

Non-native birds breeding in the United Kingdom in 1999

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Rare Breeding Birds Panel*



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The Rare Breeding Birds Panel has been monitoring the breeding of rarer non-native species in the United Kingdom since 1996, and this is its fourth annual report, covering 1999. It is, however, disappointing to report that, after three years during which the submission of relevant records by County Recorders and other observers has improved, the number of records received this year has fallen. The systematic recording of scarce non-native birds

breeding in the UK is important, particularly as it enables the spread of potential problem species to be detected at an early stage. The Panel strongly urges all observers to contribute records to their County Recorders and, through them, to the Panel.

This report lists records of breeding or potential breeding by all non-native species in 1999, plus one for 1998. Pairs or, for some species such as the pheasants (Phasianidae), males in suitable habitat qualify for inclu-

sion. The letter codes after the species' names denote the categories used by the British Ornithologists' Union 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 (Ogilvie *et al.* 2001): 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) *Columba livia* (AC), and Little Owl *Athene noctua* (C).

Records are set out in the country order England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and, within those, by alphabetical order of county. There were no records of scarcer non-native species breeding in Wales in 1999.

Systematic list

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (AE*)

Two localities: two populations of full-winged individuals.

NORFOLK The flock of full-winged birds at Great Witchingham Park was not counted this year. LOTHIAN No count was received of the flock of full-winged birds at Edinburgh Zoo.

We understand that the policy of Edinburgh Zoo of preventing any more young birds from becoming full-winged has continued, with the expectation that the free-flying members of this group will be gradually reduced over the coming years.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* (E*)

Three localities: two pairs bred.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One pair was present throughout the year at Deen Lake, but breeding was not recorded. WILTSHIRE One pair bred on the River Avon, at Salisbury. LOTHIAN One pair bred, for the third year running, on the Union Canal at Ratho.

Both breeding records refer to well-established pairs. Reports of singles and pairs were received from several other areas. In Hampshire, one at Timsbury was sitting on a nest with two eggs in February, but deserted within a week; no mate was seen.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* (AE*)

Three localities: 2-3 pairs bred.

BERKSHIRE A pair raised one young in Windsor Great Park. HERTFORDSHIRE A pair with three first-year birds visited Wilstone Reservoir, Tring, between April and June, although it is not known where it bred in 1998. AYRSHIRE A pair raised two young on Loch Slochy.

This is the largest number of escaped pairs breeding in one year. At least four apparently wild pairs bred in Scotland and Northern Ireland in 1999 (Ogilvie *et al.* 2001).

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* (AE*)

Small numbers were recorded from several localities, 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: three pairs bred.

ARGYLL Three full-winged pairs of the Greenland race *flavirostris* bred on Islay, near a waterfowl collection; ten eggs hatched, but only five young survived to three weeks old.

This small group stems from a waterfowl collection. Breeding success is typically low.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* (E*)

Five localities: up to eight pairs bred, plus a mixed pair.

DERBYSHIRE One pair raised five young at Queen's Park, Chesterfield, a regular breeding site. GREATER MANCHESTER One pair probably bred at Pennington Flash, but was not successful. HAMPSHIRE At Stratfield Saye, a female mated to a male Greylag Goose *A. anser* raised five young. SOMERSET One pair bred at Chew Valley Lake. WEST MIDLANDS Up to five pairs bred at one locality, although success was low.

Very few breeding attempts have been reported in Britain, although Delany (1993) reported 85 individuals at 27 localities in 1991, and the real total may be even higher.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* (AE*)

Two localities: two pairs bred.

HAMPSHIRE Two pairs bred at Stratfield Saye and fledged five young. ARGYLL Up to 30 individuals were seen on Coll during the year, but there were no breeding records.

