

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This, the thirty-second report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), presents details of the status of the rarest breeding birds in the UK in 2005.

The Panel

The current membership of the Panel (June 2008) is Humphrey Crick, Mark Eaton, Ian Francis, David Norman, Judith Smith, David Stroud and Mark Holling (Secretary). Ken Smith retired from the Panel in November 2007 after 15 years of service, the last 14 as Chairman. On his watch as the Panel's longest-serving Chairman, he oversaw the transition from a wholly paper-based archive to the computer database now in use, this having greatly enhanced the ability to use RBBP data to support conservation. Ken was a great ambassador for the work of the Panel and gave considerable support to its members. We are deeply grateful for all his hard work to promote the recording of rare breeding birds in the UK and wish him well in his retirement. Indeed, it will be a retirement, as Ken has also retired from the RSPB recently, leaving him more time for active fieldwork!

Mark Eaton, a Research Biologist with RSPB, has replaced Ken, while the Chairman of the Panel is now David Stroud. The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but four members also reflect the interests and requirements of both sponsoring bodies, as well as the BTO and the Association of County Recorders and Editors. The Panel's work is supported financially by JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and the RSPB, with additional support from BTO.

Future reporting plans

In the 12 months since the Panel's last report,

which covered 2003 and 2004 (Holling *et al.* 2007a), a review of rare non-native breeding birds in the UK, covering 2003–05, has also been published (Holling *et al.* 2007b). The current report thus brings our reporting in step, but still somewhat behind the planned schedule. Ultimately, it is our intention to publish the main annual report in the spring or early summer two years after the breeding season being reported upon. This allows important data on rare breeding species to be available for conservation sooner and significant trends to be recognised earlier. To achieve this, work is already underway compiling and analysing data for the 2006 report, which we aim to publish in *BB* early in 2009, followed by the 2007 report in the latter half of 2009. We then aim to publish the 2008 report, on schedule, in spring or summer 2010. Through the more efficient use of computer databases and e-mail, many recorders can now submit data to the Panel rather sooner than hitherto, but it is recognised that this timescale might create some difficulties for recording areas that have not been able to take full advantage of modern technology, and for areas where the recorder operates with little or no support. One of the most significant delays is that of receiving information from the original observers. All those who report rare breeding birds are therefore encouraged to supply their information to local recorders as soon as possible after the end of the breeding season, rather than waiting until the end of the year or even later. The Panel is also investing time and effort in updating its computer systems and will be implementing new procedures for data collection that should make it easier for recorders to submit records electronically.

Data sources

Records are collated from the whole of the UK, including the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland, but not the Channel Islands. Most of the information presented in this report is submitted by the county and regional bird recorders and we are extremely grateful for their support. We ask that recorders provide detailed submissions for all species on the RBBP list in their area; guidelines are available on the Panel's website (www.rbbp.org.uk). Summaries from county bird reports, although welcome as they help to build the national picture, cannot provide the same level of detail and, in particular, are of less use in an archival context.

The RBBP's (confidential) archive, maintained since 1973, is the only national source of data for many species and sites; it contains full details of sites and the number of pairs of each species at each site, and permits duplicate data to be identified. The Panel's data are thus robust and reliable, and of significant value for conservation. We also receive information from a number of other sources, some of which provide data not otherwise available easily. These include returns from Schedule 1 licence holders, Raptor Study Group records, counts from RSPB and other nature reserves, and a wide range of different single-species studies (see Acknowledgments). These data must all be matched with those from the recorder network to identify and remove duplicates, allowing the most accurate available figures to be compiled for this report.

Data from earlier years, for any species and/or area, which have not previously been submitted to the Panel are always most welcome and will be added to the archive. Indeed, we have begun a process to try and identify and fill gaps in our historical knowledge, and species totals will be updated as these data are archived progressively.

Coverage

In 2005, coverage improved further and reached record levels, with some data available from all counties and regions. Only four English counties did not supply detailed submissions or copies of local bird reports to the Panel (Cornwall,

Greater London, Northamptonshire and West Midlands). Data were available for all Welsh vice-counties, although for five recording areas (Glamorgan, Gower, Meirionnydd, Montgomery and Radnor) the only information was from the necessarily concise summaries in the Welsh Bird Report (Green *et al.* 2007), which reduces the completeness of the Welsh record for 2005. All areas in Scotland submitted full returns or copies of their local report and full submissions were also received for Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man.

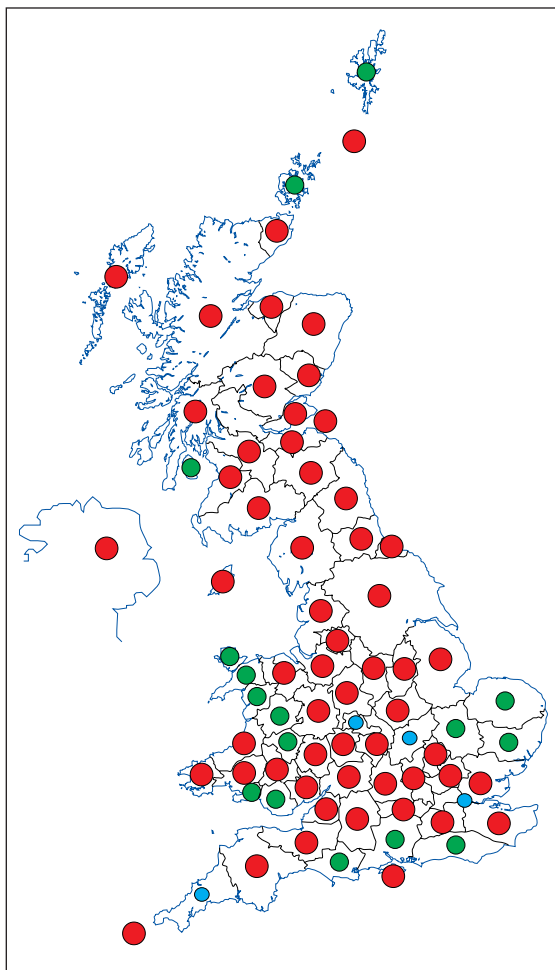


Fig. 1. Data submission to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, 2005. This shows the level of detail provided to the Panel, by recording area. Large (red) dots indicate full submission for all species from county/regional recorder, with supplementary data from other sources where applicable; medium-size (green) dots indicate data extracted from local bird report for all species, with supplementary data from other sources where applicable; small (blue) dots indicate limited species coverage – data extracted from Schedule 1 licence returns, local Raptor Study Group reports or RSPB reserve logs only.

The counties for which there are potential gaps in our knowledge are specified here so that their omission can be taken into account in the analyses of the data presented. A map showing a representation of the coverage in Britain in 2005 is shown in fig. 1.

Data inclusion and Recording Standards

There have been no changes to the acceptance criteria for records since the last report (Holling *et al.* 2007a). It is our policy to follow the opinions of the relevant local recorder, and records which have not been vetted in this way are published only in exceptional circumstances. Although all potential breeding records of species on the Panel's list are welcomed, and will be archived, we will not normally publish records of birds which appear to be passing migrants. Similarly, spring records of wildfowl, such as pairs or males present at a site for less than a week early in the breeding season, and which appear not to indicate a breeding attempt, are excluded from the report.

The Panel has now developed new guidance on recording standards, which we hope will aid collection of the most valuable information, and promote the submission of records. This is available from our website www.rbbp.org.uk, and copies will also be circulated with a future issue of *BB*.

The presentation of species data in this report is similar to previous ones, but with three main changes to the format. Firstly, an attempt has been made to provide a broader context for some species, and European populations and trends have been included. Secondly, summary tables showing statistics for the last ten years are no longer included, but summary totals for all species will be added to our website in due course. Lastly, the treatment of species which do not feature regularly in these reports, but for which records were received for the reporting year, has changed. If there was no apparent breeding attempt, these records are now summarised in an appendix.

Changes to the RBBP list

In 2005, the list of species considered remained unchanged. However, in a recent review, some changes were identified which will take effect from 2006 (see *Brit. Birds* 100: 760–761). Three species were added to the RBBP list (Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* and Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*) and

will feature for the first time in the 2006 report. The continued increase in numbers of Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* has resulted in its move to the 'less scarce' species category, whereby full site details are requested only for recording areas that have fewer than ten pairs; otherwise, just an overall total should be submitted for that area. Further information on the rationale behind these changes is available on our website, which also specifies the level of detail requested for each species.

At the same time, four species were removed from the Panel's list: Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus* and Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*. These species were added to the RBBP's list in 1996, together with all other species on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Environmental Protection Act 1990). Since then, however, data submitted to the Panel have not generated robust statistics on their status in the UK. Common Kingfisher and Common Crossbill are both relatively common and widespread and are monitored by the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). The former is also monitored adequately by the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS) and there is now a specific Barn Owl Monitoring Programme run by the BTO. There is no regular monitoring programme for Crested Tit, but very few Schedule 1 forms are submitted and the two county recorders who have this species in their areas receive little data which allow us to make any assessment of population size or even distribution.

Conservation uses of RBBP data

It is our policy to make data available for relevant conservation uses, with appropriate controls to ensure the safety of the birds and their breeding sites. Site-specific information is used by JNCC and the country conservation agencies, and national datasets by RSPB for survey planning. In the last 12 months, RBBP data have been used in the following projects: a complete inventory of breeding Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* and Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* records by RSPB; analysis of Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* records by BTO (to support the 2006 survey of that species); work on conservation of breeding Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* in northern

England. In addition, Panel data were used extensively in the annual publication *The State of the UK's Birds* (e.g. Eaton *et al.* 2006), for conservation plans for Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* and Common Crane *Grus grus* and in a review of breeding Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*.

The effect of climatic change on the populations of rare breeding birds

The implications of climate change for conservation are enormous, and changes in the distributions of some bird species are already apparent. Huntley *et al.* (2007) used climate models to predict the potential future distributions of European birds; they suggested that, without vigorous and immediate action to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, the future ranges of European bird species will, on average, shift by nearly 550 km to the northeast by the end of this century and will reduce in size by a fifth. Briefly, for species considered by the Panel, some may become more numerous in Britain and others may be lost from our breeding avifauna. Among those which may become more numerous, many already breed in the UK, including Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Montagu's Harrier, Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*, Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, Dartford Warbler, Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* and Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*. Former or occasional breeders which may return or colonise are Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*, Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and European Serin *Serinus serinus*. And there may be new colonists from the south: perhaps Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*, Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*, Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* and Ortolan Bunting *E. hortulana*.

However, there is a strong possibility that some species may suffer reduced distributions in the UK or be lost as breeding species: Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, Red-necked Phalarope, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, Redwing *T. iliacus*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Scottish

Crossbill *Loxia scotica* and Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*. Some of these are already scarce or only occasional breeders. Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* is expected to occur more to the north and west of its current distribution, vacating some southern sites. The Scottish race of Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus scoticus* may be lost from Scotland but southern England may be colonised by the continental race *mitratus*, which breeds in northern France. The theoretical ability of species to change distributions pre-supposes the availability of suitable habitat – a factor which is a major constraint in heavily fragmented European landscapes.

RBBP data were used extensively in a recent statistical analysis (Green *et al.* in press) which examined the population trends of 42 rare breeding bird species, in the period 1980–2004, in relation to changes in climatic suitability simulated using the same climatic envelope models as Huntley *et al.* (2007). This demonstrated that the information on population trends for rare breeding birds is consistent with independent information derived from climatic modelling studies.

Bird Atlas 2007–11

The breeding season of 2008 is the first to be covered by the current BTO/BirdWatch Ireland/SOC Bird Atlas project, which will map the distribution and relative abundance of birds in Britain & Ireland, in both summer and winter, from November 2007 to July 2011. Both previous breeding atlases have greatly enhanced our knowledge of the distribution and numbers of birds in these islands and atlas fieldwork presents an excellent opportunity to find new locations for rare breeders. We shall be working closely with the BTO to ensure that all data collected are included in our database, to enable the most accurate status to be determined for each species. In particular, we shall also be involved closely in the production of the maps for RBBP species so that the most accurate data available are employed, presented at the most appropriate scale in relation to the sensitivities of the species concerned. Mark Holling and David Stroud are members of the Atlas Working Group and Simon Gillings of the BTO will attend our meetings for the duration of the Atlas to ensure full collaboration between these recording projects.

Review of the year 2005

January was the mildest since 1990 and continued the trend of mild winters, although it was followed by a colder spell, from mid February to mid March. There were also unseasonably cold spells in a changeable May and during the first half of June, leading to some nest failures owing to food shortages or chilling of young. However, midsummer saw a more extended warm spell, which may have helped some late-nesting species.

This report includes details of 79 species breeding or showing indications of breeding in 2005, with a further seven species noted in Appendix 1.

The number of Gadwalls *Anas strepera* reported to the Panel was similar to the total for 2004, and again indicates that this species is now more abundant than previously thought. In comparison, Pintails *A. acuta* continued to occur only in low numbers, although breeding sites were widely distributed, from Kent to Orkney and Gwent to Argyll.

Having added Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* to the Panel's list with effect from 2003, it is pleasing to provide more information than previously and to report the hint of a population recovery. Numbers of Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix* were the third-highest on record, perhaps boosted by the settled warm conditions in late June and July. Numbers of Slavonian Grebes, although typical for the last five years, dropped from the 51 confirmed pairs in 2004 and, as many occupied sites failed to raise any young, concern is expressed over the longer-term fortunes of this species. Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* also declined, with birds vacating some areas occupied recently and no confirmed breeding in Scotland.

There was a disappointing drop in the number of Eurasian Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* after the bumper year of 2004, with the greatest loss in the Norfolk Broads, where water levels were low after a relatively dry winter. It is no longer surprising to report another record number of nesting Little Egrets, though there is little indication of a significant expansion of their range to the north and west. Another year passed with no more than summering by Eurasian Spoonbills, despite the increasing numbers breeding in the near continent.

Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* were the subject of a national survey in 2005 and we

report the highest-ever total of breeding females since the Panel was established in 1973 (and indeed long before then), with the main concentrations in eastern England. Analysis of Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* records shows an overall increase in numbers in the last 20 years to reach a total similar to that for Marsh Harrier, although the elusive nature of this species suggests that its population may actually be higher.

A breeding attempt by Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* in 2005 was the first for 12 years, but it was not clear whether eggs were laid. Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* again bred in Wales, and also in two inland counties of England. Many of our northerly breeding waders, including Purple Sandpiper, Ruff and Wood Sandpiper, experienced a poor year and lack confirmed breeding records, and 2005 was the second successive year with no Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* recorded at former breeding sites. There was also no repeat of the remarkable events in 2004 when two pairs of Pectoral Sandpipers *C. melanotos* attempted to breed. The total of 45 breeding male Red-necked Phalaropes, though, is one of the highest reported and breeding Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* had doubled in number since 2003.

This is the last report to feature Barn Owl and Common Kingfisher and analysis of the records received in the last ten years shows that both species increased. Perhaps the most exciting event of the year was the attempt by a pair of European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* to nest in Herefordshire; sadly, this ended in failure when the young were predated before fledging.

Improved reporting from some urban areas of England boosted the numbers of Black Redstarts recorded. Both Fieldfares and Redwings are expected to decline in the UK if climate change predictions are correct, and 2005 was a poor year for both. Conversely, it is anticipated that Cetti's Warbler will increase in numbers and spread north, and the indications are that this is happening already, the species benefiting from the long run of mild winters, with only brief periods of freezing conditions, in southern and western Britain. Similar range expansion is occurring by Dartford Warblers, which bred in Staffordshire for the first time in over 100 years. Bearded Tit numbers are close to record levels too. After reporting in 2004 the first successful

breeding for Red-backed Shrike since 1999, two pairs bred in 2005.

Terminology

The recording areas used in this report are the same as in previous reports (see Holling *et al.* 2007a and www.rbbp.org.uk). The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (www.ebcc.info). Within tables, the abbreviations 'Confirmed pairs' and 'Possible/probable pairs' mean, respectively, 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding' and 'Number of pairs possibly

or probably breeding'. Unless otherwise stated, the identity of the birds has been confirmed; it is only breeding *status* which is possible/probable/confirmed. Probable breeding is as defined by EBCC (e.g. a pair holding territory), and does not mean that a breeding attempt 'probably' (i.e. almost certainly) took place.

Within each species account, numbers given in the format '1-4 pairs' indicate (in this case) one proven breeding pair and a possible maximum total of four breeding pairs. In the tables, zeroes mean that there were no birds recorded in that area in that year, whereas a rule (-) indicates that no data were received.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Five sites: 4-5 pairs. This is a similar picture to that of recent years, although there were no reports of breeding in the Outer Hebrides in 2005 and only one nesting pair in Northern Ireland. Shetland remains the key location, with three pairs again breeding, but producing only four young compared with 13 in 2003 and 14 in 2004. Apparently wild, summering birds were observed in potential breeding areas in Argyll, Caithness, North-east Scotland, Orkney and elsewhere, although it is not possible to be certain of the provenance of all of these.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one pair probably bred. In the area where breeding has occurred in the past, a pair was seen with two immatures, but it is not known where they were hatched.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland Three sites: three pairs bred. A pair at the site used since 1987 reared four young, but although young were hatched at the other sites, they did not fledge.

Northern Ireland

Co. Londonderry One site: one pair fledged five young.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

83 sites: 52-168 pairs. The number of pairs reported has risen in recent years but is still well short of the estimated UK population of 300-500 breeding pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Recorders are strongly encouraged to ensure that waters that have held breeding pairs in the past are visited regularly. Where possible, pairs are included here only where there is some indication of birds being faithful to a site during the breeding season. However, Eurasian Wigeon has a tendency to over-summer without any other evidence of breeding and this is particularly evident in southern England and Wales, where only five pairs were proved to breed, in Essex, Kent and Suffolk.

England, SW

Somerset One site: one pair probably bred.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: one pair possibly bred. **Essex** One site: three pairs bred. **Hertfordshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Kent** Five sites: one pair bred, one pair probably bred and five pairs possibly bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Lincolnshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Norfolk** Four sites: 16 pairs probably bred. **Suffolk** One site: one pair bred. A pair with a large young bird seen in early July constitutes the first confirmed breeding record for the county since 1990.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one pair possibly bred. **Nottinghamshire** Three sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred.

England, N

Co. Durham Ten sites: ten pairs bred at seven sites and single pairs probably bred at three other sites. **Northumberland** Three sites: five pairs bred, and a total of 18 young counted. **Yorkshire** Three sites: seven pairs bred and four pairs possibly bred.

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Wales

Anglesey One site: one pair probably bred. **Ceredigion** One site: one pair probably bred. **Meirionnydd** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, S

Borders Three sites: three pairs probably bred. **Clyde** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Dumfries & Galloway** Three sites: three pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Two sites: three pairs bred. **Perth & Kinross** Five sites: nine pairs probably bred and five pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Four sites: three pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Caithness** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Highland Seven sites: 39 pairs probably bred. **Orkney** Nine sites: 18 pairs bred. **Outer Hebrides** Six sites: two pairs bred, three pairs probably bred and three pairs possibly bred. **Shetland** Two sites: two pairs bred; a total of ten young were recorded in two broods.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

1,516 pairs. This total is the sum of all confirmed, probable and possible breeding pairs reported to the Panel and is very similar to the total of 1,520 in 2004. This year, however, the distribution is somewhat different, with more in northern England and Wales and fewer in southwest England and mid Scotland. There were no breeding records from Northern Ireland in 2005. It is unclear at this stage whether this variation is due to reporting artefacts. Nevertheless, the grand total in each year since 2001 has been considerably higher than the most recent estimate of the British population of 770 pairs in 1988–1991 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). A total of 669 pairs of Gadwall were proved breeding in 2005, so this estimate requires reviewing.

Gadwall		Warwickshire	30
	Total	West Midlands	6
England, SW	195	Worcestershire	4
Avon	6	England, N	267
Devon	3	Cheshire & Wirral	32
Dorset	35	Cleveland	11
Gloucestershire	4	Cumbria	5
Hampshire	25	Co. Durham	4
Isles of Scilly	1	Greater Manchester	8
Somerset	114	Lancashire & N Merseyside	32
Wiltshire	7	Northumberland	17
England, SE	318	Yorkshire	158
Bedfordshire	4	Wales	57
Berkshire	19	Anglesey	37
Buckinghamshire	7	Caernarfon	3
Essex	29	Carmarthen	14
Greater London	2	Glamorgan	1
Hertfordshire	116	Gwent	2
Kent	118	Scotland, S	21
Oxfordshire	16	Borders	5
Surrey	5	Clyde	15
Sussex	2	Dumfries & Galloway	1
England, E	425	Scotland, Mid	86
Cambridgeshire	123	Angus & Dundee	5
Lincolnshire	19	Fife	3
Norfolk	176	North-east Scotland	2
Suffolk	107	Perth & Kinross	74
England, C	114	Upper Forth	2
Derbyshire	27	Scotland, N & W	33
Herefordshire	2	Argyll	2
Leicestershire & Rutland	18	Caithness	6
Nottinghamshire	18	Highland	1
Shropshire	2	Orkney	20
Staffordshire	7	Outer Hebrides	4

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Pintail *Anas acuta*

15 sites: 8–21 pairs. Although this is a typical showing for recent years, fig. 2 confirms a decline in both the number of sites holding Pintails and the number of pairs reported since the early 1990s. The peak in 1994 can be attributed to a comprehensive survey of Orkney in that year, but the trend since then is markedly downwards. The lower numbers in the 1970s occurred when the Panel was still becoming established.

England, SE

Essex One site: one pair bred. **Kent** One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair possibly bred, present until mid May only. **Lincolnshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Norfolk** Two sites: five pairs probably bred.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one pair bred, and was seen with seven young on 11th June; this is the first breeding in the county since 1998.

Wales

Gwent One site: one pair possibly bred: present in May and June but no further evidence.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Four sites: one pair bred and three pairs probably bred. **Orkney** Two sites: five pairs bred.

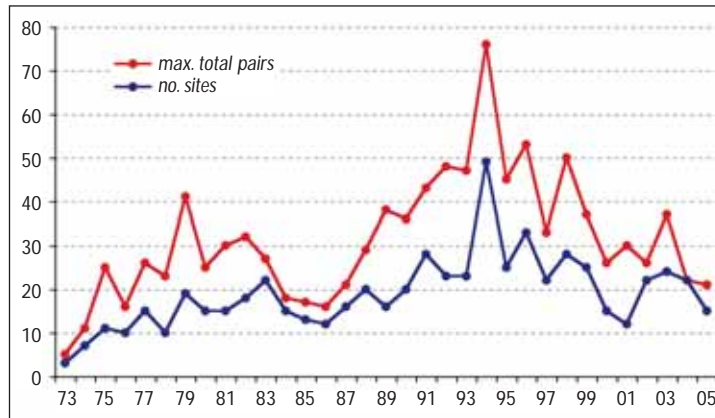


Fig. 2. Number of breeding Pintails *Anas acuta* in the UK, 1973–2005 (max. total pairs), and the number of sites where they were recorded.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

45 sites: 10–61 pairs. Garganeys are summer visitors to the UK and pairs have a habit of turning up in a wide variety of damp habitats in early spring throughout the country. Many stay only briefly and are excluded from the figures presented here. Proof of breeding is difficult to assess unless broods are seen and, despite the widespread occurrence of lingering pairs (20 counties), such proof was evident from only six English counties in 2005.

England, SW

Avon One site: one pair probably bred. **Devon** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Dorset** Two sites: two pairs probably bred. **Somerset** Three sites: one pair bred, two pairs probably bred and four pairs possibly bred.

England, SE

Kent Eight sites: four pairs probably bred and seven pairs possibly bred. **Oxfordshire** One site: one pair probably bred. **Sussex** Two sites: one pair bred and two pairs probably bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: four pairs probably bred. **Lincolnshire** Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. **Norfolk** Eight sites: two pairs bred, one pair probably bred and five pairs possibly bred. **Suffolk** Three sites: four pairs probably bred.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One site: one pair bred. **Warwickshire** One site: one pair probably bred.

England, N

Cleveland One site: one pair bred. **Northumberland** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Yorkshire** Four sites: four pairs bred, producing a total of 22 young, and four pairs probably bred.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one pair probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two sites: two pairs probably bred. **Orkney** One site: one pair probably bred.

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Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

298–540 pairs. The maximum total number of pairs in 2005 exceeded the estimate of 472 pairs in the UK (Baker *et al.* 2006), which was based on RBBP totals between 1998 and 2002. Fig. 3 shows that, after a period of sustained increase from the mid 1980s to a peak of 638 pairs in 1994, the population seems to have stabilised at a lower level of around 500 pairs.

Common Pochard			
	Total		
England, SW	44	England, N	85
Avon	1	Cheshire & Wirral	22
Dorset	9	Cleveland	10
Gloucestershire	1	Greater Manchester	1
Hampshire	7	Lancashire & N Merseyside	12
Somerset	26	Northumberland	8
England, SE	279	Yorkshire	32
Bedfordshire	1	Wales	32
Buckinghamshire	0	Anglesey	16
Essex	91	Brecon	1
Hertfordshire	23	Caernarfon	2
Kent	162	Carmarthen	13
Surrey	2	Scotland, S	5
England, E	76	Borders	5
Cambridgeshire	10	Scotland, Mid	8
Lincolnshire	7	Perth & Kinross	6
Norfolk	40	Upper Forth	2
Suffolk	19	Scotland, N & W	3
England, C	7	Orkney	3
Leicestershire & Rutland	1	Northern Ireland	1
Nottinghamshire	2	Co. Antrim	1



Fig. 3. Number of pairs of Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* in the UK, 1986–2005.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

One site: 0–1 pairs. The last confirmed breeding of this species was in Northern Ireland in 1999. In addition to the single pair in Argyll, a male summered in Leicestershire & Rutland.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair was present during the breeding season but did not breed.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Four sites: 12–21 pairs. The numbers reported were again low, with the majority, and the only confirmed breeding, in the Flow Country of northern Scotland. Indications from the detailed survey conducted in 2007 are that the data presented here represent less than half of the breeding population in Scotland.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: five pairs present on 10th May. Two former sites in the region were checked on the same date but no birds were present.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Highland** Two sites: 12 pairs bred, two pairs probably bred, and six young were counted.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

145–149 pairs bred in three regions of Scotland, and summering birds were present in at least six other areas of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These figures are similar to those of recent years. Details received from the Goldeneye Study Group indicate that a minimum of 130 females laid eggs in Badenoch and Strathspey (Highland), all in nestboxes. Of these, 51 clutches were incubated; from 486 eggs laid, 311 young hatched from 38 nests, the mean brood size being 8.2 young (range 2–12). These figures are similar to the equivalents in 2003 and 2004.

England, SE

Bedfordshire A single male apparently paired with a female Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: a pair summered as in 2004. **Leicestershire & Rutland** A female summered.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland 15 sites: at least 13 pairs bred at 11 sites in mid Deeside, and another four pairs possibly bred at four other sites. **Perth & Kinross** One site: two pairs nested in boxes but failed.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One extensive site: in a nestbox study, 87 clutches were laid and the number of breeding females was estimated at 130. Note that up to two-thirds of Goldeneye nests contain eggs laid by more than one female (per Goldeneye Study Group) so the actual number of nesting females cannot be established accurately.

