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Rare Breeding Birds Panel

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in the UK in 2021

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Mark Eaton and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Abstract This report documents the status of 111 species and subspecies of rare or scarce native birds that bred, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2021. This is by far the highest number of taxa reported on in a single year by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, and includes the first occurrence in these reports of Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans* and Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*. More significantly, it was a good year for many species of heron and their allies, with continued increases by colonisers such as Great White Egret *Ardea alba* and Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*. There were new record totals for four raptors and three northern wader species. Furthermore, Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* very likely attempted to breed in the UK for the first time since 1997. However, both Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* and Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* failed to breed for the second year in succession.

This is the 48th report published by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) and includes records of the 111 rare or scarce native taxa that bred, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2021. In addition, Appendix 2 summarises the records received for 12 rare, non-native breeding species. Although reporting by the RBBP to date covers 48 years, the Panel is celebrating its 50th anniversary as an independent body in 2023; so, in addition to summarising rare breeding bird activity in 2021, this report looks back over the last half century at changes in both how the RBBP works and the bird populations on which the Panel reports.

The area covered by the RBBP includes the four countries of the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), plus the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Using 'UK' as a shorthand reference, this is the same unit used by other national monitoring programmes, such as the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) (Heywood *et al.* 2023), and by Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury *et al.* 2021). The RBBP species list is available to view at www.rbbp.org.uk/species-overview. There has been one change on the list since last year, this being the removal of

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* following the results of the first national survey (Wotton *et al.* in prep.), which revealed a provisional population of 5,700 pairs, considerably in excess of the upper threshold of 2,000 breeding pairs used by RBBP to determine which species are monitored.

Review of 2021

Both wetter and colder than average, the 2020/21 winter saw some notable weather extremes. There was a particularly cold snap in February, when -23°C was recorded in Braemar, North-east Scotland, on 11th – the coldest UK temperature since 1995. There were no extended cold spells, however, so resident species may have escaped high mortality. Only two weeks later, temperatures were unseasonably high, with 18.4°C recorded in Suffolk in late February, and 24.5°C at Kew, Surrey, in late March. April was generally dry and was the sunniest on record in the UK but, by way of contrast, May was the wettest on record in Wales, the fifth wettest in England and fourth wettest in the UK as a whole. Notably, northwest Scotland experienced the most pronounced excess, with spring rainfall exceeding the

long-term average by over 150% – high water levels are likely to have been problematic for some species (see, e.g., Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*). The summer was in general warm, the ninth-warmest on record for the UK as a whole, but with a pronounced northwest/southeast split – Scotland and Northern Ireland received sunnier and warmer weather; the 31.3°C recorded at Castleterragh, Co. Tyrone, on 21st July was Northern Ireland's highest temperature on record. Storm Evert, the UK's first named storm to occur in July, brought heavy rain to the south and unusually strong winds for the time of year, which may have caused some losses amongst late breeders.

The RBBP report for 2020 (Eaton *et al.* 2022) was heavily compromised by the impacts of Covid-19 lockdowns on fieldwork in the spring of that year and the resulting effect on data availability. As a consequence, the recording and reporting of most rare breeding birds was adversely affected (44 of 75 regularly reported species, i.e. 59%) and we did not publish updated population estimates and trends for these species. In this report, we return to publishing updated statistics for all the species for which we believe our normal data flows are sufficiently complete, with 2020 data omitted from the calculations of 5-year means and trends. However, we do acknowledge that continued lockdown restrictions in the spring of 2021 may have again reduced field activity, albeit not to the same extent as in 2020. All four UK countries entered new lockdown periods in late December 2020 or early January 2021, with restrictions being eased incrementally from March onwards. As in 2020, impacts may have been greatest in Wales, and most significant for the recording of species for which early season fieldwork is important (e.g. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*), but there is no evidence to suggest a significant impact on UK-level reporting for any species.

This report covers 111 species or races of rare breeding birds reported breeding, or attempting to breed, in the UK in 2021. This is considerably more than any previous RBBP report – the next-highest total was 101 taxa, reported in 2020. This is in some part due to a considerable number of records of vagrant individuals demonstrating breeding

behaviour, including the first RBBP records for Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans* and Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* and the second records of Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Calidris subruficollis*, 'American Black Tern' *Chlidonias niger surinamensis* and Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*. In addition to these examples, there are records for another ten species for which we have never reported confirmed breeding in the UK, plus long-staying individuals of Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* and Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, which have only ever bred in mixed pairings (but not, in 2021, Black Duck *Anas rubripes*, as the male in Highland disappeared after a six-year residency).

We also report a 'full house' of the various species of herons and allies that may be on the verge of colonisation from continental Europe – Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* and Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* – although there were no proven breeding records for any of these in 2021. Perhaps more significantly, all of the more established long-legged colonisers – Common Crane *Grus grus*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Great White Egret *A. alba* and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* – reached record totals in 2021, as did Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*. While the influence of unwanted anthropogenic climate change in driving the increases in at least some of these species must be acknowledged, the significant role of conservation action, both in the UK and across Europe, in supporting population growth should be celebrated.

Also pleasing is that four raptor species – Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* and White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* – reached new record totals in 2021, with the number of reported pairs of Northern Goshawk exceeding 1,000 for the first time. The nascent recovery of the English population of Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* continues, with considerable breeding success in 2021. Conversely, for the second year in a row there was no confirmed breeding by Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* and indeed only two

displaying males with no sign of a female to offer them (or us) hope.

One recent – and rather surprising – phenomenon is the increase in some rare breeding waders in northern Scotland. In 2021, the Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* population in the UK reached a new high of 146 pairs, having increased by 323% in the last ten years, while both Green *Tringa ochropus* and Wood Sandpipers *T. glareola* also reached new record totals. What is driving these increases, which are rather counterintuitive in the face of climate change predictions of ranges shifting northwards (e.g. Huntley *et al.* 2007), is unclear. A fourth example was the unexpected return of Temminck's Stint after a long gap in breeding records.

After a lockdown-related absence from our 2020 report, it was pleasing to see that Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* still hang on in the UK, breeding successfully in their traditional high-altitude site in northern Scotland. The results of a survey of Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, organised by the RSPB, suggest that numbers in the UK remain at least stable, although the species' range appears to have retracted from Caithness and Orkney.

Not all northern breeders are faring well. Most notably, the maximum total of 20 pairs of Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* is the lowest since RBBP reporting began in 1973, and only three female Ruffs *Calidris pugnax* were reported attending leks. Numbers of another lekking species, the Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, were the lowest (excluding 2020 data) since lek monitoring was established in 2003; a similar decline in the numbers of this species was recorded by the 2021/22 winter survey, which estimated the population had fallen to 542 individuals (Wilkinson *et al.* in press). Finally, numbers of Corn Crane *Crex crex* fell to their lowest since 2003.

After regular confirmed-breeding records of Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* in recent years, a single singing

male on one date was a poor return, and Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* was absent as a breeding species for the second year in a row.

It can be difficult, given the between-year variation and mix of good and bad news on individual species, to gain a clear perspective on the fortunes of the UK's rare breeding birds overall. Changes in the UK's rare breeding birds over the last five decades have been discussed in recent review papers to mark the occasion of our 50th anniversary (Eaton *et al.* 2023a; Stroud *et al.* 2023), and are discussed for individual species in this report. However, it is also useful to look at the data for rare breeding species over a shorter, ten-year timescale. There are 52 taxa for which RBBP data are sufficiently robust to calculate population trends over the most recent ten-year period covered by the reports (2011–21). The four species showing the greatest increases in population size over this period are Great White Egret, Cattle Egret, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and Eurasian Spoonbill. At the other end of the spectrum, the greatest declines have been shown by Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* (now classed as a former breeder), Montagu's Harrier, Yellow-legged Gull and Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*. If we categorise these changes (using the thresholds defined in table 1), we find that there is a marked concentration of species (24 of 52) showing a strong increase (fig. 1).

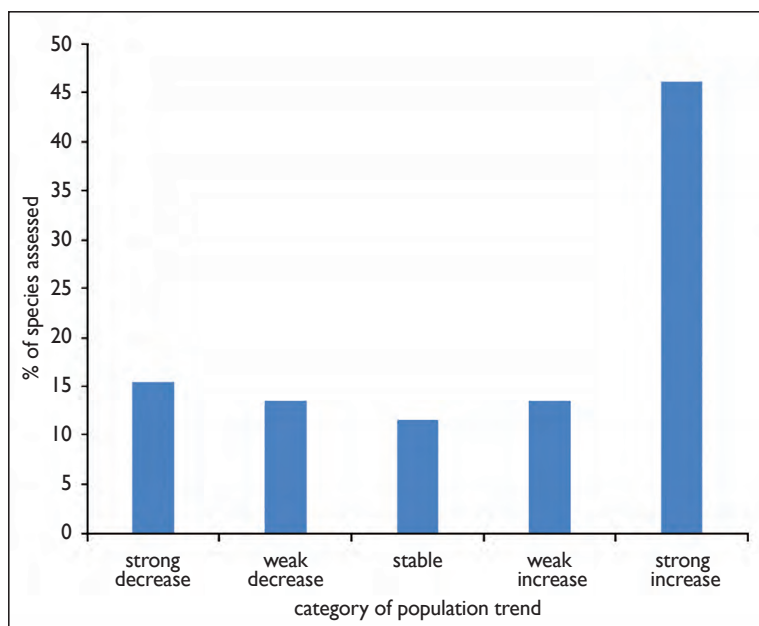


Fig. 1. Categorized 10-year trends in RBBP species, 2011–21.

Data sources and submission

The most important sources of information behind this report are the detailed submissions compiled by the UK's county and regional bird recorders. These recorders, all of whom are volunteers, are uniquely placed to understand the relevance and context of the records they receive from birders. The volume of original data received by recorders has grown substantially in recent years, increasing their workload but underlining the key role that they play. Of course, county recorders, and in turn RBBP, are highly dependent on observers submitting records in the first place. It is vital that birders across the UK continue to make their sightings available, not least for the value these records have for conservation, as outlined in this report.

In most recent years, we have received direct submissions of data from all of the UK's recording areas. Unfortunately, we did not receive data directly for Gwent and Perth & Kinross in 2021 – the latter because no recorder is in place currently – although some data were obtained from other sources for both counties. Other than data submitted by county bird recorders, our important data sources include returns from Schedule 1 licence holders, the BTO/JNCC Nest Record Scheme, raptor study groups, annual species' monitoring, periodic national surveys, and counts from RSPB reserves; a fuller description of these sources is given in Stroud *et al.* (2023).

Best efforts are made to capture the information on rare breeding birds that these multiple sources provide, but the identification of such additional records is only possible when county recorders submit site-level information for all species on which they report, rather than county totals. If only species' totals are available, it is not possible for us to determine whether records from other sources are additional or have been counted already. We therefore continue to encourage all recorders to provide site-level data for *all* species covered by the RBBP.

The report was enabled by the collation of just over 10,000 individual records, which, once duplicate records were identified, provided 7,300 unique records. This latter number has risen thanks to more recorders providing site-level information for species, rather than simply providing county totals.

Previously unsubmitted data for any years are still welcome, and make valuable additions to our archive. Birders should consider submitting not only their local records but also sightings made when birdwatching anywhere in the UK, especially in more remote and less well-covered areas, particularly northern and western Scotland. Additions, amendments and corrections to published reports from 2005 onwards are available on the RBBP website (www.rbbp.org.uk), alongside copies of our annual reports and an 'explore reports' facility, which allows bespoke report extracts for chosen species and years to be generated. These files are updated regularly, and anyone using the RBBP reports for reference or study should always check the online amendments. If you hold records that you think are missing from this report, please submit them to the relevant county recorder (and if you are a county recorder, please submit such old records directly to the RBBP Secretary).

By 2025, we will hold an archive spanning 50 years of change in the UK's rare breeding birds. We plan a range of analyses and publications based on this lengthy dataset, so wish it to be as complete as possible before we begin. We are particularly keen to receive old records of breeding and potential breeding of extremely rare breeders not shared with us previously, and additional information (such as site details) for records for which this was withheld in the original submission. If you have valuable data sitting on a hard drive or in old notebooks, please consider sharing; contact the Secretary at secretary@rbbp.org.uk (see also *Brit. Birds* 115: 392).

Receiving accurate grid references with species data is especially important to ensure good-quality records of rare breeding birds. Site information is not published, and these data remain confidential and securely stored. The lack of accurate site data remains a particular problem for raptors, for which we receive many records summarised by area, or without grid references. Either way, we are unable to eliminate the possibility that some of these may duplicate records submitted via other routes. Consequently, we cannot use the majority of those records in the compilation of the figures reported here, diminishing the value and quality of our archive and restricting the use of these data for conserva-

tion purposes. Our annual totals for species such as Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Northern Goshawk and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* are likely to be underestimates, because some imprecise data cannot be included in our summaries.

Recommendations and guidelines on data submission are available online, together with our recording standards and species-specific guidelines (www.rbbp.org.uk). Anyone with experience in monitoring a rare species is encouraged to share their expertise through the further development of these guidelines.

50 years of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This year, we have taken the opportunity to look back over the 50 years since the RBBP was established as an independent body (having operated previously, since 1968, as an RSPB sub-committee). Two papers have been published, reviewing the history of the Panel and how it operates (Stroud *et al.* 2023) and some of the broad patterns of avian change that our monitoring has shown (Eaton *et al.* 2023a). In addition, we held our first conference, with online talks, which can still be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/RBBPconf>.

The period during which the RBBP has existed has seen many changes – in the recording community, in how the Panel itself operates, and in the populations of rare breeding birds (and the species involved) themselves. The remit of the Panel has expanded, from the very rare species covered initially to today's wider consideration, which extends to species best considered as scarce breeders as well as rare non-native breeding species (recently reported upon for the 2015–2020 period; Eaton *et al.* 2023b).

Our first report, for 1973 (Sharrock *et al.* 1975), covered just 42 species, with nine of those being merely reported on as 'no records received'. Of the remaining 33, 30 are still being reported upon in 2021. Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* and Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* have been removed from consideration, as their populations have outgrown even our scarce category. This year's report contains eight of 1973's nine 'no records received' species, such as European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*,

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* and Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*; only European Serin *Serinus serinus* evaded reporting in both 1973 and 2021 – though, as the recently published review by Holling (2023) showed, there were many breeding records in the intervening period.

In that first year of reporting, there were some issues around the sharing of data with the RBBP and, of course, ornithological activity – and thus levels of recording effort – was different from that of the modern day, so we cannot be too precise in our comparisons between 1973 and 2021. However, it is possible to make broad comparisons for most of the species concerned. Besides the three aforementioned species that are no longer covered by the Panel, there are another 14 that have clearly increased in numbers since 1973 – for example, Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* were restricted to just four sites in 1973, no records of breeding Mediterranean Gulls *Ichthyophaga melanocephalus* were received, and the colonisation of Scotland by Common Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* had only just begun, with three pairs reported. Twelve species, including Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* and Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, have shown relatively little change in status since 1973, although, in some cases, there have been considerable fluctuations over the intervening decades. Finally, there are 11 species for which numbers are now clearly lower than 48 years ago. These include Red-backed Shrike, for which the report gave 40 pairs in 1973 accompanied with a caveat that 'data are very incomplete'; Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, for which 133 pairs were reported despite the lack of data from Caithness; and Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, with up to 80 breeding pairs back then.

Of course, there have been many other changes outwith this comparison, with 14 species having established themselves as regular breeders in the UK since 1973, and the expansion of the Panel's role to include many more species. Over three times as many taxa are covered in this report than back in 1973 and, as this expansion has included many more-abundant species, the volume of records has increased even more so – the reports in 1973 summed to just over 1,100

breeding pairs, whereas this year's report details over 27,000 breeding pairs. It is of course fortunate that technology has also developed, with electronic methods of communication, data-sharing, archiving and analysis enabling the production of this report. The current Secretary shudders to think of compiling the 2021 report using the postal service and paper records, as Tim Sharrock did for the 1973 report!

Conservation and other uses of RBBP data

Stroud (2019) reviewed the work of the RBBP, and how this serves to support a range of conservation purposes, and Stroud *et al.* (2023) gave an updated overview of how RBBP data is used. RBBP's policy is to make data available for relevant conservation uses, with appropriate controls over the spatial resolution at which data are provided. Site-specific information is used by JNCC and the national statutory nature conservation bodies, and national datasets by the RSPB for survey and conservation planning. Over the 12-month period up to August 2023, we received six requests for data or summary information. In addition, population totals published in the *BB* reports are widely used by conservation organisations. Trends for selected species were also supplied for use in the UK, England and Scotland Wild Bird Indicators, the UK Priority Species Indicator and the Scottish Marine and Terrestrial Species Indicators, and in the *State of Nature 2023* report (Burns *et al.* 2023).

The Panel

The Panel currently has eight members, all of whom serve in a personal capacity, although some also reflect the interests of the funding partners. They are Helen Baker, Dawn Balmer (Chair), Mark Eaton (Secretary), Ian Francis, Mark Holling, David Norman, Andy Stanbury and David Stroud. Andrew King, Panel member since 2010, stepped down in 2023, and we wish to thank him for his input over this 13-year period. In particular, insights from his experience as county bird recorder for Breconshire, as well as his knowledge of the recording community in Wales and expertise on a range of rare breeding bird species were of great value to our work. Panel

membership aims to achieve broadly representative geographic coverage and to include members who have active involvement in monitoring schemes and specialist research groups, or who participate in various external groups, to facilitate liaison between the Panel and researchers, nest recorders, ringers, surveyors and conservationists. The Panel is funded by the JNCC (on behalf of the country nature conservation bodies) and the RSPB, with an additional financial contribution from the BTO. In 2023, additional funding came from sales of the *Into the Red* book, published by the BTO (see www.bto.org/our-science/publications/bto-books-and-guides/red).

The RBBP website, www.rbbp.org.uk, provides up-to-date information on the Panel, our work, data submission, guidance on recording rare breeding birds, and access to all our past reports. We also publish regular blogs on various aspects of rare breeding birds and their recording. You can also keep up to date with our work by following us on X (formerly Twitter) at [@ukrbbp](https://twitter.com/ukrbbp), although of course we request that no sensitive data on rare breeding birds are shared there or on any other social media.

Terminology

Recording areas

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

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

Species banners

Shown for every species in the report, the species banners present key information on status, numbers and trends. A **regular breeder** is defined as a species that has bred (i.e. confirmed breeding has been recorded) at least once in the UK *and* which has bred (or was strongly suspected to have bred) for any five consecutive years within the last 25 (unless the last breeding was more than ten years ago). This definition is the same as used in the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) reviews (Stanbury *et al.* 2021). Other species may be classed as an **occasional breeder** (a species which has bred at least once in the UK but is not a regular breeder); a **potential breeder** (one which has not bred previously in the UK but, in some years, shows signs that it may do so (e.g. presence of singing males holding territory or pairs in suitable breeding habitat); a **colonising breeder** (a new colonist which first bred in the UK in the most recent five years (2017–21, or subsequently, if known at the time of writing), or one which may have occasionally bred in the past but for which breeding now appears to be becoming more regular); or a **former breeder** (one which bred regularly in the past but for which there has been no confirmed breeding record in the last ten years).

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

1. The population status (Red, Amber or Green) as determined by BoCC5 (Stanbury *et al.* 2021); see below.
2. An indication of population status in one of four categories:
 - **Very rare** (mean of <30 breeding pairs (bp) per annum);
 - **Rare** (30–300 bp per annum);

- **Scarce** (301–1,000 bp per annum);
- **Less scarce** (>1,000 bp per annum).

3. Published estimate or RBBP 5-year mean. If a recent estimate from a published national survey is available, this is used and referenced. Otherwise the estimate is based on RBBP data, using the mean maximum population size from the last five years (in this report, 2017–21). If annual RBBP coverage is poor, the best available national population estimate is used. The unit varies, but is most frequently ‘breeding pairs’ (bp). We acknowledge that, for some species, estimates based purely on RBBP data may be contrary to other estimates, especially where RBBP coverage is moderate or low (see below).

4. A population trend, where one can be calculated; this is presented as a 25-year trend where possible. For species that were added to the RBBP list in 1996, a 20-year trend is given, or 15 or 10 years for species monitored for shorter periods. Trends are calculated by comparing the 5-year mean ending in 2021 with that for 25, 20, 15 or 10 years earlier (1996, 2001, 2006, 2011). Trends are categorised into five bands, based on thresholds of rate of change used to classify species trends in the Wild Bird Indicators (e.g. Defra 2021), and shown in the table below. Most trends are derived from RBBP data, although in some cases trends from periodic surveys are used if they are more robust.

Note that if lockdown restrictions were assessed as having a very high, high, moderate or an unknown impact on the reporting coverage of a species in 2020 (Eaton *et al.* 2022), then 2020 data were omitted from the calculation of trends and species estimates; ‘5-year means’ for the period 2017–2021 were calculated using data from the four years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021.

Table 1. Thresholds for defining 25-, 20-, 15- and 10-year trend categories.

	thresholds based on 25 years of data	thresholds based on 20 years of data	thresholds based on 15 years of data	thresholds based on 10 years of data
strong increase	> +100%	> +74%	> +52%	> +32%
weak increase	+33% to +100%	+26% to +74%	+19% to +52%	+12% to +32%
stable	-25% to +33%	-21% to +26%	-16% to +19%	-11% to +12%
weak decrease	-50% to -25%	-43% to -21%	-34% to -16%	-24% to -11%
strong decrease	> -50%	> -43%	> -34%	> -24%

5. The degree of coverage (in 2021), defined as follows:

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

Coverage categories (reassessed in this report) are based on comparisons between the 5-year mean and the most reliable population estimate, where possible, taking into account known factors in the monitoring and detectability of the species.

