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THE 'BB' TEAM: left to right, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr R. J. Chandler, Robin Prytherch, Mrs Sheila Cobban and Mrs Erika Sharrock, at Fountains, Bedfordshire, August 1997 (N. Willis). David A. Christie and Mrs Alison Gathercole were not present.



British Birds Volume 90 (1997) Main contents

JANUARY-FEBRUARY

- 1 Population estimates of birds in Britain and in the United Kingdom *Dr Brian H. Stone, Dr Jane Sears, Peter A. Cranswick, Dr Richard D. Gregory, Dr David W. Gibbons, Dr Mark M. Rehfish, Nicholas J. Aebischer & Dr James B. Reid*
- 25 Identification of Yellow-legged Gulls in Britain. Part 1. *Martin Garner; illustrated by David Quinn*

MARCH

- 79 European news
- 94 How many rarities are we missing? *Peter Fraser*
- 104 Obituary: Bobby Tulloch MBE (1929-1996) *Mike Everett*

APRIL

- 123 The re-establishment of Red Kite breeding populations in Scotland and England *Dr Ian M. Evans, Roy H. Dennis, Duncan C. Orr-Ewing, Nils Kjellén, Per-Olof Andersson, Magnus Sylvén, Alfonso Senosiain & Felix Compaired Carbo*

MAY

- 167 Sexual recognition of Common Swifts *Erich Kaiser*
- 175 Minutes of the first meeting of the Association of County Recorders and Editors *M. Shrubbs*
- 177 The Best Annual Bird Report Awards *Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Robert Gillmor, R. A. Hume, John Prior & Michael J. Rogers*

JUNE

- 209 Obituary: Vero Copner Wynne-Edwards DSC FRS CBE (1906-1997) *Dr W. R. P. Bourne*
- 211 The breeding birds of Inner London, 1966-94 *P. J. Oliver*
- 231 Bird Photograph of the Year *Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr R. J. Chandler, R. A. Hume & Don Smith*
- 238 European news

JULY

- 261 Bird Illustrator of the Year *Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris, Bruce Pearson, Keith Shackleton & Dr J. T. R. Sharrock*
- 267 Cirl Buntings in Britain *Dr Andy Evans*

AUGUST

- 305 'The Chalice petrel' *R. A. Hume; P. Harrison; H. W. Wallis; Keith Cutting; S. A. Young; Peter Charles; T. M. England; J. R. Ward; S. A. Young & J. R. King (329); Michael Force (339)*
- 314 Identification of North American Herring Gull *Dr Philippe J. Dubois*

SEPTEMBER

- 369 Identification of Yellow-legged Gulls in Britain. Part 2. *Martin Garner, David Quinn & Bob Glover*

OCTOBER

- 403 The Best Bird Book of the Year
- 404 A pale Blyth's Pipit *Doug Page*
- 410 The Carl Zeiss Award
- 413 Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 1995 *Peter A. Fraser, Peter G. Lansdown & Michael J. Rogers*
- 444 Bay-breasted Warbler in Cornwall: new to Britain and Ireland *David Ferguson*

NOVEMBER

- 453 Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1996 *Michael J. Rogers & the BBRC*

DECEMBER

- 535 Young Ornithologists of the Year *Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Rob Hume, B. A. E. Marr, Dr J. J. D. Greenwood, Robert Gillmor & Peter Holden*
- 538 The ornithological year 1996 *Barry Nightingale & Keith Allsopp*
- 549 Black-faced Bunting: new to Britain and Ireland *Peter J. Alker*
- 562 Exotic birds in Portugal *Helder Costa, Gonçalo Lobo Elias & João Carlos Farinha*
- 571 Identification of Hume's Warbler *Steve Madge; illustrated by David Quinn*



WINNER, BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR 1997 (see pages 261-265): Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*, Old Town Beach, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, December 1993 (John M. Walters)



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Population estimates of birds in
Britain and in the United Kingdom
Identification of Yellow-legged Gulls





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7 x 42 SLC635	NIKON
ST/AT 80 body629	NEW 10 x 42 SE CF699
ST/AT 80 HD body929	8 x 30 ECF porro WF299
22x eyepiece94	10 x 35 ECF porro WF349
30x (WA) eyepiece145	KOWA
20-60x zoom eyepiece220	NEW Scopes - (82 mm)
Camera adaptor 800mm159	TSN 821/822469
Stay-on case55	TSN 823/824 Fluorite899
LEICA	20-box zoom EP249
8 x 20 BC Trinovid278	32x (WA) EP199
8 x 20 BCA Trinovid309	Close-up Adaptor49
10 x 25 BC Trinovid309	850mm Photo Adaptor179
10 x 25 BCA Trinovid332	Adaptor for TSN 1-4 EPS24
Soft Pouch24	Stay-on case49
8 x 32 BA Trinovid649	TSN-1 (45°) or -2 body349
8 x 42 BA Trinovid719	TSN-3 (45°) or -4 body(599) 649
10 x 42 BA Trinovid739	25x or 40x eyepiece89
8 x 50 BA Trinovid889	20x (WA) eyepiece129
10 x 50 BA Trinovid889	30x (WA) eyepiece159
Carrying strap26	60x eyepiece138
LEICA APO Televid scope929	77x eyepiece125
LEICA Std. Televid scope549	20-60x zoom eyepiece196
20-60x (B) zoom eyepiece209	Camera adaptor 800mm150
20x (WW/B) eyepiece125	Stay-on case44
40x (B) eyepiece105	27x (WA) Screw-in-eyepiece74
Photo adaptor249	TS-611 body (45°)239
ER case115	TS-612 body219
ZEISS OPTICAL CENTRE	TS-613 Fluorite body (45°)499
8 x 20B Classic225	TS-614 Fluorite body449
10 x 25B Classic265	TS-610 accessories:
Classic pouch20	20x (WA) eyepiece79
10 x 25 B/TP (New DS)359	27x (WA) eyepiece109
8 x 20 B/TP (New DS)349	20-40x zoom eyepiece150
8 x 30 BGA/T (P)699	Stay-on case40
7 x 42 BGA/T(P)689	BUSHNELL
10 x 40 BGA/T(P)689	Spacemaster with 15-45x zoom259
7 x 45 Night Owl799	8 x 42 Natureview129
8 x 56 Night Owl979*	10 x 42 Natureview149
10 x 56 Night Owl1059*	8 x 30 Natureview120

*ex-case

VIKING	7 x 36 Wide View124
OPTOLYTH	8 x 40 Alpin NG NEW385
10 x 40 Alpin NG NEW399	10 x 50 Alpin NG NEW430
8 x 30 Alpin275	8 x 40 Alpin298
10 x 40 Alpin283	10 x 50 Alpin315
12 x 50 Alpin320	7 x 42 Alpin295
TBG 80 body490	TBS 80 body490
TBG or TBS 80 HD710	30x (WW) eye piece - with scope159
DISCOVERY	8 x 42 or 10 x 42 RP, GA135
OPTICRON	8 x 32 Dioptron196
8 x 42 Dioptron198	10 x 42 Dioptron207
10 x 50 Dioptron214	8 x 32 (HRII)224
8 x 42 (HRII)225	10 x 42 (HRII)239
10 x 50 (HRII)249	12 1/2 x 50 (HRII)264
7 x 42 (HRII)225	7x24, 8x24 or 10x24 MCF: Roof prism binos (new):
7 x 36 BGA375	8 x 42 BGA395
10 x 42 BGA395	10 x 50 BGA399
HR 66 scope279	HR 66 (45°)319
15x, 20x, 25x or 40x HR eyepiece44	20x WW HDF eyepiece96
28x WW HDF eyepiece119	22x W HR eyepiece57
30x W HR eyepiece59	60x HR eyepiece49
20-60x zoom eyepiece119	

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★ **THE KENT TRUST FOR NATURE CONSERVATION**, Tyland Barn, Sandling, near Maidstone, Kent on Sunday 12th January and 9th March.

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★ **DINTON PASTURES COUNTRY PARK**, near Reading, M4 (A329(M) Woodley turn-off) and then A329 to Winkersley and Winkersley Station (B3030). Sunday 23rd March.

★ **DENHAM COUNTRY PARK**, Bucks., (A40, M40 junction) on 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st March.

★ **HANNINGFIELD RESERVOIR**, Essex (off A130 North of Basildon, near the fishing lodge) on Sunday 13th April.

★ **COLLEGE LAKE WILDLIFE CENTRE** on the B488 near Bulbourne, Tring, Herts on Sat/Sun 18th/19th January, 15th/16th February and 22nd/23rd March.

★ **WHISBY NATURE PARK** off Lincoln By-Pass (Moor Lane) S.W. of Lincoln, Lincs. Sunday 23rd February.

★ **GIBRALTAR POINT**, south of Skegness at N.W. corner of the Wash, Lincs on Sunday 9th March.

★ **GREAT LINFORD WILDFOWL RESERVE** (ARC Environmental Study Centre) near Milton Keynes on Sat/Sun, 4th/5th January, 1st/2nd February and 1st/2nd March.

★ **HARROLD-ODELL COUNTRY PARK**, 10 miles N.W. of Bedford, off the Harrold to Carlton road on Sunday 26th January and Saturday 15th March.

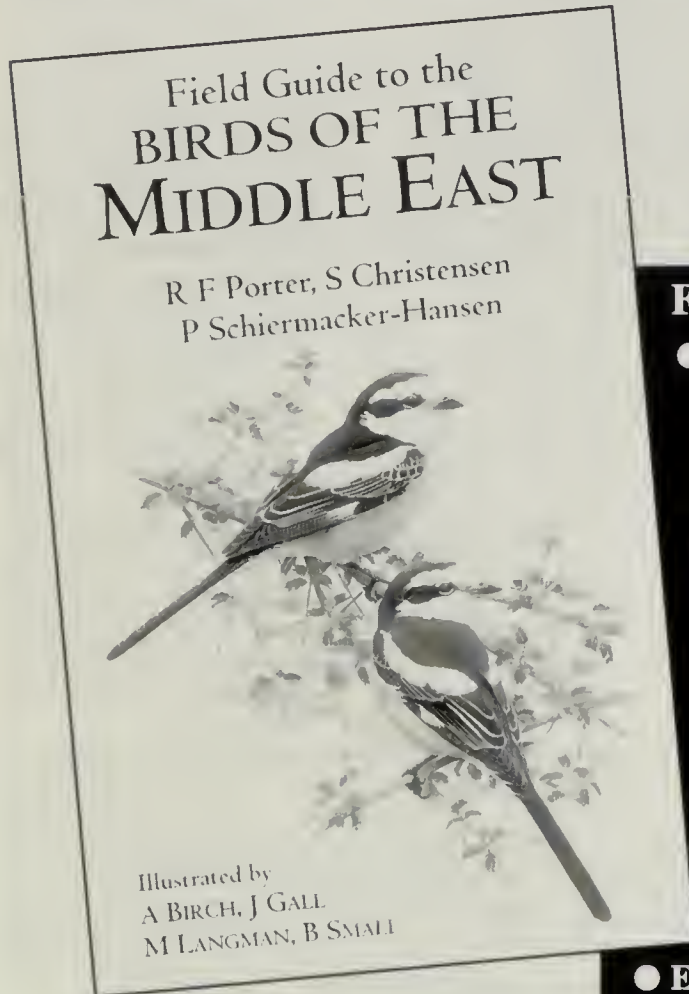
★ **KINGSBURY WATER PARK**, signposted from A4097, N.E. of Birmingham on Sunday 16th March.

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Population estimates of birds in Britain and in the United Kingdom

Brian H. Stone, Jane Sears, Peter A. Cranswick,
Richard D. Gregory, David W. Gibbons, Mark M.
Rehfish, Nicholas J. Aebischer and James B. Reid

ABSTRACT A panel formed from the British Trust for Ornithology, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Game Conservancy Trust has identified the most recent reliable estimates of the breeding, wintering and passage populations of birds in Britain and in the United Kingdom. This paper summarises the most-up-to-date estimates in a single table with the intention of providing a useful resource for conservation. This is the first year that the Avian Population Estimates Panel (APEP) has published estimates, and it will aim to publish revisions every three years.

Population estimates are one of the most widely quoted products of surveys, censuses and monitoring. They exist in numerous sources, ranging from published papers on individual species to compilations such as *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) and *The Status of*

Seabirds in Britain and Ireland (Lloyd *et al.* 1991). Many estimates remain unpublished, in reports or unfinished papers, and are known only to a few people. For some well-studied species, a plethora of estimates exists, while for others there are no reliable estimates.

This compilation of recent reliable population estimates for birds in Britain and in the United Kingdom has been prepared for three main reasons: to allow easy access to useful data in one publication; to widen the use of previously unpublished data; and to reduce the potential for confusion and dispute through the use of out-of-date or unreliable estimates. This does not purport to be a definitive list: other reliable estimates exist and these may also be used. We hope, however, that it will prove useful, and we welcome feedback which will help to update the table for future revisions.

Why are population estimates useful? As well as for interest in the numbers of a species and for academic research, population estimates are widely used to promote the conservation of birds. National population estimates may be compared with biogeographical, geographical or global populations to identify those species present in internationally important numbers in any particular country (i.e. over a threshold percentage). The status and trends of a species in one country may be compared with those in other countries within the species' range, to determine general status. This approach has been used within Europe to identify 'Species of European Conservation Concern' and to prioritise those in need of conservation action (Tucker & Heath 1994). Similarly, within a country, a population's status and trends may be assessed by comparing current population levels with earlier estimates, as was done recently in the UK to determine bird species of conservation concern (Gibbons *et al.* in press).

Population estimates are frequently used to determine whether a particular site qualifies for protection. For example, under the Ramsar Convention, a site qualifies for designation if it regularly supports at least 1% of a population of a species or subspecies of waterbird. Counts for particular counties, regions or countries may also be compared with national estimates to put their importance into context and to help to ensure that conservation action is taken in the most important areas.

A secondary benefit of this compilation has been to highlight those species for which no recent estimate exists. The lack of recent winter estimates for most passerines is an obvious gap. Several monitoring schemes exist which between them cover common breeding species, seabirds, winter waterfowl and other species of conservation concern (Smith 1994; Carter 1995). There are, however, many bird species whose uncertain status needs to be highlighted if they are to be monitored adequately in the future.

The Avian Population Estimates Panel

The membership of the Avian Population Estimates Panel (APEP) in September 1996 was Dr Nicholas Aebischer (Game Conservancy Trust), Peter Cranswick (Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust), Dr David Gibbons (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), Dr Richard Gregory (British Trust for Ornithology), Dr Mark Rehfisch (BTO), Dr Jim Reid (Joint Nature Conservation Committee), Dr Jane Sears (RSPB) and Brian Stone (JNCC and Panel Chair).

Methods

All estimates of breeding, wintering and passage populations included within the compilation have been published or are considered worthy of publication. Many have been presented in a few key publications, outlined below, but where possible these estimates have been updated and augmented using the results of recent surveys or analyses.

Geographical coverage

Estimates are published separately for Great Britain (GB) and the United Kingdom (UK). For the purposes of this paper, GB includes England, Scotland, Wales and their islands with the addition of the Isle of Man, but excluding the Channel Islands. The UK includes the same areas with the addition of Northern Ireland. The Panel experienced problems deriving estimates for Northern Ireland and very few reliable estimates resulted. It is hoped, however, that these figures can be included in future revisions.

Estimates for common breeding birds

Many of the estimates for breeding birds were published in *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland, 1988-1991* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993), referred to throughout as 'the *New Atlas*'. Estimates were derived using a range of methods (detailed within pages 462-475 of the *New Atlas* (Gates *et al.* 1993)), including the Common Bird Census, Count Method, Number of Squares Method and, in several cases, estimates provided within the species accounts (from, for example, single-species surveys). Most seabird estimates originate from *The Status of Seabirds in Britain and Ireland* (Lloyd *et al.* 1991) containing the results of the Seabird Colony Register undertaken during 1985-87. Breeding estimates are generally presented as pairs, although other units are used where appropriate.

The *New Atlas* presented estimates for Britain and Ireland, but not for the UK. Breeding estimates for the UK have been derived from the *New Atlas* (previously by DWG) for inclusion in the European Birds Database (EBD) held by BirdLife International. Many of these UK estimates were published in *Birds in Europe* (Tucker & Heath 1994). For most species, Northern Ireland populations were calculated by multiplying the All-Ireland estimates by the proportion of the species' population (calculated from the abundance measures, relative or absolute, from each 10-km square) that occurred in Northern Ireland. UK populations were then calculated by summing the populations for Britain and Northern Ireland. To conform with the EBD, all figures were converted to pairs and rounded according to the following convention: >1,000,000 to the nearest 100,000; 100,000 to 1,000,000 to the nearest 10,000; 10,000 to 100,000 to the nearest 1,000; 1,000 to 10,000 to the nearest 100; 100 to 1,000 to the nearest 10.

The majority of UK figures presented here are from the EBD, but where necessary have been converted back to the units used in the *New Atlas*. It is important to note that, as a result of rounding, the UK and British estimates for a species may be the same, even though the species does breed in small numbers in Northern Ireland.

Where a more recent published estimate is available, this has been used. In some cases, estimates have been derived from sample censuses and 95% confidence limits calculated. These are presented in the table as a best estimate followed by the confidence interval in brackets.

Estimates for rare breeding birds

Many of the estimates of breeding populations for rare breeding birds are derived from the reports of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP). Rather than present the most recent totals for these species, many of which have populations that fluctuate significantly from year to year, we have presented the mean of the most recently published five years from 1989-93 (Ogilvie *et al.* 1996). The minimum value quoted is the 5-year mean of confirmed breeders (usually pairs). The maximum is the 5-year mean of the maximum value quoted by the RBBP (generally the total number of pairs—a combination of possible, probable and confirmed breeding pairs). For a few species (e.g. Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*), it is not possible to calculate a minimum, and the single figure is presented as a best estimate.

Some species (e.g. Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus*) which are covered by RBBP reports have been surveyed recently and, where appropriate, the APEP has quoted the survey results as the best population estimate.

For several species, the APEP considered that the RBBP was likely to underestimate the population substantially (Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, Redwing *T. iliacus*, Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* and Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*). For these species, the APEP used *New Atlas* data to derive estimates.

A few species (Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Little Gull *Larus minutus*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* and Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*) have bred only occasionally during 1989-93 and would have a 5-year mean of less than 1. The breeding estimate for these species is expressed as 0-1.

Estimates of wintering populations

Most of the GB wintering waterbird population estimates are presented from recent reviews of Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and other national waterfowl survey data by Kirby (1995) and Cayford & Waters (1996). To derive most UK wildfowl figures, the proportion of each species' population counted by WeBS was calculated by comparing the average of the peak total counts for the last five available winters (1989/90 to 1993/94) with the estimate in Kirby (1995). The average peak total counts for Northern Ireland for the same period were multiplied by this factor and then added to the unrounded GB estimates. In certain cases, the UK estimate was derived using other sources which contain estimates for Northern Ireland or the UK. In these cases, the additional source is quoted.

The wader totals for Northern Ireland were calculated using WeBS data collected during the 1989/90 to 1993/94 winters. These Northern Ireland totals were then added to the GB population estimates (Cayford & Waters 1996), forming the UK population estimates.

The GB and UK wintering wildfowl and wader estimates were rounded using the convention from Kirby (1995) and Cayford & Waters (1996): >100,000 to the nearest 1,000; 10,000-100,000 to the nearest 100; <10,000 to the nearest 10.

The Ramsar Convention has recommended (Resolution C.4.6) that, for waterbirds, 1% thresholds be revised only once every nine years, yet population estimates be revised every three years. In order that the relevant estimates here also correspond to those in international usage, some may not be the most recently available. We plan to update future tables in accordance with future international revision cycles.

Winter estimates for gulls are based on the BTO Gull Roost Survey of 1993. Incomplete coverage, especially of some coastal sites, in what was otherwise a complete count, means that these figures are underestimates and are described in the table as minima.

Up-to-date estimates of the wintering populations for species not counted by the WeBS scheme are more difficult to obtain. The estimates in *The Atlas of Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Lack 1986) are now mostly rather old and could cause confusion if compared with the more recent estimates of breeding populations. The Panel decided, therefore, not to include these figures in this review. Winter population estimates are given for a few selected species (Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*, Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*, Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, Fieldfare, Redwing, Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* and Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*). These are either species for which reasonably reliable estimates are available, and which occur in the UK only in the winter, or species which have winter populations that are substantially boosted by immigration.

For winter estimates, a period quoted in the table as 1986-91 refers to the five winters of 1986/87 to 1990/91.

Estimates of passage populations

Estimates of the populations of birds on passage are particularly difficult to obtain owing to the uncertain rate at which they pass through sites where they are counted. The APEP decided to include only the higher of the autumn or spring passage population estimates, and only where this exceeded the winter estimate.

Wader passage population estimates for GB and Northern Ireland were derived from WeBS counts made during the spring and autumn months of the 1989/90 to 1993/94 winter count seasons. Since only half the GB and one-quarter of the Northern Ireland coastal sites are counted, the recorded totals were multiplied up accordingly. As not all suitable sites are covered in spring, counts being restricted largely to coastal sites, the true wader passage populations are potentially seriously underestimated. Passage population estimates are, therefore, expressed as minima. Passage wader estimates have been rounded using the same convention as for wintering estimates.

An attempt was also made to estimate the autumn passage population of Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, which occurs only on passage and is a high-priority species for international conservation action. This secretive species

is extremely hard to detect and count. The estimate is based on the mean of autumn records 1987-92 and is certainly an underestimate.

Using the table

Terminology

Each estimate in the table is assigned a 'type' and a 'derivation' to indicate how the estimate should be interpreted and broadly how it was obtained.

The types of estimate are:

- Best estimate (Best est.): the best available single figure;
- 5-year mean (5-y mean): the average of published RBBP figures for 1989-93;
- 4-year mean (4-y mean): for Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* where data were available only for confirmed breeding in 1989-92, and Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* where data were presented for 1990-93 to exclude the invasion year of 1989;
- Minimum (Min.): for estimates of passage populations derived from WeBS counts that do not cover all potential sites and underestimate total populations owing to the movement of birds through sites;
- Best estimate with 95% confidence limits (95%): for estimates derived from sample censuses where confidence limits were calculated.

Derivations are numbered from 1 to 4 with the following meanings:

1. Complete count A full or near-full census;
2. Expert estimate The best estimate in the opinion of experts studying the population of the species in question;
3. Compilation An estimate derived from a number of sources (e.g. RBBP data);
4. Extrapolation An estimate derived by extrapolating from sample surveys and methods based on abundance and distribution data.

Quality of estimates (reliability, date and change)

The table has columns for reliability (Rel), change (+/-) and date. By examining a combination of these, the reader should be able to form a judgment concerning the quality of an estimate.

The reliability figure is a simple score of 1 to 3, where 1 is good and 3 is poor. This is intended to indicate one aspect of the quality of an estimate as judged by the APEP. For example, an estimate may be assigned a good reliability score if it derives from a comprehensive count across the breeding range of the species. An estimate for a species which is secretive or occurs in inaccessible areas and is therefore difficult to survey accurately might be assigned a low reliability score.

The date given is, in most cases, a range covering the census or censuses used to derive the estimate. Although recent estimates are of the greatest use, older estimates are not necessarily of poorer quality if they refer to species with stable populations.

The column headed '+/-' in the table is used to indicate where, in the opinion of the APEP, the published figure is likely to underestimate or overestimate the present population. Although this is an unsourced, qualitative comment, it is useful in judging how well the estimate applies to the current population,

especially in cases where the only published estimate is old. A '+' symbol in this column indicates that the population has probably increased significantly since the published estimate, and a '-' symbol indicates the converse.

Use of the data

The estimates provided in the table are, in the opinion of the APEP, the best available figures in each case. A number of methods have been used to derive the various estimates. Comparison of one figure with another may, therefore, produce some apparent inconsistencies or unexpected results. The APEP strongly recommends that caution is exercised when comparing these figures one with another or with other sources. It is important to pay careful attention to the date of the estimate, its assessed reliability, its method of collection and analytical derivation, and its source before drawing any conclusions.

In particular, it is not possible to derive figures for Northern Ireland simply by subtracting the GB estimate from the UK estimate. In a number of cases where the species occurs in NI, the UK and GB figures are the same. This is because the NI populations often comprise a relatively small proportion of the UK totals and are 'lost' in the rounding applied to the estimates.

Table 1. Population estimates of birds in Britain and in the United Kingdom.

Population estimates are presented for Great Britain and for the UK, with the seasons abbreviated as follows: A = Autumn migration; B = Breeding; S = Spring migration; W = Wintering. Units are abbreviated to: A = individual adults; F = females; I = individuals; M = males; N = nests; P = pairs; T = territories; W = wild pairs (some estimates use more-complex units and these are highlighted in the notes). Estimates of populations which are thought to have increased or decreased significantly are indicated with a + or - in the +/- column (this indicates a need for caution and is *not* an indication of trend: see text for full explanation). Reliability (Rel) is scored from 1 (good) to 3 (poor); see text for a full explanation. The methods used to derive the estimate (Der) are described in the text and appear in the table as 1 = Complete count; 2 = Expert estimate; 3 = Compilation; 4 = Extrapolation. Notes appear at the end of the table and the reference numbers are listed in the reference section.

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Red-throated Diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>	GB	B	935-1,500	P	1994		Best est.	2	2,4	52	1
	GB	W	4,850	I	1980-86		Best est.	3	2	14	
	UK	B	935-1,500	P	1994		Best est.	2	2,4	52	1
Black-throated Diver <i>Gavia arctica</i>	GB	B	155-189	P	1994		Best est.	2	1,2	52	
	GB	W	700	I	1980-86		Best est.	3	2	14	
	UK	B	155-189	P	1994		Best est.	2	1,2	52	
Great Northern Diver <i>Gavia immer</i>	GB	W	3,000	I	1983		Best est.	3	2	38	
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	GB	B	5,000-10,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
	GB	W	3,290	I	1987-92		Best est.	3	4	36	
	UK	B	5,900-12,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
	UK	W	4,250	I	1987-92		Best est.	3	4	36,64	
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	GB	B	8,000	A	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
	GB	W	9,800	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	9,400	A	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	11,800	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Red-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	GB	B	2	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	
	GB	W	150	I	1983		Best est.	2	2	38	
	UK	B	2	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	
	UK	W	150	I	1983		Best est.	2	2	38	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Slavonian Grebe	GB	B	70-78	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	GB	W	400	I	1983		Best est.	2	2	38	
	UK	B	70-78	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
	UK	W	400	I	1983		Best est.	2	2	38	
Black-necked Grebe	GB	B	23-48	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	GB	W	120	I	1983		Best est.	2	2	38	
	UK	B	23-48	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
	UK	W	120	I	1983		Best est.	2	2	38	
Fulmar	GB	B	539,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	UK	B	543,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
Manx Shearwater	GB	B	220,000-250,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	UK	B	220,000-250,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
European Storm-petrel	GB	B	20,000-150,000	P	1968-87		Best est.	3	3	39	
<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	UK	B	20,000-150,000	P	1968-87		Best est.	3	3	39	
Leach's Storm-petrel	GB	B	10,000-100,000	P	1969-87		Best est.	3	3	39	
<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	UK	B	10,000-100,000	P	1969-87		Best est.	3	3	39	
Northern Gannet	GB	B	201,000	N	1994-95		Best est.	1	1	41,70	3
<i>Morus bassanus</i>	UK	B	201,000	N	1994-95		Best est.	1	1	41,70	3
Great Cormorant	GB	B	7,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	GB	W	13,200	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	7,600	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	14,700	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Shag	GB	B	37,500	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	UK	B	37,500	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
Great Bittern	GB	B	20	M	1995		Best est.	1	1	52	
<i>Botaurus stellans</i>	GB	W	50-150	I	1981-84		Best est.	2	3	38	
	UK	B	20	M	1995		Best est.	1	1	52	
	UK	W	50-150	I	1981-84		Best est.	2	3	38	
Grey Heron	GB	B	10,000	N	1991	+	Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	UK	B	11,000	N	1991	+	Best est.	2	4	22	
Mute Swan	GB	B	25,750	A	1990		Best est.	1	1	19	
<i>Cygnus olor</i>	GB	W	25,750	I	1990		Best est.	2	1	19	
	UK	B	28,000-30,000	A	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	29,800	I	1990		Best est.	2	1	17,64	
Tundra Swan	GB	W	7,200	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	UK	W	7,590	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Whooper Swan	GB	B	2	W	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	
<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	GB	W	5,600	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	2	W	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	
	UK	W	8,680	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Bean Goose	GB	W	450	I	1989		Best est.	1	1	2	
<i>Anser fabalis</i>	UK	W	450	I	1989		Best est.	1	1	2	
Pink-footed Goose	GB	W	192,000	I	1992	+	Best est.	1	1	36	
<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	UK	W	192,000	I	1992	+	Best est.	1	1	36	
'European' White-fronted Goose	GB	W	6,100	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
<i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i>	UK	W	6,100	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
'Greenland' White-fronted Goose	GB	W	13,700	I	1986-91		Best est.	1	1	61	
<i>A. a. flavirostris</i>	UK	W	13,860	I	1986-91		Best est.	1	1	61	
Greylag Goose	GB	W	100,000	I	1992		Best est.	1	1	36	
<i>Anser anser</i>	UK	W	100,000	I	1992		Best est.	1	1	36	
(Icelandic population)											
Greylag Goose	GB	B	500-700	P	1986		Best est.	2	2	65	
<i>Anser anser</i>	GB	W	5,250	I	1992		Best est.	1	1	36	
(North Scottish population)	UK	B	500-700	P	1986		Best est.	2	2	65	
	UK	W	5,250	I	1992		Best est.	1	1	36	
Greylag Goose	GB	B	13,100	A	1991		Best est.	1	1	17	
<i>Anser anser</i>	GB	W	18,900	I	1991		Best est.	2	1	17	
(naturalised population)	UK	B	13,800	A	1991		Best est.	1	4	17	
	UK	W	19,900	I	1991		Best est.	2	4	17,64	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Canada Goose	GB	B	46,700	A	1991		Best est.	1	1	18	
<i>Branta canadensis</i>	GB	W	61,000	I	1991		Best est.	2	4	18	
	UK	B	47,200	A	1991		Best est.	1	4	18,64	
	UK	W	61,600	I	1991		Best est.	2	4	18,64	
Barnacle Goose	GB	W	26,950	I	1988		Best est.	1	1	23	
<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	UK	W	26,950	I	1988		Best est.	1	1	23	
(Greenland population)											
Barnacle Goose	GB	W	12,120	I	1992		Best est.	1	1	36	
<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	UK	W	12,120	I	1992		Best est.	1	1	36	
(Svalbard population)											
Barnacle Goose	GB	B	730	A	1991		Best est.	1	1	17	
<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	GB	W	820	I	1991		Best est.	1	1	17	
(naturalised population)	UK	B	810	A	1991		Best est.	1	1	17,64	
	UK	W	920	I	1991		Best est.	2	1	17,64	
'Dark-bellied' Brent Goose	GB	W	103,300	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	36	
<i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>	UK	W	103,300	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	36	
'Light-bellied' Brent Goose	UK	W	14,600	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	1	12	
<i>B. b. hrota</i>											
(Greenland population)											
'Light-bellied' Brent Goose	GB	W	2,430	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	12	
(Svalbard population)	UK	W	2,430	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	12	
Egyptian Goose	GB	B	700	A	1991		Best est.	1	1	17	
<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	GB	W	910	I	1991		Best est.	1	1	17	
	UK	B	700	A	1991		Best est.	1	1	17	
	UK	W	910	I	1991		Best est.	1	1	17	
Common Shelduck	GB	B	10,600	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	GB	W	73,500	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	10,900	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	76,400	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Mandarin Duck	GB	W	7,000	I	1970-87		Best est.	3	2	15	
<i>Aix galericulata</i>	UK	W	7,000	I	1970-87		Best est.	3	4	15	
Eurasian Wigeon	GB	B	300-500	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Anas penelope</i>	GB	W	277,800	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	300-500	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	291,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Gadwall	GB	B	770	P	1990		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Anas strepera</i>	GB	W	8,200	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	790	P	1990		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	8,400	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4		
Common Teal	GB	B	1,500-2,600	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Anas crecca</i>	GB	W	135,800	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	1,600-2,800	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
	UK	W	141,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Mallard	GB	B	100,000-130,000	P	1979-83		Best est.	3	2	44	
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	GB	W	500,000	I	1979-83		Best est.	3	2	44	
	UK	B	100,000-130,000	P	1979-83		Best est.	3	2	44	
	UK	W	527,000	I	1979-83		Best est.	3	4	44,64	
Northern Pintail	GB	B	8-42	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Anas acuta</i>	GB	W	27,800	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	8-42	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
	UK	W	28,100	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Garganey	GB	B	15-125	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Anas querquedula</i>	UK	B	15-125	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Northern Shoveler	GB	B	1,000-1,500	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Anas clypeata</i>	GB	W	10,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	1,000-1,500	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	10,300	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Red-crested Pochard	GB	B	100	A	1988-91		Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Netta rufina</i>	UK	B	100	A	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Common Pochard	GB	B	251-406	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Aythya ferina</i>	GB	W	43,700	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	251-406	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
	UK	W	81,200	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Tufted Duck	GB	B	7,000-8,000	P	1979-83		Best est.	2	4	44	
<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	GB	W	60,600	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	8,000-9,000	P	1986		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	90,100	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Greater Scaup	GB	B	0-3	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Aythya marila</i>	GB	W	11,000	I	1986-91		Best est.	2	1	37	
	UK	B	0-3	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
	UK	W	13,400	I	1986-91		Best est.	2	1	37	
Common Eider	GB	B	31,000-32,000	F	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	GB	W	77,500	I	1986-91		Best est.	2	1	37	
	UK	B	32,000-33,000	F	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	78,000	I	1986-91		Best est.	2	1	37	
Long-tailed Duck	GB	W	23,500	I	1986-91		Best est.	3	1	37	
<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	UK	W	23,500	I	1986-91		Best est.	3	1	37	
Common Scoter	GB	B	76-89	P	1995		Best est.	1	1	68	
<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	GB	W	34,500	I	1986-91		Best est.	3	1	37	
	UK	B	76-89	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	68	
	UK	W	37,550	I	1986-91		Best est.	3	1	37	
Velvet Scoter	GB	W	3,000	I	1986-91		Best est.	3	1	37	
<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	UK	W	3,000	I	1986-91		Best est.	3	1	37	
Common Goldeneye	GB	B	83-109	P	1989-92		4-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	GB	W	17,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	83-109	P	1989-92		4-y mean	2	3	43	2
	UK	W	32,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Smew	GB	W	250	I	1983		Best est.	3	2	38	
<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	UK	W	250	I	1983		Best est.	3	4	38	
Red-breasted Merganser	GB	B	2,200	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Mergus serrator</i>	GB	W	10,000	I	1986-91		Best est.	2	1	37	
	UK	B	2,300	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	10,400	I	1986-91		Best est.	2	1	37	
Goosander	GB	B	2,600	P	1987	+	Best est.	2	4	34	
<i>Mergus merganser</i>	GB	W	8,900	I	1992		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	2,600	P	1987	+	Best est.	2	4	34	
	UK	W	8,900	I	1992		Best est.	2	4	36	
Ruddy Duck	GB	B	570	P	1991-92		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	GB	W	3,500	I	1991-92		Best est.	3	4	35	
	UK	B	590	P	1991-92		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	3,560	I	1991-92		Best est.	3	4	35,64	
Honey-buzzard	GB	B	4-23	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	UK	B	4-23	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Red Kite	GB	B	160	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
<i>Milvus milvus</i>	UK	B	160	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
White-tailed Eagle	GB	B	10	T	1995		Best est.	1	1	52	
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	UK	B	10	T	1995		Best est.	1	1	52	
Marsh Harrier	GB	B	157-160	F	1995		Best est.	1	1	16	
<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	UK	B	157-160	F	1995		Best est.	1	1	16	
Hen Harrier	GB	B	630	P	1988-89		Best est.	2	4	5	
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	UK	B	670	P	1988-89		Best est.	2	4	22	
Montagu's Harrier	GB	B	7	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
<i>Circus pygargus</i>	UK	B	7	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
Northern Goshawk	GB	B	400-450	P	1993-94		Best est.	2	2	46,57	
<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	UK	B	400-450	P	1993-94		Best est.	2	2	46,57	
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	GB	B	32,000	P	1986	+	Best est.	2	4	42	
<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	UK	B	34,000	P	1986	+	Best est.	2	4	22	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	GB	B	12,000-17,000	T	1983	+	Best est.	2	2	63	
	UK	B	12,000-17,000	T	1983	+	Best est.	2	4	22	
Rough-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo lagopus</i>	GB	W	43	I	1986-91		5-y mean	2	3	24	
	UK	W	43	I	1986-91		5-y mean	2	3	24	
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	GB	B	422	P	1992		Best est.	1	1	33	
	UK	B	422	P	1992		Best est.	1	1	33	
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	GB	B	99	P	1995		Best est.	1	3	52	
	UK	B	99	P	1995		Best est.	1	3	52	
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	GB	B	50,000	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
	UK	B	52,000	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	GB	B	1,300(1,100-1,500)	P	1993-94		95%	1	2	52	
	UK	B	1,330	P	1990-94		Best est.	1	2	52,72	
Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	GB	B	500-900	P	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	2	30	
	UK	B	500-900	P	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	4	22	
Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	GB	B	1,185	P	1991		Best est.	1	2	13	
	UK	B	1,285	P	1991		Best est.	1	2	13	
Red Grouse <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	GB	B	250,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	2	30	
	UK	B	250,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Ptarmigan <i>Lagopus mutus</i>	GB	B	10,000	P	1990		Best est.	3	2	49	
	UK	B	10,000	P	1990		Best est.	3	4	22	
Black Grouse <i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	GB	B	25,270(13,800-36,700)	M	1989-93	-	95%	2	2	1	
	UK	B	25,270(13,800-36,700)	M	1989-93	-	95%	2	2	1	
Capercaillie <i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	GB	B	2,200	A	1992-94		Best est.	2	2	8	
	UK	B	2,200	A	1992-94		Best est.	2	2	8	
Red-legged Partridge <i>Alectoris rufa</i>	GB	B	90,000-250,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
	UK	B	90,000-250,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>	GB	B	140,000-150,000	P	1988-92	-	Best est.	2	4,2	30	4
	UK	B	140,000-150,000	P	1988-92	-	Best est.	2	4,2	22	4
Common Quail <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	GB	B	5-295	M	1990-93		4-y mean	3	3	43	5
	UK	B	5-295	M	1990-93		4-y mean	3	3	43	5
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	GB	B	1,500,000-1,600,000	F	1989		Best est.	2	4	51	
	UK	B	1,600,000-1,700,000	F	1989		Best est.	2	4	22	
Golden Pheasant <i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>	GB	B	1,000-2,000	A	1981-84	-	Best est.	2	4	38	
	UK	B	1,000-2,000	A	1981-84	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Lady Amherst's Pheasant <i>Chrysolophus amherstiae</i>	GB	B	100-200	A	1991		Best est.	2	2	66	
	UK	B	100-200	A	1991		Best est.	2	4	22	
Water Rail <i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	GB	B	450-900	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	2	30	
	UK	B	700-1,400	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Spotted Crane <i>Porzana porzana</i>	GB	B	1-20	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
	UK	B	1-20	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Corn Crane <i>Crex crex</i>	GB	B	480	M	1993		Best est.	1	2	32	
	UK	B	489	M	1993		Best est.	1	2	32	
Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	GB	B	240,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
	UK	B	260,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	GB	B	46,000	A	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
	GB	W	114,100	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36	
	UK	B	48,000	A	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	124,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	2	4	36,64	
Common Crane <i>Grus grus</i>	GB	B	3	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
	UK	B	3	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	GB	B	33,000-43,000	P	mid 80s	+	Best est.	3	2	47	6
	GB	W	359,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
	UK	B	34,000-44,000	P	mid 80s	+	Best est.	3	4	22	6
	UK	W	378,000	I	1987-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	GB	B	0-1	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
	UK	B	0-1	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Avocet	GB	B	450-492	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	GB	W	1,270	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
	GB	A	1,700	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
	UK	B	450-492	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
	UK	W	1,270	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
	UK	A	1,760	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Stone-curlew	GB	B	166-180	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
<i>Burhinus oediconemus</i>	UK	B	166-180	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
Little Ringed Plover	GB	B	825-1,070	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	UK	B	825-1,070	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Great Ringed Plover	GB	B	8,500	P	1984		Best est.	2	4	48	
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	GB	W	28,600	I	1987-92	-	Best est.	2	1	9	
	GB	S	30,000	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
	UK	B	8,600	P	1984		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	31,000	I	1989-94	-	Best est.	2	1	9,71	
Dotterel	GB	B	840-950	P	1987-88		Best est.	2	4,2	30	
<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	UK	B	840-950	P	1987-88		Best est.	2	4	22	
European Golden Plover	GB	B	22,600	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	GB	W	250,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	3	2	9	
	UK	B	22,600	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	310,000	I	1989-94		Best est.	3	3	9,71	
Grey Plover	GB	W	43,200	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	GB	S	70,000	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
	UK	W	43,400	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
	UK	S	70,000	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Northern Lapwing	GB	B	190,000-240,000	P	1986-87	-	Best est.	2	3	58,65	
<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	GB	W	1,500,000-2,000,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	3	2	9	
	UK	B	200,000-250,000	P	1986-87	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	1,600,000-2,100,000	I	1989-94		Best est.	3	3	9,71	
Red Knot	GB	W	291,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
<i>Calidris canutus</i>	UK	W	298,000	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
Sanderling	GB	W	23,200	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
<i>Calidris alba</i>	GB	S	40,000	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
	UK	W	23,400	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
	UK	S	40,200	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Little Stint	GB	A	770	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
<i>Calidris minuta</i>	UK	A	770	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Temminck's Stint	GB	B	1-3	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	UK	B	1-3	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
Curlew Sandpiper	GB	A	740	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	UK	A	740	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Purple Sandpiper	GB	B	2-2	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
<i>Calidris maritima</i>	GB	W	21,300	I	1989	-	Best est.	1	1	9	
	UK	B	2-2	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
	UK	W	21,700	I	1989-94	-	Best est.	2	1	9,71	
Dunlin	GB	B	9,150-9,900	P	1980s		Best est.	2	2	50,62	
<i>Calidris alpina</i>	GB	W	532,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
	UK	B	9,150-9,900	P	1985		Best est.	2	4	50,62	
	UK	W	549,000	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
Ruff	GB	B	2-24	N	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	7
<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	GB	W	700	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
	GB	A	1,100	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
	UK	B	2-24	N	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	7
	UK	W	700	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
	UK	A	1,100	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Jack Snipe	GB	W	10,000-100,000	I	1987-92	-	Best est.	3	2	9	
<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	UK	W	10,000-100,000	I	1989-94		Best est.	3	2	9	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Common Snipe	GB	B	55,000	P	1985-91		Best est.	2	4	30,45	8
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	GB	W	>100,000	I	1987-92		Min.	3	2	9	
	UK	B	61,000	P	1985-91		Best est.	2	4	30,45	8
Woodcock	GB	B	8,500-21,500	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	UK	B	9,100-23,000	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	22	
Black-tailed Godwit	GB	B	29-53	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Limosa limosa</i>	GB	W	7,410	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
	GB	A	12,000	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
	UK	B	29-53	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
	UK	W	7,800	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
	UK	A	12,400	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Bar-tailed Godwit	GB	W	52,500	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	UK	W	56,100	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
Whimbrel	GB	B	530	P	1989-92		Best est.	2	2	21	
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	GB	S	3,000	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
	UK	B	530	P	1989-92		Best est.	2	2	21	
	UK	S	3,600	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Eurasian Curlew	GB	B	33,000-38,000	P	1985	+	Best est.	3	2	47	6
<i>Numenius arquata</i>	GB	W	115,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
	UK	B	38,000-43,000	P	1985	+	Best est.	3	4	22	6
	UK	W	123,000	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
Spotted Redshank	GB	W	120	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	GB	A	420	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
	UK	W	140	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
	UK	A	420	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Common Redshank	GB	B	30,600-33,600	P	mid 80s		Best est.	2	2	47	
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	GB	W	114,000	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
	UK	B	32,000-35,000	P	mid 80s		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	122,000	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
Common Greenshank	GB	B	1,100-1,600	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	GB	W	380	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
	GB	A	1,400	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
	UK	B	1,100-1,600	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	560	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
	UK	A	1,530	I	1989-94		Min.	2	1	71	
Green Sandpiper	GB	W	750	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	UK	W	780	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
Wood Sandpiper	GB	B	1-5	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	UK	B	1-5	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
Common Sandpiper	GB	B	15,800	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	GB	W	100	I	1987-92		Best est.	1	1	9	
	UK	B	15,800	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
	UK	W	100	I	1989-94		Best est.	1	1	9,71	
Turnstone	GB	W	64,400	I	1987-92	-	Best est.	2	1	9	
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	UK	W	69,700	I	1989-94	-	Best est.	2	1	9,71	
Red-necked Phalarope	GB	B	36	M	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	UK	B	36	M	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
Arctic Skua	GB	B	3,200	T	1985-87,91-93		Best est.	2	3	69	
<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	UK	B	3,200	T	1985-87,91-93		Best est.	2	3	69	
Great Skua	GB	B	8,500	T	1985-87,91-93		Best est.	2	3	69	
<i>Catharacta skua</i>	UK	B	8,500	T	1985-87,91-93		Best est.	2	3	69	
Mediterranean Gull	GB	B	13-22	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	UK	B	13-22	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Little Gull	GB	B	0-1	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Larus minutus</i>	UK	B	0-1	P	1989-93		Best est.	2	3	43	2
Black-headed Gull	GB	B	167,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	3	39	
<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	GB	W	1,900,000	I	1993		Min.	2	1	6	
	UK	B	190,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Common Gull	GB	B	68,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Larus canus</i>	GB	W	900,000	I	1993		Min.	2	1	6	
	UK	B	68,500	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	GB	B	83,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Larus fuscus</i>	GB	W	500,000	I	1993		Min.	2	1	6	
	UK	B	85,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
Herring Gull	GB	B	160,000	P	1985-87	-	Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	GB	W	450,000	I	1993		Min.	2	1	6	
	UK	B	180,000	P	1985-87	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Great Black-backed Gull	GB	B	19,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Larus marinus</i>	GB	W	40,000	I	1993		Min.	2	1	6	
	UK	B	20,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
Kittiwake	GB	B	490,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	UK	B	500,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
Sandwich Tern	GB	B	14,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	UK	B	17,000	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
Roseate Tern	GB	B	64	P	1995		Best est.	1	1	52	
<i>Sterna dougalli</i>	UK	B	72	P	1995		Best est.	1	1	52	
Common Tern	GB	B	12,300	P	1984-87		Best est.	2	1	30	
<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	UK	B	14,000	P	1984-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
Arctic Tern	GB	B	44,000	P	1985-89		Best est.	2	3	30	
<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	UK	B	44,000	P	1985-89		Best est.	2	4	22	
Little Tern	GB	B	2,400	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	UK	B	2,400	P	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
Common Guillemot	GB	B	1,050,000	A	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	3
<i>Uria aalge</i>	UK	B	1,100,000	A	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	3
Razorbill	GB	B	148,000	A	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	3
<i>Alca torda</i>	UK	B	160,000	A	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	3
Black Guillemot	GB	B	36,500	A	1982-90		Best est.	2	3	39	
<i>Cephus grylle</i>	UK	B	37,000	A	1982-90		Best est.	2	4	39	
Puffin	GB	B	898,000	A	1985-87		Best est.	2	1	39	
<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	UK	B	903,000	A	1985-87		Best est.	2	4	22	
Stock Dove	GB	B	240,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Columba oenas</i>	UK	B	240,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Wood Pigeon	GB	B	2,100,000-2,600,000	T	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	4	30	9
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	UK	B	2,200,000-2,700,000	T	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	4	22	9
Collared Dove	GB	B	200,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	UK	B	210,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Turtle Dove	GB	B	75,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	UK	B	75,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Rose-ringed Parakeet	GB	B	1,000-5,000	A	1991	+	Best est.	3	2	30	
<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	UK	B	1,000-5,000	A	1991	+	Best est.	3	4	22	
Common Cuckoo	GB	B	13,000-26,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	UK	B	13,000-27,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Barn Owl	GB	B	4,400	P	1982-85	-	Best est.	2	1	56	
<i>Tyto alba</i>	UK	B	4,450-4,500	P	1982-85	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Little Owl	GB	B	6,000-12,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Athene noctua</i>	UK	B	6,000-12,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Tawny Owl	GB	B	20,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Strix aluco</i>	UK	B	20,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Long-eared Owl	GB	B	1,100-3,600	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Asio otus</i>	UK	B	1,600-5,400	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Short-eared Owl	GB	B	1,000-3,500	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	UK	B	1,000-3,500	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
European Nightjar	GB	B	3,400	M	1992		Best est.	1	1	40	
<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	UK	B	3,400	M	1992		Best est.	1	1	40	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Common Swift	GB	B	80,000	P	1968-72,88-91		Best est.	3	2	30	
<i>Apus apus</i>	UK	B	85,000	P	1968-72,88-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Common Kingfisher	GB	B	3,300-5,500	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	UK	B	3,600-6,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Wryneck	GB	B	1-6	P	1989-93	-	5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	UK	B	1-6	P	1989-93	-	5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Green Woodpecker	GB	B	15,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Picus viridis</i>	UK	B	15,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	GB	B	25,000-30,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	UK	B	25,000-30,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	GB	B	3,000-6,000	P	1985/88-91	-	Best est.	2	2	11	
<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	UK	B	3,000-6,000	P	1985/88-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Wood Lark	GB	B	600	P	1993	+	Min.	1	2	59	
<i>Lullula arborea</i>	UK	B	600	P	1993	+	Min.	1	2	59	
Sky Lark	GB	B	2,000,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	UK	B	2,100,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Horned Lark	GB	W	<300	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	
<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	UK	W	<300	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	
Sand Martin	GB	B	77,500-250,000	N	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Riparia riparia</i>	UK	B	85,000-270,000	N	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Barn Swallow	GB	B	570,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	UK	B	610,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
House Martin	GB	B	250,000-500,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Delichon urbica</i>	UK	B	270,000-530,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Tree Pipit	GB	B	120,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	UK	B	120,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Meadow Pipit	GB	B	1,900,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	UK	B	2,000,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Rock Pipit	GB	B	34,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	UK	B	36,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Water Pipit	GB	W	100	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	
<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>											
Yellow Wagtail	GB	B	50,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Motacilla flava</i>	UK	B	50,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Grey Wagtail	GB	B	34,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	UK	B	38,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Pied Wagtail	GB	B	300,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Motacilla alba</i>	UK	B	320,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Bohemian Waxwing	GB	W	<100	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	10
<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	UK	W	<100	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	10
Dipper	GB	B	7,000-21,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	UK	B	7,500-22,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Wren	GB	B	7,100,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	UK	B	7,600,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Hedge Accentor	GB	B	2,000,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Prunella modularis</i>	UK	B	2,100,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Robin	GB	B	4,200,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	UK	B	4,500,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Rufous Nightingale	GB	B	5,000-6,000	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	UK	B	5,000-6,000	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Black Redstart	GB	B	27-74	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	UK	B	27-74	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Common Redstart	GB	B	90,000	P	1988-91		Min.	3	4	30	
<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	UK	B	90,000	P	1988-91		Min.	3	4	22	
Whinchat	GB	B	14,000-28,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	UK	B	14,000-28,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Common Stonechat	GB	B	8,500-22,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	UK	B	9,000-23,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Northern Wheatear	GB	B	55,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	UK	B	56,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Ring Ouzel	GB	B	5,500-11,000	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	UK	B	5,500-11,000	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	22	
Blackbird	GB	B	4,400,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Turdus merula</i>	UK	B	4,700,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Fieldfare	GB	B	25	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	GB	W	750,000	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	
	UK	B	25	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Song Thrush	GB	B	990,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	UK	B	1,100,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Redwing	GB	B	40-80	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	GB	W	750,000	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	
	UK	B	40-80	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Mistle Thrush	GB	B	230,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	UK	B	250,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Cetti's Warbler	GB	B	17-282	P	1989-93	+	5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Cettia cetti</i>	UK	B	17-282	P	1989-93	+	5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Grasshopper Warbler	GB	B	10,500	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Locustella naevia</i>	UK	B	10,500	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	22	
Savi's Warbler	GB	B	1-15	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	UK	B	1-15	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Aquatic Warbler	GB	A	40	I	1987-92		5-y mean	3	3	25	11
<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	UK	A	40	I	1987-92		5-y mean	3	3	25	11
Sedge Warbler	GB	B	250,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	UK	B	270,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Marsh Warbler	GB	B	11-34	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	UK	B	11-34	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
Reed Warbler	GB	B	40,000-80,000	P	1968-72,88-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	UK	B	40,000-80,000	P	1968-72,88-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Icterine Warbler	GB	B	0-1	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	UK	B	0-1	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Dartford Warbler	GB	B	1,600-1,890	P	1994		Best est.	1	1,2	28	
<i>Sylvia undata</i>	UK	B	1,600-1,890	P	1994		Best est.	1	1,2	28	
Lesser Whitethroat	GB	B	80,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	UK	B	80,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Common Whitethroat	GB	B	660,000	T	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Sylvia communis</i>	UK	B	670,000	T	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	4	22	
Garden Warbler	GB	B	200,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Sylvia borin</i>	UK	B	200,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Blackcap	GB	B	580,000	T	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	UK	B	590,000	T	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	4	22	
Wood Warbler	GB	B	17,200(15,830-18,570)	M	1984-85		95%	2	4	4	
<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	UK	B	17,200(15,830-18,570)	M	1984-85		95%	2	4	4	
Chiffchaff	GB	B	640,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	UK	B	690,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Willow Warbler	GB	B	2,300,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	UK	B	2,500,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Goldcrest	GB	B	560,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Regulus regulus</i>	UK	B	610,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Firecrest	GB	B	80-250	M	1988-91		Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	UK	B	80-250	M	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Spotted Flycatcher	GB	B	120,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	UK	B	130,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Pied Flycatcher	GB	B	35,000-40,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	UK	B	35,000-40,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Bearded Tit	GB	B	339-408	P	1992		Best est.	1	1,2	7	
<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	UK	B	339-408	P	1992		Best est.	1	1,2	7	
Long-tailed Tit	GB	B	210,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	UK	B	220,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Marsh Tit	GB	B	60,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Parus palustris</i>	UK	B	60,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	22	
Willow Tit	GB	B	25,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Parus montanus</i>	UK	B	25,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	22	
Crested Tit	GB	B	900	P	1980		Best est.	2	4	10	
<i>Parus cristatus</i>	UK	B	900	P	1980		Best est.	2	4	22	
Coal Tit	GB	B	610,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Parus ater</i>	UK	B	660,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Blue Tit	GB	B	3,300,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	UK	B	3,500,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Great Tit	GB	B	1,600,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Parus major</i>	UK	B	1,700,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
European Nuthatch	GB	B	130,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Sitta europaea</i>	UK	B	130,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Eurasian Treecreeper	GB	B	200,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	UK	B	210,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Golden Oriole	GB	B	1-35	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	UK	B	1-35	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
Red-backed Shrike	GB	B	2-8	P	1989-93	-	5-y mean	1	3	43	2
<i>Lanius collurio</i>	UK	B	2-8	P	1989-93	-	5-y mean	1	3	43	2
Great Grey Shrike	GB	W	60	I	1987-92		5-y mean	2	3	26	
<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	UK	W	60	I	1987-92		5-y mean	2	3	26	
Eurasian Jay	GB	B	160,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	UK	B	160,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Magpie	GB	B	590,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Pica pica</i>	UK	B	650,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Red-billed Chough	GB	B	340	P	1992		Best est.	1	2	3,31,54	
<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	UK	B	342	P	1992		Best est.	1	2	3,31,54	
Eurasian Jackdaw	GB	B	390,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Corvus monedula</i>	UK	B	430,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Rook	GB	B	850,000-860,000	P	1980		Best est.	2	2	53	
<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	UK	B	940,000-950,000	P	1980		Best est.	2	4	22	
Carrion Crow	GB	B	970,000	T	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Corvus corone</i>	UK	B	1,000,000	T	1988-91	+	Best est.	2	4	22	
Common Raven	GB	B	7,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Corvus corax</i>	UK	B	7,500	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Common Starling	GB	B	1,100,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	UK	B	1,200,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
House Sparrow	GB	B	2,600,000-4,600,000	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	2	30	
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	UK	B	2,800,000-4,900,000	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	22	
Tree Sparrow	GB	B	110,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Passer montanus</i>	UK	B	110,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Chaffinch	GB	B	5,400,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	UK	B	5,800,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Brambling	GB	B	0-2	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	GB	W	45,000-1,800,000	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	
	UK	B	0-2	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
European Serin	GB	B	0-2	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
<i>Serinus serinus</i>	UK	B	0-2	P	1989-93		5-y mean	1	3	43	2
Greenfinch	GB	B	530,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	UK	B	560,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	

Species	Region	Season	Number	Unit	Date	+/-	Type	Rel	Der	Ref	Note
Goldfinch	GB	B	220,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	UK	B	230,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Siskin	GB	B	300,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	UK	B	310,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Linnet	GB	B	520,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	UK	B	540,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Twite	GB	B	65,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	UK	B	66,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Common Redpoll	GB	B	160,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	UK	B	170,000	P	1988-91		Best est.	3	4	22	
Common Crossbill	GB	B	1,000-20,000	P	1968-90		Best est.	3	2	30,55	12
<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	UK	B	1,000-20,000	P	1968-90		Best est.	3	2	30,55	12
Scottish Crossbill	GB	B	300-1,250	P	1988		Best est.	3	2	22	
<i>Loxia scotica</i>	UK	B	300-1,250	P	1988		Best est.	3	2	22	
Parrot Crossbill	GB	B	0-1	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>	UK	B	0-1	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Common Rosefinch	GB	B	1-7	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	UK	B	1-7	P	1989-93		5-y mean	2	3	43	2
Bullfinch	GB	B	190,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	UK	B	200,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Hawfinch	GB	B	3,000-6,500	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	30	
<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	UK	B	3,000-6,500	P	1988-91	-	Best est.	3	4	22	
Lapland Longspur	GB	W	200-500	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	10
<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	UK	W	200-500	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	10
Snow Bunting	GB	B	70-100	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	2	30	
<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	GB	W	9,000-13,500	I	1981-84		Best est.	3	2	38	
	UK	B	70-100	P	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Yellowhammer	GB	B	1,200,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	UK	B	1,200,000	T	1988-91	-	Best est.	2	4	22	
Cirl Bunting	GB	B	380	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	UK	B	380	P	1995		Best est.	1	2	52	
Reed Bunting	GB	B	220,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	30	
<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	UK	B	240,000	T	1988-91		Best est.	2	4	22	
Corn Bunting	GB	B	19,800(16,000-23,000)	T	1993	-	95%	2	4	20	
<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	UK	B	19,800(16,000-23,000)	T	1993	-	95%	2	4	20	

Notes

1. The minimum figure for Red-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* is proven breeding pairs and the maximum is half the total number of adults recorded in Scotland in 1994.
2. Minimum is the number of confirmed pairs. Maximum is the total number of confirmed, possible and probable pairs.
3. Unit is a combination of apparently occupied sites and apparently occupied nests. This depends on whether the count was made from aerial photographs or from direct field counts. Note that neither unit gives an estimate of the number of breeding pairs and not all occupied sites will have pairs associated with them.
4. Minimum is the number of territories extrapolated from 1988-91 data. Maximum is an expert estimate of the number of pairs in 1992.
5. These figures exclude the invasion year of 1989, during which the population was estimated at 2,600 singing males (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) for both GB and UK.
6. Recent survey work in lowland Scotland suggests that these figures may be serious underestimates and work is currently under way to revise them.
7. Minimum is confirmed nests, maximum is total females at leks.
8. Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* breeding estimates are extrapolated using the abundance data within the *New Atlas* and the population data from the 1985-87 census of breeding waders in Northern Ireland (Partridge & Smith 1992).
9. Unit for minimum is territories and for maximum is pairs.

10. Numbers can be substantially greater in some years.
11. The estimate for Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* is based on casual autumn observations and is an underestimate.
12. Derived from both breeding atlases. Lower figure taken from *New Atlas* (1988-91). Upper figure based on 5,000 pairs derived in the 1968-72 *Atlas* and up to 40,000 individuals in Kielder Forest during 1990 reported in the *New Atlas*.

Future plans

The APEP aims to review the estimates annually and to publish a revised table every three years to coincide with the review period for international waterfowl estimates established by the Ramsar Convention and Wetlands International.

It is hoped that future updates of these estimates may include the geopolitical areas of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It may also be possible to publish separate estimates for England, for Scotland and for Wales. It would be desirable to include more-up-to-date figures for wintering populations than those available for the current list.

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LOOKING BACK

One hundred and fifty years ago: 'Capture of the Bohemian Waxwing in Bedfordshire.—On the 23rd of January last [1847], a very beautiful male Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrula*) was shot at Luton, in Bedfordshire. He was an adult bird, and in very good plumage. The weather was at that time very severe, and the ground covered with snow. When first seen, he was feeding on the berries of a mountain ash, in a garden close adjoining the street, and though a crowd of boys gathered round, he evinced no fear or shyness, and did not move till he had been pelted with stones. He then flew to a neighbouring laburnum-tree, where he was killed.' (*Zoologist* 5: 1777)

One hundred years ago: 'Quite recently a specimen of Pallas's Willow Warbler, *Phylloscopus proregulus* (Pall.), was forwarded to me for examination . . . This bird, which was obtained at Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, on Oct. 31st last [1896], affords another instance of the fact that most of the recent additions to our British avifauna are visitants from the East, chiefly from Northern Asia . . . we may therefore look for the Siberian Chiffchaff, *P. tristis*, Blyth, Eversmann's Warbler *P. borealis*, Blasius, the Bright-green Willow Warbler, *P. nitidus*, Blyth, here as all these Warblers have been obtained on Heligoland.' (*Zoologist* Ser. 4, vol. 1: 5, January 1897)

Twenty-five years ago, in January 1972: 'For the greater part of its 65-year history *British Birds* has been singularly fortunate in the continuity of its editorial direction. Its founder, H. F. Witherby, headed the editorial team with unrivalled distinction for more than 36 years, and two editors who joined soon after its inception, F. C. R. Jourdain and N. F. Ticehurst, served for 31 and 51 years respectively. The tragic exception was the early death of B. W. Tucker in 1950, only seven years after he successfully took on the difficult role as H. F. Witherby's successor. This heavy blow faced the journal with a major crisis, and the very real possibility of collapse was averted only by the willingness of E. M. Nicholson, already burdened with heavy responsibilities in a Government post, to take over as senior editor, while P. A. D. Hollom and W. B. Alexander then joined the existing team of A. W. Boyd, N. F. Ticehurst and J. D. Wood. Now, both E. M. Nicholson and P. A. D. Hollom have indicated their wish to resign . . . completing 21 years of distinguished service . . . we are pleased to announce that M. A. Ogilvie and D. I. M. Wallace have accepted the unanimous invitation of the editorial board to fill the vacancies.' (*Brit. Birds* 65: 1-3, January 1972)

Also 25 years ago: 'To co-ordinate a growing interest in waders in Britain, especially among ringers, the British Trust for Ornithology has set up a Wader Study Group.' (*Brit. Birds* 65: 38, January 1972)



CONSERVATION RESEARCH NEWS

Compiled by Mark Avery, assisted by Rhys Green



This feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports the most interesting recent scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic species.

Which species deserve conservation?

Two recent papers highlight a dilemma facing conservationists. Dr C. J. Hazevoet has pointed out that recent lists of threatened birds use the biological species concept (BSC). BSC species are natural populations that are reproductively isolated from one another by genetics, behaviour or physiology. The alternative phylogenetic species concept (PSC) defines distinctive groups of organisms with common ancestry that can be reliably discriminated from other groups by morphology, DNA characters or other traits. Closely related PSC species may interbreed and will often be classed as subspecies by adherents of the BSC. Application of the PSC to birds would at least double the number of known species and would probably increase the number of threatened species even more. Hazevoet has warned that taxa that qualify as PSC but not as BSC species may be neglected in the competition for scarce conservation resources because they are not included in international lists of threatened birds.

Dr Nigel Collar, who decided to omit PSC species (mostly recognised as subspecies under the BSC) from BirdLife International's *Red Data Book* and *Birds to Watch*, has suggested

that PSC species are not and should not be neglected entirely by conservationists, but to assess the threat status of all the potential PSC bird species, let alone identify and apply conservation measures, would be prohibitively difficult and time consuming. To adopt PSC species as the taxonomic units for conservation would both dilute efforts to save well-marked BSC species and delay the definition of conservation priorities.

This exchange gives pause for thought to those assessing national bird-conservation priorities. For example, in *Birds of Conservation Concern in the UK*, a pragmatic decision was made to give the Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* the benefit of the doubt as a BSC species, and yet some rare endemic subspecies which could arguably be PSC species, such as the St Kilda Wren *Troglodytes (troglodytes) hirtensis*, were not considered. How should the Tenerife Kinglet *Regulus teneriffae* (*Brit. Birds* 89: 379-386) and Azores Bullfinch *Pyrrhula (pyrrhula) murina* (*Brit. Birds* 85: 677-680) be treated as conservation priorities on the Canaries and Azores respectively?

HAZEVOET, C. J. 1996. Conservation and species lists: taxonomic neglect promotes the extinction of endemic birds, as exemplified by taxa from eastern Atlantic islands. *Bird Conservation International* 6: 181-196.

COLLAR, N. J. 1996. Species concepts and conservation: a response to Hazevoet. *Bird Conservation International* 6: 197-200.

Which crossbills live where?

The taxonomy of crossbills *Loxia* has long been a difficult, but fascinating and important, subject. The large invasion of Common Crossbills *L. curvirostra* into Britain in 1990 provided an opportunity to measure many of these birds. Dr Ron Summers (of the RSPB), David Jardine (of the Forestry Commission),

Dr Mick Marquiss (of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology) and Bob Proctor (of the RSPB) found that the crossbills which settled in different parts of Britain differed significantly in their bill measurements. Larger birds tended to be found in woods of pine *Pinus* rather than spruce *Picea* (although some

differences in measuring technique between observers might have contributed to this difference). Twenty-two out of 577 presumed Common Crossbills had measurements outside the published range for Common Crossbill but within that for Scottish Crossbills *L. scotica*. Does this mean that 'Scottish

Crossbills' sometimes reach Derbyshire, or that we still are not sure how to separate them? Could the big-billed Scottish Crossbill in native pinewood simply be the portion of the Common Crossbill population that can cope with the thicker scales of pine cones?

SUMMERS, R. W., JARDINE, D. C., MARQUISS, M., & PROCTOR, R. 1996. The biometrics of invading Common Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* in Britain during 1990-91. *Ringing and Migration* 17: 1-10.

Golden Eagle numbers stable in UK

In 1992, the Scottish Raptor Study Groups, the RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage repeated a census of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* first carried out in 1982-83. The number of home ranges occupied by pairs had declined marginally, by 0.5%. Considering the fact that Golden Eagles used to nest much

more widely in Scotland, and also in northern England and Wales, it might be said that the conservation of this species is not making much progress. The census confirmed previous findings, that eagle densities are higher in west than in east Scotland.

GREEN, R. E. 1996. The status of the Golden Eagle in Britain in 1992. *Bird Study* 43: 20-27.

Magpie increase stopped?

A recent analysis of BTO Common Birds Census data confirms the great increase in numbers of Magpies *Pica pica* since 1964, but also suggests that this increase has definitely slowed down and has perhaps stopped. Magpie numbers in both farmland and woodland have more than trebled over this period, but there is even the hint of a decline in the most recent years. Dr Richard Gregory and John Marchant point out that Magpies

have increased least on arable farmland and are found there in lower densities than on mixed and grazing farmland. These results are not easily reconciled with the idea that the increase in Magpie numbers has been important in influencing songbird numbers in the UK, since many of the declines have been most marked on arable farmland (where Magpie numbers have changed least).

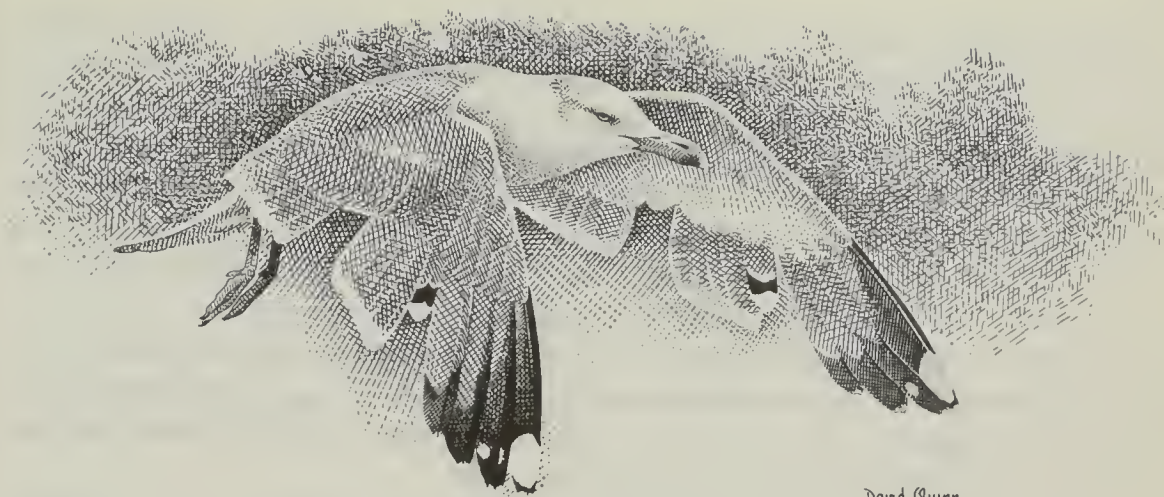
GREGORY, R., & MARCHANT, J. 1996. Population trends of Jays, Magpies, Jackdaws and Carrion Crows in the United Kingdom. *Bird Study* 43: 28-37.

Beet, not wheat

For half the year, the Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* is almost endemic to the UK: over 85% of the World population winters with us. The increasing numbers of geese are a conservation success story, but also a cause of conflict with farmers whose crops they graze. Dr Jennifer Gill of the University of East Anglia studied Pinkfeet in Norfolk for three years and discovered that the geese prefer to feed on the harvested remains of sugar beet (where it is accepted that they do no harm) rather than on winter

wheat (where they are perceived to cause damage). The geese first use beet fields closest to their roost and gradually extend their feeding range to more distant areas as the winter progresses. Because the geese do not completely deplete their preferred food of beet, Dr Gill suggests that minimising disturbance to geese feeding on beet would help to minimise the perceived damage to winter wheat. Another measure which would help the current situation would be for more beet to be planted close to the roost.

GILL, J. A. 1996. Habitat choice in Pink-footed Geese: quantifying the constraints determining winter site use. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 33: 884-892.



Identification of Yellow-legged Gulls in Britain

Martin Garner

Illustrated by David Quinn

Popular debate on the taxonomy and identification of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* and associated forms has become increasingly frequent. A contentious aspect for British birdwatchers is that the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee has not (yet?) decided to 'split' Yellow-legged Gull *L. (argentatus) cachinnans* from the northwestern *argentatus/argenteus* Herring Gull group. The aim of this paper is not to recommend either taxonomic change nor stability; it originates from our field observations, with subsequent correspondence, literature searches and museum work flowing from what we have been able to see for ourselves. We prefer to deal with identifiable 'forms', or races, to which we generally refer by their scientific names for clarity. We do, however, use 'Yellow-legged Gull' in a general sense to distinguish the *cachinnans/michahellis/barabensis* complex from 'Herring Gulls' *argentatus/argenteus*, to allow a simpler discussion.

The name Yellow-legged Gull is usually applied to individuals of the supposed species *Larus cachinnans*: in Britain, usually of the race *michahellis*. Nominate *cachinnans* (itself a candidate for species status) and other races are increasingly suspected in Britain; thus a greater precision is required. It is unfortunate that the western/southern European Yellow-legged Gull is *L. cachinnans michahellis*: reference to '*cachinnans*' often leaves a reader unclear whether the species is being referred to (i.e. 'a Yellow-legged Gull', perhaps actually of the race *michahellis*) or the (in a British context, more significant, rarer) nominate race. Using the terms '*michahellis*' and the clumsy 'nominate *cachinnans*' seems to be the only way to be unambiguous.

A new approach to large-gull identification

Roger Tory Peterson long ago revolutionised bird identification: a few key features separated most species with relative ease. This is so ingrained in our thinking that most of us expect to put a name to an individual bird very quickly;

if not, we have a wealth of literature to hand to assist. Unfortunately, this does not work well for the Herring/Yellow-legged Gull complex. For example, a large gull in non-breeding plumage with a pure white head, medium-dark grey upperparts, yellow legs, bright bill colours, red orbital rings, small white tips to the black outer primaries and contrasting underwings may not necessarily be a Yellow-legged Gull *michahellis*, although this would be a typical description submitted to a county records committee in support of such a claim.

Kaufman (1990) summarised three categories of field mark:

1. A diagnostic feature that is *absolute*: species A has it, species B does not;
2. A diagnostic field mark that is *relative*: e.g. species A has longer wings, or a darker back, than species B; helpful only if one knows both species well or, preferably, has both present for comparison;
3. 'Percentage differences': e.g. species A usually has a dark iris (but not always), and species B usually does not (but sometimes does).

The field marks of large white-headed gulls tend to fall into the second or third categories, with few *diagnostic* features that remove all possible doubt.

Greatest emphasis has been placed on upperpart tone and bare-part colour in large-gull identification. We would urge greater attention to *structure*, *moult* and *wing-tip patterns*.

Developing the right skills

'As the study of gull taxonomy and identification becomes increasingly sophisticated, we are discovering we actually know less about these birds than we thought we did several years ago' (Zimmer, in Kaufman 1990). While he referred to Thayer's Gull *L. (glaucoides/argentatus) thayeri*, Kevin Zimmer's sentiments apply equally to the large, white-headed 'Herring Gulls'.

Serious gull-watchers are aware that there is more that we do not know than that we do. Effective gull-watching involves a continuous learning curve (with some downward turns), and a willingness to adjust as new information is discovered, confirmed or discarded. There is no substitute for long and detailed field study, coupled with a willingness to learn. It is especially important to *say what we see*, even if a well-described bird is not finally identified: it is much better to have an open mind than to jump to an uninformed or unjustified conclusion.

Structure

The complex mixture of characters that makes an individual gull 'distinctive' includes subjective ones, but others are real: they are just hard to describe on paper. They are also much more useful in the field than in the museum.

Facial expression and head shape (especially in view of the alterations that take place according to posture and actions) are indeed difficult to describe, but most experienced gull-watchers agree that many species exhibit genuine characters of real value: a Glaucous Gull *L. hyperboreus* may have a 'round head' at times, but usually looks different from an Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides*; a Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus* has a highly distinctive 'face'. Similarly, Yellow-legged Gulls of the race *michahellis* have a distinctive facial appearance and nominate *cachinnans* can look quite different: the head shape, bill proportions, position of the eye, the

carriage of the head and neck and the stance produce a particular 'look' which is of prime importance in detecting an individual amongst commoner forms.

Body shape, stance and posture vary greatly. Nevertheless, generalities apply and it is important to record the whole appearance of an interesting gull, including leg length, relative proportions of the head and bill (to each other and to the whole bird), wing length and primary extension, the slope of the back and the shape of the chest, in addition to more objective details.

We suggest that observers try hard to learn such impressions, beginning from a sound knowledge of common forms, and do their best to describe what they see. It is, nevertheless, of immense value if unusual individuals are photographed so that subtleties of form and expression are captured for all to appreciate.

Moult

It is important to understand changes of plumage, with an appreciation of the timing and sequence of moult, as well as the effects of abrasion and bleaching. It is necessary to know the major feather tracts in order to understand such factors and to describe gulls in the field (or, indeed, in the museum). There are other practical benefits: for instance, it may be possible to pick out a juvenile/first-winter *michahellis* in Britain in August because *michahellis* moults on average at least two weeks and up to three months earlier than do *argentatus* and Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus graellsii* (a result of age).

Some descriptions of putative *heughlini/taimyrensis* in Britain, which sound promising, fail to include a vital feature: the exact state of moult, as judged by the primary moult (*heughlini* moults up to two or three months later than does the similar Lesser Black-back *L. f. graellsii*).

Wing-tip patterns

As wing tips are subject to obvious effects of wear and primary moult which disrupt their patterns, and, in flight, tend to be the most mobile parts of the bird, there has been a tendency to ignore the detail of what is one of the most vital areas for field identification. Apart from general descriptions of grey, black and white and basic assessments of their extent, little has been attempted. Yet it is possible to glean vital clues when a gull preens, stretches or droops a wing while standing (figs. 1 & 2, page 28).

Detailed descriptions of primary patterns have been ignored, with the assumption that variation within populations and overlap between forms render such details of no value. While no single wing-tip pattern may be foolproof, many are crucial clues, especially in combination with other characters.

For example, separation of an adult Herring Gull *L. a. argentatus* from Scandinavia, with pink or yellow legs, from a *cachinnans*-type may be resolved by the patterns of the outermost primary (P10) and the fifth primary (P5); or nominate *cachinnans* from *michahellis* by the pattern of P10.

Upperpart tones

The shade of grey on a gull's back is important but extraordinarily hard to record (even a photograph or video may be wrongly exposed). It is a matter of

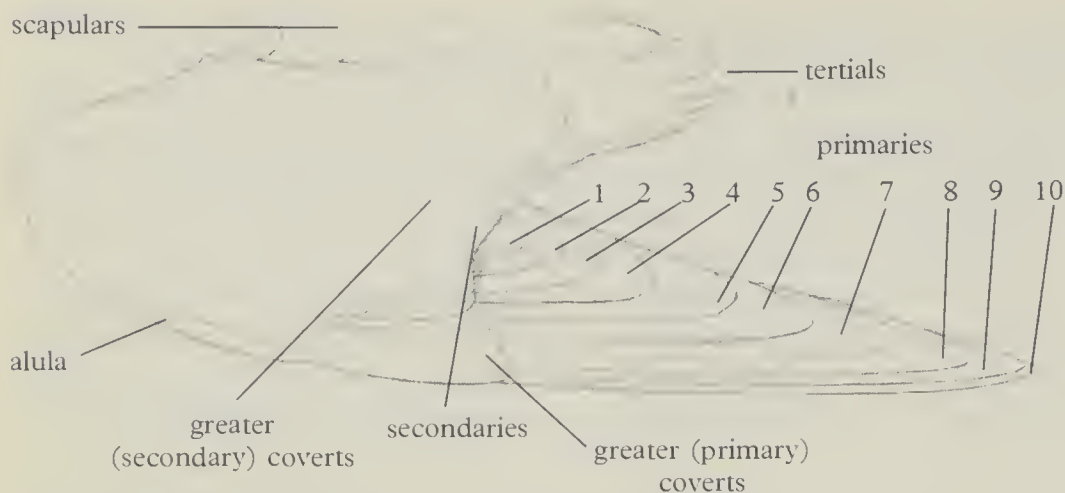


Fig. 1. Wing structure of large gull *Larus* (David Quinn). It is convenient that, on large gulls, the tip of P5 almost always lies directly beneath the tip of the tertials on the closed wing. P6 therefore is the first visible primary tip beyond the tertials. P10 may not show beyond P9, but the underside of P10 may be visible on the other wing (see fig. 2)

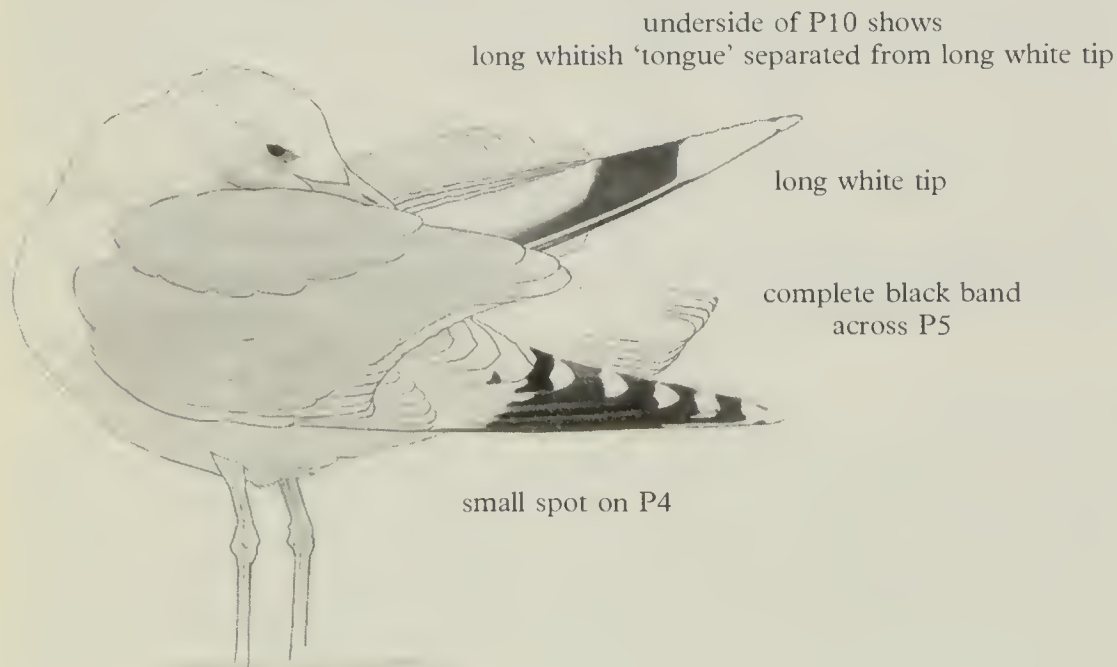


Fig. 2. Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* of nominate race (David Quinn)

comparison with other gulls alongside, so far as possible: assessments must be made in the same light conditions and, wherever possible, with individuals standing at the same angle to the observer. All gull-watchers realise that a gull may appear very dark at a certain angle, only to look remarkably pale when it turns; or it looks strikingly pale in strong sun, only to become rather dark in fading light (although dull, flat lighting is excellent for the accurate comparison of a range of greys). Pale greys are particularly subject to the effects of light and reflected light, as are underwings on gulls flying over dark earth, or over bright sand in strong sunshine, or blue water, or gleaming snow. Artists know the problems and possibilities well.

Every effort should be made to record the upperpart tone as accurately as possible, preferably by comparison with several individuals of different species (a typical Common Gull *L. canus*, a Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* or a British Lesser Black-backed Gull might prove a more stable basis for comparison than other 'Herring Gulls', which are notoriously variable).

Leg colour and L. a. 'omissus'

Many Yellow-legged Gulls (obviously) have yellow legs; but some adults do not, while some Herring Gulls do. Differences in leg colour have been seen as important species-isolating mechanisms, but this has frequently been over-emphasised. Lönnberg (1933) demonstrated that a carotinoid substance in gulls' legs and bills gives them the 'lipochrome' or yellow colour. It is found in the legs of non-yellow-legged Herring Gulls. In, for example, *L. a. argenteus*, it is possible (but unproven) that a sufficient increase in the deposition of pigment can be stimulated by the onset of the breeding season to create yellow legs. There are documented records in Britain of Herring Gulls with yellow legs, all in the breeding season (e.g. Rooke 1949; Oliver 1981; David Chapman *in litt.*).

Northwest European Herring Gulls *L. a. argentatus* have a greater propensity to show yellow legs: Barth (1975) found 28 yellow-legged specimens from 180 Norwegian Herring Gulls, with no significant differences in their biometrics. He concluded that 'The more or less yellowish tint on the feet and legs is . . . individual variation, which is more common in certain localities than others.' There were relatively more yellow-legged birds farther north, but some occurred all along the Norwegian coast.

Herring Gulls with yellow legs seen in Britain have been (and sometimes still are) referred to as *L. a. 'omissus'*: something we emphasise should cease. Mierauskas & Greimas (1992) suggested that, up to the middle of the twentieth century, Herring Gulls with yellow legs (sometimes called *omissus*) were patchily distributed in bogs in Latvia, Estonia, the St Petersburg region and the Vitebsk district (populations in which all the breeding gulls had yellow legs). It may then have been valid to consider them as a separate ecological group, if not a separate subspecies, supported by a difference in colour of juveniles from those of coastal and Baltic Sea populations of *argentatus* (with both yellow-legged and pink-legged individuals). Around 1960, these inland colonies were invaded by gulls from the eastern Baltic, including pink-legged ones, and hybridisation occurred.

Thus, if there was a valid subspecies *omissus*, it was restricted to these inland colonies and was an unlikely migrant to Britain; present-day gulls from the region are intermediate in appearance and can no longer be ascribed to a discrete race. Herring Gulls with yellow legs in Britain are much more likely to come from the Norwegian coast: it is unlikely that we shall prove that '*omissus*' ever occurred in Britain and the 'race' may now be defunct (though it is still upheld by some authors, e.g. Monzиков & Panov 1996).

Most yellow-legged forms have a small number of individuals with flesh-coloured legs. This is less frequent among *michahellis*, but more common with nominate *cachinnans*. Some Siberian forms show a variation from 'flesh to bright yellow' (Yésou & Filchagov 1993). Sometimes, too, the tarsus may be differently coloured from the toes and webs (typically yellow 'legs', flesh-coloured 'feet').

Ageing large gulls

Many immature gulls can be aged with confidence in the field. Many subadult *argentatus* and *fuscus* are probably aged accurately, although there is undoubtedly variation (Monaghan & Duncan 1979). Some *cachinnans* and *michahellis*, however, do not fall so neatly into identifiable age classes—at least, there are more exceptions, and individuals with mixed age characters—and it is perhaps preferable to refer to plumages as, for example, ‘second-winter-type’ or ‘third-winter-type’.