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

85 leks visited, and a total of 234 males counted. All known lek sites across Scotland are checked at dawn during April, and although the total is not an accurate measure of the population, this figure does enable trends to be monitored. Eaton *et al.* (2007a) considered the population to number 1,980 individuals in winter 2003/04.

Comparable data are now available for 2003 and 2004 when, respectively, 75 and 80 leks were counted and 184 and 222 males were recorded. Estimates for the mean number of males attending each lek are 2.45 for 2003, 2.78 for 2004 and 2.75 for 2005. This apparent increase may be due to the discovery of new, larger leks but might represent a small population increase since 2003.

Scotland, S

Clyde One lek: one male.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn 11 leks: 18 males. **North-east Scotland** 20 leks: 48 males. **Perth & Kinross** Six leks: 8 males.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 47 leks: 159 males.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

6–842 pairs. Confirmed breeding was established in just five recording areas: Wiltshire, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Lothian (two sites) and North-east Scotland. The bulk of records involved territorial males giving their characteristic 'song'. Numbers in Wiltshire were the highest since 1998 and, nationally, the total of 842 territorial males is the third highest since 1986. The 1,655 territorial males recorded in 1989 remains exceptional.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Common Quail			
	Total		
England, SW	163	Cumbria	4
Avon	5	Co. Durham	13
Dorset	25	Lancashire & N Merseyside	25
Gloucestershire	22	Northumberland	39
Hampshire	23	Yorkshire	73
Somerset	16	Wales	30
Wiltshire	72	Anglesey	6
England, SE	91	Caernarfon	1
Bedfordshire	5	Ceredigion	1
Berkshire	11	Denbigh & Flint	8
Buckinghamshire	6	Gwent	2
Essex	11	Meirionnydd	7
Hertfordshire	4	Pembroke	5
Kent	13	Scotland, S	46
Oxfordshire	13	Borders	26
Sussex	28	Clyde	1
England, E	168	Dumfries & Galloway	9
Cambridgeshire	23	Lothian	10
Lincolnshire	64	Scotland, Mid	65
Norfolk	62	Angus & Dundee	7
Suffolk	19	Fife	11
England, C	75	Moray & Nairn	6
Derbyshire	22	North-east Scotland	34
Herefordshire	1	Perth & Kinross	5
Leicestershire & Rutland	7	Upper Forth	2
Nottinghamshire	13	Scotland, N & W	20
Shropshire	14	Argyll	9
Warwickshire	9	Highland	1
Worcestershire	9	Outer Hebrides	2
England, N	182	Shetland	8
Cheshire & Wirral	15	Northern Ireland	2
Cleveland	13	Co. Antrim	1
		Co. Armagh	1

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Gibbons *et al.* (1997) estimated the Scottish population of Red-throated Divers in 1994 at 935 breeding pairs, with 46% in Shetland, 11% in Orkney and 43% elsewhere. As in recent years, the Panel received casual data for around 200 pairs, but only records away from the main nesting areas in north and west Scotland are listed here, while the results of monitoring studies are summarised for the main range.

In the Shetland study area, 2005 was the most productive season for ten years. Despite a late start to the season, the number of successful pairs and broods of two was relatively high and mortality of large chicks was low. On Hoy, Orkney, breeding success was lower than in 2004, which was an exceptional year, and comparable with the long-term average.

A national survey of both Red-throated and Black-throated Divers *G. arctica* was undertaken in 2006 and the results will be included in the Panel's report for 2006.

Scotland, S

Clyde Two sites but only one possible breeding pair involved, moving between the two. **Clyde Islands** Bred on Arran.

Scotland, Mid

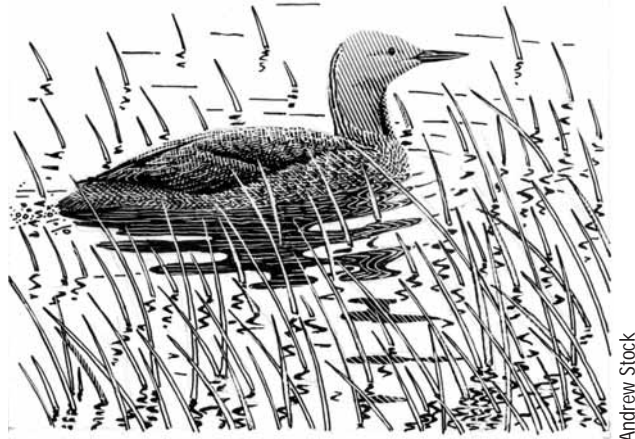
Moray & Nairn One site: one pair bred but the one chick was predated. **North-east Scotland** One site: one pair probably bred. **Perth & Kinross** One site: one pair, present in early June, but no evidence of breeding.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll 13 pairs at 12 monitored sites; four young fledged from nine pairs for which breeding was confirmed. **Caithness** At one monitored site, five pairs fledged five young. **Highland** 24 pairs at 21 monitored sites, 13 young fledged from 16 pairs for which breeding was confirmed. **Orkney** On Hoy, a full survey located 57 pairs: 33 pairs

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

fledged 41 young (0.72 young per occupied site). On Birsay Moors, 16 pairs raised 12 chicks (0.75 young per occupied site). On Rousay, five pairs raised six chicks (1.20 young per occupied site). Elsewhere in Orkney, at least 36 additional pairs bred. **Outer Hebrides** A limited survey of part of North Uist found eight breeding pairs, which fledged seven young. Of five pairs monitored on Lewis & Harris, three were successful, raising four young. **Shetland** Details for four monitored areas are available: 24 pairs on Fetlar (productivity 0.54 young per monitored pair), nine pairs on Foula (0.78), nine pairs at Hermaness (0.89) and ten pairs at Lumbister (0.80).

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, Sutherland.**Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica***

89–129 pairs. Monitoring effort was high in 2005 but occupation and productivity were poor. Parts of the range are not being regularly monitored, however.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one pair fledged one young. **Clyde** One site: one pair nested but failed owing to flooding.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one pair probably bred (at a raft site). **Perth & Kinross** Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. **Upper Forth** One site: one pair nested but was not successful.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Six pairs bred and two pairs probably bred at sites on the mainland. **Caithness & Highland** 153 mainland sites were checked by RSPB. Occupancy was poor, with just 106 apparently occupied territories (AOT) and 73 confirmed breeding pairs. Overall, 29 young fledged (0.27 young per AOT) and, as usual, raft-nesting pairs fared better than those using natural sites. Pairs on rafts fledged 0.58 young per AOT, while pairs at natural sites raised 0.25 young per AOT. Productivity was especially poor at natural sites in Caithness and Sutherland, where 29 pairs fledged just two chicks. **Outer Hebrides** Data were received on nine pairs: seven pairs fledged seven young and two pairs possibly bred.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

One site: one single in summer. A single bird was present on a loch in mid Scotland from 7th May to 19th June, while an adult with a fully grown juvenile was recorded at the same site on 20th–21st August, although there was no suggestion of local breeding. Red-necked Grebes arrive in the Firth of Forth to moult from mid August onwards, and these were probably returning birds, although records of adults with young on fresh water are unusual.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

17 sites: 44–45 pairs. In Scotland, RSPB and other volunteers monitored all known sites with a history of occupation during the last 20 years. Forty-four pairs were located, which reared 23 young. Productivity of 0.53 young per territorial pair is in line with the long-term average of 0.58, and higher than the figure of 0.47 young for 2004. However, these are average figures and, of the 16 sites occupied, only seven produced young, which is a cause for concern. In addition, a pair attempted to breed in northern England, outside the traditional range, but was not successful.

England, N

One site: one pair attempted to breed. Up to four birds were present from 2004. In May 2005 a pair was seen nest-building and engaged in territorial display but the nest was taken over by Common Coots *Fulica atra*. The grebes were last seen on 22nd May.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

16 sites: (1) Loch Ruthven: 19 pairs reared 12 young, five singles also present. (2)–(16) 25 pairs reared 11 young. A further two sites held just single birds. In addition, in Orkney, a single bird was present throughout June and was seen again in mid August, while a second bird stayed at another location for 11 days.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

21 sites: 38–53 pairs. There were no breeding records in 2005 from Gloucestershire and Hampshire, where the species bred in 2004, or from Angus & Dundee, Cleveland, Essex and Perth & Kinross, where birds were reported at breeding sites in 2004. Overall numbers are down; there were 44 confirmed breeding pairs in both 2003 and 2004 and just 38 in 2005, the lowest figure since 1997. Northern England continues to hold the core of the population (Martin & Smith 2007). Black-necked Grebes require undisturbed waters and visits to sites should be for monitoring purposes only.

England, SE

Berkshire One site: one pair possibly bred, performing courtship display in May. **Hertfordshire** Two sites: (1) six pairs fledged 14 young; (2) one pair possibly bred, as display noted in April, but did not stay. **Kent** One site: two pairs bred, fledging three young.

England, E

Lincolnshire Two sites: (1) one pair fledged two young and one pair probably bred; (2) two pairs bred.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland One site: one pair possibly bred, display noted in April but no further records. In addition, up to five other birds at three other locations, but none lingered. **Nottinghamshire** Two sites: (1) one pair fledged one young; (2) one pair possibly bred. **Staffordshire** One site: one pair fledged two young despite continued disturbance at this unprotected site.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: 14 pairs fledged 14 young. **Co. Durham** Two sites: (1) one pair fledged two young; (2) one pair laid a clutch of three but no young seen. **Greater Manchester** One site: one pair fledged two young and four pairs possibly bred. **Northumberland** Three sites: (1) five pairs fledged nine young; (2) two pairs fledged seven young; (3) two pairs possibly bred, present early in season only. **Yorkshire** One site: one pair hatched two young (one fledged) and one pair possibly bred. In addition, up to 11 birds at a third site early in the season, but they did not breed.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: one pair possibly bred. Up to three adults present but the lack of emergent vegetation at this former breeding site prevented breeding.

Scotland, Mid

Fife One site: one pair present but did not breed. **North-east Scotland** One site: one or two birds present in May and June.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

30 sites: 46–55 booming males and 27–28 breeding attempts.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one booming male. **Somerset** One booming male, for a short period only.

England, SE

Kent Although birds were present at two sites in the breeding season, booming was heard early in the spring and, thereafter, on single dates only at each site. These records provide insufficient evidence to be included in the totals of confirmed booming males and represent a reduction from a minimum of three boomers in 2004.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Four sites: four booming males. **Lincolnshire** Four sites: 6–8 booming males. **Norfolk North Norfolk coast** Three sites: three booming males; one confirmed nest. **Norfolk Broads** Eight sites: eight booming males; six confirmed nests and one pair probably bred. **Suffolk** Six sites: 20–24 booming males; 17 confirmed nests.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: one booming male and two confirmed nests. **Yorkshire** Three sites: 3–4 booming males; one confirmed nest.

Wales

One booming male, for a short period only.

Simon Wotton, of the RSPB, has commented as follows: 'There was a disappointing drop in the number of confirmed booming Bitterns in 2005, from 55 in 2004 to 46 this year. The number of sites with confirmed booming declined only slightly, from 30 to 28 sites.'

'There was a large decline in the number of booming males in the Norfolk Broads, down from 17 in 2004 to eight in 2005. The main potential reason for this decline is that water levels at a number of sites were much lower than in previous years, probably due to a relatively dry winter, but it should also be noted that a very cold spell of weather in late February and early March may have curtailed booming

activity. The reduction in activity in southeast England is also likely to have been for the same reasons.

More encouraging was that numbers again increased on the Suffolk coast, from 19 to 20 boomers, including 10 at Minsmere. Numbers of booming males in the Cambridgeshire Fens increased from two to four, at four different sites, one of which was a new site. One new site was occupied on the Humber, and here numbers were stable compared with 2004.

There was a further decline in confirmed nesting attempts this year, from 33 in 2004 to 28 in 2005. Nesting attempts declined on the Humber, but were stable elsewhere. The main nesting site was again at Minsmere. One of the two nests at Leighton Moss was close to a hide and the female could be seen feeding the young regularly. It is suspected that all four young from this nest successfully fledged.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

52 sites: 391–433 pairs. The number of sites with breeding Little Egrets reached a new peak, up from 36 in 2004, and the number of pairs continues to increase, even though no data were available from a site in Essex where over 50 pairs bred in 2004. There were more than twice as many breeding pairs in 2005 as in 2003! However, colonies remain concentrated in south and east England, and some former sites in Wales and northern England were unoccupied in 2005. A paper on the remarkable colonisation of Britain by Little Egrets, using Panel data, is currently in preparation for *BB*.

England, SW

Avon No breeding but several present in early summer. **Cornwall** No data received but nested at four sites in 2004. **Devon** Four sites: 19 pairs bred. **Dorset** Five sites: 69 pairs bred. **Gloucestershire** One site: six pairs bred. **Hampshire** At least two sites: 50 pairs bred. **Somerset** Six sites: 24 pairs bred, two pairs possibly bred. **Wiltshire** One site: 12 pairs bred.

England, SE

Buckinghamshire One site: two pairs bred. **Essex** Three sites: at least 14 pairs bred but, owing to access restrictions, no data were received from the main site, which held 51 pairs in 2004. **Hertfordshire** Recorded at two sites during spring, but no evidence of breeding. **Kent** Two sites: 70 pairs bred. **Sussex** Six sites: 19 pairs bred, one pair probably bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: an estimated 23 pairs probably bred. **Lincolnshire** Seven sites: 13 pairs possibly bred. **Norfolk** Three sites: 63 pairs bred. **Suffolk** Four sites: 26 pairs bred.

