

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* with chick.

Dan Powell

This, the thirty-third report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), presents details of the status of the rarest breeding birds in the UK in 2006.

Data sources

Records are collated from all counties of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and also the Isle of Man, but not from the Channel Islands. Most of the information presented is submitted by county and regional bird recorders (hereafter 'county recorders') and we are extremely grateful for their support. The Panel also receives 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 Groups, information from national surveys, counts from RSPB reserves, and other single-species studies (see Acknowledgments).

Coverage

In 2006, coverage was broadly similar to that in 2005, with at least minimal data available from all counties and regions (fig. 1). Neither detailed submissions for all relevant species nor copies of local bird reports were available for Angus & Dundee, Caithness, Clyde Islands, Cornwall, Northamptonshire, Perth & Kinross and West Midlands. Data were available for all Welsh vice-counties, although for three recording areas (Glamorgan, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire) the only information came from summaries published in the Welsh Bird Report (Green *et al.* 2008), which reduces the completeness of the Welsh record for 2006. Data were available from Northern Ireland but not from the Isle of Man. Readers should take into account these potential gaps in the coverage when reviewing the data presented in this report.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Data inclusion

There have been no changes to the acceptance criteria for records since the last report (Holling *et al.* 2008). It is our policy where possible to follow the opinions of the relevant county recorder. All potential breeding records of species on the Panel's list are welcomed, and will be archived, but we do not normally publish records of birds that appear to be passing migrants. Singing passerines are generally included only if they remain at a site for a week or longer, unless there is evidence that the site was a former breeding location. Similarly, spring records of wild-fowl, 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.

Records of species considered by the Panel for which only minimal indications of breeding, or very limited data, were received, are listed separately in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 contains details of species that normally appear in the report but for which no records were received for 2006.

Changes to the RBBP list

In 2006, the Panel has considered for the first time the following three species: Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* and Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*. The full species list and guidelines on submitting records are available on the Panel's website www.rbbp.org.uk.

Review of the year 2006

This report includes details of 79 species breeding or showing indications of breeding in 2006, the same number as in 2005, though with a different mix. A further four species are noted in Appendix 1.

Compared with recent years, 2006 was colder than normal during the early part of the year, and April was very dry, but there were flash floods and storms in some areas in mid May leading to failures for some species, such as Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* in Cambridgeshire and a pair of European Serins *Serinus serinus* in Devon. Condi-

tions after that were more settled, with June being the driest and sunniest since 1995, and mid July breaking temperature records. Persistent rain at times in August affected some late nesters, and thwarted a late attempt by a pair of European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* in Dorset.

We include three species that, although they have occurred in the breeding season in the UK in previous years, have not previously appeared in these reports: Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* and Iberian

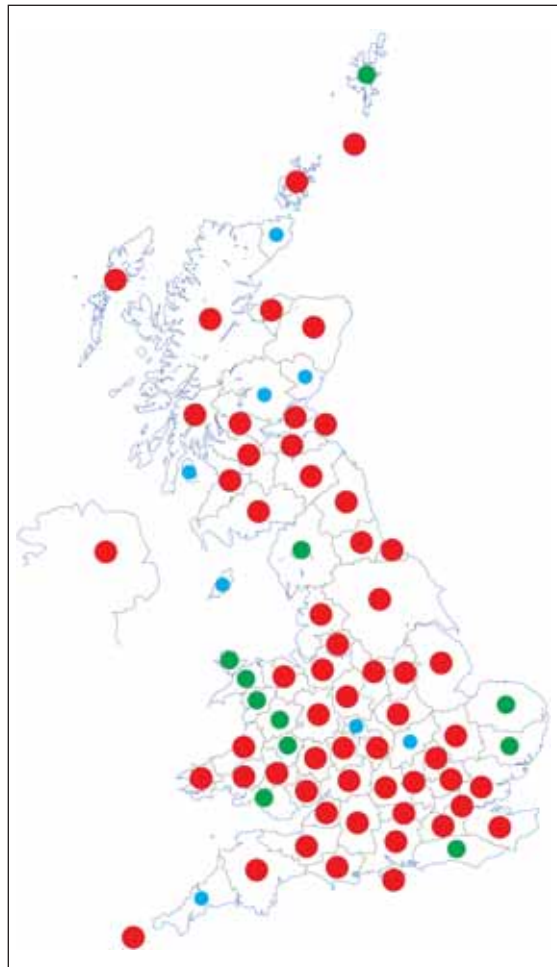


Fig. 1. Data submission to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, 2006. This shows the level of detail provided, by recording area. Large (red) dots indicate full submission for all species from county/regional recorder, with supplementary data from other sources where applicable; medium-size (green) dots indicate data extracted from local bird reports 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, RSPB reserve logs or single-species submissions only. A blank indicates that no data were submitted.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*. A Black Kite paired with a Red Kite *M. milvus* fledged two young in Highland, and a hooting male Scops Owl took up residence in Oxfordshire. There were two well-separated male Iberian Chiffchaffs on territory, in Devon and Lothian, but no evidence of females at either site.

In addition, three species are being considered by the Panel for the first time: Shoveler, Water Rail and Hawfinch. Collation of all potentially breeding Shoveler records reveals that up to 930 pairs were present in 2006, close to the lower end of the most recent population estimate and suggesting that Shoveler is perhaps less numerous than Gadwall *A. strepera*, which was added to the Panel's list in 1996. Numbers of Water Rails across the UK exceeded 1,200 territories at almost 300 sites, proving the worth of using the Panel's networks to build an inventory of sites and supporting the belief that this species is more numerous than published figures have suggested. In contrast, the Hawfinch has a very restricted distribution and, although this species is difficult to locate in the breeding season and is probably under-reported, it is hard to imagine that the difference between the figure of 3,000–6,500 pairs estimated in the last national atlas (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) and the 67 pairs reported to the Panel does not, at least in part, reflect a steep decline in the numbers of breeding birds in the last 20 years.

There was a survey of breeding divers in 2006 and the results show increases for both Red-throated *Gavia stellata* and Black-throated Divers *G. arctica* since the last full survey in 1994. The survey resulted in a welcome increase in the number of casual records of Red-throated Divers submitted, but this is one of those species for which annual reports from well-defined and well-monitored sites provides the best information for the Panel's archives. Black-throated Diver is much scarcer and all records of this species from occupied lochs, as well as negative records from known breeding lochs, are required.

Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* continue to increase within their core range in the south and west of England and Wales, with yet another record number of nesting pairs counted (434), and speculation that the actual population is nearer 600 pairs.

Most birds of prey continue to do well, with high numbers of Honey-buzzards *Pernis*

apivorus, and Red Kites also reaching a new record number of pairs since the RBBP was formed, in 1973, when just 26 pairs nested, all in Wales. It was also the most successful breeding season for the re-established population of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla*. Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* nested in Derbyshire for only the second time in 136 years but, in northern England, the numbers of pairs nesting outside protected areas are still far lower than the extent of habitat would suggest is possible; this is also the case in eastern Scotland, where the habitat supports fewer pairs than expected. For Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus*, however, the 13 confirmed breeding pairs was the highest total since 2000.

As in 2005, there was another breeding attempt by Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, this one also unsuccessful. Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* continue to spread, breeding in Durham for the first time in 2006. The two calidrid sandpipers which occasionally nest in northern Scotland, Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* and Purple Sandpiper *C. maritima*, were recorded as present but no more. A pair of Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* nested in England, which is unusual these days, but that was the only confirmed breeding record of this species in the UK.

Two passerines of the southern heathlands were the subject of surveys in 2006 – Wood Lark *Lullula arborea* and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* – and both registered increases in numbers and range. However, there were again lower numbers of Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* and Redwings *Turdus iliacus*, continuing the overall decline in these species. Numbers of breeding Firecrests *Regulus ignicapilla* were the highest ever in this report, yet the total of up to 341 pairs is still regarded as an underestimate, following significant increases since the start of this decade. Like populations of Little Egrets, Wood Larks, Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* and Dartford Warblers, those of Firecrests are increasing, perhaps related to the sequence of milder winters, helping the survival of sedentary species and encouraging partial migrants to overwinter. Contrast their fortunes with those of the migratory Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, which have almost disappeared from the UK as breeding species, and the European Serin, yet to register a regular presence.

The Panel

The current membership of the Panel (April 2009) is Mark Eaton, Ian Francis, Simon Gillings, David Norman, Judith Smith, David Stroud and Mark Holling (Secretary). Humphrey Crick retired from the Panel in summer 2008, when he left the BTO to take up a new post with Natural England. His position was taken by Simon Gillings, who had hitherto been co-opted onto the Panel for the period of the BTO/BirdWatch Ireland/SOC Bird Atlas 2007–11. Humphrey had been a member of the Panel since 1995 and had ensured that, where possible, data from the many BTO surveys were made available for the Panel's archives. He also helped harness the expertise of BTO staff in the running of the Panel and in exploiting the BTO's data resources. We thank Humphrey for his considerable support for, and inputs to, the work of the Panel during the last 13 years. All of the members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but some members also reflect the interests and requirements of the funding partners, JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and RSPB, as well as BTO and the Association of County Recorders and Editors. The Panel membership aims to achieve broadly representative geographic coverage and to include members who have active involvement in monitoring schemes and specialist research groups, or who participate in various external groups, to facilitate liaison between the Panel and researchers, ringers, surveyors and conservation practitioners.

Recording Standards

New guidance on recording standards for rare breeding birds has been developed by the Panel, and a copy is included with this issue of *British Birds*. We hope that this guidance will aid collection of the most valuable information and promote the submission of records. We seek to maximise the quality of the data collected by highlighting what is most useful in determining the number and status of each species. We welcome feedback and comments on this leaflet, which is also available on the Panel's website www.rbbp.org.uk.

The key messages behind these standards are (1) that birdwatchers should be encouraged to record and report the location and numbers of rare breeding birds using standardised terminology and accepted definitions of breeding status, and (2) that the use of precise locations

maximises the value of the data collected and ultimately the national archive of rare breeding birds held by the Panel.

The confidential archive of records of rare breeding birds in the UK has been maintained by the Panel since 1973, and is the only national source of data for many species, most of which are not well monitored by other schemes. Where possible, the archive contains full details of sites and the number of pairs of each species at each site. These data are thus robust and reliable, and of significant value for conservation. Maintaining this archive helps to fulfil the UK Government's legal responsibilities and assists in the protection of the breeding sites and amendments to legislation to protect rare breeding birds.

There are instances of sites being lost, and of prosecutions for wildlife crime failing, owing to the lack of information available on sites and occupancy. In 2008, investigation of an alleged egg-collecting incident was hampered by lack of detailed information on Honey-buzzard territories in one southern county and, in western England, a consultation on a proposed wind-farm site was unable to take into account any impact on Honey-buzzards believed to be in the area, because accurate locational data were lacking. In contrast, knowledge of the nesting locations of Montagu's Harriers in eastern England has helped to protect pairs breeding in those areas.

For more widespread species, the accuracy of the figures presented in this report is compromised if the records are submitted without reference to the area surveyed. Thus, for breeding ducks, grebes and Water Rails (for example), a knowledge of the proportion of waterbodies or known sites for a species covered in a county in a year would help in making comparisons with other counties and with data for other years. The same applies to species such as the Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, which occurs widely in some counties but is poorly monitored in most.

Only records of rare breeding birds submitted directly to the Panel or, preferably, via the county recorder can be included in the archive and only then can they form part of any analysis or reporting, such as that presented here. All data received from supplementary sources must 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; this can

be done only if sufficient detail is supplied.

It is these records that help to build the picture of the changing status of rare birds and help with species conservation and site protection. We strongly encourage all birdwatchers to heed the advice given in the Panel's Recording Standards and thus make their recording more valuable.

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 compilation of a wind-farm sensitivity map for England, which will help to protect areas holding concentrations of breeding raptors and other rare breeding species likely to be affected.

Future reporting plans

This report follows the Panel's review of rare breeding birds in 2005, published in June 2008 (Holling *et al.* 2008). As part of the process of making the reports more contemporary, our aim is to publish an annual report each spring/summer covering the breeding season of two years before. Thus the report for 2008 will appear by summer 2010. To complete the catch-up process, it is the intention of the Panel and *British Birds* to publish the report for 2007 before the end of 2009.

Part of the desire to publish this review promptly is because the report has a high conservation value. It is used by UK conservation organisations to assess population trends and direct necessary conservation measures. The recent review of species and races of birds on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan list (www.ukbap.org.uk) relied heavily on RBBP data, as do the regular *Birds of Conservation Concern* reviews (e.g. Gregory *et al.* 2002; the next review will be published in *BB* shortly) and the annual *State of the UK's Birds* reports (e.g. Eaton *et al.* 2008).

Many of the data presented here come from county recorders and we recognise that earlier publication of our report will rely on their co-operation. Many counties are already on board, collating and submitting their annual records soon after the year concerned, and we extend

our grateful thanks to recorders who support the Panel in this way. Most county bird reports are now appearing within 12–18 months of the year they are reporting on. Data from national and local surveys are also generally available within 6–12 months of the end of the survey. We hope that those counties which still aspire to such efficiency will continue to make improvements and perhaps will be able to prioritise the extraction of rare breeding bird records, in a similar way that submissions to BBRC are prioritised to allow inclusion in the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain' (e.g. Hudson *et al.* 2008, which covered the year 2007).

Terminology

With one exception, the recording areas used in this report are the same as in previous reports (see Holling *et al.* 2007 and www.rbbp.org.uk); these match the bird recording areas used by county recorders across the UK. Following Ballance & Smith (2008), records for Gower and East Glamorgan are now combined into the single Welsh vice-county of Glamorgan. The Panel attempts to collate all breeding records by bird recording area ('county') wherever possible, and we ask that contributors submit records in the same manner, via county recorders. In some cases, this is not yet possible, and records are presented under different area groupings, for instance by Raptor Study Group (RSG) area. Thus the Central Scotland RSG covers an area roughly equivalent to the Upper Forth recording area; the South Strathclyde RSG area includes both Ayrshire and Clyde and some of the Clyde Islands; and the Tayside RSG area equates approximately to the recording area of Angus & Dundee together with Perth & Kinross.

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Within tables, the abbreviation 'Confirmed pairs' means 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding'. Where tables show the number of occupied territories, these are the sum of probable and confirmed breeding pairs, as territorial birds are classed as being probably breeding, unless a nest has (at least) progressed to the stage where eggs have been laid, in which case the pair is classified as a confirmed breeding pair. It is important to note that con-

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

firmed breeding is *not* the same as successful breeding; nests that fail with eggs or with young still fall into the confirmed category. A successful breeding pair is one that fledges at least one young bird from a nesting attempt.

Where possible, the Panel is now collating figures of young in the nest separately from young fledged, as the latter figure is not always available for some species. Thus, some tables now show the number of territories *believed* to have fledged young (based on the evidence presented to the Panel), rather than territories *known* to have fledged young.