Other problems

Further difficulties may be summarised as follows:

1. Most populations of ‘Herring Gull’ show considerable intrapopulation variation, and Yellow-legged Gulls are no different. The full extent of variation is often unknown because many populations are poorly studied. Clinal differences are common, best described as ‘clinal radiation’. Various pockets of gull populations can vary clinally in *any* direction from a population ‘type’—not necessarily the straightforward north-south and east-west variation described by Grant (1986).
2. The literature on ‘Herring Gulls’ is enormous, yet much of the best information is up to 70 years old, and often in French, German or Russian. Much is in obscure journals, for example a short paper on patterns of head streaking on *michahellis* in *La Trajhasse* (Burneleau 1987).
3. Relationships between forms are still unclear and controversial, while some forms are little known, e.g. *barabensis*, which seems similar in plumage and bare parts to *armenicus* (pers. obs.); and the form breeding in northwest Iberia, easily accessible yet poorly documented.
4. Much identification material is based on skins rather than field observations, a real drawback and cause of frustration for gull-watchers. This has led, for example, to the lack of information on separating nominate *cachinnans* from *michahellis*, which is not too daunting in reality.
5. Ground-breaking literature equipped enthusiasts with new field marks and greater confidence, but also led to unchallenged assumptions and over-simplification: for example, it has become ‘essential’ to regard all *michahellis* as ‘white-headed’, yet many post-breeding individuals actually have extensive head streaking.
6. The variety of names, e.g. *autelius*, *lusitanicus*, *britannicus* and *pouticus*, and changes of opinion on taxonomy can be confusing and alter the apparent interest and potential for study of some forms. For example, *taimyrensis* has been viewed as a variable hybrid Herring Gull × Lesser Black-backed Gull; or the gulls from the geographical area given for *taimyrensis* in, for instance, Grant (1986) have been split into two species, Siberian Gull or Heuglin’s Gull *L. heuglini taimyrensis* and Vega Gull *L. vega birulai*, occurring sympatrically over the Taimyr Peninsula. The latter view is the one more likely to create more interest and stimulate further research.

L. (c.) michahellis in Britain

A knowledge of jizz and precise plumage features will assist in the location and identification of *michahellis*. Typical individuals have an appearance which is hard to convey in words, but which, with experience, renders them quite distinct. Even the briefest of views of a head in a flock, a swimming individual in a roost or a bird in flight can be enough to invite further scrutiny.

Identification of adults

A typical adult compared with *argenteus* is average *argenteus*-sized, but more sturdy, powerful or chunky (although it may appear sleek and elegant). The size varies, partly with sex and age (males and older birds are larger than females and younger ones) and also because those from western Iberia are small, while those from the western Mediterranean are the largest *michahellis*; both appear in Britain.

The head looks chunkier, more filled-out, rather square in profile, with a steep, sometimes bulbous forehead, fuller chin and throat and a flat crown (or with just a slight dome) and square nape. Typically, *argenteus/argentatus* show a more obvious mid-crown peak, just behind the eye. At times, *michahellis* may look rounder-headed; males tend to be large, big-billed and squarer-headed, females smaller, smaller-billed and rounder-headed. The head shape is sometimes compared with that of the much smaller Mediterranean Gull. The often brighter bill appears slightly shorter, possibly a little thicker, with a 'pushed-in' appearance.

The neck, when extended, looks long, thick, smoothly curved and 'muscular', or shapely; the body has a full-chested appearance. The head, neck and chest combine to give a 'proud' or 'confident' look and the birds may seem to lean forward.

Except when in the later stages of primary moult, the rear looks long and attenuated. Yellow-legged Gulls moult earlier than most *argenteus/argentatus* and often stand out in early winter as cleaner-looking, virtually full-winged gulls in the midst of more stumpy-ended *argenteus* and *argentatus*.

In flight, the wings look long and the Yellow-legged Gull remains a particularly 'smart' bird. The bright white head (apart from post breeding season) and tail contrast with the grey back and upperwings; a bold white trailing edge and extensive black on the primaries (equally visible from below) heighten the effect. There are one or two white mirrors and the underside of the primaries and secondaries is clean mid-grey, generally darker than on Herring Gulls except darker *argentatus* and paler than on a *graellsii* Lesser Black-backed Gull: thus, rather distinctive.

The legs are often the last feature to be seen well. They are usually bright yellow, or 'custard' yellow, but can look dull and washed-out, flesh-coloured or colourless in dull light. They tend to look rather longer than those of *argenteus*.

UPPERPART TONE

The grey upperparts are typically less bluish than those of fresh *argenteus* (worn feathers fade a fraction paler and browner) and fall between the pale grey of *argenteus* and the dark grey of *L. f. graellsii*. The tone is very close to that of a

typical Common Gull or just a little darker. Some may occasionally appear as dark as the palest *graellsii*, but in flight the striking contrast between the black of the primaries and the grey of the upperwing is more obvious. It cannot be stressed too often that comparison is best made between individuals at the same time, at the same distance and standing at precisely the same angle.

HEAD PATTERN

French and German vernacular names for *cachimans/michahellis* mean 'White-headed Gull', but this feature is overemphasised. From late October to December, adult *michahellis* can stand out as strikingly white-headed amongst Herring Gulls with assorted streaks and dusky marks on the head, neck and chest sides. Yet most *michahellis* seen in Britain show head streaking during the post-breeding period, coinciding with the primary moult. Head streaking on *michahellis* is most obvious from late July to early November (rarely to February), while on *argenteus/argentatus* it is most obvious from September to January.

The pattern of streaks on *michahellis* is finer, with thinner lines of streaks and less of the clouded, blotchy effect on the neck. The head therefore looks whiter, with thin lines, instead of grey-brown with dense streaking on the crown and broader blotching lower down as on *argenteus*.

The whiteness of the head is related to age: Klein (1994) noted the presence of head streaking on adult Herring Gulls known to be four or five years old but hardly ever saw it on those older than 15 years.

Of some 200 *michahellis* in Essex on 18th October 1995, nearly all showed clearly visible, sometimes extensive, head streaks (fig. 3). Burneleau (1987) studied post-breeding *michahellis* in Charente-Maritime, France, and found that 98% had head streaking in September and 96% in October.



Fig. 3. Heads of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachimans* of race *michahellis* (David Quinn) showing variations in degree of head streaking. Left, three adults; right, young adult.

The commonest pattern is a grey smudge or fine streaking around or behind the eye, extending across the rear crown and lightly over the top of the head, and/or over the ear-coverts. The streaks range from slight marks around the eye to regular, evenly spaced grey-brown pencil lines over most of the head and hindneck, ending abruptly at the base to give a pale 'hooded' effect with a very white fore face. On *argenteus/argentatus*, the face (forehead, lores, chin and throat) is streaked, less white, and the sides of the neck and chest are often broadly marked. Rare individual *michahellis* have been recorded with heavy and extensive streaking (P. Yésou *in litt.*; Burneleau 1987; pers. obs.): rarely with big gulls is anything unequivocal.

PRIMARY PATTERN

Folded wing

Most *michahellis* in Britain occur during the period of complete post-breeding moult, in July to September. Moult begins in late May or early June. Individuals in worn summer plumage show reduced (or no) white tips on the outer primaries; the closed wingtip appears black or brown apart from a white mirror/tip to P10. As moult continues, they can look scruffy, less immaculate than usual: a mixture of fresh grey and dull, faded, old, slightly brownish-grey or buffish-grey back feathers (and irregular areas of whitish where coverts are missing) combines with a short, stumpy rear as the outermost primaries are shed.

On average, *michahellis* moults earlier than does *argenteus/argentatus* and possibly more quickly, so a new set of outer primaries with bright, perfect white tips may be seen in late September or early October. At that time, *argenteus* looks untidy, with a short, incomplete wingtip or retained old outer primaries. Nevertheless, the outer two primaries may not be completely grown on some *michahellis* until late November.

When fully grown, the wings look long, with four, five, sometimes even six, white primary tips visible beyond the closed tertials. These appear more evenly spaced than on *argenteus*; the outermost white primary tip is more often visible, while on *argenteus* it is hidden by an equally long ninth primary. The tips vary when fresh from small and diamond-shaped to larger, rounder and more distinct, as on *argenteus*.

Spread wing (fig. 4)

The black area on the primaries is large, the inner edge slightly curved against the grey; the white tips are neatly spaced and look distinctive on a bird in flight from the rear. Some adults retain black shaft-streaks on the primary coverts.

The tip of the outermost feather varies from all white (as on many western nominate *cachinnans* and many *argentatus*) to a small white tip and a large or medium-sized white mirror. The inner web shows a basal wedge of grey extending down about 40% of the visible part of the feather beyond the coverts; the grey is the same tone as the upperpart colour.

More than 50% of adults show a mirror on P9 as well, although it is not always large or easy to see. In Belgium, de Mesel (1990) found that 58.5% of captured females and 67% of captured males had this second mirror, on P9. Our experience in Essex is consistent with this: the mirror on P9 may be small, restricted to the inner web, or large and across the whole feather.

There are always at least six black-marked primaries on *michahellis*. The band on P5 is fairly broad (10-20 mm) and complete, although it can be thinner on the inner web (or narrower at the shaft). At rest, this feather normally lies beneath the closed tertials. One museum specimen showed an incomplete band (by just 1 mm) on the inner web. On *argenteus*, there may be a complete black band on P5, but it tends to be thinner; many show only a small black mark on the outer web. There is often a dark mark on P4 (the fourth innermost) on *michahellis* and occasionally even a mark on P3. Only 14% of British *argenteus* have a black spot on P4 (*BWP*). Any dark-mantled 'Herring Gull' which lacks any mark on P5 or

*michahellis*

Extensive black pattern.
No white mirror on P9.
Small grey tongue on P10.

*michahellis*

More white on P9 and P10.
Longer grey tongue on P10.

*L. f. graellsii*

Lacks contrast between
grey and black, but paler
grey individuals
do occur.

*cachimans*

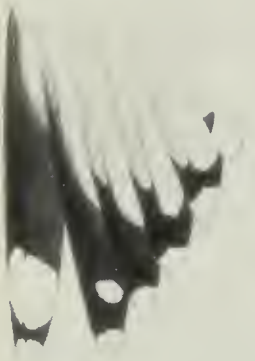
Typical of adults seen
in Essex. Long white tongue
on P10.

*cachimans*

White tongue less extensive,
but shows broad black band
on P5 and comma mark on
P4.

hybrid *argentatus* x *graellsii*

May lack black band on P5
and may show complete
white tip to P10.

*argentatus*

Small spot on P5.

*argentatus*

Complete black band on
P5.



Dark-mantled-type nominate
argentatus. Note P10 similar to
that of *cachimans*, but P5 has
only small spot and P9 shows
'thayeri' pattern.

Fig. 4. Wing patterns of adult Yellow-legged *Larus cachimans*, Lesser-Black backed *L. f. graellsii* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* (David Quinn)

shows a spot only on the outer web is almost certainly not *michahellis* (it is vital to establish that P5 is present and fully grown for this to apply).

The underwing has a large area of intense black at the tip and the underside of the secondaries and inner primaries is mid grey. In July and August many adults show a less contrasted underwing owing to moult and wear.

With perseverance in the field, quite precise details of wingtip patterns can be observed, especially as standing birds preen, stretch or show aggression (fig. 2).

LEGS

The legs of *michahellis* average slightly longer than those of *argenteus*, but the appearance varies in the field. Many are bright yellow, even orange-yellow, in spring and during the breeding season. Post breeding, the intensity of yellow may diminish, and in winter the legs often appear dull and pale. Some at close range show a straw-coloured wash to what at greater distance appear dull grey, grey-flesh or creamy legs. On some individuals, the legs appear partly flesh-coloured; webs and toes are often flesh-coloured even when the tarsi are yellow. Very rarely, apparent adults have pale, flesh-coloured legs with no yellow (but not the brighter pink typical of *argenteus*).

Accurate assessment of leg colour in varying weather and light conditions is difficult, but it is not vital to the identification of *michahellis*. Kehoe (1991) summed up the problems: 'The potential for ambiguity in leg colour is exacerbated by the use of different optical aids. It is sometimes difficult to arrive at a consensus on leg colour of an individual gull. Brief views of legs seen when a gull is bathing or in flight often lead to judgments which are later revised with better views.'

BILL

The bill of *michahellis* often differs in shape from that of *argenteus*, but this is variable and often of no value. It tends to look shorter, chunkier, 'pushed into the face', enhanced by the steeper forehead. Some individuals have parallel-sided bills that are blunter-tipped than others; some have a more obvious bulge towards the gonyx and a strong gonydeal angle. On *L. f. graellsii*, the bill is often less blunt, less parallel-sided, with a longer downcurve on the culmen, to give a slightly thinner (even drooping) shape.

The bill colour can often be brighter than on *argenteus*, with strong yellow or orange-yellow, but some individuals in the late summer or autumn have dull bills, often in combination with flesh-coloured legs, and need more careful separation from *L. c. cachinnans* (see section on other forms, page 62). The red gonydeal spot is often brighter and more extensive on *michahellis*, regularly spreading onto the upper mandible. Blackish subterminal marks are frequent, especially during July to October (Burneleau, 1987, found black bill markings on more than 80% of adults in September and October). The marks vary from small smudges to a thick and complete black band.

These black bill marks, once considered a sign of immaturity, are quite normal features of the post-breeding period, as on several Asian forms (Filchagov 1993; Garner pers. obs.).

ORBITAL RING

The orbital ring of *michahellis* is usually red to reddish-orange, rarely brownish, looking dark at long range, so often giving a distinctly beady-eyed look. Typically, *argenteus/argentatus* have yellow to dull orange rings, regularly brown in winter (sometimes redder on *argentatus*), and the eye looks paler and more glaring, especially on a well-streaked head.

IRIS COLOUR

Most *michahellis* have dull grey-yellow to bright lemon-yellow irides; a varying amount of darker pigmentation may be shown. Very rarely, apparent adults have dark irides (P. Stewart *in litt.*). Near-adults more often retain darker iris pigmentation. Other southern/Asian members of the complex show similar iris variations (Madge 1992; Hirschfeld 1992; Yésou & Filchagov 1993; Garner *in prep.*). Typically, the iris of *argenteus* is pale cream to very pale creamy-lemon, with less of a yellow hue.

BEHAVIOUR

Yellow-legged Gulls in Britain often consort, where possible, with Lesser Black-backed Gulls. They may be 'loners': often assumed to be the same individuals noted at particular sites for several years. At large, mixed roosts in the English Midlands, for example, Yellow-legged Gulls may patrol the shoreline during the afternoon, well before the bulk of the local wintering Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls return to the roost; even then, they may soon drift to one end of a flock. Their liking for the shoreline may be in strong contrast to the behaviour of other big gulls present. Some individuals have been watched feeding over reservoirs by day, alone, long before thousands of Herring Gulls return for the night. The big numbers in southeast England, however, are noted at refuse tips, by day.

*Some pitfalls**ARGENTEUS VERSUS MICHAHELLIS*

While *argenteus* is usually easily separated, care must always be used. By December, *argenteus* can be beautifully white-headed as in August/September, and, in comparison with adjacent *argentatus*, look very different. The contrasting white head may give an illusion of darker upperparts than is actually the case. The head then looks less aggressive and rounder, the bill brighter, and the primaries are full-grown, often with smaller white tips and with more extensive black than on *argentatus*, recalling *michahellis*.

ARGENTATUS VERSUS MICHAHELLIS

This is a more likely source of confusion, especially during November to March. In November and December, most *argentatus* are easily separated by heavy, blotchy markings on the head, neck and breast sides. The head looks long and angular, the bill long and pale. Some, however, can be white-headed and look smaller-billed. The very late moult gives a short-winged look late in the year. Growing outer primaries often show extensively white tips. Most *argentatus* seen

in Britain show little or no black on P5 and many have a long, pale wedge along the inner web of P9 reaching the tip, without a black bar (the so-called 'thayer' pattern) (fig. 4). In flight, most dark-backed *argentatus* have much more white on the wingtip than does *michahellis*, and the underside of the primaries is a paler grey.

By late January, however, *argentatus* can look remarkably like *michahellis*, with clean white head now looking more rounded, bill much brighter, with large red spot, small, beady eyes, and a dark grey upperside matching that of Yellow-legged Gull. Many are not especially large: Coulson *et al.* (1984) found 71% of 213 adult *argentatus* in Britain to be female (and therefore small). The upperpart tone exhibits a cline from paler in the southwest to darker in the northeast of the breeding range; the grey may be more bluish, less lead-coloured, than on *michahellis*, but the tone can be identical. Not all Scandinavian *argentatus* lack extensive black in the wingtip (although the more migratory northern populations have the least black and are the ones most likely to be seen in Britain). Those with much black and less white look like *michahellis*, even to the darker grey beneath the flight feathers and the striking white trailing edge to the wing. Their legs look longer and are usually dusky pink or greyish-pink. Individuals with yellow legs are rarely seen in Britain (but are more frequent in Scandinavia in summer: Barth 1975). Small numbers may remain in Britain in summer (C. Keyhoe, and P. A. Lassey verbally; pers. obs.) and some immatures have been recorded in summer (Coulson *et al.* 1984; *BWP*).

L. F. GRAELLSII VERSUS *MICHAHELLIS*

The upperpart tone of *graellsii* varies a little: a pale one beside a darker individual may invite confusion with *michahellis*. Alternatively, a typical *graellsii* beside a darker *L. f. intermedius* can lead to the same mistake. Strikingly pale *graellsii* do occur.

Hybrids

L. A. ARGENTEUS × *L. F. GRAELLSII*

Although rare, small numbers of apparent hybrids or known hybrid pairs produce young in Britain, west and northwest France, the Netherlands and Belgium. Hybrids are usually intermediate between their parents and so superficially resemble *michahellis*. Some hybrids on Skomer, Dyfed, have a structure unlike *michahellis* and with only a partial black band on P5 (Quinn pers. obs.). Harris *et al.* (1978) noted orange-yellow orbital rings on some hybrids in the breeding season.

L. A. ARGENTEUS × *L. C. MICHAHELLIS*

One such pair was observed at Dungeness, Kent, in 1991 (pers. obs.), apparently producing one hybrid young. The apparent *michahellis* may itself have been a hybrid. Other mixed pairs have been recorded in western France and the Netherlands; in France, they have not produced young.

L. F. GRAELLSII × *L. C. MICHAHELLIS*

Such pairs have been recorded in western France, the Netherlands, northwest

England, northeast England and southeast England. Young are known from the Netherlands. In Spain, there are hybrid *graellsii* and 'Cantabrian Yellow-legged Gulls' (see section on Atlantic Iberian gulls in Appendix, pages 58-59).

PROBABLE HYBRID *ARGENTEUS* × *GRAELLSII* × *L. C. MICHAHELLIS*

A pair bred in Cumbria in 1993, producing three young; the pair returned in 1994.

L. F. FUSCUS × *L. HEUGLINI HEUGLINI*/*L. C. CACHINNANS*

Various hybrid combinations have been reported mainly from the Volga basin (Filchagov 1994; Monzиков & Panov 1996).

L. C. CACHINNANS × *L. A. ARGENTATUS*

Hybrid pairings have been reported on the Polish Baltic coast (M. Elliot verbally).

Immature michahellis

The paucity of published records implies a lack of confidence in identifying immature Yellow-legged Gulls (especially those up to two years old). Yet Essex flocks can be 40% immatures, of which half may be in their first or second year. There seems no reason why a similar proportion of immatures may not be expected elsewhere (see also G eroudet 1992).

These individuals spend more than half the year in moult. Old and new feathers on immatures can be very different in colour and pattern. We reiterate, therefore, the importance of knowing the feather groups and the effects of moult, bleaching and wear. Note that the rate of moult, especially of the body feathers, seems to be individually variable rather than related to age. Two individuals of the same age may look very different.

Popular literature generally fails to illustrate the range of variation in immature gulls, especially the 'darker' and 'paler' types of juvenile *argenteus*. There are also erroneous assumptions, such as the invariably 'white-headed, black-billed' appearance of first-winter *michahellis*. In fact, they can have quite extensive head streaking, and some even have a pale base to the lower mandible by the first autumn.

AGEING AND MOULT

Typically, *michahellis* are two weeks to three months older than more northerly-bred *argenteus* and *graellsii* at any given time of year, so they moult earlier. The rate of progress to adult plumage is also more advanced in *michahellis* than in other forms. First-winters can moult inner greater coverts by September or October. First-summer types tend to have more adult-type grey feathers than on *argenteus* (more like *L. f. graellsii*). Second-winter types tend to have more adult grey on the wing, especially in the median coverts, than equivalent *argenteus*; some third-winter types are much closer to adult than are equivalent Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls.



Fig. 5. Adult Yellow-legged *Larus cachinnans* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* of races *L. c. michahellis*, *L. c. cachinnans*, *L. a. argenteus* and *L. a. argentatus* (David Quinn)



juv/1st-w *michahellis*



juv/1st-w *michahellis*



1st-w
michahellis



1st-w *cachinnans*



juv/1st-w *argenteus*



juv/1st-w *graellsii*

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▲ Fig. 7. Second-year Yellow-legged *Larus cachinnans* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* of races *L. c. michahellis*, *L. c. cachinnans* and *L. a. argenteus* (David Quinn)

◀ Fig. 6. Juvenile/first-winter Yellow-legged *Larus cachinnans*, Herring *L. argentatus* and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* of races *L. c. michahellis*, *L. c. cachinnans*, *L. a. argenteus* and *L. f. graellsii* (David Quinn). First-winter *cachinnans* based on two similar individuals observed in Essex in November 1996.



Fig. 8. Third-year and fourth-year Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* of races *cachinnans* (four on left) and *michahellis* (five on right) (David Quinn). (a) third-winter *cachinnans*; (b & c) third-winter *michahellis*; (d) third-summer/fourth-winter *cachinnans*; (e) third-summer/fourth-winter *michahellis*, new P5 visible beneath tertials; (f) fourth-winter-type *cachinnans* showing distinctive adult wing pattern; (g) *cachinnans* showing less-distinctive fourth-winter-type wing pattern; (h) fourth-winter *michahellis*; (i) fourth-winter-type *michahellis*, note extensive black on P5 and P4 visible beneath tertials, some black on primary coverts.

Juvenile and first-winter michahellis

While the extremes of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls are fairly obvious to experienced observers, there is much variation and it is difficult enough to separate some of those without throwing Yellow-legged Gull into the equation. Nevertheless, many juvenile/first-winter *michahellis* are identifiable and clearly 'different' to the practised eye.

Juvenile *michahellis* is more like a Lesser Black-back; first-winter *michahellis* is more like a Herring Gull. Juvenile *michahellis* may appear in Britain from early July and the plumage can be seen until mid September.

Some juveniles/first-winters are readily identifiable between mid August and mid September, when their older plumage looks more obviously worn than that of the pristine young Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, especially on the tertials and coverts, and first-winter scapulars and inner greater coverts begin to appear (although other individuals can be as fresh-looking as Herring or Lesser Black-backed Gulls).

To an experienced gull-watcher, many *michahellis* can appear quite distinct as a result of a combination of factors. Many look more solidly built than do Herring and Lesser Black-backs, with a steeper forehead, more rounded rear crown or 'squarer' head, and a thicker, more solid-looking bill. Some stand obviously tall, and have a long primary projection.

From July some, and by August many, *michahellis* have a whiter head than do Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls (although some in early September can still have a fully streaked head and neck). An increasingly distinct pattern of white foreface, throat, cheeks and neck sides, dark cap and heavy streaking over the lower hindneck (sometimes joined by a thin central line of streaks) develops. The underparts become progressively paler, often with large, contrastingly dark patches on the breast sides, sometimes forming a broad 'pectoral band', and blotching along the flanks.

The whitish-patterned head and underparts contrast strongly with the rather dark upperparts (much more than on Herring or Lesser Black-back), and the upperparts (as most are older) become clearly more worn, with variable amounts of gingery or rusty internal markings on the feathers. From early August, many show increasing numbers of first-winter greyish/buffy-ginger scapulars with double transverse bars (or anchors), not shown by Herring or Lesser Black-back until at least September.

The greater-covert bar is variable, but often obviously darker than on most Herring Gulls, the inner coverts paler, but the tertials nearly always wholly dark over the visible basal half or more, with a variable but broad pale tip.

In flight from below, the often whiter head and underparts are visible (especially in the vent/undertail-covert area); the black tail-band looks 'framed' in white, with mostly white outer feathers and a broad white tip. The underwing looks rather uniform, with mottled or barred coverts and an obvious paler inner primary window (much more obvious than from above).

The upperside in flight has a distinctive dark outer wing, often with a small, dull, paler window with a dark surround (unlike Herring Gull), a bright whiter rump and tail base, and broad black tail-band outlined in white.

From October to December, a first-winter *michahellis* looks more like a Herring

Gull, less like a Lesser Black-back. Most Lesser Black-backs have dark sooty-brown or grey-brown first-winter scapulars giving a generally grey-brown 'muddy' appearance; in contrast, both Herring and *michahellis* have paler scapulars.

On *michahellis*, the greyish/buffy-tinger first-winter scapulars of August fade to whitish-grey (with double black bar and anchors) and the birds take on a three-tone appearance to the upperparts. This consists of pale greyish scapulars, dark brown, worn coverts and blackish primaries (and nearly blackish tertials), contrasting with a whitish head pattern and mostly whitish underparts. Both Herring and Lesser Black-back tend to look more uniformly paler and darker, respectively, over the upperparts.

Most other features are valid as for juvenile, except that the tertial pattern is less reliable and the broad tail-tip wears off. Given the variation in all three forms, some will be best left unidentified.

TERTIALS (fig. 9)

In a good view, the tertial pattern is usually very helpful. It may, however, sometimes be best to concentrate first on the greater-covert bar, which usually narrows the options from three to two.

The tertial pattern is a key difference (Dubois & Yésou 1984), but can be difficult to assess. All three forms may show tertials with thin pale fringes and weak internal markings.

Most *michahellis* show:

1. A *broad* pale tip, sometimes with a thin, dark shaft-streak or anchor shape (some with pale subterminal indentation or broad curved blocks or rectangular areas subterminally). The fringe may be very short or extend towards the base of the feather, either complete or broken, but without the notches or scallops of typical Herring. Innermost tertials are sometimes brown with only a dull buff (or no) pale tip, probably linked to wear.
2. The basal half or more of the tertial is often entirely dark, with *no pale fringe*.



Fig. 9. Some examples of juvenile/first-winter tertial patterns of large gulls *Larus* (David Quinn). Top row Herring Gull *Larus argentatus argenteus*; bottom row Yellow-legged *L. cachinnans michahellis* (left three), nominate *cachinnans* (based on two first-winters seen in Essex), and Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus graellsii* (right two).

3. The tertials look worn earlier than on Herring and Lesser Black-back. Once worn and faded in winter, they are less useful as a field character.

Lesser Black-backs usually have sooty-brown tertials with only a very thin pale fringe (also shown by some *michahellis*), sometimes with a thin, indistinct, single, duller subterminal indentation or occasionally small notches. The fringe may reach the base of the feather or be cut abruptly short. There is often a paler, chestnut or gingery rectangular area towards the tip (also shown by the other two forms). Compared with this, *michahellis* has a broader pale tip or fringe.

Herring Gulls usually have paler, milk-chocolate or creamy-brown tertials, extensively notched or at least scalloped on the fringes and with pale internal markings. Some have a thin pale fringe, but it is usually all around the visible feather margin, unlike *michahellis*. Rarely, a juvenile *argenteus* may practically match the pattern of a juvenile *michahellis*, so the tertial pattern is not absolutely diagnostic on its own.

GREATER COVERTS

The greater coverts of *michahellis* may appear dark (approaching those of Lesser Black-back) or paler, like Herring. Many show a half-dark, half-pale pattern: the outer (lower on closed wing) feathers are dark with small pale tips, grading progressively inwards to pale feathers with small dark bases (except for the innermost two, which are often all-dark). This 'double triangle' of dark above or in front and light behind or below can be quite distinct (although both Herring and Lesser Black-back can occasionally show somewhat similar patterning). Some individuals moult their inner greater coverts in autumn, with new ones patterned like first-winter scapulars (see below), not usually seen on Herring or Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

MANTLE AND SCAPULARS

The lower rear scapulars on a juvenile *michahellis* may be close to the pattern of those of a Lesser Black-back (dark with narrow pale fringes, either of uniform width or slightly broader towards the tip on each web) or have broader fringes, rather notched or scalloped, with a much larger 'scallop' shape each side towards the tip (leaving a dark 'holly-leaf' centre, with a narrow terminal point). These feathers also have U-shaped or V-shaped chestnut/gingery-brown marks internally (less bright, less rusty on Herring and Lesser Black-back from July to September and usually not obvious until later, when the feathers are worn, in October or November). Some *michahellis* have a narrow, rectangular pale 'notch' on one side of the juvenile scapulars.

On a first-winter, after the moult in August to October, the scapulars are gingery to cream-coloured, fading to whitish, with double transverse bars (the distal one often anchor-shaped) and a creamy tip. They are similarly pale on a newly moulted Herring Gull, usually obviously darker on a Lesser Black-back.

The characteristic effect on a first-winter *michahellis* is of a pale scapular or mantle area (often a paler greyish 'shawl' effect), dark brown lesser or median coverts with few pale fringes or bars, and blackish tertials and primaries, creating a marked tricoloured impression. Herring Gulls are usually more uniformly pale, Lessers more uniformly dark.

UPPERWING PATTERN

Most Lesser Black-backs are dark, with little contrast. The whole outer wing is dark, and the greater coverts almost as dark as the secondaries. On Herring, the upperwing is contrasty, with dark outer primaries and a dark secondary bar isolated by an obvious pale area ('window') on the inner primaries, plus pale inner primary coverts and pale secondary coverts.

On *michahellis*, the upperwing has a dark outer wing, with at best a faint paler inner-primary window, and dark primary coverts and outer greater coverts, so the slightly paler 'window' is surrounded by dark feathers, rather than showing a dark secondary bar surrounded by pale feathers as on Herring. The often dark outer greater coverts create a 'halfway house' effect approaching the second dark bar of a Lesser Black-back (although they can be mostly dark, or mostly pale).

The inner primaries have different patterns on the three forms. On Herring, they are pale with an obvious dark shaft and a narrow dark tip which curls around the feather onto the inner web; both webs have a subterminal paler patch. On Lesser Black-backs, they are dark on the outer web and tip (ending abruptly or extending onto the inner web, forming a club shape) with an almost equally dark inner web (or merely a slightly paler gradation towards the inner edge). On *michahellis*, they are dark on the outer web and contrastingly pale on the inner web, sharply divided along the shaft; the dark tip often has a blunt, club shape. The outer web may have a long, paler 'mirror' (on 50% of individuals: *BWP*). These differences may be useful on photographs of 'difficult' individuals and can be visible in the field sometimes.

UNDERWING

This is variable and of limited use. Typically, Lesser Black-backs are dark, rather 'oily-looking', with all the primaries dark. Herring Gulls are more contrasty, with an obvious paler inner-primary window and pallid, translucent outer primaries (the coverts vary from pale with dark tips to dark). On *michahellis*, the underwing is paler than on a Lesser Black-back, the coverts dark or slightly mottled or barred paler (an effect like a series of dark parallel lines), and the inner primaries slightly paler than the outers (more obvious than on the upperwing), which are rather darker, less washed-out, than on Herring.

RUMP AND TAIL

Typically, *michahellis* has the whitest rump and most contrasted black tail-band, with a few transverse bars and arrowheads. In fresh plumage, it shows more white in the outer tail feathers and a broader white tip than when worn, so the black tail-band looks 'framed in white'. On the undertail-coverts or vent there are just a few dark bars on a very white area. (Some paler, presumably northern, *argentatus* types arriving from late September onwards show more white in the rump/tail region.)

Usually, Herring Gull has the dullest tail, with much brown barring and more extensive barring on the undertail-coverts, while Lesser Black-back has a tail more like *michahellis* (and do overlap), but frequently are more marked with dark bars: some may have a much broader area of black than is ever shown by *michahellis*, more like the Nearctic race of Herring Gull *smithsonianus*.

HEAD AND BILL

Some first-winter *michahellis* are strikingly white-headed, with a blackish mark through/behind the eye. Others are streaked, but with a whiter face, throat and underparts than is usual on a Herring Gull. Most Herring Gulls have a duller, buff or cream colour to the head rather than stark white. A typical juvenile or first-winter *michahellis* head pattern would be a white forehead and lores, dark streaky cap from forecrown to nape and down to eye level, a broad whitish band from the chin and throat curving back and up behind the ear-coverts to the hindneck and a dark lower hindneck extending upwards in the centre (most obvious from the rear), so the main element is the whitish curved band from nape to throat between darker areas above and below.

The bill colour is variable, as many *michahellis* gain a rather faint paler fleshy-coloured or brown area on the base of the lower mandible in their first winter, by late August or September. Others remain black-billed. Herring Gulls are variable, with more extensive reddish-brown on many, but blacker bills on others.

First-summer michahellis

These are confusingly variable, some so difficult that they are best left unresolved. Because *michahellis* moults earlier, it may show pale grey adult-type feathers on the mantle, scapulars and eventually some wing-coverts much earlier than the others. Most *michahellis* moult from April, and until September show a mixture of spotted, dark-centred feathers, anchor or arrowhead marks and plain grey over the scapulars.

Primary moult averages earlier: inner primaries may be new, greyer ones by May or June and the outer feather (P10) is dropped by late July.

The head and body streaking is often quite distinct. Both Herring and Lesser Black-backs vary from heavily streaked to plain, pale-headed; *michahellis* is similarly variable, but, especially in July and August, often shows a characteristic combination of white face, thin, pencil-line streaks on the crown and nape, a triangle of heavily etched lines of streaks on the hindneck (so it looks white-faced head-on but heavily marked from the rear) and a well-defined C-shape of white from the lores, around the ear-coverts and down to the sides of the neck. The heavy streaking of the hindneck extends down to bolder, rounded blotches on a whiter background than on Herring on the breast sides. Dusky eye marks add to this characteristic appearance.

The bill varies from black to grey-green or flesh-coloured at the base, with a black tip. Some have a yellow bill with a black tip. The legs are flesh-coloured; some show a yellow tint by late May.

These first-summer individuals still look long-winged, with thick but shortish bills, and more adult-type grey above than the other species; they look more contrasty than darker Lesser Black-backs (which develop darker grey feathers above by their second winter), with rounder blotches on the breast sides, distinct head streaking and, especially, a hind collar of heavy marks.

Subsequent subadult plumages

Not all individuals fall neatly into identifiable age groups. Essentially, *michahellis*

looks more advanced than do Herring or Lesser Black-back at a similar age, most obviously developing grey wing-coverts earlier, but they are also more likely to retain a dark iris later into their second winter. Most have a clean grey 'saddle' by the second winter; the brown coverts tend to be wholly dark-centred, not pale-barred as on Herring; the head and underparts (except for the dark eye mark) are whiter than on Herring, but the hindneck collar of dark spotting, often extending onto the breast sides, remains distinct.

Many have mostly dark-brown-centred tertials (Herring typically has paler, more barred tertials), though by their second summer some become more barred or worn/bleached. Some have chequered and barred second-winter plumage, with no adult grey feathers; others have a mixture of brown-barred and grey feathers in the mantle and scapulars.

The bill pattern of second-winters is variable, commonly developing a pale greenish or yellowish base and a darker tip.

In flight, *michahellis* are more contrasted, with blacker outer primaries, secondary bar and tail-band than second-year Herring Gulls, more like a huge first-winter Common Gull.

By the second summer, many have rich-yellow legs and a red orbital ring, as well as a yellow bill with a black tip or band.

L. c. cachinnans in Britain

It seems very likely that nominate *cachinnans* has been occurring in Britain for some time, unnoticed or unproved. A ringing recovery from northern France in 1953 was in the same year as three from Denmark and one from Heligoland, Germany (BWP; Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1982; Klein 1994). It may be that there have been minor influxes in some years, but the race is not yet admitted to the British List.

At Mucking, Essex, a remarkable site for *michahellis* Yellow-legged Gulls, we found it relatively easy to locate adult *cachinnans* on almost every visit during the 13 months from August 1995 to August 1996, with more than 20 records (a maximum of five individuals on one visit) altogether, including some immatures. Others showing features associated with *cachinnans* were well seen and drawn or photographed, in Hertfordshire in December 1994 (A. Harris *in litt.*) and in Gloucestershire in January 1996 (P. Stewart *in litt.*). Records have been submitted to the BBRC and eventually will be considered by the BOURC for admission to the British List.

Nominate *cachinnans* appeared from July onwards (our first second-summer type was on 5th July and first adult on 10th August) and it seems that *cachinnans* may be more likely than *michahellis* to remain through the winter to the following spring. In mid December at Mucking, there were about six *michahellis*, down from 500 in September, but still two or three *cachinnans* present. Klein (1994) found ringed *cachinnans* in February and May in northern Germany, but no *michahellis* there then. The French ringing recovery was also in May. Klein estimated that perhaps one-third of all Yellow-legged Gulls in a study area on the Baltic coast of Germany were nominate *cachinnans*.

The individuals at Mucking showed characters which, in combination, clearly pointed to western nominate *cachinnans* (or 'ponticus'). Having studied several

hundred *michahellis* in detail, we found these relatively distinctive: their shape, proportions, wing-tip patterns, bare-part colours, head streaking, upperpart tone and some behavioural differences were helpful.

The following is based extensively on experience in Essex plus a visit by MG to the United Arab Emirates in February-March 1996.

Identification of adults

Adults need to be separated with care from *michahellis*, but are likely to be overlooked because of their more Herring Gull-like head shape and less brightly coloured bill and legs. It is not yet known whether the descriptions refer only to the most well-marked individuals of nominate *cachimans* of the western populations (leaving less-obvious ones overlooked), since more-easterly populations appear to have head shapes, on some at least, closer to *michahellis* (pers. obs.), with far-eastern types variable, some with a snouty, pear-shaped look (from photographs).

Stegmann (1934) separated *cachimans* east and west of the Caspian Sea, naming the western population *ponticus*. Differences are clinal, allowing much intergradation, and general differences are visible on skins and in the field. On average, western individuals more often have a complete white tip to the outermost primary (P10), a longer white 'tongue' from the base of P10 along the inner web towards the tip, and look longer-billed. Eastern birds tend to have a white mirror on the tip of P10, and sometimes darker upperparts (although eastern birds remain very little studied).

The general appearance is striking, as individuals can appear longer-legged, longer-billed, longer-winged and longer-necked than other large gulls seen in Britain. The head shape is distinctive, with a 'snout' effect caused by a long, sloping forehead merging into the profile of a long, parallel-sided bill. In this respect, individuals can be reminiscent of Great Black-headed *L. ichthyaetus*, California *L. californicus* and even Sooty Gulls *L. hemprichii*. On some, the crown is particularly low and flat, with no pronounced forehead. The head shape and general structure of *michahellis* are obviously variable. Small females can be slender with pear-shaped heads, large males more like Great Black-headed. Nevertheless, with practice, the jizz of many nominate *cachimans* remains distinct.

The eye tends to appear high and well forward on the head, so much of the long head appears behind the eye. Some larger individuals have rather small heads, looking somewhat pear-shaped and too small for the disproportionately long bill. Smaller (female?) individuals are sometimes more reminiscent of Common Gull in head shape. The neck of *cachimans* seems relatively long, often curved, sometimes stretched up, exaggerating an upswept, smooth-backed look, with a flat head and long bill completing a peculiar profile.

Smaller individuals with a dark iris recall California Gull (pers. obs.), which inhabits a similar ecosystem (prairie) to the steppe inhabited by *cachimans*. A large, pale California Gull of the form *albertainensis* (see Jehl 1987) would be very difficult to separate from a small *cachimans* at long range, but most have the outer primary mostly (70-90%) black (grey tongues on P9 and P10 are sometimes present, but are short and hard to see).

The stance often involves a steeply sloping back, with wingtips particularly close to the ground, accentuating (or accentuated by) the long legs. There is often no obvious tertial step. Individual *michahellis* and *argentatus* more often stand nearer to a horizontal pose. This varies greatly, of course, but, in a group of gulls facing one way, the peculiar stance and posture of *cachinnans* serves to pick it out from the crowd.

In flight, the wings look long, particularly long-armed with long, thin hand (outer wing) on some, and the action is languid and relaxed. On some, the head has been held low, almost drooped, with a 'hunch' at the shoulder evident.

HEAD PATTERN

From late August to mid October, *cachinnans* tends to be whiter-headed than is *michahellis*, most of which have streaking, especially around the eye and over the rear crown. Most *cachinnans* in Bahrain in December nevertheless showed some streaks (P. Yésou *in litt.*). If there are streaks, they appear as fine, grey-brown pencil lines over the nape and hindneck, with a greater concentration around the lower hindneck as a slight collar. Many have larger brown tear-drop spots on this area, while the rest of the head is white. This pattern is less often shown by *michahellis* (though can appear similar on those moulting from streaky to white-headed), but is frequent on Asian forms such as *henglimi* and *armenicus*.

By January, most adults are entirely white-headed.

UPPERPARTS

The grey varies slightly in tone individually. Most are very slightly paler than *michahellis* or midway between *michahellis* and *argenteus*. One Essex individual matched *michahellis* in tone. The hue is obviously grey, lacking blue. The white scapular and tertial crescents vary from fairly wide and obvious to weak, with the white scapular tips lacking.

WING PATTERN

Western *L. c. cachinnans* in adult plumage has a distinctive wing-tip pattern above and below: crucially important in clinching identification in combination with other characters. It is vital to note the exact pattern of the outermost primary (P10) when present; and the presence and extent of black on P5, while checking P4 and P3 as well (figs. 2, 4 & 10).

At rest

When the longest outermost primaries—P9 and P10—are fully grown, nominate *cachinnans* looks particularly long-winged. P10 can be nearly 1 cm longer than P9 and clearly visible on some individuals (it is normal on large gulls for P10 and P9 to fall approximately level with each other when closed). Most importantly, P10 shows a long white or greyish-white tongue, or panel, clearly paler than the upperpart tone, extending from the base of the exposed feather at least 50%, and up to 75%, of the length of the inner web towards the tip. This leaves a relatively narrow band of black between this tongue and the white tip (or subterminal mirror). At rest, the longest tertial tip falls approximately halfway along the

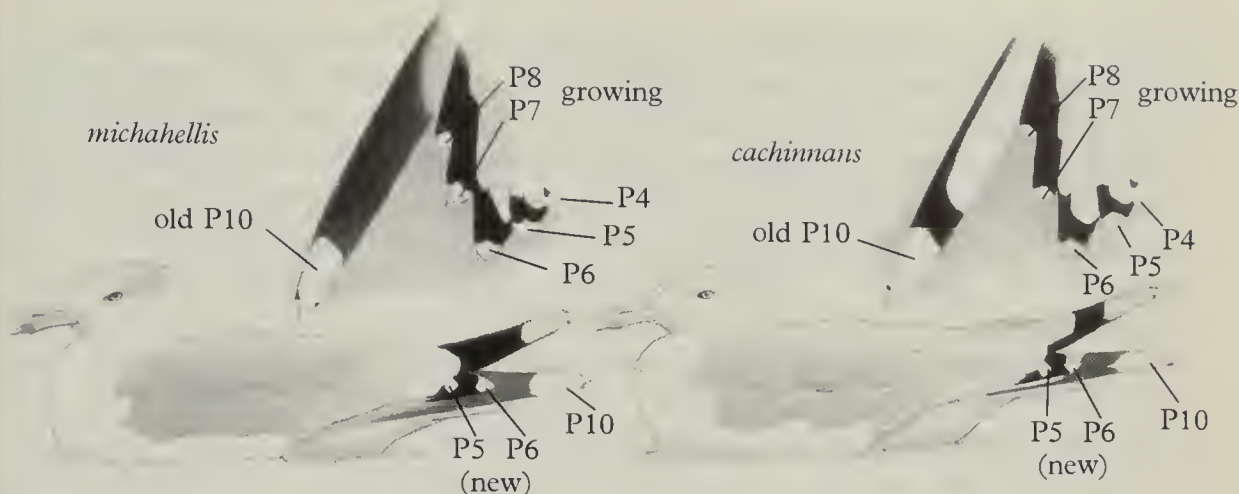


Fig. 10. Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* in mid to late August, illustrated at same stage of moult for comparison (David Quinn). Even during moult, the primaries can be numbered in the field.

outermost primary, so the white tongue is frequently visible from below—on the far wingtip—extending a little beyond the tertials.

On *michahellis*, there is, at most, a wedge or tongue of grey (not white or whitish) extending at most just 40% along the feather from the primary-covert tips on the inner web of P10. This is much more difficult to see at rest (usually only on a preening bird or as a wing is raised). Also, on nominate *cachinnans*, both P9 and P8 tend to have long greyish-white tongues on the inner webs, with these becoming progressively greyer towards the inner primaries.

The width of black between tip or mirror and whitish tongue differs (BWP; Shirihai 1996):

nominate *cachinnans* P9 = 70-98 mm

michahellis P9 = 96-140 mm

There is nearly always a complete black band across P5 on nominate *cachinnans* and, on 74% of specimens, at least a black mark on P4 (BWP).

The black on the outer webs of the outer primaries ranges from virtually the whole of the outer web on P8, P9 and P10 to a long black outer web on P10 only, with P9 mostly pale with a subterminal black band above the white mirror.

Nominate *cachinnans*, especially large (male) individuals, tend to have more white on the tips of P9 and P10 than do *michahellis*. Many show an obvious long, virtually complete white tip to P10 and a large white mirror across both webs of P9. Kohl (1958) examined 18 specimens from the western Black Sea coast and found 15 with white tips to P10 complete or separated from the 'mirror' only by tiny dark spots; only three females had large white mirrors separated from the tip by a black bar. Mierauskas *et al.* (1991) examined a larger sample of 71 individuals of both sexes from Lake Sivash (northern Black Sea) and found the following:

P10 all-white tip	74%	P9 broad white mirror on both webs	86%
trace of black near tip	14%	white spot on both webs	12%
incomplete black bar	5%	'thayeri' pattern	2%
complete black bar			
separating mirror from tip	7%		

On *michahellis*, there is often a dark mark on P4, sometimes on P3; P5 has a

broad (10-20 mm) black band; on *argenteus*, 14% of British individuals (none on the Continent) have a subterminal dark spot on P4 (*BWP*); P5 usually has a black subterminal spot on one or both webs (not a complete broad band); P9 has grey at the base (not white) with a small white tip and a white mirror often confined to the inner web, sometimes across both and sometimes absent; P10 has a grey base to the inner web and a broad white mirror and white tip, the two frequently merging into a large white tip or separated by only small spots of black.

In late August and early September, it can be particularly easy to see the patterns of the outer wing as the new inner primaries (P3-5) appear and the gap left by missing P6-8 allows the outer feathers to be examined. On 4th September, two Essex individuals had P10 remaining as the only feather protruding beyond the tertials at rest; many nearby *michahellis* had already dropped P10.

Most nominate *cachinnans* are not full-winged again until mid November, so the diagnostic P10 is not easily visible, if at all, between early September and November: this is the period when a firm identification is most difficult. Beware, also, the complications of part-grown feathers on other forms. For example, *michahellis* can have a part-grown, white-tipped P10 which merges on the closed wing with the mirror of P9, giving an erroneous impression of a long white tongue on the outer primary.

In flight

Most nominate *cachinnans* show less black on the wing tip than do *michahellis*, but the appearance varies. On some, the black on P10 extends only along the outer web around the mirror to a subterminal black band, with the whole of the inner web whitish. The contrast is clear, as the black tends to appear denser ('blacker') than on *argenteus* or *argentatus* and the grey-white tongues stand out much whiter. These pale inner webs on several outer primaries produce lines or streaks of black and whitish on the outer feathers in a 'Venetian blind' or slotted effect.

The underwing, with so much whitish on the inner webs of feathers more clearly visible from below than above, is noticeably pallid (as if 'flying over snow'). Some show darker grey on the inner primaries, creating some contrast, but none of the Essex individuals has shown anything like the obvious contrast between white coverts and grey primaries and secondaries seen on *michahellis*. The white trailing edge of the wing is of fairly uniform width, as on *michahellis*; on *armenicus*, this is broad on the secondaries but clearly narrower on the inner primary tips. A complication may arise with very worn and moulting *michahellis* from July to September, when the underwing contrast can be much reduced.

BILL

On nominate *cachinnans*, the bill is long, parallel-sided and relatively thin, often lacking the thickening tip evident on *michahellis*, with a less prominent gonydeal angle. Larger individuals have thicker bills, but still look obviously longer-billed, with more pear-shaped heads than do *michahellis*. The nostril shape may be longer, more parallel-sided, oblong and slit-like, rather than triangular (broader towards the bill tip) as on *michahellis*, but this is variable.

Most Essex *cachinnans* (August to December) had dull, olive-yellow or pale yellowish-green bills, sometimes more flesh-coloured towards the base. The gonydeal spot was dull orange or reddish-orange, confined to the lower mandible and not always extending fully across it (colours reminiscent of Iceland Gull). On typical adult *michahellis*, the bill is deep, rich yellow with an extensive bright gonydeal spot. The gape of some adult *cachinnans* showed vivid orange or bright red corners when open.

Nearly all individuals outside the breeding season show some black on the bill, several in Essex having a prominent black subterminal band across both mandibles (sometimes obscuring the gonydeal spot, as on *armenicus*).

IRIS COLOUR

Iris colour on nominate *cachinnans* ranges from pale yellow to cloudy, dull yellow-brown, or completely dark, looking blackish at long range. Two-thirds of the British individuals so far reported have shown dark eyes: this is an important component of the facial expression. The dark eye is rare in the case of *michahellis* and almost unknown in adult *argenteus* and *argentatus*, so, if confirmed as a real character and not illusory, it can alert an observer to the presence of a likely *cachinnans*. Beware, however, especially, subadult *michahellis* and also some individuals with 'apparent' dark eyes, even in quite good views, which prove to be pale, with a darker outer ring, at close range.

ORBITAL RING

On nominate *cachinnans*, this often appears to be bright orange (redder on *michahellis*), but was red on some.

LEGS

The long legs of nominate *cachinnans* (particularly long above the joint, giving a 'shank-like' effect) seem less often to be bright yellow than on *michahellis*; they range from mid-yellow through milky-grey to dull, pale pinky-flesh. Most individuals in autumn have dull, slightly greenish-yellow to pale-greyish or flesh-coloured legs.

BEHAVIOUR

On two occasions, different individuals failed to respond to the actions of the large flock of *michahellis*, *argentatus* and *fuscus*, remaining on the ground when all the others took flight. This recalls similar instances with individual Mediterranean or Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* among flocks of commoner British species.

On three separate occasions, individuals have been located amongst thousands of gulls and later joined by a second nominate *cachinnans*. It seems that, to each other at least, they are sufficiently distinct to be identifiable and to attract attention.

CALLS

None of the Essex individuals has been heard to call, but *cachinnans*-types in the Arabian Gulf give a clear, higher-pitched call than do *michahellis*; sonagrams of

their calls clearly differ, with *cachinnans* having more elements and being higher-pitched.

Immature nominate cachinnans

Some individuals showing characteristics of immature nominate *cachinnans* have been seen in Essex, but more work is needed to be sure. Some immature *cachinnans* and *michahellis* may be inseparable (and *heuglini* and *barabensis* immatures could compound the problem), but ground-breaking work by Klein (1994) and Gruber (1995) studying ringed individuals of known origin in northern Germany revealed differences, as has field experience in Essex and the UAE. Nevertheless, much remains to be confirmed by full field-testing.

Structural differences are as for adults, but the bill and skull may still be developing and their proportions less clear-cut on first-years. (Some first-winters in the UAE, and suspected individuals in Britain, are noticeably small-billed and thin-billed, not always especially long-billed.)

The following descriptions need further field-testing: they are based on limited evidence and the extent of individual variation is unknown. Nevertheless, the well-marked, or 'extreme', individuals seem to be separable from *michahellis*, if very well seen. The descriptions concentrate on these well-marked immatures.

Juvenile plumage

Key features are the structure and underwing pattern.

UNDERWING

This is variable (pers. obs.), from mottled dark and pale underwing-coverts (overlapping with *michahellis*) to mostly pale (as on *armenicus*) with two lines of dark feather tips. The inner webs of the outer primaries can be much paler greyish or whitish, so the underside of the wingtip looks pallid, ghostly grey; on *michahellis* it often looks darker, closer to Lesser Black-backed Gull.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nominate *cachinnans* can have richer, more obvious chestnut or rufous coloration on the U-shaped subterminal bands of the mantle, scapular and wing-covert feathers than do *michahellis* (BWP). Klein (1994) and Gruber (1995) confirmed this and added that the streaks on the neck and breast sides are more cinnamon-brown. Note, however, that *michahellis* is variable, and some show bright rufous or gingery colours in these areas.

Nominate *cachinnans* seems usually to have a broad white tip but no subterminal pale marks on the tertials, whereas *michahellis* has more subterminal marking (fig. 9). Some *cachinnans* have a juvenile plumage even closer to Lesser Black-backed Gull (P. Yésou *in litt.*).

The head and upperparts of juvenile/first-winter nominate *cachinnans* are more often whiter than *michahellis*, even wholly white.

On the spread wing, *cachinnans* typically shows no pale marks on the inner webs of the inner four or five primaries, while 50% of *michahellis* have small, pale oval patches (BWP).

First-winter plumage

The key feature is the coloration of the mantle and scapular (especially the lower row) feathers.

A moult in August and early September replaces juvenile scapulars and mantle feathers with paler grey feathers than on *michahellis*; they look cleaner, less marked internally, and may create a paler (more uniform, less barred) grey 'shawl' effect. The lower and rear scapulars may be almost uniform grey-buff with thin, dark anchor-shapes (rather like the pattern of the coverts of a juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*). On *michahellis*, these feathers tend to have dark bases and broader dark transverse bars, giving a clearly darker and barred appearance. Inevitably, some *cachinnans* may be more barred, but we do not know of any *michahellis* looking so clean and pale on these feathers. Those *cachinnans* with 'classic structure', plainer scapulars and very pale underwing look very distinct.

Subsequent plumages

The key features are the structural differences, the emerging adult-type grey upperpart feathers (detectably paler than on *michahellis*), the retention of a dark iris (more often and for a longer period than on *michahellis*), the longer, slit-like nostril shape and the bill colour, which can be more olive-green (on *michahellis* it begins greenish but quickly becomes brighter and yellower). The head of *cachinnans* tends to be whiter than on *michahellis* at any given age.

Second-winter-type *cachinnans* may be 'plain' with mostly unmarked grey mantle, back and scapulars and barred wing-coverts mixed with grey (as on *michahellis*), or 'spotted' with dark marks above (frequent on *cachinnans*, but not so on *michahellis*). These 'spotted' types show a mix of plain grey feathers, dark shaft-streaks and feathers with dark central spots scattered over the mantle, back and scapulars. Some individuals with third-year-type bare parts and tail may show these features.

Open question

The most marked individual adult *cachinnans* beside typical *michahellis* are very different in several respects: shape and structure; bare parts; wing-tip pattern; head streaking; and upperpart tone. Their calls are different, as revealed by sonagrams. The chick colour sometimes appears to be different, too: skins at the Natural History Museum (NHM), Tring, include a *cachinnans* chick with a darker, grey-brown ground colour to the body and a brown head and neck, the hindneck pale with dark spots, whereas *michahellis* chicks are paler creamy-yellow with a wholly pale head and bolder brown spots over the body. The long-call visual display includes 'wing-lifting' (Panov *et al.* 1991; Mierauskas *et al.* 1991): the long-call and this display are considered to be crucial in ensuring reproductive isolation and warrant further study and comparison with the long-call display of *michahellis*. Recently, *michahellis* and *cachinnans* have been found breeding close to each other near the Black Sea without extensive interbreeding. The taxonomic status of nominate *cachinnans* in relation to *michahellis* clearly needs to be reviewed.

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Appendix 1. Some other possibilities

This paper is essentially concerned with nominate *cachimans* and *michahellis*, but there are other possibilities in the 'yellow-legged gull' area in Britain which may be dealt with more briefly. They are worth considering here because they include some of the more tantalising and little-known forms which observers may suspect but find difficult to prove and on which the literature is often obscure.

Western forms

Atlantic Iberian gulls

Joiris (1978) proposed a new form, *lusitanus*, on the basis of about 200 Yellow-legged Gulls seen on the beach at Peniche, Portugal (directly opposite Berlenga Island), on 27th January 1976. He considered that these birds were of lighter structure than *michahellis* and, in direct comparison with three streaky-headed, pink-legged gulls which he considered to be *L. a. argentatus*, they looked paler-mantled and white-headed.

The conclusion reached by Joiris is considered inconclusive unless further observations corroborate his view. The darkest *argentatus* can be as dark as *atlantis* and, if the pink-legged birds were of this form, the Yellow-legged Gulls would look pale. Specimens of Yellow-legged Gull from Portugal (NHM) are all similar to or slightly darker than those of the west and central Mediterranean.

The Portuguese specimens cannot be considered the same as those described by Teyssèdre (1983, 1984), sometimes referred to as 'Cantabrian Yellow-legged Gulls', because of clear differences in wingtip patterns. Teyssèdre compared the gull populations of the Camargue

(Mediterranean coast of France), Isle of Oléron (Atlantic coast of France) and Fuenterrabia (North Spain/French border). The two French populations were similar to typical *michahellis*, but the Fuenterrabia gulls differed in their long-calls and mew-calls (similar to *argenteus*) and later breeding period at the same latitude; also, they had a long white tip on the outer primary and a large white mirror across both webs of the ninth primary, with a usually longer pale grey tongue on the inner webs than is typical for *michahellis*. The pattern is more like that of *argenteus*.

Others have noted gulls in the Cantabrian region as being closer to *argenteus* in head and bill shape (P. Yésou *in lit.*), closer to *argenteus* in structure, with shorter legs, and paler than *michahellis* on the upperparts (Dubois 1987). Biometrics of individuals in Galicia (northwest Spain) were compared with those of two Mediterranean populations. While no differences appeared between the Mediterranean populations, the Galician birds were different enough to support 'the tendency to see the Galician population as a new subspecies' (Carrera *et al.* 1987). Genuine *michahellis* also occur there (as proved by ringing recoveries, Carrera *et al.* 1993) and DQ has seen gulls typical of *michahellis*, some with just a single wingtip mirror, there in July 1996.

Thus, there appear to be three forms in the Atlantic Iberian region:

1. Small, rather round-headed, as dark as or darker than west Mediterranean *michahellis*—at least off west Portugal. The occurrence of Portuguese birds in Britain is established by a ringing recovery (ringed Berlenga Island, July 1995, recovered Gloucester, May 1996: P. Stewart *in lit.*).
2. West Mediterranean *michahellis* occurring in and possibly expanding into this area.
3. 'Cantabrian' gulls first described in the Basque region of northern Spain (and a probable specimen in Liverpool Museum, from Biarritz, southwestern France). They seem to show a number of *argenteus* Herring Gull-like features, although there is yet to be a definitive work on this surprisingly little-known form.

The precise distribution of these forms in the region is not known, nor is the extent of overlap and interbreeding, if any.

The race atlantis

The eastern Atlantic archipelagos have Yellow-legged Gulls of the race *atlantis* which were thought to be sedentary, though possibly wandering occasionally to West Africa (Grant 1986). This has been opened to question with the publication of the first three records of Yellow-legged Gull in North America (Wilds & Czaplak 1994). The first, a specimen from Quebec, Canada, collected on 18th August 1983, was remarkably like *atlantis*. Furthermore, Moore (1996) sighted Yellow-legged Gulls of this race attending ships for more than 1,000 km out of Madeira and the Azores.

The upperpart tone of *atlantis* is darker than that of *michahellis*, although some specimens from Portugal and Morocco are very close (NHM); in the field, they may show a very faint olive tinge, unlike darker *graellsii*, but look silver-grey, probably a little darker than Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, in bright sun (R. A. Hume *in lit.*). The wing-tip pattern overlaps with that of Portuguese specimens: on the closed wing there are five white tips visible beyond the tertials, a sixth (the outermost) hidden beneath the adjacent feather; often a single large mirror is most evident from below; the white mirror on P9 is small or absent except in Canary Islands (*BWP*). The black on the primaries is much more contrasted than on *graellsii* above and is extensive below. The head streaking is more intense than on most *michahellis* in August, and on a November adult specimen (NHM); in late October, adults still had fine streaking on the crown, nape and hindneck, and especially concentrated behind the eye (R. A. Hume *in lit.*). Individuals with upperpart tone between that of *michahellis* and that of *graellsii*, with 'hood' of extensive streaking as described, have been seen in Essex, but their identification and origin remain uncertain.

Juveniles and first-winters apparently have darker primaries, with no paler window on the inner primaries (but see Moore 1996); they look intermediate between first-winter *argenteus* and *graellsii*. The underwing has brown coverts with a pale line across the tips of the median coverts, paler greater coverts and a dark secondary bar, dark axillaries and often a general gingery tinge. Juveniles have darker, sooty-grey upperparts, often as dark as those of *L. f. fuscus* (*BWP*). A first-winter specimen (NHM) has *michahellis*-like tertials, but rump and tail, mantle and scapulars close to *L. f. graellsii*; in the field such individuals may look chequered on the back, but not nearly so contrasted as a Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*. Like adults in early winter, immatures can show more extensive and denser head streaking than does *michahellis*, usually with a white

forehead and throat. The bill is dull black with the extreme tip pale. Second-winters in October showed grey mantle and coverts, with variable brownish marks across the lesser and median coverts, dark brown primaries and secondary bar and a white rump contrasting strongly with a very broad black tail-band; the bill remained black. Third-winter types had dark outer primaries and coverts, grey secondary coverts, a dark secondary bar and striking paler grey inner primaries; the tail was white with a narrow, broken subterminal bar, the bill paler at the base (R. A. Hume *in litt.*).

Eastern forms

The race barabensis

This form was originally included under a description of *taimyrensis* (Stegmann 1934), itself a form treated by BWP as a hybrid population within *L. fuscus*. In 1960, it was suggested that the large gulls of the steppe zone of northern Kazakhstan were more closely related to *cachinnans* and should be given subspecific status as *L. c. barabensis* (Johansen 1960).

Recent opinion has varied: *barabensis* has been lumped with *cachinnans* as a darker variant (Stepanyan 1990; Shirihai 1996), and linked with *armenicus* and *taimyrensis/heuglini* (Bourne 1991, 1993; Filchagov 1993). Nowhere has there appeared a comprehensive field description: most published references refer to museum material or to breeding-area studies.

In the United Arab Emirates, in February and March 1996, MG found a number of individual gulls with constant characteristics unlike other forms present (including *heuglini*, *taimyrensis*, 'western' and 'eastern' *cachinnans* and *fuscus*). These would appear to be *barabensis*, but illustrate the problem of studying unringed gulls in their winter quarters, without absolute knowledge of their breeding areas. Assuming a primarily north-south migration, the wintering areas for *barabensis* ought to be from the Arabian Gulf to Bangladesh, but some, at least, appear to reach Hong Kong (Kennerley *et al.* 1995).

The field appearance of the UAE individuals is interesting, because this was very similar to that of *armenicus*: this comparison has only been hinted at in the various papers and articles that have recently advocated specific status for Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus*. Also, *barabensis* seems a possible vagrant to Britain as it breeds as close as the western forelands of the southern Urals (Johansen 1960) and is apparently a long-distance migrant, unlike *armenicus*, which is a rather short-distance migrant. (Darker-mantled individuals in newer colonies between Nizhnij Novgorod and the western Urals may include *barabensis*: E. Panov *in litt.*)

Richardson (1990) considered that *armenicus* was commoner in the UAE than *cachinnans*, but with his increasing awareness of other forms he has revised his view and now believes (*in litt.*) that he may not have seen *armenicus*. S. C. Madge (*in litt.*) believes that many visiting observers are seeing *barabensis* individuals in the Gulf states and assuming that they are *armenicus*.

As a first attempt to document these *barabensis* types, the characteristics may be summarised as follows. The sequence of similarity in the field appears to be 'western *cachinnans*'—'eastern *cachinnans*'—*barabensis*—*armenicus*. Along this line, very generally, the features appear to range from largest to smallest, palest to darkest, most white in wingtip to least white in wingtip, longest billed to shortest billed, and least brightly coloured bill and legs to most brightly coloured bill and legs.

There appears in the Arabian Gulf to be more or less a continuous cline from large, pale types to small, darker types. When well seen, however, individuals can often be assigned to a particular form. There are two possible explanations. Across a large range, there may be a continuous cline, recalling *L. a. argentatus*—*L. a. argentatus*. Or there may be relatively distinct forms with constant features, meeting in small zones of overlap and producing pockets of hybrid or intermediate types, recalling Western *L. occidentalis* and Glaucous-winged Gulls *L. glaucescens* in North America.

According to Juden & Firsova (1990), birds in the range of some *barabensis* start laying in mid May, thus breeding one or two months later than *cachinnans* and a month later than *armenicus* (closer to the breeding cycle of individuals on the Taimyr Peninsula) (Filchagov *et al.* 1992). This would presumably affect the moult, possibly resulting in moult two months later than that of *cachinnans*, thus being complete in mid December to mid January or later. A photograph of a *barabensis* from Oman in February reveals a still-growing outer primary. More information is required to confirm the timing of moult and the potential value of this feature in the field.

STRUCTURE

The race *barabensis* is a small, compact form with a very well-rounded head (including a steep

forehead, unlike most nominate *cachinnans*), a noticeably small (sometimes very thin) bill, and a rather light body. Some individuals are noticeably flat-chested and slender, others are more stocky, but often with a 'straight', deep, flat chest profile. The back looks very flat, with no tertial step; primary projection looks shorter and less attenuated than on nominate *cachinnans* and *taimyrensis*. The legs are rather short, noticeably so on some individuals, especially compared with the leggy, sloping-backed *cachinnans*. The general appearance recalls Common or Iceland Gull at times.

PLUMAGE

As on *cachinnans*, the head was wholly white in February (whereas *taimyrensis* retained nape/hindneck streaks). One January adult in the NHM still has fine brown streaks and spots on the lower hindneck (as would *armenicus* and *cachinnans*). The upperparts appear well-saturated, or rich, pale slate-grey, darker than most nominate *cachinnans*, but overlapping with *taimyrensis*, which, although usually a fraction darker, often looked less neat and immaculate. The white scapular and tertial crescents varied, but tended to be narrower than on *taimyrensis* and *cachinnans*, the scapular crescent often absent, accentuating the smooth, flat-backed effect.

The outer six or eight primaries were marked with black and the outer ones had extensive black, similar in extent to or only slightly less than that on *armenicus* (but without direct comparison). Some individuals had a single white mirror, on P10; some had a second mirror, on P9. The white primary tips looked small and abraded in February (usually larger on *taimyrensis*).

In flight, the underside of the primaries and secondaries looked contrastingly grey against the white coverts, unlike typical *cachinnans*; on some at least, the white trailing edge to the wing was narrow on the primaries and broad on the secondaries, as on *armenicus*. Most had a clearly marked grey wedge on the inner web of P10 along 30-50% of the distance from the visible base.

BARE PARTS

The bill and legs looked vivid: the legs constantly bright yellow or even orange-yellow, though photographs of some individuals from early/mid winter show duller bare parts. The bill appeared bright yellow or orange-yellow with distinct but variable dark subterminal marks, ranging from a bright red gonydeal spot, black band and white tip to a complete red band across both mandibles. Some had both red and black bands across both mandibles, others lacked black and retained only a large, vivid red patch. Filchagov (1993) found that 18 of 29 *barabensis* had dark bill marks in the breeding season. The nostril appeared to be triangular (broader towards the tip).

The iris varied from pale yellow to dark mustard or sandy-brown or completely dark. The eye looked noticeably small, so colour was hard to detect, but probably at least 50% had a pale eye: even then, with a thin red orbital ring, the eye looked small and 'beady'.

BEHAVIOUR

The roosting flocks in the UAE in late evening appeared to be of mixed forms, while daytime gatherings could be found, usually near the coast, comprising 80-90% *barabensis* types.

BARABENSIS V ARMENICUS

Ascribing a potential British record to either subspecies would be extremely difficult. More *armenicus* have a darker iris and a more extensive area of black on the bill than *barabensis*, but the overlap is complete. The bill length of *barabensis* varies. Some looked a little longer, but obviously thin; others short-billed and clearly small-billed. The key difference was the less abrupt blunt tip than *armenicus*. On *barabensis*, there was a longer, gentle curve, giving a slight drooped effect. The inner webs of the outer primaries of *barabensis* have longer grey tongues, most marked on P10, which has 30-50% of the inner web grey (*armenicus* has 90% of the outer feather black: Buzun 1993).

BARABENSIS V TAIMYRENSIS

The upperpart tone may be identical; *taimyrensis* in direct comparison tends to look a little less smart, but averages a fraction darker. While the grey of the mantle was of a similar tone, the hue is subtly different: more ashy, or even bluish, on *barabensis*, slaty or slightly washed brownish on *taimyrensis*. On *taimyrensis*, the outer primary is more extensively black, the grey wedge on the inner web extending only 15-30% of its length from the base. The *taimyrensis* types appear large, long-legged and thick-billed with a big, Herring Gull-shaped head and larger-looking eye; they have broader white tertial and scapular crescents, more hindneck spotting in spring and duller yellow bare parts. The moult can overlap or be one to three months later in *taimyrensis*. Here,

'*taimyrensis*' refers to individuals with *heuglini* structure and similarly extensive black on the outer wing (especially on P10), with similar (i.e. overlapping) or only slightly paler grey upperparts (cf. Stegmann 1934; Kennerley *et al.* 1995), a form present in the Gulf, while acknowledging the variability/taxonomic uncertainty and degree of sympatry/intergradation of these forms (*taimyrensis* and *birulai*: Stegmann 1934) occurring over a large area of northern Siberia (Stepanyan 1990; Filchagov 1994; Kennerley *et al.* 1995).

BARABENSIS V CACHINNANS

Small *cachinnans* seen in Britain, Germany and the UAE show a *barabensis*-like structure together with a dark eye and bill band. They differ in their paler upperparts, whitish (not grey) tongue on the outermost primary, and whitish underwing without a strongly contrasted grey area on the flight feathers. Many *cachinnans* have paler, less bright bare parts. It is probable, nevertheless, that some individuals are indeterminate.

BARABENSIS V MICHAHELLIS

This is speculative owing to lack of direct comparison, but larger, full-chested, plain-billed *barabensis* must be extremely difficult to separate from some *michahellis*. Only smaller individuals with a range of characters including dark eye, black or red bill band, slim body, thin, small bill and dark upperparts seem likely to be detected or worth considering, given the present state of knowledge.

It is vital to note that this description of '*barabensis*' is based on a form seen on wintering grounds. The full confirmation of these characters and the variation within this population (and degree of intergradation with other forms) can be known with full certainty only from studies over the breeding range. This is a starting point, not the last word.

Nominate *cachinnans*/*michahellis* intergrades

Several 'Yellow-legged Gulls' seen in Essex showed some aspects of the jizz, structure and bare-part colours reminiscent of nominate *cachinnans* (looking slightly different from nearby *michahellis*), but still seemed too thick-billed and bulky-headed compared with the more distinct *cachinnans* individuals. It was not possible to determine the exact wingtip pattern, but they seemed to be neither one form nor the other.

An adult gull was caught and ringed at Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, on 5th February 1994, by Peter Stewart. The wing pattern of this individual was within the normal range of *michahellis* except that P10 had a short, but clearly whitish, contrasting tongue on the inner web (on *michahellis* it is grey). The head and bill were more unusual. The head looked long and pear-shaped, with a long, sloping forehead. The iris was clouded dark (unusual on *michahellis*, but common on nominate *cachinnans*). The bill shape was typical for *michahellis* but the dull yellow colour, dull orange gonydeal spot and extensive subterminal black marks are more typical of nominate *cachinnans*, as is the orange orbital ring. The legs were pale yellow.

Thus, the individual showed a mixture of characters of *michahellis* and *cachinnans*.

It is interesting to note that Yellow-legged Gulls occurring in Bulgaria and the Bosphorus are described as intergrades (*BWP*). They appear heavier, bulkier, heavier-headed and stronger-billed (closer to *michahellis*) than nominate *cachinnans* in Israel (S. C. Madge *in litt.*).

An excellent series of photographs taken on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast appears in Garve *et al.* (1987), although the birds are of unknown origin. Most are structurally close to *michahellis*, but one (plate 9) is reminiscent of nominate *cachinnans*. It is clear that there is yet much that we do not know, and some individuals are best left unidentified.



MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS



▲ 1. Mystery photograph 202A

▲ 2. Mystery photograph 202B

202 The contrasting buff-and-black upperparts of Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* and the uniform sooty-brown upperparts of Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* enable the two species to be separated with ease both at rest and, when seen from above, in flight. The more usual view, however, as reflected by this pair of mystery photographs, is of these vultures in flight overhead. Photograph A, taken by Robin Chittenden, shows an adult Griffon Vulture in Spain in April 1994, and photograph B, taken by Tony Blake, shows an adult Monk Vulture on Mallorca in May 1993.

From below, separating the two is not straightforward and is often complicated by outside influences, including bright sunlight, which causes shaded underparts, and long-range views. Monk Vulture's slightly larger size, bigger head, deeper bill, thicker-based neck, marginally longer tail and, on average, greater wingspan are useful characters only when the two species are observed together, which is a rare occurrence in Europe in all but a few favoured areas.

Nevertheless, structure plays an important part in the identification of a solitary vulture overhead. The tail of Griffon Vulture is gently rounded, while that of Monk Vulture is more tightly curved at the tip and often appears to be rather pointed or even wedge-shaped. Wear affects the tail feathers to such a degree, however, that tail shape is a less useful distinguishing character than wing shape. Griffon Vulture has long, fingered outer primaries, very short innermost three primaries, long outer secondaries and comparatively short inner secondaries. These combine to give the trailing edge of the wing a generously S-curved profile, with the bulging outer secondaries and pinched-in look at the body especially eye-catching features. The wings of Monk Vulture are of a much more constant width throughout their length and have almost straight leading and trailing edges, though the outer secondaries do protrude slightly at times. At close range, the trailing edges of the wings of Griffon Vulture look comparatively smooth, while

those of Monk Vulture have a decidedly ragged, toothed appearance created by the more pointed secondaries and inner primaries. Both species spend much time soaring: Griffon Vulture on slightly raised wings and Monk Vulture on flat wings. This difference in wing-set during soaring remains a valid feature of separation at very long range.

Overhead, adult Griffon Vulture's dull yellow-brown underbody and buff-brown underwing-coverts with their off-white bands across the lesser and median coverts contrast markedly with its black flight feathers and tail. From the same angle, juvenile Griffon Vulture shows a gingery-brown underbody and rusty-brown underwing-coverts with a broad, cream-buff band across the median coverts, which offer an even greater contrast with its black flight feathers and tail. Monk Vulture usually appears to be entirely black below, though close views of an adult reveal a dark brown underbody, rows of tiny, whitish spots across the lesser and median coverts and grey flight feathers. Juvenile Monk Vulture also possesses grey undersides to the flight feathers. At all ages, therefore, a Griffon Vulture overhead is clearly palest on the underbody and underwing-coverts, while a Monk Vulture overhead is subtly palest on the flight feathers.

Griffon Vulture has a creamy-white head and neck with a creamy-white ruff when adult and a pale buff-brown ruff when juvenile. Adult Monk Vulture has an off-white and sooty-brown head, with the white predominating, and a pale grey-brown ruff, while juvenile Monk Vulture has a largely black head and a dark grey-brown ruff. These differences are noticeable only at reasonably close range, however, and an individual with an unclean head following feeding may provide a pitfall. From below, the conspicuousness of the feet is a safer character of separation. Though the feet of Griffon Vulture are pale, those of Monk Vulture, notwithstanding their considerable colour variation among individuals, are noticeably paler and are viewed against the species' much darker undertail-coverts, which offer a greater contrast and render them especially obvious.

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MONTHLY MARATHON



The rock-perching passerine (89: plate 172) created few problems, with all but five entrants identifying it as a lark (Alaudidae), and 96% correctly naming it as a Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*. Other answers included Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Oriental Lark *A. gulgula* and Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*.

After five hurdles, the Marathon field is now well stretched out, with 198 entrants on one correct answer, 152 on two, 126 on three, 90 on four and just three leading the competition, each with an immaculate five wholly correct answers: Stephen Foster (Co. Antrim), David McAdams (Germany) and Richard Patient (Cambridge). Well done, those three! The pressure is now really on them: as bad, so we are told by some previous winners, as sitting in the famous, black *Mastermind* chair all month every month.

The eventual winner, who achieves a minimum total of ten correct answers (and at least one more than his or her nearest rival), will be able to choose a SUNBIRD holiday to Africa, America or Asia. Previous winners have chosen trips to Canada, China, Hong Kong, Kenya and Thailand.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (01767) 682969.



▲ 3. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 127. Seventh stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 66), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th March 1997.

RULES

1. Only current individual subscribers to *British Birds* are eligible to take part. Entrants should give their name, address and *BB* reference number on their entry. Only one entry is permitted per person each month.
2. Entries must be sent by post, each one on a separate postcard, and be received at the *British Birds* Editorial Office (Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ) by the stated closing date. Every care will be taken, but, even if negligence is involved, no responsibility can be accepted for non-delivery, non-receipt or accidental loss of entries.
3. All *BB* subscribers are eligible, except members of the Editorial Board and staff of *British Birds*, Directors and members of staff of SUNBIRD WINGS Holidays, and Directors and members of staff of our printers, Newnorth Print Ltd. (Members of *BB* Notes Panels, the Rarities Committee, and other voluntary contributors—including bird-photographers, even if one of their photographs is used in the competition—are eligible unless proscribed above.)
4. To win, a *British Birds* subscriber must correctly identify the species shown in at least ten photographs included in this competition. The 'Monthly marathon' will continue until the prize has been won.
5. In the event of two or more *BB* subscribers achieving the total of ten simultaneously, the competition will continue each month until one of them (or someone else!) achieves a longer accumulation of correct entries than any other contestant.
6. In the event of any dispute, including controversy over the identity of any of the birds in the photographs, the decision of the Managing Editor of *British Birds* is final and binding on all parties.
7. No correspondence can be entered into concerning this competition.
8. The name and address of the winner will be announced in *British Birds*.



LETTER

Recording areas in Great Britain

Although the 1996 local-government changes do not affect any recorders' actual area responsibilities, a number of new recording-area titles have now been designated, especially in Wales and Scotland. On behalf of the Association of County Recorders and Editors (ACRE), I had been working on this business for some time, particularly in respect of the small number of apparent anomalies. This led me to the conclusion that local organisations should choose to adopt the recording-area title of their choice and ignore the dictates of Whitehall. This is what Scotland and Wales have now done.

In England, Avon and Cleveland have stated that they wish to continue to be known as such; both wish to retain the ornithological identities created for them in 1974. Tyne & Wear, on the other hand, does not and never wanted it in the first place. For *British Birds* Rarities Committee purposes, I have divorced Hereford & Worcester (a forced marriage if ever there was one!), to become Herefordshire and Worcestershire, with their willing agreement.

The recommendation of ACRE is that the new recording-area titles should now be regarded as permanent for all time unless anybody within the ornithological system wishes to make a change. No longer should national or local government policies be allowed to bear on our system.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT The county and regional names listed on pages 67-69 are those adopted by the ornithological organisations concerned, as recommended by ACRE. We aim to use these throughout *British Birds* (but hope that readers will forgive us if we fall down accidentally in this commitment occasionally).



COUNTY, REGIONAL AND BIRD OBSERVATORY RECORDERS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The main aim of this list is to encourage observers birdwatching away from their home areas to send records to the relevant county recorder. Several counties are divided into areas for recording purposes, but, to save space, and because we believe it is less confusing, the list generally includes only one name against each county or region. The county and regional names are those adopted by the ornithological organisations concerned, as recommended by the Association of County Recorders and Editors (see page 66). The names and addresses of observatory recorders or wardens appear separately at the end. We shall be glad to know of any errors, omissions or changes of address, which will be noted in our monthly 'News and comment' feature.

England

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- Details of the exactly defined recording areas can be obtained from the
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- MORAY and NAIRN M. J. H. Cook, Rowanbrae, Clochan, Buckie, Banffshire AB56 2EQ
- NORTHEAST SCOTLAND Andy Webb, 4 Morningside Place, Aberdeen AB10 7NG
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- OUTER HEBRIDES (*Harris & Lewis only*) W. A. J. Cunningham, 10 Barony Square, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis HS1 2TQ
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- FAIR ISLE Dr Roger Riddington, Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU
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- ISLE OF MAY Ian M. Darling, West Acres, 579 Lanark Road West, Balerno, Edinburgh EH14 7BL
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Please send any corrections or amendments to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3N7.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

January-February combined issue

It is normal for our January issue to be dispatched in mid January, only two weeks before dispatch of the February issue in late January (e.g. 11th January and 25th January in 1996). With several very long contributions, we have opted this year to combine issues 1 and 2, dispatched to subscribers in mid month (16th January), thereby producing—we hope—a more balanced read.

Since *British Birds* is published by a non-profit-making company, the substantial savings on postage and packing costs (resulting from one rather than two mailings in January), less the inevitable loss of some advertising revenue, will be used to enhance issues throughout the rest of 1997.

Exclusive reduced-price offers

It is worthwhile scanning the British BirdShop pages *every* month because there are always new special reduced-price book offers available for *BB* subscribers. All books are sent POST FREE anywhere in the World. British BirdShop is on pages vii and viii this month.

Four new British birds and some name changes

Single records of two species, both already accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee, have now been accepted by the BOU Records Committee for inclusion in Category A of the British & Irish List:

Bay-breasted Warbler *Dendroica castanea* Land's End, Cornwall, first-winter ♂, 1st October 1995, video.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* Pennington Flash, Greater Manchester, first-winter ♂, 8th March to 24th April 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 550-551, plate 128).

Nine years ago, when reporting on the third British record (*Brit. Birds* 81: 587), we alerted *British Birds* readers that 'This species may be "split", so watch out'. Now (*Ibis* 139: 197-201), the BOU Records Committee has announced its acceptance of published work showing that **Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* and **Southern Grey Shrike** *L. meridionalis* are best treated as separate species. The latter includes the form *pallidirostris*, of which there are now 11 British records:

SHETLAND Fair Isle, first-winter, 22nd September 1956 (*Brit. Birds* 50: 246-249).

SHETLAND Fair Isle, first-winter, 17th-18th October 1964 (*Brit. Birds* 58: 368; 66: 401-402).

SUFFOLK Landguard, 6th December 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 587).

DORSET Portland, first-winter, 1st November 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 524).

CORNWALL Cape Cornwall and Kenidjack Carn, 21st-23rd April 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 524, plates 196 & 197; 88: 288-290).

SUFFOLK Easton Bavents and Southwold, age uncertain, 4th-7th October 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 524).

WILTSHIRE Swindon, first-winter, 23rd-28th September 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 560, plate 167).

ORKNEY North Ronaldsay, first-winter ♂, 14th September to 16th October 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 543, plates 188 & 189).

CUMBRIA South Walney, first-winter, 2nd November 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 543).

SHETLAND Boddam, probably first-winter, 7th-10th November 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 545).

ORKNEY Papa Westray, 11th-26th November 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 543, plate 187).

The BOURC has also adopted three other 'splits':

Grey-cheeked *Cathartes minimus* and **Bicknell's Thrush** *C. bicknelli* (*Brit. Birds* 89: 1-9)

Yellow-browed *Phylloscopus inornatus* and **Hume's Warbler** *P. luinei*

Western Bonelli's *P. bonelli* and **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *P. orientalis*

There are no acceptable records of Bicknell's Thrush in Britain, but one of Eastern Bonelli's Warbler, at Whitley Bay, Northumberland, on 20th-29th September 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 520) has now also been accepted by the BOURC, and several reports of Hume's Warbler are currently on circulation to either the British Birds Rarities Committee or the BOURC and it seems probable that this last species will also be added to the British List in due course.

The following nine changes to scientific names have been recommended by the BOU Records Committee and are being adopted by *British Birds*:

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus* (formerly *Mergus cucullatus*)

Smew *Mergellus albellus* (formerly *Mergus albellus*)

Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* (formerly *Chettusia gregaria*)

White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* (formerly *Chettusia leucura*)

Great Skua *Catharacta skua* (formerly *Stercorarius skua*)

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* (formerly *Gelochelidon nilotica*)

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* (formerly *Ammodramus sandwichensis*)

Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca* (formerly *Zonotrichia iliaca*)

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia* (formerly *Zonotrichia melodia*)

One further scientific-name change recommended by the BOURC is that, pending further studies, the generic name of Great White Egret (the BOURC's Great Egret) *Egretta alba* should be changed to *Ardea* 'although placement in the genus *Casmerodius* has also been suggested'. We favour stability of lists, however, and question the advisability of making name changes when further studies still in train might result in yet another change. In this particular case, we also note that every species in the genus *Egretta* currently has the English name 'Egret' and that every species in the genus *Ardea* has the English name 'Heron', so the adoption of *Ardea alba* should, logically, also lead to the new English name 'Great White Heron' (not 'Great Heron', we suggest, since it would not be the largest member of the genus *Ardea*). We feel that this English-name change would be premature. We prefer to retain the scientific name *Egretta alba* until the 'further studies' noted by the BOURC have reached a conclusion.

Two English-name changes already adopted by *British Birds* (89: 375) have now also been adopted by the BOURC:

Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* (formerly Rufous-sided Towhee)

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* (formerly Northern Oriole)

Within the pages of *British Birds*, the only other name changed from those listed in *The 'British Birds' List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds* (1993) is the one we adopted in 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 348):

European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* (formerly Wood Nuthatch)

Unless inappropriate, we consider that it is helpful for a newly adopted English name to correspond with the scientific name (e.g. Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*, European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*).

The BOURC has reassessed about 90 British reports of **Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo* and concluded that there is no evidence that the species has occurred in the wild state in Britain or Ireland for over 200 years, and has removed the species from Category B of the British & Irish List. With official confirmation of the acceptance of recent records of **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 505), **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus* of the Nearctic race *smithsonianus* (*Brit. Birds* 89: 504), **Lesser Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella rufescens* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 593-599) and **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 528-529; 89: 512), these three species and one race have been added to Category A of the British List.

As a result of these changes, the species totals on the British List (and British & Irish List) are now as follows: Category A 523 (529), Category B 15 (15) and Category C 9 (9), totalling 547 (553).

