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Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Rare breeding birds
in the UK in 2023

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Mark Eaton and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



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European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*.

Abstract This report gives details of the 104 species and races of rare and scarce native birds that bred, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2023. The year saw the confirmed breeding of two species that had been absent for decades – a pair of Temminck’s Stints *Calidris temminckii* laid eggs in Highland for the first time since 1997 and the UK’s first breeding Eurasian Hoopoes *Upupa epops* since 1996 fledged three young in Leicestershire & Rutland. Fifteen species reached record totals as a result of ongoing increases, many flourishing in response to conservation actions such as reintroduction, improved protection, and habitat management and creation. Not all species prospered, however, with fewer pairs of Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* than ever reported before, dwindling numbers of Redwings *Turdus iliacus* and a continued absence of breeding Montagu’s Harriers *Circus pygargus*.

Introduction

This is the 50th report published by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) and includes records of the 104 rare or scarce native taxa that bred, or showed signs of breeding, in the UK in 2023. In addition, the records received for 11 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.* 2025), and by Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury *et al.* 2021, 2024). The RBBP species list is available at www.rbbp.org.uk/species-overview.

The RBBP has now reported on 51 breeding seasons (with one report, Holling *et al.* 2007, covering two years). For those species that have been covered since the first

report, for 1973, we can now report on change over the 50-year period from 1973 to 2023. Having reviewed change in the UK's rare breeding birds on the occasion of the RBBP's 50th anniversary in 2023 (both in the annual report that year (Eaton *et al.* 2023a) and in two complementary papers reviewing the development of the RBBP and changes in the birds we report upon (Stroud *et al.* 2023; Eaton *et al.* 2023b)), we do not present an in-depth analysis here. However, where relevant to discussions of change in individual species, we do present population trends since 1973. We hope in the near future to present more comprehensive analyses of how the UK's rare breeding birds have changed, and what this tells us more widely about the UK's biodiversity, the pressures acting upon it, and conservation responses intended to help it.

Review of 2023

While there was some cold weather early in the 2022/23 winter, with temperatures falling to -17.3°C in Braemar, North-east Scotland, on 13th December 2022, there were no extended periods of cold or lying snow to trouble resident breeding species, and the winter averaged slightly milder and drier than the long-term average. Much of the spring was unsettled and rather wet, with the sixth wettest March on record (since 1836) for the UK; many areas in southern UK had more than double the average rainfall, a pattern that continued through April. The adage 'good weather for ducks' might actually be evidenced by record totals in 2023 for species including Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*, Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* and Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*. Settled weather arrived by mid May, and late spring was warm and dry over much of the UK. High pressure remained established into early summer, resulting in the warmest June ever, but thereafter the summer was rather wet; July was unusually cool, dull and wet (the sixth-wettest July on record), and a succession of low-pressure systems brought double the normal rainfall to some areas. While many earlier breeding species will have been untroubled, cold and wet spells later in the breeding season, including two named storms, may have resulted in nest failures for some late breeders.

This report contains accounts of 104 species and races of rare breeding birds breeding, or showing signs of breeding, in the UK in 2023. There are no new species or races reported this year, although for the first time we report 'Common Redpoll' *Acanthis flammea flammea* as a race of Redpoll *A. flammea*, rather than a species in its own right, following a recent taxonomic change. Rather, the most eye-catching records are of two species returning to breed after many years of absence. Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* have been returning to a site in Highland since 2021, and although it seems likely they have attempted to breed previously, it was not until 2023 that this was confirmed, when a nest was found under licence; this was the first confirmed UK breeding record since 1997 (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999). Unfortunately, the same fate befell the 2023 attempt as was thought likely to have happened in 2021 and 2022, with the nest being flooded out. Intriguingly, breeding may also have occurred at another site in Highland.

While there had been two years of forewarning for the return of Temminck's Stint, the successful breeding of a pair of Eurasian Hoopoes *Upupa epops* that fledged three young in Leicestershire & Rutland came out of the blue, although one of the largest-ever spring influxes of this species (White & Kehoe 2025) clearly set the stage for the first confirmed breeding since 1996. Increasingly frequent breeding occurrences of Mediterranean species are of course now a familiar component of our annual reporting, but declines in the Eurasian Hoopoe breeding population, and some range loss along the Channel coast of France (Keller *et al.* 2020), perhaps mitigate against colonisation in the near future. The same is not true for European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, which is becoming an almost expected breeder in England; in 2023 it bred at two sites for the first time, albeit unsuccessfully. After decades of regular breeding in the UK, the absence of breeding Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus michahellis* since 2019 has been a surprise; they returned in 2023 with one pair and, as is often the case, an adult in a mixed pairing (in this instance with a European Herring Gull *L. argentatus*).

In addition to these returning or colonising species, a large number reached record, or near-record, totals in 2023. Of the 80 regularly breeding species we report upon, 19 (24%) reached the highest total we have ever reported, and a further eight had their second- or third-best year. Of the 19, there are four species for which records collated by the RBBP represent only a relatively small fraction of their UK breeding populations: Eurasian Wigeon, Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* and Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*. In the case of these species, while numbers may genuinely have risen in 2023, the record totals are just as likely to reflect an increase in recording and reporting activity by the birdwatching network upon which the RBBP depends. All breeding records of RBBP species are of value, even of species such as these four for which we are currently unable to report robust trends, so we thank all those whose efforts have helped to improve coverage. We are currently developing new approaches to measuring population trends in species with incomplete monitoring coverage (see the text account for Eurasian Wigeon below), which will give even more value to the data received. There are a number of other species, such as Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* and Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, for which the data the RBBP receive are too sparse to enable population-level monitoring at present. New analytical approaches may solve the problem for some of these species, and, regardless, species data can have multiple other uses, e.g. for site-level monitoring, survey design and range mapping.

The remaining 15 species can be regarded as reaching genuine highs in 2023. Three are in the UK as a result of reintroduction projects: Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* and White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*. The Scottish population of White-tailed Eagles, which originated from a reintroduction project starting in 1975, reached 156 pairs, but arguably the more notable record in 2023 was the first confirmed (and successful) breeding in England in 240 years: a pair, both individuals of which were released in 2020, fledged one

offspring in Sussex. Other raptor species continue to flourish; the breeding population of Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* exceeded 500 pairs – an abundance not known in the UK since the early nineteenth century, or possibly even earlier. Two other recovering raptors, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and Eurasian Goshawk *Astur gentilis*, were reported at levels just below the record totals reached in 2022. The sixth national survey of Hen Harrier (Kelly et al. 2025) showed a 20% increase since the previous survey in 2016, over which time the English population has risen from four to 50 pairs, but there have been declines in Northern Ireland.

Regular readers of our annual reports will be aware that there is a group of large wading birds that are flourishing in the UK, many of which reach record totals year after year: Common Crane *Grus grus*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Great White Egret *Ardea alba* and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* all did so in 2023. Many of these species are benefiting from conservation action, either from projects focused narrowly on their requirements or action more generally to create, restore and maintain high-quality wetland habitats, often on a large scale, across the UK. Northern Shoveler, Common Pochard and Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* also reached new record totals in 2023, which might at least in part be a response to improved wetland habitat provision. Range shifts in response to climate change may also be a factor driving increases in some of these species, and that seems very likely in the ongoing increases in Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*. There were 3,482 pairs of Mediterranean Gulls breeding in the UK in 2023; this is the highest total for any species ever reported in a RBBP report, and this gull is now a candidate to be the next species to be removed from our list. The Panel regularly reviews its species list, which in the past has led to the removal of increasing species such as Gadwall *Mareca strepera*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, but we have to exercise caution to ensure that we do not cease monitoring too hastily, particularly if species might subsequently decline, for

example due to hard winter weather or disease outbreaks (see below).

We readily attribute breeding-population increases in species with breeding ranges centred to the south of the UK to the predicted impacts of climate change. However, such predictions (such as those given in *A Climatic Atlas of European Breeding Birds* (Huntley *et al.* 2007)) also lead us to expect declines and eventual extinctions for many of the species for which the UK lies on the southern edge of their breeding range. This is not always the case, and perhaps one of the most surprising patterns shown by RBBP data over the last decade has been the increase in a number of wader species with breeding distributions across high latitudes in the Arctic, Fennoscandia and Siberia. The return of Temminck's Stint has already been noted. Numbers of Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* rose by 61% between 2022 and 2023, a continuation of a trend which has seen numbers reported triple over the last decade. While not quite matching record totals both species reached in 2021, numbers of Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* and Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* remained high in 2023.

Not all northern species are flourishing, however. The number of pairs of Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* fell yet again, to the lowest total since RBBP reporting began in 1973. Six pairs of Redwings *Turdus iliacus* was also the lowest total we have reported, albeit one matched in 2001 and 2006. There were no confirmed breeding pairs of Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* or Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* in 2023.

Further south, for the third year in a row there was no confirmed breeding by Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus*, and no pairs reported. The three-year gap since the last confirmed breeding in 2019 is probably the longest absence of this species since the early twentieth century. The RBBP's coverage of two struggling species, European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*, is not sufficiently robust to track population changes, although both were reported at their lowest-ever levels in 2023. RBBP data are, however, particularly valuable for reporting on range change; both species have suffered consider-

able range contraction since they were added to our species list, with European Turtle Dove now being reported from 18 counties (26 in 2018) and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker from 34 counties (47 in 2010).

A few readers may skim this report in search of more outlandish records of vagrant species. This year we have relatively little to offer: a Little Crake *Zapornia parva* in Cambridgeshire was our third record from that county in six years; the 'American Black Tern' *Chlidonias niger surinamensis* returned to Northumberland and a Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* returned to Shetland; while a Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* summering in Pembrokeshire means that this species features in a RBBP report for only the second time. It is notable, however, that a few species which might once have raised eyebrows are now almost to be expected – Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, for example, although there was no repeat of the confirmed breeding in 2022 by the last species.

The impact of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza on rare breeding birds in 2023

In last year's report (Eaton *et al.* 2024a) we discussed the impact of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) of the strain H5N1 on rare breeding birds in 2022; outbreaks of the virus reoccurred in wild birds in 2023. Following severe mortality in the breeding population of Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* in 2021, and in wintering waterbirds such as Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* in the 2021/22 winter, there were widespread and severe impacts on a number of seabird species in 2022. Most relevant to our reporting was the impact on Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* at the colony on Coquet Island, Northumberland, as well as some evidence of a less conspicuous but still impactful effect on raptors such as Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, White-tailed Eagle and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (Wilson *et al.* 2023).

In 2023, the virus was again conspicuously present amongst breeding seabirds, although to some extent the species affected had changed with, for example, widespread reports of severe mortality amongst Black-

headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* and Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*, including at inland sites which had been unaffected the previous year. Unsurprisingly, given the close association of the two species, mortality was reported amongst Mediterranean Gulls breeding within Black-headed Gull colonies with, for example, at least 40 adults and 50 young dying at a colony in Lancashire & North Merseyside.

Numbers of Roseate Terns at Coquet Island fell from 154 pairs in 2022 to 118 pairs in 2023, which can be attributed to the mortality of 90 adults (as well as 170 chicks) from HPAI the previous year. Only four adults were known to have died in 2023, suggesting that there may have been some build-up of immunity, although 73 chicks died. Burke *et al.* (2024) reported that 65 adult and 135 young Roseate Terns died at the colonies at Lady's Island Lake and Rockabill in Ireland in 2023; given the known interactions between Roseate Terns in those colonies and those on Coquet Island (Seward *et al.* 2019), there is the potential for this to impact numbers recorded on Coquet in future years.

Further evidence of impacts on raptors came from a study on Peregrine Falcons in southern Scotland, with an increase in subadult birds in breeding pairs in 2023 suggesting that they had recruited into the breeding population early owing to adult mortality (Smith *et al.* 2025). Our own data for Peregrine in 2023 show the largest between-year decline we have ever reported for this species. This decline was widespread, across all four countries and recorded in 66 counties; although there is no causal evidence, a decline due to HPAI mortality is perhaps the most plausible explanation for this change. There is a strong likelihood that HPAI impacted other rare breeders for which mortality may be less conspicuous or the impacts on productivity harder to detect; Atkinson *et al.* (2025) reported that by September 2023, HPAI had been detected in 79 of the 133 wild bird species tested by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

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 and those who assist them. 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 the 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 many recent years, we have received direct submissions of data from all of the UK's recording areas. Unfortunately, we did not receive 2023 data directly for Ayrshire, 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 monitoring as part of species recovery projects, 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 and other data suppliers submit site-level information for all species on which they report, rather than totals for counties or other recording areas. 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 whenever possible.

The report was enabled by the collation of over 11,500 individual records, which, once duplicate records were identified, provided just under 7,800 unique records. This latter number has risen considerably in recent years thanks to more recorders providing site-level information for species, rather than simply county totals, as well as concerted effort by the RBBP to source more site-specific records.

Additional data for any years are still welcome, since these make valuable additions to our archive. Birders should consider submitting not only their local records but also sightings made when birdwatching anywhere in the UK, especially in more remote and less well-covered areas, particularly northern and western Scotland 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 such old records directly to the RBBP Secretary).

As mentioned above, the RBBP's archive now spans 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 historical 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 underestimated 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 only around 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 are used. RBBP's policy is to make data available for relevant conservation uses, with appropriate controls over data security, use, and how any outputs from work may be used and shared in the public domain. Site-specific information is used by the country-level statutory nature conservation bodies and JNCC, and national datasets by the RSPB for survey and conservation planning. Over the 12-month period up to August 2025, we received ten 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 particular, we conducted reviews of the distribution of seven species with regard to the current Special Protection Area (SPA) network (see box 1, below). 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 England Indicator of Species Abundance.

Box 1. Using RBBP data to inform site protection for rare breeding birds

The UK's network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) plays a vital role in safeguarding the most important sites for birds in the UK, with 270 SPAs classified for 151 species or populations (in some cases the breeding, non-breeding and/or passage populations of species are assessed separately). Key sites are selected for each species (or population), giving a 'suite' of sites for each. The most recent review (the third) of the sufficiency of this network was published in 2016 (Stroud *et al.* 2016). It examined species' populations and trends within and outside of the network and identified those species for which the existing network was insufficient. A second phase of the assessment (published as Grady *et al.* 2025) provided advice and options on how to address insufficiencies, through the classification of new sites, extension of the boundaries of existing sites and/or revision of SPA site Citations to include new features (i.e. species/populations). It also identified recommended management reviews of existing SPAs, as well as additional site-specific monitoring, research and wider survey needs.

Data from the RBBP were extremely important in informing Phases 1 and 2 of this review process. There are 32 rare breeding bird species and one subspecies (Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*) with SPAs classified for their protection, and for many of these species the RBBP is the key data source. A summary of the network sufficiency for each species is given in Holling *et al.* (2017). Given the lengthy delay in the finalisation and publication of the Phase 2 report (first drafted in 2017), by the time it was published newer data were available for many species, particularly those monitored annually by the RBBP. The report itself recognised that 'updated data will, nevertheless, be needed to support implementation during Phase 3 to either verify that the advice and options are still justified or to make any necessary adjustments.' As a consequence, the RBBP has conducted work over the last year, funded by Natural England, to update the reviews at a UK-wide level for Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*, Common Crane, Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Mediterranean Gull, Eurasian Spoonbill, Eurasian Bittern and Little Egret. Phase 3 will encompass the implementation of Phase 2 of the Third Review, comprising a range of responses: the classification of new sites; the extension of the boundaries of existing sites; and/or the revision of SPA site Citations.

The recent work on these seven species demonstrated the value of our data holdings for informing conservation planning and action, and thus how the recording activities of volunteer ornithologists and birdwatchers make a valuable contribution to the conservation of rare breeding birds, but this also highlighted some weaknesses to be addressed. In particular, imprecise location data sometimes make it difficult or impossible to ascertain whether records lie within a particular site (i.e. within the precise legal boundary). We therefore repeat our frequent request that all records are submitted with site information that is as precise as possible.

The RBBP is working with a PhD student based at Durham University, Faezeh Fatemizadeh, supported by the Natural Environment Research Council-funded IAPETUS Doctoral Training Partnership and with support from Natural England. Under the supervision of Steve Willis, Faezeh will explore new statistical approaches for the analysis of rare breeding bird data and examine the impact of the key drivers of change (e.g. climate change, habitat change and conservation interventions) acting on rare breeding birds over the RBBP's 50 years of monitoring.

