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Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2013

Stejneger's Stonechat: new to Britain

British Birds

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Front-cover photograph: Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*, Cyprus, April 2015. *Mike Lane*

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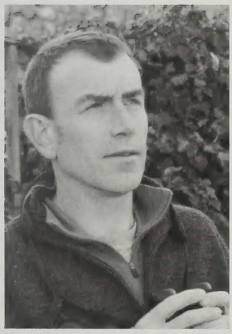


Last autumn, when we last featured a Rare Breeding Birds Panel report, UK residents were looking ahead to both the Scottish referendum and a national election. Ten months on, it's not difficult to be frustrated by the results that democracy has served up in terms of the environment. We had a UK election where virtually no-one other than the Green Party (whose 1.1 million votes delivered a solitary MP) paid even lip service to environmental issues; further afield we see Malta voting to continue spring hunting, albeit only just, while Europe is proposing a 'fitness check' on the Birds and Habitats Directives, something which the RSPB and others are quite rightly in a lather about (visit www.naturealert.eu if you haven't done so already). What will we see in the RBBP report in 40 years' time, I wonder. You can read their first report at www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp-report-1973.pdf by the way. The Hen Harrier first appeared in the RBBP report for 1996. It is hard to imagine that there will be an entry for England in ten years time, never mind 40 (see pp. 391–392).

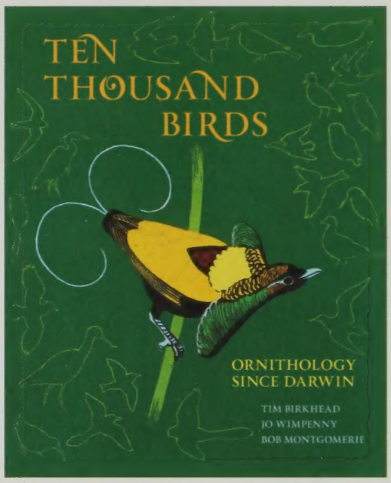
Roger Riddington

***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.

BB eye

Why should scientists bother writing books?

Ten Thousand Birds: ornithology since Darwin by Tim Birkhead, Jo Wimpenny and Bob Montgomerie came second in this year's *BB*/BTO Best Bird Book of the Year award. Here, Tim Birkhead writes about how the book came about and what it was like to write it.



The book is a history of ornithology that spans the era between Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 to the end of 2013. The accumulation of knowledge about bird biology during this period was remarkable, and we now know more about birds than about any other group of animals.

How do we know what we know? Specifically, how do we know so much about birds?

The answer is mainly because there are so many of us for whom birds are a passion. Encouraged by my father, I was an avid birdwatcher from an early age, as were my co-authors. But when I started taking days off school to watch birds, my dad was less enthusiastic and warned me that I was wasting my time, as I'd 'never get a job watching birds'. Through a bit of luck though, I *did*; and part of my training – my PhD – was conducted at the Edward Grey Institute (EGI) in Oxford. As well as housing a bunch of enthusiasts keen to turn their birding hobby into science, the EGI had one of the best ornithological libraries in the world. I loved browsing the hundreds of books and reprints there – many of them sent by their author to the EGI's world-famous director, David Lack. Often there was a little note accompanying the author's signature, and as I read those I realised that many of those books and papers were history in the making. I became intrigued by what made some birdwatchers into scientists.

In my academic job, acquired in 1976, as a lecturer in what was then the Zoology Department at the University of Sheffield, I used my fascination for the history of ornithology to develop a course on the history of science in general. That probably sounds very dull, but what interested me were the stories behind the scientific discoveries: the serendipity, the clarity of thought and the enthusiasm that made some individuals so successful as scientists.

My research has two interlinked strands: the biology of Common Guillemots *Uria aalge*, and promiscuity. I was fascinated by the fact that, despite being socially monogamous, most birds are sexually promiscuous. Some time in the late 1990s, after writing lots of scientific papers and some academic books, I decided to write *Promiscuity*, a popular science book about this area of research. That was an eye-opening experience, for I was hopelessly naïve, and my publishers took advantage of me. The book got some good reviews and I was invited to speak at literary festivals. Wow! That was so different from any scientific conference where everyone is looking for flaws in your science (something we politely call critical thinking). In contrast, at a literary event, everyone is a 'luvvie' and they are there because they are interested in your book. The juxtaposition of those two different worlds is exhilarating.

At a scientific conference in 1991, I met Bernd Heinrich – an American biologist – whose extraordinary popular science book, *Ravens in Winter*, I had just read. We compared notes and he told me to: 'get an agent'. I tried, but again I was naïve: I simply assumed that one could phone an agent and they'd take you on. No way. Eventually, however, I was lucky and found one who was prepared to act on my behalf.

A literary agent is the buffer between you, the author, and the publisher, who, in many cases, sees you simply as a cash cow, or at the very least as a way of allowing them to keep their job – especially in academic publishing. With an agent, you are taken seriously and are less likely to be screwed, as I had been – so to speak – with *Promiscuity.*

My pleasure – and success – with *Promiscuity* led eventually to *The Wisdom of Birds,* published in 2008. For several years I had been thinking about writing a history of the study of birds, primarily for an academic audience. It took six years of reading, research and writing to complete that academic magnum opus. Before it was published, though, Mark Cocker asked me how many people I thought would read the book. It was as if I'd been poleaxed. He was quite right to ask though, as my answer (although I didn't tell him at the time) was 'about ten'. I went away and spent a year rewriting *Wisdom* for a popular readership. When it was done, I told my agent and she called me a 'silly boy' for not telling her sooner so that she could have helped. Luckily, she liked the book and found a wonderful publisher who produced a beautiful book.

In *Wisdom* I had tried to cover the entire time span of ornithology, from the Ancient Greeks to the most recent academic research – acknowledging along the way the vital role that amateur ornithologists have played in so many discoveries. Spurred on by what I had learnt, I realised that there was still plenty to say about recent ornithology – especially since Darwin – so after *Wisdom* was published I decided to tackle the most recent eras of ornithology. Fortunately, there was a way of doing this that allowed me to retain some academic respectability but also legitimise spending time both visiting libraries and writing: I could apply for a research grant that would enable me to employ someone to help me climb the ornithological mountain of 400,000 publications on birds since Darwin's day. The Leverhulme Trust has a broad-minded funding scheme and they liked the idea that the end product would be a book that – unlike much scientific endeavour – would make the research accessible to the public.

I went to my agent to tell her the plan. 'No' she said. The idea of two authors (my research assistant and me) didn't wash; and anyway, she said, it sounded as though *Ten Thousand Birds* might be a bit more academic than *Wisdom.* I went to my publisher directly. And he also said 'no' – for the same reason, but adding that with a recession just starting it was hardly sensible to produce another large, colourful book. Fortunately, another publisher was more accommodating. The grant application was successful, allowing me to employ Dr Jo Wimpenny, who had previously studied corvids in Oxford, as my research assistant.

Once we started, the utter enormity of the task became apparent. It seemed easy enough when writing the research proposal, but the reality of how we were going to organise such a vast amount of information seemed completely daunting. Jo started researching, visiting libraries and interviewing senior ornithologists, while I sat at my desk in Sheffield trying to transform 400,000 publications into something both manageable and readable. There was no point in doing this if no-one was going to read it.

In total I spent a year thinking about and trying out different options. One of the first things we did was to organise a survey of the most influential ornithologists of the past 150 years – perhaps a series of chapters on the 10 or 12 most important ornithologists would work? Another idea was to consider, decade by decade, all the ornithological discoveries since Darwin's day. On reflection that seemed a bit pedestrian, epitomising the way history is often described: just one bloody thing after another.

When writing *Wisdom* I had learnt from my editor that, for a popular book to work, it needs a 'device' to give it some structure. The calendar is one such device, widely used: 12 months, 12 chapters, but hardly appropriate for a history of ornithology. The 'device' I ended up with was ornithological themes: major topics – 11 in total – in bird biology, including the evolution of birds, migration, ethology, behavioural ecology and conservation. Each chapter would be a history of that topic, describing the way our understanding has developed since Darwin's day.

Yet a topic-based approach has the potential to be very dull too. What we needed was a way of spicing this up. Here, my experience

of teaching a final-year undergraduate course on the 'history and philosophy of science' came into its own. That course sounds awful, but the way I teach it is to tell stories about the people who made that history – biology's geniuses, weirdos, crooks and foot soldiers – to explain exactly what it is that makes someone a great, dreadful or productive scientist. Ornithology is replete with colourful characters: Richard Meinertzhagen, Julian Huxley and Walter Rothschild to name just a few, and there was no shortage of wonderful stories, many of them inspirational, many of them strange and some rather sad.

With an acceptable structure, I started writing, but then realised that, having spent a full year faffing about deciding on a structure, I had just two years of the three-year grant left in which to write 11 chapters. It also became apparent that while I knew a lot of British and European ornithologists, my knowledge of North American ornithologists was limited. The solution to that was easy: I asked my long-term colleague Bob Montgomerie, who teaches and conducts ornithological research at Queen's University, in Canada, if he would come on board. He did, and as a result the project then gained a special momentum. We wrote like demons; exchanging e-mails several times a day, swapping ideas, and incorporating the information Jo acquired through her extensive research and interviews. A book began to emerge.

As we wrote, other ideas blossomed, including the need for 'timelines' to enable readers to see at a glance when the major developments in each area of ornithology had happened. We also wanted some different perspectives, other than our own, so we asked several senior ornithologists to write a short account of their career, to be placed at the end of chapters. We wanted to know how they got started (most were birders), who or what had influenced them and what they had achieved. We knew that these brief biographies 'worked' when the undergraduates I asked to read them told me they found them 'inspirational'.

Books with more than one author often suffer from the fact that it is very obvious who wrote what. We seem to have avoided this – Bob told me that he made a conscious effort to mimic my style – since no-one so far can tell which of us wrote which chapters (and we aren't telling!). We gave up the idea of any pretence of the book being academic in terms of the language used. Our style was modelled on *Wisdom* since our priority was to make the book readable. Reviewers tell us we have been successful. Mark Avery, for example, said in his blog: 'It's difficult to write about the history of ideas in an engaging way but the authors have carried it off very well.' Praise indeed!

So why should scientists bother writing books? Writing a book can seem like an indulgence, but for us it was part of our ongoing education. The only way to really know about stuff is to teach it to someone else, either in the classroom, the lecture theatre or, as here, in a popular science book. The rewards from writing a book like this, however, are many: generating new research ideas, providing the freedom to be creative, allowing you to become more deeply involved in particular topics, meeting new people – and to discover how some great scientists are incredibly dull, while others are utterly charismatic.

Tim Birkhead is a professor in the Department of Animal & Plant Sciences at the University of Sheffield

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

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

More nesting male Hen Harriers disappear

It could have been the most successful Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* breeding season for many years but those hopes have been shot down by the unexplained disappearance of FIVE nesting male birds in northwest England.

We reported last month (*Brit. Birds* 108: 311) that three males attending nests on the United Utilities Bowland estate in Lancashire had vanished within three weeks and that two of those nests then failed as the female birds, reliant on food from their mates, had abandoned their clutches. At one nest a young male arrived shortly after the older bird's disappearance and continued to feed the sitting female.

A further two nesting male Hen Harriers – at the RSPB Geltsdale reserve in Cumbria and then another at Bowland – subsequently disappeared within the space of a week in late May. The RSPB did not say if the fourth male bird to vanish from Bowland was the very bird that had saved the nest earlier in the season.

The last confirmed sighting of the male was on 29th May when it was observed passing food to the female. RSPB staff continued to see the female in the vicinity of the nest but were concerned by the absence of the male bringing food. They visited the nest on 1st June and discovered that it had been abandoned and that the eggs were cold.

At Geltsdale the male was last seen on 23rd May. Without the male returning to provide her with food, the female was forced to abandon her clutch of five eggs. Unfortunately, incubating the eggs artificially was not an option. By the time RSPB staff were sure that the female had abandoned her nest, and that it was safe to approach it, her eggs had already gone cold and were no longer viable.

The grouse-shooting fraternity and its lobbyists will say that the male birds abandoned their nests or were predated. One bird? Maybe. Two birds? Unlikely. Three birds? Improbable. Four birds? Incredible. Five birds? Impossible.

Research by Natural England, published in its 2008 report *A Future for the Hen Harrier in England?*, showed that it is very unusual for any male Hen Harrier to abandon an active nest. The inescapable conclusion is that these five male birds have been shot.

Campaigner Mark Avery put it succinctly: 'We know it's the most persecuted bird in Britain. There should be about 2,600 pairs in the UK and there are 600–800 pairs. The reason that there are so few is because of persecution and the only people interested in persecuting Hen Harriers are people who run grouse moors.'

However, the people who run Bowland welcome the harriers: last year there were only four successful nests in England, two of which were on that estate. But the sad fact is that round-the-clock nest protection is not enough. It's when hunting birds leave the safety of the estate that they 'disappear'.

RSPB-images.com

230. Male Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*.

Hen Harrier Day 2015

Raising the profile of English Hen Harriers and the desperate plight of the species as a breeding bird was the intention of last year's inaugural Hen Harrier Day, organised by Mark Avery and Birders Against Wildlife Crime www.birdersagainst.org

It was a great success – despite the weather – with hundreds of committed conservationists turning out at events in the northern uplands on the Sunday closest to 12th August, the start of the grouse-shooting season.

The second Hen Harrier Day will be on Sunday 9th August, when there will be a big gathering in the Peak District. The details of the daytime event are yet to be confirmed but see www.henharrierday.org for updates. The website also promises an evening event to celebrate the Hen Harrier on

Saturday 8th August 2015, in Buxton.

The organisers say: 'A host of celebrities will be involved including, we hope, Chris Packham, Jeremy Deller (Turner Prize winner), author Mark Cocker and Mark Avery. Last but by no means least, Henry the Hen Harrier will appear live (unlike many others) on stage.' Followers of @HenryHenHarrier on Twitter will know that he is a lonely male Hen Harrier (or rather, a person wearing an impressive Hen Harrier costume) touring the country looking for a mate.

Further Hen Harrier Day events across the country will be announced nearer the time. Keep an eye on the website.

Vote National Bird

And there was more profile-raising for the Hen Harrier in the Vote National Bird event masterminded by David Lindo www.votenationalbird.com Despite the best endeavours of Henry's supporters, the Hen Harrier did not top the poll as Britain's (unofficial) national bird but it came ninth in the final shortlist of ten, with 12,390 votes – still an impressive showing for a species which needs all the friends it can get.

A total of 224,438 votes were cast in the poll, which closed on 7th May, General Election day in the UK. More than a third of the votes (75,623) went to the Robin *Erithacus rubecula* confirming its 're-election' as Britain's national bird following a similar exercise publicised by *The Times* in 1965. The runners-up were: Barn Owl *Tyto alba* with 26,191 votes and Blackbird *Turdus merula* with 25,369 (Blackbird is Sweden's official National Bird). In descending order the remaining votes went to Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Hen Harrier and Puffin *Fratercula arctica*.

11,270 of the votes were placed by children in a ballot in schools on 7th May. The children's vote had surprisingly different results: 20% of school children voted for the Robin, while the Puffin came second with 14% of the vote and the Blue Tit third with 13%.

David Lindo said: 'The Vote National Bird campaign is in fact a victory for all our British birds. What has become the UK's biggest-ever nature vote has reminded the British people how much they love the nature around us.'

Red List for Europe shows a fifth of species under threat

And coming bottom of the national bird poll isn't the only bad news for the Puffin. The latest BirdLife assessment of threatened species in Europe, the Red List, now includes such formerly abundant species as Puffin, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*.

Of 246 regularly occurring species in the UK, 37 have been assessed as at risk of extinction in the EU. Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, a regular visitor from the Mediterranean to UK shores, is listed as Critically Endangered; Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*, Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* are among those listed as Endangered.

Puffin, Lapwing and Curlew are now regarded as Vulnerable, alongside species such as Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* and Willow Tit *Poecile montana*.

In its first regional assessment for a decade, BirdLife looked at the entire continent of Europe and also the 27 nations of the EU. Of the 533 species that occur regularly in Europe, 67 (13%) are threatened including the Critically Endangered Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* and Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*. In the countries of the EU, 82 out of 451 species (18%) are threatened. However, there is some good news as the status of species including Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Great Bustard *Otis tarda* and Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* has greatly improved because of conservation action and legal protection.

But 29 species have been 'uplisted' into the threatened category since the last Red Listing exercise in 2004. Among them are the Puffin, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and the Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. The full Red List can be found at www.birdlife.org

Corrections

On p. 326 of the June issue, the image credits were missing; both photos were taken by James Hanlon. On p. 328 of that issue, the two image credits were inadvertently transposed. Plate 186, the top photo, was taken by Richard Stonier, while plate 187, the bottom photo, was by Mike Lawrence.

Is Yellow-breasted Bunting the next Passenger Pigeon?

Indeed, one of Eurasia's formerly most abundant species has declined by 90% and retracted its range by 5,000 km since 1980 a new study shows. The Yellow-breasted Bunting was once distributed over vast areas of Europe and Asia, its range stretching from Finland to Japan but new research suggests that unsustainable rates of hunting, principally in China, have contributed to a catastrophic fall in numbers.

'The magnitude and speed of the decline is unprecedented among birds distributed over such a large area, with the exception of the Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius*, which went extinct due to industrial-scale hunting,' said Dr Johannes Kamp from the University of Münster. 'High levels of hunting also appear to be responsible for the declines we are seeing in Yellow-breasted Bunting.'

The species has all but disappeared from eastern Europe, European Russia, large parts of western and central Siberia, and Japan. During migration and on the wintering grounds, Yellow-breasted Buntings gather in huge flocks at night-time roosts making them easy to trap in large numbers. Birds have traditionally been trapped for food at these roosts with nets.

Following initial declines, hunting of the species – known in Chinese as 'the rice bird' – was banned in China in 1997. However, millions of Yellow-breasted Buntings and other songbirds were still being killed for food and sold on the black market as late as 2013. Consumption of these birds has increased as a result of economic growth and prosperity in east Asia, with one estimate from 2001 of one million buntings being consumed in China's Guangdong province alone.

'To reverse these declines we need to better educate people of the consequences of eating wildlife. We also need a better and more efficient reporting system for law enforcement,' said Simba Chan, Senior Conservation Officer at BirdLife. 'In the last decade, birdwatching has become increasingly popular in China. Birdwatchers will play an important role in future data gathering. Now is the time to address these worrying declines across the region by mobilising people for conservation action.'

Martin Hale/FLPA

231. Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Mai Po, Hong Kong, April 2013.

Mystery of '*pekinensis*' Swift migration revealed

Most of our summer migrants head south to Africa for the winter. A few head southeast towards east Africa, but none from the UK venture any farther east. We might expect that birds in the Far East would also head south, but at least three species that breed within sight of the Pacific do not conform, and head westwards for Africa.

Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* breeding in Alaska winter in east Africa and Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis* winter in southern Africa. Both species have had their routes revealed by tracking studies, using light-level geolocators and satellite tags respectively.

The routes taken by the *pekinensis* race of Common Swifts *Apus apus* that breed in Beijing, near the eastern edge of the species' range, were unknown, yet birds resembling *pekinensis* have been recorded in the southwest corner of Africa.

After leaving Alaska, Northern Wheatears take a northerly route across Siberia, whereas Amur Falcons choose a more southerly route via India; so which way would the Swifts go? They also must navigate the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau to the west of Beijing.

It was the temptation to solve this remaining puzzle that gave Terry Townshend, founder of Birding Beijing, and myself, of Action for Swifts (actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk), the idea to take up the challenge. The idea snowballed, with enthusiastic support from the China (Beijing) Birdwatching Society (President Fu Jianping and Prof. Zhao Xinru), Beijing Normal University, the Summer Palace, Belgium Ringing Scheme (Lyndon Kearsley) and the CAnMove Group at Lund

University (Prof. Susanne Åkesson).

In May 2014, Lyndon and I flew to Beijing with 31 light-level geolocators from Migrate Technology. Following a training workshop, we arrived at dawn on 24th May at the Kuoro Ting Pavilion in the Summer Palace to meet the ringing team. By 7.30 that morning, thanks to their efficiency, we had deployed all 31 geolocators.

A year later we returned to the Summer Palace, on 24th May 2015, with another 25 geolocators. We retrapped 13 Swifts with geolocators, the data were downloaded, and the Swifts released for a second year. All 25 new geolocators were deployed.

An initial analysis confirmed that the first bird went to Namibia, but also that it followed a route that took it WNW out of Beijing, across the Gobi Desert to Mongolia. From there, it headed north of the Tien Shan Mountains, to the south Caspian, across the Arabian Peninsula then into the Congo, where it stayed for a while before reaching Namibia. While in the Congo, it would meet up with birds from Europe, which head east or southeast after their stay in the Congo. The return journey to Beijing roughly retraces the steps of the outward journey.

The Wheatear may hold the record for the longest migration of a small 'landbird' but the Swift is not too far behind. I had always been intrigued by the brown Common Swifts that I had seen on Table Mountain; and, interestingly, two of the Swifts we tracked reached Cape Town.

(Contributed by Dick Newell)

White-tailed Eagle reintroduction scores a century

Forty years since White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* were reintroduced to Scotland this magnificent raptor reached the important milestone of 100 breeding pairs. The 100th pair nested on Hoy, the first White-tailed Eagles to nest in Orkney for 142 years.

This milestone comes in a year of significant anniversaries for the reintroduction programme. It is 40 years since the first young White-tailed Eagles from Norway were released on Rum, in 1975, and 30 years since the first wild chick fledged, on Mull, in 1985.

The reintroduction programme run by RSPB Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) released 82 young eagles over ten years on Rum. More young eagles were released under the programme in Wester Ross between 1993 and 1998. Further releases took place in Fife from 2007 to 2012, through a partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland, including in the National Forest Estate.

The first successful breeding, in 1985, marked the return of the White-tailed Eagle after it had been ruthlessly persecuted to extinction (the last known nesting attempt was on Skye in 1916 and the last British White-tailed Eagle was shot on Shetland in 1918).

The White-tailed Eagles on Hoy have been seen in the area every spring and summer since 2013 and are both thought to be young birds, 4–5 years old. This was their first known nesting attempt and although they were unsuccessful in raising chicks this year, the pair has gained vital experience for future nesting attempts. Colonising Orkney is a significant range expansion from the Hebrides. How fitting would it be if eagles nested on Shetland in 2018, a century after they disappeared?

British Birds e-newsletter

The second edition of our new e-mail newsletter landed in inboxes a fortnight ago. Anyone can sign up on the home page of the *BB* website www.britishbirds.co.uk

But there's an exclusive version for *BB* subscribers with a special Rare Bird Alert offer. If you wish to sign up for the (free) newsletter, simply e-mail subscriptions@britishbirds.co.uk with your name, e-mail address and subscriber number (or your full address including postcode). The newsletter contains news stories, a book of the month, rarities reports and a sneak preview of what's coming in the next month's *BB*.

Neotropical Bird Club

The Neotropical Bird Club will be holding a summer meeting in Cambridge on Saturday 25th July. The meeting will be held at St John's Church Hall in Hills Road. Entrance is free, doors open at 10.30 am for coffee and cakes and the meeting starts at 11.00 am. The talks will include Trish Allison on 'The state of birds in the Neotropics', Richard Thomas on 'Birding the Colombian Andes', Chris Sharpe on 'Three decades of birding in Venezuela', Tom Stuart on 'Recent NBC Conservation Awards' and Raymond Jeffers on 'Northeast Brazil'. A sandwich lunch will be available, and the meeting will close around 5.00 pm.

For extended versions of many of the stories featured here, and much more, visit our website www.britishbirds.co.uk

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2013

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Dan Powell

Willow Tits *Poecile montana*

Abstract This report documents the status of 91 rare or scarce species that were recorded breeding, or potentially breeding, in the UK in 2013. The spring of 2013 was much colder than normal and led to lower numbers of, for example, breeding Corn Crakes *Crex crex* and Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus*. More encouragingly, the return of milder winters since 2011 seems to have aided the recovery of some resident passerines such as Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* and Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*.

