



British Birds

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Bird
Photograph
of the Year

Greenish
Warblers

Fred
Stubbs



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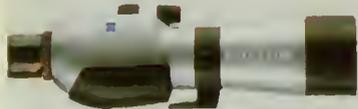
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Bird Photograph of the Year

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There were 91 entries for this year's competition, submitted by 31 photographers. Judgement day this year was Friday 4th April, and the panel of five comprised: Tim Appleton, best known nowadays as organiser of the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water; Richard Chandler, Chairman of BB2000 Ltd and enthusiastic wader photographer (and, not least, our host for the day); Robin Chittenden, wildlife photographer and partner in Birdline East Anglia; David Hosking, wildlife photographer and representative of the Frank Lane Picture Agency; and David Tipling, wildlife photographer. As usual, the judging process began with a quick run through of all the slides, to give the judges a feel for the breadth and quality of the entries, followed by a longer, more critical viewing. After much discussion and debate, the majority of the slides were eliminated to leave a mouthwatering collection of 19 on our final shortlist. Our attention was then diverted from the transparencies by a gorgeous lunch, prepared by Richard's wife, Eunice, and consumed with relish in brilliant sunshine in Richard's back garden in Oundle, Northamptonshire. Happily for Richard, this provided a new 'garden' bird, as three Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* could be seen soaring above Kings Road!

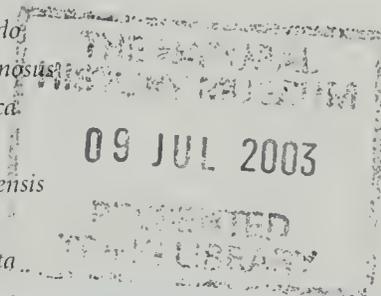
Suitably refreshed, we returned to the task in hand. The slides in our shortlist were reviewed once more, and ranked independently by each judge. No easy matter this, as they were all of the highest quality. Nonetheless, the favourite was still an outright winner. The bare facts of our deliberations are given in the table opposite.

Chris Knight's photograph of a Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* is quite simply stunning. It was the clearest winner of this competition for a number of years, with three of the five judges nominating it their first choice and the other two as their second. It is perhaps fitting that Chris (who also won this competition back in 1985) should win again following the publication of his new book, *The Feather and the Furrow: the bird photographs of Chris Knights*, which contains many of his very best images. Chris was lucky indeed to get such a beautifully crisp, large-sized image of a passerine in flight. He took it from a car while driving along one of his farm tracks in June 2002. He recalls seeing three young Sky Larks beside their parents, and stopping to watch them. Two of the youngsters came beside the car, at which point both adults were flying round, very concerned. 'I sat tight and they flew in close. I took a few pictures with the lens fairly wide open, to allow a high shutter speed (to freeze the bird in flight) and to cut out the background (that is, to blur out the background so that it did not confuse the subject of the photograph).' The prizes for the competition winner this year include a Sprayway GORE-TEX jacket, and a selection of books from leading natural history book publishers HarperCollins and A&C Black, as well as an inscribed salver and a cash prize.

In second place was a delightful shot of a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* eating a sloe, taken by Mike Wilkes at Coughton, Warwickshire, in November 2002. Mike commented that he had been watching this regular site for some

Bird Photograph of the Year

1st	Sky Lark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	(plate 220)	Chris Knights (Norfolk)
2nd	Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	(plate 221)	Mike Wilkes (Worcestershire)
3rd=	Great Grey Owl <i>Strix nebulosa</i>	(plate 222)	Gordon Langsbury (Berkshire)
3rd=	Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila clanga</i>	(plate 223)	Jens Eriksen (Oman)
5th	Chukar Partridge <i>Alectoris chukar</i>	(plate 224)	Peter Preece (Warwickshire)
6th	White-tailed Eagles <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	(plate 225)	Mike Gore (Surrey)
7th	Corn Bunting <i>Miliaria calandra</i>	(plate 226)	Bill Baston (Suffolk)
8th	Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>	(plate 227)	Mike Wilkes (Worcestershire)
9th	Black Stork <i>Ciconia nigra</i>	(plate 228)	Richard Brooks (Norfolk)
10th	Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula artica</i>	(plate 229)	Steve Young (Liverpool)
11th	Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>		Mike Lane (West Midlands)
12th	Steppe Eagle <i>Aquila nipalensis</i>		Jens Eriksen (Oman)
13th	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>		Steve Young (Liverpool)
14th=	Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		Richard Brooks (Norfolk)
14th=	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>		Tony Hamblin (Warwickshire)
16th	Dipper <i>Cinclus cinclus</i>		Mike Lane (West Midlands)
17th	Ruddy Duck <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>		Tony Hamblin (Warwickshire)
18th	Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>		Mike Wilkes (Worcestershire)
19th	Bald Ibis <i>Geronticus eremita</i>		Hanne Eriksen (Oman)



220. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR. Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Norfolk, June 2002 (Canon EOS IV; Canon 500-mm f4 IS; 1/640, f7, Fuji Provia 100, rated at 200 ASA). Chris Knights





221. SECOND. Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Coughton, Warwickshire, November 2002 (Canon EOS 3; Canon 500-mm f4 with 1.4x extender; Fuji Sensia 100, rated at 250 ASA). Mike Wilkes

considerable time, and could scarcely believe the alacrity with which the thrushes swallowed the sloes!

In equal third place came two very different, but equally special shots of birds of prey: a Great Grey Owl *Strix nebulosa* by Gordon Langsbury and a Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* by Jens Eriksen. Gordon commented that 'I was photographing this owl perched in a tree, when it decided to fly. The owl flew right past me, and I panned the bird, hand-holding the lens.' And a very good job he did indeed. The only slightly negative aspect of the shot was the marginally out-of-focus fencing in the background, which detracted from what potentially could have been a winning photograph. Jens took his shot in his adopted country of Oman, in November 2002. He wrote that 'On some days in bird photography, everything comes together and at the end of the day you cannot wait to get the films back from processing... I have photographed many Spotted Eagles, but the birds have always passed overhead. This time, luck would have it that I finally managed to get a shot of the upperside.' He was also placed in twelfth position in our shortlist with a photograph of a Steppe Eagle *A. nipalensis* taken just half an

hour before the Spotted Eagle. No wonder he couldn't wait to get the films back!

In fifth place we have an absolutely cracking shot of a Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar* taken by Peter Preece. Peter commented that 'The difficulty in obtaining this picture was that Chukars, like our Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, live in long grass or heather and you need the bird to perch on a rock or grassy stump to get a clear view. Although I had seen these birds many times before in Lesvos, I had never managed to get a good photograph. While coming round a dangerous bend on a steep mountain road, I spotted this bird and photographed it from my car window at about 7.00 pm. I had only about five minutes left before the light faded, and would not have been able to stay more than a few moments because of where the car was parked!'

Sixth place this year was taken by the fabulous action shot of two White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* grappling in flight, photographed by Michael Gore in Hokkaido, Japan, in February 2002. According to Mike's supporting notes, these two birds squabbled regu-

continued on page 325



222. THIRD EQUAL. Great Grey Owl *Strix nebulosa*, Finland, March 2002 (Nikon F5; Nikkor 80-400 mm VR lens; 1/400, f8, Fuji Sensia 100, rated at 200 ASA). Gordon Langsbury

223. THIRD EQUAL. Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, Oman, November 2002 (Canon EOS IV; Canon EF 400-mm IS DO USM; 1/400, f4.5, Fujichrome Velvia 50). Jens Eriksen





224. FIFTH. Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar*, Lesvos, Greece, May 2002 (Canon EOS 5; Canon 100-400 mm with 1.4x extender; 1/125, f8, Fuji Sensia 100). Peter Preece

225. SIXTH. White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Hokkaido, Japan, February 2002 (Canon EOS IV; Canon 500 mm f4 IS; 1/750, Fuji Sensia 100). Mike Gore



226. SEVENTH. Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, Lesvos, Greece, April 2002 (Canon EOS IV;
Canon 500-mm f4 IS with 2x converter; 1/250, f8, Fuji Sensia 100). Bill Baston





227. EIGHTH. Stock Dove *Columba oenas*, Coughton, Warwickshire, February 2002 (Canon EOS 3; Canon 500-mm f4; Fuji Sensia 100, rated at 250 ASA). Mike Wilkes

228. NINTH. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, Lesvos, Greece, April 2002 (Nikon F100; Nikon 500-mm f4 AFS lens; 1/400, f7.1, Fuji Sensia 100, rated at 125 ASA). Richard Brooks



continued from page 320

larly over an area where several hundred Red-crowned Cranes *Grus japonensis* were feeding. The eagles were feeding on carrion and dead fish thrown out by the local people.

Seventh was a fine shot of a Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* taken by Bill Baston. Bill described 'a proud Corn Bunting staking out its territory amid stiff competition in the flooded sheep field near Skala Kalloni, Lesvos, singing boldly from its perch high up among the asphodels'. Bill also admits that he 'broke the rules' with this shot, in that it was taken about 13.00 hours, in the heat of the day and when the sun is high and the light harsh. Judicious manoeuvring of his car enabled him to get the best possible position under the circumstances, however, showing that you can break the rules and still obtain a stunning photograph.

Eighth place was occupied by a beautiful portrait of a Stock Dove *Columba oenas* taken by Mike Wilkes in February 2002. 'Several Stock Doves were coming to a baited area of corn; the water had frozen over on the small pool and they looked rather nice standing on it waiting

their turn to feed.' This picture was taken from the same winter hide at Coughton, Warwickshire, as the Song Thrush photograph (plate 221) awarded second place.

In ninth position this year we have a superb shot of a Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* captured by Richard Brooks, at his regular springtime venue in Lesvos. According to Richard's notes, 'this fishing behaviour (using the wings as an "umbrella" to filter out unwanted sunlight whilst picking off small fish) is behaviour I had never before been lucky enough to photograph in such good light and with the bird so totally unconcerned by the presence of my car, at such close range that I actually had to remove my 1.4x converter to get all of it in!'

Tenth was an unusual but revealing shot by Steve Young of an Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* emerging from its nesting burrow on Skomer, Pembrokeshire. Steve claimed 'I wanted a different type of puffin picture, so by using a 24-mm wide-angle lens I was able to show the background to the bird's habitat. After a long wait lying on my stomach, the puffin finally emerged into the daylight allowing three shots to be taken before it flew back out to sea.'

229. TENTH. Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*, Skomer; Pembrokeshire, June 2002 (Nikon F5; Nikkor 24-mm lens; 1/250, f8, Fuji Sensia 100). Steve Young



Last but by no means least, marking his sixth victory in this category, David Norton's winning entry in the Young Photographer category (plate 230) portrays Fulmars at their elegant best – in flight. Fulmars nest on the walls of Lindisfarne Castle, Holy Island, Northumberland and these birds were flying past on the wind, as the sun was getting low in the sky, with stormy clouds in the background. Every now and then, some of the birds were unhappy with the proximity of others and an aggressive posture and call would be observed, as shown by the lower bird in the picture. David will receive a cheque for £100 and an engraved glass goblet presented by The Eric Hosking Charitable Trust.

The prizes for the winner, second and third places, and the Young Photographer of the Year will be presented at this year's British Bird-watching Fair at Rutland Water, in August. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors, Sprayway, HarperCollins, A&C Black and The Eric Hosking Charitable Trust, once again for their support, without which this competition would not continue. Next year's competition will assess photographs taken during 2003, and the rules will be announced in the January 2004 issue of *BB*, and on our website (www.britishbirds.co.uk) before the end of the year; they will also be available from the address below.

*Robin Chittenden, Tim Appleton, Richard Chandler, David Hosking and David Tipling
c/o British Birds, Chapel Cottage, Dunrossness, Shetland ZE2 9JH*

230. The *British Birds* Young Bird Photographer of the Year: Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, Holy Island, Northumberland, June 2002 (Canon EOS 3; 300-mm f4 IS & 1.4x extender; 1/250, f5.6, Fuji Sensia 100, rated at 200 ASA). *David Norton*



Specific status of taxa within the Greenish Warbler complex

Martin Collinson, Alan G. Knox,
David T. Parkin and George Sangster



ABSTRACT The taxonomic status of six subspecies of Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* was re-examined in the light of fresh evidence about their identification characters and biological relationships. Although *P. t. viridanus* and *P. t. plumbeitarsus* ('Two-barred Greenish Warbler') behave as distinct species in their zone of overlap, the five subspecies *viridanus*, *ludlowi*, *trochiloides*, *obscuratus* and *plumbeitarsus* form a cline within which it is not possible to define species boundaries. There is currently insufficient evidence to recognise 'Two-barred Greenish Warbler' or the allopatric taxon *P. t. nitidus* ('Green Warbler') as separate species. Consequently, no changes to their classification are recommended.

Six subspecies of Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* are currently recognised (Irwin 2000): *viridanus*, *ludlowi*, *trochiloides*, *obscuratus* (collectively known as Greenish Warbler), along with the more distinctive *plumbeitarsus* ('Two-barred Greenish

Warbler') and *nitidus* ('Green Warbler'). Of these, *viridanus*, *nitidus* and *plumbeitarsus* have occurred in Britain (Dean 1985; Bradshaw 2001). Several recent publications have provided new information about species limits within *P. trochiloides* (Helbig *et al.* 1995; Irwin

2000; Irwin *et al.* 2001a,c), prompting this taxonomic review. Some of the evidence has been summarised previously by Collinson (2001) and in recent reviews by Irwin *et al.* (2001b) and Irwin & Irwin (2002).

The specific status of Greenish Warbler taxa

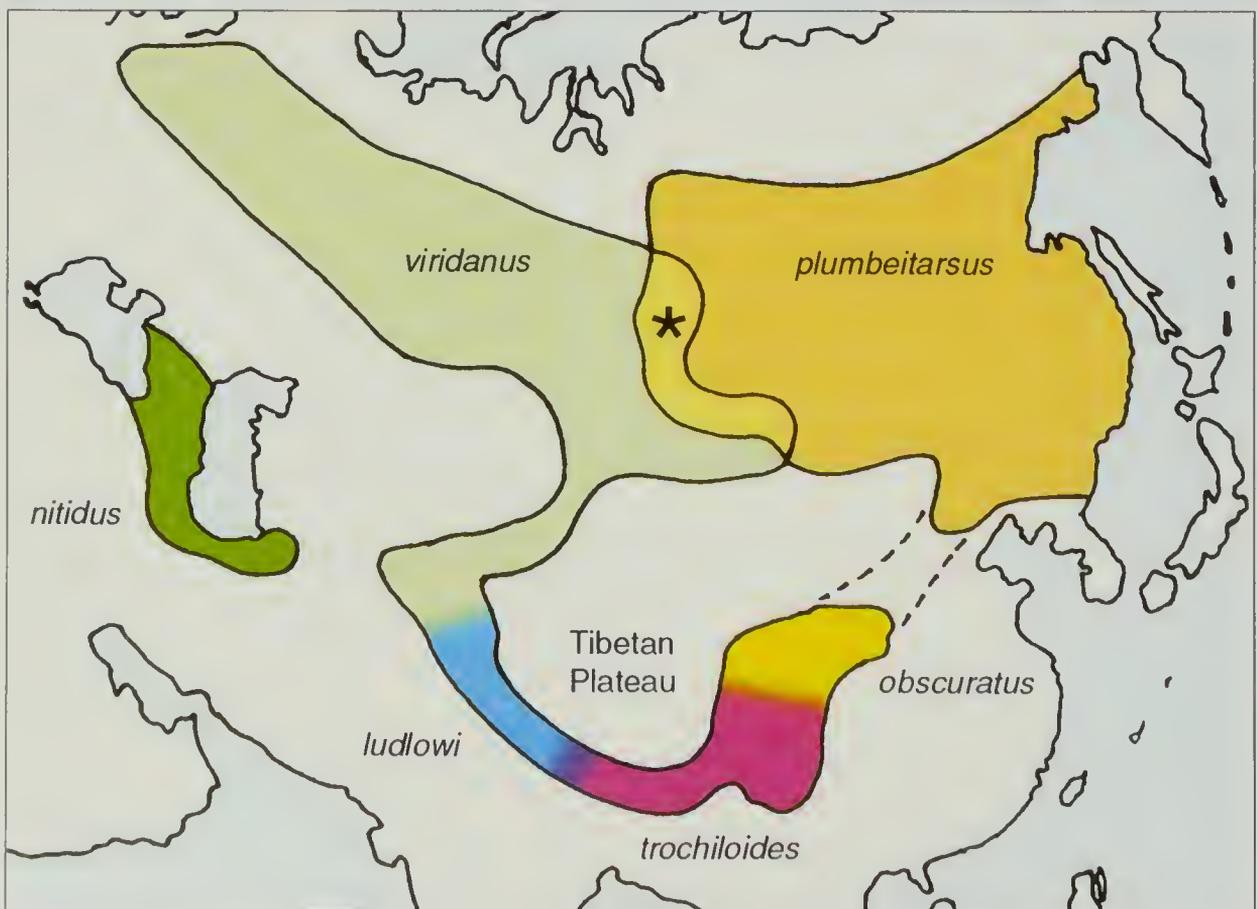
The five subspecies *viridanus*, *ludlowi*, *trochiloides*, *obscuratus* and *plumbeitarsus* have been described as a 'ring species' (Ticehurst 1938; Mayr 1942; Irwin *et al.* 2001a,b). Two of the taxa, *viridanus* and *plumbeitarsus*, coexist in central Siberia without interbreeding (they are reproductively isolated), but are connected by a chain of intermediate, interbreeding populations which change progressively in morphology around the southern borders of the Tibetan plateau (Irwin 2000; Irwin *et al.* 2001a). If *viridanus* and *plumbeitarsus* were the only taxa to be considered, they would be regarded as different species under any species concept,

and would follow the Species Guidelines developed by the BOURC Taxonomic Sub-committee (Helbig *et al.* 2002). They are partly sympatric (there is a 500-km overlap between the two); diagnosable with respect to each other on the basis of several independent morphological and genetic criteria; and no hybridisation or gene flow has been detected either by observation or genetic analysis.

Four taxa (*viridanus*, *ludlowi*, *trochiloides* and *obscuratus*) are connected by a series of interbreeding populations, so that, theoretically, gene flow is possible between all these taxa. Statistically diagnosable populations joined by a cline are treated as subspecies on the British List maintained by the BOURC (Helbig *et al.* 2002). The contiguous distribution and clinal variation in biometrics, plumage and song (Irwin 2000; Irwin *et al.* 2001a) among *viridanus*, *ludlowi*, *trochiloides* and *obscuratus* show that these four taxa should be treated as subspecies

Fig. 1. Distribution of the races of Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*.

Racial variation is clinal through the intergradation of the subspecies *viridanus* (eastern Europe to western Asia and Afghanistan), *ludlowi* (southeast Afghanistan to Kumaon), *trochiloides* (central and eastern Himalayas), *obscuratus* (central China) and *plumbeitarsus* (eastern Russia); the dotted lines indicate a gap in the distribution due to deforestation. The 'Green Warbler' *P. t. nitidus* is fully allopatric, and is not considered further. All other subspecies interbreed with adjacent subspecies with the exception of *viridanus* and *plumbeitarsus*, which show no apparent intergradation in the zone where their distributions overlap (indicated by *). 'Two-barred Greenish Warbler' *P. t. plumbeitarsus* was regarded as a separate species, *P. plumbeitarsus*, by Cramp (1992).



of *P. trochiloides*. The east Siberian breeding form, *plumbeitarsus*, is geographically separate from *obscuratus* (see fig. 1) by a gap of unsuitable habitat up to about 1,000 km wide. Irwin (2000) suggested that the habitat gap may be comparatively recent, and reported that the populations on either side of the divide are very similar, supporting a recent common ancestry.

Analyses based upon c. 1200 bases of the mitochondrial-DNA control region have been used to examine the phylogeny of Greenish Warblers (Irwin *et al.* 2001a). The sequences form two major groups (see fig. 3 in Collinson 2001, based on Irwin *et al.* 2001a): a western clade containing individuals of *nitidus*, *viridanus* and western *ludlowi*, and an eastern clade containing individuals of eastern *ludlowi*, *trochiloides*, *obscuratus* and *plumbeitarsus*. Within the range of *ludlowi*, birds carrying eastern- and western-clade DNA are otherwise indistinguishable and respond strongly to each other's songs, suggesting that DNA differences alone cannot be used to define species boundaries in these taxa. Nevertheless, both *plumbeitarsus* and *nitidus* are diagnosably distinct genetically from all other Greenish Warbler taxa on the basis of these data (as indeed is *obscuratus*).

Thus, where *viridanus* and *plumbeitarsus* coexist in central Siberia, they are markedly (diagnosably) different in mtDNA sequence, supporting the acoustic and morphological evidence for reproductive isolation of these taxa, and thus their specific status. Therefore, if *obscuratus* and *plumbeitarsus* could also be shown to be specifically distinct, then *plumbeitarsus* could clearly be split from the remaining taxa in the *viridanus-obscuratus* cline. A key comparison is thus *obscuratus* with *plumbeitarsus*: for the purposes of a taxonomic assessment these are treated below as allopatric taxa and assessed against the Species Guidelines. The main criteria are diagnosability and the degree of differentiation compared with sympatric taxa of very close taxonomic affinity (Helbig *et al.* 2002).

Diagnosability of obscuratus with respect to plumbeitarsus

The taxon *obscuratus* is considered to be intermediate in plumage between *trochiloides* and *plumbeitarsus* (Cramp 1992; Irwin 2000). It is darker grey-green above than nominate *trochiloides* with a whiter supercilium and an

increased tendency to show a median-covert wing-bar (Svensson 1992). The 'average' *obscuratus* probably differs in upperpart coloration from the 'average' *plumbeitarsus*, but it is not clear that this has ever been quantified and it would be expected that many individuals cannot be ascribed to either taxon on this character alone. Irwin *et al.* (2001a) suggested that the two are, however, diagnosably different (but not with respect to other Greenish Warbler taxa) on body size alone (combining tarsus, wing and tail length, and bill length, depth and width measurements). Body size is not always taxonomically informative for allopatric taxa, however, as it can vary in response to latitude (Helbig *et al.* 2002). Since this is one of the clinal features by which Greenish Warbler taxa differ (Irwin *et al.* 2001a), this difference in body size is not a strong argument for splitting *obscuratus* and *plumbeitarsus*.

The greater-covert wing-bar increases in size clinally from *viridanus* through the southern subspecies to *plumbeitarsus* (Irwin *et al.* 2001a; van der Vliet *et al.* 2001). The proportion of birds with a median-covert wing-bar in fresh plumage also increases, presumably being developmentally linked to the size of the greater-covert wing-bar. Many *obscuratus* are, therefore, 'two-barred'. Irwin *et al.* (2001a) showed that the width of the greater-covert wing-bar is identical in *obscuratus* and *plumbeitarsus*, but apparently significantly wider in these two than in all other Greenish Warbler taxa (although *nitidus* was not analysed). Consequently, the number and characteristics of the wing-bars cannot be used to differentiate between the two taxa.

The analysis presented in Irwin *et al.* (2001a) indicates that the songs of *plumbeitarsus* and *obscuratus* are close to being diagnosably distinct. These differences may not, however, be biologically significant, since the birds appear not to differentiate between them: *plumbeitarsus* in eastern Siberia responded strongly to *obscuratus* songs recorded in central China. Such playback experiments may provide useful background information for taxonomists looking at allopatric species, but they do not provide conclusive proof one way or the other.

Irwin *et al.* (2001a) established that considerable genetic variation exists within *plumbeitarsus*. Furthermore, *obscuratus* and *plumbeitarsus* were found to be diagnosably different from each other on the basis of the mito-

chondrial control-region DNA, although only a small sample of *obscuratus* was analysed, and no *plumbeitarsus* from the southern edge of their range were sampled.

In summary, *obscuratus* is at best diagnosably different from *plumbeitarsus* on the basis of a combination of four parameters: body size, mtDNA, upperpart coloration and song. These differences are slight and/or not taxonomically informative. Predictions about possible reproductive isolation between allopatric taxa which differ only slightly (e.g. in size or darkness of plumage) are very uncertain. There are no described differences between *obscuratus* and *plumbeitarsus* which fulfil the species-defining criteria set out in Helbig *et al.* (2002). They should, therefore, be treated as subspecies of a single species, *P. trochiloides*.

We recognise that the decision to maintain a single species containing two taxa, *viridanus* and *plumbeitarsus*, which are apparently specifically distinct, is problematic. If they were, however, to be split, current evidence does not allow anything but an arbitrary decision with respect to the inclusion of *obscuratus*, *trochiloides* and *Indlowi* in either proposed species. Until further information is published, no change of classification is recommended.

The taxonomic status of nitidus with respect to other Greenish Warblers

The taxon *nitidus* was assessed against the Guidelines (Helbig *et al.* 2002), in the light of research by Helbig *et al.* (1995) and Irwin *et al.* (2001a,c), as it is allopatric in relation to other Greenish Warblers. DNA evidence shows that *nitidus* is most closely related to *viridanus*, although the two taxa are clearly distinct with 2.5–3.1% divergence in their mitochondrial cytochrome-*b* gene (Helbig *et al.* 1995; Irwin *et al.* 2001a).

There is considerable overlap between *nitidus* and *viridanus* in all biometric measurements presented in both Cramp (1992) and Svensson (1992). The bill of *nitidus* is larger, on average, than in other Greenish Warbler taxa. Wing formula is similar to that of *viridanus*, although there are differences at the population level (Svensson 1992; van der Vliet *et al.* 2001). The primary projection of *nitidus* is longer, on average, than in the other taxa, but there is overlap. For example, plate 208 in van der Vliet *et al.* (2001) shows an individual of *nitidus* with the primary projection identical to that of a

typical *viridanus*. Width and depth of the greater-covert wing-bar are intermediate between those of *viridanus* and *plumbeitarsus* (van der Vliet *et al.* 2001), while *nitidus* may have a hint of median-covert wing-bar in fresh plumage (Cramp 1992; Svensson 1992). In fresh plumage, at all ages, *nitidus* usually has a lemon-yellow wash to the sides of the head and neck, a yellow supercilium and throat, and 'minty' green upperparts, a colour that probably never occurs in other taxa. There is, however, variation within *nitidus*, and western birds do not show such obvious yellow tones, which in any case are prone to fade and disappear with wear (Albrecht 1984; Dean 1985; van der Have 1987; van der Vliet *et al.* 2001). The supercilia of *nitidus* tend not to meet above the bill. This is atypical, although not unknown, in *viridanus*, and similar to typical *plumbeitarsus* (van der Vliet *et al.* 2001).

The call of *nitidus* is similar to that of *plumbeitarsus* and different from that of typical *viridanus*, although within *viridanus* itself it is certainly variable. The song is like that of *viridanus* in many respects, but differences have been described (Albrecht 1984; Cramp 1992). Further research into this aspect of the ecology of *nitidus* is required, but song length and frequency range appear similar to those of *viridanus* (Cramp 1992). In addition, *nitidus* is reported to react strongly to the song of *viridanus* (Mild, in Helbig *et al.* 1995), although details of the playback protocol were not published, and these can be crucial for the biological and taxonomic interpretation of such results (e.g. Kroodsma 1989). The taxonomic merits of the reported song recognition are thus unclear.

Most individuals of *nitidus* are probably identifiable, at least in the hand, on the basis of the colour of their upperparts and underparts, wing formula, the dimensions and appearance of the wing-bar(s), and supercilium pattern (Dean 1985). Nonetheless, no single combination of features has been proposed to establish identity safely, and there are certainly difficult individuals, e.g. a bird trapped on Heligoland, Germany, in June 1987 and shown in plate 216 in van der Vliet *et al.* (2001). Absolute diagnosability probably requires an analysis of mtDNA.

The Guidelines set by Helbig *et al.* (2002) require that all, or almost all, individuals in a species be distinguishable from individuals in all other species. Variation within both *nitidus* and the other Greenish Warbler taxa makes the

diagnosability of 'Green Warbler' uncertain. The yellow colour of the supercilium, and sides of head and neck, would probably fulfil diagnosability criteria if this character was present in all individuals, yet this has been shown not to be the case. With further research, it might possibly be shown that, in addition to the molecular differences, *viridanus* and *nitidus* are 100% diagnosable on the basis of a combination of plumage and biometric characteristics. In the absence of this evidence, we have to conclude that *nitidus* is still best regarded as a subspecies of *P. trochiloides* at present.

Conclusion

Although *P. t. plumbeitarsus* and *P. t. viridanus* behave as different species, the clinal nature of variation across the whole Greenish Warbler complex makes it impossible to draw biologically meaningful dividing lines between the subspecies. The relationship between the components of the 'ring species' is best regarded as speciation in process. Any split of the ring into two species would be entirely arbitrary, and as such cannot be supported at this time. Further evidence regarding the diagnosability (or otherwise) of *obscuratus* and *plumbeitarsus*, or gene flow across the distributional gap between these two taxa, may allow reassessment of these conclusions.

Irwin *et al.* (2001b) pointed out that ring species do not fall easily into traditional taxonomic hierarchies of species and subspecies. Previous taxonomic treatments of the five Greenish Warbler taxa in the proposed ring have either lumped them all as one species (the position maintained here) or have split *plumbeitarsus*. Neither taxonomic treatment yields all the relevant information about variation and inter-taxon relationships within the complex.

The relationship of *nitidus* to other taxa is complicated by its allopatric distribution and the phenotypic variation within the Greenish Warbler complex. Having reviewed current evidence, it cannot be shown that *nitidus* fulfils

formal requirements for diagnosability under the Guidelines (Helbig *et al.* 2002), and it is therefore retained as a subspecies of *P. trochiloides*. The evidence which has been central to the analysis of the other Greenish Warbler taxa, male-male song recognition, supports this conclusion. It seems likely, however, that further analysis of the variation within the Greenish Warbler complex will provide alternative, and better defined, diagnostic characters.

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Fred Stubbs, Egrets, Brewes and climatic change

W. R. P. Bourne



231. Flock of migrant Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Greece, May 2000. David Tipling/Windrush

ABSTRACT F. J. Stubbs was one of the more original and sceptical ornithologists of the early twentieth century. One of his more interesting discoveries was that misinterpretation of British medieval literature had resulted in references to Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* being attributed to Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*. His examination of early literature showed that, contrary to popular belief, Little Egrets must have bred in Britain in the past. The occurrence in Britain of Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* during medieval times has also been overlooked. The disappearance of these species as breeding birds from Britain may have been due to over-exploitation and drainage, but seems more likely to have been a consequence of the onset of the Little Ice Age.

One of the least-studied aspects of British ornithology is the twilight zone between the end of the archaeological record in the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern history in the sixteenth century (Harrison 1988). Much of our present understanding of this period is confused, largely because those who recorded information, and many who have

subsequently tried to interpret it (see, for example, fig. 1), appear to have had little understanding of the likely species involved. Furthermore, the original common names of many species are now lost in the mists of history and speculation about them has replaced knowledge. The resulting confusion has tended to bring the subject into disrepute.

Examples of the information available about some fifteenth-century feasts include a description of King Henry VI's coronation on 6th November 1429, when the menu listed 'Swanne, Capyn, Hayryn, Crane, Bytorre, Egretys, Curlewys, Wodekocke, Snytys, Ploverys, Parteryche, Pacock, Qualys, Grete Bryddys and Larkys' (Gairdner 1876). Later in the same century, the menu at the installation of Chancellor Neville as Archbishop of York, on 22nd-23rd September 1465, included such items as '1,200 Quayles, 1,400 foules called Rees, 204 Cranes, 204 Bittors, 400 Heronshawes, and 1,000 Egrittes' (Hearne 1710-15).

Generations of authors have speculated about the latter list. Even the best-informed commentator, Gurney (1921), concluded that the 'foules called Rees' must be Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*, yet they seem more likely to have been a mixed bag of smaller waders, of the sort usually consumed at such feasts (Bourne 1999a), but not otherwise mentioned for this one. Fleming (1828) also questioned whether there could possibly have been 1,000 'Egrittes' [egrets (Ardeidae)] in Britain, and suggested that they must have been Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, as the most likely alternative species with a crest (not mentioned). This assumption

Fig. 1. *The Call of the Birds*: apocalypse with figures, probably East Anglia, early fourteenth century (British Library MS. Roy. 19 B.xv). The birds have been identified by Yapp (1981) as (clockwise from the top in the tree) a miscoloured Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, a Magpie *Pica pica*, a Common Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, a Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, a possible Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, a Eurasian Jay *Garrulus garrulus*, another Common Bullfinch and a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*. Below, from right to left, a Common Crane *Grus grus*, a Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, a parrot (Psittacidae) and a white heron (Ardeidae). I suggest that, in fact, the 'Magpie' was a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, and the 'Black Stork' a poor Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, while the 'Common Kingfisher' could also be either a Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* or a Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*. The 'parrot' may be an early record of the occurrence in Britain of a parakeet *Psittacula*.



has been accepted by all subsequent authors except Fred Stubbs (1910a,b), the leading iconoclast of his day. Following the reappearance of the Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* as a breeding bird in Britain, his evidence surely now deserves more attention than it received originally.

Frederick J. Stubbs

Fred Stubbs was born in Liverpool in 1878 and brought up in Bredon, Worcestershire. After moving to Oldham, Lancashire, he became an apprentice upholsterer and also an authority on the local wildlife. He published a checklist of the local birds in 1904 (Stubbs 1904) and a string of varied and often interesting short notes in local journals and in *British Birds*. In 1909, he argued, as far as I know for the first time, that birds do not prefer to migrate against

the wind in order to avoid getting their plumage ruffled, as was then the current doctrine, but fly high overhead assisted by following winds, only coming down, and becoming visible, when the wind turns against them (Stubbs 1909).

Following a further move, this time to the East London Museum in Stepney, he published a learned contribution (Stubbs 1910a) listing many early references to egrets in Britain, in which he deduced that the Little Egret must be a lost British breeding bird. He clinched the matter later the same year (Stubbs 1910b) with the discovery of Elizabethan protective legislation in 1564, indicating that the Little Egret must have bred in Britain at one time, even if some were later imported. Unfortunately, Stubbs then complicated his case by suggesting

that several species of egret may have been involved, at least one of which was dimorphic. Gurney (1921) concluded 'that the Egret was ever in any sense abundant in England would be difficult to establish, nor is it conceivable that a thousand could be obtained at one time'. Gurney suggested that the information came from foreign cookery books, though 'the Egret may at that time have had a more northern breeding range, attracted by the [still unreclaimed] fen lands of Cambridgeshire and South Lincoln'.

After 1910, Stubbs submitted his notes to the *Zoologist* rather than *British Birds*, implying an increasingly unsympathetic response from the editors of the latter journal. In 1913, he turned the tables on his sceptics with a note on the Asiatic birds on sale in Leadhall Market (Stubbs 1913), ending with the comment 'some of these, one cannot help suspecting, travel by sinister courses to unquestioning hands, for



George Reszeter

232. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Negombo, Sri Lanka, January 2001. Realising that references to Little Egrets in medieval literature had historically been misinterpreted as relating to Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* was a key contribution of F. J. Stubbs, writing in the early twentieth century.



David Tipling/Windrush

233. Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Florida, USA, March 1997. Along with Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, the Night Heron or 'Brew' is one of the most surprising regular items to be found on lists of wild birds available from London poulterers, records for which go back to the thirteenth century, and suggest that Night Herons may have once bred regularly in Britain.

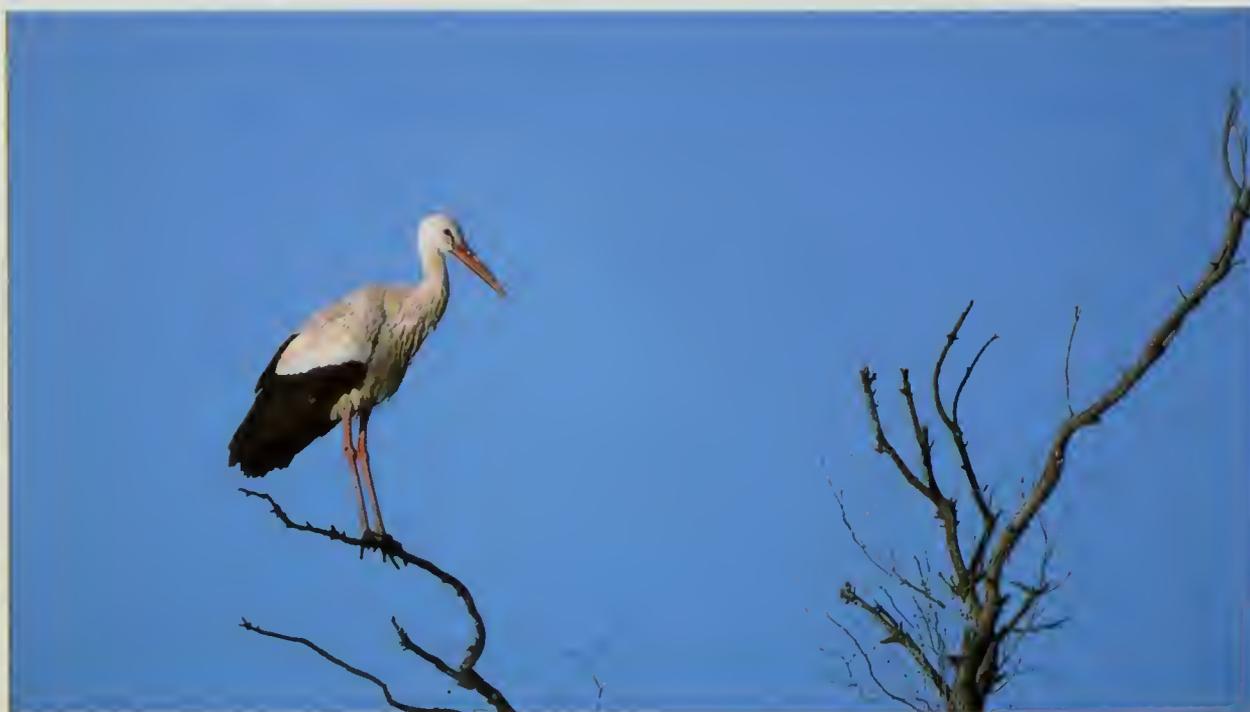
frozen birds stand transport and handling remarkably well'. This perceptive insight into the possibility of fraud in British ornithology still failed to receive recognition, even when the Hastings records were finally rejected 50 years later (Nicholson & Ferguson-Lees 1962). In 1919, Stubbs returned north to work in the Oldham Museum. He contributed weekly nature notes to the *Oldham Chronicle* until his death in 1932 (Anon. 1932), by which time he had produced at least 32 publications.

The Egret and the Brew

Stubbs (1910a,b) showed that in the Middle Ages there were repeated references to egrets in cookery books and reports of feasts in Britain. These have been subsequently dismissed on the grounds that egrets did not occur here naturally, so the birds must have been either misidentified or imported. Independent evidence is, however, provided by the London poulterers, who, for some 500 years, maintained a list of prices (Jones 1965; appendix 1). These lists show which wild birds were available for consumption and indicate the pressure they must have been under. Indeed, some prices (like those of birds used for falconry) represented several years' wages for ordinary folk. The lists, which go back as far as the prosperous thirteenth century, contained fewer species after the Black Death, and during the Hundred Years War

and the Wars of the Roses. Availability from the poulterers increased again when peace and prosperity were restored under the gluttonous Tudors, and the lists ended with rising prices and a declining range of species, implying a shortage of wild birds, in the seventeenth century, after which the now Worshipful Company of Poulterers became a ceremonial and charitable organisation.

The poulterers prepared and sold most of the more edible species found in southern England – it is interesting that these did not include grouse, widespread in the north (Bourne 1999a), although Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* occurred fairly close to London then. They did not sell raptors and scavengers, which were considered unclean. The only unexpected species to appear on these lists are the Egret and the Brew (see below), and, latterly, the Stork, presumably White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*. These were top-priced birds: the cost of a Stork was comparable with that of Common Crane *Grus grus* and Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, while prices for Egrets and Brewes were similar to those for the larger waterbirds and gamebirds, such as Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, the larger gulls (apparently scarce at that time, before they became tame scavengers; Bourne 1996) and Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*. The Egrets seem unlikely to have been



Roy Tipper

234. White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Algarve, Portugal, November 1996. In sixteenth-century Britain, White Storks were one of the most sought-after of all wild birds available from the London poulterers, with prices (of between 24 and 48 old pence) comparable with those of Common Crane *Grus grus* and Great Bustard *Otus tarda*.

Northern Lapwings, which were to be found at the bottom of the range of prices.

In addition to the Egret, mystery has surrounded the identity of the Brewe. Although often thought to be a Charadriiform, possibly the Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Stubbs (1910a) considered it to be either the Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* or a godwit *Limosa* sp., while I have previously thought it to be a gull (Bourne 1996). Recently, its identity has been revealed by publication of the correspondence of Lord Lisle (Byrne 1981; Bourne 1999a). King Henry VIII appointed Lisle, his uncle, to the role of Lord Deputy (Governor) of the Port of Calais in 1533. At that time, Calais was still held in English hands and with a monopoly of trade with the Continent. Lisle regularly supplied the King with the French 'Bihoreau' or Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, which he called 'Brewes', and kept in captivity with Grey Herons (Bourne 1999b). By that time, William Gowreley, 'yoman purveyor to the Kinges mowthe', had to send further south for egrets, implying that these were no longer available in England.

The Grey Heron and Great Bittern appear to have been popular delicacies, which may explain the demand for other Ardeids as well; like the Romans, the English must have developed a liking for the taste of bad fish. Egrets and Brewes may already have been imported into Britain in the early Middle Ages, when the

English were campaigning in France and the Holy Land, and where such exotic tastes might have been acquired. Thus, there is one early fourteenth-century apocalypse from East Anglia showing a white heron standing beside a parakeet (British Library MS Roy. 19 B.xv, f.37v; Yapp 1981, reproduced as fig. 1 here). But it seems unlikely that much importation occurred during the Hundred Years War or until native supplies began to run out in the sixteenth century, when Harrison (1586) reported that 'as for Egrets and Paupers [spoonbills] and such like, they are daily brought unto us from beyond the sea, as if all the foule of our cuntry could not suffice to satisfy our delicate appetites'. We know that Eurasian Spoonbills at least were still breeding in Britain into the seventeenth century (Gurney 1921).

Other possible medieval British breeding birds

While some of the larger waterbirds, such as the Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* and European Crane *Grus prinnigenia* may have been lost very early (Harrison 1988), others may have lasted until the main drainage of the fens began in the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, one problem with old records is that they are likely to include only the most popular and conspicuous species, and there is little chance of detecting changes among the less obtrusive ones. Here are some further possible examples

of birds which may once have bred here, from three different families:

Hérons By the late nineteenth century, Britain had only one breeding heron, the Grey Heron, compared with several in most comparable European countries. In addition to the Little Egret and Night Heron, Muffett, in the late sixteenth century (in Mullens 1912), and Sir Thomas Browne, in the seventeenth century (in Southwell 1902), mentioned a 'black heron', possibly the Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*. The occurrence of this species in Britain and also the Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* has already been suggested by Evans (1904). The latter still breeds occasionally (Holloway 1996), and was doubtless commoner, though entirely overlooked, in the past.

Wildfowl Presumably, the recent increase in British breeding wildfowl is a recovery from (inadequately recorded) past over-exploitation. For example, Strickland (1858; Bourne 2002) reported that, in addition to Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, the 'Taiga Bean Goose' *A. f. fabalis* may have once bred in the Yorkshire Carrs.

Terns Montagu (1813; Bourne 1996) found that one of John Latham's duplicates of his newly described Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* from Sussex was a Gull-billed Tern *S. nilotica*, which he named *S. anglica* (the name used for many years). In view of their distribution and past history of decline throughout northwestern Europe, this species and also Caspian Tern *S. caspia* may once have bred here. I can find no evidence, however, for the latter, although, in view of its global distribution, it seems possible that it could have bred in Britain and later been wiped out.

Discussion

In his autobiography, Charles Darwin remarks 'On this tour [of North Wales] I had a striking instance of how easy it is to overlook phenomena, however conspicuous, before they have been observed by anyone. We spent many hours in Cwm Idwal, examining all the rocks with extreme care, as Sedgwick was anxious to find fossils in them; but neither of us saw a trace of the wonderful glacial phenomena all around us...' (Barlow 1958).

This also applies to the history of British birds. The scant surviving early medieval litera-



Robin Chittenden



Günter Bachmeier

235 & 236. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (left), Lesvos, Greece, April 2001, and Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Bayern, Germany, July 2000. Could these two herons once have been regular British breeding birds?

ture contains vague reports suggesting that several of the more conspicuous Mediterranean birds, such as Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, were occurring in Britain. This was at a time when the climate was warm enough to support vineyards, and the people prosperous enough to build vast cathedrals. The ornithological establishment was, however, (and still remains) sceptical of the ancient menus listing birds provided at feasts and poulterers' lists of birds found in markets. The possibility that some of today's rarities may once have been common breeding birds has largely been dismissed, and little attention has been paid to this aspect of British history. Yet generations of ornithologists have accepted a past confusion between Little Egrets and Northern Lapwings because they were so sure that the former did not occur and the latter did. When an upholsterer from Oldham dared to question this, he had a cold reception. Now that it is breeding again, we are informed that 'the Little Egret was not a regular component of the British avifauna in historical times' (Musgrove 2002). It seems possible that the disappearance of such birds, usually attributed to persecution and changes in habitat which even the once culinarily popular Grey Heron has withstood (and Little Egrets do not require any wetter marshland), was really due to climatic change, and especially the onset of the Little Ice Age in the fourteenth century (Harrison 1988), the effects of which are now being reversed. Yet nobody has recently seen fit to notice that egrets, never mind Night Herons, have been reported here regularly before.

The converse of this situation occurred when William Bullock toured Orkney and Shetland in 1812 at the end of the Little Ice Age and found, and in at least some cases collected, not only a pair of Great Auks *Pinguinus impennis* but breeding Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* and King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* (Montagu 1813; Hardy 1978). Such past information may not necessarily be mistaken, but may help to interpret current fluctuations in bird distribution.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 1. London poulterers' prices in old pennies (from Jones 1965).

	Century:	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th
Wild birds						
Great Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>		6	12-18		8-32	30
'Brewer'/Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>			18		12-16	
(Little) Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>			18		12-16	
(Grey) Heron(sew) <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	6		12-16	12	8-32	30
(White) Stork <i>Ciconia ciconia</i>					24-48	
'Shoveller'/Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>					8-24	
Wild geese <i>Anser</i> and <i>Branta</i> spp.		4				
Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>					3-4	
Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>		1	1-2		1-4	5
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		1	3-5		3-7	8
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>		1	2-5		3-10	12
Common Quail <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>					2-4	8
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		4	8-24		6-32	60-72
Common Crane <i>Grus grus</i>		36			24-80	
Great Bustard <i>Otis tarda</i>					20-72	
Dotterel <i>Charadrius morinellus</i>					3-4	
'Green'/European Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>					2-5	6
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>					1-5	4
'Wype'/Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			1		1.5	
Plovers (Charadriidae)		1	1-3		1-2	
Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>					4	
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>						30
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		0.25	1		1-3	4
Woodcock <i>Scolopax rusticola</i>		0.75	1-3		2-6	8
Godwit <i>Limosa</i> spp.					12	
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>		3	4-10		4-10	30
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>					1	
'Puette'/Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>					6	10
Larger gulls & Mews <i>Larus</i> spp.					12-20	
Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>					1-3	
(Sky) Larks <i>Alauda arvensis</i> (dozen)		1	3		3-9	10
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i> (dozen)					10-18	12
Thrushes <i>Turdus</i> spp. (dozen)			2-6			
'Great birds' (also <i>Turdus</i> spp.?.; dozen)					3-6	
Sparrows <i>Passer</i> spp. (?) (dozen)					3	
Finches (Fringillidae) (dozen)			1			4
'Small birds' (dozen)					1-4	3
Domesticated animals						
Swans		36	36-48	40	36-96	108
Geese		3-5	4-6	6	5-16	14-18
Ducks			2-3		3	
Hens		1.5	1-6		3-10	12-20
Pullets		0.75	1-3	2	1-6	4-6
Capons		2.5	2-6	6	5-30	22-30
Peafowl		12			14-24	
Turkeys					12-72	36-54
Pigeons (dozen)			8	10	6-16	20
Suckling Pigs			6-8	8	6	
Rabbits		3-4	3-4		2-5	6-8

Conservation research news

Compiled by Mark Eaton and Lennox Campbell



Turnstones feeding on grain – opportunism or a cause for concern?

The ability of a variety of different bird species to respond to and benefit from unusual sources of food is well documented. In some cases, such as the flock of 1,000 Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* which fed for four weeks on a cargo of 'horse beans' from a wreck off Helgoland, Germany (Gätke 1900), this may simply be opportunistic and of uncertain long-term benefit. In others, the ability to exploit such sources of food may persist for years and have a significant positive impact on population size and range. Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* and other seabirds benefiting from fisheries' discards and by-catch are classic examples of this.

It is, however, also possible that unusual feeding behaviour may be an indication that birds are unable to obtain sufficient food within their usual habitats. Several species of wintering estuarine waders are known to make regular use of non-intertidal habitats, particularly around high tide or in severe weather. Smart & Gill (2003) focused their attention on a group of Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* on the Wash which since about 1998 have fed on wheat and fishmeal spilt at the docks at Port Sutton, Lincolnshire. At times, almost all of the small winter population of Turnstones in the Wash (c. 600 birds) fed at this site simultaneously.

Measuring both the amounts of food available and the rates at which Turnstones were consuming it, the authors were able to show that supply far outstripped consumption. Turnstones were most often found at the dock area during high tides and in cold weather, suggesting that, despite the (relatively) superabundant grain, this was a less preferred food source than more normal prey items from the intertidal zone. In recent years, it has been shown that declines in intertidal invertebrate prey, such as mussels and cockles, have affected other waders in the Wash; and this recent habit by wintering Turnstones, using grain to supplement their diet, may be a further indication that intertidal food resources are depleted. Nonetheless, the overall number of Turnstones wintering in the Wash has not yet declined. More generally, it appears that such studies of unusual feeding behaviour may be a useful indicator of broader ecological changes, and can provide a means to detect early signs of feeding stress before any impact is evident from declining populations.

Gätke, H. 1900. *Vogelwarte Helgoland*. Braunschweig.

Smart, J., & Gill, J. A. 2003. Non intertidal habitat use by shorebirds: a reflection of inadequate intertidal resources? *Biol. Cons.* 111: 359-369.

Is climate change shortening the breeding season of Turtle Doves?

With global warming and climate change assuming an ever-increasing public profile, much interest has rightly been shown in the fact that, over the last 30 years, many migrant species appear to be arriving earlier in the year, enabling some to start nesting much earlier. These changes have been linked to the abun-

dance of certain invertebrate foods, which have peaked earlier in response to warmer spring temperatures. Not all migrant species, or indeed all populations of the same species, show a similar response, however, and there is a risk that some may fall out of synchrony with their key food resources, causing a potentially nega-

tive impact on their annual breeding performance.

Complementing their recent intensive study of breeding Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* in southern England, Browne & Aebischer (2003) have now published the results of a more extensive analysis of data on the arrival and departure times of migrating Turtle Doves at six coastal bird observatories in southern and eastern Britain. Median spring (April-June) arrival dates and autumn (August-October) departure dates were calculated from observatory records each year from 1963 to 2000. The total number of records rose to a peak in the late 1970s and declined thereafter, closely mirroring the well-known trends from the BTO Common Birds Census. Arrival and departure times were not related to the annual CBC index itself, nor to mean spring and summer temperatures. There was, in fact, no change in arrival dates, but departure dates were on average eight days earlier.

In their main study, the authors had shown that Turtle Doves are making fewer breeding attempts each year and that this in turn has led to reduced breeding productivity during the summer as a whole. The earlier departures of Turtle Doves and the effective shortening of the breeding season illustrated in this paper are

consistent with this finding, and perhaps suggest that an earlier peak in the availability of at least some of their key seed food sources is important in these changes. Browne & Aebischer also suggest that the detailed findings from one study area can be applied to the population in the UK as a whole. Unlike some of the migrants whose breeding seasons appear to have advanced as spring temperatures have risen, Turtle Doves, which are relatively long-distance migrants, probably depend on stimuli on their wintering grounds to initiate their spring migration. This may mean, at least in the short term, that they are unable to respond rapidly to changes in food availability on their breeding grounds and asynchrony develops with their food supplies.

As well as highlighting the particular problems faced by Turtle Doves migrating to the UK, this study shows how relatively simple data collected routinely and over a long period of time can be used to help establish the wider generality of results obtained from more intensive studies.

Browne, S. J., & Aebischer, N. J. 2003 Temporal changes in the migration phenology of Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* in Britain, based on sightings from coastal bird observatories. *J. Avian Biol.* 34: 65-71.

Extinction threats to limited-range species

Of 1,186 bird species designated by the IUCN (The World Conservation Union) as globally threatened, the vast majority are endangered by habitat loss or degradation through human activities. A large number are also threatened by human exploitation or by invasive species, while 11% are perceived to be at threat from natural disasters. Nonetheless, of 128 bird species lost in the past 500 years, natural disasters are thought to have been a contributory cause for only two. In a recent paper (Hilton *et al.* 2003), the decline of the Montserrat Oriole *Icterus oberi*, a species restricted entirely to hill forest on the Caribbean island of Montserrat, is described, and attributed to natural disaster.

The Soufriere Hills Volcano on Montserrat erupted in 1995, and volcanic activity peaked in late 1997. This eruption destroyed approximately 16 km² of the 30 km² of hill forest suitable for the orioles, and deposited heavy ash falls on the remaining forest. Monitoring work was immediately set in place, and initial results

showed that, despite extensive habitat loss, the population level was high. Subsequently, however, it seems that a decline of 57-89% occurred within the remaining hill-forest area from December 1997 to September 2000, leaving a population of just 100-400 pairs. The ongoing decline might be due to the ash deposits causing a reduction in the orioles' insect food, or an increase in nest predation by opportunistic predators such as rats *Rattus* and Pearly-eyed Thrashers *Margarops fuscatus* which have increased as a result of forest disturbance.

The current precarious state of the Montserrat Oriole demonstrates the threat that natural disasters can pose to species with extremely restricted ranges, and, consequently, how important it is that populations of such species are monitored carefully.

Hilton, G. M., Atkinson, P.W., Gray, G. A. L., Arendt, W. J., & Gibbons, D.W. 2003. Rapid decline of the volcanically threatened Montserrat Oriole. *Biol. Cons.* 111: 79-89.

PhotoSpot

Breeding displays of Little Ringed Plover

Photographs of birds in display are always of interest as the photographs freeze the moment to reveal details which are not always appreciated by the observer in real time. The accompanying photographs of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* displaying illustrate this point well, although, as *BWP* shows clearly (Vol. 3: 118-124), the displays used by Little Ringed Plovers are quite well understood.

As with many members of the genus *Charadrius*, Little Ringed Plovers may often be sexed in the field at moderate range since the males usually have entirely black head markings,

particularly the ear-coverts, whereas the females often have variable amounts of brown admixed with the black head markings and breast-band. This is usually seen most easily by direct comparison of male and female in a breeding pair. In plate 240, however, the female is more similar to the male than is usually the case, even taking into account the probability that they are both full adults; first-summer females may show much browner ear-coverts.

Plates 237-240 were all taken at the same site in Kent, plates 238-240 within minutes of each other.

237. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Kent, July 1987. The 'horizontal display' is described as a smooth gliding run towards a rival, with flank feathers puffed out over folded wings. The line-drawing of this display in *BWP* could have been made from this photograph, an observation which emphasises the stylised nature of such displays. In this instance, the rival was another male Little Ringed Plover, out of sight behind the photographer's small hide.

Richard J. Chandler





Reston Kilgour

238. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Kent, April 2000. The 'scrape display' is generally performed by the male, tilting forward on his breast, scratching backwards with his feet, while flagging his partly spread tail from side to side. Note the heap of small stones behind the bird. The small amount of brown feathers in the ear-coverts of this individual, however, suggest that, in this case, it may be a female.



Reston Kilgour

239. Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius*, Kent, April 2000. If the female is close by, the 'scrape ceremony' may follow the scrape display, the male moving to the edge of the scrape, with his back to the female (her legs and feet can just be seen behind), his tail fanned over the scrape.



Reston Kilgour

240. Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius*, Kent, April 2000. Following the scrape ceremony, the female then enters the scrape, under the male's tail, with mating following once the female leaves the scrape. It is difficult to be sure in this rather oblique view, but the female does appear to have the browner ear-coverts.

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Notes

Population ecology, conservation and management of Little Ringed Plovers in South Yorkshire

The breeding population of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* in Britain is now thought to be stable, or even increasing slightly, with the most recent estimate of the population being 825-1,070 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Nevertheless, in some parts of the country considerable resources are devoted to maintaining current or past breeding populations, while some local authorities have targeted this species for Biodiversity Action Plans.

The preferred natural habitats of nesting Little Ringed Plovers are gravel banks, river shingle and lake margins, habitats which are to some degree transient and liable to change considerably over short timescales owing to changing water levels, vegetation growth and other factors. Sites which become unsuitable are thus routinely abandoned and new ones adopted. Consequently, post-industrial 'man-made' sites are ideal for Little Ringed Plovers. They provide relatively large, bare and stony areas, and the land is subject to short-term change – such sites may last perhaps two or three years before they are colonised by vegetation and become unsuitable for breeding (sparse ground cover is essential for foraging by precocial offspring). The necessity to seek out new areas regularly may, nevertheless, be an

important aspect of the species' breeding ecology, reducing nest predation by mammalian and other predators which might become familiar with traditional sites.

Since their colonisation of England and Wales, Little Ringed Plovers have come to rely increasingly on human environments for nesting. Post-industrial land, gravel-pits, quarries, reservoirs and sewage works accounted for 91% of all summer records during the national census in 1984, while only 3% were in natural habitats (Parrinder 1989).

The coalfield areas of Yorkshire are important for Little Ringed Plovers and may account for a significant proportion of the national population, with perhaps 3-4% in the Dearne Valley alone (Middleton 2000). Little Ringed Plovers first nested on the colliery spoil heaps of Yorkshire in 1947 (Chislett 1952), just nine years after the first breeding record in Britain, at Tring, Hertfordshire (Ledlie & Pedler 1938). Bare coal spoil and derelict industrial land are, however, becoming increasingly rare habitats with the decline of Britain's coal industry. The continued use of traditional restoration techniques on former colliery sites, such as greening for the sake of appearance, together with woodland plantings, has led to large-scale losses of



241 & 242. Old Moor Wetlands, South Yorkshire, January 2003, showing islands managed to attract Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius*.

this distinctive landscape. In order to safeguard the remaining breeding populations of Little Ringed Plovers, specific management practices have been carried out at some sites.

Population levels and breeding success in the Dearne Valley

The Old Moor Wetlands reserve, developed in the Dearne Valley in 1997, was quickly colonised by breeding Great *C. hiaticula* and Little Ringed Plovers. Initially, landscaping the wetland areas with subsoil provided both species with a temporary abundance of breeding habitat. Little Ringed Plovers had nested in the Dearne Valley area for many years and the reserve provided an opportunity to create habitat specifically for them, in particular bare islands. When the reserve opened in 1997, there was an abundance of suitable breeding habitat: six pairs nested and six chicks fledged. Numbers increased for two consecutive years, and in 1999 eight pairs bred, fledging 18 young. Sustained breeding success, following the rapid colonisation of the site, has not been achieved, however, as the islands have been colonised by vegetation, and, in turn, they have proved attractive to other species such as Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* and Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*.

Little Ringed Plover breeding success at Old Moor Wetlands, both at the development stage with an abundance of designed artificial habitat, and more recently under a different management regime, can be compared with the fledging success of a nearby area of post-industrial land at Grimethorpe (table 1). At Old Moor, management work was undertaken to clear vegetation and spread large amounts of

gravel on the islands, yet the breeding population has still declined, and four pairs fledged only a single chick in 2001. Cages have been used successfully to protect nests and eggs, particularly from Common Coots *Fulica atra*, although once the chicks leave the nest they are vulnerable to the attentions of a wide range of predators, including Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Magpie *Pica pica*, Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*, and American Mink *Mustela vison* (D. Waddington, verbally). Many nests were trampled by Canada Geese and Black-headed Gulls, although the gulls also helped to deter predators. Poor weather, in particular heavy rain, was partly responsible for the low fledging success in 2001, although neighbouring unmanaged sites at Grimethorpe fared better than Old Moor, reinforcing the belief that predation and trampling were important factors. Table 1 confirms that declining breeding success coincided with longer-term use of the islands at Old Moor and increasing populations of geese, gulls and other predators.

Discussion

The value and effectiveness of long-term habitat management for Little Ringed Plovers is the subject of much debate in South Yorkshire, where this is a valued and treasured Schedule 1 species. But are the returns from management work worth the investment of time, cost and effort for a species whose breeding ecology has evolved to exploit unstable and dynamic habitats? This species is always likely to suffer from predation, but even more so when the same nest sites are used year after year. If cages had not been used to protect Little Ringed Plover nests and eggs in 2001 at Old Moor, perhaps

Table 1. Numbers and fledging success of breeding Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* at Old Moor and Grimethorpe, South Yorkshire, 1997-2002.

	Old Moor			Grimethorpe		
	Pairs	Nests	Fledged	Pairs	Nests	Fledged
1997	6	6+	6 (33%)	2	2	?
1998	7	7	13 (55%)	3	2	6 (66%)
1999	8	8	18 (61%)	2	2	3 (50%)
2000	4	4+	3 (25%)	5	5	4 (30%)
2001	4	3	1 (12%)	2	2	3 (50%)
2002	4	3	3 (33%)	2	1	0*

* The lack of evidence of fledging at Grimethorpe in 2002 was a direct consequence of extensive opencast operations.

Data for 'Nests' are those for successful nests, i.e. those from which at least one young hatched. Fledging success data at Grimethorpe may be comparatively low, since not all young or nests may have been detected on the large areas of post-industrial land at this site.

there would have been no young fledged at all. And although cages are effective in protecting the eggs, the chicks remain vulnerable once they leave the nest. Moreover, costly and labour-intensive management is beset with other problems: newly created shingle areas have been rendered useless after only one winter by the effects of Canada Geese droppings, which provide an ideal medium for colonising weeds; and on one occasion a Little Ringed Plover nest was abandoned as a result of a Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare* growing quickly beside a sitting female (D. Waddington, verbally).

If we are to continue to attract breeding Little Ringed Plovers to the Dearne Valley, other novel management techniques could be introduced. For example, raising water levels to submerge part or all of the islands during winter has proved successful in reducing vegetation growth. In addition, erecting low fences around the islands might reduce the problem of trampling by Canada Geese.

Should Little Ringed Plover even remain a conservation target? Would resources be better directed elsewhere, especially considering that the species is much more common in conti-

ental Europe, and perhaps under-recorded in Britain? Attempts to maintain breeding habitat at sites in West Yorkshire have long been abandoned, while in the Dearne Valley a new wetland has been created at Grimethorpe, with reclamation of derelict land specifically designed to attract Little Ringed Plovers. The debate will no doubt continue, and only in the long term will the true worth of managing Little Ringed Plover breeding habitat in South Yorkshire be revealed.

Acknowledgments

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Nest protection of Little Ringed Plovers

Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* have been nesting at Bough Beech Reservoir, Kent, in varying numbers since 1969. The maximum numbers occurred in the long, dry summer of 1976, when at least 11 pairs were recorded. In recent years, one or two pairs have nested regularly on the sparsely vegetated concrete aprons at the northern end of the reservoir, where some shingle has been laid to encourage breeding. From the mid 1970s onwards, predation of eggs by Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* prompted the introduction of 7.5-cm-gauge wire-mesh cages to protect the nests. A cage was placed over a nest once the clutch was complete. Occasionally, the 'duty bird' might hesitate a little upon encountering the cage for the first time, often walking round the perimeter a number of times, but the longest recorded delay before a bird returned to the eggs was four minutes, and no nests have been abandoned

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because of the introduction of cages. Normally, the chicks do not return to the cage once they have left the scrape, but on one occasion the parents brooded chicks in the cage for seven days after hatching.

In 2002, a pair nested at the north end of the reservoir and the nest was duly caged. After two weeks, I arrived to find the pair in a state of agitation, and only one egg remaining in the nest. A few minutes later, a Magpie *Pica pica* landed near the nest, entered the cage and removed the last egg. In the hope that the birds would re-nest, a new cage was constructed using 5-cm wire mesh (the dimensions of the cage being 90 cm × 122 cm × 36 cm). One week later, the first egg of a replacement clutch was laid, and the cage was sited after the appearance of this egg. The pair went on to produce a full clutch of four eggs, from which two young fledged.

Fulmar killing rival

On 23rd September 2002, at North Haven, Fair Isle, Shetland, I witnessed a dramatic fight between two Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*. The two were thrashing about on the water, approximately 50 m from the beach: the bills of the two birds were interlocked and their wings extended, but one had the advantage of being straddled on the back of the other. At first it seemed an even contest, but gradually the one above began to gain advantage by gripping the other by the nape and holding its head underwater. On each occasion, the lower bird fought back, but each time it was ducked it seemed to

be submersed for slightly longer. Gradually it began to weaken until, after about 15 minutes, it was held under long enough to drown. Even though it was obviously dead, floating belly-up, the victor was still not done and continued to attack the corpse for a few moments longer.

Nick Riddiford described an almost identical attack on Fair Isle in April 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 566-567). Competition for available nesting space seemed a plausible explanation for that fight, but seems unlikely to explain such an intense altercation in late September.

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Passerines feeding on 'marine growth'

On 4th May 2002, I de-ballasted the Buchan Alpha Floating Oil Production Platform in the North Sea (57°54'N 00°01'E) from her usual 21.0 m draft to 20.5 m, thus exposing 50 cm of fresh marine growth. At the time, the wind was northerly at 18 knots, having been in the 'northern quarter' for all of the previous week, with average strength 10 knots and the sea calm. I had seen few birds, with the exception of my first Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* for the North Sea and a female Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*.

Early on 7th May, the wind veered to between southeast and ESE, strength 13 knots and the sea state much the same. I commenced my bird rounds at the usual time of 06.00 hours, and by 08.00 I had logged single Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, Common Redstart *P. phoenicurus*, Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Blackcap *S. atricapilla*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* and Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, as well as two Common Chiffchaffs *P. collybita*. I noticed that a number of

these appeared to be feeding on the exposed marine growth, and assumed that there must have been a hatch of flies or aphids, although I had never seen this before.

The following day, with more time to spare, I again recorded Robin, Black Redstart, Common Redstart, Northern Wheatear, Common Whitethroat, Common Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler feeding in a similar fashion to that of the day before. From my position 15 m above, I could see no insects on the wing through 8x binoculars. Each bird adopted the same foraging technique, making short sallies from a perch close to the waterline, and feeding only from vertical columns, where they kept position by a combination of perching and continuous wing-flapping. Similar food must have been available on the more easily accessible horizontal cross-bracings and diagonal supports but these structures were ignored; all five support columns were used, whether windward or leeward.

During 29 years' birdwatching and 41 years at sea, I have never encountered this behaviour before. I can only assume that some form of invertebrate food was to be found on the recently exposed marine growth.

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Letter

Mink and hedgehogs

Damage caused to internationally important populations of waders by the introduction of American Mink *Mustela vison* and European Hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus* to the Outer Hebrides highlights, once again, the folly of releasing species to areas where they are not native. The recent News and comment item (*Brit. Birds* 96: 205-206) brought several of the issues into focus, although some of the facts reported were taken largely from news websites which, unfortunately, did not report the situation accurately.

With regard to American Mink, I would point out that the project which could act as a precedent for the Environment Agency plans is the EU-LIFE-funded Hebridean Mink Project. This £1.65-million project is a partnership between Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (the Western Isles Council), the Scottish Executive, and the RSPB, and is managed by the Central Science Laboratory. The project, now in its second year, employs 11 trappers, working from South Harris to South Uist (where pockets of mink have recently been discovered). A PhD student is also employed, to study the ranging behaviour of local mink, and, in addition, annual surveys of breeding gulls *Larus* and terns *Sterna* are being conducted within the project area. One of the aims of this scheme is to assess the logistics for a larger project to eradicate American Mink from the Outer Hebrides completely. The MESH project, also mentioned in the News and comment item, is a private initiative aimed at raising awareness of the issue, but I am not currently aware of any major trapping effort by those involved.

Regarding hedgehogs, it is not SNH, but the Uist Wader Project, a partnership of RSPB, SNH and the Scottish Executive, which is reluctantly planning to cull hedgehogs. This decision was taken after years of research into the decline

of the internationally important breeding wader populations, the Uist hedgehog population, and the merits or otherwise of translocating very large numbers of hedgehogs to the mainland. I understand that the hedgehog welfare groups have accepted that introduced hedgehogs are the main reason for the declining wader populations, and that the hedgehogs should be removed. They do, however, disagree with the Project's conclusion that culling is the more humane option. This conclusion was based on studies which showed that translocation of large numbers of hedgehogs was likely to cause serious welfare concerns for a high percentage of those moved, as well as problems for resident hedgehogs in release sites. I understand that there will be no mass slaughter as suggested in some quarters of the press. Work will initially concentrate on North Uist, where hedgehogs are present at low densities, in order to prevent any threat to the important wader areas on this island, such as RSPB's Balranald reserve, which are currently hedgehog free.

The machairs of Uist are internationally recognised for their breeding waders through EU Birds Directive Special Protection Area designations. They are particularly important for Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, and hold a significant proportion of the UK's breeding populations of these species. Indeed, one area of South Uist formerly held the highest recorded density of breeding Dunlins anywhere in the world, but that population is now less than half its former density, primarily due to the hedgehogs. The rich bird life of the Outer Hebrides is also an important element of the local economy, attracting a large number of tourists to the islands, as well as being a factor in helping local crofters benefit from agri-environment schemes.

Andrew Stevenson

Outer Hebrides Recorder, The Old Stores, Bornish, South Uist

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

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

Vulture 'virus' caused by cattle drug?

The mysterious plague which has wiped out much of India's vulture population may have a very simple cause after all: mass poisoning. Initially, when large numbers of *Gyps* vultures were found dead and dying with gout-like symptoms in the mid 1990s, poisoning was suggested. But scientific consensus about the cause then switched to an infectious agent, thought likely to be a virus. As reported recently in *N&c* (*Brit. Birds* 95: 659), populations of White-rumped *G. bengalensis* and Indian Vultures *G. indicus* have plummeted in north-west India, while Griffon Vultures *G. fulvus* have increased; and, fearing that Griffons might act as a vector in transporting the disease to Europe and Africa, several Griffons were satellite-tagged in January 2003.

The tagged birds were subsequently tracked to a previously

unknown breeding population in Mongolia. But in any case, the virus fears may have been unfounded. As revealed at the World Conference on Birds of Prey, in Budapest in May, a common drug used to treat both people and livestock could be the vulture killer. Dr Lindsay Oaks of Washington State University, whose work in Pakistan has been supported by the Peregrine Fund, reported on results obtained just two weeks before the conference. Like other researchers, he found no trace of a virus or other disease pathogen. Tests for pesticides, metals, and other poisons were also negative. He then widened his inquiry into the kinds of medicines being given to local cattle and buffalo. One of these contained Diclofenac, a very common anti-inflammatory drug used to treat people for, among other ailments, gout.

In both Pakistan and India, a number of products containing Diclofenac are used by vets to treat sick cattle and buffalo, and vultures may have been exposed to the drug through scavenging livestock carcasses containing the residues. Kidney tissue from 23 vultures which had died with the gout-like symptoms all contained Diclofenac, while there were no traces of the drug in the tissues of vultures which had died of other causes. Furthermore, three vultures given a very small dose of Diclofenac all died within a short time, indicating that the drug is highly toxic to these birds. Debbie Pain of the RSPB described the Pakistan findings as 'very exciting' but pointed out that the results of work in India still suggest that an infectious disease may be involved. Link: Indian Jungles (www.indianjungles.com/310503.htm).

Gurney's *Pitta* rediscovered in Myanmar

One of the rarest birds in the world, reduced to just 30 individuals in the lowland forest of southern Thailand, the stunning Gurney's *Pitta* *Pitta gurneyi* is an icon of the bird conservation movement. And now it seems that the pitta may have another lifeline, following the discovery of a new population across the Thai border in southern Tenasserim, Myanmar. A month-long survey in Myanmar (the current political regime's new name for Burma) found Gurney's *Pitta* at four lowland forest sites, with a maximum of 10-12 pairs at one of these. All the sites were close to historical collecting localities (the last confirmed record of Gurney's *Pitta* from Myanmar was in 1914).

Gurney's *Pitta* was thought to be extinct in neighbouring Thailand too, until Phil Round and Uthai

Treesucon rediscovered the species at Khao Nor Chuchi, near Krabi, in 1986. The latest information from this site – where the Oriental Bird Club has championed the pitta's cause in the face of Thai government indifference – is that 25-26 birds were located in 2003. In other words, the survey in Myanmar has doubled the pitta's known world population. The newly discovered Gurney's *Pittas* are, however, threatened by the rapid clearance of their forest habitat to make way for oil palm plantations – the same fate which has befallen much of the forest in Thailand. Jonathan Eames of BirdLife International in Indochina, who took part in this year's survey, commented that fieldwork was accompanied by the constant whine of chainsaws. Lowland forest is being rapidly cleared from the region, particu-

larly along the route of the trans-Tenasserim highway, and the extent and scale of the forest clearances still pose a significant threat to the continued survival of this species.

Links: BirdLife (www.birdlife.net/news/news/2003/06/gurneys_pitta.html). Oriental Bird Club (www.orientalbirdclub.org).

Moral dilemma (1) – Birds and politics

BirdLife's good news from Myanmar coincided with the latest brutal crackdown by the authorities on the country's democracy campaigners. Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi was ambushed in her car on 30th May in an attack by government-backed thugs which left at least 60 people dead. Myanmar has one of the

most repressive regimes on the planet, one where forced labour on major construction projects is routine and corruption is endemic. Hence the pessimism about the future of Gurney's Pitta: Thai logging companies are clearing the remaining forest with a cut of the proceeds going to local military chiefs. Friends of the Earth and other charities have renewed their calls for companies like British American Tobacco (BAT) to pull out of Myanmar, and are demanding EU economic sanctions against the country. At least one

British bird-tour company runs a tour in Myanmar. But should birding and bird conservation transcend politics? If BirdLife does not engage with the authorities there, Gurney's Pitta and a host of other species will be offered even less protection.

American tourists are forbidden by US law to visit Cuba, which prevents US birders seeing some superb endemics that birders from any other nation can enjoy with impunity. Are there countries that British birders should refuse to visit on moral/ethical grounds –

because of repressive regimes which gain financially from the tourist trade – despite the ornithological riches on offer? Zimbabwe is a topical example. China has an appalling human rights record. Some British birders have even denied themselves the joys of birding in Israel because of disquiet at its policy towards the Palestinians. What do you think? Write to N&c with your views.

Link: Burma Campaign UK (www.burmacampaign.org.uk).

Moral dilemma (2) – Black Lark and sick notes

On a lighter note, readers may be aware that a male Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* graced a cliff-top at South Stack, Anglesey, last month (see plate 249, page 357). This is a dream bird for most European birders so an appreciative throng was expected on site – and duly arrived! The news was released on the evening of Sunday 1st June, so some diligent employees had a nail-biting five

days before they could *legitimately* make the journey to north Wales. Yet there were plenty who found their way to South Stack on that first Monday morning, and on subsequent days. A big twitch is always a good picture story for local TV, and camera crews were soon scrambled to Anglesey, yet there was an extraordinary reluctance by some to enjoy their few minutes of fame. Northumberland birder

Stewart Sexton told N&c: 'Four of us went for the Black Lark on Tuesday. Good job we didn't feign illness, because we were all interviewed by HTV Wales. The reporter reckoned that a film crew on Monday could hardly get an interview as loads of birders hid their faces under caps, collars, etc., in case they were identified!' Whatever next? Birders on TV, backlit with altered voices?

Lesser Flamingos satellite-tracked by WWT

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) has launched an 'Adopt A Flamingo' scheme to highlight a new conservation research project entitled 'Survival at the Edge of the Earth'. The project has been designed to improve understanding of the complex movement patterns and habitat use of the near-threatened Lesser Flamingo

Phoenicopterus minor in East Africa. This in turn will support the development of an international flyway management and protection plan. Adopters will be able to stay in touch with the flamingos' movements through SMS text messages sent to their mobile phones, as well as via WWT's interactive website. The flamingos involved in the study have been fitted with lightweight (40 g) solar-powered satellite transmitters, which will track the birds in and around the Great Rift Valley, where the largest population of this species can be found.

By tracking the movements of the flamingos and identifying the different lakes and wetlands used, the research team leading the project hopes

to understand how the birds survive in one of the most inhospitable habitats on earth. In addition, it is hoped that the research will establish whether there is a link between East African and Southern African Lesser Flamingo populations, which scientists have in the past speculated about but have been unable to prove. The adoption scheme heralds the expansion of the satellite-tracking research project – a partnership of conservation organisations led by Leicester University and the Earthwatch Institute – based at Lake Bogoria, Kenya. The aim of the adoption scheme is to encourage interest and participation in the study from a wide variety of people, from scientists and conservationists to schools and members of the public.

Link: Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (www.wwt.org.uk/flamingo).



243. Lesser Flamingos *Phoenicopterus minor*

Waders left high and dry

The Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows survey, conducted by the BTO and funded by the RSPB, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and English Nature, has revealed staggering population declines in formerly widespread wading birds. From 1982 to 2002, 60% of Common Snipes *Gallinago gallinago*, 40% of both Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* and Eurasian Curlews *Numenius*

arquatus and 20% of Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus* have disappeared from the UK, although Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* have increased by 50% during that time. An extraordinary statistic is that six key areas now hold more than half the populations of snipe, lapwing and redshank in lowland England and Wales. All of these 'wetland arks' are nature reserves or areas managed for wildlife: the Lower

Derwent, North Yorkshire; the Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire; the Ouse Washes, Norfolk/Cambridgeshire; the Norfolk Broads; the North Kent Marshes; and the Somerset Levels. Survey organiser, the BTO's Andy Wilson, commented that in parts of England and Wales, Common Snipe are now approaching local extinction, for example in the West Midlands, where only four were recorded from a total of 106 sites.

Have you seen a seal with a mobile phone?

Up to half the Atlantic Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus* pups born in North Sea breeding colonies do not survive to their first birthday. The Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) is currently trying to find out more about why this is the case. SMRU attached miniature Siemens mobile phones to the fur of 60 pups born on the Isle of May, Fife, last winter. The phones are programmed to send a text message to SMRU every three days, with the pup's current approximate location included in the message. If the technology works successfully, this will be a major breakthrough in

study techniques since the capital and operational costs are far lower than those of satellite telemetry. GSM (General System for Mobiles) coverage extends to approximately 20 km around almost all European coasts, but the analysis does not depend upon a live individual remaining within the GSM coverage corridor – rather that it will, at some time, return there, with a finite probability that a transmitted message will be received. The underlying principle is that if a seal dies, no more text messages will be received, but it is also important to know how many tags stop working

within the one-year study. This is where your help is needed. Each tag has a different two-letter code, and if you see a seal bearing a tiny (and harmless) mobile phone, wherever it may be, please note the tag code and contact SMRU. Even better, if you send a photograph of a tagged seal, your name will be entered in a £20 monthly draw. Contact SMRU with details of your sighting(s) at: Gatty Marine Lab, University of St Andrews, Fife KY16 8LB; tel: 01334 463280; e-mail: b.mcconnell@smru.ac.uk

Link: Sea Mammal Research Unit (www.smru.st-and.ac.uk).

Third port in a storm

Applications for container ports at Dibden Bay on Southampton Water and the London Gateway on the Thames (*Brit. Birds* 95: 598) have now been followed by one for Bathside Bay on the River Stour at Harwich, Essex. The application to concrete over the entire bay and create the second-biggest container port in Britain came just a week after 65 ha of saltmarsh and mudflats were designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by English Nature, in recognition of their importance for waders and wildfowl.

Chris Gibson, a conservation officer for English Nature, admitted that it was a mistake the designation had come so late, but the significance of the habitat had not emerged until bird counts were

carried out for Hutchison Ports (UK), the company that wants to build the new port. Common Redshanks and Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* from the adjoining Stour SSSI, along with Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* and Great Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* from the Orwell SSSI, just across Harwich harbour in Suffolk, all make use of Bathside Bay.

Analysts have forecast that the combined container capacity of the main UK ports – about 6m container units in 2001 – will need to increase by at least an extra 5.3m units by 2020. Nearby Felixstowe is gearing up to handle millions more containers a year, yet this will still not be sufficient to meet demand. In preparation for its proposals for

Bathside Bay, Hutchison last year secured a 138-ha site at Hamford Water, 6 km further along the Essex coast. The idea is to move back the existing clay seawall to create a new 112-ha bird refuge of mudflat, saltmarsh, sand and shingle.

Hutchison Ports claims that when Bathside is operational it will provide about 770 jobs. National and local protest groups all predict far fewer jobs for the locals. A public inquiry into Bathside is expected to start in December and last 4-6 months, with the inspector's report coming out in late 2004. Meanwhile, the Dibden Bay inquiry report is expected later this year, while the Thames inquiry report should be published in mid 2004.

Reviews

COLLINS FIELD GUIDE: WARBLER SONGS & CALLS OF BRITAIN & EUROPE

By Geoff Sample. Three CDs,
with accompanying booklet.
ISBN 0-00-713974-8. £30.00.

This guide contains recordings and descriptions of the songs and calls of 65 warbler (Sylviidae) taxa found in Europe. The three CDs contain over 180 minutes of recordings and are accompanied by a booklet (hardback, 55 pages), which provides dates and locations of the recordings, along with limited information about each taxon and brief details of song and call delivery behaviour. The definition of Europe is somewhat flexible, with a number of species found only in North Africa and the Middle East, while several Siberian species occur in Europe only as vagrants.

Each taxon is given a separate track for song, calls and identification pointers. Song recordings are provided for nearly all species (except four *Phylloscopus* warblers recorded only as vagrants in Europe). Typically, these comprise a range of songs from one individual plus, in most (but not all) cases, songs from a number (up to seven) of different individuals. There are recordings of calls for all species, often from more than one individual. The final track for each taxon consists of a verbal descrip-

tion of the main vocalisations as well as direct comparisons with the most likely confusion species (including bush-crickets *Orthoptera*, which may be confused with some *Locustella* warblers).

The quality of the recordings is variable but generally excellent, in particular the songs. The range of songs was generally comprehensive, although more limited for a few species. For example, there was only a single sequence from (a rather subtle) Iberian Chiffchaff *P. ibericus* from north-central Spain, thus not allowing for comparison of *P. i. ibericus* with *P. i. biscayensis*. There are also a number of frustrating omissions involving some forms for which vocalisations may be of particular significance, e.g. the Lesser Whitethroat group other than nominate *Sylvia curruca*; Common Whitethroats *S. communis* of the forms *icterops* and *rubicola*; or Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* of the form *fuscus* (although vocalisations of all these are discussed in the text). It would also have been useful to include recordings of the 'tek' calls occasionally heard from migrant Reed Warblers in Britain during autumn.

There is no information in the text about species which can be heard in the background, but I did enjoy trying to identify these, and they enhance the atmosphere of the recordings (in particular, the Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* with Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaese-*

laudiae and Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* in the background). Some recordings contained a good deal of background interference (notably that of the calls of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *L. certhiola*), but this was not a significant problem.

The sections on identification are one of the real highlights of these CDs. The verbal pointers and comparison of vocalisations side-by-side enables the listener to interpret and learn songs and calls more quickly than by repetitive listening. This also negates the need to flick between tracks constantly. Some of the comparisons are surprising (I had never likened the contact call of Radde's Warbler to the song of Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*), but mostly perceptive and refreshing. I did not agree with them all though, for example the claim that the 'Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* call' of Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum* is distinctive from that of other *Acrocephalus* warblers.

Despite some minor criticisms, this is an excellent source of reference for warbler vocalisations. The layout makes it easy to use and the level of detail and quality of both song and call recordings is of the highest order. If you are interested in warblers, this is a must-have, but it would surely be perfectly complemented by a more conventional identification guide.

Stephen C. Votier

BIRDS

Artwork by Robert Bateman, text by Kathryn Dean. Airlife Publishing, Shrewsbury, 2002. 176 pages. ISBN 1-84037-379-2. Hardback, £25.00.

Canadian wildlife artist Robert Bateman is the best-known living wildlife artist in North America, and his work is in huge demand worldwide, but, strangely, he is relatively poorly known in Britain. My own introduction to his work

came over 30 years ago when an aunt in Toronto began sending me Bateman cards and calendars. I marvelled at the atmospheric and often detailed scenes, where the focal point may have been a tiny bird, a camouflaged deer or distant

moose. It made me determined to find original paintings on exhibition. I finally succeeded, at his London exhibition in 1979. Boy, was I in for a shock! Many of the originals were much bigger than I had supposed, and not at all detailed in the way I had thought. A stunning Leopard *Panthera pardus* in a sausage tree (dappled in light and shade) measured 70 × 90 cm and there were paintings over 120 cm long. I was captivated.

Since then I have consumed Bob Bateman's work at every opportunity.

This book is a vehicle to publish more of Bateman's paintings, a collection of 176 reproduced on high-quality paper, in a square format, giving two or three works on each 'spread'. In a couple of instances the usual problems of reproducing landscape-format paintings across the fold are apparent, although I appreciate that there is no easy answer to this problem. The colour reproduction is excellent.

Bateman starts us at his current home in British Columbia and then takes us to a selection of locations worldwide through the (mostly recent) paintings and coloured sketches. The narrative describes the circumstances of each painting, and a little about the birds themselves, often with an underlying conservation message. There is not much on the actual painting relating directly to the hows and whys, and questions spring to my mind on almost every page; I would have found it fascinating to read how the paintings

came about. Other 'freer' images included are apparently pre-composition sketches, or perhaps loose 'recall' sketches.

Composition is extremely strong in Bob Bateman paintings (this perhaps comes from his early years spent as an abstract painter), with an amazing sense of light, texture and space. They often convey an intimate moment with nature: the viewer is given a strong personal feeling that they are there, seeing it happen. Sometimes you look into a painting and then, after a few moments, a bird or animal appears: you almost find yourself asking 'Where did that come from?' This book contains such gems in good measure. The Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* on page 19 is exquisite: that bird could dart off in an instant! For me, however, the overall feel is of slightly looser, simpler paintings than his earlier works.

A number of images seem to have been taken from larger works and reproduced nearer life size. It worries me that some of the images seem cropped down, while others

have been vignettted or etched out to white. I wonder how much control Bateman had over this. It is a mild frustration to me, since the rhythm and balance of the composition are *the* most important parts of 'a Bateman', since they skilfully lead the viewer to the point of focus. A marooned bird image taken from a larger work inevitably loses impact and context, which is a great shame.

Birds is more work from a master painter, and it is a real treat. The evidence that Bateman is a consummate field and studio artist is provided time and again. If you are new to Bateman, this book will leave you wanting more. Fortunately, there are earlier published volumes of his paintings and I urge you to seek them out. If an opportunity arises to see original Bateman paintings, I recommend you travel through hell and high water to do so. In short, if you like wildlife art, you will love this.

Alan Harris

**BONES OF CONTENTION:
THE ARCHAEOPTERYX
SCANDALS**

By Paul Chambers. John Murray, London, 2002. 270 pages, various figures. ISBN 0-7195-6054-3. Hardback, £17.90.

Palaeontology is a strange 'science', akin to restoring jigsaw puzzles with most of the pieces missing. This, of course, provides those who like that sort of thing with lots of scope for the use of their imaginations, over the results of which they seldom agree, so that dealings between them tend to resemble a wardrobe conversation, starting with an unjustified assertion, met with a flat denial, and terminating

in mutual abuse.

This initially dull-looking book is actually the exciting biography of Archaeopteryx, one of the great icons of biology, the 'missing link' between birds and whatever else they are related to, found in a Bavarian quarry in 1861. It brought great joy to Charles Darwin – who had just published *The Origin of Species* and been criticised for his failure to demonstrate the existence of intermediate forms, though he was wise enough not to admit it – since, although not a particularly scandalous event (a suggestion presumably intended to sell this book), the discovery led to even more controversy. Indeed, the arguments over Archaeopteryx are still going on today.

This book is extremely well and clearly written, with a copious (if

repetitive) bibliography for each chapter, and no method of cross-referencing between the two, to indicate, for example, the origin of the information that the owner's 'teenage children, who had to walk barefoot through the house, would occasionally stand on a sharp rock fragment' from the icon. In addition to a detailed dissection of Great Victorian antics and attitudes, it brings the story up to date with a valuable account of recent disputes over whether birds are dinosaurs (there is a BAND of those who, having failed to suggest it themselves, still maintain that *Birds Are Not Dinosaurs*), and how the Chinese took the *National Geographic* magazine for a ride.

W. R. P. Bourne



Monthly Marathon

Photo no. 198: Arctic Tern

Few serious participants in this competition should have had much difficulty recognising Monthly Marathon photo number 198 (*Brit. Birds* 96: plate 150, repeated here as plate 244 as a tern (Sternidae) of some sort and, judging from its delicately patterned upperparts and apparently fresh condition, it is in juvenile plumage. The apparent 'whiteness' of the bird's mantle and left side and the tone of 'black' on the back of the head suggest a significant degree of overexposure in this image, but the tones on the bird's right side are probably not too far out.

With around 22 species of tern on the Western Palearctic list to choose from, the logical way to start is by eliminating the more obviously unsuitable candidates. Perhaps those first to go should be all the crested/orange-billed terns – a major relief in itself, considering the problems posed even by perfectly clear profile photos of some



Colin Bradshaw

244. Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*, Northumberland, August 1990.

members of this group – followed by Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*, Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus* and the much longer-legged and whiter-headed Gull-billed Tern *S. nilotica*. The three *Chlidonias*, or 'marsh tern', species can also be readily eliminated on a variety of features, such as the absence of dark neck-side smudges and the paleness of

the upperparts, as well as the fact that none of the marsh terns has such well-defined white fringes to the primary tips.

This leaves us with Roseate Tern *S. dougallii*, Common Tern *S. hirundo*, Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea*, Forster's Tern *S. forsteri*, White-cheeked Tern *S. repressa* and the three 'little' tern taxa, all of which are very similar in juvenile plumage. Juvenile Forster's has diffusely dark-centred tertials and a paler rear crown/nape than the mystery bird. Juvenile White-cheeked is a poorly known plumage, but it appears that it is always darker grey on the upperparts than our bird, and is usually more heavily patterned. Juvenile Little *S. albifrons*, Least *S. antillarum* and Saunders's Terns *S. saundersi* can all be excluded by the lack of at least some narrow, almost paperclip-shaped dark internal markings on the scapulars, tertials and inner wing-coverts. This leaves us with just three species to choose from: Roseate, Common and Arctic. All three exhibit considerable variation in the strength and extent of dark markings on the scapulars, tertials and wing-coverts in juvenile plumage, but even the most extreme 'light' Roseate could be expected to show more extensive dark markings on at least the ter-



245. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 201. Seventeenth stage in twelfth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 53), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, or by e-mail to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, to arrive by 31st August 2003.

Monthly Marathon

tials and a few of the larger scapulars. In addition, Roseate has the broadest white fringes to the primary tips, which align to form a pronounced white 'inner edge' to the folded wing-tip, a very useful field mark (but beware of the similarly marked juvenile Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*). Most juvenile Common Terns start out with a strong gingery wash over the mantle, scapulars and tertials, but this may fade quickly on birds which are just a few weeks old, so the absence of ginger does not eliminate Common Tern. Nonetheless, several further clues do point us away from Common and are strongly indicative of Arctic. First, although the more extensive dark carpal bar of juvenile Common can be completely hidden on the folded wing, it would certainly be at least hinted at when much of the forewing is visible, as in this shot. Juvenile Arctic Tern tends to show a more obvious small block of

white on the rearmost scapulars (just where the scapular crescent is in an adult gull *Larus*), and if the image were not so overexposed at this point, it seems likely that this feature would be apparent on our mystery bird. The black on the head is subtly more extensive on juvenile Arctic than on Common, and the latter might be expected to show a more pronounced indentation of white just behind the black point on the ear-coverts. The aforementioned white fringes to the primaries are also a little wider in Arctic than in Common, as in our bird. Finally, although difficult to determine reliably from this angle, it does appear that our bird has very short legs, a further indicator that it is an Arctic Tern.

Killian Mullarney

It is now some months since we had a real 'stinker' of a puzzle, and all answers received for this round

of the competition were for one of Killian's 'final trio', of Roseate, Common or Arctic Tern. The majority of contestants, 89% in fact, duly named the bird correctly as a juvenile Arctic Tern. There has, nevertheless, been some movement at the top of the leader board, and we now have just two front-runners, Nils van Duivendijk and Diederik Kok, with a sequence of seven-in-a-row. Behind them, there are no fewer than 11 contestants with five consecutive correct answers, all of them hoping for a slip-up by the two leaders.

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid May to mid June 2003.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Fetlar (Shetland), 30th May. **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* St Agnes (Scilly), intermittently from 22nd May to 2nd June, with another on Tresco (also Scilly) on 31st May; Falmouth (Cornwall), 22nd May to 4th June; Dungarvan, (Co. Waterford), 24th May. **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* Aberlerry (Ceredigion), 3rd-5th June. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Wych Cross (East Sussex), 25th May; Goonhilly Downs (Cornwall), 29th May. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* Pembroke Mill (Pembrokeshire), 18th and 21st May. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Longtown Ponds (Cumbria), intermittently from 21st May to 9th June; Penclacwydd (Carmarthenshire), 4th June.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Fen Drayton

(Cambridgeshire), 15th May; Wormegay (Norfolk), 26th May; Sandwich Bay (Kent), 27th May; St Buryan area (Cornwall), 29th-30th May; Rame Head (Cornwall), 31st May; Goonhilly Downs, 2nd June (the dates for Cornwall suggest one fairly wide-ranging individual); Trumpington (Cambridgeshire), 1st June; near



246. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Aberlerry, Ceredigion, June 2003.

Gary Bellingham

Recent reports

Bill Baston



247. Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Lowestoft, Suffolk, June 2003.

Hersden (Kent), 7th June. **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* What was presumed to be the long-staying bird from 2002 was seen at Blakeney Point, Wells and Titchwell (Norfolk) on 16th May; Northdale/Haroldswick, Unst (Shetland), 23rd-25th May. **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* Holme (Norfolk), 12th May; Wormleighton (Warwickshire), 15th May; between Paston and Bacton (Norfolk), 19th May; Abbotsbury (Dorset), 29th May; St



248. Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*, Northdale, Unst, Shetland, May 2003

Margaret's Bay (Kent), 29th May; Acres Down (Hampshire), 31st May; Dungeness (Kent), 31st May; Stodmarsh (Kent), 31st May; Cley (Norfolk), 31st May; Great Ryburgh (Norfolk), 31st May; Holkham (Norfolk), 31st May; Titchwell, 31st May; Northward Hill (Kent), 1st June; Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 1st June; Scalby Mills (North Yorkshire), 1st June; Hickling (Norfolk), two 1st June, up to four on 2nd-4th June, with two remaining on 5th June; Cleasby gravel-pits (North Yorkshire/Co.

Durham), 8th June; Capel Fleet (Kent), 9th-11th June; Old Hall Marshes (Essex), 10th June. **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* Findhorn Valley (Highland), 12th May.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* Wattisham Airfield (Suffolk), 16th May; Cliffe Pools (Kent), 20th May; Loch of Tankerness (Orkney), 30th-31st May. **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* Dawlish Warren (Devon), 17th-18th May; Stone Point (Essex), 1st-2nd June; Ibsley Water (Hampshire), 8th June. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* Saltholme Pools (Cleveland), 6th June. **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Walland Marsh (Kent), 21st May. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Exe Estuary (Devon), 23rd May; Islay (Argyll), 25th-27th May.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Douglas Estuary (Co. Cork), 18th-28th May, with two there on 20th; Langstone Harbour (Hampshire), 1st-6th June. **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Titchfield Haven (Hampshire), 26th May, then at Littlehampton (West Sussex), 26th-27th May; Old Moor (South Yorkshire), 29th May. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Rosslare (Co. Wexford), 20th May into June, with three on 25th May. **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* Dungeness, 28th-29th May. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Carmel Head (Anglesey), 23rd May; Ballymena (Co. Antrim), two on 23rd May, then at Quoile Pondage (Co. Down), 25th May; Lochwinnoch (Renfrewshire), 26th-29th; Kilbirnie Loch (Ayrshire), 27th May; Loch of Tankerness, 3rd-8th June; East Chevington (Northumberland), 10th-11th June.



Mike Malpass

249. Male Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*, South Stack, Anglesey, June 2003.

same bird at Gott (also Shetland) on 4th June. **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* Fair Isle (Shetland), 16th-17th May; Blakeney Point, 30th-31st May. **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* Blakeney Point, 16th-17th May; Gibraltar Point, 19th-24th May; Fair Isle, 25th-26th May; Foula (Shetland), 29th May to 1st June.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Spurn, 9th June. **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Dungeness, 15th May; Marton Mere (Lancashire), 21st-29th May.

Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon* Fair Isle, 16th-17th May. **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* Foula, 16th-18th May; Fair Isle, 21st-22nd May, with a second bird there on 3rd-6th June; Fetlar, 7th June; Stronsay (Orkney), 8th June. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* Winterton (Norfolk), 4th June. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Foula, 3rd June;

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* Northdale, Unst (Shetland), 23rd-25th May. **Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca* St Kilda (Western Isles), 23rd May. **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Lodmoor (Dorset), 4th June. **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* St Agnes, two, 14th May; Skomer (Pembrokeshire), 14th May; Duckpool Valley (Cornwall), 26th May; Easington (East Yorkshire), 29th May; Badby (Northamptonshire), 31st May; Portland Bill (Dorset), 2nd and 7th June; Skokholm (Pembrokeshire), 8th June, with it or another at Marloes Mere (also Pembrokeshire), 8th June; Spurn (East Yorkshire), 9th June.

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* South Stack (Anglesey), 1st-8th June. **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* Capel-le-Ferne (Kent), 27th May; Beesands Ley (Devon), 1st June; Bressay (Shetland), 3rd June, with presumably the



Hugh Harrop

250. Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*, Fair Isle, Shetland, May 2003.

Recent reports



Hugh Harrop

251. Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, Scatness, Shetland, May 2003.

Skokholm, 4th June; Portland, 7th June. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Scatness (Shetland), 13th-15th May. **Iberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus ibericus* Kingswear (Devon), 19th May to 11th June.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Porlock Marsh (Somerset), 3rd June. **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* Fair Isle, 5th June. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Langton Herring (Dorset), 26th May; St Agnes, 26th-27th May; Minsmere (Suffolk), 29th May; Skomer, 30th May; Lodmoor, 31st May; Worbarrow Bay (Dorset), 1st June; Naast



252. White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*, Dursey Sound, Co. Cork, May 2003.

(Highland), 2nd-4th June; Isle of May (Fife), 3rd June; Portland (Dorset), 4th June.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* Dursey Sound (Co. Cork), 20th-27th May. **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* Caldy (Merseyside), 22nd-23rd May; Fair Isle, 9th June. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Fair Isle, 23rd May, with another on 29th May; North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 28th May; Westray (Orkney), 28th May. **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* Blakeney Point, 1st June.



Gary Bellingham

253. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Caldy, Merseyside, May 2003.



Rebecca Nasor

254. Male Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Fair Isle, Shetland, May 2003.

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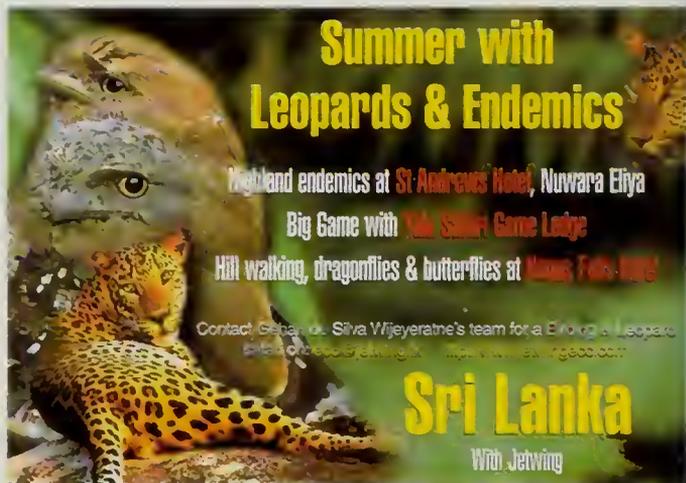
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August 2003 Vol 76 No 4



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Monthly Marathon

The next stage of the *Sunbird* Monthly Marathon, including photo number 202 and the solution to photo number 199, will appear in the September issue.

Monitoring the diets of farmland winter seed-eaters through raptor pellet analysis

Roger Clarke, Pete Combridge and Nigel Middleton



Rosemary Watts/Powell

ABSTRACT Pellets collected from winter roosts of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* in Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Hampshire were examined for plant seeds that occurred with the remains of passerines which would have been caught mostly in open farmland. The predominant seeds associated with Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis*, Hedge Accentors *Prunella modularis*, Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris*, Linnets *C. cannabina* and Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* were those of a narrow range of annual weeds of arable crops. Cereal grain was predominant with Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* remains, and because of its vulnerability to early digestion it could be more important to other species than our data show. In general, however, our results suggest that farmland bird conservation should strive to maintain viable populations of common weeds in arable crops. The introduction of new farming practices, such as genetically modified herbicide-tolerant crops, which are designed to facilitate more stringent control of arable weeds, have the potential to increase the pressure on certain farmland birds.



Roger Clarke

255. Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis* (left) and Knotgrass *Polygonum aviculare* (right). A low, often prostrate, ubiquitous weed of arable fields and farm tracks, Knotgrass is more competitive in crops than Common Fumitory, especially on heavier soils, and it provides winter seed resources for a wide range of seed-eating birds.

Recent reviews of the diets of farmland birds emphasise, for most species, the small number of studies carried out and also the potential biases which may arise from extrapolating results subject to geographical or seasonal restrictions (Campbell *et al.* 1997; Wilson *et al.* 1997, 1999). Proceedings of the latest conferences on farmland birds (Aebischer *et al.* 2000; Donald & Vickery 2001; Boatman *et al.* 2002) reflect little new information on diet composition. Recent studies of the processes of winter seed-eating by birds in arable fields (e.g. Robinson & Sutherland 1999, Moorcroft *et al.* 2002) have tended to monitor the seeds found to have been important in earlier studies, instead of making fresh assessments at a particular time and place. In this paper we present the results of a novel method of obtaining detailed regional information on the winter diets of seed-eating farmland passerines, which reinforce existing knowledge. In the light of our results, we also comment on relevant current conservation policies in the UK and on the probable effect on winter survival of farmland birds of growing genetically modified (GM) herbicide-tolerant crops.

Owing to ethical and technical methodological difficulties, the only well-known first-hand study of foods of a wide range of bird species in

Britain was undertaken 90 years ago, by Walter E. Collinge (Collinge 1913, 1924-1927). In an era of 'economic ornithology', when research focused on simple judgements as to whether each species was 'useful' or 'harmful' to human economic interests, Collinge was merely intent on providing results representative of the whole year in order to form a judgement on whether each species should be protected or not. With no details of where and when his specimens were collected, his work is of limited comparative value today, yet it still features prominently in many of the diet accounts in *BWP*.

The principal studies of the diets of seed-eating passerines in Britain since the work of Collinge can be summarised easily. In the 1960s, Newton (1967) assessed the relative proportions of species of seeds viewed through the transparent skin of the gullets of well-fed finches caught at roost. This worked well only for Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris*, Linnets *C. cannabina* and Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs*, which formed communal roosts that were easily mistnetted. This method assumes that 'feeding-up' by birds shortly before roosting is representative of general foraging patterns. By day, this method is less productive: although a proportion of Greenfinches caught have some food in their gullets from about an hour after daybreak

(I. Newton *in litt.*), we ourselves were unable to see any in Greenfinches caught by the Wicken Fen Ringing Group on winter mornings, despite the provision of peanuts and seeds close to the nets. Newton also used field observations, largely for assessing the diets of the Cardueline finches. This method, however, is not suitable for birds which feed on the ground, where their activities are harder to study. For Greenfinches, for example, seeds from tall burdock *Arctium* plants, on which feeding birds were clearly visible, were found far more frequently in observational compared with gullet data.

In recent studies of Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* (Green 1978, 1980; Donald 1999; Donald *et al.* 2001) and Hedge Accentors *Prunella modularis* (Bishton 1986), researchers collected faeces and examined processed residues to determine the relative proportions of different foods from the fragments of remains. This is difficult, since differences in the persistence within faeces of different foods (fragments of seed coatings, leaf, etc.) mean that correction factors have to be established from throughput in captive birds fed on known quantities of each food. In addition, this method is probably of much less use in establishing the seed diet of birds such as finches, which dehusk their seed intake.

Other studies have tested the use of emetics to induce regurgitation of food, for example on buntings (Emberizidae) in Oxfordshire (Prÿs-Jones *et al.* 1974; Prÿs-Jones 1977). This method has proved more successful for insectivorous species than seed-eaters because the latter often still retain some food or fail to regurgitate. After trial and error, it has also proved possible to extract crop contents through a tube (e.g. Payne 1980, Zann & Straw 1984, Dostine & Franklin 2002 – all overseas studies), although this is suspected to underestimate large seeds owing to tube bore-size constraints. Of course, all methods practised on live birds require a representative sample of birds.

Our study used a non-intrusive method of monitoring the seed diets of samples of farmland passerines in winter, by analysing Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* pellets. Winter survival is a key factor in the population dynamics of small passerines, and reduced overwinter survival rates of some species are thought to have caused overall population declines (Peach *et al.* 1999; Siriwardena 1999; Hole *et al.* 2002). The Hen Harrier is a generalist predator, ranging widely over open farmland in the predominantly arable east and southern lowland England during the winter. It uses traditional communal roost sites,



256. The Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis* is rarely considered in work on 'farmland birds'. In fact, standing crops in eastern England are an important habitat for this species, where in winter it forms a significant part of the diet of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* and itself largely depends on Fat-hen *Chenopodium album* seeds.



Roger Clarke

257. Fat-hen *Chenopodium album*. A widespread weed, especially of root crops, and exceptionally prolific in seeds which are important to the diets of many winter seed-eaters in farmland, above all the Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis*.



Roger Clarke

258. Black-bindweed *Fallopia convolvulus*. A twining, widespread weed of both cereal and root crops, with large seeds important to Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* and other farmland seed-eaters in winter. The seeds have been identified in human food among archaeological remains, and decades ago they were recognised as an important ingredient of crop seed screenings fed to stock.

from which large samples of pellets can be collected. In the Netherlands and Scotland, the Hen Harrier will specialise on voles *Microtus* when such prey is numerous or abundant (Schipper 1973; Cramp & Simmons 1980; Clarke 1999; Redpath *et al.* 2002), but this is rare in lowland England, where the diet consists predominantly of small birds of open farmland (e.g. Castle & Clarke 1995, Clarke *et al.* 1997). The hard contents of the digestive tracts of small birds survive in harrier pellets: grit, the exoskeletons of insects, whole plant seeds from the upper digestive tract and partially ground-up seeds from the gizzard. In autumn and winter, seeds are an important component of the diets of both year-round 'seed-eaters', such as finches (Newton 1967), and of species for which invertebrates are important in spring and summer, such as Sky Lark, Hedge Accentor, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* and Reed Bunting *E. schoeniclus* (Cramp 1988; Cramp & Perrins 1994). Consequently, the analysis of harrier pellets should provide useful information on passerine diet, yet pellets are a source which has so far been overlooked.

Methods and study areas

Between October and April, Hen Harrier pellets were collected at random during 1985-2002 at Wicken Fen (Cambridgeshire), 1989-2002 in the north of the New Forest (Hampshire) and 1989-2002 in north Norfolk. Three roosts were sampled in Norfolk, comprising: an acid sand coastal heathland adjacent to a goodsands-soil arable area (roost A); saltmarsh adjacent to a goodsands arable area (roost B); and a bog on the border between greensand and silt fenland arable areas, close to the Wash (roost C). The Norfolk goodsands soil is sandy with a clay constituent which retains moisture, making it prime land for sugar beet *Beta vulgaris* and barley *Hordeum vulgare* (Beckett *et al.* 1999). The silt fen and the free-draining acidic greensand soils are also good for growing both cereals and root crops. Harriers at Wicken Fen had access mainly to extensive peat fen, but also to the chalk belt across south Cambridgeshire. In addition to cereals, root crops such as sugar beet and potatoes are commonly grown in the

continued on page 367

Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i>					6	10	4
Common Fumitory <i>Fumaria officinalis</i>		1	3		3		
Speedwell <i>Veronica</i> spp.	2						
Cleavers <i>Galium aparine</i>		1				6	
Hemp-nettle <i>Galeopsis</i> spp.		2		2			
Charlock <i>Sinapis arvensis</i>				2		5	
Field Bindweed <i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>				2			
Brassicac <i>Brassica</i> spp.					3	5	
Fool's Parsley <i>Aethusa cynapium</i>			1	3			
Wild Mignonette <i>Reseda lutea</i>			1				7
Common Millet <i>Panicum miliaceum</i>				4			4
Maize <i>Zea mays</i>				2			
Compositae	1						
Unidentified grass spikelets		4	1	1			
Unidentified seeds	1		3			6	4

peat fen, whereas the chalk belt is predominantly a cereal-growing region. Birds at the New Forest roost foraged mostly to the north, in Wiltshire arable farmland (Clarke *et al.* 1997); much of this is ploughed chalk downland where cereals predominate and root crops are infrequent.

The harrier pellets were dissected wet and the contents were washed through a fine sieve capable of retaining all but the very smallest seeds, which were unlikely to be of dietary significance. The cleaned contents were then dried. Remains of seed-eating passerines in the pellets were identified by comparison with a reference collection of feathers, bills, claws and bones (Clarke 1999). The passerine diet results are based solely on whole or partially ground-up seed grains. For consistency, fragments of seed coats and cereal husks and skins were ignored, as those from some seed species were far more fragmentary and less easily identified than others. Seeds were identified by reference to identification manuals (e.g. Korsmo 1935, Berggren 1981, Hanf 1983, Flood & Gates 1986) and seeds collected from plants. Grass grains were difficult to ascribe to species, and so were mainly classified as meadow-grass *Poa*-type (small and oval), foxtail *Alopecurus*-type (medium-sized and longer), or brome-type (up to 5 mm long, flattish and broadly grooved down one side, and including bromes *Bromus*, fescues *Festuca*, rye-grasses *Lolium*, etc.).

Pellets generally contained the remains of two or three small birds or mammals. To assess which seeds occurred with which passerines, most of the data presented here (tables 1 & 2) are from those pellets containing the remains of just one bird species. The exceptions are Sky Lark/Linnet and Sky Lark/Yellowhammer mixes, which were included because they occurred frequently in New Forest pellets.

Results are presented in two simple ways: by the occurrence of seed species (table 1) and predominance of seed species (table 2). To avoid bias owing to varying seed sizes, predominance in each pellet was assessed on the basis of mass estimated by eye. No significant differences in the predominant seed species in diets were found between months.

Results

The most important seeds in the pellets were those of common weeds of cultivated ground,



259. Pale Persicaria *Persicaria lapathifolia* (left) and Redshank *P. maculosa* (right). These are tall weeds more frequent on organic soils and their seeds are of regional importance to seed-eating birds in winter.

in terms of both occurrence (table 1) and predominance by mass (table 2). Fat-hen *Chenopodium album*, Knotgrass *Polygonum aviculare* and Black-bindweed *Fallopia convolvulus* made up the bulk of seeds occurring with Sky Larks, although the proportions of pellets in which each of these was predominant varied significantly between study areas (respectively: $\chi^2_1 = 43.66$, $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2_4 = 30$, $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2_4 = 28.45$, $p < 0.001$). Fat-hen was by far the most important seed found with Hedge Accentors in all areas, although again there were significant differences between areas in the proportions of pellets in which it was predominant ($\chi^2_4 = 18.54$, $p < 0.01$). A range of other seeds, commonly up to the size of Black-bindweed, occurred with Hedge Accentors. Persicarias (Redshank *Persicaria maculosa* and Pale Persicaria *P. lapathifolia*) were sometimes important, especially to Greenfinches and Linnets in the Wicken Fen area. There were marked differences in the seeds found with Linnets in the Wicken Fen and New Forest areas; for example, in the proportion of pellets in which Knotgrass seeds were predominant (Fisher's exact test, $p = 0.001$). The most significant seeds with Reed Buntings were Fat-hen, cereals and *Alopecurus*-type grass grains (probably mainly Black-grass *A. myosuroides*). Cereals were by far the most common seeds found with Yellowhammers, but

not to the exclusion of a range of weed seeds, notably brome-type grass grains.

The larger seeds, notably Knotgrass, Black-bindweed, Redshank and Pale Persicaria, were mostly dehusked by the finches, but not at all by other passerines. Smaller seeds such as Fat-hen and Common Chickweed *Stellaria media* were swallowed whole by all species. The colour and appearance of seeds in harrier pellets was unaltered.

Discussion

How representative are our results?

The Hen Harrier's prey can be characterised as that of 'open country'. This is reflected in the high proportion of Sky Larks in their diet, the archetypal passerine of open farmland. Hen Harriers sometimes adopt a low, fast, bird-hunting flight mode (Wassenich 1968) and typically surprise prey on the ground or as they flush, rarely giving prolonged chase. Prey capture is not confined to the middle of open fields, as harriers can utilise field-edge features such as ditches and bushes to steal up on prey unseen (Schipper *et al.* 1975), and can even practise 'hedge-hopping' (Thorpe 1994). Potential prey species feeding close to high cover such as hedgerows may, however, be less at risk. More detailed study of prey capture is required, but there is little doubt that the birds Hen Harriers catch are feeding mainly in open fields.

We believe that Sky Larks taken by harriers are representative of the species as a whole, since Sky Larks tend to feed well away from hedgerows (Robinson & Sutherland 1999) and do not resort to them for cover. Hedge Accentors occur in many habitats other than open fields, but they are not unusual in standing crops such as sugar beet and brassicas, an environment where harriers can easily approach and surprise prey. In south Lincolnshire, up to four or five Hedge Accentors per hectare were found in brassica crops in winter (G. C. Steele, verbally).

Finches vary in their use of cover. Linnets can be characterised as open-country finches: unlike larks, they do resort to hedgerows for cover, but they also tend to form flighty, mobile, ground-feeding flocks. Greenfinches are comparatively more hedgerow-based, but large flocks are recorded feeding out in the open in arable fenland. Yellowhammers tend to feed close to hedgerows (Robinson & Sutherland 1999), so our results may perhaps feature a high proportion of atypical open-field feeders. Our findings on their diet are, however, similar to those of Prÿs-Jones (1977). Reed Buntings favour open, low-scrub habitats, which are pro-

ductive foraging habitats for harriers. As with Yellowhammers, our findings on winter diet of Reed Buntings are similar to those of Prÿs-Jones (see below).

How representative of the seeds eaten by small birds are those which survive in Hen Harrier pellets? A high ratio of cereal grains to broadleaved weed seeds found by Donald *et al.* (2001) in their study of Sky Lark diet was not borne out in our results. Nonetheless, cereal husks and skin occurred frequently in harrier pellets in which whole or part cereal grains were not found, and so would not have been included in our analyses. It seems likely that some cereal grains are pre-digested by small birds, cereals having a relatively flimsy skin once dehusked. Newton (1967) found that cereals sometimes occurred as a paste in the gullets of finches, while other seeds were unaltered until broken up in the gizzard. The high proportion of cereals we found in pellets containing Yellowhammers, known cereal specialists in winter (Cramp & Perrins 1994), does, however, suggest that the proportion of whole or partial cereal grains coming through in harrier pellets is relative to the level of cereal consumption.



Roger Clarke

260. Small Nettle *Urtica urens*. A frequent annual weed of arable fields (especially on friable soils), where it replaces its perennial relative the Common Nettle *U. dioica*. Small Nettle has larger seeds than the latter, which were found most frequently with Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis* remains in the pellets we analysed.



Roger Clarke

261. Common Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit*. A once-common weed, especially on peaty soils, which has virtually disappeared with the advent of effective herbicides. The good-sized seeds are known to be particularly attractive to Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis*.

Perspectives on previous work

Other than for Sky Lark, comparisons of our largely arable farmland results with those of earlier studies in Britain may be invalid owing to their being undertaken in different habitats. We lack the information on place and season for Collinge's birds to be able to judge whether comparison is valid, but it is striking that, given their importance to birds today, Collinge (1913) made no mention of Fat-hen and Blackbindweed seeds throughout his year-round work on many bird species.

Bishton's (1986) study of Hedge Accentor diet in 'hedgerow' habitat in Shropshire revealed a very different winter diet to that apparent from our results: mainly Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius* seeds.

Newton's (1967) study areas held a relatively small proportion of farmland, three-quarters of which was pasture, and the finches he studied often fed on rubbish dumps, allotments and in woodlands. Despite habitat differences, like us Newton also found that polygonums were important to Greenfinches and Linnets in winter. Collinge (1913) showed that Charlock *Sinapis arvensis* was noticeably important to Linnets and cereal grains to Greenfinches. Newton found that Charlock was important to both Linnets and Greenfinches, commenting that grain must have been less available than

when early twentieth-century studies were conducted. Charlock was a particularly abundant weed in cereal crops in the early twentieth century, sometimes causing entire crop failure. It was widely brought under control when weedkillers were introduced, particularly the hormonal (growth-restricting) herbicides in the 1940s which allowed selective control of broad-leaved weeds in cereal crops. Charlock is a good-sized, oil-rich spherical seed (1.5-mm diameter) and so was probably a particularly valuable resource to birds. Collinge found it to be the most important seed in 40 Sky Larks.

Green's (1978, 1980) work on Sky Larks in East Anglian arable farmland in the 1970s is more directly comparable with ours. Although the winter food intake of Sky Lark is partly tender leaf material grazed from the seedlings of both dicotyledons (broadleaved weeds and crops) and monocotyledons (grasses such as cereals), Green (1980) established that Sky Larks took seeds in preference to seedlings, provided that the former were available in sufficient quantity to provide a profitable energy return. He found that Sky Larks feeding on peat fen soils took more weed seeds, principally polygonums, than those feeding on mineral soils. In the peat fen, hemp-nettle *Galeopsis* seeds (typically up to 3.5 mm long) were important too. Much smaller seeds such as Fat-hen and Common Chickweed were less



262. Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*. Our results show marked differences in the winter seed diet of this declining species among different study areas.

favoured. This is in contrast to our East Anglian results, in which Fat-hen was overall as important as the polygonums, Knotgrass and Black-bindweed, even in Wicken Fen pellets in which a relatively high incidence of Redshank and Pale Persicaria indicated peat fen feeding. Hemp-nettles also occurred in our study, but at very low levels and not exclusively in the peat fen. Control of hemp-nettles was also improved by herbicides in the 1940s and they must have steadily decreased in the soil seed bank from that time. Their seeds are not long-lived in the soil (Hanf 1983) and so they are now comparatively rare plants.

Our findings for Yellowhammers are very similar to those of Prÿs-Jones (1977), i.e. a diet dominated by cereals and brome-type grass grains. Prÿs-Jones also found a similar winter diet of Reed Buntings – mostly cereals, grass grains, Caryophyllaceae (probably mainly Common Chickweed) and an example in autumn of a high incidence of Chenopodiaceae (probably Fat-hen). The principal difference was the predominance of *Alopecurus*-type grass grains compared with the brome-type grains in our results, probably owing to the greater availability of Black-grass in our more predominantly arable study area. The advent of herbicide-resistant Black-grass (e.g. www.weedscience.com) could have been of benefit to Reed Buntings.

