

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1991

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This is the nineteenth annual Report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, and its publication signals the retirement, through ill-health, of Robert Spencer as Secretary of the Panel. Bob took over from Tim Sharrock in 1983. Tim was the first Secretary, and he and Bob have each compiled nine of these reports. In taking over as Secretary from Bob in January 1993, I should like to pay a personal tribute, coupled with that of the Panel, for his dedicated hard work in ensuring the smooth running of the Panel, maintaining excellent relations with the network of county bird recorders, species co-ordinators and other observers, and compiling a succession of informative and readable reports. I am also very grateful for the smoothness of the hand-over.

An article describing the history of the Panel, its purposes and its methods of working was published in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 117-122). One point of clarification is necessary following one or two concerns expressed since its publication. It has become apparent that it was insufficiently emphasised in the article that the original forms submitted to the Panel are *never* circulated around the Panel in the way that, for example, descriptions of rare birds are circulated around the British Birds Rarities Committee. The Secretary may very occasionally find it necessary to discuss an individual form with the Chairman, but only he sees the vast majority of the forms. We hope that this categorical assurance will set at rest the minds of those people who, understandably, wished to be reassured on this point.

During the early part of 1992, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's commissioned research programmes in their Vertebrate Ecology and Conservation Branch were subject to external review. The JNCC provides the major funds in support of the Panel and it is extremely pleasing to report that the Science Review Group commented very favourably upon the work of the Panel and its relevance to conservation. The Group recommended that computerisation of the historic data held by the Panel should be proceeded with, as was mentioned in the article on the work of the Panel (*Brit. Birds* 85: 117-122). Considerable progress has already been made. Once computerisation of all the data is completed, it is intended to begin the process of sorting, checking and analysing the accumulated records.

It is obviously in the interests of the Panel, of observers and of potential users of the information that the Panel's annual report is published as quickly

as possible after the end of the year it deals with. The best that has ever been achieved in this respect has been publication some 13 or 14 months after the close of the year. Lately, however, the interval has stretched to two years or more, as will happen with this report. The Panel is seeking ways to speed up the process once the data have been received (computerisation being one of them), but, through the Secretary, will be appealing to county recorders for their co-operation in getting relevant records to the Panel within no more than nine months of the end of the year.

The Panel

The current (beginning of 1994) membership of the Panel consists of Dr L. A. Batten, Dr C. J. Bibby, Dr J. J. D. Greenwood, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr K. W. Smith, D. A. Stroud and Dr M. A. Ogilvie (Secretary). As already mentioned, Dr Ogilvie took over from R. Spencer at the beginning of 1993. Dr R. W. Summers resigned from the Panel in summer 1993 and his fellow Panel members would like to thank him for his valuable contribution during his period as a member. The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but four of them are additionally able to reflect the interests and needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is commissioned by the JNCC, with further financial support coming from the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*.

The Panel collects records from the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, but not from the Republic of Ireland. Coverage was particularly good in 1991, with records received, or nil returns, from every single county and region. There were a couple of instances where it was known that complete information had not been received for a county, but the omissions were not of major importance.

Review of the year 1991

Following a period of particularly severe weather in February, the spring and summer of 1991, well into July, were generally cooler than average, and often wetter, too, and many species of birds had a poor breeding season. The annual report of the British Trust for Ornithology's Nest Record Scheme (*BTO News* nos. 185 & 187) reported both that it was a late season, with many long-distance migrants being held back by poor weather in the Mediterranean and strong northerly winds over Europe, and that breeding success was below the long-term average for nearly half the 82 species analysed. The effects were widespread across the range of species.

Against this background, it will come as no surprise to learn that rare birds breeding in the United Kingdom in 1991 also had a hard time. At least 20 species with well-established breeding populations were reported in smaller numbers or as having a reduced breeding success or both compared with 1990, whereas only 16 species showed increases. The comparisons should be viewed with some caution because of possible differences in effort. Not only is poor weather not very encouraging to fieldworkers either, but pairs which fail are also less likely to be recorded than are successful pairs. The pattern is, however, remarkably similar to that shown by the Nest Record returns.

Migrants from the south were among the worst affected, including

Garganey *Anas querquedula*, which showed the first decline in the number of pairs for very many years. The number of sites where this species was seen actually went up slightly, so the long period of gradual increase of recent years looks set to continue in the future. Being a waterbird only compounded the problem, as also reported by the Nest Record Scheme, with high spring and early-summer water-levels flooding out nests. This was a problem for Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* in some localities. Although the number of sites where they appeared was the highest recorded, the total of pairs was the lowest for four years and rearing success was poor.

The general picture for birds of prey is one of continued well-being, but the poor breeding season of 1991 showed up in reduced production of young. This applied, for example, to Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, despite record numbers of pairs of both species commencing to nest. Breeding success of Hobby *Falco subbuteo* was also lower than usual, though the population continued to grow, if more slowly than before.

The warblers had more mixed fortunes, with Cetti's *Cettia cetti*, in particular, showing a substantial drop from 1990. This species is known to be susceptible to cold winters. Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* and Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, however, achieved minor gains, the latter especially welcome in showing increases in both number of sites and number of pairs to produce the highest totals for the last five and six years respectively. Although the totals for Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* for 1991 show considerable falls from those of 1990, the species has now become so successful that maintaining adequate coverage is becoming difficult without full-time fieldworkers. Fewer pairs were found in the main breeding area in the New Forest, but coverage was not sufficiently complete for any real comparisons to be made with 1990. A full census is scheduled for 1994.

Another success story of recent years continued into 1991, with Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* slowly spreading in range as well as increasing in numbers. Twenty years ago, the great majority of the 20-30 breeding pairs were in Scotland. Numbers in the northern haunts have actually declined slightly, but this loss has been more than made up by the colonisation of a number of quiet, lowland waters in the midland and eastern counties of England. Gravel-pits and reservoirs have increased enormously in numbers in these areas over the last 30-40 years, but, presumably because the grebes require extensive areas of emergent and floating aquatic vegetation, the necessary time for these to appear has to elapse before the grebes become interested.

The colonisation of Britain by the Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, almost entirely attributable to the sterling work of Roy Dennis and his associates in providing nest-boxes on a wide scale, has proved such a success story that it is becoming increasingly difficult to continue a full and accurate annual breeding census. This year's total of 72 confirmed pairs, therefore, though well below the 100 recorded in 1990, is not thought to represent a real decline of that magnitude. With hundreds of boxes now in place, the manpower needed to visit them all in the course of a season is now so great that it has reluctantly been concluded that in future it will be possible to monitor the boxes only in certain areas. To have gone from a single breeding pair in each of the years

1970 to 1972 to the present population of 100 confirmed pairs in 1990, and hundreds of young fledging every year, is no mean achievement. In addition, occasional breeding records are being received from elsewhere in Britain, so a wider geographical distribution should not be long in coming.

No new species bred in the United Kingdom in 1991, but there were some intriguing records of potential new or nearly new breeders, including Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, with a singing male turning up for the second year running, and the first indications of what became, in 1992 and 1993, the successful colonisation by Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* in northern England. Individuals of two different species, Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* and Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, apparently formed hybrid pairs with congeners. The latter is the long-staying individual in Northumberland, but the former is a remarkable record, though having to remain as highly probable rather than absolutely certain. The virtually certain nesting by Little Gulls *Larus minutus* in Scotland was a pleasant surprise.

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The Panel, and in particular its Secretary, very gratefully acknowledges the willing co-operation of the following in supplying information:

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We apologise for any inadvertent omissions.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

Northern Ireland Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone

England, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Somerset, Wiltshire

England, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire and South Humberside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

England, Central Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire

England, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)

Wales All present-day counties (i.e. includes the former Monmouth)

Scotland, S The regions of Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Lothian and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Lothian (East, Mid and West), Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Wigtownshire

Scotland, Mid The regions of Central, Fife, Grampian and Tayside, together with parts of Highland and Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Fife, Kincardineshire, Kinross, Moray, Nairn, Perthshire, Stirlingshire

Scotland, N & W Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, together with the greater part of Highland and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Argyllshire, Bute, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland

Systematic list

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Three localities in three counties; one pair built nest.