The *BoCC5* status can be Red, Amber or Green. The majority of Red- and Amber-listed species on the RBBP list are categorised as such because of some criteria related to their breeding status, whether it be population size (rarity or recent/historical decline), breeding range (localisation or decline) or international importance of the UK breeding population. Some species, which do not have regular breeding or wintering populations in the UK, are not classified.

Species accounts

The headline figure for 2021 (number of sites, breeding pairs, singing males, territories, etc.) is indicated in bold for easy reference. Any regular breeding species classed as ‘Very rare’ (see above), plus occasional, potential, colonising and former breeders, receive more detailed text describing the records by county. For all other species (with only a few exceptions, generally where available data are limited), the data are tabulated, with each line representing a county or RBBP region. Within the tables, note the use of the following abbreviations:

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

Definitions of breeding evidence

The definitions of ‘Confirmed breeding’, ‘Probable breeding’ and ‘Possible breeding’ follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (EBCC) (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997), but precise definitions are species specific, as defined on www.rbbp.org.uk. Thus, for some species, e.g. Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* and Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*, records of summering birds are excluded if we can be sure breeding was not attempted. Where tables show the number of occupied territories, these are the sum of confirmed and probable breeding pairs, as territorial birds are classed as being probably breeding, unless a nest has (at least) progressed to the stage where eggs have been laid, in which case the pair is classified as a confirmed breeding pair. It is important to note that confirmed breeding is *not* the same as successful breeding; nests that fail with eggs or with young still fall into the confirmed category. A successful breeding pair is one that fledges at least one young bird from a nesting attempt. Readers should note that in all cases the identity of the birds has been confirmed; it is only breeding *status* that is possible/probable/confirmed. The report does not routinely include breeding records of hybrid individuals but where young are hatched, they will be noted in an Appendix. Mixed pairs are, however, included where one of the parents is a species or race on the RBBP list.

Definition of numbers used

Within each species account, numbers given in the format ‘1–4 pairs’ indicate (in this case) one confirmed breeding pair and a maximum total of four breeding pairs (thus also including possible and probable breeding pairs).

For 14 of the more abundant species reported upon, county bird recorders are

asked to provide estimates of populations based upon available evidence. Estimates, where provided, are given in parentheses after the county name. They are summed at regional and country level, using the actual number of pairs reported for those counties that did not provide estimates, and a + indicating that the regional or national estimate may have been higher. If estimates were not provided for a given species in a county for 2021, but had been for 2019 or 2020, the

older estimates were used unless there was cause to believe they were no longer appropriate. Some regional and country totals include estimates from counties that did not provide actual records in 2021, and so are not listed in the table – hence the regional and country totals may be higher than the sum of the estimates provided. Where county estimates are provided as a range, the upper limit was used in calculating regional and national totals.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Rare 31 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +1,083%

Amber

Near-complete

27 sites: 24–29 pairs. Whooper Swan is one of a number of species that has its main breeding population to the north of the UK but has expanded south in recent years. At the same time, there has been an increase in the Icelandic population. The most recent international census of Whooper Swans wintering in Iceland, Britain and Ireland, in January 2020, found the population had increased by 27.2% since 2015, and more than doubled since 2000 (Brides *et al.* 2021). A small but increasing proportion of the population now remains to winter in Iceland, so it is conceivable that the numbers wintering in Britain and Ireland may eventually decline, but whether this would have any impact on the further establishment of the breeding population remains to be seen.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one pair bred, apparently successfully although it is not known how many young fledged.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one probable breeding pair. **Highland** Four sites: two pairs bred, fledging two and one young; two probable breeding pairs. **Orkney** One site: one pair bred, fledging two young. **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: two pairs bred, of which one fledged five young; one probable breeding pair. **Shetland** 16 sites: 16 pairs bred. At least eight were successful, with 22 young known to have fledged.

Northern Ireland

Co. Derry One site: two pairs bred, fledging five young in total.

In addition, summering birds were reported from Argyll, Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Highland, Lancashire & North Merseyside.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

Rare 117 bp

25y trend: **stable** -7%

Amber

High

64 sites: 16–89 pairs. The 2021 total is somewhat below the long-term average. Notably, the confirmed breeding record in Gower was only the tenth proven breeding in Wales. As fig. 2 shows, numbers of breeding Garganeys vary between years as well as showing longer-term fluctuations since the species was added to the RBBP's list in 1980, with high numbers in the 1990s before a fall around the turn of the century and a gradual increase since. Pöysä & Väänänen (2014) found that interannual variation in numbers breeding in central Finland was

largely driven by conditions on spring migration (with more birds arriving in warm springs) but was also influenced by rainfall in wintering areas in the Sahel the previous year. There are concerns that drought and wetland habitat loss in Africa may be one cause of a decline in the species across Europe (BirdLife International 2022).

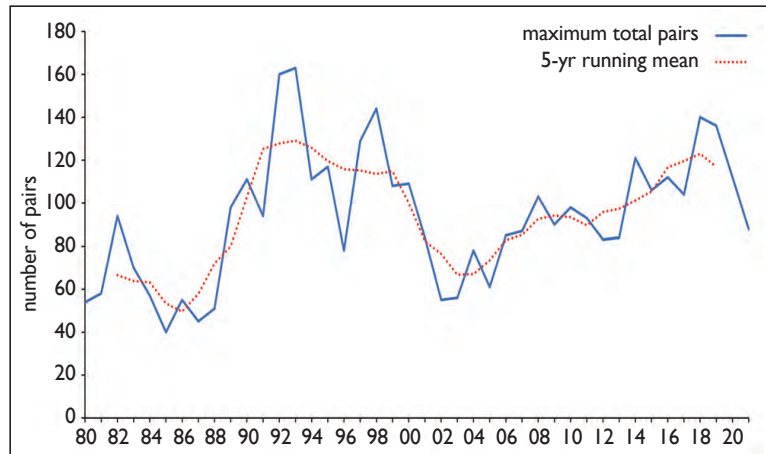


Fig. 2. Maximum numbers of Garganeys *Spatula querquedula* breeding in the UK, 1980–2021, with a 5-year running mean.

Garganey			England, E			20	8	29	Gower	1	1	1
	S	CP	TP	Cambridgeshire	7	0	13	Scotland	8	1	8	
England	52	14	75	Lincolnshire	2	1	2	Scotland, S	1	0	1	
England, SW	6	0	7	Norfolk	7	7	9	Clyde	1	0	1	
Devon	1	0	1	Suffolk	4	0	5	Scotland, Mid	2	0	2	
Gloucestershire	1	0	1	England, C	2	0	2	NE Scotland	1	0	1	
Somerset	3	0	4	Warwickshire	1	0	1	Upper Forth	1	0	1	
Wiltshire	1	0	1	Worcestershire	1	0	1	Scotland, N & W	5	1	5	
England, SE	13	3	22	England, N	11	3	15	Argyll	3	0	3	
Buckinghamshire	1	0	1	Cheshire & Wirral	1	1	1	Highland	1	0	1	
Essex	1	0	3	Cumbria	2	0	2	Orkney	1	1	1	
Hertfordshire	1	0	1	Lancs & N Mersey	3	0	3	Northern Ireland	2	0	4	
Kent	5	2	9	Yorkshire	5	2	9	Co. Antrim	1	0	2	
Oxfordshire	1	1	2	Wales	2	1	2	Co. Derry	1	0	2	
Sussex	4	0	6	Anglesey	1	0	1	TOTALS	64	16	89	

David Tipling



366. Male Garganey *Spatula querquedula*, Norfolk, April 2011.

Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Less scarce 1,351 bp 10y trend: strong increase +33%

Amber

High

262 sites: 369–1,358 pairs. This widespread breeding species was added to the RBBP's list in 2006, which now means we can present a 10-year trend (based on 5-year means, which require data for more years than the time span reported upon) for the first time. As fig. 3 shows, there has been an increase in numbers reported, but some caution has to be employed in interpreting this, as it is possible that at least some of this increase was a consequence of a gradual improvement in reporting.

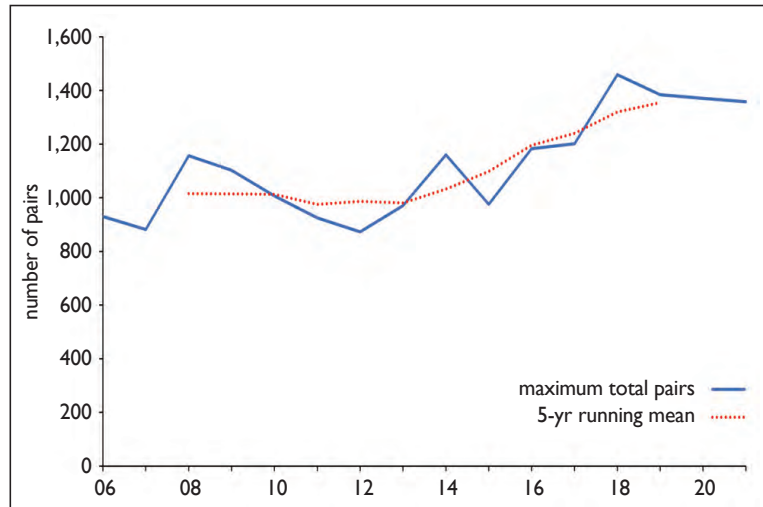


Fig. 3. Maximum numbers of Shovelers *Spatula clypeata* breeding in the UK, 2006–21, with a 5-year running mean.

Shoveler			England, N (e 295+)			47	140	294
	S	CP	TP	Cheshire & Wirral (e 39)	7	13	39	
England (1,132+)	191	307	1,102	Cleveland	1	0	24	
England, SW (e 44)	15	13	36	Co. Durham (e 2)	1	1	1	
Devon (e 8)	3	0	8	Cumbria (e 3)	3	0	3	
Dorset (e 6)	4	2	6	Greater Manchester (e 12)	5	2	12	
Gloucestershire (e 3–4)	2	2	3	Lancs & N Mersey (e 64)	7	63	64	
Hampshire (e 5)	2	3	3	Northumberland (e 3)	2	3	3	
Isle of Wight (e 3)	1	1	3	Yorkshire	21	58	148	
Somerset (e 15)	2	5	10	Wales (e 49+)	4	11	49	
Wiltshire (e 3)	1	0	3	Anglesey (e 37)	2	2	37	
England, SE (e 364)	44	47	364	Denbigh & Flint	1	9	9	
Bedfordshire (e 2)	2	0	2	Pembrokeshire (e3)	1	0	3	
Berkshire (e 1)	1	1	1	Scotland (e 227+)	66	50	195	
Buckinghamshire (e 2)	1	0	2	Scotland, S (e 36+)	16	14	36	
Essex (e 162)	8	2	162	Ayrshire	2	0	2	
Hertfordshire (e 8)	8	1	8	Clyde	7	2	13	
Kent (e 130)	14	37	130	Dumfries & G'way (e 19)	6	12	19	
Oxfordshire (e 3)	1	0	3	Lothian	1	0	2	
Surrey (e 5)	3	0	5	Scotland, Mid (e 35+)	12	3	24	
Sussex (e 51)	6	6	51	Angus & Dundee (e 12)	4	0	5	
England, E (e 388)	67	100	375	Fife (e 1–2)	1	1	1	
Cambridgeshire (e 163)	19	7	163	Moray & Nairn	1	0	1	
Lincolnshire (e 46)	11	8	46	NE Scotland (e 10)	4	0	7	
Norfolk (e 105)	16	81	105	Perth & Kinross (e 10)	2	2	10	
Northamptonshire (e 4)	3	0	4	Scotland, N & W (e 156)	38	33	135	
Suffolk (e 70)	18	4	57	Argyll (e 36–40)	4	1	36	
England, C (e 41)	18	7	33	Highland (e 9)	3	0	9	
Derbyshire (e 10)	2	0	2	Orkney (e 46)	16	11	36	
Leics & Rutland (e 6)	2	0	6	Outer Hebrides (e 53–60)	14	20	53	
Nottinghamshire (e 7)	5	3	7	Shetland (e 1)	1	1	1	
Shropshire (e 1)	1	0	1	Northern Ireland (e 12+)	1	1	12	
Staffordshire (e 4)	3	4	4	Co. Antrim	1	1	12	
Warwickshire (e 10)	3	0	10	TOTALS (e 1,411+)	262	369	1,358	
Worcestershire (e 3)	2	0	3					

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Rare 216 bp

(no trend available)

Amber

Moderate

114 sites: 69–236 pairs. This report sees a return to more typical reporting after much reduced numbers in 2020 due to lockdown restrictions; this is in fact the highest total reported since the species was added to the RBBP's list in 1996 (albeit just one pair more than in 2016). This may be due to diligent efforts by some Scottish bird recorders to locate and submit relevant records in recent years. We do not currently publish a population trend from RBBP totals, as it is felt that reporting covers only a relatively small proportion of the total population, which is spread mainly across northern Scotland, but it may be that improved reporting and new analytical approaches will enable this in future.

Eurasian Wigeon				Northumberland	2	5	5	Perth & Kinross	3	1	13
	S	CP	TP	Yorkshire	2	1	8	Scotland, N & W	73	47	143
England	21	18	42	Wales	2	0	2	Argyll	4	0	8
England, SE	1	0	1	Anglesey	2	0	2	Caithness	1	3	3
Kent	1	0	1	Scotland	90	51	190	Highland	27	2	59
England, E	8	0	12	Scotland, S	5	2	9	Orkney	10	2	10
Cambridgeshire	7	0	11	Clyde	1	0	1	Outer Hebrides	22	22	44
Norfolk	1	0	1	Dumfries & G'way	4	2	8	Shetland	9	18	19
England, N	12	18	29	Scotland, Mid	12	2	38	Northern Ireland	1	0	2
Co. Durham	3	10	10	Angus & Dundee	1	0	12	Co. Antrim	1	0	2
Cumbria	3	2	3	Moray & Nairn	1	0	4	TOTALS	114	69	236
Lancs & N Mersey	2	0	3	NE Scotland	7	1	9				

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Very rare 30 bp

25y trend: **weak decrease -33%****Amber**

Near-complete

25 sites: 6–32 pairs. Pintails have been reported on by RBBP since the Panel's inception in 1973, although in that first year only two or three pairs, on the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire, were mentioned (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). By 1975, 25 pairs were reported, which was a more accurate reflection of the population size. In the intervening years, numbers have risen as high 76, in 1994 (Ogilvie *et al.* 1996), before declining to current levels less than half of that.

England, SE

Essex One site: one probable breeding pair. Kent One site: one possible breeding pair.

Oxfordshire One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one probable breeding pair.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: two pairs bred, with four ducklings seen. Cumbria One site: one possible breeding pair. Lancashire & North Merseyside One site: one probable breeding pair.

Yorkshire Two sites: one pair bred, one possible breeding pair.

Wales

Anglesey One site: one possible pair. Denbigh & Flint One site: one pair bred (three young fledged).

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: two probable pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two sites: (1) one pair bred; (2) two probable breeding pairs. Orkney Six sites: (1) one pair bred (brood of ten ducklings seen) and two probable breeding pairs; (2) one probable and one possible breeding pairs; (3–6) one probable breeding pair at each site. Outer Hebrides Five sites: (1) two probable breeding pairs; (2–4) one probable breeding pair at each site; (5) one possible breeding pair.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Scarce 773 bp

25y trend: weak increase +56%

Red

High

177 sites: 387–815 pairs. This is the second-highest total reported since this diving duck was added to the RBBP species list in 1986, bettered only by 838 pairs in 2014 (Holling *et al.* 2016). The steady increase in the UK's breeding population is shown clearly in fig. 4, although this is largely an English population, particularly as the species has retracted from Scotland in recent years.

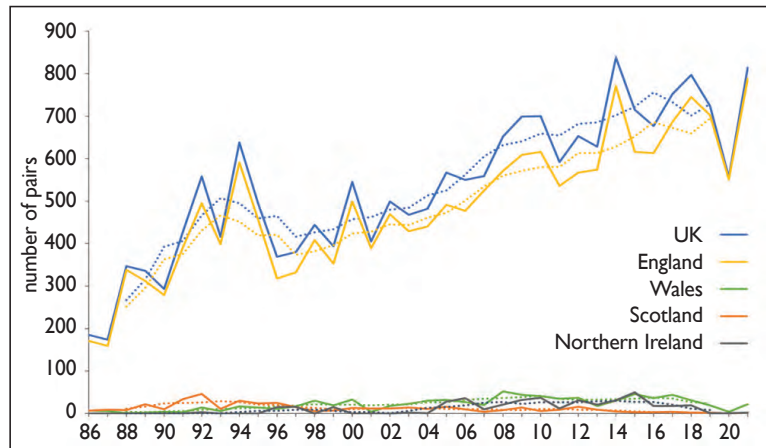


Fig. 4. Maximum numbers of Common Pochards *Aythya ferina* breeding in the UK and constituent countries, 1986–2021, with a 5-year running mean.

Common Pochard							
	S	CP	TP	Norfolk (e 40–50)	15	21	41
				Northamptonshire (e 4)	3	1	4
England (e 843+)	170	380	789	Suffolk (e 7)	5	2	6
England, SW (e 125)	12	20	101	England, C (e 23+)	11	11	22
Devon (e 1)	1	0	1	Derbyshire	1	1	1
Dorset (e 4)	2	0	4	Leics & Rutland (e 3)	1	3	3
Gloucestershire (e 3–4)	1	1	1	Nottinghamshire (e 3)	1	0	2
Hampshire (e 10)	4	5	5	Staffordshire (e 4)	3	4	4
Isle of Wight (e 12)	1	6	12	Warwickshire (e 9)	4	0	9
Isles of Scilly (e 3)	1	2	3	Worcestershire (e 3)	1	3	3
Somerset (e 90)	1	5	74	England, N (e 143+)	23	92	174
Wiltshire (e 1)	1	1	1	Cheshire & Wirral (e 13)	1	13	13
England, SE (e 406)	79	208	358	Cleveland (e 14)	4	8	43
Bedfordshire (e 3)	3	0	3	Co. Durham (e 3)	1	2	2
Berkshire (e 9)	4	6	9	Lancs & N Mersey (e 25)	2	7	26
Buckinghamshire (e 1)	1	0	1	Northumberland (e 2)	2	4	4
Essex (e 162)	22	79	162	Yorkshire	13	58	86
Greater London (e 13)	7	9	13	Wales (e 23)	4	7	22
Hertfordshire (e 30)	10	19	21	Anglesey (e 15–20)	3	4	19
Kent (e 100–150)	22	78	118	Carmarthenshire (e 3)	1	3	3
Oxfordshire (e 2)	1	1	2	Scotland, S (e 2+)	2	0	2
Surrey (e 15)	5	7	8	Dumfries & G'way	2	0	2
Sussex (e 21)	4	9	21	Northern Ireland (e 2+)	1	0	2
England, E (e 146)	45	49	134	Co. Antrim	1	0	2
Cambridgeshire (e 58)	18	10	58	TOTALS (e 870+)	177	387	815
Lincolnshire (e 27)	4	15	25				

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Occasional breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. The RBBP archive holds records of Ring-necked Ducks in eight years since 1973. Most records have simply been of individuals present during the breeding season, but birds have paired up with both Common Pochards *A. ferina* and Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula*, and a male hatched two ducklings with a female Tufted Duck in the Outer Hebrides in 2004 (Holling *et al.* 2007).

England, SW

Cornwall One site: a female present from 3rd April to 23rd September at a site where Tufted Ducks breed.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* Occasional breeder

Red

Six sites: 0–6 pairs. There was a scattering of interesting but inconclusive records from the Outer Hebrides. While the male and juvenile at site 1 could have been early migrants, the location was only a few miles from that where a pair was present early in the breeding season. Greater Scaup features regularly in these reports (in 27 of 48 years since 1973), but records of confirmed breeding are rarer, with only 13 confirmed breeding pairs since 1973, and only two in the last 20 years.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides Six sites: (1) a male with a fledged juvenile, 1st–4th August; (2) a pair, 19th–21st May; (3) a single bird on 21st May; (4) a single on 25th May; (5) a single on 10th July; (6) a single on 24th July.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* Rare 52 bp*

25y trend: stable -22%

Red

Near-complete

Two sites: 8–36 pairs. This report sees a return to more complete coverage, following much-reduced monitoring in 2020. Increased conservation concern has resulted in robust monitoring coverage in recent years, but there was a disappointing total in 2021. A total of 133 pairs was reported in 1973, despite the lack of any data from the Flow Country (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). That total included 122 pairs on Lower Lough Erne, Co. Fermanagh, but this important population had disappeared within 20 years.

* Eaton *et al.* 2008.

Common Scoter	S	CP	TP	Argyll	1	1	3
				Caithness/Highland	1	2	15
Scotland, Mid	2	0	5	Highland	4	3	13
Perth & Kinross	2	0	5	TOTALS	8	6	36
Scotland, N & W	6	6	31				

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Rare 200 bp*

(no trend available)

Red

Moderate

55–93 breeding females. Common Goldeneye first bred in Scotland in 1970, at Loch an Eilein, Highland, and, by 1973, three pairs were reported, hatching 22 young (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). Two of these pairs were in nestboxes, and the provision of nestboxes proved crucial in supporting a rapid increase in the population. By 1980, 37 pairs were reported; by 1990, 100 pairs hatched 529 young. After peaking at around 200 pairs in the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, numbers reported fell from 2011 onwards owing to a reduction in activity by the Strathspey Goldeneye Study Group. There are some concerns that there may have been a genuine fall in numbers in recent years.