This is the 40th report published by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), and includes details of 82 species or distinctive races that bred (or showed signs of breeding) in the UK in 2013. Three other rare breeding species occurred in 2013 but no relevant data were received; these species are placed in Appendix 1. A further six potential breeding species are listed in Appendix 2, and the overall total of 91 is the lowest since we last added new species to the list, in 2010.

As in 2012, the area covered and reported on by the UK Rare Breeding Birds Panel includes the four countries of the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), plus the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Using 'the UK' as a shorthand reference for this area is in line with other national reporting systems, such as the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (e.g. Harris *et al.* 2014), the Statutory Conservation Agency and RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS) and Birds of Conservation Concern (e.g. Eaton *et al.* 2009).

Many of the species we report on, although rare in the UK, are more numerous and widespread elsewhere in Europe. To put some of the UK data into context, we have on occasions made reference to trends documented by the Pan European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBMS). We have used the latest (2014) update available; this covers the time period 1980–2012 and can be found online at www.ebcc.info/index.php?ID=557. Twenty-seven countries provide data to this scheme.

Review of the year 2013

Following the wet and stormy late spring of 2012, which had an impact on the numbers and success of several rare breeding birds, a prolonged cold spell in March and April 2013 also had a negative effect. Met Office data show that the temperature across the UK was consistently below the 1960–90 average throughout those two months (that for March was 3.3°C below the long-term average) and that it was the coldest spring in the UK since 1962. Even away from upland areas, snowfall was recorded in late March and early April. In contrast, it was the warmest summer in the UK since 2006, with a prolonged heatwave during 3rd–22nd July. As a result of settled summer weather, later-nesting species seem to have had a more productive season.

The exceptionally cold spring may be implicated in a significant drop in the numbers of calling Corn Crakes *Crex crex* (-24%) and of Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus* (-33%), two species whose populations had been increasing steadily each year for over a decade. Long-eared *Asio otus* and Short-eared Owls *A. flammeus* were reported in low numbers, perhaps because any breeding attempts failed early. Indeed, it is likely that no eggs were laid at many sites because of the poor condition of the adults. The BTO Nest Record Scheme received 50–60% fewer nest records for Barn *Tyto alba* and Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* in 2013 compared with 2012, reflecting the low nesting rate of commoner species which are also dependent on the availability of small mammal prey (Barimore 2014).

Ten years ago there were just seven pairs of breeding Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* in the UK, whereas in the last five there have been an average of 23. In 2013, nine pairs bred in Shetland, equalling the peak count of 2011, but productivity was low with just one young bird fledged. The decline of both Pintails *Anas acuta* and Common Pochards *Aythya ferina* in Scotland continued, although Lesser Scaup *A. affinis* makes its first appearance in the RBBP report, courtesy of a long-staying male in Caithness that was seen mating with a female Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*. Common Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* nested successfully in Northumberland for the fourth consecutive year, and a second pair bred in England, in Avon.

Some wetland species are doing particularly well in the UK at the moment, notably herons and their allies. Another new record total was set for Eurasian Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris,* while Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* bred at over 100 sites for the first time. Little Bitterns *Ixobrychus minutus* and Great White Egrets *Ardea alba* were proved breeding again in Somerset, and the Norfolk colony of Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* was occupied for the fourth consecutive year.

A notable event in 2013 was the first successful nesting by White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in eastern Scotland in modern times, and the total number of confirmed breeding pairs across the range increased to 75. This species is well monitored, but for some other species of birds of prey (e.g. Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* and, increasingly, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*) only a sample of the population is being counted each year, affecting the accuracy of the totals reported here. Many of these species are studied annually by licensed raptor workers, but there is an important role here for birdwatchers to report signs of nesting behaviour that do not require visits to nests (e.g. pairs on territory, display, fledged young).

After the 2012 survey of Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* found 28 singing males at 11 sites, 22 males were heard in 2013, but at a larger number of sites (16). Despite this recording effort, no Baillon's Crakes *P. pusilla* were located, suggesting that the events of 2012 were related to the unusual conditions in that spring (Ausden *et al.* 2013). Common Cranes *Grus grus* further expanded their

range to southwest England, where birds from the reintroduction project bred for the first time. The reintroduced population of Great Bustards *Otis tarda* fledged no young for the fourth consecutive year, however.

Very low numbers of Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* were reported, which at least partly reflects the minimal coverage of the species in Shetland – there is clearly an opportunity for some useful survey work there. Fewer Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* nested than in recent years, although it is believed that all nesting pairs were found and counted. The low numbers may be a result of poor fledging success in the Washes of East Anglia in both 2011 and 2012, as a result of flooding; in the drier conditions in 2013, 39 young fledged there from two sites. There were no confirmed breeding Green Sandpipers *Tringa ochropus*, although pairs were present at two sites.

Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* again failed to establish a territory and this species' extinction as a breeding bird in the UK is surely imminent. After no young were fledged in England in the wet summer of 2012, only one pair of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* was found in Devon, but two young fledged. A pair also nested successfully in Scotland. In 2013 there was further evidence of a recovery of resident species sensitive to cold weather, including Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* and Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*. Overshooting spring migrants that established territories included Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Iberian Chiffchaff *P. ibericus*, Savi's *Locustella luscinioides*, Icterine *Hippolais icterina* and Melodious Warblers *H. polyglotta*, and Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*. Two pairs of Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* bred, in Northumberland and in Sussex.

An analysis of the sites used by Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* in 2013 showed that the majority are in urban or industrial locations but, in addition, rocky upland sites were used in Scotland and Wales. Unusually, one or perhaps two pairs of Blue-headed Wagtails *Motacilla flava flava* bred and there was a report of a long-staying European Serin *Serinus serinus*, the first for seven years.

Overall, eight species were recorded in 2013 for which no evidence of breeding was received in 2012. There was sufficient evidence to include four of them in the main report: Greenish and Melodious Warblers, Blue-headed Wagtail and Common Rosefinch *Erythrina erythrina*. Records for the remaining four (Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Lesser Scaup, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* and Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*) are listed in Appendix 2.

Ten species were included in the 2012 report for which there was no evidence of breeding in 2013: Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*, Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*, White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, Baillon's Crake, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* and Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*. Many of these show breeding behaviour in the UK only occasionally. We urge anyone with information on these, or any other RBBP species, for 2013 or any other year, to submit the records to the Panel Secretary as soon as possible; such records are always welcome and help to maintain our definitive archive. This report only includes information about records that have been verified by county recorders – only these can become part of the ornithological record.

Readers should note that, since 2012, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Woodlark *Lullula arborea* are no longer considered by the Panel (see Holling *et al.* 2014). There were no other changes to the RBBP list in 2013.

Data sources and submission

Each year we try to source as much information as possible from all areas of the UK, and we aim to provide prompt and accurate feedback via these annual reports. The most critical source of data is the annual return from the bird recorder network. County and regional recorders are at the hub of bird recording within their area and they are generally in the best position to compile an accurate summary of the breeding evidence for each species. They receive records from a variety of sources, often directly from observers, but increasingly via the BTO/RSPB/BirdWatch Ireland/SOC/WOS BirdTrack system. Thus recorders, and in turn the RBBP, are highly dependent on bird-

watchers submitting records in the first place. It is critical that birders across the UK make their sightings available, not least for their conservation value.

For a variety of reasons, some counties were unable to submit rare breeding bird data for 2013, even with the extended deadlines offered. In England, the only missing counties were Essex and West Midlands (for the latter, no data have been submitted to the Panel since 2009). Data were available for all counties in Wales, although for Meirionnydd the only source was the Welsh Bird Report (Pritchard 2014); while in Scotland, a change in recorder at the end of 2014 meant that no data were available for the Outer Hebrides. For Northern Ireland, only limited records were available via the Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel (Perry & Newton 2015) and the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group. To supplement areas with no input from county recorders, the BTO allowed us access to selected data from the BirdTrack system for the first time. To limit the volume of potential records and in the absence of local expertise, only those BirdTrack records with a breeding evidence code were used.

We very much hope that all recording areas will be able to supply data for 2013 and any other missing years in due course. To maintain the definitive archive of rare breeding bird records, we are always grateful for late submissions and updates to published records. Researchers should note that additions, amendments and corrections to published reports from 2005 onwards are available on the RBBP website (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports).

Other data sources include the reports from Schedule 1 licence holders, Nest Record Scheme returns, Raptor Study Group data, national surveys and counts from RSPB reserves. These additional sources mean that general levels of data provision were broadly comparable with those in recent RBBP reports. The number of unique records submitted by the end of May in 2015 was around 6% lower than in 2012, at just over 6,000. With the exception of just one county (Meirionnydd) all data came in electronically and mostly in the recommended MS Excel format, with sites listed separately for each species (see www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-data-submission). A further increase in the number of records that include a grid reference is pleasing: this is essential for validation and for detection of duplicate records. Sadly, and as in previous years, some otherwise good records (especially of raptors) could not be used because the location could not be verified, which greatly diminishes the conservation value of the fieldwork effort.

Raptor monitoring in many parts of the UK is achieved largely by the various Raptor Study Groups (RSGs). In Scotland, the results are collated by the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Coordinator on behalf of the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme and the RBBP. For the first time, the majority of records could be placed within the system of bird recording areas we use. However, a few records without grid references could not be assigned to an area; these were not used in this report, leading in some instances to lower totals than published elsewhere. Again, we implore all fieldworkers to ensure that rare bird breeding records are supported by an accurate grid reference. In much of northern England, mainly upland raptors are monitored by an array of groups operating under the Northern England Raptor Forum (NERF). Schedule 1 raptor data from Wales are collated for RBBP by RSPB Wales under contract to Natural Resources Wales. For the first time in a number of years, we have been able to use summary data on birds of prey from the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group, improving the totals for species such as Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Merlin *Falco columbarius* and Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus*.

Recorders should submit their records to the RBBP by the end of each calendar year, for the *previous* year's breeding season – i.e. data for 2014 should be submitted by 31st December 2015. Recommendations and guidelines on data submission are available at www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards Species-specific guidelines are added as they become available (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-recording), and anyone with particular experience in monitoring a rare species is encouraged to offer their expertise in compiling these guidelines.

Conservation and other uses of RBBP data

It is RBBP policy to make data available for relevant conservation uses, with appropriate controls. Site-specific information is used by JNCC and the country conservation agencies, and national datasets by the RSPB, for survey and conservation planning. Over the last 12 months, requests for the use of RBBP data have been received for around 40 species, mainly to support the JNCC-led third review of the UK's network of EU Special Protection Areas – an important conservation initiative for which RBBP data have played a key role, and which will help to improve the conservation of many species. Other uses included the support of some survey work and help with other conservation science projects led by the RSPB.

The population totals published in the *BB* reports are also widely used by conservation staff at the RSPB, BTO, JNCC and the four country agencies. All but the most recent reports are available online (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports); the 'Explore Reports' feature (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-online-reports) permits access to these same reports firstly by species and then by year, which opens up this information to a wider audience. We are keen for individuals to use this to compile species reviews for potential future publication – please contact the Panel Secretary. In all cases where RBBP data are used or referred to, we ask that the contribution of the Panel is acknowledged and that we receive copies of any new datasets compiled and any outputs. Our data access policy is available at www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-access-policy.

The Panel

In 2014, Simon Gillings, who had served on the Panel since spring 2007 as the representative for the BTO, was replaced by Dawn Balmer. We thank Simon for his efforts during those years, especially his insight into the development of *Bird Atlas 2007–11* and the data-sharing opportunities to enhance both that project and the RBBP archive. The membership of the Panel is currently: Mark Eaton (Chairman), Dawn Balmer, Ian Francis, Andrew King, David Norman, David Stroud and Mark Holling (Secretary). Members serve in a personal capacity, but some also reflect the interests and requirements of the funding partners. The Panel is funded by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and the RSPB with additional financial contributions from the BTO. Panel membership aims to achieve broadly representative geographic coverage and to include members who have active involvement in monitoring schemes and specialist research groups, or who participate in various external groups, to facilitate liaison between the Panel and researchers, nest recorders, ringers, surveyors and conservationists.

The RBBP Twitter account now has around 1,000 followers. You can keep up to date with the work of the Panel by following us (@ukrbbp), although we request that no sensitive data are broadcast over Twitter.

Terminology

Recording areas

The recording areas used in this report are the same as in previous reports (see Holling *et al.* 2007 and www.rbbp.org.uk); these match the bird recording areas used by recorders across the UK, with Gower and East Glamorgan presented separately *contra* Ballance & Smith (2008). We attempt to collate all breeding records by recording area (usually 'county') wherever possible and urge contributors to submit records in the same manner, via recorders.

Records from the Greater London recording area, which covers all areas within a 20-mile radius of St Paul's Cathedral, are reported as follows, in order to reduce the possibility of duplication with surrounding county recording areas. Under the Greater London heading we list only records from the Inner London area and the old county of Middlesex. Records away from this area and within the counties surrounding London – Hertfordshire, Essex, Kent and Surrey – are listed under those county headings.

Species banners

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

1. An indication of population status in one of four categories:
   - **very rare** (<30 breeding pairs (bp) per annum);
   - **rare** (30–300 breeding pairs per annum);
   - **scarce** (301–1,000 breeding pairs per annum);
   - **less scarce** (>1,000 breeding pairs per annum).
2. A population estimate, based where possible on the mean maximum population size from the last five years and shown as '5-yr mean' (in this report the five years are 2009–13). In some cases, we show the totals estimated in national surveys, or, particularly for species with poor coverage, the best available national population estimate.
3. The degree of coverage (in 2013), defined as follows:
   - **near-complete** (RBBP reports present more or less accurate annual totals);
   - **high** (a good estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, though a small but unknown proportion has not been recorded/reported);
   - **moderate** (a less accurate estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, which is nonetheless a significant proportion of the total population);
   - **low** (the quality of the data received is so poor that population estimates are of little value for conservation or status reviews; however, maintaining an archive of known sites is useful, and this information can be used in the design of future targeted surveys).
4. The population status as determined by Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (BoCC3) (Eaton *et al.* 2009).

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

Occasional breeding species are defined as having bred at least once in the UK but are not regular breeders. Potential breeding species have not previously bred in the UK but, in some years, show signs that they may do so (e.g. presence of singing males holding territory, pairs in suitable breeding habitat). New colonists are those species that first bred in the UK in 2011–13, or have been proved to breed in the UK subsequent to 2013.

Definitions of breeding evidence

The definitions of 'confirmed breeding', 'probable breeding' and 'possible breeding' follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Within tables, the abbreviation 'confirmed breeding pairs' means 'number of pairs confirmed breeding'. Where tables show the number of occupied territories, these are the sum of confirmed and probable breeding pairs, as territorial birds are classed as being probably breeding, unless a nest has (at least) progressed to the stage where eggs have been laid, in which case the pair is classified as a confirmed breeding pair. It is important to note that confirmed breeding is *not* the same as successful breeding; nests that fail with eggs or with young still fall into the confirmed category. A successful breeding pair is one that fledges at least one young bird from a nesting attempt. In the species accounts, the following terminology is used: *x* pairs bred (= confirmed breeding); *y* probable breeding pairs and *z* possible breeding pairs.

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

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

Definition of numbers used

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

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 23 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Amber

22 sites: 17–22 pairs. After six consecutive years of increasing numbers, fewer pairs of Whooper Swans were reported in 2013, and the number of breeding sites also dropped, by four. In Northern Ireland, the numbers of pairs dropped from five to two, although there was limited information from the province. Nine pairs in Shetland, the main county for breeding Whooper Swans, matched the previous peak total there (in 2011), but productivity was very low: five pairs hatched chicks but only one chick fledged. This is the second successive year of poor productivity for the main UK population.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one pair bred, fledging two young. **Clyde** One site: one pair bred. An injured pair hatched two young but none fledged. **Dumfries & Galloway** One site: one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one possible breeding pair, recorded on only one date in late June.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: one pair bred, one probable breeding pair. **Orkney** One site: one pair bred, but no young fledged. This is the first recorded breeding on the islands since perhaps the 1700s. **Outer Hebrides** Four sites: two pairs bred, with one pair successfully fledging four young; two probable breeding pairs. **Shetland** Nine sites: nine pairs bred but only one chick fledged.

Northern Ireland

Co. Derry One site: one pair bred. **Co. Fermanagh** One site: one pair bred.

Summering individuals or late-staying pairs were also recorded in a number of counties including **Argyll**, **Cambridgeshire**, **Caernarfonshire**, **Cornwall**, **Cumbria** and **North-east Scotland**. In addition, a naturalised pair was present but did not breed in **Bedfordshire**.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Rare: 5-yr mean 173 bp **Coverage: low** Amber

86 sites: 30–142 pairs. Eurasian Wigeon is common and widespread in winter but as a breeding species it is far more localised (Balmer *et al.* 2013). The main areas where breeding occurs are in the Scottish highlands and islands, the northern Pennines, the East Anglian Fens and the Thames Estuary. No confirmed breeding occurred away from these areas in 2013.

England, SW

Avon One site: one possible breeding pair. **Devon** One site: one possible breeding pair. **Gloucestershire** One site: two possible breeding pairs. **Somerset** Two sites: two probable breeding pairs.

England, SE

Essex One site: one pair bred (one brood of five young). **Kent** Three sites: two pairs bred, three probable breeding pairs. **Sussex** One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Seven sites: seven probable and 12 possible breeding pairs. **Lincolnshire** One site: one possible breeding pair. **Norfolk** One site: one probable breeding pair.

England, C

Nottinghamshire Two sites: two possible breeding pairs.

England, N

Cumbria Five sites: five possible breeding pairs. **Co. Durham** Four sites: four pairs bred (four broods totalling 19 young). **Northumberland** One site: one probable breeding pair. **Yorkshire** Three sites: two pairs bred (two broods totalling five young), two probable and seven possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: one probable breeding pair. **Clyde** One site: two probable breeding pairs. **Dumfries & Galloway** One site: one probable breeding pair. **Lothian** Three sites: three possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee One site: two possible breeding pairs. **Fife** Four sites: one probable and three possible breeding pairs. **Moray & Nairn** Three sites: four possible breeding pairs. **North-east Scotland** Six sites: two pairs bred (two broods totalling eight young), four possible breeding pairs. **Perth & Kinross** One

site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Four sites: three pairs bred (three broods totalling eight young), four probable and four possible breeding pairs. **Caithness** One site: three probable breeding pairs. **Highland** Nine sites: two pairs bred and at least 15 probable breeding pairs. **Orkney** 11 sites: six pairs bred (with five broods counted holding 24 young), eight probable and seven possible breeding pairs. **Outer Hebrides** Five sites: seven pairs bred (six broods were counted, comprising 35 young), one probable breeding pair. **Shetland** One site: one pair bred (one brood of four young).

As in previous reports, records of summering birds and pairs that showed no evidence of breeding are not included in the totals. Such pairs remain together throughout the summer, often at lowland sites, which may occasionally be used for breeding, but generally seem not to be. Pairs are assigned to the 'possible' breeding category based on habitat and behavioural criteria but it can be difficult to distinguish these from 'summering' pairs. As well as counties that reported breeding evidence, summering pairs were reported from **Anglesey** and **Northamptonshire**.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Rare: 5-yr mean 30 bp **Coverage: high** Amber

13 sites: 3–25 pairs. The recent decline (see Holling *et al.* 2014) continues, with confirmed breeding only in Kent and Argyll. For the second consecutive year there were no confirmed breeding records in the former stronghold of Orkney, where as recently as 2010 there were 18 pairs.

England, SE

Kent Two sites: one pair bred (brood of ten), one possible breeding pair.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: four possible breeding pairs.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: two possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: three possible breeding pairs. **Lothian** One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Three sites: two pairs bred (a nest with nine eggs and a brood of young), five probable and two possible breeding pairs. **Orkney** Two sites: two probable and one possible breeding pairs.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Rare: 5-yr mean 89 bp **Coverage: high** Amber

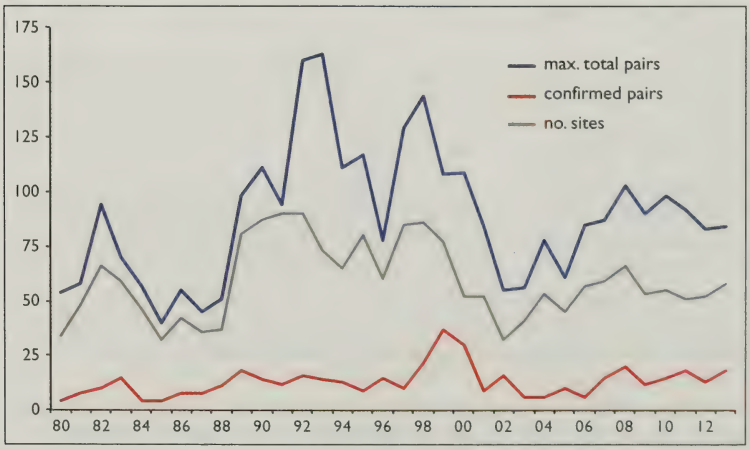


Fig. 1. Breeding status of Garganey *Anas querquedula* in the UK, 1980–2013.

58 sites: 18–84 pairs. The Panel has been reporting numbers of breeding Garganey since 1980. Fig. 1 shows that after peaks in the early and late 1990s, numbers reported annually have been reasonably stable, with maxima of around 80–100 breeding pairs each year since 2005, of which no more than

20 are confirmed, usually records of females with broods. As usual, most confirmed records in 2013 were from counties in the eastern half of England, from Yorkshire south to Sussex.

England, SW

Gloucestershire Two sites: two possible breeding pairs. **Hampshire** Two sites: two possible breeding pairs. **Somerset** One extensive site: three probable and two possible breeding pairs.

England, SE

Buckinghamshire One site: one possible breeding pair. **Essex** Two sites: one pair bred, one probable breeding pair. **Kent** Six sites: two pairs bred, seven probable breeding pairs. **Oxfordshire** One site: one probable breeding pair. **Sussex** Three sites: one pair bred (brood of four), two possible breeding pairs.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Seven sites: three pairs bred (broods totalling 18 young), four probable breeding pairs and seven possible breeding pairs. **Lincolnshire** Three sites: one probable and two possible breeding pairs. **Norfolk** Five sites: three pairs bred, five probable breeding pairs. **Northamptonshire** One site: two possible breeding pairs. **Suffolk** Two sites: two pairs bred.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One site: one pair bred (female with five well-grown ducklings seen in August). **Shropshire** One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, N

Cleveland One site: one probable breeding pair. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Three sites: two pairs bred, one probable and one possible breeding pairs. **Yorkshire** Seven sites: three pairs bred, two probable and nine possible breeding pairs.

Wales

Carmarthenshire One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee Two sites: two possible breeding pairs. **Fife** One site: one probable breeding pair. **North-east Scotland** One site: one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one possible breeding pair. **Orkney** One site: one probable breeding pair.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: one probable breeding pair.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 974 bp **Coverage: high** Amber

391–964 pairs.