These represent fewer reports than usual, although this species does not seem to breed freely in the wild.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (AE*)

17 localities in ten counties: at least 43 pairs bred, or probably bred, plus two mixed pairs. BERKSHIRE Two pairs with six young were reported at Eversley Gravel-pits, a regular site. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE A pair bred at Calvert, while the regular flock at Emberton numbered up to 50, but no information on breeding was received. ESSEX Three pairs bred at two sites in the northeast of the county, but their success is unknown. HAMPSHIRE 20 pairs were present at Stratfield Saye, and apparently breeding, but only two pairs were successful, raising three young. Two pairs raised three young at Baffin's Pond,

Portsmouth. LANCASHIRE Two birds, both paired to Canada Geese *B. canadensis*, bred at Belmont, near Bolton, but no eggs hatched. The county total, estimated from an atlas survey between 1997 and 1999, is thought to be five pairs. NORFOLK 12 broods were seen at three different localities, with a total of 65 adults present. Two other localities held 24 and five individuals, respectively, during the breeding season. SOMERSET One pair bred at Chew Valley Lake, with up to eight adults present. ARGYLL A pair of escaped birds on Islay failed to breed. AYRSHIRE A pair with a clutch of nine eggs was present on Horse Island, but it is not known whether any young fledged. ROSS & CROMARTY A pair built a nest near Invergordon and laid three eggs, which failed to hatch.

The above is an incomplete picture of the status of this species.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* (CE*)

Minimum of 54 localities in eight counties: at least 85 pairs recorded.

BERKSHIRE Two pairs bred at Odney, Cookham, and raised nine young. Single pairs bred at Billingbear Golf Course and at Binfield, each fledging seven young, and at Dinton Pastures, where five young survived of seven hatched. A pair bred at Whiteknights Park but was not thought to have fledged any young. A pair was present in April and May at Theale Gravel-pits. ESSEX Three pairs bred, but their success is unknown. GREATER MANCHESTER Two broods were seen in January at Etherow Country Park, where an adult was incubating in April. HERTFORDSHIRE One pair hatched two broods at Amwell Gravel-pit, but neither brood survived. NORFOLK Eight pairs laid clutches in the Stanford Battle area, of which six hatched 40 young. Five pairs were reported at Felbrigg Park, four at Sennowe Park and at Cranwich Gravel-pit, three at Holkham Grazing Marsh and at Whitlingham Lane Gravel-pit, and one or two pairs at 27 other localities. There were also 17 adults with one small young at Nunnery Lakes, Thetford. No details were received from Holkham Park Lake, where 15 pairs were present in 1998. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One pair raised one young at Center Parcs, Clipstone. SUFFOLK Breeding reported from: Ampton (14 adults with six young); Livermere Lake (at least three pairs bred); Sotterley (two

pairs); Lound (pair with two young); and Oulton Broad (pair with small young). SURREY Three pairs were present, and probably breeding, at Townland Pond, Oxted, and there were single pairs at Lammas Lands, Godalming, and at Godstone Bay Pond, Kew Gardens and the QEII Reservoir.

This represents improved coverage compared with last year (Ogilvie *et al.* 2000).

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (BE*)

One locality: one pair.

NORFOLK A pair was present throughout the year at the UEA Broad, Norwich, but was not thought to have bred.

A late-summer influx into southern Britain produced reports of family parties in Norfolk and Northamptonshire.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* (E*)

Seven localities in three counties: one pair probably bred.

GREATER MANCHESTER A territory-holding pair was reported from the Huddersfield Canal, Mossley. SUFFOLK Numbers at Oulton Broad increased through the year, from 12 in January to 29 in September and 31 in December, suggesting that successful breeding took place, though no reports of broods were received. SURREY One pair probably bred at Langshott, Hurley, while other pairs were present at Barnes, Clapham Common, Ewell Wood Lake and Kew Gardens.

A disappointing year, with many fewer records than in either 1997 or 1998. We do urge observers to report this species, which is not just a farmyard duck.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* (E*)

Two localities: 1-2 pairs.

BERKSHIRE A pair bred at Maiden Erlegh Lake and is thought to have raised two young, since four individuals were present in September. SURREY One pair may have bred near Dorking Mill Pond.

These two were the only breeding-season reports received.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* (AE*)

Five localities in three counties: seven pairs bred.