The population in Northumberland continues to grow and is, as with the Scottish population, aided by the provision of nestboxes, although it is not without its problems. A fieldworker checking a nestbox in 2021 was greeted by a Stoat *Mustela erminea* hurtling out over his shoulder, and then the sight of three dead female Goldeneyes, which had been stashed in the box

by the mustelid. Predation by Pine Martens *Martes martes* is a known cause of breeding failure amongst the Scottish Goldeneye population.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Common Goldeneye			Surrey	0	1	NE Scotland	1	5
	CP	TP	England, N	19	19	Perth & Kinross	0	2
England	21	23	Northumberland	19	19	Scotland, N & W	32	56
England, SW	2	2	Scotland	34	70	Highland	32	56
Avon	2	2	Scotland, Mid	2	14	TOTALS	55	93
England, SE	0	2	Angus & Dundee	0	6			
Hertfordshire	0	1	Moray & Nairn	1	1			

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

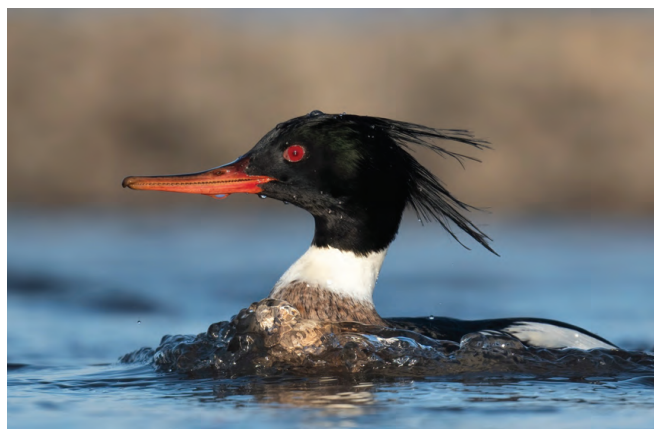
Less scarce 1,565 bp* (no trend available)

Amber

Low

106 sites: 64–192 pairs. Collecting meaningful data on this species is always challenging, given that the distribution is centred on remote areas of north and west Scotland, but RBBP continues to encourage all observers living or visiting these regions to look for and submit records of this under-reported duck.

* Humphreys *et al.* (2016).



Ben Lucking

367. Red-breasted Merganser
Mergus serrator, Devon, January 2021.

Red-breasted Merganser			Clyde Islands	4	4
	CP	TP	Scotland, Mid (e 6)	0	6
England, N (e 16)	7	13	Perth & Kinross (e 6)	0	6
Cumbria (e 8)	3	8	Scotland, N & W (e 506+)	48	135
Lancs & N Mersey (e 6)	1	2	Argyll (e 200–300)	1	3
Northumberland (e 2)	3	3	Caithness	1	1
Wales (e 37+)	5	18	Highland (e 50–70)	22	55
Anglesey (e 15)	2	2	Orkney (e 13)	5	13
Caernarfonshire (e 5)	1	1	Outer Hebrides (e 80–100)	19	41
Ceredigion	2	2	Shetland	0	22
Meirionnydd (e 9–15)	0	13	Northern Ireland (e 15+)	0	15
Scotland (e 527+)	52	146	Co. Antrim	0	2
Scotland, S (e 15+)	4	5	Co. Fermanagh	0	13
Ayrshire	0	1	TOTALS (e 595+)	64	192

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

Rare 542 individuals* 29y trend: strong decrease -75%

Red

Low

149 males at 45 active leks. A total of 94 lek sites were monitored across four recording areas, all in Scotland. Both the number of active leks and the number of displaying males have fallen to the lowest number reported since the RBBP began reporting lek counts in 2003. The sixth national winter survey of Capercaillies took place in winter 2021/22. The surveying of 1,500 km of transects throughout the range produced a population estimate of 542 individuals (95% confidence limits 255–832), suggesting a decline of 51% since the last winter survey, six years previously, and 75% since the first survey in 1992/93–93/94 (Wilkinson *et al.* in press).

Modelling work by Baines & Aebischer (2023), based on lek and brood counts, produced an estimate of 304 individual Capercaillies (95% CL 239–369) in 2020, considerably lower than the national survey estimate from just a year and a half later. The same is true for the sum of males from lek surveying given here; even when the females and juveniles that are present during a winter survey are accounted for, there is a considerable gap between lek counts and winter survey estimates. Baines & Aebischer acknowledged that Capercaillie lek counts may underestimate abundance, particularly if lek counts are derived from single visits. Aleix-Mata *et al.* (2019) compared lek counts in the Pyrenees with estimates derived from genetic sampling and found that traditional lek counts may underestimate true population size by one-half, with the probability of detecting male Capercaillies at leks varying greatly from site to site and day to day, and with some males not attending leks at all.

Regardless of such discrepancies, all evidence points to a steep decrease in an already threatened and depleted Capercaillie population. There are multiple factors driving decline, including changes to spring and summer weather, habitat loss and fragmentation, continued mortality from collisions with deer fencing, predation and disturbance from human activity leading to habitat avoidance. One contributing factor to the last factor may be the enthusiasm of people to see the species, and so the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project has launched a ‘Lek It Be’ campaign (cairngormscapercaillie.scot/lek-it-be), urging birders, wildlife photographers and wildlife guides not to seek out the species during the spring in order to keep disturbance to a minimum.

* Wilkinson *et al.* (in press).

Capercaillie			Perth & Kinross	1	1
	leks	MM	Scotland, N & W	35	137
Scotland, Mid	10	12	Highland	35	137
Moray & Nairn	4	4	TOTALS	45	149
NE Scotland	5	7			

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce 426 males

25y trend: **stable** -1%

Amber

High

7–510 singing males. It was a fairly typical year by recent standards. It is now ten years since the last ‘Quail year’, 2011, when nearly 2,000 singing males were reported (Holling *et al.* 2013).

Common Quail		Norfolk	34	Ayrshire	4
	SM	Suffolk	4	Clyde	1
England	423	England, C	48	Lothian	12
England, SW	117	Derbyshire	14	Scotland, Mid	26
Avon	10	Herefordshire	5	Angus & Dundee	2
Cornwall	1	Leics & Rutland	2	Fife	5
Devon	2	Shropshire	16	Moray & Nairn	2
Dorset	34	Staffordshire	10	NE Scotland	16
Gloucestershire	15	Worcestershire	1	Upper Forth	1
Hampshire	4	England, N	110	Scotland, N & W	38
Wiltshire	51	Cheshire & Wirral	12	Argyll	5
England, SE	52	Co. Durham	7	Caithness	3
Bedfordshire	3	Cumbria	5	Fair Isle	1
Berkshire	8	Greater Manchester	3	Highland	8
Greater London	2	Lancs & N Mersey	20	Orkney	3
Hertfordshire	3	Northumberland	28	Outer Hebrides	5
Kent	1	Yorkshire	35	Shetland	13
Oxfordshire	18	Wales	3	Northern Ireland	3
Sussex	17	Anglesey	2	Co. Antrim	2
England, E	96	Breconshire	1	Co. Derry	1
Cambridgeshire	17	Scotland	81	TOTAL	510
Lincolnshire	41	Scotland, S	17		

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Very rare 13 bp (no trend available) Near-complete

One extensive site: 19 nesting females, raising five or six young. A total of 35 males were counted at leks in the spring. In addition to the birds fledged in the wild, 15 eggs were collected from nests deemed to be in vulnerable locations, from which seven birds were raised and released back into the population and another two retained for captive breeding.

England, SW

Wiltshire One extensive site: 19 nests were located.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Less scarce 2,092 bp* 26y trend (BBS): strong decrease -97% **Red** Near-complete

National survey: 2,092 territories (95% confidence limits 1,559–2,782). The first national survey of Turtle Doves was conducted in 2021, coordinated by the RSPB, RBBP and Kent Ornithological Society, with support from the BTO and funding from Natural England. Nearly 1,000 volunteers took part in the survey, with 1,644 1-km squares surveyed across the range. In counties in the remaining core of the range, stratified samples of squares were surveyed using a two-visit territory-mapping method; elsewhere, all squares known to have held Turtle Doves recently were targeted. A total of 383 territories were recorded during the survey, with extrapolation providing the estimate given above (Stanbury *et al.* 2023). The species is now concentrated in southeast England – Kent, Suffolk and Essex together held 62.5% of the UK population – with Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Sussex also holding important numbers and an outlying population in North Yorkshire.

The resultant estimate lies very close to the RBBP’s threshold for inclusion on our species list, justifying our decision to start monitoring the species in 2018; unfortunately, given the current rate of decline (80% in just ten years; Heywood *et al.* 2023), the population seems highly likely to decline further. Poor breeding productivity (a reduction in the number of breeding attempts per pair has been linked with a change in food availability; Browne & Aebischer 2004) and unsustainable hunting on the migration routes to western Africa (Lormée *et al.* 2020) have been identified as the main drivers of this decline. Following the publication of the International Species Action Plan (Fisher *et al.* 2018), a moratorium on hunting along the western flyway (which UK birds follow) was recommended in 2019 and implemented in 2021, until at least 2024. On the breeding grounds, conservation initiatives such as Operation Turtle Dove (www.operationturtledove.org) are working with land managers to deliver improved foraging and nesting habitats to boost productivity.

The national survey has provided a robust baseline for future monitoring – critical given the low sample size now achieved through the BBS. Knowing where Turtle Doves are breeding will be essential information for targeting ongoing conservation efforts, so we hope that the increased interest in recording the species developed in 2021 will be maintained and observers will survey for and report breeding Turtle Doves annually to support ongoing RBBP monitoring between periodic national surveys.

* Stanbury *et al.* (2023)

Turtle Dove	S	CP	TP	from national survey	
				territories recorded	derived population estimates
England, SW	14	3	19	19	19
Cornwall	2	0	2	0	0
Devon	2	0	2	2	2
Dorset	1	0	1	1	1

Turtle Dove cont.	S	CP	TP	from national survey	
				territories recorded	derived population estimates
Hampshire	7	3	11	14	14
Isle of Wight	1	0	1	0	0
Wiltshire	1	0	2	2	2
England, SE	84	0	153	179	1,136
Bedfordshire	3	0	7	29	33 (31–35)
Berkshire	1	0	1	1	1
Essex	3	0	7	36	300 (136–503)
Kent	60	0	100	100	682 (301–1,215)
Oxfordshire	2	0	2	0	0
Surrey	0	0	0	2	2
Sussex	15	0	36	11	118 (27–288)
England, E	233	19	297	141	832
Cambridgeshire	35	5	48	23	227 (55–453)
Lincolnshire	35	3	47	33	52 (42–65)
Norfolk	51	3	84	46	223 (61–471)
Northamptonshire	3	0	3	4	4
Suffolk	109	8	115	35	326 (100–599)
England, C	24	3	31	17	17
Derbyshire	1	0	1	1	1
Leics & Rutland	1	0	1	1	1
Nottinghamshire	12	2	19	12	12
Warwickshire	5	0	5	3	3
Worcestershire	5	1	5	0	0
England, N	6	5	60	27	88
Cheshire & Wirral	1	0	1	0	0
Yorkshire	5	5	59	27	88 (63–114)
TOTALS	361	30	560	383	2,092 (1,559–2,782)

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

Scarce 909 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +113%**Red**

Near-complete

871 singing males. This is the lowest total reported since 2003, when the Corn Crake was still increasing in response to conservation action in western Scotland. Numbers reached 1,307 singing males in 2007, and peaked at 1,333 in 2014, but there has been a marked decline subsequently. This may be due to changes in the delivery of agri-environment support resulting in a reduction in the area managed using Corn Crake-friendly methods. There was also a notable drop in the number of birds reported in East Anglia in 2021. The release of birds in the Wensum Valley, Norfolk, ended in 2020, and the focus of reintroduction efforts has now shifted to Welney, in the same county.

England, E**Cambridgeshire** Three, at two sites. **Norfolk** Two, at two sites.**Scotland, Mid****North-east Scotland** Two, at two sites.**Scotland, N & W**

Argyll Total 383: Coll, 30; Colonsay & Oronsay, 23; Iona, 19; Islay, 26; Tiree, 285. **Caithness** 1. **Highland** Total 15: mainland, 5; Skye, 10. **Orkney** Total 17. **Outer Hebrides** Total 439: Barra & Vatersay, 68; Benbecula, 14; Berneray, 1; Harris, 6; Lewis, 89; Mingulay, 2; North Uist, 108; Pabbay, 2; South Uist, 149. **Shetland** Four, at three sites.

Northern Ireland**Co. Antrim** One site, five.

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*

Very rare 22 bp

25y trend: weak decrease -35%

Amber

High

12 sites: 0–46 singing males/pairs. Our first report, for 1973 (Sharrock *et al.* 1975), stated ‘no records received’, but a subsequent search for published records by Stroud *et al.* (2012) unearthed ten singing males in that year, and illustrated the problems faced by the RBBP in compiling data in the early years, and (maybe to a lesser extent) to this day. Numbers of this species fluctuate between years (fig. 5), with periodic peak years, most notably around the time of the first national survey in 1999 (Gilbert 2002). The year 2021 was another such peak year, entirely due to numbers reported at sites across the Lower Derwent Valley, Yorkshire. In recent years, intensive efforts have been made to monitor this and other rare breeding bird species across this floodplain, with nocturnal surveys carried out at 15 subsites at intervals of 4–5 days through key periods. Radio-tracking of individuals has improved knowledge of how birds use the site, their singing behaviour, and whether double-counting of mobile birds is an issue.

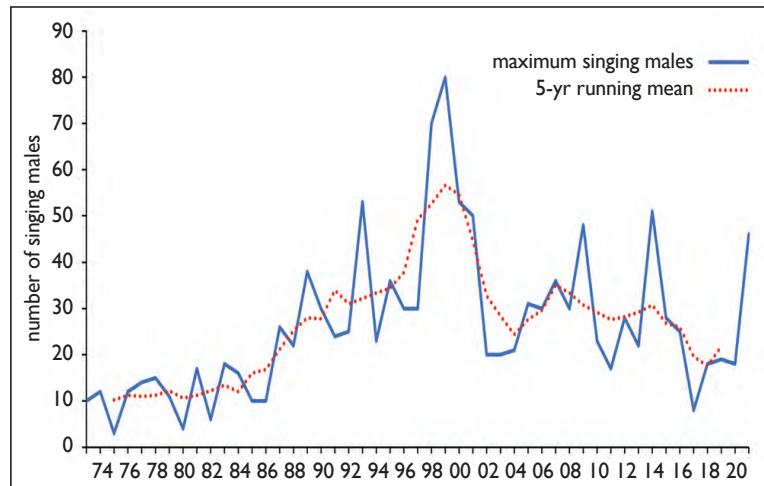


Fig. 5. Maximum numbers of Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* breeding in the UK, 1973–2021, with a 5-year running mean.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one singing male from 25th June to 2nd July. **Somerset** One site: one singing male on one date.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) two singing males between 9th May and 15th June; (2) two singing males on 15th June. **Norfolk** One site: two singing males from 10th May to 16th June.

England, N

Yorkshire One extensive site: an estimated total of 31 singing males between 2nd May and 20th July.

Wales

Ceredigion One site: one singing male on 8th June.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee Two sites: (1) two singing males; (2) one singing male on 1st July.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one singing male on 8th June. **Highland** One site: one singing male. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one singing male on 18th May.

Baillon's Crane *Zapornia pusilla*

Potential breeder

One site: one possible pair. The first record reported by the RBBP was a singing male in Kent in 2001, followed by a gap of 11 years until an influx of at least six birds in 2012, but there have now been records in five of the last ten years.

England, E

Lincolnshire One site: one singing between 5th and 7th June.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Rare 53 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +1,653%****Amber**

Near-complete

47 sites: 55–76 pairs. This year, we have made a minor change in how we report numbers of Common Cranes, moving from the approach established by the Crane Working Group (which was appropriate in the early years of the population's establishment) to a more generic approach based on atlas evidence codes, as used for other species. In effect, this means that we no longer regard some pairs as 'non-breeding' in the absence of evidence of a breeding attempt, but record, for example, a pair of birds resident at a potential nesting site in the breeding season as a probable breeding pair. As a consequence, we include nine possible or probable breeding pairs in the table below that would have previously been regarded as 'non-breeding' pairs.

Yet again, a record total is reported for Common Crane, and a record number of young birds fledged.

Common Crane					Cambridgeshire	8	8	11	9
	S	CP	TP	FL	Lincolnshire	2	1	2	0
England	42	52	70	36	Norfolk	10	12	21	8
England, SW	17	23	27	14	Suffolk	2	4	4	2
Dorset	1	1	1	2	England, N	2	3	3	2
Gloucestershire	8	6	8	1	Yorkshire	2	3	3	2
Somerset	6	15	16	10	Scotland	5	3	6	4
Wiltshire	2	1	2	1	Scotland, Mid	5	3	6	4
England, SE	1	1	2	1	NE Scotland	5	3	6	4
Oxfordshire	1	1	2	1	TOTALS	47	55	76	40
England, E	22	25	38	19					

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

Occasional breeder

One site: one mixed pair. A male has been resident at a site in Argyll since 2014. In 2021, it was again paired with a female Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, but no evidence of an actual breeding attempt was recorded.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Very rare 26 bp

26y trend: **strong decrease -58%****Red**

Near-complete

12 sites: 12–20 pairs. In 1973, RBBP reported over 50 pairs of Slavonian Grebes at 22 sites (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). As Benn *et al.* (2023) outlined, dedicated monitoring effort has resulted in full surveys nearly every year since 1971, and this is justifiably claimed as 'the longest-running and most complete dataset of any British breeding bird'. Benn *et al.* also looked back at historical records to chronicle how Slavonian Grebes were first proven to be breeding in 1909 (with, perhaps inevitably, a clutch of three eggs collected at Loch Laide, Highland, on 17th May), although the species may have been breeding in the

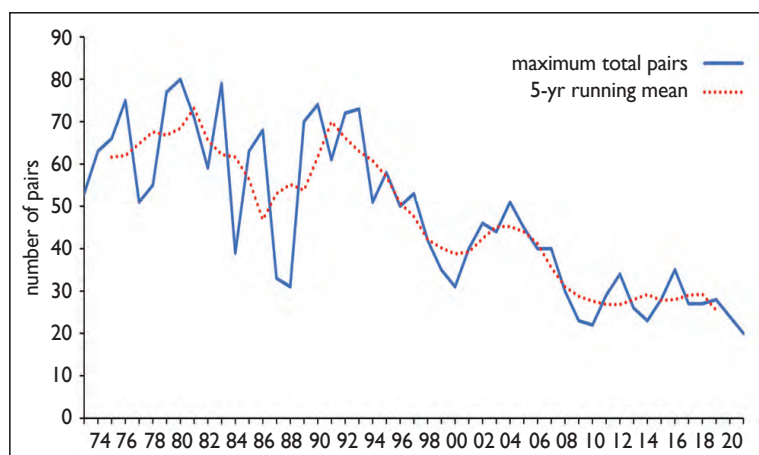


Fig. 6. Maximum numbers of Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* breeding in the UK, 1973–2021, with a 5-year running mean.

UK for a small number of years prior to that. Although data are sparse – understandably, given that egg-collection remained a significant issue – it is clear that the population grew over the following decades and, by the late 1950s, there were about 15 pairs in Inverness-shire, although this may have been an underestimate.

At their peak in 1980, there were 80 pairs of Slavonian Grebes breeding in Scotland, and numbers remained high from the 1970s through to the mid 1990s (fig. 6). Thereafter, numbers declined steadily, with this year’s total being the lowest reported since robust monitoring began. As Benn *et al.* pointed out, Slavonian Grebes appear to be relatively catholic in their choice of breeding sites, with successful breeding having been recorded on 66 lochs, so it seems unlikely that conditions on breeding sites have driven a decline. Slavonian Grebe productivity on Scottish lochs is low, and it seems that immigration of birds from Iceland is necessary to maintain the Scottish population – Benn *et al.* concluded that numbers breeding in Scotland annually may be determined by winter survival and levels of immigration and emigration.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 12 sites: (1) nine pairs fledged 15 young; (2) one pair fledged two young; (3–7) one pair fledged one young at each site; (8–10) one pair, no young fledged at any site; (11) one pair, outcome unknown; (12) one possible breeding pair.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Rare 54 bp

25y trend: **stable** -3%

Amber

Near-complete

15 sites: 49–54 pairs. It was a typical year for Black-necked Grebe by recent standards, although productivity was high, and the species bred in Norfolk for the first time. A bird held a territory in Northern Ireland for the third consecutive year.

Black-necked Grebe					Staffordshire	1	4	4	2
	S	CP	TP	YF	England, N	4	29	29	35
England	13	49	52	59	Cheshire & Wirral	1	9	9	14
England, SE	2	3	4	3	Greater Manchester	1	2	2	2
Essex	1	2	2	3	Yorkshire	2	18	18	19
Hertfordshire	1	1	2	0	Scotland	1	0	1	0
England, E	2	2	2	3	Scotland, Mid	1	0	1	0
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	0	NE Scotland	1	0	1	0
Norfolk	1	1	1	3	Northern Ireland	1	0	1	0
England, C	5	15	17	18	Co. Armagh	1	0	1	0
Nottinghamshire	4	11	13	16	TOTALS	15	49	54	59

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*

Scarce 305 bp

25y trend: **weak increase** +78%

Amber

High

310–327 pairs. The numbers reported here represent a more accurate measure of the current population size than last year’s lockdown-impacted total, although it is known that some birds remain uncounted on land from which surveyors are denied access. It is estimated, for example, that there were an additional ten pairs in Suffolk.

