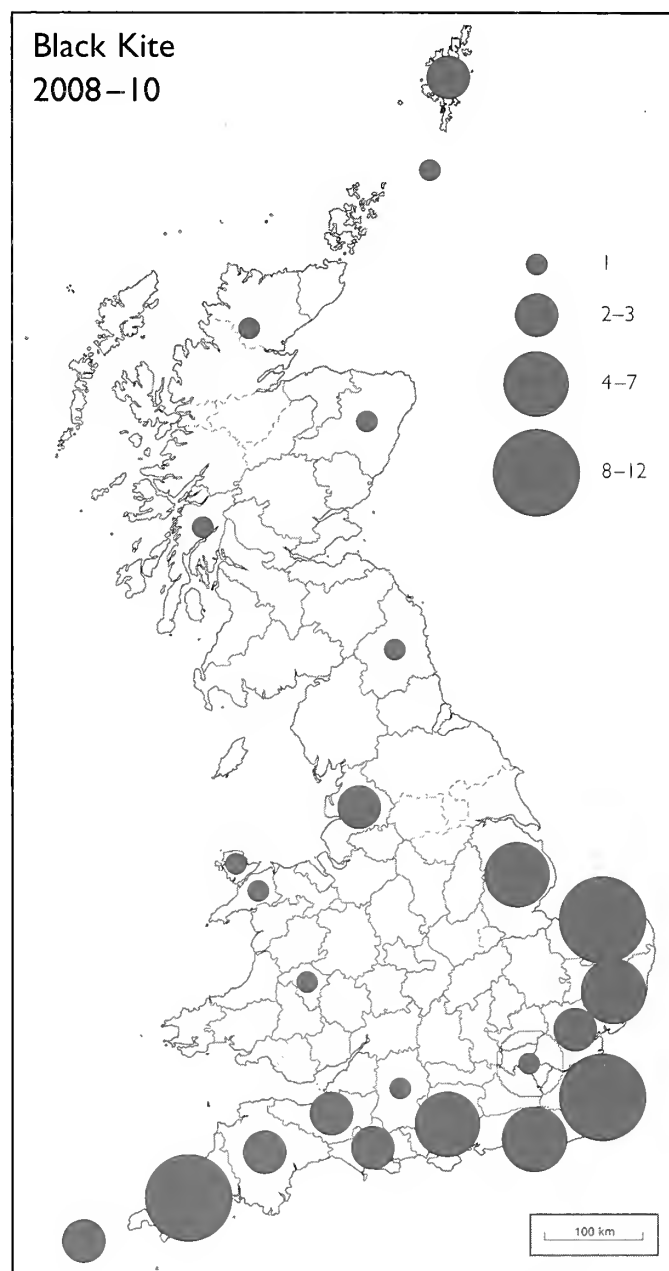


Fig. 16. Distribution of Black Kites *Milvus migrans* in Britain, 2008–10.

Annual means 1986–2009
<u>1986–89</u> 47
<u>1990–99</u> 73
<u>2000–09</u> 46

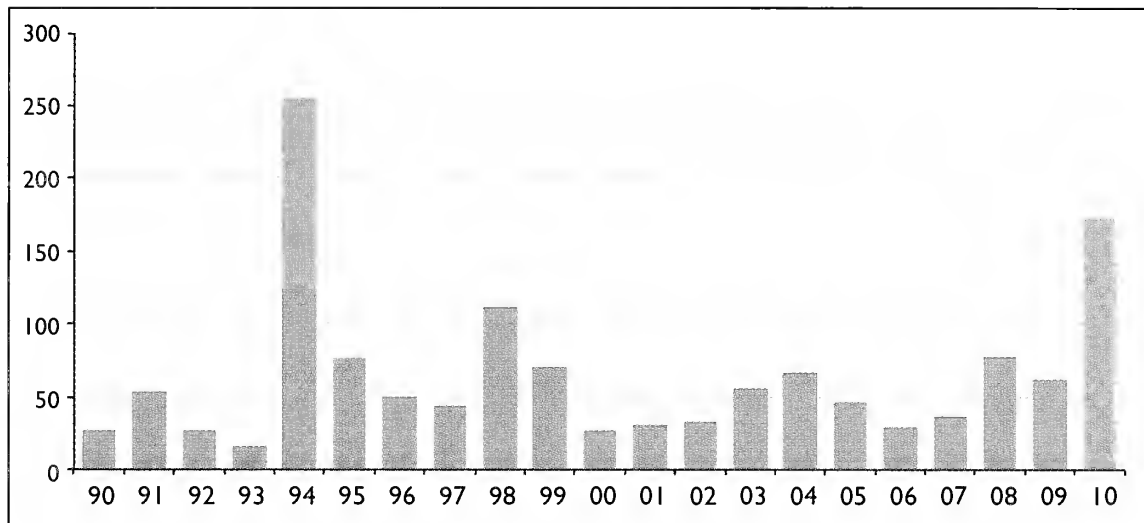


Fig. 17. Annual totals of Rough-legged Buzzards *Buteo lagopus* in Britain, 1990–2010.

Following four relatively lean years in 2004–07, both 2008 and 2009 were above

average while 2010 was the second-best year on record. Average numbers between 2000 and 2009 were similar to those of the 1980s but significantly lower than in the 1990s, which were boosted by the record 255 in 1994.

For a relatively common species, the distribution was extremely concentrated, with the English east coast between Kent and Co. Durham laying claim to more than 85% of the total of 311 records; indeed, Norfolk (128 birds), Lincolnshire (54) and Yorkshire (43) accounted for 70% of the total. This easterly distribution is hardly surprising given the species' origins, but perhaps more surprising was the relative absence of records to the north of Yorkshire – less than 10% of all records. None was seen in Wales and there were only a handful of records anywhere in western or central England.

The timing of first sightings was essentially similar in all three years. The earliest autumn arrival was one at Scolt Head (Norfolk) on 20th September 2008, and there was just one other September record. October was more productive, with most of the 93 records occurring after mid month but with indications of a slightly earlier arrival in the Northern Isles. A further 61 followed in November, and birds continued to be discovered throughout the winter months, presumably reflecting earlier arrivals filtering through to new locations. There was some evidence of a return passage movement, possibly beginning in February and continuing throughout April and early May, with the latest at Loch of Strathbeg (North-east Scotland) on 19th May 2009.

During the period 75% of birds were seen for one day only, strongly reinforcing the idea that most were on passage. Age was reported for about a quarter of individuals, of which 62 were juveniles or immatures and only 14 were adults (or 19 if birds seen previously are included), demonstrating fairly conclusively that relatively few adults reach Britain.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Total 1986–2010	No. 2008 (rank/25)	No. 2009 (rank/25)	No. 2010 (rank/25)	Other annual maxima 1986–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
1,419	25 (24)	50 (14)	21 (25)	1995/119/1	1989/84/2	Uncertain	Moderate

Annual means 1986–2009
<u>1986–89</u> 72
<u>1990–99</u> 60
<u>2000–09</u> 51

Spotted Crakes are the most secretive of Britain's scarce migrants and it is inevitable that a large number remain undetected during spring and autumn passage. Many of those recorded are actually discovered when singing, especially in spring, which raises the issue of how to discount breeding birds. The figures used here do not include known or probable breeding birds, although those singing for only a day or two during migration periods are included. In short, the statistics cannot be taken as a reliable indication of how many Spotted Crakes occur on passage in Britain. But the annual figures do give a reasonable picture of trends over time.

On this basis it appears that numbers may have fallen slightly over the past 30 years with 2008 and 2010 producing the two lowest totals during that period. As usual, most records were in England south of a line between the Severn and the Tees, with ten in Scilly, nine in Hampshire, seven in Kent, and six in Cornwall, Norfolk and Yorkshire. Birds were recorded in four Welsh and five Scottish recording areas.

All records were of singles apart from two at Grove Ferry (Kent) on 22nd August 2009 and Farlington Marshes (Hampshire) on 14th–15th October 2009. One photographed on a breakwater on Shoreham Beach (Sussex) on 19th February 2008 was an extremely unusual winter record in an unlikely location. The earliest presumed migrant was at Stodmarsh (Kent) on 30th March 2008, but most of the 15 spring records came in April and May. A total of 70 were seen in autumn between July and mid November, but with the majority in August and September.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
400	24 (4)	25 (3)	26 (2)	2007/27/1	2006/23/5	Large increase	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 <1
1960–69 <1
1970–79 3
1980–89 7
1990–99 10
2000–09 17

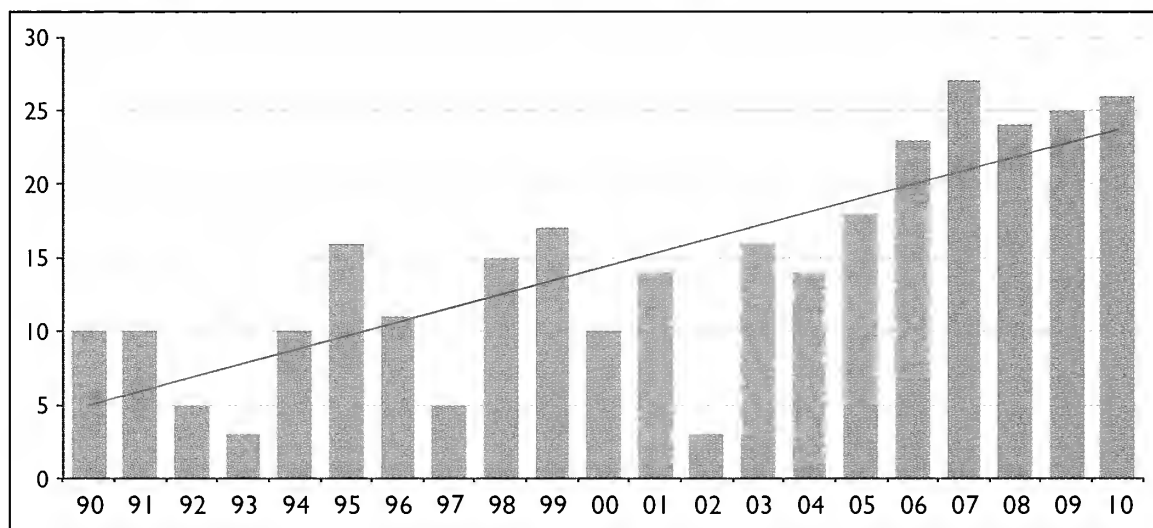


Fig. 18. Annual totals of American Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica* in Britain, 1990–2010.

Records of American Golden Plovers have increased dramatically in recent years, almost doubling on average since 2000, and more than justifying the decision to remove the species from the BBRC list after 2005; the four highest annual totals have all been in the last four years (fig. 18). The period 2001–10 accounted for 189 (47%) of the total of 400 recorded since 1958. No doubt this apparent change in status is partly due to a general increase in observer awareness and skill, since the world population is thought to be in decline (BirdLife International 2013).

A marked shift in the location of records in recent years was illustrated in the last report (*Brit. Birds* 106: 388–389), with an increasing proportion of the total now coming from the more remote margins of Scotland. During 2008–10, 20 were found in the Outer Hebrides and eight in Argyll; these two recording areas accounted for almost 40% of the 75 birds during the review period. It is possible that migration tracks have shifted north, but increasing observer coverage may be a bigger factor. The Northern Isles also contributed a significant chunk of records, with ten in Shetland and six in Orkney during 2008–10. Conversely, southwest England appears to be on the wane with ‘only’ seven in Cornwall, three on Scilly and two in Devon. Fig. 19 vividly illustrates the ‘shadow’ that Ireland casts over the Irish Sea coasts of Scotland, England and Wales in terms of this and other North American vagrants, with just two records in this area during the review period.

This species remains rare inland. Singles were recorded at Fen Drayton and Needingworth Quarry (both Cambridgeshire) in autumn 2008; at Fillingham Lake and RAF Cranwell (both Lincolnshire) in November 2008 and March 2010 respectively; and at Old Moor

(Yorkshire) in October 2009.

Six of the 75 birds recorded during 2008–10 were in spring (March to June), with the remainder arriving in autumn (July to November); none arrived in winter. The average length of stay was eight days, but in autumn some lingered considerably longer, notably one on North Uist (Outer Hebrides) from 28th September to 21st November 2010. Autumn records of birds for which an age was reported were divided evenly with 28 juveniles and 27 adults. The median arrival date for adults was 24th September and for juveniles more than a month later, on 28th October, reflecting the earlier departure of adults from the breeding grounds; the earliest juvenile appeared on Shetland on 24th September 2008.

American Golden Plovers have a loop migration that follows an elliptical pattern, taking them out across the Atlantic in autumn en route to wintering grounds in South America, then returning in spring via South and Central America, the Gulf of Mexico, then into North America via the Mississippi flyway and Canadian prairie provinces (del Hoyo 2013). Thus spring and summer records in Britain are less likely to involve newly arrived transatlantic migrants, but rather birds that arrived the previous autumn and wintered somewhere in the Old World. It is even possible that some birds manage to complete the return transatlantic migration in spring rather than becoming ‘stuck’ in Europe. It has been suggested that some of these may return here in subsequent autumns, using Britain as a staging post before continuing on to more southerly wintering grounds; for example, more than 100 American Golden Plovers have been recorded in recent years in South Africa (T. Hardaker pers. comm.). In the absence of ringing evidence this remains speculative but the large proportion of autumn adults offers some support; the later migration of juveniles at a time when birds are more likely to be caught up in Atlantic weather systems, together with their lack of migration experience, might suggest that they ought to be proportionately more numerous than adults in Britain than has been the case in recent years.

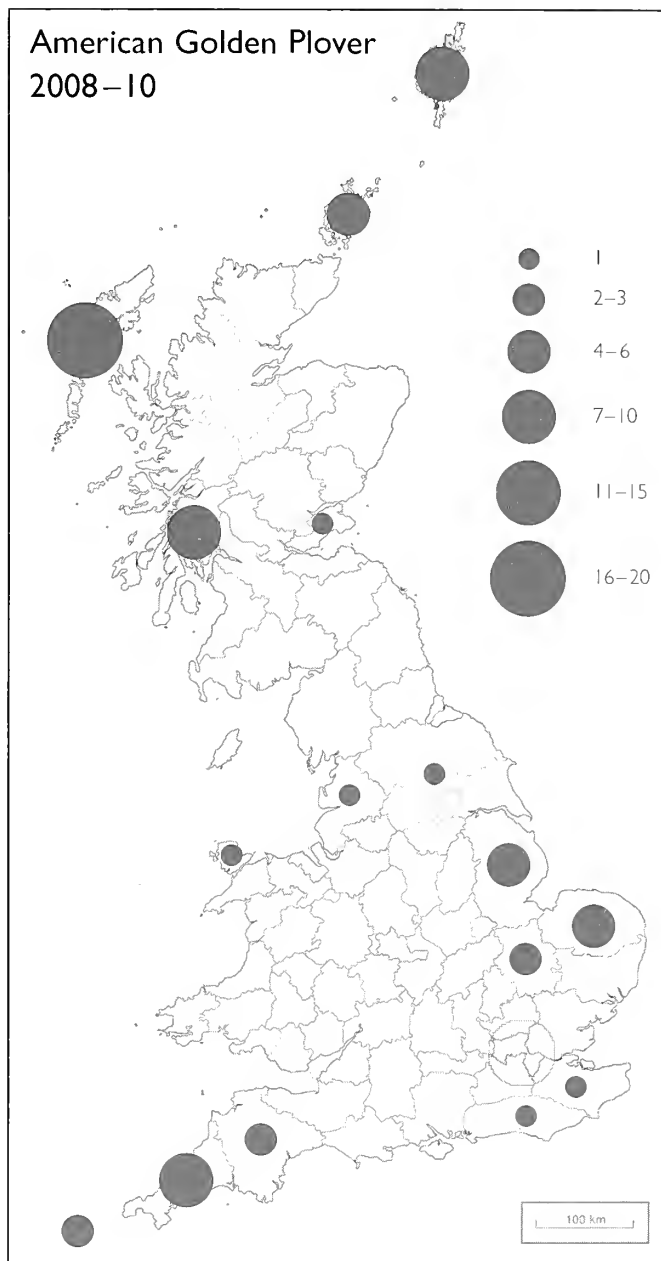


Fig. 19. Distribution of American Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica* in Britain, 2008–10.

but the large proportion of autumn adults offers some support; the later migration of juveniles at a time when birds are more likely to be caught up in Atlantic weather systems, together with their lack of migration experience, might suggest that they ought to be proportionately more numerous than adults in Britain than has been the case in recent years.