The Panel

The Panel currently has ten 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, Katy Westerberg and Jenny Weston. Jenny Weston joined the Panel as an independent member in 2025 and brings a wealth of experience; she is a Senior Species Recovery Officer in the RSPB's Global Species Recovery team, working mostly on Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*, vultures, Hen

Harriers and UK migratory species. She is an A permit holder and ringing trainer who is also very active in raptor studies in her spare time, including serving as secretary of the North East Scotland Raptor Study Group. Her recent projects have included satellite-tracking Hen Harriers, as well as using camera traps and colour rings to understand more about the habitat requirements of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* on Coll.

Panel membership aims to achieve broadly representative geographic coverage and to include members who have active involvement in monitoring schemes and specialist research groups, or who participate in various external groups, to facilitate liaison between the Panel and researchers, nest recorders, ringers, surveyors and conservationists. The Panel is funded by the JNCC (on behalf of the national statutory nature conservation bodies) and the RSPB, with an additional financial contribution from the BTO. In 2024–25, further funding was received from Natural Resources Wales 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 Bluesky at [@ukrbbp.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/ukrbbp.bsky.social) and on X (formerly Twitter) at [@ukrbbp](https://twitter.com/ukrbbp), although of course we request that no sensitive data on rare breeding birds are shared there, or indeed 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 (2019–23, 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 page 576.

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, 2019–23). 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 2023 with that for 25, 20, 15 or 10 years earlier (1998, 2003, 2008, 2013). 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 2024), 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.

5. The degree of coverage (in 2023), defined as follows:

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

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

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

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%

Species accounts

The headline figure for 2023 (number of sites, breeding pairs, singing males, territories, etc.) is indicated in bold for easy reference. Any regular breeding species classed as Very rare (see above), plus Occasional, Potential, Colonising and Former breeders, receive more detailed text describing the records by county. For all other species (with only a few exceptions, generally where available data are limited), the data are tabulated, with each line representing a county or RBBP region. Within the tables, note the use of the following abbreviations:

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

Definitions of breeding evidence

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (EBCC) (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997), but precise definitions are species specific, as defined on www.rbbp.org.uk. Thus, for some species, e.g. Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* and Eurasian Wigeon, 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.

In addition to the trends in the species banners, for a number of species we provide trends over different time periods, most particularly to provide the context of longer-term change for those species for which the RBBP now has data spanning a 50-year period. These trends are derived using the same approach as described for 25-year trends above, using the 5-year means from either end of the trend period. Note that this means that a trend covering the 1973–2023 period compares the mean of the 1973–77 and 2019–23 periods. These two periods are 46 years apart, so although these long-term trends use data from a 50-year time span they should not be considered to be '50-year trends'.

Definition of numbers used

Within each species account, numbers given in the format '1–4 pairs' indicate (in this case) one confirmed breeding pair and a maximum total of four breeding pairs (thus also including possible and probable breeding pairs). In the tables, 'n/a' indicates that no data were received from that county, but the species normally breeds there.

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; if no estimate was submitted for 2023, an older estimate was used if available. Estimates 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. Note that regional and national estimates may include those from counties not presented in the table, as no actual data were available for 2023. Where county estimates are provided as a range, the upper limit was used in calculating regional and national totals.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*
Very rare 26 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +405%

Amber
Near-complete

19 sites: 15–20 pairs. Numbers of breeding Whooper Swans have fallen in recent years, having averaged 31 pairs between 2015 and 2019. Shetland remains the stronghold but even there the number of pairs has declined, despite good productivity being reported. Nevertheless, there has been a substantial increase in this species as a breeder over the 50 years of RBBP reporting (coinciding with an increase in the much larger wintering population; see Calbrade *et al.* 2025). Whooper Swan did not feature until the RBBP report for 1978, when a pair was reported with three young in Argyll – the first confirmed breeding since 1947 (Sharrock *et al.* 1980).

England, E

Norfolk One site: two confirmed breeding pairs, both of which hatched young although none fledged.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one probable breeding pair. **Caithness** One site: one confirmed breeding pair.

Highland Three sites: three probable breeding pairs. **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: three pairs bred, fledging seven young in total. **Shetland** Nine sites: nine pairs bred. Eight of these pairs hatched young, with five pairs fledging a total of 12 offspring; the other three pairs were seen with a total of five young, pre-fledging.

Northern Ireland

Co. Derry/Londonderry One site: one probable breeding pair.

In addition, summering birds were reported from Ayrshire, Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Highland, Norfolk and North-east Scotland.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*
Rare 118 bp 25y trend: **stable** +2%

Amber
High

81 sites: 13–124 pairs. A slightly above-average year, but numbers of Garganeys reported by the RBBP have fluctuated either side of 100 for over three decades with no substantial underlying trend (see figure in Eaton *et al.* 2023b).

Garganey				England, C	5	0	6
	S	CP	TP	Derbyshire	1	0	1
England	71	13	111	Staffordshire	1	0	1
England, SW	9	1	13	Warwickshire	2	0	3
Cornwall	2	0	2	West Midlands	1	0	1
Dorset	1	0	1	England, N	24	6	38
Gloucestershire	2	0	2	Cheshire & Wirral	4	1	5
Somerset	3	1	7	Cleveland	1	0	4
Wiltshire	1	0	1	Cumbria	3	2	3
England, SE	13	5	24	Lancs & N Mersey	3	0	5
Essex	1	2	2	Northumberland	2	0	3
Greater London	1	1	1	Yorkshire	11	3	18
Kent	7	2	17	Wales	2	0	3
Oxfordshire	3	0	3	Pembrokeshire	1	0	1
Sussex	1	0	1	Radnorshire	1	0	2
England, E	20	1	30	Scotland	6	0	6
Cambridgeshire	10	0	18	Scotland, S	1	0	1
Lincolnshire	3	0	3	Dumfries & G'way	1	0	1
Norfolk	4	1	6	Scotland, Mid	1	0	1
Suffolk	3	0	3	NE Scotland	1	0	1

Garganey continued				Northern Ireland		
Scotland, N & W	4	0	4	Co. Antrim	1	0
Caithness	1	0	1	Co. Derry/Londonderry	1	0
Orkney	1	0	1	TOTALS	81	13
Outer Hebrides	2	0	2			124

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Less scarce 1,413 bp 10y trend: **strong increase** +45%

Amber

High

336 sites: 527–1,562 pairs. These are the highest totals (both of maximum total pairs and of confirmed pairs) since Northern Shoveler was added to the RBBP's species list in 2006. The cause of this increase is not clear. However, as most of the key breeding areas for the species in Southeast, East and North England are well covered, it seems unlikely that the figures are an artefact of variation in recording or reporting effort. Rather, 2023 seems to have been a genuinely good year for breeding Northern Shovelers across much of the UK (record totals were reached in England, Scotland and Wales).



Dave Nurney

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*.

Northern Shoveler				Hertfordshire (e 19)	18	2	19
	S	CP	TP	Kent (e 185–200)	23	68	185
England (e 1,344+)	267	456	1,264	Oxfordshire (e 7)	1	5	7
England, SW (e 110)	23	19	91	Surrey (e 5)	3	0	5
Devon (e 7)	3	2	7	Sussex (e 50)	7	42	50
Dorset (e 4)	4	2	4	England, E (e 429)	83	139	419
Gloucestershire (e 24)	3	5	24	Cambridgeshire (e 167)	26	15	167
Hampshire (e 10)	5	7	7	Lincolnshire (e 67)	14	13	67
Isle of Wight (e 2)	1	0	2	Norfolk (e 100)	20	93	96
Isles of Scilly (e 1)	1	0	1	Northamptonshire (e 5)	4	4	5
Somerset (e 60)	4	2	44	Suffolk (e 90)	19	14	84
Wiltshire (e 2)	2	1	2	England, C (e 44)	27	17	35
England, SE (e 403)	67	125	388	Derbyshire (e 10)	4	2	4
Bedfordshire (e 1)	1	0	1	Leics & Rutland (e 5)	2	2	2
Berkshire (e 1)	1	0	1	Nottinghamshire (e 10)	8	6	10
Buckinghamshire (e 5)	3	0	5	Shropshire (e 1)	1	1	1
Essex (e 115)	10	8	115	Staffordshire (e 3)	2	3	3

Northern Shoveler continued				Clyde	5	1	12
Warwickshire (e 7)	5	3	7	Dumfries & G'way (e 22)	3	3	13
West Midlands (e 1)	1	0	1	Scotland, Mid (e 39)	12	3	37
Worcestershire (e 7)	4	0	7	Angus & Dundee (e 8)	3	0	8
England, N (e 357+)	67	156	331	Fife (e 5)	1	0	5
Cheshire & Wirral (e 67)	10	11	67	Moray & Nairn (e 1)	1	0	1
Cleveland	4	16	39	NE Scotland (e 10)	5	0	10
Co. Durham (e 8)	4	2	8	Perth & Kinross (e 13)	2	3	13
Cumbria (e 3)	3	2	3	Scotland, N & W (e 139)	33	49	137
Greater Manchester (e 13)	9	3	13	Argyll (e 41)	3	16	41
Lancs & N Mersey (e 60)	5	33	34	Caithness (e 1)	1	0	1
Northumberland (e 14)	12	14	14	Highland (e 10)	2	1	10
Yorkshire	20	75	153	Orkney (e 25)	10	14	25
Wales (e 69+)	9	13	69	Outer Hebrides (e 60)	15	16	58
Anglesey (e 48)	2	6	48	Shetland (e 2)	2	2	2
Breconshire	1	1	1	Northern Ireland (e 24+)	3	0	24
Caernarfonshire	1	1	1	Co. Antrim	2	0	23
Denbigh & Flint	2	0	14	Co. Derry/Londonderry	1	0	1
Pembrokeshire (e 5)	3	5	5	Isle of Man (e 1)	1	0	1
Scotland (e 216+)	55	57	203	Channel Islands (e 1)	1	1	1
Scotland, S (e 38+)	10	5	29	Jersey (e 1)	1	1	1
Ayrshire	2	1	4	TOTALS (e 1,655+)	336	527	1,562

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Rare 222 bp

(no trend available)

Amber

Moderate

122 sites: 78–258 pairs. Recording of Eurasian Wigeon is believed to be substantially incomplete, and so we do not usually produce a trend from the numbers reported. However, fig. 1 does show an apparent increase in numbers since the species was added to our species list in 1996. Whether this reflects a genuine increase, or simply greater effort to record the species during the breeding season and more diligent submission of those records by county recorders, is uncertain. In recent years, a number of new statistical approaches have been developed to address spatial and temporal biases in

Eurasian Wigeon				Scotland, S	3	0	5
	S	CP	TP	Ayrshire	1	0	2
England	35	25	64	Clyde	1	0	2
England, SW	2	0	4	Dumfries & G'way	1	0	1
Gloucestershire	2	0	4	Scotland, Mid	7	2	12
England, SE	9	0	13	Angus & Dundee	2	0	2
Berkshire	1	0	1	NE Scotland	3	2	5
Kent	8	0	12	Perth & Kinross	2	0	5
England, E	7	0	10	Scotland, N & W	75	50	175
Cambridgeshire	6	0	9	Argyll	3	0	6
Norfolk	1	0	1	Caithness	6	2	6
England, C	1	0	1	Highland	24	12	92
Nottinghamshire	1	0	1	Orkney	7	5	10
England, N	16	25	36	Outer Hebrides	29	21	51
Cheshire & Wirral	1	1	1	Shetland	6	10	10
Co. Durham	7	14	20	Northern Ireland	2	1	2
Cumbria	2	1	2	Co. Antrim	1	1	1
Northumberland	4	8	8	Co. Derry/Londonderry	1	0	1
Yorkshire	2	1	5	TOTALS	122	78	258
Scotland	85	52	192				

biological data, allowing robust trends in distribution and abundance to be derived. As mentioned above, the RBBP is working with Faezeh Fatemizadeh, a PhD student at Durham University, to explore the potential of using new statistical approaches for deriving trends from our data. This may enable us to publish trends for species such as Eurasian Wigeon, for which this has not previously been possible, as well as improving the robustness of some of the species' trends we publish already.

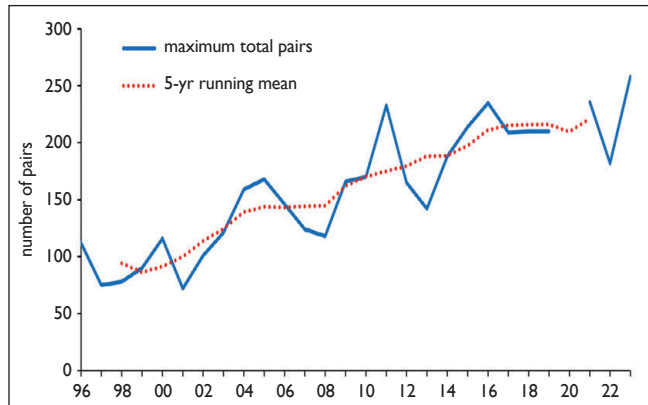


Fig. 1. Maximum numbers of Eurasian Wigeons *Mareca penelope* reported by the RBBP, 1996–2023, with a 5-year running mean. Data for 2020 are omitted owing to the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on monitoring coverage.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Rare 30 bp

25y trend: **weak decrease** -43%

Amber

High

21 sites: 7–28 pairs. Records in 2023 conformed to the pattern of the last couple of decades, during which the 5-year mean has stayed between the mid-20s and mid-30s with most records coming from Scottish islands (see Eaton *et al.* 2024a). There has been a decline from the higher numbers recorded in the 1980s and 1990s, however.

England, SW

Isles of Scilly Two sites: (1) two possible breeding pairs; (2) one possible breeding pair.

England, SE

Kent Two sites: (1) one probable breeding pair; (2) one possible breeding pair.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three sites: (1–2) one probable breeding pair; (3) one possible breeding pair.

Suffolk Two sites: (1–2) one probable breeding pair.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one probable breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one confirmed breeding pair and two probable breeding pairs across three nearby locations. **Orkney** Seven sites: (1) three pairs bred (broods seen) and one probable breeding pair; (2–4) one confirmed breeding pair (broods seen); (5–6) one probable breeding pair; (7) one possible breeding pair. **Outer Hebrides** Three sites: (1) two probable breeding pairs; (2–3) one probable breeding pair.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Scarce 800 bp

25y trend: **weak increase** +72%

Red

High

189 sites: 374–870 pairs. This is the highest total of Common Pochard we have published in 34 years of reporting on the species and a continuation of the increase the breeding population has undergone through that period (see Eaton *et al.* 2023a).

Common Pochard				Norfolk (e 40)	13	30	40
	S	CP	TP	Northamptonshire (e 1)	1	0	1
England (e 882)	185	369	851	Suffolk (e 10)	5	3	5
England, SW (e 147)	10	10	125	England, C (e 24)	11	5	24
Hampshire (e 10)	4	5	6	Leics & Rutland (e 1)	1	1	1
Isle of Wight (e 7)	2	0	7	Nottinghamshire (e 10)	3	2	10
Isles of Scilly (e 4)	2	3	4	Staffordshire (e 2)	2	2	2
Somerset (e 120)	1	2	102	Warwickshire (e 8)	3	0	8
Wiltshire (e 6)	1	0	6	Worcestershire (e 3)	2	0	3
England, SE (e 381)	90	167	380	England, N (e 203)	31	133	200
Bedfordshire (e 6)	3	4	5	Cheshire & Wirral (e 37)	2	36	37
Berkshire (e 9)	5	3	9	Cleveland (e 51)	7	5	51
Buckinghamshire (e 1)	1	1	1	Co. Durham (e 4)	1	4	4
Essex (e 124)	14	29	124	Cumbria (e 1)	1	0	1
Greater London (e 17)	12	10	17	Lancs & N Mersey (e 20)	2	17	17
Hertfordshire (e 40)	16	29	40	Northumberland (e 8)	3	8	8
Kent (e 135)	27	62	135	Yorkshire (e 82)	15	63	82
Oxfordshire (e 8)	2	4	8	Wales (e 15)	3	5	15
Surrey (e 14)	6	13	14	Anglesey (e 13)	2	3	13
Sussex (e 27)	4	12	27	Carmarthenshire (e 2)	1	2	2
England, E (e 127)	43	54	122	Scotland, S (e 4+)	1	0	4
Cambridgeshire (e 65)	20	20	65	Perth & Kinross	1	0	4
Lincolnshire (e 11)	4	1	11	TOTALS (e 901+)	189	374	870

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*
Occasional breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. A typical record of birds lingering in the spring.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: a pair was present between 10th April and 4th May at a site where Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula* breed.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Rare 41 bp

25y trend: **weak decrease** -29%

Red

Near-complete

Eight sites: 8–38 pairs. A relatively poor year – the third-lowest total reported in the last decade, despite improved monitoring coverage in recent years. As graphed in last year’s report (Eaton *et al.* 2024a), the population appears to have been broadly stable over the last 20 years, but there has been a 72% decline since the beginning of the RBBP’s reporting period in 1973, including the complete loss of the species from Northern Ireland.