Stone-curlew			Berkshire	8	8	Suffolk	94	97
	CP	TP	Oxfordshire	3	3	England, C	1	1
England, SW	106	111	Sussex	4	5	Leics & Rutland	1	1
Hampshire	26	26	England, E	188	199	TOTALS	310	327
Wiltshire	80	85	Cambridgeshire	3	6			
England, SE	15	16	Norfolk	91	96			

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Very rare 3 bp

10y trend: **strong increase** +1,600%**Amber**

Near-complete

Four sites: 1–4 breeding pairs. In addition to the records below, a pair was recorded for a single day in Devon. This is the eighth year in a row we have reported confirmed breeding by Black-winged Stilts; young birds have fledged in five of those years.

England, SE

Sussex One site: a pair, present from 27th April to 10th July, hatched four chicks, one of which survived to fledging.

England, E

Norfolk Two sites: (1) a pair present from 3rd to 29th June, with mating observed and incubating suspected; (2) a pair present from 22nd June to 11th July, although there was no evidence of a breeding attempt. Suffolk One site: a pair was present from 28th May to 1st June and was reported to be trying to nest but departed owing to constant harrying by Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Less scarce 2,349 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +252%**Amber**

Near-complete

152 sites: 2,198 pairs. The table gives totals of confirmed breeding pairs only, so may underestimate the size of the breeding population slightly. Excluding the lockdown-affected total from last year, the breeding population of Avocet has remained above 2,000 pairs since 2016. As a consequence, there are grounds for removing the species from the RBBP's list, but we are mindful of the current threat of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 to populations of colonial-nesting waterbirds. Unlike some other increasing species that have been removed from the list in recent years (such as Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, which is now monitored by the BBS), there is no alternative source of data on Avocet breeding trends other than our compilation of data.

These numbers, of course, contrast greatly with those reported in 1973; Sharrock *et al.* (1975) documented breeding of 149 pairs at just four sites – two in Suffolk, and two in an unnamed 'County A', which we can now safely reveal was also Suffolk!

Avocet			Cambridgeshire	10	24	Cumbria	1	1
	S	CP	Lincolnshire	11	176	Greater Manchester	1	1
England	148	2,289	Norfolk	25	640	Lancs & N Mersey	7	164
England, SW	11	135	Suffolk	15	243	Northumberland	3	7
Avon	1	1	England, C	12	51	Yorkshire	12	119
Gloucestershire	2	23	Leics & Rutland	1	10	Wales	3	59
Hampshire	6	75	Nottinghamshire	6	9	Denbigh & Flint	2	29
Somerset	2	36	Staffordshire	3	7	Gwent	1	30
England, SE	30	612	Worcestershire	2	25	Scotland	1	1
Essex	15	405	England, N	34	408	Scotland, N & W	1	1
Kent	9	117	Cheshire & Wirral	5	56	Outer Hebrides	1	1
Sussex	6	90	Cleveland	1	42	TOTALS	152	2,349
England, E	61	1,083	Co. Durham	4	18			

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Scarce 655 bp

20y trend: **stable** +13%**Green**

Moderate

478–734 pairs. To maintain comparability with the last national survey (Conway *et al.* 2019), the table shows only confirmed and probable breeding pairs. Although information on a further 54 possible breeding pairs was also submitted to the Panel, these may have been passage birds or those using sites only temporarily. This is the highest total reported since 2011, though it is not

clear whether this results from a population increase or improved coverage, perhaps as a result of recent efforts to encourage observers to check the often-overlooked habitats (quarries, brown-field and industrial sites, and river shingles) that some Little Ringed Plovers use. An ongoing programme of improvements to the RBBP database should enable new modelling approaches to be used to correct for variation in observer effort. This depends, however, on county recorders submitting site-level data for this and all other RBBP species, which not all do.

Little Ringed Plover		Norfolk (e 43–45)	43	Anglesey	1
	TP	Northamptonshire (e 13)	11	Breconshire (e 10)	9
England (e 702+)	633	Suffolk (e 9)	9	Carmarthenshire (e 4)	4
England, SW (e 71)	66	England, C (e 170)	153	Denbigh & Flint (e 9)	7
Devon (e 6)	5	Derbyshire (e 28)	26	East Glamorgan (e 8)	8
Dorset (e 6)	6	Herefordshire (e 11)	6	Gower	2
Gloucestershire (e 10–12)	10	Leics & Rutland (e 21)	14	Gwent (e 6)	2
Hampshire (e 35)	34	Nottinghamshire (e 20)	20	Montgomeryshire (e 10)	2
Somerset (e 6)	5	Shropshire (e 3)	2	Scotland (e 68+)	66
Wiltshire (e 6)	6	Staffordshire (e 45)	45	Scotland, S (e 44+)	44
England, SE (e 139)	125	Warwickshire (e 22–23)	22	Ayrshire	3
Bedfordshire (e 13)	13	West Midlands (e 6)	5	Borders (e 12)	12
Berkshire (e 9)	9	Worcestershire (e 13)	13	Clyde	13
Buckinghamshire (e 19)	19	England, N (e 203+)	149	Dumfries & G'way (e 6)	6
Essex (e 25)	25	Cheshire & Wirral (e 17)	17	Lothian (e 10)	10
Hertfordshire (e 6)	6	Cleveland (e 8)	4	Scotland, Mid (e 24)	22
Kent (e 20–30)	16	Co. Durham (e 10)	9	Angus & Dundee (e 6)	4
Oxfordshire (e 14)	14	Cumbria (e 16)	16	Moray & Nairn (e 1)	1
Surrey	11	Greater Manchester (e 34)	24	NE Scotland (e 14)	14
Sussex (e 12)	12	Lancs & N Mersey (e 36)	10	Upper Forth (e 3)	3
England, E (e 146)	140	Northumberland (e 30)	17	TOTAL (e 817+)	734
Cambridgeshire (e 40)	40	Yorkshire	52		
Lincolnshire (e 39)	37	Wales (e 47)	35		

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce 423 males*

24y trend (survey): **strong decrease -57%**

Red

Low

24–52 ‘pairs’. There was a typical return for this elusive species of the high tops; outwith national survey years, there is little indication of the size of the population. After two years of confirmed breeding in Cumbria, the only record there was of a male ‘false-brooding’ on one date.

*Hayhow *et al.* (2015).

Dotterel				Scotland	32	24	51	Scotland, N & W	15	16	31
	S	CP	TP	Scotland, Mid	17	8	20	Highland	15	16	31
England	1	0	1	Moray & Nairn	3	1	1	TOTALS	33	24	52
England, N	1	0	1	NE Scotland	12	6	17				
Cumbria	1	0	1	Perth & Kinross	2	1	2				

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Scarce 378 bp*

(no trend available)

Red

Low

National survey estimate: 378 territories. Owing to the remote breeding distribution of Whimbrel, centred on Shetland, there is little indication of numbers except for in national survey years, such as 2021. All areas of Shetland known to hold high Whimbrel densities were surveyed by volunteers in this RSPB-led survey, along with a sample of tetrads elsewhere in the range in the archipelago. Elsewhere, areas of Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Caithness known to have held Whimbrel previously were surveyed. Surveys were conducted between 20th May and 30th June,

with a single visit made to all suitable breeding habitat within sites and tetrads. Estimates for Shetland and component areas (listed in the table below) were derived by combining territory totals from core areas with extrapolated estimates for sampled areas (Skene & Perkins 2023).

The preliminary estimate of 364 territories in Shetland suggests an increase of 26% from the 290 territories estimated in 2009 (Jackson 2009). There are, however, some concerns about the comparability of the two results given the increased survey coverage in 2021, and further analyses are required. Regardless, it seems that fears of further population decline should be allayed, although numbers remain substantially lower than the estimated 431–471 pairs recorded by surveys in 1982–86 (Richardson 1990) and 479 pairs in 1989–94 (Dore *et al.* 1996).

Elsewhere, the two territories found on Lewis were similar to the 2–3 territories in 2009, and the ten on North Uist were an increase on the five found in 2009. However, no Whimbrels were found on previous breeding sites in Caithness (last reported in 2013) and Orkney (2016). Outside of the survey effort, a pair alarm-calling in June at a site in south Highland was most unexpected, as was the return of a male to a site in Warwickshire for a second year (Marlow & de Clermont 2021), where it held a territory between 24th April and 13th June.

* Skene & Perkins (2023).

Whimbrel	recorded territories	estimated territories	Shetland, total	274	364
			Central Mainland	75	87
England	1	1	South Mainland	15	26
England, C	1	1	West Mainland	76	106
Warwickshire	1	1	North Mainland	22	47
Scotland	287	377	Yell	14	26
Scotland, N & W	287	377	Burra	2	2
Caithness	0	0	Whalsay	23	23
Highland	1	1	Bressay	0	0
Orkney	0	0	Fetlar	13	13
Outer Hebrides, total	12	12	Unst	34	34
Lewis	2	2	TOTALS	288	378
North Uist	10	10			

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Rare 54 bp

25y trend: **weak increase 34%**

Red

Near-complete

13 sites: 61–68 pairs. It is pleasing to report the highest total of breeding pairs since 2006, which appears to indicate that the EU-LIFE funded ‘Project Godwit’ is producing dividends for the Fenland population of ‘Continental Black-tailed Godwit’ *Limosa limosa limosa*. After a pause in project activities in 2020, the ‘headstarting’ of birds (by rearing and releasing birds from clutches collected in the wild) resumed in 2021, with 43 birds raised and released. By 2021, the total number of birds produced through headstarting since 2017 reached 155, which is far greater than would have been achieved through natural productivity; as the table shows, 57 confirmed breeding pairs in England fledged just six young between them in 2021. The population breeding at the Ouse Washes, the focus of this conservation activity, has increased from three pairs in 2017 to 19 in 2021.

In Scotland, there were four confirmed breeding pairs of ‘Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit’ *L. l. islandica*.

Black-tailed Godwit					Lancs & N Mersey	1	3	3	2
	S	CP	TP	YF	<i>L. l. islandica</i>				
<i>L. l. limosa</i>					Scotland, N & W	9	4	11	4
England	4	57	57	6	Orkney	3	4	6	4
England, E	3	54	54	4	Outer Hebrides	5	0	4	0
Cambridgeshire	2	40	40	4	Shetland	1	0	1	0
Norfolk	1	14	14	0	TOTALS	13	61	68	10
England, N	1	3	3	2					

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Very rare 8 females

25y trend: strong decrease -72%

Red

High

Four sites: 0–3 breeding females. It was a poor year, with the lowest number of females reported since 2009. In early years of the RBBP, the bulk of the UK population of Ruffs was found in the East Anglian fens, sometimes in appreciable numbers (e.g. 87 males, many in breeding plumage, and 34 females at a site in Cambridgeshire on 20th April 1982; Spencer *et al.* 1985). Since then, numbers have declined, and those records that RBBP receives come mostly from the Scottish islands.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: lekking males recorded on one date.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: two males lekking to one female, on one date, with mating observed.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: at least five males lekking to one female between 1st and 12th May. Outer

Hebrides Two sites: (1) two males lekking to one female, female later seen entering potential nest site; (2) three lekking males.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Former breeder

One site: 0–2 breeding pairs. After unsuccessful breeding attempts in Highland in 1934, 1936 and 1956, and (remarkably) at Swillington Ings, Yorkshire, in 1951, a more sustained colonisation began in 1969, with breeding first proved in 1971 (Forrester *et al.* 2007). The first RBBP report stated 'County A: at least one (probably two) pairs, one of which almost certainly bred successfully' (as fig. 7 shows, another pair was retrospectively added to this total). Subsequently, the species was reported annually from sites in northern Scotland; in all, 11 sites were occupied, although breeding was only ever confirmed at four sites. After three decades of occurrences, with a peak of four confirmed pairs in 1987, the last confirmed breeding pair was in 1997 (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999b) and, subsequently, Temminck's Stint was formally added to the list of former breeders by the BoCCA assessment (Eaton *et al.* 2015).

Although it is frustrating that a breeding attempt could not be proven in 2021, the evidence points strongly towards eggs having been laid. Unfortunately, efforts to confirm this would have created undue disturbance to the breeding birds, which were meticulously observed from a distance throughout their stay.

Around 100 birds are reported on passage annually, the majority in spring; somewhat paradoxically, 2021 was the poorest year for migrants of this species since 1971 (White & Kehoe 2023a).

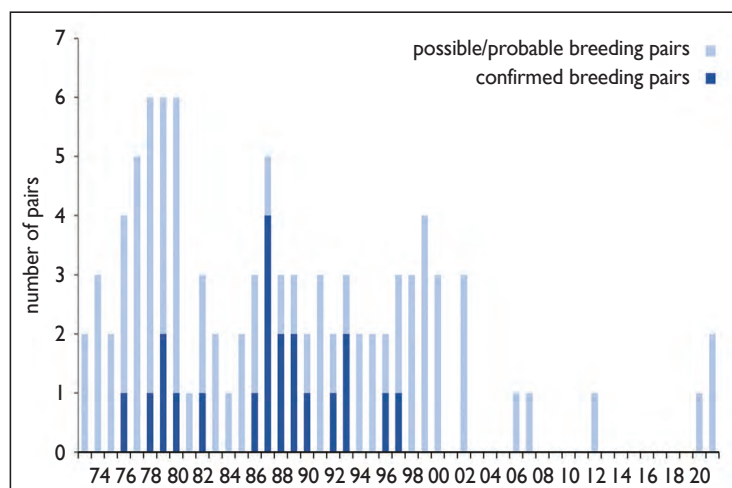


Fig. 7. Numbers of pairs of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* breeding in the UK, 1973–2021.

Scotland, N & W

Highland A pair was present at a site from 9th May to 10th July, and was joined by a second male for one day on 16th June. Although the nest was not seen, behaviour observed strongly pointed to breeding having been attempted, with display flights and courtship centred around a particular area of tall grass, followed by a period with few sightings suggesting that

incubation was ongoing. Unfortunately, heavy rain resulted in the site being flooded out on 6th July, with the likely loss of the nest shortly before eggs would have been due to hatch.

In addition to the records detailed above, we received a noteworthy late record for 2020: a male Temminck's Stint was present at a site in **Upper Forth** between 24th May and 9th July, during which period it was recorded singing and displaying.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Very rare | bp

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

Red

Near-complete

One site: one breeding pair. A pair was present at the traditional site in north Scotland.

Scotland, N

One site: one pair with two chicks.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Calidris subruficollis*

Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. A male was singing and displaying in flight at a site in **Cornwall** between 6th and 11th May; this is only the second appearance of this North American breeder in a RBBP report, following a displaying male in Cambridgeshire in 2008 (Holling *et al.* 2010). The species occurs regularly in the UK, averaging 38 individuals per annum between 2010 and 2019, of which 17% were in Cornwall (White & Kehoe 2023a), but spring records are rare, and the global population is believed to be declining.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Rare | 10 bp

25y trend: **strong increase 259%**

Red

Near-complete

48 sites: 49–146 breeding pairs/males. In addition to the Scottish breeding attempts tabulated, a female summered at a site in **Northumberland** for the eighth successive year. The recent increase in this species – up by 343% over the last ten years – has been one of the most unexpected features in recent RBBP reporting. As well as increasing numbers, the distribution has expanded – the species was reported at more than double the number of sites in 2021 than just five years previously, with the number of sites occupied in the Outer Hebrides going from three to 15.

Red-necked Phalarope				Caithness	1	0	2	Outer Hebrides	11	25	33
	S	CP	TP	Fair Isle	1	1	1	Shetland	31	11	92
Scotland, N & W	48	49	146	Highland	1	0	1	TOTALS	48	49	146
Argyll	1	12	14	Orkney	2	0	3				

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Very rare | 4 bp

20y trend: **strong increase +175%**

Amber

Near-complete

Three sites: 1–9 pairs. There were regular records of Green Sandpipers at potential breeding locations in Badenoch & Strathspey from the 1930s onwards, but it was not until 1959 that breeding was proven (Forrester *et al.* 2007). There was a subsequent lull in activity, so, by the time of the RBBP's first report, for 1973, the species did not even warrant a 'no records received' mention (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). It was not until the RBBP report for 1996 (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999a) that the species was featured, and it has been ever-present in reports since 1998 (fig. 8). It is hard to

confirm breeding attempts (in part due to the species' tree-nesting habits) but males singing and displaying in flight can be obvious in the open, boggy woodlands they frequent. Nine singing males is a new record total.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Three sites: (1) one breeding pair, nest with a clutch of four eggs, and six additional displaying males; (2–3) one singing male at each site.

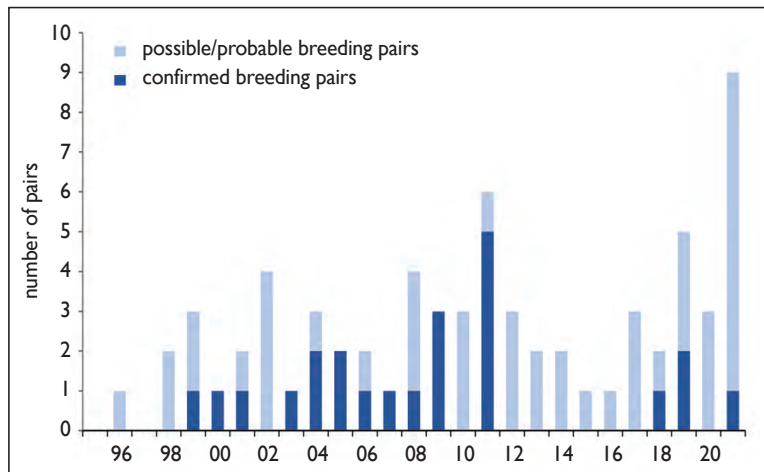


Fig. 8. Numbers of pairs of Green Sandpipers *Tringa ochropus* breeding in the UK, 1995–2021.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. A male was singing and displaying at Rockcliffe Marsh, Cumbria between 12th and 27th May. This is a rather unexpected addition to the RBBP's list of breeding species, given that the nearest breeding grounds are to the east of the Baltic (although breeding has occurred in Germany; Keller *et al.* 2020) and only around three individuals occur in the UK per annum (Holt *et al.* 2022).

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Rare 43 bp

25y trend: strong increase +383%

Amber

Near-complete

32 sites: 6–58 pairs. As with Green Sandpiper, the Wood Sandpiper is another northern wader showing a surprising upturn in records in recent years. Barring a breeding record from Prestwick Carr, Northumberland, in 1853 (Brown & Grice 2005), Wood Sandpipers began breeding in the UK in northern Scotland in 1959 (coincidentally, the first year in which Green Sandpiper breeding was proven) (Chisholm 2007). The RBBP report for 1973 stated that the species 'seemed firmly established in small numbers by 1970' and reported single birds at two sites (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). Wood Sandpiper remained an extremely rare breeding species, with single-digit numbers of pairs reported annually until the turn of the century, since when there has been a substantial increase.

Wood Sandpiper				Argyll	1	0	2
	S	CP	TP	Caithness	6	0	7
Scotland, Mid	2	0	2	Highland	23	6	47
NE Scotland	2	0	2	TOTALS	32	6	58
Scotland, N & W	30	6	56				

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

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

Amber

Low

18–120 pairs. A typical return, amounting to little more than 10% of the total population (as surveyed in 1995, with little knowledge on how it may have changed since).

* Hancock *et al.* (1997).

Greenshank		Caithness	8
	TP	Highland	81
Scotland, S	5	Outer Hebrides	24
Clyde	5	Shetland	2
Scotland, N & W	115	TOTALS	120

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

Less scarce 1,913 bp 25y trend: strong increase +5,663%

Amber

Near-complete

45 sites: 2,320–2,365 pairs. This was the third time since 2018 that the total number of breeding Mediterranean Gulls has exceeded 2,000 pairs, and the 5-year mean for the species is also approaching that upper threshold for inclusion on the RBBP's species list. The vulnerability of this colonial-breeder to HPAI H5N1 (and reports of mortality from the disease in 2023) means that careful consideration will be needed before the species is removed from RBBP reporting, however. As is normal, the majority of pairs were at one site, Langstone Harbour, Hampshire, where 1,249 pairs fledged a minimum of 601 young. The colonisation of the UK began at Needs Ore Point, Hampshire, in 1968, although it took until the late 1970s for regular breeding to become established; our first report, for 1973, merely carries a 'no records received' for this species (Sharrock *et al.* 1975).

Mediterranean Gull				Suffolk	2	12	12
	S	CP	TP	England, N	11	110	124
England	38	2,308	2,351	Cheshire & Wirral	1	6	6
England, SW	4	1,418	1,426	Cleveland	1	1	1
Dorset	1	109	109	Greater Manchester	1	0	1
Hampshire	2	1,309	1,309	Lancs & N Mersey	3	97	108
Isle of Wight	1	0	8	Northumberland	1	2	2
England, SE	12	634	649	Yorkshire	4	4	6
Berkshire	2	0	2	Wales	4	8	9
Essex	3	35	48	Anglesey	2	1	2
Kent	3	447	447	Carmarthenshire	1	6	6
Surrey	1	1	1	Denbigh & Flint	1	1	1
Sussex	3	151	151	Scotland, Mid	1	0	1
England, E	11	146	152	NE Scotland	1	0	1
Cambridgeshire	3	0	3	Northern Ireland	2	4	4
Lincolnshire	3	3	6	Co. Antrim	2	4	4
Norfolk	3	131	131	TOTALS	45	2,320	2,365

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Occasional breeder

One site: one individual. The returning adult was once again in a colony of Common Gulls *L. canus* in Perth & Kinross, for the 12th year in succession, although there was no evidence of hybrid pairing in 2021.

Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans*

Potential breeder

One site: one individual. An adult, presumably a male, was present in the tern colony at Cemlyn, Anglesey, on 4th–30th July. It displayed and offered fish to Sandwich Terns *T. sandvicensis* throughout its stay. An extremely rare vagrant to the UK (this was only the sixth

record), and a long way from the breeding colonies on the Pacific coast of Mexico and California, this might seem an unlikely occurrence. However, Elegant Terns have been visiting tern colonies in Europe since 1974, with individuals returning year after year and forming hybrid pairings with Sandwich Terns (Stoddart & Batty 2019). Furthermore, pure pairs of Elegant Terns have bred at L'Albufera de Valencia, Spain, between 2009 and 2018, raising eight juveniles (Keller *et al.* 2020).

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Less scarce 1,409 bp 20y trend: stable -10%

Amber

Near-complete

48 sites: 1,467 pairs. A number of colonies had a good year in 2021; for example, 229 pairs on Scolt Head, Norfolk, fledged 250 young. Local factors can, however, have a big impact on breeding success, with 217 pairs along the coast from Scolt Head, at Blakeney Point, raising just seven chicks. It is thought that the presence of Common Gulls and a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* may have caused large-scale colony abandonment there.

Little Tern	S	CP	YF				
				Northumberland	2	84	25
				Yorkshire	1	38	17
England	29	1,150	560	Wales	2	177	211
England, SW	3	66	20	Denbigh & Flint	2	177	211
Dorset	1	48	3	Scotland	16	100	24
Hampshire	2	18	17	Scotland, Mid	2	30	2
England, SE	8	81	50	Moray & Nairn	1	0	0
Essex	2	21	16	NE Scotland	1	30	2
Kent	3	7	2	Scotland, N & W	14	70	22
Sussex	3	53	32	Argyll	7	65	22
England, E	12	756	402	Caithness	1	0	0
Lincolnshire	1	8	3	Highland	2	3	0
Norfolk	8	687	399	Orkney	3	2	0
Suffolk	3	61	0	Outer Hebrides	1	0	0
England, N	6	247	88	Isle of Man	1	40	11
Cleveland	1	57	4	TOTALS	48	1,467	806
Cumbria	2	68	42				

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Rare 129 bp

25y trend: weak increase +49%

Red

Near-complete

Three sites: 152 pairs. Only sites with confirmed breeding pairs are listed. In addition, a site in Anglesey held two pairs during the breeding season, but there was no further evidence of breeding. The steady increase in this species at the principal colony on Coquet Island, Northumberland, has been a cause for celebration in recent years, with 2021 being no different owing to the record number of both pairs and young fledged. Most readers will, however, be aware of the catastrophic impact of HPAI H5N1 on this colony in 2022, which we will report upon next year.

Roseate Tern	S	CP	YF				
				England, N	1	150	186
				Northumberland	1	150	186
England	2	151	186	Northern Ireland	1	1	1
England, E	1	1	0	Co. Antrim	1	1	1
Norfolk	1	1	0	TOTALS	3	152	187

'American Black Tern' *Chlidonias niger surinamensis*

Potential breeder

One site: one individual. A male, first present in 2020, returned to the Long Nanny, Northumberland, between 18th May and 22nd July, spending much time displaying to Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea*.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Scarce 785 bp*

19y trend (SMP): **strong decrease -70%**

Red

Low

352 apparently occupied territories (AOTs). For many of the territories reported, breeding success is not monitored, so the numbers of fledged young we report cannot be taken as a measure of productivity, and it is not always clear where breeding success has been monitored to enable us to separate out those counts. The number of sites reported has been inflated by the use of data from the *Seabird Counts* census, which includes surveys of individual 1-km squares.

A resumption of surveying for the final, Covid-delayed year of the census meant more pairs were reported than usual. For a true perspective on the current status of this Red-listed seabird, we must defer to the imminent publication of the census results (Burnell *et al.* 2023); we will provide an expanded species account in next year's report.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Arctic Skua				Caithness	2	0	0	Shetland	62	136	25
	S	AOT	YF	Fair Isle	1	20	10	TOTALS	153	352	47
Scotland, N & W	153	352	47	Orkney	19	78	12				
Argyll	2	4	0	Outer Hebrides	67	114	0				

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Occasional breeder

Green

One site: 0–1 pairs. The individual that held territory in Shetland in 2020 returned in 2021, being present between 23rd May and 14th August.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Less scarce 1,255 bp*

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

Green

Low

162–194 pairs. As usual, our reporting covers only a small proportion of the population.

* Dillon *et al.* (2009).

Red-throated Diver				Moray & Nairn	1	2	Orkney	33	37
	CP	TP		NE Scotland	1	2	Outer Hebrides	5	15
Scotland, S	1	1		Scotland, N & W	159	189	Shetland	81	81
Clyde Islands	1	1		Argyll	26	26	TOTALS	162	194
Scotland, Mid	2	4		Highland	14	30			

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Rare 217 bp*

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

Amber

Low

21–75 pairs. As with Red-throated Diver, the remote distribution of Scotland's breeding Black-throated Diver population means that only a minority of the population is reported every year. We suspect, however, that more individuals and pairs are observed than reported, and would urge all birders encountering this species on freshwater lochs in the breeding season to submit

these records (and not to assume that another person may be doing so!).

* Eaton *et al.* (2007).

Black-throated Diver			Scotland, Mid	1	5	Caithness	0	2
	CP	TP	Moray & Nairn	1	1	Highland	15	42
Scotland, S	0	4	NE Scotland	0	2	Outer Hebrides	5	15
Ayrshire	0	1	Perth & Kinross	0	2	TOTALS	21	75
Clyde	0	2	Scotland, N & W	20	66			
Dumfries & G'way	0	1	Argyll	0	7			

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*
Occasional breeder

Amber

One site: one mixed pair. An adult Great Northern Diver was paired with a Black-throated Diver at an inland loch in **Highland**; it is not known whether there was a breeding attempt. While the RBBP's first report listed Great Northern Diver as 'no records received' in 1973, it did report that a pair had hatched two chicks in Wester Ross in 1970, and a hybrid Great Northern × Black-throated Diver had bred with a Black-throated Diver on the same loch in 1971 (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). The 1970 record has subsequently been challenged (Forrester *et al.* 2007), with the suggestion that this pairing was a Great Northern Diver with the hybrid that was reported in 1971. If this reinterpretation is correct, then, despite Arthur Ransome's writings (Ransome 1947), there is yet to be proven breeding of pure Great Northern Divers in the UK.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*
Reintroduced breeder

Two sites: nine confirmed breeding pairs. The numbers breeding as a consequence of releases from the White Stork Project (www.whitestorkproject.org) are increasing rapidly, although so far breeding has been restricted to the vicinity of the release locations.

England, SE

Surrey One site: a pair of reintroduced birds (released in Surrey in 2018 and 2019) bred, laying one egg that did not hatch.
Sussex One site: eight pairs of reintroduced birds bred, all laying eggs, with seven nests fledging a total of 14 young; the remaining nest was abandoned in a storm.



Harry Scott

368. Adult White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Dinnet, North-east Scotland, April 2022. This bird was released in Surrey in 2019.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. A pair was reported prospecting in an egret colony in **Cambridgeshire**, albeit on the relatively late date of 19th September. Numbers of Glossy Ibises reaching the UK have increased rapidly over the last decade and reached a record total of 200 individuals in 2021 (White & Kehoe 2023a). This was the third time pairs have been observed showing breeding behaviour in the UK, following records in Somerset in 2014 and in Lincolnshire in 2016 (Holling *et al.* 2016, 2018).

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Rare 43 bp

(no trend available but increasing)

Amber

Near-complete

Eight sites: 71–73 pairs. Another record total of breeding pairs was recorded in 2021, with 112 young fledging. Reports came from four new sites, which included the first breeding records for Cumbria and Essex.

England, SE

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

England, E

Norfolk Three sites: (1) 45 pairs bred, fledging 74 young; (2) three breeding pairs, all of which laid eggs, but none hatched; (3) one probable breeding pair. Suffolk One site: 13 breeding pairs, of which ten bred successfully raising a total of 21 young.

England, N

Cumbria One site: one pair bred, fledging one young. Yorkshire One site: eight confirmed breeding pairs; 14 young fledged.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: a pair was present between 9th May and 27th June.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Rare 230 booming males 25y trend: **strong increase +1,197%**

Amber

Near-complete

150 sites: 76–289 pairs. The number of Eurasian Bitterns reported has increased every year since 2006. We should not allow ourselves to become blasé about this conservation

achievement, which has only been possible through a huge programme of reedbed creation and restoration for the benefit of Bitterns and many other species. Between 1996 and 2000, 350 ha of reedbed was restored to a condition suitable for breeding Bitterns and, between 2002 and 2006, a further 300 ha of reedbed was created, including in regions away from the East

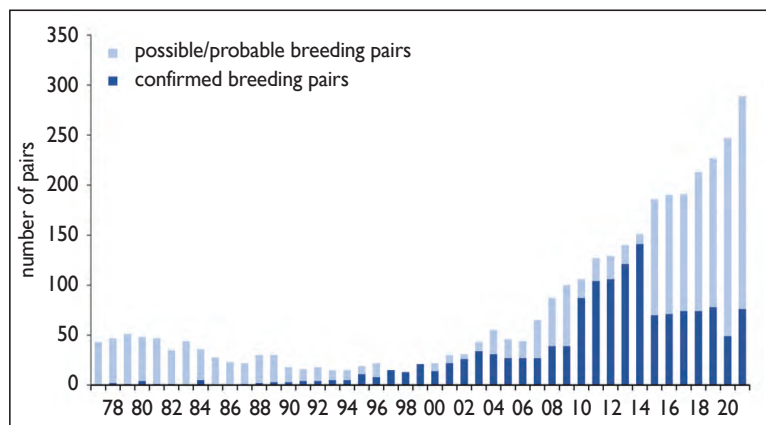


Fig. 9. Numbers of pairs of Eurasian Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* breeding in the UK, 1977–2021.

Eurasian Bittern			Hertfordshire	1	0	1	Staffordshire	2	2	3	
	S	CP	TP	Kent	9	2	16	Warwickshire	1	1	1
England	147	73	280	Oxfordshire	1	1	3	England, N	25	13	38
England, SW	17	5	50	Sussex	1	0	2	Cheshire & Wirral	1	1	1
Dorset	1	0	1	England, E	84	48	158	Cumbria	1	0	1
Gloucestershire	2	0	2	Cambridgeshire	16	7	37	Greater Manchester	1	0	1
Hampshire	1	0	1	Lincolnshire	8	14	19	Lancs & N Mersey	6	5	10
Isle of Wight	1	1	1	Norfolk	43	7	53	Northumberland	2	0	1
Somerset	8	2	40	Northamptonshire	1	0	1	Yorkshire	14	7	24
Wiltshire	4	2	5	Suffolk	16	20	48	Wales	3	3	9
England, SE	14	3	24	England, C	7	4	10	Anglesey	2	1	7
Bedfordshire	1	0	1	Derbyshire	2	0	2	Gwent	1	2	2
Berkshire	1	0	1	Nottinghamshire	2	1	4	TOTALS	150	76	289

Anglian coast where sea-level rise threatens the long-term future of sites. The species came close to going extinct in the UK (for a second time) in the 1990s (fig. 9). The apparent decline in the number of confirmed breeding records in the last decade reflects a drop in the resources put into Bittern monitoring as the population increased and is unlikely to reflect a genuine decline.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*
Occasional breeder

Amber
Near-complete

One site: one male. A male was present again at a site in the vast Avalon Marshes complex, Somerset, but there was no further evidence of breeding. The last confirmed breeding record was in 2017 (Holling *et al.* 2019).

England, SW

Somerset One site: one male singing from 1st May to 1st June.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
Occasional breeder

Three sites: 0–3 pairs. While the Cornwall and Devon records listed below are interesting, it is only the sightings from Somerset that may have involved actual breeding. However, in the absence of sightings of recently fledged juveniles, as in 2017, it is hard to know what is happening with this elusive, nocturnal species in the expansive wetlands of Somerset.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: two first-summer (2CY) birds present from 28th May to 17th July. **Devon** One site: first-summer male present from 9th to 29th April (the same bird returned in 2022). **Somerset** One site: four records of birds seen or heard between April and June, although not known how many individuals involved.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
Very rare 30 bp

(no trend available but increasing)

Amber
High

17 sites: 63–77 pairs. After a false start in 2008, Cattle Egrets began breeding in the UK in 2017; Holling *et al.* 2019) and numbers have increased every year since, with new sites being occupied annually. Fig. 10 compares the rates of increase in Cattle Egret, Great White Egret and Little Egret in the initial years of colonisation; the increase in Cattle Egret is strikingly similar to that of Little Egret, so far. Whether it will reach 500 pairs by 2027 remains to be seen!

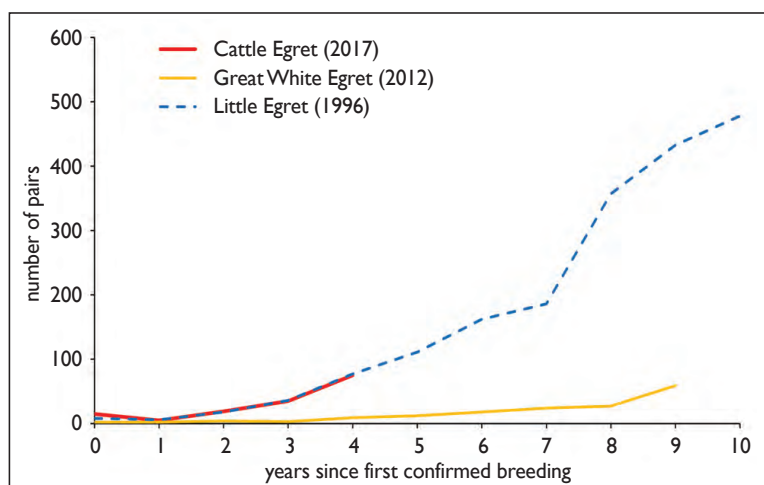


Fig. 10. Numbers of breeding pairs of Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Great White Egret *Ardea alba* and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* in the first ten years after colonisation began. Actual years of first confirmed breeding are given in legend text.

Cattle Egret					Kent	2	8	8	14
	S	CP	TP	FL	Oxfordshire	1	3	3	5
England, SW	7	39	46	11	Sussex	1	7	7	10
Cornwall	1	0	1	0	England, E	3	3	8	6
Dorset	1	1	3	3	Cambridgeshire	2	3	7	6
Hampshire	1	11	14	8	Norfolk	1	0	1	0
Somerset	3	27	27	0	England, N	1	1	1	0
Wiltshire	1	0	1	0	Cheshire & Wirral	1	1	1	0
England, SE	6	20	22	32	TOTALS	17	63	77	49
Essex	2	2	4	3					

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Occasional breeder

One site: one possible pair. A single bird was present at a site in Kent between 21st April and 30th May.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

Very rare 28 bp

(no trend available but increasing)

Amber

Near-complete

14 sites: 53–59 pairs. RBBP notes records of possible breeding where two or more birds are present at a potential breeding site through the breeding season. Yet again, a record total was recorded, with the species becoming an expected sight for birdwatchers in many parts of southern England, having undergone a huge change in status in just a few years. It is worth noting that, when the RBBP started reporting in 1973, there had not been a record of Great White Egret in the UK for over 20 years (Holt 2013). As with Cattle Egret, Great White Egret has now graduated to having breeding records tabulated in our reports, a sure sign of an increasing population! Note, however, that fig. 10 shows how the increase in this larger species has been slower than for both Cattle and Little Egret. This year's increase was driven mainly by increasing numbers at existing sites – numbers in Somerset were more than double those in 2020, for example, and numbers tripled in Norfolk. However, there was a scatter of pairs prospecting in new counties, so we should perhaps expect more range expansion in the near future.

Great White Egret					Lincolnshire	2	0	2	0
	S	CP	TP	FL	Norfolk	3	9	10	8
England	13	53	58	73	England, C	1	0	1	0
England, SW	5	39	40	53	Nottinghamshire	1	0	1	0
Isle of Wight	1	0	1	0	England, N	1	3	3	10
Somerset	3	37	37	50	Cheshire & Wirral	1	3	3	10
Wiltshire	1	2	2	3	Wales	1	0	1	0
England, E	6	11	14	10	East Glamorgan	1	0	1	0
Cambridgeshire	1	2	2	2	TOTALS	14	53	59	73

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Less scarce 1,476 bp

20y trend: strong increase +2,876%

Green

High

192 sites: 1,525–1,598 pairs. This is the tenth – and most numerous – of the herons and allies reported on by the RBBP in 2021; none of these species featured in the RBBP's first report, and most were regarded as great rarities at the time. After a period of rapid increase in the decade after Little Egrets first bred in 1996 (fig. 10), the rate of population growth slowed, with some setbacks due to hard winter weather (e.g. 2017/18; Eaton *et al.* 2020). It is likely there is now an element of reporting fatigue (and practical difficulties in making colony counts) meaning there is

a degree of under-reporting, and a number of colonies are reported as having birds present but without a count. The population is still increasing, however, with a 10-year trend of +84%, and the total reported for 2021 is the highest ever.

Little Egret			Oxfordshire	2	6	Wales	20	153
	S	TP	Surrey	3	11	Anglesey	2	16
England	159	1,375	Sussex	9	65	Breconshire	5	7
England, SW	44	289	England, E	40	339	Caernarfonshire	4	56
Avon	1	3	Cambridgeshire	9	51	Carmarthenshire	2	14
Cornwall	8	75	Lincolnshire	15	155	Denbigh & Flint	2	31
Devon	6	48	Norfolk	10	88	Gower	1	4
Dorset	5	19	Suffolk	6	45	Gwent	2	18
Gloucestershire	6	21	England, C	12	44	Meirionnydd	1	4
Hampshire	7	61	Derbyshire	1	1	Montgomeryshire	1	3
Isle of Wight	5	6	Leics & Rutland	4	11	Scotland, S	1	1
Somerset	4	29	Nottinghamshire	3	14	Dumfries & G'way	1	1
Wiltshire	2	27	Warwickshire	3	17	Northern Ireland	7	33
England, SE	46	448	Worcestershire	1	1	Co. Antrim	1	4
Bedfordshire	4	13	England, N	17	255	Co. Derry	2	9
Berkshire	1	2	Cheshire & Wirral	2	108	Co. Down	4	20
Buckinghamshire	5	15	Cumbria	4	46	Channel Islands	5	36
Essex	8	155	Greater Manchester	2	2	Guernsey	1	20
Greater London	3	5	Lancs & N Mersey	1	31	Jersey	4	16
Hertfordshire	5	45	Northumberland	1	1	TOTALS	192	1,598
Kent	6	131	Yorkshire	7	67			



Ben Lucking

369. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Devon, February 2021.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare 246 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +167%****Amber**

High

224–271 pairs. This is the highest annual total we have reported for breeding Ospreys in the UK, and it is likely that there are a few breeding records that did not reach us – not dissimilar to the situation in 1973, when the report stated: ‘A few further pairs and eyries were suspected or rumoured but details were not submitted to the Panel’ (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). In that year, however, there were just ten pairs known, all in northern Scotland. Ospreys are now breeding in all mainland counties of Scotland, have expanded southwards into northern England (with the first confirmed and successful breeding in Lancashire & North Merseyside in 2021), established themselves in Wales and, owing to a reintroduction project, in the East Midlands around Rutland Water. The next expansion is likely to be on the English south coast, where, for the second year running, a female, CJ7, originally from Rutland Water, laid unfertilised eggs at a nest in Poole Harbour, Dorset. Following this, she paired with a returning male, 022, that was released by the Poole Harbour Osprey Translocation Project in 2019 but, despite many mating attempts, no fertile eggs were forthcoming in 2021.

Osprey				Scotland, S	33	40	67
	CP	TP	YF	Ayrshire	3	3	6
England	28	31	63	Borders	10	13	20
England, SW	0	1	0	Clyde	8	10	19
Dorset	0	1	0	Clyde Islands	2	2	0
England, E	2	2	4	Dumfries & G’way	10	12	22
Northamptonshire	2	2	4	Scotland, Mid	82	96	132
England, C	8	10	17	Angus & Dundee	6	9	13
Leics & Rutland	8	10	17	Fife	1	1	0
England, N	18	18	42	Moray & Nairn	17	17	31
Cumbria	9	9	24	NE Scotland	18	20	37
Lancs & N Mersey	1	1	2	Perth & Kinross	17	21	20
Northumberland	8	8	16	Upper Forth	23	28	31
Wales	7	10	6	Scotland, N & W	74	93	69
Breconshire	0	1	0	Argyll	16	16	19
Caernarfonshire	1	1	1	Caithness	3	6	0
Denbigh & Flint	2	2	0	Highland	55	71	50
Meirionnydd	2	3	2	Northern Ireland	0	1	0
Montgomeryshire	2	2	3	Co. Fermanagh	0	1	0
Pembrokeshire	0	1	0	TOTALS	224	271	337
Scotland	189	229	268				

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Rare 130–150 bp*

20y trend: **strong increase +85%****Amber**

Moderate

40–110 pairs. This was the second year of a national survey run by European Honey-buzzard enthusiasts, meaning that the numbers reported here are higher than usual. The totals reported over the two years of the survey were 108 (2020) and 110 pairs (2021); note that these figures vary slightly from those in the survey paper by Clements *et al.* (2022) owing to subsequent data submissions. Given the changing coverage between the two breeding seasons, the best perspective on the current population is made by pooling records over the two years and accounting for gaps in survey coverage (Clements *et al.* 2022). This gave rise to an estimate of 100 territories in the three core areas of southern England (Hampshire, Sussex and surrounding counties), central Scotland (Perth & Kinross) and northern Scotland (Highland and Moray & Nairn), and 30–50 elsewhere in the UK.

While the population has shown a considerable increase and expansion since the previous survey in the UK, in 2000 (Batten 2001), there appears to have been a retraction and decline in the

west of Britain. Clements *et al.* (2022) noted a decline in Wales, absence from formerly occupied sites in Devon, Shropshire and Cumbria, and few reports from Argyll and Dumfries & Galloway.