77. Juvenile American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2008

Steve Young/Birdwatch

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Total 1986–2010	No. 2008 (rank/25)	No. 2009 (rank/25)	No. 2010 (rank/25)	Other annual maxima 1986–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
678	5 (25)	16 (22)	10 (24)	1993/59/1 1991 & 1999/42/2=	Steep decline	Moderate

Annual means 1986–2009
1986–89 28
1990–99 36
2000–09 19

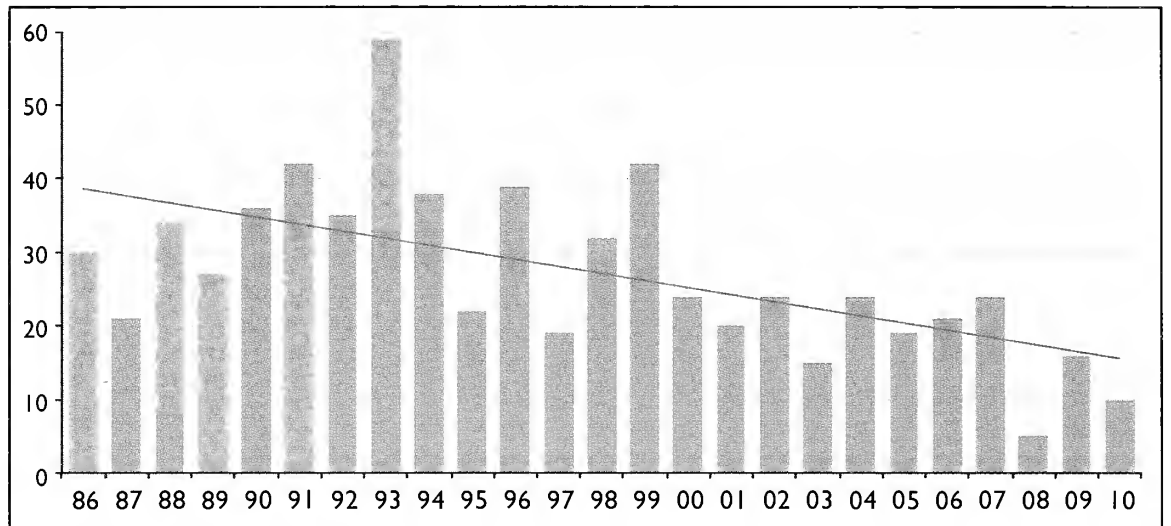


Fig. 20. Annual totals of Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* in Britain, 1986–2010.

In total, 43 birds were reported during the review period but several of

these have not been validated by county recorders; rather more had clearly been recorded on multiple dates throughout their stay or had been seen in previous years and returned to the same sites. Stripping these out left a total of 31, and three of the lowest annual totals on record. The current ten-year mean stands at 17.8, although this species is clearly in decline and seems to be moving inexorably towards contention for national rarity status (fig. 20). This decline is consistent with trends in the decreasing European breeding population, especially in Spain (BirdLife International 2013). Kentish Plovers last bred successfully in Britain in 1979, although they still do so regularly as close as northern France.

Of the 31, 27 were in southern England or East Anglia with six in Norfolk, five in Kent, four in Cornwall, Sussex and Suffolk, and two in Devon and Hampshire. Well to the north, an adult male was at Aberlady (Lothian) on 1st–2nd June 2008, while a juvenile at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) on 30th August 2009, a male at Whiteford Point (Gower) on 4th May 2010, and a juvenile at Eyebrook Reservoir (Leicestershire & Rutland) on 28th August 2010 were also outside the core area. In addition, a bird from 2007 remained on the Outer Hebrides until 20th April 2008. All records were of singles except for two in Cornwall in April and May 2009, and a male and female at Pilsey Sands (Sussex) on 13th May 2009.

Most were seen in spring, with 11 in April, nine in May and one in June, while the ten autumn records were all in August. Seven of the autumn birds were aged, all of them juveniles. Of the spring adults where the sex was mentioned, there were five males and eight females.

Temminck’s Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Total 1968–2010	No. 2008 (rank/43)	No. 2009 (rank/43)	No. 2010 (rank/43)	Other annual maxima 1968–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
4,211	179 (2)	60 (36)	125 (7)	2004/309/1 1987/176/3	Stable	Moderate

The year 2008 was the second-best on record, helping to boost the ten-year average to 124. Temminck’s Stints were seen in more than half of all recording areas, but as usual showed a marked eastern bias. Norfolk headed the list with 77 records, followed by 36 in Kent, 28 in Lincolnshire and 27 in Suffolk. In the west, six in Lancashire & North Merseyside was the highest tally and there was a scattering of records inland in England, notably six each in Leicestershire &

Annual means 1968–2009
<u>1968–69</u> 39
<u>1970–79</u> 77
<u>1980–89</u> 105
<u>1990–99</u> 95
<u>2000–09</u> 124

Rutland and Staffordshire. Fewer were seen in Scotland although 12 in North-east Scotland stood out, but only five were seen in Wales, all in Ceredigion and Gwent.

There were two very early reports: an exceptional midwinter record at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), from 9th January to 25th March 2008, and what may also have been a wintering bird at Sea Mills (Avon) on 15th March 2009. More than 90% of records were in spring, predominantly in May. Following the earliest on 21st April, a further eight were noted in that month, and there were just nine in June; in other words, this species has one of the most concentrated passage periods of any species in this review. Temminck’s Stints are always extremely scarce in autumn, when passage is more protracted than in spring; ten were seen in July during the review period, 14 in August, nine in September and one in October. A late bird was at Loch Leven (Perth & Kinross) on 4th November 2009.

Although most spring records were of singles, pairs or larger groups accounted for 59 records, almost half of all individuals seen. The highest counts came in 2008, with five at Orfordness (Suffolk) on 13th May, Grove Ferry (Kent) on 16th May and Alkborough Flats (Lincolnshire) on 21st–28th May.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
486	22 (4)	8 (23)	10 (18)	2005/39/1	1984/24/2	Increasing	High

Annual means 1958–2009
<u>1958–59</u> 2
<u>1960–69</u> 3
<u>1970–79</u> 6
<u>1980–89</u> 11
<u>1990–99</u> 9
<u>2000–09</u> 18

Following three good years from 2005 to 2007, that run extended to 2008 when 22 White-rumped Sandpipers became the fourth-highest annual total. The following two years were much less impressive, however, with eight in 2009 the lowest score since 1997.

The distribution of records was fairly typical, although relatively fewer were seen in Scotland than in 2004–07. Once again, Norfolk headed the list with nine, followed by Scilly with seven, then three in Cornwall, Kent and the Outer Hebrides. None was seen in any inland county and only singles reached Wales and northwest England.

Timing of occurrence fell within the established pattern, the earliest at Grove Ferry (Kent) on 19th–20th June 2008, and Scatness (Shetland) on 20th June 2010. Birds arrived in two distinct periods (fig. 21),

as discussed in detail in the last report (*Brit. Birds* 106: 391–393). Where age classes were reported, all those until the end of September were adults, as were three in October; five juveniles were reported in October and one in November.

The geographical spread of records was also much as expected, with only two birds away from the east coast before the end of September, but the majority of October records in the southwest. However, October also produced five of the six Scottish records within the period – three adults and two juveniles. There was just one winter record, at St John’s Lake (Cornwall) on 7th–11th December 2008.

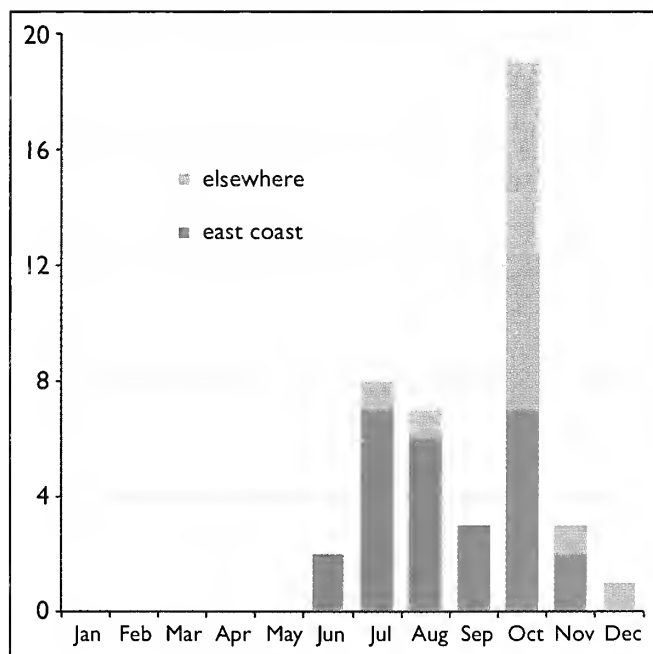


Fig. 21. Monthly totals of White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis* on the east coast of Britain (red), and elsewhere (blue), 2008–10.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Calidris subruficollis*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
948	42 (8)	44 (7)	64 (1)	1977/54/2	2006/53/3	Large increase	High

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59
1
1960–69
3
1970–79
21
1980–89
19
1990–99
15
2000–09
32

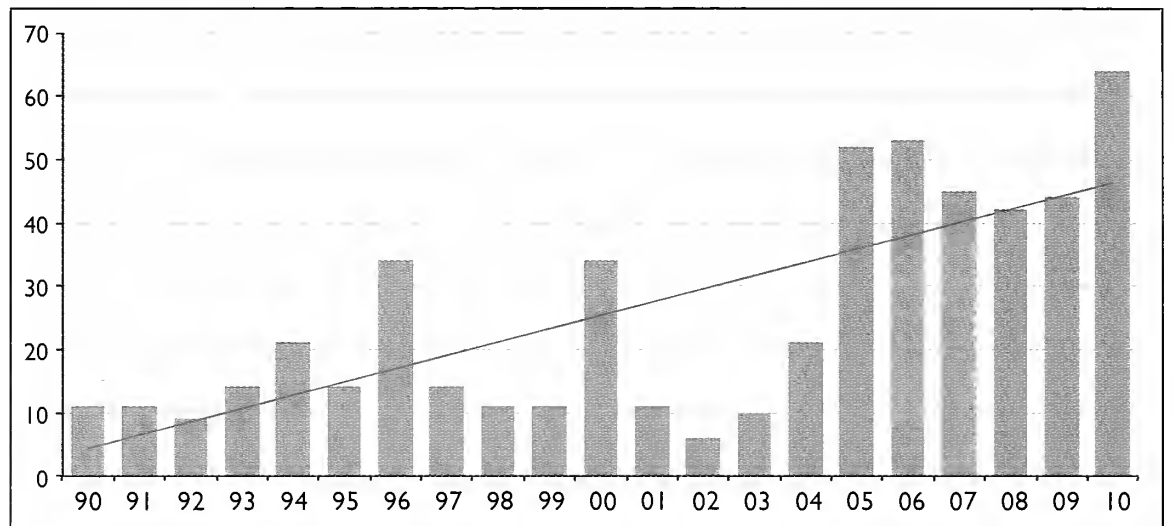


Fig. 22. Annual totals of Buff-breasted Sandpipers *Calidris subruficollis* in Britain, 1990–2010.

The number of Buff-breasted Sandpiper records has doubled over the past two decades, a trend that shows no sign of slowing (fig. 22), and the 64 in 2010 surpassed the previous record of 54, which had stood since 1977. Altogether, birds were reported from 28 recording areas, three more than during 2004–07. The increase has been particularly marked since 2005 and, as acknowledged in the last report, this must be at least partly due to the growing numbers of birders covering the islands of Scotland’s western seaboard. Between them, the Outer Hebrides and the islands in Argyll accounted for 30% of all national records during 2008–10. The Northern Isles were less favoured (11 in Shetland, six in Orkney and three on Fair Isle), although numbers there have also increased.

In contrast to the pattern of American Golden Plover sightings, southwest England again produced about 30% of British records, with 26 on Scilly and 13 in Cornwall; all other county totals were in single figures. As with so many Nearctic vagrants, Buff-breasted Sandpiper is a major rarity anywhere on the Irish Sea coast and only three were recorded between Devon and the

Hebrides during the review period: Doon-foot (Ayrshire) on 6th–9th 2008, Loch Ryan (Dumfries & Galloway) on 22nd–27th August 2010, and Dale (Pembrokeshire) on 2nd–3rd October 2010. Similarly, birds seen any distance inland are always at a premium so the five during the review period were notable: on 7th–9th June 2008 at Maxey GP and Paxton Pits on 4th–6th October 2009 (both Cambridgeshire),



Graham Catley

78. Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Calidris subruficollis*, Alkborough, Lincolnshire, May 2009.

Frampton (Gloucestershire) on 3rd–4th May 2008, Rutland Water (a first for Leicestershire & Rutland) on 17th–18th May 2010, and Attenborough (Nottinghamshire) on 4th June 2009.

Although about 40% of birds were seen for one day only, Buff-breasted Sandpipers regularly stay for longer periods and 15 stayed for ten days or more. There were 19 records of two or more and some notable clusters including six on St Mary’s (Scilly) on 4th–26th September 2010, and four on Tiree (Argyll) between 26th August and 17th September 2008.

Spring records are rare but regular. Within the period the earliest arrival was 3rd May and there were another four in May and three in June. Three followed in July and 20 in August – of which six were reported as adults and nine as juveniles (the first juvenile was on 15th August). Peak passage in all three years was in September with 92 recorded (36 reported as juveniles and none as adults). Fourteen were found in October, all juveniles apart from an adult at Tankerness (Orkney) on 8th–12th October 2008, the last at Trevorian (Cornwall) on 25th October 2010.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper is listed as Near Threatened by BirdLife International (2013): ‘a (suspected) moderate and ongoing decline based on surveys at staging posts... thought to be driven by habitat loss and conversion, but contaminants may also have an impact’. The increase in Britain is thus unexpected. As with American Golden Plover, which shares rather similar range limits and migration strategies, it is possible that some individuals may use the Old World as a staging and wintering area. Ageing is not quite so straightforward as in American Golden Plover but the lack of adults after August is still notable, suggesting that wintering in the Old World and successful return to the natal areas may be less frequent than in American Golden Plover.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Total 1968–2010	No. 2008 (rank/43)	No. 2009 (rank/43)	No. 2010 (rank/43)	Other annual maxima 1968–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
3,095	142 (3)	136 (4)	135 (5)	2003/192/1	2006/147/2	Large increase	Moderate

Annual means 1968–2009
1968–69 16
1970–79 45
1980–89 70
1990–99 57
2000–09 121

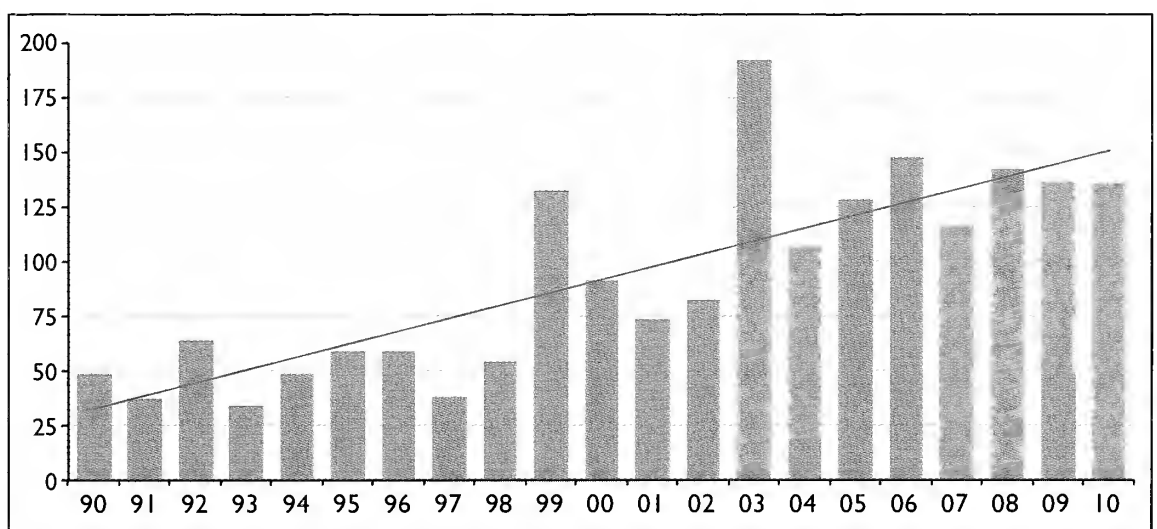


Fig. 23. Annual totals of Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos* in Britain, 1990–2010.