Four species of chiffchaff

DNA sequences and vocalisations, together with behavioural evidence from the zones of contact, suggest that, rather than the current two species of chiffchaff (Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* and Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus*), the complex is best treated by recognising at least four biological species:

Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita*

Iberian Chiffchaff *P. brehmii*

Canary Islands Chiffchaff *P. canariensis*

Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus*

A 17-page paper in *Ibis* (138: 650-666) by A. J. Helbig, J. M. Martens, I. Seibold, F. Henning, B. Schottler and M. Wink gives the evidence and reasoning. The status of the eastern form *tristis* is uncertain, since it genetically closely resembles *P. c. collybita* and *P. c. abietinus*, but its plumage and song both resemble those of Mountain Chiffchaff. The current recommendation is to maintain *tristis* as a race of Common Chiffchaff.

Only Common Chiffchaff is currently on the British List and no reports of Iberian Chiffchaff have been submitted to the BBRC. The BOURC has not, therefore, needed to consider the status of any of the forms other than *P. c. collybita*, *P. c. tristis* and *P. c. abietinus* (on which it has not suggested any 'split').

We are, therefore, accepting the recommendations of Helbig *et al.* (1996) and shall be adding Iberian Chiffchaff *P. brehmii* and Canary Islands Chiffchaff *P. canariensis* to *The 'British Birds' List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds* which we maintain for use within the journal and for the convenience of anyone wishing to use standard English names in national, county or local lists (though use of scientific names is even more important).

We do, incidentally, hear of at least two apparently well-documented claims of Iberian Chiffchaff which have never been assessed by the BBRC. Now that these would involve a potential new species for the British List (rather than a debatable race), we trust that the observers will be encouraged to submit full details.

A paper on the identification of all the forms occurring in the Western Palearctic (and especially those which occur or are likely to occur in Britain) is in preparation by Peter Clement and Andreas Helbig for publication in *British Birds*.

Bird Illustrator of the Year

Sponsored by
Pica Press
T. & A. D. Poyser

This annual competition is again co-sponsored by the natural-history publishers *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser*.

Artists have to submit a set of four drawings, for which the *exact* dimensions are crucial (see *Brit. Birds* 88: 564). The rules are the same as in previous years: copies are available on request (send a SAE to Mrs Sheila Cobban at the address below).

The top three artists will each be able to select five books from each of the *Pica Press*, *T. & A. D. Poyser* and *Academic Press* lists (a total of 15 books each). In addition, the winner will receive an engraved salver and a cheque for £100, the second-placed artist will receive £40 and the third-placed £25. The top artist aged under 22 years on the closing date of 15th March 1997 will receive The Richard Richardson Award (an inscribed book and a cheque to the total value of £60); this award is in memory of the famous Norfolk bird-artist the late Richard Richardson. A single drawing of high individual merit will be selected for The PJC Award, which is presented annually in memory of Pauline Jean Cook; the winner holds the trophy for 12 months and also receives an inscribed book.

The judging panel will comprise Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris, Bruce Pearson, Keith Shackleton and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The closing date is 15th March 1997. The full rules may be obtained from, and entries should be sent to, Bird Illustrator of the Year, *British Birds*, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Front-cover designs for sale

The original unframed drawings of the pictures on the front cover of *BB* are for sale each month in a postal auction. The pictures are usually 1½ or two times the published size. These sales help not only the artists, but also *BB*, since the artists donate 20% to the journal. It is also a way for *BB* readers to acquire—for themselves or as a present for a friend—top-class art at very reasonable prices. During the past year, successful postal bids have ranged from £39 to £116, and the average has been £104. Why not send in your bid each month? If you are successful (if your bid is the highest, and it exceeds the artist's reserve price), you will be asked to pay the sum you bid, plus £1.50 for postage and packing. Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage), to arrive before the last day of the month, to Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Bird Photograph of the Year

Canon Once again, this annual competition will be sponsored by Canon (UK) Ltd. Entrants should read the rules carefully (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 36, or write for a copy).

The prizes in 1997 will be as follows: FIRST PRIZE engraved salver plus *Canon* products of the winner's choice to the value of £500 plus cheque for £100; SECOND PRIZE *Canon* products to the value of £200 plus cheque for £40; THIRD PRIZE *Canon* products to the value of £100 plus cheque for £25.

The three winners will also receive £25-worth of bird books presented by *HarperCollins Publishers*.

An additional prize of £100-worth of *HarperCollins* books is presented for the highest-placed photograph submitted by an entrant aged 25 years or under (please state date of birth if eligible).

The judging panel will consist of Dr R. J. Chandler, Robin Chittenden, Rob Hume and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

Past winners of this competition have been Michael C. Wilkes (1977), Peter Lowes (1978), Dr Edmund C. Fellowes (1979), Don Smith (1980), Richard T. Mills (1981), Dennis Coutts (1982), David M. Cottridge (1983), John Lawton Roberts (1984), C. R. Knights (1985), Alan Moffett (1986), Dr Kevin Carlson (1987), Bob Glover (1988 & 1992), Hanne Eriksen (1989 & 1990), Philip Perry (1991), Alan Williams (1993 & 1994), Mike Lane (1995), and Roger Tidman (1996).

The closing date for entries is 31st January 1997. Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Photographs and drawings may be for sale

Many of the photographers and artists whose pictures appear in *British Birds* welcome the opportunity to sell their work. Anyone who wishes to obtain either photographic prints or original drawings is welcome to write (making an enquiry about availability, making an appropriate offer, or seeking the price) to the photographer or artist concerned, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. We shall forward all such letters as a service to our readers and contributors.

'The Carl Zeiss Award'



This award (see *Brit. Birds* 88: 427) aims to encourage the submission of potentially useful photographs to the Rarities Committee, to assist the process of individual record assessment, to increase the available reference material, and for possible publication. The sponsors, *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, offer an annual first prize of Carl Zeiss 10×40, 7×42 or 7×45 'Night Owl' binoculars and vouchers for six-month subscriptions to *British Birds* for all runners-up.

Free subscriptions for County/Regional Recorders

British Birds and *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, sponsors of the British Birds Rarities Committee, are jointly continuing to offer free annual subscriptions to *British Birds* to all the County/Regional Recorders, as our way of saying 'Thank you' to them for the hard work which they contribute to British ornithology in their 'free time'.

Donations to 'BB' and to the Richard Richardson Memorial Fund

British Birds relies on subscription income, advertisement income, sponsorship support and donations. Anyone wishing to help *BB* can make a donation (small or large!) either for a specific purpose in *BB*'s current expenditure or for our Investment Fund, the interest from which is used to maintain the highest possible level of *BB*'s service to ornithology, by subsidising features, photographs and additional pages in the journal (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 479).

The Richard Richardson Memorial Award Fund is a registered charity, the interest providing a book and small cash prize each year for the top-placed artist aged 21 or under entering the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition. donations to this Fund are also welcome.

Please make cheques payable to (1) British Birds Ltd, (2) British Birds Investment Fund, or (3) The Richard Richardson Memorial Award Fund. All should be sent to British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

May we also remind *BB* supporters that the Investment Fund is available for bequests, if any *BB* subscriber wishes to include mention of the journal in his or her will.

Thank you.

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Our postage-free mail-order book service to *BB* subscribers, British BirdShop, has always in the past included all those voted 'The Best Bird Book of the Year'.

Now, to give extra space for more books, all these highly recommended books will be listed individually only in the first issue of the year, but can still be ordered, *post free*, at any time, using the special write-in line in British BirdShop.

Have a look at pages vii & viii in this issue.



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Rare birds did well in 1996

The year 1996 was good for some of our rarest breeding species, according to the RSPB. Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* reached an all-time high, with 104 pairs producing 155 young, while White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* and Red Kites *Milvus milvus* all did well. England's only pair of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* managed to raise their first youngster since 1992. Three species all showing some increase were Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus*, Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, and Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*, of which about half the 370 pairs which nested in southwest England were successful. Corn Crakes *Crex crex*, on whose behalf so much work has been initiated, showed an increase of about 9% over last year, with 584 singing males counted.

There was, however, also a down side. Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* and Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* both fared less well (the latter in contrast to Marsh Harriers *C. aeruginosus*, which had an excellent year).

New North American species

There are six recently accepted additions to the *American Birding Association Checklist*:

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* on Attu, Alaska, on 5th June 1994.

Collared Forest-falcon *Micrastur semitorquatus* in Texas in January-February 1994.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* in Newfoundland on 24th-25th May 1994.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula* found dead in Newfoundland on about 16th November 1994.

Blue Mockingbird *Melanotis caerulescens* in Arizona from December 1991 to March 1992.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* in Newfoundland on 21st May 1994.

The report on these additions (and various name changes and so on) appears in the ABA's journal, *Birding* (28: 399-405).

Strength in numbers

Only 57,000 to go before RSPB membership hits that magical one-million mark. The psychological effects of speaking on behalf of a million members will doubtless have its influence both within the Society and on those whom it hopes to influence.

Over 90% of *BB* subscribers are already RSPB members. If you are not, the Society deserves and needs your support. Does anyone not know its address? Just for you, it is The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, and the annual membership rate is £22.

1996 records

If you have not already done so, now is the time to submit all your relevant 1996 records. The names and addresses of the County/Regional Recorders are listed on pages 67-69.

One-thousand milestone passed

The one-thousandth paper to be offered to *British Birds* since the journal became independent on 1st August 1980 was

submitted on 1st October 1996, an average of over 60 per year (of which about two-thirds have been accepted for publication).

Golden Sea Swallow

The Royal Naval Birdwatching Society has marked its fiftieth anniversary with a special Golden Jubilee issue of its journal, *Sea Swallow*, including a Patron's Foreword by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

The new cover features an Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* in colour, photographed in Iceland 25 years ago by the journal's editor, Commander M. B. Casement. The old cover is, however, not lost forever, since it has been retained as a postage-stamp-sized logo.

This bumper anniversary issue costs just £8.00 (US\$16); membership of the RNBWS is £8.00 per annum (or £7.00 if covenanted). Write to the Hon. Secretary & Treasurer, Col. P. J. S. Smith RM, 19 Downlands Way, South Wonston, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 3HS.

Dawn beats Bucks birders

Was there a red face or two to be seen after the recent Buckinghamshire Bird Club Conference? The only all-correct entry in *BB's* mystery photographs competition came from visiting speaker Dawn Balmer, who walked off with the traditional champagne prize.

Rare breeding birds

Observers with any outstanding information on rare breeding birds in Britain in 1996 are requested to send full details *now* to the relevant county bird recorder (see pages 67-69) or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie (Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN).

Single IoW report soon?

The latest *Isle of Wight Ornithological Group Bird Report* (for 1995, published in 1996) gives the news that two meetings have been held between the IoWOG and the IoW Natural History & Archaeological Society and 'a framework for the production of a joint 1996 Report has been outlined'. Good news, indeed, and we hope that the co-operation is wholehearted on both sides, to the benefit of birdwatchers in the IoW and also those of us elsewhere who want to read or consult a single, comprehensive annual account of the county's birds.

The 1995 *IoWOGBR* includes not only the usual summary of the year (6 pages) and

He deserves it . . .

Sending in some photographs, Martin Gray commented: 'The Scops Owl [*Otus scops*], especially, was delightful. My third in Orkney. With the hat trick, do I get to keep one?'

. . . and he counts it

In the same letter, Martin Gray noted that 'The Pallid Swift [*Apus pallidus*] lived for ten minutes after I found it at the base of the North Ronaldsay Lighthouse. Now, just the lightkeepers' dog and I have it on our Scottish and Orkney Lists. It was my 300th species in Orkney. It would take great willpower and strength of character not to tick it.'

Kev Wilson beats Mary

Gade

Kev Wilson, Nature Reserve Warden at Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, writes: 'You challenged birders to match Mary Gade's achievement of 77% of the Lundy List (*Brit. Birds* 89: 536). At Gibraltar Point NNR, 290 species have been recorded since 1949; my personal list for the site now stands at 251 (86%).'

Can anyone beat Kev (for a major site such as Gib. or Lundy)?

Happy birthday, GONHS!

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society was 21 years old on 10th January.

The Society's UK arm is GONHS-UK, headed by Joe Serra, who can be contacted at 155 Aboyne Road, London NW10 0EY; phone (evenings only) 0181-208 2210.

systematic list (69 pages), but also accounts of the Isle's first Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* by S. R. Colenutt, first Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis* by D. Swensson, first Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* by M. Buckley, and first Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* by D. J. Hunnybun & D. Hughes, and short papers on Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla*, Long-eared Owls *Asio otus*, Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* and European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*.

The *Report* costs £4.00 from D. J. Hunnybun, 40 Churchill Road, Cowes, Isle of Wight PO31 8HH.

Denis Frank Owen MA PhD DSc FLS (1931-1996)

As fully reported in *The Times* and *The Independent*, the death of Dr D. F. Owen in Oxford on 3rd October 1996 robbed the World of one of the foremost ecologists and zoologists of his generation. Despite an inadequate education in wartime London, which obliged him to leave school at the age of 16, he obtained a position in the Bird Room of the British Museum (Natural History). There, he gained invaluable taxonomic experience which eventually led to Dr David Lack, the then Director of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology at Oxford, to invite him to join his staff in 1951. As well as participating in the ongoing work on tits *Parus* in Wytham Wood, Denis Owen also studied Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea*, Common Swifts *Apus apus* and crows (Corvidae), publishing several papers on them in *British Birds*, *Ibis* and other journals. In autumn 1952, he spent a fortnight on the Kentish Knock lightship in the English Channel studying bird migration, the results of which he published the following year (*Brit. Birds* 46: 353-364).

Denis Owen read zoology at Oxford University, then was awarded a PhD at the University of Michigan for his work on geographical variation and polymorphism of the Eastern Screech Owl *Otus asio*. From 1962, his academic career took him successively to Makerere University, Uganda, the University of Sierra Leone as Professor of Zoology (1966-71) and the University of Lund, Sweden, as Professor of Tropical Ecology (1971-73). He returned to the UK in 1973, as Principal Lecturer in Biology at Oxford Brookes University, where he remained until his retirement in April 1996.

An industrious researcher, with a brilliant, incisive mind and a talent for clarity in speech and writing, Denis Owen wrote ten books and some 280 scientific papers and articles. The Denis Owen Memorial Fund has been set up c/o The Linnean Society of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0LQ. (*Contributed by John F. Burton*)

BOU success at Dartington

'Birds, Words & Images' was an intriguing title for the BOU's conference at Dartington Hall, Devon, on 27th-29th September: surely worth attending, I thought, and how right I was. The 100 or so delegates enjoyed a really well-planned, well-presented and most entertaining weekend, a perfect mix of the old and the new in terms of scientific tradition and modern thinking, in the beautiful surroundings of this famed fourteenth-century setting. The quality of the 22 speakers' contributions was so high that it would be unfair to single out any one for special praise. Nevertheless, in the wake of his biography of Richard Meinertzhagen, Mark Cocker's quite shocking revelations about the late Colonel's apparently criminal

activities will surely have a profound effect on ornithology over the coming years (look out for more about this in future issues of *Ibis*, and no doubt elsewhere).

The presentation of the BOU Medal to Robert Gillmor was a fitting tribute to a man whose willingly given advice and encouragement have helped so many of today's bird artists.

All who attended agreed that the weekend had been a complete success.

Finally, a word of thanks to the caterers. Conference fare is generally less than inspiring, but at Dartington we were treated to high-quality cuisine.

(DAC)

Fancy a West African trip?

The little-studied small tern of West Africa is variously regarded as a race of Little Tern *Sterna albifrons guineae* or a race of Least Tern *S. antillarum guineae*. The claims of Least Tern in Britain (Rye Harbour, East Sussex, during 1983-93 and Colne Point, Essex, from 29th June to 1st July 1991) are currently still under consideration by the BOU Records Committee (and so, too, presumably, is the question of whether Little and Least Terns

should be regarded as separate species).

The BOURC wants to know more about the West African form and has announced that it would support an application to the Union for funding to study *guineae* in its breeding habitat.

For further details, contact the BOU, c/o The Natural History Museum, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

Conservation concern in North America

Sixteen species have been listed in the sequence of greatest conservation concern in North America:

- 1 Mountain Plover *Charadrius montanus*
- 2 Swainson's Warbler *Limnothlypis swainsonii*
- 3 Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*
- 4 Bicknell's Thrush *Catharus bicknelli*
- 5 Grey Vireo *Vireo vicinior*
- 6 Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*
- 7 Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulea*
- 8 Henslow's Sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii*
- 9 Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*
- 10 Hermit Warbler *D. occidentalis*
- 11 Black Rail *Laterallus jamaicensis*
- 12 Baird's Sparrow *A. bairdii*
- 13 Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*
- 14 Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri*
- 15 Lawrence's Goldfinch *Carduelis lawrencei*
- 16 Red Knot *Calidris canutus*

Of these 16, the one that is perhaps the most unexpected inclusion on the list is Red Knot, but, as David Pashley says (*National Audubon Society Fieldnotes* 50: 130-134), 'The fear regarding this species is not that it is so low in number as to be critically imperiled [sic], but that it is so dependent on so few places, the loss of one of which could devastate the entire species. The Red Knot could go out with a bang rather than a whimper. One of these key places is the shoreline of Delaware Bay . . .'

More protection for Norfolk coast

The second phase of the £18.6-million sea-defence scheme between Happisburgh and Winterton on the Norfolk coast is now under way, which, over a period of 15 months, will complete a further five reefs and put one million cubic metres of sand on the beach. The strategy will provide improved protection for more than 6,000 ha of low-lying land behind the 14 km of sea defences, where it is feared that a major breach could result in destructive seawater floods extending into the heart of the Norfolk Broads. What, we wonder, will be the first bird species to colonise these new 'islands'?

Rescue mission for Europe's rarest birds

Of Europe's 514 regularly occurring bird species, 24 are classified as of global conservation concern. The book *Globally Threatened Birds in Europe*, compiled by BirdLife International, details new action plans for these, four of which are especially threatened. The only UK breeding species included is the Corn Crake *Crex crex*, but two of the others also directly involve the UK: the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, threatened by the expanding European range of the introduced North American Ruddy Duck *O. jamaicensis*, and the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, which occurs as Polish and east German breeders migrate to their West African wintering grounds via the North Sea and Channel coasts of the Continent, and variable numbers each year reach the reedbeds of the English south coast.

The book, edited by Borja Heredia, Laurence Rose and Mary Painter, costs £23.00 from The Stationery Office.

'Birding with Bill Oddie'

Billed as 'a beginner's guide', but likely to be highly watchable: look out for a new six-part series of 30-minute programmes on BBC2 starting in February, presented by Bill Oddie and produced by Stephen Moss.

YOY winner finds new vireo

On 25th August 1991, Paul Salaman, senior winner of the title Young Ornithologist of the Year in 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 138, 195), while exploring wet forest in the Chocó region in southwest Colombia, saw a small passerine that he could not identify. It flew into a mistnet and was obviously an undescribed form of vireo *Vireo*. Subsequently, others were seen and specimens obtained there and elsewhere in Colombia, as described by Paul and co-author Dr F. Gary Stiles (*Ibis* 138: 610-619). The new species has been given the English name Chocó Vireo.

Traditionally, the scientific specific name of a newly discovered bird is chosen by the person who discovers it. Paul Salaman and Gary Stiles, however, asked BirdLife International to use the naming opportunity to raise funds for the vireo's conservation. As a result, the American businessman Dr Bernard Master made a major contribution for the honour of having the vireo named after him: Chocó Vireo *Vireo masteri*.

Angus Hogg joins News Team

Dave Clugston has retired as Scottish representative on the Regional News Team. His successor is Angus Hogg (Kirklea, Crosshill, Maybole, Ayrshire KA19 7RJ). Thanks, Dave! Welcome, Angus!

No drink problem for Andrew Stock

Bird Illustrator of the Year winner, Andrew Stock, had his eighth solo London show, at The Mall Galleries, during 25th October to 3rd November.

His paintings derived from a trip to Kerala in southern India in January 1996, visits to the Lot Valley in France and the countryside around his studio in Ryme Intrinica, Dorset.

We are intrigued to surmise how Andrew spent his time in India when not painting, for we note that his London exhibition was sponsored by *Cobra Beer* and *Bombay Sapphire Gin*.



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 11th November 1996 to 5th January 1997. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Helston (Cornwall), 19th November to 14th December (when found dead); Hayle Harbour (Cornwall), 31st December to 5th January.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Female, Drift Reservoir (Cornwall); males, Stithian's Reservoir and Argal Reservoir (Cornwall); Lough Neagh (Co. Armagh); St John's Loch, near Thurso (Highland).

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* Shannon-bridge, (Co. Offaly), 17th December.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Shannon-bridge, 13th to at least 18th December.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Roe Estuary, Lough Foyle (Co. Londonderry), to late November;

Famous birder admits to ID boob

Maybe he can produce wonderful photographic and video images and spot a Nearctic waif near his local supermarket, but Paul Doherty admits to an embarrassing failure to identify a vocalisation from much closer to home. To find out what gave him a problem, get hold of the November issue of the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* (Paul's profile, including his shameful admission, is on page 114).

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*

Tim Cleeves—*Northeast*

Dave Flumm—*Southwest*

Frank Gribble—*Midlands*

Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*

Angus Hogg—*Scotland*

Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*

Don Taylor—*Southeast*

Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*

John Wilson—*Northwest*

Groomsport (Co. Down), 12th November and 23rd November; near Land's End (Cornwall), 14th-26th December.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Pitsford Reservoir (Northamptonshire), 15th-18th November.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleshanka* Flamborough Head (Humberside), 26th November.

Desert Wheatear *O. deserti* Salthouse (Norfolk); Barton Gravel-pits (Staffordshire); Barmouth (Gwynedd); near Cardiff (South Glamorgan).

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Near Chesterfield (Derbyshire), 4th-5th January.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* Marazion (Cornwall), 16th November, then Long Rock Pool (Cornwall), 28th December.



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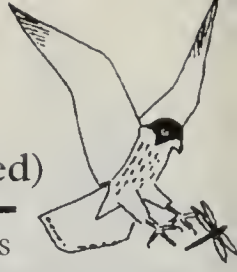
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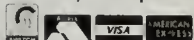
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Volume 90 Numbers 1-2 January-February 1997

- 1 **Population estimates of birds in Britain and in the United Kingdom**
Dr Brian H. Stone, Dr Jane Sears, Peter A. Cranswick, Dr Richard D. Gregory, Dr David W. Gibbons, Dr Mark M. Rehfisch, Nicholas J. Aebischer and Dr James B. Reid
- 22 **Looking back**
- 23 **Conservation research news**
Dr Mark Avery and Dr Rhys Green
- 25 **Identification of Yellow-legged Gulls in Britain** *Martin Garner; illustrated by David Quinn*
- 63 **Mystery photographs 202** *Peter Lansdown*
- 65 **Monthly marathon**
- Letter**
- 66 **Recording areas in Great Britain**
M. J. Rogers
- 67 **County, regional and bird observatory recorders in Britain and Ireland**
- Announcements**
- 70 **January-February combined issue**
- 70 **Exclusive reduced-price offers**
- 70 **Four new British birds and some name changes**
- 71 **Four species of chiffchaff**
- 72 **Bird Illustrator of the Year**
- 72 **Front-cover designs for sale**
- 72 **Bird Photograph of the Year**
- 73 **Photographs and drawings may be for sale**
- 73 **'The Carl Zeiss Award'**
- 73 **Free subscriptions for County/Regional Recorders**
- 73 **Donations to 'BB' and to the Richard Richardson Memorial Fund**
- 73 **Best Bird Books**
- 74 **News and comment** *Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott*
- 78 **Recent reports** *Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan*
- Line-drawings:** 1 Song Thrush (*Michael Webb*); 25 Yellow-legged Gull of the race *michahellis* (*David Quinn*)
- Front cover:** Smews *Mergus albellus* on ice (*Michael Webb*): the original of this month's cover design, measuring 16.85 × 16.7 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 72 for procedure).



British Birds

Volume 90 Number 3 March 1997

European news

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8 x 42 Diopton 198	
10 x 42 Diopton 207	
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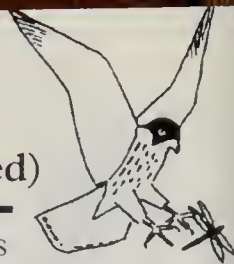
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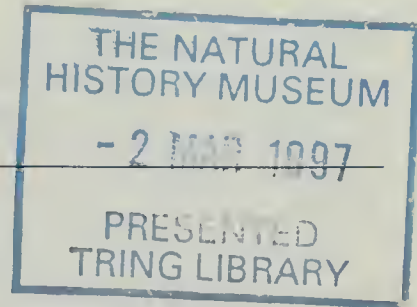
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EUROPEAN NEWS

All records have been accepted by the relevant national rarities committee, unless marked by an asterisk(*).

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As well as covering the whole of Europe, records notified by the national representatives for adjacent countries within the Western Palearctic are also included.

This fortieth six-monthly report includes officially notified records from 34 countries.

These summaries aim to include *all* records of: (1) significant breeding-range expansions or contractions; (2) major irruptions of erupting species; (3) Asiatic vagrants; (4) Nearctic species (excluding ducks, waders and gulls in Great Britain and Ireland, where they are regular); (5) other extralimital vagrants; and (6) major national rarities, including the first five national records, even if the species is common elsewhere in Europe.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to nationally accepted records of single individuals.

Diver *Gavia*

CYPRUS First record: off Paphos Lighthouse on 14th May 1996.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

DENMARK Wintering and passage: 38-39 in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 51).

TURKEY Fourth record: Göksu Delta on 13th May 1989 (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 37-38).

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*

NETHERLANDS Vagrant: moulting adult beached on Terschelling, Friesland, on 4th April 1996 (29 previous records).

SPAIN Deletion: record on 20th February 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 25) now rejected.

SWITZERLAND Fourth record: Guttingen on 7th April 1996.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

SWEDEN High count: 96 at Hornborgasjön, Västergötland, in May 1996 (largest number recorded in Sweden since 1930s).

Albatross *Diomedea*

SPAIN Third record: Asturias on 9th July 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 105).

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*

GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record: 17th April 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 485).

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

AUSTRIA First record: 30th August 1985 (*Egretta* 38: 65); previous record (*Brit. Birds* 80: 325) related to Mediterranean Shearwater *P. yelkouan*.

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*

PORTUGAL Third record: at sea, 38°33'N 11°28'W, on 20th August 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 105).

European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Exceptional numbers: up to 60 or 70 seen regularly from mid June to early July 1996 in open sea southeast of Jersey.

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*

SPAIN First and second records: Pontevedra on 3rd, 10th and 15th July 1994 and 30th July 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 106).

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: at sea between La Gomera and La Palma, two adults on 24th May 1987; at Corralejo, Fuerteventura, two adults on 24th and 25th April 1994 and probably one of these also at nearby Lobos islet on 20th May 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 106).

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

FRANCE First successful breeding record on Mediterranean coast: one pair nested on boat in Bandol harbour, Var, in 1996, one young hatched, but taken into care by local ornithologists (pair laid one egg on pier in 1995, *Brit. Birds* 89: 248).

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

AUSTRIA Wintering: regular overwintering in Lower Austria since 1988 (*Egretta* 38: 65-66; cf. increases or expansion in Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Moldova, Poland and Slovakia, *Brit. Birds* 83: 222; 84: 2; 85: 6, 444; 86: 37; 87: 2; 88: 27, 264; 89: 26, 248).

POLAND Fourth record this century and second wintering: Sulejowski Reservoir, central Poland, from 16th February to 5th April 1996.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

DENMARK High numbers: best year since 1977, with 129-159 booming males in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 53-54).

FAROE ISLANDS Fourth record: Fugloy on 12th January 1996, found dead one week later*.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

CANARY ISLANDS First breeding record: colony of 20-40 pairs near Arrecife harbour, Lanzarote, breeding since spring 1994.

HUNGARY Vagrant: adult in breeding plumage on Akadémia-fishponds, Hortobágy, on 9th June 1996* (last record was in 1989).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

CANARY ISLANDS First breeding record: three to four pairs breeding in Arrecife colony of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* on Lanzarote, since spring 1995.

FAROE ISLANDS Fourth record: exhausted at Vágur on 18th October 1995, died the following day*.

NETHERLANDS Continued breeding: one or two pairs breeding at Quackjeswater, Voorne, Zuid-Holland, in 1996 (as in 1995).

Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

FRANCE First breeding in Camargue area: pair reared three young in spring 1996 (cf. unsuccessful breeding in 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 27).

LITHUANIA Influx: at least four in Nemunas delta region during May-September 1995; Ignalina district on 7th-15th June 1995 (*Ciconia* 4: 65).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

ICELAND Wintering status: average of 45 recorded per annum during 1979-94 (range 21-83).

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

FRANCE First record: Ouessant, Finistère, on 11th-26th April 1996*.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

LITHUANIA Census: 447-484 pairs in 1995 (considerable increase from 322 nests in 1958; *Ciconia* 4: 16-21).

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

FRANCE Census: in 1995, totals of 315 occupied nests, 211 productive nests, with 548 fledged young, 88 unproductive nests and 15 nests without breeding-success information; population increased 830% since 1984; new population established since early 1980s in west, from Loire estuary to Spanish border (*Ornithos* 3: 58-62).

SWEDEN First breeding record since 1954: pair nested in Skåne in spring 1996, but not successful.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

FRANCE Good spring numbers: about 38 in spring 1996; at least one breeding pair in Camargue in spring 1996.

LUXEMBOURG First record: adult at Weiler-la-Tour on 7th-8th May 1996.

NETHERLANDS Influx: 31-37 in 1994, all but one in early autumn (cf. *Brit. Birds* 88: 265; *Dutch Birding* 18: 106).

Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*

MOROCCO Unexplained deaths: 41 adults and young from two colonies died in spring 1996, reducing the World population by one fifth (recent survey revealed only 220 wild Bald Ibises left).

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

DENMARK High passage numbers: best-ever spring/summer, with 40-60 individuals in 1996.

LITHUANIA Second record this century: six immatures at Juodkrantė, Baltic coast, on 7th July 1995 (first record was of three on Zuvintas Lake on 19th July 1946; *Ciconia* 4: 66).

NETHERLANDS Census: 833 breeding pairs in 1996 (slight increase from 814 in 1995); largest colony of 330 pairs at Oostvaardersplassen, Flevoland, in 1995, was

completely deserted in 1996, but breeding numbers increased along the North Sea coast, especially on Terschelling and Vlieland, Friesland.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

FAROE ISLANDS Second record: two adult males at Tórshavn from about 15th January 1996*, later taken into care (first record was of 12 in May/June 1995).

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

LITHUANIA Highest-ever numbers on spring migration: 2,000 at Mežių Lake, Mažkiai district, in mid April 1994 (*Ciconia* 3: 82).

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

DENMARK Highest-ever numbers of Russian race *rossicus*: 235 individuals during January-March 1996.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

HUNGARY First record: white-phase adult at Mekszikópuszta, Neusiedlersee area, on 5th-14th January 1996* (previous reports, e.g. *Brit. Birds* 86: 38, regarded as relating to escapes from captivity).

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

ESTONIA First breeding record: pair in Vilsandi Nature Reserve, west coast of Saaremaa Island, in 1996.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

FRANCE Influx: total of 2,130 in winter 1995/96, mostly at end of February, including flock of 650 near Calais (cf. about 8,000 in largest influx, in January-February 1963; *Ornithos* 3: 85-87).

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

DENMARK Third record of race *nigricans*: Yder Bjerrum, S-Jutland, on 21st-22nd December 1995.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

CZECH REPUBLIC Second record (presumed escape): near Jaroslavice, southern Moravia, from 16th May to 5th June 1995 (first record was in 1979).

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

CANARY ISLANDS Continued breeding: pair and five young and recently used nest in May 1996 at same location on Fuerteventura where breeding first recorded in 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 249).

DENMARK Invasion in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 58).

HUNGARY Vagrant: 7th April 1996 (records now annual).

LITHUANIA Second and third records: four at Kuronian Bay on 19th-27th July 1994, and

one there on 25th August 1995 (species included in Category D; *Ciconia* 3: 82; 4: 66).

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

HUNGARY First breeding record: female with 11 fledged young at Petőháza, Western Hungary, on 13th June 1996.

American Wigeon *Anas americana*

DENMARK Fourth to sixth records: male at Nissum Fjord, W-Jutland, on 24th February 1995; male at Bygholm Vejle, N-Jutland, on 28th-29th April 1995 and male at Romo, S-Jutland, from 15th April to 25th May 1996*.

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: two in 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 110).

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*

NETHERLANDS Vagrant: adult male on 21st-22nd May 1994 (also returning individual from 1992, in both 1993 and 1994; *Dutch Birding* 18: 110).

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

AUSTRIA First record of race *carolinensis*: 14th December 1985 (*Egretta* 38: 68).

ITALY First record of race *carolinensis*: male on 14th December 1990 (*Avocetta* 19: 230).

SPAIN Vagrants of race *carolinensis*: 28th December 1994 to 18th February 1995 (*Ardeola* 43: 108).

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

SPAIN First record: Asturias from 11th January 1993 to at least 5th February 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 108).

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: two males and one female at Fuerteventura on 31st January 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 108).

MOROCCO Date extension: tenth record (*Brit. Birds* 89: 28): pair stayed to at least mid March 1996 (*Porphyrio* 7: 108).

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: three in 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 110-111).

PORTUGAL Vagrant: 8th January 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 108).

SPAIN Vagrants: two records in 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 108).

SWITZERLAND Vagrant: male at Champ-Pittet/Chescaux Noreaz on 6th-9th and 14th-15th May 1996.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

AUSTRIA First record: pair on 19th November 1989 (*Egretta* 38: 68).

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: first-year female at El Hierro on 6th-21st November 1994, and first-year male at Tenerife from 24th November 1994 to 3rd March 1995 (*Ardeola* 43: 108).

SPAIN Vagrants: two first-winter males and three females at Avilés, Asturias, from 31st October 1994 to early 1995 (*Ardeola* 43: 108).
SWITZERLAND Vagrant: female at Weesen on 9th-10th and 12th-21st April 1996 (14 previous records).

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

BULGARIA Census: at least 120 pairs in 1996, with about 92 along Danube River, about 18 along the Black Sea coast and about ten inland (*Neophron* 1996 (2): 5).

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

GREECE Winter census: 12,712 in January 1995 (largest-ever number recorded in winter).

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

DENMARK First record: male at Bygholm Vejle, N-Jutland, on 5th-7th May 1985 (recently accepted and becomes first record for Western Palearctic).

NETHERLANDS First record: 21st November 1994 to June 1995 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 111).

SWITZERLAND Vagrant: adult male at Vevey on 7th-20th January 1996.

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri*

NETHERLANDS Fourth record: adult male in Zeeland from 20th May to at least 24th July 1996 (second summer record).

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

SPAIN Second record of race *americana*: Asturias from 29th October to 5th November 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 108).

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

DENMARK Census: nest-box project started in 1980s successful, with 35-36 breeding pairs in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 59).

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

DENMARK Censuses: 30 breeding pairs in 1993 and 45 in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 60).

NETHERLANDS First breeding record: pair raised young in 1996.

SERBIA First breeding and establishment: in rock holes and crevices at reservoir canyon lake of the river Uvac, Nova Varoš, where first confirmed in 1991, number of active nests in last five years has varied from 11 in 1993 to five in 1996.

Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

ISRAEL Second or third record: Nizzana on 10th-11th November 1996*.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

AUSTRIA First record: 24th May 1986 (*Igretta* 38: 69).

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

NETHERLANDS First breeding record: pair raised at least one young at Voorst, Gelderland, in 1996.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Fifth record for Jersey: single flying south over St Catherine's on 7th January 1996 (previous record was on 2nd November 1981).

DENMARK Increase: 28-30 breeding pairs, of which 13 pairs fledged young, in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 62).

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

DENMARK High wintering and passage numbers: during winter 1992/93, about 15 wintering individuals, increasing to at least 22-24 in 1993/94; on spring passage 38-43 in 1994, and on autumn passage 39-42 in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 62-64).

ICELAND Breeding status: 33 pairs nested in 1996, but only 15 pairs successfully, rearing 18 young (this is the highest total for many years, attributed mainly to mild weather).

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

BULGARIA Census: 17 breeding pairs reared 12 fledglings in 1996.

POLAND Vagrant: exhausted adult with French metal ring and white plastic ring caught at Zeleznica, near Kielce, on 5th June 1996.

SERBIA Increase: in 1996, 37 active nests and about 60 non-breeding individuals visiting feeding stations near colonies during spring and summer.

Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus*

NETHERLANDS Ninth record and first-ever territory: two, Hoge Veluwe, Ede, Gelderland, from mid July to late August 1996 (presumably pair, but no nest found).

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

SWEDEN Census: about 1,400 breeding pairs in 1995.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

DENMARK Census: breeding numbers stable since 1970: 39-41 pairs in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 64-65).

SWEDEN Census: about 75 breeding pairs in 1995.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

ICELAND Third to fifth records: in autumn about 1985, 20th April 1987 and 19th October 1988 (*Bliki* 8: 26; 10: 25; 16: 23).

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

AUSTRIA Summering: province of Salzburg since 1982 (*Igretta* 38: 70).

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

ICELAND First record of Nearctic race *sanctijohannis*: 29th-30th April 1980 (*Bliki* 4: 59).

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*

MOROCCO First record: subadult at Merzouga lake on 18th April 1996*.

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

SPAIN Fourth record: 7th March 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 109).

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

HUNGARY Vagrants: near Tápíószecső on 6th April 1996* and two near Szekktutas on 26th June 1996* (ninth and tenth records).

POLAND Vagrant: immature at Ostrówek, near Pila, on 21st January 1996 (eight previous records).

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

FRANCE Fourth record: immature in Camargue from 10th to 24th May 1996*.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

GREAT BRITAIN Census data: 422 breeding pairs in Scotland in 1992 compared well with 424 in 1982-83, but productivity was lower in the country as a whole and in seven out of eight regions (*Bird Study* 43: 20-27).

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus*

LUXEMBOURG Vagrant: light-morph at Niederanven on 14th April 1996.

NETHERLANDS Fourth record: light-morph adult at Beek-Ubbergen, Gelderland, on 17th July 1996 and, possibly same individual, on 14th August 1996.

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus*

NETHERLANDS Second record: 17th-20th September 1995 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 122-126).

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

AUSTRIA Breeding ceased in early 1980s (*Egretta* 38: 72).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

DENMARK Influx: 475-490 records in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 65).

FRANCE Influx and breeding attempt: more than 100, mainly in southern and eastern France in spring 1996; unsuccessful breeding attempt in Alsace in spring 1996.

ITALY First breeding record: two pairs in Emilia-Romagna in summer 1995 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 147).

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

ICELAND First record of Nearctic race *columbarius*: male found dead on about 23rd October 1989 (*Bliki* 11: 41; 12: 11-14).

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*

DENMARK First record: Stignæs, Zealand, on 21st October 1987 (second and third were in October 1988 and May 1989, *Brit. Birds* 88: 268-270).

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarunicus*

SPAIN Second record: 21st October 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 109).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

DENMARK High wintering and passage numbers: 1994 was best-ever year, with 475-490 records (*DOFT* 90: 65-66).

ICELAND First and second records of Nearctic race *undrius*: 30th July 1961 (*Náttúrufræðingurinn* 61: 210), and 16th October 1985 (*Bliki* 6: 43).

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

ESTONIA Census: despite decline in numbers during last decades, 10,000-18,000 pairs of singing males in 1995 (instead of previously estimated 5,000).

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni*

GREECE First record: adult found exhausted on Paros Island on 18th January 1996 (previous record in 1992 now treated as escape).

PORTUGAL First record: corpse found at Portimao, Algarve, on 24th April 1990 (*Ardeola* 43: 109).

SPAIN Second record: 14th December 1975 (*Ardeola* 43: 109).

American Purple Gallinule *Porphyryla martinica*

ICELAND First record: 5th-12th September 1976 (*Náttúrufræðingurinn* 56: 141; second was in June 1983, *Brit. Birds* 85: 447).

Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

CYPRUS Third record: individual of race *caspius* at Evretou Dam on 24th November 1995.

FRANCE First breeding record: seven adults with at least four young at Étang du Canet, Pyrénées-Orientales, at end of July and beginning of August 1996* (cf. prediction *Brit. Birds* 89: 31, 253).

American Coot *Fulica americana*

ICELAND First and second records: found newly dead on 7th November 1969, and found dead on 10th March 1971 (*Náttúrufræðingurinn* 56: 150).

Common Crane *Grus grus*

DENMARK Census and high passage numbers: six to nine breeding pairs in 1994, of which five or six pairs in N-Jutland with six fledged

young and one or two pairs on Bornholm with one fledged young (*DOFT* 90: 67-68); 1,420 passed Gilbjerg Hoved, Zealand, on 7th April 1996, the highest-ever one-day spring count.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*

FRANCE Census: in 1995, 1,400 singing males, revealing a decline of over 80% in 16 years (7,200 males in 1979-80 and 5,000-6,000 males estimated in 1985-89; *Ornithos* 3: 73-77).

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

BELARUS Third record and first breeding record: nest near Tuxhavichi, Liakhavichi district, Brest region, in late May 1996 (first and second records were in 1994 and 1995, *Brit. Birds* 89: 31).

CANARY ISLANDS First breeding record: five pairs with young in Januvio's salt pans, Lanzarote, in May 1996 (juveniles and adults observed in October 1995 in the salt pans perhaps indicate breeding in spring 1995).

FINLAND First record: 8th-12th May 1996 (*Alula* 2b: 3).

POLAND Second breeding record: three pairs with nests in Barycz River valley, Lower Silesia, in May 1996 (first was in 1994).

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

POLAND Second breeding record: pair with nest at Police, near Szczecin, in May 1996 (first was in 1994).

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus*

ICELAND First record: from about 15th July to 15th August 1957 (*Náttúrufræðingurinn* 61: 29).

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*

GREECE Fifth record: Kalogria Lagoon, Peloponnese, on 21st April 1995.

SPAIN Vagrant: Badajoz, 25th September 1991 (*Ardeola* 43: 109).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*

ICELAND First record: 7th-8th October 1979 (*Náttúrufræðingurinn* 61: 34; second and third were in October 1983 and June 1987, *Brit. Birds* 85: 448; 87: 6).

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

MALTA Second breeding record: pair bred for second consecutive year and raised two young at Ghadira Nature Reserve in 1996.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

AZORES Third record: juvenile and adult on Tereira on 23rd August 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 109).

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus*

ICELAND First to third records: 16th March 1939, 15th December 1970, and 17th-18th October 1980 (*Náttúrufræðingurinn* 61: 35-36).

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

SWEDEN Vagrants: singly at Hornborgasjön, Västergötland, on 10th-14th July 1996*, Grängesberg, Dalarna, on 12th-13th July 1996*, and Ölmeviken, Värmland, on 14th-15th July 1996* (last two may have been the same individual).

TURKEY Third record: Göksu Delta on 24th August 1989 (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 38-39).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

ITALY First record: adult in Priolo Salt pans, Sicily, on 22nd-23rd July 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 148).

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 4th September 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 111) and first-summer female at De Cocksdorp, Texel, Noord-Holland, on 31st July and 1st August 1996 (fifth and sixth records).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: two in 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 111).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

NETHERLANDS Fourth to sixth records: 24th-27th May 1994, 30th May 1994 and 16th-28th October 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 111).

TURKEY First record: Göksu Delta on 15th May 1993 (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 39).

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

GREAT BRITAIN Marked increase in recent years: wintering population now estimated at 43,200 (*Biol. Conserv.* 77: 7-17).

Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregaria*

AUSTRIA First and second records: 2nd April 1982 and 20th March 1990 (*Egretta* 38: 73).

SPAIN Vagrant: Huesca on 23rd-24th October 1994 (four previous records; *Ardeola* 43: 109).

White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*

FRANCE Second record: adult with Northern Lapwing *V. vanellus* north of Meulun, Seine-et-Marne, on 19th-20th June 1996* (first record was in 1840).

ITALY Second record: 26th April 1995 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 148).

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

ICELAND Influx: about 90 recorded in March and April 1994, the highest total since 1987 (range 36-102 per annum).

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

AUSTRIA Deletion: 3rd-9th November 1985 report (*Brit. Birds* 80: 324) has now been rejected (*Egretta* 38: 95).

AZORES Second record: juvenile on Terceira on 23rd August 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 109).

NETHERLANDS Second record: summer-plumaged adult at Lepelaarsplassen, Almere, Flevoland, on 18th-19th July 1996.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*

AUSTRIA Deletion: 13th August 1984 report (*Brit. Birds* 80: 11) has now been rejected (*Egretta* 38: 95).

GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record: 12th-13th August 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 499).

ITALY First record: two adults in Bau Cerbus, Sardinia, on 17th July 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 148).

NETHERLANDS Second record: summer adult at Mokbaai, Texel, on 25th July 1996*.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

AZORES Second record: two juveniles on Terceira on 23rd August 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 109).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

AUSTRIA Vagrants: 18th-22nd October 1986 and 18th October 1987 (*Egretta* 38: 74).

AZORES Vagrants: two adults on Terceira on 23rd August 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 110).

CANARY ISLANDS Exceptional autumn passage: additional juvenile on La Gomera in November 1995* (see *Brit. Birds* 89: 255).

NETHERLANDS Second to fourth records: 19th-21st August 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 111), adult on Texel, Noord-Holland, on 13th August 1996 and another adult on Ameland, Friesland, on 18th August 1996*.

SWEDEN Vagrant: Norsholmen, Gotland, on 16th May 1996* (twelfth record).

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*

AUSTRIA First record: 11th-16th October 1988 (*Egretta* 38: 73); record in October-November 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 325) is now rejected.

NETHERLANDS Fourth record: adult at Katwijk, Zuid Holland, on 27th July 1996.

SPAIN Second record: 1st November 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 110).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

AUSTRIA Vagrants: four records concerning five to seven individuals in 1983-89, in May, July and September-October (*Egretta* 38: 74).

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 20th September 1991 and 3rd-5th September 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 111-112).

NORWAY Vagrant: first-year at Valnesfjord,

Fauske, Nordland, on 16th September 1995 (total of 51 records involving 57 individuals has been recorded).

SPAIN Vagrants: five records involving six individuals in 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 110).

SWITZERLAND Vagrant: first-year at Yverdon on 16th-17th September 1995 (thirteen previous records).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*

AUSTRIA First record: 6th-8th August 1983 (*Egretta* 38: 74).

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*

MOROCCO First record: Oued Souss estuary from at least 28th March to 3rd April 1996*.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

AUSTRIA Vagrants: 11th September 1980 and 3rd-21st October 1986 (*Egretta* 38: 74).

NETHERLANDS Ninth and tenth records: 29th August to 3rd September 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 112), and at Veerse Meer, Zeeland, on 18th May 1996 (third spring record).

PORTUGAL First record: Algarve on 7th-25th September 1990.

SPAIN Vagrants: Barcelona on 11th September 1993, Barcelona from 2nd September to 3rd October 1994 and La Coruña on 23rd September 1994 (six other records, involving seven individuals; *Ardeola* 43: 111).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

DENMARK Fifth to seventh records: Kammerslusen, S-Jutland, on 9th July 1994; Sneum Sluse, S-Jutland, on 5th-6th May 1996* and possibly same individual at Romo, S-Jutland, on 18th-20th May 1996*.

NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 7th May 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 112).

Long-billed Dowitcher/Short-billed**Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus/L. griseus*

AUSTRIA Vagrant: 7th August 1990 (*Egretta* 38: 75).

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

GREAT BRITAIN Marked increase in recent years: wintering population now estimated at 7,410 (*Biol. Conserv.* 77: 7-17).

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

GREAT BRITAIN Moderate decline in recent years: wintering population now estimated at 52,500 (*Biol. Conserv.* 77: 7-17).

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*

AUSTRIA Vagrants: 10th-14th October 1980 and 16th September 1985 (*Egretta* 38: 75).

HUNGARY Vagrant: on Virágoskút fishponds, near Balmazújváros, on 1st-10th May 1996.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

ICELAND Wintering status: average of 61 recorded annually during 1979-94 (range 36-102 per annum).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

BELARUS First and second breeding records: nest near Tukhavichi, Liakhavichi district, Brest region, in late May 1996 and brood of downy young near Minsk in mid June 1996.

LITHUANIA First and second records: Kuronian Bay on 15th July 1995 and Nemunas Delta on 6th June 1995 (*Ciconia* 2: 35; 4: 69).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

AZORES First record: Terceira on 23rd August 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 111).

PORTUGAL Fourth record: 1st December 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 111).

SPAIN Vagrants: Asturias, 3rd November 1994, and La Coruña, 30th September to 16th October 1994 (12 previous records; *Ardeola* 43: 111).

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

AUSTRIA First record: 20th-21st October 1990 (*Egretta* 38: 5-76).

AZORES Third record: São Miguel on 25th August 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 112).

SPAIN Fourth record: La Coruña on 18th September 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 112).

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*

NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 15th October to 13th November 1994 (fifteenth record; *Dutch Birding* 18: 112).

White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus*

TURKEY First record: Western Anatolia on 28th March 1988 (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 39).

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

CZECH REPUBLIC Second record: immature near Záhlinice, central Moravia, on 16th November 1995 (first record was in September 1992, *Brit. Birds* 89: 256).

GREECE Vagrant: adult at the Evros Delta on 20th January 1995 (third winter record).

ITALY Fourth and fifth records: adults on Sicily on 5th March 1994 and on 26th January 1995 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 148).

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

DENMARK High passage numbers: 1994 was best-ever year with 33 individuals, of which seven were in spring and 26 in autumn (*DOIT* 90: 71).

NETHERLANDS Further increase: at least 310

pairs in southwest, largest colony holding 195 nests, in 1996 (cf. 225 pairs in 1995, *Brit. Birds* 89: 34).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*

BELGIUM First record: adult on 21st-29th October 1994 (*Mergus* 10: 26-31).

DENMARK Fifth record: adult at Romo, S-Jutland, on 12th-18th May 1996*.

MOROCCO Fifth record: adult at Oued Souss estuary on 16th May 1996*.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*

DENMARK Third record: second-winter at Hirtshals Harbour, N-Jutland, on 5th-7th March 1996* (possibly the same individual which stayed there from 6th November to 4th December 1995*, *Brit. Birds* 89: 257).

NETHERLANDS Fourth record: 6th April 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 112).

NORWAY Second record: second-winter at Borhaug, Farsund, Vest-Agder, from 17th December 1995 to 20th April 1996*.

PORTUGAL Vagrant: Estremadura from 29th January to 26th February 1994 (apparently same bird as in four previous years; *Ardeola* 43: 112).

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

AUSTRIA First record: two on 12th May 1985 (*Egretta* 38: 78).

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: two at Lanzarote on 3rd-4th March 1982 and first-winter at El Hierro on 6th December 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 112).

CZECH REPUBLIC Second record: juvenile near Tovačov, central Moravia, on 7th November 1995 (first record was in July 1994, *Brit. Birds* 89: 35).

NETHERLANDS Third record: 6th December 1992 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 112).

NORWAY Vagrants: adults at Lundleiret, Steinkjer, Nord-Trøndelag, on 3rd May 1995 and at Vardo, Finnmark, on 4th-20th July 1995.

PORTUGAL Vagrants: three records involving four individuals in 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 112).

SPAIN Vagrants: 19 individuals in winter 1993/94 (*Ardeola* 43: 112-113).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

CYPRUS First record: 5th March 1995 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc. 1957 Ann. Rep.* 40: 86).

GREAT BRITAIN First and second records of North American race *smithsonianus*: 26th February to 4th March 1994 and 6th March 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 504).

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

NETHERLANDS First record of Black Sea race *cachinnans*: one at Geldermalsen, Gelderland, on 11th December 1991 had been ringed as nestling on Podkova, Zaporozh'ye, Ukraine, on 25th May 1991.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*

ICELAND Vagrants of race *kumlieni*: two on 20th February 1994 (*Bliki* 16: 28); all other records from previous years (including some skins) are still under consideration by the rarities committee.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

CZECH REPUBLIC Three records since the Second World War: 17th November 1993 (*Sylvia* 31: 93), Sumvald, central Moravia, on 13th-18th April 1995 and Bohumin, northern Moravia, on 23rd December 1995.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*

FAROE ISLANDS Sixth record, but first since 1959: adult at Vestmanna from about 1st to 9th March 1996*.

SPAIN First record: Guipúzea on 6th-11th April 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 113).

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*

DENMARK Census: 1994 was a very poor year, with only four to six breeding pairs (and one probable) recorded (*DOFT* 90: 73).

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

AUSTRIA First and second records: two on 4th-5th August 1980 and one on 31st July and 1st August 1983 (*Egretta* 38: 80).

GREECE Third record: immature off Aegean coast on 17th July 1993.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

AUSTRIA First records: seven records concerning 13 individuals during 1981-89 (*Egretta* 38: 79).

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

ICELAND First record: adult on 22nd October 1959 (*Náttúrufræðingurinn* 57: 139).

PORTUGAL First record: Algarve from 31st December 1993 to 1st January 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 113).

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*

ICELAND First record: found dead on 12th June 1969 (*Náttúrufræðingurinn* 57: 139).

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

ICELAND First record: 14th October 1965 (*Náttúrufræðingurinn* 57: 141; second was in June 1989, *Brit. Birds* 86: 42).

Razorbill *Alca torda*

AUSTRIA First record: 14th March 1987 (*Egretta* 38: 80).

Crested Auklet *Aethia cristatella*

ICELAND First record: on sea at 66°48'N 12°55'W, or 45 nautical miles ENE of Langanes, northeast Iceland, some day during 12th-20th August 1912 (*DOFT* 27:103-105; *Náttúrufræðingurinn* 57: 141).

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*

MOROCCO Large concentration: over 100,000 on 7th December 1993 in area between Fouchal and Matarka (southwest of Ain Beni-Mathar), where none was recorded on previous days (*Porphyrio* 7: 89-91).

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

GREAT BRITAIN Conservation concern: now Red-listed, breeding numbers having declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

AUSTRIA First record: Rheindelta/Vorarlberg on 23rd September 1995.

ISRAEL Third record: Hula Valley on 21st October 1996.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

SPAIN First record: Mallorca on 28th October 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 113), not 28th February as previously noted (*Brit. Birds* 89: 36).

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

NETHERLANDS Breeding: pair raised two young in southern Limburg in 1996 (cf. recent re-establishment or colonisation of Belgium, Luxembourg and Denmark, *Brit. Birds* 75: 270, 571; 78: 343; 80: 13; 82: 328; 85: 9; 87: 319; 88: 274).

Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum*

BULGARIA First possible breeding record for 50 years: two calling males in Rila Mountains in March 1994 (*Eco.* (1996 no. 1): 22).

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

DENMARK Census: 77 confirmed pairs (plus 16 possible) in 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 77); the population was estimated at 150 breeding pairs in 1990 (*DOFT* 89: 21).

White-throated Needletail Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*

NETHERLANDS First record: Middelburg and Veere, Walcheren, Zeeland, on 22nd May 1996*.

NORWAY Second record: Lista fyr, Farsund, Vest Agder, on 20th May 1995.

Cf. records in Finland in April 1990 and May 1991, and in Sweden in May 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 10, 454; 89: 259).

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

HUNGARY First record: found dead at Badaacsonytördemic, Transdanubia, on 22nd May 1996.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*

GREAT BRITAIN Second record: 16th July 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 510).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*

HUNGARY First record: adult ringed in Nyíregyháza on 2nd April 1996.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: Tenerife in April 1995.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

SWEDEN Huge decrease: hard winter of 1995/96 reduced number of breeding pairs by 93% in Östergötland.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

ICELAND First record: adult male found dead at Kvísker í Örafum, southeast Iceland, on 5th June 1961 (*Náttúrufræðingurim* 62: 71-72).

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*

SWITZERLAND First record: male at Schanfigg on 15th-18th April 1996.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

GREAT BRITAIN Decline: 1995 numbers were the lowest for at least 25 years (*BTO News* 204: 12).

Aeadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virescens*

ICELAND First record: one, probably male, found newly dead on Selfoss, south Iceland, on 4th November 1967 (*Náttúrufræðingurim* 62: 73-74).

Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cineturus*

SPAIN First record: Mallorca on 24th-26th March 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 114-115).

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

SWEDEN Third record: Ostergarn, Gotland, on 27th-29th May 1996*.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

LITHUANIA Continued decrease and probable extinction: no record since one at Ventės Ragas on 16th July 1993 (*Ciconia* 3: 84).

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

GREAT BRITAIN Population increase: breeding numbers rose from about 250 pairs in 1986 to probably over 600 pairs by 1993 (*Bird Study* 43: 172-187).

Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*

GREAT BRITAIN Conservation concern: now Red-listed, breeding numbers having declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

CYPRUS Second record: two at Cape Andreas on 9th March 1996.

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*

ISRAEL Third record: Eilat on 10th-11th November.

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota*

GREAT BRITAIN Third and fourth records: 22nd-28th October 1995 and 4th-5th December 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 512).

House Martin *Delichon urbica*

DENMARK Highest-ever one-day count: 7,300 passed Gilbjerg Hoved, Zealand, on 18th May 1996.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

AUSTRIA Vagrants: 28th April 1980, 7th October 1984, 5th May 1985, one or two on 9th-21st April 1988 and 6th May 1988 (note that most were in spring; *Egretta* 38: 82).

CYPRUS Vagrants: two in March and one in November 1995 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc. 1957 Ann. Rep.* 42: 47).

DENMARK High passage numbers: best-ever year, with 65 individuals in 1994 (*DOI'T* 90: 81).

PORTUGAL Vagrants: three records involving at least four individuals in 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 114).

SPAIN Vagrants: four records involving 17 individuals in 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 114).

TURKEY Vagrants: one to three on nine dates during 20th March to 29th April 1992 and one on 4th June 1992 (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 41).

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

GREAT BRITAIN Second, third and fifth records: 22nd October to 1st November 1990, 31st October to 4th November 1993 and 7th November to 11th December 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 512).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

PORTUGAL First record: Algarve on 16th November 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 115).

SWITZERLAND First record: Ins on 11th-13th December 1995.

TURKEY First record: Kizilirmak Delta on 13th April 1992 (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 41).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

BELGIUM First record (and first breeding) of black-headed race *feldegg*: male paired with

female of unknown race reared two young in Hainaut during 11th June to 28th July 1992 (*Aves* 32: 219-226).

DENMARK Highest-ever one-day count: 5,250 passed Gilbjerg Hoved, Zealand, on 22nd May 1996.

SPAIN Third record of black-headed race *feldegg*: two in Barcelona on 30th April 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 115).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

SPAIN Vagrants: 4th April 1994 and 20th September 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 115).

SWITZERLAND Fourth record: male at Ségzegnin/Avusy on 9th May 1996.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record for Guernsey: Rue des Grons on 3rd-4th February 1996 (first was on 7th November 1990).

FRANCE Influx: from end of January to end of February 1996, about 280, mainly in north (cf. 2,200 in last invasion in winter 1988/89; *Ornithos* 3: 78-80).

NETHERLANDS Huge influx: in winter 1995/96, up to 3,500 individuals until early April.

Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*

TURKEY First record: west of Ağrı on 1st August 1986* (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 41).

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

SWEDEN First Swedish breeding record: holding territory at two localities in Norrbotten, and breeding proven at one of these (where at least four adults were present) in 1996*.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

AUSTRIA First record of race *maura*: 16th May 1985 (*Egretta* 38: 83).

GREAT BRITAIN Second record of race *variegata*: 11th September 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 515).

NETHERLANDS Vagrants of race *maura*: 22nd October 1993 and 8th October 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 114).

Pied Stonechat *Saxicola caprata*

ISRAEL Third record: Eilat on 5th-7th November 1996 (plates 5 & 6, on page 91).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

FINLAND Vagrant: 30th April 1996 (*Ahula* 2b: 7).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

AUSTRIA First record: 3rd June 1983 (*Egretta* 38: 84).

CYPRUS First record: 19th April 1992 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc. 1957 Ann. Rep.* 42: 3).

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*

DENMARK Second record: male at Stevns Klint, Zealand, from 30th June to at least middle of August 1996*.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*

CYPRUS Fifth and sixth records: Xeros Potamos on 16th April 1996, and Mazotos on 12th May 1996.

White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*

TURKEY First record: near Pinarbasi on 12th August 1993* (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 41).

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

GREAT BRITAIN Fifth and sixth records: 28th October to 3rd November 1994 and 19th October 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 516).

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*

ISRAEL First record: Eilat on 17th October 1996.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*

AUSTRIA Vagrant: male of nominate race on 8th April 1984 (*Egretta* 38: 84).

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*

ITALY First record of race *ruficollis*: male at Bergamo, Lombardy, on 30th November to 1st December 1994 (*Avocetta* 19: 232).

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

GREAT BRITAIN Conservation concern: now Red-listed, breeding numbers having declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

DENMARK First record: Gjerrild, E-Jutland, on 16th November 1994.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

AUSTRIA Possible first breeding record: Rheindelta/Vorarlberg on 19th August 1995.

CHANNEL ISLANDS First record: St Ouens Bay, Jersey, on 25th June 1996.

SWITZERLAND Vagrants: one singing at Aristau on 14th-21st July 1995 and one at Bolle di Magadino on 25th-28th October 1995.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*

NORWAY Fifth and sixth records: first-years ringed at Sklinna, Leka, Nord-Trøndelag, on 27th-28th September 1995, and at Utsira, Rogaland, on 9th October 1995.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

SWEDEN Second breeding record: Lake Tåkern, Östergötland, in 1996*.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*

ITALY Fifth record: ringed at Nonantola, Emilia-Romagna, on 17th April 1995 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 148).

NORWAY Third record: adult ringed at Slevdalsvann, Farsund, Vest Agder, on 17th September 1994*.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

NETHERLANDS Second record: singing at Walem, Valkenburg aan de Geul, Limburg, from 20th June to 1st July 1996 (plate 4).

TURKEY First record: Ereğli Marshes on 15th-17th August 1990 (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 42).

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

SPAIN First record: Cabrera, Balearic Islands, on 27th May 1992 (there are many other reports not assessed and fully accepted; *Ardeola* 43: 116).

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

MALTA Fourth and fifth breeding records: two pairs bred at is-Simar Nature Reserve in spring 1996.

Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*

CYPRUS First record: trapped at Akrotiri Reed-bed on 21st June 1981 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc. 1957 Ann. Rep.* 42: 3).

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

AUSTRIA First records: 14th May 1983 and 27th May 1987 (*Egretta* 38: 84).

Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli*

FRANCE Second record: singing male in Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 20th May 1996* (report in April 1982, *Brit. Birds* 76: 275, was never formally submitted).

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nama*

CYPRUS Fifth record: 29th March 1995 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc. 1957 Ann. Rep.* 42: 60).

NETHERLANDS Second record: 8th-9th October 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 114).

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

DENMARK Census and passage numbers: no positive records of breeding in 1994; 35-40 individuals recorded, mostly migrants (*DOFT* 90: 83).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

DENMARK Increased wintering: average of 52 per winter during 1992/93-1994/95, compared with 15-25 considered as normal (*DOFT* 90: 35-37).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

CHANNEL ISLANDS First record for Guernsey: singing male at Les Galliennes on 10th-11th June 1996.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

DENMARK Vagrants: ten in October-November 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 83).

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: five in 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 114-116).

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

AUSTRIA Vagrant: 29th September 1985 (*Egretta* 38: 84).

DENMARK Vagrants: 24 records in 1994, including 17 at Christianso, Bornholm, from 3rd September to 9th October (of which ten were on 26th September, the highest-ever one-day count; *DOFT* 90: 84).

SPAIN Vagrant: Mallorca on 21st October 1994 (eight previous records; *Ardeola* 43: 116).

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 10th-13th November 1994 and 26th November 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 116).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

PORTUGAL Second record: Algarve on 1st November 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 117).

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

DENMARK Vagrant of the race *tristis*: one found dead on 12th January 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 41) had been ringed on 18th October 1992 in Gästrikland, Sweden (*DOFT* 89: 177).

HUNGARY Third record of the race *tristis*: trapped in Nemeskút, near Sopron, on 18th September 1995.

SWEDEN Vagrant of the race *tristis*: 7th-8th September 1994 (84 previous records; *I'år Fågelv.* suppl. 22: 142).

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

DENMARK High passage numbers: 1994 was best-ever year with 85-87 individuals, of which 73-75 in March-May and 12 in September-November (*DOFT* 90: 84).

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

GREAT BRITAIN Conservation concern: now Red-listed, breeding numbers having declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

PORTUGAL First and second records: 10th October 1994 and 15th November 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 117).

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*

NETHERLANDS First record since 1985: first-summer male on Vlieland, Friesland, on 16th-19th May 1996.



▲ 4. Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Netherlands, June 1996 (Arnoud B. van den Berg). See page 90.



▲ 5 & 6. Pied Stonechat *Saxicola caprata*, Israel, November 1996 (Hadoram Shirihai). See page 89.

Azure Tit *Parus cyanus*

FINLAND Vagrant: 15th-20th April 1996 (*Alula* 2b: 6).

SWEDEN Third record: at least 12th March to 7th April 1996* (*Alula* 2b: 6).

European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

SWEDEN Several breeding records of eastern subspecies *asiatica* in Norrbotten in 1996 as a result of invasion in autumn 1995.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

CYPRUS Third to fifth records: first-winter at Akhna Dam on 8th-9th February 1994, male in Paphos Lighthouse area on 5th May 1995

and female in Paphos Lighthouse area on 6th May 1995 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc. 1957 Ann. Rep.* 42: 66).

GREECE First record: adult male at Evros Delta on 28th September 1995.

ITALY First record: Monte Mannu Montresta, Sardinia, on 4th August 1985 (record in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 86: 292, becomes second, and two records in 1992, *Brit. Birds* 88: 42, become third and fourth).

NETHERLANDS First to third records: 18th-19th October 1985, 21st October 1993 and 4th May 1995 (*Dutch Birding* 17: 97; 18: 129-131, 131-133).

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

TURKEY First record: near Birecik on 24th September 1987 (*Zool. Midd. East* 11: 42).

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

NETHERLANDS First record of race *pallidirostris*: first-winter on 3rd-22nd September 1994 (not 4th-23rd as noted in *Brit. Birds* 88: 278; *Dutch Birding* 18: 117).

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

DENMARK Invasion: about 800 individuals in autumn 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 85-86).

Daurian Jaekdaw *Corvus monedula*

FRANCE First record: 22nd June 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 145-146).

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

NETHERLANDS First records: two first-summerers at Hoek van Holland from 10th April 1994 to at least April 1996 and adult at Renesse from 21st November 1994 to 26th December 1995 (note date extensions to those given previously; *Dutch Birding* 18: 117).

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*

AUSTRIA Influx: five records involving 33 individuals in May 1984 (*Egretta* 38: 85).

NETHERLANDS 'A good year': two in June-July and two in September-October 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 117).

SWITZERLAND Vagrants: three at Lavin on 3rd June 1995 and one at Zernez on 10th June 1995 (nine previous records).

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

BULGARIA Third record of race *italiae*: occupied nest in Kresna Gorge on 1st May 1996 (*Neophron* 1996, no. 2).

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

GREAT BRITAIN Census data: the BTO Common Birds Census index showed a decrease of 85% during the period 1968-91, between the two breeding-bird atlases (*Conserv. Biol.* 9: 1434); now Red-listed, breeding numbers having declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years.

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachyactyla*

CYPRUS Second and third records: seven on 6th March 1995 and four on 20th March 1995 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* 1957 *Ann. Rep.* 42: 69).

Indian Silverbill *Enodice malabarica*

CYPRUS Escapees or feral vagrants: ones and twos in August-November 1995, including one carrying nest material on 13th September, were 'considered to be either escapees or from a feral population in Israel and [therefore] not

a new species for Cyprus' (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* 1957 *Ann. Rep.* 42: 73).

Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis*

HUNGARY First record: near Máriahalom on 3rd October 1995.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

ICELAND Breeding: pair bred in 1994 and raised three young (*Bliki* 16: 42).

Canary *Serinus canaria*

CANARY ISLANDS First breeding record for Lanzarote: several flocks (10-12 individuals) and nests found in October 1995 (the only principal island of the archipelago where the Canary was not previously considered to breed).

Siskin *Carduelis spinus*

MOROCCO Large influx: during winter 1993/94, several flocks in southwest (e.g. Oued Souss and Oued Massa) and flock of 25 as far south as Tantan (28°26'N 11°06'W) on 3rd March 1994 (*Porphyrio* 7: 142).

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

GREAT BRITAIN Conservation concern: now Red-listed, breeding numbers having declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years.

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

DENMARK Highest-ever one-day count: 10,252 passed Skagen, N-Jutland, on 3rd March 1996.

PORTUGAL First record: Estremadura on 26th November 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 117).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*

DENMARK Invasion: 70 in autumn 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 86).

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

DENMARK Invasion: 95 in January-May 1994 (cf. invasion in autumn 1993; *DOFT* 89: 179-180; 90: 86).

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*

AUSTRIA Vagrant: 12th May 1989 (*Egretta* 38: 86).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

FRANCE Status: numbers apparently stable, neither decreasing nor increasing.

Pine Grosbeak *Pimicola enucleator*

NETHERLANDS Fourth record: male at Melissant, Zuid-Holland, on 24th March 1996*.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

GREAT BRITAIN Conservation concern: now Red-listed, breeding numbers having declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years.

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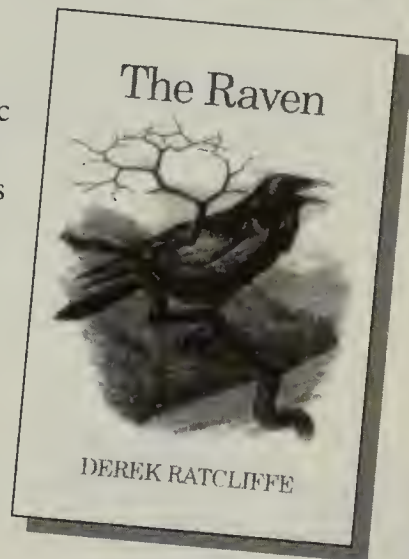
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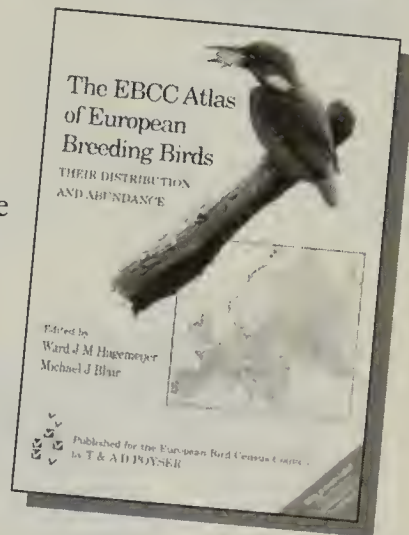
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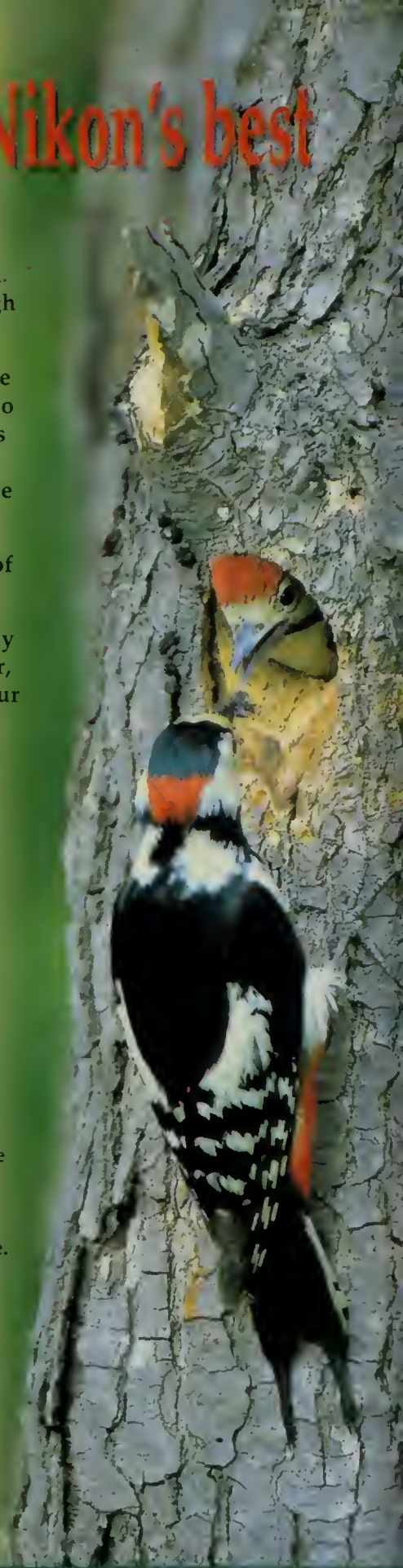


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10-YEAR
WARRANTY

Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*

GREAT BRITAIN Fourth record: 20th September 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 524).

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*

GREAT BRITAIN Second record: 18th October 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 524).

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*

ICELAND Seventh record: Seltjörn í Njarövik, on 7th-8th October 1995*.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

GREAT BRITAIN Third record: 2nd October 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 525).

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*

AUSTRIA Vagrants: 20th November 1984, 5th December 1985, and two on 8th December 1985 (*Egretta* 38: 86).

CYPRUS Fourth record: Cape Andreas on 8th-9th March 1996.

NETHERLANDS Vagrants and first winter records: three during 20th October to 4th November 1994 (21 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 18: 117), two males at Oirschot, Noord-Brabant, from 26th February to mid March 1996, and another male at Planken Wambuis, Gelderland, during first half of March 1996*.

SWEDEN Vagrant: Karlstad individual, *Brit. Birds* 89: 266, stayed from 28th December 1995 until 6th April 1996*.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

GREAT BRITAIN Decline: 1995 numbers on farmland were the lowest for at least 30 years (*BTO News* 204: 12).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

NETHERLANDS Fourth and fifth records: 23rd April 1994 and 13th March 1995 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 16-17, 118).

Official correspondents

ANDORRA Jacqueline Crozier; AUSTRIA Hans-Martin Berg; BELARUS Dr Michael E. Nikiforov; BELGIUM René-Marie Lafontaine; BULGARIA Dr Petar Iankov; CANARY ISLANDS Juan Antonio Lorenzo; CHANNEL ISLANDS Ian Buxton; CROATIA Jelena Kralj; CYPRUS A. E. Sadler; CZECH REPUBLIC Professor Karel Štastrný; DENMARK Brian Rasmussen; EGYPT Sherif Baha El Din & Mindy Baha El Din; ESTONIA Dr Vilju Lilleleht; FAROE ISLANDS Soren Sorensen; FINLAND Pekka J. Nikander; FRANCE Dr Philippe J. Dubois; GERMANY Peter H. Barthel; GIBRALTAR Charles E. Perez; GREAT BRITAIN John Marchant; GREECE George I. Handrinos; HUNGARY Dr Gábor Magyar; ICELAND Gunnlaugur Pétursson; IRELAND Pat Smiddy; ISRAEL Hadoram Shirihai; ITALY Marco Gustin; LATVIA Dr Jānis Baumanis; LITHUANIA Dr Petras Kurlavičius; LUXEMBOURG Tom Conzemius; MACEDONIA Branko Micevski; MALTA Joe Sultana; MONTENEGRO Dr Vojislav F. Vasić; MOROCCO Michel Thévenot; NETHERLANDS Arnoud B. van den Berg; NORWAY Runar Jåbekk; POLAND Dr Tadeusz Stawarczyk; PORTUGAL Dr João Carlos Farinha; SERBIA Dr Vojislav F. Vasić; SLOVAKIA Dr Alžbeta Darolová; SLOVENIA Iztok Geister; SPAIN Dr Eduardo de Juana; SWEDEN Tommy Tyrberg; SWITZERLAND Dr N. Zbinden; TUNISIA Thierry Gaultier; UKRAINE Dr Igor Gorbañ.

Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*

SPAIN First record (origin unknown): Cantabria on 3rd December 1994 (*Ardeola* 43: 117-118).

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia*

AUSTRIA Second record: two adult males at Saalfelden/Salzburg on 1st May 1995.

POLAND Deletion: only Polish record, of five on 22nd August 1982, now rejected.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*

LATVIA Third record: adult male at Lake Engure, Talsi, on 15th May 1996* (first record was in September 1975 and first breeding record in 1985).

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*

DENMARK Fifth record: male at Skagen, N-Jutland, on 12th June 1995.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

GREAT BRITAIN Conservation concern: now Red-listed, breeding numbers having declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

NETHERLANDS Third and fourth records: Ameland, Friesland, on 26th-27th May 1996, and Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland, on 31st May 1996*.

SWITZERLAND Vagrants: singing male and female at Maggiadelta/Locarno on 20th May 1996 and male there on 22nd May 1996 (seventh record this century and first record of female).

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*

GREAT BRITAIN Conservation concern: now Red-listed, breeding numbers having declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years.

LITHUANIA Continued decrease: only one record in 1995, a single singing male in Marijampolė on 28th May (*Ciconia* 4: 74).



How many rarities are we missing?

Weekend bias and length of stay revisited

Peter Fraser

ABSTRACT Despite the increasing numbers of rare birds recorded each year in Britain & Ireland by an increasing number of active birders, a significant percentage of rarities may still be escaping detection in the field.

This paper attempts to quantify the numbers of rarities being missed annually, using statistical analysis and a mathematical model.

In 1966, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*Brit. Birds* 59: 556-558) looked at weekend bias in the records of rarities in Britain & Ireland during 1958-65. He found that 45% were discovered at weekends; and that 56% were seen on only one day, but 11% stayed over a fortnight; and he calculated that an additional 19% would have been found if coverage had been as thorough on every day of the week as it was on Sundays. The present paper examines the 1958-92 statistics in more detail, and endeavours to ascertain a minimum figure for the number of individual rarities that may be going undetected in the field.

For this purpose, 'rare' passerines include all those considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC), plus those removed from the list in 1982 or subsequently, but excluding Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* (removed in 1963) and Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (whose habits preclude any proper assessment of length of stay). 'Rare' shorebirds include Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* and Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, none of which is currently on the list of species considered by the BBRC.

Weekend bias

Is weekend bias becoming less marked?

Table 1 shows the number of records in the annual Reports of the Rarities Committee for 1958-92, sorted by day of the week; the Reports are grouped into five-year periods. Despite an almost three-fold increase in total number of records (from 1,845 in the period 1958-62 to 5,489 in 1988-92), and observers' greater 'employment flexibility', little change has occurred in the percentage of rarities discovered at weekends. During 1988-92, 40% of rare birds were found at weekends: far greater than it would be (approximately 28%) were daily coverage uniform. It is also important to note that, despite the increase in Saturday records, even more rarities are first sighted on Sundays (in 1988-92, 21.3% of all first dates).

Table 1. Daily distribution of first dates of rarities in Britain & Ireland, 1958-92.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	% weekend
1958-62	191	194	224	214	209	368	445	44%
1963-67	194	163	200	192	175	319	379	43%
1968-72	305	283	317	295	265	531	580	43%
1973-77	418	421	411	473	470	747	837	42%
1978-82	608	549	514	528	567	931	995	41%
1983-87	537	551	604	565	615	1,036	993	41%
1988-92	665	638	710	633	625	1,050	1,168	40%

Does weekend bias vary regionally?

Table 2 shows level of weekend bias among rare-passerine records in different counties (using old county boundaries) during 1958-93, measured as the percentage difference from the expected level. A figure of 100% would indicate twice as many weekend discoveries as would be expected; figures around zero (0%) imply even coverage throughout the week.

Counties with popular sites, well watched by weekend visitors from the big conurbations, show the most bias. Those covered more exclusively by local observers show a reduced percentage of rarities found at weekends. Even so, there is still weekend bias in Shetland.

Table 2. Regional variation in weekend bias in rare-passerine records, 1958-93.

County	% excess at weekend
Isles of Scilly	8%
Shetland	16%
Dorset	33%
Cornwall (excluding Scilly)	34%
Co. Cork/Co. Kerry	40%
Sussex	46%
Northumberland	47%
Aberdeen/Kincardine	59%
Norfolk	65%
Kent	66%
Yorkshire	68%

Table 3. Local variation in weekend bias in rare-passerine records, 1958-93. An asterisk indicates a site with an observatory.

Site	% excess at weekend
North Ronaldsay, Orkney*	1%
Fair Isle, Shetland*	9%
Cape Clear, Co. Cork*	14%
St Agnes, Scilly	19%
Dungeness, Kent*	27%
Portland, Dorset*	29%
Flamborough, Yorkshire	60%
Spurn, Yorkshire*	60%
Hauxley, Northumberland	85%
Holkham-Wells, Norfolk	103%

Is there weekend bias at observatories or on holiday islands?

Local variation is indicated in table 3, using the same species and time period as in table 2. The least bias is shown by islands, with or without an observatory; this might be expected, as these places are visited by birders on holiday, usually for periods of at least a week. East Coast migrant-‘hot-spots’, including an observatory site (Spurn), show a notable weekend bias, whereas South Coast sites with observatories are intermediate in this respect.

In order to examine these sites in more detail, rare-passerine totals at each are listed by day of first sighting (table 4). The pattern varied significantly from constant (the ‘expected’ value being the mean of the seven daily values): for Holkham, Spurn, Flamborough, Hauxley and, surprisingly, Fair Isle, there was a probability of greater than 95% that the daily totals were not evenly distributed*.

Islands show a predictably even distribution, but it is notable that both Fair Isle and St Agnes exhibit Sunday peaks, perhaps indicative of birders arriving on Saturdays and putting in greater effort on Sundays. It is also apparent that visitors to Fair Isle may have had enough rain and wind by Thursday to deter them from searching so intensively on that day. Mainland sites with observatories, although showing substantial weekend bias, had a more even distribution of records in midweek than those without observatories.

Table 4. Numbers of rare passerines recorded at different sites on each day of the week, 1958-93. An asterisk indicates a site with an observatory.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Chi-sq.
North Ronaldsay, Orkney*	35	22	34	31	25	31	29	4.5
Fair Isle, Shetland*	177	155	162	143	187	175	200	13.2
Cape Clear, Co. Cork*	24	20	25	21	17	26	26	3.1
St Agnes, Scilly	22	34	31	32	30	31	45	8.7
Dungeness, Kent*	13	12	11	11	11	16	17	2.9
Portland, Dorset*	22	19	25	14	19	33	25	9.8
Flamborough, Yorkshire	19	14	9	15	7	27	27	22.6
Spurn, Yorkshire*	19	20	22	22	22	46	42	24.4
Hauxley, Northumberland	6	2	5	5	6	12	15	16.9
Holkham-Wells, Norfolk	5	12	3	4	18	28	30	54.1

Is weekend bias more obvious among different species groups?

On the whole, weekend bias appears more pronounced among rare ducks than among rare waders and passerines (table 5). A possible explanation for this is that finding rare ducks requires time and patience: it frequently involves sifting through large flocks of common species for the elusive rarity, a practice which would be more commensurate with weekend birding.

How does weekend bias reveal the possible numbers of birds missed?

Assuming that no site is searched at 100% daily efficiency, the rarities found on any given day consist of: (1) a percentage of that day’s arrivals; plus (2) a percentage of the previous day’s arrivals which were not discovered then, but remained; plus (3) a (small) number which arrived even earlier and stayed on to the current day, eluding observers until then.

* $\chi^2 > 12.6$

Table 5. Level of weekend bias in records of ducks, waders and passerines, 1958-93.

County	% excess at weekend		
	Ducks	Waders	Passerines
Shetland	13%	- 5%	16%
Dorset	58%	31%	33%
Cornwall (excluding Scilly)	79%	46%	34%
Co. Cork/Co. Kerry	83%	58%	40%
Sussex	65%	65%	46%
Norfolk	50%	26%	65%
Kent	53%	66%	66%
Yorkshire	68%	43%	68%

We need to know, therefore, how long birds stay at a site and how efficient observers are at finding rare birds at different sites on different days of the week. Once this information is known, a mathematical model (using a spreadsheet on a computer) can be employed to try to replicate the figures for numbers of birds present at various sites on different days of the week. This involves estimating the true numbers which do arrive, and, from these figures, subtracting the numbers actually found; this will reveal how many are missed.

Model of numbers missed at sample sites

See Appendix for discussion of the model.

Armed with an assumption that, at well-watched sites, 90% of birds present on Sundays (including previous but as yet undetected arrivals) are located, and knowing approximately how long birds stay, we use an iterative process ('make a guess!') to determine how well watched the site is during the rest of the week. Using the model, we vary these figures until we get predicted daily figures which best fit those observed.

Spurn (fig. 1)

The 'best-fit' figures for Spurn indicate that 294 rare passerines have turned up, with 36% being found each weekday and 76% on Saturday. The accuracy of the model in this case is supported by the predicted reduction in the number found on Mondays compared with the rest of the 'working' week; increased coverage at the weekend means that many fewer birds arriving then remain undetected, to be found on subsequent days.

The model suggests that, over the 35-year period, an average total of 42 rarities arrived each day of the week. Of the 22 found on a weekday, 15 had arrived that day and around seven had arrived earlier (five of these on the previous day). Although Saturdays have a lower detection rate than Sundays, the higher Saturday total is due to the initial discovering of rarities not found before; around two-thirds of birds found on Saturdays had arrived during the three previous days. By contrast, 85% of 'Sunday birds' had arrived that day.

A predicted minimum of 30% of rare passerines reaching Spurn have been missed.