The reader should note that in all cases the

identity of the birds has been confirmed; it is only breeding *status* that 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: 2-5 pairs. The regular sites in Scotland and Northern Ireland were occupied again, with fewer confirmed pairs but similar numbers overall. In addition to the five breeding sites, birds were present elsewhere, but without any evidence of breeding, as follows: in Argyll, pairs summered at two sites and six birds were present at a third; in Highland, 2-3 birds summered at three sites; and other summering birds were reported from Dumfries & Galloway, Lancashire & North Merseyside, Moray & Nairn and North-east Scotland.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides One site: one bird paired with a Mute Swan *C. olor* was seen by an empty nest in late June.

Shetland Two sites: (1) one pair bred, four young hatched and at least two fledged; (2) one pair probably bred. In addition, 16 summering birds were present at four other sites.

Northern Ireland

Co. Londonderry One site: seven adults present, one pair bred, seen with two young in June.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

81 sites: 57-146 pairs. The numbers of sites and pairs reported here are similar to those of recent years. However, the UK population is estimated to exceed 300 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993), and the numbers reported to the Panel fall well short of full coverage; consequently, we reiterate our plea to recorders to encourage the checking of regularly used sites on an annual basis. The Eurasian Wigeon colonised Britain as a breeding species during the cooler climatic phase of the 1800s (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997) and is predicted to be lost from all but northwest Scotland later this century, as climate change takes effect (Huntley *et al.* 2007). Its predicted northward shift should be monitored.

The main population is currently in northern England and north and west Scotland. Just three counties, Durham, Northumberland and Orkney, had ten or more confirmed breeding pairs and between them held over 25% of the total number of pairs. Where possible, summering non-breeders, typically in southern counties such as Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk in 2006, are excluded from the totals presented here.

England, SW

Somerset One site: two pairs possibly bred.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: one pair possibly bred. **Essex** Three sites: three pairs possibly bred. **Kent** One site: one pair bred. **Oxfordshire** One site: three pairs possibly bred.

England, E

Lincolnshire Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. **Norfolk** Two sites: three pairs possibly bred.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral Three sites: four pairs possibly bred. **Cumbria** Two sites: one pair bred and one probably bred.

Durham 12 sites: 12 pairs bred (broods seen) but county population thought to be 20-25 pairs.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Northumberland Three sites: ten pairs bred. **Yorkshire** Four sites: eight pairs bred and three pairs possibly bred.

Wales

Anglesey Two sites: four pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, S

Borders Three sites: four pairs possibly bred. **Clyde** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Dumfries & Galloway Four sites: eight pairs probably bred.

Scotland, Mid

Fife One site: one pair bred. **Moray & Nairn** One site: one pair bred. **North-east Scotland** Two sites: two pairs probably bred. **Perth & Kinross** One site: five pairs possibly bred. **Upper Forth** One site: one pair bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Four sites: one pair bred and six pairs possibly bred. **Caithness** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Highland** Seven sites: three pairs bred and 23 pairs possibly bred. **Orkney** Eight sites: ten pairs bred and seven pairs possibly bred. **Outer Hebrides** Five sites: two pairs bred, three pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Shetland** Three sites: six pairs bred.

Northern Ireland

Co. Down One site: one pair possibly bred. **Co. Tyrone** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

705–1,603 pairs. The UK Gadwall population continues to rise, with another new maximum total reported here, although there is some indication that numbers are levelling off (fig. 2). In the last ten years, the total number of pairs reported has seen a three-fold increase, with a high proportion being confirmed breeding pairs through observations of females with broods. The species has spread from its original stronghold of East Anglia (Fox 1988) to breed in every county of England except for Cornwall and Scilly in the far southwest, and England holds more than 90% of the population, with many of these birds being on artificial waters such as reservoirs, sand- and gravel-pits. In 2006, numbers

Gadwall		Confirmed pairs	Total pairs		
				West Midlands	4
England, SW	99	226		Worcestershire	4
Avon	10	10	England, N	249	366
Devon	5	10	Cheshire & Wirral	27	37
Dorset	40	42	Cleveland	8	8
Gloucestershire	1	5	Cumbria	0	2
Hampshire	17	32	Durham	2	2
Isle of Wight	0	1	Greater Manchester	15	15
Somerset	26	126	Lancashire & N Merseyside	38	38
England, SE	163	307	Northumberland	11	11
Bedfordshire	4	4	Yorkshire	148	253
Berkshire	9	9	Wales	2	32
Essex	3	33	Anglesey	0	27
Hertfordshire	40	98	Caernarfonshire	0	2
Kent	104	143	Gwent	2	2
Oxfordshire	0	16	Pembrokeshire	0	1
Surrey	0	0	Scotland, S	9	19
Sussex	3	4	Borders	2	4
England, E	105	461	Clyde	7	14
Cambridgeshire	40	167	Dumfries & Galloway	0	1
Lincolnshire	1	30	Scotland, Mid	4	33
Norfolk	52	148	Angus & Dundee	0	3
Suffolk	12	116	Fife	1	13
England, C	61	119	North-east Scotland	3	3
Derbyshire	8	22	Perth & Kinross	0	10
Herefordshire	1	1	Upper Forth	0	4
Leicestershire & Rutland	9	9	Scotland, N & W	13	40
Nottinghamshire	5	12	Argyll	0	3
Shropshire	0	1	Orkney	13	32
Staffordshire	17	26	Outer Hebrides	0	5
Warwickshire	13	40	TOTALS	705	1,603

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

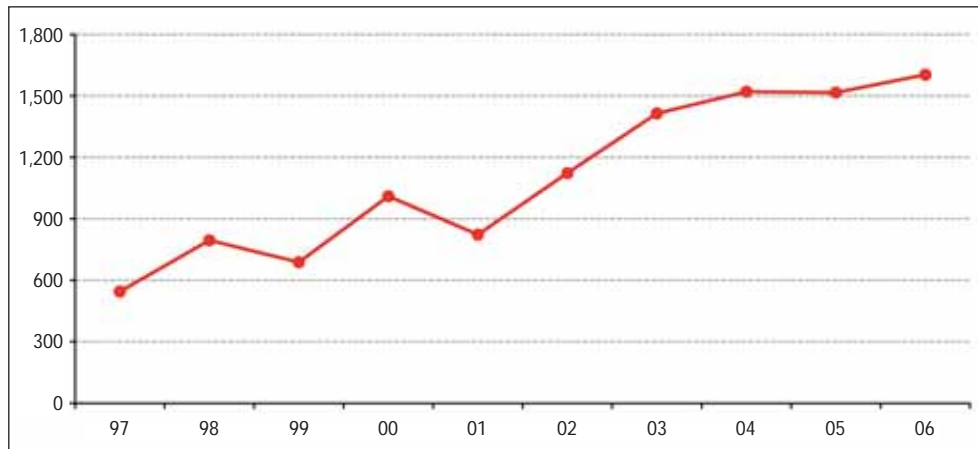


Fig. 2. Number of breeding Gadwalls *Anas strepera* in the UK, 1997–2006 (max. total pairs): the breeding population was almost three times greater in 2006 than it had been ten years earlier.

again increased in northern England, with 253 pairs in Yorkshire alone. Gadwalls remain much scarcer and more localised in Scotland and Wales. The first confirmed breeding for Gwent, two pairs at one site, occurred in 2006.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

18 sites: 10–26 pairs. The number of sites and pairs remains much as in recent years, although this species continues to show poor site tenacity, with only Argyll and Orkney regularly holding breeding pairs.

England, SE

Kent Three sites: three pairs possibly bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair present until 31st May did not breed. **Norfolk** Two sites: (1) one pair bred (brood of six seen in July); (2) two pairs probably bred.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: three pairs present in May were seen displaying but did not breed. **Yorkshire** One site: one pair bred (clutch of nine eggs predated).

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair probably bred.

Scotland, Mid

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

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: two pairs bred (broods of seven and six) and one pair possibly bred. **Highland** One site: one pair bred. **Orkney** Six sites: (1) three pairs bred; (2) two pairs bred (broods of six and five); (3)–(6) one pair possibly bred at each site.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

57 sites: 6–85 pairs. Proof of breeding was recorded in just five counties, all in the south and east: Kent, Norfolk, Suffolk, Sussex and Yorkshire. Since 1980, the number of confirmed breeding pairs has exceeded 20 in only three years: 1998, 1999 and 2000. Owing to the species being a summer visitor and passage migrant, pairs frequently stay for several days at potential breeding sites early in the season but are not then seen again and are assumed to have moved on. In calculating the totals, single birds or pairs present for less than a week during this period are excluded. However, singles or pairs present for at least a week in April and May, and any birds in suitable habitat in June or July are included, which may inflate the total numbers.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair possibly bred. **Gloucestershire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Hampshire** Three sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Somerset** Three sites: one pair probably bred and six pairs possibly bred.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: one pair probably bred. **Essex** Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. **Kent** Six sites: two pairs bred, eight pairs probably bred and six pairs possibly bred. **Sussex** Three sites: one pair bred and two pairs possibly bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Four sites: eight pairs probably bred and three pairs possibly bred. **Norfolk** Four sites: one pair bred, one pair probably bred and five pairs possibly bred. **Suffolk** Four sites: one pair bred and three pairs probably bred.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One site: one pair possibly bred. **Shropshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Warwickshire** One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. **Cleveland** One site: one pair probably bred, at a site where breeding occurred in 2004 and 2005, but land drainage in April resulted in the loss of the site. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Two sites: one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Yorkshire** Five sites: one pair bred, four pairs probably bred and four pairs possibly bred.

Wales

Anglesey Two sites: one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Ceredigion** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Gwent** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Pembrokeshire** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, S

Clyde One site: one pair possibly bred. **Dumfries & Galloway** One site: one pair probably bred.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one pair probably bred. **Perth & Kinross** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair possibly bred. **Orkney** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Northern Ireland

Co. Londonderry One site: one pair possibly bred.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

401–930 pairs. This is the first year that the Panel has collected data on this species, so this is the first opportunity to compare totals, collected largely via the county recorder network, with the national estimate of 1,000–1,500 breeding pairs in 1988–91 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Returns produced a

Shoveler	Confirmed pairs	Total pairs			
			Greater Manchester	0	2
			Lancashire & N Merseyside	31	31
England, SW	18	48	Northumberland	6	6
Dorset	10	12	Yorkshire	22	36
Hampshire	5	7	Wales	6	38
Somerset	3	26	Anglesey	0	25
Wiltshire	0	3	Ceredigion	1	3
England, SE	146	196	Meirionnydd	0	3
Essex	51	66	Montgomeryshire	1	1
Hertfordshire	2	15	Pembrokeshire	4	6
Kent	84	93	Scotland, S	0	19
Oxfordshire	0	10	Borders	0	3
Surrey	0	1	Clyde	0	7
Sussex	9	11	Dumfries & Galloway	0	9
England, E	113	422	Scotland, Mid	2	20
Cambridgeshire	74	177	Angus & Dundee	0	6
Norfolk	34	183	Fife	1	5
Suffolk	5	62	North-east Scotland	1	3
England, C	7	11	Perth & Kinross	0	6
Leicestershire & Rutland	1	1	Scotland, N & W	46	81
Nottinghamshire	2	4	Argyll	5	29
Shropshire	0	2	Highland	0	1
Staffordshire	4	4	Orkney	41	41
England, N	63	95	Outer Hebrides	0	7
Cheshire & Wirral	3	17	Shetland	0	3
Cumbria	1	3	TOTALS	401	930

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

maximum count close to the lower end of this range, suggesting that coverage was good. Over 86% of confirmed breeding pairs in 2006 nested in England, largely in the south and east, with Cambridgeshire, Kent and Norfolk apparently being the main centres. Brown & Grice (2005) summarised the historical status of the Shoveler in England and suggested that up to 150 pairs in the Lower Derwent Valley, Yorkshire, made this the most important site for this species. With just 36 pairs reported from Yorkshire, and only one of these in the Lower Derwent, either this situation no longer applies, or the returns from this important site were incomplete. It is not known how thoroughly the area was searched in 2006.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

322–519 pairs. The UK population of Common Pochards seems to have been remarkably stable in the last five years, varying between 461 and 540 pairs, and the maximum total for 2006 is somewhat greater than the ten-year mean of 454 (see fig. 3 in Holling *et al.* 2008). Over 98% of confirmed breeding pairs occur in England, with Essex and Kent being the strongholds.

Common Pochard					
	Confirmed pairs	Total pairs			
			England, N	84	105
			Cheshire & Wirral	14	17
			Cleveland	14	14
England, SW	26	54	Cumbria	0	2
Avon	4	4	Greater Manchester	4	5
Dorset	12	12	Lancashire & N Merseyside	13	15
Hampshire	5	8	Northumberland	6	6
Somerset	5	30	Yorkshire	33	46
England, SE	175	230	Wales	4	27
Bedfordshire	1	1	Anglesey	3	25
Essex	40	54	Breconshire	0	1
Greater London	32	32	Carmarthenshire	1	1
Hertfordshire	13	37	Scotland, S	0	4
Kent	87	94	Borders	0	4
Oxfordshire	1	12	Scotland, Mid	0	4
Sussex	1	1	Perth & Kinross	0	4
England, E	26	82	Scotland, N & W	2	2
Cambridgeshire	1	5	Orkney	2	2
Norfolk	8	52	Northern Ireland	0	5
Suffolk	17	25	Co. Antrim	0	1
England, C	5	5	Co. Down	0	1
Nottinghamshire	3	3	Co. Tyrone	0	3
Worcestershire	2	2	TOTALS	322	519

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Four sites: 9–16 pairs. Only low numbers of pairs are monitored on an annual basis, representing a fraction of the 95 pairs estimated in the 1995 survey (Underhill *et al.* 1998). Results of a repeat survey, carried out in 2007, will be included in the next report.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross Three sites: seven pairs possibly bred. In a survey of suitable Perthshire lochs in late May, a total of 17 adults, seven pairs and three single birds, were located.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll No information was available from the regular nesting site on Islay. **Highland** One site: nine pairs bred.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Approximately 200 laying females were found in two regions of Scotland, and summering birds were present in at least six other areas of England and Scotland. Details received from the Goldeneye Study Group indicate that 121 clutches were laid in northern Scotland. Assuming that two-thirds of clutches laid involved more than one female leads to an estimate of c. 200 egg-laying females in total, about 25% more than in recent years.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

England, C

Derbyshire A female summered, as in 2004 and 2005, and a male was also seen in July. The female bird, however, was injured and could not fly.

England, N

Cumbria One female in May in suitable habitat may have summered. **Greater Manchester** Up to five birds summered and displayed in suitable habitat. A displaying pair was seen in early June. **Northumberland** A first-summer female was recorded from July into September at a potential breeding site.

Scotland, S

Borders A female was at a potential breeding site in mid August. **Lothian** Two females and a first-summer male were recorded at a potential breeding site.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Deeside: a minimum of 18 pairs bred, with 15 clutches hatching.

