

# Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2016

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Alan Harris



Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

**Abstract** This report documents the status of 97 species of rare or scarce native birds that were recorded breeding, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2016. The year was notable for the first successful breeding by Little Gulls *Hydrocoloeus minutus* and the first confirmed breeding by Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica* since 1996. National surveys of three species on the RBBP list were carried out in 2016: Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* and Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*.

This is the 43rd report published by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), and includes details of 86 rare or scarce native taxa that bred, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2016. Three others are likely to have bred in 2016 but no data were received (see Appendix 1) while a further eight recorded in breeding habitat in 2016 are listed in Appendix 2. A summary of 14 rare non-native species reported breeding in 2016 is given in Appendix 3.

The area covered by the UK Rare Breeding Birds Panel includes the four countries 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.* 2018), and by Birds of Conservation Concern (e.g. Eaton *et al.* 2015). The RBBP species list can be downloaded at [www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-list-full.htm](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-list-full.htm); Woodlark *Lullula arborea* was reinstated to that list in 2016, following indications that its population may have fallen below our threshold of 2,000 breeding pairs.

## Review of the year 2016

The 2015/16 winter was the third-warmest in the UK since 1910 – the warmest over that period for both England and Wales – and second-wettest since 1910. Spring was unremarkable compared with long-term averages but June was cloudy and wet, with some areas of East Anglia and southeast England having more than twice the normal rainfall.

There were two obvious highlights of the

breeding year for rare birds. Since the formation of the Panel, in 1973, Little Gulls *Hydrocoloeus minutus* have been confirmed breeding in the UK only twice before. The two young that fledged from the RSPB reserve of Loch of Strathbeg in North-east Scotland in 2016 represent the first successful breeding. Also in northern Scotland, a pair of 'Red-spotted Bluethroats' *Luscinia s. svecica* bred and raised at least one young. This was the fourth confirmed breeding record of this form since 1973 but was in a particularly unusual location: an area of high-altitude, treeless arctic-alpine habitat.

Three species on the RBBP list were the subject of national surveys in 2016. A little over 1,100 individual Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus* counted in a midwinter census was a small decrease since the last such count. There was also a decline in the number of Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* territories estimated by the 2016 survey. There was better news for Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus*, with the highest reported total (1,079 pairs) in the RBBP era.

In addition to the Cirl Bunting, another six species reached their highest-ever reported totals: Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (1,238 pairs), Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (250), Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* (705), Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* (2,230), Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaeus melanocephalus* (1,911) and Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* (3,472). Four of these are species expanding their ranges northwards. With such a high total for Cetti's Warbler, this will be the last report that includes this now locally numerous species, which was first confirmed breeding in 1973.

Balancing this positive news is the low total for Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* – only six pairs – and the complete lack of records in breeding habitat of the following species, all of which have been recorded annually for many years: Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*. While the first two species have seen blank years previously (most recently 2011 and 2006, respectively), there have been records of both Red-backed Shrike and Golden Oriole in every RBBP report since 1973.

## Data sources and submission

The most important source of information behind this report is the detailed submissions compiled by the UK's county and regional bird recorders. This network provided over 70% of all data submissions in 2016. Recorders, and in turn the RBBP, are highly dependent on observers 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.

Bird recorders, who are all volunteers, are uniquely placed to understand the relevance and context of the records they receive from birdwatchers. With the widespread uptake of the BTO/RSPB/BirdWatch Ireland/SOC/WOS BirdTrack system by many birders, the volume of data has increased substantially in recent years, underlining the key role that recorders play. In 2016, all but two recording areas (Gower and Isle of Wight) submitted information directly to the RBBP, perhaps our best return rate ever, and we are delighted to include more detailed records from Essex and Outer Hebrides after several years' absence. We received species data on a site-by-site basis, with grid references for most records, from nearly all recording areas. However, in the absence of a recorder, data for Northamptonshire were available only from their annual report. To address the gap in coverage in Gower, data were extracted from the Welsh Bird Report (Hughes 2017). In cases such as these, where grid-referenced data were not available, the quality of our archive for 2016 is unfortunately diminished since we cannot eliminate the possibility of double-counted records in some cases. We continue to work with recorders to make further improvements in submissions, not least so that we can publish this report more quickly after the breeding season to which it refers. Some recording areas did not provide data for 2016 until long after the deadline: 30th November of the following year.

Other important data sources include returns from Schedule 1 licence holders, the Nest Record Scheme, Raptor Study Groups, national surveys, and counts from RSPB reserves. Overall, the level of data provision for 2016 was comparable with or slightly

Dan Powell

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

better than that in recent RBBP reports. A little over 7,000 unique records for 2016 were received by July 2018, similar to the number for 2015. Additional data for any year are still welcome, even after the annual deadlines, as the information is still valuable for our archive. Additions, amendments and corrections to published reports from 2005 onwards are available on the RBBP website ([www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk)), alongside all but the most recent copy of the annual report. These files are updated regularly and anyone using the RBBP reports for reference or study should always check the online amendments.

In recent years we have also asked recorders to supply their best estimates (i.e. not limited to known breeding attempts) of

the numbers of pairs within their recording areas for a limited number of species, for which we believe UK-wide coverage is low or moderate. The aim is to improve understanding of the total population size, which may be considerably greater than that reported by annual monitoring. Unfortunately, take-up of this option has been poor, so as yet we have been unable to make wide use of those estimates in the report. Where possible, appropriate comment is made within the individual species accounts.

We are sometimes asked why we request accurate grid references with species data. This is important to help identify duplicate data, thus improving the accuracy of the overall numbers. In addition, RBBP data are used to support site and species conservation and, as described in our last report, have recently been used to identify potential new Special Protection Areas and review the effectiveness of existing SPAs; accurate site data is crucial for this. Site information is not published and these data remain confidential. It continues to be extremely frustrating that a number of records (over 400 in 2016) submitted via the Schedule 1 licence return system fail to include an accurate (or sometimes any) grid reference, despite it being a condition of the licences they were collected under. All that fieldwork effort therefore offers almost no benefit to the conservation of the species concerned, since we cannot use the majority of those records in the compilation of the figures reported here. Almost all of these are raptors and our annual totals for species such as Osprey and Goshawk are clearly underestimates because some data cannot be included in our summaries. Overall, some 92% of all 2016 records carried a 4- or 6-figure grid reference, which represents a welcome 13% increase over 2015.

Recommendations and guidelines on data submission are available online, together with species-specific guidelines ([www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk)), and anyone with particular experience in monitoring a rare species is encouraged to share their expertise through the further development of these guidelines.

## Conservation and other uses of RBBP data

RBBP policy is to make data available for relevant conservation uses, with appropriate controls over site resolution provided. 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 ten-month period from September 2017 to June 2018, we received ten 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 site condition monitoring in the North Pennines SPA and species conservation work on Osprey, Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* and Goshawk in parts of England. Potential breeding records of Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* in Scotland and Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* across the UK were supplied for forthcoming written reviews. Our data on Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus* was shared to assist with a review presented at the 2018 Scottish Raptor Study Group conference, and on Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* sites in Highland to help plan surveys as part of the ongoing national seabird census. Data collated on Willow Tits *Poecile montanus* since 2010 will be used to support a survey of this species planned for early 2019. Finally, summary information on colonising species including Great White Egret *Ardea alba* and European

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* was presented to the BBC to support part of the *Autumnwatch* TV programme aired in October 2017.

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.* 2017b) again included a section on scarce and rare breeding birds, giving population estimates and trends based mainly on data collated by the RBBP.

## The Panel

The membership of the Panel is: Mark Eaton (Chairman), Mark Holling (Secretary), Helen Baker, Dawn Balmer, Ian Francis, Andrew King, David Norman and David Stroud (plate 417). Helen Baker, who joined in March 2018, leads the Marine Species team at JNCC and will work alongside David Stroud representing the government's conservation interests on the Panel. 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.



**417.** The Rare Breeding Birds Panel, Newcastle, March 2018. Left to right, David Norman, Ian Francis, Helen Baker, Mark Eaton, Dawn Balmer, Mark Holling, David Stroud, Andrew King.



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](http://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 each 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 that has bred at least once in the UK but is not a regular breeder); a **potential** breeder (one that has not bred previously in the UK but, in some years, shows 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 5-year period, or subsequently, if known at the time of writing, or one which may have occasionally bred in the past but for which breeding now appears to be becoming more regular); 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) 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, 2012–16). 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 2016 with that for either 25 or 15 years earlier (1991 or 2001). Trends are based on thresholds of rate of 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 2016), 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 *Mareca 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, generally 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)

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 or race 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 and a maximum total of four breeding pairs (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 +267%**

Near-complete

**23 sites: 20–27 pairs.** There was a small drop in the number of pairs of wild Whooper Swans reported in 2016, and one of these was again a mixed pairing: a female apparently paired with a Mute Swan *C. olor*, in Clyde. Although only one pair bred in the Norfolk fens in 2016, there were at least six summering nearby in Cambridgeshire and other single birds elsewhere in England and Scotland also summered. No apparently naturalised pairs were reported.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one pair bred; five eggs hatched and two young fledged.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one pair bred. Clyde One site: one presumed mixed pair bred. A female hatched one young which didn't survive. As in 2015, no male was seen and it is presumed that the female paired with a Mute Swan.

Scotland, N & W

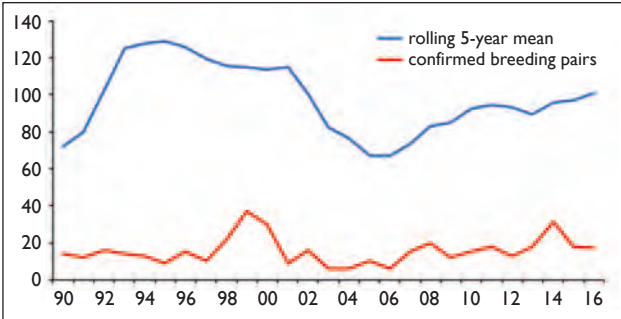
Highland Five sites: five probable breeding pairs. Orkney One site: one pair bred, one young fledged. Outer Hebrides Two sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging three young; (2) one possible breeding pair. Shetland Ten

sites: ten pairs bred, four successfully, and fledged 14 young in total.

Northern Ireland

Co. Derry Two sites: (1) five pairs bred, all hatched young, with 11 cygnets counted in late July; (2) one probable breeding pair.

**Garganey *Spatula querquedula***  
Rare 101 bp  
25y trend: **stable +27%**  
High



**Fig. 1.** Numbers of confirmed breeding pairs, and the rolling 5-year mean (of total pairs), of Garganeys *Spatula querquedula* in the UK, 1990–2016.

shorter periods, after the main passage period (which is later farther north in the country). Records of single males at well-watched sites where no females are noted are not generally part of the totals.

Fig. 1 shows the rolling 5-year mean number of pairs reported since 1990. Numbers were higher between 1993 and 2003 but then declined to pre-1993 levels, though they have been rising slowly since 2007. The number of confirmed breeding pairs, almost always based on observations of ducklings, has been broadly consistent since 1990 but with notable peaks in 1999 and 2014.

The 17 confirmed breeding pairs in 2016 were found at 13 sites, all in England, the northernmost in Cleveland. Eleven of these sites are nature reserves, managed by the RSPB (6), local Wildlife Trusts (3), WWT (1) and a Water Authority (1).

74 sites: 17–112 pairs. Since it is difficult to separate Garganeys on passage from those settling to breed, we attempt to take a conservative but consistent view when deciding which birds to include in these reports. Longer-staying pairs, especially from May onwards, and lone males seen following sightings of pairs earlier in the season, are examples of what is classed as probable breeding. Possible breeding records relate to pairs present for

Garganey				Lincolnshire	3	0	5	Scotland, Mid	4	0	4
	S	CP	TP	Norfolk	9	6	14	Angus & Dundee	2	0	2
England, SW	5	2	7	Northamptonshire	2	0	2	Fife	1	0	1
Gloucestershire	1	0	1	Suffolk	6	0	7	Perth & Kinross	1	0	1
Hampshire	1	0	1	England, N	18	9	27	Scotland, N & W	6	0	6
Somerset	2	1	4	Cheshire & Wirral	5	1	5	Argyll	2	0	2
Wiltshire	1	1	1	Cleveland	2	2	2	Orkney	1	0	1
England, SE	9	0	10	Greater Manchester	1	0	1	Outer Hebrides	3	0	3
Berkshire	3	0	3	Lancs & N Mersey	3	1	3	Northern Ireland	2	0	4
Hertfordshire	1	0	1	Yorkshire	7	5	16	Co. Antrim	1	0	2
Kent	4	0	5	Wales	3	0	3	Co. Derry	1	0	2
Surrey	1	0	1	Anglesey	1	0	1	TOTALS	74	17	112
England, E	27	6	51	Carmarthenshire	1	0	1				
Cambridgeshire	7	0	23	Pembrokeshire	1	0	1				

**Shoveler *Spatula clypeata***  
Less scarce 1,033 bp (no trend available)  
High

209 sites: 386–1,183 pairs. Since we have reported Shoveler numbers only since 2006, no long-term trends can be calculated, but the totals have remained broadly consistent over those 11 years. The 2016 figure of 1,183 pairs is the highest yet reported; the lowest was 873 pairs in 2012.

<b>Shoveler</b>				Northamptonshire	2	0	2	Pembrokeshire	2	2	4
				Suffolk	16	8	99	<b>Scotland, S</b>	12	0	20
				<b>England, C</b>	10	15	20	Ayrshire	3	0	3
<b>England, SW</b>	S	CP	TP	Derbyshire	1	2	2	Borders	1	0	1
Avon	15	4	29	Leics & Rutland	2	2	2	Clyde	2	0	3
Devon	1	1	3	Nottinghamshire	2	8	8	Dumfries & G'way	5	0	12
Dorset	2	0	2	Staffordshire	2	1	4	Lothian	1	0	1
Hampshire	4	1	4	Warwickshire	1	0	1	<b>Scotland, Mid</b>	9	6	19
Somerset	2	2	2	West Midlands	1	0	1	Angus & Dundee	4	0	7
Wiltshire	3	0	13	Worcestershire	1	2	2	Fife	2	1	6
<b>England, SE</b>	30	35	152	<b>England, N</b>	34	95	177	Perth & Kinross	3	5	6
Bedfordshire	1	0	1	Cheshire & Wirral	3	7	9	<b>Scotland, N &amp; W</b>	34	54	93
Berkshire	1	0	2	Cleveland	4	6	6	Argyll	5	30	30
Essex	7	18	101	Cumbria	1	1	1	Caithness	2	2	4
Hertfordshire	6	1	6	Co. Durham	2	2	7	Highland	4	0	5
Kent	11	12	37	Greater Manchester	4	0	7	Orkney	16	19	38
Oxfordshire	1	1	1	Lancs & N Mersey	5	31	37	Outer Hebrides	7	3	16
Surrey	1	0	1	Northumberland	1	2	2	<b>Northern Ireland</b>	2	11	36
Sussex	2	3	3	Yorkshire	14	46	108	Co. Antrim	2	11	36
<b>England, E</b>	55	156	595	<b>Wales</b>	7	8	40	<b>Channel Islands</b>	1	2	2
Cambridgeshire	11	3	255	Anglesey	2	2	31	<b>TOTALS</b>	209	386	1,183
Lincolnshire	10	0	44	Gwent	1	2	2				
Norfolk	16	145	195	Meirionnydd	2	2	3				

### Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Rare 189 bp

(no trend available)

Low

103 sites: 52–235 pairs. Higher numbers were reported from southwest and east England than in 2015, leading to the second-highest total since 1996, when Wigeon was added to the RBBP list. This total is still likely to be substantially lower than the actual population size, owing to under-reporting from remote northern and western areas. Wigeons breed in a variety of wetland sites, but the majority nest in upland areas close to pools, bogs and streams; island sites are favoured (Ferguson-Lees *et al.* 2011). Apart from sightings of pairs and ‘guarding’ males in breeding habitat in May and June, the best evidence for breeding comes from finding a female with a brood of young – typically in June and July.