England, E One locality: one from 1st April to 11th August.

England, N One locality: one in breeding plumage in late June and July.

Scotland, S One locality: pair built three nests, but no eggs laid.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	3	2	2	1	1	5	10	8	6	5	3
No. individuals	2	2	3	1	4	5	9	12	9	3	4
No. pairs	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	3	3	2	1

There has still not been a successful breeding attempt in Britain and, if anything, this now looks less likely as numbers decline from the peak of three years ago. What may well be the same pair in southern Scotland has now built nests in each of the last three years, though a second Scottish site, where eggs have been laid in past years, seems to have been abandoned.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

31 localities: 61-74 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S One locality: pair on 26th April, single on 30th and 8th May.

Scotland, Mid Eight localities: (1)-(8) totals of 14 pairs and three singles summered; eight pairs reared 12 young.

Scotland, N & W 22 localities: (1)-(22) 53 breeding pairs and three singles; 52 young fledged.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	35	25	44	26	40	43	39	22	39	36	31
Confirmed (pairs)	52	51	41	39	63	68	33	31	70	74	61
Possible (pairs)	19	8	38	21	18	19	6	6	8	12	13
Max. total pairs	71	59	79	60	81	87	39	37	78	86	74

The RSPB Highland Office carried out a co-ordinated survey in Scotland, on which these results are based. A slight decline is evidenced from last year's record total, but perhaps as much due to inclement summer weather as to

human threats, which are nonetheless serious; see Crooke *et al.* (1993, *Britain's Birds in 1990-91*: 135-138). The population also remains vulnerable because some 40% occur on just three waters.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

25 localities in 12 counties: 19-53 pairs breeding.

England, SE Five localities: (1)(2) pairs displaying and nest-building in May; (3) displaying pair in May; (4) adult calling on 18th May, seen during 12th-19th July, joined by a second individual, reported as a 'juvenile' on 13th; (5) one on 18th May.

England, E Six localities: (1) pair on 14th May only, at site where breeding has occurred; (2)(3) pairs in April or May; (4)-(6) single adults for one to three weeks.

England, Central Two localities: (1) pair in breeding plumage from end of March to end of April, up to eight including one juvenile from end of July to end of August, but no sign of breeding; (2) adult in breeding plumage from 25th April to early August.

England, N Six localities: (1) four pairs each had two broods, rearing a minimum total of four young; (2) two pairs each reared two young, a third pair may have hatched one young; (3) 27 present 6th May, several nests built, but no young reared; (4)(5) total of up to six adults in May, possibly the same individuals visiting both sites; (6) immature on 7th October.

Scotland, S Three localities: (1)-(3) single adults present in May or June.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1) six pairs bred and six young fledged; (2) two pairs bred, both seen with young; (3) two pairs present.

1990 ERRATUM The distribution of localities between the English regions, as published in the 1990 Report, contained a number of errors. The true picture is as follows, the overall totals of localities and pairs remaining the same.

1990 England, SW One locality: pair in March.

1990 England, SE One locality: pair fledged three young.

1990 England, E Four localities: (1)-(4) one or two present in summer, but no evidence of breeding.

1990 England, Central Five localities: (1) four adults summered; (2)-(5) one or two present in summer, but no evidence of breeding.

1990 England, N Four localities: (1) 12 pairs reared 11 young; (2) five adults reared at least three young; (3) pair in May; (4) one on 29th April.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	7	13	19	17	17	15	19	22	19	19	25
Confirmed (pairs)	5	11	11	17	9	11	27	15	25	21	19
Possible (pairs)	7	12	21	13	13	22	12	20	15	16	34
Max. total pairs	12	23	32	30	22	33	39	35	40	37	53

Caution has to be applied to sightings in spring and late summer as passage birds can stay well into May and reappear in July. Even making allowances for this, the totals represent an encouraging increase in numbers of both localities and pairs. The increase was particularly marked in southeast and eastern England, after a poor year for those areas in 1990. Conversely, the successful breeding in southwest England in 1990 was not repeated.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*

One locality: one in spring and early summer.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

SHEPHERD One locality: adult in gannetry, Hermaness, 23rd March to 13th April, then intermittently to 4th June.

1990 Scotland, N & W One locality: present 27th March to 7th April, 26th, 31st May, 10th June, in gannetry, Hermaness.

After an absence throughout 1988 and 1989, this lonely bird's return in 1990 failed to get a mention in the Report for that year.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

13 localities: 19 booming males.

England, SW One locality: single booming male.

England, SE One locality: single booming male.

England, E Ten localities: (1)(2) single pairs bred; (3) two booming males, one pair bred; (4) three booming males; (5) two booming males; (6)-(10) single booming males.

England, N One locality: three booming males, at least one pair bred.



	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	16	15	18	18	15	12	17	14	14	12	13
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	0	5	0	0	1	2	3	3	4
Booming males	47	35	44	36	28	23	22	30	30	20	19

The status of this species remains of great concern, with numbers at the key sites falling again, though there was a welcome return to sites in southwest and southeast England.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

18 localities: 4-21 pairs breeding, of which four were feral.

England, SE One locality: up to three feral individuals all summer.

England, N One locality: feral pair bred, raising three young.

Scotland, S One locality: single, presumed injured, all summer.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1) two feral pairs raised four young; (2) pair bred, but eggs stolen in June, and one adult died in August; (3) single summered.

Scotland, N & W 12 localities: (1) three adults, with display noted from June to August, but no sign of nesting; (2)(3) four adults summered at each; (4)-(6) two adults summered at each; (7)-(12) singles summered, one with a yellow leg ring indicating Icelandic origin.

Only one pair of apparently wild individuals bred, compared with last year's three pairs, and the total number summering declined, too. The potential for nesting by feral individuals appears to be increasing, particularly in England, which is not necessarily to be welcomed bearing in mind the recent history of other escaped wildfowl.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

One locality: 0-1 pair breeding. See also comment below.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair during 25th-26th May only, no evidence of breeding.

This species only very occasionally gets reported to the Panel, perhaps because summering 'pricked' individuals are relatively commonplace at the regular wintering haunts, especially in Scotland, while elsewhere in the country feral individuals, escaped from waterfowl collections or in some cases deliberately released by wildfowling, are not thought worthy of reporting. This species certainly has the potential to breed in the wild in Scotland. Feral Pinkfeet, which were surveyed separately in 1991 by Simon Delany (*Brit. Birds* 86: 591-599), are comparatively easy to breed in captivity and have bred from time to time outside the bounds of collections. Delany found a total of 88 at 29 sites, of which 24, all additional to the pair listed above, were at or near traditional Scottish wintering areas.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

28 localities: 4-43 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: male from late April to early June, but origin suspect.**England, SE** Three localities: (1) pair displaying during April and May, but not seen subsequently; (2) pair summered; (3) male summered.**England, E** Five localities: (1) pair summered; (2) female from 11th May to 6th June; (3) two males from 19th May to 6th June and female from 26th June to 7th July; (4) male for a few days in late May; (5) male on 4th July.**England, N** Five localities: (1) five pairs in April, one to end of June, but no evidence of breeding; (2) pair on 12th May; (3) male from mid April to end of May, female in June; (4) two in early May, no breeding; (5) male on 26th April.**Wales** One locality: two pairs attempted to breed, but no young reared.**Scotland, SW** Two localities: (1) pair on 21st April; (2) male on 5th May.**Scotland, N & W** 11 localities: (1) six pairs, two young fledged; (2) pair bred, female with seven young in July; (3) five or six pairs; (4) four or five pairs; (5) two pairs; (6) one or two pairs; (7) pair; (8) pair on 23rd April; (9) male in June; (10) female in May; (11) female from 4th to 13th June. No evidence of breeding at sites 3-11.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	16	18	23	15	17	14	16	20	16	20	28
Confirmed (pairs)	8	7	12	5	9	6	7	14	11	9	4
Possible (pairs)	23	25	20	13	12	12	14	15	28	27	39
Max. total pairs	31	32	32	18	21	18	21	29	38	36	43

There has been an increase in localities over 1990, but this is almost entirely confined to northwest Scotland and is the result of a special survey of Orkney carried out by Eric Meek for the RSPB. This confirms previous suggestions that this species is probably under-recorded by casual observations, requiring more detailed study to evaluate its true status.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

90 localities: 12-94 pairs breeding.