Common Scoter				Argyll	1	1	5
	S	CP	TP	Caithness/Highland	1	1	11
Scotland, Mid	1	2	4	Highland	4	3	17
Perth & Kinross	1	2	4	Shetland	1	1	1
Scotland, N & W	7	6	34	TOTALS	8	8	38

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Rare 200 bp* (no trend available)

Red

Moderate

88–95 breeding females. This is the highest total we have reported since 2013 and may reflect renewed monitoring effort of the species by the Strathspey Goldeneye Study Group. Regardless, levels of recording do not match those of previous decades, making it difficult to determine the true extent of any population change since the peak of 218 pairs reported in 2009 (Holling *et al.* 2011), although there are concerns that numbers have fallen.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Common Goldeneye			Scotland, Mid	5	5
	CP	TP	Moray & Nairn	2	2
England	15	16	NE Scotland	2	2
England, SW	0	1	Perth & Kinross	1	1
Avon	0	1	Scotland, N & W	68	74
England, N	15	15	Caithness	0	2
Northumberland	15	15	Highland	68	72
Scotland	73	79	TOTALS	88	95

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

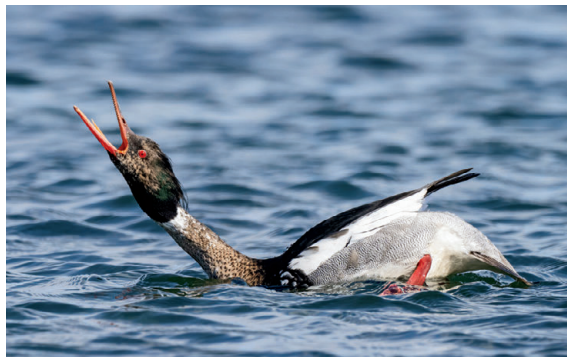
Less scarce 1,565 bp* (no trend available)

Amber

Low

160 sites: 132–272 pairs. This is the highest total reported by the RBBP in the seven years since Red-breasted Merganser was added to our species list, which hopefully points to an increase in awareness amongst bird-watchers of the significance of breeding-season records of this scarce duck. There is still some way to go, however, as the total is still only 17% of the estimated population size, and we are not yet able to infer any population trends from our reporting.

* Humphreys *et al.* (2016).



David Tipling

345. Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* displaying, Sullom Voe, Shetland, June 2019.

Red-breasted Merganser			Scotland, Mid (e 30+)	6	8
	CP	TP	Angus & Dundee	3	3
England, N (e 14)	11	14	Perth & Kinross (e 2)	0	2
Cumbria (e 9)	8	9	Upper Forth	3	3
Lancs & N Mersey (e 2)	1	2	Scotland, N & W (e 319+)	109	190
Northumberland (e 3)	2	3	Argyll (e 100)	29	29
Wales (e 28)	3	21	Caithness	1	1
Anglesey (e 10)	1	5	Highland (e 70)	15	60
Caernarfonshire (e 2–3)	2	2	Orkney (e 13)	1	5
Meirionnydd (e 15)	0	14	Outer Hebrides (e 100)	28	60
Scotland (e 375+)	118	220	Shetland	35	35
Scotland, S (e 26+)	3	22	Northern Ireland (e 17+)	0	17
Ayrshire	1	3	Co. Derry/Londonderry	0	1
Clyde	1	4	Co. Fermanagh	0	16
Clyde Islands	1	15	TOTALS (e 434+)	132	272

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*
Scarce 542 individuals* 29y trend: **strong decrease** -75%

Red
High

168 males at 48 active leks. A total of 87 lek sites were monitored across four recording areas in Scotland. While the number of Capercaillies remains at a critically low level, it is pleasing to report an increase in the number of lekking males for the second year in succession, up by 16 from the 152 reported for 2022. The number of birds outside the core of the range in Strathspey continues to dwindle though, with only a single displaying male recorded in both Perth & Kinross and Moray & Nairn.

* Wilkinson *et al.* (2023).

Capercaillie			Moray & Nairn	1	1	Scotland, N & W	43	161
	leks	MM	NE Scotland	3	5	Highland	43	161
Scotland, Mid	5	7	Perth & Kinross	1	1	TOTALS	48	168

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*
Scarce 539 males 25y trend: **stable** -6%

Amber
High

4–541 singing males. RBBP reports have frequently commented on the peaks and troughs in the UK’s Common Quail population, which is well known for its periodic irruptions northward that lead to greatly increased numbers in such ‘Quail years’ and, conversely, years with many fewer reports (see fig. 2). Currently, however, we appear to be in an unusual period of stability, with the UK totals in the last five years ranging between 522 and 584 singing males.

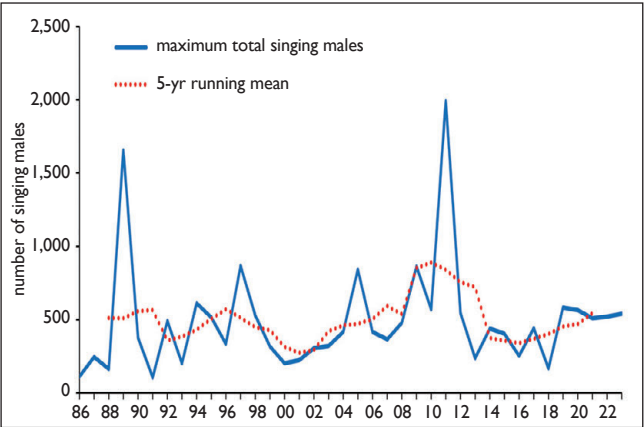


Fig. 2. Numbers of singing male Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix* in the UK, 1986–2023, with a 5-year running mean.

Common Quail		Oxfordshire	15	England, N	82
	SM	Sussex	7	Cheshire & Wirral	6
England	374	England, E	81	Co. Durham	5
England, SW	96	Cambridgeshire	20	Cumbria	9
Avon	4	Lincolnshire	28	Greater Manchester	3
Dorset	25	Norfolk	27	Lancs & N Mersey	11
Gloucestershire	14	Suffolk	6	Northumberland	36
Hampshire	5	England, C	55	Yorkshire	12
Isle of Wight	1	Derbyshire	22	Wales	25
Somerset	6	Herefordshire	1	Anglesey	4
Wiltshire	41	Leics & Rutland	5	Caernarfonshire	1
England, SE	60	Shropshire	14	Ceredigion	4
Berkshire	13	Staffordshire	4	Denbigh & Flint	5
Buckinghamshire	5	Warwickshire	4	Montgomeryshire	4
Hertfordshire	8	Worcestershire	5	Pembrokeshire	3
Kent	12			Radnorshire	4

Common Quail <i>continued</i>		Lothian	19	Argyll	4
Scotland	142	Scotland, Mid	42	Caithness	4
Scotland, S	61	Angus & Dundee	4	Highland	9
Ayrshire	4	Fife	14	Orkney	1
Borders	31	Moray & Nairn	3	Outer Hebrides	4
Clyde	2	NE Scotland	21	Shetland	17
Dumfries & G'way	5	Scotland, N & W	39	TOTAL	541

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Very rare 18 bp

(no trend available)

Near-complete

One extensive site: 23 nesting females. This is the highest number of breeding birds reported since the release of birds by the Great Bustard Project began in 2004; initial releases were sourced from Russia (2004–12), then from Spain (2014–19). It is estimated that approximately one-third of the established population now consists of birds bred in the wild on Salisbury Plain.

England, SW

Wiltshire One extensive site: 23 breeding females; 33 females were recorded at leks.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Less scarce 2,092 bp* 28y trend (BBS): **strong decrease -98%**

Red

Moderate

262 sites: 20–466 pairs. The number of European Turtle Dove pairs reported to the RBBP is clearly incomplete when compared with the estimate of 2,092 pairs derived from the first national survey in 2021 (Stanbury *et al.* 2023), and it is difficult to know whether we can read anything from the 2023 total being the lowest we have reported to date. Reporting of European Turtle Dove is proportionally lower in counties in the core of the range in southeast and east England, where birdwatching coverage of the extensive areas of farmland occupied by this



David Tipling

346. European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Snettisham, Norfolk, June 2022.

species is patchy at best. Monitoring in counties on the edge of the breeding range, where the species is now a prized local rarity, is more likely to be complete and our annual reporting therefore provides a valuable measure of range change. The RBBP began reporting on European Turtle Doves in 2018, when breeding records were received from 26 counties (Eaton *et al.* 2020); just five years later this has fallen to 18 counties, with no breeding records from Berkshire, Cornwall, Devon, Isle of Wight, Northamptonshire, Somerset, Warwickshire and Wiltshire in 2023.

* Stanbury *et al.* (2023).

European Turtle Dove				Kent	64	10	129	England, C	9	0	11
	S	CP	TP	Oxfordshire	2	0	3	Derbyshire	2	0	2
England, SW	3	1	5	Surrey	1	0	1	Leics & Rutland	1	0	1
Hampshire	3	1	5	Sussex	5	0	28	Nottinghamshire	5	0	7
England, SE	94	11	198	England, E	119	8	191	Worcestershire	1	0	1
Bedfordshire	3	0	9	Cambridgeshire	22	6	28	England, N	37	0	61
Buckinghamshire	1	0	1	Lincolnshire	24	1	29	Yorkshire	37	0	61
Essex	16	1	25	Norfolk	31	1	79	TOTALS	262	20	466
Hertfordshire	2	0	2	Suffolk	42	0	55				

Corn Crane *Crex crex*
Scarce 881 bp

25y trend: **weak increase** +54%

Red
Near-complete

897 singing males. Following a strong conservation-driven recovery and subsequent decline, the UK's Corn Crane population appears to have stabilised around 800–900 singing males in recent years (fig. 3). Releases continue at a site in Norfolk, but notably Corn Crakes no longer appear to be present at the Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire – the site of a reintroduction project between 2003 and 2016.

England, E
Cambridgeshire Six, at two sites. **Norfolk** 13, at two sites.
Scotland, N & W
Argyll Total 423: Coll, 68; Colonsay & Oronsay, 18; Iona, 10; Islay, 31; Mull, 3; Tiree, 293.
Highland Total 31: mainland, 6; Canna, 11; Skye, 14. **Orkney** Total 12. **Outer Hebrides** Total 405: Barra & Vatersay, 73; Benbecula, 8; Berneray, 5; Harris, 2; Lewis, 88; North Uist, 99; South Uist, 130.
Northern Ireland
Co. Antrim One site, five. **Co. Armagh** One. **Co. Tyrone** One.

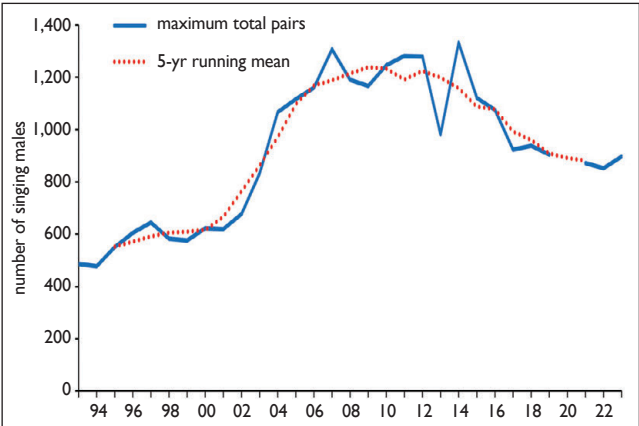


Fig. 3. Numbers of singing male Corn Crakes *Crex crex* in the UK, 1993–2023, with a 5-year running mean.

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*
Very rare 25 bp

25y trend: **weak decrease** -34%

Amber
High

13 sites: 0–20 singing males/pairs. A typical return for recent years. Spotted Crane was an extremely rare breeding bird when the RBBP began recording in 1973, and the species has shown a 145% increase over our entire reporting period. This long-term trend hides the pattern of increase to a peak in the late 1990s and subsequent decline, with considerable between-year fluctuations (see fig. 5 in Eaton *et al.* 2023b).

England, SW

Dorset One site: one singing male between 24th April and 13th May. **Oxfordshire** One site: four males singing throughout May. **Somerset** Two sites: (1) two singing males between 13th and 22nd May; (2) one singing male on 15th April.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) one singing male at two adjacent locations between 30th April and 17th June; (2) one singing male. **Norfolk** Three sites: (1) one singing male between 19th and 27th May; (2) one singing male between 27th May and 6th June; (3) one singing male between 5th and 17th June.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one singing male.

Scotland, S

Lothian One site: one singing male between 21st and 27th June.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness One site: one singing male between 21st June and 5th July. **Highland** One site: four singing males.

Little Crane *Zapornia parva* Potential breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. This is the third record we have reported in the last six years, following records in 2018 and 2020, all in Cambridgeshire. It is also the first singing male, with the previous two records being calling females.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one singing male from 14th to 24th June.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Rare 68 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +2,031%

Amber

Near-complete

46 sites: 62–86 pairs. The UK's breeding population of Common Cranes continues to prosper, with a new record total of pairs, albeit with lower productivity than reported in 2022.

Common Crane					Lincolnshire			
	S	CP	TP	YF				
England	39	57	78	32	Norfolk	9	12	17
England, SW	15	27	31	14	Suffolk	3	3	5
Dorset	2	0	2	0	England, N	3	4	7
Gloucestershire	1	5	5	2	Yorkshire	3	4	7
Somerset	10	21	22	11	Scotland	7	5	8
Wiltshire	2	1	2	1	Scotland, Mid	6	5	7
England, SE	1	1	2	0	NE Scotland	6	5	7
Oxfordshire	1	1	2	0	Scotland, N & W	1	0	1
England, E	20	25	38	16	Caithness	1	0	1
Cambridgeshire	6	6	11	6	TOTALS	46	62	86
								36

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

Very rare 21 bp

25y trend: **strong decrease** -59%

Red

Near-complete

Nine sites: 7–16 pairs. This is a drop from 20 pairs in 2022 to the lowest number ever reported by the RBBP. At least the number of young reported, at 12, was an increase on the previous year's seven. The population has declined by 66% over the 50 years of RBBP reporting.

The Panel notes with sadness the death of Malcolm Harvey in 2024 (Benn & Prest 2024). Malcolm put an immense effort into the monitoring of Slavonian Grebes in the Highlands (as well as other rare breeding birds such as European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus*) over nearly 60 years. He and his collaborators compiled what has been accurately described as the longest-running and most complete dataset of any British breeding bird (Benn *et al.* 2023); few, if any,

Slavonian Grebe
Podiceps auritus
with young.

Kirsty Yeomans



other individuals can have made such a significant contribution to our knowledge on, and conservation of, a rare breeding bird species.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Nine sites: (1) two confirmed breeding pairs, four young fledged; (2) two confirmed breeding pairs, three young fledged; (3) one pair fledged one young, one probable breeding pair; (4) one pair fledged three young; (5) one pair fledged one young; (6) four probable breeding pairs; (7) two probable breeding pairs; (8) one probable breeding pair; (9) one possible breeding pair.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Rare 61 bp

25y trend: **stable** +16%

Amber

Near-complete

21 sites: 61–73 pairs. This is the highest total of Black-necked Grebe pairs we have ever reported: our logo species has increased by 263% since monitoring began in 1973. Over that period the key sites, counties and regions for the species have changed considerably: Martin & Smith (2007) reviewed changes from 1973 to 2004, and more recently we have documented how breeding in Scotland and Northumberland has ceased while new populations have established elsewhere, such as in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire (Eaton *et al.* 2022). Over our five decades of monitoring, we have received records from 257 sites (for which adequate location details were provided) in 46 counties. This remarkably high number in part reflects the wandering behaviour of Black-necked Grebes early in the breeding season, as they may linger, and often display, at sites at which breeding does not subsequently occur. Regardless, confirmed breeding records have come from 80 sites in 23 counties and, as fig. 4 shows, these are broadly spread across England and southern Scotland. Confirmed breeding has been reported from 73 10-km squares since 1973, over three times as many as in the four-year window of the last bird atlas (Balmer *et al.* 2013 reported confirmed breeding in 23 squares) – further highlighting the long-term shifts in the species' UK breeding range.

