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Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Rare breeding birds
in the UK in 2022

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Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2022

Mark Eaton and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Abstract This report gives details of the 108 species and races of rare and scarce native birds that bred, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2022. This is the second-highest total ever reported by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, reflecting the increasing number of species colonising the country. Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* bred in the UK for the first time, in Cambridgeshire, and population increase and range expansion were recorded in a range of species colonising from southern Europe, recovering raptors, and some northern waders. However, some other species are close to losing their place in our reports: only two male Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* were recorded in 2022 and neither attracted a female; just three male Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* were found; and no Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* at all were reported in the 2022 breeding season.

Introduction

This is the 49th report published by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) and includes records of the 108 rare or scarce native taxa that bred, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2022. In addition, records received for 14 rare non-native breeding species are summarised (see Appendix 2).

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.* 2024), and by Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury *et al.* 2021, 2024). The RBBP species list is available to view at www.rbbp.org.uk/species-overview. There is just one change since the 2021 report – the addition of Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, following the record described in this report.

Review of 2022

While outside of the bird breeding season, and unlikely to have caused significant direct mortality for rare breeding birds, one of the most significant meteorological events of recent years was Storm Arwen between 25th and 27th

November 2021. The storm's impacts were greatest in Scotland and northern England, where northerly winds (with a maximum speed of 177 km/h (110 mph) recorded in Settle, Yorkshire) caused widespread damage to forestry, particularly to commercial conifer plantations. It is estimated that 12,000 ha of trees were lost (of which around 8,000 ha, approximating to 16 million trees, was in southeast Scotland and Northumberland) (Forest Research 2023). Consequently, there were widespread reports of loss of nesting sites for raptors, such as Eurasian Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, in the 2022 breeding season. There were also difficulties for fieldworkers attempting to access field sites in areas of damaged forestry. From there on, the 2021/22 winter was relatively mild, with temperatures about 1°C above the long-term average and few periods of wintery conditions; precipitation was about 10% lower than average.

The spring started warm and dry, with some areas receiving only 30–40% the average precipitation during March, but then turned cooler. April remained drier and notably sunnier than average across much of the UK, but May was wetter across most of the UK, particularly in the west, albeit only 11% above the long-term average.



443. Raptor nesting area destroyed by Storm Arwen, North-east Scotland, April 2022.

The summer was the fourth hottest on record, with temperatures 1.5°C above the long-term average. July temperatures were especially notable, exceeding 40°C for the first time in the UK – a record high of 40.3°C was recorded at Coningsby, Lincolnshire, on 19th July. New national maxima were also set in Scotland (34.8°C in Charterhall, Borders) and Wales (37.1°C at Hawarden, Denbigh & Flintshire). This heat was accompanied by drought, with rainfall at 56% of the long-term average for the period across the UK, and less than 20% of the average in some areas of southern England. A combination of the mild winter (helping resident species such as Dartford Warbler *Curruca undata*) and a dry and warm breeding season will have been beneficial for many species, although excess heat and drought later in the season may have caused problems for some others.

The 108 species and races of rare breeding birds reported breeding, or showing signs of breeding, in the UK in 2022 is three fewer than the record total reported for 2021 (Eaton *et al.* 2023c) but still the second-highest total RBBP has reported on, suggesting a continuation of the increasing trend in rare breeding bird species in the UK, largely driven by the arrival of colonising species (Eaton *et al.* 2023a). Perhaps the most notable record in this report is the first confirmed breeding of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* – after a pair bred successfully in Cambridgeshire. It remains to be seen whether this will be the start of a steady colonisation, as we are reporting for a number

of species, or more intermittent occurrences as we have observed for Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* and Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* since their first confirmed breeding attempts in 2017 (Holling *et al.* 2019) and 2010 (Holling *et al.* 2012) respectively.

Of the 14 new colonists and reintroduced species to have established populations in the UK since the RBBP began reporting in 1973 (see table 1 in Eaton *et al.* 2023a), five – Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Great White Egret *Ardea alba*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* – were reported at record levels in 2022, with another two – Common Crane *Grus grus* and Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* – just below their previous maxima.

Most of these species are expanding their ranges into the UK from the south. More appear to be on the way. Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* bred for the ninth successive year, with eight young fledging, while the two pairs of Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* that fledged four young in Norfolk, to the delight of thousands of viewers, made it the fourth year breeding had been attempted in the UK in the last decade. A male Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* raised a brood of hybrid chicks with a female Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita* in the heart of London and, although it will always be difficult to know what secretive Baillon's Crakes *Zapornia pusilla* are doing, the presence of both sexes at at least one site suggests that breeding might be imminent, if it has not occurred already.

As well as new colonists, a number of species continue to recover from historical depletion, with three raptors being reported in greater numbers than in any previous RBBP report. The number of Eurasian Goshawk pairs reported leapt by 24% since 2021 (which itself was a record year), the Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* is increasing across much of its range, as is the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, which bred in Dorset and Yorkshire for the first time in centuries.

The final record-setter in this report is Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, for which 61 pairs were recorded, continuing the recent increase in numbers in a range of northern waders, including the aforementioned Green Sandpiper as well as Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. The return of Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* as a breeding species, following 24 years without breeding, was one of 2021's greatest surprises, and two pairs were present (and very likely attempted to breed) at the same Highland site in 2022. A pair of Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima*, the UK's rarest regularly breeding bird, hung on at their remote Scottish site.

Four successive winters without any lengthy spells of cold temperatures have been good for some resident species, hence Dartford Warbler and Woodlark *Lullula arborea* both reached the highest totals since the last national survey for both species in 2006. Other species which had good years in 2022 included Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* and Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*.

The publication since our last report of the results of Britain and Ireland's fourth seabird census, *Seabirds Count* (Burnell *et al.* 2023; see box 1) has provided a vital stocktake on our internationally important breeding seabirds. Amongst the 25 seabird species covered by the census, there are four rare breeding seabirds with very different fortunes; as mentioned above, Mediterranean Gulls continue to flourish, and there were 159 pairs of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* at the beginning of the 2022 breeding season. Little Terns *Sternula albifrons* have, however, declined by 25% since the last census in 1998–2002, although in 2022 they achieved the highest productivity RBBP has reported upon. Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* is not well monitored outside the seabird cen-

suses, but *Seabirds Count* confirmed fears of a rapid ongoing decline, with a 66% drop in numbers over 18 years.

Sadly, the impact of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 is a concern for all our seabirds – at least 90 adult Roseate Terns died from the disease at the colony on Coquet Island, Northumberland, in 2022, along with an even greater number of chicks. There is evidence that the disease also impacted the productivity of raptors such as White-tailed Eagle and Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* in 2022, and we know that we will be documenting further impacts in our report for 2023. See box 2 for more details.

While Arctic Skua may be one of the most rapidly declining rare breeding bird species in the UK, others are also struggling – in some cases despite focused conservation efforts. Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* remained at the lowest level since the start of annual monitoring in 1971 with pairs having extremely poor breeding success in 2022. Numbers of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* have declined by 28% in the last ten years, and the population of Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* in the Cambridgeshire and Norfolk Fens fell owing to several years of poor productivity, despite recent conservation efforts. Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* numbers dropped dramatically, with a total of only three pairs, none of which were confirmed to have bred – but, as numbers are influenced heavily by conditions on spring migration, a recovery of sorts is possible in future years.

There are a number of species for which populations have declined to a point at which they are no longer considered regular breeders in the UK, but retain a regular presence in RBBP reports, usually through the occurrence of migrant individuals holding territory, often only briefly. There were single records of Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* and European Serin *Serinus serinus* in 2022, and two of Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*. Unfortunately, Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* may be on the way to joining this list, although a displaying male did its best to attract a mate in Wiltshire. One species from this group, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, did actually breed in 2022, on Fair Isle, for the first time in the UK since 2001.

Furthermore, there are species that have been regular breeders previously but were not reported showing breeding behaviour at all in 2022. Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* first bred in the UK in 1995 and since then there have been 29 confirmed breeding attempts, raising 28 young to fledging, as well as 17 records of mixed pairings, mainly with Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*. Breeding occurred every year from 2001 to 2019, but the species has now been absent from our reports for three years. While the Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* has always been a very rare breeding bird, numbers reported by the RBBP have declined in recent years and the blank in 2022 was the fourth such year in the last decade. A review of the changing status of this northern thrush is in preparation (Norman & Holling in prep.).

Less meaningful in conservation terms, but always of interest to the birdwatcher, the list of oddities in 2022 included Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors*, Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus*, Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*, Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fus-*

catus and, for the first time in a RBBP report, a pair of Little Buntings *Emberiza pusilla*.

As always, we are unable to make meaningful comments in this report on a number of rare breeding bird species owing to insufficient levels of reporting, which means we have little indication of their abundance or trends. In particular, there were nine species for which the degree of coverage was assessed as 'low' in 2022, and we would encourage observers and data providers to submit all breeding-season records of these species to help improve our knowledge: Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*, Eurasian Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, Black-throated Diver *G. arctica*, Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus* and Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*. Even when recording and reporting is too sparse to enable population-level monitoring, all records are of value, for example for site-level monitoring, survey design and range mapping.

Box 1. Seabirds Count

The fourth full census of seabirds breeding in Britain and Ireland, *Seabirds Count*, was conducted between 2015 and 2021 and the results were published in late 2023 (Burnell *et al.* 2023). This mammoth effort involved one thousand volunteer and professional fieldworkers collecting data from almost 10,000 sites and 5,500 urban 1-km squares. Through this we have in-depth knowledge of the numbers and distribution of our 25 regularly breeding seabirds, and changes over both the long-term since the first census, *Operation Seafarer* (1969–70), and the shorter term since the last census, *Seabird 2000* (1998–2002). Four of the 25 species covered by *Seabirds Count* are established rare breeding birds – Arctic Skua, Mediterranean Gull, Little Tern and Roseate Tern – and we draw on the *Seabirds Count* results in this report. In addition, records of a further 12 rare species (such as Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, 'American Black Tern' *Chlidonias niger surinamensis*, Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* and Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*, all featured in this report) are summarised in the book.

Box 2. The impact of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza on rare breeding birds in 2022

From 2021 onwards the UK experienced an unprecedented outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1, which had a severe impact on some wild bird populations. The H5N1 strain was first identified in China in 1996 and caused sporadic outbreaks subsequently (along with other variants arising from genetic mutation) until rapid global spread occurred from 2020 onwards. In the UK, the virus was first noted in Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* in the breeding season of 2021 (Falchieri *et al.* 2022), before causing widespread mortality amongst waterbird populations in the 2021/22 winter; for example, it was estimated that 13,200 Svalbard Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* died on the Solway Firth (NatureScot 2023).

At the end of April 2022, HPAI was again detected in Great Skuas in northern Scotland, after which it spread rapidly to other seabirds, most notably Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus*, amongst which severe mortality was recorded. Large-scale mortality was also reported from coastal tern colonies, particularly in Sandwich Terns *Thalasseus sandvicensis*, as the disease spread south through the UK. Positive tests for HPAI H5N1 were reported for 17 of the UK's 25 regularly breeding seabirds (APHA 2023). Estimating overall mortality is extremely difficult, but it will have numbered in the tens of thousands – for example, 5,035 dead Gannets were counted on Bass Rock, Lothian, on 30th June 2022 (Lane *et al.* 2024). As well as the direct mortality of adults, chicks were also killed by HPAI, while many breeding attempts failed owing to the death of one or more parent birds or abandonment.

The resurveying of key seabird colonies (some of which was part of routine annual monitoring) in 2023 (Tremlett *et al.* 2024) allowed comparison with baseline, pre-HPAI outbreak counts, which had largely been conducted as part of the *Seabirds Count* census (Burnell *et al.* 2023). Species believed to have been particularly impacted by HPAI were prioritised, with six species having sites holding over 50% of the pre-existing UK population resurveyed. Although coverage was subject to some biases, and change for other reasons since baseline counts were made cannot be disregarded, the results give an idea of the impact of HPAI in 2022 alone. Great Skua numbers had declined by 76% since the baseline surveys, and smaller declines were detected in many other species, including 25% in Northern Gannet, 35% in Sandwich Tern and 42% in Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. Of relevance to our reporting, Roseate Tern was one of the species very conspicuously impacted by HPAI H5N1 in 2022. At least 90 adult birds died on Coquet Island in 2022, as well as 170 chicks (Tremlett *et al.* 2024), resulting in the lowest productivity at that colony since 2010.

By the end of 2022, HPAI H5N1 had been confirmed by testing in over 60 species of wild bird in the UK, but away from large gatherings of wintering waterbirds and breeding seabird colonies the impact of the disease has been far less obvious. Transmission (and thus impact) may be far lower within species that do not aggregate in the non-breeding season, or nest in close colonies, but may still be present and could have a significant impact on populations and breeding performance. Wilson *et al.* (2023) used data from the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme (SRMS) to look for impacts of HPAI on raptors, owls and Common Raven *Corvus corax* in the 2022 breeding season, and found clear evidence of reduced productivity in White-tailed and Golden Eagles, particularly in coastal regions where exposure to the virus in infected seabirds would have been higher. There was some evidence of more localised impacts on Red Kites *Milvus milvus*, Common Raven and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, as well as widespread anecdotal reports of deaths and breeding failures which may have been caused by HPAI.

Within rare breeding species, HPAI had been reported in at least 11 species (excluding some waterbirds, such as Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, for which positive tests come from birds in wintering populations, rather than the much smaller breeding populations). In addition to the species mentioned above, testing revealed HPAI in Long-tailed Skua, Great White Egret, Little Egret, Osprey, Eurasian Goshawk and Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* (e.g. a brood that died in the nest in Northumberland) by the end of 2022 (APHA 2023).

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 2022 data directly for Gwent although some data were obtained from other sources. 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 nearly 11,000 individual records, which, once duplicate records were identified, provided nearly 7,600 unique records. This latter number has risen thanks to more recorders providing site-level information for species, rather than simply providing county totals. 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 and Northern Ireland. 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 these records directly to the RBBP Secretary).

By 2025, RBBP will hold an archive spanning 50 years of change in the UK's rare breeding birds. Resources allowing, 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 conservation purposes. Our annual totals for species such as Osprey, Eurasian Goshawk and Peregrine Falcon are likely to be underestimates because some imprecise data cannot be included in our summaries. In some cases, such as Osprey, high anecdotal figures (e.g. 350 pairs, or higher) have been quoted in publications, while our reporting reaches a maximum of around only 320 pairs. Reconciling these differences is an important part of our role and we urge submission of any extra information.

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.

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 2024, we received 12 requests for data or summary information, including several requests regarding populations of rare breeding birds within designated sites to inform the management of such sites. 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.

The Panel

The Panel currently has nine 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), Paul Castle, Mark Eaton (Secretary), Ian Francis, Mark Holling, David Norman, Andy Stanbury and Katy Westerberg. David Stroud, the Panel's longest-ever serving member, stepped down in autumn 2023. David joined in 1991 as the representative of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and was RBBP Chair between 2008 and 2012. Following David's retirement from the JNCC in 2019, he kindly agreed to stay on the Panel as an independent member. His wisdom and experience in numerous aspects of ornithology and the use of data for conservation purposes has been invaluable for over three decades and we, and the ornithological and conservation communities more widely, owe him a huge debt of gratitude. Paul Castle and Katy Westerberg joined the Panel in 2024. Panel membership aims to achieve broadly repre-

sentative 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 national statutory nature conservation bodies) and the RSPB, with an additional financial contribution from the BTO. In 2023–24, additional funding came from Natural England to enable a continuation of our programme of work on improving our Geographical Information System database.

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) and Bluesky at [@ukrbbp.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/ukrbbp.bsky.social), 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, 2024). 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 (2018–22, 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, 2024); 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, 2018–22). 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 2022 with that for 25, 20, 15 or 10 years earlier (1997, 2002, 2007, 2012). 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 2023), 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 unknown impact of 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;

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-year means’ for the period 2018–22 were calculated using data from the four years 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2022.

5. The degree of coverage (in 2022), 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. Note that for some, such as Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, the *BoCC* status relates to changes in the wintering population. Some species, which do not have regular breeding or wintering populations in the UK, are not classified.

Species accounts

The headline figure for 2022 (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. individual Whooper Swan 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; these are presented at county level. 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 the regional or national estimate may have been higher. Where county estimates are provided as a range, the upper limit was used in calculating regional and national totals. Note that some county estimates may contribute towards the totals, even if there were no records from the county in question in 2022 (and hence the county is not listed in the table).

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Very rare 29 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +699%

Amber

Near-complete

24 sites: 15–25 pairs. There were slightly fewer pairs than in recent years, and for the first time since 2014 there were no breeding pairs in Norfolk.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one probable breeding pair. **Highland** Two sites: two probable breeding pairs.

Outer Hebrides Five sites: one pair bred, fledging two young; four probable breeding pairs.

Shetland 14 sites: 14 pairs bred. Nine pairs hatched young with six pairs going on to fledge a total of 21 offspring.

Northern Ireland

Co. Derry One site: two probable breeding pairs.

In addition, summering birds were reported from Ayrshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire & Wirral, Cumbria, Highland, Meirionnydd and Norfolk.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

Rare 122 bp

25y trend: **stable** +2%

Amber

High

78 sites: 28–123 pairs. This is a substantial increase on the maximum of 92 pairs reported for 2021, but as shown in last year's report (Eaton *et al.* 2023c), this is within the typical between-year variability for this species: conditions on migration and on African wintering grounds over the preceding winter influence numbers returning to breed in northern Europe.

Garganey				Oxfordshire	1	1	1
	S	CP	TP	Sussex	1	0	1
England	63	26	99	England, E	26	11	45
England, SW	6	3	10	Cambridgeshire	12	0	19
Cornwall	1	0	1	Lincolnshire	3	0	3
Devon	1	0	1	Norfolk	5	7	10
Gloucestershire	1	2	2	Suffolk	6	4	13
Somerset	3	1	6	England, C	1	0	1
England, SE	9	4	14	Leics & Rutland	1	0	1
Kent	7	3	12	England, N	21	8	29

<i>Garganey continued</i>				Clyde	2	0	2
Cheshire & Wirral	2	1	3	Dumfries & G'way	1	0	1
Co. Durham	2	0	2	Scotland, Mid	4	0	9
Cumbria	2	0	2	Angus & Dundee	1	0	2
Lancs & N Mersey	3	2	4	Moray & Nairn	1	0	1
Northumberland	4	1	5	NE Scotland	2	0	6
Yorkshire	8	4	13	Scotland, N & W	2	0	3
Wales	4	1	4	Orkney	1	0	1
Anglesey	1	0	1	Outer Hebrides	1	0	2
Breconshire	1	1	1	Northern Ireland	2	1	5
East Glamorgan	1	0	1	Co. Antrim	1	0	2
Radnorshire	1	0	1	Co. Derry	1	1	3
Scotland	9	0	15	TOTALS	78	28	123
Scotland, S	3	0	3				

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors*

Potential breeder

One site: one individual. A female was present amongst a small group of Garganey at a site in **Cambridgeshire** from 30th March to 29th April, engaging in courtship displays and mating with a male Garganey. This is the fifth time this North American species has been reported by the RBBP; all four previous records have involved birds paired with Northern Shovelers *Spatula clypeata*, including a female that raised three young with a male Shoveler in Cambridgeshire in 1988 (Spencer *et al.* 1990). This could, of course, just be a question of numbers, as the UK breeding population of Shoveler is over ten times larger than that of Garganey.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Less scarce 1,388 bp 10y trend: **weak increase** +37%

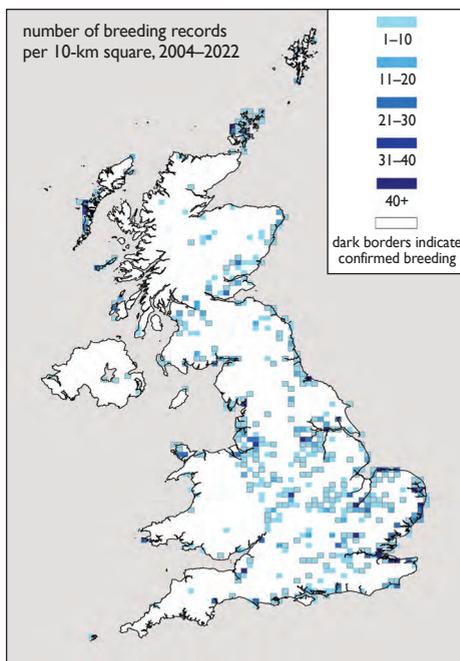
Amber

High

300 sites: 354–1,348 pairs. A pretty typical return, and only 10 fewer pairs than in 2021. The total of pairs reported has varied between 1,348 and 1,459 in the last five years (excepting the Covid-19 lockdown-impacted reporting in 2020). The sum of county estimates is only 92 pairs higher, suggesting that coverage is relatively good.

