

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2008

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



Alan Harris

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

This is the 35th report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) and includes details of the status of rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008, with a particular focus on colonising or recolonising species. With the publication of this report, we are now meeting our stated objective of providing an annual update two years after the breeding season being reported on. This enables the data to be used more rapidly to help conservation initiatives for the species concerned.

Review of the year 2008

This report includes details of 82 species breeding or showing indications of breeding in 2008, the same number as in 2007. Two species appear for the first time (Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* and Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*) and six species occurred in 2008 that did not feature in 2007 (Black

Duck *Anas rubripes*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*, Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* and Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*). A further five species are noted in Appendix 1.

In a similar vein to 2007, the breeding season of 2008 was marred by several very wet periods, with particularly heavy rain towards the end of May and in June, an important time for many breeding species. The nests of some ground-nesting and river-side birds were flooded out, especially in low-lying areas of England. The wet weather, coupled with strong winds at times, meant that fieldwork opportunities were reduced in some areas, perhaps contributing to under-recording of some species.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* numbers reached a new record, with up to 14 breeding

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

pairs in five Scottish areas and two more in Northern Ireland. This report includes a review of the colonisation of this species from the first successful recorded attempt, in 1978. Gadwall *A. strepera* populations continue to increase and this species seems likely to be removed from the RBBP list when we review it in 2011, after the current Atlas fieldwork is finished. Two wildfowl rarities reported in 2008 are Black Duck and Ferruginous Duck. The former has been reported breeding with Mallards *A. platyrhynchos* in the past and may have done so in 2008, while there are suggestions that Ferruginous Duck may have made a breeding attempt in 2004 and perhaps since, though not in 2008.

For Eurasian Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*, 2008 proved to be a record year, with a minimum of 75 booming males reported: welcome news indeed after the apparent stall in population growth in 2006. The increase seems in part to be fuelled by the provision of new habitats away from the coastal reedbeds of East Anglia. Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* again increased in numbers and the breeding population is now around 800 pairs, in just 12 years since the first recorded breeding. However, the big news is reserved for Cattle Egret, which becomes the latest addition to the avifauna of the UK. Two, possibly three pairs nested in Somerset following a large influx of Cattle Egrets into southern Britain in the preceding winter. Almost matching it for newsworthiness, a pair of Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* in Dumfries & Galloway raised three young to fledging. As was the case with the Cattle Egrets, the breeding attempt was not discovered until late in the season.

The rarer grebes do not seem to be faring well at present. Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* numbers fell to their lowest levels since the Panel's records began, and Black-necked Grebe *P. nigricollis* also posted a further decline. And, after finally making a successful breeding attempt in 2001, Red-necked Grebe *P. griseogen* is now reduced to a single bird appearing in late summer, so is included in Appendix 1.

Generally, there was positive news for raptors. Red Kites *Milvus milvus* continue to do well in the southern part of their re-established range, though they are still struggling

in northern Scotland in the face of continued persecution. Perhaps the birds released in 2007 in North-east Scotland will fare better; they are off to a good start with the first breeding attempt by a pair in that area in 2008. White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* numbers in north and west Scotland increased further and a second batch of juveniles from Norway was released on the east coast of Scotland, raising the prospect of breeding pairs becoming established elsewhere in years to come. Total numbers of Marsh *Circus aeruginosus* and Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* are similar to those in previous years, and although not all Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* pairs are counted each year, the impact of persecution on this species is evident in the low numbers breeding in England and eastern Scotland. A provisional map from Bird Atlas 2007–11, showing the 50-km squares occupied by Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*, demonstrates that the species occurs quite widely in the UK and that not all breeding pairs are being reported to RBBP, a situation we had long suspected and one that we hope the publication of the map might help to resolve. Over 200 pairs of Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* were recorded and 300 young were fledged, both record figures since the recolonisation began 54 years ago.

Some species benefit from additional work that helps to inform our knowledge and directs conservation efforts. Such work might be part of a co-ordinated survey, and there was a full survey of Merlins *Falco columbarius* in 2008, revealing an estimated 1,160 breeding pairs. Others are the subject of investigation by keen individuals. Our records are available for bona fide researchers (contact the Secretary for details) and one current example involves Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana*, where the plan is to augment the Panel's data on this species by extracting records from hitherto unavailable sources. The results will form the basis of a paper for *BB* in the future. In 2008, the number of Spotted Crakes was the lowest reported in 12 years. In contrast, Common Cranes *Grus grus* seem to be doing well, and consolidating their recolonisation, with up to 18 pairs present in 2008. Data from all available sources, including the RBBP, are

Holling *et al.*

being analysed by a new Crane Working Group, which we hope will provide material for a review in a forthcoming report.

The Black-winged Stilt is an occasional breeder in the UK, perhaps becoming more frequent, but it does not have a good history of success here, and the three chicks hatched in Cheshire & Wirral in 2008 were all predated. Among other waders, a brood of Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* on a hilltop in southern Scotland was noteworthy, while there were no records of Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, the third year in five with no hint of breeding. Purple Sandpipers *C. maritima* fared little better with one bird on one date, and numbers of Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* were also low.

Among the colonists in the gull family, Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* continue to make gains, while Yellow-legged Gulls *L. michahellis* struggle to find mates: there was only one pure pair, yet four mixed pairs. Little Gulls *Hydrocoloeus minutus*, which bred in 2007, failed to register in 2008. The single Scops Owl *Otus scops* from 2006 and 2007 did not return. Numbers of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla*, Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* and Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius colurio* in 2008 do not inspire confidence that these species will feature annually in our reports in the coming years. Ten years have passed since the last confirmed breeding record of Wrynecks in the UK.

In contrast, Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti*, now with over 2,000 territories, look well established. As usual, a variety of vagrant warblers appeared but little came of their visits to the UK. River, Savi's *Locustella luscinioides* (formerly a regular breeder), Melodious and Great Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* seem to be represented by singing males only. Marsh Warblers *A. palustris* fared a little better, with at least two pairs breeding.

The Panel is now considering certain species for which breeding numbers of particular subspecies fall within the criteria for inclusion by RBBP. Thus, the two rarer island forms of Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, 'Fair Isle Wren' *T. t. fridariensis* and 'St Kilda Wren' *T. t. hirtensis*, were added in 2008, although data were available only for *fridariensis*. We also received data for both Blue-headed and

White Wagtails *Motacilla alba alba*, with at least two pairs of the latter and two mixed pairs of Blue-headed/Yellow Wagtail *M. f. flavissima*. Earlier reported records of breeding Blue-headed Wagtails are also reviewed.

A survey of crossbills in northern Scotland found that the Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* was more numerous than hitherto recognised; indeed, the population could be in the order of 6,800 pairs, putting it well beyond the population size normally considered by RBBP. In contrast, the Parrot Crossbill *L. pytyopsittacus* is a rare breeder in Scotland with perhaps 100 individuals, although further surveys within its core range are required to establish the true size of the population.

Bramblings and Common Rosefinches remain scarce and occasional during the breeding season, although how many are being missed? Fieldwork is still underway to check former Brambling sites, using RBBP data, which might increase our understanding of a species on the edge of its range in Scotland. Continued coverage of the less well-watched parts of Britain & Ireland as part of fieldwork for Bird Atlas 2007–11 may also produce more records of these scarcer species. Finally, another rare breeding finch, the Common Redpoll *Carduelis flamma*, the UK status of which we know little, is absent from this report. For the first time since the Panel considered this species (2003), no breeding records were received, although its similarity to the Lesser Redpoll *C. cabaret* means that not all redpoll records are easily assigned to species. We ask resident and visiting birdwatchers in northern and western Scotland to be vigilant with the recording of redpolls in potential breeding habitat.

Bird Atlas 2007–11

This report is the first to include one of the survey years for the current BTO/BWI/SOC Bird Atlas project, which will collect data at a 10-km-square level for the whole of Britain & Ireland in the four breeding seasons 2008–11 inclusive. Since this is a four-year project, not all of the country is surveyed within one calendar-year, so it is only at the end of the fieldwork that a dataset comparable with those held by the RBBP will be available.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

However, in each of those four seasons, the Atlas can potentially provide additional data on rare species that may not be available through the normal channels. Accordingly, the RBBP and BTO are working closely together to ensure that data are shared (at an appropriate level, bearing in mind data sensitivities in some cases). This report has benefited from the additional fieldwork by Atlas volunteers and this has allowed the inclusion of some additional sites, for the more restricted-range species in particular.

Provisional maps of both Little Egret and Northern Goshawk have been provided by the BTO for inclusion in this report to help illustrate the range of these two species and, in the case of the latter, how a more sensitive species may be mapped to show the distribution without compromising confidentiality. These maps show data submitted to the Atlas up to July 2010 (thus covering more seasons than the records in this report, which is otherwise confined to 2008), so there are some discrepancies between the text and the map. Maps such as these will help us to assess the completeness of the RBBP archives and we hope that they will help birdwatchers to see whether they have data that can fill gaps to make Bird Atlas 2007–11 as complete as possible.

The colonisation (and recolonisation) of the UK by rare breeding birds

A species can be added to the list of breeding birds in the UK when there has been at least one instance of confirmed breeding. In the last 100 years, some species have been re-admitted to the list because breeding populations have been re-established following earlier extinctions. Well-known examples are Eurasian Bittern in 1911 and Osprey in 1954 (Sharrock 1976). Since the RBBP's formation in 1972, 16 species have been added or readmitted to the list. The box shows these species, together with the year and county of first breeding (from RBBP reports). An asterisk denotes returning species that had ceased to breed in the UK before 1900. (Non-native species are included in a separate RBBP report. The last of these was published in 2007 (Holling *et al.* 2007b) and the next, covering 2006–08, is in preparation.)

Species added to the UK's breeding avifauna since 1972, with year and county of first confirmed breeding shown

| | | |
|---------------------------|------|-----------|
| Cetti's Warbler | 1973 | Kent |
| Spotted Sandpiper | 1975 | Highland |
| Shore Lark | 1977 | Highland |
| Lapland Bunting | 1977 | Highland |
| Whooper Swan * | 1978 | Argyll |
| Purple Sandpiper | 1978 | Highland |
| Common Crane * | 1981 | Norfolk |
| Common Rosefinch | 1982 | Highland |
| Little Bittern | 1984 | Yorkshire |
| Parrot Crossbill | 1984 | Norfolk |
| Icterine Warbler | 1992 | Highland |
| Yellow-legged Gull | 1995 | Dorset |
| Little Egret | 1996 | Dorset |
| Eurasian Spoonbill * | 1998 | Suffolk |
| Red-necked Grebe | 2001 | Borders |
| Cattle Egret | 2008 | Somerset |

Sharp-eyed readers may spot the absence of the Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* in this list. Although it was reported that in 2004 it seemed very likely that breeding had occurred (Holling *et al.* 2007a), a review for the new atlas of breeding birds in North-east Scotland (Francis & Cook in prep.) suggests that the evidence is insufficient to lay claim to a first confirmed breeding record for the UK.

Of these 16 new or returning species, only six (those in bold in the box) have continued to breed on a regular basis and could thus be classed as colonisers (or recolonisers in the case of Whooper Swan and Common Crane). Others appear to be just occasional breeders, the nesting attempt(s) being of great interest at the time, but perhaps of little long-term significance. However, it takes some time to see whether the pioneer pair is followed by others. For a time, the Common Rosefinch looked as if it was here to stay, the Cattle Egret could yet prove to be a successful colonist and it may be that the Parrot Crossbill was a regular, but undiscovered, breeder in highland Scotland before the first documented breeding in Norfolk in 1984.

The dates of first breeding in the box show that the numbers of potential colonisers are clumped into two distinct time periods. The

Holling *et al.*

first, 1973–84, includes seven (of ten) species with a bias to a more northerly or northeasterly origin, notably Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* and Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus* in 1977, Whooper Swan and Purple Sandpiper in 1978, perhaps reflecting a phase of expansion of many subarctic and boreal forest species in northern Europe, or perhaps they were driven here by weather conditions at the time (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Of these, only Whooper Swan seems to have established itself as a permanent member of our breeding avifauna. Five new species were added during 1992–2001, of which three hint at a more southerly origin: Yellow-legged Gull, Little Egret and Eurasian Spoonbill. Cattle Egret in 2008 would also fall into this grouping. However, breeding by southern invaders is not a new phenomenon (e.g. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* in 1938, Black-winged Stilt in 1945, Golden Oriole in 1958, Savi's Warbler in 1960, Firecrest

Regulus ignicapilla in 1962, European Serin *Serinus serinus* in 1967 and Mediterranean Gull in 1968; Sharrock 1976, Brown & Grice 2005) and several of these have since established breeding populations.

The predictions of the impacts of climate change (Huntley *et al.* 2007) suggest that further new species with a southerly origin, especially colonial wetland species, may be expected. The first breeding of Cattle Egret in 2008 and subsequent developments in 2010 – for example, the breeding of Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* in Kent (p. 417), Little Bitterns in Somerset and Spoonbills in Norfolk (pp. 555–556) – hint that these predictions may be coming true. The year 2008 saw repeat breeding by both Eurasian Spoonbill and Black-winged Stilt, and further consolidation by species which clearly are colonising our shores, namely Little Egret, Mediterranean Gull, Firecrest and Cetti's Warbler.



David Tipling

283. Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*, Norfolk, May 2008. Firecrest is one of the species with a southerly origin that is increasing in Britain, but the numbers reported are greatly dependent on the amount of local effort to count territories or visit potential woodland sites. It is useful if county recorders can summarise the effort spent finding this species in their areas.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

The 2008 report

Each year we aim to invite specialist authors to contribute additional text to the basic species accounts, and to highlight selected species by including a review of past records, putting the current year into perspective. Taking the broad theme of colonisation of the UK by rare breeding species, this report features a review of Whooper Swans by David Okill and of Eurasian Spoonbills by Paul Collin, and additional comments on other recent 'colonists' in the species accounts. We also invite comments from organisers of national surveys. In 2008, the RSPB co-ordinated a survey of Merlins in the whole of the UK and Isle of Man, and of crossbills in Scotland, and Panel member Mark Eaton (RSPB) has provided summaries of both surveys.

Data sources

Records are collated from all counties of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the Isle of Man, but not from the Channel Islands. Most of the information presented is submitted by county and regional bird 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, national surveys, counts from RSPB reserves, and other, single-species studies (see Acknowledgments).

In recent years, as the backlog of annual reports has been addressed, and recorders have consequently had a shorter period for assembling and submitting data in time for the report, it is encouraging that the number of contributing counties has risen (fig. 1). This demonstrates not only the commitment of recorders but also the impact of electronic submissions from observers. It is also gratifying to see a steady decline in the submission of data solely by means of county bird reports. Although such submissions help to complete the national picture in terms of numbers of breeding pairs, they do little to enhance the quality of data in the Panel's archives. There has been a clear improvement in the quality of submissions from many counties in the last two years and we reiterate our thanks to those recorders who have supported us in this way.

Coverage

In 2008, submissions were received from a record number of contributing counties (fig. 1) and at least some data were available from all counties and regions (fig. 2). Full returns from 66 recorders were supplemented by extracts from four bird reports covering six Welsh counties and Shetland. Data were received from all counties in England except Greater London, although the surrounding counties that include parts of Greater London in their recording areas were able to

provide data for their London sections. No data or bird reports were received directly from Gower, Gwent, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire, so limited information was extracted from the Welsh Bird Report (Green *et al.* 2010). In Scotland, once again no returns were received from Caithness and Perth & Kinross, two significant areas for rare

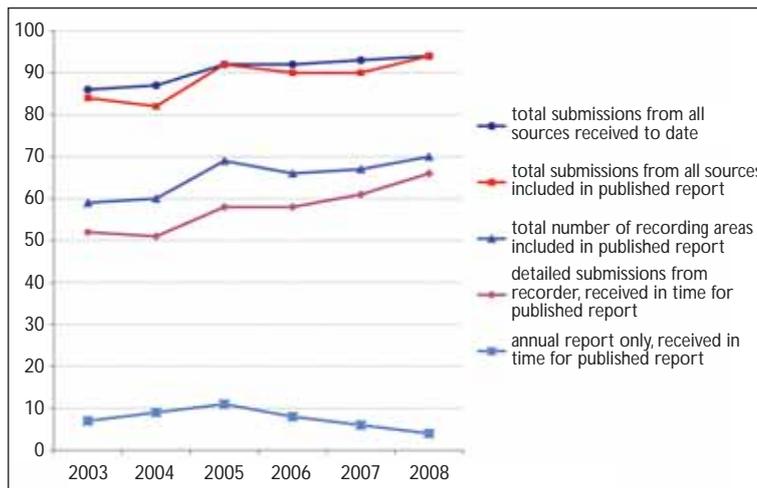


Fig. 1. Data submissions to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel by year, 2003–08. The total number of contributions received over this period has risen year on year, with the number of sources contributing to each published report reaching a new peak in 2008.

Holling *et al.*

breeding birds. The completeness of this report for these areas is therefore compromised for a number of species, except for raptors, which are monitored by the Scottish Raptor Study Groups. It is, however, good to welcome back the following counties after recent absences: Clyde Islands, Herefordshire, Isle of Man and West Midlands. And, for the first time in a number of years, we have been able to include full details of rare birds of

prey in Northern Ireland monitored by the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group. Readers should take into account any gaps in the coverage when reviewing the data presented in this report.

Because the annual RBBP reports represent an important source of information for conservation bodies, we strive to maximise coverage across the whole of the UK. Consequently, any late submissions are still welcome and important; such records will be added to our confidential archives to ensure that annual statistics and the inventory of breeding sites are updated, and summary amendments to our published reports will be added to the RBBP website (www.rbbp.org.uk) in due course.

Data inclusion

There have been no changes to the acceptance criteria for records since the last report (Holling *et al.* 2010), from which further information is available. These criteria are also available on the Panel's website (www.rbbp.org.uk). Species for which only minimal information was received are listed in Appendix 1.

Recording Standards

There has been a warm reception to the introduction of RBBP recording standards in 2009 (see www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards) and we have seen a noticeable improvement in the quality of data submitted. These standards have helped to demonstrate the need for accurate site information (in the form of six-figure grid references) and more rigorous recording of breeding behaviour to help assess the level of breeding evidence and the numbers of breeding pairs at a site. The importance of nil returns has also been shared with a wider audience. These help us to distinguish between the confirmed absence of a bird at a site, and a simple lack of records. Such improvements enhance the value of RBBP data and increase the value of existing information about rare breeding birds in the UK for the long-term benefits of conservation.