Although the breeding population of Pectoral Sandpipers in Siberia and North America is believed to be stable (BirdLife International 2013), numbers recorded in Britain have more than doubled in the past 20 years, with three of the five highest totals during 2008–10 (fig. 23). Records came from 48 recording areas, the top six being the Outer Hebrides (38), Lincolnshire (32), Norfolk (31), North-east Scotland (26), Yorkshire (25) and Orkney (22).

The Pectoral Sandpiper is essentially an autumn species in Britain with just 44 in spring (April to June) during 2008–10, compared with 369 in autumn (July to November). Of those in spring, there were 12 in both April and June, and 20 in May, the earliest at Loch of Strathbeg (North-east Scotland) on 11th–12th April 2009.

During autumn movements, there were 46 in July (including 23 adults and just two aged as juveniles) and 23 in August (seven aged as adults and three as juveniles). The comparable figures for September were 224 (6 adults, 86 juveniles), and for October 75 (1, 23). The breakdown of

age structure and timing seems to offer compelling evidence of two distinct waves of migration, adults in late summer and juveniles in autumn. The latest arrival was a juvenile at the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 2nd November 2008.

Three birds remained for a week or more, including a juvenile that managed 44 days at Saltholme Pools in Cleveland, from 27th September to 9th November 2009. Almost all records were of singles but there were ten involving three or more, five of them in the Outer Hebrides.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Total 1986–2010	No. 2008 (rank/25)	No. 2009 (rank/25)	No. 2010 (rank/25)	Other annual maxima 1986–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
785	24 (20)	37 (4)	29 (12)	1999/71/1	1989/47/2	Slight decline	Low

Annual means 1986–2009
<u>1986–89</u> 36
<u>1990–99</u> 34
<u>2000–09</u> 27

Small numbers of Red-necked Phalaropes continue to breed in Shetland so all records from there have been excluded from the statistics (together with any that attempted to breed elsewhere in Scotland), although some passage migrants may, of course, occur there too. Although the 2009 tally was the fourth highest, overall the three years under review continued the very shallow decline over the past 25 years.

More than a third of all records were in the east of England, including 19 in Norfolk and 11 in Lincolnshire, with most of the remainder spread across England; none was seen in Wales and the only Scottish records away from Shetland were singles in the Outer Hebrides, North-east Scotland and Dumfries & Galloway. The earliest was at Elmley (Kent) on 11th–13th May 2010. Of the 32 spring records, 13 were in May and 19 in June, and included 11 reported as females and four as males. Autumn passage began slowly, with four in July, followed by 13 in August and 32 in September, just six in October and two in November, the latest at Barton Pits (Lincolnshire) on 15th–27th November 2009. Of the 57 autumn birds, 32 were aged as juveniles and three as adults. One was with two Grey Phalaropes on the sea off Hurst Beach (Hampshire) on 21st January 2008 – an extremely unusual (and possibly unprecedented?) winter record.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Total 1986–2010	No. 2008 (rank/25)	No. 2009 (rank/25)	No. 2010 (rank/25)	Other annual maxima 1986–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
8,035	1,835 (1)	404 (4)	366 (7)	2001/1,125/2	2005/411/3	Uncertain	Very high

Annual means 1986–2009
<u>1986–89</u> 283
<u>1990–99</u> 168
<u>2000–09</u> 568

The years 2008–10 underlined the considerable variability in annual totals and it is difficult to detect any consistent trend in the occurrence of Grey Phalaropes. Although there were above-average numbers in both 2009 and 2010, the counts in 2008 were unprecedented: the total of 1,835 birds far exceeded the previous record of 1,125 in 2001, and comes close to a quarter of the grand total in the 25 years since 1986. As with all seabirds, however, there is a degree of uncertainty about the figures, especially for 2008; those for Scotland may have been significantly underestimated while those for southwest England may contain a number of duplicates.

Grey Phalaropes are usually recorded singly or in low single-figure numbers but 2008 was quite different: eight day-counts were in excess of 100, six of those from Skye alone and one each from Orkney and Cornwall. Equally unusual were the large feeding flocks close to shore, notably on Skye, where birds lingered for several days.

In 2008, more than 40% of all birds were seen in Scotland, including at least 300 in Highland (almost all from Skye) and 200 or so in Orkney and the Outer Hebrides, with 42 in Shetland

(where this species is rare). This influx into Scottish waters began gently enough in early October but peaked in the last week of October and the first week of November following a period of westerly and southwesterly winds, which must have deflected the birds from their usual oceanic route to African wintering grounds (McMillan *et al.* 2010). It is notable that no other species were associated with the influx so stormy conditions may not have been the sole reason. Perhaps there was exceptionally good feeding in adjacent oceanic areas and the birds, together with their food supply, were simply moved inshore with westerly gales. To put the scale of the 2008 influx into context, the previous cumulative regional totals of Grey Phalaropes in Scotland up to 2007 were around 460 in the Outer Hebrides and 100 or so in both Shetland and Orkney.

Most of the remainder were in the southwest, the majority in Cornwall, which accounted for more than a third of the record national total in 2008. The timing of the 2008 arrival in southwest England was significantly earlier than in Scotland and presumably represented a separate event. The first large count was of c. 100 off Sennen (Cornwall) on 11th September and double-figure counts continued irregularly in Cornwall, Dorset, Scilly and Sea Areas Sole and Plymouth through to 27th October.

During the three years under review, Grey Phalaropes were recorded from 59 recording areas, more than three-quarters of the total. Although the largest numbers were in western Scotland and southwest England, they were seen in most coastal recording areas (fig. 24). Birds were also recorded from a number of inland sites, mostly in England and including five in Warwickshire and four in Oxfordshire.

Reports came from all months of the year except June but during both 2009 and 2010 the largest number were in September, while in 2008 October records predominated. During the review period there were 22 records in December, 64 in January and ten in February, falling to just one in March and four in April, so there was little sign of any spring passage. The earliest autumn record was at Spurn (Yorkshire) on 12th July 2009.

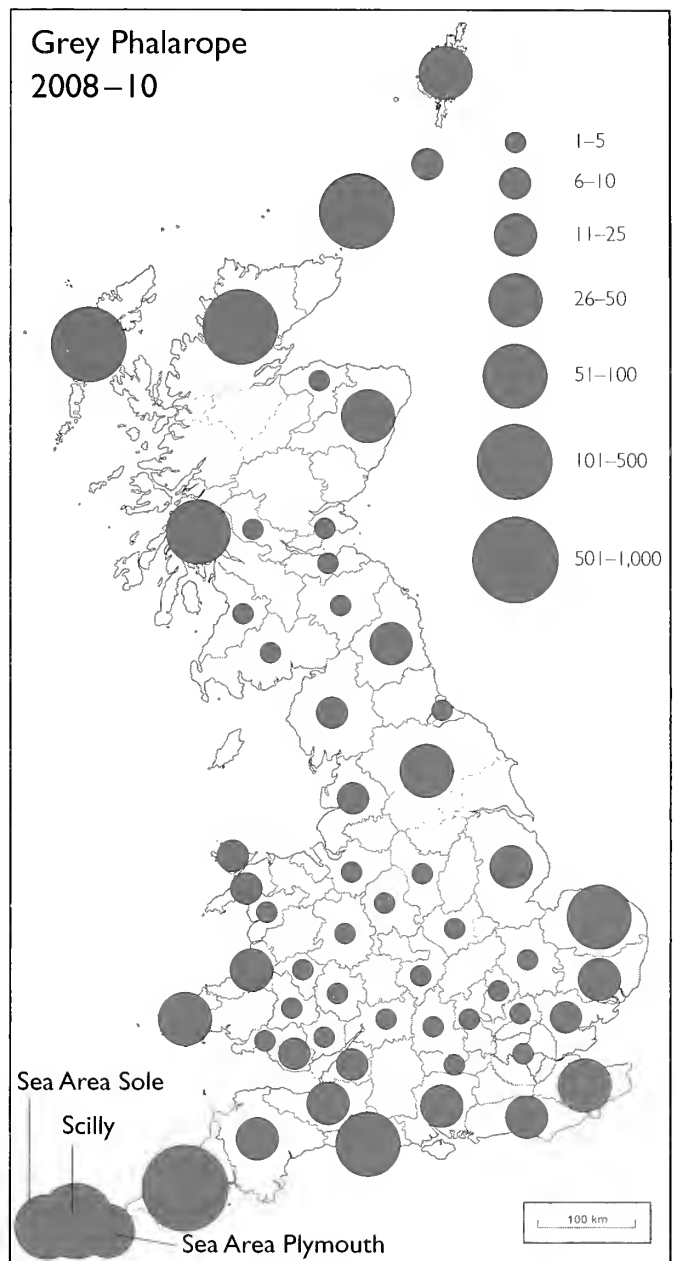


Fig. 24. Distribution of Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* in Britain, 2008–10.



Ian Butler

79. First winter Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset, October 2008.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
868	21 (12)	13 (32)	24 (7)	1992/49/1	1970/37/2	Stable	Moderate

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 6
1960–69 11
1970–79 22
1980–89 14
1990–99 19
2000–09 17

Marginally fewer White-winged Black Terns were seen during the 2000s than in the 1990s but this was largely down to the exceptional 49 in 1992. Otherwise there has been little change for 30 years, with annual totals hovering a little above the threshold separating national rarities from scarce migrants (18 per year since 2006 when the species came off the BBRC list).

Numbers were unremarkable during 2008–10 but the spread of records was rather different from that in 2005–06 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 398). Although eastern and south-eastern coastal counties continued to record birds with some regularity, there were more reports from inland counties, most notably five in Leicestershire & Rutland (mostly at Rutland Water) during 2010 (fig. 25). All records were of single birds apart from two adults at Rutland Water on 23rd May 2010, and two juveniles at Wilstone Reservoir (Hertfordshire/Buckinghamshire) on 30th August 2008.

Far fewer were recorded in spring than autumn, with just 11 in May and June spread over the three years, the earliest at Draycote Water (Warwickshire) on 10th May 2008. Six were in the English Midlands, four elsewhere in England and just one in Scotland (Fife). Typically, most were in autumn, one at Cley (Norfolk) on 8th July 2009 being the earliest. There was one other July record but the main passage came in August and September (24 and 18 records respectively). The latest of three October records was at Inner Marsh Farm (Flintshire/Cheshire & Wirral) on 16th October 2010. Of the 39 birds that were aged during the autumn, 30 were reported as juveniles and nine as adults.

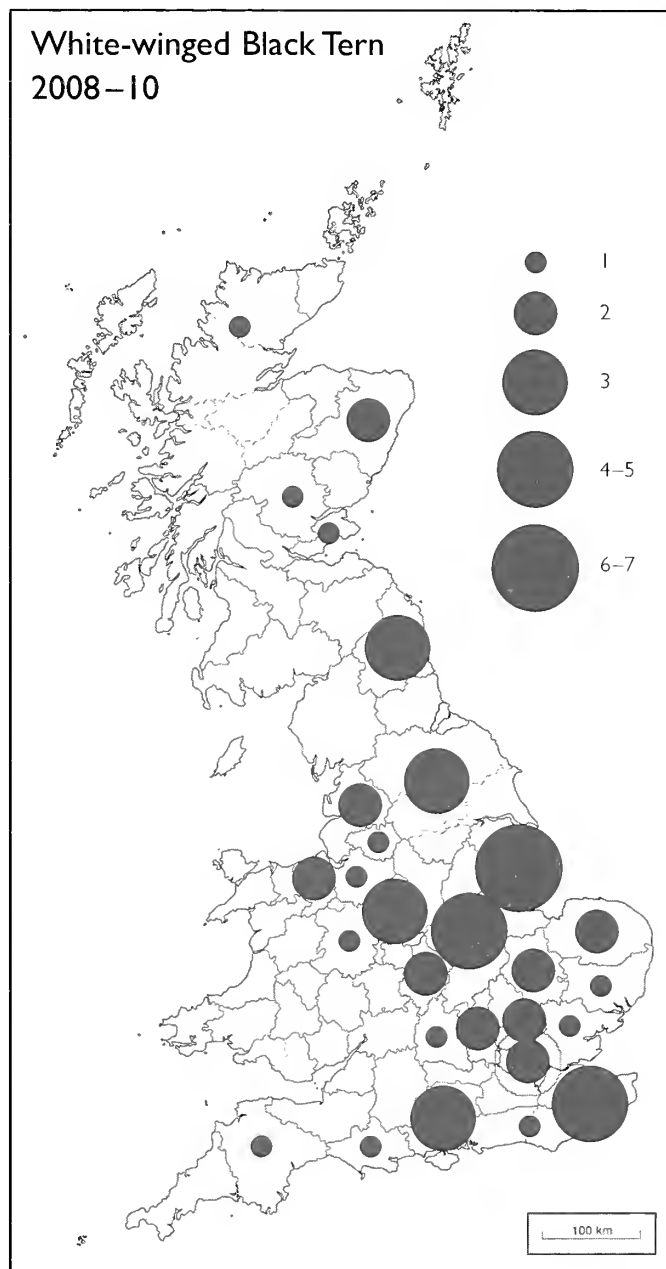


Fig. 25. Distribution of White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* in Britain, 2008–10.



80. Juvenile White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire, August 2009.

Nic Hallam

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

Total 1968–2010	No. 2008 (rank/43)	No. 2009 (rank/43)	No. 2010 (rank/43)	Other annual maxima 1968–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
5,944	212 (8)	158 (13)	102 (20)	1987/710/1	1997/396/2	Increase	Moderate

Annual means 1968–2009
1968–69 15
1970–79 58
1980–89 203
1990–99 141
2000–09 179

In contrast to the influx of 2007, when the largest numbers were along North Sea coasts (see *Brit. Birds* 106: 399), most records during 2008–10 came from the south coast and the southwest, which accounted for 213 individuals, 45% of the total, compared with the 115 on the east coast between Essex and North-east Scotland.

Seawatching from the Cornish coast accounted for 53 birds, while another 51 were seen on pelagic trips in Sea Area Sole, and Devon added a further 31. Away from the southwest, Kent recorded a total of 47, Norfolk 40 and Yorkshire 30. Comparatively few were seen anywhere in the Irish Sea and the highest totals on the west coast north of Devon were 18 in Highland and 17 in Pembrokeshire. Just a handful ventured any distance inland but there were three in Northamptonshire and singles in Greater London, Oxfordshire and Staffordshire.

There was just one midsummer record during the review period, at New Quay (Ceredigion) on 28th June 2008, although another seven birds were described as subadults or second-summers during July and August. The first trickle of autumn passage birds was recorded from mid July but migration was slow until mid August (total 88 for that month). Passage peaked during September in all three years (with a total of 245 records), falling in October (107). Numbers thereafter declined rapidly until the last, in mid November. Most records were of single birds and the largest day-count was 15 on a pelagic trip off Scilly on 18th October 2008. Of the autumn birds, 221 were aged as juveniles and 119 as adults. Winter records are always rare but four were confirmed by county recorders during 2008–10: first-winters at Swanage (Dorset) on 10th March 2008 and Capellie Farm (Clyde) on 1st February 2009, and two adults in Kent, one off Dungeness on 4th January 2008 and another off Shellness on 17th December 2009.

Although autumn 2008 produced good numbers of Sabine's Gulls, these came nowhere close to the record number of Grey Phalaropes at roughly the same time. Moreover, the geographical distribution of the two species was not at all similar: relatively speaking, there were more Sabine's Gulls in the Irish Sea but fewer in Scotland (fig. 26).