Shoveler is one of the most widespread species that RBBP reports upon, with records coming from 61 recording areas in 2022. Fig. 1 shows the wide distribution of breeding sites (from records submitted with a grid reference) over the last ten years; although the species is widespread, the sparser distribution in the west is obvious.

Fig. 1. Breeding distribution of Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* in the UK based on records for which accurate locations have been given, 2013–22.



Northern Shoveler							
	S	CP	TP				
England (e 1,115+)	221	318	1,059	Cleveland	4	4	48
England, SW (e 50)	16	10	43	Co. Durham (e 9)	6	0	9
Cornwall (e 1)	1	0	1	Cumbria (e 7)	5	0	7
Devon (e 3)	2	2	3	Greater Manchester (e 18)	6	3	18
Dorset (e 2)	2	2	2	Lancs & N Mersey (e 91)	6	67	91
Gloucestershire (e 7)	4	2	7	Northumberland (e 9)	8	9	9
Hampshire (e 10)	3	3	3	Yorkshire (e 96)	22	61	95
Isle of Wight (e 2)	1	0	2	Wales (e 61+)	7	7	61
Isles of Scilly (e 2)	1	0	2	Anglesey (e 43)	2	0	43
Somerset (e 23)	2	1	23	Breconshire	1	0	1
England, SE (e 367)	53	38	340	Carmarthenshire	1	1	1
Bedfordshire (e 1)	1	1	1	Denbigh & Flint	1	2	12
Berkshire (e 3)	3	0	3	Pembrokeshire (e 4)	2	2	4
Buckinghamshire (e 2)	1	0	2	Scotland (e 226+)	68	29	192
Essex (e 165)	10	9	165	Scotland, S (e 30+)	17	3	29
Greater London (e 4)	1	1	4	Ayrshire	4	0	4
Hertfordshire (e 15)	15	2	10	Borders	1	0	1
Kent (e 120)	14	21	98	Clyde	9	1	15
Oxfordshire (e 3)	1	1	3	Dumfries & G'way (e 10)	3	2	9
Sussex (e 54)	7	3	54	Scotland, Mid (e 38+)	12	3	39
England, E (e 337)	60	87	323	Angus & Dundee (e 8)	2	0	5
Cambridgeshire (e 136)	16	6	136	Fife (e 1)	1	1	1
Lincolnshire (e 56)	13	6	56	Moray & Nairn	1	0	4
Norfolk (e 82)	13	66	82	NE Scotland (e 6)	4	1	6
Northamptonshire (e 3)	3	0	3	Perth & Kinross (e 22)	3	1	22
Suffolk (e 60)	15	9	46	Upper Forth	1	0	1
England, C (e 44)	25	8	37	Scotland, N & W (e 158+)	39	23	128
Derbyshire (e 10)	2	0	4	Argyll (e 42)	12	3	42
Leics & Rutland (e 5)	3	2	4	Caithness	1	1	3
Nottinghamshire (e 4)	4	1	4	Highland (e 13)	2	0	13
Shropshire (e 2)	2	2	2	Orkney (e 37)	9	10	37
Staffordshire (e 2)	1	2	2	Outer Hebrides (e 60)	12	6	30
Warwickshire (e 12)	5	0	12	Shetland (e 3)	3	3	3
West Midlands (e 4)	3	0	4	Northern Ireland (e 35+)	3	0	35
Worcestershire (e 5)	5	1	5	Co. Antrim	2	0	32
England, N (e 317+)	67	175	316	Co. Down	1	0	3
Cheshire & Wirral (e 39)	10	31	39	Isle of Man (e 1)	1	0	1
				TOTALS (e 1,140+)	300	354	1,348

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Rare 210 bp (no trend available)

Amber

Moderate

79 sites: 42–182 pairs. There were fewer pairs reported in 2022 than in recent years, but it is hard to tell whether this is of any significance. We do not publish a population trend based on the Wigeon records submitted to the RBBP as we believe that only a relatively small proportion of the population is reported annually and we do not know whether variation in numbers reflects change between years in the population or in the monitoring effort.

Eurasian Wigeon							
	S	CP	TP				
England	23	7	31	Isles of Scilly	1	0	1
England, SW	1	0	1	England, SE	2	0	2
				Berkshire	2	0	2
				England, E	10	0	14

<i>Eurasian Wigeon continued</i>				Dumfries & G'way	2	0	3
Cambridgeshire	2	0	3	Scotland, Mid	12	3	19
Norfolk	8	0	11	Angus & Dundee	4	0	5
England, C	1	0	1	Moray & Nairn	1	3	3
Leics & Rutland	1	0	1	NE Scotland	3	0	5
England, N	9	7	13	Perth & Kinross	4	0	6
Co. Durham	3	3	5	Scotland, N & W	38	32	124
Cumbria	1	1	1	Argyll	4	0	8
Lancs & N Mersey	1	0	1	Caithness	5	7	24
Northumberland	2	2	2	Highland	13	9	57
Yorkshire	2	1	4	Orkney	7	2	18
Wales	1	0	1	Outer Hebrides	3	1	4
Anglesey	1	0	1	Shetland	6	13	13
Scotland	54	35	149	Northern Ireland	1	0	1
Scotland, S	4	0	6	Co. Antrim	1	0	1
Clyde	2	0	3	TOTALS	79	42	182

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Very rare 29 bp

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

Amber

Near-complete

18 sites: 6–29 pairs. It was a typical year in both numbers and distribution of breeding pairs of Northern Pintails in the UK, with a scattering of pairs at English sites (the three confirmed pairs in Cambridgeshire comprised the first confirmed breeding in that county since 2010) and higher numbers on Scottish islands, with Orkney holding the lion's share. This was not always the case, as the UK's population has waxed and waned, and the relative importance of the UK's counties has varied (fig. 2).

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three sites: (1) two pairs bred (broods seen); (2) one pair bred (brood seen); (3) one probable breeding pair. **Norfolk** One site: one probable breeding pair.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one probable breeding pair. **Cumbria** One site: one probable breeding pair and one possible breeding pair. **Lancashire & North Merseyside** One site: one pair bred, fledging two young.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Four sites: (1–3) one confirmed breeding pair and five probable breeding pairs across three nearby sites; (2) one possible pair. **Orkney** Five sites: (1) one pair bred (brood of six ducklings seen) and five probable breeding pairs; (2) one probable breeding pair; (3) two possible breeding pairs; (4–5) one possible breeding pair at each site. **Outer Hebrides** Two sites: one probable breeding pair and one possible breeding pair.

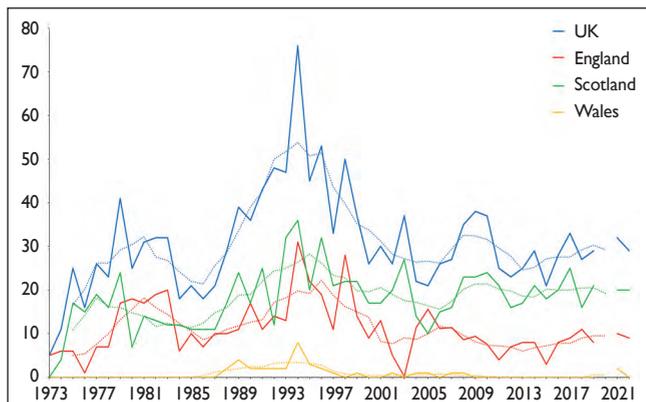


Fig. 2. Maximum numbers of pairs of Northern Pintails *Anas acuta* breeding in the UK, England, Scotland and Wales, 1973–2022, with 5-year running means (dotted lines). Data for 2020 is omitted owing to the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on monitoring coverage.



444. Northern Pintails *Anas acuta*, Lancashire & North Merseyside, December 2017.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Scarce 782 bp

25y trend: **weak increase** +70%

Red

High

194 sites: 389–792 pairs. Another high total – as shown in last year’s report, this species has undergone a near-linear increase in breeding numbers since it was added to the RBBP’s species list in 1986. This increase is somewhat at odds with a decline in the breeding population across Europe, which has led to the species being listed as Globally Vulnerable (BirdLife International 2024). There has been an accompanying decline in the wintering population in western Europe – the UK’s wintering population has fallen by 43% in just ten years (Woodward *et al.* 2020). The decline in the European breeding population has been linked to changes in water quality, the loss of gull colonies amidst which many Pochard breed, changes in the management of fish farms and increased predation pressure (Fox *et al.* 2016).

Common Pochard			England, E (e 111)				
	S	CP	TP				
England (e 834+)	187	385	752	Cambridgeshire (e 22)	13	11	22
England, SW (e 65)	8	20	46	Lincolnshire (e 31)	11	18	31
Gloucestershire (e 2)	2	1	2	Norfolk (e 45)	16	28	33
Hampshire (e 10)	3	7	7	Northamptonshire (e 2)	2	1	2
Isle of Wight (e 5)	1	0	5	Suffolk (e 11)	8	6	11
Isles of Scilly (e 3)	1	2	3	England, C (e 28)	15	10	26
Somerset (e 45)	1	10	29	Leics & Rutland (e 4)	2	4	4
England, SE (e 434)	85	169	385	Nottinghamshire (e 3)	1	1	2
Bedfordshire (e 6)	5	4	4	Staffordshire (e 3)	2	1	3
Berkshire (e 12)	3	3	12	Warwickshire (e 9)	5	0	9
Buckinghamshire (e 2)	2	1	2	West Midlands (e 3)	2	0	2
Essex (e 141)	16	35	141	Worcestershire (e 6)	3	4	6
Greater London (e 48)	8	9	13	England, N (e 196)	29	122	196
Hertfordshire (e 42)	18	29	41	Cheshire & Wirral (e 17)	2	16	17
Kent (e 150)	20	64	139	Cleveland (e 49)	4	13	49
Oxfordshire (e 8)	1	0	8	Co. Durham (e 2)	1	2	2
Surrey (e 14)	4	13	14	Cumbria (e 7)	4	0	7
Sussex (e 11)	8	11	11	Lancs & N Mersey (e 44)	3	42	44
				Northumberland (e 5)	3	5	5

Common Pochard <i>continued</i>				Scotland, S (e 7+)	2	0	7
Yorkshire (e 72)	12	44	72	Perth & Kinross	2	0	7
Wales (e 32)	4	4	32	Northern Ireland (e 1+)	1	0	1
Anglesey (e 29)	3	1	29	Co. Antrim	1	0	1
Carmarthenshire (e 3)	1	3	3	TOTALS (e 874+)	194	389	792

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Occasional breeder

Three sites: 0–3 pairs. Most of the records the RBBP receives are of birds that are lingering on a spring migration that mirrors the north–south route they would take if they had remained on the correct side of the Atlantic, but these birds eventually disappear. Presumably they summer at sites farther north or east of the UK, for example in Scandinavia, although note that the native North American breeding range extends to a latitude level with the south of France.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: a male was present from 24th March to 26th April at a site where Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula* breed.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: a female was present from 28th March to 27th April and was joined by a male from 14th to 27th April.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: a pair, appearing agitated, was present on 22nd June but not seen on subsequent visits.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Red

Occasional breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. Another record from the Outer Hebrides, following reports from six sites there in 2021. This is not, however, one of the counties from which we have ever reported confirmed breeding – within Scotland these are Caithness, Clyde, North-east Scotland, Orkney and Perth & Kinross; within Northern Ireland, Co. Antrim and Co. Down; and, perhaps most surprisingly, Anglesey in Wales.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides One site: a pair, 8th–12th May.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Red

Rare 45 bp

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

Near-complete

Eight sites: 18–44 pairs. Nowadays monitoring covers most, if not all, of the regular breeding sites for Common Scoter, with annual totals in the last ten years ranging from 33 to 54 breeding pairs. A comparison with the 2007 national survey, which produced an estimate of 52 pairs (Eaton *et al.* 2008), suggests that the population has stabilised since then. There had, however, been a decline of

Common Scoter			Perth & Kinross	2	1	6	Caithness/Highland	1	11	15	
	S	CP	TP	Scotland, N & W	6	17	38	Highland	4	5	19
Scotland, Mid	2	1	6	Argyll	1	1	4	TOTALS	8	18	44

45% since the first national survey in 1995 (Underhill *et al.* 1998) and, while monitoring (and reporting to the RBBP) was less robust in the 1970s and 1980s, it is evident from fig. 3 that there was considerable decline in those decades (including the loss of the large population on Lower Lough Erne, Co. Fermanagh). The apparent increase over the last two decades is likely to be an artefact of improving monitoring over that period. Hughes *et al.* (2024) showed that the population breeding in the Caithness/Highland Flow

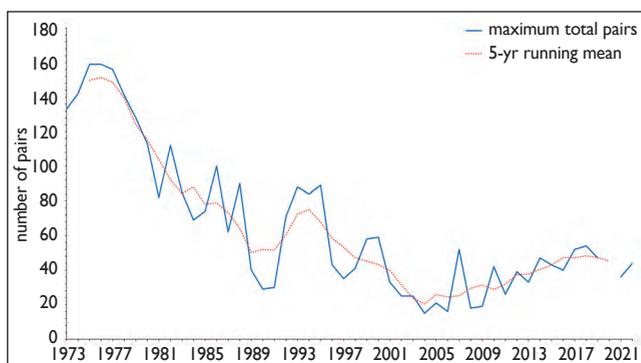


Fig. 3. Maximum numbers of Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* breeding in the UK, 1973–2022, with a 5-year running mean. Numbers in 1995 and 2007 come from dedicated national surveys; data for 2020 is omitted owing to the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on monitoring coverage.

Country declined by 44% between 2002 and 2023 yet breeding productivity remained relatively stable, while years of higher productivity did not result in increased numbers in following years.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Rare 200 bp* (no trend available)

Red

Moderate

40–73 breeding females. Monitoring of the Common Goldeneye population in Scotland remains much reduced from the levels achieved up to 2010, hence it is difficult to be sure what recent trends have been. While the number of pairs in Northumberland fell slightly in 2022, from 19 pairs in the previous year, this remains – like the colonisation of Strathspey 50 years ago – a fine example of what can happen when nesting boxes are provided in suitable habitat.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Common Goldeneye			Greater London		NE Scotland		
	CP	TP	England, N		Perth & Kinross		
England	16	17	Northumberland	15	Scotland, N & W	23	48
England, SW	1	1	Scotland	24	Highland	23	48
Avon	1	1	Scotland, Mid	1	TOTALS	40	73
England, SE	0	1	Moray & Nairn	0			

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

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

Amber

Low

102 sites: 82–202 pairs. This is, by a small margin, the highest total we have reported since Red-breasted Merganser was added to the RBBP's species list in 2017. It remains only a small proportion of the true population though, so we can only repeat our standard exhortation for birdwatchers to look for this duck along the coasts and in upland waterbodies in the north and west of the UK; to ensure that any sightings in suitable breeding habitat are submitted to the relevant county bird recorder; and for those recorders to encourage submissions and collate them in their annual returns to the RBBP.

* Humphreys *et al.* (2016).

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2022

Red-breasted Merganser (e 526+)			Scotland, Mid (e 31+)	4	5
	CP	TP	Angus & Dundee (e 2)	2	2
England, N (e 19)	16	19	Perth & Kinross	1	2
Cumbria (e 13)	10	13	Upper Forth (e 12)	1	1
Lancs & N Mersey (e 2)	2	2	Scotland, N & W (e 402+)	54	115
Northumberland (e 4)	4	4	Argyll (e 200)	10	23
Wales (e 28)	2	18	Caithness	3	3
Anglesey (e 10)	1	6	Highland (e 70)	7	49
Caernarfonshire (e 3)	0	2	Orkney (e 13)	1	3
Meirionnydd (e 15)	1	10	Outer Hebrides (e 100)	17	21
Scotland (e 448+)	64	134	Shetland	16	16
Scotland, S (e 15+)	6	14	Northern Ireland (e 31+)	0	31
Ayrshire (e 2)	2	2	Co. Antrim	0	2
Clyde	1	9	Co. Fermanagh	0	29
Clyde Islands	2	2	TOTALS	82	202
Dumfries & G'way (e 2)	1	1			

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

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

Red

Moderate

152 males at 43 active leks. A total of 87 lek sites were monitored across four recording areas, all in Scotland. As summarised in last year's RBBP report, the estimate from the most recent national winter survey (2021/22; Wilkinson *et al.* 2023) indicates that the Scottish population continues to dwindle. However, the number of males recorded at leks in 2022 was three up on the previous year, the first between-year increase in numbers of lekking males since 2014.

* Wilkinson *et al.* (2023).

Capercaillie			Moray & Nairn	2	2	Scotland, N & W	37	143
	leks	MM	NE Scotland	3	5	Highland	37	143
Scotland, Mid	6	9	Perth & Kinross	1	2	TOTALS	43	152

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce 446 males 25y trend: **stable -12%**

Amber

High

4–521 singing males. As has been remarked upon in many previous RBBP reports, Common Quail is well known for marked between-year fluctuations in numbers across northern European countries. However, 2022 was the fourth year in succession in which we have reported a UK total of between 500 and 600 singing males; this is remarkable stability for a species for which the total of singing males reported has ranged between 107 and 1,990 previously.

Common Quail			Wiltshire	45	Cambridgeshire	20
	SM	England, SE	England, SE	45	Lincolnshire	40
England	386		Berkshire	7	Norfolk	48
England, SW	113		Essex	1	Suffolk	3
Avon	4		Hertfordshire	11	England, C	24
Devon	3		Kent	8	Derbyshire	10
Dorset	28		Oxfordshire	7	Leics & Rutland	3
Gloucestershire	15		Surrey	2	Shropshire	8
Hampshire	14		Sussex	9	Staffordshire	2
Somerset	4	England, E	England, E	111	Warwickshire	1

Common Quail <i>continued</i>		Radnorshire	1	Perth & Kinross	1
England, N	93	Scotland	131	Upper Forth	1
Cheshire & Wirral	5	Scotland, S	56	Scotland, N & W	31
Co. Durham	4	Ayrshire	4	Argyll	1
Cumbria	1	Borders	20	Caithness	7
Greater Manchester	3	Clyde	1	Highland	6
Lancs & N Mersey	15	Dumfries & G'way	2	Orkney	2
Northumberland	35	Lothian	29	Outer Hebrides	2
Yorkshire	30	Scotland, Mid	44	Shetland	13
Wales	4	Fife	6	Northern Ireland	1
Anglesey	1	Moray & Nairn	5	Co. Down	1
Denbigh & Flint	2	NE Scotland	31	TOTAL	521

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Very rare 15 bp

(no trend available)

Near-complete

One extensive site: 12 nesting females, ten young fledged. In addition, three eggs were retrieved under licence and from these two birds were reared and retained for captive breeding.