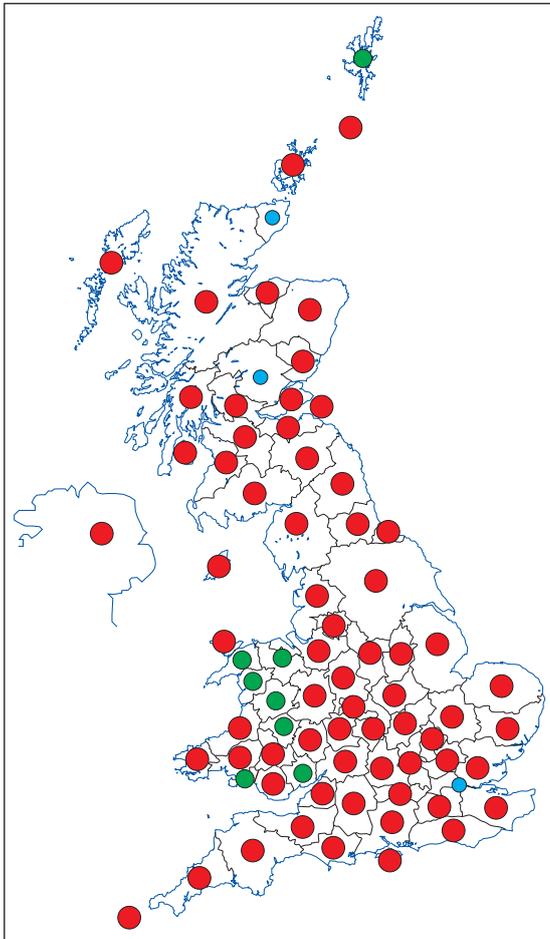


Fig. 2. Data submission to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel by recording area, 2008. This map shows the level of detail available by recording area. Large (red) dots indicate full submission for all species from recorders, with supplementary data from other sources where applicable; medium-size (green) 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.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008



David Tipling

284. Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Norfolk, February 2008. RBBP data provide information on species of high conservation importance and this is reflected in the use of such data in the assessment of designated sites, such as SSSIs and SPAs. Panel data for 21 species, including Bittern, are currently being used in a review of SPAs in the UK.

Conservation uses of RBBP data

It is 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 datasets by the RSPB for survey planning. At present, RBBP data for selected species are being used to assist with a review of the Government's designated Special Protection Areas and also with a review of the distribution of Northern Goshawk and constraints affecting that population.

The RBBP list

The only change to the list of species considered by the Panel since the publication of the last report is the inclusion, for the first time, of all potential breeding records of the rarer races of some species, notably White and Blue-headed Wagtails and the scarcer races of Wren, those breeding on the islands of Fair Isle and St Kilda. It is still our intention 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.

The Panel

The current membership of the Panel (September 2010) is as follows: Mark Eaton, Ian Francis, Simon Gillings, David Norman, 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. 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.

In early 2010, Judith Smith stood down from the Panel after ten years of service. During this time she provided extremely valuable liaison between the 'sharp-end' of county recording and the Panel, especially as the editor of *NewsACRE* – the regular newsletter of the Association of County Bird Recorders and Editors. We thank Judith for her hard work and contributions over the last decade, which have been very much appreciated.

Holling *et al.*

Terminology

The recording areas used in this report are the same as in previous reports (see Holling *et al.* 2007a and www.rbbp.org.uk); these match the bird recording areas used by recorders across the UK. *Contra* Ballance & Smith (2008), note that Gower and East Glamorgan are presented separately. 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 Highland recording area but also the western part of Moray & Nairn. Scottish Raptor Study Group area boundaries are shown on the group's website at www.scottishraptorgroups.org/areas

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Within tables, the abbreviation 'Confirmed breeding 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 fledged 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, zeroes mean that there were no birds recorded in that area in that year, whereas a rule (–) indicates that no data were received. Square brackets are used to indicate that the total included within them is known to be incomplete, while n/a indicates that data are not available.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

16 sites: 11–16 pairs. In addition, another 3–4 naturalised pairs bred and other single birds summered in a total of six counties.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one pair bred, with four cygnets recorded in July.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Two sites: (1) a pair summered but did not nest; (2) a pair was recorded in August.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: a pair summered but did not nest. **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: (1) one pair bred with six cygnets recorded in July; (2) one pair bred, seen incubating but no young seen. May have bred at this previously unreported site in 2006 and 2007; (3) pair present for three weeks but did not breed. **Shetland** Seven sites: seven pairs bred. Five pairs hatched 14 young and a total of six fledged from two broods.

Northern Ireland

Co. Londonderry One site: one pair possibly bred. **Co. Fermanagh** One site: one pair bred.

David Okill has analysed the Panel's data and compiled the following review of the status of the Whooper Swan since the first modern breeding record in 1978.

As for many species of wildfowl, assessment of the true breeding status of this species is made difficult because of the presence of injured or naturalised birds. Although Whooper Swans are

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008



Alan Harris

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

large and conspicuous, proving breeding in remote areas can be difficult, especially as the adults can range widely with unfledged young over large areas of uplands. Nevertheless, in 2008 there were 11 confirmed wild breeding pairs so this is a species which seems to have successfully colonised Scotland, Northern Ireland and, indeed, the Republic of Ireland (in 2008 a pair nested in Co. Donegal (Hillis 2009)).

Historically, there were reports of regular breeding in Orkney in the 1700s and injured birds bred in Shetland in the early twentieth century (Forrester *et al.* 2007). The present slow and tentative colonisation began in the 1970s and 1980s. The first records held by RBBP show that after a number of birds summered and a single bird was seen on a nest, the first pair of Whooper Swans nested successfully in 1978, in Argyll, hatching three young. Birds have been present in Argyll for many years and were proved breeding again in 1979 and 2007. Naturalised birds bred in Clyde in 1979, and these birds were present well into the 2000s with breeding confirmed in all but one year between 1979 and 1993, as well as in 2004. In 1988, two pairs nested in the Outer Hebrides, one pair fledging two chicks, but breeding since then has been sporadic and the sites used have not been consistent, at least until recent years. In Orkney, in 1989, a female was recorded incubating a single egg close to a Mute Swan's *C. olor* nest, apparently associating with the male. In 1990, what were considered to be wild birds nested successfully in Perth & Kinross, hatching four young and fledging three.

Since the early 1990s, numbers of single birds and pairs summering have increased slowly and instances of nesting have increased from the mid 1990s (fig. 3). A pair bred in Shetland in 1994 fledging three cygnets and by 2000 three pairs were breeding. Numbers in Shetland have fluctuated since then, with five pairs in 2004 and seven pairs in 2008 but only two pairs in 2006; in 2004 at least 14 chicks were known to have fledged.

Throughout the rest of Scotland numbers of breeding pairs have risen slowly, with sporadic records of nesting over a wide area, encompassing Ayrshire, Caithness, Highland and the Outer Hebrides. In Northern Ireland, a regular pair has been present since 1996. Elsewhere, there are regular reports of paired birds summering but with no evidence of nesting and the maximum number of confirmed breeding pairs reached double figures only in 2008.

Thus, although Argyll and Clyde seemed to attract the early colonists, Shetland is now clearly the main area for breeding Whooper Swans in the UK, with 64% of the total of confirmed pairs in 2008. However, recent years have seen some consolidation of the populations in

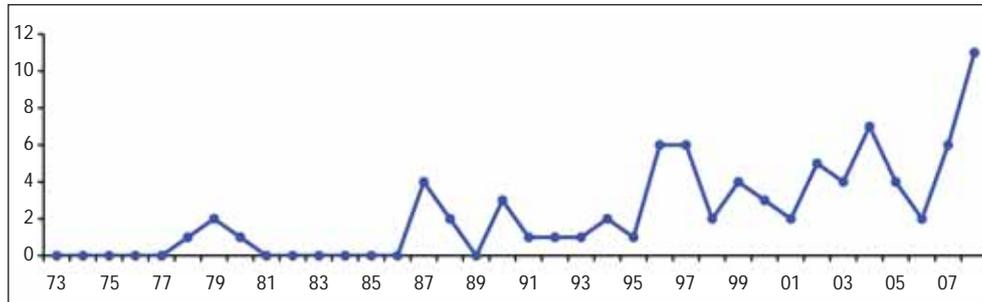
Holling *et al.*

Fig. 3. Number of confirmed breeding pairs of apparently wild Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus*, 1973–2008.

the Outer Hebrides (three pairs in 2008) and regular pairs breeding in Ayrshire (every year since 2002) and Co. Londonderry (since 2004).

Breeding by naturalised birds has been reported from Clyde and Highland, as well as several English counties including Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Greater Manchester and Lancashire & North Merseyside. There have been a number of instances of single birds building nests, and several cases of hybridisation with Mute Swans; for example, in Shetland two chicks were hatched in 2004 to a mixed pair, although soon after hatching these cygnets died during a period of poor weather.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

53 sites: 39–118 pairs. Owing to the widespread reports of summering individuals and pairs with no evidence of breeding, the total number of pairs presented in this report generally includes only records of at least probable breeding. This is based on the presence of at least a male and a female and records spanning more than one week. However, in areas with less regular coverage of sites, reports of pairs in suitable habitat over a shorter period are included within the possible breeding category. To complete the picture, county totals of pairs summering but where there was no evidence of a breeding attempt are listed for information, although the submission of these records varies between counties and is inevitably somewhat subjective.

England, SW

One summering pair reported from Somerset.

England, SE

Essex One site: one pair bred. Summering pairs were reported from **Bedfordshire** (one), **Essex** (three), **Hertfordshire** (one), **Kent** (four) and **Sussex** (26 birds).

England, E

Northamptonshire One site: one pair probably bred. Summering pairs were reported from **Cambridgeshire** (six), and **Norfolk** (seven).

England, C

Nottinghamshire One site: three pairs bred; also six other summering pairs.

England, N

Durham Five sites: eight pairs bred, three pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. At least 24 young reported. **Northumberland** Two sites: three pairs bred, with two broods totalling 13 young at one site. **Yorkshire** Five sites: three pairs bred, seven pairs probably bred and four pairs possibly bred. Also summering pairs reported from **Cheshire & Wirral** (four), **Cumbria** (two), **Durham** (one) and **Yorkshire** (four).

Wales

Summering pairs reported from **Anglesey** (two).

Scotland, S

Borders Five sites: three pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. **Dumfries & Galloway** One site: four pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one pair bred, with small young seen in early June. **North-east Scotland** Two sites: one pair bred, with two large ducklings seen in early July, and one pair probably bred. **Upper Forth** Two sites: three pairs possibly bred.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Three sites: two pairs bred, one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. The brood of five ducklings on Tiree constituted the first confirmed breeding for the island. **Caithness** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Highland** Five sites: three pairs bred and 21 pairs possibly bred. **Orkney** Seven sites: eight pairs bred, 16 pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. At one site, five broods totalling 14 young were recorded. **Outer Hebrides** Eight sites: three pairs bred and seven pairs possibly bred. **Shetland** Two sites: three pairs bred.

Northern Ireland

Co. Down One site: two pairs possibly bred.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

634–1,775 pairs. For the third consecutive year, the maximum total number of pairs reported to the Panel breaks the record and the population now appears to be over twice what it was ten years ago, when around 800 pairs were reported. The bulk of the population is still in England, which in 2008 held 93% of the total, compared to a similar 96% in 1998. The breeding pair in Cornwall was actually a mixed pair: a male paired with a female Mallard went on to produce two hybrid young.

| Gadwall | Confirmed breeding pairs | Total pairs | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| | | | West Midlands | 20 | 81 |
| | | | Worcestershire | 4 | 4 |
| | | | England, N | 194 | 298 |
| England, SW | 70 | 292 | Cheshire & Wirral | 18 | 23 |
| Avon | 5 | 5 | Cleveland | 4 | 19 |
| Cornwall | 1 | 3 | Cumbria | 0 | 6 |
| Devon | 3 | 5 | Durham | 7 | 7 |
| Dorset | 5 | 42 | Greater Manchester | 21 | 21 |
| Gloucestershire | 3 | 43 | Isle of Man | 0 | 1 |
| Hampshire | 35 | 100 | Lancashire & N Merseyside | 57 | 65 |
| Isle of Wight | 0 | 1 | Northumberland | 17 | 17 |
| Isles of Scilly | 3 | 3 | Yorkshire | 70 | 139 |
| Somerset | 10 | 85 | Wales | 13 | 55 |
| Wiltshire | 5 | 5 | Anglesey | 0 | 38 |
| England, SE | 116 | 337 | Breconshire | 0 | 1 |
| Bedfordshire | 4 | 4 | Caernarfonshire | 0 | 3 |
| Berkshire | 12 | 21 | Carmarthenshire | 11 | 11 |
| Buckinghamshire | 1 | 1 | Gwent | 1 | 1 |
| Essex | 18 | 33 | Pembrokeshire | 1 | 1 |
| Hertfordshire | 44 | 112 | Scotland, S | 7 | 24 |
| Kent | 25 | 116 | Borders | 3 | 4 |
| Oxfordshire | 0 | 10 | Clyde | 4 | 17 |
| Sussex | 12 | 40 | Dumfries & Galloway | 0 | 3 |
| England, E | 101 | 471 | Scotland, Mid | 5 | 15 |
| Cambridgeshire | [0] | 207 | Angus & Dundee | 0 | 3 |
| Lincolnshire | 4 | 4 | Fife | 2 | 4 |
| Norfolk | 74 | 137 | North-east Scotland | 3 | 3 |
| Northamptonshire | 2 | 8 | Perth & Kinross | n/a | n/a |
| Suffolk | 21 | 115 | Upper Forth | 0 | 5 |
| England, C | 93 | 221 | Scotland, N & W | 12 | 37 |
| Derbyshire | 21 | 29 | Argyll | 1 | 2 |
| Herefordshire | 0 | 5 | Orkney | 10 | 31 |
| Leicestershire & Rutland | 16 | 16 | Outer Hebrides | 1 | 4 |
| Nottinghamshire | 19 | 28 | Northern Ireland | 23 | 25 |
| Shropshire | 1 | 4 | Co. Antrim | 18 | 18 |
| Staffordshire | 7 | 19 | Co. Armagh/Tyrone | 5 | 7 |
| Warwickshire | 5 | 35 | TOTALS | 634 | 1,775 |

Holling *et al.*

Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

2 sites: 0–2 pairs. Male Black Ducks that formed mixed pairs with Mallards were reported to the Panel in 1977–86 and 1995–97, from Caernarfonshire, Lothian and Scilly. In recent years there has been a long-staying male in Cornwall, but in 2008 a female took up residence in Pembrokeshire and may have bred with a drake Mallard. The Black Ducks discussed here are all believed to be natural vagrants from North America and there are no signs of a sustainable population.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: a long-staying male (perhaps present in Cornwall since 1999) was again reported, though on 23rd May only, and it was not known whether it paired with a Mallard in 2008.

Wales

Pembrokeshire One site: a female present between 16th March and 19th May may have bred with a male Mallard.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

23 sites: 4–35 pairs. Fewer confirmed breeding pairs were noted in 2008 but the total number of pairs is the highest reported for over ten years. As in 2007, Argyll and Orkney account for about half of the reported pairs.

England, SW

Avon One site: one pair probably bred (present from April to mid May when the female disappeared for about two weeks; it was assumed that she was on a nest, though no young were seen). **Dorset** One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, SE

Essex One site: two pairs summered. **Kent** Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. At one site, the appearance of five fledged young in August suggests local breeding but no adults were seen at this site.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: two pairs summered. **Suffolk** Three sites: three pairs possibly bred; the appearance of four juveniles in late July at one site suggests local breeding but captive origin cannot be ruled out. The provenance of five birds present at another site throughout the year is also in question.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one pair summered.

Wales

Anglesey One site: one pair summered.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: one pair bred (a brood of four was seen in July). **Dumfries & Galloway** One site: one pair bred (a brood of five was recorded).

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Four sites: two pairs bred (one brood in late May and another brood, of four, in July), one pair probably bred and four pairs possibly bred. **Highland** Two sites: three pairs possibly bred. **Orkney** Three sites: nine pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

65 sites: 20–102 pairs. These totals are the highest since 2000. Fig. 4 shows that during the 1990s the maximum number of pairs (on average 121 per annum) was higher than in the 2000s, but the current trend shows numbers rising again.

England, SW

Devon One site: two pairs possibly bred. **Dorset** Two sites: one pair probably bred (mating observed in late April) and three pairs possibly bred. **Hampshire** Three sites: two pairs bred (a brood of three and a single juvenile) and one pair probably bred. **Somerset** Three sites: five pairs probably bred (pairs present between April and June) and six pairs possibly bred. **Wiltshire** One site: one pair probably bred. After a string of records from March to August, a juvenile seen in August was thought to have fledged locally.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: one pair probably bred (three males and a female were present throughout the spring). **Berkshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Buckinghamshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Essex**

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

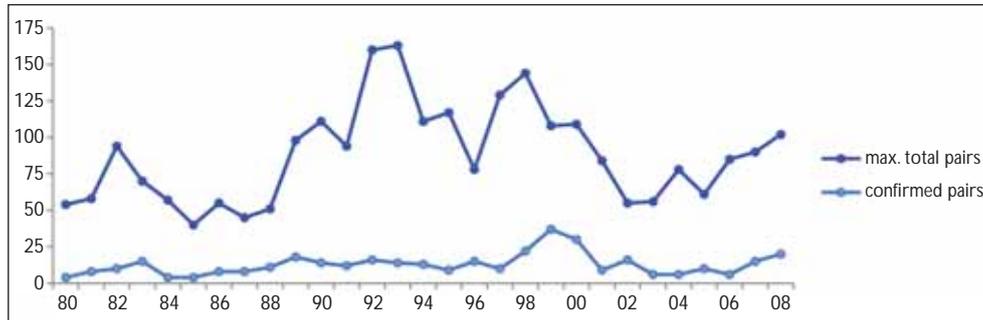


Fig. 4. Number of breeding Garganeys *Anas querquedula* in the UK, 1980–2008.

Three sites: three pairs possibly bred. **Hertfordshire** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Kent** Five sites: two pairs bred, one pair probably bred and five pairs possibly bred. **Sussex** Three sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Four sites: two pairs bred and seven pairs possibly bred. **Norfolk** Four sites: one pair bred (brood of six), one pair probably bred and four pairs possibly bred. **Northamptonshire** One site: one pair probably bred. **Suffolk** Five sites: three pairs probably bred and three pairs possibly bred.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. **Nottinghamshire** One site: one pair bred (four young). **Staffordshire** One site: one pair bred (nest found).

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one pair possibly bred. **Cleveland** One site: two pairs possibly bred. **Cumbria** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Greater Manchester** One site: one pair probably bred, with numerous records of male and female in June and July. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Three sites: three pairs possibly bred. **Northumberland** One site: one pair bred (two young seen). This follows confirmed breeding in the county in 2007, the first since 1983. **Yorkshire** Three sites: six pairs bred (five broods totalling 30 young counted), two pairs probably bred and three pairs possibly bred.

Wales

Anglesey One site: one pair possibly bred. **Breconshire** One site: one pair probably bred. **Gwent** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Pembrokeshire** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Loch of Strathbeg: three pairs confirmed (two broods totalling 14 young), plus two further probable and two possible pairs. An exceptional year at this site.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney Two sites: one pair bred (an adult with two juveniles were seen in July) and one pair possibly bred.

Outer Hebrides One site: one pair possibly bred.