Shoveler	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	6	58
Avon	2	3
Dorset	0	7
Gloucestershire	0	4
Hampshire	3	3
Isle of Wight	0	2
Somerset	1	39
England, SE	51	142
Bedfordshire	0	2
Berkshire	0	9
Essex	42	61
Greater London	3	8
Hertfordshire	1	11
Kent	1	19
Oxfordshire	0	18
Surrey	0	4
Sussex	4	10
England, E	210	407
Cambridgeshire	106	217
Lincolnshire	23	38
Norfolk	17	87
Northamptonshire	0	1
Suffolk	64	64
England, C	6	15
Nottinghamshire	3	4
Shropshire	0	1
Staffordshire	1	4
Warwickshire	1	4
West Midlands	0	1
Worcestershire	1	1
England, N	61	189
Cheshire & Wirral	1	6
Cleveland	1	6

Ben Green

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Shoveler *cont.*	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
Cumbria	0	8	Lothian	0	1
Co. Durham	3	3	Scotland, Mid	14	25
Greater Manchester	3	6	Angus & Dundee	0	4
Lancashire & N Merseyside	3	32	Fife	1	2
Northumberland	0	1	North-east Scotland	0	6
Yorkshire	50	127	Perth & Kinross	13	13
Wales	6	17	Scotland, N & W	22	78
Anglesey	1	2	Argyll	6	32
Denbigh & Flint	0	9	Highland	0	2
Gower	1	1	Orkney	13	28
Gwent	2	2	Outer Hebrides	3	14
Pembrokeshire	2	3	Shetland	0	2
Scotland, S	15	27	Northern Ireland	0	5
Borders	0	6	Co. Antrim	0	3
Clyde	3	6	Co. Down	0	2
Dumfries & Galloway	12	14	Channel Islands	0	1
			Guernsey	0	1
			TOTALS	391	964

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 653 bp **Coverage: high** **Amber**

360–622 pairs. Only nine pairs were reported in Scotland, with just three confirmed breeding records (all at one site). This species' decline in Scotland, and in Northumberland, contrasts with the relatively stable numbers across much of England. At present it is unclear what lies behind this change in status in northern Britain.

Pochards require nutrient-rich waterbodies but many apparently favourable sites in southern and eastern Scotland, and in Orkney, have been deserted in recent years. For both Pochards and Shovelers, it helps greatly if birdwatchers report all pairs found in suitable breeding habitat in spring and summer. In cases where pairs are found in April or May, it is especially useful to revisit the site in June or July to look for broods of ducklings.

Common Pochard	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	15	106
Avon	1	1
Dorset	4	9
Hampshire	5	5
Somerset	3	89
Wiltshire	2	2
England, SE	163	218
Bedfordshire	5	5
Berkshire	7	10
Essex	56	72
Greater London	19	20
Hertfordshire	28	56
Kent	36	36
Oxfordshire	1	5
Surrey	2	5
Sussex	9	9
England, E	48	129
Cambridgeshire	9	52
Lincolnshire	13	26
Norfolk	23	48
Suffolk	3	3
England, C	7	7
Nottinghamshire	5	5
Worcestershire	2	2
England, N	91	114
Cheshire & Wirral	7	7
Cleveland	22	22
Cumbria	0	1
Co. Durham	1	1
Greater Manchester	0	5
Lancashire & N Merseyside	22	22
Northumberland	2	2
Yorkshire	37	54
Wales	17	18
Anglesey	2	3
Carmarthenshire	11	11
Gwent	4	4
Scotland, S	0	1
Clyde	0	1
Scotland, Mid	3	8
Fife	0	5
Perth & Kinross	3	3
Northern Ireland	16	21
Co. Armagh/Co. Down	16	21
TOTALS	360	622

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Rare: 52 bp (Eaton *et al.* 2008) **Coverage: near-complete** **Red**

Seven sites: 10–33 pairs. Common Scoter is the focus of annual monitoring by RSPB Scotland and we believe that most pairs are now counted annually. There has been a small decline in numbers from 2010, when up to 42 pairs bred.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross Five sites: one pair bred (a brood of two seen), one probable and six possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness/Highland One extensive site (Flow Country): seven pairs bred (seven broods yielded at least 34 young; at least 18 fledged) and a further 12 probable breeding pairs. **Highland** One site: two pairs bred and four other pairs present.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Rare: 5-yr mean 140 bp **Coverage: low** **Amber**

A minimum of 105 breeding females. The main population, in Strathspey, Highland, was again not monitored fully so the totals are less representative than those reported prior to 2011, reflected in the decline in the five-year mean. Breeding remains unusual in England: since the Panel began reporting the species (in 1973) there have been records in 1990, 1991, 2008 and annually since 2010. Successful breeding in Northumberland occurred for the fourth year in a row. Pairs and individuals lingered into the summer in at least five other counties: Angus & Dundee, Cumbria, Fife, Hertfordshire and Leicestershire & Rutland.

England, SW

Avon One site: one pair bred. A female and two young (about four weeks old) were seen in late June and were still present in August.

England, N

Northumberland One site: one pair bred. Eight ducklings hatched and there were three juveniles still on site in mid July.

Alan Harris

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Scotland, Mid
North-east Scotland Deeside: 43 pairs bred.
Scotland, N & W
Highland Badenoch & Strathspey: at least 60 pairs bred.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 839 singing males **Coverage: high** Amber

2–237 singing males or pairs. There were records of confirmed breeding from Hertfordshire, the Isle of Man and Northumberland but 2013 was the poorest year for Quails since 2001. Many county recorders noted the low numbers and remarked that most birds were heard on one date only, which might suggest that some moved on quickly after arrival.

Common Quail	Total pairs or singing males
England, SW	41
Avon	4
Cornwall	1
Devon	1
Dorset	1
Gloucestershire	9
Hampshire	2
Somerset	2
Wiltshire	21
England, SE	46
Bedfordshire	5
Berkshire	7
Buckinghamshire	4
Hertfordshire	9
Kent	3
Oxfordshire	15
Sussex	3
England, E	20
Cambridgeshire	1
Lincolnshire	7
Norfolk	7
Northamptonshire	2
Suffolk	3
England, C	14
Derbyshire	3
Leicestershire & Rutland	3
Shropshire	3
Staffordshire	2
Warwickshire	3
England, N	57
Cheshire & Wirral	4
Cleveland	3
Durham	9
Lancashire & N Merseyside	3
Northumberland	9
Yorkshire	29
Wales	6
Caernarfonshire	1
Denbigh & Flint	1
Pembrokeshire	2
Radnorshire	2

Common Quail *cont.*	Total pairs or singing males		
		Perth & Kinross	2
		Upper Forth	1
Scotland, S	28	Scotland, N & W	13
Borders	14	Argyll	3
Dumfries & Galloway	2	Highland	6
Lothian	12	Orkney	2
Scotland, Mid	10	Shetland	2
Angus & Dundee	2	Isle of Man/Channel Islands	11
Fife	5	TOTAL	237

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

Rare: 5-yr mean 205 lekking males **Coverage: moderate** **Red**

119 leks were monitored, a further increase in the number checked since RBBP reporting began, but a similar number (70) were active and a total of 193 displaying males was counted, a further decrease on the totals of the previous two years. Fig. 2 shows how, despite the improved monitoring effort, the number of males recorded has not increased over the same time period. The estimated number of individual birds derived from the national transect-based survey in the 2009/10 winter was 1,285 (see Ewing *et al.* 2012).

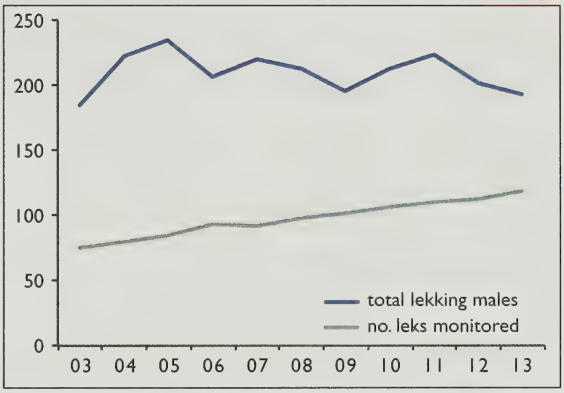


Fig. 2. The total number of Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* leks monitored and the number of lekking males counted in the UK, 2003–13.

Simon Knight

232. Displaying male Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, Speyside, February 2013.

Scotland, S

Clyde Four leks monitored but no activity recorded. However, one male was heard at one site in April.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn Ten active leks: 14 males. **North-east Scotland** Seven active leks: 12 males. **Perth & Kinross** One active lek: one male.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 52 active leks: 165 males. In the Abernethy Forest RSPB recording area, 26 males and 19 females were counted and 14 chicks were found during a brood-count census.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Less scarce: 1,255 bp (Dillon *et al.* 2009) Coverage: low Amber

Details were received for just 206 nesting pairs, only a fraction of the estimated 1,255 pairs breeding in Scotland (Dillon *et al.* 2009). Since we are unable to provide accurate figures for most recording areas, we summarise only those records submitted away from the Northern Isles. In Shetland, data from study areas showed that the number of pairs with chicks in late summer was the lowest ever (12 compared with an average of 31 for 2004–13; Heubeck & Parnaby 2015). This low productivity is thought to reflect problems with food availability. Similarly poor fledging success was also reported from Orkney mainland.

Scotland, S

Clyde One site: one probable breeding pair. **Clyde Islands** On Arran and Bute, at least two pairs bred and there were a further nine probable breeding pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one possible breeding pair. **North-east Scotland** One pair bred; one egg laid but no young believed to have fledged. **Perth & Kinross** One pair bred, seen with two young.

Scotland, N & W

Limited data received, as follows: **Argyll** At least six pairs bred plus three probable breeding pairs. **Caithness** Five pairs bred with young seen at four of these. **Highland** At least 28 pairs bred, plus one probable breeding pair. **Outer Hebrides** At least 30 pairs bred plus two probable breeding pairs.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Rare: 217 bp (Dillon *et al.* 2009) Coverage: moderate Amber

23–53 pairs. Data received were effectively only a sample of the population in N & W Scotland, although it is believed that all pairs elsewhere were located. There was nevertheless a small increase in the number of pairs reported.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One probable breeding pair. **Dumfries & Galloway** One pair bred.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One pair bred, fledging one young (the first successful breeding at this site in six years). **Perth & Kinross** Two possible breeding pairs. **Upper Forth** Three possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Five pairs bred, with two pairs being successful, fledging three young in total, and one probable breeding pair. Another seven traditional sites were not checked for occupancy. **Highland** Nine pairs bred, 20 probable breeding pairs. **Outer Hebrides** Details were received of just ten pairs; of these, seven pairs bred, plus two probable and one possible breeding pairs.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Rare: 5-yr mean 120 booming males Coverage: near-complete Red

73 sites: 121–140 booming males, with at least 46 breeding attempts at 23 sites. Even though this species is no longer subject to a full annual survey by the RSPB, the number of breeding pairs, based on records of booming males (see note below), continues to rise and the five-year mean increased by ten in 2013. As monitoring is reduced, additional records submitted to the RBBP become a more important component of the annual review.

Eurasian Bittern	No. sites	Minimum no. booming males	Maximum no. booming males	Minimum no. nests	Maximum no. nests
England, SW	11	33	36	14	14
Dorset	1	0	1	0	0
Hampshire	1	0	1	0	0
Somerset	9	33	34	14	14
England, SE	6	8	8	1	1
Bedfordshire	2	2	2	0	0
Kent	2	3	3	1	1
Oxfordshire	1	2	2	0	0
Sussex	1	1	1	0	0
England, E	43	65	77	25	27
Cambridgeshire	11	12	16	6	7
Lincolnshire	4	3	6	0	0
Norfolk	18	20	22	5	6
Suffolk	10	30	33	14	14
England, C	3	3	3	0	0
Derbyshire	2	2	2	0	0
Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	0	0
England, N	10	12	16	6	7
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	0	0
Lancashire & N Merseyside	2	1	2	0	0
Yorkshire	7	10	13	6	7
TOTALS	73	121	140	46	49

These figures are based on the RSPB monitoring methodology; the minimum figure is the closest to the number of occupied territories. The minimum number of booming males is based on residency at a site for at least a week, while the maximum figure includes males booming for a shorter period only and cases where it was not possible to confirm that different males were involved.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 2 bp

Two sites: 1–4 pairs. Although there was again just one confirmed breeding pair, there was some evidence of three other territories, indicating a possible consolidation of this new population, which first bred in the Somerset Levels in 2010.

England, SW

Somerset Two sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging at least two young, and at least two other unattached males; (2) one barking male heard between 24th April and 2nd June.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 816 bp **Coverage: moderate**

107 sites: 724–755 pairs. The number of sites with breeding Little Egrets passed the century mark for the first time, and another milestone was the first reported breeding for Nottinghamshire, but the number of nesting pairs reported dropped to its lowest level for six years. In part, this is probably due to an increasing level of apathy over recording this species, with perhaps ten colonies not counted in 2013; for these we have had to assume a count of just one. However, several of these colonies have not been counted in recent years either. We calculate that at least 80 nests went uncounted in 2013; taking this into account, there was a small decrease (<10%) between 2012 and 2013. This matches a decline in the number of nests of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* counted by the BTO Heronries census in recent years, which is likely to be a response to the sequence of cold winters earlier this decade (Baillie *et al.* 2014). Trend data from Europe

Little Egret	No. sites	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs
England, SW	30	156
Cornwall	3	10
Devon	9*	62+
Dorset	2*	3+
Gloucestershire	3	16
Hampshire	5*	27+
Somerset	6	30
Wiltshire	2	8
England, SE	28	223
Berkshire	2	4
Buckinghamshire	2	10
Essex	5	59
Hertfordshire	3	11
Kent	5	83
Oxfordshire	1	2
Sussex	10	54
England, E	24	178
Cambridgeshire	3	26
Lincolnshire	5	44
Norfolk	7*	67+
Northamptonshire	2	4
Suffolk	7	37
England, C	3	14
Leicestershire & Rutland	2	6
Nottinghamshire	1	8
England, N	3	66
Cheshire & Wirral	1	60
Cumbria	1	5
Yorkshire	1	1
Wales	11	85
Anglesey	2	12
Caernarfonshire	2	40
Carmarthenshire	3	17
Ceredigion	1*	1+
Gower	2	14
Gwent	1*	1+
Northern Ireland	1	3
Co. Down	1	3
Channel Islands	7	30
TOTALS	107	755

* Colonies occupied but at least one in the county was not counted.

(PECBMS 2014) also showed a decline in numbers between 2011 and 2012, and a longer-term decline of -30% between 2003 and 2012.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

New colonist

One site: two pairs. Great White Egrets nested for the second consecutive year in the Somerset Levels, with two pairs again present.

England, SW

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

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 9 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Amber

One site: Ten pairs. Reports of summering birds are becoming more common but so far Holkham remains the only nesting site in the UK.

England, E

Norfolk One site (Holkham): ten pairs bred, fledging a total of 18 young.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 27 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Amber

17 sites: 23–26 pairs bred. The low numbers of breeding pairs in the Scottish Highlands continues to give cause for concern. The displaying pair outside the normal range was unusual, and, much farther away, a single bird summered for its seventh consecutive year in Devon.

The decline in the UK contrasts with the situation in Iceland. Stuart Benn of the RSPB, who monitors the species in Scotland, commented: 'Slavonian Grebes have undergone a dramatic increase in Iceland recently, from some 300 pairs in the early to mid 1990s, to 850 pairs in 2005 and 1,000 pairs in 2011–12. There is some indication that this increase has now levelled off.

By contrast, breeding numbers in north Norway have crashed over that same period. The RSPB has been working with Slavonian Grebe researchers in these countries for the last few years and they are now beginning to get some idea of why these large-scale changes are taking place.'

Scotland, Mid and N & W

Angus & Dundee One site: one pair was recorded, late in the season, but courtship display was seen and two nests were built. **Highland/Moray & Nairn** 16 sites: 23 pairs bred at 14 sites, elsewhere two possible breeding pairs. Loch Ruthven was again the major site with ten breeding pairs but only three young fledged.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Rare: 5-yr mean 51 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Amber

20 sites: 28–55 pairs. In England, breeding occurred mainly at traditional sites, with a slight improvement in the number of pairs and sites over the last two years. It is now ten years since breeding was last confirmed in Scotland (Holling 2014) and there were no reports of even possible breeding from the country between 2009 and 2013.

England, SE

Essex One site: one pair bred, hatching two young, but neither fledged. **Hertfordshire** One site: four pairs bred, fledging two young; eight probable breeding pairs. **Kent** Two sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging one young; six probable breeding pairs; (2) one possible breeding pair. **Surrey** One site: two probable breeding pairs (display but no further evidence of breeding).

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair bred, fledging three young. **Lincolnshire** Three sites: (1) two pairs bred fledging seven young; (2)–(3) one possible breeding pair at each.

England, C

Nottinghamshire Two sites: (1) two pairs bred (five young fledged from seven hatched); one possible breeding pair; (2) one possible breeding pair.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: nine pairs bred, fledging 11 young. **Co. Durham** One site: one pair bred, fledging two young. **Greater Manchester** One site: one possible breeding pair. **Northumberland** Three sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging two young; one probable breeding pair; (2) two possible breeding pairs; (3) one possible breeding pair. **Yorkshire** Three sites: (1) four pairs bred, with seven fledged or large young; (2) one pair bred hatching three and fledging one young, plus one possible breeding pair; (3) one pair bred hatching two and fledging one young.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Rare: 5-yr mean 43 bp **Coverage: high** Amber

18–34 pairs and at least 16 territories where only single birds present; at least 28 young fledged. After low numbers and poor productivity in 2012, the total of breeding pairs was again low in 2013 but the number of large young was a big improvement on the ten fledged in 2012. The high number of sites with only a single bird reported will in some instances refer to unpaired birds, but may also reflect the secretive habits of Honey-buzzards and the need for long periods of observation from vantage points to survey a site effectively. We know that at least 12 sites for this species in England and Wales were not surveyed in 2013. With other apparently suitable habitat in England, Scotland and Wales not being searched for Honey-buzzards, Roberts & Law (2014) suggested that there may be over 100 pairs nesting in Britain. They used data from the RBBP to show that birds have been recorded in breeding habitat in 34 counties since 2000, compared with the 17 reported here.

England, SW

Dorset Three territories occupied by single birds only. **Hampshire** Six pairs bred, fledging at least ten young, with at least single birds present at three other sites. **Wiltshire** One pair bred, fledging two young; two probable breeding pairs and two further territories with just a single bird present.

England, SE

Kent One probable breeding pair. **Surrey** Two pairs bred, fledging four young. **Sussex** Three pairs bred,

fledging six young; two probable and one possible breeding pairs. One territory occupied by a single bird.
England, E
Norfolk One probable and one possible breeding pair and two single birds elsewhere.
England, C
Nottinghamshire One pair bred (young were fledged but number unknown) and one possible breeding pair.
England, N
Cumbria One probable breeding pair. **Yorkshire** At least one pair bred (no information on young), and one possible breeding pair.
Wales
East Glamorgan/Gower Two pairs bred, fledging four young; two probable breeding pairs. **Meirionnydd** One single bird recorded.
Scotland, S
Borders One single bird recorded. **Dumfries & Galloway** One pair bred, fledging two young; one probable breeding pair and one further single bird.
Scotland, Mid
Moray & Nairn Records of single birds at two sites only. **Perth & Kinross** One pair bred but number of young not known; also one probable breeding pair. **Upper Forth** One probable breeding pair.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Rare: 5-yr mean 61 bp **Coverage: near-complete** **Red**

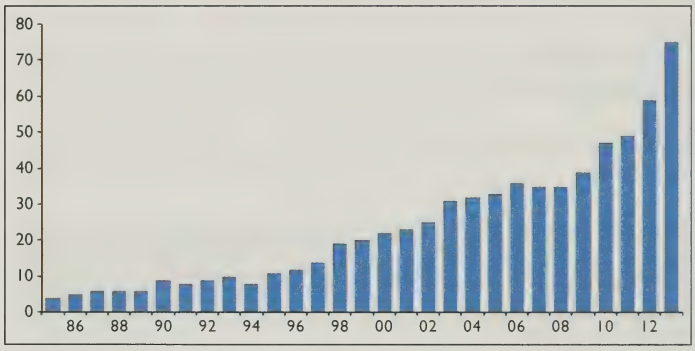


Fig. 3. The total number of confirmed breeding pairs of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in the UK since breeding was first recorded, in 1985.

Dan Powell

75–84 pairs; 62 young fledged. The first breeding attempt in eastern Scotland for nearly 200 years took place in 2013, and a single chick fledged. This follows the recent reintroductions there: both members of the breeding pair were released in 2009. Meanwhile, the established west-coast population continued to increase, reaching another new peak (fig. 3).

Scotland, Mid
Angus & Dundee One territorial pair. **Fife** One pair bred, fledging one young.
Scotland, N & W
Argyll 35 pairs bred, two further territorial pairs. At least 26 young fledged. **Highland** 18 pairs bred, with a further three territorial pairs. At least 14 young fledged. **Orkney** One territorial pair. **Outer Hebrides** 21 pairs bred, two other territorial pairs. At least 21 young fledged.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 351 bp **Coverage: moderate** Amber

280–323 breeding females/pairs. Under-recording of this species in some parts of its core range, notably the Thames marshes of Essex and Kent, and the Norfolk Broads, means that the total numbers reported are less than might be expected; the five-year mean of pairs reported to RBBP is about 100–150 pairs below the likely minimum population. The range continues to expand to the west with possible breeding in Cornwall and Warwickshire. In continental Europe, an analysis of numbers across 13 countries points to a moderate increase since 2005 (PECBMS 2014).

England, SW

Cornwall One possible breeding pair. **Dorset** Three pairs bred, including the first breeding at Poole Harbour for about 60 years. **Somerset** Three pairs bred and one probable breeding pair.

England, SE

Essex 19 pairs bred, four probable and two possible breeding pairs. **Kent** Clearly under-recorded, with data received on just 17 breeding pairs in 2013; previous atlas work suggests 80–100 pairs in the county. **Sussex** Two pairs bred and two probable breeding pairs.

England, E

Cambridgeshire 25 pairs bred, six probable and two possible breeding pairs. **Lincolnshire** 31 pairs bred, one probable and one possible breeding pairs. **Norfolk** A minimum of 62 pairs bred, plus six probable breeding pairs. Coverage was incomplete, however, especially in the Broads. **Suffolk** 63 pairs bred.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One pair bred and one probable breeding pair. **Warwickshire** One possible breeding pair.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral Two pairs bred and one probable breeding pair. **Cumbria** One possible breeding pair. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Eight pairs bred and one possible breeding pair. **Northumberland** One pair bred. **Yorkshire** 30 pairs bred, two probable and four possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, S

Borders One possible breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee One probable breeding pair, recorded at two different sites. **Fife** One pair bred. **Perth & Kinross** Four pairs bred. Single birds also recorded in **Moray & Nairn** and **North-east Scotland**.

Channel Islands

Jersey Six pairs bred. **Guernsey** Two pairs bred, two probable and two possible breeding pairs.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce: 662 bp (Hayhow *et al.* 2013) **Coverage: moderate** Red

Hen Harrier	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs
England, N	3	3
Wales	23	31
Breconshire	1	1
Caernarfonshire	0	1
Denbigh & Flint	3	5
East Glamorgan	0	1
Meirionnydd	12	14
Montgomeryshire	3	3
Radnorshire	4	6
Scotland, S	26	51
Ayrshire	6	7
Borders	3	3
Clyde	6	9
Clyde Islands	1	20
Dumfries & Galloway	10	12
Scotland, Mid	27	41
Moray & Nairn	6	7
North-east Scotland	1	2
Perth & Kinross	20	32
Scotland, N & W	138	177
Argyll	30	39
Caithness	0	2
Highland	17	18
Orkney	74	101
Outer Hebrides	17	17
Northern Ireland	16	55
Co. Antrim	2	15
Co. Derry	0	5
Co. Fermanagh	9	19
Co. Tyrone	5	16
Isle of Man	3	3
TOTALS	236	361

236–361 monitored pairs. In 2013, the status of the Hen Harrier became national news in England when no young at all were raised. The main breeding area in recent years had been the Forest of Bowland (Lancashire & N Merseyside) but, as in 2012, no pairs settled on territory there (in 2011 there had been seven breeding pairs, when 12 young fledged). Three pairs attempted to nest elsewhere in the north of England in 2013 but all failed. At one, where a 24-hour watch was set up to protect the nest, the eggs did not hatch and proved to be infertile (the female may have been an immature bird). At another, the male disappeared from the site in suspicious circumstances just a week after the nest was found. The female was incubating at the time but deserted the nest, perhaps because of the lack of food provisioning by the male.

