

Rare Breeding Birds Panel

In 1968 the council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds established a subcommittee, known as the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, to collect together in one place the records of rare breeding birds in Britain. This subcommittee consisted of A. W. Colling, Peter Conder, I. J. Ferguson-Lees, David Lea (Secretary) and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock. Details of the scheme were circulated to 46 county and regional report editors and the great majority approved it (43 in favour, one against, two not replying).

While many records were received by the Panel, the response was less complete than had been hoped. As a result of this and also the departure to Orkney of David Lea, the Panel was reconstituted in December 1972 as an autonomous body separate from the R.S.P.B., financed jointly by the British Trust for Ornithology, the R.S.P.B. and *British Birds*, and including, as before, a representative of the Nature Conservancy.

The members of the Panel are fully aware that the data on rare breeding birds submitted to them are usually confidential and that the records will continue to be sent in only if county recorders and others can be sure that the information will remain secret. Basically, this comes down to having confidence in the individuals concerned. Over the years there are bound to be changes in the Panel's composition and it has, therefore, been agreed that any such changes shall be subject to approval by the councils of the B.T.O. and the R.S.P.B. and by the editors of *British Birds*. David Lea's departure has already necessitated such a change and these bodies have approved R. H. Dennis as the Panel's new member and Dr Sharrock as its Honorary Secretary.

The aims of the Panel are to collect in one place all information on rare breeding birds so that changes in status—both increases and decreases—can be monitored, and so that essential information is not lost (as has happened in the past) through the deaths of those keeping breeding records secret.

Data sent to the panel will not be divulged to any other person (not even to members of the councils or staffs of the B.T.O. and R.S.P.B. or to the editors of *British Birds*) without the prior permission of the person supplying the information (during his or her lifetime), except that an annual summary in very general terms will be published. Localities will never be listed in this unless all concerned consider it safe to do so (for example, Snowy Owls on Fetlar, Ospreys at Boat of Garten) and often the county and sometimes even the region will be omitted. When specifically asked not

to publish, the Panel undertakes to honour this request. Typical entries (all hypothetical) in this annual report might read:

Scaup *Aythya marila* Successful breeding of four pairs occurred at three sites (two of them new) in Ross-shire, Sutherland and Inverness-shire—a higher number than in any year since 19xx.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Three pairs nested, one rearing two young successfully, at a locality in southern England. This is the first case of proved breeding since 19xx.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* Breeding of 18 pairs was proved at 17 localities in northern England and Scotland. This shows a continuing increase from the 19xx figures of eleven and nine respectively.

County recorders and others having relevant information are asked to submit breeding records of the species listed below, in duplicate, on the Panel's special forms. These will be obtainable free on request from the Secretary and should be returned to him. We hope that with very few exceptions the information will come to the Panel via the county recorder concerned. When information does not come from him, the supplier's permission is sought, on the form, for the county recorder to be informed.

Only the two copies of the original data supplied to the Panel will exist and these will be kept under lock and key, at separate places to guard against the risk of fire. The duplicate set will be referred to only in such an emergency. The main set of data will be consulted only by the Secretary, but a summary prepared by him will be shown to other members of the Panel at an annual meeting. This summary will be returned to the Secretary at the end of the meeting and copies will not be taken by the other members of the Panel.

The Panel hopes that all ornithologists, and particularly all county and regional recorders, will appreciate the importance of full co-operation so that the spread of increasing species and the decline of decreasing ones can be monitored and so that isolated breeding records are not lost.

List of species for which records are required

This list is confined to species known to have bred in Britain since 1960.

Great Northern Diver <i>Gavia immer</i>	Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
Slavonian Grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Stone Curlew <i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>
Black-necked Grebe <i>P. nigricollis</i>	Mediterranean Gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	Snowy Owl <i>Nyctea scandiaca</i>
Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>
Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
Red Kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>	Short-toed Treecreeper <i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Honey Buzzard <i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>
Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Redwing <i>T. iliacus</i>
Montagu's Harrier <i>C. pygargus</i>	Black Redstart <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Bluethroat <i>Luscinia svecica</i>
Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Cetti's Warbler <i>Cettia cetti</i>
Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i>	Savi's Warbler <i>Lucustella luscinioides</i>
Dotterel <i>Eudromias morinellus</i>	Marsh Warbler <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	Dartford Warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	Firecrest <i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>
Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Serin <i>Serinus serinus</i>
Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Snow Bunting <i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>

Various species which bred in Britain before 1960 may do so again (for example, Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*, Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*), while others which have not yet been proved to breed here have been suspected in recent years and may well be recorded in the future (for example, Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*). Observations are required for species such as these and also in cases where breeding has been suspected but not proved or where a male has held an established territory. All records should be sent to the Hon. Secretary of the Panel, **Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, 59 Curlew Crescent, Bedford MK41 7HY.**