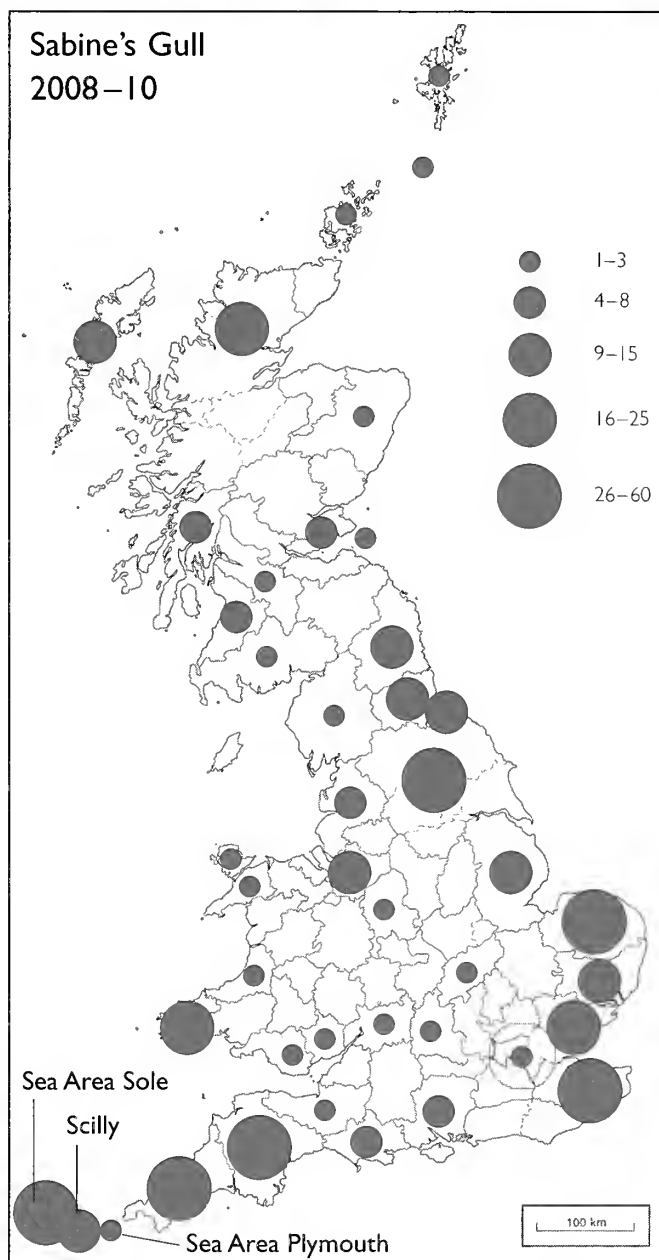


Fig. 26. Distribution of Sabine's Gulls *Xema sabini* in Britain, 2008–10.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
1,832	43 (24)	20 (29)	16 (30)	1992/108/1	1990/94/2	Declining	Low

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59
0
1960–69
0
1970–79
4
1980–89
47
1990–99
77
2000–09
54

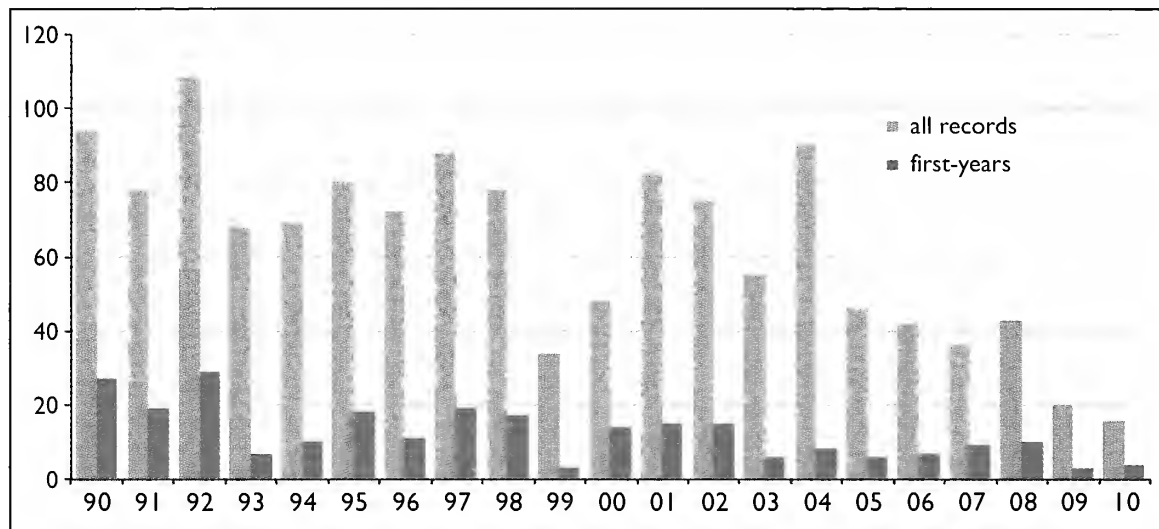


Fig. 27. Annual totals of all records of Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* (blue), and first-winter birds (red), in Britain, 1990–2010.

Altogether, 101 Ring-billed Gulls were reported during the review period but at least 22 of these were almost certainly returning birds. The data suggest an apparent 30% fall in numbers in the ten years since 2000 compared with the 1990s (fig. 27). The actual number of new arrivals was probably much lower than the figures imply since, although it is well established that Ring-billed Gulls regularly return to the same wintering areas, only those showing clear-cut site fidelity are treated as returning birds here. Known examples included one on the Thames Estuary for its eleventh winter in 2008, others in Highland and Derbyshire for their seventh winter, and one in Hampshire for its sixth – although the 20-year veteran in Orkney did not return. It is probably safe to assume that the majority of the 44 adults recorded were probably *not* new arrivals. The ten first- or second-calendar-year birds that appeared in 2008 comprised the largest total for this age class since 2002 but only marginally higher than in 2007, whereas three in 2009 and four in 2010 were the lowest since 1999. Arrivals of first-year birds totalled 83 between 2001 and 2010, compared with 147 during 1991–2000, a decline approaching 50% (fig. 27).

The majority of first-winters appeared in western Britain, including ten in Cornwall, but their overall distribution was not much different from that of older birds. Four English counties recorded four or more during 2008–10, Cornwall leading the pack with 17 followed by Dorset with seven. A further 12 were seen in Wales, including five in Pembrokeshire and three in Gower, and eight in seven Scottish recording areas.

Ring-billed Gulls were recorded in all months of the year except July but the majority turned up between October and March. The number of late winter records was perhaps a result of association with Common Gulls *L. canus* migrating northwards.

Although the assumption here is that a very large number, if not the majority, of adult Ring-billed Gulls are ‘returnees’, this leaves open the question as to where they have returned *from*. There have been recent confirmed examples of the species breeding (in a hybrid pair) in the Western Palearctic, and also returning to North American breeding areas from Europe, and it is possible that British adults might fall into either category. For the years 2000–10 there was a strong positive correlation between the number of first-years recorded and all other age classes – including a few whose age was not reported ($r_s = 0.6, P = 0.004$). In other words it appears that ‘good’ years for first-years are also ‘good’ years for adults, suggesting that some common factor underlies the occurrence of the two age classes. Without ringing recoveries, however, the suggestion that more than the occasional adult may ‘commute’ across the Atlantic remains purely speculative.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
571	6 (39)	16 (8)	49 (1)	2002/27/2	2006/25/3	None	High

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59
3
1960–69
6
1970–79
8
1980–89
12
1990–99
13
2000–09
13

Although the average number of Alpine Swifts recorded over the past three decades has remained remarkably constant, annual totals continue to show a high degree of variability. Since the mid 1980s a pattern has emerged of single-figure annual totals interspersed with significantly higher numbers. Overshooting spring migrants account for the majority of records and these annual fluctuations are probably mainly due to weather patterns, with warm southerly winds producing periodic small influxes.

The species was removed from the BBRC list in 2005 and the average number recorded in the ten years to 2010 stands at 17, boosted by large influxes in 2002, 2006 and 2010. The year 2008 was the poorest since 1971 but, after fairly average numbers in 2009, 2010 produced a new record total. The earliest records that year, at Falmouth (Cornwall) and Wargrave (Berkshire) on 20th March, were followed by a further 29 in the month – including two at Alnmouth (Northumberland) and five at various sites in Suffolk on 23rd – then ten in April and four in May, with the last of the spring at Biddenden (Kent) on 26th May. No more were seen until one at Spurn (Yorkshire) on 11th July; three further records that month included a remarkable long-stayer on South Ronaldsay (Orkney) from 24th July to 7th August, the last of the year. The earliest during 2008–10 was at Newquay (Cornwall) on 15th March 2008 and the latest at Holme (Norfolk) on 9th September in the same year.

Parkin & Knox (2010) commented that the peak arrival of Alpine Swifts in Britain occurred in April–June with the largest number in May. They compared this with a peak arrival in Ireland in March, which they argued suggested a difference in origin – Irish birds mostly coming from Iberia with British records originating farther east. The breakdown of records between 2006 and 2010, however, shows a clear peak

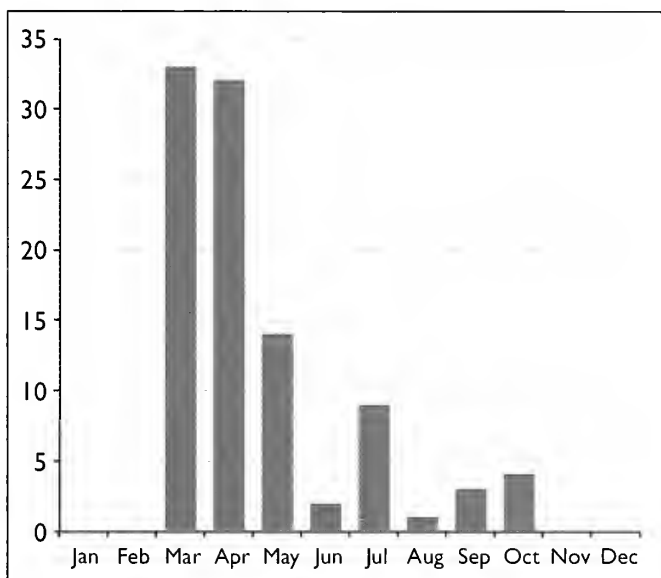


Fig. 28. Arrival dates of Alpine Swifts *Apus melba* in Britain by month, 2006–10.

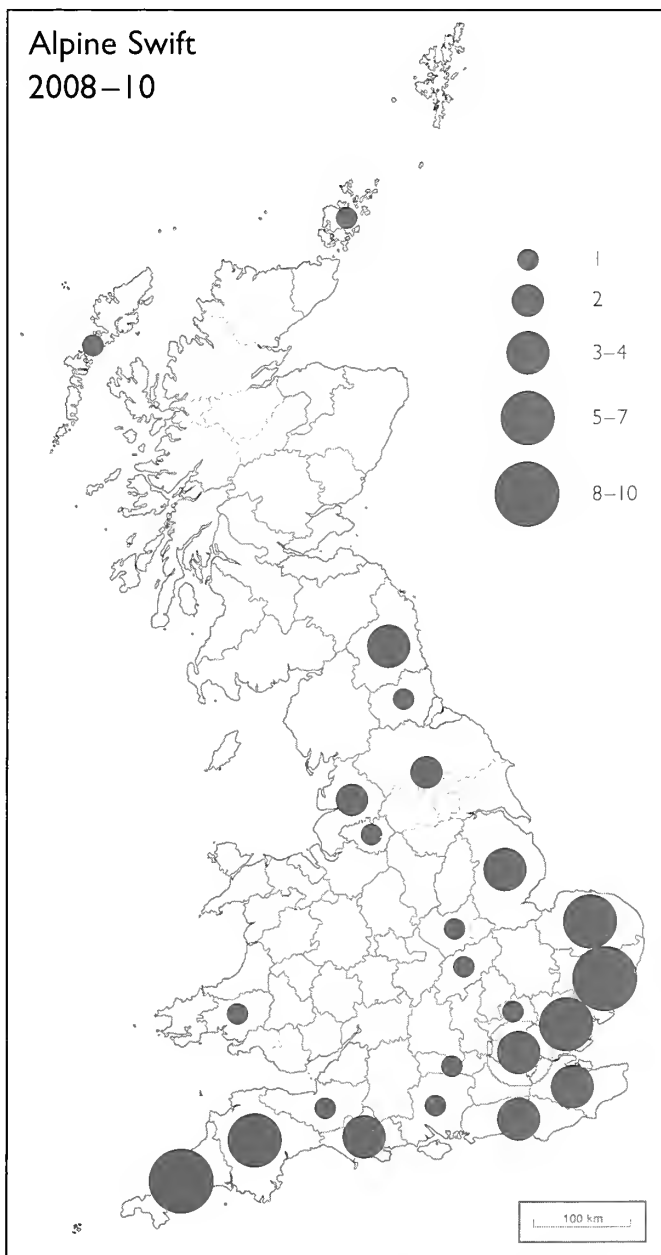


Fig. 29. Distribution of Alpine Swifts *Apus melba* in Britain, 2008–10.

during March–April, particularly in the influx years of 2006 and 2010 (fig. 28).

During the three years under review, the majority of records were in East Anglia and along the south coast of England, with ten in Cornwall, nine in Suffolk, and six in Norfolk, Devon and Essex (fig. 29). Apart from the South Ronaldsay bird mentioned above, the only record in Scotland was on Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 30th May 2009, and the only one in Wales at Ro Fawr (Carmarthen) on 16th May 2009. There were records in five inland counties: four in Greater London and singles in Greater Manchester, Leicestershire & Rutland, Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Total 1968–2010	No. 2008 (rank/43)	No. 2009 (rank/43)	No. 2010 (rank/43)	Other annual maxima 1968–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
4,981	123 (17)	65 (41)	119 (19)	1968/218/1	1980/188/2	Declining	Low

Annual means 1968–2009
1968–69 147
1970–79 113
1980–89 133
1990–99 119
2000–09 92

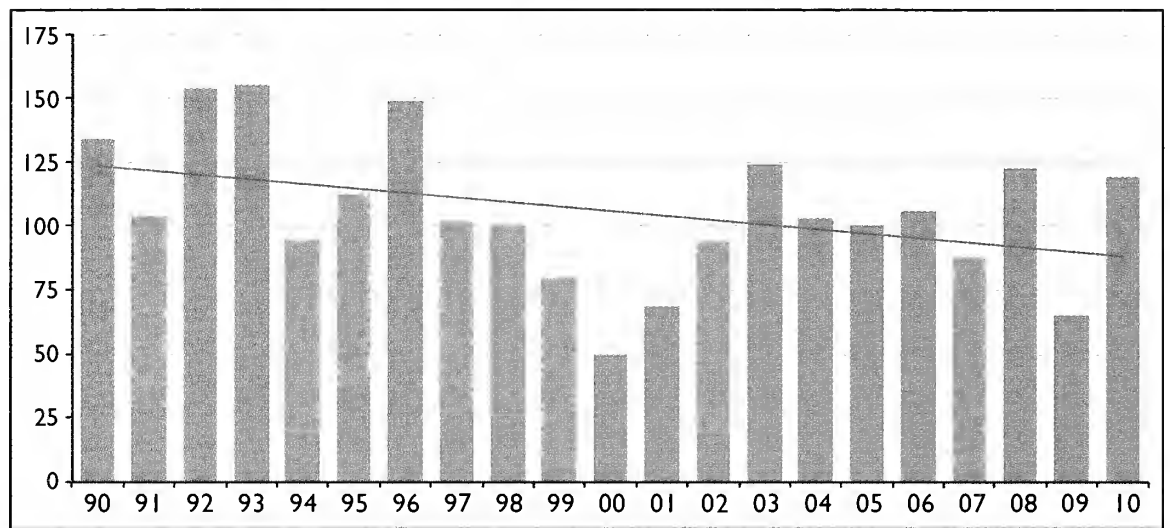


Fig. 30. Annual totals of Hoopoes *Upupa epops* in Britain, 1990–2010.

Hoopoes appear to have been in a shallow but steady decline in Britain for at least the past 20 years and possibly as far back as the 1960s, although the numbers reported have been relatively unchanged since about 1997 (fig. 30). The 2009 total of 65 was one of the lowest on record, while 2008 and 2010 were at best mediocre. The French breeding population – presumably the source



Brian Egan

81. Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Great Ryburgh, Norfolk, May 2009.

of many overshooting spring migrants that reach Britain – has been in decline for some years (BirdLife International 2013).

Although Hoopoes were reported from 54 recording areas, there was a clear concentration in southern England (fig. 31). The largest totals during the review period were 36 in Cornwall, 22 in Norfolk and 21 in Sussex. Dorset, which had been the top county during the previous four years, recorded just 14 in the period. There were 40 records in Scotland – including six each in Highland, the Outer Hebrides and Shetland – and 20 in Wales – including seven in Pembrokeshire and four in Anglesey. All records were of single birds except for two on Exmoor (Somerset) on 30th May 2009, and The Lizard (Cornwall) on 18th April 2010.