England, SW

Wiltshire One extensive site: 12 breeding females, 24 nests were located.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Less scarce 2,092 bp* 27y trend (BBS): **strong decrease -97%**

Red

Moderate

354 sites: 32–514 pairs. The 2021 national survey (Stanbury *et al.* 2023) gave a robust snapshot of the population of European Turtle Dove in the UK, which will serve as a baseline against which to measure future change and the success of the conservation action taken to save this threatened species. Outside of such a survey year the numbers reported will inevitably be lower, particularly in the core counties in the southeast and east of England. These data are still valuable, however, allowing trends in marginal counties (where proportional coverage is higher) to be followed, and directing conservation effort towards priority areas in the core counties. It is noticeable that four of the counties where European Turtle Doves were reported in 2021 – Berkshire, Cornwall, Dorset and Cheshire & Wirral – are absent from the 2022 table below. There is, however, some good news regarding this internationally beleaguered species, as following a temporary ban on hunting in France, Portugal and Spain from 2021 onwards the western flyway population rose by 25%, an increase of 400,000 pairs, in just two years (Carboneras *et al.* 2024).

* Stanbury *et al.* (2023).

European Turtle Dove		Hertfordshire	2	0	2	Suffolk	89	6	102		
	S	CP	TP	Kent	93	3	131	England, C	9	0	9
England, SW	9	5	16	Oxfordshire	2	0	3	Derbyshire	1	0	1
Devon	1	0	1	Surrey	1	0	1	Leics & Rutland	1	0	1
Hampshire	5	5	12	Sussex	15	0	31	Nottinghamshire	3	0	3
Isle of Wight	2	0	2	England, E	177	20	235	Warwickshire	2	0	2
Wiltshire	1	0	1	Cambridgeshire	18	10	32	Worcestershire	2	0	2
England, SE	122	5	185	Lincolnshire	28	0	32	England, N	37	2	69
Bedfordshire	4	1	9	Norfolk	40	4	66	Yorkshire	37	2	69
Essex	5	1	8	Northamptonshire	2	0	3	TOTALS	354	32	514

Corn Crake *Crex crex***Scarce** 891 bp25y trend: **weak increase** +61%**Red**

Near-complete

852 singing males. Another slight drop in numbers. As we reported last year, the Scottish population of Corn Crakes has been in steady decline since 2014 (and has decreased by 28% in the UK in the last ten years), which can largely be attributed to a reduction in the area of farmland being managed for the species under agri-environment agreements.

[England, E](#)**Cambridgeshire** Two, at two sites. **Lincolnshire** One. **Norfolk** Five, at one site.[England, N](#)**Yorkshire** Three, at one site.[Scotland, S](#)**Dumfries & Galloway** One.[Scotland, N & W](#)**Argyll** Total 397: Coll, 47; Colonsay & Oronsay, 31; Iona, 14; Islay, 32; Tiree, 273. **Caithness** 4.**Highland** Total 25: mainland, 7; Canna, 4; Skye, 14. **Orkney** Total 17. **Outer Hebrides** Total 390: Barra & Vatersay, 50; Benbecula, 10; Berneray, 3; Harris, 6; Lewis, 74; North Uist, 115; South Uist, 132. **Shetland** Two, at two sites.[Northern Ireland](#)**Co. Antrim** One site, four. **Co. Down** One.**Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*****Very rare** 25 bp25y trend: **weak decrease** -28%**Amber**

High

Ten sites: 1–22 singing males/pairs. A return to more usual numbers, following the peak in 2021 caused by an influx into the Lower Derwent Valley in Yorkshire. Although numbers dropped in 2022, that area remained the most important site in the UK.

[England, SW](#)**Somerset** Two sites: (1) two singing males on one date in May; (2) one singing male on one date in May.[England, E](#)**Cambridgeshire** One site: one singing male between 1st May and 6th June. **Lincolnshire** One site: one singing male on 21st April.[England, N](#)**Cheshire & Wirral** One site: an adult and juvenile together in August. **Yorkshire** One extensive site: a total of 12 singing males between May and July.[Scotland, Mid](#)**Clyde** One site: one singing male in May. **Perth & Kinross** Two sites: (1) singing male on 17th–18th April; (2) singing male on 31st July.[Scotland, N & W](#)**Caithness** One site: one singing male.**Baillon's Crake *Zapornia pusilla*****Potential breeder**

Two sites: 0–3 pairs. The fourth successive year with records of singing Baillon's Crakes in the UK. Proving breeding in such a secretive species will be a challenge, but the presence of birds of both sexes at at least one site in 2022 suggests that it might be happening, deep in marshes and fens.

England, SW

Somerset One site: one probable breeding pair. A male was recorded singing on 25th May, and a female was recorded at the same location on 8th June.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: two singing males. The first male was heard from 21st June to 29th July, the second from 25th June to 17th July. What may have been female calls were heard from the vicinity of the first male, and two birds were seen together in this area.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Rare 60 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +1,907%**Amber**

Near-complete

37 sites: 53–75 pairs. For the first time since 2017 we do not report a new record total for Common Crane, albeit this is only one fewer than the 76 pairs reported in 2021 (the number of fledged young was also down by one).

Common Crane				England, E					
	S	CP	TP	YF		19	20	32	17
England	33	50	69	35	Cambridgeshire	5	5	9	2
England, SW	10	23	27	15	Lincolnshire	2	1	3	2
Dorset	1	0	1	0	Norfolk	8	11	16	9
Gloucestershire	1	6	6	4	Suffolk	4	3	4	4
Somerset	7	16	19	9	England, N	3	5	8	2
Wiltshire	1	1	1	2	Yorkshire	3	5	8	2
England, SE	1	2	2	1	Scotland, Mid	4	3	6	4
Oxfordshire	1	2	2	1	NE Scotland	4	3	6	4
					TOTALS	37	53	75	39

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Very rare 24 bp

25y trend: **strong decrease** -58%**Red**

Near-complete

15 sites: 4–20 pairs. A matching total of pairs to last year's low, but with much poorer productivity; only seven young were fledged, by far the lowest we have ever reported.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 15 sites: (1) one confirmed breeding pair and five probable breeding pairs, one young fledged; (2) one pair fledged three young; (3) one pair fledged two young; (4) one pair fledged one young; (5–11) one probable breeding pair at each site; (12–15) one possible breeding pair at each site.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Rare 58 bp

25y trend: **stable** +12%**Amber**

Near-complete

Black-necked Grebe				England, C					
	S	CP	TP	YF		19	20	32	17
England	18	54	68	37	Lincolnshire	1	0	1	0
England, SE	3	0	5	0	Norfolk	1	0	1	0
Essex	1	0	2	0	Suffolk	1	0	1	0
Hertfordshire	1	0	2	0	England, N	5	8	11	5
Kent	1	0	1	0	Nottinghamshire	2	6	6	3
England, E	3	0	3	0	Shropshire	1	0	1	0
					Staffordshire	2	2	4	2
					TOTALS	7	46	49	32

Black-necked Grebe <i>continued</i>				Northern Ireland	1	0	1	0	
Cheshire & Wirral	1	19	19	0	Co. Armagh	1	0	1	0
Greater Manchester	1	7	7	20	TOTALS	19	54	69	37
Yorkshire	5	20	23	12					

19 sites: 54–69 pairs. Black-necked Grebe numbers rose steadily in the 1970s and 80s, but there has been no clear trend since the early 1990s, although the population has shifted between key sites and counties (see Eaton *et al.* 2022). At present, Northern England holds the bulk of the breeding population, and good numbers at the most important colonies resulted in 69 pairs in 2022, the highest total we have reported since 70 in 2001 (Ogilvie *et al.* 2023).



Mark Jarrett

445. Juvenile Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Cheshire & Wirral, June 2022.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicanus*

Scarce 303 bp

25y trend: **weak increase** +68%

Amber

High

288–314 pairs. In addition to the totals given below, it is known that some pairs remain uncounted in areas to which access is not permitted; it is estimated there may have been an additional 36 pairs in Norfolk and five in Suffolk in 2022.

Eurasian Stone-curlew			Berkshire	13	16	Suffolk	90	99
	CP	TP	Oxfordshire	2	2	England, C	1	1
England, SW	113	121	Sussex	2	4	Leics & Rutland	1	1
Hampshire	31	32	England, E	157	170	TOTALS	288	314
Wiltshire	82	89	Cambridgeshire	4	4			
England, SE	17	22	Norfolk	63	67			

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Very rare 3 bp

15y trend: **strong increase** +250%

Amber

Near-complete

Three sites: 2–3 breeding pairs. In addition to the breeding records below, the Norfolk pair was present on 18th April at a site in **Cambridgeshire**. A different pair was present in Cambridgeshire on 19th May and may have been the same birds as at a site in **Sussex** from 21st to 23rd May. This is the ninth successive year in which Black-winged Stilts have bred in the UK. Thirty-four young have fledged over this period; only 2017, when six pairs fledged 13 young between them, has been more productive than 2022.

England, SE

Kent One site: a pair, present from 15th to 19th April, made a nest scrape but then departed.

England, E

Norfolk One site: a confirmed breeding pair was present from 28th April to 30th June, four young fledged.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: a confirmed breeding pair was present from 16th May to 29th July, four young fledged.



Andrew Jordan

446. Juvenile Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Yorkshire, July 2022.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Less scarce 2,221 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +236%

Amber

Near-complete

127 sites: 2,225 pairs. The table gives totals of confirmed pairs only, so may underestimate the size of the breeding population slightly. A notable exclusion on this basis is the **Outer Hebrides**, where three birds were present at the site they bred at in 2020 and 2021, but breeding was not confirmed in 2022. The RBBP continues to cover this species, despite the population being in excess of 2,000 pairs, owing to the lack of alternative monitoring mechanisms.

Pied Avocet			England, E	54	945	Cleveland	2	38
	S	CP	Cambridgeshire	4	20	Co. Durham	2	19
England	124	2,173	Lincolnshire	9	186	Cumbria	1	11
England, SW	8	182	Norfolk	26	475	Lancs & N Mersey	8	224
Avon	1	1	Suffolk	15	264	Northumberland	3	20
Gloucestershire	2	45	England, C	5	42	Yorkshire	14	71
Hampshire	4	79	Leics & Rutland	1	12	Wales	3	52
Somerset	1	57	Nottinghamshire	2	11	Denbigh & Flint	2	50
England, SE	26	598	Staffordshire	1	7	Gwent	1	2
Essex	10	264	Worcestershire	1	12	TOTALS	127	2,225
Kent	10	207	England, N	31	406			
Sussex	6	127	Cheshire & Wirral	1	23			

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Scarce 670 bp

20y trend: **stable** +19%

Green

Moderate

443–689 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 58 possible breeding pairs was also submitted to the Panel, these may have been passage birds or those using sites only temporarily.

Our Northern England region holds the largest population of breeding Little Ringed Plovers in the UK, but the comparison across recording areas is skewed by their differing sizes. Fig. 4 shows numbers in each RBBP region by density, thus correcting for region size. This reveals that Central England has consistently held the highest density of Little Ringed Plovers. Regional densities have fluctuated since the RBBP began reporting on Little Ringed Plovers in 1996, but there are few obvious trends, other than the slow increase in densities in South and Mid Scotland where the species has become a regular breeder.

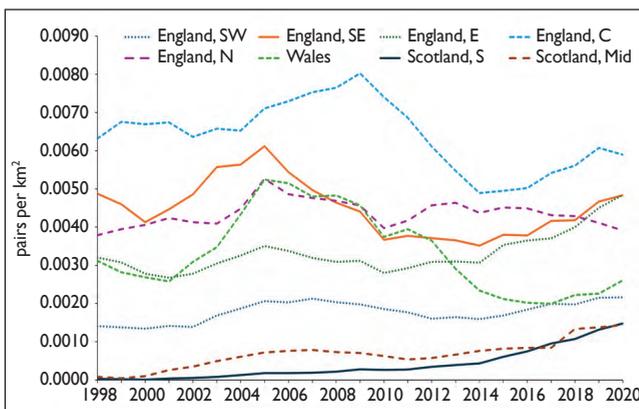


Fig. 4. Five-year running means for Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* by RBBP region, 1998–2020.

Little Ringed Plover		Cambridgeshire (e 37)	37	Anglesey (e 1)	1
	TP	Lincolnshire (e 34)	34	Breconshire (e 15)	9
England (e 730)	558	Norfolk (e 43)	43	Carmarthenshire (e 70)	35
England, SW (e 75)	65	Northamptonshire (e 6)	6	Denbigh & Flint (e 8)	8
Avon (e 2)	2	Suffolk (e 10)	7	East Glamorgan (e 8)	3
Cornwall (e 4)	2	England, C (e 141)	90	Gower (e 5)	2
Devon (e 8)	8	Derbyshire (e 20)	13	Gwent (e 6)	6
Dorset (e 8)	8	Herefordshire (e 11)	8	Meirionnydd (e 5)	2
Gloucestershire (e 10)	9	Leics & Rutland (e 20)	20	Montgomeryshire (e 10)	2
Hampshire (e 30)	24	Nottinghamshire (e 20)	14	Radnorshire	3
Isle of Wight (e 1)	1	Shropshire (e 5)	4	Scotland (e 74+)	59
Somerset (e 7)	7	Staffordshire (e 36)	4	Scotland, S (e 45+)	40
Wiltshire (e 5)	4	Warwickshire (e 12)	12	Ayrshire	2
England, SE (e 149)	122	West Midlands (e 4)	4	Borders (e 16)	16
Bedfordshire (e 10)	8	Worcestershire (e 13)	11	Clyde	13
Berkshire (e 12)	12	England, N (e 235)	154	Dumfries & G'way (e 6)	5
Buckinghamshire (e 12)	12	Cheshire & Wirral (e 17)	2	Lothian (e 8)	4
Essex (e 26)	26	Cleveland (e 14)	14	Scotland, Mid (e 29+)	20
Greater London (e 6)	4	Co. Durham (e 35)	27	Angus & Dundee (e 4)	4
Hertfordshire (e 13)	13	Cumbria (e 20)	13	Fife (e 7)	2
Kent (e 30)	14	Greater Manchester (e 34)	24	Moray & Nairn (e 3)	3
Oxfordshire (e 9)	9	Lancs & N Mersey (e 30)	13	NE Scotland (e 10)	6
Surrey (e 10)	3	Northumberland (e 20)	15	Perth & Kinross	3
Sussex (e 21)	21	Yorkshire (e 65)	46	Upper Forth (e 2)	2
England, E (e 130)	127	Wales (e 131+)	71	TOTAL (e 935+)	689

Eurasian Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus***Scarce** 423 males*24y trend (survey): **strong decrease** -57%**Red**

Low

5–27 ‘pairs’. It was a typically low return for this species, which is found on the UK’s highest peaks. The small number of records submitted to the RBBP are insufficient to give an indication of trends, so it is pleasing to report that there will be a national survey in 2025 – the last was in 2011 (Hayhow *et al.* 2015). There have been reports of Eurasian Dotterels potentially breeding in Cumbria for the past seven years, and in three of those breeding has been confirmed – a pair fledged one young in 2022.

* Hayhow *et al.* (2015).

Eurasian Dotterel				Scotland	14	4	26	Scotland, N & W	9	4	21
	S	CP	TP	Scotland, Mid	5	0	5	Highland	9	4	21
England	1	1	1	Moray & Nairn	2	0	2	TOTALS	15	5	27
England, N	1	1	1	NE Scotland	2	0	2				
Cumbria	1	1	1	Perth & Kinross	1	0	1				

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus***Scarce** 378 bp*

(no trend available)

Red

Low

Nine sites: 50–66 pairs. In general, reporting of Eurasian Whimbrel is poor outside of the years of national surveys. However, there were more Whimbrels reported than is normal in ‘non-survey’ years in 2022, owing to fieldwork around the Viking windfarm in Shetland.

* Skene & Perkins (2023).

England, C

Warwickshire One site: the same individual as in 2021 held territory between 21st April and 19th May.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one breeding pair fledged two young. **Shetland** Seven sites: a total of 49 confirmed breeding pairs, 13 probable breeding pairs and two possible breeding pairs were reported.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa***Rare** 56 bp25y trend: **weak increase** +45%**Red**

Near-complete

Six sites: 53 pairs. In addition to the young fledged in the Cambridgeshire and Norfolk Fens, 13 clutches were collected, from which 51 birds were fledged in captivity and subsequently released. This brought the total number of ‘headstarted’ birds released in the Fens by Project Godwit to 206 over five years. It was, however, the first year of Project Godwit in which the numbers of breeding pairs had fallen. This may in part have been because there was not a cohort of third-year godwits from headstarting in 2020, owing to the cessation of project activities during the Covid-19 lockdowns. It is, however, clear that the Fens population continues to struggle with poor productivity; in 2022, 46 nests were found across the project sites in the Fens, but only eight chicks fledged. Many nests were predated, largely by nocturnal mammals (although Common Crane *Grus grus* was also recorded as a nest predator, for the first time). It was estimated that 45 chicks hatched, from 14 nests, and while the fate of the 37 that failed to fledge was not observed, it is presumed that most were predated. This was the fourth year in a row that fewer than ten chicks were successfully reared (in the wild) in the Fens, and the productivity in 2022 was 0.17 fledglings per pair, which, as in previous years, was well below the 0.395 fledglings/pair required for population maintenance (Ratcliffe *et al.* 2005).

Black-tailed Godwit					Lancs & N Mersey	1	2	2	0
	S	CP	TP	YF	<i>L. l. islandica</i>				
<i>L. l. limosa</i>					Scotland, N & W	2	5	5	4
England	4	48	48	8	Orkney	2	5	5	4
England, E	3	46	46	8*	TOTALS	6	53	53	12
Cambridgeshire	2	34	34	6					
Norfolk	1	12	12	1					
England, N	1	2	2	0					

*One recently fledged bird was recorded without knowledge of which Fenland site (and county) it came from.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Very rare 10 females 25y trend: **strong decrease -65%**

Red

Moderate

Nine sites: 15+ breeding females. A typical scatter of records with little suggestion of breeding in 2022. The large concentration of birds in Cambridgeshire brings to mind the records from some years in the 1970s and 80s, after which the population declined steeply – the last confirmed breeding record in the East Anglian Fens was in 1991. Given uncertainty over the number of females attending leks in Cambridgeshire, it is hard to know what figure to use for the creation of our annual metrics; we have used a conservative estimate of ten females in Cambridgeshire for this purpose.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: a count of 183 birds on 22nd April included ‘many’ lekking birds, with males outnumbering females at the lek sites by 2:1, but no estimate was made of the number of lekking birds involved.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: four lekking males on several dates in May. **Lancashire & North Merseyside** One site: two males and two females present in May.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Three sites: four males lekking to one female across three sites in May and June. **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: (1) pair present from 8th May with the female last recorded on 21st June; (2) pair present 15th–22nd May, with second female present on one date; (3) two lekking males.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus*

Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. A male held a territory at a site in **Shetland** from 23rd to 28th June (although it may have been present before these dates), singing and displaying to Dunlins *C. alpina*. What is believed to have been the same individual was present at a site in the **Outer Hebrides** from 19th to 21st May, although no breeding behaviour was noted during that period. Although this is a surprising record given the rarity of this Scandinavian-breeding wader, which averages about 4–5 individuals a year in the UK (Bacon *et al.* 2023), it is not the first time this species has featured in a RBBP report. A pair was present at Aberlady Bay, Lothian, between 8th and 15th June 1983 during which time the male made frequent song-flights and a nest scrape may have been created (Spencer *et al.* 1986). One bird stayed until 4th July, and two singles were present for briefer periods the following year. The closest breeding Broad-billed Sandpipers to the UK are at the same latitude as Shetland, about 500 km to the east in Norway (Keller *et al.* 2020).