England, C

One site: a pair recorded copulating in late May did not nest.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: four pairs bred. **Cleveland** A juvenile begging from an adult was noted but no nesting was recorded.

Wales

Anglesey Juveniles seen in late July hint at local breeding but no nests found. **Ceredigion** One site: three pairs bred. **Gower** One site: at least five, possibly seven pairs, bred and at least nine young were reared. This constitutes the first recorded breeding for Gower. **Gwent** One site: five pairs bred.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Seven sites: at least 19 summering birds. The promise of another breeding attempt remains but there was no further progress beyond that reported for 2003 and 2004. The population in The Netherlands was 1,890 pairs (in 29 colonies) in 2007 (Triplet *et al.* in press), and there are also colonies in Belgium, Denmark, France and Germany. The Netherlands is the most likely source of the increasing numbers of summering birds in southern Britain: of the 102 foreign-ringed Spoonbills which have been seen in Britain, 101 were Dutch-ringed birds (Coiffait *et al.* 2008). The East Atlantic flyway population of Spoonbill, which also includes colonies in Morocco, Portugal and Spain, is estimated to be 11,300 individuals (Wetlands International 2006).

England, SE

Kent One site: one bird present but did not arrive until late June, staying until August.

England, E

Norfolk Two sites: 2–5 birds summered. **Suffolk** Three sites: up to 13 birds summered.

Wales

Gwent One site: three immatures summered.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005



Richard Allen

Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* over the Forest of Dean.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

18–43 pairs; a minimum of 32 young fledged. The situation in 2005 was similar to that in recent years. The majority of Honey-buzzards are still reported from southern England, yet both Scotland and Wales held six territories each. Nesting pairs in remote areas are difficult to monitor and it seems likely that some pairs are nesting undetected in parts of Britain.

England

31 territories occupied, 14 pairs raised a minimum of 25 young.

Wales

Six territories occupied, four pairs raised a minimum of seven young.

Scotland

Six territories occupied but no further indication of breeding.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

A minimum of 588–705 pairs, but a total of 900–970 breeding pairs is estimated. Not all sites in Wales and southern England can now be monitored annually. The data presented here are based largely on the figures collated by the Welsh Kite Trust (for Wales), and the monitoring schemes in place for the re-established populations in England and Scotland. In addition, some possible breeding pairs of which the Panel has been notified are included. For the first time, we are able to present minimum totals by county/recording area rather than by area of the country based on Red Kite release areas. The

Welsh Kite Trust area (recording areas)	No. confirmed breeding pairs	Min. no. young fledged
Wales & Welsh borders (Wales, Herefordshire, Shropshire)	306	316
Southern England (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire, Sussex)	119	152
Wiltshire	2	4
East Midlands (Cambridgeshire, Leicestershire & Rutland, Northamptonshire)	52	99
Northern Kites (Co. Durham)	0	0
Yorkshire	33	52
North Scotland (Highland)	39	83
Central Scotland (Perth & Kinross, Upper Forth)	25	28
Dumfries & Galloway	12	18
TOTAL	588	754

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

table summarises the position documented by the Welsh Kite Trust www.welshkitetrust.org. The number of young fledged across the UK exceeded 754 in 2005. In the county summaries below, the number of breeding pairs stated is the total number of pairs attempting to breed, not the number of successful pairs (those which fledged young). The European population of Red Kite is less than 25,000 pairs (BirdLife International 2004), and large declines have been noted in most of western Europe, so the increasing British population is becoming more significant.

England A minimum of 209–242 pairs bred, but kite workers in southern England believe the population there to be about 300 breeding pairs, which would mean an English population of over 385 pairs. The following data include the breakdown by county and the minimum totals by breeding category. Note that 37 of the 119 pairs in southern England could not be assigned to county and are not included below. The breeding attempts in Herefordshire and Shropshire are believed to relate to birds from the burgeoning Welsh population spilling over the border into England rather than from the release schemes.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One pair possibly bred. **Hampshire** One pair fledged at least two young, and one pair probably bred. **Wiltshire** Two pairs fledged four young, three pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

England, SE

Berkshire Three pairs fledged four young and one pair possibly bred. **Buckinghamshire** At least 50 pairs fledged 103 young. **Hertfordshire** One pair fledged two young, two pairs probably bred and six pairs possibly bred. **Oxfordshire** At least 26 pairs fledged 49 young. **Sussex** One pair fledged three young.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two pairs fledged five young and one pair possibly bred. **Lincolnshire** One pair possibly bred and single birds were present at a further seven sites during the breeding season. **Northamptonshire** 48 pairs fledged 90 young, and three pairs probably bred.

England, C

Herefordshire One pair fledged two young. **Leicestershire & Rutland** Two pairs fledged four young, one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Shropshire** Two pairs nested but both failed, and one pair possibly bred.

England, N

Co. Durham Two pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. These indications of potential breeding occurred in just the first season after releases began in the Gateshead area. **Yorkshire** 33 pairs fledged 52 young, and seven pairs probably bred.

Wales A minimum of 303–378 pairs bred, but it is estimated that the total population in 2005 lay between 440 and 510 pairs, fledging c. 500 young. The 2005 distribution of known territorial pairs by recording area was **Brecon** 34, **Caernarfon** 1, **Carmarthen** 74, **Ceredigion** 157, **Glamorgan** 1, **Gower** 11, **Meirionnydd** 9, **Montgomery** 27, **Pembroke** 6 and **Radnor** 58.

Scotland 76–85 pairs bred.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway 12 pairs fledged 18 young and two pairs probably bred.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross (Tayside RSG) Eight pairs fledged six young and three pairs probably bred. **Upper Forth (Central Scotland RSG)** 17 pairs fledged 22 young and four pairs probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 39 pairs fledged 83 young.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

33 territorial pairs, of which 28 pairs laid eggs and 17 pairs were successful, fledging 24 young. Breeding now occurs in three Scottish recording areas: Argyll, Highland and Outer Hebrides. The slow increase in numbers continues, with one more territorial pair than in 2004, but the same number of clutches laid. A total of 24 young reared means that 2005 was the second most productive year since the first young from the re-establishment scheme were fledged, in 1985, and the number of successful pairs is the highest over that 21-year period.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

363–429 pairs fledged a minimum of 796 young. There was a national survey of Marsh Harriers in 2005 and a summary of the findings by recording area is given below. Single birds were also recorded in suitable breeding habitat in Somerset, Bedfordshire, Dumfries & Galloway, Argyll and Caithness.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Although these are the highest numbers reported since the Panel was established in 1973, they are but a fraction of the European total, estimated at 93,000–140,000 breeding pairs (BirdLife International 2004).

England, SW

Isles of Scilly One pair bred.

England, SE

Essex 13 pairs fledged a minimum of 23 young and three pairs probably bred. **Hertfordshire** One pair possibly bred. **Kent** 52 pairs fledged a minimum of 92 young, 17 pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Sussex** One pair probably bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire 25 pairs fledged a minimum of 47 young and four pairs probably bred. **Lincolnshire** 91 pairs fledged a minimum of 236 young and two pairs probably bred. **Norfolk** 102 pairs fledged a minimum of 222 young and 22 pairs probably bred. **Suffolk** 55 fledged a minimum of 145 young and nine pairs probably bred.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One pair possibly bred. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Three pairs fledged a minimum of eight young, and one pair possibly bred. **Yorkshire** 14 pairs fledged a minimum of 21 young and two pairs probably bred.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One pair fledged three young. **North-east Scotland** Two pairs bred: one pair fledged three young, the second failed. **Perth & Kinross** Two pairs fledged eight young and one pair probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One pair fledged three young. **Orkney** One pair nested but nest not found and no young seen.

Mark Eaton, organiser of the 2005 survey, has commented: 'The RSPB/Natural England survey of Marsh Harriers ensured complete coverage of the UK breeding population in 2005, for the first time since the last survey, in 1995 (Underhill-Day 1998); the increase on previous years' totals will thus be, at least in part, due to this enhanced surveying and reporting. It is clear, however, that the British Marsh Harrier population continues to increase rapidly, at an average of 8.8% per annum since 1995. This population increase has been achieved mainly within the existing core range in eastern England, with 68% of the population breeding in Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, and a substantial population (reaching notably high densities) in north Kent. The population in Cambridgeshire – the only inland county with breeding Marsh Harriers – is also growing rapidly. Away from this core range, expansion has been slow and it is noticeable that, with the exception of birds around Leighton Moss, it has been along the east coast of Britain. The reasons for the lack of expansion into the west, despite the availability of suitable habitat, are unclear, although remarkably a pair bred on the Isles of Scilly for the first time in 2005.

'Given that just one pair remained in the UK in 1971, at Minsmere, the present population represents a remarkable conservation success. Initial recovery may have been in response to the phasing out and eventual banning of organochlorine pesticides, but has been aided by better species protection and the expansion and improved management of suitable wetland habitat.'



Alan Harris

Male Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

218–412 pairs fledged a minimum of 584 young. Following the national survey of Hen Harriers in 2004 (Sim *et al.* 2007), the number of territories for which the Panel received information returned to its normal level, at around 50% of the estimated population. No confirmed breeding or territorial behaviour was reported from south or east England, but presence was recorded in two counties.

Hen Harrier	Occupied territories	Territories that fledged young	Min. no. young fledged
England, S & E	0	0	0
England, N	16	14	32
Isle of Man	14	–	–
Wales	40	29	86
Scotland			
Dumfries & Galloway	21	11	37
Lothian & Borders	2	1	3
South Strathclyde	12	6	28
Central Scotland	3	3	8
Tayside	30	16	48
North-east Scotland	10	6	16
Argyll & Bute and Arran	111	49	118
Highland (incl. west Moray)	30	18	57
Orkney	72	33	76
Outer Hebrides	51	32	75
Northern Ireland	–	–	–
TOTAL	412	218	584

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Ten sites: 10–13 pairs fledged 17 young. Numbers of Montagu's Harrier remained at a similar low level to those in 2003 and 2004, but fewer young were raised than in either of those years. Nonetheless, 17 young fledged is above the ten-year (1996–2005) annual mean of 13.

England, SW

Five sites: 4–7 pairs. (1) three pairs bred, one pair fledging four young but two other nests being predated when the chicks were small; (2) one pair fledged four young; (3) one pair probably bred; (4)–(5) two pairs possibly bred.

England, SE

One site: one pair fledged four young. Non-breeding birds also recorded in two other counties.

England, E

Four sites: five pairs. (1) two pairs bred, one fledging one chick from a clutch of four, the other (nesting in the same field) failed; (2)–(3) one pair fledged two young from a clutch of four at each site; (4) one pair failed.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

249–424 pairs. After a slow increase until the mid 1990s, followed by a period of relative stability, the number of Goshawks reported in 2005 has increased again. Despite the species reaching a new peak, these figures are still thought to be an underestimate as this is a secretive species that is easily overlooked. A lack of accurate totals for some counties also hinders the compilation of robust figures. Nevertheless, the maximum figure given here now exceeds the UK population estimate of 410 pairs by Baker *et al.* (2006).

England

Reported from 22 counties: 120 pairs confirmed breeding plus 92 other pairs.

Wales

Reported from 13 counties: 82 pairs confirmed breeding plus 44 other pairs.

Scotland

Reported from six Scottish Raptor Study Group areas: 47 pairs confirmed breeding plus 35 other pairs.

Northern Ireland

Four pairs reported but breeding not confirmed.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

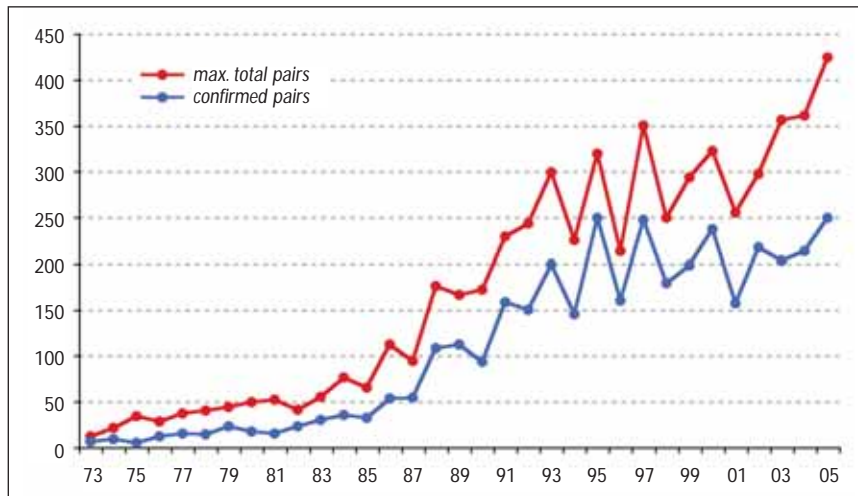


Fig. 4. Breeding Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* in the UK, 1973–2005, showing maximum total and number of confirmed pairs.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Results of Golden Eagle monitoring in Scotland, by Scottish Raptor Study Groups (Etheridge *et al.* 2007), are presented below. In addition, a single male was still present at Haweswater, Cumbria, following the death of the female in 2004. The 2003 national survey estimated the Golden Eagle population in Scotland to be 443 pairs (Eaton *et al.* 2007b).

Golden Eagle						
Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied by a pair	Pairs monitored	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Min. young fledged	Mean no. fledged per monitored nest
264	220	207	151	82	88	0.43

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

161–187 pairs. The population in Scotland appears to be stabilising, especially in Highland, North-east Scotland and Tayside; 158 pairs were known to have laid eggs, with 124 successfully rearing at least one chick. Two pairs nested in England and one in Wales and all three were successful. The more widespread occurrence of summering pairs and individuals hints that the population south of the Scottish border will continue to increase in both numbers and range.

