

# Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2007

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Dan Powell



Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra*

With the publication of this, its thirty-fourth report, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) has been compiling and archiving information on rare breeding birds for 35 years. This report presents details of the status of the rarest breeding birds in the UK in 2007.

## 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 simply 'recorders'), for whose support we are extremely grateful. The Panel also receives information from a number of other sources, including 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 2007, coverage was broadly similar to that in 2006, with at least some data available from all counties and regions (fig. 1). Full returns were received in time for this report from 61 recorders and extracts from bird

reports came from a further six counties. It is welcome to again include certain counties after some years of absence from this report, namely Angus & Dundee, Cornwall, East Glamorgan and Northamptonshire. However, it is disappointing that neither detailed submissions nor copies of local bird reports were available for 11 recording areas: Caithness, Clyde Islands, Gower, Greater London, Gwent, Herefordshire, Isle of Man, Montgomeryshire, Perth & Kinross, Radnorshire and West Midlands. Some information for the missing Welsh counties was available from the Welsh Bird Report (Green & Pritchard 2009). Data were available for Northern Ireland, however, both from the Northern Ireland recorder and from the Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel (Hillis 2008). Readers should take into account these potential gaps in the coverage when reviewing the data presented in this report.

It is encouraging that, increasingly over recent years, many recorders have provided annual data soon after the end of each year. The continuing impact of computerisation is perhaps the main reason behind this improvement, especially as data entry systems have matured and use of e-mail increased. Prompt submissions greatly assist the Panel to achieve its objective of

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publishing reports within two years of the breeding season in question; thus the 2008 report will appear in summer 2010. Inevitably, some counties have not yet been able to catch up in this manner, and we ask recorders for these areas to prioritise the collation of records of rare breeders to ensure their inclusion in future reports. Given the importance of these reports to conservation bodies, it is desirable that RBBP is able to maximise coverage across the whole of the UK. We stress that submissions received too late for the published reports are still important; these are added to our confidential archives to ensure that annual statistics and the inventory of breeding sites are updated, and that all records are centrally and securely held for conservation uses as and when required.

### Data inclusion

There have been no changes to the acceptance criteria for records since the last report (Holling *et al.* 2009), from which further information is available. These criteria are also available on the Panel's website ([www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk)) and, during the course of this year, guidance on the interpretation of breeding evidence by species will be added to this website. Species for which only minimal information was received are listed in Appendix 1.

### The RBBP list

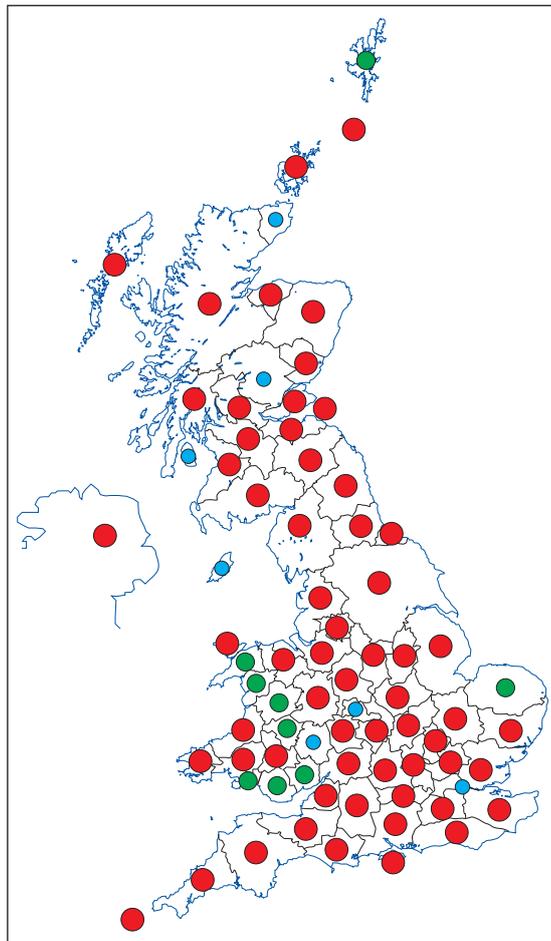
There have been no changes to the list of species considered by the Panel since the publication of the last report. Although there may be minor changes over the next two years, we intend to undertake a full review of the list once the results of Bird Atlas 2007–11 are available. The current species list and guidelines on submitting records are available at: [www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk)

It has been recognised that reporting of potential breeding records of the rarer races of some species, such as White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*, has not been entirely consistent in the past. Accordingly, with the collation of 2008 data, we intend to report all potential

breeding records of this race, as well as those of a number of other rare subspecies, including Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* other than *M. f. flavissima* and the rarer races of Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*.

### Review of the year 2007

This report includes details of 82 species breeding or showing indications of breeding in 2007, three more than in 2006. A further



**Fig. 1.** Data submission to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, 2007. 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 using supplementary data sources only. These other sources include data extracted from Schedule 1 licence returns, local raptor study group reports, RSPB reserve logs and single-species submissions.

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11 species are noted in Appendix 1.

The winter prior to the 2007 breeding season was again mild, presumably encouraging good overwinter survival of some resident passerines such as Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*. In many parts of the UK, spring was marked by a long dry spell in April but the summer itself was characterised by being exceptionally wet at times, especially in England, with extensive flooding in parts of southern Yorkshire in June and several counties in the southwest Midlands in July. Rainfall totals across the UK were almost twice the 30-year average in the key months of May, June and July (Met. Office data). This wet weather caused some ground-nesting birds, such as Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, and Eurasian Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* along the East Anglian coast, to lose nests containing eggs or young chicks owing to flooding. For other species, such as Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Merlin *Falco columbarius*, the cold and wet weather across the country, including the uplands, led to the abandonment of chicks in nests.

Numbers of wildfowl in 2007 were similar to those reported in recent years, but there is a hint that numbers of nesting wild Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* are increasing, with five pairs in Shetland. After a blank year in 2006, it is pleasing to report a pair of Greater Scaups *Aythya marila* attempting to nest again, but the numbers of Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra*, based on the results of a national survey, showed a worryingly rapid decline of 45% since the last survey in 1995, to a maximum of just 52 breeding pairs.

While there was again an unusual mixed pairing of Slavonian *Podiceps auritus* and Great Crested Grebes *P. cristatus* in England, the main population of Slavonian Grebes (in Scotland) suffered very low productivity, the second-lowest since 1971. The lower numbers of confirmed breeding Black-necked Grebes *P. nigricollis* continue the decline evident during the current decade. Some chicks were lost in heavy rain in Cheshire & Wirral but overall at least 40 young were fledged from 30 confirmed breeding pairs. In contrast, reedbed management and creation, aimed at conserving Eurasian Bitterns, continues to pay dividends

with over 50 booming males recorded, all in England. This is only the second time this number has been reached since the RSPB began the monitoring programme in 1990, but the weather caused nesting failures at some sites. Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* seem to warrant a mention in this section each year now and 2007 was no exception with yet another record number of sites and nests.

As Little Egrets go from strength to strength we look for other new colonists from the south and 2007 saw attempted breeding by Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* and Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* in eastern England. Both failed, with the torrential rain in early June affecting the herons and perhaps caused the desertion of the spoonbills.

The heavy June rains led to many nest desertions of both tree- and ground-nesting raptors and reduced the productivity of Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus*, Red Kites, Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*, Merlins and Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*. More encouragingly, Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* matched the record number of confirmed breeding pairs (13) achieved in 2006.

This is the second report to feature Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus*, and fewer were reported in 2007 than in 2006, but many recorders commented that data reflect recording effort rather than true numbers. It will be some years before we can be more confident about total numbers, but the inclusion of this species in the RBBP list has at least stimulated an increase in recording. As a planned reintroduction scheme for Common Cranes *Grus grus* nears implementation, the species seems to be doing well on its own, with ten confirmed breeding pairs in three counties compared with six pairs in 2006. The Great Bustard *Otis tarda* reintroduction marked its first success in 2007, with confirmed breeding achieved as eggs were laid by one pair.

The BTO survey of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* found almost 900 pairs, easily the highest total since the species was added to the RBBP list in 1996. A more exotic plover was added to the list of species to feature in these reports in 2007 as a long-staying Killdeer *C. vociferus* in Shetland was apparently paired with a Ringed Plover

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*C. hiaticula*. Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* and Purple Sandpipers *C. maritima* maintain their precarious hold in Scotland, while a Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* nest was the first to be documented in Britain. A survey of Wood Sandpipers *T. glareola* found a total of 11–27 pairs compared to the previous maximum of 18–22 in 2004.

As with Little Egrets, there were again record numbers of sites holding Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus*, though the number of pairs was fewer in 2007 and many colonies produced few young owing to the flooding of nests at a critical period. In 2007, Little Gulls *Hydrocoloeus minutus* nested for the fifth time in England but, as on previous occasions, the attempt failed at the egg stage.

A lone Scops Owl *Otus scops* returned to Oxfordshire for a second year and, after a blank year in 2006, two records of Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* indicate that this species may still be found in Highland Scotland, though the last confirmed breeding attempt was in 1999. Perhaps more will be found by field-workers for the 2007–11 Atlas. Such work may also increase the returns for Redwings *Turdus iliacus*, though an analysis of historical records in this report shows a long-term decline since the mid 1980s, back to the numbers present in the 1970s. When the Panel first collated records, in 1973, there were 13 singing males/pairs of Redwing; this year we report 16. Contrast that with Cetti's Warbler: 14 singing males in 1973 but over 2,000 singing males in 2007, with many recorders claiming their county totals to be underestimates.

A total of four singing Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* is unusual and seems to have been related to an influx to Shetland in late May. These are the first records of this species in this report since a pair bred in Orkney in 2002.

It is perhaps inevitable that individuals of some of the rarest breeding birds will find themselves the only representative in an area, and form mixed pairs with related species. In this report, no fewer than nine species accounts include mixed pairs: Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*, Black Duck *A. rubripes*, Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*, Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*,

Slavonian Grebe, Killdeer, Mediterranean Gull, Yellow-legged Gull *L. michahellis* and White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*.

### The Panel

The current membership of the Panel (January 2010) is as follows: Mark Eaton, Ian Francis, Simon Gillings, David Norman, Judith Smith, David Stroud (Chairman) and Mark Holling (Secretary). Members serve in a personal capacity, but some also reflect the interests and requirements of the funding partners, JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and RSPB, as well as the BTO and the Association of County Recorders and Editors (ACRE). 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

The last report introduced new recording standards to help the assessment and submission of records of rare breeding birds. A leaflet describing these standards was distributed widely during the spring of 2009. Given that perhaps half of the 2007 dataset had already been submitted by that time, it is perhaps early days to judge the impact these standards have made, but it was apparent in some submissions that a more rigorous approach in data inclusion and in the details provided had been made. Clearly, this enhances the value of the RBBP dataset. Through the wide adoption of this guidance we aim to improve the information about rare breeding birds in the UK, for the long-term benefit of bird conservation. The leaflet is available at: [www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards)

### Conservation uses of RBBP data

It has always been RBBP 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

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datasets by the RSPB for survey planning. Since the last report, RBBP data have been used by the RSPB in connection with the analysis of Common Scoter survey results and to plan a national survey of Corn Crakes *Crex crex*. The Panel and the RSPB have also worked together in assembling a definitive dataset for breeding Black-throated Divers *G. arctica* and Black-tailed Godwits. Individuals conducting research into Peregrines in northern England and in compiling an atlas of breeding birds in North-east Scotland have also benefited from access to our archives.

In recent years one of the most important uses of RBBP data has been to assist with the compilation of the annual *The State of the UK's Birds* report. The 2008 issue (Eaton *et al.* 2009b) included a review of the colonisation of the UK by breeding species from southern Europe, using data collated by RBBP. The year 2009 also saw the publication of the third *Birds of Conservation Concern* assessment (Eaton *et al.* 2009a), for which our data provided the most reliable, contemporary figures for many of the rarer species. The high conservation value of these reports demonstrates the importance of publishing the RBBP report promptly to assist the conservation effort. An action plan drawn up for Eurasian Spoonbill in Europe has also made use of RBBP data (Triplet *et al.* 2008). The conservation status of some RBBP species has changed following this review, and these changes are noted in this report.

### The 2009 Report

When compiling this report, we aim to invite individuals to contribute additional text to add value to the species accounts. In this and future reports we hope to highlight one or two species more fully by including a review of past records, putting the current year's status into more recent historical perspective. This report thus features a review of Redwing records by Bob Swann, a Highland-based birder who has experience of finding breeding Redwings and is currently the Scottish Organiser for the BTO/BWI/SOC Bird Atlas 2007–11 project. As in the past, we have also invited comment from survey organisers. For the two relevant single-species surveys conducted in 2007 (Common Scoter and Little Ringed Plover), we are grateful to

Mark Eaton (RSPB) and Greg Conway (BTO), respectively, for providing summaries.

It is also our hope that future reports will pick up on broad themes and include additional texts related to them. In this report we focus on reintroductions of rare breeding species, with extended texts on two long-term projects (White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and Red Kite), and two more recent, localised reintroductions (Corn Crake in Cambridgeshire and Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirrus* in Cornwall). Peter Newbery of the RSPB has provided these additional sections. The year 2007 also saw the first confirmed breeding of Great Bustards released as part of the project led by the Great Bustard Consortium of the Great Bustard Group and the University of Bath. David Waters and Tamás Székely have kindly provided an update on this project. Peter Newbery has also contributed the following review of bird reintroduction projects in the UK.

### Bird reintroductions in the UK Background

The first reintroduction of a native bird species, formerly extinct in the UK, involved the Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*. A number of landowners in Scotland, using a variety of techniques, released Capercaillies on their estates during the nineteenth century, and the increasing population spread widely so that by 1900 they were found between Arran and Fife, and north to Inverness-shire. This reintroduction was carried out mainly to provide gamebirds for shooting. At that time, many birds were being persecuted in one way or another, and it was not until well into the twentieth century that bird conservation came into its own.

The reintroduction of bird species to the UK, or translocation to regions within the UK from which they had disappeared, was formerly regarded with some suspicion by those interested in conservation – the general view was that if suitable habitats were available and there was no persecution, most species would recolonise naturally, given time. The unsuccessful trials by private individuals, such as those in the early 1970s involving Great Bustards on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, reinforced this scepticism, so the

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decision to reintroduce White-tailed Eagles to Scotland in the late 1970s was an enormous change in philosophy. The decision was taken because the species was regarded as globally threatened, and unlikely to recolonise naturally from its nearest breeding localities in Norway, even though the main reason for its disappearance from Scotland (persecution) was thought to be less of a threat than formerly.

A decade later, discussions took place between a number of conservation organisations to decide how best to improve the conservation status of the Red Kite in the UK. At that time, in the mid 1980s, Red Kites were confined to central Wales and, although numbers were increasing slowly, the species' range was not expanding significantly. The resulting long-running Red Kite reintroduction project, begun in 1989 and still in operation, is now well known and highly regarded by most people as an extremely successful conservation programme.

In the mid to late 1990s, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan was drawn up, and the plans for two bird species (Corn Crake in 1995 and Cirl Bunting in 1998) included reintroduction projects as a means of achieving long-term targets. It should be noted that these range-expansion objectives were only a small part of the overall conservation objectives for these species, which aimed mainly to ensure the maintenance and expansion of existing populations elsewhere in the UK. However, their inclusion was a clear sign that reintroduction as a tool had finally become accepted by mainstream conservation organisations.

In recent years, more species have been the subject of reintroduction programmes in the UK, including the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Great Bustard and Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*. A new programme, the Great Crane Project, is scheduled to begin in 2010, involving Common Cranes being released in Somerset.

It is important that any new reintroduction programmes are carried out to a high standard, with good justification and adequate resourcing. It is currently legal to release native species of birds into the wild (providing they have been acquired legally) without a licence, except for the small number listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife

& Countryside Act. However, the Schedule 9 list is likely to be extended by Defra, in order to reduce potential problems of release projects that are poorly devised or executed.

One problem regarding native species that became extinct before the bird protection legislation was devised is that reintroduced individuals and their offspring will not be covered by the Special Protection measures of Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act. In particular this applies to the Great Bustard, and also to the Common Crane (even though it became re-established in the wild in the 1980s).

### Principles for reintroduction projects

It is generally accepted by those involved in reintroduction projects that, for species which are already present in the UK, reintroduction should form only a part of the overall conservation effort for that species. Improving the status of existing native populations is of overriding importance. This topic was explored further by Carter *et al.* (2008).