* Clements *et al.* (2022).

Honey-buzzard					Yorkshire	0	0	2	0
	I	CP	TP	YF	Wales	1	2	4	0
England	4	21	48	14	Breconshire	0	0	1	0
England, SW	0	11	21	11	Gower	1	2	3	0
Dorset	0	2	4	0	Scotland	2	17	58	10
Hampshire	0	8	12	9	Scotland, S	1	0	2	0
Wiltshire	0	1	5	2	Dumfries & G'way	1	0	2	0
England, SE	3	8	20	1	Scotland, Mid	1	12	36	3
Kent	2	1	4	1	Angus & Dundee	0	0	3	0
Surrey	0	0	4	0	Moray & Nairn	0	6	17	1
Sussex	1	7	12	0	NE Scotland	1	1	1	2
England, E	1	1	3	2	Perth & Kinross	0	4	12	0
Norfolk	1	1	3	2	Upper Forth	0	1	3	0
England, C	0	1	1	0	Scotland, N & W	0	5	20	7
Nottinghamshire	0	1	1	0	Highland	0	5	20	7
England, N	0	0	3	0	TOTALS	7	40	110	24
Northumberland	0	0	1	0					

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Scarce 508 bp*

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

Green

High

163–270 pairs. Data were received from 250 home ranges that were monitored by members of Scottish Raptor Groups and made available through the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme (Challis *et al.* 2023), in addition to records received through other routes.

* Hayhow *et al.* (2017).

Golden Eagle					Argyll	2	28	49	21
	I ¹	CP	TP	YF	Highland	13	74	121	56
Scotland	26	163	269	126	Orkney	0	1	1	0
Scotland, S	0	7	10	4	Outer Hebrides	7	22	34	16
Scotland, Mid	3	31	54	29	Northern Ireland	1	0	1	0
Angus & Dundee	0	4	6	4	Co. Tyrone	1	0	1	0
Moray & Nairn	0	3	3	1	TOTALS	26	163	270	126
NE Scotland	0	7	16	7					
Perth & Kinross	1	11	19	11					
Upper Forth	2	6	10	6					
Scotland, N & W	22	125	205	93					

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

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Scarce 813 bp

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

Green

Moderate

625–1,008 pairs. In 1973, only 10 or 11 sites, with four confirmed breeding pairs, were known to the RBBP, although it was commented that many others were not officially reported to the Panel – and only one county, Northumberland, was named (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). We can be more relaxed about revealing the (broad) locations of breeding Goshawks now, and most observers are willing to submit records, given the seemingly unstoppable increase of this species (although persecution continues, and there are some noticeable holes in the current range – see Smith *et al.* 2022). After rapid population growth in the first two decades of RBBP

reporting, the rate of increase slowed somewhat but has picked up again; over the last ten years, the population has increased by 6.4% per annum. In 2021, a notable milestone was reached, with over 1,000 pairs reported for the first time.

Northern Goshawk					
	CP	TP			
England (e 805)	408	633	Lancs & N Mersey (e 2)	0	1
England, SW (e 397)	209	279	Northumberland (e 60)	35	47
Avon (e 2)	1	1	Yorkshire	31	39
Cornwall (e 23)	11	23	Wales (e 295+)	39	146
Devon (e 70)	49	70	Breconshire (e 65)	12	29
Dorset (e 30)	10	14	Caernarfonshire (e 6)	0	6
Gloucestershire (e 60–75)	38	39	Carmarthenshire (e 5)	1	5
Hampshire (e 120)	55	55	Ceredigion (e 20)	2	5
Somerset (e 17)	6	17	Denbigh & Flint (e 12)	1	12
Wiltshire (e 60)	39	60	East Glamorgan (e 15–20)	3	9
England, SE (e 83)	15	50	Gower	0	4
Berkshire (e 6)	2	3	Gwent (e 75)	20	22
Kent (e 6)	2	6	Meirionnydd (e 20–30)	0	6
Oxfordshire (e 11)	8	11	Montgomeryshire (e 50)	0	40
Surrey (e 10)	3	5	Pembrokeshire (e 8)	0	8
Sussex (e 50)	0	25	Scotland (e 283+)	178	228
England, E (e 61)	42	57	Scotland, S (e 97+)	62	84
Lincolnshire (e 1)	1	1	Ayrshire	2	7
Norfolk (e 46–50)	32	46	Borders (e 36)	29	36
Suffolk (e 10)	9	10	Clyde	1	2
England, C (e 145)	68	142	Dumfries & G'way (e 50)	29	37
Derbyshire (e 30)	18	30	Lothian (e 2)	1	2
Herefordshire (e 33)	6	33	Scotland, Mid (e 140+)	102	124
Nottinghamshire (e 11)	11	11	Angus & Dundee	1	6
Shropshire (e 41)	28	41	Moray & Nairn (e 20)	3	5
Staffordshire (e 13)	3	10	NE Scotland (e 88)	82	88
Worcestershire (e 17)	2	17	Perth & Kinross	6	15
England, N (e 119+)	74	105	Upper Forth	10	10
Cheshire & Wirral (e 3)	2	3	Scotland, N & W (e 45)	14	20
Co. Durham (e 5)	1	5	Argyll (e 5)	0	5
Cumbria (e 10)	5	10	Highland (e 30–40)	14	15
			Isle of Man (e 1)	0	1
			TOTALS (e 1,384+)	625	1,008

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce 424 bp

25y trend: strong increase +212%

Amber

High

388–473 breeding females/pairs. Some 'pairs' actually refer to two or more females paired with a single polygynous male. This is another raptor that has shown a heartening increase in the first 50 years of the RBBP's existence. Marsh Harriers came close to a second extinction in the UK, with just one pair nesting at Minsmere, Suffolk, in 1971; by the time of our first report, for 1973, there were four breeding females in Suffolk (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). The 400 threshold was exceeded



Harry Scott

370. Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, North-east Scotland, September 2021.

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2021

in 2005, when a national survey recorded 439 pairs (Holling *et al.* 2007) and, since then, the numbers reported have fluctuated around 300–400 pairs, at least partly due to variation in reporting of populations in core counties along the east coast. However, it is evident that some increase is still ongoing, and a slow spread both westwards and northwards. This year's total is a new high for the RBBP, and is in fact the highest number of Marsh Harriers breeding in the UK since some point in the mid-nineteenth century.

Marsh Harrier							
	CP	TP	YF	Lancs & N Mersey (e 8)	8	8	13
				Northumberland (e 4)	4	4	6
England (e 436+)	348	413	403	Yorkshire	38	46	57
England, SW (e 36+)	31	35	50	Wales (e 10)	6	10	5
Cornwall (e 2–3)	1	2	4	Anglesey (e 4)	4	4	2
Devon	0	1	0	Carmarthenshire	0	2	0
Dorset (e 4)	4	4	8	East Glamorgan (e 1)	1	1	0
Hampshire (e 4)	4	4	7	Gower	1	1	2
Isle of Wight (e 4)	4	4	7	Gwent (e 2)	0	2	1
Somerset (e 19)	17	19	22	Scotland (e 23+)	12	25	25
Wiltshire (e 1)	1	1	2	Scotland, S (e 2+)	0	2	0
England, SE (e 92)	36	70	52	Borders	0	2	0
Essex (e 14)	10	14	10	Scotland, Mid (e 19+)	10	20	23
Kent (e 50–70)	19	48	34	Angus & Dundee (e 2)	3	3	7
Oxfordshire (e 2)	2	2	6	Fife	2	3	5
Sussex (e 6)	5	6	2	NE Scotland (e 2–3)	2	3	3
England, E (e 240)	221	240	218	Perth & Kinross	3	10	8
Cambridgeshire (e 35)	28	35	23	Upper Forth	0	1	0
Lincolnshire (e 34)	34	34	43	Scotland, N & W (e 2)	2	3	2
Norfolk (e 111)	101	111	73	Orkney (e 2)	2	3	2
Suffolk (e 60)	58	60	79	Channel Islands (e 25)	22	25	12
England, N (e 68+)	60	68	83	Guernsey (e 4)	1	4	0
Cheshire & Wirral (e 7)	7	7	7	Jersey (e 21)	21	21	12
Cleveland (e 3)	3	3	0	TOTALS (e 494+)	388	473	445

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce 575 bp*

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

Red

High

240–381 pairs. The number of Hen Harriers reported fluctuates between years, which may reflect variation in breeding activity, but also in recording effort. Surveys every six years give a more robust indication of change in the UK population, and we will report on the results of the 2023 survey in due course. There is, however, near-complete coverage of suitable breeding habitat in England every year owing to the high concern for this much-depleted population, and this monitoring shows a very welcome recovery in recent years. In 2012, there was just a single pair in England, which raised four young; the 31 confirmed breeding pairs in 2021 and 86 fledged young are the highest totals for England since the Panel began reporting on Hen Harriers in 1996.

* Wotton *et al.* (2018).

Hen Harrier			Wales				
	CP	TP	YF	Breconshire	0	1	0
England	31	34	86	Caernarfonshire	3	8	8
England, N	31	34	86	Denbigh & Flint	3	7	4
Co. Durham	2	2	7	Meirionnydd	17	18	22
Cumbria	6	8	6	Montgomeryshire	5	6	5
Lancs & N Mersey	10	10	36	Radnorshire	1	1	0
Northumberland	8	8	18	Scotland	167	287	246
Yorkshire	5	6	19	Scotland, S	28	32	32

Hen Harrier cont.				Argyll	20	31	34
Borders	8	8	14	Caithness	3	7	3
Clyde	8	9	10	Highland	23	34	46
Clyde Islands	5	5	0	Orkney	44	103	50
Dumfries & G'way	7	10	8	Outer Hebrides	20	30	24
Scotland, Mid	29	50	57	Northern Ireland	11	17	0
Angus & Dundee	2	3	0	Co. Antrim	5	5	0
Moray & Nairn	5	5	10	Co. Derry	3	3	0
NE Scotland	10	16	37	Co. Fermanagh	1	6	0
Perth & Kinross	11	25	8	Co. Tyrone	2	3	0
Upper Forth	1	1	2	Isle of Man	2	2	1
Scotland, N & W	110	205	157	TOTALS	240	381	372

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Occasional breeder

One site: one individual. A first-summer (2CY) male was present on moorland adjacent to a Hen Harrier territory in North-east Scotland from 1st to 11th June. This is the fifth occasion that a male Pallid Harrier has been reported displaying to Hen Harriers in the UK; in 1995, a first-summer male paired with a female Hen Harrier, which laid a clutch at a site in Orkney, though the eggs were subsequently taken by a predator (Ogilvie *et al.* 1998).

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Very rare 4 bp

25y trend: strong decrease -62%

Red

Near-complete

Four sites: 0–3 pairs. There was a repeat of last year's blank for confirmed breeding pairs, but with even fewer sightings: only one male made a sustained attempt to attract a mate and there were no records of females at all. Our first report, for 1973 (Sharrock *et al.* 1975), also portrayed this species at a low ebb, with just two unsuccessful pairs, and the following year there were no confirmed pairs. Numbers subsequently recovered, which may give some hope that the same might happen again.

England, S

One site: two males. A colour-ringed 6CY male was present between April and August, displaying and nest-building, but failed to attract a female. A 3CY male was present on two dates in April and May.

England, E

Norfolk Three sites: a single male displayed at three nearby sites between 10th and 18th May.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Rare 131 bp

25y trend: strong increase +1,210%

Amber

Near-complete

132–150 pairs. In addition to the birds in Scotland tabulated below, a pair of immature birds from the English reintroduction scheme summered together on the Isle of Wight. The total of 150 pairs is a new record, and the actual number is likely to be higher now that the population has outgrown the capacity to annually monitor it in some parts of Scotland.

White-tailed Eagle				Scotland, Mid			3	4	3	Argyll	45	45	45
	CP	TP	YF	Fife	0	1	0	Highland	54	59	35		
Scotland, S	0	2	0	NE Scotland	2	2	1	Orkney	0	1	0		
Clyde	0	1	0	Perth & Kinross	1	1	2	Outer Hebrides	30	39	33		
Clyde Islands	0	1	0	Scotland, N & W	129	144	113	TOTALS	132	150	116		

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

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

Green

Low

252–330 pairs. Both UK species of ‘eared’ owl were added to the RBBP’s species list in 2010. There was, and remains, a substantial knowledge gap around their breeding populations in the UK. This is probably particularly true for the Long-eared Owl, as the numbers reported to the RBBP remain only a small proportion of the suspected population size. The species is relatively widespread in Northern Ireland (Balmer *et al.* 2013), possibly helped by the absence of Tawny Owls *Strix*

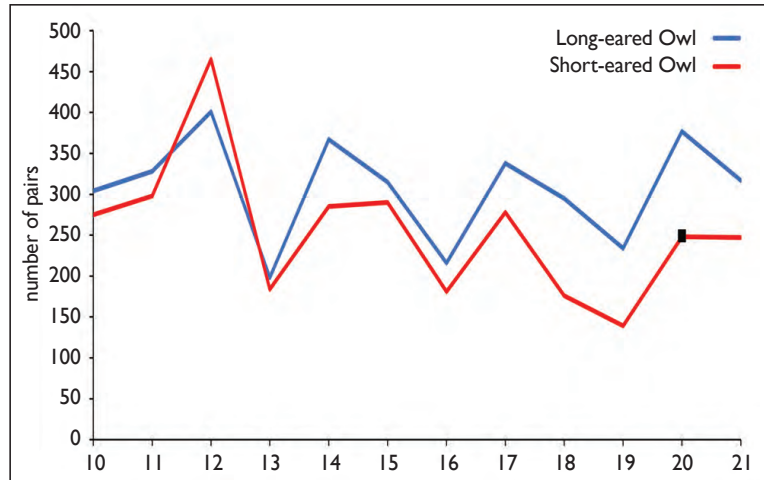


Fig. 11. Maximum numbers of Long-eared *Asio otus* and Short-eared Owls *A. flammeus* reported to the RBBP in the UK, 2010–21. The dark marker for Short-eared Owl numbers in 2020 indicates a likely moderate impact of lockdown restrictions on numbers reported for that year.

Long-eared Owl			Yorkshire	
	CP	TP		
England (e 491+)	163	209	Wales (e 17+)	41
England, SW (e 41+)	10	13	Breconshire (e 8–10)	44
Cornwall (e 10)	0	1	Ceredigion (e 5)	2
Devon	1	1	Denbigh & Flint	0
Dorset (e 3)	0	0	Montgomeryshire (e 1)	1
Hampshire (e 10)	4	4	Scotland (e 410+)	1
Isle of Wight (e 15)	4	5	Scotland, S (e 22+)	0
Somerset (e 2)	1	2	Ayrshire	1
England, SE (e 153)	31	44	Borders (e 6)	1
Berkshire (e 6)	1	1	Clyde	6
Buckinghamshire (e 2)	2	2	Lothian (e 8)	4
Essex (e 25)	24	26	Scotland, Mid (e 237+)	3
Kent (e 10–20)	2	10	Angus & Dundee	14
Sussex (e 100)	2	5	Fife (e 20–50)	1
England, E (e 36)	24	34	Moray & Nairn (e 30)	2
Cambridgeshire (e 8)	5	8	NE Scotland (e 150)	4
Lincolnshire (e 8)	8	8	Perth & Kinross	3
Norfolk (e 9–10)	6	8	Upper Forth	1
Suffolk (e 10)	5	10	Scotland, N & W (e 151+)	18
England, C (e 17)	20	22	Argyll (e 20–50)	4
Derbyshire (e 9)	7	7	Highland (e 70–100)	13
Nottinghamshire (e 3)	9	10	Shetland	1
Shropshire (e 1)	1	1	Northern Ireland (e 5+)	4
Staffordshire (e 4)	3	4	Co. Antrim	1
England, N (e 244+)	78	96	Co. Armagh	1
Cheshire & Wirral (e 3)	2	3	Co. Down	2
Co. Durham (e 100)	3	8	Channel Islands (e 42)	36
Greater Manchester (e 37)	20	28	Guernsey (e 5)	1
Lancs & N Mersey (e 30)	3	3	Jersey (e 37)	35
Northumberland (e 30)	9	10	Isle of Man (e 15)	2
			TOTALS (e 980+)	252
				330

aluco, but we receive very few records. It is maybe too early to detect any trends in numbers in either species, and we still wish to encourage improved recording, but fig. 11 shows an interesting if not entirely surprising synchronisation between population fluctuations for the two species. While both owls have been recorded taking a range of prey, voles, particularly Short-tailed Voles *Microtus agrestis*, form a large part of their diets and thus owl populations fluctuate in response to cycles in vole abundance.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Scarce 620+ bp* (no trend available)

Amber
Moderate

82–261 pairs. The single pair that fledged four young on Guernsey was the first-ever breeding record for the island.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Short-eared Owl			Radnorshire	0	1
	CP	TP	Scotland (e 283+)	44	166
England (e 113+)	34	89	Scotland, S (e 24+)	14	22
England, SW (e 3)	0	2	Borders (e 14)	14	14
Cornwall (e 1)	0	1	Clyde	0	4
Wiltshire (e 1–2)	0	1	Dumfries & G'way (e 5)	0	3
England, E (e 3)	0	3	Lothian (e 1)	0	1
Lincolnshire (e 2)	0	2	Scotland, Mid (e 58+)	7	29
Suffolk (e 1)	0	1	Angus & Dundee (e 5)	0	3
England, C (e 26)	8	26	Moray & Nairn (e 5)	2	2
Derbyshire (e 20)	8	20	NE Scotland (e 25)	1	6
Staffordshire (e 6)	0	6	Perth & Kinross	2	16
England, N (e 81+)	26	58	Upper Forth	2	2
Cheshire & Wirral (e 3)	1	3	Scotland, N & W (e 201+)	23	115
Co. Durham (e 5)	3	5	Argyll (e 20)	5	5
Cumbria	4	4	Caithness	1	10
Greater Manchester (e 5)	1	5	Highland (e 10–15)	4	15
Lancs & N Mersey (e 30)	1	7	Orkney	7	65
Northumberland (e 9)	2	9	Outer Hebrides (e 60–90)	5	19
Yorkshire	14	25	Shetland (e 1)	1	1
Wales (e 5+)	3	5	Channel Islands (e 1)	1	1
Ceredigion (e 1)	0	1	Guernsey (e 1)	1	1
Pembrokeshire (e 3)	3	3	TOTALS (e 397+)	82	261

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus*

Former breeder

Four sites: five individual birds. A few birds continue to wander around northern Scotland and the chance remains that, if the right individuals were to meet, breeding could happen. That was in effect what happened on Fetlar, Shetland, in 1966, with breeding occurring from 1967 onwards. Our first annual report documented how the single male mated with two females in 1973 – one raised two young (although one died in September) and the other deserted three eggs during incubation (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). Breeding continued until 1975, after which the male either left or died. While six males had been raised during the nine years of breeding, all had subsequently been driven away by the resident male, so he left no male heir to replace him. Unpaired females remained on Fetlar and elsewhere in Shetland, sometimes laying unfertilised eggs, until 1993 (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Scotland, N & W

Moray & Nairn One site: a male present on 27th May. **Outer Hebrides** One site: a 5CY female was present on St Kilda from 23rd March to 5th December. **Shetland** Two sites: (1) a 4CY+ male from 2020 to 20th August and a 4CY female from 2020 to 15th April; (2) a 2CY female was present at two nearby sites from 28th May to 19th June.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
Occasional breeder

Two sites: two singing males. The RBBP's first report indicated 'no records received' for 1973 (Sharrock *et al.* 1975) but commented that there had been one to four breeding records since the 1830s; it is now 25 years since we last reported a confirmed breeding record.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: one singing male between 2nd and 12th June. **Hampshire** One site: a singing male between 16th April and 25th June, returning to the same area as occupied in 2020.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
Former breeder

Four sites: 0–4 pairs. It is notable that, just a year after the prospecting pair in Ceredigion in 2020, there were two more records from Wales, which was never a core part of the Wryneck's range. In fact, the RBBP archive holds no records from Wales prior to 2020, although a few are mentioned by Pritchard *et al.* (2021). This was once a widespread breeder across much of England, but the population had crashed prior to the advent of the RBBP; our report for 1973 mentioned just one pair, in Kent (Sharrock *et al.* 1975).

England, SW

Hampshire One site: one singing male on 30th April.

Wales

Breconshire One site: one singing male on 8th June. **Gower** One site: one singing male between 24th and 30th May.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one singing male between 15th May and 30th June.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*
Less scarce 1,000+ bp* (no trend available)

Red
Moderate

34–306 territories. It was an average year for numbers of this species, though it is possible that lockdown restrictions in the early spring had an impact on recording – the detectability of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers is at its highest in the period from February to April, when birds are establishing territories through singing, drumming and other territorial interactions.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Dryobates minor



Burra Roqué

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker		Northamptonshire (e 5)	5
	TP	Suffolk (e 2)	2
England (e 749+)	288	England, C (e 77+)	58
England, SW (e 361)	105	Derbyshire	5
Avon (e 1)	1	Herefordshire	4
Cornwall (e 5)	1	Nottinghamshire (e 4)	4
Devon (e 13)	13	Shropshire (e 30)	13
Dorset (e 12)	7	Staffordshire (e 5)	4
Gloucestershire (e 3)	3	Warwickshire (e 14)	14
Hampshire (e 300)	66	Worcestershire (e 15)	14
Somerset (e 12)	7	England, N (e 10+)	9
Wiltshire (e 15)	7	Cheshire & Wirral (e 2)	2
England, SE (e 283)	98	Greater Manchester (e 3)	2
Bedfordshire (e 2)	2	Yorkshire	5
Buckinghamshire (e 1)	1	Wales (e 27+)	18
Essex (e 8)	8	Breconshire (e 7)	4
Greater London (e 3)	1	Caernarfonshire	1
Hertfordshire (e 3)	3	Carmarthenshire (e 1)	1
Kent (e 150–200)	46	Ceredigion (e 4)	4
Oxfordshire (e 1)	1	Denbigh & Flint	2
Surrey (e 25)	11	Gower	1
Sussex (e 40)	25	Gwent (e 1–3)	1
England, E (e 18)	18	Meirionnydd (e 5–7)	3
Cambridgeshire (e 3)	3	Pembrokeshire	1
Lincolnshire (e 3)	3	TOTALS (e 776+)	307
Norfolk (e 5)	5		

Merlin *Falco columbarius***Red**Less scarce 1,160 bp* 25y trend (survey): **weak increase +94%**

Moderate

268–340 pairs. It was a typical return for our smallest falcon. In recent years, the total number reported has varied between 320 and 400, but this gives little indication of actual trends – the last national survey was in 2008, so a repeat is overdue.