Land use factors

The weed seeds important in our results are from the persistent annual weeds of tilled ground; these produce seeds which do not rely on wind dispersal. Typically, they are large seeds, although Fat-hen is an exception. Knotgrass and persicaria seeds are up to 3 mm long and Black-bindweed seeds up to 4.4 mm long. Fat-hen seeds are much smaller – 1.3–1.5 mm in diameter with a flattened disc-shape – but Fat-hen has the advantage of producing great quantities of seed, up to 20,000 seeds or more per plant (Hanf 1983). These weeds depend on tillage to bring fresh seeds close to the surface for germination.

There are some important differences in the weed flora between crop types. For example, sugar beet is unique in that it is harvested gradually from September to February to spread the supply to centralised processing factories. A considerable acreage of this crop is, therefore, allowed to reach a 'climax' state as far as its surviving arable weeds are concerned. The predominant weeds of such root crops are precisely the species most prominent in our results. Sugar beet is common in our Wicken Fen and Norfolk study areas. Farmers aim to control weeds at the emergence stage, until the leaf cover of adjacent rows of sugar beet plants meet and shade out all competition. In practice, areas of failed and weak growth in the beet allow



263. The contents of a Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* pellet: Fat-hen *Chenopodium album* seeds occurring with Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* remains.

Roger Clarke

Roger Clarke



264. Black-grass *Alopecurus myosuroides*. Grass seeds are important in the winter diet of Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus*, in our study particularly *Alopecurus*-type seeds, probably mainly Black-grass. This species has developed resistance to herbicides, is frequent in autumn cereals and occurs increasingly in spring cereals.

these weeds, which have a long germination window, to persist. In addition, herbicides which generally work as 'residuals' in the soil against germinating weeds are ineffective on organic soils (in our study areas, the fenland peat). Successive low doses of non-residuals are used during the initial stages of the crop, but are ineffective against weeds growing up later. Mechanical hoeing is effective, but also encourages further germination of Fat-hen and other weeds that have relatively long germination seasons.

Although game-cover strips were available in all three study areas at times, seeds which were diagnostic of this habitat rarely appeared in our results. Common Millet *Panicum miliaceum* occurred in a tiny number of pellets, while, although it is grown in our study areas and has distinctive seeds, we failed to find any Quinoa *Chenopodium quinoa*. Since many game strips are planted alongside hedgerows, which are

themselves substantial cover, this may be due to birds feeding there being safer from harrier predation.

EC set-aside schemes were introduced in the UK from 1988, including five-year (and longer) schemes, but there was no apparent effect on our results. Although annual weeds are the principal feature of bare set-aside ground in its first year, with no tilling to stimulate the germination of annuals its flora then progresses towards the dominance of perennial grasses (Davies *et al.* 1992). We found that seeds of the most conspicuous weeds of 'wasteland' and road verges – grasses, clovers *Trifolium*, docks *Rumex*, umbellifers (Apiaceae), Common Nettle, dead-nettles *Laminum*, willowherbs *Chamerion/Epilobium*, mugworts *Artemisia* and thistles *Cirsium* – were virtually absent from the pellets we analysed. This may be explained by the ephemeral, light structure of the seeds of many of these, which means that by winter they have long been dispersed on the wind, although this is not the case with, for example, docks.

Implications of our results for conservation policy

The widespread and dramatic reduction in the food resources available to farmland birds was described by Shrubb (2003) and earlier reviews. For example, Potts (1970) showed that there had been an enormous decrease in the proportion of weed seeds in the autumn diet of Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix* since the 1930s and, within the weed seeds, a halving of the propor-



Tim Loseby

265. Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* depend largely on cereal and grass grains in winter; but our results from the Wicken Fen area also confirm the importance of Fat-hen *Chenopodium album* seeds.

tion of polygonum seeds. The most telling factors in the decline of weed seeds in recent decades are the development of more effective herbicides, the competitive density of modern crops, and the widespread shift from spring-sown to autumn-sown cereals. Polygonums are spring-germinating, and Fat-hen is often classed as such (Hanf 1983), although it does also have a (less pronounced) autumn-germinating window (Roberts 1982); but the life-cycles of arable weeds most important to birds are most in tune with spring-sown crops. Spring tilling unearths fresh resources of seeds in the soil, important both for germination and as food at an important time when birds need to attain breeding condition, while overwinter stubbles harbour surviving seeding weeds. The seeds of those species which germinate most readily in autumn, e.g. Common Chickweed, Shepherd's-purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris* and Small Nettle *Urtica urens* (Roberts 1982; Hanf 1983) tend to be smaller or less plentiful, and were much less evident in the harrier pellets we analysed.

Farmland bird conservation measures and payments to farmers under agri-environment schemes in the UK have concentrated on set-aside, headlands and crop stubbles, and on artificial feeding schemes. New arable-option grants, piloted from 1998, were incorporated in the overall Countryside Stewardship scheme from 2002. The options under the scheme are 'wildlife mixtures' (seed-bearing or pollen-/nectar-rich plants), or overwintered cereal stubble followed either by a usual spring crop, a prescriptive low-input spring cereal crop, or by turning over the stubble and leaving it fallow. Hopefully, these are just the first steps in recognition of the effects of intensive arable farming on bird populations. Apart from some encouragement of spring sowing, the current measures fail to address trends in mainstream agriculture and the implication is that farmers outside the scheme have no duty of care for wildlife. There is no reward or recognition for a degree of tolerance of common weeds in 'normal' crops through to maturity and seeding, for example by reducing herbicide input and reducing mechanical hoeing. In conjunction with spring sowing of crops, this would have most effect. Compromises would be necessary between tolerance of weeds and the consequent yield reductions and greater harvesting costs, partly offset by the reduction in input costs. Indepen-

dent data are required on the net cost of different levels of tolerance, on different soils, etc. Restoration of previously typical weeds such as Charlock and the hemp-nettles also needs to be considered seriously. Is the alternative really to artificially feed the birds? The dearth of obvious 'game-crop' seeds in our results at least merits further investigation – are they really of negligible importance compared to arable weeds, or is it simply that harriers tend not to catch birds feeding in game cover?

Weeds and GM crops

Varieties of GM crops tolerant to specific herbicides ('GMHT' crops) have been developed recently, particularly in the USA. One major example of a GMHT crop is 'Roundup Ready Sugar Beet' produced by Monsanto. 'Roundup' (compound name glyphosate) is a notoriously effective, broad-spectrum herbicide which would damage ordinary sugar beet varieties. Taking the simplified example of GMHT sugar beet and just the principal weed of sugar beet, Fat-hen, Watkinson *et al.* (2000) used mathematical simulations to model the reduction in Fat-hen levels which could occur, showing that they could be severe. Fat-hen is an important element in the diets of many seed-eaters, but our results show that a number of other weeds also need careful consideration in the GM scenario, including Knotgrass, Black-bindweed, Redshank and Pale Persicaria. With more stringent weed control, the density and viability of seeds in the soil – the 'seed bank' – would decline over time, restricting the rate of any recovery of weed populations on those fields later.

Watkinson *et al.* attempted to build different levels of uptake of GMHT beet by farmers into their model. They argued that weed-seed reduction would have little impact where farmers are already controlling weeds efficiently and adopt GMHT beet in already relatively weed-free fields, compared with a scenario where farmers adopt it in proportion to their weed problem. A full understanding of this requires knowledge about why and where higher weed densities occur – are they due to farming inefficiency or intractable problems on the ground? If the former, how long can they be expected to withstand commercial pressures? Much more research is required into these aspects.

One of the counter-arguments being put forward by GM industry interests regarding loss

of bird foods is that GM technology will allow farmers to leave weeds (and their insect fauna) between crop rows longer, because the contact herbicides used can kill at any stage, compared with a herbicide residual in the soil applied to prevent weeds emerging in the first place. Dewar *et al.* (2003) recently reported some success with this system in the earlier stages of GMHT sugar beet crops, but it requires expensive re-equipping, is much slower (band sprayers are normally half the width of blanket sprayers), and much delay in a second (blanket) spray gives lower yields compared with less expensive conventional spraying regimes. It is, therefore, unlikely to appeal to farmers without financial subsidy. Essentially, because large weeds compete for light and thereby impair the all-important photosynthesis that allows crops to grow and maximise, weed tolerance is unlikely to extend to maturity and the seeding stage. The introduction of GM crops would, therefore, still result in a winter food shortage for birds and a decline in the seed bank.

Conclusion

Our results confirm that the seeds of annual weeds are vitally important in the winter diets of farmland passerines. Decreasing abundance of these seeds is clearly affecting overwinter survival of some farmland birds, which in turn has been identified as a factor driving population declines. The conservation of arable weeds will depend on integration of crop management with an understanding of weed distribution, densities and dynamics to achieve a balance between tolerance of reasonable densities of weeds and economic return – initially in agri-environment schemes and organic systems, and then in mainstream agriculture. Weed ‘control’ technology (e.g. development of geographical positioning system ‘weed map’ guidance of sprayers to facilitate more targeted spraying) should be harnessed to achieve weed tolerance and avoid excessive efficiency in the use of pesticides (not wholly incompatible with financial goals). Herbicides have already had a strongly selective effect on the weed flora in arable fields.

This should be investigated to see whether selection could be adapted to favour weeds of greatest value in bird diets. Greater use of spring-sown crops would, together with tolerance, allow the life-cycles of weeds to be seen through to seeding in winter stubbles. Farmland bird populations are likely to be extremely sensitive to the introduction of new arable farming practices or technologies, such as GMHT crops, if such developments diminish the supplies of weed seeds even further.

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Roger Clarke

266. Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis* towering over Field Pansies *Viola arvensis*. Seeds of the diminutive Field Pansy are a regular component of the winter diet of seed-eating farmland birds.

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Numbers of wintering gulls in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man:

a review of the 1993 and previous
Winter Gull Roost Surveys

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ABSTRACT This paper summarises the January 1993 Winter Gull Roost Survey and evaluates the results of this and the four previous surveys of wintering gulls, carried out in 1953, 1963, 1973 and 1983. In total, 2,594,491 gulls were counted in Great Britain during the 1993 survey: 1,263,208 at inland sites and 1,331,283 on the coast, comprising an estimated 1,682,385 Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, 429,331 Common Gulls *L. canus*, 60,830 Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*, 376,775 Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, 43,108 Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus* and 2,062 gulls of other species. A further 19,030 gulls were counted in Northern Ireland, 3,853 in the Isle of Man and 8,477 in the

Channel Islands. Using thresholds of 1% of the respective minimum British populations, 22 sites of potential national importance were identified for Black-headed Gull, 28 for Common Gull, 19 for Lesser Black-backed Gull, 19 for Herring Gull and 20 for Great Black-backed Gull. Areas in which gulls were counted varied between surveys, but gulls at inland sites in England were counted in all five surveys. All five 'key' species increased at inland sites in England between 1953 and 1993, in particular Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The increase in wintering gull numbers in Great Britain has probably led to greater numbers of gulls using individual roosts and more roost sites being occupied. More recently, however, there have been some declines, notably of Herring Gulls.

This paper presents the results of the last UK-wide survey of winter gull roosts, carried out in January 1993, and provides minimum population estimates for five species: Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Common Gull *L. canus*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*. Four previous surveys (Hickling 1954, 1967, 1977; Bowes *et al.* 1984) suggested that numbers of wintering gulls increased between the 1950s and 1970s, and certainly there is considerable evidence that breeding populations, particularly of Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls, rose during the twentieth century until the 1970s. (Harris 1970; Chabrzyk & Coulson 1976; Mon-

aghan & Coulson 1977; Lloyd *et al.* 1991). More recently, the growth in the UK breeding populations of Lesser Black-backed and Great Black-backed Gulls has slowed, while the breeding populations of Black-headed, Common and Herring Gulls have declined (Lloyd *et al.* 1991; Tasker *et al.* 1991; Gibbons *et al.* 1993; Gregory *et al.* 2002). Black-headed, Common, Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gull are all included on the Amber List of 'Birds of Conservation Concern' in the UK owing to the decline and/or relatively small size of their breeding populations (Gregory *et al.* 2002). The Common Gull is also listed as a Category 2 'Species of European Conservation Concern' owing to a moderate decline in its numbers in Europe, which is



267. Gulls *Larus* settled at roost, Bough Beech Reservoir, Kent.

David Tipling/Windrush



268. Black-headed *Larus ridibundus* and Common Gulls *L. canus* disturbed from roost. It is easy to appreciate the potential hazard that large gull roosts, or the flight lines to and from roosts, may pose to aircraft.

the stronghold of this species (Tucker & Heath 1994).

The increase in gull numbers during the twentieth century is thought to have stemmed from a reduction in human persecution (hunting and egg-collecting) coupled with greater food availability (Spaans 1971; Lloyd *et al.* 1991). The widespread use of rubbish tips (Horton *et al.* 1983) and outfalls (Ferns & Mudge 2000) has brought gulls back into conflict with humans, mainly because of concern about the spread of disease (Fenlon 1981, 1983; Benton *et al.* 1983; Butterfield *et al.* 1983; Coulson *et al.* 1983a; Fricker 1984; Monaghan *et al.* 1985; Ferns & Mudge 2000). In particular, there are concerns that gulls may act as carriers of salmonella between these sources and the inland water reservoirs on which they roost at night. Concern over such health risks, the hazards posed by gulls to aircraft (Rochard & Horton 1980; Gosler *et al.* 1995; Milsom & Horton 1995), and the possible effects of larger numbers of gulls on wetland and coastal habitats, and on other seabirds and waterbirds, has prompted efforts to disturb gulls from favoured sites or to reduce the size of their colonies. For example, Lesser Black-backed Gulls have been culled under licence at Abbeystead, Lancashire, partly in order to prevent contamination of a local reservoir (Wanless & Langslow 1983), while on the Isle of May, Fife, the repeated

destruction of eggs was used to reduce numbers of Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls, which apparently threatened other nesting seabirds (Duncan 1978; Wanless *et al.* 1996; Finney *et al.* 2003). It is probable that such policies contributed to regional declines of these species in the 1970s and 1980s (Coulson 1991; Lloyd *et al.* 1991).

While it can be argued that there is a need to control gull numbers in certain areas, it is also important to recognise their conservation status in the UK. The UK holds considerable proportions of the European populations of these species (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997), most notably 71% of the breeding population of one subspecies of Lesser Black-backed Gull, *L. f. graellsii* (Stroud *et al.* 2001). Large numbers of gulls from Scandinavian and other west European breeding populations winter in the UK, particularly in eastern Britain, while birds of British origin are more predominant in the west (Stanley *et al.* 1981; Coulson *et al.* 1983b, 1984a, 1984b; Cramp & Simmons 1983; Horton *et al.* 1983, 1984; Monaghan *et al.* 1983; Christmas *et al.* 1986; MacKinnon & Coulson 1987; Wernham *et al.* 2002).

In order to conserve these species properly, it is essential that the extent of both breeding and wintering populations are known and that sites which are important for individual species are identified. This paper presents minimum winter

population estimates for the five key species, for inland and coastal sites, at both regional and national levels, based on the 1993 survey. We also provide amended threshold levels in order to identify sites of potential national importance for wintering gulls. Minimum population estimates are compared, where possible, with those from previous Winter Gull Roost Surveys.

Field methodology of the 1993 survey and factors affecting count accuracy

The January 1993 Winter Gull Roost Survey followed the same methods used by surveys in 1953, 1963, 1973 and 1983 (Hickling 1954, 1967, 1977; Bowes *et al.* 1984). These previous surveys varied in their coverage. In January 1953, inland (and some coastal) roosts in England and parts of Scotland were surveyed (Hickling 1954). The next survey, again primarily of inland sites in England, was planned for December 1962 and January 1963, but owing to the exceptionally severe weather that winter, the majority of counts were undertaken in December 1963 (Hickling 1967). The January 1973 survey included inland roosts in Wales (Hickling 1977), while the January 1983 survey was the first to cover the whole of Great Britain (and the Channel Islands, but not the Isle of Man), and was also the first attempt to cover

the majority of coastal roosts.

The 1993 survey covered coastal and inland sites in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Observers were asked to count or estimate the numbers of gulls at roosts around sunset between 21st and 31st January 1993, preferably on 22nd or 23rd January.

There are a number of sources of potential error in counting gulls at roosts, and to help minimise these, suggested guidelines were provided for observers. Firstly, as noted in previous surveys, counts of birds flying into roosts are typically more accurate estimates than counts of birds already settled, particularly if birds roost on choppy water. Furthermore, at large roosts, it is necessary to have several observers stationed around the site to simultaneously cover birds arriving on different flight lines so that overall numbers are not underestimated.

The difficulties of identification will also affect the accuracy of counts of individual species. In some cases, it may be necessary to estimate the total numbers of each species from the proportions of each in part of a roost or on a flight line. Where this was not possible, observers in the 1993 survey instead provided information on the numbers of unidentified 'small' gulls (Black-headed and Common Gulls)



Robin Chittenden

269. A mixed group of Black-headed *Larus ridibundus*, Common *L. canus* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, Cromer, Norfolk, February 1996. Gulls arriving at roosts in mixed groups like this are more difficult to count than roosts where a single species predominates. Where birds arrive in large mixed groups it may be possible only to estimate the total numbers of gulls involved, and the relative proportions of 'small' (Black-headed and Common) and 'large' gulls.

and unidentified 'large' gulls (Lesser Black-backed, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls) counted, in addition to any counts of individuals identified to species.

Lastly, counts may also underestimate the overall numbers using a roost if many birds arrive after dark. This was perhaps the case at the large Frampton & Waveridge Sands roost on the Severn Estuary, for example. In this case, the actual numbers of gulls counted prior to darkness have been used in analyses (these figures are also quoted in Durham 1994), as they were in previous surveys, rather than figures which included estimates of the numbers that may have arrived after dark. Observations by Shedden (1983), however, suggest that at some sites there may be little movement to or from roosts after dusk (see also Austin *et al.* 2003).

Data analysis

Minimum population estimates and 1% thresholds

Minimum population estimates in 1993 were calculated for Black-headed, Common, Lesser Black-backed, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls, for inland and coastal sites, at county, regional and national levels. Inland sites surveyed included reservoirs, natural and man-made lakes, pools and marshes, rivers, clay-pits, gravel-pits, flooded colliery works, power station lagoons, settling ponds, sewage works, flooded washlands and terrestrial sites, including buildings, playing fields and rubbish tips. Coastal sites were defined as either estuarine, open coast (including islands) or harbours. Analyses excluded data collected from offshore gas and oil platforms not visible from land.

Following Bowes *et al.* (1984), nine regions were defined within Great Britain: Southwest England, Southeast England, East Anglia, Midlands, North England, Wales, South Scotland, East Scotland and North Scotland (see appendices 1 & 2). To facilitate comparison between the two surveys, our analyses used the same 'counties' defined by Bowes *et al.*

To calculate population estimates, the numbers of each species counted were summed (for inland and coastal habitats separately in each county, region or country) together with estimates calculated from counts of unidentified 'small' and 'large' gulls. Estimates of the numbers of Black-headed and Common Gulls which made up counts of unidentified small gulls were calculated using the formula:

$$\text{estimate of species A} = \text{count of small gulls} \times P_{\text{species A}}$$

where $P_{\text{species A}}$ = the number of species A counted in the region divided by the sum of the total number of Black-headed plus Common Gulls counted in that region.

A similar approach was used to estimate the numbers of Lesser Black-backed, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls which made up counts of large gulls. Counts from the 1963, 1973 and 1983 surveys were also reanalysed using a similar methodology to estimate counts of gull species from counts of unidentified gulls where necessary. As a result, minimum population estimates for these surveys may not match those reported previously.

It should be noted that the summed counts provide only *minimum* population estimates. This is because some roosts may have been missed, or because the size of some roosts may have been underestimated (e.g. if some birds arrived at roosts after dark). No attempt has been made to extrapolate these minimum estimates to take account of these two factors.

The minimum population estimates for Great Britain (i.e. England, Scotland and Wales, but excluding the Isle of Man and Channel Islands) were used to calculate thresholds – rounded 1% levels of the estimates (following Wetlands International 2002) – so that sites in Great Britain of potential national importance for each species could be identified and listed. Sites in Northern Ireland are considered nationally important if they hold 1% or more of the estimated all-Ireland population of a bird species. Counts from neighbouring inland sites were only combined if they had been in previous surveys. Counts of parts of estuaries were combined, however, so that estuaries were treated as single sites. No such estimates or thresholds were calculated for the UK owing to more limited coverage outwith Great Britain.

Comparison with earlier surveys

Comparative minimum population estimates are tabulated for inland and coastal sites in England, Wales and Scotland for those years in which they were covered. Comparison with the results of previous surveys focuses largely on changes at inland sites in England as, with the exception of the Frampton & Waveridge Sands roost, no other sites were looked at in every survey. Minimum population estimates of gulls at inland sites in England are plotted, together



Hugh Harrop

270. Herring *Larus argentatus* and Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus* feeding on unwanted fish discarded from a fish processing factory, Lerwick, Shetland, February 2003. The ability of gulls to take advantage of the rich pickings associated with new food sources such as this is one of the key factors behind population increases during the twentieth century.

with the number of sites known to have been surveyed each year and the number of these with roosts. Data concerning the numbers and sizes of roosts surveyed in the 1953, 1963 and 1973 surveys were taken from Hickling (1954, 1967 & 1977). These sources gave only limited information concerning those sites which were surveyed but which held no gulls, and thus we are likely to have underestimated actual coverage in these surveys.

Trends in regional gull numbers were looked at in more detail using counts from those individual sites covered in every survey. In addition to the Frampton & Waveridge Sands roost, data were available from 16 inland sites, in three regions of England. Counts from the sites within each region were summed and plotted against year for each species. Data for Southeast England were available from King George V & William Girling Reservoirs, King George VI & Staines Reservoirs, and Queen Mary Reservoir. Those for the Midlands came from Belvide, Eyebrook and Swithland Reservoirs, Doddington Pool, Ellesmere and Rostherne Mere; those for North England from Ardsley, Blackmoorfoot, Eccup and Winterset Reservoirs, Hornsea Mere, Ullswater and Windermere.

Results

Coverage in 1993

A total of 283 inland and 433 coastal sites were surveyed in 1993 (table 1). The majority (97%) of the inland sites were wetlands; only nine roosts were reported from sites on dry land. Of 269 inland sites in England looked at in previous surveys, 137 (51%) were covered in 1993, with comparable figures of 14 (28%) of 50 inland sites in Wales and 27 (46%) of 59 inland sites in Scotland. Only two inland sites were previously surveyed in Northern Ireland (both of which were covered in 1993) and none in the Isle of Man or Channel Islands. Although the 1993 survey included only half the inland sites previously covered, it is likely that few large roosts were overlooked, as sites which had previously held large numbers of gulls had a high probability of being resurveyed. For example, the 63% of inland sites in England surveyed in 1983 ($n=193$) and again in 1993, held 75% of the Black-headed Gulls counted at inland sites in 1983, 89% of the Common Gulls, 98% of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 89% of the Herring Gulls and 74% of the Great Black-backed Gulls.

The 1993 survey encompassed roosts on major estuaries, though it was less complete in

Table 1. The numbers of inland and coastal sites covered by Winter Gull Roost Surveys in 1953, 1963, 1973, 1983 and 1993.

		1953	1963	1973	1983	1993
England	Inland	58	60	143	192	202
	Coastal	18	1	2	138	224
Wales	Inland	0	0	10	48	30
	Coastal	0	0	0	78	88
Scotland	Inland	6	0	0	58	43
	Coastal	3	0	0	82	73
Northern Ireland	Inland	0	0	0	2	3
	Coastal	0	0	0	3	12
Isle of Man	Inland	0	0	0	0	5
	Coastal	0	0	0	0	21
Channel Islands	Inland	0	0	0	0	0
	Coastal	0	0	0	5	15

its coverage of the open coast, particularly in Scotland. No counts were received from coastal sites in the Borders or the Northern Isles, and only limited data from the Western Isles (see appendix 2). Coastal sites (except for a few large

roosts, such as that at Frampton & Waveridge Sands) were first covered extensively in the 1983 survey. Direct comparison of the numbers of sites counted in 1983 and 1993 was not possible, as the limits of the stretches of coastline

covered were not defined in either survey, and because the stretches often did not match between the two surveys.

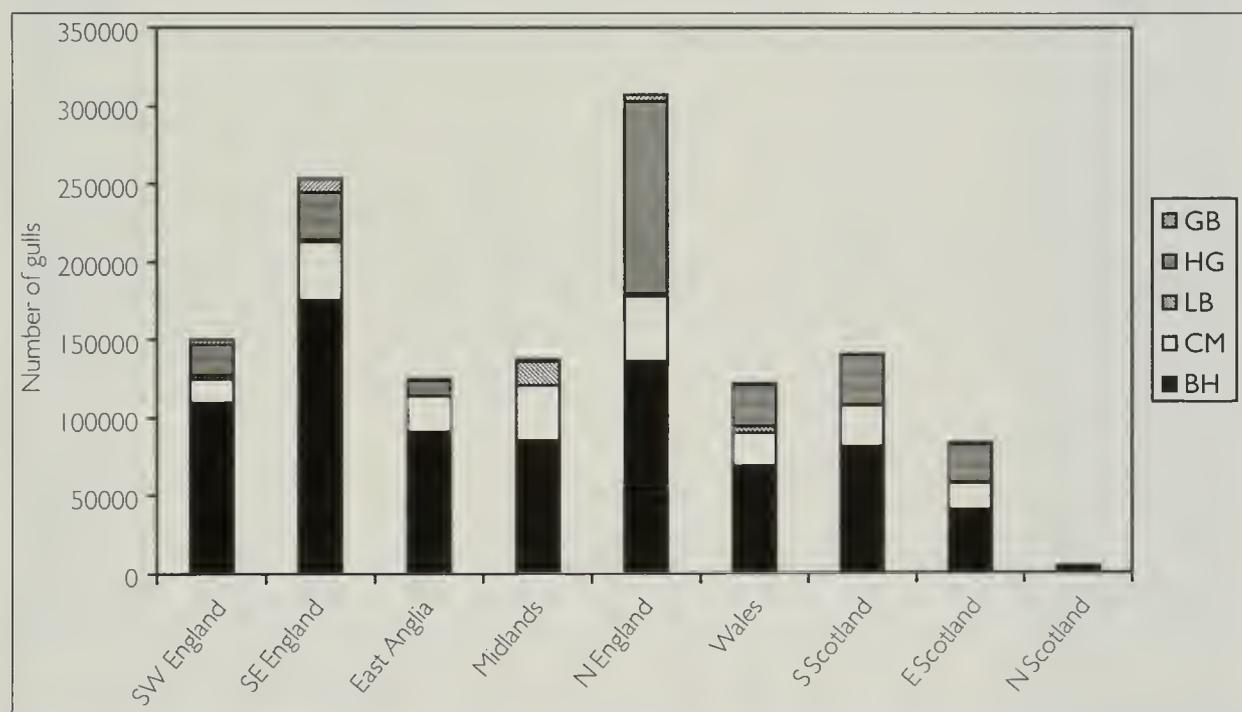
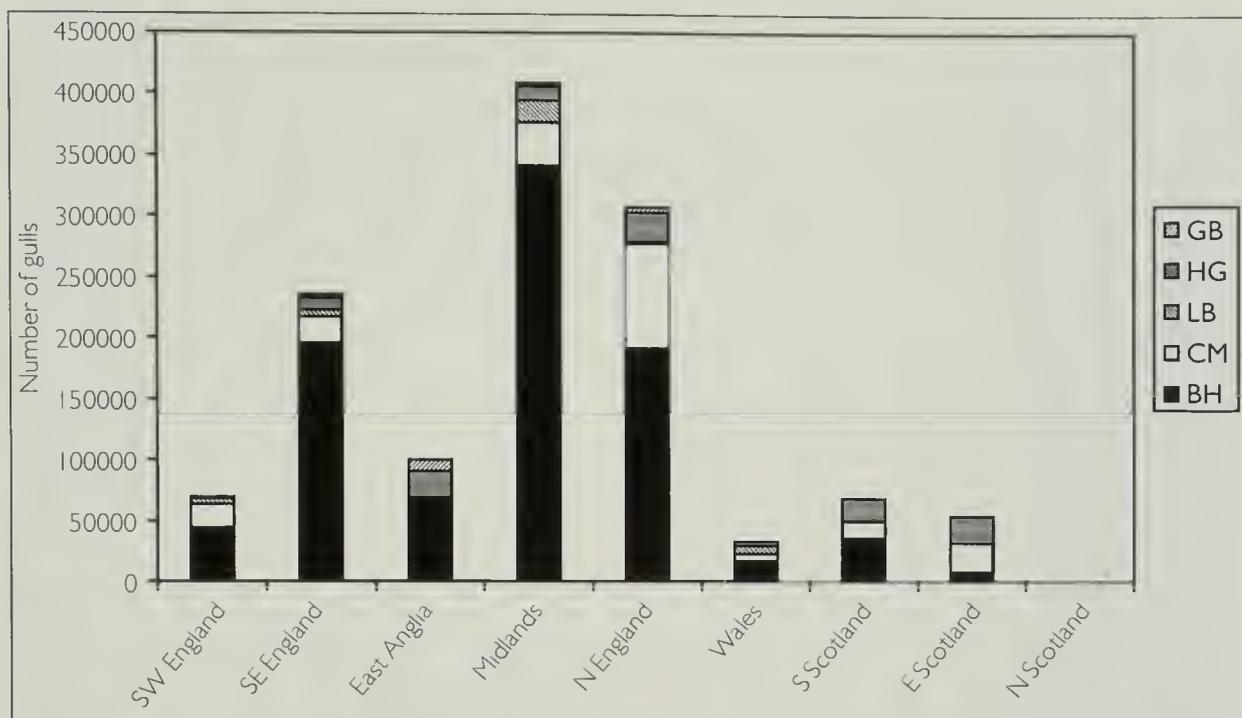
Table 2. Minimum population estimates for Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Common Gull *L. canus*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus* wintering in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands in January 1993, together with 1% thresholds for Great Britain.

	Minimum population	1% threshold
Great Britain		
Black-headed Gull	1,682,385	16,800
Common Gull	429,331	4,300
Lesser Black-backed Gull	60,830	610
Herring Gull	376,775	3,800
Great Black-backed Gull	43,108	430
Northern Ireland		
Black-headed Gull	15,412	
Common Gull	1,596	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	0	
Herring Gull	1,973	
Great Black-backed Gull	48	
Isle of Man		
Black-headed Gull	1,281	
Common Gull	16	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	0	
Herring Gull	2,283	
Great Black-backed Gull	273	
Channel Islands		
Black-headed Gull	4,128	
Common Gull	17	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	32	
Herring Gull	3,901	
Great Black-backed Gull	396	

Minimum population estimates in 1993 and 1% thresholds

In total, 2,594,491 gulls were counted in Great Britain during the 1993 survey, 1,263,208 at inland sites and 1,331,283 on the coast. Minimum population estimates for each of the five main species are given in table 2, together with rounded 1% levels of these values (i.e. 1% thresholds). An estimated 65% of gulls counted were Black-headed Gulls, 17% Common Gulls, 2% Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 15% Herring Gulls and 2% Great Black-backed Gulls. Other species observed included Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus*, Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*, Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans*, Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides*, Glaucous Gull *L. hyperboreus* and Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* (in total, 2,062 birds). Including these other species, a further 19,030 gulls were counted in Northern Ireland, 3,853 in the Isle of Man and

Wintering gulls in the UK



Figs 1 & 2. Estimated numbers of gulls *Larus* in Great Britain in January 1993, at inland sites (fig. 1) and coastal sites (fig. 2). BH = Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*, CM = Common Gull *L. canus*, LB = Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, HG = Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and GB = Great Black-backed Gull *L. mannus*.

8,477 in the Channel Islands. The total numbers of gulls counted at inland and coastal sites at county, regional and national levels are given in appendices 1 & 2; regional totals in Great Britain are also shown in figs 1 & 2.

Black-headed Gulls were proportionally more common at inland sites, while Herring Gulls were more common on the coast. There were also differences in the proportions of the five species found (for inland sites $\chi^2_8 = 189,554.2$, $p < 0.0001$; for coastal sites $\chi^2_8 = 12,933.6$,

$p < 0.0001$). In relation to the total numbers of gulls counted, Black-headed Gulls were most common in England, Common Gulls most common in Scotland, Lesser Black-backed Gulls least common in Scotland and most common in Wales, and Herring Gulls more common in Scotland than in England. Great Black-backed Gulls were rather more evenly distributed.

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Table 3. Sites which held at least 1% of the minimum British populations of Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Common Gull *L. canus*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus* in January 1993. Numbers of gulls counted are shown for those species for which the site was deemed nationally important (with the percentage of the minimum national population at the site in parentheses). Counts which exceeded the thresholds for international importance (20,000 for Black-headed Gull; 16,000 for Common Gull; 4,500 for Lesser Black-backed Gull; 13,000 for Herring Gull; 4,800 for Great Black-backed Gull; see Rose & Scott 1994) are highlighted in bold. Sites which form parts of existing Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are highlighted in bold. Counts which included estimates of unidentified 'small' and 'large' gulls are presented with minimum (counts of the relevant species only) and maximum possible values (specific count plus the total count of small or large gulls where appropriate). Counts from neighbouring inland sites were only combined if they had been in previous surveys. Counts of parts of estuaries were combined so that estuaries were treated as single sites.

Site	County	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Herring Gull	Great Black-backed Gull
Alt Estuary	Merseyside				5,213 (1.4)	
Audenshaw Reservoirs	Greater Manchester		5,500 (1.3)			
Balderhead Reservoir	Durham		5,800 (1.4)			
Blackpool (Crusader Bank)	Lancashire				4,185 (1.1)	
Blithfield Reservoir	Staffordshire	26,200 (1.6)		1,580 (2.6)		
Brogborough Pit No. 1	Bedfordshire					1,100 (2.6)
Brogborough Pit No. 2	Bedfordshire				4,100 (1.1)	3,000 (7.0)
Calvert Clay Pits	Buckinghamshire			832 (1.4)		
Chew Valley Lake	Avon	36,350 (2.2)	18,710 (4.4)	3,240 (5.3)		
Colt Crag Reservoir	Northumberland		7,400 (1.7)			
Copmere	Staffordshire			720 (1.2)		
Cruden Bay (Slains Castle)	Grampian				4,100 (1.1)	
Derwent Reservoir	Northumberland		4,400 (1.0)			
Draycote Water	Warwickshire	38,500 (2.3)	11,550 (2.7)	2,200 (3.6)		550 (1.3)
Droitwich – Westwood	Hereford & Worcester			1,700 (2.8)		
Farmoor Reservoir	Oxfordshire			2,281 (1,640–2,802) (3.7)		
Filey Bay	Yorkshire				4,240 (1.1)	
Firth of Clyde	Strathclyde	19,000 (1.1)				
Firth of Forth	Central, Fife and Lothian	23,523 (1.4)	5,676 (1.3)		11,977 (3.2)	
Firth of Forth – Longannet	Fife					624 (1.5)
Goultrop Roads	Dyfed			1,029 (1.7)		
Gronant Shore	Clwyd		4,526 (1.1)			

Site	County	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Herring Gull	Great Black-backed Gull
Hallington Reservoir	Northumberland					
Hanningfield Reservoir	Essex		6,700 (1.6)			1,102 (1,098-1,120) (2.6)
Haweswater Reservoir	Cumbria		4,448 (4,421-4,707) (1.0)			
Hilfield Park Reservoir	Hertfordshire	24,939 (1.5)	8,080 (1.9)			
Humber Estuary	Humberside					677 (669-894) (1.6)
Kempston Hardwick	Bedfordshire					650 (1.5)
King George V & William Girling Resrs	Greater London	33,000 (2.0)	4,550 (1.1)	1,010 (1.7)		
Llandegfodd Reservoir	Gwent			2,000 (3.3)		
Llys-y-fran Reservoir	Dyfed			5,000 (8.2)		
Loch Leven	Tayside		9,990 (1,556-12,697) (2.3)			
Loch of Skene	Grampian		12,910 (3.0)			
Looe Bay	Cornwall					750 (1.7)
Lound Gravel Pit	Nottinghamshire					831 (1.9)
Mersey Estuary	Cheshire and Merseyside	27,329 (27,206-27,368) (1.6)			5,321 (2,356-5,489) (1.4)	535 (427-3,560) (1.2)
Mersey Narrows	Merseyside			1,000 (1.6)	5,010 (1.3)	
Morecambe Bay	Cumbria and Lancashire	22,919 (1.4)	7,260 (1.7)	693 (1.1)		
New Swillington Ings	Yorkshire					500 (1.2)
Orwell Estuary	Suffolk	17,536 (16,579-17,779) (1.0)	4,473 (4,230-5,430) (1.0)			
Pagham Harbour	Sussex			909 (715-4,715) (1.5)	10,912 (7,978-11,978) (2.9)	1,231 (358-4,358) (2.9)
Poole Harbour	Dorset	26,407 (1.6)	7,027 (1.6)			
Queen Elizabeth II Resr	Surrey	41,021 (40,201-41,107) (2.4)				438 (246-1,243) (1.0)
Queen Mary Reservoir	Surrey	23,992 (0-26,500) (1.4)				
Ribble Estuary	Lancashire and Merseyside	38,116 (2.3)	10,047 (2.3)		70,127 (18.6)	
Marshside Nature Reserve	Merseyside				10,000 (2.7)	

Table 3. continued

Site	County	Black-headed Gull	Common Gull	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Herring Gull	Great Black-backed Gull
Roadford Reservoir	Devon			1,100 (1.8)		
Romney Sands	Kent		10,000 (2.3)		7,000 (1.9)	3,000 (7.0)
Rutland Water	Leicestershire		8,000 (1.9)			
Scarborough North Bay & Scalby Ness	Yorkshire					608 (1.4)
Severn Estuary	Avon, Gloucestershire, Glamorgan, Gwent and Somerset	109,468 (67,587-126,775) (6.5)	35,671 (18,364-77,552) (8.3)	17,290 (6,649-17,911) (28.4)		
Solway Firth	Cumbria and Dumfries & Galloway	27,871 (21,629-32,344) (1.7)	13,412 (11,513-22,228) (3.1)		16,198 (11,355-20,175) (4.3)	
South Cerney	Gloucestershire			1,200 (2.0)		
South Walney	Cumbria				14,000 (3.7)	
Southampton Water	Hampshire	18,815 (1.1)				
Stewartby Clay Pit	Bedfordshire	23,600 (1.4)			9,950 (2.6)	5,400 (12.5)
Strathclyde Park Loch	Strathclyde				11,300 (3.0)	
Tamar Complex	Cornwall and Devon					478 (1.1)
Thames Estuary	Essex, Greater London and Kent	44,496 (2.6)	8,881 (2.1)		4,962 (4,939-4,971) (1.3)	2,399 (5.6)
Pitsea Landfill Site	Essex					691 (1.6)
Theale Gravel Pits	Berkshire			1,200 (2.0)		
Tophill Low Reservoir	Humberside		9,000 (2.1)			
Ullswater	Cumbria		11,454 (2.7)			
Wash	Lincolnshire and Norfolk	38,982 (33,963-40,255) (2.3)	13,931 (12,658-18,950) (3.2)		7,255 (5,289-7,472) (1.9)	454 (255-2,438) (1.1)
Wheldrake Ings	Yorkshire	29,500 (1.8)				
Willen Lake	Buckinghamshire		5,000 (1.2)			
Willstone Reservoir	Hertfordshire	19,363 (13,329-19,994) (1.2)				
Wraysbury Reservoir	Buckinghamshire			618 (0-1,120) (1.0)		
Ythan Estuary	Grampian		5,700 (1.3)			

Table 4. Sites which held at least 20,000 gulls *Larus* in January 1993. Totals include counts of all gull species. Sites which form parts of existing Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are highlighted in bold. BH = Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, CM = Common Gull *L. canus*, LB = Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, HG = Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and GB = Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*.

Site	County	BH	CM	LB	HG	GB	Total
Severn Estuary	Avon, Gloucestershire, Glamorgan, Gwent and Somerset	109,468	35,671	17,290	2,984	121	165,536
Ribble Estuary	Lancashire and Merseyside	38,116	10,047	64	70,127	111	118,465
Thames Estuary	Essex, Greater London and Kent	44,496	8,881	543	4,962	2,399	61,422
Wash	Lincolnshire and Norfolk	38,982	13,931	58	7,255	454	60,683
Chew Valley Lake	Avon	36,350	18,710	3,240	700	0	59,008
Solway Firth	Cumbria and Dumfries & Galloway	27,871	13,412	171	16,198	397	58,049
Draycote Water	Warwickshire	38,500	11,550	2,200	2,200	550	55,001
Queen Elizabeth II Reservoir	Surrey	41,021	1,912	537	1,433	438	45,340
Firth of Forth	Central, Fife and Lothian	23,523	5,676	53	11,977	128	41,360
King George V & William Girling Reservoirs	Greater London	33,000	4,550	1,010	2,350	90	41,000
Stewartby Clay Pit	Bedfordshire	23,600	890	100	9,950	5,400	39,940
Mersey Estuary	Cheshire and Merseyside	27,329	1,859	355	5,321	535	35,443
Morecambe Bay	Cumbria and Lancashire	22,919	7,260	693	3,292	227	34,462
Poole Harbour	Dorset	26,407	7,027	204	510	145	34,297
Wheldrake Ings	Yorkshire	29,500	3,600	3	184	271	33,559
Pagham Harbour	Sussex	15,661	2,497	909	10,912	1,231	31,210
Romney Sands	Kent	10,000	10,000	1	7,000	3,000	30,504
Blithfield Reservoir	Staffordshire	26,200	40	1,580	740	142	28,705
Hilfield Park Reservoir	Hertfordshire	24,939	3,197	42	9	8	28,195
Queen Mary Reservoir	Surrey	23,992	2,508	356	856	289	28,000
Strathclyde Park Loch	Strathclyde	11,500	850	53	11,300	6	23,710
Rutland Water	Leicestershire	14,500	8,000	30	160	173	22,863
Hanningfield Reservoir	Essex	14,934	4,448	163	1,863	1,102	22,512
Audenshaw Reservoirs	Greater Manchester	16,500	5,500	275	65	32	22,373
Firth of Clyde	Strathclyde	19,000	3,000	0	200	0	22,200
Orwell Estuary	Suffolk	17,536	4,473	1	120	31	22,161
Willen Lake	Buckinghamshire	14,000	5,000	100	1,700	200	21,001
Firth of Forth - Longannet Lagoons	Fife	94	0	12	19,700	624	20,432
Eccup Reservoir	Yorkshire	16,000	4,000	0	300	64	20,364
Wilstone Reservoir	Hertfordshire	19,363	846	22	3	2	20,236

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Table 3 shows which sites in Great Britain surpassed the 1% threshold levels for one or more of the five species of gulls, and which, in the absence of more complete population estimates, could be considered as nationally important. This table also highlights counts which exceeded thresholds for international importance (using data published at the time of the survey, i.e. in Rose & Scott 1994, rather than revised figures in Wetlands International 2002). The most important site was the Severn Estuary which, largely due to the roost at Frampton & Waveridge Sands, held an estimated 7% of the minimum British population of Black-headed Gulls, 8% of Common Gulls and 28% of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Sites which held at least 20,000 gulls are listed in table 4.

Comparison with earlier surveys – minimum population estimates

Comparative minimum population estimates for inland and coastal sites in England, Scotland and Wales, for those years in which they were covered, are shown in tables 5 and 6 respectively.

Both the total number of gulls counted at inland sites in England and the number of sites surveyed have increased over the 40-year period (fig. 3). Rates of increase have varied between

species. The numbers of Black-headed Gulls counted increased by 244% between 1953 and 1993, those of Common Gulls by 472%, those of Great Black-backed Gulls by 732% and those of Lesser Black-backed Gulls by 16,402%. The numbers of Herring Gulls counted increased overall by 81% between 1953 and 1993, though they declined greatly between 1973 and 1983.

These observed increases can be explained, to some extent, by the apparent improvement in coverage between 1953 and 1993 – the number of sites surveyed inland in England rose from 58 to 202 over this period. This, in turn, may have been partly due to the creation of new reservoirs and gravel-pits, while increasing numbers of gulls would have led to more inland sites being occupied (and thus surveyed). In addition, as mentioned earlier, there is only limited information about sites covered in earlier surveys which held no gulls, and thus actual coverage in those surveys may have been underestimated. Coupled with the fact that breeding populations of gulls have also grown during the study period, it would seem that the observed increases in winter gull numbers are real, even though the rates of change in their numbers should be treated with caution.

The surveys in 1983 and 1993 are perhaps most comparable, as a similar number of sites were covered in each (at least in Great Britain). Comparison of tables 5 and 6 shows that in

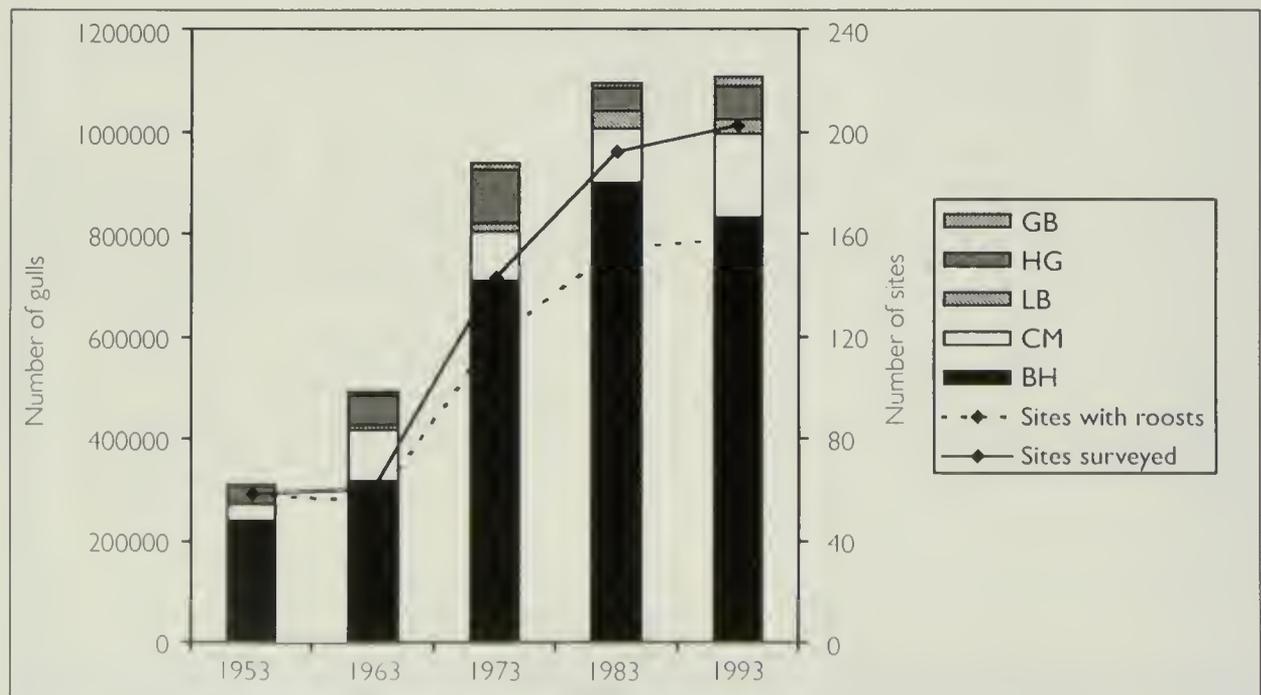


Fig. 3. Numbers of gulls *Larus* counted at inland sites in England during the 1953, 1963, 1973, 1983 and 1993 Winter Gull Roost Surveys, in relation to the number of sites known to have been surveyed and the number of these with roosts.

Table 5. Minimum population estimates of wintering gulls *Larus* at inland sites in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in 1953, 1963, 1973, 1983 and 1993.

	1953	1963	1973	1983	1993
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>					
England	241,520	316,667	707,696	898,654	830,730
Wales	-	-	10,414	15,213	16,993
Scotland	-	-	-	40,066	42,610
Northern Ireland	-	-	-	1,301	1,150
Common Gull <i>L. canus</i>					
England	28,899	100,691	95,998	106,628	165,389
Wales	-	-	2,968	47	5,718
Scotland	-	-	-	57,883	39,045
Northern Ireland	-	-	-	0	0
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>L. fuscus</i>					
England	165	6,960	15,823	36,154	27,228
Wales	-	-	249	1,582	7,264
Scotland	-	-	-	18	307
Northern Ireland	-	-	-	0	0
Herring Gull <i>L. argentatus</i>					
England	35,333	58,157	104,114	42,875	63,780
Wales	-	-	4,425	3,877	2,112
Scotland	-	-	-	32,538	39,703
Northern Ireland	-	-	-	0	247
Great Black-backed Gull <i>L. marinus</i>					
England	2,532	7,416	14,764	9,442	21,077
Wales	-	-	11	60	14
Scotland	-	-	-	1,597	1,189
Northern Ireland	-	-	-	50	3

Table 6. Minimum population estimates of wintering gulls *Larus* at coastal sites in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in 1983 and 1993.

	1983	1993
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>		
England	612,966	610,387
Wales	101,227	68,736
Scotland	252,113	112,929
Northern Ireland	5,640	14,262
Common Gull <i>L. canus</i>		
England	179,057	157,607
Wales	23,352	20,875
Scotland	133,559	40,697
Northern Ireland	2,650	1,596
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>L. fuscus</i>		
England	18,251	21,664
Wales	1,487	4,222
Scotland	305	145
Northern Ireland	0	0
Herring Gull <i>L. argentatus</i>		
England	79,076	192,846
Wales	31,220	27,065
Scotland	95,746	51,269
Northern Ireland	79	1,726
Great Black-backed Gull <i>L. marinus</i>		
England	21,120	17,838
Wales	630	1,209
Scotland	6,495	1,781
Northern Ireland	64	45

England, between 1983 and 1993, Black-headed Gull numbers declined slightly, at both inland and coastal sites, while overall numbers of Common and Herring Gulls increased, the latter considerably. Lesser Black-backed Gulls declined at inland sites but increased at coastal sites; conversely, Great Black-backed Gulls increased at inland sites but declined on the coast. In Wales, numbers of Black-headed and Common Gulls increased at inland sites, but decreased on the coast. Herring Gulls declined, to some extent, both inland and on the coast, while Lesser Black-backed Gulls increased. Great Black-backed Gulls increased at coastal sites. In Scotland, there have been increases in the numbers of Black-headed, Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls counted at inland sites, but declines in the numbers of Common and Great Black-backed Gulls. Comparison of the numbers counted at coastal sites in 1983 and 1993 in Scotland has not been attempted owing to differences in the extent of coverage in the two surveys. In Northern Ireland, despite limited coverage, it appears that there have been overall increases in Black-headed and Herring Gulls, but decreasing numbers of Common Gulls.

Comparison with earlier surveys – counts at individual sites

Figs 4-8 show how numbers of gulls have changed at those English roosts which have been counted in every survey. Black-headed Gull numbers increased in all regions between 1953 and 1993 (fig. 4), most notably at the Frampton & Waveridge Sands roost, although counts in Southeast England and the Midlands peaked in the 1970s-80s and have declined since. Common Gulls have increased moderately in Northern England and greatly at the Frampton & Waveridge Sands roost since 1953, but there has been a large decline at Midlands'

roosts since 1983, and considerable fluctuation in Southeast England (fig. 5). In the 1950s, Lesser Black-backed Gulls were relatively uncommon in winter and it was not until 1983 that the growth in their wintering numbers became really evident. Again, the greatest increase has been at the Frampton & Waveridge Sands roost, while, like Black-headed Gull, numbers also increased in the Midlands and Southeast England between 1953 and 1983, but have since fallen (fig. 6). Numbers at roosts in Northern England have remained small, however. Herring Gulls have decreased in Southeast England and, since 1973, in the Mid-

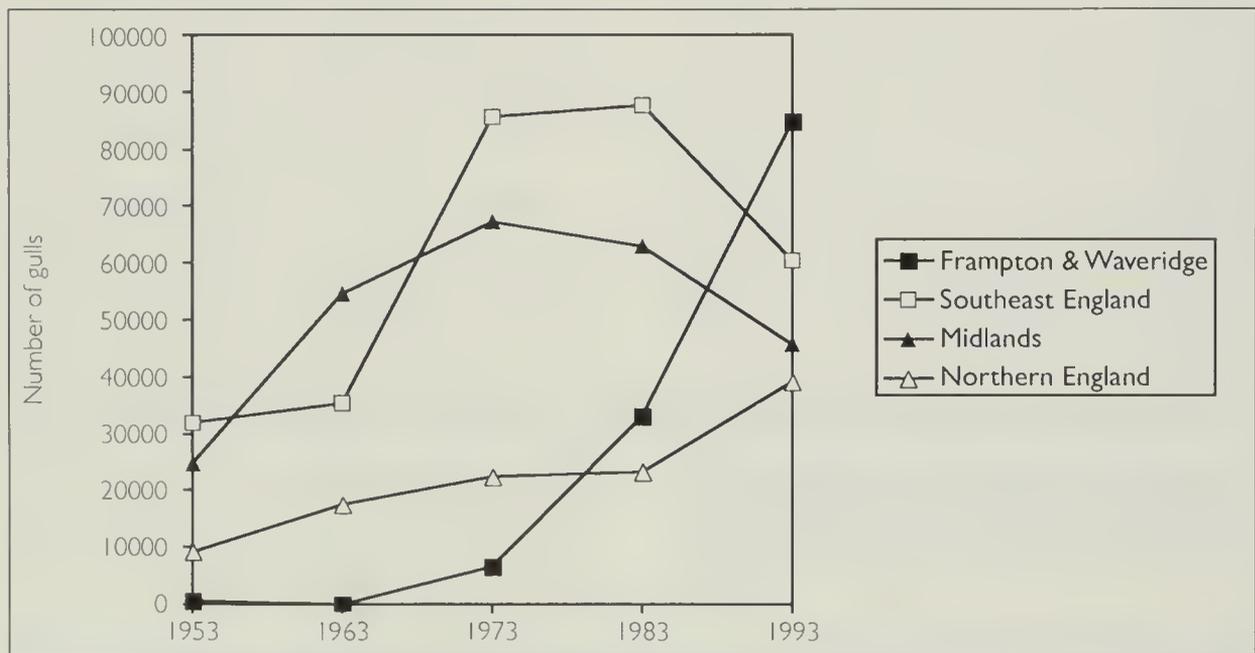


Fig. 4. Numbers of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* at roosts surveyed in 1953, 1963, 1973, 1983 and 1993.

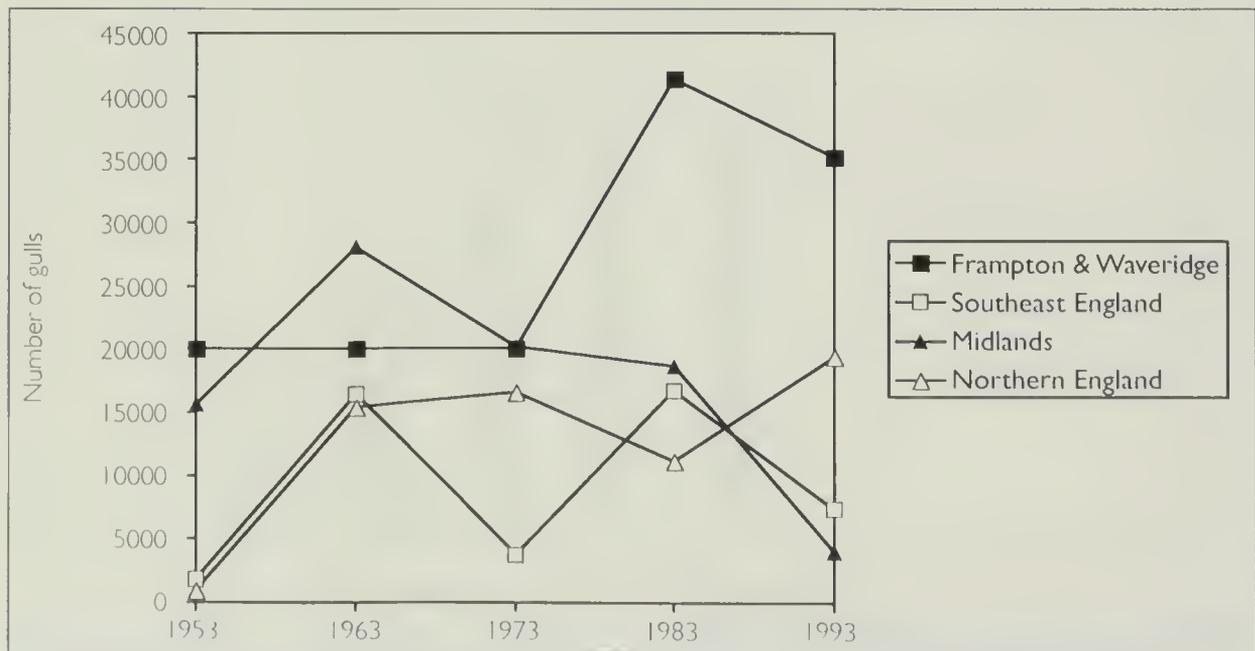


Fig. 5. Numbers of Common Gulls *Larus canus* at roosts surveyed in 1953, 1963, 1973, 1983 and 1993.

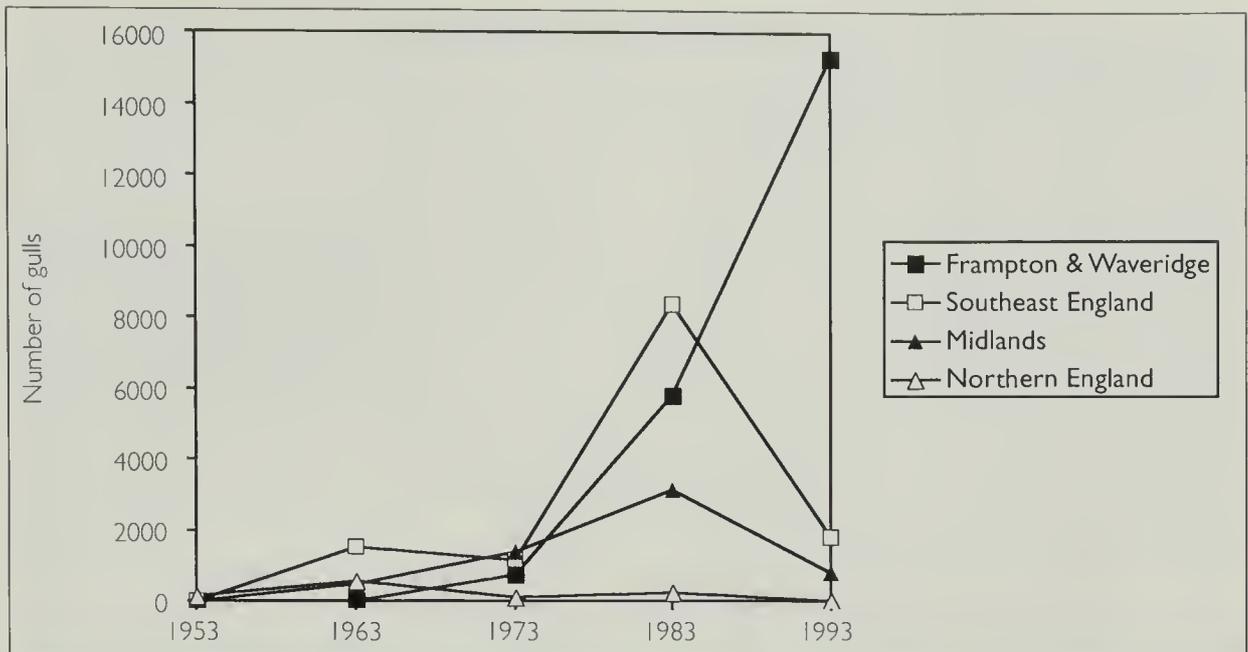


Fig. 6. Numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* at roosts surveyed in 1953, 1963, 1973, 1983 and 1993.

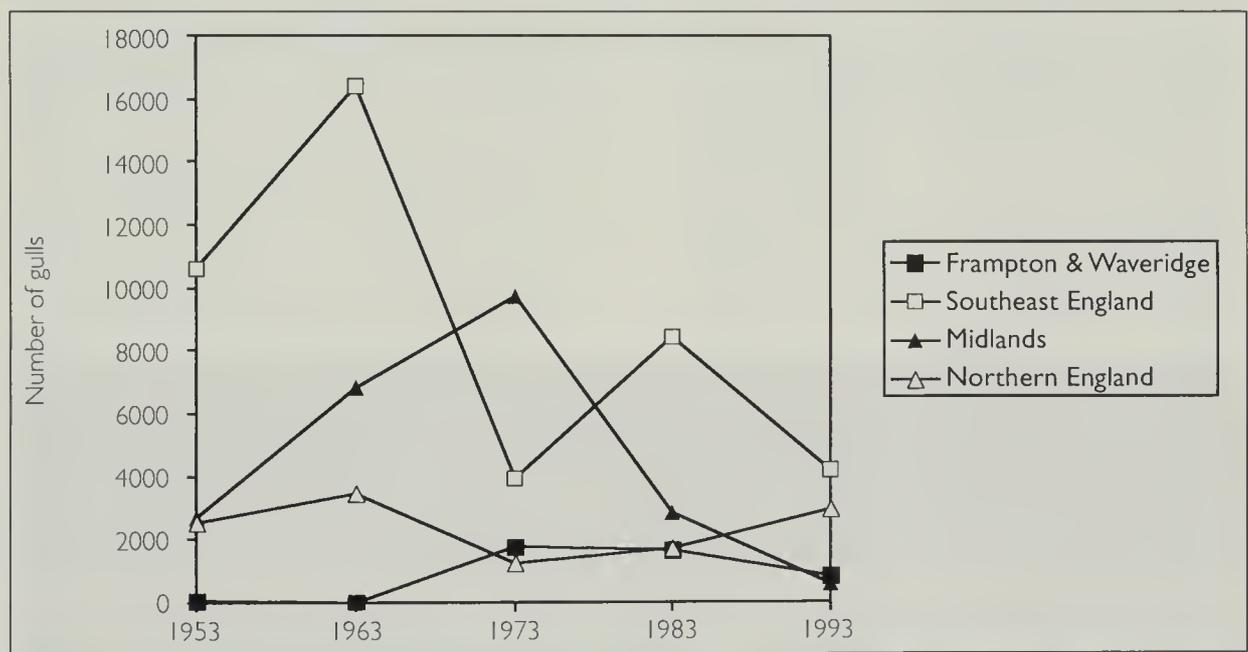


Fig. 7. Numbers of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* at roosts surveyed in 1953, 1963, 1973, 1983 and 1993.

lands also (fig. 7). Great Black-backed Gulls increased dramatically in Southeast England between 1953 and 1963 but have since declined, whereas numbers have risen overall in Northern England (fig. 8).

Discussion

Population estimates

The total numbers of the five main species of gulls recorded in Great Britain during the 1993 survey should be treated as minimum population estimates only, for three reasons. Firstly, it is clear that coverage, particularly of coastal

areas in Scotland, was incomplete. Even at inland sites in England, only 51% of sites covered previously were looked at in 1993, although this may have been due in part to the loss of some wetland sites, such as sewage farms. Comparison of sites in England covered in the 1983 and 1993 surveys suggests, however, that few large roosts were overlooked in 1993, and the same may be true elsewhere. Secondly, it is possible that the size of some roosts may have been underestimated, particularly at sites where some flight lines were difficult to survey or if many birds arrived at roosts after dark

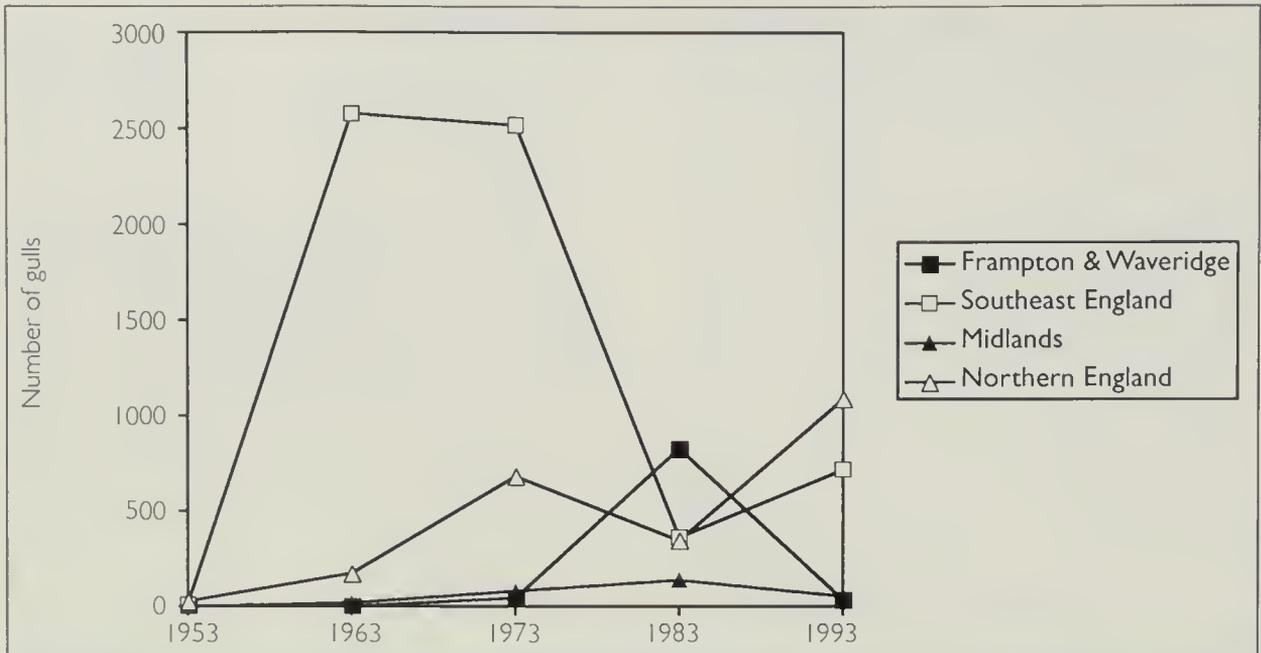


Fig. 8. Numbers of Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus* at roosts surveyed in 1953, 1963, 1973, 1983 and 1993.

(although see Shedden 1983, Austin *et al.* 2003). Finally, the population estimates given here exclude gulls which may have roosted offshore, not visible from land but still within UK Territorial Waters (i.e. 12 nautical miles from shore). Black-headed Gulls are most often associated with coastal waters when inland feeding sites are frozen or covered with snow (Lack 1986) and few are seen at sea in winter (Tasker *et al.*

1987; Webb *et al.* 1990; Stone *et al.* 1995). Concentrations of Common Gulls may be found feeding offshore in winter in the southern North Sea (Tasker *et al.* 1987; Skov *et al.* 1995) and Irish Sea (Webb *et al.* 1990), though many of these birds roost on estuaries (Vernon & Walsh 1966; Tasker *et al.* 1987). Concentrations of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls are also found off-

Dawn Balmer



271. Gulls (predominantly Black-headed *Larus ridibundus* and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*) feeding on fields sprayed with chicken waste from a local factory, East Harling, Norfolk, February 2003. The by-products of intensive modern farming methods constitute another important new food source which gulls have exploited successfully.

shore in winter, the first species notably in the Irish Sea, the last two being more widely distributed (Tasker *et al.* 1987; Webb *et al.* 1990; Skov *et al.* 1995; Stone *et al.* 1995). These species are, however, most abundant in waters relatively close to land. Previous studies have found that Herring Gulls are the least maritime of the three, often preferring to feed at rubbish tips, and that Lesser Black-backed Gulls show a greater tendency than the other two to associate with fishing boats (Furness *et al.* 1992; Noordhuis & Spaans 1992). The evidence suggests, therefore, that the numbers of these gulls roosting at distance offshore may be relatively limited.

There is consequently some uncertainty about the degree to which the totals underestimate the actual numbers of gulls that wintered in the UK in January 1993. The figures do, however, provide a valuable picture of the way in which wintering gull numbers have changed since the first survey in 1953, and also provide a measure by which important sites can be identified.

Population change and origins of wintering birds

The patterns of change in gull numbers in the UK and much of western Europe since 1900 have been attributed to reduced persecution (hunting and egg-collecting) and the species' ability to take advantage of an increase in food

availability from rubbish tips, waste water outfalls, outdoor pig farms and commercial fishery wastes (Spaans 1971; Lloyd *et al.* 1991). The increased use of rubbish tips and farmland for feeding, and the increased availability of inland roost sites (in the form of gravel-pits and water reservoirs), have enabled some species to become considerably more widespread away from the coast. Black-headed and, notably, Herring Gulls have become particularly associated with rubbish tips (Monaghan 1980; Greig *et al.* 1983, 1985; Horton *et al.* 1984). Lesser Black-backed Gulls may have benefited from fishery wastes (Bergman 1982; Furness *et al.* 1992; Noordhuis & Spaans 1992) and now winter farther north than earlier in the twentieth century (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

Horton *et al.* (1984) suggested that there had been a gradual increase in the use of Britain as a wintering area by foreign Black-headed Gulls during the twentieth century. Many winter in the southeast, although those from west European populations have a more southerly distribution than those from Scandinavia and the Baltic. Icelandic birds also occur in the north and west of Britain in winter. Although most British and Irish Black-headed Gulls remain throughout the winter, MacKinnon & Coulson (1987) suggested that 71% of Black-headed Gulls wintering in England and Wales came from continental Europe. British Common Gulls are partial migrants, although most stay



Dawn Balmner

272. Gulls *Larus* feeding at Blackborough End tip, Norfolk, February 2003. Rubbish tips seething with gulls are now a familiar sight in the British countryside.

in the country in the winter (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Britain & Ireland is also an important wintering area for birds from elsewhere in Europe, notably Scandinavia, the Baltic and Russia. Common Gulls from northern Norway tend to winter farther north in Britain than those from Denmark and the Baltic (Wernham *et al.* 2002).

The greater numbers of wintering Lesser Black-backed Gulls probably reflect a decreasing migratory tendency of the British and Irish breeding population (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Britain, in particular the southwest, also supports birds of the races *intermedius* and *graellsii* from Iceland, the Faeroes, Scandinavia and other west European breeding grounds in winter. Given the marked decline of the nominate race *fuscus* in Fennoscandia, it is uncertain whether birds of this race still occur in Britain (Strann & Vader 1992; Wernham *et al.* 2002). Herring Gulls from British colonies move less far between seasons and Irish birds are even more sedentary (Wernham *et al.* 2002). In addition, many nominate *argentatus* Herring Gulls from Scandinavia winter on eastern coasts of Britain (Stanley *et al.* 1981; Coulson *et al.* 1984b), although there are surprisingly few cross-country movements between the east and west coasts (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Great Black-backed Gulls from British colonies are also mainly sedentary and thus predominate in the west in winter (Harris 1962). A large proportion of east-coast birds originate from Norway and Russia (Coulson *et al.* 1984a).

The increase in wintering gulls up to the 1970s led to greater numbers at individual roosts and more sites being occupied (although the latter is difficult to quantify). In the London area, changes in gull numbers were recorded during the 1960s by Sage (1970), who compared counts in December 1968 and January 1969 with those made in December 1963 as part of the national Winter Gull Roost Survey (Sage 1964). He found that Black-headed Gull numbers had risen from 165,050 to 192,212 (i.e. by 16%) in this five-year period, Common Gulls from 20,050 to 31,104 (55%), Lesser Black-backed Gulls from 2,340 to 6,520 (179%) and Herring Gulls from 26,700 to 30,044 (13%), while Great Black-backed Gulls had decreased from 6,325 to 5,865 (7%). The numbers of sites occupied by the first four species were similar, so the figures therefore reflect increases at the site level.

Although there has been an absolute increase in the numbers of wintering gulls recorded in the UK between 1953 and 1993, the rate of increase has slowed since 1973. There have also been considerable variations in this pattern, between both species and regions, though interpretation is difficult owing to differences in coverage. Consequently, some apparent changes may be partly due to redistribution, perhaps reflecting regional differences in feeding opportunities over time. The numbers of Herring Gulls counted at inland sites in England fell dramatically between 1973 and 1983, perhaps owing to control of numbers at some breeding colonies (Coulson 1991; Lloyd *et al.* 1991), though between 1983 and 1993 numbers rose once again, perhaps because such controls were relaxed. Lesser Black-backed Gull has shown the greatest overall increase in numbers, having been relatively scarce in 1953. The species is, however, still relatively uncommon in Scotland in winter, and since 1983 its numbers have decreased at inland sites in England. The decline of some breeding populations has been linked with food shortages as a result of over-fishing (Hiom *et al.* 1991; Strann & Vader 1992; Gibbons *et al.* 1993). In spite of an overall increase since 1953, the numbers of Black-headed Gulls counted have decreased at coastal sites since 1983 and evidence from inland sites in Southeast England and the Midlands covered in every survey suggests that numbers have declined here too. In contrast, while recorded numbers of Common and Great Black-backed Gulls have continued to increase inland in England – notably at sites in northern England – their numbers have fallen sharply in Scotland since 1983, suggesting a possible change in these species' distributions.

Identification of important sites

Table 3 indicates that 22 sites in Great Britain could be deemed nationally important for Black-headed Gull, 28 for Common Gull, 19 for Lesser Black-backed Gull, 19 for Herring Gull and 20 for Great Black-backed Gull, as they all held 1% or more of the estimated minimum wintering populations of the species when surveyed in January 1993. It is also clear that Great Britain is of considerable international importance for wintering gulls. Using the thresholds published in Rose & Scott (1994), 18 of these sites could be deemed internationally important for Black-headed Gull, two for Common Gull,



Robin Chittenden

273. Black-headed *Larus ridibundus* and Common Gulls *L. canus* in loose, pre-roost gathering, Norwich, Norfolk, January 1997. Both these species have increased significantly at inland sites in England since the first Winter Gull Roost Survey, in 1953 (see table 5).

two for Lesser Black-backed Gull, four for Herring Gull and one for Great Black-backed Gull. These sites may, therefore, be worthy of further assessment for their suitability for statutory designation (note that the thresholds have changed recently, following the publication of new Waterbird Population Estimates: Wetlands International 2002).

The guidelines for selection of biological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in Great Britain (NCC 1989) indicate that an area may be selected for notification as a SSSI if it regularly supports 1% or more of the British population of a species, in either the breeding or non-breeding season. The selection guidelines for Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (JNCC 1999) and the criteria for selecting Ramsar sites (Ramsar Convention Bureau 1988) allow for the selection of areas which 'regularly support internationally important numbers of regularly occurring migratory species in any season and also areas that regularly support assemblages of more than 20,000 individual waterbirds or seabirds in any season' (JNCC 1999). The sites listed in table 4 are those which supported 20,000 or more wintering gulls in 1993. Other sites may also qualify for SPA designation if

numbers of gulls are considered together with those of other waterbird species. At present, no sites are designated as SPAs because of the numbers of wintering gulls that they hold (Stroud *et al.* 2001), even though all of the five key species in this paper are listed as 'migratory' in the EC Birds Directive. Nonetheless, a number of the sites listed in tables 3 and 4 form parts of existing SPAs, designated for their importance for other bird species (as these tables highlight).

There are, however, a number of factors which should be taken into account when assessing the importance of individual sites. Since the national population estimates calculated for the 1993 survey are only minima, some sites may not have held 1% of the actual British wintering populations of the relevant species. Furthermore, it is likely that some important sites will have been missed by the survey. Sites where estimates were calculated from counts of unidentified 'small' or 'large' gulls would also need to be resurveyed to gather more accurate data on the numbers of individual species. Finally, before qualifying the status of these roost sites, it would be important to know whether the single counts used in the survey are

representative of numbers over a longer period, i.e. whether the sites 'regularly' support such numbers. Clearly, there have been considerable changes in gull numbers and distributions between 1953 and 1993, and this dynamic situation has probably been driven in part by the species' catholic diets and ability to adapt to different feeding opportunities. Even within a winter, the numbers of gulls using individual roosts may change dramatically as birds move around to exploit new food sources or to avoid hard weather. It is also likely that some sites in the UK act as a refuge for gulls from the Continent during cold weather, and such sites may qualify for SPA status. Counts of gulls at King George V & William Girling Reservoirs (Meadows 1961) and Chelford Farmwood Pool in Cheshire (Barber & Barber 1986) have shown that not only are there clear seasonal patterns in the abundance of gulls – Lesser Black-backed Gull numbers, for example, peak in the autumn – but that the peaks in gull numbers at individual sites may be brief. Thus, while the single co-ordinated counts of the Winter Gull Roost Surveys may provide estimates of the national populations present at one point in time, it may be necessary to survey individual sites repeatedly to assess properly whether they are suitable for statutory designation.

The current 1% threshold values used for identifying sites of national importance for gulls are 19,000 for Black-headed Gull, 9,000 for Common Gull, 500 for Lesser Black-backed Gull, 4,500 for Herring Gull and 400 for Great Black-backed Gull (see Musgrove *et al.* 2001). These figures should be updated after the next Winter Gull Roost Survey, planned to cover three winters from 2003/04. That survey should provide, for the first time, estimates of the total (rather than minimum) populations of each of the five species, through a combined approach of censusing known roost sites and sampling elsewhere, and thus provide a basis for designating sites for their gull populations.

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Appendix 1. Estimated numbers of gulls in the 1993 Winter Gull Roost Survey: inland sites.

BH = Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, CM = Common Gull *L. canus*, LB = Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, HG = Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and GB = Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*. Region and county definitions follow those used by Bowes *et al.* (1984). Note that totals in this appendix may not match those in table 5 precisely, owing to rounding errors.

	BH	CM	LB	HG	GB	Others	TOTAL
Southwest England							
Avon	36,350	18,710	3,240	700	0	8	59,008
Cornwall	2,000	8	355	25	3	1	2,392
Devon	2,324	35	1,107	110	36	0	3,612
Dorset	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	3,328	550	35	129	0	0	4,042
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	44,002	19,303	4,737	964	39	9	69,054
Southeast England							
Berkshire	22,035	1,508	1,630	1,134	399	0	26,706
Essex	35,737	7,336	495	4,202	1,951	4	49,725
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	44,302	4,043	64	12	10	0	48,431
Kent	1,030	11	0	1	0	0	1,042
London	43,420	4,920	1,479	3,360	429	3	53,611
Surrey	66,509	4,474	912	2,308	926	0	75,129
Sussex	600	40	2	1	0	0	643
TOTAL	213,633	22,332	4,582	11,018	3,715	7	255,287
East Anglia							
Bedfordshire	34,200	1,780	190	17,400	10,150	0	63,720
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Norfolk	100	10	0	0	0	0	110
Suffolk	18,973	312	222	471	150	0	20,128
TOTAL	53,273	2,102	412	17,871	10,300	0	83,958
Midlands							
Buckinghamshire	29,990	6,572	1,565	2,532	563	2	41,224
Cheshire	50,890	1,052	1,107	767	146	1	53,963
Derbyshire	30,538	925	609	1,234	328	3	33,637
Gloucestershire	5,625	210	1,202	52	0	0	7,089
Hereford & Worcester	4,900	5	1,709	85	9	2	6,710
Leicestershire	53,131	10,548	695	698	226	1	65,299

Wintering gulls in the UK

Northamptonshire	10,900	1,455	146	138	18	0	12,657
Nottinghamshire	14,264	963	3	246	929	0	16,405
Oxfordshire	22,615	89	2,826	687	148	2	26,367
Shropshire	10,590	1,207	1,196	424	74	0	13,491
Staffordshire	55,715	177	3,399	1,355	301	7	60,954
Warwickshire	38,500	11,550	2,200	2,200	550	1	55,001
West Midlands	1,300	0	200	0	0	0	1,500
TOTAL	328,958	34,753	16,857	10,418	3,292	19	394,297
North England							
Cleveland	2,750	40	0	295	40	0	3,125
Cumbria	11,989	24,343	14	238	14	1	36,599
Durham	1,700	5,800	0	0	4	0	7,504
Greater Manchester	23,240	5,886	288	93	42	1	29,550
Humberside	4,168	10,437	0	645	727	0	15,977
Lancashire	21,652	4,336	157	348	71	0	26,564
Merseyside	5,469	2,031	136	10,067	118	0	17,821
Northumberland	9,581	18,550	7	2,276	285	0	30,699
Tyne & Wear	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yorkshire	110,314	15,477	40	9,545	2,431	2	137,809
TOTAL	190,863	86,900	642	23,507	3,732	4	305,648
ENGLAND TOTAL	830,729	165,390	27,230	63,778	21,078	39	1,108,244
WALES							
Clwyd	1,318	2,550	0	140	0	0	4,008
Dyfed	2,774	126	5,000	150	8	0	8,058
Glamorgan	1,710	41	77	1,020	3	1	2,852
Gwent	10,000	3,000	2,000	800	3	0	15,803
Gwynedd	11	0	2	0	0	0	13
Powys	1,180	1	185	2	0	0	1,368
TOTAL	16,993	5,718	7,264	2,112	14	1	32,102
South Scotland							
Borders	6,911	8,011	0	939	239	1	16,101
Dumfries & Galloway	3,817	412	0	19	0	0	4,248
Lothian	4,716	4,637	20	1,314	98	0	10,785
Strathclyde	19,400	1,791	274	15,153	14	1	36,633
TOTAL	34,844	14,851	294	17,425	351	2	67,767
East Scotland							
Central	406	67	1	606	15	0	1,095
Fife	282	434	12	19,832	672	2	21,234
Grampian	1,600	12,910	0	890	48	5	15,453
Tayside	5,478	10,783	0	950	103	0	17,314
TOTAL	7,766	24,194	13	22,278	838	7	55,096
North Scotland							
Highland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SCOTLAND TOTAL	42,610	39,045	307	39,703	1,189	9	122,863
NORTHERN IRELAND							
Antrim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Down	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fermanagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Londonderry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tyrone	1,150	0	0	247	3	0	1,400
TOTAL	1,150	0	0	247	3	0	1,400
ISLE OF MAN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CHANNEL ISLANDS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Wintering gulls in the UK

Appendix 2. Estimated numbers of gulls in the 1993 Winter Gull Roost Survey: coastal sites.

BH = Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, CM = Common Gull *L. canus*, LB = Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, HG = Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and GB = Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*. Region and county definitions follow those used by Bowes *et al.* (1984). Note that totals in this appendix may not match those in table 6 precisely, owing to rounding errors.

	BH	CM	LB	HG	GB	Others	TOTAL
Southwest England							
Avon	7,284	21	73	288	13	0	7,679
Cornwall	20,272	1,438	1,003	7,654	944	676	31,987
Devon	33,045	1,164	152	8,171	1,153	19	43,704
Dorset	44,757	12,624	254	3,529	889	16	62,069
Somerset	4,625	133	35	377	22	2	5,194
TOTAL	109,983	15,380	1,517	20,019	3,021	713	150,633
Southeast England							
Essex	37,776	8,833	587	5,365	2,496	140	55,197
Hampshire	44,900	5,096	206	1,113	713	2	52,030
Isle of Wight	2,927	509	4	222	9	4	3,675
Kent	32,862	14,701	102	10,903	3,534	606	62,708
London	5,000	500	20	150	50	0	5,720
Sussex	52,196	7,294	1,073	12,441	2,181	63	75,248
TOTAL	175,661	36,933	1,992	30,194	8,983	815	254,578
East Anglia							
Lincolnshire	23,137	4,260	55	6,074	423	4	33,953
Norfolk	27,545	12,921	3	1,915	100	0	42,484
Suffolk	40,134	5,853	36	1,866	474	118	48,481
TOTAL	90,816	23,034	94	9,855	997	122	124,918
Midlands							
Cheshire	643	2	39	11	7	0	702
Gloucestershire	84,929	35,360	15,330	805	39	0	136,463
TOTAL	85,572	35,362	15,369	816	46	0	137,165
North England							
Cleveland	10,724	3,759	3	3,720	654	6	18,866
Cumbria	22,868	7,581	305	24,942	520	1	56,217
Durham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Humberside	4,929	6,822	199	1,602	842	0	14,394
Lancashire	16,184	5,116	663	6,168	145	70	28,346
Merseyside	77,985	15,316	1,512	86,006	843	127	181,789
Northumberland	8,387	3,451	11	1,912	409	17	14,187
Tyne & Wear	650	1,500	1	28	0	1	2,180
Yorkshire	6,627	3,353	0	7,584	1,380	2	18,946
TOTAL	148,354	46,898	2,694	131,962	4,793	224	334,925
ENGLAND TOTAL	610,386	157,607	21,666	192,846	17,840	1,874	1,002,219
WALES							
Clwyd	10,130	7,711	101	1,963	507	1	20,416
Dyfed	24,758	8,420	1,981	13,504	387	13	49,063
Glamorgan	23,979	1,149	1,932	4,569	112	1	31,742
Gwent	855	0	33	231	20	0	1,139
Gwynedd	9,014	3,592	176	6,798	182	2	19,764
TOTAL	68,736	20,875	4,223	27,065	1,208	17	122,124
South Scotland							
Borders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dumfries & Galloway	23,807	10,667	55	9,349	249	0	44,127
Lothian	21,342	4,615	18	7,626	78	0	33,679
Strathclyde	26,916	5,785	1	8,425	275	3	41,405
TOTAL	72,065	21,067	74	25,400	602	3	119,211

East Scotland							
Central	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	12,506	4,310	35	7,386	161	3	24,401
Grampian	20,072	10,980	36	15,474	804	28	47,394
Tayside	7,836	2,310	0	1,525	103	85	11,859
TOTAL	40,414	17,600	71	24,385	1,068	116	83,654
North Scotland							
Highland	450	2,000	0	1,454	59	2	3,965
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Isles	0	30	0	31	52	1	114
TOTAL	450	2,030	0	1,485	111	3	4,079
SCOTLAND TOTAL	112,929	40,697	145	51,270	1,781	122	206,944
NORTHERN IRELAND							
Antrim	0	14	0	180	19	0	213
Down	11,062	1,074	0	1,046	17	0	13,199
Londonderry	3,200	508	0	500	9	1	4,218
TOTAL	14,262	1,596	0	1,726	45	1	17,630
ISLE OF MAN	1,281	16	0	2,283	273	0	3,853
CHANNEL ISLANDS	4,128	17	32	3,901	396	3	8,477

Announcement

The 2003/04 Winter Gull Roost Survey (WinGS)



As the preceding paper describes, the BTO has organised surveys of winter gull roosts each decade from 1953 to 1993. The sixth-Winter Gull Roost Survey (WinGS) will cover three winters from 2003/04 to 2005/06. Previous surveys have concentrated on inland sites, with coastal sites also being covered in the 1983 and 1993 surveys, but we hope that improved methodology during the forthcoming survey will allow us to produce the first total winter gull population estimate for the UK. To achieve this, all key inland and coastal sites will be targeted in January 2004. In addition, the number of gulls roosting inland, but away from key sites, will be estimated from a random sample of 600 tetrads (2 km x 2 km) visited over the forthcoming three winters. A pilot survey undertaken earlier this year confirmed that substantial numbers of gulls also roost offshore in

small groups, away from known key sites. Thus, we are also intending to cover 1,200 short (1-2 km) stretches of coastline around the UK in 2004/05 and 2005/06.

The populations of gulls in the UK vary considerably during any one winter. For example, numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls peak in September/October as birds move south on passage, while numbers of Black-headed, Common, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls tend to peak in midwinter or early spring. Consequently, volunteers will be encouraged to undertake additional counts at the key sites in any month between September 2003 and March 2004, although the January count will be of highest priority.

If you would like to take part in the survey, please contact your BTO Regional Representative or Mike Armitage/Steve Holloway at: BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU; tel. (01842) 750050; e-mail: mike.armitage@bto.org or steve.holloway@bto.org

Note

A 'post-Irish' review of 'firsts' for Britain

Traditionally, the BOU Records Committee (BOURC) has maintained a list of the birds recorded from the zoogeographic region of Britain & Ireland. This arrangement continued until January 1999, following a request by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, who for many years now have assessed the Irish records, that the BOURC should no longer maintain the Irish records on a combined list. Consequently, BOURC now maintains a list for Britain only (BOURC 1999), and has subsequently undertaken a detailed review of all the records which may have been affected by this change – by becoming 'firsts' for Britain in the absence of earlier Irish records. This review is now largely complete and the BOURC has been able to disaggregate the British and Irish Lists. Although this has resulted in a small number of species not making it onto the new British List, since they have only ever been recorded in Ireland (including Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans* – although recent claims of this species in Britain are currently being considered by BBRC – and Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca*), in most cases, an Irish 'first' has been followed by a subsequent British record (which now becomes the first for Britain). In the case of American Coot *Fulica americana*, Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*, Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* and Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*, the first British record was assessed by BOURC during or shortly after this review, and details of these records have been published recently.

The process of assessment was made easier by the fact that most records we considered were extremely well documented, even when photographs were not included. Some records, such as that of the American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* on Fair Isle, Shetland (see below), included details of characters not known at the time to be diagnostic. A few of the species under review have subsequently become more regular vagrants, while others have remained great rarities. In cases where the BOURC had doubts about the level of detail or the certainty of an identification, a record was referred back to the BBRC for its assessment. If BBRC subse-

quently judged that an identification was no longer safe, based on the details available, then BOURC would consider the next record in chronological order, and so on. For a bird to be accepted onto the British List, it needs to be accepted by nine out of ten BBRC members and all ten BOURC members.

There are several other species which might, at first, appear to be missing from this review, namely Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*, Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*, Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* and Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*. The relevant records have, however, for various reasons, already been examined. In the case of Sandhill Crane, the likelihood of a change in category, from B to A, meant that BOURC had previously considered, and accepted, the record of one on Fair Isle on 26th-27th April 1981 (Riddiford 1983; the only previous record was of a bird shot in Co. Cork on 14th September 1905). In the case of Pallid Swift, BOURC had originally accepted the individual seen on 13th-21st May 1978 at Stodmarsh, Kent (Harvey 1981), as a 'first', but an earlier record of a specimen collected on 30th October 1913 at St John's Point, Co. Down, had come to light after that assessment, in the collection of the National Museum, Dublin. Conversely, BOURC had already considered and accepted the record of a Belted Kingfisher in Co. Mayo, from 10th December 1978 to 3rd February 1979, before the discovery of an older British record, a female collected at Wadebridge, Cornwall, in 1908, the details of which were found in the BOU archives (Mullarney 1981). Finally, BOURC had already assessed the records of two Red-eyed Vireos during 4th-17th October 1962, on St Agnes, Scilly, as the first live birds seen in Britain (*Brit. Birds* 56: 462-464; *Ibis* 145: 178-183); these were preceded by one found dead at Tuskar Rock, Co. Wexford, on 4th October 1951 (Kennedy *et al.* 1954).

Records of the following species were examined by BOURC and are now accepted as 'firsts' for Britain within the BOURC recording area, except where otherwise stated. In a few cases, the review remains ongoing and the outcome is, as yet, unknown. In the case of Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*, it may well be several years before a final decision is reached.

Black Duck
Anas rubripes

Stoke, Kent, 18th and 25th March 1967.
Accepted (BOURC 2003).

The first two records for Britain & Ireland were both in Ireland. The first, a female, was shot near Mullinavat, Co. Kilkenny, in February 1954, while the second, a male, was seen at North Slob, Co. Wexford, on 18th February 1961 (*Brit. Birds* 48: 341, 54: 324-325). It was not until 1967 that the first Black Duck occurred in Britain: a male seen by A. M. Hutson, P. J. Oliver and C. E. Wheeler at Yantlet Creek, Stoke, Kent, on 18th March and again there on 25th (*Brit. Birds* 60: 482-483, 61: 335). Subsequently, Black Duck has occurred regularly in Britain, with several individuals taking up long-term residence, mostly in southwest England, and even occasionally hybridising with Mallards *A. platyrhynchos*.

American Golden Plover
Pluvialis dominica

Fair Isle, Shetland, 14th-15th September 1956. Accepted (BOURC 2003).

The first two records for Britain & Ireland were both in Ireland: one shot at Belmullet, Co. Mayo, on 13th September 1894 (*Irish Nat.* 1894: 224); and another shot, near Kells, Co. Meath, on 29th November 1952 (Ruttledge 1966). Prior to 1987, this species and the closely related Pacific Golden Plover *P. fulva* were considered to be subspecies of 'Lesser Golden Plover'. Many early descriptions of 'Lesser Golden Plovers' submitted to BBRC were not attributed to a particular subspecies, but as identification criteria became better established in the early 1980s, it became clear that almost all were *dominica*. Three specimen records of 'Lesser Golden Plover' from the nineteenth century were, however, all Pacific Golden Plovers. Observers of the Fair Isle bird on 14th-15th September 1956 included F. R. Allison, George Waterston and Maurie Meiklejohn, and subsequent examination of skins at the NHM and NMS made them confident that the bird was of the form *dominica* (Allison *et al.* 1959). Their description of the bird, which included an assessment of wing, leg and bill lengths, under-part details and facial pattern, was sufficiently comprehensive for BOURC to have no hesitation in accepting this bird unanimously as the first acceptable British record of American

Golden Plover.

Over the past two decades, as the identification criteria have become clearer, American Golden Plover has been identified with greater frequency and has become one of the more regularly occurring Nearctic vagrants to Britain, with over 220 records. Although most active British birders have become familiar with the species, there are still some birds which can be extremely difficult to separate from Pacific Golden Plover. This is perhaps most applicable to moulting adults in late summer.

Royal Tern
Sterna maxima

Sandwich Bay, Kent, 28th-29th July 1965.
Under review.

A long-dead bird found near Dublin, Co. Dublin, on 24th March 1954 was the first record for Britain & Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 48: 116-117). This was followed by the record of an orange-billed large tern at Sandwich Bay, Kent, on 28th-29th July 1965 (Davenport & Hollyer 1968), which was accepted at the time by BBRC (*Brit. Birds* 61: 361) as a Royal Tern. The description of this individual contains several slightly odd features for this species, however, in particular its size. At the time of the original assessment, BBRC consulted with Californian ornithologists regarding the possibility of this being an Elegant Tern *S. elegans*. The subsequent judgement was made partly on the perceived improbability of Elegant Tern ever venturing to Europe. Now that Elegant Tern has occurred in Europe, a full re-evaluation of the record is called for. This review is being undertaken as part of a more detailed assessment of all the recent records of orange-billed large terns and will, undoubtedly, take a considerable time to accomplish, as current information for this group is incomplete and in some cases contradictory. Royal Tern has remained a major rarity in Britain with only four subsequent accepted records.

Black-billed Cuckoo
Coccyzus erythrophthalmus

Tresco, Scilly, 27th October 1932.
Accepted (BOURC 2003).

A specimen obtained at Killead, Co. Antrim, on 25th September 1871 was the first record for Britain & Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 48: 7). The next record, and the first for Britain, was picked up dead after hitting a wall on Tresco on 27th

October 1932 (*Brit. Birds* 27: 111-112). The specimen was exhibited at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club in December that year, when Dr P. R. Lowe first identified it as a Black-billed Cuckoo. Although the original description left much to be desired, photographs of the specimen, now housed in the Isles of Scilly Museum, established its identity beyond doubt. Black-billed Cuckoo continues to be an extremely rare transatlantic vagrant, with no accepted records since 1990, and it is only regular visitors to Scilly who are likely to have seen one in Britain in the last 20 years.

Little Swift

Apus affinis

Llanrwst, Conwy (formerly Denbighshire), 6th November 1973. Under review.

The first record for Britain & Ireland was of one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 12th June 1967 (Sharrock 1968). The first British record concerned a bird picked up exhausted at Llanrwst on 6th November 1973 and released the following day (*Brit. Birds* 67: 328-329). Although accepted by BBRC at the time, subsequent re-examination of this record has revealed several anomalous features and measurements, suggesting that identification as Little Swift may be incorrect or, at least, unsafe. This record is currently being recirculated among BBRC. The next British record was at Skewjack, Cornwall, on 16th May 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 261-262). There have been just 16 subsequent records of Little Swift, although the species has occurred with greater frequency in recent years.

Swainson's Thrush

Catharus ustulatus

Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 14th-19th October 1967. Accepted (BOURC 2003).

A freshly dead bird which had apparently struck the Blackrock Lighthouse, Co. Mayo, on 26th May 1956, was the first record for Britain & Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 53: 99). The first British record, however, concerns one trapped on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, by C. K. Britton, B. Chambers and D. A. Scott, on 14th October 1967 (*Brit. Birds* 61: 349). The description confirmed not only the size but also the characteristic facial markings of this species. Subsequently, Swainson's Thrush has become one of the more regular of the Nearctic land-

birds to reach Britain, with a further 21 records, mainly in southwest England.

Zitting Cisticola

Cisticola juncidis

Cley, Norfolk, 24th August 1976.

Accepted (BOURC 2003).

The first record for Britain & Ireland was of a single seen on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 23rd April 1962 (Sharrock 1972). The first British record is of an individual found by Nick Dymond at Cley on 24th August 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 275-276) and then, remarkably, re-located at Holme, Norfolk, on 29th August (*Brit. Birds* 71: 276-277), where it remained until 5th September. Although its range in western Europe is expanding, this species remains a vagrant to Britain. There have been only three subsequent records, although two of these occurred in 2000, perhaps precursors to the expected advance.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella certhiola

Fair Isle, Shetland, 6th-9th October 1949.

Accepted (BOURC 2003).

The first record for Britain & Ireland was a specimen picked up dead at Rockabill Lighthouse, Co. Dublin, on 28th September 1908 (Barrington 1908). It is appropriate, however, that the next record, which becomes the first for Britain, came from Fair Isle, on 6th-9th October 1949, found by W. H. Bierman, Robin Ruttledge and L. P. Samuels (Williamson 1950). The majority of subsequent British records of this species have been on Fair Isle, in total 17 of the 26 accepted British records to the end of 2001.

More recently, however, there have been accepted records from other localities, including a well-photographed bird on Blakeney Point, Norfolk, in September 2001. This, combined with the fact that many birders are now travelling to eastern Asia, means that Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler has become less of a myth and more of a personal experience for many. In addition, the field characteristics, particularly the diagnostic tertial markings, have become better understood. It is apparent that this is not a difficult species to identify, but with at least two subspecies occurring here, the challenge is now to establish exactly which race is involved: certainly possible in the hand, but much more of a challenge in the field.

Philadelphia Vireo
Vireo philadelphicus

Tresco, Scilly, 10th-13th October 1987.
Accepted (BOURC 2003).

The first record for Britain & Ireland was of a bird at Galley Head, Co. Cork, from 12th to 17th October 1985 (*Irish Birds* 3: 327). The next record, and the first for Britain, was of a bird found and identified on Tresco by John Brodie Good and Dick Filby on 10th October 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 572-574). This species is much less common in North America than Red-eyed Vireo, which has occurred in Britain over 100 times, and there has been no subsequent record here. Since many people saw this bird, there are both high quality descriptions and excellent photographs available, and the record was accepted unanimously by BOURC.

Dark-eyed Junco
Junco hyemalis

Dungeness, Kent, 26th May 1960.
Accepted (BOURC 2003).

Although the first record for Britain & Ireland occurred at Loop Head, Co. Clare, on 30th May 1905 (*Brit. Birds* 1: 12, 48: 14), the next record was not until 1960. A male, trapped at Denge-marsh, Dungeness, by C. J. Booth and Bob Scott, on 26th May 1960, now becomes the first British record. (*Brit Birds* 64: 367-368, 69: 452-453). In the early 1960s, spring records of North American 'sparrows' were tainted with the whiff of escape, and it took 11 years for this record to be accepted. We now know, of course, that these spring occurrences are part of an expected

pattern of vagrancy within this group. Dark-eyed Junco is exceptional, however, in that there is also a secondary pattern emerging, with several long-staying birds wintering, often in suburban gardens. Perhaps the most remarkable example of this behaviour was of what was presumed to be a single male which briefly took up residence in a Hampshire village in late spring 1987, and again in 1988, then overwintered there during 1989/90.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Pheucticus ludovicianus

St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 6th-11th October 1966.
Accepted (BOURC 2003).

An adult male found at Shane's Castle, Co. Antrim, on 24th November 1957 was the first record for Britain & Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 53: 149-150). This was followed by a second Irish bird, on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, in October 1962. The first British record is, therefore, a female discovered on St Agnes, Scilly, by J. R. H. Clements *et al.* on 6th November 1966, and which remained until 11th November (*Brit. Birds* 60: 330; Grant 1968). Subsequently, there have been 19 records, most of which have occurred in western Britain in October (although one which frequented a bird table in Essex from 20th December 1975 to 4th January 1976 did not fit this established pattern). Scilly, and St Agnes in particular, has maintained its pre-eminence for Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, with over half the British records coming from that archipelago.

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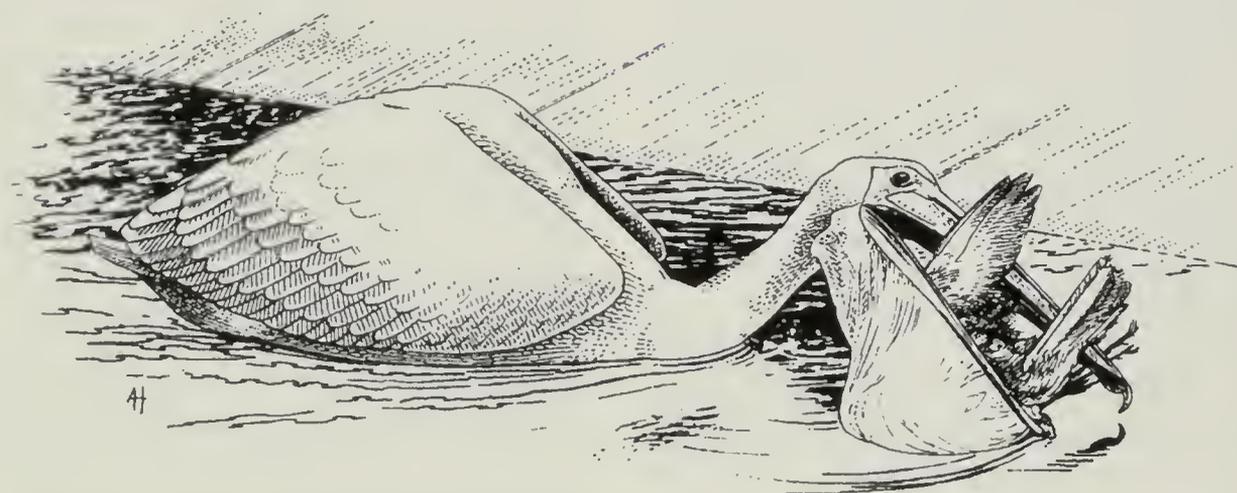
Letters

White Pelican taking Feral Pigeon

The note by Alan Gibson, regarding a White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* taking a Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* (*Brit. Birds* 96: 252), made me think back to 1982. In those days, you could go into London to deliver your freelance work, time your visit so that the editor would invite you out for a liquid lunch and (if it was Rick Morris at Usborne) get so plastered that you ended up sitting on a bench in St James's Park, staring at the ducks and wondering where you

lived. After one such occasion, a White Pelican sidled up to the bank of the lake and quietly scooped a pigeon off the concrete without so much as a murmur. I looked around. No-one else seemed to have seen it. I think that was when I decided I needed to drink more often or give up the booze. It turned out, however, that an MP had seen the same incident, kicked up a fuss and the pelican ended up being deported to London Zoo.

Alan Harris



[We are grateful to Toby Spall for allowing us to reproduce the above drawing, which appeared originally in *Wild London* in January 1982 and *Wildlife Magazine* Vol. 24, No. 3. Eds]

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Shortish or long shot at snipe?

I wonder what Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* and Swinhoe's Snipe *G. megala*, could they instruct us, would make of Paul Leader's and Geoff Carey's recent reminder of their close similarity (*Brit. Birds* 96: 178-198)? So dispiriting were their multiple cautions that I went back to my small experience of the two species to see why I had thought myself able to identify them.

Having done so, I cannot take back any point that I made about the field marks of *megala* in 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 269-271). Crucially, the description of its song at Irkutsk, Siberia, and in the nearby taiga remains diagnostic. I should, however, like to note that in the photograph of a flying bird in Rosair & Cottridge (1995) the appearance of the upperwing closely matches

my sketch except for the former's exaggeration of a pale trailing edge (a trick of the light?).

After my tryst with *megala*, it took me 22 years to catch up with certain *stenura*. During a Flamborough Ornithological Group expedition to Oman in January and February 2002, and with my initial identification confirmed by Andrew Grieve, Brian Hill and Andrew Lassey, I studied four birds fully, stalking one to about 5 m, watching two feeding, and looking at and listening to escaping birds in nine flushes. Writing in comparison with Common Snipe *G. gallinago*, I noted that: 'It was a relief to be able to pick out most of the field characters noted in the latest references (e.g. Rosair & Cottridge 1995; Mullarney *et al.* 1999). The chief exception was the supposedly prominent wing-covert

panel. I just could not be sure of it. Worse still (!), the thin pale trailing edge did catch my eye (but I was trying hard for it). It was nevertheless particularly reassuring not to be reminded for one moment of *megala*. The great similarity between *megala* and *stemura* so often remarked on by others eludes me. Conversely, the Oman *stemura* did in general character recall a small Great Snipe *G. media*. The reasons for this impression were their compactness, tendency to sit tight, usually silent takeoff, lack of subsequent zigzags, and their level carriage in flight of rather short bills. The only two calls heard from the nine flushes were both written as "short and quiet, not harsh *squik*". On the bird most closely approached, the rather short and noticeably stocky bill (not just at the base) was set on a proportionately larger head than in *gallinago*. Interestingly, the flying birds gave an impression of being rather neckless. Other differences included the tail extension beyond the wing-tip, which was noticeably shorter than in *gallinago*. Finally, the feeding behaviour of two birds was rather sluggish, with their probing less energetic than that of *gallinago*, and suggesting more "feeling about" and less "stabbing". The converse points were obvious in *gallinago*, their long thin bills carried in flight pointing downwards and their rather small heads on sometimes obvious necks. Since, to my eyes, "Wilson's Snipe" *G. (g.) delicata* shares the same structure as *gallinago*, the compactness of *stemura* and the proportions of its head and bill are worth particular note.

Patently, none of the above, old-fashioned,

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Rose-ringed Parakeets – how long have they been around?

The recent papers in *British Birds* (Butler 2002; Butler *et al.* 2002) concerning the breeding of Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* and other members of the parrot family in the wild in the UK do not give any indication of the length of time for which they have been part of our avifauna. A clue to this is given by a small book, entitled *Ornithological Notes from a South London Suburb 1874-1909* (that suburb being Brixton), by F. D. Power and published in London around 1910 by Glaisher. Towards the end of the book, Power records four members of the 'parrot tribe': Budgerigar *Melopsittacus*

holistic comments address directly the separation of *stemura* from *megala*, and the chances of confusing them as amply displayed by Leader & Carey, but like them I doubt whether *megala* has ever reached the Western Palearctic. The 'impression of the first record' by James Smith in Shirihai (1999) is seductive, but personally I find the Israeli bird's 'large white corners to the tail' incompatible with any snipe but an adult *media*. When in Britain I see a snipe fly away not showing a classically bright white trailing edge to its wing, I think of *delicata* first, *stemura* a delayed second and *megala* a hopeless, feverish third.

With *stemura* breeding on one of the cockpits of 'reversed migrants' (the northern Ural region), it ought to be straying to our shores. Let us not throw in the towel because its separation from the much more unlikely *megala* is so difficult. Last but not least, where are the distilled experiences of the extreme bird tourists in this debate? Surely Birdquest *et al.* must have logged plenty of both *stemura* and *megala* by now. How did they tell them apart?

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undulatus, Rosella *Platycercus*, Blue Mountain Lory (presumably Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*, and to which he adds a question mark), and 'The "All-green" Parakeet'. This last species he describes as 'a greenish bird, larger than a Budgerigar, with a cry like "caak" and having a very Cuckoo-like flight, [which] I have noted as many as six times. In each case they were solitary examples, and were observed on the following dates: November 11th, 1898; September 19th, 1894; August 27th, 1897; and June 26th, 1899 – all these passed over my garden. In Dulwich Park I saw a specimen,

October 18th, 1893. This bird was in a bush; in the following April, I saw one flying over the same park.' Lacking only mention of the long tail, these observations seem to suggest that green parakeets, very possibly Rose-ringed Parakeets, may have been around in London south of the Thames for quite a while. *BWP* states that Rose-ringed Parakeets bred in

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Norfolk in 1855, but after that there were no published nesting records until 1969, when they bred in Kent (see also *Brit. Birds* 67: 33).

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What constitutes an enigma?

Many different species of bird are described as being 'enigmatic', but could someone please tell me what this actually means in an ornithological context and, moreover, who is to say whether or not a species qualifies for such an epithet? Is there an Ornithological Enigma Subcommittee meeting secretly out there somewhere? If so, I think we should be told.

Take, for example, the March 2003 issue of *British Birds*, where we can read about the enigmatic Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* on page 101 and, shortly afterwards, on page 135, the no less enigmatic Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*. Or perhaps the latter is less so than the former, or, then again, could it be more? Whatever the case, just why there should be so many enigmas flying about out there seems to be something of an ornithological paradox itself, at least to me. Furthermore, it seems that the Parrot Crossbills *L. pytyopsittacus*

of Highland Scotland might actually be as interesting as the 'enigmatic' (and also 'charismatic') Scottish Crossbills also found there – which no doubt many birders had realised already.

Back to enigmas. A quick check through other sources makes Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* odds-on favourite as the Western Palearctic species most often labelled 'enigmatic'. Granted, it is something of a (presumably taxonomic) oddity, but why enigmatic? Just what does this mean? Ought not 'enigmatic' to be more strictly reserved for something like a silent owl or a psychedelic cave-dweller? Can anyone name a truly genuine candidate? Prize for the first most plausible answer, other than Three-toed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis paradoxus*, a copy of the *Field Guide to the Enigmatic Birds of the World* (in prep.), unless, of course, DNA sequencing results in its publication being cancelled...

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Another introduced bird?

The recent discussion of introduced forms (*Brit. Birds* 96: 199-202) omits to consider another problematic case. So far, there appears to be no evidence for the nature of the original British 'Cock of the Woods' or Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*. In view of the situation with the other grouse species occurring in Britain, it seems extremely likely that the British Capercaillie must have been an endemic race, lost as a

result of deforestation, the extermination of the Grey Wolf *Canis lupus* and the disarming and dispersal of the clans in the eighteenth century, which in combination allowed deer to increase and damage its habitat. Since the Continental race subsequently introduced has a vast range elsewhere, it now seems rather unreasonable to go to vast expense and disturb forestry just to preserve the species in Britain.

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News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

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

Red Kites to spread their wings with the 'Angel of the North'?

The next phase of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* reintroduction scheme promises to be the most imaginative yet. English Nature plans to release birds on Tyneside in 2004 – the first time that an urban location has been selected. Young birds from the booming Chilterns population will be translocated to Gateshead and released in the Derwent Valley, where the National Trust's wooded Gibside Estate is just a short glide from the Metrocentre shopping complex beside the A1. And just down the road is the giant 'Angel of the North' – a stunning backdrop to soaring Red Kites. In partnership with Gateshead Council and the RSPB, and with grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Nature is proposing a 'people's Red Kite project' with feeding stations and a visitor centre. Gateshead

Council has pledged £250,000 of the projected £650,000 cost of the reintroduction.

Over the past 15 years, Red Kites have been introduced successfully to three English counties (Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Yorkshire) and three Scottish regions (Ross & Cromarty, Central Scotland and Dumfries & Galloway). During 1989-94, a total of 93 young Red Kites was airlifted from Spain to the Chilterns, and a similar number was introduced from Sweden to the Black Isle in Scotland. Kites first bred in Buckinghamshire in 1991, and this year there may be 170-200 breeding pairs. English Nature's Ian Carter told N&C: 'We don't yet know how many pairs have bred in 2003: so far 130 pairs have been found. There are at least 1,000 birds in this population now, but the vast

majority are still within 15 km of their release site. People have really taken them to their hearts. They talk about them in the pub and encourage them into their gardens by leaving out the leftovers from their Sunday dinners.'

Sadly, the Scots have not been so welcoming, and illegal poisoning has taken its toll of the released birds. While the Chilterns boast up to 200 pairs, the Black Isle had just 38 breeding pairs in 2002. The Central Scotland population, near Stirling, where releases started in 1996, had 20 pairs last year. And the Dumfries & Galloway introductions, which started in 2001, should yield their first breeding success this year. On the Black Isle, 37% of released Red Kites have been found poisoned, while in Central Scotland 31% of the birds have been killed; the poisoning rate in the Chilterns is just 10%. Hopefully, the Geordies will extend a warm welcome to their Red Kites. The Tyneside population will provide the missing link in a chain of new kite colonies stretching from southern England to northern Scotland. The final release of kites as part of the Yorkshire project took place on 9th July, when 12 youngsters took the total released since 1999 to 72 birds. Breeding commenced in 2000, and 30 chicks were reared by reintroduced kites in Yorkshire in 2003.



274. Red Kite *Milvus milvus*.

W.E.O. O.B.E.

Warmest congratulations to Bill Oddie, who was awarded an O.B.E. in the Queen's birthday honours list. The BBC TV series *Birding with Bill Oddie* and *Oddie Goes Wild* have popularised both birding and general wildlife watching with the British public. Millions of people now have a greater aware-

ness of Britain's birds – and hopefully of its birders too. Indeed, Bill may well have made birding 'cool' for a young audience. How we teenage birders of the 1970s wished that our hobby was hip!

The initials 'WEO' have appeared in the annual *BB* rarities report for more than 30 years. A frequent visitor to Shetland over the years, his dream debut on Out Skerries,

finding a male Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* on a washing line in May 1975, is a great story. The following year he helped identify Britain's first Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* on Fair Isle.

Stephen Moss is Bill's BBC producer and a keen birder himself. He paid tribute to Bill: 'He's better known as a birder than as a Goodie nowadays – an extraordinary

achievement. And he's democratised wildlife watching – even to birders who hitherto wouldn't look at flowers or butterflies.' Stephen also made an interesting comparison between Bill and that other BBC star, Sir David Attenborough, with reference to two magazine titles which sit on a higher shelf than *BB*: 'Someone once said to me that if Attenborough is the *Playboy* of the natural history presenter market, glossy and polished, then Bill is the *Readers' Wives* – recognisably down-to-earth and telling it how it is!'

Missing swallows

Preliminary findings from the BTO's Migration Watch suggest that only 250,000 Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* arrived in Britain this spring – only a quarter of the normal migrating population of one million birds. 'Life's tough. These things happen,' commented the BTO's Graham Appleton, philosophically. 'There's been grotty weather over Africa. Perhaps many did not get out from South Africa. We had reports that they were south of the Sahara in April – but they should have been much farther north by then.'

During the 1960s and 1970s, a drastic 75% decline in Swallow numbers was noted in southwest Britain. This was followed in the 1980s by a 50% fall in numbers in the southeast as many farmers abandoned cattle farming and farm buildings were demolished or converted into luxury homes. The 1988-1991 BTO *Breeding Bird Atlas* estimated that there were 570,000 pairs of swallows in Britain. By then, the biggest concentrations were in areas of eastern England, plus Shropshire, Dorset and Somerset. More recently, a decline of nearly 20% has taken place in eastern England. Since numbers can recover surprisingly quickly with one or two good breeding seasons, the BTO is not overly worried – yet.

Link: BTO (www.bto.org).

All the fun of the fair

This year's British Birdwatching Fair – at Rutland Water over the weekend of August 15th-17th – is in aid of the threatened wetlands of Madagascar. As the organisers point out on the Birdfair website, two bird species have become extinct in the past 20 years in Africa, both of them in Madagascar: the Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* and the Alaotra Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolavatus*.

Last year's fair raised a staggering £150,000 for lowland forest conservation in Sumatra (*Brit. Birds* 96: 207), which took the total raised by the BBWF since 1989 to £900,000. Another successful Birdfair should see fundraising break through the £1m barrier – an incredible achievement by BBWF organisers Tim Appleton and Martin Davies.

This year, the layout of the fair has been redesigned to provide more space and accommodate more exhibitors, but there will still be the usual packed programme of illustrated talks and celebrity events. With Madagascan wetlands as the prime focus of the Birdfair, this year's poster bird is the endemic Madagascar Plover *Charadrius thoracicus*, which is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife. And don't forget to visit the *BB* stand! We're in Marquee 3 – Stands 23-24.

Links: BBWF (www.birdfair.org.uk);

Alaotra Grebe www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/actionplans/grebes/ch3b1.pdf;

Madagascar Pochard www.unep-wcmc.org/species/data/species_sheets/

Madagascar forest threatened by British company

Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a population of 16 million people on a landmass two-and-a-half times the size of Britain. Many of these people are starving and the World Food Programme has started emergency food shipments to Port Dauphin in the southeast of the island. Small wonder then that the Malagasy Government has welcomed the world's biggest mining company with open arms as it prepares to opencast a huge area of land near Port Dauphin. Rio Tinto will pay hundreds of millions of dollars for the option to mine an area containing remnants of unique forest habitats. Ilmenite is a mineral used to make paint and toothpaste, and to extract it Rio Tinto would dredge hundreds of millions of tonnes of soil. The mining operation would cover 6,000 hectares of land and could last up to 60 years.

Rio Tinto claims that the mine will be a model of green capitalism and a tonic for the world's fourth poorest country. Madagascar's government has given the go-ahead and the company has spent \$41m (£24m) in anticipation of work starting in 2005. Rio Tinto has promised a range of environmental and social schemes to offset damage to the region by the mining operation, but these have been dismissed by Friends of the Earth, who claim that the project would not be compatible with true, sustainable development. Dr Frank Hawkins, head of the Conservation International office in Antananarivo, the Malagasy capital, said that one of his main concerns was that thousands of people would migrate to Fort Dauphin in a vain search for work, and resort to cutting trees to make charcoal: 'That's what people do when in economic distress – they trash the forest.' Clearly it is not just Madagascar's wetlands that are in need of protection.

Link: *The Guardian*

www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,982989,00.html

Mixed fortunes for English Ospreys

Another highlight of the coming Birdfair will hopefully be the sight of recently fledged Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* flying over Rutland Water. Following a blank year in 2002 – when three eggs were laid but no chicks survived the subsequent torrential rain – the Rutland Water Ospreys had at least two chicks in the nest by the end of June this year.

In Cumbria, the Ospreys nesting beside Bassenthwaite Lake are rearing just one chick as we go to press, after the second young bird succumbed in cold, wet weather. The nearby Whinlatter visitor centre outside Keswick has been upgraded recently with a giant video wall showing live pictures of the Osprey nest. Visitors coming to view the Ospreys are projected to spend £2m in the locality over the summer.

Elsewhere in Cumbria, Ospreys are apparently not such a cause for celebration. In 2001, when the Bassenthwaite Ospreys first reared a chick, there were two further nesting attempts in Cumbria. One pair, on private land, was spectacularly successful, fledging three young. But at the other site, beside the River Eden in north Cumbria, the pair were shot off the nest, probably by people from the fishing fraternity. None of these birds returned in 2002, but one summered in the area this year. What are its chances? If the Osprey is to regain a foothold in England, and recolonise naturally from the north, these birds must be given better protection. Far-sighted organisations have seen the financial benefits that the Lakeland Ospreys can bring, but short-sighted individuals with a nineteenth-century attitude to birds of prey do not wish their county to become a twenty-first century ecotourist destination.

Links: Rutland Water Osprey Project (www.ospreys.org.uk);
Lake District Osprey Project (www.ospreywatch.co.uk).

Hen Harriers bounce back in Cumbria

Better news from Cumbria follows the apparently targeted burning of grouse moors near active Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* nest sites earlier this spring (*Brit. Birds* 96: 309-310). The RSPB has just announced that four young harriers have fledged from a nest on its Geltsdale reserve. The RSPB and English Nature will be following the progress of the birds closely now that they have left the nest. The young birds, two males and two females, have been wing- and radio-tagged for identification purposes, and their movements will be tracked by the English Nature project team during the next few months.

