

British Birds

VOLUME 72 NUMBER 8 AUGUST 1979

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1977

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We wish to stress once again that the main aim of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel is to provide a safe repository for confidential data. Full information is vital to fulfil the panel's function as an archive for posterity. Similarly, correct long-term conservation planning depends on accurate knowledge of status, which can be assessed only if the detailed data are all available in one place.

We feel that the panel's reliability is now established: no 'leak' has ever occurred. We urge all recorders, therefore, to supply the fullest possible information. At present, data are very variable. Some counties supply six-figure map references, such information as habitat details, clutch or brood sizes and dates of every observation, as well as comments and conservation advice; others send minimum details, such as 'one pair bred, site secret'; and a few withhold all their records. We believe that it is in the best interests of the birds for the fullest possible details to be deposited in our central files.

This annual report, the panel's fifth, is a subsidiary part of our work. Only the barest details are summarised, but we feel that it is correct to reveal basic information, with permission, when to do so does not threaten the birds. Unnecessary secrecy breeds speculation, rumour and, possibly, an unhealthy interest in rarities. We attempt to give an honest account of the rarest breeding birds in the United Kingdom and hope thereby to foster a responsible desire to document their changing status.

During 1977, the panel's members were A. W. Colling, R. H. Dennis, I. J. Ferguson-Lees, Ian Prestt and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (secretary). The

panel is supported morally and financially by *British Birds*, the BTO and the RSPB; it also includes a representative of the Nature Conservancy Council. In 1978, A. W. Colling, the NCC representative, retired from his post and from the panel. With the necessary approval of the editorial board of *British Birds* and of the Councils of the BTO and RSPB, another NCC staff member, Dr L. A. Batten, filled the vacancy.

Most records reach the panel from the county and regional recorders and editors (for names and addresses, see *Brit. Birds* 70: 356-360 and an updated list which will be published in next month's issue): individual observers are strongly encouraged to submit their data in this way, although a few do send them direct. Forms are available free from the address at the end of this report; two copies should always be sent in on these special forms, which are filed under lock and key in two separate places as a safeguard against loss by fire, and to which only the panel's secretary has direct access.

As usual, counties are named here only when permission has been given. In other cases, code letters are used: these are the same as in earlier reports, so that histories of decline or colonisation can be followed, even though the locations must remain confidential to ensure freedom from disturbance. This report contains a mixture of new and old county names: we have used those supplied by the recorders, since conversion of old names could, in some cases, reveal information about the location of breeding sites.

Fig. 1. Areas covered by this report. Records (or negative returns) were supplied for all the areas shown black. The panel does not collect records from the Republic of Ireland



For most species, we have given a range of figures for 'pairs breeding', the lower representing the number confirmed breeding and the upper the maximum if, for instance, every singing male or single sighting represented a nesting pair. Although these ranges are often very wide, they can be consistently calculated each year and will, we hope, be valuable for comparisons.

In 1976, only two counties withheld records from the panel (see *Brit. Birds* 71: 12). Regrettably, rather more did so in 1977 (see fig. 1), although we suspect that this was an oversight rather than a positive wish not to co-operate.

We apologise for the late appearance of this report. Plans to produce it for the January issue went sadly amiss; we aim to resume our usual schedule by publishing our 1978 report in January 1980.

The year's highlights

The summer of 1977 was notable for some very pleasing and encouraging developments. Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* were reported from six counties, compared with a maximum of three in the previous four years. Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* also did well, with the highest totals of breeding females and of young fledged for at least ten years. Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana*, although yet again not proved to breed, were more widespread than for some years, with perhaps as many as eight singing males. Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* are not faring well in the UK as a whole, so it was remarkable and pleasing to have successful breeding in a new Scottish mainland county. Having shown signs of colonising Britain for years, Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* came one step nearer, with a breeding attempt—the third involving a pure pair—in a new county.

The events of 1977 provided some remarkable contrasts: in the south, warmth-loving Hoopoes *Upupa epops* achieved a record total of four pairs breeding in a single year and Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* had a good year, with 24 singing males and three pairs confirmed breeding; whereas, in the north, long-lasting snow encouraged Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus* to stay to nest for the first known time and may also have influenced the Shore Larks *Eremophila alpestris* which not only nested but had their nest found (cf. *Brit. Birds* 66: 505-508, 67: 127). Also in Scotland, Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* joined Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* to create a situation which would have amazed ornithologists in the 1950s when both species were contracting southwards and as yet showed no signs of a northern colonisation (the Scottish populations of both species doubtless derive from migrants diverted en route to Scandinavia).

But when will Serins *Serinus serinus* colonise (*Brit. Birds* 61: 87-88, 64: 213-23)? And what about the predicted Fan-tailed Warblers *Cisticola jun-cidis* (*Brit. Birds* 70: 152-159)?

Finally, on a more sobering note, we draw attention to the fact that Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* has now been added to our list, at the request of several recorders, in view of the decline in its breeding numbers in Britain.

Systematic list

There were no relevant records of the following species in 1977:

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*
 Scaup *Aythya marila*
 Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*
 Sanderling *Calidris alba*
 Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*
 Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*
 Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
 Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*
 Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*
 Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*
 Serin *Serinus serinus*

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

One site: one possibly summered.

Gwynedd One site: single adult in summer plumage 16th to 18th May and again 20th August to 14th September. In 1976, similar adult seen on nearby lake on 15th August.

This is the fourth successive year in which this species has featured—albeit marginally—in these reports.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Census data incomplete, but at least 42-51 pairs breeding, at 15 sites.

Inverness Main area, 39-42 pairs at nine sites: (1) 11-12 pairs (five nests robbed); (2) 17-18 pairs; (3) one pair; (4) two pairs; (5) three pairs, unsuccessful owing to water levels; (6) three pairs; (7) one pair, robbed; (8) one pair, robbed; (9) one pair, possibly from site 7 or site 8.

County A One site: four pairs, three broods seen and four or five young reared.