As always the great majority (more than three-quarters) were seen in spring, the earliest on 23rd February 2010 on St Mary’s (Scilly), while April was clearly the best month, with 117. Although more than half of autumn records were in southern England, there were proportionately more on the English east coast and in Scotland than in spring. The latest arrival, on 12th December 2010 at Longham Lakes (Dorset), was one of just three winter records, the others being singles at Llandrillo-yn-Rhos (Denbighshire) on 12th January 2008, and at Kingsley Common (Hampshire) from 2007 to 14th January 2008.

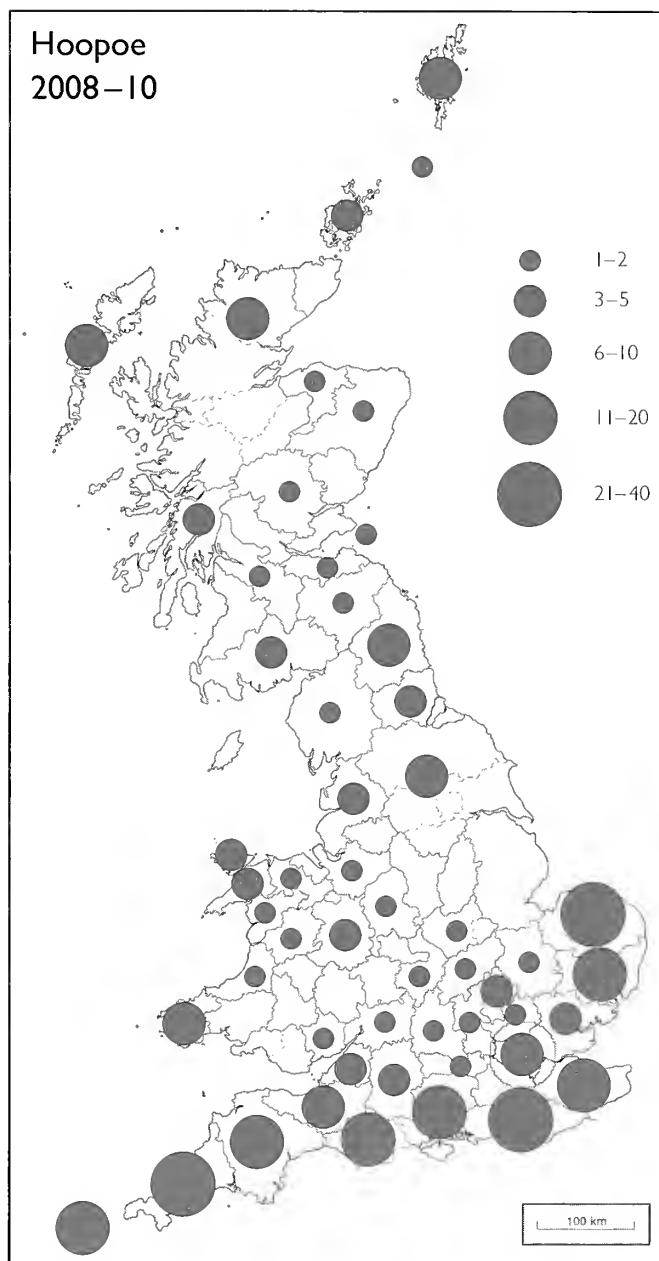


Fig. 31. Distribution of Hoopoes *Upupa epops* in Britain, 2008–10.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
1,201	77 (3)	53 (6)	58 (5)	1997/132/1 2002/104/2	Stable	High

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 7
1960–69 4
1970–79 6
1980–89 20
1990–99 38
2000–09 45

All three years under review produced good totals and every year since 2005 has ranked in the top ten, although there has been only a slight average increase over the past two decades.

European Bee-eater is one of only a handful of scarce migrants that regularly turn up in flocks, and the 188 individuals recorded during the review period involved only 97 discrete records. Most records were of singles or small groups, but flocks of five or more were seen on nine occasions, notably 12 on Scilly on 27th–28th May 2009, 11 at Nanjizal (Cornwall) on 3rd May 2008 and nine at various sites in Somerset on 26th April 2008.

Although records came from 28 recording areas, typically the great majority were seen on the English south and east coasts. In contrast to 2004–07, however, these were fairly evenly spread between southwest and southeast England, which together accounted for slightly more than half of all individuals. Away from those areas Bee-eaters remain very scarce (fig. 32). The highest

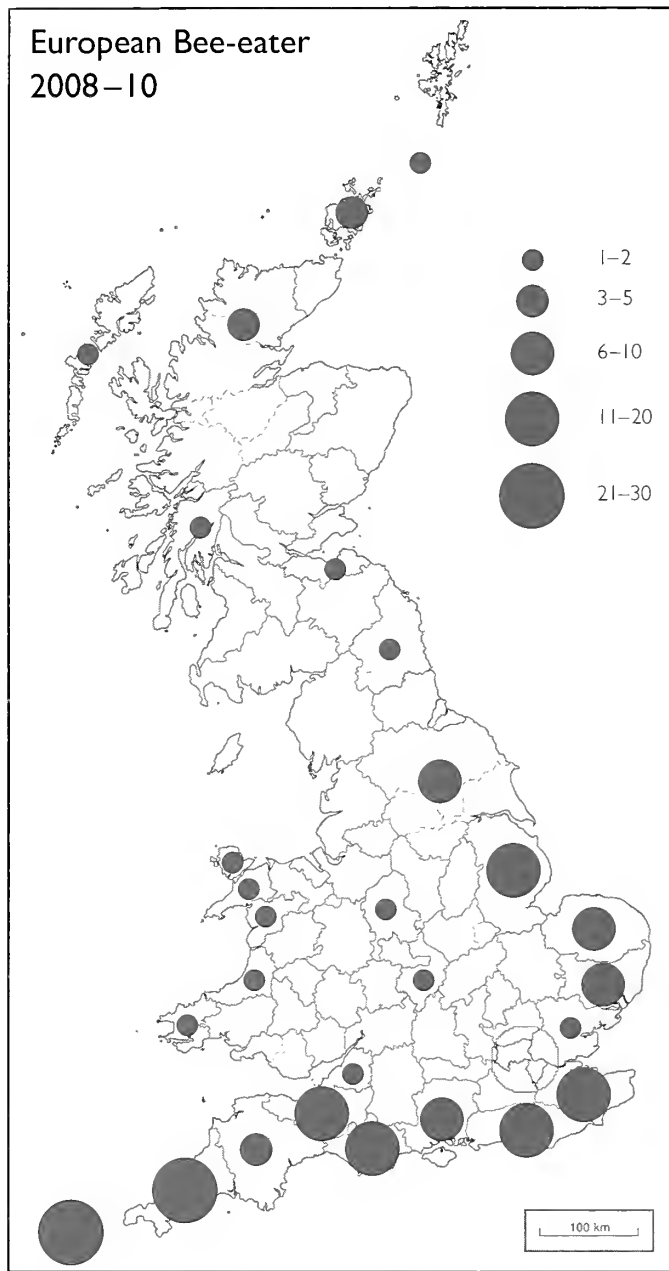


Fig. 32. Distribution of European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* in Britain, 2008–10.

Valley (Sussex) on 13th September 2008, Tolleshunt D’Arcy (Essex) on 18th September 2009, and Sudbury (Suffolk) on 14th October 2009.

county totals over the three years were 30 in Cornwall, followed by 27 on Scilly, 16 in Dorset and 13 in Lincolnshire, Sussex and Kent.

Most Scottish records were on islands, with two on Mull (Argyll) on 26th–29th April 2010, and singles on Fair Isle on 22nd May 2009, Orkney in April and July 2008, and May 2009 (possibly the same as Fair Isle), at various sites in the Outer Hebrides between 13th and 30th May 2008, and on Skye (Highland) on 18th May 2008. The only other Scottish records were two at Achmelvick (Highland) on 27th May 2008 and Barns Ness (Lothian) on 18th May 2009. Wales fared little better with singles in Pembrokeshire in 2008 (Dinas Head on 27th April and Ramsey on 24th June), and in 2010 at Harlech (Meirionnydd) on 30th April, Blaenporth (Ceredigion) on 22nd May, Aberdaron (Caernarfonshire) on 9th June and Cemlyn (Anglesey) on 13th–16th June. None was seen in northwest England and the only records in the English Midlands were singles at Doxey Marshes on 12th May 2008 and Essington Quarry on 15th June 2009 (both Staffordshire), and one in 2008 at Long Lawford on 10th June then Brandon Marsh on 22nd June (both Warwickshire).

The earliest was on 23rd April 2010, followed by a further 23 in the last week of April, 113 during May, 39 in June and nine in July. Only three were recorded in autumn:

Wryneck Jynx torquilla

Total 1986–2010	No. 2008 (rank/25)	No. 2009 (rank/25)	No. 2010 (rank/25)	Other annual maxima 1986–2010 (year/number/rank)		Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
7,243	518 (1)	170 (22)	381 (4)	1998/416/2	2002/389/3	Stable	Low

Annual means 1986–2009
1986–89 311
1990–99 259
2000–09 303

Wryneck numbers have remained remarkably stable for 25 years, with occasional fluctuations – such as the record 518 in 2008 followed by the fourth-lowest total a year later. Despite a run of high counts since 2000, the ten-year mean remained slightly lower than that of the 1980s. The European breeding population has undergone a moderate decline since the 1980s (BirdLife International 2013), so the apparently stable pattern in Britain, set against a backdrop of an increase in observer numbers, should probably be interpreted as a real decline.

Wrynecks are found predominantly in the coastal counties of southern England, which accounted for 41% of all records, and the English North Sea coast (33%), while the Northern Isles accounted for another 12%. Peak totals in these areas during the period included 114 on Scilly and 101 in Northumberland, ahead of 84 in Norfolk, 75 in Cornwall, 67 in Shetland, 57 in

Dorset and 40 in Kent. A further ten English counties in the south and east notched up double-figure totals. Elsewhere, Wrynecks were much scarcer, with just 17 recorded from mainland Scotland (ten of those in North-east Scotland), 24 in Wales and five in northwest England.

Most were seen in autumn and only 10% of records were in spring. Of the 62 in April the earliest was at Black Down (Dorset) on 4th April 2010 but most were in the last week, followed by 42 in May and two in the first week of June. The Northern Isles and East Anglia each produced more than a quarter of spring records, while southwest, northeast and southeast England each accounted for around 10%. This pattern was markedly different in autumn, when a third of records came from southwest England, the Northern Isles accounted for just 10%, and most of the remainder were spread fairly evenly between East Anglia, southeast and northeast England. There were midsummer records at Gorran Haven (Cornwall), where there were two on 3rd July 2008, and Roydon (Norfolk) on 14th July 2010 – but the main passage took place in all three years from late August to mid October, peaking during September. There were just two November records, the latest at Labrador Bay (Devon) on 19th November 2010.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

Total 1958–2010	No. 2008 (rank/53)	No. 2009 (rank/53)	No. 2010 (rank/53)	Other annual maxima 1958–2010 (year/number/rank)	Trend 1990–2010	Annual variability 1990–2010
791	46 (2)	9 (29)	24 (6)	1992/125/1 1973/42/3	Fluctuating	Very high

Annual means 1958–2009
1958–59 9
1960–69 5
1970–79 15
1980–89 14
1990–99 24
2000–09 17

The last report (*Brit Birds* 106: 385–386) suggested that the average number of Red-footed Falcons had slipped below the ten-year threshold of 150 since its removal from the BBRC list in 2006. However, there were two very good years in this review period: the 2008 total of 46 was the second-highest ever, and 24 in 2010 the sixth. The paltry nine in 2009 highlights the large annual fluctuations in this species' occurrence, which

seem largely determined by weather patterns. Influx years are more or less balanced by lean ones and ten-year totals have changed rather little since the 1970s; with only 176 recorded in the ten years to 2010, Red-footed Falcon remains one of the scarcer species in this report.

The 2008 influx began with one flying west over Cley (Norfolk) on 26th April, followed by singles in Kent and Lancashire & N Merseyside on 8th May, then Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Kent (a new bird) the following day. A further 27 were seen during May 2008, including a remarkable series of six records at Thorne Moors (Yorkshire) during 11th–21st, when four were seen together at times. There were seven new arrivals in June but the only other 'flock' was of three at Kingston Maurward (Dorset) on

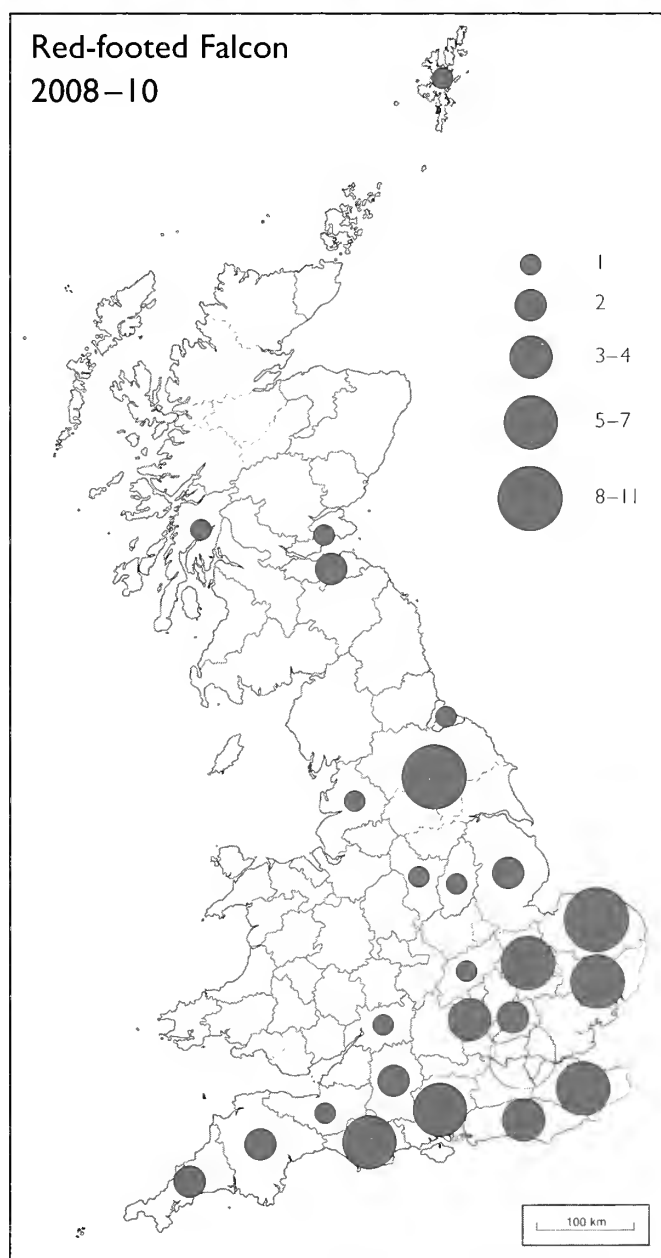


Fig. 33. Distribution of Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* in Britain, 2008–10.



Mike Wallen

82. Adult male Red-footed Falcon *Falco verspertinus*, Wilstone Reservoir, Hertfordshire, May 2010.

29th May. Only seven were recorded in spring (April–June) 2009 and 20 in 2010. During the review period, 21 spring birds were described as males and 18 as females; 11 as adults and 16 as first-summers. Six were seen in autumn (July–November) 2008, two in 2009 and one in 2010; of these only one was identified as an adult male, the remainder being either females or immatures. The latest was at Fife Ness (Fife) on 2nd November 2010.

The geographical distribution was broadly similar in all three years with the majority in southern and eastern England, including 11 in Norfolk, nine in Yorkshire, and seven in Cambridgeshire and Kent (fig. 33). Farther north, there were singles in Lancashire & N Merseyside and Cleveland, while there were just five in Scotland (two in Lothian and singles in Argyll, Fife and Shetland) and none in Wales.