News from Dorset

James Lidster is the new County Recorder for Dorset. Please send any sightings or rarity descriptions (including photos) to him at 35 Napier Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 4LX; tel. (01202) 672406; e-mail: dorset-birds@bopenworld.com. James is compiling an annual database of sightings and is happy to receive records daily, weekly or monthly rather than at the year's end, with the aim of decreasing everyone's workload at the end of the year. By mid June, he had compiled 1,337 records of over 185 species. This information is copied directly onto the main Dorset database, where it will be used for Dorset bird reports and to monitor the status of important species in the county.

Defra countryside walks guide

If you are holidaying in Britain this summer, a new guide to the 1,000 miles of farmland walks opened up by Countryside Stewardship payments has been published by Defra. The full list of 1,600 sites – including the charmingly named Wagtail Farm – is catalogued county by county and is available at <http://countrywalks.defra.gov.uk>

Requiem for a desert oasis

Those who have travelled to the United Arab Emirates in search of Middle Eastern specialities will be saddened to learn that one of Dubai's best birding hotspots – the Wimpey Pits – has been bulldozed. Local birders Simon Aspinall and Peter Hellyer penned this obituary in their weekly *Twitcher's Guide* e-mail newsletter: 'Over the years since they first developed, as a result of the discharge of treated sewage, the Pits had undoubtedly become one of the top wetland sites in southeastern Arabia, perhaps anywhere in the peninsula. They have produced some stunning records: the UAE's first Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* and Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*; first breeding records for the UAE of Common Coot *F. atra* and White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* – which have become regular and resident; plus a whole host of other goodies, like Little Pratincole *Glareola lactea*, Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio*, the UAE's largest flocks of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* and literally hundreds of ducks. In the name of development, the Pits are now being infilled and will then be used as building land – for a new "Chinatown". We would be the first to concede that the Pits were not natural... and we always suspected that they might be temporary. It does, however, seem a pity that the Dubai authorities, always so keen to encourage and stimulate tourism, have been unwilling to recognise not only that they brought visitors, but also that, carefully managed, they could have become a flagship site for wildlife conservation for the region.'

Link: www.uaeinteract.com/nature/bird/twitch.asp

Huffin' and puffin

Wardens on the RSPB's Coquet Island reserve in Northumberland are relieved that thousands of Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica* have, albeit belatedly, returned to their nesting burrows. By the third week of May, fewer than 50 pairs were in residence – compared with a breeding population of 18,700 pairs in 2002 – prompting widespread 'Missing Puffins' headlines in the national press. But in June, an emergency census revealed that more than 11,000 pairs of puffin had returned to Coquet. That total is still a few thousand down on last year's record breeding season, although other Atlantic Puffin colonies along the east coast have increased numbers, so perhaps there is a link. The late arrivals on Coquet could be good news for visitors, though. In August, when many holidaymakers visit Northumberland, most puffins have already left the island, but this year they may still be around to delight the summer day-trippers. Atlantic Puffins first nested on Coquet as recently as 1966 and their numbers have increased steadily since then. Coquet is perhaps better known as the breeding site for more than 75% of the entire UK population of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii*.

Protect raptors on your holiday

Still looking for an autumn destination for a week's holiday? How about a trip to Malta, and an opportunity to do your bit in protecting some of the millions of birds hunted illegally on the island every autumn? The annual BirdLife Malta raptor camp runs from September 13th to 20th this year. The camp has several aims: to deter hunting by the presence of foreign birders, since tourism is crucial to the Maltese economy; to promote the principle that migrating birds belong to everyone, not just the Maltese; to enable birdwatchers to enjoy migrating raptors; to study the little-known central Mediterranean migration route; and to set up and strengthen international co-operation with BirdLife partners throughout Europe.

Malta's position as a staging post between Sicily and Libya means approximately ten million birds of 250 species migrate over the island every year. But the appalling carnage inflicted by Maltese hunters means that almost a third of the total – three million birds – are trapped or shot in Malta. Resident species fare no better. Malta only has about 25 breeding bird species because of its severe hunting problem. Joining the raptor camp is one way to make a difference. Holidaymakers in Malta can join up for just an afternoon. The camp will cost you just £12/night to cover food and lodging. Full details can be found on the BirdLife Malta website.

Link: BirdLife Malta (www.birdlifemalta.org).

Recording Birds on the Canary Islands

In the past, birders visiting the Canary Islands have tended to send their records (mainly of rarities), to residents in Tenerife. Final assessment of rarity descriptions is, however, carried out by the Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO) rarities committee. What constitutes a rarity on the Spanish mainland and the Balearics may, however, differ from that on the Canaries: visit <http://www.seo.org/AvesEsListaHomologacion.asp> where a list of bird species which require descriptions may be found. As well as SEO, there is a recently formed body, Sociedad Ornitologica Canaria, to which records of *any* species, not just rarities, may be sent. It is envisaged that, in future, this society may well carry out roles similar to those performed by the county societies in the UK. The address is SOC, C/Malaquita no 5, 38005 Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Islas Canarias, Spain.

(Contributed by Barry Lancaster)

Sprosser roster in Moscow

Moscow's annual 'Nightingale Evening', conducted by the Russian Bird Conservation Union, has shown a 10% increase in Thrush Nightingales *Luscinia luscinia*. In order to promote interest in birds (a daunting task in a country where birdwatching is not a widespread hobby), the RBCU has enlisted the Muscovite public in a spring count of singing Thrush Nightingales every year since 2001. People were invited to go out and listen for sprossers on the evening of 24th May, resulting in 550 reports of at least 921-1,177 singing males (after exclusion of many double counts), a 10% increase compared with 2002. Some sprossers were heard singing under the Kremlin walls, but not, like last year, within the Kremlin itself. The results are far from complete, since few special surveys have been conducted in large city parks, known to harbour many dozens of nightingales. The organisers, led by Vadim Avdanin, estimate that the total number of singing Thrush Nightingales in Moscow alone is 3,000-4,000, enough for the RBCU to declare this city of ten million the 'Nightingale Capital'.

Link: Russian Bird Conservation Union (www.rbcu.ru).

Kiwis come to the aid of Kokakos

Expat New Zealanders living in London have arranged a fundraising evening in aid of the Kokako *Callaeas cinerea wilsoni*: one of NZ's two remaining species of wattlebird, and down to just 450 pairs. It is reputed to have the most mournful call of any bird in the world. The cultural evening – on 9th August at the London Wetland Centre in Barnes – will include a Maori welcome, a presentation about the Kokako, an auction of Maori art, and supper. Contact Patrick Battersby on 0207 6211090 or patrick@daviesbattersby.com

Reviews

CALLS OF EASTERN VAGRANTS

By Hannu Jännes. Hannu Jännes/Earlybird Birding Tours, Helsinki, Finland, 2002. Single CD, £15.99.

If, like me, you find sonograms and transcriptions of calls a little unsatisfactory, and, in addition, you have a certain fondness for Eastern Palearctic migrants, then you will take great pleasure from this excellent CD. It focuses entirely on the calls (rather than songs) of eastern vagrants to the Western Palearctic, on the basis that few vagrants ever sing. Most of the recordings were made by Hannu Jännes, although supplemented by additional work from twelve others; the majority originate from China or India and consequently deal with non-breeding birds. Covering 64 species plus an additional four subspecies, this represents the most comprehensive selection of calls of eastern vagrants available on any single CD.

Many of the selections address the more difficult identification challenges, including separation of Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* from Eastern

Bonelli's Warbler *P. orientalis*, and that troublesome trio of Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Sykes's Warbler *H. rama* and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida*. In addition, this CD features some of the least-known vagrants to reach the Western Palearctic, which could all too easily be overlooked simply owing to a lack of available recordings. Hume's Lark *Calandrella acutirostris*, with its highly distinctive call, is a case in point. Similarly, skulking species such as Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, which are more likely to be noticed by those familiar with the calls, are also covered.

Given the number of contributors, it was pleasing to find that the recording quality is consistently excellent. In particular, the call of Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* is so evocative that I almost felt I was in the field. Other recordings will have listeners drooling, not only over the principal call, but also for what can be heard in the background. Perhaps the best example of this is the recording of Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, which features a fine supporting cast of

Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi*, Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatulus* and 'Taiga Flycatcher' *Ficedula parva albicilla*.

Interestingly, I found some of the calls strangely at odds with my personal experience. For example, the Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* recording, from the isolated breeding population in central China, sounded subtly but distinctly different from calls of birds wintering in Hong Kong, which are probably from the northern breeding population. I also found the call of Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* strangely monosyllabic.

I have just two minor quibbles. Firstly, without a time display for each track, it is difficult to identify the different tracks under each species. Secondly, some species I had hoped to find here were missing, the obvious examples being Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago megala* and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *L. certliola*. These minor criticisms do not, however, detract from what is an excellent compilation, one which will at times prove invaluable.

Paul Leader

Each of these attractive, well-produced books follows the same format, with good, readable introductory sections, followed by the photographs, texts and maps, with two species per page. The introduction covers the usual subjects of acknowledgments, taxonomy, nomenclature, sequence, distribution and status, habitats, global status, bird topography and, of course, a section about the photographs. The book on the Indian subcontinent includes an account of the ornithological history of the subcontinent and a series of attractive habitat photos, followed by a short account and photos of the major ongoing threats to birds.

Most species are represented by one photograph, although two are included for a small number of

A PHOTOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT, INCLUDING NEPAL, SRI LANKA, THE MALDIVES, PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH & BHUTAN

By Bikram Grewal, Bill Harvey and Otto Pfister. Christopher Helm, A&C Black, London, 2003. 512 pages; 1,050 colour photographs; distribution maps. ISBN 0-7136-6403-7. Paperback, £19.99.

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By Morten Strange. A&C Black, London, 2003. 398 pages; over 700 colour photographs; distribution maps. ISBN 0-7136-6402-9. Paperback, £19.99.

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species, particularly in the Indian subcontinent guide. A brief text

covering description, voice and habits, and a colour-coded distrib-

ution map for the region are included. In all three books, the plumage descriptions vary from extremely brief to a reasonable length, so that while many are adequate for identification purposes, there are also many which are completely inadequate, especially for the more difficult groups such as raptors and warblers. Likewise, the very brief voice descriptions vary from useful to useless.

So, what of the photographs? Well, as might be expected, the quality varies hugely, with many excellent or good shots, some fairly good or indifferent shots, and a minority that are just plain awful. Understandably perhaps, each book includes some photos of captive birds, although the Indian subcontinent book does not mention this within the relevant text. I strongly suspect that quite a few of the Indian passerines, mainly some of the Timaliidae (mistakenly listed as Sylviidae)

were trapped specifically for photographic purposes (which I would consider to be unethical, if not actually illegal in India). The undoubtedly captive Red-faced Liocichla *Liocichla phoenicea* appears to have been dunked in a can of crimson paint, while the Black-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis nipalensis* photo is terrible.

The big question is, what function does each of these books serve? Can they justify their titles as 'guide to the birds of...'? The Indian subcontinent guide includes 800 species, about 62% of the number which occur in the region, the Indonesia guide includes 686 species, approximately 45% of the total, and the Southeast Asia guide includes 668 species, some 44% of the total. Thus, anyone attempting to use any one of these as their main identification guide will come seriously unstuck. For example, in the Southeast Asia book, only 31 of 70 possible species

of birds of prey are included, only three of eight minivets *Pericrocotus* and only seven of 28 species of *Phylloscopus* warbler. In the Indonesia guide, the same groups are represented by 26 of 67 raptors, four of seven minivets and two of seven *Phylloscopus* warblers. These groups are better represented in the Indian subcontinent guide, which contains 55 of 67 raptors, six of eight minivets and 13 of 25 *Phylloscopus* warblers.

The books are a showcase for a fine collection of bird photographs, being the first ever published for some species. But by including many poor photographs and by covering such a low proportion of species which occur, none of the books can possibly be useful as an identification guide. They will certainly not compete with any of the relevant modern field guides.

Nick Dymond

JONATHAN COUCH'S CORNISH BIRDS

Edited by R. D. Penhallurick.
Polperro Heritage Press,
Clifton-upon-Teme, 2003. 192
pages; black-and-white
illustrations. ISBN 0-9530012-
8-8. Paperback, £12.95.

Jonathan Couch (1789-1870), pronounced 'Cooch', was described by his grandson, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, as 'a proud man, stiff in his Methodist ancestry, he strode his domain as its unchallengeable great man, in top hat, high white stock, long black coat and, until past middle age, black breeches and silver-buckled shoes...'. To the modern mind, such a person would hardly seem likely to have embraced a profound interest in the natural world, but the fact that he did is clearly demonstrated in Roger Penhallurick's study of Couch's hitherto little-known 'Journals of Natural History, 1805-1870' and similar works.

In this book, Penhallurick has

obviously researched his subject carefully, especially when it came to establishing quite which species Couch was referring to. Names such as 'Speckled Diver' (Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*), Black-toed Gull (Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*) and Ash-coloured Harrier (Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*) are largely unfathomable to modern-day birders.

Some might view the work of such early naturalists with a degree of scepticism, whether it relates to rarer species or otherwise. An entry in the journals deals with a Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* reported to have been found dead in a field near Liskeard on 24th August 1838, the first occurrence for Great Britain. A full account was sent by Couch to the Linnean Society, and the specimen was submitted to William Yarrell for inspection. With this sound procedure behind it, the record was never doubted and was eventually quoted by such careful authorities as Saunders (*An Illustrated Manual of British Birds*, 1889) and Harting

(*A Handbook of British Birds*, 1901). One might initially be equally sceptical about a Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*, another first for Great Britain, 'shot in Mount's Bay, probably at or near Marazion Marsh, on 10th October 1853 by a person who showed it to E. H. Rodd', by whom (according to Saunders) it was recorded in the *Zoologist* and was thus also quoted by Harting.

It is against this background of careful recording of extreme rarities that one can approach Couch's accounts of the commoner species with greater confidence. It has to be said that, even to the modern eye, nothing stands out in his journals that could attract significant doubt. This work of research by Roger Penhallurick is of undoubted value in casting light on a hitherto obscure figure, though it is possibly of greater academic interest than scientific. Even so, it makes intriguing reading for those interested in Cornwall's birds, and its editor is to be congratulated.

Mike Rogers

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid June to mid July 2003.

'Soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis* St John's Point (Co. Down), 22nd June. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Two, 13 km south of St Mary's (Scilly), 12th June; 14 km southeast of St Mary's, 3rd July. **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* Lamby (Glamorgan), 24th June. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Pennington Flash (Greater Manchester), 1st-9th July at least.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Stiffkey Fen (Norfolk), 13th June; Kinbrace area (Highland), 21st June to 8th July at least; near York (North Yorkshire), 22nd June; Grove Ferry (Kent), 26th June. **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* St Margaret's-at-Cliffe (Kent), 15th June; Langtoft (Lincolnshire), 25th June; Pilson Green (Norfolk), 28th June; Fen Drayton (Cambridgeshire), 28th June; Upton Fen (Norfolk), 29th June; Retford (Nottinghamshire), 29th June; Burnthouse Lane Gravel-pits (Berkshire), 4th-9th July at least; Sandwich Bay (Kent), 7th July; Langtoft (Lincolnshire), 8th July.



Stef McElwee

275. Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, East Chevington, Northumberland, June 2003.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Ferrybridge (Dorset), 30th June; Walton-on-the-Naze (Essex), 1st-5th July. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Cley (Norfolk), 23rd June; Goldcliffe Pools (Gwent), 2nd-3rd July. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Hauxley (Northumberland), 28th June. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* East Chevington (Northumberland), 12th June.



Iain Leach

276. Second-summer Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*, Hallcroft Gravel-pits, Nottinghamshire, June 2003.



Stef McElwee

277. Adult White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, East Chevington, Northumberland, June 2003.



Kevin Scott

278. First-summer 'Steppe Grey Shrike' *Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris*, Ballaghennie, Isle of Man, June 2003.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* Exceptional passage at Dungeness (Kent) peaked at about 150 on 25th June, a site record; 51, Westcliff/Shoebury (Essex), 28th June. **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Shoebury, 5th July. **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* Tophill Low (East Yorkshire), 14th June; presumed same Hallcroft Gravel-pits (Nottinghamshire), 15th-24th June. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Long-stayer, East Chevington, (from 10th June) to 9th July at least.



Rebecca N...

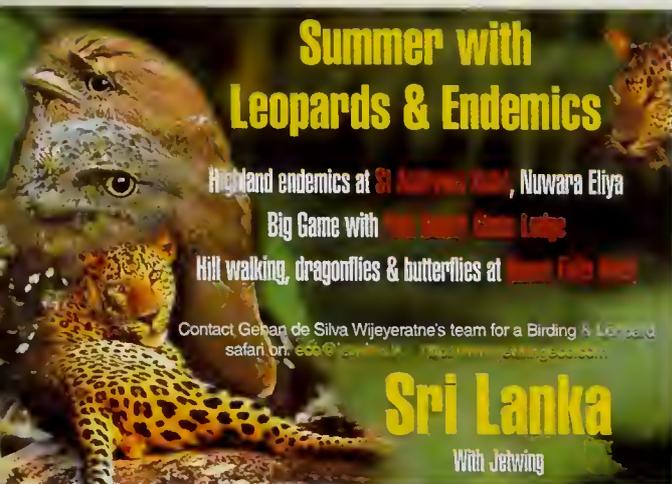
279. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Fair Isle, Shetland, June 2003.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* St Mary's, 14th June, possibly same St Martin's (Scilly), 15th June; Sennen (Cornwall), 14th and 23rd June, possibly same Carn Bosavern and St Just (Cornwall), 15th June; St Agnes (Scilly), 26th June; Rye Harbour (East Sussex), 6th July; Dungeness, 6th July; Holkham (Norfolk), 6th July; Newbridge (Gwent), 8th-9th July; St Margaret's-at-Cliffe, 8th July; Cley, 8th July.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* Portland Bill (Dorset), 15th June. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Unst (Shetland), 2nd July. **Lesser Grey Shrike**

Lanius minor near Acle (Norfolk), 26th June to 1st July. **'Steppe Grey Shrike'** *Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris* Ballaghennie (Isle of Man), 17th June to 9th July at least. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Penrith (Cumbria), 13th June; near Seaford (East Sussex), 20th-22nd June.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* St Mary's, 12th-15th June; Foula (Shetland), 12th June; Calf of Man (Isle of Man), 13th June; Sheringham (Norfolk), 13th June; Felixstowe (Suffolk), 14th June; Rhum (Highland), 14th June; Minsmere (Suffolk), 15th June; Islay (Argyll), 16th June; near St David's (Pembrokeshire), 21st June; Foula, 1st July; Chandler's Ford (Hampshire), 2nd July; Rhos (Conwy), 5th-7th July; Canning Town (Greater London), 6th July; Port Talbot (Glamorgan), 8th-9th July at least. **European Serin** *Serinus serinus* Holkham, 9th June; two, Sandwich Bay, 16th June; Pagham Harbour (West Sussex), 22nd June; Everton (Bedfordshire), 29th June to 8th July; Portland Bill, 29th June. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Skomer (Pembrokeshire), 16th June; St John's Loch (Highland), 28th June to 1st July.



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English and scientific names and sequence of birds should follow *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1997); or, for non-West Palearctic species, Monroe & Sibley (1993), *A World Checklist of Birds*. Names of plants should follow Dony et al. (1986), *English Names of Wild Flowers*. Names of mammals should follow Corbet & Harris (1991), *The Handbook of British Mammals*, 3rd edition. Topographical (plumage and structure) and ageing terminology should follow editorial recommendations (*Brit. Birds* 74: 239-242; 78: 419-427; 80: 502).

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Status of Marsh
and Willow Tits

Waggrancy theories

The decline of the
House Sparrow



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Monthly Marathon

The next stage of the Sunbird Monthly Marathon, including photo number 202 and the solution to photo number 199, will now appear in the October issue.

general ringing: few people go out to catch one or other of these species specifically. Almost all Marsh and Willow Tits are caught in mistnets under circumstances in which the three commoner species – Coal *P. ater*, Blue and Great – are also caught. It should be noted, however, that the reverse is not true: many of the last three species are captured in gardens, where the occurrence of Marsh Tits and, particularly, Willow Tits is low. By not using totals of nestlings, two potential biases are avoided: that there has been a proliferation of nestboxes during the period concerned (young birds are easier to extract from nestboxes than from natural nest-sites, so proportionately more young will have been ringed); and that Marsh Tits infrequently, and Willow Tits very rarely, use nestboxes (hence totals would favour Blue and Great Tits, which readily use nestboxes).

Here, I present the numbers of full-grown individuals of these two species ringed each year from 1956 to 2001 inclusive. These data cannot on their own be used as a measure of abundance, since the overall number of birds ringed each year increased markedly during this period, especially since the late 1950s with the advent of mistnets. I have assumed that the rising numbers of Coal, Blue and Great Tits ringed are indicative of the increase in general ringing effort. I have attempted to allow for this increase by plotting the numbers of Marsh and Willow Tits ringed as a proportion of the numbers of these three common species ringed. The data were taken from the BTO's annual reports on Bird Ringing in Britain & Ireland (e.g. Clark *et al.* 2002).

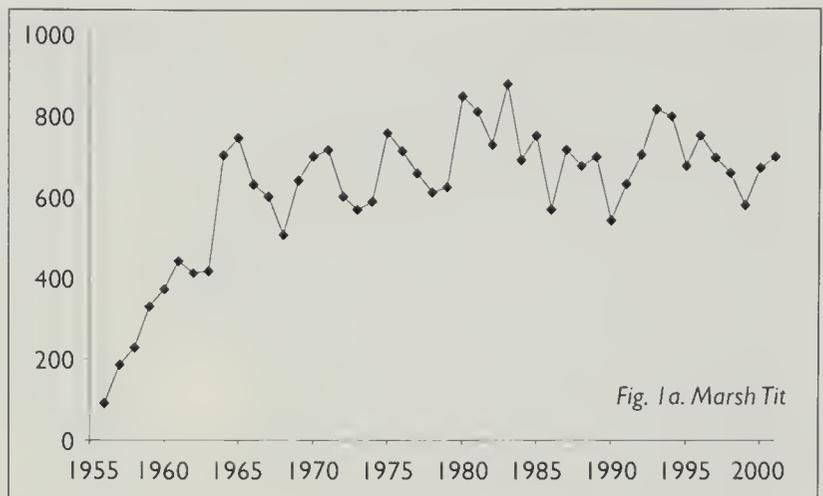


Fig. 1a. Marsh Tit

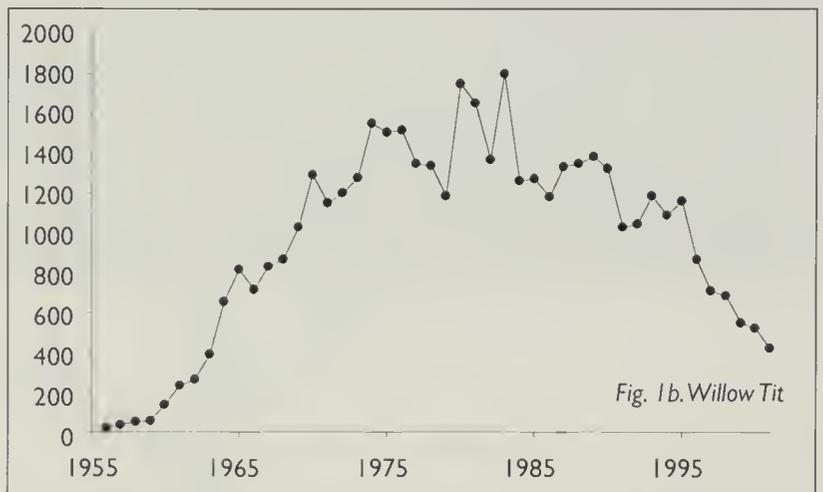


Fig. 1b. Willow Tit

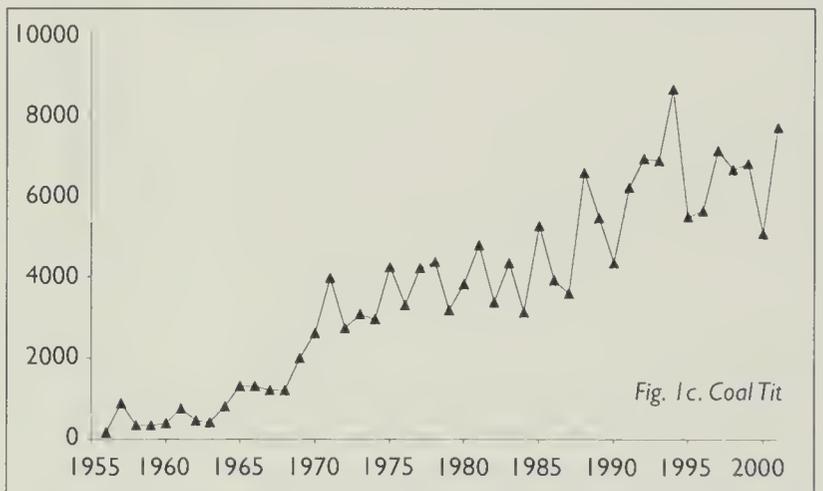


Fig. 1c. Coal Tit

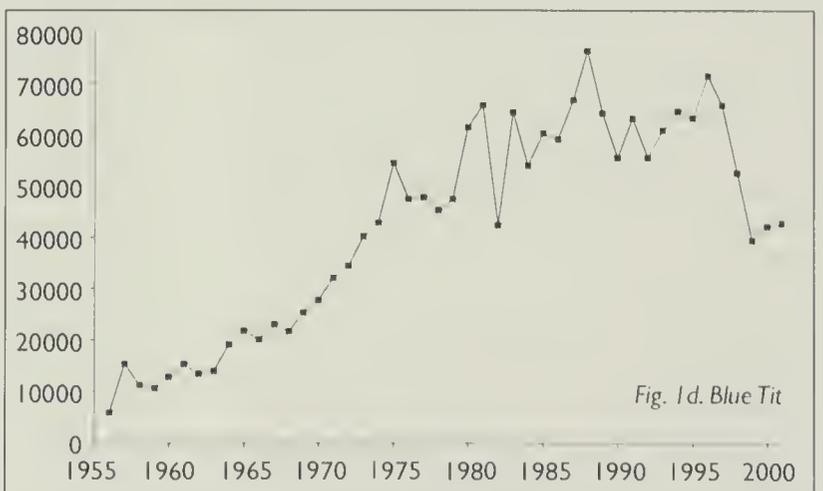


Fig. 1d. Blue Tit

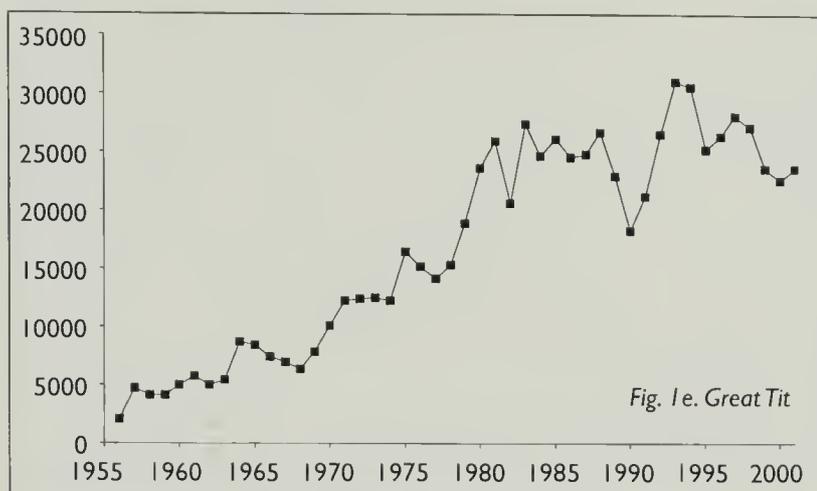


Fig. 1e. Great Tit

Figs 1a-1e. The numbers of full-grown Marsh *Parus palustris*, Willow *P. montanus*, Coal *P. ater*, Blue *P. caeruleus* and Great Tits *P. major* ringed in the UK, 1956-2001.

Results

Figs 1a & 1b show the totals of full-grown Marsh and Willow Tits ringed in the UK from 1956 to 2001 inclusive. The patterns are somewhat different. The numbers of Marsh Tits ringed increased until about the mid to late 1960s, but have since remained fairly stable. In contrast, those of Willow Tits increased until the early 1980s, but have been declining steadily since then.

As mentioned, neither of these graphs allow for the fact that there has been a steady increase in overall ringing effort during this time. Figs 1c-1e show the numbers of full-grown Coal, Blue and Great Tits ringed. Each shows a fairly steady increase throughout the whole of the period under review and this, presumably, is largely indicative of the increase in ringing effort. The three species do not show consistent increases compared with each other, however. The main points to note are:

- i) Coal Tit has become commoner in relation to both Blue and Great Tits. This increase was very marked from about 1960 until the early 1970s and then again during the 1990s; in between, the Coal Tit/Blue Tit ratio (fig. 2a) did not change much, while the Coal Tit/Great Tit ratio (fig. 2b) showed a marked decline, especially between 1978 and 1979 when it dropped by 40%.
- ii) Blue Tit has become somewhat scarcer in relation to Great Tit (fig. 3), though with wide year-to-year variations in the ratio.

In an attempt to 'correct' the numbers of Marsh and Willow Tits ringed for variation in ringing effort, figs 4a & 4b show the numbers of these two species divided by the sum of Coal,

Blue and Great Tits ringed in the same year. These graphs show that the patterns of decline of Marsh and Willow Tits differ somewhat:

Marsh Tits have declined sharply since the mid 1960s: the current level is about 25% of that in early years. This overall decline seems to have occurred in three distinct phases, as follows.

i) 1964-1972: a very sharp and almost linear decline, during which the relative numbers ringed dropped by 50%.

ii) 1973-1984: a slower decline of 25-30%. The decline during 1964-1984 is highly significant ($T = 9.27$, $p < 0.001$), but that from 1973 onwards is not significant.

iii) 1985 onwards: no evidence of a decline. Indeed, there is a significant increase over this period ($T = -2.57$, $p = 0.18$), but this is only because of the elevated figures in 2000 and 2001.

Willow Tits continued to increase until 1970 when, quite abruptly, they went into a steady and fairly constant decline which has brought them down to about 25% of their 1970 level. In contrast to Marsh Tit, there has been no sign of the decrease levelling off. The decline from 1970 is highly significant ($T = 17.67$, $p < 0.001$).

Both species show a steady increase in relative numbers ringed in the earlier years, up to about 1965 in the Marsh Tit and 1970 in the Willow Tit. This increase, relative to the other three species, may have been because this was the period during which mistnets were introduced and became widely used, leading to the trapping of many more birds on farmland and in woodland as opposed to in gardens. One might expect, therefore, that the proportion of Marsh and Willow Tits ringed would have increased during this period.

In an attempt to check this, I used the ringing data for another woodland species which was not normally trapped before the advent of mistnets, the Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*. As expected, the numbers of this species that were ringed rose rapidly during the period 1956-1966 (fig. 5). As a proportion of the Coal+Blue+Great Tits ringed, it increased from 0.45% to 2.2% during these 11 years, with each year's

proportion being higher than that of the previous year. Unlike the case with Marsh and Willow Tits, however, the ratio of tree-creeper to the three common tits shows no significant change since 1966. Nonetheless, the tree-creeper data support the suggestion that the early rise in the proportion of Marsh and Willow Tits ringed, compared with the three common tits, may indeed have been due to the advent of mistnets.

Discussion

The rates of the decline of Marsh and Willow Tits shown here depend on the validity of making the correction for ringing effort. The method of correction used here cannot be precisely true, since the increases in the three common species used as a measure of ringing effort have not been exactly the same, and presumably the factors affecting their population sizes differ. Nevertheless, since the five tit species are nowadays caught largely in mistnets set in the same habitats, much of this netting must have the potential to catch these five species in roughly the proportions that they are present. Any biases in 'catchability' among the species should have remained constant. There may be biases in the behaviour of ringers, for example not ringing Blue Tits because of the increasing cost of rings from the mid 1990s onwards. Such biases would be hard to quantify, but seem likely to reduce the numbers of the common birds ringed in favour of the rarer ones; in other words, if there are such biases, then the decline in Marsh and Willow Tits will have been even more marked than is shown here.

It would have been good to have been able to use some measure of nesting, but the use of nestling totals was rejected on the grounds that

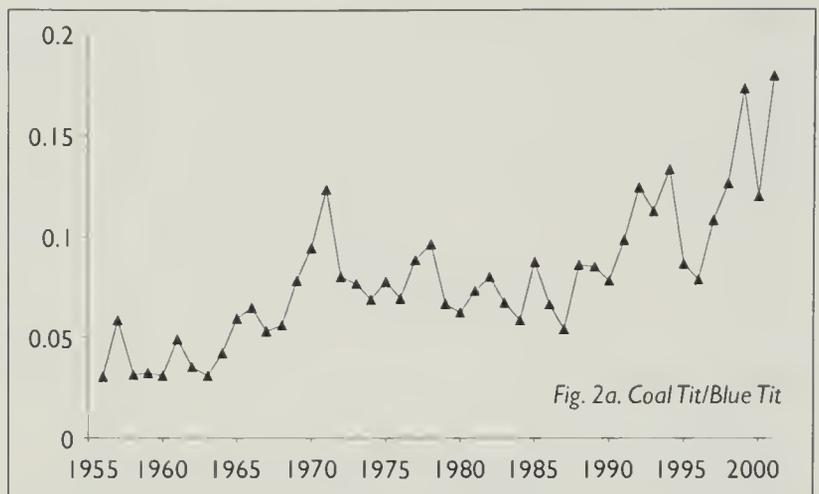


Fig. 2a. Coal Tit/Blue Tit

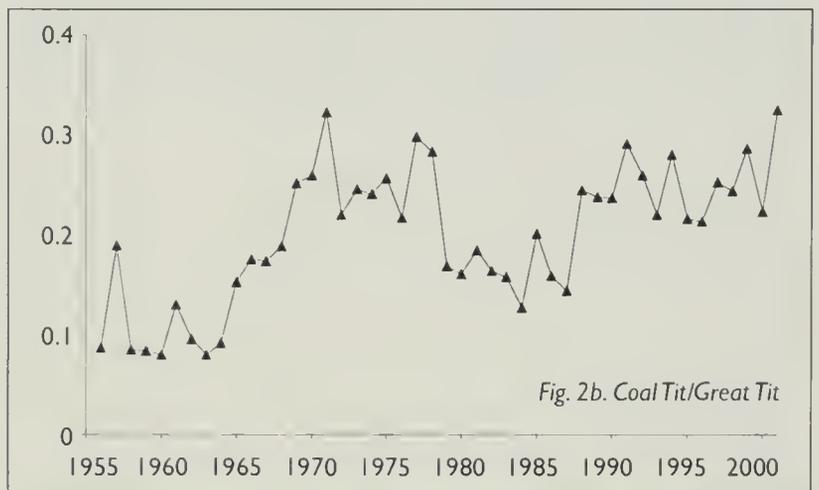


Fig. 2b. Coal Tit/Great Tit

Figs 2a & 2b. The numbers of full-grown Coal Tits *Parus ater* ringed in the UK as a proportion of the numbers of Blue Tits *P. caeruleus* (2a) and Great Tits *P. major* (2b), 1956-2001. The increases with time are significant ($T = -7.80, p < 0.001, r^2 = 58.1$; $T = -4.82, p < 0.001, r^2 = 34.6$).

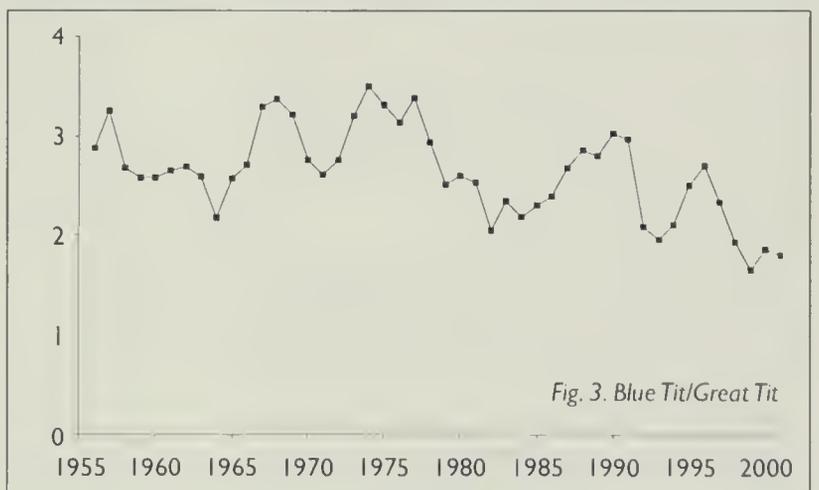
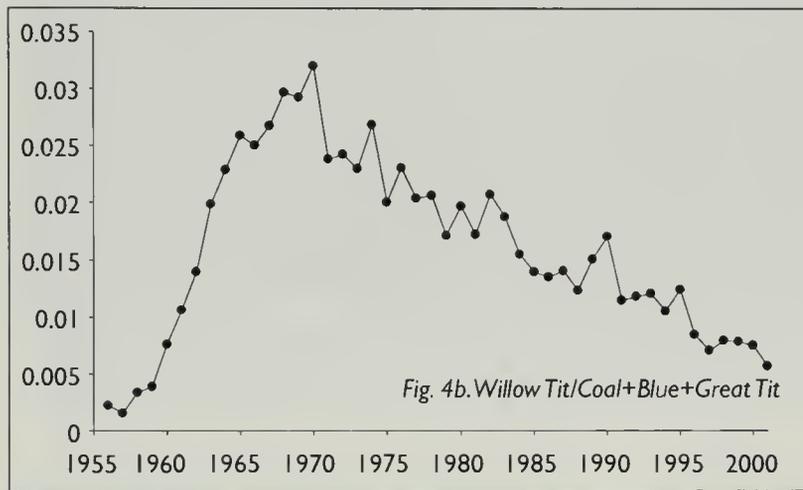
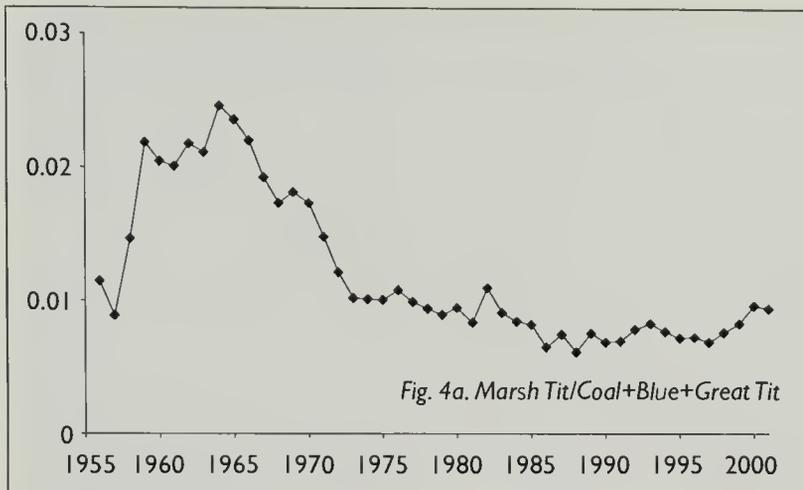


Fig. 3. Blue Tit/Great Tit

Fig. 3. The numbers of full-grown Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* ringed in the UK as a proportion of the numbers of Great Tits *P. major*, 1956-2001. The decrease with time is significant ($T = 37.80, p < 0.001, r = 25.4$)

the different species show markedly different tendencies to use nestboxes, where most nestlings are ringed. Blue and Great Tits show the highest tendencies to use nestboxes, followed by Coal Tits. Both Blue and Coal Tits, however,



Figs 4a-4b. The numbers of full-grown Marsh *Parus palustris* (4a) and Willow Tits *P. montanus* (4b) ringed in the UK during 1956-2001, as a proportion of the total numbers of full-grown Coal *P. ater*, Blue *P. caeruleus* and Great Tits *P. major* ringed in the same years.

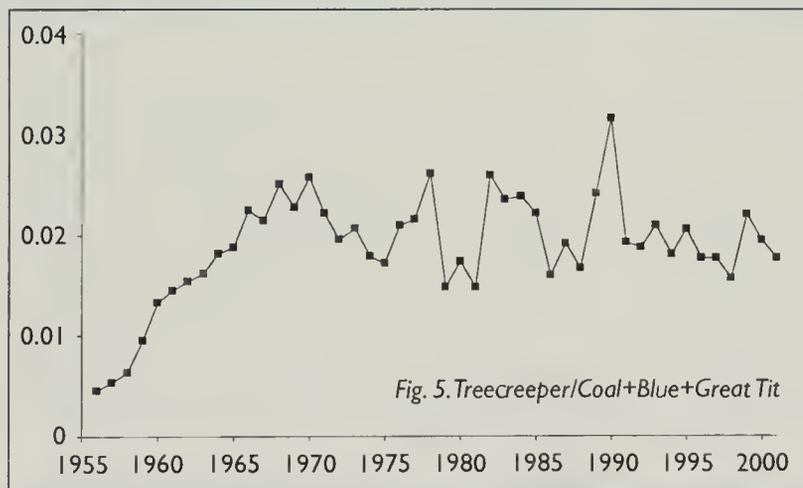


Fig. 5. The numbers of full-grown Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* ringed in the UK during 1956-2001, as a proportion of the total numbers of full-grown Coal *Parus ater*, Blue *P. caeruleus* and Great Tits *P. major* ringed in the same years.

them. Marsh Tits and, to an even greater extent, Willow Tits largely avoid using nestboxes, preferring natural sites; the latter normally excavates a new hole for itself each year in a rotten stump.

The possibility that most of the increases in the totals of the three commoner species have come about due to large increases in the populations of these species can be ruled out. Long-term studies (e.g. Perrins 1998), together with CBC results during 1974-1999 (Thewlis *et al.* 2001) and the BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey data during 1970-2001 (Glue 2002) have shown that numbers of these three species have remained relatively stable over time, certainly when compared with the five-fold or greater increases in the totals ringed. Consequently, the ringing totals provide strong evidence for declines in both Marsh and Willow Tits, supporting the general belief that these two species have decreased markedly in the last 30 years or so. Indeed, the figures suggest that the decline of the Marsh Tit may have been much greater than the 50% reported by Gregory *et al.* (2002). That report is based on CBC data from 1974 onwards, whereas the data in fig. 4a indicate that the Marsh Tit had already undergone a marked decline before 1974. Siriwardena (2001) also noted that CBC records show the species to have been in decline since the mid 1960s.

The declines shown here, and those reported in the other studies cited above, raise the question of why this has

being much smaller than Great Tits, may fail to find a suitable nestbox where boxes are at low densities or when breeding numbers are high, since Great Tits will normally out-compete

happened. Siriwardena (2001 and in press) notes that the Marsh Tit has declined in all three habitat types covered by the CBC: wet habitats, farmland and woodland, while the Willow Tit



281. Willow Tits *Parus montanus* occupy large territories, up to 15 ha in some parts of Europe, and are highly faithful to them, staying put even during severe weather.

seems to have remained stable in its preferred wet habitats but declined elsewhere (Siriwardena in prep.). Hence the reasons for the declines of the two species may not be exactly the same. This would be in keeping with the results shown here in fig. 4, where the declines of the two species are not synchronised in time. Fig. 4a shows that the decline of the Marsh Tit started shortly after the CBC began, and that it has declined by some 60-70% since then. The rate of decline has slowed after the mid 1970s and the ratio to the three common species has either been constant or has even possibly increased slightly since the mid 1980s. Compared with fig. 4b, the CBC data for the Willow Tit are remarkably similar: both sets of figures show an increase until the early 1970s, since when they have been steadily declining.

Siriwardena (2001, in press, in prep.) considered the reasons for these declines. One is the possibility that the fall in numbers of Marsh and Willow Tits has been associated with increases of the commoner tits. Both species tend to be out-competed for nest-sites by the more dominant Blue and Great Tits. In the case of Willow Tits, which excavate their own hole each spring, this could be particularly serious since they take some time to excavate their cavity and will, at best, be late if they have to start

again. On at least some occasions, they may lose a series of sites in succession and end up failing to breed; the more aggressive Blue Tit seems normally to be the culprit (Maxwell 2001). Siriwardena (2001) reported that he was unable to find convincing evidence to support the hypothesis that the decreases in numbers of Marsh and Willow Tits were associated with increases in the other species of tits. Indeed, from the CBC index, Blue Tits seem to have increased only slightly (9%) during the period 1974-1999 (Thewlis *et al.* 2001). Great Tits increased by some 29% in the same period, however, and they are dominant to Blue Tits in competition for nest-sites. So, even if there was no change in Blue Tit numbers, but Great Tits increased, the pressure on Willow Tit holes from Blue Tits might increase as more of the latter became excluded from other nesting sites by Great Tits. Furthermore, looking at CBC results over a slightly longer time period, from 1968 to 1999, Blue and Great Tits show a somewhat greater increase – by 27% and 58% respectively. When these trends are plotted out, they suggest that the steepest rise in numbers in these two species was in the late 1960s/early 1970s – at the time when the Marsh Tit decline was apparently most severe. If these trends are genuine, however, it does suggest that the steepest decline



Tim Loseby

282. Various factors have been put forward to explain why Marsh Tits *Parus palustris* are less common in Britain than they were 40 years ago. Habitat deterioration may be a factor, especially in southern Britain, where increasing deer numbers have had a dramatic effect on the understorey in woodlands where they occur.

in the Marsh Tit, as shown in fig. 4a, may not have been quite so marked as the ringing data imply.

Clark *et al.* (2002) reported that an analysis of BTO Nest Record Cards showed no evidence for any decline in Willow Tit productivity since 1965 and a slight increase in Marsh Tit productivity since 1980. These measures are on a per nest basis, however, so they would not show a decline in breeding productivity per pair if a significant number of birds failed to breed at all, because birds which fail to lay eggs are not recorded within the Nest Record Scheme. Siriwardena (2001) showed that Marsh Tit survival rates had declined since the 1960s.

It remains possible that nest predators have also reduced the proportion of successful nests. One nest predator, the Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, is a potential threat to these two species as it is easily able to open their nests (Wesolowski 2002). This species showed a marked increase in the mid 1970s, associated, it was thought, with the large increase in elms dying from Dutch Elm Disease; if this is the case, it is not clear why their numbers have remained stable since then, although the quantity of dead trees has presumably diminished greatly.

Siriwardena (2001) suggested that habitat deterioration may be at the root of the problem. One obvious major change in southern Britain is the very large increase in deer numbers. These are having a serious effect on the woodland understorey. Compared with the other tits, Marsh and Willow are birds which tend to live in these lower parts of the woods and hence may have been most affected by the increase in deer. Studies of the species in parts of Wales, where as yet the deer numbers are not so high, might be rewarding.

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Tim Loseby

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Looking back

Fifty years ago:

'THE USE OF EARTHENWARE POTS AS NESTING-HOLES FOR HOUSE SPARROWS... In the Vosges mountains in France during the first World War earthenware pots especially designed for sparrows to nest in were to be seen on the walls of a great many farms and I have no doubt the practice still persists. These served a double purpose, for they not only kept the population of House Sparrows

[*Passer domesticus*] in check but they also supplied the farmer with food. I was told that the nests were never taken until the fledglings were on the point of flying, that is to say, when they were most suited for culinary purposes. These earthenware pots, locally called *pots de moineaux*, were roughly hemispherical in shape with a projecting spout through which the birds could come and go... COLLINGWOOD INGRAM.' (*Brit. Birds* 46: 352, September 1953)

Vagrancy theories: are autumn vagrants really reverse migrants?

James J. Gilroy and Alexander C. Lees



Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*
Richard Johnson

ABSTRACT Reverse migration is a popular concept, often used to explain the occurrence of autumn vagrants. The term 'reverse migration shadow' has been used to identify regions in which autumn vagrancy of a given species may occur, and to predict potential future vagrants to Britain. In this paper, we evaluate this theory and, by analysing vagrancy patterns, demonstrate that autumn vagrancy is not limited to the 'shadow' of a 180° route-reversal. Although the vast majority of individuals follow a traditional route to winter quarters, vagrancy during autumn migration occurs in all directions, and we contend that it is the pattern of observer coverage which determines the number of vagrants discovered. The occurrence patterns of some vagrants reaching Britain can be explained using the idea of long-range dispersal. We suggest that some comparatively regular vagrants reaching Britain are, in fact, performing annual migrations to presently undiscovered wintering grounds in western Europe or West Africa.

*In the river valleys and on the low, densely forested hills, Leopards *Panthera pardus* stalk through the undergrowth, and the beautiful Asian Paradise Flycatchers *Terpsiphone paradisi* flit restlessly among the branches... Higher up the mountains, the bright southern birds are left behind in an enchanting sea of sounds, scents and colours. In their place stands the more solemn but equally beautiful world of the coniferous taiga, where the cool silence is perhaps broken only by the simple but sweet song of a Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*. (Algirdas Knystautas 1987)*

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* is a bird of the vast boreal forests of eastern Asia. For most European birders, however, the species is likely to conjure up images of chilly late autumn days, stunted Sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus* and windswept headlands. To stumble upon a tiny piece of Siberia in such an abstract setting is one of the most fascinating elements of birding, not least because the discovery represents a remarkable aberration from the norm. Most people would view such a displaced individual as an unfortunate waif, the bearer of a faulty inner compass, soon to meet its destiny in the unforgiving waters of the North Atlantic.

There are many forms of vagrancy, and many theories have been constructed to explain them. For example, the frequent occurrence of vagrants in late spring can be neatly explained by the idea of overshooting: individuals migrating along the normal bearing of their original migration fail to stop within their breeding range. Others may fail to locate mates or suitable habitat on their breeding grounds and subsequently continue to an alternative destination beyond the normal breeding range. Fast-moving depressions crossing the North Atlantic are undoubtedly responsible for many

Nearctic migrants from the eastern seaboard of North America reaching European coasts in autumn. The presence of a 'blocking' anticyclone over northwest Russia in autumn will, in some years, conspire to produce a strong easterly airflow over Europe, bringing with it a wave of disoriented migrants from Siberia or Central Asia (Elkins 1991). Even when easterly airstreams fail to develop, migrant passerines from Siberia invariably appear annually, albeit in smaller numbers. Weather systems, therefore, can be only partly responsible for carrying Asian passerines to western Europe, and the appearance of regular autumn vagrants from Siberia requires further explanation. Currently, one of the most popular theories involves the concept of 'reverse migration'.

Reverse migration theory

Rabol (1969) proposed that reverse migration was a root cause of a significant proportion of autumn vagrancy, an idea later championed by Cottridge & Vinicombe (1996). The theory stems from the observation that, in order for many vagrant species to reach western Europe, individuals must re-orient at approximately 180° to their normal migration route. A logical explanation for autumn vagrancy is that these



Hugh Harrop

284. Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, Quendale, Shetland, September 1996. The fact that Red-breasted Flycatchers are regular autumn vagrants to Britain while Collared Flycatchers *F. albicollis* are not can be explained by reverse migration theory. A mirror image of the Red-breasted Flycatcher's route to southern Asia produces a 'vagrancy shadow' directly over Britain & Ireland. In the case of Collared Flycatcher, bound for Africa, the shadow falls over the high Arctic and misses Britain entirely. The autumn vagrancy patterns of many other species, however, do not fit so neatly with reverse migration theory.

individuals experience reversed polarity; in other words, their internal navigational mechanisms mistake north for south. By plotting species' breeding and wintering ranges on accurate global projection maps, it is possible to extrapolate the potential 'vagrancy shadow' for each of these disorientated migrants.

Strong supporting evidence for reverse migration theory came from specific case studies. Cottridge & Vinicombe compared the occurrence patterns of Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* and Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis* in Britain & Ireland. Both species have similar breeding distributions in the Western Palearctic, but spend the winter in quite separate regions, requiring each species to migrate in completely different directions. In autumn, most Red-breasted Flycatchers fly southeast, bound for southern Asia. Consequently, this species' vagrancy shadow falls directly across Britain & Ireland. By contrast, the vagrancy shadow for Collared Flycatcher, which adopts a southerly heading during autumn migration to reach its wintering areas in East Africa, misses Britain entirely and shows that reversed migrants would be expected to occur in the high Arctic. The result is regular autumn vagrancy to Britain & Ireland in the former species, but not the latter. The apparent strength

of this theory prompted Cottridge & Vinicombe to speculate on whether certain species might occur naturally in Britain. For example, for species such as Daurian Starling *Sturnus sturninus* and Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*, they suggested that natural vagrancy to Britain is 'extremely unlikely' because the vagrancy shadows of these species do not extend to western Europe: they would be more likely to occur in regions bordering the Bering Sea.

Problems with reverse migration theory

Along with Moss (1995) and others, we believe that the increasing use of reverse migration theory to explain autumn vagrancy in north-western Europe may be counterproductive. In particular, the judgement of rarity records based simply upon the position of the vagrancy shadow (and taking the view that autumn vagrants occur largely in the shadow produced by a 180° reversal of migratory orientation) may prove misleading. At first glance, the occurrence patterns of most autumn vagrants from Siberia support the reverse migration model. The vast majority of such records occur in northwest Europe, as would be expected from the predominantly southeasterly orientation of Siberian breeding passerines, migrating



Tim Loseby

285. Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 1987. Vagrant Yellow-browed Warblers are not limited to the strict 'reverse migration shadow' linking their breeding grounds in Siberia with northwest Europe, but have occurred right along the east coast of the Atlantic, from Iceland to the Canary Islands, as well as in the Middle East and Alaska.

Table 1. Records of vagrant Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (records of subspecies *ruficollis* and *atrogularis* combined), with the approximate angle of deviation from a normal migration route, measured from the centre of the breeding range.

Country	Angle of deviation from normal route	Number of records	Reference
Israel	25°W	11	Shirihai (1996)
Egypt	30°W	2	Shirihai (1996)
Greece	45°W	1	Clement & Hathway (2000)
France	60°W	11	Clement & Hathway (2000)
Spain	60°W	1	Clement & Hathway (2000)
Great Britain	70°W	27	Rogers <i>et al.</i> 2002
Sweden	80°W	22	Pulliainen & Tomo (2003)
Finland	85°W	21	Swedish Rarities Committee (2003)
Taiwan	45°E	1	Clement & Hathway (2000)
Japan	75°E	9	Clement & Hathway (2000)

to wintering areas in southern China and southeast Asia. Nevertheless, this pattern also reflects the considerable bias in observer effort towards these areas (Lewington *et al.* 1991). At almost all other compass points to which a Siberian vagrant could orientate, observer coverage is, by comparison, negligible. Can we claim with any confidence that there are fewer vagrants moving in these other directions?

Phillips (2000) noted that vagrant Yellow-browed Warblers *P. inornatus* are not limited to landfalls along a rhumb line linking Siberia with northwest Europe. In fact, they occur at any conceivable point of the compass where there are birders to find them. This distinctive species, which is relatively easy to find, has occurred along the eastern Atlantic seaboard from Iceland to the Canary Islands, and is trapped in sufficient numbers at Scandinavian ringing stations to generate statistically significant datasets on orientation (Thorup 1998). Furthermore, Yellow-browed Warbler, along with Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* and Little Bunting *E. pusilla*, is a regular autumn vagrant in Israel (Shirihai 1996). In order to reach Israel, these individuals are orienting in a southwesterly direction, approximately 90° to their normal route, which would take them into southeast Asia. Individuals migrating in the opposite direction to their normal migration route would find themselves in the high Arctic, where observer coverage is undoubtedly too low to detect them. Nonetheless, there *are* occasional records there, such as a Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* which alighted on a vessel 110 km north of Bear Island in the Arctic Sea (Lewington *et al.* 1991). In addition, increasing

coverage of the Alaskan islands produced the first North American record of Yellow-browed Warbler, on St Lawrence Island, in 1999 (Lehman 2000).

The Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* provides another good example of random scatter migration. This species, which comprises the nominate form 'Red-throated Thrush', together with 'Black-throated Thrush' *T. r. atrogularis*, breeds from western and central Siberia, east through western Mongolia to northwestern China. Its winter range lies to the south of the breeding range, extending from Iran and Kazakhstan through the Indian subcontinent to the Tibetan Plateau, northern Myanmar to northeastern China. Vagrants have moved in most directions around this route (table 1). In this case, birds arriving in Britain cannot be reverse migrants, as the reverse migration shadow of Dark-throated Thrush falls over the Russian Arctic. Many other regular autumn vagrants reaching western Europe also have reverse migration shadows which completely miss Britain & Ireland, yet still occur here. Examples include Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*, Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* and Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*.

Turning to regions beyond Europe, one area with a high concentration of birders is North America. Here the vagrancy patterns are strikingly different. In California, the annual appearance of vagrants from the eastern seaboard is celebrated in a similar fashion to the arrival of Siberian vagrants in Europe. In this case, species which normally migrate along the eastern seaboard to the Caribbean and beyond must

migrate in a direction ranging between 45° and 90° to the west, carrying them across the North American landmass, to make landfall on the west coast. Among the most frequently recorded vagrant passerines reaching California are Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* and Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*, and their occurrence is seemingly unrelated to weather patterns (Patten & Marantz 1996). In addition, many Palearctic breeding passerines now turn up in California. Of these, Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* is regular, while Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Olive-backed Pipit and Rustic Bunting have all been recorded.

The charismatic and easily recognisable Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficata* provides an interesting example. It breeds in the southern prairie region of central North America, as far north as Kansas, and follows a precise route on autumn migration, along the Gulf of Mexico to winter in the southern Caribbean. Reverse migration along a 180° line would place the vagrancy shadow in central Canada, east of the Rockies. In this case, however, birder coverage is good in all directions around the breeding range and, consequently, there are records in almost every North American state. Vagrants have reached the west coast, north almost to Alaska, and have occurred throughout the eastern seaboard states north to Nova Scotia (Sibley 2000).

It is evident that vagrant birds can travel in all directions, including a bearing opposite to the normal direction of migration (Alerstam

1990; Lewington *et al.* 1991), and we contend that apparent peaks in occurrence in reverse migration shadows often correspond with areas of high observer coverage. Interestingly, the term 'reverse migration' has another use in defining an unrelated migratory phenomenon. Experiments devised to measure the migratory orientation of birds have shown that a proportion of migrants at a stopover site will often orient in the opposite direction to the majority (Wiedner *et al.* 1992; Akesson *et al.* 1996). To demonstrate this, Akesson *et al.* (2001) conducted a radio-tracking experiment using Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* which exhibited reversed migration orientation at Falsterbo, Sweden. These individuals moved in the opposite direction to that of normal migration for up to two days before reversing their orientation again and resuming their normal migration direction. This phenomenon has been explained as a short-term motivational conflict, experienced by migrants reaching an environmental boundary or obstacle (Karlsson *et al.* 1996). A typical example would be a sea crossing (as in the Falsterbo experiment): some weaker individuals may decide not to attempt to cross, and instead backtrack along their previous heading, to refuel at a known feeding site, before making another attempt (Akesson *et al.* 1996; Akesson 1999). This short-term phenomenon is, however, unlikely to be a cause of regular vagrancy.

The main function of a vagrancy theory is to make sense of our observations and records.



Dennis Coutts

286. Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Voe, Shetland, October 1982. The chill of late autumn, Sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus*, and windswept and remote places: classic conditions for an autumn Pallas's Leaf Warbler. And this is often a fairly typical view of this species in Britain, high up among the blowing Sycamore leaves, in and out of view, forever on the move.



George Reszeter

287. Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Scilly, October 1999. A more showy individual than that in plate 286. The 'Sibes' recorded in Britain each autumn are generally thought to be irrevocably lost, thanks to their errant navigational sense. But could some of our Pallas's Leaf Warblers actually be part of a small wintering population surviving somewhere in the West?

Reverse migration theory is useful in that it offers an explanation for differences in the frequency with which various species are recorded. Without this framework, we are left with little to account for the surprising abundance of some species, and the absence of others. In the remainder of this paper, we will examine a number of alternative concepts, and attempt to provide an explanation for *some* of these patterns, by looking at vagrancy as a form of dispersal.

Vagrancy and dispersal

Migration is a complex process, and birds use many different cues as navigation aids, including visual, olfactory and magnetic stimuli (Wallraff 1996, 2001; Walinder *et al.* 2001). An inability to use any one of those cues could result in a bird migrating in the wrong direction. One potential cause of vagrancy is genetic mutation. Evidence suggests that migratory instincts, including orientation, are coded precisely in a bird's inherited genetic configuration (Freeman & Herron 2001). If this was not the case, how else could, for example, a juvenile Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* perform its migration to Africa unaided? Given this strong genetic basis, it is clear that simple mutations could affect any of the behaviours involved with

migration. It is, therefore, inevitable that some individuals will be born with migratory instincts which differ from those of the rest of the population.

The difficulty with this 'simple mutation' explanation for vagrancy is the frequency with which certain vagrants occur. Such mutations are almost certainly *too* rare to be responsible for the relatively large numbers of Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Yellow-browed and Pallas's Leaf Warblers which occur in northern Europe each year. No known species has such a high rate of novel phenotypic mutation (Freeman & Herron 2001). Normally, this discrepancy would be accounted for by reverse migration theory, or by invoking non-genetic causes of vagrancy. Navigation is a difficult business, and perhaps some young individuals, though genetically endowed with the means to navigate correctly, can still make errors through inexperience. Weather, of course, will always play a part in determining the numbers of vagrants arriving (Moss 1995).

Another hypothetical explanation builds on the idea that autumn vagrants act as agents of dispersal by colonising new wintering areas (Williamson 1975; Alerstam 1990; Sutherland 1998). Imagine the following scenario. The world population of a certain abundant migra-

tory species migrates each year from breeding grounds in Siberia to winter quarters in southern India. Successive generations inherit the orientation of this migration genetically, such that juveniles can perform the entire migration in isolation from other birds. Occasionally, mutations occur in this population, with juveniles dispersing in random directions away from their normal route. One year, a small number of these mutant juveniles locate suitable wintering habitats in the Mediterranean region, and survive. After retracing their migration route to Siberia the following spring, they breed, and the mutant orientation genes are passed to some of their offspring. If these offspring follow a similar orientation and are able to locate and survive in the new wintering habitat, this new orientation could proliferate in future generations. In this way, vagrants are able to expand into suitable but previously unoccupied wintering areas and exploit vacant niches that may benefit the species' survival in the long term.

How likely is this scenario? Helbig (1991) conducted a series of laboratory experiments in which individuals from two subpopulations of Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* were interbred. Each subpopulation uses an entirely different migratory route in autumn: birds from central Europe move southwest, while those from eastern Europe migrate southeast (Berthold 1988). The migratory orientation of hybrid offspring was found to be intermediate between those of the two parents. Other experiments have produced similar findings (e.g. Helbig 1996, Pulido *et al.* 2001). This evidence suggests that, in order for a new migratory orientation to be passed from generation to generation, both parents would have to share the same abnormal orientation genes. Genes are complex entities, however, and in some cases only one parent would need to carry the mutant gene in order for some of the offspring to show the abnormal characteristic, as a result of an allelic dominance relationship (Freeman & Herron 2001). Of course, if the entire migratory orientation was learned from the parents, as it is in some species, rather than inherited, the likelihood of offspring finding the new winter site would be significantly higher (Baker 1980; Sutherland 1998). It is possible that just such a development may now be occurring in the case of Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*. This Siberian breeding species winters primarily in

Asia, from the central Himalayas to north-eastern China, and until recently was only known as a vagrant to the Western Palearctic. Small populations have been discovered wintering in Israel (Shirihai 1996), and more recently in western Italy (Occhiato 2003). As these birds, including adults and first-winters, return annually to specific and localised regions within each country, it appears that small but stable migratory subpopulations, perhaps with a genetic abnormality affecting their navigational abilities, have become established outside the normal wintering range.

Previous authors, including Williamson (1975), Cottridge & Vinicombe (1996) and Sutherland (1998) have alluded to the possibility that a small number of vagrants could stumble upon successful wintering areas by chance. The frequency with which some regular 'vagrants' occur in Britain could, therefore, be explained by these birds being part of a surviving population, established by 'genuine' vagrants at some time in the past. Such birds may now be wintering at low densities somewhere in southern or western Europe or West Africa, and returning to the breeding grounds to mate with birds sharing a similar genetic abnormality, to produce offspring with the same migratory orientation. Not so long ago, birdwatchers in Britain considered Pallas's Leaf Warbler to be one of the rarest vagrants reaching these islands, with only three records prior to 1958 (Cottridge and Vinicombe 1996). Today, Pallas's Leaf Warbler occurs annually in Britain, with numbers exceeding 100 individuals in some years. It is theoretically possible that this species has recently established a new winter range, and is using Europe as a migratory flyway. Although we think of them as vagrants, they may actually represent a biologically significant population, following a genuine annual migration.

This hypothetical scenario might be referred to as 'pseudo-vagrancy'. Table 2 lists several species from northern European and Asian breeding ranges which normally winter in southern and southeast Asia. European records of all of these species have increased in the last 50 years. We contend that these patterns could be explained if these birds were, in fact, 'pseudo-vagrants', performing annual migrations to presently undiscovered wintering grounds.

Table 2. Examples of possible Siberian 'pseudo-vagrants', i.e. species passing through Europe in small numbers on migration to newly colonised wintering areas. The species listed at the head of the table are those recorded most regularly in Britain, and hence are considered to be the most likely 'pseudo-vagrants', with the likelihood reducing towards the foot of the table.

	Species	Likelihood of being a 'pseudo-vagrant'
Richard's Pipit	<i>Authus uvaeseelandiae</i>	Higher  Lower
Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus iuornatus</i>	
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	
Pallas's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	
Little Bunting	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	
Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>	
Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>	
Radde's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus schwarzi</i>	
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Authus hodgsoni</i>	
Lanceolated Warbler	<i>Locustella lanceolata</i>	
Yellow-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza aureola</i>	
Pechora Pipit	<i>Authus gustavi</i>	

British vagrants as 'legitimate' migrants?

Does our knowledge of European vagrancy patterns support the 'pseudo-vagrant' theory? A hypothetical Siberian 'pseudo-vagrant' wintering in southern Europe or western Africa would logically follow the most direct route, taking it over the Eurasian continental land-mass. Its detection is possible only when it is forced to make landfall: after drifting to the British or Scandinavian coastline in autumnal easterly winds, for example. In most winters, a handful of Siberian passerines attempt to overwinter in Britain & Ireland: the winter of 2002/03 produced wintering records of three Yellow-browed Warblers, two Richard's Pipits, plus Dusky Warbler, Little Bunting and Blyth's Pipit *A. godlewskii* (*Birding World* 15: 312-318, 2002). These numbers are, however, a fraction of those found in autumn, perhaps suggesting that conditions here may not be suitable for the long-term survival of such birds *en masse*.

Farther south, however, the story is rather different. Richard's Pipits winter regularly in France, Spain, Portugal and Morocco, and return annually to the same well-watched sites. Sizeable flocks have included up to 18 together in Spain (de Juana *et al.* 2000), 15 in Morocco (*Brit. Birds* 92: 64-82) and four in France (*Brit. Birds* 92: 278-300). Yellow-browed Warblers are also wintering in Iberia in increasing numbers (*Brit. Birds* 85: 6-16). Could such winter records be representative of a much more widespread pattern, involving other species? Observer coverage may hold the key to this question. Consider the parallel phenomenon of the so-called 'Shetland specialities'. Certain species, including

Lanceolated Warbler and Pechora Pipit *Authus gustavi*, occur regularly in the Northern Isles, but only rarely elsewhere in Britain. Perhaps some of these species *do* occur in larger numbers away from Shetland, but go unnoticed elsewhere in Britain & Ireland, as their skulking nature precludes detection in all but the bleakest of habitats. One might argue that the paucity of wintering 'pseudo-vagrant' records could be similarly explained. Once birds such as Yellow-browed Warblers have moved away from coastal migrant traps and dispersed inland to woodland, scrub and farmland habitats, their detection rate will surely drop dramatically, even in areas where there are plenty of birders. If these 'pseudo-vagrants' have the capacity to reach North Africa, their detection would be near impossible, yet small numbers of vagrants originating from Siberia have been recorded there (Bergier & Bergier 1989), suggesting that the true numbers involved could be much higher.

The paucity of records of these species in western Europe in winter and spring does, however, present a major stumbling block for the theory. Even if these hypothetical 'pseudo-vagrants' go unnoticed on their wintering grounds, surely some would be located again in the spring, as they pass through areas with a high concentration of observers? For most species, however, spring migration routes are different to those used in autumn. In general, spring migrants also adopt a greater urgency, with birds migrating faster, and making fewer stopovers, than in autumn (Moss 1995). In autumn, inexperienced first-year birds, lacking

a similar urgency to reach their wintering grounds, are more likely to make prolonged stopovers. Following the winter, during which these more experienced and capable survivors have had time to lay down fat reserves prior to migration, the return journey to the breeding areas occurs rapidly, and with only the minimum number of stopovers, often during periods of inclement weather.

The Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* is one example of a possible 'pseudo-vagrant'. With its breeding range centred on Belarus, and extending to the German-Poland border, Lithuania, Hungary, Ukraine and western Russia, occasional autumn records in Britain were formerly treated as vagrants. Since the early 1970s, intensive ringing studies in coastal reedbeds throughout southern England have



Tim Loseby



Tim Loseby

288 & 289. Shetland specialities: Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (top) and Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, both photos taken on Fair Isle, Shetland, in September 1997. Do these species turn up in Britain away from the Northern Isles more frequently than records suggest?

revealed a small but regular autumn passage through this region (Gorman 2002; Wernham *et al.* 2002), and it now seems that the entire world population of Aquatic Warblers migrates along a precise route through a staging area in western France and Belgium, with southern England receiving a small proportion of the total numbers involved. But, despite this now well-known passage through western Europe, the exact wintering range of Aquatic Warbler still remains largely unknown. There are just a handful of winter records from Senegal, Mauritania, Mali and Ghana (Cramp 1992; Wernham *et al.* 2002), and it seems that the entire population of a European breeding species is able to elude detection for several months of the year. The paucity of spring records from western and central Europe is also striking, although in recent years, increased ringing effort in Spain has revealed the existence of a small spring passage there (A. van den Berg, verbally). Here we have a species which maintains a viable population, migrates through western Europe to winter in West Africa, and yet is rarely seen in winter or spring. Parallels can be drawn between this species and any regular autumn vagrant. It is true that Aquatic Warblers are

inveterate skulkers, and difficult to find without a mistnet, yet their specific habitat requirements might make them easier to locate on their wintering grounds than more generalist species. If wintering populations of 'pseudo-vagrant' species are small and widely dispersed, the detection of even a few individuals could be seen as being indicative of a much larger overall population.

In recent years, Blackcaps have overwintered in Britain in increasing numbers. Ringing recoveries have shown that most of these originate in eastern Europe (Berthold 1988; Berthold & Helbig 1992). In order to reach Britain from their breeding grounds, these individuals migrate northwest: a 90° aberration from their normal Mediterranean-bound route. Evidently, this population was established after individuals with 'faulty' migratory orientations were able to overwinter successfully in Britain, and return to breed with birds sharing a similar directional and migratory abnormality. Apparently, the arrangement is advantageous, as the number of Blackcaps wintering in Britain is on the increase (Berthold 1988). This example is undoubtedly representative of a more general frequently occurring pattern amongst migratory species.



290. Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, China, May 1992. British records of Radde's Warbler have increased sharply in recent decades. Is this pattern solely down to increased observer coverage and interest, or is this species a 'pseudo-vagrant', with small numbers undertaking a regular, annual migration to some yet undiscovered wintering grounds?

The disjunct wintering ranges of species such as Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* and Red-throated Pipit, which winter in both southern Asia and East Africa, or the increasing numbers of migratory hummingbirds from the western United States wintering at garden feeders in the eastern USA (Calder 1995) may be further examples. A review of migratory plasticity by Sutherland (1998) described 43 similar cases in which species have significantly changed their migration routes in historical times. Could the 'pseudo-vagrants' listed in table 2 be further examples of this phenomenon?

Conclusions

Our aims in writing this paper were twofold. First, we wished to raise some questions about the reverse migration theory and, in particular, to highlight the dangers of using it to predict which species might occur as vagrants in western Europe. Reverse migration is a genuine short-term condition, potentially affecting any migrant faced by a large barrier to passage. The use of 'reverse migration theory' in order to

establish the vagrancy potential is, however, likely to be counterproductive when determining the likelihood of vagrants reaching western Europe. We suggest that true autumn vagrancy occurs primarily as the result of inherited genetic abnormalities which affect the navigation systems of an unknown proportion of the population of most migratory species. Such individuals may migrate in any direction, not only in the reverse direction. This variation may also lead to individuals migrating abnormally long distances and, in extreme cases, remarkable extralimital records.

Second, we wished to discuss a different framework for understanding the vagrancy phenomenon: as a form of dispersal. The idea that vagrants can establish new wintering populations is not new but, we feel, deserves greater attention, not least for the potential conservation implications in today's changing landscape. It is anticipated that the 'pseudo-vagrant theory' proposed here will at least provide a basis for further discussion on how the relative frequency with which certain species appear in



Tim Loseby

291. Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 1997. Perhaps the most fondly regarded of all the 'Shetland specials', this species is extremely skulking by nature but can be equally confiding and approachable once found. Fair Isle is the place to find them – an amazing 68% of all British records to date have been on Fair Isle – but how much of that is down to the presence of a large concentration of birders each September on a small island with little cover? Is this species, in reality, more widespread along the east coast of Britain?

Britain may be explained. At present, the collective understanding of winter bird distributions is insufficient either to prove or disprove the theory. Only through increasing observer coverage and awareness, particularly in presently under-watched regions, will we add some much-needed clarity to this debate.

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The decline of the House Sparrow: a review

J. Denis Summers-Smith



292. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. Tim Loseby

ABSTRACT The House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* population in Britain suffered a major decline in the 1920s, particularly in built-up areas, which coincided with the replacement of the horse by the internal combustion engine. The mixed fortunes of House Sparrows since then are examined, emphasising that factors operating on farmland populations differ from those in towns and cities. Farmland sparrows decreased by about 60% between 1979 and 1995, but then stabilised at a new, lower level; this decline is attributed to changes in agricultural practices. The situation with sparrows in built-up areas is much more complex, with a gradual decline until about 1990. Since then, a massive decrease has led to almost complete extinction in some urban centres, while in the suburbs and small rural towns, sparrows have decreased little, if at all. Some speculative ideas are put forward to account for the situation in built-up areas.

The recent decline of the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* in the United Kingdom and parts of western Europe is widely recognised (Summers-Smith 1999; Crick *et al.* 2002). Indeed, in December 2002, the *Telegraph Magazine* considered the species' appearance on the Red List of UK endangered species (Gregory *et al.* 2002) as one of the notable events of the

year! This paper aims to review the present situation, recognising that there are substantial differences in what is happening in farmland, urban centres, and small rural towns and suburbs, and also between the UK and the neighbouring continental mainland. The decline of the House Sparrow in farmland parallels that of many other farmland species, but

the situation in built-up areas is much less clear. Some ideas are put forward with a view to identifying areas of possible future research.

The farmland situation

Data on House Sparrows in farmland are provided by the BTO's Common Birds Census (CBC), which gives a population index based on annual surveys of 200-300 sample areas, each of approximately 100 ha, distributed across the UK (Marchant *et al.* 1990). Although the CBC began in 1962, sufficient data were not available to obtain a reliable index for the House Sparrow until 1970. Fig. 1, the House Sparrow index from 1970 to 1999, shows an increase up to 1979 followed by a decline of about 60%, although this had flattened out by 1995, suggesting that the farmland population has now stabilised at a new, lower level. This decline is in line with that of many other farmland species (Fuller *et al.* 1995) and is attributed to changes in farming practices:

- the switch from spring- to autumn-sown cereals
- increased use of pesticides
- increased use of herbicides
- the switch from haymaking to cutting for silage before the grass has set seed
- reduced spillage of grain and improved storage to meet EU regulations

These changes have reduced food availability, both of seeds, which sustain birds throughout the year, and of invertebrates, which are required by House Sparrows for rearing young



Fig. 1. Population index for the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, 1970-1999, based on BTO Common Birds Census data.

(Summers-Smith 1980). Studies have suggested that a major impact has been a reduction in the survival rate (Siriwardena *et al.* 1999), specifically of first-year birds (Crick *et al.* 2002), rather than a decrease in productivity.

The situation in built-up areas

The CBC has two limitations as far as the House Sparrow is concerned. First, results are limited to farmland and woodland, and thus provide little information about built-up areas, the prime habitat for this species. Second, the CBC is biased towards the populous southeast, so that the results do not necessarily reflect the true situation throughout the UK. The only trend data for House Sparrows in built-up environments come from Kensington Gardens, London; these include autumn counts, which began in 1925 and have been repeated somewhat erratically since then, together with counts in five years during spring and the breeding season (Sanderson 1995, 1999, 2001). These data are presented in fig. 2, where the breeding-season counts are plotted as estimates of the previous autumn's counts, assuming a 25% winter mortality (Summers-Smith 1959). Fig. 2 shows a decline which appears to have occurred in three phases. A steep decline in the 1920s was caused by the replacement of the horse with the internal combustion engine and the consequent loss of food to House Sparrows, in the form of spillage from nosebags and undigested seed in horse droppings (Summers-Smith 1963). There is only one count available for this period, but it is likely that by the start of the 1930s the population had eventually stabilised

at a new level (this phase is shown tentatively by a dashed line). Subsequently, a gradual decline from 1945 to 1975 is followed by a rapid decline from about 1990/91 to 2001. The transition from the second to the third phase is not defined precisely, but for the sake of illustration the phases are joined by extrapolation of the lines of best-fit. Anecdotal evidence in support of the last phase is provided by numerous letters from the general public to the press.

In the absence of trend counts, some information on the urban-centre situation is

available from sample censuses in three British cities: London (R. Bland *in litt.*, who analysed London Natural History Society counts from 1925-1998), Glasgow (author), and Edinburgh (Dott & Brown 2000). These are supplemented by counts from Dublin, Ireland (author), and Hamburg, Germany (Mitschke 1999; Mitschke *in press*; Mitschke *et al.* 1999), and shown in fig. 3, superimposed on the plot for Kensington Gardens (fig. 2). The points are plotted as breeding-season densities, previous autumn count figures being reduced by 25% (see above). The sample census results clearly support the separation of the second and third phases of the sparrow decline, in particular the repeat censuses from all locations, which confirm the steep decline in the 1990s.

Similar census counts from small rural towns are also plotted in fig. 3: data from Stockton-on-Tees, Co. Durham, 1959 (Summers-Smith 1963); Tranent, Lothian, 1986 (da Prato 1989); Crewkerne, Somerset, 1976 and 1996 (Parsons 1999); Guisborough, Cleveland, 1997 and 1998 (Summers-Smith 1999); Sandhurst, Berkshire, 2000 (Sussex 2000); Sandhurst and Crowthorne, Berkshire, and Bracknell, Berkshire, 2001 (Robinson 2002). These counts show no significant change in House Sparrow numbers during this period, though it is possible that any declines in small towns may have been buffered by birds moving in from adjacent farmland.

The BTO's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) provides more relevant data on the House Sparrow in built-up areas, though this study did not begin until 1994 (Noble *et al.* 2001). The BBS shows that built-up areas have the highest den-

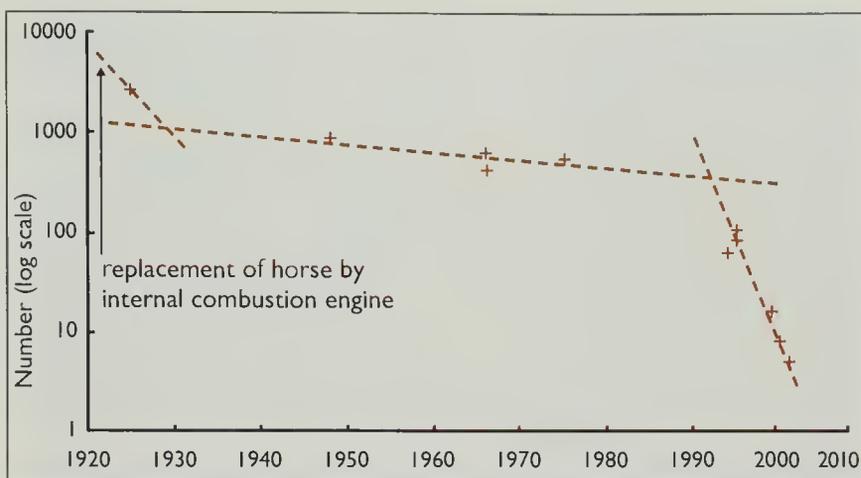


Fig. 2. Autumn counts of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in Kensington Gardens, London. The data come from autumn surveys and breeding population estimates, the latter plotted as the number counted the previous autumn minus an assumed winter loss of 25%. 1945-1975: $r = -0.78$, ns, $n = 4$; 1996-2001: $r = -0.89$, $p < 0.05$, $n = 6$.

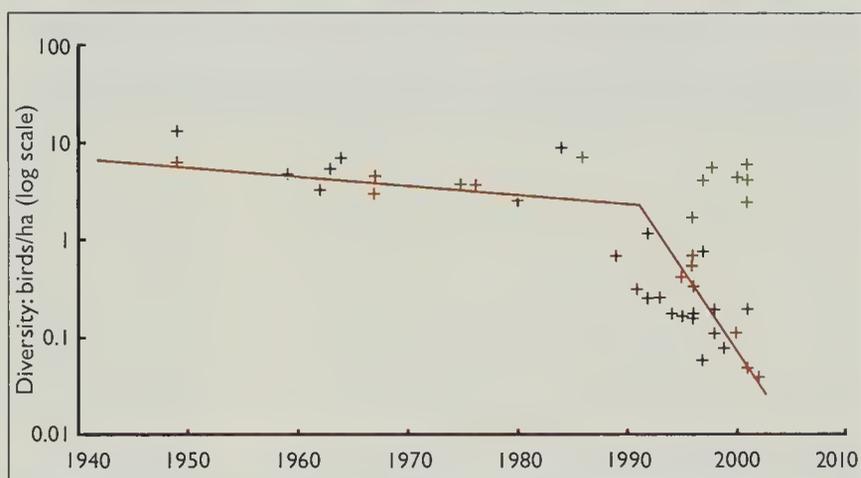


Fig. 3. Breeding-season density of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in built-up areas, based on sample censuses: Red – Kensington Gardens, London (see fig. 2) Black – Large town centres (London (excluding Kensington Gardens), Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, Hamburg) Green – Small rural towns ($r = -0.15$, ns, $n = 9$)

sities of House Sparrows in Britain, holding over 60% of the population, with more than half of this figure in suburban areas. This survey shows that during 1994-2000, the urban population decreased by 5.6%, while the suburban population decreased by 3.3% (although these differences are not significant – Crick *et al.* 2002).

The reality is more complicated, however, than the above generalisations suggest. The situation in urban centres is by no means simple; while there have been dramatic declines, almost to the point of extinction, in central London (RSPB 2003), Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin, Hamburg, and Ghent (pers. obs.), there appear to have been no comparable declines in Man-



Rebecca Nisbet

293. House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in farmland are thought to have decreased by around 60% between the late 1970s and the mid 1990s in Britain. Agricultural intensification is thought to have been the main factor behind this decline, in particular the shift from spring- to autumn-sown cereals in arable areas, and the replacement of haymaking with silage in pastoral regions; greater use of herbicides and pesticides; and the reduced spillage of grain as farming operations have been modernised and 'cleaned up'.

chester (Prowse 2002), Berlin (Böhner *et al.* in press) and Paris (McCarthy 2000; C. Galinet & C. Wilkinson, *in litt.*). Moreover, BBS data suggest that, while there has been an overall decline of House Sparrows in England during 1994-2000, the species has actually increased in Scotland and Wales (Raven *et al.* 2002).

While the separation of built-up habitats into large town centres and small rural towns/outer suburbs is a convenient generalisation, the urban habitat is by no means uniform, and detailed studies have shown that the decline of sparrows in human settlements has been patchy. The patchiness of the decline in London has been clearly demonstrated by the RSPB (2003), and also shown by, for example, Paston (2001) and Robinson (2002). Paston and Robinson both found the decline to be more severe in the 'leafy' suburbs than in more socially deprived areas, whereas Wilkinson (*in prep.*) found that the presence of House Sparrows in suburban Oxford was positively related to the density of bushes, particularly native species, in gardens. In the outskirts of Hilversum, in the Netherlands, van der Poel (2000) showed that sparrows favoured newer buildings (later than 1953) rather than the older ones. These differences tell us more about the habitat preference of the species, but perhaps the habitats abandoned by the birds also provide some clues on the factors influencing the decline.

Discussion

For a species to decline there must be either a reduction in breeding productivity and/or in survival. Survival can be determined from ringing recoveries or resightings of colour-ringed individuals; determination of breeding productivity is much more difficult for a multi-brooded species like the House Sparrow, unless marked individuals are followed throughout the breeding season. In fact, it is too simplistic to treat productivity and survival as independent. For example, the adults may work harder to maintain their output at a cost to their own survival. Shortage of winter food may

not reduce survival, but could delay the onset of breeding (although this is not supported by the BTO's Nest Record Scheme, which suggests that the beginning of breeding has advanced by five days in the past 25 years, in line with climate change – Crick *et al.* 2002). Moreover, a proportion may fail to breed, or perhaps rear young which are not fit enough to survive and fill gaps in the breeding population.

The situation in farmland appears to be quite distinct from that in urban centres. A major decline in farmland began in the late 1970s, but after a decrease of about 60% the population had stabilised by about 1995 (fig. 1). In contrast, a gradual decline in urban centres continued, with little change for 50 years from the 1930s, before the urban population went into free-fall in the late 1980s or early 1990s (fig. 3). A gradual and continuing decline is probably also taking place in suburbs and small towns, though it has not yet become catastrophic.

There is no evidence of any significant interchange of House Sparrows between farmland and urban populations (Summers-Smith 1956; Wernham *et al.* 2002), and it is almost certain that the factors for the declines are largely unrelated. Thus, while the work of the Farmland Bird Group at Oxtord (Hole *et al.* 2002) has provided sufficient data to assess the relevance of productivity and survival for farmland sparrows, the data are not necessarily relevant to those birds in

towns and cities. The urban sparrow population itself is far from homogeneous and is more realistically split into birds which populate urban centres and those in the outer suburbs/small towns, perhaps subdividing the latter further by separating birds living in 'rural' built-up areas. The key parameter defining these habitats is the 'home range' – the foraging area utilised by the birds – which for adult House Sparrows extends to a radius of 1-2 km from the breeding colony (Summers-Smith 1963).

A number of explanations, summarised below, have been proposed for the urban House Sparrow decline. Clearly, any credible explanation must take into account the difference in the rate of decline between urban centres and the suburbs.

(i) Increased predation by Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*, Magpies *Pica pica* and domestic cats *Felis catus*

Eurasian Sparrowhawks and Magpies have certainly increased in urban areas, but there is no reason why they should have had more impact in city centres. Furthermore, Magpies predate eggs and chicks in open nests and are unlikely to have had much impact on sparrows, which breed in enclosed, inaccessible sites. The domestic cat, on the other hand, is a significant predator of House Sparrows (Churcher & Lawton 1987). Woods *et al.* (in press) suggested

that cats (both domestic and feral) accounted for 26 million House Sparrows in Britain during 1997, of a total population of 49 million (Crick *et al.* 2002). This is a significant cull rate, but it is a spot check and it is not known whether the number of cats increased over the period of interest. With a limited supply of prey in city centres, however, a differential effect between city centres and small rural towns must be a possibility.

(ii) Competition for food from other urban species

Feral Pigeons *Columba livia* and gulls *Larus*, particularly Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*, are the main potential competitors for food, but it is unlikely that either would give rise to a differential effect between the two urban habitats.

(iii) Loss of nesting opportunities

A reduction in the availability of suitable nest holes in modern buildings and renovated old buildings must have occurred. The effect could be more severe in city centres, since thick hedges provide alternative nesting opportunities in rural towns and modern housing estates.

(iv) Spillover from farmland

The farmland decline preceded that in the cities and some suggest that the urban decline was a consequential effect. This seems unlikely, owing



Tim Loseby

294. House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* and Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* crowding round a bird-feeder in a suburban Kent garden. Sparrows in some suburbs and small towns of Britain have not experienced the alarming population crash which has been evident in many city-centre populations since the early 1990s.

to the lack of exchange between the two habitats, and because any knock-on effect from farmland would have been more likely to affect small rural towns than urban centres.

(v) Disease

House Sparrow populations affected by epidemic disease have been reported by Menegaux (1919-21) and Stenhouse (1928), but such declines are limited in duration because the disease organism attenuates as the host develops resistance – in other words, quite different from the present urban-centre decline, which has continued for at least ten years.

(vi) Traffic

Greater volume of traffic leads to increased disturbance and pollution from exhaust fumes, both of which would be greater in city centres than small towns. It seems unlikely that this alone could have been responsible for the urban-centre decline, but the introduction of unleaded petrol in the UK in 1989 was important. This involved the replacement of the octane improver tetra-ethyl lead by methyl tertiary-butyl ether. The latter is a carcinogen, and may enter the environment through spillage at filling stations and incomplete combustion in engines idling when stationary. Joseph (1999) attributed an increase in asthma in children and domestic cats in Philadelphia to toxic vapours

(methyl nitrite and compounds with hydroperoxy radicals) in the exhausts of engines running on unleaded petrol. It seems unlikely that this could cause sparrow deaths, but might depress invertebrate populations.

Bower (1999) attributed the decline in House Sparrows in Hamburg to a lack of insects, particularly at the beginning of the breeding period. Further support for the idea that shortage of invertebrate food could be important is provided by preliminary results from an ongoing study in Leicester (Vincent *et al.* 2002). In 2002, there was found to be complete failure of 14 broods (46%) in suburban nests, all but one of these in nests where clutches had been laid after the end of May. In the majority of cases, the nestlings died after only a few days, suggesting that starvation, possibly resulting from lack of invertebrate food, was the cause. Van der Poel (2002) suggested that the decline in Dutch urban centres was down to a lack of insects. Unfortunately, no relevant data on invertebrate populations in urban habitats are available, and there is no consensus as to causes of the shortage, although garden pesticides could be a possible factor in suburbia.

Siriwardena *et al.* (1999) and Crick *et al.* (2002) suggested that decreased survival was the reason for the House Sparrow decline, whereas lack of invertebrates would cause a decrease in productivity. Their conclusions are not necessarily incompatible with a view that invertebrate population declines are important: they were based respectively on the national datasets of the BTO and a specific farmland investigation and, as already mentioned, may not be strictly relevant to the urban situation.

The question of why House Sparrows should have declined so markedly, yet other urban species have not been similarly affected is also important. The other significant city-centre species, the Feral Pigeon, rears its young entirely on a vegetable diet and thus would not be affected by a shortage of invertebrates. Other small



Tim Loseby

295. One factor which may have adversely affected the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* in built-up areas in the latter part of the twentieth century is the more efficient design of modern housing (and the renovation of older buildings), which offers fewer safe nesting opportunities for sparrows

passerines form a less significant part of the urban avian biomass, so that any decline may be less noticeable, at least by the general public.

A hypothesis

I suggest that the following factors may, in combination, have been responsible for the urban-centre decline of House Sparrows, yet have had less effect in small rural towns and suburbs:

- increased predation by domestic cats
- loss of nesting opportunities
- pollution from unleaded petrol
- increased use of pesticides in parks and gardens

In addition, the House Sparrow is a social animal which nests in loose colonies and depends on social stimulation for its breeding success. Reduction of colony size below some critical threshold may impair breeding behaviour to the extent that success declines, perhaps ultimately resulting in the disappearance of the colony. This is known as the 'Allee Effect' (Allee 1938), one of the best known examples being the demise of the Passenger Pigeon *Ecopistes migratorius* (Halliday 1980). Such an effect is shown schematically in fig. 4. The way gaps in the breeding population were quickly filled prior to the recent decline (Summers-Smith 1963) is cir-



Hugh Harrop

296. Male House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Maywick, Shetland, April 2003. The decline of the House Sparrow is far from uniform and, in contrast to the situation in most of Britain, the species may even be increasing in Scotland. Is this merely due to the persistence of more traditional agricultural practices in remote areas, such as Shetland, or is there a more subtle reason? We simply do not know.

cumstantial evidence of the presence of 'floaters', birds which could not find a gap in existing social communities. Reduced breeding output because of breeding impairment, together with loss of colonies due to an Allee Effect, would reduce the number, and possibly quality, of such floaters. This could explain the difference in the rate of the decline between urban centres and small rural towns, if decreases in the latter have not reduced colonies to the critical size. Some support is given for this idea by a study of House Sparrows in London currently being carried out by Helen Baker (verbally). Preliminary evidence suggests that the decline she has recorded is not merely a function of reduction in colony size, but rather of increased dispersion of the colonies.

These ideas are not presented as 'the answers' to the House Sparrow problem, but in the hope of stimulating further research to test them along with other possible causes of decline.

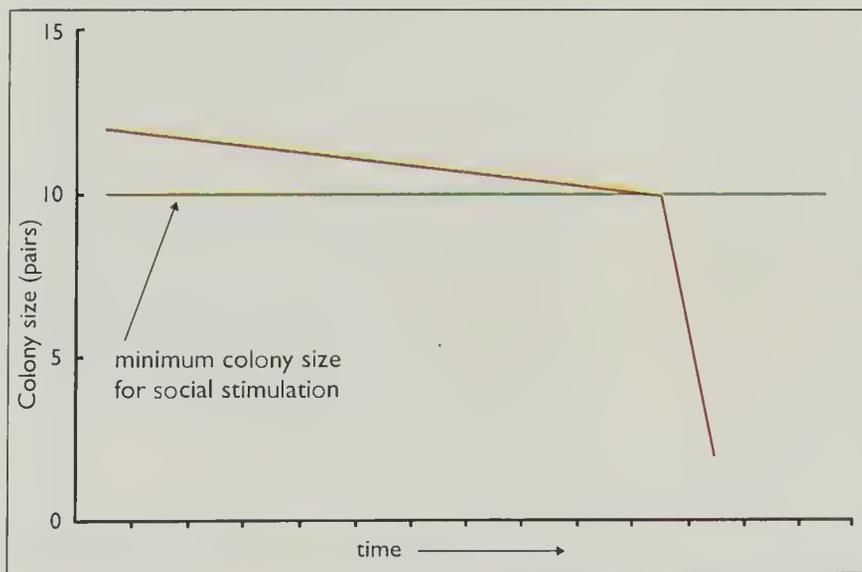


Fig. 4. Schematic representation of the 'Allee Effect'.

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Conservation research news

Compiled by Graeme Buchanan, Andy Evans,
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Variable responses to climate change by breeding tits

Birds of many species are now nesting earlier, a fact generally attributed to our changing climate. Warmer springs, it is argued, bring forward the time of peak food abundance, and since birds synchronise their breeding cycle with food availability, they need to nest earlier too. One problem for a bird, though, is predicting exactly when food availability will peak. There is a long lead-in time before nestlings are ready to feed, involving egg-laying and incubation. Another problem is that an overall trend towards earlier springs conceals the great climatic variation between years, and requires the birds to respond accordingly. Some species are remarkably flexible and have a number of ways in which they can adjust their hatching date, even after the first egg has been laid. Analysis of long-term breeding data of Great Tits *Parus major* in Wytham Woods, Oxfordshire, has revealed some of these subtleties. Cresswell & McCleery (2003) found that tits opted to vary both clutch size and the timing of incubation in order to achieve synchronisation (with food supply) but not laying interval or the duration of incubation. During the 39-year study period, the tits had actually improved their level of hatching synchronisation with food availability, perhaps because warmer springs allowed them to start laying even earlier relative to the food peak, making it easier to start incubating at just the right time, with concomitant improvements in productivity.

Comparison of Great Tit populations elsewhere suggests that there are other issues to consider, however. In 13 study sites throughout Europe, only five (including Wytham) have recorded earlier laying dates in the past 20 years (Visser *et al.* 2003). At such a large geographical scale, we would not expect climate changes to

have been uniform across all areas, but differences in the degree of change still did not account for all the variation in laying dates. Instead, Visser *et al.* believe that the key factor is whether or not the tits have a second brood. They suggest that fewer birds are attempting to raise two broods because warmer temperatures cause the food peak to pass more quickly, meaning that there is less food available for later nestlings. By switching to single broods, the laying date of the first egg would become *later*, improving synchronisation of the single brood with the food peak and compensating for the earlier spring. The authors found that sites where the number of double-brooded tits had declined were those where laying date had not become earlier, and this applied to both Great Tits and Blue Tits *P. caeruleus*. Hence there is the counter-intuitive situation that an apparently longer breeding season has resulted in fewer nesting attempts for some birds.

With Cresswell & McCleery indicating that productivity has probably increased for single-brooded tits and Visser *et al.* suggesting that productivity has decreased for those rearing two broods, the implications for overall population trends are unclear. Nonetheless, these studies continue to shed light on birds' adaptability to changes in their environment, and further complicate our ability to predict the impact of climate change.

Cresswell, W., & McCleery, R. 2003. How Great Tits maintain synchronization of their hatch date with food supply in response to long-term variability in temperature. *J. Anim. Ecol.*, 72: 356-366.

Visser, M. E., Adriaansen, F., van Balen, J. H., Blondel, J., Dhondt, A. A., van Dongen, S., du Feu, C., Ivankina, E. V., Kerimov, A. B., de Laet, J., Matthysen, E., McCleery, R., Orell, M., & Thomson, D. L. 2003. Variable responses to large-scale climate change in European *Parus* populations. *Proc. Roy. Soc. B* 270: 367-372.

Near-extinction of *Gyps* vultures across the Indian subcontinent

The catastrophic collapse of populations of Long-billed *Gyps indicus* and White-rumped Vultures *G. bengalensis* in India, Pakistan and Nepal is already having profound effects on the ecosystem and is also of concern for human health and welfare. The proliferation of uneaten cattle carcasses has led to increases in other scavengers such as feral dogs – the main means of rabies transmission to humans – and possibly rats too. Other disease risks may include bubonic plague and anthrax. Livestock too may be at risk from dog- and rat-borne pathogens such as canine distemper virus and canine parvovirus and certain bacteria. Furthermore, there may be serious economic impacts as a result of the declines, with the need to deal with carcass disposal and disease spread, while there are impacts of cultural and religious significance too. The Parsees traditionally dispose of their dead by offering them to airborne scavengers for consumption in ‘towers of silence’. Before the crash, an entire body would have been consumed within an hour; now the vultures have gone and this method of disposal is no longer

practical. Both vulture species are now listed as critical, among the most threatened birds in the world. Pain *et al.* (2003) describe the international research effort underway to identify (and hopefully rectify) the cause of the declines. While the causal factor(s) have yet to be established with certainty, food shortage and persecution are unlikely to have played a major role. Although a toxin or contaminant has not been discounted (and see *Brit. Birds* 96: 349), an infectious disease is still thought the most likely hypothesis. If disease *is* to blame, there is concern that it could spread to other members of the genus and track through the Middle East to Africa where the ecological consequences would be devastating. Whatever the cause of the problem, halting the declines in *Gyps* vultures is, without doubt, the most urgent problem in ornithological conservation today.

Pain, D. J., Cunningham, A. A., Donald, P. F., Duckworth, J. W., Houston, D. C., Katzner, T., Parry-Jones, J., Poole, C., Prakash, V., Round, P., & Timmins, R. 2003. Causes and effects of temporospatial declines of *Gyps* vultures in Asia. *Conserv. Biol.* 17: 661-671.

What determines the foraging distribution of raptors on heather moorland?

To test the prediction that mobile predators hunt in areas of high prey densities to maximise their returns, Thirgood *et al.* (2003) investigated the factors affecting foraging distribution of raptors on heather moorland. During the breeding season, both male and female Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* foraged close to the nest-site (although the effects of prey abundance and habitat could not be separated); neither Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* nor Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* displayed any relationship between foraging and prey abundance, nest-site or habitat; while both Common Kestrels *F. tinnunculus* and Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* (considered to be vole *Microtus* specialists) were recorded less frequently in years when small mammals were less abundant. In winter, male Hen Harriers left the moors, and females tended to forage in areas with more grouse *Lagopus/Tetrao* and small mammals.

Peregrines were also recorded more frequently in areas where grouse were abundant, whereas Common Buzzard and Common Kestrel numbers fluctuated between years, probably in line with small mammal abundance.

This study demonstrates that specialist predators (Common Buzzard, Common Kestrel and Short-eared Owl) respond to temporal but not spatial fluctuations in their main prey type (small mammals), while generalists (Hen Harrier and Peregrine) respond to overall prey abundance. The prediction that mobile predators hunt in patches with higher energy returns is supported for both groups of species, although the authors suggest that generalists do switch between prey types as the relative profitability of hunting for each changes.

Thirgood, S. J., Redpath, S. M., & Graham, I. M. 2003. What determines the foraging distribution of raptors on heather moorland? *Oikos* 100: 15-24.

Siberian White Crane

Although not the rarest of the world's cranes, Siberian White Crane *Grus leucogeranus* is arguably the most threatened, with a global population currently estimated to number less than 2,500 individuals. Three isolated breeding populations exist in northern Siberia, where the species favours lowland marshes and wetland depressions in the tundra and tundra/taiga transition zone. The hitherto unknown breeding sites of the two western populations were discovered by Russian scientists in 1978 in the upper Ob' River basin of northwest Siberia, while the third population breeds on the tundra of northern Yakutia in eastern Siberia. The isolation of the two western populations from the much larger eastern one suggests a formerly more widespread distribution. In these remote regions, Siberian White Cranes are difficult to find, often nesting several kilometres from neighbouring pairs, and to study. Like most Palearctic cranes, however, they are highly migratory, travelling up to 6,000 km to three disjunct wintering areas, where they congregate in large flocks, often numbering hundreds of birds. Siberian White Cranes are particularly adapted to excavating aquatic plants from soft muddy soils and shallow waters on tidal mudflats, bogs and marshes, and depend heavily upon a limited number of large undisturbed wetlands for feeding (Potapov & Flint 1989; Meine & Archibald 1996). This, together with their social behaviour, has enabled accurate surveys of wintering populations for some years, providing reliable data on population dynamics and breeding success. Reproduction rates for the eastern and western populations, estimated by the ratio of juveniles to adults in wintering areas, suggest that survival rates in the breeding areas are good, and typical of a healthy crane population (Archibald & Mirande 1999).

Although migration routes, particularly of the two western populations, are poorly known, one group, believed to be the westernmost population, makes regular stopovers during migration in the Naurzum Nature Reserve in western Kazakhstan, and the Astrakhan Nature Reserve in the delta of the Volga River, Russia, which lies on the northwestern shore of the Caspian Sea and just within the boundaries of the Western

Palearctic. In the colder conditions of late October/November, they continue south to wintering areas on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea in Iran. Although greatly reduced, this population has been relatively stable in recent years, ranging between 9 and 11 birds since the mid 1980s (Meine & Archibald 1996).

The central population winters in India, but is now confined to the Keoladeo National Park near Bharatpur. Although probably never abundant or widespread, this population declined catastrophically during the twentieth century. From 1965, when 200 birds wintered in Keoladeo, numbers declined to just five individuals in the winter of 1992/93 and, when none appeared in subsequent years, this population was assumed lost. Then, in February 1996, four birds returned, including a juvenile, suggesting that an alternative, unknown, wintering area does exist. Numbers in Keoladeo decreased to just two adults during 1999-2002, and there were none there in winter 2002/03. No juveniles have been seen in recent years, and the prospect of recovery for this population seems bleak (Archibald & Mirande 1999; BirdLife 2001).

In contrast to the critical state of the two western populations, substantial numbers still breed in eastern Siberia. Although the cranes were known to migrate through China's north-east coastal provinces during the late nineteenth century, the actual wintering grounds remained a mystery. This population was 'overlooked' for almost 100 years and it was not until the early 1980s that Chinese researchers realised that Siberian White Cranes were still migrating through northeastern China and must be wintering within the country. Survey teams searched the vast floodplains along the Yangtze River, and in 1983 the population was finally discovered, at Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve in Jiangxi province, numbering in excess of 2,000 individuals. Subsequent surveys of the Yangtze valley, and Poyang Lake in particular, revealed that a few smaller groups were wintering irregularly at other wetlands along the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, and that a total of almost 3,000 birds were wintering in China. Within such a vast region, extending over an area of several thousand square kilometres, crane flocks disperse widely and form



Peter Sacki

297-300. Adult Siberian White Cranes *Grus leucogeranus*, Keoladeo National Park, India, November 2000.



Pete Frank



Peter Sackl



Peter Sackl



301. Adult Siberian White Cranes *Grus leucogeranus*, Keoladeo National Park, India, January 2000. Helmut Pum

smaller groups, making them difficult to survey accurately. It is thought that numbers remained fairly stable between 1988 and 1997, at around 2,500 birds. Aerial surveys at Poyang Lake in 1999 located only 2,004 birds, however, suggesting that this population may also be declining (BirdLife International 2001) or using alternative wintering sites. Vagrants from this population have reached Japan, South Korea and, most recently, Hong Kong.

Ultimately, the Siberian White Crane's long-term survival seems to rely on complete protection from hunting, minimal disturbance, and the prevention of further destruction and degradation of wetlands along migration routes and in the wintering areas. Unfortunately, the cranes face an uncertain future. Increased disturbance on the breeding grounds due to oil exploration and development may affect breeding success, particularly of the two small western populations. Hunting during migration is a serious threat to long-term survival, in particular to the population wintering in India,

which has to run the gauntlet of hunters while on migration through Pakistan and Afghanistan. Oil exploration in northern Yakutia and on the Yamel peninsula may also affect the eastern and central populations. A more imminent threat comes with construction of the Three Gorges Dam in China, which is now nearing completion. The ensuing disruption of the river flow will affect the hydrology of the Yangtze floodplains, including Poyang Lake (Meine & Archibald 1996; BirdLife International 2001). This scheme to control flooding along the lower Yangtze will doubtless limit the number of lakes which are suitable for Siberian White Cranes to feed and roost, and possibly even prevent all flooding. In this worst-case scenario, millions of birds will be displaced, including internationally important populations of several threatened and endangered species, including Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Oriental Stork *Ciconia boyciana*, Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides*, Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*, Baikal Teal *Anas*

formosa, Hooded Crane *Grus monacha*, White-naped Crane *G. vipio*, and the eastern race of Great Bustard *Otis tarda*. In addition, farmland freed from the risk of annual flooding will encourage tens of thousands of people to take up residence in these fertile former floodplains, bringing associated pressures of disturbance and hunting.

Yet there is hope. The International Crane Foundation (ICF), in collaboration with Russian, Indian, and Japanese researchers, has fitted satellite transmitters to Siberian White Cranes in an attempt to establish exact migration routes and important wetlands used for resting and feeding on migration. The ICF has also produced a video in ten languages that informs local people of the need to protect Siberian White Cranes in their countries. In Russia, a more ambitious reintroduction project has been operating for several years to augment the small western populations using captive-bred birds (Friedman 1992; Meine & Archibald 1996). With the initial success of the Whooping Crane *G. americana* reintroduction project in

the USA, using captive-bred birds imprinted to follow a microlight aircraft disguised as a Whooping Crane, a similar scheme is now operating in western Siberia. In 2002, six captive-bred Siberian White Cranes released at the Kunovat Nature Reserve in western Siberia were imprinted on a hang-glider, which they followed to wintering grounds in Iran. The success of this ambitious project depends upon the birds establishing strong pair bonds, returning successfully to their release area and, ultimately, forming a new breeding population.

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302. Juvenile Siberian White Crane *Grus leucogeranus*, Mai Po Marshes, Hong Kong, December 2002. Martin Hale



Notes

Feather lice from Ascension and Magnificent Frigatebirds

In the recent paper on the identification of the 1953 Tiree frigatebird (Walbridge *et al.*; *Brit. Birds* 96: 58-73), the authors drew attention to the identification evidence provided by chewing lice (Insecta: Phthiraptera). A number of lice representing three genera were obtained from the Tiree corpse and the identification of these specimens, held in the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, had been rechecked and compared with current listings of frigatebird lice.

One louse species recorded from the Tiree bird was *Colpocephalum angulaticeps* (Piaget 1880), a species which can be found on both Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* and Great Frigatebirds *F. minor*, but not on Magnificent Frigatebird *F. magnificens*, where it is replaced by the closely related *C. spineum* (Kellogg 1899). Walbridge *et al.* used this as supporting evidence to rule out the possibility that the Tiree bird was a Magnificent Frigatebird. When the paper went to press, there were no fully authenticated records of *Colpocephalum* spp. from Ascension Frigatebirds *F. aquila*.

We have now been able to examine lice collected from Ascension Frigatebirds on Boatswainbird Islet, off Ascension Island, the only breeding place of this species. Following a request from BZ, Richard White, Ascension Island Conservation Officer, kindly collected four lice from Ascension Frigatebird fledglings in December 2002. These lice were slide-mounted and identified by RLP, and deposited in the entomological collection of the Museum of New Zealand, Wellington. The four lice examined were identified as two female *C. angulaticeps* (Piaget 1880) and two female

Pectinopygus crenatus (Giebel 1874).

Magnificent Frigatebird is host to the louse *C. spineum*, and is to date the only known host of this louse species. Our data establish that *C. angulaticeps* is indeed the species of this genus which occurs on *F. aquila* and confirms the evidence from the Tiree specimen's ectoparasites, conclusively ruling out Magnificent Frigatebird. As yet, no *Colpocephalum* louse has been recorded from Christmas Island Frigatebird *F. andrewsi* and thus we hesitate to say that *C. spineum* is host-specific to *F. magnificens* only. This host specificity would be easy to clarify should anyone provide lice from *F. andrewsi* on Christmas Island (please contact any of the authors: see details below).

Pectinopygus crenatus (with type-host *F. aquila*) was the first species of *Pectinopygus* described from any frigatebird species. Two other species were described later: *P. gracilicornus* (Piaget 1880) from *F. minor*, and *P. fregatiphagus* (Eichler 1943) from *F. magnificens*. On morphological grounds it is, however, extremely difficult to separate these three nominal species of *Pectinopygus* and, consequently, they have little value as aids for the identification of frigatebirds at the species level. Many other species of *Pectinopygus* lice occur on almost all other species of Pelecaniformes. In the UK, for example, the *Pectinopygus* lice parasitising Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*, Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, and Shag *P. aristotelis* belong to three different species, one per host species.

We are indebted to Richard White for his efforts in collecting lice.

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Presumed hybrid between Red-backed Shrike and Lesser Grey Shrike in Bulgaria

On 9th May 1998, R. Tsonev observed an unusual shrike *Lanius* in the Pleven region of northern Bulgaria (43°31'N 24°41'E). Further detailed observations of this bird were made on 14th May, over a period of about 20 minutes, during which I was able to obtain four photographs, two of which are reproduced here (plates 303 & 304). It was immediately apparent that this individual did not closely resemble any of the European shrikes. It did, however, exhibit a number of features in common with Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio* and Lesser Grey Shrike *L. minor*, both of which occur in large numbers, and in all suitable habitats, throughout the region. Unfortunately, the bird was not trapped and, therefore, a more detailed examination was not possible; consequently, its true identity could not be established with certainty. Based upon the available evidence, however, it is considered that the combination of plumage characters and structural features point to this unusual shrike being a hybrid between Red-backed Shrike and Lesser Grey Shrike.

Description

Comparatively broad black eye-stripe, broader than that of *collurio* but narrower than on *minor*. Upperparts dark grey, more saturated on crown and, together with the broad black facial

mask, giving it an almost black-headed appearance when viewed from a distance. Narrow, somewhat pale, grey or greyish-white patch on the scapulars, resembling to some extent that of Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor*. Closed wing dark brown, with very small white patch at base of primaries. Cheek, chin and throat white. Breast and belly bright orange-buff (not pinkish as on *collurio* and *minor*). Undertail-coverts white. Tail shape, coloration and length as in *collurio*. The size was the same as *collurio*, or slightly larger.

This putative hybrid closely resembled the description of a known hybrid between Red-backed Shrike and Lesser Grey Shrike described by Eck (1971). Yet, although this individual shared many of the characters that Eck described, it also differed in a number of aspects. These included:

Scapulars

This bird showed a paler area on the scapulars, which was absent on Eck's bird.

Underparts

The sharp contrast between the white throat and orange-buff breast was absent from Eck's bird. The underpart colour could, however, have faded from the specimen after preparation and storage, although this seems unlikely.



Boris Nikolov



Boris Nikolov

303-304. Presumed hybrid Red-backed *Lanius collurio* and Lesser Grey Shrike *L. minor*, northern Bulgaria, May 1998.

Crown

The crown appeared darker than the mantle, while the upperparts of Eck's bird seemed to be uniform grey above, with no contrast between the crown and mantle.

The bird was already paired, or in the process of pairing, with a female Red-backed Shrike. Almost all the Red-backed Shrikes in the area were already paired and the population density was high. The suspected hybrid gave advertising calls, and was observed wing-shivering. Begging-calls resembling the fledgling food calls were heard from the female Red-backed Shrike, and were followed by courtship feeding, during which the suspected hybrid presented the Red-backed Shrike with an insect. All vocalisations of the presumed hybrid shrike were very similar to those of Red-backed Shrike, but more rasping.

Hybridisation in birds is widespread but comparatively rare, with interspecific hybrids occurring at a frequency of approximately one in 50,000 birds (Mayr 1970). Grant & Grant (1992) stated that 9.2 % of all avian species are known to have bred with another species under natural circumstances and produced hybrid offspring. Interspecific hybrids are known among several *Lanius* species (Panov 1989), and Lefranc *et al.* (1989) summarised all records of mixed Laniidae pairings and hybrids observed

in Europe. Red-backed Shrike is known to have hybridised with several species of shrikes, including Brown Shrike *L. cristatus*, Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus* and Woodchat Shrike *L. senator*, as well as Lesser Grey Shrike (Lefranc & Worfolk 1997). There are, however, only three known hybrids resulting from matings between Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes. These species are semi-sympatric and the hybrids between them are presumably the result of accidental hybridisation (Panov 1989).

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Great Ringed Plover smothered by sand

As part of my work as Shorebird Warden at Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve, Lincolnshire in 2002, I was involved in monitoring the breeding success of Great Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*. The trials and tribulations of one pair were of particular interest. On 4th May, four eggs were being incubated at a site at the north end of the shorebird sanctuary, at the point where the beach meets embryonic dunes. Being only 50 m from the deflector fence, it was decided that no protection measures would be put in place, lest they draw attention to the nest. Nonetheless, two eggs were still predated on 8th May, with possible corvid tracks being noted by the nest scrape. Accordingly, a wire-mesh cage, fashioned into a 60-cm-high dome-shape, was

installed, along with a 'flexinet' fence.

During a spell of strong winds on 24th May, it was noted that the cage was encouraging a build-up of wind-blown sand. Although the parent birds were still in attendance, I removed much of the sand that evening. The following morning, it was apparent that sand had continued to drift through the night, and also that an embryo dune which had overshadowed the clutch had shifted into the 'flexineted' area, thus raising the ground level by several centimetres. Furthermore, a near-perfect dome of sand had accumulated within the cage, and it was clear that the slight wind resistance created by the cage had caused this accumulation of sand. No plovers were to be found in the area,

and both the cage and fence were removed.

Several days later, no plovers had shown further interest in the site and it was decided that the nest should be excavated to check the eggs for fertility and proximity to hatching. Astonishingly, a dead female Great Ringed Plover was uncovered, still in the incubating position. It was covered by several centimetres of sand, and was in an early state of decay. It was not possible to establish whether the nest had been immediately buried by sand owing to a sudden collapse of the dune, or whether the wind-blown sand had built up over a period of hours. A post-mortem examination of the plover was carried out by Jason Waine, of the Southcrest Veterinary Centre in Redditch, and this revealed that the bird had indeed died

Tim Sykes

Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve, Skegness, Lincolnshire PE24 4SU

through smothering. Sand was found in the gizzard and intestines, and blood was noted in both the trachea and the lungs. About 18 tapeworms were present in the ileum, and while the bird had undoubtedly been smothered, it was clearly already having some health problems, with a fairly heavy tapeworm burden and a digestive tract disease causing an obstruction.

This remarkable incident testifies to the tenacity and determination of these birds, and highlights the extreme conditions which sometimes have to be endured by shorebirds. It also provides a rare example of wardening intervention having a negative impact on breeding success, as the cage encouraged sand deposition over the nest scrape.

Nest protection of Little Ringed Plovers

Further to recent Notes on Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* (*Brit. Birds* 96: 344-346), and particularly the use of cages to protect nest-sites from predators, I can report the successful use of cages at my local gravel-pit site at Cassington, Oxfordshire. In 2003, I 'caged' eleven nests and without exception the sitting birds immediately accepted the cages. The cages are also useful in preventing accidental damage or trampling, by alerting workers at industrial sites to the superbly camouflaged plover nests.

Terry Godfrey

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I found that a cheap and convenient cage was readily available in the form of white plastic-coated wire bicycle baskets, which cost around £6.00 each from cycle shops, secured by a couple of metal pegs. The dimensions, typically 50 cm x 30 cm x 25 cm deep and vertical wire spacing of about 3.5 cm are ideal.

Hanson Aggregates sponsored the purchase of nest protection cages for use at Cassington Quarry.

EDITORIAL COMMENT Note that Little Ringed Plovers are a Schedule 1 species and that a licence is required before embarking upon this type of study; Terry Godfrey carried out this work under licence No. 2003126.

Feeding behaviour of migrant Ruff

On 1st October 1992, on Fueteventura, Canary Islands, I observed a male Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* feeding on caterpillars from a low, semi-prostrate beet *Beta* plant, close to a roadside footpath near the tourist complex of Caleta de Fuste and some 250 m from the coast (plate 305). Presumably a tired migrant, it was extremely tame, and moved away only momentarily if I approached to within 1 m, while

passing vehicles were ignored. The same bird was again seen on 3rd October, at the same locality, again feeding on the abundant caterpillars from the same species of plant.

Moths bred from caterpillars collected from the plants on 13th October proved to be those of a Pyralid moth *Hymonia recurvalia* (Fabricius). Caterpillars of Noctuid moths are given as food of Ruffs during the breeding season,



Rae Vernon

305. Male Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* taking caterpillars from beet *Beta* plant, Fueteventura, Canary Islands. October 1992.

and have also been recorded in the stomachs of migrant Ruffs in the Ukraine (BWP).

I am indebted to Dr M. Wilson of National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, for help in the identification of both plant specimens and species of moth.

Rae Vernon

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Robins living inside building

In December 2001, while shopping at Frosts Garden Centre at Willington, Bedfordshire, I was surprised to see two Robins *Erithacus rubecula* feeding among the potted plants within the sales area. On my next visit, I again saw at least two (and perhaps more) Robins in the same area, clearly living quite satisfactorily within the confines of the large building. There were only some automatic doors allowing access to the gardens of the Centre, but on warm days double doorways were often wide open, allowing easy access (or escape) for a bird. The Robins appeared to be perfectly at home, taking as little notice of me or the other shoppers as they would of a gardener digging a vegetable patch. Subsequently, I discovered that several species of bird, including Blackbirds

Turdus merula, occasionally entered the Centre, but only the Robins ever stayed inside regularly, and have done so every year for eight or nine years.

It is not unusual for birds to enter buildings accidentally, to take advantage of temporary food supplies in places such as railway stations, or to roost or nest inside buildings when there is easy access. In this case, however, although the Garden Centre's staff did not know of a nest being found within the building, the Robins were clearly taking advantage of warmth, protection and food over long periods. This long-term residence compares, therefore, with that of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* down coal mines (*Brit. Birds* 73: 325-327).

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock

Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Male Song Thrush successfully raising a brood after the death of its mate

The male and female of a breeding pair of Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* were radio-tagged in 2000 as part of a long-term study into the use of farmland habitats during the breeding season in Essex. Both birds were located daily from the day of tagging, the male on 6th March, the female on 12th May. Following an unsuccessful first breeding attempt, a second nest was built close to a busy lane. On 17th May, the female was recovered dead on the lane, having been hit by a passing vehicle. At the time of the female's

death, both birds were feeding nine-day-old nestlings. The male thrush continued to provision the nestlings during the following four days, and all five nestlings fledged successfully on 21st May. The male was subsequently recorded provisioning the fledglings for a further seven days. It would seem likely that the male sheltered the nestlings overnight on more than one occasion, since heavy and persistent rain fell on two nights between 17th and 21st May.

