

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2015

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



Steve McQueen

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Abstract This report documents the status of 100 species of rare or scarce birds that were recorded breeding, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2015. The year was notable for the addition of a new breeding species for the UK: Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*. Several species, including three raptors, reached their highest population levels in recent years and the recent run of mild winters has probably contributed to large increases in numbers of Firecrests *Regulus ignicapilla* and Cetti's *Cettia cetti* and Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata*. For the first time we present long-term population trends for most of our regular breeding species. The species showing the greatest increase is Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, while that showing the greatest decline is Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*.

This is the 42nd report published by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), and includes details of 90 species that bred, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2015. Three other rare breeding species/races are known to have bred in 2015 but no data were received (see Appendix 1). A further seven potential breeding species are listed in Appendix 2. A summary of 11 rare non-native species reported breeding in 2015 is given in Appendix 3.

The area covered by the UK Rare Breeding

Birds Panel includes the four nations of the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), plus the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Using 'UK' as a shorthand reference, this is the same unit used by other national monitoring programmes, such as the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (e.g. Harris *et al.* 2017) and by Birds of Conservation Concern (e.g. Eaton *et al.* 2015). In 2015 there were no changes to the RBBP list, which can be downloaded at www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-list-full.htm.

Review of the year 2015

The weather in spring and summer 2015 was unremarkable in terms of its impact on breeding birds, although it was relatively cool and wet compared with the 1981–2010 average (Met Office). High pressure in April brought some notably dry, sunny and warm days but the rest of the season was mainly unsettled, apart from a dry and sunny period in the south in June. Rainfall was higher than average in north and west Scotland, while the southeast of England was drier than average.

The highlight of the year was the first recorded breeding of Iberian Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus ibericus*: a pair fledged two broods in Gower. Although the Iberian Chiffchaff has become a more expected vagrant in the last ten years, it remains a national rarity and this was the only record of the species in the UK in 2015. Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* and European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* bred again, but only the Bee-eaters were successful. A range of overshooting warblers held territory: Subalpine *Sylvia cantillans* and Sardinian Warblers *S. melanocephala* in southern England, Melodious Warblers *Hippolais polyglotta* in central England and Wales, and Icterine *H. icterina*, Blyth's Reed *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and Great Reed Warblers *A. arundinaceus* in Scotland. Two resident warblers, which suffered losses in the cold winters at the start of the decade, have recovered strongly: Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* increased to a new record total of almost 3,000 singing males and Dartford Warbler *S. undata* numbers were double those in 2014. For no fewer than five species, the highest totals in the history of the RBBP were reported: Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*. In contrast, only seven breeding female Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* were reported.

The archive of rare breeding bird data now extends to over 40 years for many species, and has reached 20 years for those species added when the RBBP list was expanded in 1996. This year, within a revised header (the 'species banner') for each species in the main systematic list, we present for the first time long-term trends (over 25 years where possible, or

15 years for those with shorter runs of data). Listed below are the top ten 'winners' and losers' among our regular breeding birds. Note that some species, such as Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, may well have topped this list if we had presented it a few years ago when that species was still on the RBBP list.

	species*	trend
1	Little Egret	(did not breed 25 years ago)
2	Mediterranean Gull	9,158%
3	Common Crane	1,883%
4	White-tailed Eagle	1,181%
5	Firecrest	1,063%
6	Cirl Bunting	814%
7	Cetti's Warbler	718%
8	Wood Sandpiper	663%
9	Whooper Swan	584%
10	Eurasian Bittern	496%
	species	trend
1	Golden Oriole	-93%
2	Fieldfare	-80%
3	Ruff	-72%
4	Savi's Warbler	-67%
5	Marsh Warbler	-66%
6=	Slavonian Grebe	-57%
	Dotterel	-57%
8	Redwing	-54%
9=	Purple Sandpiper	-50%
	Red-backed Shrike	-50%

* Scientific names of the species can be found in the main species accounts.

Regarding these lists, it is worth remembering that the changes reflect the long term, so recent changes in a different direction will be concealed. Note also that even slight changes in very small populations can have a large impact on percentage increase or decrease (this applies to most of the 'losers' and to Wood Sandpiper among the 'winners') – but even so, the tables still give a good feel for the species which are thriving and struggling respectively.

The Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* last bred in 2009 but has (just about) maintained a toe-hold with some probable breeding records since. In a recent review, Golden Oriole and Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* were deemed to be the two species most likely to

become extinct as breeding birds in Britain (Stanbury *et al.* 2017). Several of the other 'losers' are restricted to northern Scotland, including Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Redwing *T. iliacus* and Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*. The Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* is already regarded as a former breeder, given the lack of confirmed breeding for more than ten years. Among the 'winners', four species have colonised from the south and in some cases also benefited from milder winters – Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, Firecrest and Cetti's Warbler – while several of the others have benefited from direct conservation action to improve habitats or via reintroduction schemes.

Data sources and submission

Each year we try to source as much information as possible from all parts of the UK, and we aim to provide prompt and accurate feedback via these annual reports. The most important source of data is the annual return from the bird recorder network (83% of all data submissions in 2015). Recorders are generally in the best position to compile an accurate, site-by-site summary of the breeding evidence for each species within each area. They receive records from a variety of sources, often directly from observers, but also from other sources, such as the BTO/RSPB/BirdWatch Ireland/SOC/WOS BirdTrack system. Recorders, and in turn the RBBP, are highly dependent on birdwatchers submitting records in the first place. It is vital that birdwatchers across the UK make their sightings available, not least for the value these records have for conservation, as outlined below.

In 2015, there was a disappointing reduction in the number of contributing counties: no information was provided directly by recorders for Essex, Isle of Wight, Outer Hebrides and West Midlands, although other information for these areas has been collated where possible. Birders who have submitted data on rare breeding birds to the recorders in these areas may not see their records appearing here and, more significantly, their contribution will not be assisting the conservation of those species and their breeding sites. Readers should be aware of these gaps when they interpret the data in this report.

Other important data sources include the returns from Schedule 1 licence holders, the Nest Record Scheme, Raptor Study Groups, national surveys, and counts from RSPB reserves. These additional sources mean that the overall level of data provision was broadly comparable with that in recent RBBP reports. The number of unique records for 2015, received by the end of September 2017, was a little higher than for 2014, at over 7,000.

Any data received after the annual deadlines, from any recording area or species study, make valuable additions to the Panel's archive, and our ability to provide data for conservation use. Additions, amendments and corrections to published reports from 2005 onwards are available on the RBBP website (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports).

Almost all data are now submitted electronically, mostly in the recommended MS Excel format, with sites listed separately for each species (a template is available at www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-data-submission). Some 79% of all 2015 records carried a 4- or 6-figure grid reference, which represents a significant increase over 2014 (up 12%). We cannot overstate the importance of the provision of accurate location data to facilitate the greatest benefit to site and species conservation (a lack of location data can frustrate conservation objectives, such as for the SPA review described below). It is also essential for validation and for detection of duplicate records. It is still the case that some otherwise good records (especially of raptors) cannot be used because the location cannot be verified. We appeal especially to those who submit data on Schedule 1 returns to include accurate 6-figure grid references, as per the condition of their licence.

Generally, we receive data from national surveys and species studies within 12 months, but we are unable to publish our reports until we have sufficient data from the bird recorder network. Many counties have their data ready within 12 months of the end of the breeding season and we ask for submission as soon as possible, ideally by November of the following year. A significant number of counties did not make this deadline for 2015 data and this, coupled with new systems in operation by the Panel this year and the (welcome) increased volume of site-

specific data on some species, means that this report appears significantly later than usual. We aim to bring our publishing timetable forward again in 2018.

Recommendations and guidelines on data submission are available online (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards). Species-specific guidelines are also given (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-recording), and anyone with particular experience in monitoring a rare species is encouraged to share their expertise through these guidelines.

Conservation and other uses of RBBP data

RBBP policy is to make data available for relevant conservation uses, with appropriate controls. Site-specific information is used by JNCC and the national statutory conservation agencies, and national datasets by the RSPB for survey and conservation planning. Over the 12-month period from September 2016 to August 2017, we received 20 specific requests for data. In addition, population totals published in the *BB* reports are widely used by conservation staff at RSPB, BTO, JNCC and

the four national statutory conservation agencies. Projects supported with RBBP data in the last year have included the management of SPAs for Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Marsh Harrier, Osprey and Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and assessments of the effectiveness of the SPA network for a range of species, including Common Crane *Grus grus*, Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (see below). RBBP data were heavily used in the first published assessment of extinction risk for birds in Great Britain (Stanbury *et al.* 2017). Private individuals have also received data for reviews of species to be published; these include Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*, Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* in England, and Firecrest (see Clements *et al.* 2017). Finally, RBBP data have been released at 50-km² resolution to the second European Breeding Bird Atlas (www.ebba2.info).

An annual review, *The State of the UK's Birds*, is published by the RSPB on behalf of a range of conservation organisations. The most recent (Hayhow *et al.* 2017c) includes a section on scarce and rare breeding birds,



Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* in Essex, May 2015; this species is teetering on the edge of extinction as a breeding bird in Britain (see text).

Richard Allen



Roger Riddington

392. Female Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* feeding fledged juvenile in Shetland in July 2015. Although two pairs bred successfully in Scotland in 2015, the long-term trend for this species as a breeder is still downwards.

giving population estimates and trends based mainly on data collated by the RBBP.

Summary data are available online and we aim to improve this over the next five years. All but the most recent reports are on our website (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports); the 'Explore Reports' feature (www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-online-reports) permits access to these same reports firstly by species and then by year, which opens up this information to a wider audience. We are keen for individuals to use this to compile species reviews for potential future publication. Our data access policy is available at www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-access-policy.

Using RBBP data to help preserve important sites for rare breeding birds

A major recent use of RBBP data has been to support the third review of the UK network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) legally classified under the EU Birds Directive (Stroud *et al.* 2016). Some 270 SPAs are classified for species listed on Annex I of the Directive and for regularly occurring migratory birds. Selection of key sites for each

species gives a 'suite' of sites that forms the national SPA network.

The final review was submitted by JNCC to Ministers in October 2016 and is available online (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7309>). A key objective of the review was to compare numbers of birds held within this protected area network since 2000 with the numbers present a decade earlier and make appropriate recommendations.

The table opposite summarises results for RBBP species. Rare breeding species that are not listed in the table may occur within SPAs but are not legal 'qualifying species' for which site designation and management are required.

One of the main aims of the review was to assess the sufficiency of SPA suites for the species for which sites have been classified. For those species where SPA provision was found to be insufficient, a further phase of the review process is currently underway to consider how best to address this deficiency. The UK SPA Scientific Working Group recommended that SPA provision should be made for six rare breeding Annex I species which are not qualifying species at any

Table 1. Summary conclusions of the third UK SPA Review for relevant rare breeding birds.

	Number of SPAs classified for species (SPA suite)	Number within UK SPAs (pairs)	Population trend within SPA suite 1990s vs 2000s	Proportion of populations within SPA suite		Assessed sufficiency of SPA suite
				GB	Northern Ireland ***	
Eurasian Wigeon	2	60	↓	20%	–	sufficient
Shoveler	1	169	↑	54%	–	sufficient
Common Scoter	3	50	↑	96%	–	sufficient
Capercaillie*	11	125	↓**	unknown	–	sufficient
Red-throated Diver*	10	329	↓	30%	0%	insufficient
Black-throated Diver*	12	100	↑**	45%	–	insufficient
Eurasian Bittern*	6	45	↑**	56%	–	insufficient
Slavonian Grebe*	6	14	↓	61%	0%	insufficient
Honey-buzzard*	1	4	↑	12%	–	sufficient
Marsh Harrier*	10	164	↑	51%	–	sufficient
Hen Harrier*	17	203	↑**	30%	19%	insufficient
Golden Eagle*	12	125	↑**	28%	–	sufficient
Osprey*	9	17	?	8%	–	insufficient
Spotted Crane*	4	11	↓	39%	–	insufficient
Corn Crane*	11	350	↑**	29%	–	sufficient
Stone-curlew*	3	230	↑	66%	–	sufficient
Avocet*	8	885	↑**	59%	–	insufficient
Dotterel*	8	241	↓	38%	–	insufficient
Whimbrel	1	20	↓	6%	–	insufficient
Black-tailed Godwit	2	47	↑**	87%	0%	sufficient
Ruff*	4	2	↓	33%	–	sufficient
Red-necked Phalarope*	1	11	↓	55%	–	insufficient
Wood Sandpiper*	3	9	↓	82%	–	sufficient
Arctic Skua	76	343	↓	16%	–	insufficient
Little Tern*	27	1,156	↓	61%	0%	sufficient
Roseate Tern*	7	81	↑	94%	0%	sufficient
Mediterranean Gull*	5	145	↑	24%	–	insufficient
Short-eared Owl*	6	121	↓	18%	–	sufficient
Merlin*	15	246	↓**	22%	6%	insufficient
Peregrine Falcon*	11	72	↓**	5%	1%	insufficient
Red-billed Chough*	12	149	↑**	50%	0%	insufficient
Dartford Warbler*	6	1,654	↓	52%	–	insufficient
Fair Isle Wren*	1	29	↓	100%	–	sufficient

Notes: * Indicates that a species is listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.
 ** Indicates that further SPA provision has occurred since the 1990s. Further details of sufficiency assessments are given by Stroud *et al.* (2016).
 *** A dash indicates that the species is absent as a breeder in Northern Ireland.

current UK SPA, namely Little Egret, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, White-tailed Eagle, Montagu’s Harrier, Common Crane and Red-backed Shrike.

The review found considerable change within the network over a ten-year period, typically matching trends apparent from other sources such as *Bird Atlas 2007–11* (Balmer *et al.* 2013). Thus species for which the northern edge of their range lies within the UK, such as Avocet, Mediterranean Gull and Dartford Warbler, have expanded in range and popula-

tion size since the 1990s with resulting declines in the proportion of the national population held within SPAs. Upland and/or northerly rare breeders, such as Dotterel, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Merlin *Falco columbarius*, have declined, sometimes with range contractions, leading to sharp declines in total numbers within SPAs. In most cases, the differences are as anticipated from predicted climate-change impacts.

Identifying, monitoring and classifying

SPAs is dependent on high-quality, robust data. RBBP data were critical to assessments for relevant species, and the review acknowledges the huge contribution made by volunteer bird-watchers. In some cases, a lack of consistent reporting across years or the use of imprecise locations led to uncertainty in the conclusions reached about particular sites or species. Improvements in the data collated by the RBBP in recent years will help to mitigate these problems in future. The review concludes that the UK SPA network is critical to the long-term conservation of many bird species.

The Panel

The membership of the Panel is: Mark Eaton (Chairman), Dawn Balmer, Ian Francis,

Andrew King, David Norman, David Stroud and Mark Holling (Secretary). Members serve in a personal capacity, but some also reflect the interests and requirements of the funding partners. The Panel is funded by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and the RSPB, with additional financial contributions from the BTO. 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, nest recorders, ringers, surveyors and conservationists.

Terminology

Recording areas

The recording areas used in this report are the same as in previous reports (see Holling *et al.* 2007 and www.rbbp.org.uk); these match the bird recording areas used by recorders across the UK, with Gower and East Glamorgan presented separately *contra* Ballance & Smith (2008). We attempt to collate all breeding records by recording area (usually 'county') wherever possible and urge contributors to submit records in the same manner, via recorders.

To reduce the possibility of duplication with surrounding areas, records from the Greater London recording area, which covers all areas within a 20-mile radius of St Paul's Cathedral, are reported as follows. Under the Greater London heading we list only records from the Inner London area and the old county of Middlesex. Records away from this area and within the counties surrounding London – Hertfordshire, Essex, Kent and Surrey – are listed under those county headings.

Species banners

Shown for every species in the report, the species banners present key information on status, numbers and trends. A **regular breeder** is defined as a species that has bred (i.e. confirmed breeding has been recorded) at least once in the UK and which has bred (or was strongly suspected to have bred) for any five consecutive years within the last 25 (unless the last breeding was more than ten years ago). This definition is the same as used in the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) reviews (Eaton *et al.* 2015). Other species may be classed as an **occasional breeder** (a species which

has bred at least once in the UK but is not a regular breeder); a **potential breeder** (one which has not bred previously in the UK but, in some years, show signs that it may do so (e.g. presence of singing males holding territory or pairs in suitable breeding habitat); a **colonising breeder** (a new colonist which first bred in the UK in the most recent five years (2011–15, or subsequently, if known at the time of writing); or a **former breeder** (one which bred regularly in the past but for which there has been no confirmed breeding record in the last ten years).