Acknowledgments

Firstly thanks to Peter Fraser who set up the national database of scarce migrants and produced all the previous reports. He has been a hard act to follow. Of course, without the many birders who have submitted their records for publication in county bird reports none of this would have been possible. The role of county recorders and local records committees is absolutely vital in ensuring that reports are scrutinised and that only confirmed records make it to publication. Special thanks are due to the Scottish Birds Records Committee and the Welsh Records Panel who adjudicate records in their respective countries of most of the species considered here; their publications can be accessed at www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/records-committee and www.birdsinwales.org.uk/rare/wrp.htm. Last but not least, Rare Bird Alert www.rarebirdalert.co.uk kindly supplied all records that were reported to the bird information services.

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Steve White and Chris Kehoe, c/o 102 Minster Court, Crown Street, Liverpool L7 3QD,
e-mail stevewhite102@btinternet.com



Notes

Avocets nesting at 140 m above sea level

Newsham Pond is a small (c. 8 ha), shallow pool at the edge of the village of Newsham, northwest of Richmond, in North Yorkshire. The site is roughly 45 km from the nearest coast and lies at an altitude of 140 m above sea level. Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* have visited the site annually since 2007 in spring, but typically stayed only a few days. In 2010, I managed to persuade the landowner to install a simple sluice system to allow water to be released into a nearby drainage channel and create more shallow water areas and exposed mud.

Since the sluice was installed, the site has been a magnet for waders on spring and autumn passage, with species recorded including Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Red Knot *Calidris canutus* and Sanderling *C. alba*,

and even Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii* in May 2007 and May 2013.

In 2012, two pairs of Avocets bred at Newsham, rearing a total of seven young. In 2013, three pairs arrived and settled to nest. The eggs were within days of hatching when all three nests were predated, probably by Stoats *Mustela erminea*. The three pairs commenced a second attempt, this time on a gravel island that contains a Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* colony, with up to 300 pairs of nesting gulls, but these all fell victim, this time one brood of four and two clutches, to an unknown predator.

The presence of breeding Avocets at an inland site at such an altitude is, I believe, unprecedented in Britain, and I am looking forward eagerly to what 2014 might bring.

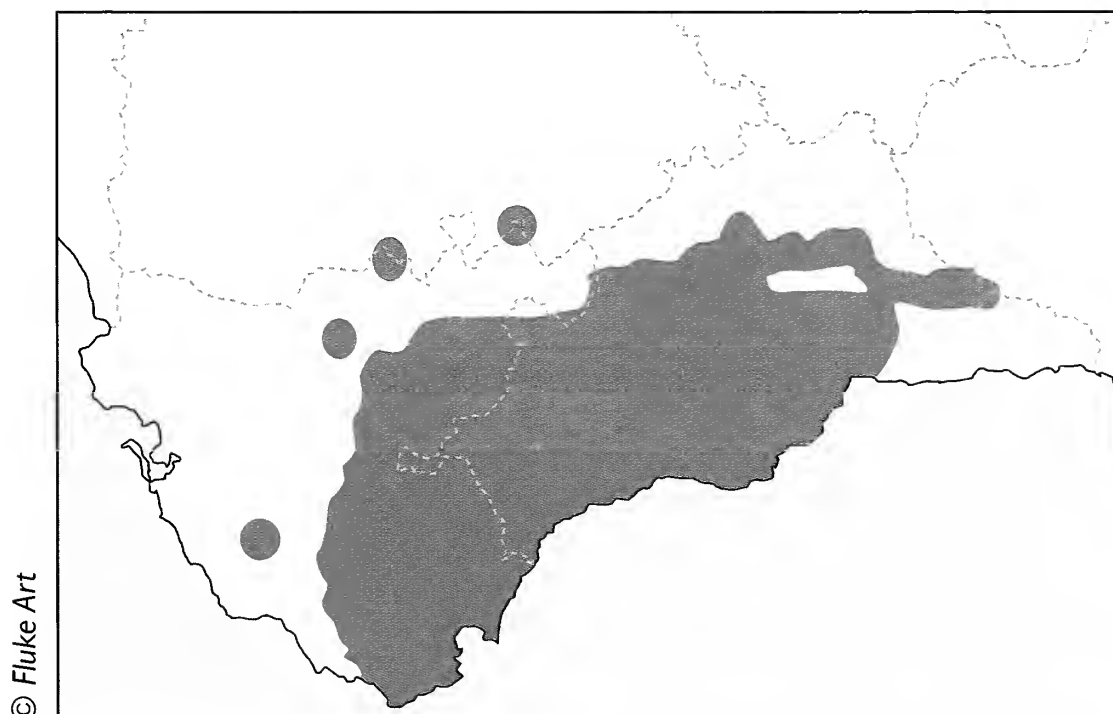
Dave Moore, Greystones, Hutton Magna, Richmond, North Yorkshire DL11 7HH

Great Spotted Woodpeckers in southern Spain

The Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* is widely distributed throughout the Iberian Peninsula, where the race *D. m. hispanus* occurs. However, birds in southernmost Spain, the provinces of Cádiz and Málaga, show some similarities to the North African races *D. m. mauritanus* and *D. m.*

numidus (del Hoyo *et al.* 2002). Vaurie (1965) stated that 'an occasional specimen [of *D. m. hispanus*] shows a very vaguely defined red crescent across the upper breast', but many birds (both adults and juveniles) in Cádiz and Málaga show a red breast patch of variable extent and intensity, while the red

coloration of the undertail-coverts extends in a wedge shape onto the belly, in some individuals reaching halfway up the sternum. Indeed, this was first noted in the late nineteenth century (Irby 1879). A further distinction is that pale areas of the plumage are greyish-brown rather than whitish, as in *D. m. hispanus*. It should be noted that not all birds in this region exhibit



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Fig. 1. Distribution of the Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* population in Málaga and Cádiz (after Molina Villarino 2003).

Antonio Manuel Rodríguez Mariscal



Sebastián Corrales Guillén



83 & 84. Great Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos major*, Málaga, Spain, September 2011 (83) and August 2006 (84). Note the red band across the breast, the extent of red on the undertail-coverts to the belly, and the sullied greyish-brown wash to the pale areas of the underparts. These characters are lacking in the race *D. m. hispanus*, which is widespread throughout the Iberian Peninsula.

Samuel Peregrina Domínguez, C/ Miramargaritas, 2, 1ºG. 29011 Málaga, Spain;
e-mail samuel.peregrina@gmail.com

such extensive red on the underparts, and birds lacking the red breast patch do occur.

The distribution of these birds extends from the Strait of Gibraltar in the west, east to the Montes de Málaga National Park (Málaga province), and north to Grazalema in the Sierra Grazalema (Cádiz), and Ronda in the Serranía de Ronda (Málaga) (fig. 1). Within this restricted range they occur in many of the habitats that Great Spotted Woodpeckers frequent elsewhere in Spain, but they also occur in *Eucalyptus* plantations, especially along the Guadalhorce and Grande (Málaga) Rivers, a habitat seemingly shunned elsewhere in Spain.

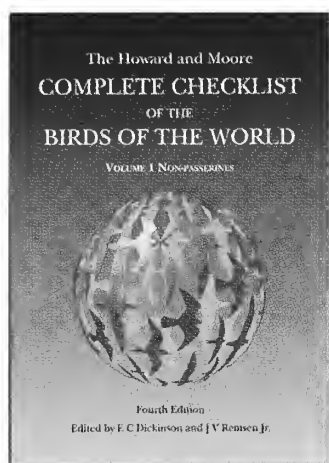
These birds may represent an undescribed subspecies of Great Spotted Woodpecker, or genetic introgression by North African birds into the *D. m. hispanus* population in southern Spain. Phylogenetic studies are currently underway at the University of Málaga that will compare the birds in Málaga and Cádiz with those from elsewhere in Spain and North Africa, which should help to clarify the relationships of the woodpeckers in this region.

Acknowledgments

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The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World. 4th edn. Vol. I: Non-passerines

Edited by E. C. Dickinson and J. V. Remsen Jr

Aves Press, 2013

Hbk, 461pp

ISBN 978-0-9568611-0-8 Subbuteo code M05957

£59.99 BB Bookshop price £54.00

This is the first volume of the extensively revised and updated 4th edition of the 'Howard and Moore' Checklist. Now published independently by the Trust for Avian Systematics, this Checklist has, once again, significantly raised its game. It bears all the hallmarks of an ongoing work by a group of ornithologists on a mission to clear up the ambiguities and errors in ornithological nomenclature and authorship, within the context of a scientifically sound classification. The very large number of molecular papers which have added to our understanding of avian phylogeny since the 3rd edition in 2003 have been taken on board and incorporated into the Checklist, and changes resulting from these studies have been referenced (and partially explained) through an explosion of footnotes. New to this edition, and particularly useful, is a chapter from Joel Cracraft that outlines the modern understanding of higher-order avian classifications (above family level) that was substantially sidestepped previously. Cracraft also introduces an asterisk-based notation to highlight those groups of taxa whose relationships are poorly supported and where there is ambiguity about their interrelationships. The resulting classification is well presented, within the straitjacket of the printed page – the book acknowledges that linear sequences inadequately reflect the complexities of avian relationships.

As with the 3rd edition, the species-level taxonomy nominally follows the Biological Species Concept (BSC), with taxonomic statements in the literature being critically evaluated in terms of the strength of the evidence and filtered through BSC thinking before affecting the Checklist. Subspecies are regarded (ideally) as diagnosable units similar to phylogenetic species. The assembly of any World List under strict BSC criteria is impossible, and the functional definition of subspecies as diagnosable units may be biologically flawed and also impossible to effect, so perhaps wisely the authors

have let many sleeping dogs lie. A stronger and more unified explanation of the principles of species-level taxonomy would be a useful supplement to the next edition.

One purpose of the book is to be an authoritative nomenclator, and to that effect some changes have been made – the concept of prevailing usage of scientific names has been largely abandoned in favour of stricter adherence to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. A significant attempt has been made to resolve the unexpectedly large number of scientific names that have more than one spelling in current usage (one of the appendices tackles this). Type species are named for all genera. An attempt has been made to tackle English names too: neither of the two obvious options – following the IOC wholesale, or abandoning English names altogether – has been adopted for the Checklist. Instead, regional authorities are generally followed, leading to the retention of more than one English name for a few species, and some general principles (for example the use of hyphens) are laid out.

A number of appendices are included, some in hard copy and some on a CD. Richard Schodde's contribution on the nomenclature of higher-level ranks of classification is useful, and there are a number of other clarifications and lists in the appendices, including a gazetteer with a few maps to complement the updated range statements. Free annual updates of the Checklist are promised.

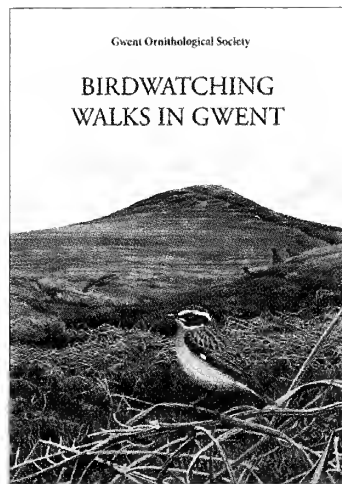
The majority of the updates, corrections and additions to this version of the Checklist are overtly there for the academic and professional community – the casual world-lister is likely to derive less benefit. Indeed, any pretence that this is a 'checklist' has more or less been abandoned, and the tick boxes included in the 3rd edition have disappeared in the 4th edition. The font is a bit bigger, and there remains a limited amount of space for annotations and notes, but make no mistake: the Howard and Moore Checklist is being developed with posterity



in mind, as a permanent, citable, authoritative, accurate reference point for the professional, or at least very serious, ornithologist. Other World Checklists may find ways to be more aesthetically pleasing or birder-friendly, but Howard and Moore is the authority whose decisions on things like nomenclature and authorship they will copy. Now

split into two volumes, with Vol. 2 promising to cost another £80.00, Howard and Moore is becoming the expensive option, but if you are serious about the accuracy and technicalities of your world list, this remains the one to go for.

Martin Collinson



Birdwatching walks in Gwent

By Al Venables, Andrew Baker, Dave Brassey, John Coleman, Chris Field, Verity Picken and Steph Tyler

Gwent Ornithological Society, 2013

Pbk, 239 pp; 16 colour photographs, many maps and line-drawings

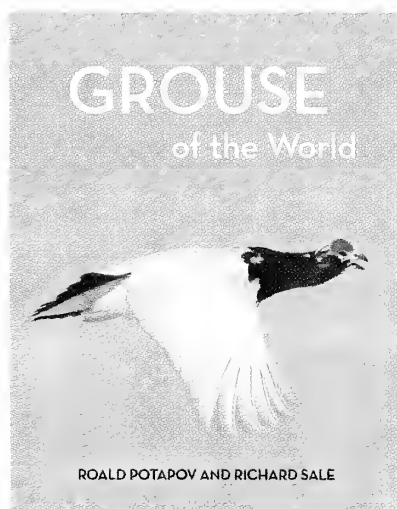
ISBN 978-0-9505760-1-5 Subbuteo code M23751

£11.99 BB Bookshop price £10.75

As Welsh counties go, Gwent is overshadowed by its much larger neighbours but, despite its modest size, 122 species bred here during the Gwent breeding atlas (1998–2003) and about 200 species are recorded annually. Within its boundaries is a wonderfully diverse mix of habitats, ranging from the intertidal mudflats of the Severn Estuary to the valleys with their hanging oak woodlands and fast-flowing streams, leading to the windswept heather-covered uplands. As part of its 50th anniversary celebrations, the Gwent Ornithological Society (GOS) has produced this attractive guide to 55 of the county's best birding locations, where many of these species can be found.

For visitors, this is the ideal guide to consult when planning a short break in the county. For those living nearby, many of these walks will take you through some of the finest landscapes in the county, and with 55 to choose from, pick one each week and enjoy them throughout the year. Even if the birds are quiet, you will still spend a glorious day in fine Welsh countryside. But with a territorial Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* at The Blorenge in 2010, the wintering Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* at Rhiwderin in 2012, and the long-staying American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* at Magor Marsh in 1981, who knows what you may discover.

Peter Kennerley



Grouse of the World

By Roald Potapov and Richard Sale

New Holland, 2013

Hbk, 408pp; colour photos, 93 illustrations, 19 distribution maps

ISBN 978-1-78009-250-8 Subbuteo code M21312

£30.00 BB Bookshop price £27.00

The dust jacket announces that this is 'the first comprehensive English-language guide to this unique family of birds'. Clearly that is incorrect, as anyone interested in this family will already own *The Grouse of the World* by Paul Johnsgard, published by Croom Helm in 1983. Indeed, that book is listed in the present book's bibliography! Putting aside that anomaly, this book does provide a very detailed account of the

19 grouse species from around the world.

An opening chapter discusses the many adaptations that these birds benefit from. This is a fascinating family of birds, which is restricted entirely to the colder regions of the northern hemisphere. Each species is supremely designed to live in environments where the changing seasons present major challenges to survival. For example, they have feathered nostrils and feet, and all but one species have pectinated toes, which grow flanges for the winter months to double the surface area of the feet. This latter adaptation is



unique to the grouse family.

The species are then segmented into eight groups and are assessed in detail. Information is provided in a standard format on coloration, dimensions, distribution, subspecies, habitats, population structure and density, territoriality, nutrition, wintering and breeding seasons, and hunting, recreation and conservation.

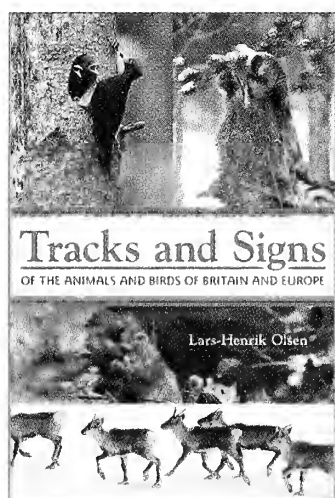
The male and female of each species have been illustrated in colour by Jackie Garner. Having seen her paintings at a recent exhibition, I know that these do not represent her best work and, being on a buff background, they simply do not come across as fresh and new – or indeed particularly sharp. There are many diagrams to illustrate data, and while these provide a wealth of information, some would have benefited from a redesign as they are clearly based on work published 40–50 years ago. The choice of photographs is, however, very good and for each species there are useful images.