Northern Ireland

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

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

268–1,157 pairs. Although the number of confirmed breeding pairs is similar to that in 2007, the total number of pairs is the highest in three years, but this is probably inflated by the large numbers reported at the Ouse Washes in Cambridgeshire, where 328 males were counted in early May (compared with a five-year mean of 78 males in 2003–07). It is a standard census technique to measure the number of potentially breeding ducks by counting males at this time of year. In 2007, the Washes were flooded for much of the summer, meaning that hardly any grassland management took place. Consequently, in the spring of 2008, the Washes were densely vegetated and wet and it is believed that these conditions favoured breeding Shovelers. However, any that attempted to breed in such low-lying habitat would have been affected by flooding in early April and again in late May. It may be spring flooding, such as occurred in both 2007 and 2008 across the main parts of the Shoveler's range in east and southeast England, which explains

Holling *et al.*

Graham Catley



285. Male Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, Lincolnshire, February 2008. Total numbers of breeding Shovelers reported to the RBBP during 2006–08 were 931, 882 and 1,157 pairs (totals adjusted to include data received after publication), but the 2008 figure is perhaps inflated because of large numbers present at a few sites in spring, many of which may not have gone on to breed. The number of confirmed breeding pairs in both 2007 and 2008 (229 and 268 respectively) was much lower than in 2006 (402) and this may reflect low success rates after summer flooding in the main areas of the species' range.

the low number of broods (and thus confirmed breeding pairs) compared with the total number of pairs.

| Shoveler | Confirmed breeding pairs | Total pairs | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| | | | Cumbria | 1 | 1 |
| | | | Durham | 3 | 3 |
| | | | Greater Manchester | 2 | 8 |
| | | | Isle of Man | 0 | 1 |
| England, SW | 8 | 39 | Lancashire & N Merseyside | 35 | 92 |
| Avon | 0 | 2 | Northumberland | 3 | 3 |
| Cornwall | 0 | 1 | Yorkshire | 38 | 136 |
| Devon | 2 | 2 | Wales | 3 | 38 |
| Dorset | 3 | 8 | Anglesey | 0 | 28 |
| Hampshire | 2 | 2 | Breconshire | 0 | 1 |
| Somerset | 1 | 24 | Gwent | 0 | 6 |
| England, SE | 46 | 186 | Pembrokeshire | 3 | 3 |
| Essex | 21 | 76 | Scotland, S | 1 | 14 |
| Hertfordshire | 6 | 10 | Borders | 0 | 2 |
| Kent | 9 | 73 | Clyde | 0 | 5 |
| Oxfordshire | 0 | 9 | Dumfries & Galloway | 1 | 7 |
| Sussex | 10 | 18 | Scotland, Mid | 4 | 8 |
| England, E | 87 | 508 | Angus & Dundee | 0 | 3 |
| Cambridgeshire | 7 | 329 | Fife | 1 | 2 |
| Lincolnshire | 2 | 2 | North-east Scotland | 3 | 3 |
| Norfolk | 58 | 118 | Scotland, N & W | 20 | 80 |
| Northamptonshire | 0 | 4 | Argyll | 7 | 27 |
| Suffolk | 20 | 55 | Highland | 0 | 1 |
| England, C | 10 | 20 | Orkney | 8 | 38 |
| Leicestershire & Rutland | 1 | 1 | Outer Hebrides | 5 | 14 |
| Nottinghamshire | 7 | 9 | Northern Ireland | 2 | 5 |
| Shropshire | 1 | 5 | Co. Antrim | 1 | 1 |
| Staffordshire | 0 | 4 | Co. Armagh | 1 | 1 |
| West Midlands | 1 | 1 | Co. Fermanagh | 0 | 1 |
| England, N | 87 | 259 | Co. Tyrone | 0 | 2 |
| Cheshire & Wirral | 2 | 7 | TOTALS | 268 | 1,157 |
| Cleveland | 3 | 8 | | | |

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

410–652 pairs. These are the highest figures reported since the species was added to the RBBP list in 1986. Southeast England proved again to be the stronghold, with 42% of pairs (and 49% of confirmed breeding pairs), mainly in Essex and Kent.

| Common Pochard | Confirmed breeding pairs | Total pairs | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----|-----|
| | | | Nottinghamshire | 6 | 10 |
| | | | Shropshire | 0 | 2 |
| | | | Worcestershire | 3 | 3 |
| England, SW | 40 | 88 | England, N | 60 | 85 |
| Avon | 2 | 2 | Cheshire & Wirral | 19 | 19 |
| Dorset | 18 | 18 | Cleveland | 15 | 15 |
| Gloucestershire | 0 | 1 | Cumbria | 0 | 2 |
| Hampshire | 10 | 12 | Greater Manchester | 10 | 10 |
| Somerset | 10 | 55 | Lancashire & N Merseyside | 3 | 14 |
| England, SE | 200 | 272 | Northumberland | 1 | 1 |
| Bedfordshire | 1 | 1 | Yorkshire | 12 | 24 |
| Berkshire | 1 | 5 | Wales | 20 | 52 |
| Essex | 110 | 113 | Anglesey | 3 | 35 |
| Hertfordshire | 23 | 41 | Carmarthenshire | 16 | 16 |
| Kent | 60 | 85 | Gwent | 1 | 1 |
| Oxfordshire | 0 | 4 | Scotland, S | 2 | 4 |
| Surrey | 2 | 2 | Borders | 0 | 2 |
| Sussex | 3 | 21 | Lothian | 2 | 2 |
| England, E | 60 | 111 | Scotland, N & W | 4 | 4 |
| Cambridgeshire | 2 | 27 | Orkney | 4 | 4 |
| Lincolnshire | 2 | 2 | Northern Ireland | 15 | 21 |
| Norfolk | 46 | 68 | Co. Antrim | 3 | 5 |
| Suffolk | 10 | 14 | Co. Armagh/Tyrone | 12 | 16 |
| England, C | 9 | 15 | TOTALS | 410 | 652 |

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

A male seen intermittently in Avon from 10th May to 1st September was thought to have been a bird seen at the same site as a juvenile in 2006; there was no evidence of breeding in 2008. This species has not been included in the Panel's reports before, but the full story of a sequence of records that may relate to a probable breeding attempt can now be revealed.

A female Ferruginous Duck had been present on a number of dates at Chew Valley Lake during 2000–02, and this bird returned in April 2003, a few



Rich Andrews

286. A male Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* was seen intermittently in 2008 at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, between May and September (and photographed here in May 2009). It is assumed to be the same bird as a juvenile male first seen at the site in October 2006, and may conceivably have been raised in the UK.

Holling *et al.*

days before it was joined by a male. The pair was noted together on only three dates, in April and June. They returned in February 2004 and were seen mating in March. In late May and throughout June, the male was seen regularly, as if on guard, but both birds moved away at the end of June and no young were seen. In 2005 and 2006, the pair was recorded together on only one date in each year, so any hopes that a breeding attempt might be repeated faded. However, a juvenile male was found in October 2006, and remained into November. In 2007, a first-summer male, presumably the same bird, was noted on many dates between June and November, and an adult female was also present on three dates in June and August.

Given the evidence, it can only be speculated that a breeding attempt did occur in 2004, which seems likely to have failed. It is, however, possible that a further attempt occurred elsewhere in southwest England in 2006, which produced at least one juvenile male. An alternative explanation is that the juvenile was the result of 'egg-dumping' by the female Ferruginous Duck in another duck's nest at Chew.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. After a promising record from Caithness in 2007, the evidence that the Greater Scaup can still be counted among our breeding avifauna is again weak. The records in North-east Scotland were from a well-watched site, so it is unlikely that breeding occurred.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: three birds, a pair and another male, were present between April and July, with the female being elusive from May onwards. In August, five birds in eclipse plumage were recorded.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: two males were recorded on 19th June.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

12 sites: 3–18 pairs. After the complete survey in 2007 found up to 52 pairs, reports received have returned to the normal range of 10–20 pairs, based largely on casual records. In 2008, many of these came from Atlas fieldworkers in Highland and Perth & Kinross. In addition, 15 birds at two sites in early July in Ayrshire appeared to be in potential breeding habitat, yet these records mirror similar reports in previous years at inland waters in midsummer and are not thought to relate to breeding birds.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross Two sites: one pair bred and one pair probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness Two sites including one extensive site: (1) one pair bred, seen with a brood of four; (2) seven pairs probably bred. **Highland** Eight sites: one pair bred, four pairs probably bred and three pairs possibly bred.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

At least 59 breeding pairs, including one in England. The pair in Avon constitutes the first confirmed breeding by apparently wild birds in England.

Full details of the nestbox scheme administered by the Goldeneye Study Group were not available for this report so figures are unfortunately not comparable with those of recent years. The number of pairs reported in Highland reflects a sample of what is normally a population of over 80 nesting females.

England, SW

Avon One pair bred: six downy young were seen on 4th June with two surviving to 14th July at least.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three summering males at two sites.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland A male summered but no females were seen after 18th May. **Worcestershire** A male remained until 1st June.

England, N

Cumbria One bird summered.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Scotland, S

Lothian A single male was recorded at an inland site in June.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Deeside: in 26 monitored nests, 233 eggs were laid and 198 young hatched, of which at least 34 fledged.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Badenoch & Strathspey: in 32 monitored nests, 128 young hatched from 15 successful nests.

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

98 leks were visited, and a total of 213 displaying males counted, similar numbers to those in 2007. All known lek sites in Scotland are checked at dawn during April; although not an accurate measure of population size, this figure does enable trends at these leks to be monitored and data presented here are comparable with those published in recent reports.

Scotland, S

Clyde Three leks: three males.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn 15 leks: 19 males. **North-east Scotland** 20 leks: 32 males and 21 females. Productivity seemed to be low, with just three chicks found with five hens. **Perth & Kinross** Eight leks: seven males.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 52 leks: 152 males.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

11–470 singing males or pairs. Confirmed breeding was recorded in four counties: Cumbria (one pair), Leicestershire & Rutland (one pair), Northamptonshire (one pair) and Yorkshire (eight pairs). The mean number of Common Quails over the most recent ten-year period is 389, so the numbers in 2008 were slightly above average. The highest numbers seemed to be in northern England, with 29% of all records.

| Common Quail | Total pairs or singing males | England, C | 35 |
|--------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| | | Derbyshire | 6 |
| | | Herefordshire | 5 |
| England, SW | 99 | Leicestershire & Rutland | 1 |
| Avon | 7 | Nottinghamshire | 6 |
| Cornwall | 2 | Shropshire | 11 |
| Devon | 3 | Staffordshire | 1 |
| Dorset | 5 | Warwickshire | 3 |
| Gloucestershire | 22 | Worcestershire | 2 |
| Hampshire | 19 | England, N | 138 |
| Somerset | 14 | Cheshire & Wirral | 12 |
| Wiltshire | 27 | Cleveland | 2 |
| England, SE | 62 | Cumbria | 23 |
| Bedfordshire | 2 | Durham | 4 |
| Berkshire | 11 | Isle of Man | 1 |
| Buckinghamshire | 12 | Lancashire & N Merseyside | 38 |
| Essex | 0 | Northumberland | 9 |
| Hertfordshire | 7 | Yorkshire | 49 |
| Kent | 4 | Wales | 20 |
| Oxfordshire | 1 | Anglesey | 2 |
| Sussex | 25 | Breconshire | 2 |
| England, E | 50 | Ceredigion | 1 |
| Cambridgeshire | 9 | Denbigh & Flint | 1 |
| Lincolnshire | 12 | East Glamorgan | 3 |
| Norfolk | 17 | Montgomeryshire | 1 |
| Northamptonshire | 5 | Pembrokeshire | 4 |
| Suffolk | 7 | Radnorshire | 6 |

Holling *et al.*

| Common Quail <i>cont.</i> | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-----|
| | Total pairs or singing males | | |
| | | Moray & Nairn | 4 |
| | | North-east Scotland | 15 |
| | | Upper Forth | 1 |
| Scotland, S | 27 | Scotland, N & W | 10 |
| Borders | 24 | Argyll | 4 |
| Clyde | 2 | Caithness | 1 |
| Lothian | 1 | Outer Hebrides | 1 |
| Scotland, Mid | 29 | Shetland | 4 |
| Angus & Dundee | 5 | TOTAL | 470 |
| Fife | 4 | | |

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

248–267 pairs. These figures represent only a sample of the estimated 1,255 pairs breeding in Scotland (Dillon *et al.* 2009). In Orkney, the season was protracted with many pairs laying late, suggesting that the birds were not in good condition, but overall it was an average year. For example, on Hoy, where all breeding pairs were monitored, 43 chicks were produced from 32 successful nests at 56 occupied sites, a productivity of 0.77 young per occupied site. In Shetland, however, it was the worst year on record in terms of successful pairs and numbers of young fledged. Many pairs either did not attempt to breed or failed in their first attempt. Pairs that did fare slightly better, but this extended the breeding season into September for some. Productivity estimates included: Fetlar, 16 pairs but only four successful, 0.25 young per occupied site (poorest year since 1990); Yell, ten pairs monitored with 0.30 young per occupied site; Foula, eight pairs with 0.38 young per occupied site.

Scotland, S

Clyde Two pairs probably bred. Clyde Islands Three pairs bred.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One pair bred. North-east Scotland One pair bred. Upper Forth One pair possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

For most areas the following statements are based on only limited information. Argyll One pair bred and three pairs probably bred. Caithness One pair bred, two pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. Highland 24 pairs bred, three pairs probably bred and six pairs possibly bred. Orkney 102 pairs bred, including 56 pairs on Hoy where a full survey was carried out. Outer Hebrides Nine pairs bred. Shetland 106 pairs bred and one pair possibly bred.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

52–73 pairs. These figures represent only about a third of the estimated population of 217 breeding pairs (Eaton *et al.* 2007b).

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One pair possibly bred. Clyde Three pairs probably bred.

Scotland, Mid

One pair bred but failed on eggs, one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Eight pairs located, of which three bred and fledged a total of three young. Caithness Five sites checked held four pairs in total: three pairs bred and one young was fledged from a natural site; the other two (raft) sites failed. Highland 51 pairs found, of which 43 bred. At least 23 young fledged from the 42 monitored nests, meaning that 0.55 young fledged per apparently occupied territory (AOT), the highest for many years. Outer Hebrides Two pairs bred, fledging one young, and one pair possibly bred.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

49 sites: 75–87 booming males with 39 breeding attempts at 20 sites. Simon Wotton, RSPB, commented as follows.

2008 was an astonishing year for Bitterns in the UK. The population of booming males increased to its highest level since the monitoring programme began in 1990, and up to or even

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

above the twentieth-century peak reached in the 1950s. There was a minimum of 75 booming males confirmed in England, an increase of 47% on the 2007 figure of 51 boomers. The number of sites supporting at least one booming male also rose, to 42, an increase of 24% over 2007 figures, with a further expansion of range into southwest England.

There was a dramatic increase of 44% in the number of nests, to a minimum of 39, and also a large (66%) jump in the number of sites supporting breeding females, to 20.

It is possible that increased water levels in late winter and early spring at many sites, after a wet winter, particularly in the Norfolk Broads and the Fens, may have contributed to the sharp increase in booming males and nests.

England, SW

Somerset Two sites: 2–3 booming males; two confirmed nests.

England, SE

Hertfordshire One site: 0–1 booming male. **Kent** Two sites: two booming males.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Six sites: ten booming males; four confirmed nests. **Lincolnshire** Seven sites: 6–8 booming males. **Norfolk North Norfolk coast** Four sites: four booming males; two confirmed nests. **Norfolk Broads** 15 sites: 21–25 booming males; 11 confirmed nests. **Suffolk Suffolk coast** Six sites: 24–27 booming males; 15 confirmed nests. **Fens** One site: two booming males.

England, N

Cumbria One site: one booming male. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** One site: one booming male and two confirmed nests. **Yorkshire** Three sites: 2–3 booming males; three confirmed nests.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Two sites: 2–3 pairs. After a well-documented influx in late 2007, mainly to southwest England (Hudson *et al.* 2008), it was widely anticipated that some birds may stay to breed, and so it was that breeding was later proved in Somerset, where at least two young fledged. There was a further influx in 2008, so it may be that this species is here to stay. It will be interesting to see whether the numbers of breeding Cattle Egrets increase in the manner of Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*. Cattle Egrets have a history of colonising new areas, and in the twentieth century expanded to South Africa, Australasia, South America and North America as well as northwards within Europe.

England, SW

Somerset Two sites: two pairs fledged at least two (probably three) young and a third pair probably bred.



Brian Gibbs

287. Juvenile Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Somerset, August 2008. One of two young fledged in Somerset in 2008, the first breeding record for the UK.

Holling *et al.*

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

68 sites: 751–792 pairs. Little Egret has become perhaps the most successful of recent colonists. The total number of sites and pairs reported in 2008 is lower than in the previous year, the first time in 12 years that this has happened, but the number of confirmed breeding pairs (751) reaches another new record (fig. 5). This drop in number of sites may simply reflect less complete reporting from counties where the species is well established, although there is little sign of expansion away from the southern half of Britain. The range is shown by the provisional map from Bird Atlas 2007–11, which includes all records of confirmed and probable breeding for the three breeding seasons 2008–10 (fig. 6).

Note that when colony counts are given as ranges (e.g. 5–7 nests), this should be interpreted as five pairs confirmed and a further two pairs probably breeding. After two pairs nested in both Berkshire and Scilly in 2007, no breeding activity was noted in either county in 2008.

England, SW

Cornwall Three sites: 16 pairs. **Devon** At least nine sites: 76–78 pairs bred. **Dorset** Seven sites: 39–50 pairs. **Gloucestershire** Two sites: 16 pairs. **Hampshire** Five sites: 79–87 pairs. **Somerset** Four sites: 42–43 pairs. **Wiltshire** One site: 15–20 pairs.

England, SE

Buckinghamshire Two sites: four pairs. **Essex** Six sites: 79 pairs. **Kent** Two sites: 103–112 pairs at Northward Hill RSPB, the largest colony in Britain, and at least ten pairs at the second. **Oxfordshire** No data (one pair in 2007). **Sussex** Five sites: 41 pairs.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Although up to 74 birds were present at the Ouse Washes in June, there appears to have been no nesting attempts in 2008. **Lincolnshire** Three sites: 22 pairs. **Norfolk** Four sites: 73–75 pairs bred. **Suffolk** Six sites: 33 pairs.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: 30 pairs. **Yorkshire** One site: one pair probably bred (a displaying pair was seen nest-building).

Wales

Anglesey One site: at least one pair. **Caernarfonshire** Two sites: at least 41 pairs. **Carmarthen-shire** At least one pair probably bred. **Ceredigion** One site: eight pairs bred. **Gower** Two sites: 18–19 pairs. **Gwent** One site: five pairs.

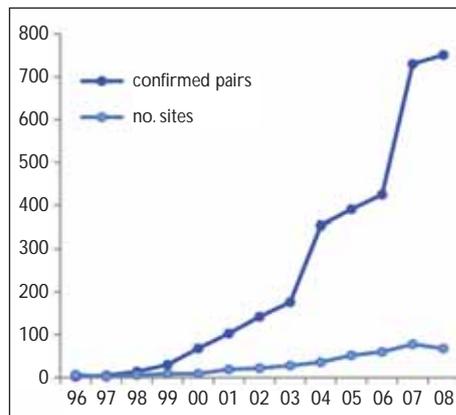


Fig. 5. Number of confirmed breeding pairs of Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and potential or confirmed breeding sites in the UK, 1996–2008.