England, E

Northamptonshire One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland Two sites: one pair fledged three young at Rutland Water, and a pair at another site possibly bred. **Nottinghamshire** One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, N

Cumbria Two sites: one pair fledged two young at Bassenthwaite Lake, and a pair at another site possibly bred.

Wales

Meirionnydd One site: one pair fledged two young at Glaslyn.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway Three pairs present: one pair fledged two young. **Lothian & Borders** Five pairs present: four pairs laid and three pairs fledged a total of nine young.

Scotland, Mid

Central Scotland 18 pairs present: 17 pairs laid and 14 pairs fledged 30 young. **North-east Scotland** 17 pairs present: 17 pairs laid and 14 pairs fledged 28 young. **Tayside** 46 pairs present: 38 pairs laid and 32 pairs fledged 59 young.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Scotland, Mid

Argyll Ten pairs present: nine pairs laid and five pairs fledged nine young. **Highland** 81 pairs present: 72 pairs laid and 55 pairs fledged 105 young.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

294–504 pairs. The table below is based on sample monitoring areas only and the figures, especially for England and Wales, are incomplete; county summaries for key areas of Wales and northern England were not available for this report. The number of occupied territories reported is the highest during the ten years that data have been collected, although it represents less than half the most recent UK population estimate (for 1993–94; Rebecca & Bainbridge 1998). The apparent increase in territories in the Outer Hebrides is due to improved monitoring and reporting from that area in 2005. No data were available for Northern Ireland.

Merlin	Territories occupied by pairs	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged
England, SW	1	0	0
England, C	20	15	50
England, N	169	112	203
Wales	24	11	17
Scotland			
Dumfries & Galloway	6	5	15
Lothian & Borders	30	15	59
South Strathclyde	16	7	25
North-east Scotland	45	29	87
Tayside	53	27	75
Argyll	7	3	7
Highland	47	27	91
Orkney	20	13	48
Outer Hebrides	57	23	63
Shetland	9	7	30
Northern Ireland	–	–	–
TOTAL	504	294	770

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

265–870 pairs. The figures here represent only a sample of the population, thought to be 2,200 pairs (Clements 2001). Results of the fieldwork for Bird Atlas 2007–11 are expected to show an increase in the range of the Hobby but, from the data available here, there is no sign of any significant spread north of a line between the Mersey and the Humber. The Kent Ornithological Society has recently reassessed the breeding population in Kent, which appears to be the most important county for Hobby. It supplied the following figures for recent years: 1999–2001 (150–200 pairs each year); 2002–04 (175–225 pairs) and 2005–07 (200–250 pairs). These figures are based on the increase in reported numbers.

Hobby	Total pairs	Confirmed pairs	Total pairs	Confirmed pairs	
			England, SE	403	72
England, SW	163	54	Bedfordshire	4	4
Avon	10	6	Berkshire	15	5
Devon	23	9	Buckinghamshire	12	4
Dorset	19	1	Essex	37	9
Gloucestershire	11	8	Hertfordshire	65	7
Hampshire	16	12	Kent	200	35
Isle of Wight	2	0	Oxfordshire	23	3
Somerset	22	2	Surrey	27	2
Wiltshire	60	16	Sussex	20	3

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

<i>Hobby continued</i>	Total pairs	Confirmed pairs		Total pairs	Confirmed pairs
England, E	123	41	Nottinghamshire	12	12
Cambridgeshire	21	10	Shropshire	10	0
Lincolnshire	18	3	Warwickshire	30	12
Norfolk	26	21	Worcestershire	2	2
Northamptonshire	2	2	England, N	38	19
Suffolk	56	5	Cheshire & Wirral	14	14
England, C	124	71	Greater Manchester	1	0
Derbyshire	35	35	Lancashire & N Merseyside		30
Herefordshire	20	3	Yorkshire	20	5
Leicestershire & Rutland	15	7	Wales	19	8
			Scotland	0	0

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

452–900 pairs. The following summary information was received. The size of the non-random sample available to the Panel has been consistent in recent years, and the 2005 figures are similar to those for 2003. The balance across areas was different, however, with few reported from Northern Ireland but more from Wales in 2005.

Peregrine Falcon	Territories occupied by pairs	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged
England, SW	74	33	65
England, SE	38	30	65
England, E & C	76	33	69
England, N	195	81	189
Wales	162	83	134
Scotland			
Dumfries & Galloway	56	29	62
Lothian & Borders	56	29	67
South Strathclyde	30	18	43
Central Scotland	25	13	25
North-east Scotland	53	32	64
Tayside	66	36	70
Argyll	23	9	15
Highland	19	15	34
Orkney	12	4	6
Uists	13	5	14
Northern Ireland	2	2	4
TOTAL	900	452	926



Judith Smith

149. Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* chick being fitted with darvic ring, Greater Manchester, June 2005. A project to colouring Peregrine chicks in Greater Manchester, Lancashire and West Yorkshire, to allow field identification of known individuals, began in 2005. To date, 101 nestlings have been colouring and there have been several sightings of fledged youngsters from Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and new sites in Lancashire, mainly from urban sites (including churches, cathedrals and factory chimneys). Observers are encouraged to check any Peregrines seen well in northern England carefully for colour rings. Any sightings would be much appreciated and can be reported to the BTO or to craig.bell1@ntlworld.com

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005



Adrian Dancy

150. Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* are now thriving in many urban areas, such as this brood of chicks in Manchester in May 2007.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

19 sites: 0–21 pairs. Birds calling on single dates are included because many are from traditional nesting sites and the elusive nature of the species means that it tends to be overlooked. In 2005, eight of those sites were RSPB reserves, which may reflect regular coverage. There were nil returns from regular sites in Highland and Shetland in 2005, this being the first year since 2000 that no spring or summer Spotted Crakes have been recorded in Shetland

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: one singing male 10th–24th June. **Hampshire** One site: one singing male 30th April to 5th May and probably same nearby on 8th May.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three sites: four singing males in April and May. **Norfolk** One site: one singing male 8th–18th May.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one singing male 11th May. **Yorkshire** One site: one singing male 11th July.

Scotland, S

Clyde One site: one singing male 8th and 11th June.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee One site: one singing male 13th May and 13th–15th June. **North-east Scotland** Two sites: (1) one singing male 30th May to 8th June and one adult seen on 7th July; (2) one singing male 30th May. **Perth & Kinross** One site: one singing male 24th June to 1st July.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Four sites: (1) two singing males; (2) one singing male 21st–22nd May; (3) one singing male 20th June to 9th July; (4) one singing male. **Outer Hebrides** Two sites: (1) one singing male 25th June; (2) one singing male 1st July.

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

1,117 singing males. Although a full survey of Corn Crakes was not undertaken by RSPB in 2005, the total number of calling males has, nevertheless, continued to increase, especially in Argyll, which holds over half of the UK's Corn Crakes. In 2001, the UK total was just 619 males. The rate of increase thus remains close to an average of 5% per year. On the downside, numbers on the Isle of Man declined and there were no calling birds in Shetland for the first time since 1994.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: two singing males. **Suffolk** One site: one singing male.

England, N

Isle of Man Two sites: two singing males.

Wales

Caernarfon One site: one singing male.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One bird was flushed from suitable habitat in mid May.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Total 616: mainland 2, Coll 159, Colonsay & Oronsay 53, Gigha 0, Iona 29, Islay 52, McCormaig Isles 1, Mull 5, Staffa 2, Tiree 310, Treshnish Isles 3. **Highland** Total 48: mainland 15, Canna 1, Eigg 1, Muck 4, Rum 0, Skye 27. **Orkney** 13. **Outer Hebrides** Total 431: Barra 57, Benbecula 28, Berneray 3, Harris 10, Lewis 114, Mingulay 3, North Uist 104, South Uist 103, Vatersay 9.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: one singing male. **Co. Down** One site: one singing male. **Co. Tyrone** One site: one singing male.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Four sites: 5–7 pairs. Cranes are shy birds and require large undisturbed areas in which to breed. It is heartening that in our crowded islands there is still space for a few pairs, though only the established Norfolk population reared young in 2005. The increase in records, and recent nesting attempts outside Norfolk, may indicate that this is a species capable of recolonising Britain successfully. The species is currently being assessed against World Conservation Union (IUCN) guidelines for potential reintroduction elsewhere in southern Britain (Carter *et al.* 2008).

England, E

Norfolk One site: four pairs bred and one pair probably bred. Three pairs were successful, raising five young from broods of two, two and one. The fourth nest was predated.

England, elsewhere

One site: one pair bred. Two young were hatched but failed to survive more than a few weeks.

Scotland

Two sites: one pair and one single. (1) Pair present between mid July and mid September; (2) one bird summered, being present from mid May to late August.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Three sites: 0–2 pairs. Fraser *et al.* (2007) listed 16 records of Black-winged Stilt in 2005. The breeding attempt documented here is the first since 1993, when a pair laid eggs in Cheshire (Ogilvie *et al.* 1996). The only successful breeding attempts by Black-winged Stilts in the UK were in Nottinghamshire in 1945 and Norfolk in 1987, although eggs were also laid in Cambridgeshire in 1983. Small numbers breed annually in The Netherlands and in Belgium.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: one pair seen mating but only present between 12th and 15th May.

England, E

Norfolk One site: 'Sammy', the unmated male stilt, remained at Titchwell until 21st May, when he was at least 12 years old, but was not seen subsequently.

Suffolk One site: one pair attempted to breed. Present during 16th–30th May, when courtship, copulation and the carrying of nest material were seen. The female became difficult to see from mid month as she spent much time in a thick area of Saltmarsh Rush *Juncus gerardii*. An empty nest scrape was found after the pair had departed although it was not certain whether the scrape had ever contained eggs.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

70 sites: 1,366 pairs. Revised figures for 2004 are 1,454 pairs at 74 sites, owing to an additional 95 pairs being reported from Kent. A small reduction in the numbers of breeding pairs was apparent in 2005, although the loss is shared across most of the UK range. The Welsh colony increased to five pairs and a single bird was recorded at a site in North-east Scotland for the fifth consecutive year. The five-year mean (1997–2002, excluding 2001) on which the most recent population estimate of 877 breeding pairs was based (Baker *et al.* 2006) has been exceeded every year since 2002.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Avocet	No. sites	Confirmed pairs	Min. young fledged
England, SW			
Hampshire	1	3	4
England, SE			
Essex	14	201	70
Kent	10	216	55
Sussex	2	12	24
England, E			
Cambridgeshire	4	6	0
Lincolnshire	5	122	16
Norfolk	15	443	138
Suffolk	11	259	71
England, C			
Worcestershire	1	1	2
England, N			
Lancashire & N Merseyside	3	23	29
Yorkshire	3	75	37
Wales			
Gwent	1	5	9
TOTAL	70	1,366	455

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Six counties: 307 confirmed pairs fledged 182 young. Monitoring by RSPB, supported by Natural England, covers most of the population each year, amounting to 258 pairs in 2005. In addition, a large estate in Suffolk held a further 49 pairs, bringing the national total to a minimum of 307 breeding pairs, a continued increase. The figures given in the table (right) are for proven breeding pairs only.

Stone-curlew	Confirmed pairs	Young fledged
England, SW		59
Hampshire	23	
Wiltshire	68	
England, SE		8
Two counties	12	
England, E		115
Norfolk	119	
Suffolk	85	
TOTAL	307	182

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

510–770 pairs. The total of 770 pairs reported in 2005 is the highest ever, but still lower than the population estimate for the UK of 825–1,070 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). In the ten years that the Panel has collected data on this species, numbers were initially stable but then appeared to decline until an upturn in fortunes began in 2003 (fig. 5). As Little Ringed Plovers breed opportunistically, for example on industrial sites and at gravel-pits as well as in natural sites in river valleys, it is difficult to be sure that all pairs have been found. The survey organised by the BTO in 2007 attempted to visit all known sites so the results of that census will better inform us about the population trends. A detailed breakdown of the number of confirmed breeding pairs on a county-by-county basis for 2005 can be found on the Panel's website at: www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp-2005-little-ringed-plover-county-totals.pdf

Little Ringed Plover	Confirmed breeding	Max. total
England, SW	46	72
England, SE	79	142
England, E	44	79
England, C	121	154
England, N	116	195
Wales	92	109
Scotland, S	1	3
Scotland, Mid	11	16
TOTAL	510	770

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

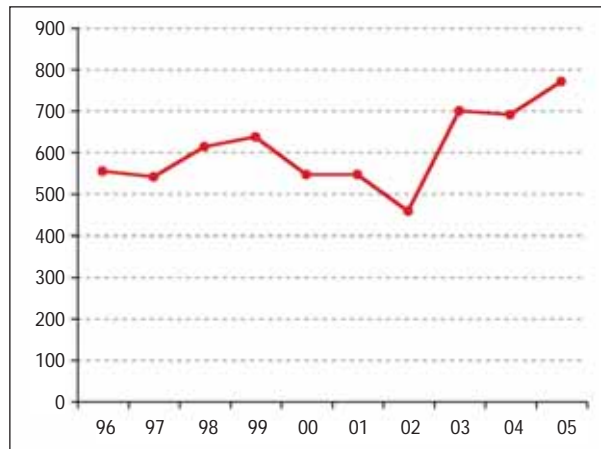


Fig. 5. Number of pairs of Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* breeding in the UK, 1996–2005. The gradual decline in numbers was reversed in 2003 and the numbers in 2005 reached an all-time high of 770 breeding pairs.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

The Panel aims to cover only those Dotterels nesting outside the main Scottish range: the mountainous areas of Highland, Moray & Nairn, North-east Scotland and Perth & Kinross. In 2005, only one record away from this core breeding range was received.