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii***Former breeder**

Two sites: 0–3 breeding pairs. The return of breeding Temminck's Stints to northern Scotland was one of the ornithological surprises of 2021 (Eaton *et al.* 2023c). Two pairs returned in 2022, and in a similar sequence of events at least one pair appeared to be nesting before fluctuating water levels flooded the presumed nest site. The occurrence at a second site is intriguing – this may simply have been a migrant, as the bird could not be found subsequently, but it was in a large area of suitable habitat in which it (or a pair) might have evaded detection.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: (1) Two pairs were reported at the site that was occupied in 2021, with observations between 16th May and 30th June. One pair was seen defending an area of long grass from Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos*, suggesting that they may have had a nest, but raised water levels subsequently flooded the site; (2) a single bird present in suitable breeding habitat on 7th June.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima***Very rare** | bp25y trend: **strong decrease** -55%**Red**

High

One site: one breeding pair. A pair was present at the traditional site in north Scotland. It is now eight years since breeding birds were reported from any other montane site in Scotland, or more than one pair was reported.

Scotland, N

One site: one pair with three chicks.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus***Rare** | 18 bp25y trend: **strong increase** +259%**Red**

Near-complete

47 sites: 22–121 breeding pairs/males. Numbers in 2022 dropped slightly from those in 2021, but this is still the second-highest total we have reported since 1973. We have devoted considerable text space to discussing Red-necked Phalarope trends in recent years, and so will not repeat that in this report, but the rapid increase in numbers and spread in range over the last decade remains one of the most unexpected occurrences in the UK's rare breeding bird populations.

Red-necked Phalarope			Scotland, N & W			46	22	120	Orkney	1	0	3
	S	CP	TP	Argyll	1	13	15	Outer Hebrides	3	4	9	
England, N	1	0	1	Caithness	1	0	2	Shetland	39	5	89	
Northumberland	1	0	1	Highland	1	0	2	TOTALS	47	22	121	

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus***Very rare** | 5 bp20y trend: **strong increase** +108%**Amber**

Near-complete

Six sites: 0–6 pairs. A drop from the nine pairs reported last year, but this is still the second-highest total reported for Green Sandpiper and further evidence of good fortunes for a range of northern waders in the UK at present.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Six sites: five probable breeding pairs and one singing male.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. A male was singing and displaying on 8th May at a site in **Cumbria**, where it had also held territory in 2021. Keller *et al.* (2020) showed that this species has undergone a substantial westward shift into Belarus and the Baltic States since the 1980s.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Rare 51 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +443%

Amber

High

34 sites: 5–61 pairs. The remarkable rise in Wood Sandpiper numbers – which seems to be partly the product of an increase in awareness and recording effort, alongside a genuine increase in the population – continued in 2022 with a new record total.

Wood Sandpiper				Perth & Kinross	1	0	1	Highland	19	4	39
	S	CP	TP	Scotland, N & W	31	5	58	TOTALS	34	5	61
Scotland, Mid	3	0	3	Argyll	1	0	2				
NE Scotland	2	0	2	Caithness	11	1	17				

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

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

Amber

Low

16–140 pairs. A typically low return for this wader of remote Scottish wetlands and moors.

* Hancock *et al.* (1997).

Common Greenshank				Perth & Kinross	5	Outer Hebrides	33
	TP			Scotland, N & W	133	Shetland	1
Scotland, S	2			Argyll	6	TOTAL	140
Clyde	2			Caithness	31		
Scotland, Mid	5			Highland	62		

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*

Less scarce 2,150 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +5,618%

Amber

High

46 sites: 2,561–2,610 pairs.

The UK's Mediterranean Gull population continues to grow (fig. 5), with a record total reported in 2022 (exceeding the 2,400 pairs in 2018). In addition, a substantial colony in Dorset was occupied but not counted – in previous years this has held up to 155 pairs. As usual, Hampshire held far more pairs than any other county, although these were spread between two major colonies rather than concentrated solely

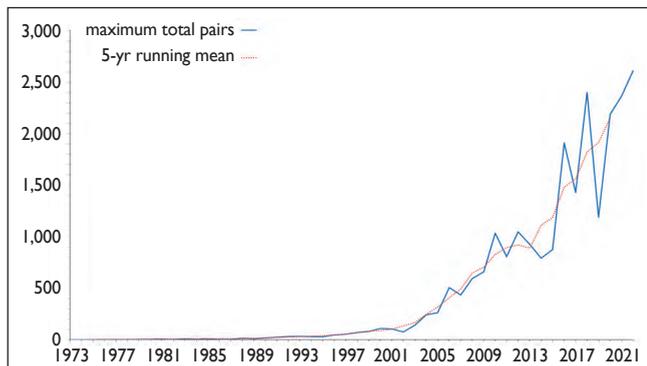


Fig. 5. Maximum numbers of Mediterranean Gulls *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus* breeding in the UK, 1973–2022. The dotted line shows the 5-year running mean.

at Langstone Harbour as has been the case previously. *Seabirds Count* (Burnell et al. 2023) provided an estimate of 2,295 pairs at 59 sites. The latter is considerably greater than we reported in any year during the census period (50 sites, in 2018), and the *Seabirds Count* figure may be the result of the collation of data across a range of years.

While we are not aware of any confirmed deaths of Mediterranean Gulls from HPAI H5N1 in 2022, there were widespread outbreaks of the disease in gull colonies in 2023, including in colonies of Black-headed *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* and Mediterranean Gulls. We will report on these, and any impacts on the population, in future years. This susceptibility, as well as the lack of robust coverage through the BTO/JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP), explains the current retention of the species on our list despite the population now exceeding 2,000 pairs.

Mediterranean Gull			England, C	1	0	1	
	S	CP	TP	West Midlands	1	0	1
England	39	2,542	2,590	England, N	13	115	125
England, SW	5	1,278	1,308	Cheshire & Wirral	1	0	6
Dorset	1	nc	nc	Cleveland	1	5	5
Hampshire	3	1,275	1,275	Greater Manchester	1	0	1
Isle of Wight	1	3	33	Lancs & N Mersey	4	104	105
England, SE	10	938	938	Northumberland	1	1	1
Berkshire	1	2	2	Yorkshire	5	5	7
Essex	3	83	83	Wales	2	4	5
Kent	3	551	551	Anglesey	1	1	2
Surrey	1	1	1	Carmarthenshire	1	3	3
Sussex	2	301	301	Northern Ireland	5	15	15
England, E	10	211	218	Co. Antrim	3	12	12
Cambridgeshire	3	0	3	Co. Down	1	2	2
Lincolnshire	3	3	7	Co. Fermanagh	1	1	1
Norfolk	2	183	183	TOTALS	46	2,561	2,610
Suffolk	2	25	25				

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 14th year in succession, being present between at least 26th May and 25th June, although there was no evidence of mixed pairing in 2022.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Less scarce 1,387 bp 20y trend: **stable** -14%

Amber

Near-complete

46 sites: 1,398 pairs. Annual monitoring of Little Terns – as reported to the RBBP through county recorders, the RSPB’s collation of monitoring in the Annual Little Tern Newsletter, and the SMP – gives a good idea of fluctuations in the population, but is incomplete. The UK’s largest colonies are protected and well monitored, but smaller colonies, particularly in northern Britain, are not necessarily reported upon annually, a situation not helped by the species’ tendency to move breeding sites between, or even within, breeding seasons. The more robust coverage, of 122 sites, achieved by the *Seabirds Count* census should therefore give a better idea of numbers. The focal year for censusing Little Terns was 2018, although 31% of sites were counted in other years within the 2015–21 *Seabirds Count* period (Burnell et al. 2023). The total estimate from *Seabirds Count* was 1,750 AON, of which 1,403 were in the UK (1,004 in England, 227 in Scotland and 172 in Wales) and 12 in the Isle of Man (with the remaining 335 in the Republic of Ireland). The



David Tipling

447. Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*, Norfolk, May 2020.

RBBP mean for the whole 2015–21 *Seabirds Count* period (excluding 2020 when monitoring was adversely impacted by Covid lockdowns) was 1,387 confirmed pairs (AON), only 28 AON lower than the *Seabirds Count* estimate, suggesting that annual reporting by the RBBP is only marginally incomplete.

The British population declined by 25% between *Seabird 2000* and *Seabirds Count*, a decline attributed largely to poor breeding success, although the influence of poor adult survival cannot be discounted (Burnell *et al.* 2023). Productivity between 1986 and 2008 averaged 0.5 chicks per nest, whereas 0.74 chicks per pair is required for population stability (Cook & Robinson 2010). Productivity has remained low, with a mean of 0.52 chicks per pair over the five years 2017–21 (RBBP data), but it is pleasing to report that the mean productivity in 2022 was 1.12 chicks per pair, the highest rate achieved since the RBBP began reporting productivity in 2007, and the total of fledged chicks reached (and far exceeded) 1,000 for the first time in that period. There were no records of HPAI in Little Terns in the UK in 2022 but two deaths from the virus were reported in 2023 (Norman *et al.* in press).

Little Tern				Northumberland	2	75	105
	S	CP	YF	Yorkshire	1	39	41
England	27	1,023	1,190	Wales	3	251	275
England, SW	6	59	66	Denbigh & Flint	2	250	275
Dorset	1	43	55	Gower	1	1	0
Hampshire	5	16	11	Scotland	15	92	96
England, SE	5	72	58	Scotland, Mid	3	12	19
Essex	2	23	19	Moray & Nairn	2	2	2
Kent	1	9	6	NE Scotland	1	10	17
Sussex	2	40	33	Scotland, N & W	12	80	77
England, E	8	670	818	Argyll	5	40	24
Lincolnshire	1	17	11	Highland	3	8	9
Norfolk	6	641	807	Orkney	1	30	44
Suffolk	1	12	0	Outer Hebrides	3	2	0
England, N	8	222	248	Isle of Man	1	32	0
Cleveland	2	49	86	TOTALS	46	1,398	1,561
Cumbria	3	59	16				

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Rare 139 bp

25y trend: **weak increase** +66%**Red**

Near-complete

Five sites: 159 pairs. In addition, there was an adult paired with a Common Tern *S. hirundo* at a site in Lothian with two chicks in the nest. As usual, nearly all the pairs reported were at the colony on Coquet Island, Northumberland, but there were confirmed (pure) breeding attempts at another four sites – five breeding sites is the most since seven sites were occupied in 2009 (Holling *et al.* 2011). Also as normal was another between-year increase in numbers (for the sixth year in succession) to the highest total reported since 1989; Burnell *et al.* (2023) described the recovery in Britain and Ireland as ‘one of the best-known conservation success stories from these islands’.

That is, unfortunately, where the good news ends, as Roseate Tern was one of the species very conspicuously impacted by HPAI H5N1 in 2022. Ninety adult birds died on Coquet Island in 2022, as well as 170 chicks (Tremlett *et al.* 2024), resulting in the lowest productivity at the colony since 2010.

Roseate Tern				England, N	1	154	74	Co. Antrim	1	1	1
	S	CP	YF	Northumberland	1	154	74	Channel Islands	1	2	1
England	2	155	74	Wales	1	1	1	Jersey	1	2	1
England, SW	1	1	0	Anglesey	1	1	1	TOTALS	5	159	77
Hampshire	1	1	0	Northern Ireland	1	1	1				

‘American Black Tern’ *Chlidonias niger surinamensis***Potential breeder**

One site: one individual. A female, first present in 2020, returned to the Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea* colony at the Long Nanny, Northumberland, between 13th May and 24th July. Owing to its displaying behaviour, it was previously believed to be a male; then, in 2024, it laid an egg in a mixed pairing with a male Arctic Tern.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Scarce 727 bp*

18y trend (census): **strong decrease** -66%**Red**

Moderate

135 AOTs. This is a lower total than in most recent years, owing to the cessation of fieldwork for the mammoth *Seabirds Count* census, which spanned 2015 to 2021. The publication of the results of that exercise (Burnell *et al.* 2023) means we have an up-to-date assessment of the status of this declining species that is far more robust than is currently achieved by reporting to the RBBP.

Arctic Skua				Caithness	5	5	0	Outer Hebrides	6	9	4
	S	AOT	YF	Fair Isle	1	22	17	Shetland	8	31	22
Scotland, N & W	33	135	59	Highland	1	27	0	TOTALS	34	135	59
Argyll	2	4	0	Orkney	11	37	16				

Unfortunately, *Seabirds Count* confirmed that the decline in numbers that was first detected between the *Seabird Colony Register* (1985–88) and *Seabird 2000* (1998–2002) censuses has continued and, indeed, the rate of loss has increased, with a decline of 66% since *Seabird 2000*. This is the greatest decline recorded in any seabird species in Britain and Ireland. The loss of abundance has been accompanied by a decline in site occupancy, from 573 sites in *Seabird 2000* to 302 sites in *Seabirds Count*; of the sites surveyed during both censuses, 324 (65%) had declined to zero by *Seabirds Count*, while only 20 newly colonised sites were found.

The table below breaks the population change down by the regions used for census reporting. The Northern Isles hold most of the UK's Arctic Skua population, so the declines there have led to the greatest net loss – 819 AOTs (more than the entire remaining population) were lost in Shetland alone since *Seabird 2000*. From the headline figures, it appears that the population in the Outer Hebrides has held up better; in Lewis the estimate actually increased, from 99 to 104 AOT. However, it appears that this may be due to a substantial increase in surveying coverage in *Seabirds Count*; the decline of 64% across the 51 sites surveyed in both censuses was very close to that recorded elsewhere.

Area	<i>Seabird 2000</i>	<i>Seabirds Count</i>	% change
Argyll & Bute	21	7	-67
Caithness	72	24	-67
Orkney	724	237	-67
Outer Hebrides	162	133	-18
Ross & Cromarty (Highland)	0	1	-
Shetland	1,114	295	-74
Sutherland (Highland)	48	30	-38
TOTALS	2,141	727	-66

This steep and widespread decline has been driven by poor productivity; data submitted to the SMP show how breeding success has been poor in most years this century, with complete colony failure being common (JNCC 2021). This failure has been driven by low availability of sandeels, the key prey item for the seabird species, such as the Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, upon which Arctic Skuas kleptoparasitise. In addition, predation from Scotland's formerly increasing population of Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua*, principally on chicks and juvenile Arctic Skuas, has been a significant top-down pressure (Perkins *et al.* 2018). Climate change is considered to be the underlying cause of changes in food availability, and climate modelling has predicted the extinction of Arctic Skua in Scotland by 2050 (Davies *et al.* 2021).

One slight glimmer of hope is that to date there have been no recorded cases of HPAI in Arctic Skuas in the UK (although there has been one in the Faroe Islands). A resurvey in 2023 of sites that held a combined 48% of the population in *Seabirds Count* found that numbers were 28% lower than pre-HPAI baseline counts, which might suggest there had been an impact (Tremlett *et al.* 2024). However, at least some of this decline might simply be attributed to a continuation of the between-census decline of 5.8% per annum, particularly as some of the baseline counts may have been as long as nine years previously. The Great Skua population has been impacted very heavily by HPAI, with large numbers of birds reported dead at some colonies in 2022 (e.g. 1,400 corpses were counted on Foula, Shetland in 2022; Camphuysen *et al.* 2022). A total of 356 SMP sites, which collectively held 81% of the 10,937 AOTs of Great Skua reported by *Seabirds Count*, were resurveyed in 2023 to assess the impact of HPAI. The total of AOTs had fallen by 76%, from a pre-HPAI total of 9,088 to 2,160. While of great concern for our internationally significant (and previously flourishing) population of Great Skuas, this may result in a period of respite from predation for the UK's beleaguered Arctic Skuas.

* Burnell *et al.* (2023).

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* Occasional breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. The individual that held territory in **Shetland** in 2020 and 2021 returned to the same area on 9th May. It displayed until 23rd May, when it died of HPAI – a rather high-profile victim amongst the heavy seabird losses in 2022.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata***Green****Less scarce** 1,255 bp* 12y trend (survey): **weak increase** +38%

Low

144–204 pairs. As usual, our reporting only covers a small proportion of the population, which was last surveyed in 2006.

* Dillon *et al.* (2009).

Red-throated Diver			Moray & Nairn	0	1	Orkney	44	57
	CP	TP	Scotland, N & W	142	200	Outer Hebrides	20	27
Scotland, S	2	3	Argyll	4	6	Shetland	60	71
Clyde Islands	2	3	Caithness	0	4	TOTALS	144	204
Scotland, Mid	0	1	Highland	14	35			

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica***Amber****Rare** 217 bp* 12y trend (survey): **stable** +16%

Low

21–56 pairs. As normal, the records we received for 2022 reflect only a small proportion of the breeding population, and we suspect that considerably more pairs are observed but not reported. We can only repeat our annual encouragement to any observers finding Black-throated Divers on freshwater lochs in the breeding season to submit details to the relevant county bird recorder.

* Eaton *et al.* (2007).

Black-throated Diver			Scotland, Mid	3	5	Caithness	2	2
	CP	TP	Moray & Nairn	1	1	Highland	6	24
Scotland, S	0	3	Perth & Kinross	2	4	Outer Hebrides	5	17
Ayrshire	0	1	Scotland, N & W	18	48	TOTALS	21	56
Clyde	0	2	Argyll	5	5			

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer***Occasional breeder**

One site: one mixed pair. As in 2021, an adult Great Northern Diver was paired with a Black-throated Diver on a loch in **Highland**, also visiting another loch nearby, although there was no further indication that a breeding attempt was made (MacMillan 2024). We have reported breeding behaviour by Great Northern Divers in 13 years since 1973, although only in two instances was this by pure pairs – single birds paired with Black-throated Divers is a more frequent occurrence, and confirmed breeding by a pure pair has yet to be recorded. Two recent papers have revealed that there has been considerably more activity than the RBBP has reported, all involving mixed pairings between Great Northern and Black-throated Divers. Broad (2024) documented a male Great Northern Diver that has summered at a site in Highland (different from that above) since 2000, being reported in 20 of the 22 years in which the loch was visited. The loch is a regular breeding site for Black-throated Divers (albeit with poor success), and many interactions between the two species were observed. In 2014 a single hybrid chick was reared with a Black-throated Diver – although the Great Northern has continued to associate with Black-throated Divers in subsequent years, there has been no sign of another breeding attempt. It was not recorded in 2022. McMillan (2024) reviewed the records of mixed pairs of the two species in Highland since 1970, which also included occurrences that were not known to the RBBP at the time but which have now been added to our archive.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris***Potential breeder**

One site: one individual. This bird was present in the colony of Northern Gannets at Bempton Cliffs, **Yorkshire**, between 30th March and 3rd August. It was also present at the same site between 28th June and 24th September 2021 (Holt *et al.* 2022), as well as making brief visits in 2017 and 2020 (Holt *et al.* 2018, 2021). This is the most widespread and abundant albatross species, with a population estimated at 1.4 million individuals; regardless, the UK is a long way from its natural breeding range, with the nearest colonies being over 12,000 km away in the South Atlantic. Once lost, however, individuals tend to return to seabird colonies, perhaps the most famous example being the individual that summered in the colony of Northern Gannets at Hermaness, Shetland, nearly every year between 1972 and 1995, and may have been the same bird that was at Bass Rock, Lothian between 1967 and 1969. In recent years there have been at least two individuals wandering European seas; it seems the Bempton individual was the one that has been visiting various European locations since 2014, most frequently consorting not with Gannets but with Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* on the German island of Sylt.



Kit Day

448. Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*, Bempton Cliffs, Yorkshire, April 2022.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia***Reintroduced breeder**

Two sites: 12–15 pairs. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was another increase in the introduced population in Sussex in their third year of nesting. Breeding occurred at the second release site in Sussex for the first time. In addition to the 20 birds fledging from nests, a further 37 birds were released in 2022.