County B Four sites: (1) one pair probably bred; (2) one pair present April, but did not stay; (3) one pair on 6th April, three birds on 9th April, but no proof of breeding; (4) one on 21st May.

County C One site: one on 3rd-6th July; no suggestion of breeding, but locality suitable.

Numbers good, but breeding success poor; egg-collecting prevalent and at least seven nests were robbed; in other main area (data not included), numbers average, but poor success.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Seven sites: at least 11 pairs (three sites), plus summering individuals at four sites.

County A Two sites: (1) 22 adults on 3rd April, then dispersal to other sites, three pairs nested, two broods (one and one) on 6th August; (2) seven pairs with 16 young, brood sizes uncertain, but definitely four broods (three, three, three and two).

County B One site: one adult 9th April in suitable habitat.

County C One site: one adult 10th-27th March, at former breeding locality.

County D One site: one pair with two recently hatched young in June.

County E One site: one adult present from spring to 28th August.

County F One site: three adults on 12th June, one on 13th.

1975 County E One site: one in breeding plumage 1st-23rd May.

1976 County E One site: one in partial breeding plumage 21st-24th March.



N.A.

A better year, especially at site 2 in County A, where good breeding success. Data incomplete, as no count from main site in County B. In no year since before 1973 has more than three counties been featured.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

This species has not previously appeared in one of these reports. Fifteen sites; habits make confirmation of breeding very difficult.

Kent One site: two males booming from April to early July.

Lancashire One site: 11 males booming at Leighton Moss.

Lincoln/South Humberside One site: one January to November, male booming in May, two seen 14th July.

Norfolk Five sites: (1) three males booming; (2) two males booming; (3) (4) (5) single males booming. These eight boomers compare with 60 in 1954.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) seven pairs at Minsmere (cf. 13 pairs in 1976); (2) eight males booming.

County A Four sites: (1) (2) sight records of singles in June; (3) (4) single males booming.

County B One site: one seen flying into reed-bed on 3rd June.

These 0-40 pairs breeding compare with the estimate of 'about 80' in *The Atlas* and the more accurate calculations by J. C. U.-Day and J. Wilson (*Brit. Birds* 71: 285-300) of 79-83 in 1954, 68-72 in 1970 and 45-47 in 1976.

**Black Duck** *Anas rubripes*

One female present in one site.

Cornwall One site: one female present until at least 16th May and reappeared on 29th August; often in association with Mallards *A. platyrhynchos*; individuals suspected of being hybrid offspring were reported.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

15 sites: 10-26 pairs breeding.

Angus One site: one pair present 20th April to 30th July.

Caithness Two sites: (1) two pairs in May, female with six young on 29th June; (2) one pair on 1st July, behaviour suggested breeding.

Cambridge One site: five males in May, two broods later.

Inverness One site: one pair present April to 26th May.

Kent Two sites: (1) one pair, female with nine young in first week of July; (2) one pair 18th-31st May, male 1st-19th June and female 13th-26th August.

Orkney Eight sites on three islands involving a possible total of 14 pairs, six of which were proved breeding: (1) four pairs bred and four females seen with ducklings on 11th July; (2) two pairs in late March, brood of ducklings seen 13th June; (3)-(6) single pairs in May; (7) three females, all believed to be nesting; (8) one pair on several dates, distraction display seen on 23rd June and 2nd July.

An average year, although the number of pairs possibly breeding was the highest since these reports started. The 1973-77 totals have been 3-5, 10-11, 12-25, 6-16 and 10-26.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

12 sites: 10-35 pairs breeding.

Caithness Eight sites, six pairs proved breeding and a further 13 pairs possibly breeding: (1) six males and four females, one female on eight eggs on 12th June, five females, and one with four young on 10th July; (2) pair on 12th June, female with eight young on 10th July; (3) female

with seven young on 17th July; (4) two females with broods on 31st July; (5) four pairs on 12th June, single duckling on 3rd August; (6) one pair on 17th May; (7) one pair on 4th June; (8) one to three pairs on 7th June.

Inverness One site: one pair probably nesting.

Shetland Two sites: (1) up to four pairs at usual loch, 'breeding not proved, though probable'; (2) brood of ducklings observed.

Stirling One site: three pairs proved breeding, clutches of eight and 14 found on 11th-12th June, but no young seen, a further six pairs and one male present; clutch of 14 thought to be product of two pairs which were in the area.

1976 Shetland Two sites: (1) brood of two ducklings; (2) at least one pair probably bred.

Data incomplete, as no information from large breeding population in Co. Fermanagh, and two regular nesting grounds in Scottish Highlands were not visited. The late 1976 records raise the total for that year to 22-159 pairs breeding.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Nine sites, but breeding not suspected at five of them; at least six or seven pairs breeding.

Essex One site: singly on 15th June and 19th July; well-watched area and breeding not suspected.

Gwynedd Three sites: (1) female on 20th June; (2) male and female from 7th June to 14th August; (3) immature on 8th June. No suggestion of breeding, but increasing tendency towards summering is worth reporting (there were a few sightings in May-June 1975 and 1976).

Highland Four sites: (1) three pairs, female with five young, at least two clutches of eggs deserted; (2) at least one and probably two pairs, one clutch of eggs deserted, possibly one brood of young hatched; (3) one pair, six young fledged; (4) one pair, clutch of eggs deserted.

Lothian One site: immature male from winter until 17th July; adult female from 18th June to 17th July. No suggestion of breeding.

Colonisation of Scotland continued, but poor breeding success; at least six and probably seven females laid eggs, but very cold spring resulted in clutches being deserted; only two broods definitely reported.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

At least eight sites: two pairs confirmed breeding.

Bedford One site: one seen in July in suitable habitat, but not on subsequent visits.

Hampshire 'At least three males through summer.'

Norfolk One site: pair from 1st June, three flying young in August.

Yorkshire One site: one summered May to August, display seen, a second individual seen on 3rd September.

Nottingham 'Presence acknowledged.'

County A One site: regular sightings from May to September, and pair displaying on 29th May.