A new survey of breeding Hen Harriers in the UK and Isle of Man will be undertaken in 2016.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 13 bp **Coverage: near-complete** **Amber**

Five sites: 7–8 pairs fledged six young. This represents another poor year for Montagu's Harriers in Britain. Again there was just one pair in the former stronghold, in the hinterland of the Wash, although a single male was present for a month in Cambridgeshire. Males can roost over 10 km from a nest site (M. Thomas pers. comm.) so it is feasible that a pair may have been overlooked in the area.

England, S

Four sites: six 'pairs' bred (at one site a polygamous male paired with two females), four young fledged; plus one possible breeding pair.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one pair bred, fledging two young.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 469 bp **Coverage: moderate** **Green**

361–464 pairs. Some detailed Goshawk studies reported that the cold and late spring in 2013 caused many pairs to desert when nest-building or at the early stages of egg-laying or incubation (Challis *et al.* 2014). Nevertheless, a large proportion (76.5%) of the submitted records in 2013 were of confirmed breeding, even higher than the average of 68% in the last 20 years – these are nests visited by licensed fieldworkers for productivity monitoring and to ring the chicks. We believe that there is consistent under-recording of Goshawks, at the local and national scale, because birdwatchers are not reporting many records of the species' spring display – the one time of the year when this secretive hawk becomes more conspicuous.

Northern Goshawk	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	76	98
Cornwall	4	4
Devon	8	8
Gloucestershire	25	27
Hampshire	26	40
Somerset	0	2
Wiltshire	13	17
England, SE	1	4
Surrey	0	1
Sussex	1	3
England, E	14	15
Norfolk	9	9
Suffolk	5	6
England, C	55	65
Derbyshire	11	11
Herefordshire	13	20
Nottinghamshire	8	8
Shropshire	16	19
Staffordshire	3	3
Warwickshire	1	1
Worcestershire	3	3
England, N	48	83
Cheshire & Wirral	0	2
Cleveland	0	1
Cumbria	1	4
Co. Durham	0	8
Greater Manchester	0	1
Lancashire & N Merseyside	0	1
Northumberland	26	34
Yorkshire	21	32

Northern Goshawk *cont.*	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
Wales	52	82
Breconshire	4	10
Caernarfonshire	0	2
Carmarthenshire	0	1
Denbigh & Flint	2	2
East Glamorgan	1	2
Gower	3	8
Gwent	24	24
Montgomeryshire	7	13
Pembrokeshire	4	4
Radnorshire	7	16
Scotland, S	54	54
Ayrshire	1	1
Borders	19	19
Clyde	2	2
Dumfries & Galloway	31	31
Lothian	1	1
Scotland, Mid	61	63
Angus & Dundee	5	5
Moray & Nairn	1	1
North-east Scotland	51	53
Perth & Kinross	1	1
Upper Forth	3	3
TOTALS	361	464

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

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

194–265 pairs. The total of 128 fledged young is the highest since 2010, when a similar number of territories were monitored, mainly by members of the Scottish Raptor Study Groups. A national survey in 2015 will update our knowledge of the status of the Golden Eagle in Scotland.

Golden Eagle	Singles [1]	Probable breeding pairs [2]	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs	Min. no. young fledged
England, N	1	0	0	0	0
Scotland, S	0	3	8	11	2
Borders	0	0	1	1	0
Clyde	0	0	1	1	1
Clyde Islands	0	2	5	7	1
Dumfries & Galloway	0	1	1	2	0
Scotland, Mid	5	10	34	44	26
Angus & Dundee	1	1	3	4	3
Moray & Nairn	0	1	0	1	0
North-east Scotland	2	2	11	13	6
Perth & Kinross	2	4	16	20	15
Upper Forth	0	2	4	6	2
Scotland, N & W	13	58	152	210	100
Argyll	0	20	43	63	28
Caithness	1	1	0	1	0
Highland	12	32	79	111	51
Outer Hebrides	0	5	30	35	21
TOTALS	19	71	194	265	128

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

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare: 5-yr mean 206 bp **Coverage: moderate** Amber

178–208 pairs. A minimum of 307 young fledged. Although there are increasing numbers of pairs nesting in England, Wales and southern Scotland (totals of 15, seven and 31 pairs respectively, the highest ever reported in all three areas), there has been no such increase in the rest of Scotland.

This may be due to data received being largely from the same study areas each year, the size of which are constrained by the time available to volunteers, which in turn results in some new territories going unrecorded. Unfortunately, accurate locations of many of these nests are not submitted to the Panel, meaning that it is impossible to identify new and additional sites reported by more casual observers. This is hampering our knowledge of the changing status of this species and its conservation and we urge that full site details are submitted.

England, E

Northamptonshire One territorial pair.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland Five pairs bred, fledging 14 young.

England, N

Cumbria Three pairs bred, with two of these fledging four young; three other territorial pairs. **Northumberland** Two pairs bred, fledging four young; and one territorial pair.

Wales

Meirionnydd Two pairs bred fledging four young; one territorial pair and two other immature pairs. **Montgomeryshire** One pair bred, fledging two young; and one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One territorial pair. **Borders** Eight pairs bred, fledging 14 young. **Clyde** Nine pairs bred, fledging 14 young; three other territorial pairs. **Clyde Islands** One pair bred, but no young fledged. **Dumfries & Galloway** Five pairs bred, fledging ten young; three other territorial pairs. **Lothian** One pair bred but failed before the eggs hatched. This is the first confirmed breeding record for the county.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee Eight pairs bred, fledging 11 young; one other territorial pair. **Fife** One pair bred, fledging one young. **Moray & Nairn** 13 pairs bred, fledging 27 young. **North-east Scotland** 18 pairs bred, fledging 33 young. **Perth & Kinross** 29 pairs bred, fledging 43 young; two other territorial pairs. **Upper Forth** Nine pairs bred, fledging 13 young; three other territorial pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll 16 pairs bred, fledging 33 young; three other territorial pairs. **Caithness** Two pairs bred, fledging four young, and one possible breeding pair. **Highland** 45 pairs bred, fledging 76 young; four other territorial pairs.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,315 bp **Coverage: moderate** **Green**

At least 464 sites: a minimum of 1,627 territories; 145 confirmed breeding pairs. The Water Rail has been on the RBBP list for eight years now and these are the highest reported totals of both sites and territories. Despite this, at around 60 of these sites Water Rails were recorded merely as 'present during the breeding season': no counts were made and a minimum of one at each has had to be assumed. This degree of under-recording supports the belief that the national population is over 2,000 territories (see also Holling *et al.* 2013).

Water Rail	Sites	Territories
England, SW	**41**	**408**
Avon	3	8
Cornwall	1	1
Devon	4	4
Dorset	6	296
Gloucestershire	1	3
Hampshire	17	38
Isle of Wight	1	1
Isles of Scilly	1	1
Somerset	4	53
Wiltshire	3	3
England, SE	**137**	**173**
Bedfordshire	6	10
Berkshire	2	2
Buckinghamshire	3	3
Essex	4	22
Greater London	2	2
Hertfordshire	8	13
Kent*	95	95
Oxfordshire	2	3
Surrey	7	10
Sussex	8	13
England, E	**63**	**401**
Cambridgeshire	16	36
Lincolnshire	8	15
Norfolk	16	22

Water Rail *cont.*	Sites	Territories
Northamptonshire	1	1
Suffolk	22	327
England, C	**26**	**59**
Derbyshire	4	4
Leicestershire & Rutland	1	1
Nottinghamshire	5	12
Shropshire	3	3
Staffordshire	4	19
Warwickshire	5	10
Worcestershire	4	10
England, N	**82**	**359**
Cheshire & Wirral	13	14
Cleveland	4	35
Cumbria	6	13
Co. Durham	7	7
Greater Manchester	13	40
Lancashire & N Merseyside	2	146
Northumberland	16	20
Yorkshire	21	84
Wales	**39**	**83**
Anglesey	2	27
Breconshire	5	5
Caernarfonshire	5	10
Carmarthenshire	1	1
Ceredigion	1	2
Denbigh & Flint	2	2
East Glamorgan	3	3
Gower	5	6
Gwent	3	7
Montgomeryshire	4	10
Pembrokeshire	1	1
Radnorshire	7	9
Scotland, S	**28**	**54**
Ayrshire	3	8
Borders	10	22
Clyde	3	7
Dumfries & Galloway	10	14
Lothian	2	3
Scotland, Mid	**21**	**56**
Angus & Dundee	6	40
Fife	3	3
Moray & Nairn	2	2
North-east Scotland	5	5
Perth & Kinross	5	6
Scotland, N & W	**25**	**31**
Argyll	6	8
Caithness	1	1
Highland	9	9
Orkney	8	12
Outer Hebrides	1	1
Channel Islands	**2**	**3**
Jersey	2	3
TOTALS	**464**	**1,627**

* Numbers in Kent are based only on the number of occupied tetrads during survey work in 2007–12.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 26 singing males **Coverage: moderate** Amber

16 sites: 0–22 pairs/singing males. A year after the national survey in 2012 (Schmitt *et al.* 2015), and despite the presumed reduction in recording effort, there was only a slight decrease in the number of potential pairs reported, while the number of sites increased from 11 to 16. Nevertheless, the survey results point to a decline of 65% since the previous one, in 1999. All records listed refer to singing birds reported in suitable breeding habitat.

England, SW

Somerset One site: at least three during 2nd–8th June.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) Nene Washes: up to four; (2) Ouse Washes: one.

England, N

Yorkshire Two sites: (1) extensive site with two singing males in May and June; (2) one for two weeks in late June and early July.

Wales

Breconshire One site: one from 29th May to 1st June. **Ceredigion** One site: one for ten days from 29th May.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway Three sites: three birds.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee One site: one from 27th June to 1st July.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two sites: (1) one on 17th and 27th June; (2) one on 21st May only. **Caithness** One site: one. **Highland** One site: one on 23rd May. **Orkney** One site: one from 29th May to 2nd June and then it or another at a nearby site on 9th–10th June.

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,191 bp **Coverage: near-complete** **Red**

982 singing males. A comprehensive survey of Corn Crakes in the core part of the Scottish range was again undertaken in 2013, when a significant fall in numbers (-24%) became apparent, following years of increasing counts (Wotton *et al.* in press). This decline was attributed to the exceptionally cold spring of 2013. The mean spring temperature (March–May) in northern Scotland was 4.5°C in 2013, compared with 6.5°C in 2012 and 7.4°C in 2014 (Met Office data).

England, E

Cambridgeshire One extensive site (Nene Washes): seven calling males, including five confirmed breeding pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Total 582: Coll 64, Colonsay & Oronsay 53, Iona 25, Islay 87, Mull 3, Staffa 1, Tiree 348, Treshnish Isles 1. **Highland** Total 57: Eigg 3, Mainland 14, Muck 2, Skye 38. **Orkney** Total 12. **Outer Hebrides** Total 321: Barra & Vatersay 67, Benbecula 10, Berneray 3, Harris 4, Lewis 75, Mingulay and other islands south of Vatersay 7, North Uist 80, South Uist 75. **Shetland** Total 1.

Northern Ireland

Co. Derry One site: one.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 19 bp **Coverage: near-complete** **Amber**

12 sites: 15–25 pairs, eight young fledged. There was another increase in the numbers and range of the Common Crane in the UK in 2013, with at least possible breeding recorded at 12 sites, the most since the recolonisation in 1981, while the number of breeding pairs also reached a new record. This was partly a consequence of the first attempted breeding by birds from the Great Crane Project at Slimbridge, in Gloucestershire, but note also the increase in Scotland – where the breeding pair was successful for the second year in a row and at least one other pair was also present.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: one pair bred (the young died within two days of hatching), and one possible breeding pair. **Somerset** One site: one pair built a nest but did not lay eggs. All three pairs were from the Great Crane reintroduction project.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Four sites: (1) two pairs bred, one successful pair fledging two young, with a further non-breeding pair; (2)–(4) one possible breeding pair. **Norfolk** One extensive site (Norfolk Broads): eight pairs bred, three pairs were successful with up to four young fledged; also one probable breeding pair. **Suffolk** One site (Lakenheath): two pairs bred, both were unsuccessful.

England, N

Greater Manchester One site: one possible breeding pair. **Yorkshire** One extensive site: one pair bred, fledging one young; also one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Two sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging one young; (2) one non-breeding pair.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Reintroduced population first bred in 2007

One extensive site: two pairs. The small reintroduced breeding population was again unsuccessful; young have been fledged only in 2009.

England, SW

Wiltshire One site: two females laid eggs but no chicks hatched.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 390 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Amber

Seven counties: 319 confirmed breeding pairs fledged a minimum of 87 young. After a record year in 2012, numbers plummeted in 2013, owing to the effect of the cold, late spring (fig. 4). Malcolm Wright, who collates data for the Panel from the East Anglian Brecks, commented: 'The breeding season of 2013 was easily the worst in the 28 years since detailed monitoring began, in 1985, as a result of the coldest spring in southern England since the early 1960s. Bitterly cold easterly winds blew across East Anglia throughout March and the first half of April, with snow and hard frosts at times. About 30 Stone-curlews were discovered lying dead on fields and heathland in April and May, but inevitably more must have died that were never found or consumed quickly by scavengers. It appeared that many of the birds were unable to find sufficient food during the really bad spring weather and some had starved to death. Many other species were affected by this severe weather but in Suffolk Stone-curlews and Barn Owls appeared to be particularly badly caught out. The overall Breckland population dropped from 259 pairs in 2012 to 202 pairs in 2013. The productivity of 170 pairs that were closely monitored was a miserly 0.28 chicks fledged per breeding pair, way below the 0.70 which has been estimated as necessary to maintain the population (Green *et al.* 1997). It is likely that some of the females were in such poor condition that they were unable to lay a clutch of eggs. After 27 years of gradual improvement, there is no doubt that 2013 was a real setback for Britain's Stone-curlew population.'

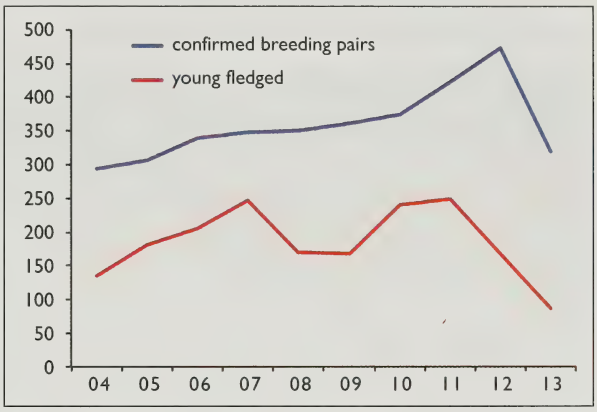


Fig. 4. The total number of confirmed breeding pairs of Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus* and the number of young fledged in the UK, 2004–13.

Stone-curlew	Confirmed breeding pairs	Min. no. young fledged
England, SW	83	26
Hampshire	9	2
Wiltshire	74	24
England, SE	11	1
Berkshire	7	0
Oxfordshire	3	1
Sussex	1	0
England, E	225	60
Norfolk	107	27
Suffolk	118	33
TOTALS	319	87

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,747 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Amber

At least 115 sites: 1,715 pairs. The number of breeding sites reached a new peak, but breeding was not repeated in Somerset or Staffordshire, where Avocets bred for the first time in 2012. The overall count of pairs in the UK also dropped, perhaps after the poor productivity in 2012. To maintain the accuracy of our reports for this species, and to minimise potential duplication, we ask that those reporting Avocets include a precise six-figure grid reference and the best count of nesting or prospecting pairs at each site.

The number of pairs at the single colony in Wales was the highest recorded there since breeding began in 2003, increasing from 27 in 2012 to 41 in 2013. Although displaying pairs have been recorded in North-east Scotland (Balmer *et al.* 2013), we still await the first confirmed breeding record for Scotland.

Avocet	No. sites	Minimum no. confirmed breeding pairs
England, SW	4	42
Gloucestershire	1	3
Hampshire	3	39
England, SE	31	349
Essex	16	130
Kent	12	168
Sussex	3	51
England, E	46	977
Cambridgeshire	6	34
Lincolnshire	12	218
Norfolk	19	513
Suffolk	9	212
England, C	7	27
Leicestershire & Rutland	1	*
Nottinghamshire	5	14
Worcestershire	1	13
England, N	26	279
Cheshire & Wirral	3	43
Cleveland	2	14
Co. Durham	1	4
Lancashire & N Merseyside	5	105
Northumberland	3	8
Yorkshire	12	105
Wales	1	41
Gwent	1	41
TOTALS	115	1,715

* Birds attended colony but no eggs were laid.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 614 bp **Coverage: moderate** **Green**

545 pairs. Little Ringed Plovers are a popular study species but it is disappointing that some Schedule 1 returns do not contain accurate grid references; such records often cannot be used by the RBBP because of potential duplication when reviewed against other records submitted for a county. Equally, some birdwatchers are not even reporting Little Ringed Plovers at potential breeding sites, or following up observations made early in the spring to see if a pair later establishes a territory. All of these factors have affected the 2013 total, which is less than half that recorded in the last national survey, in 2007, when the population was estimated at 1,115 pairs (Conway *et al.* 2008). Consequently, it is difficult to provide any indication of trends since that survey.

Little Ringed Plover	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs
England, SW	37
Avon	1
Devon	1
Gloucestershire	3
Hampshire	18
Isle of Wight	1
Somerset	4
Wiltshire	9
England, SE	95
Bedfordshire	6
Berkshire	14
Buckinghamshire	2
Essex	9
Greater London	10
Hertfordshire	4
Kent	21
Oxfordshire	7
Surrey	8
Sussex	14
England, E	65
Cambridgeshire	19
Lincolnshire	19
Norfolk	19
Northamptonshire	6
Suffolk	2
England, C	108
Derbyshire	23
Herefordshire	8
Leicestershire & Rutland	7
Nottinghamshire	18
Shropshire	8
Staffordshire	25
Warwickshire	10
West Midlands	3
Worcestershire	6
England, N	164
Cheshire & Wirral	13
Cleveland	4
Cumbria	6
Co. Durham	9
Greater Manchester	19
Lancashire & N Merseyside	32
Northumberland	17
Yorkshire	64

Little Ringed Plover *cont.*	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs		
Wales	61	Montgomeryshire	7
Breconshire	6	Radnorshire	3
Caernarfonshire	1	Scotland, S	5
Carmarthenshire	27	Clyde	2
Denbigh & Flint	3	Dumfries & Galloway	2
East Glamorgan	6	Lothian	1
Gower	1	Scotland, Mid	10
Gwent	1	Angus & Dundee	3
Meirionnydd	6	Fife	5
		North-east Scotland	1
		Perth & Kinross	1
		TOTAL	545

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce: 423 breeding males (Hayhow *et al.* in press) **Coverage: low** **Amber**

In 2013, data were received relating to 67 confirmed and probable breeding pairs nesting within the main Scottish range, with records from mountain ranges within the recording areas of **Highland**, **North-east Scotland** and **Perth & Kinross**.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Scarce: 300+ bp (Jackson 2009) **Coverage: low** **Red**

4–7 apparently occupied territories. The low total is a reflection of the coverage and reporting from Shetland, which was even poorer than normal.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness One pair in late May. **Fair Isle** One displaying pair in suitable breeding habitat in mid April, then a singing male elsewhere on the island on 29th–30th May. **Orkney** Two pairs behaving as if with chicks. **Shetland** The only records received were of two nests at a Mainland site.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Rare: 5-yr mean 59 bp **Coverage: near-complete** **Red**

Eight sites: 48–50 pairs. At 48 confirmed breeding pairs, this is the lowest number of Black-tailed Godwits for ten years and for the first time since 1968 there were no breeding records from Kent. In recent years the few pairs breeding in the grazing marshes of north Kent have had poor breeding success due to the predation of small young or trampling of nests by livestock (Clements *et al.* in press).

L. l. limosa

Four sites: 43–45 pairs fledged 39 young.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site (Nene Washes): 41 pairs fledged 37 young. **Norfolk** One site (Welney): two pairs fledged two young.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside.One site: one bird present in May and seen displaying.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: a single bird was present in late May and up to four in June, in suitable habitat. Note that the race of these birds was not recorded.

L. l. islandica

Four sites: five pairs fledged 2–4 young.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: two pairs bred, one of which fledged two young. **Shetland** Three sites: three pairs bred. One pair hatched two chicks, which may have fledged; the other pairs had no young.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 8 females **Coverage: high** Red

Three sites: 0–10 breeding females. Birds returned to the two sites where confirmed breeding occurred in 2012, with lekking in April and early May. There was no further evidence of breeding, although the presence of two males and a female in June might suggest that some birds had stayed to nest.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: 15 males and two females at a lek but no further evidence of breeding. **Yorkshire** One site: up to 17 males and eight females were present at leks in mid April with six (five males) lekking until 6th May. More suggestive of possible breeding was the record of two males and a female on 1st–2nd June.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides One site: two males behaving aggressively towards each other on 31st May.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 1 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Amber

One site: two pairs.

Scotland, N

One site: two pairs bred, with records of two broods, each of three chicks, in July.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 34 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Red

11 sites: 3–38 breeding pairs/males. Data received for 2013 relate mainly to counts of apparently breeding males and confirm the increase in numbers of recent years. An out-of-range female in North-east Scotland recalled the run of breeding on the Scottish mainland in the period 1977–84. A single female also summered in Gloucestershire.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one female present at a suitable breeding site from 5th June to 4th July.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair bred; two chicks fledged. **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: three probable and three possible breeding pairs. **Shetland** Six extensive sites: 30 males in total with confirmed breeding by at least two pairs.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 3 bp **Coverage: high** Amber

Two sites: 0–2 pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: two possible breeding pairs.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

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

Data were received for a minimum of 146 pairs, with at least 25 pairs confirmed breeding. Records came from five areas: **Argyll** (two pairs), **Caithness** (14), **Highland** (113), **Outer Hebrides** (16) and **Shetland** (1). It is pleasing to see the high numbers reported from Highland given that there was no survey or atlas project underway, but there is still great potential for the casual visitor to northern Scotland to contribute to our knowledge of the status of this species by reporting all records of Greenshank in suitable breeding habitat between May and July. In the latter part of this period, adults are very noisy in the presence of chicks and so alert the observer

Dan Powell

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

well before they are close to the young. Such records can be reported as confirmed breeding (distraction display) and negate the need to look for nests or chicks (which would in any case require a disturbance licence).

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 27 bp **Coverage: near-complete** **Amber**

11 sites: 2–28 pairs. One of these sites was a new one for the monitoring team led by RSPB Scotland, which tries to check all known and potential sites each year.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness Four sites: one probable and three possible breeding pairs. **Highland** Seven sites: two pairs bred, 21 probable and one possible breeding pairs.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Scarce: 2,136 bp (Mitchell *et al.* 2004) **Coverage: moderate** **Red**

146 apparently occupied territories (AOTs). At least 16 young fledged. Eaton *et al.* (2009) added Arctic Skua to the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Red list owing to the steep decline in its breeding population. Since then, data published by the RBBP has confirmed that the decline (apparently driven by low productivity, which relates mainly to food supply but also to predation by Great Skuas *S. skua* in some areas; Forrester *et al.* 2007) has continued. In 2010 we reported 558 AOTs but that included a full survey on Orkney (which found 376 AOTs). The 2013 total of 146 is the lowest yet reported. In 2011–13, two important Shetland colonies (Fair Isle and Foula) fledged just five young between them (all in 2012).