England, SE

Sussex Two sites: (1) ten pairs of reintroduced birds bred, all laying eggs of which 38 hatched, and ultimately eight nests fledged a total of 19 young. Three additional pairs occupied nests or nest-built without laying; (2) two pairs of reintroduced birds bred, both laying eggs. One pair abandoned the nest, the other fledged one young.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus***Colonising breeder**

Three sites: 1–3 pairs. A new breeding species for the UK, albeit one that has been anticipated for a number of years (e.g. Ausden *et al.* 2019, who also suggested that the UK has few wetlands large enough to host sizeable Glossy Ibis colonies). The Scarce Migrants Report (e.g. White & Kehoe

2024a) has documented the increase in numbers of this southern species occurring in the UK, rising from a mean of two individuals per year in the 1990s to 76 in the 2010s and 188 per year between 2020 and 2022 – the 226 recorded in 2022 was the highest total yet. The spread of records is broad – Glossy Ibises were reported from 50 counties in 2022 – and breeding behaviour has been reported previously from Lincolnshire (2014), Somerset (2016) and Cambridgeshire (2021). The last record, of a pair prospecting in an egret colony, was a precursor of events to follow, as birds returned to breed at the site in 2022. As with other tree-nesting colonial herons and allies, monitoring breeding attempts hidden in dense vegetation can be very challenging, but diligent fieldwork managed to document the fledging of one bird.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: a pair was present from 12th March to 10th September, and was seen displaying, mating and nest-building.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair bred, fledging one young.

England, N

Cleveland One site: three birds were present between May and August, with a pair seen displaying, mating and nest-building.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Rare 51 bp

10y trend: **strong increase** +852%

Amber

Near-complete

Nine sites: 69–73 pairs. There were the same number of pairs in 2022 as in the previous year, but productivity increased to a new maximum. Data from near-European countries suggest that productivity averages around two young per pair and is higher in smaller colonies than large ones (Triplet *et al.* 2008). Since the establishment of regular breeding in the UK, in 2010, the mean annual productivity has been 1.75 young per pair so 2022, at 1.77 young per pair, falls close to the average. While the headline figure might suggest stasis between 2021 and 2022, breeding was confirmed at two new sites in Norfolk, although research shared by the UK Spoonbill Working Group reveals that one of these sites was not actually ‘new’, as it was occupied in the sixteenth century. Tudor household accounts detail the collection of young Spoonbills for the table; when Cardinal Wolsey visited, he was provisioned with ‘three shovelardes [Spoonbills], three Bitterns, ten cygnets, twelve capons, thirteen plovers, eight pike and three tench.’

Eurasian Spoonbill					Suffolk	1	10	10	16
	S	CP	TP	YF	England, N	2	9	9	15
England	8	69	72	122	Cumbria	1	1	1	2
England, SE	1	1	4	2	Yorkshire	1	8	8	13
Essex	1	1	4	2	Scotland, Mid	1	0	1	0
England, E	5	59	59	105	NE Scotland	1	0	1	0
Norfolk	4	49	49	89	TOTALS	9	69	73	122

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Rare 248 booming males 25y trend: **strong increase** +1,412%

Amber

Near-complete

133 sites: 71–263 pairs. After having increased year-on-year since 2005, Bittern numbers dipped slightly from 2021. White *et al.* (2024) reviewed the current status of the Bittern in the UK and identified the conservation action required to continue and sustain the recovery. The historical range of the species stretched to Scotland and Northern Ireland, so there is still work to do if it is to recover throughout this range. Equally, there is a risk of the recovery stalling, or even reversing, if the condition of currently occupied reedbed sites is not maintained. An audit of 29

key breeding sites for Bitterns, holding over half the population in 2023 (though note that the numbers reported by White *et al.* are lower than those reported by the RBBP), found that while most had good reedbed management, there were widespread concerns over resources for implementing future management plans, or indeed delivering current plans.

Eurasian Bittern				Suffolk	12	17	36
	S	CP	TP	England, C	9	3	11
England	130	71	255	Derbyshire	2	1	2
England, SW	17	11	55	Leics & Rutland	1	0	1
Dorset	1	0	1	Nottinghamshire	2	2	3
Gloucestershire	3	0	3	Staffordshire	1	0	1
Isle of Wight	1	1	2	Warwickshire	3	0	4
Somerset	8	9	44	England, N	22	18	36
Wiltshire	4	1	5	Cheshire & Wirral	2	0	2
England, SE	15	5	24	Cleveland	1	1	1
Bedfordshire	2	1	3	Cumbria	1	0	1
Berkshire	1	0	1	Greater Manchester	1	0	1
Kent	9	2	15	Lancs & N Mersey	2	6	7
Oxfordshire	2	2	4	Yorkshire	15	11	24
Sussex	1	0	1	Wales	3	0	8
England, E	67	34	129	Anglesey	2	0	7
Cambridgeshire	16	1	32	Gwent	1	0	1
Lincolnshire	7	7	14	TOTALS	133	71	263
Norfolk	32	9	47				

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*
Occasional breeder

Amber
Near-complete

Two sites: two males. The last confirmed breeding in the UK was in 2017, and in recent years reports of potential breeding activity from the regular area on the Avalon Marshes in Somerset have tended to be rather brief.

England, SW

Somerset One site: one male singing from 28th May to 6th June.

England, C

Warwickshire One site: one male singing from 19th to 20th June. Although only a brief stay, it is notable as the bird returned in 2023.



Little Bittern
Ixobrychus minutus

Dave Nurney

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Rare 41 bp

(no trend available but increasing)

High

15 sites: 62–68 pairs. Recording productivity of Cattle Egret nests, often hidden in dense vegetation, is difficult and therefore very incomplete. Thus, we have discontinued tabulating numbers of young fledged, although a minimum of 36 fledged in 2022. In last year's report we commented on the rapid increase in Cattle Egrets since 2017, and demonstrated how closely this matched the growth of the Little Egret population in the early years of its colonisation of the UK.

Western Cattle Egret				Berkshire	1	0	1	Lincolnshire	1	1	1
	S	CP	TP	Essex	1	9	9	Norfolk	1	4	6
England, SW	5	25	25	Kent	2	2	3	England, N	1	0	1
Dorset	1	1	1	Oxfordshire	1	2	3	Cheshire & Wirral	1	0	1
Hampshire	1	7	7	Sussex	1	14	14	TOTALS	15	62	68
Somerset	3	17	17	England, E	3	10	12				
England, SE	6	27	30	Cambridgeshire	1	5	5				

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Occasional breeder

One site: one possible pair. A single bird was present at a site in **Kent**, the same location as in 2021, between 18th April and 7th May. Twelve years have elapsed since the one and only confirmed breeding of Purple Herons in the UK, in 2010, when a pair fledged two young at Dungeness, Kent (Holling *et al.* 2012).

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

Rare 39 bp

(no trend available but increasing)

Near-complete

13 sites: 62–68 pairs. It is getting increasingly tricky to distinguish potential breeding birds from the individual birds wandering during spring and summer; the RBBP notes records of possible breeding where two or more birds are present at a potential breeding site through the breeding season. This was a new highest total, for the seventh successive year, although the number of sites occupied fell by one. The Avalon Marshes in Somerset remains by far the most important location in the UK for this species (as documented by Morgan *et al.* 2022). The population increase is not without its struggles: Bloomfield (2023) documented the repeated interactions in 2022 between Great White Egrets and Marsh Harriers breeding in close proximity at Holkham, Norfolk, with the egrets defending nests with eggs and subsequently chicks from harrier attacks. Most of the egret nesting attempts failed, though whether this was caused by the harriers, or perhaps predation by Otters *Lutra lutra*, is not known.

Great White Egret					Suffolk	1	0	1	0
	S	CP	TP	YF	England, N	2	1	2	2
England	10	62	65	84	Cheshire & Wirral	2	1	2	2
England, SW	4	48	48	72	Wales	2	0	2	0
Somerset	3	43	43	67	Anglesey	1	0	1	0
Wiltshire	1	5	5	5	East Glamorgan	1	0	1	0
England, E	4	13	15	10	Scotland, Mid	1	0	1	0
Cambridgeshire	1	5	5	0	NE Scotland	1	0	1	0
Lincolnshire	1	0	1	0	TOTALS	13	62	68	84
Norfolk	1	8	8	10					

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Less scarce 1,496 bp 20y trend: **strong increase** +1,751%

Green

High

185 sites: 1,532–1,603 pairs.

After several mild winters, the UK population of Little Egrets has grown steadily, increasing to a new high at a rate of 4.5% per annum since the ‘Beast from the East’ winter storm in early 2018, which caused considerable direct mortality. The population continues to edge north, with the first proven breeding in the Borders, an increase at the site of the first Scottish breeding in Dumfries & Galloway and records from North-east Scotland in 2022.

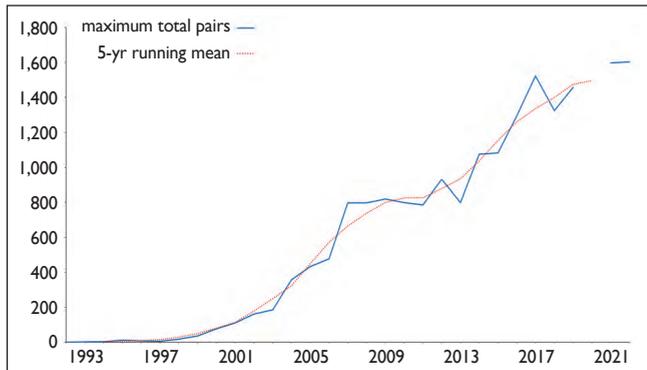


Fig. 6. Maximum numbers of Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* breeding in the UK, 1992–2022. The dotted line shows the 5-year running mean. Data for 2020 is omitted owing to the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on monitoring coverage.

Little Egret		Sussex	9	46	Anglesey	2	14	
	S	TP	England, E	40	360	Breconshire	2	2
England	157	1,391	Cambridgeshire	7	107	Caernarfonshire	2	26
England, SW	40	277	Lincolnshire	11	108	Cardiganshire	3	10
Avon	1	1	Norfolk	15	97	Denbigh & Flint	2	25
Cornwall	8	44	Northamptonshire	3	12	Gwent	1	9
Devon	5	26	Suffolk	4	36	Meirionnydd	1	5
Dorset	5	32	England, C	14	66	Montgomeryshire	1	3
Gloucestershire	5	19	Derbyshire	3	10	Radnorshire	1	3
Hampshire	8	90	Leics & Rutland	4	10	Scotland	3	4
Isle of Wight	4	9	Nottinghamshire	3	16	Scotland, S	2	3
Somerset	3	30	Warwickshire	1	24	Borders	1	1
Wiltshire	1	26	West Midlands	1	2	Dumfries & G'way	1	2
England, SE	43	397	Worcestershire	2	4	Scotland, Mid	1	1
Bedfordshire	2	10	England, N	18	292	NE Scotland	1	1
Berkshire	1	4	Cheshire & Wirral	2	126	Northern Ireland	6	72
Buckinghamshire	5	10	Cleveland	1	17	Co. Antrim	1	5
Essex	8	119	Cumbria	5	72	Co. Derry	1	2
Greater London	4	31	Greater Manchester	3	5	Co. Down	4	65
Hertfordshire	5	41	Lancs & N Mersey	2	9	Channel Islands	4	39
Kent	7	147	Northumberland	2	2	Guernsey	1	20
Oxfordshire	2	8	Yorkshire	4	61	Jersey	3	19
Surrey	2	8	Wales	15	97	TOTALS	185	1,603

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare 261 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +162%

Amber

High

263–321 pairs. The UK population of Ospreys continues to increase, with a new record total reported in 2022, although it is still likely that some pairs went unreported. The recent increase has been spread broadly across the UK – rather remarkably, all regions and countries achieved new high totals in 2022 with the exception of Mid Scotland. Range expansion included summering pairs in Norfolk, Radnorshire and Staffordshire, and successful breeding in Yorkshire and Dorset, the latter being the first breeding to arise from the Poole Harbour Osprey Translocation Project.

Osprey				Yorkshire	1	1	0	Lothian	1	2	3
	CP	TP	YF	Wales	7	14	15	Scotland, Mid	84	99	148
England	31	40	63	Breconshire	0	2	0	Angus & Dundee	5	6	5
England, SW	1	1	1	Caernarfonshire	2	2	3	Fife	2	2	2
Dorset	1	1	1	Denbigh & Flint	1	1	2	Moray & Nairn	15	16	21
England, E	3	4	5	Meirionnydd	2	5	6	NE Scotland	18	20	40
Norfolk	0	1	0	Montgomeryshire	2	2	4	Perth & Kinross	27	35	46
Northamptonshire	3	3	5	Radnorshire	0	2	0	Upper Forth	17	20	34
England, C	8	12	16	Scotland	225	266	354	Scotland, N & W	101	117	140
Leics & Rutland	8	11	16	Scotland, S	40	50	66	Argyll	24	28	25
Staffordshire	0	1	0	Ayrshire	5	6	3	Caithness	3	3	5
England, N	19	23	41	Borders	12	13	25	Highland	74	86	110
Cumbria	10	11	26	Clyde	11	15	15	Northern Ireland	0	1	0
Lancs & N Mersey	1	2	2	Clyde Islands	2	2	0	Co. Fermanagh	0	1	0
Northumberland	7	9	13	Dumfries & G'way	9	12	20	TOTALS	263	321	432

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Rare 130–150 bp*

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

Moderate

41–103 pairs. There was, as was to be expected, an increase in reporting during the national survey years of 2020 and 2021, but the numbers reported remained high in 2022. A growing interest in – and survey effort on – the species in some counties, such as Sussex, has resulted in higher numbers continuing to be reported.

* Clements *et al.* (2022).



James McCallum

European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus*, Norfolk, July 2022.

European Honey-buzzard				England, N	0	2	5	2	
	I	CP	TP	YF	Co. Durham	0	0	1	0
England	11	25	67	9	Northumberland	0	1	2	2
England, SW	0	8	17	4	Yorkshire	0	1	2	0
Cornwall	0	0	1	0	Wales	3	3	6	0
Dorset	0	1	3	2	Breconshire	0	0	1	0
Hampshire	0	5	11	0	Gower	3	3	4	0
Wiltshire	0	2	2	2	Meirionnydd	0	0	1	0
England, SE	7	13	36	3	Scotland	0	13	30	5
Berkshire	0	0	1	0	Scotland, S	0	0	2	0
Essex	0	1	1	2	Dumfries & G'way	0	0	2	0
Kent	0	1	2	1	Scotland, Mid	0	9	16	5
Surrey	1	1	3	0	Moray & Nairn	0	2	4	2
Sussex	6	10	29	0	NE Scotland	0	2	4	2
England, E	4	0	6	0	Perth & Kinross	0	4	7	0
Norfolk	4	0	5	0	Upper Forth	0	1	1	1
Suffolk	0	0	1	0	Scotland, N & W	0	4	12	0
England, C	0	2	3	0	Argyll	0	1	1	0
Derbyshire	0	0	1	0	Highland	0	3	11	0
Nottinghamshire	0	2	2	0	TOTALS	14	41	103	14

There was an error in the numbers we reported for Highland and Moray & Nairn in 2021, and thus in our regional, Scottish and UK totals. The corrected numbers for Scotland and the UK are given below.

Revised numbers of breeding European Honey-buzzards in Scotland and the UK as a whole in 2021.

European Honey-buzzard				Moray & Nairn	0	2	3	3	
	I	CP	TP	YF	NE Scotland	1	1	1	2
Scotland	2	14	41	6	Perth & Kinross	0	4	12	0
Scotland, S	1	0	2	0	Upper Forth	0	1	3	0
Dumfries & G'way	1	0	2	0	Scotland, N & W	0	6	17	1
Scotland, Mid	1	8	22	5	Highland	0	6	17	1
Angus & Dundee	0	0	3	0	UK TOTALS	7	37	93	20

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Scarce 508 bp*

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

Green

High

143–282 pairs. Data were received from 273 home ranges that were monitored by members of Scottish Raptor Study Groups and made available through the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme (Challis *et al.* 2023), in addition to records received through other routes. While numbers of pairs seemed, allowing for variation in reporting, as usual in 2022, there was evidence of an impact from HPAI H5N1; three positive tests for H5N1 in Golden Eagle corpses are recorded within the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) dataset (www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-in-wild-birds), while there were anecdotal reports of breeding failure for which H5N1 could have been the cause. Wilson *et al.* (2023) found that four of five local studies for which sufficient data were available demonstrated a significant decline in Golden Eagle productivity in 2022 – in Trossachs, Mull and Lochaber, Central Lewis and Harris, and Northwest Sutherland – and looking at the SRMS dataset as a whole, breeding success (the percentage of pairs to fledge broods) declined from 48% between 2018 and 2021 to 28% in 2022. The largest decline was in Lewis and Harris and, in general, the impacts were greater in coastal than inland areas; the likely explanation for this is the increased exposure of eagles to H5N1 through

predating and scavenging upon coastal seabird and waterbird populations. In addition to reduced breeding success, pairs that did breed successfully fledged smaller broods in 2022.

* Hayhow et al. (2017).

Golden Eagle					Argyll	2	29	51	10
	I ¹	CP	TP	YF	Caithness	0	1	1	0
Scotland	22	143	281	85	Highland	10	56	116	38
Scotland, S	0	9	13	3	Orkney	0	0	1	0
Scotland, Mid	4	30	59	23	Outer Hebrides	6	18	40	11
Angus & Dundee	1	3	6	3	Northern Ireland	1	0	1	0
Moray & Nairn	0	3	3	1	Co. Tyrone	1	0	1	0
NE Scotland	0	10	19	8	TOTALS	23	143	282	85
Perth & Kinross	2	9	21	8					
Upper Forth	1	5	10	3					
Scotland, N & W	18	104	209	59					

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

Eurasian Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Scarce 954 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +241%**

Green

Moderate

740–1,252 pairs. Fig. 7 shows how rapidly the Eurasian Goshawk population has grown in recent years, with the bulk of the increase being in England. There was an increase of 24% between 2021 and 2022 across the UK – the between-year change was 37% in England. This increase was despite the loss of a number of nest sites due to the extensive damage to forests caused by Storm Arwen in November 2021.

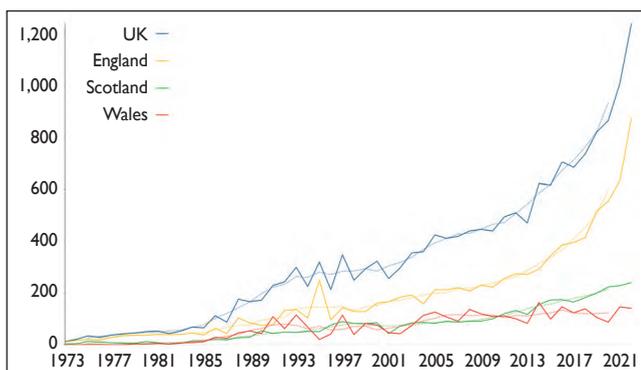


Fig. 7. Maximum numbers of Eurasian Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* breeding in the UK, England, Scotland and Wales, 1973–2022. Dotted lines show the 5-year running means.