It is the formal policy of JNCC and the country agencies to follow the IUCN's internationally accepted guidelines on reintroductions when deciding whether to approve a reintroduction project. The RSPB undertakes an initial assessment of the conservation justification for any new reintroduction programme, along the following lines:

**Is the species extinct in the UK or a significant part of its original UK range?**

*If not, reintroduction is likely to be unnecessary, unless there are other pressing reasons.*

**What were the causes of the species' original disappearance? If they were natural processes, reintroduction may not be justified. Human persecution, habitat destruction, etc. would be justifications.**

**Have these causes been rectified/reduced/eliminated? If not, reintroduction is unlikely to be justified.**

**What is the likelihood of natural recolonisation within the next ten years? If likely, reintroduction is probably unnecessary unless there are other pressing reasons for going ahead.**

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**Is the reintroduced species likely to have a significant impact on any native species?**

*If so, this would make reintroduction difficult to justify.*

**Does sufficient suitable habitat exist to support a self-sustaining breeding population? If not, can sufficient suitable habitat be created and maintained?**

**Can its long-term suitability be assured (designation, conservation ownership)?**

*Long-term security is an essential requirement.*

**From where is donor stock to be obtained?**

*Elsewhere in the UK, within the EU, outside the EU?*

**Is it of wild or captive origin? Biosecurity is an extremely important part of any translocation proposal, and stringent safeguards are needed to prevent disease transmission**

*from captive individuals into the wild.*

**If wild, will removing these individuals affect the remaining donor population?**

*It is a firm principle that any donor population must not be detrimentally affected by the removal of individuals for translocation.*

**Is it genetically similar to the original UK stock? Wherever possible, genetically similar stock should be used. This is especially important for a species which still exists in other parts of the UK, so that mixing of native and reintroduced populations is likely.**

**Aviculture methods required (captive breeding/rear-and-release/other).**

*In general, the simpler the methods, the cheaper the project and the greater the chance of success.*

### Terminology

The recording areas used in this report are the same as in previous reports (see Holling *et al.* 2007 and [www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk)); these match the bird recording areas used by recorders across the UK. *Contra* Ballance & Smith (2008), records for Gower and East Glamorgan are again presented separately in this report as these areas continue to publish separate bird reports (see p. 52). The Panel attempts to collate all breeding records by bird recording area (usually 'county') wherever possible, and we urge contributors to submit records in the same manner, via 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 areas of Angus & Dundee together with Perth & Kinross. However, North-east Scotland RSG includes that recording area and the eastern part of the Moray & Nairn recording area, and Highland RSG includes not only the Highland recording area but also the western part of Moray & Nairn. Scottish Raptor Study Group area boundaries are shown on their website at [www.scottishraptorgroups.org/areas](http://www.scottishraptorgroups.org/areas)

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (Hagemeyer & 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 confirmed and probable 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 confirmed 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 table headings 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.

Readers 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. was likely to have) occurred.

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, zeros mean that there were no birds recorded in that area in that year, whereas a rule (–) indicates that no data were received.

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### Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

13 sites: 6–13 pairs. In the previous ten years between two and seven pairs have nested, with the majority always in Shetland (where there have been breeding attempts since 1994). The number of sites in 2007 was higher than in recent years and may indicate a modest expansion. As well as the pairs listed, single summering birds were reported widely, mainly in Scotland, but at these sites there was no indication of breeding behaviour.

#### Scotland, S

**Ayrshire** One site: one pair possibly bred.

#### Scotland, Mid

**North-east Scotland** One site: an unpaired bird built a nest.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. **Caithness** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one pair probably bred. **Shetland** Five sites: five pairs bred; three were successful fledging a total of seven young.

#### Northern Ireland

**Co. Londonderry** One site: one pair bred, fledging seven young. **Co. Fermanagh** One site: one pair probably bred.

### Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

50 sites: 48–124 pairs. Owing to the widespread records of summering individuals and pairs, with no evidence of breeding, this report includes only records of at least probable breeding, based on the presence of at least a male and a female and records spanning more than one week. Problems of coverage in the remote areas of north and west Scotland mean that the numbers here will under-represent the true total as some sites are visited only once in the season. Possible breeding records, included previously, would have accounted for up to 46 pairs in 2007, but almost all of these are in counties with little record of continuous breeding. In addition, small flocks in Lancashire & N Merseyside, Norfolk and Sussex were noted during the breeding season.

#### England, SW

**Somerset** One site: three pairs probably bred.

#### England, SE

**Essex** One site: two pairs bred.

#### England, E

**Northamptonshire** One site: one pair probably bred.

#### England, C

**Nottinghamshire** One site: three pairs bred.

#### England, N

**Durham** 11 sites: 21 pairs bred. **Northumberland** Four sites: six pairs bred. **Yorkshire** Four sites: one pair bred and seven pairs probably bred.

#### Wales

**Anglesey** Two sites: seven pairs probably bred.

#### Scotland, S

**Borders** One site: one pair probably bred. **Clyde** One site: one pair probably bred. **Dumfries & Galloway** Two sites: four pairs probably bred.

#### Scotland, Mid

**Perth & Kinross** One site: five pairs probably bred.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Two sites: one pair bred and one pair probably bred. **Highland** Eight sites: one pair bred and 39 pairs probably bred. **Orkney** Six sites: six pairs bred and five pairs probably bred. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one pair bred. **Shetland** Two sites: six pairs bred.

#### Northern Ireland

**Co. Down** One site: two pairs probably bred.

### Gadwall *Anas strepera*

533–1,660 pairs. The maximum of 1,660 pairs is another new record, yet is still likely to be an underestimate. There were fewer records of confirmed breeding, and that total is the lowest since

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1996 (313). This may be because observers are less inclined to report breeding now that the species is more common and widespread. In 1996 the total number of pairs reported, at 494, was less than a third of the total in 2007.

Gadwall	Confirmed pairs	Total pairs			
England, SW	73	360	Worcestershire	1	1
Avon	2	3	England, N	123	258
Devon	1	4	Cheshire & Wirral	12	22
Dorset	0	56	Cleveland	0	17
Gloucestershire	5	9	Cumbria	1	5
Hampshire	41	144	Durham	4	6
Isles of Scilly	1	1	Greater Manchester	11	12
Somerset	20	140	Lancashire & N Merseyside	26	34
Wiltshire	3	3	Northumberland	7	7
England, SE	90	336	Yorkshire	62	155
Bedfordshire	6	6	Wales	9	72
Berkshire	6	6	Anglesey	0	60
Buckinghamshire	1	1	Caernarfonshire	1	4
Essex	0	13	Carmarthenshire	8	8
Hertfordshire	33	133	Scotland, S	0	23
Kent	37	137	Borders	0	3
Oxfordshire	0	13	Clyde	0	17
Sussex	7	27	Dumfries & Galloway	0	3
England, E	156	425	Scotland, Mid	3	22
Cambridgeshire	42	176	Angus & Dundee	1	4
Lincolnshire	3	21	Fife	0	2
Norfolk	32	79	North-east Scotland	2	6
Northamptonshire	0	4	Perth & Kinross	0	7
Suffolk	79	145	Upper Forth	0	3
England, C	50	124	Scotland, N & W	14	25
Derbyshire	11	12	Argyll	2	4
Leicestershire & Rutland	7	15	Orkney	10	12
Nottinghamshire	15	40	Outer Hebrides	2	9
Staffordshire	9	14	Northern Ireland	15	15
Warwickshire	5	40	Co. Antrim	11	11
West Midlands	2	2	Co. Armagh	3	3
			Co. Tyrone	1	1
			TOTALS	533	1,660

Pintail *Anas acuta*

20 sites: 10–28 pairs plus one hybrid. The key counties of Argyll and Orkney account for half of the total number of pairs.

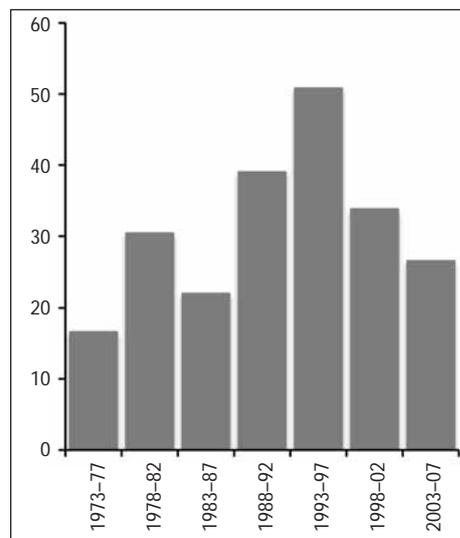
England, SE

Essex Two sites: one pair bred and one pair possibly bred. Oxfordshire One site: four pairs possibly bred. Sussex One site: one pair bred, seen with three very recently fledged young in late July, although it is thought they were hatched elsewhere.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: one pair bred (brood of ten seen in late May) and one pair possibly bred.

Fig. 2. Number of breeding Pintails *Anas acuta* (max. total pairs) in the UK, 1973–2007. Five-year means have fluctuated between 22 and 51 pairs in the last 30 years, but note that there was a complete survey of Orkney in 1994.



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**Lincolnshire** One site: one pair bred (brood of seven seen in early July).

[England, N](#)

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

[Wales](#)

**Pembrokeshire** One site: a female Pintail × Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* hybrid was seen with a brood of 13 on 6th April but not subsequently.

[Scotland, S](#)

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

[Scotland, N & W](#)

**Argyll** Five sites: two pairs bred (one brood of five seen in late July), and six pairs possibly bred. **Orkney** Three sites: four pairs bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one pair probably bred.

[Northern Ireland](#)

**Co. Armagh** One site: one pair probably bred as two small birds seen in late July were thought to be juveniles reared locally.

### Garganey *Anas querquedula*

62 sites: 15–90 pairs. There is the usual wide spread of records, with little consistency between years. Proof of breeding was reported from nine counties in England and one in Northern Ireland, the highest number since 2000.

[England, SW](#)

**Gloucestershire** Two sites: two pairs possibly bred – one pair may have nested but was flooded out. **Hampshire** Three sites: three pairs bred and one pair probably bred. **Somerset** Three sites: ten pairs probably bred.

[England, SE](#)

**Buckinghamshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Hertfordshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Kent** Seven sites: one pair bred and nine pairs possibly bred. **Sussex** Three sites: two pairs bred and one pair possibly bred.

[England, E](#)

**Cambridgeshire** Two sites: one pair bred and 12 pairs possibly bred. **Lincolnshire** Three sites: three pairs possibly bred. **Norfolk** Six sites: three pairs bred and four pairs possibly bred. **Northamptonshire** Three sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Suffolk** Three sites: one pair bred and two pairs possibly bred.

[England, C](#)

**Nottinghamshire** Three sites: one pair bred and two pairs possibly bred.

[England, N](#)

**Cleveland** One site: two pairs possibly bred. **Greater Manchester** One site: one pair probably bred. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Three sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Northumberland** One site: one pair bred. This is the first breeding in the county since 1983. **Yorkshire** Three sites: one pair bred, two pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred.

[Wales](#)

**Anglesey** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Carmarthenshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Ceredigion** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Pembrokeshire** One site: one pair possibly bred.

[Scotland, S](#)

**Borders** One site: one pair possibly bred.

[Scotland, Mid](#)

**North-east Scotland** One site: three pairs possibly 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. **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred.

[Northern Ireland](#)

**Co. Antrim** One site: one pair bred.

### Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

229–881 pairs. With only two years of data, it is too early to draw firm conclusions on numbers and distribution. However, the total of confirmed breeding pairs is much lower than in 2006 and this holds true across most of the counties with higher numbers of confirmed pairs in both years: Cambridgeshire, Essex, Kent, Lancashire & N Merseyside, Norfolk and Orkney, with only Yorkshire

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	Confirmed pairs	Total pairs			
Shoveler			Cleveland	2	6
England, SW	14	38	Cumbria	1	1
Avon	1	2	Greater Manchester	1	3
Devon	0	1	Lancashire & N Merseyside	12	43
Dorset	1	11	Northumberland	1	1
Hampshire	8	12	Yorkshire	36	102
Somerset	4	12	Wales	4	38
England, SE	43	166	Anglesey	0	34
Bedfordshire	1	1	Pembrokeshire	4	4
Essex	1	65	Scotland, S	0	9
Hertfordshire	6	11	Borders	0	1
Kent	34	68	Clyde	0	2
Oxfordshire	0	10	Dumfries & Galloway	0	6
Sussex	1	11	Scotland, Mid	2	14
England, E	75	346	Angus & Dundee	1	3
Cambridgeshire	63	176	Fife	1	3
Norfolk	6	90	North-east Scotland	0	3
Northamptonshire	1	3	Perth & Kinross	0	5
Suffolk	5	77	Scotland, N & W	31	96
England, C	4	8	Argyll	4	29
Leicestershire & Rutland	1	1	Highland	0	1
Nottinghamshire	3	3	Orkney	19	31
Shropshire	0	1	Outer Hebrides	8	35
Staffordshire	0	3	Northern Ireland	2	2
England, N	54	164	Co. Antrim	1	1
Cheshire & Wirral	1	8	Co. Tyrone	1	1
			TOTALS	229	881

posting an increase. As noted in the last report, the Derwent Valley in Yorkshire is believed to be the most important site for breeding Shovelers in England; with 71 pairs reported in 2007, compared with just one in 2006, the difference is surely a result of different levels of recording at this site.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

319–559 pairs. Numbers remain stable, with Essex and Kent between them accounting for 42% of the total number of pairs.

	Confirmed pairs	Total pairs			
Common Pochard			Shropshire	0	1
England, SW	28	65	Worcestershire	2	2
Avon	7	7	England, N	28	52
Dorset	6	6	Cheshire & Wirral	8	11
Gloucestershire	0	1	Cleveland	5	5
Hampshire	8	13	Greater Manchester	4	4
Isles of Scilly	0	1	Lancashire & N Merseyside	3	19
Somerset	7	37	Northumberland	2	2
England, SE	183	267	Yorkshire	6	11
Essex	108	108	Wales	5	20
Hertfordshire	20	32	Anglesey	2	9
Kent	55	125	Carmarthenshire	0	8
Oxfordshire	0	2	Gwent	3	3
England, E	59	136	Scotland, S	0	1
Cambridgeshire	1	11	Borders	0	1
Lincolnshire	1	44	Scotland, N & W	3	3
Norfolk	51	68	Orkney	3	3
Northamptonshire	1	3	Northern Ireland	9	10
Suffolk	5	10	Co. Antrim	5	6
England, C	4	5	Co. Armagh	3	3
Nottinghamshire	2	2	Co. Tyrone	1	1
			TOTALS	319	559

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

### Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. A promising record from Caithness suggested a breeding attempt, the first such indication since a pair in Argyll in 2002. In addition, a single female present at a site in Argyll in 2007 was in an area where breeding might occur.

Greater Scaup is now a Red-listed species (Eaton *et al.* 2009a) but this is due to declines in the non-breeding population rather than any change in its status as a breeding bird; there has never been more than three pairs in the last 35 years.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** One site: a single female present from late May into June. **Caithness** One site: a vigilant male close to a female at a possible nest-site in mid May, but despite repeated visits there were no further sightings.

### Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Fifteen lochs and one extensive site: 9–52 pairs. Common Scoters were found breeding in the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland and at one site in the Inverness-shire glens in 2007, and were found at former breeding sites elsewhere. Up to five birds were present at two inland lochs in Borders in May but no breeding was suspected. Common Scoters in Northern Ireland last appeared in these reports in 1998 (two males only) and no breeding birds were reported there in 2007. Below, Mark Eaton outlines the 2007 survey.

The higher-than-usual maximum estimate is the result of a national survey in 2007, run by the RSPB in partnership with SNH and WWT. This survey aimed to locate birds on breeding lochs between late April and early June, in the period when males attend lochs for courtship and mating before departing (they play no further part in breeding). Although females may move between lochs for subsequent nesting attempts, birds are far easier to locate in this period, with the number of females counted being used as a proxy for pairs. Surveying covered all sites known to have held birds in the breeding season previously, along with an additional selection of other potentially suitable waterbodies (although no Common Scoters were found on these). A total of 297 lochs was surveyed, each receiving three visits at two-week intervals. The estimate of 52 breeding pairs represents almost a halving of the breeding population since the previous survey, in 1995, which found 95 pairs, with an accompanying reduction in the number of lochs used (down by 25%) and the overall breeding range (down by 17%, from 23 to 19 10-km squares). This decline gives the Common Scoter the dubious distinction of being one of the UK's fastest-declining breeding birds: research into the likely cause(s) of this decline is ongoing.

#### Scotland, Mid

**Perth & Kinross** A maximum of six pairs and two additional unpaired males at five lochs, although no records of breeding were received subsequently.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** One pair and an additional single male were recorded at the former nesting site on Islay. **Caithness/Highland** Two sites, including one extensive site: (1) six pairs bred, fledging 12 young, and a further 10 pairs probably bred, with an estimate of 26 breeding pairs (pairs or females were recorded on 27 waterbodies, although there is likely to have been much movement among them and many will not have been used for breeding); (2) three pairs were known to have bred successfully, fledging 17 young. The survey estimated 19 pairs earlier in the season, and recorded females at nine lochs, with unpaired males at a further two.

### Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Data from the Goldeneye Study Group provided an estimate of 185 egg-laying females in northern Scotland, while at least 10 summering birds were present in seven other counties of England and Scotland. A total of 83 nestboxes were occupied in study areas in Badenoch & Strathspey (Highland), while in Deeside (North-east Scotland) 27 boxes were occupied and one nest in a natural tree hole was found. As in past reports, we assume that around two-thirds of these 111 clutches laid involved more than one female.

#### England, SW

**Avon** Two females summered.

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### England, E

**Cambridgeshire** One male summered and there were also reports of two other single birds in June and July.

### England, C

**Derbyshire** An injured female remained in the summer. **Leicestershire & Rutland** A male summered but no females were seen after 5th May.