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Probable breeding was reported from Coll (one AOT). **Caithness** Two AOTs at one inland site, behaviour of one indicated young nearby. **Fair Isle** 19 AOTs but no young fledged. **Highland** Ten pairs fledged 12 young on Handa. **Orkney** A total of 57 AOTs were counted from 12 sites (not a full survey); just one young known to have fledged but numbers unknown at seven sites. **Outer Hebrides** On North Uist there was

evidence of only one AOT; two nests with eggs were reported on Lewis and two pairs on St Kilda fledged one young each. **Shetland** A total of at least 52 AOTs was counted from ten sites, but full counts were not available at all of these. From six sites where information on productivity was available, just one young fledged. The largest colony was on Foula – 35 AOTs – where 26 pairs were known to have laid eggs. Young hatched at just eight of these but the chicks appeared not to have been fed and died within a few days; none fledged.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

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

Minimum of 1,553 pairs at 56 colonies. A minimum of 814 young fledged. This is the second-highest number of young fledged since 2007, perhaps aided by the dry summer. The many problems faced by breeding Little Terns are illustrated by the situation at the large Cleveland colony, where only a single chick fledged. In mid June, about half the eggs were stolen by a thief, and the remaining pairs then lost their eggs to Hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus*. Many pairs relaid but two Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* eventually predated all but one of the chicks.

September 2013 saw the launch of the EU LIFE+ Little Tern Recovery Project. The main objective of the project, which will last for five years, is to secure the long-term recovery of breeding Little Terns in the UK through actions including site management, reviewing the effectiveness of different management techniques and increasing public awareness and support.

Little Tern	No. sites	Confirmed breeding pairs	Min. young fledged
England, SW	3	73	31
Dorset	1	25	30
Hampshire	2	48	1
England, SE	12	83	19
Essex	6	53	18
Kent	2	4	0
Sussex	4	26	1
England, E	13	918	540
Lincolnshire	1	2	0
Norfolk	9	901	536
Suffolk	3	15	4
England, N	6	155	60
Cleveland	1	50	1
Cumbria	2	34	2
Northumberland	2	35	17
Yorkshire	1	36	40
Wales	1	129	65
Denbigh & Flint	1	129	65
Scotland, S	1	0	0
Lothian*	1	0	0
Scotland, Mid	2	43	30
Moray & Nairn	1	3	1
North-east Scotland	1	40	29
Scotland, N & W	17	108	41
Argyll	7	61	38
Caithness	1	3	0
Highland	2	8	2
Orkney	2	2	0
Outer Hebrides	5	34	1
Isle of Man	1	44	28
TOTALS	56	1,553	814

* Birds attended a colony but no eggs laid.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Rare: 5-yr mean 83 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Red

Three sites: 79 pairs plus two mixed pairs. A total of 79 young (including four hybrids) probably fledged. The UK population of Roseate Terns is now almost entirely confined to Coquet Island, in Northumberland, but there are larger numbers in the Republic of Ireland. Data from the Seabird Monitoring Programme show that in 2013 there were 1,214 pairs at Rockabill in Co. Dublin and 150 at Inish, Co. Wexford.

England, N

Northumberland One site (Coquet Island): 78 pairs raised at least 75 large young.

Wales

Anglesey One site: two mixed pairs bred, each fledging two hybrid young. Both Roseate Terns were paired with Common Terns *S. hirundo*.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: one pair bred, laid one egg, but no sign of any fledged young.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 878 bp **Coverage: moderate** Amber

46 sites: 895–926 pairs. The trend over the last five years indicates a stable population but some of the main colonies were not counted accurately in 2013. The number of sites increased to 46, which suggests that breeding is becoming more widespread (as shown by the maps in Balmer *et al.* 2013) and that numbers of breeding pairs may be higher than published here. We encourage observers to obtain accurate counts of known Mediterranean Gull colonies and to check other gull colonies, since this species typically begins breeding alongside other gulls, especially Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*.

England, SW

Dorset One site: at least 80 pairs normally breed here, but no accurate count made in 2013. **Hampshire** Six sites: (1) 184 pairs fledged 49 young; (2)–(6) 30 pairs bred and two probable breeding pairs.

England, SE

Berkshire One site: one mixed pair bred but no young reared and the 2nd-summer Mediterranean Gull was not seen after the end of May. **Essex** Five sites: (1)–(5) four pairs bred and four possible breeding pairs. **Kent** Seven sites: (1) no accurate count made in 2013 but at least 200 pairs estimated; (2) 115 pairs bred; (3)–(7) seven pairs bred and ten probable breeding pairs. **Sussex** Four sites: (1) no accurate count made in 2013 but at least 150 pairs estimated; (2)–(4) 43 pairs bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one possible breeding pair – a single adult held territory in a Black-headed Gull colony from April to July. **Lincolnshire** Three sites: three possible breeding pairs. **Norfolk** Four sites: (1)–(4) 35 pairs bred.

England, C

Shropshire One site: one pair bred and fledged three young.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: three pairs bred. **Greater Manchester** One site: two probable breeding (displaying) pairs. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Two sites: (1) 26 pairs bred, and four probable breeding pairs; (2) two possible breeding pairs (two territorial males). **Northumberland** One site: four pairs bred fledging three young. **Yorkshire** Three sites: (1)–(3) four pairs bred and one probable breeding pair; young fledged from only one site.

Wales

Anglesey One site: three pairs bred fledging two young.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one possible breeding pair – an adult and a 2nd-summer bird paired and displayed in April but not seen subsequently.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: three pairs bred, fledging three young. **Co. Down** One site: two pairs bred. **Co. Fermanagh** One site: one possible breeding pair – an adult and a 2nd-summer bird paired but no further evidence of breeding.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 4 bp **Coverage: near-complete** Amber

Three sites: One pair plus 1–2 mixed pairs. Since 2007 we have reported a breeding pair in Dorset and one or more mixed pairs in Hampshire, with little indication of any increase in numbers there, or further spread elsewhere.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair bred, one young fledged. **Hampshire** One site: one mixed pair bred; a Yellow-legged Gull paired with a Herring Gull *L. argentatus* fledged three hybrid young for the sixth year in a row.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one possible breeding mixed pair. A 3rd-summer Yellow-legged Gull, paired with a 3rd-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, began nest-building but abandoned the site in late May.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Scarce/Less scarce: 1,800–6,000 bp* **Coverage: unknown** Green

109–194 pairs. Long-eared Owls are under-recorded throughout their range, so our reported totals will always be a gross underestimate. Typically, the majority of records of breeding Long-eared Owls refer to calling juveniles. If the owls either do not breed or do not raise any young, searching for them on summer evenings produces few records and county totals are correspondingly low. This was the case in 2013, perhaps due to the effects of a cold and late spring. The confirmed breeding record in Shetland is notable as it was the first for the county since 1975; three young fledged from a nest in a small plantation.

[* (Musgrove *et al.* 2013)]

Long-eared Owl	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	1	4
Avon	1	1
Hampshire	0	1
Isle of Wight	0	1
Somerset	0	1
England, SE	4	8
Essex	1	1
Kent	3	4
Oxfordshire	0	1
Sussex	0	2
England, E	5	14
Cambridgeshire	1	5
Lincolnshire	2	3
Norfolk	1	1
Suffolk	1	5
England, C	14	22
Derbyshire	2	7
Nottinghamshire	12	12
Staffordshire	0	2
Warwickshire	0	1
England, N	38	77
Cumbria	0	1
Co. Durham	3	11
Greater Manchester	3	10
Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	2
Northumberland	5	15
Yorkshire	26	38
Wales	5	18
Denbigh & Flint	0	1
Gwent	0	8
Montgomeryshire	0	2
Radnorshire	5	7
Scotland, S	7	12
Borders	3	6
Clyde Islands	1	2
Dumfries & Galloway	1	1
Lothian	2	3
Scotland, Mid	10	11
Angus & Dundee	3	3
Moray & Nairn	0	1
North-east Scotland	1	1
Perth & Kinross	3	3
Upper Forth	3	3
Scotland, N & W	18	19
Argyll	4	4
Caithness	1	1
Highland	12	13
Shetland	1	1
Northern Ireland	3	3
Channel Islands	4	6
Guernsey	2	2
Jersey	2	4
TOTALS	109	194

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Scarce/Less scarce: 620–2,180 bp* **Coverage: unknown** Amber

47–184 pairs. As for the previous species, 2013 was a poor year for the Short-eared Owl, with the lowest numbers of pairs yet reported and a low level of confirmed breeding. Many counties reported single birds seen only briefly at sites, suggesting a wandering non-breeding population; these are not included in the table below. Again, the cold spring may have affected the availability of mammalian prey and hence the condition of the adults preparing to breed.
[* (Musgrove *et al.* 2013)]

Short-eared Owl	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, E	0	4
Lincolnshire	0	3
Norfolk	0	1
England, C	0	11
Derbyshire	0	7
Staffordshire	0	4
England, N	5	33
Cumbria	1	7
Co. Durham	1	4
Greater Manchester	0	1
Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	3
Northumberland	0	1
Yorkshire	2	17
Wales	9	11
Denbigh & Flint	0	1
East Glamorgan	1	1
Meirionnydd	0	1
Pembrokeshire	5	5
Radnorshire	3	3
Scotland, S	4	24
Borders	1	9
Clyde	1	1
Clyde Islands	0	12
Dumfries & Galloway	2	2
Scotland, Mid	8	12
Moray & Nairn	1	3
North-east Scotland	1	3
Perth & Kinross	5	5
Upper Forth	1	1
Scotland, N & W	21	85
Caithness	2	8
Highland	2	2
Orkney	10	68
Outer Hebrides	7	7
Isle of Man	0	4
TOTALS	47	184

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

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

One site: 0–1 pairs.

Scotland, N & W

North-east Scotland One site: one singing male in early June.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

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

21–348 pairs. Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers are under-recorded throughout their range; they are elusive and the difficulty of finding them in deciduous woodland increases once trees are in leaf. Dedicated searching, and in particular listening out for calling and drumming birds, from February to April is the best way of locating breeding sites and such records can be logged as possible breeding at least. Based on the data submitted, the New Forest is a stronghold; twice as many pairs were recorded in Hampshire (the great majority in the New Forest) as in any other county.

PECBMS (2014) showed a decline of 63% since 1990 in the monitored European population of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers in Europe (based on data from 16 countries) indicating that declines are not restricted to the UK. The European population is now c. 20–30% of its level in 1980.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	2	93
Devon	0	4
Dorset	0	2
Gloucestershire	1	7
Hampshire	1	61
Somerset	0	8
Wiltshire	0	11
England, SE	4	94
Bedfordshire	1	3
Berkshire	0	6
Buckinghamshire	0	11
Essex	0	3
Greater London	0	4
Hertfordshire	0	5
Kent	0	31
Oxfordshire	0	1
Surrey	2	19
Sussex	1	11
England, E	3	26
Cambridgeshire	0	7
Lincolnshire	0	3
Norfolk	0	5
Northamptonshire	0	6
Suffolk	3	5
England, C	5	70
Derbyshire	1	10
Herefordshire	0	14
Leicestershire & Rutland	1	5
Nottinghamshire	0	9
Shropshire	2	10
Staffordshire	0	6
Warwickshire	0	4
Worcestershire	1	12
England, N	2	37
Cheshire & Wirral	0	3
Co. Durham	0	5
Greater Manchester	0	3
Lancashire & N Merseyside	0	2
Yorkshire	2	24
Wales	5	28
Breconshire	0	1
Carmarthenshire	1	3
Ceredigion	0	2
Denbigh & Flint	0	1
East Glamorgan	1	5
Gwent	0	4
Meirionnydd	0	3
Montgomeryshire	0	2
Radnorshire	3	7
TOTALS	21	348

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

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

Amber

268–322 pairs monitored. As usual, this is a sample of pairs monitored by dedicated fieldworkers; this species requires much effort to establish the occupation of breeding territories in its favoured

Merlin	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied
England, C	16	19
Derbyshire	15	16
Shropshire	1	1
Staffordshire	0	2
England, N	86	106
Cumbria	8	9
Co. Durham	32	40
Lancashire & N Merseyside	8	8
Northumberland	13	17
Yorkshire	25	32
Wales	14	22
Breconshire	3	5
Ceredigion	1	2
Denbigh & Flint	1	2
Meirionnydd	4	5
Montgomeryshire	2	3
Radnorshire	3	5
Scotland, S	35	35
Ayrshire	6	6
Borders	12	12
Clyde	6	6
Dumfries & Galloway	8	8
Lothian	3	3
Scotland, Mid	57	63
Angus & Dundee	8	8
Moray & Nairn	14	16
North-east Scotland	26	27
Perth & Kinross	9	12
Scotland, N & W	50	56
Argyll	2	4
Caithness	1	2
Highland	21	21
Orkney	6	8
Outer Hebrides	7	7
Shetland	13	14
Northern Ireland	10	21
Co. Antrim	4	6
Co. Derry	2	4
Co. Fermanagh	0	1
Co. Tyrone	4	10
TOTALS	268	322

remote moorland sites. The mean number of occupied territories reported over the last five years is just 348, 30% of the UK breeding population estimated by the 2008 survey (Ewing *et al.* 2011).

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,052 bp **Coverage: moderate** **Green**

206–1,025 pairs. The Hobby is one of the most difficult species to provide accurate annual estimates for. It breeds late, with the peak of activity after the main breeding bird survey period, and many pairs nest in trees in open farmland, a habitat not favoured by birdwatchers in summer. Many breeding pairs are consequently overlooked, since it is now relatively common in parts of southern England, and the number of records received by county recorders in some areas is low. To compound the problem, some fieldworkers licensed to visit nests keep locations secret, even to the RBBP, meaning that such records cannot always be incorporated into county totals. Returns from counties vary from accurate counts in areas at the edge of the range, to good estimates where it is scarce, and more general estimates in areas where it is common (with little or no evidence provided to recorders to support those assertions). This is unfortunate and helps to explain the wide variation in numbers presented in the table.

Clements & Everett (2012) studied the dispersion pattern of Hobbies in three counties in southeast England during 2005–10 and found that densities were higher than in previous studies conducted in Britain, at 9–15 pairs per 100 km². It would be valuable to repeat this work elsewhere in the Hobby's range, but birdwatchers can also help, by reporting all Hobbies found in breeding habitat after the main spring passage period, roughly from mid May to early September

Hobby	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	**53**	**226**
Avon	2	12
Cornwall	3	9
Devon	2	2
Dorset	6	30
Gloucestershire	6	21
Hampshire	18	62
Isle of Wight	0	4
Somerset	6	19
Wiltshire	10	67
England, SE	**30**	**397**
Bedfordshire	1	4
Berkshire	3	7
Buckinghamshire	1	6
Essex	2	3
Greater London	4	5
Hertfordshire	5	27
Kent	1	(300)*
Oxfordshire	4	15
Surrey	6	17
Sussex	3	13
England, E	**48**	**130**
Cambridgeshire	9	31
Lincolnshire	8	46
Norfolk	7	15
Northamptonshire	15	25
Suffolk	9	13
England, C	**45**	**146**
Derbyshire	29	29
Herefordshire	2	10
Leicestershire & Rutland	2	22
Nottinghamshire	6	7
Shropshire	3	41
Staffordshire	1	16
Warwickshire	0	9
West Midlands	1	1
Worcestershire	1	11
England, N	**14**	**87**
Cheshire & Wirral	10	25
Co. Durham	0	2
Greater Manchester	0	14
Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	15
Yorkshire	3	31
Wales	**13**	**36**
Anglesey	0	1
Breconshire	3	11
Caernarfonshire	0	1
Carmarthenshire	0	1
Denbigh & Flint	0	3
East Glamorgan	1	3
Gower	1	3
Gwent	3	3
Meirionnydd	0	2
Montgomeryshire	1	3
Radnorshire	4	5
Scotland, Mid	**2**	**2**
Angus & Dundee	2	2
Scotland, N & W	**1**	**1**
Highland	1	1
TOTALS	**206**	**1,025**

* Estimated total.

(see www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/sp_guidelines_hobby.pdf). We request that county recorders follow these guidelines when compiling their annual submission, to provide greater consistency across years and counties.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

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

803–1,072 pairs. In some counties all pairs are monitored, but for most we receive data from only a sample of the population. The 2014 national survey of breeding Peregrines will be discussed in our next report, but initial findings confirm the loss of some pairs from traditional sites in northern Britain (coastal northwest Scotland and some upland shooting estates) and an increase in lowland habitats where many Peregrines take advantage of man-made structures for nesting.

Peregrine Falcon	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs
England, SW	**128**	**182**
Avon	12	17
Cornwall	34	59
Devon	26	27
Dorset	16	28
Gloucestershire	9	10
Hampshire	15	15
Isle of Wight	2	5
Isles of Scilly	2	2
Somerset	7	12
Wiltshire	5	7
England, SE	**53**	**68**
Bedfordshire	2	2
Berkshire	1	4
Buckinghamshire	2	2
Essex	2	2
Greater London	12	19
Hertfordshire	0	3
Kent	14	14
Oxfordshire	2	4
Surrey	8	8
Sussex	10	10
England, E	**31**	**38**
Cambridgeshire	4	5
Lincolnshire	18	20
Norfolk	4	4
Northamptonshire	1	2
Suffolk	4	7
England, C	**84**	**110**
Derbyshire	29	29
Herefordshire	0	12
Leicestershire & Rutland	6	13
Nottinghamshire	13	15
Shropshire	18	18
Staffordshire	9	10
Warwickshire	1	4
West Midlands	1	1
Worcestershire	7	8
England, N	**101**	**127**
Cheshire & Wirral	7	7
Cleveland	2	4
Cumbria	10	10
Co. Durham	5	7
Greater Manchester	8	9
Lancashire & N Merseyside	14	23
Northumberland	17	20
Yorkshire	38	47
Wales	**89**	**160**
Anglesey	1	9
Breconshire	8	9
Caernarfonshire	3	9
Carmarthenshire	3	8
Ceredigion	3	4
Denbigh & Flint	8	8
East Glamorgan	19	29
Gower	3	10
Gwent	5	6
Meirionnydd	3	6
Montgomeryshire	1	10
Pembrokeshire	25	39
Radnorshire	7	13
Scotland, S	**124**	**146**
Ayrshire	21	23
Borders	28	35
Clyde	13	13
Clyde Islands	6	10
Dumfries & Galloway	41	45
Lothian	15	20
Scotland, Mid	**83**	**95**
Angus & Dundee	12	16
Fife	11	11
Isle of May	1	1
Moray & Nairn	9	9
North-east Scotland	24	26
Perth & Kinross	14	17
Upper Forth	12	15
Scotland, N & W	**29**	**33**
Argyll	9	10
Caithness	1	1
Fair Isle	1	1
Highland	5	6

Peregrine Falcon *cont.*	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs			
Orkney	6	7	Co. Down	10	12
Outer Hebrides	4	5	Co. Fermanagh	11	14
Shetland	3	3	Co. Tyrone	8	15
Northern Ireland	67	98	Isle of Man	3	4
Co. Antrim	28	37	Channel Islands	11	11
Co. Armagh	2	5	Guernsey	3	3
Co. Derry	8	15	Herm	1	1
			Jersey	5	5
			Sark	2	2
			TOTALS	803	1,072

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 3 bp **Coverage: near-complete** **Red**

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. The news from the erstwhile stronghold of the East Anglian Fens remains bleak, with two birds present only for a few days in 2013. The singing male in Shetland was undoubtedly a misplaced migrant but remained in potential breeding habitat for a week and thus 'qualifies' for a report entry. The number of migrant Golden Orioles has generally declined since the mid 1990s, although numbers in 2012 were higher than when the breeding population was at its peak (White & Kehoe 2015). Across Europe, the Golden Oriole population is judged to be stable and indeed showed an increase from 2004 to 2009 (PECBMS 2014).

England, E

Suffolk One site (Lakenheath): one possible breeding pair. A male and a female/1st-summer male were present for nine days in May.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: one singing male, 2nd–9th June.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 4 bp **Coverage: moderate** **Red**

Four sites: 2–4 pairs. Just one pair returned to Devon but another pair bred at a new site in Scotland (see Cook 2015). The latter demonstrates the importance of following up potential breeding records even when they occur in unexpected places, and was the first confirmed breeding for Moray & Nairn. Red-backed Shrikes bred, or attempted to breed, in Scotland from 2003 to 2010.

A paper on the conservation of Red-backed Shrikes in Britain and the prospects for recolonisation will be published in *BB* later in the year.

England, SW

Devon One site: one pair bred, fledging two young.

England, E

One site: one singing male during 2nd–23rd June but not subsequently.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one pair bred, fledging two young.

Scotland, N & W

Fair Isle One site: one possible breeding pair. A pair was present in suitable habitat for at least a week in the second half of May. The birds were seen copulating but nothing more was suspected.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 380 bp **Coverage: high** **Amber**

242–314 pairs. These are typical numbers for recent years, reflecting both the comparable monitoring effort from year to year and the stability of the Chough population in the key areas. A national census was carried out in 2014, which will be discussed in our next report.

Red-billed Chough	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	5	9
Cornwall	5	9
Wales	188	251
Anglesey	33	40
Caernarfonshire	67	89
Ceredigion	19	29
Denbigh & Flint	1	2
East Glamorgan	1	1
Gower	2	2
Meirionnydd	16	22
Pembrokeshire	49	66
Scotland	23	24
Argyll: Colonsay & Oronsay	10	11
Argyll: Islay	13	13
Northern Ireland	1	1
Co. Antrim	1	1
Isle of Man	25	29
TOTALS	242	314

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 687 bp **Coverage: moderate** **Amber**

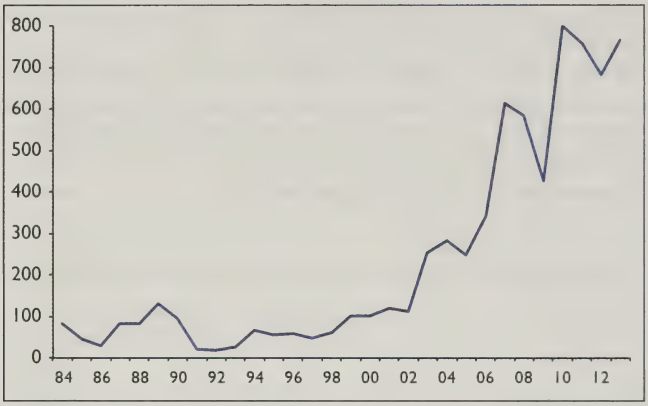


Fig. 5. The maximum total number of singing male Firecrests *Regulus ignicapilla* reported in the UK, 1984–2013.

Ben Green

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

766 territories or singing males. Fig. 5 shows that in the last 30 years the number of breeding Firecrests was stable at or below 100 pairs until 2003. Since then, the increase to the current levels of 700–800 territories reported annually is striking. Intensive fieldwork in some counties of southeast England and the New Forest has produced larger counts than are reported annually but such fieldwork is time-consuming and not repeated every year. Singing Firecrests can be difficult to locate in the tree canopy and their high-pitched song is inaudible to some observers. We suspect that this species is greatly under-recorded in areas where it is now common and we welcome the results of more detailed surveys of defined areas, as are currently underway in Hampshire. Note that the figure for Kent is an estimate based on the results of the county's recent atlas project (Clements *et al.* in

press) rather than records submitted in 2013. At present, the Firecrest remains a rare species north and west of a line between the Wash and Poole Harbour (Balmer *et al.* 2013).

Firecrest	Singing males/ territories		
England, SW	263	Oxfordshire	8
Avon	3	Surrey	44
Cornwall	2	Sussex	6
Devon	3	England, E	96
Dorset	4	Cambridgeshire	3
Gloucestershire	15	Norfolk	55
Hampshire	187	Suffolk	38
Somerset	7	England, C	1
Wiltshire	42	Herefordshire	1
England, SE	(391)	Wales	9
Bedfordshire	3	East Glamorgan	1
Berkshire	50	Gwent	5
Buckinghamshire	70	Montgomeryshire	3
Hertfordshire	10	Channel Islands	6
Kent	(200)*	Guernsey	2
		Jersey	4
		TOTAL	766

* Estimated total.

Willow Tit *Poecile montana*

Less scarce: 3,400 bp (Musgrove *et al.* 2013) **Coverage: moderate** **Red**

102–626 pairs. We have been reporting Willow Tits for only four years but these are the lowest totals so far of both confirmed breeding and total pairs.