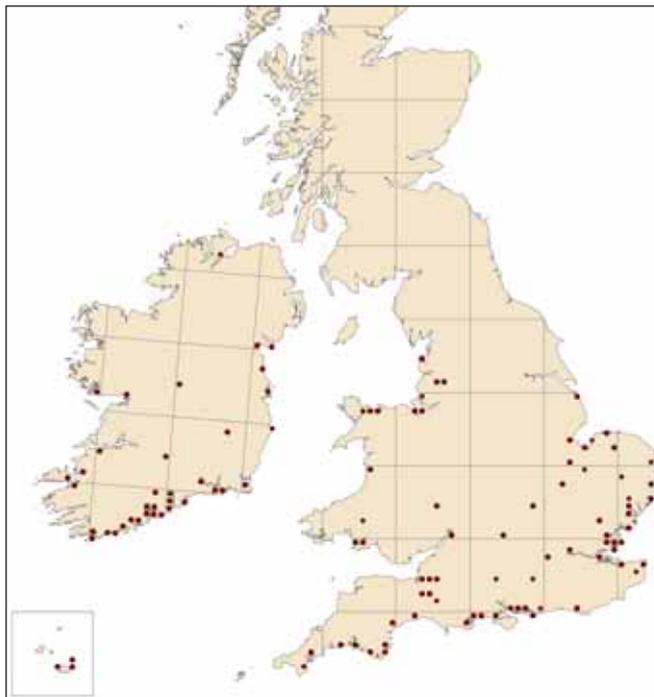


Fig. 6. The breeding distribution of Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* in Britain & Ireland, based on data collected to date for Bird Atlas 2007–11. With only three summering birds recorded in the previous breeding atlas (1988–91), this species has shown one of the largest range expansions in the latest atlas. The two dot sizes indicate probable and confirmed breeding. Map generated in July 2010.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

One site: one pair. This is the first confirmed breeding record for Scotland and the fourth for the UK in recent times, but only the second successful attempt (following that of a pair which reared two young in Lancashire & N Merseyside in 1999).

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway

One site: one pair bred. After records of a single bird from 27th June and then two birds from 18th August, it was with some surprise that three juveniles were found on 23rd August, remaining in the area until 20th September (documented more fully in Collin 2009).



Keith Kirk

288. Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Dumfries & Galloway, August 2008. This adult was one half of the pair that fledged three young in the county in 2008.

Paul Collin, Recorder for Dumfries & Galloway, has compiled this summary of documented nesting attempts by Spoonbills in the UK, to put this important record into context.

Given the increasing numbers breeding on the near continent (see Holling *et al.* 2008), colonisation of the UK by Spoonbills has long been anticipated. They now regularly summer at several sites in East Anglia, often in sizeable groups, with display and nest-building activity recorded at a number of locations since 1989. The first documented record of eggs being laid (in the modern era) was in 1998 but the attempt failed. Despite the seemingly large number of both birds and nesting attempts (ten nests were built in 2002, for example), Spoonbills have been slow to establish, with nesting attempts disrupted by Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* and even Common Coots *Fulica atra* (see below). Spoonbills seem highly sensitive to disturbance and in both instances of successful breeding the pair failed to return the following year. It seems surprising that the first successful breeding attempts were in the west, rather than in the wetlands of East Anglia, but if the species is to become established as a regular breeder it is more likely in the east, closer to the Dutch breeding colonies.

Breeding attempts by Eurasian Spoonbills in the UK since 1989 (confirmed records shown in bold)

| | | |
|-------------|---------------------|--|
| 1989 | Suffolk | One pair nest-building. |
| 1995 | Norfolk | Up to four present from April to August; nest-building noted. |
| 1996 | Cheshire & Wirral | At least six birds at two sites; display and nest-building noted. |
| 1997 | Cheshire & Wirral | One pair nest-building at a 1996 site. |
| 1997 | Suffolk | Possible nesting attempt. |
| 1998 | Suffolk | One pair laid two eggs that were lost to a Fox; this was the first confirmed egg-laying in the UK since 1668. |
| 1998 | North-east Scotland | One pair present from May to July, copulation seen but no nest-building. |

Holling *et al.*

Breeding attempts by Eurasian Spoonbills in the UK since 1989 *cont.*

| | | |
|------|---------------------------|--|
| 1999 | Cleveland | Two birds, occasionally three, seen throughout the summer and observed carrying sticks. |
| 1999 | Lancashire & N Merseyside | One pair reared two young from three eggs laid. |
| 1999 | Norfolk | Four pairs noted carrying sticks. |
| 1999 | Suffolk | One pair but no nesting activity reported. |
| 2000 | Lancashire & N Merseyside | One adult and a first-summer at the 1999 site, but no breeding activity noted. |
| 2000 | Norfolk | One pair built a nest that was quickly dismantled by Common Coots. |
| 2000 | Suffolk | Four pairs but no breeding activity reported. |
| 2001 | Dumfries & Galloway | One pair built four nesting platforms but was displaced by Grey Herons. |
| 2002 | Suffolk | Nineteen individuals, possibly nine pairs, tended ten nests; no birds fledged and it is unclear whether eggs were laid. Breeding thought to have been disrupted by Foxes. |
| 2004 | Cumbria | Three adults summered, display and nest-building seen. |
| 2004 | Suffolk | Two adults and two first-years visited the 2002 site. |
| 2006 | Suffolk | Two pairs built two large nests, but both deserted. |
| 2007 | Cheshire & Wirral | One pair and a subadult, display and stick-carrying noted. |
| 2007 | Suffolk | Sixteen birds recorded, two pairs built two large nests, eggs were laid in at least one of these, with a bird still sitting in late June, but both nests were deserted. |
| 2008 | Dumfries & Galloway | One site: one pair fledged three young. |

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

13 sites: 29 pairs, one mixed pair, and singles at two other sites. Stuart Benn, RSPB, commented as follows.

In mainland Scotland, 29 pairs were located and 14 young reared (38 and ten, respectively, in 2007). This is the lowest number of pairs recorded since regular monitoring began, in 1971. Productivity was 0.48 young per territorial pair, a little below the long-term average of 0.56. Twelve sites were occupied by pairs in 2008 (the lowest ever) and a further two by just a single bird; only six sites produced young (the second-lowest ever). All the above figures give cause for concern. In 2008, sites within Special Protection Areas (SPAs) held 18 pairs (62%) and produced six young (43%), significantly fewer than the 37 pairs (53% of the population) in the late 1990s (Stroud *et al.* 2001).



Oliver Smart

289. Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Mull, Argyll, May 2008.

At Loch Ruthven, 13 pairs bred but no young were reared. This is the first year of total breeding failure since 1982. Three of the last five years at this site have had poor or zero productivity. The reasons for this are unclear although,

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

after an exceptionally dry spring, water levels were very low in 2008.

For the third year running, a female Slavonian Grebe paired with a Great Crested Grebe *P. cristatus* in England but the pair was again unsuccessful. Eggs were laid but the nest was deserted owing to excessive disturbance at the site.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland One site: one mixed pair. A female paired with a Great Crested Grebe and laid eggs but the nest was deserted.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

Moray & Nairn/Highland 12 sites: 29 pairs reared 14 young; in addition, two single birds were present at two other sites.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

17 sites: 28–43 pairs, at least 32 young fledged. In their review of records up to 2004, Martin & Smith (2007) reflected on an increasing population and speculated that there may be further increases if sites are not disturbed. However, since 2002 the number of sites has declined from 26 to 17 and the number of confirmed pairs from 50 to 28. There has been some loss of sites, yet also new ones established. This species continues to be vulnerable and we reiterate the importance of careful and continuous monitoring of known sites, and of following up pairs found in early spring in potential breeding habitat.

England, SE

Hertfordshire One site: three pairs fledged four young, and one pair possibly bred. **Kent** One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair fledged one young. This is the first breeding record for the county since 1992. **Lincolnshire** One site: one pair fledged three young.

England, C

Nottinghamshire Two sites: two pairs probably bred. At one, the pair was noted as having failed but it is not known if eggs were laid, while at the second a pair was present in May and a juvenile was seen in early August. **Staffordshire** One site: one pair possibly bred, but abandoned the site owing to recreational disturbance.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: 14 pairs bred and one other pair probably bred. Seventeen young fledged. **Durham** One site: one pair possibly bred: the pair was seen mating in spring but did not stay to nest. **Greater Manchester** One site: three pairs bred, fledging two young. **Northumberland** Three sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging one young from a brood of three, and two pairs possibly bred; (2) two pairs bred, but abandoned the site after egg-laying; (3) one pair possibly bred. **Yorkshire** Three sites: (1) two pairs bred, fledging two young; (2) one pair bred, fledging two young; (3) three pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: two pairs possibly bred. Although present from early April until mid July, with display recorded, no nests were built.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

21–34 pairs; at least 30 young fledged. Mean values in the previous ten years are 20 confirmed breeding pairs and 41 territories (1999–2008), so 2008 was an average year. However, more pairs were confirmed breeding than in 2007, when productivity was low because of wet weather during the critical months of June and July.

England, SW

Eleven territories occupied in three counties. Six pairs bred, fledging ten young.

England, SE

Seven territories occupied in three counties. Seven pairs bred, fledging ten young. There were also 2–3 non-breeding adults, not apparently attached to a territory, seen in the region.

England, E, C & N

Six territories occupied in four counties. Three pairs bred, fledging at least four young. There were perhaps as many as seven other birds reported from the breeding areas but these were not associated with territories.

Holling *et al.*

Wales

Seven territories occupied. Four pairs bred, and three were successful, fledging four young. Also at least two sites with just single birds reported.

Scotland

Two territories occupied in two recording areas. One pair bred, fledging two young. In addition, there was evidence of occupation of a site in a third area.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

A minimum of 994 pairs, but a realistic total would be in excess of 1,500 pairs. As suggested in previous reports, the numbers of Red Kites in England and Wales are now such that full monitoring of the population is no longer feasible and the figures presented here are minima for most counties. The situation in Scotland is described more accurately, but although the re-established population in the southwest (where breeding began only in 2003) is growing rapidly, persecution is continuing to restrain populations farther north. However, the latest re-establishment project, in North-east Scotland, had its first breeding pair in 2008, although no young were hatched. We are grateful to the Welsh Kite Trust for collating much of the data summarised here.

Smart *et al.* (2010) confirmed that the growth of the population in northern Scotland is being severely restricted by illegal killing. They compared the performance of two populations where equal numbers of young birds were released over the same period, as part of the initial phase of reintroducing the species, in Scotland (Black Isle, Highland) and England (Chilterns). While the population in the Chilterns has thrived, reaching approximately 320 breeding pairs by 2006, the Black Isle population has struggled, reaching just 41 pairs over the same period. This was much lower than expected, and the population in 2009 had still reached only 49 breeding pairs. Monitoring of both populations showed that production of successfully reared and fledged Red Kite chicks was very similar, indeed among the highest in Europe. Thus the low growth rate of the Black Isle population does not reflect food supply or poor breeding productivity. Instead, the study demonstrated that low survival rates of young birds in their first and second years of life is the main factor limiting population growth of the Scottish birds, and that illegal killing accounts almost entirely for their poor survival prospects. Most Red Kites in Scotland and England breed for the first time when two years old, so persecution is severely reducing the number of new recruits in the Black Isle population. In the absence of persecution, modelling suggests that the annual survival rate of young kites would have been high enough to allow the Black Isle population to grow at the same rate as that in the Chilterns and, by 2006, northern Scotland would have held over 300, rather than 41, breeding pairs. More encouragingly, if illegal killing was to be stopped, the population is likely to respond quickly, probably reaching 300 breeding pairs within ten years.

England A minimum of 295 pairs bred. However, the population in southern England, centred on the Chilterns and mainly in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, was believed to be 400–500 breeding pairs. The following lists give total number of pairs by county, although in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire these represent gross underestimates.

England, SW

Hampshire 8, Wiltshire 5.

England, SE

Bedfordshire 2, Berkshire no proved breeding but indications of a probable breeding pair, Buckinghamshire 49, Hertfordshire 1, Oxfordshire 25, Sussex 3.

England, E

Cambridgeshire 5, Lincolnshire 1, Norfolk probable breeding at two sites, Northamptonshire 95.

England, C

Herefordshire 1, Leicestershire & Rutland 3, Shropshire 7.

England, N

Durham 21, Northumberland 2, Yorkshire 67.

Wales A minimum of 566 pairs bred, but it is estimated that the total population in 2008 lay between 750 and 900 pairs, fledging over 600 young. The 2008 distribution of known breeding or territorial pairs by recording area was Breconshire 62, Caernarfonshire 3, Carmarthenshire 80, Ceredigion 208, Denbigh & Flint 2, East Glamorgan 2, Gower 13, Gwent 4, Meirionnydd 9, Montgomeryshire 55, Pembrokeshire 16 and Radnorshire 112.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Scotland 133 pairs bred.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway 31 pairs fledged at least 54 young.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One pair bred: a pair from the 2007 re-establishment scheme near Aberdeen laid eggs but the eggs failed to hatch. **Perth & Kinross (Tayside RSG)** 32 pairs fledged at least 44 young. **Upper Forth (Central Scotland RSG)** 23 pairs fledged at least 31 young.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 46 pairs fledged at least 81 young.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

35–44 pairs. The following summary was taken from the newsletter of the RSPB's Sea Eagle project team.

The 2008 breeding season was not as successful as 2006 and 2007. However, it was the third-best year on record in terms of number of chicks produced. In addition, two new pairs were located, bringing the total number of occupied territories to 44. The new pairs were located on the Outer Hebrides and in Wester Ross (Highland). As in 2007, 35 pairs laid eggs but in 2008 only 21 broods hatched; 20 pairs were successful, fledging 28 young.

A large proportion of the breeding failures occurred on the Outer Hebrides, where only two of 11 pairs bred successfully and this was the main reason why the number of chicks fledging was lower than in 2006 and 2007. The breeding failures there were attributed to poor weather during incubation.

Scotland, N & W

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

Highland 18 pairs bred, of which 11 fledged 16 young, and a further four territorial pairs.

Outer Hebrides Eight pairs bred, of which only two were successful, fledging four young, and a further three territorial pairs.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

374–392 breeding females/pairs. These figures indicate similar numbers and a comparable distribution to 2007, and indeed to the survey year of 2005, although it is likely that not all pairs are reported to county recorders in the core counties of eastern England and Kent. The population is likely to be in the order of 450 pairs.

England, SW

Isles of Scilly One pair bred, fledging two young. **Somerset** As in 2007, several females summered at one site but the only males were those passing through, and none lingered.

England, SE

Essex 15 pairs bred and one pair possibly bred. **Kent** An estimate of at least 90 breeding pairs was again given, although details of only six breeding pairs were received. **Sussex** One pair bred and one pair probably bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire 21 pairs fledged at least 16 young. **Lincolnshire** 90 pairs bred. **Norfolk** A minimum of 83 pairs bred, with a further two pairs probably breeding and one possible breeding pair. **Suffolk** At least 52 pairs bred and eight pairs possibly bred.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside Six pairs bred. **Northumberland** One pair probably bred. As in 2007, nest-building was reported at one site but the pair moved away. Two juveniles later in the season may have fledged locally. **Yorkshire** 11 pairs bred and one pair probably bred.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway An unpaired female frequented a suitable breeding area from May to September.

Scotland, Mid

Fife/Perth & Kinross Four pairs bred, fledging three young. **Moray & Nairn** One pair possibly bred: a male and female arrived in April but left the area in May. **North-east Scotland** One pair probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two females present, one seen carrying nest material on two dates, but no males recorded. **Orkney** One pair probably bred.

Holling *et al.*

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

362–501 monitored pairs fledged a minimum of 442 young. Displaying males with no signs of mates were recorded from a further three English counties and in several parts of Northern Ireland. It is unfortunate that only limited data were available from the important Isle of Man population, the size of which was as high as 57 territories in 2004.

| Hen Harrier | Occupied territories | Confirmed breeding pairs | Territories believed to fledge young | Min. no. young fledged |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| England, N | 24 | 23 | 9 | 29 |
| Cumbria | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Derbyshire | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lancashire & N Merseyside | 12 | 12 | 7 | 23 |
| Northumberland | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Isle of Man | 8 | 8 | n/a | n/a |
| Wales | 28 | 27 | 11 | 35 |
| Breconshire | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Caernarfonshire | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Denbigh & Flint | 6 | 6 | 6 | 21 |
| Meirionnydd | 7 | 7 | n/a | n/a |
| Montgomeryshire | 6 | 6 | 4 | 11 |
| Radnorshire | 7 | 7 | n/a | n/a |
| Scotland, S | 114 | 45 | 25 | 65 |
| Dumfries & Galloway RSG | 15 | 14 | 4 | 21 |
| Lothian & Borders RSG | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| S Strathclyde RSG (Ayrshire, Clyde, Clyde Islands) | 95 | 29 | 20 | 42 |
| Scotland, Mid | 77 | 56 | 25 | 76 |
| Central Scotland RSG | 8 | 5 | 3 | 12 |
| North-east Scotland RSG | 15 | 9 | 4 | 8 |
| Tayside RSG | 54 | 42 | 18 | 56 |
| Scotland, N & W | 221 | 197 | 97 | 227 |
| Argyll RSG | 61 | 51 | 32 | 91 |
| Highland RSG (incl. Caithness) | 50 | 45 | 23 | 64 |
| Orkney | 65 | 60 | 20 | 10 |
| Outer Hebrides (Uists only) | 45 | 41 | 22 | 62 |
| Northern Ireland | 37 | 14 | 7 | 10 |
| TOTALS | 501 | 362 | 174 | 442 |

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*



Phil Jones

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

12 sites: 11–16 pairs fledged a minimum of 14 young. The small English population continues to hold its own, though productivity in 2008 was the lowest since 2002. Although some eggs were lost to predators, several pairs relaid and went on to fledge young. One chick was lost to disease and another nest was deserted. One fieldworker commented that late-developing winter cereals forced birds

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

to nest in grass grown for silage or oil-seed rape, and success was lower in these crops.

England, S

Six sites: four pairs bred (two pairs each fledging three young), and five pairs possibly bred.

England, E

Lincolnshire Two sites: two pairs bred, and fledged one young each. Norfolk Four sites: five pairs bred, fledging six young.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

280–439 pairs. Numbers of monitored and reported pairs were similar to those of recent years, although it is believed that this species is widely under-recorded. In part, this is due to its secretive behaviour for much of the year, but also because it suffers from persecution (even though it has full protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981), as well as wilful or accidental disturbance of nesting sites, so observers are reluctant to share information. The best way to collect information on numbers is to look for displaying birds in the early spring. Regular presence at a site indicates that a territory is occupied and this information should be passed to county recorders so that it can be collated by the RBBP, in order to compile a more complete picture of numbers and trends across the UK.