England, SW 11 localities in four counties: 2-10 pairs breeding.**England, SE** 15 localities in seven counties: 4-16 pairs breeding.**England, E** 32 localities in four counties: 2-35 pairs breeding.**England, Central** Nine localities in four counties: 3-9 pairs breeding.**England, N** 16 localities in seven counties: 1-16 pairs breeding.**Scotland, S** Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.**Scotland, Mid, N & W** Three localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	48	66	59	46	32	42	36	37	81	87	90
Confirmed (pairs)	8	10	15	4	4	8	8	11	18	14	12
Possible (pairs)	50	84	55	53	36	47	37	40	80	97	83
Max. total pairs	58	94	70	57	40	55	45	51	98	111	94

Although there has been a slight decline in the number of pairs (both confirmed and possible) over last year, the number of sites continues to increase. Regionally, the picture is uneven, with a decline in southeast England, but continued increases in central and northern areas. This species' preference for shallow water and dense emergent vegetation makes it particularly difficult to observe to the point of proving breeding.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

161 localities: 284-428 pairs breeding.

England, SW 15 localities in five counties: 9-27 pairs breeding.

England, SE 46 localities in nine counties: 110-193 pairs breeding.

England, E 26 localities in six counties: 48-64 pairs breeding.

England, Central Ten localities in five counties: 11-15 pairs breeding.

England, N 43 localities in eight counties: 77-92 pairs breeding.

Wales Three localities: three pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Nine localities: 11-15 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid Nine localities: 15-19 pairs breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	68	63	138	116	133	161
Confirmed (pairs)	126	130	185	260	207	284
Possible (pairs)	59	44	162	76	86	144
Max. total pairs	185	174	347	336	293	428

The surge in numbers is welcome after last year's slight decline. It has long been thought that the population is higher than indicated by the reports reaching the Panel. A survey in 1986, based mainly on local bird reports, indicated a minimum of 375-395 pairs, and Dr A. D. Fox, of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, has suggested that numbers have remained stable over the last 25-30 years, with some sign of an increase in the 1980s (*Brit. Birds* 84: 83-98). We shall wait with interest to see whether the 1992 figures are evidence of a further rise in numbers or merely the result of better reporting to the Panel.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Ten localities: 0-10 pairs.

Scotland, S, Mid, N & W Ten localities: (1)-(6) single pairs in June, no evidence of breeding; (7) male in May; (8) female on 18th July; (9)(10) single moulting males in July.

After just a single pair last year, this is the largest number of definite pairs ever reported to the Panel, with a bias towards northern Scotland, which remains the most likely area for successful nesting, despite the occasional more southerly records.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, N & W One locality: female or immature on 18th August.

The female which summered in mid Scotland in 1989 and 1990 was not seen this year. The above record was in the Western Isles, where breeding was suspected in 1969.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

14 localities: 9-30 pairs.

Northern Ireland One locality: two pairs bred.

Scotland, S and Mid Five localities: (1) two pairs on 10th May; (2) pair in June and July; (3) male and two females in April and May and three females in June; (4) male on 16th July, no evidence of breeding though it has occurred at this site; (5) at least one individual.

Scotland, N & W Eight localities.

ARGYLL Three localities: (1) up to ten pairs, four or five pairs bred, but success unknown; (2)(3) single pairs in June in suitable habitat.

CATHNESS Two localities: (1) female and five young on 29th July; (2) male on 15th June.

SUTHERLAND Two localities: (1) female on nest on 29th May; (2) pair displaying on 25th May.

SHELLAND One locality: four pairs in May and June, one brood of three.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	6	17	6	9	25	35	15	36	7	9	14
Confirmed (pairs)	5	14	10	17	2	8	29	14	8	6	9
Possible (pairs)	77	98	75	52	72	92	33	76	32	23	21
Max. total pairs	82	112	85	69	74	100	62	90	40	29	30

A small but welcome increase in the number of localities. In many areas, however, reliable censuses depend on much more thorough surveying than is normally possible. The regular Argyll site was below its recent peak, but the Shetland site had more pairs than last year. The Northern Ireland population continues to give particular cause for concern.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Breeding almost exclusively in one extensive nest-box scheme, but increasing numbers summering elsewhere.

England, SW Two localities.

DORSET One locality: male summered for fifth consecutive year.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE One locality: up to three summered.

England, SE Two localities.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: female with damaged wing summered.

HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: four immature males and two females stayed to 6th May.

England, E One locality.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: two females on 30th June, one staying to 24th August.

England, Central One locality.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: up to eight individuals in May, two males displaying to three females on 1st June, one or two stayed to August, but no evidence of breeding.

England, N Seven localities.

DURHAM One locality: female and four young seen on 11th May.

LANGASHIRE Three localities: (1) three feral pairs bred, 18 young in May, further brood of seven young in August; (2) pair on 26th May; (3) female on 15th June.

NORTHUMBERLAND Two localities: (1) two juveniles from 4th August to end of month, not reared at site; (2) one juvenile from end July to end August, not reared at site.

Scotland, S 11 localities.

BORDERS Three localities: (1) pair and immature male on 6th June; (2) up to six males, late May and June; (3) male on 23rd June and 3rd July.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Two localities: (1) male and female in early July, perhaps failed breeders; (2) one male during summer.

LANARK Three localities: (1) two males summered; (2) one male summered; (3) immature summered.

LOTHIAN Three localities: (1) up to 11 in early May; (2) five in early May, one female on 26th June; (3) female on 26th May.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

PERTSHIRE One locality: eggshells in nest-box when cleaned out.

Scotland, N & W Five localities.

CATHNESS One locality: female on 28th June.

SHETLAND One locality: female summered.

WESTERN ISLES One locality: male, first reported, as immature, in 1987, still present.

HIGHLAND Nest-box area: incomplete survey of the boxes found 69 pairs breeding, of which 34 were successful, 926 eggs were laid and 301 young hatched. Elsewhere: two nests at one locality were both destroyed by predators.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Confirmed (pairs)	29	27	47	53	67	77	80	90	88	100	72
Young hatched (min.)	286	220	209	311	336	390	332	427	453	529	301

The long-running nest-box scheme, which began in the Spey valley in 1970, has now proved so successful that it has been decided, reluctantly, that it is no longer possible to monitor all the boxes annually. Colonisation

elsewhere has been slow, with confirmed breeding in Perthshire and Durham, in addition to the feral birds in Lancashire, but the number summering continues to increase both in Scotland and in England. It is at such sites that the placing of nest-boxes is most likely to lead to successful breeding.

Smew *Mergus albellus*

One locality: one individual.

England, Central One locality: summering individual, probably female.

The first summering reported since 1986 and the first in England since 1979.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

20 localities in 13 counties: 2-22 pairs breeding.