Willow Tit	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
England, SW	8	30	England, N	47	325
Cornwall	2	5	Cheshire & Wirral	6	30
Devon	0	1	Cleveland	1	5
Gloucestershire	3	13	Cumbria	0	7
Hampshire	0	8	Co. Durham	20	55
Wiltshire	3	3	Greater Manchester	7	41
England, SE	0	6	Lancashire & N Merseyside	0	(50)*
Berkshire	0	4	Northumberland	1	15
Oxfordshire	0	2	Yorkshire	12	122
England, E	15	55	Wales	6	50
Lincolnshire	8	36	Breconshire	0	5
Norfolk	6	15	Carmarthenshire	0	1
Northamptonshire	1	1	Ceredigion	0	11
Suffolk	0	3	Denbigh & Flint	0	2
England, C	16	144	East Glamorgan	0	2
Derbyshire	5	32	Gower	0	1
Herefordshire	0	20	Gwent	1	1
Leicestershire & Rutland	1	5	Meirionnydd	0	1
Nottinghamshire	0	32	Montgomeryshire	2	10
Shropshire	3	15	Pembrokeshire	0	2
Staffordshire	7	30	Radnorshire	3	14
Warwickshire	0	9	Scotland, S	10	16
West Midlands	0	1	Ayrshire	0	1
			Dumfries & Galloway	10	15
			TOTALS	102	626

* Estimated total.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 533 bp **Coverage: moderate** **Amber**

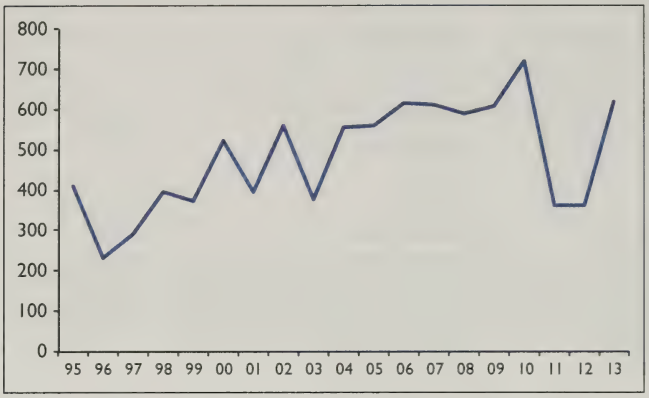


Fig. 6. The maximum total of breeding pairs of Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* reported in the UK, 1995–2013.

Richard Porter

233. Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, Cley Marshes, Norfolk, January 2013.

At least 69 sites: a minimum of 618 pairs. Holling *et al.* (2013) showed that the national population of Bearded Tits declined by almost 50% between 2010 and 2011, which was thought to have been caused by the cold winter of 2010/11. A decline after the very cold winter of 1995 is also apparent in fig. 6. Numbers remained stable in 2012 but an increase in 2013 suggests that the milder winters since 2010/11 have allowed a recovery; an increase in the number of sites occupied, the highest since 2002 (the year of the last full survey), supports this. The first breeding records for North-east Scotland, Oxfordshire and Upper Forth occurred in 2013, suggesting that productivity in 2012 was high and there was dispersal from the core sites at the end of that breeding season.

A symposium on the status of the Bearded Tit in the UK was held earlier this year and highlighted the difficulties of censusing this species accurately. A report will be published in *BB* later this year.

Bearded Tit	Minimum no. sites	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs
England, SW	8	55
Dorset	4	13
Hampshire	2	5
Somerset	2	37
England, SE	19	149
Essex	4	13
Kent	13	(125)*
Oxfordshire	1	1
Sussex	1	10
England, E	34	228
Cambridgeshire	6	17
Lincolnshire	3	16
Norfolk	15	50
Suffolk	10	145
England, N	3	101
Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	18
Yorkshire	2	83
Wales	1	5
Gwent	1	5
Scotland, Mid	3	77
North-east Scotland	1	1
Perth & Kinross	1	75
Upper Forth	1	1
Channel Islands	1	3
Jersey	1	3
TOTALS	69	618

* Estimated total.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,733 bp **Coverage: moderate** **Green**

1,556 singing males or territories. In the three years prior to the cold winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11, over 2,000 territories of Cetti's Warblers were recorded, but since then numbers have fallen back to around 1,500 territories (fig. 7). The numbers in 2013 increased by 13% on 2012, indicating a degree of recovery, although Norfolk, Suffolk and Warwickshire reported some evidence of a continued decline (cold weather in East Anglia in early 2013 may have contributed in that region). However, central England overall recorded its highest total yet, with a 171% increase since 2011. Owing to the problems of censusing larger sites, full counts from some counties (e.g. Dorset and Kent) are not always available and we urge birdwatchers and reserve managers to carry out a full census of this species wherever possible, to help to confirm its current status.

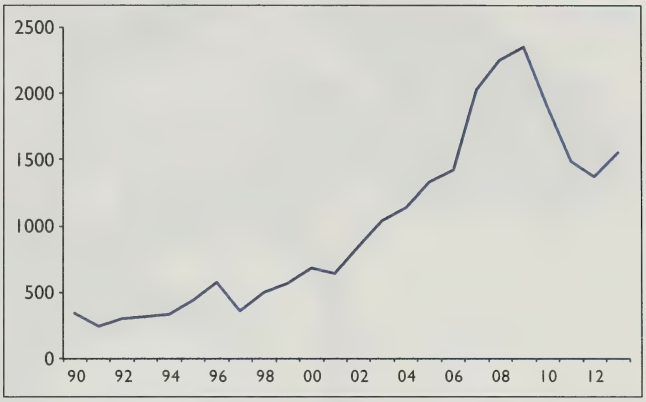


Fig. 7. The maximum total number of singing male Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* reported in the UK, 1990–2013.

Cetti's Warbler	Singing males/ territories
England, SW	498
Avon	21
Cornwall	16
Devon	32
Dorset	84
Gloucestershire	22
Hampshire	143
Isle of Wight	5
Somerset	140
Wiltshire	35
England, SE	341
Bedfordshire	9
Berkshire	60
Buckinghamshire	11
Essex	117
Greater London	17
Hertfordshire	21
Kent	43
Oxfordshire	8
Surrey	3
Sussex	52
England, E	441
Cambridgeshire	108
Lincolnshire	15
Norfolk	98
Northamptonshire	20
Suffolk	(200)*
England, C	84
Derbyshire	18
Leicestershire & Rutland	12
Nottinghamshire	17
Staffordshire	14
Warwickshire	16
West Midlands	1
Worcestershire	6
England, N	33
Cheshire & Wirral	12
Greater Manchester	3
Lancashire & N Merseyside	9
Yorkshire	9
Wales	139
Anglesey	9
Breconshire	4
Caernarfonshire	5
Carmarthenshire	20
Ceredigion	2
East Glamorgan	17
Gower	21
Gwent	43
Meirionnydd	1
Pembrokeshire	17
Channel Islands	20
Jersey	20
TOTAL	1,556

* Estimated total.

Ben Green

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male. It is 20 years since we reported a long-staying singing Greenish Warbler (two in Kent in June–July 1993). Since 2003 we have not included apparently transient passerines on passage, but do report those that stay for a week or more, although the 2013 bird was present for just six days. White & Kehoe (2015) noted that occurrences of singing males staying for more than a day are slowly increasing, with nine reported in May and June 2011–12.

England, N **Lancashire & N Merseyside** One site: a male singing from 13th to 18th June.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male.

Wales **Carmarthenshire** One site: a male singing from 17th April to 8th July.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

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

Dartford Warbler	Total pairs		
England, SW	**369**	England, E	63
Cornwall	13	Norfolk	3
Devon	17	Suffolk	60
Dorset	288	England, C	1
Hampshire	45	Staffordshire	1
Somerset	6	Wales	24
England, SE	**116**	Caernarfonshire	6
Berkshire	4	Gower	11
Surrey	97	Pembrokeshire	7
Sussex	15	Channel Islands	**50**
		Jersey	50
		TOTAL	623

623 territories. Taken at face value, these figures suggest that there has been no real recovery in numbers since the impact of cold winters at the end of the last decade, but there were no counts available from the important New Forest population in 2013. This can be a difficult species to locate and when counts are based only on casual records the numbers reported will generally underestimate the population of a site. In a broader context, this species has shown a moderate decline across its European range since 1998 (PECBMS 2014).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 5 bp **Coverage: near-complete** **Red**

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. Short-staying singing birds were also noted from **Devon**, **Gloucestershire**, **Hampshire** and **Sussex** (Hudson *et al.* 2014) but none was recorded for more than two days.

England, E

Suffolk Two sites: (1) one singing male from 12th May to 9th June; (2) one singing male from 25th May to 7th June.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Occasional breeder; last bred in 2009

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. These are the first reports since 2009, when there was a small influx to Highland and one pair bred (Swann 2010).

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one singing male from 1st to 8th June.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one singing male from 17th to 24th June.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. Melodious Warblers breed mostly to the south of Icterine Warblers in spring and this species has yet to be confirmed breeding in the UK.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One site: one singing male from 21st to 30th June.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 9 bp **Coverage: high** **Red**

Six sites: 2–7 pairs. These are typical numbers and locations with breeding confirmed in Sussex and, for the first time ever, in Northumberland.

England, SE

Essex One site: two singing males recorded from 8th to 21st June. **Kent** One site: one singing male wandered between three nearby locations from 9th to 20th June. **Sussex** Two sites: (1) one pair bred, probably fledging three young; (2) a singing male in late May.

England, N

Northumberland One site: one pair bred, present from 4th June with two juveniles on 6th July. First breeding record for the county.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one singing male from 16th to 28th June.

Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 34 bp **Coverage: near-complete** **Red**

The all-island survey in 2013 revealed a total of 33 territories (five fewer than 2012). The first fledged chicks were seen on 4th June.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 13 bp **Coverage: low** **Red**

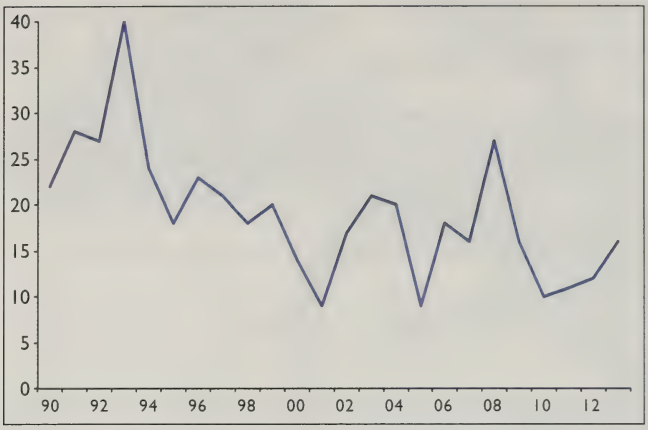


Fig. 8. The maximum total number of Redwings *Turdus iliacus* reported in the UK, 1990–2013.

15 sites: 4–16 pairs. Holling *et al.* (2010) noted the steady decline in numbers since the 1980s (when the totals peaked at 121 pairs in 1984). Since 1990, the number of potential breeding pairs has fluctuated between nine and 40 showing a recent peak coinciding with the first year of fieldwork for *Bird Atlas 2007–11* (fig. 8). It is likely that breeding Redwings are under-recorded, especially in the Highland glens, where most breeding pairs occur. Visitors to these areas in summer should be alert for evidence of breeding by Redwings and ensure that records are submitted to the local recorder or BirdTrack, with the appropriate breeding evidence code.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one probable breeding pair. **North-east Scotland** Two sites: one singing male and one possible breeding pair. **Perth & Kinross** One site: one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Ten sites: two pairs bred, two probable breeding pairs and six singing males. **Shetland** One site: two pairs bred but no young fledged.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Occasional breeder, last bred in 1995 (Red-spotted) and 1996 (White-spotted)

One site: one singing male. Ausden *et al.* (2014) discussed how the breeding population of White-spotted Bluethroats *L. s. cyanecula* has been increasing in the Netherlands but noted how few summering or breeding birds have been recorded in the UK. White & Kehoe (2015) also illustrated how the trend in numbers of Bluethroats reaching the UK (all races, but primarily nominate *svecica*) has declined over the period 1990–2012. The creation of new wetlands in southern Britain could provide potential new nesting habitat and this is a species that birdwatchers should be aware of at such sites. In 2013, however, the only records were of birds in June, and these perhaps referred to late migrants, since they occurred at sites where they are unlikely to have been overlooked earlier in the year. One bird, in Norfolk, is listed below, while the second, although singing from suitable habitat in Lancashire and N Merseyside, was present for only three days (19th–21st June).

England, E

Norfolk One site: one singing male *L. s. cyanecula* on 1st–3rd and 8th–11th June.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Rare: 5-yr mean 53 bp **Coverage: high** **Amber**

48 sites: 12–53 pairs. The maximum total number of breeding Black Redstarts in recent years has been reasonably consistent although this species is not particularly site faithful and new sites are discovered each year. They can be overlooked in urban areas, where the song may be drowned out by traffic noise, while pairs in rural areas generally occur in remote upland sites or in quarries, which are often out of bounds to the public. In 2013, the majority of reported sites (35) were

in traditional urban locations with a further four associated with industrial sites such as power stations. Only two sites were on coastal cliffs, a habitat that has frequently been used in the past in Kent and Sussex. Five sites, all in Wales and Scotland, were in upland areas associated with quarries or rocky screes, and these included a family party recorded late in the season in the Southern Uplands (Borders), where breeding has not previously been confirmed. Possibly a new development was the occurrence of two birds around farm buildings at two sites in Cambridgeshire – could this reflect the species taking up a broader range of habitats in the UK, as they do on the near Continent? European data show a recent increase after a period of relative stability since the late 1990s (PECBMS 2014).

England, SW

Hampshire One site: one singing male.

England, SE

Berkshire Three sites: two possible breeding pairs and one singing male. **Buckinghamshire** One site: one possible breeding pair. **Greater London** 17 sites: two pairs bred, three probable breeding pairs, three possible breeding pairs and ten singing males. **Hertfordshire** Two sites: two singing males. **Kent** Five sites: One pair bred, two probable breeding pairs and two singing males.

England, E

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

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one singing male.

England, N

Co. Durham One site: one pair bred. **Greater Manchester** One site: one singing male. **Yorkshire** Four sites: four possible breeding pairs.

Wales

Ceredigion One site: one possible breeding pair. **Denbigh & Flint** One site: one pair bred, fledging at least three young at a site used in 2012. **Gwent** One site: one pair bred.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: one pair bred; a family party was located in early September. **Lothian** One site: one possible breeding pair.

Channel Islands

Jersey Three sites: one pair bred, one possible breeding pair and a singing male.

Ben Green

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla f. flava*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 2 bp **Coverage: high** **Green**

Two sites: two pairs. After a blank year in 2012, a pair of nominate *flava* wagtails nested in Orkney (where Yellow Wagtails *M. f. flavissima* do not nest) – this was the third record of Blue-headed Wagtails breeding in the islands. Another pair (possibly a mixed pair) nested in typical *flavissima* nesting habitat in Norfolk.

England, SE

Norfolk One site: one pair, possibly a mixed pair, bred. A male nominate *flava*, first seen on 18th May, was seen taking food into a cereal field on 2nd June, but the female was not seen.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: one pair bred. First seen on 28th May, they had fledged five young by 13th July.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 3 bp **Coverage: high** **Green**

Seven sites: 19–20 pairs. Breeding in Shetland is not unexpected, but the two confirmed breeding records in southeast England (Kent and Sussex) are considerably more unusual. The only similar record in the RBBP database is of a pure pair that bred at Cley, Norfolk, in 1997. On the Channel Islands, White Wagtail is the regular breeding form (and the data for those islands are omitted from the five-year mean shown above).

England, SW

Isles of Scilly One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, SE

Kent One site: one pair bred. Both adults were recorded in late June and were seen carrying a faecal sac. **Sussex** One site: one pair bred, two young fledged.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland Two sites: two pairs bred on Unst, and both fledged young.

Channel Islands

Limited data were received but a minimum of five pairs bred on **Jersey** and ten pairs on **Guernsey**.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 127 bp* **Coverage: low** **Red**

13–204 pairs. Monitoring this shy species is difficult, and only where dedicated surveys are undertaken (in 2013 only in the New Forest, Hampshire) are more realistic numbers obtained. The location of the records submitted closely matches the UK distribution shown in Balmer *et al.* (2013). [* 2011 estimate was 500–1,000 bp (Clements 2013).]

England, SW

Gloucestershire Limited data from the Forest of Dean: three pairs bred and six possible breeding pairs. **Hampshire** In the New Forest, 85 territories at 14 sites were located, and there were seven other pairs elsewhere in the county. **Wiltshire** Three pairs bred.

England, SE

Kent The only data available were a count of 46 birds on 5th April from a core breeding area. The county population estimate is 50–70 pairs. **Sussex** Two possible breeding pairs.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One possible breeding pair. **Norfolk** Three possible breeding pairs.

England, C

Derbyshire One possible breeding pair. **Nottinghamshire** One possible breeding pair.

England, N

Cumbria 14 possible breeding pairs. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Two pairs bred. **Yorkshire** Eight possible breeding pairs.

Wales

Caernarfonshire Two possible breeding pairs. **Carmarthenshire** One pair bred, the first confirmed breeding

record since 2009. **East Glamorgan** One probable breeding pair. **Gwent** One pair bred and two possible breeding pairs. **Meirionnydd** One probable and two possible breeding pairs. **Radnorshire** Two pairs bred and five probable breeding pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one pair bred.

Common Rosefinch *Erythrina erythrina*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 2 bp **Coverage: low** Green

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. In the last decade there have been 12 instances of long-staying singing male Common Rosefinches, with one or two in seven of the ten years. All but two have been in mainland Scotland, the others both on Anglesey. Only two of these records have involved an accompanying female bird, however: in Caithness in 2006 and in Highland in 2008.

Wales

Anglesey One site: one singing male from 21st June to 3rd July.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one singing male from 18th June to 15th July.

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 9 bp **Coverage: low** Green

Nine sites: 3–16 pairs. Up to 16 pairs reported in one year is the highest total since 2004.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: two probable breeding pairs found at an island site on 7th June. **Orkney** Two sites: (1) two pairs bred; (2) one possible breeding pair. **Shetland** Six sites: in total, one pair bred (fledging three young in July), four probable and four possible breeding pairs, and two singing males.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 5 bp **Coverage: low** Green

One site: 0–1 pairs. This is the first report of Serin since 2006.

England, SE

Kent One site: one possible breeding pair. A single bird was seen intermittently from 13th April into June, while two birds were reported on 20th April.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Rare: 79 bp (2011 survey) **Coverage: low** Amber

Casual records from the main breeding areas of the Cairngorms (**Highland/Moray & Nairn/North-east Scotland**) provided evidence of 43 pairs: two confirmed, four probable and eight possible breeding pairs, plus 29 other singing males. Some 25 of these were located in a survey of the Abernethy RSPB reserve.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

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

A minimum of 144 territories, but only part of the Devon population was monitored.

England, SW

Cornwall 28 pairs bred on the Roseland Peninsula, and in total 65 young were fledged. There was an additional singing male elsewhere, at some distance from the core population. **Devon** Information was received on 114 territories.

Channel Islands

Jersey One pair bred.

Appendix 1. Other species considered by the RBBP for which no data were received in 2013.

The following taxa are regular breeding birds in the UK but the size of their populations qualifies them to be reported annually by the RBBP. However, in 2013, no breeding records were submitted to the Panel.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

The Short-toed Treecreeper has always been on the RBBP's radar as a potential breeding species. Following the addition of the Channel Islands to the area covered in 2012, we now include the small population of Short-toed Treecreepers that breeds in woodlands, parks and large gardens on the islands of **Guernsey** and **Jersey** (Balmer *et al.* 2013).

St Kilda Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*

The St Kilda Wren is Red-listed because of its small population and restricted range (Eaton *et al.* 2009) but since this race was added to the RBBP list, in 2009, there have been no all-island counts. The last census was in 1993; this covered only part of the islands and 136 territories were counted. Forrester *et al.* (2007) considered the population to be 230–250 breeding pairs.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

In 2013, no breeding records of Parrot Crossbills were received from **North-east Scotland** and the only report from **Highland** was that they were present in Abernethy Forest. Summers & Buckland (2011) estimated the Scottish population to be 131 individuals or 50 breeding pairs, but the confidence intervals around this figure were large.

Appendix 2. Other species considered by the RBBP and also recorded in 2013.

The following occasional or potential breeding species were recorded during the breeding season in 2013, but showed no further signs of breeding than are documented here.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

In **Avon**, a male was recorded on a number of days in May, June and August.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

In **Caithness**, between 10th May and 11th June, a male associated with Tufted Ducks and was seen mating with a female Tufted Duck.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

In **Gower**, an adult was present at one site from 25th April to 26th June.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

At a site in **Cambridgeshire** a single bird in breeding plumage summered for the third consecutive year. It was present from 7th April to 9th August. In **Fife**, one was on an inland loch from 18th June to 13th July. In its ninth consecutive year of residence, a single male was again recorded on a number of occasions at a site in **Yorkshire** between 12th March and 23rd June.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

In **Perth & Kinross**, in late May, an adult was reported at the site where breeding occurred in 2009, but there was no indication that the bird was paired.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

In **Northumberland** a male was singing on 19th–21st May, and may have been present earlier.

Acknowledgments

The Rare Breeding Birds Panel would like to thank the many contributors who have supplied the data that this report is based upon. Birdwatchers across the country provide many of the original observations and we gratefully acknowledge them for sharing these. However, in most cases their records are made available to the RBBP only because of the hard work and diligence of those county and regional bird recorders who form a unique network of expertise across the whole of the UK. All of them do this invaluable but time-consuming work on a voluntary basis, and we salute the willing co-operation and assistance of recorders past and present. There are too many individuals to list here, but they are named individually on our website. Most recorders also helped further by reviewing an early draft of this report, helping to ensure the accuracy of the data presented.

Input from specialist study groups, conservation bodies and various key individuals also means that the report can be even more comprehensive. Valuable supplementary data were submitted from a number of national monitoring schemes, both professional and amateur. Information for many species was supplied via the Schedule 1 licensing system by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the BTO and the RSPB. For significant additional information on Schedule 1 species we acknowledge in particular the help of Jez Blackburn (BTO), Amy Challis (Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme), David Raw (North of England Raptor Forum), Eimear Rooney (Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group) and Adrienne Stratford (RSPB Wales). Carl Barimore (BTO), Will George (RSPB), John Marchant (BTO) and Roddy Mavor (JNCC/RSPB/SOTEAG Seabird Monitoring Programme) were also helpful in providing access to Nest Record Scheme, RSPB reserves, Little Egret and seabird data respectively. Will has also given the benefit of his data management experience in the development of the RBBP database. We also thank the BTO for allowing access to selected records from the BTO/RSPB/BirdWatch Ireland/SOC/WOS BirdTrack dataset. More generally, many individuals in these organisations provided friendly advice and information over the year, for which we are most grateful.

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Short paper

'Stejneger's Stonechat' in Dorset: new to Britain

Abstract A Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* was discovered at Portland, Dorset, at dusk on 24th October 2012. In better conditions the following day it was suspected to be of the eastern form *S. m. stejnegeri* and this was later confirmed by DNA analysis, after the bird had been trapped and ringed. Photographs confirmed that this same individual had been present on Texel, the Netherlands, on 8th–23rd October 2012. At the time this was the first acceptable record of *stejnegeri* for western Europe. Since then, a bird found dead at Landsort, Sweden, in October 2008 has been identified as *stejnegeri* after DNA analysis.