Fair Isle (fig. 2)

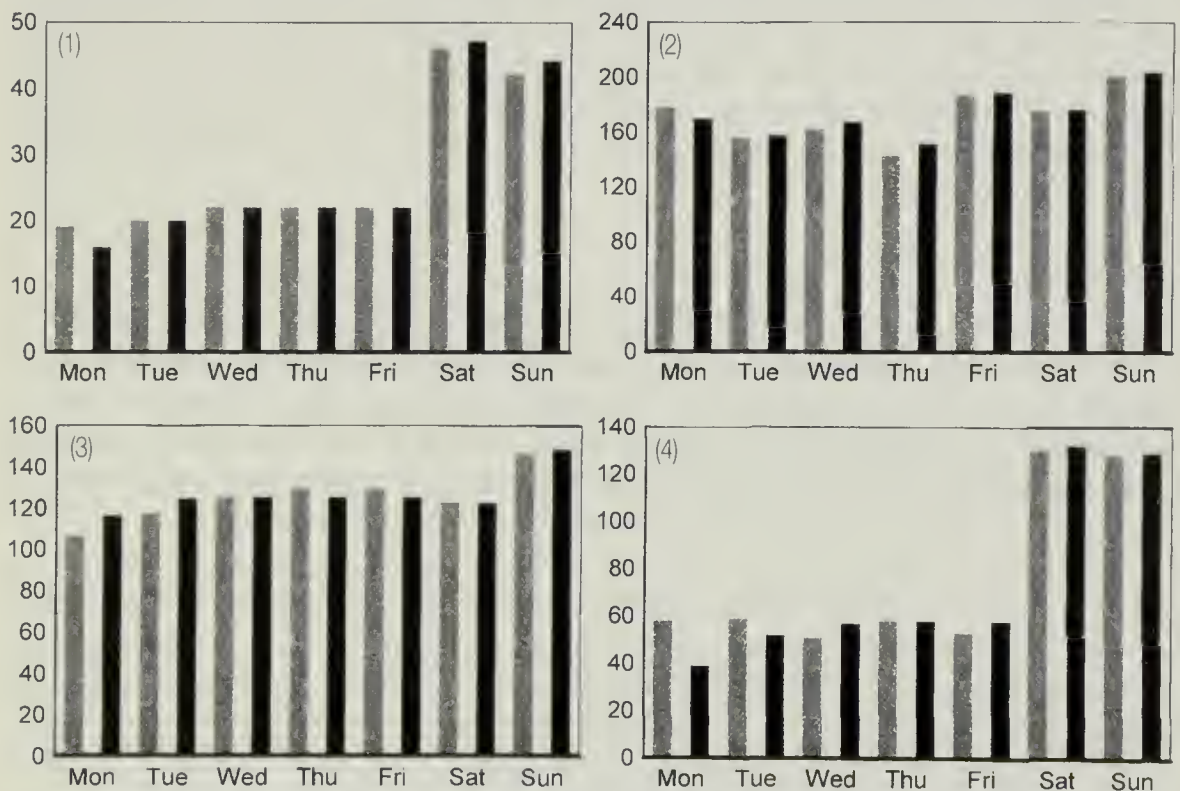
Fair Isle is wardened, and is also visited almost exclusively (apart from during 'twitches') as a long-stay holiday location. As expected, it does not show weekend bias in the manner of a mainland site, but nevertheless exhibits variation through the week.

A 'good fit' is obtained by assuming maximum bird-finding efficiency on Sundays, declining through the week to reach a minimum on Thursdays. A small increase in effort on Friday (the last day of the holiday) is well rewarded, as rarities are then discovered which arrived on Thursday, but were not located owing to lack of enthusiasm. The figures giving this fit were an average total of 195 birds arriving for each day of the week over the 35-year period; and efficiency of 90% for Sundays, 81% for Mondays, 72% for Tuesdays and Wednesdays, only 65% for Thursdays, but rising to 77% for Fridays and Saturdays.

These figures indicate that a minimum of 11% of rare passerines on Fair Isle are missed.

'Best fits' for other sites

The Isles of Scilly (fig. 3) show less weekday variation than does Fair Isle (fig. 2). The reduction in numbers of birds found on Mondays points to a very high finding efficiency on Sundays (about 92%). The model suggested slightly less bird-finding effort on Saturdays (76%) than on weekdays (78%). As with Fair Isle, at least 11% of rare passerines are missed, and it is probably reasonable to assume that the same figure holds for Cape Clear Island and North Ronaldsay.



Figs. 1-4. Observed (shaded) and predicted (solid) numbers of rare passerines on each day of the week: (1) at Spurn, Yorkshire, (2) on Fair Isle, Shetland, (3) in the Isles of Scilly, and (4) in Yorkshire, during 1958-93.

Spurn's lack of weekday variation made it the ideal mainland site to be modelled. Other mainland sites do not quite have sufficient numbers of records to be amenable to statistical analysis, and we have looked instead at certain counties and modelled their figures.

Fig. 4 shows the difference between observed and predicted figures for Yorkshire. Finding efficiencies are 90% for Sundays, 72% for Saturdays and 32% during the week. Over the 35 years, a total of 115 passerine rarities arrives for each day of the week. At best, as many as 40% of the county's rare passerines are missed. The model predicts, however, that many fewer are found on Mondays than is actually the case. This could be explained by more searching being done on Mondays than on other weekdays (in fact, one-third more is required to produce the same number of new birds). If this is as unlikely as it seems, the only solution is to decrease the total finding rate (including Sundays) and increase the number of arrivals. A much better fit is obtained with efficiencies of 50% on Sundays, 45% on Saturdays and 20% on weekdays. With these figures, 57% of individuals are missed: thus, no fewer than 725 rare passerines have eluded birders in Yorkshire since 1958.

A similar pattern holds for Norfolk and Kent. If 50% of birds present on Sundays are found, the model suggests that, in addition to the 435 records of sample species in Norfolk during 1958-93, a further 590 individuals went undiscovered. This is also around 57%. We can assume a broadly similar pattern along the whole British east coast. Even taking Shetland as a whole, as many as 44% may have been missed.

On the South Coast, the picture is basically similar. Neither Portland, Dorset, nor Dungeness, Kent, both of which have fairly even weekday figures with elevated totals at weekends, shows a reduction on Mondays: indicating that weekend coverage is incomplete. Assuming a 50% rather than 90% level for Sunday coverage, Dorset may miss 53% of its rare passerines, Sussex 56% and Cornwall 53%.

Other orders of birds

Passerines are particularly well suited to this type of model, and constitute the largest single category of rarities analysed (over 25%). Once a passerine has ceased to be seen it is usually deemed to have 'gone' (very few proven cases exist of passerines being relocated at places remote from their original discovery site), and few passerines remain for protracted periods, making analysis of numbers of individuals and their length of stay relatively easy. By contrast, some ducks linger for years, reappearing annually and moving around, being recorded only intermittently; raptors are frequently recorded as 'fly-overs', while seabirds are seldom seen for more than a matter of seconds; and many herons and storks move around the country.

Waders are quite amenable to analysis, as they show 'sensible' length-of-stay statistics, but there are considerable geographical differences. In the West, only around 40% of rare waders are recorded on one day only, whereas eastern counties show one-day rates of about 60%. A reasonable explanation is that most of the former are more likely to have flown across the Atlantic and to be in need of a recovery period, whereas those in the East include individuals which might be better considered to be on passage.

In western areas, an estimated 33% of rare waders (around 160 individuals) in Cos. Cork and Kerry have gone undetected; probably no more than a handful have been missed in Scilly, where daily totals show no detectable bias, with more discovered on Tuesdays than on other days of the week; and 25% (110 birds) have been missed in Cornwall. In the East, an estimated 30% (about 100) have been missed in Yorkshire, about 18% (75) in Norfolk, and at least 35% (100) in Kent. All these figures assume a 90% finding rate on Sundays.

Implications for the present

By applying the calculated percentages of unrecorded rarities to the current totals for selected orders of birds in various counties of Britain & Ireland in the five years 1990-94, we can reach an approximate figure for the minimum number of rarities missed each year.

Of 4,959 rare-bird records during 1990-94, 3,777 (755 per year) were ascribed to newly arrived individuals. Of these, 54.6% (2,063, or 413 per year) were passerines or near-passerines. This group can be broken down into geographical areas with different finding efficiencies (table 6).

Table 6. Average number of rare passerines and near-passerines recorded annually 1990-94, and estimated annual number eluding observers.

Area	Average no. recorded	% missed	Average no. missed
East Coast	155	57%	205
Fair Isle/N Ronaldsay	59	11%	7
Orkney/Shetland	76	45%	62
South Coast	53	53%	60
Scilly/Cape Clear	31	11%	4
Elsewhere	39	60%	58

The total number of rare passerines and near-passerines missed is estimated at around 400 per year, virtually the same as the number found. A similar ratio could be expected for waders (i.e. about 90-100 per year). Other groups, mostly of bigger birds, are probably not overlooked in such large numbers. Currently, about 68 rare herons and storks are found each year, 56 new ducks and geese, 62 raptors and 55 gulls and terns; in addition to this total of about 240 individuals, maybe a further 100 individuals are missed each year.

In summary, it can be estimated that approximately 800 rarities are overlooked in Britain & Ireland every year. We must emphasise that this estimate is conservative, with no allowance made for 'new' areas being better covered than before, or for existing popular areas receiving more intensive coverage at different times of the year. Our estimate is based on a pattern drawn from existing data. Go out and find these missing rarities!

Length of stay of rare birds

This is a vast subject. Fig. 5 shows the lengths of stay of rare passerines in Scilly and on Fair Isle and of waders in Scilly. A 'one-day bird' is defined as an individual recorded at a site on one date only; a 'two-day bird' is one recorded

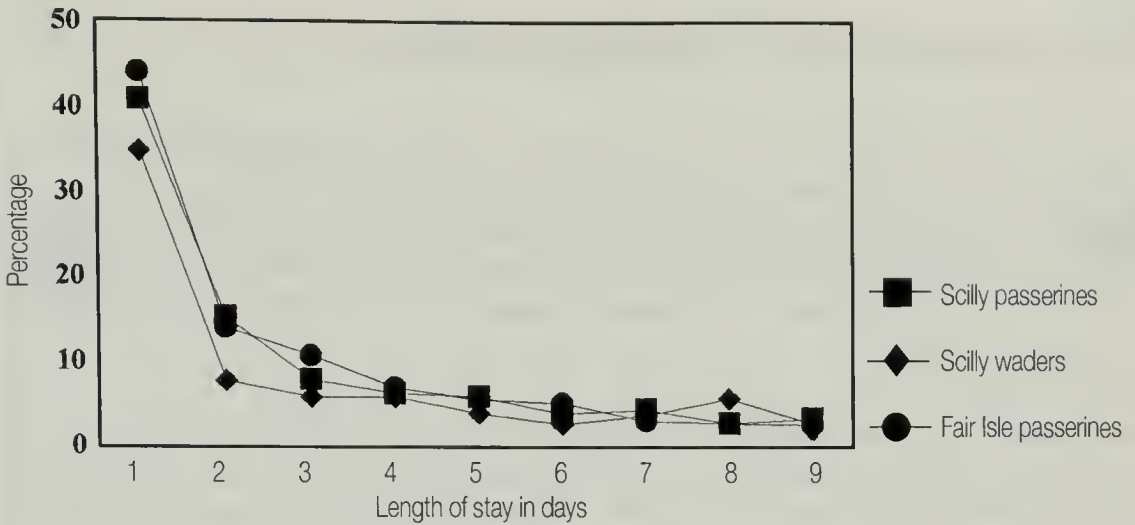


Fig. 5. Length of stay of rare birds during 1958-93.

on two (and only two) consecutive dates; and so on.

At well-watched sites, approximately 40% are recorded as one-day birds. The figure is much higher (up to 70%) at less well-covered sites, indicating that the latter may lose track of rarities more quickly than well-watched sites (and, of course, that fewer are found on their actual day of arrival). To put it another way, 60% of birds arriving remain beyond one day; of these, about 70% stay until the next day, 70% of the latter stay for a further day, and so on. We can assume that our experience of well-watched sites is an approximation of the actual situation.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Ray Augur for his comments on an earlier draft, and for kindly showing me full details of his own model and tests he had made on it.

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Appendix. Model of birds missed at sample sites

For a given site, the numbers of individual rarities recorded on each day of the week since 1958 are known. The fact that these vary through the week indicates that some birds must be missed, as there is no reason to suppose that birds preferentially arrive on any particular day of the week. Each day's total consists of the percentage of those rarities present which was recorded.

Those recorded on any day consist of the fraction which arrive that day and are detected, plus a fraction of the birds which arrived undetected the previous day and stayed on, plus a (small) number which arrived on days before that but eluded observers until the current day, and so on. (It is in fact useful arithmetically to go back only four or five days.)

The approximate figure for birds remaining from one day to the next can be determined (see above), and at well-watched sites a reasonable guess can be made of the level of bird-finding efficiency when at its peak. If this peak is assumed, then this dictates arithmetically the number of birds which arrive on the peak day (and hence every other day). The only other numbers which must then be tinkered with are the bird-finding efficiency figures for the remaining days.

The working assumption is that, at well-watched sites (such as those used as examples), 90% of rare birds present on Sundays are found. This assumption is completely arbitrary, but it seems a reasonable guess for sites of, say, 1 square mile (260 ha) in extent being watched by several dozen observers.

Based on the author's experience on St Agnes, Scilly, where 20-30 birders cover the island every day in October, very few birds are seen by only one person on a given day. This indicates that relatively few are missed. In practice, it was found that, given a 90% rate for Sundays, there was only a handful of values for the rest of the week which would fit the actual statistics.



MONTHLY MARATHON



The lower of the two flying raptors that formed the sixth stage (*Brit. Birds* 89: plate 188) was correctly identified as Red Kite *Milvus milvus* by 95% of entrants (the others naming it as Black Kite *M. migrans*), but the upper bird caused more of a problem, being named as Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* (73%), Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* (10%), Black Kite (7%), Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus* (6%) and Bonelli's Eagle *H. fasciatus* (4%). The majority view was correct. This Red Kite and Booted Eagle were photographed by Martyn Brewer on Menorca, Spain, in June 1987. None of the three leaders—Stephen Foster, David McAdams and Richard Patient—faltered at this hurdle, and they still lead the field; there are a further 81 contestants with five correct answers, 110 with four, 131 with three, 165 with two and 136 with one.

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▲ 7. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 128. Eighth stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 66), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th April 1997.



CONSERVATION RESEARCH NEWS

Compiled by Mark Avery



This feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports the most interesting recent scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic species.

Introduced species and the Azores Bullfinch

Dr Jaime Ramos of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology in Oxford studied the Azores Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula murina* (or *Pyrrhula murina* according to some authors) at its only World site: the mountains of the island of São Miguel in the Azores. In his three-year study, funded by the RSPB, he found that the World population numbered 60-200 pairs. 'Priolos', as they are known in the Azores, were rarely found in the lower, cultivated areas of the island, which look quite similar to the habitats of Bullfinches in Northwest Europe, but instead are found in the few remaining areas of upland native

laurel forest. A botanical cocktail of introduced plants threatens the native vegetation and thus the Azores Bullfinches. Although Azores Bullfinches feed preferentially on some introduced plants, these species are out-competing native ones on which the Azores Bullfinches depend to a great extent at certain times of the year. Dr Ramos suggests that better management of the remaining areas of native flora and control of some introduced plant species are necessary to conserve this island endemic, which was once so common on São Miguel that it was regarded as a pest.

RAMOS, J. A. 1996. Introduction of exotic tree species as a threat to the Azores Bullfinch population. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 33: 710-722.

'Farming and Birds in Europe'

This book (edited by Dr Debbie Pain and Dr Mike Pienkowski of the RSPB) includes a series of case-studies. For example, Dr Dick Potts describes the Game Conservancy Trust's excellent study of how changes in cereal farming have affected Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix* and contributed to their 80% population decline since the 1930s. Additional mortality, especially from chick starvation, caused the decline. Experiments showed that shortages of insect food were brought about by use of herbicides and allowed the Game Conservancy to develop the technique of leaving unsprayed headlands around the edges of fields (conservation headlands), which if widely adopted would lead to increases in Grey

Partridge numbers. Also, Dr Andy Evans of the RSPB assesses the value of mixed farming for seed-eating birds such as Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirius*. A Cirl Bunting territory would ideally include both extensively managed pasture with abundant invertebrates such as grasshoppers (for nestling food) and arable land which produces winter stubble-fields rich in broadleaved weeds (for winter feeding). Over the last 50 years, mixed farming has been lost from much of the UK and not surprisingly the Cirl Bunting has also declined. This book contains several other case studies from throughout the European Union and discusses the ways in which they can aid bird conservation.

PAIN, D. J., & PIENKOWSKI, M. W. (eds.) 1996. *Farming and Birds in Europe: the Common Agricultural Policy and its implications for bird conservation*. London.

Dr Mark Avery, Research Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL



OBITUARY

Bobby Tulloch MBE (1929-1996)

In his introduction to *Bobby Tulloch's Shetland* (1988), the late Jo (Lord) Grimond tells the story of God discussing with St Michael the latter's World tour of inspection, and saying to him '... when you are in Shetland do not forget to stop in Mid Yell and pay my regards to Mr Bobby Tulloch. I regard him as one of my successes.'

Like everyone who had the good fortune to do so, the Archangel would have found meeting Bobby on his home patch an unforgettable experience. Nearly 30 years have passed since it first happened to me, but the memories of our first full day in the field are still very fresh in my mind. With the *sinmer dim*, we must have been out for about 20 hours non-stop, starting with Fetlar, going on to Hermaness and finishing up with a visit to a colony of Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*. We visited the Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca*, watched some Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* and saw countless seabirds, but it is not the birds that I recall most vividly from that magical day. Instead, I remember Bobby catching a Common Seal *Phoca vitulina* pup to show me, and 'calling up' a Common Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* that came and swam with us alongside the

boat. In between teaching me local bird names and much other Shetland lore besides, he told countless stories of people he'd met and places he'd been to. I have now forgotten why, but he also recited (in a slightly dodgy Yukon-type accent) lengthy extracts from Robert Service's *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*. We sang, too, with the uninhibited gusto you can only really manage in a small boat well out of earshot of the rest of the World.

It was often like that with Bobby. He was one of the best field naturalists I have ever met, and a birdwatcher in the real sense of that now somewhat unfashionable word, but he was never that bane of our hobby, the bird bore. There were always so many other things to talk about, and the laughter and the impish humour were never far away. He had few equals as a raconteur, and was frequently the butt of his own stories. I saw hard-nosed, horny-handed RSPB wardens reduced to tears of helpless laughter by his tale of



▲ 8. Bobby Tulloch and his humour (a compilation by Bobby Tulloch himself)

the time he and Dennis Coutts dressed in an old pantomime horse in their attempts to photograph the Fetlar Snowy Owls.

Dennis has said of Bobby that he was 'the most versatile person I have known'. He was an accomplished musician on guitar, fiddle and accordion, much in demand at social gatherings of all kinds; he often augmented the standard repertoire with his own hilarious songs and poems. As a photographer (self-taught, as with most things to which he turned his hand), he quickly became outstanding. It was the combination of his personality, his talents and his huge enthusiasm that made him one of the most brilliant and sought-after lecturers of my time. He only had to appear on the programme to double audiences at bird clubs and RSPB groups and he easily filled the Royal Festival Hall. In every way, he was a wonderful ambassador for Shetland: I find it hard to imagine that his islands could ever have a better one.

Born at North Aywick in Shetland, Bobby Tulloch left school at 14 and became a baker, a trade he was to follow during his army National Service, where he became a staff sergeant in charge of a bakery in Hong Kong. But he yearned for other things and when, in 1964, the late George Waterston offered him the post of Shetland Representative of the RSPB, he jumped at the chance. He served the Society with distinction for the next 21 years before accepting early retirement. It would be simplistic (and unfair) to say that the RSPB made Bobby Tulloch what he was: the job helped, of course, but it worked both ways—the Society gained enormously from having such a talented and popular man on its books.

His visits south were always looked forward to by his RSPB colleagues. He made our mouths water with his tales of the Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* which visited his bird-table one winter, and of the Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* in his garden. There would be the latest humorous story too, such as when he received a phone call from a neighbour who was puzzled by a bird which had turned up near her house: it was bigger than a sheep, she insisted. When he went to look, Bobby found it was a Common Crane *Grus grus*—when she had said 'bigger', the lady had really meant 'taller'. I recall his delight when he reported seeing his very first Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, and when I showed him his first Little Owl *Athene noctua*—and how he felt claustrophobic in an English wood. On our visit to Havergate Island, he found a fellow sea-dog in the late Reg Partridge: they spent ages discussing different kinds of home-mixed anti-fouling paint, Bobby being as fascinated by the Suffolk variety as he was by the Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* we had gone to see.

Ornithologically, Bobby's crowning moment came when he found that Snowy Owl nest on Fetlar in 1967 (see *Brit. Birds* 61: 119-132), an event which brought him to the fore and undoubtedly played a part in shaping his future. It was in the 1960s that he took it upon himself to round up the records of the then-tiny team of Shetland birdwatchers and to publish an annual bird report. Four of these were produced before, in December 1973, at a meeting in Dennis Coutts's shop in Lerwick, it was decided to form the Shetland Bird Club. Snow prevented Bobby from attending, but he learned later that he had become, more or less overnight, both County Recorder and Club President. He held the latter post until his death.

Looking back, retirement seems to have been a mere blip in Bobby Tulloch's life. He seemed forever busy, serving on the Sullom Voe oil-terminal advisory

group, lecturing on National Trust for Scotland cruises, and leading tours for Island Holidays. His travels took him far and wide—for example, to Novaya Zemlya, Jan Mayen, Svalbard, Norway, Iceland, the Mediterranean, the Seychelles, Alaska and the Falklands. Shetland, though, remained the hub of his existence, with the birds he had known and loved since boyhood.

His 'formal' ornithological publications were very few, but he wrote *A Guide to Shetland's Birds* (with Fred Hunter, 1970), *Migrations: travels of a naturalist* (1991) and *A Guide to Shetland's Breeding Birds* (1992), and provided the photographic illustrations for Scott & Palmer's *The Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Shetland Islands* (1987). Beyond any doubt, though, his finest book was the superbly illustrated and beautifully written *Bobby Tulloch's Shetland*, which won him the annual Shetland literary prize in 1988. Semi-autobiographical, it gives us a wonderful insight into the world of a remarkable man.

After a series of strokes, Bobby died peacefully in hospital in Lerwick. He had enriched many people's lives and made many friends: I suspect that their affectionate memories of him would mean more to him than all the many plaudits he received in his lifetime. We could have headed this obituary 'Robert John Tulloch', but Bobby was 'Bobby' to everyone, and we feel sure that he would have approved the affectionate use of his nickname. To say that he is sorely missed seems so very inadequate. But it's true.

MIKE EVERETT



REVIEWS

Atlas Zimního Rozšíření Ptáků V České Republice 1982-85.

By Vladimír Bejček, Karel Šťastný & Karel Hudec.

Nakladatelství a Vydavatelství H&H, Praha, 1995. 270 pages; 45 line-drawings; 140 distribution maps. ISBN 80-85787-94-6. Paperback. Price not given.

Although otherwise wholly in Czech, 'The Atlas of Wintering Birds in the Czech Republic, 1982-85' has a very useful four-page section in English, giving all the essential background, including the methodology. With an average of 1½ pages each, the 183 species wintering in the Czech Republic each have a full-page-width dot-distribution map and, for those which also breed in the Czech Republic, a small version of the 1973-77 breeding-distribution map taken from *Atlas Hnízdního Rozšíření Ptáků v ČSSR 1973/77* (Šťastný, Rendík & Hudec, 1987).

Whereas the Czech Breeding Bird Atlas was qualitative, this Wintering Atlas is quantitative. The 700 fieldworkers used the method which was tried in winter 1981/82 in Britain, but was then discarded in favour of a more sophisticated method involving analysis of observers' raw counts. The Czech method involved observers not only in counting birds which they saw, but also in estimating the proportion which they had found within the areas of each habitat visited, and in assessing the proportion of each habitat which had not been visited within their recording area. Each species was

then allocated to one of five orders of magnitude ('1' = 1-10 individuals up to '5' = 10,001 or more). Although involving considerable observer interpretation, it is very unlikely that many estimates were 'out' by more than one order of magnitude, and on the swings-and-roundabouts principle, the general distributions shown by the maps should be accurate (and far more valuable than mere presence/absence would have been). Inevitably, however, the quantitative winter distribution maps are less solidly blocked in than are the qualitative breeding distribution maps, so comparison of the latter with the former inevitably gives the impression that there are fewer birds in winter than in summer, even for species which are wholly resident. It is, however, very helpful to have the breeding distributions alongside. Comparison shows, for instance, that Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* are

numerous and widespread in winter, with a range well beyond the breeding areas, whereas all but a handful of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* vacate the country in winter: taking the mid point of each order of magnitude (e.g. taking the 101-1,000 of '3' to be 550), the respective wintering populations are 3,800,000 Rooks but only 26,000 Common Starlings.

This book is, of course, an essential addition to any serious ornithological library covering European birds, and, like its predecessor dealing with the breeding birds, is an essential base for future studies. The major impression is, however, the achievement of the organisers, the observers and the compilers in producing this documentation of bird distributions in the extreme conditions prevailing in a Central European winter.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Atlas Saisonnier des Oiseaux du Québec.

By André Cyr & Jacques Larivée.

Presses de l'Université de Sherbrooke and Société de Loisir Ornithologique de l'Estrie, Sherbrooke, 1995. 711 pages; 303 line-drawings; 1,170 maps. ISBN 2-7622-0106-3. Paperback Can\$/US\$56.95.

The maps for the 303 bird species included in this atlas are based on more than three million records provided by 250,000 checklists accumulated during the 46 years 1950-95. Using faintly shaded, heavily shaded and black squares, the distributions show frequency, on a different scale for each species. There is a standard double-page-spread format, the left-hand pages with text wholly in French (though with the addition of English bird names) and decorative black-and-white illustrations, by a variety of artists, and the right-hand pages each with four maps, for spring, summer, autumn and winter. The definition of the four seasons is (like the frequency symbols) adjusted for each species to accord with its

known migration periods (e.g. 'spring' is 16th February to 31st March for Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*, but 1st-31st May for Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina*).

Transparent overlays are provided showing coverage, principal towns, principal rivers, geographical regions, temperature, rainfall and so on. As with all bird atlases, there is abundant material here for everyone interested to make their own interpretations and discoveries: a book to be perused as well as used for reference. How good to see the observations accumulated during thousands of hours of fieldwork being put to such good use.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

The Birds of Hungary.

By Gerard Gorman.

Christopher Helm (Publishers), London, 1996. 192 pages; 50 line-drawings; 363 maps. ISBN 0-7136-4235-1. £19.99.

These days, it is perhaps unusual to find that the author of a national avifauna is not a national of the country concerned; Gerard Gorman has, however, lived and worked in Hungary for the last ten years and the list of Hungarian ornithologists acknowledged shows the extent to which he has integrated

into the country's society. The advantage to non-Hungarians is, of course, that the text is not only in English, but is also in very readable English.

Of the 363 bird species on the Hungarian List, approximately half a page is given on average to all the regularly occurring species,

with one substantial paragraph summarising history, habitat, habits and so on, followed by one or two lines each on status in Hungary, status internationally, distribution, and timing. For these main species, there is also usually a distribution map with three different shadings, for residents, summer visitors and winter/passage visitors. There is a scattering of attractive line-drawings by John Davis throughout this part of the book. A 22-page separate section on 'Rare visitors and vagrants' also includes maps, with vagrant records indicated by dots in the actual locations. Only those species recognised by the Hungarian Rarities Committee have been included in this section, but it is noted that some published

records from the past were not adequately scrutinised or even examined at all.

This book is valuable as an up-to-date work of reference, but perhaps its greatest value will be in prompting observers with unpublished past information in their notebooks to send in corrections to the text or amendments to the maps, and to encourage today's birdwatchers to confirm, amend or expand upon the information by increased fieldwork. The broad-brushstroke distribution maps are, for instance, in contrast to the precision of dot-distribution atlas maps produced by some other East European countries.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

A Birdwatcher's Guide to Turkey.

By Ian Green & Nigel Moorhouse.

Prion Ltd, Huntingdon, 1995. 122 pages; 15 line-drawings; 30 maps.
ISBN 1-871104-05X. Paperback £10.95.

The latest publication of these popular birdwatchers' guides deals with one of the most geographically and ornithologically diverse countries within the Western Palearctic. The authors have chosen to divide the country into seven main regions as outlined by the Ornithological Society of the Middle East in its journal, *Sandgrouse* (1986). Each region is given a brief introduction to the habitats and their associated birds, followed by the sites themselves, which are then clearly subheaded into sections on location, accommodation, strategy, birds, and other wildlife. A map accompanies each of the main

sites and these are, in general, detailed and accurate, although the clarity of some could have been improved by highlighting key areas. Useful information is provided on people, climate, food, travel and so on. The book concludes with a selected bird list featuring the specialities, with brief notes on their status, as well as a full species checklist.

If you are contemplating a visit to this superb country, whether as a 'quiet' family holiday or as an intensive birding trip, I urge you to go out and purchase this excellent guide.

STEVE WILLIAMS

Where to Watch Birds in Holland, Belgium & Northern France.

By Arnoud van den Berg & Dominique Lafontaine.

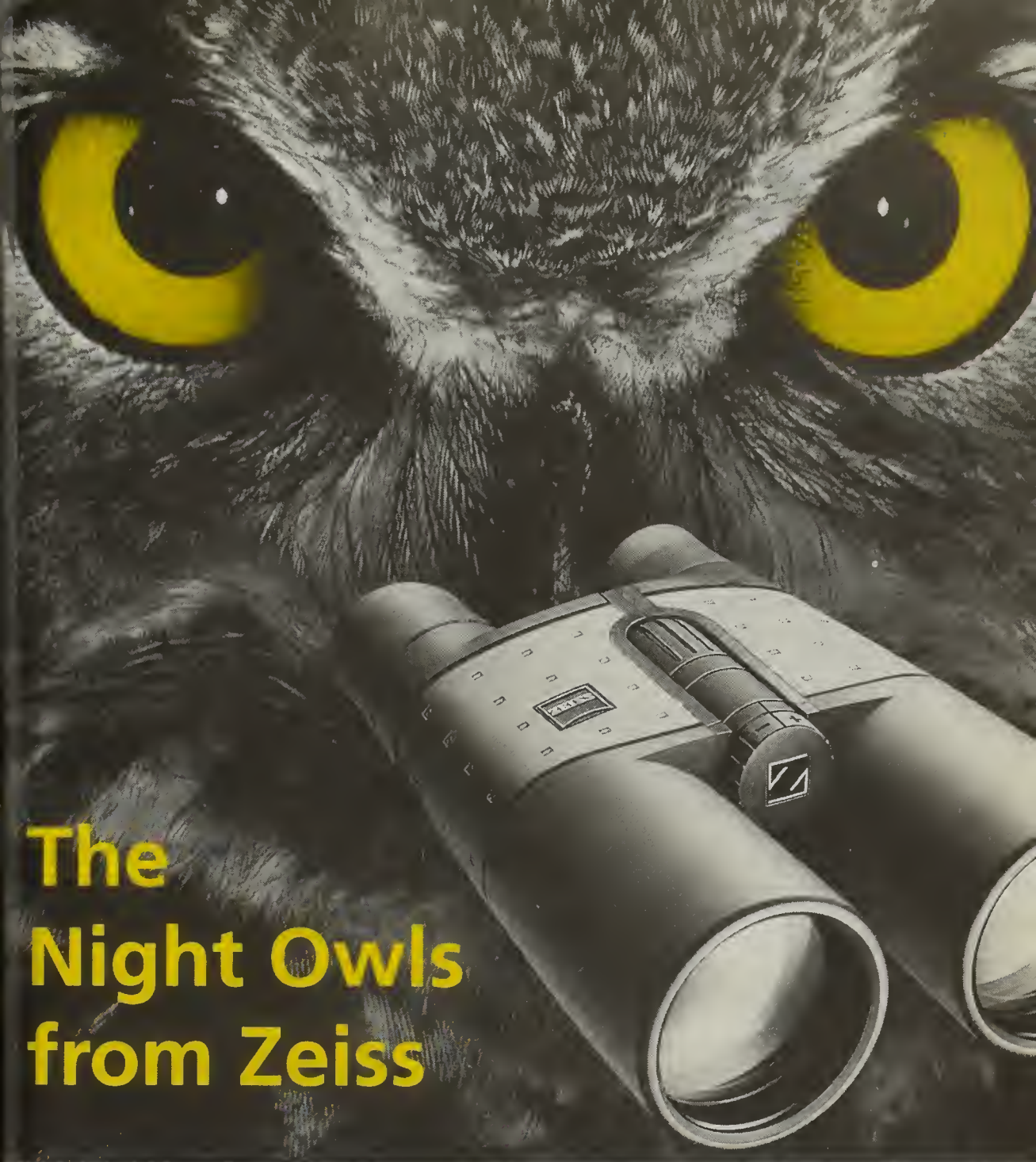
Hamlyn, London, 1996. 216 pages incorporating 6 colour plates. ISBN 0-600-57977-8. £16.99.

With all the localities included in this useful new guide no more than a four-hour drive from the Channel ports, this is quite the most interesting, and intriguing, of the Hamlyn *Where to Watch* series. What is more, this guide has the stamp of authority, as it has been written by two local experts: Arnoud B. van den Berg for the Netherlands, and Dominique Lafontaine for Belgium and Northern France. Details of more than 180 sites are provided, and it is notable that several of the best French sites close to the Channel, not mentioned in *Where to Watch Birds in France*, are included. The ornithological attractions of the Netherlands are better

known than those of northern France, but even regular visitors are likely to learn of new sites. Belgium also has much to offer, and localities are given for such elusive breeding species as Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia* and Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus*.


The price is high for a paperback; it could have been cheaper if the publisher had not decided to include six unnecessary colour plates. Alternatively, the money would have been much better spent on providing an alphabetical site-index, more maps, and a hardback binding.

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A Checklist of the Birds of Chile. By Steve N. G. Howell. (American Birding Association, Colorado Springs, 1996. ISBN 1-878788-35-3. Paperback. \$4.95) Checklist with eight tick columns, English, scientific and Spanish bird names, and codes of status and abundance (c common, f fairly common, u uncommon, r rare or l local) within each of four biogeographic regions.

JTRS

A Birder's Guide to Florida. By Bill Pranty. (American Birding Association, Colorado, USA, 1996. 388 pages. ISBN 1-878788-04-3. Spiral-bound paperback \$18.95) This is a really practical guide with remarkably detailed descriptions of a wide range of sites. It has sections on the history and habitats of this great birding area. There is a fold-out colour map and species lists, not only of birds, but also of amphibians, reptiles and mammals.

The size and weight make this book more appropriate for the car glove-compartment than a jacket pocket, and, whereas the 'comb binding' makes the pages easy to turn, there is also a danger that the pages and the colour map could become detached in the field.

PETER HOLDEN

Bird Songs and Calls of Britain and Northern Europe. By Geoff Sample. (HarperCollins, London, 1996. 128 pages; 2 CDs. ISBN 0-00-220037-6. £19.99) There are no illustrations in this, the latest of the famous Collins Field Guides, but the text is accompanied by two CDs which have recordings of 151 species.

Nine pages set the scene with a readable account of the terminology and the purpose of bird songs and calls, followed by a 20-page description of the contents of the CDs. The remainder of the book is devoted to descriptions of the songs and calls of 242 species arranged in systematic order, with the voice of Geoff Sample interjecting to identify each new species, which can be found easily through the CD numbering system.

This field guide is, however, aimed more at the beginner than the expert: some of the songs and calls are very brief, and less-common calls are often missing. So, too,

are many species: Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* is included, but not Black-throated *G. arctica*; Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, but not Black Redstart *P. ochruros*; Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, but not Firecrest *R. ignicapillus*. Like Oliver, I was left wanting more.

PETER HOLDEN

Finches, Bowerbirds & Other Passerines of Australia: National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife. Edited by Ronald Strahan. (HarperCollins, London, 1996. 301 pages; 182 colour plates; 74 distribution maps. ISBN 0-207-18880-7. £47.50) This is the final volume of ten superb photographic books on the birds of Australia (though the first one to be submitted for review in *British Birds*). The collection of photographs has been compiled from the work of many of Australia's top bird-photographers and the quality of reproduction is excellent. The accompanying text is also very detailed and the whole series provides an excellent photographic companion to the more traditional *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* that is currently in production. The whole series can be highly recommended, though the price is likely to put off those without a serious interest in Australia's birds.

DAVID FISHER

Top Birding Spots in Britain & Ireland. By David Tipling. (HarperCollins, London, 1996. 320 pages. ISBN 0-00220035-X. Paperback £9.99) Subtitled 'The 130 Best Places to go Birdwatching', this book truly gives the 'feel' of what many of the places will be like, through the inclusion of photographs of places and some of the birds, with 150 helpful little maps. Keep it in the glove compartment of your car.

JTRS

Sealife: a complete guide to the marine environment. By Geoffrey Waller. (Pica Press, Mountfield, 1996. 504 pages. ISBN 1-873403 26-7. £30.00) Although about 15% of this book is devoted to seabirds, birdwatchers and ornithologists are most likely to purchase it for its comprehensive treatment of groups with which they are less familiar: everything from microscopic plankton to whales. The book's subtitle genuinely does not exaggerate the comprehensive and authoritative coverage.

JTRS

ALSO RECEIVED

Feather Reports: a chronicle of bird life from the pages of *The Times*. By Derwent May. (Robson Books, London, 1996. 184 pages. ISBN 1-86105-016-X. £12.95)

Bird Sounds of Bolivia/Sonidos de Aves de Bolivia. CD-ROM for Microsoft Windows. By Sjoerd Mayer. (Bird Songs International BV, Westernland, 1996. ISBN 90-75838-01-8. US\$99.00)



MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS



▲ 9. Mystery photograph 203A.



▲ 10. Mystery photograph 203B.

203 Within the Western Palearctic, Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata* has declined markedly in Spain and has relinquished its former breeding areas in Algeria and Tunisia; it is now restricted to extreme southwestern Spain and northern Morocco. The similar, far more widely distributed Common Coot *F. atra* also, however, frequents these regions at all seasons. This apparent identification drawback often provides a unique opportunity to compare the two species and to study their differences. Mystery photograph A shows a Red-knobbed Coot in Morocco in January 1990 and mystery photograph B shows a Common Coot in Norfolk in November 1994; both photographs were taken by Robin Chittenden.

The two name-giving bumps above the frontal shield of Red-knobbed Coot are a diagnostic feature. In comparison with those on adults in spring and summer, however, those on juveniles are insignificant, and those on first-winters and on adults in autumn and winter are smaller and less colourful. Even on adults in the breeding season, they are highly variable between individuals, both in size and in colour, ranging from very small to quite substantial, and from dull purplish-red to clear scarlet. Neither their size nor their colour is eye-catching, except at close range, and their inconspicuousness at longer distances places a greater emphasis on other characters, notably profile and the shape of the frontal shield.

Profiles of birds vary with mood and movement, and coots are no exception. Nevertheless, Red-knobbed Coot and Common Coot not infrequently display their own distinctive profiles. In comparison, Red-knobbed Coot has a less deep and apparently more downcurved bill owing to the lower mandible's slightly concave bottom edge, a decidedly smaller head in relation to body size and a clearly thinner and sometimes longer-looking neck. Its rather triangular head shape, which is enhanced by the presence of the knobs and the shape of the frontal shield, is created by a relatively steeper and higher forehead with the

highest point of the crown being immediately above the shield, and a very long and gently curving nape. Common Coot shows either a comparatively rounded head, which is highest centrally, or a flat-topped head, in both cases with the forehead and nape possessing similar profiles. On the water, Red-knobbed Coot's body is normally relatively flat and slightly forward-sloping, with the lowest point at the base of the neck and the highest point towards the tail, and thus somewhat rectangular-looking. The body of Common Coot is usually more rounded and highest centrally, with the lowest point at the tail.

The white frontal shield of Red-knobbed Coot is trapeziform. It is broadest at the top, where it is often slightly indented, and narrows evenly downwards. It is only fractionally less wide than the pale bill where the two meet, and this ample contiguousness gives it a substantial look when viewed from the front. From the side, however, it shows only as a narrow, parallel-sided strip which is confined to the forehead. The white frontal shield of Common Coot is oval, with a rounded top and a narrow base where it meets the bill, giving the impression head-on of a rather weak shield only insecurely attached to the bill. From the side, though, its bulging shape renders it more visible than that of the rarer species and, in the breeding season at least, it extends onto the forecrown on many individuals. Considering the black, rather than the white, the difference in frontal-shield shape manifests itself most obviously in the different shape of the loreal feathering where the bill meets the shield. This takes the form of a gentle bulge on Red-knobbed Coot and an intrusive, sharp point on Common Coot.

In comparison with Common Coot, Red-knobbed Coot is slightly larger, with longer wings, generally darker plumage and a blue-grey tone to the bill. It lacks Common Coot's white tips to the secondaries and yellow tone to the legs: when discernible, these are useful supporting characters. The identification of a Red-knobbed Coot can normally be achieved, however, by close attention to the shape of its frontal shield and its profile, supplemented at close range, of course, by its red knobs.

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LOOKING BACK

Twenty-five years ago, in March 1972: 'An astonishing influx, quite without precedent in recent years' of Gyr Falcons *Falco rusticolus*, with records from seven localities, in Anglesey, Cornwall, Devon, Surrey and Sussex, during the month. There were Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* in Devon, Glamorgan and Scilly at the same time, the first in Britain outside Shetland since 1968. (*Brit. Birds* 66: 339, 344)



NOTES

Grey Heron exploiting behaviour of Great Cormorant, and attempting to rob it

On 19th February 1991, near Flixton, Suffolk, we were watching a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* walking along the muddy margin of the River Waveney. The surrounding land was covered by about 20 cm of snow and all ponds and lakes were frozen. A Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* swam slowly upstream, diving continually. As it drew level with the heron, the latter changed direction and followed it, repeatedly darting at something in the water. Although I did not see it catch anything, the heron appeared to be taking advantage of fish flushed towards the bank by the swimming cormorant. The two disappeared upstream, still in association.

On the following day, a Great Cormorant suddenly appeared in mid-river with an eel *Anguilla anguilla* in its beak. A Grey Heron immediately flew towards it and repeatedly attacked it with its feet, seemingly trying to get the cormorant to drop the eel rather than steal it directly from the latter's bill. The cormorant dived repeatedly, but was followed by the flying heron; eventually, it changed direction underwater and took flight immediately on surfacing. The heron gave up the chase.

R. E. BATTY and L. FORBES

Sunfields, Rectory Terrace, Pulham Market, Diss, Norfolk IP21 4SZ

Grey Heron catching and swallowing Blackbird

On 20th February 1991, near Flixton, Suffolk, we were watching a regularly well-stocked birdtable from inside a cottage, looking down a 45° slope towards the River Waveney about 40 m away. There was a covering of snow on the ground and all nearby standing water was icebound. A Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* occasionally walked by on mud at the edge of the still-flowing river. Tits *Parus* were on the birdtable, with a couple of Blackbirds *Turdus merula* and Hedge Accentors *Prunella modularis* feeding on scraps beneath it. A Grey Heron started to walk purposefully up the slope, its head sunk into its shoulders, but none of the birds around the table took any notice of it. When it reached the table, it suddenly lunged at the nearest Blackbird, an adult male, ran halfway down the slope, shook its victim a few times until it appeared to be dead, and swallowed it. Despite almost continuous watching until the snow melted a few days later, this behaviour was not repeated, although the heron, or others, still patrolled the mud along the unfrozen river.

R. E. BATTY and L. FORBES

Sunfields, Rectory Terrace, Pulham Market, Diss, Norfolk IP21 4SZ

Grey Heron catching Common Starling in flight

On 23rd May 1992, at Shibdon Pond LNR, Tyne & Wear, I observed a Grey

Heron *Ardea cinerea* take a Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* in mid-air. The starling had initially attracted attention (both mine and the heron's) by emitting a loud alarm 'squawk', probably after being attacked by a nearby Magpie *Pica pica*. As the call sounded, the heron, which had been roosting in willows *Salix* in the centre of the pond, stretched its neck and gazed in the direction of the call; almost immediately, it leaped from its perch and rose on a shallow upward trajectory, presumably to connect with the starling. The point of capture was hidden by tree branches, but the event was marked by a loud alarm call from the starling, and by the heron immediately swooping down to its original perch with its victim, calling incessantly, dangling by the neck from its bill. The heron proceeded to squeeze the starling until its struggles ceased, before dipping it into the water until its plumage was thoroughly saturated. It then attempted to swallow the prey, a feat which it did not manage while under observation (approximately 20 minutes); the starling's wings seemed to be proving an insurmountable problem, protruding on each side of the heron's bill and catching on its gape. I have observed Grey Herons attack and, occasionally, take birds, but I was surprised to find the species capable of the successful capture of such a prey item by this totally unlikely 'flycatching' technique.

KEITH BOWEY

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EDITORIAL COMMENT J. Hancock & J. Kushlan (1984, *The Herons Handbook*), discussing the feeding methods of herons (Ardeidae) in general, termed this technique 'Aerial Flycatching', but did not mention it specifically for any West Palearctic species. Mark Keighley and Andrew Hall (*Brit. Birds* 88: 423) described a Grey Heron capturing a hirundine in flight, after several failed attempts: the hirundine was one of a large flock feeding over open water, and the heron, rather than descending to drown its prey, continued along the same flight path.

Long-tailed Ducks plunge-diving

At 07.30 GMT on 20th February 1979, in good light with little wind and a calm sea, we were looking north over the sea about 100 m east of the mouth of the River Spey, Grampian. A number of ducks were on the sea, including about 45 Long-tailed Ducks *Clangula hyemalis*. Our attention was drawn to what was, to us, an unusual cooing sound to our left: a female Long-tailed Duck was flying east closely pursued by three males, all moving parallel to the shoreline about 100 m out and about 3 m above the water. Suddenly, the female dived into the sea at an angle of 30°, with her wings swept back, rather in the manner of a Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*. The males did likewise, but the female quickly surfaced and took flight; by the time the males got going again, she had a distinct advantage in distance. *BWP* (vol. 1) makes no reference to Long-tailed Ducks diving other than from the surface.

R. E. BATTY and N. A. BELL

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr M. A. Ogilvie has commented: 'If this was a typical courtship pursuit-flight, then landing on the water is quite a usual feature; the

dive could have been almost accidental.' *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas* (vol. 3) mentions that Long-tailed Ducks occasionally dive directly from flight and may also take flight immediately on surfacing (see also, e.g., *Brit. Birds* 7: 22 and *The Handbook* vol. 3).

Turnstones feeding on fry

On 21st March 1993, from a boat at Dockyard, Bermuda, I watched a flock of eight Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* standing on the jetty alongside. One by one, they would hover about 60 cm above the sea and then drop to take small fry, probably Reef Silverside *Hypoatherina harringtonensis*, from just below the surface, returning to the jetty to swallow the prey. One Turnstone even rested on the water for about two seconds, before flying back to the jetty. The event was recorded on video by my colleague, Eric Amos. In Bermuda, Turnstones most commonly feed along the rocky shoreline, along the beach tideline, and forage among stranded Sargassum *Sargassum natans*. I can find no reference to the above-mentioned feeding behaviour in *BWP* (vol. 3) or elsewhere.

ANDREW DOBSON

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Mediterranean Gulls foot-paddling

On 24th August 1990, at Aegion lagoon, southern Greece, I observed a juvenile and a first-summer Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* foot-paddling. This feeding method is used widely by other gull species, such as Black-headed *L. ridibundus*, Common *L. canus* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, but has apparently not been recorded for Mediterranean Gull (*BWP*, vol. 3).

FOTINI PAPAZOGLOU

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Herring Gull attempting to catch Great Spotted Woodpecker in flight

On 1st December 1990, while watching the pre-roost gathering of gulls *Larus* at Little Marlow Gravel-pit, Buckinghamshire, I heard the typical flight call of a Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*. On looking up, I saw the woodpecker with a third-summer/adult winter Herring Gull *L. argentatus* a few metres behind it. The gull accelerated and closed in on the woodpecker, which continued its flight but with noticeably shallower undulations. The woodpecker called again, at a higher pitch. The gull attempted to snatch the woodpecker, which evaded it; then continued its chase until the woodpecker dived into a copse, the gull pulling up and flying away. The pursuit lasted for 80 m. The woodpecker, flying in the open over a distance of at least 200 m and at an estimated height of 30 m above the water, was obviously vulnerable.

MICHAEL S. WALLEN

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LETTERS

White-billed Divers wintering off British and Irish coasts

Folvik & Mjøs suggested that 100-200 White-billed Divers *Gavia adamsii* winter south of Norway (*Brit. Birds* 88: 125-129). Their observations, however, rather than representing a random sample of migration, were made mostly during 05.00-12.00 hours, and coverage was greatest in early May: times when divers were most likely to be seen. An average spring passage of 90-100 individuals is thus likely to be a substantial overestimate. With just 46 birds seen over 13 years, this population appears small. If these divers do winter off Britain and Ireland, the true figure is probably much nearer the recent average of seven records per year.

STUART A. REEVES

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Asbjørn Folvik has replied as follows: 'We maintain that our data represent a random sample of the White-billed Diver passage. While absolute numbers and coverage are connected, in further calculations we used "individuals per hour" (actual number recorded per time unit). This number is factual, and not influenced by differences in coverage (note also that coverage is high in late May, when diver numbers are far lower). Migration has been observed at dusk and at dawn, and divers are known to migrate at night, so ten hours seems a reasonable estimate of daily migration time. Total migration period was determined by the period between first and last observations; coverage was rather low in early April, and there is a distinct possibility that some migrate then (even low numbers will increase the estimate). The two "constant" parameters have possibly then been estimated conservatively. Incorporation of subsequent data from 1994 and 1995 confirms our earlier estimate, even with increased coverage, giving an "expected" total of 122 individuals in spring. Our main aim was to show that far more White-billed Divers winter south of Norway than was previously thought; we did not claim that these were all in British and Irish waters. In 1994, 15 passed western Norway on 1st May alone, so at least some are missed somewhere in winter.'

Seabirds without their toes

With reference to the note by Keith Bowey (*Brit. Birds* 88: 111) regarding damage to the feet and legs of European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* and the subsequent letters from Jim Stonehouse, Joe Sultana, John Borg and Bernard Zonfrillo (*Brit. Birds* 89: 185-187), I recently came across the following passages in *A History of British Birds* by William Yarrell, volume 4, revised and enlarged by Howard Saunders, London, 1884-1885, pp. 28-29, under the heading 'The Dusky Shearwater *Puffinus obscurus* (Gmelin) [currently treated as the race *opisthomelas* of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*]:

'It appears that in *The Zoologist* for 1858 (p. 6096), Mr. Henry Stevenson recorded the appearance in Norfolk of a rare shearwater, thought to be a "Dusky

Shearwater"; the events had been recorded in the *Transactions of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society*, iii, (pp. 467-475). He writes that the dead bird "... showed no appearance of having been shot at ... but the inner web of one foot was partially nibbled away, as though a mouse or some other vermin had been at it." Mr. Stevenson then gives a footnote: "This was my impression at the time; but the examination of a large number of Pomatorhine [*Stercorarius pomarinus*] and other Skuas, killed on our coast in 1877, showed that the webs of the feet, in this class of birds, are frequently mutilated."

So, for foot mutilation, it seems that skuas (*Stercorariidae*) can be affected as well as shearwaters (*Procellariidae*) and storm-petrels (*Hydrobatidae*). The nineteenth-century observations on the subject must indicate that nylon lines or nets cannot be indicted as sole or major culprits at the present time.

A. P. RADFORD

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Identification statistics

When I first started birdwatching about 40 years ago, all good textbooks stated that a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* had pale legs and a Chiffchaff *P. collybita* dark ones. Apart from the song there was no other safe way to tell the difference in the field. Then—horror of horrors—it came to light that leg colour was not a safe distinction. I asked a field expert what the chances were of being right if I used the leg colour for identification, and he said about 50%. I accepted that.

Now I read of identification problems in the separation of Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* from Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla*, with one expert objecting to every 'safe' distinction, claiming that individuals of both species can sometimes show these features. So, even if all the identification features were present, the identity of a bird would still be uncertain.

Has the time come for statistics to be applied to this matter? How frequently do 'safe' features for the Long-toed Stint appear in Least Sandpiper populations? What is the frequency of two or more features occurring? How often can a Least Sandpiper show all the features of a Long-toed Stint? And—if there is a finite chance of all the features occurring on individuals of species A which identify species B—must statistical confidence be placed against records of B in the annual reports?

If it has, it is time I took up another hobby.

D. A. C. McNEIL

721 Loughborough Road, Birstall, Leicestershire LE4 4NN

EDITORIAL COMMENT Rob Hume, Chairman of the British Birds Rarities Committee, has commented: 'I think that Dr McNeil pushes this too far. I do not believe that, for example, a Willow Warbler could ever look exactly (i.e. 100%) like a Chiffchaff. I believe that the sort of statistical summaries that Dr McNeil suggests are beyond us.' Used in conjunction with other features, many of the 'old' identification criteria (such as a Chiffchaff's dark legs) are still very useful.



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

NNR de-declared

Braunton Burrows NNR in North Devon has the unhappy distinction of being only the third* National Nature Reserve ever to be de-declared.

The problem at Braunton is that English Nature and the owners, Christie Devon Estate Trusts, cannot agree on how this 600-ha sand-dune reserve should be managed. EN wants to follow scrub control with light grazing to mimic the pre-myxomatosis cropping by Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*; CDET wants no grazing.

Maybe we do not understand all the complexities of this particular game, but to outsiders it sounds as if the CDET has stubbornly refused to let EN have a say in writing the rulebook, so EN is sulking and has taken its ball home. Some heads need knocking together somewhere, for wonderful, wild, undeveloped sites such as this need to be treasured, and maintained by sympathetic, research-based management.

The site is still an SSSI, and an international Biosphere Reserve, but that protection from development is of little use if the wildlife value of the dune system is destroyed by increased disturbance and lack of proper management.

The Devon Wildlife Trust (Shirehampton House, 35-37 St David's Hill, Exeter, Devon EX4 4DA) and North Devon MP, Nick Harvey, have both stressed the need for co-operative action. Come on Christie Devon Estate Trusts! Come on English Nature! Sort it out!

*The other two were Tring Reservoirs in Hertfordshire, which had declined in its wildlife importance, and the site in Sussex of the 'discovery' of the fraudulent Piltown skull.

RSPB news from Shetland

The RSPB in Shetland reports that the sandeel fishery caught just over 1,000 tonnes during the 1996 season, only one-third the permitted amount, for which fishermen blamed poor weather and the small size of most boats. With oil developments west of Shetland continuing apace, the RSPB is now a member of the new Atlantic Frontier Environmental Forum, whose role is to discuss and examine environmental issues relating to oil developments on the Atlantic Frontier.

Birdwise, Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* fared less well than in 1995, with colonies in south Mainland slightly more successful than those elsewhere. On Fetlar, the total of 36 pairs of Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* was the highest for almost

30 years. Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* also reached a Fetlar record of 81 pairs. In south Mainland, one Corn Crake *Crex crex* was reported singing, but, although the crofter entered into an agreement under the RSPB/SNH/Scottish Crofters Union Corncrake Grant Scheme, it is unlikely that the bird found a mate. Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* had a poor season, particularly on Yell. Of 19 pairs of Merlins *Falco columbarius*, however, 16 were successful, rearing 56 young; Peregrine Falcons *F. peregrinus* bred for the first time since 1993, one pair rearing four young; and, for the third successive year, Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* nested successfully, rearing three cygnets.

£60 for a pair of Lesser Kestrels

The Convento de São Francisco, a former Franciscan convent, now the home and art centre of Geraldine & Kees Zwanikken, is also the site of the largest colony of Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* in Portugal.

When restoring the old buildings, Geraldine and Kees ensured that as many nest holes as possible were left for the falcons and, when these were fully occupied, they ingeniously sited flask-shaped pottery hole-substitutes on the roof. Over the years, the colony has grown to its present total of 65 Lesser Kestrel nests, and there is now no more wall space left in which to create holes and no more roof space on which to fix flasks.

The Zwanikkens now propose to build a

'Falcon Tower' of local stone, to merge with the existing buildings, with nest sites for up to 20 more pairs of Lesser Kestrels. The cost of the Falcon Tower will be a mere £900, which for, say, 15 more pairs of Lesser Kestrels, works out at £60 per nest. A conservation bargain!

John Gooders' bird-tour company, 'Birding', is sponsoring the Falcon Tower and will match, penny for penny, all sums donated. There are no administrative costs, no facility costs, no design costs: every penny will go directly into stone, mortar and, of course, holes. Donations may be sent to Lesser Kestrel Tower Fund, Birding, Finches House, Hiham Green, Winchelsea, East Sussex TN36 4HB.

Birding information in Cyprus

As many visitors to Cyprus will know, the Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957) has provided an Information Centre and telephone 'birdline' service for the past three years. Please note the following changes. The Information Centre will be open daily from 10.00 to 12.30 local time in the taverna adjacent to the Apollo Hotel, Lighthouse Road, Kato Paphos. The telephone number for the 'birdline' has also changed, to Paphos 233707. Visitors to the island are reminded that all services and information are provided free of charge, but that in exchange you are requested to leave behind all the details of your observations during your visit to the island.

The contact is Jeff Gordon, Director COS(57), PO Box 1129, 8131 Kato Paphos, Cyprus.

Vietnam '96 . . . Ecuador '97

The British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water in August 1996 raised £50,000 for conservation of the Ke Go Forest in Vietnam, presented to BirdLife International's Dr Mike Rands at a special reception at The Lodge.

It was revealed that next year's Birdwatching Fair will raise funds for conservation of forest in Ecuador, close to the capital, Quito. The symbol in 1997 will be the Andean Cock-of-the-rock *Rupicola peruviana*.

We liked RSPB Chief Executive Barbara Young's way of saying that the annual Fair at Rutland Water is unmissable: 'Be there, or be square!'. We also enjoyed David Wragg pointing out that the Fair is 'a partnership between the biggest name in nature conservation [his Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation] and the smallest [the RSPB]'.

Twitcher redefined

We recently provided definitions for the words ornithologist, birdwatcher, birder and twitcher (*Brit. Birds* 89: 479). It is interesting to compare our definition of twitcher ('Someone who is willing to travel considerable distances, if necessary, to see rare birds already found and identified by other birders') with that compiled totally independently by David Ferguson, Editor of the *Buckinghamshire Bird Club Bulletin* (133: 1): 'Someone who is prepared to travel a considerable distance in order to see a bird already identified by somebody else.' Great minds, rather than plagiarism, we assure both his and our readers.

David Ferguson has come up with an even more succinct definition, as a result of unsuccessfully trying to twitch the Elmley Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, when he 'had to listen to a group of brightly-clothed characters discussing in loud voices the relative battery lives of their pagers. My definition thus becomes "A birdwatcher with a pager". I don't know if the non-appearance of the bird and the bright clothes and loud voices were connected.'

To join the Buckinghamshire Bird Club, write to A. F. Brown, Riders Way, Poyle Lane, Burnham, Buckinghamshire SL1 8LB.

Sussex shows why and how

In an excellent 16-page booklet, the Sussex Ornithological Society not only gives its requirements for record submission, but also explains why records are required and what constitutes a record, and gives hints on description-writing and a model example (a Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* at Ferry Pools, Sidlesham, on 7th September 1995, described by Roger Suckling).

We like the SOS's final quote: 'Man, irrespective of whether he is a theologian or a scientist, has a strong tendency to see what he hopes to see.'

For details of how to join the SOS, write to John Trowell, Lorrimer, Main Road, Icklesham, Winchelsea TN36 4BS.

Re-establishments in Gibraltar

In 'an ambitious programme to restore key elements in the fauna', the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, in co-operation with the Agencia de Medio Ambiente of the Junta de Andalucia, hopes to re-establish Common Raven *Corvus corax*, Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* and Spanish Ibcx *Capra pyrenaica*. As well as restoring lost species to the Rock, the GONHS hopes that the first two will help to control Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* and that the last will control vegetation within firebreaks.

Fine Finnish photos

The quarterly Finnish magazine, *Ahula*, now in its second year, always includes stunning photographs. The latest issue to hand (no. 3, 1996) contains a 'Monthly marathon'-type competition (but with five mystery photos, not one), birdwatching at the wetland Liminganlahti and in the Canary Islands, the identification of Red-breasted Flycatchers *Ficedula parva* of the eastern race *albicilla*, predicted as a possible vagrant to Europe, the decline of the Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* in western Europe, the expansion of the range of the Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, studies of Blyth's Red Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, and a selection of photographs of recent Fennoscandian rarities. The text is in Finnish and English.

Ahula costs 170FIM in Europe or 180FIM outside Europe (both surface mail; credit-card or cash payments only, not cheques) from *Ahula*, PO Box 85, 02271 Espoo, Finland.

Good for Bushnell

BirdLife International and the American-based optics company, the Bushnell Corporation, will both be benefiting from a new co-operative link. New 8×40 and 8×42 *Bushnell* binoculars will carry the BirdLife International name and logo (and the recommendation that that implies), while BirdLife International will receive a rumoured five-figure (or even six-figure?) sum, as well as worldwide publicity wherever the binoculars are sold.

Sounds like a perfect example of a mutually beneficial sponsorship deal; for further details, contact John Vickers at Bushnell's UK distributors: J. J. Vickers & Sons, Unit 9, Revenge Road, Lordswood, Kent ME5 8DW; phone 01634 201284.

Pyrenean migrants

Named after its premier watchpoint in the western Pyrénées, the French study and protection association, Organbidexka Col Libre, runs co-ordinated counts of raptors and other migrants at the major crossing points at both ends of the mountain chain. Its newsletter gives details of the autumn passage of Short-toed Eagles *Circaetus gallicus*, the majority of which use the Eyne and Plateau de Bielle Passes towards the eastern end. The most spectacular numbers are in the second half of September, when the maximum daily count can be as high as 600. For more details, OCL's new address is 11 Rue Bourgneuf, F-64100 Bayonne, France. (Contributed by Ken Hall)

New ground-cuckoo Collared

Examining museum specimens of ground-cuckoos *Carpococcyx* from Sumatra and Borneo, Nigel Collar found that those from Sumatra, supposed to be the same species as those in Borneo, were 20% smaller, oil-green rather than purplish-blue on the wings and tail, and lacked the dark hood of the latter.

In a paper co-authored with ground-cuckoo expert Adrian Long (*Forktail* 11: 135-150), the new species has been named Sumatran Ground-cuckoo *C. viridis*. Whilst the Bornean *C. radicens* is widely known from lowland areas, the Sumatran Ground-cuckoo is known from only six localities and has not been recorded since 1916. As BirdLife International says: 'It now needs to be searched for.'

Boost for birds in Yemen . . .

A joint production by the Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME), BirdLife International and the Environmental Protection Council in Yemen has provided an impressive addition to the Yemen environmental education programme. Based upon a tried-and-tested formula from other parts of the World, and with financial aid from a range of bodies, including the British Council, British Gas and Shell International Petroleum, a well-illustrated, native-language identification booklet has been produced. The attractive illustrations (by Mike Langman) reproduced on an accompanying poster will, we are sure, be well received throughout the Yemen. Even

if the text is beyond our understanding, there are still mouth-watering pictures of, for example, Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, Yemen Warbler *Sylvia buryi*, Yemen Serin *Serinus menachensis* and Yemen Thrush *Turdus menachensis*. The 10,000 copies that have been printed will be distributed to all schools in the Yemen, part of the programme being developed by Dr Omar Al-Saghier, the BirdLife representative in Yemen.

Further details from Richard Porter, Head of Middle East Division, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

. . . and Socotra

Volume 17 of *Sandgrouse* (published 1996), the journal of OSME, is devoted to scientific papers and records from Southern Yemen and Socotra, the report of the OSME surveys in the spring of 1993. Anyone with an interest in the ornithology of the Middle East will find much to interest him or her within the 188 pages of this special volume. In addition to papers presenting the full status of species within the area, there are some fascinating reports on the region's endemics, including Socotra eisticolas *Cisticola incanus* and *C. haesilatus*, Sunbird *Nectarinia balfouri*, Starling *Onychognathus frater* and Bunting *Emberiza socotrana*. Comments on the status and taxonomic position of the buzzard *Buteo* (? species) and

Forbes-Watson's Swift *Apus berliozi* on Socotra make fascinating reading. Presented here are the results from the field work undertaken by 19 personnel under the leadership of Richard Porter, with sponsorship from 12 different organisations including TeleYemen, Yemen Airways, the American Institute of Yemeni Studies and Lasmo Oil (Aden) Ltd.

We hope that this report will be publicised far more widely than just the birding community, for, in addition to the mass of ornithological data, there are reports on mammals, reptiles, amphibians and dragonflies. Copies, price £10.00, are available from OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Authors & Artists for Conservation

Like all good ideas, it is simple. Under the Public Lending Right system, payment is made from Government funds to authors whose books are borrowed from public libraries. In 1989, the World Land Trust (WLT) was formed with the intention of raising funds for the acquisition and management of land in Belize (it now owns and manages 100,000 ha there). Drawing upon the expertise gained in Belize, it went on to launch projects in Costa Rica and the Philippines. Then, in 1994, came the good but simple idea. The trustees of WLT donated the Public Lending Right on their books and encouraged others to do likewise. By donating one or more Public Lending Rights to the charity, writers, illustrators, photographers, editors and translators help to provide long-term support for the World

Land Trust. So was formed 'Authors & Artists for Conservation' (AAFC) and its members' contributions currently go towards the WLT's latest project, saving the island of Danjagan in the Philippines, which was about to be cleared of its forest to make way for a leisure centre. Over £9,000 has been raised since the formation.

At an annual reception in July 1996, David Gover OBE, cricketer, commentator, wildlife enthusiast and founder member of AAFC, was guest of honour and, in addition to several amusing stories of wildlife around the World, he launched a new video, the result of three months' filming on Danjagan Island. For details of the video, of AAFC and of the WLT, contact John A. Burton, Blyth House, Bridge Street, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 8AB.

Myths and legends

Mark Cocker is seeking information for a book on worldwide bird mythology and lore, particularly cultural associations in both historical times and the present day, the significance that birds have had for pre-industrial peoples and the cultural importance and exploitation of birds. Please send contributions, all of which will be acknowledged, to him at 9 Primrose Road, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich NR11 4AT, or tel/fax 01603-611797.

BTO moves into Ireland

To develop its activities in Ireland—both in the North and in the Republic—the BTO has appointed Ken Perry as its part-time Ireland Officer. The BTO Ireland Office will be based at Ken's home: 43 Portstewart Road, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, Northern Ireland BT52 1RW; phone 01265-42985.

Cox's Sandpiper's identity unveiled

First described from Australia in 1982 (*South Aust. Nat.* 56: 63)—and subsequently recorded again there, in Hong Kong and in the USA—Australian DNA studies (*Condor* 98: 459-463) have now revealed that 'Cox's Sandpiper *Calidris paramelanotos*' is not a Siberian relict species (*contra Brit. Birds* 81: 253-257), but is a hybrid between a male Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* and a female Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*.

Winter sparkles

The 8th Bedfordshire Bird Conference, 47½ years after the first in 1949, was held at Silsoe Agricultural College, Bedfordshire, on Saturday 23rd November.

Those who listened to Rob Dazley, David Kramer, Martin Palmer and Paul Trodd describing Bedfordshire bird habitats agreed that it must be a wonderful county in which to live and birdwatch. Dr Peter Lack described techniques and uses of surveys and censuses and, to contrast with Bedfordshire's birds, those in Massachusetts and on Fair Isle were described by Tony Cook and Tim Loscby.

Several people got only one answer wrong in the *British Birds* mystery photographs competition, but the winner, with all five photographs correctly identified, was *Daily Star* journalist Stuart Winter, who won the traditional bottle of champagne.

'Vulture News'

A biannual scientific publication devoted solely to vultures (particularly conservation and education projects in Africa), *Vulture News*, founded in 1979, is the journal of the Vulture Study Group, a working group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust. The subscription price of US\$30 (worldwide) includes membership of the VSG and the Group's newsletter, *Gyps Snips*. Write to the VSG at PO Box 72334, Parkview 2122, South Africa.

Shooting themselves in the foot

As tourism becomes one of the fastest-growing activities in the World, and one of the biggest employers of labour, one would imagine that, in a country where unemployment is soaring, local authorities would do everything in their power to encourage visitors to their area. Not, it appears, in the French Pyrénées, where, for the second year running, the mayor of Larrau (close to Organbidexka Col Libre watchpoint) has banned walkers, cyclists, hang-gliders and naturalists from venturing onto (or over) the Pic d'Orhi and surrounding hillsides between 15th September and 15th November. This is to allow the local shooters to remain undisturbed in their 'paisible' (peaceful, calm, quiet) exercise of slaughtering the Wood Pigeons *Columba palumbus* (and what else?) that migrate over the mountain passes. The response of those promoting green tourism in the Pyrénées has so far been muted, despite the fact that registered hunters represent a mere 2.5% of the French population. In France, as elsewhere, the men with guns seem to wield an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. (*Contributed by Ken Hall*)

Help in America

Hundreds of projects with chances for bird-watchers (sorry!, birders) to get involved in field projects from Alaska to Bolivia are listed in *Volunteer Opportunities for Birders*, published by the American Birding Association.

ABA members get it free; to join, write to PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, CO 80934-6599, USA. *BB* subscribers can purchase it for £3.25 through British BirdShop (see pages iii & iv).

RSPB deified

Under the heading 'Deset Zapovijedi Promatrača Ptica: The Ten Commandments for Birdwatchers', the Croatian journal *Troglodytes* has published 'The Birdwatchers' Code', credited to the RSPB. Good to see the message spreading internationally, even if our own part in initiating the Code has been overlooked in the shadow of the almighty Society.

Tony Armstrong joins News Team

Tim Cleeves has retired as the representative for Northeast England on the Regional News Team. His successor is Tony Armstrong, 39 Western Hill, Durham City DH1 4RT. We are most grateful to Tim for his help over the past three years. Welcome Tony!

Is it legal?

Subtitled *A plain guide to bird protection today*, the latest 32-page updated edition of *Wild Birds and the Law* is available (price £3.00 incl. p&p) from the RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*

Tony Armstrong—*Northeast*

Dave Flumm—*Southwest*

Frank Gribble—*Midlands*

Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*

Angus Hogg—*Scotland*

Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*

Don Taylor—*Southeast*

Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*

John Wilson—*Northwest*



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 6th January to 9th February 1997.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* South Norwood (Greater London), 28th January to 9th February; Rostellan (Co. Cork), 2nd-9th February; long-stayer present at Hayle Harbour (Cornwall), to 9th February.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), late January to 9th February.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* Alturlie (Highland), 12th January to 9th February.

Blue-winged Teal *A. discors* Female, North Bull, Dublin (Co. Dublin), mid January to 9th February.

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* Welney and Wissington (both Norfolk), 21st-28th January, and, intermittently, to 7th February (potential first for Britain & Ireland).

Redhead *A. americana* Rutland Water (Leicestershire), 4th-9th February.

Lesser Scaup *A. affinis* Tophill Low Reservoir (East Yorkshire), 9th January to 9th February; long-stayer present at Stithian's Reservoir (Cornwall), to 9th February.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* Hornsea Mere (Humberside), 6th-22nd January; East Park Lake, Kingston upon Hull (Humberside), 27th January.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Houghton Green Lake (Cheshire), 12th January.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* Kinaird Head, Fraserburgh (Grampian), 1st-9th February.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* Large influx, mainly on English east coast, including 49 at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 30 at Holkham (Norfolk), 40 at Titchwell (Norfolk) and 37 at Orford Ness (Suffolk).



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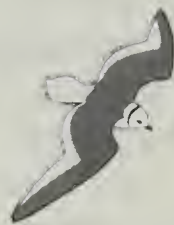
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- 79 European news
- 94 How many rarities are we missing? Weekend bias and length of stay revisited *Peter Fraser*
- 102 Monthly marathon
- 103 Conservation research news *Dr Mark Avery*
- Obituary**
- 104 Bobby Tulloch MBE (1929-1996) *Mike Everett*
- Reviews**
- 106 'Atlas Zimního Rozšíření Ptáku V České Republice 1982-85' by Vladimír Bejček, Karel Štastný & Karel Hudec *Dr J. T. R. Sharrock*
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- 109 Short reviews
- 110 Mystery photographs 203 *Peter Lansdown*
- 111 Looking back
- Notes**
- 112 Grey Heron exploiting behaviour of Great Cormorant, and attempting to rob it *R. E. Batty and L. Forbes*
- 112 Grey Heron catching and swallowing Blackbird *R. E. Batty and L. Forbes*
- 112 Grey Heron catching Common Starling in flight *Keith Bowey*
- 113 Long-tailed Ducks plunge-diving *R. E. Batty and N. A. Bell*
- 114 Turnstones feeding on fry *Andrew Dobson*
- 114 Mediterranean Gulls foot-paddling *Fotini Papazoglou*
- 114 Herring Gull attempting to catch Great Spotted Woodpecker in flight *Michael S. Wallen*
- Letters**
- 115 White-billed Divers wintering off British and Irish coasts *Stuart A. Reeves*
- 115 Seabirds without their toes *Dr A. P. Radford*
- 116 Identification statistics *Dr D. A. C. McNeil*
- 117 News and comment *Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott*
- 122 Recent reports *Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan*
- Line-drawing:** 94 Common Nighthawk (*Peter Cartwright*)
- Front cover:** Strong breeze: Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Welney (*David Cook*): the original of this month's cover design, measuring 18.6 × 20.8 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 72 in January issue for procedure).

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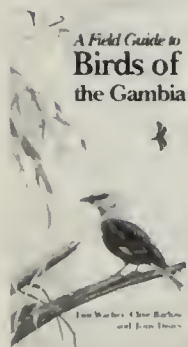
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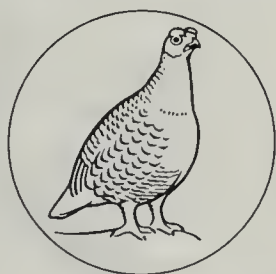
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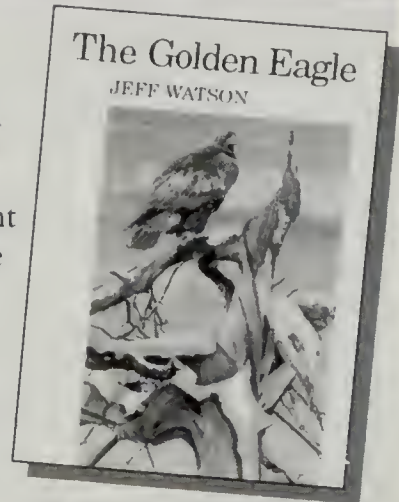
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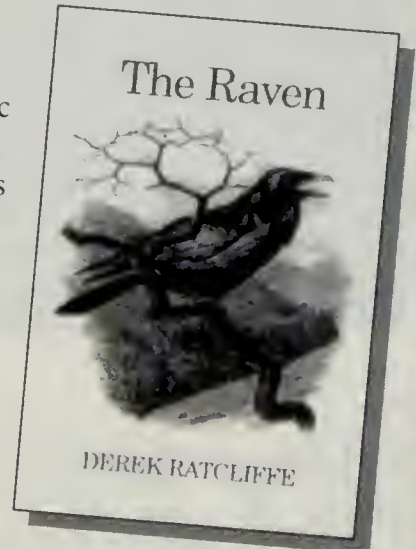
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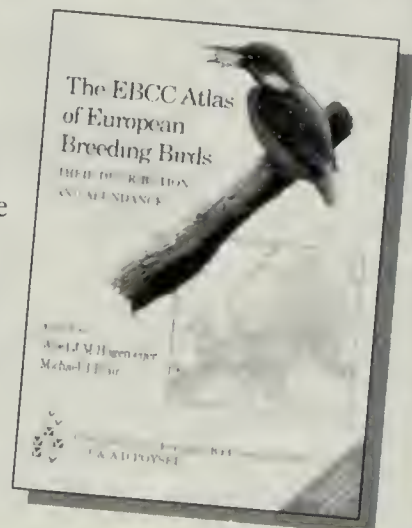
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The re-establishment of Red Kite breeding populations in Scotland and England

Ian M. Evans, Roy H. Dennis, Duncan C. Orr-Ewing, Nils Kjellén, Per-Olof Andersson, Magnus Sylvén, Alfonso Senosiain and Felix Compaired Carbo

ABSTRACT The sight of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* gliding and wheeling effortlessly in the skies of Scotland and England was once very familiar. Until recently, however, Red Kites were absent from much of this former range within the UK: a long-standing legacy of past persecution. Conservation measures now in hand have started to redress this. These measures were initiated during 1989-94, when the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (initially the Nature Conservancy Council) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds undertook a joint project to re-establish breeding populations of Red Kites in Scotland and England by translocation of nestlings from Sweden, Spain and Wales to sites in northern Scotland and southern England. Totals of 93 nestlings were released at each of these two sites. As a result, Red Kites bred successfully in Scotland and England in 1992. These populations are

increasing, and wild-bred Red Kites produced by released birds are now being recruited into the breeding population. In 1996, at least 37 pairs bred in southern England and 16 pairs in northern Scotland. This paper reports on the background and progress of this project and the development of this work into a wider operational recovery programme by English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the RSPB.

The Red Kite *Milvus milvus* has recently been classified as a Category 4 Species of European Conservation Concern, and is considered to have a favourable conservation status, with a World population of 19,000 to 37,000 pairs (Tucker & Heath 1994) confined virtually within Europe (table 1). Populations in south and east Europe, however, are declining and fragmented, while along the adjacent fringe of western Asia and North Africa Red Kites are virtually extinct. Only in northwest and central Europe are numbers recovering around the main Red Kite population centres in Germany and France. The future of these populations is by no means certain, as large numbers overwinter in southern Europe, where human pressure is reducing their range and numbers (Evans & Pienkowski 1991; Antonio Montero 1996) and recent intensification of agriculture in the eastern part of Germany is causing concern for breeding Red Kites there (M. Stubbe *in litt.*).

Table 1. Summary of World breeding status of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus*.
Countries ranked in order of population size.

Country	Population (breeding pairs)	Status	Census date	Reference
Germany	12,000-25,000	Stable	-	Tucker & Heath (1994)
Spain	3,375-3,760	Decline	1991-94	Viñuela (1992-94)
France	2,300-2,900	Increase	1979-82	Thiollay & Terrasse (1984)
Sweden	650	Increase	1995	Kjellén (1996)
Poland	300	Increase	-	Evans & Pienkowski (1991)
Switzerland	235-300	Increase	1985-87	Mosimann & Juillard (1988)
United Kingdom	182	Increase	1996	Unpublished
Italy	130-170	Decrease	1990-92	Cortone <i>et al.</i> (1994)
Portugal	100	Stable	1985-89	Evans & Pienkowski (1991)
Russia	0-50	Decline	-	Tucker & Heath (1994)
Czech Republic	20-25	Stable	1989	Evans & Pienkowski (1991)
Morocco	20-24	Decline	-	Thévenot <i>et al.</i> (1985)
Belgium	15-20	Increase	1979-89	Evans & Pienkowski (1991)
Romania	10-20	Decline	-	Tucker & Heath (1994)
Slovakia	10-20	Stable	-	Tucker & Heath (1994)
Luxembourg	12-15	Stable	1990	Evans & Pienkowski (1991)
Denmark	10-15	Stable	1980-89	Evans & Pienkowski (1991)
Belarus	0-10	Decline	1990	Tucker & Heath (1994)
Ukraine	5-8	Decline	1988	Tucker & Heath (1994)
Austria	5-6	Increase	1991	Meyburg (1991)
Latvia	0-5	Decline	-	Tucker & Heath (1994)
Lithuania	1-2	Decline	1985-88	Tucker & Heath (1994)
Moldova	1	Decline	1990	Tucker & Heath (1994)
Cape Verde Isles	'Few'	Decline	-	Evans & Pienkowski (1991)

Conservation action in the UK

The first efforts to save the Red Kite began at the beginning of this century with the initiation of nest-protection schemes in Wales (Lovegrove 1990). Such efforts were ineffective initially, and the Red Kite nearly became extinct in the UK during the 1930s (Davis 1993). In the years after World War Two, however, the Nature Conservancy (superseded by the Nature Conservancy Council in 1971, and the Countryside Council for Wales in 1990) and the RSPB organised the monitoring, research and protection, and this helped the range expand within Wales (Lovegrove 1990). This work is now undertaken by the Welsh Kite Trust and, in 1996, the Trust reported at least 127 breeding pairs in Wales, with a further 28 pairs occupying territories (Welsh Kite Trust 1996). The current breeding distribution still represents a small fraction of the former range of the Red Kite within the UK, as fewer than 5% of all 10-km National Grid squares are occupied. In comparison, another medium-sized raptor with a similar ecology, the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, breeds in 41% of Britain's 10-km squares (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) and the potential range would be much larger if illegal persecution were to cease. Recolonisation of former nesting areas in England and Scotland, which still remain suitable for Red Kites, is unlikely to occur naturally, as there are three factors currently restricting the population's ability to expand within Wales. These are:

1. Relatively low breeding productivity of the Welsh population (0.84 young per breeding pair in 1991 to 1993, Newton *et al.* 1994) compared with populations in France and Germany (1.5 to 1.8 young per breeding pair, Evans & Pienkowski 1991). This is due mainly to poor habitat quality and the activities of egg-collectors (Newton *et al.* 1994).
2. Illegal poisoning, which reduces the number of individuals recruited into the breeding population and also removes a proportion of established pairs each year. During 1971-93, a total of 44 Red Kites was confirmed to have been poisoned in the UK (Cadbury 1991; Fletcher & Hunter 1993; Fletcher *et al.* 1991, 1992, 1994).
3. A low rate of immigration from larger Continental populations (May *et al.* 1993) has meant that the rate of population growth within the UK has, until recently, been dependent upon the breeding productivity and survival of the population within Wales.

Re-establishment proposals

Following natural recolonisation by the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (Waterston 1971) and the successful re-establishment of the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (Love 1983), attention in Scotland turned to the Red Kite. A proposal to translocate Red Kites from Wales to Scotland was made in 1981 (by RHD), but this was unsuccessful. A further proposal, to re-establish Red Kites in Scotland with potential donor stock coming from continental Europe, was raised again within the RSPB in 1984. This resulted in the formation of a joint NCC/RSPB Project Team in 1986 to assess measures to facilitate range recovery of the Red Kite within the UK.

The Project Team recognised that the long-term existence of any species is dependent upon maintaining as wide a distribution as possible. Once populations

are fragmented or restricted, they become increasingly vulnerable to local environmental pressures. Hence, conservation measures which make Red Kites less dependent on events in just one area would not only help to restore a significant member of our fauna throughout Britain, but also make a major contribution to the international conservation of this species, and help to safeguard a part of the World's biodiversity. After two years of careful consideration, the Project Team concluded that re-establishment was an appropriate conservation measure and should be undertaken in Scotland and England. IUCN criteria (Green 1979) were used to assess the eligibility of the Red Kite as a candidate for re-establishment. This assessment (Evans 1994) is summarised as follows:

1. *There should be good historical evidence of former natural occurrence.*

The Red Kite was once an abundant resident and migratory breeder over most of Britain, but became extinct as a nesting species in England in 1871 (Fisher 1947) and in Scotland in 1917 (Baxter & Rintoul 1953). A small population survived in a remote area of central Wales which is now recovering slowly as a result of protection.

2. *There should be a clear understanding of why the species was lost. In general, only those lost through human agency and unlikely to recolonise naturally should be candidates for re-establishment.*

Human persecution was the key factor responsible for the disappearance of Red Kites over most of the UK. Persecution was first recorded in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, after legislation encouraged persecution through bounty payments. It continued through the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, as a result of indiscriminate killing and collecting.

3. *The factors causing extinction should have been rectified.*

These have largely been corrected by changes in legislation and public attitudes. Persecution that occurs today is illegal and unlikely to exterminate Red Kites in the UK, but it still undermines population growth and range expansion.

4. *There should be suitable habitats of sufficient extent to support the re-established population and allow it to expand.*

It is considered that the majority of the Red Kite's former range in the UK still remains suitable in terms of nesting, feeding and roosting habitats. The current range occupied in Wales appears not to be the preferred habitat, but was simply the last refuge from human persecution.

5. *The donor population from which individuals are translocated should be as close as possible genetically to that of the original native population.*

*Obtaining all birds for re-establishment from within Britain (i.e. from Wales) was not feasible on account of small population size and slow rate of growth. Recent evidence (May *et al.* 1993) suggests that there are unlikely to be any major natural genetic differences between British and Continental populations (as these were parts of a continuous population that has recently become fragmented by persecution).*

6. *The loss of individuals taken for re-establishment should not prejudice the survival of the population from which they were taken.*

Red Kite nestlings were obtained from populations which could compensate for their loss (Continental populations) or from nests at which nestlings were unlikely to fledge (Welsh population).

Leading on from these decisions, the NCC and the RSPB initiated a joint translocation experiment in 1989 to evaluate whether and how Red Kite

population centres could be re-established in formerly occupied areas outside Wales. In 1990, as a result of reorganisation of the NCC by Government, the work was taken forward by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, being undertaken by a large team of ornithologists.

Re-establishment stage by stage

Selecting release sites

The Project Team recommended that experimental release sites should be established in the eastern districts of northern Scotland and in southern England. The Project Team agreed that potential sites should be judged on the following criteria (Lovegrove, Elliott & Smith 1990). They should be:

- a. In a sufficiently large area of suitable habitat and not an isolated patch of good habitat in an otherwise unsuitable area.
- b. In a region with a sustainable food supply in both winter and summer.
- c. In an area where the breeding success of Common Buzzards (if present) indicated an abundant food supply.
- d. In an area free of illegal poison baits.
- e. In an area of low annual rainfall, below an altitude of 350 m above sea level.
- f. In an area where the local community was favourable to the project.

In 1988-89, landowners and farmers were approached in several areas that the Project Team had identified as suitable, and release sites were selected.

Establishing release sites

Fig. 1 gives the approximate locations of the release areas (exact details are not publicised by the country agencies, the JNCC or the RSPB). In northern Scotland, two aviary complexes (Appendix 1) were built about 12 km apart in an area of farmland interspersed with woodland and rough grazing, which included several villages as well as a network of public roads. In southern England, another two aviary complexes, based on a design by Llewellyn (1990), were built 0.5 km apart on two adjacent estates with areas of woodland and mixed farming covering a combined area of 2,600 ha. The aviaries (Evans *et al.* 1994; Appendix 1) complied with Government quarantine standards (Anon. 1989).

Food for the Red Kite nestlings was collected mainly from local gamekeepers and stored frozen until needed. The main food items in northern Scotland were Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* shot with a .22-calibre rifle. In addition, young crows, mainly Rooks *Corvus frugilegus*, farmed Atlantic Salmon *Salmo salar*, trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss* and *S. trutta*) and smaller numbers of assorted mammals (road kills) were obtained. In southern England, fewer rifle-shot Rabbits were available and more legally trapped items (Grey Squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis*, Rabbits, mustelids and crows) were supplied by gamekeepers and were not killed specifically for the project. Trapping by gamekeepers is undertaken annually in spring as part of game management practice (mustelids and crows) and pest control (Grey Squirrels and Rabbits). Prey items killed with shotguns were avoided to prevent ingestion of lead shot.