For all **regular** breeding species, the species banners give additional information, as follows:

1. The population status (Red, Amber or Green, indicated by a coloured side-bar) as determined by BoCC4 (Eaton *et al.* 2015); see below.
2. An indication of population status in one of four categories:
 - **Very rare** (mean of <30 breeding pairs (bp) per annum);
 - **Rare** (30–300 bp per annum);
 - **Scarce** (301–1,000 bp per annum);
 - **Less scarce** (>1,000 bp per annum).
3. A population estimate. If a recent estimate from a national survey is available, this is used and referenced. Otherwise the estimate is based on RBBP data, using the mean maximum population size from the last five years (in this report, 2011–15). If annual RBBP coverage is poor, the best available national population estimate is used. The unit varies, but is most frequently 'breeding pairs' (bp). We acknowledge that for some species, estimates based purely on RBBP data may be contrary to other estimates, especially where RBBP coverage is moderate or low (see below).

4. A population trend, where one can be calculated; this is presented as a 25-year trend where possible. For species that were added to the RBBP list in 1996, a 15-year trend is given. Trends are calculated by comparing the five-year mean in 2015 with that for either 25 or 15 years earlier (1990 or 2000). Trends are based on thresholds of rate change used for the Wild Bird Indicators (e.g. Defra 2017) and shown in the table below. Most trends are derived from RBBP data, although in some cases trends from periodic surveys are used if they are more robust.

	thresholds based on 25 years of data	thresholds based on 15 years of data
strong increase	> +100%	> +52%
weak increase	+33% to +100%	+19% to +52%
stable	-25% to +33%	-16% to +19%
weak decrease	-50% to -25%	-34% to -16%
strong decrease	> -50%	> -34%

5. The degree of coverage (in 2015), defined as follows:
- **Near-complete** (RBBP reports present more or less accurate annual totals);
 - **High** (a good estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, though a small but unknown proportion has not been recorded/reported);
 - **Moderate** (a less accurate estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, which is nonetheless a significant proportion of the total population);
 - **Low** (the quality of the data received is so poor that population estimates are of little value for conservation or status reviews; however, maintaining an archive of known sites is useful, and this information can be used in the design of future targeted surveys).

The BoCC4 status can be Red, Amber or Green. The majority of Red- and Amber-listed species on the RBBP list are categorised as such because of some criteria related to their breeding status, whether it be population size (rarity or recent/historical decline), breeding range (localisation or decline) or international importance of the UK breeding population. Some species, which do not have regular breeding or wintering populations in the UK, are not classified. The only species in this report which is Amber-listed for criteria that are not related to the breeding population is the Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*, which owes its status to the localised distribution and international importance of its wintering population.

Species accounts

The headline figure (number of sites, breeding pairs, singing males, territories, etc.) is indicated in bold for easy reference. Any regular breeding species classed as Very rare (see above), plus occasional, potential, colonising and former breeders, receive more detailed text describing the records by county. For all other species (with only a few exceptions, where available data are limited), the data are tabulated, with each line representing a county or RBBP region. Within the tables, note the use of the following abbreviations:

- S = sites
- T = territories
- CP = confirmed breeding pairs
- TP = max. total breeding pairs (typically possible, probable and confirmed breeding)
- MM = males, SM = singing males
- I = individuals or singles
- YF = min. no. young fledged

Definitions of breeding evidence

The definitions of ‘Confirmed breeding’, ‘Probable breeding’ and ‘Possible breeding’ follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (EBCC) (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Where tables show the number of occupied territories, these are the sum of confirmed and probable breeding pairs, as territorial birds are classed as being probably breeding, unless a nest has (at least) progressed to the stage where eggs have been laid, in which case the pair is classified as a confirmed breeding pair. It is important to note that confirmed breeding is *not* the same as successful breeding; nests that fail with eggs or with young still fall into the confirmed category. A successful breeding pair is one that fledges at least one young bird from a nesting attempt. 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. The report does not routinely include breeding records of hybrid individuals but where young are hatched they will be noted in an Appendix. Mixed pairs are, however, included where one of the parents is a species on the RBBP list.

Definition of numbers used

Within each species account, numbers given in the format ‘1–4 pairs’ indicate (in this case) one confirmed breeding pair (CP) and a maximum total of four breeding pairs (TP – thus also including possible and probable breeding pairs). In the tables, ‘n/a’ indicates that no data were received from that county, but the species normally breeds there.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Very rare 26 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +584%

Near-complete

24 sites: 20–32 pairs. More than 20 pairs of wild Whooper Swans have bred every year since 2010 but 2015 marks a new record. The six pairs in Norfolk made a significant contribution to the increase; this new population seems to be formed mainly of wintering birds that stayed on in the spring because one or both members of the pair are injured. The overall total is likely to have been higher, since no data were received from the Outer Hebrides, where there were four pairs in 2013.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one pair bred, seen with one cygnet, and six other pairs present, mostly injured birds.

England, N

Cumbria One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one pair bred, three well-grown young seen in July. Clyde

One site: one presumed mixed pair bred. A female sat on a nest for a long period but no male nor any young were seen; there were Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* in the area. Dumfries & Galloway One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one pair bred, at least one young fledged.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Four sites: one pair bred (clutch of four eggs, no information on young), three probable breeding pairs. Orkney One site: one pair bred, three young fledged. Outer Hebrides [no information]. Shetland 11 sites: 11 pairs bred, at least 16 young fledged.

Northern Ireland

Co. Derry Two sites: (1) three pairs bred, all successful; (2) one probable breeding pair (the female apparently adopted three recently fledged Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* while the male attacked a nearby male Mute Swan).

There were also two single birds in Bedfordshire, possible breeding pairs in Berkshire and Cambridgeshire and a confirmed breeding pair in Cheshire & Wirral: all these are believed to be naturalised escaped birds.



Dan Powell

Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus*

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Rare 188 bp

(no trend available)

Low

91 sites: 68–214 pairs. Despite recent improvements in recording, especially in its Highland stronghold, breeding Wigeons are still under-recorded. The estimate in Musgrove *et al.* (2013) was 300–500 breeding pairs. Notable in 2015 was the first confirmed breeding record for Staffordshire: a female was seen with a single duckling in July but the chick did not survive.

Eurasian Wigeon			England, N			Fife					
S	CP	TP	Cheshire & Wirral	13	22	32	Moray & Nairn	3	0	6	
England, SE	3	0	10	Cumbria	2	1	2	North-east Scotland	2	3	5
Essex	1	0	2	Co. Durham	6	10	10	Perth & Kinross	1	0	1
Kent	1	0	7	Yorkshire	4	11	19	Scotland, N & W	49	38	121
Surrey	1	0	1	Wales	1	0	3	Argyll	5	1	8
England, E	8	0	19	Anglesey	1	0	3	Caithness	3	1	7
Cambridgeshire	7	0	12	Scotland, S	7	0	10	Highland	30	6	73
Norfolk	1	0	7	Borders	1	0	1	Orkney	8	24	27
England, C	2	2	4	Dumfries & G'way	5	0	8	Shetland	3	6	6
Nottinghamshire	1	1	3	Lothian	1	0	1	TOTALS	91	68	214
Staffordshire	1	1	1	Scotland, Mid	8	6	15				
				Angus & Dundee	1	2	2				

Records of summering birds and pairs that showed no evidence of breeding are excluded. Pairs are assigned to the possible breeding category (included within the TP column) based on habitat and behavioural criteria but they can be difficult to distinguish from 'summering' pairs.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Very rare 25 bp

25y trend: stable -14%

High

11 sites: 3–21 pairs. Following a decline in the last ten years (fig. 1), the Pintail is now classed as a very rare breeder, with a 5-year mean below 30 breeding pairs. The peak in numbers in 1994 coincided with a full survey in Orkney, where there were up to 26 pairs, which compares with just five in 2015. A paltry total of five young fledged in 2015.

England, SE

Kent One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: two possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, Mid

NE Scotland One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Five sites: (1) one pair bred (female on nest); (2)–(4) ten probable breeding pairs; (5) one possible breeding pair. Orkney Two sites: (1) one pair bred (fledging five young); (2) one pair bred and three probable breeding pairs.

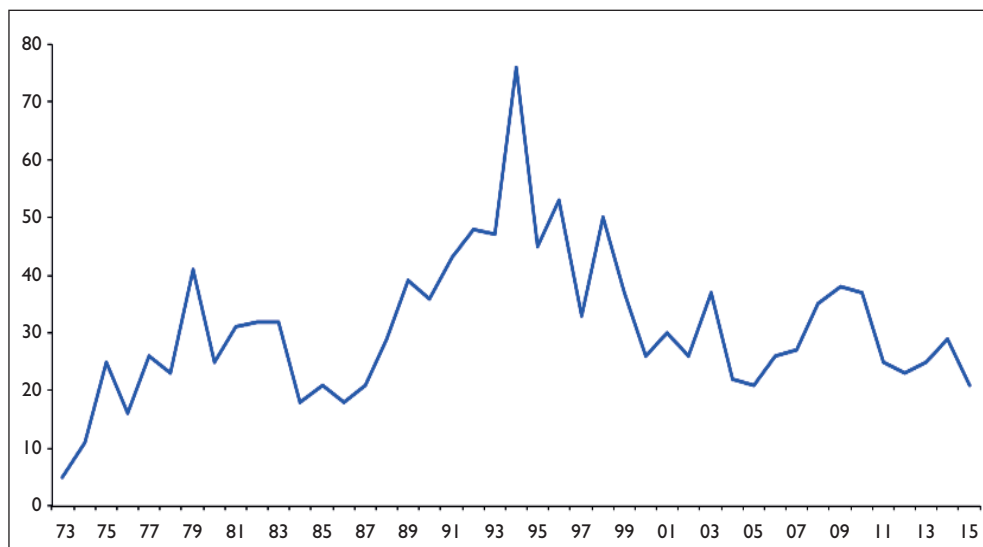


Fig. 1. Numbers of breeding pairs of Pintails *Anas acuta* in the UK, 1973–2015.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Rare 97 bp

25y trend: **weak increase** +35%

High

77 sites: 19–107 pairs. After a bumper year in 2014, possibly associated with a warm and settled spring that year, numbers fell back to more typical levels in 2015.

Garganey				England, E	29	5	46	Carmarthenshire	1	0	1
	S	CP	TP	Cambridgeshire	11	2	23	Denbigh & Flint	1	0	1
England, SW	5	2	10	Lincolnshire	4	1	7	Scotland, S	1	0	1
Avon	1	0	1	Norfolk	7	2	9	Clyde	1	0	1
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	Northamptonshire	2	0	2	Scotland, Mid	2	0	2
Hampshire	1	0	1	Suffolk	5	0	5	Angus & Dundee	1	0	1
Somerset	2	1	7	England, N	18	6	24	Perth & Kinross	1	0	1
England, SE	14	5	15	Cheshire & Wirral	1	0	1	Scotland, N & W	4	1	5
Buckinghamshire	1	0	1	Cleveland	1	1	5	Argyll	2	0	2
Essex	2	0	2	Greater Manchester	2	0	2	Orkney	2	1	3
Hertfordshire	2	0	2	Lancs & N M'side	2	1	2	Northern Ireland	1	0	1
Kent	8	5	9	Yorkshire	12	4	14	Co. Antrim	1	0	1
Sussex	1	0	1	Wales	3	0	3	TOTALS	77	19	107
				Anglesey	1	0	1				

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Scarce 981 bp

(no trend available)

High

269–976 pairs. The available data indicate that the population has been stable in the last ten years, with annual totals varying between 873 and 1,160 pairs. The variation is likely to be due to annual differences in local coverage. There is only one SPA classified for Shoveler (the Ouse Washes in Cambridgeshire/Norfolk), but the overall SPA network holds over 50% of our breeding Shovelers.

Shoveler				Northamptonshire	0	10	Pembrokeshire	2	4
				Suffolk	3	56	Scotland, S	5	13
	CP	TP	England, C	10	27	Clyde	0	5	
England, SW	7	37	Derbyshire	1	3	Clyde Islands	0	1	
Avon	1	2	Leics & Rutland	4	4	Dumfries & G'way	5	6	
Dorset	1	4	Nottinghamshire	1	12	Lothian	0	1	
Gloucestershire	1	1	Shropshire	1	1	Scotland, Mid	6	12	
Hampshire	2	5	Warwickshire	0	4	Angus & Dundee	0	3	
Isle of Wight	0	2	Worcestershire	3	3	Fife	1	4	
Somerset	2	20	England, N	93	201	Perth & Kinross	5	5	
Wiltshire	0	3	Cheshire & Wirral	4	14	Scotland, N & W	21	94	
England, SE	56	101	Cleveland	4	4	Argyll	4	41	
Berkshire	0	3	Cumbria	1	6	Caithness	1	2	
Essex	8	46	Co. Durham	3	3	Highland	0	2	
Greater London	0	1	Greater Manchester	0	3	Orkney	15	48	
Hertfordshire	1	3	Lancs & N M'side	35	35	Shetland	1	1	
Kent	44	45	Northumberland	0	1	Northern Ireland	7	14	
Surrey	1	1	Yorkshire	46	135	Co. Antrim	6	8	
Sussex	2	2	Wales	9	59	Co. Armagh	1	2	
England, E	55	417	Anglesey	3	50	Co. Fermanagh	0	4	
Cambridgeshire	9	209	Breconshire	0	1	Isle of Man	0	1	
Lincolnshire	1	33	Gower	2	2	TOTALS	269	976	
Norfolk	42	109	Gwent	2	2				

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Scarce 685 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +157%

High

370–715 pairs. Although well below the 2014 total of 838 pairs, this is still the second highest ever reported. The Pochard is a late nester, with most eggs being laid in June (Gilbert *et al.* 1998),

so sightings of all pairs in breeding habitat in May to July should be submitted to help build a complete picture.

Common Pochard			Surrey	5	7	Northumberland	1	3
			Sussex	10	10	Yorkshire	84	88
			England, E	42	144	Wales	9	46
England, SW	CP	TP	Cambridgeshire	6	59	Anglesey	0	36
Avon	2	2	Lincolnshire	10	17	Carmarthenshire	6	6
Devon	1	6	Norfolk	24	53	Denbigh & Flint	0	1
Dorset	8	9	Northamptonshire	0	3	Gwent	3	3
Gloucestershire	0	4	Suffolk	2	12	Scotland, Mid	0	1
Hampshire	0	1	England, C	6	9	Fife	0	1
Isles of Scilly	2	3	Derbyshire	1	1	Scotland, N & W	1	2
Somerset	8	80	Leics & Rutland	2	2	Orkney	1	2
England, SE	147	224	Nottinghamshire	0	1	Northern Ireland	17	50
Bedfordshire	6	7	Staffordshire	1	3	Co. Antrim	1	12
Berkshire	6	11	Worcestershire	2	2	Co. Armagh	15	15
Essex	14	76	England, N	127	134	Co. Down	1	1
Greater London	12	14	Cheshire & Wirral	8	9	Co. Fermanagh	0	2
Hertfordshire	25	27	Cleveland	9	9	Co. Tyrone	0	20
Kent	69	70	Greater Manchester	3	3	TOTALS	370	715
Oxfordshire	0	2	Lancs & N M'side	22	22			

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Rare 52 bp*

25y trend: weak decrease -43%

Near-complete

14 sites: 11–43 pairs. The last full survey, in 2007, located 52 pairs, a decline from 95 pairs in 1995 (Eaton *et al.* 2008). Although numbers have been lower since 2007, good coverage in 2014 and 2015 suggests the population may have stabilised. The Flows of Caithness and east Sutherland (Highland) are treated as one extensive site and this remains the most important area, with a third of all pairs in 2015. The UK's SPA network holds about 96% of all our breeding Common Scoters, making a big contribution to the protection of this species. * Eaton *et al.* (2008).