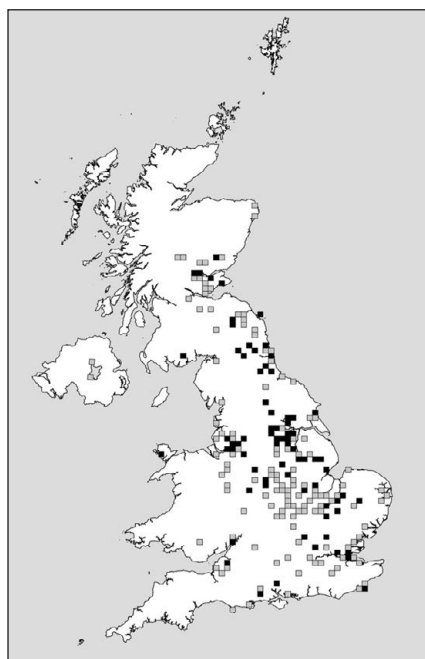


Fig. 4. Breeding records of Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* in the UK, 1973–2023. Black squares show 10-km squares with confirmed breeding records since 1973, grey squares show those with possible or probable breeding records.

Black-necked Grebe					Nottinghamshire	6	7	10	7
	S	CP	TP	YF	Staffordshire	2	2	2	1
England, SE	2	1	5	2	England, N	9	51	54	74+
Essex	1	0	4	0	Cheshire & Wirral	3	21	21	17+
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	2	Greater Manchester	1	10	10	45
England, E	2	0	2	0	Northumberland	1	0	1	0
Cambridgeshire	1	0	1	0	Yorkshire	4	20	22	12
Lincolnshire	1	0	1	0	TOTALS	21	61	73	84+
England, C	8	9	12	8					

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Scarce 318 bp

25y trend: **weak increase** +65%

Amber

High

311–323 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 that there were an additional five pairs in Suffolk and 51 in Norfolk. In the early years of RBBP reporting, the population only ever reached double figures, but a Nature Conservancy Council and RSPB project from 1987 onwards enabled a strong recovery, with an increase of 336% since 1973. The population remains vulnerable, however, with a significant proportion breeding on arable land where nests may be lost to agricultural operations; teams of conservation volunteers play an essential role in finding nests and working with farmers to ensure they are protected (Eaton *et al.* 2024b).

Eurasian Stone-curlew			Sussex	4	4
	CP	TP	England, E	182	187
England, SW	116	121	Cambridgeshire	6	6
Hampshire	21	26	Norfolk	73	75
Wiltshire	95	95	Suffolk	103	106
England, SE	12	14	England, C	1	1
Berkshire	6	8	Leics & Rutland	1	1
Oxfordshire	2	2	TOTALS	311	323

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Very rare 5 bp

15y trend: **strong increase** +550%

Amber

Near-complete

12 sites: 9–14 breeding pairs. It is getting increasingly difficult to track the movements of pairs of Black-winged Stilts between sites. In addition to the breeding records below, there were pairs at sites in **Essex** on 17th May, and at another from 27th to 30th May, and at a site in **Cambridgeshire** from 1st to 4th May. The pairs reported below represent a new high for Black-winged Stilts in the UK, although the total of 13 young fledged was matched by the six pairs that bred in 2017. This Mediterranean coloniser has now bred annually for ten years, with 47 offspring fledged over this period; whether these young are returning to fuel the colonisation is not known, although the presence of a 2CY pair in Yorkshire, not far from the site of successful breeding in 2022, hints that that could be the case.

England, SE

Essex One site: one pair between 19th May and 17th June, with mating and nest-building observed. A second pair was present on 25th May only. **Kent** Two sites: (1) three confirmed breeding pairs. Two pairs arrived on 17th May and a third pair by 31st May, with nesting occurring from 22nd May, 26th May and 2nd June. The first and third pair failed on 10th and 15th June respectively; the second pair fledged four young and was last seen on 2nd August; (2) a pair

and a second female between 26th April and 2nd May, with mating observed. Subsequently a pair between 17th and 23rd June showed incubation behaviour without a nest – these were probably failed breeders from site 1.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one confirmed breeding pair, present between 29th May and 12th July, hatched four chicks, which were lost to predation around 5th–6th July. **Lincolnshire** One site: two confirmed breeding pairs fledged four and two young. One pair arrived on 1st May, the other on 23rd May; birds remained until 24th August. **Norfolk** One site: one probable breeding pair present between at least 26th May and 19th June; breeding may have been attempted. A second pair was present briefly, as well as two individuals. **Suffolk** Three sites: one pair moved between three sites between 30th April and 2nd May, with copulation being observed at two of these sites.

England, N

Yorkshire Three sites: (1) two confirmed breeding pairs, one of adults, one of 2CY birds, both failed and moved to site 2 and 4 respectively; (2) the adult pair from site 1 hatched four and fledged three young; (3) a confirmed breeding pair was present from 4th to 29th May, but failed; (4) the failed 2CY pair from site 1 was present from 14th June to 21st July, but no further breeding behaviour was reported.



Mark Rayment

347. Juvenile Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Frampton Marsh, Lincolnshire, July 2023.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Less scarce 2,229 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +207%

Amber

Near-complete

134 sites: 2,188 pairs. The table gives totals of confirmed pairs only, so may underestimate the size of the breeding population slightly. Numbers of Pied Avocets recorded breeding in the UK have exceeded 2,000 pairs annually for eight years, except in 2020 when Covid-19 lockdowns impacted monitoring effort.



Stephen Message

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* brooding.

Pied Avocet			England, E	52	857	Co. Durham	1	15
	S	CP	Cambridgeshire	8	19	Cumbria	2	30
England	128	2,129	Lincolnshire	9	213	Greater Manchester	1	1
England, SW	9	176	Norfolk	23	427	Lancs & N Mersey	10	198
Avon	1	6	Suffolk	12	198	Northumberland	4	16
Dorset	1	1	England, C	12	37	Yorkshire	14	110
Gloucestershire	2	29	Leics & Rutland	1	4	Wales	5	57
Hampshire	4	88	Nottinghamshire	2	10	Anglesey	1	1
Somerset	1	52	Staffordshire	5	11	Denbigh & Flint	3	41
England, SE	20	584	Worcestershire	4	12	Gwent	1	15
Essex	7	250	England, N	35	475	Scotland, N & W	1	2
Kent	8	251	Cheshire & Wirral	2	43	Outer Hebrides	1	2
Sussex	5	83	Cleveland	1	62	TOTALS	134	2,188

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Scarce 689 bp

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

Green

Moderate

446–684 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 88 possible breeding pairs was also submitted to the Panel, these may have been passage birds or those using sites only temporarily. Numbers reported in 2023 were around par, but yet again (and as highlighted in last year’s report) good numbers were reported from Scotland; there has been an increase of 225% there over the last ten years.



Mark Raymond

348. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Flamborough, Yorkshire, July 2023.

Little Ringed Plover		Norfolk (e 35–45)	24	Carmarthenshire (e 70)	2
	TP	Northamptonshire (e 10)	7	Denbigh & Flint (e 3)	3
England (e 769)	578	Suffolk (e 15)	12	East Glamorgan (e 8)	8
England, SW (e 83)	79	England, C (e 161)	130	Gower (e 5)	3
Avon (e 4)	4	Derbyshire (e 20)	20	Gwent (e 1)	1
Devon (e 12)	12	Herefordshire (e 11)	5	Meirionnydd (e 5)	3
Dorset (e 7)	7	Leics & Rutland (e 20)	20	Montgomeryshire (e 20)	5
Gloucestershire (e 12)	12	Nottinghamshire (e 20)	13	Pembrokeshire (e 1)	1
Hampshire (e 35)	33	Shropshire (e 6)	6	Radnorshire	3
Isle of Wight (e 1)	1	Staffordshire (e 37)	34	Scotland (e 82+)	63
Somerset (e 6)	6	Warwickshire (e 30)	17	Scotland, S (e 53+)	45
Wiltshire (e 5)	4	West Midlands (e 4)	4	Ayrshire	3
England, SE (e 142)	119	Worcestershire (e 13)	11	Borders (e 21)	21
Bedfordshire (e 11)	11	England, N (e 247)	141	Clyde	13
Berkshire (e 11)	11	Cheshire & Wirral (e 17)	7	Dumfries & G’way (e 6)	1
Buckinghamshire (e 9)	9	Cleveland (e 5)	5	Lothian (e 8)	7
Essex (e 25)	25	Co. Durham (e 35)	14	Scotland, Mid (e 29)	18
Hertfordshire (e 11)	11	Cumbria (e 21)	21	Angus & Dundee (e 4)	1
Kent (e 20–30)	13	Greater Manchester (e 34)	14	Fife	2
Oxfordshire (e 9)	9	Lancs & N Mersey (e 30)	9	Moray & Nairn (e 2)	1
Surrey (e 11)	11	Northumberland (e 40)	23	NE Scotland (e 10)	9
Sussex (e 19)	19	Yorkshire (e 65)	48	Perth & Kinross	2
England, E (e 136)	109	Wales (e 137+)	43	Upper Forth (e 4)	3
Cambridgeshire (e 29)	29	Anglesey (e 1)	1	TOTAL (e 988+)	684
Lincolnshire (e 37)	37	Breconshire (e 15)	13		

Eurasian Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce 423 males*

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

Red

Low

18–49 ‘pairs’. A typical return for a species which is poorly recorded outside of national surveys. Fortunately, a montane bird survey (covering this species and Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*) was conducted in 2025, so we will be able to provide a more robust update on numbers (and how they have changed since the last survey in 2011) in due course.

* Hayhow *et al.* (2015).

Eurasian Dotterel				Moray & Nairn	3	0	4
	S	CP	TP	NE Scotland	2	5	14
England	1	0	1	Perth & Kinross	4	6	6
England, N	1	0	1	Scotland, N & W	16	7	24
Cumbria	1	0	1	Highland	16	7	24
Scotland	25	18	48	TOTALS	26	18	49
Scotland, Mid	9	11	24				

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Scarce 378 bp* (no trend available)

Red

Low

14 sites: 10–39 pairs. Eurasian Whimbrel is another species that receives little monitoring coverage outside of national surveys, although recent site monitoring related to windfarm developments has produced an increase in records submitted as Schedule 1 licence returns.

* Skene & Perkins (2023).

England, C

Warwickshire One site: the same individual as that present in 2021 and 2022 returned and maintained a territory from 7th May to 13th June.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one confirmed breeding pair at the same site as used in 2022. **Outer Hebrides** Two sites: one confirmed breeding pair and one probable breeding pair. **Shetland** Ten sites: a total of eight confirmed breeding pairs, 24 probable breeding pairs and three possible breeding pairs were reported.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Rare 57 bp 25y trend: **weak increase +36%**

Red

Near-complete

Nine sites: 51–57 pairs. The increasing trend reported for Black-tailed Godwits over the last 25 years reflects that the baseline falls in the population slump of the 1990s (fig. 5, which shows the trend for *L. l. limosa* and *L. l. islandica* combined). Over the longer term since RBBP monitoring began in 1973, however, the population has declined slightly (-18%), while over a shorter term there has been little change (e.g. -2% over the last ten years). The boost in productivity provided by Project Godwit, which ‘headstarted’ 206 young godwits in the Cambridgeshire and Norfolk Fens between 2018 and 2022

by collecting clutches and raising the young in captivity, may have bought some time for this beleaguered population. Without this intervention, productivity is extremely low; only two birds fledged in 2023, due to predation of eggs and chicks, which is about 10% of the number required to maintain the population. There has also been a marked shift in the Fens population in recent years, with low productivity resulting in a steady

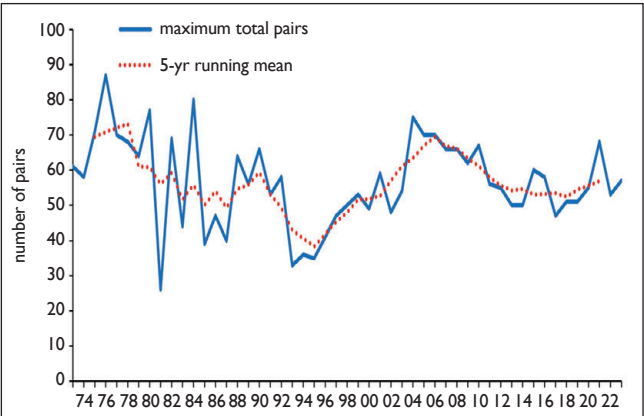


Fig. 5. Maximum numbers of Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* breeding in the UK, 1973–23, with a 5-year running mean.

decline at the Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire, whilst the recruitment of headstarted birds into the breeding population at the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire/Norfolk, has resulted in a rapid, counterbalancing increase there (from three pairs in 2017 to 23 pairs in 2023).

Black-tailed Godwit					Norfolk	1	14	14	0
	S	CP	TP	YF	England, N	1	1	1	0
<i>L. l. limosa</i>					Lancs & N Mersey	1	1	1	0
England					<i>L. l. islandica</i>				
England, SW					Scotland, N & W	4	3	8	?
Gloucestershire					Orkney	3	3	7	?
England, E					Shetland	1	0	1	0
Cambridgeshire					TOTALS	9	51	57	2+

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Very rare 10 females 25y trend: **weak decrease** -43%

Red

Moderate

Nine sites: 10+ breeding females. Ruff is one exception to the pattern of increasing trends in the rare breeding waders with northern breeding distributions. Whilst the species continues to feature annually in RBBP reports, and interesting records of displaying males and lingering females are regularly received from favoured areas, most particularly on Scottish islands, confirmed breeding records are rare (only nine this century) and the trend continues downwards. The pattern here mirrors the widespread declines across the western flyway population of this species, with massive range losses in southern and central areas (Keller *et al.* 2020). Although there may be multiple factors driving this change in the Ruff breeding population, including widespread degradation and loss of both breeding and wintering habitats, the spatial pattern of change does conform with predictions of climate change impacts, for example Zöckler (2002), Huntley *et al.* (2007).

England, N
Lancashire & North Merseyside One site: two males and one female present in the spring.
Scotland, Mid
NE Scotland Two sites: (1) birds present from 30th April into July, lekking reported on 19th May with at least one female present; (2) two males displaying on a single date.
Scotland, N & W
Argyll One site: up to nine males and two females present between May and July. **Orkney** Two sites: (1) two males and three females on 7th May, males still present in early July; (2) two juveniles seen on 1st August but not known whether they originated at the site. **Outer Hebrides** Two sites: (1) male and female present between 8th May and 20th June, although not seen together; (2) male from 3rd May, pair from 9th May to 12th June and female stayed to 18th June. **Shetland** One site: a displaying male between 1st and 30th June, female present on 1st June only.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus*

Potential breeder

One site: one displaying male. The male reported below was also seen on Orkney on 20th May, and at other sites on Shetland on 21st May and 2nd and 4th July, and is assumed to have been the same bird as held territory at the same Shetland site in 2022.

Scotland, N & W
Shetland One site: a male held territory from 4th June to 1st July.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii***Very rare** 2 bp

(no trend available)

Four sites: 1–5 breeding pairs. This species made a surprising return to RBBP reports in 2021, and it seems likely that breeding was attempted in that year and the following one, but definitive proof eluded the observers. In both years it was believed that the nest site was flooded out by rising water levels; in 2023, birds returned to the same site and the nest was located under licence, and so the first breeding in the UK since 1997 (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999) was confirmed. Unfortunately, it succumbed to the same fate.

