

Non-native birds breeding in the UK in 2002

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



Bar-headed Geese *Anser indicus*. Simon Gillings

This is the seventh annual report by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel into the breeding of rarer non-native species in the UK, and covers the year 2002. 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 (Holmes *et al.* 1998; BOURC 2004). Since 1996, the Panel has monitored the establishment and spread of populations of these species, and 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.

As in previous years, coverage in 2002 was patchy, with considerable variation in the reporting of introduced and escaped birds in different parts of the country. Yet it is imperative that we learn more about our breeding non-native birds. Certain species, whether escapes from captivity or deliberate introductions, can create potentially serious conservation or even economic problems, and for this reason we urge observers to redouble their efforts in reporting the species described below

to County Recorders and/or to the Panel.

The results of a new survey of naturalised geese breeding in the UK, carried out by WWT in 2000, were finally published in 2004 (Rowell *et al.* 2004), and are presented here for the appropriate species. They are compared with the Panel's data, and also with the results from an earlier national survey of naturalised geese, in 1991 (Delany 1993).

The current membership of the Panel is 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.

It was with great sadness that the Panel learnt of the death of Colin Bibby on 7th August 2004. Colin had been a member of the Panel since 1990 but was forced to resign owing to ill health in April 2004. His knowledge and advice were invaluable and he played a key role in the development of the Panel into a major source of information of conservation importance.

Systematic list

Records of non-native species for which there was breeding or potential breeding activity in 2002 are included. 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

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* (E*)

Three localities in two counties: two pairs bred. GREATER MANCHESTER Pair bred at Arley Hall but failed. Two immatures present, Elton Reservoir, early August, but origin unknown. SUSSEX Pair bred at Benbow Pond, Cowdray Park, and was seen with a downy cygnet on 11th August; fledging success was not reported.

This represents a considerable reduction on the nine or more breeding pairs in 2001. In four counties where breeding occurred in 2001, Devon, Lothian, Northeast Scotland and Orkney, it was confirmed that no breeding took place this year.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* (AE*)

Three localities in three counties: three pairs bred.

BEDFORDSHIRE A pair attempted to breed at Wardown Park, Luton. BERKSHIRE Pair with two young on 31st May, fledging success unknown. HIGHLAND Pair bred in Glen Strathfarrar, breeding success unknown.

These were the only reports of pairs believed to be of captive origin (see Ogilvie *et al.* 2004 for reports of assumed wild pairs).

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus (AE*)

No reports of breeding in 2002 were received. Rowell *et al.* (2004) found a total of 33 individuals at 20 sites in 2000. They also reported breeding by a pair at Horsey Island, Essex, and probable breeding in Leicestershire, neither of which was reported to the Panel. Their figure compares with a total of 88 birds at 29 sites in 1991 (Delany 1993).

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons (AE*)

One locality in one county: at least one pair bred.

ARGYLL Three full-winged pairs of the race *flavirostris* were present on Islay near a water-fowl collection, of which one pair definitely

BOURC (BOURC 2004). The absence of a letter indicates that the species is not currently listed.

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.* 2004): Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*.

bred, rearing two young.

Rowell *et al.* (2004) found only seven adult birds (two *albifrons*, one *flavirostris* and four undetermined) at seven sites in 2000, none of them breeding, which is a considerable drop since Delany's (1993) total of 54 *albifrons* in 1991.

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

Five localities in four counties: up to five pairs bred.

KENT Flock in Grove/Stodmarsh area, August-October, included at least three juveniles; possibly also bred in Wingham area. SUSSEX Two adults and two immatures were present in Chichester Harbour in late August and early September, but it is not known where breeding took place. WARWICKSHIRE Pair fledged one young on lake at Kineton. WILTSHIRE Pair bred at Edington Lake and reared four young.

No breeding apparently took place in either Derbyshire or Hampshire in 2002, where breeding has been fairly regular in past years. Reports of singles and small flocks were received from a number of counties. There were 52 birds at 18 localities in eight counties in 2000 (Rowell *et al.* 2004), with just one breeding pair, at Stratfield Saye, Hampshire. This record was not reported to the Panel at the time, but three other breeding pairs that year were. Delany (1993) reported 85 birds at 27 localities in 1991.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* (AE*)

Two localities in two counties: 3-4 pairs bred.

HAMPSHIRE Although two pairs were reported from the regular breeding site of Stratfield Saye, it is not thought that breeding actually took place. ARGYLL On Coll, a flock of 24 adults and 10 goslings was rounded-up and ringed during their annual wing moult in July 2002. This was thought to be all the birds present on the island at the time, but it is not known whether there were any others elsewhere. This flock of 30-40 introduced geese moves between Coll and Mull during the year.