County D One site: pair seen on 20th and 21st May, but not on subsequent visits.

County E Two sites: (1) nest with two eggs on 26th June, but breeding failed; (2) one on 24th April and two on 1st June.

Widespread records, including two cases of confirmed breeding, suggest little change in the general position: reported totals of pairs breeding during 1973-77 have been 1-2, 2-6, 0-5, 1-9 and 2-10. The continuing absence of full information from the main breeding area in the New Forest makes it impossible to assess the actual breeding population; we hope that full details for this and for past years will eventually be deposited in our files.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Total of 35 pairs: 33 nests, of which 12 successful with 17 young reared.

County A No pairs; one unattached individual in April.

County B Two sites: (1) (2) pairs nested but failed to rear young.

County C 25 sites: (1)-(4) two young reared; (5)-(8) one young reared; (9)-(21) pairs nested but failed to rear young; in one instance, pair built nest, but female poisoned before eggs laid, replacement female did not lay; (22)-(25) pairs partly built nests, but did not lay eggs. A further 14 or more unattached individuals present.

County D Four sites: (1) two young reared; (2) one young reared; (3) pair nested but failed to rear young; (4) two birds present, but no nest found. Also two unattached individuals in April.

County E Three sites: (1) one young reared; (2) pair nested, but failed to rear young; (3) two birds present, but no indication of breeding.

County F One site: one young reared.

Including those in County C which only partly built nests, the number of pairs and number of nests were the highest noted in these reports, but the numbers of successful nests and young reared were lower than in 1975 or 1976.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

13 sites: 16-17 pairs breeding (including two females mated to one male), rearing a total of 44 young.

Humberside One site: one pair reared two young, where prospecting, but no breeding, noted in 1975 and 1976 (see below).

Kent Two sites: (1) one pair summered and female seen carrying nest material on one occasion, but breeding not confirmed; (2) one to three present from 26th April to 2nd June.

Lancashire One site: breeding attempt by one pair foiled when grass field cut for hay.

Norfolk Five sites, six pairs reared 19 young: (1) one pair reared four young; (2) two pairs reared five and four young; (3) one pair reared two young; (4) one pair reared four young; (5) one pair, but no nest.

Suffolk Four sites, eight females and seven males reared 23 young: (1) Minsmere: one pair reared four young, second pair failed, third male was mated to two females which reared four and two young; (2) one pair reared four young; (3) two pairs reared three and two young; (4) one pair reared four young.

1975 Humberside Two sites: (1) adult male in April, displaying and nest-building; (2) female summered.

1975 Kent One site: two (both considered to be immature) summered.

1976 Humberside One site: male and female in April, displaying and nest-building.

1976 Kent One site: one (probably female) summered.

The 1977 totals of breeding females and of young fledged were the highest for over ten years.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Two sites: one breeding attempt which failed.

County D One site: nest with eggs in crops, but eggs disappeared.

County E One site: one pair possibly breeding, but no details supplied to us.

The slight improvement noted last year was not sustained. Totals of pairs breeding during 1973-77 have been 2-3, 0-3, 0-3, 3-5 and 1-2.



Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

19 sites: 2-19 pairs breeding, but no young known to have been reared.

County C One site: present, but no other information supplied.

County D One site: pair and one extra bird (probably female) displaying on 18th February, old nests built up in April, and in June, when nest-tree showed signs of having been climbed recently; human predation probably regular.

County F One site: adult female present, built 'frustration nest'.

County K Three sites: (1) one pair reared at least one young; (2) (3) pairs did not attempt breeding.

County L Two sites: (1) adult male on 7th April; (2) pair displaying on 7th April. Probably did not breed, although Goshawks seen at both of these sites in previous years.

County N One site: one pair nested, but eggs found broken.

County O Three sites: (1)-(3) present, but no other information supplied.

County Q Four sites: (1)-(4) pairs present and possibly/probably breeding.

County R One site: one pair probably breeding, seen early spring, displaying on 3rd April and 15th May, present in summer.

County S Two sites: (1) (2) pairs displaying.

1976 County P Four sites: (1) one pair reared at least two young; (2) one pair reared two young; (3) one pair, but no evidence of nesting; (4) one pair possibly present.

Information on this species is still being withheld for certain areas, but the data submitted suggest continuing spread. Totals of pairs breeding during 1973-77 have been 6-12, 8-17, 4-31, 11-22 and 2-19.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

20 sites: seven successful pairs reared 13 young.

Inverness Loch Garten: pair laid three eggs in usual nest and reared two young; male was same as in 1974 and 1975.

Perth Loch of Lowes: male only early in season; female later, but no breeding attempt.

Scotland 18 sites: (1) pair laid four eggs (first four-egg clutch known in Scotland this century) robbed by egg-collectors; (2) pair laid eggs, failed; (3) pair reared three young; (4) pair laid two eggs, one young reared; (5) pair laid three eggs, failed; (6) new female arrived late in spring, non-breeding pair; (7) pair reared two young; (8) pair laid three eggs, failed; (9) pair reared two young; (10) pair laid three eggs, failed; (11) pair laid eggs, failed; (12) pair laid eggs, failed; (13) non-breeding pair all season; (14) pair reared two young; (15) non-breeding pair all season; (16) non-breeding pair built new eyrie; (17) new pair built eyrie, but no proof of breeding; (18) new pair reared one young.

Bad weather resulted in late start to the breeding season, and three old established eyries were not occupied by breeding pairs; 14 pairs laid eggs, one nest was robbed (third year in succession that Osprey eggs have been taken in Scotland), six pairs had difficulties during incubation almost certainly due to males being unable to catch enough fish for incubating females in very cold spring, all these eggs failed to hatch or were broken or eaten; remaining seven pairs reared 13 young. A poor year: the lowest number of young since 1972.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Over 99 sites: 48-115 pairs breeding with a total of at least 73 young reared.

Avon Three sites: (1) one pair bred; (2) one pair probably bred; (3) one pair possibly bred.