Fig. 1. Approximate locations of populations of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in the UK. Shaded grey area denotes breeding range within Wales. Filled circles refer to where Red Kites were released in northern Scotland and southern England in 1989 to 1993/94, and where Red Kites are now breeding. Open circles refer to the new release areas in central Scotland and the East Midlands of England, established in 1995/96.

Obtaining release stock

In 1988, the Swedish Red Kite Project (Sylvén 1976) indicated that it might be possible to collect Red Kite nestlings from nests in Skåne, southern Sweden, during the period when they were being ringed as part of an intensive study (Kjellén 1995). The WWF-funded project has undertaken winter feeding and annual monitoring of the Swedish Red Kite population since 1976 (Kjellén 1994) and has recorded its rapid recovery from 50 pairs in the 1970s to an estimated 650 pairs in 1995 (Kjellén 1996). This led to an official request, from the RSPB, to collect Red Kite nestlings, which was granted by the Swedish Government.

The first young were collected on 10th June 1989. It was decided to take young kites of approximately four to six weeks of age because they could thermo-regulate without parental brooding and could feed themselves. Smaller nestlings would have required a greater level of artificial care, with a greater risk of imprinting on and/or conditioning to humans. As the sex of each nestling could not be ascertained, nestlings of appropriate age were selected arbitrarily, since concentrating solely on large or small nestlings could, unwittingly, have introduced a heavy sex bias into the founder population. As nests in Skåne often contained three or even four nestlings, two young were collected from nests with four nestlings and one young from nests with three nestlings. This ensured that pairs always continued to rear a brood, since successful nests are more likely to be re-used in subsequent years (Walters Davies & Davis 1973). Young were also collected from nests throughout the population, so that genetic variability was as high as possible. These guidelines for collecting Red Kite nestlings were followed each year.

The collection of nestlings covered a period of three days. In 1989, ten were collected, and in the following four years 20-24 per year. Each nestling was ringed and kept separately in a cardboard box at Lund University field station. The nestlings were fed by hand twice a day on small fish; they were given a full crop each time. In 1989, four of the ten Swedish nestlings were taken to England, while during 1990-93 all those imported from Sweden were released in Scotland (table 2).

Table 2. Origins of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* released in England and Scotland during 1989-94.

Origin	Release site	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Skåne	Scotland	6	19	20	24	24	-
Skåne	England	4	-	-	-	-	-
Wales	England	1	2	4	-	-	-
Navarra	England	-	11	11	10	10	-
Aragón	England	-	-	-	10	10	20

During 1990-94, the central and provincial governments in Spain agreed to license the collection of Red Kite nestlings from the provinces of Navarra and Aragón (table 2) as their Red Kite populations were comparatively large (Elósegui Aldasoro 1985; Compaired Carbo *in litt.*) and productive and could compensate for the loss of a small number of nestlings. Nests were located in early March, when Red Kites were in the early stages of incubation but before the nest trees had acquired foliage. The main method used was to drive along a road or track, scanning the surrounding trees for likely nest structures. The best areas to find nests were in trees growing along river banks, as these provided the most suitable nest sites. Nest sites in large forests (especially in Navarra) were much more difficult to locate, while those close to villages were often located with help from local inhabitants. The most frequent nest trees used were Black Poplar *Populus nigra* and oak *Quercus*. Once an occupied nest was located, a rough hand-drawn sketch map was made, to ensure that the nest could be re-found for further checks. The nestlings were collected during the last week of May or the first week of June, following the same guidelines as those used in Sweden. In Navarra, nestlings were collected from a total of 41 nests during 1991-93; single nestlings were taken from 38 broods, and two nestlings were taken from three broods (two nestlings were not released). In Aragón, nestlings were collected from a total of 23 nests during 1992-94 (some nests were 'harvested' more than once); single nestlings were collected from 30 broods, and two nestlings were collected from five broods. The average brood size of nests from which nestlings were taken was 2.4 nestlings. Depending on weather conditions and work commitments of the Spanish conservationists, it took five to seven days to collect 20 nestlings from Aragón and Navarra. After collection, the nestlings were ringed and kept together in aviaries at a raptor-rehabilitation centre in Navarra and then flown to England during the period 31st May to 8th June.

The English operation benefited also from the donation of seven Red Kite nestlings from Wales (table 2), where field workers have been operating a small-scale rescue service since 1986. The nestlings were taken as eggs from five nests that were at risk from egg-collectors. Dummy eggs (some of which were stolen subsequently by egg-collectors) replaced the original clutch to ensure that the

pair continued to incubate. The real eggs were incubated artificially and the chicks were reared by a captive female Common Buzzard until four to six weeks old. At that age, they were transferred to the release aviaries in southern England.

The applicability of captive breeding was investigated by JNCC. Seven adult females and two adult males that could not be rehabilitated were provided by Grupo de Rehabilitacion de la Fauna Autoctona (GREFA) and the Buitrago Raptor Rehabilitation Centre in Spain in November 1989. A further male and female were obtained in 1991, when a released Red Kite from southern England and a wild Red Kite from Wales could not be rehabilitated. No nestlings have yet been reared, although two pairs have laid infertile clutches. Captive breeding is an extremely difficult technique and the use of wild stock in the release programme was therefore appropriate, particularly as IUCN criteria 5 and 6 were not violated.

Care of Red Kites in captivity

The care of nestlings in captivity was essentially the same each year, so no distinction is made between years. Nestlings were matched with nestlings of similar age and size and placed on an artificial nest platform. Depending on numbers available, two to four nestlings were placed in each aviary compartment. They were fed on finely minced meat and bone during the first few days after import. Then, depending on age, the food was either chopped up finely or minced (four to six weeks old), skinned (six to nine weeks old) or given whole (after ten weeks). Food was supplied daily in excess amounts through a small lockable hatch beside the nest platform. Initially, two feeding visits were made per day, but this was reduced to a single visit as the birds got older. The amount of food required varied and was adjusted depending on the amount consumed. An indication of the food required is shown from the records kept in southern England (table 3). Contact with the birds was kept to an absolute minimum, to reduce the chance of imprinting on and conditioning from their human keepers. Inspections were normally made through tiny inspection holes in the wooden-panelled sides of the aviaries, which reduced human contact considerably by providing a suitable screen.

A veterinary officer made at least one visit to each release site during the period of captivity to check the health of each bird. This involved taking a 2-ml blood sample from each nestling for haematological examination, sex determination and DNA 'finger-printing' studies, and a physical examination to ensure that each nestling was suitable for release. Three imported Red Kites, representing 1.6% of the total, could not be released into the wild. One of these was imported from Sweden in 1990 and, despite veterinary attention, died soon after it was introduced to the aviary in Scotland. The cause of this problem was unknown. The two others were taken from nests in Spain and imported into England in 1991. One (the runt of a brood of three) was found to have abnormal bone growth only three days after importation, while the other died from an acute infection (trichomoniasis, caused by the flagellate protozoan parasite *Trichomonas gallinae*) five days after importation. Two other nestlings caught this infection, but were successfully treated with antibiotics (metronidazole).

Table 3. Individual food items supplied to Red Kites *Milvus milvus* reared and released in southern England during periods in June, July and August 1990 and 1991.

Note: not all food was consumed, but is included here to give an indication of how much was required. None of the items was killed specifically for the project.

	1 Jun-28 Jul 1990	7 Jun-10 Aug 1991	25 Jun-27 Jul 1991
No. of days	58	65	32
No. of Red Kites	11	11-15	2
BIRDS			
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	-	1	-
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	-	3	-
Wood Pigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	15	22	-
Eurasian Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	-	4	-
Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>	81	41	8
Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>	56	24	1
Rook <i>C. frugilegus</i>	20	-	-
Jackdaw <i>C. monedula</i>	3	1	1
MAMMALS			
Stoat <i>Mustela erminea</i>	4	4	-
Weasel <i>M. nivalis</i>	4	8	-
Fox <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	10	3	-
Rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>			
small	22	40	3
medium	82	43	14
large	25	42	-
Grey Squirrel <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	18	136	9

To facilitate visual identification of individual Red Kites in the field, both wings of each nestling were marked with a uniquely labelled wing-tag, which was coloured to denote the year of fledging (table 4, Appendix 2). A tail-mounted radio transmitter was also fitted to the Red Kites released during 1989-93 (Appendix 2), to facilitate the collection of information on the daily movements of individual birds.

During the period of captivity, there were no recorded instances of aggression between nestlings, and by the time of release (at ten to twelve weeks old) all birds were proficient fliers and showed surprisingly good manoeuvrability within the confines of their relatively small aviary.

Table 4. Wing-tag colours used for each cohort of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* released or naturally fledged in Scotland and England.

Year	Scotland	England
1989	Orange	Orange
1990	Blue	Blue
1991	Yellow	Yellow
1992	Lime-green	Black
1993	Red	Green
1994	White	Orange

Release into the wild

Releases took place during the period 26th July to 3rd August in northern Scotland and during 10th July to 3rd August in southern England. A total of 93 Red Kites was released in each area, and releases were suspended in southern England in 1994 and in northern Scotland in 1993 (table 2). Prior to opening the release doors, food was placed on or near the aviaries, and the birds were released in batches of up to ten per day. In northern Scotland, the release doors were opened before dawn. In southern England, however, no particular time of day was chosen and releases were undertaken sometimes in the presence of people. It was important that releases were not undertaken during periods of heavy rain.

In both release areas, Red Kites settled in the vicinity of the aviaries after release and remained together in loose groups, returning to feed at food stations established on or near the release aviaries. In northern Scotland, up to ten Rabbits or an equivalent amount of fish was placed on top of each aviary each night whilst the Red Kites were roosting. In southern England, it was found that small food items on their own would be carried off by individual Red Kites, depleting the food supply very quickly. To prevent this happening, large items, such as carcasses of Fox or deer (Fallow Deer *Dama dama*, Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*), were provided, but these had to be slit open in several places as the skin was too tough for the Red Kites to break through by themselves. The food stations were maintained daily for a period of up to three to four weeks in both areas. During this time, the number of juveniles visiting the food stations declined as they began exploring the surrounding countryside in search of natural foods. Red Kites released in previous years and Common Buzzards also visited food stations.

Establishment of breeding centres

After release, juvenile Red Kites moved around considerably, and many individuals left the release areas at some point during their first year. Radio telemetry and wing-tag observations allowed the dispersal of some birds to be tracked. In northern Scotland, some Red Kites dispersed south to southern and southwestern Scotland and Northern Ireland, and a few even reached the Republic of Ireland and Cornwall in their first autumn. Survivors returned in the following spring. In southern England, Red Kites dispersed either in their first autumn or during the following spring, and were recorded in Wales, East Anglia, Cornwall, Kent and northern France. Survivors varied considerably in the time taken to return to southern England: some returned after a few days, while others took several months. Those individuals that did not disperse formed communal roosts. The numbers attending these roosts during winter increased over the years as more kites were released and as juveniles and subadults returned to their subsequent release areas after dispersal. In England, 76% of all released Red Kites survived their first year and at least 62% of those released during 1989-92 bred at least once during 1991-94. In northern Scotland, at least 34% of released Red Kites are known to have been recruited into the breeding population in 1994. In March 1995, the population was estimated to be 117 individuals in southern England and 50 individuals in northern Scotland.

The first signs of courtship and breeding behaviour by kites in their first year were observed in 1991 in both areas. Two pairs bred (i.e. laid eggs) in southern

England, but both attempts failed. In 1992, Red Kites released by the translocation programme bred successfully in both areas. This achieved a major target for the project and represented the first successful breeding in England and Scotland for over a century. The breeding populations in both release areas have increased each year since 1991 (table 5), and in 1994 Red Kites reared in the wild by pairs established by the release programme themselves reared young for the first time.

Table 5. Status and breeding success of populations of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* established as a direct result of the release programme in northern Scotland and southern England in 1991-96.

Note: in 1995 and 1996, not all breeding pairs were located.

Year	No. of single males on territory		No. of non-breeding pairs located		No. of breeding pairs located		No. of successful pairs		No. of young fledged	
	SCOTLAND	ENGLAND	SCOTLAND	ENGLAND	SCOTLAND	ENGLAND	SCOTLAND	ENGLAND	SCOTLAND	ENGLAND
1991	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	0	-	0
1992	3	-	1	3	1	4	1	4	1	9
1993	4	1	3	3	5	9	3	8	7	14
1994	5	-	3	2	8	20	6	17	13	37
1995	-	-	2	2	15	24	11	22	26	55
1996	-	-	5	-	16	37	15	33	38	80

All nests were built at heights ranging from 8-25 m in mature trees. In Scotland, Red Kites nested mainly in Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, but also in other trees, including Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, oak *Quercus*, Douglas Fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii* and Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis*. The tree species favoured for nesting in southern England were Beech and oak, but other species—notably Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and White Poplar *Populus alba*—have also been utilised. The nest position varied depending on the suitability of the site, and was built either from scratch or on top of another structure such as an old Red Kite nest, other raptor nest or squirrel drey.

The performance of each breeding population created by the re-establishment project is similar to or better than that of the donor populations from which they were taken (Newton *et al.* 1994; Kjellén 1994; A. Senosiain *in litt.*). In comparison with the isolated but self-sustaining population in Wales, the re-established populations are more productive (with several cases of four-egg clutches and fledged broods of four young) and initiate breeding at an earlier age. At least 115 young have fledged in southern England and 47 young in northern Scotland during 1992-95. In 1996, not all nests were located; even so, 80 young were reared by 37 breeding pairs in southern England (Snell, McQuade & Stevens 1996), while in northern Scotland 38 young were reared by 16 breeding pairs. Predictions of population growth based on breeding and survival data indicate that the populations are self-sustaining and should continue to expand without the need for further releases at these locations.

Conclusions and future implications

The joint JNCC/RSPB re-establishment project has been a success and its

achievements can be summarised as follows:

1. The Red Kite was a suitable candidate for re-establishment in the UK as assessed against IUCN criteria.
2. The Red Kite can be successfully translocated and released into the wild without jeopardising donor populations, demonstrating that such a scheme is practical using the techniques developed.
3. The released Red Kites became independent in the wild and a significant number has survived.
4. The breeding performance of successful pairs established by the project is at least as good as those of the populations from which the released birds were taken, demonstrating the suitability of the environments into which they have been released.
5. Nestlings reared in the wild by pairs established by the project are breeding in the re-established populations.
6. Effective monitoring has demonstrated that the established populations are expanding.

We have learnt much from this project. The collection and translocation of Red Kites from one country to another was a successful operation. It appears that much of the UK is suitable for Red Kites so long as they are not illegally persecuted. The breeding populations re-established in northern Scotland and southern England demonstrate that the most productive areas for Red Kites are not necessarily where the remnant Welsh population now survives. Past persecution removed the species from areas of high human population, which often coincided with the most productive land. By re-establishing Red Kites in such areas, the project has demonstrated that, when persecution is absent or where it can be reduced, a faster rate of population growth can be achieved.

The Government nature conservation agencies and the RSPB are now utilising the techniques developed in a programme to facilitate restoration of the Red Kite throughout its former range in the UK. This will be achieved by linking the existing breeding populations in England, Scotland and Wales, since one large population is less vulnerable than several smaller isolated populations. To promote linkage, English Nature and the RSPB (Carter *et al.* 1995) have established a new release site in the East Midlands of England (fig. 1) and released 11 Red Kites in 1995 and 16 in 1996. These birds were mainly imported from Segovia and Salamanca in Spain, although one was obtained from Wales and another (from Aragón) was rehabilitated from southern England. In Scotland, the RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage have established a new release site in central Scotland and released 19 Red Kites (imported from Germany) in 1996. The country agencies and the RSPB will continue with the effective monitoring of the established breeding populations to ensure that their favourable conservation status is maintained. It is hoped that, by the year 2000, there will be five breeding populations in the UK, exceeding 350 breeding pairs in total.

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Appendix 1. Release aviaries

In northern Scotland, an aviary containing two compartments was constructed in 1989 in an area of mature Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* and birch *Betula* woodland overlooking hay meadows and rough grazing, adjacent to a large commercial conifer wood. In 1990, a three-compartment aviary complex was established at another site 12 km away in a small stand of mature pine trees overlooking meadows and a wooded valley. In 1993, one further compartment was added at the original aviary. The dimensions of each aviary compartment were $3.66 \times 3.05 \times 2.44$ m high. Each compartment had a double layer of wire-mesh netting with a gap of approximately 1 cm that covered the front section as well as half of the side. The wire mesh was dug into the ground to a depth of 1 m to exclude mammalian predators. A double release door was situated in the top front section of the aviary and could be opened and shut by means of a pulley system operated from the back of the aviary. Entry into each compartment was gained through a double door at the back of the aviary. In one corner of each compartment, there was an artificial platform on which a stick nest, lined with moss, grass and wool, was placed. This was sheltered by a wooden roof on top of the aviary. The floor of the aviary was covered with softwood bark, and natural dead trees, leading out from the nest platform, provided perches. A lockable food hatch provided direct access to the nest platform.

In southern England, two single-compartment aviaries were built in 1989 about 0.5 km apart on one estate in a secluded area some distance away from public footpaths on opposite sides of a small wooded valley, in sight of each other. In 1990, one aviary was destroyed during severe gales and this site was abandoned. To accommodate more kites in 1990, a further two compartments were added to the surviving aviary and a new three-compartment aviary was established about 0.5 km away in a large woodland clearing on an adjacent estate. Each aviary compartment was 2.44 m high and covered an area of 6.10×2.44 m constructed of wood with all four sides panelled. The front of each aviary was fitted with a release door (2.44×1.22 m) which was opened only on the day of release. This was covered on the outside by 1.25-cm wire-mesh netting and on the inside with 2.50-cm mesh of soft plastic 'Netlon Parkguard'. A wooden platform (0.75×0.75 m) was built in a back corner of each compartment on which newspaper and green foliage was placed as a crude nest. This was sheltered by a wooden section of roof 2.44×1.22 m. The remaining area of the roof was covered by the same double layer of mesh netting as the release door. Access to the aviary was gained only through a double-door system at the rear. Two horizontal perches were provided across the full 2.44-m width of each aviary, near the front and rear. The rear perch was connected to the nest platform on one side and to the floor on the other by a diagonal perch, allowing a grounded bird access to the nest platform. Each aviary was protected by a skirt of wire mesh around the outside. An inner layer of wire mesh covered the entire basal area and supported a 'Permalite' roofing-felt floor.

Appendix 2. Fitting of monitoring marks

When nestlings were six to eight weeks old, both wings were marked with a wing tag which was coloured to denote the year of fledging. The tags were made from sheets of PVC-coated nylon mesh, which had the advantage of being light in weight, durable and flexible. Initially, the shape

of the tag denoted whether the bird was of Welsh, English or Scottish origin, but in 1993 a common shape was adopted. Later versions of Scottish tags incorporated additional coloured (Sericol screen ink) strips painted along the trailing edge of the tag, the colour combination being unique to each bird. An alphanumeric label was painted onto the front of the tag for identification of each bird. White (Sericol screen ink) labels were favoured as they could be read at much greater distances than black labels. A contact telephone number was also painted on the reverse of each tag so that, if the bird was found, the JNCC or the RSPB could be contacted immediately.

The tags were fitted to each wing by piercing the patagium about 3 cm from the carpal joint with a 1.6-mm-diameter nylon pin or a stainless-steel wire (0.9-mm-diameter). The tag was attached to the pin above and below the wing and held in place by two 9.5-mm-diameter nylon washers on the upper wing surface and a single washer on the lower wing surface. The ends of the nylon pin were melted with a naked flame and flattened into a plug to prevent the washers sliding off. A pin length of 22 mm between washers was found to be adequate, as this prevented the tag from twisting on the pin whilst ensuring that the tag remained proud of the lesser coverts and scapulars. These visual markers could be read up to 0.7 km away using a $\times 60$ telescope and were especially valuable for identifying individuals in the field without the need for capture. The life span of the markers was limited, since degradation of the nylon washers on the upper wing surface by ultraviolet light caused them to become brittle with age. This was accentuated by plastic fatigue caused by the plastic tag continually flapping in the wind. Consequently, washers failed and tags were lost three to five years after they were fitted, although tag life could be extended by fitting more than one washer. Steel-pinned tags apparently lasted longer.

At the time of fledging (7 to 8 weeks old), the primary, secondary and tail feathers are 'soft-penned' (i.e. feather quills contained blood and were easily damaged) as their development is still incomplete. At about 10 weeks old, however, they become 'hard-penned' (i.e. feather quills contained no blood). At the latter stage, a tail-mounted TW2 Biotrack 20-g radio transmitter was fitted to all the Red Kites released during 1989-93 in southern England using the method described by Kenward (1978). This technique ensured that the transmitter would be shed with the tail feathers during the bird's first moult in June and July in the following year. In northern Scotland, the same method was used during 1989-91; during 1992-93, however, an undertail-mounting technique was employed. This method concealed the TW2 transmitter in the undertail-coverts and involved attaching the transmitter to a 2-cm length of hollow pipe which was inserted over the rachis, pushed down to the base of the tail feather and glued into position. A single aerial was attached to the rachis with glue and dental floss and trimmed to the length of the tail feather.



REQUEST

Red Kite observations

Reporting records of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* can help with monitoring the expanding English and Scottish populations. In particular, any Red Kites suspected of breeding or holding breeding territories in England should be reported to Ian Carter, Red Kite Project Officer, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA. In addition, as Red Kites move around considerably during their first year, non-breeding records are of particular value if the colour of the wing tags, and if possible the inscription on the wing tag, is recorded. Such records, from anywhere in England, should be sent, along with any other enquiries, to Ian Carter at the above address. In Scotland, *all* reports of Red Kites are requested, and these should be sent to Lorcan O'Toole, South and West Scotland Regional Office, RSPB, West of Scotland Science Park, Kelvin Campus, Glasgow G20 0SP.

It is extremely helpful if records include the date and time of the sighting, the location (ideally a six-figure grid reference) and the name and address of the observer. The latter is particularly important as it allows fieldworkers to follow up any reports, should they require further details. If, for any reason, the above contacts cannot be reached, reports can be routed via the RSPB's Wildlife Enquiry Unit at The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DJ. (phone 01767 680551).



CONSERVATION RESEARCH NEWS

Compiled by Mark Avery



This feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports the most interesting recent scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic species.

Cold comfort for farmland birds

The population levels of many birds may be determined by winter food availability. A study by Dr Jeremy Wilson, Roy Taylor and Lis Muirhead of Oxford University looked at habitat use by wintering birds on farmland in the Thames Valley. Two of the most striking findings are that seed-eating species, such as Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, Goldfinch *C. carduelis*, Linnet *C. cannabina*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* and Reed Bunting *E. schoenichus*, strongly prefer stubble fields and use winter

cereals far less than expected on the basis of their area. The switch from spring-sown to autumn-sown cereals has removed stubble fields from the landscape of much of the country, and studies such as this one suggest that this change must have reduced the general quality of farmland for many birds. Nowadays, rotational set-aside is the main source of winter stubble fields and its area will be halved next year, with probable harmful effects for seed-eating birds.

WILSON, J. D., TAYLOR, R., & MUIRHEAD, L. B. 1996. Field use by farmland birds in winter: an analysis of field type preferences using resampling methods. *Bird Study* 43: 320-332.

Crested Tits are stumped

Crested Tits *Parus cristatus* often excavate nest-holes in stumps of rotting wood and it has been suggested that the availability of nest sites may limit population densities in many woodlands, but particularly in plantations. A study by Rebecca Denny and Dr Ron Summers in the RSPB Abernethy Forest nature reserve has shown that Crested Tits are surprisingly selective about where they nest. Only trees with a diameter of more than 20 cm are used, but, almost perversely it would seem,

Crested Tits avoid the southwest side of trees (where the depth of soft sapwood is greatest), preferring more northerly or easterly aspects. These results provide useful information to guide future schemes to provide nest sites for Crested Tits. They also, perhaps, explain why attempts to provide rotting stumps suitable for Crested Tits at Abernethy have been unsuccessful: the stumps were probably slightly too small.

DENNY, R. E., & SUMMERS, R. W. 1996. Nest site selection, management and breeding success of Crested Tits *Parus cristatus* at Abernethy Forest, Strathspey. *Bird Study* 43: 371-379.

Dr Mark Avery, Research Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL



MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS



▲ Plate 11. Mystery photograph 204A.



▲ Plate 12. Mystery photograph 204B.

204 Only in Northwest Africa do the ranges of Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura* and White-crowned Black Wheatear *O. leucopyga* overlap. The former breeds also in extreme southern France, in Spain and in Portugal, while the latter's range extends eastwards to eastern Saudi Arabia.

The name-giving white crown makes the identification of an adult White-crowned Black Wheatear straightforward, but non-adults, which may be encountered in all months of the year, have black crowns, as do Black Wheatears of all ages. Mystery photograph A, taken by G. D. & Y. S. Dean, shows an adult Black Wheatear in Spain in June 1984, and mystery photograph B, taken by Robin Chittenden, shows a first-year White-crowned Black Wheatear in Morocco in January 1990.

The latter bird's non-black bill and legs and the off-white tips to its alula, greater primary coverts, primaries and tertials enable us to age it as a non-adult. The excessive paleness of its bill strongly indicates that it is a White-crowned Black Wheatear, and this is confirmed by the extent of white below. On White-crowned Black Wheatears of all ages, the white covers the undertail-coverts, vent, lower belly and rear flanks and ends in a point centrally between or in front of the legs. On Black Wheatears of all ages, however, the white is more restricted, and covers only the undertail-coverts and extreme rear flanks and ends squarely well behind the legs.

Except for the presence of white on the forehead and crown, the most striking character for separating the two species is tail pattern. This applies to individuals of all ages, and is detectable, though not fully appreciable, in the two mystery photographs. The rump-and-tail pattern of Black Wheatear is very like that of Northern Wheatear *O. oenanthe*, with a white rump and uppertail-coverts and a white tail except for black central tail-feathers, and a thick, black terminal or subterminal bar. White-crowned Black Wheatear differs in the extension of the white onto its lower back and, more significantly, in its lack of a black terminal or subterminal bar. This makes an isolated feature of the black central

tail-feathers, though sometimes there are small black spots or small grey patches on the tips of the other tail-feathers, most often on the outermost. White-crowned Black Wheatear's distinctive tail pattern shows more clearly in plate 13.

Though difficult to see, and overshadowed in importance by the tail patterns, the two species' underwing patterns are noticeably different. Black Wheatear's underwing is uniformly black, while White-crowned Black Wheatear has black underwing-coverts and contrasting grey flight-feathers. Despite being variable according to season, moult, age, sex and race, the tone and colour of the plumage generally differ between the two species. Black Wheatear is normally decidedly less glossy, more brown-toned and consequently more contrasting between adjacent feather tracts than White-crowned Black Wheatear. Further, more subtle characters of separation are White-crowned Black Wheatear's sleeker appearance, more slender bill and slightly longer and narrower wings with more pointed wing-tips. A surprisingly reliable identification feature is choice of habitat: Black Wheatear is essentially a bird of cliffs and mountains, while White-crowned Black Wheatear is typically a desert-dweller, occurring there in both flat and mountainous areas.



▲ Plates 13 & 14. White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, Morocco, January 1990 (Robin Chittenden)

The forehead and crown of a White-crowned Black Wheatear can show every mixture of black and white between all black, as in mystery photograph B, and all white, as in plate 14. Intermediate extremes include Britain and Ireland's only White-crowned Black Wheatear, in Suffolk in June 1982, which had just a single white feather on its forehead, and the individual in plate 13, with its black-flecked, largely white forehead and crown.

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FROM THE RARITIES COMMITTEE'S FILES

Identification of pale Paddyfield Warblers



On 24th September 1993, Kevin Shepherd found an unusual, unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warbler at Sheringham, Norfolk. At first glance, it seemed to show a prominent supercilium and relatively short wings, which suggested Paddyfield Warbler *A. agricola*, but all thought of that was dispelled by the concolorous, cold greyish-brown upperparts, which were, at times, noticeably washed olive and clearly lacked rufous. Steve Votier was called, and the bird was quickly caught in a mist-net. The warbler was carefully examined in the hand and a detailed description and a series of photographs was taken. The bird was identified as a Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum*, following careful reference to Svensson (1992) and Lewington *et al.* (1991), on a combination of biometrics, uniformity and colour of upperparts and more especially the wing, a supercilium widest in front of the eye and the absence of a dark line above the supercilium. A full description of the bird, including all relevant biometrics and a pair of sketches (fig. 1), appears below.

Upper mandible horn-grey with pale horn cutting edge, the pale cutting edge broadest just the distal side of nostril. Lower mandible wholly pale horn with a small area of grey suffusion 2 mm short of the bill tip. Entire upperparts from forehead to upperside of tail almost uniform greyish-brown with a slight olive cast to entirety. Uppertail-coverts slightly warmer-coloured than rest of upperparts, being pale brown with a buff tinge. No rufous on upperparts. Supercilium broad and white with very slight buff suffusion, broadest in front of eye and fading behind eye to finish level with rear of ear-coverts. No dark upper edge to supercilium. Iris dull greyish-olive. Lores with grey-brown suffusion. Ear-coverts wholly greyish-brown, with restricted buff feathering below eye. Chin white. Throat white with restricted buff tipping. Breast white with more extensive buff tipping than throat, most buff on side of breast. Belly white. Flanks with extensive buff extending to sides of uppertail-coverts, where most buff. Undertail-

coverts off-white, tips suffused buff. Wings uniform pale greyish-brown with buff tinge. All wing feathers with pale buffish-brown fringes, broadest on tertials and most narrow on all feathers of alula, hence alula looking darker. Primaries diffusely tipped off-white, less than 0.4 mm at broadest tip (i.e. almost nothing there). Primaries all fresh. Tertials slightly worn (typical for first-winter *Acrocephalus*). Tail moderately worn with lots of castellations (typical for first-winter *Acrocephalus*). Lcgs pinkish-grey; rear of legs paler. Soles pale yellow; claws mid grey.

Full biometrics were included. Details of the more relevant biometrics included a wing length of 61.5 mm, emarginations on 3rd, 4th and slight on 5th; wing-point 3rd = 4th; 2nd primary = 6th; notch on 2nd = 3.8 mm less than secondaries; notch on 3rd = 8th/9th; 1st primary = 3.45 mm longer than primary coverts; bill 15.8 mm to skull, 10.4 mm to feathers; tail 54.5 mm.

The bird was released, details were phoned in to 'Birdline', and a crowd of observers gathered to watch this 'first' for Norfolk, which showed well in the field for the first time. It quickly became apparent that many observers questioned the identification. In the field, the supercilium was fairly obvious, and there was a clear dark line above it which had not been visible in the hand. Some observers were convinced that the bird was a Paddyfield Warbler, and SV, later, agreed with this; KS was more cautious, preferring to wait until the photographs were

returned and could be used to check the identification. Eventually, a combination of the biometrics and photographs left neither of the original observers in any doubt that this was indeed a Paddyfield Warbler, and it was accepted as that species by the British Birds Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 88: 538, plate 182).

We can sympathise completely with the observers' feelings, described by KS in his original BBRC submission: 'For a long, long time we had both dreamed of finding a new species for Norfolk. To find one and then completely "mess up" the identification is an experience neither of us wants to go through again. Following a day of suicidal despair, we both decided the only way to overcome it was to get out there and find something better. We hammered the site and were justly rewarded with Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (another county first) only five days later and Black-throated [Dark-throated] Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* in October. We feel much better now!'

Several lessons can be learned from this tale. First is the fact that field characters are not necessarily in-hand characters. Many fairly obvious features in the field change considerably when a bird is observed in the hand or close up. Most observers are aware of how 'jizz' changes when close to a bird; for instance, how small Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* and Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* can look when close up, yet how large Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus* can appear. Plumage features also vary. The classic example of this is the wing-bar of Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*. This species often shows good wing-bars in the field which can 'disappear' when the bird is caught. A similar thing happens to the dark shadowing above the supercilium of Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi*, and Peter Lansdown (*in litt.*) reports in-the-hand Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus* appearing to have no supercilia. In general, head patterns are more obvious on birds in the field than in the hand and subtle differences in shading, which are obvious when a bird is seen from a distance, can be missed from close up. The dark mark above the supercilium of this bird was not obvious in the hand (plates 18 & 19), but was clearly visible in the field and in some of the photographs, though it is not visible in others. Both observers feel that they missed this because they examined the bird too closely and they expected the feature to be more obvious than it was. In addition, the supercilium was considered to look more obvious in front of the eye and not to flare out behind the eye.

Two other important lessons are that once one gets on the wrong track with an identification it can be very difficult to get back on the right track, and that even very good and careful birders can still make mistakes. The two observers involved, from their past track record and the details submitted with this record, definitely fall into the category of top-class birder. They are to be congratulated for allowing us to 'go public' on this record. They are also to be congratulated for documenting the record with such detail that they were able, retrospectively, to confirm the identification from all the data they had already gathered.

Perhaps the most important lesson, however, is that birds do not always look like you expect them to. This cold grey-brown Paddyfield Warbler was different from any that the observers had previously seen or read about. The literature available at the time suggested that Paddyfield Warbler was generally a rufous bird which, even at its most dull, showed rufous on the rump, and which showed a striking head pattern. This bird had no hint of rufous in its cold grey-brown plumage. Whilst in the hand, it was compared directly with the illustrations of



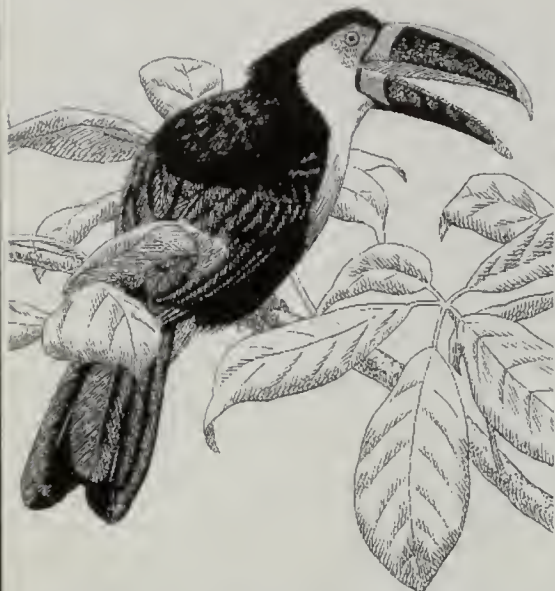
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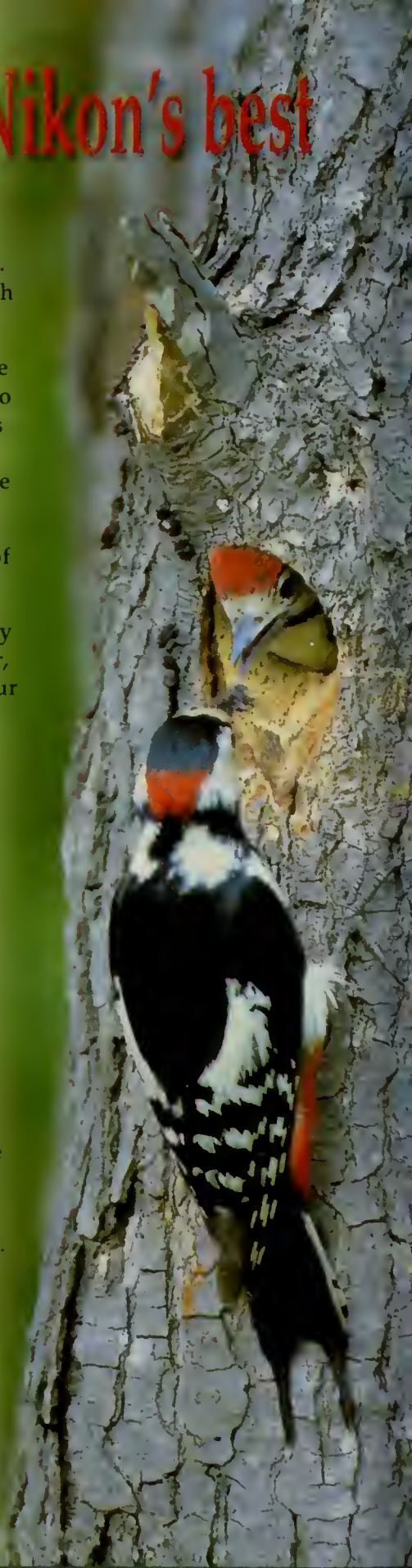


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**10-YEAR
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▲ ► 15-17. Unidentified warbler, perhaps Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Kazakhstan, June 1984 (C. Bradshaw)



▼ 18 & 19. Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Norfolk, September 1993 (Kevin Shepherd)



Blyth's Reed and Paddyfield Warblers in Lewington *et al.* (1991): it was very similar to the former, but bore no resemblance to the illustration of Paddyfield Warbler.

This, however, is not an isolated event with this species. In June 1984, a group of birders, including CB, trapped a strange warbler at Tselinograd, Kazakhstan, USSR. The bird was in a scrub area with breeding Blyth's Reed Warblers and Booted Warblers *Hippolais caligata*. The bird was examined quickly, photographed and released. No biometrics or wing-formula were taken by the ringer who handled the bird. It was identified as Booted Warbler, with everyone happy about the identification. All the other Paddyfield Warblers in the area were a pale chestnut or pale tawny-brown. When the photographs were returned, however, both CB and Alan Dean, who had also been present, became suspicious that the identification was incorrect, as the bill seemed too big and dark, the undertail-coverts perhaps too long, and there was no sign of white on the outer tail feathers (plates 15-17). It was difficult to be sure what species it was, but the very short wings and relatively prominent supercilium suggest that it may have been a Paddyfield Warbler, and one photograph (plate 16) showed the tail-cocking typical of the species. Once again, this bird showed uniform grey-brown upperparts with no sign of any rufous in the plumage or dark tertial centres, and neither the eye-stripe nor the dark line above the eye was particularly prominent, although there was a dark spot in front of the eye.

Conclusions

Neither bird should have been bleached at the respective times of year, as the Norfolk bird was a first-year and the Kazakhstan bird should have completed its pre-breeding moult one month earlier (Cramp 1992), although Williamson (1976) suggested that adults can be faded to a grey-brown, retaining warmth only on the rump, by mid June. No other Paddyfield Warbler seen in Kazakhstan around this time approached this individual in plumage tones. A somewhat similar episode concerning a pale adult Paddyfield Warbler, on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, during 30th September to 15th October 1974, was described in detail by D. S. Flumm and N. A. G. Lord, with photographs by D. B. Hunt (*Brit. Birds* 71: 95-101). It seems unlikely that these three were 'freak' birds, and we presume that pale Paddyfield Warblers showing reduced or no rufous, uniform upperparts and a less obvious head pattern occur regularly, though infrequently. Svensson (1992) alluded to this, but *BWP* suggests that Paddyfield Warbler should always show dark-centred tertials and, at least, rufous on the rump. Perhaps this shows, as demonstrated previously by Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephalos* (*Brit. Birds* 86: 378-386), that there are gaps in our collective knowledge of the range of variation of plumage of lesser-known species, particularly those exhibiting marked geographical variation.

Identification of Paddyfield Warbler is usually relatively straightforward, with a combination of prominent supercilium flaring behind the eye, a dark shadow above the supercilium, short wings and rufous-toned upperparts, particularly the rump and base of the tail, with marked contrast between dark tertial centres and pale rusty edges. First-winters are frequently paler, as are individuals of the races *septima* from the Black Sea area and *capistrata* from Central Asia, although there

seems some doubt as to whether colour differences for *capistrata* are caused by more rapid wear of plumage rather than genuine pigment differences. If an observer were confronted with one of these pale Paddyfield Warblers, however, identification would be much less easy. The combination of structure, head pattern and thrush-like bill would seem to be the best features, but it is, perhaps, doubtful that a sight-only record would be acceptable.

We would be pleased to hear opinions about the identity of the 1984 bird and details of any other variant Paddyfield Warblers.

Acknowledgments

The Rarities Committee is indebted to Kevin Shepherd and Steve Votier for allowing it to use their notes and photographs, and to discuss their record fully. We have tried to 'open up' the workings of the Committee with several similar cases in the past, but have been thwarted by observers who have refused permission to use their records as examples of problems of identification or assessment. We understand observers' natural reluctance to have their mistakes published, but feel that, because of this, Kevin and Steve are to be congratulated for allowing this rather painful experience to appear in print. We are also indebted to Martin Elliott for the use of his excellent sketches.

COLIN BRADSHAW

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EDITORIAL COMMENT There is further discussion of Paddyfield Warbler identification in a letter from Lars Svensson and reply by Dr Colin Bradshaw & Jimmy Steele on pages 152-158.



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NOTES

These contributions have all been assessed by the eight members of either the Behaviour Notes Panel or the Identification Notes Panel.

Daytime roosting behaviour of Alpine Swifts

On 8th April 1992, while visiting Fes, Morocco, we observed many Alpine Swifts *Apus melba* feeding very low over the city, some foraging only 3 m above the ground and between the buildings. Many were evidently in poor condition; three were picked up from the ground, exhausted, and a small number were found dead along the city walls.

The roosting behaviour of these swifts was noteworthy. Very large numbers were seen roosting on the city wall during the day. Along one 20-m section which was particularly sheltered from the wind, three dense clusters of roosting Alpine Swifts totalled approximately 350 individuals; the largest contained an estimated 150 swifts, the composition constantly changing as individuals landed or dropped away from the cluster. Although this behaviour is described and illustrated in *BWP* (vol. 4), it is believed that clusters of this size roosting during the day are perhaps exceptional and are a reaction to extreme weather conditions. The previous few days had been particularly cold, with much snow in the mountains.

DURWYN LILEY and LAURA WATSON

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Green Woodpecker visiting hot-air balloonists

At about 08.00 hours on 26th June 1993, while floating in a *Viva 77* hot-air balloon at 100-150 m over the woods, rivers and chateaux of a quiet part of north France, our peace was interrupted when a Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* flew up to the basket, 'yaffled' at us and flew away. A few minutes later, we heard the call again and I felt the bird alight on my shoulder. I turned and squealed, and the three of us—Julia Bayly, Martin Phipps and I—watched it fly off to the trees.

The ballooning magazine *Aerostat* reported a racing pigeon *Columba livia* hitching a ride on a balloon about 60 m up, the pigeon resting near the top of the balloon envelope for some ten minutes, but I know of no other instances of a woodpecker behaving in the manner described.

MARY FOX

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EDITORIAL COMMENT David A. Christie has commented: 'I know of no comparable records. Although the Green Woodpecker is certainly very inquisitive, and will investigate any strange intrusion, physical or aural, into its territory, it does seem surprising that this individual should have ascended to an altitude of 100 m or more to "check out" the balloon; generally, Green Woodpeckers are reluctant to rise much above treetop level. That it landed on the balloonist's shoulder, delightful though the experience may have been, is less surprising in the circumstances; a human being floating in a (presumably) slow-moving aerial object would appear far less of a threat than one walking along a woodland edge.'

Magpies flying out to sea apparently to migrate

On 10th March 1993, from the top of sand-dunes at Waxham, Norfolk, I was watching a party of six Magpies *Pica pica*, which was then joined by a further 11 individuals which flew in from various points during the next 15 minutes. After some ten minutes of heated activity, followed by a short period of silence and inactivity, seven Magpies detached themselves from the group, circled up to about 60 m, and flew straight out to sea. I watched them through my telescope until they disappeared from sight, about 5 km out and still flying strongly. They were on a bearing of approximately 100°, which would have taken them to the Dutch coast about 190 km away.

According to the literature, Magpies are non-migratory and sedentary. *The Atlas of Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Lack 1986) states that there is no winter influx of Magpies from the Continent. Nevertheless, it would appear that these individuals were in fact on a return migration; nothing else seems to fit the bill. Over the years, I have seen several landbirds either coming ashore in autumn or leaving in spring, including Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius*, Great Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos major*, a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and a Common Coot *Fulica atra*, as well as all the usual migrants. Since Waxham is one of the main landfall sites in East Anglia, I would expect the occasional odd sighting.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT *BWP* (vol. 8) describes the Magpie as sedentary, with limited dispersal, and reluctant to cross sea; at Falsterbo, Sweden, small groups have been seen attempting to cross the 24 km to Denmark in autumn, apparently without success, although spring crossings from Denmark to Sweden are occasionally successful. Magpies were unknown in Ireland until about 1676, when they appeared in Co. Wexford, presumably having crossed the sea either from England/Wales or from France/Iberia.

Carrion Crow attacking milk cartons

On 4th June 1993, at Leuchars, Fife, two standard 568-ml cartons of full-cream milk were found badly damaged shortly after delivery. One had a hole measuring 6.5 cm by 3 cm, with strips of cardboard torn away completely; the other carton had a hole 3 cm by 1 cm. About 30 minutes after these were removed, a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* was observed pecking at further cartons nearby, and there is little doubt that this individual was the culprit. On 14th June, what was probably the same bird was seen close to another vandalised carton, with a large amount of spilt milk on the ground.

I cannot find any reference to milk cartons being opened by birds. It requires a relatively powerful species, such as a Carrion Crow, to obtain access to the contents of a carton: after all, even human beings occasionally have difficulty.

NORMAN ELKINS

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LETTERS

Ruddy Ducks

A great deal has been written concerning the fate of the Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* in Britain and Ireland (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 86: 338; 87: 394-395, 494; 88: 243-244). While I have no wish to add any weight to the emotive rhetoric which has sometimes been used, I should declare here and now that I feel that these birds should be left alone, and for good reason.

The Ruddy Duck belongs to a small subfamily, the Oxyurinae, which diverged from the rest of the Anatidae some 40 million years ago (Sibley, Ahlquist & Monroe 1988; Sibley & Ahlquist 1990) and, as such, is the sister group to all other waterfowl except the whistling-ducks (Dendrocygnidae) and the aberrant Magpie Goose *Anseranas semipalmata*. Their behaviour and appearance have often led to their segregation in earlier classifications.

Sibley & Monroe (1993) recognised seven species of *Oxyura*, of which only two include populations with substantially white heads: the Nearctic and Neotropical Ruddy Duck and the Palearctic White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala*. The sub-Saharan Maccoa Duck *O. maccoa*, a dark-headed species, has been suggested as a likely candidate for the closest relative of the White-headed Duck (Johnsgard, in Mayr & Cottrell 1979, p.503). If, however, all the reports that the White-headed Duck 'readily' interbreeds with the Ruddy Duck, producing 'viable hybrids' (*Brit. Birds* 86: 338), are true (and I have no reason to doubt them), then the inescapable conclusion is that they *may*, in fact, be conspecific.

The likelihood is that the White-headed Duck is the remnant of a 'first-wave' invasive spread of white-faced stiff-tails into preglacial or, more likely, interglacial Europe. In the current interglacial, the White-headed Duck's distribution is of the 'Caspian and Mediterranean glacial refuge' type (Harrison 1982, pp.28-39), from which it clearly has not made a particularly successful recovery; indeed, it has been in general decline throughout much of its range since the last century. The corollary of this probably means that, in the not *too* distant past, northern Europe possessed a common white-faced stiff-tail.

The effect of the Ruddy Duck in Europe is, therefore, identical to that of other 'second-wave' invasions: either the separation has been long enough for the isolating mechanisms to be 'in place' for them to behave as separate 'species', or they freely interbreed.

Of course, I am being disingenuous here, as we all know that the Ruddy Duck has been popular with aviculturists since at least 1936 and 'escaped' from the then Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge during the 1950s and later. This single fact is, however, central to the muddled thinking that has characterised much of the debate to date: the rather 'Victorian' notion that Man is somehow 'outside' nature, and that any of his actions are therefore 'not natural'. In a deterministic sense, it could be said that the Ruddy Duck 'used' Man to maximise its breeding success, and that, as a 'method' of range expansion, introduction has no peer.

Indeed, one of the reasons I am prompted to write this letter was a recent radio news item which said that, and I quote, 'The Ruddy Duck is destroying the White-headed Duck'. This typical example of alarmist journalism is,

unfortunately, little different from anything we have heard so far from people who ought to know better.

'Saving' (rather than 'destroying') would be closer to the truth, for, if we could move several thousand generations ahead in time, we would probably find a strong and thriving European stiff-tail, not the Ruddy Duck as such, nor yet the White-headed Duck, but as much 'part of nature' as any other living organism and probably more tolerant of Man-modified habitats.

Just as DNA-DNA hybridisation techniques have revolutionised ideas on the classification of birds, so detailed mtDNA studies are revealing that strictly morphological and 'museum-based' notions of species and speciation are quite wrong and give a false sense of stability, not unlike the pre-Darwinian 'fixity of species' concept. One of the outcomes of this exciting research is that morphologically different populations can be conspecific, whilst seemingly identical populations with 'seamless' distributions can be several, or many, reproductively isolated species.

This being the case, and given that the White-headed Duck is breeding with the Ruddy Duck, then I should say that it is already too late to do anything about it, certainly for the Iberian population. That said, there are still many questions that require answers. Are hybrids as fertile as, or less fertile than, the offspring of pure pairs? Are White-heads accepting Ruddy mates because no White-heads are available, or through positive selection? Are the hybrids breeding with one or both of the parent forms or selecting other hybrids? How are hybrids identified in the field? Is the zone of hybridisation expanding? I suspect that little or no research has been conducted in these areas and that these and mtDNA studies are urgently required and should be viewed as an interesting study opportunity.

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Status of swift species on Gran Canaria

The literature implies that the Common Swift *Apus apus* occurs only as a non-breeder in the Canary Islands, where Pallid Swift *A. pallidus* is described as 'scarce' (*BWP*, vol. 5), while the endemic Plain Swift *A. unicolor* is said to be common in all habitats, including urban ones (Chantler & Driessens, 1995, *Swifts: a guide to the swifts and treeswifts of the World*).

On numerous occasions in early June 1995, while holidaying at Maspalomas at the south end of Gran Canaria, I watched a flock of swifts around a construction site in the 'urbanisation', where they flew up into crevices in the ceilings of the unfinished building. They appeared identical to Common Swifts

in build and coloration, and showed a distinct white throat patch as often as would Common Swifts in Britain. Screaming parties of over 20 swifts flew around the area each evening.

About 3 km away, swifts fed every day over a brackish lagoon just inland from Maspalomas beach; the vast majority, up to hundreds, appeared indistinguishable from Common Swift. Single-figure flocks of Pallid Swift were sometimes present, both here and at various points farther inland. Also inland, there were numbers of dark swifts west of the town of Telde and at the summit of Pozo de las Nieves (about 1700 m), where I also saw one Pallid, while swifts near the west coast matched the book descriptions of Plain Swift.

I suggest that Common Swifts are present in some numbers in midsummer, apparently nesting, at least in the Maspalomas area of Gran Canaria. The distribution of Common and Plain Swifts may need to be reassessed.

R. ALLAN REESE

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Tony Clarke has commented: 'It has been known for some time that Common Swifts breed on Gran Canaria, but I have been unable as yet to find out exactly where. I have been informed that there are a few locations, but am unaware of the total number of pairs involved. The species has also been seen entering holes on Tenerife, but the locations are inaccessible without climbing experience. Identification of the three swift species breeding in the Canary Islands is not easy, especially as Plain Swift can show a pale throat; anyone reporting Common Swift or, on Tenerife, Pallid Swift outside migration periods may be asked to provide detailed descriptions. I should be interested to hear from anyone who believes that he or she may have found breeding Pallid or Common Swifts on Tenerife, so that I could visit the areas concerned.'

Tony Clarke would welcome calls from observers visiting Tenerife, where his home telephone number is 52-42-91.

Mystery warblers in Tselinograd

Dr Colin Bradshaw and Jimmy Steele invited further comments on the unidentified bird featured in 'Mystery photographs 195' (*Brit. Birds* 88: 561-564, plates 199 & 200), photographed in arid scrub near Tselinograd, Kazakhstan. To me, it is a typical Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* of the nominate race *caligata*, the subspecies which breeds commonly in the area and in the very same type of scrub (which I recognise from four visits). Since several similar birds were seen in the same habitat, this seems the obvious solution to the mystery, rather than speculating about their being of the much more southerly Central Asian subspecies *rama*, or hybrids with Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida*. Even an undescribed subspecies of Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* is mentioned as a vague possibility. So, what caused the problem?

Could the observers have been misled by a slight misconception of what a normal nominate Booted Warbler should look like? I would say that it looks very

much like the bird(s) in plates 199 & 200. This possibility was dismissed, however, and readers were referred to plate 201 for a typical nominate Booted; yet the latter shows what looks to me to be a Paddyfield Warbler.

Single photographs can be deceptive, and can sometimes convey an impression quite uncharacteristic of the species and even, occasionally, more typical of another species. The very long and evenly broad, light supercilium of the bird in plate 201, however, strongly suggests Paddyfield, as does the rather strong bill (original transparency, with additional picture of the same bird, examined by courtesy of CB) with pale pinkish-yellow base of lower mandible; the head shape (with flattish forehead) and the rather strong tarsi are also better for Paddyfield than for Booted, and the bird is rather long-tailed and apparently has reasonably long undertail-coverts.

In the same region there were said to have been numerous Olivaceous Warblers. I have failed to find this species at this locality, including in June 1987 (when CB's photographs were taken), as also, so far as I know, have all other Scandinavian and Finnish groups. After all, Tselinograd lies over 800 km north of the known range of Olivaceous Warbler, which breeds north to the Syr-Darya river but does not enter the main Kazakh steppe.

Booted Warbler (of both races) has a supercilium which is off-white and rather prominent in front of the eye, narrowing over the eye ('waisted supercilium'), often widening again behind the eye but usually being much less distinct there, and narrowing quickly and being tinged more buffish-grey at the rear; it is never broad and distinct over the eye and never extends *a long way back over the ear-coverts* as on Paddyfield Warbler. A few black-and-white photographs of trapped Booted do show a rather long and prominent supercilium, but this could be caused by reproduction from colour slides; in life, Booted Warblers do not have this appearance, but look just like the bird(s) in plates 199 & 200. It may even be productive to reassess all records of Booted showing a very long and broad supercilium, one example being the Fair Isle, Shetland, record of 25th August to 2nd September (captioned October) 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 434).

Typically, the bill of Booted Warbler is pinkish-brown with a darker culmen and a diffusely darker area on the distal portion of the lower mandible, but not showing particularly strong contrasts. Paddyfield Warbler's bill is somewhat variable, but generally rather pale straw-coloured or pinkish on the base of the lower mandible, with a more contrasting blackish smudge towards the tip.

In reasonably fresh plumage, Paddyfield Warbler has a rufous-tinged rump, but in summer much or all of this warm tinge may be abraded, inviting confusion with Booted Warbler (in museum collections in both Stockholm and Tring, and more recently in Copenhagen, I have found July Paddyfield mislabelled as Booted). Most fresh-plumaged Paddyfield Warblers characteristically have a fairly obvious contrast on the tertials (darkish centres and paler edges), again becoming much subdued in worn plumage; Booted shows less obvious (but some) contrast on the tertials, even when fresh.

After checking these important features, I would consider song and habitat. (My experience of the calls is still too limited to enable me to differentiate the two species on calls alone.)

Only then would I consider the finer and more variable features such as tail graduation and length, length of undertail-coverts, primary projection, darkness

of crown sides, and so on. Paying too much attention to these often overrated, mostly jizz-related characters can so easily lead the observer astray. Booted Warbler's tail, for instance, is not completely square, often having a graduation of 4, 5 and even 6 mm; with total tail length of around 50 mm, such a graduation can appear rather obvious.

I would even place general plumage coloration among these subordinate characters. Judging mostly from skins and photographs, I have found Paddyfield the most variable of all the Western Palearctic warblers: some are rich tawny-brown above, with a strong rufous tinge on the rump and creamy-buff breast sides and flanks; others are very pale and grey-brown. A varying degree of feather abrasion appears to be the main reason for this, but (poorly understood) geographical differences, or the appearance of different colour morphs, could add to it. Be that as it may, I have more than once initially mistaken a typical Paddyfield for something else just because of this variability of plumage colours. Even the shape can at times be misleading, with some individuals resembling a *Hippolais* warbler and others looking like a long-tailed *Phylloscopus*. That Paddyfield Warbler can sometimes look confusing is amply demonstrated by Flumm & Lord (*Brit. Birds* 71: 95-101). Compare also CB's plate 201 with plate 31 in Flumm & Lord: there is a remarkable similarity.

The 'mystery bird' has a rich buff-brown wash on its underparts, strongest on the flanks. This further supports identification as nominate Booted. If any obvious difference in colours can be detected between the two races, nominate *caligata* is a little darker buff below and *rama* paler. The latter can be slightly more greyish-brown above, too (making it difficult to separate from Olivaceous Warbler in the field), but not always; the Copenhagen museum skin series of *rama* from southwest Afghanistan shows warm brown upperpart coloration almost identical to nominate *caligata*.

I must conclude that nominate *caligata* and *rama* are so similar that the greatest care is required to separate them (if at all possible in the field). I realise that others are of a different opinion, but one should bear in mind that a difference of about 1-1.5 mm in bill length (and slightly paler underparts) is not much to go on; there is also a slight overlap in bill measurements, and a few apparent breeders in eastern Afghanistan and Baluchistan have just as fine a bill as the nominate race (Siberia and Kazakhstan). The picture may prove to be more complex than we wish to believe.

Incidentally, bill depth (measured at feathering) of *rama* is identical to that of *caligata*, at least in a substantial part of its range. I and others have stated that *rama* has a stronger (meaning heavier, thicker) bill; judging from about 70 skins from various parts of Iran, Afghanistan and Baluchistan, it is not stronger, but is only slightly longer. It will be interesting to examine birds from farther north and northeast ('*annectens*') to see if these have thicker bills.

If I am right in my assumption about the birds in plates 199 & 200 and in plate 201, it is still strange that slightly different song was noted from the 'mystery birds' and from those regarded as nominate *caligata*. Were these differences only imagined? Apparently so, although it is difficult to evaluate this afterwards, especially with some doubt concerning some of the identifications.

LARS STENSSON

Sturegatan 60, S-114 36 Stockholm, Sweden

We are grateful to Lars Svensson not only for the detail of his response but also for the measured nature of it. We were initially surprised by the response but should not have been, as something else that CB had written should have made us think twice about the identification (see below). We agree that the mystery photograph (*Brit. Birds* 88: plate 199) is of a spring nominate Booted Warbler. We also agree with LS over the range of Olivaceous Warbler; the latter were seen both before and after the 'mystery bird', but CB's notes reveal that these observations were made much farther south, at Frunze and Tashkent. We apologise for our misleading comments in this respect.

It is obvious that there is a significant difference between the appearance of Booted Warbler in spring and in autumn. In our experience, autumn Booted are not particularly *Hippolais*-like and are more likely to be confused with a *Phylloscopus* warbler than with an Olivaceous Warbler. Our experience of spring Booted Warblers is limited, but photographs of those in Britain show them to be much more Olivaceous-like, including an 'apparently bigger' bill, perhaps a function of head shape, which appears less rounded in spring. In Tselinograd, the party of birders present 'identified' two types of Booted. The first, the original mystery bird (88: plate 199), differed from the fairly pale sandy, *Phylloscopus*-like Booted we are used to seeing in autumn; these birds looked more like Olivaceous Warblers, with a relatively large bill. The second type (88: plate 201) was a pale sandy bird—apparently, the 'real' mystery bird—seen in a dried wadi on the rolling steppe at Sobhiika, about 20 km out of Tselinograd: with about ten of these in the area, CB concentrated on getting photos rather than examining them properly; they looked so like autumn Booted that he did not think twice.

CB was at Tselinograd in 1984 as well, and had a rather odd (and similar) experience concerning a misidentified Paddyfield Warbler (see pages 142-147 in this issue). Comparison of photographs of this bird (90: plates 15-17) and the one considered earlier (88: plate 201) suggests that these are the same species, but we have no idea what the actual species is. If considered in isolation, the 1984 bird could be an aberrant Paddyfield Warbler. With a further ten identical birds in the Tselinograd area in 1987, we are less sure. Furthermore, both birds were in similar habitat, which differed noticeably from that of 'normal' Paddyfield Warblers nearby. The 1984 individual was trapped in an area of dry scrub a couple of hundred metres from reeds fringing the river; the site, now very dry, had obviously suffered spring flooding. The birds in 1987 were also in thorny scrub in a ditch that was bone-dry, but would clearly have been wet earlier in the spring.

We did, however, see considerable numbers of 'normal-looking' Paddyfield Warblers in the area, but all were in reedbeds. It seems unlikely that, in the same area, normal-looking Paddyfield Warblers would be nesting only in reedbeds and 'odd-looking' Paddyfield Warblers only in drying thorny scrub. Is it not more likely that the latter are of a different species? But what is the species?

Plates 20 & 21 show two further photographs of the 1987 warbler. We agree with LS that some features displayed by these birds seem too marked for any *Hippolais*, especially the prominent supercilium behind the eye (plate 20) and the dark spot on the lores (plate 21). Compare this, however, with plates 30 & 31, a Booted Warbler photographed in the Isles of Scilly in October 1985. There is little



▲ 20 & 21. Mystery warbler, Kazakhstan, June 1987 (Colin Bradshaw)



▲ 22 & 23. Mystery warbler, Kazakhstan, May 1984 (Colin Bradshaw)



▲ 24 & 25. Paddyfield Warblers *Acrocephalus agricola*, Kazakhstan, June 1987 (Colin Bradshaw)



▲ 26 & 27. Paddyfield Warblers *Acrocephalus agricola*, Kazakhstan, June 1987 and May 1984 (Colin Bradshaw)



▲ 28 & 29. Paddyfield Warblers *Acrocephalus agricola*, Kazakhstan, May 1984 (Colin Bradshaw)



▲ 30 & 31. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Scilly, October 1985 (Colin Bradshaw)

difference in supercilium length between the latter and the bird in plates 20 & 21, and none between it and the birds in plates 22 & 23 (which we think are the same species). We cannot explain the dark lores.

Further Paddyfield Warblers in the Tselinograd area are illustrated in plates 24-26 (taken in 1987) and 27-29 (1984). All show a rounded tail and longer undertail-coverts than in plates 20 & 21—and these last two, and perhaps plate 22 as well, also seem to show white outer webs to the outer tail feathers. We still think that the jizz of the bird in plate 201 (vol. 88) is closer to *Hippolais* than to *Acrocephalus*, but we remain unsure what species it is.

If, as seems likely, the original mystery photograph (88: 199) is of a Booted Warbler of the nominate race, and there are large numbers of 'normal-looking' Paddyfield Warblers in reedbeds around Tselinograd, what are these pale pot-bellied birds with a prominent supercilium, short undertail-coverts and perhaps white outer tail feathers found in scrub growing in dried-up inundation areas? We shall be fascinated to know what others make of them with this additional information.

COLIN BRADSHAW and JIMMY STEELE

9 Tynemouth Place, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ



LOOKING BACK

One hundred and fifty years ago: 'Occurrence of the Scops Eared Owl at the Scilly Islands.—I received yesterday [12th April 1847] from Mr. James, the steward of the lord-proprietor of the Scilly Islands, a very good specimen of the scops owl. It was reported to me to have been caught in the past week on the grounds of Mr. Smith, the lord-proprietor in the island of Tresco, and I should imagine that it must have been disabled from flying, by exhaustion, after having performed a migratorial flight, as the bird does not exhibit any bodily injury. The finding of this bird at the present season of the year in such a locality, seems to confirm the supposition that this species visits Europe in the summer from Africa and the warmer regions of the earth.' (*Zoologist* 5: 1777)

One hundred years ago: 'Breeding of the Roseate Tern in Britain.—I have pleasure in reporting the fact that this elegant and most beautiful of our Sea-swallows, *Sierna dougalli*, is not yet extinct as a British breeding species, and that it still has a regular nesting haunt in the British Isles. Your readers will be aware that eminent and leading ornithologists have for some years been of opinion that the Roseate Tern only visited our coasts as a casual summer migrant, and this has been so stated in all recent works on British birds. However, for the past few years I have known of a colony of these birds nesting annually in Britain; but of course, for obvious reasons, I must refrain from naming the precise locality. In 1895, I sent Mr. J. T. Proud, of Bishop Auckland, specimens of their eggs, and informed that gentleman of the whereabouts of the locality, and last year he visited the place, saw the birds, and obtained their eggs himself; and I understand he has had the pleasure of supplying the British Museum with such specimens, and has satisfied the British Museum authorities that this Tern is still a British-breeding species.

'It is satisfactory to know that these rare birds have selected a portion of our islands for rearing their young where they are not likely to be much molested by man . . .' (*Zoologist* Ser. 4, vol. 1: 165, April 1897)

Twenty-five years ago, on 8th April 1972, P. G. Lansdown and D. C. Palmer watched a Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* at Steart Point, Somerset, the sixteenth British record and the first since 1965. (*Brit. Birds* 66: 345)



REVIEWS

Atlante degli uccelli di Piemonte e Valle d'Aosta in inverno (1986-1992).

By M. Cucco, L. Levi, G. Maffei & C. Pulcher.

Museo Regionale Naturali, Torino, 1996. 365 pages; 170 line-drawings; 288 distribution maps. ISBN 88-86041-15-2. L120.000.

This is the 'Atlas of the Birds of Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta in Winter': the area bordered by France, Switzerland and Lombardia to the west, north and east, respectively, surveyed by standard 10-km squares, and presented in the standard style (with blue dots on an outline shaded usefully in grey to indicate altitude, up to and over 400 m and 1,000 m), with small breeding-distribution maps alongside for comparison. The text is wholly in Italian, although the captions to the figures in the introductory sections are also given in English, and there is a first-rate 1½-page English summary, which has been so carefully written that it will enable English-speaking non-Italian-speaking readers to make full use of this book. The bulk of the data was collected during the six winters 1986/87-1991/92 (almost 71,000 records), supplemented by a further 1,300 during 1992/93.

It is fascinating for us in Britain, where the Hedge Accentor *Prumella modularis* is a lowland, garden-and-hedgerow bird, to find that the breeding ranges of both Hedge Accentor and Alpine Accentor *P. collaris* are

almost wholly within the area of squares containing land over 1,000 m, but that in winter 90% of the former species have made an altitudinal migration to overwinter in areas below 1,000 m: the breeding and wintering distribution maps of Alpine Accentor are almost identical, whereas those for Hedge Accentor are almost complete opposites.

As well as the maps, there are histograms to show the altitudinal distribution of each species in winter, and also the proportions within each of the species' main habitat types (the latter a little difficult for a non-Italian-speaking, non-botanical ornithologist to interpret, but the information is there for anyone wishing to make the effort).

Not surprisingly, far more species overwinter in the lowlands (178 species below 200 m) than in the mountains (15 species above 2,500 m). Much more use is made of the data than merely dot-distribution maps, demonstrating just what can be achieved by careful analysis, even with the data from just one part of a country.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

The Birds of Britain & Europe. Bird Images Video Guides. vols. 5-7; 5: larks to thrushes; 6: warblers to orioles; 7: shrikes to buntings.

Filmed by Paul Doherty. Narrated by Bill Oddie.

Bird Images Video Guides, Sherburn-in-Elmct, 1996. Running time approximately 80 minutes per video. £16.95 each or all three for £44.95.

Over 200 species are covered by these three video tapes. The general quality is superb, and I strongly recommend them. The camera work is excellent: for example, look at the footage of the Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* on the ground, the Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* clambering over the rock face, or the Radde's Accentor *Prumella ocularis* feeding. For the few species not shown moving, there is a still image of the bird.

Used in conjunction with a good field guide, these tapes capture both their jizz and their beauty and are an ideal way to enjoy and study the birds of Britain and Europe. Some vagrant species are missing, and many of the birds have been filmed on their

breeding grounds, but species are shown in a variety of plumages, not just adult males, but also females and juveniles. The calls and songs are covered by the addition of good sound recordings. Bill Oddie's commentary is professional, informative and interesting.

There are enough vagrants to Britain (e.g. the 1996 Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* at Werrington, Cambridgeshire, and the Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* in Cumbria) to keep ardent twitchers happy, and both the novice and the experienced birdwatcher could learn from these video guides. They represent extremely good value for money. Buy them!

DAVE ODELL

Rare Birds Day by Day.

By Steve Dudley, Tim Benton, Pete Fraser & John Ryan. Illustrations by Dave Nurney.

T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1996. 392 pages; 31 line-drawings. ISBN 0-85661-102-6. £25.00.

The simple aim of this book is to give a day-by-day account of the rarer species seen in Britain and Ireland. Thus, throughout the year, records are listed in systematic order with information such as county, locality and the first date (and last date when different). Each account is preceded by a summary outlining the more important events of that day.

Thus, with this book, a new kind of birdwatching is born: 'forward-looking' birdwatching. But, unfortunately, birdwatching, like meteorology, is not an exact science! And, as a point of fact, birdwatching depends on weather, too. So, don't dream too much. If you choose 9th May to look for an 'overshot' Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* in Shetland, you run the risk of being disappointed. And to what extent does a total

of 139 Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* seen in June add to the likelihood of seeing one in that month this year?

To my eyes, this book never will replace its famous predecessors, *Scarce Migrant Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1974) and *Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1976, 1989), with their clear distribution maps and good and detailed diagrams based on seven-day periods, from which a reader can get a clear picture of each rare bird's occurrence pattern. For the would-be rarity-finder, there are no shortcuts: one has to pry a lot to see a sought-after species, even in the right place at the right time.

First and foremost, *Rare Birds Day by Day* is a book for fun and entertainment (and nothing more).

PHILIPPE J. DUBOIS

A Guide to the Identification and Natural History of the Sparrows of the United States and Canada.

By D. J. Rising. Illustrated by David D. Beadle.

Academic Press, London, 1996. 365 pages; 27 colour plates. ISBN 0-12-588970-4. £30.00.

This informative and attractive book covers those species of the subfamily Emberizinae occurring in North America—the North American sparrows, longspurs and Old World buntings. There is an account for each species which includes identification, habits, habitat and range, breeding, history and geographical variation. There are plates of each relevant plumage of each species, including two plates demonstrating the geographical variation of Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* and one each for Song *Melospiza melodia* and Savannah Sparrows *Passerculus sandwichensis*. The quality of the plates is excellent.

What is wrong with the book? Well, principally timing. It is published less than twelve months after the excellent *Buntings and Sparrows* by Byers, Olsson & Curson (*Brit. Birds* 89: 217) and inevitably has to be compared with that. The identification text is

less detailed, as is that on geographical variation (although this is more than compensated for by the plates), the sections on habits and range are similar, but this book scores with the fascinating 'history' section detailing the discovery of each species: an excellent innovation, particularly for those already hooked by Mearns & Mearns (1988, 1992). Beadle's plates are excellent, with detailed, life-like birds. In comparison, Byers' plates are more sketchy and somewhat 'cartoon-like' but sometimes display the key identification features more clearly.

In summary, I highly recommend this excellent book. If you are working on a tight budget, however, and can afford only one book on the group, I would have to recommend the earlier Byers *et al.*

COLIN BRADSHAW

ALSO RECEIVED

Broedvogels van het Noordelijk Deltagebied 1991: een overzicht van de broedvogels van Beschermde- en Staatsnatuurmonumenten. By N. D. van Swelm. (Ministerie LNV, Dordrecht, 1996. 161 pages. ISBN 90-6816-009-5. No price given)



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Young Ornithologists of the Year



▲ 32. Young Ornithologists of the Year, 1996. Oscar Campbell (Senior Winner) and Matthew Harding (Intermediate Winner) with their Young Ornithologists of the Year certificates and prizes of a complete set of *BWP*, *Swarovski* binoculars, *Barbour* jackets and over 30 bird books (courtesy of co-sponsors *Christopher Helm Publishers*, *Hamlyn*, *HarperCollins*, *Oxford University Press*, *PanMacmillan*, *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser*), at BTO Annual Conference, Derbyshire, December 1996 (Derek Toomer)

Potential entrants in the 1997 competition should now be spurred on by their mentors to keep up their notebook entries until the closing date of 1st September 1997.

The two 1996 winners (*Brit. Birds* 89: 539-541) received their awards at the BTO Annual Conference (plate 32). Their achievement also received coverage in the magazine *BBC Wildlife* (14 (12): 10).

Bird Observatory for Gibraltar

Ornithologists in Gibraltar—one of the best places in Europe to watch the spring and autumn migration, especially of raptors and storks—are planning to establish an observatory and ornithological centre, where data could be stored and information exchanged, scientists could study and birding enthusiasts could meet others with the same interest. To convince the national and local governments that this proposal deserves assistance, letters of support are needed from

universities, societies, associations, groups, clubs and individuals, in fact from anyone who can testify to the value of this unique location, where two seas and two continents meet.

Please write to Proyecto Estación Ornitológica en el Estrecho de Gibraltar, C/Lope de Vega nº 6, 11370 Los Barrios, Cadiz, Spain; or Fax (56) 685162. (Contributed by Maria Cristina Parkes and Francisco Montoya)

Eric Hosking Trust bursaries

Two awards have been made: to the Loru Environment Education Centre, Santo Island, Vanuatu, in the Pacific Ocean, to fund a leaflet (in English, French and Bislama Pidgin) about the rainforest on the island; and to the Lake District National Park for a project with children during its Bird Day on 4th May 1997.

For details of the bursaries (past awards and also how to apply), write to the Eric Hosking Charitable Trust, Pages Green House, Wetheringsett, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5QA.

Boost for Stone-curlews

Of 13 awards made in 1996 under a new Species Action Grants Scheme for work to enhance populations of some of England's most endangered animals and plants, one was for work on a bird: the Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedienemus*. The awards, totalling over £75,000, are part of English Nature's contribution to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and complement their Species Recovery Grants Scheme.

For further information, telephone 01733-318436 or write to English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

English names of birds

Congratulations to the Oriental Bird Club on producing by far the best and most logically reasoned principles for deciding on uniform treatment of English bird-names. Based on a draft by Edward Dickinson, David Wells & Martin Woodcock, the three-page explanation in the OBC's *An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region* by Tim Inskipp, Nigel Lindsey & William Duckworth (1996) should be compulsory reading for anyone interested in (or critical of) the use of standardised English names.

We hope that the American-dominated group currently compiling a list of standardised English names of all the World's birds on behalf of the International Ornithological Congress will pay heed to the OBC's words of wisdom. If not, the OBC may rue its statement that it 'will adopt the standardized list of names when it is published'.

While complimenting the OBC on its excellent set of principles, we do not necessarily approve of all the names which it has adopted: with numerous fork-tailed swift species, it seems less than helpful to use Fork-tailed Swift (in place of Pacific Swift) for *Apus*

pacificus, and the possible confusion between Pallas's Warbler and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler is surely better solved by calling the former Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* than by devising a wholly new name for the latter, Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, even if its song is not a buzz.

While praising the OBC's published criteria, two *not* listed seem to us to be helpful (especially to biologists, conservationists and others who are not ornithologists): (1) that whenever possible the English name should reveal the bird's affinities, and (2) that, unless inappropriate, a newly devised name should correspond with the scientific name. Thus, for example, we prefer Chukar Partridge (rather than Chukar) for *Alectoris chukar* and Siberian Flycatcher (rather than Dark-sided Flycatcher or Sooty Flycatcher) for *Muscicapa sibirica*.

The English-naming section is only 1% of this excellent *Checklist*; a full review will appear in due course. It is available for £9.95 (plus £2.00 p&p) from the OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, or £10.00 *post free* through British BirdShop (see pages ix & x).

Bill Oddie recognised

In appreciation of his contribution to ornithology through his broadcasting and writing, the Editorial Board of *British Birds* has unanimously elected Bill Oddie as an Honorary Subscriber.

As revealed in his perceptive and educational (as well as humorous) *Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book* (1980), which became an 'instant classic', and his autobiographical *Gone Birding* (1983), Bill is a long-standing subscriber to *BB*. He has always emphasised the constructive aspects of birding and birdwatching, and encouraged his viewers on TV, listeners on radio and the readers of his books to record and submit their observations for the benefit of the science of ornithology and of conservation (though he would not put it so pompously), as well as to have fun watching birds. It is this responsible guidance

to new birdwatchers, young and old, that has gained the admiration not only of *BB*, but also of all those who have invited him to write a foreword for their book or to speak at their local society meeting, to introduce events at the British Birdwatching Fair, or to carry out such duties at similar events.

Bill Oddie's many talents have been a great asset to British (and to Irish!) birdwatching in the last three decades and have been given generously and willingly by him. We are delighted that he has accepted our invitation. Bill joins Brian & Sheila Bottomley, I. J. Ferguson-Lees, P. A. D. Hollom, Guy Mountfort, E. M. Nicholson, M. J. Rogers, Major R. F. Rutledge, Dr P. O. Swanberg, Prof. Dr K. H. Voous and D. I. M. Wallace, who are the journal's only other Honorary Subscribers.

Raptors reviewed

With fierce controversy in the local Press on claims by local game interests, pigeon-racers and Beatrix Potter devotees that songbird populations are being depressed by raptors and that culling programmes are required for birds of prey, the second North of England Raptor Conference, held in Newcastle upon Tyne on 9th November, was very timely.

A full house of 150 delegates heard accounts of key species. Roy Dennis highlighted the success of Ospreys *Pandion haliaeetus* in the Highlands of Scotland and described the Rutland Water 'hacking' project. Steve Petty described the success of the Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* in colonising large areas of forestry around the English/Scottish border. Brian Etheridge contrasted the breeding performance of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* in Scotland on managed and on unmanaged moors, with persecution at such a high level on the former that the species would soon become extinct if this were the only habitat available to it

(luckily, unmanaged moors produce surplus young which then attempt unsuccessfully each year to colonise managed areas). Brian Little described the 30-year story of Merlins *Falco columbarius* in Northumberland, including the detrimental effects of pesticides on the population in the past and the versatility of the species in adapting to the large new forestry areas at Kielder. Geoff Horne showed that the population density of Peregrine Falcons *F. peregrinus* in Lakeland is the highest in Europe.

The Conference, organised jointly by the Northumbria Ringing Group and the Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club under a steering group consisting of Tom Cadwallender, Bryan Galloway, Bill Johnson and Nick Rossiter, provided a boost to morale, reinforcing delegates' determination to see that biodiversity targets continue to include the restoration of raptors to their historic position in the countryside. (Contributed by Nick Rossiter)

New English bird names

The English names recommended by the BOU/*BB* (c.g. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*) are now being used in 38% of the county bird reports.

A good compromise, adopted for instance by *Avon*, *Isles of Scilly* and *Northamptonshire*, is to include, during this interim period, both 'new' and 'old' English names in the headings in the systematic list.

Swanwick '96

The first weekend in December is synonymous with the BTO's Annual Bird-watchers' Weekend at Swanwick in Derbyshire.

With the theme of 'Birds and water', the 1996 conference started with Tim Appleton describing the making of Rutland Water. The complex and controversial subject of fish-eating birds versus fish stocks (and fishermen's tales) was tackled by Mick Marquiss, Mark Feltham and Chris Spray, with the Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* being seen as the real black bird by the fisheries lobby, closely followed by Goosander *Mergus merganser*. The Witherby Lecture, by Dr Myrfyn Owen, Director of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, on the theme 'Wildlife and water: partnerships for effective action', described a number of schemes culminating in the ambitious project at the site of Barn Elms Reservoirs adjacent to Heathrow Airport. This, and other sessions, encouraged participation in the WeBS counts.

Recipients of the Jubilee Medal and the Tucker Medal were Karl Partridge and John Callion, in recognition, respectively, of atlas exploits along the Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland border and a range of projects in Cumbria.

Between the formal sessions were all the informal quizzes, meetings and presentations that make Swanwick what it is. A great pity, therefore, that the number of participants was significantly down this year. At least in part, this was caused by clashes with meetings in London of the Oriental Bird Club and the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society. Surely this can be avoided in the future?

The *BB* mystery photographs champagne was won by Dawn Balmer with the only all-correct set of identifications, showing that her Buckinghamshire success (*Brit. Birds* 90: 75) was no fluke.

Cornucopia

The latest report on *Birds in Cornwall 1995* contains a systematic list overflowing with facts, maps, histograms, photographs and drawings. A sign of the times, however, is a list of over 40 putative records for which no documentation has been submitted and an appeal for details of them *from anyone* who can help.

Papers include reports by Keith Grant, Derek Lord and David Ramsden on a sample census of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* in 1994, which found 51 breeding pairs, leading to an estimate of 100-200 pairs for the county, and by D. S. Flumm on the occurrence of Aquatic Warblers *Acrocephalus*

paludicola at Marazion Marsh in 1995; and accounts of three birds new to Britain: the 1970 Marazion Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* by Philip D. Round, the Land's End Bay-breasted Warbler *Dendroica castanea* by D. Ferguson, and a Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* 'showing characteristics of the race "*dauricus*"' (which needs to be assessed by the BOURC) by M. Southam and D. Lewis.

Copies cost £5.50 (incl. p&p; cheques payable to CBWPS) from Greg Conway, Tregenna, Cooksland, Bodmin, Cornwall PL31 2AR.

NYPEN

A major new environmental youth programme has been launched. Known as the National Young People's Environment Network (NYPEN), and co-ordinated by five national organisations including the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts, it aims to help young people aged 13-19 to plan and run their own environmental projects, by providing a three-year package of money, advice and guidance.

If you are a youth worker or involved with an agency and would like to know more about the scheme or even become a regional co-ordinator, please contact Bud Simkin, National Youth Programme Co-ordinator, Council for Environmental Education, University of Reading, London Road, Reading RG1 5AQ.

The birds of . . . where?

At a recent meeting of the Bristol Ornithological Club, I heard members talking about the 'Birds of Cuba' amidst a certain amount of chortling. Breaking into the conversation, I discovered that they were not talking about the island in the Caribbean, but about the 'County which Used to Be Avon'—CUBA.

The former county of Avon has been split in a most undignified way into four Unitary Authorities (ugh!). I gather that the editors of the *Avon Bird Report* (joint winners of *BB*'s Best Bird Report for 1994) have decided, sensibly, to retain the title *Avon Bird Report* to cover the area of the four UAs, which is the same as that of the former county. (*RJP*)

Paula's sponsored trek

Paula Lawrence, Sales & Marketing Manager of Zeiss, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee, is herself seeking sponsorship, for a 100-km trek in the Anti Atlas mountains of Morocco in aid of the Cancer Research Campaign.

One hundred people will take part during eight days in May 1997. Paula's personal aim is to raise at least £1,800 for cancer research.

If you would like to sponsor Paula (or know a company or organisation which is likely to do so), ring her at Zeiss on 01707 871323.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*

Tony Armstrong—*Northeast*

Dave Flumm—*Southwest*

Frank Gribble—*Midlands*

Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*

Angus Hogg—*Scotland*

Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*

Don Taylor—*Southeast*

Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*

John Wilson—*Northwest*



MONTHLY MARATHON



December's scaly-plumaged bird was obviously a swift *Apus*, and most entrants (80%) identified it as a Common Swift *A. apus*; other suggestions were Pallid Swift *A. pallidus* (16%), Pacific Swift *A. pacificus* (3%) and White-rumped Swift *A. caffer* (1%). It was a juvenile Common Swift, photographed in Russia by G. D. Serov.

The leaders (Stephen Foster, David McAdams and Richard Patient) all got it right and now have accumulated seven correct answers; 58 contestants are on six, 93 on five, 114 on four, 136 on three, 148 on two and 98 on one. This month's hurdle is plate 33, below.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (01767) 682969.



▲ 33. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 129. Ninth stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 66), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th May 1997.



RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most-recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1996 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel** *Pterodroma madeira/P. feae/P. mollis* Farne and Hauxley (Northumberland), 5th September 1993; Formby Point (Lancashire), 8th September 1995. **Redhead** *Aythya americana* Bleasby (Nottinghamshire), 8th-27th March*. **Lesser Scaup** *A. affinis* Kingsmill Reservoir (Nottinghamshire), 15th April; Tyttenhanger Gravel-pit (Hertfordshire), 7th-18th April. **Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus* two, Girvan (Ayrshire), 13th-27th April. **American Coot** *Fulica americana* Stodmarsh (Kent), 16th to at least 29th April*. **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* Skellberry (Shetland), 3rd-4th June. **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* Ardnamurchan (Argyll), 27th March. **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Beachy Head (East Sussex), 8th October 1995. **Cedar Waxwing** *Bombycilla cedrorum* Nottingham (Nottinghamshire), 20th February to 18th March*. **Veery** *Catharus fuscescens* North Uist (Outer Hebrides), 20th-22nd October 1995. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* Fair Isle (Shetland), 17th September. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Fair Isle, 4th-6th June; 11th-13th June; 24th September; Holm (Orkney), 16th-19th October. **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* Bibby's Hollow NR (Worcestershire), 6th-20th February.

*Identification accepted by the BBRC; status still to be assessed by the BOURC.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 10th February to 16th March 1997.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Flying over Portland Bill (Dorset), then, presumably same, Exmouth (Devon), 13th March. **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* White-phase individuals singly: Valencia Island (Co. Kerry), 3rd March; Blennerville (Co. Kerry), 6th March; Fanore (Co. Clare), 8th March. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* First-winter, Newry (Co. Down), 30th February to 12th March. **Herring Gull** *L. argentatus* Two first-winters of Nearctic race *smithsonianus*, Belfast City Dump (Co. Antrim), intermittently from 15th February to 13th March. **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucooides* First-winter of race *thayeri*,

Belfast City Dump, 1st & 7th March; of race *kunlieni*: Benbecula (Western Isles), 27th February; first-winter, near Wexford (Co. Wexford), 27th February and second-winter there, 4th March; two second-winters, Belfast City Dump, 5th-16th March. **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* Adult winter, Bullock Harbour, Dublin (Co. Dublin), 12th February to 16th March. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* Brixham (Devon), from at least 12th February to 27th February. **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Studland (Dorset), 5th-6th March.