Scotland, S

Borders A trip of seven birds was recorded on a hilltop on 4th May, and five were still present on 17th May; no further visits were made. Three hills in this area were checked for Dotterels in the summer but none was found. The habitat here continues to become less suitable for this species, owing to the longer vegetation on the summits, which may be due to reduced grazing pressure and climate change.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One site: 0–2 pairs. A poor year for this species, which is on the edge of its Arctic breeding range in Scotland. The species typically nests in some of the least accessible montane habitats and some pairs may be missed in poor weather. Since RBBP began monitoring Purple Sandpipers in 1976, the number of confirmed pairs in any one year has never exceeded the four in 1981 and 1994, although three pairs bred as recently as 2003.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: two pairs probably bred but no further information.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. After reports of confirmed breeding in both 2003 and 2004, all 2005 could offer was displaying birds for a few days only.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: a pair for three days in May followed by four birds displaying on the fourth day, but no further records.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: a male displaying to a female on two dates in June.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

18 sites: 58–70 pairs. Breeding records involving birds of the nominate form from continental Europe came from the same counties in England as in 2004, with a similar number of confirmed pairs (53 in 2005 compared with 52 in 2004). Display was noted at other coastal sites in eastern England, with birds lingering into the summer, which may hint at the potential for future expansion here. In Scotland, the race *L. l. islandica*, which has its breeding range centred on Iceland, bred in Orkney and

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Shetland (a total of five confirmed pairs), while probable breeding was reported from the Outer Hebrides, and there was a strong suggestion of breeding in Argyll. The pair which attempted to breed in southern Scotland was probably of the nominate race.

Outside the UK, key populations of nominate *limosa* breeding in The Netherlands and Russia are declining, while those of *L. l. islandica* showed a significant increase during the period 1990–2000. Given the separate trends shown by the two races, observers are requested to specify the race of breeding birds recorded in the UK, where this is known. In a recent review (2007), the European race *L. l. limosa* was added to the UK's BAP priority species list owing to the threat of extinction in Europe (see www.ukbap.org.uk).

L. l. limosa

England, SE

Kent Two sites: three pairs bred; one pair failed and success at two other nests is unknown.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: 45 pairs fledged at least 15 young. **Norfolk** One site: three pairs bred but all nests predated. **Suffolk** Two sites: at one, a single male *limosa* displayed to an *islandica* female; at the other, a male chased off an *islandica* male.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside Two sites: (1) two pairs hatched at least five young; (2) one pair possibly bred.

Yorkshire One site: one pair probably bred.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair probably bred (these birds were not positively identified to this race, but were thought most likely to be *L. l. limosa*).

L. l. islandica

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair with two large young was seen in late June although it is not certain that they bred at this locality. **Orkney** Three sites: (1) one pair bred, seen with young, and three pairs probably bred; (2) one pair displaying; (3) one pair alarming in June. **Outer Hebrides** One site: at least one pair probably bred, plus a single bird noted nearby. **Shetland** Three sites: four pairs bred, one of which fledged two young.

Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus

The following records from outside the species' main range in Orkney and Shetland were received. There have been no confirmed breeding records to date from North-east Scotland, but breeding in the Outer Hebrides has been recorded in most years since 1968 (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one bird in suitable habitat.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides Three sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred.

Greenshank Tringa nebularia

Following the appeal made in the last report for more records of Greenshanks in breeding habitat, data were received from 36 sites, holding up to 63 pairs, but this still represents less than 10% of the estimated breeding population (Baker *et al.* 2006), which is concentrated in northwest Scotland. No breeding records were submitted from either Perth & Kinross or Argyll. It is hoped that Bird Atlas 2007–11 will help to better define the current status of this species.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Two sites: singles present in April only.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness Three sites: three pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

Highland 18 sites: ten pairs bred and 32 pairs probably bred.

Outer Hebrides 12 sites: four pairs bred, seven pairs probably bred and five pairs possibly bred.

Shetland One site: one pair bred.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One site: two pairs. Green Sandpipers cling onto their traditional site in Highland and breeding was again confirmed this year.

Green Sandpiper was first noted in breeding habitat in Scotland in the 1930s (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Breeding was first confirmed in 1959 but, after the formation of the RBBP in 1972, the species was not recorded breeding until 1995. Since then it has been reported every year except 1997, and there were four pairs in 2002. Breeding has been confirmed in five of these ten years. Green Sandpipers nest in trees in the old nests of other birds, in damp, open woodland habitats, and it is likely that some pairs are breeding undetected in Highland Scotland.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: two pairs bred, with singing, display and distressed alarming behaviour recorded.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Two sites: 0–9 pairs. In contrast to 2004, when 18–22 pairs were reported to the Panel, records from only two sites, both monitored by RSPB, were received for 2005.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: eight pairs probably bred.

Outer Hebrides One site: one pair probably bred.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Eight sites: 33–45 pairs. The maximum number of pairs is determined from the number of males at breeding sites, all of which are monitored by RSPB. The maximum of 45 pairs is one of the highest of recent years and continues the current upturn in fortunes referred to in the Panel's 2002 report (Ogilvie *et al.* 2004).

Scotland, N & W

Orkney Two to four birds were present on six dates between 8th June and 12th July but there was no indication of breeding.

Outer Hebrides Five sites: three pairs bred, seven pairs probably bred and five pairs possibly bred.

Shetland Three extensive sites: (1) Fetlar. At least 20 breeding males. (2)–(3) Another ten breeding males. A total of 57 young hatched in Shetland colonies but the number fledged is not known.



David A. Trewell

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

28 sites: 243–262 pairs. The extraordinary increase in numbers of breeding Mediterranean Gulls documented in the last report has continued, in particular the number of confirmed breeding pairs (twice as many as in 2003). The increase is most noticeable at the largest colony, Langstone Harbour in Hampshire, which has seen a 233% increase in just two years. There are also signs of movement into Wales and northern England, although there were no new counties in which breeding was confirmed in 2005.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair probably bred. **Hampshire** Three sites: (1) 110 pairs at Langstone Harbour fledged 165 young; (2) six pairs probably bred; (3) one pair possibly bred. **Isle of Wight** One site: three pairs fledged seven young and two pairs possibly bred.

England, SE

Essex Three sites: seven pairs bred. **Kent** Three sites: (1) 47 pairs bred; (2) 12 pairs bred; (3) one pair possibly bred. **Sussex** One site: 37 pairs bred.

England, E

Norfolk Three sites: five pairs bred. **Suffolk** Two sites: (1) ten pairs fledged 10–12 young; (2) four pairs fledged two young.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: three pairs fledged two young. **Greater Manchester** One site: one pair bred, but this may have been a mixed pairing with a Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, as only one Mediterranean Gull was seen sitting on the nest. However, up to three adults were present in the colony between February and July. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Two sites: four pairs bred. **Yorkshire** Two sites: three pairs probably bred.

Wales

Anglesey One site: one pair possibly bred. **Brecon** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Gwent** One site: one pair displaying on one date in June but did not breed here.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: one pair probably bred. **Co. Down** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Four sites: 1–4 pairs. A similar situation to recent years, with just one pair breeding and no young fledged. However, as populations in western Europe have been increasing since at least 1970 (BirdLife International 2004), it seems likely that this species will continue to appear in future reports.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair nested but failed to produce any young for the fourth year running.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: mixed pairing with Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*. This was a different site from that used in 2003 and 2004 by a male Yellow-legged Gull.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: mixed pairing with Lesser Black-backed Gull. A male Yellow-legged Gull was paired with, and seen displaying to, a female Lesser Black-backed Gull for at least 11 days in mid to late April.

Northern Ireland

Co. Fermanagh One site: one bird present in a Lesser Black-backed Gull colony on 12th–21st May only.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Minimum of 1,501 pairs. Summary information for each area is presented, based on a non-random sample rather than a complete survey. The table shows the number of confirmed breeding pairs, which should be treated as minima. About 1,200 of the 1,500 pairs are at colonies monitored as part of the annual JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme (Mavor *et al.* 2006). The following summary is taken from that source: 'Small declines in numbers of breeding pairs at sampled colonies occurred in most regions in 2005. Productivity in England and Wales, at 0.27 chicks fledged per nesting pair, was low (as in 2004) and presumed to be due to localised food shortages, tidal inundation

Little Tern	Total
England, SW	173
England, SE	233
England, E	539
England, NE	148
England, NW	67
Wales	72
Scotland, S	8
Scotland, Mid	56
Scotland, N&W	205
TOTAL	1,501

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

and predation. Productivity in Scotland was higher than in the previous five years, at 0.62 chicks fledged per nesting pair.'

Taking Britain & Ireland as a whole, the colony at Kilcoole, in southeast Ireland, was the most productive, with 1.6 chicks fledged per nesting pair. This colony, at 100 pairs, is the largest outside the stronghold in East Anglia. Between them, Norfolk and Suffolk accounted for 491 pairs in 2005, with two-thirds of these at just three colonies.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Five sites: 104 pairs fledged 98 young. No breeding was recorded in Norfolk, Wales or on the Isle of May, where this species has bred in some recent years. In Eire, 733 pairs bred at three sites, fledging 1,080 young (Mavor *et al.* 2006; RSPB unpublished data).

England, S

One site: one pair bred but the nest was abandoned.

England, N

Northumberland Two sites: (1) Coquet Island: 91 pairs hatched 103 young and fledged 89; (2) Farne Islands: one pair fledged one young, the first breeding here since 2002.

Scotland, Mid

Fife One site: four pairs fledged four young.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: seven pairs fledged four young.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Minimum of 3,724 pairs. This species has been included in the RBBP report since 1996 and the figures have been based initially on returns from county and regional recorders. Where these have not been available, or if they provide additional data, Schedule 1 returns have been used. Since the totals thus vary, from estimates based on sites recording Barn Owls during the breeding season to accurate counts of known nests, the regional and UK totals are minima and should be used cautiously. The breakdown by recording area for 2005 is posted on the Panel's website (<http://www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp-2005-barn-owl-county-totals.pdf>). All regions show an increase over 2004, except for those in Scotland. No figures were available for Northern Ireland.

The minimum number of pairs reported to the Panel is now 4.5 times what it was ten years ago (fig. 6). Since Barn Owl is currently monitored by the Barn Owl Monitoring Programme run by the BTO, and by the BBS (it was recorded in 2% of surveyed squares in both 2005 and 2006), this species has now been removed from the list of species covered by RBBP.

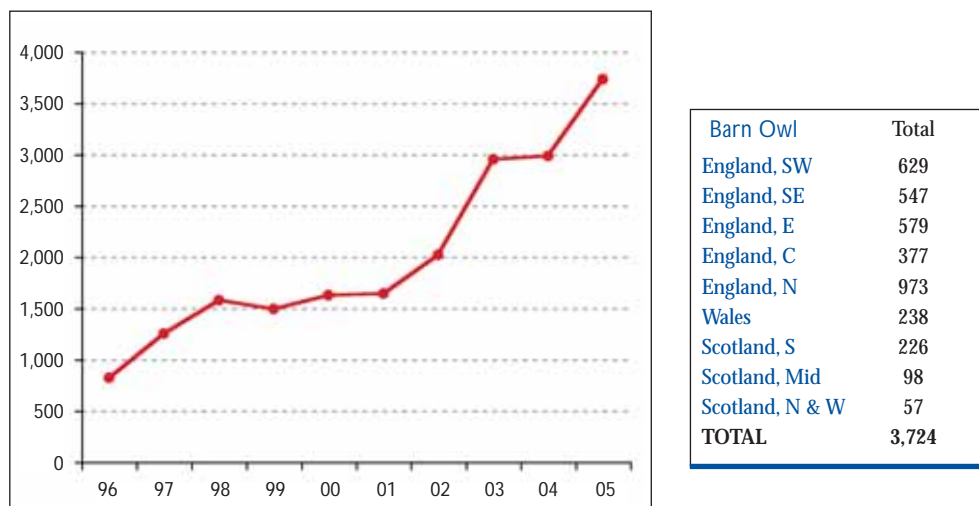


Fig. 6. Number of pairs of Barn Owl *Tyto alba* breeding in the UK, 1996–2005.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Minimum 1,361 pairs. For Kingfishers, as for Barn Owls, the RBBP report has included data based on returns from recorders since 1996. The Kingfisher totals are similarly variable, from accurate counts of known nests to estimates based on sites recording this species during the breeding season. The regional and UK totals are therefore minima and should be used cautiously. The breakdown by recording area is given on our website (<http://www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp-2005-common-kingfisher-county-totals.pdf>). Most regions showed an increase over the 2004 total, the exceptions being eastern England, Wales and mid Scotland. None was reported from north & west Scotland, and no figures were available for Northern Ireland.

In 2005, the minimum number of pairs was more than twice what it was in 1996 (fig. 7) but, increasingly, recorders have stated how incomplete their knowledge of the local population is. Common Kingfisher is now monitored by BBS (it was reported from 2% of surveyed squares in 2005 and from 3% of squares in 2006) and this is the last year it will appear in the RBBP report.

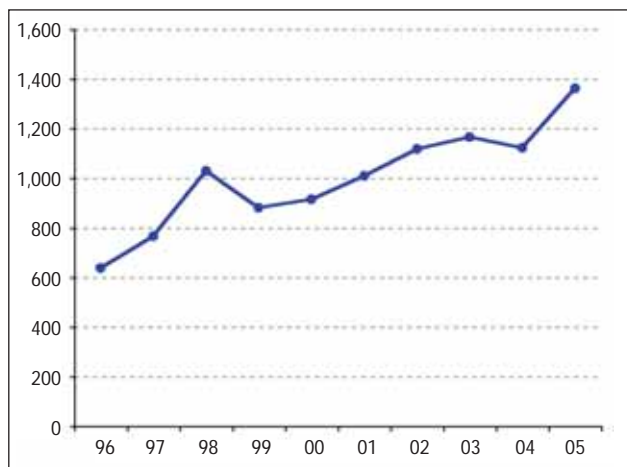


Fig. 7. Number of pairs of Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* breeding in the UK, 1996–2005.