There is a colour distribution map for each

species, with subspecies ranges being indicated somewhat vaguely through the use of numbers or letters, while the maps are also inconsistent in the way they illustrate latitude and longitude. The authors' choice of subspecies names is often at variance with other authorities. I found a small number of errors, for example the *brunnesceus* subspecies of Ruffed Grouse *Bonasa umbellus* is shown as occurring in Newfoundland, whereas it is restricted to Vancouver Island. Taking Ruffed Grouse again, the authors follow taxonomy dating back to 1943 and so recognise 12 rather than 14 subspecies.

This book describes a fascinating family of birds, and its value is in the wealth of information that is presented. My only disappointment is that the style of presentation could have been much better.

Keith Betton



Tracks and Signs of the Animals and Birds of Britain and Europe

By Lars-Henrik Olsen

Princeton University Press, 2013

Pbk, 273pp; illustrated throughout with photographs and artwork

ISBN 978-0-691-15753-5 Subbuteo code M21769

£17.95 BB Bookshop price £10.50

Back in the sepia-tone days of my youth, many were the times that I was sent out of

the house by a frazzled mater to go and do something useful. One such useful activity was playing wildlife detective, sleuthing in the woods to uncover who has been where and what they have eaten. The culprit usually turned out to be a Fox *Vulpes vulpes* with an unfortunate diet. My efforts were aided by *Tracks and Signs* (OUP, 1975), written by Gwen Allen and Joan Denslow, with beautiful illustrations by Eric Ennion, which quickly pointed me at the guilty party. What japes.

So it was with great interest that I read this *Tracks and Signs* (originally published in Denmark as *Dyr & Spor* in 2012). This book provides a guide to field signs of some 175 species of European birds and mammals. The bird sections describe signs that will guide you to the activities of bird groups only though, curiously, the tracks of game-birds are explored in much greater detail. The mammals are dealt with specifically and are

supported by many useful illustrations by the author, showing tracks, scats and other signs of activity. I now know who is likely to attack my turnips, if I ever chose to grow some. There are many colour photos of the beasts themselves, most worthy of being printed in a larger tome.

Over half of the book is devoted to describing the mammals by species. Each one is given a map of its European distribution, which is only really useful for general information because of the small space given to them. According to the maps I have a reasonable chance of finding an Otter *Lutra lutra* swimming in my pond – maybe they know something I don't. Slightly disappointingly, though, bats receive just two pages; surely, in these enlightened days, there would have been more to say about them. But then, to be fair, this book makes no claims to be complete and it is packed full with solid information and images.

Which brings me to my one major bugbear with this book: being so full it's not easy to navigate. As far as I can make out there are no chapters as such, just various sections with small headings,

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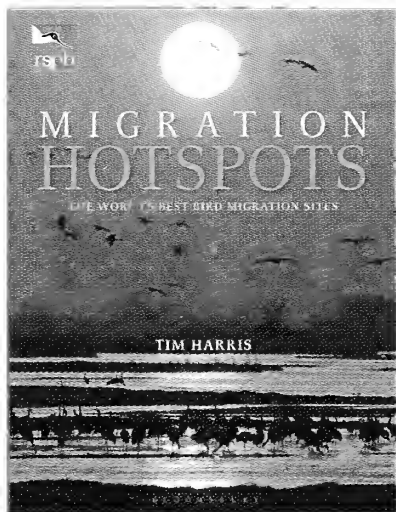


which are hard to find. The contents page has three columns with about a hundred references, rendering it functionless. So why, when there are seven blank pages at the back didn't the publisher put some thought into the layout, add chapter breaks (thus creating a useful contents page and not a second index as it is now) to give it some

breathing space and make it more user-friendly?

This is not a reflection on Olsen, it's a fine book with masses to offer, but we need our next batch of Countryside Columbos scratching their heads out in the field, not indoors puzzling over the pages.

Dan Powell



Migration Hotspots

By Tim Harris

Bloomsbury, 2013

Hbk, 224pp; many colour photographs

ISBN 978-1-4081-7117-2 Subbuteo code M21736

£25.00 BB Bookshop price £22.50

Once, I had a brief stopover in Panama City; I was in the airport terminal for no more than 40

minutes, whilst the plane was refuelled. The timing, however, was right: just after 10.00 am on 27th March. During those 40 minutes I was fortunate to see over 20,000 raptors emerging from the surrounding forest and heading north. The vast majority were Swainson's Hawks *Buteo swainsoni* and among them were varying numbers of Turkey Vultures *Cathartes aura* and Broad-winged Hawks *Buteo platypterus*. Wood Storks *Mycteria americana* and Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were also flying over. A quarter of a century later those images are still indelibly imprinted on my mind, such is the power of seeing bird migration at a hotspot.

Tim Harris has chosen 29 sites from around the world for this book, which aims 'to be a celebration of bird migration'. Following a brief introduction to bird migration, from which little would be learnt by keen birders, these site accounts form the bulk of the book. Here we are told which species use the sites and when. However these sites are not dealt with in a standardised fashion. Some are described by season, others by habitat and location and yet others by species groups. I found this annoying as I would have liked to have been able to find out easily which species move through an

area and when. Equally frustrating is trying to find out why these sites attract so many birds and how to go about birding them. Again a lack of standardisation diminishes these accounts as the answers (when given) are hidden under a bewildering array of subheadings.

The accounts are illustrated with many beautiful photographs, both of the places and of their birds. For a book that is a celebration of migration hotspots, far too many are portraits of single birds, lacking the impact of birds en masse. Of the 27 photographs depicting raptors, 20 are of single birds. A flock of Black Bazas *Aviceda leuphotes* migrating over Chumphon, Thailand, would have been an image (and sight) to behold. Similarly, when we are told that flocks of thousands of Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* congregate on the lakes of Kazakhstan in May, a picture of six does not convey that message.

Despite these faults, this is a well-produced book that does celebrate the wonders of bird migration. Hopefully, it will inspire people to visit these, and other, sites around the world and experience bird migration at its most thrilling. Sadly, those wishing to do so or those hoping to find out more about why and how birds migrate will have to look elsewhere for the information they desire. This is a book for the coffee table rather than the bookshelf.

Richard Schofield



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Harry Hussey

This summary of unchecked reports covers the new arrivals in the period from early January to early February 2014.

Headlines In an otherwise quiet spell, a handful of rarities stood out, the most surprising being a Purple Gallinule, found dead in Ireland, and a Red-flanked Bluetail in Gloucestershire. Other noteworthy midwinter records were a Sora on Scilly and a Squacco Heron in Kent. Glossy Ibis were two a penny and crossbills, both Two-barred and Parrot, were popular attractions.

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii* North Uist (Outer Hebrides), two, 11th January. **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* Loaningfoot (Dumfries & Galloway), long-stayer again 6th February; Pennington/Keyhaven Marshes, 13th–14th January, then Needs Oare Point (all Hampshire), 18th January; Henfield (Sussex), 2nd February.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* Long-stayers in Co. Armagh, Highland, Co. Leitrim, North-east Scotland. Also: Co. Donegal, 11th–12th January; Gwent, 3rd–7th February. **Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* Termoncarragh Lake, Mullet Peninsula (Co. Mayo), 19th January to 5th February; Loch Sunart (Highland), 6th February. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* Loch of Bosquoy (Orkney), 18th January.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* Blashford Lakes (Hampshire), long-stayer to 28th January. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Long-stayers: Dozmary Pool (Cornwall), to 3rd February; Cardiff Bay Wetlands/Cosmeston Lake (East Glamorgan), to 6th February; Alturlie Point (Highland), to 14th January; South Uist (Outer Hebrides), to 30th January. Also: Loch Watten (Highland), 13th–18th January; Tittesworth Resr (Staffordshire), 14th January to 6th February; Angliham (Co. Galway), 20th January. **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* Long-stayers: Nairn (Highland), 13th–27th January, perhaps same Burghead (Moray & Nairn), 17th and 29th January; Eyebroughy/Fidra/Gullane Bay (Lothian), up to two to 25th January, one to 2nd February; Blacksod (Co. Mayo), to 5th February; Bluemull Sound (Shetland), to 10th January. Also: Ruddon's Point (Fife), 16th–17th January; Cahermore

(Co. Cork), 19th January; Hopeman (Moray & Nairn), two, 29th January. **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* Long-stayers in Co. Antrim, Caernarfonshire, Co. Cork, Denbighshire (up to five to 7th February), Dorset, Fife and Lothian. Also: Devon, 11th January; Outer Hebrides, 18th January to 5th February; Co. Down, 2nd February.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* Thorpeness (Suffolk), 2,837 on 20th January. **Pacific Diver** *Gavia pacifica* Lough Fea (Co. Tyrone), 19th January to 2nd February. **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* Brixham/Berry Head (Devon), long-stayer to 18th January, again 2nd–4th February. Also: South Ronaldsay (Orkney), 11th–14th January; Roseheartly (North-east Scotland), 30th January to 1st February; Burghead, 2nd February; Ferrybridge (Dorset), 6th February.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Hythe (Kent), 20th–24th January and 3rd February. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Long-stayers Buckinghamshire to 7th February, Devon to 20th January, Co. Down to 1st February and Co. Waterford to 29th January. **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* There were records of mostly singles from: Co. Antrim, Argyll, Co. Armagh, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Co. Clare, Cleveland, Co. Cork, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Co. Down, Co. Durham, Essex, Greater Manchester, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire & N Merseyside, Lincolnshire, Lothian, Norfolk (at least three in the county), Northumberland, Orkney, Outer Hebrides, Shetland, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Co. Waterford, Co. Wexford and West Midlands.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* North Uist, long-stayer sporadically to 6th February.

Recent reports

Sora *Porzana carolina* St Mary's (Scilly), 2nd–3rd February. Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinicus* First-summer male, found dead, Carne, Mullet Peninsula, 2nd February. American Coot *Fulica americana* Loch Flemington (Highland), long-stayer to 6th February.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* Sruhill Lough (Co. Mayo), 19th January. Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Lepe CP (Hampshire), long-stayer to 4th February. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* North Uist, long-stayer to 19th January. Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), long-stayer again 10th January. Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Pennington Marshes, 20th–21st January and 1st–3rd February.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* Elly Strand, Mullet Peninsula, 16th–30th January.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), long-stayer to 24th January; Cromane (Co. Kerry), 30th–31st January. Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* Dawlish Warren (Devon), long-stayer to 3rd February; Cardiff, 12th January, same Cosmeston Lakes, 25th January. Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* North Bull (Co. Dublin), 15th–28th January. Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 18th January to 2nd February. Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* Canna (Highland) from about 20th January to 9th February. American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* Cobh (Co. Cork), 2nd February. 'Thayer's Gull' *Larus glaucooides thayeri*

Burry Holms (Gower), long-stayer to 11th January, again 18th–19th January.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* Fenit (Co. Kerry), 18th January; Wick (Highland), 5th February.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* Folkestone (Kent), 24th January to 2nd February. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* Long-stayers Ramsgate (Kent), to 6th February; Dungeness (Kent), to 4th February; Coleshill (Warwickshire), 25th January to 7th February.

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus* Long-stayer Scilly to 4th February. Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* Shire Valley (Gloucestershire), 3rd–7th February. Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* Burton Marsh (Cheshire & Wirral), long-stayer to 7th February.

Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni* Hemsted Forest (Kent), 11th–13th January. Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* Long-stayers: Forest of Dean (Gloucestershire), up to 15 to 30th January, six to 2nd February; Hemsted Forest to 2nd February; Lynford (Norfolk), to at least 12th January; Postensplain (Shropshire), up to three to 1st February, one to 4th; Broomhead Resr (Yorkshire), up to seven to 4th February, three to 6th. Also: Nagshead RSPB (Gloucestershire), 10th January; Hoveton Hall (Norfolk), early January to 7th February. Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* Long-stayers: Hemsted Forest to 17th January; Mayday Farm (Norfolk), six to 26th January; Holt (Norfolk), up to eight to 3rd February, then 14, 4th–6th February; Budby Common (Nottinghamshire), 14 to 6th February; Ashdown Forest (Sussex), up to ten to 18th January, two to 19th; Broomhead Resr to 11th January. Also: Waveney Forest (Norfolk), up to two 10th–13th January, one to 16th; Grime's Graves (Norfolk), four, 12th January; Bolderwood (Hampshire), two, 19th January.



Rich Andrews

85. Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Shire Valley, Gloucestershire, February 2014.

Talking point

Conservation, the big picture and the elephant in the room

The human population of the planet has doubled in the last 30 years, placing ever more pressure on the environment. The demand increases daily but the supply of water, oil, rain-forest timber, ivory or rhinoceros horn does not. As Mark Twain said: 'Buy land, they are not making it anymore'. Human population growth is the elephant in the room...

You could argue that the majority of conservation organisations do rather little to help combat the global squeeze on the environment and natural resources. Mostly, those organisations are focused on raising enough funds to support themselves and tend to concentrate on relatively parochial issues rather than the bigger picture. We look proudly at the successes – such as breeding White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albi-cilla*, Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* and Common Cranes *Grus grus* – but while it is great to see these species in Britain, they have huge world ranges, they are not remotely endangered and the British population is a drop in the ocean.

Every day we are bombarded by pleas to help protect certain species or habitats. We can adopt a Snow Leopard *Panthera uncia* or 'make a home for birds', but what do our contributions *really* achieve? If we save a reedbed in Norfolk, how does that help Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* or Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* in their African habitats? Most of 'our' breeding birds spend at least nine months of the year in the tropics or subtropics where the pressures of hunting and habitat destruction completely outweigh any effort we might make to safeguard their breeding habitats. These migrants also run the gauntlet of widespread hunting and netting in many countries bordering the Mediterranean.

I reckon that it is hard to find a conservation project anywhere in the world that can claim to be a genuine success, with the exception of those on small, isolated islands. The conservation work on Mauritius, for example, is extraordinary – the systematic weeding out of invasive introduced plants to restore the natural habitat, captive breeding followed by reintroduction of highly endangered species that are now making a comeback. But on a continental

scale this success cannot be achieved. Tigers, all species of rhinoceros, Spoon-billed Sandpipers *Calidris pygmaeus* and countless other species are heading inexorably towards global extinction despite high-profile conservation efforts. In New Zealand where introduced birds, mammals and plants have virtually destroyed the ecosystem, the answer has been to trap the few remaining individuals of endangered species on the main islands and relocate them to uninhabited offshore islands. This works, but in a *Jurassic Park*, virtual-zoo kind of way.

Like the governments who tell us that all is well, when usually it is anything but, most conservation organisations (and wildlife documentaries) pretend that we are doing a great job and if only we give them more money everything will be OK. What we need to see is an 'Unreported World' style of documentary showing us the shocking reality of wildlife trade and habitat exploitation, and telling us what conservationists *really* think. In 1990 Seub Nakhasathien, one of Thailand's passionate conservationists, committed suicide, unable to cope with the reality of his inability to preserve Thailand's natural heritage in the face of official corruption.

CITES attempts to reduce the trade in endangered species but in reality it is powerless. Countries sign up and agree to the terms, but just as the illegal drugs trade continues to function worldwide so does the trade in wildlife, which in world terms of economic importance is third only to the drugs and arms trades. As long as there is a market there will be suppliers. One country in particular, China, is probably the biggest threat to the natural environment of the world. Having destroyed most of its own natural resources it has now set about plundering those of the rest of the world. As the Chinese economy continues to grow, underdeveloped countries are at their mercy and will provide illegal timber, animals or minerals in an attempt to improve their own economies. Much of the illegal trade in wildlife and timber is only possible because of official corruption, often reaching the highest levels of government. Just as officials in certain Central and South

American countries have lined their pockets through the drugs trade, in Africa and much of Asia the same can be said for the trade in wildlife and timber. There is simply no limit to human greed.

Almost 30 years ago, when parts of Ethiopia were suffering from extreme famine, Bob Geldof came up with the idea of Band Aid. He was savvy enough to realise that if they just handed over the money that was raised, it would be trousered by corrupt officials and would never get to the people in need. So he organised ships to transport the food and convoys of trucks with Band Aid workers aboard to get the aid through. It worked. Can we do something similar with conservation donations? So far, history suggests that we can't.