Of the other records, one seems likely to be one of the individuals from the failed breeding attempt dispersing after the nesting failure (a suggestion that is supported by records in subsequent years, which we will return to in future reports). The most interesting record is, however, the pair at a further site in Highland, with the intriguing possibility that they hatched young.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: a single bird in suitable breeding habitat on 2nd June.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Three sites: (1) One confirmed breeding pair at the site occupied since 2021. Birds returned on 26th May, and a clutch of four eggs was laid, but the nest was flooded out by 2nd July, if not earlier. A third individual was also present; (2) a single bird was present in suitable breeding habitat on 7th July – it seems probable that this was one of the individuals from site 1 following the failure at that site; (3) a probable breeding pair was recorded between 1st June and 7th July. On the latter date two small wader chicks were seen in the vicinity of the pair, but the observer was not completely confident that they were of this species.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima***Very rare** 1 bp25y trend: **strong decrease** -62%**Red**

Near-complete

One site: one confirmed breeding pair. A pair bred at the traditional site in north Scotland. Since the first confirmed breeding record in 1978, Purple Sandpipers have been reported in all but four of the 46 years (and one of these absences was in 2020, when Covid-19 restrictions prevented most ornithological fieldwork in the high montane areas they occupy). Multiple pairs were reported in most years through the 1980s and 1990s (fig. 6), and records were received from a number of sites (though a precise figure cannot be provided as in some cases site information was not shared with the RBBP). More recently, numbers have fallen, and since 2015 there have only been records of a single pair at the same site – although systematic checking of previously occupied sites does not occur, so it is possible that additional pairs have gone unrecorded. The Scottish breeding grounds, at a latitude of 57°N, lie at the very southern edge of an international breeding distribution which stretches up to Franz Josef Land at 82°N. How long this species, which seems to have such a precarious grip on its status as a UK

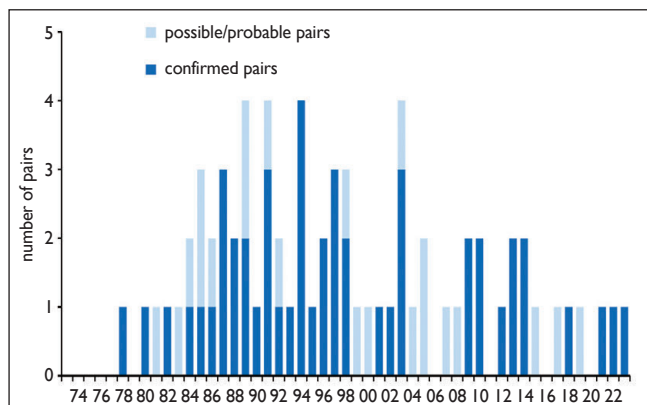


Fig. 6. Numbers of pairs of Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* breeding in the UK, 1973–2023.

breeder, can persevere in the face of climate change is unclear; but perhaps the increase in other rare northern waders, such as Temminck’s Stint, Red-necked Phalarope and Wood Sandpiper, gives some glimmer of hope?

Scotland, N

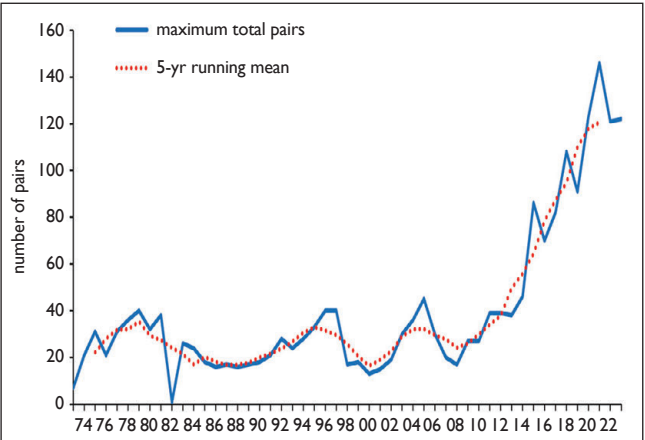
One site: one pair incubating a clutch of four eggs – the outcome of this breeding attempt was not reported.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*
Rare 121 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +282%

Red
Near-complete

49 sites: 64–122 breeding pairs/males. This is the fourth successive year in which over 100 pairs of this charismatic wader have been reported; as fig. 7 shows, recent numbers exceed any reported in the 50-year history of the RBBP, following a sharp increase over the last decade.

Fig. 7. Maximum numbers of Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* breeding in the UK, 1973–2023, with a 5-year running mean.



Red-necked Phalarope				Scotland, N & W			Orkney					
	S	CP	TP	Argyll								
England, N	1	0	1	Caithness	1	0	1	Shetland	32	47	89	
Northumberland	1	0	1	Highland	2	1	2	TOTALS	49	64	122	



349. Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Shetland, June 2018.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Very rare 6 bp

20y trend: **strong increase** +173%

Amber

Near-complete

Seven sites: 2–7 pairs. Another good year for this northern wader; only in 2021, when there was a maximum total of nine pairs, have more been reported.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Seven sites: two confirmed breeding pairs (one with two chicks, another with a clutch of four eggs), three probable breeding pairs and two possible breeding pairs.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Rare 65 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +566%

Amber

High

56 sites: 4–98 pairs. Yet again we report a new record total for the number of pairs of Wood Sandpipers, with a 61% increase since 2022. This rise reflects both the discovery of new sites and increased numbers breeding in known locations. Remarkable though this seems, it is just a continuation of the recent trend: numbers have tripled in the last ten years. There has been a 1,383% increase in the number of breeding Wood Sandpipers, all of which are in Scotland, over the 50 years since the Panel started reporting in 1973; for the first three decades, it remained an extremely rare species, reported only in single figures (fig. 8).

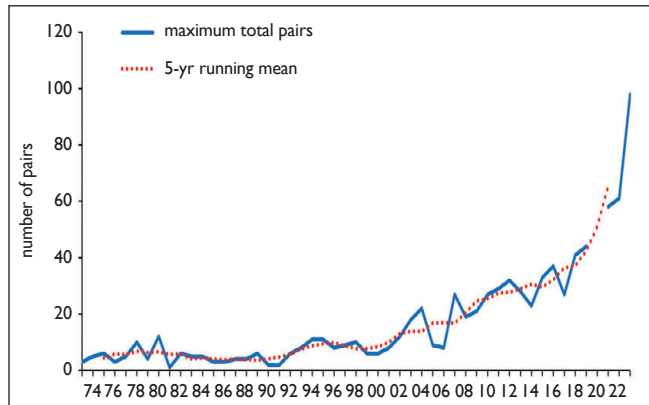


Fig. 8. Maximum numbers of Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* reported by the RBBP, 1973–2023, with a 5-year running mean. Data for 2020 are omitted owing to the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on monitoring coverage.

Wood Sandpiper				Argyll	1	0	1
	S	CP	TP	Caithness	16	3	25
Scotland, Mid	1	0	2	Highland	36	1	68
NE Scotland	1	0	2	Outer Hebrides	2	0	2
Scotland, N & W	55	4	96	TOTALS	56	4	98

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

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

Amber

Low

36–222 pairs. We report on only a small proportion of the Common Greenshank population, hardly surprising given the extensive distribution over the north and west of Scotland. This being the case, it is hard to know whether the relatively high number reported for 2023 (the third-highest total since the species was added to our list in 1996) reflects an increase, or merely a fluctuation in recording or reporting. There does appear to be an increase in the small number in Shetland, however.

* Hancock *et al.* (1997).

Common Greenshank		Perth & Kinross	9	Outer Hebrides	46
	TP	Scotland, N & W	208	Shetland	5
Scotland, S	5	Argyll	6	TOTALS	222
Clyde	5	Caithness	34		
Scotland, Mid	9	Highland	117		

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*
Less scarce 2,366 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +5,158%

Amber
Near-complete

44 sites: 3,457–3,482 pairs. In 2022 we reported a new record maximum total (2,610 pairs) for this gull; this total was comfortably exceeded in 2023, with an increase of one-third on the previous year. Large between-year fluctuations in numbers are typical of this species, with most of the population concentrated in a few colonies that are vulnerable to disturbance and flooding on spring tides (93% of the 2023 total occurred in the five colonies holding 100 or more pairs). The underlying trend is a rapid increase equating to more than a doubling every five years over the last 25 years. While most of the breeding population remains concentrated in southern England (with 2,183 nests at one site alone, Langstone Harbour in Hampshire), there has also been some range expansion. Most notably, 2023 saw the first confirmed breeding in Scotland, with two pairs of 3CY birds nesting and hatching chicks in North-east Scotland, although none survived to fledging (Short 2024).

The most obvious impediment to the continued increase of the UK’s Mediterranean Gull population, and to the species’ removal from consideration by the RBBP (the 5-year mean now comfortably exceeds our 2,000-pair threshold), is the impact of HPAI. No mortality due to HPAI was reported in Mediterranean Gulls in 2022 (Tremlett *et al.* 2024), but in 2023 widespread outbreaks occurred in Black-headed Gull colonies, within which Mediterranean Gulls often breed, and with this came reports of Mediterranean Gull deaths. At the large colony in Lancashire & North Merseyside, 119 pairs of Mediterranean Gulls were counted by aerial survey, breeding amongst an estimated 12,821 pairs of Black-headed Gulls. The first deaths among the gull colony were noted in mid April, and by late May it was estimated that 150 birds were dying each day. Over the course of the breeding season, an estimated 9,000 adult and more than 10,000 young Black-headed Gulls died, along with 40+ adult and 50+ young Mediterranean Gulls (S. J. Martin pers. comm.). The rate of adult mortality (17+%) is close to that reported for a site in Poland (21%), where Mediterranean Gulls similarly nested amongst the more abundant Black-headed Gulls (Przymencki *et al.* 2024).

Mediterranean Gull				England, C	1	1	1
	S	CP	TP	West Midlands	1	1	1
England	38	3,438	3,463	England, N	8	129	136
England, SW	7	2,498	2,506	Cleveland	1	1	6
Dorset	3	280	280	Cumbria	1	0	1
Hampshire	3	2,218	2,218	Lancs & N Mersey	3	120	121
Isle of Wight	1	0	8	Northumberland	1	2	2
England, SE	12	717	724	Yorkshire	2	6	6
Berkshire	1	0	1	Wales	2	5	5
Buckinghamshire	1	0	1	Anglesey	1	2	2
Essex	4	51	52	Carmarthenshire	1	3	3
Kent	4	656	658	Scotland, Mid	1	2	2
Sussex	2	10	12	NE Scotland	1	2	2
England, E	10	93	96	Northern Ireland	3	12	12
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	Co. Antrim	2	10	10
Lincolnshire	3	9	12	Co. Down	1	2	2
Norfolk	5	78	78	TOTALS	44	3,457	3,482
Suffolk	1	5	5				

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis***Occasional breeder**

One site: one individual. To the best of our knowledge, this individual has succeeded in finding a mate on just three occasions, with the Ring-billed Gull incubating a clutch of two eggs in 2016 and probably paired with a Common Gull *L. canus* in 2009 and 2017, but there was no evidence of offspring from these pairings. This is the only individual that the RBBP has reported, but a hybrid Ring-billed × Common Gull chick fledged from a mixed pairing in a colony in Co. Down in 2004 (Eaton 2023).

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: for the 15th year, the returning adult was once again in a colony of Common Gulls. It was reported between at least 20th April and 14th May, but with no evidence of mixed pairing.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis***Very rare** 1 bp25y trend: **weak increase** +67%**Amber**

Near-complete

Two sites: one pair, and one mixed pair. At one point it looked like Yellow-legged Gull was en route to becoming established as a regular breeder in the UK, in a similar fashion to a number of other southern European species in recent decades. Following the first confirmed breeding in 1995, in Dorset, breeding records were received most years, with 29 confirmed attempts, fledging 28 birds, logged by 2019. Most of these records were of what appeared to be the same pairs returning to the same locations year after year, and confirmed breeding has only previously occurred in Dorset (23 times) and Hampshire (six times). In addition to these pure pairs, there have been 17 confirmed breeding records of Yellow-legged Gull in mixed pairings with either Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* or European Herring Gull *L. argentatus* (Eaton 2023).

With records annually since 1999, three consecutive blank years between 2020 and 2022 were rather surprising, but 2023 saw a return to form, and there was a notable first confirmed breeding record away from the south coast, with a pair raising young on a gull and tern breeding raft on a Staffordshire reservoir.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: a male Yellow-legged Gull hatched two chicks with a female Herring Gull, but they did not fledge.

England, C

Staffordshire One site: one pair raised four young.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons***Less scarce** 1,381 bp20y trend: **stable** -15%**Amber**

Near-complete

46 sites: 1,336 pairs. A total close to the recent average, but productivity was again high, with more than 1,000 chicks fledged for the second year running. Another item of good news is the apparently low exposure of Little Terns to HPAI. Norman *et al.* (2025) surveyed site managers and researchers across Europe and found that there were only three known cases of mortality due to HPAI in 2022 and 2023 (one adult in Co. Wicklow, Ireland, and two chicks/juveniles in Northumberland). They suggested that the relatively wide spacing between Little Tern nests (2–5 m apart) and their tendency to breed in single-species colonies may have reduced their exposure to the transmission of HPAI, which caused high levels of mortality amongst other seabird species, often at the same or nearby sites as apparently unaffected Little Tern colonies.

Little Tern				Cumbria	6	82	42
	S	CP	YF	Northumberland	2	105	125
England	32	961	899	Yorkshire	1	58	107
England, SW	5	69	67	Wales	2	238	171
Dorset	1	38	40	Denbigh & Flint	2	238	171
Hampshire	4	31	27	Scotland	11	116	110
England, SE	7	75	59	Scotland, Mid	1	11	11
Essex	2	29	42	NE Scotland	1	11	11
Kent	1	15	2	Scotland, N & W	10	105	99
Sussex	4	31	15	Argyll	3	50	46
England, E	10	503	374	Caithness	1	0	0
Lincolnshire	1	4	4	Highland	2	5	1
Norfolk	7	479	370	Orkney	1	22	30
Suffolk	2	20	0	Outer Hebrides	3	28	22
England, N	10	314	399	Isle of Man	1	21	18
Cleveland	1	69	125	TOTALS	46	1,336	1,198

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Rare 139 bp

25y trend: **weak increase** +88%

Red

Near-complete

Five sites: 122 pairs. In addition, there were reports of probable breeding pairs in **North-east Scotland** and at another site on **Anglesey**. Access restrictions due to HPAI meant that few data on productivity were available in 2023. The UK's only functional colony of Roseate Terns, on Coquet Island, Northumberland, was hit heavily by an outbreak of HPAI H5N1 in 2022, during which a minimum of 90 adults and 170 chicks died. Given this high mortality, it is no surprise to report there was a fall in numbers breeding there, from 154 pairs in 2022 to 118 pairs in 2023, and thus the first between-year fall in the UK population since 2016, and the largest such fall since the crash in numbers in the late 1980s (fig. 9). HPAI reoccurred in the Coquet Island colony in 2023, with high chick mortality (73 deaths) but much lower adult mortality (four deaths) than in 2022 (Tremlett *et al.* 2024). Tremlett *et al.* (2025) suggested that the loss of breeding adult seabirds may be buffered by the recruitment of non-breeding birds into a colony, or the movement of birds from suboptimal breeding locations; while the 2022 outbreak was known to have killed at least 29% of the breeding adults on Coquet Island, the colony declined by only 21% between 2021 and 2023.

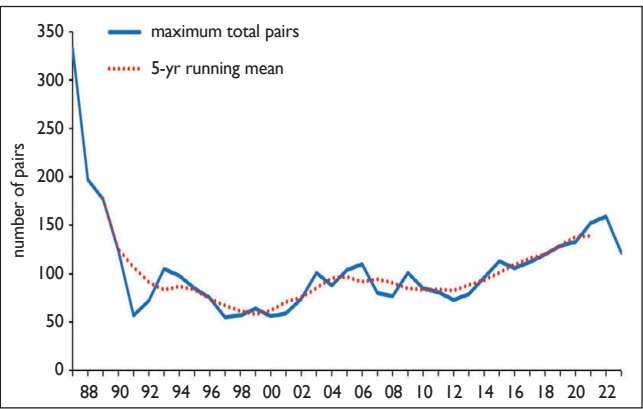


Fig. 9. Maximum numbers of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* breeding in the UK, 1987–2023, with a 5-year running mean.

Roseate Tern			England, N	1	118	Co. Antrim	1	1
	S	CP	Northumberland	1	118	Channel Islands	1	1
England	2	119	Wales	1	1	Jersey	1	1
England, SW	1	1	Anglesey	1	1	TOTALS	5	122
Hampshire	1	1	Northern Ireland	1	1			

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

One site: one individual. This returning individual was present in an Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea* colony at the Long Nanny for its fourth year.

England, N

Northumberland One site: a returning female was present between 1st June and 6th July.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Red

Scarce 727 bp*

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

Low

469 AOTs. Outside of the periodic seabird censuses, numbers of Arctic Skuas reported are normally low, but there was massively increased survey coverage in 2023 owing to concerns about the impact of HPAI H5N1 on seabird populations. Note that very few productivity data were collected by this surveying, and the high number of sites is an artefact of reporting at a 1-km-square resolution. As we reported last year, resurveying in 2023 found that numbers of Arctic Skuas had fallen from the baseline provided by the Seabirds Count census between 2015 and 2021 (Burnell *et al.* 2023), with numbers in the resurveyed colonies down by 28%, but this may simply be a continuation of the pre-existing decline. Although HPAI has been detected in Arctic Skuas globally, there have been no confirmed cases in the UK (Tremlett *et al.* 2024). By contrast, the decline in Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* due to massive HPAI-caused mortality has been estimated at 73% (Tremlett *et al.* 2025). Predation by Great Skuas has been identified as ‘top-down’ pressure on Arctic Skuas, compounding the impact of ‘bottom-up’ pressure caused by severe food shortages (Perkins *et al.* 2018; Perkins 2023). The dramatic reduction in Great Skua numbers may therefore lessen predation pressure on Arctic Skua chicks, juveniles and even adults – potentially providing an opportunity for the struggling population.

* Burnell *et al.* (2023).

Arctic Skua				Highland	1	23	0
				Orkney	27	76	20
Scotland, N & W				Outer Hebrides	81	120	4
Argyll				Shetland	165	216	16
Caithness				TOTALS	281	469	50
Fair Isle							

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Green

Less scarce 1,255 bp*

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

Low

143–201 pairs. As usual, our reporting covers only a small proportion of the population. Without a national survey, it is not possible to assess trends in this species (or Black-throated Diver *G. arctica*); the last survey of both species was in 2006.

* Dillon *et al.* (2009).

Red-throated Diver		Moray & Nairn		0	1	Caithness	0	2
		NE Scotland		0	1	Highland	22	37
Scotland, S		Perth & Kinross		0	4	Orkney	43	49
Ayrshire		Upper Forth		0	1	Outer Hebrides	9	19
Clyde Islands		Scotland, N & W		142	190	Shetland	61	73
Scotland, Mid		Argyll		7	10	TOTALS	143	201

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

Amber
Low

17–61 pairs. Since the last national survey in 2006, numbers of Black-throated Divers reported to the RBBP have fluctuated between 31 (2017) and 96 pairs (2009), but it is unclear whether these fluctuations represent anything other than variation in recording or, perhaps more likely, reporting. Regardless, we encourage all observers encountering Black-throated Divers on freshwater lochs in the breeding season to report observations to the relevant county bird recorder. Recent data on distribution will be important to inform survey design should a much-needed survey go ahead.

* Eaton *et al.* (2007).

Black-throated Diver		Scotland, Mid		1	7	Argyll	0	4
	CP	TP	Moray & Nairn	1	1	Caithness	1	4
Scotland, S	1	2	NE Scotland	0	1	Highland	12	33
Ayrshire	0	1	Perth & Kinross	0	5	Outer Hebrides	2	11
Clyde	1	1	Scotland, N & W	15	52	TOTALS	17	61

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*
Occasional breeder

One site: one mixed pair. While the RBBP does not usually report upon breeding attempts by hybrids (where one or both parents are of a rare breeding bird species), it is pertinent to report that in addition to the long-established mixed pairing given below, an adult hybrid Great Northern × Black-throated Diver, thought to be a male, was recorded paired with a Black-throated Diver at a loch in **Argyll** between 26th and 28th May, although they could not be found subsequently (Jardine & Dickson 2024).

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: an adult was paired with a Black-throated Diver, present between at least 23rd April and 15th June, although no further sign of breeding was observed. This individual has returned to the same loch in 20 of the 24 years since it was first recorded in 2000, and successful mixed breeding was recorded in 2014 (Broad 2024).



350. Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*, Highland, June 2023.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia***Very rare** 10 bp

(no trend available but increasing)

Near-complete

Three sites: 22–23 pairs. The population originating from releases in Sussex continues to grow. The Cambridgeshire record is of interest, but the origin of the bird (or birds) involved is not known.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: a single bird occupied a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* nest in a heronry between 13th and 20th May, nest-building and bill-clacking. It is possible that a second bird was present in the area.

England, SE

Sussex Two sites: (1) 20 pairs of reintroduced birds bred, all laying eggs, of which 28 hatched and 26 fledged; (2) one pair of reintroduced birds bred and fledged two young.

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

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. There was no repeat of last year's confirmed breeding, but pairs continue to occur at potential breeding sites. While the Suffolk record may seem rather late in the breeding season, it should be noted that the successful pair in 2022 was not discovered until August, and had been recorded displaying at the same site on 19th September 2021 before returning to breed the following year.

England, SE

Kent One site: two birds were present together throughout the breeding season.

England, E

Suffolk One site: one pair was present in a Eurasian Spoonbill colony, displaying and playing with sticks, on 8th August.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia***Rare** 60 bp20y trend: **strong increase** +1,050%**Amber**

Near-complete

Nine sites: 72–76 pairs.

These are new record totals – not just the total of pairs, but also of confirmed pairs and productivity, which of course bodes well for a continued increase. Successful breeding at a site in the Norfolk Broads meant a return to an area where Eurasian Spoonbills bred until the mid-seventeenth century (Brown & Grice 2005).

351. Eurasian Spoonbill
Platalea leucorodia, Spurn,
Yorkshire, June 2022.



Thomas Willoughby

Eurasian Spoonbill					Suffolk	1	14	14	30
	S	CP	TP	YF	England, N	3	5	7	8
England, SE	1	1	2	4	Cumbria	1	0	1	0
Essex	1	1	2	4	Lancs & N Mersey	1	0	1	0
England, E	5	66	67	126	Yorkshire	1	5	5	8
Cambridgeshire	1	0	1	0	TOTALS	9	72	76	138
Norfolk	3	52	52	96					

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*
Rare 278 booming males 25y trend: **strong increase** +1,634%

Amber
Near-complete

142 sites: 86–331 pairs. A new record total, and the first time we have reported over 300 booming male Eurasian Bitterns. Particularly notable totals were reported from Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Somerset, Suffolk and Yorkshire, which together held 73% of the population, but the continuing increase has been accompanied by range expansion as well as growth in core areas. Over the last decade we have added new counties to our table at the rate of one per year.



352. Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* in flight, Norfolk, May 2023.

Eurasian Bittern				Norfolk	34	13	43
	S	CP	TP	Suffolk	15	19	55
England	138	80	321	England, C	8	6	11
England, SW	18	1	89	Derbyshire	1	1	2
Avon	1	0	1	Leics & Rutland	1	0	1
Gloucestershire	2	1	2	Nottinghamshire	4	3	6
Hampshire	1	0	1	Staffordshire	1	1	1
Isle of Wight	1	0	1	Warwickshire	1	1	1
Somerset	10	0	79	England, N	25	17	44
Wiltshire	3	0	5	Cumbria	1	0	1
England, SE	11	8	22	Greater Manchester	1	0	1
Bedfordshire	1	1	2	Lancs & N Mersey	4	4	11
Kent	8	4	16	Yorkshire	19	13	31
Oxfordshire	1	3	3	Wales	4	6	10
Sussex	1	0	1	Anglesey	2	4	7
England, E	76	48	155	Gower	1	0	1
Cambridgeshire	17	7	37	Gwent	1	2	2
Lincolnshire	10	9	20	TOTALS	142	86	331

Little Bittern *Botaurus minutus*
Occasional breeder

Amber
Near-complete

One site: one male. This was only the second year since 2009 with no report from the Avalon Marshes, Somerset, and it is six years since the last confirmed breeding there; the colonisation of the UK appears to be on hold, at least temporarily.

England, C

Warwickshire One site: one male singing from 6th to 8th June, returning to the same site that it was present at, for a similarly brief stay, in 2022.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
Colonising breeder

Four sites: 0–5 pairs. Given the difficulties in detecting breeding behaviour in this secretive and nocturnal species, any extended stay in potential breeding habitat is of interest. In only one year (2015) have we reported more pairs, but it is hard to know whether any of these birds had any intent to breed in the UK.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: one bird between 12th June and 2nd July. **Somerset** One site: two birds present between 8th April and 5th May.

England, SE

Kent One site: one or two birds present on several dates between 25th April and 5th May.

England, SE

Cambridgeshire One site: up to four adults present between 9th June and 18th July.

Western Cattle Egret *Ardea ibis*

Rare 54 bp

(no trend available but increasing)

High

18 sites: 66–71 pairs. This is slightly higher than the total reported for 2022, which was down from the record total of 77 pairs reached in 2021; it seems that the rapid increase in Western Cattle Egrets breeding in the UK has halted, at least for now. That said, it is likely that some breeding pairs go unreported, particularly in the extensive and hard-to-access wetlands of Somerset, where the number of fledged juveniles observed suggests there are more pairs than have been counted. Cattle Egrets appear to breed rather late in the season in the UK, so may not be present in mixed heron and egret colonies when early survey visits are made. Even when present, nests can be extremely hard to find in fully foliated trees, particularly as Cattle Egrets tend to nest lower down than other species. The new site in Yorkshire (which may have been occupied but unreported in 2022) is the most northerly in the UK, and probably Europe.

Western Cattle Egret				Essex	1	4	4	Norfolk	1	3	4
	S	CP	TP	Hertfordshire	1	2	2	England, C	1	0	1
England, SW	4	13	13	Kent	2	3	3	Warwickshire	1	0	1
Dorset	1	1	1	Oxfordshire	1	4	6	England, N	2	5	5
Hampshire	1	6	6	Sussex	4	31	32	Cheshire & Wirral	1	2	2
Somerset	2	6	6	England, E	2	4	5	Yorkshire	1	3	3
England, SE	9	44	47	Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	TOTALS	18	66	71

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
Occasional breeder

One site: one possible pair. While an unremarkable record, this is the third successive year a bird has lingered at the same site.

England, SE

Kent One site: a single bird was present between 15th and 20th May.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*
Rare 58 bp (no trend available but increasing) Near-complete

18 sites: 101–110 pairs. It is getting increasingly tricky to distinguish potential breeding attempts 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. It might not surprise many readers to see that there was a new record total reached in 2023, for the eighth successive year. There was a substantial jump in numbers from the 68 pairs reported for 2022, largely due to an increase in numbers nesting at sites across the Avalon Marshes in Somerset, where the UK colonisation began back in 2012. While prospecting pairs are being recorded more widely, there was only one new confirmed breeding site in 2023, in Cambridgeshire.

Great White Egret					Norfolk	2	6	7	15
	S	CP	TP	YF	Suffolk	2	0	2	0
England	15	101	107	130+	England, N	1	2	2	4
England, SW	8	79	82	93+	Cheshire & Wirral	1	2	2	4
Avon	2	0	2	0	Wales	2	0	2	0
Gloucestershire	1	2	2	0	East Glamorgan	1	0	1	0
Isle of Wight	1	0	1	0	Meirionnydd	1	0	1	0
Somerset	3	72	72	88	Scotland, Mid	1	0	1	0
Wiltshire	1	5	5	5+	NE Scotland	1	0	1	0
England, E	6	20	23	33+	TOTALS	18	101	110	130+
Cambridgeshire	2	14	14	18+					

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Less scarce 1,589 bp 20y trend: strong increase +1,289% High

200 sites: 1,614–1,696 pairs. With the first confirmed breeding in 1996, Little Egret was the fore-runner of a lengthening list of southern herons and allies to become established as a breeding species in the UK. It continues to lead the way, now breeding in all four of the UK's nations and still increasing, overcoming setbacks caused by harsh winters. Numbers have nearly doubled in the last ten years, and a new record total was reached in 2023. A paper using data from the RBBP and the BTO's Heronries Census to model Little Egret trends, and to provide a new population estimate, will be published soon.

Little Egret			Devon	9	68	Wiltshire	1	23
	S	TP	Dorset	7	44	England, SE	47	375
England	162	1,455	Gloucestershire	4	19	Bedfordshire	4	13
England, SW	41	280	Hampshire	9	67	Berkshire	1	5
Avon	2	2	Isle of Wight	1	2	Buckinghamshire	5	17
Cornwall	7	43	Somerset	1	12	Essex	6	56

Little Egret continued			Worcestershire	2	2	Montgomeryshire	1	3
Greater London	2	3	England, N	19	365	Pembrokeshire	1	1
Hertfordshire	5	34	Cheshire & Wirral	2	176	Radnorshire	1	3
Kent	7	126	Cleveland	1	17	Scotland	3	6
Oxfordshire	2	8	Cumbria	2	25	Scotland, S	2	5
Surrey	3	18	Greater Manchester	2	5	Borders	1	1
Sussex	12	95	Lancs & N Mersey	3	73	Dumfries & G'way	1	4
England, E	40	386	Northumberland	3	7	Scotland, Mid	1	1
Cambridgeshire	7	97	Yorkshire	6	62	NE Scotland	1	1
Lincolnshire	10	97	Wales	20	125	Northern Ireland	10	73
Norfolk	14	122	Anglesey	1	4	Co. Antrim	2	4
Northamptonshire	2	9	Breconshire	4	4	Co. Derry/Londonderry	1	3
Suffolk	7	61	Caernarfonshire	3	30	Co. Down	7	66
England, C	15	49	Cardiganshire	4	25	Channel Islands	5	37
Derbyshire	3	12	Denbigh & Flint	2	29	Guernsey	1	20
Leics & Rutland	3	5	Gower	1	5	Jersey	4	17
Nottinghamshire	5	13	Gwent	1	20	TOTALS	200	1,696
Warwickshire	2	17	Meirionnydd	1	1			

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
Rare 285 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +164%

Amber
High

274–316 pairs. The maximum total of pairs reported is just five fewer than the record total reached in 2022 (fig. 10), and the number of confirmed breeding pairs is the highest we have ever reported. The increase in Osprey numbers in recent years has been accompanied by an expansion in range, with colonisation of new counties since 2020 (based on years of first-confirmed breeding records) including Caernarfonshire and Fife in 2020; Lancashire & North Merseyside in 2021;

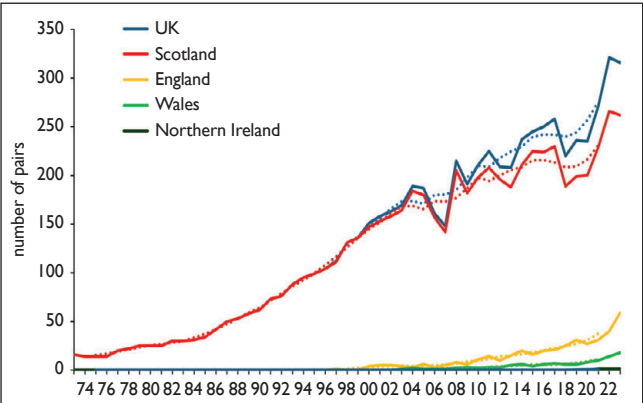


Fig. 10. Maximum numbers of Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* breeding in the UK, Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 1973–2023, with 5-year running means.

Dorset and Yorkshire in 2022; and Staffordshire and Co. Fermanagh in 2023. The last was the first breeding by Ospreys in the isle of Ireland for over 200 years. In addition, pairs seeking to establish have been reported from Breconshire, Norfolk, Pembrokeshire and Radnorshire over the same period. The mean population over the first five years of RBBP reporting (1973–77) was just 16 pairs; there has been a 1,729% increase since then.