Scotland, N & W

Highland In the nestbox study in Badenoch & Strathspey, a minimum of 103 clutches were laid, with 64 of these being incubated. Of the total of 581 eggs, 458 hatched from 56 nests (87.5% of clutches) and the mean brood size was the same as in 2005, at 8.2 young (range 1–19).

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

93 leks were visited, and a total of 206 displaying males counted, a slight decrease on 2005. All known lek sites across Scotland are checked at dawn during April; although not an accurate measure of the population, this figure does enable trends at these leks to be monitored. Eaton *et al.* (2007a) estimated the population in winter 2003/04 to be 1,980 individuals (95% confidence limits 1,284–2,758; counts included both males and females, of all ages).

Scotland, S

Clyde One lek: two males.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn 14 leks: 20 males. **North-east Scotland** 20 leks: 40 males. **Perth & Kinross** Eight leks: 10 males.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 50 leks: 134 males.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

5–416 singing males or pairs. This was an average year for Common Quail (ten-year mean 444 singing males or pairs; see fig. 3). Confirmed breeding was recorded in just five counties: Borders, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Nottinghamshire and Wiltshire.

Common Quail		Leicestershire & Rutland	3
	Total	Nottinghamshire	1
England, SW	66	Shropshire	8
Avon	5	Staffordshire	3
Gloucestershire	8	Warwickshire	2
Hampshire	7	Worcestershire	9
Somerset	8	England, N	90
Wiltshire	38	Cheshire & Wirral	15
England, SE	46	Cleveland	5
Berkshire	6	Cumbria	5
Buckinghamshire	4	Durham	10
Hertfordshire	1	Greater Manchester	5
Kent	10	Lancashire & N Merseyside	12
Oxfordshire	10	Northumberland	18
Sussex	15	Yorkshire	20
England, E	99	Wales	12
Cambridgeshire	15	Anglesey	1
Lincolnshire	16	Breconshire	1
Norfolk	66	Ceredigion	1
Suffolk	2	Meirionnydd	5
England, C	37	Montgomeryshire	1
Derbyshire	11	Pembrokeshire	3

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Common Quail <i>continued</i>			
Scotland, S	20	Scotland, N & W	19
Borders	12	Argyll	3
Lothian	8	Fair Isle	2
Scotland, Mid	27	Highland	4
Fife	4	Orkney	4
Moray & Nairn	8	Outer Hebrides	5
North-east Scotland	14	Shetland	1
Upper Forth	1	TOTAL	416

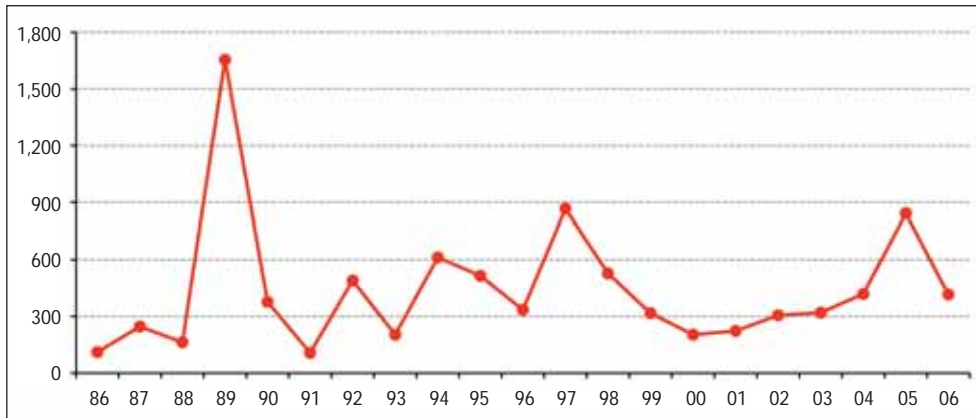


Fig. 3. Maximum numbers of singing males or pairs of Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix* recorded in the UK during 1986–2006, showing the ‘quail years’ of 1989, 1997 and 2005.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Some 1,255 breeding pairs were estimated during the second national survey of this species, funded by RSPB and SNH under the Statutory Conservation Agency and RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme (Dillon *et al.* in press). This survey achieved full coverage of the important breeding populations on Shetland and Orkney, and a random sample of 5-km squares elsewhere in the range. Estimates were corrected to account for sites where breeding evidence was overlooked, following the findings of



Hugh Harrop

109. Adult Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, with chicks, Shetland, July 2006. A national survey of Red-throated Divers in 2006 estimated a total of 1,255 breeding pairs with Shetland holding the largest proportion of the breeding population.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Red-throated Diver	Total number of adults	Number of occupied lochs	Estimated number of breeding pairs ¹
Mainland Scotland (Argyll/Highland)	931 (612–1,277)	530 (353–739)	227 (130–342)
Inner Hebrides (Argyll/Highland)	815 (303–1,534)	505 (176–1,017)	221 (70–438)
Orkney	280	110	97
Outer Hebrides	893 (450–1,365)	462 (246–704)	317 (164–524)
Shetland	1,286	600	407
TOTALS²	4,146 (3,430–4,992)	2,177 (1,729–2,744)	1,255 (1,014–1,551)

Figures in parentheses show 95% confidence limits.

¹ Corrected estimate of breeding pairs, after Gomersall *et al.* (1984).

² The total population estimate differs from the sum of the census areas and the extrapolated estimates from the sample regions owing to different sampling intensities and small sample sizes in different areas introducing rounding errors.

intensive studies in Shetland in the 1980s (Gomersall *et al.* 1984).

The estimate suggests an increase of around 34% since the first full survey, in 1994. That survey estimated a total of 935 breeding pairs, with approximately 430 (46%) of these in Shetland and 105 (11%) in Orkney (Gibbons *et al.* 1997). Results from the Northern Isles indicate that populations there have remained relatively stable since 1994 (and that the Shetland population has not recovered to the higher levels of the 1980s). It thus seems that other areas are responsible for the overall increase, although Shetland remains the most important area for Red-throated Divers, with around 32% of the national population there. At a regional level, the large confidence limits around estimates restrict our ability to pinpoint where changes have occurred, but there appear to have been large increases in both the Inner and the Outer Hebrides.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

As with the previous species, there was an RSPB/SNH national survey of Black-throated Divers in 2006, the first since 1995. This entailed surveying all known breeding territories (single lochs, parts of larger lochs, or groups of small lochs close to each other), along with a random sample of potentially suitable lochs elsewhere within the breeding range. Given the good knowledge of the range of Black-throated Diver, thanks to previous national surveys (in 1985 and 1995) and other studies including annual RSPB monitoring at many sites, a large proportion of the population was found.

The full, corrected estimate was 217 summering territories (95% confidence limits 190–252). Although proving breeding was not a requirement of the survey, 112 breeding attempts were recorded; this will be an underestimate of the total number. The table shows the regional distribution of the 173

Black-throated Diver	Summering territories	No. sites with birds present	Breeding attempts
Scotland, S			
Ayrshire	1	1	1
Scotland, Mid			
Moray & Nairn	0	1	0
North-east Scotland	1	1	0
Perth & Kinross	9	11	3
Upper Forth	2	2	1
Scotland, N & W			
Argyll	15	16	6
Caithness	5	7	4
Highland	117	149	86
Outer Hebrides	23	39	11
TOTALS	217¹	320¹	112

¹ These totals are not the sum of regional numbers; they include extrapolation from a stratified random sample of sites, and correction for territories missed during surveying.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

territories actually located by surveyors. The Scottish Black-throated Diver population has increased by 16% from the newly revised estimate of 187 territories in 1995, which itself was up from the 1985 estimate of 151 territories. This increase appears to have been spread across most of the range, although was most marked in the Outer Hebrides, and may possibly be a response to increased productivity as a result of a large programme of nesting-raft provision (Hancock 2000).

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Three sites: one pair and two single birds. In Northamptonshire, one bird present from May to November was joined by a second from 25th June to 20th July. A single bird was again present in Fife, recorded from 8th June to 2nd July, and in Cambridgeshire, a bird was present until 19th May and then again from 1st July, spending part of the intervening period at another site less than 5 km away.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

19 sites: 40–41 pairs. In mainland Scotland, 39 pairs were located and 34 young reared (44 and 23, respectively, in 2005). Productivity was 0.87 young per territorial pair, well above the long-term average of 0.58 and the highest figure since 2000. Seventeen sites in mainland Scotland were occupied by pairs in 2006 but only seven of these produced young, figures which remain a cause for concern. The transitory nature of many sites is demonstrated by the fact that although 16, 14, 16 and 17 sites were occupied by pairs in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006, respectively, 29 lochs were occupied in total, eleven were used in just one of those years and only six lochs held pairs in all four years. In 2006, sites within Special Protection Areas (SPAs) held 27 pairs (69%) and these produced 27 young (79%). Since coverage is believed to be complete for this species, this demonstrates the importance of SPAs classified for Slavonian Grebe.

Well away from the normal breeding area of this species, in the English Midlands, a bird paired with a Great Crested Grebe *P. cristatus* but the hybrid young did not survive (Toon 2007).

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland One site: one hybrid pair. An adult paired with a Great Crested Grebe, four eggs were laid and two hatched, but both chicks were predated by a Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

Moray & Nairn/Highland 17 sites: 39 pairs reared 34 young, two singles also present at two other sites. **Orkney** One site: a pair was seen displaying on a suitable loch in April and by early June one bird remained, but no nest was located.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

17 sites: 34–60 pairs. Since the publication of a review of breeding Black-necked Grebes in Britain up to 2004 (Martin & Smith 2007), the population has fallen from 44 confirmed breeding pairs in 2004, to 38 in 2005 and 34 in 2006, with the loss of the Scottish breeding population and the small numbers in southwest England. The population seems to be increasingly concentrated into a few main sites in central and northern England. Continuous and careful monitoring of all known sites is essential, and nil returns from former breeding sites are important too. Since Black-necked Grebes are able to colonise new sites rapidly, vigilance in following up records of pairs in early spring is also required.

England, SE

Hertfordshire One site: up to 12 pairs possibly bred; although birds were present from March until October, no nests were built and no young seen. **Kent** One site: one pair bred.

England, E

Lincolnshire One site: one pair bred.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland No breeding: reported from four sites but only in April and July, with none lingering. Two juveniles were seen at one site, but it is known that they were not reared locally. **Nottinghamshire** Two sites: (1) two pairs bred; (2) one pair bred. **Staffordshire** One site: one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. It is thought that disturbance prevented successful breeding.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: 15 pairs bred. **Durham** One site: one pair possibly bred (seen displaying in April). **Greater Manchester** Two sites: (1) two pairs bred; (2) one pair probably bred. **Northumberland** One site: four pairs bred and four pairs probably bred. **Yorkshire** Four sites: (1) five pairs bred and two pairs probably bred; (2) two pairs

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

bred and one pair possibly bred; (3) one pair bred; (4) one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: a pair present from late April to late May, with one bird remaining until July, but the lack of emergent vegetation at this site precludes breeding.

Scotland, Mid

Fife One site: one pair possibly bred.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

38 sites: 44–63 booming males with 27 breeding attempts at 12 sites. Eurasian Bitterns have been surveyed annually since 1990, the aim being to quantify the minimum and maximum numbers of (i) booming males and (ii) nesting females. Only those males which are known to have been booming for a week or more are counted in the minimum figures for the year. Funded by RSPB and Natural England, the survey relies on both professional ornithologists and amateur birdwatchers. The accuracy and standardisation of the annual survey is extremely important as it helps measure the success of the continuing wetland habitat management, habitat restoration and creation for this species.

In 2006 there was some stabilisation in the UK's Bittern population. The minimum number of 44 booming males was two down on 2005's total. This followed the much larger decline of 16% between 2004 and 2005. Twenty-seven sites were used by booming males, down by just one on 2005. The number of active nests located, at 27, was the same as in 2005.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: 0–1 booming male. **Somerset** One site: 0–1 booming male.

England, SE

Kent One site: 0–1 booming male; also a bird heard briefly at a second site. **Surrey** One site: one booming male.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three sites: 1–3 booming males. **Lincolnshire** Four sites: 4–6 booming males. **Norfolk North Norfolk coast** Five sites: 3–5 booming males; two confirmed nests. **Norfolk Broads** Ten sites: 10–11 booming males; four confirmed nests. **Suffolk** Six sites: 21–27 booming males; 18 confirmed nests.

England, N

Greater Manchester One site: 0–1 booming male. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** One site: one booming male and two confirmed nests. **Yorkshire** Three sites: 3–4 booming males; one confirmed nest.

Wales

One site: 0–1 booming male.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

60 sites: 425–478 pairs. The number of sites where breeding Little Egrets were recorded rose again in 2006 to a new record of 60, with some evidence of breeding reported from 23 counties. It is becoming increasingly difficult to make accurate counts of some larger colonies and the totals here do not include two major colonies, in Dorset (at least 50 nests) and Essex (at least 35 nests). It is also believed that counts from some colonies have not been submitted to the Panel and the UK population in 2006 was probably closer to 600 pairs. Nevertheless, there is again little sign of expansion north of a line from the Mersey to the Humber.

England, SW

Cornwall Three sites: 17 pairs bred. **Devon** Five sites: 22 pairs bred and five pairs probably bred. **Dorset** Five sites: 18 pairs bred but no count from the largest colony. **Gloucestershire** One site: seven pairs bred and three pairs probably bred. **Hampshire** Four sites: 49 pairs bred and 13 pairs probably bred. **Isles of Scilly** One site: one pair bred; first breeding for Scilly. **Somerset** Five sites: 22 pairs bred, eight pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Wiltshire** One site: not counted but estimate of at least 12 pairs probably bred.

England, SE

Berkshire Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. **Buckinghamshire** One site: three pairs bred. **Essex** Four sites: 29 pairs bred and five pairs possibly bred, but the count at the largest site is known to have been incomplete. **Kent** Two sites: 70 pairs bred. **Sussex** Six sites: 17 pairs bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: at least five pairs bred at one and an unknown number (counted as at least one) probably bred at the other. **Norfolk** Four sites: 72 pairs bred. **Suffolk** Five sites: 34 pairs bred and two pairs possibly bred.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: ten pairs bred. **Yorkshire** One site: one pair built up a nest but not thought to have laid.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Wales

Caernarfonshire Two sites: seven pairs bred. **Carmarthenshire** One site: one pair bred, fledging two young; first breeding for the county. **Ceredigion** One site: four pairs bred. **Glamorgan** Two sites: 26 pairs bred. **Gwent** One site: 11 pairs bred.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

One site: one pair built a nest. In Norfolk and Suffolk, more than 30 birds summered, being mobile between several coastal sites. One pair built a large nest at a site in Suffolk, but no eggs were laid.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

23–39 pairs; at least 40 young fledged. Reporting of Honey-buzzards to the Panel continues to improve and the number of young fledged in 2006 (40) was the highest since the survey years of 2000 and 2001 (40 and 41 respectively), when extra efforts were made to monitor and report this species. Despite improvements in the quality of the data being submitted, we are aware that we still do not receive all records, which can have direct and unfortunate consequences. In recent years, the lack of detail on nesting locations has hampered attempts to prosecute egg-collectors, as well as failing to prevent windfarms being built within Honey-buzzard territories.