Common Scoter			S	CP	TP	Scotland, N & W	11	11	37	Highland	6	7	18
Scotland, Mid	3	0	6	Argyll	2	0	3	TOTALS			14	11	43
Perth & Kinross	3	0	6	Caithness/Highland	3	4	16						

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Rare 200 bp*

25y trend: stable -16%

Low

40–44 breeding females. The reduction in numbers reported (105 pairs in 2013 and 70 in 2014) is probably a reflection of decreased monitoring effort in the core breeding area of Strathspey (Highland) and Deeside (North-east Scotland). Two pairs again bred in Northumberland, with broods of 13 and four in May reduced to eight and three by June. Breeding has occurred in Northumberland every year since 2010. The first recorded breeding in England was in 2008, in Avon, and the second confirmed breeding for that county occurred in 2015. * Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

Common Goldeneye			England, SE	0	1	North-east Scotland	1	1
			Hertfordshire	0	1	Scotland, N & W	35	37
			England, N	2	2	Highland	35	37
England, SW	CP	TP	Northumberland	2	2	TOTALS	40	44
Avon	1	1	Scotland, Mid	2	3			
			Moray & Nairn	1	2			

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce 728 males

25y trend: **weak increase** +43%

High

5–404 singing males. Confirmed breeding was recorded in Angus & Dundee, Norfolk (3) and Northumberland. This was a below-average year for Quails – the annual fluctuation in the numbers of birds arriving in Britain each year is high.

Common Quail		Northamptonshire	5	Pembrokeshire	1
		Suffolk	2	Scotland, S	35
	SM	England, C	36	Ayrshire	1
England, SW	78	Derbyshire	10	Borders	23
Avon	3	Leics & Rutland	8	Dumfries & G'way	2
Devon	3	Shropshire	10	Lothian	9
Gloucestershire	10	Staffordshire	8	Scotland, Mid	31
Hampshire	6	England, N	76	Angus & Dundee	7
Somerset	13	Cheshire & Wirral	8	Moray & Nairn	1
Wiltshire	43	Cleveland	5	North-east Scotland	22
England, SE	51	Cumbria	4	Upper Forth	1
Bedfordshire	1	Co. Durham	5	Scotland, N & W	22
Berkshire	18	Lancs & N M'side	6	Argyll	5
Buckinghamshire	1	Northumberland	12	Caithness	4
Essex	2	Yorkshire	36	Fair Isle	1
Hertfordshire	5	Wales	11	Highland	4
Kent	4	Anglesey	1	Orkney	3
Oxfordshire	8	Caernarfonshire	1	Shetland	5
Sussex	12	Carmarthenshire	2	Northern Ireland	1
England, E	63	Denbigh & Flint	3	Co. Derry	1
Cambridgeshire	16	East Glamorgan	1	TOTAL	404
Lincolnshire	8	Meirionnydd	1		
Norfolk	32	Montgomeryshire	1		

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

Rare 211 lekking males (no trend available)

High

234 males at 65 active leks. A total of 108 leks was monitored by RSPB staff across four recording areas. This is the highest total since 2005, but survey effort varies each year. The number of lekking males has been largely stable since 2003, but it is not yet possible to calculate a long-term population trend.

Regular national surveys of this species are conducted in the winter, when birds are easier to find in the forest and there is no risk of disturbing breeding females; the most recent national survey took place in the winter of 2015/16 and will be summarised in the next report.

Capercaillie			Moray & Nairn	9	16	Scotland, N & W	45	199
	leks	MM	North-east Scotland	9	16	Highland	45	199
Scotland, Mid	20	35	Perth & Kinross	2	3	TOTALS	65	234

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Less scarce 1,255 bp*

12y trend (survey): **weak increase** +38%

Low

272–297 pairs. Data returns for Red-throated Divers are very incomplete, especially from N & W Scotland, with less than 20% of the population counted each year. The population trend within the SPA suite for Red-throated Divers (30% of the UK population breeds within SPAs) showed a decline between the 1990s and the 2000s, yet the trend between the two national surveys (1994 and 2006) showed a weak increase. A complete survey was undertaken in 2015 on Hoy (Orkney); over 200 known sites were visited, 63 of which were occupied by pairs and 43 of those fledged chicks successfully. Most pairs had one chick, but there were eight broods with two chicks, a higher proportion than in recent years. * Dillon *et al.* (2009).

Red-throated Diver			Moray & Nairn	1	2	Highland	54	62
			North-east Scotland	1	2	Orkney	95	97
	CP	TP	Upper Forth	1	1	Outer Hebrides	17	21
Scotland, S	6	6	Scotland, N & W	263	286			
Clyde Islands	6	6	Argyll	13	14	Shetland	81	88
Scotland, Mid	3	5	Caithness	3	4	TOTALS	272	297

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Rare 217 bp*

12y trend (survey): **stable +16%**

Low

25–78 pairs. This is the highest total recorded since 2009, mainly due to improved reporting in Highland. Nevertheless, 78 pairs represent only about a third of the UK population found in the 2006 diver survey (Eaton *et al.* 2007). With consistently low coverage of both diver species, we are unable to give long-term population trends. Although 45% of the UK population of Black-throated Divers breeds within SPAs, the suite is not deemed to be sufficient for the conservation of this species. * Eaton *et al.* (2007).

Black-throated Diver			Scotland, Mid	1	7	Scotland, N & W	22	69
			Moray & Nairn	1	1	Argyll	4	5
	CP	TP	North-east Scotland	0	1	Highland	16	60
Scotland, S	2	2	Perth & Kinross	0	4	Outer Hebrides	2	4
Dumfries & G'way	2	2	Upper Forth	0	1	TOTALS	25	78

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Rare 147 booming males 25y trend: **strong increase +496%**

Near-complete

86 sites: 70–186 pairs. 157–179 booming males, with at least 70 breeding attempts recorded at 28 sites. The increase continues, with 20 more sites registered than in 2014 (the highest-ever number since RBBP reporting began, in 1973), and a further increase in the count of total pairs.

Eurasian Bittern	sites	booming males (min)	booming males (max)	nests (min)	nests (max)	total pairs
England, SW	12	45	48	17	18	48
Avon	1	0	1	0	0	1
Gloucestershire	1	0	1	0	0	1
Hampshire	1	1	1	0	0	1
Somerset	9	44	45	17	18	45
England, SE	8	9	11	2	2	11
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	0	0	1
Hertfordshire	1	0	1	0	0	1
Kent	4	6	6	2	2	6
Oxfordshire	1	1	1	0	0	1
Sussex	1	1	2	0	0	2
England, E	48	87	99	36	40	103
Cambridgeshire	12	19	24	9	10	26
Lincolnshire	4	2	4	0	0	5
Norfolk	24	28	30	8	10	31
Suffolk	8	38	41	19	20	41
England, C	5	2	6	1	1	6
Derbyshire	2	0	2	0	0	2
Nottinghamshire	3	2	4	1	1	4
England, N	11	13	13	8	9	16
Greater Manchester	1	1	1	0	0	1
Lancs & N M'side	1	1	1	0	0	1
Yorkshire	9	11	11	8	9	14
Wales	2	1	2	0	0	2
Anglesey	1	1	1	0	0	1
Breconshire	1	0	1	0	0	1
TOTALS	86	157	179	64	70	186

These figures are based on the RSPB monitoring methodology; the minimum figure is the closest to the number of occupied territories. The minimum number of booming males is based on residency at a site for at least a week, while the maximum figure includes males booming for a shorter period only and cases where it was not possible to confirm that different males were involved. The maximum total number of pairs combines information on both booming males and nests found; sometimes the number of nests at a site exceeds the number of boomers heard.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Very rare 3 males (no trend available) Near-complete

Three sites: 0–5 pairs. As in 2014, there was no evidence of confirmed breeding in 2015, but this is the seventh consecutive year that barking males have been heard in Somerset. The bird recorded in Suffolk and Yorkshire occurred at well-monitored sites and, given the lack of overlap in dates, BBRC felt that the records related to the same male, which also visited Lincolnshire on 28th June and another site in Yorkshire on 11th–12th July (Hudson et al. 2016).

England, SW

Somerset One site: up to four barking males heard between 19th May and 5th July. No females, juveniles or feeding flights recorded.

England, E

Suffolk One site: one barking male heard between 16th May and 26th June, believed then to relocate to Yorkshire.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one barking male heard intermittently between 30th June and 31st July.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Scarce 921 bp 15y trend: **strong increase** +3,076% Moderate

130 sites: 938–1,027 pairs. It is now 20 years since Little Egrets were first proved to breed in the UK, in Dorset, and the increase in the breeding population since then has been phenomenal. For the second year running over 1,000 pairs were reported but we know that some colonies were not counted and suspect that others are being overlooked. Further expansion was indicated by two counties recording their first confirmed breeding records: Cleveland and Meirionnydd.



Dan Powell

Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*

The total in the table below is of confirmed and probable breeding pairs. Possible breeding, based on short-term attendance at a potential breeding site, was also recorded at one site in Cornwall (six birds). Intriguingly, there was also a record of possible breeding from Angus & Dundee: a pair was seen in a small heronry and later in the season six egrets, including a very young juvenile, were seen nearby, suggesting that breeding may have occurred in Scotland, although we still await proof of first breeding in that country.

Little Egret			Kent	6	99	Northumberland	1	2
	S	TP	Oxfordshire	1	8	Yorkshire	5	10
England, SW	34	216	Surrey	1	2	Wales	13	117
Avon	1	1	Sussex	8	50	Anglesey	4	20
Cornwall	3	21	England, E	27	273	Caernarfonshire	4	58
Devon	9	60	Cambridgeshire	1	9	Denbigh & Flint	1	5
Dorset	4	9	Lincolnshire	8	101	Gower	1	9
Gloucestershire	3	8	Norfolk	8	102	Gwent	1	17
Hampshire	6	62	Northamptonshire	2	3	Meirionnydd	2	8
Isle of Wight	1	1	Suffolk	8	58	Northern Ireland	3	10
Somerset	5	27	England, C	3	28	Co. Derry	1	1
Wiltshire	2	27	Leics & Rutland	2	6	Co. Down	2	9
England, SE	35	254	Nottinghamshire	1	22	Channel Islands	4	44
Bedfordshire	2	6	England, N	11	85	Guernsey	1	20
Berkshire	4	7	Cheshire & Wirral	1	50	Jersey	3	24
Buckinghamshire	4	16	Cleveland	1	1	TOTALS	130	1,027
Essex	4	47	Cumbria	1	13			
Hertfordshire	5	19	Lancs & N M'side	2	9			

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

Very rare 2 bp

(no trend available)

Near-complete

One site: 1–3 pairs. Breeding has now occurred for six consecutive years, but with no expansion in breeding range up to 2015. Single birds summered in potential breeding habitat in Cambridgeshire and Kent.

England, SW

Somerset One site: one pair bred, successfully fledging two young; also two probable breeding pairs.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Very rare 12 bp

(no trend available/increasing)

Near-complete

One site: 14 pairs. As for the preceding species, breeding has occurred for six consecutive years, all at one site (Holkham).

England, E

Norfolk One site: 14 pairs bred, fledging 27 young.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Occasional breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. In Wiltshire, a pair with two recently fledged young appeared on 13th September, but it is not known whether breeding occurred in the county. The age of the juveniles suggested they may have fledged from somewhere in southern England. To date the only confirmed breeding record in the UK was in Borders, where one young fledged in 2011.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Very rare 27 bp

25y trend: strong decrease -57%

Near-complete

17 sites: 28 pairs. The long-term decline since the early 1990s appears to have stabilised in the last five years (fig. 2).

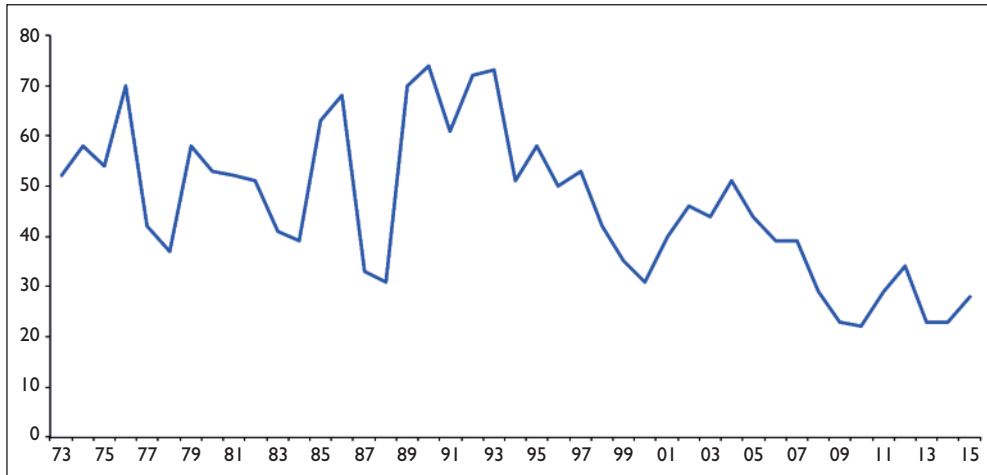


Fig. 2. Numbers of confirmed breeding Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* in the UK, 1973–2015.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 17 sites: 28 pairs bred, 14 young fledged. At the main site, Loch Ruthven, eight pairs fledged four young.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Rare 54 bp

25y trend: **weak increase +44%**

Near-complete

17 sites: 45–59 pairs. The UK’s largest colony is now in Yorkshire, where 18 pairs hatched 37 young of which at least 12 fledged. This is a significant increase on the five pairs there in 2014. The most productive colony was in Hertfordshire, where 13 young fledged.

Black-necked Grebe					Lincolnshire	1	3	6	n/a
					England, C	1	5	5	7
					Nottinghamshire	1	5	5	7
England, SE	S	CP	TP	YF	England, N	9	27	35	24
Essex	5	9	12	13	Cheshire & Wirral	1	6	8	8
Hertfordshire	1	0	1	0	Greater Manchester	1	0	1	0
Kent	2	7	8	13	Northumberland	3	1	3	2
England, E	2	2	3	0	Yorkshire	4	20	23	14
Cambridgeshire	2	4	7	3	TOTALS	17	45	59	47
	1	1	1	3					

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Rare 40 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +219%**

Moderate

18–39 pairs. The 5-year mean has been above 35 pairs since 1999. The long-term increase is from the baseline of lower numbers reported before that year, when we believe some data were withheld from the Panel. Observers are less secretive now, but that cannot be said for the Honey-buzzard itself, which is a difficult species to monitor effectively. There are large areas of Britain where no-one is looking for Honey-buzzards and the population could be more than double the total given here. Only 12% of the UK population occurs within SPAs but this proportion is deemed to be sufficient for its conservation.

Honey-buzzard					England, SE	0	6	16	8
					Kent	0	2	4	2
England, SW	I	CP	TP	YF	Surrey	0	0	4	0
Dorset	0	9	14	10	Sussex	0	4	8	6
Hampshire	0	0	2	0	England, E	1	0	0	0
Wiltshire	0	8	11	8	Norfolk	1	0	0	0
	0	1	1	2					

Honey-buzzard <i>cont.</i>					Denbigh & Flint	0	0	1	0
	I	CP	TP	YF	Gower	0	1	1	2
England, C	1	0	1	0	Scotland, S	1	0	1	0
Herefordshire	0	0	1	0	Dumfries & G'way	1	0	1	0
Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	0	Scotland, Mid	2	0	2	0
England, N	2	2	3	3	Angus & Dundee	1	0	0	0
Cumbria	0	0	1	0	Moray & Nairn	1	0	0	0
Yorkshire	2	2	2	3	Perth & Kinross	0	0	2	0
Wales	0	1	2	2	TOTALS	7	18	39	23

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Rare 83 bp 25y trend: **strong increase +1,181%** Near-complete

75–108 pairs. For the first time since the re-established population began to breed, in 1985, the UK population exceeded 100 pairs.

White-tailed Eagle		Fife			Highland			TOTALS			
	CP	TP	YF	Perth & Kinross	0	1	0	Orkney	1	1	0
Scotland, Mid	2	3	3	Scotland, N & W	73	105	63	Outer Hebrides	19	29	18
Angus & Dundee	1	1	2	Argyll	22	30	21				
									75	108	66

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce 354 bp 25y trend: **strong increase +462%** Moderate

343–393 breeding females/pairs. (Some ‘pairs’ actually refer to multiple females paired with a polygynous male.) There were further signs of range expansion, with the first-ever breeding in Oxfordshire, and the first in Hampshire since 1957.

The last national survey, in 2005 (see Holling *et al.* 2008), found 429 pairs. Data submitted annually to the Panel is incomplete in the core counties of the range (particularly Essex, but also Kent, where at least 25 pairs are thought unaccounted for), which leads to the apparent annual fluctuation in the last decade (fig. 3). Yet despite incomplete coverage, the overall picture is encouraging, with probably 420–450 breeding pairs/females in 2015. Observers are encouraged to report pairs in breeding habitat between April and July (and not to assume that someone else has recorded the birds).