Great Britain 20 localities: (1) pair bred, laying two eggs and rearing two young; (2) pair seen in June and family party of adult and two juveniles in September; (3) recently fledged young found injured on 1st September, later died; (4) pair seen, including display, July and August; (5) pair from May to September and third individual in August, thought to have nested, but no young seen; (6) displaying pair seen from June to August; (7) one or two individuals all summer; (8) three on 1st June, four from 29th June to 1st September; (9) two on 17th August and one on 24th; (10) singles during breeding season; (11) one displaying on 27th July; (12) male on 19th May and several dates in August, including display; (13) one on dates in July and August, two at end of August; (14) one in suitable habitat on 22nd July; (15)(16) singles in June; (17)-(19) singles in July; (20) single in August.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Confirmed (pairs)	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2
Max. total pairs	9	3	5	2	4	6	7	10	20	19	22

A very slight increase on 1990, in the same number of counties, confirming the more widespread distribution of the last few years. Some of the sightings are almost certainly of migrants on passage. On the other hand, a single observation at one locality in one year was followed the next by the discovery of a breeding pair, so that all sightings are worth pursuing and, as it is felt that this species is still under-recorded, worth reporting.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

92 pairs and at least 76 further individuals.

Wales 92 localities: 76 pairs were proved breeding, of which 41 were successful, rearing 62 young. In addition, a minimum of a further 76 unmated individuals was identified during the spring. Although the number of young reared was lower than last year's record total, the number of pairs attempting to breed was higher than ever. Unprecedented failures at the egg stage accounted for the poor production. The primary cause appeared to be the unseasonably cold weather during the main incubation month of April, which had a severely unsettling effect on the birds. The cold spring also followed a much colder winter than many recent ones, with snow and severe cold in February causing the kites to disperse widely. Seven clutches were stolen by egg-collectors (though one clutch was of dummy eggs!). Other failures included at least three attributable to human disturbance. (The Panel is indebted, as always, to Peter Davis, who is employed by the Countryside Council for Wales to study the kites, for his detailed report. The table, below, includes some minor revisions, mainly retrospective additions, for 1988-90.)

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Total pairs	46	47	46	46	54	58	59	68	71	84	92
Breeding pairs	32	38	33	33	343	40	44	49	54	65	76
Successful pairs	18	19	30	13	19	23	27	27	33	47	41
Young reared	21	23	24	21	25	29	39	38	49	73	62

The steady increase in the Welsh population continues, despite the slight hiccup of this year's poor production. Records back to the last century have been reviewed recently by Peter Davis (*Brit. Birds* 86: 295-298), showing that the low point in the population occurred as recently as the 1930s (with just ten pairs), instead of about 1905 as previously accepted.

The JNCC/RSPB experimental reintroduction programme entered its third year in 1991, with the release of 20 Swedish kites in Scotland and 11 Spanish and four Welsh kites in England. Survival of these birds continues to be high.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Reintroduction.

Scotland Eight pairs attempted to breed and seven young were reared, including one brood of two.

The best year by far for production of young, although the number of pairs remains low.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

92-111 'pairs' breeding.

Great Britain Analysing the information received on this partially polygamous species suggests the totals of 83 males and 91 females given in the table and the number of 'pairs' as above. The 198 young produced is a new record, but includes some estimations.

For the second year running, two pairs bred successfully in Scotland.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Breeding males	17	19	21	27	29	26	40	42	58	73	83
Breeding females	20	24	28	32	31	32	46	56	66	110	91
Young	48	59	71	66	86	82	126	145	172	145	198

The growth in numbers of this species in Britain in the last two decades has been remarkable: in 1973, the first year of the RBBP, there were just four sites with a total of four males and six females which, between them, reared 16 young. Protection of the nesting areas of this easily disturbed species has played a very significant part, for which the landholders as well as the conservation agencies must be praised. (The Panel is grateful to Mike Seago and Bob Image for much detailed information.)

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

14 localities: 7-14 pairs breeding.

England, SW Seven localities: (1)-(3) pair bred at each site, all rearing young; (4) female in June and July, no male seen; (5) male during July, perhaps from nearby breeding site; (6)(7) 'ringtails' seen in May.

England, SE One locality: female throughout July.

England, E Five localities: (1)(2) pair bred at each site, both rearing young; (3) eggs laid but female apparently unmated; (4) nest failed; (5) female in June and July, male seen once, no evidence of breeding.

England, N One locality: pair displaying in late March, but no other sightings.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	8	7	8	2	9	10	10	14	15	9	14
Confirmed (pairs)	2	3	6	1	3	7	6	6	7	5	7
Possible (pairs)	7	5	4	1	6	3	4	8	8	4	7
Max. total pairs	9	8	10	2	9	10	10	14	15	9	14

A year of mixed fortunes, though one showing a welcome return to the

levels of 1988 and 1989 after the poor showing last year. The species' habit of nesting in crops can lead to problems in locating pairs and from unwitting disturbance by farming activities, although wardening schemes are in place to minimise this.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

At least 192 localities: 158-229 pairs breeding.

England and Wales At least 149 localities in 33 counties: (1)-(149) a minimum total of 127 pairs attempted to breed, of which 71 were known to be successful and 27 failed, mainly owing to nest robbery. The fate of the other 29 nests is uncertain. A minimum total of 121 young was reported to have fledged. There were a further 59 singles or pairs not proved breeding.



Scotland At least 43 localities in three regions: (1)-(31) a total of 31 pairs is known to have bred, of which 25 were successful and six failed; (32)-(41) total of ten pairs, but breeding not proved; (42)-(43) singles.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. counties	28	17	19	22	20	31	31	31	23	30	36
Confirmed (pairs)	17	24	34	36	36	57	54	108	112	93	158
Possible (pairs)	36	19	27	42	39	59	40	68	54	79	71
Max. total pairs	53	43	61	78	75	116	94	176	166	172	229

It is difficult to know how significant is the apparently sharp increase in the number of pairs, but it is noteworthy that nearly 70% of them were confirmed as breeding. The number of counties is also at an all-time high.

It is accepted that only some of the breeding goshawks in Britain are reported to the Panel, both because of the difficulties of working in the dense conifer forest in which most pairs nest and because there is still an entirely understandable reluctance on the part of some observers to part with information about pairs nesting or attempting to do so. Deliberate destruction of nests, eggs, young and adults remains by far the most commonly reported cause of nest failure and, even though the Panel can assure all recorders and observers that if they request that sites be treated as confidential then that is exactly how they are treated, it may well be that such an assurance is still not sufficient for some.

Estimates of the true breeding population of Northern Goshawks in Britain are extremely difficult to make, but Steve Petty of the Forest Authority's Wildlife and Research Branch, to whom, together with his team of goshawk-watchers, the Panel is indebted for much detailed information, has little doubt that the total is substantially higher even than the record numbers reported this year.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

73 pairs: 64 pairs laid eggs, fledging 82 young.

England, SE One locality: one from 18th May to 2nd June and (?same bird) from 19th to 23rd June, plus a second in late May.

England, E One locality: immature on several dates from 8th May to 14th July, a second on 1st June.

England, N One locality: single in early May.

Scotland A total of 73 eyries was occupied by pairs, nine more than in 1990, and a further two nests had single individuals. The 64 pairs which laid eggs is an increase of six over the previous year, but the number of successful pairs stayed the same while the number of young reared suffered the first drop for 15 years, a reflection of the higher-than-usual losses of eggs and young during prolonged periods of cold, wet weather.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Pairs	25	30	30	31	34	42	50	53	58	62	73
Successful pairs	20	21	20	21	22	24	30	38	38	44	44
Young reared	42	45	45	47	53	48	56	81	81	90	82

The population continues to increase and spread. The setback of this year's relatively poor production of young—only 1.12 per pair compared with a mean of 1.45 for the three preceding years—is unlikely to be more than temporary. (As usual, Roy Dennis and his associates provided the Panel with full information on which the above is based. The figures in the table include some minor updates to previously published data.)

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

At least 446 localities: 159-469 pairs breeding.

England, SW 59-143 pairs breeding, 93 young reported.

England, SE 47-170 pairs breeding, 60 young reported.

England, E 24-78 pairs breeding, 49 young reported.

England, Central 26-49 pairs breeding, 59 young reported.

England, N 0-19 pairs breeding, no young reported.

Wales 3-8 pairs breeding, four young reported.

