

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 *Syrnaticus 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 Copleham 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 acuticauda*

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 bred 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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Dr M. A. Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN