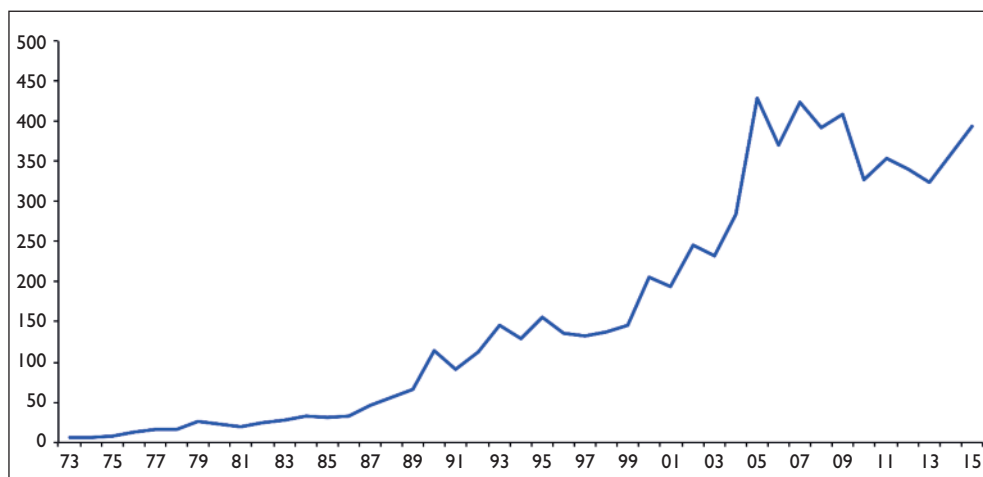


Fig. 3. Total numbers of ‘pairs’ of breeding Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* in the UK, 1973–2015. Note that since 2012 the total has included pairs nesting in the Channel Islands, accounting for some 9–22 pairs.

Marsh Harrier											
	CP	TP	YF	Cambridgeshire	29	39	33	Breconshire	0	1	0
England, SW	17	20	39	Lincolnshire	39	56	35	Scotland, Mid	7	9	20
Cornwall	0	1	0	Norfolk	73	76	61	Angus & Dundee	3	3	6
Dorset	5	5	9	Suffolk	60	64	92	Fife	0	1	0
Hampshire	1	1	2	England, C	1	1	1	Perth & Kinross	4	5	14
Isle of Wight	1	1	2	Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	Scotland, N & W	0	1	0
Somerset	10	12	26	England, N	43	47	63	Highland	0	1	0
England, SE	56	61	36	Cheshire & Wirral	2	2	5	Channel Islands	17	17	n/a
Essex	7	10	6	Lancs & N M'side	5	5	7	Guernsey	4	4	n/a
Kent	46	47	26	Northumberland	1	1	5	Jersey	13	13	n/a
Oxfordshire	1	1	2	Yorkshire	35	39	46	TOTALS	343	393	380
Sussex	2	3	2	Wales	1	2	0				
England, E	201	235	221	Anglesey	1	1	0				

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce 545 bp*

28y trend (survey): stable +2%

Moderate

234–363 pairs. These figures are almost identical to those reported for 2014, but no data from Northern Ireland (55 pairs in 2014) were available. In addition to the confirmed breeding pairs in England, there were records of single, unpaired, birds in Derbyshire (five) and Yorkshire (two). Mostly these birds were present only briefly, early in the spring, but one male lingered and was seen displaying in an area where breeding occurred in 2014. * Wotton *et al.* (2017).

Hen Harrier											
	CP	TP	YF	Meirionnydd	20	22	18	NE Scotland	1	3	4
England, N	10	11	18	Montgomeryshire	3	4	5	Perth & Kinross	16	29	25
Cumbria	4	4	9	Ayrshire	3	3	9	Scotland, N & W	127	207	208
Co. Durham	0	1	0	Borders	6	9	9	Highland	18	23	29
Lancs & N M'side	4	4	1	Clyde	9	22	10	Orkney	42	105	47
Northumberland	2	2	8	Clyde Islands	1	2	0	Outer Hebrides	19	27	41
Wales	30	36	28	Dumfries & G'way	10	12	24	Northern Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a
Breconshire	1	1	2	Scotland, Mid	27	44	41	Isle of Man	11	17	n/a
Caernarfonshire	3	5	n/a	Angus & Dundee	1	1	2	TOTALS	234	363	347
Denbigh & Flint	3	4	3	Moray & Nairn	9	11	10				

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Very rare 10 bp

25y trend: stable -15%

Near-complete

Four sites: seven breeding females/pairs. (Some 'pairs' actually refer to multiple females paired with a polygynous male.) Although the number of breeding birds is similar to that in the early 1990s, there has been as few as seven pairs only once in that period (1996) and four sites is the lowest since 1984. The high incidence of polygyny also does not bode well for a recovery in the near future. Only six young fledged in 2015. In the last ten years, there has been only one other year when fewer than 14 young have been raised in the UK (in 2013, when six young fledged).

England, S

Two sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging three young; (2) one pair bred but failed when the two-week old chicks were predated, probably by a Badger *Meles meles*. Elsewhere, at a former breeding site, just a single female returned.

England, E

Norfolk One extensive site: three females bred (with a single male). One nest failed while the others fledged one young each.

England, E

Yorkshire One site: two females bred with a single male. One nest fledged one young while the other was predated at the chick stage.



Steve McQueen

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Scarce 542 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +274%

Moderate

437–616 pairs. The increase in records continues and in 2015 this was most noticeable in four regions of England and two in Scotland. Even so, in core parts of the range, it is likely that not all pairs are being found or reported. No data from Northern Ireland (12 pairs in 2014) were available in time for inclusion.

Northern Goshawk		Nottinghamshire	9	9	Pembrokeshire	4	7
		Shropshire	16	18	Radnorshire	4	17
	CP	Staffordshire	1	1	Scotland, S	59	79
England, SW	109	Worcestershire	2	3	Ayrshire	3	7
Cornwall	5	England, N	55	104	Borders	21	32
Devon	37	Cheshire & Wirral	0	1	Clyde	3	4
Dorset	0	Cleveland	0	1	Clyde Islands	0	1
Gloucestershire	22	Cumbria	1	14	Dumfries & G'way	31	32
Hampshire	32	Co. Durham	0	5	Lothian	1	3
Somerset	1	Lancs & N M'side	0	1	Scotland, Mid	81	89
Wiltshire	12	Northumberland	28	37	Angus & Dundee	5	5
England, SE	3	Yorkshire	26	45	Moray & Nairn	4	7
Essex	0	Wales	57	99	North-east Scotland	69	73
Surrey	0	Breconshire	3	15	Perth & Kinross	2	2
Sussex	3	Caernarfonshire	0	2	Upper Forth	1	2
England, E	19	Carmarthenshire	2	3	Scotland, N & W	4	5
Norfolk	12	East Glamorgan	2	3	Highland	4	5
Suffolk	7	Gower	4	10	Northern Ireland	n/a	n/a
England, C	50	Gwent	28	30	TOTALS	437	616
Derbyshire	12	Meirionnydd	7	7			
Herefordshire	10	Montgomeryshire	3	5			

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Scarce 508 bp*

33y trend (survey): **stable** +16%

Moderate

508 pairs. * Hayhow *et al.* (2017a).

A complete survey of 729 potential Golden Eagle home ranges in Britain in 2015 found that the population was 508 territorial pairs, a 15% increase from 442 pairs in 2003.

The inventory of known home ranges included 31 'new' home ranges, known to have become established only since the 2003 national survey (some of which were identified during 2015).

Home-range amalgamation was recorded when there was evidence that a former range had been incorporated within another range by territory expansion. Sixty-seven ranges were identified as having been amalgamated with adjacent home ranges, either through discussions with local experts or through observations of eagle movements during the survey field season.

This was the fourth complete survey of Golden Eagles in Britain, and was intended to measure population size, distribution and breeding success and compare findings with the results of previous surveys, in 1982–83, 1992 and 2003, at both national and regional scales. Previous surveys showed an apparently stable population, of around 420–440 breeding pairs. The population had recovered from the effects of persecution in the early nineteenth century and the consequently very low numbers early in the twentieth century. Golden Eagles were once found across most upland areas of Britain, but Scotland is now home to the entire UK population (England’s last remaining Golden Eagle disappeared in 2016).

The survey involved six months of fieldwork, with surveyors visiting each home range on a minimum of three occasions between January and August 2015: first to look for eagles or signs of their presence, then to look for evidence of breeding or carry out further checks for occupation, and finally, to record productivity of nesting pairs.

In 2015, the proportion of post-amalgamation home ranges (661) occupied was 77%, but there was marked variation between regions. The highest concentrations of eagles were found in the Outer Hebrides and on Mull. The northern highlands and the central spine of Scotland, between the Great Glen and Stirlingshire, saw the greatest increase in eagle numbers between 2003 and 2015. Recovery also continued in much of the west highlands and islands with modest increases noted there. However, this positive progress is not consistent across Scotland, and concerns remain about low levels of home-range occupancy in the east highlands (40%), and also the proportion of subadult pairs holding territory in that region and in the south-central highlands. Persecution associated with grouse-moor management has been highlighted as a particular population constraint in both of these areas.

This increase in numbers means that, at a national scale, the population now meets the targets identified by SNH to define favourable conservation status in terms of abundance in Scotland. Home-range occupancy has increased overall but some regions are below target levels. Increased monitoring and tagging of eagles, as well as the introduction of new legislation, may serve as effective deterrents against persecution, so facilitating the population increase.

Data submitted to the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme (Challis *et al.* 2016) showed that in 2015 productivity of the breeding pairs varied across the country: in the west of Scotland, a large proportion of nesting attempts failed while the birds were on eggs or with young; whereas in the east, productivity was higher, with one pair even rearing triplets, which is an infrequent occurrence.

The table below is compiled from returns submitted to the SRMS, but also includes other data received by the RBBP where they differ. The national survey and SRMS annual monitoring use slightly differing criteria for determining occupation of a range by a pair. Following the approach taken for the last national survey, a territory is considered occupied if a pair of birds is recorded OR if only a single bird is seen but a newly built-up nest is recorded. As a consequence, the national survey figure for ranges considered occupied by a pair is slightly higher than the SRMS figures.

(Contributed by Daniel Hayhow)

Golden Eagle					North-east Scotland	3	6	10	5
					Perth & Kinross	7	15	22	11
					Upper Forth	1	6	9	5
England, N	1 ¹	0	0	0	Scotland, N & W	42	257	442	131
Cumbria	1	0	0	0	Argyll	8	57	87	19
Scotland, S	2	9	11	5	Caithness	0	2	4	0
Scotland, Mid	18	33	50	26	Highland	31	135	256	86
Angus & Dundee	5	5	7	4	Outer Hebrides	3	63	95	26
Moray & Nairn	2	1	2	1	TOTALS	63	299	503	162

¹ Total includes home ranges occupied by single birds or showing signs of occupation but no pair seen.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare 225 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +342%**

Moderate

219–245 pairs. A further increase in overall numbers was apparent in 2015, with small gains in most areas apart from Wales, where the number of confirmed breeding pairs remains at four.

Osprey				Meirionnydd	2	2	5	Angus & Dundee	7	8	9
	CP	TP	YF	Montgomeryshire	2	2	6	Moray & Nairn	14	14	26
England, E	2	2	4	Scotland, S	32	36	49	North-east Scotland	16	21	23
Northamptonshire	2	2	4	Ayrshire	2	2	3	Perth & Kinross	31	35	47
England, C	6	6	11	Borders	9	11	7	Upper Forth	20	22	34
Leics & Rutland	6	6	11	Clyde	11	11	20	Scotland, N & W	80	89	119
England, N	7	8	14	Clyde Islands	1	1	1	Argyll	14	17	17
Cumbria	4	4	8	Dumfries & G'way	8	10	16	Caithness	3	3	4
Northumberland	3	4	6	Lothian	1	1	2	Highland	63	69	98
Wales	4	4	11	Scotland, Mid	88	100	139	TOTALS	219	245	347

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Less scarce 1,353 bp (no trend available)

Moderate

437 sites: 272–1,353 territories. The number of territories reported has ranged from 972 to 1,628 since 2006 (when RBBP monitoring began) but this variation is probably due to annual differences in coverage. Water Rail is known to be a particularly under-recorded species and this year many recorders provided a separate estimate of their county population; some of these differed considerably from the 2015 records (e.g. Argyll 100, Borders 110, Dorset 184, Dumfries & Galloway 30, Hampshire 100, Moray & Nairn 40, North-east Scotland 80 and Sussex 76). Taking all these into account would give a revised figure of at least 1,950 territories.

Water Rail				Suffolk	22	266	Scotland, S	27	41
	S	T		England, C	25	85	Ayrshire	4	9
England, SW	29	144		Derbyshire	4	6	Borders	7	12
Avon	2	29		Leics & Rutland	2	2	Clyde	6	10
Devon	4	10		Nottinghamshire	5	19	Clyde Islands	1	1
Dorset	6	16		Staffordshire	7	32	Dumfries & G'way	7	7
Gloucestershire	1	1		Warwickshire	3	17	Lothian	2	2
Hampshire	9	31		West Midlands	1	1	Scotland, Mid	30	42
Isle of Wight	1	1		Worcestershire	3	8	Angus & Dundee	8	15
Isles of Scilly	1	2		England, N	106	398	Fife	2	2
Somerset	4	52		Cheshire & Wirral	21	42	Moray & Nairn	1	3
Wiltshire	1	2		Cleveland	2	7	North-east Scotland	15	18
England, SE	67	101		Cumbria	6	7	Perth & Kinross	4	4
Bedfordshire	6	8		Co. Durham	5	8	Scotland, N & W	28	68
Berkshire	6	6		Greater Manchester	14	53	Argyll	12	36
Buckinghamshire	3	3		Lancs & N M'side	8	163	Caithness	2	2
Essex	3	13		Northumberland	14	15	Highland	9	19
Hertfordshire	4	11		Yorkshire	36	103	Orkney	5	11
Kent	24	38		Wales	25	49	Northern Ireland	10	16
Oxfordshire	3	6		Anglesey	4	12	Co. Antrim	2	2
Surrey	7	10		Breconshire	4	5	Co. Armagh	2	4
Sussex	11	6		Caernarfonshire	3	3	Co. Down	5	8
England, E	85	403		Ceredigion	3	3	Co. Fermanagh	1	2
Cambridgeshire	23	37		Denbigh & Flint	1	1	Isle of Man	2	2
Lincolnshire	6	34		East Glamorgan	2	2	Channel Islands	3	4
Norfolk	28	60		Gower	7	10	Jersey	3	4
Northamptonshire	6	6		Gwent	1	6	TOTALS	437	1,353
				Radnorshire	n/a	7			

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana***Very rare** 29 bp25y trend: **stable** +16%

Moderate

17 sites: 0–28 pairs/singing males. All records refer to singing males and all records are included here, regardless of how long the birds were present. It is clear that 2014, when 51 singing males were reported from 21 counties, was an exceptional year. The site in Cheshire & Wirral where breeding was confirmed in 2014 saw the return of a territorial male, but the long period of singing suggests it may have been unmated. For the first time since 2002, no Spotted Crakes were reported from anywhere in Yorkshire. White & Kehoe (2017) showed that 2015 was the poorest year for migrant Spotted Crakes in Britain since 1986.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: one, 15th–22nd June. Somerset Two sites: (1) four birds; (2) three birds.

England, SE

Kent One site: one, 27th–30th May.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) Nene Washes: one from 3rd May to late June; (2) Ouse Washes: one, 3rd–4th May.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one, 6th April.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one from early May to late August. Lancashire & N Merseyside Two sites: (1) one; (2) one.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: two, 22nd–25th July. Clyde Two sites: (1) five; (2) one, 20th–31st July.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee One site: one, 15th–24th July.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one, 21st and 28th July. Caithness One site: one, 30th May. Highland One site: two.

Corn Crane *Crex crex***Less scarce** 1,200 bp25y trend: **strong increase** +146%

Near-complete

1,121 singing males. Although the long-term trend is positive, fewer Corn Crakes were reported in 2015 than in 2014 when 1,333 singing males were found (Wotton *et al.* 2015). Declines were noted in most of the islands in Argyll and the Outer Hebrides as well as in Orkney and Yorkshire. Three birds in Northern Ireland is typical, although ten were reported in 2011. Eleven SPAs are classified for Corn Crakes and these areas hold 29% of the breeding population.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Total 24: Nene Washes 21, Ouse Washes 3. Lincolnshire One, 22nd May to 2nd June.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One, 25th May to 16th June. Yorkshire One, female trapped with brood patch.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One in June.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Total 605: Coll 78, Colonsay & Oronsay 55, Gigha 0, Iona 32, Islay 102, Mull 3, Staffa 0, Tiree 333, Treshnish Isles 1; mainland 1. Caithness Total two. Highland Total 56: Canna 5, Eigg 1, mainland 10, Muck 8, Skye 32. Orkney Total 16. Outer Hebrides Total 408: Barra & Vatersay 82, Benbecula 17, Berneray 1, Harris 3, Lewis 103, Mingulay and other islands south of Vatersay 6, North Uist 118, South Uist 78. Shetland Total three.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim Two. Co. Derry One.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Very rare 24 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +1,883% Near-complete

14 sites: 26–32 pairs. A total of 14 young fledged. Cranes that are apparently paired but not associated with a particular site are classed as non-breeding pairs; as well as the ten noted below, there were two other non-breeding pairs reported, from Gwent and Shetland. It is likely that these pairs will settle at new breeding sites in the coming years, continuing the increase in numbers and range.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: two pairs bred, one chick fledged. A total of four non-breeding pairs in the county. **Somerset** Three sites: (1) two pairs bred, both unsuccessful, and one probable breeding pair; (2) one pair bred, two young fledged; (3) one probable breeding pair. Two non-breeding pairs in the county. **Wiltshire** One site: one pair bred, one young fledged.

England, SE

Oxfordshire One site: one pair bred, but failed when the clutch was predated.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three sites: (1) three pairs bred, but all nests were predated; (2) one pair bred, one young fledged; (3) one pair bred, one young fledged. One non-breeding pair elsewhere in the county. **Norfolk** One extensive site (Norfolk Broads): nine pairs bred. Three pairs were successful and a total of four young fledged. Also one probable and two possible breeding pairs in the Broads. **Suffolk** One site (Lakenheath): two pairs bred, fledging three young between them. Two non-breeding pairs elsewhere in the county.

England, N

Yorkshire One extensive site: two pairs bred, one young fledged, the nest of the other pair was predated. One non-breeding pair elsewhere in the county.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland: Two sites: (1) one pair bred, but the chick(s) were predated a week after hatching; (2) one probable breeding pair.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Very rare 2 bp (no trend available) Near-complete

One extensive site: two pairs. Although birds reintroduced to Salisbury Plain have bred each year since 2007, success has been poor and the number of egg-laying females has never exceeded four.

England, SW

Wiltshire One site: at least two females laid eggs. One nest produced one chick to fledging age, the outcome of the second nest was unknown.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Scarce 399 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +196% Near-complete

335–402 pairs. A reduction in monitoring effort means that the outcome of many nesting attempts is not followed through, so it is not possible to give the total number of young fledged. Some county figures include estimates of additional pairs based on recent occupation of known sites. Around a third of nests are now on cropped farmland, while over half are on protected plots or in semi-natural grassland (per RSPB).

Stone-curlew			Wiltshire	90	103	England, E	197	250
			England, SE	10	10	Cambridgeshire	2	2
	CP	TP	Berkshire	3	3	Norfolk	99	138
England, SW	128	142	Oxfordshire	5	5	Suffolk	96	110
Hampshire	38	39	Sussex	2	2	TOTALS	335	402

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Occasional breeder

Five sites: four pairs. This is the third consecutive year that Black-winged Stilts have bred in England, but no young were reared in 2015. Ausden *et al.* (2016) concluded that this species is attempting to colonise Britain, a process driven by both population increases in northern France and drought conditions in southwest Europe in spring. The provision of disturbance-free sites and measures to minimise both nest predation and rapid changes in water levels are required to help the establishment of this vulnerable population.

England, SE

Kent Two sites: (1) two pairs bred, each making two nesting attempts. The first attempts failed before hatching, the second attempts produced broods of three and two chicks but all were predated. (2) One pair from site (1) nested but the eggs were predated.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair bred, laying two eggs that were predated within a week of being laid. The birds arrived on 16th May, the nest was empty by 25th May. **Lincolnshire** One site: one pair present only on 27th–28th May; they displayed, mated, built a nest, but then left the area. This may have been a failed pair from elsewhere, perhaps Cambridgeshire. **Norfolk** One site: one pair bred but the eggs were predated.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Less scarce 1,791 bp 25y trend: **strong increase +368%** **Near-complete**

106 sites: 1,893 pairs. Almost 2,000 pairs of Avocets nested in 21 counties, a total and range matched only in 2012. Since 2012 the returns from one important county, Essex, have been incomplete; in 2015, that means that perhaps 100 pairs are missing from the UK total. Assessment of the SPA network for this species depends on knowing the precise location of colonies. Currently, the network is deemed to be insufficient for the protection of Avocets, so annual counts of all colonies and submission of the data to the RBBP is an important priority.

Avocet		England, E		England, N				
	S	CP	Cambridgeshire	45	934	Cheshire & Wirral	25	299
England, SW	6	52	Lincolnshire	11	229	Cleveland	3	35
Gloucestershire	1	5	Norfolk	20	465	Co. Durham	2	26
Hampshire	3	44	Suffolk	9	215	Lancs & N M'side	5	8
Somerset	2	3	England, C	5	19	Northumberland	2	102
England, SE	24	549	Leics & Rutland	1	1	Yorkshire	11	7
Essex	8	51	Nottinghamshire	2	4	Wales	1	121
Kent	13	417	Staffordshire	1	2	Gwent	1	40
Sussex	3	81	Worcestershire	1	12	TOTALS	106	40
							106	1,893

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce 423 males* 24y trend (survey): **strong decrease -57%** **Low**

Data were received relating to a total of 75 breeding pairs or single birds in suitable habitat in the main Scottish range, in **Angus & Dundee** (1), **Highland** (59), **Moray & Nairn** (5), **North-east Scotland** (8) and **Perth & Kinross** (2); of these, 45 pairs were proved to breed. *Hayhow *et al.* (2015).

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Scarce 587 bp 15y trend: **stable +1%** **Moderate**

588 pairs. The table below shows only confirmed and probable breeding pairs; a further 48 possible breeding pairs may have been passage birds or those using sites only temporarily. The number of breeding Little Ringed Plovers submitted each year has been remarkably consistent



Colin Richards

393. Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Cairngorms National Park, Scotland, June 2015.

since the species was added to our list in 1996, although the national survey in 2007 found 1,115 pairs (Conway *et al.* 2008). Most Little Ringed Plovers in the UK nest in small sand-pit or quarry sites, with each site holding fewer than ten pairs. The extensive river shingles of the Tywi river system in Carmarthenshire were not thoroughly counted in 2015 but this important population usually numbers around 60 pairs.

Little Ringed Plover	England, E	69	Northumberland	17
	Cambridgeshire	9	Yorkshire	71
	Lincolnshire	17	Wales	35
England, SW	TP	65	Norfolk	34
Avon	2	Northamptonshire	4	Carmarthenshire
Cornwall	1	Suffolk	5	Denbigh & Flint
Devon	3	England, C	101	East Glamorgan
Dorset	8	Derbyshire	24	Gower
Gloucestershire	10	Herefordshire	7	Gwent
Hampshire	24	Leics & Rutland	12	Meirionnydd
Somerset	5	Nottinghamshire	17	Montgomeryshire
Wiltshire	12	Shropshire	2	Radnorshire
England, SE	97	Staffordshire	17	Scotland, S
Bedfordshire	5	Warwickshire	11	Clyde
Berkshire	9	West Midlands	2	Dumfries & G'way
Buckinghamshire	11	Worcestershire	9	Lothian
Essex	8	England, N	193	Scotland, Mid
Greater London	6	Cheshire & Wirral	25	Angus & Dundee
Hertfordshire	10	Cleveland	4	Fife
Kent	16	Cumbria	10	Moray & Nairn
Oxfordshire	7	Co. Durham	12	North-east Scotland
Surrey	8	Greater Manchester	22	Perth & Kinross
Sussex	17	Lancs & N M'side	32	TOTAL
				588

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Rare 290+ bp* (no trend available) Low

The extremely poor reporting rate for Whimbrel continued in 2015: two pairs were reported from Orkney while no information on the numbers of breeding pairs was available from Shetland. We repeat our plea for *all* records of birds in potential breeding habitat to be submitted to the county recorders. * Jackson (2009).

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Rare 54 bp 25y trend: **stable** -1% Near-complete

Ten sites: 57–60 pairs. Although the number of breeding pairs remains fairly steady, productivity in 2015 was again very poor and just five young fledged. In the most recent five-year period, it was only in 2012 that more than ten young were raised. The five-year mean productivity at the main site, the Nene Washes in Cambridgeshire, is just 0.20 young per breeding pair, well below a sustainable level (per RSPB). Predation of chicks by Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* seems to have been the main issue for the nominate *limosa* population in 2015.

Black-tailed Godwit					England, N	1	0	2	0
	S	CP	TP	YF	Lancs & N M'side	1	0	2	0
<i>L. l. limosa</i>	4	50	52	2	<i>L. l. islandica</i>	6	7	8	3
England, SW	1	1	1	2	Scotland, N & W	6	7	8	3
England, E	2	49	49	0	Orkney	3	4	5	0
Cambridgeshire	1	46	46	0	Shetland	3	3	3	3
Norfolk	1	3	3	0	TOTALS	10	57	60	5

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Very rare 8 females 25y trend: **strong decrease** -72% High

Four sites: 1–7 breeding females. A female was discovered attending a nest with eggs in Highland in late June. Records of confirmed breeding for Ruff are unusual (there have been only four in the last ten years) and to find a nest even more so. The site was not near a known lekking area so the female may have come some distance to nest (male Ruffs play no part in parental duties, leaving the females to incubate the eggs and rear the chicks). Elsewhere, lekking and copulating birds were reported from Cambridgeshire (10–13 males), Cheshire & Wirral (up to 11 males and one female), Norfolk (up to eight males) and Yorkshire (up to 35 males), but in all cases the birds moved on and there were no subsequent breeding attempts at these sites.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One extensive site: up to 51 males and five females at leks from 23rd April. In early May the females were seen to move out to marshland, but although they may have nested there, there was no further evidence of breeding.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one female on 18th May at a former breeding site. Highland One site: one pair bred. A female was found on eggs in late June and was still present on 16th July but there was no sign of any Ruffs in the area by the end of July.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Very rare 1 bp 25y trend: **strong decrease** -50% Near-complete

One site: 0–1 pairs. Higher numbers were present in the late 1980s but in the last ten years there have been no more than two pairs reported each year.

Scotland, N

One site: one pair was present in the usual nesting area, but there was no further evidence of a breeding attempt.



Roger Riddington

394. Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Shetland, July 2015.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Rare 50 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +195%

Near-complete

24 sites: 61–83 breeding pairs/males. This is by some distance the highest number of confirmed breeding and total pairs reported by the Panel, with an increase of 87% in the total since 2014. The increase was evident across all island groups where phalaropes nest and has also occurred in Ireland, where at least ten males were present at two sites in Co. Mayo in 2015 (Newton 2016).

Red-necked Phalarope

	S	CP	TP
Scotland, N & W	24	61	83
Argyll	3	3	6
Outer Hebrides	5	8	15
Shetland	16	50	62
TOTALS	24	61	83

As well as the apparently breeding males listed in the table, a female returned to the potential breeding site in North-east Scotland that was visited in 2010 and in each summer from 2012 and 2014; a male was also recorded nearby but the two were not seen together. In Northumberland, a female was also present for an extended period at an upland site.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Very rare 3 bp

15y trend: **strong increase** +100%

High

One site: 0–1 pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one possible breeding pair. Two birds were recorded but only on one date.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Less scarce 1,080 bp* (no trend available)

Low

27–267 pairs. Thanks to diligent recording in Highland, this is the highest total since 2010, when the numbers reported were boosted by fieldwork for *Bird Atlas 2007–11*. The last full survey of Greenshanks was 20 years ago and there is insufficient information to assess population trends since then. * Hancock *et al.* (1997).

Greenshank	Scotland, N & W	264
	Caithness	34
Scotland, Mid	TP Highland	201
	Outer Hebrides	29
Perth & Kinross	3 TOTAL	267

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Very rare 29 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +663%**

Near-complete

17 sites: 2–33 pairs. These are the highest numbers of breeding Wood Sandpipers reported by the Panel (fig. 4), higher than in 2007, which coincided with a full survey. The species is well monitored every year at its traditional sites by RSPB Scotland, but other sites are not always checked annually, which contributes to the apparent variation in numbers. Exploration of suitable areas often reveals new sites for Wood Sandpipers (four completely new sites were registered in 2015), suggesting that the true population may yet be a little higher than reported here.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness Three sites: three possible breeding pairs. **Highland** 14 sites: two pairs bred, five probable and 23 possible breeding pairs.

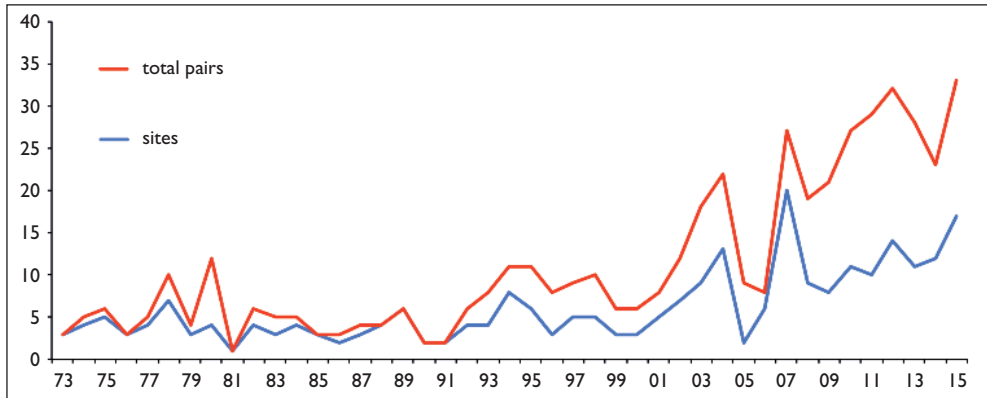


Fig. 4. Total numbers of occupied sites and breeding pairs of breeding Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* in the UK, 1973–2015.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Scarce 2,136 bp*

15y trend (survey): **strong decrease -37%** Moderate

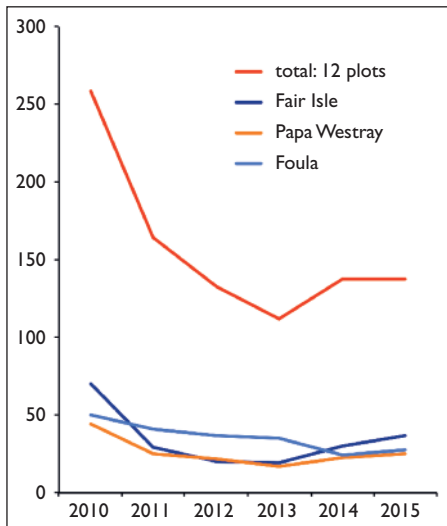


Fig. 5. Total AOTs of Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus* at 12 sites with data for all years, 2010–2015; shown separately are the three largest UK colonies.

226 AOTs. In the last national census, 2,136 Apparently Occupied Territories (AOTs) were found in the UK, compared with 3,388 in the previous census (Lloyd *et al.* 1991; Mitchell *et al.* 2004). This steep decline led to the species being Red-listed in BoCC3 (Eaton *et al.* 2009) and it was added to the list of species covered by the RBBP in 2010 to help monitor any subsequent change in status. Seabird Monitoring Programme data (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2878>) show that the trend was stable until the early 1990s but that since then this species has declined more than any other seabird in the UK, with the lowest population index in 2013 being 82% lower than in 1986.