<b>Eurasian Wigeon</b>				Lincolnshire	1	0	1	<b>Scotland, Mid</b>	7	2	9
				Norfolk	5	1	9	Angus & Dundee	4	1	4
<b>England, SW</b>	S	CP	TP	<b>England, N</b>	13	14	24	Fife	1	0	2
Avon	7	0	11	Cheshire & Wirral	1	0	1	Moray & Nairn	1	0	2
Devon	1	0	1	Cumbria	2	0	2	North-east Scotland	1	1	1
Devon	3	0	5	Co. Durham	7	12	15	<b>Scotland, N &amp; W</b>	52	28	127
Somerset	2	0	3	Northumberland	1	2	2	Argyll	5	3	7
Wiltshire	1	0	2	Yorkshire	2	0	4	Caithness	13	0	26
<b>England, SE</b>	7	1	15	<b>Wales</b>	2	2	3	Highland	15	2	44
Bedfordshire	1	0	1	Anglesey	1	0	1	Orkney	7	6	13
Berkshire	1	0	1	Caernarfonshire	1	2	2	Outer Hebrides	9	16	27
Essex	4	1	6	<b>Scotland, S</b>	3	1	9	Shetland	3	1	10
Kent	1	0	7	Ayrshire	1	0	1	<b>TOTALS</b>	103	52	235
<b>England, E</b>	12	4	37	Dumfries & G'way	2	1	8				
Cambridgeshire	6	3	27								

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.





**418.** Male Black Duck *Anas rubripes*, Strontian, Highland, March 2017.

### Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

#### Occasional breeder

**One site: one mixed pair.** A male Black Duck has been present at Strontian in Lochaber, on the west coast of Scotland, since 2007, although it has not been recorded every year. In 2015 it was seen consorting with female Mallards *A. platyrhynchos*, though no young were seen. In 2016, a breeding attempt was documented for the first time. A total of 17 eggs were laid of which 13 hatched. Three of the resulting hybrid young (a male and two females) survived until at least February 2017.

This is not the first time that this American species has paired with a Mallard and produced hybrid young in the UK. A female in the Isles of Scilly between 1977 and 1983 bred with a male Mallard in 1979–1983, producing a total of 15 hybrid young. In Caernarfonshire, a male paired with a female Mallard in 1980–1984 produced hybrid young in at least 1980; and in Cornwall a male also bred with female Mallards in some years between 1999 and 2007. Our records of the Cornish bird are incomplete and we welcome further details for the RBBP archive.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one mixed pair bred, fledging three hybrid young.

### Pintail *Anas acuta*

**Very rare** 25 bp

25y trend: **stable -25%**

High

**16 sites: 7–28 pairs.** After a poor year in 2015, with just three confirmed pairs, seven pairs bred in three counties in 2016. Tiree, in Argyll, seems to have replaced Orkney as the stronghold: 11 pairs were located in 2016, with four broods recorded. The Suffolk record is noteworthy as this was only the second record of confirmed breeding for the county since 1951; the other was a pair seen with five young in 1999 (Ogilvie *et al.* 2001).

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) one probable and one possible breeding pair; (2) one probable and one possible breeding pairs. Norfolk Three sites: (1) one probable breeding pair; (2) one probable breeding pair; (3) one possible breeding pair. Suffolk One site: one pair bred; seven young fledged from a brood of 11.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

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

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One extensive site: four pairs bred (four broods totalling 24 young counted in June) and seven probable breeding pairs. Orkney Six sites: (1) one pair bred (fledging six young); (2) one pair bred but failed early in the season; (3) one probable breeding pair; (4)–(6) one possible breeding pair at each. Outer Hebrides One site: one possible breeding pair.

**Common Pochard *Aythya ferina***

Scarce 701 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +122%**

High

368–670 pairs. Although overall this species is increasing as a breeding bird, the population in Scotland is fading away, with no confirmed breeding there for the first time since Pochard was added to the RBBP list, in 1986. Recording tends to be biased towards sightings of females with broods; counts of potential breeding pairs seen earlier in the season are not always submitted. We therefore asked county recorders to suggest estimates for the number of breeding pairs in their recording areas. Only a small proportion of areas did this but the totals submitted suggest that few pairs are being overlooked in those recording areas.

<b>Common Pochard</b>			Kent	50	63	Co. Durham	1	2
			Surrey	6	24	Greater Manchester	0	5
			Sussex	9	9	Lancs & N Mersey	13	13
England, SW	CP	TP	England, E	57	195	Northumberland	3	3
Cornwall	1	1	Cambridgeshire	8	108	Yorkshire	57	80
Devon	0	3	Lincolnshire	3	31	Wales	9	36
Dorset	4	4	Norfolk	39	42	Anglesey	2	28
Gloucestershire	1	3	Northamptonshire	0	5	Caernarfonshire	1	1
Hampshire	3	3	Suffolk	7	9	Carmarthenshire	5	5
Isles of Scilly	2	3	England, C	10	14	Gwent	1	2
Somerset	44	44	Leics & Rutland	2	2	Scotland, Mid	0	3
Wiltshire	0	2	Nottinghamshire	1	1	Perth & Kinross	0	3
England, SE	123	214	Staffordshire	3	3	Northern Ireland	18	18
Bedfordshire	3	3	West Midlands	0	4	Co. Antrim	2	2
Berkshire	2	4	Worcestershire	4	4	Co. Armagh	12	12
Essex	23	77	England, N	96	127	Co. Derry	2	2
Greater London	4	4	Cheshire & Wirral	10	12	Co. Down	2	2
Hertfordshire	26	30	Cleveland	12	12	TOTALS	368	670

**Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra***

Rare 52 bp\*

25y trend: **stable -21%**

Near-complete

9 sites: 11–40 pairs. Dedicated survey work at all the main breeding locations found 40 pairs, consistent with recent years, although the confirmed breeding records from Argyll were the first since 2002. In Argyll, two pairs of Common Scoters bred while a third female was paired with a male Velvet Scoter *M. fusca*; all three nesting attempts failed. The Flows of Caithness and east Sutherland (Highland) are treated as one extensive site. \* Eaton *et al.* (2008).

<b>Common Scoter</b>			Scotland, N & W			8	10	36	Highland	4	6	18
	S	CP	TP	Argyll		2	3*	3*	TOTALS	9	11	40
Scotland, Mid	1	1	4	Caithness		1	0	1				
Perth & Kinross	1	1	4	Caithness/Highland		1	1	14	(* includes 1 mixed pair)			

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Rare 200 bp\*25y trend: stable -21%Low

47–52 breeding females. Continued lower levels of monitoring effort in the core breeding area of Strathspey (Highland) and Deeside (North-east Scotland) mean that the total reported here is much lower than the estimated population of 200 pairs. Based on single birds reported late in the spring, and the presence of at least two breeding pairs, it is possible that there is a larger population in Perth & Kinross than has been noted before; potentially a range expansion. The confirmed breeding record in Greater London is of a female of unknown origin seen with seven young. \* Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

Common Goldeneye			Greater London	1	1	Moray & Nairn	0	1
			England, N	4	4	North-east Scotland	1	2
			Northumberland	4	4	Perth & Kinross	1	2
England, SW	CP	TP	Scotland, S	0	1	Scotland, N & W	40	40
Avon	0	1	Dumfries & G'way	0	1	Highland	40	40
England, SE	1	1	Scotland, Mid	2	5	TOTALS	47	52

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce 376 males25y trend: weak decrease -26%High

4–253 singing males. It was another poor year for Quail in 2016, with the second-lowest total since 2001. With the last ‘good’ year being 2011, the 5-year mean drops sharply to levels typical of the early 2000s and the trend moves from stable to one of a weak decrease. Confirmed breeding was recorded only in Borders and Derbyshire. The number of breeding pairs in Borders was assumed to be three, as six adults were seen with 12 recently fledged young on 23rd August. The only other brood recorded was of six young in Derbyshire on 20th July.

Common Quail			Lincolnshire	7	Gwent	2
			Norfolk	19	Radnorshire	4
			Northamptonshire	4	Scotland, S	16
England, SW	SM	62	Suffolk	1	Ayrshire	1
Avon	5		England, C	16	Borders	11
Cornwall	2		Derbyshire	9	Dumfries & G'way	1
Devon	1		Leics & Rutland	3	Lothian	3
Gloucestershire	11		Shropshire	4	Scotland, Mid	14
Hampshire	3		England, N	56	Angus & Dundee	4
Somerset	1		Cheshire & Wirral	3	Moray & Nairn	2
Wiltshire	39		Cleveland	2	North-east Scotland	6
England, SE	21		Cumbria	1	Perth & Kinross	1
Bedfordshire	6		Lancs & N Mersey	10	Upper Forth	1
Berkshire	7		Northumberland	15	Scotland, N & W	13
Kent	1		Yorkshire	25	Argyll	2
Oxfordshire	2		Wales	11	Highland	6
Surrey	2		Anglesey	1	Orkney	1
Sussex	3		Ceredigion	2	Outer Hebrides	2
England, E	44		Denbigh & Flint	1	Shetland	2
Cambridgeshire	13		East Glamorgan	1	TOTAL	253

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

Rare 1,114 individuals\*6y trend: weak decrease -13%High

226 males at 73 active leks. A total of 115 leks was monitored across four recording areas, a further increase in monitoring effort. The number of active leks increased to its highest level

Capercaillie			Moray & Nairn	9	14	Scotland, N & W	53	199
	leks	MM	North-east Scotland	10	12	Highland	53	199
Scotland, Mid	20	27	Perth & Kinross	1	1	TOTALS	73	226

since 2009 but there was a small decline in the number of lekking males in all areas of Mid Scotland. \* Wilkinson *et al.* (2018).

The fifth national Capercaillie survey, a collaboration between the RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) under the Statutory Conservation Agency and RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS), was carried out in the winter of 2015/16. Nick Wilkinson of the RSPB provided the following summary; more information can be found in Wilkinson *et al.* (2018).

Unlike most national single-species surveys, those for the Capercaillie are carried out in winter, when the birds feed in the tree canopy and are more readily flushed and detected by observers. This timing also avoids disturbance during the breeding season. Thanks to relatively benign winter conditions, a team of six surveyors covered nearly 750 2-km transects (equivalent to a total distance of almost 1,500 km) between November 2015 and March 2016. In total, 136 birds were recorded in 120 encounters, giving rise to a population estimate of 1,114 individuals (95% confidence limits: 805–1,505). This is a slight decline (-13%) since the previous survey in 2009/10, when the population was estimated to be 1,285 individuals (95% CL: 822–1,882), although this change was not statistically significant.

Over the longer term (national surveys dating back to the early 1990s), the population appears to have fluctuated between 1,000 and 2,000 birds and is much reduced from higher numbers in the 1970s. It is now very much at the lower end of this range and at a critical level. The area around Strathspey continues to be the major stronghold with 83% of the population, and the Capercaillie is now very scarce in Easter Ross, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Perthshire.

In recent decades, conservation measures to reduce mortality from fence collisions (marking fences to make them more visible, reducing their height or removing them completely) have been put in place in many established woodlands, though the threat from fencing remains in newly planted areas. By contrast, management to improve breeding success has proved much less tractable, with multiple factors involved, including weather, habitat and predators, although poor breeding success remains the key factor underlying the lack of population recovery.

Breeding success is adversely affected by weather (in particular high rainfall in June when the chicks hatch) and predation; success is only (relatively) high when both June rainfall and numbers of predators are low. Furthermore, wetter Junes have become more frequent and appear to be part of a long-term trend, while the small size and fragmented nature of forests within much of this species' Scottish range provides easier access for predators such as crows and Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and exacerbates the effects of predation through 'edge effects'. In addition, there is increasing evidence that human disturbance (use of vehicle tracks and footpaths) causes Capercaillies to avoid using large areas of otherwise suitable woodland, reducing the area of habitat available to the birds and, potentially, limiting population expansion. While the concerted conservation action of the last two decades appears to have made a second extinction of the Capercaillie in Scotland less likely, these latest results highlight that the population remains at a critically low level.

### Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Less scarce 1,255 bp\* 12y trend (survey): **weak increase +38%** Low

145–205 pairs. Since most Red-throated Divers nest in remote and infrequently visited areas, this species is not well monitored by the RBBP. Since the last complete survey was now over ten years ago, our knowledge of population trends is also poor. Nevertheless, there is great value in receiving reports of all pairs on suitable breeding waterbodies in north and west Scotland, so that we can maintain an inventory of used sites. \* Dillon *et al.* (2009).



Red-throated Diver			Scotland, Mid	2	4	Caithness	1	3
			Moray & Nairn	1	2	Highland	11	28
	CP	TP	North-east Scotland	1	1	Orkney	81	95
Scotland, S	5	5	Perth & Kinross	0	1	Outer Hebrides	13	17
Clyde Islands	5	5	Scotland, N & W	138	196	Shetland	23	43
			Argyll	9	10	TOTALS	145	205

**Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica***

Rare 217 bp\*12y trend (survey): stable +16%Low

23–59 pairs. Reporting levels for Black-throated Divers continue to be low and the total of 59 pairs, from 51 sites, is unrepresentative of the national population, which is probably closer to 200 pairs. For example, the Argyll Recorder suggested that there are 5–15 pairs of breeding Black-throated Divers in that county, rather than the one found in 2016. As with Red-throated Diver, reporting of all occupied sites is important to maintain the site inventory.

Observers in southern Scotland report that the small and localised population there appears to be under threat from expanding populations of naturalised Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* and native Greylag Geese *Anser anser*, which are now breeding at diver lochs and aggressively chasing divers from areas near their nests. Although four pairs were reported on territory in Ayrshire, Clyde and Dumfries & Galloway, none were proved to breed in this area in 2016. \* Dillon et al. (2009).

Black-throated Diver			Clyde	0	2	Scotland, N & W	20	51
			Dumfries & G'way	0	1	Argyll	1	1
	CP	TP	Scotland, Mid	3	4	Highland	11	36
Scotland, S	0	4	Moray & Nairn	1	1	Outer Hebrides	8	14
Ayrshire	0	1	Perth & Kinross	2	3	TOTALS	23	59

**Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps***

Occasional breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. This vagrant from North America, with just 45 records to the end of 2017 (Holt et al. 2018), has been recorded breeding once before: a male paired with a Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* in Cornwall in 1994 and three hybrid young fledged (Ogilvie et al. 1996).

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: a male Pied-billed Grebe paired with a Little Grebe and a nest was built, but no eggs were laid.

**Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus***

Very rare 29 bp25y trend: strong decrease -54%Near-complete

16 sites: 35 pairs. This is a welcome increase in the number of pairs; 35 is the highest total since 2007 (see fig. 2 in Holling et al. 2017).

Scotland, N & W

Highland 16 sites: 35 pairs bred, 19 young fledged; plus six single birds. At the main site, Loch Ruthven, 15 pairs fledged seven young.

**Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis***

Rare 55 bp25y trend: weak increase +33%Near-complete

20 sites: 33–51 pairs. Black-necked Grebes continue to occupy a small number of sites, mainly in northern England (57% of all pairs and 64% of confirmed breeding pairs). The most productive sites are also those with the largest number of pairs, and in 2016 there were two of these, in Cheshire & Wirral and in Yorkshire, with 26 young reared between them.

<b>Black-necked Grebe</b>					England, C	1	5	5	5
					Nottinghamshire	1	5	5	5
England, SE	S	CP	TP	YF	England, N	10	21	29	33
Essex	4	6	9	3	Cheshire & Wirral	1	8	9	11
Hertfordshire	1	0	1	0	Greater Manchester	1	0	1	0
Hertfordshire	1	4	4	3	Northumberland	4	0	4	0
Kent	2	2	4	0	Yorkshire	4	13	15	22
England, E	4	1	7	0	Scotland, S	1	0	1	0
Cambridgeshire	2	0	2	0	Borders	1	0	1	0
Lincolnshire	1	0	4	0	TOTALS	20	33	51	41
Norfolk	1	1	1	0					

### Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

#### Potential breeder

**One site: 0–1 pairs.** This is a similar record to that in Lincolnshire in 2014, when a pair began to build a nest but nothing more came of it. With recent breeding by other expanding herons and their allies, there is some anticipation that Glossy Ibis will be added to the list of British breeding birds in the near future.

#### England, SW

**Somerset** One site: one possible breeding pair. A resident individual was joined by a second bird in mid June; subsequently there were bouts of display and passing of sticks, but no nest was built.

### Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

**Very rare** 15 bp

(no trend available but increasing)

Near-complete

**Two sites: 18–21 pairs.** Spoonbills are now a familiar sight at some wetlands in southern England, especially in East Anglia and Kent, and the Cheshire & Wirral record in 2016 hints at an expansion of range to the north. The only breeding colony, at Holkham in Norfolk, continues to grow.

#### England, E

**Norfolk** One site: 18 pairs bred, fledging 35 young, with two additional prospecting pairs.

#### England, N

**Cheshire & Wirral** One site: one probable breeding pair. From early May to early September, there were up to 12 birds, but only one adult. In June, display, copulation and nest-building were noted.



Andrew Bloomfield

**419.** A post-fledging flock of Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* at Holkham, Norfolk, 26th July 2016.

**Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris***

Rare 159 booming males    25y trend: **strong increase +586%**    Near-complete

91 sites: 71–190 pairs. There was a slight increase in the number of booming males in 2016, although there were some regional differences compared with 2015. Somerset is still the predominant county for booming Bitterns, with the majority of birds in the extensive Avalon Marshes. Booming was also reported from a number of new sites, including in East Anglia, southeast England and in Wales. Of the sites monitored annually for both booming and nesting activity (a subset of the whole UK population), there was a decrease in nesting activity in 2016, reflecting a poor year in East Anglia, particularly on the Suffolk coast, probably linked to unseasonably high spring rainfall in 2016. For example, only five nests were recorded on the Suffolk coast, down from 15 in 2015, and there was another drop in the number of reported nesting attempts in the Fens. (Contributed by Simon Wotton)

Eurasian Bittern	sites	booming males (min)	booming males (max)	nests (min)	nests (max)	total pairs
England, SW	14	49	52	20	24	52
Avon	1	0	1	0	0	1
Dorset	1	1	1	0	0	1
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	0	0	1
Isle of Wight	1	0	1	0	1	1
Somerset	10	47	48	20	23	48
England, SE	11	11	13	3	3	14
Bedfordshire	4	3	4	0	0	4
Kent	5	7	7	1	1	7
Oxfordshire	1	0	1	2	2	2
Sussex	1	1	1	0	0	1
England, E	51	87	98	29	32	102
Cambridgeshire	10	21	22	6	7	22
Lincolnshire	7	1	6	1	1	7
Norfolk	23	22	27	10	12	30
Suffolk	11	43	43	12	12	43
England, C	1	0	1	0	0	1
Staffordshire	1	0	1	0	0	1
England, N	11	13	15	11	11	17
Greater Manchester	1	0	1	0	0	1
Lancs & N Mersey	1	1	1	0	0	1
Yorkshire	9	12	13	11	11	15
Wales	3	3	4	1	1	4
Anglesey	2	2	3	1	1	3
Gwent	1	1	1	0	0	1
TOTALS	91	163	183	64	71	190

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 (TP) 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 4 males    (no trend available)    Near-complete

Two sites: 0–3 males. Obtaining proof of breeding is difficult for Little Bitterns but this species is becoming a regular part of our breeding avifauna and new sites are to be expected. In 2016, as well as a bird once again in Yorkshire, which remained for almost two months, there was a single

bird at a suitable site in Suffolk for two days in June.

England, SW

**Somerset** One site: at least two and possibly three males were recorded between 7th May and 3rd August, but there were no definite records of females, juveniles or feeding flights.

England, N

**Yorkshire** One site: one male present from 4th June to 28th July.

**Great White Egret *Ardea alba***

**Very rare** 4 bp

(no trend available)

Near-complete

**Two sites: 7–9 pairs.** With an increase in the size of the initial colony in Somerset and a new site being established in Norfolk, there are signs that the breeding population may be about to take off; the widespread reports of birds in potential breeding habitat in southern England certainly support that possibility. In Cheshire & Wirral, an adult was occasionally seen in a heronry among nesting Grey Herons *A. cinerea* and Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*. Although it made initial attempts at nest-building, it was not paired.

England, SW

**Somerset** One site: six pairs bred, five successfully, fledging 15 young.

England, E

**Norfolk** One site: one pair bred, two additional possible breeding pairs. The nesting pair was unsuccessful as the clutch (three eggs) was predated.

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***

**Scarce** 1,011 bp

15y trend: **strong increase +1,939%**

Moderate

**144 sites: 1,203–1,238 pairs.** The expansion of the Little Egret population continues with confirmed breeding recorded in two new counties, Carmarthenshire and Warwickshire, and probable breeding in a further two, Derbyshire and Radnorshire. The total in the table below is the sum of both confirmed and probable breeding pairs; note that breeding was not confirmed in Northumberland in 2016. It is likely that the wide distribution of Little Egrets in southern Britain makes the species seem a commoner breeding bird than it actually is, although we believe that some small colonies are being overlooked. Nevertheless, the total of 1,238 pairs is the highest yet

<b>Little Egret</b>								
	S	TP	Oxfordshire	1	3	Northumberland	2	2
England, SW	31	252	Surrey	2	10	Yorkshire	5	17
Avon	1	1	Sussex	8	72	Wales	17	138
Cornwall	3	18	England, E	24	256	Anglesey	4	15
Devon	7	62	Cambridgeshire	2	44	Caernarfonshire	3	58
Dorset	6	39	Lincolnshire	8	74	Carmarthenshire	1	6
Gloucestershire	3	10	Norfolk	7	92	Denbigh & Flint	2	14
Hampshire	6	66	Northamptonshire	1	4	Gower	1	24
Isle of Wight	1	2	Suffolk	6	42	Gwent	2	7
Somerset	2	28	England, C	7	15	Meirionnydd	3	13
Wiltshire	2	26	Derbyshire	1	1	Radnorshire	1	1
England, SE	40	364	Leics & Rutland	1	1	Northern Ireland	5	39
Bedfordshire	2	9	Nottinghamshire	3	9	Co. Derry	1	1
Berkshire	3	12	Warwickshire	2	4	Co. Down	4	38
Buckinghamshire	4	18	England, N	16	136	Channel Islands	4	38
Essex	7	90	Cheshire & Wirral	2	70	Guernsey	1	20
Greater London	1	2	Cleveland	1	9	Jersey	3	18
Hertfordshire	5	24	Cumbria	3	16	TOTALS	144	1,238
Kent	7	124	Lancs & N Mersey	3	22			



recorded. Little Egrets breed later than Grey Herons, which they often nest alongside. Perhaps the focus on the BTO Heronries Census ([www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/heronries-census](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/heronries-census)) in 2018, coinciding with the 90-year anniversary of that survey, will reveal new sites.

**Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***

Rare 230 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +288%**

Moderate

218–250 pairs. The accuracy of our data holdings for the Osprey continues to be bedevilled by the lack of detailed site information for most of the Scottish population. Of all Osprey records submitted for 2016, only 21% had at least a 4-figure grid reference, a much lower proportion than for the majority of species. In addition, one Scottish core area returned limited data in 2016: only three nests were reported from Badenoch & Strathspey (Highland) – this area accounted for 11 pairs in 2015. If a similar number were present there in 2016 (which seems likely), the maximum UK population would have been over 260 pairs. Nonetheless, the known total of 250 pairs is still a new record (fig. 2).

The reporting situation in England and Wales is much better, and here we can be confident that the population has expanded with an increase to 26 pairs across these two countries. The first breeding pair in Caernarfonshire was reported in 2016, while in Montgomeryshire there was a rare instance of polygyny: two nests, in close proximity to each other, were served by a single male. The first nest fledged two young while the second failed when the clutch of three eggs was predated about a week after laying.

Osprey			Wales			Scotland, Mid			Scotland, N & W		
	CP	TP	YF	Caernarfonshire	Meirionnydd	Montgomeryshire	Perth & Kinross	Upper Forth	Argyll	Caithness	Highland
England, E	2	2	3	1	2	5	10	11	12	15	18
Northamptonshire	2	2	3	2	2	5	31	38	47	75	86
England, C	5	6	10	0	1	0	8	11	7	13	17
Derbyshire	0	1	0	5	5	10	11	12	15	13	17
Leics & Rutland	5	5	10	9	12	20	2	2	4	6	7
England, N	9	12	20	5	8	9	8	9	18	56	62
Cumbria	5	8	9	4	4	11	1	2	1	218	250
Northumberland	4	4	11								365
				Lothian			TOTALS				

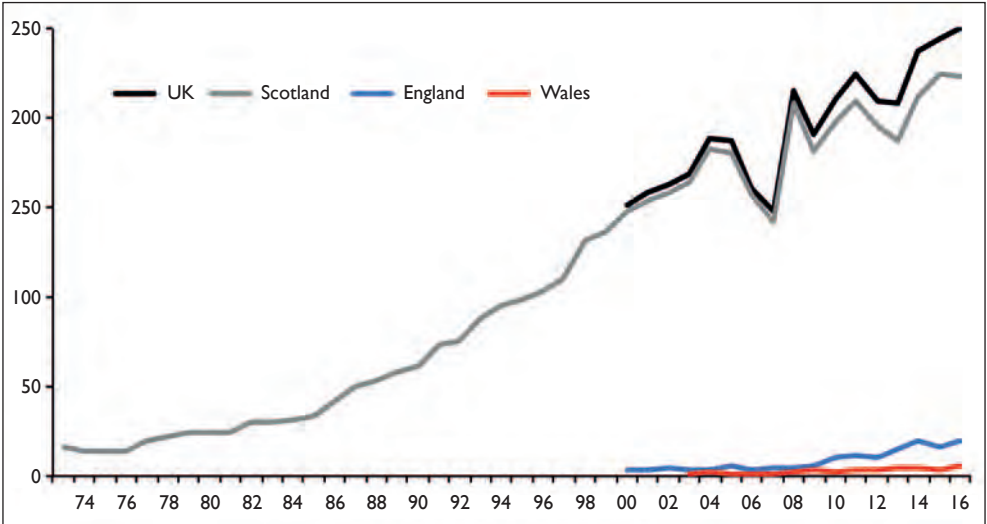


Fig. 2. Total number of pairs of Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* in the UK, 1973–2016.

### Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Rare 38 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +144%**

Moderate

22–35 pairs. The Honey-buzzard remains rare and elusive but is probably more widely distributed than the statistics show; Roberts & Law (2014) suggested there may be as many as 100 nesting pairs in Britain. There are many areas of potential breeding habitat and the species can be overlooked without long periods of careful observation. It is also prone to seemingly desert regular sites only to be found in ‘new’ areas; whether such new areas have actually been recently colonised or whether the species had been previously overlooked there is not always clear. In 2016, fewer pairs were reported from southern England but the population in Mid Scotland, which previously had numbered 0–3 pairs, increased significantly, despite the level of coverage being comparable with that in recent years. The difference seems to have been due to the unusually large numbers of social wasps in the area in 2016 (Shaw *et al.* 2017).

Honey-buzzard					England, C	0	0	1	0
					Derbyshire	0	0	1	0
	I	CP	TP	YF	England, N	2	1	2	1
England, SW	1	9	12	8	Cumbria	0	0	1	0
Dorset	0	2	3	1	Yorkshire	2	1	1	1
Hampshire	1	6	8	5	Wales	0	1	1	2
Wiltshire	0	1	1	2	Gower	0	1	1	2
England, SE	2	5	6	8	Scotland, S	0	0	1	0
Kent	0	1	2	2	Dumfries & G'way	0	0	1	0
Surrey	0	1	1	2	Scotland, Mid	0	6	11	8
Sussex	2	3	3	4	Perth & Kinross/ Upper Forth	0	6	11	8
England, E	0	0	1	0	TOTALS	5	22	35	27
Suffolk	0	0	1	0					

### Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Scarce 508 bp\*

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

Moderate

184–347 pairs. Following the complete survey in 2015, reported numbers were, as to be expected, reduced. They were nevertheless higher than in previous years; for the ten-year period 2005–2014 we reported a mean of 264 total pairs (range 220–330). The male at Haweswater in Cumbria, which had remained on territory since the female died in 2004, was not seen during 2016 and is now presumed dead. Successful breeding last occurred in England in 2001 when one chick fledged in Cumbria. Following a reintroduction project in the Republic of Ireland, which began in 2001, there were two territories in Northern Ireland. \* Hayhow *et al.* (2017a).

Golden Eagle					Scotland, N & W	25	141	283	99
					Argyll	2	39	62	28
	I <sup>1</sup>	CP	TP	YF	Caithness	0	1	1	1
Scotland, S	1	8	11	2	Highland	22	79	164	54
Scotland, Mid	12	35	51	36	Outer Hebrides	1	22	56	16
Angus & Dundee	2	3	5	4	Northern Ireland	0	0	2	0
Moray & Nairn	0	1	4	1	Co. Antrim	0	0	1	0
North-east Scotland	2	10	15	12	Co. Tyrone	0	0	1	0
Perth & Kinross	8	15	19	14	TOTALS	38	184	347	137
Upper Forth	0	6	8	5					

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

**Northern Goshawk**  
**Scarce** 584 bp      25y trend: **strong increase +249%**      Moderate

473–705 pairs. Over 700 pairs is by far the highest Goshawk total ever reported, yet this probably still falls short of the number of occupied territories in the UK. Much of our knowledge about breeding numbers of Goshawks is based on the work of raptor specialists checking and monitoring nests under Schedule 1 licences, but they can only ever cover a proportion of the population. For much of the year Goshawks remain inconspicuous, but for a short period in early spring birds displaying over woodland are more visible. Yet we receive precious few records of these; this is one species for which birders could make a significant contribution to the work of the Panel. All sightings of Goshawks during the period February to July are likely to represent at least possible breeding pairs. We asked recorders to estimate the number of Goshawk territories in their areas; fewer than 25% of recorders did so, but that would still add a further 130 pairs to the published total. We encourage recorders to try to compile these estimates so that we might have a better understanding of the UK’s Goshawk breeding population.

Northern Goshawk			Shropshire	15	19	Meirionnydd	0	3
			Staffordshire	1	3	Montgomeryshire	2	9
			Worcestershire	3	6	Pembrokeshire	1	7
England, SW	CP	TP	England, N	55	126	Radnorshire	8	27
Cornwall	4	5	Cheshire & Wirral	0	1	Scotland, S	48	70
Devon	23	23	Cleveland	0	2	Ayrshire	4	8
Dorset	3	5	Cumbria	4	6	Borders	19	27
Gloucestershire	32	34	Co. Durham	0	6	Clyde	4	4
Hampshire	57	59	Lancs & N Mersey	0	2	Dumfries & G’way	19	29
Somerset	1	6	Northumberland	31	68	Lothian	2	2
Wiltshire	15	24	Yorkshire	20	41	Scotland, Mid	77	96
England, SE	4	9	Wales	70	146	Angus & Dundee	3	4
Surrey	0	2	Anglesey	0	2	Fife	1	4
Sussex	4	7	Breconshire	12	25	Moray & Nairn	3	4
England, E	21	21	Caernarfonshire	0	7	North-east Scotland	62	73
Norfolk	13	13	Carmarthenshire	1	4	Perth & Kinross	6	9
Suffolk	8	8	Ceredigion	0	5	Upper Forth	2	2
England, C	57	73	Denbigh & Flint	0	4	Scotland, N & W	6	8
Derbyshire	18	18	East Glamorgan	6	8	Highland	6	8
Herefordshire	9	16	Gower	15	19	TOTALS	473	705
Nottinghamshire	11	11	Gwent	25	26			

**Marsh Harrier**  
**Scarce** 361 bp      25y trend: **strong increase +383%**      Moderate

Marsh Harrier				England, E	186	221	233	Gower	1	1	1
	CP	TP	YF	Cambridgeshire	27	40	15	Gwent	0	1	0
England, SW	16	17	39	Lincolnshire	35	46	25	Pembrokeshire	1	1	0
Dorset	4	4	11	Norfolk	64	70	73	Scotland, Mid	6	10	15
Hampshire	1	2	1	Suffolk	60	65	120	Angus & Dundee	2	3	5
Isle of Wight	2	2	7	England, N	38	55	58	Fife	0	1	0
Somerset	9	9	20	Cheshire & Wirral	2	3	2	Perth & Kinross	4	5	10
England, SE	49	56	72	Lancs & N Mersey	4	4	7	Upper Forth	0	1	0
Bedfordshire	1	1	0	Northumberland	1	1	4	Channel Islands	21	25	18
Essex	8	11	14	Yorkshire	31	47	45	Guernsey	3	5	n/a
Kent	36	36	52	Wales	4	6	5	Jersey	18	20	18
Oxfordshire	1	1	1	Anglesey	2	2	4	TOTALS	320	390	440
Sussex	3	7	5	Breconshire	0	1	0				

320–390 breeding females/pairs. Some ‘pairs’ actually refer to two or more females paired with a single polygynous male. As well as these pairs, there were single birds reported from the edge of the range in Cornwall (where breeding has occurred once, in 2014), Greater Manchester (where breeding has yet to be reported) and Orkney. Marsh Harriers nested regularly in Orkney during 2001–07, but have not since; in 2016 a single male, present for several weeks, was seen nest-building but remained unpaired.

### Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce 575 bp\*

12y trend (survey): **weak decrease -29%** High

575 pairs. \* Wotton *et al.* (2018).

The fifth UK and Isle of Man Hen Harrier survey was carried out in 2016 by a partnership involving the RSPB, SNH, the Scottish Raptor Study Group, the Northern England Raptor Forum, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group and Manx BirdLife. Simon Wotton of the RSPB provided this summary; more information can be found in Wotton *et al.* (2018).

Survey work was carried out by members of Raptor Study Groups and other upland bird study groups, other volunteers, staff from the statutory agencies, RSPB and other conservation bodies, and RSPB contract fieldworkers. Coverage was by 10-km square, as in previous surveys. Because the range in Scotland was too large for complete coverage, a stratified sample of squares was surveyed (stratification being based upon (i) recent Hen Harrier occupancy, (ii) whether the square was at least partly within a SPA designated for Hen Harriers and (iii) the amount of potentially suitable breeding habitat in each square). In England, Northern Ireland, Wales and the Isle of Man the aim was for complete coverage of all suitable habitat in the identified breeding range. Across Scotland, 331 10-km squares were surveyed compared with 213 squares in 2010 (+55%). There was also increased coverage in Northern Ireland (+38%), Wales (+36%) and the Isle of Man (+43%) in 2016 compared with 2010.

The UK and Isle of Man Hen Harrier population was estimated at 575 territorial pairs (95% confidence limits, 477–694), a non-significant decline of 13% since 2010, but a significant decline of 24% since 2004. In Scotland, the population estimate was 460 territorial pairs (95% cl, 359–573), a non-significant decline of 9% since 2010, but a significant decline of 27% since 2004. Scotland held c. 80% of the UK and Isle of Man population in 2016. Orkney and the Hebrides were the only Scottish regions to report small increases, with declines elsewhere, particularly in



Dan Powell

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*



Hen Harrier	TP
England, N	4
Wales	35
Scotland	460
Northern Ireland	46
Isle of Man	30
TOTAL	575

eastern and southern Scotland. Only four breeding or territorial pairs were found in England, down from 12 in 2010. Numbers have fallen in Wales, from 57 to 35, and Northern Ireland has also experienced a decline since 2010, from 59 to 46 breeding pairs. Hen Harriers were also surveyed on the Isle of Man, with numbers remaining stable at 30 pairs, up one since 2010.

Note that in the tables the first (left) gives the estimated country totals as per the survey report while the larger table (below) gives county totals based on data supplied to the RBBP.

Hen Harrier				Radnorshire	7	9	n/a	Argyll	67	106	122
	CP	TP	YF	Scotland, S	35	54	68	Caithness	0	12	0
England, N	4	4	7	Ayrshire	1	7	3	Highland	22	49	23
Cumbria	1	1	1	Borders	8	9	12	Orkney	48	124	32
Northumberland	3	3	6	Clyde	7	10	5	Outer Hebrides	23	43	47
Wales	20	29	4	Clyde Islands	12	19	20	Northern Ireland	27	42	n/a
Breconshire	1	1	0	Dumfries & G'way	7	9	28	Co. Antrim	5	10	n/a
Caernarfonshire	0	3	0	Scotland, Mid	29	48	34	Co. Derry	2	6	n/a
Carmarthenshire	1	1	0	Moray & Nairn	8	12	7	Co. Fermanagh	15	21	n/a
Denbigh & Flint	3	4	4	North-east Scotland	1	4	4	Co. Tyrone	5	5	n/a
Meirionnydd	6	7	0	Perth & Kinross	20	32	23	Isle of Man	21	30	8
Montgomeryshire	2	4	0	Scotland, N & W	160	334	224	TOTALS	296	541	345

Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*  
Potential breeder

One mixed pair. A male Northern Harrier bred with a female Hen Harrier in Orkney in 2016, the first time that this North American species has bred in the UK. Eggs were laid but the breeding attempt failed before they hatched. The male was present in the breeding area between 20th April and 23rd June and is believed to be the same as one first seen in Orkney in autumn 2015. This is not the first time that there has been a mixed harrier pairing in Orkney: in 1995, a male Pallid Harrier *C. macrourus* paired with a female Hen Harrier, but this attempt also failed when the eggs disappeared, thought to have been taken by a predator (Ogilvie et al. 1998).

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: one male bred with a female Hen Harrier but the pair failed on eggs.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*  
Very rare 8 bp      25y trend: weak decrease -34%      Near-complete

Five sites: 5–6 breeding pairs. The UK population remains in a critical state and although ten young fledged in 2016, this is due in no small part to the extensive nest protection measures in place. A maximum of six pairs is the lowest recorded since 1984. Some young were satellite-tagged in an effort to understand their migration routes and potential problems the British-bred birds may face when they leave the UK (see <http://bit.ly/2wyXNSm>).

England, S

Three sites: (1) two pairs bred, both fledging three young; (2) one pair bred fledging three young; (2) one pair bred fledging two young. Elsewhere, just a single female lingered briefly at a former nesting site but no male arrived.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one pair bred fledging two young.

England, E

Yorkshire One site: one female present from late April to early August remained unpaired although a male was seen on one date.

### White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Rare 92 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +1,214%**

Near-complete

65–104 pairs. This total is fewer than that in 2015, which may be due to the reduced monitoring in place for this species. Nonetheless, there was an expansion of range to inland areas of Highland, with one pair breeding successfully in Badenoch & Strathspey.

White-tailed Eagle				Fife	1	1	1	Highland	26	45	31
	CP	TP	YF	Perth & Kinross	1	2	1	Orkney	1	1	0
Scotland, Mid	2	4	2	Scotland, N & W	63	100	65	Outer Hebrides	15	25	10
Angus & Dundee	0	1	0	Argyll	21	29	24	TOTALS	65	104	67

### Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Very rare 3 bp

(no trend available)

Near-complete

One extensive site: seven nesting females.

Eight nests were found, of which one was a second attempt after an initial failure. At least five of the nesting attempts were by two-year-old females, younger than normally expected for this species. It is possible that other females may have bred in private farmland away from the census area. Mating is rarely seen and it is unknown if there was a dominant male or whether more than one male was involved in the breeding attempts. Of nine chicks seen, at least two were known to have fledged.

Individual Great Bustards released in south Wiltshire were recorded in Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Cornwall and northern France in 2016. It is thought that there were around 50 bustards extant in southern England at the end of 2016.

England, SW

Wiltshire One extensive site: at least seven females laid eggs; a minimum of two young fledged.

### Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Less scarce 1,414 bp

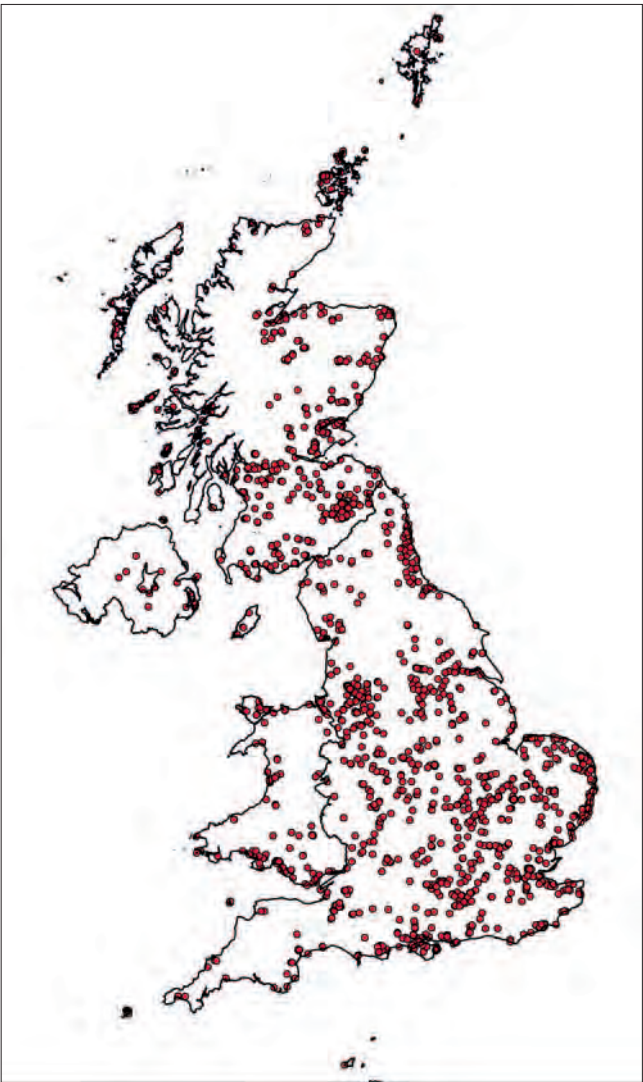
(no trend available)

Moderate

Water Rail			Lincolnshire	4	39	Wales	36	51
	S	T	Norfolk	33	57	Anglesey	7	10
England, SW	41	130	Northamptonshire	1	2	Breconshire	2	2
Avon	3	27	Suffolk	22	318	Caernarfonshire	1	2
Devon	6	13	England, C	38	126	Carmarthenshire	1	2
Dorset	7	13	Derbyshire	8	8	Ceredigion	5	5
Gloucestershire	2	3	Herefordshire	3	3	Denbigh & Flint	2	3
Hampshire	16	31	Leics & Rutland	1	1	East Glamorgan	7	10
Isle of Wight	2	2	Nottinghamshire	2	24	Gower	3	3
Somerset	4	40	Staffordshire	12	62	Gwent	1	3
Wiltshire	1	1	Warwickshire	5	16	Meirionnydd	1	2
England, SE	61	101	West Midlands	2	3	Radnorshire	6	9
Bedfordshire	6	6	Worcestershire	5	9	Scotland, S	47	125
Berkshire	8	8	England, N	102	284	Ayrshire	5	6
Essex	5	9	Cheshire & Wirral	22	63	Borders	21	81
Hertfordshire	3	8	Cleveland	2	24	Clyde	10	15
Kent	26	49	Cumbria	6	7	Clyde Islands	2	2
Oxfordshire	3	7	Co. Durham	3	5	Dumfries & G'way	8	19
Surrey	7	11	Greater Manchester	17	39	Lothian	1	2
Sussex	3	3	Lancs & N Mersey	1	1	Scotland, Mid	33	41
England, E	78	448	Northumberland	16	27	Angus & Dundee	3	5
Cambridgeshire	18	32	Yorkshire	35	118	Fife	11	12

Water Rail cont.		
	S	T
Moray & Nairn	1	1
North-east Scotland	8	9
Perth & Kinross	7	7
Upper Forth	3	7
Scotland, N & W	40	74
Argyll	22	26
Caithness	2	2
Highland	7	30
Orkney	8	15
Outer Hebrides	1	1
Northern Ireland	5	10
Co. Antrim	2	6
Co. Down	2	2
Co. Tyrone	1	2
Isle of Man	1	1
TOTALS	482	1,391

482 sites: 205–1,391 territories. Spending much of its time hidden in waterside vegetation, the Water Rail is particularly poorly recorded and annual totals (which have varied between 972 and 1,628 in the last ten years) will underestimate the true population. Some recorders have given separate estimates of their county populations, using local knowledge. About a quarter of counties provided such an estimate, and these combined would add c. 1,200 extra territories, suggesting a UK population in excess of 2,500 territories and probably considerably more. Counties where the estimate is noticeably higher than the total reported for 2016 include Dorset, Hampshire, Lancashire & N Merseyside (all with estimates of over 100 territories) and Argyll, Moray & Nairn and Perth & Kinross (all with estimates of over 50 territories). Fig. 3 confirms the wide distribution of Water Rails across Britain and is based on all sites provided to the RBBP with at least a 4-figure grid reference.



**Fig. 3.** The distribution of all grid-referenced sites for Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus* in the RBBP database for 2006–16.

**Corn Crane *Crex crex***

Less scarce 1,158 bp    23y trend (survey\*): **strong increase +146%**    Near-complete

1,075 singing males. The number of singing males recorded was slightly lower than in 2015 (1,121), with most areas seeing a small decline. Seven calling birds at one site in Yorkshire bucked this trend, and was the highest count at this site since 2009. \* Wotton *et al.* (2015).

England, E  
Cambridgeshire Total 16: Nene Washes 15, Ouse Washes 1. Lincolnshire One, heard for four days in May.

**Norfolk** Two, at two widely separated sites. One summered while the other was recorded for at least four days in July.

[England, N](#)

**Yorkshire** Seven, all within one extensive site. Records from late April into July with four birds recorded consistently through most of this period.

[Scotland, N & W](#)

**Argyll** Total 607: Coll 89, Colonsay & Oronsay 52, Gigha 0, Iona 28, Islay 84, Mull 3, Staffa 1, Tiree 346, Treshnish Isles 2, mainland 2. **Caithness** Total one. **Highland** Total 44: Canna 2, Eigg 1, mainland 15, Muck 1, Skye 25. **Orkney** Total 12. **Outer Hebrides** Total 383: Barra & Vatersay 57, Benbecula 14, Berneray 0, Harris 6, Lewis 103, Mingulay and other islands south of Vatersay 6, North Uist 103, South Uist 94. **Shetland** Total one.

[Northern Ireland](#)

**Co. Antrim** One.

### Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

**Very rare** 31 bp

25y trend: **stable +10%**

Moderate

**16 sites: 1–25 pairs/singing males.** All records refer to singing males and all records are included here, regardless of how long the birds were present. This was a typical year with birds detected at an average number of widespread sites. A minimum of five (and possibly seven) calling birds at the Nene Washes is higher than usual, and may be a response not only to the management of this extensive site, but also to widespread shallow flooding.

[England, SW](#)

**Somerset** Three sites: (1) two heard on one date in July; (2) one on 14th July; (3) one.

[England, SE](#)

**Bedfordshire** One site: one, 19th–27th May.

[England, E](#)

**Cambridgeshire** Two sites: (1) Nene Washes: up to five calling throughout the season; (2) Ouse Washes: one on 21st July. **Norfolk** One site: one, 20th–23rd July. **Suffolk** One site: one, 23rd–26th April.

[England, N](#)

**Cheshire & Wirral** One site: despite night-time visits, no singing birds were heard; however, in late July an adult and a juvenile were seen, and it is likely that breeding occurred nearby, possibly in marshes in neighbouring Denbigh & Flint. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** One site: (1) two, 19th April to 31st May. **Yorkshire** Two sites: (1) three on 13th May, one still present on 24th May; (2) two on 10th May.

[Scotland, S](#)

**Clyde** One site: one.

[Scotland, Mid](#)

**North-east Scotland** One site: two birds, presumably a pair, 15th May to 6th August. A predated egg found on 16th July indicates that breeding occurred.

[Scotland, N & W](#)

**Argyll** One site: one on 19th April only. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one 3rd–11th June.

### Common Crane *Grus grus*

**Very rare** 28 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +1,625%**

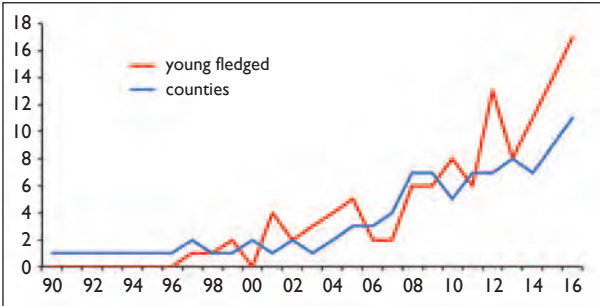
Near-complete

**18 sites: 32–38 pairs.** This year saw a significant upturn in the number of breeding sites and pairs, both to new record levels, while the number of young fledged (18) was also a peak since recolonisation (fig. 4). This reflects the consolidation of the natural population in the east and in Scotland coupled with the success of the reintroduced birds in the southwest, which included the first breeding in Wales for around 400 years. Note that Cranes that are apparently paired but not associated with a particular site are classed as non-breeding pairs.

[England, SW](#)

**Gloucestershire** One extensive site: four pairs bred, no young fledged. Four non-breeding pairs in the county. **Somerset** Four sites: seven pairs bred but fledged only one young. Two non-breeding pairs in the county. **Wiltshire** One site: one pair bred, one young fledged.





**Fig. 4.** Total number of counties with breeding pairs of Common Cranes *Grus grus* and the total number of young fledged in the UK, 1990–2016.

breeding pair. **Suffolk** One site (Lakenheath): two pairs bred, fledging a total of three young.  
**England, N**  
**Yorkshire** One site: one pair bred, fledging one young; also, one possible breeding pair.  
**Wales**  
**East Glamorgan** One non-breeding pair. **Gwent** One site: one pair bred, fledging one young. This is the first breeding record for the county.  
**Scotland, Mid**  
**North-east Scotland** Two sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging one young; (2) one pair bred, but chicks were lost to a predator. Also one non-breeding pair in the county.

**Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus***  
**Scarce 384 bp**      **25y trend: strong increase +169%**      **Near-complete**

320–347 pairs. A review of the status of the Stone-curlew in 2012–16 published by the RSPB concluded that the population had largely recovered from the exceptionally cold spring in 2013. The provision of fallow plots within cropped habitats increases the number of pairs nesting in an area and in particular the productivity of those pairs (RSPB 2016).

Stone-curlew	Wiltshire		82	90	England, E	199	218
	England, SE		7	7		Cambridgeshire	1
England, SW	CP	TP	Berkshire	4	4	Norfolk	100
	114	122	Oxfordshire	2	2	Suffolk	98
Hampshire	32	32	Sussex	1	1	TOTALS	320
							347

**Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus***  
**Colonising breeder**

**Three sites: three pairs.** Three pairs in southeast England made four breeding attempts but as in 2015 no young were reared. Factors implicated in the breeding failure included heavy rain, predation and unusual behaviour by one of the nesting birds. The pair from Kent that relocated to Essex provided the first breeding record of Black-winged Stilts for the latter county.

**England, SE**  
**Kent** Two sites. At the first site, three pairs bred but all failed. One pair hatched two young: one chick died when only three days old and the other perished when just ten days from likely fledging. Heavy rain was the cause in both cases. A second pair failed when the eggs were removed from the nest by a male stilt; the pair then relocated to Essex where a second clutch was deserted five days after the eggs were laid. The third pair also laid eggs, but these disappeared overnight, probably taken by a Red Fox, which was seen near the nest site the following day. This pair subsequently relocated to a second site in Kent; their clutch was predated by Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* two days before they were due to hatch.

**Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta***

**Less scarce** 1,885 bp      25y trend: **strong increase +355%**      Near-complete

112 sites: 2,230 pairs. The strong increase in the Avocet population continues, and this is the first time that over 2,000 pairs have been reported to the Panel. Better coverage in Essex in 2016 contributed to this high total. The species' distribution was confined to the same 21 counties as in 2015 but the number of sites used increased further. At some less well-watched sites, evidence of confirmed breeding may not be available for pairs that settle and fail early in the season and there were indications of potential breeding by a further 91 pairs.

<b>Avocet</b>			<b>England, E</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1,019</b>	<b>England, N</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>360</b>
	S	CP	Cambridgeshire	3	34	Cheshire & Wirral	2	40
<b>England, SW</b>	5	56	Lincolnshire	8	178	Cleveland	4	40
Gloucestershire	1	16	Norfolk	22	560	Co. Durham	1	12
Hampshire	3	36	Suffolk	14	247	Lancs & N Mersey	6	106
Somerset	1	4	<b>England, C</b>	5	25	Northumberland	3	5
<b>England, SE</b>	25	727	Leics & Rutland	1	1	Yorkshire	13	157
Essex	11	222	Nottinghamshire	2	4	<b>Wales</b>	1	43
Kent	11	392	Staffordshire	1	3	Gwent	1	43
Sussex	3	113	Worcestershire	1	17	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>2,230</b>

**Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius***

**Scarce** 550 bp      15y trend: **stable -5%**      Moderate

357–554 pairs. The table below shows only confirmed and probable breeding pairs; a further 50 possible breeding pairs may have been passage birds or those using sites only temporarily. Based on the national survey (Conway *et al.* 2008), annual returns to the RBBP account for about half of the national population (estimated at 1,115 pairs in 2007). Several counties provided population estimates, bolstering the belief that our coverage of this species could be improved. Estimates included 50 pairs in Lancashire & N Merseyside and ten in Surrey. The large population along the River Tywi in Carmarthenshire was again not counted but this extensive site is thought to support around 60 pairs.

<b>Little Ringed Plover</b>		Lincolnshire	28	Yorkshire	66
	TP	Norfolk	31	<b>Wales</b>	31
<b>England, SW</b>	42	Northamptonshire	8	Breconshire	4
Avon	2	Suffolk	8	Carmarthenshire	2
Devon	3	<b>England, C</b>	<b>106</b>	Denbigh & Flint	4
Dorset	2	Derbyshire	20	East Glamorgan	6
Hampshire	25	Herefordshire	4	Gower	1
Somerset	4	Leics & Rutland	16	Gwent	5
Wiltshire	6	Nottinghamshire	2	Meirionnydd	2
<b>England, SE</b>	<b>69</b>	Shropshire	4	Montgomeryshire	4
Bedfordshire	9	Staffordshire	33	Radnorshire	3
Berkshire	8	Warwickshire	11	<b>Scotland, S</b>	17
Buckinghamshire	6	West Midlands	7	Borders	3
Essex	17	Worcestershire	9	Clyde	13
Greater London	1	<b>England, N</b>	<b>187</b>	Dumfries & G'way	1
Hertfordshire	5	Cheshire & Wirral	18	<b>Scotland, Mid</b>	<b>18</b>
Kent	4	Cleveland	4	Angus & Dundee	9
Oxfordshire	4	Cumbria	12	Fife	2
Surrey	1	Co. Durham	13	North-east Scotland	6
Sussex	14	Greater Manchester	23	Perth & Kinross	1
<b>England, E</b>	<b>84</b>	Lancs & N Mersey	31	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>554</b>
Cambridgeshire	9	Northumberland	20		

**Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus***

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

13–52 pairs. For the first time since 2011 (when two pairs bred), there was confirmed breeding by a pair in **Cumbria**. In Scotland, data were received relating to a total of 51 breeding pairs or single birds in suitable habitat in the main range, in **Angus & Dundee** (2), **Highland** (29), **Moray & Nairn** (5), **North-east Scotland** (4) and **Perth & Kinross** (11); of these, 13 pairs were confirmed breeding records. \*Hayhow *et al.* (2015).

**Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus***

**Scarce** 290+ bp\*      (no trend available)      Low

No confirmed breeding records were submitted. There were reports of single probable/possible breeding pairs in **Orkney** and the **Outer Hebrides**; the main breeding location is **Shetland** but we were made aware of only one probable breeding pair, on Yell. \* Jackson (2009).

**Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa***

**Rare** 55 bp      25y trend: **stable -2%**      Near-complete

Nine sites: 52–58 pairs. The 42 pairs at the main site, the Nene Washes in Cambridgeshire, laid 44 clutches, of which 19 hatched. Losses were due to predation (20) and desertion (five). Three pairs relaid nearby but they also failed; only five young fledged from this site. There was better success at Welney WWT in Norfolk, where three breeding pairs all fledged young.

In the far north, birds of the race *L. l. islandica* bred successfully in Orkney but we have no count of the number of young fledged. The traditional sites in Shetland were all checked but only one was occupied: three birds arrived and displayed but no eggs were laid and they soon moved on.

Black-tailed Godwit									
	S	CP	TP	YF	<i>L. l. islandica</i>	5	6	9	n/a
<i>L. l. limosa</i>	4	46	49	14	Scotland, N & W	5	6	9	n/a
England, SW	1	1	1	0	Orkney	3	6	7	n/a
England, E	2	45	45	14	Outer Hebrides	1	0	1	0
Cambridgeshire	1	42	42	5	Shetland	1	0	1	0
Norfolk	1	3	3	9					
England, N	1	0	3	0	TOTALS	9	52	58	14
Lancs & N Mersey	1	0	3	0					

**Ruff *Calidris pugnax***

**Very rare** 13 females      25y trend: **strong decrease -57%**      High

17 sites: 1–33 breeding females. Ruffs occur regularly on passage in spring on their way to breeding grounds in northern and eastern Europe and lekking is observed at some stopovers, some of which are potential breeding sites. We have included counts where leks persisted for at least five days, and applying this criterion shows 2016 to have had the highest number of potentially breeding females since 1993, although many of these will have been passage birds. Breeding was confirmed at only one site, in Argyll, but may have occurred elsewhere in northwest Scotland, where there was a total of 11 possible breeding pairs. The lekking birds in Cleveland were the first seen on the North Tees Marshes since the 1980s.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: five females and up to 23 males lekking for over a week in May. Lincolnshire One site: a maximum of four females with males at a lek from 6th May until early June. Norfolk Three sites, although birds probably moved between them: in total, there was a minimum of 33 males lekking and five

females visiting the leks on 5th–16th May. After a period with no sightings, birds reappeared on 10th June and some lekking was again observed until 1st July.

England, N

**Cheshire & Wirral** One site: up to five males lekking and one female attending between 29th April and 2nd June, with a single female still present on 8th–9th June. **Cleveland** One site: one female with up to four males lekking on 9th–17th June. **Lancashire & N Merseyside** Two sites: (1) 26 males lekking and five females attending in late May and early June; (2) five males lekking and one female attending on 7th–11th May.

Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Two sites: (1) one pair bred. Two males seen displaying to a female on 9th June. On 11th July a female with two or three small chicks was seen; (2) a pair together 13th–25th May and then a different male on 3rd–6th June; nearby a (different?) pair was also in suitable habitat on 12th May. **Orkney** One site: up to five males and two females in June. **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: (1) up to five males and one female on 13th and 16th May with lekking noted on several occasions, four birds still present on 23rd June and breeding suspected; (2) up to three males and one female on 20th June with the female still present on 8th and 11th July; (3) a pair lekking on 6th July but up to two males in area from 2nd June to 6th July. **Shetland** Two sites: (1) a female on 13th–27th May was seen to emerge from a probable nest site on the last date, and a male was seen there on 12th June; (2) up to two males and three females on 7th–15th June, with mating seen on 9th June. On 4th July a female was seen coming out of long vegetation as if from a nest.

### Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Potential breeder

**One site: 0–1 pairs.** There have been very few records of displaying Jack Snipes in spring; for example Hertfordshire in 1984 and Lancashire & N Merseyside in 1994. The bird on North Uist, Outer Hebrides, was therefore very unusual (and was located by an observer in the area to see a vagrant Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*). The bird was not seen subsequently but it or another Jack Snipe was flushed from the edge of a loch about 25 km to the south in mid June.

Scotland, N & W

**Outer Hebrides** One site: one displaying bird on 27th May.

### Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Rare 56 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +213%**

Near-complete

**23 sites: 55–70 breeding pairs/males.** Although there were fewer breeding males reported in 2016 than in the bumper year of 2015 (61–83), owing to lower totals in the Outer Hebrides and Shetland, there were more than twice the number of confirmed pairs in Argyll and records from three other counties.

Red-necked Phalarope							
	S	CP	TP	Highland	1	0	1
Scotland, Mid	1	0	1	Orkney	1	1	2
North-east Scotland	1	0	1	Outer Hebrides	3	4	6
Scotland, N & W	22	55	69	Shetland	15	42	52
Argyll	2	8	8	TOTALS	23	55	70

### Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Very rare 2 bp

15y trend: **stable +13%**

High

**One site: 0–1 pairs.** The Green Sandpiper remains one of our rarest regular breeders but there has been no confirmed breeding since 2011.

Scotland, N & W

**Highland** One site: one probable breeding pair. Elsewhere, and many tens of kilometres away from the normal breeding area, one was reported singing and displaying on 10th May; this was assumed to be a passage bird since there is no apparently suitable breeding habitat close by.

Andy Williams



420. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Highland, July 2016.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola***

Very rare 31 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +750%**

Near-complete

21 sites: 5–37 pairs. The only other year when Wood Sandpipers have been recorded at 20 or more sites was the survey year of 2007, and since then 28 new sites for the species have been logged (with seven new sites discovered in 2016). Clearly not all are used every year, but the numbers of breeding Wood Sandpipers in Scotland are perhaps higher than ever before.

Wood Sandpiper	S	CP	TP	Highland	13	5	27
Scotland, N & W	21	5	37	Outer Hebrides	1	0	1
Caithness	7	0	9	TOTALS	21	5	37

**Greenshank *Tringa nebularia***

Less scarce 1,080 bp\*

(no trend available)

Low

Greenshank		Caithness	22
	TP	Highland	98
Scotland, N & W	138	Outer Hebrides	17
Argyll	1	TOTAL	138

4–138 pairs. Without an increase in recording effort it is difficult to judge the population trends for the Greenshank in the UK. Scotland is at the westernmost limit of a large range, which extends

from Fennoscandia across Russia to Kamchatka. \* Hancock *et al.* (1997).

**Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus***

**Occasional breeder**

One site: one pair. Display and copulation by a pair of Little Gulls at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB (North-east Scotland) were recorded in both 2014 and 2015, with the pair seen carrying nest material in 2015. A pair returned in 2016 and this time nested among a colony of Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* (Humpidge 2016). Two young fledged – the first successful breeding by Little Gulls



in the UK. Previously, confirmed breeding occurred in Norfolk in 1978 and 2007. Eggs were laid on both occasions but in 1978 they failed to hatch and in 2007 were taken by a predator.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one pair bred fledging two young.

**Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus***

Less scarce 1,110 bp 25y trend: **strong increase +8,309%** Moderate

53 sites: 1,846–1,911 pairs. We have reported over 1,000 pairs of Mediterranean Gulls only twice before, in 2010 (1,034) and 2012 (1,047). Almost 2,000 pairs in 2016 is therefore a significant increase in numbers, driven mainly by large increases since 2015 in Hampshire (+126%) and Kent (+195%). There has been little change in range, however. Counties in central England have not had breeding pairs every year, and 2016 saw the first confirmed breeding in Nottinghamshire since 1997. The only mixed pairings (included in the table) were with a Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* (one pair in Worcestershire, the first breeding by Mediterranean Gull in that county, and one pair in Yorkshire) and with a Common Gull *Larus canus* (Co. Fermanagh).

Mediterranean Gull				Norfolk			Yorkshire				
	S	CP	TP	Suffolk			Wales				
England, SW	7	907	945	England, C	6	4	9	Anglesey	1	1	1
Dorset	2	10	48	Nottinghamshire	1	1	1	Carmarthenshire	1	5	5
Hampshire	5	897	897	Shropshire	1	0	1	Denbigh & Flint	1	0	1
England, SE	12	821	825	Staffordshire	2	2	4	Montgomeryshire	1	0	1
Essex	5	10	14	West Midlands	1	0	2	Northern Ireland	3	7	8
Kent	5	750	750	Worcestershire	1	1*	1*	Co. Antrim	1	5	5
Sussex	2	61	61	England, N	10	46	57	Co. Down	1	2	2
England, E	11	55	59	Cumbria	1	3	3	Co. Fermanagh	1	0	1*
Cambridgeshire	3	1	3	Lancs & N Mersey	5	39	46	TOTALS	53	1,846	1,911
Lincolnshire	3	2	4	Northumberland	1	0	3	(* mixed pairs)			

**Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis***

Occasional breeder

One site: one mixed pair. The Ring-billed Gull found paired with a Common Gull in 2009, and seen at the same colony in 2014, returned in 2016 and was seen on eggs; so far this is the only confirmed breeding by this species in the UK, albeit as half of a mixed pair.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one mixed pair bred. A Ring-billed Gull paired with a Common Gull was seen incubating two eggs.

**Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis***

Very rare 3 bp 15y trend: **stable +0%** Near-complete

Two sites: two pairs. The same two sites as in 2015 again reported single breeding pairs of Yellow-legged Gulls; no mixed pairs were recorded.

England, SW

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

**Little Tern *Sternula albifrons***

Less scarce 1,491 bp 15y trend: **stable -5%** High

74 sites: 1,290 pairs. Most Little Tern colonies are counted every year, the only exceptions being some of the smaller sites in Scotland. In 2016, a full survey took place in the Outer Hebrides,

where Little Terns nest in small, well-scattered colonies along the coastal machair. Numbers were lower there than in recent years, however. Overall, this is the lowest total since Little Tern was added to the RBBP list in 1995 but it was a productive year, with the highest minimum total of young fledged since 2011, when there were 886 young.

Little Tern	S	CP	YF	Norfolk	8	493	403	Lothian	1	3	0
England, SW	3	59	71	Suffolk	3	67	5	Scotland, Mid	1	3	0
Dorset	1	39	71	England, N	8	205	114	Moray & Nairn	1	3	0
Hampshire	2	20	0	Cleveland	1	84	58	Scotland, N & W	34	142	39
England, SE	10	107	25	Cumbria	4	61	4	Argyll	12	59	28
Essex	4	31	12	Northumberland	2	54	47	Highland	6	16	3
Kent	3	18	0	Yorkshire	1	6	5	Orkney	1	5	8
Sussex	3	58	13	Wales	2	142	172	Outer Hebrides	15	62	n/a
England, E	14	587	419	Denbigh & Flint	2	142	172	Isle of Man	1	42	9
Lincolnshire	3	27	11	Scotland, S	1	3	0	TOTALS	74	1,290	849

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Rare 95 bp25y trend: strong decrease -47%Near-complete

Five sites: 106 pairs plus four mixed pairs. Away from the main colony on Coquet Island, Northumberland, the only breeding pairs of Roseate Terns were singles in Anglesey and Co. Antrim, while others were seen at another suitable nesting site in Anglesey and on the Isle of May, but they did not stay to breed. In addition, birds in Anglesey and in the Firth of Forth (Fife and Lothian) were paired with Common Terns.