Conditions at first light at Portland Bill, Dorset, on 22nd October 2012 were a heady mix of easterly winds, overnight rain and reduced visibility, and it soon became clear that there had been a major arrival of migrants. The undoubted highlight was the discovery of a Pale-legged or Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus tenellipes/borealoides* at nearby Southwell, the first record of this species pair from the extreme east of Siberia in the Western Palearctic. This showed from just how far away some birds in this arrival might be coming. The following day another top-quality rarity, an adult 'Daurian Shrike' *Lanius i. isabellinus*, was discovered, so by 24th October the chances of matching the events of the previous two days seemed low. And so, when a report filtered through that Nick Urch (on an after-work dash for the Daurian Shrike, which by then was settled in Top Fields) had seen a probable Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* at dusk near Culverwell, the news was greeted with less enthusiasm than might otherwise have been the case.

Shortly after dawn on 25th October, the stonechat was quickly relocated and Nick's provisional identification confirmed; however, it was just as quickly apparent to those observers with previous experience of Siberian Stonechats that this individual was considerably more richly coloured than any they had seen before and the possibility of the far-eastern form *S. m. stejnegeri* was mooted. Yet in the absence of any definitive field characters to separate that taxon from the more familiar nominate *maurus*, this seemed a possibility likely to remain no more than conjecture. At the time I was corresponding via e-mail with Paul Leader in Hong Kong regarding the identification of both the leaf warbler and the shrike. On seeing the images of the stonechat on the PBO website, he too expressed an opinion that the bird bore a strong resemblance to *stejnegeri* (a common winter visitor to Hong Kong), but acknowledged that it would have to be examined in the hand for there to be any realistic chance of taking the identification any further. As the bird was frequenting a favoured fence-line, it was relatively easily caught in a spring-trap on the morning of 26th October and taken to the observatory for examination (plates 234 & 235). After we had taken measurements and photographs, the bird was released where it had been caught and remained there for the rest of the day but, after the first clear night of the week, it could not be relocated on 27th October.

Identification

Field identification as a Siberian Stonechat was relatively straightforward, with the large, unmarked pale rump/uppertail-covert patch and black underwing-coverts in particular excluding all races of European Stonechat *S. rubicola*. The absence of any visible white in the bases of the outer tail feathers was considered to exclude the two southern forms of Siberian Stonechat, *S. m variegatus* and *S. m. armenicus*, so the identification lay between *maurus* and *stejnegeri* – two taxa that the available literature indicated were, on plumage characteristics alone, all but inseparable.

Martin Cade

Martin Cade

234 & 235 First-winter male 'Stejneger's Stonechat' *Saxicola maurus stejnegeri*, Portland Bird Observatory, Dorset, October 2012.

Suspicions that the latter might be favoured were based on the rich, deeply saturated plumage hues: the breast/belly and rump/uppertail-covert patch were strongly washed apricot-buff, while the ground colour of the crown and mantle was warm rufous-brown. Subsequently, Hellström & Norevik (2014) suggested that the presence of dark spotting on the uppertail-coverts may be a useful character for the separation of some *stejnegeri* from all *maurus*; this feather tract was not studied in detail at the time but examination of the in-hand photographs reveals no sign of dark marks on any of the visible uppertail-coverts.

That the bird was a male had been indicated in the field by the black underwing-coverts, and this diagnosis was confirmed in the hand by the presence of extensive concealed black bases to the feathers of the throat and side of the head. Ageing as a first-winter was confirmed by the inside of the upper mandible being entirely pink. Svensson (1992) stated that *stejnegeri* has a somewhat wider base to the bill than *maurus* and it was this biometric that offered the only tangible chance to secure an identification without resorting to molecular analysis: the recorded measurement of 4.9 mm at the proximal end of the nostrils fell just within the overlap between the two forms (*stejnegeri* 4.7–5.7 mm, *maurus* 4.0–4.9 mm).

DNA analysis

DNA was isolated from the base of a single tail feather, which was dislodged accidentally while the bird was being measured. Following the protocols of Zink *et al.* (2009), the Aberdeen University lab had previously

sequenced the mitochondrial ND2 gene of European Stonechat and Siberian Stonechats of the races *maurus*, *variegatus* and *armenicus* to confirm the first British record of Siberian Stonechat (Collinson & McGowan 2012). Consequently, the data available provided very good resolution of stonechat species and subspecies.

Zink *et al.* (2009) showed that birds from eastern Siberia, assigned to *S. m. stejnegeri*, are genetically highly distinct from birds from western Siberia, assigned to *S. m. maurus*. From the Portland DNA, the ND2 gene was PCR-amplified using avian primers L5216 and H6313. The clean PCR product was gel-extracted and sequenced (Accession No. LN864489). Using NCBI BLAST, the sequence was compared to all other *Saxicola* sequences deposited in the database. The sequence carried by the Portland bird was novel, but 99.0–99.9% identical (1–10 bp changes) to each of 72 birds previously sequenced by Zink *et al.* from locations all across eastern Siberia within the range of *stejnegeri*. The closest match (1 bp difference) was a bird from Dornod, Mongolia. In contrast, the closest match of 41 nominate *maurus* sequences was only 92% similar (at least 77 bp difference). European Stonechats, Canary Islands Stonechats *S. dacotiae* and African Stonechats *S. torquatus* were all similarly at least 70 bp different from the Portland bird. These data place the Portland bird firmly within the '*stejnegeri*' clade (yellow group of birds in fig. 1 of Zink *et al.* 2009).

There are a number of caveats to be aware of, however. Zink *et al.* (2009) found '*stejnegeri*' ND2 DNA in two (of eight) birds from the range of *variegatus* in southwest Asia. The other six had '*maurus*' ND2 DNA. They were satisfied that this was not a mistake and put the anomalous result down to a putative long-distance dispersal event (i.e. a vagrant *stejnegeri* that has bred within the range of *variegatus* and has left its genetic footprint). Assuming that to be true, it is possible that *stejnegeri* DNA exists within western Siberian *maurus* populations away from the main range of *stejnegeri*. However, it was not detected in any of 41 birds assigned to nominate *maurus* in Zink *et al.* (2009) so it is reasonable to assume that any *stejnegeri* DNA in *maurus* populations is pretty scarce, and in any case hypothetical. The other caveat is that no biometric or plumage data are presented for the birds analysed in Zink *et al.* (2009) so it is possible, again hypothetical, that some morphological '*maurus*' birds around the zone of contact were genetically *stejnegeri* and vice versa. This does not change the fact that the *stejnegeri* clade DNA carried by the Portland bird has never been seen in any bird identified as nominate *maurus*, but is present in every bird identified as *stejnegeri*. There is also the usual caveat that mtDNA is only informative about the bird's mother. If the Portland bird were the product of a mating between a male *maurus* and female *stejnegeri*, this would not be resolved without sequencing a nuclear gene too. Such pairings are presumably extremely rare, or it would be difficult to see how the two taxa could remain so genetically distinct.

The fact that the Portland bird's DNA is not absolutely identical to any previously analysed *stejnegeri* is not a concern. There is some genetic variation among *stejnegeri* in the database, and given that only around 70 of the 100,000s of *stejnegeri* in the world have been sampled, it is inevitable that there are currently undescribed, but closely allied, DNA sequences yet to be published. The Portland bird's DNA is within 0.1% of published *stejnegeri* sequences but 8% different from published *maurus* sequences.

Taxonomy, distribution and vagrancy

Formerly, *stejnegeri* was treated as a race of the widely distributed, polytypic Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*, but the validity of *stejnegeri* as a distinct taxon has been questioned by some authors (e.g. Urquhart & Bowley 2002). Recently, it has been placed as one of six races of Siberian Stonechat (Sangster *et al.* 2011), while genetic studies have shown that it is clearly distinct from *maurus* and most likely merits full species status (Zink *et al.* 2009).

Although replacing *maurus* in east Asia, where its breeding range encompasses eastern Siberia, Mongolia, northern China, the Korean Peninsula and Japan, the boundary between the two forms remains to be fully clarified. Stoddart (1992) suggested that they intergrade across large areas of

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236 & 237. First-winter male 'Stejneger's Stonechat' *Saxicola maurus stejnegeri*, Texel, the Netherlands, October 2012.

Siberia, with Vaurie (1959) and Stepanyan (1990) specifying a zone of intergradation extending from the lower Yenisey River southeast to the Irkutsk area, west of the southern part of Lake Baikal. Besides two anomalous and unexplained records from Astrakhan, southern European Russia (Zink *et al.* 2010) – well outside the range even of *maurus* – genetically confirmed specimens of *stejnegeri* have been recorded from no further west than Lake Baikal (Zink *et al.* 2009).

It is a long-distance migrant, wintering from Assam in northeast India east across southern China to Taiwan, and south through Burma and the Indochina region to the Malay Peninsula, but becoming less frequent south to Singapore. Stragglers have reached the Philippines, northern Borneo and Sumatra (*HBW*). The timing of the autumn migration of *stejnegeri* closely matches that of many of the eastern vagrant passerines that reach Britain: the Russian breeding grounds are vacated from the second half of August, with main autumn passage at Beidaihe (northeast China) between mid August and mid October (*HBW*); in Hong Kong peak numbers occur from the end of September to the beginning of November (Carey *et al.* 2001).

Although the core breeding range of *stejnegeri* lies farther east than that of the majority of vagrant passerines that reach Britain from Siberia, there is ample recent evidence of a trend toward species with a similar distribution reaching western Europe. In this context the remarkable, near-simultaneous occurrence at Portland of a Pale-legged or Sakhalin Leaf Warbler – the former breeding no closer than Amurland and Manchuria (southeast Russia/northeast China), and the latter confined to islands off the east Asian seaboard – lends support to the idea that autumn 2012 offered particularly favourable conditions for extreme long-distance vagrancy from east Asia.

At the time of its occurrence, this individual constituted the first acceptable record of *stejnegeri* for western Europe, although an earlier record of a bird ringed and later found dead at Landsort, Sweden, in October 2008 has since been identified as *stejnegeri* following preliminary DNA analysis. A subsequent record of one at Orivesi, Pappilaniemi, Finland, in November 2013 has been confirmed genetically.

As an unexpected postscript to this record, it became apparent after the announcement of the bird's formal identification that it bore strong similarities to a Siberian Stonechat present at Texel, Netherlands, from 8th–23rd October (Kok 2012; plates 236–238). Subsequent detailed scrutiny of photographs suggested that the two records refer to the same individual and

the Dutch record has been submitted as such to the CDNA. With a straight-line distance of 584 km between the two sites, the bird must have travelled at a mean speed of at least 26 km/h in the 22.5 hours between the last sighting at Texel and its discovery at Portland (Diederik Kok pers. comm.).

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Paul Leader and Diederik Kok for their helpful comments, which led to the successful outcome in establishing the identity of this bird.

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Editorial comment **Paul French, Chairman of BBRC, commented:** 'The identification of this bird is well documented here by Martin Cade, and the Portland birders are to be congratulated on their willingness to entertain the improbable and secure the bird's identification by

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238. First-winter male 'Stejneger's Stonechat' *Saxicola maurus stejnegeri*, Texel, the Netherlands, October 2012.

trapping it. The combination of plumage features and DNA evidence left BBRC in no doubt that the identification was sound, and it was accepted on a single circulation of the Committee. Given that the field identification criteria for *stejnegeri* are still a work in progress, successful future claims will most likely require the bird to have been trapped and to have yielded a feather sample for DNA analysis. This situation may well evolve as the waters become clearer, if only for those birds that show the potentially diagnostic dark centres to the longest uppertail-coverts.'

Martin Collinson, Chairman of BOURC, commented: '"Stejneger's Stonechat" *Saxicola maurus stejnegeri* has had a rocky relationship with the British and Western Palearctic Lists. Unusually saturated or dark examples of Siberian Stonechat have historically been cited as potential *stejnegeri*, but uncertainty about identification criteria, combined with reports of a wide intergrade zone and an assumption that *stejnegeri* was "just" an eastern form of *maurus*, made record assessment complicated. For example, an adult male seen at Cley, Norfolk, on 2nd May 1972 was widely considered to be *stejnegeri* (see Robertson 1977) but the identification cannot be proven and latterly that bird has been accepted only as *stejnegeri*/nominate *maurus* (BOU 2009). Genetic evidence showing that nominate *maurus* and *stejnegeri* are, in fact, not closely related and may represent separate species has concentrated the minds of observers on the subject of identification of *stejnegeri*. That said, identification remains tricky, and though neither biometrics nor plumage, nor arguably even the DNA, identified the Portland bird with 100% certainty in isolation, together they formed congruent lines of evidence that BOURC was able to accept. Provenance was not an issue, and so the subspecies was added to the British List. As stated above, the Portland bird had been seen on Texel in the days prior to its arrival in Britain. The identification has been accepted by CDNA and it is expected that the taxon will be added to the Dutch List in due course.

Letter

Archiving your bird records

Moss Taylor raises an important issue with regard to the long-term storage of personal bird records (*Brit. Birds* 108: 186–187). Having thought about the issues myself, I have come to several conclusions.

Firstly, it is a tragic waste when unique documents are just thrown away upon the death of the author, and Moss should be congratulated in saving the records of the late Richard Richardson, and the diaries from Nancy's Cafe at Cley.

Secondly, it is obviously of value if records can be stored electronically; and clearly the place to submit electronic data is the BTO/RSPB/BWI/SOC/WOS BirdTrack database. It is an advantage for observers to enter their own records, if only because of accuracy in deciphering handwriting (at least in my case). Julian Greenwood highlighted the important role of BirdTrack in historical records (*Brit. Birds* 108: 250), and it remains my intention to do likewise. I started recording in 1957 but have not yet got beyond 1958, so this is still a work in progress.

That does raise the issue of the long-term safety of electronic data. Can we be really certain that data will survive the vicissitudes of time, politics, economics, changes of format, changes in codes and unpredictable events? Would we still have the Doomsday Book if it were solely in electronic format?

But, in addition to electronic storage, the primary documents should also be saved for posterity, and an obvious starting point is the Local Authority Archive for your area. Most Archives are not well stocked on local Natural History, and welcome back issues of

local bird reports, etc. Allen (1976) commented on the difficulty of finding such ephemera. It is then easy to deposit material for safekeeping; you are usually given a choice of leaving material as a gift or on loan. Invariably, you will be given an accession number. All that then remains is to write out a letter, asking your executors to deposit your notebooks at the Archive, under your accession number. Sign and date the letter, or even amend your will, so that your executors will know what to do.

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We asked for a response from the BTO to Ray Eades' letter, and received the following:

It is very welcome that Ray and many others are making use of BirdTrack to save their records for posterity. To date, over 33 million records have been added to BirdTrack by nearly 25,000 people, making this one of the largest stores of biodiversity data anywhere in the world. Managing this flood of data is a challenge, to say the least. However, we do have lots of plans for making BirdTrack even better in future, for individual birders, county recorders and bird clubs, bird observatories, and even a number of other countries which are now making use of BirdTrack. Importantly, we are keen to start making optimum use of this wealth of information to enhance ornithology and conservation. We are fully committed to the long-term future of BirdTrack.

Most of the records being added – at a current rate of about 18,000 per day – are of contemporary observations. However, a number of observers are taking the opportunity to enter their older records for posterity. About three million records relate to observations made before the system was launched in 2002, and indeed there are over 10,000 records per year for every year since 1957. Particular mention should be made of Bardsey Bird Observatory, which has deposited its entire archive of daily logs in the system, though there are an increasing number of individual birders doing this too, which we very much welcome.

Ray identifies the critical question of long-term security of electronic data. Can we be 'certain' that data will remain safe and accessible into the future? This is, of course, a much wider question for society as a whole than it is for ornithology, and doubtless something the clever folk in the technology world are thinking about carefully. However, the BTO has invested heavily in the infrastructure and resources required to provide optimal security for its large datasets, including BirdTrack and all of our other projects such as the Atlases, WeBS, BBS, Ringing, and so on. The online surveys data are stored in an Oracle database, which is hosted on an external server, is backed up daily and is additionally copied down to a server based at The Nunnery. The servers themselves are monitored constantly during working hours, with regular checks during out-of-hours periods, and are replaced and upgraded according to a scheduled plan which is revised each year. Future developments, such as cloud storage and database options, are re-evaluated regularly to determine the most suitable action for the BTO to pursue. In short, the BTO takes its responsibilities for data security very seriously and this will continue to be the case in the future.

As to whether primary paper documents should also be saved, the BTO does not have the capacity to retain original notebooks from large numbers of observers. However, this may well be something that could be investigated locally as Ray suggests. We can certainly provide advice to individuals with large quantities of paper-based records that they wish to digitise. We can offer suggestions on seeking assistance with the physical process of data entry and guidance about formatting the data in a way that facilitates use of BirdTrack's tool for uploading large batches of records.

Further information about adding historical records to BirdTrack can be found at www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack/taking-part/adding-historical-records

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Notes

Migrant Hobby feeding on Hornets

On 23rd August 2014, I came across an adult Hobby *Falco subbuteo* hawking unidentified insects low over a stubble field adjacent to the River Trent at Laughterton, Lincolnshire. It was a sunny afternoon and I watched the bird for several minutes as it repeatedly flew fast and low on the same course along the far edge of the field. The falcon grabbed a prey item with its talons at regular intervals (roughly every 20 seconds or so) and transferred it to the bill immediately. During the five or six minutes I watched it, it caught several prey items a minute and seemed to devour them quickly before catching the next; the prey was caught easily with no chasing involved. The bird had a favoured trajectory, which it didn't deviate from, repeatedly flying a transect maybe 50 m long, back and forth, at a height of about 2–3 m above ground. I watched it until a local Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* appeared and chased the Hobby away from its territory. The Hobby flew off high to the south-west and I didn't see it again.

A little further along the riverside footpath I found an active Hornet *Vespa crabro* nest at the base of an old, hollowed-out Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Literally hundreds of Hornets were arriving and departing and I soon realised that on leaving the nest chamber they were heading straight out, low over the stubble field, towards precisely the same area that the Hobby was hawking over. Returning Hornets were also using the same track. It was now obvious to me that the Hobby had been feeding on the Hornets. I retreated to a sensible distance and watched the Hornets coming and going and through my binoculars, and could now clearly see the active flight line over the stubble field.

Neither *BWP* nor Chapman (1999) mentioned the Hobby feeding on Hornets, although Birkhead (1974), referring to Hesse (*Orn. Monatsber.* 24: 3–4, 1916), included the Hobby in a list of bird species recorded as having eaten adult social wasps (Vespidae). However, it seemed to me to be a food source that a migrant Hobby might exploit gladly when an opportunity arose.

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Hooded Crows nesting inside a caravan

Hooded *Corvus cornix* and Carrion Crows *C. corone* show flexibility in their choice of nest site, and will nest on the ground, cliffs, and on man-made structures such as electricity poles when trees are scarce or absent (e.g. Ferguson-Lees *et al.* 2011, McIvor *et al.* 2012). During a study of the nest-site selection of Hooded Crows in Orkney, carried out between 2009 and 2012, a pair was found nesting on the floor inside an old caravan. What made this choice of nest site even more remarkable was the presence of suitable nesting habitat in the form of two groups of trees, each of which contained an old crow nest, within the same territory.

The territory was first visited in June 2010, when a pair had a nest 1 m from the ground in a small group of willows *Salix viminalis*, which contained three large young close to fledging. A second nest was found in a larger group of trees some 200 m away, but mirror checking confirmed that this had not been used in 2010. In 2011, visits to the site on 20th and 30th April and 22nd May found that both of these nests were still in place, but neither showed any sign of being reused. The pair was present at all of these visits, however, flying overhead and making alarm calls while I attempted to locate the new nest site. It was not until 24th June that I looked in the old

Guillam McIvor

239. Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* nest in derelict caravan, Mainland Orkney, June 2011.

caravan sited between the two groups of trees and discovered the nest (plate 239). The pair was at the caravan when I arrived, and there were no fledged young with the adults. An inspection of the nest suggested that it had been predated at the egg stage or had failed within a week of hatching. In 2012, the missing windows of the caravan were boarded up, preventing access by the birds, and a new nest had been constructed in the large stand of trees 100 m away.

Crows typically prefer to nest in conifers, and nests in these trees suffer lower predation rates than those in deciduous trees, probably because of the concealment they provide (Loman 1979). It is possible that the crows selected the caravan in 2011 as it was a more cryptic choice than the nearby willows, albeit one that made the nest more vulnerable to mammalian nest predators. Nonetheless, it provides an excellent example of the innovative capabilities of crows, and the flexibility they can show when choosing a nest site.

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Use of a Schwegler nestbox by House Martins

Much Cowarne is a small hamlet in rural Herefordshire, with a sixteenth-century farmhouse, a nearby 1960s brick-built detached house and a cluster of five barn conversions. The 1960s house supports a small House Martin *Delichon urbicum* colony, numbering 19 nests in 2014. Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* presumably occupied the barns before their conversion in 2007 since they have subsequently nested

Gerald Wells

Gerald Wells

240 & 241. House Martins *Delichon urbicum* occupying a Schwegler nestbox, Herefordshire, June–July 2014.

there in small numbers, building under the eaves. In 2013–14, Swallow nests were largely confined to one of the barn conversions and its adjoining garage, some 100 m from the House Martin colony, with a maximum of three occupied nests. In 2009 two Schwegler Swallow nestboxes were placed under the eaves of this building and although not occupied by breeding birds they have been used as roosting sites by juvenile Swallows each year.

In late May 2014, Swallows were seen pursuing House Martins in the vicinity of these nestboxes and giving frequent alarm calls. By 5th June, a pair of House Martins had used one of the Schwegler boxes as a foundation for their own nest, and construction was well advanced (plate 240). The nest was completed by 10th June and fledged young were visible at the entrance on 24th July (plate 241). A second brood was also reared in this nest.

Towards the end of the breeding season, it was apparent that two natural Swallow nests, one under the eaves of the adjacent garage (vacated by Swallows after rearing a single brood), and another on a garage close to the main House Martin colony, had also undergone partial 'conversion' by House Martins with several courses of mud pellets added around the rim of each nest.

The use of Swallow nests by other species at this site has been recorded previously for Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba*, which reared two broods successfully, and Robins *Erithacus rubecula*, which abandoned immediately after building when the nest was reclaimed by a pair of Swallows.

In situations where nest sites are scarce, hirundines may experience competition from other species, including other hirundines, and House Martins will occasionally use an old Barn Swallow nest (Turner 2004), but the use of this type of Schwegler nestbox appears to be unrecorded. Possible explanations include an expansion of the established colony or the beginning of the relocation of that colony; observations in the coming years may reveal more.

Acknowledgment

I thank Mick Colquhoun, County Recorder for Herefordshire, for his comments on a draft.

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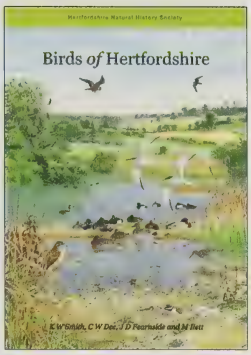
Reviews

Birds of Hertfordshire



By Ken Smith, Chris Dee, Jack Fearnside and Mike Illett
Hertfordshire Natural History Society, 2015
Hbk, 293pp; many colour photographs
ISBN 978-0-9931217-0-8, **£39.00**

A cover painting by Alan Harris, showing (at least) 13 bird species at a Hertfordshire wetland in spring, is an uplifting entry point to this new avifauna for Hertfordshire, and one that immediately entices the reader to explore further. And the rest of the book does not disappoint: this is a most attractive atlas, with bright, colourful and varied page layouts that combine an appealing mix of colour photographs, maps, tables and graphics with a typeset that is clear but not too small or large.

This is the third county avifauna for Hertfordshire and its production was inspired by fieldwork for the recent national bird atlas. Having decided at an early stage to produce a tetrad-based county atlas alongside the national project, Hertfordshire has led the field in providing online maps to show the work in progress as the project developed. This was also the third county tetrad atlas for Hertfordshire, which means that there is now an impressive panorama of bird data for this landlocked county. The completed maps are available (free) online; a wise decision, since it would be unrealistic to print maps from three breeding atlases, plus winter maps from the current survey and any indications of abundance or change between the atlases. All these aspects can be explored at www.hertsatlas.org.uk.