Scotland 0-2 pairs breeding, one possible young reported.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Confirmed (pairs)	51	97	80	93	98	91	108	103	140	154	159
Possible (pairs)	10	105	182	116	148	202	164	226	250	287	310
Max. total (pairs)	160	202	262	209	246	293	272	329	390	441	469
Young reared (min.)	89	63	104	91	117	126	160	133	205	239	265

The species continues to increase and to expand its range, with noticeable increases, particularly, in southwest and southeast England, though slight reductions in eastern England and Wales. This was in a year when, as will be apparent from species accounts above, breeding success among birds of prey was, in general, much poorer than in 1990, owing to poor weather.

The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland (1993) estimates a total within the range 500-900 pairs, which is consistent with the numbers found and reported to the Panel.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

88 localities: 2-107 pairs breeding.

England, SW 29 localities: 1-41 pairs breeding.

England, SE 15 localities: 0-18 pairs breeding.

England, E 26 localities: 0-29 pairs breeding.

England, Central Four localities: 0-5 pairs breeding.

England, N Five localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Nine localities: 0-9 pairs breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	84	152	130	904	255	88
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	5	27	13	2
Possible (pairs)	110	245	158	1,628	364	105
Max. total pairs	111	246	163	1,655	377	107

Numbers have returned to a low level, comparable with that in the mid 1980s when the Panel first began gathering records of this species. The 1989 invasion was certainly of an impressive size, and perhaps suggests that there was a small 'follow-on' effect in 1990 that has now disappeared. We must now await the next invasion, but it does not seem to be tempting fate too much to suggest that the scale of the 1989 influx, the largest of the century thus far, is unlikely to be exceeded before the next century begins.

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*

Seven localities: 0-14 pairs breeding.

England, E Two localities: (1) one singing from 8th May; (2) one singing on several dates between 2nd July and 10th August.

Scotland, N & W Five localities: (1) three singing in late June, two pairs on 27th, pair singing on 10th July; (2) five singing; (3) two individuals responded to tape lure on 29th June; (4)(5) singles singing in June.



	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. counties	3	1	3	3	2	3	4	5	7	6	5
No. localities	4	2	6	4	2	3	7	6	14	14	7
No. singing	9	3	12	10	3	4	18	10	21	21	14

This is always considered to be a species of which a very high proportion of records refer merely to singing, thanks to its far-carrying and highly distinctive song, but its very secretive behaviour in inaccessible habitat. Thus, it is probably correct to report a relatively poor year after two better ones, even though the significance of this is unclear. The geographical balance shifted noticeably, with only two singing in England, compared with 16 and ten in 1989 and 1990 respectively. The 12 heard in Scotland represent the most since the Panel began collecting records in 1973.

Corn Crane *Crex crex*

Nine localities: 0-23 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

SOMERSET One locality: one singing.

England, N Two localities: (1)(2) singles singing at each.

Scotland, Mid Two localities.

GRAMPIAN One locality: one singing during June and July.

UNNAMED DISTRICT One locality: single singing throughout summer.

Scotland, N & W Four localities.

ARGYLL One locality: 13 singing during June census.

CAITHNESS Three localities: (1) up to three singing in May and June; (2) one singing from 21st June to end July; (3) one singing in late June.

Only records away from the Northern and Western Isles and Northern Ireland are collected by the Panel. The meagre return for this year represents a further decline on 1990. Active management, with payments to farmers and crofters to grow hay instead of silage and to delay mowing until August, is beginning to show promise in the islands, following a scheme implemented in Northern Ireland. It is naturally difficult to introduce such management for isolated singing Corn Crakes throughout the rest of Britain, though it must be worth attempting if they return to an area in successive years.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

United Kingdom Two pairs nested, but neither fledged young owing to predation. A third pair was present, but did not attempt to nest. The group of six was joined by an immature in March and early April. Six were again present in November and December, but decreased to five in late December.

Breeding or attempted breeding has now taken place every year since 1981. Unfortunately, the presence of this population continues to be publicised to birdwatchers via at least one monthly magazine, despite appeals for discretion on account of their extreme sensitivity to disturbance. It would be sad, indeed, if they were to be driven away by the very people to whom they give most pleasure.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

21 localities: 448-453 pairs reared about 305 young.

England, SE and E 21 localities: (1) 120 pairs bred, 21 young fledged; (2)-(5) total of 82 pairs bred, hatching 195 young of which 110 fledged; (6)-(9) total of 46 pairs bred, 45 young fledged; (10) 45 pairs had 98 breeding attempts, but reared only one young; (11) 35-40 pairs bred, fledging 40 young; (12) 35 pairs bred, 13 young fledged; (13) 22 pairs bred, success unknown; (14) 15 pairs bred, 39 young fledged; (15) 15 pairs reared 13 young; (16) 12 pairs reared at least five young; (17) 12 pairs bred, three young fledged; (18) five pairs bred, ten young fledged; (19) two pairs bred, five young fledged; (20) one pair bred, nest washed out by high tide; (21) one pair bred, success unknown.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities		5	9	9	11	14	15	18	27	24	21
Confirmed (pairs)		201	190	238	237	269	255	341	389	521	355
Young reared (min.)		155	150	192	118	245	227	315	136	150	200

After last year's drop, the number of breeding pairs has risen to the second-best ever, as has the number of young reared, after three years of relatively low numbers. There is, as usual, very considerable variability in success between different colonies, with, first, some of the smaller ones being proportionately much more successful than larger ones and, secondly, more-recent colonies being more successful than longer-established ones.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Ten counties: 139-155 pairs.

England, SW Four counties: nine pairs present, at least six young fledged.

England, SE Three counties: 50 pairs present, at least 39 young fledged.

England, E Three counties: 96 pairs present, at least 78 young fledged.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Confirmed (pairs)	10	8	20	19	68	103	137	126	126	139	139
Possible (pairs)	43	59	76	52	47	12	0	3	17	10	16
Max. total pairs	53	67	96	71	115	115	137	129	143	149	155

Totals up to the mid 1980s certainly substantially underestimate the true total. The slight upward trend in the 'maximum' number of pairs since about 1987 is probably accurate because recent coverage, principally by RSPB protection wardens, has been relatively uniform and systematic. Even so, mark-resighting studies of colour-ringed birds in Breckland suggest that about 10% of the adult population is not located in the breeding season. The actual adult population in 1991 was, therefore, probably about 170 pairs.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding (excluding those in main Scottish breeding area).

England, N One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: individuals seen in May, no evidence of breeding.

Scotland, S Two localities.

BORDERS One locality: three in May, probably on passage.

LANARK One locality: female seen on 28th May in suitable habitat.

The Panel is concerned only with potential nesting outwith the main breeding range and recognises that most records reaching it from southern Scotland and northern England will be casual observations. The locality in the Borders where breeding took place in 1990 was not searched this year.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Two localities: 3-4 breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) three pairs displaying at the regularly occupied site; (2) one on 19th July.

In the last ten years, the maximum total of pairs has been between one and five, with no sign of any increase. The one regular breeding site was surveyed after last year's gap and the presence of three pairs confirmed.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Two localities: 3 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, one young fledged; (2) nest found with clutch of five eggs, but no further information.

Three confirmed breeding pairs matches the previous best year, 1987. This species is notoriously unwilling to leave its nest and the finding of breeding pairs is, therefore, always going to include an element of luck.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Nine localities: 7-15 females nesting.

England, E Seven localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) at least four females nested; (2) three females at lek, one or two nested.

NORFOLK One locality: adult until late June.

UNNAMED COUNTY Four localities: (1) two females nested, no young fledged; (2) pair in suitable habitat, late June; (3) three females in suitable breeding habitat throughout June; (4) pair displaying in suitable habitat in June, but did not stay to breed.

England, N Two localities.

CHESHIRE One locality: five males and one female in early April, occasional lekking by two males, but all left by 8th May.