Roseate Tern				Anglesey	1	3 (2*)	0	Northern Ireland	1	1	1
	S	CP	YF	Scotland, S	1	1	1	Co. Antrim	1	1	1
England, N	1	104	91	Lothian	1	1*	1**	TOTALS	5	110	96
Northumberland	1	104	91	Scotland, Mid	1	1	3	(* mixed pairs ** hybrid young)			
Wales	1	3	0	Fife	1	1*	3**				



Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

### Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

**Scarce** 2,136 bp\* 15y trend (survey): **strong decrease -37%** Low

151 AOTs. Incomplete coverage hampers our ability to track changes in this declining seabird. In 2016 there was no monitoring at six of the 12 sites sampled in the 2015 report, including Handa (Highland). Arctic Skuas were also recorded on three islands/island groups in Argyll (Coll, Jura and the Treshnish Isles) but there were no counts in 2016.

Perkins *et al.* (2018) analysed data from 32 colonies in Orkney and Shetland, plus Handa, and measured a population decline of 81% between 1992 and 2015. This suggests that the UK population may now be as low as 550 pairs. The decline has been driven by a reduction in breeding success, caused by poor food availability when the adults are feeding chicks, but also predation pressure from Great Skuas *S. skua*. \* Mitchell *et al.* (2004).

<b>Arctic Skua</b>	S	AOT	YF	Fair Isle	1	37	12	Outer Hebrides	2	14	2
Scotland N & W	16	151	59	Highland	1	3	n/a	Shetland	3	35	n/a
Caithness	2	7	4	Orkney	7	55	41	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>59</b>

### Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

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

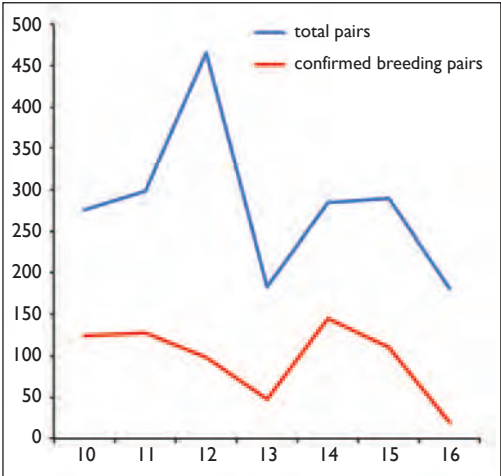
124–216 pairs. The 5-year mean for Long-eared Owl is now 300 bp, well below the estimated population, but this does provide a benchmark against which to judge the annual submissions. Thus 2016 was a poor year for the species with widespread reports of lower numbers attempting to breed and very few fledged young, particularly in northern England (Smith & NERF 2017), and thought to be due to very low numbers of small-mammal prey, which also affected Short-eared Owls *A. flammeus*. \* Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

<b>Long-eared Owl</b>			Nottinghamshire	7	9	Fife	1	1
			Staffordshire	3	4	Moray & Nairn	1	2
	CP	TP	<b>England, N</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>66</b>	North-east Scotland	3	3
England, SW	3	5	Cumbria	1	3	Perth & Kinross	1	1
Hampshire	3	3	Co. Durham	2	4	Upper Forth	1	1
Somerset	0	1	Greater Manchester	2	14	<b>Scotland, N &amp; W</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>
Wiltshire	0	1	Northumberland	3	11	Argyll	2	3
<b>England, SE</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	Yorkshire	21	34	Caithness	0	1
Essex	1	1	<b>Wales</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	Highland	5	6
Kent	3	10	Gwent	4	4	Orkney	1	2
Oxfordshire	0	2	Meirionnydd	0	1	Outer Hebrides	2	5
Sussex	0	2	Montgomeryshire	0	1	<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>England, E</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>	Radnorshire	2	8	Co. Antrim	2	3
Cambridgeshire	3	7	<b>Scotland, S</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	Co. Armagh	3	3
Lincolnshire	0	4	Ayrshire	2	2	Co. Down	8	8
Norfolk	1	2	Borders	2	6	<b>Isle of Man</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Northamptonshire	1	1	Clyde	1	3	<b>Channel Islands</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>
Suffolk	2	3	Lothian	5	7	Guernsey	1	2
<b>England, C</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Scotland, Mid</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	Jersey	21	22
Derbyshire	1	2	Angus & Dundee	1	2	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>216</b>

### Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

**Scarce** 620+ bp\* (no trend available) Low

20–181 pairs. Since the Short-eared Owl was added to the RBBP list in 2010, the total number of pairs has ranged from 184 (2013) to 465 (2012) with a 5-year mean of 281 (fig. 5). Low vole



**Fig. 5.** Number of confirmed breeding and total pairs of Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* in the UK, 2010–16.

abundance in 2016 led to even fewer reports and exceptionally low numbers of confirmed breeding pairs. Many traditional sites were unoccupied. In Scotland, of 182 home ranges checked, only 57 (31%) were occupied by pairs and a further 42 (23%) by single birds only. Forty-one home ranges were monitored on Orkney, a stronghold for this species, but only two pairs laid eggs and only one young fledged (Challis *et al.* 2018). In study areas in northern England (covering mainland upland areas of six counties), there were no more than five breeding pairs and no young were fledged (Smith & NERF 2017). \* Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

Short-eared Owl		Cumbria	0	2	Dumfries & G'way	0	1
		Co. Durham	4	6	Lothian	0	1
England, SW	CP	Greater Manchester	0	6	Scotland, Mid	0	7
	TP	Lancs & N Mersey	0	2	Angus & Dundee	0	2
Cornwall	0	Northumberland	0	2	Moray & Nairn	0	2
Wiltshire	0	Yorkshire	4	17	North-east Scotland	0	2
England, SE	1	Wales	6	17	Perth & Kinross	0	1
Essex	0	Anglesey	1	1	Scotland, N & W	4	80
Kent	1	Breconshire	0	2	Argyll	1	6
England, E	0	Cardemarthenshire	0	1	Caithness	0	17
Lincolnshire	0	Meirionnydd	0	2	Highland	0	1
Norfolk	0	Pembrokeshire	2	4	Orkney	2	41
England, C	1	Radnorshire	3	7	Outer Hebrides	1	15
Derbyshire	1	Scotland, S	0	10	Isle of Man	0	3
Staffordshire	0	Borders	0	4	TOTALS	20	181
England, N	8	Clyde	0	2			
Cheshire & Wirral	0	Clyde Islands	0	2			

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor***

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

Low

12–305 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. The long-term decline in the numbers of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, leading to the species’ Red-listing and addition to the RBBP list, is thought to be driven by poor productivity. In an attempt to better understand the breeding biology of the species, Ken and Linda Smith began a new nest-monitoring project in 2015. The best time to find the species is in February and March when they are more vocal and the deciduous trees they inhabit are still leafless. \* Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker		Dorset	5	England, SE	89
		Gloucestershire	3	Bedfordshire	6
England, SW	TP	Hampshire	71	Berkshire	4
	106	Somerset	11	Buckinghamshire	6
Devon	11	Wiltshire	5	Essex	3

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker <i>cont.</i>		Suffolk	2	Yorkshire	16
		England, C	45	Wales	22
		Derbyshire	4	Breconshire	1
	TP	Herefordshire	4	Caernarfonshire	1
Hertfordshire	6	Leics & Rutland	2	Carmarthenshire	1
Kent	31	Nottinghamshire	5	Ceredigion	3
Oxfordshire	2	Shropshire	6	Denbigh & Flint	4
Surrey	11	Staffordshire	6	East Glamorgan	2
Sussex	20	Warwickshire	3	Gower	1
England, E	18	West Midlands	2	Gwent	2
Cambridgeshire	5	Worcestershire	13	Meirionnydd	3
Lincolnshire	3	England, N	25	Montgomeryshire	1
Norfolk	2	Cheshire & Wirral	7	Radnorshire	3
Northamptonshire	6	Greater Manchester	2	TOTAL	305

### Merlin *Falco columbarius*

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

280–396 pairs. Possible breeding records (18 pairs) are omitted from the table, since these usually refer to single sightings or signs of occupation in suitable habitat with no further evidence. Raptor workers in northern England reported conflicting stories about the 2016 season for Merlin. In Northumberland, almost twice as many chicks fledged than in 2015 (48 young from 21 nests, cf. 26 young from 17 nests); while in Calderdale, Yorkshire, many territories were abandoned early in the year following a wet winter and sodden ground in spring. Several areas reported the loss of traditional sites; an increase in the intensity of grouse-moor management, particularly the burning of stands of old heather, is thought to be a key factor. \* Ewing *et al.* (2011).

Merlin			Wales	7	21	Perth & Kinross	13	22
			Breconshire	0	5	Scotland, N & W	56	79
	CP	TP	East Glamorgan	0	1	Argyll	3	5
England, C	17	23	Meirionnydd	3	6	Caithness	1	1
Derbyshire	14	20	Montgomeryshire	0	1	Highland	18	29
Shropshire	1	1	Radnorshire	4	8	Orkney	4	7
Staffordshire	2	2	Scotland, S	24	36	Outer Hebrides	3	9
England, N	110	154	Borders	9	15	Shetland	27	28
Cleveland	0	1	Clyde	7	8	Northern Ireland	9	10
Cumbria	4	4	Dumfries & G'way	5	7	Co. Antrim	5	6
Co. Durham	41	43	Lothian	3	6	Co. Derry	3	3
Greater Manchester	1	1	Scotland, Mid	57	73	Co. Tyrone	1	1
Lancs & N Mersey	10	12	Angus & Dundee	6	7			
Northumberland	21	23	Moray & Nairn	8	12	TOTALS	280	396
Yorkshire	33	70	North-east Scotland	30	32			

### Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Less scarce 888 bp 25y trend: **strong increase +133%** Low

275–689 pairs. The Hobby is a difficult species to monitor and our level of coverage continues to be low. Several counties that normally have breeding Hobbies did not report any, presumably because none of their records appeared to relate to nesting pairs, and the few county estimates received add only another c. 250 pairs to the total. In areas where the Hobby is relatively common, birders often do not report single birds, but any record of the species in July or August could relate to a breeding pair. Hobbies are still rare in Scotland, so the first breeding record for Moray & Nairn was notable.



Hobby			Oxfordshire	0	20	England, N	22	76
	CP	TP	Surrey	9	14	Cheshire & Wirral	13	39
England, SW	67	179	Sussex	1	15	Greater Manchester	0	8
Avon	2	4	England, E	88	182	Lancs & N Mersey	0	1
Cornwall	8	10	Cambridgeshire	7	18	Northumberland	0	1
Devon	5	35	Lincolnshire	14	71	Yorkshire	9	27
Dorset	10	16	Norfolk	21	24	Wales	23	49
Gloucestershire	7	7	Northamptonshire	23	35	Breconshire	6	12
Hampshire	25	29	Suffolk	23	34	Carmarthenshire	0	2
Somerset	4	16	England, C	50	106	Denbigh & Flint	2	5
Wiltshire	6	62	Derbyshire	29	33	East Glamorgan	1	9
England, SE	23	94	Herefordshire	5	17	Gwent	9	9
Bedfordshire	1	3	Leics & Rutland	n/a	n/a	Meirionnydd	0	1
Berkshire	0	7	Nottinghamshire	2	2	Radnorshire	5	11
Buckinghamshire	3	3	Shropshire	10	12	Scotland, Mid	2	3
Essex	3	9	Staffordshire	1	27	Angus & Dundee	1	2
Greater London	4	6	Warwickshire	2	5	Moray & Nairn	1	1
Hertfordshire	2	15	Worcestershire	1	10	TOTALS	275	689
Kent	0	2						

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Less scarce 1,701 bp\*    22y trend (survey): **stable +5%**

Moderate

811–1,072 pairs. It is to be expected that fewer pairs would be reported in a ‘normal’ year, compared with the survey year of 2014. The significantly higher total for southeast England (93 pairs in 2016, cf. 57 in 2014) indicates a continuation of the rapid spread of Peregrines in this area, where many pairs nest on man-made structures. \* Wilson *et al.* (2018).

Peregrine Falcon			Suffolk	4	7	Gower	7	8
	CP	TP	England, C	81	97	Gwent	6	8
England, SW	125	169	Derbyshire	26	26	Meirionnydd	2	4
Avon	9	10	Herefordshire	3	5	Montgomeryshire	3	4
Cornwall	33	58	Leics & Rutland	5	11	Pembrokeshire	18	25
Devon	45	50	Nottinghamshire	7	7	Radnorshire	16	17
Dorset	7	9	Shropshire	17	17	Scotland, S	125	161
Gloucestershire	6	7	Staffordshire	8	8	Ayrshire	21	28
Hampshire	17	21	Warwickshire	6	8	Borders	22	31
Isles of Scilly	1	2	West Midlands	5	6	Clyde	18	22
Somerset	4	8	Worcestershire	4	9	Clyde Islands	3	8
Wiltshire	3	4	England, N	103	137	Dumfries & G’way	50	58
England, SE	71	93	Cheshire & Wirral	11	12	Lothian	11	14
Bedfordshire	1	3	Cleveland	2	5	Scotland, Mid	64	92
Berkshire	1	5	Cumbria	11	17	Angus & Dundee	10	14
Buckinghamshire	2	2	Co. Durham	6	6	Fife	11	14
Essex	0	2	Greater Manchester	7	11	Isle of May	0	1
Greater London	11	18	Lancs & N Mersey	17	19	Moray & Nairn	5	6
Hertfordshire	0	1	Northumberland	7	18	North-east Scotland	23	31
Kent	9	12	Yorkshire	42	49	Perth & Kinross	6	15
Oxfordshire	3	3	Wales	101	142	Upper Forth	9	11
Surrey	11	14	Anglesey	3	7	Scotland, N & W	33	53
Sussex	33	33	Breconshire	8	10	Argyll	11	14
England, E	27	37	Caernarfonshire	5	11	Caithness	1	1
Cambridgeshire	5	5	Carmarthenshire	4	7	Highland	4	12
Lincolnshire	12	18	Ceredigion	2	3	Orkney	12	16
Norfolk	4	4	Denbigh & Flint	7	9	Outer Hebrides	4	8
Northamptonshire	2	3	East Glamorgan	20	29	Shetland	1	2

<b>Peregrine Falcon</b> <i>cont.</i>			Co. Armagh	6	7	Co. Tyrone	10	11
	CP	TP	Co. Derry	11	11	<b>Isle of Man</b>	1	3
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	72	79	Co. Down	11	11	<b>Channel Islands</b>	8	9
Co. Antrim	19	24	Co. Fermanagh	15	15	<b>TOTALS</b>	811	1,072

### Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

**Scarce** 393 bp\*

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

Near-complete

379–406 pairs. There was complete coverage of the Islay population in 2016, and the resulting UK total of 406 pairs thus exceeds the population estimated by Hayhow *et al.* (in press) in 2014. It also exceeds 400 for the first time since 2010. \* Hayhow *et al.* (in press).

<b>Red-billed Chough</b>			Denbigh & Flint	2	2	Argyll: Islay	46	46
	T	TP	East Glamorgan	2	2	<b>Northern Ireland</b>	1	1
<b>England, SW</b>	10	10	Gower	2	2	Co. Antrim	1	1
Cornwall	10	10	Meirionnydd	19	19	<b>Isle of Man</b>	57	57
<b>Wales</b>	252	278	Pembrokeshire	74	84	<b>Channel Islands</b>	4	4
Anglesey	41	45	<b>Scotland, N &amp; W</b>	55	56	Jersey	4	4
Caernarfonshire	88	93	Argyll: Colonsay			<b>TOTALS</b>	379	406
Ceredigion	24	31	& Oronsay	9	10			

### Willow Tit *Poecile montanus*

**Less scarce** 3,400+ bp\*

(no trend available)

Moderate

103–667 pairs. All totals in the table are derived from site-based records submitted by county recorders, and in most cases are therefore biased to locations where birdwatchers go. Few recorders provided estimates of their county populations and these add no more than 100 pairs to the total. RBBP data thus provide a gazetteer of Willow Tit sites, and confirm the broad distribution documented in *Bird Atlas 2007–11* (Balmer *et al.* 2013), but we know little more about national numbers of breeding pairs. To underpin conservation efforts, a robust population estimate is required, and the RBBP and RSPB are organising a country-wide survey of Willow Tits for early spring 2019 and 2020; all birders within the species' range are encouraged to take part. \* Musgrove *et al.* (2013).