Derek Gruar, John Mallord and Andrew Impey

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Unusual feeding behaviour of Eurasian Treecreeper

On 13th December 2002, I was watching a large number of birds feeding on various fare provided in my garden when my attention was drawn to a Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* shuffling along the ground on the concrete patio immediately below a well-attended peanut feeder. Through my binoculars I could

see clearly that the bird was picking up small fragments of peanuts falling to the ground as the result of feverish activity at the feeder. The bird occasionally flew to a small shrub and moved in more normal fashion but continually returned to the ground to feed again.

Derek Moore

Rowan Howe, Gors Road, Salem, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 7LY

On 28th September 2002, near my home in Banffshire, Northeast Scotland, I disturbed a male Feathered Thorn *Colotois pennularia*, a distinctive orange geometrid moth with a wingspan of around 48 mm, from birch *Betula* foliage. The moth flew away but was seized in mid air by a Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*, which had left a nearby birch trunk. The bird returned to the same trunk, where it froze for several seconds in an upright position, holding the moth firmly by the thorax in its bill. The moth was then swallowed, wings and all, with no apparent difficulty, despite the size of

the prey. It would be unremarkable if treecreepers caught insects they themselves disturbed from trunks, but to see a passing moth 'hawked' so expertly was more surprising.

On 20th January 2003, a Eurasian Treecreeper, which had been working its way along a wooden fence with attached peanut feeder in my garden, flew to the ground and spent about 15 seconds picking up tiny items from beneath the feeder, and probing in the short lawn turf. Eventually, it was chased away by a Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*.

Roy Leverton

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EDITORIAL COMMENT It is well known that Eurasian Treecreepers will forage on surfaces other than trees (e.g. see *Brit. Birds* 84: 512-513). As far as we are aware, however, these are the first documented reports of treecreepers exploiting the now-ubiquitous peanut feeder, although *BWP* quotes several instances of this species taking fat (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 67: 515-516, 69: 310).

Letters

Black Storks with white tails

Observations of Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* with apparently white tails by Santiago Cano Alonso (2002) merit further investigation. The suggestion by Combridge (2003) that this appearance may result from the long white undertail-coverts covering and obscuring the black tail provides the best explanation of this phenomenon. Ryder & Ryder (1982) appear to have been the first to have put forward this explanation, while observations by Firmánský & Horváth (1997) describe similar behaviour, and include a photograph of a Black Stork in flight apparently spreading its undertail-coverts. Although not commonly recorded, this behaviour occurs regularly at the nest, as part of the greeting ritual between returning birds. Cramp & Simmons (1977) note that returning birds perform a mutual 'up-down' display at the nest, both as a greeting and as an infrequently seen threat display towards intruding conspecifics, during which the white undertail-coverts are spread widely and conspicuously sideways, extending beyond the tail on both sides. Similar behaviour has also been documented by Bauer

& Glutz von Blotzheim (1966) and Kahl (1972).

Furthermore, Black Storks regularly spread their undertail-coverts not just on the nest, but also in flight and, in particular, during aerial displays above potential or actual nest-sites. Such displays occur more frequently early in the breeding season, in April and May, during pair formation and nest-site selection. On at least 20 occasions during the last 25 years, I have seen adults expanding their undertail-coverts during aerial displays, observations involving both solitary and paired individuals as well as those in small groups, soaring high above their woodland breeding areas. When extended in flight, the white undertail-coverts can be particularly conspicuous, and cover the upper surface of the tail (which is typically held tightly closed), giving the impression that the tail is either partially or completely white. This is readily visible on flying birds at ranges of 1 km or more.

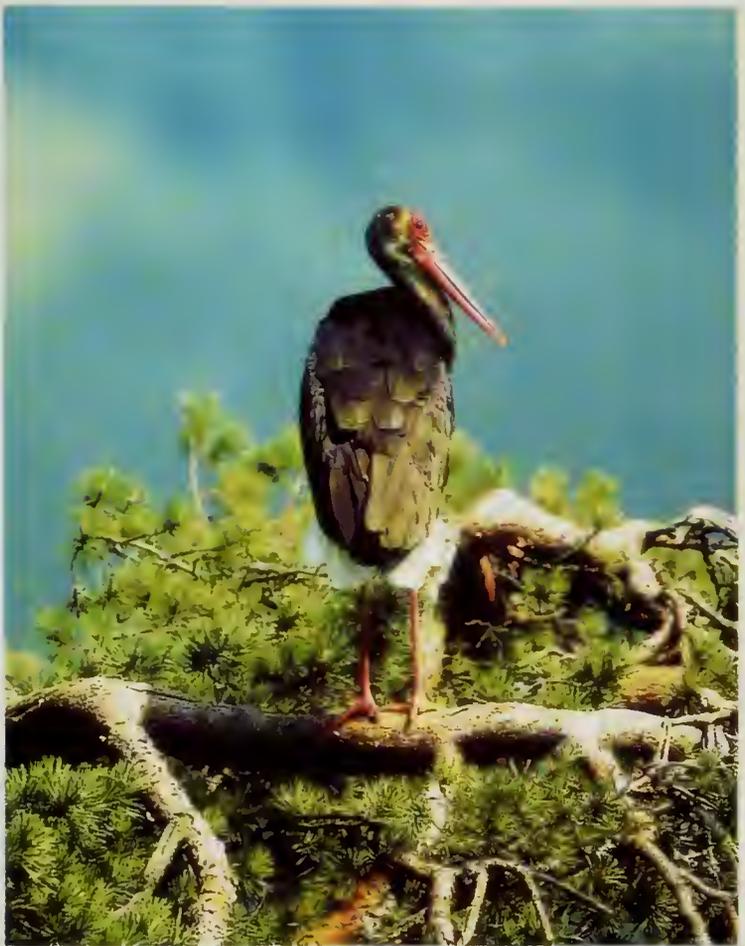
A published account of the aerial courtship display of Black Storks (Sackl 2000) based on field observations in Austria includes a photograph which illustrates this behaviour well (see



306. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, showing spread undertail coverts, giving the impression that the bird has a white, or partially white, tail; Steyrtal, Austria, April 1999.

plates 306 & 307). If seen at greater distance, or when light conditions are unfavourable, it is quite possible to conclude that the bird is showing a white tail, but when the undertail-coverts are retracted, the appearance may change and the tail appear black again. In some ways, this behaviour is analogous to the spreading of the white undertail-coverts in some raptors, including Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* and Eurasian Sparrowhawk *A. nisus*, which in German is termed *Flaggen* (literally 'to fly a flag').

Of course, observations and conclusions must always be made with care, as it is possible that an aberrant Black Stork with a white tail might be encountered. Although I have no personal experience of this, I have, however, photographed a White Stork *C. ciconia* in Hungary which showed a single, almost completely black outer tail-feather. Thus, the possibility of partial albinism in Black Stork, like partial melanism in White Stork, cannot be completely discounted, but I believe the above explanation is more likely to account for most published evidence of 'Black Storks with white tails'.



Norbert Puhringer

307. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, showing spread undertail-coverts at rest, again giving the impression that the bird has a white, or at least partially white, tail; Steyrtal, Austria, July 1997.

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More enigmatic birds

Simon Aspinall raises the question, humorously but pointedly, what constitutes an enigma (*Brit. Birds* 96: 408)? Scientifically speaking, of course, only the Talaud Kingfisher *Todirhamphus enigma* qualifies, closely followed by Zimmer's

Tody-Tyrant *Hemitriccus aenigma* and Broad-billed Sapayoa *Sapayoa aenigma* with Striped Crake *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* as runner-up.

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Birds and past agriculture

In his essay on changes in farming, Shrubbs (2003) says little about events before 1700, but there are some key questions about this period (reviewed recently in Simmons 2001). For example, did all the dry land between the coast and mountaintops become afforested after the glaciations, or was some kept open by grazing animals and/or human incendiaries? If the former is true, there would have been little room for many farmland birds, such as Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, which presumably arrived with agriculture from the Middle East several millennia ago (and for which there is becoming increasingly less room in the modern agricultural landscape). Did the first agriculture involve open fields, or enclosures to protect crops? The Celts apparently had small fields, but were they surrounded by hedges, providing conditions more like those in some parts of the country today? Enclosures have long been part of the landscape in south-east England and the West Country: how far do they go back?

We know that the Anglo-Saxons introduced the European open-field system down the centre of England, where huge fields were divided into strips with large areas left fallow, and any hedgerows were usually restricted to the field boundaries. This would have suited birds of open country – such as Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix*, Great Bustards *Otis tarda*, Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedipnemus*, Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* and Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe*, which all figured on old game lists – especially when increasing areas became sheepwalks with the building of the

monasteries in the twelfth century and labour shortages after the Black Death in the fourteenth century. Whatever the status of older enclosures, the open fields apparently also began to be enclosed much earlier than is sometimes suggested – long before legislation was brought in to deal with the hard core. In fact, enclosure was already extensive by 1517 (Orwin & Orwin 1954). Drainage of the Fens – seasonal swamps which flooded in the winter and dried out slowly in the summer leaving meres inland in a way unknown today, even in those abandoned peat-diggings, the Norfolk Broads – took longer, but the process was speeded up in the middle of the seventeenth century.

All these developments, together with climatic fluctuations, must surely have resulted in changes in our avifauna which, unlike those due to the current mechanisation of agriculture, have received little consideration. While there may be little evidence of these past agricultural practices here now, some of them still persist abroad, notably in southern Europe, and there is room for speculation on how many of the species still found there would have occurred in Britain as well, in the open fields, vineyards, forests and swamps (and similar temperatures) of the Medieval Warm Period. The subject deserves more attention.

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News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

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

Save Our Spoon-billed Sandpipers

For most birders the sight of just one Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* would suffice. But read this evocative passage: 'Can you really better the sight of 75 Spoon-billed Sandpipers, half still in rust-red breeding plumage, packed tightly in a line, all swinging their heads and bodies side to side? Or a cloud of 60,000 Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris* blackening the surface of the mud as they drop down to feed? Or even a single group of 600 Saunders's Gulls *Larus saundersi*, rising and falling, rising and falling onto a carpet of crabs, while in the background a group of Red-crowned Cranes *Grus japonensis* stalk through saltmarsh, clear then

blurred through a rising heat haze?'

Charlie Moores is describing Saemangeum, the South Korean estuary which could shortly be obliterated by a nonsensical reclamation scheme. Charlie, his brother Nial, and their Korean colleague Kim Su Kyung, have alerted the world to the imminent fate of Saemangeum, probably the most important site on the East Asian-Australasian shorebird flyway. And at the eleventh hour, a Korean court has suspended reclamation work at Saemangeum, just as the 33-km seawall blocking the estuaries of the Mangyeung and Dongjin Rivers was about to be completed. But the Korean Government has appealed against the

court's decision to halt the reclamation of 40,000 ha of estuary for farmland. In September, as the appeal is being held, 200 'Spoonyies' – 10% of the global population – will be refuelling at Saemangeum on the west (Yellow Sea) coast of South Korea en route from north-east Siberian tundra to wintering grounds in southeast Asia.

Within a week of the court decision in July, an online petition on the Wetlands and Birds of Korea website supporting the stay of execution had attracted the support of more than 1,000 birders from 40 countries. To add your name go to: www.wbkenglish.com/petition01.asp

Corn Crakes reintroduced to England

The only globally threatened species that nests in Britain may be breeding in East Anglia next year. Up to 50 young Corn Crakes *Crex crex* reared at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park have been released at the Nene Washes RSPB reserve in Cambridgeshire. The Corn Crake Project, a collaboration between the RSPB, the Zoological Society of London and English Nature, aims to re-establish the Corn Crake as a breeding species in England, where it was eradicated by mechanised harvesting machines in the early twentieth century. Since then, the Corn Crake has been restricted to the Western Isles, the Isle of Man and parts of Ireland, where the harvest is late enough for the species to breed and farming is less industrialised than in other parts of Britain & Ireland.

It is hoped that the young crakes released in Cambridgeshire will return from their winter migration to Africa as breeding adults, and become established at the site. This is new territory for a Species Recovery Programme, however: the very successful Red Kite *Milvus milvus* releases have been far simpler by comparison. Peter Newbery, the RSPB's bird reintroduction expert, said that the Corn Crake would never be a common bird in Britain again unless farming practices changed radically, but commented 'At least we know that there is a nucleus of grassland sites which are being managed for conservation.' The £90,000 cost of the reintroduction programme will be shared by the three partners. The young crakes have been bred from captive Corn Crakes, imported from Leipzig in Germany.

Giant woodpecker feared extinct

BirdLife International fear that the stunning Imperial Woodpecker *Campephilus imperialis* may be extinct now that an expedition to the last area where sightings were reported has found no evidence of a resident population. The black-and-white woodpecker, at 60 cm long the biggest in the world, was formerly found throughout the Sierra Madre Occidental mountains of northwestern Mexico, and, historically, was not a rare species within its habitat of high-altitude pine forests. The last confirmed report of the bird was in 1956, although there had been eight local reports of sightings since that date in two remote areas.

A joint expedition by BirdLife and Proxima, a local conservation NGO, spent 16 days in an isolated part of north-central Durango state, where the woodpecker was apparently sighted in a pristine canyon in 1996. The Imperial Woodpecker now joins its close relative, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker *C. principalis*, on the 2004 IUCN Red List as 'Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct)'. The bird's decline has come about through habitat loss – it requires extensive areas (about 26 km² per pair) of continuous open and untouched pine forest with dead trees for feeding and nesting. Although large areas of pine remain, they are now logged, with dead trees being felled. Hunting is also thought to have contributed to the bird's downfall.

Offshore windfarms whip up a storm

The massive expansion in wind energy unveiled by the Government in July was hailed as a dream come true by the green lobby. But it could be a nightmare for migratory birds at some of our most important coastal sites. The Trade and Industry Secretary, Patricia Hewitt, announced that giant windfarms would be constructed in the Wash, the Thames Estuary and off the coast of northwest England. Ultimately, the electricity generated is expected to power 15% of all UK households, and create 20,000 new jobs. It will also help the UK meet its target of 10% of all energy demand coming from renewable sources by 2010. The Scottish Parliament recently approved Scotland's first offshore windfarm – on the Robin Rigg sandbank in the Solway Firth. The £200m facility will consist of 60 turbines, each 130 m high, equidistant between the coasts of Dumfries & Galloway and Cumbria.

Plans for a 30-turbine windfarm at the mouth of the Tees estuary in northeast England have provoked a storm of protest. The turbines would be sited in three lines of ten between 1.5 and 2.5 km off the renowned migration watchpoint of South Gare. Former BBRC member Dave Britton commented: 'As any South Gare seawatcher will



Günter Bachmeier

308. White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, one of the species which is apparently susceptible to collisions with wind turbines in Spain.

know, this area is on the main flight line of passing seabirds, in particular wildfowl (Anatidae), Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus*, skuas (Stercorariidae) and auks (Alcidae). It is also in the way of hordes of migrants arriving at South Gare in a tired state during falls in both spring and autumn.'

Seabirds migrating along the British coastline have yet to experience a forest of windmills scything through the air, but Spanish raptors and storks *Ciconia* have already fallen victim to windfarms. In Navarre, in northern Spain, nearly 1,000 wind turbines have been erected since 1995 along a major migration route. A study in 2001 calculated that 400 Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* had died in

the turbine blades in one year alone. Local conservation group Gurelur says more than 7,000 raptors and storks are dying every year. Alicante-based ornithologist Mark Duchamp has been a persistent critic of windfarms. His controversial claim, based on the Navarre study and the projected spread of windfarms over the next 30 years in Spain, is that 15 million birds will perish in wind turbine blades during that period. British birders will have to be vigilant when the new round of offshore windfarm applications starts if we are to prevent such carnage among our migrant birds.

Link: Spanish Windfarm Study (www.iberica2000.org/Articulo.asp?CodArt=dd4554).

Tougher penalties for illegal wildlife trade

The Government has promised to crack down on the illegal wildlife trade. Environment Minister Elliot Morley announced that tougher penalties will be included in the Criminal Justice Bill currently going through Parliament. He said that the Government was taking urgent action following overwhelming support for increases in penalties outlined in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) consultation paper published in

January. The new penalties will apply to certain offences including trading the highly lucrative 'shahtoosh' shawls, made from the fine hair of slaughtered Tibetan Antelopes, which is illegal in this country. Shahtoosh shawls can retail for up to £15,000 and black-market rhino horn for up to £30,000 per kilo.

Other species, traditionally exploited for their medicinal properties in east Asia and across the world – including the UK – such as tigers, bears, and some plants, are also subject to the controls. The proposals include increasing the

penalty from two to five years' imprisonment for people found guilty of trading illegally in endangered species, and making those offences arrestable. Mr Morley said: 'I firmly believe that we must address the illegal trade in endangered species as a matter of urgency. Only then can we ensure that those wildlife criminals who cynically exploit our world's most endangered species, with no regard for the consequences of their actions, are properly punished.' The new Clause will introduce similar provisions in Scotland.

Scandal at one-million-member wildlife charity

Relax – the RSPB is in the clear. The scandal in question has taken place in the USA. But to grasp the scale of it, imagine that senior staff at the RSPB had drained the reedbeds at Minsmere and drilled for oil beneath the Suffolk countryside in a misguided attempt to raise more funds for Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* conservation. The story appeared in the *Washington Post* and concerns the Nature Conservancy and Attwater's Prairie-chicken *Tympanuchus cupido attwateri*, a grouse which is

arguably the USA's most endangered bird, with just 56 individuals left in the wild spread across three counties of Texas.

According to the *Washington Post*, which spent two years investigating the story, Nature Conservancy (the world's wealthiest 'green group', with \$3bn in assets and a million members) felled trees, allegedly drilled for gas under one of the few remaining breeding grounds of the prairie-chicken, and sold unspoiled land at discounted prices to its trustees for luxury

homes. The paper says that the Mobil oil company gave the charity a stretch of coastline in Texas where Attwater's Prairie-chicken occurs, but that instead of shielding the land, Nature Conservancy sank a gas well, lost a \$10m lawsuit concerning another charity's claim to the oil rights, and exposed the birds, in the words of one of Nature Conservancy's own scientists, to 'a higher probability of death'. Read the full story at: www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,965910,00.html

Design your own RSPB reserve

One would hope that membership applications to our very own million-member conservation charity have soared from grateful listers following not one but two potential firsts for Britain on RSPB reserves in the space of a month. The Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* at South Stack RSPB reserve came hard on the heels of the Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* which graced the observatory area and the neighbouring RSPB reserve at Dungeness, Kent. Of course, the RSPB is a far more enlightened organisation than it was 20 years ago. Another famous first for Britain, which turned up

on a Welsh RSPB Reserve (Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*, at Ynys-hir, Gwynedd/Dyfed, in October 1981), was suppressed. The new-look RSPB puts the news out, manages the hordes of twitchers, and collects their donations.

The RSPB has a checklist of essential criteria against which potential reserves are assessed:

- Does the site contribute to, or have the potential to contribute to, the conservation of Birds of Conservation Concern?
- Is the conservation interest of a potential reserve best enhanced

or maintained via another route?

- Is the site in question a strategic extension to an existing reserve?
- Is the site greater than 500 acres (c. 200 ha)?
- Is the landowner willing to work with the RSPB on the acquisition?
- Does the site have the potential to support a visitor operation?
- Is the potential purchase of the site eligible for grant aid or other financial support?

If all these criteria are satisfied, who knows what you may be ticking off on your local patch.

Limit to Antarctic tourism?

Are you planning that holiday of a lifetime to Antarctica? Don't put it off much longer or you may be at the back of the queue. Tourism in Antarctica may be curbed under measures being considered by the countries which control activities in the world's last great wilderness. The tour operators who ferry thousands of people to see the Antarctic's dramatic landscapes and unique wildlife formed their own self-regulatory body in 1991, the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO). But the number of visi-

tors to the frozen continent is rising rapidly, with around 22,000 expected to enjoy the sights of penguins, seals, icebergs and glaciers next year, compared with annual figures of around 5,000 in the early 1990s.

New Zealand is at the forefront of moves to limit tourism, and Trevor Hughes, of New Zealand's Antarctic policy unit, said that while IAATO and its members had done a good job in promoting high standards so far, more stringent regulation was needed. 'New and bigger operators are coming in:

thousand-passenger vessels which are not members of IAATO, full of heavy bunker oil' Hughes told Reuters at the closing session of a two-week meeting of Antarctic Treaty nations in Madrid in June. 'Tourism is becoming the major human activity in Antarctica and the treaty parties need to take responsibility for its more active and effective management and regulation.' Norway will host a meeting of experts early in 2004 to examine the impact of tourism on the largely pristine Antarctic environment.

Myanmar revisited (or not)

The moral dilemmas posed by birding in countries with repugnant regimes (*Brit. Birds* 96: 349-350) prompted two responses from people familiar with Myanmar (Burma).

John Bellak commented that: 'Not travelling to Burma will certainly not help anyone. When I travelled there, outside Rangoon there was no sign of oppression and in the villages of the Irrawaddy basin there was reasonable prosperity and every sign of contentment.'

And the vastly experienced Oriental birder Nick Dymond, who visited Mount Victoria in March, made these observations: 'Once through the airport, you have virtually no direct contact with the horrendous regime, but lots of contact with the absolutely delightful ordinary people, who I still regard as just about the nicest race of people I have met anywhere in the world. Not to go to Burma would deny these wonderful people the opportunities to meet and make many long-term friends from outside Burma, and it would deny many Burmese the opportunity to make some money from tourists. I am aware that proportions of these monies are almost certainly filtered off by the regime, but tourists are still of significant benefit to the ordinary Burmese people. If birders, and other tourists, were only to visit countries with a clean bill of health as far as human rights are concerned, then surely there are many countries, other than China, Zimbabwe and Israel, that we should not visit? What about India? Maybe we should not go there as the religious and political systems seriously abuse the human rights of the underprivileged? And, of course, no bird tours should go to Bhutan, a country whose leaders have evicted so many thousands of its inhabitants who are left to fester in refugee camps in southern Nepal. And presumably I must cancel my next winter's visit to Australia, a country with an appalling record of abuse of human rights of the "real" Australian people?'

These are all valid points and I am grateful to Nick for a thoughtful response from someone with personal experience of Myanmar. In mid July, the Foreign Office wrote to British tour operators asking them to stop arranging holidays to Myanmar because of the regime's human rights record.

Chichester Harbour Trust

A new charity has been formed to safeguard one of southern England's finest estuary systems – Chichester Harbour. The Chichester Harbour Trust has already raised £100,000 for its long-term plan of acquiring land around the harbour 'to promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the natural beauty and wildlife of the area for public benefit'. And the first person to reach for his chequebook was HRH the Prince of Wales. Chichester Harbour is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a Special Protection Area and a wetland designated under the Ramsar Convention. It has the sixth-largest area of saltmarsh of any British estuary and eelgrass *Zostera* beds unique in Sussex. For further details contact: Chichester Harbour Trust, PO Box 327, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1ZN; tel. (01243) 777632; e-mail admin@chichesterharbourtrust.org.uk

New guide to Holy Island and its birds

Northumbrian birder Ian Kerr has updated his *Lindisfarne's Birds* and published a new guide to birds and birding on Holy Island, off the Northumberland coast. *The Birds of Holy Island* is an excellent introduction to the birds and history of this fascinating island. Besides being a wonderful read, the royalties from the sale of the book will go towards the cost of a new village hall on Lindisfarne, so by buying a copy you will also be supporting a very worthwhile cause. Copies cost £6.50 and are available from Ian Kerr, 7 Crossgates, Holy Island, Northumberland TD15 2ST.

Insects register on the Splatometer

The RSPB's research into declining insect populations in Britain – and the impact of that on insectivorous birds – will be helped next year with the aid of a very low-tech tool. The 'Splatometer' is effectively a square of flypaper on a car's number plate which traps insects when they crash into the car. Drivers will be asked to send the bug-filled sticky paper to the RSPB, which is carrying out the survey next summer. The society hopes that 100,000-200,000 people nationwide will take part in the survey in 2004. There has been widespread evidence to suggest that insect populations have fallen over the last 50 to 100 years or so, possible causes of the decline being pollution, habitat loss and climate change. The RSPB's Graham Madge said: 'There really is huge value in mass-participation surveys such as this – if you can get 100,000 people taking part, that's probably equivalent to several entomologists' life work, and obviously you get the data very quickly.'

Raptors in the firing line

The latest bird persecution statistics released by the RSPB show that crimes against raptors and owls made up more than half of the bird crime detected in 2002. There were 591 crimes against wild birds reported last year, with reintroduced Red Kites *Milvus milvus* bearing the brunt of bird-of-prey persecution. Four were poisoned in 2002 and three were shot (a further 12 were poisoned in 2001 and nine have already been recorded dead from poisoning in 2003). Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* were also targeted, with 24 nests robbed – a further 13 nests have been robbed so far in 2003. Last year, 33 offenders were prosecuted for bird crime and six received jail sentences.

Bikers' capers scuppered by Capers

The 'horse of the woods' has put paid to a new riding activity in the Highlands. Plans for a £200,000 mountain biking centre on Speyside have been scrapped after Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* droppings were found at the proposed site. Capercaillie numbers have fallen dramatically in the past decade to below 1,000 individuals, making it a prime candidate for extinction in the UK – for the second time. So when RSPB staff found droppings and feathers from a female Capercaillie on the site at Glenmore forest identified for the mountain bike centre, the plans were shelved. Scotland is one of the world's top mountain biking destinations, and the sport's world cup was held near Fort William in May this year. The new centre was expected to attract some 50,000 enthusiasts each year to its 20 km of bike trails, but Forestry Commission Scotland, the lead partner in the project, said it had no choice but to drop the scheme for the Capercaillies' sake.

In the 1970s, there were 20,000 Capercaillies in Scotland. The species was hunted to extinction in 1785 but flourished after it was reintroduced from Scandinavia in the nineteenth century. Its latest plight has been partly blamed on global warming. The bird can survive low temperatures, but Capercaillie chicks can succumb to the damp of Scotland's increasingly wet summers. Deer fences and habitat change have also taken their toll, and the bird is now afforded the highest protection under UK and EU law. Three years ago, the EC criticised Britain for not doing enough to preserve the species, and the 'Caper' has the dubious distinction of being the breeding bird most likely to become extinct in Britain over the next 15 years.

Habitat creation as payback for port expansion

Defra, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has completed a three-month consultation exercise on where to create new saltmarsh in southeast England after the House of Lords ruled that two port developments were illegal. Portions of the Medway Estuary in Kent and the Stour/Orwell Estuaries in Suffolk were excluded from classification as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in the 1990s. This was to permit port expansion on Lappel Bank in the Medway, and at Fagbury Flats on the Orwell. The RSPB challenged the decision and the House of Lords referred it to the European Court of Justice, which ruled that EU states could not take economic requirements into consideration when designating SPAs.

Defra now proposes to create new mudflats and saltmarsh at Weymarks, near Bradwell in north Essex, to compensate for the loss of habitat to shorebirds at the two other sites. If the proposed scheme were to go ahead, the existing sea wall at Weymarks would be breached to allow the tides through. Within five to ten years, the 170-ha area would return to the bird-friendly wetland which existed before the advent of modern farming. There would also be a financial saving to the taxpayer. To maintain the existing sea wall at Weymarks would cost around £20m over the next ten years, while the projected cost for the proposed wetland creation is around £5.5m. There is local opposition to the plan, however: about one-third of local people are in favour but nearly half are against. Nature conservation minister Ben Bradshaw pledged that other sites along the East coast would be examined before a final decision was reached early in 2004.

Rarities Committee news

Phil Bristow is the new BBRC member for Wales

The BBRC is delighted to announce that Phil Bristow, from Glamorgan, has been appointed as the new member of the Committee. Phil is well known to Welsh birders and has served on the Glamorgan Records Committee. He has a wide interest in identification and migration and has travelled extensively in North America, Asia and Africa, as well as the

Western Palearctic. He was the BBRC nominee for this vacancy, and has been elected unopposed.

Phil replaces Grahame Walbridge, who will retire on 1st September. We would like to thank Grahame for all his hard work and wish him well for the future, but he will get no well-earned rest. Not only has he been elected onto the BOU Records Committee, but he

will also maintain a role in the sub-species group of BBRC (RIACT), where his extensive knowledge will continue to be an invaluable resource.



The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd.

Chairman: Colin Bradshaw, 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ
Secretary: M. J. Rogers, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

Reviews

HORACE ALEXANDER: 1889 TO 1989. BIRDS AND BINOCULARS.

By J. Duncan Wood.
Illustrations by Robert Gillmor
and Ian Wallace. William
Sessions, York, 2003. 191 pages.
ISBN 1-85072-289-7.
Paperback, £12.00.

Horace Alexander, a fine Quaker and humanist, would not have wanted a monument. But now he has two. The first is his own memoir, *Seventy Years of Bird-watching* (Poyser, 1974), a remarkable record of a lifetime's interest in birds, and bird recording. This new book, beautifully written by Duncan Wood, is a worthy second monument.

I first met Horace Alexander ('H. G.') in the late 1940s, when he was President of the Birmingham Bird Club, and renewed that acquaintance in the 1980s in Philadelphia. Duncan Wood, who knew H. G. far better than I, has

produced a thorough and sensitive biography of a man who can be regarded as one of the founding fathers of modern British ornithology. In the Foreword, Wood reminds us that H. G. maintained 'active involvement in two rather different concerns, the promotion of peace and the study of birds'. Alexander was a seminal figure in the history of modern India, on 'My dear Horace' terms with Mahatma Gandhi. A chapter in this book covers H. G.'s peace work in the subcontinent. Most of the book is about birds, about the rise of field ornithology, about ornithology before and after the Second World War, about modern times, about the ornithologist as observer, and the ornithologist as recorder.

This book has something for everyone interested in birds, in birdwatching and its modern development. H. G. and his brother W. B., Harry Witherby, Norman Ticehurst, Bernard Tucker, T. A. Coward and Max Nicholson were all friends, and present at the birth of *British Birds*, of the Witherby Handbook, of the BTO, and the Edward Grey Institute in Oxford. H. G. was Chairman of the BOU Rarities Committee, and responsible for the publication of *The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland* (BOU, 1971).

H. G.'s work on



Michael Thomas

309. Horace Alexander,
Philadelphia, USA, 1980.

Water Pipits *Anthus spinoletta*, Willow Tits *Parus montanus* and the genus *Phylloscopus* was pioneering, and is well covered in this book. H. G.'s real monument, however, is his work on his local patches (several in England, and in the USA, to which he retired) and his study of distribution. Armed with six-inch Ordnance Survey maps, he was the founder of bird mapping techniques.

Horace Alexander was an extraordinary human being, and a model for all birdwatchers. This splendid book, which includes appendices covering H. G.'s correspondence, extracts from his field notebooks, and his bird drawings, allows us all to share in a remarkable life.

Michael Thomas

Horace Alexander



Fig. 1. Painting of Kentish Plover, 1907.

BIRDS BY BEHAVIOUR

By Dominic Couzens,
illustrated by Philip Snow,
Tony Disley, David Nurney,
Richard Jarvis and
Michael Webb.
Collins, London, 2003. 256
pages; colour illustrations.
ISBN 0-00-711549-0.
Paperback, £16.99.

To quote from the introductory pages '*Birds by Behaviour* differs from other field guides in one very important respect. It ditches all discussion of plumage and plumage patterns and concentrates instead on shape, behaviour and ecology.' In other words, this guide deals with jizz.

The captions and annotations to the copious all-colour paintings form the entire text. Not only are

there no plumage details, but there are no distribution maps, and no mention of voice. *Birds by Behaviour* is, therefore, not a primary identification guide, but rather a companion to a more traditional field guide. The user is advised in the introduction to 'check the plates carefully to find out all the information given for a particular bird. Many of the plates are very "busy", meaning that some notes

can be fairly hidden away in all corners of the page.' This sums up the main drawback: you have to check the whole page carefully, as information on the same species can occur in several different captions and, unless you know your birds in the first place, it is sometimes difficult to associate the caption with the correct illustration.

Moreover, the only way to find all the information on a bird is to use the index, as a species may occur in more than one place in the book. Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, for example, appears under 'Larks, pipits and other small brown birds', 'Seed-eating bird families', 'Larks: song flights and habitats' and 'Larks: other larks', while Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* appears on six different pages, and Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* on no fewer than eight pages! There are also 12 'General comparison' pages, e.g.

'Birds swimming on the sea', 'Birds flying over the sea', and 'Aerial birds'; these are scattered throughout the book so are not easy to find.

Nevertheless, given the subjective nature of the jizz approach, much of the text is, in fact, very good, and captures succinctly the feeling of a species, e.g. Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* is 'pointed at all angles'. The illustrations, too, are mostly useful and pleasing, varying in quality from excellent to average. It is unfortunate that none of the illustrations are attributed to artist, so we are left to guess which of the five artists – a mixture of well- and lesser-known names – painted what.

I looked out my copy of *Birds by Character: the field guide to jizz identification* (by Rob Hume, illustrated by Ian Wallace, Darren Rees, John Busby and Peter Partington; Papermac, 1990), which covers the

same subject, but in a different format. I was impressed afresh by how good it is! Not only is all the information on each species presented together, with two or three species per page, but the illustrations are all excellent, and the text laid out as a series of bullet points which time and again capture the essence of a species. For me, *Birds by Behaviour* suffers by comparison with *Birds by Character*.

There is undoubtedly a good idea here, but I feel the end result is not entirely successful. Perhaps it is overambitious and tries to cover too much ground by including all the breeding birds of Europe east to European Russia and most regular visitors. Stripped down to a guide covering just garden birds and commoner species, and reorganised to allow better retrieval, it could be excellent for the popular market.

Ian Dawson

TRACKS & SIGNS OF THE BIRDS OF BRITAIN & EUROPE

By Roy Brown, John Ferguson, Michael Lawrence and David Lees, illustrated by David Quinn, Chris Shields and Michael Lawrence.

2nd edition. Christopher Helm, A&C Black, London, 2003. 333 pages; 61 colour plates; numerous colour photographs; colour and line-drawings; maps.

ISBN 0-7136-5382-5.
Paperback, £24.99.

The second edition of this well-known guide is almost exactly 100 pages longer than the first (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 80: 443-444), and greater use of colour and crisper design has resulted in a more attractive and user-friendly product. The content of the new edition remains roughly the same as that of the original, but the omission of the checklist of species, which included the scientific names of birds covered, may well be a mistake as they are not

included elsewhere. The book is well illustrated throughout, not only with photographs but also with superb colour plates and admirably clear line-drawings.

The opening chapter outlines the structure of the book, while the second explains how to record, collect and analyse information. The remaining seven chapters deal with specific topics; of these 'Nests and roosts' is, in my view, the weakest and could have been omitted in favour of expanding other sections. The information it presents on nests and nest-sites is very basic and, despite the title, roost sites are not discussed. The decision to use Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* as one of the examples in this chapter seems an odd choice, given the stated geographical limits of the guide.

The sections entitled 'Tracks and trails', 'Feeding and behavioural signs', 'Pellets', 'Droppings', 'Feathers' and 'Skulls' all contain much to interest and inform, most of which is unavailable elsewhere. I found the detail presented on tracks very impressive, but strongly suspect that most people will buy

this volume for the wealth of information on skulls (over 200 examples are illustrated) and, especially, feathers. Numerous colour plates illustrate this last subject and are sufficient reason by themselves to own this book.

A list of addresses of European bird protection and study organisations followed by a bibliography concludes the guide. Unfortunately, neither appears to have been updated since the first edition in 1987. For example, according to the address list, the BTO is still based at Beech Grove, West Germany remains a political entity, while Beaman & Madge (1998, *The Handbook of Bird Identification*) is noted in the text but omitted from the bibliography. It is a pity that not a single eastern European ornithological organisation is listed.

Notwithstanding a few nit-picks, this unique volume deserves a place on the bookshelves of anyone with an interest in birds and the countryside. Even if you own the original edition, the improvements to this one make it worth buying.

Pete Combridge

FLIGHT IDENTIFICATION OF EUROPEAN SEABIRDS

By Anders Blomdahl, Bertil Breife, Niklas Holmström, Christopher Helm, A&C Black, London, 2003. 374 pages; 690 colour plates. ISBN 0-7136-6020-1. Paperback, £35.00.

I borrowed Anthony McGeehan's copy of *Sjöfågelboken: fältbestämning av sträckande sjöfåglar* a few years ago, and he was lucky to get it back! Written in Swedish, it is an excellent collection of black-and-white photographs of seabirds in flight, and a great resource. Bertil Breife and Niklas Holmström were two of its authors, and now they have teamed up with Anders Blomdahl to produce the successor to that book, this time with colour photographs and written in English. Having coveted the first book, I certainly looked forward to the second.

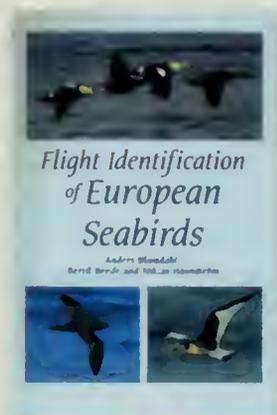
The book has a soft, laminated cover designed for use in the field, although I would be too scared of getting the pages wet to take it out. It covers the expected divers *Gavia*, grebes (Podicipedidae), tubenoses and allies (Procellariidae), gannets (Sulidae), cormorants (Phalacrocoracidae), skuas (Stercorariidae), gulls (Laridae), terns (Sternidae) and auks (Alcidae). It differs from those other two seabird photographic guides, *Photographic Handbook of the Seabirds of the World* (Enticott & Tipling 1997) and *Seabirds of the World: A Photographic Guide* (Harrison 1987) in that wildfowl (Anatidae) are also covered in detail.

A helpful introduction includes basic aspects of identifying seabirds and a very useful table of seawatching sites across western Europe. Each group of species is preceded by a general overview of the key features of the group, while each species account is subdivided into several sections including size, silhouette, flight and flocking, plumage, and – where relevant – subspecies. The text is accompa-

nied by a variety of flight shots illustrating various aspects of the birds' appearance.

Seawatching is a unique discipline. Precise plumage details often take second place behind jizz, subjective impressions and briefly seen plumage 'clues'. The tricky issues involved are well played out in, for example, the account of a possible Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* off Dungeness, Kent (*Brit. Birds* 95: 156-165). So how well does this book communicate these things?

The initial impression is of a fantastic collection of colour photographs, especially of wildfowl in flight. The text is fairly simple and full of information, with quite a few hints and tips which were new to me. The enthusiasm for and knowledge of seabirds which the



authors possess is clear throughout. I decided quickly that this would be a useful reference book. My particular favourites are the information on flock shapes and individual silhouettes of the wildfowl, and the photos of the 'darker'-rumped Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* and the flock of first-summer Ross's Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea*.

Having said all that, I was ultimately a little disappointed. I wonder if many will miss the vital tips because they are buried away in the text. Moreover, photographs alone cannot convey the unique skills which seawatchers typically develop and have to sharpen continually. Take, for example, Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini*. The quickest way to pick them up is on their (almost) unique flight action, most

often confused with Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*. Rudimentary ageing of Sabine's Gulls for me is: white collar = adults... no white collar and shorter-looking tails = juveniles. The rest is usually irrelevant unless the birds are very close. I had hoped for something like a series of vivid sketches to illustrate flight action, flight path and the little plumage clues which are just visible at long range, along with pointers and a short, pithy text. I could easily imagine a similar treatment for the skuas and the *Pterodroma* petrels. It is extremely difficult to convey in photographs alone the 'seawatch experience' and appearance of these birds. I wondered why some species – such as Bar-headed *Anser indicus* and Egyptian Geese *A. aegyptiacus* – were included. Pacific Diver *G. pacifica* is covered as a possible vagrant, but who would claim one on a European seawatch? Yet more pertinent vagrants, such as Capped *P. hasitata* and Herald Petrels, Yellow-nosed *Thalassarche chlororhynchos* and Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans*, are missing, and there is nothing at all on that prized seabird, the Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*.

This could have been an opportunity to be at the forefront of new identification challenges such as Cory's *Calonectris diomedea* versus 'Scopoli's' Shearwater *C. d. borealis* and the tricky black-and-white shearwaters. So a comment is made on the characteristic 'head-lifting' of Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*, when in fact it is also a normal feature of Levantine Shearwater *P. yelkouan* (and illustrated in the published photos!). The photographs are mostly helpfully and accurately labelled, though the 'first-calendar-year' *Larus michahellis* from Romania is, in fact, a first-year *L. cachinnans*.

So, we do not yet have the definitive European seabird guide. Nevertheless, I do want to emphasise that this is a great collection of photos with a useful text, and is a resource well worth having.

Martin Garner

**ERIC ENNION:
A LIFE OF BIRDS**

Edited by Bob Walthew.
Lavenham Press, Lavenham,
2003. 80 pages; 83 paintings.
ISBN 0-9526-2364-X.
Hardback, £25.00.

Love him or hate him – and sadly some still doubt his great talent – Eric Ennion was one of the true originals of twentieth-century bird art. His particular genius was for capturing the free movement, dynamism and individuality of his subjects. As in real life, they are always doing something, which makes his paintings the antithesis of field guide plates: the birds are as they *are*; not as they should be.

Some people will have encountered his work only in the worst of all contexts. In the 1960s, the oil

company Shell commissioned 81 paintings to appear in James Fisher's scholarly *tour de force*, the classically misnamed *Shell Book of Birds* (1966). In the end, they only used 48 of the complete set and these appear at a size little bigger than a large postage stamp, with terrible colour reproduction. The present volume has brought them all together for the first time, at or close to their original size. They are a beautiful sample of the master's work when Ennion was, in the words of Robert Gillmor's introductory essay, 'at the height of his powers as an artist'.

While they are representative of his talent, they are not – even his most ardent admirer must acknowledge – his best work. To use a somewhat elevated comparison, Ennion was the Leonardo da Vinci of bird art – a multi-talented

man tempted from his main calling by a crowd of other interests. In his long life he was a founder of the Field Studies Council's centre at Flatford Mill, the warden of a bird observatory, a keen ringer, a student of bird migration, an art teacher and a writer. Fortunately, this book reflects the other sides of Ennion by pulling together a selection of his articles from the 1950s and 60s. As with other bird painters, the laser-eye and sense of overall design were easily transferred to the written word and he produced natural-history essays of great insight and originality. The new book therefore delivers a double helping of the great man's gifts, and I would heartily recommend it both to long-time admirers and to any who may never even have heard of him.

Mark Cocker

**A CONCISE HISTORY OF
ORNITHOLOGY**

By Michael Walters.
Christopher Helm, A&C
Black, London, 2003. 166
pages of narrative; 80 pages of
appendices.
ISBN 1-873403-97-6.
Hardback, £30.00.

This deceptively slim book contains about 95,000 words on the lives and works of the founding figures of ornithology. Over 350 people from all the continents are credited with some part in the development of the science and many of the 60 or so major contributors feature in 90 fascinating black-and-white illustrations. The bibliography lists about 450 references, dated from 500 BC to AD 2000. The appendices present 30 systematic orders constructed during the long ascent to an intelligent classification of birds.

Having recently become fascinated by the progenitors of my chosen hobby-cum-science, I opened the book with great expectation but, about 40 pages in, I faltered. The interruption to my enjoyment and learning was no

fault of the author; it was entirely due to the small typeface used. This has allowed 800 words per page, but no easy track from line to line. I solved the problem by changing up to my painting glasses and ploughed on.

As the passages on early British ornithologists came and went, I felt some disappointment at the often brief treatment (or exclusion) of personal heroes, but full compensation for this came in a growing



understanding of the contributions of the ornithologists of other countries. Some sense of the international web of ancient ornithology is available in other histories but, laudably, Michael Walters has defined many more linking strands. I read on with renewed interest, relishing particularly the occasional tales and snippets of verbatim exchanges.

Actually, I could have done with more of these to lighten what was increasingly apparent as the book's main theme, the 'critical path' of avian systematics, also exhibited in the appendices but there with virtually no explanatory comment.

Having disclaimed any personal attempt to discuss its more recent developments, the author (or publisher?) nevertheless asked John Coulson to add a chapter on the ornithology of the twentieth century. In this, I found some fuller recognition of the diversification of its current disciplines, and even some asides on birdwatchers and their politics, but the abrupt change of style made for an awkward ending. People became many fewer; subjects radiated. I longed for some last resolving comments on the whole saga, but there was none.

In the case of the loyal *BB* reader and like souls, aged 50 years and counting, I recommend that this book goes straight onto their historical shelf. I also wish for it to catch the attention of those who watch birds through the current tunnels of attention, but sadly, somehow I doubt that it will.

D. I. M. Wallace

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid July to early August 2003.

'Soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma madeiralfeae/mollis* Singles past Galley Head (Co. Cork), on 19th July and 28th July. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* One, 11 km south of St Mary's (Scilly), 12th July; singles off Scilly (no other details), 14th and 22nd July; two, 10 km southeast of St Mary's, 25th July; one, 16 km south of St Mary's, 26th July; one, Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare), 26th July; one, 10 km south of St Mary's, 27th July.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Bowling Green Marsh (Devon), 5th August. **Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall), 16th-17th July; long-stayer Tresco (Scilly), then St Mary's, to at least 6th August. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* Kilcoole (Co. Wicklow), 4th August.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Moulton (Suffolk), 13th July; near Sidlesham (West Sussex), 22nd July; near Southampton (Hampshire), 31st July; Glen Glass (Highland), 2nd August; Beachy Head (East Sussex), 3rd August. **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* East Winch (Norfolk),



George Reszeter

310. Male Black Duck *Anas rubripes*, Tresco, Scilly, July 2003.



George Reszeter

311. Adult Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Keyhaven, Hampshire, July 2003.

12th July; Barrow-on-Humber (Lincolnshire), 25th-26th July; Great Leighs (Essex), 2nd August.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* Keyhaven Marshes (Hampshire), 22nd-26th July. **Semi-palmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* St Mary's, 2nd-6th August at least. **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* Startops End Reservoir (Hertfordshire), 5th-6th August at least. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Hickling Broad (Norfolk), 22nd-27th July; Spurn (East Yorkshire), 27th July; Wyre Estuary (Lan-



Steve Young/Birdwatch

312. Adult White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (left), with Dunlin *C. alpina*, Spurn, East Yorkshire, July 2003.

cashire), 3rd-6th August at least. **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 27th-31st July. **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* Lough Beg (Co. Cork), 6th August. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Kilcoole, 25th July to 4th August. **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* St Mary's, 23rd-24th and 26th July; same Tresco, 25th and 27th July.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Port Clarence/Middlesbrough/Dorman's Pool (Cleveland), 16th-17th July. **Little Gull** *Larus minutus* Exceptional numbers past Kilnsea (East Yorkshire), with 3,000 on 27th July, and Spurn, with 1,400 on 3rd August. **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* Mallow (Co. Cork), 30th July.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* South Uist



Mike Malpass

313. Juvenile Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*, Spurn, East Yorkshire, July 2003.



Rebecca Nason

314. Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*, Fair Isle, Shetland, July 2003.

(Western Isles), 17th-29th July. **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Stanwick Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire), 16th-19th July, also Summerleys Nature Reserve (Northamptonshire), 18th July;



Mike Morris

315. Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, Whitburn, Co. Durham, July 2003.

Great Livermere Lake (Suffolk), 30th July. **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* Arbroath (Angus), 19th July. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Hilbre Island (Merseyside), 9th-14th July; presumed same Hoylake (Cheshire), 13th July; presumed same Seaforth (Merseyside), 14th and 16th-17th July; Welland Bank Pits (Lincolnshire), 12th July; presumed same Belvide Reservoir (Staffordshire), 13th July; Draycote Water (Warwickshire), 15th July (different); Earls Barton Gravel-pits/Summerleys NR (Northamptonshire), 27th July to 4th August; possibly same Marston Vale Country Park (Bedfordshire), 4th August; Pulfin Bog (East Yorkshire), 31st July; Lough Derg (Co. Tipperary), 31st July to 4th August; Cley (Norfolk), 1st August; Carnsore Point (Co. Wexford), 2nd August; plus long-stayer, East Chevington (Northumberland), to 4th August.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* Spurn, 19th-31st July. **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops* Fair Isle (Shetland), 30th July. **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* St German's (Cornwall), 2nd August; Merevale Hall (Warwickshire), 3rd August. **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* Two, Chiddingfold (Surrey), 12th July; St Nicholas-at-Wade (Kent), 13th July; Whitley Bay (Northumberland), 15th July; Beachy Head, 19th July; possibly same Seaford (East Sussex), 20th July; Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire), 20th July; Kingsdown (Kent), 22nd July; Dunwich Heath (Suffolk), 27th July; presumably same North Warren (Suffolk), 27th July and over Dingle Marshes (Suffolk), 28th July; Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 3rd August.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* Cape Cornwall (Cornwall), 11th July. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* Dunwich Heath, 12th July. **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus* Halcro (Highland), 12th-13th July; Southampton, 12th July. **European Serin** *Serinus serinus* Keyhaven Marshes, 11th July; Rainham Marshes (Greater London), 3rd August. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Sidlesham Common (West Sussex), 13th-20th July; North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 2nd-5th August.

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Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2001

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This is the twenty-ninth annual report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, which presents details of the status of Britain's rarest breeding birds for the year 2001. The majority of the totals are set out by county, region or, occasionally, country, with actual localities omitted, except where these are well-known and previously publicised. Sadly, this is still necessary to minimise the ever-present threat from egg-collectors, and also any possible risk of disturbance from over-enthusiastic bird-watchers. Where county names are given, these are grouped within the Panel's ten regions (see pp.481-482).

The Panel

The current membership of the Panel is: Colin Bibby, Humphrey Crick, Ian Francis, Judith Smith, Ken Smith, David Stroud and Malcolm Ogilvie (Secretary). The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but three are also able to reflect the interests and needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is supported financially by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and the RSPB, with additional support coming from the BTO.

Coverage

The Panel collects records from the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, but not from the Republic of Ireland. The majority of the information presented here is submitted by County Recorders, with additional data coming from specialist groups and Schedule 1 licence forms received from the three country agencies. Coverage in 2001, while

excellent in geographical terms, with records received from virtually all County Recorders, was, nevertheless, seriously affected by the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, which seriously restricted access to many areas during the spring (see below). With regard to the acceptance of records for publication, it is the Panel's policy to follow the opinions of the appropriate County Recorder and local committee, and only in very exceptional cases to publish records which have not been vetted in this way.

Review of the year 2001

The spring was generally finer and drier than in recent years, though some parts of the country experienced quite cold weather, with northerly winds predominating in April, which probably delayed the nesting of some species and may have discouraged some pairs from breeding altogether. Some (mainly short) periods of heavy rainfall in late April and May led to problems of flooding in parts of southern England, with ground-nesting waders being flooded out, though not to the same extent as in 2000. June was a drier month over much of the country, though parts of Scotland were wetter; while rainfall in July was higher than average in many areas.

Foot-and-mouth disease

The outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) began in the third week of February and, before the end of the month, local authorities had been given powers to close footpaths and rights of way where this was considered necessary, and access to the countryside generally was being actively discouraged. During

March and April, the geographic extent of the outbreak became clear, with particular 'hotspots' in southwest and northwest England, while in Scotland, the outbreak was confined to the south of the country. By the end of April, infected-area restrictions were being lifted from farmland in several areas, but local authorities varied enormously in the speed with which they relaxed their bans on the use of rights of way, with at least some maintained until the end of July. Perhaps not surprisingly, many landowners and farmers also kept notices prohibiting access in place long after it was strictly necessary. On the other hand, many birdwatchers carrying out regular surveys reported excellent co-operation from those who usually grant them permission to enter their land, even in areas which were potentially at risk. Thus, the results of the 2001 breeding season reported here are more complete than was feared, although for a number of species coverage was severely restricted or occasionally not possible. In a number of cases, estimates of breeding numbers are presented when actual surveys were not possible. Some indication of how coverage was affected is given in the relevant species comments. One side effect of the ban on access to the countryside was the reduced level of disturbance, and a number of County Recorders commented on how this may have enabled more pairs of some species to breed successfully.

Divers to Eurasian Spoonbill

The breeding season for Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* in both Shetland and Orkney was a substantial improvement on that in 2000, with a larger number of successful pairs in both island groups. Productivity on Shetland was poor, however, and a reduced food supply (principally sandeels *Ammodytes*) was thought to be the likely cause. Only just over half the Black-throated Diver *G. arctica* haunts could be surveyed in 2001 because of FMD, interrupting a very long-running survey. Not only was monitoring restricted, but, unfortunately, a number of the rafts which had been removed for winter maintenance could not be returned to the lochs in time for the breeding season. The fact that raft nests are, in general, more productive than natural sites distorted the productivity figures, which, from the sample checked, were poor.

After thinking that Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* had finally given up attempting to breed in southern Scotland after 17 years of

trying, a pair unexpectedly appeared at a different locality and not only laid eggs but actually reared one young, thus providing the first successful breeding of this species in the UK. Both the number of breeding pairs of Slavonian Grebes *P. auritus* and the number of young reared rose compared with 2000, and there was a small but welcome increase in the number of localities occupied, though this is still well below the level of even ten years ago. A decline in the number of confirmed breeding Black-necked Grebes *P. nigricollis* from the record numbers in 2000 can probably be attributed to the reduced coverage stemming from FMD, although productivity was not good. The continued conservation management being carried out by RSPB, English Nature and others on the *Phragmites*-reedbed habitat of Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* resulted in a striking increase in the number of booming males, up from 22 to 30, and at least 22 nests. Despite access restrictions in some areas, numbers of breeding Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* increased substantially, by approximately 50% over the 2000 figure, and breeding activity was reported from 11 counties compared with the previous year's total of six, including the first breeding in Wales. Unlike the situation in 2000, Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* did not attempt to breed, and the establishment of a permanent breeding colony is clearly still a little while away.

Wildfowl

Two pairs of Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* nested successfully in Shetland and this species can now probably be regarded as a regular breeding species, albeit in very small numbers. Summering occurred in several other areas of Scotland, often by injured birds unable or unwilling to migrate to Iceland, and this may lead to further breeding attempts in future. Reports of many of the scarcer ducks, including Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Gadwall *A. strepera* and Pintail *A. acuta*, were well down on past years because of access problems across the country, but even where pairs were seen, their breeding status was difficult to establish. The same was certainly true for Garganey *A. querquedula*, although there was a general paucity of records, suggesting that it was a relatively poor year for this species anyway, and that there was little recovery from the low numbers found in 2000. Access to reservoirs and gravel-pits, necessary to establish numbers of breeding

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, was severely restricted in many English counties and the total reported is not representative. Neither Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* nor Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* were surveyed in detail within their Scottish ranges in 2001, though there was an increase in the number of records of summering Common Goldeneyes from England.

Raptors

The Panel's survey of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in 2000 resulted in better coverage and increased numbers reported, and it had been intended to repeat the survey in 2001. FMD put an end to this intention, but nonetheless coverage was good and there was a smaller drop in numbers of pairs reported than might have been expected. This species' late breeding season enabled observers to get round most of its favoured areas in time to see what was happening. Monitoring of the Welsh Red Kite *Milvus milvus* population was severely curtailed, and little more than one-third of the estimated territory-holding pairs could be checked. Estimated totals have been provided by the Welsh Kite Trust, and the run of data is prob-

ably good enough to be able to interpolate reasonably accurate figures in a year or two's time. Breeding success of the pairs which were monitored was quite good, with none of the losses from heavy rain and high winds experienced in some recent years, and perhaps some benefit from reduced disturbance by walkers and other countryside users. The re-established populations in England and central Scotland had a generally good season in areas where monitoring was possible. In northern Scotland, however, recruitment remained well below that expected and was almost certainly affected by deliberate poisoning. The number of pairs of breeding White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* continued to increase, slowly but steadily, although their breeding success was slightly down: 11 young were reared to fledging compared with 12 in 2000.

Coverage of Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* populations was better than expected, thanks to access restrictions being lifted at key breeding sites in East Anglia in time for survey work. There was, however, a slight decline in overall numbers of breeding males and females recorded, the first for several years. Owing to FMD, data on breeding success was more diffi-



David Tipling/Windrush

316. Family party of Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus*, Shetland, June 2003. Two pairs of Whooper Swans nested successfully in Shetland in 2001, the year considered in this report, and this species is now perhaps best regarded as a rare yet regular breeding species in Scotland.

cult to obtain than usual and fewer chicks were known to have fledged than in 2000. Monitoring of Hen Harriers *C. cyaneus* was virtually impossible in much of southern Scotland, where just 16 occupied territories were checked compared with 58 in 2000, with a similar picture in northern England (7 and 14 respectively) and Wales (6 and 19). Britain's rarest regularly breeding raptor, Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus*, enjoyed its most productive year since 1995. After an increase in the number of Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* pairs monitored in 2000, numbers fell back in 2001 because of restricted access. Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* had a reasonable year, with breeding success slightly better than in either of the two previous years. One of two pairs in northern England managed to fledge a chick, but the two pairs in southern Scotland both failed. Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* continued their steady increase, with monitoring hardly affected by FMD. Away from the core area, a pair bred in Dumfries & Galloway, and three pairs bred in Cumbria, two of which reared young. In addition, a pair bred at Rutland Water in Leicestershire, where the male, a relocated bird, attracted a wild mate.

Monitoring of all three falcons included in this report was affected by access restrictions, with many fewer Merlins *Falco columbarius* reported than usual from England, Wales and southern Scotland. Numbers of Hobbies *F. subbuteo* declined from the peak in 2000, and while Peregrine Falcons *F. peregrinus* were monitored adequately in England, coverage in Wales was poor and virtually non-existent in southern Scotland.

Common Quail, rails and waders

Calling Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix* can often be heard over considerable distances, enabling surveys to be carried out from public roads and footpaths, but even so, 2001 was a second successive poor year, with most of those present concentrated in the southern half of England. Similarly, the distinctive call of Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* carries well in the still dusk atmosphere, enabling surveys to be carried out with relative ease, but again the number of localities and singing birds were both close to those reported in 2000. The spring and summer weather was perhaps poorest in northwest Scotland and, consequently, numbers of Corn Crakes *Crex crex*

were almost exactly the same as in 2000.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* numbers were well down on the record total in 2000, partly because access to several colonies was banned, while establishing whether young had fledged was also impossible in several cases. Where monitoring was possible, a combination of high tides and predation was blamed for the failure of some colonies. Monitoring of Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedipnemus* was successful in southern England, but severely curtailed in the East Anglian Brecks. As a consequence, the total number of pairs found was only about two-thirds of what might have been expected, although breeding success was reasonably good. Given their preference for gravel-pits, reporting of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* was particularly poor, and the results are probably not a true reflection of actual numbers. There were no definite reports of either Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* or Purple Sandpiper *C. maritima* breeding in Scotland this year, though a pair of the latter species possibly did so. Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* were noted at two leks in Cambridgeshire, both involving several birds, but neither was known to lead to any nesting attempt. Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* did quite well, despite losses caused by flooding at one key site, and the number of breeding pairs was higher than for many years. A pair of Green Sandpipers *Tringa ochropus* bred in Scotland for the third year running and a second pair may have done so; and, while there were no confirmed breeding Wood Sandpipers *T. glareola*, at least eight pairs were located. Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* continued to breed in Shetland, with a slightly better year than in 2000, but, disappointingly, there were no reports of any birds in the Western Isles.

Gulls and terns

The number of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* breeding in England was very similar to the record numbers found in 2000. Although confirmation of successful breeding was difficult to establish in several localities, at least 30 young are known to have fledged. No less than three pairs of Yellow-legged Gulls *L. (cachinnans) michahellis* attempted to breed, two of which reared young. Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* showed some signs of recovery from the low figures in 2000, although numbers in Scotland fell to an all-time low. In contrast,

the number of breeding Little Terns was the highest ever in these reports.

Barn Owl, Common Kingfisher and Wryneck

Although monitoring of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* and Common Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis* was affected by FMD restrictions, the impact of these controls was less severe than might have been expected, particularly considering how many Barn Owls breed in farm buildings. For the first time since the Panel started collecting records in 1973, there was not a single report of Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* during the breeding season. If recolonisation ever does take place, it will be interesting to see whether it occurs in Scotland by, presumably, Scandinavian birds, or in the southern half of England by birds from the near continent. In view of the recent and ongoing declines in the Netherlands and northern France, a reversal of its fortunes in England may be some way off.

Passerines

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea* monitoring was badly affected in several counties, especially in its Hampshire and Breckland strongholds. As Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* inhabit mainly urban areas or industrial sites, such as power stations, FMD access restrictions should not have affected their monitoring too much. The drop in number of localities, and in the number of pairs may, therefore, be real. For the second year running, two pairs of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* nested successfully, but there were few reports of breeding Redwings *T. iliacus*. Access restrictions prevented the normal survey coverage for several of the rarer breeding warblers. Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* were all affected to a greater or lesser extent, and we hope to reveal a return to more accurate monitoring in 2002 in our next report. Vagrant warblers frequently sing during spring migration, and 2001 brought its usual crop of potential colonisers, including Great Reed *A. arundinaceus*, Marmora's *S. sarda* and Greenish Warblers *Phylloscopus trochiloides*.

Welcome co-operation from Forest Enterprise enabled a planned survey of Firecrests *Regulus ignicapilla* in Kent to proceed, and the results helped to raise the number of breeding pairs to a new record total, despite some gaps in coverage elsewhere. Monitoring of Bearded Tits

Panurus biarmicus was adversely affected by access problems, as it was for other species confined to wetland habitats, and numbers dropped sharply from the record total reported in 2000. Access permissions were obtained for all the Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* breeding localities within the East Anglian study area, but the number of breeding pairs fell to the lowest level since 1975, with barely half the number of pairs compared with 2000. Red-billed Choughs *Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax* did quite well where they were monitored, but there were several gaps in coverage. Finally, to end on a high note, a breeding pair of Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla* in northern Scotland was the first since 1993.

Conservation uses of Panel data

It is the Panel's policy to make data available for relevant conservation uses. As well as site-specific information (e.g. for the review of Special Protection Areas by JNCC and the country conservation agencies), national datasets have been used by the RSPB for planning surveys. The Panel's data have also played a key role in national population estimates and in the development and implementation of recovery plans for certain species. The publication 'The state of the UK's birds 2002' (Gregory 2003) makes extensive use of the Panel's data, as does the recently revised 'The population status of birds in the UK' (Gregory *et al.* 2002). The year also saw the publication by JNCC of a major review of the UK network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the EC Birds Directive (Stroud *et al.* 2001). This identified groups of sites to be given European protection because of their importance to particular species, the range of species covered including many of those which the Panel monitors. The results provide a valuable audit of the degree to which these populations were protected within the SPA network in the late 1990s. As a follow-up to this review, the Panel is currently examining Spotted Crake data to place the results of the 1999 national survey of that species (Gilbert 2002) into a broader context, and to review the Spotted Crake SPAs in Britain. This will almost certainly revise the historical record for the species.

Publications

The bibliography at the end of this report gives details of published results of censuses and surveys of the numbers and distribution of

Panel species, many of these making use of the Panel's data.

Acknowledgments

Without the hard work and willing co-operation of numerous individuals, the county, regional and local recorders throughout the UK, as well as many specialist study groups and conservation organisations, the production of this report would not be possible. Although many must, for the security of the species concerned, remain anonymous, the Panel, and in particular the Secretary, would like to express sincere thanks to all those individuals whose fieldwork produced the observations which form the basis for this report. Important information for many species was also supplied by English Nature (EN), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Countryside Commission for Wales (CCW), and the RSPB, and the Panel gratefully acknowledges their efforts and the role they played in the production of this important report.

We would, however, like to extend particular thanks to Jake Allsopp and the Golden Oriole Group, Ian Carter, Colin Crooke, Tony Cross and the Welsh Kite Trust, Roy Dennis, Julianne Evans, Gillian Gilbert, Rhys Green, Malcolm Henderson, Bob Image, Georgina Pickerell and Ron Summers, all of whom supplied information for their particular specialities. Thanks are also due to the Scottish, Welsh and Cumbrian Raptor Study Groups, the Sea Eagle Project Team, and the Osprey Study Group, who monitor the important raptor populations in their respective regions.

Last but by no means least, we are particularly grateful to the licensing officers of the three country agencies – John Holmes (EN), John Ralston (SNH) and Sian Whitehead (CCW) – for their ready co-operation in supplying information.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

Reorganisation of local government throughout Britain has made some of the names below obsolete. As happened after the last major reorganisation, in 1974, however, some English county and area bird societies have changed their recording areas and others have not. So, without defining the precise boundaries of the 'counties' given below, these are, so far as possible, the names used by the local recorders who

sent the Panel their information.

For Wales and Scotland, again wherever possible, the names of the recording areas included in the respective annual bird reports of those two countries are used. Each publishes a map showing the names and boundaries, that for Wales being based on the Watsonian vice-counties, and that for Scotland on the local bird-report areas.

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

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

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdon & Peterborough, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

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

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

Wales The Watsonian vice-counties of Anglesey (Môn), Brecon (Brycheiniog), Carmarthen (Caerfyrddin), Caernarfon, Ceredigion, Denbigh (Dinbych), Flint (Fflint), Glamorgan (Morgannwg) (following the Welsh Bird Report, this recording area includes East Glamorgan and Gower), Gwent, Meirionnydd, Montgomery (Trefaldwyn), Pembroke (Penfro), Radnor (Maesyfed)

Scotland, S

The local bird-recording areas of Ayrshire, Borders, Clyde (comprising West and East Dunbartonshire including that part now in Argyll & Bute, North and South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, City of Glasgow, Inverclyde, Stirling–Clyde drainage), Clyde Islands (Arran, Bute, the Cumbraes), Dumfries & Galloway, Lothian

Scotland, Mid The local bird-recording areas of Angus & Dundee, Fife, Forth (Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Stirling), Moray & Nairn, North-east Scotland (Aberdeenshire), Perth & Kinross

Scotland, N & W The local bird-recording areas of Argyll & Bute (except Bute and former West Dunbartonshire), Caithness, Highland (Badenoch & Strathspey, Inverness, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland), Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles

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

Systematic list

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' used in the Panel's reports follow those recommended by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee. Within tables, the abbreviations 'Confirmed pairs' and 'Max. total pairs' mean, respectively, 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding' and 'Number of pairs confirmed *plus* possible/probable pairs breeding'.

Within each species account, numbers given in the format '1-4 pairs' indicate (in this case) one proven breeding pair and a possible maximum total of four breeding pairs.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Long-term monitoring continued in Orkney and Shetland. Other, more casual, breeding observations are not listed.

Scotland, N & W

ORKNEY On Hoy, a complete survey of 117 known localities found 65 pairs, of which 42 were successful, rearing 47 young, and 23 failed; on West Mainland, 27 pairs reared 33 young; on Rousay, only one young was reared at monitored localities; on Eday, five to seven pairs reared three young. This was the most successful breeding season for several years, with many more broods of two being reared than usual.

SHETLAND The total number of successful pairs in three study areas increased, but productivity fell. On Hermaness, seven pairs reared three young; on Fetlar, 23 pairs reared 11 young; on Foula, 11 pairs reared four young. This pattern, one of an increase in successful pairs, but lower productivity, was repeated at other monitored sites. In contrast to Orkney, the ratio of two-chick broods to one-chick broods was the lowest for over ten years, and this was attributed to a poor food supply.

WESTERN ISLES At least six of ten pairs monitored on North and South Uist reared young.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Monitoring of this species was severely curtailed by FMD, and only 51 localities were checked by the RSPB instead of the usual 90+ sites. A total of 51 pairs bred at monitored sites: 19 pairs nested on rafts but managed to rear only four young, while 32 pairs bred in natural localities and reared eight young. In addition to access restrictions, which affected many of the more-productive raft sites, a number of rafts which had been removed for winter renovation could not be replaced in time for the breeding season. This undoubtedly explains not only the lower than usual raft productivity, but also why this is the first year in which natural localities were more productive than rafts.

Year	Sites monitored	Sites occupied	Rafts used/available	Young fledged (av. chicks per pair)			Production ratio: raft site to natural site
				Rafts	Natural	Total	
1996	120	96	27/45	19 (0.70)	28 (0.41)	47 (0.49)	1.7
1997	98	82	32/41	17 (0.53)	12 (0.10)	29 (0.35)	5.3
1998	114	82	38/45	19 (0.50)	12 (0.28)	31 (0.38)	1.8
1999	90	77	38/48	14 (0.37)	7 (0.27)	21 (0.27)	1.4
2000	93	83	33/57	14 (0.42)	13 (0.33)	27 (0.33)	1.3
2001	51	51	19/unknown	4 (0.21)	8 (0.25)	12 (0.24)	0.8



Tim Loseby

317. Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*, Kent, March 1994. The first successful breeding of Red-necked Grebe in Britain occurred in 2001, in southern Scotland.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Five localities in three counties: one pair bred, plus two adults in summer plumage. During the past ten years, up to five pairs have been reported from up to ten sites. After believing last year that the on/off breeding attempts of a pair in southern Scotland since 1983 had finally come to an end, a pair appeared on a different water within the region in 2001 and bred successfully for the first time in the UK. The single surviving youngster was last seen in early August.

England, E

One locality: summer-plumaged adult at usual site, 1st-25th April.

England, N

Three localities: (1)-(3) summer-plumaged adult noted at three inland localities on 9th, 23rd and 24th May.

Scotland, S

One locality: pair bred, hatching at least two young and rearing one.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

18 localities: 40 pairs breeding, fledging 34 young. There were welcome increases in both the number of localities used and the number of territorial pairs from last year's low, while productivity was down slightly on the record high of 2000. The population at Loch Ruthven continues to flourish, with further growth in the number of pairs breeding and of young reared. The RSPB continues its research on this species, which includes habitat management, the effects of predation and attempts to locate the wintering grounds of Scottish breeding birds.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

18 localities: (1) Loch Ruthven: 18 pairs present and all probably bred, rearing 23 young; (2)-(18) 22 pairs reared 11 young.

Slavonian Grebe	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	34	33	32	31	24	22	25	24	15	18
Confirmed pairs	72	73	51	58	49	53	42	35	31	40
Young reared	38	25	30	46	17	15	16	12	33	34
Young/territorial pair	0.53	0.34	0.59	0.79	0.35	0.28	0.38	0.34	1.06	0.85

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

32 localities in 18 counties: 42-70 pairs bred. The slight drop in the number of confirmed pairs can be attributed, at least in part, to poor coverage because of FMD, as some regular sites could not be visited until well into the breeding season.

England, SW

Four localities: 0-4 pairs. AVON Two localities: (1) one in summer plumage, April to June; (2) adult in April, with four briefly on one day. HAMPSHIRE One locality: single present in May and June. SOMERSET One locality: adult summered.

England, SE

Six localities: 4-10 pairs. ESSEX Two localities: (1) pair bred; (2) pair present April-May. HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: up to five pairs present, three broods reared. KENT Three localities: (1) up to five adults in March, then two until May and one in July; (2) three adults in March, two in April; (3) single in April in potential breeding habitat.

England, E

One locality: 2-3 pairs. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: three pairs of which two are known to have bred, rearing four young.

England, Central

Five localities: 5-9 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair in early June; (2) summer-plumaged adult in April. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: (1) five pairs believed to have bred, but only three young seen; (2) pair probably bred. WARWICKSHIRE One locality: adult in May, up to three juveniles, July-September, not certainly reared here.

England, N

Ten localities: 24-32 pairs. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL One locality: about 15 pairs bred and a record 25+ young fledged. GREATER MANCHESTER Two localities: (1) pair fledged four young, second pair probably bred; (2) pair present, but did not breed. NORTHUMBERLAND Two localities: (1) seven pairs known to have bred, but only four young reared; (2) two birds present in May. YORKSHIRE Five localities: (1) pair bred unsuccessfully; (2)-(4) pairs present in May-June; (5) adult in June, two juveniles in July-August, but probably not reared here.

Scotland, S

Two localities: 2-4 pairs. BORDERS Two localities: (1) two pairs bred and reared three young; (2) two pairs probably bred.

Scotland, Mid

Four localities: 5-8 pairs. ANGUS Two localities: (1) pair present in April but then left; (2) pair thought to be from locality (1) arrived in May and bred successfully, fledging two young. FIFE One locality: four pairs reared eight young. PERTSHIRE One locality: two pairs present of which one probably bred.

Black-necked Grebe	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	29	31	32	30	32	26	18	22	29	32
Confirmed pairs	26	24	27	30	20	17	35	34	48	42
Max. total pairs	60	50	81	77	53	46	48	53	65	70

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

18 localities, which held a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 33 booming males; at least 16 young fledged. Numbers have continued to climb, with a further increase in both the number of booming males and of nests. Productivity was also good.

England, SW

Two localities: (1)(2) single booming males.

England, SE

One locality: single booming male.

England, E

13 localities: (1) 6-7 booming males, up to ten nesting attempts; 32 young hatched, of which 14 were known to have fledged; (2) 4-5 booming males, two nesting attempts, but outcome unknown; (3) two booming males, 4-5 nesting



Tim Loseby

318. Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Lea Valley, Hertfordshire, February 1996. Reedbed management work is clearly having a positive effect on the numbers of breeding Great Bitterns in Britain, and a significant increase in numbers was recorded in 2001.

attempts; chicks seen, but final outcome unknown; (4) two booming males, one nesting attempt, two young fledged; (5) one booming male, two nesting attempts, outcome unknown; (6) two booming males, one nesting attempt; (7) one booming male, one nesting attempt; (8)(9) one booming male, one possible nesting attempt; (10) 1-2 booming males; (11)-(13) single booming males.

England, N

Two localities: (1) two booming males, one nest, chicks lost early on; (2) one booming male, one possible nest.

Great Bittern	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	14	13	16	13	10	10	12	16	17	18
Confirmed nests	4	5	5	11	8	15	13	22	19	22
Booming males (min.)	18	15	15	19	22	11	13	19	22	30
Booming males (max.)	19	17	16	20	22	12	18	24	28	33

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

18 localities: 98-111 pairs bred. This represents a doubling of breeding localities and a 50% increase in breeding pairs since 2000 (see fig. 1, p.486), and a considerable geographical spread, which includes the first breeding records for Cheshire & Wirral and Wales.

England, SW

Ten localities: 64-72 pairs. AVON Two localities: (1) up to five birds in April and May; (2) single in May. DORSET Four localities: (1) 45 pairs bred, number of fledged young unknown; (2) three pairs bred, seven young seen; (3) five adults in heronry in May, displaying and carrying sticks; (4) pair present in heronry early in the year. HAMPSHIRE Two localities: (1) 11 pairs bred; (2) at least one pair bred. SOMERSET Two localities: (1) two pairs bred in heronry, rearing five young; third pair may have bred; (2) two pairs bred in isolated trees in hedgerow, rearing four young.

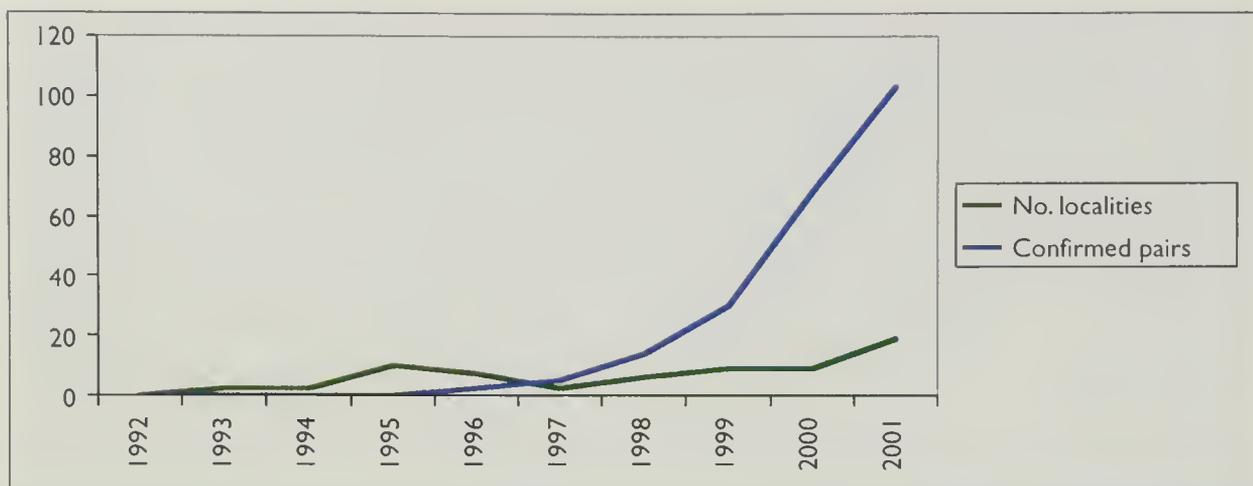


Fig. 1. The number of confirmed breeding pairs of Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* in the UK, 1992-2001. The graph emphasises the dramatic increase of this species since about 1997, predominantly in England. The first breeding record for Wales was confirmed in 2001; how long will it be before Little Egrets are breeding successfully in Scotland?

England, SE

Three localities: 32 pairs. ESSEX One locality: 20 pairs reared 45 young. KENT Two localities: (1) seven pairs reared 17-18 young; (2) five pairs bred, no details of success.

England, E

One locality: 0-3 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: at least two, possibly three, pairs visiting heronry, but no proof of breeding.

England, N

Two localities: 1-2 pairs. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL One locality: pair bred in heronry, one young reared. YORKSHIRE One locality: adult in breeding plumage early May, flock of six in July.

Wales

One locality: One pair. SOUTH WALES One locality: pair bred and fledged two young.

Scotland, S

One locality: 0-1 pairs. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: adult in early June.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Six localities with birds present, but no breeding activity was reported this year. Nonetheless, the birds at these sites were all in potential breeding habitat and worth recording in case of future colonisation.

England, E

Four localities: (1) one or two birds seen occasionally from early March to late July; (2) one or two birds intermittently from April to late July; (3) one to three birds regularly in July; (4) four on 17th June.

England, N

One locality: three present in July in suitable breeding habitat.

Scotland, S

One locality: two in early June, at a site where nest platforms were built in 2000, but no breeding activity.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Eight localities: 2-8 pairs bred. These are all considered to be of wild origin, although some may have been injured birds unable to undertake their normal migration to breeding grounds in Iceland. Only pairs are shown. In addition, several single birds were reported during the summer from other localities. Records of escaped birds are now included in the Panel's report on non-native breeding birds (*Brit. Birds* 96: in press).

Scotland, S

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One area: mated pair on several lochs over about ten days in late April.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL Three localities: (1)(2) single pairs present June-July; (3) two pairs arrived late July and stayed into autumn. HIGHLAND One locality: pair summered. SHETLAND Three localities: (1) pair bred, hatched four eggs and reared one youngster; (2) pair bred, hatched three eggs and one young fledged; (3) single adult at regular breeding site, sat on nest, but no eggs laid.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Breeding reports were received as detailed below. As with virtually all the wildfowl in this year's report, access restrictions imposed because of FMD meant reduced coverage in several areas, and so the data are not truly comparable with those for previous years.

England, SW

DEVON One male summered. SOMERSET 12 birds at two localities.

England, SE

BEDFORDSHIRE Single pairs at two localities, one of which may have attempted to breed. ESSEX Pair summered. KENT Eight pairs in county.

England, E

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Four pairs at one locality, no broods seen. SUFFOLK 1-4 birds at eight localities.

England, Central

DERBYSHIRE Three males summered. LEICESTERSHIRE Pair summered. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Five pairs bred, rearing 13 young at one locality, a pair probably bred at a second, and another possibly at a third. WARWICKSHIRE Single males summered at three localities.

England, N

CHESHIRE & WIRRAL Birds summered at five localities. CUMBRIA Single pairs present in suitable habitat at two localities. NORTHUMBERLAND Four pairs reared broods at one locality. YORKSHIRE At least seven summering birds.

Scotland, S

BORDERS Three pairs. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Three pairs probably bred at two localities.

Scotland, Mid

ANGUS & DUNDEE Pair summered. MORAY & NAIRN Pair summered. PERTH & KINROSS Pairs bred at three localities, and were present at three more.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL Two pairs bred at one locality. HIGHLAND 16 pairs present at one locality. ORKNEY Six pairs bred at four localities, four pairs probably bred at three more. SHETLAND Pair bred at one locality, pair possibly bred at a second.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

The maximum total reported, 823 pairs, is well down on the previous year's figure of at least 1,000 pairs, and reflects access difficulties.

England, SW

AVON Four pairs. DEVON Up to 18 pairs. DORSET Seven pairs. HAMPSHIRE 35 pairs. SOMERSET 55 pairs. WILTSHIRE One pair.

England, SE

BEDFORDSHIRE Six pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Ten pairs. ESSEX 16 pairs. GREATER LONDON Four pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE 20 pairs. KENT 96 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE 10-15 pairs. SUSSEX 25 pairs.

England, E

CAMBRIDGESHIRE 18 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 18 pairs. LINCOLNSHIRE 26 pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Six pairs. SUFFOLK 67 pairs.

England, Central

DERBYSHIRE 26 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE Four pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 48 pairs. SHROPSHIRE Five pairs. WARWICKSHIRE 15 pairs. WORCESTERSHIRE One pair.

England, N

CHESHIRE & WIRRAL 31 pairs. CUMBRIA Six pairs. GREATER MANCHESTER 12 pairs. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE 13 pairs. NORTHUMBERLAND Nine pairs. YORKSHIRE 55 pairs.

Wales

ANGLESEY 33 pairs. CAERNARFON Two pairs. CARMARTHEN Nine pairs. GWENT Four pairs. PEMBROKE One pair.

Scotland, S

BORDERS Three pairs. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Two pairs.

Scotland, Mid

ANGUS & DUNDEE Seven pairs. NORTHEAST One pair (first breeding record). PERTH & KINROSS 50-80 pairs.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL One pair. ORKNEY Three pairs. SHETLAND Five pairs.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

12 localities or areas: 1-30 pairs breeding. Like last year, limited coverage in Orkney, which is by far the most important breeding area in the UK, was a key factor in the relatively low totals, particularly of confirmed pairs. In 1998, for example, almost all the confirmed pairs (12 of 13) were in Orkney.

England, SW

One locality: 0-1 pairs. SOMERSET One locality: summering male.

England, SE

Two localities: 1-2 pairs. KENT One locality: pair summered, breeding not confirmed. SURREY One locality: pair bred, but perhaps of feral origin.

England, E

Five localities: 0-5 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) single pairs, breeding not confirmed. SUFFOLK Three localities: (1)(2) single pairs in May; (3) female in July.

England, Central

One locality: 0-1 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: pair summered.

England, N

One locality: 0-4 pairs. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL One locality: four males summered, much display but no evidence of breeding.

Scotland, N & W

Two areas: 0-17 pairs. ORKNEY Two areas: (1) 13 pairs present; (2) four pairs present.

Pintail	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	23	23	49	25	33	22	28	25	15	12
Confirmed pairs	13	4	20	11	8	5	13	22	10	1
Max. total pairs	48	47	76	45	53	33	50	37	26	30

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

52 localities: 9-84 pairs breeding.

England, SW

Six localities: 2-12 pairs. AVON One locality: pair probably bred. DEVON One locality: one pair. DORSFET One locality: one pair. SOMERSET Three localities: two pairs bred, seven other pairs.

England, SE

14 localities: 3-23 pairs. BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: one pair. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: one pair. ESSEX Two localities: two pairs. KENT Nine localities: three pairs bred, 15 other pairs. OXFORDSHIRE One locality: one pair.

England, E

17 localities: 2-31 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Five localities: one pair bred, 17 other pairs. NORFOLK Three localities: four pairs. SUFFOLK Nine localities: one pair bred, eight other pairs.

England, Central

Five localities: 2-6 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE Three localities: three pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: two pairs bred. WARWICKSHIRE One locality: one pair.

England, N

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE One locality: one pair. YORKSHIRE One locality: one pair.

Wales

Three localities: 0-3 pairs. ANGLESEY One locality: one pair. CAERNARFON One locality: one pair. CEREDIGION One locality: one pair.

Scotland, S

Three localities: 0-3 pairs. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Three localities: three pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. ANGUS & DUNDEE Two localities: two pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. ARGYLL One locality: one pair. ORKNEY One locality: one pair.

Garganey	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	90	73	65	80	60	85	86	77	52	52
Confirmed pairs	16	14	13	9	15	10	22	37	30	9
Max. total pairs	160	163	111	117	78	129	144	108	109	84

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

405 pairs.

England, SW

16 pairs. AVON One pair. DORSET One pair. HAMPSHIRE Five pairs. SOMERSET Eight pairs. WILTSHIRE One pair.

England, SE

244 pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Five pairs. ESSEX 102 pairs. GREATER LONDON Six pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE Four pairs. KENT 116 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE Eight pairs. SURREY Three pairs.

England, E

50 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Eight pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH One pair. LINCOLNSHIRE 21 pairs. NORFOLK Eight pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One pair. SUFFOLK 11 pairs.

England, Central

17 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE Four pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 12 pairs. SHROPSHIRE One pair.

England, N

62 pairs. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL 15 pairs. CUMBRIA Three pairs. GREATER MANCHESTER Two pairs. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE 15 pairs. NORTHUMBERLAND Four pairs. YORKSHIRE 23 pairs.

Wales

Four pairs. ANGLESEY Two pairs. CAERNARFON One pair. CARMARTHEN One pair.

Scotland, S

Two pairs. BORDERS Two pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Seven pairs. ANGUS & DUNDEE One pair. PERTH & KINROSS Six pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Three pairs. ORKNEY Three pairs.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Four localities or areas: 2-33 pairs. The last full census was in 1995 (Underhill *et al.* 1998), when the British & Irish population was estimated to be 195 pairs. Four localities is by far the lowest number recorded during the past ten years, as is the maximum total of pairs; ten-year means for these two statistics are 28.1 and 60.1 respectively. During the 1995 survey, 61 occupied sites were visited, which held up to 89 pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Two localities: pair bred, three other pairs.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL One locality: pair bred, plus eight pairs. HIGHLAND One area: 20 pairs present.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Only sample data are available from nestbox schemes in Highland. The slow increase and spread of birds summering in England continues.

England, Central

Eight localities: 0-9 pairs. DERBYSHIRE One locality: pair summered. HEREFORDSHIRE One locality: two pairs present. LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: one pair. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Four localities: single summering females. WARWICKSHIRE One locality: summering female.

England, N

Five localities: 0-12 pairs. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL One locality: summering bird. CUMBRIA Three localities: three pairs and three males summered. GREATER MANCHESTER Three localities: at least five summering males.

Scotland, S

Three localities: 0-12 pairs. BORDERS Summering pair. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY 11 summering males.

Scotland, Mid

At least three localities: 0-4 pairs. MORAY & NAIRN One locality: one pair. PERTH & KINROSS Three localities: pair and female at one, male at second; in addition, up to 50 summering birds at third locality, though no evidence of breeding and omitted from the totals.

Scotland, N & W

47 pairs. HIGHLAND Two localities: (1) Spey Valley including Insh Marshes: 41 nestboxes used; (2) RSPB Abernethy reserve: six nestboxes used.

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Confirmed breeding by 27 pairs; minimum of 41 young reared. Coverage in 2001 was not as complete as in 2000, when the first-ever national survey was carried out. European Honey-buzzards breed quite late in the summer, however, and access restrictions in some key areas were lifted in time for the necessary observations to be carried out.

Great Britain

15 pairs fledged two young, 11 pairs fledged one young, and one pair bred and failed. 27 pairs probably or possibly bred. There were an additional ten single birds in known breeding localities.

The breakdown of the above into countries is: England 25 pairs bred, plus 19 probable/possible pairs; Wales two possible pairs; and Scotland two pairs bred, plus six probable/possible pairs.

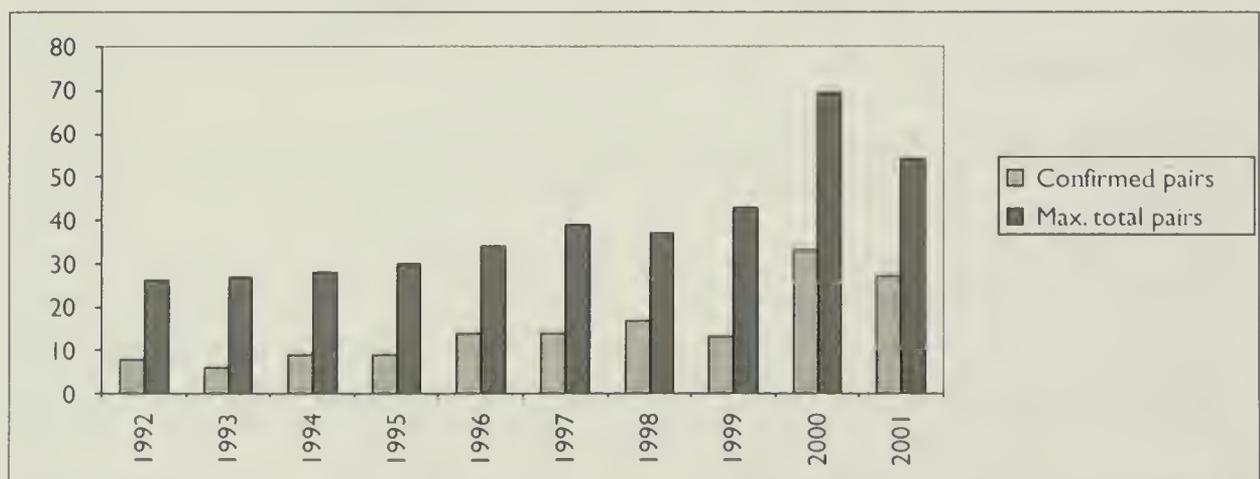


Fig. 2. Numbers of pairs of breeding European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in the UK, 1992-2001. The sharp increase in 2000 corresponds with the Panel's survey of the species in that year.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

FMD restrictions severely affected monitoring this year, especially in Wales. The figures given below include some estimation and should be compared with the results of the first national survey since reintroductions began, which took place in 2000 (Wotton *et al.* 2002).

Including both wild and re-established populations, an estimated 285 pairs are believed to have bred in Wales, raising an unknown number of young; at least 140 breeding pairs from released stock in England reared a minimum of 242 young; while in Scotland the totals are 44 pairs and 84-85 young. Allowing for incomplete reporting from some areas, the release programme continues to show excellent results (fig. 3).

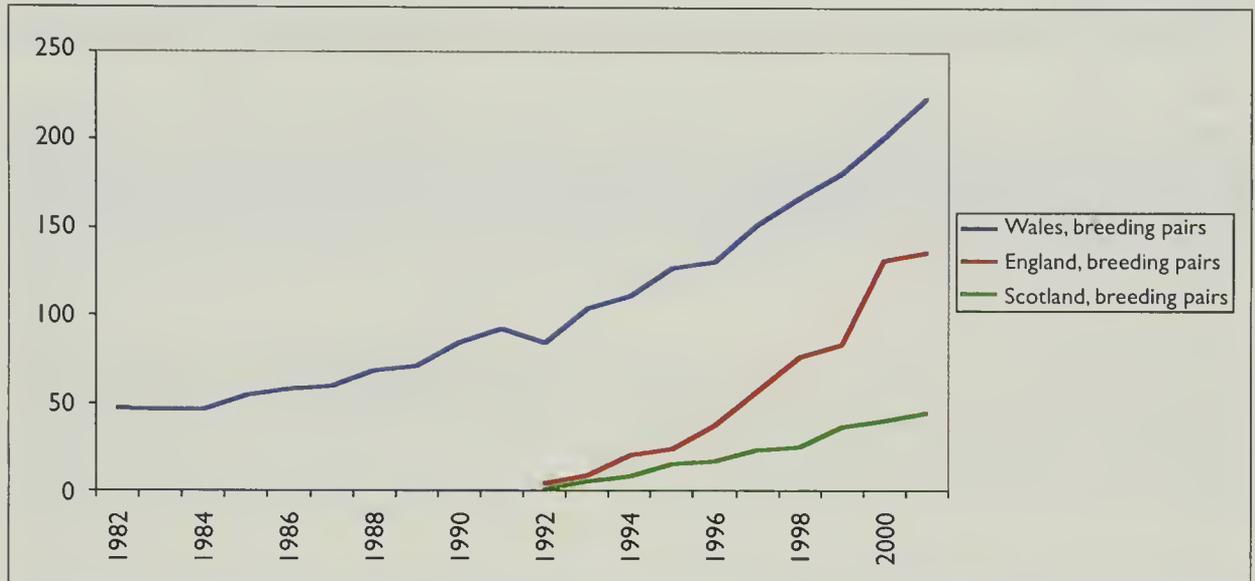


Fig. 3. The number of breeding pairs of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in Wales, England and Scotland, 1982-2001. The success of the kite reintroduction scheme in England and Scotland is clearly evident, although, as this graph illustrates, population growth rates have varied significantly between the two countries.

Wales

There was no count of breeding pairs, but estimates based on the known details of 106 occupied territories, and allowing for the mean annual increase of recent years of c. 10%, suggest an estimated total of 285 breeding pairs which may have raised around 247 young. Of 106 territories investigated, at least 83 pairs built nests and 75 are known to have laid. Of these, 49 pairs fledged at least 72 young, and 25 are known to have failed. The breeding success in these territories was considerably better than for the population as a whole in the two previous years. This improvement has been attributed not just to drier weather in May and June, but to a reduction in disturbance because of access restrictions.

Red Kite – Wales	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total pairs	101	115	138	146	161	180	200	228	249	(285)
Breeding pairs	84	104	111	127	130	152	167	181	201	(223)
Successful pairs	60	61	70	79	90	99	112	118	103	(168)
Young reared	96	82	99	117	119	129	174	165	141	(247)
Young/territorial pair	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.6	(0.9)

England, South

A total of 113 breeding pairs are believed to have bred in the Chilterns area, rearing over 200 young. In addition, there were up to six pairs in other counties of southern England, of which two probably reared three young between them.

England, Central

In the East Midlands release area, 13 nests were located, four of which failed. The remaining nine were successful and 25 young were reared.

England, North

Eight pairs are known to have bred, including one well away from the release site, and a total of 14 young were reared. Owing to the outbreak of FMD, the intended release of further birds could not take place.

Red Kite – England	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total pairs	7	12	22	26	nc	61	87	nc	146	(140)
Breeding pairs	4	9	20	24	37+	57	76	83	131+	(136)
Successful pairs	4	8	17	22	nc	50	67	78	nc	nc
Young reared	9	14	37	55	80	111	146	172	226+	(242+)
Young/territorial pair	1.3	1.2	1.7	2.1	–	1.8	1.7	–	1.5	(1.7)

Scotland, South

A total of 33 birds was released in summer 2001 in order to establish the species in a new area of the country. Of these, 14 came from the Chilterns population, 12 from northern Scotland and seven, unexpectedly, from Germany where they had been confiscated from an illegal collector.

Scotland, Central

Ten pairs were known to have laid and seven were successful, rearing seven or eight young. One pair bred in Tayside, the first record in modern times.

Scotland, North

A total of 34 nests was located, only two more than in 2000. Of these, 31 successfully reared 77 young, the comparable figures for 2000 being 30 and 74, respectively. The rate of increase of this population is well below that in other release areas and appears to be linked to poor recruitment into the breeding population, with only three individuals from the 54 young reared in 1999 breeding in 2001. Previous survival estimates indicated that around half should have been recruited into the breeding population. In the 12 months to April 2001, the known deaths of 11 birds in the area included eight poisoned illegally, one killed by road traffic, and two more dying on sporting estates, the bodies of which were not available for post mortem. Persecution appears to be holding down a population that should otherwise have grown much faster than it has.

Red Kite – Scotland	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total pairs	2	8	11	17	22	27	30	39	44	44
Breeding pairs	1	5	8	15	17	23	25	36	40	44
Successful pairs	1	3	6	11	16	19	22	26	38	38
Young reared	1	7	13	26	39	39	47	59	84	84-85
Young/territorial pair	0.5	0.9	1.2	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.9	1.9

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Scotland

Twenty-three territories were occupied by re-established pairs, with a single bird in a further territory. Clutches were known to have been laid by 17 pairs and breeding was suspected by a further two. Two of the four remaining territory-holding pairs added material to nests, but did not lay, and the two other pairs probably did not breed. Of the 17 pairs which laid, ten broods were known to have hatched and seven were successful, fledging 11 young (four broods of two and three of one). The failures were all thought to be natural, with no instances of nest robbery this year.

Although a slightly less successful season than in 2001, the continued increase in the number of territorial pairs is encouraging (see fig. 4 on p.493). The Sea Eagle Project is supported jointly by JNCC, SNH and the RSPB.

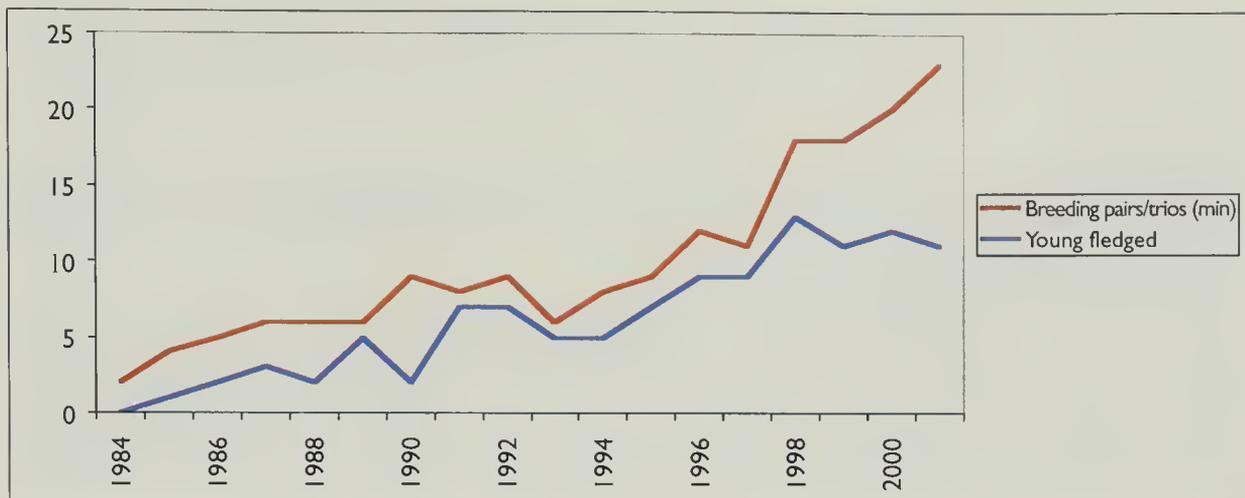


Fig. 4. The number of breeding pairs/trios of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Scotland, 1984-2001, and the number of chicks fledged. Although there have been setbacks along the way, the overall growth in numbers points to a successful reintroduction scheme.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

158-194 pairs bred, rearing at least 346 young. The slight decline from 2000 can be explained by the problems of access imposed by FMD. Indeed, the coverage achieved is a great credit to the fieldworkers and to the landowners for their co-operation. In a number of localities, it was possible to confirm that breeding occurred, but visiting nests to check success was not possible. The first successful breeding in Orkney, by two pairs, is noteworthy.

England, SW

One locality: 0-2 pairs. SOMERSET One locality: immature male and two females in suitable habitat.

England, SE

11 localities or areas: 21-24 pairs. ESSEX Four localities: (1) three pairs reared seven young; (2) pair reared two young; (3)(4) single pairs bred. KENT Seven localities or areas: (1) five pairs reared 11 young; (2) four pairs bred, result unknown; (3) three pairs bred, result unknown; (4) two males and three females fledged at least four young; (5)(6) pair present, probably bred; (7) up to three birds in June.

England, E

125-147 pairs bred. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Seven localities: (1) six pairs reared 16 young; (2) two pairs reared seven young; (3) male and two females probably bred, three young seen but possibly not from this locality; (4) two pairs probably bred, outcome unknown; (5) pair reared 3-4 young; (6) male and two females probably bred, no young reared; (7) pair bred, outcome unknown. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH One locality: two pairs reared three young. LINCOLNSHIRE Whole county: 41 males and 43 females reared at least 116 young, three pairs probably bred, seven pairs possibly bred. NORFOLK Whole county: 29 pairs reared 53 young, one pair probably bred, two pairs possibly bred. SUFFOLK Whole county: 41 pairs reared at least 100 young, one pair probably bred, two pairs possibly bred.

England, N

Six localities: 7-11 pairs bred. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE Two localities: (1) two males and three females bred and fledged nine young; (2) pair bred unsuccessfully. YORKSHIRE Four localities: (1) three pairs fledged six young; (2) male and two females probably bred; (3)(4) single pairs present.

Wales

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. CEREDIGION Two localities: (1)(2) females present in May.

Scotland, Mid

Three localities: 3-5 pairs. FIFE One locality: pair attempted to breed, but did not lay. NORTHEAST One locality: pair attempted to breed, but apparently failed. PERTH & KINROSS One locality: three pairs bred, one successful fledging three young.

Scotland, N

Three localities: 2-3 pairs. ARGYLL One locality: female present from May to September. ORKNEY Two localities: (1)(2) Single pairs bred, rearing 3-6 young between them; the first successful breeding on Orkney.

Marsh Harrier	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Breeding males	92	84	114	151	135	131	137	145	184	183
Breeding females	107	110	129	156	136	132	138	145	206	195
Young reared	229	244	255	277	263	206	292	256	377	346

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, the figures are based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete survey. The total number of monitored territories was well down on the 238 of 2000, which is almost entirely explainable by restricted access to breeding areas. Overall breeding success rose slightly, but was very poor in some areas, especially in northern England and south Strathclyde where persecution is known to be a serious problem. The total number of territorial pairs found during the 1998 census was 570 (range 499-640) (Sim *et al.* 2001).

Hen Harrier	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/occupied territory
England, N	7	2	6	0.86
Wales	6	6	15	2.50
Borders & Lothian	1	0	0	0
Dumfries & Galloway	2	0	0	0
South Strathclyde	13	3	11	0.85
Stirling	5	2	5	1.00
Angus	5	2	5	1.00
Perth & Kinross	15	4	14	0.93
Northeast Scotland	14	11	38	2.71
Moray & Nairn	6	4	15	2.50
Argyll & Bute	43	28	92	2.14
Highland	12	10	28	2.33
Orkney	32	15	31	0.97
Western Isles	25	14	27	1.08
Northern Ireland	12+	?	?	—
TOTALS	198	101	287	1.45

Note: It was not possible to obtain any productivity data from the occupied territories in Northern Ireland.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

11 localities: 9-16 pairs reared 20 young. The number of breeding pairs was similar to that in 2000, yet productivity and the number of young reared was well above the recent average, as fig. 5 illustrates.

England, SW

Four localities: (1) pair reared three young; (2) pair present; (3) female in June and July; (4) male in July.

England, SE

Two localities: (1) male and two females, both successful, reared six young; (2) male and two females, one successful, reared three young.

England, E

Four localities: (1) four pairs bred, two rearing five young; (2) pair reared at least three young; (3)(4) single males in June.

England, Central

One locality: (1) male in July and August.

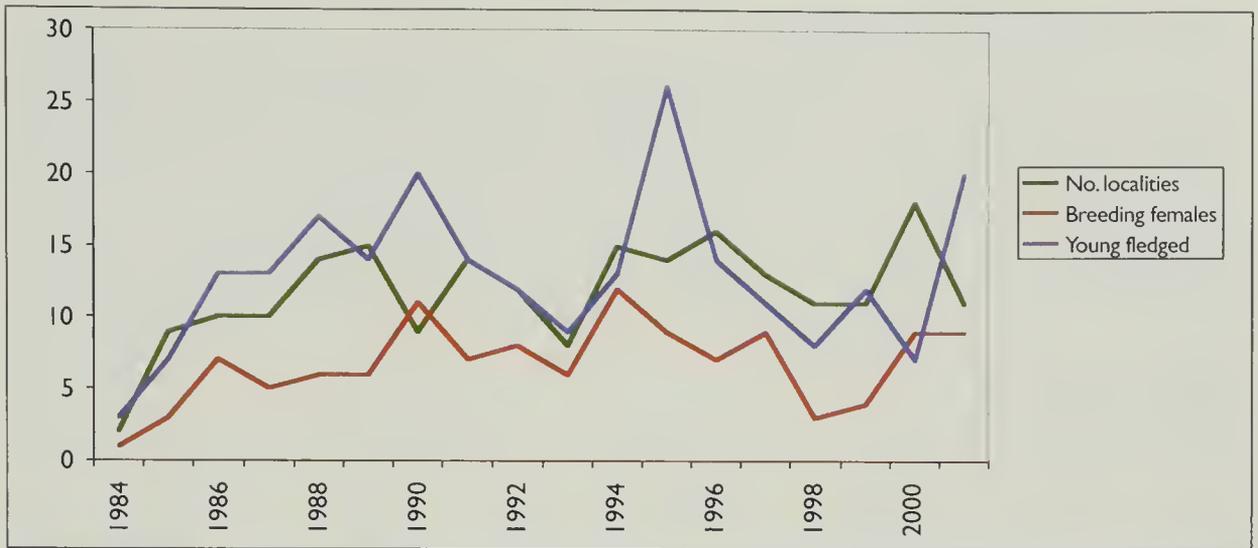


Fig. 5. Breeding data for Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*, the rarest of Britain's regularly breeding raptors, 1984-2001. In contrast to the marked success of some raptors, as shown in this report, Montagu's Harriers have experienced mixed fortunes during the past two decades.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

At least 194 localities or areas: 157-255 pairs breeding. This represents a sharp fall in the number of confirmed pairs, as well as in areas from which records came, but is largely due to access restrictions in 2001. We hope that the next report will show a return to more typical levels of reporting, and continue to urge that, in order to assist its conservation, all information on this species should be deposited with the Panel – not least to provide a more-complete dataset on the scale and extent of persecution.

England

At least 106 localities in 18 counties; 87 pairs known to have bred, plus 79 other pairs.

Wales

39 localities in nine counties: 40 pairs known to have bred, plus six other pairs.

Scotland

49 localities in six recording areas: 30 pairs known to have bred, plus 13 other pairs.

Northern Goshawk	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. counties	34	35	33	38	33	41	38	42	36	33
Confirmed pairs	150	199	145	249	160	247	179	198	237	157
Max. total pairs	243	299	225	319	213	347	249	293	322	255

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

The following summary information has been received. For each area other than northern England, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census. There was an increase in productivity for the second year running (1999: 0.41, 2000: 0.48), but it remains particularly low in some areas.

Golden Eagle	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/territorial pair
England, N	2	1	1	1.00
Dumfries & Galloway	2	0	0	0
Borders	0	0	0	0
Central Scotland	9	4	5	0.56
Tayside	18	9	12	0.67
Northeast Scotland	18	5	7	0.39
Argyll	54	18	21	0.39
Highland	95	42	55	0.58
Western Isles	23	(5)	(7)	—
TOTALS	221	84	108	0.51*

* The totals for the Western Isles are omitted from this calculation since not all occupied home ranges there were checked for fledged young. Numbers in parentheses represent incomplete survey results.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

158 pairs with nests: 139 pairs laid eggs, rearing 224 young. The first breeding by the relocated birds at Rutland Water took place in 2001, with a released male breeding with an unringed female, presumably from the Scottish population. Three pairs bred in Cumbria, while further increases took place across Scotland. At least three nests were robbed by egg-collectors, and other failures were due to high winds at critical times.

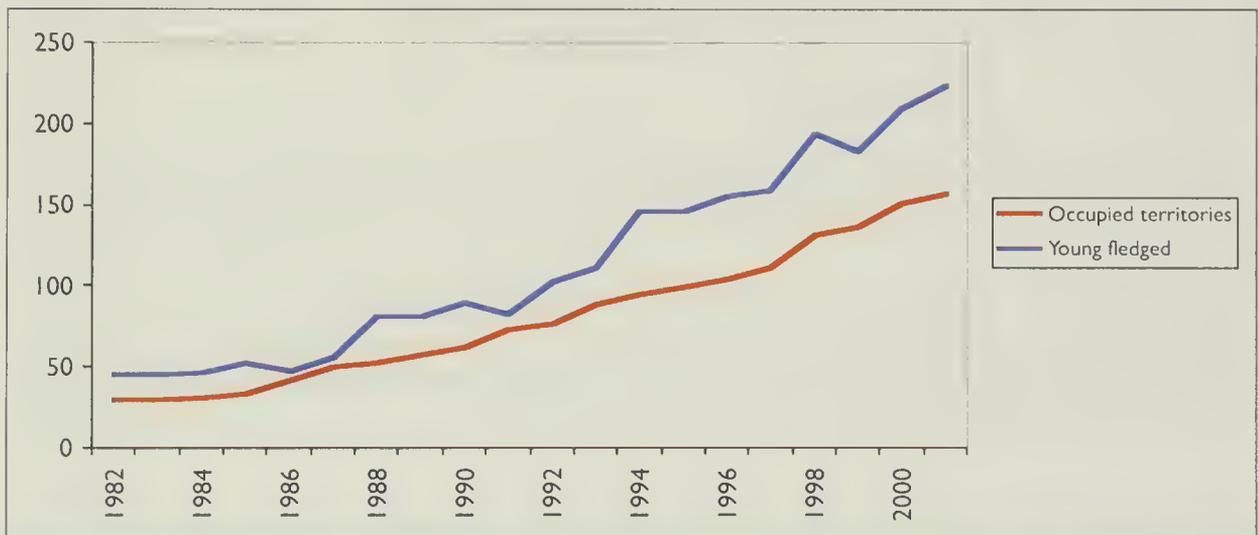


Fig. 6. Numbers of occupied territories and young fledged for Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* in the UK, 1982-2001. The species is no longer confined to Scotland, and there were four breeding pairs in England in 2001.

England, Central

LEICESTERSHIRE One pair bred, and reared one young; second pair copulating and stick carrying but did not breed; 12 more young were translocated from Scotland to Rutland Water, all of which fledged and left the area.

England, N

CUMBRIA Three localities: (1) pair bred, three young reared; (2) pair bred, one young reared; (3) pair bred, but no young reared.

Scotland, S

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: one pair bred, but eggs failed to hatch.

Scotland, Mid

FORTH Eight pairs laid, of which seven reared 18 young. TAYSIDE 45 occupied territories, 37 clutches laid, 31 hatched and 29 pairs reared 60 young. NORTHEAST 13 pairs occupied territories, 12 pairs laid, nine of which reared 20 young. ELSEWHERE Five pairs located, four of which laid, with three pairs rearing five young.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL Five pairs were all successful, fledging ten young. HIGHLAND 76 pairs located, of which 68 bred and 51 reared 106 young.

Osprey	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Occupied territories	76	88	95	99	104	111	131	136	151	158
Pairs with eggs	63	78	83	92	93	102	117	125	125	139
Successful pairs	47	56	69	73	74	77	93	87	nc	107
Young reared	103	111	146	146	155	159	194	183	209	224
Young/occupied territory	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.4

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census. The effect of FMD is only too obvious in the table below, with only Northeast Scotland reporting a higher total of occupied territories than in 2000, and the overall number of occupied territories and total number of successful pairs fledging young down from 294 and 181, respectively. Where it was monitored, breeding success was slightly lower than in 2000. The most recent estimate of the British population is 1,300 (1,100-1,500) pairs in 1993-94 (Rebecca & Bainbridge 1998).

Merlin	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/occupied territory
England, Central	15	12	35	2.33
England, N	50	25	76	1.52
Wales	16	7	16	1.00
Borders & Lothian	22	11	30	1.36
Dumfries & Galloway	1	1	2	2.00
Angus	14	5	15	1.07
Perth & Kinross	21	10	28	1.33
Northeast Scotland	39	35	104	2.67
Argyll & Bute	4	0	0	0
Highland	35	21	73	2.09
Orkney	14	10	34	2.43
Shetland	8	6	16	2.00
Western Isles	9	9	21	2.33
Northern Ireland	7	4	6	0.86
TOTALS	255	156	456	1.79

No data were available for Southwest England, South Strathclyde and Stirling.



Gordon Lingsbury

319. Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Shetland, June 1990. Foot-and-mouth disease affected monitoring of nesting Merlins in 2001, but breeding success appeared to be slightly lower than in 2000.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Minimum of 370-697 pairs breeding. Reporting of this species was less affected by FMD restrictions than it was for some others, partly because several County Recorders derive the total of pairs for their area from an analysis of all sightings rather than the actual location of pairs and nests. In this case, the number of pairs breeding in 2001 was estimated using similar techniques to those employed in previous years, so the numbers in the table are, in most cases, directly comparable.

This total remains well below a recent estimate of the total British breeding population of 2,200 pairs (Clements 2001), which was derived by extrapolation of numbers throughout the country, based upon known breeding densities in well-studied areas. Nonetheless, the first breeding records in Lancashire & North Merseyside and Highland show that the species is continuing to expand its range.

England, SW

51-166 pairs. AVON 8-13 pairs. DEVON 17 pairs. GLOUCESTERSHIRE 1-3 pairs. HAMPSHIRE 10-70 pairs. ISLE OF WIGHT One pair. SOMERSET 9-29 pairs. WILTSHIRE 5-33 pairs.

England, SE

237-324 pairs. BEDFORDSHIRE Four pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 6-22 pairs. ESSEX 8-19 pairs. GREATER LONDON 0-1 pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE 2+ pairs. KENT c. 200 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE Three pairs. SURREY 6-27 pairs. SUSSEX 8-46 pairs.

England, E

21-59 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 2-6 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 2-10 pairs. NORFOLK 0-3 pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 8-12 pairs. SUFFOLK 9-28 pairs.

England, Central

38-98 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 16-20 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE 2-11 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE eight pairs. SHROPSHIRE 2-24 pairs. WARWICKSHIRE 9-34 pairs. WORCESTERSHIRE One pair.

England, N

11-31 pairs. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL 5-7 pairs. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE One pair (first successful breeding in county). NORTHUMBERLAND 5-12 pairs. YORKSHIRE 0-11 pairs.

Wales

11-16 pairs. BRECON 1-3 pairs. GLAMORGAN One pair. GWENT 5-8 pairs. RADNOR Four pairs.

Scotland, N

1-3 pairs. HIGHLAND 1-3 pairs (first breeding in region).

Hobby	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Confirmed pairs	255	152	170	161	190	167	161	246	381	370
Max. total pairs	582	493	500	430	454	624	675	553	711	697

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census. Access restrictions prevented a survey comparable with that in 2000, when the number of occupied and successful territories was 753 and 393, respectively. Breeding success, especially in England, should, therefore, be treated with caution. The most recent estimate of the UK Peregrine population is 1,263 pairs in 1991 (Crick & Ratcliffe 1995). A more up-to-date figure will soon be available from the national survey held in 2002 (postponed from 2001).

Peregrine Falcon	Occupied territories	Territories known to have produced clutches	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/territorial pair
England, SW	113	28	94	0.83
England, SE	28	10	25	0.89
England, Central	42	23	49	1.17
England, N	119	57	118	0.99
Wales	51	26	40	0.78
Borders & Lothian	9	6	17	1.89
Dumfries & Galloway	3	2	4	1.33
South Strathclyde/Arran	1	1	2	2.00
Angus	19	10	26	1.37
Central	16	16	34	2.13
Perth & Kinross	52	40	73	1.40
Northeast Scotland	59	31	73	1.24
Moray & Nairn	1	1	2	2.00
Argyll	12	8	14	1.17
Highland	26	18	40	1.54
Orkney	7	4	11	1.57
Western Isles	3	2	7	2.33
Northern Ireland	72	47	?	—
TOTALS	633	330	629	0.99

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

4-223 pairs breeding. A very similar year to 2000, though with more birds in the southern half of England and fewer in the north; and many fewer in Scotland.

England, SW

49 males. AVON Seven singing males. DEVON Six singing males. DORSET Ten singing males. HAMPSHIRE Four singing males. SOMERSET Five singing males. WILTSHIRE 17 singing males.

England, SE

22 males. BEDFORDSHIRE One singing male. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One singing male. ESSEX Seven singing males. KENT 12 singing males. SURREY One singing male.

England, E

Two broods, 44 males. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Up to 15 singing males. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH Six singing males. LINCOLNSHIRE Four singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Up to ten singing males. SUFFOLK Two broods, nine singing males.

England, Central

One brood, 60 males. DERBYSHIRE Five singing males. LEICESTERSHIRE Ten singing males. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Brood seen, 28 singing males. SHROPSHIRE Ten singing males. WARWICKSHIRE Seven singing males.

England, N

24 males. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL Five singing males. CUMBRIA Three singing males. GREATER MANCHESTER One singing male. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE One singing male. NORTHUMBERLAND Four singing males. YORKSHIRE Ten singing males.

Wales

Two males. GLAMORGAN One singing male. PEMBROKE One singing male.

Scotland, S

Five males. BORDERS Four singing males. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One singing male.

Scotland, Mid

One brood, six males. ANGUS & DUNDEE At least one brood. FIFE Four singing males. MORAY & NAIRN One singing male. PERTH & KINROSS One singing male.

Scotland, N & W

Seven males. ARGYLL Three singing males. HIGHLAND One singing male. ORKNEY One singing male, plus one found dead. SHETLAND Two singing males.

Common Quail	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Confirmed broods	9	1	8	15	5	4	5	5	2	4
Singing males	481	202	604	500	330	863	523	312	201	219
Max. total pairs	490	203	612	515	335	867	528	317	203	223

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

23 localities: 35 singing males. A similar picture to that in 2000. The national census carried out in 1999 (Gilbert 2002) represents the most accurate approximation of the total British population.

England, SW

Three localities: three males. HAMPSHIRE Three localities: (1)(2) singing males in suitable habitat in April and May; (3) bird in suitable habitat, late March and early April.

England, SE

One locality: one male. KENT One locality: singing male in late April.

England, E

Eight localities: 16 males. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: (1) seven singing males, of which four persistently; (2) two singing males; (3) singing male. NORFOLK Three localities: (1) two singing males; (2)(3) single singing males. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males, one in late March only.

England, Central

One locality: one male. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: singing male.

England, N

One locality: one male. YORKSHIRE One locality: one singing male.

Scotland, S

One locality: one male. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: singing male in August.

Scotland, Mid

One locality: one male. NORTHEAST One locality: singing male.

Scotland, N & W

Seven localities: 11 males. ARGYLL One locality: singing male. GRAMPIAN One locality: singing male. HIGHLAND One locality: five singing males. ORKNEY One locality: one singing male. SHETLAND One locality: singing male. WESTERN ISLES Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.

Spotted Crake	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	12	19	5	8	8	13	16	40	22	23
No. pairs/singing males	14	31	11	10	13	14	31	46-77	34	35

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*

One singing male. This is the first time that this species has figured in these reports. It is recorded quite regularly from the Netherlands in summer and so is certainly a potential coloniser.

England, SE

One locality: one male. KENT One locality: a male sang from 26th June to 6th July (*Brit. Birds* 95: 491).

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

619 pairs or singing males. The total of 599 singing males on all Scottish islands is just six more than in 2000, which is probably a satisfactory result given the rather poor summer experienced across the area. There were increases on six islands, including one on Eigg for the first time since 1994, and declines on eight. Numbers on the mainland of Scotland were down on the 24 recorded in 2000.

England, E

One locality: one singing male. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: singing male, 30th June and 1st July.

England, Central

One locality: one singing male. SHROPSHIRE One locality: singing male, 23rd May to 6th June.

Wales

One locality: one singing male. ANGLESEY One locality: singing male, 17th May to 23rd June.

Scotland, N & W: Mainland

Four main areas: 17 singing males. ARGYLL At least one singing male. CAITHNESS Four singing males. SUTHERLAND Up to ten singing males. WEST INVERNESS Two singing males.

Scotland, N & W: Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland

17 localities or areas: 599 singing males.