Eurasian Goshawk			Oxfordshire (e 12)	8	12
	CP	TP	Surrey (e 10)	6	6
England (e 957+)	515	872	Sussex (e 60)	12	60
England, SW (e 464)	236	404	England, E (e 89)	53	84
Avon (e 1)	1	1	Lincolnshire (e 2)	1	2
Cornwall (e 34)	26	34	Norfolk (e 67)	38	67
Devon (e 70)	48	58	Suffolk (e 20)	14	15
Dorset (e 35)	7	13	England, C (e 176)	111	169
Gloucestershire (e 80)	56	71	Derbyshire (e 40)	36	36
Hampshire (e 150)	40	133	Herefordshire (e 52)	21	52
Somerset (e 25)	10	25	Nottinghamshire (e 12)	10	12
Wiltshire (e 69)	48	69	Shropshire (e 40)	30	40
England, SE (e 99+)	31	93	Staffordshire (e 14)	8	14
Berkshire (e 6)	1	5	Worcestershire (e 18)	6	15
Essex	1	1	England, N (e 129+)	84	122
Kent (e 10)	3	9	Cheshire & Wirral (e 3)	2	3

Eurasian Goshawk <i>continued</i>			Radnorshire	6	16
Cleveland	0	1	Scotland (e 315+)	177	240
Co. Durham (e 6)	2	5	Scotland, S (e 117+)	63	93
Cumbria (e 13)	7	13	Ayrshire	3	5
Lancs & N Mersey (e 3)	2	2	Borders (e 45)	33	45
Northumberland (e 60)	39	55	Clyde	3	9
Yorkshire (e 43)	32	43	Dumfries & G'way (e 50)	22	26
Wales (e 319+)	48	140	Lothian (e 8)	2	8
Breconshire (e 60)	8	24	Scotland, Mid (e 153+)	103	134
Caernarfonshire (e 12)	0	2	Angus & Dundee	1	5
Carmarthenshire (e 7)	1	7	Fife	0	17
Ceredigion (e 10)	4	6	Moray & Nairn (e 20)	1	1
Denbigh & Flint (e 16)	0	16	NE Scotland (e 90)	85	90
East Glamorgan (e 20)	0	19	Perth & Kinross	5	9
Gower (e 15)	7	13	Upper Forth	11	12
Gwent (e 75)	9	9	Scotland, N & W (e 45)	11	13
Meirionnydd (e 30)	4	13	Highland (e 45)	11	13
Montgomeryshire (e 50)	7	10	TOTALS (e 1,591+)	740	1,252
Pembrokeshire (e 8)	2	5			

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce 448 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +221%

Amber

High

404–488 breeding females/pairs. Some 'pairs' actually refer to two or more females paired with a single polygynous male. As discussed in last year's report (Eaton *et al.* 2023c), Marsh Harriers have shown a remarkable recovery in the UK after coming very close to extinction in the early 1970s (there was just one breeding pair in 1971). After plateauing over the last two decades, it appears that the population is growing again (fig. 8). There have been some large proportional increases on the margins of the UK range; in Somerset, for example, the number of pairs has increased from four in 2012 to 25 in 2022, and the number in Northern

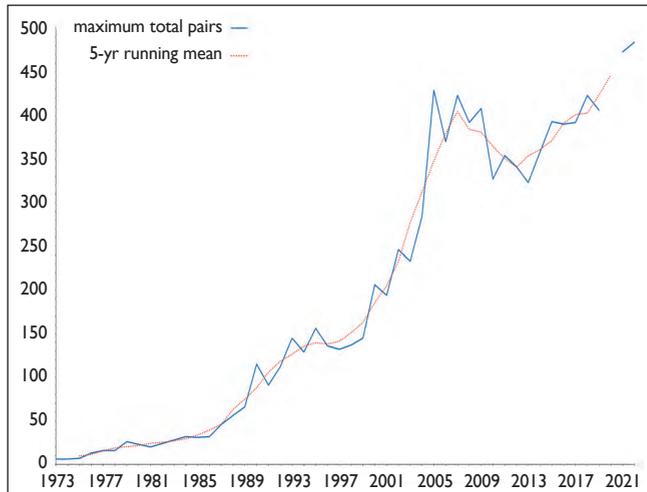


Fig. 8. Maximum numbers of Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* breeding in the UK, 1973–2022, with a 5-year running mean. Data for 2020 is omitted owing to the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on monitoring coverage.

England has risen from 26 to 47 over the same period. However, increases in the core of the UK range have also contributed to the population growth (e.g. in the East of England the number of pairs has risen from 219 to 261 over the last ten years), although variation in monitoring effort may also have an influence. While the increasing Marsh Harrier population has been identified as a potential conservation conflict with the UK's threatened lowland breeding waders, including Black-tailed Godwit, Upcott *et al.* (2024) found that temporal mismatch (most waders have finished breeding by the time Marsh Harriers are chick-rearing) meant that wader adults and chicks were only a very small proportion of the harriers' diet, and conflict was likely to be minimal in most years.

Marsh Harrier	CP	TP	YF				
				Lancs & N Mersey (e 12)	9	9	16
				Northumberland (e 6)	6	6	0
England (e 478+)	365	438	445	Yorkshire (e 47)	43	47	60
England, SW (e 47)	37	44	62	Wales (e 7)	7	7	8
Cornwall (e 3)	1	3	4	Anglesey (e 4)	4	4	7
Dorset (e 8)	7	8	20	Carmarthenshire (e 1)	1	1	1
Hampshire (e 6)	3	3	5	Gwent (e 2)	2	2	0
Isle of Wight (e 4)	4	4	4	Scotland (e 19+)	13	19	19
Somerset (e 25)	21	25	26	Scotland, S (e 1+)	0	1	0
Wiltshire (e 1)	1	1	3	Borders	0	1	0
England, SE (e 93)	41	60	35	Scotland, Mid (e 15+)	13	15	19
Essex (e 14)	6	7	5	Angus & Dundee (e 4)	4	4	9
Kent (e 70)	28	45	18	Fife	3	3	5
Oxfordshire (e 3)	3	3	5	NE Scotland (e 1)	1	1	3
Sussex (e 6)	4	5	7	Perth & Kinross	3	5	0
England, E (e 266)	222	265	255	Upper Forth	2	2	2
Cambridgeshire (e 34)	28	34	17	Scotland, N & W (e 3)	0	3	0
Lincolnshire (e 47)	31	47	62	Orkney (e 3)	0	3	0
Norfolk (e 115)	94	115	79	Northern Ireland (e 1+)	0	1	0
Suffolk (e 70)	69	69	97	Co. Armagh	0	1	0
England, C (e 1)	1	1	0	Channel Islands (e 23)	19	23	16
Leics & Rutland (e 1)	1	1	0	Guernsey (e 4)	0	4	0
England, N (e 71)	64	68	93	Jersey (e 19)	19	19	16
Cheshire & Wirral (e 5)	5	5	15	TOTALS (e 528+)	404	488	488
Cleveland (e 1)	1	1	2				

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus***Scarce** 691 bp*25y trend (survey): **stable** +21 %**Red**

High

357–502 pairs. The 2023 Hen Harrier survey (Kelly *et al.* in press) found a 20% increase in the breeding population in the UK and Isle of Man since the last survey in 2016; we will give full details in next year's report. While monitoring coverage in years between surveys is not structured to allow change to be assessed at a UK scale, it is notable that the 502 pairs reported in 2022 comprised our highest annual total outside of a survey year. In England, where few if any breeding attempts are missed, there was another increase in the population in 2022, setting new records for the number of pairs, and their total productivity, since we began reporting on the species in 1996.

* Kelly *et al.* in press.

Hen Harrier	CP	TP	YF				
				Meirionnydd	14	20	32
				Montgomeryshire	1	2	2
England	49	63	124	Radnorshire	5	11	0
England, C	1	1	2	Scotland	221	315	314
Derbyshire	1	1	2	Scotland, S	20	34	26
England, N	48	62	122	Borders	7	12	9
Co. Durham	3	6	2	Clyde	4	10	7
Cumbria	7	9	17	Clyde Islands	4	4	0
Lancs & N Mersey	16	22	50	Dumfries & G'way	5	6	10
Northumberland	9	10	27	Lothian	0	2	0
Yorkshire	13	15	26	Scotland, Mid	31	42	67
Wales	37	57	66	Fife	0	1	0
Breconshire	1	1	0	Moray & Nairn	8	8	18
Caernarfonshire	3	5	0	NE Scotland	15	17	25
Denbigh & Flint	13	18	32	Perth & Kinross	8	16	24

Hen Harrier <i>continued</i>				Northern Ireland	19	25	18
Scotland, N & W	170	239	221	Co. Antrim	5	8	5
Argyll	30	40	60	Co. Derry	2	3	5
Caithness	1	2	0	Co. Fermanagh	5	7	3
Highland	28	36	49	Co. Tyrone	7	7	5
Orkney	80	112	62	Isle of Man	31	42	0
Outer Hebrides	31	49	50	TOTALS	357	502	522

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Very rare 3 bp

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

Red

Near-complete

One site: 0–2 pairs. It was another year without a confirmed breeding pair in the UK. The same male that was present in 2021 (Eaton *et al.* 2023c) returned and did his best to attract a mate, to no avail.

England, SW

Wiltshire One site: two males. A colour-ringed 7CY male was present between May and July, displaying and nest-building. A 2CY male was present between June and August. A female was reported on one date in June.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Rare 136 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +1,140%

Amber

Near-complete

122–150 pairs. An identical total to 2021, but with lower productivity (see below). In addition to the Scottish population, eagles from the English reintroduction project have established territories; two birds from the first cohort, released in 2019, settled together in the Isle of Wight, and a pair from the 2020 releases was displaying and defending a territory in Sussex from other released individuals.

There is, however, cause for concern over the vulnerability of White-tailed Eagles to HPAI H5N1, particularly given the importance of seabirds and waterbirds in the diet of some pairs and their scavenging behaviour. The analysis of SRMS data by Wilson *et al.* (2023) found a similar decline in White-tailed Eagle productivity in 2022 as there was for Golden Eagle. The overall breeding success rate fell from 67% to 45% and was markedly worse in coastal breeding areas (both eagle species showed the greatest fall in breeding success in Lewis and Harris). Brood sizes for successful pairs were on average smaller than in 2018–21. Anecdotal observations from raptor fieldworkers included observations of dead or dying eagle chicks in the nest, as well as the loss of one or both parent birds.

White-tailed Eagle				NE Scotland	2	2	1
	CP	TP	YF	Perth & Kinross	1	1	1
England	0	2	0	Upper Forth	1	2	2
England, SW	0	1	0	Scotland, N & W	115	140	67
Isle of Wight	0	1	0	Argyll	30	34	21
England, SE	0	1	0	Caithness	2	2	0
Sussex	0	1	0	Highland	59	70	34
Scotland	122	148	74	Orkney	0	1	0
Scotland, Mid	7	8	7	Outer Hebrides	24	33	12
Angus & Dundee	3	3	3	TOTALS	122	150	74

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus***Less scarce** 1,800+ bp* (no trend available)**Green**

Low

221–307 pairs. The mean UK total for the 13 years we have reported upon this elusive species is 308 pairs, so numbers in 2022 could hardly have been more average. As the collated county estimates show, only a small proportion of the breeding population is reported.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Long-eared Owl			Gwent (e 5)	1	1
	CP	TP	Montgomeryshire (e 1)	1	1
England (e 590+)	135	173	Radnorshire	1	1
England, SW (e 33)	11	14	Scotland (e 389+)	47	84
Cornwall (e 5)	0	1	Scotland, S (e 57+)	18	34
Dorset (e 3)	1	1	Ayrshire	1	3
Hampshire (e 10)	1	1	Borders (e 10)	8	10
Isle of Wight (e 15)	9	11	Clyde	6	12
England, SE (e 146)	18	27	Clyde Islands	0	2
Buckinghamshire (e 1)	1	1	Dumfries & G'way (e 5)	0	1
Essex (e 25)	5	10	Lothian (e 25)	3	6
Kent (e 20)	5	9	Scotland, Mid (e 161+)	17	22
Sussex (e 100)	7	7	Angus & Dundee	1	1
England, E (e 36)	23	30	Fife (e 50)	6	11
Cambridgeshire (e 9)	6	9	NE Scotland (e 100)	9	9
Lincolnshire (e 7)	7	7	Upper Forth (e 10)	1	1
Suffolk (e 20)	10	14	Scotland, N & W (e 171+)	12	28
England, C (e 35)	20	21	Argyll (e 50)	2	6
Derbyshire (e 20)	6	6	Caithness	0	2
Leics & Rutland (e 1)	1	1	Highland (e 100)	8	9
Nottinghamshire (e 7)	7	7	Orkney	1	2
Shropshire (e 1)	1	1	Outer Hebrides (e 15)	1	7
Staffordshire (e 6)	5	6	Shetland (e 2)	0	2
England, N (e 259+)	63	81	Northern Ireland (e 13+)	5	13
Cleveland	1	1	Co. Antrim	0	3
Co. Durham (e 100)	3	3	Co. Armagh	3	3
Cumbria (e 1)	1	1	Co. Derry	0	1
Greater Manchester (e 37)	11	11	Co. Down	2	5
Lancs & N Mersey (e 30)	0	2	Co. Fermanagh	0	1
Northumberland (e 30)	6	14	Isle of Man (e 10)	3	3
Yorkshire (e 60)	41	49	Channel Islands (e 31)	27	28
Wales (e 13+)	4	6	Guernsey (e 5)	2	2
Breconshire (e 5)	1	2	Jersey (e 26)	25	26
Denbigh & Flint	0	1	TOTALS (e 965+)	221	307

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus***Scarce** 620+ bp* (no trend available)**Amber**

Moderate

89–216 pairs. The total of Short-eared Owls reported has ranged between 176 and 465 pairs since we began collating data in 2010. Nearly half of the pairs reported in 2022 were in Orkney, a remarkable concentration. Recent tracking work (Calladine *et al.* 2024) has revealed the remarkable nomadic behaviour of Short-eared Owls, with some individual birds moving large distances (up to 4,216 km) between successive breeding attempts and having low fidelity to both breeding and non-breeding areas. This work suggests that most, if not all, of Europe's Short-eared Owls belong to a single integrated breeding population, which has implications for attempts to conserve the species. In most (16) of the 18 breeding attempts monitored, the female

bird left before the young had fledged, leaving the male to continue provisioning the brood.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Short-eared Owl			Montgomeryshire (e 1)	1	1
	CP	TP	Pembrokeshire (e 1)	1	1
England (e 99)	30	62	Radnorshire	3	5
England, SW (e 1)	0	1	Scotland (e 239+)	54	144
Cornwall (e 1)	0	1	Scotland, S (e 7+)	4	7
England, E (e 1)	0	1	Borders (e 2)	0	2
Lincolnshire (e 1)	0	1	Clyde	0	1
England, C (e 14)	3	14	Clyde Islands	1	1
Derbyshire (e 13)	3	13	Lothian (e 3)	3	3
Staffordshire (e 1)	0	1	Scotland, Mid (e 3+)	1	3
England, N (e 83)	27	46	Angus & Dundee (e 2)	0	2
Cheshire & Wirral (e 1)	0	1	Perth & Kinross	1	1
Co. Durham (e 3)	1	1	Scotland, N & W (e 229+)	49	134
Cumbria (e 4)	2	4	Argyll (e 20)	1	3
Greater Manchester (e 2)	0	2	Caithness	0	2
Lancs & N Mersey (e 30)	2	3	Highland (e 10)	1	4
Northumberland (e 8)	5	6	Orkney	42	102
Yorkshire (e 35)	17	29	Outer Hebrides (e 90)	3	18
Wales (e 28+)	5	10	Shetland (e 5)	2	5
Denbigh & Flint	0	1	TOTALS (e 366+)	89	216
Meirionnydd (e 20)	0	2			

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus*

Former breeder

Two sites: three birds. Since breeding ceased in Shetland in 1975, there have been some lengthy periods without any records of Snowy Owls, interspersed by years with birds lingering in areas where breeding might conceivably occur if the birds of the opposite sex were to meet up. In 2022 a male and female did meet up, on the rocky, tundra-like habitat of Ronas Hill on Mainland Shetland, but nothing happened. Maybe a breeding attempt would have been to come, had the young female survived to the 2023 breeding season.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides One site: a 6CY female was present on St Kilda from 14th to 30th April, then on 22nd–23rd May. It also visited sites in North Uist and South Uist. The same bird was on St Kilda in 2021. **Shetland** One site: a 5CY+ male, present since 2020, was reported from 7th May to the year's end. A 3CY female, which had been present at other sites in the archipelago in 2021, was present from 10th February to 19th August when it was found dead. Although notionally a pair, no breeding behaviour was reported.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Occasional breeder

Three sites: three singing males. This is the highest number reported since 1979, when there were four singing birds (Sharrock *et al.* 1981).

England, SW

Cornwall Two sites: (1) a singing male between 19th April and 2nd May; (2) a singing male between 21st and 26th April. **Hampshire** One site: a singing male between 15th April and 17th July, roaming around an extensive area, as occupied in 2020 and 2021.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster***Colonising breeder****One site: two breeding pairs.**

This was certainly the most popular and high-profile rare breeding bird record in 2022. A flock arrived at a quarry at Trimmingham, **Norfolk**, on 5th June, and when it became obvious that two pairs were intent on breeding, plans, led by the RSPB, were made to protect the site and to make suitable viewing facilities available with the cooperation of the landowner. The presence of breeding Bee-eaters was announced on national television (BBC *Springwatch*) on 16th June, and it is estimated that 20,000 people visited over

the course of the summer. The first chick fledged on 15th August, and all birds had departed by 27th August. The ten confirmed breeding attempts between 1920 and 2023, and the efforts made to protect these attempts, are reviewed by Holling & Thomas (2024).



Mike Edgecombe

449. European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster*, Trimmingham, Norfolk, June 2022.

England, E

Norfolk One site: two pairs fledged two young each; three unpaired adults were also present at the site.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla***Former breeder**

One site: 0–1 pairs. A very typical year – seven of the 13 records in the last ten years have been in Highland, and all except one (a rather unexpected pair in Ceredigion in 2020) have been of single singing males.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one singing male on 15th May.

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

Moderate

27–523 territories. This is the highest total reported by the RBBP since 2012 and the third highest since the species was added to the RBBP species list in 2010. However, this peak can be attributed solely to the survey conducted in Hampshire; had Hampshire reporting been at the same level as in 2021 (66 pairs), the UK total for 2022 would have been 275 pairs and thus the joint-lowest with 2019.

The survey in Hampshire (K. Smith *et al.* 2023) is an excellent example of how county-based surveys can add to our knowledge of important populations of rare breeding birds. A sample of 197 1-km squares was surveyed across the county, with 136 of these within the New Forest.

Volunteer surveyors were asked to make three early morning visits to each survey square between 1st March and 30th April, reflecting this elusive species' early season peak in territorial activity (and hence detectability). Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were found in 123 squares, all but five of which were within the New Forest. From these records a county-wide total of 314 territories (95% confidence intervals 284–347) was derived, with the great majority (296, 95% CI 276–315) in the New Forest. The survey provides more evidence that the New Forest is the most important area for Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers in the UK, and the authors suggest that the species is holding its own there, but there appears to be ongoing decline in the rest of Hampshire. * Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker		Hertfordshire (e 6)	5	Staffordshire (e 4)	4
	TP	Kent (e 200)	43	Warwickshire (e 9)	9
England (e 763+)	513	Oxfordshire (e 1)	1	Worcestershire (e 28)	13
England, SW (e 368)	344	Surrey (e 20)	5	England, N (e 11)	9
Cornwall (e 4)	1	Sussex (e 40)	26	Cheshire & Wirral (e 6)	6
Devon (e 13)	5	England, E (e 11)	11	Greater Manchester (e 3)	1
Dorset (e 12)	3	Cambridgeshire (e 1)	1	Yorkshire (e 2)	2
Gloucestershire (e 5)	5	Lincolnshire (e 1)	1	Wales (e 25+)	10
Hampshire (e 315)	314	Norfolk (e 4)	4	Breconshire (e 4)	1
Somerset (e 12)	9	Northamptonshire (e 3)	3	Caernarfonshire (e 5)	1
Wiltshire (e 7)	7	Suffolk (e 2)	2	Cardiganshire (e 1)	1
England, SE (e 293)	104	England, C (e 80+)	45	Denbigh & Flint	2
Berkshire (e 3)	1	Derbyshire (e 5)	4	Gwent (e 3)	1
Buckinghamshire (e 2)	2	Herefordshire	5	Meirionnydd (e 7)	1
Essex (e 17)	17	Nottinghamshire (e 4)	2	Radnorshire	3
Greater London (e 4)	4	Shropshire (e 25)	8	TOTALS (e 788+)	523

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Red

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

Moderate

248–358 pairs. This is a similar total to 2021 (351 pairs); indeed, RBBP has reported on 300-and-something pairs annually for the last 14 years. Annual monitoring by raptor study groups covers only a minority of the population, however, and (as we point out every year) a new national survey is well overdue.