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British Birds

Volume 90 Number 4 April 1997

123 The re-establishment of Red Kite breeding populations in Scotland and England *Dr Ian M. Evans, Roy H. Dennis, Duncan C. Orr-Ewing, Nils Kjellén, Per-Olof Andersson, Magnus Sykvén, Alfonso Senosiain and Felix Compaired Carbo*

Request

138 Red Kite observations

139 Conservation research news
Dr Mark Avery

140 Mystery photographs 204 *Peter Lansdown*

From the Rarities Committee's files

142 Identification of pale Paddyfield Warblers *Dr Colin Bradshaw*

147 The Carl Zeiss Award

Notes

148 Daytime roosting behaviour of Alpine Swifts *Durzeyn Liley and Laura Watson*

148 Green Woodpecker visiting hot-air balloonists *Mrs Mary Fox*

149 Magpies flying out to sea apparently to migrate *T. W. Fairless*

149 Carrion Crow attacking milk cartons
Norman Elkins

Letters

150 Ruddy Ducks *Steven M. S. Gregory*

151 Status of swift species on Gran Canaria *R. Allan Reese*

152 Mystery warblers in Tselinograd *Lars Svensson; Dr Colin Bradshaw and Dr Jimmy Steele*

158 Looking back

Reviews

159 'Atlante degli uccelli di Piemonte e Valle d'Aosta in inverno (1986-1992)' by M. Cucco, L. Levi, G. Maffei & C. Pulcher *Dr J. T. R. Sharrock*

159 'The Birds of Britain & Europe. Bird Images Video Guides', vols. 5-7, by Paul Doherty *Dave Odell*

160 'Rare Birds Day by Day' by Steve Dudley *et al. Dr Philippe J. Dubois*

160 'A Guide to the Identification and Natural History of the Sparrows of the United States and Canada' by D. J. Rising *Dr Colin Bradshaw*

161 News and comment *Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott*

165 Monthly marathon

166 Recent BBRC decisions *M. J. Rogers*

166 Recent reports *Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan*

Line-drawing: 123 Red Kite and Rooks
(G. Russell)

Front cover: Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (*Mark James*): the original of this month's cover design, measuring 16.9 × 16.7 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 72 in January issue for procedure).



British Birds

Volume 90 Number 5 May 1997

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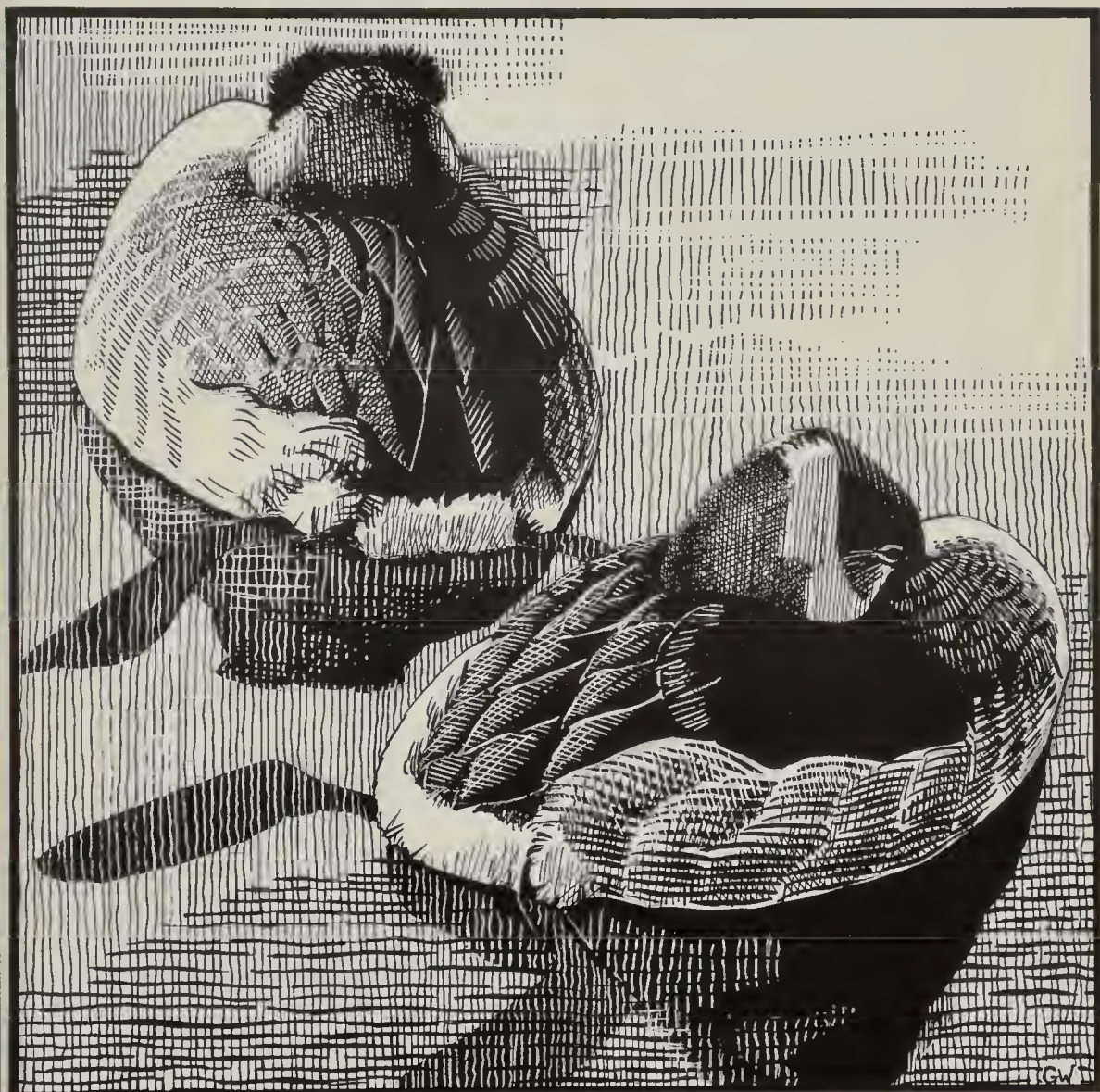
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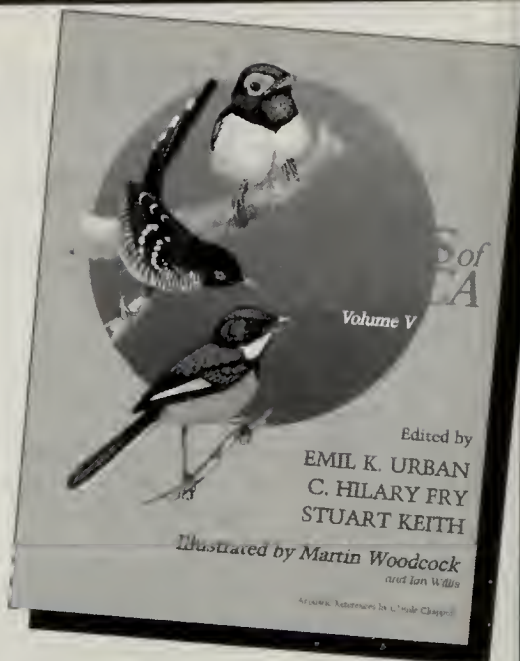
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Sexual recognition of Common Swifts

Erich Kaiser

ABSTRACT It is quite a joke that Common Swifts *Apus apus* have been flying around our houses for hundreds of years, shouting their sexes for anyone to hear, yet we have until recently not understood their messages. Although they look identical, male and female Common Swifts utter different calls, and make duetting screams. Our ability to sex these birds has at last allowed detailed behavioural studies to be carried out.

As with most swifts (Apodidae), the human eye is unable to see *any* difference between the sexes of the Common Swift *Apus apus*, not even in museum specimens. Until now, dissection has been the only safe method of sexing individuals of the species.

There is no fundamental difference between the eyes of swifts and of human beings, so it is highly unlikely that they are able to see differences which we have been overlooking for hundreds of years. This is even more improbable when one keeps in mind that swifts see each other either in the air or within their dark nest holes. Some tropical swiftlets nest in large caves in complete darkness, where they depend on sonar orientation. As mutual recognition is of greatest importance at the nest, their method of sexing cannot be visual. The fact that they changed from visual to acoustical orientation in these dark caves suggests that they may use the same method in sexing each other.

Background

Most workers on the Common Swift are familiar with the 'duetting'. Lack (1956, *Swifts in a Tower*) gave a good description of this behaviour and, in addition, gave examples of other (tropical) birds where the characteristic call is a combined effort of both members of the pair. I cite from page 27: '. . . they usually sit side by side in the entrance and scream in duet, one giving a higher note than the other. This, we think, must be the "swee-ree" call of the swift, mentioned in *The Handbook of British Birds* and other standard works; it is really two notes, one given by each member of the pair.'

Theoretically, therefore, Lack had solved the problem of sexing. He was aware that this duetting is composed of two different notes, and that one member of the pair is responsible for the 'swee' and the other for the 'ree' of the duetting. I could never understand why he did not take the next step: to watch a mating, or a female laying, and then keep the birds under observation until the next duetting occurred.

Many years have passed since Lack's *Swifts in a Tower*, and some research has been carried out on duetting. In many species, the contribution of the male and the female to the duet is clearly defined. Surprisingly, duetting is not restricted to monomorphic species, but is also found to some extent in dimorphic species. In the latter cases, the duetting is often woven into a complicated ritual of optical presentations, which often dominate the acoustical part (Farabaugh 1982).

Study site

Swifts have always fascinated me. In 1957, I bought Lack's *Swifts in a Tower* and in 1958 I visited the Oxford colony. A student named Christopher Perrins picked me up at the train station with his *Lambretta* motor-scooter and then showed me around the Museum Tower, where I was permitted to spend a whole day alone, to observe as much as I could. In 1965, I installed the first two boxes in my house in Kronberg, near Frankfurt, Germany, the first of which was occupied in 1966. From then on, my colony grew steadily to 34 pairs in 1995, plus another 15 pairs in the nearby church and in a neighbour's house. All pairs are in wooden boxes, 25 inside buildings, the rest in boxes fixed to the outside.

In Oxford, there were 40 pairs in 1958, but an observer could never watch more than one box at a time, which could become quite boring with feeding intervals of up to two hours. So, I installed 17 boxes into the triangular front wall of a small gable in my house, which are now all occupied. There, the observer can watch all 17 nests simultaneously at close range. All boxes have glass backs (or are open at the top in the lowest level). With this construction, the observer sits in the middle of the colony and nothing escapes his attention, not even at dawn or dusk. Lack and his students had to stop their observations at dusk, because visibility in the boxes was close to zero. I therefore installed a small adjustable light above each nest. The birds soon became used to this gadget and completely ignored it.



▼▲ 34 & 35. Two views of study site with breeding Common Swifts *Apus apus* in loft of house in Kronberg, Germany (Erich Kaiser)



Material and methods

For three years (1970-72), I marked all Common Swifts in the gable colony with a paint dot on their tails. Those uttering 'swee' had the dot on the left, and those uttering 'ree' a dot on the right tail tip. With a soft paint brush and a little

patience, it was possible to mark the birds without any disturbance in their boxes; most of them appeared not even to notice the procedure. This method showed that the female is responsible for the 'swee' and the male for the 'ree' part of the duetting. The fact that more than 90% of the adults in my colony are ringed was a valuable additional help in my studies. In the course of three breeding seasons, I had many opportunities to confirm, by watching matings or females laying, that this method of sexing is completely reliable. Over the years, I have become so familiar with this method of sexing that I never even think about it. As the 'ree' is lower pitched than the 'swee', people with a musical ear may be able to sex a calling individual from the pitch of its call, but I mostly need to hear the duetting to tell the 'swee' apart from the 'ree'.

Results

Fights

Once I had solved the problem of sexing, I was able to solve some other problems, of which Lack was well aware but could not explain. For instance, he noticed that in a fight one member of the pair behaved as if it was indifferent: it continued building or incubating, or it simply left the box. The fact that Lack could not tell the sexes apart made it impossible for him to see the very simple rules in these fights. He expressed his uncertainty in the following sentence: 'As our birds were not marked, we do not know for certain whether the active bird was the male.'

After long years of observation, these rules are now obvious. When, in fine weather in the mornings or evenings, the non-breeders (bangers) bang at or scream into occupied sites, the established pairs enter their boxes and sit at the entrances. When one of the prospectors screams (questions) into a box, the pair duets in reply, indicating that the site is occupied. If the banger demonstrates by its ree-call that it is a male, and if it ignores the facts and enters the box, the male of the pair will attack and fight it. If the banger is a female (swee-call), however, the female of the pair will attack it.

Thus, the two birds involved in a fight are either both males or both females. To investigate this matter, I ringed 34 such fighting couples, or noted their ring numbers if already ringed. So far, I have not proven a fight between a male and a female, except for short-term scuffles.

It is well known that some swifts desert when taken out of the box for ringing. Lack was well aware of this danger. 'Once we realised it might happen, we stopped ringing the birds, though this unfortunately meant that we could not recognise each bird individually, which would have helped some aspects of our work.' In 1981, I found out that fighting swifts can be handled *without any such problems*: they always fight with their eyes closed. In the gable colony, all boxes have glass backs, which can be opened noiselessly, and it is possible to lift such fighting couples carefully out of their boxes. The birds are so concentrated on their fight that they do not seem to notice additional bodily contacts. They are, however, sensitive to unusual noises and bright lights. When lifted out of the nest box, the fighters are put into a closed cardboard box, which is taken to the flat below. Upon the box being opened, some of the fighters separate, but others continue fighting and have

to be separated. After the procedure of handling (noting the ring numbers, weighing, and marking the plumage) they are released through an open window. There has not been a single desertion following this procedure, and often the two fighters were back in the box only ten minutes after handling, to resume the fight that had been interrupted without it being decided. Before I discovered this safe method of handling adult swifts, I too lost—through desertion—a few established breeders after ringing, and the others remained extremely nervous for the rest of the season. Individuals ringed in a fight, however, return to their box normally.

Net catches

I also ring or control adult Common Swifts by net catches from a window underneath the gable colony. During 1986-94, I caught and ringed 368 non-breeders with this net, when they were inspecting the colony for vacancies during fine weather in the early morning. Many were recaptured in later years, controlled in a fight or had found a vacancy in the colony.

All the swifts that I handle are marked with a system of paint dots on the plumage, so that I can identify up to 92 birds individually for the rest of the season without further ring controls. It was quite a surprise when I found out how long these colour marks remain visible. De Roo (1966) showed that about 30% of the adult Common Swifts return from Africa with their outermost (10th) primaries unmoulted. As my system of marking involves one wing tip in 47% and both wing tips in 9% of the marked birds, it was to be expected that some of them would return with such an unmoulted and still-marked outer primary. When this actually happened (repeatedly), I could hardly believe the discovery that the previous year's colour marks were almost as bright as they had been more than nine months earlier.

Pair formation

When a banger pokes its head into the entrance hole, light is cut out completely and the inside of the box becomes pitch-black. In this darkness, identification is nevertheless of the greatest importance, but cannot be achieved optically by the birds.

Sometimes, a single Common Swift has occupied a box. Let us assume that it is a male; then, if the banger, screaming into the entrance, is also a male, they both shout (to simplify matters) 'Boy! Boy!', and, if the stranger ignores this warning and enters, he will be attacked. If the banger is a female, however, she will shout 'Girl! Girl!', while the owner will answer 'Boy! Boy!', and this may be the beginning of a new pair formation.

It is obvious that the members of an established pair know each other by their voices. So, a male is well aware when a strange female enters his box. Nevertheless, he would never attack her, because a female is no challenge to him, nor does she stake a claim to his ownership of this box. Short scuffles may ensue, but never severe fights lasting up to several hours as with two individuals of the same sex, where both opponents stimulate each other, by their identical calls, to ever new aggression. When, however, in great excitement, a scuffle has started between a male and a female, both calm each

other by their calls, and within a few minutes they separate. So, a male is programmed primarily to fight off rival males, because, if he fails to do so, he will lose not only his box, but also the chance to reproduce. The same system works with females, and for the same reasons.

Especially at the beginning of pair formation in spring, the swifts seem to be absolutely indifferent about their mate. Obviously, the primary goal of a swift during the breeding season is the possession of a nesting site. If a particular swift (male as well as female) has reached this goal, the problem of a mate in most cases solves itself, at least in densely populated areas such as Kronberg or Oxford, where some of the non-breeders are three or even four years old before they find a vacancy (Perrins 1971; Kaiser 1992). If two members of the opposite sex compete for the box of a particular swift, he or she leaves the decision to them, and, without interfering, accepts the victorious bird as his or her mate for that season.

Such behaviour seems hardly compatible with the findings of Weitnauer (1947), that some pairs return to their nests year after year. In my colony, too, there are many examples of such constancy. This pair constancy is based, however, on a different factor: the return of both members of the pair within a few days. In instances where discrepancy between the arrival dates is more than ten days, the first bird has usually found a new mate before his or her old partner returns. Most of these late returnees, therefore, risk a fight to win back their previous year's position (a good chance for me to control them), but the outcome of such fights is uncertain, and my findings are that birds returning late year after year often change their site and, finally, are displaced from the colony.

Importance of identification at the nest

If a second swift enters the box, the incubating bird on the nest will call, which is either a question or a warning, depending on who is entering. Normally, it is its mate, which will answer the call (question) and the matter is settled. When the bird on the nest is brooding the unfeathered chicks, and its mate enters with its pouch packed with food, the latter is often reluctant to answer the questioning call, because of its full pouch. Sometimes, the bird on the nest accepts this silent approach of its mate. At other times, especially when it is alarmed by the presence of bangers around the colony, it immediately attacks the silent intruder. The new arrival is now in a conflict: usually, it tries to ignore the attacks, get to the nest, feed the chicks and then give the identifying call to calm its mate. When, however, the attacks become too fierce, the incoming bird is often forced to utter its call, which sounds muffled by the food in its throat. The fact that these attacks are not merely continued, but actually get more and more fierce, until the incoming bird is literally forced to utter the identifying call, is a clear proof that swifts have no ways of identifying each other except by vocalisations.

I have often witnessed an adult attack one of the older and more mobile chicks near the entrance. This happens especially when bangers are around the colony and the parents are alarmed. The young then identifies itself by begging. So, Common Swifts have three different 'identifying calls': one for

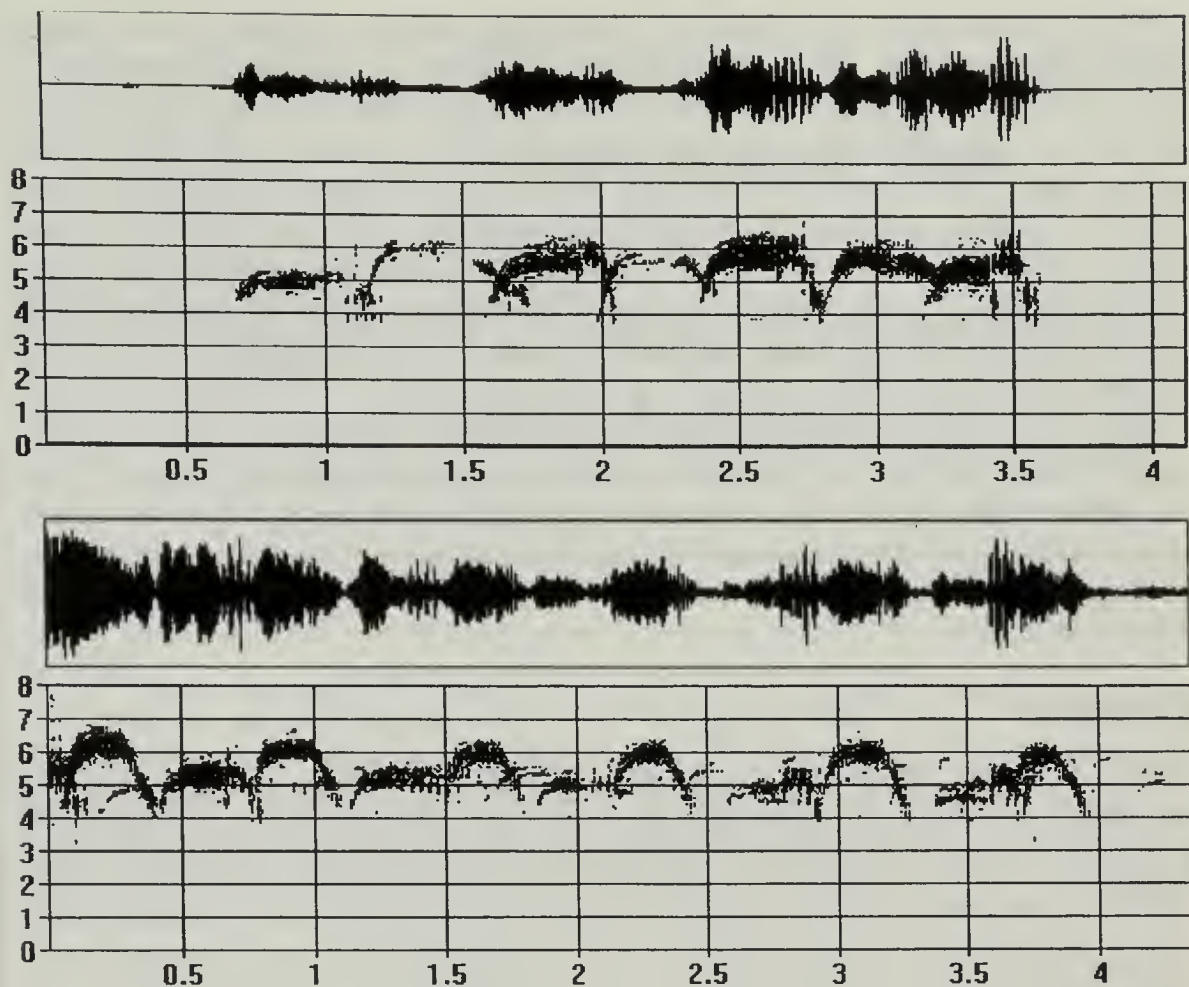


Fig. 1. Sonograms of two duets between Common Swifts *Apus apus* (Ulrich Tigges). Top, both birds in 'relaxed mood'; and, bottom, duet of an established pair reacting to the call (not recorded) of a prospecting non-breeder at the entrance hole, with both birds very excited and the difference between the 'swee' and the 'ree' very distinct.

males, one for females and one for neutral (begging). If the chick remains silent, it runs the risk of being seriously injured.

Swifts compete for holes not only among themselves, but also with other species (e.g. starlings *Sturnus*, sparrows *Passer*). Returning so late in spring, Common Swifts regularly have to expel such competitors from their traditional sites. They have adapted their behaviour to this situation: a swift will attack any bird in its site that fails to answer its questioning call and identify itself vocally as the resident's mate or another member of the opposite sex.

During prolonged cold weather, weak non-breeders that have not taken part in a weather movement may alternatively spend the night in occupied boxes. This does not, however, happen very often in my colony. I have seen it only twice since 1966: once, there were two strangers, each in a different corner of a large nestbox, while the pair sat on the nest; the second time, three swifts slept peacefully in another nestbox.

These 'bad-weather guests' seem to know instinctively that they must remain absolutely silent. Even a single call would reveal the sex of such an intruder, and alarm and challenge the member of the same sex of the resident pair. The cold weather that causes the 'energy shortage' of these homeless birds and forces them to look for such a shelter also helps them. In fine

weather, all 'house-owners' are active and alert, and the slightest knock causes them to rush to their entrance hole, eager to expel any possible intruder. In extended poor weather, however, they usually sit on their nests with fluffed-out feathers and reduce all activities to a minimum. So, their hosts' apathy helps these weakened homeless birds to find a safe roost for the night and to conserve their badly reduced fat reserves. In cooler regions, where periods of poor weather are more common, such 'silent guests' (I prefer this to the often-used term 'tolerated guests') in occupied nests occur fairly regularly, especially during spring migration (Lack 1956). This behaviour clearly has survival value for the species.

Since our Common Swifts become silent in Africa (Brooke 1971), they must lose sexual identity as they will have no means of knowing which of them is male and which is female, a truly astonishing aspect. Even if the members of a pair arrive on the same day at the nesting site in spring, it must be very unlikely that, with no way of identifying each other, they have kept in contact during their nine months in Africa.

Conclusion

Finally, I believe that all species of swifts (at least those that nest in dark places, and where the sexes look alike) identify each other vocally. With a little patience, it should be possible to find out the different calls of males and females for each species.

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Erich Kaiser, Margarethenstr. 16, D-61476 Kronberg, Germany

How you can help Swifts

The BTO and the RSPB, in liaison with architects and the building industry, have produced a leaflet, *Concern for Swifts*, with advice on providing nest-sites and nest-boxes for Swifts. For a free leaflet, send an SAE to the BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, or to the RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.



Minutes of the first meeting of the Association of County Recorders and Editors

Historically, meetings of County Report Editors have been held under the aegis of the BTO, and meetings of County Recorders have been arranged by *British Birds*. The two came together, under the independent umbrella organisation, the Association of County Recorders and Editors, in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 230).

A meeting of ACRE was held, at the joint invitation of the BTO and *British Birds*, at Swanwick, Derbyshire, on 8th December 1996, during the course of the BTO's Annual Birdwatchers' Weekend.

The meeting was attended by 21 delegates, representing Avon, Bedfordshire, Borders, Breconshire, Carmarthenshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Shropshire, Surrey, Sussex, Stirlingshire and the Welsh Ornithological Society, with observers attending from *British Birds*, the BOU Records Committee and the BTO Ringing Committee. The meeting was chaired by Mike Shrubbs.

The full Minutes of this meeting have been made available to all the members of ACRE, but a much-shortened summary will be of wider interest. The main conclusions are summarised below.

1. ACRE itself

It was agreed that ACRE provides an extremely useful medium for discussing the work and problems surrounding the production of county bird reports and for the exchange of ideas. It provides an excellent link between counties which otherwise tend to work in isolation. It was agreed that ACRE should remain independent but should look to the BTO and *British Birds* for logistic back-up and support.

It was agreed that ACRE's basic aim should be to continue to promote best practice in the business of producing county bird reports, in the work of Recorders and in problems arising in managing record systems and archives.

It was agreed to formalise an annual subscription to be paid by county societies/clubs. Since those most likely to benefit from membership were perhaps those least likely to join, the aim should be to establish the principle of 100% participation.

2. Volume of records

The number of records handled annually by counties appeared to range from 20,000 to 100,000. Discussion suggested that the best way to organise collation was to have a single collection point, the Recorder, with work then split by species to a team of not more than a dozen assistants.

It was agreed that, since they otherwise lose both impact and marketability, the aim should always be for Reports to appear within the following calendar year (c.g. 1995 in 1996).

The important question of data verification on computer data-bases will be discussed fully in the Association's newsletter, *newsACRE*.

Most counties already have a Records Committee to assess records of scarce species; all should. Most use postal circulation, and there was a clear consensus that all members of records committees should, if practicable, receive records simultaneously, to avoid members playing 'follow my leader' rather than forming independent opinions.

3. Observers' initials in Reports

Lengthy discussion concluded that observers' initials are an integral part of any record (not just of rarities), that inclusion encourages young observers to contribute, and enables errors in the published record to be spotted and traced. Guidelines for the best practice in using initials in Reports will be featured in *newsACRE*.

4. Computerisation

Ownership of the copyright of submitted records should be established by each organisation (writing this into its Constitution), to avoid disputes over use of computerised data. Attention was drawn to the legal requirements of registration with the Data Protection Registrar.

5. Archiving records

Most counties keep archives for future research; all should. The basic archive should be kept on paper, under species. Long-term storage of data on computer disks might create serious problems (many systems have a maximum life of ten years) and changing technology might render data unexpectedly inaccessible. Again, this subject will be covered in detail in *newsACRE*.

It was recommended that, whenever possible, archive storage should be at the local museum or county environmental records centre: a central site, but with ownership of the records resting unequivocally with the Society or Club.

6. Working with Ringing Groups and Birdlines

Methods of achieving an efficient transfer of valuable ringing information (not only descriptions of rarities, but also summaries of numbers of common species ringed at specific sites) would be discussed between ACRE and the Ringing Committee.

Relations between Birdlines and County Recorders varied regionally: good in some areas, but non-existent in others, and 'bridges need to be built', a matter which ACRE will pursue. The unanimous opinion of all present was that undocumented records of scarce species, from Birdlines or any other source, should not be used in County Reports. The unanimous view was that all rarity records, identified by a list of species requiring documentation, must have acceptable descriptions before publication.

The very constructive discussion and comments, and the desire for co-operation and the sharing of ideas between counties, under the aegis of ACRE, bode well for the future.

M. SHRUBB

c/o ACRE, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



The Best Annual Bird Report Awards



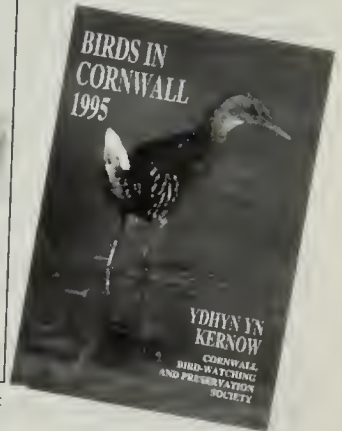
1st



2nd



3rd=



3rd=



5th=



5th=

The criteria used for judging the annual regional, county and local bird reports have become established over the past five years. General standards continue to improve, as demonstrated, for instance, by the top 1995 report achieving a score of 85% and the report in fifteenth position achieving the same score as that in tenth position in 1994.

Design, typefaces, quality of decorative illustrations and similar points were assessed by Robert Gillmor, representing the Society of Wildlife Artists; the inclusion of histograms, graphs, special articles, ringing report and census results were assessed by John Prior, representing the British Trust for Ornithology; the inclusion of reports on the year's weather and ornithological events, rarities descriptions and a list of species for which descriptions are required were assessed by Rob Hume, representing the British Birds Rarities Committee; the inclusion of a map of the area, migrant dates and thorough listing of known and probable escapes from captivity were assessed by Mike Rogers, representing the Association of County Recorders and Editors; and the usefulness of documentary drawings and photographs and a status summary were assessed by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, representing *British Birds*. All five judges made separate assessments of the systematic list, scoring each from 0 to 5, since this is the essential core of every annual bird report. At the end of the day's judging, all the individual scores were summed. Thus, the reports were, as usual, assessed independently, though with discussion throughout the day as each judge came across interesting, good, bad or

amusing points. A little bit of extra detail can add interest to the bare bones of a record (e.g. the fact that the European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* in Keyworth, Nottinghamshire, on 1st October 1995 'spent the entire day sat on the top of a washing line post in a garden'). The occasional lighthearted touch was also appreciated by the judges, and probably also would be by a report's usual readers. Perhaps editors might bear those points in mind.

Essex has 'done it again', achieving first place for the fourth successive year (see table 1). *Hampshire*, in second place, and *Avon* and *Cornwall*, in equal third place, all set an exceedingly high standard.

The smaller organisations, with fewer members, were led by *Hertfordshire* (first in the medium-membership category) and *SK58* (devoted to the single 10-km square spanning the South Yorkshire/Nottinghamshire border, which was first in the small-membership category).

Table 1. The top 15 annual bird reports for 1995.

Position	County (with positions in top ten in 1990-94)	Editor(s)	Score
1st	<i>Essex</i> (- 2 1 1 1)	D. J. Rhymes & S. D. Wood	85%
2nd	<i>Hampshire</i> (- - - 5 -)	Trevor Carpenter	83%
3rd=	<i>Avon</i> (- 5 9 - 1)	A. H. Davis	80%
3rd=	<i>Cornwall</i> (2 2 4 5 4)	Greg Conway	80%
5th=	<i>Hertfordshire</i> (- - 2 2 -)	Bruce Taggart	77%
5th=	<i>SK58</i> (- - - - -)	Rob Hardcastle & Andy Hirst	77%
7th	<i>Leicestershire & Rutland</i> (- - - - -)	A. J. MacKay	74%
8th=	<i>Derbyshire</i> (5 6 7 - 10)	R. M. R. James	73%
8th=	<i>Nottinghamshire</i> (- - - - -)	Bernie Ellis	73%
10th	<i>Isles of Scilly</i> (- - - - -)	Peter Robinson	71%
11th=	<i>Greater Manchester</i> (- - - - -)	Mrs A. J. Smith	70%
11th=	<i>Northamptonshire</i> (- - - - -)	Bob Bullock	70%
11th=	<i>Somerset</i> (- - - - -)	B. D. Gibbs	70%
11th=	<i>Wiltshire</i> (- 6 5 9 -)	Paul E. Castle	70%
15th	<i>Shetland</i> (4 - 7 - 7)	Paul Sclater	68%

In medium-membership category (200-400 members): 1st *Hertfordshire*, 2nd= *Somerset* and *Wiltshire*. In small-membership category (under 200 members): 1st *SK58*, 2nd= *Greater Manchester* and *Northamptonshire*.

As last year, a summary of the judges' votes and comments has been made available to the Association of County Recorders and Editors, and will be summarised in that organisation's newsletter, *newsACRE*. Comments on the good and bad points in annual bird reports have been made in past years (*Brit. Birds* 85: 299-308; 86: 163-165; 87: 171-173; 88: 218-220; 89: 214-216).

While the judges were delighted with the generally high standard throughout the county reports, there was a feeling of considerable disappointment at the much lower standard among bird-observatory reports. We use the word 'disappointment' deliberately, for we had anticipated exciting reading. Not a single observatory report achieved a score of over 50%, yet the exciting birds and the background of regular daily recording over many years should, theoretically, have given the observatories a head start over the majority of

counties. We hope that these words of criticism will spur the observatory editorial teams to peruse the best of the county reports and assess ways to improve their standards, so that one or more bird-observatory reports feature in our top-ten list next year.

This year's best reports can be obtained as follows:

- ESSEX Antony Harbott, 5 Allnutts Road, Epping CM16 7BD (£8.00)
 HAMPSHIRE Mrs Margaret Boswell, 5 Clarence Road, Lyndhurst, Hampshire S043 7AL (£6.00)
 AVON Dr H. E. Rose, 12 Birbeck Road, Bristol BS9 1BD (£4.00 + 50p p&p)
 CORNWALL Greg Conway, Tregenna, Cooksland, Bodmin, Cornwall PL31 2AR (£5.50 incl. p&p)
 HERTFORDSHIRE Bruce Taggart, 195 Milton Court, Smarts Green, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire EN7 6BD (£6.50 + 50p p&p)
 SK58 R. Hardcastle, 1 Hunters Green, Throapham, Dinnington, Sheffield, Yorkshire S31 7UF (£4.95 incl. p&p)
 LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND Andrew MacKay, 68 Leicester Road, Markfield, Leicestershire LE67 9RE (£4.95 incl. p&p)
 DERBYSHIRE R. W. Key, 3 Farningham Close, Spondon, Derby DE21 7DZ (£5.60 incl. p&p)
 NOTTINGHAMSHIRE G. Ellis, 16 The Chancery, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 3AS (£5.00)
 ISLES OF SCILLY Peter Robinson, Riviera House, Parade, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0LP (£5.00)
 GREATER MANCHESTER Mrs A. J. Smith, 12 Edge Green Street, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan WN4 8SL (£4.50 + 50p p&p)
 NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Bob Bullock, 81 Cavendish Drive, Northampton NN3 3HL (£5.00 incl. p&p)
 SOMERSET Tony Parsons, Barnfield, Tower Hill Road, Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 8BJ (£5.00 incl. p&p)
 WILTSHIRE N. J. Pleass, The Curlews, 22 Ferrers Drive, Grange Park, Swindon SN5 6HJ (£5.00 incl. p&p)
 SHETLAND Ian Sandison, 9 Burnside, Lerwick, Shetland (£4.00)

♂. T. R. SHARROCK (BB), ROBERT GILLMOR (SWLA), R. A. HUME (BBRC),
 JOHN PRIOR (BTO) and MICHAEL ♂. ROGERS (ACRE)
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LOOKING BACK

One hundred years ago: 'Although the Stone Curlew [*Burhinus oedicnemus*] is a bird of extreme wariness, it is possible on Thetford Warren to get within ten yards of flocks numbering from twelve to twenty in the months of May and June. In the "Fauna of Norfolk", Lubbock says that they were sometimes observed in flocks of from eighty to a hundred prior to their autumnal migration, but personally I have never seen a flock containing more than twenty-five. This may possibly be accounted for by the fact that, whereas in Lubbock's time the country was practically bare, and formed one vast heath, now, by the extensive planting of quick-growing trees, numerous plantations divide the heathland into sections, and it may be that only the birds of these smaller sections at present collect together, where of yore their area was much more extended.' (*Zoologist* Ser. 4, vol. 1: 249, May 1897)



FROM THE RARITIES COMMITTEE'S FILES

How certain are the separation features of Arctic and Greenish Warblers?



When Alström & Olsson (1987) published their views on the field identification of Arctic *Phylloscopus borealis* and Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides*, there was a prevalent feeling in Britain that they had been over-cautious. The impression gained in more recent years is that this view has apparently not changed. Are these two species relatively easy to separate, or, as with Dusky *P. fuscatu*s and Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi* (Bradshaw 1994), is there more reason for confusion than popular opinion in Britain would have us believe?

The following two events illustrate that mistakes can still be made, and that not all individuals are as straightforward as we may like to believe.

'The Prior's Park warbler'

The following is an edited version of Colin Bradshaw's notes for the BBRC:

At about 09.00 GMT on 16th September 1994, Tom Tams informed me that he had that morning seen both Arctic Warbler and Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* in Prior's Park, Tyne & Wear. After several hours of searching with Mary Carruthers, a warbler with a short wingbar and prominent supercilium leapt into a dead tree and began feeding vigorously. It darted back and forth into the foliage before coming out again onto the dead branches, where it fought with Willow Warblers *P. trochilus*, allowing direct size comparison.

My first impression was that it was an Arctic Warbler. It was a bit dingy, with none of the vivid green above or silvery white below associated with Greenish Warbler; it was pot-bellied, and had what was, for a *Phylloscopus* warbler, an 'enormous' bill. Over the next 15 minutes, we watched it in excellent light. Careful note was taken of several features, and especially the head pattern (regarded as one of the best criteria for separating Arctic and Greenish).

SIZE & JIZZ One thing that immediately worried me was that the bird was small, definitely smaller than Willow Warbler, and not noticeably long-winged (although I find the latter feature particularly unhelpful in the field). It was also fairly restless, moving about the tree as much as or more than the other warblers, and was not so ponderous as 'normal' Arctic. It was, nevertheless, distinctly pot-bellied and 'neckless', with a relatively large head and very large bill.

BARE PARTS Large bill, looking more like that of *Hippolais* than *Phylloscopus*, with gently curved upper mandible from about halfway along to the tip, at no time showing retroussé look characteristic of Greenish Warbler.

Lower mandible yellow-orange with dark tip. Legs pale brown, slightly paler than those of Willow Warbler.

HEAD Supercilia very long, and noticeably very broad and white behind eye, but narrower in front; they seemed to stop just short of the bill above the 'hinge' on each side, and did not extend onto the forehead. Also, apparently a solid line from eye to bill, with no evidence of bulge in front of eye or diffuse area nearer bill typical of Greenish Warbler. Ear-coverts, while not mottled as on typical Arctic, did not have the hollow-centred appearance of Greenish; I described them as being 'sullied'. Crown dull olive. Chin and throat were whitish, but not pure white.

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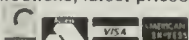
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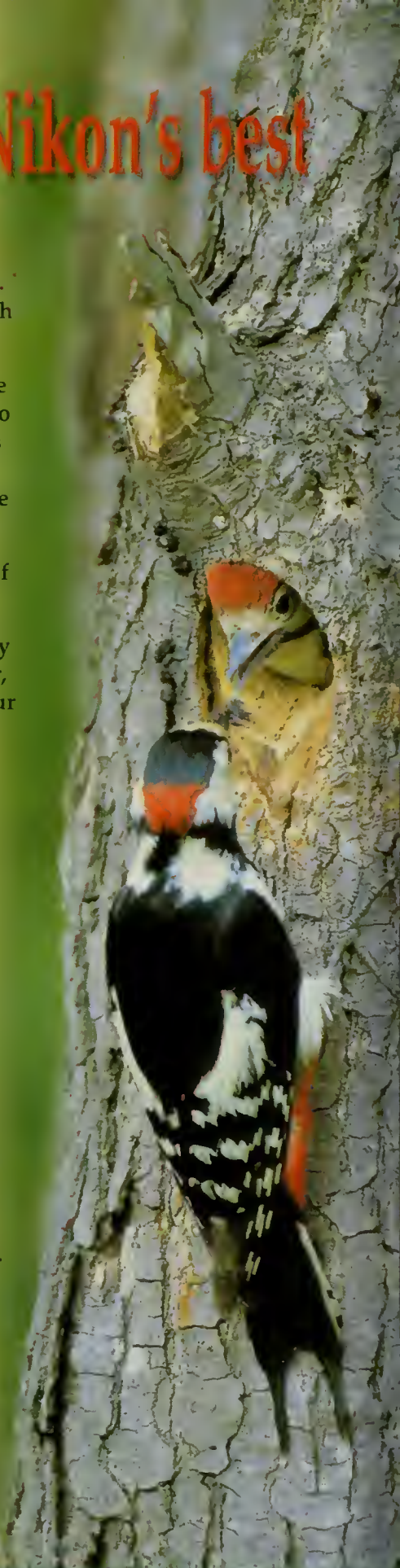


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▲ 36 & 37. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, with large bill and other features recalling Arctic Warbler *P. borealis* (see text), Tyne & Wear, 18th September 1994 (Frank Golding)

UPPERPARTS & UPPERWINGS Upperparts were dull grey-green, lacking the brightness of Greenish. Both wings had a quite broad but short bar starting about halfway along the greater coverts, where it was broadest, and narrowing on the outer covert, thus giving the impression of a short, broad downward-facing spike. On the left wing there seemed to be a pale tip to at least one of the median coverts,

but this did not form a second wingbar. No evidence of any obvious greener tinges on edges of remiges or rectrices.

UNDERPARTS Sullied pale greyish-yellow, more noticeably on the breast sides, and with none of the silky whiteness of Greenish.

CALL No call was heard.

Although the bird was small and very active, and its legs were not straw-coloured, I considered it to be an Arctic Warbler. The combination of bill size, supercilia not meeting above bill, solid line from eye to bill, lack of pale-centred ear-coverts, and drab upperparts and sullied underparts, together with the pot-belly, all added up to Arctic Warbler.

Nobody had good views of the warbler for the next two days. Then, on 18th September, I heard in my garden (about 180 m from the initial site) a single disyllabic call typical of Greenish Warbler; the call was given only once. I had to go out, but the crowd of observers later told me that excellent views had been had of an Arctic Warbler, which had also been heard calling. I was, however, completely nonplussed when told that the call had been shrill and disyllabic like that of a Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: this was incompatible with the harsh 'zic' of Arctic, but was a perfect description of the call of Greenish. Two hours later, the bird was trapped (and ringed) by Mark Cubitt, who reidentified it as a Greenish Warbler (plates 36 & 37).

I saw the bird again on 21st, just before dusk, when it gave a classic sibilant, disyllabic Greenish Warbler call. It was small, quite slim, very silky white below, with bright edges to the wing feathers but with a short, spiky wingbar. It also bore a ring.

The wing formula taken by MC rules out Arctic Warbler, and one of the in-hand photographs shows an emarginated sixth primary. The bill, at 12.9 mm, was above Svensson's (1992) range for Greenish (11.7-12.7 mm), although the other measurements were relatively small. The supercilia stopped 2 mm short of the bill, even though photographs seem to show that they might meet above the bill.

The photographs show a continuous stripe from eye to bill, a large bill, slightly mottled ear-coverts and darkish lateral breast patches; 'flash effect' has apparently whitened the rest of the underparts, which MC described as pale yellow, but the edges of the primaries do look very bright.

I considered that the trapped Greenish Warbler was the same individual as that seen in Prior's Park on 16th. To me, it seems inconceivable that there were, in the same place and at the same time, a Greenish Warbler with plumage and structural features suggesting an Arctic and an Arctic Warbler with some characteristics of Greenish. There are too many similarities in the two descriptions for them to refer to two different birds.

Some observers claimed that one Arctic, two Greenish and at least two Yellow-browed Warblers were present in the area. There was certainly a Greenish Warbler, identified by call and by wing formula (and accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee: *Brit. Birds* 88: 541). Furthermore, I suspect that there was in fact only one warbler with a wingbar, although the canopy was so thick and the wind so strong that others could easily have been missed.

I found this whole episode both confusing and instructive. Perhaps the warbler had just arrived on 16th and had fluffed out its belly feathers, making it look pot-bellied and sullied below, but the combination of large bill and the 'wrong' supercilium and eye-stripe details really worried me.

'The Fair Isle warbler'

The following is an edited version of Roger Riddington's notes for the BBRC:

On 20th September 1994, Nick Ward found a small warbler at Bulls Park, Fair Isle, Shetland, which he identified as a Greenish Warbler. I was a little surprised, as this would have constituted the latest date for the species on the island. Two other aspects also aroused my suspicions: the upperparts were described as dark olive-green, and the legs as pale. The bird was, however, said to be diminutive, with a very small bill: features consistent with Greenish Warbler.

After lunch, NW and I, together with several other birders, quickly relocated the warbler and over the next hour had good views of it, although it stubbornly refused to call. My first reaction was 'Where are the wingbars?'. The bird showed the faintest pale tips, visible only at very close range, to the outermost three greater coverts. Three further things struck me: it had dark olive-green upperparts, even in bright sunlight; the legs were pale, showing orange tones in the sunlight; and the supercilium was white, washed with a little yellow, clearly stopped short of the bill, and did not flare behind the eye. These factors greatly fuelled my suspicion that this was an Arctic Warbler. The only negative point was the bill, which seemed tiny. Other points noted were cold grubby-white underparts, a solid loreal and post-ocular stripe, and a primary projection roughly one-third to one-half the length of the exposed tertials. Despite good and prolonged views, the consensus was confusion. Most people were pro-Greenish; I still strongly favoured Arctic, but was concerned by the size of the bill.

Fortunately, the bird was easily trapped (plates 38 & 39), and on wing formula was clearly an Arctic Warbler (accepted by the BBRC: *Brit. Birds* 88: 541). Although it was on the small side, its wing length (64.0 mm) and weight (8.6 g) were within published ranges for Arctic. The bill, however, was amazingly short

(11 mm), well below the range quoted by Svensson (1992) for both Arctic and Greenish Warblers, but its depth (3.2 mm) was within the range for both. NW and I checked the bill length independently and arrived at the same figure. The warbler was aged as an adult, having heavily worn plumage; this was presumably the cause of the indistinct wingbar.

These observations may have some implications for the use of bill length as one of the more reliable identification pointers in the field.

Discussion

Evidently, some Arctic and Greenish Warblers are very difficult to tell apart. The above events are not isolated occurrences. A warbler on Whalsay, Shetland, in 1990, was initially identified as Arctic, but was later reidentified as Greenish, and there is still controversy surrounding a 1991 record of a *Phylloscopus* in Hartlepool, Cleveland. There have been several reports of autumn Greenish Warblers with indistinct median-covert (second) wingbars (P. Ellis *in litt.*), and even a calling spring individual with an obvious second wingbar (P. Harvey *in litt.*).

It seems that, for field identification, only the call is 100% reliable, and even this must be treated with some caution. Birders at Prior's Park on 18th September, believing that they were watching an Arctic Warbler, may have been expecting a 'sharp' or 'harsh' call as described in books and not unlike the second part of a Pied Wagtail's 'chissik' call, but were apparently satisfied when they heard a call more like the wagtail's 'chewee'. To those who know them, the calls

Table 1. Important features differentiating Arctic *Phylloscopus borealis* and Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides*.

Feature	Arctic	Greenish
Call	Short, hard 'dzit' or 'zic'	Loud disyllabic 'tsee-wee', more strident when alarmed
Legs	Pale, straw or pale grey-brown; often yellow feet	Usually dark grey, but can be pale brown, occasionally straw
Bill	Lower mandible orange with obvious dark tip	Orange lower mandible but dark tip often restricted
Wingbars	Usually on greater coverts, and often showing median-covert bar	Usually only single greater-covert bar, rarely a second
Supercilia	Begin above nostrils, do not join across forehead; often narrow in front of eye; uniform in width behind eye	Often bridge across top of bill; always seen to reach bill; wide just in front of and behind eye, before tapering off
Eye-stripe	Darker than crown; continuous from bill to eye	Concolorous with crown; usually broken on lores, giving dark spot just in front of eye
Ear-coverts	Usually mottled, 'dirty'	Often clean, or at least appearing hollow-centred
Upperparts	Often dark olive-green or dull grey-green	Often relatively bright, especially on edge of primaries
Underparts	Basically white, but dingy or grey, especially on sides of breast	White and clean, sometimes almost silvery
Size	Usually larger than Willow Warbler <i>P. trochilus</i>	Usually smaller than Willow Warbler
Wing-point	Longer than Greenish (but difficult to judge)	Shorter (difficult to judge)
Shape	Often quite pot-bellied	Often quite slim, but often 'neckless'
Bill size	Longer and deeper than Greenish	Smaller than Arctic (but larger than Willow Warbler)
Behaviour	Often looks quite ponderous and slow-moving for a <i>Phylloscopus</i>	Extremely active, moving quickly through foliage; wing-flicks



▲ 38 & 39. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, with small bill and other features recalling Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides* (see text), Fair Isle, Shetland, 20th September 1994 (Nick Ward)

of Arctic and Greenish Warblers are very distinct and easily separable, but to the inexperienced or uninformed ear this is not necessarily the case.

Other features of Arctic and Greenish Warblers were fully covered by Alström & Olsson (1987) and are summarised in table 1, but it is well to realise that the typically cautious approach of those authors is appropriate: 'With silent birds, great care must be taken. It is essential to remember that there are no diagnostic features (except call) separating Arctic and Greenish in the field. All of the characters distinguishing the two are more or less variable . . .?'

With a non-calling individual, safe identification requires that it should have the appropriate size, structure, head markings, plumage tones and bare-part coloration. Any variation from the normal demands reappraisal of the identification.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank Mary Carruthers, Mark Cubitt, Pete Ellis, Graham Gordon, Paul Harvey, Tom Tams, Guy Thompson, Steve Votier and Nick Ward for help with these and similar records; Keith Vinicombe for reading the manuscript; and Per Alström, Alan Dean, Iain Robertson and Urban Olsson for their pioneering work on the identification of this pair of species.

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MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS



▲ 40. Mystery photograph 205A.



▲ 41. Mystery photograph 205B.

205 Two small, dark swifts with white rumps are found in the Western Palearctic: Little Swift *Apus affinis*, which, though recorded in Britain and Ireland on ten occasions up to the end of 1994, breeds no nearer than Northwest Africa, and White-rumped Swift *A. caffer*, which, though unrecorded here, nests in small numbers as close as southern Spain. Mystery photograph A, taken by F. G. H. Allen, shows a White-rumped Swift in Spain in June 1966, and mystery photograph B, taken by W. R. Hirst, shows a Little Swift in Cornwall in May 1981.

Though variable, depending upon mode of flight, tail shape is always different between the two species. White-rumped Swift has a very long tail, the length of which comfortably exceeds wing width. It is deeply forked with particularly attenuated and pointed outermost feathers, though these are shorter and more round-tipped on the nevertheless obviously forked tail of a juvenile. In direct flight, as opposed to during manoeuvres, White-rumped Swift's tail is held closed, despite which it presents an equally distinctive profile, looking like an elongated spike. Little Swift has a much shorter, fuller tail, the length of which is similar to the wing width. It frequently appears wider than the body and is round-ended when spread. In straight flight, Little Swift's tail is held closed and is square-ended, though often with a very shallow notch centrally.

Tail shape influences both general appearance and flight. White-rumped Swift's elegant tail is complemented by its comparatively narrow, pointed wings and its slim body, which tapers evenly from breast to tail. These characters contribute to its slender, delicate, attenuated appearance and its light, graceful flight. In contrast, Little Swift's rather stubby tail seems suited to its blunter-tipped wings and its sturdier body, which tapers little from breast to vent. These features give the species a compact, quite stocky look and a less flowing flight, with alternate bouts of fluttering wing-beats and steady gliding.

A further major character of separation is the white on and adjacent to the rump. On White-rumped Swift, this takes the form of a narrow, though conspicuous, curving rump-band which just touches the rear flanks, thus enabling some white to be seen from the side but not from below. Little Swift possesses a much wider, even-more-striking rump-band, which wraps around to encompass the rear flanks and thus allows some white to be seen from all angles, including from directly underneath. Its prominence from a lower than side-on viewpoint can be appreciated by reference to the Little Swift in plate 42.



◀ 42. Little Swift *Apus affinis*, Cornwall, May 1981 (W. R. Hirst)

Other differences between the two species are of lesser importance. White-rumped Swift has a slim, white trailing edge to the secondaries and frequently also to the inner primaries. This is affected by wear, however, and its appearance can be approached by the pale trailing edge of a freshly moulted Little Swift. Whilst Little Swift's darkest underwing-coverts are uniform with the underparts, those of White-rumped Swift often appear paler. Conversely, the upper-tail-coverts and undertail-coverts of White-rumped Swift are as dark as the body, while those of Little Swift are contrastingly paler, especially the outermost. Similarly, White-rumped Swift's tail is noticeably darker than that of Little Swift. Indeed, when Little Swift's spread tail is viewed from below, its outer tail-feathers are seen as two translucent triangles which contrast markedly with the tail's darker centre and the underparts.

Both species possess a large, contrasting, white patch on the chin and throat. When worn, that of White-rumped Swift shows some dusky streaking, while that of Little Swift is more obscured by dark markings, as on the individual in photograph B and plate 42.

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LETTERS

Osprey establishment

There is understandable controversy regarding the attempt to establish breeding Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* at Rutland Water in England (*Brit. Birds* 89: 152-153, 321-324), with valid views put forward on both sides. The letter from David Sergeant (*Brit. Birds* 89: 568), in which he suggested that the provision of basic nest structure and a little patience are all that are required to tempt Ospreys to breed, is, however, not a useful contribution to the debate. He mentioned that this practice has been successful in North America, but ignored the crucial fact that it has been successful only where a breeding population of Ospreys is already resident in the locality. The farthest that Ospreys have been tempted from other breeding pairs is probably only 20 km (Poole 1989). In fact, nesting structures are already present at Rutland Water, but there is, of course, no breeding population within 400 km. Ospreys appear reluctant to make breeding attempts where there is no evidence of successful breeding by other Ospreys. This reluctance has obvious evolutionary benefits among stable populations, but is a barrier to the recolonisation of suitable habitat where a short-lived extinction event (in this case anthropogenic) has occurred. It is the attempt to overcome this reluctance, by exploiting their strong natal-site fidelity, that requires the translocation of Scottish Ospreys in the current (re-)establishment scheme. Of course, spontaneous colonisation of new regions can occur, as at the Boat of Garten in the 1950s, but we have no way of knowing the likely timescale of this happening again in England, and the presence of non-breeding Ospreys at the site should not be taken as a guarantee that breeding attempts will follow.

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Reference

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The earlier breeding records of Icterine Warbler in England

The recent report of a pair of Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* breeding in Scotland in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 90) inevitably sharpens interest in the two previous published accounts of breeding in Britain. One of these (Yorkshire, 1970) has never received full acceptance and has been persuasively questioned by Paul Doherty (*Brit. Birds* 85: 247). The other (Wiltshire, 1907) found acceptance in *The Handbook of British Birds* (vol. 2, page 63) and has not, so far as I know, been given any serious critical reassessment.

Briefly, the story is that on 3rd May 1907 Geoffrey Pye-Smith, then a 14-year-old schoolboy at Marlborough College, flushed an unidentified bird from a nest with two eggs at Mildenhall, Wiltshire. Two days later, the bird was flushed again, this time off three eggs. By 8th May, it was clear that the nest had been deserted,

and it and the three eggs were taken by Pye-Smith. He apparently had no idea of their potential interest, for there is no mention of the finding of such a nest in the contemporary *Reports of the Marlborough College Natural History Society* to which Pye-Smith was a contributor.

In fact, nothing at all seems to have been heard about this record until 19 years later when, at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club held on 10th February 1926, the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain introduced Pye-Smith, bearing his nest and eggs, which he (Jourdain) confidently identified as 'typical Icterines, being distinctly larger and paler in colour than those of the Melodious Warbler [*H. polyglotta*]' (*Bull. BOC* 46: 74). Pye-Smith then for the first time published (*Brit. Birds* 19: 311) his account of the finding of the nest, and this was picked up and quoted in full in the 1926/27 *Report of the Marlborough College Natural History Society* — by obvious inference as a record previously unknown to the editor. Curiously, in his *British Birds* note Pye-Smith made no mention at all of Jourdain. We have no idea, therefore, whether the initial identification of the eggs was made by Pye-Smith or by Jourdain. In any event, Jourdain's involvement was sufficient to ensure that the record had an easy passage into the *Handbook*, of which, of course, Jourdain was one of the authors. For the research into the old local literature, I am greatly indebted to Seán Dempster, Head of Biology at Marlborough College.

But today, with the benefit of 70 years' more experience of the ornithological scene, this breeding record looks even more improbable than it must have looked at the time. It rested exclusively on the identification of eggs that had been taken 19 years previously. Jourdain was apparently confident that Icterine eggs could be specifically identified. Other authorities have been less sure. The data in *BWP* (vol. 6, pages 296 & 308) indicate that it is only on average that Icterine's eggs measure larger than those of Melodious: there is a wide measure of overlap between the two, and there does not seem to be any constant difference in the colour of the markings. Bannerman (*The Birds of the British Isles*, vol. 3, page 105) quoted Col. Meiklejohn's opinion that 'there is no certain character by which the eggs of the icterine and melodious warblers can be distinguished', and added that this was also the view of Savile Reid as expressed in the *Catalogue of Birds' Eggs in the British Museum*.

The nest and eggs are still with the Marlborough College Museum. At the instigation of Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, and with the very kind co-operation of Seán Dempster, two of these eggs were submitted for examination by Michael P. Walters, Curator of Eggs at The Natural History Museum, Tring. I quote at some length from his subsequent report, because it contains much informed comment of a kind that we seldom hear nowadays:

'I have now had a look at the two eggs you left with me, and the short answer is that, in my view, it is not now possible to say with any certainty whether they are *H. icterina* or *H. polyglotta*. They are, however, undoubtedly the eggs of a *Hippolais* warbler. The eggs of the Sylviidae are very diagnostic at generic level, and *Hippolais* produces an egg which is quite unlike anything else.

'The identification of eggs is a highly subjective matter, and the fact that it is not now possible to identify these eggs does not mean that it might not have been so at one time. Jourdain was an extremely competent oologist (perhaps one of the best there has ever been) and I would not be inclined to disregard him, on the basis of what Bannerman or Reid may have said . . . Meiklejohn is another matter

entirely — he was a very experienced oologist, but we are left with a plain difference of opinion between two experts . . .

‘I have no experience of *fresh* eggs of either of the two species involved. I think it is quite likely that it is possible to distinguish fresh eggs by the criteria which Jourdain gives . . . These disputed eggs have been around for nearly 90 years, and many of ours are even older. In more recent specimens there appears to be a tendency for eggs of *icterina* to be larger and paler than those of *polyglotta*, but the difference is very slight. In addition Pye-Smith’s eggs have been poorly blown, some contents have been left in at least one of the two, which has unnaturally darkened it. It is thus impossible to look at it now with the eyes of Pye-Smith or Jourdain. Thus, while I have no good reason to doubt the accounts of Pye-Smith and Jourdain, I don’t think there is any way to confirm the identity after such a long lapse of time.’

But even if one accepts (as I am inclined to do) that Jourdain’s identification of the eggs was probably correct, one is still left wondering why he was so ready to accept this as a genuine breeding record. That a first British breeding record should depend on a chance find by a 14-year-old schoolboy in itself must inspire general disbelief. But Jourdain was singularly well placed to extend this disbelief into virtual certainty. When passing judgment on the eggs, he had already contributed the ‘Breeding-habits’ sections in *A Practical Handbook of British Birds*, as he was later to do again in the *Handbook*, and in both of these the relevant particulars for Icterine Warbler were identical: ‘*Breeding-season*.—From end May or early June: mid-June in Scandinavia.’

The Mildenhall nest already held two eggs when first found on 3rd May. This indicates that the presumed pair (no second bird was actually seen) must have become established not much later than mid April. But the Icterine Warbler (as indicated by Jourdain’s own breeding dates) is a late migrant, with few reaching northern Europe before May, and the main arrival not taking place until mid May. The annual-cycle diagram in *BWP* (vol. 6, page 296) indicates the earliest egg-laying as taking place at the beginning of May, but the accompanying text suggests that in northern Europe egg-laying does not begin until late May at the earliest. Against this background, it seems inconceivable that an extralimital pair of Icterine Warblers could have met up and commenced breeding by the end of April—especially in a western county of southern England which is so remote from the NE quadrant of Britain, from which most Icterine records come.

Melodious Warbler is only marginally earlier than Icterine in its arrival and breeding dates, so this is not a more likely possibility. I suggest that the only rational conclusion is that some mistake, misplacement or other confusion occurred during the 19 years that the nest and eggs lay in limbo, and that the eggs seen by Jourdain were not those found at Mildenhall in 1907. Pye-Smith seems to have been abroad for most of those 19 years, including active service throughout the First World War. There must, therefore, have been very ample scope for confusion.

DOUGAL G. ANDREW

Muirfield Gate, Gullane, East Lothian EH31 2EG

EDITORIAL COMMENT We concur with Dougal Andrew’s conclusion.



NOTES

These contributions have all been assessed by the eight members of either the Behaviour Notes Panel or the Identification Notes Panel.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Common Kestrel perching in close proximity

At 08.21 GMT on 13th October 1989, in the Valle del Palmar (Buenavista), northwestern Tenerife, Canary Islands, I saw a male Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and a female Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* perched less than 40 cm apart on two adjacent branches of an American Aloe *Agave americana*. During about 30 seconds' observation through a 420-mm tele-lens from a hide 17 m away, the sparrowhawk remained inactive, showing no reaction to the very close proximity of the kestrel; the latter gave only some rapid twitching movements of the head. No perceptible sound was heard from either raptor.

FELIPE SIVERIO

Rodelundvej 12, Rodelund, 8653 Them, Denmark



▲ 43. Female Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (left) and male Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* perching in close proximity, Canary Islands, October 1989 (F. Siverio)

Female Common Kestrel carrying stick from nesting cavity

At about 09.00 GMT on 18th June 1993, in a pasture field near West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a female Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* emerge from a cavity about 4 m up in an isolated Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* about 25 m from me. The kestrel was holding a twisted stick about 30 cm long in one talon. Through binoculars, I watched it fly across the field with the stick until it disappeared into a copse; the stick was not entangled with

the bird's foot. A pair of Common Kestrels had a nest with young in the tree cavity, where plenty of sticks were present following previous nesting by Eurasian Jackdaws *Corvus monedula*. Kestrels do not normally convey materials to their nesting sites, but, even so, this individual was carrying a stick away from what was, presumably, its own nest. I can suggest no explanation for this behaviour.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

EDITORIAL COMMENT Prof. Ian Newton has commented that this action may perhaps have been 'analogous to carrying off prey remains, which they do regularly.'

Collared Dove showing threatening behaviour towards Magpie

On 17th May 1993, at West Lavington, Wiltshire, I was watching a pair of Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* feeding on bread on our lawn. A Magpie *Pica pica* flew down and was immediately threatened by one of the doves, which sank its head between its shoulders, puffed out its breast, and advanced towards the Magpie in a series of springy hops; the Magpie retreated and then flew away. Shortly afterwards, the Magpie returned and was again threatened by the Collared Dove, which was joined by its mate, both adopting the posture described. The Magpie took off again, followed by one of the doves, and did not return.

GEOFFREY L. BOYLE

Strawberry Lee, White Street, West Lavington, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 4LW

EDITORIAL COMMENT Derek Goodwin has commented that this is a 'very typical and usual reaction of territorial, breeding Collared Doves towards Magpies; they also fly at Magpies.' Although *BWP* (vol. 4) refers to Collared Doves attacking Magpies, it gives no details of the behaviour or the postures adopted.

Magpie catching House Martin

On 15th May 1990, at Capel, Surrey, I was watching about 25 House Martins *Delichon urbica* collecting mud from the side of a pond. A Magpie *Pica pica* was also watching the martins from a distance of 5 m. After about ten minutes, the Magpie slowly approached the edge of the busy flock and got within a few centimetres of one of the martins; it suddenly lunged with its beak and struck the martin on the head, then held it down with one foot and finished it off with three more blows. The Magpie flew off towards its nest nearby, carrying its victim. While this was happening, the other House Martins showed little or no reaction to the Magpie and continued to collect mud. Although I walked the area daily, I did not see the Magpie repeat this behaviour.

WESLEY ATTRIDGE

Dungeness Bird Observatory, 11 RNSSS, Romney Marsh, Kent TN29 9NA

EDITORIAL COMMENT Birkhead (1991, *The Magpie*) noted that 'Magpies are sometimes sufficiently agile to catch small birds.' Derek Goodwin has commented that Wesley Attridge's observation 'Seems a nice example of a predator "grasping" the situation' and that 'many birds, if adult *and without dependent young*, show very little or no fear of predators that normally cannot catch them.'

Eurasian Jackdaw preying on House Martin

In May 1993, in Bowburn, Co. Durham, I was watching House Martins *Delichon urbica* collecting mud for their nests. A Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* suddenly swooped down, picked up a martin and took it to the roof top, where it began to eat it.

RICHARD EVANS

61 Steavenson Street, Bowburn, Co. Durham

EDITORIAL COMMENT *BWP* (vol. 8) states for Eurasian Jackdaw: 'Few records of adult songbirds being killed and eaten' (page 125) and 'adult songbirds, up to size of [Common] Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*' (page 126); House Martin is not mentioned, although the list of avian prey species is not exhaustive.

Apparent whole brood of Common Starlings exhibiting albinism

On 28th May 1991, at Elmley RSPB Reserve, Kent, I found a family of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* consisting of one normal adult and three albino offspring. The juveniles were virtually identical, with wholly creamy-white plumage, dull yellow-orange bills (pinker towards the base), plum-coloured eyes and deep pinkish legs. All three were behaving in a manner suggesting that they had recently fledged: sticking closely with the adult, regularly begging, and occasionally being fed by the adult. There may have been other, possibly normal offspring from this brood, although none was noted in the immediate area.

Albinism is fairly common among certain species, and has even been noted in individuals from successive broods of the same adults. I can, however, find no reference to entire broods being completely albinistic, as seemed to be the case here. This is not surprising, as albinism is thought to be genetically controlled and is usually a recessive characteristic. I am not a genetics expert, but is it possible for a recessive trait to be phenotypically present in a whole brood, or does this observation tell us something new about albinism?

MARTIN S. GARNER

35 Meeting House Lane, Lisburn, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland BT27 5BY

EDITORIAL COMMENT Bryan Sage has commented: 'Mr Garner's observation is of exceptional interest, referring to an event that is evidently rare in nature. The only comparable record of which I am aware refers to entire coveys of Northern Bobwhites *Colinus virginianus* seen in Georgia, USA, in the early



▲ 44-46. Albino juvenile Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* (centre, with one adult), Kent, May 1991 (*Martin S. Garner*)

1930s. The genetics of albinism were explained and illustrated in my 1962 paper (*Brit. Birds* 55: 201-225), and Mr Garner is correct in saying that pure albinism is usually recessive. It is due to a single, autosomal (i.e. not sex-linked) recessive gene, although there is evidence from the Blackbird *Turdus merula* that the pied plumage condition may sometimes be both hereditary and sex-linked. Without knowing for certain that there were no normal young in this Common Starling brood, and lacking plumage details of the other adult of the pair, further comment on the genetics of this case would be purely speculative.'



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

British birds exported in wildlife trade

We are all aware of the vast array of birds caught and imported from the less-developed parts of the World into the UK for the bird trade. It may surprise readers, however, to note that during 1995 MAFF processed health certificates permitting the export from the UK of 2,628 finches, of which 1,129 were Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris*. Up to July 1996, health certificates had been processed for a further 4,931 finches, of which 2,241 were Greenfinches. All these birds were bound for Malta, where there is a thriving interest in cage-birds. At no point in the UK were these birds subject to checks on their origin. Reports from BirdLife Malta suggest that, of those arriving in Malta, some if not most appeared to be wild-taken.

Such trade would have been subject to licence, and shipments open to inspection, until 1993, when the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 was effectively made redundant by the issuing of a general licence by the Department of the Environment. This licence effectively allows the free import and export of all species not listed on the appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Although possession and sale of wild-taken British birds remains an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, this legislation is virtually unenforceable where international trade is involved.

With two Government departments both apparently turning a blind eye to such trade, it could become increasingly difficult for the UK to influence trade in threatened species elsewhere in the World. (*Contributed by Graham Elliott*)

Sensible move from the Spanish

To allow autumn and winter hunting on a Spanish wetland that held 30% of the European Marbled Ducks *Marmaronetta angustirostris* and some 10% of Spain's White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala* would seem crazy in the extreme. Until recently, however, this was the situation at the Spanish wetland of El Hondo, at a time when the rest of Europe was attempting to save Spain's White-headed Ducks. Now, at last, the Regional Administration has seen sense and agreed to the imposition of a hunting ban at El Hondo.

'BB' in 'Wings'

The latest issue of *Wings*, the magazine of IWC BirdWatch Ireland, pictures Oscar Campbell of Co. Armagh receiving his certificate and a host of other prizes after winning the senior section of *BB*'s Young Ornithologists of the Year Award. The latest edition of the new-look *Wings* includes a thought-provoking letter from Antarctica, the latest information on some of the most important coastal sites for birds in Ireland, recent reports and a host of other articles. Details from BirdWatch Ireland, Ruttledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

National Nest Box Week launched

Having chosen the highly appropriate date of 14th February, the BTO is to be congratulated on launching what will undoubtedly become an annual feature of the birding calendar. So simple: why has it not been thought of before? There are many instances where the lack of available nest sites is the controlling factor in bird populations. It was Chris Mead, whose influence is clearly behind this new initiative, who stated 'Britain needs more holes'.

The Suffolk Wildlife Trust provided its Lackford Wildlife Reserve for the launch of National Nest Box Week, and, with impressive sponsorship from Jacobi Jayne & Co., *Bird Watching* magazine, BoxWatch and British Sugar plc, Tony Soper declared the Week open. The future seems assured, as Cellnet has agreed to help in 1998 and is fixing nestboxes to many of its new aeries throughout the country. 'Each one equipped with a mobile phone!' commented Jeremy Greenwood. As part of the opening ceremony, a series of nestboxes for species as diverse as Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* and Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* was installed on the reserve and within the grounds of British Sugar at Bury St Edmunds. The latter were just a few of the 328 nestboxes now installed on British Sugar land. For more details of National Nest Box Week, contact the BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Lancashire atlas

The newly formed Lancashire Bird Club has launched its first major enquiry: a tetrad atlas of Lancashire and North Merseyside. The fieldwork will cover three years, starting this year. The northern part of the area has already been mapped recently using tetrads, but the two clubs involved, the Lancaster Bird Watching Society and the Fylde Bird Club, have agreed to support fully the new atlas and to resurvey their areas. The atlas work is sponsored and supported by North West Water. There are stewards for all of the 10-km squares, but further observers are needed to cover tetrads throughout the area.

Offers of help should be made to Dr Peter Golborn, 48 Earlswood, Skelmersdale WN8 6AT, for south of the River Ribble, and to Bob Pycfinch, 12 Bannistre Court, Tarterton, Preston PR4 6HA, for north of the Ribble. (Contributed by John Wilson)

Nest Record Scheme

The Nest Record Scheme, one of the longest-running BTO surveys, has now collected a huge wealth of data on Britain's breeding birds. This year sees the fiftieth anniversary of the Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* nestbox scheme on the Nagshead Reserve in Gloucestershire, inaugurated by Bruce Campbell and continued today by Ivan Proctor, the RSPB warden, and a willing team of volunteers.

A starter pack for the Nest Record Scheme is available from Caroline Dudley, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

National Wood Lark Survey

This year, the BTO, the RSPB and English Nature are conducting a national survey of the Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*, a repeat of the first survey that was undertaken in 1986, when 241 territories were discovered throughout southern England. We can confidently expect a higher total this year. If you have any spring (February-May) records of Wood Larks for 1997, please send them to Simon Wotton, Research Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Who's who?

John Pemberton, editor and publisher, since 1981, of the well-established *Birdwatcher's Yearbook*, has just published *Who's Who in Ornithology* at £29.95. It is available through British BirdShop (see pages xi & xii).

Irish PO shows Royal Mail the way to do it

With a set of five definitive bird stamps, *An Post*, the Irish Post Office, has not made the mistakes our own Royal Mail made recently giving us grotesque Robins *Erithacus rubecula* at Christmas (and then missing the opportunity of using Peter Scott paintings: *Brit. Birds* 88: 571; 89: 287).

Painted by top bird-artist/ornithologist, Killian Mullarney, the *An Post* stamps feature Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* (28p), Robin (32p), Puffin *Fratercula arctica* (44p), Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (52p), and White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* (£1). A special presentation pack costs IR£4.50 from Irish Stamps, PO Box 1991, Dublin 1, Ireland.



▲ 47. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1996. Winner, Roger Tidman (centre), is congratulated by David King, Professional Services Manager of *Canon*, the sponsors, with Guest Presenter, Mrs Dorothy Hosking, holding the salver (*Chris Knights*)

Looking as happy as a winner should, Roger Tidman received *Canon* accessories, cheque and salver at the Bird Photograph of the Year reception at the Forte Crest Regent's Park Hotel in London on 3rd July 1996 (plate 47). Maintaining the welcome tradition which started with the late Eric Hosking's involvement as Photographic Editor of *British Birds* and senior judge of BPY, his widow, Mrs Dorothy Hosking, again presented the awards.

OBC boxes clever

A collecting-box in the shape of a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, given by the RSPB to the Oriental Bird Club, has been repainted by OBC Council member, Peter Morris, as a Firethroat *Luscinia pectardens* (plate 48).

The funds it attracts for the OBC will be spent on conservation projects in the Orient, where the OBC has already awarded almost 100 grants for research on threatened Asian birds and habitats.

► 48. The OBC's newly painted Firethroat *Luscinia pectardens* collecting-box receiving its first donation, from Emily Redman, daughter of Nigel Redman, past Chairman and current Council member of the OBC.





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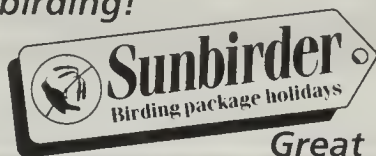
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Raptor battle ahead?

There can be very few birdwatchers who have not heard the stories/complaints. 'Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* are decimating the Racing Pigeons *Columba livia*'; 'Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* are removing the Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*'; and even that 'Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* have caused the song-bird decline.'

It has been suggested that the conservation movement has acted in a rather half-hearted manner to contradict these claims. Although this is far from true, it certainly has not been shouted from the roof tops. Now, some would say at last, there seem to be changes ahead.

The latest issue of *Birds* magazine (spring 1997) contains two very relevant articles. The first, by RSPB Conservation Director Graham

Wynne, examines the Hen Harrier controversy and tells the story as it really is; the second, by Angus Nurse, looks at how the RSPB assists Police Wildlife Liaison Officers. At the same time, the RSPB has published four leaflets: *Birds of Prey and Domestic Pigeons*, *Birds of Prey and Songbirds*, *Birds of Prey and Red Grouse* and *Birds of Prey and their Recovery*. The conservation movement seems to be flexing its collective muscles at a time when the RSPB is about to enrol its one-millionth member. In this case, strength does come from size, for there are many individuals and interests that remain to be convinced. Details from RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Don't ignore Egyptian Geese

If you see an Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* with colour rings, do not assume that it is a local escapee. The naturalised population of Egyptian Geese around Brussels, Belgium, estimated to total 500 individuals in 1995, is being marked by the Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique with a darvic colour ring (each engraved with a unique three-number or

three-letter code) on one leg and a metallic ring on the other. So far, there have been recoveries in France and the Netherlands. (Contributed by Didier Vangeluwe)

As with all observations of colour-ringed, wing-tagged (or otherwise marked) birds, details should be reported to the addresses given on page 207.

Where have the Song Thrushes gone?

In disputes at food, belligerent Blackbirds *Turdus merula* almost invariably dominate and expel the smaller and more timid Song Thrushes *T. philomelos*. In hard weather, food scattered in a garden will attract more Blackbirds, which will lead to fewer Song Thrushes in the immediate vicinity. Since those people recording the birds which occur in a garden in winter will be those who provide food, they are bound to record far more Blackbirds than Song Thrushes. Neighbouring gardens, where there is no food provided, are likely to have fewer Blackbirds, but perhaps all the Song Thrushes. Thus, winter garden counts by birdwatchers are likely to underestimate the Song Thrush population.

The food taken by the Blackbirds will, of course, also benefit the Song Thrushes, for they may find havens, away from the concentrations of bullying Blackbirds, where they can feed quietly on natural food.

In my own garden, my lawn currently has 16 voracious Blackbirds squabbling over apples and bread, but no Song Thrushes. The latter can be found scavenging in the leaf-litter under a hedge, well away from the food which I have put out. When there is no supplementary food, there are fewer Blackbirds, but also several Song Thrushes on the lawn.

The decline in Song Thrush numbers over the past several decades is certainly real, but could it perhaps be less catastrophic than some winter garden counts may suggest?

Anyway, it is about time that we had a repeat quantitative *Wintering Atlas*, using the same methodology as in 1981/82-1983/84 (Lack 1986): not only interesting results, but voted by many people as providing the most satisfying and enjoyable fieldwork of all the many BTO censuses and surveys. (JTRS)

Indian projects win OBC awards

The Forktail-Leica Award—worth £1,500—will fund a ten-month research project by Pratap Singh in six locations in the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, home to 19 endemic bird species.

The OBC-WildWings Conservation Awareness Award—worth £1,000—went to a team led by Sunita Rao for work on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, in the Bay of Bengal between India and Burma, which will emphasise the need for islanders to cherish their rainforests, mangroves and coral reefs.

RSPB gets new man in Wales

After heading the RSPB operations in the Principality for many years, Roger Lovegrove is retiring and the RSPB has acquired a new Director, Wales. Tim Stowe has moved to the national office in Newtown from his previous post in the north of Scotland. He is no stranger to Wales, having worked there in a research capacity in the past.

With future possible political changes, and with farmland birds in Wales at an all-time low, Tim has some conservation challenges in front of him: everything from the uplands and Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* to the coastlands with Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* and Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii*.

We wish him well.

ROC 50

Belated congratulations to the Reading Ornithological Club on the fiftieth anniversary of its formation on 29th January 1947. The Club has celebrated by the publication in February of a 20-page account, by President Emeritus Dr Eric V. Watson, of *Birdwatching in the Reading Area at the Time of the Founding of the Reading Ornithological Club*.

The ROC's Recorder for 25 of those 50 years (during 1965-83 and 1990 to the present), Peter Standley, notes that, in those 50 years, seven to nine species have been lost as breeding species (Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*, and, perhaps, Hawfinch

Are you 'Wildbrain of Britain'?

The BBC Natural History Unit is seeking contestants for a new Radio 4 quiz to find the 'Wildbrain of Britain': the person with the greatest knowledge of British and global wildlife.

With Lionel Kelleway from BBC Radio 4's 'The Living World' as question-master, 'Wildbrain' will be recorded in September-October and will go on air on BBC Radio 4 in the run-up to Christmas.

For an application form, send a SAE before 30th May to Wildbrain, BBC Natural History Unit, Broadcasting House, Bristol BS8 2LR.

Ospreys welcome!

A 40-page booklet published in 1994 by the Environmental Conservation Branch of the Canadian Wildlife Service (Environment Canada, 25 St Clair Ave East, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1M2, Canada), *Artificial Nest Structures for Ospreys: a construction manual* by Peter J. Ewins, should be useful to anyone wishing to attract Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* to suitable waters. (Contributed by Dr D. E. Sergeant)

NBC meets in May

The spring meeting and AGM of the Neotropical Bird Club will be held at Blakcney Village Hall, Norfolk, on Sunday 25th May. Doors open at noon; meeting starts at 2 p.m. For further details, contact the NBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Coccothraustes coccothraustes and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*). The ten gains in the same period are Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Great Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*, Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, Black Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*. In the ROC's recording area (approximately 8-km radius from the centre of Reading), 195 species had been reported up to 1947; 60 have been added since, to bring the current Reading total to 255.

The address of the ROC is: A. J. Hannan, Robin Cottage, Turner's Green, Upper Bucklebury, Reading RG7 3HLL.

New Recorders

After an amazing 30 years of service, Harold E. Grenfell has retired as Recorder for West Glamorgan/Gower. The new Recorder is Robert H. A. Taylor, 285 Llangyfelach Road, Brynhyfryd, Swansea SA5 9LB.

The task of Recorder for Norfolk is now to be shared between Giles Dunmore and Neil Lawton. All records should be sent to Giles at 49 The Avenues, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 3QR.

T. J. Dix has resigned as Recorder for Outer Hebrides (Uists, Benbecula & Barra). The new Recorder is Brian Rabbitts, 6 Carinish, Lochmaddy, North Uist HS6 5HL.

David Wright has resigned as Recorder for Anglesey. The new Recorder is David Rees, Dragon Isaf, Penmynydd, Llanfair P.G., Anglesey LL66 6PN.

Douglas E. Dickson, Recorder for Fife (except Isle of May), has moved to 2 Burrelton Court, Glenrothes, Fife KY7 4UN.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—Northern Ireland

Tony Armstrong—Northeast

Dave Flumm—Southwest

Frank Gribble—Midlands

Barrie Harding—East Anglia

Angus Hogg—Scotland

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Don Taylor—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

John Wilson—Northwest



MONTHLY MARATHON



The members of the tideline gang (plate 7), photographed by Richard T. Mills in Co. Cork in September 1975, were correctly identified as Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus*, Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* and a Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* by almost all competitors, though the godwit was also named as Hudsonian *L. haemastica*, and some entrants managed to find non-existent Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*, Spotted Redshanks *T. erythropus*, Little Gulls *Larus minutus* or Common Gulls *L. canus* and a Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*. Stephen Foster, David McAdams and Richard Patient fell into no such traps, and all advanced to eight correct answers. Hot on their heels, 58 entrants are on seven, 84 on six, 100 on five, 118 on four, 130 on three, 108 on two and 54 on one. The SUNBIRD trip to Africa or Asia will be won by the first person to achieve a higher total (of ten or more) than any other competitor.



▲ 49. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 130. Tenth stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 66), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th June 1997.



REVIEWS

A Birdwatchers' Guide to the Canary Islands.

By Tony Clarke & David Collins.

Prion Ltd, Huntingdon, 1996. 110 pages; 15 line-drawings; 48 maps. ISBN 1-871104-06-8. Paperback £10.75.

The Canaries have at least five endemic bird species, plus three more shared with other Atlantic islands, and a dramatic flora with high endemism. For island evolution, this is Europe's nearest thing to the Galapagos. In recent years, the Canaries have become a desirable birding destination. The resulting watching has turned up a growing list of migrants and vagrants. Many of the good spots are small and quite hard to find. With this excellent guide, this will no longer be the case. If I had had it on my own visits to

the islands, I would have had even better times than I did without. Clear maps and good site descriptions provide all you will need. Do not get too carried away by the mouth-watering species lists for some of the sites; many species are only vagrants. Look out for the dragonflies, reptiles and butterflies also listed. Do not miss some of the well-marked subspecies either—they will be classed as species before too long.

COLIN BIBBY

Handbook of the Birds of the World. vol. 3. Hoatzin to auks.

Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott & Jordi Sargatal.

Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, 1996. 822 pages; 60 colour plates; 389 colour photographs; 577 distribution maps. ISBN 84-87334 20-2. £105.00.

The two previous mammoth volumes in this mammoth series have already received rave reviews in *British Birds* (86: 190-191; 88: 323) and elsewhere in the ornithological press. 'Mammoth' is used intentionally, for this 822-page tome takes some lifting (it weighs over 4 kg). This is likely to be the most widely purchased of the first three volumes (by those who are not collecting the full set), for 56% of the space is devoted to three very popular groups: waders, gulls and terns.

As with the other volumes, the photographs are well chosen (many of them being ones I have never seen published elsewhere), almost all of an exceedingly high standard, and similarly very well reproduced. The artwork (60 colour plates) is by ten well-known and highly accomplished artists and matches the photographic quality.

The species accounts (roughly three to a page), each with a very clear distribution map, are in small print, but the choice of typeface and ample space makes even this easy to read. The more-general family accounts, with details of systematics and morphology, habitat, habits, voice, food and feeding, breeding, movements, relationship with Man, and status and conservation, are in larger type, but again are very easy to read because they

are written in such excellent prose.

Unlike some other gigantic works of reference, *Handbook of the Birds of the World* is a real pleasure to read. Not only is it a first-rate work of reference, but its pages are eminently browsable. Open almost anywhere and you will find a topic which instantly grabs your attention, covered in up-to-date detail, discussed intelligently and in a style which encourages you to read on and on. Since over 30 authors are involved, this suggests that much of the credit must go to the editorial team involved in bringing the whole gigantic work together.

It is almost impossible to praise this book too highly. Text, paintings and photographs are all of a staggeringly high quality.

It cannot be denied that the cost of each volume is also high, but the average bird book these days costs £24.95, on which basis (or on any other) *Handbook of the Birds of the World* is excellent value for money. I very strongly recommend anyone who has not yet examined one of these volumes to do so. If you can possibly scrape together sufficient to start the long-term investment involved, purchase this one (and the previous two).

JTRS

Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East.

By R. F. Porter, S. Christensen & P. Schiermacker-Hansen. Illustrated by A. Birch, J. Gale, M. Langman & B. Small.

T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1996. 460 pages; 112 colour plates; 722 distribution maps. ISBN 0-85661-076-3. £29.95.

On many occasions when I am consulting field guides, I find myself wondering if the late Roger Tory Peterson had any inkling of what he was spawning when he produced the very first *Eastern Field Guide* in the 1930s. I wonder what he would have thought of this publication? There are now very few areas of the World without a 'field guide to the birds of . . .'; indeed, many have several such publications. Each guide that is produced should be better than the one before, not only in quality of content and production, but also with innovations. Here we have a clear, state-of-the-art guide that has me wondering how it could be bettered — but no doubt, in the years ahead, it will be. The authors and artists are to be congratulated, and how nice to see the publication dedicated to P. A. D. Hollom, so accurately described as 'a pioneer of modern bird identification'.

Although the 112 colour plates, averaging some six or seven species each, are the work of four separate artists, the book flows seamlessly without any obvious change from plate to plate. They are truly a veritable delight of excellence, and I, for one, now

know of the existence of the Gambaga Flycatcher *Muscicapa gambagae* and what it looks like.

All the standard components of a field guide are here: a map of the area covered, an explanation of the text and layout, and the topography of a bird, yet all confined to a mere six pages, leaving the bulk of the book to the nitty-gritty. The innovation is that each plate has a facing page with a very clear map showing the breeding distribution and a statement as to the species' status in the region and the habitat in which it is found. An individual species number leads you to the 200 pages of identification text which form the second half of the book. I took the opportunity to use the guide to check a photograph of a bunting taken in Iran in 1970, the identity of which had been queried. The result: a quick conclusion that the original identification as Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* was indeed accurate (regrettably!). If you intend to visit Turkey, Cyprus, Israel, the UAE, or anywhere else in the Middle East, this must be in your luggage.