England, SW

12 territories occupied in three counties, eight pairs raised a minimum of 15 young.

England, SE

Seven territories occupied in three counties, seven pairs raised ten young.

England, E, C & N

Seven territories occupied in three counties, one pair raised three young.

Wales

Seven territories occupied, six pairs bred, fledging ten young.

Scotland

One pair bred in Highland, fledging two young, which were radio-tracked. Evidence of occupation or presence of single birds at former breeding sites late in the season was reported from five other sites in four regions.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

One mixed pair. A male was found paired with a six-year-old, wing-tagged female Red Kite from the North Scotland population in late June. This very late nest contained two well-feathered young, which later fledged. The young had the appearance of Red Kites and were last seen during August. Neither the young nor the adults were seen during the following winter or in 2007. This record constitutes the first confirmed breeding by a Black Kite in the UK. Prior to this, a single Black Kite had summered in Highland in 2002, 2003 and 2004, thought to be the same individual in all three years (Forrester *et al.* 2007), and it is possible that it was that bird which bred in 2006.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

669–1,038 pairs. The figures presented here are minima, since not all sites in Wales and southern England are now monitored annually. It seems likely that in 2006 the UK Red Kite population stood at over 1,200 breeding territories. No new release schemes began in 2006, and a review of the existing Red Kite reintroductions will be included in the 2007 report.

England A minimum of 196–508 pairs bred.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One pair bred. **Hampshire** One pair fledged two young, one pair probably bred and ten pairs possibly bred. **Wiltshire** Two pairs bred, one fledging two young, two pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One pair probably bred. **Berkshire** Three pairs fledged four young and two pairs possibly bred. **Buckinghamshire/Oxfordshire** Minimal information was received on the important population in the Chilterns, although 68 nesting pairs were monitored. This population was thought to number around 350 breeding pairs, with c. 600 young reared. **Hertfordshire** One pair probably bred and five pairs possibly bred. **Surrey** No breeding but reported from 20–25 sites in summer, including parts of Greater London. **Sussex** Two pairs bred fledging two young.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two pairs bred with two chicks in each nest. **Lincolnshire** One pair bred and one pair possibly bred.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Norfolk No breeding records, but birds reported from 18 sites in summer. **Northamptonshire** 67 pairs with 118 young in 57 nests.

England, C

Derbyshire Up to two birds summered in one area. **Herefordshire** Two pairs bred, one fledging two young. **Leicestershire & Rutland** Two pairs produced five chicks in total and two pairs possibly bred. **Shropshire** One pair fledged two young. This is the first successful breeding in the county since 1876.

England, N

Durham Four pairs bred, two pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. At least three young fledged from two nests, the first successful breeding in the county for almost 200 years. **Yorkshire** 40 pairs fledged 75 young.

Wales A minimum of 387–433 pairs bred, but it is estimated that the total population in 2006 lay between 500 and 600 pairs, fledging 420–504 young. The 2006 distribution of known territorial pairs (numbers of pairs confirmed in brackets) by recording area was as follows:

Breconshire 52 (48), **Caernarfonshire** 4 (3), **Carmarthenshire** 72 (67), **Ceredigion** 162 (147), **Denbigh & Flint** 1 (1), **Glamorgan** 15 (15), **Gwent** 2 (2), **Meirionnydd** 5 (2), **Montgomeryshire** 29 (24), **Pembrokeshire** 7 (5) and **Radnorshire** 84 (73).

Scotland 86–97 pairs bred.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway 17 pairs fledged 27 young and two pairs probably bred.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross (Tayside RSG) 11 pairs fledged 18 young and four pairs probably bred. **Upper Forth (Central Scotland RSG)** 19 pairs fledged 27 young and five pairs probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 39 pairs fledged 79 young.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

36 territorial pairs, of which 31 pairs laid eggs and 17 pairs were successful, fledging 29 young. This was the most successful breeding season since the re-establishment programme began. Breeding occurred in three Scottish recording areas: Argyll, Highland and Outer Hebrides.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

209–370 breeding females (noted as 'pairs' in the county details below). The maximum total presented here is the highest ever in this report with the exception of 2005, when a full national survey recorded a minimum of 363 confirmed breeding pairs. Nevertheless, apart from the key county of Norfolk, most county totals here are comparable to those reported in the survey.

England, SW

Devon One site: one pair bred but failed. This is the first breeding for the county since the nineteenth century.

England, SE

Essex 11 sites: 18 pairs bred, one pair probably bred and four pairs possibly bred. **Kent** Estimate of 70 pairs, with at least nine pairs confirmed breeding. No formal survey but numbers were believed to be similar to those in 2005, when the whole population was counted.

England, E

Cambridgeshire 13 sites: 25 pairs bred. **Lincolnshire** 72 pairs bred and 30 pairs probably bred. **Norfolk** A minimum of 77 pairs bred or probably bred, with at least 19 pairs confirmed breeding. Nesting occurred in three main areas (35 pairs in the Broads, 32 pairs along the north coast and 10 pairs around the Wash). **Suffolk** Eight sites: 48 pairs bred.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside Two sites: two pairs and a third female bred, fledging ten young. Two females also summered at a third site. **Yorkshire** Seven pairs bred and five pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, Mid

Fife/Perth & Kinross One extensive site: six pairs bred fledging 18 young, with one further territorial pair. **Moray & Nairn** one site: one pair bred fledging two young.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: a pair built a nest at a new location but deserted before eggs were laid. A male was present in April and May at the 2005 breeding site but no female was seen.

Single birds were also reported at potential breeding sites in Hertfordshire and Wiltshire (counties where breeding is yet to occur) and from sites in Anglesey, North-east Scotland, Orkney and Somerset (where breeding has occurred in the past); but there was no evidence of breeding in these counties in 2006.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

265–412 pairs fledged a minimum of 453 young. The first breeding birds in Derbyshire since 1997, and only the second since 1870, were reported. No confirmed breeding or territorial behaviour was reported from south or east England, but presence was again recorded in two counties.

Hen Harrier	Occupied territories	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
England, C	1	1	1	5
Derbyshire	1	1	1	5
England, N	22	20	12	40
Cumbria	4	4	4	10
Lancashire & N Merseyside	11	11	6	22
Northumberland	4	4	1	3
Yorkshire	3	1	1	5
Isle of Man	n/a	–	–	–
Wales	34	21	12	27
Breconshire	3	1	0	0
Caernarfonshire	3	0	0	0
Denbigh & Flint	7	7	7	12
Meirionnydd	10	7	3	8
Montgomeryshire	5	5	2	7
Radnorshire	6	1	0	0
Scotland, S	71	40	23	56
Clyde Islands	24	15	13	26
Dumfries & Galloway	19	10	5	14
Lothian & Borders	4	2	2	6
S Strathclyde (Ayrshire/Clyde)	24	13	3	10
Scotland, Mid	64	48	36	101
Angus & Dundee	5	2	1	3
Central Scotland	2	1	1	3
North-east Scotland	14	6	5	12
Moray & Nairn	10	10	8	26
Perth & Kinross	33	29	21	57
Scotland, N & W	220	135	85	224
Argyll	91	42	24	63
Highland (incl. Caithness)	23	17	10	31
Orkney	71	46	28	72
Outer Hebrides (Uists)	35	30	23	58
Northern Ireland	n/a	–	–	–
TOTALS	412	265	169	453

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

2006 13 sites: 13–17 pairs fledged a minimum of 24 young. This was the highest number of sites since 2000 and the highest-ever number of confirmed breeding pairs in this report. In recent years, this species has become faithful to certain areas of southern and eastern England, helping the regular monitoring and protection of Montagu's Harriers.

England, S

Three sites: four pairs bred, one pair possibly bred, and two singles. Of the nesting pairs, two pairs failed at the egg stage, one pair fledged two young from a clutch of four, and one pair fledged four young.

England, E

Lincolnshire Four sites: three pairs bred, fledging six young, and one pair possibly bred. **Norfolk** Five sites: six pairs bred, fledging 12 young, and one pair possibly bred.

England, N

One site: one pair probably bred: a male and two females present on 10th May, with a pair remaining to late May. A breeding attempt was strongly suspected but the male was not seen after 11th June.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

272–411 pairs. Following increases in recent years (see fig. 4 in Holling *et al.* 2008), the number of pairs reported in 2006 was similar to that in 2005. Most reports are of monitored nests in study areas. Fewer reports of territorial birds are received, which means that the population figures here are probably underestimates. We encourage birdwatchers who find Goshawks in breeding habitat to provide county recorders with the details, to enable more accurate assessments of local populations.

Northern Goshawk					
	Confirmed pairs	Total pairs			
England, SW	37	42	Lancashire & N Merseyside	0	4
Devon	7	7	Northumberland	24	27
Gloucestershire	22	24	Yorkshire	18	29
Hampshire	5	6	Wales	80	107
Somerset	0	1	Breconshire	7	12
Wiltshire	3	4	Caernarfonshire	1	2
England, SE	1	4	Carmarthenshire	15	16
Bedfordshire	0	1	Ceredigion	8	16
Essex	1	2	Denbigh & Flint	4	5
Surrey	0	1	Glamorgan	10	15
England, E	3	7	Gwent	21	23
Norfolk	2	5	Meirionnydd	5	7
Suffolk	1	2	Montgomeryshire	8	8
England, C	41	78	Pembrokeshire	1	3
Derbyshire	18	18	Scotland, S	40	58
Herefordshire	12	38	Ayrshire	0	3
Nottinghamshire	2	4	Dumfries & Galloway	15	17
Shropshire	7	10	Lothian & Borders	25	38
Staffordshire	1	5	Scotland, Mid	22	31
Warwickshire	1	3	Moray & Nairn	0	7
England, N	46	81	North-east Scotland	22	24
Cleveland	0	3	Scotland, N & W	2	2
Cumbria	3	8	Highland	2	2
Durham	1	10	Northern Ireland	0	1
			Co. Down	0	1
			TOTALS	272	411

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Results of Golden Eagle monitoring by Scottish Raptor Study Groups (Etheridge *et al.* 2008) and the Northern England Raptor Forum are presented below. The first table shows that 290 home ranges were checked in total, against the population of 443 pairs estimated following the 2003 national survey (Eaton *et al.* 2007b). The second table provides a breakdown of monitored home ranges by recording area. In the Uists, a comprehensive survey of known eyries was carried out. Golden Eagles also breed elsewhere in the Outer Hebrides, on the islands of Lewis & Harris, but in 2006 there was no monitoring of this important population. In England, a single male at Haweswater, Cumbria, remained unpaired for the second year running.

Although recent surveys of Golden Eagles have shown a stable population across Scotland as a whole, detailed analysis of the performance of breeding pairs in different areas of Scotland by Whitfield *et al.* (2008) demonstrates that only parts of western Scotland hold populations that are stable or expanding. Elsewhere, in the central and eastern Highlands, where the main land use is grouse-moor management, their study showed that less than half the known territories are occupied and existing

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
290	233	218	149	91	84	0.39

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Golden Eagle					
	Singles	Probable breeding (pairs)	Confirmed breeding (pairs)	Total pairs	Min. no. young fledged
England, N & Scotland, S	1	4	1	5	1
Angus & Dundee	3	1	4	5	4
North-east Scotland (incl. E Moray)	2	5	12	17	7
Perth & Kinross	8	2	9	11	11
Upper Forth	0	2	6	8	2
Argyll	4	18	44	62	21
Highland (incl. W Moray & Nairn)	8	41	60	101	32
Outer Hebrides (Uists only)	2	11	13	24	6
TOTALS	28	84	149	233	84

populations continue to decline. Based on the numbers of young produced by the remaining pairs, however, these populations should be expanding markedly. Instead, Whitfield *et al.* found that their numbers are declining and they are failing to produce young birds which could settle in other parts of Scotland. These results are consistent with several other published studies showing that Golden Eagles have been subjected to illegal persecution in these areas.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

147–161 pairs. Fewer pairs were reported in 2006 than in recent years, which reflects reduced monitoring of the larger populations in the core areas of Highland and Tayside in particular. There was a further small increase in the population in southern Scotland (to eight breeding pairs), but numbers in England (two pairs) and Wales (one pair) remain the same as in 2005.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland One pair fledged three young at Rutland Water. A second pair at another site was seen displaying and carrying nest material.

England, N

Cumbria One site: one pair fledged three young at Bassenthwaite Lake.

Wales

Meirionnydd One site: one pair fledged two young at Glaslyn. This is the third year that young Ospreys have flown from this site.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway Two pairs fledged one young each, and a third pair summered and was seen mating. Also one single bird present. **Lothian & Borders** Six pairs laid eggs and five pairs fledged ten young. Single birds were present at five other sites.

Scotland, Mid

Central Scotland 18 pairs and one single bird present: 16 pairs bred fledging 34 young. **North-east Scotland** 19 pairs laid eggs and 16 pairs fledged 34 young. **Tayside** 25 pairs present: 20 pairs laid eggs and 15 pairs fledged 31 young.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll 12 pairs present, 11 pairs laid eggs and nine pairs fledged 17 young. **Highland** 74 pairs and two single birds present: 70 pairs laid eggs and 48 pairs fledged 97 young.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

321–461 pairs. The following table is based on sample monitoring areas only and the figures, especially for England and Wales, are incomplete, although comparable with those of previous years. No data were available for Northern Ireland. This total is less than half the estimated population in the UK of 1,300 pairs (95% confidence limits 1,100–1,500), based on the 1993–94 survey (Rebecca & Bainbridge 1998). A repeat survey took place in 2008.