* Ewing *et al.* (2011).

Merlin			Breconshire	3	5	Angus & Dundee	2	8
	CP	TP	Caernarfonshire	0	1	Moray & Nairn	9	9
England	124	136	Cardiganshire	0	2	NE Scotland	25	27
England, C	7	8	Ceredigion	1	1	Perth & Kinross	4	11
Derbyshire	6	7	Denbigh & Flint	0	4	Scotland, N & W	62	101
Staffordshire	1	1	East Glamorgan	0	1	Argyll	1	2
England, N	117	128	Meirionnydd	2	3	Caithness	1	2
Cheshire & Wirral	1	1	Montgomeryshire	1	1	Highland	11	30
Cleveland	1	1	Radnorshire	4	7	Orkney	9	14
Co. Durham	35	39	Scotland	113	193	Outer Hebrides	10	18
Cumbria	9	12	Scotland, S	11	37	Shetland	30	35
Greater Manchester	0	1	Borders	8	28	Northern Ireland	0	4
Lancashire & N Mersey	4	5	Clyde	0	1	Co. Antrim	0	4
Northumberland	19	20	Dumfries & Galloway	2	5	TOTALS	248	358
Yorkshire	48	49	Lothian	1	3			
Wales	11	25	Scotland, Mid	40	55			

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo***Less scarce** 2,050 bp* 25y trend: **weak increase** +41%**Green**

Moderate

281–753 pairs. We know that reporting of Eurasian Hobby by the RBBP is very incomplete; the total of county estimates is 1,313 pairs, while Clements *et al.* (2016) suggested the population may exceed 3,000 pairs. Our reporting does, however, appear to be relatively consistent between years and indicates that while the population has increased in the long-term, it has declined from a peak around 2008–13, when totals exceeding 1,000 pairs were reported in four of six years.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Eurasian Hobby			Herefordshire	3	17
	CP	TP	Leics & Rutland (e 15)	2	4
England (e 1,216+)	256	693	Nottinghamshire (e 10)	2	3
England, SW (e 307)	60	161	Shropshire (e 20)	6	10
Avon (e 2)	2	2	Warwickshire (e 10)	2	10
Cornwall (e 8)	4	6	Worcestershire (e 7)	5	7
Devon (e 36)	4	36	England, N (e 89)	47	66
Dorset (e 35)	11	17	Cheshire & Wirral (e 16)	8	16
Gloucestershire (e 20)	18	20	Co. Durham (e 3)	1	1
Hampshire (e 150)	11	41	Greater Manchester (e 2)	0	2
Isle of Wight (e 3)	0	3	Lancs & N Mersey (e 15)	1	2
Somerset (e 20)	2	3	Northumberland (e 1)	0	1
Wiltshire (e 33)	8	33	Yorkshire (e 50)	37	44
England, SE (e 423)	45	147	Wales (e 89+)	23	52
Berkshire (e 9)	3	7	Breconshire (e 18)	7	11
Buckinghamshire (e 9)	1	1	Caernarfonshire (e 1)	0	1
Essex (e 14)	8	14	Cardiganshire (e 12)	2	12
Greater London (e 9)	5	9	Ceredigion (e 1)	0	1
Hertfordshire (e 42)	4	11	Denbigh & Flint (e 13)	0	6
Kent (e 200)	9	61	Gwent (e 25)	4	5
Oxfordshire (e 15)	2	2	Meirionnydd (e 4)	0	1
Surrey (e 25)	8	12	Montgomeryshire (e 4)	3	4
Sussex (e 100)	5	30	Radnorshire	7	11
England, E (e 283)	53	237	Scotland (e 8+)	2	8
Cambridgeshire (e 24)	4	24	Scotland, Mid (e 7+)	2	7
Lincolnshire (e 74)	3	74	Angus & Dundee	2	4
Norfolk (e 35)	16	26	Moray & Nairn (e 2)	0	2
Northamptonshire (e 90)	16	84	NE Scotland (e 1)	0	1
Suffolk (e 60)	14	29	Scotland, N & W (e 1)	0	1
England, C (e 114+)	51	82	Highland (e 1)	0	1
Derbyshire (e 35)	31	31	TOTALS (e 1,313+)	281	753

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus***Less scarce** 1,701 bp* 22y trend (survey): **stable** +5%**Green**

High

857–1,222 pairs. This is the highest total we have reported outwith a national survey year. Given that Peregrines feed almost exclusively on birds, and in coastal areas seabirds often provide a large proportion of their diet, the potential for them having high exposure to HPAI H5N1 is obvious. Data from APHA shows that three corpses tested positive for HPAI in the UK in 2021, and nine in 2022 (APHA 2023).

The analyses of Wilson *et al.* (2023) found that the breeding success of Peregrines was lower in 2022 than in 2018–21 in three SRMS regions (Central, Lothian & Borders and Tayside) out of a total of ten regions for which sample sizes were sufficient, and lower over Scotland as a whole. The impact on the size of successfully fledged broods was less apparent, with only one region

(Lothian & Borders) having a significantly lower brood size in 2022, and no impact across Scotland as a whole. It seems likely that, as with the two eagle species, HPAI had an impact on the percentage of broods fledging successfully, although it is not clear what the main mechanism was (e.g. the chicks dying from HPAI, or one or both of the adults). Wilson *et al.* (2023) commented ‘the size range of prey and coastal distribution of Peregrine is likely to put them at greater risk than the other avian predators [other than the two eagle species]’.

* Wilson *et al.* (2018).

Peregrine Falcon			Anglesey (e 9)	2	4
	CP	TP	Breconshire (e 16)	11	14
England (e 798+)	473	632	Caernarfonsire (e 12)	6	6
England, SW (e 239)	151	190	Carmarthenshire (e 6)	1	6
Avon (e 10)	10	10	Ceredigion (e 10)	2	2
Cornwall (e 60)	20	31	Denbigh & Flint (e 9)	2	9
Devon (e 64)	50	64	East Glamorgan (e 30)	21	26
Dorset (e 25)	9	12	Gower (e 35)	1	2
Gloucestershire (e 18)	16	18	Gwent (e 30)	11	11
Hampshire (e 25)	24	24	Meirionnydd (e 15)	2	5
Isle of Wight (e 8)	4	8	Montgomeryshire (e 15)	8	8
Isles of Scilly (e 2)	1	2	Pembrokeshire (e 33)	25	33
Somerset (e 20)	10	14	Radnorshire (e 15)	10	15
Wiltshire (e 7)	7	7	Scotland (e 487+)	202	362
England, SE (e 148)	86	129	Scotland, S (e 191+)	101	168
Bedfordshire (e 2)	2	2	Ayrshire	19	29
Berkshire (e 4)	4	4	Borders (e 58)	24	44
Buckinghamshire (e 5)	3	5	Clyde	9	17
Essex (e 15)	9	13	Clyde Islands	5	6
Greater London (e 23)	23	23	Dumfries & G'way (e 64)	35	55
Hertfordshire (e 5)	5	5	Lothian (e 17)	9	17
Kent (e 40)	12	23	Scotland, Mid (e 103+)	60	103
Surrey (e 14)	14	14	Angus & Dundee	8	16
Sussex (e 40)	14	40	Fife	9	16
England, E (e 49)	39	49	Isle of May (e 1)	1	1
Cambridgeshire (e 5)	2	5	Moray & Nairn (e 6)	5	6
Lincolnshire (e 18)	18	18	NE Scotland (e 36)	19	36
Norfolk (e 8)	5	8	Perth & Kinross	9	16
Northamptonshire (e 6)	6	6	Upper Forth	9	12
Suffolk (e 12)	8	12	Scotland, N & W (e 193+)	41	91
England, C (e 130)	100	128	Argyll (e 70)	8	16
Derbyshire (e 39)	39	39	Caithness	0	2
Herefordshire (e 9)	5	7	Fair Isle (e 1)	1	1
Leics & Rutland (e 14)	9	14	Highland (e 90)	21	52
Nottinghamshire (e 4)	3	4	Orkney (e 14)	8	14
Shropshire (e 23)	19	23	Outer Hebrides (e 15)	2	5
Staffordshire (e 9)	7	9	Shetland	1	1
Warwickshire (e 6)	4	6	Northern Ireland (e 73+)	68	73
West Midlands (e 10)	2	10	Co. Antrim	25	25
Worcestershire (e 16)	12	16	Co. Armagh	9	9
England, N (e 232)	97	136	Co. Derry	6	8
Cheshire & Wirral (e 12)	8	12	Co. Down	5	5
Cleveland (e 2)	3	3	Co. Fermanagh	10	13
Co. Durham (e 6)	4	6	Co. Tyrone	13	13
Cumbria (e 80)	8	15	Isle of Man (e 10)	4	4
Greater Manchester (e 18)	11	18	Channel Islands (e 11)	8	10
Lancs & N Mersey (e 35)	13	13	Guernsey (e 5)	2	4
Northumberland (e 25)	12	15	Jersey (e 6)	6	6
Yorkshire (e 54)	38	54	TOTALS (e 1,614+)	857	1,222
Wales (e 235)	102	141			

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio***Very rare** 4 bp25y trend: **stable** -17%**Red**

High

One site: 0–1 pairs. The second consecutive year with just a single male reported.

England, E

Suffolk One site: a male was present between 5th July and 13th September.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus***Former breeder**

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. There were relatively high numbers of migrant Golden Orioles reported in 2022: White & Kehoe (2024b) collated 132 records, all except three in the spring. This is the eighth-highest total during the 55 years for which data is available. Despite this, there were only two records of potential breeding.

England, SE

Kent One site: singing male(s) between 12th and 31st May; possibly more than one bird present.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: one singing male from 20th to 25th May.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax***Scarce** 381 bp*32y trend (survey): **stable** -1%**Green**

Near-complete

373–406 pairs. Red-billed Chough was added to the RBBP's species list in 1996, and good monitoring coverage has been achieved over the last 20 years through dedicated efforts such as the Cross and Stratford Welsh Chough Project (along with national surveys, the most recent of which was in 2014; Hayhow *et al.* 2018b). An analysis of 25 years of data from the Cross and Stratford project has revealed a decline in both territory occupancy and productivity in north and mid Wales (Cross *et al.* 2023). Occupancy fell by 25% overall, but far more so in inland territories (72%) than coastal ones (12%). Productivity also declined over the study period, by 25%, mainly owing to a reduction in the nest success rate; again, it was inland territories that saw the greatest fall (33%, compared to 17% in coastal territories). These findings give cause for concern for the future of the most important population of Choughs in the UK; however, the number of pairs reported in north and mid Wales in 2022 was the highest since 2011.

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

Red-billed Chough		East Glamorgan		2	2
	T	TP	Gower	5	7
England, SW	49	55	Meirionnydd	9	9
Cornwall	49	55	Pembrokeshire	85	85
Wales	262	289	Scotland, N & W	46	46
Anglesey	36	39	Argyll: Colonsay & Oronsay	8	8
Caernarfonshire	103	111	Argyll: Islay	38	38
Carmarthenshire	1	2	Isle of Man	16	16
Ceredigion	20	32	TOTALS	373	406
Denbigh & Flint	1	2			

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*

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

Green

Low

4–38 pairs. This is the same total reported as for 2021 (Eaton *et al.* 2023c), indicating that we have a long way to go to achieve any meaningful monitoring of Crested Tits. There are large areas of the species' Scottish range from which no records were received (e.g. from the west of Loch Ness) and we can only repeat our encouragement that all records of Crested Tit in the breeding season should be submitted to the relevant county bird recorder.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Crested Tit			Scotland, N & W	4	24
	CP	TP	Highland	4	24
Scotland, Mid	0	14	TOTALS	4	38
Moray & Nairn	0	14			

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Scarce 687 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +121%

Green

High

92 sites: 847 pairs. This is the highest total for pairs of Bearded Tits in our 49 years of reporting. This is in part due to the inclusion of a total for the Tay reedbeds in Perth & Kinross – the difficulties of estimating the size of the population there means that it is frequently absent from our calculations, but there was sufficient activity by Tay Ringing Group in 2022 (with over 1,000 Bearded Tits ringed) to enable a site estimate to be produced. At the UK scale, even this year's notable total will be substantially below the true population size, as other large reedbed sites were either unsurveyed or only partially surveyed. We know, for example, that the numbers submitted for Leighton Moss (Lancashire & North Merseyside), Lakenheath and Minsmere (Suffolk) and Avalon Marshes (Somerset) are all below the true populations for those important sites. We hope that an ongoing programme of improvements to the RBBP database will enable a modelling approach to be applied to datasets such as that for Bearded Tit in the future, which will allow such variation in monitoring coverage to be controlled for in the production of population trends.



David Tripling

450. Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, Norfolk, April 2006.

That said, the negative relationship between Bearded Tit populations and hard winters has been well documented, and since there have been no notably severe winter snaps since the 2017/18 winter it is likely that the species is currently flourishing in the UK, in a similar fashion to Dartford Warbler.

Bearded Tit			Sussex	3	3	Northumberland	1	1
	S	TP	England, E	41	304	Yorkshire	8	129
England	88	640	Cambridgeshire	3	5	Wales	1	2
England, SW	7	63	Lincolnshire	7	67	Gwent	1	2
Dorset	4	22	Norfolk	16	109	Scotland	3	205
Hampshire	2	11	Suffolk	15	123	Scotland, Mid	3	205
Somerset	1	30	England, C	1	1	NE Scotland	1	1
England, SE	27	128	Nottinghamshire	1	1	Perth & Kinross	1	200
Bedfordshire	1	3	England, N	12	144	Upper Forth	1	4
Essex	7	33	Cleveland	1	3	TOTALS	92	847
Kent	16	89	Lancs & N Mersey	2	11			

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

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

Green

Moderate

1,259 singing males. This is the highest total reported by the RBBP (noting that the species was dropped from reports between 2013 and 2015) since the last national survey in 2006 (Conway *et al.* 2009), which produced an estimate of 3,064 territories. That much larger total was the result of

a huge survey effort covering 3,619 1-km squares, so is not comparable with our current collation of records. A national survey is planned for 2025, so will give us a much clearer picture of the status of this species.

* Conway *et al.* (2009).



Dave Nurney

Woodlark
Lullula arborea

Woodlark		Berkshire (e 53)	53	Suffolk (e 290)	281
	SM/T	Buckinghamshire (e 1)	1	England, C (e 60)	34
England, SW (e 501)	372	Kent (e 5)	5	Nottinghamshire (e 32)	32
Devon (e 7)	7	Oxfordshire (e 2)	2	Staffordshire (e 27)	1
Dorset (e 126)	70	Surrey (e 170)	168	Worcestershire (e 1)	1
Gloucestershire (e 5)	5	Sussex (e 100)	82	England, N (e 10)	10
Hampshire (e 350)	277	England, E (e 541)	532	Yorkshire (e 10)	10
Wiltshire (e 13)	13	Lincolnshire (e 18)	18	TOTAL (e 1,443)	1,259
England, SE (e 331)	311	Norfolk (e 233)	233		

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus***Potential breeder**

One site: one singing male. A singing male was present at a site in **Norfolk** between 27th March and 15th May. This record arrives hot on the heels of the species' first inclusion in a RBBP report, last year. White & Kehoe (2024b) report that there have been 46 records of wintering Dusky Warblers in the UK since 2012, of which 28 were in the three years 2020–22. If the increased frequency of this behaviour is maintained, we might expect more records of Dusky Warblers holding territory, either on the sites they have wintered at (as in Lancashire & North Merseyside in 2021; Eaton *et al.* 2023c) or once they have started to migrate north, as appears to have been the case in 2022.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus***Occasional breeder**

One site: one mixed pair. Individuals are reported upon by the RBBP only if they maintain territories for at least five days. Territorial male Iberian Chiffchaffs are now an annual occurrence in the UK, with records every year since 2010. A pure pair raised broods of four and seven chicks in Gower in 2015 (Hunter 2018), but this is the first recorded instance of mixed breeding with a Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita*. There is a hybrid zone about 20 km wide where the ranges of the two species meet in the western Pyrenees, in which around 24% of all pairs are mixed (nearly all male Iberian with female Common), and about 10% of the birds in this zone show genetic evidence of hybrid origin (Collinson & Melling 2008). It may be that other hybrid pairings in the UK have been undetected – of 320 records of this individual submitted to the London Bird Club, only two included any evidence of breeding other than singing!

England, SE

Greater London One site: a male held territory from 4th May to 8th September, and was seen paired with a female Common Chiffchaff and feeding young both in the nest and after fledging (a minimum of three chicks fledged).

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. This was the 31st year in which we have reported at least one territory-holding Great Reed Warbler in the UK, but we still await a pair.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one male singing from 16th May to 8th July.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one male singing from 18th May to 12th 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 **Herefordshire** from 6th to 10th June. We have reported males of this species holding territories in seven of the last ten years, although only in one year has there been more than a single bird (two in 2020).

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris***Very rare** 16 bp25y trend: **strong decrease** -59%**Red**

High

Three sites: 0–3 pairs. After a slight upturn in the breeding population in recent years, including a peak of 32 singing males in 2020 (Eaton *et al.* 2022), the numbers reported in 2022 were the lowest we have ever reported. Given the low site fidelity of Marsh Warblers, and the location of the UK on the very northwestern edge of the species' breeding range, our population is dependent on continual renewal from migrant birds. Bell *et al.* (2021) demonstrated that breeding numbers in the UK were linked to the number of spring migrants recorded, which is heavily influenced by weather conditions in late spring. White & Kehoe (2024b) reported that numbers of migrant Marsh Warblers were low in 2022, with the year ranked 33rd out of the 37 for which totals have been collated.

England, SE

Kent One site: one territorial male, present from 26th May to 8th August.

England, E

Suffolk One site: one probable breeding pair – a male present (at a site occupied in 2020 and 2021) from 2nd to 7th June at least, and a female probably also present.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: one singing male from 31st May to 13th June.**Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*****Occasional breeder**

One site: one singing male. A typical record – in the last ten years records of singing males present for (our reporting threshold of) five days or longer have come from Highland (eight), North-east Scotland (three) and Shetland (two).

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one singing male from 13th to 20th June.**Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*****Very rare** 10 bp25y trend: **weak increase** +72%**Red**

Near-complete

Six sites: 0–6 pairs. Records of birds present for fewer than five days, and those not accepted by the BBRC, are excluded. After three years of higher numbers, 2022 saw a return to a more typical single-figure total.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one singing male, 17th April to 17th July, presumed to be the same individual as in 2021.

England, SE

Kent Two sites: (1) one singing male, 28th April to 2nd May; (2) one singing male, 29th June to 30th July.

England, E

Norfolk Three sites: (1–2) two singing males, from 18th and 19th April to 22nd April with one individual, likely one of the same, at a nearby site on 1st May; (3) one singing male, 11th to 28th May.