* Ewing *et al.* (2011).

Merlin			Wales	10	14	Scotland, Mid	42	58
	CP	TP	Breconshire	2	3	Angus & Dundee	4	7
England	115	140	Ceredigion	0	1	Moray & Nairn	11	13
England, C	8	9	Denbigh & Flint	2	2	NE Scotland	23	27
Derbyshire	7	8	East Glamorgan	0	1	Perth & Kinross	4	11
Staffordshire	1	1	Meirionnydd	5	6	Scotland, N & W	65	86
England, N	107	131	Montgomeryshire	1	1	Argyll	3	3
Cheshire & Wirral	1	1	Scotland	143	186	Highland	26	40
Co. Durham	40	45	Scotland, S	36	42	Orkney	6	12
Cumbria	8	8	Ayrshire	1	2	Outer Hebrides	3	4
Greater Manchester	0	2	Borders	26	26	Shetland	27	27
Lancs & N Mersey	4	5	Clyde	2	2	TOTALS	268	340
Northumberland	23	31	Dumfries & Galloway	4	6			
Yorkshire	31	39	Lothian	3	6			

Hobby *Falco subbuteo***Green**Less scarce 681 bp 25y trend: **weak increase +38%**

Moderate

241–648 pairs. Although reporting to the RBBP is thought likely to underestimate the true population substantially (Clements *et al.* 2016), it may do so in a relatively consistent fashion, meaning that the population trend derived from our data is a useful indication of change. Certainly, the RBBP has

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2021

tracked the increase in the population since 1973 (when there were thought to be ‘probably at least 85 [pairs]’ in England and Wales; Sharrock *et al.* 1975) and the expansion of the range northwards from southern England. There appears to have been a downturn in the last decade, with numbers reported by the RBBP having fallen by 34% and a UK BBS trend of -14% (Heywood *et al.* 2023).

Hobby			Derbyshire (e 35)	30	30
	CP	TP	Herefordshire	3	16
England (e 1,332+)	226	602	Leics & Rutland (e 26)	1	1
England, SW (e 352)	54	127	Nottinghamshire (e 2)	5	6
Avon (e 2)	2	2	Shropshire (e 30)	7	19
Cornwall (e 19)	7	13	Staffordshire (e 9–11)	2	2
Devon (e 44)	3	18	Warwickshire (e 12)	1	12
Dorset (e 35)	6	8	Worcestershire (e 5)	6	7
Gloucestershire (e 18–23)	15	22	England, N (e 74+)	35	59
Hampshire (e 175)	7	13	Cheshire & Wirral (e 22)	2	22
Isle of Wight (e 3)	0	3	Co. Durham (e 2)	0	0
Somerset (e 20)	5	5	Greater Manchester (e 2)	1	2
Wiltshire (e 31)	9	43	Lancs & N Mersey (e 15)	2	2
England, SE (e 438)	35	86	Yorkshire	30	33
Bedfordshire (e 2)	0	2	Wales (e 80+)	13	41
Berkshire (e 24)	3	3	Breconshire (e 25)	2	13
Buckinghamshire (e 9)	1	1	Carmarthenshire (e 2)	1	4
Essex (e 10)	4	5	Ceredigion (e 1)	1	1
Greater London (e 6)	3	6	Denbigh & Flint (e 13)	1	13
Hertfordshire (e 42)	5	11	East Glamorgan (e 8–9)	1	2
Kent (e 100–200)	4	22	Gower	1	1
Oxfordshire (e 15)	1	1	Gwent (e 25)	5	5
Surrey (e 30)	11	18	Montgomeryshire (e 4)	1	2
Sussex (e 100)	3	17	Scotland (e 5+)	2	5
England, E (e 331)	47	237	Scotland, S (e 1)	0	1
Cambridgeshire (e 50)	7	28	Lothian (e 1)	0	1
Lincolnshire (e 81)	0	81	Scotland, Mid (e 3+)	2	3
Norfolk (e 20–30)	11	23	Angus & Dundee	2	3
Northamptonshire (e 80–100)	19	80	Scotland, N & W (e 1+)	0	1
Suffolk (e 70)	10	25	Highland	0	1
England, C (e 137+)	55	93	TOTALS (e 1,417+)	241	648

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

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

Green

High

854–1,225 pairs. This is the highest total we have reported outside of a national survey year and, as is now the norm following the expansion of this species across lowland England, Peregrine was reported from more counties than any other species the RBBP reports upon.

* Wilson *et al.* (2018).

Peregrine Falcon			Isle of Wight (e 5)	4	5
	CP	TP	Isles of Scilly (e 1)	0	1
England (e 742+)	429	631	Somerset (e 20)	5	12
England, SW (e 228)	128	210	Wiltshire (e 13)	8	13
Avon (e 15)	14	15	England, SE (e 154)	82	119
Cornwall (e 50)	13	50	Bedfordshire (e 3)	3	3
Devon (e 52)	25	52	Berkshire (e 2)	2	2
Dorset (e 25)	16	19	Buckinghamshire (e 5)	4	5
Gloucestershire (e 18–22)	18	18	Essex (e 15)	15	15
Hampshire (e 25)	25	25	Greater London (e 25)	25	25

Peregrine Falcon cont.			Gwent (e 30)	5	9
Hertfordshire (e 4)	4	4	Meirionnydd (e 15)	0	4
Kent (e 30–40)	13	19	Montgomeryshire (e 15)	15	15
Oxfordshire (e 4)	3	4	Pembrokeshire (e 33)	17	33
Surrey (e 16)	8	12	Radnorshire (e 15)	2	3
Sussex (e 40)	5	30	Scotland (e 464+)	259	350
England, E (e 53)	40	52	Scotland, S (e 186+)	153	186
Cambridgeshire (e 7)	6	7	Ayrshire	16	22
Lincolnshire (e 19)	19	19	Borders (e 54)	54	54
Norfolk (e 7–8)	5	7	Clyde	12	13
Northamptonshire (e 8)	2	8	Clyde Islands	12	12
Suffolk (e 11)	8	11	Dumfries & G'way (e 64)	46	64
England, C (e 119)	79	110	Lothian (e 21)	13	21
Derbyshire (e 35)	35	35	Scotland, Mid (e 85+)	48	84
Herefordshire (e 9)	1	9	Angus & Dundee	7	13
Leics & Rutland (e 11)	4	11	Fife	10	17
Nottinghamshire (e 5)	4	5	Moray & Nairn (e 4)	1	3
Shropshire (e 25)	21	23	NE Scotland (e 20)	14	20
Staffordshire (e 9)	4	5	Perth & Kinross	12	19
Warwickshire (e 6)	3	6	Upper Forth	4	12
West Midlands (e 4)	1	1	Scotland, N & W (e 193+)	58	80
Worcestershire (e 15)	6	15	Argyll (e 50–70)	35	35
England, N (e 188+)	100	140	Caithness	0	1
Cheshire & Wirral (e 12)	9	12	Fair Isle (e 1)	1	1
Cleveland (e 2)	1	1	Highland (e 90)	11	25
Co. Durham (e 10)	3	10	Orkney (e 16)	9	10
Cumbria (e 40)	12	22	Outer Hebrides (e 15)	2	8
Greater Manchester (e 21)	14	15	Northern Ireland (e 95+)	78	95
Lancs & N Mersey (e 35)	16	16	Co. Antrim	27	33
Northumberland (e 20)	10	16	Co. Armagh	6	7
Yorkshire	35	48	Co. Derry	10	13
Wales (e 238)	82	140	Co. Down	11	12
Anglesey (e 9)	2	6	Co. Fermanagh	13	15
Breconshire (e 18)	5	14	Co. Tyrone	11	15
Caernarfonshire (e 15–17)	7	12	Isle of Man (e 25)	1	1
Carmarthenshire (e 5)	2	4	Channel Islands (e 9)	5	8
Ceredigion (e 10)	0	1	Guernsey (e 5)	3	4
Denbigh & Flint (e 6)	4	5	Jersey (e 4)	2	4
East Glamorgan (e 30)	19	28	TOTALS (e 1,586+)	854	1,225
Gower (e 35)	4	6			

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio***Very rare** 5 bp25y trend: **stable** -23%**Red****High**

One site: 0–1 pairs. Breeding has been confirmed in seven of the last ten years, so 2021 was a poor year for this species, which continues to ‘bump along the bottom’. The first dozen or so annual RBBP reports documented the end of the Red-backed Shrike as a regular breeder in the UK, although the decline had begun many decades previously (Batten *et al.* 1990). Interestingly, our first report states ‘it has been suggested that long-term climatic changes are the primary cause [of this decline]’ (Sharrock *et al.* 1975). Climate changes may well have been a contributing factor, but more recent knowledge might suggest that widespread changes in land management and their impact on the invertebrate prey of shrikes may have had a greater influence. Tryjanowski *et al.* (2006) suggested that egg-collecting may have played a significant role, at least in the later period of decline.

England, SW

Devon One site: one singing male at an inland site on 14th June.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Former breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. The colonisation of poplar plantations in the East Anglian fens began a few years before the establishment of the RBBP; in 1973, the Panel reported one successful pair and six singing males (Sharrock *et al.* 1975) and by the end of that decade there were about 30 pairs. After a peak of 42 pairs in 1990, a slow decline began, before a more rapid fall in the first decade of this century. The last confirmed breeding was in 2009 (Holling *et al.* 2011), and in the last six years there have been at most single birds reported.

England, SE

Kent One site: one singing male on 18th May and 2nd June.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Scarce 381 bp*

32y trend (survey): stable -1%

Green

Near-complete

364–368 pairs. The most eye-catching numbers in the table below are those for England, as the population in Cornwall jumped from 23 pairs in 2020 to 41 in 2021. Given that 23 of these pairs bred successfully, fledging 66 young, it is not unreasonable to expect further increases. In addition, an individual roamed potential breeding sites in south Devon in spring 2021, suggesting that a resumption of breeding in this county might be possible after an absence of over a century. Conversely, the population on Colonsay and Oronsay, Outer Hebrides, has declined from a peak



Ben Lucking

371. Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, Cornwall, April 2021.

of 25 territorial pairs in 2005 to five in 2021, due to poor survival of birds during their first year of life and a resulting low recruitment (Jardine *et al.* 2019). The same issues are faced by Choughs on Islay, where a programme of supplementary feeding, along with treatment for respiratory and alimentary-tract parasites, has maintained population levels in recent years. Habitat management is required to secure the long-term survival of this population, along with a programme of genetic management to tackle problems arising from inbreeding (Trask *et al.* 2020).

* Hayhow *et al.* (2018b).

Red-billed Chough		East Glamorgan	1	1	
	T	TP	Gower	5	5
England	38	41	Meirionnydd	11	11
England, SW	38	41	Pembrokeshire	87	87
Cornwall	38	41	Scotland	45	46
Wales	278	278	Scotland, N & W	45	46
Anglesey	42	42	Argyll: Colonsay & Oronsay	4	5
Caernarfonshire	98	98	Argyll: Islay	41	41
Carmarthenshire	3	3	Isle of Man	3	3
Ceredigion	29	29	TOTALS	364	368
Denbigh & Flint	2	2			

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*

Less scarce 1,000–2,000 bp* (no trend available)

Green

Low

13–38 pairs. It was only in 2020 that Crested Tit was readmitted to the RBBP's species list, having been covered previously between 1995 and 2005. We hope that, in time, reporting will increase to a more meaningful proportion of the population, and we encourage all observers visiting pine forests in northern Scotland to look for and submit records of this species.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).



Burna Roqué

Crested Tit
Lophophanes cristatus

Crested Tit			Scotland, N & W	11	30
	CP	TP	Highland	11	30
Scotland, Mid	2	8	TOTALS	13	38
Moray & Nairn	2	8			

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Scarce 663 bp

25y trend: **weak increase +95%**

Green

Near-complete

88 sites: 591 pairs. Bearded Tits were not surveyed (but rather simply reported as present) at 11 RSPB reserves in 2021, some of which hold important numbers, so our total underestimates the true population. In addition, there has been little reporting from the vast Tay Reedbeds, Perth & Kinross, in recent years; the population there has previously been estimated to be as high as 250 pairs in some years (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Bearded Tit			Kent	14	55	Northumberland	2	3
	S	TP	Sussex	3	13	Yorkshire	11	146
England	82	580	England, E	34	275	Wales	1	3
England, SW	9	61	Cambridgeshire	5	5	Gwent	1	3
Devon	1	0	Lincolnshire	8	70	Scotland	5	8
Dorset	4	35	Norfolk	7	78	Scotland, Mid	5	8
Hampshire	3	14	Suffolk	14	122	NE Scotland	1	1
Somerset	1	12	England, N	17	155	Perth & Kinross	3	5
England, SE	22	89	Cheshire & Wirral	1	2	Upper Forth	1	2
Bedfordshire	2	3	Cleveland	1	2	TOTALS	88	591
Essex	3	18	Lancs & N Mersey	2	2			

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

Less scarce 3,064 bp* (no trend available)

Green

Moderate

1,198 singing males. This is the highest total reported since the last national survey in 2006 (Conway *et al.* 2009), although it is still far short of the estimate from that survey.

* Conway *et al.* (2009).

Woodlark		Sussex (e 100)	73
	SM/T	England, E (e 391)	333
England, SW (e 486)	482	Lincolnshire (e 11)	11
Devon (e 10)	6	Norfolk (e100–130)	111
Dorset (e 132)	132	Suffolk (e 250)	211
Gloucestershire (e 1)	1	England, C (e 74+)	64
Hampshire (e 328)	328	Derbyshire	3
Wiltshire (e 15)	15	Nottinghamshire (e 37)	37
England, SE (e 327)	300	Staffordshire (e 34)	24
Berkshire (e 52)	52	England, N (e 19+)	19
Buckinghamshire (e 3)	3	Yorkshire	19
Oxfordshire (e 2)	2	TOTAL (e 1,297+)	1,198
Surrey (e 170)	170		

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male. A male overwintered at a site in Buckinghamshire from 6th December 2020 to 2nd April and was heard singing from early February onwards. This was a long way from the edge of the breeding range, which usually extends no farther west than just this side of the Urals (Keller *et al.* 2020).

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*

Occasional breeder

One site: one singing male. Individuals are reported upon by the RBBP only if they maintain territories for at least five days.

England, E

Suffolk One site: one singing male, 17th April to 22nd June.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male. A Dusky Warbler that overwintered in Lancashire & North Merseyside was joined by a second bird on 15th February. One of these individuals departed around 1st March, but the other, a male, remained until 29th April, singing from 13th April onwards. Numbers of this Siberian-breeding species occurring in the UK have increased over the last 30 years (White & Kehoe 2023b) and overwintering birds have become a regular occurrence. It is therefore not surprising to receive our first report of an individual establishing a territory before departure (as has happened with Yellow-browed Warbler, see above, and Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*).

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Potential breeder

Two sites: two singing males. Individuals are reported upon by the RBBP only if they maintain territories for at least five days. Such territory-holding males have been reported in 30 of the 48 years covered by the RBBP to date but, to the best of our knowledge, none of the 55 birds involved have succeeded in attracting a mate.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One site: one male singing from 30th May to 4th July.

England, N

Northumberland One site: one male singing from 4th to 18th June.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male. Individuals are reported upon by the RBBP only if they maintain territories for at least five days. A single male was singing at a site in Staffordshire between 18th and 24th June.

Mark Rayment



372. Adult male Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Staffordshire, June 2021.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Very rare 18 bp

25y trend: strong decrease -55%

Red

High

13 sites: 3–17 pairs. There was a fall in numbers following a bumper year in 2020, although 2021 still generated the fourth-highest total this century (fig. 12). As usual, most records came from eastern coastal counties, but confirmed breeding in Buckinghamshire was notable (and followed successful breeding in Bedfordshire the previous year).

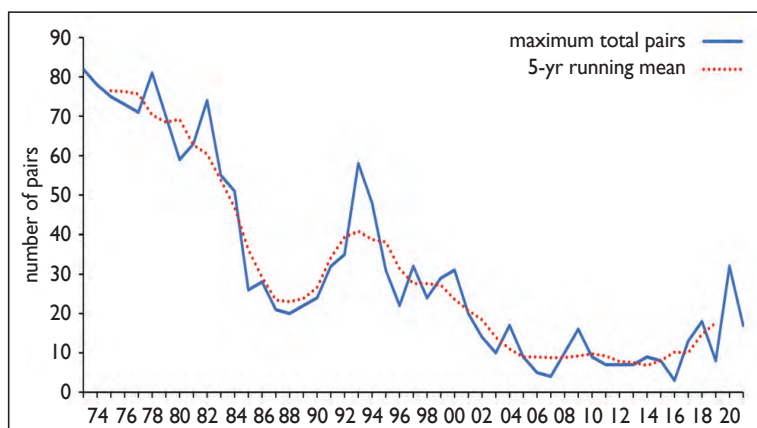


Fig. 12. Maximum numbers of Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* breeding in the UK, 1973–2021, with a 5-year running mean.

England, SE

Buckinghamshire One site: one breeding pair, adults seen carrying food but outcome unknown.

Kent Two sites: (1) one confirmed breeding pair, adults seen carrying food but young not believed to have fledged; (2) one singing male from 15th to 28th June. **Sussex** Two sites: (1) two singing males; (2) one singing male.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one singing male from 1st to 12th June. **Norfolk** Two sites: (1) one singing male from 11th to 21st June; (2) one singing male from 14th to 24th July. **Suffolk** One site: one confirmed breeding pair, two probable breeding pairs and two additional singing males.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland Four sites: (1) one singing male from 4th to 10th June; (2) one singing male from 5th to 9th June; (3) one singing male from 6th to 22nd June; (4) one singing male from 2nd to 6th July.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. A singing male was at a site in **Worcestershire** between 19th and 23rd June. This is the eighth record of a singing male Melodious Warbler holding a territory in the UK for at least five days. The distribution of these previous records – in Breconshire, Co. Durham, Herefordshire, Lancashire & North Merseyside, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk and West Midlands – is perhaps surprising, given the species' breeding range in southwest Europe.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Occasional breeder

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. These records fit the established pattern for Icterine Warbler in the UK – most territory-holding males, and all four confirmed breeding attempts since the establishment of the RBBP, have been in northern Scotland.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland Two sites: (1) male singing from 31st May to 12th June; (2) males singing on 28th May, 7th and 26th June – it is possible that more than one individual was involved.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*

Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. A male was reported singing at Ham Wall, **Somerset**, between 4th and 18th June. This is the 13th singing male River Warbler to have been reported by the RBBP, but the first since 2010. Although there has been range expansion in some parts of Europe, such as Finland (Keller *et al.* 2020), there has been a significant fall in the European population as a whole, with a decline of 55% in the last ten years (PECBMS 2022).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Very rare 10 bp

25y trend: **stable** +13%

Red

Near-complete

11 sites: 0–12 pairs. Records of birds present for fewer than five days, and those not accepted by the BBRC, are excluded. There was another relatively strong showing in 2021, including the first

records of this species for both Bedfordshire and Carmarthenshire. The total is similar to that given in the RBBP's first report, for 1973 (12 singing males, albeit restricted to just three sites; Sharrock *et al.* 1975), although, as fig. 8 in last year's report (Eaton *et al.* 2022) shows, numbers have fluctuated both higher and then lower than this over the intervening decades.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one singing male, 24th April to 14th May. **Somerset** One site: two singing males, 2nd May to 4th June. **Wiltshire** One site: one singing male, 30th June to 7th July.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: one singing male, 5th to 16th May.

England, E

Norfolk Three sites: (1) one singing male, 11th to 28th May; (2) one singing male, 2nd to 6th July; (3) one singing male, 16th to 20th July. **Suffolk** Two sites: (1) one singing male, 23rd to 27th May; (2) one singing male, 17th June to 27th July.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one singing male, 11th to 27th May.

Wales

Carmarthenshire One site: one singing male, 6th to 29th May.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Occasional breeder

One site: one singing male. A male was present at the site on Alderney, singing and displaying between 1st March and 24th August, but there was no sign of any other birds being present. Breeding occurred at this site in 2020 (*Brit. Birds* 115: 676).

Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Curruca cantillans*

Potential breeder

One site: one singing male. A male was singing at a site in Cornwall between 20th and 30th April. The RBBP has reported on ten records of 'Subalpine Warbler' in the past, although only six met our modern reporting criteria of holding territory for at least five days. Many of these records came before there was widespread awareness of the differences between what were then regarded as races of Subalpine Warbler, and now are treated as separate species. Only a few have been identified to species: a Moltoni's Warbler *C. subalpina* held territory in Shetland in 2009, there have been two singing male Eastern Subalpine Warblers prior to the bird reported here, and a male paired with a female 'Subalpine Warbler' in Caernarfonshire in 2010 was thought possibly to also be this species.