The diver survey in Shetland gave an opportunity to check known Merlin sites and 22 out of 75 home ranges were found to be occupied, producing higher totals than usual from that county. Note that the totals for 2005 (in Holling *et al.* 2008) were incorrect: 198 territories were occupied in northern England and 112 of these fledged at least 303 young. This means that the overall figures for 2005 were 294–533 pairs breeding with a minimum of 870 young fledged.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Merlin	Territories occupied by pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
England, SW	3	1	0	0
England, C	25	25	21	83
Derbyshire	21	21	17	66
Shropshire	3	3	3	14
Staffordshire	1	1	1	3
England, N	116	113	93	285
Cumbria	18	18	12	n/a
Durham	28	28	28	97
Lancashire & N Merseyside	11	10	6	23
Northumberland	23	22	12	36
Yorkshire	36	35	35	129
Wales	32	11	7	24
Breconshire	2	1	1	3
Caernarfonshire	2	0	0	0
Denbigh & Flint	2	2	2	6
Meirionnydd	10	7	3	12
Montgomeryshire	6	1	1	3
Pembrokeshire	1	0	0	0
Radnorshire	9	0	0	0
Scotland, S	46	28	22	63
Dumfries & Galloway	8	8	5	12
Lothian & Borders	28	16	15	45
South Strathclyde	10	4	2	6
Scotland, Mid	126	75	61	184
Angus & Dundee	17	8	7	22
Moray & Nairn	17	11	9	28
North-east Scotland	42	33	28	92
Perth & Kinross	50	23	17	42
Scotland, N & W	113	68	50	155
Argyll	5	4	4	10
Highland	41	22	18	50
Orkney	21	18	12	41
Outer Hebrides	24	7	4	12
Shetland	22	17	12	42
TOTALS	461	321	254	794

Hobby Falco subbuteo

258–846 pairs. The figures here represent only a sample of the population, thought to be c. 2,200 pairs (Clements 2001). The overall numbers are similar to those of recent years, and with a similar distribution, largely south of a line between the Wirral and the Humber. In Wales, the majority of pairs are in the southeast of the country, but 2006 saw the first confirmed breeding in Carmarthenshire, a welcome westward extension of range.

The level of coverage and the method of calculating county populations differ widely among counties. Most receive few confirmed breeding records, yet for some this is all that is available and leads to a gross underestimate of the county population (e.g. Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Oxfordshire). Other county recorders include sites where Hobbies are seen regularly in the total, but even then the figures are believed to be underestimates. In counties such as Kent, where there have been methodical surveys over several years, a better estimate can be calculated. Hobbies are elusive when breeding, many nesting in hedgerow trees in poorly covered agricultural landscapes, and the young do not fledge until late July onwards, after most breeding bird survey work is complete. The Panel is working on standard guidelines for assessing numbers of this species, and would welcome contributions from those familiar with the falcon. In the meantime, the chapter on Hobby in Hardey *et al.* (2006) provides useful guidance on the monitoring of this species.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

	Confirmed pairs	Total pairs			
Hobby			England, E	56	109
			Cambridgeshire	13	18
			Lincolnshire	5	9
England, SW	49	190	Norfolk	12	27
Avon	4	10	Northamptonshire	5	5
Devon	11	15	Suffolk	21	50
Dorset	3	23	England, C	83	127
Gloucestershire	11	15	Derbyshire	41	41
Hampshire	5	52	Herefordshire	1	10
Isle of Wight	1	1	Leicestershire & Rutland	6	20
Somerset	3	23	Nottinghamshire	6	6
Wiltshire	11	51	Shropshire	1	10
England, SE	9	350	Staffordshire	4	4
Bedfordshire	1	5	Warwickshire	23	35
Berkshire	4	7	Worcestershire	1	1
Buckinghamshire	6	15	England, N	26	53
Essex	6	30	Cheshire & Wirral	14	21
Greater London	0	8	Greater Manchester	0	2
Hertfordshire	3	51	Lancashire & N Merseyside	0	3
Kent	0	200	Yorkshire	12	27
Oxfordshire	7	7	Wales	4	16
Surrey	8	23	Scotland	1	1
Sussex	4	4	TOTALS	251	846

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

731–990 pairs. The following summary information was received, representing around 65% of the population estimated in the 2002 national survey (Banks *et al.* in press). That survey estimated 1,514 occupied territories, comprising 1,441 pairs and/or single birds confirmed and an estimated 73 extras (5% of total occupied territories) that were not visited.

Peregrine Falcon	Territories occupied by pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
England, SW	150	103	80	192
Avon	15	15	7	13
Cornwall	10	10	10	28
Devon	71	41	41	102
Dorset	25	13	13	32
Gloucestershire	7	4	2	4
Hampshire	6	4	3	6
Somerset	13	13	3	6
Wiltshire	3	3	1	1
England, SE	41	31	[21]	[47]
Bedfordshire	1	0	0	0
Berkshire	1	0	0	0
Essex	6	4	2	2
Greater London	3	2	1	3
Kent	7	5	n/a	n/a
Oxfordshire	1	1	1	n/a
Surrey	1	1	0	0
Sussex	21	18	17	42
England, E	1	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	1	0	0	0
England, C	88	76	[44]	[91]
Derbyshire	24	21	14	28
Herefordshire	11	10	n/a	n/a
Leicestershire & Rutland	8	6	5	13

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Peregrine Falcon <i>cont.</i>	Territories occupied by pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
Nottinghamshire	6	6	3	3
Shropshire	19	19	11	31
Staffordshire	6	5	4	n/a
Warwickshire	5	4	2	5
West Midlands	3	0	0	0
Worcestershire	6	5	5	11
England, N	203	150	[102]	[232]
Cheshire & Wirral	7	4	2	5
Cleveland	2	2	4	4
Cumbria	85	70	57	127
Durham	5	4	n/a	n/a
Greater Manchester	6	5	3	11
Lancashire & N Merseyside	50	20	18	46
Northumberland	25	22	18	39
Yorkshire	23	23	n/a	n/a
Wales	150	99	[26]	[129]
Anglesey	2	1	1	1
Breconshire	17	12	8	11
Caernarfonshire	7	7	5	9
Carmarthenshire	13	7	n/a	n/a
Ceredigion	1	1	1	2
Denbigh & Flint	10	10	10	26
Glamorgan	35	15	n/a	25
Gwent	7	3	n/a	8
Meirionnydd	7	6	n/a	10
Montgomeryshire	4	1	1	1
Pembrokeshire	46	36	n/a	36
Radnorshire	1	0	0	0
Scotland, S	161	134	98	237
Dumfries & Galloway	61	55	39	93
Lothian & Borders	62	50	38	99
South Strathclyde	38	29	21	45
Scotland, Mid	130	92	70	132
Central Scotland	25	19	14	26
North-east Scotland	46	29	27	52
Tayside	59	44	29	54
Scotland, N & W	64	46	37	73
Argyll	25	21	16	33
Highland	16	14	10	20
Orkney	11	5	5	9
Outer Hebrides	12	6	6	11
Northern Ireland	2	0	0	0
Co. Antrim	2	0	0	0
TOTALS	990	731	478	1,133

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

296 sites: a minimum of 1,293 territories. The most recent population estimate for the Water Rail in Great Britain is 450–900 pairs, though with nearly twice as many as this in Ireland (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). There is, however, a general feeling among many county recorders that the figures will be too low, given the secretive habits of the species and the low recording rate, unless there is a specific survey of likely sites using taped calls. Since Water Rails are not adequately monitored by current annual schemes such as BBS and WeBS, the species was added to the RBBP list to help expand our knowledge of its status and distribution. A major benefit of this approach is that a comprehensive list of Water Rail sites can be established, which also has conservation benefits. Even without any co-ordinated survey effort in most counties, the total of 1,283 territories in Britain alone is considerably higher than the top figure of 900

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

	Sites	Territories			
Water Rail			Durham	6	6
			Greater Manchester	16	27
England, SW	30	162	Lancashire & N Merseyside	2	102
Devon	3	12	Northumberland	4	4
Dorset	6	7	Yorkshire	18	82
Hampshire	13	24	Wales	12	38
Isle of Wight	4	4	Anglesey	3	25
Somerset	3	113	Breconshire	2	3
Wiltshire	1	2	Caernarfonshire	2	2
England, SE	56	131	Ceredigion	2	3
Bedfordshire	3	5	Glamorgan	2	3
Buckinghamshire	2	2	Pembrokeshire	1	2
Essex	15	57	Scotland, S	23	64
Greater London	1	1	Borders	7	8
Hertfordshire	5	8	Clyde	11	30
Kent	18	45	Dumfries & Galloway	5	26
Oxfordshire	2	3	Scotland, Mid	13	90
Surrey	4	4	Angus & Dundee	1	16
Sussex	6	6	Fife	7	8
England, E	37	396	North-east Scotland	3	3
Cambridgeshire	12	29	Perth & Kinross	2	63
Lincolnshire	1	1	Scotland, N & W	25	54
Norfolk	11	37	Argyll	13	24
Suffolk	13	329	Highland	6	22
England, C	20	65	Orkney	3	4
Derbyshire	2	2	Outer Hebrides	1	2
Leicestershire & Rutland	3	3	Shetland	2	2
Nottinghamshire	1	3	Northern Ireland	10	10
Staffordshire	3	35	Co. Antrim	2	2
Warwickshire	10	20	Co. Armagh	1	1
Worcestershire	1	2	Co. Down	5	5
England, N	70	283	Co. Fermanagh	1	1
Cheshire & Wirral	15	15	Co. Tyrone	1	1
Cleveland	3	37	TOTALS	296	1,293
Cumbria	6	10			

given in Gibbons *et al.* (1993).

Returns from the majority of counties were received, but it is possible that some recorders omitted this newly listed species by accident. The results therefore reflect a minimum that we hope to build upon in the coming years. It would be useful if, in future, recorders could indicate whether their returns reflect casual records only or the results of partial or complete surveys of known sites. Without this knowledge, it is premature to highlight particular counties, although Suffolk held over 25% of the Water Rails reported in 2006, despite the suggestion that fewer records than normal were received that year in that county.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

22 sites: 0–26 singing males. These are the highest numbers of both sites and calling birds since 2001. The record from Co. Down is the first record of a singing bird in Northern Ireland since 1992, when one was reported from Co. Fermanagh. 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. All records below refer to single calling birds unless specified.

England, SW

Dorset One site: 11th–14th May. Somerset One site.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) three, 5th May to 14th June; (2) one, possibly two, 23rd–28th May. Norfolk One site: 15th and 17th April.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

England, C**Staffordshire** One site: 30th April to 13th May.**England, N****Cleveland** One site. **Yorkshire** Three sites: (1) four dates in April; (2) two dates in May; (3) four dates in June.**Wales****Anglesey** One site: 18th–24th April. **Ceredigion** One site: 3rd–4th June.**Scotland, S****Dumfries & Galloway** Two sites: (1) several dates in July; (2) single date in July.**Scotland, N & W****Argyll** Three sites: (1) two; (2) one, 30th May to at least 7th July; (3) one. **Highland** One site. **Orkney** One site: 8th June. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one from 19th June with a second in early July. **Shetland** One site: 18th June only.**Northern Ireland****Co. Down** One site: 9th–15th May.**Corn Crake *Crex crex***

1,157 singing males. Fieldwork by the RSPB provides most of the records of this species and the total continues to increase at a moderate rate, especially in Argyll. There were no data from Northern Ireland or the Isle of Man, which between them had five singing birds in 2005. The reintroduced population in Cambridgeshire increased from two to six, although it is possible that two birds moved site and may have been double-counted.

England, E**Cambridgeshire** One site: six singing males. **Suffolk** One site: one singing male.**England, N****Cumbria** One site: one singing male.**Scotland, S****Clyde** One site: one singing male.**Scotland, Mid****Angus & Dundee** One site: one singing male. **North-east Scotland** One site: one singing male in set-aside from 8th June to 7th July, with a second bird elsewhere heard for one day only.**Scotland, N & W**

Argyll Total 665: mainland 1, Coll 171, Colonsay 40, Garvellachs 1, Gigha 0, Iona 39, Islay 59, McCormaig Isles 2, Mull 7, Oronsay 22, Staffa 2, Tiree 316, Treshnish Isles 5. **Caithness** 2. **Highland** Total 31: mainland 10, Canna 2, Eigg 0, Muck 3, Rum 0, Skye 16. **Orkney** Total 17: Burray/South Ronaldsay 1, North Ronaldsay 1, Papa Westray 9, Stronsay 3, West Mainland 3. **Outer Hebrides** Total 430: Barra 66, Benbecula 26, Berneray 4, Harris 14, Lewis 101, Mingulay 0, North Uist 100, South Uist 110, Vatersay 9.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Two sites: 6–10 pairs. The number of confirmed breeding pairs thus increases by just one, but 2006 was significant in that a pair away from the long-established Norfolk Broads population successfully reared one young, after failures in the preceding two years. Given the poor success of the Norfolk birds, this may have been the only young Common Crane fledged in the UK in 2006.

England, E**Norfolk** One site: five pairs bred and four pairs probably bred. Of the five nesting pairs, only one was seen with young, a brood of three, but they were predated before fledging.**England, elsewhere**

One site: one pair bred, fledging one young.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

One site: one pair bred. This is the sixth breeding attempt in the UK since the first in Nottinghamshire in 1945, but only that pair and one in Norfolk in 1987 successfully reared young.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: one pair bred but no young fledged. Two males and a female arrived on 5th May and by 19th May had laid four eggs at a site close to a small Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* colony. The second male was driven away and left the site on 22nd May. The eggs did not hatch and the birds abandoned the nest on 23rd June and left the site on 28th June.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

66 sites: 1,570 pairs. When Avocets first recolonised England, they nested in coastal wetlands, especially brackish lagoons, but increasingly they have been found nesting in a range of freshwater habitats. The first inland nesting was at Hickling Broad, Norfolk, in 1982 (Brown & Grice 2005) and a number of the sites reported here are away from the sea. A pair that laid two eggs and fledged one young in Durham was also at an inland site, and this constitutes the first breeding for that county. In addition, two sites in Cambridgeshire held three prospecting pairs, which did not stay to breed, and a site in North-east Scotland which has held a single bird for five consecutive years hosted a displaying pair during mid April.



Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* with chick.

Avocet	No. sites	Confirmed pairs	Min. young fledged
England, SW	1	6	18
Hampshire	1	6	18
England, SE	26	538	163
Essex	13	180	116
Greater London	1	1	2
Kent	10	331	25
Sussex	2	26	20
England, E	29	923	204
Lincolnshire	6	231	80
Norfolk	15	464	108
Suffolk	8	228	16
England, C	1	1	4
Worcestershire	1	1	4
England, N	8	97	115
Cheshire & Wirral	1	1	3
Durham	1	1	1
Lancashire & N Merseyside	3	38	49
Yorkshire	3	57	62
Wales	1	5	1
Gwent	1	5	1
TOTALS	66	1,570	505

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Six counties: 339 confirmed pairs fledged 206 young. Monitoring by RSPB, supported by Natural England, covers most of the population each year, amounting to 288 pairs in 2006. In addition, a large estate in Suffolk held a further 51 pairs, bringing the national total to a minimum of 339 breeding pairs, a continued increase.

Stone-curlew	Confirmed pairs	Young fledged
England, SW	103	73
Hampshire	24	13
Wiltshire	79	60
England, SE	14	9
Berkshire	9	4
Oxfordshire	5	5
England, E	222	124
Norfolk	131	67
Suffolk	91	57
TOTALS	339	206

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

519–783 pairs. The numbers and distribution of Little Ringed Plovers reported in 2006 was very similar to that in 2005. Information held by the Panel on breeding sites helped to direct the 2007 survey of this species and a summary of the results will be included in the next RBBP report. From the findings of that survey, it would appear that the figures presented here are minima for most areas and under-represent the actual totals.