Total number of singing males: ARGYLL – INNER HEBRIDES 237 (Coll 62, Tiree 143, Iona 7, Colonsay & Oronsay 18, Islay 7), HIGHLAND – INNER HEBRIDES 24 (Skye 21, Eigg 1, Muck 2), ORKNEY 9, SHETLAND 2, WESTERN ISLES 327 (Lewis 60, Harris 4, Berneray 1, North Uist 74, Benbecula 34, South Uist 90, Barra & Vatersay 64).

Common Crane *Grus grus*

After failing in 2000, it is good to report a return to successful breeding for this species at the regular site in Norfolk.

England, E

NORFOLK One locality: two pairs nested, each rearing two young, though one chick died shortly after fledging.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

One locality: single male present.

England, E One locality: male present all year.

The single bird present at Titchwell, Norfolk, for the last eight years, remained throughout 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 491).

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

43 localities: 800-895 pairs reared a minimum of 335 young. The data this year are incomplete: some colonies were not surveyed, while at others neither the exact number of pairs nor the production of young was known. At those colonies where breeding success could be ascertained, it was better than the disastrous situation in 2000, though still very poor at some.

England, SE

17 localities: 280-374 pairs. ESSEX Nine localities: (1) 46 pairs reared at least 18 young; (2) 40 pairs bred; (3) 35 pairs bred; (4) ten pairs reared up to ten young; (5) three pairs bred; (6)-(8) two pairs bred; (9) pair bred. KENT Eight localities: (1) 68 pairs reared 65 young; (2) 60 pairs present, no further information; (3) 31 pairs bred; (4) c. 30 pairs present, no further information; (5) 29 pairs reared up to 25 young; (6) ten pairs reared eight young; (7) pair bred; (8) up to eight adults in June.

England, E

23 localities: 494 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: pair reared two young, first (recent?) breeding record for county. LINCOLNSHIRE Three localities: (1) up to 50 pairs reared at least 90 young; (2) two pairs reared four young; (3) pair reared no young. NORFOLK Eight localities: (1) 60 pairs bred; (2) 40 pairs reared no young; (3) 26 pairs reared 44 young; (4) 20 pairs bred, few or no young reared; (5) 10 pairs bred; (6) four pairs bred; (7) two pairs reared no young; (8) two pairs bred. SUFFOLK 11 localities: (1) 78 pairs reared one young; (2) 64 pairs reared eight young; (3) 55 pairs reared one young; (4) 29 pairs reared at least 25 young; (5) 18 pairs reared no young; (6) eight pairs reared nine young; (7) eight pairs reared seven young; (8) seven pairs reared no young; (9) four pairs reared six young; (10) three pairs reared two young; (11) two pairs reared five young.

England, Central

One locality: 0-1 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: pair present, did not breed.

England, N

Two localities: 26 pairs. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE One locality: pair reared one young. YORKSHIRE One locality: 25 pairs reared four young.

Avocet	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	29	25	29	25	25	35	48	36	39	43
Confirmed pairs	492	436	623	613	592	654	834	655	980	800
Young reared (min.)	336	347	181	149	189	238	536	444	172	335

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Seven counties: 159-164 pairs fledged 103 young. Major access problems in the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecklands meant that the results for 2001 are particularly unsatisfactory. In southern England, a pair bred, albeit unsuccessfully, in Devon.

England, SW

36-41 pairs. DEVON One locality: pair bred, but no young were reared. HAMPSHIRE 12 pairs, eight of which bred, and reared one young. WILTSHIRE 28 pairs, of which 27 bred, rearing 17 young.

England, SE

Six pairs. BERKSHIRE Five pairs, which all bred, and reared three young. OXFORDSHIRE One pair reared two young.

England, E

117 pairs. NORFOLK 87 pairs reared 69 young. SUFFOLK 30 pairs reared 11 young.

Stone-curlew	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Confirmed pairs	155	146	141	165	174	192	215	235	253	159
Max. total pairs	159	162	173	174	188	203	226	246	270	164
Young reared (min.)	111	101	91	164	155	167	165	163	168	103

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census. The total number of pairs is well down from the peak count of 636 (in these reports) in 1999. The most recent estimate of the British population was 825-1,070 pairs in 1991 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Little Ringed Plover	Confirmed breeding pairs	Max. total pairs
England, SW	26	31
England, SE	77	104
England, E	34	62
England, Central	96	132
England, N	109	187
Wales	13	28
Scotland, Mid	0	1
TOTALS	355	545

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

No reports were received from outside main Scottish breeding areas. The Panel seeks records only away from the main breeding range, which lies north of a line from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Tay and holds in the region of 840-950 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One locality: one male. The worst year since 1984, with no females at the traditional site. In the past ten years, single confirmed pairs were recorded in 1992, 1996 and 1997, with two in 1993; how much longer can Temminck's Stint maintain its tenuous place in this report?

Scotland, N & W

One locality: single male displaying in mid May.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One locality: one pair. After two years when only a single bird was seen, one pair was present and possibly bred. What is perhaps most surprising is the tenacity with which a handful of individuals persist in their attempts to breed in Scotland. From 1990 to 1998, the number of confirmed breeding pairs varied between one and four (in 1994), but for the past three years there have been no confirmed breeding attempts at all.

Scotland, N & W

One locality: pair present, may have bred.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Two localities: two leks. Although there were two leks of reasonable size in Cambridgeshire, there was no indication of nesting at either site. No birds were present at leks used in previous years in Kent and northern England.

England, E

Two localities: two leks. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) 16 males and 11 females were observed lekking during 2nd-15th May, with occasional sightings of a male and female into June, though with no proof of nesting; (2) at least 12 lekking males in late April and early May, but no evidence of breeding.

Ruff	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	21	10	13	7	8	6	5	3	5	2
No. leks	7	7	3	3	3	5	2	3	4	2
Nests/broods	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0-1	0

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

11 localities: 52-59 pairs breeding. Despite a sharp fall in the number of localities used, the number of confirmed pairs was the highest since 1984, and the total pairs the highest since 1990. Breeding success was poor, however, especially at the sites in Cambridgeshire, where flooding disrupted breeding for the third time in four years.

England, SE

Two localities: 8-10 pairs. KENT Two localities: (1) five pairs bred, no young reared, sixth pair present; (2) three pairs bred, no young reared, fourth pair present.

England, E

Two localities: 35 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE. Two localities: (1) 28 pairs reared 16 young from 76 that hatched; (2) seven pairs bred, one reared two young.

England, N

One locality: Two pairs. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE One locality: two pairs raised one young.

Scotland, S

One locality: 0-1 pairs. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: pair summered.

Scotland, N & W

Five localities: 7-11 pairs bred. ORKNEY Three localities: (1) four pairs reared at least two young, two further pairs

present; (2) pair probably bred; (3) single pair displaying, but no breeding evidence. SHETLAND Two localities: (1) two pairs reared one young; (2) pair bred, but failed.

Black-tailed Godwit	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	24	16	22	15	12	11	13	18	17	11
Confirmed pairs	20	28	20	28	34	42	38	45	39	52
Max. total pairs	58	33	36	35	41	47	50	53	49	59

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Away from the species' stronghold in Orkney and Shetland one pair bred. The pair which bred in north Wales for the first time in 2000 did not return, but a pair bred successfully on the Scottish mainland in the same area as in 1995 and 1996. The Scottish population is estimated at 530 pairs (Stone *et al.* 1997).

Scotland, N

One locality: one pair. HIGHLAND One locality: bird with young.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

The following limited information was received, and we repeat our appeal for information from bird-watchers visiting the Highlands. In this enormous, underwatched region, all records are welcome, in particular of displaying birds or singing males. This information can be sent to the local recorder, or directly to the Panel Secretary. The Scottish population is estimated at 1,100-1,600 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL At least one pair bred. HIGHLAND 65 pairs reported from 16 localities. SHETLAND Three pairs bred. WESTERN ISLES Five pairs reported.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One locality: one pair. One, possibly two, pairs bred for the third year running at the same locality, though it is not known whether any young fledged. The only confirmed breeding record prior to 1999 was in Inverness-shire in 1959 (*Brit. Birds* 52: 430-432).

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND One locality: one or two pairs bred.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Five localities: 0-8 pairs bred. A small, but welcome increase after two poor years. Establishing with certainty that breeding has occurred is not a priority for this species, because it may result in unnecessary disturbance. It seems likely, however, that at least five pairs did breed. In the past decade, the maximum total of pairs recorded peaked at 11 in 1994 and 1995, with a mean of 8.7.

Scotland, N & W

Five localities: (1) four pairs present and probably breeding; (2) pair probably bred; (3)-(5) singles in suitable habitat in May-June.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Two localities: 15 breeding males reared at least seven young.

Scotland, N & W

Two localities. SHETLAND Two localities: (1) nine breeding males, at least five young fledged; (2) six breeding males, at least two young fledged.

The number of breeding males and the number of young reared in Shetland increased slightly in 2001. Disappointingly, there were no reports from the Western Isles, where birds were present at eight sites in 2000.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

22 localities: 90-105 pairs, including one mixed pair. Another excellent year, and although the overall totals are slightly below the record numbers in 2000, monitoring was hit by FMD restrictions. Had it not been for these, 2001 may have been the most successful year ever.

England, SW

Four localities: 51-56 pairs. HAMPSHIRE Three localities: (1) 46 pairs raised up to 23 young; (2) four pairs reared one young; (3) pair bred, but failed. ISLE OF WIGHT One locality: five pairs present, but breeding not confirmed.

England, SE

Nine localities: 33-38 pairs. ESSEX Four localities: (1) two pairs reared one young, third pair present; (2)(3) two pairs fledged three young; (4) pair bred, result unknown. KENT Two localities: (1) 16 pairs raised at least two young; (2) eight pairs bred, all failed. SUSSEX Three localities: (1) two pairs bred, result unknown; (2) three pairs present, end March; (3) pair present, early April.

England, E

Two localities: 2-3 pairs. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, result unknown but probably failed; (2) pair displayed, but did not breed.

England, N

Seven localities: 4-8 pairs. CUMBRIA Two localities: (1) pair bred, but failed; (2) two birds in suitable habitat. GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair bred, but failed. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE Three localities: (1) pair reared at least one young; (2) mixed pair (one paired with a Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*) bred, but failed; (3) two pairs probably bred. NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: pair present, but did not breed.

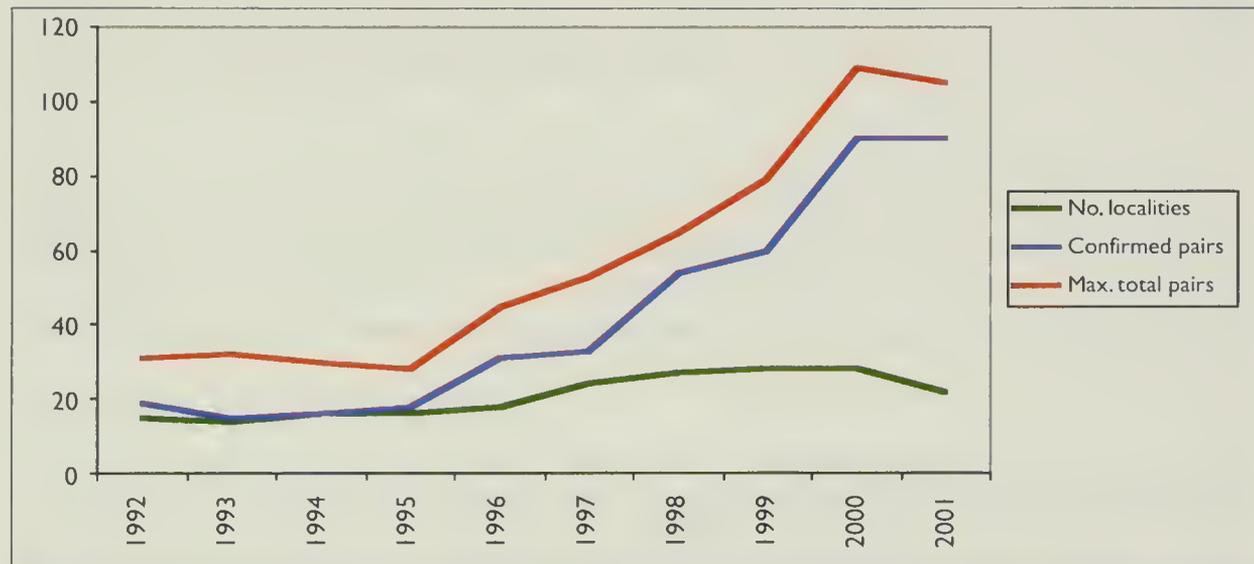


Fig. 7. Numbers of breeding Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* in the UK, 1992-2001. The sharp rise in the number of breeding pairs, predominantly in southern parts of England, since the late 1990s is striking, and looks set to continue.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus (cachinnans) michahellis*

Four localities: 3-4 pairs, plus mixed pair. Two successful pairs in Dorset follow single pairs which reared young there in 1997, 1999 and 2000.

England, SW

Three localities: 3-4 pairs. DORSET Two localities: (1) two pairs reared one young each; (2) pair laid twice, but failed. SOMERSET One locality: 1-2 birds present, April and May.

England, SE

One locality: One mixed pair. BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: male paired with Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, but did not breed.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Seven localities: 58-59 pairs reared a minimum of 66 young. Although the number of localities remained at an all-time low, the number of breeding pairs held up well, while productivity was significantly better than in 2000, when 38 young were fledged. Scotland was the only area not to show an increase in breeding pairs over 2000, dropping from 10-11 pairs to just two.

England, SW

One locality: 0-1 pairs. HAMPSHIRE One locality: pair in May.

England, N

Two localities: 43 pairs. NORTHUMBERLAND Two localities: (1) 42 pairs fledged 55 young; (2) pair reared one young.

Wales

One locality: Seven pairs. ANGLESEY One locality: seven pairs raised four young.

Scotland, Mid

Two localities: Two pairs. FIFE Two localities: (1) pair reared one young; (2) pair bred, but failed.

Northern Ireland

One locality: six pairs. CO. ANTRIM One locality: six pairs reared at least five young.

Roseate Tern	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	15	18	14	15	11	14	11	8	7	7
Confirmed pairs	62	84	74	72	66	54	50	61	52	58
Max. total pairs	72	105	98	85	75	55	57	64	56	59

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

The following summary information has been received (data refer to number of pairs). For each area, it is based on a sample rather than a complete census. The total number of breeding pairs has risen steadily over the last five years, increasing by a third since 1997. The latest estimate of the total British breeding population is 2,430 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Little Tern	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
SW England	260	218	235	155	257
SE England	182	152	103	199	154
E England	561	642	776	694	712
NE England	104	146	151	100	132
NW England	9	42	50	45	55
Wales	80	45	86	nc	85
Scotland	185	215	253	304	447
TOTALS	1,381	1,460	1,654	1,497	1,842

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

1,644 pairs. Coverage was extremely patchy, with access restrictions a particular problem for this species, which so often breeds in farm buildings. The overall total was, however, almost exactly the same as in 2000 (1,625-1,642). Numbers reported from Wales were particularly low, but, in contrast, a reasonably good survey was achieved in Lincolnshire. The estimates for Northern Ireland are the first that we have published. The BTO's Barn Owl Monitoring Programme showed that nestbox occupation rates decreased from 83% to 61% between 2000 and 2001. Heavy rains and subsequent flooding during autumn 2000 may have caused a shortage of small mammal prey over the winter period, leading either to reduced survival or to a reduction in the proportion of birds attempting to breed. The Nest Record Scheme showed an exceptionally low mean brood size of 2.87 compared with a mean of 3.38 over the period 1983-2000 (Beaven *et al.* 2002).

England, SW

345 pairs. AVON 4 pairs. CORNWALL 7. DEVON 59. DORSET 16. HAMPSHIRE 60. ISLE OF WIGHT 27. SOMERSET 28. WILTSHIRE 144.

England, SE

228 pairs. BEDFORDSHIRE 3 pairs. BERKSHIRE 1. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 60. ESSEX 22. HERTFORDSHIRE 3. KENT 32. OXFORDSHIRE 30. SURREY 5. SUSSEX 72.

England, E

357 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 21 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 10. LINCOLNSHIRE 236. NORFOLK 33. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 44. SUFFOLK 13.

England, Central

140 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 25 pairs. HEREFORDSHIRE 38. LEICESTERSHIRE 14. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 13. SHROPSHIRE 7. STAFFORDSHIRE 1. WARWICKSHIRE 40. WORCESTERSHIRE 2.

England, N

383 pairs. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL 22 pairs. CUMBRIA 62. GREATER MANCHESTER 5. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE 130. NORTHUMBERLAND 7. YORKSHIRE 157.

Wales

25 pairs. BRECON 4 pairs. CEREDIGION 11. DENBIGH 2. GLAMORGAN 1. GWENT 2. PEMBROKE 5.

Scotland, S

42 pairs. ARRAN 2 pairs. AYRSHIRE 5. BORDERS 7. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY 26. LOTHIANS 2.

Scotland, Mid

3 pairs. FIFE 2 pairs. NORTHEAST SCOTLAND 1.

Scotland, N & W

56 pairs. ARGYLL 40 pairs. HIGHLAND 16.

Northern Ireland

About 65 pairs. CO. ANTRIM 10 pairs. CO. ARMAGH Up to 10 pairs. CO. DOWN Up to 15 pairs. CO. LONDON-DERRY Up to 15 pairs. CO. TYRONE and CO. FERMANAGH Up to 15 pairs.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

1,008-1,058 pairs. The total is close to the highest number recorded (1,028-1,062 in 1998) since the Panel began monitoring this species in 1996. Although several of the totals are estimates, and FMD restrictions interfered with survey work in some counties, other counties have achieved more accurate and complete counts than previously.

England, SW

190 pairs. AVON 8 pairs. CORNWALL 1. DEVON 4. DORSET 5. HAMPSHIRE 116. SOMERSET 46. WILTSHIRE 10.

England, SE

225 pairs. BEDFORDSHIRE 4 pairs. BERKSHIRE 2. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE c. 100. ESSEX 12. GREATER LONDON 8. HERTFORDSHIRE 1. KENT 26. OXFORDSHIRE 25. SURREY 14. SUSSEX 33.

England, E

102 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 21 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 20. LINCOLNSHIRE 19. NORFOLK 4. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 7. SUFFOLK 31.

England, Central

120 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 2 pairs. HEREFORDSHIRE 41. LEICESTERSHIRE 6. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 15. SHROPSHIRE 15. STAFFORDSHIRE 4. WARWICKSHIRE 37.

England, N

325-375 pairs. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL 28 pairs. CUMBRIA 50-100. GREATER MANCHESTER c. 50. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE c. 100. NORTHUMBERLAND 13. YORKSHIRE 84.

Wales

11 pairs. BRECON 10 pairs. CEREDIGION 1.

Scotland, S

15 pairs. BORDERS 12 pairs. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY 2. LOTHIANS 1.

Scotland, Mid

12 pairs. ANGUS & DUNDEE 3 pairs. NORTHEAST SCOTLAND 5. PERTH & KINROSS 4.

Scotland, N & W

8 pairs. HIGHLAND 8 pairs.

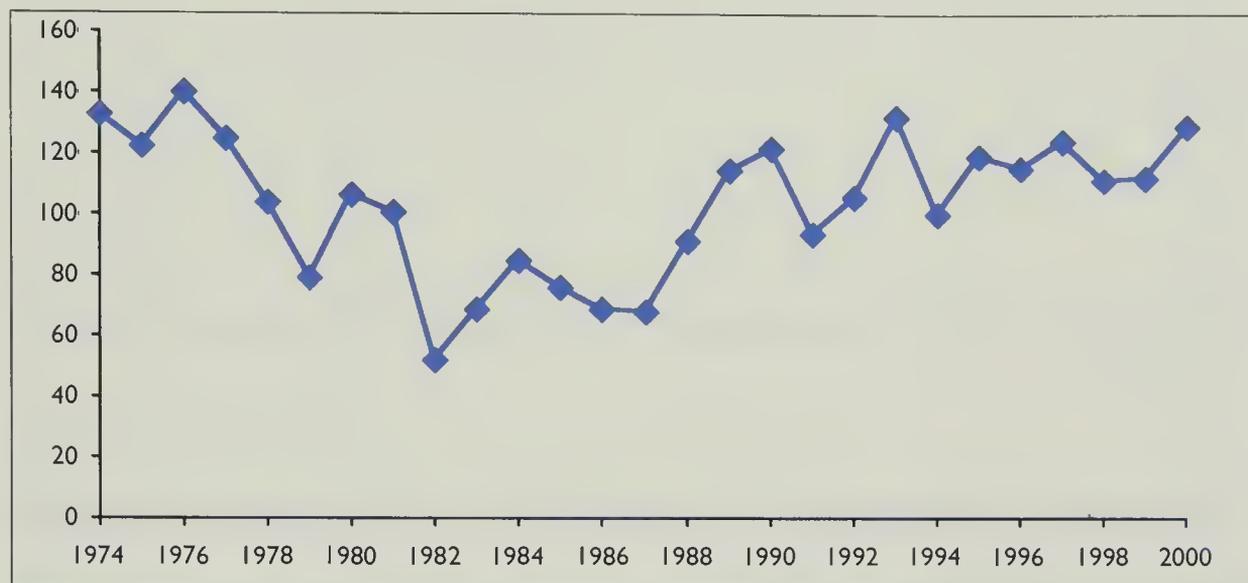


Fig. 8. The annual population index for the Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, 1974-2000, derived from the BTO's Waterways Bird Survey.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

No breeding-season reports were received. This is the first 'complete blank' in 30 years reporting. Is this the end of Wrynecks trying to breed in Britain?

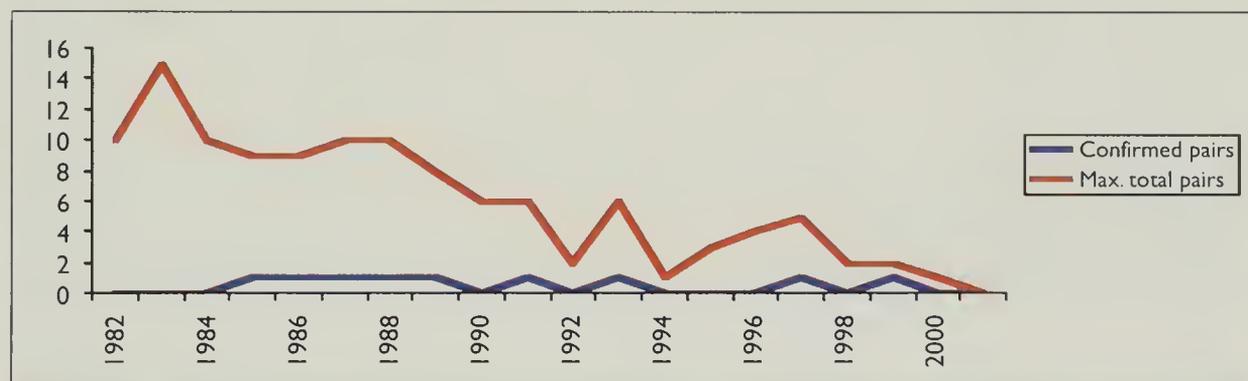


Fig. 9. Numbers of breeding Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* in the UK, 1982-2001. This species may now be officially extinct as a breeding bird in Britain.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

The following county totals were received (data show number of pairs), which are compared with those from the previous four years, including the full census in 1997. The totals do not reflect the 2001 breeding population accurately. Survey work was almost impossible in some of the most important areas, especially in the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks.

Wood Lark	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Cornwall	0	0	0	0	0
Devon	53	7	12	10	5
Dorset	105	54	66	2	47
Hampshire	294	174	179	c.325	158
Somerset	0	0	0	0	0

continued on page 510

Wood Lark <i>continued</i>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Wiltshire	3	2	9	0	1
Bedfordshire	1	1	0	0	1
Berkshire	63	2	40	nc	0
Buckinghamshire	6	3	5	0	1
Essex	0	3	2	0	0
Kent	3	6	1	3	4
Surrey	171	134	135	c.162	133
Sussex	71	60	nc	78	44
Lincolnshire	37	40	51	nc	44
Norfolk	248	326	364	c.300	56
Suffolk	457	459	474	470	305
Nottinghamshire	31	78	135	57	24
Staffordshire	7	3	0	0	0
Yorkshire	2	19	27	22	33
TOTALS	1,552	1,371	1,500	1,429	856

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

One locality: male and female. This is the third year running that at least one bird has been present at this site.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND One locality: male in May and June, female once in August.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

One locality: one singing male. This is the third time that this species has appeared in these reports, but the first since 1994.

England, E

LINCOLNSHIRE Male singing, 15th May, Gibraltar Point (*Brit. Birds* 95: 505).

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

One locality: one singing male.

Wales

CEREDIGION Male of the white-spotted form *L. c. cyanecula* in song, Cors Caron, 26th May (*Welsh Bird Report* 2001).

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

31 localities: 17-44 pairs breeding. A disappointing year, although the 2000 Kent survey, which found 11 localities in use, was not repeated in 2001.

England, SW

One locality: 0-1 pairs. AVON One locality: singing male.

England, SE

13 localities or areas: 9-20 pairs. BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: juvenile in July thought to have been reared nearby. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: singing male. ESSEX Six localities: (1) pair bred; (2)-(6) single singing males. LONDON One area: four pairs bred, plus three singing males. KENT One locality: two pairs bred. SURREY Three localities: (1) pair bred; (2)(3) singing males.

England, E

12 localities: 8-18 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH One locality: pair bred, plus singing male. LINCOLNSHIRE Three localities: (1) pair bred; (2)(3) single females. NORFOLK Two localities: (1) three pairs bred, plus singing male; (2) singing male. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: at least one pair bred. SUFFOLK Five localities: (1) pair bred, plus two other pairs; (2) pair bred; (3) pair possibly bred; (4)(5) single singing males.

England, Central

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. DERBYSHIRE One locality: singing male. LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: singing male.

England, N

Three localities: 0-3 pairs. GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair possibly bred. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.

Black Redstart	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	44	53	66	58	46	67	71	39	39	31
Confirmed pairs	14	32	32	19	28	33	32	15	24	17
Max. total pairs	71	76	95	82	65	99	91	50	66	44

Fieldfare Turdus pilaris

Six localities: 2-6 pairs breeding. Although found at fewer localities than in 2000, breeding was confirmed for the second year running. During the past ten years, the number of confirmed pairs has varied between none and two (mean 1.0), and the maximum total of pairs between none and ten (mean 5.4).

England, E

One locality: pair displaying in early May.

England, N

Two localities: (1) pair bred, feeding unknown number of young; (2) agitated pair present in late June.

Scotland, S

Two localities: (1) pair in suitable habitat in mid June, but no evidence of breeding; (2) flock of five on 21st July, potential family party.

Scotland, Mid

One locality: pair bred, adult carrying food.

Redwing Turdus iliacus

Five localities: 3-6 pairs breeding. The decline continues, with the number of localities and maximum number of pairs reaching the lowest levels for a decade, during which the number of confirmed pairs peaked at nine in 1992 (mean 3.6), and the maximum total of pairs peaked at 38 in 1996 (mean 20.1). Again, we appeal to all observers, including birdwatchers visiting the Highlands, to listen for singing birds and to report them to the local recorder or to the Panel Secretary.

Scotland, N & W

Five localities: (1) two pairs bred; (2) pair bred; (3)-(5) single singing males.

Cetti's Warbler Cettia cetti

637 'pairs' or singing males. The total has fallen only slightly compared with the record number of singing males in 2000 (678), suggesting that FMD restrictions had relatively little effect on the recording of this noisy bird.

England, SW

431 males. AVON 16 singing males. CORNWALL 12 singing males. DEVON 19 singing males. DORSET 69 singing males. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Four singing males. HAMPSHIRE 151 singing males. ISLE OF WIGHT 12 singing males. SOMERSET 129 singing males. WILTSHIRE 19 singing males.

England, SE

36 males. ESSEX Four singing males. OXFORDSHIRE 10 singing males. SUSSEX 22 singing males.

England, E

118 males. NORFOLK 103 singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two singing males. SUFFOLK 13 singing males.

England, Central

Seven males. WARWICKSHIRE Four singing males. WORCESTERSHIRE Three singing males.

Wales

45 singing males. ANGLESEY Six singing males. CARMARTHEN 11 singing males. CEREDIGION/PEMBROKE Three singing males. GOWER 14 singing males. GWENT 11 singing males.

Cetti's Warbler	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. counties	18	21	23	25	28	24	27	24	23	22
Max. total 'pairs'	298	317	332	441	574	361	496	563	678	637

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Nine localities: 0-9 pairs. Despite FMD restrictions, 2001 was the best year since 1994.

England, SW

AVON One locality: singing male in May. GLOUCESTERSHIRE One locality: singing male in May and June.

England, SE

KENT Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males in May.

England, E

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: singing male in late April and May. NORFOLK Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males.

England, N

YORKSHIRE One locality: singing male in late April.

Savi's Warbler	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	13	5	7	2	3	4	2	7	2	9
Confirmed pairs	2	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Max. total pairs	22	8	10	3	3	5	2	9	2	9

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

16 localities: 5-20 pairs breeding. Inevitably, access restrictions prevented visits to several regular haunts at the right time of year, and the Kent Ornithological Society was not able to repeat its survey of 2000. On the other hand, successful breeding in Yorkshire is noteworthy. During the past decade, the number of confirmed pairs has varied between none and 12 (in 1993), with the maximum total of pairs recorded between 20 and 58 (also in 1993). Quite why the North Sea remains such an effective barrier to this species remains a mystery. Having travelled from its East African wintering quarters to breed commonly throughout northern and western Europe, establishing a viable population in eastern England would not seem to present an insurmountable hurdle.

England, SE

Seven localities: 4-8 pairs, plus two singing males. ESSEX Two localities: (1) pair reared two young; (2) two singing males. KENT Four localities: (1) three pairs of which two reared young; (2)-(4) single pairs present, breeding status unknown. GREATER LONDON One locality: singing male in May, two adults and juvenile in July presumed to have bred there.

England, E

Seven localities: eight singing males or individuals. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: singing male. SUFFOLK Six localities: (1) two singing males; (2)-(5) single singing males; (6) bird seen late July and early August.

England, Central

One locality: one singing male. WARWICKSHIRE One locality: singing male in late May.

England, N

One locality: one pair. YORKSHIRE One locality: pair reared one young.

Marsh Warbler	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	13	15	22	16	11	17	10	22	21	16
Confirmed pairs	9	12	0	2	3	5	9	3	0	5
Max. total pairs	35	58	48	31	22	32	24	29	31	20

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Two localities: two singing males.

England, E

LINCOLNSHIRE Male singing, Welland Bank Pits, 16th-22nd May.

England, N

CLEVELAND Male singing, Coatham Marsh, 15th-16th May (*Brit. Birds* 95: 511).

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*

Two localities: two singing males. This is the first time this species has featured in these reports.

England, E

NORFOLK Singing male, Scolt Head, 12th and 18th May (*Brit. Birds* 95: 512). SUFFOLK Singing male, Sizewell, 29th May (*Brit. Birds* 95: 512).

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Minimum of 1,203 territories identified. A low total compared with those of 1999 and 2000, although the large New Forest population, which typically holds several hundred pairs, was not counted this year. Devon reported a 50% decline over the 2000 total, the third year running that it has fallen there, from a high of 277 pairs in 1998.



Richard Brooks

320. Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, Dunwich Heath, Suffolk, March 2003. As for many other species, foot-and-mouth disease had a deleterious effect on the recording efficiency of observers monitoring this species in 2001. Nonetheless, the 98 pairs reported in Devon represents a 50% decline over the 2000 total, the third year running that it has fallen, from a high of 277 pairs in 1998.

Dartford Warbler	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. counties	7	11	10	12	12	11	12	11	9	12
Max. total pairs	926	1,146	1,675	1,679	552	915	947	1,747	1,925	1,203

England, SW

556 pairs. DEVON 98 pairs. DORSET 183. HAMPSHIRE 207 (excluding New Forest). ISLE OF WIGHT 6. SOMERSET 60. WILTSHIRE 2.

England, SE

596 pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 1 pair. KENT 5. SURREY 529. SUSSEX 61.

England, E

48 pairs. SUFFOLK 48 pairs.

Wales

3 pairs. GLAMORGAN 3 pairs.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

One locality: one singing male. The first such record since 1993.

England, SW

DORSET Male singing, Weston, Portland, 1st-2nd July (*Brit. Birds* 95: 514).

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

39 localities or areas: 10-121 pairs breeding. The Kent Ornithological Society is to be congratulated on going ahead with its survey of Forest Enterprise woodlands, which produced the highest number of Firecrests in the county for 18 years. Coverage elsewhere was patchy, but quite good in the important county of Hampshire. The Kent survey shows what can be achieved when studying this attractive species.

England, SW

11 localities or areas: 2-60 pairs. AVON One locality: singing male. GLOUCESTERSHIRE One locality: three singing males. HAMPSHIRE Two localities or areas: (1) 35 pairs; (2) 12 pairs in remainder of county. WILTSHIRE Seven localities: (1)(2) pairs bred; (3)(4) two singing males; (5)-(7) single singing males.

England, SE

19 localities: 8-44 pairs. BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: pair possibly bred. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: at least one singing male. KENT County survey of Forest Enterprise woodlands: eight pairs bred, with another 18 singing males in nine localities. OXFORDSHIRE One locality: three singing males. SURREY Four localities: (1) 3-4 singing males; (2)-(4) single singing males. SUSSEX Three localities: (1) three singing males; (2) two singing males; (3) singing male.

England, E

8 localities: 0-15 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males. SUFFOLK Six localities: (1)(2) four singing males; (3) two singing males; (4)-(6) single singing males.

Wales

One locality: 0-2 pairs. RADNOR One locality: two males in June.

Firecrest	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. localities	15	20	41	35	35	26	30	37	33	39
Max. total pairs	19	28	66	56	60	48	62	103	103	121

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

385-396 pairs. A considerable decline from the 483-520 pairs reported in 2000, but still close to the 339-408 pairs estimated in 1992 by Campbell *et al.* (1996). There were clearly recording problems in some areas, but the decline from 55 pairs to eight at the RSPB's Leighton Moss reserve, Lancashire, was genuine, and thought to have been caused by a combination of severe winter flooding and/or very poor setting of *Phragmites* seed.

England, SW

24 pairs. DORSET 15 pairs at four localities. HAMPSHIRE Nine pairs at three localities.

England, SE

97 pairs. ESSEX Ten pairs at three localities. KENT 64 pairs. SUSSEX 23 pairs at four localities.

England, E

175 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One pair. LINCOLNSHIRE Five pairs at two localities. NORFOLK 36 pairs at three localities. SUFFOLK 133 pairs at seven localities.

England, N

63 pairs. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE Eight pairs at one locality. YORKSHIRE 55 pairs at one locality.

Wales

One pair. CEREDIGION Two birds in May at one locality.

Scotland, Mid

25-36 pairs. MORAY & NAIRN Single male in July at locality where up to six birds have been present in the last three years. PERTH & KINROSS One extensive locality containing an estimated 25-35 pairs.



Tim Loseby

321. Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, Norfolk, May 1993. At Leighton Moss, Lancashire, one of the species' most northerly breeding sites in the UK, a decline in the number of Bearded Tits from 55 pairs to eight in 2001 is thought to have been caused by a combination of severe winter flooding and/or very poor setting of *Phragmites* seed.

Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*

These data, received from local studies, represent a very incomplete picture of the Scottish population. The estimated total population is 900 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Scotland, Mid

MORAY & NAIRN Estimated county total 50-100 pairs; nestbox study suspended because of FMD restrictions; three boxes known to have been occupied.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND Three localities: (1)-(3) total of four pairs bred.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

11 localities: 3-11 pairs breeding.

England, E

A total of 34 nest localities was visited in the study area, with the presence of birds being confirmed at 11 sites. Breeding was confirmed at only three sites, but probably occurred at one other. A minimum of just two young are known to have fledged, though it is possible that three more did so, but one nest is known to have failed. In addition, seven other sites are known to have held birds, including two with a singing male, and two at which more than one bird was seen on more than one occasion. This was by far the worst year since the 1970s, and not only within the study area, since there was a complete absence of records from outside it.

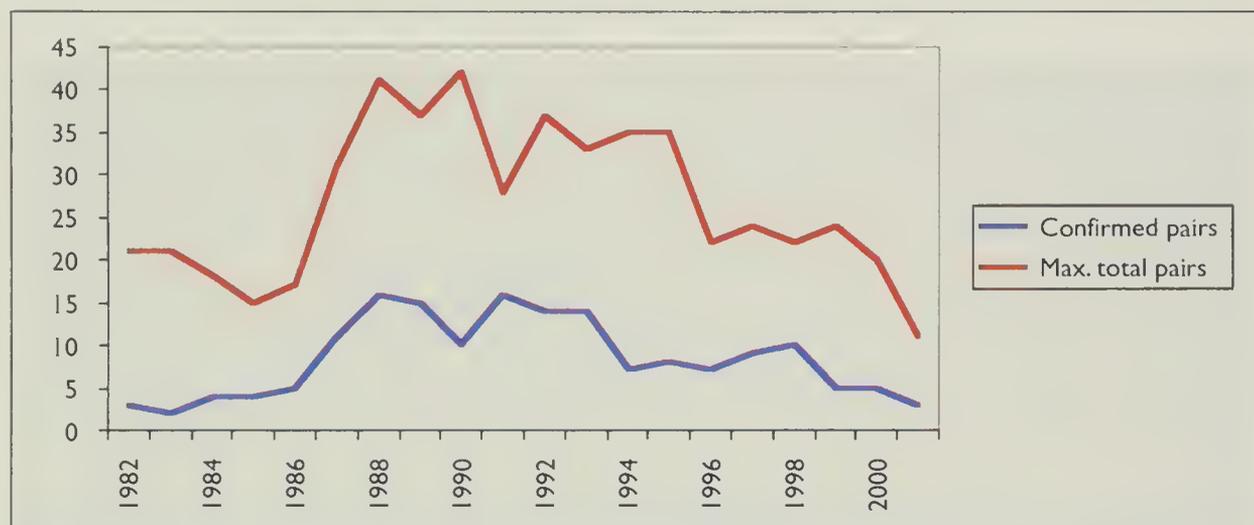


Fig. 10. Numbers of breeding Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in the UK, 1982-2001. The 2001 breeding season was one of the worst for this species since the 1970s.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding. A similar year to 2000, although the brief appearance of a bird in northern Scotland is welcome after a gap last year. As Red-backed Shrike remains a common and widespread species throughout much of central Europe, it is hoped that it is experiencing a natural, periodic or cyclical fluctuation in numbers, more apparent in the UK because the species is at the edge of its breeding range here, rather than a terminal decline. In the past decade, there have been single confirmed breeding pairs in just four years: 1992, 1994, 1997 and 1999. The maximum total of pairs has ranged from one to 13 (in 1992) during this time (see fig. 11).

England, SW

Three localities: (1)(2) single females in late June; (3) female in mid July.

Scotland, N

One locality: male on 9th May.

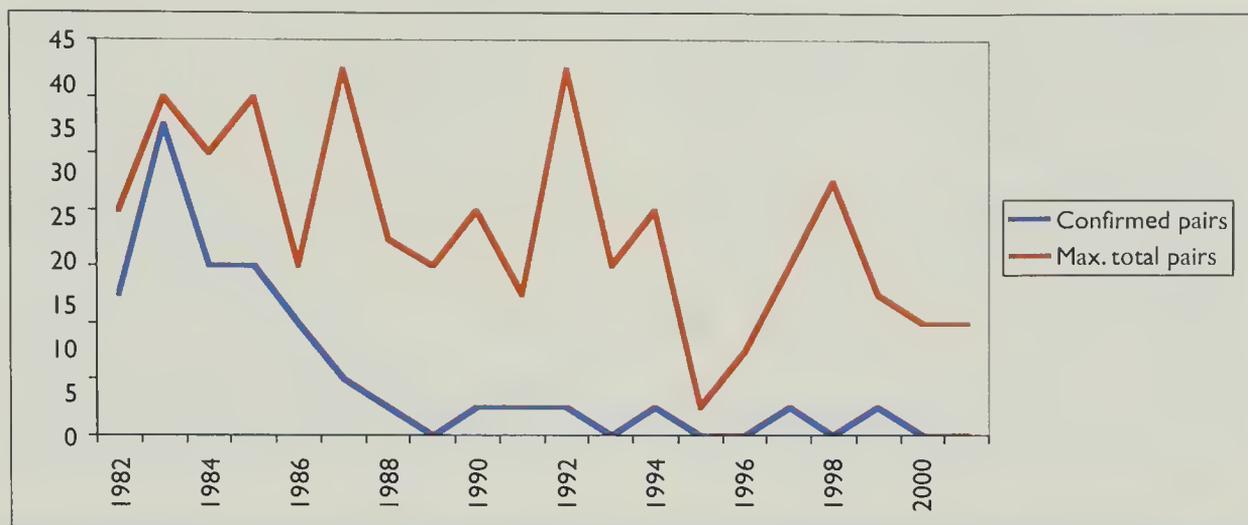


Fig. 11. The decline of the Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* in the UK, 1982-2001.

This graph shows how the species has virtually disappeared as a breeding species during the last two decades.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Several areas, including sites in Wales, Islay and the Isle of Man, were not fully surveyed this year. The appearance of up to seven birds in Cornwall in early 2001 was followed by observations of a pair on the Lizard peninsula from April. One bird was seen carrying sticks into a cliff crevice in early July, but there was no further evidence of breeding (Carter *et al.* 2003).

Red-billed Chough	Occupied sites	Successful pairs	Young reared	Young/territorial pair
Cornwall	1	0	0	0
Anglesey	9	4	15	1.67
Caernarfon	7	7	20	2.86
Ceredigion	25	15	36	1.44
Glamorgan	3	nc	nc	-
Pembroke	7	4	10	1.43
Dumfries & Galloway	1	1	3	3.00
Colonsay & Oronsay	17	12	29	1.71
Islay	15	10	25	1.67
Antrim	2	0	0	0
TOTALS	87	53+	138+	1.64

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs. The first confirmed breeding since a single pair in 1993 – the only other such record during the past ten years.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND Two localities: (1) adult with young in late June; (2) singing male in late April.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

The following information was received for England and Wales. The few Scottish records received are not presented. Many recorders reported that it was a relatively poor year for this species.

England, SW

DEVON Seven localities: presumed breeding. HAMPSHIRE Seven pairs. SOMERSET Eight birds in suitable habitat.

England, SE

KENT Four pairs. SURREY Five pairs. SUSSEX 17 pairs.

England, E

SUFFOLK One pair bred.

England, Central

DERBYSHIRE Up to four pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE 31 birds in July may have been local breeders. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One pair. SHROPSHIRE Up to ten pairs.

England, N

CUMBRIA 100-150 pairs (from Stott *et al.* 2002). YORKSHIRE 10 pairs.

Wales

BRECON Four pairs. CAERNARFON At least five pairs. CEREDIGION Two pairs. GWENT At least one pair.

Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*

No detailed reports were received from the two main study areas, so this information merely confirms that breeding actually occurred in 2001. See Summers *et al.* (2002) for more information on the distribution and habitats of this species. No data are available on populations.

Scotland, N & W

Two localities: (1) one pair bred, plus four other pairs; (2) pair bred.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

The distribution, status and breeding biology of this species were discussed recently (Summers 2002; Summers *et al.* 2002), but neither paper gave any estimate of population size, which is still not known.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

HIGHLAND Two pairs bred at the RSPB Abernethy Forest reserve, one rearing three young, the other failing. A pair reared four young at a nearby locality.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

One locality: pair bred. One of the two pairs in Yorkshire in 2000, previously reported as seen nest-building, was subsequently seen carrying food into dense scrub, confirming that breeding took place. The 2001 breeding record therefore makes it the second year running that a pair has bred. Nonetheless, the complete absence of other records means that the overall decline continues. From a peak of 20 possible breeding pairs (and five confirmed pairs) in 13 localities in 1992, numbers have steadily declined, making 2001 the worst year in the past decade.

England, N

CUMBRIA One locality: one pair reared three young.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Five areas or localities: up to six pairs. These records are not representative of this species, which has an estimated population of 70-100 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Scotland, Mid and N & W

NORTHEAST SCOTLAND/HIGHLAND At least 17 males, and probably more than 20, within the recording area.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

DEVON Virtually no coverage, owing to FMD. A full census took place in 2002, the results of which will be published in due course.

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Rarities Committee news

BBRC seeks new member

BBRC seeks a new member to join the Committee on 1st April 2004. The prime qualifications of candidates and are described on page 212.

BBRC's nominee is Lance Degnan from Doncaster, South Yorkshire. In addition to having been a committee member of Spurn Bird Observatory for ten years, Lance has assessed records for the Yorkshire Rarities Committee, and has been editor of both the Spurn and Yorkshire report for a number of years. Recently, he is

perhaps best known for identifying the Gringley Carr Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* in December 2002. He is well travelled in Europe, Asia and the Americas and has a particular interest in the identification of passerines. He has been co-opted onto the Committee to cover some short-term absences from 1st September.

The Committee would welcome any alternative nominees. Names should be sent to Colin Bradshaw, either by letter or by e-mail (drcolin.bradshaw@btinternet.com),

before 1st January 2004, with details of a proposer and seconder, and the written agreement of the nominee. After this date, a voting slip and list of candidates with relevant details will be sent to all County Recorders and bird-observatory wardens.



The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd.

Chairman: Colin Bradshaw, 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ
Secretary: M. J. Rogers, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

Identification of Daurian Jackdaw

Paul J. Leader

ABSTRACT Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus* has three distinct age-related plumages: both juveniles and adults are pied, but first-years have largely black plumage. Some authorities state that adults can occur in two plumage morphs, pied and all-dark; examination of almost 200 skins of Daurian Jackdaws, however, showed that, without exception, all-dark individuals proved to be first-years, while pied individuals were adults. Furthermore, the head streaking of first-years, often mentioned as a key separation feature from Eurasian Jackdaw *C. monedula*, varies according to time of year. As a consequence, first-winter Daurian Jackdaws may be overlooked in Europe.

Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*, is the eastern counterpart of Eurasian Jackdaw *C. monedula*, breeding across southern Siberia from 96°E, east to Amurland and Ussuriland in eastern Siberia, and south to northern and western China (Cramp & Perrins 1994). Southern populations are largely resident and form large, nomadic, post-breeding flocks, while northern breeders are short-distance migrants which move south to winter in eastern China, the Korean Peninsula and southern Japan, but are uncommon in southern China and rare farther south.

Daurian Jackdaw is unique among corvids in having three distinct plumages, which enable adult, first-winter and juvenile birds to be readily aged in the field. In summary, the adult is pied (plates 322-323), the first-winter plumage appears largely black (plates 324-325), and the juvenile plumage is dark grey-cream and grey-black. In the past, this has led to considerable confusion over the species' moult sequence, and also over whether adults can show two colour phases – the familiar pied plumage and one which is completely dark. Furthermore, there are also some misleading statements in the literature regarding the identification of birds in first-winter plumage. It is possible that some of this confusion has arisen from the tendency for some first-summer birds to associate closely with adults during the breeding season (PJL pers. obs.).

In order to help resolve these issues, I examined 80 non-pied Daurian Jackdaw specimens, at the Natural History Museum, Tring and Academia Sinica, Beijing, which established that all such specimens were individuals in first-winter plumage. These birds were aged on the basis of brownish primaries, and narrow, pointed and brownish rectrices (these characters are widely accepted as valid criteria for ageing first-winter Eurasian Jackdaws: Svensson 1992). By contrast, 115 pied individuals were examined, and all were readily aged as adults on the basis of glossy-black primaries and rectrices, the later also being obviously broad. Only three specimens in juvenile plumage were examined, and these superficially resembled the adults. They were, however, obviously duller, with the black-and-white patterning of the adult being replaced with brownish- or grey-black and cream. All three were recently fledged birds, with all the primaries still growing.

While identification of adults and juveniles is straightforward, it is more difficult to distinguish between first-winter Daurian Jackdaws and Eurasian Jackdaws of a similar age. It is widely stated (e.g. Madge & Burn 1994, Beaman & Madge 1998) that first-winter birds can be separated from Eurasian Jackdaw using a combination of iris colour and the extensive silvery streaking on the ear-coverts and the rear portion of the sides of the head, but, while the majority of first-winter birds examined had



Paul J. Leader

322-323. Adult Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*, Beizha Forestry Farm, Qinghai Province, People's Republic of China, June 2000.



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extensive streaking on the ear-coverts, 16% lacked streaking and on a further 11% this streaking was faint. There was also a marked seasonality regarding the collection dates of

such birds: all unstreaked birds were collected between September and November, while all those with faint streaking were collected between September and February (table 1). By

Table 1. Extent and frequency of head streaking in first-winter Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauurica*, based upon examination of specimens in the Natural History Museum, Tring, and the Academia Sinica, Beijing.

Period when specimen collected	No streaking	%	Faint streaking	%	Medium streaking	%	Heavy streaking	%	Total
September-November	13	59.1	6	27.3	1	4.5	2	9.1	22
December-February	0	-	3	33.3	3	33.3	3	33.3	9
March-May	0	-	0	-	13	32.5	27	67.5	40
June-August	0	-	0	-	4	44.4	5	55.6	9
Total	13		9		21		37		80

Paul J. Leader



324-325. First-summer Daurian Jackdaw *Corvus dauuricus*, Beizha Forestry Farm, Qinghai Province, People's Republic of China, June 2000.

Paul J. Leader



December, all birds exhibited some streaking, which by March was conspicuous on all individuals and defined as either medium or heavy (table 1). Typical individuals representing the heavy, faint and no streaking categories referred to in table 1 are shown in plate 326.

Accordingly, there is a clear tendency for first-winter Daurian Jackdaws to show little or no head streaking in autumn and early winter, and obvious streaking thereafter. Whether this

change in the extent of the streaking is a result of wear or due to partial moult is unclear. Although Cramp & Perrins (1994) noted that the extent of ear-covert streaking varies on first-winter Daurian Jackdaws, and that some birds lack pale-streaked ear-coverts, this was attributed to the belief that two different morphs, 'dark-headed' and 'silver-eared', existed. Given the seasonal variation summarised in table 1, this explanation now appears highly unlikely.



Paul J. Leader, copyright Natural History Museum, Tring

326. First-year Daurian Jackdaws *Corvus dauuricus*, showing the variation in ear-covert streaking referred to in table 1: from heavy streaking (left), through faint (centre) to none (right).

Daurian Jackdaw in Europe

There have been seven records of Daurian Jackdaw in Europe, with two from the Netherlands and single records from Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and France. Perhaps surprisingly, all have been conspicuous pied adults in spring (A. van den Berg, verbally), and it seems possible that first-winters are being overlooked within large flocks of Eurasian Jackdaws, especially poorly marked birds early in the winter. This spring-only pattern is unprecedented for an Eastern Palearctic passerine in western Europe. It is possible that these birds are escapes, although there is no evidence that this species is traded; alternatively, it has been suggested that the birds occurring in western Europe are from populations which migrate farther east in autumn (A. van den Berg, verbally). Another possibility is that in autumn such birds are migrating overhead in corvid flocks and thus avoid detection by birders.

First-winter Daurian Jackdaws which lack streaking on the ear-coverts closely resemble juvenile Eurasian Jackdaw. They are, however, readily separable from first-winter and adult Eurasian Jackdaws by their lack of a pale-grey

nape. In addition, first-winter Daurian Jackdaws have a glossy-black throat which contrasts with the sooty-black upper breast. Furthermore, the iris colour is always dark in Daurian Jackdaw, but ranges between light grey and white in Eurasian Jackdaw. This last difference is diagnostic at all ages, except for recently fledged juvenile Eurasian Jackdaws, which have dark irides.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr Robert Prÿs-Jones and Mark Adams at the Natural History Museum, Tring, and Professor Lei Fu Min at Academia Sinica, Beijing. Arnoud van den Berg was extremely helpful in providing details of the European records. Mike Leven commented on a draft of this paper.

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Marsh and Willow Tits – one species or two?

In recent years, I have found it increasingly difficult to separate Marsh Tits *Parus palustris* from Willow Tits *P. montanus*. I do not believe, as some might suggest, that this is related to advancing years or increasing deafness! Nor do I think that it is solely due to diminishing familiarity as a result of the declining population of Willow Tits in East Anglia.

On visiting Norway in July 2002, I saw for the first time the northern European race of Willow Tit *P. m. borealis*, a bird so strikingly different from both the British race of Willow Tit *P. m. kleinschmidti* and the British race of Marsh Tit *P. p. dresseri*, that it made me question the relationship between these two British races.

Despite extensive collecting in Britain during the nineteenth century, it seems surprising that the British race of Willow Tit was not recognised until 1898, unless, of course, it is actually

a race of Marsh Tit. Indeed, this was exactly the view taken by Herr Kleinschmidt who first identified it, although it was Mr Hellmayr who gave it the scientific name of *P. montanus kleinschmidti*. Ernst Hartert, in his *Die Vögel der Paläarktischen Fauna* (1910-1922) used the trinomial name *P. atricapillus kleinschmidti*, thus including it as a race of Black-capped Chickadee *P. atricapillus* of North America.

Confusion clearly reigned and several years passed before Lord Rothschild published the first full description of the British Willow Tit, in 1907 in the first volume of *British Birds* (*Brit. Birds* 1: 44-47). In fact, its scientific name was only changed back to *P. montanus kleinschmidti* in the second half of the twentieth century.

Despite remarkable advances in field identification, Marsh and Willow Tits remain one of the most difficult species pairs to separate in Britain, and can be all but impossible in early juvenile plumage. Even birds in the hand can be extremely hard to separate, particularly as there are no differences in wing formulae. Surely this alone must increase the suspicion that they are more closely related than is currently accepted? One of the methods used to separate Marsh and Willow Tits in the hand, and incidentally also useful even in the field, is the comparative length of the outer tail feathers. In the Willow Tit they are noticeably shorter than the remainder of the tail feathers, whereas they are about the same length as the rest of the tail in the Marsh Tit. This is generally not mentioned in modern field guides, and yet is illustrated and described in Rothschild's original description.

Generally, the most reliable way to separate Marsh and Willow Tits in the field is by their calls. In my experience, however, Marsh Tits are capable of producing sounds which are remarkably similar to some of those given by Willow Tits, although I admit that there are some calls which are undoubtedly unique to the latter. Finally, hybridisation between the two species has been demonstrated in the wild, and over the years I have found two apparently mixed species pairs in the Sheringham area of Norfolk.

Is it possible that during the last 100 years we have all been misled into believing that two separate species actually exist in Britain, whereas in reality Marsh and Willow Tits are races of the

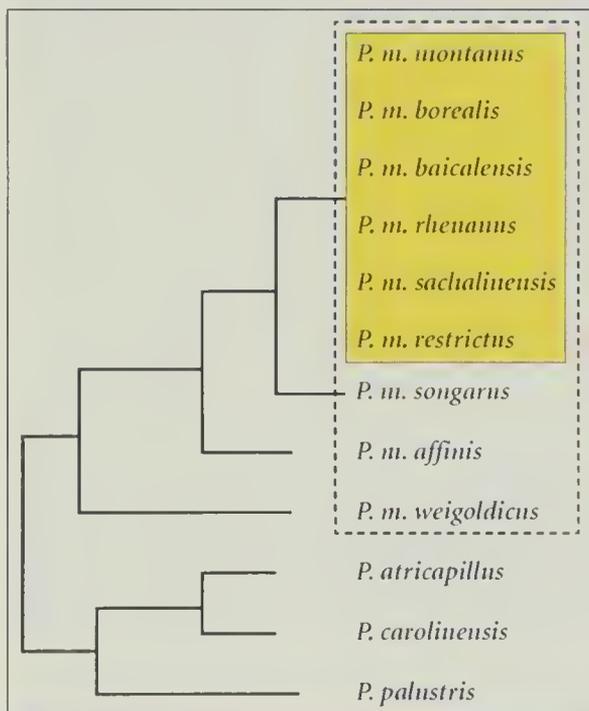


Fig. 1. Phylogeny of Marsh *Parus palustris* and Willow Tits *P. montanus*, and Black-capped *P. atricapillus* and Carolina Chickadees *P. carolinensis* based on a maximum likelihood analysis of comparisons of their cytochrome *b* gene sequences. Simplified from Salzburger *et al.* (2002). Branch lengths have been changed and are diagrammatic only. The boxed area shown by the dashed line indicates subspecies within the inclusive Willow Tit assemblage (but see comments in the text about 'Songar Tit'). The yellow shading represents a complex of extremely closely related forms within which evolutionary relationships were not resolved in the analysis.

same species? Presumably this could be confirmed or refuted by DNA evidence, but I am

unable to find any reference to such an investigation having been undertaken.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Martin Collinson has commented as follows: 'Moss Taylor is right to point out that species boundaries within the subgenus *Poecile*, which includes Marsh and Willow Tit, have historically been, and are still being, redefined. Both species are polytypic: BWP goes to some length to compare and contrast the field characters (plumage and song) of the different subspecies of both species. I share Moss Taylor's Scandinavian experience in which geographically separated subspecies of Willow Tit may appear superficially as different from each other as Willow Tit is from Marsh Tit.

'In fact, molecular analyses of the Paridae (Kvist *et al.* 1996; Salzburger *et al.* 2002) have demonstrated that European Marsh Tits are genetically highly divergent from all sampled subspecies of Willow Tit. Sixteen or more subspecies of Willow Tit may be recognised, with a large amount of intraspecific diversity, and species splits within the complex have been proposed. For example, the subspecies *weigoldicus*, *songarus*, *stoetzneri* and *affinis* are sometimes recognised as forming a separate species, 'Songar Tit' *P. songarus* (Eck 1980; Kvist *et al.* 1996, 2001; Dickinson 2003). In an attempt to study the relationships between subspecies of Willow Tit, Salzburger *et al.* (2002) sequenced a fragment of the mitochondrial cytochrome *b* gene of individuals from nine subspecies of Willow Tit, and compared them with each other and with sequences of the same gene from specimens of Black-capped Chickadee, Carolina Chickadee *P. carolinensis* and Marsh Tit. One of the gene trees which they drew up on the basis of these data is presented here (fig. 1). The data show clearly that there is pronounced genetic structure within the Willow Tit complex, with the subspecies *songarus*, *affinis* and *weigoldicus* being genetically (as well as geographically) separated from the other subspecies which form part of the pan-Palaearctic main range of the species. Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees are resolved as sister species, divergent both from each other and all the Willow Tit subspecies. Furthermore, Marsh Tit was also very highly divergent from all Willow Tit subspecies (21 mutations in 306 base pairs corresponds to an uncorrected genetic distance of 6.9%, suggesting that the Marsh and Willow Tit lineages split more than four million years BP).

'Although they demonstrate different habitat preferences, Marsh and Willow Tits are broadly sympatric across much of the Western Palearctic, with widespread opportunity for hybridisation. Even though the differences between the two may sometimes appear subtle, it is inconceivable that these taxa could maintain their separate identities in sympatry unless there are effective mechanisms which prevent free interbreeding and extensive gene flow (mixing of DNA lineages; discussed in Collinson 2001, Helbig *et al.* 2002). That Marsh and Willow Tits retain their subtle morphological differences and their rather pronounced genetic differences is sufficient to infer that these barriers to gene flow do exist, and that the taxa are reproductively isolated. This would be the case even if the dissimilarity (see above) in the relative lengths of the outer tail feathers (assuming this to be genetically determined) were the *only* recognised difference between the taxa. Thus Marsh and Willow Tits can safely be treated as separate species, both under the Phylogenetic Species Concept (as diagnostically distinct monophyletic lineages) and under the Biological Species Concept (as reproductively isolated taxa).'

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Obituary

Max Nicholson CVO CB

Edward Max Nicholson, born on 12th July 1904 in Ireland and known to all simply as Max, died on 26th April 2003. One of the most influential conservationists of the twentieth century, Max was an exceptional ornithologist too. He founded the BTO in 1933, and took on the role of its Honorary Secretary from 1935 to 1939, and that of Chairman in 1947-49. He was Director General of the Nature Conservancy from 1952 to 1966, and, among other offices held, he was President of the RSPB; both a Vice

President and a Vice Chairman of the BOU; and the first Chairman and Chief Editor of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* project, and a member of its editorial team for all nine volumes. Among the many honours bestowed during his long and exceptional career were the BTO's Tucker Medal in 1956, the BOU's Godman-Salvin Medal in 1962 and the WWF Gold Medal in 1982.

In terms of this journal, Max Nicholson played a critical role after the tragic death of Bernard Tucker, then senior editor of *British Birds*, in December 1950. With characteristic vision, Max assembled a team of editors, of which he became chairman, and he served as the journal's senior editor from 1951 to 1960. In doing so, he not only saw *BB* through the immediate crisis of Tucker's death but he also managed to harmonise the standards and traditions of H. F. Witherby with the vigorous new forces apparent in post-war ornithology: he took the journal forward, into a new era. He remained a member of the Editorial Board until 1971, thus completing 21 years of distinguished service. Among the many significant achievements during his tenure as senior editor, the following bear testament to his foresight and forward-thinking: steps to rationalise the handling of sight-only records of birds, including liaison with the BOU and county editors, which led, ultimately, to the establishment of the BBRC in 1959; the proper examination, and subsequent rejection of, the 'Hastings Rarities', something which Max felt was a pre-requisite for the impending *BWP* project, and



Biel Perello

327. Max Nicholson, about to release one of the first White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala* to arrive at S'Albufera Parc Natural, Mallorca, from Doñana National Parc, in spring 1993. Back in the 1980s, Max played a pivotal role in saving the Albufera from destruction at the hands of developers and subsequently promoted various conservation projects there, making annual visits to the Parc until 2000.

which in itself proved to be a veritable high-point in the critical approach to rarity recording; ecological studies of the Camargue and the Coto Doñana, which had a significant impact on the subsequent conservation of those areas; the prominent coverage given to the early work of bird observatories in Britain; the appointment of James Ferguson-Lees as the first full-time executive editor, and the development of photographic features under G. K. Yeates; and, in his own words, ‘a battle against jargon and unnecessary technicalities’.

Few people are properly qualified to write an obituary of Max which covers the many and

varied aspects of his life in detail. Elsewhere, for example, Jeremy Greenwood has provided an excellent account of his life, in particular his role in founding the BTO (*BTO News* 247: 6-7). Here, Norman Moore, a colleague of Max’s in the early days of the Nature Conservancy, and someone who appreciates better than most the impact which Max Nicholson had on conservation in Britain and farther afield, provides his own personal appreciation of a quite unique individual.

Eds

When Max Nicholson died in April this year, four generations of ornithologists lost a pivotal figure, one who had influenced everything we knew and did about birds. His death truly marks the end of an era.

Although I knew Max for 50 years, and was a member of the Nature Conservancy when he was Director General, I cannot cover his long and productive life adequately. Therefore, this brief contribution is a personal appreciation rather than an obituary. Birds were Max’s special delight and his greatest interest, but he was much more than a first-class ornithologist. He had a distinguished if stormy career in the Civil Service. He wrote influential books about government and about conservation, as well as on birds. In the Second World War, he played a key role in seeing that vital supplies reached Britain across the Atlantic. It was a delight for those who attended his Memorial Service at St Luke’s Church in Chelsea, on 27th June, that the story of a memorable occasion in the Atlantic, written by his son Piers Nicholson, was included with our hymn sheets. I quote it in full:

‘*Max crossing the Atlantic in 1942* As part of his job in the Ministry of War Transport, Max had to go to Washington from time to time. On this occasion he was travelling in the *Queen Elizabeth*. This was the only ship allowed to sail without a destroyer escort, because it was considered fast enough to avoid U-boats. As a precautionary measure, it sailed a course of large zig-zags. The exact position of the ship was a matter of top security, and known only to the Captain and the navigating officer. There was, therefore, some consternation when Max announced to the Captain that they were 300 miles southwest of Iceland. “How did you

know?” he asked, fearing a damaging security breach. “Well, I have just seen a bird which has a 200-mile radius from Greenland but is unknown in Iceland, while I saw another bird earlier today which has a 300-mile radius from Iceland, but they have now vanished.”’

Max’s involvement with the interaction between human affairs and birds was fundamental to him all his life. It was no accident that his contribution to the Collins New Naturalist series was entitled *Birds and Men: the birdlife of British towns, villages, gardens and farmland* (published in 1951). Max’s love of birds led to his wish to conserve them. He knew that the most important way to do that was to conserve their habitats, and that that could only be done by involving organisations and governments in conservation. This led to his quite extraordinary success in initiating and guiding organisations, something which we now take for granted. His work at Oxford in the 1920s, which included the pioneering National Census of Heronries, led to Max taking the leading role in founding the BTO in 1933. He greatly influenced the RSPB, and was its President from 1980 to 1988. Even during his work with the Ministry of Shipping in the war, he was deeply involved with plans for post-war reconstruction, and this became his main occupation in the early years of peace. It resulted in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, the 1947 Agriculture Act and the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. The last was of immense importance for conservation: for the first time, conservation of nature became part of the Government’s remit. It led to the formation of the Nature Conservancy, the forerunner of English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Council for Wales, the

Joint Nature Conservation Committee and much of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

Max was Director General of the Nature Conservancy from 1952 to 1966. I was appointed as Regional Officer for South West England in 1953 and soon realised that my boss was a very remarkable person: a Whitehall man who got into the field whenever he could. In the 1950s, we were busy selecting and establishing National Nature Reserves. One of my first experiences of Max in the field was at Braunton Burrows, in Devon. He was recovering from polio and I suspect that walking gave him considerable pain. When a harrier *Circus* appeared, however, he was galvanised into action, rushing forward trying to get a better view as it flew away over the sand dunes. I realised that he was not just an administrator of conservation but cared deeply and personally about it. He continued to have many innovative ideas. He was enthusiastic about the BTO's Common Birds Census and sought my views about it. As a scientist, I had doubts that enough sites could be covered for the scheme to show what was happening to bird populations on farmland as a whole. Max had confidence that the scheme would grow, and eventually produce results of real value to those studying the effects of modern agriculture on wildlife: fortunately, he did not take my advice! On another occasion, we disagreed about liaising with wildfowlers at the Bridgewater Bay NNR. As the Regional Officer with local knowledge, I could see that co-operation with the very responsible local wildfowlers was essential, and well worth the loss of a few Eurasian Wigeons *Anas penelope*. Initially, Max was strongly opposed to my proposals, despite them being backed by the Nature Conservancy's chairman, Arthur Duncan. Then he completely changed his mind, and there followed a long period of constructive co-operation with the Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland. Max was not an easy boss, but he was such an inspiring leader that, over the years, respect and admiration grew into affection. Those of us lucky enough to be working at Monks Wood in its early days were grateful to have Max 100% behind our endeavours.

Max complemented his work in government

conservation by taking major initiatives in the voluntary sector. He helped Peter Scott form the Severn Wildfowl Trust, the forerunner of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, and gave vigorous support to the formation of an ever-increasing number of county Wildlife Trusts. He had an even greater effect overseas. I suspect that he was greatly influenced by his early experiences: he founded the Oxford Exploration Club and in the 1920s took part in its adventurous expeditions to the Amazonian rainforest and to Greenland. In addition, his official duties as a high-ranking civil servant gave him international expertise at the highest level; he understood how government and government departments worked, or failed to work. As a result, he was deeply involved with the International Biological Programme and strongly supported the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. He was equally effective in pursuing world conservation in the voluntary sector, being a prime mover in setting up the World Wildlife Fund in 1961. Despite all his organisational activities, he found time to be an editor, not only of *British Birds* for 21 years, as described above, but for all nine volumes of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. He was responsible for the habitat sections of all volumes, and for the voice sections until 1982 – a fine tribute to his ornithological expertise.

Max lived in London all his adult life. I was a member of the Trust for Urban Ecology, of which he was Chairman, and I have a vivid memory of his delight as we walked over the green space that was being developed on the site of the Surrey Docks and a Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* sang overhead within sight of St Paul's.

Max was innovative to the end: in his nineties he set up the New Renaissance Group and tirelessly promoted the idea that the conservation of the environment must be made central to the political agenda of humankind. All the while, he continued to keep in touch with his old friends and colleagues, who became increasingly aware of the kindness which underlay the formidable personality of one of Britain's greatest men of his time.

Norman Moore

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

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

New Freira colony boosts population by 50%

BirdLife International has reported that a new colony of Europe's rarest breeding bird, Madeira Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* (for which the alternative names of Zino's Petrel or Freira are also used), has been found in the central mountains of Madeira. The colony, with at least nine occupied nests, which in turn produced 20 chicks this year, is also the largest known colony for this Critically Endangered species, which was previously thought to number only 20-30 pairs.

The colony was discovered in the Pico do Areeiro area of the Madeira Natural Park by the park authorities. It is a far more accessible site than the three previously

known colonies, which are all on inaccessible mountain ledges. Paulo Oliveira, head of the conservation division at the park, commented that further colonies may be found and that work was underway to try to locate them. In late August, an update by Madeiran ornithologist Jorge Garzon to the *Eurobirdnet* mailing list claimed that 19 nest burrows, 15 of them occupied, had been located, suggesting a new global population for Madeira Petrel of 45 pairs. Black Rats *Rattus rattus* remain the main threat to the petrel, but the new colony could inadvertently be damaged by walkers. A proposed new NATO radar station on

Madeira may – or may not – be another threat (*Brit. Birds* 96: 50, 260).

Note also that the first Portuguese Rarity Report, covering Portugal, Madeira and the Azores for the years 1999-2001, has just been published. Copies of the report, which is in Portuguese with an English summary, are available from Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA) in Lisbon – e-mail: spea@spea.pt

Links: BirdLife International (www.birdlife.net); SPEA (www.spea.pt).

Heir restorer for Bald Ibis

The heir to the Swarovski Optik family firm, Daniel Swarovski, has donated €25,000 to an innovative project designed to restore a migratory Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* population to Europe. As reported previously in N&c (*Brit. Birds* 95: 261), biologists from the Konrad Lorenz Research Station hoped to lead a captive-bred flock of imprinted Bald Ibises on a flight from Austria across the Alps to wintering grounds in the Po Delta in Italy. It is hoped that the birds will migrate north in the spring and eventually establish a self-sustaining breeding population in Austria.

Until the seventeenth century, Bald Ibises inhabited the cliffs around the Austrian cities of Salzburg and Graz. Indeed, they were once a popular dish! Today, wild Bald Ibises survive in just two colonies – in Morocco and Syria (see right). The flock of 20 Austrian birds was introduced to the microlight aircraft a month before they departed south and were taken on practice flights. One of their human foster parents was the passenger in one of two microlights paid for by Swarovski, on the journey that started on August 18th. This is a technique which has worked with the Critically Endangered Whooping Crane *Grus americana* in the USA.

The journey from Austria to Italy was then scheduled to take a fortnight in hops of up to 90 km a day. The birds were roosted overnight at rural airfields or meadows in a mobile aviary. But some of the journey was also completed by road because adverse weather and/or the birds' reluctance forced the project team to put the ibises in the back of their van. The diary of the 'Flight of the Ibis' is on the new Swarovski Birding website.

Link: Swarovski Birding (www.swarovskibirding.com).

Bald Ibises take off in Morocco too

Meanwhile, what was once thought to be the only colony of Bald Ibises left in the world has been going from strength to strength recently. In 1997, the population in Morocco had fallen to less than 50 pairs and was largely confined to the Souss-Massa National Park, near Agadir. The long-term population decline has been driven by human persecution (especially hunting), habitat loss and poisoning by pesticides. But thanks to the conservation programme initiated by the RSPB, on behalf of BirdLife International, the population of Bald Ibises has increased by almost 60%, to 85 pairs this year (up from 70 pairs in 2002). Between them, the birds reared 100 flying young in 2003.

Conservation measures have included the employment of local staff as wardens and the construction of drinking points to provide clean water close to the breeding cliffs. The birds breeding at the Souss-Massa National Park are the only wild ones in the world, apart from a remnant, and genetically distinct, population of three pairs discovered in Syria last year. These birds reared three young in 2002 (a dry year), but in 2003 (a wet year) the three Syrian pairs raised seven young.

Offshore windfarm in the dock

As opposition to the huge new offshore windfarms proposed by the British Government mounts in northern England (*Brit. Birds* 96: 464), the European Commission has begun to investigate Germany's possible infringement of European environmental laws by building its first offshore windfarm. BirdLife Germany complained to the EC over Germany's planned Butendiek windfarm, consisting of 80 turbines spread over 35 square kilometres in the middle of the East German Bight Important Bird Area (IBA), which is important for many seabirds such as Red-throated *Gavia stellata* and Black-throated Divers *G. arctica*, terns *Sterna* and ducks (Anatidae).

Germany has yet to designate any 'Natura 2000' sites under the

Birds and Habitats Directives, although the German Federal Ministry for Nature Conservation has agreed that the East German Bight fulfils all the scientific criteria for a designation under both directives. The German Government has, nonetheless, approved the Butendiek windfarm, and there are plans for a further 22 windfarms in the German part of the North Sea and for six in the Baltic Sea, some of them with more than 120 turbines spread over an area of as much as 100 square kilometres. BirdLife Germany director Gerd Billen has called the windfarm 'absolutely unacceptable'.

In the UK, public consultation continues on the 30-turbine windfarm in the Tees estuary off South Gare. A special meeting of the

Teesmouth Bird Club, whose members have been monitoring local bird populations for more than 40 years, voted unanimously to oppose the scheme. A key concern was that the ornithological study conducted during the past year as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment 'contains no reference to the major risks to seabirds moving and feeding offshore and of incoming, landward-bound passerine migrants, such as Redwings *Turdus iliacus*, Song Thrushes *T. philomelos*, Blackbirds *T. merula* and Fieldfares *T. pilaris*'. In Cumbria, where people have been excluded from any say in a 60-turbine windfarm planned for the Solway Firth – as it is just inside Scottish waters – birders and the county council are now demanding a public inquiry.

RSPB feels the heat in global warming debate

The RSPB is coming under fire as a supporter of wind energy. Anti-windfarm birders have highlighted the Society's close relationship with the alternative energy industry. The RSPB has a partnership with the power company Scottish & Southern Energy that yields a £10.00 payment to the RSPB for every member who switches their gas and electric supplier to 'RSPB Energy', with a further £5.00 payment in each subsequent year. The Society's campaign urges members to 'Help the Ptarmigan stay cool' and tackle global warming by switching to a power company which uses renewable sources. RSPB Energy has now raised £1 million, which the Society is spending on its nature reserves.

On its website the RSPB states:

'The available evidence suggests that appropriately positioned windfarms do not pose a significant hazard for birds. However, evidence from the USA and Spain confirms that poorly sited windfarms can cause severe problems for birds. Because of this, the RSPB has objected to 26 windfarm proposals (on- and off-shore) since 1998 and has raised concerns about a further 29... Currently we are objecting to a proposed windfarm at Shell Flat off the Lancashire coast as it is home to England's most important flock of wintering Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra*.'

One prominent windfarm campaigner who has now recanted is David Bellamy. In 1989, he made a promotional video entitled *Power from the Wind*, but in the Summer

2003 issue of the Wildlife Trusts' *Natural World* magazine he states that: 'I've learned a lot since and, like many other people, now regard wind turbines as silver satanic mills.' Strong stuff, but then Professor Bellamy is something of an environmental maverick. He was a prominent supporter at the first Countryside Rally in July 1997 – a rally in support of foxhunting. The BOU is now considering a conference about birds and renewable energy for spring 2005 (its open meeting about birds and the equally controversial GM crops is being held on February 5th 6th 2004 at the Royal Society in London).

Link: RSPB (www.rspb.org.uk); BOU (www.bou.org.uk).

Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture

The Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture, organised by Oxford Ornithological Society together with the Ashmolean Natural History Society, and sponsored by *British Birds*, will be held at the

University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford, at 8.00 p.m. on Tuesday 4th November. The speaker this year will be Hugh Boyd, and the subject will be 'British Ornithology 1940 to

2040'. The entrance fee is a bargain £2.00 for what promises to be another compelling lecture in this series. Contact David Hawkins (tel. 01993 880027).

German 'BTO' is launched

The German Bird Monitoring Trust *Vogelmonitoring Deutschland* officially came into being at a founding meeting in Chemnitz, Saxony, in August 2003. Among the speakers at the event were the renowned producer of nature films Heinz Sielmann and the Director of the BTO, Jeremy Greenwood. The new trust owes much to the influence of the BTO and will be the first Germany-wide organisation to provide long-term monitoring of bird populations and their habitats in Germany.

Although the need for a standardised and co-ordinated bird monitoring system in Germany has been recognised for years, not least in order to meet the requirements of the European Birds and Habitats Directives and the RAMSAR Convention, it had been organised on a *Länder* (provincial) level with consequent problems of standardisation and co-ordination on a federal basis.

Link: German Bird Monitoring Trust (www.vogelmonitoring.de).

EBCC meets in Turkey

One of the first opportunities for the new German Bird Monitoring Trust to exchange information with fellow European organisations will be next year's conference of the European Bird Census Council. The EBCC exists to bring together all birders in Europe who are interested in census and atlas work, whether amateur or professional. The 16th meeting will be held in Kayseri, Turkey, on 6th-11th September 2004. This is an ideal opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with fellow enthusiasts from across Europe and to see some great birds at peak migration time. For more details e-mail ebcc2004@erciyes.edu.tr

Saemangeum update

There has been a magnificent international response to the plight of South Korean estuary Saemangeum and its passage-migrant Spoon-billed Sandpipers *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*, Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris* and Nordmann's Greenshanks *Tringa guttifer* (*Brit. Birds* 96: 463). By 2nd September, nearly 6,000 people from 73 countries had signed the on-line petition against the reclamation scheme which would turn the foremost wetland in northeast Asia into low-grade farmland. Work on the 33-km seawall which would seal off the Mangyeong and Dongjin estuaries forever was halted at the last minute by a Korean court in July, following a petition by 3,500 local people and environmental lobbyists. But the Government appealed, and that appeal got underway in late August. In fact, even before the appeal was heard, it appeared that the Agriculture Ministry had resumed reclamation work – in clear contravention of the court ruling. Its justification for destroying 40,000 ha of mudflats has been posted on its website as follows: 'The Saemangeum Project is designed to create farmland to produce 140,000 tons of rice every year, which can feed 1.5 million people for a whole year... The project will establish marshes, migratory bird habitats, nature preserves, ecology parks, and so on... Saemangeum will be a model for global environmental-friendly reclamation project.'

For the latest news, visit the Wetlands and Birds of Korea website. And keep signing that petition.

Links: Wetlands and Birds of Korea (www.wbkenglish.com); Korean Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry www.maf.go.kr/maf_eng/issue/issue2.htm).

It's been a good year for the Roseates

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, the UK's rarest breeding seabird, has had its most successful season for at least 30 years at the Coquet Island nature reserve in Northumberland. This summer, 70 pairs nested on the island, one of the RSPB's smallest reserves at just 6 ha, and at least 80 chicks fledged. Indeed, it is thought that the entire English population may have nested there this year. The breeding population on the island has more than doubled in the last five years (just 29 pairs nested in 1998) and the island now has the largest breeding colony of Roseate Terns in the UK. Fifty-seven pairs bred there in 2002, raising 56 chicks. The population was at its lowest point in 1977 with just 16 pairs. The combination of good weather and special nestboxes with 'patios' (*Brit. Birds* 95: 469) provided by the RSPB have been the crucial factors behind the successful year.

New member wanted for BOURC

Meanwhile, the BOU Records Committee (BOURC), which maintains the British List, is seeking a new member. The Committee scrutinises potential first records for Britain, concentrating on issues of identification (liaising closely with the BBRC) and provenance. The BOURC is an appointed Committee of BOU Council and comprises ten members, including a Chairman, a Secretary and the Chairman of BBRC. The committee is a well-balanced team of birders with international ornithological and birding experience and knowledge, and includes both professionals and amateurs. Applications and nominations should be sent, with a CV outlining relevant details and qualifications, by post or e-mail to the BOURC Chairman, Eric Meek, at Smyril, Stenness, Orkney Islands KW16 3JX; e-mail bourc.chair@bou.org.uk The closing date for applications is 30th November 2003.

Reviews

A BIRDER'S GUIDE TO THE BEHAVIOUR OF EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS

By Gábor Michl. Gavia Science,
Budapest, 2003. 291 pages; 48
illustrations.
ISBN 963-210-172-3.
Hardback, £32.99.

Animal behaviour has grown into a distinct discipline in the last two decades, complete with its own organisations and journals. Much of the literature relating to birds is in behavioural and more general scientific journals and rather little in the major bird titles. As a result, most birders will not be very up to date or familiar with the subject material treated here. Michl devotes two major sections to communication and breeding. He does not tackle foraging, however, which has been the other major area of interest in behavioural ecology. He has clearly read the literature extensively, since there is good coverage of European and American journals. Many of the 457 references are recent, with about half from the last decade.

In plumage and coloration, we are beginning to understand what makes a top-quality bird and how coloured badges signal rank. Some colours, red especially, may be

expensive to make so not easy to fake. Unlike humans (and mammalian predators), birds can see ultraviolet and this, for example, is the basis for mate choice in the Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*. The sexes appear identical to the human eye, but they differ in their ultraviolet intensity. Understanding of song is advancing fast with the decoding of different messages given in different circumstances and for different audiences.

The largest part of the book deals with reproduction and sexual selection. This subject has been revolutionised by DNA methods, which have widely shown that the sex lives of many apparently monogamous bird species are not as straightforward as once believed. Nor is it just the males who are looking for opportunities to maximise their breeding success. Another emerging understanding has been the importance of parasites and the quality of the immune response in driving sexual selection.

A final section describes the behaviour of 48 non-passerine families, devoting a page to each family. Much of this material is culled from the major handbooks and says more about general biology than is covered in the previous pages. Though this part seems somewhat semi-detached, the author has culled and pointed

up a wide variety of interesting snippets. Many are described as being unusual among birds. Of quite a few points I thought, 'that would make an interesting study'. Each family also has a whole-page illustration by Szabolcs Kókay, whose work will be familiar to those who followed the *British Birds* Bird Illustrator of the Year Award closely. Many of these drawings have a strange charm and wit, although 48 pages could have been used differently to improve communication of the book's theme.

The writing style is clear but terse, often reading like a sequence of paper summaries. There are no figures or illustrations to support the chain of argument and assist its communication. Often I would have liked to know a bit more about just how a particular experiment was designed (the best are now very clever) or to see some of the actual analysis of data. I would also have liked to see more attempts to synthesise and summarise current knowledge.

I think many *BB* readers would enjoy this book and few could fail to learn something new and interesting about bird behaviour. If you were looking for a topic or methodological ideas for a behavioural study, this would be a particularly good read.

Colin Bibby

THE 'HOWARD AND MOORE' COMPLETE CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD

Edited by Edward C.
Dickinson. 3rd Edition.
Christopher Helm, A&C Black,
London, 2003. 1,039 pages.
ISBN 0-7136-6536-X.
Hardback, £60.00.

The third edition of the 'Howard and Moore' checklist is a huge body of work. It responds to the perceived need for a checklist that

caters for birdwatchers who not only want a list, but want it to 'satisfy the raft of intelligent questions' that they will ask about it. The result is a checklist which attempts to accurately identify and record the primary works upon which it is based and to explain the decisions which were taken during its compilation. The main list, of 9,721 extant and 128 extinct species, looks good, and is relatively conservative, claiming to follow a version of the Biological Species Concept. The format is well laid out, according to family, sub-family and genus, with all valid

subspecies listed for each species. Importantly, each taxon, down to subspecies, has been referenced and dated, with fully referenced footnotes to explain any synonymies or taxonomic decisions. Range statements are given for each subspecies. The Introduction claims that this is 'essentially a new work', and that all the attributions and citations have been checked. In all, it is a superb effort – a worthwhile and very substantial upgrade of the old edition.

The sequence of families in the list is, of course, always going to be contentious, and in an age of phy-

logenetic flux caused not least by the continued flow of new molecular data, it is not surprising that we have another new sequence here to find our way around. The Howard and Moore sequence has previously been based on the Peters checklists (*Check-list of Birds of the World*, 1931-1986): the Introduction of this edition states that the Sibley & Monroe (*Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World*, 1990) sequence 'could not be ignored', and Joel Cracraft was invited to set a sequence of families. Some of the principles and publications underlying the decisions taken on ordering the families are explained in a chapter by Cracraft and colleagues, but in the end what we have is something which is different from Peters, different from Sibley & Monroe, different from the Clements Checklist (*Birds of the World: a checklist*, 1978) and, by its very nature, likely to change in future editions. Like it

or lump it, this instability is normal and inevitable (albeit somewhat frustrating as well), and there is a handy index of the family sequence at the start of the main list in case you, like me, end up wondering where the heck, for example, the dippers *Cinclus* have got to!

Species-level taxonomy is always going to be problematical too, of course. The discussion of species concepts, and the explanation of the choice of Biological over Phylogenetic Species Concept are a little thin. In turn, some of the species-level taxonomic decisions regarding proposed splits appear overly conservative and/or subject to an editorial decision to wait for them to 'bed in' or be widely accepted by the appropriate regional authorities before they make it into the book. This is laudable, I guess, but it leaves the Editor having to apologise to the taxonomists whose work has, for now,

been ignored.

For the user, the book is pretty well laid out and surprisingly easy on the eye. For nearly all species, only one English vernacular name is given, even when there are widely used and established alternatives. A book such as this benefits from personal notes and scribbles, and there is just about enough white space on the pages to include the reader's own comments, put in a vernacular name that you recognise and, if you want to follow your own taxonomy, to upgrade any of the subspecies to species level. Many readers might want to do just that – the book cannot be, and cannot aspire to be, the last word. And it isn't! It is a work-in-progress, for which updates are inevitable and desirable in light of continuing research, but one which will also become an essential reference work.

Martin Collinson

AN ATLAS OF BREEDING
BIRDS OF THE BURREN
AND ARAN ISLANDS

By Liam Lysaght. Birdwatch
Ireland, Monkstown, 2002. 160
pages, photographs, figures,
distribution maps.
ISBN 1-899204-15-6.
Paperback, £19.50.

Ronseal would have no difficulty in marketing this publication: its contents are perfectly described in the title. Limestone is the main geological link between the islands (located in Galway Bay, roughly halfway up the west coast of Ireland) and the block of countryside about the size of Berkshire and known as The Burren – 'a rocky place' – which faces them from the Irish mainland. Cliffs, machair, and freshwater wetlands are all represented in a mosaic of habitats which occur here, but the overriding physical characteristic of the district is threadbare, outcropping limestone. The area is pretty,

botanically among the best in Ireland, and still blessed with lots of breeding Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* and Common White-throats *Sylvia communis*. The islands have seabirds, including Little Terns *Sterna albifrons*, and Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*. Overall, the region does not possess any glittering ornithological treasures and reflects the ebb of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* and Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* which has occurred throughout Ireland.

The author's interest in the region's birdlife seems to have been sparked partly by his admiration of the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* and by his employer's advice, when working as a park ranger in the Burren National Park, to 'wander aimlessly in the park, rather than trouble myself with controversial management issues'! Three cheers for the Irish *mañana* attitude to responsibility/worry, especially when the outcome is a valuable baseline study of bird communities, thor-

oughly researched and brought between covers. Perhaps it seems odd, but I am always absorbed by book introductions. Liam's is an excellent one and gives a lyrical overview of how times have changed, while also setting out some uplifting aspirations for the future. His chapters on 'Landscape and land use', 'Regions and habitats' and, especially, 'The future' are well written and thought-provoking.

Prefaced by a useful ten pages of discussion on distribution changes, bird community structure, and news of some species increases (Blackcap *S. atricapilla*, as elsewhere in Ireland, is one), the 105 breeding species are covered on separate pages, each containing a dotted distribution map. Perhaps unnecessarily, the accounts contain a description of the birds' physical appearance. Some of these portraits have charm, however: in terms of vocalisations, the Sky Lark's song earns it diva status, that of Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* relegates it to an understudy and, on page 66, the Woodcock's

Scolopax rusticola display flight ends in a typographical masterpiece when it is described as having a 'display flight performed at dust'.

POCKET GUIDE TO THE BUTTERFLIES OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

By Richard Lewington. British Wildlife Publishing, Rotherwick, 2003. 144 pages, 450 illustrations. ISBN 0-9531399-1-3. Softback, £9.95.

This field guide from British Wildlife Publishing is up to the same high standards as the other two from the same stable: *Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Great Britain and Ireland*, published in 1997, and the new guide to moths (see below). All three guides have a common link: illustrator Richard Lewington, who

FIELD GUIDE TO THE MOTHS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

By Paul Waring, Martin Townsend and Richard Lewington. British Wildlife Publishing, Rotherwick, 2003. 432 pages, 1,800 colour illustrations. ISBN 0-9531399-2-1. Paperback, £29.95.

Birders have become used to superlative field guides, but there is much less choice when it comes to identifying moths. Here, at last, is a true *field* guide, depicting all the larger British moths as they are seen at rest in the field (or, more likely, in the egg box, after trapping). It is the most important book on moths published since 1984, when Bernard Skinner's *Colour Identification Guide to Moths of the British Isles* suddenly made moth identification accessible to the general naturalist.

The biggest drawback of 'Skinner', is that it shows set speci-

Dust, of course, is one thing the author hopes this book does not gather. Given the love that he has clearly put into its compilation, I

is also author of this particular book. Lewington has a precise artistic style and, while he may be a little too diagrammatic for some tastes, it makes him the perfect choice for a field guide because of the clarity of his excellent illustrations.

The book wastes no space on background information; it is virtually entirely devoted to identification. Most species have a two-page spread, with a painting of the butterfly in the field on the left, and illustrations of upper- and underwing, egg, caterpillar and chrysalis on the right. A coloured phenology chart clearly shows when each stage of the life-cycle may be encountered. The brief text is, surprisingly, a little wordy considering the conciseness of the

mens – dead moths, with their wings spread open, and with no clue as to how they appear in life. It was Richard Lewington's desire to paint all the larger moths in their natural postures which eventually led to the production of this long-awaited book. His exemplary illustrations are complimented perfectly by British Wildlife Publishing's superb production and the authoritative text by Paul Waring and Martin Townsend, two entomologists who have carried out work on most of Britain's rare and scarce moths.

As well as giving standard information on distribution, flight period and food plants, the text gives field characters for every species; something which we might take for granted in a bird guide, but this is the first time such information has been made available in one volume for moths. Similar species are also described and differentiated. The book is also determinedly accessible, and unnecessary entomological terminology has been ditched: terms such as 'bivoltine' or 'polyphagous'

do not think there is any danger of that.

Anthony McGeehan

book as a whole, while key identification features for similar species could have been given more prominence. Distribution maps are based closely on those in *The Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* (Asher *et al.* 2001) but, on the scale here, they are unnecessarily precise, especially for migrants. Rare migrants and extinct species are given a single-page spread and there are even three pages of commoner day-flying moths.

Overall, a combination of portability, accuracy and ease of use should make this the first choice for anyone wanting to take a butterfly book into the field in Britain or Ireland.

Mike Pennington

are missing, and there are no 'reniform stigmata' on wings, just 'kidney marks'.

Perhaps the biggest frustration is the fact that plates are grouped together in large blocks, so that illustrations and text are widely separated. This was obviously not a financial decision, since every page already has colour. There are obvious advantages in, for example, having all the difficult pugs (the *Phylloscopus* warblers of the moth world) in a block of plates, but distributing the illustrations through the text would surely have been preferable to most users. The softback review copy is also difficult to use while viewing a moth, as it will not lie open, so a hardback version would be welcome.

This groundbreaking publication will be an indispensable guide to anyone already interested in the subject, but it will surely follow 'Skinner' in introducing a whole new generation to moth identification.

Mike Pennington



Monthly Marathon

Photo no. 199: Yellow Warbler

At one time or another, we have all been faced with unsatisfactory, and often brief, rear-end views of an apparently unfamiliar bird disappearing into cover. Most will be common birds seen badly, but occasionally the views suggest that something more exotic may be involved. In the case of Monthly Marathon photo number 199 (*Brit. Birds* 96: plate 187, repeated here as plate 328), we are looking at a well-marked, yellowish-green passerine that should be much easier to sort out than some of the dull, drab offerings we are usually confronted with. But, having almost immediately eliminated Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, I really started to struggle with this bird.



Colin Bradshaw

328. Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*, Manitoba, USA, August 1991.

329. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 202. Eighteenth stage in twelfth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 53), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, or by e-mail to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, to arrive by 30th November 2003.



With this type of view, it makes sense to run through the available options, eliminating each as we go until all that remains is the solution to the problem. Even though this sounds a straightforward and logical approach, there are so many caveats and pitfalls attached to this method that a correct solution can still be difficult to obtain. Clearly we have a small passerine, a conclusion reinforced by comparison with the surrounding leaves and twigs. Although we are looking along the bird from the rear, and foreshortening could be coming into play, the tail does seem reasonably short, and the impression created is that of a fairly compact bird with a relatively small head. This combination of structural features, together with the conspicuously dark-centred, pale-fringed tertials, eliminates both Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* and females of the four crossbill *Loxia* species which occur in Europe.

The family which best fits the structural and plumage features is the Old World warblers. But do any of the species recorded within our boundaries actually match the features shown by this bird? Undoubtedly, the uniform bright

yellowish-green upperparts are the most eye-catching feature of our bird, but they are unlikely to help with the solution to our problem. It is attention to the finer plumage details that may reveal its identity and, with only a fleeting glimpse, we need to focus on the dark-centred tertials, the median and greater coverts with their yellowish-green fringes, and the pale-tipped primaries and inner webs to the rectrices.

Some members of the *Phylloscopus* group can appear quite bright, particularly in fresh first-winter plumage. Of the commoner species, Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* and Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix* could show plumage tones approaching the intensity of colour seen on our bird, especially if hit by a shaft of sunlight within a shady canopy. Both, however, lack the fairly conspicuous wing-bars which our bird exhibits and are readily eliminated. Similarly, working through features associated with the less familiar *Phylloscopus* warblers quickly reduces the possibilities to none. Clearly, if this bird is a warbler, it is not a *Phylloscopus*. Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* and Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta* spring to mind next, although neither would show such a strong colour above and both lack the wing-bars and conspicuous tertial fringes shown by our mystery bird.

Having drawn a blank here, it makes sense to run through the likely possibilities from North America. One of the female tanagers might fit the bill, but both Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* and Summer Tanager *P. rubra* lack conspicuous tertial fringes, wing-bars and pale tips to the rectrices. Once again we are drawn to the bright colour of our bird and surely one of the New World warblers should provide a match? Initially, the choice seems overwhelming, so at this point we

should remind ourselves that only species which have occurred within the Western Palearctic are included in this competition. If this individual originates from North America, the field has just narrowed considerably. So, are we still dealing with a warbler? Well, I think we are, as again the general plumage features and the impression of size seem to fit that group. Most of the New World warblers which have reached the Western Palearctic thankfully exhibit a varied combination of plumage features – including conspicuous wing-bars, pale rump patches or upperpart streaking – which do not correspond with the appearance of our bird, and they can, therefore, be quickly eliminated.

Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina* shows plain yellowish-green upperparts, but the pale tips to the greater coverts form only an indistinct wing-bar, while that on the median coverts is entirely lacking. The species which comes closest to matching our mystery bird is first-winter Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*, with greenish-yellow upperparts that are brighter than those of Tennessee Warbler, and with a similar pattern of wing-bars and tertial fringes to the bird in the photograph. Sadly, the characteristic yellow panels on the inner webs of the outer tail feathers are not visible in the photograph. In addition, a number of anomalies remain which, at first glance, appear at odds with this identification. In particular, the dark flight feathers do not seem to tie in with illustrations or even photos in the various guides. Undoubtedly, many of these will have been selected to depict a 'perfect' bird in ideal conditions, while here we are dealing with a bird moving through foliage and lit by a shaft of sunlight. The effect of light and, more importantly, viewing angle can combine to briefly create a misleading impres-

sion. In this case, it appears that the primaries are slightly spread and what we are seeing are the darker inner webs, while the brighter feather fringes to the outer webs are lost in this photograph. A photograph of Yellow Warbler in Shetland with one wing slightly flared appears in Vinicombe & Cottridge's *Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1996) and shows how surprisingly dark the inner webs to the flight feathers can appear. Clearly, under certain conditions, Yellow Warbler can appear to show dark flight feathers. Put that bird in the middle of a bush and you get pretty close to our mystery bird.

Steve Rooke

Steve Rooke was not the only one to find this bird a real problem to identify, and only 21% of entrants named it correctly as a Yellow Warbler. The most popular solution was Scarlet Tanager, and 46% of entrants voted for that species. Votes for a large variety of other species included Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, Wood Warbler, Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, Greenfinch and Common Crossbill *L. curvirostris*. The results leave Nils van Duivendijk and Diederik Kok still intact at the top of the leader board, both now with a sequence of eight-in-a-row. Behind them, some of their closest challengers have fallen away, leaving Lou Cross in third place on six-in-a-row, and then Ben Rackstraw and Kilian Weixler with four correct answers.

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers early August to early September 2003.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Whitburn (Co. Durham) and Newton Point (Northumberland), 26th August. **'Soft-plumaged petrel'** *Pterodroma madeira/mollis/feae* Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire), 24th August; Whitburn, 26th August; Barn's Ness (Lothian), 28th August; Brora (Highland), 29th August. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Two, 10 km south of St Mary's (Scilly), 8th, 10th and 13th August; one 10 km south of St Mary's, 22nd August; one, 11 km west of St Mary's, 25th August; one, 11 km south of St Mary's, 28th August.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Bushey Heath (Hertfordshire), 26th August; Hornsea Mere (East Yorkshire), 8th September. **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* Cofflete Creek (Devon), 2nd September. **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* Glaslyn Marshes (Gwynedd), 4th-7th September. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* Chew Valley Lake (Somerset), 13th-26th August; Lough Beg (Co. Derry), 7th-9th September.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Portland (Dorset), 6th, 7th, 10th and 30th August (all same); Brean

Down (Somerset), 12th August; Beachy Head (East Sussex), 14th August; Grain (Kent), 17th August; Brighton (East Sussex), 26th August; WWT Barnes, then Regent's Park (Greater London), 30th August; Rye Harbour (East Sussex), 31st August; Treen (Cornwall), 3rd September. **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* Unst (Shetland), 2nd-9th September. **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* In addition to those



Bill Baston

330. First-summer male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire, August 2003.



Sam Alexander

331. First-summer female Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Newburgh, Northeast Scotland, August 2003.

Mike Malpass



332. Adult Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*, Startops End Reservoir, Hertfordshire, August 2003.

mentioned last month: Colne Point (Essex), 15th August; Langtoft Gravel-pits (Lincolnshire), 17th August; Wicken Fen (Cambridgeshire), at least 20th-30th August; Ythan Estuary (Northeast Scotland), 20th August to 9th September; long-stayer at Deeping Fen (Lincolnshire), until 5th September.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Sandwick (Shetland), 5th-8th September. **Semi-palmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* Fair Isle (Shetland), 13th August; Quilty (Co. Clare), 31st August; Blennerville (Co. Kerry), 10th September, with three there on 11th; Clonakilty

(Co. Cork), 11th September; Crookhaven (Co. Cork), 11th September. **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* Startops End Reservoir (Hertfordshire), 5th-12th August. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* In addition to those mentioned last month: Cresswell Ponds (Northumberland), 8th-12th August; Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 2nd-8th September; Blackrock (Co. Kerry), 10th September; two, Blennerville, 11th September. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Crookhaven, 9th August; Foula (Shetland), 1st and 6th September; Threipmuir Reservoir (Lothian), 6th-10th September; Salthouse (Norfolk), 8th September. **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* Large influx late August/early September, including at least ten in Ireland in early September, and at least five at Loch of Strathbeg (Northeast Scotland) on 9th September. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Cahore (Co. Wexford), 7th September; Dawlish Warren (Devon), 8th September. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Rusheen (Co. Galway), 1st September. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Clonakilty, 7th August; Dorman's Pool/Saltholme Pools (Cleveland), 13th-14th August; Loch of Tankerness (Orkney), 3rd-4th September.

Brian Orr



333. Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*, North Uist, Western Isles, August 2003.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* 3,000 passed Spurn (East Yorkshire), 3rd September.



Rob Wardle

334. Juvenile Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Kelling, Norfolk, August 2003.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*
In addition to those mentioned last month:
Holland Haven (Essex), 10th August; Glasson
(Lancashire), 14th-24th August; Tophill Low
(East Yorkshire), 15th August. **Snowy Owl**
Nyctea scandiaca North Uist (Western Isles),
14th August to 6th September.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* 45,000 passed
through Spurn on 3rd September, with a
further 20,000 on 4th September, while 2,000
and 4,000 respectively passed Dungeness (Kent)
on the same dates. **Red-rumped Swallow**
Hirundo daurica St Mary's, 8th August. **House**
Martin *Delichon urbica* 15,000 passed Spurn on
3rd September, and 1,800 passed Dungeness on
7th September. **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris*
Bryher (Scilly), 24th August; St Martin's (Scilly),
25th-26th August; Nanjizal (Cornwall), 26th
August; St Mary's, 28th August and 7th-8th
September; Durlleston (Dorset), 30th August;
North Wirral (Cheshire), 7th September.
Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Kelling
(Norfolk), 23rd-25th August; Tacumshin, 3rd-
8th September; Quendale (Shetland), one 3rd-
9th September with a second 5th-8th
September; Out Skerries (Shetland), 6th-7th
September; Pennington Marshes (Hampshire),
7th-9th September; Fair Isle, 7th September.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* La Claire Mare,
Guernsey (Channel Islands), 11th-20th August.
Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* North
Ronaldsay (Orkney), 8th September; Fair Isle,
8th September. **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus*
paludicola Slapton Ley (Devon), 10th August;
Titchfield Haven (Hampshire), 13th August;
Orford Ness (Suffolk), 13th August, with
another on 14th August; Kenfig Pool (Glam-
organ), 14th and 16th August; Marazion Marsh
(Cornwall), 15th-16th August; Gileston (Glam-
organ), 16th August; La Claire Mare, 20th
August. **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*
Dungeness, 9th September. **Eastern Olivaceous**
Warbler *Hippolais pallida* Portland, 31st August.
Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* West Runton
(Norfolk), 31st August to 2nd September;
Donna Nook (Lincolnshire), 6th-7th Sep-
tember. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus*
trochiloides Filey (North Yorkshire), 12th-13th
August; Fetlar (Shetland), 20th-21st August;
North Ronaldsay, 20th August; Lowestoft
(Suffolk), 25th-26th August; Reculver (Kent),
26th-30th August; Point of Ayr (Flintshire),
28th August; Pagham Harbour (West Sussex),
29th August; Cley (Norfolk), 31st August;
Holme (Norfolk) 31st August to 2nd Sep-
tember; Filey, 4th-7th September; Bawdsey
(Suffolk), 6th September; Overstrand (Norfolk),

Recent reports



James Lidster

335. Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, Portland, Dorset, August 2003.

7th September. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Kilnsea (East Yorkshire), 25th-31st August; North Ronaldsay, 1st-3rd September; Wester Quarff (Shetland), 1st-3rd September. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Sandwich Bay (Kent), 24th August.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* Large fall on Scilly on 26th August included 160 on St Mary's (and 200 there on 28th), 100 on St Martin's and 75 on St Agnes. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Trevoze Head (Cornwall), 5th-11th August; Land's End (Cornwall), 4th September.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* Widespread influx in late August/early September, with around 30 records, including at least six at Portland, and one inland at Sewardstone (Hertfordshire), on 3rd September; four at Porthgwarra (Cornwall), on 5th September; five at Houzel Bay (Cornwall), 6th September. **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* Out Skerries (Shetland), 8th September. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* Farne Islands (Northumberland), 1st September; Portland, 3rd September; Fair Isle, 7th-8th September.



George Reszei

336. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, West Runton, Norfolk, September 2003.

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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2002

M. J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee

This is the forty-fifth annual report of the British Birds Rarities Committee and it provides details of the records which have been assessed by BBRC for the year 2002, along with additional, outstanding records from previous years. To enhance the overall accuracy of the report, we have, for the first time, invited County Recorders and bird report editors to check a draft version. Although the response was not complete, for a variety of reasons, we see this as a positive move towards greater co-operation between BBRC and those who submit records to us. We hope that such collaboration will improve steadily towards a point where errors and omissions are few, and the content of the report remains consistently accurate and thorough.

This year's report gives details of decisions made on some really great birds, including no fewer than six species – Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*, Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni*, Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii*, 'Caspian Gull' *Larus (cachinnans) cachinnans*, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* and Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama* – which, for one reason or another, make their first appearance in a BBRC report. The detective work required to add Ascension Frigatebird to the British List has already been reported in detail (*Brit. Birds* 96: 58-73), while Allen's Gallinule was elevated to Category A following the capture of one at Portland, Dorset, just as the only previous record, in January 1902, passed its centenary. Macqueen's Bustard and the two warblers appear here as the result of continuing taxonomic research, conferring species status upon forms previously considered subspecies: something which we will surely see more of in the next few years. The long-anticipated addition of Sykes's Warbler to the British List involves, for the time being, only those records concerning trapped individuals. In

addition, the first British Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* remained into another year and there are second mentions of Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* and Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*. Other highlights of the year must include not one but two Oriental Turtle Doves *Streptopelia orientalis*, after an absence of more than 25 years, and the first Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* since 1992.

Rarity-minded readers will note that there are several obvious omissions from the report – no 'orange-billed' terns *Sterna* or 'brown' skuas *Catharacta*, for instance – which merits explanation here. BBRC is analysing the occurrence and descriptions of 'orange-billed' and 'Elegant *S. elegans*-like' terns, both in Europe and along the Atlantic seaboard of North America, to investigate whether any common pattern of dates or plumage characters can lead us towards a sensible approach when assessing these records. Similarly, we are attempting to develop a rational stance for assessment of 'brown' skuas. While a combination of DNA, biometrics and a full description may clinch the identification of the bird at Aberavon, Glamorgan, in February 2002 (as Brown Skua *C. antarctica*), and DNA analysis of samples taken from the individual on St Agnes, Scilly, in October 2001 prove it too is part of the Brown Skua group (see *Brit. Birds* 95: 538), dealing with sight-only records remains problematic, as those who saw the Dorset and Devon 'brown' skuas in January 2000 will testify. For such birds, separation of Great Skua *C. skua* from South Polar Skua *C. maccornicki* and Brown Skua in plumages other than adult breeding would seem impossible. Surely, however, we should not lose these records and there must be a way forward; we just need to establish the criteria to get there. On a more upbeat note, we have now agreed the criteria required for identification and accep-

tance of Sykes's Warbler in the hand. This has enabled us to carry out a review of some records previously accepted as Booted Warbler *H. caligata*, and the results are published here. A review of field identification criteria is underway. Although no longer a rarity, we publish the first details of 'Caspian Gull' in Britain. BBRC would be pleased to review any well-documented claims, preferably with supporting photographs, made prior to 31st December 1999. As many observers are now familiar with this distinctive taxon, its true status in Britain is becoming clearer, but one wonders whether it has always been relatively common, or whether a new pattern is emerging.

BBRC has also been investigating the difficult business of subspecies identification, particularly of forms which have the potential to occur in Britain. This can be a minefield of missed opportunities and false starts, as not only is much of the background information incomplete, but the taxonomic position of some races is also in a state of flux, in particular where these occur in poorly studied regions of the Palearctic such as Central Asia. As a result, we are now in a position to assess many little-known subspecies and emerging species. We have now completed our analyses of the Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* complex, separation of Eastern *Hippolais pallida* and Western Olivaceous Warblers *H. opaca*, and the *badius* form of Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, and details of these will be published shortly. As an example of the unexpected problems we face, we thought we were close to finalising our analysis of the Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus* complex, but may now have to completely re-evaluate this if the position of the form *karelini* is changed. We are also close to completing our reviews of spring 'Siberian Stonechats' *Saxicola torquata maura*, Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella naevia* of the eastern race *straminea*, Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* of the eastern race *fuscus*, Subalpine Warblers *Sylvia cantillans* and Desert Warblers *S. uana*, and have established guidelines for the subspecific identification of Common Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* of the eastern form *samamisticus*, the Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* complex in Asia, including the so-called 'Desert Lesser Whitethroat' *S. (c.) minula*, and Common Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* of the African form *africana*. We have also finalised a full analysis of the identification criteria for

'Wilson's Snipe' *Gallinago (gallinago) delicata* but these appear to be so limited that we are not clear whether they are of use in the field. It would be fair to say that with these projects, and examination of all the large white-headed gull records, it has not been a quiet year!

A quick glance at the Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* records may raise some queries. Two of the records are from 'Scilly' while the remainder are 'At sea'. This is because, historically, records within three nautical miles from shore are regarded as having the same status as birds seen from the adjoining land. Birds farther out are regarded as 'At sea'. Although this may seem arbitrary, it helps to distinguish birds which may have been visible from land, and changing this system now would create problems when examining the historical records dealt with in this way.

Following last year's request, more records are being submitted by e-mail (to secretary.bbrc@dial.pipex.com) and we greatly welcome this (with, of course, copies to the relevant County Recorder). We also welcome digital photographs submitted in the same way, but require images to be reasonably small or compressed (preferably in .jpeg format) so that downloading times are minimised. To ensure that our database of records remains accurate, we would request observers to provide their full initials so that attributions can be applied consistently, year on year. The proofreading of the report by County Recorders, mentioned earlier, is tangible evidence of the burgeoning e-mail correspondence between BBRC and recorders. Any recorders or editors who have not yet been involved in this process but would like to participate in future should send an e-mail to chair.bbrc@dial.pipex.com. We are particularly grateful to Judith Smith for her help in fostering these links. Readers are reminded that they can find out more about records committees throughout Europe by visiting the Association of European Rarities Committees website, at www.AERC.be.

BBRC wishes to thank the full network of County Recorders and Bird Observatory Wardens and their respective committees, with whom it has worked closely to produce this report, and especially those who have checked a draft version. BBRC also readily acknowledges everyone who finds a rarity and makes the effort to submit their record. Without such commitment this report would simply not be

produced. It is inevitable that, despite our best efforts, not all records submitted appear in this report. Some arrived too late for circulation to be completed in time, while other difficult records are currently being reviewed and recirculated. Comparing the records we received with those reported to the various bird information services suggests that there are less than 30 records missing for 2002. We continue to encourage the finders to submit these records for review, so that these reports can be made as complete as possible. We also thank Judith Smith, who provided much-needed administrative help with BBRC communications, and Adrian Pitches and Chris Kehoe for assisting with the selection of photographs for the report. We should also like to thank Keith Arnold, Giff Beaton, Jean Marc Béliveau, Arnoud van den Berg, Will Bostic, Paul Champlin, Marc Duquet, Jon Feenstra, Brush Freeman, Michel Gosselin, Mary Gustafson, Richard Heil, Gaye Horn, Steve Howell, John Idzikowski, Jukka Jantunen, Al Jaramillo, Richard Knapton, Paul Lehman, John Miles,

Steve Mlodinow, Will Russell, Ben Sheldon, David Sibley, David Spector, Keith Vinicombe, Steve Votier, Angus Wilson and, in particular, Bill Clark, Dick Forsman and Ron Pittaway for their input on difficult records this year, and Keith Naylor for his extensive assistance with historical data.

Our sponsors, Carl Zeiss Ltd, continue to support our work, and we remain enormously grateful for the financial contribution they make. Without this support, the production of this report would be severely compromised.

Finally, the current and all past members of BBRC would like to thank Mike Rogers for his unstinting work as Secretary to the Committee. This is the 25th year that he has compiled this report and he has probably contributed more to the rarities scene in Britain than any other individual. His hard work, attention to detail and unflagging courtesy make him a national treasure, and he deserves more recognition than this simple eulogy.

Colin Bradshaw

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as the 2001 report (95: 476-528). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if video-recorded, tape-recorded or photographed (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) date(s); and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the cases of the very similar Eastern *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers *P. bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of frigatebirds *Fregata* and the 'soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma mollis/feae/madeira* complex (see also *Brit. Birds* 94: 395).
3. The sequence of species, English names and scientific nomenclature follow the 'British Birds' *List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1997).
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species' name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded (i) in Britain & Ireland to the end of 1957, (ii) in Britain only for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in the totals), or 'the same' when evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same or a nearby locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.
5. The breeding and wintering ranges are given in parentheses at the end of each species' comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 205, 10)

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, adult, 14th September (R. Little *et al.*), also in Northumberland below; another adult, 18th October (C. Bielby, A. McLee).

Highland Gairloch, Ross & Cromarty, adult, 3rd-18th March (K. A. & K. D. Shaw, L. Steele).

Norfolk Holme, juvenile/first-winter, 24th September (G. F. Hibberd, D. Noble); presumed same, Scolt Head, 1st October (N. M. Lawton *et al.*). Another, West Sheringham, 5th October (J. E. D. Furse, P. J. Heath *et al.*).

Northumberland Annstead Point, adult, 14th September (S. T. Holliday *et al.*); same, Seaton Sluice, 14th September (B. Bullough, M. Hepple); both same as Cleveland.

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 25th-28th April (P. A. Brown, M. Gray).

Outer Hebrides Cellar Head, Lewis, adult, 9th May (S. Hulka, J. Stirling).

Shetland Off Kirkabister, Mainland, adult, 28th April to 24th May; presumed same, 19th October to 2003 (M. Mellor *et al.*); possibly same as 24th-25th April 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 455). Harold's Wick and Burra Firth, Unst, adult, 1st-2nd June (R. M. Fray, R. M. Thewlis *et al.*); presumed same, 10th-11th, photo. (M. A. Maher *et al.*) (fig. 1 on page 546). West Voe of Sumburgh, first-summer, 12th August (M. Mellor *et al.*).

2000 Yorkshire, North Ness Point, Whitby, age uncertain, 3rd September (J. A. Beaumont, A. M. Hanby, R. S. Slack).

2001 Orkney Rerwick Point, Tankerness, second-winter/second-summer, 30th April (K. E. Hague *et al.*).

One at Cellar Head, Lewis, on 9th May might possibly have been the same individual seen on roughly the same date at Tiumpan Head, Lewis, in 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 515). How many birds make similar routine stopovers on their annual migrations? Although the bill colour of White-billed Diver may seem to be so obvious that other supporting identification criteria are not required, BBRC has on file a photograph of an undoubted Great Northern Diver *G. immer* in the USA which shows a very obvious whitish bill. BBRC still considers that an assessment of bill *shape* and relative body/head/bill size is important and, in non-breeding plumage, detailed notes on the head and neck plumage should be supplied.

(In W Palearctic, rare and sporadic breeder along Arctic coasts of European Russia, E from Yamal peninsula and Novaya Zemlya. Also breeds in coastal regions of Siberia, N Alaska and Canada E to Mackenzie River and Baffin Island. Winters at sea, in E Atlantic, S to S Norway, but distribution poorly known.)

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 36, 1)

Caithness Harrow Harbour, 6th May, video. (J. Corbett, S. Laybourne, J. Smith *et al.*).

The Caithness bird was the first individual recorded on salt water in Britain, although one was present in the brackish mouth of the River Hayle, Cornwall, in 1996-97 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 457). This species' reluctance to take advantage of seawater appears odd, as Pied-billed Grebes are not uncommon on brackish waters in the New World, and occasionally occur on the sea. Perhaps enforced resting on the sea in transit from North America makes them shun it when they hit our shores?

(Breeds throughout North America from C Canada S through USA to C America, Caribbean and much of South America. N populations migratory, wintering S USA and Mexico.)

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 15, 2)

Lothian Tor Ness, adult, 13th October (M. Griffin); presumed same as East Yorkshire below.

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, adult, 12th June (M. Gray, O. Melander).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, adult, 22nd September (L. G. Degnan, D. Hursthouse, T. McEvoy, J. Wozencroft *et al.*); also in Lothian.

Following two last year, another three similarly unexpected records in 2002 suggest that there may now be more birds present in the North Atlantic than previously in the recent past. The two North Sea sightings presumably refer to the same individual and are recorded statistically as such. On both occasions, the bird wandered rather close inshore in conditions not normally associated with great seabirds, to the astonishment of the finders. It is perhaps surprising that it was not seen at other North Sea coast seawatching sites during the intervening weeks. The third record, seen from a boat well out in the North Atlantic, in high summer and near a Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* colony, recalls the individual which returned to Shetland most years between at least 1972 and 1995. Perhaps this



Fig. 1. White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*, Harold's Wick, Unst, Shetland, June 2002.

Richard Thewlis

individual has already taken up residence, unseen, within the huge gannetry on St Kilda. Now *that* would be an interesting twitch!

(Breeds on islands in S South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Outside the breeding season, disperses N throughout southern oceans as far as Tropic of Capricorn.)

Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae* (0, 25, 5)

Northumberland Farne Islands, 23rd September (D. Steel *et al.*); also in East Yorkshire below.

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 21st September (M. Ainscough, A. Disley, J. S. Lees) (fig. 2).

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 1st September (I. Marshall, P. Rhodes *et al.*); 23rd September (P. A. Lassey, J. McLoughlin *et al.*), also in Northumberland.

Yorkshire, North Ffiley Brigg, 26th August (A. Norris, J. M. Turton *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Sole, 49°50'N 06°15'W, about 10 km S of St Mary's, Scilly, 8th September (R. L. Flood *et al.*).

2001 Cumbria Walney Island, 22nd July (C. Raven).

Striking pattern of underside immediately obvious with underwings appearing all dark with a slightly paler base to primaries. In stark contrast to white body with dark "smudge" on side of head.

Similar in size to manx s/water but appeared slightly longer winged, more rakish. Manx and Sooty briefly in same view for comparison and Blue Fulmars - also seen on same seawatch and in days before and after sighting.

Dark bar across coverts to rump difficult to see at first

Tail, pale and contrasted with dark rump/back

Upperside appearing darkish grey with a brownish tinge, there was a dark smudgey diffuse bar from the carpal joint over the rump and across the other wing to the carpal. Primaries and secondaries dark, but when light caught rear edge of wing when going/angled away a pale panel on both wings was noticeable.



Flight very distinctive with "towering loop" then low flight over water when briefly lost to view on a couple of occasions before being relocated during "towering loop".

Tony Disley

Tony Disley

Fig. 2. Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae*, Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 2002.

2001 Devon Berry Head, 17th July (M. Darlaston, M. R. Langman, B. R. Macdonald); same, Hope's Nose, 17th July (C. Proctor).

2001 Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 23rd September (A. Forsyth, I. Marshall, B. Richards *et al.*).

2001 At sea Sea area Sole, M. V. *Scillonian*, 49°08'N 06°54'W, about 96 km SW of Scilly, 12th August, video. (S. Rogers *et al.*).

These two closely related species, also known as Zino's Petrel and Fea's Petrel respectively, form part of the 'soft-plumaged petrel' group, the members of which, because of their pelagic habits and extreme global rarity, remain poorly known and are proving almost impossible to separate in the field. Nonetheless, good photographs were obtained of two individuals in the far southwest of Britain in 2001, one record appearing in last year's report (*Brit. Birds* 95: 479) and the other accepted here (both as 'either/or' records); and these have been circulated around BBRC with the aim of establishing whether there is sufficient evidence to accept either as a definite Fea's Petrel. If either (or both) is accepted, this would represent the first positively identified record of any 'soft-plumaged petrel' for Britain, despite the 30 accepted 'either/or' records to date. The record(s) would then be passed on to BOURC for consideration. Detailed identification and review papers will be published in *British Birds* shortly.

The majority of the 2002 records fit the increasingly familiar pattern of August and September birds off the southwest and northeast coasts of England. With the series of North Sea records it is difficult to be sure just how many individuals were involved. In the period between late August and late September, large flocks of seabirds, including Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* and Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, were feeding off the coast of northeast England. It is possible that the multiple records may represent just one bird circulating around areas of rich feeding and being relocated occasionally. Certainly, some individuals were tracked as they moved along the east coast, but the full picture remains incomplete as some records for the period have yet to be submitted. The bird in Orkney was only the second for Scotland and the first noted from land there.

(Madeira Petrel confined to central mountains of Madeira where breeding population is c. 45 pairs; wintering range unknown. Cape Verde Petrel breeds in Madeira archipelago (Bugio) and Cape Verde Islands. Outside breeding season, disperses throughout N Atlantic.)