At the start of the century, breeding was widespread in Orkney and Shetland, including Fair Isle. In the Hebrides, breeding was recorded on Lewis, North Uist and St Kilda (Outer Hebrides), Coll and Jura (Argyll) and Handa (Highland). On the Scottish mainland, there were two coastal sites in Sutherland (Highland) and three coastal sites in

Arctic Skua				Caithness	4	5	2	Outer Hebrides	1	2	n/a
	S	AOT	YF	Fair Isle	1	37	10	Shetland	13	89	n/a
Scotland N & W	38	226	69	Highland	2	17	15	TOTALS	38	226	69
Argyll	1	1	n/a	Orkney	16	75	42				

Caithness; the only inland population was in the Caithness Flows.

The mean number of AOTs reported by the RBBP in 2011–15 is only 183 so it is clear that many sites are not counted each year. Arctic Skuas are fully surveyed on Fair Isle every year and a county-wide survey in Orkney found 376 AOTs in 2010. In the six years since the species was added, we have data from a total of around 60 sites; 38 sites in 2015 is the highest yet. This variation in coverage makes assessment of the population trend very difficult in the absence of a complete survey. However, we have data from 12 sites in all six years, 2010–15, which show a mean annual total of 157 AOTs. Fig. 5 shows how this sample has fared over the six years, including counts from the three largest colonies: Fair Isle, Foula (Shetland) and Papa Westray (Orkney). It is clear that the decline continued until 2013 but in all cases there has been a small recovery since. The number of young fledged has been higher in 2014 and 2015 than in the previous few years, suggesting that food supply has been better and predation pressure reduced in these years. * Mitchell *et al.* (2004).

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Less scarce 1,554 bp 15y trend: stable +5%

High

62 sites: 1,417 pairs. The total number of pairs nesting in 2015 was the lowest since 2010 (cool, windy weather and consequently poor feeding conditions early in the breeding season led to fewer pairs settling to breed), although at least 660 young fledged. The greater mobility of birds meant that several sites were occupied for the first time in years, however, and in some areas the numbers nesting were higher than recently (for example colonies in Cleveland, Denbigh & Flint and Lothian). The EU LIFE+ Little Tern Recovery Project continued in 2015, and at some colonies additional measures were used to improve breeding success, such as diversionary feeding of Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* and Foxes, and the use of a raft (Macleod-Nolan 2016).

Little Tern				Norfolk	13	439	134	Scotland, Mid	2	21	0
	S	CP	YF	Suffolk	4	191	182	Moray & Nairn	1	2	0
England, SW	4	85	39	England, N	8	189	115	North-east Scotland	1	19	0
Dorset	1	33	34	Cleveland	2	45	28	Scotland, N & W	19	175	6
Hampshire	3	52	5	Cumbria	3	63	5	Argyll	5	90	6
England, SE	7	66	42	Northumberland	2	44	53	Caithness	0	0	0
Essex	3	22	1	Yorkshire	1	37	29	Highland	1	5	n/a
Kent	1	2	3	Wales	2	165	101	Orkney	1	2	n/a
Sussex	3	42	38	Denbigh & Flint	2	165	101	Outer Hebrides	12	78	n/a
England, E	18	662	346	Scotland, S	1	4	8	Isle of Man	1	50	3
Lincolnshire	1	32	30	Lothian	1	4	8	TOTALS	62	1,417	660

Roseate Tern *Sternula dougallii*

Rare 89 bp

25y trend: strong decrease -48%

Near-complete

Five sites: 113 pairs plus three mixed pairs. In Northumberland, a record 111 pairs nested on Coquet Island, while another pair bred on the Farne Islands (although that nest failed). At least 105 young (including one hybrid) probably fledged. All mixed pairs were with Common Terns *S. hirundo*. Pairs were also seen at suitable nesting sites on Anglesey and on the Isle of May, but did not stay to breed.

Roseate Tern				Wales	1	2	1	Northern Ireland	1	1	1
	S	CP	YF	Anglesey	1	2*	1	Co. Antrim	1	1	1
England, N	2	112	102	Scotland, Mid	1	1	1	TOTALS	5	116	105
Northumberland	2	112	102	Fife	1	1*	1	(* mixed pairs)			

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Occasional breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. A pair settled at the same site in Scotland where display and copulation had occurred in 2014; three nests were built but no eggs were laid.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one probable breeding pair.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Scarce 889 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +9,158%**

Moderate

41 sites: 855–875 pairs. The first nesting by a pair of Mediterranean Gulls occurred in 1968, in Hampshire, and this was followed by territory-holding by males and mixed pairings with Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. Numbers grew only slowly until the early 2000s, when there was a rapid increase, but the present decade has seen the total fluctuate between about 800 and 1,050 pairs (fig. 6). It has become increasingly difficult to obtain accurate counts for some colonies, many of which are on estuarine islands, and some colonies are prone to desertion after tidal flooding. The majority (85% in 2015) of nesting pairs still occur along the south coast of England, from Dorset to the Thames Estuary (note that no data for 2015 were submitted from Essex). The mixed pairings included in the table were with Black-headed Gulls (Anglesey and Dumfries & Galloway) and with a Common Gull *L. canus* (Co. Fermanagh).

Mediterranean Gull			Lincolnshire	1	0	1	Wales	2	3	4	
	S	CP	TP	Norfolk	4	54	54	Anglesey	1	1*	2
England, SW	7	464	464	Suffolk	3	1	7	Carmarthenshire	1	2	2
Dorset	2	67	67	England, N	12	43	49	Scotland, S	1	0	1
Hampshire	5	397	397	Cheshire & Wirral	2	0	3	Dumfries & G'way	1	0	1*
England, SE	7	284	287	Cleveland	1	0	2	Northern Ireland	2	5	6
Kent	5	251	254	Greater Manchester	1	1	1	Co. Antrim	1	5	5
Sussex	2	33	33	Lancs & N M'side	4	35	36	Co. Fermanagh	1	0	1*
England, E	10	56	64	Northumberland	1	3	3	TOTALS	41	855	875
Cambridgeshire	2	1	2	Yorkshire	3	4	4	(* mixed pairs)			



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Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus*

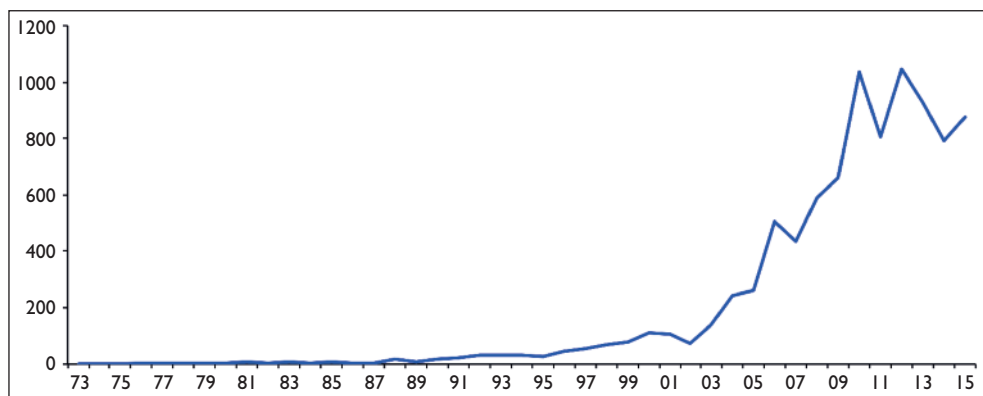


Fig. 6. Total numbers of breeding pairs of breeding Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* in the UK, 1973–2015.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Very rare 3 bp

15y trend: **strong increase +86%**

Near-complete

Two sites: two pairs. Two pure breeding pairs were reported, both at traditional sites. Some mixed, but apparently non-breeding, pairs occurred elsewhere; for example, a Yellow-legged Gull and a Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* were seen behaving as a pair in spring in Norfolk, at an inland site but not at a gull colony.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair bred, one young fledged. Hampshire One site: one pair bred, two young fledged.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Less scarce 1,800+ bp* (no trend available)

Low

239–314 pairs. Fewer Long-eared Owls were reported from Wales and southern Scotland in 2015, but most of the other regions held similar numbers to those in 2014. In areas of northern England where the species is monitored, it was a mixed year for numbers of breeding pairs found and young fledged (Smith *et al.* 2016). No data were available from the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group but this species is the commonest owl there and greatly under-recorded. * Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

Long-eared Owl		England, N	114	151	Angus & Dundee	9	9
		Cheshire & Wirral	0	1	Fife	1	2
		Cleveland	3	4	Moray & Nairn	1	1
England, SW	4	Cumbria	0	6	North-east Scotland	4	4
Avon	1	Co. Durham	9	9	Perth & Kinross	2	3
Hampshire	2	Greater Manchester	12	17	Upper Forth	2	3
Somerset	0	Lancs & N M'side	15	17	Scotland, N & W	16	29
Wiltshire	1	Northumberland	9	18	Argyll	4	7
England, SE	10	Yorkshire	66	79	Caithness	1	1
Kent	9	Wales	11	16	Highland	7	14
Sussex	1	Ceredigion	1	1	Orkney	0	2
England, E	13	Gwent	8	8	Outer Hebrides	4	5
Cambridgeshire	1	Montgomeryshire	0	1	Northern Ireland	0	1
Norfolk	7	Radnorshire	2	6	Co. Antrim	0	1
Northamptonshire	0	Scotland, S	12	14	Isle of Man	1	1
Suffolk	5	Borders	9	9	Channel Islands	12	12
England, C	27	Clyde	0	1	Guernsey	3	3
Derbyshire	15	Clyde Islands	0	1	Jersey	9	9
Nottinghamshire	10	Lothian	3	3	TOTALS	239	314
Staffordshire	2	Scotland, Mid	19	22			

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Scarce 620+ bp* (no trend available) Low

110–290 pairs. The data presented here are heavily dependent on incidental records provided by raptor specialists working in the uplands. In Scotland, productivity was poor, with only 1.7 young fledged per successful pair compared with 2.1 in 2014 (Challis *et al.* 2016). It was one of the best years for the species in northern England, with 39 successful pairs producing at least 46 young (Smith *et al.* 2016). Northern and central parts of the Pennines had higher numbers than normally reported, although comparatively low numbers were found in Northumberland, the North Yorkshire Moors and the South Peak area of the south Pennines. * Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

Short-eared Owl		Northumberland		Angus & Dundee				
	CP	TP	Yorkshire	0	6	Moray & Nairn	1	3
England, E	0	2	Wales	24	48	North-east Scotland	0	4
Norfolk	0	2	Denbigh & Flint	5	11	Perth & Kinross	0	6
England, C	9	18	Meirionnydd	1	1	Upper Forth	17	20
Derbyshire	8	16	Montgomeryshire	0	2	Scotland, N & W	0	1
Staffordshire	1	2	Pembrokeshire	0	1	Argyll	16	77
England, N	50	120	Radnorshire	2	2	Caithness	3	3
Cleveland	2	2	Scotland, S	2	5	Highland	0	2
Cumbria	0	22	Borders	11	27	Orkney	4	25
Co. Durham	11	24	Clyde	6	11	Outer Hebrides	7	43
Greater Manchester	1	4	Dumfries & G'way	4	7	Isle of Man	2	4
Lancs & N M'side	12	14	Scotland, Mid	1	9	TOTALS	1	1
				18	34		110	290

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Occasional breeder

One site: two pairs. The year 2015 was the best ever for migrant Bee-eaters in Britain: an estimated 193 birds were reported, with the main arrival in June (White & Kehoe 2017). It was also the first time that breeding occurred in two consecutive years, although the choice of location



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appears to be purely opportunistic. Two pairs fledged nine young in the Isle of Wight in 2014, while in 2015 two pairs nested in Cumbria. In addition, a party of four Bee-eaters was present on the Isles of Scilly for six days in June, joined by a further eight birds on 8th–9th June. Copulation was observed on 10th

395. European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Cumbria, July 2015.

June before the birds departed but there was no other indication of breeding; there is probably no suitable nesting habitat on the islands.

England, N

Cumbria One site: two pairs bred at a quarry site in the north of the county, one young fledged successfully.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Former breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. With no confirmed breeding in the UK for over ten years, the Wryneck is judged to be regionally extinct as a breeding species (Eaton *et al.* 2015; Stanbury *et al.* 2017), but each year since 2007 potential breeding birds have been reported at between one and five sites. The status of the Wryneck as a breeding bird in the UK was reviewed in Holling *et al.* (2012) and Hayhow *et al.* (2017b).

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: a single bird was seen on 25th July only.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*

Less scarce 1,000+ bp* (no trend available)

Low

25–311 territories. The table below lists all records of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers thought to be in breeding territories, based on presence in suitable habitat between February and July. Most records come from casual encounters but in Hampshire there has been a concerted effort to find and record territories in recent years, mainly in the New Forest. Consequently, there have been consistently high totals for that county since 2011, when 90 territories were identified. By comparing their findings from two extensive areas of the county with the extent of available habitat, the Hampshire fieldworkers estimate the population for the whole county to be at least 250 territories (Hampshire Recorder pers. comm.). A similar exercise for Kent, based on a recent tetrad atlas (Clements *et al.* 2015), estimated 150–200 territories. The Sussex tetrad atlas (Thomas 2014) estimated a county population of 10–20 pairs.

Since this is such a difficult bird to find, especially once trees are in leaf, we asked all county recorders to provide us with their best estimate of the number of territories in their areas. The response was disappointing, with most merely restating their 2015 count. In addition to the three English counties noted above, three Welsh counties – Breconshire, East Glamorgan and Gower – provided county estimates by increasing their 2015 totals by a few pairs to take account of suitable areas not checked, but all agreed that there is insufficient local effort to search for this species, so the estimates are inevitably low. Taking these additional figures into account, the estimated total submitted to the RBBP by county recorders was c. 600 territories. Habitat-based estimates indicate a larger figure than this, but probably still fewer than 1,000 territories (Rob Clements pers. comm.). * Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Oxfordshire	1	England, N	33	
	Surrey	19	Cheshire & Wirral	10	
	TP	8	Co. Durham	1	
England, SW	114	England, E	Greater Manchester	4	
Cornwall	5	Cambridgeshire	Yorkshire	18	
Devon	2	Lincolnshire	Wales	28	
Dorset	5	Norfolk	Breconshire	2	
Gloucestershire	12	Northamptonshire	Caernarfonshire	1	
Hampshire	67	Suffolk	Carmarthenshire	3	
Somerset	14	England, C	Ceredigion	2	
Wiltshire	9	Derbyshire	Denbigh & Flint	2	
England, SE	68	Herefordshire	East Glamorgan	3	
Bedfordshire	3	Leics & Rutland	Gower	1	
Berkshire	3	Nottinghamshire	Gwent	5	
Buckinghamshire	6	Shropshire	Meirionnydd	1	
Essex	2	Staffordshire	Montgomeryshire	2	
Greater London	2	Warwickshire	Radnorshire	6	
Hertfordshire	5	West Midlands	n/a		
Kent	19	Worcestershire	11	TOTALS	311

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Less scarce 1,160 bp* 25y trend (survey): **weak increase +94%** Moderate

282–381 pairs. Almost the same number of Merlin pairs were monitored in 2015 as in 2014, covering about a quarter of the population estimated by Ewing *et al.* (2011). Possible breeding records (17 pairs) are omitted from the table, since these usually refer to single sightings or signs of occupation in suitable habitat with no further evidence. It was a poor year in at least two areas: no young fledged from 13 pairs in Meirionnydd and only one from 23 pairs in Northumberland. Poor weather conditions – heavy rain and mist – were implicated in the latter case, yet 2015 was the most productive season for Merlins in a Co. Durham study area since that study began in the mid 1990s: 164 young fledged from 50 nests where eggs were laid (Smith *et al.* 2016). Greater Manchester also had its first successful nest for many years. * Ewing *et al.* (2011).