### England, N

**Northumberland** A first-summer male was present until 1st July. **Yorkshire** A male summered.

### Scotland, S

**Borders** A female present in mid May and at the same site in mid August may have summered.

### Scotland, Mid

**North-east Scotland** Deeside: in 28 monitored nests, 220 eggs were laid and 175 young hatched.

### Scotland, N & W

**Highland** In the nestbox study in Badenoch & Strathspey, a minimum of 83 clutches were produced, with a total of 657 eggs laid and at least 343 young hatched.

## Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

92 leks were visited, and a total of 220 displaying males counted. 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. The figure of 220 males is comparable with those in recent reports.

**Scotland, S Clyde** One lek: two males.

**Scotland, Mid Moray & Nairn** 14 leks: 15 males. **North-east Scotland** 20 leks: 40 males. **Perth & Kinross** Seven leks: 11 males.

**Scotland, N & W Highland** 50 leks: 152 males.

## Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

7–384 singing males or pairs. Confirmed breeding was recorded in just three counties: Borders (three pairs), Highland (one) and Yorkshire (three). Common Quail is no longer a Red-listed species; it was moved to the Amber list in the recent BoCC review.



Phil Jones

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Common Quail		Oxfordshire	10
	<b>Total</b>	Sussex	21
<b>England, SW</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>England, E</b>	<b>51</b>
Avon	3	Cambridgeshire	3
Cornwall	4	Lincolnshire	13
Devon	8	Norfolk	24
Dorset	10	Northamptonshire	4
Gloucestershire	11	Suffolk	7
Hampshire	12	<b>England, C</b>	<b>20</b>
Somerset	3	Derbyshire	4
Wiltshire	38	Leicestershire & Rutland	1
<b>England, SE</b>	<b>51</b>	Nottinghamshire	1
Bedfordshire	1	Shropshire	3
Berkshire	7	Staffordshire	5
Essex	8	Warwickshire	3
Hertfordshire	2	Worcestershire	3
Kent	2		

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

<i>Common Quail cont.</i>		Borders	26
	<b>Total</b>	Dumfries & Galloway	3
England, N	79	Lothian	9
Cheshire & Wirral	10	Scotland, Mid	26
Cumbria	2	Angus & Dundee	9
Durham	5	Moray & Nairn	7
Lancashire & N Merseyside	10	North-east Scotland	8
Northumberland	10	Upper Forth	2
Yorkshire	42	Scotland, N & W	15
Wales	15	Argyll	3
Breconshire	1	Highland	7
Ceredigion	1	Orkney	1
Montgomeryshire	8	Outer Hebrides	2
Radnorshire	5	Shetland	2
Scotland, S	38	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>384</b>

### Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

After the survey in 2006 found an estimated 1,255 breeding pairs in Scotland, returns to the Panel in 2007 were back at normal levels, based on only sample studies. The island of Hoy, Orkney, was fully surveyed. Here, 60 sites were occupied and eggs were laid at 47 of these; 27 pairs were successful in raising a total of 32 chicks to (or close to) fledging, a success rate of 0.53 chicks per occupied site or 1.19 chicks per successful site. The number of successful sites as a percentage of occupied sites (45%) is the lowest for many years. Productivity per successful site was average, but productivity per occupied site was the lowest since 2000, and the total number of chicks raised the lowest since 1997.

#### Scotland, S

**Clyde** Two pairs bred, with three young hatched.

#### Scotland, Mid

**Moray & Nairn** One site: one pair possibly bred. **North-east Scotland** Three sites: one pair bred and two pairs possibly bred.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Five pairs bred with another ten pairs reported. **Highland** 34 pairs bred with another four pairs



Rebecca Nason

1. Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, Fetlar, Shetland, July 2007.

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reported. **Orkney** At least 93 pairs monitored including 60 on Hoy. **Outer Hebrides** 12 pairs bred with another four pairs reported. **Shetland** At least 68 pairs monitored including 26 successful pairs in the Shetland Ringing Group study area.

### Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

53–88 pairs. As with Red-throated Diver, the number of records submitted was reduced to only a sample of the total population, estimated at 217 summering territories (95% confidence limits 190–252) in 2006.

#### Scotland, S

**Ayrshire** One pair possibly bred. **Clyde** One pair bred but failed due to fluctuating water levels.

#### Scotland, Mid

One pair bred but failed.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Eight pairs located, of which four bred and fledged a total of four young. **Caithness** A survey of 12 sites found pairs at only two; one pair bred, fledging one young from a raft nest. **Highland** 70 pairs monitored, of which 46 were proved to breed. This was the lowest number monitored since 2001. However, 2007 was the most productive breeding season since 1996, returning a figure of 0.46 young fledged per apparently occupied territory (AOT). All raft sites were checked, and these fledged 0.78 young per AOT compared with 0.22 from natural sites. **Outer Hebrides** Five pairs possibly bred, being recorded on single dates or only early in the season.

### Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

41 sites: 51–65 booming males with 27 breeding attempts at 12 sites. Simon Wotton, RSPB, commented as follows.

This year saw a welcome increase in the number of booming males to a minimum total of 51, a 16% increase from 2006. This is only the second year since the monitoring programme started in 1990 that there have been more than 50 booming males in the UK. Also encouraging was the 22% increase in the minimum number of sites frequented by booming males this year, the highest number of sites since the start of the monitoring programme.

The minimum number of recorded nests with chicks remained at 27 for the third year in a row. This stabilisation in nesting attempts follows a worrying decline of more than 20% since the peak of 34 nests in 2003.

Perhaps the most exciting result of the season came from Cambridgeshire, where the first Bittern nests since the late 1930s were discovered. Four nests were located at one site where three different females and one booming male were present. This is the first time in the UK that Bitterns have nested at a newly created reedbed.

#### England, SE

**Kent** Two sites: 1–2 booming males.

#### England, E

**Cambridgeshire** Four sites: five booming males; four confirmed nests. This is the first confirmed breeding in the county since 1938. **Lincolnshire** Four sites: five booming males. **Norfolk North Norfolk coast** Four sites: 3–4 booming males. **Norfolk Broads** 12 sites: 10–16 booming males; six confirmed nests. **Suffolk Suffolk coast** Seven sites: 20–25 booming males; 14 confirmed nests. **Fens** One site: one booming male.

#### England, N

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

### Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

One site: one singing male. There has still not been a repeat of the only confirmed breeding record, in Yorkshire in 1984. Singing males present at sites for at least a week have been reported in three of the last ten years.

#### England, E

**Norfolk** One site: a booming male was recorded at Titchwell from 18th to 27th June.

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

### Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

78 sites: 730–798 pairs. These numbers represent a considerable increase over the totals in recent reports, with new records set for the number of sites and pairs. Berkshire, Lincolnshire and Oxfordshire recorded their first breeding birds in 2007, but there was still little sign of expansion to the north of a line between the Mersey and the Humber. Note that when colony counts are given as ranges (e.g. 5–7 nests), the first figure is the number of pairs confirmed breeding and the second is this figure plus the number of pairs probably breeding.

#### England, SW

**Cornwall** Four sites: 14 pairs. **Devon** At least nine sites: 92–95 pairs bred. **Dorset** Five sites: 35–37 pairs. **Gloucestershire** One site: 5–19 pairs. **Hampshire** Four sites: 68–85 pairs. **Isles of Scilly** One site: two pairs. **Somerset** Five sites: 35–36 pairs. **Wiltshire** One site: 19–22 pairs.

#### England, SE

**Berkshire** Two sites: two pairs. This is the first recorded breeding for Berkshire; both pairs were successful. **Buckinghamshire** Two sites: four pairs. **Essex** Five sites: 43 pairs. **Kent** Two sites: 93 pairs at Northward Hill, the largest colony in Britain, and 15 pairs probably bred at the second. **Oxfordshire** One site: one pair; first breeding record for the county. **Sussex** Seven sites: 40–41 pairs.

#### England, E

**Cambridgeshire** One site: 11–12 pairs. **Lincolnshire** Three sites: 16–18 pairs. This is the first confirmed breeding in the county although there have been positive signs since at least 2003. **Norfolk** Seven sites: 129 pairs bred. **Suffolk** Seven sites: 57 pairs.

#### England, N

**Cheshire & Wirral** One site: 15–20 pairs.

#### Wales

**Anglesey** One site: one pair. **Caernarfonshire** Two sites: 14 pairs bred. **Carmarthenshire** Three sites: ten pairs. **Ceredigion** One site: seven pairs bred. **Gower** Two sites: 13–17 pairs. **Gwent** One site: four pairs bred.

### Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

One site: 0–1 pairs. This is the first time that this species has appeared in these reports, and breeding has never been confirmed in Britain. In the late 1960s there were regular spring reports, especially at Minsmere in Suffolk (up to five in May 1968) and in the Stour Valley in Kent (Sharrock & Sharrock 1976). For the first time since then, similar behaviour was observed at Minsmere in 2007. Three birds, two males and a female, were present from 18th to 27th May, with two birds still there on 31st May. All sported breeding plumes and were recorded displaying. No nest-site was found, but heavy rain and flooding in early June, which caused



Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Dan Powell

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failures of nesting Eurasian Bitterns, is thought to have stalled any breeding attempt.

[England, E](#)

**Suffolk** One site: one pair attempted to breed.

### Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Two sites: 1–3 pairs. Nest-building by Spoonbills in the UK was first recorded in modern times in 1989, and was again reported in six of the 11 years between 1996 and 2006, in five different counties. Breeding was confirmed during that period only in 1998 (Suffolk, eggs predated) and 1999 (Lancashire & N Merseyside, two young fledged). Consequently, the pair that laid eggs at a site in eastern England in 2007 represents only the third such record in modern times.

Summering birds have become regular in southern counties since the mid 1990s. In 2007, there were up to 29 at nine sites in Norfolk, and in Suffolk two sites held up to 11 and 22 birds respectively, with smaller numbers of other birds at other sites in other counties.

[England, E](#)

One site: two pairs built nests and eggs were laid in at least one of these, but the nests were subsequently deserted.

[England, N](#)

**Cheshire & Wirral** One site: one pair of subadults was present between June and August and the birds were seen displaying and carrying sticks.

### Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

**16 sites: 39 pairs, plus singles at three other sites.** Stuart Benn, RSPB, commented as follows.

In mainland Scotland, 38 pairs were located and ten young reared (39 and 34, respectively, in 2006). Productivity was 0.26 young per territorial pair, well below the long-term average of 0.56 and the second-worst figure ever since regular monitoring began in 1971 (only 1976, with 0.20, was worse). Fifteen sites were occupied by pairs in 2007 with a further three holding just single birds; only six sites produced young and these figures remain a cause of concern. In 2007, sites within Special Protection Areas held 25 pairs (66%) and produced eight young (80%).

For the second year running, a bird paired with a Great Crested Grebe *P. cristatus* in England but the pair was again unsuccessful. This time the nest was flooded out.

[England, C](#)

**Leicestershire & Rutland** One site: one mixed pair. An adult paired with a Great Crested Grebe, laid eggs but the nest was flooded out and no eggs hatched.

[Scotland, Mid and N & W](#)

**Moray & Nairn/Highland** 15 sites: 38 pairs reared ten young, two singles also present at two other sites. **Orkney** One site: a single bird was present from 3rd April to 22nd May at the site that held a non-breeding pair in 2006.

### Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

19 sites: 30–48 pairs. At least 40 young fledged. The status of breeding Black-necked Grebes up to 2004 was reviewed by Martin & Smith (2007) and the population was shown to have risen during the late 1990s to a peak of 50 confirmed pairs in 2002. Since then, however, a decline in the number of sites occupied and the number of pairs is apparent, and both seem to be returning to the levels of the mid 1990s (fig. 3). It is unclear why this is happening.

[England, SE](#)

**Hertfordshire** One site: up to 21 birds present early in the season, but only three pairs remained; although birds were present from March until July, no nests were built, as in 2006. **Kent** One site: one pair possibly bred.

[England, E](#)

**Lincolnshire** One site: two pairs. One pair bred fledging five young. **Northamptonshire** Two sites: two pairs possibly bred.

[England, C](#)

**Nottinghamshire** Two sites: (1) one pair bred and fledged one young; (2) up to three adults present. **Staffordshire** One site: one pair bred but the birds were again disturbed and no young were reared.

### Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

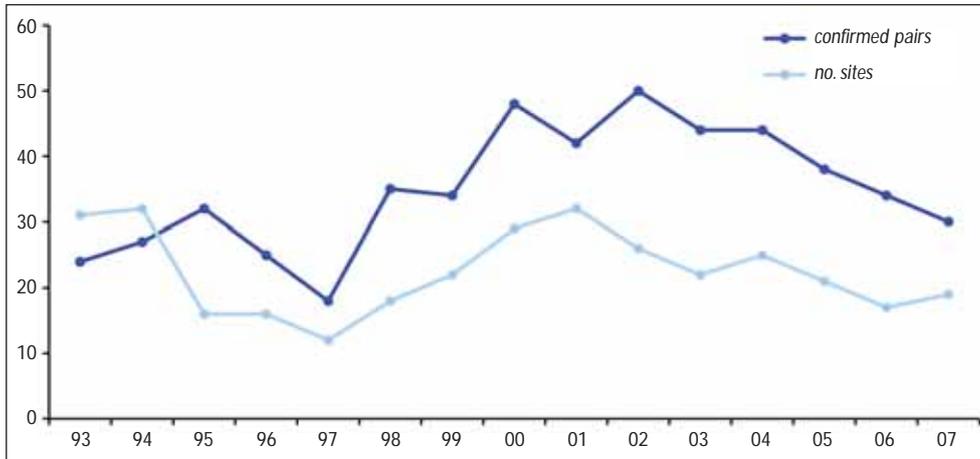


Fig. 3. Number of confirmed breeding pairs and total number of sites with Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* in the UK, 1993–2007.

#### England, N

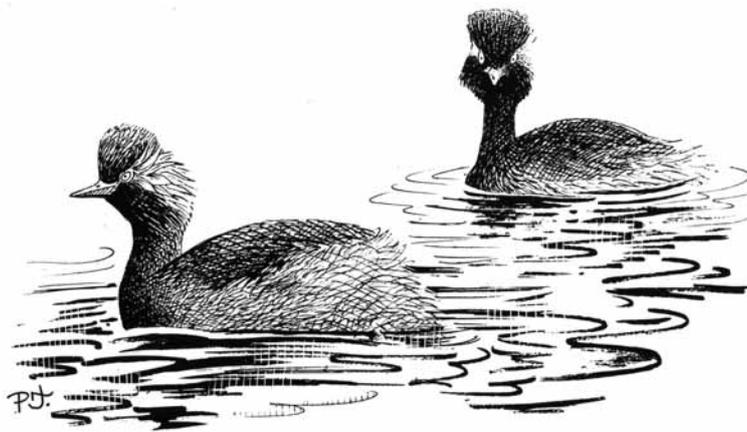
**Cheshire & Wirral** One site: 14 pairs bred with 24 young being fed on 24th June. Torrential rain the next day, however, caused the loss of some chicks; 15–17 young were believed to have fledged. **Durham** One site: one pair bred and fledged two young. **Greater Manchester** One site: four pairs bred with ten young seen (one pair double-brooded) and at least six young fledged. **Northumberland** Three sites: (1) six pairs bred and fledged nine young from five broods; (2) two pairs possibly bred; (3) one pair possibly bred. **Yorkshire** Three sites: (1) one pair bred (fledging one young) and one pair probably bred; (2) one pair bred (fledging one); (3) three pairs possibly bred, being present early in the season but left owing to low water levels.

#### Scotland, S

**Borders** One site: two pairs possibly bred. Birds were present from early April until June with display seen frequently but no nests were located.

#### Scotland, Mid

**North-east Scotland** One site: one pair possibly bred, but seen only on one date in June.



Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis*

Phil Jones

### Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

12–37 pairs; 23 young fledged. The wet weather during June and July had a significant impact on the breeding success of Honey-buzzards with some pairs not attempting to nest while those that did had only limited success. The conditions also affected the ability of fieldworkers to locate the birds, as Honey-buzzards rarely fly above the canopy in poor weather. This may explain the number of sites for which just single birds were reported rather than pairs. Given these difficulties and the continuing secrecy over sites, we urge observers to submit, in confidence, all reports of Honey-buzzards in breeding locations, so that accurate numbers can be maintained.

#### England, SW

Ten territories occupied in three counties. Three pairs bred, fledging six young. In addition, four sites with

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just single birds reported.

### England, SE

Nine territories occupied in three counties. Five pairs bred, fledging ten young.

### England, E, C & N

Seven territories occupied in five counties. No confirmed breeding reported. In addition, two sites with just single birds reported.

### Wales

Six territories occupied. Three pairs bred, fledging six young. In addition, five sites with just single birds reported.

### Scotland

One territory occupied. One pair bred, fledging one young. In addition, four other sites recorded Honey-buzzards during the breeding season, all areas where breeding has been attempted in the past, but there was no further evidence.

## Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

638–1,439 pairs. The continued increase and spread of the native and reintroduced Red Kite populations means that the figures presented here are minima, particularly for the main centres in Wales and southern England, where only a proportion of the total number of nesting pairs is monitored. A figure of around 1,500 pairs now seems a reasonable estimate of the total population. The dry spring allowed many pairs to begin nesting early and some of these had young large enough to withstand the effects of the heavy rain in June and July, which reduced the productivity of other pairs.

This year saw notable increases in both Shropshire and Durham. In Shropshire, where the first modern breeding occurred only in 2006, there were six pairs; these are thought to originate from the native Welsh population. In Durham, the successful reintroduction there saw an increase from four confirmed breeding pairs in 2006 to 16 pairs, plus another in neighbouring Northumberland. The story of the Red Kite reintroduction project is summarised below by Peter Newbery.

In the late 1980s, the decision was taken to reintroduce Red Kites to England and Scotland, even though the native Welsh population was known to be increasing. The justification at the time was that conservation organisations had a long-term aim to see Red Kites breeding right across their former British range, and believed that this would not be achieved within a reasonable timescale except by translocation.

Numbers were recovering slowly in Wales, where the remnant population was confined after near-extinction early in the twentieth century, but there were few signs of range expansion and it was thought likely that natural recolonisation of England and Scotland would take many decades. Accordingly, a reintroduction programme was drawn up and, in 1989, juvenile Red Kites were imported from Spain to a site in the Chilterns, west of London, and from Sweden to the Black Isle, near Inverness. By 1992, 93 kites had been released in each locality and successful breeding took place that year. As the populations grew, plans were drawn up for further releases, and by 2009 seven additional populations had been established, in Co. Down, Dumfries & Galloway, Durham, Northamptonshire, North-east Scotland, Perth & Kinross and Yorkshire. The first releases in North-east Scotland were in the summer of 2007.

The Red Kite reintroduction project is still running, 20 years after it started, and has been a tremendous success, not only in achieving its original conservation aim but also in terms of public awareness, participation and profile. While the native Welsh population has probably reached in excess of 800 breeding pairs, reintroduced populations have now reached over 600 pairs, most of them in a broad belt from the northern Chilterns to north Wiltshire.

**England** A minimum of 234–490 pairs bred. The population in southern England, centred on the Chilterns and mainly in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, was believed to be over 350 breeding pairs, with over 600 young reared, although only 184 nests were monitored. The following details were received by county, although in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire these represent minima.

### England, SW

**Hampshire** Three pairs bred; at least ten other pairs. **Wiltshire** Four pairs bred; six other pairs.

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007



Rebecca Nason

2. Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Radnorshire, April 2007.

[England, SE](#)

**Bedfordshire** One pair bred, the first recorded breeding in modern times for the county. **Berkshire** At least two pairs bred. **Buckinghamshire** 54 pairs bred. **Hertfordshire** Five pairs bred; 18 other pairs. **Oxfordshire** 23 pairs bred. **Sussex** One pair bred; one other pair.

[England, E](#)

**Cambridgeshire** Three pairs bred; five other pairs. **Lincolnshire** One pair bred. **Northamptonshire** 61 pairs bred.

[England, C](#)

**Herefordshire** Two pairs bred; one other pair. **Leicestershire & Rutland** Three pairs bred; one other pair. **Shropshire** Six pairs bred.

[England, N](#)

**Durham** 16 pairs bred and one other pair built a nest that was blown down before laying. **Northumberland** One pair bred, fledging one young, the first successful breeding pair in the county for over 150 years. **Yorkshire** 48 pairs bred.

**Wales** A minimum of 311–473 pairs bred, but it is estimated that the total population in 2007 lay between 672 and 840 pairs, fledging over 600 young. The 2007 distribution of known territorial pairs (numbers of pairs confirmed in brackets) by recording area was **Breconshire** 58 (32), **Caernarfonshire** 2 (2), **Carmarthenshire** 77 (33), **Ceredigion** 187 (165), **Denbigh & Flint** 2 (0), **East Glamorgan** 4 (1), **Gower** 13 (9), **Gwent** 2 (2), **Meirionnydd** 12 (5), **Montgomeryshire** 36 (19), **Pembrokeshire** 8 (5) and **Radnorshire** 72 (38).

**Scotland** 93–109 pairs bred.

[Scotland, S](#)

**Dumfries & Galloway** 21 pairs bred; one other pair.

[Scotland, Mid](#)

**Perth & Kinross (Tayside RSG)** 13 pairs bred; 7 other pairs. **Upper Forth (Central Scotland RSG)** 20 pairs bred; six other pairs.

[Scotland, N & W](#)

**Highland** 39 pairs bred; 2 other pairs.

Holling *et al.*

### White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

35–42 pairs. Six new pairs were found in 2007 bringing the total number of occupied territories to a new peak since the reintroduction scheme began, of 42 pairs. The range has continued to expand to the north, south and east. Furthermore, 2007 saw the first releases of a new reintroduction scheme, which is described below by Peter Newbery.

There is good evidence that the White-tailed Eagle was once a common and widespread bird in Britain, but habitat loss and persecution reduced its range to west- and north-coast strongholds in the nineteenth century, leading to its ultimate extinction as a breeding bird by 1916. After unsuccessful trials in Argyll and on Fair Isle in the 1950s and 1960s, the first phase of reintroduction was undertaken between 1975 and 1985 by the (then) Nature Conservancy Council on the island of Rum, Highland, and this was followed by supplementary releases between 1993 and 1998 in Wester Ross, Highland. The first successful breeding took place on the Isle of Mull, Argyll, in 1985. These reintroductions have resulted in a Scottish population of 46 territorial pairs of White-tailed Eagles by 2009.

A long-term target for the White-tailed Eagle programme was set at 150 territorial pairs over a range of around 150 10-km squares by 2050, and in order to help achieve this ambitious target, a second phase of releases began in Fife with 15 juveniles in 2007 and another 15 in 2008.

At the same time, Natural England announced proposals to establish a third release programme in eastern England. Initial progress was encouraging, and a feasibility study, IUCN assessment and site assessment were carried out, but the public consultation process proved tricky and plans have had to be delayed. However, there is still optimism that a release locality can be agreed upon and the first birds released by autumn 2010.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Nine pairs bred, of which seven fledged ten young, and a further two territorial pairs.

**Highland** 18 pairs bred, of which nine fledged 11 young, and a further three territorial pairs.

**Outer Hebrides** Eight pairs bred, of which eight fledged 13 young, and a further two territorial pairs.

### Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

387–423 breeding females/pairs. The total number of breeding Marsh Harriers reported in 2007 was close to that in 2005 when a comprehensive survey recorded 363–429 breeding females/pairs. The expansion into southwest England continues, with repeat nesting in the Isles of Scilly and suggestions of breeding in Somerset. Elsewhere, county totals were comparable with the 2005 survey figures, although increases were apparent in Kent and Yorkshire.

#### England, SW

**Isles of Scilly** One pair bred fledging one, possibly two, young. **Somerset** Up to three different females at one site during the breeding season but males seen only spasmodically.

#### England, SE

**Essex** 20 pairs bred, fledging at least 16 young. **Hertfordshire** One pair possibly bred but two juveniles seen in early August may have fledged locally. **Kent** Estimate of 90–100 breeding pairs. **Sussex** One pair probably bred (nest-building noted) and two pairs possibly bred.

#### England, E

**Cambridgeshire** At least 12 confirmed breeding attempts with five other possibly breeding females. **Lincolnshire** 84 pairs bred and one pair probably bred. **Norfolk** A minimum of 90 nesting females fledged at least 98 young. **Suffolk** At least 65 pairs bred, four pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

#### England, N

**Lancashire & N Merseyside** Four females: (1) a male and two females bred at one site fledging six young; (2) one pair bred; (3) a female and an immature male summered. **Northumberland** One pair built a nest but did not lay; three juveniles later in the season in the same area may have fledged locally. **Yorkshire** 17 pairs bred, one pair probably bred (nest-building noted) and four pairs possibly bred.

#### Scotland, Mid

**Fife/Perth & Kinross** Four pairs bred fledging three young, with a further four territorial pairs.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Orkney** One pair bred but although chicks were hatched none fledged.

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

### Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

276–376 monitored pairs fledged a minimum of 510 young. The table summarises the level of monitoring of Hen Harriers across the UK but is believed to be complete only for England. Many fieldworkers mentioned reduced productivity owing to the wet weather when young were in the nest. The next national Hen Harrier survey is planned for 2010.

Hen Harrier	Occupied territories	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
<b>England, N</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>44</b>
Cumbria	3	2	1	5
Lancashire & N Merseyside	16	15	10	30
Northumberland	4	4	2	8
Yorkshire	2	2	1	1
<b>Isle of Man</b>	n/a	–	–	–
<b>Wales</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>34</b>
Breconshire	1	1	1	2
Caernarfonshire	5	4	2	2
Denbigh & Flint	9	7	6	17
Meirionnydd	12	8	2	4
Montgomeryshire	11	8	5	9
<b>Scotland, S</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>102</b>
Clyde Islands	25	24	17	46
Dumfries & Galloway	11	8	4	11
Lothian & Borders	6	4	3	13
S Strathclyde (Ayrshire/Clyde)	27	20	8	32
<b>Scotland, Mid</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>94</b>
Angus & Dundee	0	0	0	0
Central Scotland (Upper Forth)	2	0	0	0
Moray & Nairn	6	6	6	12
North-east Scotland	5	3	2	3
Perth & Kinross	37	25	24	79
<b>Scotland, N &amp; W</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>236</b>
Argyll	44	31	24	58



Richard Allen

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Holling et al.

Hen Harrier cont.				
	Occupied territories	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
Highland (incl. Caithness)	27	20	11	37
Orkney	64	43	25	75
Outer Hebrides (Uists only)	44	29	23	66
Northern Ireland	15	12	n/a	n/a
Co. Antrim	15	12	n/a	n/a
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>510</b>

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Eight sites: 13–14 pairs fledged a minimum of 25 young. Thirteen confirmed breeding pairs matches the 2006 total, which itself was a record high since records began, in 1973 (fig. 4). The low totals in 1998 and 1999 are a true reflection of fewer pairs nesting, since coverage and reporting were comparable and birds were present in the breeding localities.

England, S

Two sites: four pairs bred, one pair probably bred, and one single. Of the nesting pairs, two pairs fledged four young and two pairs fledged three young.

England, E

Lincolnshire Two sites: two pairs bred. One pair fledged four young (thanks to RSPB wardening, it was possible to view this nest-site from late June into August, when young were being fed in the nest); the second pair failed. Norfolk Three sites: six pairs bred, fledging seven young.

England, N

One site: one pair bred. A clutch of four was laid but was deserted in June, probably as a result of wet weather at that time.

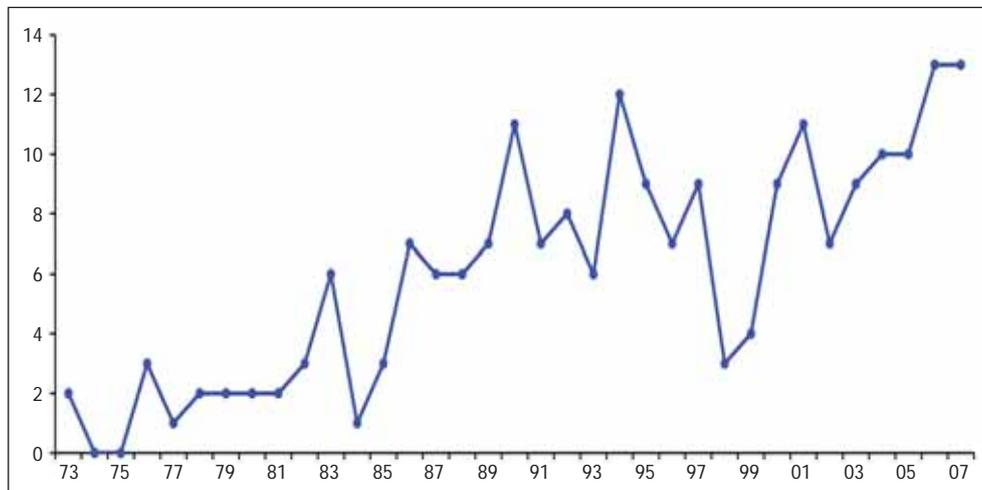


Fig. 4. Number of confirmed breeding pairs of Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* in the UK, 1973–2007.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

274–400 pairs. The number of pairs reported here is similar to that in the 2005 and 2006 reports; it is known to be an underestimate in many areas and largely reflects the effort put into monitoring. This can be a difficult species to locate and establishing the actual number of territorial pairs is not easy, while, owing to the threat of persecution and disturbance, sites are often kept secret. In some areas, there are also concerns about correct identification of large Accipiters. These issues make it difficult for recorders to assess their local populations accurately and the

### Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

Northern Goshawk				
	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs		
			Lancashire & N Merseyside	4 4
			Northumberland	22 24
			Yorkshire	22 22
England, SW	50	69	Wales	56 91
Devon	10	12	Anglesey	0 1
Gloucestershire	28	34	Breconshire	4 15
Hampshire	9	15	Caernarfonshire	0 1
Somerset	0	3	Carmarthenshire	8 21
Wiltshire	3	5	Ceredigion	3 3
England, SE	0	2	Denbigh & Flint	3 3
Buckinghamshire	0	2	East Glamorgan	6 6
England, E	3	15	Gower	4 4
Norfolk	2	8	Gwent	21 23
Northamptonshire	0	2	Meirionnydd	1 1
Suffolk	1	5	Montgomeryshire	6 8
England, C	42	54	Pembrokeshire	0 5
Derbyshire	23	23	Scotland, S	46 61
Herefordshire	5	5	Ayrshire	0 4
Nottinghamshire	3	3	Dumfries & Galloway	16 17
Shropshire	10	12	Lothian & Borders	30 40
Staffordshire	0	8	Scotland, Mid	24 25
Warwickshire	0	2	North-east Scotland	23 24
Worcestershire	1	1	Perth & Kinross	1 1
England, N	53	62	Scotland, N & W	0 1
Cleveland	0	1	Highland	0 1
Cumbria	4	5	Northern Ireland	0 20
Durham	1	6	TOTALS	274 400

Panel is dependent on the submission of Schedule 1 licence returns to provide numbers. However, these returns underestimate the numbers of pairs as they focus on nests monitored under licence. Consequently, we strongly encourage birdwatchers to report all nesting and territorial Goshawks to their county recorder.

### Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Results of Golden Eagle monitoring by Scottish Raptor Study Groups (Etheridge *et al.* in prep.) and the Northern England Raptor Forum are presented below. The first table provides a breakdown of monitored home ranges by recording area. The second table shows that 286 home ranges were checked in total, against the population of 443 pairs estimated following the 2003 national survey (Eaton *et al.* 2007).

Golden Eagle 1					
	Singles *	Probable breeding pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs	Min. no. young fledged
England, N & Scotland, S	2	1	3	4	2
Angus & Dundee	1	3	2	5	3
North-east Scotland (incl. E. Moray)	3	8	7	15	5
Perth & Kinross	5	3	10	13	12
Upper Forth	0	3	5	8	4
Argyll	6	14	43	57	27
Highland (incl. W. Moray & Nairn)	10	35	57	92	35
Outer Hebrides (Lewis & Harris)	0	1	2	3	2
Outer Hebrides (Uists)	1	7	18	25	11
TOTALS	28	75	147	222	101

\* Total includes home ranges occupied by single birds or showing signs of occupation but no pair seen.

Holling et al.

Golden Eagle 2						
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
286	222	209	147	103	101	0.48

**Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***

126–148 pairs. This is the lowest total reported to the Panel since 1999, when 125–136 pairs bred. Despite the expansion into southern Scotland, England and Wales (18 pairs in 2007 compared to just two in these areas in 1999), it would appear that coverage in (or reporting from) the main breeding range of Highland and especially Tayside is reduced (there were 81 and 57 pairs, respectively, reported in 2004, for instance); there is no evidence that the population has decreased. However, although Ospreys are now more frequently seen across the UK than ever before, the breeding population is still probably only around 200 pairs.

**England, E**

**Lincolnshire** 1–2 prospecting birds present from mid June to mid July. **Northamptonshire** One pair engaged in nest-building.

**England, C**

**Leicestershire & Rutland** Two pairs fledged five young at Rutland Water and a third pair built a nest but did not lay eggs.

**England, N**

**Cumbria** One site: one pair again fledged three young at Bassenthwaite Lake. **Yorkshire** One site: two birds summered.

**Wales**

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

**Scotland, S**

**Dumfries & Galloway** Three pairs on territory but no eggs laid. **Lothian & Borders** Eight pairs monitored: seven pairs laid eggs and three pairs fledged seven young.

**Scotland, Mid**

**Central Scotland** 18 pairs monitored: 16 pairs bred and 13 pairs fledged 32 young. **North-east Scotland** 19 pairs monitored: 19 pairs bred and 12 pairs fledged 22 young. **Tayside** 13 pairs monitored: 12 pairs laid eggs and fledged 20 young.

**Scotland, N & W**

**Argyll** 12 pairs monitored: 12 pairs laid eggs and 11 pairs fledged 22 young. **Highland** 67 pairs present, 65 pairs monitored: 56 pairs laid eggs and 41 pairs fledged 79 young.