Common Kingfisher	Total
England, SW	167
England, SE	383
England, E	130
England, C	186
England, N	397
Wales	48
Scotland, S	43
Scotland, Mid	7
TOTAL	1,361

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

One site: one pair bred. The last time this species appeared in the Panel's reports was in 2002, when a pair fledged two young in Co. Durham and a second pair attempted to breed in Yorkshire.

Herefordshire One site: one pair bred; the young were taken from the nest burrow at night by a predator, probably a Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*.



European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster*.

Alan Harris

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Wryneck Jynx torquilla

Ten sites: 0–7 pairs bred. Given the elusive nature of this species, all potential breeding sites which recorded late spring or summer Wrynecks are listed here, although only one pair and six singing males were recorded and no further evidence of breeding.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn Two sites: a single bird on one date in mid May, and one pair on one date in June only. **North-east**

Scotland Two sites: one singing male and a single bird in May.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Six sites: five singing males and one single bird in July.

Wood Lark Lullula arborea

1,001 pairs. The following county totals were received, most of which are based on counts of singing males. Coverage is incomplete for many counties, making year-to-year comparisons difficult. For example, although singing birds were reported from Devon, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire in 2003–04, there were no returns for 2005. In Devon, Wood Larks breed largely in farmland habitats so may be overlooked (and 57 territories were identified in the 2006 survey), whereas in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire the lack of records may be a true reflection of the status. In Wiltshire, breeding was proved for the first time since 2002, with two young fledged. The largest increases appeared to be in central England, particularly Nottinghamshire. The previous national survey, in 1997, found 1,426–1,552 pairs (Wotton & Gillings 2000) and was repeated in 2006.

Wood Lark	Total	Surrey	147
England, SW	173	Sussex	72
Devon	0	England, E	452
Dorset	51	Lincolnshire	10
Hampshire	121	Norfolk	161
Wiltshire	1	Suffolk	281
England, SE	272	England, C	76
Bedfordshire	0	Nottinghamshire	50
Berkshire	51	Staffordshire	26
Buckinghamshire	0	England, N	28
Kent	2	Yorkshire	28
		TOTAL	1,001

Shore Lark Eremophila alpestris

One site: 0–1 pairs. The only confirmed breeding records occurred in 1977 and 2003. Like other species of the high tops, this species is readily overlooked, and even finding the birds can prove difficult.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: a series of records of a single bird in suitable breeding habitat in the summer may point to a nesting pair. Most reports referred to a male, but others did not specify gender, so there may have been two birds. There were also unconfirmed reports of singing males from the high tops in both Highland and Moray & Nairn.

White Wagtail Motacilla alba alba

One site: one pair. This is the first appearance of this distinctive race in the Panel's reports since 2000, when five pairs were recorded in Argyll and the Outer Hebrides; however, the possibility of mixed pairings with Pied Wagtail *M. a. yarrellii* could not then be excluded and this breeding record of a pair of the nominate race in Argyll is therefore of interest. However, Forrester *et al.* (2007) suggested that one or two pure or mixed pairs nest most years in Scotland, usually in the Northern Isles.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair fledged at least one young.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

54 sites: 17–60 pairs. Unusually for species considered by the Panel, Black Redstart nests mainly in urban areas and their presence is under-recorded unless special efforts are made to locate singing males. New data have increased the estimates for 2003 and 2004 (Holling *et al.* 2007a) to 15–37 and 21–45 pairs respectively. In 2005, good coverage from the major conurbations of Greater London and the West Midlands produced returns from 54 sites, revealing up to 60 pairs. This total is still lower than those in the late 1980s, when over 100 pairs were typically recorded annually.

England, SW

Avon One site: one singing male in May. **Dorset** Two sites: two pairs probably bred. **Hampshire** One site: one pair reared two broods. **Isle of Wight** One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: one singing male in June. **Berkshire** One site: at least two singing males and one female. **Buckinghamshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Essex** Four sites: five pairs probably bred. **Greater London** 12 sites: five pairs fledged 14 young, one pair possibly bred and six other singing males. **Hertfordshire** Three sites: one pair bred, one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Kent** Eight sites: seven pairs bred, one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred, plus one other singing male.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three sites: three singing males. **Lincolnshire** One site: one pair probably bred. **Norfolk** Five sites: one pair probably bred and four singing males. **Northamptonshire** One site: one pair fledged three young. **Suffolk** Three sites: one pair bred, one pair probably bred and one singing male. Absent from one regular site.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one pair possibly bred but site subsequently demolished. **West Midlands** Two sites: three pairs probably bred.

England, N

Greater Manchester One site: one pair bred. **Yorkshire** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Wales

Denbigh & Flint One site: one singing male in May.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

One site: 0–1 pairs. Single birds, but no indications of breeding, were recorded during June–July, in five areas: Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire (two birds), Greater Manchester, Borders and North-east Scotland. The only suggestion of possible breeding was a male in Shetland heard singing occasionally from 8th June and remaining until late September.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Four sites: 1–6 pairs. This is a very low number of records for this species, which reached a peak of 78 pairs in 1984 (fig. 8), at a time when more effort was made to record and confirm breeding. Single birds, but no signs of breeding, were recorded during June in Kent and in July in Brecon. The latter is of additional interest because singing birds have previously been recorded in May in this area.

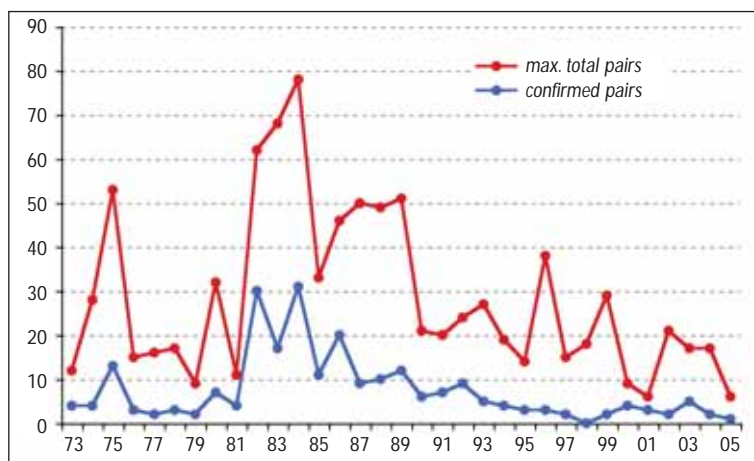


Fig. 8. Number of confirmed pairs, and maximum total of possible breeding pairs of Redwing *Turdus iliacus* in the UK, 1973–2005.

of breeding, were recorded during June in Kent and in July in Brecon. The latter is of additional interest because singing birds have previously been recorded in May in this area.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one pair bred. A family party was found on 3rd July and constitutes the first confirmed breeding in this area since 1975.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one pair probably bred. **Orkney Three** singing males were recorded but only early in the season. **Outer Hebrides One site:** one pair probably bred. A first-summer female with a small brood patch was trapped in June, but there was no further indication of a breeding attempt.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

1,331 singing males. This is a new peak estimate for this species, and even this is believed to be an underestimate. Following the first British record, in 1961, Cetti's Warbler became firmly established as a breeding species in some southern and southeastern counties of England in the 1970s. Severe winters in the mid 1980s checked the population growth, but since then milder winter weather has enabled this resident warbler to consolidate and expand its range. In 2005, singing birds were recorded in the breeding season from 29 counties, although the stronghold is still in southwestern England, where both Hampshire and Somerset had at least 200 singing birds. The population in Wales has increased further to a new high of 137 singing males.

The national survey in 1996 revealed a total of 519–574 singing males, so there has been at

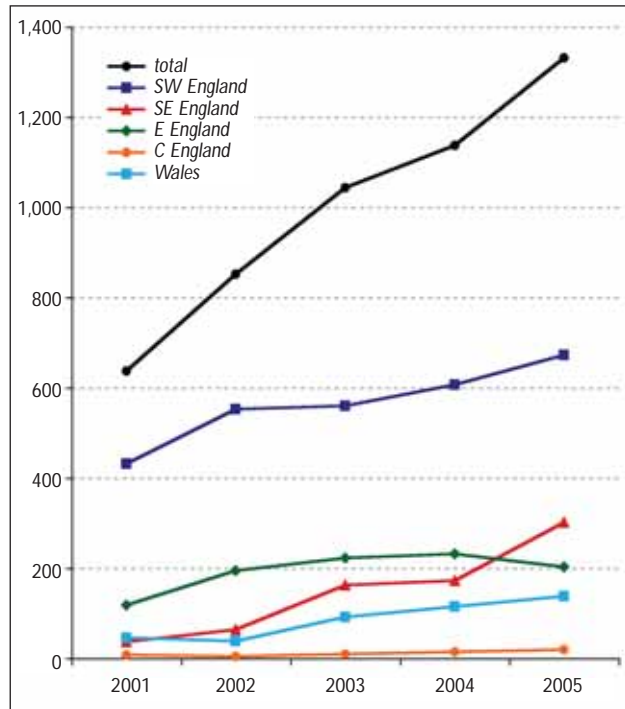


Fig. 9. Number of singing male Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* in England and Wales, 2001–05, illustrating the increase in the overall and regional totals.

Cetti's Warbler	Total (confirmed pairs)	Sussex	56 (14)
England, SW	672 (17)	England, E	202 (4)
Avon	17	Cambridgeshire	6 (4)
Cornwall	13	Norfolk	117*
Devon	78	Suffolk	79
Dorset	79	England, C	19 (10)
Gloucestershire	8 (1)	Leicestershire & Rutland	0†
Hampshire	200 (3)	Warwickshire	11 (7)
Isle of Wight	25	Worcestershire	8 (3)
Somerset	225 (10)	Wales	137 (1)
Wiltshire	27 (3)	Anglesey	4
England, SE	301 (19)	Brecon	0†
Berkshire	46 (1)	Caernarfon	3
Buckinghamshire	3	Carmarthen	22
Essex	40	Glamorgan	10 (1)
Greater London	1	Gower	43
Hertfordshire	3 (1)	Gwent	47
Kent	132 (3)	Pembroke	8
Oxfordshire	20	TOTAL	1,331 (51)

* The total in Norfolk is known to be an underestimate, as 176 singing males were recorded in 2004.
 † In both Brecon and Leicestershire & Rutland, single singing males were recorded during the winter months but, since this is often a prelude to breeding, future records can be expected.

least a 61% increase in the ten years since then. Fig. 9 shows the increase in numbers reported to the Panel over the last five years, broken down by region.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Seven sites: at least seven singing males. Although the total number of singing males is typical of recent years, the birds show little or no site fidelity, and only Kent has held Savi's Warblers annually since 2001. Scottish records are exceptional; there were only seven records to the end of 2004 (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Owing to population declines over the last 25 years, Savi's Warbler was added to the UK's list of BAP species in 2007 (see www.ukbap.org.uk).

England, SW

Somerset Two sites: (1) one singing male between 16th April and 11th May; (2) one singing male between 24th June and 26th July.

England, SE

Kent Three sites: at least three singing males, with the possibility of a second singing male at one of these sites. Note that only one of these has been assessed and accepted by BBRC at the time of writing (*Brit. Birds* 100: 736).

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland One site: one singing male between 13th and 24th April. This was only the third county record of this species.

Scotland

Perth & Kinross One site: one singing male between 10th and 16th May.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Seven sites: 1–9 pairs. Following indications of disturbance to potential nesting sites, the Panel has decided not to name counties in England where breeding is suspected. It is encouraging to note that two young fledged from a nest in Shetland, however. The maximum total of nine pairs is the lowest recorded for 20 years, continuing the decline illustrated in the Panel's 2002 report (Ogilvie *et al.* 2004).

England, SE

Three sites: three pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. (1) Three males held territory and probably bred; (2) singing male; (3) an adult was trapped in May and three juveniles were trapped at the same site in August.

England, E

One site: one singing male held territory between 7th and 18th June.

England, C

One site: one singing male held territory from 10th to 23rd June.

England, N

One site: one singing male held territory between 6th and 27th June.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: one pair bred. A male was heard in song on 8th July and for a few days thereafter. Then, in mid August, a pair was heard alarm-calling and seen carrying food; two young were fledged.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Three sites: three singing males. Singing Great Reed Warblers have been recorded in every one of the last ten years, with a maximum of four in 1997, although in 2002 the single record received was of a male present for just one day, and only birds present in habitat for several days are included in these reports. However, despite the regularity of occurrence, there has been no further evidence of breeding.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: one singing male from 15th May to 9th June.

England, C

Warwickshire One site: one singing male from 6th to 10th May.

Wales

Caernarfon One site: one singing male from 10th to 18th June.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Minimum of 1,556 pairs. The increase of recent years continues although, clearly, this figure underestimates the total population, as 1,597–1,675 pairs were counted in the last national survey, in 1994. This survey was repeated in 2006 and will be described in the next report. Compared to 2003–04, there has

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Dartford Warbler	Total	Sussex	100
England, SW	614	England, E	115
Devon	119	Norfolk	2
Dorset	111	Suffolk	113
Hampshire	279	England, C	1
Isle of Wight	8	Staffordshire	1
Somerset	97	Wales	27
England, SE	799	Cardiff	4
Berkshire	28	Glamorgan	5
Buckinghamshire	1	Gower	15
Surrey	670	Pembroke	3
		TOTAL	1,556

been an overall increase in numbers in eastern England and Wales. Perhaps the most significant event of 2005 was the recolonisation of Cannock Chase, Staffordshire, where a pair bred for the first time in over 100 years.