Bedford Six sites: (1) one pair reared two young; (2) pair seen early August to mid September, behaviour suggesting breeding; (3)-(6) singles in suitable habitat, June-August.

Berkshire Two sites: (1) pair in July; (2) one pair with two juveniles on 15th August, up to three in area until 11th September.

Cambridge Two sites: (1) one pair reared two young; (2) one pair bred.

Devon 'A good season, but with a drop in number of young fledged compared with 1976', but details have been withheld.

Dorset 15 sites, with nesting confirmed at eight, of which three certainly failed, and only six (or perhaps a few more) young reared; seven other pairs present in breeding territory.

Hampshire In New Forest area, only isolated records sent to recorder, so not possible to indicate breeding populations. Elsewhere, four sites: (1) (2) single pairs reared two young; (3) one pair reared one young; (4) one pair nested, possible juvenile seen later.

Kent Two sites: (1) one pair reared three young; (2) one pair in July-August at traditional site.

Leicester Five sites: (1) one pair with two, possibly three, young in nest; (2) one pair with one young in nest; (3) one pair reared three young; (4) one pair with four flying young; (5) regular sightings.

Nottingham Two sites: (1) pair in same locality as in 1975 and 1976, possibly breeding; (2) pair in May, but then moved away.

Oxford Eight sites: (1) one pair reared three young; (2) one pair reared two young; (3) one pair nested, but outcome unknown; (4)-(8) sightings from late May to mid July.

Perth One site: pair displaying on 29th May, juvenile seen a few kilometres away on 13th August.

Somerset 11 sites, but no confirmed breeding: (1) pair on 3rd July; (2) up to three together 4th July to 8th September; (3) (4) possible nesting pairs; (5)-(11) singles, mostly on single dates, May-September.

Suffolk Four sites, but no confirmed breeding: (1) singly in May, June and July; (2) one seen on 23rd May and 5th June; (3) one seen 25th-29th June; (4) one seen from 21st May to 7th July.

Surrey 13 sites: (1) (2) single pairs reared at least two young; (3) (4) single pairs reared two young; (5) one pair laid two clutches, but both stolen from nest, probably by man; (6) one pair, eggs found below nest tree; (7) one pair, clutch did not hatch; (8) pair present all summer; (9)-(13) present. 'A very bad year, several regular sites produced no birds at all, and success in general was poor.' This followed a run of good years.

Sussex The Council of the Sussex Ornithological Society has released only the following data: six sites: (1) one pair confirmed breeding; (2) one pair probably breeding; (3)-(6) single pairs possibly breeding.

Warwick Six sites: (1) one pair, display observed; (2) one pair, adult with two young seen nearby in mid September; (3) one pair 'as usual', no details; (4) (5) single pairs 'probably successful'; (6) singly on many occasions.

Wiltshire Eight sites: (1) pair with four flying young; (2) one pair reared two young; (3) one pair reared one young; (4)-(8) pairs probably bred.

Worcester One site: one pair reared three young.

County E 15 sites: (1) (2) single pairs reared three young; (3)-(7) single pairs reared two young; (8) one pair reared at least one young; (9) one pair reared one young; (10) one pair bred, success unknown; (11) one pair bred, but reared no young; (12)-(15) single pairs.

1976 South Yorkshire One site: one, probably two, present during summer, but breeding not confirmed.

1976 County E Seven sites: (1) one pair reared three young; (2) one pair fledged three young, but one died; (3) one pair reared two, or perhaps three, young; (4) (5) single pairs reared two young; (6) one pair nested, but outcome unknown; (7) one pair present all summer.

We receive very detailed nest-by-nest information from some counties, yet others withhold all but the barest summaries. The submitted data, however, suggest the following totals of breeding pairs during 1973-77: 22-60, 43-91, 37-132, 58-139 and 48-115. The number of young known to have been reared was the highest since these reports started: 1973-77 totals have been 24, 49, 40, 69 and 74.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Four sites with males singing, but no breeding confirmed and no pairs recorded.

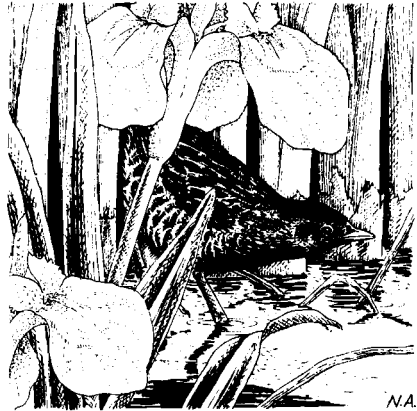
Cambridge One site: up to four males singing 15th-20th May.

Derbyshire One site: male singing on 9th June; sightings of up to three in August/September.

Inverness One site: one or two males singing from 20th May to 23rd June.

Kent One site: male singing, 21st-22nd April.

These records confirm the scarce, irregular and scattered presence of this species in Britain during the breeding season. Since 1972, the annual totals of reported pairs breeding have been 0, 0-5, 0, 0-1 and, now, 0-8.

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Seven sites: 146 pairs reared 14 young.

Lincoln/South Humberside One site: up to three present fairly frequently from 20th May to 18th July, but no reports of breeding behaviour.

Norfolk Two sites, with successful breeding at one: (1) four pairs nested, one pair laid two clutches, two pairs each successfully reared three young; (2) one pair failed.

Suffolk Four sites, with successful breeding at three: (1) Havergate Island, 85 pairs reared total of only one young; (2) Minsmere, 52 pairs reared total of only three young; (3) one pair reared four young; (4) two pairs failed. Extremely low breeding success resulted from combination of cold weather and lack of insect food, plus some predation by Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*, which wiped out practically all of both first and second broods.

The number of pairs remains high despite low breeding success of previous season.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

The limited information available makes it impossible to indicate with any confidence the numbers breeding in Britain.

Berkshire Two sites: (1) several, 22nd May to 9th August, probably two pairs; (2) only one pair probably breeding in contrast to two or three in 1976.