Merlin			Yorkshire	22	32	Angus & Dundee	8	10
			Wales	23	25	Moray & Nairn	17	18
	CP	TP	Breconshire	2	2	North-east Scotland	34	44
England, C	12	13	Ceredigion	0	1	Perth & Kinross	18	28
Derbyshire	10	10	Meirionnydd	13	13	Upper Forth	0	2
Herefordshire	0	1	Montgomeryshire	3	4	Scotland, N & W	49	70
Shropshire	1	1	Radnorshire	5	5	Argyll	1	1
Staffordshire	1	1	Scotland, S	21	42	Caithness	0	1
England, N	100	129	Ayrshire	0	3	Highland	17	23
Cumbria	1	9	Borders	8	17	Orkney	4	13
Co. Durham	50	54	Clyde	7	9	Outer Hebrides	3	8
Greater Manchester	1	1	Dumfries & G'way	5	9	Shetland	24	24
Lancs & N M'side	9	10	Lothian	1	4	Northern Ireland	n/a	n/a
Northumberland	17	23	Scotland, Mid	77	102	TOTALS	282	381

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Less scarce 938 bp 25y trend: **strong increase +172%** Low

225–899 pairs. Compared with 25 years ago, when our 1990 report described expansions west into Wales, east into East Anglia and north to Yorkshire (Ogilvie *et al.* 1993), there has been a substantial increase in the numbers and range of the Hobby. At that time, using a figure of only two pairs per occupied 10-km square, the population was estimated at 500–900 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Now, Clements *et al.* (2016) suggest that 3,000 breeding pairs may be a more reasonable estimate for the UK. Continued low coverage of the species in its core range reduces the value of our figures to inform population estimates. We again encourage counties to instigate local studies, as described by Clements *et al.* (2016).

Hobby			Surrey	10	12	Lancs & N M'side	0	10
	CP	TP	Sussex	2	24	Northumberland	0	1
England, SW	57	290	England, E	51	158	Yorkshire	4	26
Avon	5	8	Cambridgeshire	8	8	Wales	14	43
Cornwall	4	17	Lincolnshire	4	85	Breconshire	2	7
Devon	16	26	Norfolk	6	11	Carmarthenshire	0	4
Dorset	6	10	Northamptonshire	24	24	Denbigh & Flint	0	1
Gloucestershire	7	8	Suffolk	9	30	East Glamorgan	1	6
Hampshire	9	149	England, C	54	140	Gower	1	3
Isle of Wight	0	2	Derbyshire	32	36	Gwent	4	5
Somerset	1	8	Herefordshire	5	11	Meirionnydd	0	2
Wiltshire	9	62	Leics & Rutland	1	21	Montgomeryshire	0	4
England, SE	36	197	Nottinghamshire	4	4	Radnorshire	6	11
Bedfordshire	4	5	Shropshire	3	4	Scotland, S	0	1
Berkshire	3	11	Staffordshire	3	42	Borders	0	1
Buckinghamshire	4	7	Warwickshire	3	3	Scotland, Mid	1	3
Essex	1	11	Worcestershire	3	19	Angus & Dundee	0	2
Greater London	2	3	England, N	12	65	Perth & Kinross	1	1
Hertfordshire	1	42	Cheshire & Wirral	7	20	Scotland, N & W	0	2
Kent	1	59	Cumbria	0	1	Highland	0	2
Oxfordshire	8	23	Greater Manchester	1	7	TOTALS	225	899

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Less scarce 1,701 bp* 25y trend (survey): **stable** +5%

Moderate

733–997 pairs. The Peregrine is the only species of rare breeding bird which nests in all recording areas; the only exception in 2015 was the Isle of May, where birds nested in 2014 but did not settle in 2015. After the survey year of 2014, the reporting rate for Peregrine Falcon is back to lower levels; a comparison with the regional totals in the 2014 report gives an indication of the level of under-recording in 2015. Note, however, that an additional five pairs were reported in eastern England than in 2014. * Wilson *et al.* (in press).

Peregrine Falcon			England, C	75	90	Montgomeryshire	2	2
	CP	TP	Derbyshire	25	25	Pembrokeshire	27	39
England, SW	121	139	Herefordshire	3	4	Radnorshire	4	11
Avon	11	15	Leics & Rutland	4	4	Scotland, S	119	160
Cornwall	28	40	Nottinghamshire	8	9	Ayrshire	21	25
Devon	28	29	Shropshire	20	20	Borders	25	33
Dorset	8	8	Staffordshire	7	8	Clyde	16	24
Gloucestershire	13	13	Warwickshire	0	6	Clyde Islands	4	8
Hampshire	18	18	West Midlands	3	4	Dumfries & G'way	40	52
Isle of Wight	1	1	Worcestershire	5	10	Lothian	13	18
Isles of Scilly	3	3	England, N	123	150	Scotland, Mid	63	89
Somerset	7	8	Cheshire & Wirral	8	9	Angus & Dundee	11	15
Wiltshire	4	4	Cleveland	5	6	Fife	8	12
England, SE	56	94	Cumbria	15	17	Isle of May	0	0
Bedfordshire	1	1	Co. Durham	7	11	Moray & Nairn	2	2
Berkshire	2	4	Greater Manchester	9	9	North-east Scotland	19	23
Buckinghamshire	2	2	Lancs & N M'side	21	22	Perth & Kinross	14	22
Essex	4	6	Northumberland	15	21	Upper Forth	9	15
Greater London	18	24	Yorkshire	43	55	Scotland, N & W	34	58
Hertfordshire	0	3	Wales	100	152	Argyll	7	17
Kent	9	20	Anglesey	4	6	Caithness	1	1
Oxfordshire	2	3	Breconshire	12	12	Fair Isle	1	1
Surrey	10	10	Caernarfonshire	2	7	Highland	12	15
Sussex	8	21	Carmarthenshire	5	9	Orkney	10	18
England, E	25	45	Ceredigion	1	7	Outer Hebrides	2	4
Cambridgeshire	5	6	Denbigh & Flint	4	4	Shetland	1	2
Lincolnshire	11	27	East Glamorgan	23	29	Northern Ireland	n/a	n/a
Norfolk	4	5	Gower	4	12	Isle of Man	8	11
Northamptonshire	2	2	Gwent	5	6	Channel Islands	9	9
Suffolk	3	5	Meirionnydd	7	8	TOTALS	733	997

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Very rare 2 singing males 25y trend: **strong decrease** -93%

Near-complete

Four sites: 0–4 pairs. Three of these records refer to wandering males, although they were seen in suitable breeding habitat. There was also a one-day record of a singing immature male in Essex. Stanbury *et al.* (2017) suggested that the Golden Oriole is now possibly extinct as a breeding species in Britain given that it is over five years since the last confirmed breeding record (2009, when two pairs fledged four young at Lakenheath, in Suffolk).

England, E

Suffolk Two sites: (1) one possible breeding pair. A singing male was heard on 8th May and then a pair was heard cat-calling on 24th May, but there was no evidence of a breeding attempt; (2) one singing male, probably a first-year bird, on 14th–16th May.

England, N

Northumberland One site: one singing male. One was heard on 3rd June and 16th July.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one singing male. One sang regularly for three days (2nd–4th June) but was definitely unpaired.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Very rare 4 bp

25y trend: **weak decrease** -50%

High

Four sites: 3–4 pairs. Most of the UK’s breeding Red-backed Shrikes had already been lost 25 years ago, yet the long-term trend since then is still very much downward. However, 2015 was the first year since the RBBP began its annual reporting that two pairs have bred in Scotland, and both were successful. Full details of these pairs were given by Taylor & Francis (2016) and Riddington (2017). Overall ten young were known to have fledged in 2015, making it the most successful year since 1985, when 15 young fledged (from six confirmed breeding pairs).

England, SW

Cornwall One site: one possible breeding pair. In June, a female and an unsexed bird were seen a few kilometres from the area where a male and female were seen in 2014. Devon One site: one pair bred. A male was found with three still-dependent young on 4th August.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one pair bred, three young fledged.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: one pair bred, four young fledged.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Scarce 393 bp*

32y trend (survey): **stable** -1%

Near-complete

326–349 pairs. All known sites in England and Wales, plus the islands of Colonsay and Oronsay in Scotland, are counted fully each year, and an increase in the number of pairs in Wales was identified. The 2014 survey estimated the UK population to be 393 pairs (Hayhow *et al.* in prep. a). Only the Isle of Islay and the Isle of Man received sample coverage. * Hayhow *et al.* (in prep. a).

Red-billed Chough								
	T	TP	Denbigh & Flint	2	2	Argyll: Islay	10	10
England, SW	5	5	East Glamorgan	1	1	Northern Ireland	1	1
Cornwall	5	5	Gower	4	4	Co. Antrim	1	1
Wales	240	263	Meirionnydd	17	18	Isle of Man	59	59
Anglesey	37	42	Pembrokeshire	65	74	Channel Islands	2	2
Caernarfonshire	93	100	Scotland, N & W	19	19	Co. Antrim	2	2
Ceredigion	21	22	Argyll: Colonsay			TOTALS	326	349
			& Oronsay	9	9			

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce 981 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +1,063%

Moderate

1,548 singing males. This is by far the highest total of Firecrests we have reported – over five times greater than the counts from ten years ago. Clements *et al.* (2017) argued that counts of singing Firecrests submitted to recorders rarely provide a full picture of the status of the species. They contend that the UK population is in excess of 4,000 singing males, which would mean that it should no longer be classed as a rare breeding bird. We asked all county recorders to provide us with their best estimate of the number of territories in their areas. Where these were provided, they were generally based on local experience rather than any survey effort, and most repeated their previous counts for 2015. Hampshire and Kent were the exceptions, giving county estimates of 2,000 and 150 territories respectively. Incorporating these and other estimates would put the population at a little over 3,000 territories – twice the number submitted based on birds recorded in 2015. Unfortunately, the distribution of Firecrest is still too localised for the BBS to be able to provide an annual population index.

Firecrest		Buckinghamshire	120	Derbyshire	2
	SM	Greater London	2	Herefordshire	2
England, SW	960	Hertfordshire	9	Warwickshire	1
Avon	1	Kent	16	Worcestershire	1
Cornwall	4	Oxfordshire	11	Wales	47
Devon	40	Surrey	128	Ceredigion	1
Dorset	13	Sussex	107	Gwent	45
Gloucestershire	27	England, E	83	Meirionnydd	1
Hampshire	751	Cambridgeshire	3	Channel Islands	7
Somerset	23	Norfolk	36	Guernsey	5
Wiltshire	101	Northamptonshire	1	Jersey	2
England, SE	445	Suffolk	43	TOTAL	1,548
Berkshire	52	England, C	6		

Willow Tit *Poecile montana*

Less scarce 3,400+ bp* (no trend available)

Moderate

196–678 pairs. The figures in the table are, overall, very similar to those in each of the last six years that we have been reporting Willow Tits. The population trend from the BBS (Harris *et al.* 2017) shows a significant decline of -80% in the period 1995–2015. There is a broad range of local studies ongoing in a range of counties in England and in central Wales, and a working group has been set up by the RSPB to try to improve our understanding of this species.
* Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

Willow Tit		England, C	141	Wales	52
	TP	Derbyshire	46	Breconshire	6
England, SW	30	Herefordshire	1	Cardarthenshire	3
Avon	1	Leics & Rutland	9	Ceredigion	6
Cornwall	3	Nottinghamshire	20	Denbigh & Flint	2
Devon	6	Staffordshire	58	East Glamorgan	5
Gloucestershire	3	Warwickshire	6	Gower	2
Hampshire	12	West Midlands	1	Gwent	1
Wiltshire	5	England, N	360	Meirionnydd	2
England, SE	6	Cheshire & Wirral	30	Montgomeryshire	11
Berkshire	4	Cleveland	5	Pembrokeshire	2
Oxfordshire	2	Cumbria	2	Radnorshire	12
England, E	43	Co. Durham	100	Scotland, S	46
Lincolnshire	25	Greater Manchester	75	Ayrshire	1
Norfolk	15	Northumberland	14	Dumfries & G'way	45
Northamptonshire	3	Yorkshire	134	TOTAL	678

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Scarce 595 bp

15y trend: **strong increase +64%**

Moderate

77 sites: 647 pairs. The slight fall in the number of pairs (down from 772 in 2014) is mainly due to the count from the UK's largest colony, the extensive Tay reedbeds in Perth & Kinross, being a minimum figure, based on a ringing capture/recapture analysis.

Bearded Tit		Kent	17	109	Yorkshire	6	132
		Sussex	2	14	Wales	1	6
	S	England, E	29	252	Gwent	1	6
England, SW	10	Cambridgeshire	5	20	Scotland, Mid	3	26
Dorset	6	Lincolnshire	3	30	North-east Scotland	1	1
Hampshire	3	Norfolk	9	60	Perth & Kinross	1	23
Somerset	1	Suffolk	12	142	Upper Forth	1	2
England, SE	25	England, N	8	151	Channel Islands	1	2
Bedfordshire	3	Lancs & N M'side	1	18	Jersey	1	2
Essex	3	Northumberland	1	1	TOTALS	77	647

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*Less scarce 1,827 bp 25y trend: **strong increase +718%**

Moderate

2,935 singing males. Prior to a series of colder-than-average winters, particularly those of 2009/10 and 2010/11, the RBBP had reported up to 2,347 singing male Cetti's Warblers (in 2009). Over the next three breeding seasons numbers dropped by about 1,000 but since then have risen again, with a staggering 64% increase recorded between 2014 and 2015, to a new high of almost 3,000 singing males. An increase was apparent across all regions of England, but not in Wales.

Cetti's Warbler		Kent	315	Cheshire & Wirral	13
	SM	Oxfordshire	12	Greater Manchester	11
England, SW	812	Surrey	12	Lancs & N M'side	20
Avon	45	Sussex	236	Yorkshire	35
Cornwall	15	England, E	727	Wales	211
Devon	31	Cambridgeshire	111	Anglesey	16
Dorset	118	Lincolnshire	33	Breconshire	3
Gloucestershire	70	Norfolk	217	Caernarfonshire	6
Hampshire	278	Northamptonshire	38	Carmarthenshire	21
Isle of Wight	1	Suffolk	328	Ceredigion	5
Somerset	180	England, C	158	Denbigh & Flint	7
Wiltshire	74	Derbyshire	51	East Glamorgan	28
England, SE	928	Leics & Rutland	24	Gower	48
Bedfordshire	17	Nottinghamshire	43	Gwent	60
Berkshire	66	Staffordshire	15	Montgomeryshire	1
Buckinghamshire	10	Warwickshire	19	Pembrokeshire	16
Essex	143	West Midlands	n/a	Channel Islands	20
Greater London	80	Worcestershire	6	Jersey	20
Hertfordshire	37	England, N	79	TOTAL	2,935

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male.

England, SW

Isles of Scilly One site: a male singing on 4th and 11th June.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*

Occasional breeder

One site: one pair. Singing Iberian Chiffchaffs have recently become more regular vagrants to Britain in the spring. Analysing records submitted to BBRC, Hudson *et al.* (2016) stated that of the 38 singing birds accepted in the period between 1972 and 2015, 20 had stayed for at least a week, with one bird in Carmarthenshire staying from mid April to early July. Breeding was, however, not widely expected, yet in 2015 the only record of this species was a breeding pair discovered in a remote part of south Wales. A detailed account of the discovery will be published in *BB* shortly.

Wales

Gower One site: one pair bred, the first record of confirmed breeding for the UK. In total, seven young from two broods fledged.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Potential breeder

One site: two singing males. In the last ten years we have reported territorial male Subalpine Warblers in Shetland in 2009 and Fair Isle in 2011, and a nest-building pair in Caernarfonshire in 2010. Nevertheless, two singing males at the same site in 2015 is remarkable.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: two singing males, one on 13th–20th April and a second on 14th–15th April only.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male. Sardinian Warbler has not previously appeared in RBBP reports, although a male summered at Gibraltar Point in Lincolnshire in 1979 and in 2013 a male trapped and ringed in Borders on 30th June was refound on 25th September (and remained until November). Sardinian Warbler is one of the most frequently encountered warblers in the Mediterranean region, where it is mainly sedentary.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: one singing male, 14th–26th May.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Less scarce 3,214 bp* 25y trend: **weak increase +70%**

Moderate

1,677 territories. Dartford Warblers are susceptible to the effect of cold winters and, as for Cetti's Warblers, reports to the Panel declined between 2009 and 2011. After a small increase since 2011, 2015 saw the number reported more than double that of 2014, with an increase across all regions. The last full survey, in 2006, coming after a long run of mild winters, may have recorded the population at or close to its peak and, with no new survey currently planned, it is all the more important that all breeding-season records are collated and submitted to the RBBP. * Wotton *et al.* (2009).