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 299, 41)

Scilly Nine: 6 km E of St Mary's, eight, 30th July, video. (R. L. Flood, J. K. Higginson *et al.*); 4 km S of St Mary's, 14th August, video. (J. K. Higginson, N. Wheatley *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Sole, 31: 12 km S of St Mary's, Scilly, 27th June, video. (J. K. Higginson *et al.*); three, 5th July, video. (J. K. Higginson *et al.*); 13 km S of St Mary's, 8th July (J. K. Higginson *et al.*); two, 10th July, video. (R. L. Flood *et al.*); 14 km S of St Mary's, 16th July (A. Hicks *et al.*); 22 km S of St Mary's, two, 20th July (R. L. Flood, P. A. Stancliffe *et al.*); 14 km S of St Mary's, two, 22nd July (L. & M. Love, P. A. Stancliffe *et al.*); 13 km SE of St Mary's, 24th July (R. L. Flood *et al.*); 14 km SE of St Mary's, 25th July (R. L. Flood *et al.*); 12 km SE of St Mary's, 27th July (J. K. Higginson *et al.*); two, 28th July, one video. (R. L. Flood, J. K. Higginson *et al.*); 14 km S of St Mary's, three, 4th August, one video. (R. L. Flood, J. K. Higginson, K. Pellow *et al.*); 12 km S of St Mary's, 7th August, video. (S. Aitken *et al.*); 8 km S of St Mary's, six, 14th August, two video. (R. L. Flood, J. K. Higginson, N. Wheatley *et al.*); 12 km S of St Mary's, 15th August (R. L. Flood *et al.*); 14 km S of St Mary's, 22nd August (P. A. Stancliffe *et al.*); 11 km E of St Mary's, 30th August (R. L. Flood *et al.*) (plates 337 & 338); 12 km S of St Mary's, 5th September (R. L. Flood *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Tyne, 20 km E of Cambois, Northumberland, 1st September, photo. (S. T. Holliday, C. G. Knox *et al.*).

It is becoming increasingly apparent that Wilson's Storm-petrel is not a particularly rare bird off the southwest coast of England, thanks to a group of committed pelagic birders who work hard to clarify its status by documenting records throughout the late summer season. Last year (2001), we published 18 records from around the Isles of Scilly, there were 29 in 2000, and this year there are 40 records from this area. We cannot begin to guess at just how many birds are really present there. Whether this is a new phenomenon or simply the result of systematic pelagic trips in the area is unclear. It is, however, worth noting that numbers of this species peaked in 1987-88, when pelagic seabird trips frequently went farther out into the Atlantic.



Bryan Thomas



Bryan Thomas

337 & 338. Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, sea area Sole, July/August 2002.

Elsewhere, Wilson's Storm-petrel remains a major rarity. The bird seen from a boat off Northumberland represents the first record from the North Sea, in an area which rarely provides many surprises on pelagic trips.

(Breeds on rocky coastlines and offshore islands of Antarctic. Migrates N to winter throughout southern oceans, N to C North Atlantic along E seaboard of North America to Newfoundland, Canada, and Bay of Biscay in W Europe.)

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* (0, 1, 2)

Cornwall About 1.5 km off The Lizard, 21st April (C. J. & P. Jose, B. F. & S. Woodgate).

At sea Sea area Sole, M. V. *Scillonian*, about 6.5 km E of Scilly, 29th March (P. Davison, J. Pegden, J. Robson *et al.*).

These two records, possibly relating to the same individual, come hot on the heels of the first British record, in June 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 480). Perhaps, if no more follow for a number of years, the statistical significance of this cluster will need to be taken into account.

(Rare breeder on Cape Verde Islands; has bred Azores and suspected Canary Islands; otherwise closest colonies in Caribbean and Red Seas. Pelagic outside breeding season in tropical Atlantic, N Indian and E Pacific Oceans, Caribbean and Red Seas.)

Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila* (1, 0, 0)

1953 Argyll Tiree, first-stage juvenile, ♀, moribund, 9th July, now at National Museums of Scotland, photo. (per R. Y. McGowan, B. J. Small, G. Walbridge *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 96: 58-73, plates 34, 42 & 43). Previously accepted as Magnificent Frigatebird *F. magnificens* (*Brit. Birds* 47: 58-59, 86: 454).

The remarkable story of the reidentification of the 'Tiree Magnificent Frigatebird' as an Ascension Frigatebird, during a review of 1950-58 rarities, has been published recently (*Brit Birds* 96: 58-73). Originally found caught in a net by a local fisherman, the specimen was sent to the British Museum where, based on limited comparative material, it was identified as a Magnificent Frigatebird *F. magnificens*, the first British record. Almost 50 years later, Grahame Walbridge examined photos of the specimen and began to suspect that a mistake had been made. Lengthy and detailed studies of the plumage of the Tiree specimen, particularly in comparison with other juvenile frigatebirds, confirmed its identity as Ascension Frigatebird. This reidentification has recently been supported by evidence from body parasites taken from the corpse (*Brit. Birds* 96: 454).

This record highlights the fact that not all sightings of frigatebirds in the North Atlantic can be assumed to be Magnificent on account of that being the most likely species. It also demonstrates the great care required to establish the presence of diagnostic features, particularly in the case of the highly variable immature plumages. Fortunate observers of vagrant frigatebirds need to concentrate on the

shape and colour of any breast-band, the presence and shape of the axillar spur, the shape of the white patch on the belly, the extent of the pale 'hood', and the colour of any wash on the head.

(Tropical Atlantic Ocean. Rare and probably declining, breeding only on one islet off Ascension Island in tropical E Atlantic.)

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* (0, 1, 0)

Regular readers of *British Birds* will know that Magnificent Frigatebird has been removed from the British List (see above, and *Brit Birds* 96: 58-73). Although Magnificent Frigatebird occurred on the Isle of Man in December 1998 (*Birding World* 12: 11), records from the island are not formally admitted to the British List. Nonetheless, as records of other species from the Isle of Man are included in the BBRC statistics, this record also appears in the statistics above.

With the single exception of Ascension Frigatebird *F. aquila* (above), all other frigatebirds recorded from British waters were not identified specifically.

(In W Palearctic, breeds on two islets off Boavista, Cape Verde Islands, where population is small and declining. Elsewhere, breeds S Florida, USA, throughout Greater and Lesser Antilles from Bahamas to coastal Venezuela and Brazil, and in Pacific from S Baja California, Mexico, S to Ecuador and Galapagos. Largely sedentary, but occasionally wanders north in USA to Canada.)

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 190, 2)

Devon Exeter, ♀, 27th March, moribund, 28th, photo. (R. Dixon) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 156).

Kent Hoo Peninsula, ♂, dead, 19th July, photo. (per Kent Ornithological Soc.).

(Widespread, patchy and declining in Europe N to 53°N. To E, breeds to 60°N in Russia, and E to Kazakhstan. W Palearctic population migratory, wintering mainly in E Africa from Sudan and Ethiopia S. Other populations largely resident or dispersive in N Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa and Australia.)

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 423, -)

2001 Cambridgeshire Nene Washes, age uncertain, 25th May (*Brit. Birds* 95: 481); also 2nd June when noted to be colour-ringed and presumed to have been of captive origin (per J. Oates).

2001 Warwickshire Brandon Marsh, adult, 13th May (J. M. Rushforth, F. G. Stoke, D. A. Stone).

(Local breeder in Morocco and throughout Mediterranean basin to Ukraine and Turkey. Occurs widely throughout France with regular breeding N to Belgium and occasionally Netherlands. Elsewhere, occurs throughout Indian subcontinent and SE Asia, N to Japan, locally within sub-Saharan Africa and widespread in North and South America.)



C. Inman

339. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Walney Island, Cumbria, June 2002.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 48, 2)

Cumbria Walney Island, 6th-11th June, photo. (C. Raven *et al.*) (plate 339).

Devon East Budleigh, 20th June (P. M. Mayer, C. Shere).

2001 Cornwall Lamorna Cove, 25th May, video. (B. D. Blowers, J. Chapel *et al.*).

(W Palearctic breeding population small and fragmented, centred on Mediterranean basin, from S Spain to Black Sea and E to Kazakhstan, with large population in Danube delta. W Palearctic population migratory, wintering in N tropical Africa. African population largely resident.)

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 116, 2)

Buckinghamshire High Wycombe, 16th January (W. L. Claydon).

Cornwall See 2001 Cornwall below.

Somerset Catcott Lows, 23rd-27th May (B. D. Gibbs *et al.*).

2001 Cornwall Chyvarloe/Gweek area, four, 11th December, two to 20th April 2002, video. (S. Bury, J. Chapel, K. Harris *et al.*).

2001 Scilly St Agnes, 16th-17th May (F. H. D. Hicks, M. Hicks, D. Page).

With two additional records, one of four together in Cornwall, the total for 2001 has increased to 12. Small influxes of this highly dispersive species, typically of ten or more birds, have occurred every 3-6 years in recent times, but 2002 saw a return to a trough between peaks.

(In Europe, common and widespread in S Spain and Portugal with small, expanding populations in France and Italy. N populations disperse outside breeding season. Widespread resident throughout much of Africa, S and SE Asia N to S China and Japan, Australia, S USA, N and C South America.)

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* (0, 1, 0)

Argyll Isle of Arran, 13th January to 28th March; same, Loch Fyne, 3rd April and Balvicar, 4th April to 3rd May; same, Ettrick Bay, Bute, 15th-18th May; same, Loch Riddon, 19th and again Loch Fyne, 22nd May; same, Castleton, Lochgilphead, 25th-31st May; again, Seil Island to about 7th June (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 113). All presumed same as 2001 Argyll, Ayrshire (*Brit. Birds* 95: 481-482).

Ayrshire Ardrossan and Ardeer, since 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 481-482) to 9th January; also near Slatcoats, early January (per A. A. Murray).

Dumfries & Galloway Tongland Bridge, 19th August, photo. (I. Mathewson, A. W. & I. Wiles); same, Caerlaverock, 6th September; same, Lochar Water, 7th-17th September (per A. A. Murray); all presumed same as Argyll above.

We received an unconfirmed report that this well-travelled bird had been in poor condition prior to its disappearance from Balvicar in early June 2002 and, indeed, some locals believed that it had died. So the appearance of a Snowy Egret in Dumfries & Galloway just over two months later was surprising, and raised the possibility of a second individual. The black-and-yellow pattern on the legs matched that of the Balvicar bird perfectly, however, confirming that it had recovered and resumed its tour of western Scotland.

(Breeds throughout warm temperate USA, C and South America to S Chile and NE Argentina. Most N breeders migratory, wintering S to Gulf of Mexico, with some remaining on E coast N to New Jersey.)

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 143, 37)

Argyll Loch A'Phuil and Cnoc Bhireapol, Tiree, 28th May to 2nd June (J. Bowler, J. Wolstencroft *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire St Ives Gravel-pits, 17th May (M. L. Hawkes, J. L. F. Parslow). Grafham Water, 11th September (M. L. Hawkes, R. Presley *et al.*). Sawtree Roughs, 14th October, photo. (S. P. Dudley, S. M. Elsom, L. Smith *et al.*).

Carmarthenshire Llandeilo, 30th July to at least 18th August (A. Clark, J. Friese *et al.*).

Cheshire Sandbach Flashes, 4th-6th January (A. Bromont, I. Dickinson); same, Great Budworth, 11th January, photo. (T. Coatsworth, M. J. Feltham, D. Walter); also in Lancashire & North Merseyside below (*Brit. Birds* 95: plates 37 & 78). Inner Marsh Farm, 17th May (E. J. Abraham *et al.*).

Cleveland Portrack Marsh, Stockton-on-Tees, 11th-12th October (S. Ashton, M. A. Blick *et al.*); same, North Tees Marshes, intermittently 13th October to 9th November (M. A. Blick *et al.*); presumed also in Lincolnshire below. Dorman's Pool, 2nd December (M. A. Blick).

Cornwall Porth Reservoir, Newquay, first-year, 4th-8th August, photo., same as Gloucestershire/Wilt-

shire, Suffolk, colour-ringed as a nestling, Lac du Grande Lieu, Loire Atlantique, France, 14th May 2002 (S. M. Christophers). Hayle, 1st September (L. P. Williams).

Devon Bowling Green Marsh, 3rd September (J. Gale, T. Smith, M. S. Wolinski).

Dorset Radipole Lake, two, 27th-28th July, photo. (A. Barrett, C. White *et al.*).

Essex Stone Point, three, 11th May (G. James).

Glamorgan Flat Holme, 22nd September (P. Bristow); also in Somerset below.

Gloucestershire/Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, first-year, 18th-28th August, colour-ringed (D. Lyford *et al.*); also in Cornwall, Suffolk.

Greater Manchester Chorlton Water Park, 11th August; same, Sale Water Park, 12th (I. M. Mc KERCHAR *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, 10th-26th August (J. Brown, R. Wincup, J. Wylson *et al.*). Capel Fleet, 20th October (C. E. Morris *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Martin Mere, 5th January (A. & J. Rimmer *et al.*); presumed same as Sandbach Flashes, Cheshire.

Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, 12th August (the late E. J. Locker, J. D. Periam). Fort Henry Ponds, 24th October (T. Mitcham).

Lincolnshire Holbeach Marsh, 19th October (A. H. J. Harrop); probably same, Grainthorpe Marsh, 28th October to 4th November, photo. (K. Robinson *et al.*); presumed same as Portrack Marsh and North Tees Marshes, Cleveland. Tetney Marshes, 18th December (J. Hawcroft, I. Higginson, P. C. Short *et al.*).

Norfolk Fritton Marshes and Hemsby, 28th January to 23rd February, possibly since 17th January; same, Haddiscoe Island, 15th-16th February, Halvergay, 16th February (P. J. Heath, B. J. Small *et al.*). Holkham area, 13th-18th May (J. R. Williamson). Breydon, 12th June (P. R. Allard). Eccles-on-Sea, 4th July, photo. (N. Bowman).

Northamptonshire Storton's Gravel-pits, 12th October (M. R. Alibone).

Outer Hebrides Bornish, South Uist, 23rd-30th November, probably since 10th, photo. (A. Scott, A. Stevenson *et al.*).

Somerset Shapwick Heath, 22nd September (D. & M. Mockeridge *et al.*); also in Glamorgan. Wimpleball Lake, 11th-15th October, photo. (B. D. Gibbs *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, first-year, 30th August, colour-ringed, same as Cornwall, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire. Dunwich and Minsmere, 10th September (R. Drew); present 7th-27th.

Surrey Staines Moor, 6th September (F. J. Maroevic, P. J. Naylor, K. L. Purdey *et al.*); presumed same, Pudmore Pond, Thursley, 7th September (A. J. Fisher).

Sussex, West Coldwaltham Brooks, two, 29th September (A. R. Kitson).

Wight, Isle of Newtown, 2nd June (R. Green *et al.*).

Wiltshire See Gloucestershire/Wiltshire above.

Yorkshire, North Riccall, 8th-15th January, photo. (C. S. Ralston, D. Tate *et al.*).

1999 Dorset See 1999 Wiltshire below.

1999 Wiltshire Britford, intermittently 3rd-22nd September, colour-ringed individual, also in Dorset, Worcestershire (*Brit. Birds* 94: 459), was colour-ringed as a nestling, Lac du Grande Lieu, Loire Atlantique, France, 8th May 1999 (per R. Turner).

1999 Worcestershire See 1999 Wiltshire above.

2000 Greater London Kempton Park Nature Reserve, 7th October (*Brit. Birds* 95: 483), locality is in Greater London as originally stipulated.

2000 Man, Isle of Langness, 18th-19th, 26th June (D. Goddard, A. M. Sapsford, C. & D. Sharpe *et al.*).

2001 Cheshire Neston Marsh, 27th October (C. & P. Brewster); presumed same as Flintshire, 12th August to at least 5th November (*Brit. Birds* 95: 483).

2001 Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, 21st June, video. (J. Chapel, S. Kolodziecki *et al.*).

The trio in Essex is the first such group to be recorded. The tracking of a colour-ringed youngster from its nest in a newly established French colony (the species first bred in northwest France in 1994: *Brit. Birds* 88: 27) to Cornwall, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire and finally Suffolk was remarkable. Without those rings, these sightings would almost certainly have been recorded as three different birds in the statistics. This brings into question the degree of duplication involved in the multiple occurrences of recent years. Without good evidence there is little which can be done to clarify the true picture, and

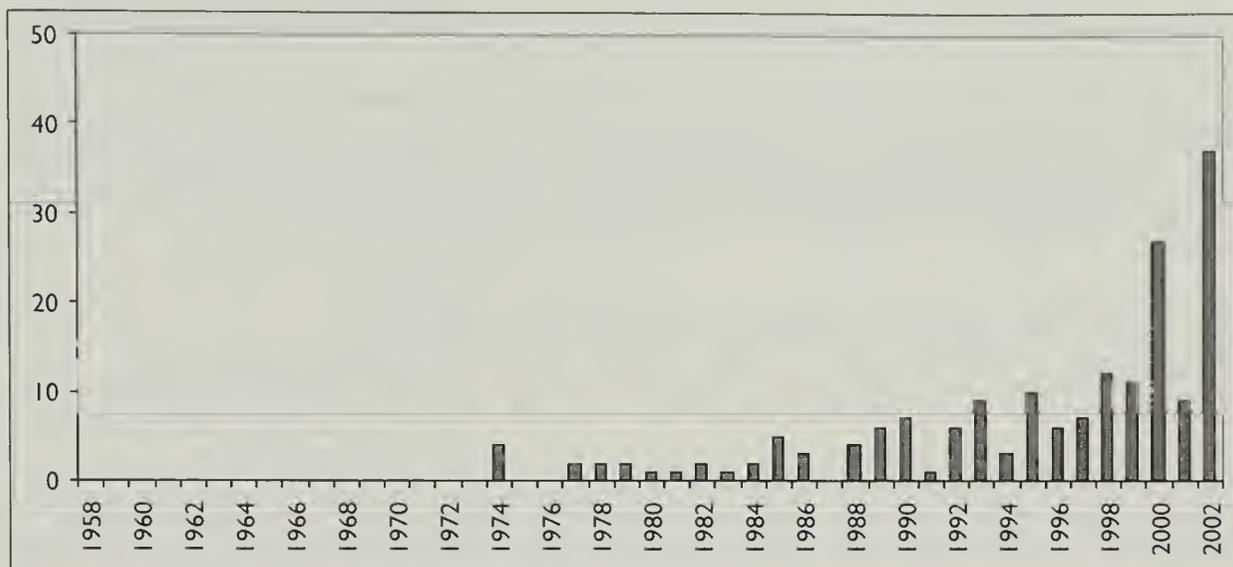


Fig. 3. Accepted records of Great White Egret *Egretta alba* in Britain, 1958-2002.

BBRC must make occasional assumptions when a wandering individual is believed to account for a series of records. Though duplication may be exaggerating the picture somewhat, there is no doubt that the species is now occurring here in record numbers (see fig. 3). As recently as 1988, the all-time total for Britain & Ireland reached 37, the number recorded in Britain (excluding Ireland) in 2002!

(Small, but increasing breeding population in Netherlands, and recently established colony in NW France. Elsewhere in Europe, highly fragmented breeding range from E Austria to Ukraine, but generally rare. W Palearctic population migratory, most wintering in N Africa and E Mediterranean, although recent trend to overwinter in C and NW Europe. Other populations breed across much of Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas.)

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 117, 8)

Essex Newport, 15th May (S. Patmore).

Hampshire Whitchurch, 17th May (J. Switzer *et al.*).

Highland Spean Bridge, Inverness-shire, 18th May, photo. (R. & S. Bottomley).

Kent Dungeness, 31st May (D. Walker, A. S. Wraithmell *et al.*).

Norfolk Gateley/Great Ryburgh/Sennow Park, 25th-30th May (R. H. Hogg, A. & M. Saunders, R. G. Vernon *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Blidworth, 2nd June (M. E. Taylor).

Suffolk Bury St Edmunds, 1st May, photo., metal ring on each leg (C. & J. R. R. Carr *et al.*).

Sussex, West Barlavington, 3rd May (A. Perry, G. C. M. Roberts).

Two records reported to various information services have not yet been submitted to BBRC, but, ironically, we include here an accepted record which was not broadcast to the nation's birders at the time.

(Breeds from C Iberia and E France through C Europe to Russia and in small numbers in N Greece and Turkey. To E, breeds widely in small numbers in forested temperate regions of Russia and Siberia to Russian Far East. Most are migratory, wintering in Africa, S and SE Asia.)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 71, 15)

Cambridgeshire/Norfolk West Walton, 12th-13th September, photo. (J. Ellis, B. & G. Martin); presumed same as Snettisham (Norfolk) below.

Devon Budleigh Salterton, eight, 4th-5th September, one, Exe Estuary area to at least end July 2003, photo. (D. Nicholls, D. Stone, A. & D. Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, four, 6th September (S. J. M. Gantlett, R. G. Millington *et al.*); presumed same as Oxfordshire. Hickling, 7th September (M. Fiszer *et al.*); same, Blakeney Freshes, 8th (S. Aspinall, R. F. Porter); same, Holkham, 8th (per G. E. Dunmore); same, Holme, 9th (G. F. Hibberd, D. Noble); same Snettisham, 10th, photo. (D. & P. Wileman *et al.*); presumed same as Cambridgeshire/Norfolk above.

Northamptonshire Ravensthorpe Reservoir, 22nd September (G. Pullan).

Oxfordshire Otmoor, four, 6th September, photo. (R. Ebbs *et al.*); also in Norfolk.

Shetland South Nesting, 2nd-14th October, photo.; same, Houser, Tingwall, 19th-23rd October; same, Lerwick, 25th October (M. A. & P. R. Fisher *et al.*).

An excellent year for this species, the last comparable influx being that of 17 birds in 1986.

(European breeding range centred N and W of Black Sea in Ukraine and Romania, with small, declining population in Balkans. Occasionally breeds France and Spain. To E, breeds from Volga River to Kazakhstan. Palearctic population migratory, most wintering in E Africa, small numbers remaining within Mediterranean basin. Resident or dispersive populations occur in Africa, S Asia, Australia, E USA and the Caribbean.)

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 89, 0)

2001 Outer Hebrides Berneray, North Uist, adult, 17th February (P. R. Boyer).

This individual arrived in an apparently wild state but, given the location and the age of the bird, there must be some doubt about its origins. For consistency, and until a clearer picture emerges, however, we will continue to include such birds in the BBRC statistics for the time being.

(Rare and declining throughout entire breeding range from N Scandinavia to NE Siberia. Reintroduction scheme in Swedish Lapland boosts numbers wintering in the Netherlands. Migratory, wintering in scattered groups in Netherlands, Hungary, S Black and Caspian Sea areas, N Kazakhstan and Yangtse valley, China.)

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

North American and E Siberian race *B. b. nigricans* (1, 114, 14)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 12th-14th October (L. Chappell *et al.*).

Essex Goldhanger, River Blackwater, two, 13th January (D. Rhymes); same Old Hall Marshes, 30th January (per H. Vaughan); Old Hall Marshes, another individual, 13th January, 13th February; presumed one of same, Tollesbury Wick, 16th-17th February (D. L. Acfield); two of same since 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 483). Two of same, Old Hall Marshes, 9th November to at least 1st January 2003 (per H. Vaughan). Paglesham Lagoon, 24th November, photo. (S. Arlow). The Naze, 3rd February (G. C. Bond, D. Rhymes); another, 3rd (D. Rhymes), one or other since 2001 below; one of same, 8th December to at least 1st January 2003 (D. Rhymes); one or other, Holland Haven, 14th December (P. A. & S. Cox, T. H. Watson) (fig. 4).

Hampshire Weston Shore, 25th-26th February (R. Bonser, N. Montegriffo per J. M. Clark); presumed



Fig. 4. 'Black Brant' *Branta bernicla nigricans*, Holland Haven, Essex, December 2002.

same as Cams Bay, Fareham, 2001 below.

Kent Funton Creek, near Sittingbourne, 9th November, photo. (P. Broomhead, D. Miller, D. Willett).

Lincolnshire Tetney, 26th November (S. D. Wellock).

Norfolk Cockthorpe area, first-winter, intermittently 20th January to 4th May, photo. (A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Terrington Marsh, two adults, 3rd February (D. E. Balmer, P. M. Wilson); presumed same with one first-winter, Snettisham, 16th February; one or other, 1st March (M. A. Ward). Lynn Point, 5th March (T. Lowe). Burnham Norton, two, 14th November (J. R. McCallum). Burnham Overy, 21st December to at least 13th January 2003 (D. P. Appleton).

Suffolk Trimley Marshes, 21st February (P. Besson, N. Odin); presumed same as Trimley Marshes, 18th January 2001 and Levington 27th November 2001 to 25th January 2002 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484). Kingsfleet, 21st December to 3rd January 2003 at least (M. Ferris, J. A. & P. R. Kennerley *et al.*); presumed same as 18th January 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484).

Sussex, West West Wittering, 17th February to 17th March (A. R. Kitson *et al.*); presumed same as 15th December 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484); present throughout winter, accompanied by four intergrades (per E. D. Urquhart). Pilsey and Thorney Islands, 11th-31st December, two, 31st December (C. B. Collins), presumed returning individuals from 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484).

1998 Essex Blackwater Estuary, 23rd December (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520), now assumed one of Cudmore Grove, last seen 28th January 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 464).

2000 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 29th November (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484), now assumed to be returning bird from 1999. Tollesbury, 19th February (*Brit. Birds* 94: 460), now assumed to be returning bird from 1999.

2000 Lincolnshire Kirton Marsh, adult, 15th January (S. Keightley *et al.*).

2001 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 9th December to 9th March 2002 (per H. Vaughan), one of two from 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 483); 9th December to 13th February 2002 (per H. Vaughan), one of two from 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 483). The Naze, 17th November to 13th January 2002 (G. James).

2001 Hampshire Keyhaven, 16th December to 22nd March 2002 (per R. B. Wynn), same as Hurst Beach 27th December into 2002 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484). Cams Bay, Fareham, 29th December (T. Carpenter).

2001 Norfolk Ousemouth, 13th January (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484), presumed same as Lynn Point 29th October 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 460).

2001 Suffolk Shotley, Stour Estuary, 29th March (L. Woods).

2001 Sussex, West West Wittering, adult, 15th December to 3rd March 2002, returning bird with four juvenile intergrades (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484). Pagham Harbour, 19th December (N. J. Voaden), presumed same as 15th-16th November 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484).

(Expanding W in Arctic NE Siberia to Lena delta, where overlaps with nominate race. Majority breed in Arctic Alaska and E to Victoria Island, Canada. Migratory, wintering on Pacific coast of North America, S to Baja California. Formerly, large numbers wintered in N China, Korean Peninsula and Japan, but now rare.)

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 52, 2)

Argyll Loch Gruinart area, Islay, adult, intermittently 18th October to at least 9th April 2003 (T. ap Rheinallt *et al.*); presumed returning individual of 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484).

Perth & Kinross Findatie, adult, 15th February (I. Munro, S. Paterson, J. Sykes *et al.*); same, Vane Farm, 14th, 29th March (J. Fermer, S. Paterson *et al.*); same, Gellybank, 27th-28th March, photo., and present in area until 27th April (I. Munro *et al.*); second individual, adult, Vane Farm, 7th April at least (A. W. Reid, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

2000 Suffolk Landguard, age uncertain, 17th January; possibly same as Southwold, 7th-15th January (*Brit. Birds* 94: 461), now considered not same as Southwold but probably same as Waldringfield, first-winter, 3rd-18th January (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484), now recorded as present 2nd January to 12th March. Southwold individual now considered probably of captive origin (per N. Odin).

2001 Moray & Nairn Redhill, adult, 17th-18th April; same, Roseisle, 19th (M. J. H. Cook, R. Hewitt), probably same as 2001 Perth & Kinross (*Brit. Birds* 95: 484).

(Breeds Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter in coastal regions of W Black Sea in Romania and Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter in Netherlands, Greece, Turkey. Some may still use former wintering areas along Caspian Sea.)

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 334, –)

2000 Ayrshire Irvine Harbour, ♂, 21st-30th January (B. Orr *et al.*).

2000 Dorset Butterstreet Cove, ♂, 26th-28th November; considered same, Abbotsbury, 5th December (*Brit. Birds* 95: 486), now presumed returning 1999 individual (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520).

(Breeds C Alaska E across cool temperate Canada to Hudson Bay and Quebec, and S into NW and mid-west USA. Winters throughout USA and Central America S to Colombia.)

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 24, 1)

Cornwall Colliford Reservoir, ♂, 19th January to 5th August (per K. A. Wilson *et al.*); presumed same as 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 486). Stithians Reservoir, ♂, 31st March intermittently to 15th October (per K. A. Wilson); presumed same as 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 486). Loe Pool, ♂, 31st August to 13th October (S. F. Elton per K. A. Wilson); presumed same as 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 486).

Devon Slapton Ley, ♂, 1st January intermittently to at least 20th April; same, Bowcombe Creek, 17th January (per M. Tyler); presumed same as 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 486).

Scilly St Martin's and Tresco, ♂, 26th December intermittently to at least 31st May 2003, photo. (R. L. Flood *et al.*)

There must now be record numbers of Black Ducks in Britain. They readily hybridise with Mallards *A. platyrhynchos* and the offspring of such pairings have the potential to confuse. Check the speculum and tail carefully for telltale signs of Mallard influence if you find a suspected 'Black Quack'. With more real Black Ducks around, the chances of two getting together, though still remote, must be increasing. Details of one reported from Shetland have not yet been submitted.

(Breeds E North America from Labrador S to North Carolina and W to Manitoba. Most are resident or dispersive but N breeders migrate to winter in coastal SE USA.)

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 208, 0)

1989 Yorkshire, East Beacon Pond and Sammy's Point, Kilnsea, ♀ or first-winter, 29th October (the late N. A. Bell, R. C. Hart, M. K. Rotherham *et al.*).

2000 Greater London Walthamstow Reservoirs, age/sex uncertain, 5th November (D. G. Darrell-Lambert).

2000 Kent Elmley, ♂, 9th May (G. W. Allison).

2001 Essex Old Hall Marshes, ♂, 14th May (B. Churches, C. J. Tyas).

2001 Staffordshire Belvide Reservoir, ♂, intermittently, 11th July to 3rd September, photo. (S. Nuttall *et al.*); same, Blithfield Reservoir, 2nd September (per G. J. Jones).

(Breeds from S Alaska, across much of temperate Canada to south-central USA. Migratory, wintering in S USA, Mexico, Caribbean and N South America.)

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* (0, 5, 1)

Greater Manchester Pennington Flash, ♂, 11th-30th July, photo. (I. M. McKerchar *et al.*) (plate 340).

1996 Kent Cliffe, ♂, probably first-winter, 7th December (P. Larkin, D. Mercer).

Since it came shortly before the Norfolk record in January 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 566), the Kent record in 1996 had to undergo protracted consideration by both BBRC and BOURC before it could be finally accepted as the first for Britain.

The Greater Manchester bird was the first to be recorded outside the winter period in Britain. Rare ducks in late summer are often regarded with suspicion, yet this is a period of considerable wildfowl movement, with many birds travelling to gather in large moult assemblages. Some birds are known to move large distances to moult at favoured waters. Even so, it is more likely that, if a true vagrant, this individual had crossed the Atlantic some time prior to its discovery here.

Potentially of more concern than its origin was the possibility that the Greater Manchester bird was a hybrid (or inbred to some degree, and hence of captive origin). Keith Vinicombe recently discussed the problems presented by Canvasback × Common Pochard *A. ferina* hybrids, which are seemingly quite frequent in captivity (*Brit. Birds* 96: 112-118). While the presence of white or pale markings on the bill might be a give-away for a hybrid in full plumage, such marks may be reduced or even absent on eclipse males, and are invariably absent on females and juveniles. No plumage characters are known

which enable a hybrid or impure Canvasback to be distinguished from the real thing. Extremely careful attention must, therefore, be paid to structure, as first-generation hybrids at least would be likely to lack the more extreme proportions shown by an uncontaminated Canvasback. The Greater Manchester bird showed features such as the classic head-and-bill shape, the forward-angled edge to the black breast, and very pale body typical of pure Canvasback, so, based on present knowledge, we are as sure as we can be that this bird was pukka.

(Breeds from C Alaska S through W Canada to NE California, and E to C USA. Winters from British Columbia to Great Lakes, and S throughout USA to C Mexico.)

Redhead *Aythya americana* (0, 2, 0)

Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, ♂, since 7th November 2001 to 5th February (*Brit. Birds* 95: 487); returned, 21st September to 19th January 2003 (D. G. Carrington *et al.* per S. J. Moon).

(Patchy breeding distribution in S Alaska and prairie provinces of W Canada and USA. Local breeder in NE USA but range expanding along NE seaboard. Winters in warmer regions of S USA, Mexico and Cuba.)

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (many, 263, 10)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, ♀, 22nd August, 14th September (R. M. Andrews *et al.*); presumed same as 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 487).

Bedfordshire Elstow, ♀, since 7th November 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 487), there or at Stewartby Lake to 31st January, same, 4th to at least 31st December (per D. J. Odell).

Berkshire Wraysbury Gravel-pits, juvenile, 1st October; same, Old Slade Nature Reserve, 2nd-30th November (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*); also in Greater London, Surrey.

Dorset Morden Park, ♂, since 27th December 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 487), to 9th March; same, 1st-31st December (per J. Lidster).

Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, ♂, 22nd July to 6th August, photo. (J. T. Smith *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, ♀, 13th-22nd March (M. J. McGill *et al.*).

Greater London Harmondworth Country Park, juvenile, 28th-30th October (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*); also in Berkshire, Surrey.

Leicestershire/Northamptonshire Swithland Reservoir, ♂, 5th-15th October, photo. (S. M. Lister *et al.*).

Norfolk Welney, ♂, 1st January (J. B. Kemp, D. Stevens); presumed same, 19th November (J. B. Kemp). Fowl Mere, ♂, intermittently, 5th February to 14th April (O. R. Marks *et al.*); presumed same



340. Male Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* (left), with male Common Pochard *A. ferina*, Pennington Flash, Greater Manchester, July 2002.

as 2001 below. Hickling, ♂, 16th March (J. Hampshire); presumed same, Stanford Water, 16th February, 22nd-31st March, 14th April and Thompson Water, 13th April (per G. E. Dunmore).

Northamptonshire Daventry Country Park, juvenile/first-winter, intermittently 15th December to 10th February 2003 (G. Pullan *et al.*). See also Leicestershire/Northamptonshire above.

Somerset See 2001 Somerset below.

Suffolk Minsmere, ♂, 9th-21st January; another ♂, 11th-12th January, one or other to 21st, photo. (W. J. Brame, R. Drew *et al.*); both additional to 2001 below; ♂, 23rd October to 30th December (J. & P. Wright *et al.*); presumed same as one or other individual above.

Surrey Papercourt Gravel-pits, ♀, 2nd January, photo. (J. Gates *et al.*). Staines Reservoirs, juvenile, 1st October; also in Berkshire, Greater London.

1999 Dorset Morden Lake, ♂, 20th December 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 523), previously noted, since 1998 to 23rd January; same, Lulworth Lake, 10th January; same, Hyde Lakes, 6th February (per J. Lidster).

2000 Dorset Morden Lake, ♂, since 1999 to 13th February, returning 23rd November to at least 23rd December (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464); same, Budden's Farm Lakes, 24th February; same, Sturminster Marshall Gravel-pit, 18th December (per J. Lidster).

2000 Greater London Kempton Park Nature Reserve, ♂, 22nd May (*Brit. Birds* 95: 488), locality is in Greater London as originally stipulated (per K. Purdey).

2001 Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, ♂, 15th January (*Brit. Birds* 95: 487), now considered same as Godmanchester, 13th-22nd January (*Brit. Birds* 95: 487), and Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, 1st January 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464) (per J. Oates).

2001 Dorset Morden Lake, ♂, 27th-30th December (*Brit. Birds* 95: 487), full dates 1st January, 9th March, 1st-31st December (per J. Lidster).

2001 Greater Manchester Salford Quays/Irwell Water, ♀, since 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464) to 25th January (P. Berry per A. J. Smith); same, Chorlton Water Park, 27th January to 11th March (P. Hines per A. J. Smith); same, Loonts Lake, 19th March (B. T. Shaw per A. J. Smith).

2001 Norfolk Fowl Mere, ♂, 1st April (R. W. R. Seymour).

2001 Somerset Ham Wall, since 2000 to February (*Brit. Birds* 95: 488), to 10th February; returned, 28th November to 20th February 2002 (per B. D. Gibbs).

2001 Suffolk Minsmere, ♂, 14th October to 12th February 2002 (W. J. Brame, R. Drew *et al.*).

2001 Warwickshire Coombe Abbey, first-winter ♀, 2nd-28th October (J. J. Bowley *et al.*).

(Main breeding range in temperate steppe-forest from Poland and Hungary E through Ukraine to Caspian Sea, but distribution often patchy. Other populations occur in S Spain, Kazakhstan, W Mongolia and Tibetan Plateau. Migratory, most winter in E Mediterranean, Black and Caspian Seas, NE Africa and Indian subcontinent.)

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 48, 5)

Cornwall Drift Reservoir, ♂, 14th-27th October, photo. (G. Hobin, F. Hull *et al.*).

Dorset Swineham Gravel-pits and Studland, first-winter ♂, since 11th November 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 488), to 29th April, returned as adult, 14th December to 1st January 2003 (per J. Lidster).

Dumfries & Galloway Auchenreoch Loch, three first-winter ♂♂, 20th-24th December, one or two, Auchenreoch and Milton Lochs, 28th December to 16th February 2003, two, 18th February to at least 20th April (S. Cooper, G. Stenning *et al.*).

Highland Loch Insh, Inverness-shire, ♂, 29th-30th March, photo. (C. Davis, C. Donald, M. A. Newell *et al.*).

2001 Hertfordshire Wilstone Reservoir, first-winter ♀, 4th-7th November, video. (D. Bilcock *et al.*).

All accepted records were of drakes this year, including an unprecedented three together in Dumfries & Galloway. These three provided a unique and rather magical viewing opportunity on the ice-bound Auchenreoch Loch in late December. Lone females can still create identification headaches, and two records of females remain under consideration. Additional identification features were highlighted recently by Martin Garner, who stressed the importance of the underwing as well as the upperwing pattern (*Birding World* 15: 506-508).

(Breeds from C Alaska through Canada to Hudson Bay, and S to Washington and South Dakota. Isolated populations E of Great Lakes. Winters along both coastlines of USA, in E from New Jersey to Mexico, W Indies, and C America to N Colombia.)



Pascal Etienne

Fig. 5. First-summer male King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, Morston, Norfolk, March 2002.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 103, 5)

Argyll Dunstaffenage, ♂, 6th April (I. A. Dillon, B. A. L. Howlett).

Dumfries & Galloway Kirkcolm Point, Loch Ryan, first-summer ♂, 3rd October to at least 27th March 2003 (S. Bearhop, C. J. McInerny, S. C. Votier *et al.*); presumed same, near Cairnryan, Loch Ryan, 15th December (P. N. Collin).

Fife Leven, ♀, 15th September, 17th, 26th October (per D. Ogilvie); presumed same as 2001 Fife below.

Man, Isle of Rue Point, ♂, probably first-summer, 24th May to 2nd June (S. Davies, B. Jones, J. P. Thorpe).

Norfolk Holkham Bay and Wells Harbour, and Morston, first-summer ♂, 19th January to 3rd April, photo. (J. V. Bhalerao, P. Etienne *et al.*) (fig. 5).

Shetland Bluemull Sound, Belmont, Unst, ♀, 31st March, possibly since mid March, photo. (W. Dickson, J. Goodlad, J. Gray).

2001 Fife Methil, ♀, 2nd December (*Brit. Birds* 95: 489), not ♂ as stated; presumed same as Leven 3rd to at least 6th August, but reports (at Leven) on 2nd February and 8th April now withdrawn (per D. E. Dickson).

It would appear that annual recurrences of males off the east coast of Scotland have come to an end, at least for the time being.

(Breeds from Kanin peninsula E across Arctic Siberia, including Novaya Zemlya and W Svalbard, Arctic Alaska, N Canada and N Greenland. European population winters along ice-free coasts of White Sea, N Norway and Iceland. Pacific population winters in Bering Sea.)

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

North American and E Siberian race *M. n. americana* (0, 7, 0)

Caernarfonshire Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr, ♂, since 17th December 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 489), to 8th April; returned, 3rd November, intermittently to at least 28th April 2003 (per J. Barnes).

2001 Moray & Nairn, Burghead Bay, ♂, 27th October to 7th December (D. M. Pullan *et al.*).

(Breeds on Siberian tundra from Yana River E to Alaska, and N Canada to Newfoundland. In N Atlantic, winters along coasts of E USA, N to South Carolina, and inland on Great Lakes. Elsewhere, winters in ice-free seas along both coasts of N Pacific Ocean, S to N Japan and California.)

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 300, 8)

Cornwall Boscastle, 20th-21st April, video., photo. (G. Fabbram).

Dorset Easton, Portland, 31st May (G. Walbridge *et al.*).

Gwent Newport, 5th June (J. O'Sullivan, J. D. Wilson).

Highland Near Rhifail, Strath Never, Sutherland, 4th June (N. Archer); probably same, Achentoul, 9th July to at least early August, photo. (C. H. Crooke, R. H. Dennis, A. F. McNee *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 23rd September, video. (R. L. Flood, A. Hutt).

Suffolk Tuddenham St Martin, 11th June (S. Abbott, Mr & Mrs Ambrose).

Sussex, East Glynde Reach, 8th June (M. J. Helps, A. R. Kitson).

Yorkshire, North Whitestone Point, Whitby, 10th September (S. Mills, R. S. Slack).

2001 Cambridgeshire Chippenham Fen, 18th May (K. J. Warrington).

Once again, more records of Black Kite have been rejected than accepted. The increase in records submitted to BBRC reflects a widespread belief that Black Kite is now occurring more frequently in Britain, in particular during the last three or four years. Information received from the Netherlands and northern France, however, suggests that there has been no comparable increase in numbers in parts of the Continent bordering the English Channel and southern North Sea. In the Netherlands, records of several rare raptors have increased in recent years, but Black Kite is not one of them. Numbers there increased until 1980 but since then seem to have remained at the same level. If numbers are not increasing on the near continent, where have all these new British birds come from? Could it be that a few mobile individuals have increased the expectation and decreased the rigour with which this species is being identified?

We all, apparently, identify Black Kite with ease when travelling overseas, so why do so many records fail to make the grade in Britain? To reiterate comments made in 1990, 'For a bird that is big and brown with a forked tail, and flies about in the open air, the Black Kite still has a troubled time in Committee circulations. Simplistic descriptions are all too often inadequate for a species that should, when a real one appears, present little trouble' (*Brit. Birds* 83: 456-457). Since then, little has changed. Many of the descriptions we receive are of birds seen either without optics or at considerable range. There is often little plumage detail to evaluate, while the description of shape and flight is cursory. Interestingly, in southern Europe both adults and second-calendar-year birds invariably commence primary moult in late May and June. It is, surprising, therefore, that many of the submitted descriptions fail to note this obvious feature, although it is generally apparent in birds which are photographed.

For an acceptable record we require a detailed description of a well-seen bird. We need details of moult, flight behaviour, shape and structure, size and plumage. If the bird is too distant to see much in the way of plumage detail, we still require careful notes on moult, shape and flight, along with an explanation of how a dark Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* or European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* was considered and eliminated. BBRC will continue to take a hard line with poorly documented records.

(Breeds throughout continental Europe, with most in Spain, France and Germany, and widespread smaller populations, except in maritime NW Europe and Scandinavia. To E, breeds European Russia to Kazakhstan and C Siberia. Nominate race winters Africa and NW Indian subcontinent. Other races resident or dispersive in sub-Saharan Africa, Indian subcontinent, E and SE Asia and Australia.)

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (3, 8, 3)

Kent Elmley, third-calendar-year ♂, 3rd-20th August, photo. (C. G. Bradshaw, S. Brown, J. Hunt *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 316; 96: plate 341).

Norfolk Stiffkey and Warham Greens area, juvenile, 24th December to 30th March 2003, photo. (R. Johnson, S. C. Votier *et al.*) (fig. 6).

Shetland Sumburgh, juvenile, 10th September; same, Brow Marsh, 10th-14th, photo. (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*).

The comment in last year's report that 'a long-staying individual on the mainland would be well received' appeared prophetic as the hundreds of grateful travellers admired the Elmley bird in August. This year's influx of three individuals brings to mind the record year of 1993, when five were recorded. The similarity of occurrences is also striking, with the male in Kent recalling the third-calendar-year



Richard Johnson

Fig. 6. Juvenile Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Stiffkey and Warham Greens area, December 2002 to March 2003.

Steve Young/Birdwatch



341. Third-calendar-year male Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (right), with Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Elmley, Kent, August 2002.

(or second-summer) individual in Essex in summer 1993, and autumn juveniles in Shetland in both years. Even more remarkable is the appearance of another juvenile at Brow Marsh, Shetland, on almost exactly the same dates as a juvenile at the same site in 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 490). The juvenile in Norfolk on Christmas Eve represents an amazing find, and brings to mind the juvenile Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* which led many observers on a merry dance in late November 1995, before it was identified correctly (*Birding World* 8: 420-421). Thanks to the perseverance of two sharp observers, many birders were able to enjoy their second Pallid Harrier on the British mainland within a few months.

With several Pallid Harriers reported in the spring of 2003, it remains to be seen whether these records represent a genuine upsurge in this (previously) almost mythical raptor's fortunes in Britain. A number of northern European countries have experienced an increase in numbers in recent years, and there is some evidence to suggest that the ongoing loss of breeding habitat to farming in southern Russia and Kazakhstan may be forcing adults to wander west of their regular breeding range in search of suitable habitat. A record from Sussex in 2002 remains under consideration and reminds us that the identification of immatures remains potentially difficult.

(Fragmented range on steppe grasslands from Ukraine E through Russia to 100°E and S to Kazakhstan. Occasionally breeds to W of main breeding range in Europe. Migratory, wintering throughout much of E and C Africa and the Indian subcontinent.)

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (11, 6, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, first-summer ♂, 13th-21st May, video., photo. (R. L. Flood, K. Webb *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plates 226 & 227; 96: plates 342 & 343).

This first-summer male, the first in Britain since 1992, sported a metal ring on its left leg. It will have struck most people who saw this bird that there is a world of difference between identifying one in central Spain and being confident enough to claim a vagrant in Britain. BBRC is currently re-examining the documentation on the contentious bird seen at Black Rock, Cornwall, in 1979, the file for which has gathered dust in the BBRC's pending tray for many years without a decision being made.

(Fragmented breeding range throughout Mediterranean basin from Iberia and Morocco to Ukraine, Turkey and Caspian Sea. Numerous in parts of Spain but declining to east. Uncommon outside W Palearctic, with sporadic breeding from Kazakhstan to W China. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

Gary Bellingham



Gary Bellingham

342 & 343. First-summer male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, St Mary's, Scilly, May 2002.



Iain Leach

344. First-summer female Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Gringley Carr, Nottinghamshire, June 2002.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 627, 11)

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, first-summer ♂, 18th May (C. & T. P. Inskipp, M. Kohler, Z. Zöckler). Eynesbury, ♀, 8th June (S. M. Elsom, J. T. Williams).

Norfolk Hickling, first-summer ♂, 19th-22nd May, photo. (J. Hampshire, P. J. Heath *et al.*); first-summer ♀, 5th July to about 31st August, photo. (M. Chipperfield, J. Hampshire *et al.*). Blakeney Point, ♀, 21st May (M. I. Eldridge, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Upton Fen, ♀, age uncertain, 23rd May (J. Knowler). Salthouse, ♀, 8th June (B. & I. Burrows). Burgh St Peter Staithe, first-summer ♀, 29th August (G. J. Etherington); same, Oulton Dyke, Suffolk, below.

Nottinghamshire Gringley Carr, first-summer ♀, 12th-17th June, photo. (M. C. & S. Dennis *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 256; 96: plate 344).

Suffolk Orfordness, ♀, 17th May (J. Askins, D. Cormack). Oulton Dyke, first-summer ♀, 29th August (G. J. Etherington); also in Norfolk, above.

Yorkshire, North North Duffield, ♀, 19th May (M. Tunmore).

2001 Wiltshire Haxton, first-summer ♀, 3rd-9th June, photo. (M. Collier, R. Turner *et al.*).

(Breeding range highly fragmented across wooded steppe of E Europe, from E Hungary to temperate Russia, E to Baikal region. Numbers breeding in Europe small and declining. Migratory, wintering in SW Africa.)

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 118, 6)

Argyll Loch Gruinart and Gorn area, Islay, adult white-phase, 22nd-24th February (A. Kets, T. ap Rheinallt *et al.*).

Cornwall Trethewey and Land's End, juvenile/first-winter white-phase, 4th-5th December, video. (K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

Orkney Greeny Hill, Mainland, ♂, white-phase, 6th, 8th April, possibly since 14th March (E. J. Williams *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, white-phase, 2nd, 4th-5th April, photo. (A. Robinson). Loch Paible, North Uist, age uncertain, white-phase, 14th April (B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, white-phase, 3rd May (M. A. Maher).

2000 Cornwall Goonhilly Downs, 3rd March (M. Eaton); same, Cape Cornwall, juvenile/first-winter white-phase, intermittently, 5th-23rd March, photo. (M. P. Semmens, J. D. Swann *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plates 121 & 122; 96: plate 345).

We are pleased to publish a record, albeit belatedly, of the 2000 Cornish bird, which was well seen and photographed by many birders. We had been asked to reconsider our original decision (to accept it) by an observer who possesses widespread knowledge of hybrid falcons. He felt that this was not a pure Gyr Falcon, but probably a hybrid Gyr \times Saker Falcon *F. cherrug*. This conclusion was based upon examination of photographs, which revealed that the primaries were at least as long as the tail and the pattern of the spots on the flanks, best seen on the underparts of the bird in flight, were more typical of a Saker Falcon than a Gyr Falcon.

BBRC takes such issues seriously and felt that it was essential to investigate this claim thoroughly before publishing the record. As Saker Falcon is also relatively short-winged, a Gyr \times Saker hybrid would be unlikely to appear longer-winged than a pure Gyr Falcon. We examined the photographs carefully and felt that the side-on photos showed the primaries to fall well short of the tail-tip. We suspected that the problem was one of photographic angles rather than hybrid origin, however, and Bill Clark agreed with this view. He commented that: 'I have been looking at wing-tip to tail-tip relative positions on many species of raptors. I find that this can change on an individual raptor depending on how the wings are held, and one is often misled because the wing-tips are closer to or further from the viewer than is the tail-tip. I feel that this is the case in some of the photos you sent. Nevertheless, I have looked at all of the characters of this falcon to see if it showed any characters other than those of a juvenile white-morph Gyr. I found no characters that would suggest a hybrid... [It possessed] the following characters shown only by Gyr Falcons: lack of a moustachial stripe, broad chest, wide wings, and some unbanded tail feathers. A hybrid should show dark moustachial marks and completely barred tail feathers, and would have narrower wings and chest. The streaks or flank spots are typical of a juvenile white-morph Gyr.'

This bird was also seen to attack a Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* at one point, perhaps a throwback to typical breeding-grounds behaviour? Certainly, Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis* frequently nest colonially around Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus* nests, as they benefit from the raptor's intolerance of other predators, especially Arctic Fox *Alopex lagopus*, which outweighs the danger of nesting so close to such a powerful hunter.

(Within Europe, most numerous in Iceland and Norway, with smaller populations breeding in N Sweden, Finland and Arctic Russia. To E, breeds across Arctic Siberia, and to W across Greenland, N Canada and Alaska. European birds mostly resident but high Arctic breeders from N Canada and Greenland migratory, occasionally wintering S to NW Europe.)



Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryula alleni* (1, 0, 1)

Dorset Weston, Portland, juvenile/first-winter, moribund, 10th February; specimen now at Natural History Museum, Tring (M. Cade, A. Snaith *et al.*) (plate 346).

This bird was discovered by a member of the public and, like its predecessor, which was caught on a boat off East Anglia just over 100 years earlier, on New Year's Day 1902 (*Ibis* 116: 578), it was exhausted and died soon after discovery. With two records of the species in Spain during the preceding month, and the first record of African Crane *Crex egregia* for the Western Palearctic, on Tenerife, two months prior to this (*Birding World* 15: 60-61), the bird at Portland is, perhaps, not quite as unprecedented as it seems. These records appear to suggest an unusual wet-season dispersal from sub-Saharan Africa. Allen's Gallinule is now elevated onto Category A of the British List.

(Breeds throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa, except the SW. Post-breeding dispersal N and S of equator coincides with seasonal rains. European vagrancy recorded between October and February, with majority in December.)



Peter Coe

346. Juvenile/first-winter Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryula alleni*, Weston, Portland, Dorset, February 2002.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* (92, 18, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, ♂, 22nd March (F. Hicks, M. Hicks, D. Page *et al.*).

Spring records are surprisingly rare, with most having occurred in the late autumn and winter periods. The species has become much less frequent here during the last few decades, no doubt reflecting its decline across much of its European breeding range.

(Locally abundant in Iberian Peninsula, with smaller populations in S and C France, Italy, Sardinia and Ukraine. French populations winter in S France or Iberia, but Iberian birds are largely resident. To E, breeds widely across S Russia to E Kazakhstan and winters around SW Caspian Sea.)

Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii* (0, 1, 0)

1962 Suffolk Westleton, 25th November to 29th December, photo. (*Brit. Birds* 56: 399, plate 61; 57: 247-249). This individual is now specifically identified as Macqueen's Bustard (*Ibis* 145: 175-180).

(In W Palearctic, breeds from Sinai peninsula and southern Israel, E to Arabian Peninsula and perhaps Iraq. To E, fragmented and reduced population breeds across C Asia from Turkestan and Kazakhstan to Mongolia, S to Iran, Afghanistan and N Pakistan. Sedentary in warmer regions, but N populations migrate to winter from Arabian Peninsula to NW India.)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 194, 8)

Devon South Huish, four, 17th-31st May, one to 2nd June, photo. (A. J. Livett, N. Ward *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, two, 17th April (K. Martin, P. Raby).

Norfolk Hockwold Washes, two, 8th-11th May (D. E. Balmer, S. Newson *et al.*); same, Fowl Mere, 12th (M. R. & O. R. Marks *et al.*); also in Suffolk below. Titchwell, since 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 491), throughout year (per G. E. Dunmore).

Suffolk Lakenheath, two, 8th May (I. Barton, P. J. Dolton *et al.*); same as Norfolk.

The presence of pairs and small parties during the spring raised hopes of potential breeding attempts, but these did not come to fruition. Meanwhile, the lonely male on the north Norfolk coast maintains his solitary vigil as he enters his tenth year.

(Breeds along Atlantic coast of France and locally throughout Mediterranean basin to Black Sea. To E, breeds from S Siberia and C Asia to NW China. Most European birds winter in sub-Saharan Africa and, increasingly, in SW Iberia. Asian breeders winter across S and SE Asia and S China. Other races occur in Australasia, the Americas and Hawaii.)

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 35, 3)

Cornwall Godrevy, 20th November (S. Marshall *et al.*).

Devon Saunton Sands, 19th April (R. Jutsum).

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 4th-10th November, photo. (J. K. Higginson *et al.*) (plates 29 & 347).

Typically a late autumn vagrant, the St Agnes individual graced the island after nearly all the October birders had departed. On occasions, it was on Perigilis beach with a Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*.



Chris Batty

347. First-winter Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*, St Agnes, Scilly, November 2002.

(Breeds S Alaska, S Canada and throughout USA to Mexico. N breeders migratory, wintering S USA and Mexico to Columbia. Other races resident in Caribbean and South America.)

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* (0, 1, 1)

Lincolnshire Rimac, ♀, 11th-15th May, photo. (B. M. Clarkson, M. J. Tarrant *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plates 228 & 229; 96: plate 348).

There has been much debate and argument surrounding the accepted record of a Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii* which frequented the Don Estuary, Northeast Scotland, in August 1991. Many observers believe that this bird was, in fact, a Lesser Sand Plover, and further research is currently ongoing to establish whether this is the case. Clearly, this species pair can still cause identification problems. The Rimac bird was, however, a typical Lesser Sand Plover, with its relatively short legs, large head and stubby bill.



Iain Leach

348. Female Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Rimac, Lincolnshire, May 2002.

(Nominate *mongolus* group breeds in mountains and tundra of Arctic E Siberia, Kamchatka and Kommander Islands. Distinct *atrifrons* group breeds from C Pamir and Tien Shan ranges across mountains of W China and N Kashmir to Tibetan plateau. Migratory, wintering along tropical coasts of S and E Africa, Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent, S China, SE Asia and Australia.)

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 223, 2)

Ayrshire Barassie, Monkton Toon and Bogside, Irvine, juvenile, 26th-31st October, photo. (R. H. Hogg *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Smithey Fen, Cottenham, adult, 28th October (R. Thomas *et al.*); same, Holme Fen, Aldreth, 31st October to 3rd November (J. Oates *et al.*); presumed same as one or other of Swaffham Prior Fen individuals, October 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 491).

Orkney Birsay, juvenile, 25th September (I. A. Dillon).

1999 Hampshire Keyhaven Marsh area, juvenile, 30th October (*Brit. Birds* 94: 469), observer was T. Parminter.

2001 Cambridgeshire Swaffham Prior Fen (*Brit. Birds* 95: 491), observers should read A. Long, J. Oates *et al.*

(Breeds on coastal tundra from extreme NE Siberia, E across N Alaska and Canada to Baffin Island. Migrates over W Atlantic to wintering grounds in S South America.)

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 45, 4)

Norfolk Thornham Marshes, adult, 17th May, photo. (P. & P. Ashton *et al.*). Berney Marshes, adult, 28th July, photo. (P. R. Allard, J. Harris).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 8th-9th July (P. A. Brown, J. S. Lees *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides North Boisdale/Oduburgh, South Uist, adult, 7th-14th April, photo., presumed returning individual of 14th October to 4th November 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 492); presumed same, North Boisdale and Garrymonie area, South Uist, 13th October to 10th November, again, 9th February to at least 5th April 2003 (A. Stevenson *et al.*). West Gerinish, South Uist, adult, 3rd-4th August, photo. (A. Stevenson).

2000 Essex Old Hall Marshes, first-summer, 7th May (*Brit. Birds* 94: 469), present to 9th (per S. Cox).

Overwintering is not unprecedented, with individuals in East Yorkshire in 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 544) and in Dorset in 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 470), plus a handful of isolated winter records. What is particularly unusual about the South Uist bird is that it is the first individual to have reappeared in consecutive winters. It is possible that this same bird has now been seen on South Uist in all seasons since it first appeared, in October 2001.

(Breeds across Siberian tundra from Yamal peninsula E to Chukotski peninsula, including New Siberian islands, and W Alaska. Although small numbers winter regularly in Kenya and Persian Gulf, main wintering range extends from Indian subcontinent to S China and Japan, S through SE Asia to Australia, New Zealand and islands in C Pacific.)

American/Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica/fulva* (9, 292, -)

1998 Man, Isle of Langness, adult, 25th-26th May (A. M. Sapsford *et al.*).

As from 1st January 2002, 'either/or' records of American/Pacific Golden Plovers will not be published in this report (*Brit. Birds* 94: 395).

Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* (5, 36, 0)

2001 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 23rd-24th February (P. E. Charlton, C. J. Tyas); presumed same as Suffolk, October-November 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 470).

(Breeds from Volga and Ural Rivers E across steppes of SE Russia and W Central Asia to E Kazakhstan; now rare and declining throughout much of range. Most migrate to winter in NE Africa, with smaller numbers to Pakistan and NW India.)

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 66, 3)

Cleveland Dorman's Pool, adult, 14th July (P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*).

Dorset Ferrybridge, adult, 13th-14th September, probably since 12th, photo. (E. D. Lloyd *et al.*).

Orkney Loch of Tankerness, adult, 28th-29th June, photo. (K. E. Hague *et al.*).

(Breeds on tundra of W Alaska, E across Arctic Canada to S Baffin Island and coastal Labrador. Has bred in extreme NE Siberia. Migrates across Great Plains and E seaboard of USA to winter in C America and shorelines of tropical South America to Brazil and Peru.)

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (6, 23, 1)

Staffordshire Drayton Bassett, 23rd-25th May, photo. (M. J. Inskipp, G. J. Mant, M. Priest *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 230; 96: plate 349).

This record represents the third for the West Midlands and the second for Staffordshire but only the second spring record for Britain, the previous one being on 22nd May 1977 in Hampshire (*Brit. Birds* 71: 500).

(Breeds in C and S Alaska, E across N Canada, to Labrador and Newfoundland. Winters in S USA, C America, the Caribbean and South America, S to Brazil and N Chile.)

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 326, 15)

Cleveland Greatham Creek and Seal Sands, adult, 13th July (C. Sharp *et al.*). Seaton Snook and Seal Sands, adult, 8th-19th August (R. C. Taylor *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, juvenile/first-winter, 10th November, photo. (R. J. Curtis, K. Rylands).

Essex Old Hall Marshes, adult, 18th-21st July, photo. (Mr & Mrs Barnes, D. Rhymes, J. Wylson).

Kent Grove Ferry, adult, 20th July, photo. (M. P. Wilson *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Marshside Marsh, adult, 19th-20th May, photo. (J. Dempsey, B. McCarthy *et al.*).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, juvenile/first-winter, 9th-16th November (A. Brown, R. H. Hogg, A. J. & R. McNab *et al.*).

Norfolk Kelling, adult, 6th July, photo. (A. I. McElwee *et al.*). Titchwell, adult, 23rd-26th July (J. E. D. Furse, E. T. Myers, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*); adult, 31st August to 10th September (J. Oates *et al.*).

Northumberland Cresswell Pond, adult, 30th June, photo. (A. D. McLevy *et al.*). St Mary's Island, adult, 18th-22nd July, photo. (N. P. Dales *et al.*). Farne Islands, adult, 4th-9th, 14th-18th September, photo. (D. Steel *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, adult, 27th-30th August, photo. (D. Page *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, adult, 15th August (T. G. Davies).

1999 Dorset Ferrybridge, adult, 26th July (M. Cade, C. E. Richards *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: 493), now considered same as Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, 28th July to 1st August 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 531).

2001 Cleveland Saltholme Pools, adult, intermittently 29th September to 11th October, photo. (G. Icton, R. Little, R. C. Taylor *et al.*).

2001 Northeast Scotland Loch of Strathbeg, adult, 3rd August (R. Coleman, J. Harrison).

2001 Yorkshire, South Old Moor Nature Reserve, adult, 17th-18th June, photo. (J. Hewitt, S. C. Renouf *et al.*).

(Breeds in N Alaska and Arctic Canada, from Mackenzie River E to S Baffin Island. Overflies W Atlantic to winter in S South America.)



349. Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (left), with Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Drayton Bassett, Staffordshire, May 2002.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (5, 20, 0)

2001 Kent Grove Ferry, adult, 30th August, photo. (P. R. Laslett, the late R. Pettit *et al.*).

(Breeding range restricted to small region of Siberian tundra, from Yana River to Kolyma River delta, and possibly farther east. Migrant through coastal Alaska, China and Japan, to winter in New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand.)

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 174, 5)

Cleveland Dorman's Pool, 15th June, photo. (R. C. Taylor *et al.*).

Devon Exminster Marshes, 30th-31st May (P. M. Mayer *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, two juveniles, 3rd-6th August, one to 12th, photo. (S. J. M. Gantlett, R. G. Millington *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch Paible, North Uist, 8th-9th June (D. Allan *et al.*).

A rather typical showing of adults, but the two juveniles were much appreciated, being only the fifth record of birds of this age in the past decade. Their occurrence recalls that of the last juvenile which lingered, also at Cley, in September 1993, and represents the first multiple arrival of juvenile Broad-billed Sandpipers in Britain.

(Nominate European race breeds in boreal forest bogs of N Norway, Sweden and Finland, and into Arctic Russia, where distribution uncertain. European birds migrate through E Mediterranean, Black and Caspian Seas to winter in Persian Gulf, W India and Sri Lanka, with small numbers in coastal E Africa. E race *L. f. sibirica* breeds from Taimyr Peninsula to Kolyma River delta, and winters from Bay of Bengal through coastal SE Asia to Australia.)

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* (1, 18, 2)

Hampshire Pennington Marshes, adult, 21st July to 3rd August, photo. (R. B. Wynn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 278; 96: plate 350).

Shetland Norwick, Unst, juvenile, 5th-7th November, photo. (M. A. Maher, M. G. Pennington, M. I. Smith *et al.*) (plate 351).

The Shetland individual, as well as being the latest ever, is the first confirmed British record of a juvenile, although one in Lancashire from 27th September to 8th October 1967 (*Brit. Birds* 61: 340) was not aged. Although juveniles have occurred previously in Ireland and Northern Ireland (most recently at Lough Beg, Co. Londonderry, in September 2001; see *Brit. Birds* 94: plate 283), birds of this



Mike Malpass

350. Adult Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*, Pennington Marshes, Hampshire, July 2002.

Hugh Harrop



351. Juvenile Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* (front), with Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Norwick, Unst, Shetland, November 2002.

age-class remain a true rarity in Europe. With most records relating to early autumn adults, often on the east coast, it is interesting to speculate where and when they initially make landfall.

(Breeds on tundra from NE Alaska to Hudson Bay. Migrates through interior and E USA to winter in C South America, from E Bolivia and S Brazil to NE Argentina. Occasionally winters N to Mexico, Caribbean and S USA.)

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 112, 4)

Norfolk Sheringham, 8th September (A. P. & L. G. Benson *et al.*). Warham Greens, 10th September (J. R. McCallum, D. Waddingham). Blakeney Point, 12th September (R. G. Millington, N. Mугan, R. F. Porter *et al.*).

Suffolk Corton, 13th September (J. Brown *et al.*).

2001 Hertfordshire Hollingdon's Meads, 18th September (A. J. Harris).

An average number by recent standards, and on typical dates for the species, but this influx is particularly noteworthy as records were surprisingly concentrated in East Anglia. During the last decade, 70% of all records have occurred in the Northern Isles and this species remains a good find on the mainland.

(Scarce and local breeder in Norway and Sweden, which hold most of declining European population. Smaller and fragmented population breeds from Poland to Estonia. Also breeds E through European Russia, W and N Siberia to Yenisey River but population trends here unknown. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 156, 2)

Lincolnshire Saltfleet Haven, juvenile, 1st-17th November, photo. (I. C. & S. J. M. Whitehouse, A. G. Williams *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, juvenile, 21st-30th September, photo. (R. M. & R. P. Fray, K. B. Shepherd *et al.*).

A bird seen at Loch of Strathbeg, Northeast Scotland, on 1st September, and recorded as not accepted in Appendix 2, was clearly a dowitcher sp.

(Breeds primarily in Arctic Siberia where range is expanding W to Lena River delta. North American range restricted to coastal tundra of W and N Alaska, and E to Mackenzie River. Migrates through USA to winter from coastal S USA to N Central America.)

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

North American race *N. p. hudsonicus* (2, 2, 0)

Gwent Goldcliff Pools, 3rd-4th May (N. Desmond, J. Marsh *et al.*); presumed same as 6th-7th May 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 473).

The reappearance of this bird at Goldcliff recalls the Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* at Blacktoft Sands, East Yorkshire, which reappeared there in spring 1983 after first being seen in autumn 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 496; 78: 550). The Gwent bird may well have used Goldcliff as a staging post in spring 2001, when the site was not accessible owing to foot-and-mouth disease restrictions.

(Breeds on tundra of W and N Alaska and N Canada E to Hudson Bay and Greenland. Migrates through Canada and USA to winter in coastal regions of S USA to Chile and Brazil.)

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 29, 0)

1986 Devon Topsham, 22nd February (*Brit. Birds* 81: 559), now considered inadequately documented.

(Breeds in temperate and subarctic North America, from SE Alaska through NW and C Canada to mid-west and NE USA. Migrates through interior USA E of Rocky Mountains, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean to winter in South America from S Brazil to Argentina.)

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 103, 4)

Cheshire Inner Marsh Farm, adult, 21st-29th July (P. E. Miller, C. Wells *et al.*).

Essex Old Hall Marshes, adult, 25th August (E. Waliczky).

Yorkshire, East Blacktoft Sands, adult, 12th-17th July, photo. (V. Parslow *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Leventhorpe Hall Pond, 8th-9th June (P. R. Morris *et al.*).

2000 Highland Dingwall Bay, Ross & Cromarty, first-winter, 4th-5th October (D. P. Butterfield, R. Graham *et al.*).

2000 Kent Grove Ferry, adult, 17th September, photo. (C. Sammels, M. P. Wilson).

We await details of the two popular and well-watched juveniles at Elmley, Kent, in August.

(Occasionally breeds in Finland and Baltic countries to Ukraine and W Russia. To E, breeds commonly across forest-steppe region of Siberia to Mongolia and NE China. Winters commonly throughout sub-Saharan Africa, especially E Africa, and Indian subcontinent E to S China and SE Asia; also Australia.)

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (12, 16, 2)

Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, 11th-14th May (T. ap Rheinallt *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, 28-30th April, 8th-9th May, photo. (A. Robinson).

While these records could well relate to the same individual, there was no direct evidence to back up this claim, so they are treated here as two birds rather than one.

(Breeds from S Alaska across subarctic Canada, E to Labrador and Newfoundland. Migrates throughout USA to winter in S coastal USA, C America, Caribbean and South America.)

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 193, 8)

Ceredigion/Pembrokeshire Teifi Estuary, 22nd-25th May (H. Roderick, G. Walker *et al.*).

Cheshire Frodsham, 17th March to about 15th April (F. Duff *et al.*).

Cornwall Crowdy Reservoir, age uncertain, 14th October (S. M. Christophers).

Essex Old Hall Marshes, 16th May (P. Charlton, C. Hudson, C. J. Tyas *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Pilling, juvenile, 12th-19th September, photo. (C. G. Batty, R. E. Danson, S. Dunstan *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Frieston Shore, 31st May, video., photo. (S. Keightley *et al.*).

Norfolk Cantley, juvenile, 8th November to 8th December, photo. (C. P. Baker *et al.*) (plates 30 & 352).



Barry Jarvis

352. Juvenile Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Cantley, Norfolk, November 2002.

Outer Hebrides Loch Bee and Clachan Pools, South Uist, adult, 10th-11th August, photo. (A. Stevenson *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Pembroke, since 15th December 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 495), to 17th March. See also Ceredigion/Pembrokeshire above.

2001 Cornwall Tresempole Pool/Devoran River, adult, 2nd-8th September, video. (J. Chapel, M. May *et al.*).

2001 Kent Oare Marshes, adult, 13th October, photo. (I. Harding *et al.*); same, Elmley, 13th (per B. E. Wright).

2001 Scilly Tresco, juvenile, 30th August to 28th September (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

This species was seen in every month except June and July. A number of birds reported during 2002 have yet to be submitted, including individuals photographed at Washington, Co. Durham, and Amwell, Hertfordshire. We would welcome details of these and any others missing from this report.

(Breeds throughout much of subarctic Alaska and Canada, E to James Bay. Migrates through USA, where some overwinter, but majority winter from Caribbean and C America to Chile and Argentina.)

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 21, 1)

Hertfordshire Rye Meads, adult, 13th-16th September, photo. (P. Roper *et al.*).

Astonishingly, this is the fourth record for this inland county and the second from this locality.

(Breeds C and S Alaska through subarctic Canada to Quebec and Labrador. Migrates through USA and winters in Caribbean and C America, S to Argentina.)

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 56, 3)

Cumbria Grune Point, 29th July, photo. (D. Allen *et al.*).

Essex Maldon, 25th-29th August, photo. (R. Neave *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Beacon Ponds, Kilnsea, 1st June (A. Hutt *et al.*).

(European range restricted to small population in N Gulf of Bothnia, Finland, and Belarus. To E, breeds widely but locally throughout N Russia to E Siberia. Winters widely along coasts of S and E Africa to Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia and Australasia.)

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 116, 2)

Durham Pow Hill and area, Derwent Reservoir, 19th June to 6th July, photo. (J. Dobinson, S. Rippon, S. Westerberg *et al.*) (plate 353); also in Northumberland.



353. Adult Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Derwent Reservoir, Co. Durham, June 2002.

Northumberland Derwent Reservoir, 2nd July (D. J. Britton per I. Fisher), 3rd, 6th July (A. D. McLevy *et al.*); same as Durham above.

Scilly Gugh and St Agnes, first-winter, 11th-23rd October, photo. (T. R. Cleeves, J. Walsh *et al.*).

Two records is an average showing in recent years. Autumn juveniles still provide the occasional identification conundrum and one such bird in Derbyshire remains under consideration. The displaying male in Durham/Northumberland put on a great show, both for visiting birders and the female Common Sandpipers *A. hypoleucos* of the reservoir.

(Breeds over much of North America from W Alaska to Newfoundland and S to California, Texas and North Carolina. Some winter in coastal USA to S of breeding range but most winter in C America, Caribbean and N South America, S to N Argentina and Chile.)

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 208, 1)

Orkney Loch of Tankerness, juvenile/first-winter, 5th September, photo. (K. E. Hague).

1999 Man, Isle of Point of Ayre, adult, 20th September, photo. (R. Fraser, D. Shakleton, J. & M. Stott).

In the case of unusual habitat selection, behaviour, or when individuals exhibit unusual plumage or moult features, BBRC requires unequivocal supporting documentation before accepting the record. The 1999 Isle of Man record concerned an individual feeding on the sea, which was considered atypical for individuals on this side of the Atlantic. Further documentation was requested and the observer provided a photograph which proved the identification.

After the first record, in 1954, this species occurred here regularly, with annual totals averaging three, four, six and five in each ten-year period between 1958 and 1997. Since then, however, the average has fallen to just one bird per year.

(Breeds interior W Canada S to California, and throughout mid-west USA; also S Ontario, where population is increasing. Most migrate through interior USA and winter in South America, from Peru S to Argentina and Chile.)

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 94, 0)

1977 Cheshire See 1977 Lancashire & North Merseyside below.

1977 Lancashire & North Merseyside Mersey Estuary, adult, 3rd August (*Brit. Birds* 71: 506), locality was New Ferry, Cheshire.

2001 Cheshire West Kirby, first-winter, 2nd October (C. J. Butterworth, L. Greenstreet).

2001 Devon Upper Plym Estuary, adult, 4th August (R. W. Gould, S. M. R. Young *et al.*) (fig. 7).

(Locally common from Nova Scotia, S along E seaboard of USA to Florida and Gulf coast, the Caribbean, and C America to N Venezuela. S populations largely resident but N breeders winter within S breeding range.)

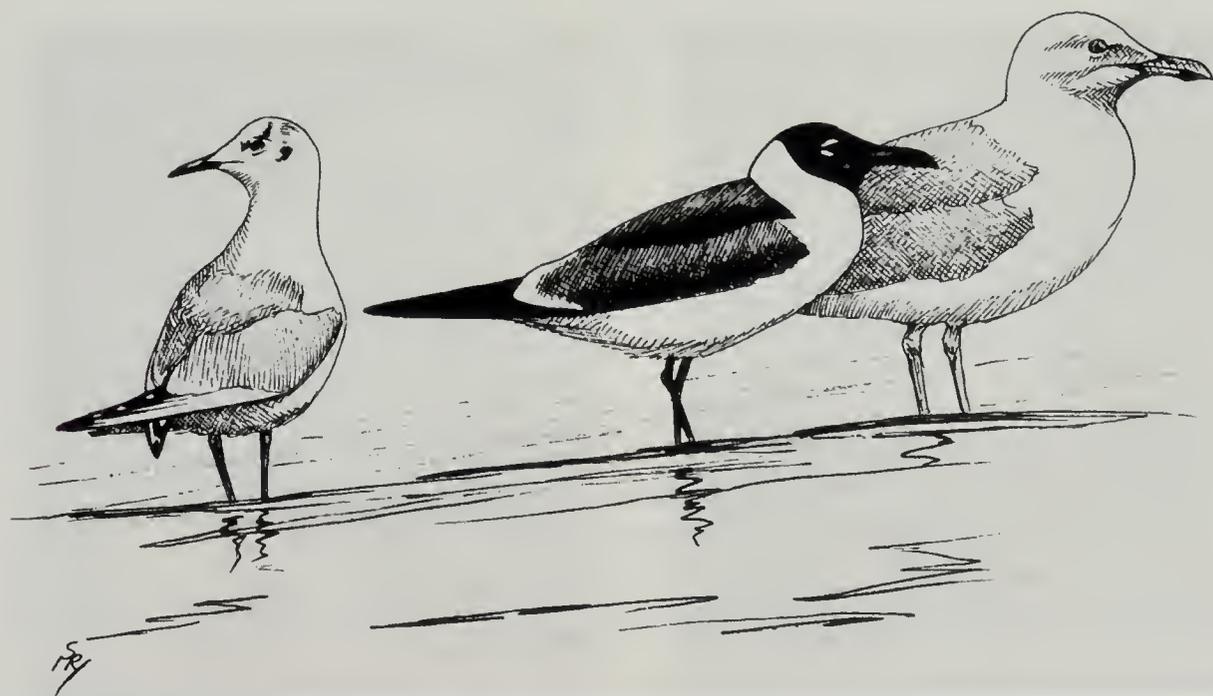


Fig. 7. Adult Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*, Plym Estuary, Devon, August 2001.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 39, 2)

Leicestershire/Northamptonshire Stanford Reservoir, adult, 3rd-5th November (G. Pullan *et al.*); also in Warwickshire.

Oxfordshire Farmoor Reservoir, adult, 17th-28th August, video., photo. (N. J. Hallam *et al.*).

Warwickshire Draycote Water, adult, 6th November (J. F. C. Judge *et al.*); same as Leicestershire/Northamptonshire above.

1986 Gwynedd Aber Dyssyni, second-summer or adult, 22nd March (*Brit. Birds* 81: 562); record now withdrawn by observers.

The November adult was not particularly remarkable in itself. What *was* remarkable was that its finder at Stanford Reservoir (Gary Pullan) discovered a small, dark-mantled, hooded gull at Boddington Reservoir, Northamptonshire, in March 2001, which resembled a Franklin's Gull. It was thought most likely to be a hybrid, perhaps Mediterranean *L. melanocephalus* × Common Gull *L. canus*. Then, in March 2002, another small, dark-mantled, hooded gull was found at Draycote Water by John Judge, clearly different from the Boddington bird, but again superficially similar to Franklin's and again thought most likely to be a Mediterranean × Common Gull hybrid. It is good to see that the continuing efforts of both observers (and indeed Nic Hallam, another inland reservoir stalwart) were rewarded this year with an undisputed Franklin's. There is also a cautionary tale here though, and claims resulting from brief views of what might seem to be one of the more distinctive small gulls must be treated with caution by the Committee. The Boddington bird will be described more fully in a forthcoming paper in *British Birds*.

(Breeds locally throughout interior provinces of temperate W Canada, E to Great Lakes and S to mid-west USA. Winters along Pacific coast of South America, from Guatemala to Chile.)

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 104, 0)

Cornwall See 2001 Cornwall below.

Sussex, West Pagham Lagoon, adult, 16th to 25th March, video. (A. R. Kitson *et al.*); presumed same as 2001 Cornwall below.

2001 Cornwall Millbrook Lake, adult, 19th December to 9th March 2002, photo. (R. W. Gould *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plates 39, 40 & 114; 96: plates 354 & 355).

2001 Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, first-summer, 27th May, video. (T. J. Meehan *et al.*).

The relocation of the Cornish wintering bird in West Sussex is notable.

(Breeds widely across N North America from W and C Alaska through Canada to James Bay. Winters locally on ice-free rivers and lakes in N USA, and S along both coasts of USA to Mexico and Caribbean.)

Steve Young/Birdwatch



Mike Asinforth

354 & 355. Adult Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*, Millbrook Lake, Cornwall, February/March 2002.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

North American race *L. a. smithsonianus* 'American Herring Gull' (0, 7, 3)

Cornwall Hayle, juvenile/first-winter, 9th-10th March (M. T. Elliott).

Dorset Corfe Mullen, Sturminster Marshall and Lychett Bay, first-winter, 4th March to 6th May (J. Lidster *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, first-winter, 6th-28th February, dead 28th, photo. (R. L. Flood, J. K. Higginson *et al.*).

1999 Caithness Scrabster, first-winter, 6th-13th March, video. (S. Laybourn, N. Money *et al.*).

With the features of 'American Herring Gull' becoming more widely known, observers are gaining both the ability and the confidence to identify darker first-winter *smithsonianus*, which are being increasingly recorded. Nonetheless, recent awareness of the plumage variability of other forms, most notably darker *L. a. argentatus*, which can match many features of *smithsonianus*, has required BBRC to undertake widespread consultation about this form. The result has been the establishment of clear criteria which enable a thorough assessment of claimed first-winter *smithsonianus*.

The records accepted for 2002 concern three 'classic' first-winters. In each case, the features were described in clear detail and two were supported by video or digital images. As observer confidence grows and birds in Ireland return for their second and third winters, BBRC is actively investigating the range of features associated with other age-classes of *smithsonianus*. These criteria are still developing, and there is no hiding from the difficulties involved. It is telling that no records for any age-class other than first-winter have been submitted to BBRC for assessment.

The record from Scilly has been published previously (Flood 2002), being one of three individuals present on Scilly in the early part of 2002, but so far we have only accepted one ('Bird 2' in the aforementioned reference). One of the other claims from Scilly, 'Bird 3' in Flood (2002), remains under consideration: it showed characters, notably on the coverts, underparts and tail, which are not diagnostic of *smithsonianus*, although it may well prove to be one. The variability of this form is such that not all submitted records describe features which match all of the presently agreed criteria. The relatively hard stance taken by BBRC will inevitably mean that, like the Scilly bird, some individuals *might* be *smithsonianus* but, because of the overlap of features with other forms, they are not considered safely identifiable as such, at least for the time being. Such an approach has enabled us to be consistent with our decisions and allows for some variation in characters. Some may accuse us of 'throwing out the baby with the bathwater', but we believe that we have got the balance about right, based upon our current knowledge.

Currently, large white-headed gull taxonomy is in a state of flux and the long-term status of *smithsonianus* is unclear. Yésou (2002) suggested that *argentatus* (along with *argenteus*) is 'biologically isolated' from *smithsonianus*, and that genetic and phenotypic differences would lead to treatment of *smithsonianus* as a 'good' species. This differs from the current position in Britain, but the Taxonomic Sub-committee of BOURC is presently reviewing the whole 'Herring Gull' complex.

References

Flood, R. L. 2002. Three American Herring Gulls on the Isles of Scilly. *Birding World* 15: 106-110.

Yésou, P. 2002. Systematics of *Larus argentatus-cachinnans-fuscus* complex revisited. *Dutch Birding* 24: 271-298.

(Breeds from S Alaska E across C and N Canada to S Baffin Island, Labrador, Newfoundland and NE coastal region of USA. Many resident, others winter S to S USA and Mexico.)

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Central Palearctic race *L. (c.) cachinnans* 'Caspian Gull' (0, 75, -)

1995 Essex Mucking Tip, 9 adults: 16th August; two, 4th September; another two, 29th September, possibly same 18th October (one photo.); two, 2nd November (one photo.); one, possibly two, 15th December (M. Garner *et al.*).

1996 Essex Mucking Tip: three, possibly four adults, 31st January; second-summer, 10th-12th July; two adults, 10th August; four adults, one second-summer/third-winter, 24th August (*Brit. Birds* 90: plates 115, 117, 130); two adults, two third-winters, one second-winter, one first-winter, 7th October (photo.); four, possibly seven adults, one first-winter, 14th October (photo.); adult, one third-winter, one second-winter, two first-winters, 4th November (*Brit. Birds* 90: plates 97, 102-103, 113), video. (M. Garner *et al.*) (plates 356 & 357).

- 1998 Cambridgeshire Milton, adult, 28th February, photo. (R. G. Newell).
 1998 Gloucestershire Hempstead, adult, trapped, 7th December, photo. (P. Stewart *et al.*).
 1998 Greater London Eel Pie Island, Twickenham, adult, 31st December to at least January 1999, photo. (A. Pearson *et al.*).
 1998 Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, seven adults: 30th September; 11th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th November; 30th December (J. Wright).
 1998 Northamptonshire Welford Tip, fourth-winter, 12th November; another, 13th (J. Wright).
 1999 Derbyshire Poolsbrook Country Park, first-winter, 13th-14th March, photo. (E. A. Fisher, K. R. Gould *et al.*). Ogston Reservoir, first-winter, 8th December (R. J. Lowe).
 1999 Gloucestershire Hempstead, adult, 25th August (M. T. Elliott, S. N. G. Howell, J. P. Martin).
 1999 Kent Dungeness, adult, 15th-28th August (K. G. Holland, D. Walker *et al.*).
 1999 Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, first-winter, 5th January; fourth-winter, 6th January; second-winter, 31st January; fourth-winter, 12th February; adult, 14th February; adult, 16th February; adult, first-winter, 21st October; first-winter, 23rd October; first-winter, 27th October (J. Wright). Rutland Water, third-summer, 25th July; adult, 1st August; adult, 23rd December (J. Wright).
 1999 Norfolk Saxlingham, first-winter, 27th December (A. M. Stoddart).
 1999 Northamptonshire Welford Tip, fourth-winter, 9th January; adult, 28th January; adult, 11th February; fourth-winter/fourth-summer, 27th February; fourth-winter, 25th October; two adults, 7th December (J. Wright).
 1999 Suffolk Blythburgh, first-winter, 27th March; first-winter, 3rd December to 19th April 2000 (B. J. Small *et al.*).

Many birders have already concluded that 'Caspian Gull' is occurring in Britain, so the formal acceptance of the first British records of this form will come as no surprise – 'about time too' we hear many shout. On the basis of the Essex records, BOURC has recently accepted *cachinnans* onto the British List. We owe Martin Garner and his colleagues a huge debt, not only for proving that *cachinnans* is occurring in Britain, but also for disseminating the knowledge to other birders through groundbreaking articles which appeared in *British Birds* (Garner & Quinn 1997; Garner *et al.* 1997). In addition, we should also acknowledge the truly pioneering work of Klein (1994) and Gruber (1995) which, based in some instances upon observations of ringed gulls of known age, helped to clarify the identifi-



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356. Fourth-winter-type 'Caspian Gull' *Larus (cachinnans) cachinnans*, Mucking, Essex, November 1996.

cation and occurrence of *cachinnans*, which otherwise may have remained overlooked or discredited for much longer.

BBRC faced a number of challenges during the assessment process. Our initial concern was to establish a set of key structural and plumage characters for *cachinnans* at all ages. Having done this, it was recognised that many counties had already accepted and published records of Caspian Gull, and we were keen to see how these records stood up to evaluation using the criteria we had established. In the meantime, gull identification has continued to grow in popularity and, with experience and discussion, ideas and perceptions of certain forms have evolved rapidly. Perhaps our biggest hurdle has been one of understanding the picture an observer is trying to convey of a bird. It is not easy to put the image and subtle details of a gull into words, and it is no coincidence that Martin Garner's accepted records were, in a number of cases, supported by high-quality photographic or video images. On the issue of records prior to 2000 which have not yet been submitted, BBRC is aware of a number of published records and would still like to receive claims prior to 1st January 2000. Although we have received a number of descriptions from 2000 to the present date which will not be published here, these have been instructive and BBRC has benefited greatly from the information these contained. We are indebted to all those who answered our request for information.

Since the mid 1990s, we have learned much more about the plumage (including its variability) of *cachinnans*. It is no coincidence that several of the observers associated with these records are now synonymous with Caspian Gull. Having established criteria, BBRC has adopted quite a strict approach to the assessment of records of this form. Some may believe we are too strict, and it is important to stress that a number of reports deemed unacceptable were close calls, but not quite up to the standard we set. A detailed paper based upon record evaluation at a county or local level will be published in due course, which we hope will enable records committees to cope with the onerous task of assessing records and establishing a true picture of the status and distribution of Caspian Gull in Britain.

Despite the fact that there are ringing recoveries of *cachinnans* from Denmark, Germany and France dating back to 1953 – raising questions as to whether these gulls have been generally overlooked in Britain in the past – there are indications that there has been a recent westward expansion of the breeding range, possibly resulting in the larger numbers now being recorded in northwestern Europe. There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that *cachinnans* is also prone to minor influxes. Therefore,



357. First-winter 'Caspian Gull' *Larus (cachinnans) cachinnans*, Mucking, Essex, November 1996.

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cachinnans should surely not now be considered a national rarity in the true sense of the word. In some parts of Britain, *cachinnans* is recorded with greater frequency than Glaucous *L. hyperboreus* or Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides*, but for those living outside East Anglia and the Midlands, where it appears to be a regular visitor, it is infrequently encountered and remains rare.

As mentioned above, BOURC has recently accepted Caspian Gull, as *Larus argentatus cachinnans*, onto Category A of the British List with the following comment: 'The committee considered that the identification characteristics of *L. a. cachinnans* were now well established on the basis of papers relating to birds of known provenance.' They also considered that it will, in practice, never be possible to eliminate the possibility of the genetic influence of other taxa in any individual and that the only pragmatic solution is to accept records of *cachinnans* provided that an individual displays no anomalous characters. On the question of just which criteria were necessary for acceptance, the majority of BOURC members felt that, in the case of adults, a description of the pattern of the 10th (outermost) primary was essential, in addition to all the other well-documented 'jizz' characters. On this basis, a record from Mucking, Essex, on 16th August 1995 was considered to fall short of the rigorous standards required for acceptance as the first record for Britain, whereas the record of 4th September 1995 did fulfil those criteria. For the reasons outlined above, the first record accepted by the BBRC is not the same as that accepted by the BOURC, who felt that the first individual to show unequivocally all the features required to place *cachinnans* on the British List was that at Mucking, Essex, on 4th September 1995.

There has been a great deal of debate concerning the taxonomic status of Caspian Gull, and BBRC has been thankful that it has only to deal with the identification! The most recent and well-received review of the '*Larus argentatus-cachinnans-fuscus* complex' was provided by Yésou (2002). In this, he gives sound reasons why *cachinnans* should be treated as specifically distinct from *michahellis* – differences in 'recognition signal', leading to reproductive isolation, and marked genetic differences – as well as *armenicus*, *barabensis* and *mongolicus*. BOURC prefer to treat 'Caspian Gull' as Herring Gull *L. a. cachinnans*, stating that 'this lively issue has not yet been resolved. Data concerning the breeding behaviour of *michahellis* and *argenteus* in western Europe are well documented, but much of the published literature regarding the situation in eastern Europe is anecdotal. Publication of an important peer-reviewed paper in the next few months is anticipated and is keenly awaited.'

Rather than making immediate and arbitrary short-term changes, *British Birds* continues to treat the 'yellow-legged gull' complex as *Larus cachinnans*, with 'Yellow-legged Gull' *L. c. michahellis* and 'Caspian Gull' *L. c. cachinnans* representing distinct forms within a single, wide-ranging species. Although it is widely recognised that this state of affairs is unsatisfactory, we, like many of our readers, look forward to a rapid clarification and resolution of this thorny issue.

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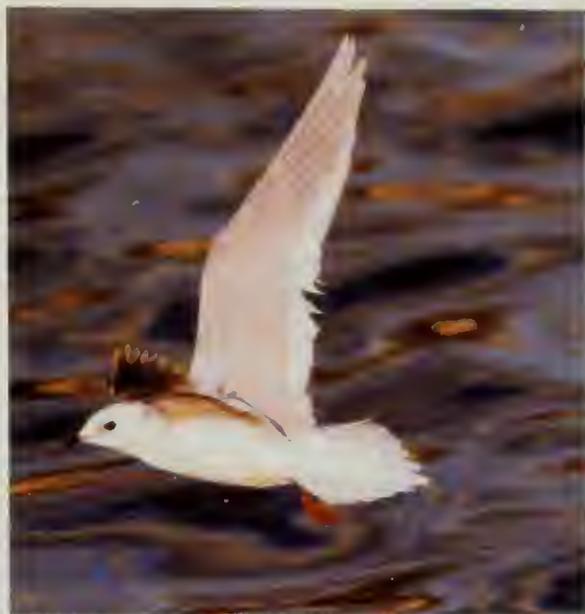
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(Breeds from E Germany and Poland to Black Sea, E across steppes of S Russia and Kazakhstan to Xinjiang province, W China. Winters to S of breeding range from E Mediterranean to Persian Gulf and W India. Being recorded with increasing frequency in western Europe outside breeding season.)

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 73, 8)

- Cornwall Sennen Cove, adult, 19th February, photo. (T. George, K. A. Wilson *et al.*).
 Devon Blackstone Meadow, Plymouth, adult, 28th January to 5th March, photo. (M. Northey, S. Tonkin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 81; 96: plates 358 & 359).
 Gloucestershire Frampton Pools, first-winter/first-summer, 16th April (A. H. Eveleigh, M. J. McGill, P. Zaltowski *et al.*).
 Gower Blackpill, Swansea, adult, 10th February (S. L. Murray, R. H. A. Taylor *et al.*).
 Northeast Scotland Peterhead, second-winter, 9th-11th March (N. S. Littlewood *et al.*).
 Shetland Loch of Tingwall, first-summer, 10th-28th May, photo. (P. Selater *et al.*).
 Yorkshire, East Blacktoft Sands, adult, 31st March, photo. (L. Palmer, P. C. Short, S. D. Wellock *et al.*);

Iain Leach



Rebecca Nason



358 & 359. Adult Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, Plymouth, Devon, March 2002.

same, Brough Haven, 31st (G. Thomas).

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, adult, 16th March to 4th April, photo. (D. Bywater *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 158).

These eight individuals (five adults, one second-winter and two in first-winter or first-summer plumage) were all found in the first half of the year, suggesting that exceptional numbers were present in British waters during this period. How many lurked unseen among Britain's vast wintering gull population? The average number per year since 1958 is only two, but eight were also recorded in 1993.

(Locally common on tundra of NE Siberia, from Lena River E to at least Kolyma River. In Canada, rare and local in W Hudson Bay region, perhaps elsewhere. Siberian birds migrate E past Point Barrow, Alaska in September to unknown wintering areas assumed to lie near edge of pack ice, perhaps in Bering Sea or N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 42, 3)

Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, first-winter, since 27th December 2001 to 4th January (*Brit. Birds* 95: 497).

Caernarfonshire Criccieth and Morfa Bychan area, adult, intermittently, 9th-28th February; same, Porthmadoc, 15th; same, Morfa Harlech, Meirionnydd, 15th, photo. (E. Lewis *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plates 80 & 115; 96: plate 360).

Gower Blackpill, Swansea, juvenile/first-winter, 29th November to at least 5th December, photo. (R. J. Howells *et al.*) (plate 31).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Fairhaven, adult, 13th-15th February, photo. (A. Hinchcliffe, K. Sharrock, P. Smith *et al.*).

Meirionnydd See Caernarfonshire above.

Two in one year in Wales is unprecedented as there are just two previous accepted records from the principality. The occurrence of two adults in February is also noteworthy.

(In Europe, only breeds in Svalbard. Elsewhere, restricted to islands in the high Arctic between Franz Josef Land and Arctic Canada, with small numbers in N and SE Greenland. Wintering range poorly known, apparently within or close to edge of pack ice.)



Steve Young/Birdwatch

360. Adult Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, feeding on Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*, Criccieth, Caernarfonshire, February 2002.

Gull-billed Tern

Sterna nilotica

(52, 215, 2)

Cheshire Inner Marsh Farm, 18th May (E. J. Abraham, B. S. Barnacal, C. Wells).

Cornwall Sennen Cove, Drift Reservoir and Marazion Marsh, adult, 31st August to 21st September, photo. (per K. A. Wilson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 318; 96: plate 361).

(Small population in N Germany and Denmark. Widespread though local in Spain, but colonies are isolated and small elsewhere in S Europe. To E, breeds discontinuously from Turkey and SW Russia through Kazakhstan, Mongolia and NW China, with an isolated population in NE China. European population winters in coastal W Africa, S to Gulf of Guinea. Asian populations winter from Persian Gulf to Indian subcontinent and SE Asia. Other races occur in Australia and the Americas.)



George Reszeter

361. Adult Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*, Drift Reservoir, Cornwall, September 2002.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 237, 6)

Central Region Skinflats, 9th July, photo. (G. Owens *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Boultham Mere, 10th August, photo. (S. P. Botham); same, North Hykeham, 10th (D. M. Jenkins).

Norfolk Filby Broad, 13th May (J. Hampshire, J. R. Williamson *et al.*); same, Hickling, 12th-14th, photo.; same, Rockland Broad, 13th (per G. E. Dunmore). Breydon, 23rd June (I. N. Smith); presumed same, Hockwold Washes, 26th-30th (J. D. & J. E. Geeson *et al.*).

Suffolk North Warren, 12th May (D. Thurlow). Havergate, 7th August (D. Short).

2001 Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 12th June (A. Tucker *et al.*); another, 27th July, photo. (G. Armstrong *et al.*).

(Isolated and declining European population breeds on Baltic coasts of Estonia, Sweden and Finland to head of Gulf of Bothnia. To E, fragmented populations from Black Sea coast of Ukraine across steppe-lake region of C Asia to NW Mongolia and E China. European birds winter in W Africa to Gulf of Guinea, while Asian populations winter on coasts to S of breeding range. Other populations in Australia, S Africa and North America.)

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 17, 1)

Cornwall Hayle, first-winter, 25th November to 5th December, photo. (P. A. Rutter, L. P. Williams *et al.*).

2000 Pembrokeshire Gann/Dale, first-winter, 4th December (G. H. Rees).

(Breeds in C Canada, mid-west USA, and E coast USA from Maryland to Texas. Winters coastal S USA, S to Mexico.)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (20, 99, 5)

Anglesey Llyn Maelog, adult, 3rd August (R. Pritchard).

Gloucestershire/Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, 14th-15th April, photo. (K. J. Beint, A. & M. A. Croose, G. L. Webber *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 159).

Greater Manchester Pennington Flash, 21st-29th May, photo. (P. Berry, A. Doyle, I. M. McKercher *et al.*).

Norfolk Hockwold Washes, 16th May (P. Etherington, P. J. Milford *et al.*); same as Suffolk, below.

Nottinghamshire Kingsmill Reservoir, 2nd May (S. Dunn).

Suffolk/Norfolk Lakenheath Fen, 16th May, photo. (T. E. Bond, G. & P. Briggs, R. E. Buckland *et al.*); same as Norfolk, above.

Wiltshire See Gloucestershire/Wiltshire above.

2000 Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, 5th June (T. Baker, D. Buckingham, H. Gouldstone *et al.*); presumed same as Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 4th (*Brit. Birds* 94: 479).

(Opportunistic and erratic breeder through S and E Europe, from Iberia to Poland. Numerous and widespread from N Black Sea E to W Kazakhstan, with Volga/Ural River complex holding most of European population. Winters in tropical W and C Africa and from Nile delta to E Africa. Other populations in Indian subcontinent, E Asia, S Africa and Australia.)

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 711, 12)

Cambridgeshire Kingfisher's Bridge, juvenile, 24th September (J. Oates *et al.*); same, Shropshire's Reservoir, Strettham, 24th-26th (B. S. Martin, J. Oates *et al.*).

Cleveland Coatham Marsh and Saltholme Pools, 9th May (N. A. Preston *et al.*). Saltholme Pools, second-summer, 10th June (T. Francis *et al.*). Greatham Creek, Seaton Common, adult, 3rd August (D. Griss, J. Regan, R. C. Taylor *et al.*).

Kent Swale, 2nd June (D. Faulkner).

Lothian Musselburgh, juvenile/first-winter, 8th October (K. Gillon *et al.*).

Norfolk Welney, juvenile, 9th-11th August (J. B. Kemp *et al.*). Cantley, juvenile/first-winter, 18th October to 16th November, photo. (J. R. Lansdell *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Cove, adult, 4th August (P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*).

Northumberland Holywell Pond, adult, 8th intermittently to 19th August, photo. (A. D. McLevy, S. Sexton *et al.*); same, St Mary's area, 9th-11th, 19th August (A. Curry *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Tiumpan Head Loch, Lewis, 12th-20th May, photo. (G. Thompson *et al.*).

Suffolk Dunwich Heath, juvenile, 9th September (M. L. Cornish).

Yorkshire, North Bolton-on-Swale, 10th May (N. Dales *et al.*); probably same as Cleveland, 9th.

1992 Lincolnshire Covenham Reservoir, 31st May (K. Robinson).

1996 Lincolnshire Covenham Reservoir, second-summer, 2nd June (*Brit. Birds* 92: 583), first noted, 1st (per K. Robinson).

1999 Cornwall Marazion, juvenile/first-winter, 17th October; same, Cot Valley, 18th-20th, photo. (I. M. Wilson *et al.*).

1999 Dorset Ferrybridge, juvenile, 19th September (J. & R. Cockram, J. A. Lucas *et al.*).

2001 Lincolnshire Kirkby-on-Bain, juvenile, 27th September to 4th October, photo. (G. P. Catley, K. D. Robertson *et al.*).

2001 Warwickshire Draycote Water, adult, 29th-31st July, photo. (R. E. Harbird *et al.*).

(W limit of European range from Poland to Hungary, where local, with sporadic breeding to W. Breeds commonly from Belarus, W Russia and Ukraine E to S Siberia, N Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russian Far East and NE China, but absent from large areas. Winters throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia and N Australia.)

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* (2, 3, 2)

Highland Portmahomack, Easter Ross, juvenile/first-winter, 9th November, photo. (R. F. Hewitt).

Orkney Stromness, juvenile/first-winter *S. o. meena* 20th November to 6th December, photo. (J. Bishop, E. R. Meek *et al.*) (plates 32, 171 & 172).

For such a rare bird, two records in one year is outstanding. The Orkney bird has been widely reported and was of the race *S. o. meena*, which has been recorded in Britain on only one previous occasion, at Spurn, East Yorkshire, on 8th November 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 448). All other records have been of the nominate race. The Highland bird was not seen sufficiently well to establish its racial iden-

tity, but the photograph leaves no doubt as to the species. In general, Oriental Turtle Dove is fairly obvious, as the photographs of the Highland bird showed, but the wing-bars can be surprisingly indistinct and, particularly for northern birders, a lack of familiarity with juvenile Turtle Dove *S. turtur* can impede identification. The western race *S. o. meena* is smaller than the nominate form, has a white rather than grey tail-tip, shows more white in the outermost tail feathers and has whiter flanks and belly. All of these characters combine to make it more difficult to distinguish from Turtle Dove than is the case with the nominate, especially in juvenile plumage.

(Breeds from S Urals, E to Japan and S to Himalayas, C China and Taiwan. Northern populations migratory, wintering in SE Iran, the Indian subcontinent, and from S China to N Thailand and Indochina.)

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 36, 0)

1988 Man, Isle of Gansay, adult, dead, 30th September, photo. (K. Scott *et al.*).

(Breeds across S Canada from British Columbia to New Brunswick, and throughout the USA to C Mexico. Winters in South America, S to Argentina.)

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (65, 26, 1)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 24th-26th March, photo. (R. Fuller *et al.* per K. A. Wilson).

This bird was found just two days after the Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* on St Agnes, Scilly (see above), and during a period of excellent weather for overshooting migrants. It is only the second ever to be recorded in March (the previous one being captured aboard a fishing boat off Portland Bill, Dorset, on 20th March 1990: *Brit. Birds* 84: 478). It was found during a moth-trapping session at Porthgwarra.

(Common summer migrant to N Africa and S Europe, from Iberia N to C France and E to Greece. Also breeds across Ukraine, S Russia and S Siberia to W Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Iran. Most winter in N equatorial Africa, but some remain in S Europe.)

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* (3, 16, 0)

1999 Ceredigion Mwnt, juvenile, dead, 28th October, specimen now at National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, photo. (P. Howlett, G. Walker).

(Breeds throughout temperate North America, S to Panama and Caribbean. Winters South America, S to C Argentina. Some migrate over W Atlantic, where regular on passage Bermuda and Lesser Antilles.)

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* (50, 407, 25)

Avon Sand Point, 21st April (A. J. Foan, P. A. Gregory *et al.*); also in Somerset below.

Cheshire Farndon, 24th March (C. P. Edwards).

Cleveland Hartlepool Old Cemetery, Seaton Carew and Seaton Common, 9th June, photo. (T. Francis, J. Regan, R. C. Taylor *et al.*).

Cornwall St Just, two, 26th March (per K. A. Wilson). Illogan, 1st June (M. J. Healan). Sennen, 2nd June (M. D. Warren). Near Cape Cornwall, 23rd September (R. & H. Dawson).

Dorset Studland, 31st March (N. Hopper). Lodmoor and Portland Bill, 21st April (R. C. F. Hastings *et al.*). Radipole Lake, 18th May, photo. (J. A. Lucas *et al.*). Peveril Point, 15th-17th June, photo. (per J. Lidster).

Essex Mundon, 20th July (J. F. Bright).

Kent Bockhill, 10th April (P. Chantler); presumed same, Capel le Ferne, 10th (I. A. Roberts). Bockhill, 17th May (J. Chantler, N. Jarman).

Norfolk Sheringham, 20th June (A. Dunkley *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 24th March (T. Purcell, G. Thompson). Penberi Pool, St David's, 25th March (S. E. Duffield *et al.*). Mullock Bridge, 26th March (S. D. Bosanquet).

Scilly Treseo and Bryher, 23rd March (R. L. Flood *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 30th September, photo. (M. Potts *et al.*); presumed same, Foula, 1st October (D. & G. Atherton).

Somerset Brea Down, 21st April (B. E. Slade *et al.*); same as Avon.

Suffolk Landguard, 6th June (N. Odin).

Wight, Isle of Ventnor Downs, 22nd March (R. J. Curtis, E. N. Wotton).

Yorkshire, East Cottingham, 24th March (S. P. Dudley).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 18th April, photo. (S. Cochrane, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

A rather typical spread of records, falling between spring and early autumn. The Tresco and Bryher individual was part of an extraordinary influx of rarities into Scilly and western Cornwall in the early spring.

(Breeds discontinuously in NW Africa and throughout S Europe, N to C France and Switzerland, to Ukraine. To E, breeds locally through Turkey and Caucasus to Iran, Afghanistan and N Pakistan. Winter range unknown, but assumed to be in Afrotropics or W India where separation of local populations from northern migrants not possible.)

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 37, 2)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 22nd November (L. Chappell *et al.*).

Scilly Bryher, 25th-26th March, photo. (J. K. Higginson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 154).

2001 Durham See 2001 Northumberland below.

2001 Northumberland Tynemouth, 24th-25th October (*Brit. Birds* 95: 502), also seen at Marsden Quarry and South Shields, Durham, photo. (J. P. Cook *et al.*); different individual, Whitburn, 23rd-24th October (J. P. Cook *et al.*).

2001 Scilly Bryher and Tresco, 22nd June (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

2001 Yorkshire, North Nosterfield, 28th May (T. Parrish, T. Scott, S. Worwood).

The two records from 2002 represent both the earliest and latest occurrences ever reported in Britain. While most of the records from the invasion years of 1999 and 2001 occurred in October, a quick search of the database reveals that Pallid Swift has now been recorded in every month except December, January and February. It is apparent that not only late, but also early swifts are well worth a second look.

(Locally common throughout Mediterranean basin from Iberia to Greece, but rare or absent from many regions. Outside Europe, breeds locally from Mauritania and Canary Islands across NW Africa and Middle East to Arabian Peninsula and S Iran. Most winter in N African tropics, but some remain in S Europe.)

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (0, 17, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 17th May, photo. (G. Bellingham *et al.* per R. L. Flood).

(Isolated population in NW Africa, increasing and expanding in Morocco. Breeds locally and discontinuously in Middle East from Israel to SE Iran and N along Euphrates River to SE Turkey. Largely resident, but some Middle East populations migratory. Elsewhere, resident or dispersive throughout sub-Saharan Africa and Indian subcontinent to Sri Lanka.)

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 95, 0)

2001 Ayrshire Ardeer, 7th-10th May (J. Gentleman *et al.*).

(Declining, yet remains widespread and numerous in NW Africa and Spain. In E Europe, occurs locally N to Estonia and E to Ukraine but nowhere common. More common from Turkey and S Russia to S Urals, SW Siberia, S Kazakhstan and W China. Winters locally in equatorial W Africa but most in E Africa from Kenya to Zimbabwe. Another race, *C. g. semenowi*, breeds Iran, Afghanistan and N Pakistan, and winters in E Africa.)

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* (0, 1, 1)

Shetland Burrafirth, Unst, 29th May, photo. (W. Dickson).

Only the second record for Britain and the Western Palearctic. The first occurred at a similar stage of the spring, but at the opposite end of the country: on St Mary's, Scilly, on 6th-10th June 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 381-384). In contrast to that individual, this bird showed itself only to its finder during her regular morning walk along one of Britain's most northerly streams. It was associating with Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and House Martins *Delichon urbica* but remained at Burrafirth for little more than an hour.

(Breeds throughout North America, below tree line from C Alaska to Labrador, and S to S USA. Winters Gulf of Mexico and throughout C America and Caribbean to N South America.)

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 361, 21)

Borders St Abb's Head, 23rd April (C. Beale *et al.*).

Buckinghamshire Furston Lake, Milton Keynes, 29th April (E. J. Read *et al.*).

Cheshire/Flintshire Shotwick Fields, 9th August (B. S. Barnacal).

Cornwall Land's End, 2nd May (M. D. Warren). Skewjack, 4th May (K. A. Wilson).

Dorset Blocknor Point, Portland, 3rd May (G. Walbridge).

Essex See Hertfordshire/Essex below.

Flintshire See Cheshire/Flintshire above.

Hertfordshire/Essex Hollingson's Meads, 28th-29th May (A. J. Harris); also seen to enter nearby Essex.

Kent Grove, 3rd May (A. & C. H. Hindle). Dungeness, 19th May (A. S. Wraithmell *et al.*); another, Dungeness, 25th May (J. Cantelo *et al.*).

Norfolk Hunstanton Cliffs, two, 24th October (G. F. Hibberd).

Northumberland Cocklawburn, 23rd April (M. Hutcheson). Farne Islands, 9th September (J. Gorman *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Bosherton Ponds, 26th April (R. Thomas).

Suffolk Southwold, 11th April (B. J. Small). Flixton, two, 19th May (C. & J. Ayers, C. A. Jacobs, I. Levett *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East East Park, Hull, 2nd-23rd April, photo. (B. Richards *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 160).

Spurn, 4th May, photo. (S. P. Nicholson).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 31st March (K. J. Barnard).

1999 Sussex, East Fairlight, 16th May (A. Borrows, A. S. Grace *et al.*).

2001 Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, 20th May (*Brit. Birds* 95: 503), second-named observer's correct name was P. Herkenrath.

2001 Devon Lundy, 26th October (M. Ferris, M. James).

2001 Fife Isle of May, 18th May (K. Hosi, D. J. Norden, I. Patinson).

(Widespread and locally common in NW Africa, Iberia, Balkans and Greece but uncommon in C Mediterranean. To E, breeds discontinuously in W and S Turkey and Middle East. Wintering area of European population unknown but assumed to lie in N equatorial Africa. Other populations breed in E Asia from S Siberia to S China and Japan, Indian subcontinent and locally in equatorial Africa.)

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 10, 1)

Nottinghamshire Gringley Carr, first-winter, 28th December to 5th January 2003, video., photo., sound-recorded (C. J. & L. J. Degnan, J. Wozencroft *et al.*) (fig. 8).

1988 Shetland Fair Isle, 13th-23rd October, photo. (A. J. Livett, N. J. Riddiford, P. G. W. Salaman *et al.*).

The Nottinghamshire individual represents an exceptional inland find and shows that virtually any-

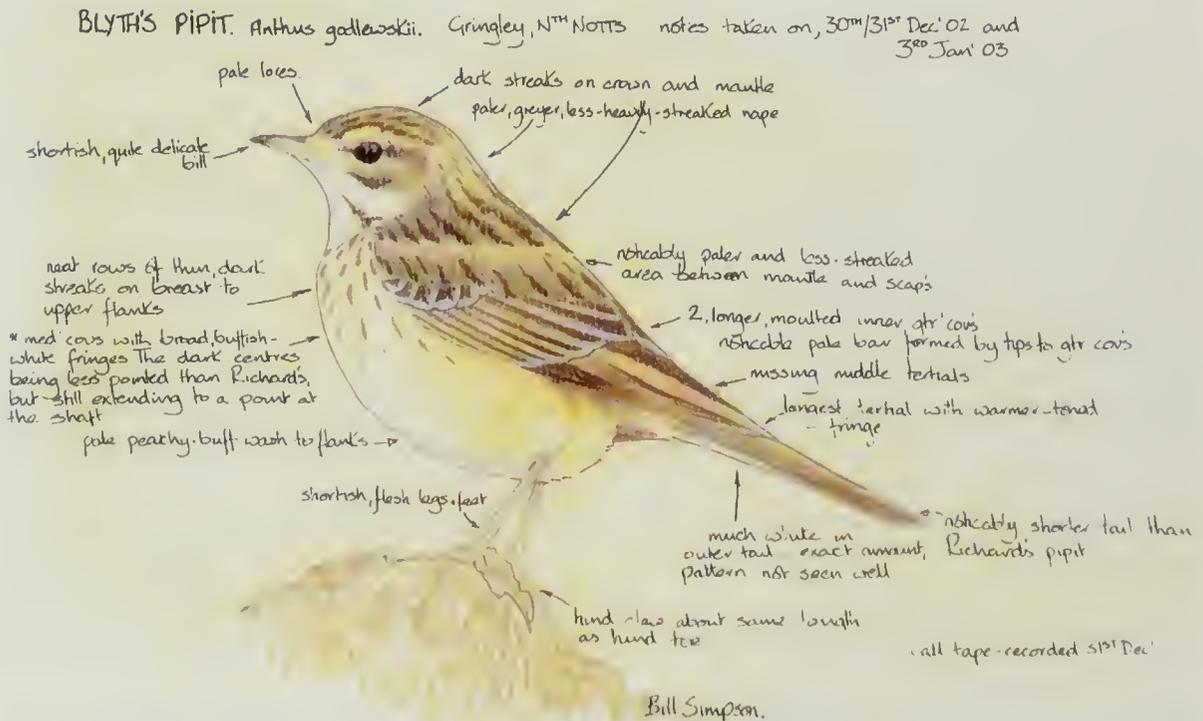


Fig. 8. First-winter Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, Gringley Carr, Nottinghamshire, December 2002 to January 2003.

thing is possible, even in the depths of winter. With the long saga of bringing together full and satisfactory documentation now concluded, the 1988 Fair Isle bird becomes the first British record admitted to Category A, the only previous accepted record having been one in East Sussex in 1882.

(Breeds from S Transbaikalia and N Mongolia to extreme NE China and S to Tibet. Winters locally throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 241, 7)

Man, Isle of Calf of Man, 10th May (T. Bagworth, J. D. D. Bishop).

Norfolk Lynford Arboretum, 2nd to at least 20th February, probably since 1st, photo. (J. V. Bhalerao *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 116; 96: plate 362).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, 22nd-23rd October (J. G. Brown, J. Darke, S. E. Duffield).

Scilly St Mary's, 20th October (N. Davis, J. K. Higginson, N. Wheatley *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 11th-14th October (P. R. French *et al.*). Scatness, 14th-15th October (P. M. Ellis *et al.*). Bressay, 16th October (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington, B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

2001 Scilly St Agnes, 12th-17th October (*Brit. Birds* 95: 504), finders/identifiers, T. Davison, D. Scattergood, N. Topliss.

2001 Suffolk Corton, 30th September (J. Brown, A. Easton *et al.*).

Records in May, such as that on the Isle of Man, are certainly not without precedent, but overwintering Olive-backed Pipits are unusual, and the one in Norfolk recalls the bird which frequented a suburban garden in Bracknell, Berkshire, from 19th February to 15th April 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 566).

(European range restricted to N Urals. Widespread across C and E Siberia to N China, Kamchatka, Kuril Islands and Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan and throughout N and C parts of SE Asia. Population in Himalayas and mountains of west-central China winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 55, 4)

Shetland Fair Isle, 26th-27th September, photo. (P. French, S. Pinder, J. J. Sweeney *et al.*); another, 26th-28th September (A. Jayne *et al.*); third individual 5th-7th, 11th October (R. Still *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 350). Kergord, 5th October (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington).

2001 Shetland Foula, 19th, 21st September (C. G. Batty, T. C. Lowe *et al.*).

Four in a year is notable, although all occurred on typical dates and in typical places. No fewer than 47 of the 59 British records since 1958 have been in Shetland. The species rarely calls during its visits to Britain and can be remarkably elusive, so it is tempting to speculate that many others are missed on the British mainland.

(Breeds within narrow region of scrub-tundra and taiga of subarctic Eurasia, from Pechora region of NE Russia across Siberia to Chukotka peninsula and Kamchatka. Migrates through E China and Taiwan to wintering areas in Philippines, N Borneo and N Sulawesi. Isolated population in NE China.)



John Harriman

362. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Lynford Arboretum, Norfolk, February 2002.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 384, 9)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 31st May (S. D. Stansfield); 17th-18th October (D. Barnden, E. Bowler, S. D. Stansfield).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 21st May (R. Drew, M. I. Eldridge, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, 22nd-26th April, photo. (J. G. Brown, J. Darke, S. E. Duffield *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 7th October (N. Chambers, L. Hanninen); 6th November (R. L. Flood). Treco, 18th-19th October, photo. (R. M. Fray *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 16th-17th May (A. J. Bull *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 11th October (M. Rowbottom *et al.*).

2001 Outer Hebrides Hirta, St Kilda, 17th May (A. Robinson).

2001 Scilly St Martin's, 15th May (R. L. Flood).

(Breeds in Arctic Eurasia, from N Norway, Sweden and Finland E to Chukotka peninsula and S to Kamchatka, with small numbers in W Alaska. Winters across N and C equatorial Africa, S China and SE Asia.)

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 134, 10)

Scilly Treco, first-winter, 2nd, 18th October; presumed same, St Martin's, 4th-18th, photo. (R. M. Fray, M. S. Scott, R. M. Thewlis *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 351; fig. 9).

Shetland Fair Isle, five first-winter birds: 10th-13th August (D. N. Shaw *et al.*); 16th-17th August (D. N. Shaw); 31st August to 6th September (A. J. Bull *et al.*); another, 31st August to 9th September (P. R. French *et al.*); 22nd September (P. R. French, S. Holloway, D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Out Skerries, first-winter, 18th August, photo. (G. Ball, M. S. Chapman, S. Minton). Quendale, juvenile/first-winter, 6th-10th September (R. Riddington *et al.*). Haroldswick, Unst, first-winter, 19th September, photo. (M. A. Maher *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, first-winter, 27th-30th September, photo. (R. Haughton, A. Marshall, P. Wren *et al.*).

(Nominate race breeds in N Russia, from E Kola and Kanin peninsula across N Siberia to Taimyr Peninsula and S to C Siberia. Range of C Asian *M. c. werae* expanded W during 20th century; small numbers now breed regularly in Belarus, Baltic countries and occasionally S Finland; otherwise from Ukraine and S Russia, E across N Kazakhstan and Mongolia to N China. Another race breeds on Tibetan plateau. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent, S China and SE Asia to peninsular Thailand.)



Fig. 9. First-winter Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, St Martin's, Scilly, October 2002.



Mike Majpass

363. Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*, Minsmere, Suffolk, March 2002.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* (29, 13, 1)

Suffolk Minsmere, 16th-19th March, photo. (A. Connor, S. Naythan *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 161; 96: plate 363).

Given the fact that Alpine Accentors often leave their lowland wintering quarters at the beginning of March, the date of this record is not surprising. It is, however, by far the earliest record in modern times with the next earliest having been at Portland, Dorset, on 8th-30th April 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 532). Prior to the BBRC era, there is an old record from Rottingdean, Sussex, on 16th March 1922.