Dorset Three sites: (1) pair on 28th May; (2) (3) heard at sites near first. Records incomplete.

Essex One site: singly on 22nd April and 6th June, pair on 18th May.

Hampshire 'Information so scanty that to list the few pairs found would give a very misleading picture.'

Norfolk 'No survey undertaken, but present at a number of localities.'

Oxford Four sites: (1) pair from May to 22nd July; (2)-(4) single pairs probably bred, but no data supplied.

Suffolk Coastal belt: three pairs, success unknown; Suffolk Breckland: numbers uncertain.

Sussex Two or three sites: two or three pairs, one proved breeding, but details not supplied to us.

Wiltshire Seven sites: (1) (2) two pairs; (3) one or two pairs; (4)-(6) single pairs; (7) details not available. At sites (1)-(6), two pairs proved breeding, one more probably bred and four or five possibly bred.

1976 Berkshire Additional site: (2) two young seen in May, possibly three pairs bred in the area.

The late 1976 record raises the total for that year to 17-114 pairs breeding. The 1977 total of three to over 26 is clearly completely unrepresentative.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

At least 12 sites, but data very incomplete.

Aberdeen/Banff One site: three seen, but no proof of breeding.

Grampian No details, but recorder reports: 'Breeding status as usual, breeding late due to snow on high ground, average production of young on high tops, slightly better on lower ground.'

Ross One site: one pair with two young 1st July.

County D Three sites: total of six pairs nested and one single bird present; nine young fledged.

County E One site: up to eight between 9th and 22nd May, but no proof of breeding.

County F Four sites: (1) one pair nested, one young fledged by 31st July; (2) one pair bred; (3) one pair probably bred; (4) two pairs on 22nd May.

The total of 9-20 pairs breeding is again hopelessly inadequate and unrepresentative. Once more, we have received no details from the main Grampian area, although these must have been obtained as a basis for the general comment which we have quoted.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Three sites: 7-9 individuals; 5-7 possibly or probably breeding.

County A One site: one displaying 22nd-28th June, but no proof of breeding.

County B One site: five to seven birds (four or five displaying) on 1st June: probably bred but no firm evidence.

County C One site: one on 4th July (possibly also 7th July), but no suggestion of breeding.

Continued increase at main site, with up to seven present; successful breeding not proved, but it is considered unwise to search for eggs or young of this species; unusual breeding behaviour of this species makes assessment of number of pairs difficult.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Six sites; no confirmed breeding.

Caithness Two sites: (1) female on 12th June; (2) female from 15th-19th June. Males with ruffs seen at both sites in previous years, but breeding regarded as 'very unlikely'.

Cambridge/Norfolk One site: up to eight females in May, but few sightings in June. Breeding not confirmed.

Hebrides One site: behaviour of female in suitable breeding habitat suggested presence of young.

Humberside One site: up to 15 males and four females present until May, lekking behaviour observed, but area then flooded and birds left and breeding not suspected.

Kent One site: one male and immature female present 30th May to 1st June.

The total of pairs breeding (0-12) is relatively meaningless for this species. Of special interest, however, is the probable breeding record in the Hebrides, perhaps the first such instance in Scotland.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

11 sites: 37-70 pairs breeding, with considerable success.

Cambridge None bred at two former sites: (1) none bred at site at which one pair was successful in 1973 and two pairs probably bred in 1974; (2) none bred at site at which one pair probably bred successfully in 1971, but not in 1973-77, although conditions were suitable.

Cambridge/Norfolk Ouse Washes: 52 pairs, of which at least 32 pairs, and probably also the majority of the rest, bred successfully.

Cumbria Two sites: (1) one pair reared four young, and at least one other pair possibly bred; (2) pair present in May and June, single in July: possibly breeding.

Kent One site: pair display-fighting, singing and making scrape in April; female disappeared from 28th April to 5th May, but pair displaying again 6th-11th May; male alone on 12th May, neither seen subsequently: probably attempted to breed, but were not successful.

Norfolk One site: adult mobbing human intruder on 6th June, probably had young. (See also Cambridge/Norfolk)

Orkney One site: one pair in June, thought not to have bred. One found dead on 29th June.

Shetland One site: one pair hatched young at usual site.

Somerset One site: six pairs almost certainly breeding (to avoid disturbance, no attempt made to find nests or young).

Suffolk Two sites: (1) one pair hatched young, and two other pairs possibly bred; (2) one pair hatched young.

County A One site: pair nested, but the three eggs vanished, perhaps due to predation by fox *Vulpes vulpes*.

With 5-18 (almost certainly 11-18) pairs breeding away from the main site on the Ouse Washes, and a successful year there, 1977 was a good year.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Four sites: 2-5 pairs breeding.

Caithness One site: one seen 12th June, but no suggestion of breeding.

Grampian One site: one at new site 20th May and 14th June, but no suggestion of breeding.

Sutherland One site: one pair bred successfully.

County B One site: first displaying 13th May; two, possibly three, displaying 17th May; pair and young 27th June to 6th July; possibly another brood later.

1976 Perth CORRECTION One site: one pair in territory and possible change-over seen on 5th June (not 'five or six pairs in territory').

About average in recent years and it is encouraging that one regular site is maintained. A difficult species to census and several sites are not visited annually. The revised 1973-77 totals are 0-2, 1-4, 2-6, 1-3 and 2-5 pairs breeding.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Seven sites: 20-31 pairs breeding.

Perth One site: one adult on 18th June, not seen on later visit.

Shetland Five sites: (1) 19-22 pairs bred; (2) (3) total of at least two (probably four) pairs probably nested; (4) two pairs seen on several occasions and probably bred; (5) at least one bird, but breeding not proved.

County B One site on mainland Scotland: pair arrived 7th June, nest and four eggs seen 28th June, all hatched 5th July.

A better year in the main breeding quarters in Shetland and encouraging to have successful breeding at a completely new locality on the Scottish mainland. No information from Western Isles.