Dartford Warbler		TP	England, SE	439	Wales	40
England, SW	1,039	Bedfordshire	1	Caernarfonshire	5	
Cornwall	13	Berkshire	4	East Glamorgan	5	
Devon	84	Surrey	410	Gower	20	
Dorset	425	Sussex	24	Pembrokeshire	10	
Hampshire	493	England, E	109	Channel Islands	50	
Isle of Wight	n/a	Norfolk	5	Jersey	50	
Somerset	24	Suffolk	104	TOTAL	1,677	

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Very rare 5 bp

25y trend: **strong decrease -67%**

Near-complete

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. The number of Savi's Warblers recorded each year fluctuates widely. There are only a limited number of large reedbeds suitable for this species, but in the 1970s up to 30

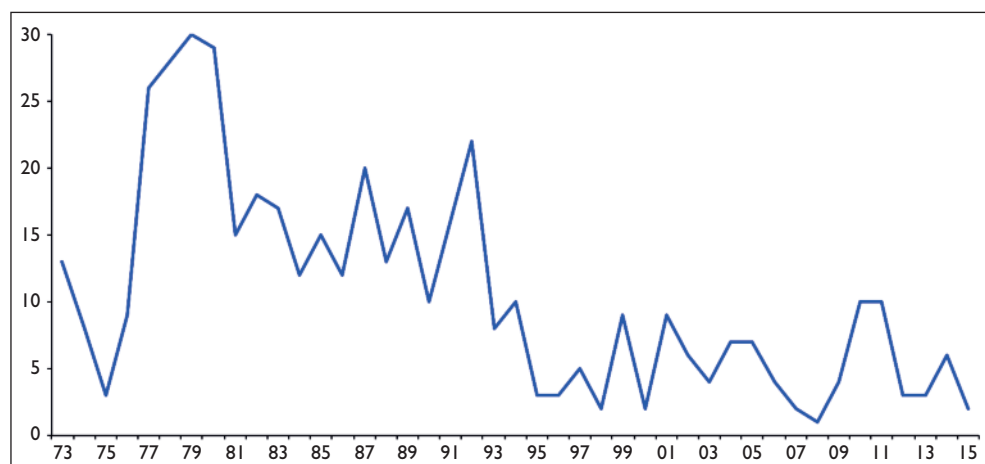


Fig. 7. Total numbers of singing male Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinioides* in the UK, 1973–2015.

singing males were recorded (fig. 7). Since the mid 1990s, there have been rather fewer. The last time breeding was confirmed was in 2010, in Sussex. Birds heard on single dates only, or records not yet submitted to BBRC, are excluded.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: one singing male, 19th April to 2nd May. Somerset One site, one singing male, 23rd May to 19th June.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Occasional breeder

Two sites: two singing males. These are typical records and dates. Observers should be alert to the possibility of hearing singing Icterine Warblers, particularly in the central highlands of Scotland in June, and sites should be checked later in the summer for adults feeding young. Breeding has occurred in this area in the past (1992, 1998 and 2009) as well as in Orkney (2002).

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one singing male, 8th–13th June.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one singing male, at least 11th–15th June.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

Potential breeder

Two sites: two singing males. Never before have we reported two Melodious Warblers holding territory in the UK in the same year. The RBBP archives show that there have been only four previous potential breeding records: Co. Durham (2003), Lancashire & N Merseyside (2008), Herefordshire (2010) and Nottinghamshire (2013).

England, C

West Midlands One site: one singing male, 11th June to 11th July.

Wales

Breconshire One site: one singing male, at least 21st–23rd June, but strong territorial behaviour suggested that it had been present for some time previously.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male. This is the second consecutive year that a Blyth's Reed Warbler has held territory in the UK, and another species of warbler that birders in the north of Scotland should be listening for. This bird was in riverside trees and tall herbaceous vegetation, typical habitat in the main breeding range.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one singing male, 15th–27th June.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Very rare 8 bp

25y trend: strong decrease -66%

High

Six sites: 0–8 pairs. Breeding has been confirmed in 15 of the last 20 years, but not in 2015; however, this is a secretive species and proof is usually obtained by seeing adults carrying food for young.

England, SE

Kent Three sites: (1) one singing male held territory on 7th–17th June, was seen paired with another *Acrocephalus* warbler and nest-building was recorded; (2) two singing males, one 26th–27th June and then

396. Marsh Warbler
Acrocephalus palustris,
Norfolk, June 2015.

two from 28th June to 3rd July; (3) one singing male, 1st–19th June. Sussex One site: two singing males from late May into June.

[England, E](#)

Norfolk One site: one singing male, 9th–23rd June.

[Scotland, N & W](#)

Orkney One site: one singing male, 20th–27th June.



Steve Gamblett

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male. This is the first record of this species staying for five days or more in Shetland, but it seems unlikely that it found a mate there. The Panel archives have only two other similar records from Scotland: Borders in 1997 and Angus & Dundee in 2006.

[Scotland, N & W](#)

Shetland One site: one singing male, 3rd–22nd June.

Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*

Rare 38 bp

(no trend available)

Near-complete

43 territories. The all-island survey in 2015 revealed two more territories than in 2014 and the highest total since we began reporting this subspecies. Fledged chicks were seen from 10th June.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Very rare 8 bp

25y trend: strong decrease -80%

Moderate

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. The limited information from two sites does not provide much evidence of breeding having occurred, but the last confirmed breeding of Fieldfare was in Northumberland in 2012, and breeding occurred at a similar lowland site in Lothian in 2008.

[England, N](#)

Northumberland One site: one, probably two, birds in suitable breeding habitat on 6th June.

[Scotland, S](#)

Lothian One site: One alarming adult was found in suitable breeding habitat on 19th May but despite several subsequent visits could not be relocated.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Very rare 19 bp

25y trend: strong decrease -54%

Low

36 sites: 2–40 pairs. Visitors to northern Scotland between mid May and July should be on the lookout for, and report any signs of, potentially breeding Redwings.

[Scotland, Mid](#)

Moray & Nairn Two sites: two possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 30 sites: one pair bred, eight probable and four possible breeding pairs, 21 singing males. Shetland Four sites: one pair bred and three singing males.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Rare 56 bp

25y trend: weak decrease -45%

Moderate

41 sites: 15–49 pairs. Two records of possible breeding, in Ayrshire and Cornwall, refer to a recently fledged juvenile seen alone in mid August, suggesting that these birds fledged locally – and the Ayrshire bird was close to a working quarry with no access. Black Redstart numbers fluctuate annually; they are not always site faithful and tend to nest in areas with limited or difficult access. The main nesting habitats are quarries, industrial sites, city centres and coastal towns.

Black Redstart				Kent	6	8	11	England, N	4	0	4
	S	CP	TP	Surrey	2	0	3	Greater Manchester	1	0	1
England, SW	4	2	4	Sussex	1	0	2	Lancs & N M'side	1	0	1
Cornwall	1	0	1	England, E	6	2	7	Yorkshire	2	0	2
Dorset	1	0	1	Cambridgeshire	1	0	1	Wales	1	1	1
Hampshire	1	1	1	Norfolk	3	1	4	Denbigh & Flint	1	1	1
Somerset	1	1	1	Suffolk	2	1	2	Scotland, S	1	0	1
England, SE	18	8	25	England, C	6	1	6	Ayrshire	1	0	1
Berkshire	1	0	1	Leics & Rutland	2	0	2	Channel Islands	1	1	1
Essex	1	0	1	Staffordshire	1	1	1	Guernsey	1	1	1
Greater London	7	0	7	West Midlands	3	0	3	TOTALS	41	15	49

Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla f. flava*

Very rare 1 bp

(no trend available)

High

One site: one mixed pair.

England, SW

Somerset One site: a female bred with a male *M. f. flavissima*, seen carrying food for young.

White Wagtail *Motacilla a. alba*

Very rare 4 bp

(no trend available)

High

Eight sites: 1–21 pairs plus 1–4 mixed pairs. All mixed pairs were with Pied Wagtails *M. a. yarrellii*. Data from the Channel Islands are omitted from the five-year mean shown above; away from these islands there was only one pure breeding pair, in Kent.

England, SW

Avon One site: one possible breeding mixed pair. A White Wagtail, apparently paired with a Pied Wagtail, was seen feeding recently fledged young in mid May. Isles of Scilly One site: one probable breeding mixed pair. A female with a well-developed brood patch was caught on 25th May and was thought to be nesting in the vicinity, although it was not seen paired or subsequently with young.

England, SE

Kent One site: one pair bred, fledging two young.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one probable breeding mixed pair. A male collecting nest material on 15th June was also seen displaying to a female Pied Wagtail on 16th June.

Scotland, N & W

Fair Isle One site: one male singing on 24th June only, but from the site held by a territorial male in 2014.

Shetland One site: one mixed pair bred, fledging two young.

Channel Islands

White Wagtail is a rare but annual breeder on the islands, with an estimate of ten pairs breeding on Guernsey and a minimum of nine pairs on Jersey in 2015.

Scandinavian Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus littoralis*

Occasional breeder

Two sites: two mixed pairs. The Scandinavian Rock Pipit, which breeds mainly along the coasts of Fennoscandia and the Kola peninsula of Russia, has not appeared in our report previously. It is a regular spring passage migrant along the east coast of Britain, and the records from Fair Isle suggest that it may be worth looking for among nominate Rock Pipits *A. p. petrosus* in northeast Britain.

Scotland, N & W

Fair Isle Two sites: (1) one mixed pair bred. A singing male on 18th May was seen carrying food on 16th June. It was assumed that the bird was paired with a nominate Rock Pipit; (2) one paired with a nominate Rock Pipit on 19th May.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce 500+ bp*

(no trend available)

Low

6–156 pairs. Hawfinches are elusive and frequently overlooked, especially in the breeding season, so records of even just one bird on one date, in suitable breeding habitat in April to July, are added to the Panel's database. Nevertheless, the numbers reported annually continue to be very low. This is another species where we asked recorders to provide estimates of the number of pairs they believed to breed in their counties, but only Hampshire provided a number significantly different from those in the table. Based on fieldwork, which located 52 territories, an estimate of at least 400 pairs for the New Forest has been suggested, with perhaps another 50 elsewhere in the county (Marcus Ward per Keith Betton).

The counts for Gloucestershire and Gwent include data from ringing undertaken in the Forest of Dean, using numbers of birds with brood patches trapped at feeding stations, suggesting that birds are breeding nearby (Jerry Lewis *in litt.*). * Clements (2013).

Hawfinch		Kent	10	Wales	47
	TP	Surrey	2	Breconshire	1
England, SW	81	Sussex	1	Caernarfonshire	1
Devon	1	England, E	2	East Glamorgan	1
Gloucestershire	20	Norfolk	2	Gwent	37
Hampshire	55	England, N	13	Meirionnydd	2
Somerset	1	Cumbria	11	Montgomeryshire	1
Wiltshire	4	Lancs & N M'side	1	Radnorshire	4
England, SE	13	Yorkshire	1	TOTAL	156

Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

Very rare 12 bp

(no trend available)

Low

12 sites: 5–16 pairs. It can be difficult to prove breeding by this species of redpoll, especially given that Lesser Redpolls *A. cabaret* can occur in the same areas. Family parties are often not located until late in the breeding season. The evidence suggests that this is a regular breeder in small numbers, mainly on Scottish islands.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Three sites (all islands): (1) one pair bred and two other probable breeding pairs; (2) one pair bred at a site where breeding was also recorded in 2014; (3) one probable breeding pair. **Highland** Three sites: (1) two probable breeding pairs on 9th June; (2) one probable breeding pair on 13th June; (3) one probable breeding pair on 30th June. **Shetland** Six sites: (1) one pair bred, seen with newly fledged young on 30th June; (2) one pair bred, seen with newly fledged young on 17th July; (3) one pair bred; (4) two males displaying in June; (5) one pair nest-building in June; (6) one pair on territory.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*

Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. This may have been a bird left over from the influx in autumn 2013, which led to possible breeding in Gloucestershire and Yorkshire in 2014.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: One singing male seen between 15th February and 25th March.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Rare 60 bp*

(no trend available)

Low

4–26 pairs. Casual records from the main breeding areas in the Cairngorms (Highland/Moray & Nairn/North-east Scotland) provided evidence of 15 pairs: four confirmed, six probable and five possible breeding pairs. We also received reports from other mountain ranges in Highland (where there were eight probable and three possible breeding pairs). * Hayhow *et al.* (in prep. b).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

Less scarce 1,079 bp*

27y trend (survey): large increase +814%

Low

228 pairs. Only limited information (172 territories) was received from Devon, where the majority of Cirl Buntings breed, and from Cornwall (52) where a successful reintroduction project has been underway (Jeffs *et al.* 2016). In an indication of a possible range extension, in Dorset, a pair was present in March and April with the male singing at times. However, nesting is not thought to have occurred. In the Channel Islands, three pairs bred on Jersey.

A full survey of Cirl Buntings took place in 2016 and found 1,079 territories. A paper summarising the results will be published in *BB* next year. * Jeffs *et al.* (in press).

Appendix 1. RBBP species for which no data were received in 2015.

The following taxa are regular breeding birds in the UK, but in 2015 no breeding records were submitted to the Panel.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

Short-toed Treecreeper is a fairly common resident on Jersey and Guernsey (Young *et al.* 2017).

‘St Kilda Wren’ *Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*

Forrester *et al.* (2007) considered the population to be 230–250 breeding pairs.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Summers & Buckland (2011) estimated the Scottish population at around 50 breeding pairs.

Appendix 2. Other species considered by RBBP also recorded in 2015.

The following occasional or potential breeding species were recorded in suitable habitat during the breeding season in 2015.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

A single male was present throughout in Highland, and although it associated with Mallards *A. platyrhynchos*, there was no evidence of any mixed breeding having taken place.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

In East Glamorgan a drake Lesser Scaup, which in 2014/15 had returned for its seventh consecutive winter, remained until 29th June. During this period it was seen chasing and displaying to a female Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*, but there was no evidence of breeding having taken place.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Single birds were reported from Cornwall (2), Isles of Scilly (5) and Somerset (2). Although there was no suggestion of breeding, the elusive nature of this species and the extensive suitable habitat now available in Somerset means that this could have been overlooked.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

An adult was seen ashore in Shetland on two dates in June.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

A male on Fair Isle was present on 10th–22nd May and was noted singing from 18th May, on which date a female was also present.

Common Rosefinch *Erythrina erythrina*

A male took up temporary residence in Berkshire for 13 days in June, but did not show any signs of holding territory.

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

There was a record of one on an isolated hilltop in Highland on 3rd July, an unlikely date for a passage migrant.

Appendix 3. Rare non-native species considered by RBBP recorded in 2015.

Data on the following rare non-native breeding species have been received for 2015. This is an incomplete summary and we urge all birdwatchers to ensure they report all potential breeding records of non-native species to county recorders. For more detail on non-native breeders in 2012–14 see Holling *et al.* (2017).

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

A total of 11 pairs were reported, with seven records of confirmed breeding from six counties: Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire (2), Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Kent. Seven breeding pairs compares with six in 2014.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

New information on a small breeding population in Oxfordshire was received, where two pairs bred in 2015. The population on Coll, Argyll, numbered up to 20 birds but no young were reported in 2015.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

Small populations were reported from Berkshire and Breconshire, but the only confirmed breeding was in Cambridgeshire and Derbyshire; a minimum of one pair bred in each county.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

The only record was of a pair in Hampshire in early spring. Confirmed breeding was last recorded in the UK in 2012.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Twenty pairs bred in seven counties: Berkshire (2), Gloucestershire (6), Greater London (4),

Leicestershire & Rutland (1), Norfolk (5), Suffolk (1) and Surrey (1). This compares with 30–47 pairs in 12 counties in 2014, so the 2015 data may well be incomplete. In Yorkshire, a mixed pair (male Red-crested Pochard and female Common Pochard) produced chicks, but it is thought that they did not fledge.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

A pair bred in Cheshire & Wirral. Elsewhere there was a small number of records of 1–2 birds but no indication of pairs on territory. This compares with 5–6 breeding pairs reported in 2014.

Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

Only a single male was reported from Bedfordshire.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*

Golden Pheasants were reported from Scilly and Norfolk, but there was no indication of breeding.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

The only breeding evidence came from Cornwall, where at least two broods of chicks were seen. Free-flying populations were reported in Highland and Northamptonshire, but with no evidence of breeding.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

One pair laid four eggs in the Forest of Bowland, Lancashire & N Merseyside; the clutch was taken by a collector and it is not known if the pair relaid.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus*

Data on 13 pairs in Greater London were received, of which 11 pairs bred. Breeding may have occurred in Hertfordshire, where there were at least 20 individuals. Both areas are traditional, suggesting that there has been no spread in the population.

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