**Merlin *Falco columbarius***

280–453 pairs. The table below is based on sample monitoring areas only and the figures are known to be incomplete in some areas, although comparable with those of previous years, as monitoring effort in recent years has been similar. The second national Merlin survey took place in 2008 and a summary of the results will appear in the next report.

Merlin	Territories occupied by pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
<b>England, SW</b>	2	1	0	0
<b>England, C</b>	17	15	14	43
Derbyshire	15	14	13	40
Shropshire	1	1	1	3
Staffordshire	1	0	0	0
<b>England, N</b>	137	87	54	143
Cleveland	1	0	0	0
Cumbria	15	15	14	25
Durham	28	27	9	28

### Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

Merlin cont.

	Territories occupied by pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
Lancashire & N Merseyside	40	4	3	11
Northumberland	20	12	8	25
Yorkshire	33	29	20	54
<b>Wales</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>
Breconshire	6	2	2	8
Denbigh & Flint	2	2	2	4
East Glamorgan	1	1	1	2
Meirionnydd	12	4	1	2
Montgomeryshire	7	3	1	2
<b>Scotland, S</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>82</b>
Dumfries & Galloway	7	5	2	7
Lothian & Borders	35	14	12	42
South Strathclyde	19	11	10	33
<b>Scotland, Mid</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>155</b>
Angus & Dundee	17	12	12	39
Moray & Nairn	16	16	7	11
North-east Scotland	37	37	28	82
Perth & Kinross	25	9	9	22
Upper Forth	5	1	1	1
<b>Scotland, N &amp; W</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>170</b>
Argyll	6	2	2	6
Highland (including Caithness)	36	14	12	44
Orkney	21	14	10	32
Outer Hebrides	26	11	11	37
Shetland	15	15	15	51
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>
Co. Antrim	3	3	3	6
Co. Tyrone	1	1	1	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>620</b>

### Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

238–894 pairs. As with the reporting of many of the less rare raptors in recent years, the numbers presented here largely reflect local monitoring effort rather than the perceived actual numbers present. Thus, as shown in fig. 5, the maximum number of pairs reported to the Panel rose

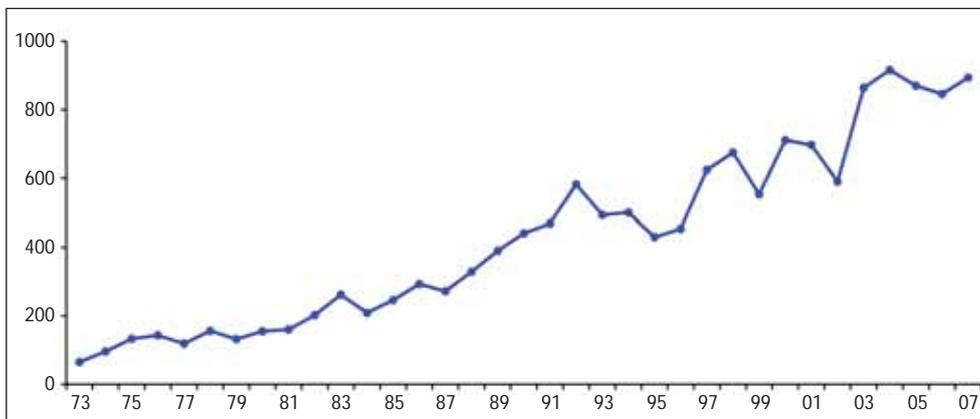


Fig. 5. Maximum total number of breeding pairs of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* reported to RBBP, 1973–2007.

Holling *et al.*

Hobby	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			Norfolk	15	32
			Northamptonshire	5	5
England, SW	71	220	Suffolk	15	41
Avon	4	12	England, C	61	108
Cornwall	0	8	Derbyshire	38	44
Devon	20	20	Herefordshire	3	3
Dorset	4	24	Leicestershire & Rutland	1	5
Gloucestershire	7	8	Nottinghamshire	7	7
Hampshire	14	53	Shropshire	2	9
Isle of Wight	1	4	Staffordshire	1	3
Somerset	7	25	Warwickshire	7	35
Wiltshire	14	66	Worcestershire	2	2
England, SE	35	400	England, N	15	30
Bedfordshire	1	15	Cheshire & Wirral	10	15
Berkshire	6	20	Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	2
Buckinghamshire	2	17	Yorkshire	4	13
Essex	0	22	Wales	9	23
Greater London	1	5	Breconshire	1	4
Hertfordshire	3	69	Carmarthenshire	2	2
Kent	12	200	Denbigh & Flint	1	1
Oxfordshire	5	6	East Glamorgan	1	2
Surrey	1	26	Gwent	4	6
Sussex	4	20	Montgomeryshire	0	2
England, E	47	113	Radnorshire	0	6
Cambridgeshire	7	16	Scotland	0	0
Lincolnshire	5	19	TOTALS	238	894

steadily in the first 30 years of monitoring, but has since levelled off at around 850–900 pairs. This compares with a 12% increase (smoothed trend) between 1995 and 2007 on BBS plots (Risely *et al.* 2009).

The numbers are believed to be much higher in most southern counties than would appear from the table above. Thus in Kent, intensive fieldwork in largely agricultural habitats, extrapolated across the county, resulted in a county population estimate of at least 200 pairs. Fieldwork in Derbyshire also gives a more accurate position than is available in neighbouring counties without equivalent efforts by dedicated fieldworkers. Although only 10–15 pairs are reported from casual recording in Cheshire & Wirral, local atlas surveying in 2004–06 yielded an estimate of 40–50 pairs in the county (Norman 2008). Hobbies breed late and proof of breeding is often not obtainable until July or August, after the main fieldwork season. The pair in Lancashire & N Merseyside was the first proved breeding for that county.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

747–961 pairs. The table below is based on sample monitoring areas only and the figures are known to be incomplete in some areas, although comparable with those of previous years, as monitoring effort in recent years has been similar. A nest that fledged one young in Cambridgeshire constituted the first confirmed breeding for that county.

Peregrine Falcon	Territories occupied by pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
England, SW	163	149	[77]	[163]
Avon	12	12	9	21
Cornwall	13	13	6	15
Devon	67	67	35	76
Dorset	27	27	n/a	28
Gloucestershire	13	10	8	15

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

<i>Peregrine Falcon cont.</i>	Territories occupied by pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
Hampshire	6	4	3	4
Isles of Scilly	1	0	0	0
Somerset	21	13	13	n/a
Wiltshire	3	3	3	4
<b>England, SE</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>[20]</b>	<b>[54]</b>
Bedfordshire	2	2	0	0
Berkshire	1	1	n/a	n/a
Essex	7	3	2	5
Greater London	2	2	2	6
Kent	4	3	n/a	n/a
Oxfordshire	1	1	1	2
Surrey	1	1	0	0
Sussex	20	20	15	41
<b>England, E</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	1
Lincolnshire	2	2	1	3
Northamptonshire	2	2	1	1
<b>England, C</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>[97]</b>
Derbyshire	26	26	10	23
Herefordshire	1	1	1	2
Leicestershire & Rutland	9	8	8	19
Nottinghamshire	3	3	3	9
Shropshire	18	18	13	28
Staffordshire	7	7	3	8
Warwickshire	4	4	2	6
West Midlands	2	2	2	n/a
Worcestershire	3	3	2	2
<b>England, N</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>242</b>
Cheshire & Wirral	4	2	2	7
Cleveland	1	1	1	3
Cumbria	73	58	46	103
Durham	5	4	3	7
Greater Manchester	3	3	1	4
Lancashire & N Merseyside	50	20	18	43
Northumberland	29	29	16	37
Yorkshire	19	17	14	38
<b>Wales</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>[65]</b>	<b>165</b>
Anglesey	2	0	0	0
Breconshire	17	10	8	17
Caernarfonshire	8	6	5	11
Carmarthenshire	10	7	7	12
Ceredigion	6	5	5	9
Denbigh & Flint	7	7	7	22
East Glamorgan	32	23	19	36
Gower	9	6	2	4
Gwent	9	6	4	8
Meirionnydd	10	6	6	8
Montgomeryshire	5	2	2	4
Pembrokeshire	44	30	n/a	34
<b>Scotland, S</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>224</b>
Dumfries & Galloway	60	49	42	99
Lothian & Borders RSG	58	44	29	75
South Strathclyde RSG	34	25	20	50
<b>Scotland, Mid</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>160</b>
Angus & Dundee	23	13	12	28

Holling *et al.*

Peregrine Falcon <i>cont.</i>	Territories occupied by pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories believed to fledge young	Min. no. young fledged
Central Scotland RSG	22	20	18	38
North-east Scotland RSG	39	23	20	38
Perth & Kinross/Fife/Isle of May	35	29	25	56
<b>Scotland, N &amp; W</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>65</b>
Argyll	21	12	9	18
Highland RSG	22	15	12	25
Orkney	12	9	6	11
Outer Hebrides (Uists only)	10	4	4	8
Shetland	2	2	1	3
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Co. Antrim	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>[509]</b>	<b>[1,176]</b>

**Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus***

259 sites: a minimum of 998 territories. The Water Rail was added to the list of species covered by the Panel only in 2006, in which year returns indicated a total of almost 1,300 territories. Although the 2007 total is lower, it confirms that the UK population exceeds recent estimates (450–900 in Gibbons *et al.* 1993). The ‘missing’ 300 territories can be accounted for by lower or absent counts from some counties that provided data for 2006.

Several counties acknowledge that this is an under-recorded species and thus totals are inevitably underestimates, affected by recording effort and the sites that are covered in a particular year. We are, however, now able to build a gazetteer of Water Rail sites, which, after a few years, may permit the calculation of more refined estimates. We encourage observers to submit all records of Water Rails during the breeding season to help to build up this picture. It is also useful to indicate whether counts from a site are the result of a survey or gathered from casual reports.

Water Rail	Sites	Territories	England, C	17	59
			Derbyshire	0	0
			Leicestershire & Rutland	1	1
<b>England, SW</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>236</b>	Nottinghamshire	2	6
Cornwall	1	1	Staffordshire	4	33
Devon	4	5	Warwickshire	7	13
Dorset	10	150	West Midlands	1	1
Hampshire	10	17	Worcestershire	2	5
Isle of Wight	2	2	<b>England, N</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>121</b>
Somerset	5	57	Cheshire & Wirral	3	6
Wiltshire	2	4	Cleveland	2	4
<b>England, SE</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>82</b>	Cumbria	5	5
Bedfordshire	5	5	Durham	4	4
Buckinghamshire	1	1	Greater Manchester	5	20
Essex	3	22	Lancashire & N Merseyside	4	39
Hertfordshire	2	6	Northumberland	3	3
Kent	10	25	Yorkshire	13	40
Oxfordshire	2	8	<b>Wales</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>54</b>
Sussex	10	15	Anglesey	3	29
<b>England, E</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>295</b>	Breconshire	3	5
Cambridgeshire	6	19	Caernarfonshire	1	1
Lincolnshire	4	4	Ceredigion	2	2
Norfolk	13	39	East Glamorgan	3	3
Northamptonshire	2	2	Gower	1	1
Suffolk	11	231	Gwent	1	6

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<i>Water Rail cont.</i>					
	Sites	Territories			
			Fife	6	6
			North-east Scotland	6	6
			Perth & Kinross	2	2
Pembrokeshire	1	3	Scotland, N & W	26	53
Radnorshire	4	4	Argyll	13	16
Scotland, S	36	64	Highland	5	29
Ayrshire	4	6	Orkney	2	2
Borders	13	27	Outer Hebrides	3	3
Clyde	14	24	Shetland	3	3
Dumfries & Galloway	3	5	Northern Ireland	3	4
Lothian	2	2	Co. Antrim	2	3
Scotland, Mid	16	30	Co. Fermanagh	1	1
Angus & Dundee	2	16	TOTALS	259	998

### Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

14 sites: 26 singing males. This total matches that from 2006, with a similar distribution of records. There were no records from the Insh Marshes in Highland, formerly a regular site for this species, although we are aware that unconfirmed reports from this site were submitted to bird information services but not to the recorder. We repeat our plea for all records of this extremely rare breeder to be submitted formally. Note that all records listed below refer to single calling birds unless specified.

#### England, SW

Somerset One site.

#### England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) up to four, 12th May to 26th June; (2) one, 30th April to 20th May. Norfolk One site: 21st June only. Suffolk One site: one heard on 25th, 27th and 30th April, two males on 12th May and one seen on 15th July.

#### England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside Two sites.

Yorkshire One site: up to five calling males.

#### Wales

Breconshire One site: 30th March and 8th April, possibly also 27th April.

#### Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two sites: (1) four birds; (2) two birds. Orkney One site: 21st June only. Outer Hebrides Two sites: (1) one on 11th May and probably same from a site close by on 14th May; (2) one on 4th and 15th July.



Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Phil Jones

### Corn Crake *Crex crex*

1,300 singing males. The number of birds recorded in the core areas of northwest Scotland continues to rise and now the total population is almost twice what it was five years ago, as shown in fig. 6. The population has been monitored annually by the RSPB since 1993 and the species has shown a dramatic response to conservation efforts since 2002. The reintroduction programme in eastern England, outlined below by Peter Newbery, is also showing signs of success with more records away from the release site in Cambridgeshire.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan for the Corn Crake, published in 1995, had a long-term aim to re-establish the species in parts of its former range in the UK, although the technique by which this might be achieved had yet to be developed. The discovery that a bird-keeper in eastern Germany was successfully breeding captive Corn Crakes provided a likely solution. He found that it was possible for captive-bred Corn Crakes to migrate and survive the winter in the wild and return as

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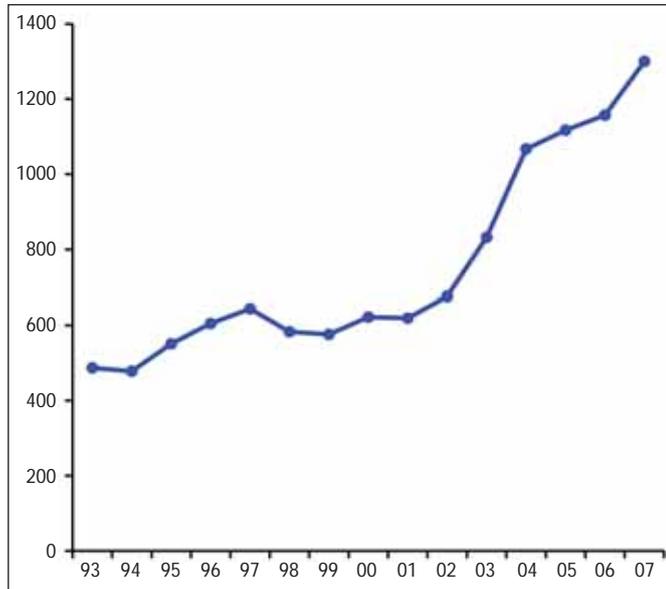


Fig. 6. Maximum total number of singing male Corn Crakes *Crex crex* in the UK, 1993–2007.

15 young captive-bred Corn Crakes were imported from Germany and transferred to purpose-built outdoor pens at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park. Disappointingly, no breeding took place that summer but, in the years since, over 500 juvenile Corn Crakes have been released. In the first few summers, no returning birds were heard, but by 2008 14 calling males were present. Six of these were trapped and five found to be carrying rings showing that they had been released the previous year – it was disappointing that there appeared to be little recruitment of wild-bred birds, however.

England, E

**Cambridgeshire** One site: five singing males. **Suffolk** One site: one singing male, 10th June only.

England, N

**Cleveland** One site: one singing male calling for up to three weeks. **Cumbria** One site: one singing male, 18th May only. **Yorkshire** One site: two singing males, 21st June to 5th July.

Scotland, S

**Borders** Two sites: two singing males on single dates in June. **Clyde** Two sites: (1) one singing male throughout July; (2) one singing male on 22nd June only. **Dumfries & Galloway** Two sites: (1) one singing male late May to early June; (2) one singing male from mid July into August.

Scotland, Mid

**North-east Scotland** Two sites: one singing male from 8th–18th July; (2) one singing male, 13th–17th July. **Upper Forth** One site: one singing male, 18th May only.

Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Total 756: Mainland 4, Coll 180, Colonsay 48, Garvellachs 0, Gigha 0, Iona 30, Islay 68, McCormaig Isles 3, Mull 4, Oronsay 25, Staffa 1, Tiree 391, Treshnish Isles 2. **Caithness** 0. **Highland** Total 42: Mainland 15, Canna 3, Eigg 2, Muck 3, Rum 0, Skye 19. **Orkney** Total 21: Burray/South Ronaldsay 0, East Mainland 2, Egilsay 2, North Ronaldsay 0, Papa Westray 7, Sanday 2, Stronsay 0, West Mainland 5, Westray 3. **Outer Hebrides** Total 461: Barra 63, Benbecula 27, Berneray 7, Harris 12, Lewis 115, Mingulay 2, North Uist 117, South Uist 105, Vatersay 13. **Shetland** Total 1.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Four sites: 10–12 pairs. Ten confirmed breeding pairs is a new record total and, with expansion to two counties away from Norfolk, it would appear that the Common Crane has established itself as a regular member of Britain's breeding avifauna. Productivity remains low, however, and only one young fledged in 2007. Details of the first breeding in Suffolk are documented by Sils (2008).