GREATER MANCHESTER A family party of two adults and five young arrived at Doff-cocker Lodge, Bolton, on 28th October; a male

and three females were still present at the end of the year. A male was present on Elton Reservoir, Bury, from 28th July to 21st September, being joined by a female on 9th-11th September. NORFOLK Six broods, all believed to have been left full-winged, were reported from the waterfowl collection at Pensthorpe. SURREY Reports were received of a full-winged male in Kew Gardens on 8th April, and of a female at Unstead sewage farm.

A reduction compared with last year, and we still have no details concerning the well-established breeding population at Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* (A)

One locality: two pairs bred.

LANCASHIRE Two pairs, known to be of captive origin, bred at Mere Sands Wood, but without success.

The birds which have bred at this site since at least 1988 originated from a nearby waterfowl collection.

Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera* (E*)

Two localities: one pair and a single bird.

NORFOLK One was at Alderfen in late February. SUSSEX A pair was seen in West Dean Woods on 31st January.

These were the only records received.

Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii* (E*)

Two localities: two calling males and a single bird.

NORFOLK One was at Barnham Broom from 30th November to 11th December. SUFFOLK Two adult males at Wantisden on 31st December were calling constantly.

The only records received.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* (CE*)

29 localities in four counties: minimum of 98 birds recorded.

LANCASHIRE A small population persists in the Lytham area, surviving from releases last made in 1993; some hybridisation with Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* has been reported. In addition, a pair was present from January to March at Mere Sands Wood. NORFOLK A total of at least 77 birds was reported from 14 localities, an increase for the second year running, although there are thought to be up to 100 in the county.

SUFFOLK Records were received from 11 localities, including six calling males: at The King's Forest (four), Elveden and Thetford Forest (one each). SUSSEX A minimum of two males and a female was seen at Linchball and West Dean Woods; another pair was reported from West Dean, but no indications of breeding.

No reports were received from the known localities on Furzey and Brownsea Islands, Dorset, and Tresco, Isles of Scilly.

Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae* (CE*)

One county: five pairs.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Five pairs were reported, but no complete survey has ever been carried out.

In 1998, a total of 85 territories was identified in Bedfordshire (Cannings 1999), but the survey has not been repeated.

Common Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* (E*)

Three localities in one county: three pairs bred. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two females hatched broods of four and one young, respectively, at Pipewell Wood, but only one young survived, from the brood of four. A pair with two well-grown young was at Kirby Hall on 13th June, with a second pair nearby. Individuals were also reported from a third location.

This is a new species for these reports, although we have subsequently discovered that a pair fledged three young at Pipewell Wood in 1998.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (E*)

One locality: one pair bred.

MERSEYSIDE One pair bred at Fazackerley (success unknown), where a single pair bred in 1997 and two pairs bred in 1998.

This remains the only breeding site in Britain for this species.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (CE*)

Four counties.

BERKSHIRE Three pairs were reported from Cookham and two pairs from both Bray and Maidenhead Court. Single pairs were seen at Horton Gravel-pit and in Windsor Great Park. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Fewer were reported during the breeding season than in 1998,

with about 12 birds in five or six areas, and a total of 50-60 wintering individuals. MIDDLESEX One breeding pair was reported. SURREY Up to 15 breeding or territory-holding pairs were reported, but it is known that this figure does not represent the number breeding in the county. The roost at Esher peaked at around 3,000 in November.

A study of the population biology of this species in southeast England commenced in 2000, which should lead to a much better knowledge of its breeding status and distribution.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* (E*)

Three localities or areas: breeding occurred at two.

DEVON A single was at Stoke Hill, Exeter, in August. HERTFORDSHIRE There is a small breeding population in Borehamwood, with up to 17 birds seen in February. SURREY A pair bred at Lonsdale Reservoir, but the outcome is unknown; small numbers are regular in this area, and around Barn Elms and Richmond Park.

The species is probably commoner around London than the above indicates. It is likely that the study of Rose-ringed Parakeets (see above) will reveal more information about this species, too.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* (E*)

Two localities: one pair bred.

ENGLAND One pair bred at a location in northern England and fledged two young.

WARWICKSHIRE An unmated male, apparently on territory, was calling in wooded rural parkland between February and December.

The pair in the north of England bred for the fourth year running.

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