Since the formation of the world's largest conservation bodies, millions of pounds have been spent and very little has been achieved. High-profile species such as the Mountain Gorilla *Gorilla beringei* can generate a tourist industry that brings foreign currency into countries that need it and consequently helps to fund the protection of the species and its environment. Wildlife tourism is an expanding market and is certainly helping conservation in a few areas of the world. Poachers are becoming rangers and wildlife guides, local people are becoming aware of the importance of protecting their local habitats – yet really this applies only to flagship species or to spectacular environments such as the Masai Mara, Serengeti or Ngorongoro. How many people in the world are aware of the plight of Aquatic Warblers *Acrocephalus paludicola* and how many care? I can remember the euphoria in the birding community when Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* was rediscovered in Thailand. What happened? The few remaining pockets of lowland forest were destroyed to grow oil-palms or rubber, and the handful of birders who made the pilgrimage to see the species were simply not enough to make pittas more economically important than oil-palms. Pittas were deliberately shot or trapped so that without their presence the forest was deemed less important and could therefore be cleared. Imagine shooting most of the Whimbrels

Numenius phaeopus and Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* in Shetland so that the land would be deemed ecologically unimportant and ripe for windfarms.

Much is made of the shift in conservation policy from creating a human exclusion zone where wildlife could flourish to accepting that indigenous people have a right to live in the forests that they have inhabited for thousands of years, that there are sustainable forms of hunting and that man is, and always will be, a natural component of the environment. Yet look at the 'western' approach to conservation in our own countries. We have destroyed our habitats on a grand scale, often with the help of government funding. Where are the hedgerows, the prairies, the steppes, the ancient woodlands – destroyed in the name of agricultural efficiency (or human greed). We are appalled by the habitat loss in developing countries yet ignore the fact that we have completely wrecked our own. Far from setting an example for the rest of the world we have demonstrated that we can increase agricultural production as long as we don't give a fig for our natural environment.

So what can be done? Well, we could give more money to conservation, but that will merely provide a few people with jobs and allow the scientific community to document the destruction of the planet more thoroughly. We could demand that the existing conservation bodies pool their resources and put pressure on governments, the EU and even the UN. Yet bureaucracy will stifle any progress until it is too late. Man is the dominant species on the planet and human needs will always come before those of wildlife – after all wildlife doesn't have a vote. Or we could just accept the inevitable – that as long as mankind's demands continue to increase and deplete the natural resources of the planet there is not much hope.

Some years ago, on a trip to Thailand, an American professor of ornithology told me that we were living at exactly the right time in history. Fifty years earlier world travel was a privilege reserved for the wealthy and in 50 years time there will be nothing left to see.

Iain Robertson

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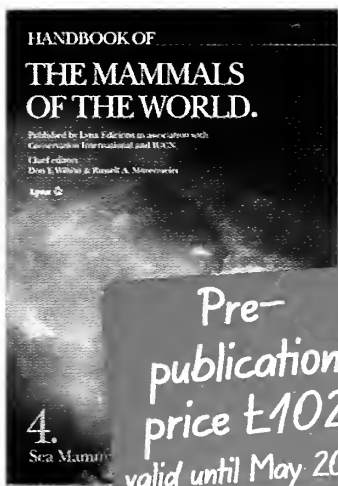


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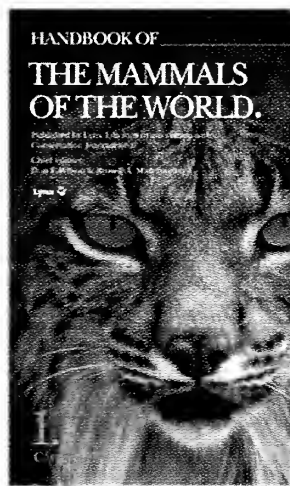
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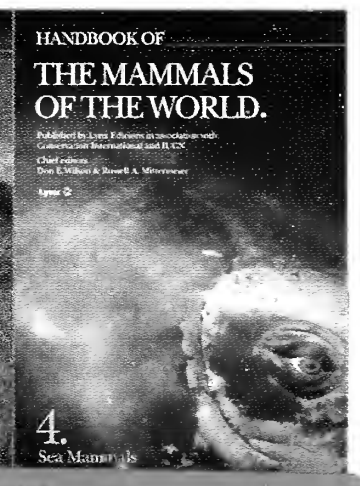
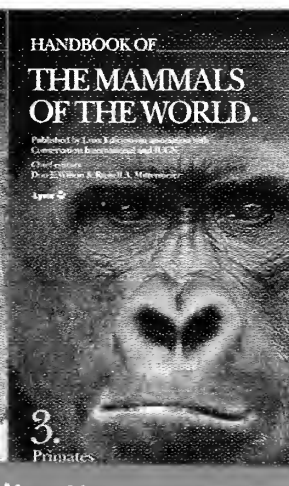
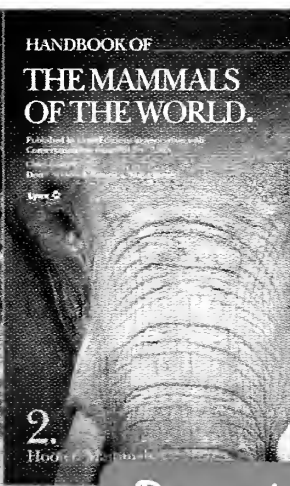
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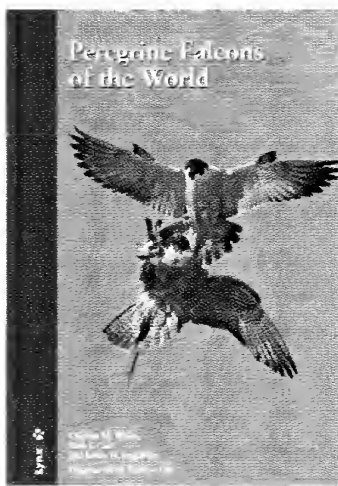
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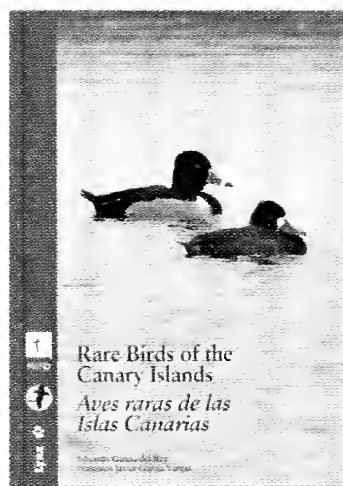
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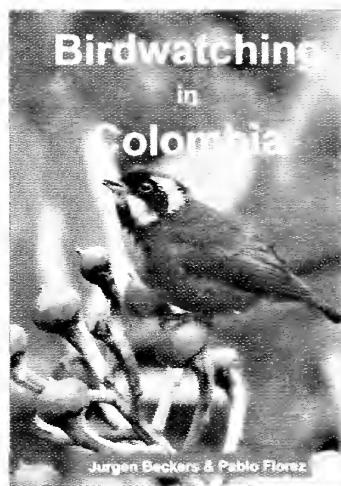
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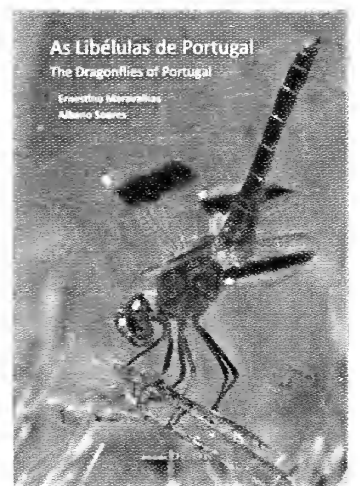
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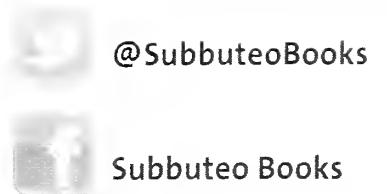
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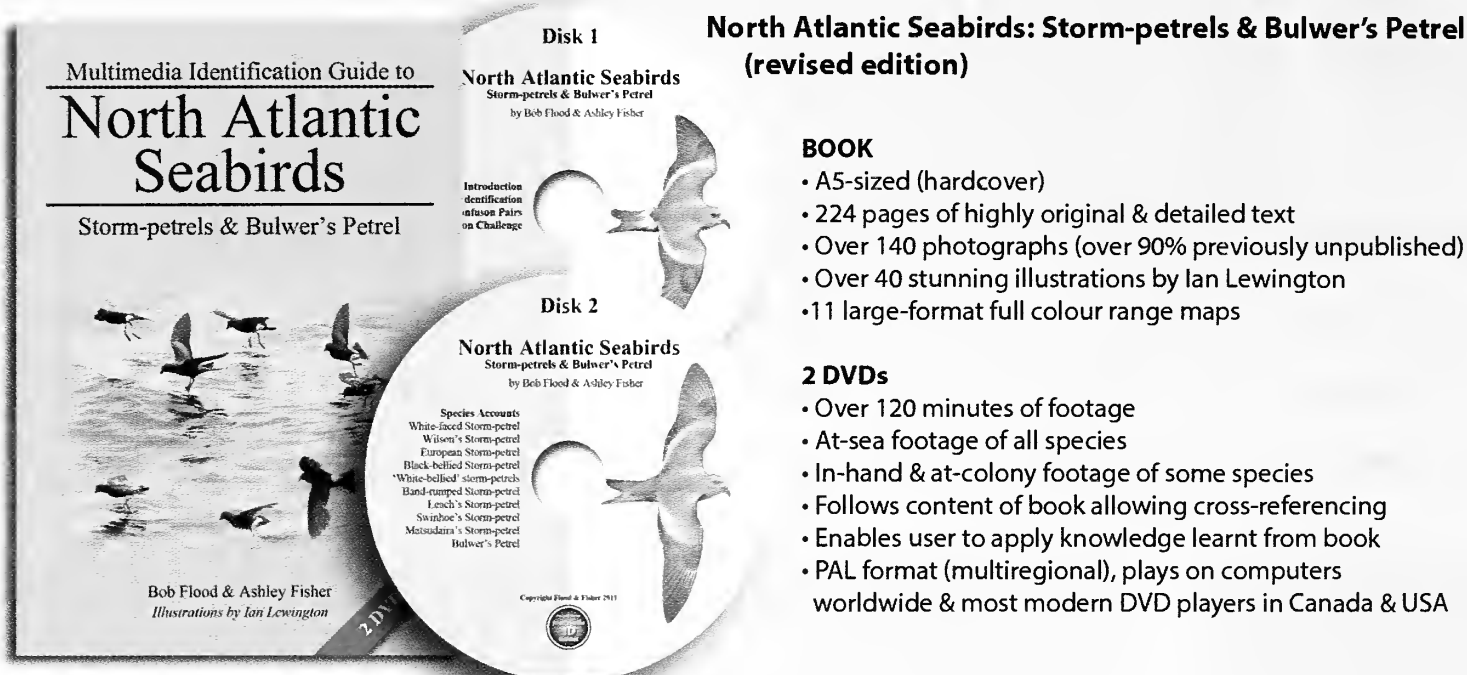
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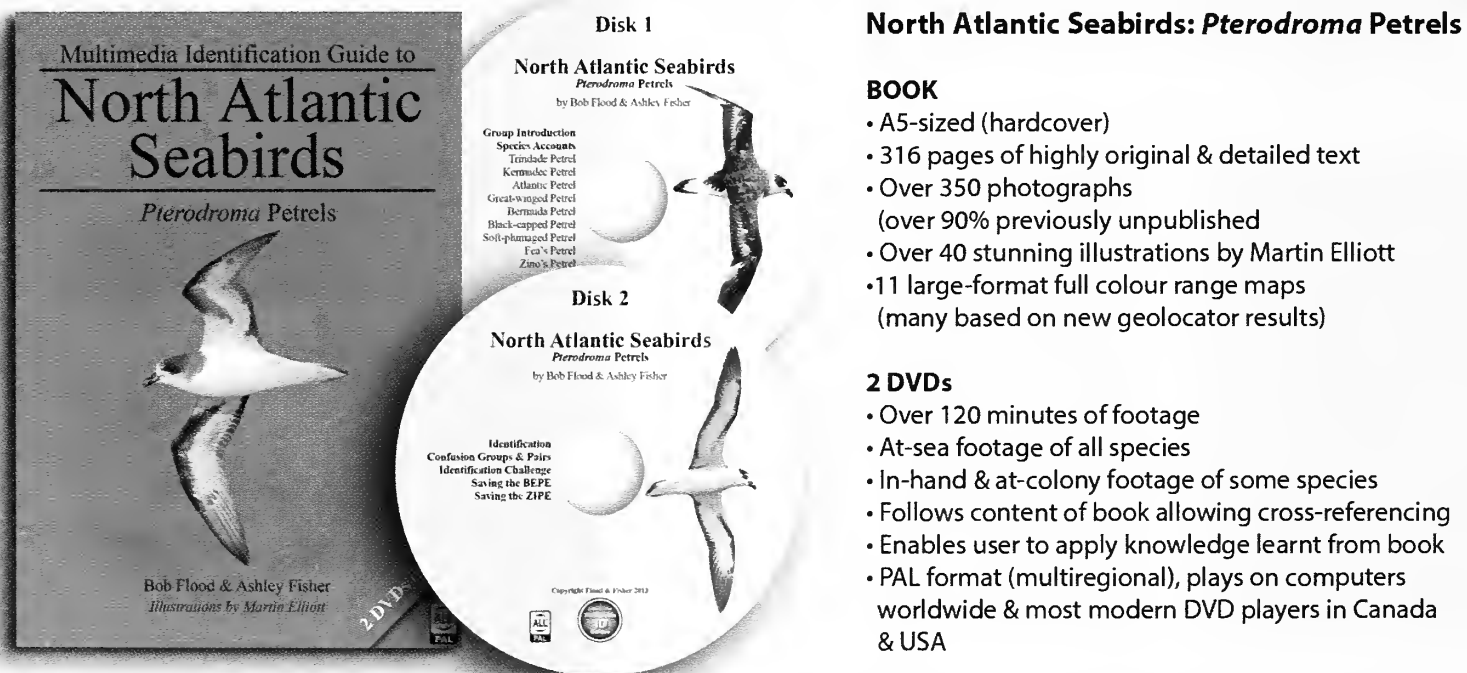
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I have been traveling so much this last eighteen months that only this morning did I eventually open the package [containing the guide]. I was going to take just a quick look but soon found myself jumping from species to species and the clock somehow advancing two hours as I turned over pages and played the video sections. This guide will set a new standard in sea birding publications and is surely destined to find wide use by sea birding enthusiasts. The approach is novel, the text succinct and the illustrations by Ian Lewington superb. Add to that the video clips which show the various species in their environment, performing different tasks under differing conditions, and you have a one of a kind book for both expert and novice alike.

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As a group the *Pterodromas* pose one of the greatest seabird identification challenges due to their pelagic habits, remote breeding islands, complex plumage patterns, and murky taxonomy. Bob Flood and Ashley Fisher are thus to be congratulated in what surely is the best text and images so far published on the North Atlantic *Pterodromas*. There are over 300 pages of text that simply overflow with not only detail but passion and colourful descriptions so that some *Pterodromas* are "petite," others "brutish." The colour photographs, the majority unpublished, are outstanding and eclipse any collection so far published. Martin Elliott's images are masterful and this is complimented with two DVDs with at-sea coverage and full narration. This is an important publication in seabird literature, it sets new standards, and will increase our understanding of these "winged runners," the *Pterodromas*. Beginners and experts alike will learn much from this quite exceptional publication which has been well-researched and meticulously presented. **Peter Harrison MBE** (author *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*)

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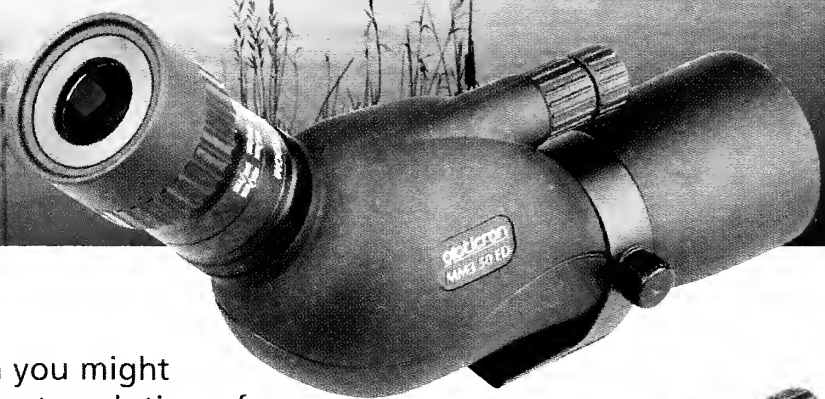
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