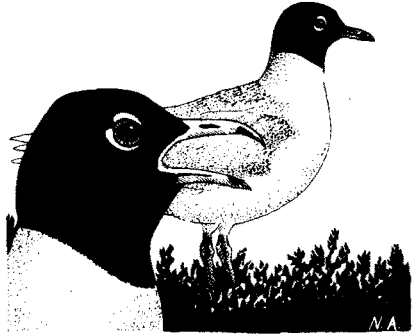
Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Two sites: one pair nested, but unsuccessful.

County A One site: pair present for several days in May, one sat on a nest (apparently of Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*) on several occasions.

County B One site: pair laid eggs, one or two lost to predation, one addled.

The record in County B was only the third instance of nesting in Britain by a pure pair, the previous cases being in Hampshire in 1968 and 1976.



Little Gull *Larus minutus*

One site: several summered.

County C One site: two adults and five immatures summered; one adult seen carrying nesting material, and attempted to mate with an immature.

There has been only one instance of confirmed breeding (*Brit. Birds* 70: 331-332); summering records have recently been listed (*Brit. Birds* 71: 575; 72: 190).

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

One adult bred with a Herring Gull *L. argentatus*.

Shetland One site: same adult as in 1975 and 1976 paired with a Herring Gull and successfully reared two young at usual site; the nestlings were colour-ringed.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*.

Two sites: no breeding.

Shetland Two sites: (1) on Fetlar, at least five (possibly six) females in spring but all had left by 13th June, no male; (2) two females summered.

As in 1976, there was no adult male on Fetlar to breed with the female Snowy Owls on the island; no young males have yet re-appeared.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Four sites: four pairs bred.

Avon One site: one pair hatched three young, of which two fledged.

Somerset One site: one pair reared one young; adults present from 21st May to 31st August; young stayed until 13th September.

Surrey One site: one pair reared two young, but one of the young was killed by a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*.

Sussex One site: one pair reared two young but both—as well as one adult—were killed, probably by a fox *Vulpes vulpes*.

With fewer than 30 cases of proved breeding in the last 140 years, four in one year is most remarkable. The last proven breeding record in the UK was in Sussex in 1971.



Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

17 sites: 7-19 pairs breeding.

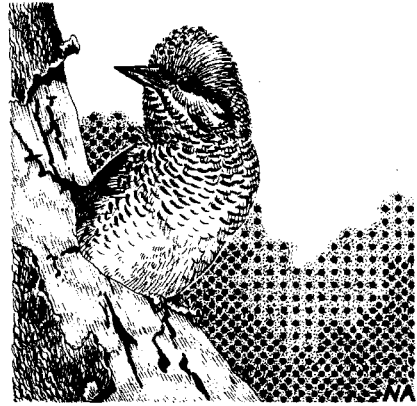
Hertford Two sites: (1) one pair bred; (2) adult seen feeding juvenile in July.

Inverness 12 sites, five pairs proved breeding, one probably breeding and six possibly breeding: (1) one pair reared young; (2) one pair feeding young in nest 2nd-18th July; (3) one pair mating, probably nested, but not proved; (4) one pair reared young; (5) one pair laid nine eggs, but no young reared; (6) one pair reared young, same nest as in 1975 and 1976; (7) one singing from 23rd May to 27th June; (8) one singing briefly in May; (9) one singing 17th June; (10) one singing 22nd-28th May; (11) one singing 3rd July; (12) one singing 31st May to 19th June.

Kent One site: one singing 26th-27th April.

Perth Two sites: (1) at least two, possibly three, singing 17th June; (2) one singing 12th June.

A very encouraging year and the Scottish population appears to be sustaining, with birds returning to nest in the same localities (and even the same tree). This is a difficult species for which to prove breeding and singing records could easily refer to successful nesting pairs.

**Shore Lark** *Eremophila alpestris*

Two sites: one pair bred successfully; other adults present.

Scotland Two sites: (1) two or three males in song in June; nest with three eggs 25th June, at least one juvenile 12th August to 7th September; (2) one adult on 23rd June.

A better year and first nest and eggs actually seen in the United Kingdom; young seen later in summer.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Now dropped from our lists (*Brit. Birds* 71: 13), but one late return.

1976 South Yorkshire Five sites: (1) pair reared four young; (2) pair reared at least two young; (3) pair in territory, but no evidence of breeding; (4) (5) total of four singing males.

These records raise the total of pairs breeding in 1976 to 33-81.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Six sites: 4-6 pairs breeding.

Bedford One site: one at end of May appeared agitated.

Cumbria Two sites: (1) (2) single adults carrying food suggests young being reared at both.

Grampian Two sites: (1) one fledged young on 7th July; (2) adult singing on 8th July.

Stafford One site: 'one pair nested', but fuller details not reported.

1976 South Yorkshire One site: adult incubating on 28th April, but breeding not successful, perhaps due to predation by Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*.

The sporadic, rather scattered, breeding and attempted breeding of this recent coloniser is obviously continuing. The revised 1976 total is now three to nine pairs breeding.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Seven sites: only one proved breeding record.

Grampian Two sites: (1) two apparently on territory 19th April, but no subsequent sightings; (2) one adult on 11th June.

Inverness One site: four singing males in spring, but no proof of nesting.

Lincoln/South Humberside Three sites: (1) one repeatedly carrying food on 22nd May; (2) one 12th-13th June; (3) one 11th-13th June.

Northumberland One site: one pair with fledged young, and another singing male.

1976 Inverness Second site: (2) pair mobbing Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, considered to be probably nesting.

The species is becoming very scarce after the peak years of 1968-72; some of the above records may refer to late spring migrants and thus seven sites may be optimistic. Only one proved breeding record is the lowest total this decade.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

41 sites: 13-154 pairs breeding.

Cornwall Five sites, but no confirmed breeding: (1) one 8th January to 8th June, pair 8th April; (2) one 9th April; (3) one male 28th May to 17th June; (4) one 2nd-3rd June; (5) one male 13th July, one female 20th September.