Little Ringed Plover					
	Confirmed pairs	Max. total			
England, SW	44	57	Warwickshire	18	21
Avon	3	4	Worcestershire	15	15
Dorset	1	2	West Midlands	5	5
Gloucestershire	9	10	England, N	167	269
Hampshire	19	28	Cheshire & Wirral	9	9
Somerset	0	1	Cleveland	6	9
Wiltshire	12	12	Cumbria	6	6
England, SE	38	112	Durham	5	8
Bedfordshire	0	3	Greater Manchester	22	36
Berkshire	13	18	Lancashire & N Merseyside	12	50
Buckinghamshire	1	7	Northumberland	5	9
Essex	3	24	Yorkshire	102	142
Greater London	1	2	Wales	110	117
Hertfordshire	7	21	Breconshire	5	6
Kent	7	21	Carmarthenshire	70	70
Oxfordshire	0	2	Ceredigion	1	3
Surrey	1	4	Denbigh & Flint	0	3
Sussex	5	10	Glamorgan	16	16
England, E	47	85	Gwent	4	4
Cambridgeshire	14	24	Meirionnydd	5	5
Lincolnshire	4	32	Montgomeryshire	5	5
Norfolk	20	20	Radnorshire	4	5
Suffolk	9	9	Scotland, S	1	5
England, C	105	127	Borders	0	1
Derbyshire	22	22	Clyde	1	2
Herefordshire	9	14	Lothian	0	2
Leicestershire & Rutland	15	21	Scotland, Mid	7	11
Nottinghamshire	5	6	Angus & Dundee	2	3
Shropshire	5	9	Fife	3	5
Staffordshire	11	14	North-east Scotland	2	2
			Upper Forth	0	1
			TOTALS	519	783

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

The Panel aims to cover only those Dotterels nesting outside the main Scottish range, which is the mountainous areas of Highland, Moray & Nairn, North-east Scotland and Perth & Kinross. In 2006, data relating to 20 breeding pairs in Highland and North-east Scotland were received, as well as records from the Southern Uplands of Scotland and the North Pennines. In Borders, a trip of four Dotterels was found on a hilltop where the species formerly bred, although a search of three hilltops in the area later in the season revealed nothing. In Cumbria, a single (unsexed) bird was found on 5th June, possibly hinting at a breeding attempt there.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One site: one bird. This is the first report of this species since 2003. The last known successful breeding was in 1993.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one or possibly two birds seen in early June at a former breeding site but no further records.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One site: one bird. Purple Sandpipers nest on mountain tops in the central highlands of Scotland, and can be elusive on their breeding grounds. There have never been more than five pairs in any given year. Nevertheless, this is a poor showing and perhaps suggests that we are about to lose this fragile population.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: a single bird, possibly a female, reported from likely habitat.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Five sites: 1–8 pairs. Most Ruffs showing breeding behaviour are restricted now to the northern and western islands of Scotland, which reported breeding pairs in 2003 and 2004. It is therefore unusual to report breeding from the English mainland. The last confirmed breeding in England was in Sussex, in 1996.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: a female with two small young was seen in mid June. This followed records of up to ten males and two females at a lek, for three weeks between late April and mid May.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: a pair on 11th June followed by one breeding-plumaged bird on 3rd July.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: a male displaying to a female on two dates in mid June, as in 2005. **Orkney** One site: two breeding-plumaged males chasing each other on 14th June. **Outer Hebrides** One site: up to two males and one female between 10th May and 25th July.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Ten sites: 68–70 pairs. The numbers of breeding nominate *limosa* increased from 53 in 2005 to 62, with a moderate increase at the sites in Cambridgeshire, Kent and Yorkshire. Numbers of the northern *islandica* population were static, but records came only from the Northern Isles.

L. l. limosa

62–63 pairs.

England, SE

Kent Two sites: six pairs bred; two pairs at one site failed and the outcome at the other site is unknown.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: 48 pairs fledged only four young. Wet weather and predation reduced productivity.

Norfolk One site: three pairs bred, fledging four young. **Suffolk** A single male on the coast was seen displaying for the ninth consecutive year, but this time only for its own benefit.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: two pairs bred, one fledging one young and the other failing after the eggs hatched. **Yorkshire** One site: three pairs bred but all failed because of flooding in late May.

L. l. islandica

6–7 pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: four pairs bred. **Shetland** Three sites: two pairs bred, one of which fledged two young, and a third pair held territory.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

The only record of Whimbrels from outside the species' main range in Orkney and Shetland was of a pair in suitable habitat on North Uist, Outer Hebrides.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Two sites: 1–2 pairs. The one regular site, occupied since 1999, continues to hold one or two breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: one pair bred, fledging two young, and one pair probably bred.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Dan Powell



Data received by RBBP reflect only a small proportion of the breeding pairs of Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* in Scotland and the Panel seeks annual counts from a number of defined areas so that population trends can be established.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

27 sites: 6–71 pairs. Given the current estimate of the UK breeding population of 780–1,420 pairs (Hancock *et al.* 1997), the figures presented here are a gross underestimate of the numbers of breeding Greenshanks. We have previously appealed for more information on this species, in part to enhance our knowledge of the breeding sites, and would particularly welcome regular counts of breeding pairs from defined areas, which might help us to construct annual population indices.

Scotland, Mid

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

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Three sites: one pair bred, one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Caithness** One site: at least one pair possibly bred. **Highland** 12 sites: three pairs bred, at least 45 pairs probably bred and eight pairs possibly bred. **Outer Hebrides** Ten sites: two pairs bred and eight pairs probably bred.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Six sites: 0–8 pairs. Only limited information was again received for this species, with no details of breeding success. A full survey was conducted in 2007 and this will be summarised in the next report.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness Recorded at one site. **Highland** Recorded at five sites with three pairs at one of these.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Nine sites: 23–30 breeding males. The increase in numbers shown in the most recent RBBP reports seems to have faltered, with only 12 males at the main site on Fetlar, compared with 20 in 2005 and 19 in both 2003 and 2004.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides Six sites: two breeding males, two males probably breeding and four males possibly breeding. **Shetland** Three extensive sites: (1) Fetlar. At least 11 breeding males and one male probably breeding. (2)–(3) Another ten breeding males.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

34 sites: 474–506 pairs, including mixed pairs. A substantial increase occurred in 2006, with up to 500 pairs in England alone. Over half of these are at the important colony in Langstone Harbour, Hampshire, and there are two other large colonies in Kent and Sussex. Together, these three colonies

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

account for almost 90% of the total breeding population, with the number of pairs increasing from 194 to 423 confirmed breeding pairs in just one year.

Elsewhere, although there are widespread indications of attempted breeding, mainly in Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* colonies, many of these attempts are not sustained in subsequent years. After three pairs reported in Wales in 2005, there were none in 2006, just a single adult at a Black-headed Gull colony in Breconshire, in April. Several of the out-of-range records refer to adult or subadult Mediterranean Gulls attempting to pair with Black-headed Gulls. A more unusual record, though, was of an adult Mediterranean Gull apparently paired with a Common Gull *L. canus* in Scotland, where there have previously been few breeding attempts (Forrester *et al.* 2007; plates 110 & 111). Between 1980 and 2004, there were four instances of single adults in Black-headed Gull colonies in Scotland, and two sites where birds held territories in Common Gull colonies. At one, in Orkney, a bird returned for three seasons between 1998 and 2000.



Eric McCabe



Eric McCabe

110 & 111. Over 500 pairs of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* nested in England in 2006, but elsewhere the species is still unusual as a breeding bird. In Scotland, the only record in 2006 was this bird, which formed a mixed pair with a Common Gull *L. canus*, in Perth & Kinross. Away from their main colonies in southern England, Mediterranean Gulls often appear in colonies of Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* and initially form mixed pairs before small colonies of Mediterranean Gulls become established.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

England, SW

Hampshire Three sites: (1) 264 pairs at Langstone Harbour fledged 204 young; (2) one pair bred at a new site, fledging one young; (3) three pairs probably bred, including one mixed pair (with Black-headed Gull). **Isle of Wight** One site: six pairs fledged two young.

England, SE

Essex Five sites: 11 pairs bred. **Kent** Two sites: (1) 84 pairs bred and c. 16 pairs probably bred; (2) two pairs bred. **Sussex** One site: 75 pairs bred, fledging 45 young.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) a pair was seen displaying in a Black-headed Gull colony, but did not establish a territory; (2) a single male held territory in a Black-headed Gull colony. **Lincolnshire** Three sites: three pairs possibly bred. **Norfolk** Two sites: three pairs bred, fledging three young. **Suffolk** Two sites: (1) nine pairs fledged just one young; (2) two pairs bred but failed to rear young.

England, C

Staffordshire Two sites: (1) 1–2 subadults displaying in a Black-headed Gull colony; (2) a single bird displaying in a Black-headed Gull colony.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: six pairs bred. **Greater Manchester** One site: one mixed pair (with Black-headed Gull) fledged one young. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Two sites: six pairs fledged seven young. **Northumberland** One site: a single adult in a Black-headed Gull colony. **Yorkshire** Two sites: three pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one pair probably bred – an adult was paired and seen copulating with a Common Gull in May but it is not known if eggs were laid (plates 110 & 111).

Northern Ireland

Co. Down Two sites: four pairs bred. **Co. Tyrone** One site: one pair possibly bred – a single adult in June.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Three sites: 1–4 pairs. There is little indication that this species is gaining a foothold in the UK, but observers should be aware of the possibility when checking colonies of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair bred. Two young were hatched but these were soon lost, presumed predated.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one adult and a second-summer were displaying between March and May, while a third bird was paired and displaying with a Lesser Black-backed Gull in March and April.

Northern Ireland

Co. Fermanagh One site: one bird present in a Lesser Black-backed Gull colony.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Minimum of 1,617 pairs at 66 colonies. The table shows the number of occupied Little Tern colonies by county and the minimum number of confirmed breeding pairs at those colonies. Almost all of the colonies in England and Wales, and about half of the Scottish colonies, are monitored as part of the annual JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme (Mavor *et al.* 2008). The following summary is taken from that source: 'Small to moderate increases occurred in two-thirds of the regions [as defined by the Seabird Monitoring Programme], but declines were noted in southwest Scotland, southeast England and northwest England. Productivity at many sites across the regions was reduced by predation, bad weather and tidal inundation. Additionally, localised food shortages depressed productivity in southwest Scotland and at sites in eastern England.'

Little Tern	No. colonies	Confirmed pairs			
			Sussex	2	24
			England, E	15	747
England, SW	3	155	Lincolnshire	3	73
Dorset	1	33	Norfolk	7	609
Hampshire	2	122	Suffolk	5	65
England, SE	11	171	England, N	9	267
Essex	7	134	Cleveland	2	30
Kent	2	13	Cumbria	2	50

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Little Tern <i>cont</i>					
	No. colonies	Confirmed pairs			
			Moray & Nairn	1	4
Isle of Man	1	17	North-east Scotland	1	22
Northumberland	2	106	Scotland, N & W	22	124
Yorkshire	2	64	Argyll	15	76
Wales	2	111	Caithness	2	10
Denbigh & Flint	2	111	Highland	1	12
Scotland, S	1	1	Orkney	1	3
Ayrshire	1	1	Outer Hebrides	3	23
Scotland, Mid	3	41	TOTALS	66	1,617
Angus & Dundee	1	15			

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Nine sites: 108–110 pairs fledged 113 young. The following summary is taken from Mavor *et al.* (2008): 'The colony at Coquet Island, the largest in the UK, continued to increase, reaching the third-highest level since recording began in 1969. On the Farne Islands, Roseate Terns kept a foothold with one nesting pair. One pair more [five] than in 2005 was recorded at the only site in Scotland (1981–2005 mean seven pairs). As in 2005, only one pair nested in southern England. The species returned to Wales, with one nesting pair each at two sites after an absence of two consecutive years. Numbers at the colony in Northern Ireland declined to less than half the long-term mean (1986–2005 mean 11 pairs).'

England, S

Two sites: (1) one pair bred but no young were raised; (2) a pair appeared in a mixed tern colony on 30th May, but not subsequently.

England, N

Northumberland Two sites: (1) Coquet Island: 94 pairs fledged 100 young; (2) Farne Islands: one pair fledged one young.

Wales

Anglesey Three sites: (1) one pair fledged one young; (2) one pair fledged one young; (3) a territorial pair did not nest.

Scotland, Mid

Fife One site: five pairs fledged eight young.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: five pairs fledged two young.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*

One site: one singing male. Eurasian Scops Owls breed in warm, dry, open areas in southern and eastern Europe and the species is typically a very rare spring vagrant. A bird holding territory such as this one in Oxfordshire is unusual and this is the first time that Eurasian Scops Owl has appeared in the RBBP report. There was, however, a similar instance in 1980, when a male was present in Hampshire from 12th May to at least 14th July (Rogers *et al.* 1981).

England, SE

Oxfordshire One site: one male calling between 12th and 30th June may have been present since 21st April.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

One site: one pair attempted to breed. There was a long gap between the nesting by three pairs of European Bee-eaters in Sussex in 1955 (Brown & Grice 2005) and the breeding attempts in Durham and Yorkshire in 2002 (Ogilvie *et al.* 2004). A third recent attempt, in Herefordshire in 2005 (Holling *et al.* 2008), and now this record in 2006, suggests that breeding Bee-eaters may become more frequent in the future and birders should be aware of this if the species is seen in summer close to sandy cliffs and quarries.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair present at a coastal site from 13th June started to excavate a nest hole in late July. Although the hole was completed in early August, it is not known whether eggs were laid; the birds were driven away from the site after 18th August owing to persistent wind and rain.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006



Rosemary Powell

Wood Larks *Lullula arborea* were the subject of a national survey in 2006 and an 88% increase in the numbers of territories since the previous survey, nine years earlier, was revealed. There has been a less dramatic extension in range, but a pair in Gwent was the first to nest in Wales since 1981.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

3,064 territories (95% confidence limits 2,472–3,687) were estimated from the 2006 national survey (Conway *et al.* in press). This estimate accounts for suitable habitat not covered and a correction factor for the number of visits has been applied to the actual numbers detected. A total of 1,771 territories were reported, which are summarised by county in the table below. These include 13 territories in Staffordshire and one in Kent that were not reported through the national survey.

Unsurprisingly, the numbers reported in 2006 are far higher than those in 2005, reflecting the more comprehensive coverage of known breeding sites and high level of coverage of potentially suitable habitat within 10 km of known sites, to detect local range expansion.

A revised estimate of 1,633 territories (95% confidence limits 1,621–1,644) for the 1997 national survey (Wotton & Gillings 2000) has been calculated. There has therefore been a breeding population increase of 88% in the past nine years.