Given the sensitivity attached to this species, Bird Atlas 2007–11 will not display maps at 10-km-square level. Fig. 7 shows the distribution of records submitted to the project for the three breeding seasons 2008–10, by 50-km grid squares.

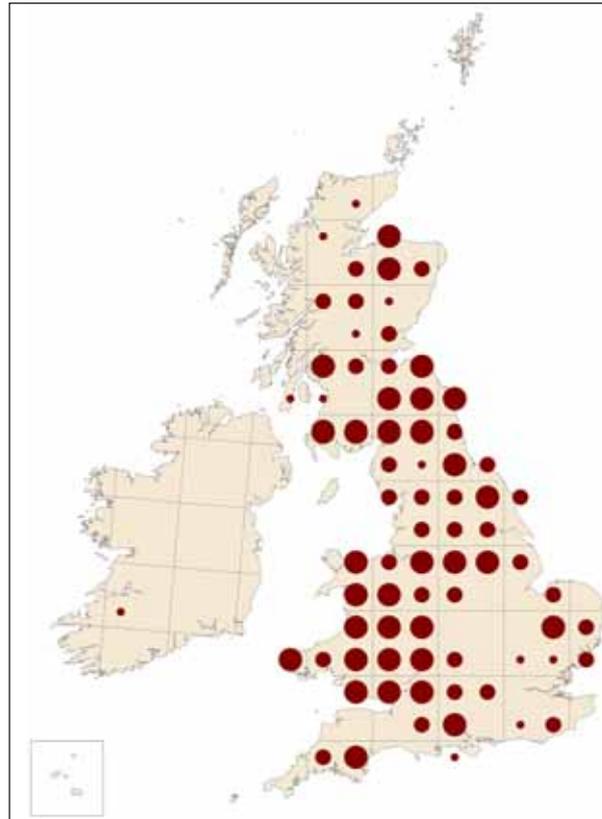


Fig. 7. The breeding distribution of Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* in Britain & Ireland based on data collected to date for Bird Atlas 2007–11. For this sensitive species, mapping at 50-km-square resolution protects the location of individual sites whilst still conveying the broad pattern of distribution. The three dot sizes indicate possible, probable and confirmed breeding. Map generated in July 2010.

| Northern Goshawk | Confirmed breeding pairs | Total pairs | England, SE | 0 | 6 |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|------------------|----|----|
| | | | Bedfordshire | 0 | 1 |
| | | | Buckinghamshire | 0 | 3 |
| | | | Kent | 0 | 1 |
| | | | Sussex | 0 | 1 |
| England, SW | 50 | 57 | England, E | 3 | 8 |
| Devon | 10 | 13 | Norfolk | 2 | 3 |
| Dorset | 1 | 1 | Northamptonshire | 0 | 2 |
| Gloucestershire | 26 | 27 | Suffolk | 1 | 3 |
| Hampshire | 10 | 10 | England, C | 38 | 65 |
| Somerset | 0 | 0 | Derbyshire | 13 | 20 |
| Wiltshire | 3 | 6 | | | |

Holling *et al.*

| Northern Goshawk <i>cont.</i> | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------|---------|
| | Confirmed breeding pairs | Total pairs | | |
| | | | Denbigh & Flint | 0 2 |
| | | | East Glamorgan | 4 23 |
| | | | Gower | n/a n/a |
| | | | Gwent | 16 19 |
| Herefordshire | 12 | 27 | Meirionnydd | 1 4 |
| Nottinghamshire | 3 | 7 | Montgomeryshire | 3 14 |
| Shropshire | 10 | 10 | Pembrokeshire | 0 30 |
| Staffordshire | 0 | 0 | Radnorshire | 24 27 |
| Warwickshire | 0 | 1 | Scotland, S | 57 57 |
| Worcestershire | n/a | n/a | Ayrshire | 0 0 |
| England, N | 47 | 71 | Borders | 34 34 |
| Cheshire & Wirral | 0 | 1 | Clyde | 1 1 |
| Cleveland | 0 | 5 | Dumfries & Galloway | 21 21 |
| Cumbria | 4 | 9 | Lothian | 1 1 |
| Durham | 0 | 5 | Scotland, Mid | 30 32 |
| Lancashire & N Merseyside | 1 | 3 | Fife | 0 1 |
| Northumberland | 26 | 26 | North-east Scotland | 30 31 |
| Yorkshire | 16 | 22 | Perth & Kinross | n/a n/a |
| Wales | 48 | 136 | Scotland, N & W | 1 1 |
| Breconshire | 0 | 12 | Highland | 1 1 |
| Caernarfonshire | 0 | 3 | Northern Ireland | 6 6 |
| Carmarthenshire | n/a | n/a | TOTALS | 280 439 |
| Ceredigion | 0 | 2 | | |

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. Data were available for a total of 271 home ranges, against the population of 443 pairs estimated following the 2003 national survey (Eaton *et al.* 2007a). The mean number of young fledged per monitored nest was 0.50, similar to that in recent years.

| Golden Eagle | Singles * | Probable breeding pairs | Confirmed breeding pairs | Total pairs | Successful pairs | Min. no. young fledged |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------------|
| England, N & Scotland, S | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Angus & Dundee | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| North-east Scotland (incl. E Moray) | 1 | 0 | 15 | 15 | 5 | 6 |
| Perth & Kinross | 1 | 2 | 12 | 14 | 6 | 7 |
| Upper Forth | 0 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 4 |
| Argyll | 3 | 6 | 55 | 61 | 34 | 36 |
| Highland (incl. W Moray & Nairn) | 17 | 15 | 74 | 89 | 40 | 46 |
| Outer Hebrides (Lewis & Harris) | 0 | 0 | 26 | 26 | 11 | 11 |
| Outer Hebrides (Uists) | 1 | 1 | 25 | 26 | 11 | 11 |
| TOTALS | 25 | 27 | 219 | 246 | 114 | 125 |

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

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

181–215 pairs. At least 312 young fledged from 151 successful breeding pairs. The excellent coverage in 2008 meant that, for the first time during this recolonisation period, over 200 pairs were recorded, a significant milestone in the Osprey's recovery; the total of over 300 young fledged is also a record for the modern era. Productivity was high in the more recently occupied parts of the range in southern Scotland and Wales, which bodes well for further consolidation and expansion.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland Two pairs bred and one non-breeding pair. Three young fledged from the one successful nest at Rutland Water. Up to four other birds summered in the county.

England, N

Cumbria One pair again fledged three young at Bassenthwaite Lake, and the male and female of a second pair present elsewhere from mid June were seen copulating. **Northumberland** One pair was seen displaying and attending a nest platform at Kielder Water.

England, elsewhere

Two non-breeding pairs.

Wales

Meirionnydd One pair fledged three young at Glaslyn. **Wales elsewhere** One pair seen displaying in the vicinity of an artificial nest, with a male present from late April and a female from late June.

Scotland, S

Borders Eight pairs bred, fledging 19 young, and one other territorial pair. **Dumfries & Galloway** One pair bred, fledging three young, a second pair on territory and three other possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee Seven pairs bred, fledging ten young, and three other territorial pairs. **North-east Scotland** 17 pairs bred, fledging 27 young, and three other territorial pairs. **Perth & Kinross** 42 pairs bred, fledging 69 young, and four other territorial pairs. **Upper Forth** 17 pairs bred, fledging 34 young, and two other territorial pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll 14 pairs bred, fledging 22 young, and one other territorial pair. **Highland/Moray & Nairn** 71 pairs bred, fledging 119 young, and at least ten other territorial pairs.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

391–458 pairs monitored; new national estimate of 1,160 pairs. A national survey of Merlins was undertaken in 2008 and, below, Mark Eaton describes the results of the survey. Although the figures in the table immediately below are not directly comparable with those from the national survey, they are presented here in familiar format because monitoring effort in recent years has been similar and these totals can thus be compared with those in previous reports. Note that they are based on sample monitoring areas only and the figures are known to be incomplete in some areas.

| Merlin | Territories occupied by pairs | Confirmed breeding pairs | Territories believed to fledge young | Min. no. young fledged |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| England, SW | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| England, C | 25 | 20 | 15 | 58 |
| Derbyshire | 21 | 19 | 14 | 56 |
| Shropshire | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Staffordshire | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| England, N | 145 | 114 | 82 | 284 |
| Cleveland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cumbria | 20 | 11 | 9 | 27 |
| Durham | 33 | 33 | 27 | 92 |
| Greater Manchester | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Lancashire & N Merseyside | 15 | 14 | 9 | 29 |
| Northumberland | 20 | 20 | 13 | 41 |
| Yorkshire | 53 | 35 | 24 | 95 |
| Wales | 28 | 9 | 7 | 21 |
| Breconshire | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Carmarthenshire | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Denbigh & Flint | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| East Glamorgan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Meirionnydd | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Montgomeryshire | 6 | 5 | 3 | 10 |

Holling *et al.*

| Merlin <i>cont.</i> | Territories occupied by pairs | Confirmed breeding pairs | Territories believed to fledge young | Min. no. young fledged |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Radnorshire | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Scotland, S | 51 | 50 | 29 | 93 |
| Dumfries & Galloway RSG | 11 | 11 | 5 | 15 |
| Lothian & Borders RSG | 28 | 27 | 20 | 65 |
| South Strathclyde RSG | 12 | 12 | 4 | 13 |
| Scotland, Mid | 82 | 79 | 21 | 56 |
| Central Scotland RSG | 5 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| North-east Scotland RSG | 33 | 31 | n/a | n/a |
| Tayside RSG | 44 | 43 | 20 | 55 |
| Scotland, N & W | 113 | 110 | 53 | 160 |
| Argyll | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Highland (including Caithness) | 38 | 38 | 17 | 44 |
| Orkney | 18 | 16 | 7 | 19 |
| Outer Hebrides | 37 | 37 | 14 | 42 |
| Shetland | 19 | 18 | 14 | 51 |
| Northern Ireland | 13 | 9 | 5 | 16 |
| TOTALS | 458 | 391 | 212 | 688 |

The first UK-wide survey of Merlins was conducted in 2008, 14 years since the 1993–94 British survey. In addition to extensive coverage of study areas by raptor study groups and other volunteers, RSPB fieldworkers covered a sample of 10-km squares across the UK, from which country and UK estimates have been extrapolated.

The survey produced an estimate of 1,160 breeding pairs (95% confidence limits 912–1,532) of Merlins in the UK, and 1,128 in Britain, with the latter suggesting a decline of 13% (not significant) since 1993–94. The additional table below presents a national breakdown. Although the power to detect spatial patterns of change is limited by the margin of error around estimates, the declines since the last survey appear to have been greatest in England with, for example, only a single territory left in southwest England.

| Merlin | No. of breeding pairs in 1993–94 | No. of breeding pairs in 2008 | Change in estimate (%) |
|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Scotland | 818 (635–1,100) | 733 (539–1,004) | -10 |
| England | 401 | 301 (175–566) | -25 |
| Wales | 81 | 92 (60–128) | 14 |
| Northern Ireland | n/a | 43 (23–72) | n/a |
| Britain | 1,291 (1,108–1,500) | 1,128 (874–1,509) | -13 |
| United Kingdom | n/a | 1,160 (912–1,532) | n/a |

Figures in parentheses are 95% confidence limits. England and Wales received full census coverage in 1993–94. All estimates of change are not statistically significant.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

279–1,142 pairs. The numbers of confirmed breeding pairs presented here largely reflect local monitoring effort rather than actual numbers present and hence are similar to those reported in recent years (five-year mean 248 confirmed breeding pairs). However, the 2008 figure for total pairs is the highest ever, the first time it has exceeded 1,000, although this is still only half the estimated UK population of c. 2,200 pairs (Clements 2001). The increase in the number of pairs reported is consistent across all regions, except Wales and Scotland. The higher numbers may be due to a continuing increase in the population, but may also reflect more careful assessment of numbers at a county level, as encouraged by the Panel (guidelines on estimating county popula-

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008



Dan Powell

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

tions of Hobby are available on the RBBP website under species information), aided by the generation of more records through Atlas fieldwork. Totals derived from estimates provided by county recorders are shown in the table here, except where marked *.

| Hobby | Confirmed breeding pairs | Total pairs | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|------------|--------------|
| | | | Northamptonshire | 3 | 12 |
| | | | Suffolk | 14 | 56 |
| | | | England, C | 66 | 160 |
| England, SW | 60 | 259 | Derbyshire | 35 | 35 |
| Avon | 3 | 10 | Herefordshire | 6 | 19 |
| Cornwall | 0 | 1* | Leicestershire & Rutland | 2 | 14 |
| Devon | 10 | 19 | Nottinghamshire | 6 | 6* |
| Dorset | 3 | 36 | Shropshire | 2 | 13 |
| Gloucestershire | 11 | 30 | Staffordshire | n/a | n/a |
| Hampshire | 9 | 71 | Warwickshire | 8 | 41 |
| Isle of Wight | 1 | 5 | West Midlands | 4 | 4 |
| Somerset | 4 | 20 | Worcestershire | 3 | 28 |
| Wiltshire | 19 | 67 | England, N | 18 | 42 |
| England, SE | 78 | 452 | Cheshire & Wirral | 14 | 21 |
| Bedfordshire | 1 | 2 | Greater Manchester | 0 | 7 |
| Berkshire | 1 | 12 | Lancashire & N Merseyside | 2 | 6 |
| Buckinghamshire | 2 | 18 | Yorkshire | 2 | 8 |
| Essex | 12 | 22 | Wales | 6 | 24 |
| Greater London | 2 | 2* | Breconshire | 1 | 8 |
| Hertfordshire | 8 | 104 | Carmarthenshire | 2 | 3 |
| Kent | 28 | 200 | Denbigh & Flint | 0 | 1 |
| Oxfordshire | 10 | 10* | East Glamorgan | 0 | 0 |
| Surrey | 8 | 34 | Gwent | 3 | 4 |
| Sussex | 6 | 48 | Montgomeryshire | 0 | 1 |
| England, E | 51 | 204 | Radnorshire | 0 | 7 |
| Cambridgeshire | 8 | 20 | Scotland, S | 0 | 1 |
| Lincolnshire | 0 | 80 | TOTALS | 279 | 1,142 |
| Norfolk | 26 | 36 | | | |

* These totals usually reflect actual nest counts and are unlikely to represent the number of pairs in the county.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

847–1,045 pairs. As with the reporting of many of the less-rare raptors, the numbers presented here largely reflect local monitoring effort rather than actual numbers present. The following table 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. Nevertheless, the increasing numbers of Peregrines is reflected in the total number of occupied territories, which exceeds 1,000 for the first time in a non-survey year. It is good to be able to report more meaningful numbers for Northern Ireland; the last time we had comparable figures was 2004.

Holling *et al.*

| Peregrine Falcon | Territories occupied by pairs | Confirmed breeding pairs | Territories believed to fledge young | Min. no. young fledged |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| England, SW | 166 | 144 | [86] | [160] |
| Avon | 11 | 8 | 7 | 20 |
| Cornwall | 16 | 13 | 13 | 32 |
| Devon | 69 | 69 | 40 | 93 |
| Dorset | 29 | 29 | 16 | n/a |
| Gloucestershire | 8 | 8 | 2 | 3 |
| Hampshire | 8 | 8 | 3 | 6 |
| Isle of Wight | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Isles of Scilly | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Somerset | 15 | 3 | n/a | n/a |
| Wiltshire | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| England, SE | 55 | 40 | [28] | [68] |
| Bedfordshire | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Berkshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Essex | 9 | 5 | n/a | n/a |
| Greater London | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Kent | 19 | 11 | 8 | 19 |
| Oxfordshire | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Surrey | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sussex | 22 | 21 | 19 | 45 |
| England, E | 7 | 4 | 4 | 11 |
| Cambridgeshire | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Lincolnshire | 3 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Norfolk | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Northamptonshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Suffolk | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| England, C | 93 | 84 | [49] | [107] |
| Derbyshire | 26 | 25 | 15 | 33 |
| Herefordshire | 15 | 12 | n/a | n/a |
| Leicestershire & Rutland | 6 | 6 | 6 | 16 |
| Nottinghamshire | 5 | 4 | 3 | 10 |
| Shropshire | 19 | 19 | 15 | 35 |
| Staffordshire | 9 | 9 | 6 | 7 |
| Warwickshire | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| West Midlands | 3 | 3 | n/a | n/a |
| Worcestershire | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| England, N | 168 | 149 | [86] | [191] |
| Cheshire & Wirral | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Cleveland | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Cumbria | 61 | 59 | 33 | 79 |
| Durham | 7 | 7 | 6 | 13 |
| Greater Manchester | 6 | 5 | 4 | 13 |
| Isle of Man | 12 | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| Lancashire & N Merseyside | 26 | 20 | n/a | n/a |
| Northumberland | 26 | 26 | 23 | 37 |
| Yorkshire | 26 | 22 | 14 | 33 |
| Wales | 149 | 101 | [82] | [120] |
| Anglesey | 6 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Breconshire | 16 | 7 | 4 | 7 |
| Caernarfonshire | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 |
| Carmarthenshire | 10 | 10 | 3 | 5 |
| Ceredigion | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Denbigh & Flint | 11 | 11 | 11 | 24 |
| East Glamorgan | 21 | 21 | 21 | 35 |
| Gower | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

| Peregrine Falcon <i>cont.</i> | Territories occupied by pairs | Confirmed breeding pairs | Territories believed to fledge young | Min. no. young fledged |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Gwent | 9 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Meirionnydd | 7 | 7 | n/a | n/a |
| Montgomeryshire | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Pembrokeshire | 42 | 37 | 37 | 38 |
| Radnorshire | 19 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Scotland, S | 150 | 131 | 82 | 204 |
| Dumfries & Galloway RSG | 55 | 50 | 31 | 65 |
| Lothian & Borders RSG | 61 | 50 | 35 | 101 |
| South Strathclyde RSG | 34 | 31 | 16 | 38 |
| Scotland, Mid | 127 | 98 | 76 | 159 |
| Central Scotland RSG | 24 | 17 | 16 | 35 |
| North-east Scotland RSG | 42 | 34 | 23 | 47 |
| Tayside RSG | 61 | 47 | 37 | 77 |
| Scotland, N & W | 60 | 44 | 32 | 66 |
| Argyll RSG | 22 | 16 | 12 | 23 |
| Fair Isle | 1 | 1 | n/a | n/a |
| Highland RSG | 13 | 13 | 9 | 20 |
| Orkney | 12 | 7 | 4 | 8 |
| Outer Hebrides | 11 | 6 | 6 | 13 |
| Shetland | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Northern Ireland | 70 | 52 | 49 | 120 |
| TOTALS | 1,045 | 847 | [574] | [1,206] |

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

320 sites: a minimum of 972 territories; 86 pairs confirmed breeding. In this, the third year of data, the total number of territories is a little lower than in 2006 and 2007, but 320 is the most sites logged. We encourage observers to record all observations during the breeding season to help county recorders estimate the numbers present at each site, and ultimately build a UK-wide list of breeding sites for this species.