Although there was no evidence that a breeding attempt was made in Shetland in 2007, the

adults to nearby grassland.

With this knowledge, a plan was drawn up jointly between (what was then) English Nature and the RSPB to breed Corn Crakes in captivity, and release them on the Nene Washes near Peterborough. Here, several hundred hectares of grassland are managed for birds and other wildlife by both organisations working with local farmers. From the outset, it was clear that it would be necessary to release relatively large numbers of juveniles, because natural overwinter mortality is high.

The Zoological Society of London was brought in as a project partner and, in 2001,

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

presence of a displaying pair is interesting. It is also notable that information concerning a probable breeding attempt in Caithness in 1997 was not submitted to the Panel at the time but has since been documented by Forrester *et al.* (2007). A repeat attempt in Scotland would not now be unexpected. It is important to reiterate, however, that nesting cranes are extremely sensitive to disturbance and a wide area around the site of any potentially nesting pair should not be disturbed under any circumstances.

### England, E

**Norfolk** One extensive site: eight pairs bred but only one young fledged. **Suffolk** One site: one pair laid and hatched two eggs, but the chicks survived for less than two weeks; a second pair built a nest but it is not known whether eggs were laid.

### England, elsewhere

One site: one pair bred, two young hatched but died before fledging.

### Scotland, N & W

**Shetland** One site: a pair was seen displaying regularly for five days in May, and the same pair was probably present elsewhere in Shetland during April and May.

## Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

One site: one pair bred. David Waters, Director of the Great Bustard Group, and Tamás Székely, University of Bath, present some background to the reintroduction project that led to this first confirmed breeding of Great Bustards in Britain for 175 years.

In 2004, the Secretary of State for the Environment issued a licence to the Great Bustard Consortium (comprising the Great Bustard Group and the University of Bath) to carry out a ten-year Great Bustard reintroduction trial. The licence was issued after six years of consultation and development by a Steering Group, led by the Great Bustard Group, and also including English Nature, RSPB, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), Defence Estates, and local ornithological and conservation groups. When the licence was issued, the Steering Group was replaced by the Great Bustard Consultative Committee, which is largely composed of the old Steering Group with the addition of JNCC and Defra, but without ZSL. There are additional corresponding members of the Committee, principally from Russia, Germany, Hungary and Spain.

The stock is sourced from eggs recovered from nests destroyed or abandoned through agricultural disturbance in Saratovskaya, Russian Federation. The work is conducted by a branch of the Russian National Academy of Science under licence from the Russian Federal Service for the Supervision and Management of Wildlife. The protocol for the collection of eggs was drawn up with the Russian authorities, the Hungarian BirdLife Partner (MME) and the Great Bustard Consortium, and is held not to be detrimental to the source population. There are frequent inspections by the Russian authorities and the system has been inspected by international visitors from Spain and from the RSPB. The eggs are hatched in Russia and the chicks reared in isolation from humans. The chicks are imported to the UK when they are about six weeks old.

The birds are released on the military estate of Salisbury Plain. The first release was in 2004 and the number of birds released annually since then has varied from 6 to 33. The population in the UK release area in July 2009 was 15, with representatives from every year of release being present.

The first Great Bustard eggs that the project was aware of, and the first in the wild in the UK since 1832, came in 2007. They were incubated for at least 40 days (the normal period being 26–28 days), before the female abandoned them. On subsequent examination they were found to be infertile, but of suitable size and shell thickness. The likely explanation for the infertility is that the males had not yet reached sexual maturity: it is widely held that Great Bustard males are not fertile, or at least will not breed, until they are four or five years old.

Footnote: further eggs were laid in 2008, which were infertile. In 2009, two females incubated fertile eggs and successfully hatched three chicks. Two fledged but by the autumn only one young male had survived and was still with the female parent.

### England, SW

**Wiltshire** One site: one female from the reintroduction scheme laid two eggs, which proved to be infertile.

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**Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta***

68 sites: 1,536 pairs. Although this is a similar total to that in 2006, there were reductions in the number of pairs in Kent (32%) and in Lincolnshire (54%) yet an increase of 73% in Yorkshire, suggesting some movement among colonies.

Avocet	No. sites	Confirmed pairs	Min. young fledged
England, SW	2	11	10
Hampshire	2	11	10
England, SE	19	387	86
Essex	11	102	32*
Kent	4	226	28*
Sussex	4	59	26
England, E	34	857	68
Cambridgeshire	2	26	3
Lincolnshire	4	106	3*
Norfolk	18	487	54*
Suffolk	10	238	8*
England, C	1	2	8
Worcestershire	1	2	8
England, N	11	273	41
Cheshire & Wirral	1	4	3
Durham	1	1	2
Lancashire & N Merseyside	4	58	32
Yorkshire	5	210	4
Wales	1	6	11
Gwent	1	6	11
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1,536</b>	<b>224</b>

\* Fledged totals not available from all sites.

**Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus***

Eight counties: 348 confirmed pairs fledged 248 young. Although overall there was a modest increase in numbers, 2007 saw the range expand to include two counties that have not held breeding pairs in recent years. Monitoring by the RSPB, supported by Natural England, covers most of the population each year, amounting to 294 pairs in 2007. In addition, two estates in Suffolk held a further 54 pairs, bringing the national total to 348 breeding pairs, a continued increase. The recovery in the breeding range permitted the Stone-curlew to move from Red to



Dan Powell

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

### Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

Stone-curlew	Confirmed pairs	Young fledged	Oxfordshire	7	2
England, SW	104	77	One other county	1	0
Hampshire	19	13	England, E	227	162
Wiltshire	85	64	Cambridgeshire	1	0
England, SE	17	9	Norfolk	129	87
Berkshire	9	7	Suffolk	97	75
			TOTALS	348	248

Amber in the latest BoCC assessment. The figures given in the table below are for proven breeding pairs only.

#### Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

891 pairs. A survey organised by the BTO of both Ringed *C. hiaticula* and Little Ringed Plovers found almost 900 breeding pairs of the latter species, higher than the recent five-year average of 678 pairs (2002–06) based on returns from recorders. The main results from the survey are outlined below by Greg Conway.

Since the first pair nested at Tring Reservoirs, Hertfordshire, in 1938, numbers of breeding Little Ringed Plovers in the UK have increased steadily, accompanied by a range expansion to the north and west. In 1973, a total of 467 pairs were recorded in Great Britain (Parrinder & Parrinder 1975) and by 1984 there were 608–631 pairs (Parrinder 1989). The most recent published population

Little Ringed Plover	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs	West Midlands	4
England, SW	58	Worcestershire	19
Avon	4	England, N	291
Devon	1	Cheshire & Wirral	31
Dorset	1	Cleveland	7
Gloucestershire	6	Cumbria	12
Hampshire	32	Durham	15
Somerset	2	Greater Manchester	29
Wiltshire	12	Lancashire & N Merseyside	38
England, SE	145	Northumberland	28
Bedfordshire	13	Yorkshire	131
Berkshire	25	Wales	144
Buckinghamshire	9	Breconshire	11
Essex	16	Carmarthenshire	77
Greater London	9	Ceredigion	1
Hertfordshire	13	Denbigh & Flint	5
Kent	21	East Glamorgan	10
Oxfordshire	19	Gower	2
Surrey	14	Gwent	6
Sussex	6	Meirionnydd	4
England, E	76	Montgomeryshire	23
Cambridgeshire	22	Radnorshire	5
Lincolnshire	22	Scotland, S	6
Norfolk	19	Borders	3
Suffolk	13	Clyde	3
England, C	155	Scotland, Mid	16
Derbyshire	42	Angus & Dundee	3
Leicestershire & Rutland	26	Fife	4
Nottinghamshire	13	Moray & Nairn	1
Shropshire	9	North-east Scotland	7*
Staffordshire	23	Upper Forth	1
Warwickshire	19	TOTAL	891

\* Counts from 2006, as sites not covered in 2007.

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estimate is 825–1,070 pairs for 1988–91, during the last breeding atlas (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

In total, 891 pairs of Little Ringed Plovers were located during the 2007 survey, a far higher figure than that reported by the RBBP in 2006. This increase was due both to the comprehensive coverage of current and historical breeding locations and sampling of other suitable habitats and to expansion to the west and north of the core range in central and southeast England.

Gravel- and sand-pits remain the most important habitat for this species. Increased use of river shingle in 2007 reflected the species' range expansion into northern and western regions.

### Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*

One site: 0–1 pairs. This American plover is a new species for the Panel's reports, but this was an opportunistic pairing rather than a serious breeding attempt.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Shetland** A long-staying first-summer female paired with a male Ringed Plover and was seen giving distraction display at two different sites, but there was no further evidence of nesting.

### 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 2007, data relating to 29 breeding pairs in Highland and North-east Scotland were received (of which 11 were confirmed breeding). In Borders, four hilltops were visited in mid June but no Dotterels were seen. In Cumbria, several trips of up to 23 birds in early May were in suitable habitat but there were no further records despite the presence of a single (unsexed) bird in June 2006.

### Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One site: 0–1 pairs. The evidence presented here provides the most promising sign in the last ten years. Owing to a decline of over 50% in the breeding population in the last 25 years, the Temminck's Stint moved from Amber to Red in the latest BoCC assessment.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Highland** One site: one bird was present at a former breeding site for about a week and distraction display was noted on one occasion, which would indicate that a breeding attempt had occurred. This behaviour suggests that young were present nearby, but they were not seen and there was no further evidence.

### Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One site: one bird alarm-calling. Although three pairs bred in 2003, there has been no further confirmation of breeding since then. However, the breeding habitat of this species is in remote and inaccessible areas, so it is possible that breeding goes undetected.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Highland** One site: a single bird was reported giving alarm calls in potential breeding habitat, indicating a probable breeding attempt, but there was no further evidence.

### Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Four sites: 0–21 pairs. Breeding has been confirmed in only three of the last ten years. The large numbers of lekking birds early in the season in Yorkshire inflate the totals presented here and, in the light of past records in the region, the one-day record from Argyll is really the best hint of potential breeding in 2007. The sharp decline in the breeding population (over 50% in the last 25 years) meant that the Ruff was moved from Amber to Red in the recent BoCC assessment. In the Netherlands the population has fallen by 90% since the 1950s, and in Denmark there was a 75% decrease between 1970 and 1995 (Delany *et al.* 2009).

#### England, E

**Cambridgeshire** One site: up to 40 males with 11 females lekking in April but none was seen in May.

#### England, N

**Lancashire & N Merseyside** One site: up to nine males and two females were at a lek for three weeks in late

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April and early May. **Yorkshire** One site: 42 males were lekking with seven females in March to mid April, numbers dwindling to 27 in late April and five by May.

**Scotland, N & W**

**Argyll** One site: a single male and one female were at a lek on 9th June.

### Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

13 sites: 60–66 pairs. Black-tailed Godwit is Red-listed in BoCC based on a historical decline that largely affects the nominate race, which nests in England. The race *islandica* breeds in smaller numbers but the population is stable.

#### *L. l. limosa* 52–56 pairs

**England, SE**

**Kent** Two sites: (1) two pairs bred, both failed; (2) two pairs bred, one pair fledged two young.

**England, E**

**Cambridgeshire** One site: 41 pairs fledged 20 young. At a former breeding site, the only record was of a displaying male on just one date in early May. **Norfolk** One site: five pairs bred, but nests were flooded out.

**Suffolk** One extensive site: a single male again held territory on the coast from late April to mid May.

**England, N**

**Lancashire & N Merseyside** Two sites: (1) one pair bred, but the eggs were predated; (2) a pair was seen displaying and in mobbing behaviour. **Yorkshire** One site: one pair bred, two other pairs showed breeding behaviour.

#### *L. l. islandica* 8–10 pairs

**Scotland, N & W**

**Orkney** One site: four pairs bred and one pair held territory close by. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one bird on 5th July was behaving as if nesting; no further information. **Shetland** Three sites: four pairs bred, each fledging at least one young.

### Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

46–56 apparently occupied territories (AOTs) reported. This is a very limited sample. Surveys in Shetland indicated a substantial decline: on Fetlar, 30–32 AOTs were recorded compared with 80 in 1986 and 60 in 2002; in four survey plots on Unst there were 8–13 AOTs, compared with 53 in 1989 and 31 in 2003; and in a single survey plot on Yell there was only one AOT, compared with 7–8 in 1985. This decline, documented over the last 25 years, means that the Whimbrel is now a Red-listed species (formerly Amber).

**Scotland, N & W**

**Highland** Only one pair reported from RSPB reserves in Sutherland. **Orkney** One site: six pairs bred at this regular site. **Outer Hebrides** Two sites: three possible breeding pairs. **Shetland** 39–46 AOTs recorded on Fetlar, Unst and Yell.

### Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One site: one pair. According to the BTO's Nest Record Scheme, this record represents the first documented nest of this species in Britain (Dave Leech pers. comm.).

**Scotland, N & W**

**Highland** One site: one pair bred. The pair was seen displaying from 8th April, and the nest was later found in an old Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* nest in a Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, situated some 12 m above the ground. The clutch of four eggs hatched on 3rd June and after that date the adults were often heard alarm-calling, indicating that chicks were nearby. The family was present until at least 28th June.

### Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

41 sites: 14–53 pairs. Once again the totals here represent a small sample of the UK population, with Caithness and Highland particularly under-represented. The total of confirmed breeding pairs is lower than it might be as many records of probable breeding refer to adults behaving in an agitated manner – these birds are likely to have small young hidden nearby.

**Scotland, N & W**

**Argyll** One site: one pair probably bred. **Caithness** One site: one pair bred. **Highland** 22 sites: 13 pairs bred,

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18 pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Outer Hebrides** 16 sites: seven pairs probably bred and ten pairs possibly bred. **Shetland** One site: one pair probably bred.

### Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

20 sites: 11–27 pairs. A full survey of sites that have historically held breeding Wood Sandpipers was undertaken in 2007 and so this report gives a comprehensive picture of the status of this species in the UK. In 2004, based on a similar study (Chisholm 2007), we reported 18–22 pairs at 13 sites. The displaying bird in Perth & Kinross was at a new site.

#### Scotland, Mid

**Perth & Kinross** One site: one pair possibly bred.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Caithness** Four sites: four pairs possibly bred. **Highland** 14 sites: 11 pairs bred, five pairs probably bred and five pairs possibly bred. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one pair possibly bred.

### Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Ten sites: 20 breeding males. Perhaps the higher numbers in 2003–06 (maxima of 30, 36, 45 and 30 breeding males, respectively) constituted a false dawn, since reports in 2007 were well down, particularly in the Outer Hebrides.

#### Scotland, N & W

**Outer Hebrides** One site: two apparently breeding males. **Shetland** Nine sites: 18 apparently breeding males. Productivity was low with just three chicks seen.

### Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

44 sites: 405–433 pairs/territories, including one mixed pair. The number of sites increased to a new peak, reflecting the continued northward expansion of Mediterranean Gulls from their strongholds in southern England. As they explore new areas, adult and second-summer birds typically occur in colonies of Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. In this list, sites with first-summer birds only are excluded.

The total number of pairs fell, owing to a 64% decline at what had been the largest colony in Hampshire. This is believed to reflect the unavailability of suitable nesting habitat after winter storms removed considerable quantities of Sea Beet *Beta vulgaris maritima* from areas favoured by the gulls.

#### England, SW

**Dorset** One site: an estimated 40 pairs bred. **Hampshire** Three sites: (1) 94 pairs at Langstone Harbour fledged just 15 young; (2) ten pairs bred with at least five young reported; (3) four pairs bred and six pairs probably bred, but no young reported. **Isle of Wight** One site: two pairs fledged one young.

#### England, SE

**Essex** Four sites: ten pairs bred. **Kent** Three sites: (1) 132 pairs bred; (2) two pairs bred; (3) one pair bred. **Sussex** Two sites: (1) 40 pairs bred, with poor productivity (15 juveniles present in mid May); (2) 20 pairs bred and ten pairs possibly bred.

#### England, E

**Cambridgeshire** Three sites: (1) a pair of 2nd-summer birds bred but the eggs were infertile; (2) one pair of adults displayed in March and April but there was no further evidence of breeding; (3) a 2nd-summer male held territory during March to May. **Lincolnshire** Three sites: (1) one pair in colony of Black-headed Gulls; (2) one pair present; (3) two birds in May and up to five in June. **Norfolk** Five sites: (1)–(4) 14 pairs fledged 11 young; (5) one pair present occasionally. **Suffolk** Three sites: 13 pairs bred, five young fledged at one site but success elsewhere unknown.

#### England, C

**Staffordshire** One site: three pairs bred but all young drowned in heavy rain in mid June. **Warwickshire** One site: one pair bred but whole gull colony flooded out in mid June.

#### England, N

**Cheshire & Wirral** Three sites: one pair bred and two pairs built nests but did not lay eggs. **Cumbria** One site: two pairs fledged two young. **Greater Manchester** One site: one mixed pair (with Black-headed Gull) fledged one young. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Two sites: (1) eight pairs fledged 14 young; (2) three pairs

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fledged six young. **Northumberland** One site: two 2nd-summer birds present until June but no breeding attempt made. **Yorkshire** Two sites: (1) a 2nd-summer paired with an adult hatched two young but none fledged; (2) a pair of 2nd-summer birds displayed and held territory only.