Since 1997, the known breeding range, in terms of occupied 10-km squares, has increased by 48%. The majority of the range expansion has occurred immediately around existing population centres, particularly in East Anglia, Hampshire, Nottinghamshire, Sussex and Yorkshire. However, a number of new sites have been occupied in a modest wave of westward and northward expansion into

Wood Lark	Pairs	Cambridgeshire	1
		Lincolnshire	49
England, SW	593	Norfolk	249
Devon	57	Suffolk	370
Dorset	153	England, C	78
Hampshire	379	Nottinghamshire	37
Wiltshire	4	Staffordshire	40
England, SE	389	Worcestershire	1
Berkshire	66	England, N	41
Essex	1	Yorkshire	41
Kent	2	Wales	1
Surrey	213	Gwent	1
Sussex	107	TOTAL	1,771
England, E	669		

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Cambridgeshire, Gwent, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Yorkshire, many constituting the first local breeding records in over 25 years. Indeed, the Gwent record represents the first breeding in Wales since 1981. The predominantly farmland population in Devon has shown some increase in numbers but little overall range expansion. However, there were no occupied sites in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire and only low numbers still persisting in Kent and Wiltshire.

The traditional habitats of heathland and young forestry plantations still hold the majority of birds, but the biggest change since 1997 has been the increased use of farmland across Britain.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

24 sites: 14–29 pairs. The long-term decline in numbers of breeding Black Redstarts during the last 20 years was illustrated in Holling *et al.* (2007), but coverage in 2005 was better, revealing up to 60 pairs from 54 sites, all in southern Britain (Holling *et al.* 2008). Regrettably, coverage in 2006 was less good, with only minimal data received from Greater London, which in 2005 accounted for 12 pairs at 12 sites. Former sites in Lancashire & North Merseyside were searched in 2006 but no birds were found.

England, SE

Berkshire One site: one pair probably bred as a male held territory from May to July. **Buckinghamshire** One site: one pair possibly bred – a male was at the 2005 site in early spring. **Greater London** One site: one male present. **Hertfordshire** Although records were received of three separate birds between May and July, one of which may have been a juvenile, only possible breeding is indicated. **Kent** Three sites: three pairs bred, plus one other singing male. This represents a significant reduction in numbers from just a few years ago. **Sussex** Four sites: five pairs bred and one pair probably bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one singing male in April and May. **Norfolk** One site: one pair bred and two pairs probably bred. **Suffolk** Four sites: two pairs bred, one pair probably bred and one long-staying male.

England, C

West Midlands Five sites in two cities: one pair bred (juvenile seen in July) and four pairs possibly bred.

England, N

Greater Manchester One site: one pair bred.

Wales

Montgomeryshire One site: one pair bred. A recently fledged juvenile was thought to have come from a nearby quarry.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

One site: one pair bred. The fortunes of the Fieldfare as a nesting bird in the UK seem to vary from year to year (fig. 4), with no apparent pattern and no site fidelity. The maximum number recorded in any one year has been 13, during a period of relative abundance in the early 1990s. Since the blank year of 1999, there have been four years with only one or two potentially breeding pairs, and two years (2000

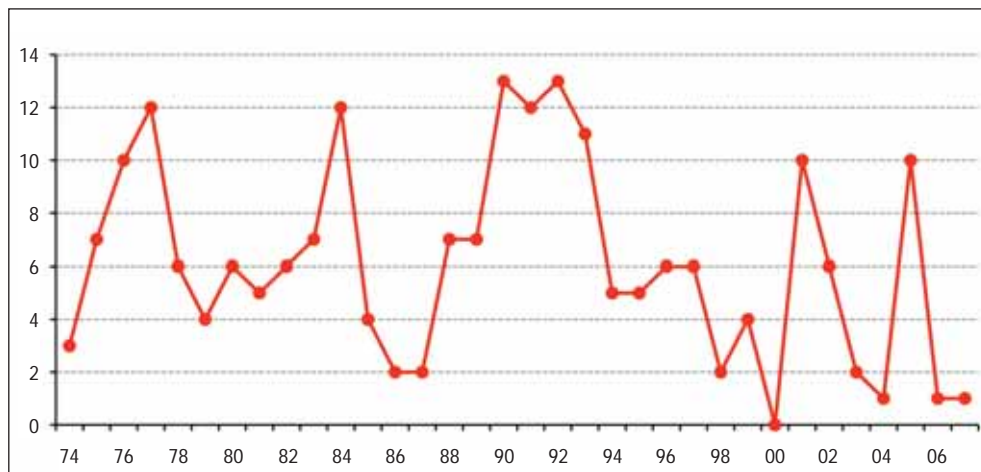


Fig. 4. There is no consistency in the number of potentially breeding Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* recorded in the UK.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

and 2004) with as many as ten. In that seven-year period, breeding has been confirmed in Borders (which has proved to be one of the most regularly used areas by this species), Cumbria, Fife, Highland, Kent, North-east Scotland and Orkney.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: an adult was seen carrying food on 12th June, but despite searches no Fieldfares were found in the area in subsequent weeks.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Ten sites: 4–12 pairs. Numbers of breeding Redwings apparently remain low, following the decline since the early 1980s (fig. 8 in Holling *et al.* 2008), but annual coverage is variable and the total numbers may be underestimated because they are based only on casual submissions and not from concerted searches.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Nine sites: four pairs bred, five pairs probably bred and two singing males. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one pair probably bred. A nest was built but deserted before laying.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

1,422 singing males or territories. This total is another record high, yet even this is reckoned to be an underestimate. Cetti's Warblers are now so numerous in some southern counties that the Panel requests county totals only for those areas with more than ten sites or singing males. They are, however, still a novelty in counties peripheral to the main range and we would like to monitor all sites within these areas, to track the species' range expansion. Notable records in 2006 included the first records in this report from Staffordshire (two singing males at one site) and the first confirmed breeding in Yorkshire, where two pairs, at two sites, each fledged three young.

Cetti's Warbler	Total	England, E	323
England, SW	644	Cambridgeshire	6
Avon	32	Norfolk	176
Cornwall	11	Suffolk	141
Devon	66	England, C	20
Dorset	68	Staffordshire	2
Gloucestershire	14	Warwickshire	13
Hampshire	132	Worcestershire	5
Isle of Wight	24	England, N	3
Somerset	270	Yorkshire	3
Wiltshire	27	Wales	134
England, SE	298	Anglesey	6
Berkshire	36	Breconshire	1
Buckinghamshire	2	Caernarfonshire	8
Essex	68	Carmarthenshire	20
Hertfordshire	6	Ceredigion	2
Kent	124	Glamorgan	52
Oxfordshire	12	Gwent	41
Surrey	2	Pembrokeshire	4
Sussex	48	TOTAL	1,422

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Three sites: at least four singing males. Numbers have remained low, fewer than ten singing males per year, since the early 1990s, as shown in fig. 5. Since they nest in reedbeds, it seems unlikely that Savi's Warblers are limited by a lack of suitable habitat in the UK. It may be that conditions elsewhere – in their breeding areas in continental European strongholds, on migration or in the sub-Saharan African wintering quarters – are limiting their population here.

England, SW

Somerset Two sites: (1) one singing male on 9th–14th April, but not heard subsequently; (2) one singing male on 25th–28th July, included here as this may have been a returning bird from 2005.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

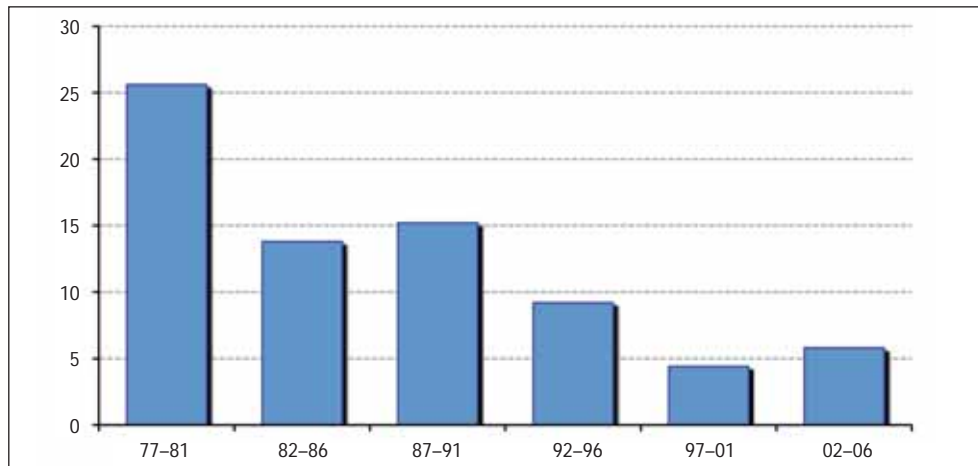


Fig. 5. Five-year averages of the total number of singing male Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinioides* reported to the RBBP, 1977–2006. The marked decline from the late 1970s is clear, along with another fall in numbers since the early 1990s.

England, SE

Kent One site: two singing males. One singing from 24th April was joined by a second male on 27th April and both were then seen and heard regularly into May, with occasional records in June and August. A female was also seen on 2nd–4th May. Elsewhere, a male singing on 24th April only may have moved to the main site, and there was an additional record of a singing male at a third site on 3rd July. Note that none of these records has been submitted to BBRC for verification.

In addition to these records, a bird trapped in Wiltshire on 28th May is thought to have been on passage, and a bird was recorded singing on 3rd–4th June in Norfolk.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Four sites: 1–5 pairs. The maximum total of five pairs is even lower than the total of nine in 2005, itself the lowest for 20 years. After the successful breeding in Shetland in 2005, only passage birds were recorded there, with two singing males on Shetland for just three days each. Another bird singing in northeast England for five days in mid July was also perhaps a late passage bird.

England, SE

Two sites: one pair bred and two pairs probably bred. (1) Four adults and two juveniles were trapped and it is believed that one pair bred and a second pair probably bred; (2) singing male on three dates in May and July with presence of a second bird strongly suspected. In addition, singing males were recorded on single dates at two further sites.

England, E

Suffolk One site: one singing male present from 8th to 15th June.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: one singing male present for a week in mid June.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One site: one singing male. In addition, four others were reported in spring, but for one day only, in Kent, Lincolnshire, Suffolk and Yorkshire.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee One site: one singing male from 11th June to 13th July.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

3,214 territories estimated in a national survey. The fourth national Dartford Warbler survey was undertaken in 2006, organised by BTO, Forestry Commission (England), Natural England and RSPB. The aim was to achieve full coverage of all the 1-km squares ('core squares') occupied during the previous national survey (in 1994) and subsequently, and sample coverage of a random selection of

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006



Ben Green

The fourth national survey of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* revealed the highest total number of territories yet recorded, at over 3,200. Since the previous survey in 1994, there has been a significant range expansion with breeding now recorded in East Anglia, central England and south Wales.

squares from 5-km and 10-km buffers around core squares, stratified by the presence of suitable habitat. In all, 2,575 1-km squares were surveyed in England and Wales. There was further coverage in the Channel Islands, on Alderney, Guernsey, Herm and Jersey.

During the survey, 2,559 territories were located in the UK – 2,518 in England and 41 in Wales – an increase since the 1994 survey, when 1,682 territories were found (all in England). Dartford Warblers were found in 126 10-km squares, a range increase of 117% since 1994. A further 85 territories were recorded in the Channel Islands, with 53 found on Jersey.

The final UK estimate was 3,214 territories (95% confidence limits 2,878–3,591) in the UK in 2006, up by 70% since the previous survey in 1994. This comprises 3,142 territories (2,827–3,491) in England and 72 territories (41–116) in Wales.

The three main counties in 2006 were Dorset (18% increase in numbers since 1994), Hampshire (2% decrease since 1994) and Surrey (169% increase since 1994). There have been some major changes in distribution since the 1994 survey, with 128 territories found on the Suffolk coast heathlands and breeding birds on Cannock Chase, Staffordshire, and Sutton Park, West Midlands. Of interest is the spread into the uplands of southwest England, with 118 territories found on Exmoor and 52 on Dartmoor. The highest recorded territory in 2006 was at around 460 m, on Exmoor.

The county totals in the table show the actual numbers of territories counted in the national survey.

Dartford Warbler	Total	Sussex	106
England, SW	1,783	England, E	131
Cornwall	29	Norfolk	1
Devon	233	Suffolk	130
Dorset	754	England, C	5
Hampshire	631	Staffordshire	3
Isle of Wight	5	West Midlands	2
Somerset	131	Wales	41
England, SE	599	Carmarthenshire	10
Berkshire	21	Glamorgan	12
Buckinghamshire	1	Gwent	4
Surrey	471	Pembrokeshire	15
		TOTAL	2,559

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*

Two sites: two singing males. Migrant passerines which sing on passage are included in this report only when they remain, in suitable breeding habitat, for at least a week. This species was first noted in the RBBP report in 1999, when there were two singing males, in Devon and in Dorset (Ogilvie *et al.* 2001). Since then, there have been three other records, all of singing males, which qualify for inclusion, but which have not previously appeared in these reports: Cornwall (13th–31st May 2000), Oxfordshire (27th April to 15th May 2001) and Devon (19th May to 17th June 2003). Records of Iberian Chiffchaff are verified by BBRC, and Collinson & Melling (2008) reviewed all British records, and commented on identification criteria.

England, SW

Devon One site: one singing male from 1st May to 6th June.

Scotland, S

Lothian One site: one singing male on 6th–13th May, having being located originally 2 km away on 5th May.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

At least 64 sites, including several extensive sites: 5–341 pairs. Although the maximum total of 341 pairs is the highest yet in this report, it is still thought to be an underestimate, as the data submitted depend heavily on the search effort for this species. In 2006, targeted effort in some counties, such as Hampshire and Sussex, produced high totals, yet only one bird was reported from Kent, where 19 males were found in a survey in 2001. Such variation might explain some of the fluctuations in the number of pairs in RBBP reports since 1973 (fig. 6) but there is no question that the numbers have been increasing dramatically in the last five years.

Firecrests are extremely vocal where they occur at higher densities, but less so at low densities, so some birds may be being overlooked. Surveys of areas away from known hotspots may therefore be productive in identifying new sites. In this report, records of territories (probable breeding) are based on occupation of a site for over a week. Singing males recorded for less than a week are treated as possible breeding records.

England, SW

Gloucestershire Two sites: two territories. **Hampshire** One extensive site (New Forest) held 78 territories, a second site held 20 territories, and there were ten other territories elsewhere in the county. **Somerset** Four sites: two pairs bred and six singing males. **Wiltshire** Four sites: 17 territories and two singing males.

England, SE

Berkshire Ten sites: two pairs bred, 56 other territories and a further five singing males. **Buckinghamshire** Two sites: five singing males. **Essex** Two sites: two singing males. **Hertfordshire** Two sites: one territory and one singing male. **Kent** Reported from only one site, with one bird on one date. However, as in the previous two years, there was no survey and this is thought to be a gross under-representation. **Oxfordshire** One site: one territory. **Surrey** One site: three singing males. **Sussex** At least three sites: 64 territories identified with 49 at one main site.