Dartford Warbler *Curruca undata*

Less scarce 3,214 bp* 25y trend: **stable** +27%

Amber

Moderate

1,860 territories. This is the highest total reported by the RBBP since 2,081 territories in 2008; following that peak, the hard winters of 2008/09 and 2009/10 reduced the population by two-thirds. Recovery was steady thereafter, until another drop in numbers occurred following the winter of 2017/18. The susceptibility of this resident insectivore to hard winters has been recorded historically in, for example, 1860/61, 1880/81 and 1886/87 (Brown & Grice 2005), and the RBBP's first report noted how the population had been reduced to ten pairs in 1963 by two successive hard winters (Sharrock *et al.* 1975).

* Wotton *et al.* (2009).

Dartford Warbler		Surrey (e 775)	576
	TP	Sussex (e 125)	122
England (e 2,354)	1,837	England, E (e 138)	137
England, SW (e 1,278)	964	Norfolk (e 2–3)	2
Cornwall (e 20)	17	Suffolk (e 135)	135
Devon (e 50)	40	Wales (e 12+)	12
Dorset (e 500)	466	Caernarfonshire (e 1)	1
Hampshire (e 650)	392	Carmarthenshire (e 1)	1
Isle of Wight (e 10)	10	Ceredigion	1
Somerset (e 48)	39	Gower	7
England, SE (e 938)	736	Pembrokeshire	2
Berkshire (e 33)	33	Channel Islands (e 77)	11
Buckinghamshire (e 3)	3	Guernsey (e 27)	11
Kent (e 2)	2	TOTAL (e 2,443)	1,860

‘Fair Isle Wren’ *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*

Rare 41 bp

25y trend: **stable** +26%

Red

Near-complete

48 territories. This distinctive race occurs only on Fair Isle and the population is monitored every year; the 2021 total is the highest since 1966.

Scotland, N & W

Fair Isle 48 territories.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Very rare 2 bp

25y trend: **strong decrease** -73%

Red

High

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. There was a fall in numbers in 2021, following 1–5 pairs reported in 2020.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one possible breeding pair.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Very rare 24 bp

25y trend: **stable** -3%

Red

High

18 sites: 4–21 pairs. The trend given above suggests that the UK’s small breeding population of Redwings is relatively stable, but in fact there are considerable between-year fluctuations – for example we reported a maximum total of 40 pairs in 2015, but just 12 in 2019 – as well as the population waxing and waning over a longer time frame with a notable peak in the 1980s (see fig. 10 in Eaton *et al.* 2020).

England, SE

Kent One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Eleven sites: four confirmed breeding pairs, one probable breeding pair and nine

singing males. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one probable breeding pair. **Shetland** Three sites: one probable breeding pair and two singing males.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* Occasional breeder

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. Bluethroat remains an extremely rare breeding species in the UK, with the last confirmed breeding record being a pair of ‘Red-spotted Bluethroats’ *L. s. svecica* in Moray & Nairn in 2016 (Holling *et al.* 2018). Four of the five confirmed breeding attempts in the UK have been by this race (all four of which were in Scotland). It is, however, the ‘White-spotted Bluethroat’ *L. s. cyaneacula* that has been identified as a potential colonist of wetlands in the south of Britain (Ausden *et al.* 2015); although there was a run of records supporting this prediction between 2009 and 2013, the records below are only the second and third singing male White-spotted Bluethroats since then.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: one singing male between 19th and 28th June.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one singing male between 23rd May and 6th June.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* Rare 72 bp

25y trend: **stable -8%**

Red
High

47 sites: 40–80 pairs. It was a good year for the species, with the second-highest total reported since 2002. While the 25-year trend shows apparent stability, there was a notable fall in numbers around the late 2000s; there has, however, been an increase of 51% in the last ten years. The Outer Hebrides record was of a singing male, and briefly a pair, on St Kilda – if they had stayed to breed, this would have been a major range extension!

Black Redstart				Greater London	17	2	19	England, N	2	1	3
	S	CP	TP	Kent	8	10	15	Lancs & N Mersey	1	0	1
England	46	40	79	Surrey	2	1	2	Yorkshire	1	1	2
England, SW	1	0	2	Sussex	4	2	4	Scotland, N & W	1	0	1
Hampshire	1	0	2	England, E	8	20	28	Outer Hebrides	1	0	1
England, SE	35	19	46	Cambridgeshire	1	0	1	TOTALS	47	40	80
Bedfordshire	1	2	3	Norfolk	3	6	13				
Berkshire	3	2	3	Suffolk	4	14	14				

‘Blue-headed Wagtail’ *Motacilla flava flava* Occasional breeder

Two sites: 1–2 mixed pairs. A typical return for this distinctive subspecies. Since the RBBP began collecting data on this race in 2008, 16 of the 19 records received have been mixed pairings between Blue-headed Wagtail and Yellow Wagtail *M. f. flavissima*.

England, C

Staffordshire One site: male seen feeding young in the nest, female believed to be Yellow Wagtail *M. f. flavissima*.

England, N

Cumbria One site: one singing male from 7th May to 23rd June, believed to be paired with female Yellow Wagtail.

‘White Wagtail’ *Motacilla alba alba*
Very rare 29 bp (no trend available)

Amber
High

Nine sites: 4–10 pairs. In addition to the records given below, it is estimated that there are 20 breeding pairs on Guernsey and 15 breeding pairs on Jersey.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: (1) female seen feeding young, male not seen so may have been mixed pair with Pied Wagtail *M. a. yarrellii*; (2) two probable breeding pairs. **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: (1) pair recorded on 2nd June; (2) single bird reported from 30th June to 1st July; (3) single bird reported on 1st June. **Shetland** Four sites: (1) one confirmed breeding pair fledged three young; (2) adult with fledged young on 27th July; (3) female fledged two broods with male Pied Wagtail; (4) alarm-calling male reported on 13th June.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
Occasional breeder

Green

One site: 0–1 pairs. This species did not appear in a RBBP report until 1977 and, although there were regular records between then and the turn of the century, it has remained an extremely rare breeder, typically in north Scotland.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one singing male from 19th to 21st May.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
Less scarce 500+ bp* (no trend available)

Red
Moderate

16–114 pairs. Numbers reported by the RBBP are largely reliant on fieldwork being conducted in the core areas of the remaining range – the New Forest, Forest of Dean and Meirionnydd – and whether that results in good survey coverage in any given year.

* Clements (2013).

Hawfinch		England, N (e 5+)	5
	TP	Lancs & N Mersey	5
England (e 517+)	73	Wales (e 453+)	27
England, SW (e 446)	51	Caernarfonshire (e 5)	3
Gloucestershire (e 15–25)	15	Carmarthenshire	1
Hampshire (e 400)	29	Denbigh & Flint	2
Somerset (e 1)	1	East Glamorgan (e 11)	11
Wiltshire (e 20)	6	Gower	1
England, SE (e 49+)	10	Gwent (e 255–310)	2
Hertfordshire (e 1)	1	Meirionnydd (e 100–120)	4
Kent (e 10–20)	3	Montgomeryshire (e 3)	3
Surrey	3	Scotland (e 14)	14
Sussex (e 25)	3	Scotland, S (e 1)	1
England, E (e 10)	1	Lothian (e 1)	1
Norfolk (e 10)	1	Scotland, Mid (e 7)	7
England, C (e 7+)	6	Moray & Nairn (e 2)	2
Derbyshire (e 2)	1	NE Scotland (e 5)	5
Herefordshire	2	Scotland, N & W (e 6)	6
Shropshire (e 2)	2	Highland (e 6)	6
Worcestershire (e 1)	1	TOTAL (e 984+)	114

Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

Very rare 24 bp (no trend available)

Amber

Moderate

17 sites: 1–21 pairs. The first record of breeding by Common Redpolls in the UK was in Shetland in 1982 (Forrester *et al.* 2007), but there were very few subsequent breeding records until the species was split from Lesser Redpoll *A. cabaret* in 2001. The first records received by the RBBP were in 2004, when a considerable number were found on the Outer Hebrides. We have received records in all but one year since then, but numbers vary considerably, as do the locations (fig. 13), although all records have been in N & W Scotland, mainly on islands. It seems likely that there is genuine between-year variation in numbers, possibly related to fluctuating levels of winter immigration into the UK, but undoubtedly there is variation in recording coverage, not helped by the difficulties of identifying redpolls where the two species both occur.

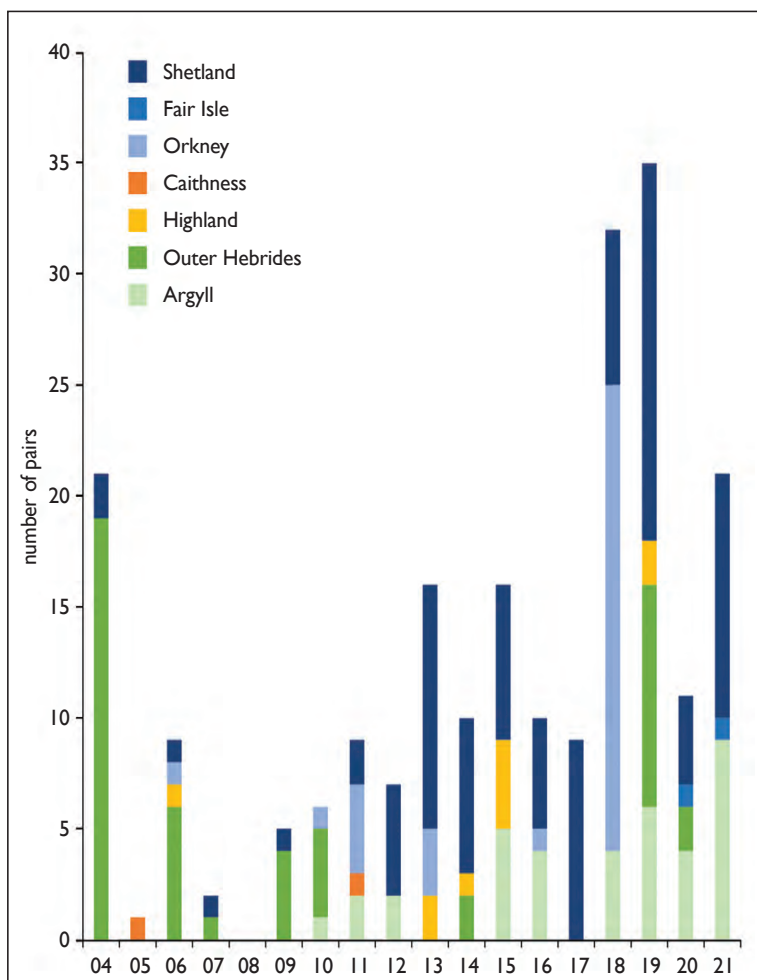


Fig. 13. Numbers of pairs of Common Redpolls *Acanthis flammea* breeding in the UK, by county, 2004–21.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Six sites: nine probable breeding pairs in total. **Highland** One site: one confirmed breeding pair. **Shetland** 10 sites: (1) two probable breeding pairs; (2–5) one probable breeding pair at each site; (6–8) one singing male at each site; (9–10) possible breeding pair at both sites.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

Less scarce 1,079 bp* 27y trend (survey): strong increase +814% Low

Red

102–469 pairs. This is by far the highest total reported to the RBBP outside of a national survey year, partly due to sterling efforts by the Devon bird recorder to collate observations, but also due to the new Cirl Bunting Monitoring Programme established by the RSPB.

* Jeffs *et al.* (2018).

Cirl Bunting			Devon	96	423
	CP	TP	Channel Islands	4	7
England	98	462	Jersey	4	7
England, SW	98	462	TOTALS	102	469
Cornwall	2	39			



Ben Lucking

373. Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*, Cornwall, January 2021.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Rare 79 bp*

(no trend available)

Amber

Moderate

8–40 pairs. It is likely there is some duplication between records received from the core of the breeding range in the Cairngorms, so the totals here may overestimate the number of pairs recorded in 2021. We know, however, that the actual population is higher (Hayhow *et al.* 2018a) as pairs are breeding in less-visited parts of the Cairngorms and elsewhere in northern Scotland and these are rarely reported.

* Hayhow *et al.* (2018a).

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn Cairngorms: three confirmed breeding pairs and one possible breeding pair.

North-east Scotland Cairngorms: two confirmed breeding pairs and 18 possible breeding pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Cairngorms: three confirmed breeding pairs, six probable breeding pairs and two possible breeding pairs. West Highlands: one probable breeding pair, two possible breeding pairs.

Outer Hebrides Two sites: two possible breeding pairs.

Appendix I. RBBP taxa for which no data were received in 2021.

The following rare taxa are regular breeders in the UK. Confirmation of presence was received in 2021, but no breeding records were submitted: **Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla* (Channel Islands only); **'St Kilda Wren'** *Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis* (St Kilda only); **Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (Highland only).

Appendix 2. Rare non-native species considered by RBBP recorded in 2021.

Data on the following rare non-native breeding species have been received for 2021.

Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii* The only records were of two males at a site in Worcestershire, one at a site in Derbyshire, and individuals at three sites in Denbigh & Flint.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* Up to 20 individuals, including a small number of females, were once again reported to be present at a site in Suffolk, although with no evidence of breeding in 2021; it may be that this number is an overestimate of the actual number of birds present. Birds were present at four sites in Dorset, with counts totalling up to nine pairs and an additional 15 individuals, and at a site on the Isles of Scilly, with additional birds reportedly released there recently.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* Breeding was confirmed in Cornwall (one pair fledged five young), Hertfordshire (one pair fledged two young) and Yorkshire (six pairs at one site, most of which hatched chicks). Elsewhere, birds were reported from three sites in Breconshire, two in Derbyshire and single sites in Caernarfonshire, Denbigh & Flint and Meirionnydd.

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides* A pair was present at a site in Cumbria all year.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* Up to 43 individuals were reported from a site in Cumbria, with some juveniles present, although not all birds at this site are free-flying.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* The long-established population on Coll, Argyll, fell in numbers yet again, with only six individuals left in 2021 and no sign of breeding. A pair was reported on eggs at a site in Yorkshire.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* Confirmed breeding records came from just two counties: a female was reported with one cygnet in Devon, and a pair laid eggs, but failed, in Worcestershire. Pairs were present at two sites in Wiltshire and single sites in Devon, Dumfries & Galloway and Pembrokeshire. Otherwise, a few records were received of single birds, in Buckinghamshire, Derbyshire (six sites), Co. Down, Dumfries & Galloway, Co. Durham and Wiltshire.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* Records were received from five counties with confirmed breeding reported from a site in Carmarthenshire (six pairs, with three young fledged) and one in Cornwall (one pair on eggs). Elsewhere, reports were received from 15 sites in Derbyshire, two sites in Cambridgeshire and one in Breconshire and Norfolk.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* At the main breeding site, Cotswold Water Park, there were four confirmed breeding pairs (with a total of 13 fledged young) and another 17 individuals reported on the Gloucestershire side, and three confirmed breeding pairs (11 fledged young) on the Wiltshire side. Other confirmed breeding records came from Berkshire (two pairs fledged two young between them at one site, and one pair was seen with one fledged young at another site), Cambridgeshire (confirmed breeding, a female with a single duckling, at one site and pairs at two other sites) and Lincolnshire (three pairs with a total of four fledged young at one site, and a probable breeding pair at another). The only other records came from Hertfordshire, where one site held a probable breeding pair and two sites held multiple birds but no breeding evidence was reported.

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus* An individual was recorded nest-building with a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* in a garden in Derbyshire, and a male was resident in Cambridgeshire for the sixth year.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* The regular pair in the Forest of Bowland, Lancashire & North Merseyside, was present but, again, after calling early in the year, there was no sign of a breeding attempt. The only other records received were of presumably the same individual at two sites in Anglesey and an individual photographed on a crag in Cumbria.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* A male, present in a hybrid pairing with a Peregrine, fledged three young in Lothian. This escaped bird, present since 2012, is thought to be a Lanner, although, given the nature of modern falconry, its lineage may not be pure.

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Input from specialist study groups, conservation bodies and various key individuals also means that the report can be even more comprehensive. Valuable supplementary data were submitted from several national monitoring schemes. Information for many species was supplied via the Schedule 1 licensing system by Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), NatureScot and the BTO. For additional information on raptors, we are grateful for the support of the Northern England Raptor Forum, the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group and the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme. The BTO also supplied additional data from the BTO/JNCC/RSPB UK Breeding Bird Survey and Waterways Breeding Bird Survey, BTO/JNCC Nest Record Scheme, the BTO Heronries Census (for Little Egret) and the BTO/JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme. We also thank the RSPB for additional information from their network of nature reserves and from species surveys they coordinate including, in 2021, the RSPB/RBBP/KOS national Turtle Dove survey and the national Whimbrel survey. More generally, many individuals in these organisations provided friendly advice and information over the year, for which we are most grateful. We thank the JNCC, RSPB and BTO for their financial support for the work of the RBBP; additional funding in 2023 came from sales of the *Into the Red* book, published by the BTO, with particular thanks to Kit Jewitt and Mike Toms. The Secretary would also like to thank the current Panel members for their time, expertise and support. Finally, in our 50th anniversary year, we would like to acknowledge the contribution of all past Panel members, Chairs and in particular the four previous Secretaries: Tim Sharrock, Bob Spencer, Malcolm Ogilvie and Mark Holling.

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The Rare Breeding Birds Panel is supported by JNCC, RSPB and the BTO

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Records of rare breeding birds in 2022 are now being collated;
county recorders are reminded that data should be submitted by 30th November 2023
using the spreadsheet downloadable from www.rbbp.org.uk.

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Crane, Common <i>Grus grus</i>	634	Ruff <i>Calidris pugnax</i>	639
Diver, Black-throated <i>Gavia arctica</i>	644	Sandpiper, Buff-breasted <i>Calidris subruficollis</i>	640
Diver, Great Northern <i>Gavia immer</i>	645	Sandpiper, Green <i>Tringa ochropus</i>	640
Diver, Red-throated <i>Gavia stellata</i>	644	Sandpiper, Marsh <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	641
Dotterel <i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	637	Sandpiper, Purple <i>Calidris maritima</i>	640
Dove, Turtle <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	631	Sandpiper, Wood <i>Tringa glareola</i>	641
Duck, Ring-necked <i>Aythya collaris</i>	627	Scaup, Greater <i>Aythya marila</i>	628
Eagle, Golden <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	651	Scoter, Common <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	628
Eagle, White-tailed <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	654	Shoveler <i>Spatula clypeata</i>	625
Egret, Cattle <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	647	Shrike, Red-backed <i>Lanius collurio</i>	660
Egret, Great White <i>Ardea alba</i>	648	Skua, Arctic <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	644
Egret, Little <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	648	Skua, Long-tailed <i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	644
Falcon, Peregrine <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	659	Spoonbill, Eurasian <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	646
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	667	Stilt, Black-winged <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	636
Garganey <i>Spatula querquedula</i>	623	Stint, Temminck's <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	639
Godwit, Black-tailed <i>Limosa limosa</i>	638	Stone-curlew <i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	635
Goldeneye, Common <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	628	Stork, White <i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	645
Goshawk, Northern <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	651	Swan, Whooper <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	623
Grebe, Black-necked <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	635	Tern, 'American Black' <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	
Grebe, Pied-billed <i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	634	<i>surinamensis</i>	644
Grebe, Slavonian <i>Podiceps auritus</i>	634	Tern, Elegant <i>Thalasseus elegans</i>	642
Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	641	Tern, Little <i>Sternula albifrons</i>	643
Gull, Mediterranean <i>Ichthyophaga</i>		Tern, Roseate <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	643
<i>melanocephalus</i>	642	Tit, Bearded <i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	662
Gull, Ring-billed <i>Larus delawarensis</i>	642	Tit, Crested <i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>	662
Harrier, Hen <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	653	Wagtail, 'Blue-headed' <i>Motacilla flava flava</i>	668
Harrier, Marsh <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	652	Wagtail, 'White' <i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	669
Harrier, Montagu's <i>Circus pygargus</i>	654	Warbler, Blyth's Reed <i>Acrocephalus</i>	
Harrier, Pallid <i>Circus macrourus</i>	654	<i>dumetorum</i>	664
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	669	Warbler, Dartford <i>Curruca undata</i>	666
Heron, Night <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	647	Warbler, Dusky <i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>	663
Heron, Purple <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	648	Warbler, Eastern Subalpine <i>Curruca cantillans</i>	666
Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	658	Warbler, Great Reed <i>Acrocephalus</i>	
Honey-buzzard, European <i>Pernis apivorus</i>	650	<i>arundinaceus</i>	663
Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	657	Warbler, Icterine <i>Hippolais icterina</i>	665
Ibis, Glossy <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	645	Warbler, Marsh <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	665
Merganser, Red-breasted <i>Mergus serrator</i>	629	Warbler, Melodious <i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	665
Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	658	Warbler, River <i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	665
Oriole, Golden <i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	661	Warbler, Savi's <i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	665
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	650	Warbler, Yellow-browed <i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	663
Owl, Long-eared <i>Asio otus</i>	655	Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	637
Owl, Short-eared <i>Asio flammeus</i>	656	Wigeon, Eurasian <i>Mareca penelope</i>	626
Owl, Snowy <i>Bubo scandiacus</i>	656	Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	662
Phalarope, Red-necked <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	640	Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted <i>Dryobates minor</i>	657
Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	626	Wren, 'Fair Isle' <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	
Plover, Little Ringed <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	636	<i>fridariensis</i>	667
Pochard, Common <i>Aythya ferina</i>	627	Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	657