### Northern Ireland

**Co. Down** Four sites: (1) one pair bred (but eggs taken for human consumption along with other gull eggs); (2) one pair bred; (3) one pair held territory; (4) one pair present only.

## Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Four sites: 3–5 pairs, including three mixed pairs. This species has appeared in these reports in every year since 1996, and the five pairings reported here matches the previous maximum from 2001. Clearly the population has not taken off in similar fashion to the spread of Mediterranean Gulls, largely owing to the low success and high incidence of mixed pairings with Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*.

### England, SW

**Dorset** One site: one pair bred. Two young fledged; this is the first nesting success at this site since 2001.

**Hampshire** One site: a mixed pair bred. One paired with a Lesser Black-backed Gull nested but no young were seen.

### England, E

**Cambridgeshire** Two sites: (1) a female paired with a Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen incubating during 3rd–31st May; (2) a male paired with a Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen displaying in March.

### Northern Ireland

**Co. Fermanagh** One site: one bird was again present in a Lesser Black-backed Gull colony between mid May and mid June.

## Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

One site: one pair. This confirmed breeding record was the second for Norfolk and the fifth for England: all have been unsuccessful. There has been one, possibly two, confirmed breeding attempts in Scotland: a very recently fledged juvenile was found in 1988, and in 1991 four juveniles appeared at a site where up to four adults had been recorded, though no nest was found.

### England, E

**Norfolk** One site: a pair bred but eggs were predated. The pair, an adult male and a 2nd-summer female, arrived in late May and was seen displaying, mating and nest-building at the RSPB's Titchwell reserve. The first egg was laid on 5th June and the second on 6th, and a 24-hour watch was set up to prevent disturbance. Unfortunately, that night both eggs were lost to a predator (Eele 2008).



Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Dan Powell

## Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Minimum of 1,356 pairs at 68 colonies. The table shows the number of occupied Little Tern colonies by county and the minimum number of confirmed breeding pairs and young fledged from those colonies. The following summary was compiled by Sabine Schmitt, RSPB.

Poor weather conditions in May and June meant a generally late start to nesting and throughout the season heavy and persistent rain, strong winds and high tides contributed to complete breeding failure at many Little Tern colonies. Predation also depressed productivity at many sites. The fact that, with a few exceptions, food supplies were abundant prevented this season from

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Little Tern	No. sites	Confirmed pairs	Min. young fledged
<b>England, SW</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>2</b>
Dorset	1	8	0
Hampshire	3	113	2
<b>England, SE</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>5</b>
Essex	5	75	0
Kent	1	10	0
Sussex	2	23	5
<b>England, E</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>264</b>
Lincolnshire	2	52	3
Norfolk	13	547	261
Suffolk	6	14	0
<b>England, N</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>164</b>
Cleveland	2	50	108
Cumbria	3	55	25
Isle of Man	1	21	10
Northumberland	2	74	21
Yorkshire	1	27	0
<b>Wales</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>99</b>
Denbigh & Flint	1	103	99
<b>Scotland, S</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
Ayrshire	1	6	0
<b>Scotland, Mid</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>19</b>
Angus & Dundee	1	12	16
Fife	1	1	2
North-east Scotland	1	25	1
<b>Scotland, N &amp; W</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>62</b>
Argyll	11	81	61
Caithness	1	5	n/a
Highland	4	35	0
Orkney	1	1	1
Outer Hebrides	4	18	n/a
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1,356</b>	<b>615</b>

becoming the worst on record. Surprisingly, some sites fared well and even better than in previous years. At Gronant (Denbigh & Flint), productivity was fairly high at almost one chick per pair. Three (Argyll) escaped the heavy rains on the mainland and recorded its best season for at least ten years. Consistent food availability at Scolt Head (Norfolk) resulted in more fledged young at this site than in the previous three years combined. The biggest surprise, however, came at Crimdon Dene (Cleveland), where 47 pairs fledged 105 young: a staggering productivity of 2.23 chicks per pair. Owing to predation and inclement weather, however, the Great Yarmouth (Norfolk) colony could not repeat the success of the previous season but 159 young still fledged.

**Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii***

Three sites: 80 pairs fledged 96 young. The Panel has collated data on this species from all breeding sites in the UK since 1987 (by which time the species had already undergone a large decline) and the changing fortunes are illustrated in fig. 7. The large decline in the early 1990s was associated with a shift of the population to colonies in Eire. Numbers in the UK have been increasing during the current decade, until 2007, which also saw a reduction in the number of sites occupied. It remains to be seen whether this is a temporary loss.

**England, S**

A single bird in a mixed tern colony on 24th May was the only record.

**England, N**

**Northumberland** One site: Coquet Island: 75 pairs fledged 89 young.

### Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

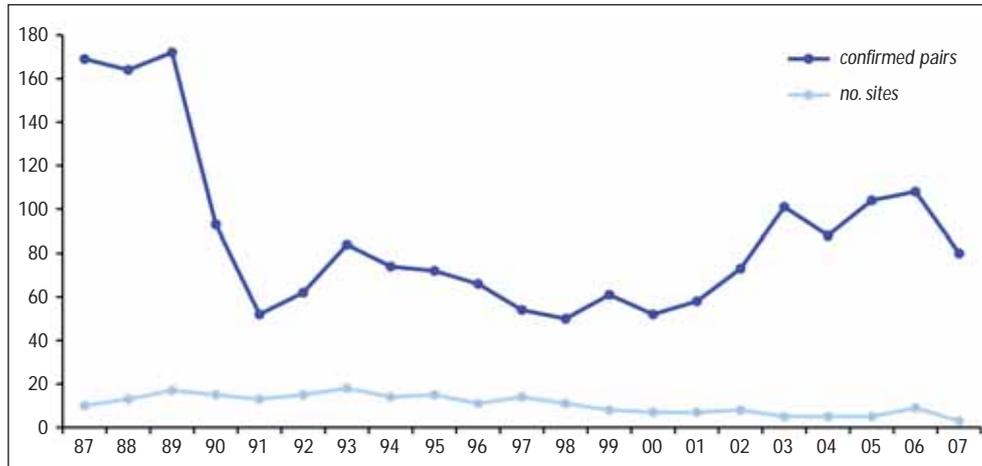


Fig. 7. Number of confirmed breeding pairs of and sites for Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* in the UK, 1987–2007.

**Scotland, Mid**

**Fife** One site: one pair fledged two young.

**Northern Ireland**

**Co. Antrim** One site: four pairs fledged five young.

### Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*

One site: one singing male.

**England, SE**

**Oxfordshire** One site: one male calling between 15th May and 5th June was presumed to be the same individual recorded at the same site in 2006.

### Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Two sites: one singing male and one other bird. The last confirmed breeding record was in 1999 and since then there have been two blank years and only one year with more than one bird reported (there were records from ten sites in 2006).

**Scotland, N & W**

**Caithness** One site: a single bird in suitable habitat was seen on 13th May but could not be found a week later, although the weather was poor. **Highland** One site: one singing male from 2nd June to 2nd July.

### Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Three sites: 3–5 pairs. Owing to the severe decline in the breeding population over the last 25 years, Golden Oriole moved from Amber to Red in the recent BoCC review. The figures for 2007 offer little hope of a recovery.

**England, E**

**Cambridgeshire** One site: only one male seen. **Norfolk** No breeding records. **Suffolk** Two sites: three pairs bred and one pair possibly bred.

### Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Three sites: 2–3 pairs. There have been at least two sites with Red-backed Shrikes in nine of the last ten years, and breeding has been confirmed in five of these, including the last four.

**Wales**

One site: one pair bred at the site first occupied in 2005. The first brood died in very heavy rain and a second clutch was deserted.

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### Scotland, Mid

One site: a female was reported in late June but not seen again.

### Scotland, N & W

One site: one pair bred at a site where a male has summered since 2003 and a female was present in 2006. It is not known whether the nesting attempt was successful.

## Red-billed Chough *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax*

243–327 pairs. After successful breeding in 2004–06, only a single bird was present in Dumfries & Galloway. The recolonisation of Cornwall continues to be successful, however, with an increase to three pairs.

Red-billed Chough	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			East Glamorgan	1	1
			Gower	7	7
England	3	3	Meirionnydd	17	19
Cornwall	3	3	Pembrokeshire	47	72
Isle of Man	n/a	n/a	Scotland	45	46
Wales	194	277	Argyll: Colonsay & Oronsay	18	19
Anglesey	25	45	Argyll: Islay	27	27
Caernarfonshire	72	100	Northern Ireland	1	1
Ceredigion	23	29	Co. Antrim	1	1
Denbigh & Flint	2	4	TOTALS	243	327

## Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

11–613 pairs. Almost twice as many Firecrest territories were reported in 2007 as in 2006, producing another new record total, although the proportion of confirmed breeding records remains low. Much of this increase comes from the New Forest in Hampshire and from West Sussex, but there were also significant increases in Norfolk and Suffolk. Echoing the pattern shown by other rare species increasing from the south, notably Little Egret, Cetti's Warbler and Dartford Warbler, there is little indication of range expansion north of the English Midlands.

### England, SW

**Dorset** Two singing males. **Gloucestershire** One pair bred, two pairs seen nest-building and five singing males. **Hampshire** One extensive site (New Forest) held 145 territories, almost 50% more than recorded in 2006. In total across the county, three pairs bred, 172 pairs probably bred and 12 pairs possibly bred. **Somerset** Two territories and a further three singing males. **Wiltshire** 16 territories and a further eight singing males.

### England, SE

**Bedfordshire** Two pairs bred. **Berkshire** 72 territories recorded. **Buckinghamshire** Two pairs bred. **Hertfordshire** One pair seen nest-building and a further three singing males. **Oxfordshire** One pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Sussex** One pair bred, 30 pairs probably bred and 148 pairs possibly bred. Significant effort was invested to locate this species in West Sussex, and 179 pairs is three times the number recorded in 2006.

### England, E

**Norfolk** One pair bred, 40 territories and a further 27 singing males. **Suffolk** 44 territories and seven singing males or possible breeding pairs.

### England, C

**Derbyshire** One pair bred, two pairs possibly bred and two further singing males.

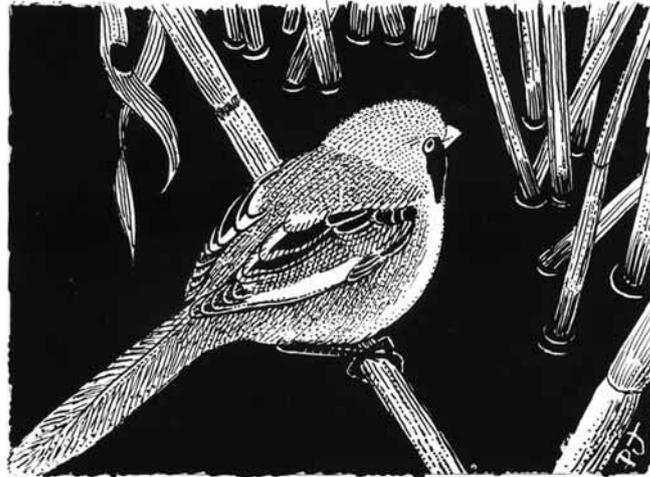
### Wales

**Montgomeryshire** One singing male. **Radnorshire** One singing male.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

**Bearded Tit**  
*Panurus biarmicus*

At least 40 sites: a minimum of 611 pairs. These figures are similar to those reported for 2006. The figure for Kent is an estimate and, although birds were present in the Tay reedbeds in Perth & Kinross, there were no counts from this site, which held at least 70 pairs in 2004.



Phil Jones

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Bearded Tit	Minimum no. sites	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs			
			Norfolk	12	142
			Suffolk	6	209
England, SW	7	37	England, N	3	135
Dorset	3	17	Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	25
Hampshire	3	12	Yorkshire	2	110
Somerset	1	8	Wales	1	1
England, SE	7+	79	Gwent	1	1
Essex	3	14	Scotland, Mid	2	2
Kent	n/a	50	Moray & Nairn	1	1
Sussex	3	15	Perth & Kinross	1	1+
England, E	20	357	TOTALS	40	611
Cambridgeshire	2	6			

**Wood Lark** *Lullula arborea*

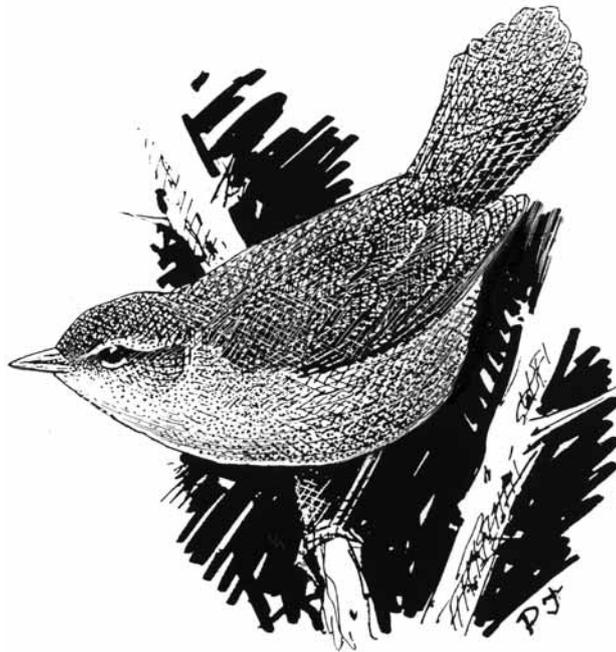
1,171 territories. Since 2006 was a survey year, it is not surprising that 2007 saw a reduction in the number of territories reported, reflecting reduced coverage and reporting across the whole range. The 2006 survey produced a record of 1,771 territories, which, when extrapolated, yielded an estimated record of 3,064 territories.

Wood Lark	Singing males/territories		
		England, E	481
		Lincolnshire	15
		Norfolk	188
		Suffolk	278
England, SW	275	England, C	68
Devon	12	Nottinghamshire	34
Dorset	26	Staffordshire	32
Hampshire	231	Warwickshire	1
Wiltshire	6	Worcestershire	1
England, SE	334	England, N	13
Bedfordshire	1	Yorkshire	13
Berkshire	48	TOTAL	1,171
Surrey	209		
Sussex	76		

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**Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti***

Phil Jones



Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

2,024 singing males or territories. The number of pairs of breeding Cetti's Warblers passed the 1,000 mark only in 2003, yet just four years on they have exceeded 2,000, with a 30% increase from 2006. Their increase is thought to be fuelled by a long run of mild winters favouring overwinter survival and their range expansion is driven by the increasing dispersal distance of juveniles (Robinson *et al.* 2007). A thorough survey in Kent revealed 388 territories, compared with just 124 in 2006 (based on casual reports only). It is likely that other counties with healthy populations are also under-recording Cetti's Warblers, so the true population could be significantly higher than 2,000 pairs.

Cetti's Warbler	Singing males/ territories		
		Norfolk	230
		Northamptonshire	20
		Suffolk	215
<b>England, SW</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>England, C</b>	<b>31</b>
Avon	42	Derbyshire	1
Cornwall	12	Leicestershire & Rutland	3
Devon	70	Nottinghamshire	1
Dorset	91	Staffordshire	1
Gloucestershire	14	Warwickshire	17
Hampshire	163	Worcestershire	8
Isle of Wight	36	<b>Wales</b>	<b>162</b>
Somerset	270	Anglesey	7
Wiltshire	30	Breconshire	1
<b>England, SE</b>	<b>622</b>	Caernarfonshire	8
Bedfordshire	1	Carmarthenshire	20
Berkshire	21	Ceredigion	1
Buckinghamshire	2	East Glamorgan	13
Essex	84	Gower	58
Hertfordshire	8	Gwent	44
Kent	388	Meirionnydd	1
Oxfordshire	16	Pembrokeshire	9
Sussex	102	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,024</b>
<b>England, E</b>	<b>481</b>		
Cambridgeshire	16		

**Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus***

One site: one singing male. Another was heard for just one day in April in Devon.

**England, E**

**Norfolk** One site: one singing male from 21st April to 7th June.

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

### Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

2,098 territories. This total is about 500 fewer than that reported in 2006 when, after extrapolation, the national survey estimated 3,214 territories in England and Wales. Numbers reported from counties in southwest England are particularly low as they do not include figures for the stronghold of the New Forest in Hampshire. Coverage in southeast England was good, however, with an increase of 22% reported from the Surrey heaths.

Dartford Warbler	Total	England, E	132
		Norfolk	3
England, SW	1,215	Suffolk	129
Cornwall	23	England, C	4
Devon	81	Staffordshire	4
Dorset	750	England, N	1
Hampshire	265	Yorkshire	1
Isle of Wight	11	Wales	19
Somerset	85	Carmarthenshire	1
England, SE	727	East Glamorgan	5
Berkshire	30	Gower	8
Surrey	604	Pembrokeshire	5
Sussex	93	TOTAL	2,098

### Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Two sites: two singing males. Both 2007 records have been accepted by BBRC. The Somerset bird was at the same site as one in both 2005 and 2006.