BOB SCOTT

The Tree Sparrow.

By J. Denis Summers-Smith.

Summers-Smith, Guisborough, 1995. 205 pages; 4 colour plates; numerous black-and-white illustrations; 10 maps. ISBN 0 9525383 0X. £24.00.

The author is already well known from his previous three books on sparrows, including his classic on the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (1963). As in his earlier books, he brings to this new book an unusually wide perspective, synthesising a large and scattered literature on the Tree Sparrow *P. montanus* from around the World. The international scope of the book is one of its strengths, as it reveals how the ecology of a single species can vary markedly across Eurasia, according to conditions, including the presence or absence of competing sparrow species. Also, as an amateur in the best sense, Denis Summers-Smith is unconstrained by the dictates of current scientific fashion, and ranges widely over aspects of

biology that receive scant attention in most other bird monographs.

The book is arranged in nine main chapters, which between them deal with the evolutionary and distributional history of the species, its annual and breeding cycles, numbers and movements, feeding habits, and relationships with other species, including Man. The bird has a wide range, and the chapter on breeding includes some of the best data yet assembled on latitudinal trends in laying dates, clutch-sizes and annual productivity (young per female).

One of the curious features of the Tree Sparrow is the huge fluctuations in its abundance which have occurred in Britain and elsewhere over at least the last 200

years. In Britain, it reached especially high numbers in the 1890s and again in the 1970s. This most recent rise and fall in national numbers coincided with the fall and rise of the Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, raising suspicions of a causal relationship. The recent decline in Tree Sparrow numbers, however, also coincided with a decline in weed-seed food-supplies, caused by herbicide use and the switch from spring to autumn ploughing of stubble

Birding in Kent.

By Don Taylor.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1996. 168 pages; 20 line-drawings. ISBN 1-873403-53-4. Paperback £11.95.

This is not a county avifauna, nor is it a county bird-finding guide. Indeed, it is perhaps easier to say what this book is not than what it is. Divided into seven sections, this is Don Taylor's personal reminiscences of ten years' birding in a county that is 'inexhaustibly rewarding'. If you are a Big Day, Bird Race or Local Patch enthusiast, there will be much to interest you. I enjoyed the 'Birdwatching calendar', as it brought back many memories. Almost 50% of the book is a

fields. Also, at the time of earlier fluctuations, both weed seeds and Sparrowhawks were presumably plentiful. Nothing in ecology is simple.

In conclusion, the author has done an excellent job, presenting a mass of information in a clear and readable manner. The book is nicely produced and a pleasure to read.

I. NEWTON

1985-94 systematic list, with simple bar charts indicating annual patterns of occurrence. For tingling excitement, read the account of finding the White-throated Needletail Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*. Some standardised English bird names are used throughout the book, but others not; the inconsistencies jarred somewhat.

Kentologists will love this book.

BOB SCOTT

Cley Marsh and its Birds. By Billy & Bernard Bishop. (Revised second edn, Hill House Press, Cley, 1996. 145 pages; 24 black-and-white-plates. ISBN 0-9528031-0-0. Paperback £12.95) This new soft-back edition includes the main text by Billy Bishop originally published in 1983 (reviewed in *Brit. Birds* 76: 600). His son Bernard, who succeeded him as Reserve Warden, continues the story up to 1996. The diary-extracts mainly concern birding events, with a few references to the more important developments of the Reserve. The great flood of February 1996 is recorded, complete with four photographs showing the terrible devastation to the Marsh and hides. The checklist of birds has been updated, with useful notes on current status and recent records.

DAVID CLUGSTON

photographs gives a first-rate picture of the range of habitats (and a further 14 photographs show some of the typical birds).

JTRS

The Birds of Togo. By Robert A. Cheke & J. Frank Walsh. (BOU, Tring, 1996. 230 pages. ISBN 0-907446-18-3. £22.00 UK; £24.00 overseas) The latest (no. 14) in the BOU's invaluable checklist series, with each of Togo's 624 species listed (an average of five to a page), with habitats and status summarised in a brief but thoroughly referenced paragraph. A total of 39 colour

Teach Yourself Bird Sounds. Cassette 8: coniferous and mixed woods. Compiled and written by Dominic Couzens & John Wyatt. (Waxwing Associates, Tring, 1996. £6.99) The previous seven tapes in this series have covered habitats from gardens and woods to moors, marshes and seacliffs. This cassette lasts 75 minutes and includes 46 species less commonly found in typical woodlands, preferring poplar, birch or conifers. Useful recordings are included of Golden *Chrysolophus pictus* and Lady Amherst's Pheasants *C. amherstiae*—not found on other tapes. Tracks last about 30 seconds each, and are compared with similar species. The narration is useful, with tips that can be used to good effect. More tapes are on the way from Waxwing, and the whole set would make an excellent present for birders, ranging from beginners to those who have a good knowledge. The recordings are well produced and are in a mixture of stereo and mono.

KEITH BETTON

Wings of the Orient. By Geoffrey Davison, Chew Yen Fook, Ken Scriven & Karen Phillipps. (Sony Systems Design International, Singapore, 1996. 200 species. CD-ROM. £45.95) An interactive CD-ROM reference guide to birds of Malaysia. An enjoyable dip into the many facets of birdwatching in the region, with many features that are hidden from the casual user. I was immediately drawn to the slide show of stunning photographs of over 200 species. I felt, however, that the 'breath-taking . . . fly-through' of different habitats, and the '360° panoramic view of 28 different virtual-reality environments' fell way short of reality, and I found the 'beautiful acoustic music' invasive. Useful features are the 80 or so recordings of vocalisations and checklists for Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore. Worth having if you are planning to visit the region. TIM INSKIPP

Bird in the Nest. By Bill Oddie & Peter Holden. (Robson Books, London, 1995. 146 pages. ISBN 1-86105-039-9. Paperback £12.99) The book of the BBC Natural History Unit's very successful TV series of (mostly) live from-the-nest transmissions. JTRS

The Butterflies of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. By R. D. Penhallurick. (Dyllansow Pengwella, Truro, 1996. 180 pages. ISBN 0 9515-785-1-0. £14.75) Well-written, readable accounts, full of interest even for those who do not regularly visit the area. Decorated with the author's attractive black-and-white illustrations. JTRS

Cross Your Legs and Wish. By Christopher Pilling. (Redbeck Press, Frizinghall, 1994. 44 pages. ISBN 0-946980-20-9. Paperback £5.95) Award-winning modern poet's verses on British birds. JTRS

A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Namibia. By Ian & Jackie Sinclair. (New Holland, London, 1995. 144 pages. ISBN 1-86825-730-4. Paperback £7.99) This

pocket guide to suit the novice contains most of the species that might be seen on a short tour. As an identification aid, it has the limitations typical of the genre: few plumages are shown and the choice of species has more to do with the availability of good photographs than with the needs of the keen birdwatcher. Nevertheless, many fine photographs are included. Those of the larks are a useful addition to the illustrations in the otherwise far superior 'Sasol' guide (*Illustrated Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa*, 1993). A. R. BAKER

Carving Realistic Birds. By David Tippey. (Guild of Master Craftsmen Publications, Lewes, 1996. 166 pages. ISBN 1-86108-010-7. Paperback £14.95) This comprehensive and informative book is packed with illustrations, covering everything from tools and techniques to step-by-step descriptions of how to complete three subjects: Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* and Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. Patterns are provided, as are details on painting, finishing and final assembly of these birds. Also included are patterns for a further seven subjects along with information on colour application. A book which will be appreciated by both woodcarvers with some experience and enthusiastic beginners. ROSEMARIE COOKE

The Peregrine Sketchbook. By C. F. Tunnicliffe. (Excellent Press, London, 1996. 79 pages. ISBN 1-900318024. Hardback £19.95) The work of Charles Tunnicliffe is well known to all with an interest in wildlife. In this quality book, Robert Gillmor has brought together all 26 of the 1948 sketches of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* that Tunnicliffe made at an Anglesey eyrie. Tunnicliffe was to use these sketches as a basis for some terrific scraperboards and narrative in his book *Shorelands Summer Diary* (1985). In full circle, these now accompany the original colour sketches. To have both source and product of a particularly inspiring summer for Tunnicliffe together in one book is really rather nice. ALAN HARRIS

ALSO RECEIVED

A Birder's Guide to New Hampshire. By Alan Delorey. (American Birding Association, Colorado Springs, 1996. 222 pages. ISBN 1-878788-11-6. Paperback, spiral-bound, US\$16.95)

Country Foxes. By Hugh Kolb. (Whittet Books, London, 1996. 128 pages. ISBN 1-873580-29-0. Paperback £7.99)

Newman's Birds of Southern Africa. 5th edn. By Kenneth Newman. (Southern Book Publishers, South Africa, 1996. 512 pages. ISBN 1-86812-611-0. Paperback £16.95)



CONSERVATION RESEARCH NEWS

Compiled by Mark Avery



This feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports the most interesting recent scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic species.

European solutions for global problems

A tenth of the World's 10,000 bird species are threatened with global extinction and 24 of these are found in Europe (about one in 20 of Europe's bird species). Dr Borja Heredia, Laurence Rose and Mary Painter provide action plans for 19 of these, as well as for three species which are not considered to be globally threatened (Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, Azores Bullfinch *Pyrrhula (pyrrhula) murina* and Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*) but are of great conservation concern. The plans for a further three globally threatened species (Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* and Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*) are in preparation. An action plan for Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregaria* will not be produced owing to its mainly non-European distribution, and one for Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* has been published by the UK Government. The species covered range from Madeira Petrel

Pterodroma madeira (<30 pairs nest on one Madeiran island) to the Corn Crake *Crex crex*, which is still widespread and numerous but has declined rapidly throughout its range. The proposals cover conservation actions from reform of agricultural policy to nature-reserve acquisition and management. The plan for the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* should be required reading for those who doubt the need for control of Ruddy Ducks *O. jamaicensis*.

This conservation first-aid kit was compiled by BirdLife International, with help from Wetlands International, funded by the RSPB and European Union LIFE and has been published by the Council of Europe. It draws on the knowledge of about 370 experts across the continent. A similar level of co-ordination and co-operation will be needed to implement these plans.

HEREDIA, B., ROSE, L., & PAINTER, M. (eds.) 1996. *Globally Threatened Birds in Europe: action plans*. Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

Slender hope for *tenuirostris*?

The Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* is one of Europe's 24 globally threatened species and must be one of the least known. We know little of how many individuals survive in the wild (the estimate is 50-270 individuals, but this is a complete guess), where they winter (except the one(s) that occurred at Merza Zerga, Morocco) or where they nest (somewhere in Russia, but the last nest was found in 1924). The species action plan (see above) puts great emphasis on eventually using satellite tags to give us many of the simple answers about this bird's distribution and numbers, but tags light enough (<12 g) are not currently

available. Two recent papers consider the whereabouts of this bird's breeding grounds. Dr Georg Bojko and Dr Eugenius Nowak report seeing a Slender-billed Curlew in west Siberia, Russia, in July 1996. The bird was seen once and there was no evidence of nesting. More searches are planned for 1997. Dr Alla Danilenko, Dr Gerard Boere and Dr Elena Lebedeva review past records and adopt a habitat-based approach to narrow down the area of search for the breeding grounds. They suggest that Slender-billed Curlew habitat use may vary with hydrological conditions and that forest-steppes should be searched in the

next few, relatively wet, years of a climatic cycle, whereas bogs may be a better bet in the drier conditions expected after the year 2000.

BOJKO, G. W., & NOWAK, E. 1996. Observation of a Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* in west Siberia. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 81: 79.

DANILENKO, A. K., BOERE, G. C., & LEBEDEVA, E. A. 1996. Looking for the recent breeding grounds of Slender-billed Curlew: a habitat-based approach. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 81: 71-78.

Grey Partridges benefit from predator control

The numbers of Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix* have been declining in Britain for about 40 years. The role of herbicides and insecticides in reducing the food supply of the largely insectivorous chicks is well established as important in the decline, but the impact of predators of partridge eggs and incubating females is less well established. Dr Stephen Tapper, Dr Dick Potts and Malcolm Brockless of the Game Conservancy Trust carried out an elegant six-year experiment in Wiltshire to measure the effects of reducing numbers of crows, Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and Stoats *Mustela erminea* on the partridge breeding population and production of young. Predators were killed (legally) in one of two large farmland study areas and left undisturbed in the other area. After three years, the treatments were switched between areas and the study then continued for a further three years. Most of the effort to control predators was concentrated in spring and early summer, so predators recolonised the treated area every year and their numbers recovered rapidly in the previously treated area after the switch-over. Breeding success and population size of partridges both increased when predators were controlled. The effect on population size was mainly the result of better breeding,

rather than survival, though female survival improved because fewer incubating females were killed by mammalian predators. After three years of predator control, the breeding-population density in the treated area was 2.6 times that on the untreated area. The contributions to this improvement from controlling each of the several predator species cannot be assessed separately from this experiment, but Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*, Red Foxes and Stoats are all known from other studies to be important predators.

This important study has clarified a contentious issue by careful application of the experimental method. Could the conclusions from this study be generalised to other areas and other species? There is little reason to suppose that they would not apply to partridges in other parts of the country. Whether they apply to other species is, however, less certain, because the Grey Partridge is one of a group of species in which autumn population size, which is strongly dependent on breeding success, is a good predictor of numbers of breeding adults in the following spring. This tends to be the case for gamebirds and waterfowl, but is less often so for other taxa, such as passerines.

TAPPER, S. C., POTTS, G. R., & BROCKLESS, M. H. 1996. The effect of an experimental reduction in predation pressure on the breeding success and population density of Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix*. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 33: 965-978.

Dr Mark Avery and Dr Rhys Green, Research Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL



RARITIES COMMITTEE NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



Peter Clement retired in rotation at the end of March 1997. We wish to put on record our thanks to Peter for his efforts on behalf of birdwatchers and County Recorders everywhere during his membership of the Committee. No doubt we shall turn to him from time to time for his expert knowledge on a wide range of specialist subjects, and we are already taking note of his constructive views on the way the Committee works and can progress.

We had two excellent candidates for Committee membership, to replace Peter Clement. After an election, organised by ACRE, involving County Recorders and their Records Committees and the Bird Observatories, we are pleased to announce that John Martin of Bristol (with 108 votes) has been elected to BBRC membership as from 1st April 1997. The second candidate, Chris Bradshaw of Kent, received 37 votes. We are grateful to both John and Chris for agreeing to stand, and to their respective nominators, as well as to all those electors who responded in the postal vote, and to ACRE for administering the election.

RAH



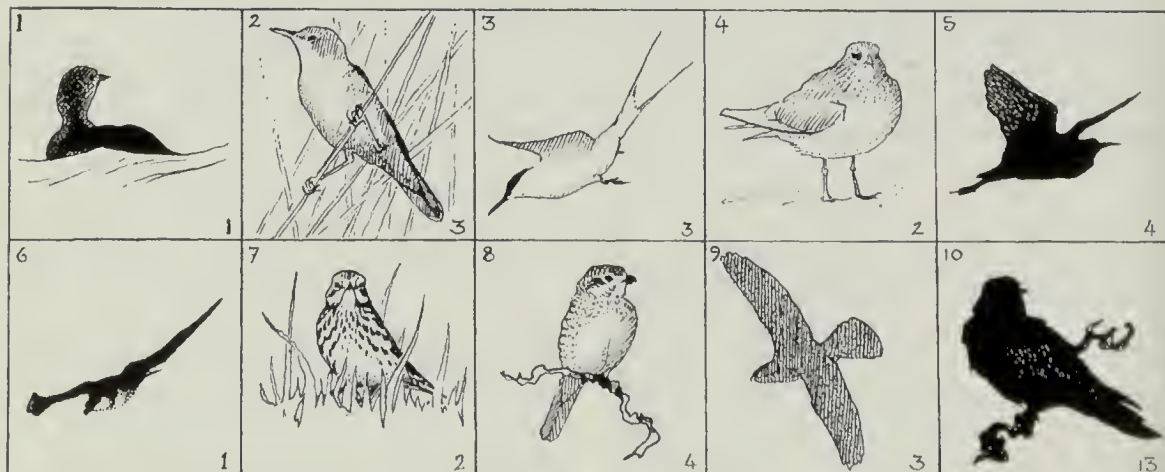
ANNOUNCEMENT

Christmas puzzle: the solution



MANZANILLA
LA GITANA

The key to the first part of the solution to the puzzle on page ix in the December 1996 issue (pictures repeated here) was the phrase 'brain-power initially', as the word BRAINPOWER contains the initial letters, in order, of each species illustrated: Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*, Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*, Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*, Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* and Rook *Corvus frugilegus*.



The key to the second part of the solution was the term 'scientific formula'. The number in the bottom-right-hand corner of each box represented the formula and 'scientific' referred to each of the ten species' scientific name. So, Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* has 'G' as its first 'scientific' letter, Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* has 'R' as its third, and so on. Continued, this spells 'Great Snipe' *Gallinago media*, the eleventh bird.

This Christmas puzzle was devised by Peter Lansdown and illustrated by Ren Hathway.

The three postcards drawn from those giving an all-correct answer were sent by R. J. Walker (Swaffham, Norfolk), Barry Weston (Edmonton, London) and Simon Woolley (Winchester, Hampshire), each of whom wins a case of three bottles of *La Gitana* sherry supplied by the sponsor of the Christmas puzzle, *Vinicola Hidalgo SA*.



REQUESTS

Photographs needed

For forthcoming papers, colour transparencies or colour prints of the following species are needed:

Saker *Falco cherrug*, Lanner *F. biarmicus*, Gyr *F. rusticolus* and Barbary Falcons *F. peregrinoides*. Greater Sand *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Lesser Sand *C. mongolus* and Kittlitz's Plovers *C. pecuarius*.

Water *Anthus spinoletta*, Rock *A. petrosus* and Buff-bellied Pipits *A. rubescens*.

Please send to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Photographs of 1996 rarities needed

Colour prints, black-and-white prints and colour transparencies are needed to illustrate the Rarities Committee's next report. We rely on readers' help, so that we can include the best possible selection. Those published (as well as those circulated to the Rarities Committee) are eligible for The Carl Zeiss Award (see page 73). Please send prints or slides (as soon as possible) to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Colour-marked birds: a reminder

Although colour-marking may be used in purely local studies (e.g. of behaviour), the majority of studies of marked populations depend upon co-operation from all observers who sight the marked individuals. Only in exceptional instances do we publish separate requests on this subject (there are far too many such studies to include them all). If you see a marked bird (other than with an ordinary BTO ring), please report it as follows:

CORMORANTS: Dr Robin Sellers, Rose Cottage, Ragnall Lane, Walkley Wood, Nailsworth, Gloucester GL6 0RU.

SWANS AND GEESE: Carl Mitchell, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT.

WADERS: c/o Stephen Browne, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

GULLS: Large gulls: Peter Rock, 32 Kersteman Road, Redlands, Bristol BS6 7BX; small gulls: Kjeld Pedersen, Daglykkevej 7, DK-2650 Hvidovre, Denmark.

ALL OTHER SPECIES: Jeremy Blackburn, BTO.



RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most-recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1996 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* Dungeness (Kent), fly-by record, 1st May. **Steller's Eider** *Polysticta stelleri* Fetlar (Shetland), wing only, 31st March. **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* Pilsey Island (West Sussex), 28th July. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Draycote Water (Warwickshire), 28th September. **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), moribund, 26th October. **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* St Mary's (Scilly), 20th-22nd October 1993. **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Barton Gravel-pits (Staffordshire), 23rd-30th May. **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* Marazion (Cornwall), 16th October to at least 28th December. **Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* Holland-on-Sea (Essex), 18th-23rd November. **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* Beachy Head (East Sussex), 2nd-3rd October; Tresco (Scilly), 20th-25th October; Norwich (Norfolk), 9th-15th November. **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* Bardsey Island (Caernarfonshire), 27th September.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 17th March to 13th April 1997. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* Hoy (Orkney), 22nd March. **Little Crane** *Porzana parva* Bough Beech Reservoir (Kent), 23rd-30th March. **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 13th April. **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* Peak of 12, in gull roost at Sandymount (Co. Dublin), 22nd March. **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* Malahide (Co. Dublin), 23rd-27th March. **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta* Five

together, Soldier's Point (Co. Louth), 6th April (unprecedented number for Ireland, where species averages only two records a year). **Bohemian Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus* Peak winter count of 56 together at Bangor (Co. Down), on 13th April. **Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* Waterside (Cumbria), long-stayer from 14th July 1996 still present.



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British Birds

Volume 90 Number 5 May 1997

167 **Sexual recognition of Common Swifts** *Erich Kaiser*

175 **Minutes of the first meeting of the Association of County Recorders and Editors** *M. Shrubbs*

177 **The Best Annual Bird Report Awards** *Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Robert Gillmor, R. A. Hume, John Prior and Michael J. Rogers*

179 **Looking back**

From the Rarities Committee's files

180 **How certain are the separation features of Arctic and Greenish Warblers?** *Dr Colin Bradshaw and Dr Roger Riddington*

185 **Mystery photographs** 205 *Peter Lunsdown*

Letters

187 **Osprey establishment** *Jason Godfrey*
187 **The earlier breeding records of Icterine Warbler in England** *Dougal G. Andrew*

Notes

190 **Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Common Kestrel perching in close proximity** *Felipe Siverio*
190 **Female Common Kestrel carrying stick from nesting cavity** *Dr A. P. Radford*
191 **Collared Dove showing threatening behaviour towards Magpie** *Geoffrey L. Boyle*
191 **Magpie catching House Martin** *Wesley Attridge*
192 **Eurasian Jackdaw preying on House Martin** *Richard Evans*
192 **Apparent whole brood of Common Starlings exhibiting albinism** *Martin S. Garner*

194 **News and comment** *Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson*

199 **Monthly marathon**

Reviews

200 **'A Birdwatchers' Guide to the Canary Islands'** by Tony Clarke & David Collins *Dr Colin Bibby*
200 **'Handbook of the Birds of the World. vol. 3. Hoatzin to auks'** edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott & Jordi Sargatal *Dr J. T. R. Sharrock*
201 **'Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East'** by R. F. Porter, S. Christensen & P. Schiermacker-Hansen *Bob Scott*
201 **'The Tree Sparrow'** by J. Denis Summers-Smith *Dr I. Newton*
202 **'Birding in Kent'** by Don Taylor *Bob Scott*
202 **Short reviews**

204 **Conservation research news** *Dr Mark Avery and Dr Rhys Green*

206 **Rarities Committee news and announcements** *R. A. Hume*

Announcement

206 **Christmas puzzle: the solution**

Requests

207 **Photographs needed**
207 **Photographs of 1996 rarities needed**
207 **Colour-marked birds: a reminder**

208 **Recent BBRC decisions** *M. J. Rogers*

208 **Recent reports** *Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan*

Line-drawing: 167 **Common Swifts** (*Norriann Arlott*)

Front cover: Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* (*Gary Wright*): the original of this month's cover design, measuring 16.8 × 16.9 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 72 in January issue for procedure).



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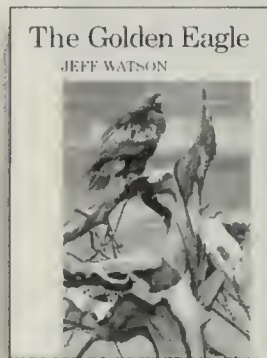
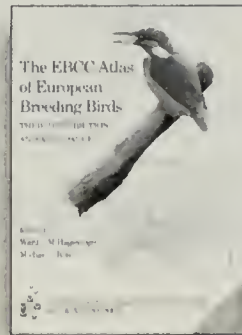
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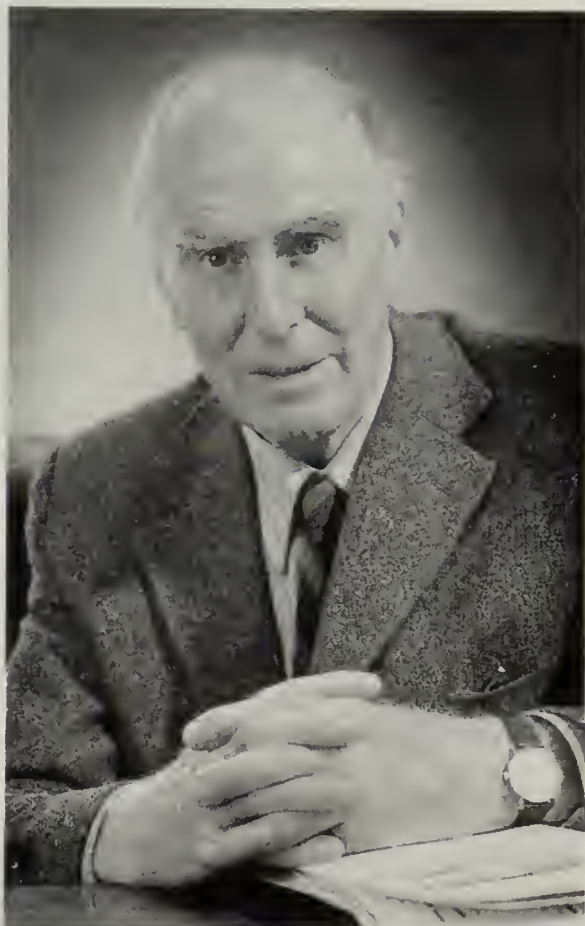
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OBITUARY

Vero Copner Wynne-Edwards DSc FRS CBE (1906-1997)

In the death of Vero Wynne-Edwards ('Wynne') aged 90 on 5th January, we have lost a fine athlete, a versatile naturalist, a constructive Head of Department, and a controversial theoretician of international stature. The third son of the Rev. Canon J. R. Wynne-Edwards, born on 4th July 1906, he was reared in the Yorkshire Dales and educated at Leeds Grammar School, Rugby School and New College, Oxford, where he was awarded a First and became Senior Student. On asking him what part he played in the renaissance of British Ornithology taking place at Oxford at that time, I was told facetiously by Max Nicholson that he came on one of the censuses, disappeared into a field with Jeannie Morris, and failed to return any counts, and then by Wynne that he also had a copy of Max's seminal work *How Birds Live* with interleaved blank pages so that he could make notes throughout.



▲ 50. Professor V. C. Wynne-Edwards (1906-1997), Aberdeen, 1970s (Andy Lucas)

Wynne next moved to the Plymouth Marine Laboratory, where he surveyed the local Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* roosts while cycling to visit Jeannie in Exeter (at least 74 km each way), and they married when he moved on to Bristol. In his Starling report in *British Birds* (23: 138-153, 170-180; 24: 346-353), he was already speculating about the reasons for birds' social behaviour. In 1930, he became Associate Professor at McGill University, Montreal. There, he made his name with a major review of the seabirds of the North Atlantic, based on his transects between Britain and Canada, and expeditions to the Arctic, also contributing to a census of gannetries (*Morus bassanus*) and speculating about non-breeding by some Fulmars

Fulmarus glacialis and seabird population dynamics. The first seabird atlas in the World, for eastern Canada, was dedicated to him, Les Tuck and Finn Salomonsen; and his son, Hugh, and daughter, Janet, have founded a dynasty of biologists in Canada, including seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

In 1945, he returned, as Regius Professor of Natural History, to Aberdeen, where he remained until he retired in 1974. He built up the Department from a small but happy band lurking in a rat-hole in a corner of Marischal Quadrangle to garrison a huge new mock-medieval fortress in old Aberdeen. His student, George Dunnet, undertook more work on Fulmars and then other forms of oil pollution in the Scottish islands, and established the famous Culterty Field Station on the Ythan Estuary up the coast. One associated unit under David Jenkins worked on Grouse and Moorland Ecology inland, and another on birds at sea, until they were nationalised. Wynne also served on numerous committees, becoming chairman of several, including the Natural Environment Research Council during 1968-71, also President of the BOU from 1965 to 1970; details will be found in obituaries by his successor, Paul Racey, in *The Independent* of 11th January and in *The Times* of 4th February.

Wynne's most important contribution to biology, possibly the most important since that by Charles Darwin, was to direct more attention to the role of social behaviour in population dynamics. He disagreed with the emphasis placed on competition for food by David Lack in his book *The Natural Regulation of Animal Numbers* in 1954, and embarked on a vast review of *Animal Dispersion in Relation to Social Behaviour* (1962) to show that animals have developed ways to limit its effect. Unfortunately, instead of taking as much care as the Original Evolutionist to forestall critics, he left an opening for complaints that he was not a good Darwinist because his 'group selection' conferred no advantage on individuals. All around the World, obscure people emerged from back rooms to declare such a novel suggestion heretical, editors began to refuse his contributions, and it became academic suicide for a student to mention him. Perhaps, now that more examples of organisms co-operating successfully emerge daily, posterity may give him more credit?

While it is possible to find political parallels to the argument over whether the world works through competition or co-operation, he showed no awareness of it. Indeed, he was rather conservative in his views, until, at the end of his career, he signed the *Blueprint for Survival*, calling for limits to economic growth during the most expansive phase of the Heath government of the early 1970s. When I later found him sitting alone in the Common Room and congratulated him upon his CBE, he gave me a little lecture about how people are assessed for these honours, while I thought sadly 'If only you had not signed that document, you might have made a useful Life Peer.'

In person, he was lightly built and wiry, with an open, engaging manner. While firmly convinced of the rightness of his own ideas, he did not impose them on others, and was always interested in their problems; so, while not a strong chairman of committees, he was universally liked. Socially, he was elusive, spending his spare time on feats of endurance in the hills, preferably on skis. To us, he embodied the spirit of the sunlit uplands, and we hope that he is now happy surveying the wildlife of the Elysian Fields.

W. R. P. BOURNE



The breeding birds of Inner London, 1966-94

P. J. Oliver

ABSTRACT The breeding birds of a defined area of 40 square miles (103.5 km²) in the centre of London ('Inner London') have been monitored regularly since at least 1929 and were covered by Atlas surveys in 1968-72 and 1988-94. This paper reviews the changes since the last full review in 1966 and reveals that at least 66 species bred in Inner London in the 27 years to 1994. In that period, only two species were lost as breeding birds, while 24 species increased in abundance. The varied habitat of the Royal and other central parks, together with the temporarily attractive site of the derelict Surrey Docks, were important in attracting such a wide range of species to nest in an ornithologically unpromising area.

From an ornithological perspective, Inner London must be one of the most intensively studied urban areas in the World. While full details of the birds of Inner London appear annually in the *London Bird Report*, there has been no review of its avifauna since that by Cramp & Tomlins (1966).^{*} This paper reviews changes among the breeding birds since 1965, based on information in the forthcoming *New Atlas of Breeding Birds of the London Area* (Betton in prep.). It reveals not only the remarkable diversity of bird-life that lives successfully in the inherently hostile environment of a major conurbation, but also the adaptability and speed of response of many species to new opportunities as habitats change.

Inner London, as a biological recording area, was first defined by Holte Macpherson and Witherby in 1929 (Earp 1991) as '... an oblong area: the centres of the upper and lower boundaries being 2½ miles [4 km] due north and south of Charing Cross, and those of the two sides 4 miles [6.4 km] due east and west of that point.' This definition has remained unchanged ever since and is followed in this paper (fig. 1). The summary that follows draws on the preliminary maps for the *New London Atlas*, based on fieldwork in 1988-94, compared with those in Montier (1977), which were based on fieldwork in 1968-72; it also takes account of breeding-season records published in the *London Bird Report* for the years 1966-94. A more detailed analysis will appear in the *London Bird Report* (Osborne in prep.).

Habitats

Inner London is by no means all bricks and mortar. The western half contains not only the Royal Parks, but also a number of other open spaces, while in the northwest there remain some comparatively large and mature gardens. The Royal Parks, together with Battersea Park, all in the western half, account for over 600 ha, while Victoria and Southwark Parks in the eastern half amount to another 113 ha. In aggregate, these open spaces, all of which have substantial areas of mature trees and many of which have lakes attractive to waterfowl, account for about 7% of the area of Inner London. Areas of dense scrub and shrubberies are, however, in short supply, even in the more mature parks, where the preference of the authorities is mainly for mature trees, open grassed areas and flower-beds, with only limited plantings of dense shrubberies. The eastern half, lacking the same extent of open spaces, has for long been less suitable for birds, but for the past 25 years the disused Surrey Docks, lying at the eastern edge of Inner London, have proved something of an ornithological Mecca in the context of an otherwise largely inhospitable environment.

Inner London, in common with all other conurbations, is subject to constant change as buildings are demolished and replaced by others. Usually this gives rise to very temporary changes of habitat, but these are often exploited by birds remarkably quickly. Less often, the changes are longer-lasting or more profound. In the latter category is the abandonment and subsequent redevelopment of the Surrey Docks. These were closed to commercial shipping in 1970 and were for some years left untouched, with the result that the comparatively undisturbed derelict ground and waterbodies attracted a remarkable range of species (Grant 1971; George 1974; Alderton 1977). Even following the redevelopment of the

^{*} This important paper will be cited frequently, and is henceforth referred to as 'C&T'.

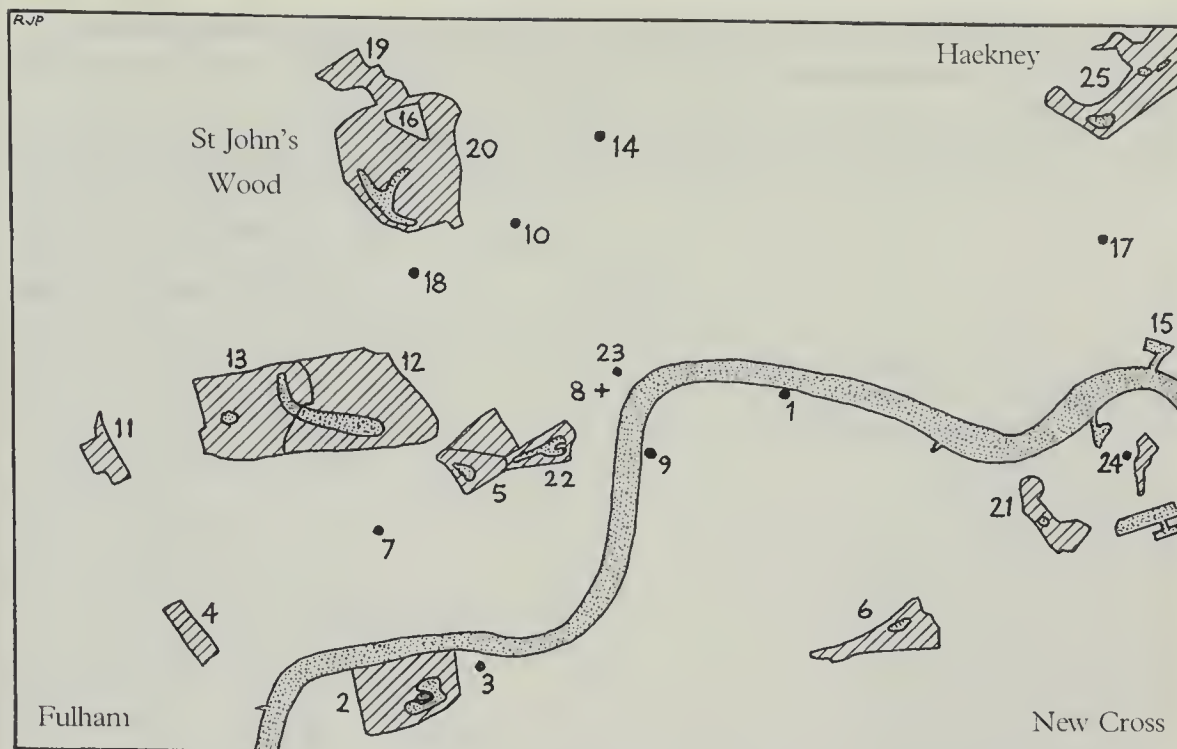


Fig. 1. Inner London, showing principal parks and open spaces and locations of other sites mentioned in text. (Redrawn by Robin Prytherch). Stippling = River Thames and park lakes; cross-hatching = parks.

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|----|----------------------------|----|-----------------|
| 1 | Bankside | 10 | Euston Road | 19 | Primrose Hill |
| 2 | Battersea Park | 11 | Holland Park | 20 | Regent's Park |
| 3 | Battersea Power Station | 12 | Hyde Park | 21 | Southwark Park |
| 4 | Brompton Cemetery | 13 | Kensington Gardens | 22 | St James's Park |
| 5 | Buckingham Palace | 14 | King's Cross | 23 | Strand |
| 6 | Burgess Park | 15 | Limehouse Basin | 24 | Surrey Docks |
| 7 | Cadogan Square | 16 | Regent's Park (London Zoo) | 25 | Victoria Park |
| 8 | Charing Cross | 17 | Mile End Road | | |
| 9 | County Hall | 18 | Paddington Street | | |

area, mostly for housing, but with some waterbodies and parkland being retained for leisure purposes, it remains attractive to many species not otherwise associated with Inner London and, from an ornithological perspective, represents the greatest change to the area since the wartime blitz in the 1940s. The general cleaning-up of the metropolis, in particular the clean-up of the Thames and the reduction in air pollution, was substantially complete by the early 1970s, and resulted in demonstrable improvements in the bird population (Cramp 1975; Harrison & Grant 1976).

Changes in distribution and abundance

All species known to have bred in Inner London since 1966, or that were mapped as present in the breeding season in either of the Atlas surveys, are listed in table 1. This shows the number of tetrads from which each species was recorded in each of the surveys and indicates those species for which there has been a sustained increase or decrease over the past 30 years. The judgment on whether a species has shown such a change in status is, to a degree, subjective, not only taking into

Table 1. Species that bred or were present in the breeding season in Inner London during 1966-94, showing number of tetrads (maximum possible 24) in which recorded in Atlas surveys.

Trend + = sustained increase. - = sustained decrease. * not mapped by Montier (1977). Totals under 'PRESENT' include those under 'CONFIRMED BREEDING'.

	1968-72		1988-94		Trend
	Confirmed breeding	Present	Confirmed breeding	Present	
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				1	
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	2	2	5	7	+
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				4	
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1	*	2	14	+
Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	3	6	4	13	
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>			3	5	+
Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	5	5	6	11	+
Mandarin Duck <i>Aix galericulata</i>				1	
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	15	18	14	21	
Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i>				1	
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	5	5	5	7	+
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	6	7	9	13	+
Ruddy Duck <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>			1	3	
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>		*	3	4	+
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	7	17	18	24	+
Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	7	7	9	13	
Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	5	5	9	12	
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>			1	2	
Great Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>					
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>		*		13	
Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>		*		5	
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>		2	3	10	+
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	3	4	3	12	+
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>				1	
Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	13	20	24	24	
Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>	3	3	4	5	
Wood Pigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	24	24	21	24	
Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			1	1	
Rose-ringed Parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i>				1	
Tawny Owl <i>Strix aluco</i>	6	13	5	9	-
Common Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	3	9	4	23	+
Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i>				1	
Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>	1	2	3	6	+
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos minor</i>				2	
Sky Lark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>			1	1	
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>				1	
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	1	1		4	
House Martin <i>Delichon urbica</i>	3	7	11	20	+
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>				2	
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	2	2	2	2	
Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			6	10	+
Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	9	12	8	19	
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	12	17	20	23	
Hedge Accentor <i>Prunella modularis</i>	14	19	20	23	+
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	11	14	19	24	
Black Redstart <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	1	7	11	12	
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	24	24	23	24	
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	18	22	17	24	
Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	16	21	17	20	

	1968-72		1988-94		Trend
	Confirmed breeding	Present	Confirmed breeding	Present	
Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>		1		3	
Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>				1	
Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>				1	
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	1	1		1	
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	3	7	7	11	
Common Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	1	3	2	7	
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	2	3	2	10	
Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>	2	4	3	6	
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	7	8	9	13	—
Long-tailed Tit <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	3	3	9	10	+
Coal Tit <i>Parus ater</i>	7	9	7	9	
Blue Tit <i>Parus caeruleus</i>	18	20	21	24	
Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>	10	16	15	20	
European Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>	1	1	2	5	+
Eurasian Treecreeper <i>Certhia familiaris</i>	1	2	4	6	+
Eurasian Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	8	13	7	14	
Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>	1	3	19	22	+
Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>	2	3			—
Carion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>	15	21	22	24	
Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	22	23	24	24	
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	23	24	24	24	
Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>	1	1			—
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	5	12	7	9	
Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>	14	20	16	23	
Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	8	14	8	18	
Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	1	4	6	12	
Common Redpoll <i>Carduelis flammea</i>		1	4	6	+
Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	5	6	4	8	
Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		1	1	1	

account records published in the *London Bird Report*, but also allowing for the fact that the coverage in the eastern half of Inner London was far from complete in 1968-72; as a result, increases in the number of tetrads from which a species was recorded between the two surveys are sometimes more apparent than real. For example, whereas the Robin* was recorded in both surveys breeding in most of the western tetrads, it was apparently absent from all but two in the eastern half in 1968-72, but present in all of those (and breeding in all but three) in 1988-94. It seems unlikely that such a marked change in a species well distributed elsewhere in London represents anything other than better coverage in the more recent survey.

One of the most encouraging features is that just two species—Jackdaw and Tree Sparrow—have been lost as breeding birds in Inner London since 1965, with only three more—Tawny Owl, Song Thrush and Spotted Flycatcher—showing a constant decline. In contrast, at least 24 species are now more common than they were 30 years ago, and 20 species recorded in 1988-94 were absent in the earlier survey. Comments follow on selected species. These principally describe the changes which have occurred between the two Atlas surveys, the earlier one having commenced shortly after the close of C&T's (1966) review.

*Scientific names are given in table 1.

Grebes and heron

The Little Grebe has always been erratic as a breeding species in Inner London, C&T noting occasional nesting on the lakes in Regent's and St James's Parks and the grounds of Buckingham Palace. This pattern has continued, but with an unusually long series of records from St James's Park during 1983-88, breeding being confirmed in four of those years. Little Grebes also nested at Surrey Docks in 1977 and 1978. In contrast, C&T documented the first nesting of the Great Crested Grebe in Inner London, in Regent's Park in 1964. This was an isolated event, but in 1971 a pair attempted to nest in Hyde Park and this proved to be the start of regular nesting on lakes in the larger parks, including, since 1983, Victoria Park. It has nested only erratically at Surrey Docks and Burgess Park. In the mid 1980s the total breeding population in Inner London ranged from 14 to 16 pairs, but in other years rarely reached double figures.

Grey Herons began breeding in Inner London in 1968, when two pairs nested in Regent's Park, but failed to rear young. Since then, they have bred there successfully every year, with ten pairs raising 19 young as early as 1970, although, apart from an isolated peak of 18 pairs in 1979, numbers otherwise rarely reached double figures prior to 1989. From that time, however, there was a marked increase, with over 20 pairs every year during 1989-93 and a maximum of 28 occupied nests in 1991. A second heronry was established, at Battersea Park, in 1990, when there were two occupied nests, rising to nine by 1993 and 15 in the following year, so that the combined totals of nests in Inner London in these last two years were 31 and 30, respectively.

Wildfowl

The Mute Swan remains scarce in Inner London. C&T referred to a breeding population of one to five pairs, and this has remained the norm ever since; most records come from the central parks. In contrast, the status of both Greylag and Canada Geese has been transformed. The Greylag was not recorded in 1968-72, but, as elsewhere in Britain (Owen & Salmon 1988), it has established a feral population in Inner London, the origin of which appears to have been the collection in St James's Park, where free-flying individuals were noted from 1977. Expansion of this population was limited by control measures, and there have rarely been more than ten broods in St James's Park. Nesting was first reported in Regent's Park in 1985, but there, too, the number of breeding pairs has not reached double figures. In spite of these low nesting numbers, large flocks occur in the parks, and in the summer survey of 1991 the combined total for St James's, Regent's and Hyde Parks and Kensington Gardens reached 200, of which 158 were in St James's Park (Baker 1992). Early in 1994, more-severe control measures were taken, with the majority of the geese being rounded up and removed (reportedly killed rather than translocated), so that for about 18 months very few were present in the parks. By late 1995, however, numbers had increased again, presumably by immigration.

The expansion of the Canada Goose population began earlier, was even more substantial and also reflected the national picture. As with the Greylag, the extent of the increase has been limited by control in the central parks, so that, throughout

the period under review, breeding pairs in each of Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens, and Regent's and St James's Parks have not reached double figures. By contrast, in Battersea Park, five pairs bred in 1975, but by the time the next records were received from this locality, ten years later, some 40 pairs were estimated to have nested, though they reared only 110 young. In spite of the control measures, the total population using the parks has increased remarkably. In the summer survey in 1983, a total of 417 was reported, whereas by the summer of 1992 there were 1,154 (Baker 1992). As with the Greylag, this species was rounded up in large numbers in the winter of 1993/94, but, like that species, had begun to increase again by late 1995.

C&T referred to the Common Pochard's spread in the 1950s from St James's Park to other central parks. It was for long restricted to those localities, though in increasing numbers, but by the early 1990s it had also been reported from parks in the eastern half of Inner London. C&T estimated five to 15 breeding pairs; today, the breeding population in Inner London is usually 15 to 30 pairs.

The Tufted Duck has increased throughout the London Area. Based on a survey conducted in 1984, Oliver (1985) estimated the Inner London nesting population at a minimum of 126 pairs at eight localities. This is far higher than reported before or since, but, judging by the records in the *London Bird Report* for subsequent years, it seems likely that numbers have remained at around the same level. That other nationally expanding species, the Ruddy Duck, has bred in Regent's Park and probably in St James's Park, but has not yet firmly established itself in Inner London away from the park collections.

Raptors

The Eurasian Sparrowhawk had nested only once (unsuccessfully) in Inner London, in Holland Park in 1953, prior to the 1988-94 survey, so, in spite of its recent resurgence elsewhere in London, its establishment as a breeding species in the inner area is as surprising as it is welcome. It was present and probably breeding in three tetrads and recorded in one other; sightings of this raptor over Inner London are now widespread, even away from known breeding areas. In the case of the Common Kestrel, the opening of our review period saw the beginning of its recovery as a breeding species in Inner London, for in 1963 none bred, but single pairs were reported to have nested in both 1964 and 1965 (Montier 1977). By the time of the 1988-94 survey, it was recorded in all 24 tetrads and bred in 18; the summering population was thus probably well in excess of 20 pairs.

Waders

Given the widespread distribution in the London Area of the Little Ringed Plover and the fact that it bred just outside the Inner London boundary in 1968-72, its appearance as a breeding bird at the then-derelict Surrey Docks was not unexpected, a pair nesting there in most years during 1973-84, though not apparently subsequently. Perhaps more remarkably, a pair nested at Battersea Power Station in 1992. The temporarily suitable habitat at the Surrey Docks also resulted, in 1973, in the first recorded nesting in Inner London of single pairs of Great Ringed Plover and Northern Lapwing. Great Ringed Plovers bred there again in 1978 and 1980, but neither species has done so since, the habitat now being unsuitable for any of these waders.

Gulls and terns

While both Black-headed and Common Gulls were present during the 1988-94 survey, neither has shown any suggestion of breeding behaviour. By contrast, Herring Gulls had already established a tenuous foothold as a nesting species near an outside aviary at the London Zoo by the end of the period reviewed by C&T. Breeding has continued there annually, but in very small numbers. From 1967, one or two pairs have nested in most years in St James's Park or on nearby buildings, but from the early 1980s reports of nesting, usually of only a pair or two, began to come from other sites, for example on buildings alongside or close to the River Thames at County Hall, and the Strand and in Cadogan Square, some 1¼ km north of the river, though these sites were rarely occupied for more than one season. Then, in 1988, a pair probably nested at King's Cross, and this led to the establishment of a small colony of up to six pairs at a development site there. In 1994, a colony of eight pairs was discovered nesting at Primrose Hill, about 2½ km from the King's Cross site. Although the Lesser Black-backed Gull had been present or attempted to nest in both St James's and Regent's Parks during the previous survey, and had been reported elsewhere in Inner London in subsequent years, nesting was not proved until 1987, when a pair bred at Euston Road. This was repeated in the two following years, in the second of which another pair nested at the King's Cross development site. The latter has proved particularly suitable for this species, and by 1994 there was a small colony of 11 pairs there, when a further six pairs nested at Primrose Hill. Lesser Blackbacks have also begun nesting elsewhere in Inner London, often on rooftops but also, in 1995 and 1996, on a barge moored on the Thames. Both this species and the Herring Gull look set to become the familiar rooftop nesters that they now are in other cities in Britain.

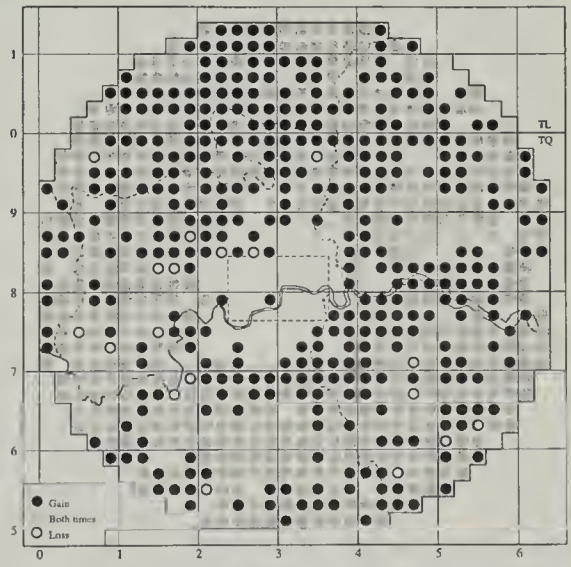
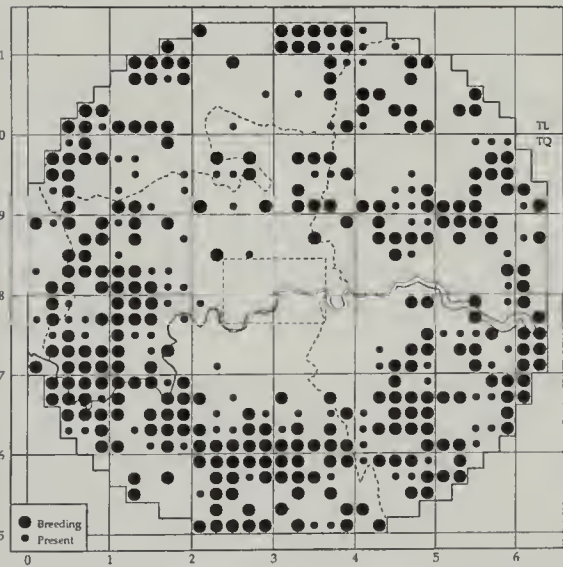
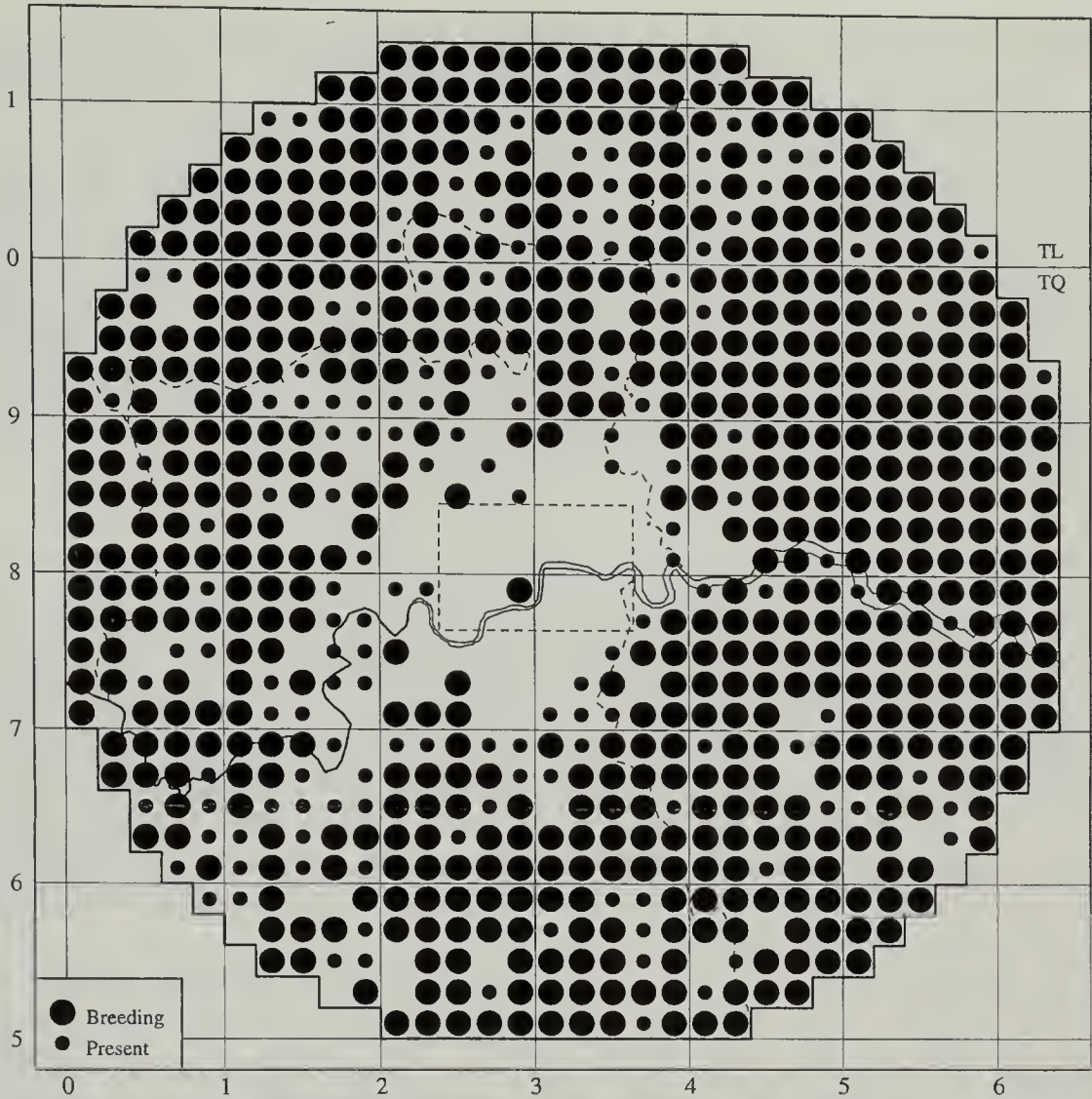
Inner London must be an unlikely area for nesting terns, yet a pair of Common Terns bred in Limehouse Basin in 1989 and four pairs nested on rafts in disused docks just outside the Inner London boundary in 1994.

Other non-passerines

C&T documented the extinction of the Stock Dove as a breeding bird in Inner London by 1961, attributing this to toxic chemicals used on seed-dressings (the birds nesting inside but feeding outside Inner London). By the time of the 1968-72 survey, however, it had re-established itself and it remains today a scarce but regular breeder in Regent's Park and Kensington Gardens. Breeding by the Collared Dove in Inner London is unsurprising, but has been reported in only one tetrad (figs. 2-4). Although the Rose-ringed Parakeet was also present in 1988-94 in only one tetrad in the southwest of the area, this appears to be an extension of the gradually spreading population from one of the early strongholds of the species in southwest London. It may therefore be the beginning of the establishment of this introduced species in Inner London.

The Tawny Owl has apparently suffered a decline, having disappeared from the eastern half (previously present in three tetrads, in one of which it bred) and reduced from ten tetrads (seven breeding) to nine (five breeding) in the western half.

C&T commented that the Common Swift, having managed to remain as a scarce breeder in the west of the area during the worst period of air pollution, might



Figs. 2-4. Breeding distribution of Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* in London during 1988-94 (top, large map) and during 1968-72 (small map, bottom left), with differences between these distributions highlighted (bottom right); in fig. 4, solid dots show tetrads colonised and open circles tetrads vacated between the two surveys. (On all maps, some gaps in East London north of the River Thames in 1968-72 reflect incomplete coverage in that earlier survey.) Note that, despite considerable expansion to occupy almost all parts of outer London, the central area, including Inner London, has barely been penetrated. (Maps from the forthcoming New Atlas of Breeding Birds of the London Area, edited by Keith Betton)

increase in the future. In fact, it has remained scarce in Inner London, though nowadays it is also found away from the previously favoured western edge of the area. The large number of tetrads in which it was present but not proved to be breeding in 1988-94 probably indicates feeding rather than nesting.

There seems no doubt that all three species of woodpecker are better represented in Inner London than 30 years ago. Both Green and Lesser Spotted were absent in 1968-72 (though the Green Woodpecker had previously nested in the comparatively secluded grounds of Holland Park), and, although neither has since been confirmed as nesting, the Lesser Spotted is reported regularly from Regent's Park. The Great Spotted is now well established in Inner London: it was recorded in 1988-94 in six tetrads (breeding in three), compared with two (breeding in only one) in 1968-72.

Passerines

The House Martin did not breed in Inner London between 1889 and 1966, when six pairs were found nesting in the residential area of St John's Wood. It has since bred annually in Inner London, with a rapid build-up to 19 nests at St John's Wood by 1969. Numbers reported thereafter fluctuated markedly, probably at least partly because of variations in observer effort, but with more than 50 pairs annually since 1980, and a maximum of 120 pairs in 1982. In the 1988-94 survey, it was widely reported in both the eastern and western halves of the area. The Barn Swallow, never an urban breeder, has failed to penetrate Inner London, having bred there only once since 1908 (in Regent's Park in 1968).

The appearance of Sky Lark and Meadow Pipit as breeding species is attributable mainly to the change in habitat suitability of the Surrey Docks. Up to about ten pairs of Sky Larks nested annually there during 1971-92, though apparently not since, and the Meadow Pipit bred regularly until 1987. The Yellow Wagtail, too, has benefited from the suitability of the Surrey Docks, as many as 15 territories having been recorded there, with up to ten pairs successfully nesting. This species is an opportunist, for in recent years it has also nested in the southwest of the area at sites that have become temporarily suitable because of redevelopment. The Grey Wagtail was not recorded in the 1968-72 breeding seasons, the British population still being at a low level following the severe winters of 1961/62 and especially 1962/63. In the 1988-94 survey, it was recorded in ten tetrads, breeding in six, and can now be regarded as a regular breeder in Inner London.

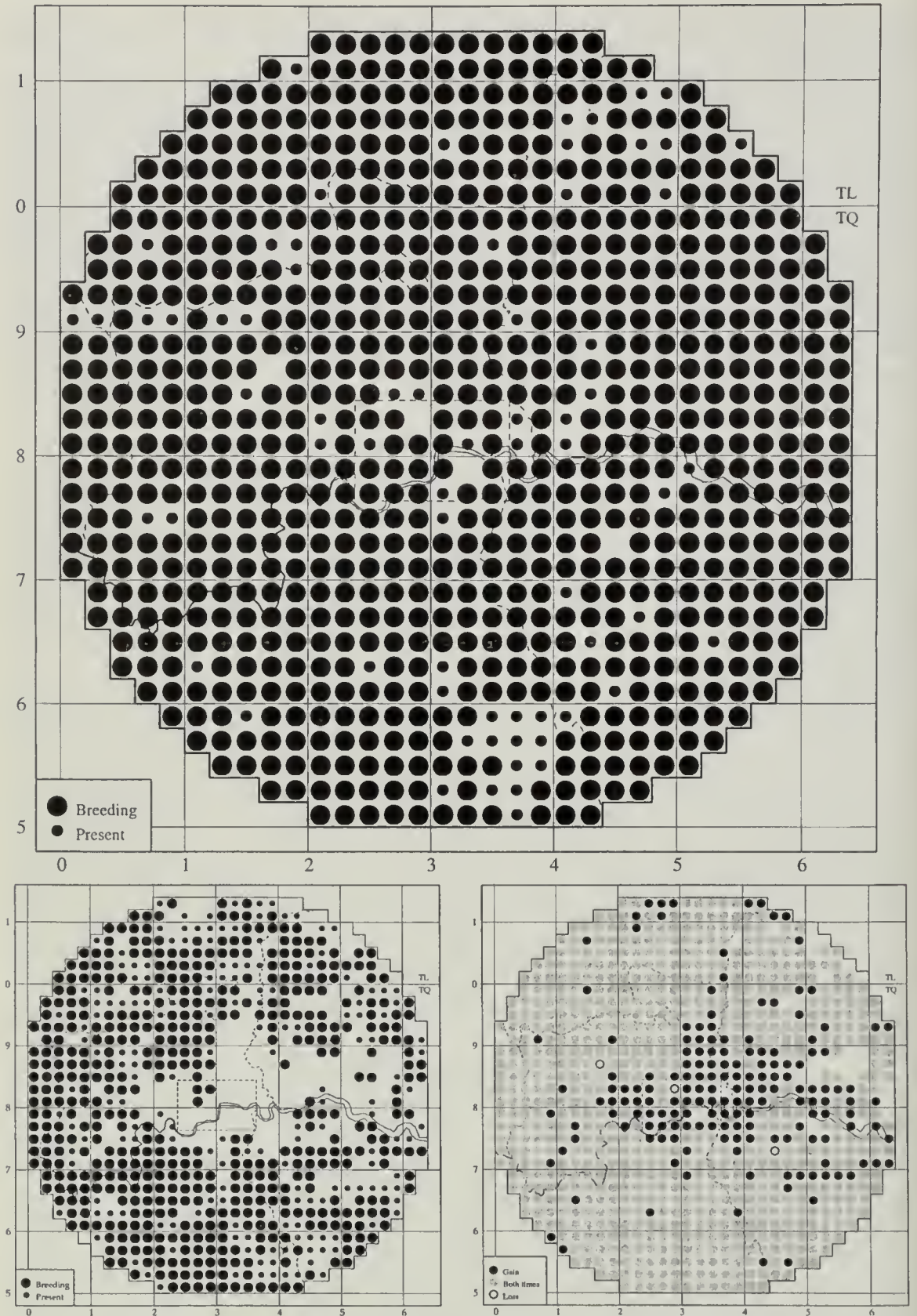
The Black Redstart has long been established as an Inner London breeder, though its faithfulness to sites is often of short duration, presumably because of changes in the suitability of habitat. Thus, of the 79 sites from which nesting pairs or singing males were reported in the *London Bird Report* during 1966-94, one (the mainly industrial area of Bankside) was occupied for 16 years and another (Surrey Docks) for 15 years, 14 for three to 11 years, 12 for only two years, but as many as 51 sites in only one season. This predilection for changing sites and the fact that it occurs in locations frequently of little other interest to birdwatchers make an assessment of its population difficult. Based on records in the *London Bird Report*, numbers have varied markedly from year to year and show no obvious long-term trend. The totals of pairs and singing males have

occasionally reached double figures, and there were 15 in 1987, 17 in 1993 and 24 in 1994.

The Song Thrush is widely reported to have declined in Britain (Marchant *et al.* 1990) and this is reflected in Inner London, where it had previously increased during the period reviewed by C&T. In 1968-74, breeding was confirmed in all the western tetrads, compared with only two-thirds of them in 1988-94; an apparent improvement over the same period in the eastern half is probably at least partly attributable to improved coverage in the later survey. Sanderson (1995) reported a substantial decline in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, from an average of 36 territories in the period 1967-80 to only nine in 1994. Although another nationally declining species, the Spotted Flycatcher (Marchant *et al.* 1990), bred in the eastern half in 1988-94, but was not recorded doing so in 1968-72, it has declined sharply in the western half, from breeding in eight tetrads to only three in 1988-94, with presence in another two. This decline is confirmed by the numbers reported from the central parks, in several of which it nested regularly until the end of the 1970s, with up to ten territories in Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens, up to nine in Regent's Park and up to three in Holland Park. Lower numbers occurred in the early 1980s and none has been reported from Regent's Park since 1983 or from Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens since 1989. On the other hand, there has, in recent years, been a scattering of isolated breeding reports from the periphery of the Inner London area.

Unsurprisingly, warblers remain scarce in Inner London, most species that are recorded occurring only sporadically. Nevertheless, it is interesting that both Common Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat were recorded in 1988-94, but not in 1968-72; that Reed Warblers were singing (but apparently unmated) in two localities in 1994; and that the Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* was reported from several places only just outside the Inner London boundary. Likewise, the three regularly nesting species—Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler—were all reported in 1988-94 in more tetrads than previously. There seems little doubt that the Long-tailed Tit, European Nuthatch and Eurasian Treecreeper have all become better established since the earlier survey, though not surprisingly they are all associated with the larger, comparatively well-wooded parks in the west (fig. 1).

The Magpie was initially also dependent on the parks as it became established in Inner London, but it has shown itself capable of exploiting much less 'green' habitats, and C&T's comment that 'it may yet penetrate into the centre' has been amply justified (figs. 5-7, on page 222). In 1966, records of six separate individuals in various central parks were thought worthy of comment in the *London Bird Report*. Breeding was attempted, unsuccessfully, in Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens in 1969, and by 1971 it nested successfully both there and in Regent's Park. Numbers increased slowly, with up to six and eight pairs respectively at those two localities by the end of the decade, by when breeding had also occurred in several other central parks. Nesting away from parks was first reported in 1982, at Brompton Cemetery, though a pair had been present in the breeding season at Surrey Docks in 1980. During the 1980s, nesting was reported more and more widely and was not restricted to parks and squares, with records from, for example, Mile End Road and Paddington Street in 1986. By the beginning of the 1990s, around 30 pairs were reported nesting in Inner London, but the true total is



Figs. 5-7. Breeding distribution of Magpie *Pica pica* in London during 1988-94 (top, large map) and during 1968-72 (small map, bottom left), with differences between these distributions highlighted (bottom right); in fig. 7, solid dots show tetrads colonised and open circles tetrads vacated between the two surveys. Note that, unlike Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (figs. 2-4), which had a similar distribution in 1968-72, the Magpie has successfully colonised the whole area, including Inner London. (Maps from the forthcoming New Atlas of Breeding Birds of the London Area, edited by Keith Betton)

probably greater, since many scattered pairs are now unlikely to be reported, the species being regarded as commonplace in the built-up area. This dramatic increase reflects the success of this controversial species elsewhere in Britain. In contrast, the Eurasian Jay has become somewhat less widespread in the western half, breeding reports coming from six tetrads, compared with ten in 1968-72. As already noted, the Jackdaw has been lost as an Inner London breeding bird. For many years, a pair or two hung on in Kensington Gardens, but none has bred there since 1969. Seven were released in Regent's Park in 1978, but no subsequent breeding has been reported.

The Tree Sparrow, previously nesting in the southwest corner of Inner London, has also been lost as a breeding bird, no doubt reflecting its national decline (Marchant *et al.* 1990). Among the finches, the Greenfinch has declined in the western sector, where breeding had earlier been reported from all 12 tetrads; in 1988-94, it was absent from one and merely present in another three. The Linnet was found breeding in six tetrads in the more recent survey, but as all of these were in the eastern sector there must be doubt as to whether it was truly absent previously. By contrast, the Common Redpoll, recorded in six tetrads (breeding in four), principally in or near the parks, was clearly more widespread than in 1968-72, when it was breeding in only one tetrad. C&T documented the Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* as possibly having nested in the 1950s and 1961 and 1962, but it has not since been recorded in Inner London in the breeding season. Finally, the Reed Bunting, present but not breeding at Surrey Docks in 1968-72, has bred there almost annually since 1973.

Discussion

In the 27 years to 1994, a minimum of 66 species bred in Inner London, at least 48 of them regularly. That number would have been much lower had not the derelict land and water of the Surrey Docks become available, while the number of regular breeders would probably have been halved but for the trees, shrubs and lakes of the larger parks. In 1988-94, ten species were present and almost certainly breeding throughout the area: Rock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Wren, Hedge Accentor, Robin, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Carrion Crow, Common Starling and House Sparrow. Another five were present almost throughout the area: Mallard, Mistle Thrush, Great Tit, Magpie and Greenfinch. Allowing for incomplete coverage in 1968-72, and with the notable exception of the now-widespread Magpie, the same situation probably existed at the time of the previous survey, although, as already noted, there may have been a decline in the case of the Greenfinch. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Hedge Accentor is in fact now more widespread, for it is by no means confined to parks and gardens, but can even be found singing from shrubs planted in containers in otherwise wholly concrete environments, continuing the trend of increase noted by C&T. Its numbers in the parks can be substantial, with, for example, frequently upwards of 30 territories in Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens and 78 'pairs' reported from Regent's Park in 1978. Suggestions that the House Sparrow is declining have so far been confirmed by quantified data from Inner London only by winter counts in Kensington Gardens, which revealed a decrease from 544 in 1975 to only 46 in 1995 (Sanderson 1995).

The importance of the parks, predominantly in the western half, will have become apparent from the comments on changes in status, but an increasing number of species has demonstrated an ability to spread out from these favoured areas and exploit the urban environment. Good examples are the Hedge Accentor and the Magpie. Other species are becoming established or increasing in the parks, among them the woodpeckers, Long-tailed Tit, European Nuthatch and Eurasian Treecreeper. In contrast, two species, Goldfinch and Linnet, are plainly more widespread in the eastern half of the area than in the 'greener' western half. The tits provide another interesting contrast, for, whereas both the Blue and the Great Tits have managed to sustain themselves in the bricks and mortar of the eastern half as well as in the parks and gardens of the west, the Coal Tit and the Long-tailed Tit are strictly confined to the latter. A different form of exploitation is illustrated by the large gulls, which are beginning to treat London's buildings as breeding cliffs.

All these species, of course, need adequate food supplies as well as secure nest sites. While the clean-up of the River Thames resulted in many more birds feeding there, it is not immediately obvious that this has affected any of the breeding birds in Inner London. One might speculate, however, that the Great Cormorant, now seen feeding on the Thames in Inner London throughout the year, and nesting at Walthamstow Reservoirs, only some 4 km north of the boundary, might be the next new breeding species for Inner London.

The cleaner air, and thus the probability of greater abundance of insect food, following the Clean Air Act of 1956, has already been cited as a possible reason for the increase of some breeding species in Inner London (Cramp 1975). In comparing the periods 1940-56 and 1957-73, Cramp (1975) noted a net gain of three insectivorous species and commented that this might '... soon rise to five if the Long-tailed Tit and Goldcrest succeed in establishing themselves as regular breeding species.' Both had in fact done so by the time of the 1968-72 survey, and the Long-tailed Tit has since increased further. The majority of the other passerine species that have increased between the two surveys are at least partly insectivorous, as are most of the much smaller number of species that have declined. Several of the latter are also becoming scarcer elsewhere in Britain (Song Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher and Tree Sparrow: Marchant *et al.* 1990; though not Eurasian Jay, Jackdaw or Greenfinch), and it is tempting to conclude that the further net increases can be linked to continuing improvements in the availability of insect food. While this may be true, the evidence is only circumstantial and the factors affecting bird distribution are many and complex. With our present knowledge, conclusions on the reasons for the changes in Inner London can be no more than tentative.

Inner London has provided numerous examples of birds' abilities to exploit areas that become newly suitable for them as a result of some change in use by Man. The wide range of species that made use of the Surrey Docks is the best example of this, but others have been commented on earlier in this paper. Such exploitation requires, however, a pool of available individuals outside the area capable of moving in when conditions become suitable. To this extent, therefore, the ornithological prosperity of the centre of a major metropolis depends as much on what happens outside its confines as on events within it. It is clear from this survey, however, that the balance sheet for Inner London over the last 30 years

has been favourable. Perhaps the appearance of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* in the breeding season in 1994 and 1995 augurs well for the centre of our capital city as we approach the millennium.

Acknowledgment

I thank Ken Osborne, formerly the London Natural History Society's Ornithological Recorder for Inner London, for providing much information about the birds of the metropolis and for commenting on a draft of this paper.

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P. J. Oliver, The Briar Patch, Limpsfield Chart, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0TL

Publication of the *New Atlas of Breeding Birds of the London Area* is expected in early autumn 1997. It will be available post free through British BirdShop.



CONSERVATION RESEARCH NEWS

Compiled by Mark Avery



This feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports the most interesting recent scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic species.

Fewer Lesser Kestrels

The Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* is one of 24 globally threatened species found in Europe. Once very numerous, this species has crashed in numbers. Studies of survival and productivity of Lesser Kestrels in the Guadalquivir valley, Spain, provide a nice example of how fieldwork, analysis and common sense need to be combined to produce conservation recommendations. Field studies show that productivity of Lesser Kestrels is very poor, probably because changes in agriculture have reduced the availability of the large insects on which nestlings are fed. Analyses suggest

that increasing survival would have a greater impact on Lesser Kestrel numbers than would increasing productivity, yet, thinking through the practicalities of conservation actions, the authors decide that there is relatively little scope for increasing survival above current levels. The authors recommend a suite of measures, such as proper enforcement of protective legislation (to aid survival but with relatively low impact on the population) as well as changing farming practice near colonies (which will improve breeding success through food availability).

HIRALDO, F., NEGRO, J. J., DONAZAR, J. A., & GAONA, P. 1996. A demographic model for a population of the endangered Lesser Kestrel in southern Spain. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 33: 1085-1093.

A biological uncertainty principle

Why is studying nesting success like studying elementary particles? Answer: if you do not study nests, you cannot know about their outcome, but, if you do study them, how do you know that you haven't influenced their outcome? Analysing data collected in the 1960s, Henry Mayer-Gross, Dr Humphrey Crick and Dr Jeremy Greenwood of the British Trust for Ornithology show that passerine nests visited by human beings do not suffer lower breeding success than unvisited ones. Thrushes *Turdus* and

insectivores might actually have benefited from nest visits, although the opposite may have been true for finches (Fringillidae). Clearly, care must be taken when visiting nests, but might it be that we have feared too much that visiting nests attracts predators whereas perhaps the truth is that predators avoid areas where people are seen or leave their scent? This is an area which needs more study, as it has big implications both for the validity of many scientific studies and also for how we think about disturbance in general.

MAYER-GROSS, H., CRICK, H. Q. P., & GREENWOOD, J. J. D. 1997. The effect of observers visiting the nests of passerines: an experimental study. *Bird Study* 44: 53-65.

Dr Mark Avery, Research Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL



NOTES

These contributions have all been assessed by the eight members of either the Behaviour Notes Panel or the Identification Notes Panel.

Feeding association of Little Grebes with Ring-necked Duck

In winter 1992/93, an adult male Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* was present intermittently on the River Kent at Kendal, Cumbria, where it often associated with a small group of Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula*. During the same period, up to seven Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* were on the river. In mid January 1993, I became aware that two grebes appeared to be closely connected with the ducks, and that, when the Ring-necked Duck dived, they immediately followed.

Since *BWP* (vol. 1) makes no mention of a feeding association for either species involved, I carried out four ten-minute systematic observations in late January and early February. I recorded 23 feeding dives by the Ring-necked Duck and 35 by the Tufted Ducks: on each of the three occasions when the Little Grebes were present, their dives were apparently co-ordinated to follow the Ring-necked Duck, rather than the Tufted Ducks; in the majority of cases, the grebes surfaced a few seconds after the Ring-necked Duck and stationed themselves within 1 m of it, so as to follow the next dive. No other interactions were noted between the birds in this loose grouping.

It is likely that a degree of apparent co-ordination will occur when birds are exploiting the same food source. In this case, however, the close timing of the dives would suggest that the Little Grebes were taking opportunistic advantage of the larger duck, whose dives may disturb, dislodge or scatter small prey items. Why the behaviour was more directly associated with the single Ring-necked Duck is more difficult to deduce.

JOHN PEATFIELD

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented: 'The Little Grebe is known to associate with feeding Common Coots *Fulica atra* (see *Brit. Birds* 49: 501; 50: 351-352) and I have seen this myself; it has also been seen attending domestic ducks and two species of shoveler *Anas* (*Brit. Birds* 68: 293-294). On 12th August 1975, Robert Gillmor and I spent seven hours watching grebes at Theale Old Gravel-pit, Berkshire, and noted a Little Grebe diving where several Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* were dipping and upending; the same or another bird also surfaced quite near us at times and we realised that it was going the rounds of all the fishermen dotted around the banks, probably looking for small fish attracted by their bait.'

Black-necked Grebe associating with Tufted Ducks

During 26th December 1993 to 16th January 1994, a Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* was present at Fort Henry Ponds, Leicestershire. Throughout its stay, it associated closely with two male Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula*. The grebe swam very close to the ducks and was rarely more than 1 m away from either; all three frequently dived almost simultaneously, the grebe lagging slightly

behind. On one occasion, the grebe began to preen immediately after a Tufted Duck started to roll-preen. When disturbed, the group sought shelter together in a small reed-fringed bay.

TERRY MITCHAM

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EDITORIAL COMMENT This is surely a feeding association, as observed between Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* and a Ring-necked Duck *A. collaris* (see preceding note).

Treetop-hunting by Hen Harriers

Pre-roost treetop-hunting by Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* (*Brit. Birds* 84: 570) is quite common in west Galloway, Dumfries & Galloway. In this area, two roosts are bordered by large areas of willows *Salix*, mostly forming dense cover 5-8 m in height. In over 30 years of watching harrier roosts, I have seen treetop-hunting on most visits: the harriers fly at slow speeds across the top of the willows, systematically coursing from one end to the other and back again, sometimes several times before entering the roost. These hunts are typically like those used by this species when hunting over tall rank vegetation in open country. This behaviour may stem from a need to replenish energy stores before roosting if the harrier has been largely unsuccessful during the day.

R. C. DICKSON

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Merlin falling down chimney with prey

During February 1993, Mrs Ferry of Steeple Ashton, Wiltshire, recounted to me the following details. In late January 1993, Mrs Ferry was in her living room when she heard a commotion in the chimney. Suddenly, a small raptor clutching a headless Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* shot out of the fireplace. She secured the bird and released it in her backyard, where it flew a short distance and dropped to the ground, apparently exhausted or perhaps injured. She retrieved the raptor and, after looking through her bird books, identified it as a Merlin *Falco columbarius*. She sought advice by telephone from the Hawk Conservancy at Weyhill, Hampshire, who convinced her that the chances of a Merlin coming down her chimney were non-existent and that it must be a Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* or some other species. Feeling unable to care for the falcon herself, she took it to Weyhill, where the staff, much to their disbelief, were forced to confirm that she had indeed had a first-winter female Merlin down her chimney. The sad end is that the Merlin died the following day. In her obvious great excitement in recounting this event, Mrs Ferry informed me that the headless Common Starling was 'almost completely dead'! I was unable to follow that with any sensible comment.

Keevil Airfield is immediately next to Mrs Ferry's house, and a Merlin would not be unexpected in the area. In mid March 1993, the Imber Ranges military training area, about 8 km to the south, held certainly two or possibly three overwintering Merlins.

M. H. SMITH

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Aberrant tail pattern of adult Black-headed Gull

On 11th May 1995, at Shibdon Pond, Tyne & Wear, we discovered a Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* which had been killed by a bird of prey. It had not been eaten, and we examined the corpse. It was a well-marked adult in relatively fresh summer plumage, with a very bright red eye-ring and small, neat, white tips to the black primaries; it showed no contrast in coloration, or difference in feather generation, among any of the grey upperwing-coverts. It was, therefore, in at least second-summer or, more likely, third-summer plumage, second-summers tending to show less white on the black primaries. The tail feathers were of the same generation, but the two pairs on each side of the central pair had a black mark towards the tip of each feather; the pattern was symmetrical, although the black mark on the third tail feather on the right was more crescent-shaped, slightly broadened at one end, and somewhat less heavy than those on the other three feathers. The markings were undoubtedly due to pigmentation, and not to any contamination. The spotted feathers showed no other abnormalities, appeared 'sound' in every respect, and, as they exhibited a similar degree of wear to the other rectrices, they were not retained from a previous moult sequence. They appeared to illustrate a remnant representation of a feather pattern normally found in a younger age-class of this species (e.g. first-winter). It would seem that this individual had managed to grow four adult tail feathers which, for some reason, showed a patterning of dark spots of a type associated with first-calendar-year Black-headed Gulls.

KEITH BOWEY and BRIAN POLLINGER

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Carrion Crow attacking and grounding Herring Gull

On 3rd June 1993, near the Cob at Pwllheli, Gwynedd, I became aware of loud angry calls from a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* flying about 5 m overhead in pursuit of a juvenile Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*. The gull, which was not carrying any food, was clearly trying to evade the crow, which followed it at speed around a roughly circular course about 100 m in diameter. The crow managed to seize the tips of the outer primaries of the gull's left wing, hanging on until the gull crashed out of control into the shallow water of a nearby drainage ditch. Still holding on, the crow landed heavily, largely on the gull itself, and then, with a violent jerk of its head, threw the gull on to its back, almost completely submerging it, before flying off. The gull preened for a couple of minutes and then flew away, apparently none the worse for the encounter.

In fights between Herring Gulls on the ground, one or both individuals often seize the opponent's primaries and pull or swing it around by this hold, but I had never before seen a Carrion Crow do this, either on the ground or in flight.

DAVID G. P. CHATFIELD

Rhizwenfa, Rhizw, near Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 8AE



LETTER

Marsh Warblers breeding in Orkney: first Scottish breeding record

A pair of unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warblers nested in Orkney in 1993 (Adam & Meek 1994; Ogilvie *et al.* 1996). Based on (1) comparison of measurements with Walinder *et al.* (1988), (2) the birds' general coloration and (3) the comparative frequency of Marsh Warblers *A. palustris* and Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus* in Scotland in spring, identification as Marsh Warblers was felt to be almost certain, but could not be conclusively proved.

We are most grateful to Jörg Hadasch (*in litt.*) for drawing to our attention his own work on a Marsh Warbler population in Germany and also to the identification criteria established by Dorsch (1983). As a result, using our measurements, he has now positively identified one of the Orkney adults and all three juveniles as Marsh Warblers (the identity of the second adult could not be established conclusively). Details of this breeding record will, therefore, now be submitted for publication in *Scottish Birds*.

E. R. MEEK and R. G. ADAM

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LOOKING BACK

Twenty-five years ago, in June/July 1972: '... after 10th June, a total of probably several hundred [Common Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra*] being reported in many parts of Britain from Shetland to Lundy [Devon] by the end of the month ... The largest gathering reported was one of 300 at Haldon (Devon) on 18th July; on 23rd a flock of 70 came in off the sea at Hengistbury Head (Hampshire) ...' (*Brit. Birds* 65: 452)



BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR

1st Jens Eriksen (Sultanate of Oman): Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (plate 51)

2nd Pekka Helo (Finland): Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* (plate 53)

3rd Bob Glover (Essex): Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (plate 52)

Junior (25 years and under) winner David Norton (Essex): Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* (plate 56)

Canon The general standard of entries continues to rise, and it was only as a result of ruthless pruning that the judges reduced the original 127 entries to an initial short-list of 33. Many of the photographs discarded at this early stage nevertheless attracted comments such as 'That's one I would have been proud to have taken' or 'That's superb! (But we have seen one like it before.)'. Reducing the first short-list further was even more difficult, the judges having to search for reasons to eliminate each transparency. The final selection of 20 was then subjected to an individual, independent vote by each judge, ranking the set from 1 to 20. The difficulty experienced in doing this is demonstrated by the facts that no fewer than 13 entries were ranked in the top five by at least one judge, and, similarly, eight of the 20 were placed in the first three.

The initial short-list of 33 represented the work of 25 different photographers, and the final short-list of 20 included photographs by 14 (see table 1, on page 237). Eight photographers had two of their three entries included in the first short-list of 33 (Pascal Bourguignon, Dr Kevin Carlson, Bob Glover, Pekka Helo, Chris Knights, Ben Phalan, Wayne Richardson and Ray Tipper), while one (Jens Eriksen) had all three of his entries (the maximum allowed in the rules) included in this short-list. After the second sifting, Pascal Bourguignon, Bob Glover, Pekka Helo and Wayne Richardson still had two transparencies included, and all three of Jens Eriksen's survived all the weeding processes. In view of their consistency, it is entirely fitting that one of Jens Eriksen's three transparencies should have won, and that photographs by Pekka Helo and Bob Glover were placed second and third.

In the competition between entrants aged 25 or under, the judges unanimously chose a transparency by David Norton (plate 56), but also admired work by the two runners-up, a Willow Tit *Parus montanus* photographed by Tristan Millen and a group of Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* on Great Saltee photographed by Ben Phalan.

The senior winner, Jens Eriksen, described the circumstances concerning his Cattle Egret (plate 51) as follows: 'Checking out the birdlife in the southern part of Oman, at Salalah, I came across a flock of over 60 Cattle Egrets. Many were in beautiful breeding plumage, which is not often seen here. Using the car as a hide, I edged closer and closer over a period of an hour. One by one the egrets

moved a bit farther away, but before moving on they often stretched their wings and lowered their heads. The photograph shows this stretching behaviour.'

Pekka Helo's adult male Northern Goshawk (plate 53) was photographed in Oulu, Finland, in April. The bird is beautifully lit, with light reflected by the snow, and the photograph perfectly composed. Since 1971, Pekka Helo had been providing winter food for Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos*, but during winter 1995/96 had to move the site. The eagles did not find the new site, but Northern Goshawks did: three juveniles from October, then later two adults. In March, the provided carcass was frozen solid, but the female Goshawk rested on it for a long time, the flesh thawed out and she then ate from it. In April, the female was usually at the nest, but the male visited the carcass almost daily and Pekka obtained many hundreds of photographs. On 14th April, after feeding for more than two hours on the carcass, the male flew to the rootstock of a fallen pine and preened for 15 minutes. The sun was setting, and soft light came through the trees directly onto the left side of the bird. Pekka took about 100 photographs, the best, he thinks, of all those he had obtained during the winter.

Bob Glover, previous winner of Bird Photograph of the Year in 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 226-232) and 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 293-299), described obtaining his Sedge Warbler photograph (plate 52) as follows: 'Very early one misty morning, on my way to a wader hide, I encountered a Sedge Warbler singing along a dyke. The whole area was saturated in dew and the cobwebs were everywhere, so I lay low and waited for the sun to light it up. The bird came up the stems to catch the warmth of the sun and I grabbed a few shots before the dew and the magic evaporated and it became yet another stagnant summer day.'

Fourth-placed David Tipling described obtaining his Brambling photograph (plate 55) as follows: 'During September I started a feeding station in the orchard at Bough Beech Reservoir. By feeding daily I soon had plenty of birds coming down in front of my hide. Then, in early November, Bramblings started to appear and by mid month over 30 would visit daily. This picture of a male perched in a Larch *Larix decidua* is one of many shots I have taken of this species.'