Dartford Warbler *Curruca undata*

Less scarce 3,214 bp* 25y trend: **weak increase** +38%

Amber

Moderate

2,286 territories. As with the other heathland specialist we report upon, Woodlark, the numbers of Dartford Warbler in 2022 were greater than in any year since the national survey in 2006. This resident insectivore is vulnerable to mortality during cold and icy conditions – the negative relationship between Dartford Warbler numbers and harsh winters has been tracked since the 19th century (Brown & Grice 2005). That relationship is evident in fig. 9, with, for example, the impact of the winters of 2008/09 and 2009/10, and the ‘Beast from the East’ winter storm in early 2018 being obvious. A run of mild winters since then has allowed a rapid recovery. However, some other fluctuations, such as the dip in 1996, may be related to variation in monitoring coverage in some core areas of the range. Even 2022’s high numbers are incomplete with, for example, under-reporting from the New Forest. The national survey planned for 2025 will give a more robust estimate of the current population.

* Wotton *et al.* (2009).

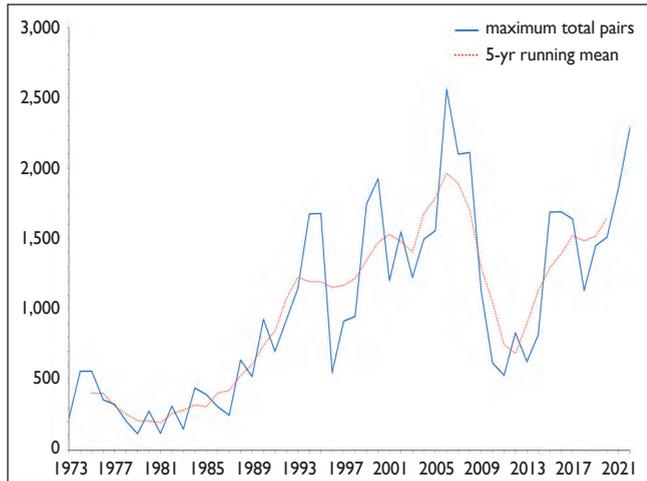


Fig. 9. Maximum numbers of Dartford Warblers *Curruca undata* breeding in the UK, 1973–2022, with a 5-year running mean.



Dave Nurney

Dartford Warbler
Curruca undata

Dartford Warbler		Somerset (e 67)	67	Suffolk (e 190)	186
	TP	England, SE (e 896)	873	Wales (e 37+)	28
England (e 2,855)	2,258	Bedfordshire (e 1)	1	Caernarfonshire (e 4)	3
England, SW (e 1,766)	1,196	Berkshire (e 47)	47	Carmarthenshire (e 2)	2
Cornwall (e 19)	19	Buckinghamshire (e 2)	2	Gower (e 26)	18
Devon (e 70)	46	Surrey (e 721)	721	Pembrokeshire	5
Dorset (e 600)	569	Sussex (e 125)	102	TOTAL (e 2,967+)	2,286
Hampshire (e 1,000)	486	England, E (e 193)	189		
Isle of Wight (e 10)	9	Norfolk (e 3)	3		

'Fair Isle Wren' *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis***Rare** 39 bp25y trend: **stable** +16%**Red**

Near-complete

37 territories. There was a substantial drop from the 48 territories reported in 2021, but this should not give cause for great alarm as the population remained close to the long-term average, and considerable between-year fluctuations might be expected for small-bodied and relatively short-lived species such as wrens.



Alex Penn

Scotland, N & W

Fair Isle 37 territories.**451.** 'Fair Isle Wren' *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*, Fair Isle, August 2022.**'St Kilda Wren' *Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*****Rare** 230 bp*

(no trend available)

Red

Low

One site: 8–10 territories. We only occasionally receive counts of this endemic race and when we do, they cover just a small proportion of the population. The area around Head Dyke (see below) typically holds between five and 12 territories (Miles 2018).

* Forrester *et al.* (2007).

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides Eight to ten territories were estimated within the Head Dyke area on the island of Hirta, St Kilda.**Redwing *Turdus iliacus*****Very rare** 24 bp25y trend: **stable** +3%**Red**

High

24 sites: 2–25 pairs. A typical year, close to the recent average and with a wide scatter of records across Scottish sites. It is the third successive year with breeding-season records from Kent; just over half of all the English breeding records in the RBBP's database have come from this county, mostly in the 1970s and 80s.

England, SE

Kent One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

NE Scotland Two sites: one probable breeding pair and one singing male. **Perth & Kinross** One site: one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 16 sites: two confirmed breeding pairs, three probable breeding pairs, one possible breeding pair and 11 singing males. **Outer Hebrides** One site: one possible breeding pair.**Shetland** Three sites: one possible breeding pair and two singing males.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Occasional breeder

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. Both ‘White-spotted Bluethroat’ *L. s. cyanecula* and ‘Red-spotted Bluethroat’ *L. s. svecica* have bred in the UK previously, and reports by the RBBP are near-evenly split between 15 White-spotted and 14 Red-spotted (and five unattributed). Perhaps surprisingly, 2022 was only the second year in which both races have featured in one of our reports.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: one singing male ‘White-spotted Bluethroat’ between 21st June and 6th July, at the same site it was present at in late June 2021.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one singing male ‘Red-spotted Bluethroat’ on 6th June. Although it was recorded on one day only, the remote location in suitable montane breeding habitat makes this record worth reporting.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Rare 82 bp

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

Red

High



75 sites: 45–101 pairs. This is the highest total in the UK since 1988, and only the fourth year in which 100 pairs has been reached. Southeast England remains the most important region for Black Redstarts, which is not surprising given the species’ continental distribution and preference for urban and industrial breeding locations; there were high totals in both Greater London and Kent. What is also noteworthy is the spread of records – only in 2018 have there been records from as many counties as the 23 in the table below. At the northern edge of the range a singing male in Highland continued the slow increase in records in Scotland; confirmed breeding there remains extremely rare, although it has occurred as far north as Orkney (in 1973; Sharrock *et al.* 1975).

Black Redstart			Greater London	18	3	20	West Midlands	1	0	0	
	S	CP	Kent	10	11	19	England, N	4	4	4	
England	73	45	99	Surrey	2	0	2	Co. Durham	1	1	1
England, SW	9	5	9	Sussex	7	4	7	Greater Manchester	2	2	2
Devon	2	1	2	England, E	12	12	24	Yorkshire	1	1	1
Dorset	3	1	3	Cambridgeshire	3	0	4	Wales	1	0	1
Hampshire	2	2	2	Norfolk	3	1	4	Meirionnydd	1	0	1
Somerset	2	1	2	Suffolk	6	11	16	Scotland, N & W	1	0	1
England, SE	44	23	59	England, C	4	1	3	Highland	1	0	1
Bedfordshire	1	2	3	Derbyshire	1	0	1	TOTALS	75	45	101
Berkshire	2	1	4	Nottinghamshire	1	0	1				
Essex	4	2	4	Shropshire	1	1	1				

‘Blue-headed Wagtail’ *Motacilla flava flava*

Occasional breeder

Three sites: 1–3 pairs. The pair in Shetland was only the fourth pure ‘Blue-headed Wagtail’ pairing we are aware of since rare breeding subspecies were added to RBBP’s reporting in 2008.

England, N

Cumbria One site: a male held a territory from 8th to 19th May.

Scotland, S

Lothian One site: a male, present from 17th May to 16th July, was paired with a female Yellow Wagtail with displaying observed and the female seen carrying nesting material.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: a pair made two breeding attempts, fledging five young on the second occasion.

'White Wagtail' *Motacilla alba alba*

Rare 49 bp

(no trend available)

Amber

High

Two sites: two pairs. Many breeding attempts entail hybrid pairings with Pied Wagtails *M. a. yarrellii*, which was the case for at least one of the 2022 records. In addition to the records given below, it is estimated that there are 30 breeding pairs on Guernsey and 15 breeding pairs on Jersey.

England, SW

Isles of Scilly One site: a bird was seen collecting food on 27th May, presumably feeding young at a nest. The partner was not seen, so may have been a Pied Wagtail.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: a female paired with a male Pied Wagtail; four eggs were laid but further progress was not reported.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce 500+ bp*

(no trend available)

Red

Moderate

19–160 pairs. A relatively low total, but this is in no way indicative of population trends as numbers of Hawfinches reported annually are very much dependent on fieldwork activity in the core areas – the New Forest (Hampshire), Meirionnydd and what we have loosely termed the Forest of Dean (Gloucestershire) in previous reports. The last population is not restricted to the Forest of Dean, but spreads west into the Lower Wye woodlands in Gwent. The numbers breeding in Gwent might equal or even exceed those in Gloucestershire, as densities may be higher in the native broadleaved woodlands of the Wye Valley than in the Forest of Dean, which has extensive coniferous plantations (Jerry Lewis pers. comm.). The population over the whole Forest of Dean and Wye Valley has been estimated at 650 pairs (Lewis 2018).

In our report for 2020 we published the first breeding record for Clyde. It is notable that the male from this pair was caught in the Wye Valley (Gwent) on 9th April 2022, then again in Cardiff (East Glamorgan) on 27th April (Jerry Lewis pers. comm.) – an interesting insight into connectivity between Hawfinch populations across the UK.

* Clements (2013).

Hawfinch		Kent (e 20)	3	Breconshire (e 5)	2
	TP	Sussex (e 100)	9	Caernarfonshire (e 4)	1
England (e 592+)	103	England, E (e 10)	3	Denbigh & Flint	1
England, SW (e 430)	69	Norfolk (e 10)	3	East Glamorgan (e 10)	6
Gloucestershire (e 10)	10	England, C (e 2)	2	Gwent (e 310)	43
Hampshire (e 400)	40	Derbyshire (e 2)	2	Meirionnydd (e 120)	2
Wiltshire (e 20)	19	England, N (e 10+)	10	Montgomeryshire (e 3)	1
England, SE (e 140+)	19	Cumbria	5	Radnorshire	1
Essex	6	Lancs & N Mersey	5	TOTAL (e 1,046+)	160
Hertfordshire (e 4)	1	Wales (e 454+)	57		

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Occasional breeder

One site: one confirmed pair. A pair bred on Fair Isle. A clutch of five eggs was laid on 23rd June, all had hatched by 4th July but only one bird fledged, the rest dying during cold and wet weather. Although Common Rosefinch still features in RBBP reports more often than not, this was the first confirmed breeding since 2001. This eastern European species first bred in the UK in

1982, when a nest was found in Highland. Thereafter, numbers fluctuated, but increased slowly – in 1992, 5–20 pairs were reported, and colonisation seemed on the cards. As fig. 10 shows, this stalled around the turn of the century. Although Keller *et al.* (2020) show there was some expansion along the western edge of the breeding range in central Europe and Fennoscandia between the 1980s and 2010s, the short-term population trend of -36% for Europe suggests that a return to greater numbers is perhaps unlikely.

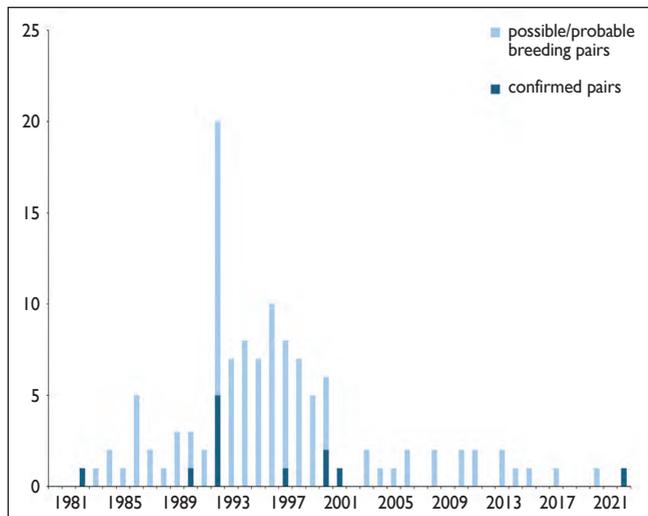


Fig. 10. Numbers of Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* breeding in the UK, 1980–2022.



Alex Penn

452. Recently fledged Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Fair Isle, July 2022.

Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

Very rare 28 bp (no trend available)

Amber

Moderate

12 sites: 17–22 pairs. A typical return. Coverage and distribution tend to vary between years – in some years there have been considerable numbers in Orkney and the Outer Hebrides, but none were reported from these counties in 2022. Note that Gill *et al.* (2024) now treat Arctic Redpoll *A. hornemanni*, Common Redpoll *A. flammea* and Lesser Redpoll *A. cabaret* as one species, Redpoll *A. flammea*, and this will therefore be the final report in which Common Redpoll appears as a species; however, as a rare breeding subspecies, we will continue to report upon the taxon *A. f. flammea* and encourage all observers to continue to submit records.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Four sites: 12 confirmed breeding pairs in total. **Highland** One site: one probable breeding pair. **Shetland** Seven sites: (1) two confirmed breeding pairs and one probable breeding pair; (2–4) one confirmed breeding pair at each site; (5) one singing male; (6–7) possible breeding pair at both sites.

European Serin *Serinus serinus***Former breeder**

One site: two pairs. Two singing males with two females were present at a site in **Cornwall** between 23rd and 28th March. In some ways this record fits the pattern for European Serin records in recent years, as reviewed by Holling (2023) – a brief stay at a site in southern England, with no breeding. But the presence of four birds together is very unusual, although not without precedent. Between 1981 and 1987 – during the heyday of this species breeding in the UK – a site in Devon held two or three singing males annually, with successful breeding in 1981–85. Other records of two males have come from elsewhere in Devon, as well as Kent and Sussex.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis***Rare** 79 bp*

(no trend available)

Amber

Moderate

4–46 pairs. It is possible that 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 2022, although we do employ a conservative approach in calculating totals. We encourage observers of Snow Buntings in potential breeding locations to submit records with precise location details (as well as numbers and breeding evidence) to ensure that duplicate records can be identified. This is the highest total we have reported since 52 pairs in 1989, when there was considerable fieldwork focused upon the species (e.g. 20 broods were ringed that year). It is, however, still only a proportion of the population, estimated at between 60 and 99 pairs by the only full survey, in 2011 (Hayhow *et al.* 2018a), as pairs breed in less-visited parts of the Cairngorms and are scattered elsewhere in northern Scotland. Hayhow *et al.* found that fewer than 40% of territories were detected by a single fieldwork visit, so under-recording may be an issue even in better covered areas.

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

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn Cairngorms: one confirmed breeding pair, one possible breeding pair and 13 singing males. **North-east Scotland** Cairngorms: one confirmed breeding pair, ten possible breeding pairs and one singing male.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Cairngorms: two confirmed breeding pairs, nine probable breeding pairs, two possible breeding pairs and two singing males. West Highlands: one probable breeding pair, one possible breeding pair and two singing males.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius***Less scarce** 1,079 bp* 27y trend (survey): **large increase** +814%**Red**

Moderate

65–571 pairs. This is the highest total we have reported outside of a national survey year. This is largely due to coverage through the Cirl Bunting Monitoring Programme, initiated by the RSPB in 2021 to improve annual monitoring. In 2022, 115 tetrads received two survey visits (another 13 were surveyed once) as part of this monitoring. Cirl Buntings were recorded in 75 of these tetrads, with a total of 339 territories counted. Extrapolation from this sample gives an estimate

of 1,027 territories (95% confidence intervals 798–1,304), which suggests there has been little change since the last survey in 2016, although the low sample size means that precision is low, and there are some biases in sampling (Simon Wotton pers. comm.). However, this is an excellent start for this volunteer-based programme, which will hopefully allow us to track changes in the Cirl Bunting population more accurately in the future.

* Jeffs *et al.* (2018).

Cirl Bunting			England, SW	61	566	Channel Islands	4	5
	CP	TP	Cornwall	2	32	Jersey	4	5
England	61	566	Devon	59	534	TOTALS	65	571

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* Potential breeder

One site: one probable breeding pair. A pair was present in **Norfolk** between 21st March and 23rd April. The male sang from 10th April onwards and was seen displaying to and feeding the presumed female in an area of Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, but the pair moved on subsequently. This is the first time that this species, which breeds from northern Scandinavia across to the far east of Russia and winters in southern Asia, has been included in a RBBP report. There has been a strong increase in records in the UK, with the number reported annually having nearly tripled this century (White & Kehoe 2024b). This increase has included birds overwintering more frequently, and there were 12 reported in late winter and spring of 2022, either at wintering sites or on the move northwards. Presumably considerably more are missed, spread across rarely visited arable fields in southern England. The Norfolk pair appeared to have found habitat to their liking, briefly raising hopes of breeding, but presumably the lure of the taiga forest proved too strong to resist.

Appendix 1. RBBP taxa for which no data were received in 2022.

The following rare taxa are regular breeders in the UK. Confirmation of presence was received in 2022, but no breeding records were submitted.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (Channel Islands only).

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (Highland only).

Appendix 2. Rare non-native species considered by RBBP recorded in 2022.

Data on the following rare non-native breeding species have been received for 2022; many are of non-breeding birds which may be recent releases or escapes from captivity, rather than part of established breeding populations. A more comprehensive summary of non-native birds breeding in the UK over the period 2015–21 was given in Eaton *et al.* (2023b).

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* A considerable number of individuals, some free-flying, were present at a site in **Cumbria**, but no juveniles were reported in 2022.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* Only six individuals were left on Coll, **Argyll**, with no sign of breeding this year.

Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides* A pair was present at a site in **Cumbria**; eggs were laid, but no young reported.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* Confirmed breeding records were received from single sites in Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire and Sussex. Courtship was observed between a pair in Hampshire, and records of non-breeding birds were received from Co. Down, Dumfries & Galloway, Essex, Greater London and Surrey.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* A single male at a site in Berkshire was the only record received.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* The only reports received were from sites in Berkshire, Cambridgeshire and Derbyshire (two), with no records of breeding.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* 23 sites: 16–49 pairs. The seven Gloucestershire and Wiltshire sites are all within the extensive Cotswold Water Park complex.

Red-crested Pochard				England, SE	7	4	16	England, E	9	7	13
	S	CP	TP	Berkshire	2	0	10	Cambridgeshire	7	2	7
England, SW	7	5	20	Essex	1	1	1	Lincolnshire	2	5	6
Gloucestershire	4	1	16	Greater London	1	1	1	TOTALS	23	16	49
Wiltshire	3	4	4	Hertfordshire	3	2	4				

Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii* Birds were reported from three sites in Dorset: (1) one pair raised one young, two additional males were present; (2) three males; (3) one male. Single birds were reported from five sites in Hampshire. The Dorset record is the first confirmed breeding we have reported since we began including non-native rare breeding birds in 1996.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* Males were reported from two sites in Dorset, an individual was reported from Hampshire, four were present at a site on the Isles of Scilly and a juvenile was reported, although hybridisation with Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae* could not be ruled out, and two birds were present at a site in Perth & Kinross. Intensive monitoring at the site in Suffolk in 2022–23, for which the population has previously been reported as up to 20 individuals, suggested that there were only 4–7 individuals (W. J. Smith *et al.* 2023).

Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae* A single bird was reported in Highland, and birds were still present at a site in the Isles of Scilly.

Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera* A single female was reported from Anglesey, having taken to consorting with local Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* Breeding was reported from single sites in Hertfordshire (one brood of four) and Yorkshire (five pairs, 'most' with chicks). Birds were also reported from two sites in Derbyshire and a single site in Cornwall.

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus* The long-present male in Cambridgeshire was recorded between 27th January and 4th July, and was reported displaying.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* Five pairs were present at a single communal nest on the Isle of Dogs, Greater London.

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Find out more about the Panel at www.rbbp.org.uk



Records of rare breeding birds in 2023 are now being collated; county recorders are reminded that data should be submitted by 30th November 2024 using the spreadsheet downloadable from www.rbbp.org.uk.

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