Devon Five sites with breeding proved at one: (1) at least six singing males until mid April, then three regularly to end of year, juveniles observed in July and August; (2) one male from January to 13th June, a male on 6th October, three or four at end of the year; (3) singing male and one other on 29th May, male heard into June; (4) one male present 8th May to 3rd July, one female throughout July; (5) one 1st January to 26th February, and three 25th October to 31st December.

Dorset Six sites: no confirmed breeding; no further details supplied.

Hampshire At least one site: 'A considerable number of records, but no proof of breeding'; two pairs possibly bred.

Isle of Wight Four sites: (1) male from 3rd April, female from 21st June, probably from 17th April; (2) singing bird 19th April; (3) singing bird on 8th May, 13th and 21st June; (4) singing bird on 24th July.

Kent Nine sites, 93 singing birds, 48 pairs, 12 proved breeding: (1) 13 territories, eight with pairs; (2) 59 territories, 35 with pairs; (3) four territories; (4) seven territories, four with pairs; (5) one pair; (6) one territory; (7) one territory; (8) one territory; (9) six pairs. There has been a 54% increase in the population of the first six sites since 1975.

Norfolk Five sites, but no confirmed breeding: (1) three singing all breeding season; (2) one singing 10th May to 31st July and again on 2nd October; (3) eight singing throughout breeding season; (4) 14 singing in breeding season; (5) two singing in spring.

Perth One site: one singing, but did not stay.

Suffolk Four sites: (1) one or two singing 10th April to 13th July and again in late autumn, one pair probably bred; (2) one pair present and another male singing; (3) one 5th May; (4) one 2nd June.

Worcester One site: one singing 26th May to 16th June.

There was a further increase in both the range and population of this species (1-14 pairs in 1973, 5-16 in 1974, 8-75 in 1975 and 8-80 in 1976). The number of sites occupied in summer away from Kent has increased from

none in 1973 to three in 1974, six in 1975, 12 in 1976 and now 32 in nine counties in 1977. It should be noted, however, that birds were reported for only one or two days at some of these sites.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

13 sites: breeding confirmed at three; total of 26 singing males.

Devon Two sites: (1) singing male 10th May to 4th June; (2) singing male 14th-21st May.

Dorset One site: 'possibly two males, 9th May to 22nd August' (*Brit. Birds* 71: 519).

Hampshire One site: singing male 25th-29th June.

Humberside One site: two males singing, 12th May to 2nd July and 16th May to 4th June.

Kent One site: up to five singing males from 3rd April to 25th September; carrying food on 4th, 5th, 9th and 19th June; two pairs bred, probably successfully.

Norfolk Two sites: (1) three singing males, and one carrying food on 7th July; (2) pair, including singing male, in August, but breeding not confirmed.

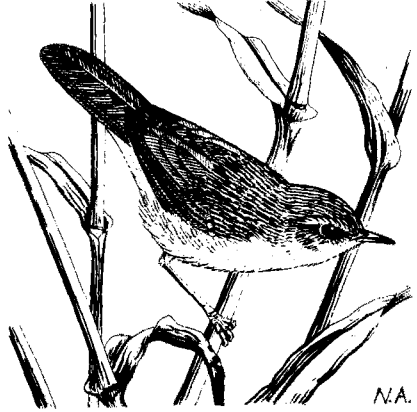
Stafford One site: one singing male from 6th June to 5th July.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) at Minsmere, one pair possibly bred and two males singing in May and June; (2) two singing males in June and July, and one juvenile trapped on 11th August indicating successful breeding.

Warwick One site: one pair probably breeding and a second singing male.

County A One site: two males singing, from 10th May to 24th June and 17th-26th May.

An encouraging year, suggesting continuing consolidation by this species in England.



Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Seven sites: 2-71 pairs breeding.

Gloucester Two sites: (1) one pair bred; (2) one singing male from 28th May to mid June.

Isle of Wight One site: at least three singing males on 13th June; on 21st June, behaviour of one pair suggested presence of nearby nest. There had been only four previous records for the Isle of Wight, and no suspicion of breeding.

Kent One site: up to three singing males from mid May to mid June, at least one and perhaps two were paired.

Warwick One site: one pair possibly bred.

Worcester Two sites: (1) total of 50-60 pairs estimated, based on count of 46 singing males; (2) one singing male 16th to 19th June.

County A One site: one pair reared single brood.

Some evidence of a slight improvement in status compared with previous years, but in the main area the regular counter has commented: 'We are worried by undue disturbance and exploration by birdwatchers, including trespass. Their activities could be the most serious threat to the species.'

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

While this species remains at a high level, accurate counts are impossible.

Devon Several sites: population estimated at 30-40 pairs, but at least six pairs burnt out by heath fires.

Dorset At least 50 pairs present in many sites. 'In spite of the terrible heath fires in 1976, the species seems to have colonised unburnt heathland remarkably successfully. High numbers reported in autumn, indicative of a good season.'

Hampshire Seven sites: (1) New Forest population was estimated to be at least 200 pairs, but no detailed data available; (2) six pairs proved breeding and a further six singing males; (3) two broods and a third singing male; (4) one pair with young; (5) two pairs with young; (6) one male carrying food for young; (7) one pair with one young.

Isle of Wight Two sites: (1) present April-June, pair with two fledged young on 21st May, pair with one fledged young on 3rd June, considered different; (2) adult in May and October, juvenile on 14th September.

Surrey Four sites, with breeding proved at two: (1) four or five pairs; (2) six or seven pairs; (3) five pairs, but only one produced young; (4) one pair reared two young. 'Position greatly strengthened in the county despite loss of habitat.'

County A Five sites: (1)-(5) totals in March-April of at least seven, six, two, one and one pairs, sites not checked subsequently.

1976 County A Four sites: (1) two pairs, one pair seen carrying food; (2) one pair reared two broods; (3) eight singing males in April, three pairs feeding young in August; (4) one pair in May-June.

The total population for the country cannot be accurately assessed on the basis of the data submitted, but was almost certainly over 300 pairs and possibly over 400 pairs.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

12 sites: 2-31 pairs breeding.