(Breeds discontinuously through high mountain ranges of NW Africa, Spain and C Europe, N to S Germany, S Poland, and through Balkan countries to Greece. In Asia, breeds in all major ranges from C Turkey across C and S Asia, S to Himalayas and E to Japan and Taiwan. In winter, most European birds descend below snowline near breeding areas but some disperse to lowlands.)

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 139, 6)

Fife Isle of May, trapped, 10th May (M. Hall, M. P. Harris, M. Moeller-Holtkamp *et al.*).

Norfolk Weybourne, 12th-13th September, trapped 12th, photo. (M. & W. Preston).

Northumberland Farne Islands, 8th May, photo. (D. Steele *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 12th May (P. R. French *et al.*); 20th-27th August, trapped 27th (S. J. Pinder *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, in song, 8th-10th May (M. G. Stoye, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

2001 Sussex, East Combe Haven, in song, 6th-8th May (K. M. Johnston *et al.*).

(Widespread throughout E Europe with dramatic population increase in 20th century. Range still expanding NW into W Norway, and locally abundant in S Scandinavia and Baltic countries. C European range from Denmark SE to Romania and Ukraine, and through temperate European Russia to S Siberia. Winters E Africa, from S Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 23, 3)

Durham Marsden Quarry, ♀ or first-winter, 7th October (J. P. Cook *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, ♀ or first-winter, 15th-16th November, photo. (J. P. Shaughnessey *et al.*).

Shetland Helendale, Lerwick, ♀ or first-winter, 11th-14th October, photo. (G. F. Bell, H. R. Harrop *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 352).

There were also three birds in 1998, and these two years are bettered only by 1999, when there were five. This increase in records (there have been 18 during the past decade, 1993-2002, but just 11 before

that) is presumably correlated to an increasing population and westward expansion of the breeding range. Durham recorded its first in 2002, but Shetland and Lincolnshire remain the species' most favoured counties, now with seven and five records respectively.

(Small population expanding in NE Finland but main range in cool temperate forests of N Eurasia from E Russia and Siberia to Kamchatka, N Japan and NE China. Winters S China, Taiwan and S Japan, through SE Asia to N peninsular Thailand.)

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* Eastern race *S. t. maura* (1, 299, 2)

Cornwall St Levan, ♀ or first-winter, 3rd October (R. P. Fray, A. J. Mackay).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀ or first-winter, 10th September (D. N. Shaw).

1999 Dorset Weston, Portland, ♀ or first-winter, 23rd October (J. A. Lucas *et al.*).

2001 Devon Lannacombe Beach, first-winter ♂, 13th October (D. Smallshire, A. Swash).

2001 Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♀ or first-winter, 16th-22nd September (P. A. Brown *et al.*).

2001 Shetland Brough, Whalsay, ♀ or first-winter, 7th October (J. L. Irvine, B. Marshall).

2001 Yorkshire, East Bampton, ♀ or first-winter, 22nd-24th September (M. E. Taylor *et al.*).

Just two records were accepted for 2002 as we go to press, but with the four additional records for 2001, the total for that year increases to 17, with 11 or 12 being found within the 11-day period between 16th and 26th September.

Following a number of reports of male Common Stonechats with white rumps and restricted orange on the underparts in spring, BBRC is currently undertaking a review of claims of male 'Siberian Stonechats' at this time of year. It seems likely that most will prove to be Common Stonechats of the form *rubicola*, and originating from the near continent. Our assessments have been based on field experience and museum work at the NHM, Tring, which reveal that, in spring, male 'Siberian Stonechats' possess a unique suite of characters which permit identification. Careful scrutiny of three features – neck collar, rump and underwing – is essential, although in the case of the underwing this is invariably difficult to see in the field. Two further characters – white at the base of the tail and white inner greater coverts – are sometimes visible and provide valuable supporting evidence if *maura* is suspected. Other features, including the broader buff fringing on the upperparts and underpart coloration, are variable, but tend to be obvious on *maura*.



Fig. 10. Accepted records of Common Stonechats *Saxicola torquata* of the eastern race *maura* in Britain, in spring (a) and autumn (b).

The results of this review will be published in due course, but the records for this report, all being of females or first-winter birds in the autumn, did not challenge BBRC in this respect. The next report of a spring male will, however, be very closely scrutinised.

The taxonomy of Common Stonechat has been well studied in recent years (e.g. Wittmann *et al.* 1995), and Urquhart (2002) recommended that Common Stonechat is split into at least three species: African Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Common Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola* and Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura*. Although this treatment has yet to be adopted by BOURC, the evidence supporting it is strong, although it does leave the form *variegata*, also recorded in Britain, in a state of limbo. *British Birds* continues to follow BOURC in its treatment of *maura* as a form of Common Stonechat. There has also been some discussion regarding the validity of the easternmost form of Common Stonechat *S. (t.) stejnegeri*, which some authorities consider to be synonymous with *maura*. It is interesting, therefore, to see it given full treatment by Urquhart (2002). Although its features are variable, many (perhaps even the majority) are considered to be inseparable from *maura* in the field.

References

Wittmann, U., Heidrich, P., Wink, M., & Gwinner, E. 1995. Speciation in the Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) inferred from nucleotide sequences of the cytochrome *b* gene. *J. Zool. Syst. Evol. Research* 33: 116-122.

Urquhart, E. 2002. *Stonechats: A guide to the genus Saxicola*. Christopher Helm, London.

(Breeds widely across N Asia from N Urals S to N Caspian Sea, Mongolia and N China, E to Kolyma basin, Okhotsk coast and N Japan. Winters from N Indian subcontinent to S China and SE Asia.)

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 19, 0)

2001 Norfolk Near Warham, 22nd September; same, Lodge Marsh, Wells, 29th, photo. (A. I. Bloomfield, J. R. McCallum *et al.*).

There are no accepted records from 2002, although an October record in Wales is still under consideration. BBRC has recently undertaken a detailed review of a record from Blakeney Point, Norfolk, in October 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 486) following detailed and unbiased queries about its identification. Upon review, it was concluded that the identification, based upon the initial description, was correct and it was again accepted by BBRC, without reservation.

(Small European population restricted to E Greece, Bulgaria, Ukraine and SW Russia. In Asia, breeds widely across arid grasslands from Turkey through Kazakhstan, Mongolia and N China, S to Iran and N Pakistan. Winters from N Sahel zone to E Africa, and throughout Middle East from Arabian Peninsula to S Iran, Pakistan and NW India.)

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 43, 1)

Cornwall Nanquidno, ♂, *O. h. hispanica*, 23rd March to 1st April, photo. (M. T. Elliott *et al.*) (fig. 11).

1975 Dorset Portland Bill, ♂, 14th June (*Brit. Birds* 69: 345). Previously unassigned, was first-summer *melanoleuca*.

1980 Fife Isle of May, ♂, 2nd-23rd May (*Brit. Birds* 74: 483). Previously unassigned, was first-summer *melanoleuca*.

1985 Dorset Portland, ♂, 27th-28th May (*Brit. Birds* 79: 570). Previously unassigned, was first-summer *melanoleuca*.

1987 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, ♂, 5th June (*Brit. Birds* 81: 579). Previously unassigned, was *hispanica*.

1989 Essex Jaywick, ♂, 26th May (*Brit. Birds* 83: 476). Previously assigned to *melanoleuca*, now considered unsafe to attribute to race.

1990 Outer Hebrides Howmore, South Uist, ♂, 23rd April (*Brit. Birds* 84: 483). Previously considered to be *hispanica*, although not published as such, now considered unsafe to attribute to race.

1992 Kent Denge Marsh, ♂, 16th May (*Brit. Birds* 86: 509). Previously unassigned, was *hispanica*.

1993 Norfolk Stiffkey, first-winter ♂, 24th October to 1st November (*Brit. Birds* 87: 549). Previously unassigned, was *hispanica*.

1998 Dorset Winspit, ♀, 16th May (*Brit. Birds* 92: 592). Previously assigned to *hispanica*, now considered unsafe to attribute to race.

The Cornish bird arrived during a period when a number of other Mediterranean overshoots appeared in southwest England, including Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (see above) and Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*.

Also presented here are the initial findings of a review of all records of Black-eared Wheatear, in an

Martin Elliott



Fig. 11. Male Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* of nominate race *hispanica*, Nanquidno, Cornwall, March 2002.

attempt to clarify racial identification of these birds. As several records remain under consideration, BBRC would be grateful to receive any previously unpublished colour photographs which might assist this review, the full results of which, together with the criteria used, will be published in *British Birds* in due course.

In autumn, the separation of some individuals of the eastern form *melanoleuca* from Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka* remains potentially tricky. One particular individual on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, in October 2002, was submitted as a Pied Wheatear, but BBRC concluded that this bird could not be attributed conclusively to either species. Observers faced with such a challenge are recommended to consult the identification papers by Magnus Ullman (*Dutch Birding* 16: 186-194; 25: 77-97).

(Breeds Mediterranean basin; nominate form in NW Africa and Iberia, E to France and N Italy; eastern form, *O. h. melanoleuca*, from S Italy to Greece, and SW Asia from Turkey to S Caucasus, S to Israel and SW Iran. Winters widely across N tropical Africa from Senegal and N Nigeria to Ethiopia and Eritrea.)

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 65, 1)

Man, Isle of Niarbyl, ♀, 5th January, photo. (D. Thompson *et al.*).

(Breeds widely but discontinuously across arid and desert regions of N Africa from Morocco to Middle East, N to S Caucasus, and across C Asia from C Iran and N Pakistan to Mongolia and N China. Some N African birds resident, but many winter in Sahara and Sahel region of N Africa from Mauritania E to Ethiopia and Somalia. Asian breeders winter from Arabian Peninsula to NW India.)

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (30, 22, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 29th-30th September, photo. (S. J. Pinder *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 323; 96: plate 364). Collafirth, Northmavine, 30th September (R. J. Curtis *et al.*).

These are the first records since 1999. The fact that both turned up within a day of each other suggests that they were associated with the same movement and weather pattern. As observer coverage has increased along the northeast coast of Britain and in the Northern Isles, synchronous arrival dates have been shown to be a feature of some vagrant Siberian species. The same species often arrive in southern England and Scilly a few days later in the autumn. Both White's Thrushes in 2002 proved typically elusive, even though one frequented the relatively bare cliffs on the east side



Hugh Harrop

364. First-winter White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 2002.

of Fair Isle! These take the Shetland total to 13, reaffirming its position as the best locality for the species in Britain.

(Palearctic race *Z. d. aurea* widespread in C and S Siberia from Yenisey River to Ussuriland, S to N Mongolia, extreme NE China, Korean Peninsula and Japan. Small (isolated?) population extends W to foothills of European Urals. Winters widely throughout S China, Taiwan and S Japan to Indochina and C Thailand. Nominate race resident or altitudinal migrant in Himalayas, SW China and Taiwan.)

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 40, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 26th-30th October, photo. (D. Page, C. & E. Parnell *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 353).

Although both the date and location are predictable, this species has occurred less frequently in Britain since the early 1990s. This is only the third record since 1994, following singles in Cornwall in 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 593) and Orkney in 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 508).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia E throughout Alaska and N Canada to Labrador and Newfoundland. Migrates across E USA to winter in N South America.)

Veery *Catharus fuscescens* (0, 5, 1)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 30th September to 5th October, trapped 30th, photo. (J. S. Lees *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 324).

This was only the sixth record for Britain, but the second for Scotland following one in the Outer Hebrides in October 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 497). The other four all turned up in southwest England. This was also the earliest record by almost a week, although Nearctic vagrants often appear early in the Northern Isles. This is presumably because they are displaced across the Atlantic during an earlier stage of their autumn migration, when they are at higher latitudes.

(Breeds Canada from S British Columbia, E to Newfoundland, S through warm temperate USA and E of Rocky Mountains, S to N Arizona and Georgia. Winters N South America from Colombia to NW Brazil.)

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 45, 3)

Cornwall Nanjizal, first-winter ♂, *T. r. atrogularis*, 15th October (K. A. Wilson).

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter ♂, *T. r. atrogularis*, 19th October, photo. (M. J. Lawson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 354).

Shetland Fleck, South Mainland, first-winter ♀, *T. r. atrogularis*, 17th October, photo. (P. M. Ellis *et al.*).

2000 Shetland Foula, first-winter ♀, *T. r. atrogularis*, 23rd September, video. (J. M. & T. P. Drew).

(Western, black-throated form *T. r. atrogularis* breeds in C and N Urals, E across SW Siberia and E Kazakhstan, to NW China. Winters Iraq to N India, E through Himalayan foothills to Bhutan. Nominate red-throated form breeds to E, in C Siberia, wintering in E Himalayas and S fringe of Tibetan plateau from Nepal to SW China, and N to NE China.)

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* (0, 4, 0)

2000 Dorset Hengistbury Head, in song, 20th-30th May, photo. (D. N. Smith *et al.*).

This individual was easily distinguished from the bird present during 15th-16th May 2000 at nearby Portland Bill, Dorset, (*Brit. Birds* 94: 488) by the fact that the latter was missing its tail!

(Resident throughout Mediterranean basin, and N along Atlantic seaboard of W France, but recent N expansion curtailed by severe winters. Elsewhere, other races breed throughout Indian subcontinent, S China and S Japan to SE Asia and N Australia, and in sub-Saharan Africa.)

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (3, 24, 2)

Shetland Hametoun Burn, Foula, 6th-7th October, trapped 6th, photo. (A. R. Mainwood *et al.*). Skaw, Unst, 14th-15th October, trapped 14th, photo. (M. A. Maher, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

Both the arrival date and location of these two fit the pattern of previous records perfectly. No fewer than 22 of the 28 British 'PG's have occurred in Shetland (one of the pre-1958 records was in Ireland), although both individuals in 2002 were the first accepted records for their respective islands. This species, like several other eastern vagrants, is experiencing something of an upsurge in its fortunes: there were just 13 records before 1996, but there have been 15 in the past seven years. The increase in observer coverage alone is surely not sufficient to explain this increase.

(The race *rubescens* breeds across C and E Siberia, N to 64°N, from Irtysh River E to Yakutia and Sea of Okhotsk. Three other races breed to the S, from NE Kazakhstan through Mongolia to Ussuriland and N and NE China. Winters from NE India to S China, and S throughout SE Asia.)

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 83, 4)

Scilly Annet, 22nd-23rd September (F. H. D. Hicks, D. Page, R. Rhigelato *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, trapped, 7th September, photo. (A. J. Bull, R. J. Curtis); first-winter, trapped 6th October, photo. (P. R. French *et al.*); another, 10th October (I. A. Dillon *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 355; 96: plate 365).

Rather surprisingly, the Annet bird was the first record for the Isles of Scilly, being found on what is a typical arrival date for this species in Britain. One can only wonder how many more may have gone previously undetected on well-vegetated Scilly. Nonetheless, the Northern Isles retain their near-monopoly on this species.

(Singing males regular in E Finland. To E, breeds discontinuously from C Urals E across much of Siberia to Kamchatka, Kuril Islands, Hokkaido and NE China. Winters in Indian subcontinent, from Nepal E through NE India into SE Asia and Philippines.)

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 29, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 21st-25th September, trapped 21st, photo. (A. J. Bull, R. Caygal, R. Kemp *et al.*).

This was the first record since 1998. The fortunes of this fine *Locustella* appear to be in decline, unlike those of its Siberian relatives, and speculation regarding the possibility of a future breeding attempt (*Brit. Birds* 92: 594) now rings hollow.

(Patchy and local distribution across C and E Europe, but is spreading into NW Europe: from Germany to C Finland, and E through C Russia to W Siberia. S limit extends to Croatia and Ukraine. Migrates through Middle East and NE Africa to winter in E Africa.)

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (many, 610, 4)

Kent Grove Ferry, in song, 2nd-6th June (R. H. Lawrence *et al.*).

Norfolk Hickling, in song, 7th-15th May (P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane *et al.*).

Shetland Hametoun, Foula, 28th-29th May (S. C. Votier *et al.*).

Sussex, West Paghham Harbour, in song, 29th May to 3rd June (S. J. Patton *et al.*).

2001 Cambridgeshire Wicken Fen, in song, 27th April to 12th May (P. Atkinson, B. York *et al.*).

(Breeds discontinuously in W Europe, from Iberia to Netherlands; range contracting to SE, although still expanding NE into Estonia. To E, occurs through temperate Russia S through Ukraine to Black Sea coasts. European birds winter in W Africa from Senegal to N Nigeria. Another race, *L. l. fusca*, breeds in C Asia from Caspian Sea E across Kazakhstan to NW China, wintering in NE Africa.)



Hugh Harrop

365. Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 2002.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 45, 1)

Scilly Gugh, 1st-6th November (D. Page, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

2001 Scilly St Mary's, 13th-14th October, photo. (R. E. Turley *et al.* per R. L. Flood) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 350).

(In Europe, restricted to Black Sea coasts from Bulgaria and Danube delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia and SW Siberia, Kazakhstan and NW China, S to Uzbekistan and N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 42, 5)

Northumberland St Mary's Island, 13th-14th October (C. Bradshaw, A. Curry, C. Kehoe *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 30th October to 12th November, photo. (A. J. Middleton, R. J. Senior, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Shetland Norwick, Unst, first-winter, trapped 15th October, photo. (M. A. Maher, S. J. Minton, M. G. Pennington). Bressay, first-winter, 15th-16th October, trapped 16th (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey, B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 12th-16th October, photo. (A. Norris, J. Sanderson *et al.*).

2001 Dorset Portland Bill, first-winter, 16th October to 3rd November, trapped 16th, photo. (M. Cade, P. J. Morgan, G. Walbridge *et al.*).

2001 Greater London Canary Wharf, 6th-28th October, video. (A. Middleton, K. Murray *et al.*).

2001 Shetland Fair Isle, 24th September (P. A. A. Baxter, S. E. Duffield, M. A. Maher *et al.*).

This is yet another species experiencing an upsurge in the number of sightings. The three additional records from 2001 bring that year's total to eight, and the tally to a remarkable 17 in the past three years. Viewed against a background of only 30 records in the previous 42 years, this would seem to represent an extraordinary change in fortunes. While there may well be a genuine increase in the numbers arriving here, associated with range expansion into northeast Europe, there are probably other factors at play too. Blyth's Reed Warbler remains one of the most difficult of all British species to identify, but the improvement in digital technology allowing good field images to support records, the availability of such images to the wider birding public, some good identification papers, and much greater overseas field experience means that we are now receiving high-quality submissions of birds in the field. Five of the eight records published here were not trapped, and even some that were trapped were correctly and confidently identified in the field beforehand.

BBRC has been developing guidelines for assessment of field records, but careful observation of a combination of field characteristics is required, as no single feature is diagnostic. Excellent views are a prerequisite to acceptance as even the most skilled and experienced of observers can make mistakes in the field with incomplete views. Plumage tones often vary markedly with angle and light, while structure can be affected by posture. Both are critical to safe identification and prolonged views under a range of conditions are essential. An accurate transcription of the call is important too, although whether this is absolutely diagnostic has yet to be clarified. This is not identification for the faint-hearted, but it is an identification which *can* be made in the field. Observers of a putative Blyth's Reed Warbler are encouraged to spend time obtaining the maximum possible information, documenting it extremely carefully and, ideally, taking photographs or video evidence of the bird. We look forward to receiving, and accepting, more records based on such high-quality submissions.

(Breeds in S Finland, Estonia, Latvia and European Russia to 64°N. To E, found across C Siberia to Lake Baikal and upper Lena River, S through Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka and E into NW Burma.)

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 189, 6)

Cleveland Hummersea Farm, in song, 19th May (M. R. K. Askew *et al.*).

Dorset Radipole Lake, in song, 31st May, photo. (P. F. Baker *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, 16th May (J. G. Brown, J. Darke, S. E. Duffield).

Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, 29th May (P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Foula, 8th June to 13th July, trapped 6th July, photo. (D. & G. Atherton, A. R. Mainwood, S. C. Votier *et al.*) (plate 366).

Surrey Frensham Little Pond, in song, 18th May to 12th June, photo., sound-recorded (S. P. Peters *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 233).



Steve Votier

366. Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, Foula, Shetland, July 2002.

2000 Lincolnshire Chapel St Leonard's, in song, 29th May to July, photo. (S. Keightley *et al.*).

2001 Lincolnshire Near Deeping St James, in song, 16th-22nd May (S. Keightley, T. Williams).

(Breeds discontinuously throughout much of continental Europe from Iberia to Greece, N to S Sweden and Finland, and E across S Russia, Turkey and Caucasus to W Siberia. To E, *A. a. zarudnyi* breeds in C Asia from Volga to NW China. Winters throughout C and S Africa.)

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler

Hippolais pallida (0, 9, 1)

Shetland Sandwick/ Hoswick, adult *H. p. elaeica*, 18th to at least 28th August, trapped 18th, photo. (P. M. Ellis *et al.*).

British Birds has adopted the BOURC's recommendation to split Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* into two species: Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, which remains as *H. pallida*, and Western Olivaceous Warbler *H. opaca*, which was formerly treated as a subspecies of Olivaceous Warbler (*Ibis* 144: 707-710). Although this is the first time that Eastern Olivaceous Warbler has appeared in our report as a distinct species, the nine previously accepted records have been reviewed and were all found to be of this form.

The 2002 individual occurred on an exceptionally early date, somewhat reminiscent of the adult

at Portland on 4th-5th July 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 555). It appears that midsummer may be a good time for those with limitless energy and enthusiasm to search for vagrants from southeast Europe and western Asia. Another claim from Essex remains under consideration.

(Breeds throughout Balkans from Croatia to Greece and Turkey, S Caucasus, S Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Iran and N Afghanistan. Migrates through Middle East to winter in E Africa.)

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 84, 2)

Dorset Portland Bill, first-winter, 15th-19th August, trapped 15th, photo. (J. A. Lucas *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 280).

Shetland Sumburgh Head, first-winter, 24th-25th August (P. M. Ellis *et al.*).

With the separation of Sykes's Warbler *H. rama* from Booted Warbler (*Ibis* 144: 707-710), the identification of Booted Warbler has now become even more complex. Never the most straightforward identification to make, an even more thorough assessment of plumage and structure is now required to identify this species with confidence. This situation is akin to that of Eastern *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers *P. bonelli*, and, like the latter species-pair we will maintain an 'either/or' category to ensure that good records of Booted/Sykes's Warblers are not lost (see below). Careful, objective observations, together with photographic or video images, are likely to be the key to sealing an identification. See also the comments below for Sykes's Warbler. An individual at Land's End, Cornwall, in September showed some features of Sykes's Warbler and is still under review.

(Expanding W and breeding S Finland. To E, breeds C Russia and W Siberia to Yenisey Valley, throughout Kazakhstan to W Mongolia and W Xinjiang province, China. Winters N and peninsular India, S to Karnataka.)

Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama* (0, 4, 0)

1959 Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 29th-31st August, trapped 29th (J. Bazey, R. H. Dennis *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 53: 123-124, 425).

1977 Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 20th-27th August, trapped 20th, photo. (R. A. Broad, M. A.

Peacock, M. P. Sutherland *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 71: 520).

1993 Shetland Seafield, Lerwick, 22nd October to 9th November, trapped 24th, photo. (W. Jackson, K. Osborn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 87: 554).

This is another species making its first appearance in this report as the result of a recent species split by BOURC (*Ibis* 144: 707-710), in this case the separation of *rama* from Booted Warbler *H. caligata*. A decade ago, many experienced birders were perhaps unaware that this taxon even existed, never mind ready to contemplate the challenge of trying to identify one in Britain. The two older records are published here following a review of all records of trapped Booted Warblers where the biometrics suggested that *rama* might be a possibility, while the Seafield bird has never been formally published as *rama* in the BBRC report. Although there were several promising candidates in our review, only these three (plus the one at Portland Bill, Dorset, in 2000: *Brit. Birds* 94: 489) had the appropriate biometric measurements to establish the identification conclusively. BBRC is, however, currently reviewing two extremely well-documented field records (from East Sussex and Norfolk) from August 2002, both supported by photographs, as well as another trapped individual (from Orkney), also from August 2002. Although precise biometric data from a trapped individual is the best route to conclusive identification, this species appears to have a distinctive structure and some helpful, albeit subtle, plumage features which are evident in the field, although the extent of overlap with both Booted Warbler and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* remains a potential minefield. This subject is right at the cutting edge of bird identification and we still have much to learn. Observers of a putative Sykes's Warbler would be well advised to observe the bird exceptionally carefully over a prolonged period, noting the fullest possible details of plumage, structure, movement and behaviour. Even if it is ultimately trapped, biometrics may not prove to be definitive, although these must be recorded with the utmost care.

(Breeds C Kazakhstan to W Xinjiang province, NW China, S locally to Persian Gulf states, Iran, Afghanistan and N Pakistan. Winters N and W India, occasionally S to Sri Lanka.)

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 462, 19)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, ♂, 31st October (J. Lennon, S. D. Stansfield).

Cleveland South Gare, ♂, *S. c. albistriata*, 8th-9th June, photo. (N. A. Preston *et al.*).

Cornwall Porthgwarra, first-summer ♂, 26th March (M. D. Wallace) (fig. 12).

Fife Isle of May, first-summer ♂, trapped 10th May (M. Hall, M. P. Harris, H. Möeller-Holtkamp *et al.*).

Norfolk Winterton Dunes, first-summer ♂, 24th April, photo.; ♀, 14th May (P. Cawley *et al.*).

Cley, ♂, 19th May (A. Saunders *et al.*).

Blakeney Point, ♂, 21st May (N. Mugar, R. F. Porter).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-summer ♂, 9th-10th April, trapped 9th, photo. (J. S. Lees *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, ♂, 16th May (J. G. Brown, J. Darke, S. E. Duffield).

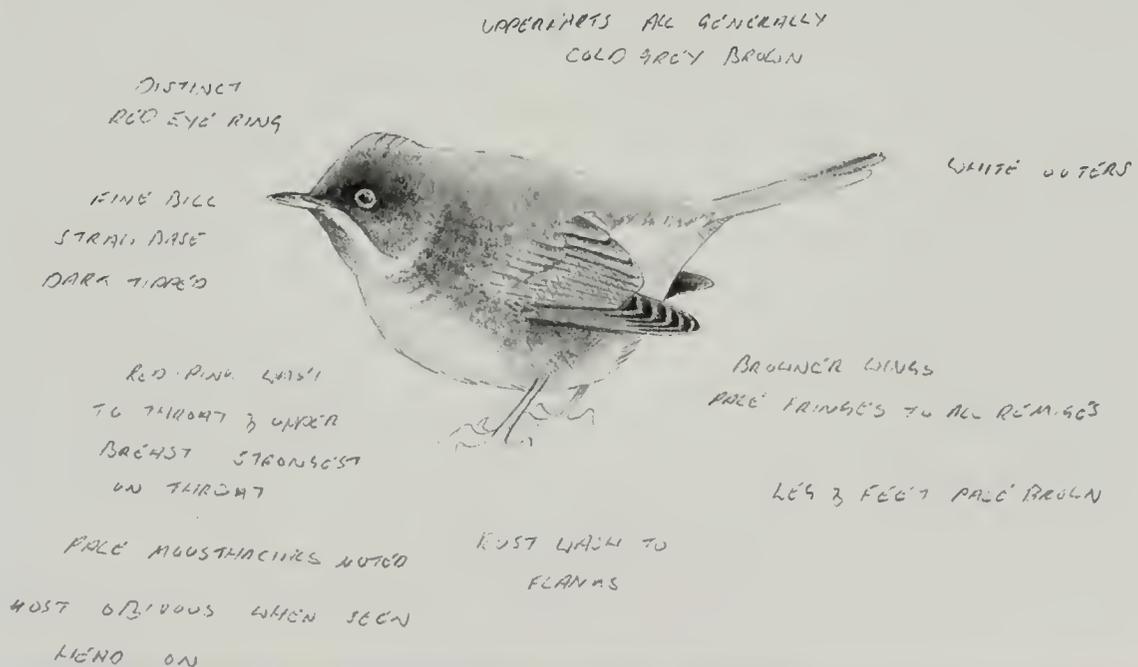


Fig. 12. First-summer male Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Porthgwarra, Cornwall, March 2002.

Steve Votier



367. First-summer male Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, of eastern race *albistriata*, Foula, Shetland, June 2002.

Scilly St Mary's, ♂, 26th-28th April (R. L. Flood *et al.*); ♂, 9th October (S. Cromet-Beolans, D. Spittle). St Agnes, ♀, 30th May (D. Page). Bryher, ♂, 4th June (S. G. Hogan); present since 17th May. Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, 12th-15th May (P. R. French, D. N. Shaw *et al.*); first-summer ♀, 31st May to 7th June, trapped 6th, (P. R. French, D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Foula, first-summer ♂, *S. c. albistriata*, 30th May to 11th June, dead mid June, photo. (plate 367). (D. & G. Atherton, P. Gear, S. C. Votier *et al.*). Boddam, ♀, 4th-5th June (H. R. Harrop *et al.*). Maywick, first-summer ♂, 11th August (H. R. Harrop). 1989 Dorset Durlston Country Park, ♂, 3rd May (D. Leadbetter *et al.*).

1999 Outer Hebrides Carnon, South Uist, ♂, 4th June (P. R. Boyer).

BBRC is happy to consider well-founded claims of the race *albistriata*, preferably supported by photographic evidence. The last to be published as such was in 1993, and a review is currently taking place to put the published record straight in relation to any since then.

(Four races widely but locally distributed throughout Mediterranean basin from NW Africa and Iberia N to S France, and E to Greece and W Turkey. Winters S of Sahel from Mauritania and Senegal to S Egypt and Sudan.)

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 58, 4)

Cornwall Sennen, ♂, 14th-15th November (M. D. Warren *et al.*).

Norfolk Old Hunstanton, ♂, 27th September to 15th October, photo. (W. Craig, A. & I. Dearing, H. Lacey *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 325).

Scilly St Agnes, ♂, 29th March to 2nd April (D. Page *et al.*). St Martin's, first-summer ♂, 21st-22nd April, photo. (R. L. Flood, N. Wheatley *et al.*).

(Largely resident or dispersive throughout Mediterranean basin, from NW Africa and Iberia to S France, N Italy and E to W Turkey and Israel. Some winter in N Africa from Sahara S to Mauritania and S Libya.)

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 337, 21)

Cleveland South Gare, two, 9th September (R. Little *et al.*). Old Cemetery, Hartlepool, 10th-12th September (T. Francis, R. C. Taylor *et al.*). Hartlepool Headland, 10th-15th September; another, 13th-15th, both trapped 13th, both photo. (C. Sharpe *et al.*).

Cumbria Walney Island, 19th September, photo. (T. Phizacklea, C. Raven *et al.*).

Fife Isle of May, 6th-7th June, trapped 6th, photo. (J. Graham, D. Robertson *et al.*); trapped 9th September, photo. (I. M. Darling *et al.*); 16th-18th September, photo. (D. A. Money *et al.*). Balcomie Castle, Fife Ness, 12th-17th September (K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 10th-13th September (G. P. Catley *et al.*) (plate 368).

Norfolk Scolt Head, two, 27th-28th August (J. Brown, N. M. Lawton, M. E. S. Rooney *et al.*). Weybourne, 17th-18th September, trapped 18th, photo. (E. & M. Cram, M. & M. Preston).

Northumberland Holy Island, 10th September (S. Sexton *et al.*); another, 13th September (M. J. Carr *et al.*) (fig. 13).

Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 23rd August (D. N. Shaw); another, 23rd-25th, photo. (J. Kerr, S. J. Pinder, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

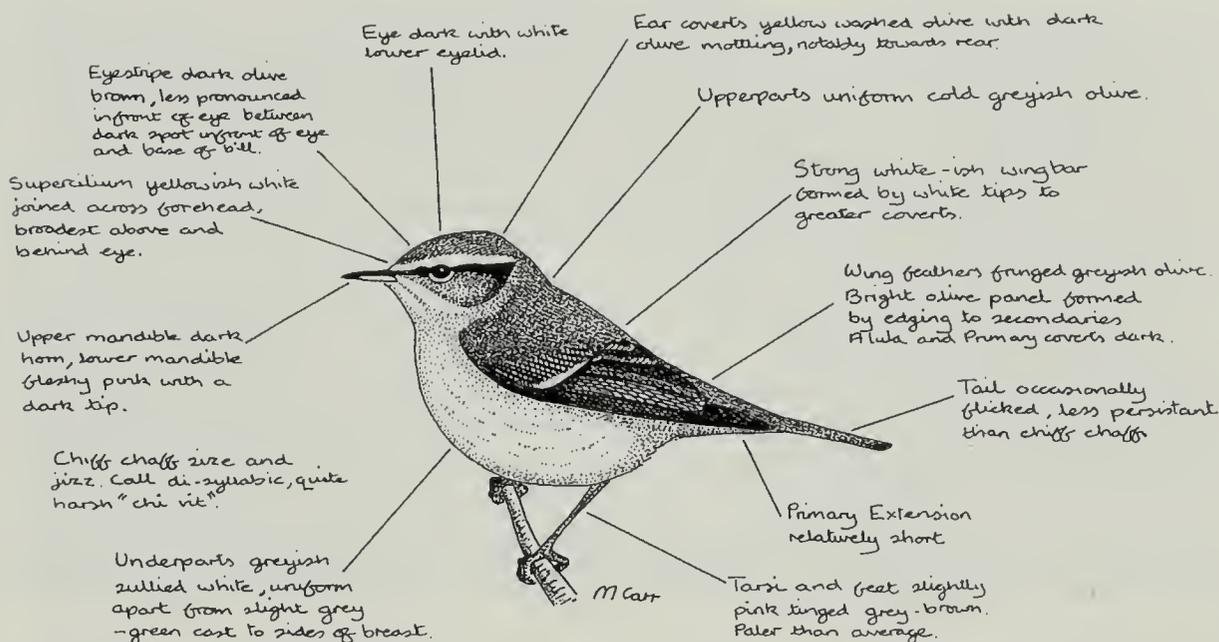
Yorkshire, East Bempton, 12th-16th September, photo. (K. Belk, G. E. Dobbs *et al.*). Spurn, 14th-18th September, trapped 14th, photo. (G. E. Dobbs, J. Wozencroft *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Fair Isle, R. V. *Kommander Jack*, 61°55'N 01°10'E, 110 km NE of Shetland, 19th-20th August, photo.; apparently left vessel within sight of Out Skerries, Shetland (R. B. Wynn).

1976 Norfolk Holme, 14th-19th October, photo., previously accepted as Arctic Warbler *P. borealis* (*Brit. Birds* 70: 436).

The impressive total of 21 birds has only been exceeded in 1987 (23), 1992 (29) and 1995 (31).

The Holme bird of 1976 was previously accepted as an Arctic Warbler *P. borealis* (*Brit. Birds* 70: 436), but the discovery of previously unseen photographs resulted in this record being reassessed.



Mike Carr

Fig. 13. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Holy Island, Northumberland, September 2002.

BBRC was in no doubt that an error had occurred and that the bird was unquestionably a Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*, probably of the race *P. t. plumbeitarsus* (Stoddart 2003). There have been two subsequent records of this form in Britain, both on similar dates, but the documentation available for the Norfolk bird narrowly failed to meet the standard for acceptance as the first record for Britain of this race.

Reference

Stoddart, A. M. 2003. From the Rarities Committee's files: The Holme wing-barred *Phylloscopus* warbler. *Brit. Birds* 96: 74-78. (The European and W Siberian race *P. t. viridanus* has expanded W during 20th century to E Poland, Baltic countries and S Finland, with sporadic breeding in Germany, Sweden and Norway. To E, breeds through Russia and W Siberia to Yenisey River, S through NW Mongolia to N Afghanistan and NW Himalayas. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent. Other races occur in NE Asia, throughout Himalayas to SW China, wintering from Indochina to N Thailand.)



Graham Catley

368. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Donna Nook, Lincolnshire, September 2002.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 225, 6)

Cornwall Cot Valley, 16th-18th October, photo. (A. & A. Tate).

Northumberland Holy Island, 14th-15th September, photo. (C. G. Knox, W. Maguire, D. Watson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 356).

Outer Hebrides Castlebay, Barra, 23rd-24th September (S. R. Green *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, trapped, 10th July, photo. (A. R. Mainwood *et al.*). Fair Isle, 19th July (D. N. Shaw, G. Tyler *et al.*); another, 30th July (A. J. Bull, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

The three autumn records show a fairly typical spread of dates and locations, although the individual on Barra is the first record for the Outer Hebrides, and just reward for a small band of observers who focused their attention away from more popular birding hotspots. Late summer records are not as unusual as they may at first appear: there have been six previous records of adults at this time, five in Shetland and one in Norfolk, between 21st June and 14th August. Perhaps these individuals overshot their normal breeding areas and just kept going, eventually ending up in western Europe? Whatever the explanation, it serves as a reminder that eastern vagrants can, and do, occur in July.

(Breeds locally in N Scandinavia, becoming widespread across N Russia E to extreme NE Siberia, S to Baikal region, Ussuriland and NE China. Other races breed in Alaska, and Kamchatka through Kuril Islands to N Japan. Migrates through E China to winter widely in SE Asia to Java, Philippines and Sulawesi.)

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 47, 2)

Norfolk Eccles on Sea, 2nd-4th November, photo. (A. J. Kane *et al.*).

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, 20th January to 6th April, photo. (M. A. Maher, S. J. McElwee, J. G. Steele *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 117; 96: plate 369).

(Breeds in Altai Mountains to W Mongolia, S through Tien Shan and Pamirs to NE Afghanistan, NW Himalayas and mountains in NW China. Winters in S Afghanistan to N India, E to W Bengal. Another race breeds in C China from Shanxi to S Yunnan, W to lower slopes of Tibetan plateau.)



Mike Malpass

369. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Northumberland, March 2002.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 237, 2)

Norfolk Wells Woods, 10th-14th October (C. Boness *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 1st-2nd November, photo. (N. Montegriffo *et al.*).

2001 Fife Isle of May, 28th September (K. M. Morton *et al.*).

2001 Norfolk Lodge Marsh, Wells, 22nd October (J. R. McCallum).

2001 Suffolk Sizewell, 13th October (R. Fairhead *et al.*).

These two well-watched individuals represent the lowest annual total since 1986. It was a poor year for both this species and Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* in 2002, following good numbers of both species in 2001. While easterly airflows emanating from Asia periodically bring good numbers of both Radde's and Dusky Warblers to our shores, their appearance in Britain is, in fact, poorly correlated. During the past 20 years, the annual totals of Radde's and Dusky Warblers have reached double figures on seven and ten occasions respectively, but their 'bumper' years have coincided just five times. Although commonly thought of as breeding in the same part of the world, Dusky nests across a much wider range of latitudes than Radde's, so perhaps weather-related differences in breeding success explains why often only one or the other (periodically) puts in a good showing.

(Breeds in S Siberia from Novosibirsk region E to Ussuriland and NE China. Migrates through E China to winter in N Burma, Indochina and C Thailand.)

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 244, 4)

Shetland Sumburgh Head, 14th October (P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

Suffolk Thorpeness, 10th October (A. Botwright, P. Clack, R. Drew); 1st-4th November (D. Fairhurst, J. A. & P. R. Kennerley *et al.*). Hollesley Bay, trapped 16th November (P. Catchpole, R. A. Duncan).

2001 Essex The Naze, 14th October (D. Rhymes *et al.*).

2001 Norfolk Wells, 22nd October (J. R. McCallum).

A description of the well-watched wintering bird in Suffolk has yet to be submitted.

(Breeds in Siberia from Ob River N to 60°N, E to Sea of Okhotsk, S to Russian Altai, N Mongolia and Ussuriland through NE China. Winters Nepal to S China and SE Asia to Singapore. Another race breeds on Tibetan plateau.)

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 55, 5)

Cornwall Pendeen, 21st September (M. D. Warren *et al.*). Nanquidno, 10th-14th October (N. Beasley, M. D. Warren *et al.*). Land's End, 26th October to 1st November, video. (M. D. Warren *et al.*).

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, 13th-14th October (S. J. McElwee, J. G. Steele *et al.*).

Scilly St Martin's, 4th-6th October, photo. (J. P. Martin, R. E. Turley *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 357; 96: plate 370).



George Reszeter

370. Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, St Martin's, Scilly, October 2002.

In some recent identification literature (e.g. *Collins Bird Guide*; *Birding World* 15: 411), it is claimed that Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *P. orientalis* may use a 'hü-if' alarm call similar to that of Western Bonelli's Warbler. Having discussed this with some of the authors of the material involved, however, they agreed that there is little or no evidence to endorse this claim (e.g. *Birdwatch* 119: 26-30). BBRC has reviewed original descriptions of the accepted records of Eastern Bonelli's Warbler and still believes that call is undoubtedly the safest and most reliable means of separating Western and Eastern Bonelli's Warblers. Silent birds pose one of the trickiest identification challenges and particular attention needs to be paid to precise upperpart colours and tones, bare-part detail, wing structure and, perhaps, facial pattern. In combination, these may confirm the identification.

(Breeding range centred on SW Europe from Iberia to N France, S Germany, Italy, Austria, and locally in mountains of N Africa. Winters along S edge of Sahara, from Senegal and S Mauritania to N Cameroon.)

Eastern/Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis/bonelli* (3, 131, 5)

2000 Shetland Foula, 2nd October, video. (J. M. & T. P. Drew *et al.*).

As the bird on Foula in 2000 was not heard to call, it is currently accepted only as Eastern/Western Bonelli's Warbler. The video is, however, of a high quality and BBRC is analysing details of the wing formula to see if specific identification is possible.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 22, 1)

Sussex, West Church Norton, ♂, 20th June, photo. (T. J. Edwards, D. Francis, O. Mitchell *et al.*).

1985 Norfolk Holkham Meals, first-summer ♂, 12th-13th May, photo. (P. M. Cocker, R. Grimmett, R. G. Millington *et al.*). Previously rejected, *Brit. Birds* 83: 495.

Acceptance of the much-debated 1985 Norfolk individual was facilitated by the discovery of a new series of photographs. The hybrid spectre, although not 100% eliminated, was considered very unlikely. BBRC are grateful to Dr Ben Sheldon at the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford, for his invaluable input.

(Small numbers breed as far W as E France and S Germany but most occur from C and E Europe to temperate regions of European Russia W of Urals. Isolated populations on Baltic islands Gotland and Öland, and S Italy. Winters in E and C Africa, from Tanzania to Zimbabwe.)

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 155, 2)

Kent Dungeness, first-winter and one other, 23rd October (D. Walker *et al.*).

2000 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, ♂, 13th June, photo. (N. Smith).

2001 Lincolnshire Barton-on-Humber, ♂, 10th-11th April, photo. (G. P. Catley *et al.*).

Now seemingly returning to its former rarity status, this masked reed swinger retains its pulling power. Following the ten-year average of eight records per year during the 1990s, there has been a total of only 11 records for the three years 2000-2002.

(Widely but locally distributed throughout C and E Europe, from Denmark, Germany and Italy NE to C Sweden and Estonia. Absent from much of NW Europe but locally numerous in Spain. To E, breeds from S Russia to Volga River. Largely resident or dispersive in Europe. Other races occur in C Asia and from S Siberia to NE China, and winter in Pakistan, S China and S Japan.)

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 55, 3)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, first-summer ♂, 26th June, video. (M. D. Wallace *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 18th-22nd October, photo. (A. & E. Reed *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 358; 96: plate 371).

Shetland Fetlar, ♂, *L. i. isabellinus*, 14th-17th September, photo. (P. Kelly, M. Smith *et al.*).

1961 Norfolk Walcott, 10th-14th September (*Brit. Birds* 55: 581), now considered inadequately documented.

1976 Suffolk Benacre, 30th August to 25th September (*Brit. Birds* 72: 539), now considered inadequately documented.

1977 Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 21st August (*Brit. Birds* 72: 539), now considered inadequately documented.

1978 Cambridgeshire Hemingford Grey, 8th October (*Brit. Birds* 73: 525), now considered hybrid with



George Reszeter

371. First-winter Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2002.

Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*.

The ongoing review of all previously accepted records, the purpose of which is to determine the subspecies involved in each case, where possible, continues. A number of issues have complicated the review of adults, which we had thought to be virtually complete. In particular, some of the descriptions of key features necessary to assign individuals to subspecies are contradictory, partly a consequence of different observers' perceptions of subtle colour tones in varying light conditions. Several birds also appear to show features of *karelini*, which is frequently treated as a colour-morph of *phoenicuroides*. Recent work in Central Asia, however, suggests that *karelini* may be a diagnosable and distinct population, and separable from *phoenicuroides*. If correct, this may have implications regarding the acceptance of the first individual to the British List. We hope to publish the preliminary results of this review as soon as possible.

(Four races breed widely but discontinuously in C Asia, from Caspian Sea and W Iran through Kazakhstan to Tajikistan, Afghanistan and N Pakistan to S Mongolia and NW China, with isolated population from Zaidam depression to N Tibetan plateau. Winters in NE and E Africa, S Arabian Peninsula, S Iran and NW Indian subcontinent.)

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 127, 1)

Devon Dawlish Warren, 26th May, photo. (L. Collins *et al.*).

2001 Northeast Scotland Girdleness, first-winter, 10th October (O. Campbell).

Another poor showing. This species has declined markedly here in recent years, with 74 recorded during the 1960s and 1970s, then only 47 during the 1980s and 1990s, and just six in the last five years. This bucks the general trend of increasing numbers of southern and eastern vagrants being recorded here, due, in part, to better observer coverage and, possibly, changing climatic factors. The increasing rarity of Lesser Grey Shrike is surely linked to the long-term decline in breeding populations across Europe, this being particularly catastrophic in the western part of its range where it is now extinct, or nearly so, as a breeder in France, Germany, Austria, Italy and the Baltic states. This range contraction has been linked to deteriorating breeding success, as a result of cooler, wetter summers (*BWP*), so might the Lesser Grey's fortunes eventually improve with global warming?

The delayed acceptance of the Girdleness bird was because of the need to safely eliminate Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* of the migratory Central Asian form *pallidirostris*. While adult Lesser Grey Shrike is distinctive, first-winter birds which lack obvious black feathering on the forehead can appear superficially similar to *pallidirostris*. A casual or incomplete description of a first-winter may fail to separate the two safely. Any claimed first-winter Lesser Grey Shrike or Southern Grey Shrike should, ideally, include a careful estimate of the primary projection beyond the visible tertials on the

closed wing and, if possible, a count of the primary tips visible past the longest tertial. Other important points to note include the extent of black on the lores, prominence of any whitish supercilium, the exact tone of grey on the upperparts, the extent of any paler areas on the rump and/or lower scapulars, and the bill shape and colour.

After some debate over the relative primary projections of *minor* and *pallidirostris*, we concluded that the Girdleness bird was too long-winged for *pallidirostris*, and that, on balance, the supporting features also favoured Lesser Grey.

(European range centred E of Balkans to E Poland, with small numbers W through N Mediterranean to S France and NE Spain. To E, breeds locally from Black Sea coasts, across S Russia and Kazakhstan to extreme NW China and SW Siberia. Migrates through E Africa to winter in S Africa, from Namibia to S Mozambique and N South Africa.)

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 463, –)

1990 Dorset Portland, adult, since 30th August 1989 to at least February (*Brit. Birds* 84: 498), to 22nd April; presumed same, Weymouth, 26th January to 7th February (per G. Walbridge).

1994 Dorset The Grove, Portland, 8th June (*Brit. Birds* 95: 518); first-named observer was M. Snell.

2000 Dorset Portland Bill, juvenile, 15th October (*Brit. Birds* 94: 496), correct date 16th October, but not same as The Grove, Portland, same date.

2001 Dorset Portland, various localities, juvenile, 7th September (*Brit. Birds* 95: 517), to 24th October.

2001 Hampshire Hayling Island, adult, 23rd-30th October, photo. (T. Parminter, M. Tate).

2001 Highland Durness, Sutherland, 22nd June (M. Fitch, Mr & Mrs Groutage).

2001 Lincolnshire Louth, in song, 13th-15th June, photo. (H. Bunn, G. P. Catley *et al.*).

2001 Pembrokeshire Haverfordwest, juvenile, 16th October to 21st November, photo. (F. Lanthorn, B. Morgan, G. H. Rees).

2001 Scilly Bryher, 6th June (K. Webb *et al.*).

2001 Shetland Symbister, Whalsay, adult, 2nd August, (B. Marshall, E. & J. A. Simpson). Bigton, adult, 12th-15th August, photo. (L. Johnson). Tingwall, adult, 25th August (I. Sandison *et al.*).

2001 Warwickshire Exhall, 21st-27th June, photo. (J. J. Bowley, A. Tustin *et al.*).

(Irruptive, regularly reaching SE Europe but only occasional breeder, erratically W to Hungary. Core breeding range extends from S Ukraine and C Turkey E across S Russia to E Kazakhstan and S through Iran to Afghanistan. Winters throughout India S to Sri Lanka.)

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 96, 0)

2000 Scilly St Mary's, 26th September (K. Bloomfield, K. Webb *et al.*).

(Breeds throughout S Canada, and USA E of Rocky Mountains. Migrates throughout E USA to winter in N South America. Other races resident in South America.)

European Serin *Serinus serinus* (76, 1,458, 0)

1968 Shetland Scalloway, 17th November (*Brit. Birds* 62: 487), now considered inadequately documented.

(Breeds NW Africa and throughout Europe except Iceland, Britain, Scandinavia and much of European Russia. Southern populations sedentary but most northern breeders winter S to Mediterranean basin.)

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 768, 1)

Norfolk Titchwell, two ♀♀ or first-winters, since 15th December 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 519), up to two intermittently to 23rd February (per G. E. Dunmore).

Shetland Fair Isle, *C. h. exilipes*, 19th October (P. R. French *et al.*).

Worcestershire See 2001 Worcestershire below.

1996 Yorkshire, North Pannal, near Harrogate, 23rd February (R. & M. Fairclough, P. V. Irving), considered same as Farnham, 24th-26th March (*Brit. Birds* 90: 508).

2001 Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, first-winter, 22nd-24th September (I. Brook, C. R. McKay, T. ap Rheinallt).

2001 Worcestershire Habberley Valley, first-winter ♂, 30th December to 22nd January 2002 (A. Warr, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

The worst showing since the completely blank year of 1983. The confusion risk presented by some

Common Redpolls *C. flammea*, particularly frosty individuals of the northwestern race *islandica*, should not be underestimated. Acceptance, especially in a non-influx year, still requires adequate description of a range of features and, in particular, an accurate description of the rump and undertail-coverts. Sadly, many descriptions we receive are somewhat cliché, describing the undertail-coverts as white and unmarked, which, in reality, they rarely are.

(Circumpolar Arctic, with European breeding range restricted to N Scandinavia. Race *C. h. exilipes* breeds on tundra of Arctic Eurasia, Alaska and Canada to Hudson Bay. Nominate race breeds Ellesmere and Baffin Island to N Greenland. Both races disperse S in winter, irregularly reaching NW Europe.)

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (40, 88, 12)

Norfolk Sandringham, ♀, 12th December, photo. (J. V. Bhalerao *et al.*); present 8th-15th (plate 63).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 13th August, photo. (P. A. Brown *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Bagley Wood, ♀, 9th December to 16th January 2003, photo. (J. Gosling *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 2nd August (A. J. Bull); ♂, three ♀♀/juveniles, 16th-19th August, ♂, juvenile, photo. (A. J. Bull *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 319); ♂, ♀ or first-summer ♂, 22nd August (P. R. French *et al.*); ♂, 8th-11th September, photo. (M. Fraser, D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Foula, first-winter, 17th-19th August (A. R. Mainwood *et al.*).

2001 Fife Isle of May, juvenile/first-winter ♂, 27th July to 3rd August, trapped 27th, photo. (J. M. & L. J. Wilson, R. I. Parkinson).

During the midsummer influx (which corresponded with a major eruption in Scandinavia) there was also a controversial male present in South Yorkshire which has only recently been submitted to BBRC. Despite large numbers of Common Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* throughout the country during the late summer and autumn, there were no further discoveries of Two-barred Crossbills until December.

(Local resident within larch *Larix* forests of N Eurasia from N Russia to E Siberia, reaching Sea of Okhotsk, and S to Baikal region. Irruptive dispersal leads to irregular breeding in Finland, and very occasionally in Sweden and Norway. Outside breeding season, dispersal occasionally reaches NW Europe. Other races breed across N North America, and Hispaniola.)

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (1, 21, 2)

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 22nd-29th October, photo. (M. Carroll, J. M. Pearson, B. Richards *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 359; 96: plate 372).



Mike Malpass

372. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, October 2002.

At sea Sea area Dogger, oil installation *Uisge Gorm*, 56°01'N 03°11'E, 20th May to 1st June, photo. (D. Rodger).

2000 Man, Isle of Llergydhoo, Peel, 28th May, photo. (T. Bagworth, J. Bishop, Mrs I. Crellin *et al.*).

(Breeds North America from SE Yukon E to Newfoundland, S to Great Lakes and N USA to New Jersey. Winters SE USA, from Massachusetts S to Florida, Texas and into N Mexico and California.)

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* (0, 4, 0)

2001 Devon Lundy, 12th October (*Brit. Birds* 95: 520), first-named observer was A. L. Cooper.

(Breeds from Russian Altai and Ob River E across Siberia to Sea of Okhotsk, S to Baikal region, N Mongolia, Amurland, N Korean Peninsula and extreme NE China. Winters South Korea and through much of E China to Hong Kong. Other races breed in Japan and C China.)

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 35, 0)

1998 Durham Langley Moor, ♀, 22nd-24th March, dead 28th, mounted specimen retained by finder, photo. (R. Urwin *et al.*).

2001 Yorkshire, North Filey, 3rd March (D. J. & P. M. Scanlan, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

(Breeds temperate Russia from W Urals to upper Kolyma River, S to S Siberia, Mongolia, lower Amur River and Sakhalin. Isolated population breeds Qinghai and Gansu provinces, C China. Small isolated wintering populations regular W Italy and C Israel. Otherwise winters S of breeding range from Turkestan E through Himalayan foothills to C and E China, N of Yangtze.)

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 406, 4)

Lothian Thorntonloch, ♂, 6th-8th June (K. Gillon *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides North Rona, in song, 6th-7th June (M. Gray).

Scilly St Mary's, 5th to at least 8th October, photo. (S. Hall *et al.*).

Sussex, East Hove, ♂, 10th-11th May (T. J. Wilson).

(Breeds in boreal forest mires of N Eurasia from Sweden and Finland, E across N Russia to easternmost Siberia and Kamchatka, and S to Baikal region. European population migrates SE to winter in E China, Korean Peninsula and S Japan.)

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 202, 6)

Essex Colne Point, ♀ or first-winter, 5th September (R. Allen).

Norfolk Scolt Head, ♀ or first-winter, 24th-25th September (N. M. Lawton *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀ or first-winter, 3rd-5th September, photo. (R. M. Harvey).

Shetland Sumburgh, ♀, or first-winter, 8th September (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington, I. S. Robertson). Skaw, Unst, ♀ or first-winter, 9th September, photo. (R. P. Fray *et al.*) (plate 373). Quendale, ♀ or first-winter, 10th-14th September (R. Riddington *et al.*).

(European range restricted to small and declining population in C Finland, centred on Gulf of Bothnia. To E, breeds widely across Russia and Siberia to Kamchatka, S to NE China and NE Hokkaido. Winters locally from E Nepal through Himalayan foothills to NE India, and widely throughout SE Asia.)



373. Female or first winter Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Skaw, Unst, Shetland, September 2002.

Black-headed Bunting
Emberiza melanocephala
(9, 154, 3)

Lancashire & North Merseyside Birkdale, Southport, ♂, 19th June (C. Fyles *et al.*).

Lothian Gullane, ♂, 3rd June, photo. (P. Morris) (plate 374).

Suffolk Gunton, first-winter, 24th-25th September, photo. (J. Brown *et al.*).

1993 Suffolk Oulton Broad, ♂, 30th May (*Brit. Birds* 87: 566), now considered inadequately documented.

1999 Dorset Verne Common, Portland, ♂, (*Brit. Birds* 93: 564); correct date was 1st June.

From late May to June is now firmly established as the best time to find this species in Britain. The records in Lancashire & North Merseyside and Lothian were both firsts for their respective counties. The identification of adult females and first-winters can still prove to be a major headache with anything other than the more classic individuals. Precise attention to primary projection, wing structure, plumage tones, the presence and strength of streaking on various feather tracts of the upperparts, and bill size may help. Note that, in autumn, accurate ageing is the crucial first step in the identification process.

(Breeds from C Italy to Greece, Turkey, N Iraq and W Iran, N through Caucasus to Ukraine and S Russia. Winters in W and C India.)

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
(0, 23, 1)

Dorset Hengistbury Head, first-winter, 1st-23rd November, photo. (G. Armstrong, G. D. Masser, S. Simmonds, I. Southworth *et al.*) (plates 33 & 375).

(Breeds widely across S Canada and N USA, S to NE California and New Jersey. Winters Peru to S Brazil and N Argentina.)



Pat Morris

374. Male Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (bottom), with Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* and Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Gullane, Lothian, June 2002. A psychotic Wood Pigeon eyes up its next kebab...



George Reszeter

375. First-winter Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, Hengistbury Head, Dorset, November 2002.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Ibis* 136: 253)

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, first-winter, 7th-25th March, photo. (S. J. McElwee, A. Priest *et al.*).

It is now possible to establish the age of female-type and first-winter Hooded Mergansers accurately. Armed with this new-found knowledge, there is little doubt that the Newbiggin bird was a first-winter, and that this may also be true for the North Uist individual of 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 524). As a result, BOURC will undertake a review of the status of this species in Britain and Europe, and assess the likelihood of birds escaping from captivity in Europe.

(Breeds from S Alaska, E across S Canada and N USA to Newfoundland, and S to Oregon, Virginia and locally almost to Gulf coast. Winters coastally, from S limit of breeding range to California and Florida.)

Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, 4th-7th September, trapped 5th, photo. (A. J. Bull, M. A. Newell, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

This species currently resides in Category D of the British List as, in the majority of cases, it is difficult to establish the provenance of the individual. In the case of the Fair Isle bird, the combination of plumage damage, including broken rectrices, the early date and its age all point to a higher chance of this being an escape than a wild vagrant. Nonetheless, BBRC feels that, until the British status of the species is clarified, it is prudent for all records to be published.

(Breeds Siberia from N Baikal region E to Sea of Okhotsk, S to N Mongolia and lower Amur region. Migrates to winter NE India, SE China, N Thailand and Indochina.)

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Hon. Secretary; b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; c) those mentioned in 'Recent reports' in *British Birds* if full details were unobtainable; or d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

2002 White-billed Diver St Andrews, Fife, 7th March; Sanga Bay, Sutherland, Highland, 30th May. Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* of nominate form *diomedea* ('Scopoli's Shearwater') Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 21st July; 3rd August. Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel Holy Island, Northumberland, 24th September. Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* Alton Water, Suffolk, 3rd February. Little Bittern Horrock's Flash, Greater Manchester, two, 17th January. Squacco Heron Hickling, Norfolk, 26th June. Great White Egret Quenington, Gloucestershire, 5th January; Sudbury, Suffolk, 4th May; Hickling, Norfolk, three, 10th May; Harwich Fort, Essex, 11th May; Hartlepool Headland, Cleveland, 3rd June; Breydon, Norfolk, 15th-17th August; Burnham Overy/Deepdale, Norfolk, 29th August; Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 13th September; Burnham Norton, Norfolk, 30th September; St Mary's, Scilly, 16th October. Black Stork Storrington, West Sussex, 7th September. Glossy Ibis Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, four, 25th August. 'Black Brant' Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 6th January; Beaumont Quay, Hamford Water, Essex, 28th January; Hook-with-Warsash, Hampshire, 10th February to 19th March; 10th November to December. Black Kite Heacham, Norfolk, 5th April; Camber, East Sussex, 12th April; Little Haldon, Devon, 14th April; near Colchester, Essex, 23rd April; Stoke Common, Buckinghamshire, 11th May; Bookham, Surrey, 12th May; Piddleshinton, Dorset, 2nd June; Aldringham, Suffolk, 4th June; Thorntonloch, Lothian, 9th June; Glen Prosen, Angus & Dundee, 12th June; Tomatin, Sutherland, Highland, 18th June; Kerry Ridgeway, Shropshire, 13th August; Worlabby Carrs, Lincolnshire, 4th September; near Cosmeston, Glamorgan, 7th September. Red-footed Falcon Dunwich Heath, Suffolk, 24th April; Willington Gravel-pits, Derbyshire, 10th May;

Kingfishers' Bridge, Cambridgeshire, 18th May; Salthouse Heath, Norfolk, 19th May; Langham, Norfolk, 27th May; Scurdie Ness, Angus & Dundee, 12th August; Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire, 1st September; Sandscale, Cumbria, two, 15th September; Port Logan, Dumfries & Galloway, 15th-20th September; Freshwater West, Pembrokeshire, 1st October. **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* Nanquidno and Hendra area, Cornwall, 20th June. **Gyr Falcon** Astley Green, Greater Manchester, 28th January; Matley Wood, New Forest, Hampshire, 10th October; Landguard, Suffolk, 29th October; Thornbury Holsworthy, Devon, 29th December. **Black-winged Stilt** Orcharton Bay, Dumfries & Galloway, 9th December. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Sandscale, Cumbria, 27th August; Goldcliff Lagoons, Gwent, 31st August. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Martin Mere, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 9th August; Bowling Green Marsh, Devon, 3rd September. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Marshside Marsh, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 6th May. **Great Snipe** Balcomie Golf Course, Fife, 10th September; Trimley Marshes, Suffolk, 10th September; Westleton Heath, Suffolk, 22nd October. **Long-billed Dowitcher** Loch of Strathbeg, Northeast Scotland, 1st September. **Marsh Sandpiper** Peterstone Wentloog, Gwent, 2nd May; Pulborough Brooks, West Sussex, 3rd-4th May; Cley, Norfolk, 22nd August. **Greater Yellowlegs** Dawlish Warren, Devon, 24th August. **Grey-tailed Tattler** *Heteroscelus brevipes* Dawlish Warren, Devon, 16th September. **Laughing Gull** Hoveringham Gravel-pits, Nottinghamshire, 15th October; South Huish, Devon, 27th November. **Bonaparte's Gull** Sellafield, Cumbria, 8th February; Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 13th February. **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* Martin Mere, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 6th March. **Gull-billed Tern** Ythan Estuary, Northeast Scotland, 19th May; Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, 16th July; Leith and Seafield, Lothian, 27th July; Telscombe, East Sussex, 22nd August. **Caspian Tern** Landguard, Suffolk, 26th August. **Whiskered Tern** Scurdie Ness, Ferryden and Montrose Bay, Angus & Dundee, 14th-18th October. **White-winged Black Tern** Fife Ness, Fife, 31st August. **Alpine Swift** Martin Mere, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 22nd May. **Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius* Bognor Regis, West Sussex, 4th July. **Red-rumped Swallow** Watermead Lake, Leicestershire, 29th April; Salthouse, Norfolk, 24th May; Thrybergh Country Park, South Yorkshire, 16th July. **Pechora Pipit** Gugh, Scilly, 12th October; St Agnes, Scilly, 24th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Cossington, Leicestershire, 31st March; Holkham Meals, Norfolk, 10th September. **Citrine Wagtail** Radway, Warwickshire, 30th April. **Thrush Nightingale** Fair Isle, Shetland, 27th May. **Black-eared Wheatear** Machrihanish, Argyll, 5th-6th October. **Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* Colsterdale, North Yorkshire, 5th June. **White's Thrush** Goldsithney, Cornwall, 9th December. **Dark-throated Thrush** Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 20th October; near St Nicholas at Wade, Kent, 24th October. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Tresco, Scilly, 6th October. **Lanceolated Warbler** Fair Isle, Shetland, 19th October. **Savi's Warbler** Sea area Forties, 23rd August. **Greenish Warbler** Brean Down, Somerset, 2nd June. **Hume's Warbler** Brook Down, Isle of Wight, 6th October. **Dusky Warbler** Dawlish Warren, Devon, 9th November. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** Cley, Norfolk, 12th October. **Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* North Nibley, Gloucestershire, 17th July; Beeston Bump, Norfolk, 5th September; North Nibley, Gloucestershire, late October; Newton Abbot, Devon, 27th December. **Arctic Redpoll** Tregonnick Point, Cornwall, 7th May. **Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus* Sullom Plantation, Shetland, 9th June; Auchmithie, Lothian, seven, 9th September. **Yellow-browed Bunting** *Emberiza chrysophrys* Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, 21st October. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Burrafirth, Unst, Shetland, 9th October.

2001 **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* Reculver, Kent, 4th September. **Night Heron** Southampton, Hampshire, two, 13th May. **Great White Egret** Stockton Heath, Warrington, Cheshire, 25th July; Bowcombe Creek, Devon, 9th-10th August. **'Black Brant'** Blackwater Estuary, Essex, 24th November to 30th December. **American Wigeon** Hodbarrow, Cumbria, two, 17th September; St Peter's Pool, Orkney, 26th September to 5th October. **Black Kite** Sandwich Bay, Kent, 8th April; Knighton, Somerset, 12th April; Cotswold Water Park, Wiltshire, 14th April; Dartford Heath, Kent, 1st May; Brading Marsh, Isle of Wight, 18th May; Codshall, Staffordshire, 22nd May; South Tyne area, Northumberland, 9th June; near Marden Quarry, Northumberland, 27th July; Broughton, Buckinghamshire, 3rd September. **Red-footed Falcon** Winterton Dunes, Norfolk, 4th July. **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* Spurn, East Yorkshire, 27th June. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Fair Isle, Shetland, 13th November. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Crowdy Reservoir, Cornwall, 10th September. **Spotted Sandpiper** Beddington Sewage Farm, Surrey, 30th September to 10th October. **Laughing Gull** Wormleighton Reservoir, Warwickshire, 11th October. **Ross's Gull** Minsmere, Suffolk, 7th June. **Forster's Tern** Draycote Water, Warwickshire, 26th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Cop Mere, Staffordshire, 30th Sep-

tember. Citrine Wagtail Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 16th May. Thrush Nightingale Wells, Norfolk, 25th September. Black-eared Wheatear Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 28th October. Great Reed Warbler Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, 12th May. Booted Warbler Netherstone, Deerness, Orkney, 20th August; Hoswick, Shetland, 24th September. Dusky Warbler Sizewell, Suffolk, 13th October. Nutcracker Lymington, Hampshire, 28th October. Rosy Starling Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 29th August. Parrot Crossbill Uigen, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 11th July. Rustic Bunting Broad Chalke, Wiltshire, 28th November. Black-headed Bunting near Llanpumsaint, Carmarthenshire, 3rd June.

2000 White-billed Diver Dungeness, Kent, 30th April. Lesser Scaup Sandwell Valley, West Midlands, 16th November. Black Kite Horsey Mere and Hickling, Norfolk, 11th June. Red-footed Falcon Rowley Regis, West Midlands, 6th June. Least Sandpiper Titchwell, Norfolk, 19th October. Solitary Sandpiper Hayle, Cornwall, 28th September. Slender-billed Gull Cley, Norfolk, 22nd May; Farne Islands, Northumberland, 15th October. Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* Seahouses, Northumberland, 22nd November. Olive-backed Pipit Foula, Shetland, 24th September; 6th October. Red-throated Pipit Holme, Norfolk, 7th May. Lanceolated Warbler Foula, Shetland, 27th September. Booted Warbler Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 4th June. Hume's Warbler Seahouses, Northumberland, 10th November. Yellow-breasted Bunting Seaforth, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 24th September.

1999 White-billed Diver Bressay Sound, Shetland, 2nd May. Great White Egret Holme Pierrepont, Nottinghamshire, 9th June. European Roller Eaglesfield, Cumbria, 27th July. Common Stonechat *S. t. maura* Foula, Shetland, 30th September. Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler Foula, Shetland, 23rd September. Dusky Warbler North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 21st September.

1998 Caspian Tern Hornsea Mere, East Yorkshire, 9th August.

1995 Pine Bunting Tresco, Scilly, 22nd October.

1989 Blyth's Pipit Portland Bill, Dorset, 16th March to 3rd May.

1985 Little Shearwater Minsmere, Suffolk, 3rd November.

1978 Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* Guildford, Surrey, 15th November.

Appendix 3. List of records not accepted but identification proved

This list provides a permanent record of those occurrences which, usually on the grounds of likely escape from captivity, find no place in any category, but which may, at some future date, merit further consideration. It does not include (a) any record of a species for which natural vagrancy is wholly unlikely, or (b) those records of presumed escapes already mentioned in the main text of this or earlier Reports.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* Wells and other localities in north of county, Norfolk, juvenile or first-winter, 3rd November 2001 to 6th February 2002, photo.; presumed same, returning as adult, Holkham and other localities in north of county, 1st October 2002 to 15th January 2003, photo.; presumed same Read's Island, South Ferriby and Winterton, Lincolnshire, adult, 10th November, photo. (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 11). Budle Bay, Northumberland, adult, 5th October, photo.; presumed same, Cardrunk, Cumbria, 3rd December 2002.

Since the arrival of a young bird with Pink-footed Geese *A. brachyrhynchus* in northwest Norfolk in November 2001, this species has generated a great deal more interest than previously. The records listed above do not represent the complete picture, and BBRC is keen for all recent records of potentially wild Ross's Geese to be submitted. We would particularly like to receive further detailed descriptions, and photographs, of a second bird in Norfolk in autumn 2002, as there is a difference of opinion between observers about the size of the bird.

Currently, Ross's Goose is not on any category of the British List, although it is accepted onto Category A of the national list of the Netherlands. When BBRC has completed its review of all records, it intends to submit the file to BOURC, who may then investigate the likelihood of escape from captive waterfowl collections in Europe.

It is well known that the population of this Arctic breeding goose, once considered endangered, has increased greatly in recent years and may now number close to one million individuals. Its winter range, once almost exclusively restricted to the Sacramento Valley in California, has extended east-

wards to the eastern seaboard of the USA, where it is now regular. One might well expect increased transatlantic vagrancy as a consequence of this expansion, and this may be occurring. The problem, as ever, is sorting out the genuine wild birds from the frequent escapes of this attractive goose, which is commonly kept in captivity. The credentials of some of the birds listed seem, on the face of it at least, very promising.

(Breeds in scattered colonies on tundra of Canadian Arctic, from Perry River region of Northwest Territories to N Manitoba, including Southampton Island, E to N Ontario. Most migrate across C USA to wintering grounds in S USA, with smaller numbers regular on NE Atlantic seaboard and N Mexico.)

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* Hardley Flood, Norfolk, ♂, 18th June to 25th August 2002, photo. Stanford Reservoir, Leicestershire/Northamptonshire, ♂, 10th to at least 22nd September 2002, photo. Broadwater Gravel-pits, Greater London, ♀ or first-winter, 14th-18th December 2002.

(Highly fragmented breeding range across steppe region of S Palearctic. Small resident or dispersive European population now confined to south-central Spain. More widespread in Asia, from C Turkey, E through C Asian steppes of S Russia to E Kazakhstan and W Xinjiang province, NW China. Asian breeders winter locally on wetlands to S of breeding range from Israel to Iran and Punjab, Pakistan.)

Appendix 4. List of selected records still under consideration

This list is not intended to be complete. Some decisions may have been arrived at and notified to County Recorders/observers prior to the publication of this Report.

2002 Black-browed Albatross Mundesley, Norfolk, 31st December. Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel Flam-borough Head, East Yorkshire, 26th August. Brown Skua *Catharacta lounbergi* Aberavon, Glamorgan, 1st February. Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans* Dawlish Warren, Devon, 18th May; Porthmadog, Caernar-fonshire, 23rd-26th July. Little Swift Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 25th June. Sykes's Warbler Sher-ingham, Norfolk, 23rd August; North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 26th August; Beachy Head, East Sussex, 31st August.

2001 Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 9th October. Brown Skua St Agnes, Scilly, 7th October. Forster's Tern Tingwell and Eynhallow Sound area, Orkney, 24th-27th October (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528). Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* Dungeness, Kent, 14th-17th April.

2000 Canvasback Loch of Rummie, Sanday, Orkney, 21st-23rd June (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528). Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* Dungeness, Kent, 20th May. Iberian Chiffchaff Portland Bill, Dorset, 11th May (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528). Collared Flycatcher Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 26th September (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528).

1998 Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* of North American race *G. g. delicata* ('Wilson's Snipe') St Mary's, Scilly, 9th October to 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528).

1997 Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* of North American race *G. g. delicata* ('Wilson's Snipe') St Mary's, Scilly, 19th October (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528).

1996 South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki* Dawlish Warren, Devon, January, February; presumed same, West Bexington, Dorset, January, February (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528).

1993 South Polar Skua At sea, Sea area Sole, 26th August (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528).

1962 Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* St Agnes, Scilly, 30th September to 2nd October (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528).

1961 Olivaceous Warbler St Agnes, Scilly, 3rd-4th October (*Brit. Birds* 95: 528).



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Reviews

RAPTORS IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Proceedings of the joint meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation and The World Working Group on Birds of Prey & Owls, Eilat, Israel, 2nd-8th April 2000.

Edited by R. Yosef, M. L. Miller and D. Pepler. International Birding and Research Center in Eilat, 2002. 276 pages; many figures and tables; line-drawings. No ISBN. Paperback, £17.50.

Since my plans to attend the 2000 World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls at Eilat were scuppered by other commitments, I was particularly pleased to be able to read these *Proceedings*. They include all manuscripts and abstracts submitted for the meeting: a total of 109 contributions. These are categorised under the following eight subject headings: General & Techniques; Diet & Foraging; Reproductive Ecology; Migration and Wintering Ecology; Population Status & Ecology; Genetics & Taxonomy; Ecotoxicology & Diseases; and Conflicts & Solutions. Apart

from half-a-dozen items on owls, all contributions relate to diurnal birds of prey. They cover raptor species from most parts of the world, but with a certain bias towards the Palearctic. Although the majority are relatively short abstracts, there is still a very good number of longer papers.

This publication contains so much of great interest and value that it is perhaps unfair to single out any contributions. Nevertheless, I found both the papers and the abstracts dealing with Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, which features prominently in these pages, of particular interest; this globally threatened species has declined dramatically throughout its range, and the substantial research currently being conducted on its populations merits wide publicity.

Otherwise, a study on the 'Altai Falcon' reveals that, in terms of morphometrics, this puzzling raptor is so similar to Saker Falcon *F. cherrug* that the two would be treated as being of the same species; Gyr Falcon *F. rusticolus* is morphometrically distinct from both. Plumage-colour analysis, on the other hand, suggests the possibility that 'Altai Falcon' is the result

of hybridisation between Gyr and Saker at the end of the last ice age, at which time their ranges would have overlapped, and subsequent repeated back-crossing. Alternatively, 'Altai Falcon' may be simply a dark morph of the eastern subspecies of Saker *F. c. milvipes*, as proposed two decades ago by L. S. Stepanyan (1982, *Acta XVIII Congr. Int. Orn.*, Moscow).

Another item which caught my eye concerns the status of the Philippine Eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi*, another globally threatened species. It seems that this eagle's total population could amount to 340 pairs, slightly more than previously thought, but subsistence hunting, with firearms, remains a great threat and could ultimately lead to this imposing raptor's demise.

For any serious ornithologist, these *Proceedings* are worth reading in full. Not only do they give a valuable insight into the amount of important research now being conducted on birds of prey, but they also draw attention to the perils facing many of these magnificent bird species in the modern world.

David A. Christie

FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

By David Sibley.
Christopher Helm, A&C Black,
London, 2003. 433 pages;
colour illustrations and
maps throughout.
ISBN 0-7136-6657-9
Flexibound, £14.99.

FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF WESTERN NORTH AMERICA

By David Sibley.
Christopher Helm, A&C Black,
London, 2003. 473 pages;
colour illustrations and
maps throughout.
ISBN 0-7136-6658-7
Flexibound, £14.99.

'Sibley', as David Sibley's *The North American Bird Guide* (2000) has become known, has been split into two slimmer volumes covering the birds of eastern and western North America, taking the Rocky Mountains as their dividing line. Despite what the advertising blurb claims – 'accompanied by a new, more

detailed text' – the crucial identification content remains the same, although for some species this is almost beyond minimalist. Additional text concentrates on habitat choice, nesting preferences and behaviour, and is presumably culled from *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behaviour* (2002).

Sibley's 'formula' is to depict every North American species at rest, and in flight poses showing both upperside and underside. All very ambitious and laudable, but also somewhat irrelevant when it comes to stereotyped flight representations of small, plain passerines. For example, in the western volume, Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fus-catus* and Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* are shown in flight from above and below. The plates have a stylised layout designed for ready comparisons between similar species, which works well. Throw in a distribution map for each species, Peterson-style pointers for 'key identification features', and a short paragraph covering habits and voice, and you can work your

way through an entire continent's avifauna knowing that whatever bird you are interested in will be illustrated and written about. Of course, the test of any good field guide is how well the birds are illustrated and whether the text adequately complements the pictures.

David Sibley is one of North America's younger birders, well qualified to be a member of 'the tertial gang' and someone who has delved into – and made sense of – thorny identification topics ranging from flight identification of North American raptors (with Pete Dunne and Clay Sutton in *Hawks in Flight*) to the separation of Saltmarsh *Ammodramus caudatus* and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows *A. nelsoni* (*Birding* 28: 196-208), now treated as full species. Thanks to Roger Tory Peterson, North America is arguably the birthplace of the field guide. Except for the appearance of the birds themselves, much has changed in the dissemination of bird identification knowledge since Peterson's original *Field Guide to the Birds* (1934). Kenn Kaufman wrote brilliantly and cracked a selection of tough nuts in *Advanced Birding* (1990), while various species groups have been put under the spotlight and elegantly described and painted to a high standard in works such as Rising & Beadle's *The Sparrows of the United States and Canada* (1996). So David Sibley has had plenty of building blocks to work with.

Some field guide plates are misted with a feeling of pure greatness. When I turn a page and see the essence of a species caught by artistic genius I feel humbled at the talent which delivered the likeness. You feel the bird come alive and can imagine the pleasure that the

artist must have felt at 'getting it right'. I seldom got that buzz from these two guides. Without doubt, Sibley has put in a monumental effort. Constantly, however, I felt pangs of disappointment. Gorgeous birds seemed to have been dashed off in a rough-and-ready style. Several raptors look as though they have gone a few rounds with Mike Tyson. If you haven't seen Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus* or Swainson's Hawk *B. swainsoni* in the wild, then be prepared for two of the most adorable birds of prey on the planet. Sibley's representation of them is an uglification of the magnificent. Other raptors appear frumpish, the Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* looks constipated and NASA does a better line in Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* artwork. It is odd to think that Sibley's raptors in *Hawks in Flight* were so much better.

On the other hand, passerines seem to be his forte. Sparrows and warblers are in many cases excellent. The tricky *Ammodramus* sparrows are superb, right down to the bright white tail-feather corners on Baird's Sparrow *A. bairdii* – alleged to be plain by other guides. A tour through shorebirds produces mixed results: nice Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, but his Greater *Tringa melanoleuca* and Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes* identification is in need of a revision course (read *Limicola* 6: 53-79, where the Germans tell you all you need to know). By the time I got to the skuas and gulls it was time for the brown paper bag. I reckon I would lose mystery bird quizzes based on his standing first-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* or first-winter Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*. Or maybe I just don't like them because they look as though they have been painted

using a trowel? Nevertheless, few plates are actually untrustworthy. Exceptions are several of the tern plates, even some depicting 'easy' species like Common *Sterna hirundo* and Arctic *S. paradisaea*. His pygmy-sized flying juveniles are dire – and young Commons have a grey rump, not a white one.

I found the text to be as patchy as the plates. Had an editor been put to work on it, needless repetition could have been eradicated. For example, every *Catharus* thrush is described as having habits and an appearance similar to Swainson's Thrush *C. ustulatus*, and no fewer than 20 raptors, all vireos *Vireo* and a host of species from Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* to skuas and Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* are described as 'solitary'. From a transatlantic vagrancy perspective, waterthrush *Seiurus* identification is not addressed with any degree of clarity of text or illustrations (but see *Advanced Birding*), while voice transcriptions have retrogressively 'gone Swedish' (interminable, meaningless lines of vowels and consonants replacing analogies that stick). Peterson (1934) described the voice of Black-throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens* as a 'husky, lazy, zur, zur, zur, zreee or "I am la-ZY"'. Sibley, 67 years later, portrays it as 'lazy, drawling, husky ... zheew zheew zheeeeee'. From first-hand experience, Peterson's 'I am la-ZY' is the best way to learn the song. I have been trying to come up with another analogy – one for my gut feeling for these two guides. It is this. Do you remember 'nouvelle cuisine'? That too was originally hailed as something special until we tried it out and then got hungry for real substance.

Anthony McGeehan

**WILD FLOWERS OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND:
THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE BRITISH & IRISH FLORA**

By Marjorie Blamey, Richard Fitter and Alastair Fitter.

A&C Black, London, 2003.

482 pages; colour illustrations on every facing page; over 800 maps.

ISBN 0-7136-5944-0. Paperback, £16.99.

In many ways this is the pictorial field guide we have been waiting for, with, in addition to the more obvious and popular flowering plants, reasonably comprehensive coverage of grasses, sedges, rushes and ferns. Consequently, it was with great eagerness that I field-tested this book for three weeks.

Its most obvious competitor is Francis Rose's *The Wild Flower Key* (Warne, 1981) and I was constantly tempted to make comparisons with that volume. So, what did I like about the new guide? Unlike Rose, it gives good coverage of grasses, sedges, rushes, ferns, water plants and trees. I particularly liked the distribution maps, which can tell you if you are wildly off track with

your identification, and there are tables of key features for groups of difficult species, for example yellow composites, which provide a quick reference for the more unusual distinguishing characters.

What didn't I like? There are no proper dichotomous keys, and little emphasis on diagnostic features and comparisons, tempting one to match plants to the pictures rather than properly identifying them. The rarity status designations are rather odd and not terribly intuitive, with the star ratings applying to classes which are close to, but not the same as, official categories (Red Data Book, Nationally Scarce). Although I liked the indications of decline and habit of

growth/abundance next to the maps, I had to keep checking back to see what the symbols meant. There are also some unnecessary errors – the quillwort *Isoetes* illustrations are labelled the wrong way round and both tasselweeds *Ruppia* are shown with very long spiral flowering stalks. I did, however, like the way aquatic plants are grouped by form rather than taxonomically.

Generally, I was rather disappointed with the illustrations, especially compared with Blamey's illustrations in other guides. The book is rather over-ambitious, tackling critical groups like the whitebeams *Sorbus* and generally trying to be all things to all field botanists. But the real question is, would I recommend it to students? I've always recommended Rose's key as a pictorial guide, but I suspect that now I shall be recommending Blamey, Fitter & Fitter.

Sarah Whild

**THE BIRD SONG OF
KENYA & TANZANIA:
AN INTRODUCTORY AID
TO IDENTIFICATION**

By John Hammick.

Mandarin Productions,
Wimborne, 2002. Single CD;
99 species covered. £9.99.

Most of the recordings on this CD were made on a safari to Tanzania in October 2001. A number of recordings have been included which were taken elsewhere, but only one was actually produced in Kenya! Other songs were recorded from as far away as Zimbabwe and The Gambia. While the majority of the species included do occur in Kenya, several do not, so the first part of the title is a little misleading – presumably a marketing ploy of the production company to increase potential sales. The second part of the title is also misleading, as the CD is simply a collection of recordings. There is no commentary or an accompanying set of

extended sleeve notes which might justify it being called 'An introductory aid to identification'. The lack of announcements on the CD means that the listener has to follow the track numbers on the display of the CD player and check them against the list of species on the sleeve notes. Consequently, the CD is not of much practical use for casual listening. For such 'educational' collections it helps greatly when trying to learn the vocalisations if the species' name is announced at the end of each track. The songs can then be listened to repeatedly with ease and an attempt made to identify each before the track finishes.

The selection of species included has presumably been dictated by what John Hammick managed to record during his safari. Thus it is very much a random selection with, for example, a recording of Levaillant's Cuckoo *Oxylophus levaillantii* (taken in The Gambia), but none of Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius*. The latter is

heard far more frequently in Kenya than the former in my experience, and is often a fascinating 'mystery sound' to the first-time visitor as the species calls incessantly but can be difficult to see. The recordings themselves are mostly of good quality. They have been produced on minidisc, which some professional archivists still have reservations about, but which I have been a fan of for some years. As a result, there is no obtrusive tape hiss in the background.

There is really nothing wrong with this CD, but it contains such a small, random selection of species (less than 10% of the combined Kenyan and Tanzanian lists) that one has to question how useful it would be to the first-time visitor. A better selection of common, widespread species would have been much more useful as an introductory guide, but presumably recordings of many of those species were not available to the production team.

David Fisher

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

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

Windfarm plan for Portland

Birders in Dorset are campaigning against a windfarm proposal for Weymouth harbour. This is the latest offshore scheme to spark protests from birders in England and follows plans for major windfarm projects at Teesmouth and the Solway Firth (see *Brit. Birds* 96: 464 & 530). The Portland Port Authority wants to erect 11 wind turbines in the harbour, 20 m behind the breakwaters, and has commissioned the electricity generator Powergen to conduct a feasibility study. From sea level to the tip of the turbine blades at the top of their rotation will be 100 m. With a rotating diameter of 80 m each, the row of 11 turbines will present a combined barrier of nearly 900 m.

The Port Authority has a tough fight on its hands, however. Spearheading the anti-windfarm campaign is Charlie Moores, one of the team behind the high-profile campaign to save the Saemangeum estuary in South Korea (see right). Potential victims of that 900-m wall of rotating blades include Weymouth Bay's wintering flock of between 400 and 500 Red-breasted Mergansers *Mergus serrator*. A nationally important flock of more than 1,000 dark-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla bernicla* spend the winter along the Fleet, and in recent years there have been increasing numbers of pale-bellied Brent Geese *B. b. hrota* there too. In summer, the Fleet is home to a colony of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons*, and their preferred crossing point from the Fleet to Weymouth Harbour is through the windfarm zone.

For further information, contact Portland Bird Observatory committee members Charlie Moores and Peter Mowday at petermowday@tiscali.co.uk

Phone masts cause controversy too

If the scything blades of windmills at key wildlife sites are not bad enough, conservationists in the USA have raised the alarm about mobile phone masts too. A federal investigation has been launched into the plight of up to 50 million migratory birds killed each year by mobile phone and broadcast masts strung across the USA. The communications commission has a legal duty to minimise the environmental effect of the hundreds of thousands of masts spread across the country. At some masts located on migratory routes, thousands of birds have apparently been killed in a single night. The agency will work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to look at why migratory birds fly into masts. The commission says that certain factors – such as mast height, lighting systems, type of antenna support structure, and location – may affect the hazards posed to migratory birds. The scientific team is particularly concerned about whether lighting of various sorts and colours may attract birds, particularly at night, in fog or bad weather. It also wants to discover if any successful mitigation measures have been tried.

Link: *The Guardian* (www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,1027233,00.html).

World's waders in decline

A conference of the international Wader Study Group – a specialist group of Wetlands International and IUCN scientists – has concluded that the majority of wader populations (at least those whose population trend is known) are in decline all around the world. In short, 48% are declining, compared with just 16% which are increasing. The reasons for these declines are diverse and generally poorly understood. More than 130 wader specialists from 20 countries attended the WSG conference in Cádiz, Spain, in late September. The full text of their concluding statement – and summary statistics – can be found on the WSG website: www.waderstudygroup.org

Saemangeum update 2

The battle to Save Our Spoon-billed Sandpipers *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* (*Brit. Birds* 96: 463) is reaching a climax. The decisive court hearing over the future of the 400 km² Saemangeum estuary in South Korea – the key staging post for waders breeding in northeast Siberia, and a site which Ramsar asked the South Korean Government to protect as a Wetland of International Importance in 1999 (and which they did not) – was scheduled to start on 31st October. The magnificent lobbying campaign by Wetlands and Birds Korea has seen (by early October) 6,400 birders from 76 countries sign an online petition condemning the government reclamation scheme. To add your name, go to: www.wbkenglish.com/petition01.asp

Research work in Arctic Siberia has confirmed the importance of Saemangeum. One of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper juveniles leg-flagged in South Chukotka this summer by Christoph Zöckler was sighted on September 21st on Okbong-ri tidal flat at Saemangeum.

Link: World Conservation Monitoring Centre (www.unep-wcmc.org).

New Order in Manchester

No, this is not news of a home-town gig for the seminal electropop band of the 1980s, but instead it concerns the Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group becoming the first bird club in Britain to embrace the new ordering of the British List, with its 2002 annual report published in September. As *BB* readers will be aware, those observatory log calls will never be the same again. In overdue recognition of the new phylogenetic order first published by Sibley & Monroe in 1990, the BOU has reordered the British List with immediate effect. The familiar 'Any divers, grebes...' at the beginning of the nightly log will now be replaced by 'Any swans, geese, ducks, gamebirds...'

The Oriental Bird Club was the first significant authority to embrace the Sibley & Monroe order with its *Annotated Checklist of Birds of the Oriental Region* in 1996.

The BOU has waited until Karel Voous, one of its Gold Medal winners, had passed away (*Brit. Birds* 95: 257-259) before announcing its intention to follow suit. The British List now begins with Anseriformes and Galliformes, before resuming a more familiar order. It is really a simple matter of ripping out the wildfowl and gamebird plates from your favourite field guide and stapling them at the front of the book. You can download the reordered British List at www.bou.org.uk/recbrlst.html

Link: Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group
(www.gmbirds.freeserve.co.uk).

Hen Harriers notch up one more nest

The Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* breeding figures for 2003 published by English Nature show that there was one more successful nest than in 2002 – and four more fledged young across the country. This is despite a number of setbacks earlier in the spring. There were 22 nesting attempts in England this year, involving at least 18 territorial females. From these attempts, eight successful nests resulted in 26 fledged young. There were 14 failed breeding attempts, including six nests lost under circumstances suggesting illegal persecution.

Radio-tracking is being used to follow young birds across the English uplands. Harriers have already been recorded moving between the Bowland Fells, the North York Moors, the North Pennines and the Yorkshire Dales, often travelling large distances every day. The tracking also showed that a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* took a juvenile Hen Harrier fledged from one of the eight successful English nests. It is hoped that the surviving birds can be tracked back to their moorland breeding sites next spring.

Released Red-billed Choughs die

Two of the six Red-billed Choughs *Pyrhacorax pyrhacorax* controversially released in Cornwall by the Paradise Park aviary in Hayle have died within a month: one drowned in a cattle trough and the other was taken by a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. English Nature, the National Trust, and the RSPB had all warned against the release of the birds because they were captive-bred and would struggle to survive in the wild. In addition, the RSPB claimed that the captive birds posed a risk of disturbing the wild choughs and/or passing on diseases.

The release of the birds was the culmination of Paradise Park's 'Operation Chough': a 16-year project by the privately owned sanctuary to return the charismatic crow, which is the emblem of Cornwall, to the county. Paradise Park ploughed on with the project despite the natural recolonisation of Red-billed Choughs in Cornwall in the past two years (see *Brit. Birds* 96: 23-29).

Cetacean first for Europe

Two Melon-headed Whales *Peponocephala electra* on the Biscay coast of France in August were the first live sightings of this mammalian species in Europe. An account of their stranding, together with the remarkable account of the Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* which followed the Portsmouth–Bilbao ferry into port in Spain, appears on the Organisation Cetacea (ORCA) website. There is also a great picture of the Harp Seal *Pagophilus groenlandicus* at Portland on September 27th, and bird reports from the Bay of Biscay cruises in 1999 and 2000. The whale-watching page now has an online form for casual marine wildlife observations, as well as giving some general advice on whale watching.

Link: ORCA (www.orcaweb.org.uk).

Correction:

A 'post-Irish' review of 'firsts' for Britain

Since the publication of the above Note (*Brit. Birds* 96: 402-405), we have been alerted to two errors:

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*

The first Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler for Britain, on Fair Isle, Shetland, in 1949, was present on 8th-9th October, not 6th-9th as stated.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

The record of an adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Shane's Castle, Co. Antrim, on 24th November 1957 was subsequently rejected by IRBC, and so the first-winter on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 7th-8th October 1962, found by Mike Fogden and Tim Sharrock, stands as the first record for Britain & Ireland.

Eds



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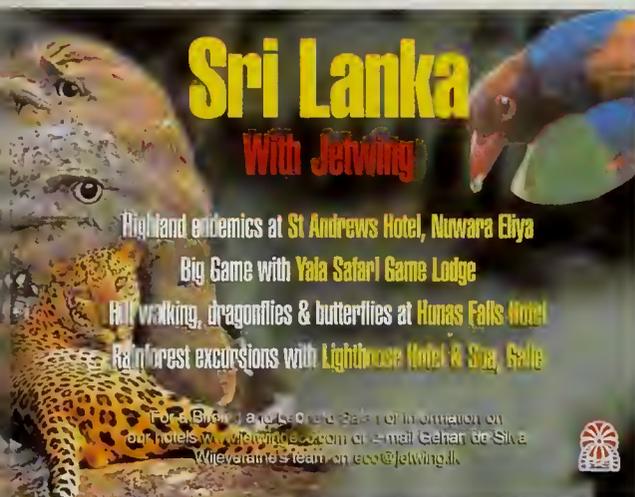
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December 2003 Vol 96 No 12

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The Carl Zeiss
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breeding in 2001

Scarce migrants
in 2001



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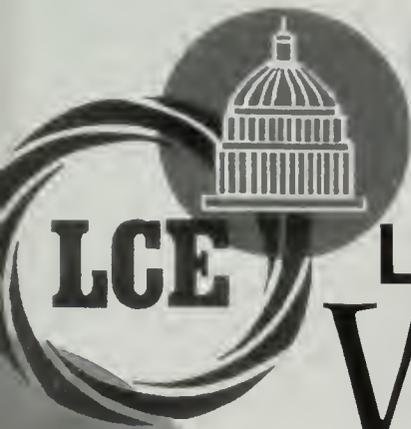
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The Carl Zeiss Award 2003



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Brit. Birds 94: 536) or have a crucial influence upon the decision made by BBRC. One of the more challenging tasks of the Committee in 2002 was to develop criteria for the assessment of field records of Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and our initial short list contained series of photographs of three individuals of this species. There were also photographs of two Greenish *Phylloscopus trochiloides* and one Arctic Warbler *P. borealis*, two Oriental Turtle Doves *Streptopelia orientalis*, and one of a Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* which permitted the bird to be assigned to the western race *hispanica*. Over the course of the evening, and several bottles of wine, the judges whittled down this initial selection to a short list of six entries, listed below in Voous order.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*
Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*
Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum*
Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Richard & Rob Fray
Dick Hewitt
Robin Harvey
Andy Middleton
Nick Lowton/Bryan Thomas
Russell Wynn

The images of the Long-billed Dowitcher on Foula, Shetland, in September 2002, taken by Richard and Rob Fray are particularly interesting, as they show a richly coloured individual which might possibly, under some circumstances, have been mistaken for a Short-billed Dowitcher *L. griseus* (plates 382 & 383).

The series of excellent photographs of the Thrush Nightingale on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, in May 2002, by Robin Harvey demonstrates just how the breast pattern of this species can change with variations in light. It also enables a critical examination of the closed wing, and of the colour contrast between the tail/rump and the mantle,

which are also important fieldmarks when ruling out Rufous Nightingale *L. megarhynchos* (plates 384 & 385).

The Greenish Warbler which was found onboard the R. V. *Kommander Jack*, northeast of Shetland in August 2002, had been mooted as a potential 'Green Warbler' *P. t. uittidus*, but, after studying the detailed photos taken by the finder, Russell Wynn, it became clear that the enriched plumage colour apparent in some images was caused by changes in the background (plates 386 & 387).

Good contenders though all these three were, our third short list in the course of a long evening contained the remaining three sets of



Richard Hewitt

376 & 377. Joint winner of The Carl Zeiss Award 2003: juvenile/first-winter Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Portmahomack, Easter Ross, Highland, November 2002.



Richard Hewitt

photos, including two of different Blyth's Reed Warblers. The images in an excellent series of the Scilly bird from two photographers, Nick Lowton and Bryan Thomas, were clear enough to allow us to analyse the wing formula, as well as demonstrating the effect of light on the apparent coloration of the bird (plates 380 & 381). Deciding the eventual winner of this year's competition was perhaps as difficult as any we have judged, but this last entry was not selected as the overall winner because it was clear that this bird had been seen so well that the identification would probably have been clinched without photos anyway. That was not so for the remaining two birds. The discovery of each of these provides an amazing story, topped by the photographs.

In early October 2001, an unstreaked *Acrocephalus* was discovered at Canary Wharf, in the Docklands area of Greater London. Andy Mid-

dleton and Ken Murray were fairly certain that it was a Blyth's Reed Warbler and Andy took extensive video footage of the bird (plates 378 & 379). Unfortunately, coming just after the 11th September terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, and because Canary Wharf itself had already been mooted as a potential target for a terrorist attack, they were not allowed to release the news. The grabs from the video confirm that they had indeed found a Blyth's Reed Warbler.

On 9th November 2002, Dick Hewitt was driving along a country road in Easter Ross, on a goose count, when he noticed a dove feeding at the roadside. He thought initially that it was a juvenile Turtle Dove *S. turtur*, in itself a rare bird in this part of the world, particularly so late in the year, but he noticed that it looked large and dark. He grabbed his camera, fortunately handily placed on the seat beside him,



Andy Middleton

378 & 379. Joint winner of The Carl Zeiss Award 2003: Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Canary Wharf, Greater London, October 2001 (from video footage).



Andy Middleton



Bryan Thomas

and managed to take one photograph before the bird flew off, never to be seen again. At the time, although he thought it might have been an Oriental Turtle Dove, he assumed that he had little hope of confirming the record: he had watched the bird for a total of about 90 seconds! Fortunately, the photograph was to prove otherwise and shows an undoubted Oriental Turtle Dove, probably of the race *meena* (plates 376 & 377).

In both these cases, it is unlikely that the records would have been accepted without the photographic support, in the first case because of the inherent unlikelihood of the record, and in the second because the observer simply did not manage to record sufficient detail to confirm such a rare bird. We were unable to separate these two, and have decided to award them both joint winners of the first prize.

In recognition of the difficulties which the



Nick Lowton

380 & 381. First-winter Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, St Mary's, Scilly, October-November 2002. We have chosen these two photographs to demonstrate the variation in both apparent colour with different lighting conditions, and shape with posture. The following features can, however, be seen on both photographs: the uniform wing with, in particular, little contrast in the tertials; the short primary projection; and the parallel supercilium extending to just behind the eye. There is a trace of warmth (perhaps a hint of rufous-brown) on both the rump and the edges of the remiges. This is quite compatible with the identification and, in fact, this warmth contrasting with a lack of such tones anywhere else on the plumage may actually be a positive feature.

judges had this year in separating the two winners, Carl Zeiss Ltd have generously provided two prizes from their brand new range of 'Conquest' binoculars, which were launched at the British Birdwatching Fair in August 2003. The four new Conquest models are in the 'mid-price' range of optics, although there seems to have been no compromise on features and technical properties. They are undoubtedly well made and appear to be robust, being nitrogen-filled, and thus waterproof, and fitted with easy-grip rubber



Renee Fray



Bob Fray

382 & 383. Juvenile Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Foula, Shetland, September 2002.



Robin Harvey



Robin Harvey

384 & 385. Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Farne Islands, Northumberland, May 2002.

armouring. With ZEISS T* multicoating on the lenses, the image is clear and bright, and the binoculars feature high-eyepoint eyepieces and push-pull eyecups. The most remarkable thing about them, however, is their light weight. They are among the lightest quality binoculars available, with the 8 × 30 BT* weighing a mere 495 g, and the 10 × 30 just 510 g. If ever you wanted a pair of binoculars to hang round your neck comfortably for a

whole day in the field, these could be the ones. Zeiss have agreed that this year's winners can each choose between the 8 × 30 and the 10 × 30 models; the range also comprises 12 × 45 and 15 × 45 models.

Acknowledgments

Grateful thanks are due to Harry Scott for allowing us to use the sharpened digital version of Dick Hewitt's Oriental Turtle Dove transparency.



Russell Wynn



Russell Wynn

386 & 387. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, sea area Fair Isle, 61°55'N 01°10'E, 110 km NE of Shetland, August 2002.

Colin Bradshaw, Chris Kehoe, Adrian Pitches and Jimmy Steele
c/o 9 Tynemouth Place, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ



The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd

Non-native birds breeding in the United Kingdom in 2001

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



388. A pair of Eagle Owls *Bubo bubo* bred in northern England each year between 1996 and 2001, with only one failure. The pair reared three young in 2001 (the year covered in this report). Observers are urged to submit all sightings of this species in the UK to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, whether or not they involve birds thought to be breeding. *Photographer unknown*

This is the sixth annual report by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel into the breeding of the rarer non-native species in the United Kingdom and covers the year 2001. Recording of many species was reduced this year because of restrictions on access imposed during the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) epidemic. Even allowing for this, however, coverage

was less complete than hoped for and we urge all observers to report the occurrence of 'escapes' to their County Recorder and, through them, to the Panel.

As explained by Ogilvie (1997), free-living non-native species, whether resulting from escapes from captivity or through deliberate introductions, can lead to serious conservation

problems, for example to indigenous species or to agriculture. Britain has experienced some widespread and well-publicised problems, for example those relating to Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* and Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*.

Almost 300 species of non-native birds have been reported in the wild in Britain and about one-sixth of these have bred in the wild (BOURC 1998; Holmes *et al.* 1998). All of these species have the potential to acquire pest status capable of causing significant economic and nature conservation impacts. By gathering information on their breeding since 1996, the Panel has put in place a national mechanism to track the establishment and spread of populations of these non-native species, a need which was identified at the joint BOU/JNCC Conference on introduced and naturalised birds in the UK held in 1995 (Holmes & Simons 1996; Marchant 1996).

The information gathered will assist conservation agencies and the Government to fulfil Article 8 of the Biodiversity Convention, and other international treaties, such as the EC Birds Directive, which stress the need to ensure that releases of non-native species are closely regulated and do not result in ecological conflicts with native fauna or flora, whether in this country or farther afield. The Government has recently received the report from a working group reviewing its non-native species policy (Defra 2003) and in this the Panel was identified as playing an important monitoring role.

Records of all non-native species for which there was breeding or potential breeding activity in 2001 are listed below. In the case of the pheasants (Phasianidae), the presence of males in suitable habitat is sufficient to qualify a species for inclusion. The letter codes after the species' names are the categories used by the BOU Records Committee (BOURC 1998). The absence of a letter indicates that the species is not currently listed.

- A Species which have been recorded in an apparently natural state at least once since 1st January 1950.
- B Species which were recorded in an apparently natural state at least once up to 31st December 1949, but have not been recorded subsequently.
- C Species that, although originally introduced by Man, either deliberately or accidentally,

have established breeding populations derived from introduced stock, that maintain themselves without necessary recourse to further introduction.

- E Species that have been recorded as introductions, transportees or escapees from captivity, and whose breeding populations (if any) are thought not to be self-sustaining. These are marked E* when they have been recorded as nesting with their own kind.

The following species, shown as Category C in the British List, are dealt with in the Panel's reports on rare breeding birds (e.g. Ogilvie *et al.* 2003): Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*.

The Panel does not gather information for the following relatively common species of which introduced or escaped populations breed in the wild (categories in brackets): Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* (AC), Greylag Goose *Anser anser* (AC), Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* (AC), Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* (C), Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (AC), Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* (C), Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* (BC), Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar* (E*), Red-legged Partridge *A. rufa* (C), Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (C), Rock Dove (and Feral Pigeon) *Columbia livia* (AC), and Little Owl *Athene noctua* (C).

Comments included under the various goose species refer to the totals found during a national survey in 1991 (Delany 1993). Although a repeat survey was carried out by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in 2001, the results are not yet available.

Records for England are listed first followed by those for Scotland and, within each country, by alphabetical order of county. There were no records of scarcer non-native species breeding in either Northern Ireland or Wales in 2001.

The Panel

The current membership of the Panel is: Colin Bibby, Humphrey Crick, Ian Francis, Judith Smith, Ken Smith, David Stroud and Malcolm Ogilvie (Secretary). The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but three are also able to reflect the interests and needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is supported financially by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and the RSPB, with additional support coming from the BTO.

Systematic list

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (AE*)

Two localities in two counties: two populations of full-winged individuals.

NORFOLK Full-winged birds were seen both in and outside Great Witchingham Park all year, with a maximum of five, including juveniles, in October. LOTHIAN No young were left full-winged at Edinburgh Zoo.

Edinburgh Zoo is now pursuing a policy to reduce the number of free-flying birds.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* (E*)

At least ten localities in nine counties/regions: at least nine pairs bred.

DEVON Pair bred at Starcross and reared four young. ESSEX Pairs bred at Abberton Reservoir (one young reared) and Hanningfield Reservoir (three young reared). GREATER MANCHESTER Pair bred at Arley Hall and reared four young. SUSSEX Pair bred at Amberley Wildbrooks RSPB Reserve and reared five young, and a pair was present at Cowdray Park and possibly bred. WILTSHIRE Pair bred at Ramsbury Lake and reared two young. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Mated pair visited several lochs over a period of about ten days at the end of April, but apparently did not breed. LOTHIAN Pair bred on the Union Canal at Ratho and reared two or three young. NORTH-EAST SCOTLAND Pair bred at the St Fergus Gas Terminal and fledged one of the two young hatched. ORKNEY Pair bred near Kirkwall and reared three young.

This is easily the largest number of pairs reported breeding since the Panel started gathering records in 1996.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* (AE*)

There were no reports of breeding by apparently escaped or introduced birds. For reports of breeding by birds thought to be of wild origin see Ogilvie *et al.* (2003).

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus (AE*)

Small numbers were recorded in summer from a number of localities where Icelandic birds regularly winter, such as the Solway Firth, but no breeding was reported.

Delany (1993) found a total of 88 individuals at 29 sites in 1991, including a breeding pair in Lancashire.

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons (AE*)

One locality in one county: three pairs bred.

ARGYLL Three full-winged pairs of the Greenland race *flavirostris* bred on Islay, but only one brood of three young fledged.

Delany (1993) reported a total of 54 *albifrons* in 1991, of which 40 were at six localities in Norfolk. The small group of *flavirostris* on Islay stem from a waterfowl collection, and breeding success is typically low.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* (E*)

Three localities in three counties: one pair bred and one pair possibly bred.

DERBYSHIRE Pair present on a lake at Kineton all summer, but breeding probably did not occur. SURREY Pair bred at Teddington Lock and reared two young. SUSSEX Flock of 22, including eight juveniles, at Chichester Harbour, 1st September. The origin of these remains a mystery and they could have come from a foreign collection.

Reports of singles and small flocks were received from a number of counties. Delany (1993) reported 85 individuals at 27 localities in 1991, but few breeding attempts have been reported and breeding success appears to be typically low.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* (AE*)

Two localities in two counties: one hybrid pair bred.

HAMPSHIRE A Snow Goose paired with a Greylag Goose *A. anser* reared three young at Blashford. No report was received from the regular breeding site of Stratfield Saye owing to FMD restrictions on access. ARGYLL The introduced flock of 30-40 which moves between Coll and Mull was present during 2001, but there was no report of breeding.

Emperor Goose *Anser canagicus* (E)

Two localities in two counties: three pairs bred.

CUMBRIA Two pairs bred at Walney Island rearing four young; up to 14 were present through the year. SURREY A captive pair bred at Claremont Lake and reared three young. On 20th September, a flock of eight was present at this site, of which six were full-winged.

This is the first time that breeding has been reported in the wild, and follows the failed breeding attempt of a mixed pair (hybrid

Emperor × Bar-headed Goose *A. indicus*) in Cumbria in 2000. Delany (1993) found 14 individuals in 1991 at seven localities.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (AE*)

Minimum of three localities in four counties: seven pairs known to have bred.

AVON Two pairs bred at Chew Valley Lake and reared three young. CUMBRIA Three pairs reared two young at Killington Reservoir and two pairs reared eight young at Derwent Water. A flock of 59 birds was seen all summer at the latter site and also on Ullswater. HAMPSHIRE No reports were received from the regular breeding site of Stratfield Saye because of FMD restrictions on access. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE An estimated 15 pairs were present in the county.

As in 2000, the above is an incomplete picture of the status of this species, exacerbated by access restrictions. Flocks of apparently non-breeding birds were reported from a number of localities.

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiacus (CE*)

Minimum of 42 localities in ten counties: at least 47 breeding pairs recorded.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Pair bred at Langley Park and reared six young. ESSEX Single pairs possibly bred at Earls Colne and at South Park, Ilford. GREATER MANCHESTER Pair reared two young at Etherow Country Park. HAMPSHIRE Two pairs bred in the Avon Valley and reared five young. LEICESTERSHIRE At least four pairs bred at Rutland Water and reared 19 young. NORFOLK Breeding was recorded at 29 locations, though no totals of pairs are available. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Pair bred at one locality and was seen with seven young in April. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Pair bred at Attenborough, but the two young seen in April subsequently disappeared; two broods, of four and eight young, were seen at Center Parcs, Rufford. SUFFOLK Four pairs bred and ten pairs possibly bred in the county, but data incomplete. SURREY Pair reared eight young in Kew Gardens; two pairs were present in Sutton Place, one of which bred, but outcome unknown; single pairs were present all year at Bay Pond, Godstone, and at Walton-on-Thames, but breeding not thought to have occurred.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (BE*)

One locality: one pair.

NORFOLK Pair present at Holkham Park all year.

In addition, there were many sightings of singles and small flocks reported to us.

Muscovy Duck

Cairina moschata (E*)

Four localities in four counties: six pairs bred.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Maximum of 30 birds present at Ely during the year; at least three pairs bred, with broods of seven, four and two reported. CHESHIRE Pair bred at Shakerley, young being seen in July. DEVON Two pairs bred at Okehampton, ten birds present in December. DORSET Pair present throughout the year at Abbotsbury.

Records of non-breeding birds were received from a further two counties. We repeat our comment made last year that this species is not just a farmyard duck and that we welcome all records.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* (E*)

One locality: pair bred.

DEVON Female with five to seven week-old young near Haytor on 23rd June.

In addition, single birds were seen in three counties.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* (AE*)

Three localities in two counties: six pairs known to have bred.

NORFOLK Regular free-flying flock at Penthorpe Waterfowl Park; five broods seen. At least two females were reported throughout the summer at Hickling Broad. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Pair bred at Lound and were seen with four young on 25th June, but only one remained by 14th August.

Yet again we have no information on the apparently well-established population in the Cotswold Water Park (Gloucestershire/Wiltshire), and once more we urge local bird-watchers there to carry out a survey of this species.

Common Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula (A)

No reports of apparently escaped or introduced birds were received.

Reeves's Pheasant *Symaticus reevesii* (E*)

Six localities in four counties: at least nine birds. AVON Single males at Clevedon on 29th March and at Henleaze on 24th April. NORFOLK Reported from Seven Acre Pit, Stanford Training Area, on 28th April. SOMERSET Male at Coppleham Cross, 29th April. Birds reported as introduced at Ash Priors. WILTSHIRE Two males and three females were seen at Druid's Lodge on 29th December.

Green Pheasant *Phasianus versicolor*

One county, four localities. NORFOLK Reported from Brumstead (dead bird), 1st February; East Ruston, 28th March; Neatishead, 8th February and 18th March; and Worstead, 10th February.

These sightings come from the same area of Norfolk as the six seen in 2000.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* (CE*)

One locality: single bird recorded. SUFFOLK Male heard calling at Brandon on 3rd April.

A very poor showing after the much fuller report published for 2000. Access restrictions because of FMD are at least partly to blame for the lack of records.

Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae* (CE*)

The only information received was that there is still a population present in Backwood and Wavendon Woods, Buckinghamshire.

Common Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* (E*)

One locality. NORFOLK Two, Winfarthing, 9th May and one on 20th.

The only previous records of this species in these reports were of breeding by up to three pairs in Northamptonshire in 1998-99.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* (E)

One locality: two pairs bred. NORFOLK Two pairs fledged 12-14 young at Houghton Park; there were several other adults in the area.

This is the first breeding by this species to be included in these reports. The locality is well

away from Stanford Water, Norfolk, where three were seen in suitable habitat in 2000.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (E*)

One locality: hybrid pair bred. KENT A pair of hybrid Alexandrine x Rose-ringed Parakeets *P. krameri* bred at Sidcup and reared at least one young. A male Alexandrine was seen attending two Rose-ringed Parakeet nests nearby.

This is the first breeding report since the pair which bred at Fazackerley, Merseyside, in 1997-99 disappeared.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (CE*)

Breeding in seven counties: total population 6,000+.

BERKSHIRE Mainly in east of county, but spreading west; at least 118 birds roosting at Maidenhead in winter 2001/02. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Small population in southeast of county, as well as farther north to Bourne End and Marlow; the most recent estimated total is of c.100 birds in 2000. DORSET At least two pairs bred at Studland, where 12+ birds were seen in August. KENT Estimated 100+ pairs on the Isle of Thanet, where principal roost, at Ramsgate, peaked at 540 in winter 2001/02 and the total population was estimated at 600 birds. Increasing population in west of county around Lewisham, with peak roost count of 900 in winter 2001/02. MIDDLESEX Largest counts from Bushy Park and Hampton Court areas with at least 150-200 birds present. SURREY Peak roost counts in winter 2001/02 were of 4,096 at the Esher Rugby Club and 350 at Reigate. SUSSEX Continued expansion south and a small isolated population around Brighton.

Although this report normally concentrates on reports of breeding pairs, the population of this species is far more easily monitored through counts at roosts. The five main winter roosts, at Esher, Lewisham, Reigate, Ramsgate and Maidenhead, held a total of 6,004 birds during winter 2001/02, compared with 4,352 during winter 2000/01.

Butler (2002) divides the birds living in the London area into two subpopulations: (1) southwest London, including east Berkshire, south Buckinghamshire, Middlesex, Surrey and north Sussex, and (2) southeast London,

centred on the Lewisham/Bromley/Bexley area of northwest Kent.

Most of the information above came from Butler (2002) and Raven (2002), as well as from Chris Butler's website at <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~wolf0977/plan.html>, to which observers are requested to contribute their sightings.

Blue-crowned Parakeet

Aratinga acuticaudata

One locality: pair bred.

KENT Pair bred at Lewisham; four eggs laid, but predated. Second pair present but not proved to be breeding.

This is the first time that this species has been recorded breeding in the wild in the UK, although it is probable that birds have been breeding at Lewisham for some years as a pair was seen at a bird table in the area in 1997 and numbers had increased to about 15 by 1999. The details of the breeding attempt have already been reported by Butler *et al.* (2002). The species is a native of South America where different subspecies occur in Columbia and Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* (E*)

Two localities in two counties: breeding at one. HERTFORDSHIRE The population in Borehamwood numbered at least 32 birds, with seven nests found, but breeding success was not known. SURREY One bird of the pair which bred at Lonsdale Reservoir in 1999 was found dead in February 2001 and the other subsequently disappeared.

Occasional sightings suggest continuing escapes of this species, but no other breeding populations are known. Previous colonies existed at Tiverton, Devon, and Barnton, Cheshire, but then died out.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* (E*)

One locality: pair bred.

ENGLAND The pair which has been breeding at a location in northern England since 1996 reared three young.

This pair has bred for six years running, with only one failure. There have been very few

reports of the 13 young reared during this period. It would be useful to receive all records of this species, whether breeding or not, from throughout the UK.

Red-winged Laughingthrush *Garrulax formosus*

One area: breeding reported.

ISLE OF MAN Escapees from a wildlife park have been living in the wild for several years, with breeding taking place since at least 1996.

This addition to the list of non-native species breeding in the UK has only recently been reported to the Panel. A full account is in preparation. The species is a native of southwest Szechwan and northeast Yunnan provinces in southwest China.

Acknowledgments

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Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2001

Peter A. Fraser and Michael J. Rogers

ABSTRACT Of those migrants considered in this report, 2001 proved to be a good year for a diverse mix of species. In particular, the highest numbers ever recorded of Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris*, Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* and Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica* of the white-spotted race *cyaneola* stand out as highlights, while sightings of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii*, Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae* and Barred Warblers *Sylvia nisoria* were also well above average. For many birders, however, the spring of 2001 will be remembered primarily for the restrictions on access to the countryside as a consequence of the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) epidemic. These restrictions were, of necessity, strictly enforced, which probably resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of scarce migrants recorded during the spring. For example, Hoopoes *Upupa epops*, Tawny Pipits *Anthus campestris*, Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator*, Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* and Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* were all particularly scarce during the spring. Some species, however, such as Woodchat Shrike and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, occurred in low numbers in autumn too (there were fewer Ortolans than in any year since 1968), which suggests that factors other than FMD were responsible for the poor showing in 2001. It was also the worst year on record for Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, which, like Ortolan Bunting, invariably occurs in larger numbers in autumn.

This is the seventh annual report on scarce migrant birds in Britain, and it follows a similar format to the sixth report (*Brit. Birds* 95: 606-630). Additional data for each species may be found in the 'Scarce Migrants' section of the BBRC website (www.bbrc.org.uk).

Only those records which have been assessed and accepted by the appropriate local, regional or national records panels have been included in this report. Every year, the time taken to assemble the data (including the record assessment process) varies considerably among counties and consequently, despite the willing and enthusiastic co-operation of nearly all Britain's County Recorders and their assistants, this

report has to be published well after the year under review. Even then, many or all records from a few counties and sub-counties are not included. Current gaps in the source material for the scarce migrants database can be seen on the website (see above) and we urge recorders still to submit data for 2001 and previous years, if they have not yet done so. Statistics have been updated for previous years as they have become available, even if this was after the publication of the report in question. In addition, the inclusion of records previously treated as being 'at sea', but within the 200-mile 'British Economic Zone', have been included this year, resulting in a further revision of some statistics.

Table 1. The data show the relative abundance of each species in 2001, by ranking the number of individuals recorded during 2001 in the context of previous annual totals. For example, 2001 was the seventh-best year on record for Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*. Note that the number of years of comparable data varies according to species. This table highlights in more detail which species were recorded in relatively high or low numbers in 2001. When compared with previous reports in this series (e.g. Fraser & Rogers 2001, 2002), it is apparent that some species are appearing more regularly towards the bottom of the table. In particular, several southern or southeastern species, such as Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Icterine *Hippolais icterina* and Melodious Warblers *H. polyglotta* and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, are in the midst of a run of poor years.

Species	No. in 2001	Year Rank	Years of data
Ring-necked Duck <i>Aythya collaris</i>	48	1	44
Grey Phalarope <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	1,039	1	16
'White-spotted Bluethroat' <i>Luscinia svecica cyaneacula</i>	17	1	34
Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	134	2	34
Richard's Pipit <i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>	165	2	44
Barred Warbler <i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	208	3	34
Green-winged Teal <i>Anas carolinensis</i>	28	5	44
European Honey-buzzard <i>Pernis apivorus</i>	156	5	16
Sabine's Gull <i>Larus sabini</i>	249	5	34
Common Crane <i>Grus grus</i>	87	6	44
Pectoral Sandpiper <i>Calidris melanotos</i>	69	7	34
Ring-billed Gull <i>Larus delawarensis</i>	72	7	29
White Stork <i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	26	9	44
Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i>	56	9	16
European Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>	26	9	44
Red-breasted Flycatcher <i>Ficedula parva</i>	109	10	34
European Serin <i>Serinus serinus</i>	54	10	44
Little Bunting <i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	30	10	44
Short-toed Lark <i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	17	11	44
Yellow-browed Warbler <i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	303	11	34
Cory's Shearwater <i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	160	12	44
Rough-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo lagopus</i>	28	12	28
Common Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus erythrinnus</i>	105	12	44
Surf Scoter <i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	11	13	44
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	217	13	16
Marsh Warbler <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	40	13	16
Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	21	14	16
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	139	14	16
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	20	15	16
Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	79	15	34
Great Grey Shrike <i>Lanius excubitor</i>	58	15	16
Bluethroat <i>Luscinia svecica</i> (all races)	89	18	34
Pallas's Leaf Warbler <i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	16	21	44
Melodious Warbler <i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	26	22	34
Buff-breasted Sandpiper <i>Tryngites subruficollis</i>	10	26	44
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	13	28	44
Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	64	32	34
Aquatic Warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	11	34	44
Icterine Warbler <i>Hippolais icterina</i>	32	34	34
Ortolan Bunting <i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	19	34	34
Tawny Pipit <i>Anthus campestris</i>	8	38	44
Woodchat Shrike <i>Lanius senator</i>	5	41	44

Systematic list

Interpretation of the statistics used and quoted in the species accounts should take into consideration the following points:

- Increasing numbers of field observers, armed with greater knowledge and improved
- mobility and spending more time in the field, must, to some extent, be responsible for the increase in the recorded numbers of certain species.
- Known breeding individuals (of species such as Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

and Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*) have been excluded from the report.