The book opens with interesting and relevant chapters describing the county's landscape and habitats, an ornithological history of Hertfordshire, and bird surveys and recording in the county. The last shows just how much fieldwork has been undertaken over the last 50 years or so and the value these local surveys have provided. Moving on to the core of the book, the species accounts, two points immediately come to mind. One is the overriding feeling of quality mentioned earlier. The other is the brevity of the text. Most county avifaunas go into detail about individual records or where commoner birds are to be found. This can be useful but can also be a dull read! Does anyone really read them all? With this Hertfordshire book, the reader could easily read everything printed within the covers of the book, page by page, or dip in as they wished, yet would still feel they had learnt something interesting and useful after each sitting. With so much information available on the internet these days, and a declining market for expensive books, I think this is a wise decision. A full reference and explanation of status may interest some, but most folk are looking for less, or perhaps for an introduction to the birds of an area, and I find it hard to imagine how this could have been done better than it has here.

The selection of maps and graphics for each species is different, depending on what is considered interesting to share. Thus the Robin *Erithacus rubecula* occurs in every tetrad, so no tetrad map is included in the book (it's still there on the website); instead there are maps of abundance in both breeding season and winter and a chart showing the BBS trend for the county. The results have shown a higher abundance in the middle and south of the county and while this is pointed out, no explanation is offered. For the Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* there are maps of recent distribution in both seasons, a map of breeding-season abundance, and a graph of the county BBS trend. For a number of species where there have been large changes in distribution in the three atlas surveys, such as Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* and Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* (all declining) and Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (increasing but where the use of breeding habitat has changed from wet grasslands to arable crops), maps from all breeding surveys are included. Some other species accounts are enhanced by graphics from, for example, ringing recoveries, annual or monthly numbers, arrival dates or WeBS counts.

County population estimates are presented in species headers alongside the GB estimates from Musgrove *et al.* 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 64–100). These are based on estimates prepared for the previous county atlas but scaled for recent changes or improved knowledge. Some avifaunas and atlases shy away from putting numbers to their local birds but I think it is helpful for readers to better understand the county and to assess future changes.

Hertfordshire is fortunate in having a long ornithological history on which to draw. A chapter describing changes in the avifauna provides perspective over the last 40 years, for which there is much information, as detailed in the 12-page

review of bird surveys and recording in the introductory chapters. The book concludes with appendices and a site gazetteer, maps for selected sites, the full Hertfordshire List and selected records for 2013, bringing the book as up to date as can be possible for such an extensive review.

While I'm not familiar with Hertfordshire, I am keenly interested in where birds occur, when and why. Having spent several hours with this book I feel much better informed about all manner of things; that, coupled with the visual appeal means that I love this book! This is now the county avifauna of choice for me when looking for inspiration and ideas on local surveys and reporting their results to a wide audience. Anyone who lives in or near Hertfordshire, or knows the county, must get a copy. And I strongly advise anyone else interested in county avifaunas or atlases to do the same.

Mark Holling

A Birdwatching Guide to North East Germany and its Baltic Coast

By Roger White
Published privately, 2012
Pbk, 147pp; colour photos and maps
ISBN 978-0-9571695-1-7, £17.95

Germany has many fantastic birding sites, but most are not on the radar of foreign birdwatchers, since information on birds and where to watch them in languages other than German is almost non-existent. Roger White published his first book, covering Brandenburg and Berlin (see *Brit. Birds* 105: 489), in 2012. His second deals with the federal state Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, in north-east Germany. The whole area is divided into four subregions ('rectangles'), each covering between nine and 31 sites. Although the book concentrates on the Baltic Sea coast, many excellent inland sites are also included, as is the island of Fehmarn (which is actually part of Schleswig-Holstein, although from a birdwatching perspective it makes sense to include it here). For each site there is a map, a short introduction, notes on access and a description of the bird species expected. For the sites that I have visited, the information has been thoroughly researched and is well presented, although some maps are printed at a rather small scale and lack GPS-coordinates. Some site descriptions only scratch the surface of the potential of the sites (e.g. Grüner Brink on Fehmarn, or sea-watching on the north coast of Rügen and Darß), but this may be rather subjective. A list of the regularly occurring bird species (including German names) is also included.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is a huge area with many great birding sites. The Baltic Sea coast is excellent for migration and hosts one of the largest roosts of Common Cranes *Grus grus* in Europe with up to c. 70,000 birds present in September and October. Coastal and inland wetlands hold significant numbers of breeding and roosting waterbirds, some of them rare in Britain, including Little Crake *Porzana parva*, Whiskered *Chlidonias hybrida* and White-winged Black Terns *C. leucopterus*. Add in passerines like River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* and Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, various woodpeckers in the forests, White-tailed *Haliaeetus albicilla* and at some sites Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* and you have an excellent birding destination. Roger White has presented this region extremely well to English-speaking birdwatchers. So, buy the book and come to visit – you will not be disappointed!

Jochen Dierschke

Birds

Edited by Mavis Pilbeam
British Museum Press, 2015
Pbk, 96pp; 48 colour illustrations
ISBN 978-0-7141-5112-0, £9.99

Every human culture has made images and poems about the birds people live amongst. Most attribute meaning to their avifaunas beyond their factual truth. Birds live vividly in our imaginations and our dreams, and artists the world over have been drawn to what we have made of birds as much as what they are themselves.

The British Museum has a large collection of

images of birds from around the world. This little book – designed as a souvenir or gift – reproduces 50 of them and sets them between 50 bird poems on roughly the same subject. The poems are all in English and most were written in English. The pictures retain the look of their country or culture of origin. The poems are nice to have but there are not many surprises in the line-up. The best poems are by the canonical bird poets: John Clare has five, Thomas Hardy three, Edward Thomas two. If you've read anything of the poetry of birds, most of these will be familiar. A handful were new to me. One or two earned their keep. I liked David Chorlton's Turkey Vulture 'looking for an open wound/to receive its penitent head.' All but two or three of the contemporary voices are American and rather wan and diluted poets. The anthologist herself commits the cardinal sin of her trade by including a poem of her own.

The illustrations are brighter, for sure, and more appealing too. None of them are drawings for identification purposes but most can be labelled to a species. William Seaby's Bullfinches on snowy twigs are here and Thomas Bewick's Robin, but there are also several delightful Japanese pictures, a miraculous sixteenth-century Hoopoe by John White that has most certainly been truly seen close up, and a somewhat terrifying etching from 1686 of the Bass Rock that gives the full Gannet roil effect.

It would have been good to see more contemporary British work represented – both pictures and poems. The field is flowering right now. Close looking and attention to detail still make for the best poems and pictures. Issa Kobayashi, the late eighteenth-century Japanese haiku poet, knew and demonstrated this. He is famous for his poems on mosquitoes and frogs – more than 150 of each. Here is his complete 'Wren'. It has the delicacy and speed of a Japanese or Chinese painting but also the immediate quality of a field note – something seen and taken down in front of the object itself and worth having for that alone:

The wren
Looking here, looking there,
'Dropped something?'

Tim Dee

Also received:

Field Guide to Invasive Plants and Animals in Britain

By Olaf Booy, Max Wade and Helen Roy
Bloomsbury, 2015
Pbk, 304pp; many colour illustrations and maps
ISBN 978-1-4081-2318-8, **£24.99**

This field guide covers mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, invertebrates and various groups of plants; it includes a wide range of established invasive non-native species, alongside some non-natives which are not yet established but which could become invasive in the future.

Pocket Guide to the Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland

Second edition
By Richard Lewington
British Wildlife Publishing/ Bloomsbury, 2015
Pbk, 160pp; many colour illustrations and maps
ISBN 978-1-910389-04-1, **£9.99**

British Moths: a photographic guide to the moths of Britain and Ireland

Second edition
By Chris Manley
Bloomsbury, 2015
Hbk, 352pp; many colour photographs, maps
ISBN 978-1-4729-0770-7, **£39.99**

This impressive guide covers 871 macro and 1,276 micro moths (some 800 more than in the first edition, most of the additions being micros). A concise text gives key information on identification, wingspan, status and distribution, flight periods, habitats and larval food plants and there are now distribution maps for every resident species. The first edition of this guide was published in 2008 as *British Moths and Butterflies*. In this new edition, butterflies and caterpillars are omitted and this helps to justify the claim that it is the most comprehensive collection of photos of British moths ever assembled. As well as the new species, there are new images (all of living insects) of many of the species covered last time, so this volume is a really significant new edition.

News extra

British Birds grants to young birdwatchers

Following the success of the inaugural Young Birdwatchers' Grants, awarded by the *British Birds* Charitable Trust in 2013 (see *Brit. Birds* 107: 46–48), we repeated the scheme in 2014. Birders aged under 25 were encouraged to apply for grants to support their ringing activities or visits to bird observatories. Here are reports from some of the beneficiaries.

Jenny Donelan, 22 and from Gwynedd, visited Bardsey in September 2014

'It was lovely living island life for a week, away from technology and able to fully immerse myself in nature. The experience improved my birding skills as I was out most days alone, identifying whatever I could find. News of rarities on the island made me go out and look for these birds – seeing them in an island environment made them easier to find, which was great. Ringing new species and seeing them in the hand increased my skills at identifying such birds in the field. Before seeing them in the hand I would have struggled. It was extremely useful for me to experience a different ringing set-up, and to accompany the observatory ringers and watch and learn the techniques they used to run the sessions. I'm grateful for the experience this grant was able to give me, and without it I would not have had the money to travel and stay at Bardsey for the week. Thanks to all the staff at Bardsey for making sure I had a thoroughly enjoyable and educational week. Some of my personal highlights: using a Heligoland trap for the first time; ringing my first Manx Shearwater chicks and seeing Risso's Dolphins.'

Martin Suanjak

242. Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* at Spurn Bird Observatory.

Espen Quinto-Ashman, 17 and from Hereford, visited Spurn in April 2014

'I arrived at Spurn around lunchtime on 19th April to the news of a possible Blyth's Pipit which had been seen in the fields around Easington gas terminal. A visit to the gas terminal yielded brief flight views of the large pipit, sound recordings were obtained and it soon transpired that it was "just" a Richard's Pipit. Still, a lifer for me all the same!

'The next day started watching several Arctic Terns go out to sea over the Warren, also seen were my first Lesser Whitethroat of the year along with a scattering of other common migrants. The 21st and 22nd brought more of the same with good numbers of common migrants, but on the 22nd also a Short-eared Owl hunting at Sammy's Point and amazing views of a Black Redstart. The 23rd was similar with one highlight being a Corn Bunting migrating over Numpties, the other being a long overdue ringing tick in the form of House Sparrow – mega!

'The 24th was another good day with three Marsh Harriers, a "Blue" Fulmar and my first Sedge Warblers and Tree Pipit of the year. I really enjoyed my week at Spurn Bird Obs and I'd like to thank *BB* very much for this opportunity, without which I wouldn't have been able to have this experience.'

Martin Suanjak, 19 and from Austria, spent two weeks at Spurn in September/October 2014

'Seeing a Yellow-browed Warbler has always been kind of a dream for me, therefore I chose the peak time for this species to have the biggest chance of seeing one.

'And when I finally got to Spurn on 28th September, basically the first bird I was looking at was... a fine juv Masked Shrike! Not a bad start, I thought, but things got even better... The next day would yield four new species alone, starting with a Little Bunting trapped in the morning. As the day wore on the "wink wink" calling of skeins of Pink-footed Geese overhead was heard (a lifer for me – there have been only 14 Austrian records), a showy Richard's Pipit and in the late afternoon a Yellow-browed Warbler! It showed itself superbly flitting

around in the Sycamore trees right in front of the Warren, the place where I was staying. So after only two days I exceeded my goal of three lifers by having seen five already and also ticked my target species. Spurn did it again!

'The next day the Yellow-browed Warbler got caught and I was privileged enough to ring it. The following days were a bit slower but good times for chatting and catching up with the latest local news and getting a "behind-the-scenes" view of the daily life at a bird observatory. I tried to make as many new contacts as possible; I met some truly amazing people.

'As always at Spurn, visible migration was superb. With the excellent birders doing the visible migration counts, you can learn a lot. For me, for example, I learnt how to distinguish Rock and Meadow Pipit on call and flight silhouette, which I found very hard at the start but got to grips with in the end.

'I can only recommend any young birder to go to a bird observatory and learn a lot there! Thanks to *BB* for enabling me to have such a great experience! See you soon, Spurn!'

Katherine Mayer, 15 and from Cheshire, used her grant to buy ringing equipment

'I have been training as a bird ringer for over a year now, and the *BB* grant has allowed me to purchase all of the necessary equipment, such as pliers and books. Learning how to ring birds has been a great way to improve my knowledge of many British birds, and has allowed me to experience things that would otherwise have been impossible.

'Some things that I have been able to do include ringing the summer migrants (specifically warblers) at Woolston Eyes Nature Reserve, where I even got the opportunity to ring a juvenile Water Rail. I have also been able to put colour rings on adult Dippers, and ring Dipper and Pied Flycatcher chicks at various sites around Cheshire.'

'I also had the opportunity to go out on several occasions with Schedule 1 licence holders and ring Barn Owl chicks, which allowed me to learn how to age and sex Barn Owls. Most of the ringing I have done has been at my trainer's shelter belt, which attracts a wide range of species throughout the year, but I have also been able to go out with other members of South Manchester Ringing Group.

'Bird ringing has also allowed me to help other people learn more about birds, as I am able to share the knowledge that I am gaining with the children at the RSPB Wildlife Explorer group, where I help out as a junior leader; and I have also helped at several open day events, at which we demonstrated the ringing process to the public.'

Ian MacKennon, 24 and from Merseyside, bought a second-hand telescope and ringing equipment

'I received the grant whilst still volunteering at Martin Mere WWT. Having a scope has helped me hugely: I've really been able to appreciate the coastal birdlife near to me on the Ribble Estuary and Sefton Coast, and I have gained many more opportunities – taking part in ringing sessions at Martin Mere, and doing WeBS counts on the Sefton Coast.

'One of my favourite moments ringing was a Whooper Swan catch, which involves tempting swans down a netted pipe with food, then closing the pipe entrance and rounding the birds up for ringing: always good fun! I am currently on a training placement with Lancashire Wildlife Trust, surveying Local Wildlife Sites, which includes breeding bird surveys on some sites. I'm certain that the knowledge and skills that the grant allowed me to develop helped me gain the placement, and so the Young Birdwatchers' Grant really helped make a difference. The grant helped my confidence hugely, knowing that there is a support network out there for young people trying to improve as naturalists. I am also grateful for the help and support I have received trying to gain a foothold in the conservation sector, and hope I can contribute to the conservation of birds and British wildlife for a long time into the future.'

Amy Robjohns, 20 and from Hampshire, used her grant to visit Portland. She wrote an account on her blog: https://birdingaroundhampshire.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/a-trip-to-portland

Darren Mayer

243. Katherine Mayer with a Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*.

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Harry Hussey

This summary of unchecked reports covers early May to early June 2015.

Headlines Although airstreams from the west and south dominated, it was surprising that, for the second period in a row, Nearctic vagrants caught the eye, with a trio of *Catharus* thrushes (Grey-cheeked in Co. Mayo, Swainson's in Pembrokeshire and Veery in Orkney) together with a pair of Hooded Mergansers in Co. Donegal and a Dark-eyed Junco in Co. Cork. A breath of easterlies towards the end of the period brought a Black-winged Pratincole and a Black-headed Bunting. An impressive spread of southern herons reached southwest England, matched by an outstanding passage of skuas in northern Scotland. A good spring wader passage saw a couple of Broad-billed Sandpipers joining a widespread influx of Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* and both Temminck's *Calidris temminckii* and Little Stints *C. minuta*. Early June brought good numbers of European Bee-eaters to southern England. Other southerly rarities included a Moltoni's Warbler on Fair Isle, a Sardinian Warbler in Cornwall and a Collared Pratincole in Suffolk.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* Records from Lincolnshire, North-east Scotland (two) and Yorkshire (two). Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Wintersett Resr (Yorkshire), long-stayer to 17th May. King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* Ythan Estuary (North-east Scotland), long-stayer to 9th June; Unst (Shetland), 7th–9th June. Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* River Don (North-east Scotland), long-stayer last seen 21st May, after some 20 weeks. Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* Records from Highland, North-east Scotland and Shetland. Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus* Tory Island (Co. Donegal), pair, 19th–23rd May.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Portsoy (North-east Scotland), 12th May; Balnakeil (Highland), 21st May; North Uist (Outer Hebrides), 22nd May; Eshaness (Shetland), 5th June.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* St Buryan (Cornwall), found dead 12th May; St Mary's (Scilly), 13th–18th May; Lakenheath Fen (Suffolk), 16th May to 8th June; Tresemple Pool/St Clement, 17th–28th May, Helston Loe (all Cornwall), 17th May. Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Long-stayers, St Mary's (up to three), and Burgh-le-Marsh (Lincolnshire); other records from Cornwall (up to two) and Somerset (up to three). Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Long-stayers Polgigga (Cornwall), to 12th May and Prawle Point (Devon), to 16th May. New arrivals South Milton, 13th May, Beesands, 16th–17th May, Slapton, 17th May (all Devon); Land's End, 15th–17th May, Nanjizal, 15th May, Goonhilly Downs, 16th May and Marazion Marshes, 6th–9th June (all Cornwall); also St Mary's, 14th May to 3rd June; Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 22nd May. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* In Kent, long-stayers near Warehorne to 19th May, and Cooling Marshes 31st May; also Trull (Somerset), 25th May. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Lodmoor (Dorset),

Bob Flood

244. Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, St Mary's, Scilly, May 2015.

12th–29th May; Rye Harbour (Sussex), 13th May; Dungeness (Kent), 13th May; Drift Resr (Cornwall), 18th–29th May; St Martin's (Scilly), 15th–16th and 26th–28th May. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Scolt Head 21st May, same Old Hunstanton, 21st–22nd, Snettisham, 22nd (all Norfolk), then Frampton Marsh, Boston and Kirkby-on-Bain, 22nd May (all Lincolnshire), then Midhope Moor (Yorkshire), 23rd May; Marloes, then Skomer (Pembrokeshire), 25th May, same Nantyffyllon (East Glamorgan), Coed Morgan (Gwent), 26th May, Skomer again, 2nd June; Newton Abbot (Devon), 5th June; Marazion Marshes, then Constantine, 7th June, Penzance, Nanjizal, Polgigga (all Cornwall), 8th June; St Mary's, then St Agnes (Scilly), 8th June.

Richard Stonier

245. Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*, Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, May 2015.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Records from Cornwall (two), Essex (two), Hampshire (two), Kent, Norfolk (two), Suffolk (two), Sussex (two) and Yorkshire. **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* Large influx into the southwest of England, including 30 Bryher (Scilly), 50 Marazion, 150 Polgigga and 186 Nanjizal (all Cornwall), all 8th June.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Grove Ferry (Kent), 11th–12th May; Mickle Mere (Suffolk), two, 13th May, then probably same Bowers Marsh (Essex), 22nd and 26th May, Frampton Marsh, 27th–28th May and Potterick Carr (Yorkshire), 29th May; others Sidlesham Ferry (Sussex), 29th May to 7th June; Sandwich Bay (Kent), two, 30th May. **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* Exminster Marshes (Devon), 23rd–24th May. **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* Balcomie (Fife), 30th–31st May; Ynyslas (Ceredigion), 5th June. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Calidris falcinellus* Tinker's Marsh (Suffolk), 22nd–23rd May; Findhorn Bay (Moray & Nairn), 29th May. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Cley (Norfolk), 25th–26th May; Lough Beg (Co. Derry), 28th–29th May; Frampton Marsh, 29th May to 7th June. **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* Arran (Argyll), 19th–21st May; Wellington GP (Herefordshire), 25th May.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* Titchfield Haven/Posbrook Flood (Hampshire), long-stayer to 9th June. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Low Newton-by-the-Sea (Northumberland), 11th–14th May. **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* Lakenheath Fen, 7th–9th June. **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* Bothal Pond (Northumberland), 28th May to 1st June, same Loch of Skene (North-east Scotland), 3rd June.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* Passage off North Uist included 105 on 11th, 353 on 12th and 911 on 16th, and off Lewis (both Outer Hebrides), 198 on 12th; 485 on 13th May off Eshaness (Shetland). **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* Off North Uist, 762 on 11th, 1,307 on 12th, 437 on 15th, 847 on 16th and 325 on 28th; 645 on 13th May off Eshaness. **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* Bowling Green Marsh/Exminster Marshes (Devon), 23rd May; Bothal Pond, 29th–30th May. **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 30th May. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Dungeness, two, 14th–15th May; Martin Mere, 24th May, Lunt Meadows (both Lancashire & N Merseyside), 25th May; Paxton Pits (Cambridgeshire), 26th May; Pugney's CP (Yorkshire), 28th May; Swineham GP (Dorset), 2nd–4th June. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Fiddaun Island

(Co. Galway), 5th June. **Bonaparte's Gull** *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* Southampton (Hampshire), long-stayer to 24th May; also Llanrhidian Marsh (Gower), 12th May; Dungeness, 16th May; Kingsmill Lake (Cornwall), 26th May.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* The Mullet (Co. Mayo), 12th May; Lyme Regis (Dorset), 14th May; Loddiswell (Devon), 16th May; Winwick (Cheshire & Wirral), 23rd May; Spurn (Yorkshire), 7th June.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Widespread influx throughout the period, peaking 3rd–7th June, with groups of 12 in Scilly, six in Lincolnshire, five in Yorkshire, four in Cornwall and Somerset. Further records of 1–3 in Co. Antrim, Devon, Dorset, Co. Galway, Gloucestershire, Highland, Kent, Co. Mayo, Norfolk, Northumberland, Orkney, Suffolk, Surrey and Sussex. **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* Records from Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Dorset, Greater London (two), Kent (two), Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Sussex and Co. Waterford.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* Records in Co. Cork, Cornwall (up to three), Orkney and Scilly, with a **'Balearic Woodchat Shrike'** *L. s. badius* at Wykeham Forest (Yorkshire), 13th May. **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* Records in Cambridgeshire, Dorset, Co. Down, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Orkney, Suffolk, Surrey and Yorkshire (up to three).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Out Skerries, 2nd and 6th June; Unst, 2nd June; Swining, 5th June; Sandwick, 5th–6th June; Foula, 5th June; Whalsay (all Shetland), 8th June; also Sanday (Orkney), 3rd June; Fair Isle, two, 3rd June, one to 5th; St Martin's, 4th June. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Hickling Broad (Norfolk), 26th May. **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* South Uist (Outer Hebrides), 14th May; Portland Bill (Dorset), 23rd May; Unst, 25th–28th May; North Uist, 4th June. **Moltoni's Warbler** *Sylvia subalpina* Fair Isle, 15th–26th May. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* Land's End, 14th–26th May. **Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta* Portland Bill, 15th May; Skokholm (Pembrokeshire), 15th May; St Mary's, 20th May; Ponsongath (Cornwall), 27th May. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Forest Row (Sussex), 23rd May; Fair Isle, 8th June. **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Sandwell Valley (West Midlands), 18th May; Unst, 3rd–9th June.

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus* South Uist, 19th–21st May. **Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* Skokholm, 2nd–9th June. **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* The Mullet, 25th May. **Veery** *Catharus fuscescens* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 30th May to 9th June.

John Hewitt

246. 'Balearic Woodchat Shrike' *Lanius senator badius*, Wykeham Forest, Yorkshire, May 2015.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* Fair Isle, long-stayer to 19th May. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* North Ronaldsay, 5th June. **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* Seaton Common (Cleveland), long-stayer to 12th May; South Shields (Co. Durham), 14th May.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* Dursey Island (Co. Cork), 9th June. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Fair Isle, 19th May; North Ronaldsay/Sanday, 20th–29th May; Unst, 27th–29th May. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Skomer, 7th June.

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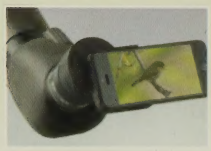

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