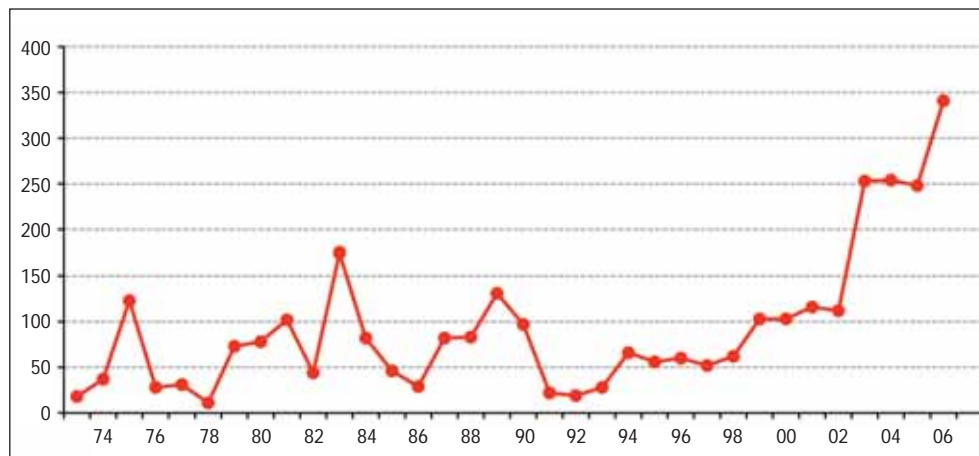


Fig. 6. The total number of breeding pairs of Firecrests *Regulus ignicapilla* reported to the RBBP, 1973–2006.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one singing male. **Norfolk** Two extensive sites and two other sites: 45 territories in total.

Suffolk Seven sites: two territories and seven singing males.

England, C

Derbyshire Two sites: (1) a singing male in June and July, one young seen close to the male on one date may have been a hybrid (with Goldcrest *R. regulus*); (2) one female on one date in July. **Staffordshire** One site: a pair which had overwintered stayed and bred, but failed at the egg stage. This is the first confirmed breeding for the county.

England, N

Yorkshire Two sites: one territory and one singing male.

Wales

Montgomeryshire Three sites: three territories.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

49 sites: a minimum of 614 pairs. The national survey of Bearded Tits in 2002 produced an estimate of around 650 pairs (Eaton *et al.* 2004), and the total reported here is now close to that figure, especially given that some sites provided minimum counts. The breeding pair in Bedfordshire represents the first breeding for that county, and a pair bred in Gwent for the second year running. Bearded Tits were also reported from sites in Cheshire & Wirral and North-east Scotland, indicating possible breeding in these counties, and from two additional sites in Hampshire in the breeding season.

Bearded Tit	No. sites	Confirmed/ probable breeding pairs	England, E	21	296
			Cambridgeshire	1	1
			Lincolnshire	1	5
			Norfolk	11	91
			Suffolk	8	199
England, SW	9	40	England, N	3	138
Dorset	2	11	Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	35
Hampshire	5	17	Yorkshire	2	103
Somerset	2	12	Wales	1	1
England, SE	13	96	Gwent	1	1
Bedfordshire	1	1	Scotland, Mid	2	43
Essex	6	17	Moray & Nairn	1	1
Kent	5	72	Perth & Kinross	1	42
Sussex	1	6	TOTALS	49	614

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Six sites: 3–6 pairs. After rising to a population of over 40 pairs in the late 1980s, the number of Golden Orioles has continued to decline and the 2006 tally is the lowest since 1974. Jake Allsop of the Golden Oriole Group (GOG) has commented: 'Given that the breeding range of the Golden Oriole in England has now contracted to Lakenheath (Suffolk), with just 2–3 records each year from nearby sites, the Golden Oriole Group has discontinued its survey work. The Lakenheath area continues to be surveyed by Peter Dolton of GOG. 2006 was exceptional in that a research student from the University of East Anglia visited all 60 or so sites that GOG has ever surveyed in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. This contraction of the breeding range of Golden Orioles is not confined to Britain; the same is happening across northern Europe, including Scandinavia, the Low Countries and northern Germany. As the species remains at normal breeding levels elsewhere in its range (with the possible exception of Turkey), we assume that the decline in the northern part of its range is connected with climate change, in particular increasingly inclement weather at critical points in the breeding cycle, and possibly some changes in the timing and availability of its main invertebrate prey items.'

England, E

Cambridgeshire 12 sites surveyed but no orioles found. **Norfolk** 32 sites surveyed but orioles recorded at only one, close to Lakenheath. Breeding not suspected. **Suffolk** 12 sites surveyed and orioles recorded at five of these: three pairs bred with one pair fledging at least two young; two pairs possibly bred.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Three sites: two pairs and a single male. In 2006, Red-backed Shrikes bred in Britain for the third consecutive year, but the numbers present are very small and we have to go back to 1986 to find more than two pairs breeding in a year.

England, SE

Hertfordshire One site: an adult male found on 22nd July remained into August. Red-backed Shrikes were last suspected of breeding in Hertfordshire in 1974.

Wales

One site: one pair fledged four young. This site was the same one occupied in 2005. The male arrived on 8th June and the female on 23rd June. The young were ringed in the nest on 25th July and last seen after fledging on 8th August.

Scotland, N & W

One site: one pair was present throughout the summer but breeding was not proven.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax*

Minimum of 296 pairs. The figures here include all the monitored pairs of Red-billed Choughs in the UK, a similar number to 2005, but no data were available from the Isle of Man. The total of 296 pairs is less than 70% of the lower population estimate for the UK (429–497 pairs; Baker *et al.* 2006). In Wales, the first successful breeding in East Glamorgan for approximately 150 years was encouraging, and a pair of Choughs returned to Northern Ireland after an absence in 2005.

In England, two pairs nested in Cornwall. Leigh Lock, RSPB Species Recovery Officer, has commented: 'Red-billed Chough returned naturally to Cornwall in 2001 (the species had been absent since 1973 and had not bred since 1952), with one pair successfully fledging young in 2002, and every year since. A second pair was successful for the first time in 2006, a significant step towards a natural recolonisation of the county and towards linking the fragmented populations of northwest Europe. Habitat restoration is a priority in the county to ensure that there is sufficient habitat to support an increasing population of Red-billed Choughs.'

Red-billed Chough	Pairs	Young reared
England	2	8
Cornwall	2	8
Isle of Man	n/a	n/a
Wales	251	411
Anglesey	40	59
Caernarfonshire	90	151
Ceredigion	27	52
Denbigh & Flint	5	3
Glamorgan	3	10
Meirionnydd	18	25
Pembrokeshire	68	111
Scotland	42	60
Argyll: Colonsay & Oronsay	26	33
Argyll: Islay	15	26
Dumfries & Galloway	1	1
Northern Ireland	1	0
Co. Antrim	1	0
TOTALS	296	479

Note: numbers for Colonsay & Oronsay exclude three prospecting (immature) pairs, and the 33 young reared there were fledged from 17 monitored nests, 13 of which were successful.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Three sites: 1–3 pairs. Although climate change predictions would suggest that European Serins should breed more often in the UK, the species remains only an occasional breeder, and these are the first records since 2003. The most recent confirmed breeding records were in 2003 (Norfolk) and 1996 (Kent).

England, SW

Devon One site: one pair bred. A pair was present from 26th April, and there were two females on 28th and 29th April. One female was seen on a nest on 10th May but the second female left the area. The nest was destroyed in severe storms in mid to late May and neither female was seen again, although the male was still singing on 25th May.

Dorset One site: one singing male at a coastal site lingered but did not attract a mate.

England, SE

Kent One site: one female. Although only seen for one date in mid June, this bird was present in an area where breeding has occurred in the past. In addition, a male was also seen on one date in early June but the habitat was not thought to be suitable and breeding was not suspected.

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

Six sites: 2–9 pairs. This species seems to be a regular breeder in the north and west of Scotland and it is likely that it is under-recorded.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one pair probably bred. A pair was present and the male was seen song-fighting. **Orkney** One site: one singing male on two dates in April and May at a former breeding site (from the 1980s). **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: one pair bred and five pairs probably bred. At the breeding site, a female was seen with a juvenile in late July. **Shetland** One site: one pair bred. A family, including two juveniles being fed, was seen in late August.

Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*

Four sites: 2–6 pairs. The records received by the Panel represent just a fraction of the total breeding population and are in no way indicative of the status of this species. More informative figures will hopefully emerge from the 2008 survey of crossbills in Scottish forests.

Although Scottish Crossbill has been regarded as a good species for over 20 years, work by RSPB scientists (Summers *et al.* 2007) confirmed recently that Scottish and Parrot Crossbills *L. pytyopsittacus* are reproductively isolated from each other and from Common Crossbills *L. curvirostra*. This is due in part to the discovery of calls distinct to each species, but also because, despite frequent irruptions of migratory Common Crossbills into the range of sedentary Scottish and Parrot Crossbills, the diagnostic features of each species (calls and bill dimensions) have not been lost through hybridisation and dilution of the gene pool.

Scotland, Mid

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

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: birds present but no further information available.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Three sites: 2–4 pairs. As with the preceding species, this total represents an unknown fraction of the total numbers of pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Two sites: (1) two pairs bred; (2) six birds present in mid March but no further information.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: birds present but no further information available.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. This is a typical showing for this species, which last bred in the UK in 2001.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one male singing from 22nd June to 16th July.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness One site: one pair holding territory, with singing male present during mid to late June at least and a female seen on 21st June.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

28 sites: 10–67 pairs. This is the first year that the Panel has collected records for the Hawfinch and it is perhaps surprising how scarce this species actually is in the breeding season. The latest population estimate is 3,000–6,500 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993); the records collected by the Panel for 2006 represent just a tiny fraction of this figure. This is an elusive bird, and greatly under-recorded, but it does appear to have gone into a sharp decline since the early 1990s, the period on which the population estimate was based. Langston *et al.* (2002), analysing data from county bird reports from across England and Wales, found substantial declines at traditional sites, including those in Derbyshire, Kent, Norfolk, Oxfordshire and Staffordshire. A recent report at [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/rwbs-full-report.pdf/\\$FILE/rwbs-full-report.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/rwbs-full-report.pdf/$FILE/rwbs-full-report.pdf) shows declines of 60% between the original BTO surveys in 1965–72 and the Repeat Woodland Bird Survey in 2003–04, and declines of 73% between RSPB work in the 1980s and the Repeat Woodland Bird Survey in 2003–04.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006



Dan Powell

The Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* is a new species on the RBBP list and the records received point to a restricted and localised distribution in England and Wales, with the total number of records received falling far short of the latest population estimates based on the last Breeding Birds Atlas (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

In this analysis, we have included only records of birds seen in breeding habitat after the winter flocks disperse, in early April. It is notable how few Hawfinches are then located by birdwatchers. The records are scattered across central and southern England with an important outpost in southern Cumbria and northern Lancashire. The main site in England seems to be the New Forest (Hampshire), with 22 pairs. Records were received from four Welsh counties, where Gwent, with eight pairs reported, is a stronghold. No breeding-season records were received from Scotland, although the presence of birds in the winter in Borders and in Perth & Kinross suggests that there may still be a breeding population in that country. Hawfinches are absent from Northern Ireland (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

We encourage all birdwatchers to record the numbers and location of any Hawfinches in the breeding season and to ensure that details are submitted to the appropriate county recorder. It is hoped that fieldwork for the current national atlas project will also assist in the compilation of a contemporary gazetteer of Hawfinch sites.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: two pairs probably bred. **Hampshire** Four sites, including one extensive site, the New Forest: three pairs bred, 13 pairs probably bred and nine pairs possibly bred.

England, SE

Kent Four sites: one pair probably bred and 11 pairs possibly bred. **Surrey** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Sussex** One site: three pairs possibly bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair probably bred. **Norfolk** One site: one pair probably bred. **Suffolk** One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, C

Derbyshire Three sites: birds present at one site throughout the breeding season, but seen on single dates only, in June and July, at other two sites.

England, N

Cleveland One site: one singing male in March at a traditional site. **Cumbria** Three sites: (1) one pair bred and one pair probably bred. Up to two males and three females present throughout the summer, with two juveniles seen in late June and early July; (2) one pair bred. Two adults and three juveniles seen in July and August; (3) single bird seen in late June. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** One site: one pair possibly bred based on two birds seen irregularly at a traditional site. **Yorkshire** One site: one pair possibly bred at a former breeding site.

Wales

Caernarfonshire One site: one pair possibly bred. **Glamorgan** One site: one pair possibly bred, based on a sighting in mid June. **Gwent** Two sites: five pairs bred and three pairs probably bred. All nests found failed owing to predation by Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* and Common Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*. **Meirionnydd** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

13 sites: 4–15 pairs. Snow Buntings inhabit high mountain areas in the breeding season and effective monitoring depends on access to the sites and careful counting of birds found. The records here, collected casually, represent just a small fraction of the probable population. Given the predicted effects of climatic change on the high tops, monitoring of the remaining Scottish population is of high priority, but could be achieved satisfactorily only with a dedicated survey.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Eight sites: two pairs bred and six pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Five sites: two pairs bred and five pairs possibly bred.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

No data were submitted for this species in 2006. It continued to be limited to Devon, where 697 territories were recorded in the last survey in 2003 (Wotton *et al.* 2004). The RSPB/Paignton Zoo/Natural England/National Trust scheme to reintroduce Cirl Buntings to Cornwall started in 2006. More information on that project will be included in the Panel's next report.

Appendix 1. Other species considered by the Panel also recorded in 2006.

The following species were recorded during the breeding season in 2006 but showed no signs of breeding.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* An unpaired male again remained at one site in Avon.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* In Northumberland, there was a highly unusual record of a pair present for three days in mid June. Records of pairs lingering in May in Scottish coastal waters are not unusual, but Long-tailed Ducks are rare from June to August (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* One on Sula Sgeir, Outer Hebrides, recorded from 23rd May to 1st July, was presumably the returning bird from 2005.

The following species was recorded during the breeding season in 2006 but only limited information was available:

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* Reported from North Rona and St Kilda in the Outer Hebrides. A full survey of Bearasaigh revealed no birds, and none were found in a brief visit to Haskeir (both Outer Hebrides).

Appendix 2. Species considered by the Panel for which no records were received in 2006.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* In 2005 a pair was recorded in Argyll, and a late record (of a long-staying male, published only on the Panel's website) was received from Caithness. No records were supplied to the Argyll recorder in 2006, and no records of Greater Scaups in 2006 have yet been received from Caithness.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* Disappointingly, given that there were records from ten sites in 2005, no records of Wrynecks were received in 2006.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* No records received. A project began in 2007 to visit all sites where Bramblings have been recorded in the breeding season in Highland and Caithness.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2006

Acknowledgments

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