- Individuals remaining from one year to the next (e.g. overwintering Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata*) have been counted only in their year of arrival.
- Returning individuals (e.g. Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis*) have, where possible, been counted only in their year of arrival,

unless stated otherwise.

- Known escapes from captivity (e.g. some White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*) have been excluded.
- Statistics for some species for 2001, and to a lesser degree for earlier years, are incomplete because of the unavailability of data from some counties.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1998	1999	1980	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
160	22,526	12	5,116	3,634	2,851	14	18	453	1,519	1,228

Unlike the previous four years, 2001 was not memorable for large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters in the southwest. Nonetheless, record numbers were seen along the North Sea coast, although it is difficult to assess the level of duplication involved among the reports here. The estimate of 65 seen between Suffolk and Fife represents an increase of more than 58% above the previous high count along the North Sea coast, when 41 were recorded in 1995. There were a number of sightings away from prime large-shearwater territory, with singles off Walney Island, Cumbria, on 12th July, and Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire, on 19th August; two off the Isle of Wight, on 11th July and 8th August; and one off Griminish, Outer Hebrides, on 28th June.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1987	1999	1970/94	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
13	729	28	35	32	28	7	19	21	20	19

With just 13 birds recorded, 2001 was a particularly poor year for Purple Herons in Britain. Undoubtedly, access restrictions owing to foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) were partially responsible for this poor showing, especially for a species which typically occurs more frequently in spring than autumn. As usual, most appeared in counties bordering the English south and east coasts, but the northernmost bird turned up at North Plain, Cumbria, on 18th June. Other inland records included birds at Idle Stop, Nottinghamshire, on 22nd April and a long-stayer at Saddington Reservoir, Leicestershire, from 27th August until 20th September, which was also the only one in autumn.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1998	1986	1977	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
26	583	9	55	48	39	2	16	15	21	19

Of the 50 records received for 2001, about half were thought to have captive origins. An estimate of 26



Iain Leach

389. White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Bottesford, Leicestershire, August 2001.

wild individuals has been derived, although considerable doubt must remain over several midsummer records. Following the appearance of one of unknown provenance in Ayrshire in mid January, there was a flurry of records in late March, coinciding with birds returning to their European breeding areas. These included one over an observer's garden in Copperhouse, Cornwall, on 16th, with possibly the same bird at Bideford on 18th, and at Exebridge (both Devon) on 21st-22nd. The two other records that month came from Fosse Meadows, Leicestershire, on 27th and Welham Bridge, East Yorkshire, on 30th. Surprisingly, the latest of the presumed wild birds was as early as 20th-22nd August, at Witcham, Cambridgeshire.

There are now at least three main loci of captive White Storks in Britain, from which birds are escaping (Bristol Zoo, Avon; Harewood, West Yorkshire; and at least two wildlife parks in Norfolk). Assessing the likely origin of White Storks in Britain is becoming increasingly difficult, especially as we might also expect a small increase in records from recolonisation schemes on the near Continent.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1999	2000	1996	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
28	509	5	47	42	30	2	6	12	23	36

There are probably at least 50 Green-winged Teals being recorded annually in Britain at present, but 2001 saw a reduction in the number of presumed new arrivals on this side of the Atlantic. Nonetheless, the 28 reported in 2001 still represent the fifth-best total since 1958, well above the annual mean for the 1990s. Reports were received from 25 recording areas throughout Britain, the majority from western counties, in particular Argyll, Ayrshire, Cornwall, Lancashire & North Merseyside, the Outer Hebrides and Pembrokeshire. Most of these were found during the early winter and spring. In the second half of the year, eight presumed new birds were discovered during the autumn and late winter, with just one of these, at Abbotsbury, Dorset, being a first-winter.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			2001	2000	1999/80	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
48	429	1	48	34	28	1	8	13	13	41

The influx continues, with increasing numbers of first-years being reported, supporting the impression that we are seeing genuine new arrivals (fig. 2). Over 25% of all Ring-necked Ducks ever recorded in Britain have arrived in the four years between 1998 and 2001. Birds were noted in 27 recording areas, although it is difficult to establish just how many might have moved between areas. A further seven remaining from 2000 are excluded from these statistics. Consequently, 2001 was by far the best year on record for Ring-necked Ducks in Britain. Individuals arrived in three main waves: 14 in January-February, including four at Heathfield Gravel-pits, Pembrokeshire; 11 in April-May, five of which turned up between 10th and 16th April; and 21 in October-December. Ten were found during 2nd-15th October, of which six were either in Scilly or Cornwall.



Fig. 1. The distribution of presumed newly arrived Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris* in Britain in 2001.

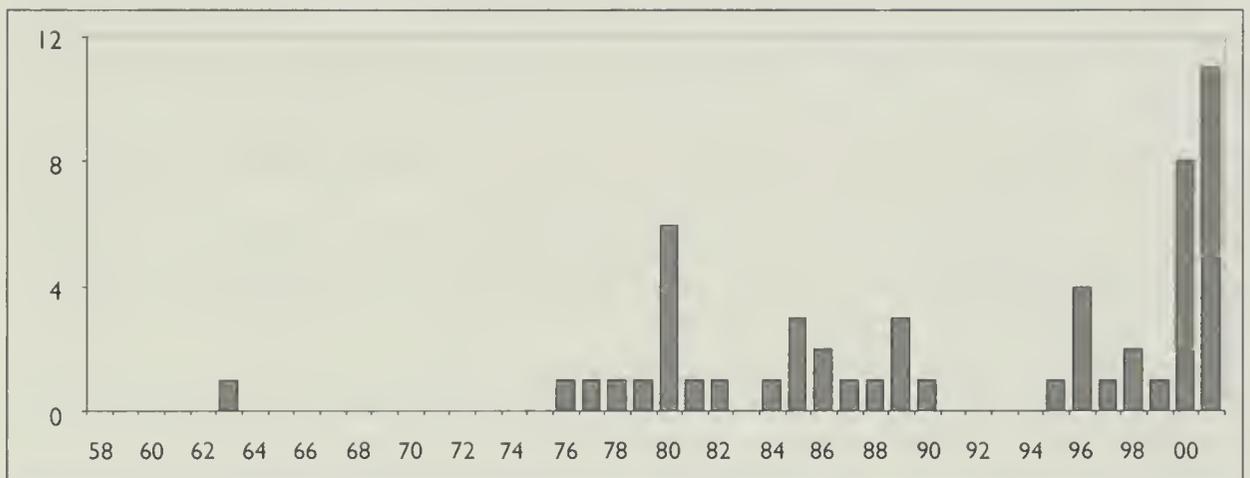


Fig. 2. Annual totals of first-year Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris* in Britain, 1958-2001.



Mike Ashforth

390. Male Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (right) with female Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Tophill Low, East Yorkshire, April 2001. With 48 new arrivals reported, 2001 was a record year for Ring-necked Ducks in Britain.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1999	1989	1997	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
			11	364	13	25	24	22	2	5

There were approximately 24 Surf Scoters reported in Britain during 2001, of which a maximum of 11 and a minimum of six were considered newly arrived here. It seems that the increase in new birds which began in 1997, and was dominated by first-years, has now ceased (fig. 3). Only one first-year was reported in 2001, at Par, Cornwall, on 12th-14th December.

Most of those seen in 2001 were in Scotland, including four males and a female in Fife, at least three in Moray & Nairn, and others in Angus (two), Argyll (two), Lothian, Northeast Scotland (two) and the Outer Hebrides. It is possible that birds seen in Norfolk, Northumberland and Yorkshire may be part of a small and mobile population along the English east coast, comprising at least two males and a female; but these birds have been included in the totals as new arrivals. The remaining sightings were in Ceredigion, Devon and Dorset.

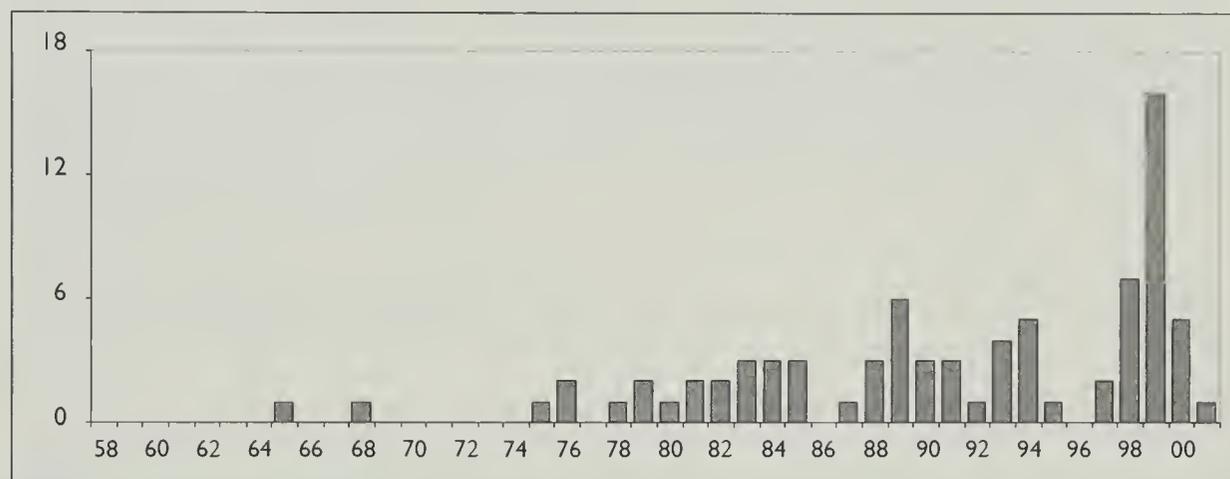


Fig. 3. Annual totals of Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata* described as 'immature' or 'first-year' in Britain, 1958-2001.

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1986-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2001			Annual means 1986-2001		
			2000	1999	1993	1986-89	1990-99	2000-01
			156	3,803	5	2,166	200	167

Following the exceptional influx of migrant European Honey-buzzards into Britain in September 2000, more typical numbers were reported during 2001. Nonetheless, 63 were noted in spring, still the second-best spring total since national record collation began, in 1986. Fig. 4 (on page 632) illustrates the steady increase in spring European Honey-buzzards in Britain over this period. During 2001, spring records came from 24 recording areas and included the second-earliest migrant ever in Britain, at Beddington, Surrey, on 12th April.

Numbers reported in autumn were typically average, with 84 seen between August and October. These included two radio-tagged birds in Argyll – west of Islay on 14th September and off Fishnish, Mull, on 24th September – plus unseen, but satellite-tracked birds in Lancashire and Somerset.

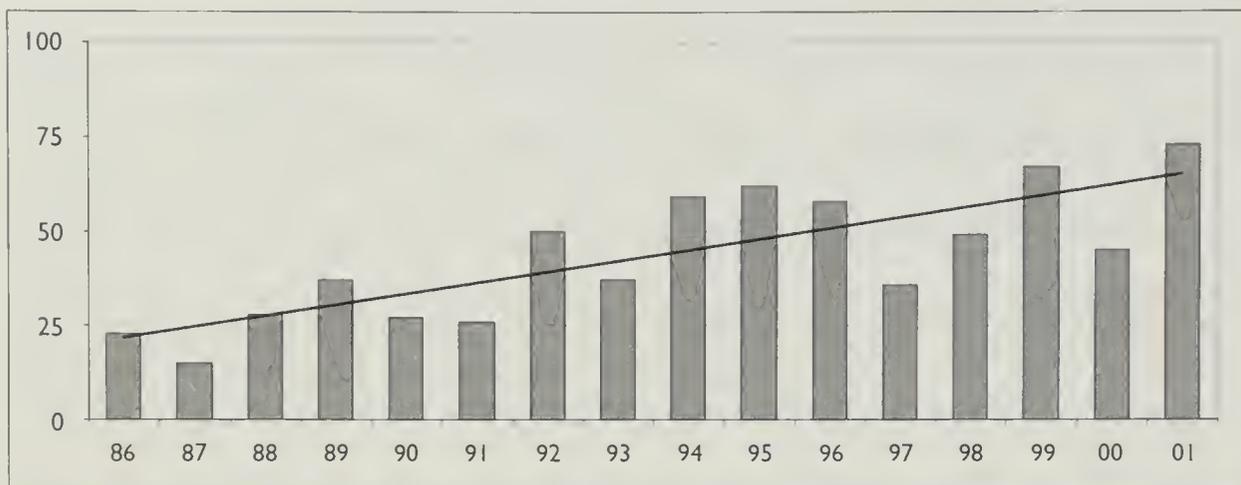


Fig. 4. Numbers of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* recorded in spring (April-June) in Britain, 1986-2001, with linear trend-line added.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1974-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1974-2001			Annual means 1980-2001		
			1994	1998	1988	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
28	1,116	12	237	110	85	28	72	27

Very few Rough-legged Buzzards arrived in Britain during 2001. The statistics given above relate to calendar years, while fig. 5 illustrates the annual numbers reported each winter from 1974/75 to 2000/01, which provides a more realistic picture of the presence of Rough-legged Buzzards in Britain. Most records came from the North Sea coast, but singles were also reported from Scilly during October, and in Cornwall from 15th December into 2002.

Potapov (1993) looked at the relationship between this species and the Siberian Lemming *Lemmus sibiricus*, and established that Siberian Lemmings typically have population cycles of four or five years, roughly the same as the periodicity of peak numbers of Rough-legged Buzzards in Britain (fig. 5). He also found that while Rough-legged Buzzard breeding success and Siberian Lemming population density were correlated, population parameters (including clutch-size, hatching success and fledging success) were related to other factors too, such as weather and the presence or absence of Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca*, so that numbers in western Europe might not be predicted solely by lemming populations on the breeding grounds.

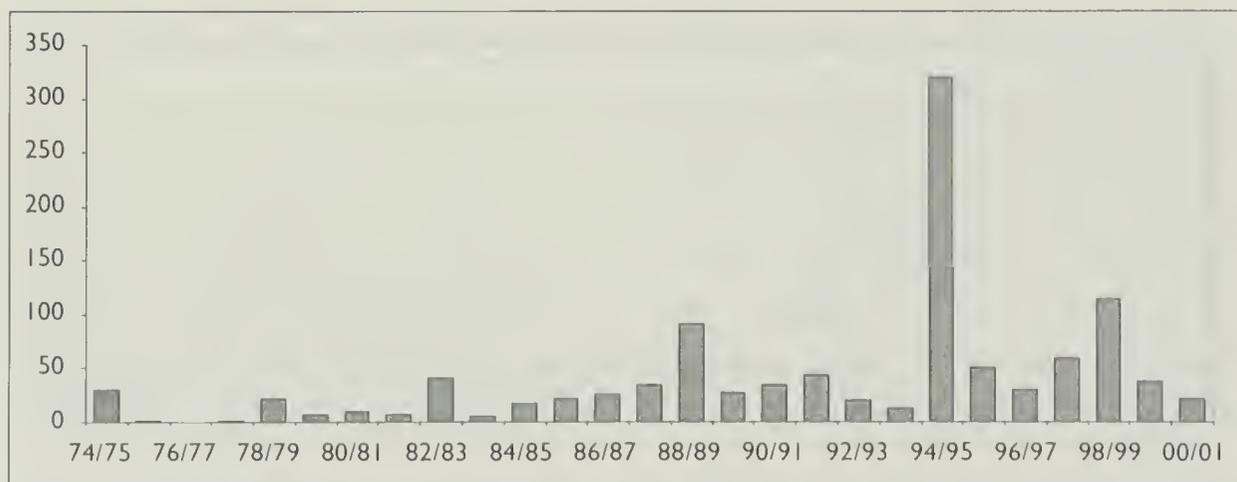


Fig. 5. Numbers of Rough-legged Buzzards *Buteo lagopus* reported each winter in Britain, 1974/75 to 2000/01. Invasion years appear to occur every 4-6 years, although the scale of each 'invasion' clearly varies. During the past 30 years, the 319 reported in 1994/95 was exceptional.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

391. Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001. This individual, which was present on Scilly throughout October 2001, was presumed to have been of the Nearctic form *B. l. sanctijohannis*.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1986-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2001			Annual means 1986-2001		
			1995	1989	1988	1986-89	1990-99	2000-01
56	1,004	9	117	83	81	72	59	63

Despite FMD access restrictions to many nature reserves, ten migrant Spotted Crakes were detected in spring. This figure is slightly below the 1986-2001 spring annual mean of 16. Numbers in the autumn fared a little better, with 45 birds found, making autumn 2001 the eighth best since 1986. A juvenile at Kenfig Pool, Glamorgan, on 26th October, was the last of the year.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1963	1982	1985	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
87	2,080	6	685	199	103	64	19	56	38	95

Of the 87 migrant Common Cranes reported to us in 2001, 48 (55%) appeared in spring, the third-best spring arrival since 1958. The five highest spring totals on record have occurred during the last six years (fig. 6 on page 634), so it appears that this may reflect a genuine surge in numbers in the western European population.

Birds were seen in 17 recording areas, although very few appeared in the western half of the country. Nevertheless, a party of four was seen in Glamorgan and Gwent in January, while, also in January, singles were logged in Pembrokeshire and Shropshire. There was no obvious peak arrival period in spring, with sightings over a protracted period from mid February until the end of May. The highlight of the autumn records was a flock of 17 at Breydon Water, Norfolk, on 17th October.

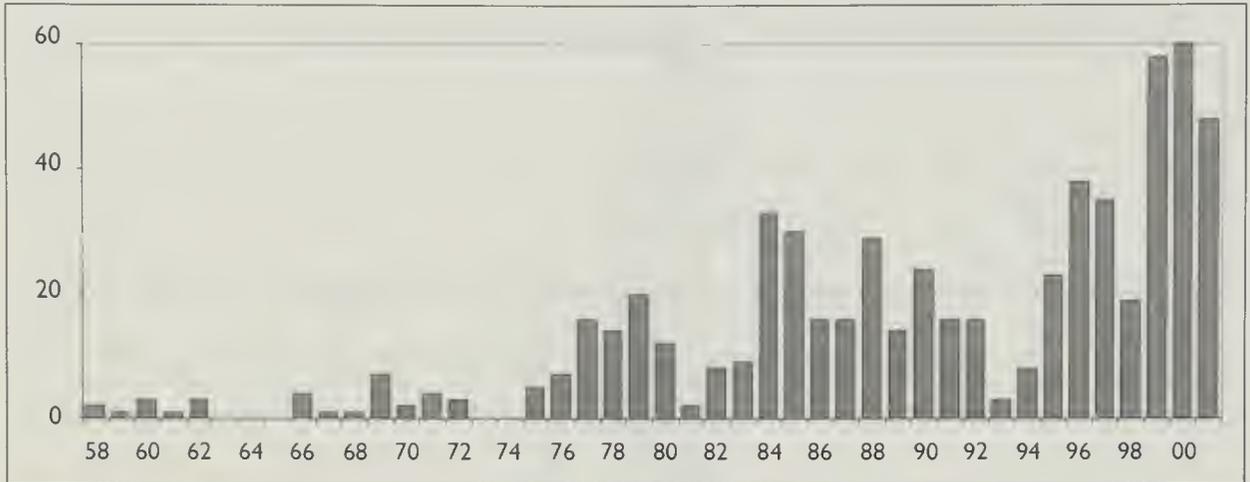


Fig. 6. Annual totals of Common Cranes *Grus grus* in Britain in spring (February-May), 1958-2001.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1986-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2001			Annual means 1986-2001		
			1993	1991	1999	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
20	519	15	59	42	41	28	36	22

With only 20 Kentish Plovers reported to us, 2001 became the second-worst year for this species in Britain since 1986. All birds occurred along the east and south coasts, from Breydon Water, Norfolk, to Padstow, Cornwall, with Dawlish Warren, Devon, alone accounting for a disproportionate six birds. Elsewhere, five were reported from Kent, three from Sussex, two each from Dorset and Norfolk (including the Breydon bird), with the remaining individual in Suffolk.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1987	2001	1977	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
134	3,106	2	176	134	125	71	105	95	131

It was the second-best year ever for this species in Britain in 2001, eclipsed only by the invasion in 1987 (see above). Indeed, one can speculate that 2001 may have been the all-time record year, with possibly many Temminck's Stints being missed owing to FMD access restrictions. Of the 134 birds



Fig. 7. Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* in Britain in 2001. The chart shows the numbers of newly arrived birds in each month of the year; divided into three periods.

recorded during the year, 95 were seen in spring, the fifth-best total since 1968. The autumn tally was more typical, and the 39 birds reported constitute the eleventh best since 1968. The ten-day profile of the arrivals in 2001 is shown in fig. 7. More were seen in Norfolk (27) than in any other county, but there were also impressive numbers in northwest England, with records from Cheshire (Elton Hall, 8th-9th May), Greater Manchester (Audenshaw, 15th May and Hope Carr, 5th-6th June) and ten in Lancashire & North Merseyside, with four arriving on 13th May and six between 23rd and 25th May. The most remarkable record was a flock of ten which visited the Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire, all too briefly on 4th June.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001		Annual means 1968-2001			
			1999/84	1983	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
69	1,904	7	131	89	40	70	57	80

It proved to be a moderate year for Pectoral Sandpipers in Britain in 2001. Just five were found in spring (three of which were in Scotland), compared with the exceptional 14 found in 2000. After five in July, there were 17 in August, with, as expected, all but two turning up along the east coast. The percentage of July-August records (36%) was much higher in 2001 than the corresponding mean for the period 1968-2001 (27%). With juveniles arriving from September onwards, records became more widely scattered, with 11 in Cornwall and seven on the Outer Hebrides. Far inland, there were sightings at Stanwick, Northamptonshire, on 29th July; Allscot, Shropshire, on 24th-27th September; and Ryall, Worcestershire, on 29th September.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1977	1975	1996	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
10	612	26	54	48	34	3	21	19	15	22

In sharp contrast to the situation in 2000, Buff-breasted Sandpipers were extremely scarce in Britain in 2001, and only ten were reported. Of these, one appeared on North Rona, Outer Hebrides, on 23rd June, while another, on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, on 8th July, was just the eighth ever recorded during this month. Of the eight autumn records, five were in Scotland, including two more on the Outer Hebrides, and three of the eight arrived on 3rd October (see below). Full details of the birds seen in autumn 2001 are as follows:

Musselburgh and Aberlady Bay, Lothian, 22nd August; Tinker's Marsh, Suffolk, 4th-14th Sep-

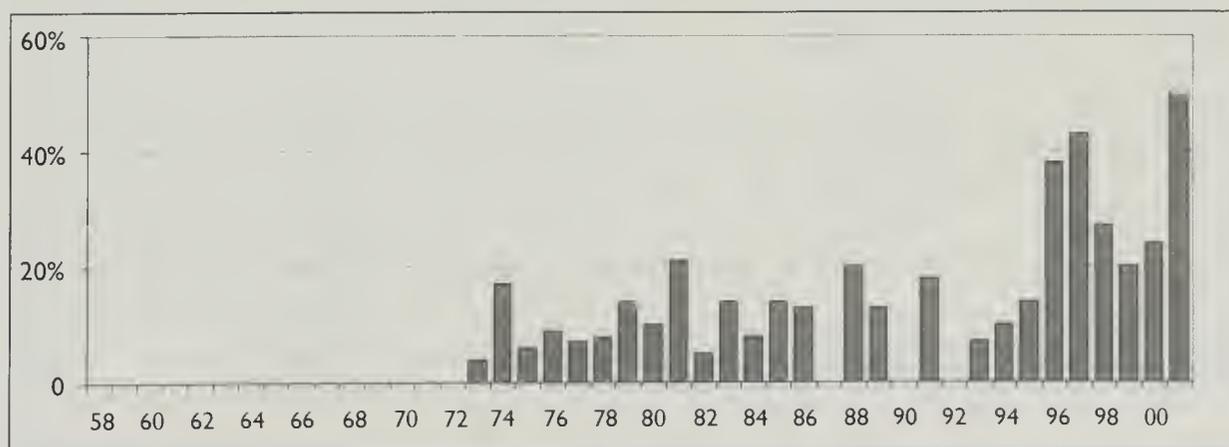


Fig 8. The numbers of Buff-breasted Sandpipers *Tryngites subruficollis* in Scotland, 1958-2001, shown as a proportion of the total in Britain, where that annual total is ten or more.

tember; Frenchman's Rocks, Argyll, 12th September; Fleck and Quendale, Shetland, 24th September to 2nd October; Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 3rd-5th October; North Rona, Outer Hebrides, 3rd October; St Mary's, Scilly, 3rd-15th October; and West Gerinish, Outer Hebrides, 6th-7th October.

The pattern of arrivals of this species appears to be shifting northwards in Britain, and fig. 8 shows the number recorded in Scotland as a percentage of the annual total in Britain.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1986-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2001			Annual means 1986-2001		
			1999	1989	1992	1986-89	1990-99	2000-01
21	529	14	69	46	41	36	34	24

Yet another poor showing for migrant Red-necked Phalaropes in Britain. The 21 reported included four in East Yorkshire, three in Kent and Lancashire & North Merseyside, two in Norfolk, and singles in nine other recording areas, two of which were in Scotland. Records were spread between 8th June (Marshside, Lancashire & North Merseyside, and Cley, Norfolk) and 11th November (South Shields, Durham), with five during 9th-11th September.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1986-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2001			Annual means 1986-2001		
			2001	1989	1987	1986-89	1990-99	2000-01
1,039	3,998	1	1,039	366	365	282	167	601

A remarkable year for this species, with 1,039 individuals recorded, making 2001 by far the best year since detailed record collation at a national scale began, in 1986. Records came from 39 recording areas, but the majority were reported in southwest England and Wales. Scilly enjoyed the lion's share of records with a staggering 528, plus a further 38 in adjacent waters. Cornwall, with 219, also fared particularly well, followed by 110 in Wales, 21 in the Outer Hebrides and 13 in Argyll. A scattering of birds appeared at inland sites, counties involved including Cambridgeshire (Grafham Water, 8th-16th November), Leicestershire (Rutland Water, 13th-17th October and Swithland Reservoir, 18th-20th October), Northamptonshire (Earl's Barton, 8th November), Nottinghamshire (Netherfield, 1st-3rd October), Shropshire (Venus Pool, 24th November), Surrey (Walton Reservoir, 13th October), Warwickshire (Kenilworth, 5th-16th October) and West Yorkshire (Rodley, 26th August). Passage peaked during the first ten days of October, when 672 were seen, which included counts on Scilly of 153 off Treco on 1st, and 137 off Peninnis Head, St Mary's, on 7th (fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* in Britain in 2001. The chart shows the numbers of newly arrived birds in each month of the year; divided into three periods.



Robin Chittenden

392. First-winter Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Snettisham, Norfolk, September 2001. It was an exceptional year for Grey Phalaropes in 2001. Over 1,000 were reported, mainly in southwest England.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1987	1997	1988	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
249	4,434	5	710	396	346	51	203	141	174

The total of 249 Sabine's Gulls in 2001 constitutes the fifth-best year in Britain since 1968. There were records from 30 recording areas, including every English east-coast county as well as Fife, Northeast Scotland and Shetland (fig. 10). The only record from a land-locked county was a single at Foxcote Reservoir, Buckinghamshire, on 16th-19th September. As usual, most occurred in Cornwall, where 41 were logged.

There were records in winter, spring and mid-summer, including a first-winter offshore at Southwold, Suffolk, on 12th January; an adult at Scatness, Shetland, on 25th May; two second-year birds off Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 24th June and 9th July; and a first-summer off Berry Head, Devon, on 17th July. Autumn passage commenced during the first half of August, when seven were seen, including a first-summer and at least one adult in Northumberland, one on Severnside, Avon, on 12th, and two adults seen from the *M. V. Scillonian* during the 'pelagic seabird cruise' in sea area Sole, also on 12th August. New birds were reported daily from August 30th to September 24th, with an obvious peak during the middle ten days of September, when 96 were seen.



Fig. 10. The distribution of Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* in Britain in 2001.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1973-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1973-2001			Annual means 1973-2001			
			1992	1990	1997	1973-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
72	1,392	7	108	94	88	4	47	76	59

The figure of 72 Ring-billed Gulls in Britain in 2001 refers only to presumed new arrivals, and excludes birds known to have lingered on from 2000 and those returning to traditional wintering sites. There was believed to have been between six and 14 lingering or returning birds, and the lower figure has been used in this report. If the true number lies closer to 14, there may have been as few as 64 new birds in 2001. Perhaps a better statistic to use in this assessment is the number of first-winters, which, in 2001, was only 13. Certainly, there appear to be fewer Ring-billed Gulls arriving in Britain now than was the case during the early 1990s (fig. 11).

This species is now turning up more frequently on the east coast, with records in Essex, Suffolk, Cleveland and Northeast Scotland in 2001, while the second ever for Fair Isle, Shetland, was seen on 30th April.

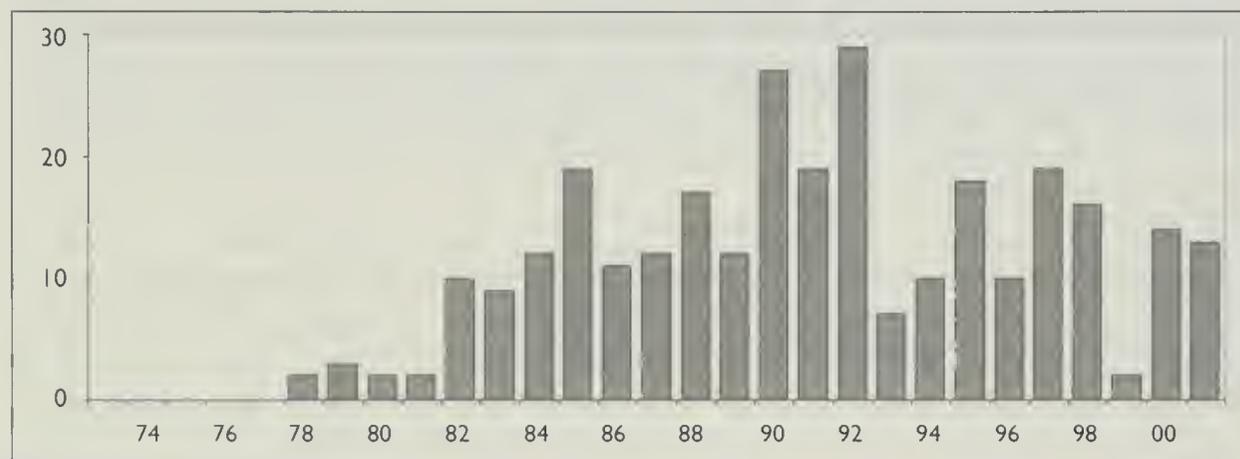


Fig. 11. Numbers of first-winter Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* in Britain since 1973.



393. Second-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Otterspool, Merseyside, August 2001. Records suggest that fewer Ring-billed Gulls are arriving in Britain now than was the case a decade ago, at the beginning of the 1990s.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1997	1990	1995	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
26	744	9	132	71	39	4	6	20	38	24

The 26 European Bee-eaters reported in Britain during 2001, although well below the mean for the 1990s, actually fit the overall pattern of the past 20 years pretty well. Exceptional numbers in both 1991 and 1997 contributed much to the high mean annual value for that decade. In 2001, sightings came from 12 recording areas, including four singles in Suffolk and a flock of four together in Cornwall on 12th-15th May. This latter group spent four days wandering around west Penwith, and comprised the first record of the year. They were followed by a further 12 in May, seven in June and three in July, with the latest record of the year being one at Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, on 26th July.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1968	1980	1977	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
64	4,045	32	218	188	178	118	133	118	56

Following on from the lowest annual total of Hoopoes in Britain in 2000, the number reported in 2001 was the second lowest since 1968. While it might be reasonable to suppose that countryside access restrictions owing to FMD during the spring of 2001 reduced the number found, the trend since 1996 has been towards lower annual totals. The first of the 38 spring birds appeared at Sidmouth, Devon, on 19th March; a further five appeared in summer (in June); while in autumn, 21 occurred between 2nd August, at Pett, Sussex, and 6th November, at Preston, Lancashire.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1986-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2001			Annual means 1986-2001		
			1998	1987	1988	1986-89	1990-99	2000-01
217	4,305	13	407	354	314	311	257	245

Thirty-seven Wrynecks were reported in spring 2001, below the average spring tally of 45.5 since 1986, but matching the pattern of the past three years. Of these, 11 were in Shetland, nine in Norfolk and four in East Yorkshire. In autumn, just 180 Wryneck records make this one of only four autumns since 1986 when fewer than 200 have been seen. Perhaps surprisingly, the best county in which to see Wrynecks in autumn was Dorset, where 26 were reported. Typically for this species, there were several inland records, including singles at Lower Lyde, Herefordshire, on 21st August and Hollybed Common, Worcestershire, on 4th September, while there were three in Wiltshire during the autumn.



Reston Kilgour

394. Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001. Wrynecks were scarce in autumn 2001, with reports throughout Britain totalling fewer than 200.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1996	1994	1999	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
17	608	11	45	39	31	5	11	13	27	22

Just 17 Short-toed Larks were reported in Britain during 2001, the lowest number since 1990, when 14 were recorded. Seven were seen during the spring, between 6th May, on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, and 29th May, on St Mary's, Scilly. The remaining ten appeared in autumn, with the earliest at Spurn, East Yorkshire, on 19th September and the latest at nearby Easington, also East Yorkshire, on 3rd-4th November. Scilly was the top spot for this species in 2001, with a combined spring and autumn total of five. The remaining 12 were all found on the east coast, with three recorded in both Shetland and East Yorkshire, two in Norfolk and Northumberland, and singles in North Yorkshire and Suffolk.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1994	2001	1995	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
165	3,123	2	352	165	157	34	51	65	130	127



Fig. 12. Distribution of Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae* in Britain in autumn 2001. Note the concentrations in Shetland and Norfolk.

The 165 Richard's Pipits recorded in Britain during autumn made 2001 the second-best year on record, bettered only by 352 in 1994. In contrast, the trend towards an increasing number of spring records was halted abruptly this year, with a complete blank during the spring.

While there were 24 in Shetland and an exceptional 55 in Norfolk, records were spread widely throughout England and Wales, including several from inland counties. The distribution of records shown in fig. 12 reveals that, apart from Shetland, there were no reports from elsewhere in Scotland, or north of Cumbria, although no data have yet been received from Orkney. New arrivals were reported daily from 19th September until 30th October, with the last on Walney Island, Cumbria, on 18th December.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1992	1983	1977	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
8	1,097	38	57	56	45	13	27	36	29	14

With just eight records received, 2001 proved to be one of the worst years for Tawny Pipits in Britain since 1958. During this period, there have been fewer birds in only four years: there were six in 1959 and 1999, and seven in 1964 and 1966. All the 2001 records are listed below:

Holme, Norfolk, 11th-12th May; Heysham, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 16th May; Hollingbury, Sussex, 25th August; Sheringham, Norfolk, 19th-22nd September, with a second bird there on 20th-21st; Garthorpe, Lincolnshire, 1st October; Lower Cuckmere Valley, Sussex, 1st October; and

Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 14th November.

Tawny Pipit is now occurring here in much lower numbers than Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*, and this is a trend which appears to have become more pronounced in recent years. Over the five-year period from 1997 to 2001, Richard's Pipit was seven times commoner than Tawny Pipit. Although both species were removed from BBRC's jurisdiction in 1982, the increasing rarity of Tawny Pipit, coupled with the possibilities of encountering Blyth's Pipit *A. godlewskii* in Britain, means that field identification of the larger pipits requires the utmost care. If this trend towards declining numbers continues, Tawny Pipit may need to be considered for readmission to the list of species reviewed by BBRC. Observers should be aware that in spring, a large pipit is just as likely to be a Richard's Pipit as a Tawny Pipit because, since 1990, the average number of spring Richard's Pipits is six, while for Tawny Pipit the comparable figure is seven.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1985	1981	1987	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
			89	4,358	18	622	333	251	98

Although 2001 was another below-average year for Bluethroats as a whole in Britain, it was the best year ever for birds of the white-spotted race *cyaneacula*. There were at least 17, and probably 19 or more, 'White-spotted Bluethroats', including at least 15 during the traditional 'early' spring period from March to mid April, plus two birds found in late May. The first records of the year were concentrated along the east coast between Kent and Norfolk, including two in Suffolk, at Landguard on 17th-18th March and at Lowestoft on 24th March; one in Kent, at Deal on 18th March; one in Essex, at Shoeburyness on 19th-27th March; and one in Norfolk, at Cley on 28th March. Farther north, singles on the Farne Islands on 28th March and St Mary's Island on 16th-21st April were the fourth and fifth county records for Northumberland; seven were seen in Shetland (including five on Fair Isle) between 30th March and 6th April; and one was reported at Cove, Northeast Scotland, on 2nd April. In addi-



Gary Bellingham

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395 & 396. Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*; red-spotted male of race *svecica*, Beeley Moor, Derbyshire, June 2001 (left); white-spotted male of race *cyaneacula*, Shoeburyness, Essex, March 2001. One of the few highlights of a spring dominated by access restrictions to the countryside as a result of foot-and-mouth disease was the number of 'White-spotted Bluethroats'. At least 17, and probably 19 or more, were reported during the spring.



Fig. 13. Distribution of Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica* of the white-spotted race *cyaneula* in Britain, 1968-2001.

tion, single females were seen at Portland, Dorset, on 26th March and Swalecliffe, Kent, on 27th March; given the dates, it seems mostly likely that these were also of the white-spotted race. Later in the spring, a singing male was discovered at Cors Caron, Ceredigion, on 26th May, and another male was seen at Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, on 30th May.

In addition to these, another 38 birds were seen in spring, either of the red-spotted race *svecica* or not assigned to subspecies, with at least 24 between 9th and 13th May. A total of 32 were reported in autumn, fractionally more than the annual average at this season since 1980, which is 28. Nineteen appeared between 19th and 29th September, including singles at The Range, Anglesey, on 23rd

and at Strathlene, Moray & Nairn on 27th-29th. There was a late flurry of seven records during 18th-25th October, including one at Whiteford Plantation, Gower, on 21st, with the last being on Whalsay, Shetland, on 25th.

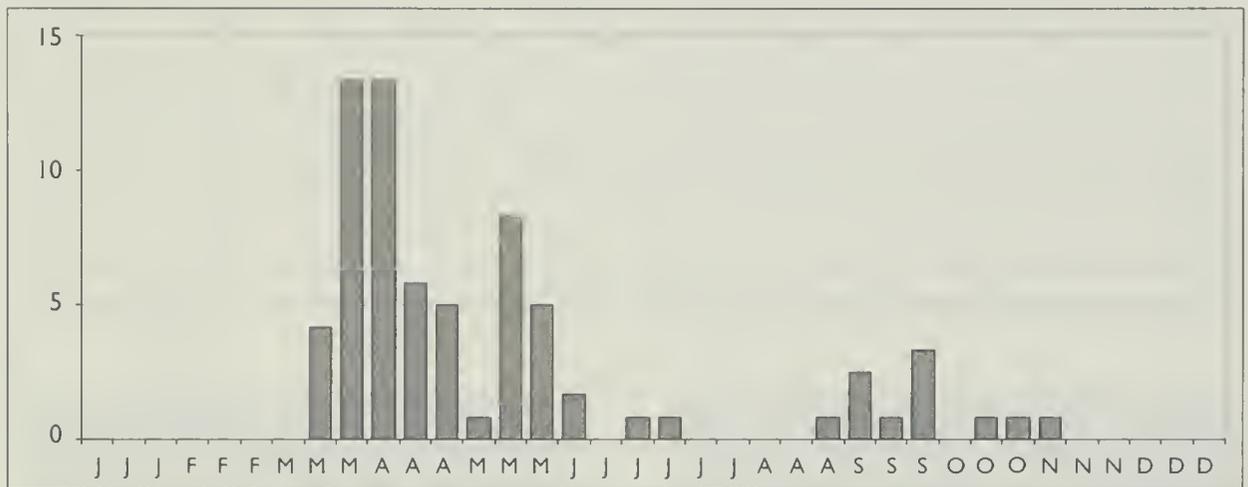


Fig. 14. The numbers of Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica* of the white-spotted race *cyaneula* in Britain, 1968-2001; the chart shows the timing of new arrivals, grouped into ten-day periods.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1976	1991	1972	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
11	1,186	34	102	62	61	10	40	23	42	13

Last year, we observed that the 14 Aquatic Warblers recorded in 2000 represented the lowest total since 1978 (Fraser & Rogers 2002). In 2001, the number fell to just 11, the lowest total since 1968 (and one fewer than the 12 recorded in 1970, when the species was still considered by BBRC). If this trend continues, this is another species which may need to be considered for readmission to the BBRC list. Away from the traditional south-coast reedbed sites, there were just two records, both at Uskmouth, Gwent, on 16th and 22nd August. The earliest occurred at Farlington, Hampshire, on 3rd August, while the latest was at Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, on 24th September.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1986-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2001			Annual means 1986-2001		
			1992	1994	1997	1986-89	1990-99	2000-01
40	825	13	103	73	63	32	60	48

It was a poor year for migrant Marsh Warblers in Britain in 2001. As usual, most occurred in spring, but this year there were just six in autumn: three in Shetland, two in Sussex and one (the latest) on Holy Island, Northumberland, on 23rd October. Between four and 12 autumn Marsh Warblers have been recorded annually since 1986, a total of 125 individuals, at a remarkably consistent average of 7.8 birds per year.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1997	1992	1995	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
32	3,448	34	286	277	173	79	104	138	39

The year 2001 eclipsed 2000 as the worst year for Icterine Warblers in Britain since 1968 (Fraser & Rogers 2002). Recording may have been affected by FMD restrictions, and indeed there were only three in spring, in Norfolk, Northumberland and the Outer Hebrides, all in June. Icterine Warblers are late migrants, however, and many of the access restrictions had been lifted by the time most birds would typically appear. Although the spring showing was poor, the autumn was the worst on record. Of just 29 recorded, five arrived on 19th August, followed by another five on 21st-22nd August, with three of these being in Angus & Dundee. A further ten appeared in September, with two late birds, at Hoswick, Shetland, on 1st October and Walsey Hills, Norfolk, on 25th October. The only birds away from the east coast were at Loch Paible, Outer Hebrides, on 22nd September, and five during the autumn on Scilly.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1981	1996	1983	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
26	1,086	22	60	59	54	29	39	30	25

Another below-average year for a migrant which is becoming scarcer (see Fraser & Rogers 2002). All 26 records in 2001 occurred during the autumn, with 25 of these appearing at south-coast locations. The only other report came from Landguard, Suffolk, where a singing male was present on 1st July. Dorset was the top county in 2001, with an impressive 11 records.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1994	1997	2001	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
208	4,694	3	231	219	208	144	108	158	155

A pleasing return to form for Barred Warbler, with the third-best year since 1968. The total of 208 is a minimum figure, as it assumes a conservative estimate of 30 birds from Fair Isle, Shetland, where as many as 50 may have occurred. As several records have yet to be received from a further two east-coast



397. Juvenile Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 2001. As usual, Shetland was the best place to see Barred Warblers in autumn, this individual being one of an estimated 30-50 recorded by Fair Isle Bird Observatory during 2001.

areas in Scotland, 2001 may yet prove to have been an even better year.

The first of the autumn appeared at Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, on 18th August. This was followed by a significant arrival, of at least 50 birds, during the last ten days of the month and to 2nd September. New arrivals dried up in early September but another major influx began on 13th September, with new arrivals daily until the end of the month. Although no new birds were reported during the first three days of October, a further 25 arrived during the month, followed by seven in November. Three birds lingered in Cornwall until mid November, as did one of the three birds in Wales, at Porth Clais, Pembrokeshire.

As usual, Shetland was the place to see Barred Warblers in Britain in 2001, with nearly half (at least 95) of all records. Most east- and south-coast counties recorded at least one, while out to the west there were four on the Outer Hebrides and three in Pembrokeshire.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1997	1994	1996	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
16	1,431	21	171	153	142	3	9	39	83	46

A paltry total of 16 Pallas's Leaf Warblers were reported in 2001, the worst year since 1986. All occurred on the east coast, apart from two in Dorset and an excellent inland find at Wolford Wood, Warwickshire, on 4th November. The first of the autumn was on Whalsay, Shetland, on 7th October, followed by a further ten from 18th to 23rd October, and another two in the last week of the month. November produced a final flurry, with the Warwickshire record, one at Hengistbury Head, Dorset, on 14th, and the last of the year at Sandwich Bay, Kent, on 20th.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1988	1985	1986	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
			739	542	498	72	321	327	301
303	7,932	11							

The upsurge in records of Yellow-browed Warblers, which began in 1984, reached a peak of 739 individuals in 1988. Although the annual totals since then have not approached this peak figure, they have exceeded 250 each year, with the single exception of 1995, and have, in fact, remained remarkably consistent, as shown in fig. 15.

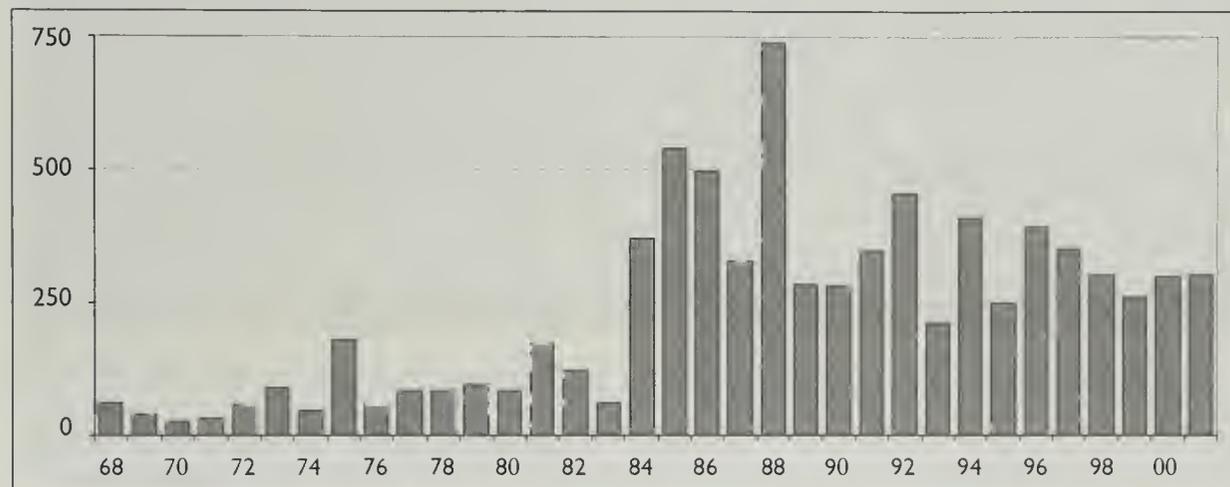


Fig. 15. Annual totals of Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* in Britain, 1968-2001.

In 2001, there was one record of a wintering bird, at Helston Sewage Works, Cornwall, present until 29th March, followed by two spring records, at Brough, Whalsay, Shetland, on 3rd-4th May (the first spring record for Shetland) and Land's End, Cornwall, on 15th-16th May.

Away from the usual coastal haunts, there were several autumn records from unexpected localities. These included singles on Tiree, Argyll, from 27th September to 1st October; Aust, Avon, on 12th October; Danes Moss, Cheshire, on 22nd September; Kendal, Cumbria, on 24th September (this being just the second record from the old county of Westmorland); Mersehead, Dumfries & Galloway, on 14th October; Essex Filter Beds, Greater London, on 28th October; Rutland Water, Leicestershire, on 5th October; Loch Spynie, Moray & Nairn, on 25th September; and Boddington Reservoir, Northamptonshire, on 21st-22nd October.

The arrival of Yellow-browed Warblers in 2001 occurred in two marked phases, with 137 appearing in the last ten days of September, then just 14 during the first ten days of October, followed by 63 and 49 respectively in the two subsequent ten-day periods. Only five new arrivals were logged in November.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1984	1976	1989	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
			196	174	128	75	115	87	90
109	3,098	10							

It proved to be a better than average year for Red-breasted Flycatchers in Britain in 2001, the 109 seen comprising the tenth-best annual total since 1968. As usual, there was a small influx in May, with singles recorded from Cleveland, Pembrokeshire and Shetland, plus two at Spurn, East Yorkshire. Of these, four were first-summer males.

The first autumn migrant was noted on 9th September, with birds appearing at both Waxham and

Reston Kilgour



398. First-winter Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001.



Fig. 16. Distribution of Red-breasted Flycatchers *Ficedula parva* in Britain in 2001.

Winterton, Norfolk. A major arrival in the last ten days of September comprised a total of 47 records, including one at Wicken Fen on 26th, the first for Cambridgeshire. Birds arrived almost daily throughout October, with the last on 26th (and none in November). Most were found on the east and south coasts, especially between Co. Durham and Norfolk, and on Scilly. Sightings elsewhere included singles at Lillstock, Somerset, on 12th-13th October, and at Blackpool, Lancashire & North Merseyside, on 2nd October, while other west-coast records included three in Pembrokeshire and four on the Outer Hebrides.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1994	1992	1997	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
79	2,926	15	232	184	157	48	84	132	94

It was one of the worst years on record for migrant Golden Orioles in Britain in 2001, the 79 presumed migrants recorded comprising the lowest total since 1991. Of these, no fewer than 28 appeared on Scilly. The paucity of records elsewhere probably reflected countryside access restrictions owing to FMD during the spring, when most Golden Orioles are recorded. The same can be said of several of the following species, all of which typically occur regularly in spring, and all of which were recorded in below-average numbers during spring in 2001: Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Woodchat Shrike *L. senator*, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, European Serin *Serinus serinus* and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*. There were just two Golden Orioles in autumn, both on St Mary's, Scilly, on 26th August and 16th September.



Bill Baston

399. Juvenile Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Landguard, Suffolk, September 2001. As for several other species featured in this report for which the spring migration usually contributes a significant proportion of the annual total, spring 2001 was exceptionally poor for Red-backed Shrikes. Only 35 were seen in spring, by far the lowest total since regular collation of records at a national level began.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1986-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2001			Annual means 1986-2001		
			1988	1998	1992	1986-89	1990-99	2000-01
139	3,655	14	423	371	364	255	228	167

It was yet another disappointing season for migrant Red-backed Shrikes in 2001. Of the 139 recorded, only 35 were found in spring, by far the lowest number recorded in this season since 1986. Even allowing for FMD access restrictions, the prospects for the return of Red-backed Shrike as a regular breeding species to England look bleak. During the autumn, however, the species put in an average showing with 99 birds reported, compared with the 1986-2001 annual autumn mean of 98.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1986-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2001		Annual means 1986-2001		
			1998	1991/90	1986-89	1990-99	2000-01
58	1,918	15	234	160	131	127	64

With nine newly arrived birds reported during the early winter period, followed by just three spring migrants, Great Grey Shrikes were particularly scarce in the early part of the year. Numbers improved during the autumn, with five appearing in September, followed by approximately 15 in October, including nine within the six-day period from 21st to 25th October, all of which were in Shetland or along the east coast of Scotland. A further 26 were found in November-December, most of which were reported from inland locations, including four in Wales and singles in Shropshire and Herefordshire. Nonetheless, 2001 still replaces 2000 as the second-worst year for Great Grey Shrikes in Britain since 1986.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1997	1995	1988	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
5	666	41	36	27	26	12	13	16	21	13

Following the trend set by the previous two species, 2001 was a dreadful year for Woodchat Shrikes, the five records representing the third-lowest annual total since 1958, and the lowest since 1963. In previous years, over two-thirds of all Woodchats have turned up in spring and it is exceptional for autumn birds to outnumber those in spring, while the absence of records from both Dorset and Norfolk, two of the most favoured counties, is also noteworthy. Even allowing for FMD access restrictions, these results are unexpected.

The details of the five records received are as follows: St Martin's, Scilly, 12th May; Marazion, Cornwall, 30th May; Nanquidno, Cornwall, 24th-25th August; Middle Woodford, Wiltshire, 8th-9th September; Skaw, Unst, Shetland, 25th September.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1996	1994	1997	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
54	1,458	10	99	81	75	8	19	37	68	58

Continuing the theme of the passerines in this part of the report, 54 records represents a below-average showing by recent standards for this predominantly springtime migrant. As usual, most were reported from south-coast counties, with Dorset (16, including ten on Portland), Sussex (15, of which 12 were at Selsey Bill) and Kent (12) topping the list. One of the more unusual records was an adult male at the Wick of Tresta, Fetlar, Shetland, from 31st August to 20th October, only the sixth for Scotland and also a particularly long-staying individual. Two in East Yorkshire, at Spurn on 21st May and at Flamborough Head on 14th June, were also north of the species' typical limits.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			1992	1995	2000	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
105	3,023	12	244	180	173	10	37	75	147	139

Yet another species for which spring 2001 will be best forgotten: 14 spring records is the worst total for Common Rosefinch since 1980. All but three (one in Kent and two in the Outer Hebrides) of those which were seen in spring occurred along the North Sea coast between East Yorkshire and Shetland. This was the second consecutive poor spring for Common Rosefinch, and it seems that its establishment as a regular breeding bird is still some way away.

Numbers in autumn were, however, an improvement on recent years with 90 birds recorded, compared with the annual autumn mean of 86 for the period 1990-2001. Of these, the majority were again in Shetland (58 records), but there were also four in Wales, including three on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, on 11th October and one at Llanrhystud, Ceredigion, on 26th September.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1968-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2001			Annual means 1968-2001			
			1996	1969	1995	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
19	1,982	34	118	114	89	53	58	71	31

Never has there been such a poor year for Ortolan Bunting records in Britain. With just 19 recorded, the 2001 total is the lowest since 1968, when systematic, regular record-keeping began. Furthermore, the 2001 total was also lower than any recorded from 1958 to 1967, a period when there were considerably fewer active observers than there are today (Sharrock 1974).

Both spring and autumn totals were the lowest ever. Only three were recorded in spring, singles in Sussex, Norfolk and North Yorkshire. The sixteen autumn records occurred between 15th August, at North Foreland, Kent, and 12th October, at Brownwich Cliffs, Hampshire. Only Scilly, with three, and Shetland, with two, recorded more than one individual during the autumn. There was also one on St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, on 27th September.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

Number of individuals in 2001	Number of individuals in 1958-2001	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2001			Annual means 1958-2001				
			2000	1987	1993	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-01
30	782	10	59	47	46	5	10	24	29	45

In comparison with recent years, 2001 was an average year for Little Buntings in Britain. There was just one spring record, at Sheshader, Outer Hebrides, on 2nd May. In autumn, birds turned up in many of the east-coast counties where this species typically occurs, with most in Shetland (11), followed by Scilly (four). Away from Scilly and the east coast, there were two in Dorset, and singles in Devon and Pembrokeshire. One of the Shetland birds, at Chanerwick, stayed from 2nd November until 26th December and represents the only winter record during the year.



Fig. 17. Distribution of Little Buntings *Emberiza pusilla* in Britain in 2001.

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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank most sincerely the county and regional recorders and their assistants for providing such detailed information for 2001 and for supplying additional records for past years where appropriate. Without their ready co-operation, this report would not have been possible.

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The production of this report depends in no small part upon the goodwill of the county and regional recorders who provide us with data. In order to make the report as complete as possible, we would be most grateful for a copy of your county or regional report (sent to Mike Rogers at the above address) or data for the relevant species e-mailed to Peter Fraser at pafrazer@dial.pipex.com.

The deadline for submission of 2002 data is 31st May 2004.

Conservation research news

Compiled by Paul Donald, Andy Evans and Mark Eaton



European Barn Swallows don't fly south – African swallows fly north!

A high proportion of the species breeding in northern latitudes are long-distance migrants. Many European breeding birds fly huge distances to winter in sub-Saharan Africa, and many species breeding in North America undertake equally spectacular migrations to Central and northern South America. But are these migrants really tropical species which have evolved a tendency to move north in summer, or temperate species which have evolved a strategy of migrating south in winter? In other words, is the Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* an African species which migrates north to breed, or a Eurasian species which flies south in winter? The weight of evidence currently supports the former view, known as the 'tropical origin hypothesis', yet proving that hypothesis is very difficult. There are, after all, far more species of swallows (Hirundinidae), cuckoos (Cuculidae) and bee-eaters (Meropidae) in tropical Africa than there are in Europe. But perhaps there are some clues in present-day ecological patterns which might reveal something of these birds' evolutionary history?

Recent research by Katrin Böhning-Gaese and Reik Oberrath, at the Institut für Zoologie at Mainz University, suggests that habitat selection might indeed tell us something about these migrants' ancestral past. One of the most obvious differences between the wintering grounds of North American and European migrants is the extent of forest cover. North American migrants winter in areas which are, or at least were until recently, covered mostly by thick, tropical forests. European migrants, on the other hand, winter primarily in more open, savannah-woodland habitats. Anyone who has visited Central American forests in the winter

will have been impressed by the numbers and variety of warblers which breed in North America, but birders in dense tropical forests in Africa may fail to see even a single migrant from the north.

Böhning-Gaese & Oberrath (2003) showed that the extent of forest cover in areas occupied by wintering North American migrants is twice that within the areas occupied by wintering European migrants, and they suggest that this has probably always been so. If the tropical origin hypothesis is correct, the ancestors of present-day migrants would have evolved on what is now their wintering grounds. If they evolved their migratory strategies by occupying similar habitats ever further north, but returning to their areas of origin each winter, we might expect North American breeding migrants to breed in more forested habitats than their European counterparts. In other words, do long-distance migrants still breed in habitats similar to those of their tropical ancestors? Or does habitat use by migrants simply reflect availability?

The researchers addressed these questions by first comparing habitat use by migrant and resident species on both sides of the Atlantic. They found that proportionately more North American long-distance migrants are associated with forests than are European migrants, on both the breeding and the wintering grounds, but that there is no difference between the two continents in the proportion of resident species breeding in forests. Resident tropical species show a similar pattern, with Neotropical species in families containing long-distance migrants being more frequently associated with forests than Afrotropical ones. The researchers then compared the extent of forest cover in Europe

to that in North America, and found that, although European migrants are more frequently associated with open habitats, the proportion of forested land is actually higher in Europe than in North America, and probably historically far greater. So patterns of habitat use of migrants on both sides of the Atlantic more closely reflect habitat availability on their wintering grounds than on their breeding grounds, a finding which supports the tropical origin hypothesis.

Further evidence in support of the hypothesis comes from looking at the habitats used by short-distance migrants. Such migrants fall into two groups: those, such as Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, which are members of families containing long-distance migrants and which presumably evolved the strategy of short-distance migration simply by gradually reducing the distance flown each autumn; and those, such as Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, which belong to families containing no long-distance migrants and no tropical rep-

resentatives, and which presumably evolved short-distance migration as a strategy to escape hard winters. These two groups thus occupy the same breeding and wintering grounds, but differ in the ancestral paths they followed to develop a short-distance migration strategy. Short-distance migrants with long-distance ancestors show habitat use consistent with those ancestors, whereas short-distance migrants from families containing no long-distance migrants exhibit habitat use more akin to resident species. These results clearly indicate that patterns of habitat use by migrant birds reflect patterns of habitat availability on their wintering grounds and not on their breeding grounds, firm support for the tropical origin hypothesis. So perhaps we should not think of 'our' swallows flying south for the winter, but rather of African swallows flying north for the summer!

Böhning-Gaese, K., & Oberrath, R. 2003. Macroecology of habitat choice in long-distance migratory birds. *Oecologia* 137: 296-303.

Hope for declining Common Starlings?

The Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* has recently been added to the 'Red List' of Birds of Conservation Concern in the UK (Gregory *et al.* 2002), and is declining across much of northern Europe. A recent study in southern Sweden related the recent decline in that country (more than 50% since 1975) to the loss of permanent (grazed) pasture. The study showed that this was the birds' preferred habitat and that in areas where there was less pasture, birds flew further to forage and consequently fed their nestlings less frequently. Although this did not have a measurable effect on fledging success, it may have imposed a cost in other ways, for example in terms of body condition of adults or fledglings. Much of this is not new or surprising, but nevertheless relevant to the situation in the UK. The exciting aspect of this study is that when permanent pasture was

scarce, Common Starlings foraged on grass margins to arable fields. Such margins are an important component of agri-environment schemes in the UK. Research is underway on how best to manage such margins for the benefit of foraging birds. Meanwhile, the Swedish study seems to offer real hope that an important tool for the recovery of Common Starlings in the UK is already available to farmers.

Bruun, M., & Smith, H. G. 2003. Landscape composition affects habitat use and foraging flight distances in breeding European Starlings. *Biol. Conserv.* 114: 179-187.
 Gregory, R. D., Wilkinson, N. I., Noble, D. G., Robinson, J. A., Brown, A. F., Hughes, J., Procter, D., Gibbons, D. W., & Galbraith, C. A. 2002. The population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man: an analysis of conservation concern 2002-2007. *Brit. Birds* 95: 410-448.

Atlantic Puffins avoid gulls when choosing where to nest

Gulls *Larus* are widely considered to have a negative impact on many other species breeding at seabird colonies. They are known to adversely affect these species in three ways: through predation of adults, chicks and eggs; by kleptoparasitism on adults returning to the colony with food for their young; and by competition for the same nesting sites. The control of gull populations has been attempted at many seabird colonies over the last few decades, owing to the perception of this negative impact on 'more important' species. Nonetheless, very few studies have been conducted to determine whether such gull control does result in benefits for other seabird species.

Gull-culling (nest removal and the culling of adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*) was conducted on the National Nature Reserve on the Isle of May, Fife, between 1972 and 1989, in response to high predation by gulls on other seabirds. Finney *et al.* (2003) investigated the effect upon Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica* of this control of gull populations, using data collected over a 23-year period. As gull control was carried out in particular parts of the island, this provided an opportunity to compare recruitment of

immature Atlantic Puffins into the breeding colony in areas with high gull density (low levels of control) and low gull density (high levels of control).

The authors found that areas where gull control was practised most heavily (and therefore contained the lowest densities of gulls) had higher recruitment of Atlantic Puffins than areas with higher densities of gulls. This suggests that areas with low gull densities were more attractive to puffins. Although puffins and gulls do not compete for nest sites, kleptoparasitism and predation of chicks was sufficiently high to cause second- and third-year Puffins returning to the island (together with immigrants from other colonies) to avoid areas of high gull density when selecting breeding areas. This finding is contrary to a study in Newfoundland which found that puffins preferred to breed in areas with high Herring Gull density, as the gulls offered protection from more significant predators, such as Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus* (Rice 1987). On the Isle of May, numbers of Great Black-backed Gulls and other predators were extremely low, so that nesting among high densities of Herring Gulls offered no such advantage.

The authors stress that further research should be carried out to assess the impact of gull-culling at other seabird colonies, in order to assist management decisions and ensure that culling is justified. This is particularly apposite given the recent declines in coastal breeding populations of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls and their increased conservation status.

Finney, S. K., Harris, M. P., Keller, I. F., Elston, D. A., Monaghan, P. & Wanless, S. 2003. Reducing the density of breeding gulls influences the pattern of immature Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica* to a breeding colony. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 10: 515-552.
Rice, J. 1987. Behavioural responses of Common Puffins to kleptoparasitism by Herring Gulls. *Canadian Journal of Zoology*, 65: 339-341.



Pat Morris

400. Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica*, Fidra, East Lothian, July 2002.

Notes

Unusual hunting method of Hen Harrier

For the past ten years, I have studied the behaviour of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* which in autumn roost in vast numbers in the reedbeds of S'Abulfera Parc Natural, Mallorca. Each evening, the starlings fly into the Parc from many directions in substantial flocks, gathering first at diverse collecting points before later moving *en masse* to a single roost site. When making these flights they sweep all before them, bunching and swirling in tight-packed groups around any bird which intrudes onto their flight path. Herons *Ardea* and ducks (Anatidae) are swiftly and peremptorily seen off, but it is the substantial population of Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* and the occasional Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* which most frequently receive sustained attention, giving rise to kaleidoscopic movements by the starlings in their group efforts to oust the raptors from the vicinity of gathering points or the chosen roost site.

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Normally at such times, the harriers twist and jerk this way and that to evade their aggressors. On 30th October 2002, however, I watched a female Hen Harrier being set upon in typical fashion by several hundred Common Starlings. Instead of taking evasive action, the harrier maintained straight and level flight and this prompted the pursuing starlings to bunch more tightly and fly even closer to the harrier. At this point, the harrier thrust out a talon, grasped a starling and wheeled clear of the horde. Initially, I assumed that this was a chance event, but then on two subsequent evenings I observed the same female Hen Harrier behave in identical fashion and on both occasions it took a starling. I concluded that this was probably a hunting technique learned by this one particular harrier, since it was certainly not typical behaviour of the species in general, as observed over many years.

Persistent searching for prey by Eurasian Sparrowhawk

At Skateraw, East Lothian, on 20th September 2002, our attention was drawn to screaming calls in nearby long grass. On approaching the noise, we flushed an adult female Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, which flew off to a nearby tree. While examining the spot where the sparrowhawk had been, we found a collection of small, plucked feathers and then, in the dense grass, a Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*. The jackdaw attempted to escape but was unable to fly and collapsed, hidden in long grass, about 2 m from its original position. Apart from a few feathers plucked from the head, it seemed largely in good condition, but a full inspection was not made. Watching from a nearby vantage point, we observed as the Eurasian Sparrowhawk remained in hawthorn *Crataegus* scrub, about 100 m away, for around 30 minutes, before returning to the original site. It spent a considerable time on the ground where, unfortunately, we were unable to observe

it. It returned frequently to a nearby wall and could be clearly seen intently scanning the area containing the jackdaw. We watched for a further 45 minutes, during which time the sparrowhawk had to endure a couple of half-hearted mobs from passing crows *Corvus*; it was still present when we left.

One week later we found the dead Eurasian Jackdaw intact, where we had last seen it. We presume that the Eurasian Sparrowhawk was searching for the jackdaw but that it had escaped detection in the long grass. Newton (1986) makes brief reference to a sparrowhawk waiting 20 minutes on an isolated bush where a thrush *Turdus* had taken refuge before the hawk was scared off. Here we present a further example of a similar behaviour. Given the low hunting success of 12% cited by Newton, such activity is perhaps not unexpected and may be common (though seldom seen). It is also intriguing, in this case, to speculate whether the

resources invested searching for a lost or abandoned prey item may be correlated with the size and therefore energy value of the prey. Perhaps an additional factor in this behaviour is the predator's confidence that the prey will be suffi-

ciently injured and therefore unlikely to escape.

Reference

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Mallards attacking Common Buzzard

On 30th July 2002, while walking in the uplands near Tylwch, Llanidloes, Powys, a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* flew leisurely across in front of me, at a height of about 150 m. A moment later, two pairs of Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* appeared, flying above and behind the raptor and following the same line of flight. The ducks were flying fast, and soon closed the gap, then one of the pairs peeled off

and dropped towards the buzzard from above, and both birds tried to strike it on the back with their feet. The buzzard avoided the attack simply by sideslipping, and the ducks regained height and continued on their original line of flight. The attack was led by the male Mallard and the whole episode lasted just a few seconds. I am not aware of any other records of ducks attacking a Common Buzzard in this way.

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Hobby kleptoparasitising Long-eared Owl on the Nene Washes

Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* are frequently seen on the Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire, hunting their normal range of bird and invertebrate prey species in typical fashion. Exceptionally, they have been observed taking small Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* chicks. In June 2002, a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* was regularly seen hunting on the Washes at dusk. There were exceptionally large numbers of Short-tailed Field Voles *Microtus agrestis* in the area in 2002, particularly on the Washes, the population having benefited from the lack of recent flooding.

On the evening of 11th June, CK observed a Hobby leave its perch and speed low after the Long-eared Owl, which was carrying prey back towards its nest. The Hobby grabbed the prey from behind and a short tussle ensued on the ground. The Hobby emerged as the victor, and brought the mammal prey back to the central drove of the RSPB reserve, where it started eating it on the ground, before being disturbed by two Magpies *Pica pica*. The Long-eared Owl immediately returned to quartering the field for more prey as if nothing had happened. On 18th

June, at about 21.30 hrs, BS observed a Long-eared Owl hunting the fields along the Nene Washes RSPB reserve. A short time later, this bird was seen flying high, with prey, towards its nest. A Hobby rose from directly below the Long-eared Owl, snatched the prey neatly in flight, and quickly disappeared. The Long-eared Owl immediately turned, lost height, and continued hunting. These two sightings almost certainly involved the same individual Hobby, and member(s) of the same pair of Long-eared Owls.

Chapman (1999) mentions kleptoparasitism by Hobby on several species and postulates that this is the most likely source of ground-dwelling mammals in the diet of Hobbies (up to 10% or more in Russia). Owls are not mentioned among the victims of kleptoparasitism. But on 11th June 2000, Michael Thain recorded a Hobby taking prey from a Barn Owl at Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire (*British Birds* 94: 247), and Marcus Kohler (verbally) observed this behaviour, again at Wicken Fen, on 5th July 2002. Hobby and Long-eared Owl often share similar hunting habitat: open country near to wood-

land. When Long-eared Owls are obliged to hunt in daylight because they are feeding large young, they are perhaps likely victims of such kleptoparasitism.

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Reference

Chapman, A. 1999. *The Hobby*. Arlequin Press, Chelmsford.

Moorhens climbing tree to eat persimmons

The Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* is considered to be almost omnivorous, feeding both on plant and animal material. Although it is well known that this species can climb trees to eat fruits (*BWP* confirms that various fruits, namely plums and pears *Prunus*, and crab-apples *Malus*, are included in the diet) this is the first report of Moorhens eating persimmons *Diospyros*. This peculiar behaviour (see plate 401) was observed during the winters 2001/02 and 2002/03 (from November onwards) close to a restored wetland site in northern Italy, and

involved a group of 20-30 wintering individuals. Different birds could be seen at the same time hanging on tree branches to pick pieces of fruits, while others fed on fallen fruits below. It should be noted that the site hosted plenty of food (other plants, berries and invertebrates), and that persimmon trees were quite distant from normal feeding areas (about 30 m from the nearest cover). Perhaps the birds were actively searching for persimmons, which are an excellent source of carotenoids and vitamin A.

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Roberto Garavaglia

401. Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Cassinazza di Baselica, northern Italy, October 2002.

Stone-curlew taking Little Tern chicks

On 6th June 2002, I was studying a breeding colony of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* in Siracusa, southeast Sicily, Italy. At the site I had counted 33 pairs of Little Terns and 16 pairs of Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus*, plus two pairs each of Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius*

and Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*. While searching for any downy young, I noticed a Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* at one of the Little Tern nests. Through a telescope, I could see clearly that it had caught a chick (approximately 2-3 days old) and was

attempting to swallow it. The parent terns mobbed the Stone-curlew furiously, which nevertheless attempted to take other chicks from the same nest. Eventually, the Stone-curlew was chased away to another part of the colony, where it again attempted to predate a nest. By this time, however, all the terns at the colony,

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plus some Kentish Plovers, were alerted, and the Stone-curlew was hounded from the colony.

There is no mention of birds in the diet of Stone-curlews in *BWP*, although I watched a Stone-curlew kill and eat an exhausted Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* which had landed on a beach at Vendicari, Siracusa, in April 1993.

Common Chaffinch nesting in reedbed

On 12th June 2002, at Rostherne Mere NNR, Cheshire, I discovered a Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* nest within a reedbed. The nest, bright green with moss, was attached to six old canes of Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, in a clump of stems which had been disturbed some months earlier by the weight of roosting Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*. The nest, some 60 cm above the water, was 10 m from the shore and less than 2 m from the open water of a 48-ha lake. The reedbed was bordered by sheep meadow, with mature oak *Quercus* woodland beyond. When discovered, the nest con-

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tained five one-day-old chicks. By 18th June, the nest, now compressed into an oval shape, held only three chicks, which I ringed. On the evening of 24th June, the three chicks perched on the nest rim (plate 402), and would be clearly ready to fledge on the following day. The nest was empty on 28th June, but on 6th July I found the remains of one of the ringed nestlings on the water surface at the mid-point of the reedbed, some 5 m short of the safety of dry land. I doubt whether the first flight of the other chicks would have carried them to shore.



402. Thirteen-day-old Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* nestlings in reedbed nest, Rostherne Mere NNR, Cheshire, June 2002.

Reviews

THE BIRDS OF SUFFOLK

By Steve Piotrowski.
Christopher Helm, A&C Black,
London, 2003. 360 pages;
70 colour photographs;
line-drawings, charts
and distribution maps.
ISBN 1-7136-6354-5.
Hardback, £40.00.

Suffolk has long been recognised as one of the richest and most diverse of the English counties. It is home to perhaps the broadest spectrum of breeding birds (in England), while the winter months bring internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl and raptors to its coastal wetlands and inland marshes. Consequently, Suffolk's ornithology has been well documented by previous authors, including Ticehurst (1932) and Payn (1973, 1978). Their detailed accounts of the birdlife during their respective periods make fascinating reading, but for the current generation of birders, these older accounts relate to a bygone era – one now lost to the demands of industrial agriculture and to the urban sprawl so prevalent during the last 30 years. The time is ripe for an update and this book meets all expectations.

Indeed, this book establishes a most-important milestone in Suffolk ornithology. Not only does it provide an updated review of all species recorded from Suffolk (in the case of some rarities, up to the end of 2002), but also forms the new baseline by which future changes can be monitored, and provides a valuable insight into developments which have occurred in the recent past.

Introductory chapters discuss Suffolk's many and varied habitats, ranging from the coasts and estuaries, marshes and broads, to the Sandlings and Breckland, rivers, woodland and farmland. Many of the changes affecting the countryside since the account by Payn,



ranging from the intensification of agriculture to the increase in reservoirs and gravel-pits, and their impact on bird populations are discussed. Further chapters consider the effects of weather and climate change. In particular, the emphasis that the impact of an occasional harsh winter has upon bird population levels is discussed, as are the weather conditions causing falls of migrants on the coast.

Other chapters deal with Suffolk's ornithological history, noting particularly the enormous contribution made by C. B. Ticehurst. In addition to older material, the author has drawn upon the vast reservoir of information which has become available in the last 30 years, including published papers and accepted records which have appeared in the *Suffolk Bird Report* since 1950, as well as information from unpublished sources. This has enabled the author to make many fascinating comparisons between current and past trends and fluctuations.

Ringing, migration studies, surveys and conservation have always been important in the county, as they establish important yardsticks by which population trends can be monitored. Their results feature prominently within the systematic list, which is by far the largest section (almost 300 pages) and, perhaps, of most interest to active birders. For most breeding species, a distribution

map, based upon the results of a tetrad survey, summarises the breeding range. Although for the most part these are accurate, in the case of some species, including Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, they were probably prepared several years ago, and details of recent, and in some cases significant, declines have been omitted. Accounts of the commoner passage migrants and winter visitors are thorough and neatly summarised using bar charts to plot changes in annual abundance.

Treatment of rarities is commendably concise. Almost all accepted records of national rarities are listed individually, although careful scrutiny reveals the inclusion of a tiny minority of records which have not yet been accepted or await submission for assessment. Examples include some early reports of 'Caspian Gull' *Larus (cachinnans) cachinnans* and an 'American Herring Gull' *L. argentatus smithsonianus* in the late 1990s, along with two Radde's Warblers *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and a Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* reported in 2002. Their inclusion is doubtless due to the long gestation period of this book and the author's enthusiasm to keep the text updated.

An attractive series of excellent vignettes are liberally scattered throughout the book, in addition to 32 pages of colour photographs, which show a range of important habitats, and a selection of both common and rare species photographed within the county.

The Birds of Suffolk nicely complements the recently published *The Birds of Norfolk*, providing many interesting comparisons and surprising contrasts. If you live in East Anglia, or regularly visit this region, then this book will be a treasure-trove of interesting facts and one which you will regularly want to delve into. A must-have for the bookshelf.

G. J. Jobson

THE BIRDS OF EXMOOR AND THE QUANTOCKS

By David K. Ballance and B. D. Gibbs. Isabelline Books, Falmouth, 2003. 205 pages; colour frontispiece; 32 illustrations; endpaper maps; folding map. ISBN 0-9542955-1-X. Hardback, £35.00. (ISBN 0-9542955-2-8. Paperback, £14.95).

Although Exmoor lies across two counties, it is surprising that this is the first major avifauna to cover all of it in one volume. The authors have also chosen to include the Quantocks and the Blackdown Hills, the other major uplands of the region. They claim, with some justification, that no other area of similar size in England and Wales contains such a variety of habitats. The introduction describes these habitats succinctly, and there are quite detailed maps of the topog-

raphy and a gazetteer of principal sites.

A brief history of local ornithology, including ornithologists active since the mid nineteenth century is given. Almost nothing was published about the birds of the area until Cecil Smith's *Birds of Somersetshire*, in 1869. For more recent records, the authors have drawn heavily on annual county bird reports, but have also consulted a wide range of other published sources (fully referenced).

The bulk of the book consists of the species accounts, which vary from a single sentence for accidentals to two pages for Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*. Records up to the end of 2000 are included. Each account is prefaced by a description of the species' past and present status, and arrival and departure dates of migrants are recorded. The accounts are generally full, and cover distribution, timing of breeding, and numbers. The area has seen several local extinctions,

notably of Red *Lagopus lagopus* and Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, and Cirl *Emberiza cirrus* and Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra*, while numbers of Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* are at a low ebb. Merlins *Falco columbarius* continue to hold on, however, while Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* is a notable gain.

The book ends with records of exotics and escapes, and a list of rejected records. The illustrations, by local artists, are of birds in local settings. I found that of Black Grouse at their last Exmoor lek particularly evocative. This book contains a great deal of information and bears comparison with any other local avifauna of which I am familiar, and I recommend it to anyone with an interest in the area. It is available only from Isabelline Books, 8 Woodlane Crescent, Falmouth TR11 4QS; e-mail mikann@beakbook.demon.co.uk

David Warden

THE ATLAS OF WINTERING BIRDS IN NORTHUMBRIA

Edited by John Day and Mike Hodgson. Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club, 2003. 468 pages; 36 colour photographs; many black-and-white line-drawings. ISBN 0-9538839-4-9. Hardback, £42.00.

If you put only one bird book on your Christmas list, make it this one. Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club's small band of fieldworkers have produced the first wintering atlas for a British county, and it is a worthy companion volume to the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Northumbria* (Day, Hodgson & Rossiter 1995). Many county bird clubs have now produced breeding atlases, but a winter atlas is a quite different challenge. Breeding birds on territory stay in one place and can be logged during the long days of spring and summer. Mapping the

distribution of bird species in the short winter days is subject to the vagaries of weather and food supply – and the birds move in response to both!

During the three winters of 1996/97 to 1998/99, more than 140 observers made regular two-hour visits to all 1,432 tetrads within the Club's recording area – the county of Northumberland and the districts of Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside. With over 500,000 ha of land and inshore waters, and 100 km of coastline, this is one of the largest ornithological recording areas in England, yet with a low density of observers. Northumberland is particularly important for wintering birds; for example, 2,700 ha of intertidal mudflats on Lindisfarne hold nationally and internationally important populations of waders and wildfowl, notably Svalbard pale-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota*, which peaked at 4,000 during the atlas fieldwork.

A total of 171 species winter

regularly in the region, and the results of this tetrad atlas are compared with the national *Winter Atlas* (Lack 1986), compiled during 1981-84. There are familiar stories of declines among farmland birds such as Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* between the two recording periods, but perhaps the greatest success story is the remarkable increase of Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, which occurred in 67% of 10-km squares compared with just 17% in 1981-84. The atlas quantifies populations of wintering birds and the top ten is dominated by immigrants from northern Europe. Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* at the top is followed by Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Rook *Corvus frugilegus*, Common Gull *Larus canus*, Eurasian Jackdaw *C. mouclula*, Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*.

This atlas is produced

extremely professionally, with vignettes of all the wintering species. An invaluable acetate overlay, supplied with the book, maps all the river systems and major settlements in 'Northumbria'. Tetrad maps of all major habitat types are similarly useful,

and photographs of key locations, many of them taken from the air, help the reader visualise the patchwork of upland moorland, lowland farmland and dramatic coastline which makes this region so attractive to wintering birds.

The authors and fieldworkers

should be congratulated for this substantial achievement. The atlas is available, post free, from Mike Hodgson, 31 Uplands, Monkseaton, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear NE25 9AG.

Adrian Pitches

**BIRDS, SCYTHES
AND COMBINES:
A HISTORY OF BIRDS AND
AGRICULTURAL CHANGE**

By Michael Shrubbs. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003. 371 pages; maps; tables; graphs; black-and-white illustrations.
ISBN 0-521-81463-4.
Hardback, £35.00.

If you want to know why so many of our farmland bird populations are in a parlous state, this is by far the most informative book available. The author approaches environmental history armed with a lifetime of experience as a working farmer in Sussex and Wales, and a long association with the scientific work of the BTO. In short, he knows what he is talking about, perhaps uniquely so. His aim is to survey the impact of 250 years of constant agricultural change on British farmland birds, under which definition the book includes 99 species with a combined population of over 91 million in the breeding season, and 82 species with a population of 177 million in the winter. The categories are perhaps a little too widely drawn (it is surprising to find Pintail *Anas acuta* and Garganey *A. querquedula* on the list) but this hardly matters when a core 22 species account for over 80% of the breeding population in summer.

The book develops by outlining the course of agrarian change since the eighteenth-century enclosures, in arable and pastoral farming, including, eventually, such familiar themes as the use of pesticides, the removal of hedges and drainage of wet areas, the coming of mechani-

sation and the modernisation of buildings. The basic message is that in economic and social terms the countryside has been in a state of flux since 1750: there is no single 'traditional farming system' to go back to, but rather the past is a kaleidoscope of farming change driven by markets, technology and government policy. For birds, however, these changes tended broadly to cancel one another out until around 1970. Certainly there were losers with the early enclosures, the Great Bustard *Otis tarda* being the obvious example: in Sussex they were common enough to be coursed with hounds before the great changes. But these were more than compensated for by the benefits from high organic inputs into Victorian farming, which encouraged species like Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*: MacGillivray, in a Hebridean croft during the mid nineteenth century, had Corn Buntings' eggs fried on a shovel for his tea. Every twist in the game produced winners and losers: species like Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* were losers when the main wetlands were drained, but gainers when agricultural depression after 1870 led to the neglect of farm drains and the spread of rushy fields. Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* lost out with the sweeping away of gorse *Ulex* and whins *Genista* on enclosure, but gained again as a result of the multiplication of hedges and weedy root crops. But nothing much fundamental happened to farmland birds as a whole until the second half of the twentieth century.

The most important single critical change was the development of pre-emergent herbicides from the mid 1960s, which within two

decades radically altered the ecology of arable farmland and destroyed both the arable weed flora and the traditional rotation of crops. The way was now clear for autumn-sown monocultures, and the specialisation of farming away from the traditional mixed farm to a cereal east and pastoral west – always a tendency but now a confirmed division. Grassland management, meanwhile, became more intense, with heavy fertiliser applications and EU headage payments. The situation was exacerbated by mechanisation and the abolition of the old stack yards, which had immemorably provided so much winter feed.

Shrubbs writes with clarity (not always helped by his publisher's layout of maps). His argument is concentrated and the detail intense, if also intensely interesting. Who would have guessed, for example, that the fate of the Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* in the Norfolk Broads was sealed by the coming of the London taxi and the bus, vehicles which did not need the specialist crop of marsh hay that had formerly been sold to fuel the capital's transport?

Not all is doom and gloom. We overcame the loathsome habits of Victorian collecting, though we have not (at least in Scotland) abjured raptor persecution. We largely overcame the use of organochlorines and organophosphates which menaced the bird population in the late 1950s and early 1960s. On the other hand, the message of this book is that the current crisis will not so quickly go away. The organochlorines poisoned people as well as Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*, so there was a wider social reason to ban them. No-one is going to ban pre-

emergent herbicides or black-bag silage just for the sake of the birds, nor should they try. The EU might eventually back away from headage payment for sheep on the hills; that would help, but it would not put the clock back. Indeed, the message of this book is that the clock never can be put back, even if we know to which point in history we wanted

to turn it. Paying farmers for feeding birds in winter might do something: encouraging headlands and beetle banks by public subsidy might do even more. But the old rotational farming and the mixed farms which for centuries, even more centuries that Michael Shrubbs deals with, supported our farmland birds are gone forever.

We had better get used to it, decide what we want instead, and make that work for the birds. It is hard to be optimistic, but this wonderfully scholarly and perceptive book clears the ground for sharper thought.

Chris Smout

THE NEW ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BIRDS

Edited by Christopher Perrins.
OUP, Oxford, 2003. 656 pages;
colour photographs;
illustrations; maps.
ISBN 0-19-852506-0.
Hardback, £35.00

Usually, when I hear the words 'Encyclopedia of Birds' or, worse still, 'Pictorial Encyclopedia', my heart sinks. I see cheap production, poor photos, awful illustrations, and a naff text by authors no-one has ever heard of – something guaranteed to be remaindered at a cut-price bookshop near you within six months. I have been given a few down the years by well-meaning relatives. Most have, for years, filled much-needed space on the bookshelves without being opened. Who buys this junk? Well, I guess that it is often a 'well-meaning' relative for a member of the family who is 'into birds'.

But this one is different: *honestly!* It is really excellent. Chris Perrins has gathered together a top-class field of authors and illustrators and kept them on a pretty tight rein. The result is an authoritative work, well-structured and packed with accurate and detailed text. The illustrations are generally excellent, although the Great Black backed Gull *Larus marinus* must surely be deformed around the bill, and the Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* looks a bit short in the wing. Many of the photographs are as stunning, as we have come to expect in recent years.

The format is fairly straightforward. A few pages of introductory material, entitled 'What is a bird?', give a brief overview of avian evolution, structure and anatomy, and breeding systems. Then it is straight into the main part of the book: a review of all 200 avian families, with coverage ranging from a single page for small groups such as frogmouths (Podargidae), through to six pages for gulls (Laridae), ten for owls (Strigiformes) and 14 for ducks, geese



and swans (Anatidae). There are standard sections on structure, distribution, food, breeding biology, and an especially useful one on conservation, but these are used cleverly to highlight interesting aspects of biology or adaptation relevant to a particular group.

An attractive feature is the inclusion of short (two-page) sections headed 'Photo Story' and 'Special Features'. The former take a series of photos which show, for example, an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* catching a fish, male Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* displaying at a lek, and (my favourite) Kakapos

Strigops habroptilus in captivity. The 'Photo Story' sections show important aspects of behaviour, ecology, etc. in stunning detail, with a commentary text from people who really do know what they are talking about. 'Special Features' are varied and, for example, include reports on Great Tit *Parus major* population biology, why an owl looks like an owl, and pigeon (Columbidae) navigation. These are excellent and authoritative, presenting serious science in an accessible and readable way.

So, this book is more than just a series of glossy pictures of pretty birds. The single-volume format cannot compete with the detail of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, and many topics are necessarily brief, especially the 'Factfile', a small box for each family which includes the number of species, their global distribution, habitat, plumage, voice, nest, eggs, diet and conservation status, and, bizarrely, an illustration of size against a human silhouette (imagine the Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, about the size of a big toe!). Who should buy it? It is probably not for 'serious birders', but if you know someone who is 'into birds', then you could do a lot worse than give them this for Christmas. My advice is to leave plenty of time to buy them something else in case you decide to keep it!

Finally, Chris, Don Merton (page 310) is *not* examining a fledgling Kakapo, he's cuddling it; and rightly so: it's a little cracker!

David T. Parkin

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

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

Cull for English Nature?

The Government's apparent decision to kill off its conservation watchdog in England is a grim case of history repeating itself. It is barely a decade since the then Conservative Government scrapped the UK-wide Nature Conservancy Council in 1991, at the same time creating Scottish Natural Heritage, the Countryside Council for Wales and English Nature. Now, English Nature faces the chop from the present Labour Government. And, once again, it seems to be punishment for performing the watchdog role far too effectively for its masters' liking.

The NCC was created in 1973, and stemmed from its parent organisation, the Nature Conservancy, set up by Max Nicholson in 1949. But after more than 40 years of effective nature conservation, including the establishment of a network of National Nature Reserves, the NCC was split into three in an act of political spite by the Tories. The NCC's main crime had been to vigorously oppose blanket afforestation of northwest Scotland's Flow Country with alien conifers. Generous tax relief on those quick-growing plantations made conifers a great business opportunity for wealthy backers of the Conservatives. And highlighting this tax dodge, one which signalled disaster for breeding Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* and Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia*, did not endear the NCC to Environment Secretary Sir Nicholas Ridley, and the organisation was duly abolished.

Now it seems to be shoot-the-messenger time once more. Scientists at English Nature were dubious about Genetically Modified (GM) crops and insisted on field trials of GM sugar beet, oilseed rape and maize. And, as suspected, the results show that biodiversity *will* suffer if GM crops are sown in British fields (see p.662). This is not what Tony Blair and his pro-GM advisers wanted to hear. Consequently, Environment Secretary, Margaret Beckett, and Mr Blair's chief countryside adviser, Lord Haskins (the former head of the Northern Foods conglomerate), are now pushing for the creation of a new rural quango. The plan is for a centralised land management body which will swallow up English Nature, the Countryside Agency (responsible for National Parks in England and Wales) and the Forestry Commission. Conspiracy theorists will see a clear link between EN's scrutiny of GM crops and its likely demise. A better explanation may simply be a row over money, or rather the plethora of grants awarded to farmers and landowners by EN, the Countryside Agency and the Forestry Commission. Lord Haskins wants this money – currently handled by Defra, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – to be distributed by regional development agencies, but Margaret Beckett wants to retain that spending power within her department, and the best way to achieve that is by abolishing the three existing quangos and creating one, the Land Management Agency, under her control.

So what future for English Nature's species recovery work on, for example, Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* and Red Kites *Milvus milvus*? And who will speak up for National Nature Reserves like the Wash, Teesmouth or Stodmarsh when the developers circle? Watch out for the Government's new rural strategy early in the New Year, and be prepared to start letter-writing...

Links: *The Guardian* (www.guardian.co.uk/country);
Countryside Agency (www.countryside.gov.uk);
Defra Rural White Paper (www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralwp);
English Nature (www.english-nature.org.uk).

UK urged to halt pick-up-a-penguin voyage

The RSPB has called on the British Government to overrule a contentious plan to capture 120 pairs of wild Rockhopper Penguins *Eudyptes chrysochome* on the islands of Tristan da Cunha, a UK overseas territory in the South Atlantic. The organiser of the scheme, a South African aquarium owner, is planning to collect the birds from Nightingale Island, one of the penguins' most important breeding sites. Once captured, the penguins will apparently be shipped to zoos and bird collections around the world on the unproven premise that they will be used to support captive-breeding programmes.

BirdLife International lists the Rockhopper Penguin as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List of threatened species, because of the rapid decline of several populations (at least 24% over the last 30 years). This is due to a combination of threats; around Tristan these include significant mortality from driftnet fishing and rock-lobster fisheries. Although the application has been approved by Bill Dickson, the islands' administrator, the RSPB has written to Bill Rammell, Minister for Overseas Territories at the Foreign Office, calling on the Government to overrule the decision. Alistair Gammell, the RSPB's international director, commented: 'It appears to us that this expedition is little more than a commercial collecting expedition with no benefits to conservation. Considering the lack of information on penguin numbers on Tristan da Cunha, we are surprised the UK Government has apparently sanctioned this so easily.'

Link: BirdLife (www.birdlife.net).

GM crops will wipe out Sky Larks

A flurry of papers published in October confirmed what anyone with an interest in wildlife had suspected all along: that GM crops doused with herbicide are bad for farmland biodiversity. The Scientific Steering Committee, set up by the Government to oversee three-year Farm Scale Evaluations of GM herbicide-tolerant sugar beet, oilseed rape and maize, announced that for many groups of wildlife it is indeed better to grow conventional crops than their GM alternatives.

Bees in beet, and butterflies in beet and rape were recorded more frequently in and around conventional crops because there were more weeds to provide food and shelter. There were also more weed seeds among these crops, which are a vital winter food source for farmland birds. By contrast, weed seeds were reduced by 80% in the GM crops. In the modelling studies, growing GM sugar beet caused rapid decline of Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis*, leading to extinction within 20 years. Similarly, the models showed that Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* would be severely affected if GM oilseed rape were grown.

The threat to farmland birds, highlighted by the modelling studies, was caused by the decline

in their food sources because of the weedkillers used on the GM crops. These so-called 'broad spectrum' weedkillers kill off everything except the GM crops, which are designed to survive spraying. GM herbicide-tolerant maize was actually better for many groups of wildlife than conventional maize, with more weeds in and around the crops. But the conventional maize was treated with atrazine, a weedkiller which has been banned by the EU and is being withdrawn from the market. The control does not, therefore, represent a real comparison with GM maize-growing methods.

Membership of the Scientific Steering Committee included English Nature, the Game Conservancy Trust and the RSPB. And the RSPB was trenchant in its response to the Farm Scale Evaluations: two of the three GM crops should be banned because of their adverse effects on wildlife. Mark Avery, director of conservation at the RSPB, said: 'The commercialisation of GM beet and oilseed rape could be disastrous for birds. The Government is committed to reversing bird declines and has promised to ban GM crops if they damage the environment. The Farm Scale Evaluations show that two GM crops harm the environment and minis-

ters now have no choice but to refuse their approval.' David Gibbons, RSPB's head of conservation science and a member of the Scientific Steering Committee, said: 'The... results are unexpectedly dramatic. There will be far less food for farmland birds if GM beet and spring oilseed rape are grown commercially. Agricultural intensification has already caused declines of these birds and these two crops will undoubtedly worsen their plight.'

The eight scientific papers containing the results of the evaluations have been published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* and will now be assessed by the Advisory Council on Releases to the Environment (ACRE), the statutory body which advises ministers. A political decision will then be taken by the Government about the UK's position on commercial GM crop cultivation within the EU.

Links: Farm Scale Evaluations (www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/fse/); ACRE (www.defra.gov.uk/environment/acre/); Royal Society (www.pubs.royalsoc.ac.uk/).

Round-the-world albatross petition

Round-the-world yachtsman John Ridgway, who once rowed the Atlantic with Chay Blyth, has taken to the high seas again to highlight the threat of extinction facing the world's albatrosses (Diomedidae) from longline fishing. He and his crew set sail from Scotland in July on a year's odyssey. They reached Cape Town, South Africa, in October and are now *en route* to Melbourne, Australia.

John, 65, launched his Save the Albatross Voyage with these words: 'Almost forever, the albatross has graced the skies of the Southern Ocean. But soon they will be no

more. Pirate longline fishing will kill them all. I cannot stand by and watch this happen. I will sail around the world, following their circumpolar track to raise public awareness and prevent their needless slaughter. It may be the last chance for the albatross.' His voyage through the Southern Ocean, home to all the world's albatross species, will publicise the annual death toll of hundreds of thousands of seabirds on the baited hooks of longline trawlers, many of which are fishing illegally. An online petition has been launched to coincide with John's journey and

he will present the final petition to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's meeting on pirate fisheries, in Rome in June 2004. The petition is hosted by the BirdLife partner in New Zealand, Forest and Bird. A log of John's journey appears on his own Save the Albatross website.

Links: Save the Albatross petition (www.forest-bird.org.nz/petition/index.asp); Save the Albatross Voyage (www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/brunel/A894594).

Ghost ships unwelcome in Tees Bay

The RSPB has joined the ranks of opposition to the so-called 'ghost ships' – redundant US Navy vessels being sailed across the Atlantic to be scrapped at a yard outside Hartlepool in northeast England. Four vessels set sail from the James River in Virginia in early October on the 6,500-km voyage to the Able UK yard in the northwest corner of Tees Bay. Teesmouth is a National Nature Reserve and has been designated as a Special Protection Area because of its international importance for more than 20,000 migrant and wintering wildfowl and waders which use the area throughout the year.

Friends of the Earth opposed the £13-million contract, with its promise of 200 jobs, from the outset, and a High Court judge granted an injunction on 5th November to halt the ships being scrapped in a wet dock separated from the sensitive waters of the Tees estuary simply by dock gates. A full hearing is scheduled for the week commencing 8th December. RSPB Conservation Manager Nick Mason said: 'Our understanding is that there is no safe place to hold these ships on Teesside. Until there is a cast-iron guarantee that this work will have no adverse impact on the Tees estuary, we do not want to see any more ships set sail.' Any contamination of the fragile and sensitive estuarine habitats by oil, PCBs, or other pollutants could have a major impact on wildlife.

Ranked alongside RSPB and FoE in opposition to the ghost ships are local residents, Hartlepool Council and the Environment Agency, which has ruled that Able UK's waste management licence for a waste tip adjoining its yard does not cover the dismantling of ships (hitherto, Able UK has dismantled oil rigs).

STOP PRESS: On 6th November, as the first two ships approached UK waters, Environment Secretary Margaret Beckett announced that the project could not be completed under international and EU law. Although the return of the first two ships would be impractical, safety and liability concerns over the possible return of the other two ships to the US are being examined.

Link: Friends of the Earth (www.foe.co.uk).

Golden Jubilee for Bird Study

Congratulations to the editorial team of *Bird Study*, the BTO's scientific journal, which celebrated its 50th birthday with a special issue in November. Highlights of the special 50th anniversary issue include:

History: Colin Bibby reviews the progress of field ornithology in Britain, in the context of *Bird Study* and the BTO. Interesting statistics include how membership and turnover of BTO and the RSPB have changed.

Speciation: David Parkin reviews how developments in molecular and population genetics have led to a reappraisal of just what constitutes a species.

Migration: Franz Bairlein summarises what we know about bird movements and discusses how new techniques will reveal even more about migration.

Link: BTO (www.bto.org).

New Recorder for Shetland

Micky Maher is taking over from Kevin Osborn as the new Recorder for Shetland. His contact details are: Hamarsgarth, Haroldswick, Unst, Shetland ZE2 9ED; tel. 01957 711677; e-mail recorder@birdclub.shetland.co.uk Shetland Bird Club is keen to receive electronic submission of all records, including commoner species. Forms in Word and Excel and further details are available at www.nature.shetland.co.uk

Oh, for the wings of a dove

Or in my case it was the wings of a Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* which launched my (short-lived) collection of bird wings gathered from roadside fatalities in the 1970s. Sadly, once the smell found its way from the garage into the house, my father unceremoniously dumped my budding natural history museum in the dustbin. Happily, there is now a new, odour-free, resource for students of bird wings. It can be found online at www.ups.edu/biology/museum/wingphotos.html thanks to the University of Puget Sound in the USA.

And the NHM is on the WWW too

Following on from the previous item, the Natural History Museum has launched a new online guide to British wildlife called Nature Navigator. It is aimed primarily at children, students, gardeners and anyone else who wants to explore the richness of Britain's wildlife. It provides easy access to the scientific and common names of Britain's plants and animals, useful research and educational information, plus links to related sites for those interested in learning more. There are also links to other organisations offering specialist advice, practical knowledge or local wildlife and conservation activities. Nature Navigator covers over 8,000 species and is illustrated with thousands of beautiful paintings and drawings from the Natural History Museum's unique collection of artwork, the world's largest accumulation of natural history art.

Link: Natural History Museum (www.nhm.ac.uk/naturenavigator).



Monthly Marathon

Photo no. 200: Sky Lark

Every so often, this competition includes something which initially defies identification. The bird depicted in plate 213, repeated here as plate 403, is one such individual, since it lacks any clear or familiar plumage features that would normally allow the observer to guess what it is, at least to family level. When faced with such birds, either you just know what it is because you have seen one before in similar circumstances, or you make an educated guess or, more likely, a leap of faith. For me, this individual falls into the first category. Fortunately, I happen to know what this bird is because I have seen it in this plumage on many occasions. Unfortunately, convincing you to believe me is not going to be easy.

Most birders would quickly conclude that, regardless of species, this is a young bird. The conspicuous pale brown and white fringing to most of the upper-body and wing feathers, along with a general untidiness, all point to this individual being not long out of the nest. We gain the impression of a bird with a small head and a bulky, longish body. Although it is hard to be certain, the photograph creates the distinct impression that the bird is sitting low in the grass and could be relatively short-legged. The tail is pointing directly towards us and, while it is impossible to determine the length, it does seem to be fairly broad. Furthermore, there appears to be a suggestion of white on the outer tail-feathers, broader and most conspicuous towards the tip. Discerning any meaningful plumage characteristics from that mass of pale-fringed juvenile feathering is not easy, but I think we can safely say that this is going to be a brownish bird with dark streaking which is likely to be most pronounced on the crown and mantle. Furthermore, the white fringing suggests that pale supercilia may



Arnoud B. van den Berg

403. Juvenile Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Falsterbo, Sweden, July 2001.

reach around the head and meet across the nape, although from this angle the white feather-edges could also just hint at a paler neck.

There are many families in which pale-fringed juvenile feathers create a scaly appearance. For me, however, the features determined so far from this photo all point to one particular family, the larks (Alaudidae); this is the point at which that leap of faith is required if we do not have past experience to draw on. Sticking with this premise, we next have to try and narrow it down to species level. We know it will be one of the warmer-toned, brown and streaked larks, which eliminates some of the Western Palearctic options and restricts us to Crested *Galerida cristata*, Thekla *G. theklae*, Wood Lullula *arborea*, Sky *Alauda arvensis* and Oriental Lark *A. gulgula*. Both Calandra *Melanocorypha calandra* and Bimaculated Lark *M. bimaculata* would appear considerably paler toned than our mystery bird, and so can be ruled

out, as can Short-toed *Calandrella brachydactyla* and Lesser Short-toed Lark *C. rufescens*. There does not appear to be any suggestion of a crest, which should be present in juvenile Crested and Thekla Larks, although some may suggest this is debatable. Some observers might be inclined towards thoughts of Wood Lark, particularly given that paler area on the nape, but juvenile Wood Lark should show distinctly pale supercilia, joining to form a narrow but clearly defined whitish band across the nape. A further feature that, at first glance, appears to exclude Wood Lark is the apparent white in the outer tail-feathers. Adult Wood Larks show a prominent white tip to most of the tail feathers, and we might expect to see more indication of that in this photo.

Despite this potential pitfall, I am going for juvenile Sky Lark. Fortunately, I am familiar with Sky Lark in this plumage and despite cries of "That's not fair!", this is the correct answer. If, however, you

Monthly Marathon

were to ask me why it was not a juvenile Oriental Lark, which also qualifies for entry in this competition, I would have to admit that I have not the faintest idea. I am placing my trust in the editors who, I am sure, would not be so cruel as to show a species in a plumage which does not occur in the Western Palearctic.

Steve Rooke

This Sky Lark, photographed by Arnoud B. van den Berg at Falsterbo, Sweden, in July 2001, was the second really tough photograph in a row, and although two-thirds of entrants named it correctly, the field was smaller than normal. Supporting Steve's assessment, contestants either went straight to one of the larks or set off on the wrong track completely: among the incorrect answers this month, there were votes for Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*. Nonetheless, the leading players avoided a potential banana skin (although two commented that this was the hardest photo in the current round



404. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 203. Nineteenth stage in twelfth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 53), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, or by e-mail to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, to arrive by 31st January 2004.

so far): Nils van Duivendijk and Diederik Kok remain in front with a sequence of nine-in-a-row, with Lou Cross not far behind with seven and Kilian Weixler with five.

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid September to early November 2003.

'Soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma madeiral mollis/feae* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 15th September. Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* Spurn (East Yorkshire), 22nd September. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Hayle estuary (Cornwall), 11th September; Nanquidno (Cornwall), 14th September; Venus Pool (Shropshire), 24th September; Coombe Haven (East Sussex), 27th-30th September. Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Exminster Marshes (Devon), two, 2nd-19th October, one to 2nd November at least.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* Rutland Water (Leicestershire), 22nd September to 4th October; Bowling Green Marsh (Devon), 24th September; Rahasane (Co. Galway), 9th October. Redhead *Aythya americana* Kenfig (Glamorgan), presumed returning bird, 29th October to 6th November at least. Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Chasewater (Staffordshire), 6th October; Studland (Dorset), presumed returning bird, present from mid October. King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* Rue Point (Isle of Man), 23rd October; Cat Firth (Shetland), 25th October.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Staines Moor (Surrey), 29th September; Cheesefoot Head (Dorset),

Mark Witherall



405. Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Gravir, Lewis, Western Isles, October 2003.

Hugh Harrop



406. First-winter Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 2003.

Ross McGregor



408. White's Thrush *Zosteror clausa*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, October 2003.



Mike Malpass

407. Male Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2003.



Mike Pennington

409. First winter Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*, Burravirth, Unst, Shetland, October 2003.

3rd-4th October. **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* Hunstanton (Norfolk), 28th October. **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* St Mary's (Scilly), 20th October.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* Aranmore Island (Co. Donegal), 10th-11th October. **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* St Agnes (Scilly), 15th September and 6th October, also on St Mary's, 26th September and 7th-9th October; Old Moor (South Yorkshire), 20th-22nd September; Moreton (Wirral), 20th September; Islay (Argyll), 22nd-24th September and 19th October to 2nd November; Dyers Green (Cambridgeshire), 28th September; Guardridge (Fife), 28th-29th September; Bishopthorpe (North Yorkshire), 30th September to 8th October; Carahane (Co. Kerry), 2nd October; Edderthorpe Flash (South Yorkshire), 8th October; Birsay (Orkney), 10th October; Mullet Peninsula (Co. Mayo), 11th October; Breydon Water (Norfolk), 12th-19th October; Marshside (Merseyside), 19th October; Blagdon Lake (Somerset), 1st-2nd November; Fair Isle (Shetland), 3rd-6th November; Fleck (Shetland), 5th-6th November; Crossens Inner Marsh (Merseyside), 6th November (possibly same as Marshside bird of 19th October). **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Ythan estuary (Northeast Scotland), 2nd November.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* St Agnes, 16th-17th September; Dungarvan (Co. Waterford), 9th-14th October. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Unst (Shetland), 10th October; Fair Isle, 10th-11th October; Lewis (Western Isles), 12th October; South Uist (Western Isles), 23rd-25th October. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Ladybridge Lake/Nosterfield (North Yorkshire), 20th-23rd September. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire), 14th September; Cromer Point (North Yorkshire), 21st September; St Agnes, 22nd-25th September, same on St Mary's 22nd and 26th-30th September, also on Tresco (Scilly), 26th September; Northwick Warth (Gloucestershire), 27th-30th September; North Ronaldsay, 29th September to 1st October; Whalsay (Shetland), 2nd-7th October and 16th October; Davidstowe Airfield (Cornwall), 8th October; Llyn-Y-Trew (Ceredigion), 19th October; near Clatter (Powys), 20th October.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* Covehithe (Suffolk), 13th September; Out Skerries (Shetland), 20th September; Bardsey (Gwynedd), 10th October; Noss (Highland), 16th October. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Druridge Bay (Northumberland), 13th September; St Mary's, 18th September to 8th October; Cowpen Marsh/Greatham area (Cleveland), 23rd September to 19th October; Land's End (Cornwall), 1st October; Rahasane, 9th October; Gann estuary (Pembrokeshire), 19th October to 6th November at least; Hayle estuary, 23rd October to 7th November at least; Smerwick Harbour (Co. Kerry), 5th November. **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* Lewis (Western Isles), 23rd-25th October. **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* Barrow Gurney Reservoir (Somerset), 2nd November. **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* Kilcoole (Co. Wicklow), 3rd October.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* St Mary's, 6th November. **Little Gull** *Larus minutus* Large numbers in the North Sea included 10,000 past Spurn on 12th September and 2,077 on 14th September; 1,200 past Fraisthorpe (East Yorkshire) on 23rd September; 4,928 past Flamborough (North Yorkshire) on 28th September, with 3,000 on 4th October and 2,500 on 5th October; 900 past Hartlepool Headland (Cleveland) on 2nd October and at least 2,000 on 3rd October; 2,500 past Tynemouth (Northumberland) on 4th October; 1,168 past Filey (North Yorkshire) on 4th October. **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* Sennen Cove (Cornwall), 30th October. **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Tingwall area (Orkney), 26th-27th September; Sennen Cove, 25th October. **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Newbiggin (Northumberland), 27th September. **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* Dungeness (Kent), 26th-27th September. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Snettisham (Norfolk), 2nd-3rd October; Grove Ferry (Kent), 18th October. **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 24th September.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex), 4th October; Firsby Reservoir (South Yorkshire), 11th October; St Agnes/St Mary's, 11th-12th October. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* Out Skerries, 29th September to 4th October and 17th October; Kergord (Shetland), 2nd October; Whalsay, 2nd October; Sumburgh (Shetland), 12th October;

George Reszeter



410. Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*, Tresco, Scilly, October 2003.

Unst, 13th-15th and 18th October; Fetlar (Shetland), 14th-15th October with two on 17th October; Great Yarmouth (Norfolk), 18th-20th October; Skegness (Lincolnshire), 18th-20th October; Filey, 19th October; St Mary's, 22nd-26th October; Fair Isle, 23rd October to 6th November, with two on 24th October and 3rd November; St Martin's (Scilly), 24th October; St Agnes, 27th October; Seaford Head (East Sussex), 30th October. **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* Fair Isle, 5th-14th October; Foula (Shet-



Hugh Harrop

411. Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 2003.

land), 8th and 12th-15th October; Lerwick (Shetland), 14th-17th October. **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* Fair Isle, 17th September; Nanquidno, 2nd October; Beachy Head (East Sussex), 4th October; St Mary's, 4th and 13th October; Mewslade Valley (Glamorgan), 14th October; Tresco, 14th October; Marshside, 14th October; Dungeness, 14th October. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Loch of Spiggie (Shetland), 18th September; Fair Isle, 20th, another 29th-30th September; Filey, 21st September; Barra (Western Isles), 26th-30th September; North Ronaldsay, 28th September to 7th October; Farne Islands (Northumberland), 2nd October; Foula, 4th and 10th-12th October.

Hugh Harrop



412. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Quendale, Shetland, September 2003.



Micky Maher

413. Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama*, Unst, Shetland, October 2003.



Bill Baston

414. Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Southwold, Suffolk, October 2003.



Graham Catley

415. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, October 2003.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* Wide-spread influx from mid October, mostly groups of less than ten, and mainly in Scotland, but with some as far south as East Anglia. Larger flocks included 30 Tain (Highland), 25th October; 38 Forfar (Angus), 26th October; 40 near Helensburgh (Argyll), 27th October; 30 Lerwick, 27th October; 20 Lowestoft (Suffolk), 27th October; 20 Norwich (Norfolk), 27th October; 200+ Aberdeen (Northeast Scotland), 6th November. **Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia caliope* Fair Isle, 17th-19th October. **Red-flanked**

Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* Fetlar, 28th September; Crail (Fife), 15th-17th October; Fair Isle, 16th October; Caister (Norfolk), 27th October. **'Siberian Stonechat'** *Saxicola torquata maura* Thorpeness (Suffolk), 14th September; Titchwell (Norfolk), 24th-27th October; Cruden Bay (Northeast Scotland), 1st November. **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* St Mary's, 15th-



Mike Malpass

416. Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Lytham St Anne's, Lancashire, October 2003.



Hugh Harrop

417. First-winter Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* of eastern form *albicilla* ('Taiga Flycatcher'), Dales Lees, Mainland Shetland, October 2003.



Jack Levene

418. Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2003.

Stuart Williams

419. Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*, Dale, Orkney, October 2003.

Hugo Hamer

420. First winter Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 2003.

17th October; Waxham (Norfolk), 23rd-26th October; Collieston (Northeast Scotland), 25th-28th October; Paston (Norfolk), 1st November. **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Lundy (Devon), 26th October.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* Scatness (Shetland), 28th September; North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 17th-19th October. **Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* Unst, 27th-30th September, with another on 15th October; Bryher (Scilly), 21st October. **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* Foula, 27th-29th September; Tresco (Scilly), 11th-18th October. **'Black-throated Thrush'** *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis* Foula, 9th-18th October; Fair Isle, 16th October; Brae (Shetland), 16th October.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* Whalsay, 28th September to 3rd October; Bryher (Scilly), 2nd October. **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* Fair Isle, 11th, with others on 21st, and 28th-29th September; Sanday (Orkney), 29th September; Out Skerries, 30th September to 3rd October. **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinoides* Fair Isle, 30th September. **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* Slapton Ley (Devon), 13th September; Ashleworth Ham (Gloucestershire), 14th September; Coombe Haven, 15th September; Lodmoor (Dorset), 22nd and 25th September; Nanjizal (Cornwall), 27th September and 5th October; St Mary's, 27th September. **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* Barra, 26th-27th September; Foula, 29th September to 8th October, same, Kergord, 11th-12th October; Fair Isle, 14th October. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Fair Isle, 11th-13th, also 18th and 28th September; Quendale (Shetland), 15th-16th September; Barra, 26th

September; Foula, 28th September to 8th October; North Ronaldsay, 30th September to 1st October; Isle of May (Fife), 1st October; Unst, 5th-8th October.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* Quendale, 14th-19th September; Sumburgh, 19th September; Unst, 20th September; St Agnes, 28th September to 3rd October; Whitburn (Co. Durham), 2nd October; Cley (Norfolk), 5th-6th October. **Sykes's Warbler** *Hippolais rama* North Ronaldsay, 29th September to 1st October; Unst, 4th-9th October. **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* Bressay (Shetland), 30th September; Crookhaven (Co. Cork), 4th October; Easington (East Yorkshire), 18th-19th October. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* Skegness, 2nd October to 6th November at least.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Brotton (Cleveland), 28th September; Benacre (Suffolk), 29th September. **'Two-barred Greenish Warbler'** *Phylloscopus trochiloides plumbeitarsus* Bryher, 27th-28th September. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Foula, 16th-18th September and 1st November; Grutness (Shetland), 17th September; Fair Isle, 20th September; Fetlar, 1st-10th October; Unst, 9th October; St Martin's, 28th October. **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* After the first, at Talmine (Highland) on 11th October, about 100 arrived between 13th and 19th October, mostly along the east coast. There were 21 new arrivals on 14th, 17 on 15th and 14 on 19th October. About 25-30 were seen in Scotland (including the Northern Isles), with at least 16 in Norfolk, and ten in both North Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. The influx continued throughout October and into November, with most records from Scotland and the English east coast; the first one reached Scilly on 17th October, and four were seen in Ireland (three in Co. Cork and one in Co. Dublin). **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* Large influx, with up to 150 during last ten days of September, continuing into October with 140 in mid October, including 24 in Scilly on 13th October, 18 in Shetland on 16th October, and ten on Fair Isle alone on 17th October. **Hume's Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei* Trimingham (Norfolk), 16th-20th October; Sizewell (Suffolk), 18th-23rd October; Hawsker Bottoms (North Yorkshire), 20th October; Southwold (Suffolk), 21st-27th October; Flamborough, 23rd-24th October;

Gibraltar Point, 23rd-28th October; Cot Valley (Cornwall), 25th-26th October; Kilnsea (East Yorkshire), 26th October to 1st November; Waxham, 26th-27th October; Titchwell, 26th-27th October; Beachy Head, 6th-7th November. **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* Spurn, 1st and 12th-13th October; Gibraltar Point (Lincs), 1st and 13th October; Tory Island (Co. Donegal), 2nd October; Sennen, 12th October; Lowestoft, 13th October; Portland (Dorset), 13th October; Fair Isle, 13th October. **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* Tresco, 6th October; Filey, 13th-14th October and 29th-31st October; Fetlar, 14th October; Collafirth (Shetland), 17th October; Foula, 22nd October; Fair Isle, 22nd October; Margate (Kent), 22nd October; Lytham St Anne's (Lancashire), 23rd-24th October; Hemsby (Norfolk), 23rd-27th October; Out Skerries, 24th-25th October; Waxham, 27th-30th October; Brotton, 28th-30th October; Sumburgh, 4th-6th November; between Sennen and Land's End, 7th November; Farne Islands, 7th November. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Nanjizal, 26th-28th September; Spurn, 30th September. **Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla* Large influx during mid October, including 75 on Scilly on 13th October and 30 at Dungeness on 15th October, accompanied by huge numbers of **Goldcrests** *Regulus regulus*.

'Taiga Flycatcher' *Ficedula parva albicilla* Dales Lees (Shetland), 12th-15th October. **Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla* Dungeness, 14th and 16th October. **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* Land's End, 15th-18th October; Dungeness, five, 24th October; Abbotsbury (Dorset), 24th October; Lodmoor, two, 26th October, one remaining to 27th October; Grove Ferry, 26th October.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Out Skerries, found dead, 1st October; Donna Nook (Lincolnshire), 13th October; St Martin's, 23rd-26th October; Burnham Norton (Norfolk), 26th-27th October. **Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* Widespread influx of about 25-30 from mid October, including three in Derbyshire on 30th October. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Talbot Heath (Dorset), 14th September; Maywick (Shetland), 15th-17th September; North Ronaldsay, 16th-23rd September; Barra, 1st-2nd October.

Hugh Harrop



421. Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Sumburgh, Shetland, September 2003.

George Reszeter



422. Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, Bryher, Scilly, October 2003.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* Barra, 5th-7th October; St Mary's, 11th-14th October; St Martin's, 13th-14th October. **European Serin** *Serinus serinus* Barton-on-Sea (Hampshire), 4th October; St Agnes, 5th October; Furnace Pond (Kent), 7th October; St Mary's, 10th and 25th October; Stanpit Marsh (Dorset), 19th October and 1st November; Portland, 24th and 27th-29th October. **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* Small influx in northern Scotland, mostly of the nominate form *hornemanni*: Fair Isle, 22nd, 26th-27th September and 2nd-3rd October; Lerwick, found dead, 22nd September; North Ronaldsay, 27th September; Unst, 29th September to 6th October, with two 7th-16th,

September. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Tory Island, 1st October. **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* Cape Clear (Co. Cork), 10th October; Bryher, 16th-17th October; St Mary's, 20th October.

We would like to thank all the photographers who submitted pictures of rarities to us this autumn, and regret that we have not been able to use more of them here. We will retain these images on file, and intend to use as many as possible in future reports (including the BBRC annual report and the Scarce Migrants report).

and at least one other between 17th October and 6th November; Sumburgh, 30th September; Yell (Shetland), found dead, 7th October; Foula, two or three between 8th October and 1st November; Veensgarth (Shetland), 24th October.

Northern Parula *Parula americana* Brownstown Head (Co. Waterford), 5th October. **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* Dale (Orkney), 31st October to 2nd November. **Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* South Uist (Western Isles), 17th-20th October. **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* Loop Head (Co. Clare), 3rd-4th October. **Savannah Sparrow** *Passerculus sandwichensis* Fair Isle, 14th-19th October.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* Unst (Shetland), 31st October to 1st November. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Foula, 23rd September; Barra, 28th September; St Mary's, 18th October. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* North Ronaldsay, 12th and 17th-18th September; Bryher, 21st-22nd September; Sumburgh, 26th



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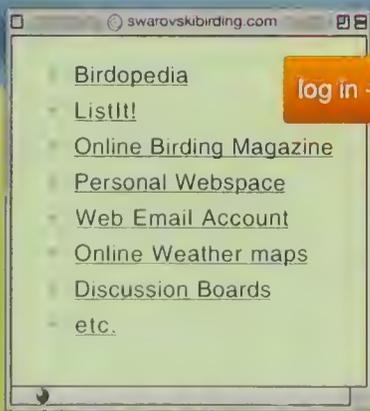
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