Berkshire Two sites: (1) one male singing on 3rd May; (2) one male singing on 4th July.

Buckingham One site: at least 14 singing males established in territories. This is a slight improvement on 11 in 1976, but greatly below the total of 46 singing males found in this site in 1975.

Cambridge One site: one singing male, March to July.

Devon One site: one pair from 5th April to at least 3rd May.

Gwent Three sites: (1) one pair built nest, but material systematically stolen by female Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, none seen after 31st May; (2) singing male on 22nd June and 4th July, perhaps from site 1; (3) one on 31st May.

Hampshire Two sites: (1) one pair bred; (2) one singing male.

Kent One site: up to seven singing males May to June.

Nottingham One site: one singing male 25th June.

The population has remained at about the 1976 level and therefore much reduced from its peak in 1975. The annual totals of pairs breeding during 1973-77 have been 2-18, 0-33, 14-121, 4-27 and 2-32.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

14 sites: 5-19 or more pairs breeding.

Gwent Three sites: (1) male on 16th July; (2) male on 15th June; (3) male in June and July.

Kent Three sites: (1) singing male on 29th May; (2) singing male on 11th June; (3) one pair raised four young.

Suffolk Five sites: (1) at least six singing males, one nest found and at least three family parties located; (2) pair 30th-31st May and single bird 17th-25th June; (3) one on 17th June; (4) one in mid June; (5) one on 29th May.

County B Two sites: (1) singing male from 22nd May to 27th July; (2) singing male on 7th June.

County C One site: one pair fledged young.

The highest ever estimate of pairs breeding in the UK in 1976 was closely matched this year, even though there were no data from County A. The annual totals of pairs breeding during 1973-77 have been 1-8, 2-4, 2-7, 6-21 and 5-19.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Reported from 11 counties: 47-63 pairs breeding.

Bedford One site: male on two occasions in mid June.

Essex One site: one pair in late June and early July.

Hampshire Three sites: (1) (2) single pairs each raised three young; (3) pair possibly bred.

Lincoln/South Humberside Six sites: (1) two pairs, one reared four young, other pair almost certainly reared two young, the first proved breeding since 1945; (2) one on 20th July; (3) one male from 31st May to 1st June; (4) one male on 20th May; (5) one from 25th May to 11th June; (6) female on 24th May, 11th June and 19th July, male on 2nd June.

Norfolk Eight sites: (1) three pairs, no young reared; (2) one pair, no young reared; (3) two pairs bred successfully; (4) one pair summered; (5) female on 7th June; (6) male from 10th June to 1st July, female on 11th July; (7) one pair bred; (8) two pairs, success not known.

Nottingham One site: one pair fledged three young from four eggs, the first breeding in the county since 1947.

Suffolk Minimum of 27 pairs in the coastal belt and three pairs in Breckland.

County A Two sites: (1) pair feeding one recently fledged young on 1st August; (2) pair, male displaying to female, 6th-10th June.

County B Four sites: (1) nest with two eggs on 26th June, deserted containing four eggs on 18th July; (2) male carrying food on 25th June; (3) male on 20th June, pair on 22nd June, site not revisited; (4) two, perhaps both males, on 8th and 15th June, site not revisited.

County C One site: one pair, courtship feeding on 18th June, feeding four young in nest on 13th July, last seen 19th July after nestlings killed by predator.

County D One site: pair courtship feeding.

It was a much better year than expected for this species, with breeding taking place for the first time since the 1940s in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. Counties A, B, C and D are all in Scotland, where there were also nine other records of singles (eight males, one female) in late May to July in the Highlands, which brings new hope. There were records in more counties than in any year since 1973, and 1977 also had the highest maximum total.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

One site: summer records.

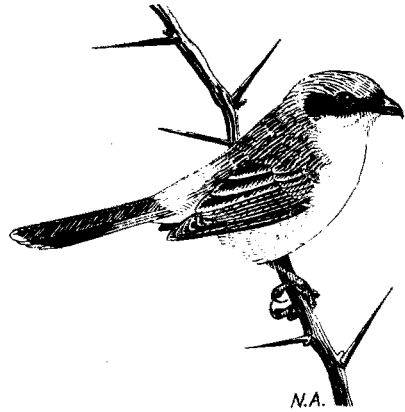
Caithness One site: singing male 11th May to 17th August, one female on 7th May, two females on 20th May.

This species has not appeared in our report before. The last singing male was also in Caithness, in 1972.

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

Six sites: at least two females reared broods.

Scotland Six sites: (1) male and two females, each female reared four young, another female not far away on 14th July; (2) two pairs during 7th-14th July, one pair copulating; (3) two males and a female on various dates from 16th June to 6th August, possibly nested; (4) at least six males and one female on various dates from 31st May to 27th June; (5) one pair 3rd July; (6) two males and two presumed females 2nd June.



The arrival of Lapland Buntings on suitable breeding territory was unprecedented and led to the first proved breeding record of this species in the United Kingdom (*Brit. Birds* 72: 53-59). A cold, late spring with above-average snow cover on the mountains was probably an influence on this northern breeder. There is only one previous record of one in a suitable breeding area in the UK (*Brit. Birds* 71: 11-33).

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Five areas: 4-15 pairs breeding.

Scottish Highlands Four areas: (1) at least three to five males and two to four females, 'good breeding season'; (2) three to five males and five females, 'good breeding success'; (3) two pairs bred, three young seen; (4) two pairs apparently breeding and also a single female.

County B One site: at least two singing males and at least one agitated female in June-July; first time this century that breeding has been suspected.

1976 Grampian Further detail, but probable overlap with general comment already published. One site: 11, including four pairs, song-flights and chasing seen, 26th May.

Difficult to work out numbers actually breeding, but apparently a good breeding season (eggs and young seen) with numbers higher than usual, possibly influenced by heavier than usual snow cover in mountains.

Rare Breeding Birds Panel, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