| Water Rail | Sites | Territories | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| | | | Sussex | 13 | 23 |
| | | | England, E | 32 | 315 |
| | | | Cambridgeshire | 3 | 9 |
| England, SW | 46 | 132 | Norfolk | 15 | 60 |
| Avon | 1 | 2 | Northamptonshire | 3 | 3 |
| Cornwall | 3 | 3 | Suffolk | 11 | 243 |
| Devon | 6 | 10 | England, C | 32 | 68 |
| Dorset | 5 | 6 | Derbyshire | 3 | 3 |
| Hampshire | 20 | 61 | Herefordshire | 1 | 1 |
| Isle of Wight | 2 | 2 | Leicestershire & Rutland | 3 | 3 |
| Isles of Scilly | 1 | 1 | Nottinghamshire | 3 | 3 |
| Somerset | 6 | 43 | Shropshire | 1 | 1 |
| Wiltshire | 2 | 4 | Staffordshire | 4 | 32 |
| England, SE | 55 | 113 | Warwickshire | 9 | 14 |
| Bedfordshire | 5 | 8 | West Midlands | 3 | 3 |
| Berkshire | 5 | 7 | Worcestershire | 5 | 8 |
| Buckinghamshire | 2 | 2 | England, N | 69 | 132 |
| Essex | 2 | 20 | Cheshire & Wirral | 6 | 6 |
| Hertfordshire | 7 | 9 | Cleveland | 4 | 7 |
| Kent | 17 | 31 | Cumbria | 7 | 9 |
| Oxfordshire | 1 | 8 | Durham | 5 | 5 |
| Surrey | 3 | 5 | Greater Manchester | 12 | 39 |

Holling *et al.*

| <i>Water Rail cont.</i> | | | Scotland, S | 17 | 48 |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------|------------|
| | Sites | Territories | Ayrshire | 5 | 10 |
| Lancashire & N Merseyside | 4 | 7 | Borders | 7 | 14 |
| Northumberland | 17 | 17 | Clyde | 2 | 18 |
| Yorkshire | 14 | 42 | Dumfries & Galloway | 3 | 6 |
| Wales | 26 | 85 | Scotland, Mid | 13 | 37 |
| Anglesey | 4 | 37 | Angus & Dundee | 1 | 7 |
| Breconshire | 3 | 7 | Fife | 4 | 5 |
| Caernarfonshire | 3 | 12 | North-east Scotland | 7 | 18 |
| Carmarthenshire | 1 | 1 | Perth & Kinross | 1 | 7 |
| Ceredigion | 2 | 3 | Scotland, N & W | 29 | 41 |
| Denbigh & Flint | 4 | 4 | Argyll | 13 | 13 |
| East Glamorgan | 1 | 2 | Highland | 6 | 18 |
| Gower | n/a | n/a | Orkney | 7 | 7 |
| Gwent | 1 | 10 | Outer Hebrides | 2 | 2 |
| Pembrokeshire | 1 | 3 | Shetland | 1 | 1 |
| Radnorshire | 6 | 6 | Northern Ireland | 1 | 1 |
| | | | Co. Antrim | 1 | 1 |
| | | | TOTALS | 320 | 972 |

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*

Nine sites: 20 singing males. Nine is the lowest number of sites recording Spotted Cranes in a single year since 1996 (the ten-year mean is 18). It seems that the species was concentrated in rather few places in 2008 and over half the birds reported were at just two, albeit extensive, sites in Cambridgeshire and Yorkshire. Site records refer to single calling birds unless stated.

England, SE

Kent One site.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: up to four singing males, with the first heard on 13th June, and the maximum on 23rd June, after spring floods had receded. **Norfolk** One site: 24th April and 4th May. **Suffolk** Two sites: (1) one heard on 8th May only; (2) one on 10th and 13th–16th June but two on 17th–20th June.

England, N

Yorkshire One extensive site: up to seven calling males with records from late April to mid July.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two sites: two calling males at one and one at the other. **Highland** One site.

Corn Crane *Crex crex*

1,191 singing males. This was not a survey year so counts in the core areas of the Inner and Outer Hebrides may be a little low. The overall impression, however, is that although there is some redistribution between years, overall numbers are now stable. Tiree again posted the highest total, with over 400 calling birds counted.

England, SE

Berkshire One site: one singing male, 17th–27th June.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: 14 singing males. **Lincolnshire** One site: one singing male in May.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one singing male, 18th–27th June.

Scotland, S

Borders Two sites: two singing males on single dates. **Dumfries & Galloway** One site: one singing male present most of summer.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one singing male on 15th June only.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Total 740: Mainland 4, Coll 118, Colonsay & Oronsay 67, Iona 50, Islay 82, Mull 8, Staffa 1, Tiree 408,

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Treshnish Isles 2. **Highland** Total 29: Mainland 14, Canna 3, Eigg 0, Muck no count, Rum no count, Skye 12. **Orkney** Total 21: Burray/South Ronaldsay 2, East Mainland 2, Egilsay 4, North Ronaldsay 1, Papa Westray 4, Sanday 2, Stronsay 1, West Mainland 5. **Outer Hebrides** Total 374: Barra & Vatersay 70, Benbecula 25, Berneray 7, Harris 8, Lewis 68, Mingulay 2, North Uist 102, South Uist 92. **Shetland** Total 2.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: one singing male 27th May to at least 6th June. **Co. Fermanagh** Three sites: two singing males in May and one in May and June.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Six sites: 11–18 pairs. The number of sites and pairs reaches a new high since recolonisation began, in 1981. It has been a long, slow process, with limited breeding success in some years, but it now is beginning to look as though the Common Crane is once again an established part of the British avifauna (Boisseau & Yalden 1998). A UK Crane Working Group has been set up within the last 12 months and RBBP will be working with it to establish definitive data on this species. We hope to be able to give more information in the 2009 report.

England, E

Norfolk One extensive site: eight pairs bred, fledging four young. There were also three other pairs, two of which probably bred while the third was a non-breeding pair. **Suffolk** One site: two pairs laid eggs but no young fledged. One pair lost their chicks to a predator a few days after hatching; chicks from a second attempt were also predated, at about two weeks old. The second pair produced one chick but that was predated when about three weeks old.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one pair bred, fledging two young. A non-breeding pair was also present.

England, elsewhere

Three sites in three counties: three non-breeding pairs in potential breeding habitat.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

One site: one pair bred.

England, SW

Wiltshire One site: one female from the reintroduction scheme laid eggs that, as in 2007, were infertile.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

One site: one pair bred. This is only the seventh confirmed breeding attempt in the UK and became the subject of media attention when the RSPB set up viewing facilities under their 'Aren't Birds Brilliant?' scheme. However, like most other attempts since the first (and successful) nesting in Nottinghamshire in 1945, this one ended in failure. The only other successful attempt by this species was in Norfolk in 1987.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one pair bred. A pair arrived at Neumann's Flash on 25th April and subsequently laid eggs. Three eggs hatched on 28th May but two chicks were lost to predators on that date and the third chick was predated on 20th June.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

290. Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, Neumann's Flash, Cheshire & Wirral, April 2008. All three chicks from this breeding attempt were predated.

Holling *et al.***Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta***

79 sites: 1,299 pairs. The Avocet recolonised England in the 1940s, with an unsuccessful breeding attempt in Norfolk in 1941, and the first successful breeding in Essex in 1944 (Brown & Grice 2005). Since then, it has become a conservation success story and, with breeding recorded at 79 sites in 2008, is now present at more sites than ever before, including more than ten inland ones. The range is now extending north along the east coast with the first breeding for Cleveland in 2008, following the colonisation of Durham in 2006.

| Avocet | No. sites | Confirmed breeding pairs | Min. young fledged |
|---------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| England, SW | 2 | 17 | 19 |
| Hampshire | 2 | 17 | 19 |
| England, SE | 26 | 308 | 128 |
| Essex | 16 | 89 | 50* |
| Greater London | 1 | 1 | n/a |
| Kent | 5 | 173 | 60* |
| Sussex | 4 | 45 | 18* |
| England, E | 36 | 762 | 120 |
| Cambridgeshire | 6 | 21 | 36 |
| Lincolnshire | 8 | 161 | 30* |
| Norfolk | 14 | 380 | 43 |
| Suffolk | 8 | 200 | 11* |
| England, C | 2 | 5 | 10 |
| Nottinghamshire | 1 | 1 | n/a |
| Worcestershire | 1 | 4 | 10 |
| England, N | 12 | 200 | 60 |
| Cheshire & Wirral | 1 | 7 | 0 |
| Cleveland | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| Durham | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Lancashire & N Merseyside | 4 | 80 | 44 |
| Yorkshire | 5 | 110 | 7* |
| Wales | 1 | 7 | 12 |
| Gwent | 1 | 7 | 12 |
| TOTALS | 79 | 1,299 | 349* |

* Fledged totals not available from all sites.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Eight counties: 350 confirmed pairs fledged 171 young. Monitoring by RSPB, supported by Natural England, covers most of the population each year, amounting to 294 pairs in 2008. In addition, two estates in Suffolk held a further 56 pairs, bringing the national total to 350 breeding pairs, two more than in 2007. The total number of young fledged was down by 31%, however. This was the lowest number of young per fledged breeding pair since 1990 (see fig. 8) and is thought to reflect a combination of wet weather at crucial times in the spring and summer and the loss of set-aside land which has been providing feeding areas later in the season. The figures given in the table below are for proven breeding pairs only.

| Stone-curlew | Confirmed breeding pairs | Young fledged | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| | | | Oxfordshire | 4 | 3 |
| | | | One other county | 2 | 0 |
| England, SW | 99 | 33 | England, E | 238 | 133 |
| Hampshire | 15 | 2 | Cambridgeshire | 1 | 0 |
| Wiltshire | 84 | 31 | Norfolk | 140 | 77 |
| England, SE | 13 | 5 | Suffolk | 97 | 56 |
| Berkshire | 7 | 2 | TOTALS | 350 | 171 |

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

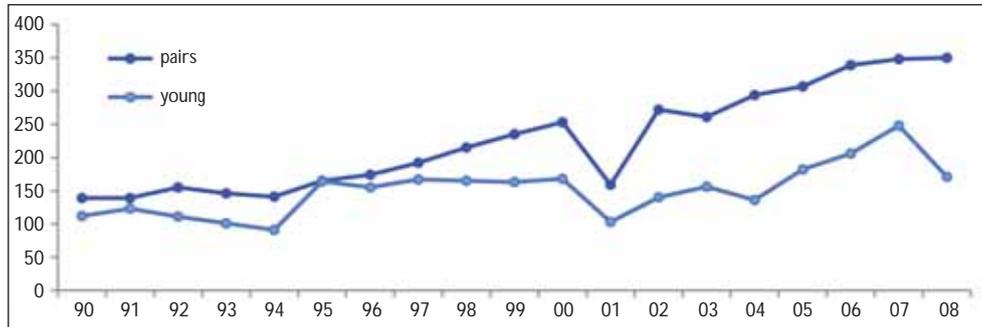


Fig. 8. Number of confirmed breeding Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicanus* and minimum number of young fledged in the UK, 1990–2008. Wet weather in summer and loss of set-aside habitat led to 2008 being the poorest year for productivity since 1990, when monitoring began. Note that owing to access problems in 2001 not all breeding pairs could be counted, and in both 2001 and 2002 the figures for the number of young fledged are also incomplete. Nevertheless, the trends over the last ten years, and in particular the poor productivity in 2008, are clearly visible.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

530 pairs. Revised figures for the 2007 Little Ringed Plover Survey revealed just over 900 confirmed and probable breeding pairs (Conway *et al.* in prep.). In contrast, 2008 saw incomplete coverage, especially in counties in southeast England, northern England and Wales, where numbers are higher than those reported here. In Scotland, the total of 22 pairs contrasts with the situation ten years previously: just three pairs bred in 1997, none in 1998, and one in both 1999 and 2000 (Forrester *et al.* 2007). This increase is in line with the predictions of Huntley *et al.* (2007) on the effects of climate change.

| Little Ringed Plover | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Confirmed and probable breeding pairs | |
| England, SW | 49 | Derbyshire |
| Devon | 2 | Herefordshire |
| Dorset | 2 | Leicestershire & Rutland |
| Gloucestershire | 6 | Nottinghamshire |
| Hampshire | 27 | Shropshire |
| Somerset | 2 | Staffordshire |
| Wiltshire | 10 | Warwickshire |
| England, SE | 83 | West Midlands |
| Bedfordshire | 8 | Worcestershire |
| Berkshire | 17 | England, N |
| Buckinghamshire | 3 | Cheshire & Wirral |
| Essex | 8 | Cleveland |
| Hertfordshire | 8 | Cumbria |
| Kent | 13 | Durham |
| Oxfordshire | 10 | Greater Manchester |
| Surrey | 5 | Lancashire & N Merseyside |
| Sussex | 11 | Northumberland |
| England, E | 51 | Yorkshire |
| Cambridgeshire | 16 | Wales |
| Lincolnshire | 7 | Breconshire |
| Norfolk | 18 | Carmarthenshire |
| Northamptonshire | 3 | Denbigh & Flint |
| Suffolk | 7 | East Glamorgan |
| England, C | 163 | Gower |
| | | Gwent |
| | | Meirionnydd |
| | | Montgomeryshire |
| | | Radnorshire |

Holling *et al.*

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------|-----|
| Little Ringed Plover <i>cont.</i> | | Scotland, Mid | 18 |
| | Confirmed and probable breeding pairs | Angus & Dundee | 2 |
| | | Fife | 7 |
| Scotland, S | 4 | Moray & Nairn | 1 |
| Borders | 3 | North-east Scotland | 8 |
| Clyde | 1 | TOTAL | 530 |

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

The main range of the Dotterel in the UK is the mountainous area of Highland, Moray & Nairn, North-east Scotland and Perth & Kinross. In 2008, data relating to around 30 breeding pairs in Highland and North-east Scotland were received. In Borders, five hilltops were visited in late May and early June and on one a trip of nine Dotterels was recorded, but the birds were absent on a follow-up visit. The following records relate to breeding or potential breeding away from the main range. The confirmed record from a remote hill in southern Scotland is especially noteworthy.

England, N

Cumbria One site: three males and three females were found in suitable breeding habitat but there was no further evidence of any nesting attempts.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair bred. A male with a brood of two small young was found.



Oliver Smart

291. Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Cairngorms, Highland, May 2008. A breeding record in 2008 from southern Scotland was notable, but the main population in the Scottish Highlands is poorly monitored. Results of repeat surveys of well-defined areas of suitable habitat would be especially useful in helping to keep track of population changes.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One site: one alarming bird.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: a single bird was reported in potential breeding habitat and alarm-calling briefly, but there was no further evidence of breeding.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Five sites: Up to 18 females and 61 males. Large leks of birds in northern England promise much but no evidence of any breeding attempts was noted. No leks were recorded in Cambridgeshire in 2008, although up to 40 birds were present in April 2007.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside Two sites: (1) up to seven males and five females at a lek in early May, with mating observed and three males and a female still there on 9th June; (2) a male and female in early May. **Yorkshire** One site: up to 54 birds including 46 males were reported at a lek.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: up to six lekking males and two females were present in mid May and early June.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: two females in June with one male and one female lekking on 9th June.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

14 sites: 59–66 pairs. Having become extinct as a regular breeder during the eighteenth century, the Black-tailed Godwit bred only sporadically in England during the first part of the nineteenth. The recolonisation of England began when regular nesting recommenced in 1952, and up to 65 pairs were breeding in 1972 (Brown & Grice 2005). In Scotland, the first confirmed breeding record was as recently as 1946 (Caithness) and the colonisation of northern parts of the UK by the race *islandica* began with the establishment of regular breeding populations in Shetland in 1949 and Orkney in 1973 (Forrester *et al.* 2007); this in turn reflected increases in core Icelandic breeding areas (Stroud *et al.* 2004). Since 1973, when the Panel first collected data, overall numbers in the UK have remained stable, with a 35-year mean of 14 sites (range 5–24) and 43 confirmed pairs (20–72), with most comprising birds of the nominate race nesting mainly in eastern England.

Fig. 9 shows the trends of the two races separately and reinforces the importance of recording trends at the level of populations or races. The numbers of nominate *limosa* in the UK fluctuated dramatically in the 1980s but since the early 1990s have steadily recovered (albeit to levels that are historically depleted), while the *islandica* story is one of gradual colonisation. The recovery of the *limosa* population in the UK is not reflected in Europe, where declining numbers resulted in the formal agreement of an International Single Species Action Plan (Jensen *et al.* 2008) by the Contracting Parties to the African-Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement.

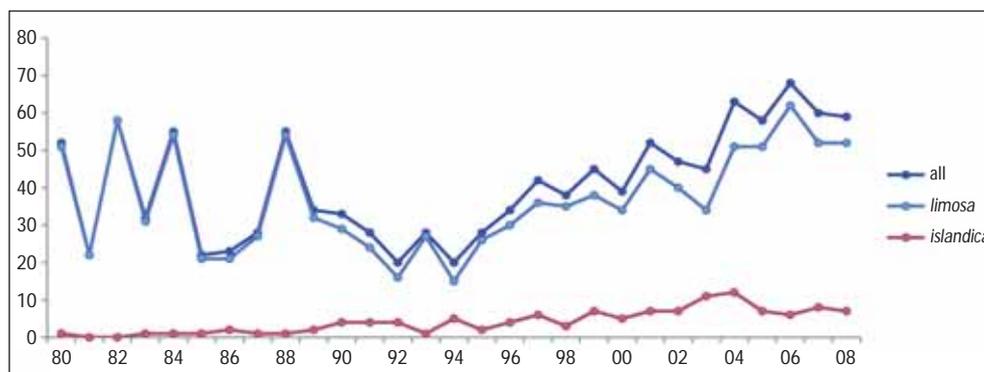


Fig. 9. The contrasting population trends between the two races of Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* breeding in the UK, 1980–2008.

Holling *et al.*

L. l. limosa 52–57 pairs

England, SW

One site: one pair bred, but the nest was washed out in summer floods.

England, SE

Kent Two sites: (1) four pairs bred, all failed; (2) three pairs bred, all failed.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: 40 pairs fledged 34 young. **Norfolk** One site: three pairs bred, but all failed owing to flooding and predation of young; also two displaying males which did not breed. **Suffolk** One extensive site: a single male was seen displaying at two coastal sites from March to at least mid June.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: one pair bred. Two males and a female were present, and made two nesting attempts, but although four young hatched from the second attempt, none fledged. **Yorkshire** One site: one pair probably bred. They were thought to be incubating in April but the site was flooded out and the attempt failed.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair probably bred. Two birds summered and although they were not thought to have bred, the occurrence of two small juveniles in early September suggests that a brood might have been reared locally. These birds were not assigned to race but are assumed to have been *limosa*.