Rowell *et al.* (2004) reported a total of 86

Snow Geese at 17 sites during 2000, which compares with 85 at 27 localities found in 1991 by Delany (1993). Delany included the Coll/Mull flock in his total, however, which was not mentioned by Rowell *et al.*

Emperor Goose *Anser canagicus* (E)

No reports of breeding in 2002 were received. In 2000, 14 birds were found, all adults, at five localities (Rowell *et al.* 2004). In 1991, Delany (1993) also found 14 birds, at seven localities.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (AE*)

Breeding reported from at least nine localities in eight counties.

BEDFORDSHIRE A maximum of 28 young were present on Roxton Gravel-pit in early July, but it is not known how many fledged or how many pairs actually bred. A pair also bred at Harrold Gravel-pit and reared one young. CHESHIRE & WIRRAL Pair hatched one young at Tatton. DERBYSHIRE Pair fledged two young at Carsington Reservoir. HAMPSHIRE Eight pairs bred at the regular site of Stratfield Saye, with up to 20 young seen. HIGHLAND Pair bred at Tarbat House, Dornoch Firth, but success unknown. NORFOLK Pair bred successfully at Ditchingham Gravel-pit, but number of young not reported. SUFFOLK Twelve small young seen on Sotterley Park lake in early June; number of pairs involved not reported. Breeding suspected elsewhere in county. WARWICKSHIRE Three pairs bred on lake at Priors Marston, success unknown.

The 2000 survey (Rowell *et al.* 2004) found a total of 693 birds at 75 sites. Details of the number and location of all the breeding sites are not given, but 129 of the total were juveniles with breeding confirmed in Cumbria, Essex and Hampshire, among others. The Panel's report for 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 631-635) included breeding records for those three counties, and also a further five. Although several flocks appear to be flourishing, the total found in 2000 is well down on the 925 at 89 localities reported by Delany (1993).

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* (CE*)

Minimum of 43 localities in seven counties: at least 33 breeding pairs recorded.

BERKSHIRE Breeding reported from Windsor Great Park (two pairs), the River Thames at

Caversham (two pairs), Dinton Pastures Country Park (four pairs) and Theale Gravel-pits (two pairs), with young produced at each locality. GREATER MANCHESTER Pair fledged two young at Compstall Water. HAMPSHIRE Up to six pairs at four localities, but breeding not confirmed. LEICESTERSHIRE Five pairs raised 15 young at Rutland Water. NORFOLK Breeding reported from 17 localities, but no estimate of the total number of pairs involved. SUFFOLK Up to 17 pairs breeding at 14 localities. WARWICKSHIRE Single pairs at two localities, both in suitable habitat, but breeding not reported.

Coverage remains disappointingly patchy. In 2000, a total of 575 was found at 43 localities (Rowell *et al.* 2004), with the majority (444) in Norfolk and a further 64 in Suffolk. In fact, only one breeding locality away from Norfolk and Suffolk was listed, though the Panel's report for 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 631-635) records breeding in six other counties. In 1991, the total recorded was 906, with Norfolk holding over 800 of these (Delany 1993). It is not known whether this is a genuine reduction in numbers or simply whether coverage in Norfolk was less thorough in 2000.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (BE*)

No reports of breeding in 2002 were received.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* (E*)

Three localities in three counties: at least four pairs bred.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE The population at Ely numbered at least 19 adults during the summer and a minimum of ten young were seen. DERBYSHIRE Up to 11 adults and 15 young (broods of eight and seven) were present at Bradford Dale in late July. NORFOLK Pair fledged one young at Broom Heath.

No breeding took place in either Cheshire or Devon where this species was reported in 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 96: 620-625). Records of non-breeding birds were received from a number of other counties. This species is not simply a farmyard duck and all records are useful in establishing the national picture.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* (E*)

Two localities in two counties: pair bred, three other pairs reported.

LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEYSIDE Pair present in suitable habitat. WILTSHIRE Pair bred at Stanton Park and fledged one young;

two other pairs present in early March.

Singles were seen in at least five other counties.

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

Five localities in four counties: at least five pairs. GLAMORGAN Pair displaying at Roath Park Lake in early April. GOWER Pair at Eglwys Nunydd in late March. LINCOLNSHIRE Pair at Langtoft Gravel-pits in April and 12 birds in September. NORFOLK Two young seen in May at Pensthorpe, where there is a free-flying population, and two males and a female at nearby Great Ryburgh in April and June.

Once again, our annual plea for data from the well-known population in the Cotswold Water Park has gone unheeded. Information from this site would be extremely valuable.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* (A)

No reports of apparently escaped or introduced birds in 2002 were received.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* (E)

Six localities in three counties: no confirmed breeding.