#### England, SW

Somerset One site: one singing male, 24th April to 3rd June.

#### England, E

Norfolk One site: one singing male, 14th–27th May.

### Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Four sites: four singing males. This is the first time that this species has appeared in these reports since 2000. The long-staying birds in Shetland were part of an influx of at least 27 individuals in late May and June. Some clearly felt that they had found suitable breeding habitat and established territories. On the face of it, it would seem unlikely that Shetland would provide suitable habitat, as breeding Icterine Warblers on the Continent are associated with open forest and shrubby woodland. However, a record of confirmed breeding in Orkney in 2002, not included in our report for 2002 but documented in Forrester *et al.* (2007), involved a pair that nested in a garden on Stronsay and fledged four, possibly five, young in July. This was only the third confirmed breeding record in the UK, following two records in Highland in the 1990s. In June 1992, adults were watched carrying food and removing faecal sacs, and fledged young were seen in late July, while in 1998 a pair was ringed in early June, the female of which had a brood patch thus confirming a breeding attempt, but the outcome was unknown.

#### England, E

Norfolk One site: one singing male from 21st April to 2nd June.

#### Scotland, N & W

Shetland Three sites: three singing males: (1) 31st May to 7th June; (2) 2nd–20th June; (3) 2nd June to 3rd July.

### Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Three sites: three singing males. On the basis of these figures we are in danger of losing this species as a regular breeding bird in Britain. In addition to these records, presumed passage birds were reported singing elsewhere in southeast England (six birds in three counties) and in the Isle of Wight, Shetland and Suffolk, but all of these were recorded for less than a week.

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### England, SE

**Kent** Two sites: two singing males recorded for over a week.

### England, E

**Suffolk** One site: one singing male, 3rd–12th June.

## Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One site: one singing male. Only records where birds remain at a site for over a week are included and once again the only evidence of occupation is a singing male.

### England, SE

**Kent** One site: one singing male, 10th–20th June.

## Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

One site: one pair bred. As in 2006, only one record of breeding Fieldfares was received. The successful attempt was in Derbyshire, where breeding was last confirmed in 1989. The recent BoCC review Red-listed the Fieldfare owing to the long-term decline in breeding numbers.

### England, C

**Derbyshire** One site: one pair bred, with 3–4 large young seen in the nest.

## Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Up to 14 sites: 1–16 pairs. The long-term decline in the breeding population has led to the Redwing being Red-listed in the recent BoCC review.

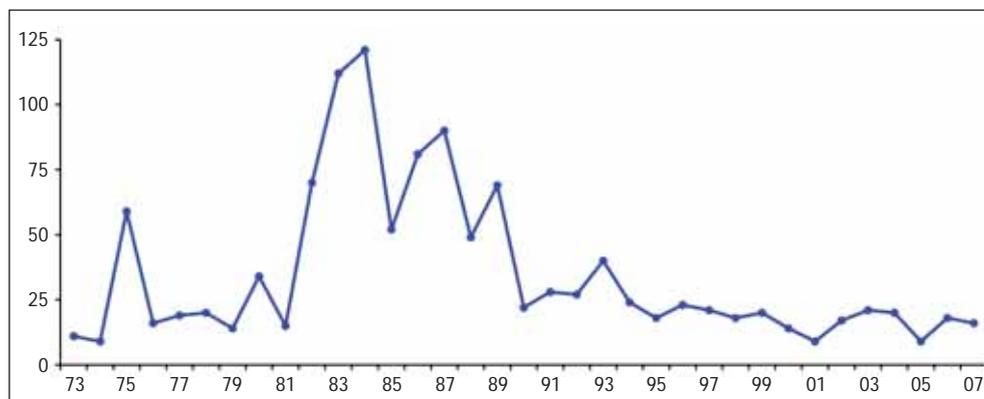
### Scotland, N & W

**Highland** Up to nine sites: two pairs probably bred and eight singing males. **Shetland** Five sites: one pair bred producing a juvenile seen on 5th July, and five other singing males. This is the first confirmed breeding in Shetland since 2000 and although singing birds are regular here there has never been more than one record of confirmed breeding in any one year.

Bob Swann has analysed the Panel's data and compiled the following brief review of the status of the Redwing as a UK breeding bird over the last 35 years.

The first confirmed breeding by Redwings in Britain was in 1925, in Sutherland. From then until the 1968–72 breeding atlas there were fewer than 40 breeding records. Atlas work resulted in a large increase in breeding records, however, for example 20 pairs in Wester Ross alone in 1968. During 1968–72, confirmed breeding records were logged in 54 10-km squares, mainly in the north of Scotland, and possible/probable breeding in a further 57 (Sharrock 1976).

RBBP data show an increase in the number of summering individuals reported, reaching a peak in 1984, followed by a steady decline (fig. 8). Numbers fluctuate greatly from year to year as a result of variation in both reporting rates and the numbers of birds present. Evidence from recorders suggests that the number of birds actually located and reported is only a small



**Fig. 8.** Maximum total number of breeding pairs of Redwings *Turdus iliacus* in the UK, 1973–2007.

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

proportion of those actually present.

The table shows confirmed breeding pairs in different parts of Britain. North and west Scotland has always been the main breeding area, though in the mid 1970s a small population built up in Kent, with eight confirmed pairs reported in 1976.

It is possible that the increase in numbers up to the mid 1980s may have been the result of more data being received by the newly established RBBP, as there is a suggestion that numbers may actually have been in decline over that time period. Between 1988 and 1991, fieldworkers for the second breeding bird atlas recorded breeding Redwings in 42% fewer 10-km squares than during the first atlas, with noticeable reductions in areas away from the core region of N & W Scotland (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Since then numbers have continued to drop. There has been no confirmed breeding in England since 1989, when a recently fledged juvenile was reported in Staffordshire. The last confirmed breeding records in Scotland outside the north and west were in Perth & Kinross in 1997 and then not until 2005, when a family party was recorded in Deeside, North-east Scotland. Even in well-covered parts of north and west Scotland, a decrease in numbers has been observed. Results from the new 2007–11 Atlas will give further information on the extent of this decline.

	N & W Scotland	Rest of Scotland	England
1973–77	12	12	15
1978–82	61	1	2
1983–87	105	3	2
1988–92	45	1	1
1993–97	25	2	0
1998–02	10	0	0
2003–07	14	1	0

### Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

24 sites: 15–31 pairs. The totals here are similar to those in 2006, perhaps once again reflecting the lack of thorough coverage in Greater London, but nonetheless a decline is evident and the low numbers may not all be due to under-recording. Singing males recorded on single dates only at two sites in Cambridgeshire are not included here but occurred at potential breeding sites and may reflect wandering males looking for partners.

#### England, SW

**Avon** One site: one pair bred. Present from 20th May, a female was seen taking food into a nest-site between shipping containers (which were moved soon afterwards). This is the first confirmed breeding record for Avon.

#### England, SE

**Bedfordshire** One site: one pair bred and fledged one young. **Berkshire** Two sites: one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Essex** One site: two singing males in April and a sighting in August, but no further evidence of breeding. **Greater London** Two sites: one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Kent** One site: two pairs bred, both fledging young. **Sussex** Six sites: five pairs bred (five broods totalling ten young) and two singing males.

#### England, E

**Norfolk** Three sites: two pairs bred, with 4–5 young fledging, and three singing males. **Suffolk** Two sites: three pairs bred, fledging at least four young.

#### England, C

**Derbyshire** One site: one bird on 12th June in potential breeding habitat. **West Midlands** One site: two singing males.

#### England, N

**Greater Manchester** Two sites: one pair bred, fledging two young; and 1–2 female/immature birds at a second site where a nest used in a previous year was found in 2008. **Yorkshire** One site: one female seen in likely breeding habitat.

### White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*

One site: one mixed pair. In addition, a female White Wagtail seen feeding young Grey Wagtails *M. cinerea* in Cleveland was thought to be responding to begging calls rather than being a parent bird.

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### England, E

**Norfolk** One site: one mixed pair. A male was seen paired with a female Pied Wagtail *M. a. yarrelli* and feeding young in late May. The brood was later predated.

### Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

Two sites: 1–2 pairs. It is unclear whether this low return is due to fewer Common Redpolls breeding in 2007 or, more likely, because of under-recording. Local birders and visitors to the northern and western islands of Scotland are encouraged to check any redpolls they find and report singing males and any other evidence of breeding. Note that Lesser Redpolls *C. cabaret* also breed in some of these areas and so the identity of any redpolls needs to be confirmed.

### Scotland, N & W

**Outer Hebrides** One site: a family party was seen among a flock of Twites *C. flavirostris*. **Shetland** One site: 'breeding birds' were reported to the recorder but could not be located when followed up.

### Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*

At least two sites: 2–3 pairs. This is an unrepresentative total for the true numbers of this species in the forests of northern Scotland. In an attempt to better quantify the population, a survey of all three crossbill species breeding within the range of the Scottish Crossbill was carried out in 2008 and the results of that survey will appear in the Panel's next report.

### Scotland, Mid

**North-east Scotland** Two sites: (1) two pairs bred (up to six birds were seen in April, two juveniles on 25th June and two recently fledged young on 24th July); (2) one singing male in March.

### Scotland, N & W

**Highland** Believed to be present at two sites but no other information.

### Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Three sites: three pairs. As with the previous species, this is a gross under-representation of the true numbers present.

### Scotland, Mid

**North-east Scotland** Two sites: (1) one pair bred (up to 11 birds were seen in April, a second-brood nest was found on 16th April, and juvenile Parrot Crossbills were seen in a mixed flock of crossbills in May and in a flock of 11 Parrot Crossbills in July); (2) one pair bred (up to eight were present in February and April and a juvenile was seen in June).

### Scotland, N & W

**Highland** One site: one pair bred (young in a nest on 28th April had fledged by 1st May).

### Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

At least 34 sites: 14–48 pairs. In the second year of collating Hawfinch data, we report slightly more confirmed breeding pairs, but even fewer pairs in total. However, an estimate provided for Kent, based on the size of spring flocks, would, if accurate, boost the total to over 100 pairs. Elsewhere, we list only records of pairs or singing males reported after dispersal in March/April. Breeding records are highly dependent on chance observations, and confirmed breeding records largely refer to sightings of juveniles.

### England, SW

**Gloucestershire** One site: one pair bred and two further singing males. **Hampshire** At least 15 sites within the New Forest: two pairs bred, ten pairs probably bred and eight pairs possibly bred. **Wiltshire** Four sites: two pairs bred and two pairs possibly bred.

### England, SE

**Kent** Three sites: three pairs possibly bred. An estimate of 50–70 pairs in the county was based on the size of pre-dispersal flocks in spring. **Sussex** Two sites: two pairs possibly bred.

### England, E

**Norfolk** One site: three pairs bred.

### England, C

**Derbyshire** One site: one pair possibly bred.

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

### England, N

**Cumbria** One site: two pairs bred. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Two sites: one pair probably bred and five pairs possibly bred.

### Wales

**Breconshire** One site: one pair bred. This is the first confirmed breeding record for Breconshire since 1979. **Gwent** One site: one pair bred. **Radnorshire** Two sites: two pairs bred.

### Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

In two study areas of the Cairngorms (within North-east Scotland), a total of 17 pairs was identified: 11 males and five females in the central Cairngorms, and six males and two females in the western Cairngorms (survey areas defined by Smith & Marquiss 1994). No nests were found. Other than these records, only casual observations were submitted from mountain tops in Highland.

### Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

Only minimal data were received for this species in 2007, but birds bred in Cornwall for the first year in recent times. These were birds from the reintroduction scheme, supplementing the existing population in Devon, which was not surveyed in 2007. The last report to include Cirl Buntings in Cornwall was that for 1998, when two pairs were present in April; the last confirmed breeding was in 1994, and although a male carrying food was reported in 1996, no females were seen in that year (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999).

Cirl Buntings released in Cornwall during 2006 made at least 12 nesting attempts (resulting in at least 11 fledglings) during 2007. This is a huge milestone in the programme to establish a self-sustaining population. Below, Peter Newbery describes the background to this reintroduction and reports on progress to date.

The main objective of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for the Cirl Bunting is: 'in the long term, [to] ensure a wider geographical spread of the Cirl Bunting by re-establishing populations outside the current (1997) range'. The UK population reached an all-time low of 118 breeding pairs in 1989, almost confined to the coastal strip of south Devon. Although numbers increased thereafter, there was little sign of range expansion by this extremely sedentary species, and reintroduction was considered to be the only means of achieving this.

In 2000, a reintroduction programme was drawn up by (what was then) English Nature and the



Dan Powell

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

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RSPB, with Paignton Zoo brought in as an avicultural partner. The original plan was to establish a breeding population in captivity, releasing the resulting offspring as juveniles, since it was estimated that more birds would need to be released (35 per annum for 3–5 years) than could safely be removed from the wild in Devon. Unfortunately, there was no successful breeding in captivity, and eventually, with a further increase in the wild population, plans were revised and a 'rear-and-release' strategy adopted. This involves chicks being taken, under licence, from nests in Devon and hand-reared at Paignton Zoo where they are kept in aviaries before release in Cornwall. The Devon population is unaffected as the adult birds re-lay and RSPB researchers have shown that first-brood nests (clutches started before 1st July) were only half as successful as second-brood ones, since the availability of grasshoppers and bush crickets, the preferred food for feeding chicks, increased later in the season ([www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/science/casestudies/cirlbunting.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/science/casestudies/cirlbunting.asp)).

The Roseland Peninsula in Cornwall was eventually chosen as the release locality and chick releases began in 2006. The revised target was to release 60 birds per annum for four years, to achieve a breeding population of 35 pairs by 2010. By summer 2008, 188 juveniles had been released and 12 breeding pairs established, with 15 wild-bred juveniles fledging successfully.

### Appendix 1. Other species considered by the Panel also recorded in 2007.

The following ten species were recorded during the breeding season in 2007 but showed no further signs of breeding than are documented here.

**Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*** An unpaired male was present at one site in Cheshire & Wirral for most of the year and was noted displaying to a female Eurasian Teal *A. crecca*, as it had done in the breeding seasons of 2004 and 2006 (Norman 2008).

**Black Duck *Anas rubripes*** A male at a site in Cornwall between May and July was paired with a female Mallard. Apparently, this male has been present since 1999 and has bred with Mallards on a number of occasions (though not in 2007), producing hybrid young.

**Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*** During March, a male at a site in Argyll was paired with and displayed to a female Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*.

**Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*** In Argyll, a female was seen on the unusual date of 8th June.

**Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*** One bird, paired with a Black-throated Diver, was present on an inland loch in mainland Highland, but there was no evidence of a breeding attempt.

**Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*** Following records in 2005 and 2006, one returned to Sula Sgeir, Outer Hebrides on 8th–10th May.

**Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*** Two sites: two single birds. In Northamptonshire, one bird in breeding plumage returned to the site where summering has occurred before, but was present only during 13th–21st April. For the fourth consecutive year, a single bird was present on a loch in Fife, from 5th July to 11th August.

**Hoopoe *Upupa epops*** In Hertfordshire, a bird was present from 24th April to 18th May, while in Cambridgeshire a singing male was reported on 15th April only.

**Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*** The only record received was of a singing male on 16th June in the Outer Hebrides. Fieldwork intended to survey all known Brambling sites in north and west Scotland over a number of summers began in 2007. Only ten sites were checked, but each received a visit of around three hours. No Bramblings were found but the areas covered were not in the area believed to be the main breeding area. The RBBP report for 2006 did not include any Brambling records, but a late record of a singing male in Highland has since been received.

**Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*** A male in the Outer Hebrides seen on both 14th and 16th June may have been a late migrant. Although the Common Rosefinch is an occasional

## Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2007

breeder in the UK, passage birds in Scotland are typically recorded in late May and early June (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

The following species was recorded during the breeding season in 2007 but only limited information was available:

**Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*.** Reported from St Kilda in the Outer Hebrides, where 19 occupied burrows were monitored.

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## Announcements

### East Glamorgan and Gower

Following discussions between the Welsh Ornithological Society and the local societies concerned, it is now recommended that Glamorgan should be treated as two Recording Areas at both national and local level: as **East Glamorgan** (UAs of Bridgend, Rhondda/Cynon/Taff, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and the west part of Caerphilly) and **Gower** (UAs of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot). This updates the paper by Ballance & Smith (*Brit. Birds* 101: 364–375) to reflect local practice, which at present is strongly in favour of separating the two areas.

### New taxonomic sequence

The BOU has just published the BOURC's 38th report (*Ibis* 152: 199–204), which describes changes to the British List including the taxonomic recommendations covered in the BOURC TSC's 6th report (*Ibis* 152: 180–186). The taxonomic changes include a revised sequence of passerines, and a change in the position of grebes, as per the TSC's 4th report (*Ibis* 149: 853–857). These changes will be implemented by *BB* from January 2010, and will explain the initially unfamiliar sequence of passerines in the RBBP report. All the above reports, plus links to the revised list, can be viewed at <http://thebritishlist.blogspot.com>.

A revised *British Birds* List of Birds of the Western Palearctic will be available early in January at [www.britishbirds.co.uk/bblist.htm](http://www.britishbirds.co.uk/bblist.htm)