L. l. islandica 7–9 pairs

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one displaying bird was present in mid May.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: four pairs bred with at least two being successful. **Shetland** Three sites: three pairs bred and one pair probably bred; at least two young fledged.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Four counties: 6–39 pairs. This is a very poor total, partly a reflection of limited surveying of the main population in Shetland (although, as described in the 2007 report, there has been a substantial decline there in the last 25 years). Atlas fieldwork in Shetland provided a wider spread of records but the full extent of the decline will be clearer when the results of a Whimbrel survey conducted in 2009 are available.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness One site: one pair possibly bred. **Orkney** One site: five pairs bred. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one pair possibly bred. **Shetland** Just 16 AOTs (including one confirmed pair) were recorded in a survey of core areas on Unst and two pairs in a sample area of Yell. On Mainland, Fetlar and Out Skerries, Atlas records indicate probable or confirmed breeding in 14 tetrads.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Four sites: 1–4 pairs. One pair was again confirmed nesting in the traditional area of Highland, while the three other records stem from Atlas fieldwork in the area. Breeding in Scotland has remained at this low level since the first confirmed breeding, in 1959 (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one pair bred at a usual site; elsewhere, one bird was seen on four occasions in suitable habitat throughout May and June and into early July and may have been part of a breeding pair, while there were single-date records of possible breeders at two other sites.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

75 sites: 18–107 pairs. These are the highest figures published by the Panel, reflecting additional reporting by a small number of researchers licensed to study this Schedule 1 species at the nest, but they still comprise just a sample of the estimated population of 780–1,420 pairs (Hancock *et al.* 1997). We are keen to hear from anyone who might be willing to study Greenshanks in defined areas to help the Panel with population monitoring. A Schedule 1 licence would be required if the study involved work at or close to nests.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair probably bred. **Caithness** Six sites: one pair bred and 22 pairs probably bred.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Highland 46 sites: 15 pairs bred, 35 pairs probably bred and nine pairs possibly bred. **Outer Hebrides** 15 sites: two pairs bred, six pairs probably bred and nine pairs possibly bred. **Shetland** Seven sites: seven pairs possibly bred.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Nine sites: 1–19 pairs. The full census reported in Holling *et al.* (2010) found 11–27 pairs at 20 sites.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness One site: one pair probably bred. **Highland** Seven sites: one pair bred, 13 pairs probably bred and three pairs possibly bred. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one pair possibly bred.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Nine sites: 17 breeding males. This is another low total, similar to the position in 2007.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides Two sites: two apparently breeding males. **Shetland** Seven sites: 15 apparently breeding males.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

37 sites: 543–592 pairs/territories, including one mixed pair. Surprisingly perhaps, there were fewer colonies reported in 2008 than 2007 (although the number is the second-highest ever) but the number of pairs is a new record. The breeding population is still concentrated along the south coast of England between Dorset and Kent (87% of the total).

The first confirmed breeding record was in 1968 in Hampshire, which until recently remained the most important county for the species (Kent has now taken on that mantle). Fig. 5 in the Panel's report for 2003–04 (Holling *et al.* 2007a) shows the phenomenal increase in the breeding population since the early 1970s, and especially since the mid 1990s.

England, SW

Dorset One site: 87 nests. **Hampshire** Three sites: (1) 86 pairs at Langstone Harbour fledged 41 young; (2) 26 pairs bred with only one young reported; (3) 23 pairs on territory early in the season but only two pairs bred after the licensed collection of Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* eggs, with one young possibly reared at this site. **Isle of Wight** One site: seven pairs present but only two pairs bred, fledging four young.

England, SE

Essex Three sites: 16 pairs bred. **Kent** Four sites: (1) 76 pairs bred; (2) 74 pairs bred; (3) 60 pairs bred; (4) one pair bred. **Sussex** Three sites: (1) 63 pairs bred with at least 39 young fledged; (2) nine pairs bred with at least nine young fledging; (3) up to five pairs displaying in April did not stay to breed.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: a pair was present for a week in April but not subsequently. **Norfolk** Five sites: (1) five pairs fledged one young; (2) three pairs fledged five young; (3) one pair bred and one pair probably bred; (4)–(5) one pair present at each site but no evidence of breeding. **Suffolk** Two sites: (1) six pairs bred with at least five large young seen, and up to nine other pairs present; (2) two pairs bred but no young reared.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland One site: a pair of 2nd-summer birds was noted displaying, but were present only in April and July. **Staffordshire** One site: two pairs bred. One of these fledged two young and the other laid eggs that did not hatch. This is the first successful breeding in the county.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral Two sites: (1) two pairs bred with two young seen in nests; (2) one pair on territory did not lay eggs. **Cumbria** One site: two pairs bred but outcome was not known. **Greater Manchester** One site: one mixed pair (with Black-headed Gull) hatched one young. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Three sites: 14 pairs bred. **Yorkshire** One site: two 2nd-summer birds displaying and copulating in April and present into May but did not nest.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Two sites: at each a pair consisting of one adult and one 2nd-summer bird was seen displaying during April but did not nest.

Holling *et al.*

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: two pairs fledged two young. **Co. Down** One site: one pair (an adult and a 2nd-summer) bred but although eggs were laid they did not hatch.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Two sites: one pair and four mixed pairs. Unlike the previous species, this one shows little sign of expansion. Five 'pairs' is the most recorded since breeding was first recorded (in 1995), but as has often been the case, most are actually teamed up with either Lesser Black-backed *L. fuscus* or Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, rather than a bird of the same species.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair bred. Two young hatched and one fledged. **Hampshire** One extensive site: four mixed pairs bred. Two birds were paired with Lesser Black-backed Gulls and two with Herring Gulls. All nests were in rooftop colonies, but not all at the same one. Eight young from these mixed pairings hatched and six fledged.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Minimum of 1,562 pairs at 64 colonies. This figure is almost identical to the ten-year mean of 1,565 pairs. The following summary was compiled by Sabine Schmitt, RSPB.

With May 2008 being warmer and drier than average, hopes were high for a successful breeding season but another wet and windy summer depressed productivity at most UK colonies. Inclement

| Little Tern | No. sites | Confirmed breeding pairs | Min. young fledged |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| England, SW | 10 | 100 | 10 |
| Dorset | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| Hampshire | 8 | 90 | 10 |
| Isle of Wight | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| England, SE | 10 | 104 | [15] |
| Essex | 5 | 80 | 15 |
| Kent | 2 | 18 | n/a |
| Sussex | 3 | 6 | n/a |
| England, E | 14 | 887 | 482 |
| Lincolnshire | 2 | 60 | 2 |
| Norfolk | 10 | 784 | 447 |
| Suffolk | 2 | 43 | 33 |
| England, N | 7 | 218 | 98 |
| Cleveland | 2 | 64 | 67 |
| Cumbria | 1 | 64 | 15 |
| Isle of Man | 1 | 9 | 13 |
| Northumberland | 2 | 51 | 2 |
| Yorkshire | 1 | 30 | 1 |
| Wales | 1 | 105 | 104 |
| Denbigh & Flint | 1 | 105 | 104 |
| Scotland, S | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Ayrshire | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Scotland, Mid | 3 | 53 | 28 |
| Angus & Dundee | 1 | 20 | 17 |
| Moray & Nairn | 1 | 12 | 0 |
| North-east Scotland | 1 | 21 | 11 |
| Scotland, N & W | 18 | 95 | [40] |
| Argyll | 11 | 60 | 39 |
| Caithness | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| Highland | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Orkney | 2 | 10 | 1 |
| Outer Hebrides | 3 | 18 | n/a |
| TOTALS | 64 | 1,562 | 777 |

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

weather conditions were exacerbated by high predation levels at many sites but food availability at most of the larger colonies was good, resulting in a more successful season than in 2007.

In western Scotland, breeding success was high on Tiree, whereas on the neighbouring island of Coll most of the birds present did not settle. Productivity in the east of Scotland was the highest there for nine years (0.61 chicks per pair). In contrast, northeast England had its worst season since 2004, although the number of breeding pairs remained stable. Food shortages affected sites in the north of that region, while the weather and predation affected productivity at other colonies. The only success story in northeast England was a colony in Cleveland, where one chick per pair fledged; all other sites in the region combined fledged very few young. In northwest England, a long-established colony in Cumbria was abandoned, probably because of the presence of large gulls: the terns relocated to a nearby island, where at least 15 young fledged from 64 pairs.

Colonies in eastern England fared better: Scolt Head (Norfolk) had a highly successful season and, for the first time in four years, a good number of young fledged at Minsmere (Suffolk). However, the UK's largest colony, at Great Yarmouth (Norfolk), fledged a disappointing 0.5 chicks per pair. It was one of the worst seasons on record for southeast England, where the number of breeding pairs has more than halved since 2001. In 2008, a total of 104 pairs raised only 15 chicks to fledging. At Rye Harbour (East Sussex), no Little Terns nested for only the second time since 1970. In contrast, the colony at Gronant (North Wales) was very productive for a third consecutive season.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Four sites: 76 pairs fledged 49 young. The steady decline in recent years continues, but the overall total is largely determined by the number of pairs nesting at the main colony on Coquet Island.

England, S

Hampshire A single bird in a mixed tern colony was recorded on seven dates between 15th May and 8th July but no breeding attempt was made.

England, N

Northumberland Coquet Island: 71 pairs raised at least 45 large young.

Scotland, Mid

Fife One site: two pairs fledged one young.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: three pairs fledged three young.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

One site: one bird. Ten years have now passed since the last confirmed breeding record. Despite improved coverage of some remote parts of highland Scotland during Atlas fieldwork, there is no recent evidence to suggest that Wrynecks are now nesting in the UK. This is particularly disappointing given that the species was identified as a priority for action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan in 1998.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: two records of what may have been the same bird on two dates in June.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Four sites: 2–8 pairs. Although the maximum number of pairs reported here is higher than in recent years, two of these probably relate to passage birds and breeding was recorded at only one site.

England, SE

Kent One site: one singing male and a second (unsexed) bird in late May.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair possibly bred, with at least one male present. **Norfolk** No breeding records for the second year in a row. **Suffolk** One site: two pairs bred and three pairs possibly bred.

Wales

East Glamorgan One site: one calling bird on two days in June.

Holling et al.**Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio***

Three sites: four unpaired males and one other single bird. After successful breeding in 2005 and 2006, then two unsuccessful attempts by the same pair in 2007, no birds returned to Wales in 2008; and, despite recent instances of successful breeding in Scotland, there was only a single bird recorded there this year.

England, SW

One site: three males apparently holding territory in suitable breeding habitat. The first two were noted from 22nd May, with three on 25th–29th and two remaining to 20th June. They were noted singing and performing display flights but no females were seen.

England, E

Norfolk One site: a male was present from 16th June to 31st July.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one bird recorded on four dates in June.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax*

278–442 pairs. These figures include all monitored pairs in the UK. Although only 31 pairs were monitored on the Isle of Man (where 37 pairs were recorded in 2005), the increasing population is now thought to number around 160 pairs. Single birds were also recorded in the breeding season from Lancashire & N Merseyside and Dumfries & Galloway.

| Red-billed Chough | Confirmed breeding pairs | Total pairs | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-----|-----|
| | | | Gower | 4 | 5 |
| | | | Meirionnydd | 18 | 20 |
| England | 2 | 3 | Montgomeryshire | 0 | 1 |
| Cornwall | 2 | 3 | Pembrokeshire | 67 | 73 |
| Isle of Man | 31 | 160* | Scotland | 45 | 60 |
| Wales | 199 | 218 | Argyll: Colonsay & Oronsay | 19 | 20 |
| Anglesey | 24 | 25 | Argyll: Islay | 26 | 40 |
| Caernarfonshire | 64 | 68 | Northern Ireland | 1 | 1 |
| Ceredigion | 19 | 22 | Co. Antrim | 1 | 1 |
| Denbigh & Flint | 3 | 3 | TOTALS | 278 | 442 |
| East Glamorgan | 0 | 1 | * estimated total | | |

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

25–584 territories or singing males. After a doubling of the number of territories reported between 2006 and 2007, slightly fewer were reported in 2008, but the figures depend heavily on targeted effort by dedicated individuals in key areas, perhaps in particular Sussex where 179 territories were identified in 2007 (cf. 103 in 2008). New sites in Cleveland and Herefordshire and records from Cambridgeshire (where single singing birds were reported in 2003, 2005 and 2006) and Warwickshire (where a pair bred in 2005) hint at some expansion of range.

In compiling these totals, records of singing males as well as indications of territory through repeated observations are treated as equal, even though many reports relate to single sightings only (often because follow-up visits are not possible). This perhaps exaggerates the totals but gives a clearer picture of overall distribution.

England, SW

Gloucestershire Five singing males. **Hampshire** Six pairs bred, and a further 180 territories or singing males were identified. One extensive site (New Forest) held 112 territories. **Somerset** Six singing males. **Wiltshire** One pair bred and a further 29 territories or singing males.

England, SE

Bedfordshire Two pairs bred and a further four singing males. **Berkshire** Four pairs bred and a further 70 singing males. **Buckinghamshire** Two territories. **Essex** Two pairs probably bred and a further five singing males. **Hertfordshire** 11 territories or singing males. **Oxfordshire** Two territories. **Surrey** Eight territories or singing males. **Sussex** 103 territories or singing males.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Four singing males. **Norfolk** Five pairs bred, and a further 69 territories or singing males.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Suffolk 51 territories or singing males.

England, C

Derbyshire Two pairs bred, and a further four territories or singing males. **Herefordshire** One pair bred.

Warwickshire One singing male.

England, N

Cleveland One singing male in late May was unusual since Firecrest has not yet bred in Cleveland.

Wales

Breconshire Two singing males. **Radnorshire** Four pairs bred.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

At least 61 sites: a minimum of 589 pairs. The number of birds is close to the five-year mean of 586 pairs, and comparison with the 2007 report shows a remarkable stability in numbers, or at least reporting. It is difficult to count breeding pairs precisely, which is why the total given combines confirmed and probable breeding pairs. The increase in the number of sites reflects improved reporting from Kent and Norfolk.

| Bearded Tit | Minimum no. sites | Confirmed and probable breeding pairs | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| | | | Norfolk | 18 | 113 |
| | | | Suffolk | 7 | 229 |
| England, SW | 7 | 28 | England, N | 3 | 131 |
| Dorset | 3 | 14 | Lancashire & N Merseyside | 1 | 18 |
| Hampshire | 3 | 11 | Yorkshire | 2 | 113 |
| Somerset | 1 | 3 | Wales | 1 | 4 |
| England, SE | 21 | 73 | Gwent | 1 | 4 |
| Essex | 5 | 14 | Scotland, Mid | 2 | 6 |
| Kent | 13 | 50 | Moray & Nairn | 1 | 1 |
| Sussex | 3 | 9 | Perth & Kinross | 1 | 5 |
| England, E | 27 | 347 | TOTALS | 61 | 589 |
| Cambridgeshire | 2 | 5 | | | |



Graham Catley

292. Juvenile Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, Lincolnshire, July 2008. Given their reedbed nesting habitat, providing proof of breeding for Bearded Tit is largely based on observations of fledged juveniles. Birdwatchers are encouraged to submit sightings of recently fledged juveniles to recorders, but breeding can be confirmed at that site only if it is certain that the young were fledged there. The RBBP combines the totals of confirmed and probable breeding pairs to produce the annual population estimate.

Holling *et al.*

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

1,143 territories. Assessment of the Wood Lark population is only really possible when a full survey is organised; the last time this happened, in 2006, 1,771 territories were counted and a population estimate of 3,064 territories derived (Conway *et al.* 2009).

| Wood Lark | Singing males/ territories | Sussex | 78 |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| | | England, E | 467 |
| England, SW | 380 | Lincolnshire | 12 |
| Devon | 7 | Norfolk | 206 |
| Dorset | 36 | Suffolk | 249 |
| Gloucestershire | 1 | England, C | 37 |
| Hampshire | 325 | Derbyshire | 1 |
| Wiltshire | 11 | Nottinghamshire | 18 |
| England, SE | 240 | Staffordshire | 18 |
| Bedfordshire | 1 | England, N | 19 |
| Berkshire | 44 | Yorkshire | 19 |
| Surrey | 117 | TOTAL | 1,143 |

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*



Simon Gillings

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

2,257 singing males or territories. Cetti's Warbler nested for the first time in the UK in Kent, probably in 1972 and definitely in 1973, the year that the RBBP first presented an annual report of rare breeding birds (Sharrock *et al.* 1975; Brown & Grice 2005). The colonisation of the UK followed a northwards expansion across Europe from the Mediterranean that began during the first half of the last century. Since then, the population has risen pretty consistently, passing 100 singing males as early as 1977, then 500 in 1996, 1,000 in 2003, and 2,000 in 2007 (see fig. 10). This is a success story to rival that of the Little Egret. Notable among the 2008 data was the first breeding record for Bedfordshire.

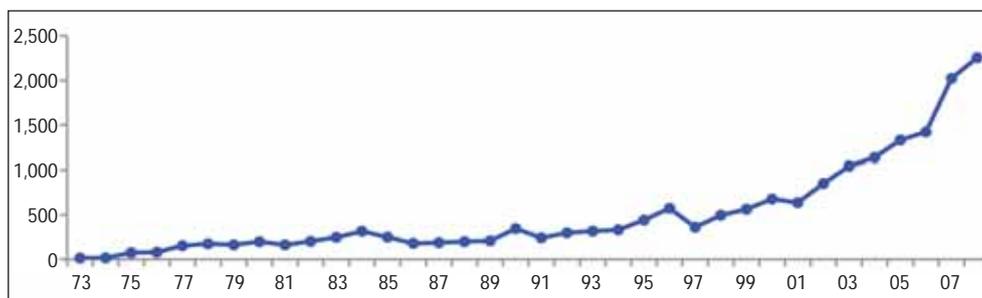


Fig. 10. Number of singing males/territories of Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* in the UK, 1973–2008. Population growth was moderate until the start of the present decade, when it began to climb more dramatically.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Cetti's Warbler | Singing males/ territories | Northamptonshire | 19 |
| | | Suffolk | 178 |
| England, SW | 752 | England, C | 34 |
| Avon | 53 | Derbyshire | 0 |
| Cornwall | 5 | Leicestershire & Rutland | 2 |
| Devon | 85 | Nottinghamshire | 0 |
| Dorset | 100 | Shropshire | 1 |
| Gloucestershire | 19 | Staffordshire | 2 |
| Hampshire | 161* | Warwickshire | 19 |
| Isle of Wight | 29 | Worcestershire | 10 |
| Somerset | 270** | England, N | 2 |
| Wiltshire | 30 | Cheshire & Wirral | 1 |
| England, SE | 760 | Greater Manchester | 1 |
| Bedfordshire | 1 | Wales | 237 |
| Berkshire | 48 | Anglesey | 8 |
| Buckinghamshire | 4 | Breconshire | 2 |
| Essex | 121 | Caernarfonshire | 1 |
| Greater London | 1 | Carmarthenshire | 45 |
| Hertfordshire | 15 | Ceredigion | 0 |
| Kent | 388** | East Glamorgan | 21 |
| Oxfordshire | 14 | Gower | 49 |
| Sussex | 168 | Gwent | 105 |
| England, E | 472 | Meirionnydd | 0 |
| Cambridgeshire | 35 | Pembrokeshire | 6 |
| Lincolnshire | 1 | TOTAL | 2,257 |
| Norfolk | 239 | | |

* Although 161 territories were counted, the county recorder provided an estimate of over 200.
 ** These figures are based on 2007 figures.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

2,081 territories. This compares with an estimated 3,214 territories in England and Wales in 2006 during the last full survey (Wotton *et al.* 2009). Note that a survey in 2008 of sites in Wales located 79 territories (Green *et al.* 2010) but the county totals shown here in square brackets are those figures submitted directly to us. Counts marked with an asterisk are thought to be incomplete and therefore represent minima, but the counts for Ceredigion, Gloucestershire, Radnorshire and Yorkshire refer to possible breeding only, with birds being recorded for a limited period only (in Gloucestershire), or to single birds present in the breeding season. In Yorkshire, for example, the record refers to an unmated male present from May to August, but it is included to document the potential northwards range expansion (this individual and the one in Ceredigion were the first records of the species in those counties).

| | | | |
|------------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Dartford Warbler | Total | Norfolk | 2 |
| England, SW | 1,259 | Suffolk | 107 |
| Cornwall | 10 | England, C | 12 |
| Devon | 87* | Staffordshire | 4 |
| Dorset | 295* | West Midlands | 8 |
| Gloucestershire | 2 | England, N | 1 |
| Hampshire | 693 | Yorkshire | 1 |
| Isle of Wight | 12 | Wales | 79 |
| Somerset | 160 | Anglesey | [4] |
| England, SE | 621 | Ceredigion | [1] |
| Berkshire | 8* | East Glamorgan | [14] |
| Surrey | 515 | Gower | [20] |
| Sussex | 98 | Pembrokeshire | [8] |
| England, E | 109 | Radnorshire | [1] |
| | | TOTAL | 2,081 |

Holling *et al.***River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis***

Phil Jones

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*

One site: one singing male. River Warbler first appeared in these reports in 1984 (Norfolk), while in 1995 (Cambridgeshire and Greater Manchester) and 1996 (Northumberland and Staffordshire) there were two separate singing birds. This is the first time the species has appeared in this report since 1998. Breeding has never been confirmed in the UK (and proving it would be difficult as males generally cease singing when paired). The nearest regular breeding areas are in southern Sweden and Germany.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: one singing male from 8th to 17th June.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

One site: one singing male. In Norfolk, a singing bird was recorded on 9th and 10th May but not subsequently. Consequently, one (or perhaps two) in Kent was the only one to qualify for this report; the short duration of the song periods does not suggest that breeding took place.