UNNAMED COUNTY One locality: three males lekking in May, one until 23rd June.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	10	13	8	6	8	7	16	14	15	8	9
Nests	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	7
Max. no. females possibly nesting	13	23	32	6	8	9	69	11	17	15	15

Although none appeared at any of the three Essex localities this year, new sites were found elsewhere in eastern England where Ruffs were present in suitable habitat. The total of seven definite nesting attempts is comfortably the highest since the Panel was created in 1973.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

18 localities: 28-53 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

SOMERSET One locality: one pair nested, but eggs infertile; one or two singles also present.

England, SE Four localities.

ESSEX Two localities: (1) three pairs bred, one of which failed but re-nested; (2) pair bred.

KENT Two localities: (1) pair in late May, in suitable breeding habitat; (2) single summered in suitable breeding habitat.

England, E Seven localities.

GAMBRIDGEESHIRE Two localities: (1) 14 pairs, of which at least eight nested and four or five produced young, and at least four fledged; (2) at least eight (and perhaps as many as 13) pairs nested, four successful, fledging 12 young.

NORFOLK Four localities: (1) two pairs bred unsuccessfully; (2) one pair bred, hatching one young which did not fledge; (3)(4) single pairs bred unsuccessfully.

UNNAMED COUNTY One locality: two pairs probably bred.

England, N One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: adult in late May.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

DUNBARTONSHIRE One locality: pair false-nest-building in late May.

Scotland, N & W Four localities.

ORKNEY One locality: pair throughout most of May, but no evidence of breeding.

SHEFLAND One locality: two pairs fledged two young.

UNNAMED COUNTY Two localities: (1) three on 3rd June; (2) six on 7th June.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	5	13	10	12	11	19	13	17	14	16	18
Confirmed (pairs)	22	38	32	55	22	23	28	36	34	33	28
Possible (pairs)	4	31	12	25	17	24	12	28	22	33	25
Max. total pairs	26	69	44	80	39	47	40	64	56	66	53

An average year for numbers of pairs, though an increase in localities, mainly in northern England and Scotland. Summering birds, sometimes in flocks, confuse the picture. For example, there were up to 94, many in full breeding plumage, present at a locality in Cheshire during May and June, but there was no sign of display or nesting.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

One locality.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

GATTHNESS One locality: four present from May to July.

This was the only report received from the Scottish mainland. (Information

from the regular sites in the Northern and Western Isles is not collected by the Panel.)

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs bred.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) pair bred, but success not reported; (2) agitated adult behaving as if young present on 5th July.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	1	4	3	4	3	2	3	4	6	2	2
Confirmed (pairs)	1	3	1	4	2	2	3	3	2	1	1
Possible (pairs)	0	3	4	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1
Max. total pairs	1	6	5	5	3	3	4	4	6	2	2

Not all known localities for this species are visited every year.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

One locality: one probably bred with Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos*.

England, N One locality: adult from 30th June to 7th July at Welbeck Southern Washlands Nature Reserve, West Yorkshire, apparently paired to a Common Sandpiper with three young, which fledged on 4th July. It was seen in display flight and to be standing guard near the family party. The record has been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 85: 528).

While not proved as hybridising with the Common Sandpiper, it seems strongly probable that this did occur. This species nested in Britain for the only time in 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 288-292).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Five localities: 16-21 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Five localities: (1) 15 broods; (2) one brood seen; (3) up to three pairs bred, but no attempt made to find young; (4) two males and one female in usual area, breeding suspected, but no young thought to have been produced; (5) female in late May.

This is the best year since 1984, with excellent success at one site in particular, where the habitat is being skilfully managed.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

13 localities: 15-23 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: pair bred.

England, SE Seven localities: (1) five pairs bred and four young fledged; (2) one pair bred, producing one young; (3) pair bred, but eggs destroyed; (4)(5) total of three pairs, success unknown; (6)(7) single pairs, success unknown.

England, E Two localities: (1) adult feeding hybrid young (with Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*) in early July; (2) three pairs bred but no young fledged.

England, N Three localities: (1) two adults in April, one stayed until early July; (2) sub-adult in Black-headed Gull colony from mid April to early June; (3) adult in late March.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	4	2	6	4	3	5	3	9	5	10	13
Confirmed (pairs)	3	2	2	4	3	1	1	5	6	11	15
Possible (pairs)	3	1	6	1	5	4	2	10	3	5	8
Max. total pairs	6	3	8	5	8	5	3	15	9	16	23

Breeding success remains low, but the number of pairs has shown an encouraging increase to a new high level, while the number of localities at which pairs or singles are present, if not breeding yet, is also on the increase.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

One locality: 1-2 pairs probably bred.

Scotland, Mid One locality: up to four adults in colony of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* in June; four juveniles on 25th June and three on 28th.

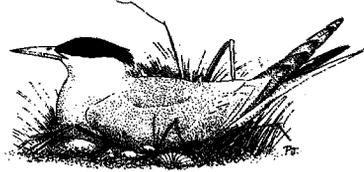
Although no nest was found, the county recorder considers that the evidence constitutes proof of breeding. There was a similar occurrence in 1988, with the only previous indication of breeding in Scotland, when a very recently fledged juvenile was seen.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

One locality: one individual.

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female from 14th May to 18th August, mated to Sandwich Tern *S. sandwicensis*; seen probably incubating on 30th May, in poor weather; nest subsequently abandoned.



Now in its eighth consecutive year, this bird has bred or attempted to breed, mated with a Sandwich Tern, on six occasions, but hybrid young have been reared only twice.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

13 localities: 52-57 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities.

ISLES OF SCILLY Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, one young definitely fledged, another probably did; (2) pair, but breeding not confirmed.

England, SE One locality: pair prospecting in June, juvenile (of uncertain origin) on 22nd July.

England, N Four localities: (1) 20 pairs laid 31 eggs of which 20 hatched and 13 young fledged; (2) two pairs bred, at least one young fledged; (3) pair bred, at least one young fledged; (4) pair bred, but failed to rear any young.

Wales Three localities: (1) three pairs fledged about three young; (2) pair bred, but deserted soon after laying; (3) adults present, but no eggs laid.

Scotland, Mid One locality: minimum of 18 pairs, with 12 clutches laid and minimum of 15 juveniles fledged.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair seen on territory in June and may have laid, though were not successful.

Northern Ireland One locality: four pairs bred and four young fledged.

A further serious decline in numbers since 1990, though, for the second year running, the main part of the breeding population of Britain and Ireland has shifted to the latter country.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One locality: two females.

Scotland, N & W One locality: two females present throughout the year. (For all the year's records, see *Brit. Birds* 85: 532.)

And still they hang on, waiting for 'Mr Right' to come along.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Six localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

England, E One locality: one in suitable breeding habitat on 20th June.

England, Central One locality: one singing on 30th April.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) pair bred, but eggs taken by predator; (2) one singing on 25th May.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) one singing on 9th and 10th June; (2) one singing on 7th July.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	2	9	14	9	9	9	10	9	8	6	6
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Possible (pairs)	2	10	15	10	8	8	9	9	7	6	5
Max. total pairs	2	10	15	10	9	9	10	10	8	6	6

A return, after last year's blank, to a single confirmed breeding attempt, albeit unsuccessful, and no improvement in the reduced number of localities.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

59-362 pairs breeding.

England, SW 24-168 pairs breeding.

DEVON Six localities: (1) up to 13 pairs, at least one bred; (2)-(6) single pairs at each, breeding proved at one.

DORSET Ten localities: total of 29 pairs, of which nine definitely bred and 16 probably did.

HAMPSHIRE Incomplete survey of New Forest produced minimum of 60 pairs; further 60 pairs elsewhere, at least 12 of which were known to have fledged young.

WILTSHIRE One locality: pair bred, rearing one young.

England, SE 12 localities: 4-34 pairs breeding.

BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: single in late March.