DEVON Five together in a field in August. NORFOLK There were no reports from the breeding locality of 2001, but two were seen about 12 km from that site, in August. Two males and a female seen at another locality in April and single pairs at two (separate) nearby localities, one in June and the other in December. SOMERSET A free-flying flock is well established at Ash Priors, but no reports of breeding were received.

This species may be increasing in popularity as a species to keep, and release.

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

Six localities in three counties.

NORFOLK Males reported from three sites within the Stanford Training Area, including two displaying in late July at one and seven males in September at a second; sightings from three other localities. SOMERSET Small numbers present at Ash Priors throughout the summer. WILTSHIRE Three males present at Druid's Lodge estate in early May.

Green Pheasant *Phasianus versicolor*

Three localities in one county.

NORFOLK Up to 12 males at Worstead all year; also reported from Frettenham, in late March and early April, and North Walsham, in early April (two).

This species was first reported to the Panel in 2000, from the same general area of northeast Norfolk, where it appears to be persisting, though the above localities are up to 10 km west of the original release site.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* (CE*)

21 localities in five counties: minimum of 64 birds involved.

DEVON Single males, one killed by a car, at two localities. LANCASHIRE & NORTH MERSEY-SIDE Nine males and a female seen in Lytham Hall Woods. NORFOLK Reported regularly from three localities, Wayland Wood (up to 11), Hockham Woods (10) and Wolferton (3), plus one or two sightings of 1-5 birds (total 15) at seven other localities. SUFFOLK Six males seen in five different localities. SUSSEX Three pairs and a single bird reported from three localities.

The Norfolk total of 39 compares with 49 in 2000, the last year for which there were good figures. The Sussex total is incomplete as the three estates which held up to 45 pairs in 2000 were not surveyed this year.

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

Present in two counties, which still hold the two main populations of this species.

BEDFORDSHIRE At least 15 different birds seen in several localities. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Still present but no counts. A total of 85 territories was identified in this county in 1998.

Common Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* (E*)

This species was seen in five localities in Norfolk, but no breeding was reported. Common Peafowl bred in Northamptonshire in 1998 and 1999, and two were seen at Winfarthing, Norfolk, in 2001.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (AE*)

Two localities in two counties: two full-winged populations.

NORFOLK Free-flying birds from the colony at

Great Witchingham Park continue to be seen outside the park in small numbers. **LOTHIAN** No young were left full-winged at Edinburgh Zoo.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (E*)

No reports of breeding were received in 2002.

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

Breeding in at least five counties: total population 6,000+.

The summary of breeding numbers in the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Kent, Middlesex and Surrey in the Panel report for 2001 cannot be improved upon, as the study upon which it was based (Butler 2002) ended prior to the 2002 breeding season. Very few were seen in Sussex, and no breeding was reported. The five main winter roosts, at Esher, Lewisham, Reigate, Ramsgate and Maidenhead, were counted during winter 2001/02 and held a total of 6,004 birds (Butler 2002). Sightings of small numbers of birds were reported from Cheshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis* (E)

One locality: pair bred.

LOTHIAN Pair bred at Dunbar, an adult and juvenile being present during January to April, with five birds seen on 3rd April, and another juvenile present on 5th August.

This is the first reported breeding by this species in the wild, and the second successive year that a new species of parrot has bred in the UK (the first breeding of Blue-crowned Parakeet was reported in 2001). Rosy-faced Lovebird is a native of Angola, Namibia and South Africa.

Blue-crowned Parakeet *Aratinga acuticaudata*

No reports of breeding were received in 2002, although there were seven together in the Lymington area of Hampshire from September to December. Last year's attempted breeding in Kent was not repeated.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* (E*)

Two localities in two counties: breeding at one.

HERTFORDSHIRE The Borehamwood population numbered at least 35 birds and breeding was known to occur, but there was no count of nests. **WILTSHIRE** A small colony was reported from Castle Combe, with up to eight birds in March, but no information was received on breeding. These birds have apparently been present in the village for at least two years.

Scattered records 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*)

The pair that has been breeding at a location in northern England since 1996 reared two young in 2002. Reports of single birds were received from Highland, Norfolk and Warwickshire (a long-staying individual, but not seen after February). This is the seventh year running in which this pair in northern England has bred, but there have been hardly any reports of the 15 young reared to date. Birdwatchers are encouraged to submit all records of this species from the UK, whether breeding or not.

Red-winged Laughingthrush *Garrulax formosus*

In the Isle of Man, escapes from a wildlife park have been living in the wild for several years, with breeding taking place since at least 1996 (including in 2002).

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