<b>Willow Tit</b>		Herefordshire	5	<b>Wales</b>	67
	TP	Leics & Rutland	10	Breconshire	6
<b>England, SW</b>	58	Nottinghamshire	27	Caernarfonshire	1
Cornwall	9	Shropshire	24	Carmarthenshire	7
Devon	11	Staffordshire	18	Ceredigion	3
Gloucestershire	8	Warwickshire	4	Denbigh & Flint	4
Hampshire	24	West Midlands	2	East Glamorgan	1
Wiltshire	6	Worcestershire	4	Gower	3
<b>England, SE</b>	2	<b>England, N</b>	346	Gwent	1
Berkshire	1	Cheshire & Wirral	37	Montgomeryshire	13
Oxfordshire	1	Cleveland	6	Pembrokeshire	3
<b>England, E</b>	45	Cumbria	1	Radnorshire	25
Lincolnshire	16	Co. Durham	41	<b>Scotland, S</b>	24
Norfolk	17	Greater Manchester	97	Ayrshire	1
Northamptonshire	12	Lancs & N Mersey	23	Dumfries & G'way	23
<b>England, C</b>	125	Northumberland	23	<b>TOTAL</b>	667
Derbyshire	31	Yorkshire	118		

**Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus***

Scarce 657 bp15y trend: strong increase +66% Moderate

84 sites: 670 pairs. This species has shown a continued long-term increase and both the 5-year mean and the number of new sites in 2016 are the highest recorded, the latter up from the previous record of 77 in 2015. The pair recorded in Nottinghamshire was the first to breed in that county.

Bearded Tit			Oxfordshire	1	1	Yorkshire	4	139
			Sussex	3	17	Wales	1	6
	S	TP	England, E	32	268	Gwent	1	6
England, SW	10	72	Cambridgeshire	6	17	Scotland, Mid	3	39
Dorset	6	24	Lincolnshire	3	36	North-east Scotland	1	3
Hampshire	3	9	Norfolk	11	71	Perth & Kinross	1	33
Somerset	1	39	Suffolk	12	144	Upper Forth	1	3
England, SE	31	119	England, C	1	1	Channel Islands	1	1
Bedfordshire	2	2	Nottinghamshire	1	1	Jersey	1	1
Essex	8	17	England, N	5	164	TOTALS	84	670
Kent	17	82	Lancs & N Mersey	1	25			

**Woodlark *Lullula arborea***

Less scarce n/a(no trend available) Moderate

1,030 singing males. The Woodlark was on the RBBP list from 1996 until 2012 inclusive. A survey in 2006 (Conway *et al.* 2009) estimated the UK population to be 3,064 pairs, well above the RBBP threshold, and the species was removed from our list from 2013 onwards. However, Stanbury *et al.* (2017) highlighted declines in Woodlark populations in some regions of the UK since the 2006 survey, carried out at a time when the UK population was especially high. Given the considerable declines reported in some areas, we felt that it was sensible to reinstate the Woodlark to the RBBP list with effect from the 2016 season. We do not anticipate full coverage, but if monitoring in most of the range is reasonably consistent it will be possible to assess trends



Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

<b>Woodlark</b>		Bedfordshire	1	<b>England, C</b>	28
	SM/T	Berkshire	23	Derbyshire	2
<b>England, SW</b>	388	Buckinghamshire	1	Nottinghamshire	9
Avon	1	Kent	1	Staffordshire	15
Devon	9	Surrey	121	West Midlands	2
Dorset	63	Sussex	68	<b>England, N</b>	27
Gloucestershire	3	<b>England, E</b>	372	Yorkshire	27
Hampshire	306	Lincolnshire	10	<b>TOTAL</b>	1,030
Wiltshire	6	Norfolk	124		
<b>England, SE</b>	215	Suffolk	238		

and identify areas with high Woodlark populations as well as any areas where the species is in decline or is lost. The 2016 total of 1,030 territories is similar to the last published RBBP total of 951 territories in 2012.

### Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

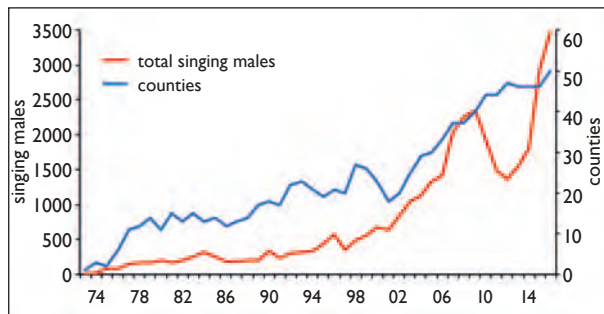
**Less scarce 2,225 bp**    **25y trend: strong increase +844%**    **Moderate**

3,472 singing males. A further increase in 2016 saw the 5-year mean exceed the threshold for inclusion of a species on the RBBP list. Of the 50 counties reporting Cetti's Warblers, 30 reported an increased number in 2016 compared with 2015. Many counties that did not record an increase actually have large populations; and it is likely that birders in these counties are not reporting all Cetti's Warblers. Recording fatigue probably means that the species' population has exceeded 2,000 'pairs' for much of the past decade. The total is considered to be sufficiently robust to remain above the Panel's threshold even following spells of hard winter weather. With such a consistent upward trend (fig. 6), this is the last report in which Cetti's Warbler will appear. Below, David Norman summarises the species' current status.

Cetti's Warblers were first proven to breed in Britain in 1973. Their population increased rapidly and their range expanded, although they were badly hit in hard winters, with some local extinctions. A detailed account of the species' earlier years was given in Holling *et al.* (2011). The population has continued to increase, and the species has now bred in almost every county in England and Wales, where its preferred habitat is scattered scrub in damp areas (reed swamp, reedbed, fen/marsh or by open water). Despite the increase in numbers, there is little sign of spread to the north, and the species has not yet colonised Cumbria, Co. Durham, Northumberland or anywhere in Scotland (although one was trapped in Scotland in October 2016; McGowan & McInerney 2018). Cetti's Warbler is still mainly a bird of southern England, however, with the bulk of the population (82% in 2016) in the regions of southwest, southeast and eastern England.

A welcome effect of the rise in population and increase in range has been that the Cetti's Warbler now features in two annual surveys, the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and the Constant Effort Sites (CES) Scheme. Recent analysis of short-term trends from BBS, produced for the last five and ten years, give UK population rises from 2006–16 of 154%, and from 2011–16 of 102% (Harris *et al.* 2017).

Frequenter habitats often visited by ringers, Cetti's Warblers are found in up to a quarter of CES sites. These data show captures of adults increasing by 54% during 2005–15, and by 33% in 2010–15. Captures of juveniles rose by 88% in 2005–15, and by 5% in



**Fig. 6.** Number of singing males/territories and of counties with breeding presence of Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* in the UK, 1973–2016.

Cetti's Warbler					
	SM	Surrey	18	Greater Manchester	20
England, SW	1,088	Sussex	212	Lancs & N Mersey	14
Avon	52	England, E	893	Yorkshire	71
Cornwall	23	Cambridgeshire	175	Wales	257
Devon	39	Lincolnshire	49	Anglesey	20
Dorset	181	Norfolk	199	Breconshire	3
Gloucestershire	68	Northamptonshire	57	Caernarfonshire	4
Hampshire	455	Suffolk	413	Carmarthenshire	34
Isle of Wight	1	England, C	189	Ceredigion	3
Somerset	210	Derbyshire	69	Denbigh & Flint	2
Wiltshire	59	Herefordshire	1	East Glamorgan	36
England, SE	899	Leics & Rutland	34	Gower	35
Bedfordshire	35	Nottinghamshire	4	Gwent	103
Berkshire	113	Shropshire	1	Montgomeryshire	2
Buckinghamshire	21	Staffordshire	39	Pembrokeshire	14
Essex	97	Warwickshire	26	Radnorshire	1
Greater London	168	West Midlands	2	Channel Islands	23
Hertfordshire	54	Worcestershire	13	Jersey	22
Kent	161	England, N	123	Guernsey	1
Oxfordshire	20	Cheshire & Wirral	18	TOTAL	3,472

2010–15, with large statistical confidence limits, suggesting that perhaps Cetti’s Warbler numbers in their favoured prime sites might be levelling out while they expand to occupy other areas (Massimino *et al.* 2017). It will be important to keep monitoring the species’ population trends in this way. In northern Italy, Cetti’s Warblers, and other resident insectivores, have declined considerably since 2012 owing to several winters with spells of severe weather (Paul Tout pers. comm.). This would be consistent with an overall shift of bioclimatic range, as predicted by Huntley *et al.* (2007): a thinning of distribution in southern Europe as well as a continued major expansion northwards.

**Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus***  
**Colonising breeder**

**Four sites: four singing males.** After the surprise discovery of a successful breeding pair in South Wales in 2015 (Hunter 2018), 2016 saw a return to the expected pattern of scattered singing birds. Four is the most recorded in any year except 2010, when there were also four singing males holding territory for more than five days.

- England, SW  
Cornwall One site: one singing male, 11th April to 23rd June. Isles of Scilly One site: one singing male, 17th April to 11th July.
- England, SE  
Kent One site: one singing male, 23rd–28th April.
- England, C  
Shropshire One site: one singing male, 5th April to 2nd May.

**Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus***  
**Potential breeder**

**One site: one singing male.** A typical record: one long-staying but apparently unpaired male.

England, E  
Cambridgeshire One site: one singing male, 14th May to 22nd June.



### Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Very rare 7 bp

25y trend: **strong decrease -70%**

High

Three sites: 0–3 singing males. In addition to these birds, two different singing males were reported in Norfolk but each was present for two days only (one 8th–9th June and the other 11th–12th June).

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one singing male, 2nd–9th June.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland Two sites: (1) one singing male, 9th–15th June; (2) one singing male, 13th–14th June and the same or another 22nd–30th June.

### Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Occasional breeder

Two sites: two singing males. Of the two birds recorded, a well-watched singing male was presumably unpaired, while the news of the second bird came too late to enable any follow-up; given the dates and location, it is likely that this bird had been on site for a longer period and could potentially have been breeding.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: (1) a long-staying singing male, from 29th May to 23rd June; (2) one bird recorded on 29th–30th June only.

### Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Very rare 4 bp

25y trend: **strong decrease -72%**

Near-complete

Seven sites: 0–7 pairs. Although the long-term trend is downward, this is the best showing since 2010, when there were eight singing males and breeding was confirmed in Sussex. Records of birds heard on 1–2 days only, or not yet submitted to BBRC, are excluded.

England, SW

Hampshire One site: one singing male, 18th–24th April. Somerset Two sites: (1) one singing male, presumed returning bird, 20th April to 11th May; (2) one singing male, 16th–22nd May.

England, E

Norfolk Two sites: (1) one singing male 16th–28th June; (2) one singing male, 29th June to 3rd July. Suffolk One site: one singing male, 12th April to 27th May, thought to be paired.

Wales

Gwent One site: one singing male, 29th May to 4th June.

### Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Less scarce 3,214 bp\*

25y trend: **weak increase +86%**

Moderate

1,691 territories. The 2016 total is very similar to that in 2015 (1,677), and while some counties showed an increase and others a decrease, many of these changes may simply be recording

Dartford Warbler		England, SE	335	Caernarfonshire	2
	TP	Bedfordshire	1	Carmarthenshire	1
England, SW	1,157	Berkshire	18	East Glamorgan	1
Cornwall	28	Surrey	271	Gower	13
Devon	35	Sussex	45	Pembrokeshire	7
Dorset	479	England, E	124	Channel Islands	51
Hampshire	569	Norfolk	4	Jersey	50
Isle of Wight	n/a	Suffolk	120	Guernsey	1
Somerset	46	Wales	24	TOTAL	1,691



Simon Stirrup

**421.** Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, Cambridgeshire, February 2016. Dartford Warblers found in winter away from established breeding areas could be exploring potential new territories.

artefacts. County estimates for Hampshire, for example, indicate that there may be another 200–230 territories there. A partial survey of heathland in Dorset by the RSPB located 473 territories, 49 more than in the same areas in 2015, which may represent a continued recovery since the harsh winters in the 2010–12 period. The pair on Guernsey was the first there since Dartford Warblers were lost during those same cold winters. It is unlikely that numbers nationally have yet returned to the levels recorded by the 2006 survey. \* Wotton *et al.* (2009).

**Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla***

Scarce 1,125 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +1,255%**

Low

1,473 singing males. Singing Firecrests are easily overlooked and in counties where they are now common they are probably under-reported. The numbers received by the RBBP are likely to be underestimates and Clements *et al.* (2017) suggested that the UK population is now over 4,000 singing males. A few recorders submitted county estimates to help fill the gap, with four counties presenting figures notably different from those in the table below: Buckinghamshire (100), Hampshire (over 3,000), Somerset (25) and Surrey (150). Kent has previously provided estimates of 150, and Sussex recorded over 100 in 2015. Incorporating these totals into the 2016 site totals

<b>Firecrest</b>					
	SM	Kent	15	Worcestershire	2
England, SW	1,052	Oxfordshire	12	England, N	3
Devon	18	Surrey	63	Northumberland	1
Dorset	26	Sussex	39	Yorkshire	2
Hampshire	882	England, E	154	Wales	25
Somerset	2	Cambridgeshire	1	Carmarthenshire	3
Wiltshire	124	Lincolnshire	1	Denbigh & Flint	1
England, SE	225	Norfolk	100	Gwent	21
Berkshire	45	Northamptonshire	5	Isle of Man	1
Buckinghamshire	40	Suffolk	47	Channel Islands	7
Essex	1	England, C	6	Guernsey	4
Greater London	4	Derbyshire	1	Jersey	3
Hertfordshire	6	Herefordshire	3	TOTAL	1,473

gives a revised figure of over 3,900 pairs.

Indications of range extensions are apparent, with records of singing or breeding birds in Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, Isle of Man, Lincolnshire, Northumberland and Yorkshire. However, the species' concentration in southern and southeastern England means that even a short-term BBS trend cannot be compiled. It seems that only Hampshire currently has a basis for a more reliable estimate of the county population, but neighbouring Sussex conducted a full survey in 2018. The results of that survey are eagerly awaited and the position of Firecrest on the RBBP list will be reconsidered once a clearer picture is available.

### Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*

Rare 38 bp

(no trend available)

Near-complete

**34 territories.** Thirty-four territories is a decrease of nine on the 2015 total. It was a late season for the Fair Isle Wren: song was not recorded until 10th March and the first fledged young were seen on 13th June (in recent years first fledging has been between 2nd and 10th June).

### St Kilda Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*

Rare 230 bp\*

(no trend available)

Near-complete

There was no all-island survey but six territories were counted within the head dyke area of the village. This is a small proportion of the estimated 230–250 breeding pairs. \* Forrester *et al.* (2007).

### Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Very rare 21 bp

25y trend: **strong decrease -42%**

Low

**19 sites: 5–20 pairs.** A more typical year, after the bumper report of 40 pairs in 2015. Many pairs in remote areas are surely overlooked; one of the pairs in Highland in 2016 concerned a nest found in a rhododendron bush by the front door of a holiday cottage and reported to the BTO.

England, N

Cumbria One site: one singing male.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one singing male.

Scotland, N & W

**Fair Isle** One site: one singing male, plus one other bird; both summered on the island but there was no indication that they were a pair. **Highland** 12 sites: three pairs bred, three probable breeders and seven singing males. **Shetland** Four sites: two pairs bred, one probable breeding pair and one singing male.

### Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

**Occasional breeder**

**One site: one pair.** One of the headline events of the year was a pair of 'Red-spotted Bluethroats' *L. s. svecica* that bred in arctic-alpine habitat in the uplands of Moray & Nairn (Ince 2018). At least one young fledged. This was the first breeding record for that recording area and was a particularly unusual location for this species, being over 900 m asl and wholly lacking in trees. A male was found on 26th June and was subsequently observed singing from a stony outcrop. A female was seen on only three occasions but, having established that there was a pair, the observer obtained a Schedule 1 licence and continued detailed observations until the last sighting on 2nd August. A single juvenile was first seen on 28th July, being fed by the male; it is possible that other fledglings were hidden or being fed by the female in the vicinity. The weather deteriorated considerably after 2nd August and it is not known if the birds then departed or even if they survived a series of storms.