BERKSHIRE Four localities: at least 19 pairs or singing males, one pair known to have bred successfully.

SURREY Six localities: 12 pairs bred or probably did so, with young at two sites.

SUSSEX One locality: two pairs, one produced at least one young.

England, E Five localities: 29-157 pairs breeding.

LINCOLNSHIRE Two localities: two pairs, one proved to breed, and four or five further males.

NORFOLK One locality: 49 pairs; of 13 nests checked, ten were successful.

SUFFOLK Two localities (one extensive): (1) 37 pairs; of 15 nests checked, eight were successful; (2) survey of extensive locality produced 60-64 pairs.

England, Central One locality.

UNNAMED COUNTY One locality: three pairs, of which two bred successfully.

A further increase on last year's good total, particularly in southwest England, even though the survey work in that area was not regarded as complete. Elsewhere, numbers are holding steady.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, Mid One locality: single on 25th July, possibly on passage.

Although there was no indication of breeding behaviour, summer records are sufficiently unusual for it to be worth recording this one.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

36 localities: 23-69 pairs breeding.

England, SE 19 localities.

BERKSHIRE Two localities: (1) singing male in early May; (2) singing male on 13th June.

ESSEX One locality: pair probably bred.

KENT Six localities: (1)(2) single pairs bred and further singing male at each site; (3) pair bred; (4) three pairs; (5)(6) single pairs.

LONDON Four localities: (1) pair bred and further singing male present; (2) pair summered; (3)(4) singing males in summer.

SURREY Six localities: (1) pair bred; (2) pair summered; (3) male in March and May, female in March; (4) single in May, and pair on 1st June; (5)(6) singles in May.

England, E Eight localities.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: single on 15th April.

NORFOLK One locality: two pairs bred, with further two or three singing males.

SUFFOLK Six localities: (1) four pairs bred; (2) two pairs bred, and further two pairs probably did so; (3) two pairs bred successfully; (4) pair bred, two additional singing males and a further possible pair; (5) pair probably bred; (6) up to nine singing males in suitable breeding habitat.

England, Central Seven localities.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: pair present through April.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: one to three singing males from 3rd May.

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: male on several dates in April to June.

WEST MIDLANDS Four localities: (1) pair bred successfully; (2) male singing in April with further possible sub-adult male; (3) male singing in July; (4) female or sub-adult male on 12th April.

England, N Two localities.

LANCASHIRE One locality: female and recently fledged juvenile in early August.

YORKSHIRE One locality: five pairs bred, of which two each reared two broods.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	92	77	70	56	50	36
Confirmed (pairs)	81	46	54	36	28	23
Possible (pairs)	38	63	58	46	46	46
Max. total pairs	119	109	118	82	74	69

This species continues to decline, in both numbers of localities and numbers of pairs, since it was reinstated as a Panel species in 1986. Whilst it is possible that under-reporting is still a problem, the situation must now be regarded as increasingly gloomy. Once again, we would appeal for *all* breeding-season sightings in potential breeding habitat to be reported to the relevant county recorders.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

13 localities: 2-13 pairs breeding.

England, SE Two localities.

ESSEX One locality: one with Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus* in early June, the second such sighting there in the last four years.

KENT One locality: adult feeding recently fledged young on 30th May.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: single on 9th June.

England, Central Four localities.

DERBYSHIRE Four localities: (1) pair in May, giving alarm calls; (2)-(4) singles in June.

England, N Two localities.

CUMBRIA One locality: pair, including singing male, in May, but breeding not proved.

DURHAM One locality: adult seen several times between 25th May and 6th July.

Scotland, S Two localities.

BORDERS Two localities: (1)(2) singles 'alarming' in late April, but not seen subsequently.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

GRAMPIAN One locality: pair with two juveniles on 19th June.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

CAITHNESS One locality: four, possibly a family party, flew over on 8th July.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	6	7	10	4	3	2	7	7	12	12	13
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	3	0	0	2	1	2	3	5	2
Possible (pairs)	6	5	9	4	3	0	6	5	10	7	11
Max. total pairs	6	7	12	4	3	2	7	7	13	12	13

Although only two pairs were proved to be breeding, the number of localities and number of possible pairs maintain the slightly higher levels of recent

years. The wide geographic spread should be noted, including the second case in the last four years of confirmed breeding in southern England, the previous occasion being in Berkshire in 1988. Clearly, nowhere is impossible, while the continued reports of association with Mistle Thrushes are also worth bearing in mind.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

15 localities: 7-20 pairs breeding.

England, E Two localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: pair in summer.

SUFFOLK One locality: single in suitable breeding habitat on 2nd June.

Scotland, Mid One locality: juvenile in late June.

Scotland, N & W 12 localities: (1) two pairs with clutches, third pair believed to have nested; (2) pair reared two broods; (3) pair bred successfully; (4) three pairs, no nests located; (5) two nests, one destroyed by predators; (6) pair nest-building on 26th June; (7)(8) single individuals singing in June and July; (9) single singing in April; (10) report of two individuals, one carrying food; (11) adult on 6th July; (12) one on 13th June, though in unlikely breeding area.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	6	42	65	58	35	32	39	22	38	17	15
Confirmed (pairs)	4	30	17	31	12	20	9	10	12	6	7
Possible (pairs)	7	32	51	48	23	26	41	30	39	15	13
Max. total pairs	11	62	68	79	35	46	50	49	51	21	20

Similar numbers to last year, though with renewed sightings in eastern England. While it may be that last year's decline is being confirmed by these figures, the variability in coverage and reporting is probably too great for confident deductions to be made.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

80 localities: 27-241 breeding 'pairs'.

England, SW 46 localities in seven counties: 10-181 'pairs' breeding.

England, SE 11 localities in four counties: 6-17 'pairs' breeding.

England, E 16 localities in three counties: 11-31 'pairs' breeding.

Wales Seven localities in three counties: 0-12 'pairs' breeding.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. counties	16	12	13	13	13	11	14	14	15	21	17
Confirmed ('pairs')	56	29	90	78	59	4	31	24	12	19	27
Possible ('pairs')	106	173	157	238	190	175	156	174	196	326	214
Max. total 'pairs'	162	202	247	316	249	179	187	198	208	345	241

This year has seen a very significant decline in numbers, both of localities and of singing males, following the bumper year of 1990. (N.B. The use of the term 'pairs' has been normal in these reports, but does not properly represent the true situation for this highly polygynous species, whose females and nests are very difficult to find.) It remains to be seen whether 1990 was an upward blip, or if the population will recover its upward path. Most of the decline seems to have taken place in southwest England and it is possible that the amount of survey work has been reduced. It seems more likely, however, that the cold weather experienced in February and the cool and damp spring were more significant factors.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

13 localities: 0-16 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality: singing male from late April to end July.**England, E** 11 localities.

NORFOLK Seven localities: (1)(2) two singing at each site; (3)-(7) singles singing.

ELSEWHERE Four localities in two counties: (1) two singing males; (2)-(4) single singing males.

England, N One locality.

LANCASHIRE One locality: one singing from mid April to late June.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	8	11	12	10	12	9	16	10	13	5	13
Confirmed (pairs)	5	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Possible (pairs)	10	18	15	12	14	11	20	13	17	9	16
Max. total pairs	15	18	17	12	15	12	20	13	17	10	16

A better year, after the poor showing in 1990, with a return to several eastern England sites where this species was apparently absent last year. None of the former regular sites in southeast England has, however, been recolonised after their abandonment last year.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

15 localities: 9-32 pairs breeding.

England, SW Three localities: (1) singing from 25th May, two or three individuals carrying nest material in June; (2) two singing males in June; (3) one singing male in June.**England, SE** Seven localities: (1)-(7) totals of 20 singing males and at least 11 pairs, but rain washed out several nests.**England, Central** Four localities.

WORCESTERSHIRE Four localities: (1)-(4) single pairs bred successfully at each site.