Pekka Helo's adult male Snow Bunting (plate 54) was photographed in Finnmark, Norway, in April. Pekka Helo had failed to get good photographs of Snow Buntings on his many trips to Norway, but in April 1996 put out food near his parked car. 'The Snow Buntings were feeding before I was back in the car! Only a very little idea, and so simple.' He then took about 200 photographs of the Snow Buntings in the next two days, but, despite one of these coming fifth, Pekka was still not content with the quality and planned to try again in 1997.

Winner of the HarperCollins under-26 prize, David Norton, described his Lesser Black-backed Gull photograph (plate 56) as follows: 'This bird was calling for some time and I wanted to get a close picture of it while showing the type of habitat it was in. This involved slowly walking around the bird at a distance so as to include part of the island and the sea as the background and a tuft of grass in the foreground. This picture shows the bird at full stretch.'

So many others of the short-listed photographs greatly impressed the judges, such as an incredibly camouflaged female Capercaillie nicknamed 'Mrs Invisible'



▲ 51. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1997: Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Sultanate of Oman, May 1996 (Nikon F4s; Nikkor 600 mm AF-1 + 1.4× converter; 1/180th, f5.6; Fujichrome Velvia)(*Jens Eriksen*)

▼ 52. THIRD PRIZE: Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Essex, July 1996 (Nikon F601; 600 mm; 1/500th, f5.6; Fuji Provia)(*Bob Glover*)





▲ 53. SECOND PRIZE: Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Finland, April 1996 (Minolta 9xi; Minolta 600 mm AF; 1/125th, f4; Kodachrome 200)(Pekka Helo)



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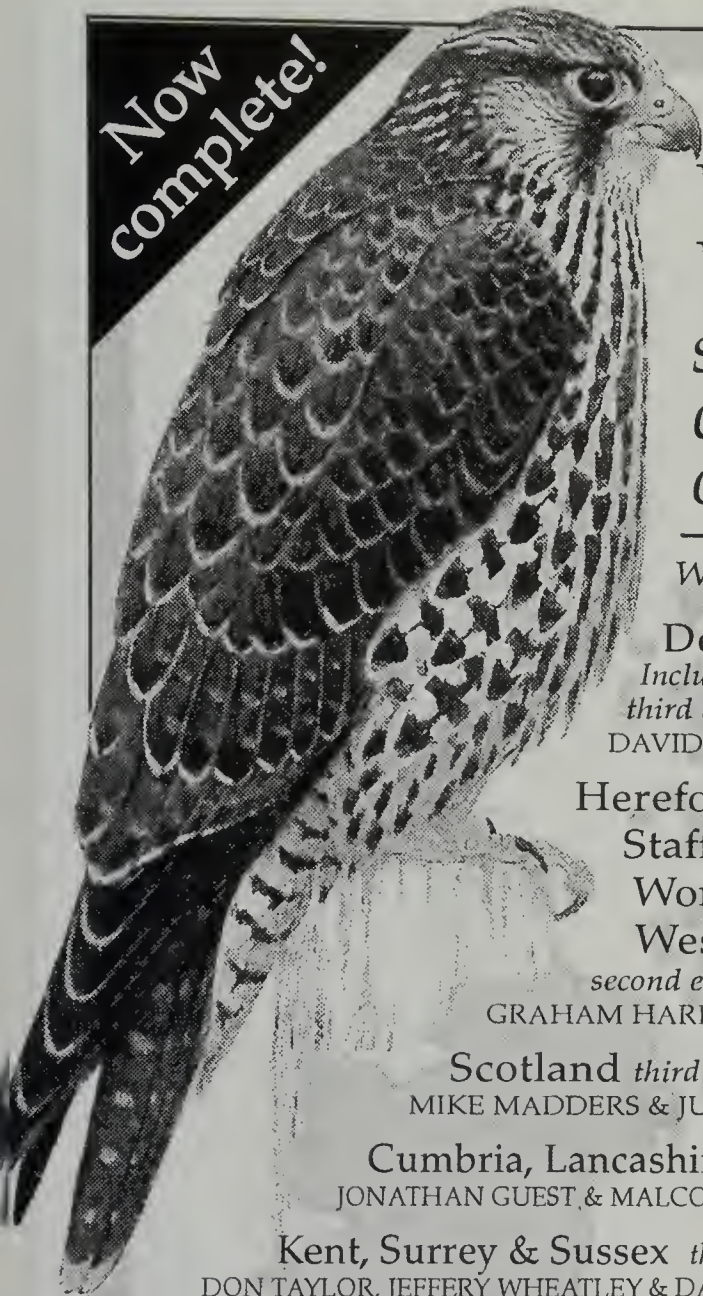
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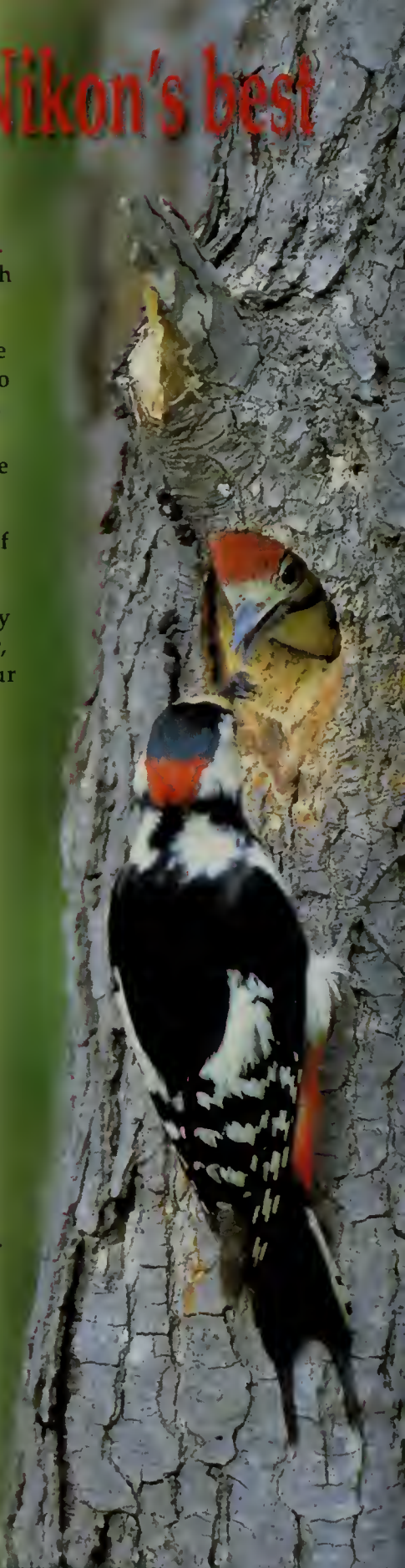


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▲ 54. FIFTH: Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, Norway, April 1996 (Minolta 9xi; Minolta 600 mm AF + 1.4× converter; 1/180th, f5.6; Fuji Provia 100)(Pekka Helo)



▲ 55. FOURTH: Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Kent, November 1996 (Nikon F4; Nikkor 600 mm; f5.6; Fuji Velvia)(David Tipling)

▼ 56. UNDER-26 WINNER: Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, Lothian, July 1996 (Nikon F801s; Sigma 500 mm; 1/250th, f8; Kodachrome 64)(David Norton)



Table 1. The top 20 entries.

1st	Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> (plate 51) Jens Eriksen (Sultanate of Oman)
2nd	Northern Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i> (plate 53) Pekka Helo (Finland)
3rd	Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i> (plate 52) Bob Glover (Essex)
4th	Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i> (plate 55) David Tipling (Kent)
5th	Snow Bunting <i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i> (plate 54) Pekka Helo
6th=	Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> Jens Eriksen
6th=	Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i> Wayne Richardson (Cleveland)
8th=	Capercaillie <i>Tetrao urogallus</i> Christer Kalenius (Finland)
8th=	Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> Roger Tidman (Norfolk)
10th	Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> Bob Glover
11th	Whooper Swans <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> Chris Knights (Norfolk)
12th=	Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i> Pascal Bourguignon (France)
12th=	Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i> Philip Newman (Kincardineshire)
14th	Cyprus Warblers <i>S. melanothorax</i> Dr Kevin Carlson (Norfolk)
15th	Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> Pascal Bourguignon
16th=	Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i> Hanne Eriksen (Sultanate of Oman)
16th=	Tundra Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus</i> Dr Edmund Fellowes (Dumfries & Galloway)
18th	Common Kestrel Tony Clarke (South Yorkshire)
19th	Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> Wayne Richardson
20th	Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> Jens Eriksen

The following photographs were also included in the initial short-list: Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* (Klaus Bjerre), Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* (Neil Bowman), Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* (Dr Peter Gasson), Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (Ernie Janes), Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (Chris Knights), Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (Henry Lehto), Willow Tit *Parus montanus* (Tristan Millen), Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* (David Norton) (plate 56), Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* (Ben Phalan), Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* (Ben Phalan), Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (Ray Tipper) and Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* (Ray Tipper).

by Finnish photographer Christer Kalenius, an evocative four Whooper Swans 'walking on air' as they came in to land at Welney Washes, Norfolk (Chris Knights), and a Short-eared Owl hunting in the French département of Aube (Pascal Bourguignon).

One of us commented, having driven all the way from Scotland to Bedfordshire to take part in the judging, 'As always, the most enjoyable day of the year. Well worth the journey!': sentiments endorsed by the other judges who had travelled less far. We all look forward to seeing next year's selection.

J. T. R. SHARROCK, R. J. CHANDLER, R. A. HUME and DON SMITH
c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3Nj



EUROPEAN NEWS

All records have been accepted by the relevant national rarities committee, unless marked by an asterisk(*).

Records are included only if they have been sent by the official national representative, each of whom is listed at the end of this report, or have been published in the relevant national journal (these sources are always acknowledged).

As well as covering the whole of Europe, records notified by the national representatives for adjacent countries within the Western Palearctic are also included.

This forty-first six-monthly report includes officially notified records from 37 countries.

These summaries aim to include *all* records of: (1) significant breeding-range expansions or contractions; (2) major irruptions of erupting species; (3) Asiatic vagrants; (4) Nearctic species (excluding ducks, waders and gulls in Great Britain and Ireland, where they are regular); (5) other extralimital vagrants; and (6) major national rarities, including the first five national records even if the species is common elsewhere in Europe.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to nationally accepted records of single individuals.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

LUXEMBOURG First record: first-winter at Esch-Sûre on 8th-15th December 1996.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

FRANCE Second record: 2nd January to 12th February 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 154).

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

NETHERLANDS Census: 266 pairs in 1994 (cf. 230-250 in 1989, 150 in 1990 and 90 in 1991, *Brit. Birds* 85: 443).

SLOVENIA First confirmed breeding: pair with two young (and two other adults) in 1996 (*Acrocephalus* 17: 43-46).

Albatross *Diomedea*

BELGIUM First record: Zeebrugge on 16th December 1980 (accepted as either Yellow-nosed *D. chlororhynchos* or Black-browed *D. melanophrys*; *Oriolus* 62: 40).

FRANCE Vagrant: Ouessant on 16th September 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 154).

ITALY Vagrant: Sicily on 9th March 1991 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 66).

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

UKRAINE First record: injured bird at confluence of Rivers Limnyts and Dnister on 6th August 1995.

Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*

ISRAEL See Slovakia.

SLOVAKIA Rejection: old specimen record from 1870 now rejected (*Tichodroma* 8: 7-21), so the Eilat, Israel, records on 31st May 1982 and 18th April 1989 (*Dutch Birding* 9: 152-157; 11: 170-172) are the only accepted records for the Western Palearctic (*Dutch Birding* 18: 309-310).

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*

NETHERLANDS First record: feeding along and from exposed tidal sandbanks at Westplaat on 21st April 1995 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 221-226). Ship-assisted occurrence: found alive on ship in Europoort, Zuid-Holland, in last week of November 1993, later died in captivity (*Dutch Birding* 18: 231-234).

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

NORWAY Fifth record: Lista Fyr, Farsund, on 22nd July 1995.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

MALTA First record: first-year in September 1995.

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*

NORWAY First record: ringed at Revtangen, Klepp, Rogaland, on 13th August 1996*.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*

NORWAY First record rejected: Molen, Vestfold, record on 29th June 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 321) has, after reconsideration, now been rejected.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

PORTUGAL First record: Ponta da Piedade, Lagos, Faro, from 29th July to at least October 1996.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

BULGARIA Mid-winter census: considerable decrease, with only 4,600 in early 1997 (15,534 in early 1996, *Important Bird Areas in Bulgaria*, 1996).

SWITZERLAND High passage numbers: in autumn 1996, including total of 6,661 migrating over Monthey during 6th September to 9th December.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*

BULGARIA Mid-winter census: 272 in 1996/97.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*

FRANCE Escape: Saclay, Essone, on 25th-29th August 1996.

ITALY Escapes: all records have now been rejected as escapes from captivity (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 149).

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

NETHERLANDS Census: 158 pairs in 1994.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

LATVIA First record: adult near Kekava, Riga, from 13th September to 4th October 1996.

POLAND Second record: adult at Slonsk Reservoir, western Poland, on 27th April 1996 (first was in July 1994).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

POLAND Largest-ever influx: at least 75 in August-September 1996 throughout eastern and southern Poland, with largest concentration of 18 at Biebrza Marshes on 20th August.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

CHANNEL ISLANDS First record: Fort Le Crocq, Guernsey, on 23rd October 1996.

GERMANY Influx: 133 records in 1994 (cf. 162 during the 17 years 1977-93, and only 23 records of Little Egret *E. garzetta* in 1994; *Limicola* 10: 217-220).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

SWITZERLAND Range expansion: first breeding in Grisons and in Ticino in 1993 (*Om. Beob.* 93: 316).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

NETHERLANDS Census: 285 pairs in 1994 (cf.

900 in 1977 and 450-500 in 1982, *Brit. Birds* 77: 233).

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

ESTONIA Continued increase: 2,300-2,900 pairs in 1994 and 2,600-3,200 pairs in 1995.

ITALY First breeding record: Piedmont in 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 65).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

DENMARK Influx: six records during September-December 1994 (cf. 19 previous records; *DOFT* 90: 142-143).

NETHERLANDS Influx: 15 records involving up to 37 individuals, including groups of seven, eight and ten, the majority being first-winters, during 17th August to 11th November 1994, with one staying to 20th May 1995 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 293-301).

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

DENMARK First breeding since 1969: at least one pair with one juvenile in 1996 (cf. influx in spring 1996, *Brit. Birds* 90: 80).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: juvenile ringed on Tenerife in November 1996.

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus*

GERMANY First and second records of nominate race: 5th January 1994 and 9th January 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 221).

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

FRANCE Influx: about 120 in northeastern France during January-February 1997.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

BULGARIA Highest mid-winter census total for 21 years: 323,430 in January 1997.

DENMARK Highest-ever count: 11,590 passing Gudhjem, Bornholm, on 28th September 1996.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

BULGARIA Second to fourth records: 22nd November 1996, 9th February 1997 and 13th February 1997.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

BULGARIA Highest-ever numbers: 62,653 at main wintering sites at Shabla and Durankulak Lakes on 30th January 1997.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

SLOVENIA Second record: 7th September 1991 (*Acrocephalus* 17: 77).

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

HUNGARY First breeding records this century: three single pairs with young at three sites in 1996 (*Túzok* 1: 126-127).

American Wigeon *Anas americana*

FRANCE Vagrants: female on 30th-31st

October 1993 and male on 3rd October 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 155).

GERMANY Vagrant: 5th-10th May 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 224).

SWEDEN Vagrants: two males, in May & July 1995 and June 1995 (*Vår Fågelv. suppl.* 25: 126).

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*

DENMARK Escape: male at Vejlerne, N-Jutland, was on 10th-13th April 1995 (not just 10th-11th April 1995, *Brit. Birds* 89: 28).

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

BELGIUM Vagrant of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: 27th-28th February 1994 (sixth record; *Oriolus* 62: 41).

GERMANY First record of race *carolinensis*: 7th May 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 224).

SWEDEN Vagrants of race *carolinensis*: four in April-May 1995 (*Vår Fågelv. suppl.* 25: 81).

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

NORWAY Second record: adult male at Vasshusvannet, Klepp, Rogaland, from 5th March to 15th June 1995.

SPAIN Second record: Llobregat delta, Barcelona, on 13th November 1996*.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

AUSTRIA Second record: adult male at Asteu, near Linz, Upper Austria, on 26th May 1996.

CZECH REPUBLIC First record/escape: male near Tovačov, central Moravia, on 24th April 1996.

FRANCE Vagrants: males on 28th March 1995 and 23rd October 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 156).

SWEDEN Vagrants: four records involving three males in 1995 (*Vår Fågelv. suppl.* 25: 126).

SWITZERLAND Fourth record: male at Nuolener Ried on 26th June 1996.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

SWITZERLAND Range expansion: first breeding in Valais in 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 317).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

BELGIUM Vagrants: two overwintering from 1993 and two new individuals in 1994 (now nine records; *Oriolus* 62: 41).

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: six on Tenerife in January 1997*.

FRANCE Vagrants: six records involving two individuals in 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 156).

GERMANY Vagrants: three in 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 224).

SWEDEN Vagrants: two males, in January 1995 and May & November 1995 (*Vår Fågelv. suppl.* 25: 126).

SWITZERLAND Vagrants: female on 17th-18th March 1991 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 332) and female

or first-year at Pfäffikon during 25th September to 7th October 1996.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

SWEDEN Decline: though there are about 35 records in all, one at Hulusjön, Västergötland, on 23rd-25th September 1996* is only the third or fourth record in the 1990s.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

SWITZERLAND Escape/vagrant: adult male from 10th February to 31st March 1995 (not just 20th March, *Brit. Birds* 89: 29), included in Category D (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 341).

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*

CZECH REPUBLIC First record: male near Nymburk, central Bohemia, on 19th February 1996.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

FRANCE Fourth record of race *americana*: 2nd April 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 156).

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

FRANCE Vagrants: three records in 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 156).

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

DENMARK Escapes: male at Fåborg Havn, Fuen, during January 1991, and female or immature at Staunings O, Zealand, on 8th-11th August 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 144).

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

SWITZERLAND First and second breeding records: 1993 and 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 319).

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

SWEDEN First breeding record: Tansetjärn, Hälsingland, in 1996.

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

SWITZERLAND Low passage numbers: 2,897 in 1996 (cf. 5,143 in 1995).

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

BELGIUM Second record: 15th May 1994 (*Oriolus* 62: 41).

Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

FRANCE First feral breeding record this century: from 23 released in gorges de la Jonte, Lozère, since 1992, pair reared one young in spring 1996.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

GIBRALTAR Second record: male on 26th March 1996.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

CYPRUS First breeding record: pair with two young in Paphos Forest during 5th-29th August 1996.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*
MOROCCO First record: adult female at Meknès on 3rd April 1996*.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*
SPAIN First and second records: Lobeira, Ourense, on 29th April 1995 and Algeciras, Cádiz, on 7th August 1995 (*La Garcilla* 97: 46).

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*
FRANCE Influx in east: 30 in Franche-Comté, more than 20 in Champagne and scattered records elsewhere in January-February 1997*.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*
NORWAY First record rejected: Molen, Vestfold, record on 23rd September 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 287) has, after reconsideration, now been rejected.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*
ISRAEL Second record: Negev on 22nd November 1996.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*
DENMARK Vagrant: immature at Stevns Klint, Zealand, on 7th September 1992 (14 previous records; *DOFT* 90: 144).

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*
GREECE Breeding: pair in Epirus in May 1996, 'perhaps the only breeding pair in Greece'.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*
DENMARK Influx: about 45 individuals during August-September 1996.

LATVIA Irruption: up to more than 30 daily at Pape, Liepaja, from 19th August to middle of September 1996 (similar to irruption in 1995, *Brit. Birds* 89: 253).

SWEDEN Influx: about 123 in 1995 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 81).

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*
DENMARK Fourth and fifth records: Tipperne, W-Jutland, on 24th May 1995 and Christiansø, Bornholm, on 14th August 1996 (first three were in 1987, 1988 and 1989, *Brit. Birds* 90: 83).

POLAND Fifth record: Zywiecki Reservoir on 15th September 1996.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*
CYPRUS Second record: Phassouri Reedbeds on 23rd September 1996.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*
ICELAND Census: in 1996, covering 5,200 km² and 80 traditional territories, revealed 45 occupied territories, these pairs producing 18 young, with average of 3.1 young per nest, a decrease in number of occupied territories of

25% since 1989, following decrease in number of Ptarmigans *Lagopus mutus*.

Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus*
ICELAND Population fluctuations: setting index at 1.0 in 1981, censuses in northeast Iceland during 1981-94 showed increase to 3.1 in 1986 and drop to 0.7 in 1994; mean density of males over this period was 6.3 per km² (*Náttúrfræðingurinn* 65: 137-151).

Little Crake *Porzana parva*
SWITZERLAND Record influx: 16 records involving 17 individuals in 1995 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 333).

Corn Crake *Crex crex*
IRELAND Continued increase: 186 singing males in 1996, mainly in North Donegal, the Shannon Callows and Co. Mayo, represented 7% increase on 1995.

Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
CYPRUS Deletion: record of individual of race *caspicus* on 24th November 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 83) now rejected.

FRANCE First breeding: suspected in 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 31, 253), then three pairs reared at least seven young at étang du Canet, Pyrénées-Orientales, in 1996 (*Ornithos* 3: 176-177; this information replaces that published in *Brit. Birds* 90: 83).

Common Crane *Grus grus*
BELGIUM Strong passage: longer and heavier migration than usual in autumn 1994, with peak on 4th November (*Aves* 33: 65-75).
DENMARK Highest-ever count: 3,350 passing Gudhjem, Bornholm, on 20th October 1996.

Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
UKRAINE Second breeding record: ten pairs nested in May 1996.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus*
HUNGARY First and second records: 1st November to 30th December 1986 and 16th August 1992 (*Túzok* 1: 20).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
DENMARK First record: Agger Tange on 4th-6th August 1994 (not just 4th-5th August 1994 as noted *Brit. Birds* 88: 32; *DOFT* 90: 145).

FRANCE Vagrant: male in Camargue on 14th-16th May 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 160).
HUNGARY First record: 7th-14th July 1992 (*Túzok* 1: 20-21).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
DENMARK Fourth record: Nyord, Moen, on 3rd October 1995.

FINLAND Influx: about 45 juveniles and one adult during 14th September to 15th October 1996* (*Ahula* 3: 40).

FRANCE First record: adult male at Saint-Valéry-sur-Somme on 17th July 1994 (not 15th July 1994 as noted *Brit. Birds* 89: 254; *Ornithos* 3: 160).

SWEDEN Vagrants: two, in June 1995 and August 1995 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 129).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

DENMARK First record: Nekso, Bornholm, on 24th-25th August 1996*.

FRANCE Vagrant: 9th-25th September 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 160). Amendment: adult in Ain on 12th-13th August 1995 (given as just 12th August 1995 in *Brit. Birds* 89: 254) accepted as *P. dominicalfulva* (*Ornithos* 3: 160).

SWEDEN Vagrant: juvenile in September 1995 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 129).

Spur-winged Lapwing *Hoplopterus spinosus*

HUNGARY First record: 17th-24th October 1993 (not just 17th October 1993 as noted *Brit. Birds* 88: 270; *Túzok* 1: 21).

Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregaria*

AUSTRIA Third record: adult male at Rheindelta, Lake of Constance, Vorarlberg, on 23rd March 1996.

FRANCE Vagrants: 28th-30th October 1994, 22nd-23rd March 1995 and 3rd November 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 160-161).

GERMANY Vagrants: singly in March, August and September 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 229).

SWEDEN Third record: 12th September to 9th October 1995 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 129).

SWITZERLAND Vagrant: 2nd August 1995 (*Om. Beob.* 93: 334).

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

FRANCE Vagrant: 14th August 1995 (not 13th August 1995 as noted *Brit. Birds* 89: 254; *Ornithos* 3: 161).

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*

FRANCE Second record: 22nd-23rd July 1995 (not 22nd-30th July 1995 as noted *Brit. Birds* 89: 33; *Ornithos* 3: 161).

IRELAND Second record: The Cull, Co. Wexford, on 20th-21st August 1996*.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*

SWEDEN Vagrant: adult on 17th-18th July 1995 (nine previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 129-130).

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Record numbers: on Guernsey during 12th-23rd September 1996, with maximum of 16 on 18th September; and

on Jersey during 7th-10th September 1996, with maximum of 56 on 20th September.

DENMARK Highest-ever numbers: 2,246 at Vejlerne, N-Jutland, on 18th September 1996 and 1,570 at Fanø, S-Jutland, on 21st September 1996.

FRANCE Very large influx: record numbers inland, involving thousands, with up to 400 together, mainly in northern half of France, in September 1996.

IRELAND Record numbers: in autumn 1996, with unprecedented flock of up to 300 at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, in late September.

SWITZERLAND Heavy passage: many localities in autumn 1996, with maximum 75 at Rhine delta on 20th September.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*

IRELAND First record: Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 15th-16th June 1996*.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

FRANCE Vagrant: 26th October to 11th November 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 161).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

FRANCE Vagrant: 25th October 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 161).

IRELAND Influx: up to ten in August-October 1996, with a record six at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford (largest-ever single flock)*.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*

FRANCE Vagrant: 11th-12th September 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 161).

GERMANY Fourth record: 2nd-6th August 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 228, 229).

ICELAND Second and third records: Seltjarnarnes, Gull., on 30th August 1996*, and Hafurbjarnarstaðir á Miðnesi, Gull., on 14th September 1996*.

NETHERLANDS Deletion: adult at Katwijk on 27th July 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 85) was 'misidentified'.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

BELGIUM Vagrants: 10th-11th September 1994 and 20th September to 1st October 1994 (23 previous records involving 24 individuals; *Oriolus* 62: 42).

DENMARK Vagrants: 8th August 1992, 15th July 1994 and 1st-5th August 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 145).

FRANCE Vagrants: seven records in 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 162).

GERMANY Vagrants: one in May 1994 and two in September 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 229).

HUNGARY Vagrants: 27th September to 1st October 1987, 5th September 1988, 6th-7th October 1991, 17th-21st July 1993, 12th-14th

September 1993 and 11th September 1994 (*Túzok* 1: 21, 25).

POLAND Vagrant: Mietkowski Reservoir on 4th-7th August 1996 (16 previous records).

SWEDEN Vagrants: three in July-August in 1995 (87 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 130).

SWITZERLAND Vagrant: 16th-17th September 1995 (*Om. Beob.* 93: 334).

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

SWITZERLAND Heavy passage: several localities in autumn 1996, maximum of at least 50 at Rhine delta on 15th September.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

DENMARK Vagrant: 16th July to 11th August 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 145).

FRANCE Vagrants: Eight records involving ten individuals in 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 162).

HUNGARY First and second records: 10th-22nd October 1993 and 16th-18th August 1995 (*Túzok* 1: 21, 25).

SWEDEN Vagrants: three in 1995, in May, June and October (18 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 130). Minor invasion: six during 15th September to 21st October 1996*.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

FRANCE Vagrant: 2nd-24th October 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 162).

HUNGARY First record: 30th April to 1st May 1995 (*Túzok* 1: 21-22).

SWEDEN Vagrant: 4th-5th May 1995 (nine previous records involving ten individuals; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 130).

Dowitcher *Limnodromus*

ITALY Fourth record: 22nd February 1993 (*Riv. Ital. Om.* 65: 67).

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

DENMARK First record of race *islandicus*: Søndre Farup Klæggrav, S-Jutland, on 8th May 1995.

Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*

FINLAND First record: Åland on 1st October 1996 (*Alula* 3: 38-40).

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

GREAT BRITAIN Breeding estimate: 479 pairs in Shetland during 1989-94 (*Scot. Birds* 18: 193-195).

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*

GREECE Largest-ever flock in recent years: 15 on Evros Delta on 17th April 1990.

HUNGARY Vagrants: 5th September 1995 and 1st-10th May 1996 (*Túzok* 1: 83-86).

MOROCCO Confirmed absence: none reported during winter 1996/97.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

UKRAINE High passage numbers: at least 85 during 15th July to 19th August 1995.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

SWEDEN Second record: 4th June 1995 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 130).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

GERMANY Third record: 19th-21st July 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 231).

SLOVENIA First record: 23rd April 1993 (*Acrocephalus* 17: 59-60, 77).

SWEDEN Vagrant: one in August 1995 (six previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 130).

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

IRELAND First record: Rosslare Backstrand, Co. Wexford, 24th August to 19th September 1996*.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

FAROE ISLANDS First breeding record: adult with one downy young at Saksun from 15th July 1996*.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

FRANCE Vagrants: 12th October 1995 and 5th-12th November 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 162).

GERMANY Vagrant: 11th November 1994 to 1st January 1995 (*Limicola* 10: 228, 231).

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*

FRANCE Vagrants: three records in 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 163).

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

MALTA Third record: found dead in January 1997.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

SLOVENIA Third record: 7th September 1991 (*Acrocephalus* 17: 78).

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

BELGIUM Highest-ever total: 185 in 1994 (*Mergus* 10: 18-25).

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

HUNGARY Colonisation: first confirmed breeding in 1940; annual since 1953; total of six sites and maximum of six pairs in any one year during 1940-79; total of seven sites and maximum of 21 pairs in any one year during 1980-89; total of nine sites used during 1990-96 and a record 150 pairs bred in 1996 (*Túzok* 1: 105-115).

IRELAND First breeding record: pair with at least one young in Co. Wexford in 1996 (two unsuccessful attempts in 1995)*.

SLOVAKIA First breeding records: total of 14

pairs nested at two sites 80 km apart in 1996.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: La Gomera from January to February 1996*.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*

HUNGARY First record: 12th-22nd September 1992 (not just 19th September 1992 as noted *Brit. Birds* 86: 284; *Túzok* 1: 22, 25).

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*

AUSTRIA First twentieth-century record: juvenile at Rheindelta, Lake of Constance, Vorarlberg, on 2nd September 1995.

BELGIUM Highest-ever total: 57 in 1994 (*Mergus* 10: 18-25).

SWEDEN Exceptional numbers: about 30 in August-December 1996* (only about 115 previous records).

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

GERMANY Second record: 8th July 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 234).

HUNGARY First and second records: 3rd-7th May 1992 and 22nd June 1994 (*Túzok* 1: 23).

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*

BULGARIA First record: one moulting from second-winter to third-summer plumage at Yailata site on Black Sea Coast, Dobrich region, on 24th June 1996 (*Branta* (1996): 13).

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

BELGIUM Third and fourth records: second-summer on 20th-21st April 1994 (*Oriolus* 62: 43; *Dutch Birding* 18: 238-240) and adult on Belgian/Dutch border on 8th January 1995 (*Dutch Birding* 18: 240-241).

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: first-winter on Tenerife in January 1996*.

FRANCE Vagrants: nine records involving two individuals in 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 164).

GERMANY Third and fourth records: 18th September 1994 and 21st November 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 234).

HUNGARY First record: 21st December 1990 (*Túzok* 1: 23).

NETHERLANDS Fourth record: adult on Belgian/Dutch border on 8th January 1995 (see also under Belgium; *Dutch Birding* 18: 240-241).

SWEDEN Vagrant: adult from April to July 1995 (nine previous records, involving seven individuals; *I'år Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 132).

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

IRELAND First record: Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 7th-8th August 1996*.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

ITALY Second breeding site: first breeding in Laguna di Venezia, with 202 nests in early June 1995 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 66: 87-88).

Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans*

SPAIN First record: Llobregat delta on 24th-30th April 1993.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*

NORWAY First record rejected: Molen, Vestfold, record on 15th May 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 278) has, after reconsideration, been rejected.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

SWEDEN Decrease: declined by about 75% in a decade, at least partly owing to heavy predation by Pine Martens *Martes martes* which have become very common since an epidemic reduced numbers of Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*.

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

HUNGARY First record: 18th November 1985 (*Túzok* 1: 24, 25).

SPAIN Correction: first record was on 3rd December 1994 (not 3rd February 1994 as stated in *Brit. Birds* 89: 36).

SWEDEN Vagrants: two in 1995, in January-April and November-December (18 previous records involving nine individuals; *I'år Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 134).

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus*

SPAIN Increase: feral population at Barcelona about 850 in 1994 (*La Garcilla* 97: 47).

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

NETHERLANDS Deletion: 'breeding in southern Limburg in 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 87) was an erroneous rumour' (*Dutch Birding* 18: 104, 146).

Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*

DENMARK First record: 4th October 1991 (*DOFT* 90: 147).

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: North Ronaldsay, Orkney, moribund, on 26th October 1996 (first record for Scotland).

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*

NORWAY First record rejected: Jomfruland, Telemark, record on 18th May 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 13) has, after reconsideration, been rejected.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

CYPRUS Vagrant: Pano Platres on 25th May 1996 (five previous records).

ITALY Deletions: previously accepted records in 1975 and 1993 are now rejected as

insufficiently documented (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 149).

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

SWITZERLAND Range expansion: first breeding in Grisons, in 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 321).

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

CZECH REPUBLIC Best-ever year: 106 pairs in 23 localities in 1996; flock of 120 in southern Moravia in August 1996 (cf. increases noted in 1995: *Brit. Birds* 89: 37).

SWITZERLAND Largest-ever autumn flock: 30-40 over Rapperswil on 24th September 1996.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius*

NETHERLANDS Minor influx: in winter 1996/97, two in November-December, and singles from 14th December, on 25th-26th December and from 1st January.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

LATVIA Irruption: at least 250 at Pape, Liepaja, from 28th August to end of October 1996 (previous irruptions in 1973, 1986—when noted in Finland, *Brit. Birds* 80: 326—and 1990).

Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus*

SWITZERLAND Range expansion: first and second breeding records in Jura, in 1993 and 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 321).

White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*

NORWAY First and second records rejected: Revtangen, Klepp, Rogaland, record on 12th October 1961 and Stjordal, Nord-Trøndelag, record on 29th October 1972 have, after reconsideration, been rejected.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*

CANARY ISLANDS Decline: census results during 1992-95 show critical situation of those breeding on Tenerife, with only four populations, totalling probably fewer than 100 pairs (*Rev. Acad. Canar. Cienc.* 7: 47-61).

GREECE First record: near Koutsoneri, Crete, on 15th April 1995.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

SWITZERLAND Above-average passage: autumn 1996, including at least 140 on migration at Wasserscheide on 11th October.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

SPAIN First record: Gijón, Asturias, on 12th October 1994.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

SWEDEN First record: Kullen, Skåne, on 19th-22nd October 1996*.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

BELGIUM Fourth record: 4th May 1993 (*Oriolus*: 62: 45).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

BELGIUM Exceptional autumn influx: 64 in 1994 (18 in nineteenth century, 22 records involving 25 individuals in 1900-66, over 77 in 1967-93; *Oriolus* 62: 45-46).

FRANCE Vagrants: 18 records involving 22 individuals in 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 166).

GERMANY Vagrants: 28 records in 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 241-242).

HUNGARY First record: 21st September 1994 (*Túzok* 1: 25).

ITALY Status summary: 150 records involving 161 individuals during 1824-1994, 80% in September-November, slight peak (4%) in April, but records in every month except June and July, and one overwintered in Latium in 1992/93 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 112).

MOROCCO Largest-ever wintering concentration: flock of 15 south of Oued Massa on 4th January 1996*.

SWEDEN Vagrants: about 50 in 1995 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 102-103).

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

GREAT BRITAIN Third record: St Mary's, Scilly, on 20th-22nd October 1993 (fourth to sixth were in October-November 1993, November 1994 and November-December 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 528-529; 89: 512).

NETHERLANDS Second record: first-winter at Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland, on 25th-28th October 1996.

NORWAY First record: first-year at Nordsileiret, Steinkjer, Nord-Trøndelag, on 3rd-13th November 1995.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

GERMANY Vagrant: 8th October 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 242).

SWITZERLAND First record: Ins on 11th-13th December 1995 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 338).

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

SWEDEN First record: Träslvsläge, Skåne, on 4th-14th January 1997*.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

BELGIUM Second record of black-headed race *feldegg*: male on 10th May 1994 (*Oriolus* 62: 47).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

ESTONIA Fourth to sixth records: adult male on 28th May and 4th June 1995*, first-year trapped on 18th July 1995* and first-year on 3rd August 1995*, all at Pulgoja, Pärnu District. Correction: first record (*Brit. Birds*

85: 457) was on 21st July 1990, not 21st August 1990.

GERMANY First breeding record: pair feeding brood, and a second male present, near Greifswald, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, in 1996 (*Limicola* 10: 311-316).

POLAND Continued breeding: all three breeding sites, near Rewa, Elblag and Siemianowka Reservoir, reoccupied in 1996, with total of about eight breeding pairs (cf. four pairs in 1994 and seven pairs in 1995, *Brit. Birds* 88: 40; 89: 38).

Black-throated Aecentor *Prunella atrogularis*

GERMANY First record: Muxall, Kreis Plön, Schleswig-Holstein, on 13th-16th February 1994 (*Limicola* 8: 98; 10: 243).

SWEDEN First record: 14th-15th June 1988 (*Vår Fågelv.* 48: 458).

Only other recent records were in Finland in October 1987 and October 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 275).

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

DENMARK Second to fourth records: 6th-9th October 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 148), male at Ballum Sluse, S-Jutland, on 2nd October 1996 and female or first-winter at Christianso, Bornholm, on 19th October 1996.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

DENMARK Vagrant of eastern race *maura*: Lyngvig Fyr, W-Jutland, on 19th October 1996 (25 previous records).

GERMANY Vagrant of race *maura*: 30th November to 17th December 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 244).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

NETHERLANDS First record: Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland, from 21st October to 8th November 1996.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

DENMARK Third record: Christianso, Bornholm, on 7th October 1992.

POLAND Second record: female/immature at Jastarnia, Hel Peninsula, on 28th September 1996 (first record was at same location in October 1995: *Brit. Birds* 89: 261).

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

HUNGARY First record: 17th November 1991 (*Túzok* 1: 27, 33).

Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura*

NORWAY Second record rejected: Saulekilen, Grimstad, Aust-Agder, record on 2nd June 1973 has, after reconsideration, been rejected.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

FRANCE Third record: Ouessant on 16th-18th October 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 167).

ICELAND Third record: Reykjavik Botanical Gardens on 9th October 1996*.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*

FRANCE Vagrant: male singing Territoire de Belfort during 9th-23rd April 1995 (ten previous records; *Ornithos* 3: 167).

GERMANY Vagrants: 5th October 1994 and 9th October 1994 (*Limicola* 8: 324; 10: 244).

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*

NORWAY First record of race *naumanni*: first-year trapped at Sokndal, Rogaland, on 26th-27th November 1996*.

SWEDEN First record of race *eunomus*: Fävren, Västergötland, on 17th October 1996*.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*

SWEDEN Vagrant: 22nd-28th December 1995 (14 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 138).

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

BELGIUM Second record: 30th April 1994 (*Oriolus* 62: 48).

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Census: population on Jersey stable, with 18 singing males.

HUNGARY First and second records: Keszthely-Fenckpuszta, near Lake Balaton, on 25th October 1996, and Hortobágy fishponds on 23rd August 1996*.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*

BELGIUM Third record: 14th October 1994 (*Oriolus* 62: 48).

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

POLAND Second and third records: singing males at Naziclence, Upper Sillesia, on 23rd May 1995 and at Swidwie Lake, near Szczecin, on 1st August 1996 (first record was in May 1989: *Brit. Birds* 83: 228).

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*

BELARUS Census: breeding recorded at 12 mire sites (most-recent estimate: 6,700-9,700 singing males).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*

GERMANY Third record: 25th September 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 245).

HUNGARY First to third records: 11th August 1978, 23rd September 1992 and 21st July 1995 (*Túzok* 1: 28, 29, 33).

ITALY First to fourth records and regular overwintering: Sardinia on 19th September 1993, ringed and recaptured on 30th September, 17th December and 22nd December 1993; Sardinia on 17th December 1993, ringed and recaptured on 29th

December 1993, 5th January and 19th March 1994; Friuli-V.G. on 31st August 1994; Sardinia on 12th March 1994, ringed and recaptured on 18th December 1994 and 29th January 1995 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 65: 65; fifth record was in April 1995: *Brit. Birds* 90: 90). SPAIN First and second records: Flix, Tarragona province, on 1st September 1995* and Coria del R'ò, Sevilla province, on 6th November 1996*.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

GERMANY Fifth record: 14th June to 3rd July 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 245).

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

IRELAND Second record: singing at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 22nd-23rd June 1996*.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*

AUSTRIA First record: Rheindelta, Lake of Constance, Vorarlberg, on 15th September 1996.

BELGIUM Fourth record: 15th September 1994 (*Oriolus* 62: 48).

SWEDEN Fifth record (second of race *rama*): 3rd September 1995 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 139).

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

BELGIUM Fifth record this century: 1st-2nd October 1994 (*Oriolus* 62: 48).

CHANNEL ISLANDS Census: population on Jersey stable, with 24 singing males, including 11 pairs.

GERMANY Fourth record: 9th November 1994 to 3rd January 1995 (*Limicola* 9: 116; 10: 246, 248).

NETHERLANDS Third record: Brielsegatdam, Westvoorne, Zuid-Holland, on 3rd-7th January 1997.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

ICELAND Second record: Reynivellir í Suðursveit, A-Skaft, on 29th-30th September 1996*.

Ménétries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*

ISRAEL Second winter record: Hameshar Plain, southern Negev, on 19th January 1997.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

HUNGARY First record: 29th July 1979 (*Túzok* 1: 29, 33).

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*

DENMARK Second record: 13th November 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 148).

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

DENMARK Second record: ringed at Tipperne,

W-Jutland, on 18th-20th September 1996.

ICELAND First record: Selfoss, Ár., on 22nd September 1996*.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

BELGIUM Vagrants: three in November 1994 (30 previous records; *Oriolus* 62: 49).

CHANNEL ISLANDS Vagrants: Guernsey on 2nd October 1996 and 30th October to 1st November 1996.

CZECH REPUBLIC Second record: Krkonose Mountains on 31st October 1996.

DENMARK Largest-ever influx: about 85 individuals during autumn 1996, with at least 55 (24 ringed) at Christianso, Bornholm (including 17, with 11 ringed, on 19th October).

FRANCE Vagrants: 28th October 1995, 31st October 1995 and 15th November 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 168); only seven during autumn 1996 influx.

GERMANY Vagrants: four records involving five individuals in October-November 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 246).

GIBRALTAR First record: 3rd November 1996.

HUNGARY First record: Hortobágy fishponds on 13th October 1996.

LATVIA Vagrants: Pape, Liepaja, on 12th October 1996 and 9th November 1996.

NETHERLANDS Large influx: more than 30 individuals during 8th October to 7th December 1996.

SWEDEN Vagrants: 29 in October 1995 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 109-110). Exceptional invasion: well over 100 reported in autumn 1996, mostly in October, with a peak of about 60 on 16th October; considering the limited coverage, the total number of birds must have been in the thousands (Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus*, the other common Siberian warbler, occurred in normal numbers).

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

CZECH REPUBLIC Fourth record: Krkonose Mountains on 14th October 1996.

DENMARK Small influx: about 19 individuals during autumn 1996 (slightly above average).

FAROE ISLANDS Vagrants: two in October-November 1996*.

FRANCE Vagrants: 26 records involving 29 individuals in 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 168).

GERMANY Vagrants: 42 records in September-November 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 246-247).

GIBRALTAR Second record: trapped on 26th October 1996.

HUNGARY First and second records: 8th October 1989 and 4th November 1989

(*Túzok* 1: 31, 34).

LATVIA Vagrant: Pape, Liepaja, on 13th October 1996.

SWEDEN Vagrants: 22 in September-October 1995 (*Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 110).

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

BELGIUM Second record: 27th October to 10th November 1991 (*Oriolus* 59: 97).

DENMARK Vagrants: 13th November 1989 (*DOFT* 90: 149) and Skagen, N-Jutland, on 2nd November 1995 (five previously accepted records: *DOFT* 89: 106; *Brit. Birds* 89: 41).

EGYPT First record: 18th October 1992.

FINLAND Fourth and fifth records: 20th May 1991 and 8th-10th October 1991.

FRANCE Third record (fourth individual): 24th-30th October 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 168).

GERMANY First and second records: 5th-7th November 1990 and 18th February to 4th April 1992 (*Limicola* 6: 168; 8: 196).

NETHERLANDS Fifth to eighth records: see *Brit. Birds* 85: 460.

SWEDEN Vagrants: 1st November 1980 and 4th-5th November 1989 (total of 13 records up to 1995; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 139).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

BELGIUM Vagrant: 18th October 1990 (now six records; *Oriolus* 62: 49).

DENMARK Vagrants: 7th-9th October 1994, 8th October 1994 and 9th October 1994 (nine previous records; *DOFT* 90: 149), Christianso, Bornholm, on 2nd October 1996 and 13th October 1996.

GERMANY Fifth record: 8th October 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 247, 248).

SPAIN First recent record: trapped at Cabrera island, Balearics, on 20th October 1996* (only previous record was male caught at Doñana on 7th November 1966).

SWEDEN Vagrant: 6th October 1995 (31 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 140).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

DENMARK Vagrants: Sondervig, W-Jutland, on 9th October 1996 and Christianso, Bornholm, on 15th October 1996 (26 previous records).

FRANCE Vagrant: 5th November 1994 (ten previous records; *Ornithos* 3: 168).

SWEDEN Vagrants: five in October 1995 (27 previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 140).

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*

HUNGARY First and second records: 28th August 1989 (*bonelli* and *orientalis* not distinguished; *Túzok* 1: 33-34) and juvenile trapped at Tömörd on 18th October 1996*.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

LATVIA Fifth record of eastern race *tristis*:

trapped at Pape, Liepaja, on 18th October 1996.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

MOROCCO Fourth record: Ifrane on 18th January 1996* (second and third records were in 1990, *Brit. Birds* 87: 323).

Willow Tit *Parus montanus*

SWEDEN Serious decline: decreased by over 50% in last decade, 'owing to forestry practices'.

Coal Tit *Parus ater*

ANDORRA Influx: flocks of 50 or more frequent in winter 1996/97.

CHANNEL ISLANDS Influx: on Jersey from late September 1996, with at least 30 during November and December 1996, seven on Herm on 23rd October 1996 and at least 15 on Guernsey from 27th October to end of 1996.

FRANCE Large influx: mainly in coastal Northern France, but many reaching Mediterranean coast and extreme southwest, during September-October 1996 (also on islands, e.g. up to 400 on Ouessant, Finistère, and more than 100 on Hoëdic, Morbihan).

NETHERLANDS Huge invasion: in late September 1996, with counts of 1,000-8,300 per day flying past at several sites in Noord-Holland and Zuid-Holland.

SWITZERLAND Invasion: autumn 1993 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 315).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

NETHERLANDS Census: 131 pairs breeding in 1994.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

DENMARK First record: adult female at Totten, Anholt, on 9th June 1994 (*DOFT* 90: 149-150).

FRANCE Fifth record: first-winter on Ouessant, Finistère, on 1st-8th November 1996*.

GERMANY Fifth record: 1st November 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 248).

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

HUNGARY First record: 21st April 1979 (*Túzok* 1: 31, 34).

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

DENMARK Second record: race *pallidirostris* at Vejlbj Klit, W-Jutland, on 24th November 1995 (treated as race of *L. excubitor*).

NETHERLANDS Correction: date of first record of race *pallidirostris* given in *Dutch Birding* (18: 117) was erroneous and should be as noted in *British Birds* (88: 278): 4th-23rd September 1994.

SWEDEN First record: race *pallidirostris* on 30th August to 6th September 1995 (treated as race

of *L. excubitor*, *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 141).

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

UKRAINE First record for 100 years: 23rd May 1995.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

ANDORRA Influx: flocks of 30 or more frequent in winter 1996/97.

FRANCE Large influx: thousands, mainly in Northeastern France and particularly in Nord/Pas-de-Calais region, from September to beginning of November 1996.

SWITZERLAND Largest passage for many years: autumn 1996, including 4,000 through the Ulmethöch during 25th September to 18th October.

The last widespread irruption was in 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 591; 78: 611-637).

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

FRANCE Small influx: six in Nord and Pas-de-Calais départements in September 1996 and 13 new individuals in northern France during October 1996 (all associated with influx of Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius*, see above).

Daurian Jaekdaw *Corvus dauricus*

NETHERLANDS First record: Noord-Holland and Zuid-Holland during 1st-15th May 1995 (perhaps same as one in Vendée, France, on 22nd June 1995, *Ornithos* 3: 145-146; *Dutch Birding* 18: 226-231).

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

TURKEY First breeding record: pair (presumed escapes) reared three young in Ankara in May-July 1996 (*Zool. Midd. East* 13: 25-26).

Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis*

HUNGARY First record: 3rd October 1995 (*Túzok* 1: 79-80).

SWITZERLAND Unusually large autumn flock: at least 300 at Val Chamuera on 14th October 1996.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

BELGIUM First record: Fonteintjes at Blankenberge, West-Vlaanderen, on 13th October 1995 (*Mergus* 10: 100-105).

FRANCE Fifth record: Ouessant on 10th October 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 170).

SPAIN First and second records: Tarragona on 19th October 1995* and Elche on 25th October 1995.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

SWITZERLAND Low numbers: very few in winter 1996/97.

Citrel Finch *Serinus citrinella*

BELGIUM Vagrant: Awirs on 13th October

1993 (eighth record; *Oriolus* 62: 49).

SWITZERLAND Migration: passage noted at Col de la Croix, including 120 on 4th October and 96 on 7th October 1996 (few observations of passage away from Col de Bretolet).

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

SPAIN First record: flock of 19 at Gijón, Asturias, on 15th October 1993.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*

HUNGARY First and second records: 12th September 1990 and 16th December 1990 (*Túzok* 1: 32, 34-35).

SWEDEN High numbers: occurred and bred in large numbers in northern Sweden in 1996; census of sample plots suggests that total number at the end of the breeding season may have been over 100,000 (in some of the censused areas, this was the fourth most common species).

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*

PORTUGAL First record: Cabo Espichel, Setúbal, on 6th August 1996.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

BELGIUM Range expansion: first record of pair in Wallonia, including a 'red' singing male in suitable breeding habitat, on 17th June 1996 (*Aves* 33: 129-132).

SPAIN First breeding-season record: male singing at Arties, Aran Valley, Pyrénées, on 31st May 1996*.

SWITZERLAND Increasing: from under ten records per annum during 1979-89 to over 25 per annum in 1992-94, with almost 50 in 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 322-323).

Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus*

FRANCE Presumed escape: 29th November 1994 (*Ornithos* 3: 175).

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*

BELGIUM Presumed escape: 28th November 1992 (*Oriolus* 62: 50).

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus*

NETHERLANDS Presumed escapes: first-winter male with aberrant moult and deformed bill on 28th October 1991 and singing presumed male with unusually pale plumage on 27th May 1993 (first Dutch records, but not admitted to Dutch List, *Dutch Birding* 18: 305-308).

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

SWITZERLAND High numbers: autumn 1994 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 315).

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

GREAT BRITAIN Vagrants: Beachy Head, East Sussex, on 2nd-3rd October 1996, Tresco,

Scilly, on 20th-25th October 1996, and Norwich, Norfolk, on 9th-15th November 1996.

Northern Parula *Parula americana*

FRANCE Second record: Ouessant on 21st October 1995 (*Ornithos* 3: 172).

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*

ICELAND First record: Borgir í Nesjum, A-Skaft., on 5th October 1996*.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: immature male on Gran Canaria in February 1984*.

NETHERLANDS First record: adult male on Vlieland, Friesland, on 13th-15th October 1996.

NORWAY First record: Utsira, Rogaland, on 8th October 1996*.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

GREAT BRITAIN Vagrant: Bardsey Island, Caernarfonshire, on 27th September 1996.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

FRANCE First record: Barfleur, Manche, on 25th August 1965, now officially added to Category A (formerly in D1).

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

MALTA First record: October 1995.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephala*

FRANCE Wintering population: maximum of seven males and two females in Camargue from 31st January 1997* (wintering probably regular for a long time, since five were ringed in Camargue during winter 1965/66).

GERMANY Vagrant: 21st October 1994 (*Limicola* 10: 251).

HUNGARY First record: 1st January 1986 (*Túzok* 1: 32, 35).

Official correspondents

ANDORRA Jacqueline Crozier; AUSTRIA Hans-Martin Berg; BELARUS Dr Michael E. Nikiforov; BELGIUM René-Marie Lafontaine; BULGARIA Dr Petar Iankov; CANARY ISLANDS Juan Antonio Lorenzo; CHANNEL ISLANDS Ian Buxton; CROATIA Jelena Kralj; CYPRUS A. E. Sadler; CZECH REPUBLIC Professor Karel Štastný; DENMARK Brian Rasmussen; EGYPT Sherif Baha El Din & Mindy Baha El Din; ESTONIA Dr Vilju Lilleleht; FAROE ISLANDS Soren Sorensen; FINLAND Pekka J. Nikander; FRANCE Dr Philippe J. Dubois; GERMANY Peter H. Barthel; GIBRALTAR Charles E. Perez; GREAT BRITAIN John Marchant; GREECE George I. Handrinos; HUNGARY Dr Gábor Magyar; ICELAND Gunnlaugur Pétursson; IRELAND Paul Milne; ISRAEL Hadoram Shirihai; ITALY Marco Gustin; LATVIA Dr Jānis Baumanis; LITHUANIA Dr Petras Kurlavicius; LUXEMBOURG Tom Conzemius; MACEDONIA Branko Micevski; MALTA Joe Sultana; MONTENEGRO Dr Vojislav F. Vasić; MOROCCO Michel Thévenot; NETHERLANDS Arnoud B. van den Berg; NORWAY Runar Jabekk; POLAND Dr Tadeusz Stawarczyk; PORTUGAL Dr Joao Carlos Farinha; SERBIA Dr Vojislav F. Vasić; SLOVAKIA Dr Alzbeta Darolová; SLOVENIA Iztok Geister; SPAIN Dr Eduardo de Juana; SWEDEN Tommy Tyrberg; SWITZERLAND Dr N. Zbinden; TUNISIA Thierry Gaultier; UKRAINE Dr Igor Gorbań.

SPAIN Third record: male at Masegosa, Cuenca province, on 30th March 1995.

SWEDEN Vagrants: three in 1995, in January-February, October and December (eight previous records; *Vår Fågelv.* suppl. 25: 141-142).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Status: population on Jersey stable/reducing, with eight singing males, including five pairs, in 1996.

Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*

BELGIUM First record for Western Palearctic: Tongeren on 20th October 1966 (*Oriolus* 62: 50).

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

HUNGARY First and second records: 7th November 1988 and 22nd October 1990 (*Túzok* 1: 35).

Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*

BELGIUM Presumed escape: 15th April 1974 (*Oriolus* 62: 50; cf. Shetland record in July 1974, *Brit. Birds* 88: 556).

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*

SPAIN Second record: first-year trapped at Cabrera island, Balearics, on 4th October 1995.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

HUNGARY First record: 23rd June 1995 (*Túzok* 1: 35).

SWITZERLAND Fifth and sixth records: 6th June 1995 and 21st-22nd June 1995 (*Orn. Beob.* 93: 340).

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*

NORWAY Correction: 1986 record was of male of unknown age on 13th May (not second-year male on 28th September, *Brit. Birds* 82: 24).



REVIEWS

Where to Watch Birds in the East Midlands: Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire & Nottinghamshire.

By Graham Catley.

A & C Black, London, 1996. 287 pages; 35 line-drawings; 60 site maps. ISBN 0-7136-4460-5. Paperback £12.99.

This new addition to the 'where to watch' titles begins with an overview of the region and explains the abbreviations used on the numerous site maps. It is pleasing to see full acknowledgment of the many people who have contributed detailed local information, and a list of contacts with addresses included as an appendix.

Each county is covered in turn, beginning with an outline map showing geographical positions of the sites. Although the Ordnance Survey map number for each area is given, inclusion of a few major towns on the county maps would have been helpful. The individual

sites are each discussed with reference to their habitat, followed by details of birds likely to be seen at different seasons, and some guidance on the best times to visit (with valuable advice on, for example, when there are likely to be large numbers of human visitors); access is covered in very good detail. A list of additional good birding sites is given, with map references and short summaries.

This book provides a useful 'reminder' reference for local birders and is an excellent guide for anyone wishing to visit sites within the region.

D. BUDWORTH

The Origin and Evolution of Birds.

By Alan Feduccia.

Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1996. 432 pages; 534 illustrations. ISBN 0-300-06460-8. Hardback £45.00.

This is a remarkable book. When it arrived for review, I glanced at it and thought 'H'm, typical coffee-table stuff.' How wrong I was! This is a deep, scholarly text about bird evolution, written largely from a fossil perspective. It is not an easy read, but is packed with information, and very well researched. Starting with the earliest fossils, the author leads through the development and evolution of modern birds. Detailed (very detailed!) chapters on the rise of birds of prey and ducks and their allies are masterly, and there is a super chapter on the evolution of

flightlessness.

The book is presented in a large-page format, with lots of pictures, including fabulous illustrations of fossils, and fascinatingly speculative reconstructions of long-extinct species. The book is sadly let down, however, by the quality of reproduction of the photographs of modern birds: some are so dark as to be worthless.

Not a light read, but a very worthwhile struggle.

DAVID T. PARKIN

Hybrid Ducks.

By Eric Gillham & Barry Gillham.

B. L. Gillham, Wallington, 1996. 88 pages; 53 colour plates; three black-and-white plates. ISBN 0-9511556-0-2. Paperback £14.00 (plus £1 p&p Europe, £2 elsewhere).

Do you remember 'The Lesser Scaup [*Aythya affinis*] affair'? A great many bird-watchers claimed Britain's first record for the species, but the bird, which was present for three consecutive winters on a Berkshire gravel-pit in the late 1950s, turned out to be a Common Pochard *A. ferina* × Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* hybrid (*Brit. Birds* 54: 49-54). Hybrid ducks may not turn you on,

but they cannot be ignored.

This book contains photographs (nearly all in colour) and descriptions of about 1,000 records of 161 different duck hybrids. Although many stem from waterfowl collections, others are of apparently wild origin. The authors do not pretend that this is the last word; indeed, they put in a plea for descriptions to accompany mentions of

hybrids in county bird reports. Over 200 publications are listed in the bibliography. The hybrids are presented in taxonomic

order, but, even so, an index would have been useful.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

Wings Guide to British Birds: a Channel 4 book. By Dominic Couzens. (Harper Collins, London, 1997. 251 pages. ISBN 0-00-20069-4. Paperback £12.99) Field guide with nice paintings (by Norman Arlott) reproduced far too small, along with tiny maps and very short texts. Linked with the Channel 4 TV series, so may be a helpful start for new converts to birdwatching.

JTRS

The Birds of the Galápagos Islands. By Isabel Castro & Antonia Phillips. (Christopher Helm, London, 1996. ISBN 0-7136-3916-4. Paperback £12.99) This new field guide to the birds of the Galápagos is an attractively produced paperback, containing 30 colour plates illustrating all of the islands' birds. The well-written species accounts are fairly lengthy and should provide enough information to identify the birds. Brief introductory sections provide some useful background to the islands, and all visitors will benefit from purchasing a copy.

DAVID FISHER

The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary. Edited by John E. Pemberton. (Buckingham Press, Maids Moreton, 1997. 320 pages. ISBN 0-9514965-7-3. Paperback £12.50) Comparing this, the latest, with my well-thumbed 1981 edition (the first), the basic theme has continued: why change a winning formula? There are fewer pages (just 35) devoted to articles; the rest is crammed with useful information, including bird recorders, bird clubs, RSPB groups and wildlife trusts, all by county; addresses of national and international organisations, tide tables and species lists, and a 60-page, useful 'where to watch birds'. Buy a copy! You will wonder how you managed without it.

BARRY NIGHTINGALE

Conservation of Mediterranean Wetlands. 4. Management of nest sites for colonial waterbirds. By C. Perennou, N. Sadoul, O. Pineau, A. Johnson & H. Hafner. (Tour du Valat, Arles, 1996. 114 pages. ISBN 2-910368-07-06. 751F) British site-managers can only dream of creating and managing habitats for the majority of the 28 species covered in this book. Attractively produced, this excellent, easily read publication will appeal to professional conservationists as well

as private and industrial landowners in the Mediterranean region. It discusses why colonial-nesting birds select a site, how colonies function, and how human influences affect colonial birds. Technical fact-sheets illustrate breeding structures, methods of attracting birds and management for specific species.

TIM APPLETON

Munias and Mannikins. By Robin Restall. (Pica Press, Sussex, 1996. 264 pages. ISBN 1-873403-51-8. Hardback £28.00) A delightful addition to this publisher's well-known series, but an unusual one in several respects. It deals with only a single genus, whose species the author has specifically kept as aviary birds for detailed study, complementing his extensive fieldwork. A most attractive set of 64 annotated colour plates of measured drawings and life studies augments 16 more-formal plates showing the full range of plumages and races. Many of the species are little known, and some new races are described, as well as a new species from Borneo, obtained from a dealer and kept in captivity, but not yet seen in the wild.

MARTIN WOODCOCK

Messages from an Owl. By Max R. Terman. (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996. 217 pages; 87 black-and-white photographs. ISBN 0-691-01105-2. £17.95) The author reared an abandoned nestling Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus* and released it into the wild in Kansas. Fascinating behavioural insights were obtained over the next five years through radio-tracking. Although tame enough to allow transmitter batteries to be replaced, the bird also found a wild mate and bred successfully.

MAO

Where to Watch Birds in Asia. By Nigel Wheatley. (A & C Black, London, 1996. 463 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4304-X. £14.99) This guide, the third in the series by this author, covers an immense area, from Turkey to Japan and Mongolia to Indonesia. It cannot hope to be comprehensive, and has no such pretensions, nor is it a detailed site guide. The reader is encouraged to consult the detailed trip reports other birders have written. Not a book to take with you on your Asian jaunt, but certainly one to dip into when planning a long or short trip.

STEVE ROOKE



DIARY DATES

Compiled by Sheila D. Cobban

This list covers July 1997 to August 1998

12th July ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST AGM & SUMMER MEETING. School of Oriental and African Studies, Russell Square, London. Details from A. J. Morris, 134 Station Road, Crayford, Kent DA1 3QQ.

24th July to 8th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

15th-17th August BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR. Eggleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water.

24th August ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB MEETING. Blakeney Village Hall, Blakeney, Norfolk. Details from OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

28th-30th August EUROPEAN ORNITHOLOGICAL UNION FOUNDATION MEETING. Bologna. Details from Dr Fernando Spina, Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica, Via Ca Fornacetta 9, 40064 Ozzano Emilia (BO), Italy.

30th-31st August SCOTTISH WILDLIFE & COUNTRYSIDE FAIR. Vane Farm RSPB Reserve, Kinross. Details from RSPB Scottish Office, 17 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BN.

1st September YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

5th-7th September BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION AUTUMN CONFERENCE. Stranmillis College, Belfast. 'Bird Science and Conservation—a view from Ireland.' Details from Dr Julian Greenwood, Science Department, Stranmillis College, Belfast BT9 5DY.

13th-14th September IRISH WILDLIFE & COUNTRYSIDE FAIR. Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Oxford Island NNR, Craigavon, Co. Armagh. Details from RSPB Northern Ireland Office, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 4QT.

31st October to 2nd November SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Balavil Sport Hotel, Newtonmore.

Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

3rd November BOU HALF-DAY CONFERENCE. 'Bioacoustics.' The Linnean Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London. Details from BOU, c/o The Natural History Museum, Akeman Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

14th-16th November SCOTTISH RINGERS' CONFERENCE. Fife Arms Hotel, Braemar. Details from Robert Rae, 11 Millend, Newburgh, Ellon, Aberdeenshire AB4 0AW.

5th-7th December BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

13th December OBC AGM. Zoological Society Meeting Rooms, Regent's Park, London.

15th December THE BEST ANNUAL BIRD REPORT AWARDS: closing date for entries.

9th-11th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Swanwick.

31st January BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

March IWC-BIRDWATCH IRELAND/RSPB ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE. 'Birds and tourism.' Wexford.

14th March JOINT SOC/BTO BIRDWATCHERS CONFERENCE. St Andrews.

15th March BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

20th-22nd March RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. York.

23rd-31st March XIV INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN BIRD CENSUS COUNCIL. Cottbus, Germany.

3rd-5th April BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM. 'Tropical forests and islands.'

4th-11th August V WORLD CONFERENCE ON BIRDS OF PREY AND OWLS. Midrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

16th-22nd August XXII INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS. Durban, South Africa.

Mrs S. D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Gurney's going, going . . .

As we probably all remember, after a four-year search, Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* was rediscovered on 14th June 1986. Philip Round now reports that 'Ten years to the very day after my rediscovery, on 14 June 1996, a bulldozer, hired by a local villager, started to smash down part of the core-area—90 hectares of secondary forest—which supports perhaps six pairs of Gurney's Pitta.

'Ten years and a quarter of my life later, I can say that the combined efforts of the Royal Forest Department's Wildlife Conservation Division and the Khao Nor Chuchi Lowland Forest Project might have slowed the conversion of forest to rubber and oilpalm, but they haven't stopped it. Even though the Thai government moved with commendable swiftness to declare a protected area at Khao Nor Chuchi soon after the discovery of the pitta, most of the lowland forest was excluded from the 150-km² reserve.

'Thai newspapers and television are full of stories about the perils of deforestation and environmental degradation. But it seems as if the forest we are all supposed to conserve exists only as an abstract concept, somewhere in our imaginations. Thailand's economy is growing rapidly, land prices are spiralling and illegal land speculation, sale and purchase is rife. At least three separate government agencies, the Department of Agricultural Co-operatives, the Office of Land Reform, and the Ministry of the Interior, are all pursuing policies that tend to promote further land clearance in the only known stronghold of Gurney's Pitta.

'Against their combined might, the Royal Forest Department (which itself was still allowing logging in the area until a few years ago) is powerless. Our present belief is that the numbers of Gurney's Pittas around Khao Nor Chuchi have declined from an estimated 39-40 pairs when we discovered them to 21-25 pairs, at most, today.'

This is just one example of a threatened species, one that has gained a lot of positive publicity within and outside the country where it is found, yet, even in this case, saving it from extinction seems to be much more difficult than rediscovering it when it was originally thought to have been extirpated. The full account by Phil Round (*World Birdwatch* 18 (3): 12-15) carries many messages applicable everywhere.

West Midlands good, but late

There are some county reports that are always a good read and worth dipping into even if you are not familiar with the area. What a pity we had to wait until 1997 for the 1994 *West Midland Bird Club Report*. The difficulties of producing such complete and detailed annual reports on a voluntary basis are well known to us and we do not intend criticism; all clubs

face these problems. As a personal view, we cannot help thinking that this report would have done very well in 'The Best Annual Bird Report Awards' had it been available in time to qualify. Copies can be obtained (£6.00 including p&p) from Mrs D. Dunstan, 4 Blossomfield Road, Solihull B91 1LD.

'Bibliography of English and Welsh County and Local Bird Lists'

David K. Ballance would be very glad to hear from anyone who has copies of unusual books or pamphlets (especially any that are not in existing national bibliographies) and who would like to receive a list of works not yet traced. His planned new *Bibliography* will also contain detailed accounts of all county and local reports. Works on even the smallest areas are of value (but not manuscripts). Please write or telephone to Flat Two, Dunboyne, Bratton Lane, Minehead, Somerset TA24 8SQ; phone 01643 706820.

Welcome 'Túzok'!

With more than just a change in name, the Hungarian journal *Túzok* (formerly tripping off the tongue as *Madártani Tájékoztató*) is a lively, up-to-date and modern-looking publication. There are substantial English-language summaries of papers (and headings for shorter notes). *Túzok* is published quarterly by the Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society (MME). The annual subscription is HUF4000 (about £17), payable by Eurocheque to MME, Költő u. 21., H-1121 Budapest, Hungary; phone & fax +36-1-1758327.

New birdwatching centre on Texel

The Dutch island of Texel is, justifiably, becoming a much-visited birding venue. With an island list of 334 species including Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus*, White-tailed Lapwing *Chettusia leucura* and Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*, it is not surprising that this easily accessible island with plenty of out-of-season accommodation is growing in popularity with British

birdwatchers looking for somewhere a little different at migration time. Arend Wassink, long-time resident on Texel, has recently opened the Texel Birdwatching Centre to act as a meeting and information point for birders on the island. On offer is use of a library, cycle hire, bar, meals, accommodation and, of course, information. Contact Arend on +31-222-316416.

East Lancs guide

Although the title—*East Lancashire Ornithologists' Club: a members' guide, species by species, to assist record keeping and reporting*—might suggest that this is a short, two-page or three-page information sheet, it is in fact a 132-page booklet, compiled by Peter Hornby, and the text more closely resembles a county avifauna. There are, for instance, full pages devoted to species such as Magpie *Pica pica*, Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* and Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*. The text covers almost the whole range of subjects which might interest the local birdwatcher seeing (or hoping to see) any of these species in his or her home area.

Produced cheaply (£5.00 incl. p&p), other local and county clubs and societies might consider producing a similar document—as a cockshy, for example—a year or two before publication of a full county avifauna, to attract comments and extra records. Copies of this *ELOC Guide* can be obtained from the Club Secretary, Doug Windle, 39 Stone Age Road, Barrowford, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 6BB (make cheques payable to E.L.O.C.).

RSPB Conservation Review 1996

First published in 1987, the *RSPB Conservation Review* is now a well-established annual publication that gives an insight into the broad range of the RSPB's conservation work. The RSPB now manages one of the largest conservation estates in the UK. The current year will see this estate pass the 100,000-ha mark. All the Society's work, whether on its reserves or elsewhere, is based on careful research and, in any one year, the RSPB spends some £2 million on biological and economic research. Vol. 10 in the series contains information as diverse as details of UK Bird Species of Conservation Concern (now known as BoCC and replacing the old label of Red Data Birds), work in the field of marine conservation, an inventory of British reedbeds, restoring Dorset heathland, and the importance of RSPB reserves for amphibians and reptiles. Copies are available, price £10.00, including p&p, from RSPB Conservation Review, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

George Edwards (1910-1996)

George Edwards, who died on 20th July 1996, was a pioneer in British ornithology and bird-photography. Born in Halifax in 1910, he made his first film in 1933, using an *Ensign* cine-camera. A year later, while filming in Scotland, he discovered the first-ever known instance of breeding by Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* in Britain (*Brit. Birds* 28: 97-99). Also in 1934, he made the first of many visits to Spurn which were to continue for the next 60 years. During the 1940s and into the 1950s, George spent much of his time working with Eric Hosking, whose pioneering flash-photography allowed hitherto unseen views of birds in flight. Together with Stuart Smith, the three of them studied bird behaviour, publishing their work in *British Birds* (e.g. 'Aggressive display of the Ringed Plover [*Charadrius hiaticula*]', *Brit. Birds* 40: 12-19; 'Aggressive display of the Oystercatcher [*Haematopus ostralegus*] studied by means of stuffed specimens and a mirror', *Brit. Birds* 41: 236-243; and the classic 'Reactions of some passerine birds to a stuffed Cuckoo [*Cuculus canorus*]', *Brit. Birds* 42: 13-19). Despite this pedigree in still-photography, George was always a cine-photographer at heart. In 1954, he started the RSPB Film Unit and invested in a 16-mm *Bolex* cine-camera, the latest in cine technology at that time. With this, he made the first RSPB films, including the first

footage of Minsmere ('Birds of an Eastern County'). In 1957, he left the RSPB and turned to filming overseas, travelling the oceans from the Antarctic to Spitsbergen for the British Antarctic Survey and Anglia TV's 'Survival'. He specialised in filming on remote islands, where he would be dropped off with nothing much but camera and film, to be collected some weeks later. This style of filming took him around the World several times by ship, including an astonishing 52,000 nautical miles in 1959. George was a meticulous diarist, and from the age of 15 to the day he died most of his experiences are recorded in detail. He was also an accomplished artist: many a Spurn rarity was captured by his water-colours and, during his maritime voyages in the 1960s, he painted most of the oceans' pelagic species.

His contemporaries will remember George as a short man, usually wearing a long coat, a black beret and a large pair of *Barr & Stroud* binoculars: he rarely wore anything different. George had a remarkable wit. The late Eric Hosking recalled him 'even turning Harry Witherby to helpless laughter'. He always had time for everyone, especially children, young ornithologists or not. He gave many lectures at schools and ornithological societies, starting in Halifax in 1933 and finishing in Southampton in 1995. (*Contributed by Peter Edwards*)

Just as you thought 'Acros' were getting easier

Once upon a time, the separation of Sedge *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and Aquatic Warblers *A. paludicola* was considered quite a problem, but is now regarded as fairly straightforward (*Brit. Birds* 76: 342-346), despite the odd hiccup (*Brit. Birds* 77: 377-378). The separation of Reed *A. scirpaceus*, Marsh *A. palustris* and Blyth's Reed Warblers *A. dumetorum*, and of Great Reed *A. arundinaceus*, Clamorous Reed *A. steutoricus* and Basra Reed Warblers *A. griseldis* were also beginning to be clarified (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 77: 393-411; 79: 392-396; 80:

280-281; 81: 171-178), despite 'Mead Warblers' looking like Reed and singing like Marsh (*Brit. Birds* 58: 181-188, 473-478).

Now, as well as the case of the Sedge Warbler × Reed Warbler hybrids, looking a bit like Black-browed Reed Warblers *A. bistrigiceps* (*Brit. Birds* 78: 434-435), there is a medium-sized *Acrocephalus* warbler in Germany which has been shown by mtDNA analysis to be a hybrid between a male Reed Warbler and a female Great Reed Warbler (*Limicola* 10: 281-303). Help!

Bulgaria, the British connection

Along with numerous other European bird societies, the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds now has a British address to handle membership and other matters for

its supporters in the UK. Write to the BSPB(UK) Secretary, Ann Scott, 8 Woodlands, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 1UE.

Cats under scrutiny

The domestic moggy periodically comes in for criticism for its 'wanton destruction of birds and other wildlife'. A 1988 survey by the Mammal Society found that Siamese cats were the most efficient killers, each bringing in an average of seven birds and mammals per month.

My own Siamese cat kills (and eats), on average, two or three Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and one Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* per week, and also regularly catches Wood Pigeons *Columba palumbus* and Common Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus*. Since he was a kitten, however, anything smaller seems to have been beneath his dignity, unless it has provided an irresistible target. In the last five years, three such examples were a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* snagged by its wing on a Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* impeded by a spider's web as it fluttered against a window, and a male Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* which perched in a bush, watching the cat, but allowed himself to be caught by the cat with its mouth. All three 'deserved' to become victims, natural selection acting against their incompetence or stupidity. The only other regular victims are nestling, recently fledged and protective parent Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris*, which similarly just ask for trouble by shouting out 'Here we are! Come and eat us!'.

So, like Rosamund Kidman Cox, Editor of



BBC Wildlife (March 1997, page 5), I have now come out of the closet to reveal myself as a cat-loving birdwatcher. (The March 1997 issue of *BBC Wildlife* includes a four-page article on the subject.)

A new survey to monitor avian and mammalian kills by domestic cats is being organised by the Mammal Society from 1st April to 31st August. For details of how to take part, send a SAE to Mammalaction Cat Survey, The Mammal Society, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Row, London SW8 4BG.

Incidentally, *BBC Wildlife* is a splendid read each month, covering every aspect of natural history, with stunning photographs. From your local newsagent or PO Box 425, Woking, Surrey GU21 1GP; phone 01483 733748; fax 01483 756792. (JTRS)

North Kent revisited

Many years ago, one of us (BS) was living and working on the North Kent marshes, one of the best-known birding areas in southern England and one that had seen massive changes in agriculture (land drainage and conversion to arable), industry (more roads, buildings and development) and increasing human population and associated pressures (recreational activities). Recently, and some 20 years later, he had cause to return to the area for a few days and a mixed bag of changes was apparent.

Hay lay in the fields in large plastic-covered rolls, not bales to go into stacks where the Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* or Little Owls *Athene noctua* could nest; the set-aside was full of Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis*; and, although the orchards were fewer, some of those remaining looked abandoned and overgrown, full of suitable nesting sites. There were fewer sheep; no Tree Sparrows *Passer*

montanus; singing Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* and 'purring' Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* were widespread, but probably less numerous; and everywhere was very, very dry.

Recently produced for North Kent are three educational booklets, written by Chris Skinner on behalf of the RSPB, the National Rivers Authority (now the Environment Agency) and Kent County Council. Entitled *Exploring the North Kent Marshes*, they deal with the landscape, the wildlife, and human usage of the area and are intended as information-and-activity packs for teachers and pupils. As Bill Oddie says in his introduction, 'It's changed, but it's still a fascinating area and not just to the birdwatcher.'

Further details from Chris Skinner, RSPB Education Adviser, South-east Office, 2nd Floor, Frederick House, 42 Frederick Place, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 1AT.

Scottish Wildlife Photographic Competition

Colour or black-and-white prints or transparencies of (a) Scottish wildlife, (b) lochs, burns and landscapes and (c) people and conservation may be submitted for the third annual Kodak/Lizars Photographic Competition. The closing date is 18th July 1997, so hurry now to get a copy of the rules and an entry form by sending a SAE to Kodak/Lizars 1997 Photographic Competition, c/o RSPB Scottish Headquarters, 17 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BN.

Prizes will be awarded and a selection of entries displayed at the Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Fair at Vane Farm RSPB Nature Reserve, by Loch Leven, on 31st August 1997.

Alcoholic RSPB

The RSPB won two awards in Scotland in 1996, both associated with alcohol. The first was the Glenfiddich (of malt-whisky fame) Living Scotland Award for the work at the Mersehead Reserve, Dumfries & Galloway. The Society is in the process of creating a wetland complex that will not only continue to attract the wintering flock of Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*, but also provide breeding sites for a range of grassland wildfowl and waders. The second award (actually the RSPB came second) was the Laurent-Perrier (of champagne fame) Award for Wild Game Conservation, such work currently being undertaken at the Abernethy Reserve, Highland. Work at the site over the last seven years has seen a significant increase in numbers of Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus* and, more impressively, Black Grouse *T. tetrix*. The latter increased by over 300% between 1989 and 1996, at a time of national decline of the species.

Málaga in 1994

Congratulations to the group SEO-Málaga on producing the first-ever bird report to be published in Andalucía. In addition to the systematic list, detailing some 248 species, there is a very full ringing report for the years 1980-94. There are articles, all with an English summary, on a winter census of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, sources of colour-ringed Audouin's Gulls *Larus audouinii* and the status of Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* and Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*. A glance down the list of contributors reveals a few (very few) British birders. There are

Why 'Bird Watching'?

Periodically, someone asks us 'Why do you keep giving "plugs" to *Bird Watching*?', inferring (even if they do not say so) that other commercial bird magazines are at least as good.

One answer is that it is reciprocal. *Bird Watching* often goes out of its way to mention articles or features in *BB*, and studiously avoids setting up, say, a photographic or illustration contest in direct competition with our BPY or BIY.

More importantly, however, *Bird Watching*—while not failing to criticise when this is justified—does not target the BTO, the RSPB, the BOU or other such organisations, which by and large do sterling work, with provocative, headline-making adverse publicity. Thank heavens that *Bird Watching*, published by the giant EMAP corporation (powerful enough to do almost anything it chooses), has invariably taken a balanced viewpoint and has consistently tried to give newcomers to the hobby/science of bird-watching/ornithology good, balanced advice. We hope that EMAP is aware of how lucky it is to have David Cromack as Editor of *Bird Watching*.

You should be able to get *Bird Watching* from your local newsagent. If not, write to Bird Watching, EMAP Pursuit Publishing Ltd, Bretton Court, Peterborough PE3 8DZ.

Birds of Bexley

Southeast London birders may like to know that we can expect a publication on the *Birds of Bexley* in 1998. Ralph Todd is working on its preparation: if you have any unpublished data, please contact him at 9 Horsham Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7HU.

clearly very many more birdwatchers visiting from northern Europe, and they should all make it a matter of principle to contribute their records following any visit. This seems to be the usual failing of modern birding—an unwillingness to submit details of observations.

Anuario Ornitológico de Málaga, 1994 is obtainable (price £8.00 including p&p, by international giro or Eurocheque only) from A. M. Paterson, SEO-Málaga, Edificio San Gabriel 2-4-A, Escritor Adolfo Reyes, E-29620 Torremolinos, Spain.

Fossil code

English Nature has issued a code of practice for fossil-collecting. So, if you spot them when out birdwatching, don't just pick up those ammonites.

1. Seek agreement over access to sites and over the ownership of any fossils you collect.
2. Collect only a few representative specimens.
3. Record precisely where and when fossils were found.
4. Involve specialists where needed and place important specimens in museums or other appropriate collections.
5. Avoid disturbance to wildlife and do not leave the site in an untidy or dangerous condition.

English Nature's palaeontologist, Dr Jonathan Larwood, comments that 'Responsible collecting, whether by professional or amateur, can make a significant

contribution to our scientific knowledge. Irresponsible collecting delivers no scientific or conservation gain . . .'. Substitute 'noting and reporting' for 'collecting', and these comments would apply equally to birdwatching.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

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Don Taylor—*Southeast*

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John Wilson—*Northwest*



MONTHLY MARATHON



April's warbler (plate 33) was photographed in an exotic location (in Portugal, by Dr Kevin Carlson, in June 1990) and a few competitors gambled on Spectacled *Sylvia conspicillata*, Subalpine *S. cantillans*, Desert *S. nana* or Barred *S. nisoria*, but, by and large, contestants were not fooled, most identifying it as Common Whitethroat *S.*

communis.

Some copies of the May issue have a poorly printed version of plate 49, so this has been repeated (on page xi) in this issue; and the deadline for entries for that tenth stage has been extended to 15th July 1997, the same as for the eleventh stage (plate 57).



▲ 57. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 131. Eleventh stage in ninth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 66), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th July 1997.



RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most-recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1996 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* Salthouse (Norfolk), 7th October. **Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel** *Pterodroma madeira/P. feae/P. mollis* Sea Area Fair Isle, 25th June; Newbiggin (Northumberland), 13th September; Strumble Head (Pembrokeshire), 4th October. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* First-summer male, Anglers Gravel-pit and adjacent waters (West Yorkshire), 15th-21st April; Frodsham (Cheshire), 16th May to 9th September; female, Drift Reservoir (Cornwall), 17th-18th November; Suthians Reservoir (Cornwall), 23rd November to at least 5th December, and, same individual, Argal Reservoir (Cornwall), 28th December into 1997. **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* Rye Meads (Hertfordshire), 30th September to 1st October. **Terck Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Bowling Green Marsh (Devon), 2nd June. **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* Singing, Doxey Marshes (Staffordshire), 20th June to 22nd July. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* of 'two-barred' race *plumbeitarsus* Holkham Meads (Norfolk), 15th-16th October. **Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* Waterside, Wigton (Cumbria), 13th July into 1997. **Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* Stornoway (Western Isles), 26th-29th October.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churehtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 14th April to 11th May 1997.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Fetlar (Shetland), 26th April; Dungeness (Kent), 1st May. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Male, Gransha Lake (Co. Londonderry), 10th May. **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* St Kilda (Western Isles), 19th April. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Hetton-le-Hole (Co. Durham), 7th May. **Terck Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Loch of Strathbeg (Grampian), 9th May. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Drift Reservoir (Cornwall), 22nd April; Musselburgh (Lothian), 27th April. **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* Summer-plumaged adult, Cork City (Co. Cork), 15th April. **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* Tynemouth (Co. Durham), 2nd May. **Gull-**

billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* Two, Landguard (Suffolk), 1st May. **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 11th May. **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Foreland (Isle of Wight), 5th May. **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* Six in southern England between 29th April and 8th May. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Bude (Cornwall), 3rd-4th May; Newton Marsh (Lancashire), 4th-6th May. **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* Calf of Man (Isle of Man), 7th May. **Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspiciellata* Landguard, 26th April to 2nd May. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Tiree (Highland), 30th April to 1st May.



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(BB098)

MONTHLY MARATHON



This photograph (plate 49) was reproduced badly in many copies of the May issue. It is reprinted here for the benefit of 'Monthly marathon' competitors, and the deadline for entries is extended from 15th June to 15th July 1997. The four-page section involved (pages 177-178 & 199-200) will be reprinted, supplied to the binders and included in bound volumes at the end of the year. Anyone else wishing to have one of these reprinted four-page sections may write for one to Bob Ratcliff, Newnorth Print Ltd, College Street, Kempston, Bedford MK42 8NA.

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British Birds

Volume 90 Number 6 June 1997

Obituary

- 209 Vero Copner Wynne-Edwards
DSc FRS CBE (1906-1997)
Dr W. R. P. Bourne

- 211 **The breeding birds of Inner London, 1966-94** *P. J. Oliver*

- 226 **Conservation research news**
Dr Mark Avery

Notes

- 227 Feeding association of Little Grebes with Ring-necked Duck *John Peatfield*
- 227 Black-necked Grebe associating with Tufted Ducks *Terry Mitcham*
- 228 Treecop-hunting by Hen Harriers
R. C. Dickson
- 228 Merlin falling down chimney with prey
M. H. Smith
- 229 Aberrant tail pattern of adult Black-headed Gull *Keith Bowey and Brian Pollinger*
- 229 Carrion Crow attacking and grounding Herring Gull *David G. P. Chatfield*

Letter

- 230 Marsh Warblers breeding in Orkney: first Scottish breeding record *E. R. Meek and R. G. Adam*

- 230 **Looking back**

- 231 **Bird Photograph of the Year**
Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr R. J. Chandler, R. A. Hume and Don Smith

- 238 **European news**

Reviews

- 251 'Where to Watch Birds in the East Midlands: Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire & Nottinghamshire' by Graham Catley *D. Budworth*
- 251 'The Origin and Evolution of Birds' by Alan Feduccia *Professor David T. Parkin*
- 251 'Hybrid Ducks' by Eric Gillham & Barry Gillham *Dr Malcolm Ogilvie*
- 252 Short reviews

- 253 **Diary dates** *Mrs S. D. Cobban*

- 254 **News and comment** *Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott*

- 259 **Monthly marathon**

- 260 **Recent BBRC decisions** *M. J. Rogers*

- 260 **Recent reports** *Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan*

Line-drawing: 211 Common Kestrel, East London (*Andy Maguire*)

Front cover: Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* courtship feeding, Haytor Down, Dartmoor, May 1993 (*John M. Walters*): the original of this month's cover design, measuring 16.9 × 16.7 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 72 in January issue for procedure).