This is only the fifth confirmed breeding record of Bluethroats in the UK, and the fourth of



Robert Ince

**422 & 423.** Adult and juvenile Bluethroats in the Cairngorms, Moray & Nairn, August 2016.

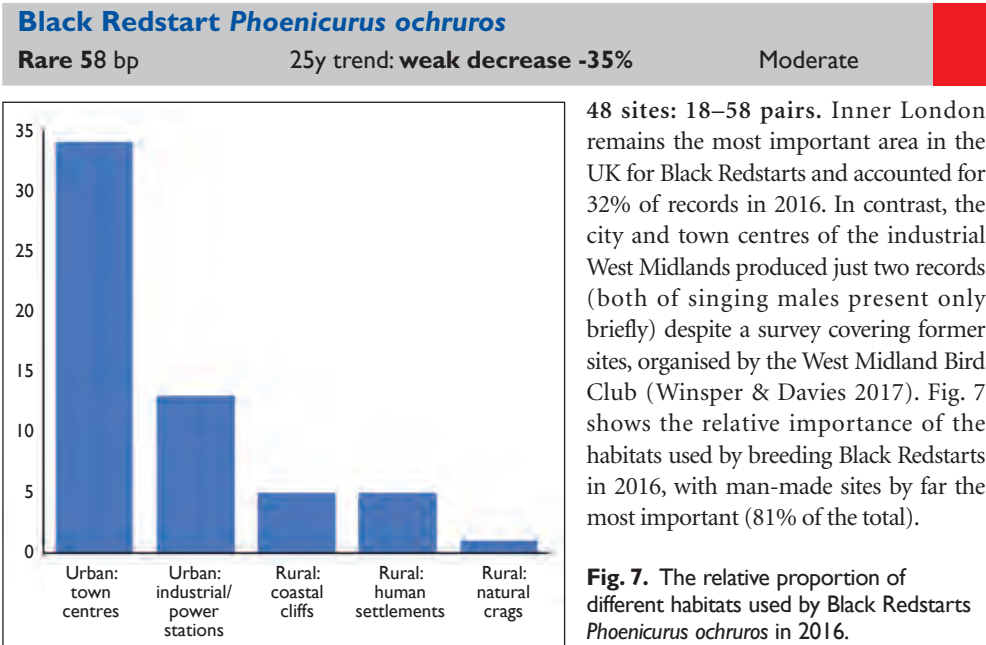
the red-spotted race. The first occurred at Insh Marshes (Highland) in 1968; eggs were laid but predated. There then followed two successful attempts: in 1985 at Insh Marshes two out of four young fledged; then in 1995 a pair fledged three young near Tomatin (also Highland) (Ogilvie *et al.* 1988, 1998; Forrester *et al.* 2007). A pair of ‘White-spotted Bluethroats’ *L. s. cyanecula* fledged six young at Thorne Moors in Yorkshire in 1996 (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999).

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one pair bred, fledging at least one young.



Robert Ince





<b>Black Redstart</b>				Sussex	1	1	1	England, N	6	4	6
	S	CP	TP	England, E	8	7	12	Cheshire & Wirral	1	1	1
England, SW	3	1	3	Cambridgeshire	1	0	1	Greater Manchester	2	1	2
Dorset	3	1	3	Norfolk	2	4	6	Yorkshire	3	2	3
England, SE	24	6	30	Suffolk	5	3	5	Wales	3	0	3
Berkshire	1	1	1	England, C	4	0	4	Breconshire	2	0	2
Greater London	15	4	18	Derbyshire	1	0	1	Radnorshire	1	0	1
Kent	6	0	9	Leics & Rutland	1	0	1	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>58</b>
Surrey	1	0	1	West Midlands	2	0	2				

### Scandinavian Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus littoralis*

#### Potential breeder

**Two sites: 1–2 mixed pairs.** A bird resembling the Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis* was paired with a nominate *A. p. petrosus* in Lothian: these birds were feeding young in a nest (Andrews 2016).

Scotland, S

Lothian One site: one mixed pair bred.

Scotland, N & W

Fair Isle One site: a singing male recorded on 20th May may have been a late passage migrant.

### Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

**Less scarce** 500+ bp\* (no trend available)

Low

**40–430 pairs.** These are by far the largest totals reported for the Hawfinch since it was added to the RBBP list 11 years ago. Much of this apparent increase is due to dedicated fieldwork by a small group of individuals in Hampshire, where the county population is now estimated at 550 pairs, mainly in the New Forest. The only other county to supply estimates significantly different from the totals below was Meirionnydd (30 pairs). Kirby *et al.* (2018) found that the nesting success rates of Hawfinches across five seasons was 36%, a level that suggests this is not likely to be the driver of recent declines in the UK Hawfinch population. \* Clements (2013).

<b>Hawfinch</b>		Derbyshire	1	Gwent	7
	TP	England, N	3	Meirionnydd	3
England, SW	385	Cumbria	1	Montgomeryshire	1
Gloucestershire	4	Lancs & N Mersey	1	Radnorshire	5
Hampshire	370	Yorkshire	1	Scotland, Mid	4
Wiltshire	11	Wales	23	Perth & Kinross	4
England, SE	13	Breconshire	2	Scotland, N & W	1
Kent	12	Caernarfonshire	3	Highland	1
Surrey	1	Denbigh & Flint	1	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>430</b>
England, C	1	East Glamorgan	1		

### Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

**Very rare** 12 bp (no trend available)

Low

**8 sites: 5–10 pairs.** Records from Argyll and the Northern Isles were received in 2016; none was submitted for regularly occupied areas in the Outer Hebrides.

Scotland, N & W

**Argyll** Three sites: (1) two pairs bred, with fledged juveniles seen on 28th July; (2) one pair bred, present at an active nest on 9th June; (3) one probable breeding pair.

**Orkney** One site: one probable breeding pair, based on a series of records in June including a singing male and up to five birds by the end of the month.

**Shetland** Four sites: (1) two pairs bred. A displaying pair was seen on 21st May, two singing males and four juveniles on 8th July and two family parties on 17th July; (2)–(4) one possible breeding pair.



European Serin *Serinus serinus*  
Occasional breeder



Roger Charlwood

**One site: 0–1 pairs.** An intriguing set of records from coastal Sussex suggests the possibility of local breeding, although the regular breeding population just across the English Channel in France must be a potential alternative source of the family party. The occurrence of up to three Serins at Landguard (Suffolk) in June, including a trapped female with a brood patch (White & Kehoe 2018), is also intriguing.

**England, SE**  
Sussex One site: A family party – adult male, a female and a juvenile – arrived at a coastal site on 16th June, leaving the next morning; later, on 17th, two males, one singing, came to the same garden.

**424.** Male European Serin *Serinus serinus*, Sussex, June 2016.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

Less scarce 1,079 bp\* 27y trend (survey): large increase +814% High

1,079 territories. \*Jeffs et al. (2018).

The Cirl Bunting has been the subject of conservation action since the late 1980s, when the species was in imminent danger of being lost from the UK. Population monitoring has been a vital part of the recovery programme, with full surveys in 1989–93, 1998, 2003 and 2009, and sample surveys in 1994–97 and 2002. Another full survey was undertaken in summer 2016, following the same methodology used previously; for full details, see Jeffs et al. (2018). Simon Wotton provided the following summary.

In 2016, 217 core and 139 buffer tetrads were surveyed, with 896 Cirl Bunting territories found in 186 tetrads. The UK population was estimated at 1,079 territories (95% confidence limits, 986–1,217), thus passing the 1,000-pair target set by the ambitious Cirl Bunting Recovery Project 25 years ago.

The core part of the population remains in south Devon, with concentrations around the Salcombe, Dart and Teign estuaries, but there are increasing numbers in west Cornwall (following a successful reintroduction programme between 2006 and 2011) and in east Devon, and birds are starting to recolonise former areas in north Cornwall and north Devon. Between the 2009 and 2016 surveys, the size of the breeding population increased by 25% and the number of occupied tetrads by 37%. Overall, since conservation action commenced in the late 1980s, the population has increased nine-fold. This is directly linked to the delivery of relevant options within agri-environment schemes.

Cirl Bunting	TP
England, SW	896
Cornwall	40
Devon	856
Channel Islands	3
TOTAL	899

### Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

#### Occasional breeder

**One site: one singing male.** This is the third successive year that a Lapland Bunting has been found in the mountains of Scotland in the breeding season, and the fifth year since 2011; all other recent sightings have been single-date records only. The last time Lapland Buntings were proved to breed in the UK was in 1980.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one singing male, 4th–9th June.

### Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Rare 79 bp\*

(no trend available)

Low

0–32 pairs. Casual records from the main breeding areas in the Cairngorms (Highland/Moray & Nairn/North-east Scotland) provided evidence of up to 29 pairs: six probable and one possible breeding pairs plus 22 singing males. We also received reports from other mountain ranges in Highland (where there was one probable and two possible breeding pairs). \* Hayhow *et al.* (2018).

## Appendix 1. RBBP species for which no data were received in 2016.

The following taxa are regular breeders in the UK, but in 2016 no breeding records were submitted.

### Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

Short-toed Treecreeper is a fairly common resident on Jersey and Guernsey (Young *et al.* 2017). The recorders estimate at least 300 and 150 breeding pairs respectively on these two islands.

### White Wagtail *Motacilla a. alba*

There were no records of breeding White Wagtails, including individuals paired with Pied Wagtails *M. a. yarrellii*, submitted in 2016, apart from for the Channel Islands, where this is the only breeding form: there are normally around ten pairs on both Jersey and Guernsey.

### Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Summers & Buckland (2011) estimated the Scottish population at around 50 breeding pairs. As in recent years, the species was only noted as ‘present’ in Abernethy Forest, Highland, with no further information available.

## Appendix 2. Other species considered by RBBP also recorded in 2016.

The following occasional or potential breeding species were recorded in breeding habitat during the breeding season in 2016.

### Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

In Cambridgeshire, a male present between 20th April and 1st August was seen displaying and calling but remained unpaired. Another unpaired bird frequented a small loch in Fife between 24th May and 2nd July.

### Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

During late May to mid June, there were four sightings within the extensive Avalon Marshes in

Somerset, with perhaps two birds being present. As in 2015, a breeding attempt is a possibility given the difficulties in observing this species in breeding habitat.

### **Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis***

A single bird joined Little Egrets in a nesting colony in **Hampshire** for five days in May. The only confirmed breeding record of Cattle Egrets in the UK was in 2008 (Holling *et al.* 2010).

### **Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea***

One or two birds were present at various locations in **Kent**, in all months except March, November and December. Three juveniles were recorded in August/September, one of which was found freshly dead. The feather development on that bird suggested recent fledging but it might still have been reared overseas; the nearest breeding areas are in the Netherlands.

### **Black Tern *Chlidonias niger***

In **Yorkshire**, a Black Tern summered at Swillington Ings, present from 5th June to 15th August. Although it was vocal and was frequently seen carrying fish, there was no indication of a breeding attempt.

### **Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus***

A solitary male appeared to set up territory on the **Isles of Scilly**; it was present between 18th April and 18th May, and was heard ‘singing’ one evening and early the next morning.

### **Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus***

Stanbury *et al.* (2017) suggested that the Golden Oriole is effectively now extinct as a breeding bird in Britain. The last confirmed breeding record was in 2009 (Suffolk). The only birds reported in 2016 were passage birds, and although some were singing, they were usually present for only one day. White & Kehoe (2018) showed that 2016 was also a particularly poor year for migrant Golden Orioles.

### **‘Blue-headed Wagtail’ *Motacilla f. flava***

There were no records of breeding Blue-headed Wagtails but so-called ‘Channel Wagtails’, believed to be the hybrid offspring of ‘Blue-headed’ and Yellow Wagtails *M. f. flavissima*, bred in **Oxfordshire**. One paired male was seen feeding young, while nearby a single male held territory.



Dan Powell

Male ‘Channel Wagtail’ *Motacilla f. flava* x *flavissima*

‘Channel Wagtails’ are regularly found, in low numbers, elsewhere in the British range (see for example Andrews & Gillies 2016). Since this is essentially an intergrade between two subspecies, we do not intend to collect further records of this taxon.

### Appendix 3. Rare non-native species considered by RBBP recorded in 2016.

Data on the following rare non-native breeding species have been received for 2016. These suggest that there are fewer non-native species breeding in the UK than hitherto and, with the exception of Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*, also fewer pairs of each species. This may well be a reporting artefact and we urge all birdwatchers to ensure that all confirmed and potential breeding records of non-native species are submitted to county recorders.

#### Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Following a series of records in the Bradford area of Yorkshire, a nest with eggs was found in moorland in early May.

#### Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

A total of five confirmed breeding pairs was reported. One pair bred in Oxfordshire, or perhaps in a neighbouring county, based on a record of four juvenile birds in the local flock of naturalised Snow Geese. In Yorkshire, 25 adult birds resident at York University fledged eight goslings from four broods. The former main breeding flock resident on Coll, Argyll, was reduced to 14 birds but again no young were reported. Breeding there was last confirmed in 2014.

#### Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

A total of eight pairs was reported, three fewer than in 2015, and there were only three records of confirmed breeding, from three counties: Berkshire, Hampshire and Sussex. It is possible that the Sussex pair, seen with two juveniles in November, may have nested in Hampshire, where six cygnets were hatched in April. A pair was seen nest-building in Cleveland in August but the eventual outcome is unknown. All other records related to long-staying pairs in three other counties (Cambridgeshire (two pairs), Dorset and Wiltshire). These numbers are much lower than the 5-year mean of 19 pairs in 2010–14 but may be the result of under-reporting.

#### Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

One pair bred at the regular site in Wiltshire, where breeding has occurred since 2010. Eight eggs were laid but it is not known whether any young fledged.

#### Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

Confirmed breeding was reported from three counties: Breconshire, Cambridgeshire and West Midlands, where single pairs nested and produced young. It is also possible that breeding occurred in Derbyshire, where up to 22 birds were present at Buxton all year.

#### Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Eleven pairs bred in eight counties: Bedfordshire (1), Essex (1), Gloucestershire (1), Greater London (1), Leicestershire & Rutland (1), Norfolk (1), Suffolk (1) and Wiltshire (4). However, including pairs in breeding habitat, a total of 49 pairs was reported, the highest yet, with records from 14 counties. The main centre of the population remains the Cotswold Water Park in Gloucestershire/Wiltshire: there were 26 pairs there in 2016. All records came from England, south of Manchester in the west and Lincoln in the east.

#### Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Only one record of breeding was received: one pair bred in Surrey. Otherwise the only birds

reported in the breeding season were a female in Cheshire & Wirral, an unsexed bird in Sussex and a male in West Midlands.

### **Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris***

There were two flocks of this species roaming free in Isle of Man. Breeding was not recorded but may occur.

### **Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo***

A male Turkey was recorded displaying in Herefordshire on 19th May.

### **Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus***

Breeding in the wild was recorded in Cornwall, Dorset and Isle of Man, and there were additional reports (via a local newspaper) of up to 30 feral birds roaming wild in Co. Durham. This species is almost certainly under-recorded as a breeding species in the UK.

### **Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus***

Golden Pheasants were reported from Dorset, Isles of Scilly, Norfolk, Suffolk and Perth & Kinross, but there was no indication of breeding.

### **Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae***

The remnant population of Lady Amherst's Pheasant in Bedfordshire was down to a single male, which was not seen after May 2016.

### **Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo***

A pair again nested in the Forest of Bowland, Lancashire & N Merseyside; three young fledged in 2016. In Devon, a singing bird was recorded between February and June.

### **Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus***

Data on 11 pairs in Greater London were received; seven pairs bred, but all nests were controlled so that no young were reared. Breeding also occurred in Hertfordshire, where there were six confirmed breeding pairs and a count of 62 individuals at three distinct colonies in December 2016.

#### **Acknowledgments**

We thank the many contributors who have supplied the data that this report is based upon. Birdwatchers across the country provide many of the original observations and we gratefully acknowledge these. In most cases, their records reach the RBBP thanks to the hard work and diligence of county and regional bird recorders. This invaluable but time-consuming work is completed on a voluntary basis, and we salute the willing cooperation and assistance of recorders past and present; they are named individually on our website. Most recorders reviewed an early draft of this report, helping to ensure the accuracy of the data presented. It is not an exaggeration to say that the work of the RBBP could not function without the support of the bird recorders.

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Find out more about the Panel at [www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk)



Records of rare breeding birds in 2017 are being collected and recorders are reminded that data should be submitted on the spreadsheet downloadable from [www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk) by **30th November**.