Osprey			Northamptonshire	3	3	0	Northumberland	8	9	14
	CP	TP	YF ¹	England, C	8	8	16	Yorkshire	1	1
England	33	35	60	Leics & Rutland	7	7	15	Wales	11	18
England, SW	1	1	3	Staffordshire	1	1	1	Breconshire	0	2
Dorset	1	1	3	England, N	21	22	41	Caernarfonshire	2	2
England, E	3	4	0	Cumbria	10	10	24	Denbigh & Flint	2	2
Norfolk	0	1	0	Lancs & N Mersey	2	2	3	Meirionnydd	4	5

Osprey continued			Dumfries & G'way			10	13	17	Argyll	14	14	14
Montgomeryshire	3	3	8	Lothian	1	1	1	Caithness	2	2	3	
Pembrokeshire	0	1	0	Scotland, Mid	89	103	134	Highland	72	81	131	
Radnorshire	0	3	0	Angus & Dundee	5	7	9	Northern Ireland	1	1	2	
Scotland	229	262	357	Fife	2	2	0	Co. Fermanagh	1	1	2	
Scotland, S	52	62	75	Moray & Nairn	18	19	24	TOTALS	274	316	444	
Ayrshire	7	8	11	NE Scotland	17	17	26					
Borders	14	15	31	Perth & Kinross	31	39	56	¹ Fledged numbers are a minimum; we do not assume fledging of young reported in the nest.				
Clyde	17	21	15	Upper Forth	16	19	19					
Clyde Islands	3	4	0	Scotland, N & W	88	97	148					

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Rare 130–150 bp*20y trend: strong increase +85%

AmberModerate

38–88 pairs. Heightened awareness on the widespread distribution of this secretive raptor, in part raised by efforts around the national survey in 2020–21 (Clements *et al.* 2022), means that new sites continued to be found, although overall reporting does not match the level of the two survey years.

* Clements *et al.* (2022).

European Honey-buzzard					England, N	0	2	5	4
	I	CP	TP	YF	Northumberland	0	2	3	4
England	3	24	53	29	Yorkshire	0	0	2	0
England, SW	0	7	9	9	Wales	0	3	5	4
Dorset	0	1	1	2	Gower	0	3	5	4
Hampshire	0	4	6	3	Scotland	5	11	30	7
Wiltshire	0	2	2	4	Scotland, S	0	1	1	1
England, SE	2	15	33	16	Dumfries & G'way	0	1	1	1
Essex	0	0	3	0	Scotland, Mid	5	5	18	0
Kent	0	1	7	0	Moray & Nairn	2	0	2	0
Surrey	2	0	3	0	NE Scotland	3	0	4	0
Sussex	0	14	20	16	Perth & Kinross	0	4	10	0
England, E	1	0	5	0	Upper Forth	0	1	2	0
Norfolk	1	0	4	0	Scotland, N & W	0	5	11	6
Suffolk	0	0	1	0	Highland	0	5	11	6
England, C	0	0	1	0	TOTALS	8	38	88	40
Nottinghamshire	0	0	1	0					

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Scarce 508 bp*33y trend (survey): stable +16%

GreenHigh

167–279 pairs. Data were received from 284 home ranges that were checked by members of Scottish Raptor Groups and made available through the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme (SRMS; Peniche *et al.* 2025), in addition to records received through other routes. Reported productivity was higher than in 2022; using SRMS data, Wilson *et al.* (2023) found a significant decline in Golden Eagle productivity in 2022, particularly in coastal areas, which was most likely due to the increased component of seabirds and waterbirds in the diets of eagles near the coast, and hence a higher risk of exposure to HPAI H5N1.

* Hayhow *et al.* (2017).

Golden Eagle					Argyll	1	41	76	20
	I ¹	CP	TP	YF	Caithness	0	1	1	0
Scotland	19	167	278	117	Highland	8	72	107	63
Scotland, S	0	2	15	1	Orkney	0	1	1	1
Scotland, Mid	1	22	35	16	Outer Hebrides	9	28	43	16
Angus & Dundee	0	0	1	0	Northern Ireland	0	0	1	0
Moray & Nairn	0	5	5	0	Co. Tyrone	0	0	1	0
NE Scotland	0	10	19	14	TOTALS	19	167	279	117
Perth & Kinross	0	1	2	0	¹ Total includes home ranges occupied by single birds or showing signs of occupation but no pair seen.				
Upper Forth	1	6	8	2					
Scotland, N & W	18	143	228	100					

Eurasian Goshawk *Astur gentilis*

Less scarce 1,042 bp 25y trend: strong increase +287%

Green

Moderate

755–1,089 pairs. This represents a fall in numbers following the record total we reported for 2022, but the number of pairs in 2023 was still the second highest on record. Of the 42 species listed in the RBBP's first report 50 years ago (Sharrock *et al.* 1975), only Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* and three species that have since been removed from consideration as rare breeders – Red Kite, Cetti's Warbler and Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* – have shown a greater increase than Eurasian Goshawk, which has increased by 3,844% since the beginning of the Panel's monitoring in 1973.

Eurasian Goshawk			England, N (e 124+)	73	107
	CP	TP	Cheshire & Wirral (e 1)	0	1
England (e 1,010+)	532	754	Co. Durham (e 6)	3	5
England, SW (e 503)	246	354	Cumbria (e 10)	5	7
Avon (e 2)	1	2	Lancs & N Mersey (e 5)	2	2
Cornwall (e 20)	21	31	Northumberland (e 60)	32	51
Devon (e 70)	54	68	Yorkshire	31	41
Dorset (e 35)	8	15	Wales (e 321)	35	86
Gloucestershire (e 120)	51	64	Breconshire (e 60)	6	19
Hampshire (e 150)	48	76	Caernarfonshire (e 12)	1	3
Somerset (e 25)	9	17	Carmarthenshire (e 7)	0	3
Wiltshire (e 81)	54	81	Ceredigion (e 10)	4	9
England, SE (e 105)	36	74	Denbigh & Flint (e 16)	1	8
Berkshire (e 6)	1	3	East Glamorgan (e 20)	2	3
Essex (e 6)	1	2	Gower (e 15)	1	6
Kent (e 10)	3	7	Gwent (e 75)	7	9
Oxfordshire (e 13)	9	13	Meirionnydd (e 30)	5	10
Surrey (e 10)	4	4	Montgomeryshire (e 50)	2	5
Sussex (e 60)	18	45	Pembrokeshire (e 6)	1	6
England, E (e 93)	81	87	Radnorshire (e 20)	5	5
Lincolnshire (e 3)	2	3	Scotland (e 372+)	188	248
Norfolk (e 65)	58	61	Scotland, S (e 114+)	62	84
Suffolk (e 25)	21	23	Ayrshire	1	6
England, C (e 185)	96	132	Borders (e 38)	33	38
Derbyshire (e 40)	27	29	Clyde	8	12
Herefordshire (e 52)	17	23	Dumfries & G'way (e 50)	19	25
Nottinghamshire (e 12)	6	6	Lothian (e 8)	1	3
Shropshire (e 50)	38	47	Scotland, Mid (e 168+)	115	151
Staffordshire (e 13)	5	13	Angus & Dundee	1	3
Worcestershire (e 18)	3	14	Fife	0	13

Eurasian Goshawk continued			Scotland, N & W (e 90)	11	13
Moray & Nairn (e 20)	1	3	Highland (e 40)	11	13
NE Scotland (e 103)	96	103	Northern Ireland (e 1+)	0	1
Perth & Kinross	9	17	Co. Antrim	0	1
Upper Forth	8	12	TOTALS (e 1,704+)	755	1,089

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce 474 bp

25y trend: **strong increase** +244%

Amber

High

427–530 breeding females/pairs. Some ‘pairs’ actually refer to two or more females paired with a single polygynous male. We graphed the increase in breeding Marsh Harriers in the UK in last year’s report (Eaton *et al.* 2024a), so will not dwell on it here other than to point out that this is another record total for the species, which has exceeded a maximum total of 500 pairs for the first time. The increase since 1973 – when the species was on the very brink of extinction in the UK – has been 4,822%, the greatest of any species that the RBBP has reported upon for the entire 50-year span of its existence.

Marsh Harrier				Greater Manchester (e 3)	1	3	3
	CP	TP	YF	Lancs & N Mersey (e 12)	12	12	10
England (e 512)	405	491	379	Northumberland (e 9)	5	9	11
England, SW (e 55)	38	54	56	Yorkshire (e 43)	34	43	30
Cornwall (e 3)	2	3	3	Wales (e 11+)	7	11	10
Dorset (e 9)	8	8	8	Anglesey (e 5)	5	5	7
Gloucestershire (e 1)	0	1	0	Caernarfonshire	0	1	0
Hampshire (e 12)	5	12	4	Ceredigion	0	1	0
Isle of Wight (e 4)	4	4	6	Denbigh & Flint	0	1	0
Somerset (e 24)	17	24	31	Gower (e 1)	1	1	0
Wiltshire (e 2)	2	2	4	Gwent (e 1)	1	1	3
England, SE (e 101)	46	81	33	Pembrokeshire	0	1	0
Bedfordshire (e 1)	1	1	3	Scotland (e 24+)	15	24	35
Berkshire (e 1)	0	1	0	Scotland, S (e 3+)	0	3	0
Essex (e 20)	10	20	0	Borders (e 2)	0	2	0
Kent (e 50–70)	30	50	25	Clyde	0	1	0
Oxfordshire (e 2)	2	2	0	Scotland, Mid (e 18+)	15	18	35
Sussex (e 7)	3	7	5	Angus & Dundee (e 4)	4	4	5
England, E (e 278)	258	278	210	Fife	1	3	3
Cambridgeshire (e 30)	23	30	17	Moray & Nairn (e 1)	0	1	0
Lincolnshire (e 43)	42	43	35	NE Scotland (e 1)	1	1	2
Norfolk (e 123)	116	123	63	Perth & Kinross	7	7	19
Suffolk (e 82)	77	82	95	Upper Forth	2	2	6
England, C (e 1)	1	1	0	Scotland, N & W (e 3)	0	3	0
Leics & Rutland (e 1)	1	1	0	Orkney (e 3)	0	3	0
England, N (e 77)	62	77	80	Channel Islands (e 29)	0	4	0
Cheshire & Wirral (e 7)	7	7	19	Guernsey (e 4)	0	4	0
Cleveland (e 2)	2	2	4	TOTALS (e 576+)	427	530	424
Cumbria (e 1)	1	1	3				

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce 691 bp*

25y trend (survey): stable +21%

Red

High

650 territorial pairs. A UK and Isle of Man survey of Hen Harriers was conducted in 2023, the sixth in a sequence stretching back to 1988–89. The UK survey was funded by Natural

England, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and RSPB, and the Isle of Man survey was supported by the Gough Ritchie Charitable Trust. Fieldwork was conducted by Raptor Study Group (RSG) and Upland Bird Study Group members, other volunteers, staff from the statutory agencies, RSPB and other conservation bodies. Leah Kelly, RSPB Conservation Scientist and one of the survey coordinators, kindly provided the following summary of the survey and results, which are described in more detail in Kelly *et al.* (2025).

Survey design was similar to previous national surveys. In Scotland, a non-random selection of squares, mostly encompassing existing study areas, was chosen by Scottish RSG members, and the remaining squares within the species’ range were randomly selected from two sampling strata. In England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man, coverage of all suitable habitat within the 10-km squares of the species’ known range was planned – note that the Isle of Man survey was conducted in 2022, although for simplicity the combined estimate from the UK and Isle of Man surveys is referred to as being from 2023. The same standard field methodology as for previous surveys was used, requiring at least two visits in suitable weather between late March and early August to all suitable breeding habitat in each 10-km square.

Hen Harrier records were classified into proven, probable or possible breeding categories. As in previous national surveys, the number of territorial pairs (proven and probable breeding) was used to estimate the breeding Hen Harrier population. The UK and Isle of Man Hen Harrier population was estimated at 691 territorial pairs (95% confidence limits 593–802), 20.2% higher than in 2016 (a near-significant change). As shown in the table below, numbers of territorial pairs had fallen in Northern Ireland since 2016 but increased in England, Wales, Scotland and the Isle of Man. Within Scotland, estimates were provided for six regions, with the most notable change since 2016 being in the Hebrides, where the population had increased significantly from 49 (45–52) to 110 (62–166) territorial pairs; the other significant change was an increase in the East Highlands.

* Kelly *et al.* 2025.

Table 2. Results of the 2023 UK and Isle of Man survey of Hen Harriers.					
	coverage (10-km squares surveyed)	territorial pairs (95% CL)	proven pairs (95% CL)	territorial pairs plus possible records (95% CL)	% change in territorial pairs since 2016
England	120	50	50	50	+1,150
Wales	55	40	38	47	+14.3
Scotland	372	529 (431–640)	436 (348–535)	600 (508–707)	+15
Northern Ireland	87	34	18	45	-26.1
UK	634	653 (555–764)	542 (454–641)	742 (650–849)	+19.8
Isle of Man ¹	10	38	31	42	+26.7
UK and Isle of Man	644	691 (593–802)	573 (485–672)	784 (692–891)	+20.2
¹ surveyed in 2022					

In addition, we present below the usual breakdown by county of records received by the RBBP. Numbers are higher than usual owing to the additional fieldwork conducted for the survey. In some areas we received records from sources outside of the national survey recording – e.g. a male displaying at a site in Norfolk between 9th April and 6th May was a notable record – and we present productivity data, which was not an objective of the national survey. Note that the numbers of total pairs we present are equivalent to the records of territorial pairs plus possible breeding records presented from the national survey, above.

Hen Harrier				Clyde Islands	9	9	0
	CP	TP	YF	Dumfries & G'way	5	6	9
England	50	58	141	Lothian	2	3	7
England, E	0	1	0	Scotland, Mid	35	69	75
Norfolk	0	1	0	Angus & Dundee	2	2	2
England, N	50	57	141	Moray & Nairn	9	17	17
Co. Durham	5	5	12	NE Scotland	16	20	43
Cumbria	11	11	26	Perth & Kinross	8	28	13
Lancs & N Mersey	10	14	34	Upper Forth	0	2	0
Northumberland	16	19	43	Scotland, N & W	188	384	394
Yorkshire	8	8	26	Argyll	28	96	45
Wales	37	44	83	Caithness	2	5	0
Breconshire	1	1	0	Highland	33	63	71
Caernarfonshire	5	5	11	Orkney	78	134	157
Denbigh & Flint	11	14	29	Outer Hebrides	47	86	121
Meirionnydd	12	13	37	Northern Ireland	17	36	21
Montgomeryshire	3	4	6	Co. Antrim	8	13	15
Radnorshire	5	7	0	Co. Derry/Londonderry	1	7	0
Scotland	251	503	505	Co. Fermanagh	0	1	0
Scotland, S	28	50	36	Co. Tyrone	8	15	6
Ayrshire	1	4	1	Isle of Man	9	9	16
Borders	6	11	7	TOTALS	364	650	766
Clyde	5	17	12				

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Very rare 4 bp25y trend: strong decrease -68%

RedNear-complete

Three sites: 0–5 pairs. As for all species, the 5-year mean population given in the banner above is based on the maximum total of pairs reported each year. In the case of Montagu's Harriers, the great majority of recent breeding-season records concern single birds and 'at best' were single displaying males. Therefore, the mean of four gives a somewhat misleading impression; what is more relevant is that in the last three years of reporting there has been no confirmed breeding pair in the UK – indeed, there has been no sign of a pair at all. There was a gap of two years with no breeding in 1974 and 1975; the current three-year gap is probably the lengthiest absence of breeding Montagu's Harriers since the species' return from UK extinction in the early twentieth century.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: two females. An adult female was present from 14th April to 7th May, while a second bird was present from 10th to 14th May.

Wiltshire One site: two males. An adult male was present from April to July, displaying and nest-building, and a 2CY was present for three weeks in June and July.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one adult male displaying from 29th May to 4th June.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Rare 144 bp25y trend: strong increase +1,027%

AmberNear-complete

126–160 pairs. In the 40 years since the first confirmed breeding by reintroduced White-tailed Eagles, on Mull, Argyll, in 1983, the total reported by the RBBP has failed to set a new record (or equal the existing record) on just five occasions. Numbers in 2023 conformed to this pattern, rising from 150 (in both 2021 and 2022) to 160 in 2023. One of these pairs was of particular significance: following the start of a reintroduction project based on the Isle of Wight, in 2019, the

pair that fledged one bird in a Sussex woodland was the first breeding pair in England since 1780. Both adults were Scottish-bred birds that had been translocated in 2020.