England, N One locality: pair bred successfully.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	3	26	26	28	23	18	11	13	10	12	15
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	3	4	2	12	10	6	11	13	9
Possible (pairs)	3	72	53	47	40	16	11	14	11	11	23
Max. total pairs	3	74	56	51	42	28	21	20	22	24	32

The slight recovery in numbers of both sites and pairs noted in 1990 has continued in all areas, with Worcestershire back up to four sites compared with only one in 1989, though most of the increase has been in southeast England. Let us hope that this trend continues.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One locality: one individual.

England, N One locality.LANCASHIRE One locality: singing male at Leighton Moss during 4th to 13th June (*Brit. Birds* 86: 513).

This is the second consecutive year that this species has been reported to the Panel.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

67-701 pairs breeding.

England, SW County maxima:

CORNWALL 1, DEVON 54, DORSET 221, HAMPSHIRE over 400, SOMERSET 1.

England, SE County maxima:

BERKSHIRE 1, SURREY 20, SUSSEX 2.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. counties	7	6	6	6	5	5	8	6	5	8	8
Confirmed (pairs)	50	8	14	11	26	15	8	26	23	55	67
Possible (pairs)	69	304	134	429	368	293	239	616	499	873	634
Max. total pairs	119	312	148	440	394	308	247	639	522	928	701

Although there has been a sharp decline compared with last year, it should be emphasised that, as the population has increased, so it has become more and more difficult to census all the pairs, particularly in complex areas such as the New Forest, hence the estimated total for Hampshire, which should be regarded as an absolute minimum.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

19 localities: 2-22 pairs breeding.

England, SW Seven localities.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE Three localities: (1) two males in May; (2/3) single males in May and June.

HAMPSHIRE Three localities: (1)(2) single pairs bred; (3) singing male in April.

WILTSHIRE One locality: singing bird in May.

England, SE 11 localities.

BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: singing male in suitable breeding habitat in March.

BERKSHIRE Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males in May.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: two territories.

ESSEX One locality: single singing male in May.

LONDON One locality: female in May.

SURREY Three localities: (1) singing male in May, probably bred; (2/3) singles singing in April, no evidence of breeding.

SUSSEX One locality: singing male in May.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: two singing males in May and June.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	35	21	75	47	24	19	37	44	52	48	19
Confirmed (pairs)	15	4	6	4	5	1	8	11	19	9	2
Possible (pairs)	87	40	169	78	41	28	74	72	112	88	20
Max. total pairs	102	44	175	82	46	29	82	83	131	97	22

A very poor season, with the lowest number of pairs since 1978 and the lowest number of sites since 1986. The decline was evident right across the range, with no reports at all from central and northern England, or from Wales, where the species has bred regularly in small numbers since 1983. Spring weather is thought to be the dominating factor in determining how many reach our shores in any one year.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

27 localities: 16-28 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1) pair bred, rearing one young; (2) male heard in May and June, a possible pair, or second male, in early June.

England, SE One locality: pair probably bred.

England, E 36 localities surveyed and a minimum of 15 breeding pairs found. Seven nests produced fledged young, a further six nests failed, mainly owing to predators, the outcome of the six others being unknown. A further eight sites held singles, with no evidence of breeding.

England, Central One locality: pair singing in May.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	13	12	14	11	12	13	22	35	29	38	27
Confirmed (pairs)	4	3	2	4	4	5	11	16	15	10	16
Possible (pairs)	22	18	19	14	11	11	20	25	22	32	12
Max. total pairs	26	21	21	18	15	17	31	41	37	42	28

A relatively poor year for both breeding pairs and production of young. The eastern England population was once again surveyed by the Golden Oriole Group, to whom the Panel is most grateful for its detailed information. The colonisation of East Anglia by Golden Orioles, their status and conservation were recently documented and discussed (*Brit. Birds* 87: 205-219).

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Four localities: 1-4 pairs breeding.

England, E Three localities: (1) pair bred successfully; (2) male present during second half of May; (3) female in possible breeding habitat on 3rd July.

Scotland, Mid One locality: male on 7th July.



	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. localities	6	2	3	4	7	3	8	6	3	7	4
Confirmed (pairs)	11	5	11	6	6	4	2	1	0	1	1
Possible (pairs)	29	3	1	4	6	2	11	6	6	7	3
Max. total pairs	40	8	12	10	12	6	13	7	6	8	4

The optimism engendered in last year's Report by the increase in sites and numbers was not borne out this year, when the maximum number of pairs sank to the lowest ever, even though one pair successfully reared a brood.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

One locality: one individual.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: a bird, probably of the Iberian race *meridionalis*, spent the period from 18th May to 8th July in an area of farmland.

A fascinating record and the first report of this species to reach the Panel since 1975.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) male singing and displaying on 11th May; (2) male singing on 28th May.

The first relevant Scottish records since 1988 and the first on the mainland since 1987. This species remains extremely unpredictable in its summer appearances, though this should only encourage observers to watch or listen for it. In the early 1980s, it was seen in up to ten localities.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs.

England, SW Two localities.

DEVON Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males in May.

These are the first reports from Devon since 1988, but there is no cause for optimism with a complete absence of relevant reports from anywhere else in the UK and no sign of a return to the five to nine pairs found in seven of the eight years from 1981.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Four localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

England, N Two localities.

DURHAM Two localities: (1) maximum of ten (four males and six females) in January, with three pairs displaying on 26th; (2) male on 10th March, calling repeatedly in an agitated manner.

Scotland, N & W Two localities.

HIGHLAND Two localities: (1) pair nested, fledging four young; (2) adult male on 7th July.

There was a considerable influx of this species in autumn 1990, with a total of 159 confirmed records (*Brit. Birds* 85: 550). Unlike the last big influx, in 1983, however, when some stayed to breed in 1984 and 1985, the great majority of birds this time apparently returned to whence they had come. There was a scattering of other reports in January-March 1991, but the above were the sole instances of breeding or display noted.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

One locality: 0-2 pairs breeding.

England, N One locality: at least two males and one female throughout July. Both males sang and one paired with the female, but no breeding took place.

1990 Scotland, N & W ERRATUM The entry for a successful breeding pair in Shetland should, in fact, have referred to Sutherland.

The initial stages of a successful colonisation of northern England the following year (*Brit. Birds* 85: 646).

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Two localities: 24 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W 23 nests found during a survey; an adult and four immatures elsewhere.

Although the survey work has become more intensive in recent years, it still covers only a part of the population. Total numbers have more recently been estimated at 70-100 pairs (*The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*, 1993).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

98-241 breeding pairs.

England, SW

CORNWALL. Nine localities: (1) pair bred, rearing at least one young and building again in August; (2) pair in spring, female and juvenile nearby in late August; (3) pair in April and May, and male until at least 2nd July; (4) male singing in spring, pair in late May, and three males and two females in June; (5)-(9) single singing males from March to July.

DEVON 231 occupied territories found during a thorough survey of the county. Of these, 97 held pairs which were confirmed as breeding, a further 11 probably did so, while in the remaining 123 territories there was a possibility that breeding occurred.

SOMERSET One locality: singing male on two dates in July.

The extremely detailed and thorough research, habitat management and survey work carried out in Devon by Dr Andy Evans for the RSPB, in conjunction with the Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society, has resulted in an enormous increase in the number of known territories in that county. Some of the increase is due to much greater effort, but a growing part is due to a better understanding of the specific habitat and food requirements of this species. Two of the more important requirements are an abundance of weed seeds for winter feeding, a resource which has declined with the ever-more-rapid ploughing of autumn stubbles, and a rich source of invertebrates for feeding the nestlings, which these buntings traditionally obtained from unimproved grasslands, another declining habitat. Management based on this knowledge should give this species a more assured future than seemed likely only a few years ago.

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[It is the aim of the Panel to produce two annual reports in the next 12 months, and we hope to publish that for 1992 in spring 1995 and that for 1993 in autumn 1995. EDS]