England, SE

Kent One site: one singing male from 2nd to 9th June and (it or another bird) from 2nd to 10th July. Note that these records have not been submitted to BBRC for verification.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

One site: one singing male. Even though Melodious Warblers breed in northern France, the species remains just a scarce passage migrant in the UK, recorded especially in the early autumn on the south coast. This species appeared in the RBBP reports of 1989 and 2000 but both of those records were of single-day birds that would not satisfy our current criteria for inclusion. Another record, from 2003, not submitted to RBBP at the time, is more relevant: a singing bird was present on 1st–8th July in County Durham. That bird and the 2008 record given below thus constitute the only hint of breeding by Melodious Warbler in the UK to date.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: one singing male on 7th–21st May. The bird was trapped on the last date and not seen subsequently.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Seven sites: 2–9 pairs. This is a somewhat more encouraging picture than that for 2007, when there were records from just three sites. Nonetheless, it appears that the species is no longer able to maintain a toehold in Kent. In fact, since the breeding records in Shetland and Yorkshire, together with the potential breeding attempt in Sussex, are all from coastal sites, one could argue that Marsh Warbler is becoming an opportunistic breeder in the UK. With these and other recent records, it may be worth paying particular attention to singing birds in coastal scrub along the south and east coasts of Britain.

England, SE

Kent One site: one singing male recorded for over a week.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Sussex Two sites: two singing males. At one of these sites a juvenile trapped at the end of August may have fledged locally.

[England, E](#)

Norfolk One site: one singing male present from 30th May to 5th June. **Suffolk** One site: a female with a brood patch was trapped on 17th June, indicating at least probable breeding in the area.

[England, N](#)

Yorkshire One site: one pair bred, fledging at least three young, one pair probably bred and a further singing male was thought to be unpaired.

[Scotland, N & W](#)

Shetland One site: one pair bred. A male was present from 11th June and in early August a pair was seen feeding two recently fledged young.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Two sites: two singing males. Only records where birds remain at a site for over a week are included and yet again the only evidence of occupation for this species is singing males.

[England, E](#)

Suffolk Two sites: (1) one singing male on 11th May and 8th–9th June was believed to be the same bird; (2) one singing male on 17th–18th May and 29th–30th May was also thought to refer to just one bird.

Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*

St Kilda Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*

These two races were added to the RBBP list in 2008, but only data on *fridariensis* were available. The population of this vulnerable race is monitored annually and in 2008 it was estimated to be 20–24 territories. At present there is no monitoring of *hirtensis* populations, but a partial survey took place in 2009 and details of that will be in the next report. Historically, full counts of the main island of Hirta occurred in 1957 (117 territories), 1990 (145–157) and 1993 (113–117) (National Trust for Scotland data).

Forrester *et al.* (2007) considered the population of the St Kilda Wren to be in the order of 230–250 breeding pairs, while the Fair Isle Wren is much scarcer, with an estimated 25–30 breeding pairs only.



Mark Breaks

293. Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*, Fair Isle, May 2008. In 2008, the population of the distinctive Fair Isle race of the Wren was only 20–24 territories, making it one of the rarest regularly breeding passerines now monitored by RBBP.

Holling *et al.*

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

7 sites: 1–7 pairs. Fieldfares are renowned for their fluctuating breeding numbers (see fig. 4 in Holling *et al.* 2009) and, following just a single breeding pair in 2007, there were seven potential breeding records in 2008. These were spread widely across Scotland, as well as in northern England and North Wales, but the only confirmed breeding was in Shetland, where one pair laid eggs but failed to rear any young. Two records of single, one-day birds in late May (Borders) and late June (Denbigh & Flint) are not included in the totals, although it is possible that they were of summering birds.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one pair probably bred, with two present on 23rd May and one seen on five dates in early June.

England, N

Cumbria One site: one pair probably bred. A single bird was recorded on five dates between 5th May and 3rd June, and both a male and a female were recorded separately on one date.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: one reported on three dates in May and July. **Clyde** One site: one pair possibly bred. A pair was seen feeding together on 26th May but there was no further evidence from this site. **Lothian** One site: one pair probably bred. Several sightings of one bird in early May culminated in a record of an alarming pair on 8th May but there were no further sightings despite regular searching.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one pair possibly bred. **Shetland** One site: one pair bred, laying a clutch of five eggs, which did not hatch.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

24 sites: 7–27 pairs. These figures are a little higher than those reported in recent years, partly owing to more records from Highland as a result of Atlas fieldwork. This species' long-term decline was described in Holling *et al.* (2010). The record from North-east Scotland is notable as the only recent confirmed breeding records here were in 1975 and 2005.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one pair bred, fledging three young in early June, and one singing male.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 22 sites: six pairs bred, three pairs probably bred and 14 pairs possibly bred, based largely on the occurrence of singing males. **Shetland** One site: two pairs possibly bred.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

49 sites: 20–54 pairs. The maximum number of pairs is the highest since 2005, when 60 pairs were reported. In part, this reflects the wider spread of records (from 21 counties in both 2005 and 2008 compared with just 12 in 2006 and 13 in 2007). However, this species suffers from low reporting rates, partly because it tends to nest in poorly watched industrial or derelict urban areas, and



Dan Powell

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

partly because there are few consistent sites used from year to year. More information from Greater London would certainly help to provide a more complete picture, however. Some of the pairs in the southern counties of England are cliff nesters, so not all are associated with the weedy, industrial town-centre sites seen as typical of this species.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

England, SW

Avon One site: one pair bred. After the first confirmed breeding record for Avon in 2007, a pair again bred; four young hatched but died in heavy rain at the end of May. **Dorset** One site: one pair bred. **Hampshire** Four sites: four singing males, each on one date only, but two were at former breeding sites and were not followed up.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: one pair possibly bred where breeding was confirmed in 2007. **Berkshire** One site: one singing male in an area where breeding has occurred previously. **Essex** One site: one singing male. **Greater London** Two sites: two pairs bred. A regular site surveyed three times in the spring produced no sightings. **Hertfordshire** Two sites: (1) one pair bred; (2) one pair possibly bred (a lone juvenile was seen in late June). **Kent** Four sites: three pairs bred, two pairs probably bred, and one singing male. **Surrey** Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. **Sussex** Seven sites: three pairs bred (two broods, each of three) and four singing males. All of these sites are coastal, with some nests in inaccessible cliff sites.

England, E

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

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one singing male on 10th May only. **Leicestershire & Rutland** One site: one singing male. **Warwickshire** One site: one pair probably bred. **West Midlands** Three sites: one pair bred and two males in breeding habitat.

England, N

Greater Manchester Three sites: one pair bred at a very public city-centre site, fledging three young on 18th July; and two pairs possibly bred. **Yorkshire** Four sites: two pairs bred and three singing males.

Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava*

Three sites: 2–3 mixed pairs. This distinctive race has not featured in RBBP reports before, but was added with effect from the 2008 season, as explained in the introduction. The paragraph below is a brief review of its status to date but we welcome any additional data to complete the picture. As it is a race rather than a full species, the Blue-headed Wagtail may have been under-recorded in the past and we encourage rigour in future reporting so that we can better understand the status of breeding *flava* wagtails.

Historical reports refer both to pure pairs of Blue-headed Wagtail and to mixed pairs with Yellow Wagtail *M. f. flavissima*. Brown & Grice (2005) mentioned 18 instances of pure Blue-headed pairs breeding in five English counties, with mixed pairs being 'often formed'. In Wales, a pair bred in Montgomeryshire in 1968–1971 (Lovegrove *et al.* 1994), and a mixed pair bred in Gwent in 1996 (Welsh Bird Report). There are three records of pure pairs breeding in Scotland since 1968, and in most years 1–3 Blue-headed-type wagtails are seen among Yellow Wagtails in the areas where the latter breed regularly (Forrester *et al.* 2007). In Northern Ireland, there is a confirmed breeding record from Co. Antrim in 1963 (Hutchinson 1989).

England, SW

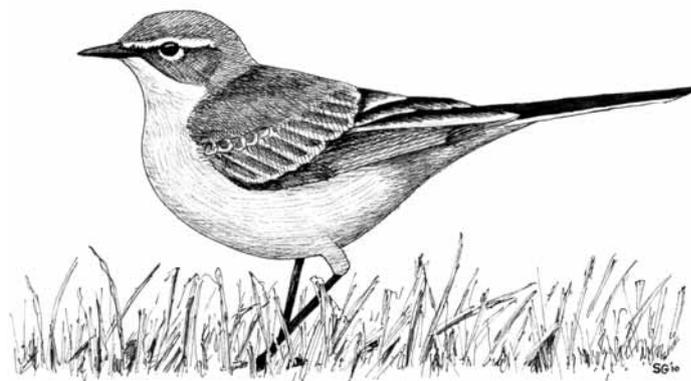
Somerset One site: a male paired with a female Yellow Wagtail.

England, C

Staffordshire One site: a male was seen carrying food into an area with nesting Yellow Wagtails.

England, N

Greater Manchester One site: a male, present since late April, paired with a female Yellow and the pair was seen with four juveniles in late July and early August.



Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla f. flava*

Simon Gillings

Holling *et al.*

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*

Three sites: two pure pairs and a third, probably mixed, pair. Reports of pure pairs of White Wagtails, or of mixed pairs with Pied Wagtails *M. a. yarrellii*, have been submitted in just four years since the first, in 1994. It is unlikely that all instances have been reported, however, as White Wagtails are fairly regular breeders in Shetland (Pennington *et al.* 2004). From 2008 onwards, we intend to collate such records more thoroughly, and it is encouraging to report three pairs involving White Wagtails in 2008.

England, SE

Surrey One site: one pair. A single female White was first noticed gathering food on 31st May at a site in neighbouring Berkshire, but the nest was finally located, on 11th June, about 100 m over the border into Surrey. Two juveniles fledged on that date and were later seen in Berkshire. The male parent was never firmly established but a male Pied was seen briefly, displaying to the female on 13th June.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland Two sites: two pairs. In both cases the adults were recorded carrying food in mid July.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

One site: 0–1 pair. In addition to a single potential breeding record, there were two records of singing males from the Outer Hebrides, but as both were recorded on single dates they are assumed to have been passage birds.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: heard on three occasions but could not be relocated despite extensive searching.

Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*

Records from just two sites were received by RBBP but Atlas records were submitted from a wider area within Highland. In addition, in 2008 the RSPB co-ordinated a survey of crossbills and Mark Eaton outlines some results as follows.

The first-ever survey of the Scottish Crossbill was conducted between January and April 2008 (Summers & Buckland 2010), following the development of a novel survey technique that entailed luring crossbills to systematically selected survey points by playing crossbill excitement calls through a loudspeaker. All crossbills responding to this lure were counted, sexed and tape-recorded, the last to allow subsequent identification to species (Summers *et al.* 2002). In addition, a knowledge of how crossbills respond to the lure with increasing distance was used to calculate estimates of abundance for the different species.

Crossbills were recorded at 451 of the 852 points surveyed in 3,506 km² of coniferous woodland in northern Scotland. There were estimated to be 13,600 adult Scottish Crossbills (95% confidence intervals 8,130–22,700), which equates to approximately 6,800 pairs, as well as 27,100 Common Crossbills (95% C.I. 14,700–38,400) and 100 Parrot Crossbills. The Scottish Crossbill estimate far exceeds previous estimates for this species (e.g. 300–1,250 pairs, BirdLife International 2004), although numbers and particularly the distribution of crossbills are likely to vary considerably between years and are dependent on coning patterns. Given the limited number of records typically received by the Panel, and the sizeable population (for example, Scottish Crossbills are commoner than breeding Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* in the UK), RBBP will now need to consider whether this species remains on the RBBP list!

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one pair bred with two further pairs present.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one pair bred. In addition, breeding birds were assumed to be present at a second site.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Records were received from two sites (see below). As summarised above, Summers & Buckland (2010) confirmed that Parrot Crossbills are genuinely rare breeding birds in Scotland with maybe 100 individuals found in 2008. However, this estimate has very wide confidence limits, and a

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008



Sheila Blamire

294. Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Speyside, March 2008. A survey of crossbills in Scotland in 2008 found around 100 Parrot Crossbills but further work is required to translate this into the number of breeding pairs. The Panel receives very few records of this species directly, yet all records from breeding habitat are important, especially if combined with breeding evidence. We encourage birdwatchers visiting pine forests in northern Scotland to ensure that their sightings are submitted to county recorders.

more robust estimate would require a dedicated survey of this species alone, within its more restricted range.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Two sites: birds present at both during the breeding season but no further evidence.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. The first recorded breeding of Common Rosefinch was in 1982 (in Highland) and since then there have been four other confirmed breeding records in Scotland (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Breeding was first recorded in England in 1992 and that preceded a sequence of records that hinted at a colonisation process (Wallace 1999). But after a peak of five confirmed breeding pairs in 1992, the last breeding pair in the UK was in Cumbria in 2001. A blank year followed, and since then records have been largely restricted to occasional singing males in spring, with the number of adults remaining on site for at least a week never exceeding two. Few stay as long as a month, as the 2008 birds did. It is unlikely that the showy (but single) male in Upper Forth attracted a mate, but the male in Highland clearly did. Frustratingly, in the latter case, there was no evidence of a breeding attempt. Common Rosefinches are still arriving in Britain each spring, but at present colonisation seems an unlikely prospect.

Scotland, Mid

Upper Forth One site: a singing male was reported between 19th June and 14th July.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: on 30th May a singing male was accompanied by a female carrying nest material. The male was still singing on 2nd July, but the female was not seen again.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

At least 47 sites: 28–78 pairs. The number of potential breeding pairs reported to the Panel remains much lower than the last estimate of the breeding population, based on Gibbons *et al.* (1993), of 3,000–6,500 pairs. Results of Bird Atlas 2007–11 will hopefully provide more informa-

Holling *et al.*

tion on numbers through a better appreciation of range and abundance; some county bird reports indicate that much larger numbers are observed in late winter than are found during the breeding season. These data have not been included here, but it is interesting to speculate how such late-winter gatherings relate to the number of breeding pairs in a given area. The results from regular ringing in Gloucestershire, noted below, are a good example of this.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: one pair possibly bred. However, trapping at two sites in early May indicated a local population of 53–191 birds, which demonstrates the apparent level of under-recording in core areas (Lewis 2010). **Hampshire** At least 19 sites within the New Forest: 20 pairs bred and 13 pairs probably bred. A singing male was reported from another locality on one date only. **Wiltshire** Small numbers were reported from three main sites throughout the year but no figures relating to potential breeding were received.

England, SE

Hertfordshire One site: one pair bred (a family party with three juveniles in June). **Kent** One site: one pair bred (but the county population is estimated to be 50–70 pairs). **Sussex** Three sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, N

Cumbria Four sites: two pairs bred, one pair probably bred and nine pairs possibly bred. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** One site: one pair bred. **Yorkshire** One site: two pairs probably bred and three pairs possibly bred.

Wales

Gwent Six sites: six pairs probably bred and four pairs possibly bred. **Meirionnydd** Two sites: one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. **Radnorshire** Seven sites: three pairs bred and four pairs possibly bred.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Casual reports from the main breeding areas of the Cairngorms (within both the Highland and North-east Scotland recording areas) amounted to 20 breeding pairs, of which two were confirmed breeding (nests with young). Elsewhere, there were reports in early May of birds at two mountain-top sites in western Highland.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

93 pairs reported. The Devon figures are just a sample of the population, which is still limited to two counties in southwest England. The figures from Cornwall come from the reintroduction scheme described in Holling *et al.* (2010).

England, SW

Cornwall 11 pairs bred, fledging 15–20 young. An additional male held territory. **Devon** At three sites, 67 pairs bred with a further 14 territories recorded.

Appendix 1. Other species considered by the Panel also recorded in 2008.

The following five potentially breeding species were recorded during the breeding season in 2008 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 in January and then from April to the end of the year.

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

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* For the fifth consecutive year, a single bird was present on a loch in Fife, from 8th June to 28th August. This suggests post-breeding dispersal rather than a return to a potential breeding site.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2008

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* A single male was reported displaying over a three-day period in early June at a site in Cambridgeshire.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* Four records of Icterine Warbler were submitted, all relating to birds in potential breeding habitat in June, but none qualifying for a potential territory. In early June, singing males were recorded in both Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, both present for just two days, while in mid June another was singing for just one day in Buckinghamshire. Also in mid June, one was trapped in Northamptonshire but not seen subsequently.

The following species was recorded during the breeding season in 2008 but only limited information was available.

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* Reported from St Kilda in the Outer Hebrides, where 68 occupied burrows were monitored, involving 48 pairs which were confirmed breeding.

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Holling *et al.*

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