Although the UK population is increasing, in some countries in continental Europe where Dartford Warblers are censused through common bird monitoring programmes, including Spain, there have been declines (www.ebcc.info). As a consequence, Dartford Warbler has now been classified as Near Threatened on the global IUCN Red List.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

At least 37 sites: 9–248 pairs. The numbers given here are comparable with those of 2003–04, which were the highest ever reported to the Panel. In 2005, however, the number of sites at which the species was found was much lower. Assuming that at least some sites were unsurveyed rather than devoid of Firecrests, the overall population may well have been higher. As stated previously, the search effort for Firecrests varies considerably from year to year and between counties (for example, see Kent below). There is scope to improve our knowledge of the distribution of this species through Bird Atlas 2007–11. The European trends for Firecrest are stable, although a 23% decline in the breeding population was indicated in France in 1990–2000 (BirdLife International 2004).

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: one pair possibly bred. **Hampshire** Nine extensive sites: two pairs bred and 96 pairs probably bred, 63 of the territories being in the New Forest. **Wiltshire** Three sites: eight pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred.

England, SE

Berkshire Five sites: three pairs bred and a further 64 singing males. **Buckinghamshire** Three sites: two pairs bred and eight pairs possibly bred. **Essex** Two sites: two pairs probably bred. **Kent** Reported from only one site, where one pair possibly bred. In 2005, there was no survey and numbers are grossly under-represented by this total. **Surrey** Three sites: three pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Sussex** 23 pairs probably bred at an unknown number of sites.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one singing male on one date. **Norfolk** Two extensive sites: one pair bred and 21 singing males. **Suffolk** Five sites: five pairs possibly bred.

England, C

Warwickshire One site: one pair bred and two pairs possibly bred.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

48 sites: a minimum of 552–559 pairs. Owing to variations in reporting across sites, the total of 552 pairs combines the figures for both confirmed and probable breeding pairs. Fig. 10 shows that the maximum total has increased by over 150% in the last ten years, and that numbers are now approaching the totals recorded in the last annual survey, in 2002 (see Eaton *et al.* 2004). This estimated the British breeding population to be in the region of 650 pairs, an increase of nearly 60% since the previous survey, in 1992, and matching the peak numbers recorded in the mid 1970s and early 1980s. The Panel's 2002 report (Ogilvie *et al.* 2004) included numbers from only a sample area of what was then the main breeding site in Perth & Kinross. The difference between the 2005 figures presented

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

here and the 2002 survey total for Perth & Kinross can be explained largely by the much lower numbers at this site in 2005.

England, SW

Dorset Six sites: 16–17 pairs. **Hampshire** Three sites: seven pairs. **Somerset** Three sites: at least 11 pairs.

England, SE

Essex Five sites: 16 pairs. **Hertfordshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Kent** At least four sites: 66–69 pairs. **Sussex** Three sites: 20 pairs and at least 68 young fledging from two sites.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair fledged two young. **Lincolnshire** Two sites: three pairs present early in the season. **Norfolk** Seven sites: 153–154 pairs. **Suffolk** Six sites: 143 pairs but numbers at one site (Minsmere) not counted this year.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one pair but no young recorded. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** One site: 32 pairs fledged 53 young, continuing the recovery at this site. **Yorkshire** One site: at least 70 pairs fledged a minimum of 292, possibly over 400, young, in one of the best breeding seasons ever recorded.

Wales

Gwent One site: one pair fledged 6–9 young. This is the first breeding in Wales since 1988.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: two pairs. **North-east Scotland** One site: at least two individuals in July indicates possible breeding. **Perth & Kinross** One extensive site: ten pairs reported but only 40 birds ringed this year (compared with 70 pairs and 373 ringed in 2004). This sharp reduction is thought to have been caused by food shortage in winter 2004/05.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Ten sites: 2–10 pairs. Away from known breeding sites, presumed passage birds were also noted singing on single dates in Essex and Kent. The sighting of a pair well outside the normal range, in Argyll, raises interesting questions as it followed records of a singing male there in 2004 (ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2007). In addition, the long stay of a male in Nottinghamshire warrants a mention. However, numbers in the core range of East Anglia continue to decline, down to just two known successful pairs, the lowest total since 1983. A 21% decline in France in 1990–2000 was indicated by BirdLife International (2004), although the European status is felt to be secure owing to stable or increasing populations in eastern Europe.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: two singing males. **Norfolk** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Suffolk** Five sites: two pairs fledged at least four young, two pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One site: one singing male present on at least six days in mid May.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair seen on one date in July close to the location where a singing male was heard on two dates in May and June 2004.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Two sites: two pairs. Red-backed Shrikes were last recorded breeding in 1999 and 2004, so the occurrence of two widely separated pairs, both successfully rearing young, is noteworthy. In addition, single birds were seen in suitable breeding habitat in three Scottish counties in May and June, including one



Fig. 10. Maximum total number of breeding pairs of Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* in the UK, 1996–2005.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005



Alan Harris

Female Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*.

which remained for more than ten days in mid to late May.

Wales

One site: one pair fledged two young. The nest was found after fledging, and the pair returned to the same site in 2006. Subsequent searches of the area in 2006 revealed a third nest, which may indicate that the pair nested in the same area undetected in 2004.

Scotland, N & W

One site: one pair bred and one fledged young seen on 13th July.

Red-billed Chough
Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax

Minimum of 316 pairs. The numbers presented here are slightly higher than those reported in 2003–04, but still well below the estimated UK population of 429–497 pairs (Baker *et al.* 2006). No Red-billed Choughs were found in Co. Antrim for the first time since 2000.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Two sites: 0–3 pairs. After breeding was confirmed in Highland in 2002, there were no breeding records of Brambling in 2003–04, and little evidence was submitted in 2005. Two of the records refer to singing males in the first few days of May only, and may well refer to passage birds.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: three singing males in suitable habitat in May.

Red-billed Chough	Pairs	Young reared
England		
Cornwall	1	5
Isle of Man	37	81
Wales		
Anglesey	34	64
Caernarfon	83	146
Ceredigion	27	49
Denbigh & Flint	2	3
Glamorgan	1	0
Gower	2	3
Meirionnydd	16	33
Pembroke	68	140
Scotland		
Argyll: Colonsay & Oronsay	19	34
Argyll: Islay	25	64
Dumfries & Galloway	1	1
Northern Ireland		
Co. Antrim	0	0
TOTAL	316	623

Note: numbers for Colonsay & Oronsay exclude six prospecting (immature) pairs, and the 34 young reared there were fledged from 14 monitored nests. No data were received from other areas of Argyll where Red-billed Choughs may have been present.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

After confirmed breeding in the Outer Hebrides and Shetland in 2004, there was little to report from these islands in 2005, although it seems that breeding may have taken place in Caithness in 2005.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness One site: a flock of 25 on 17th May included some juveniles being fed, and 50 Common Redpolls were present at the same site on 24th July. **Shetland** One site: present until 2nd June but did not breed.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

At least 175 pairs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The 2005 total lies between those given for 2003 (332) and 2004 (107). As some counties supply minima based on confirmed breeding records only, and others provide higher totals based on the presence of birds in spring, the same caveats given in previous years (that totals for some counties are a gross underestimate) apply here. It seems that the numbers of Common Crossbills in England were close to average in 2005, but that numbers were considerably higher in Wales, with four times as many pairs reported as in 2004. No data are presented for Scotland, as the information there is even more incomplete. It is notable, however, that breeding was confirmed in Orkney.

Because Common Crossbills nest early, are prone to long movements after juveniles have fledged, and breed in extensive areas of conifer plantations visited infrequently by birdwatchers, it is recognised that it is difficult to produce meaningful annual statements based on the data we receive. Moreover, the species is sufficiently numerous and widespread to be monitored by the BBS (in 2005, Common Crossbills were reported from 2% of BBS squares; Raven & Noble 2006). Consequently, Common Crossbill has now been removed from the RBBP list.

Common Crossbill	Total (confirmed pairs)		
		Nottinghamshire	3
		Shropshire	20
England, SW	15 (10)	England, N	7 (2)
Dorset	na	Lancashire & N Merseyside	2
Gloucestershire	5 (4)	Northumberland	na
Hampshire	3 (3)	Yorkshire	5 (2)
Somerset	7 (3)	Wales	100 (58)
England, SE	5 (0)	Brecon	35 (9)
Bedfordshire	1	Caernarfon	5 (5)
Kent	1	Carmarthen	2
Surrey	1	Ceredigion	8 (6)
Sussex	2	Denbigh & Flint	4 (4)
England, E	15 (11)	Glamorgan	18 (18)
Cambridgeshire	1	Gower	4 (1)
Lincolnshire	8 (8)	Gwent	4 (4)
Norfolk	1 (1)	Meirionnydd	8 (8)
Suffolk	5 (2)	Montgomery	12 (3)
England, C	23 (0)	Northern Ireland	10 (0)
Derbyshire	na	TOTAL	175 (81)

Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*

Five sites: 1–14 pairs. Information from two RSPB reserves in Highland was supplemented this year by additional data from three sites in North-east Scotland. Even so, the data provide limited insight into the overall population level or trends of this species. Forrester *et al.* (2007) stated that the Scottish (and therefore world) population was between 300 and 1,300 pairs, but this was based on extrapolation from surveys conducted in the 1970s. A survey, using sonograms to identify this and other crossbill species, is underway in 2008, and this will give us the first robust estimate of the numbers and distribution of Scottish Crossbills.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Three sites: one pair bred, one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: at least ten pairs probably bred.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Three sites: 1–3 pairs. As for the previous species, these data provide just a tiny sample of the population breeding in Scotland. Summers (2002) claimed that, in 1995–2001, Parrot Crossbill was the most abundant crossbill species nesting in Abernethy Forest, Highland; Forrester *et al.* (2007) suggested that the Scottish population was about 100 pairs. Note that these records have not been assessed by BBRC.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Two sites: one pair bred and one pair probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one pair probably bred.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

One site: 0–1 pairs. There continues to be no suggestion that this species will gain even a toehold in the UK.

Scotland, Mid

Upper Forth One site: one male singing on several dates in July.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Two pairs bred and up to 26 singing males were reported. Very few data were received for this species in 2005. In North-east Scotland, two pairs bred at different sites: young were recorded in the nest at one site and fledged young at the other. In the Cairngorms, one observer counted 26 singing males in walks covering the whole breeding range, including peripheral hill blocks, but the observations were made late in the season and double counting of some individuals could not be ruled out. The ideal time to make counts is early in the season, when pairs can be determined, but it is rare that weather conditions in the mountains allow such opportunities. These caveats mean that these data cannot be relied upon to provide a meaningful index of the British breeding population of Snow Buntings, which was estimated at 70–100 pairs by Gibbons *et al.* (1993). More recently, Forrester *et al.* (2007) felt that the Scottish population was no more than 60 pairs but stressed that there has been no one year when all suitable hills have been surveyed.

Given the low population, the uncertainty over numbers, and the possible impacts of climate change on montane habitats in the UK, it is vital that all records of Snow Buntings in breeding habitat are submitted to the local bird recorders for archive and analysis by the Panel, even if counts in any one season do not allow a meaningful index to be calculated. If possible, counts of singing males or pairs should be made in the period between late May and July, and a record made of the area covered and any likely effect of the weather. Negative records from apparently suitable areas are also very important if we are to measure any decline or shift in the distribution, and we urge submission of such information.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

No data were submitted for this species in 2005. The 2005 *Devon Bird Report* included only one record of confirmed breeding and a plea for all records to be submitted, with grid references, to the County Recorder. The Panel supports this request, in order to improve monitoring of the species in between national surveys under the Statutory Conservation Agency and RSPB Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS) Agreement. Numbers of breeding Cirl Buntings are increasing (Eaton *et al.* 2006) but there has been limited range expansion, and Cirl Buntings in the UK remain extremely localised. This is one of the reasons why a reintroduction scheme into Cornwall was trialled in 2004 and 2005, followed by the first full-scale reintroduction in May 2006. For more details on this project see <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/farming/working/projects/cirlbuntings/reintroduction.asp>.

Appendix 1. Other species considered by the Panel also recorded in 2005.

The following species were recorded during the breeding season in 2005 but showed no signs of breeding:

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* One on Sula Sgeir, Outer Hebrides, on 25th–31st August was probably present at this gannetry earlier in the year.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis* In Cambridgeshire, a male was seen displaying to Eurasian Teals *A. crecca* in March; and in Argyll a male was recorded on two dates in June. It is of interest to note that an apparent hybrid (male) Eurasian/Green-winged Teal was reported in winter 2007/08 from East Anglia.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* An unpaired male was present in Avon for most of the year.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* A female was present in Argyll in July.

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* A record of one in Caithness on 28th May was the only record received.

The following species were recorded during the breeding season in 2005 but only limited information was available:

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* Using tape-response techniques, Mavor *et al.* (2006) reported incomplete surveys on North Rona and Hirta, St Kilda (both Outer Hebrides). Both sites showed slight declines compared to equivalent surveys in 2001 and 2003 respectively.

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus* Information submitted to the Panel included details of just five nests in Highland and an estimate of 50–100 pairs for Moray & Nairn. Because data received are insufficient to provide any meaningful statistics on the population in Scotland, Crested Tit has now been removed from the RBBP list.

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Ken W. Smith

151. The Rare Breeding Birds Panel, Old Moor RSPB Reserve, South Yorkshire, November 2007. From left: Ian Francis, Mark Eaton, Mark Holling, Judith Smith, David Norman, Humphrey Crick and David Stroud.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2005

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