White-tailed Eagle				Fife	0	1	0
	CP	TP	YF	NE Scotland	3	3	4
England	1	3	1	Perth & Kinross	4	4	1
England, SW	0	1	0	Upper Forth	0	1	0
Dorset	0	1	0	Scotland, N & W	117	145	88
Isle of Wight	0	1	0	Argyll	26	36	26
England, SE	1	1	1	Caithness	2	2	1
Sussex	1	1	1	Highland	54	64	42
Scotland	125	156	94	Orkney	0	1	0
Scotland, S	0	1	0	Outer Hebrides	35	42	19
Clyde	0	1	0	Northern Ireland	0	1	0
Scotland, Mid	8	10	6	Co. Fermanagh	0	1	0
Angus & Dundee	1	1	1	TOTALS	126	160	95

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

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

Green

Low

250–341 pairs. Numbers of Long-eared Owls reported to the RBBP fluctuate considerably between years, at least in part reflecting the availability of the Short-tailed Voles *Microtus agrestis* which form an important component of their diet. As we have shown previously (Eaton *et al.* 2023b), these fluctuations are in synchrony with those of Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus*, and this stayed true in 2023 with both species being reported in above-average numbers: 341 pairs is the fourth-highest total we have reported for Long-eared Owl in the 14 years since adding the species to our list. It remains, however, a fraction of the likely population of this elusive owl. Finding Long-eared Owls can be difficult, particularly in the early spring when birds are establishing territories, but offers the fieldworker great satisfaction when successful; we would like to encourage more observers to take on the challenge!

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Long-eared Owl				Nottinghamshire (e 7)	6	7
	CP	TP		Shropshire (e 1)	1	1
England (e 473+)	114	168		Staffordshire (e 3)	3	3
England, SW (e 32+)	5	8		England, N (e 236+)	71	102
Cornwall (e 1)	0	1		Cheshire & Wirral (e 1)	1	1
Hampshire (e 10)	1	1		Co. Durham (e 75)	2	5
Isle of Wight (e 15)	3	4		Cumbria (e 9)	9	9
Somerset (e 2)	1	1		Greater Manchester (e 37)	8	11
Wiltshire (e 1)	0	1		Lancs & N Mersey (e 30)	4	4
England, SE (e 151)	8	17		Northumberland (e 30)	7	18
Essex (e 25)	6	8		Yorkshire	40	54
Kent (e 10–20)	2	9		Wales (e 38+)	7	14
England, E (e 33)	12	21		Carmarthenshire	0	1
Cambridgeshire (e 11)	4	11		Denbigh & Flint	1	1
Lincolnshire (e 2)	2	2		East Glamorgan	1	2
Norfolk (e 3–10)	1	3		Gwent (e 5)	5	5
Suffolk (e 10)	5	5		Meirionnydd (e 5)	0	1
England, C (e 21)	18	20		Montgomeryshire (e 1)	0	1
Derbyshire (e 10)	8	9		Radnorshire	0	3

Long-eared Owl <i>continued</i>			Argyll (e 50)	5	7
Scotland (e 492+)	83	107	Caithness	3	3
Scotland, S (e 59+)	31	37	Highland (e 70–100)	23	24
Ayrshire	2	4	Orkney (e 6)	3	6
Borders (e 10)	5	5	Outer Hebrides (e 15)	1	1
Clyde	12	14	Shetland (e 3)	0	3
Clyde Islands	0	1	Northern Ireland (e 14+)	8	14
Dumfries & G'way (e 5)	2	3	Co. Antrim	1	6
Lothian (e 25)	10	10	Co. Derry/Londonderry	1	2
Scotland, Mid (e 256+)	17	26	Co. Down	2	2
Angus & Dundee	2	2	Co. Fermanagh	3	3
Fife (e 50)	0	8	Co. Tyrone	1	1
Moray & Nairn (e 30)	1	2	Isle of Man (e 10–15)	8	8
NE Scotland (e 150)	7	7	Channel Islands (e 33)	30	30
Perth & Kinross	4	4	Guernsey (e 6)	3	3
Upper Forth (e 10–20)	3	3	Jersey (e 27)	27	27
Scotland, N & W (e 177+)	35	44	TOTALS (e 1,065+)	250	341

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Scarce 620+ bp* (no trend available)

Amber

Moderate

127–311 pairs. As mentioned for Long-eared Owl, above, 2023 appears to have been a good vole year, and the total of 311 pairs is the second highest we have reported since adding the species to our list in 2010.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Short-eared Owl			Radnorshire	0	6
	CP	TP	Scotland (e 329+)	49	191
England (e 128+)	74	108	Scotland, S (e 30+)	10	24
England, SW (e 2)	0	2	Ayrshire	0	2
Cornwall (e 2)	0	2	Borders (e 10)	0	4
England, E (e 2)	0	2	Clyde	2	5
Lincolnshire (e 1)	0	1	Clyde Islands	8	11
Norfolk (e 1)	0	1	Lothian (e 2)	0	2
England, C (e 11)	5	11	Scotland, Mid (e 50+)	16	26
Derbyshire (e 8)	5	8	NE Scotland (e 25)	6	6
Staffordshire (e 3)	0	3	Perth & Kinross	9	19
England, N (e 113+)	69	93	Upper Forth	1	1
Cleveland	0	1	Scotland, N & W (e 249+)	23	141
Co. Durham (e 20)	9	20	Argyll (e 50)	3	8
Cumbria (e 37)	37	37	Caithness	0	2
Greater Manchester (e 1)	0	1	Highland (e 8)	4	7
Lancs & N Mersey (e30)	8	10	Orkney (e 94)	9	94
Northumberland (e 7)	7	7	Outer Hebrides (e 60–90)	4	25
Yorkshire	8	17	Shetland (e 5)	3	5
Wales (e 31+)	3	11	Northern Ireland (e 1+)	1	1
Denbigh & Flint	0	1	Co. Antrim	1	1
Montgomeryshire (e 1)	0	1	TOTALS (e 489+)	127	311
Pembrokeshire (e3)	3	3			

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* Former breeder

One site: one bird.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: the adult male present since 2020 remained through most of the year, although it did wander to Fair Isle in May and June.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Occasional breeder

One site: one confirmed breeding pair. Certainly one of the ornithological highlights of the 2023 breeding season, this was an unexpected record as, unlike some other Mediterranean species such as European Bee-eater, there has been no increase in records in the UK – indeed, the European population is declining (-30%, 1980–2023; PECBMS 2025). The last confirmed breeding record in the UK was in 1996, in Montgomeryshire, where a pair also raised three young; prior to that there were confirmed pairs in Avon, Somerset, Surrey and Sussex, all in 1977. In recent years there have been a few singing males, including an individual that returned to an area in Hampshire between 2020 and 2022, but nothing to really suggest breeding was imminent. However, there was a large influx of 102 individuals in April and May 2023, and the annual total was the highest recorded since 1980 and the third highest since regular recording started in 1968 (White & Kehoe 2025).



Carl Baggott

353. Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* family party foraging, Leicestershire, July 2023.



Carl Baggott

354. Eurasian Hoopoe, Leicestershire, July 2023.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland One site: a pair was present between 17th May and 23rd August and fledged three young. The habitat was described as a number of large arable fields interspersed with isolated trees and small woods. The birds wandered widely but favoured a large, closely mown lawn at a private residential property in the heart of the farmland.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Colonising breeder

Two sites: two breeding pairs. This is the first year that European Bee-eaters have bred at more than one location in the UK, and the Norfolk record represents the first time that Bee-eaters have returned to a site used previously, following the successful (and high-profile) breeding at Trimingham in 2022. Sadly, the attempts failed both there and at the site in Greater Manchester in 2023. Holling & Thomas (2024) reviewed the 12 breeding attempts by Bee-eaters in the UK to date; of these, five attempts, involving ten pairs, have succeeded in raising a total of 24 young.

England, E

Norfolk One site: a pair, with an additional unpaired individual, returned to the same site that breeding occurred at in 2022. It is believed that the breeding attempt failed during incubation, with Stoat *Mustela erminea* predation being suggested as a potential cause.

England, N

Greater Manchester One site: one pair was present from 15th June to 19th July. It is believed that they were incubating eggs from 24th June and feeding chicks from 13th July onwards, but the nesting attempt failed on 19th and the birds departed.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Former breeder

Three sites: 0–3 pairs. A very typical set of records of birds lingering briefly in the north of Scotland – it is now 22 years since the last record of confirmed breeding, in Highland.

Scotland, Mid

NE Scotland One site: one singing male on 19th May.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: (1) one male singing and excavating a nest hole on 25th and 27th May; (2) one singing male (date not reported).

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*

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

Red

Moderate

33–220 territories. The very substantial drop in numbers reported from 2022’s total of 523 territories can be attributed to the return to more typical reporting in Hampshire, following a county survey there in 2022, which produced an estimate of 314 territories (Smith *et al.* 2023). Regardless, the maximum total of 220 territories reported in 2023 is by a considerable margin the lowest we have reported since this elusive woodpecker was added to the RBBP’s list in 2010. In that first year of coverage, records were received from 47 counties; that number has now dwindled to 34. The population estimate of 1,000+ pairs given in the species banner above is drawn from Woodward *et al.* (2020), which in turn was informed by RBBP data (Holling *et al.* 2017). An analysis of tetrad-scale atlas data by Smith *et al.* (2021) suggested that there were 1,750–2,300 pairs of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers in the UK around the time of *Bird Atlas 2007–11* (Balmer *et al.* 2013). While RBBP data suggest there has been range loss and popula-

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker		Greater London (e 1)	1	Staffordshire (e 3)	3
	TP	Hertfordshire (e 5)	3	Warwickshire (e 20)	10
England (e 755+)	205	Kent (e 150–200)	42	Worcestershire (e 25)	14
England, SW (e 371)	41	Surrey (e 20)	8	England, N (e 6)	4
Cornwall (e 4)	1	Sussex (e 40)	26	Cheshire & Wirral (e 3)	3
Devon (e 13)	2	England, E (e 11)	11	Greater Manchester (e 3)	1
Dorset (e 5)	4	Cambridgeshire (e 2)	2	Wales (e 26+)	15
Gloucestershire (e 7)	6	Norfolk (e 4)	4	Breconshire (e 5)	5
Hampshire (e 320)	9	Northamptonshire (e 2)	2	Carmarthenshire (e 2)	2
Somerset (e 20)	17	Suffolk (e 3)	3	Ceredigion	3
Wiltshire (e 2)	2	England, C (e 77+)	47	Denbigh & Flint	1
England, SE (e 290)	102	Derbyshire (e 8)	8	Gower (e 2)	1
Berkshire (e 3)	1	Herefordshire	2	Radnorshire	3
Buckinghamshire (e 4)	4	Nottinghamshire (e 4)	1	TOTALS (e 781+)	220
Essex (e 17)	17	Shropshire (e 15)	9		

tion decline since that time (e.g. see the analysis in Eaton *et al.* 2021), it seems likely that the population does still exceed 1,000 pairs.
* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

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

Red

274–371 pairs. This is the highest total since 396 pairs in 2016 (Holling *et al.* 2018), but the numbers of Merlins reported have been fairly consistent – since 2016 the maximum total has ranged only between 351 and this year’s 371 pairs. The monitoring effort by Merlin enthusiasts is equally consistent, with good reporting from a number of study areas. This covers only a relatively small proportion of the breeding population, however, and, with indications of a decline in a number of areas (e.g. Challis *et al.* 2023), there is a pressing need for a national survey of this raptor, the first since 2008.
* Ewing *et al.* (2011).

Merlin			Ceredigion	1	1	Perth & Kinross	8	19
	CP	TP	Denbigh & Flint	2	2	Scotland, N & W	72	111
England	126	142	Meirionnydd	3	5	Argyll	1	1
England, C	4	4	Montgomeryshire	1	2	Caithness	1	1
Derbyshire	4	4	Radnorshire	3	3	Highland	12	25
England, N	122	138	Scotland	126	195	Orkney	10	19
Cleveland	1	1	Scotland, S	14	29	Outer Hebrides	14	30
Co. Durham	37	39	Ayrshire	0	1	Shetland	34	35
Cumbria	13	16	Borders	10	17	Northern Ireland	5	10
Lancashire & N Mersey	6	7	Clyde	0	3	Co. Antrim	4	6
Northumberland	24	33	Dumfries & G’way	2	4	Co. Armagh	0	1
Yorkshire	41	42	Lothian	2	4	Co. Derry/Londonderry	1	1
Wales	17	24	Scotland, Mid	40	55	Co. Fermanagh	0	1
Breconshire	0	2	Angus & Dundee	4	4	Co. Tyrone	0	1
Caernarfonshire	7	7	Moray & Nairn	5	7	TOTALS	274	371
Carmarthenshire	0	2	NE Scotland	23	25			

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*
Less scarce 2,050 bp* 25y trend: **stable +27%** Moderate

Green

302–676 pairs. Given that RBBP reporting covers approximately one-third of the UK’s breeding Eurasian Hobby population, caution has to be employed in interpreting trends in the totals we report. Broad trends are evident, however, and probably give a meaningful indication of change – a very substantial increase since 1973 (+511%) levelling out to relative stability over the last 25 years, as reported in the banner above. Looking at the recent trend gives some cause for concern, as the numbers we have reported have declined by 35% over the last ten years.
* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Eurasian Hobby			Dorset (e 35)	14	19
	CP	TP	Gloucestershire (e 20)	19	19
England (e 1,185+)	283	627	Hampshire (e 150)	11	16
England, SW (e 318)	66	128	Isle of Wight (e 4)	0	4
Avon (e 4)	2	4	Somerset (e 20)	3	5
Cornwall (e 10)	5	10	Wiltshire (e 39)	6	39
Devon (e 36)	6	12			

Eurasian Hobby continued			Worcestershire (e 7)	7	7
England, SE (e 382+)	38	159	England, N (e 91+)	45	67
Bedfordshire	1	1	Cheshire & Wirral (e 12)	4	12
Berkshire (e 24)	2	2	Cleveland	0	2
Essex (e 4)	1	4	Co. Durham (e 4)	2	2
Greater London (e 6)	5	6	Greater Manchester (e 6)	3	6
Hertfordshire (e 42)	6	23	Northumberland (e 2)	0	2
Kent (e 100–150)	11	65	Yorkshire (e 50)	36	43
Oxfordshire (e 15)	1	15	Wales (e 88+)	15	40
Surrey (e 20–30)	7	11	Breconshire (e 18)	2	11
Sussex (e 100)	4	32	Caernarfonshire (e 1–2)	0	1
England, E (e 260)	66	178	Carmarthenshire (e 5)	0	5
Cambridgeshire (e 14)	8	14	Denbigh & Flint (e 13)	2	3
Lincolnshire (e 81)	4	81	Gwent (e 25)	5	7
Norfolk (e 30–35)	15	27	Meirionnydd (e 4)	0	2
Northamptonshire (e 50–70)	23	24	Montgomeryshire (e 3)	3	3
Suffolk (e 60)	16	32	Radnorshire	3	8
England, C (e 134+)	68	95	Scotland (e 12+)	4	9
Derbyshire (e 35)	28	28	Scotland, S (e 1)	0	1
Herefordshire	8	12	Lothian (e 1)	0	1
Leics & Rutland (e 16)	2	2	Scotland, Mid (e 9+)	2	6
Nottinghamshire (e 10)	2	5	Angus & Dundee	1	5
Shropshire (e 22)	13	22	Moray & Nairn (e 2)	1	1
Staffordshire (e 5–10)	1	1	Scotland, N & W (e 2+)	2	2
Warwickshire (e 20)	7	16	Highland (e 2)	2	2
West Midlands (e 2)	0	2	TOTALS (e 1,285+)	302	676

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

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

Green

High

683–1,003 pairs. Peregrine data collated by the RBBP come from a variety of sources – submissions from county recorders, raptor study groups, nest recording and ringing data, and Schedule 1 licence returns. Not all records are shared with us, or supplied with sufficient spatial detail to allow inclusion in our collation of totals, and so there is some variation between years in the flow of data (and, of course, there may be variation between years in observer activity). Regardless, there was a substantial decline in the number of both confirmed breeding pairs (-20.3%) and total pairs (-17.9%) reported between 2022 and 2023 – the greatest between-year change reported since the RBBP began collating Peregrine data in 1996 (other than changes due to the reporting of national surveys). This decline was widespread across the UK, making it unlikely to be an artefact of local variation in reporting: a fall in numbers was noted in all four countries and in all of our reporting regions except South Scotland (which showed a marginal +2% change). At a finer scale, a between-year decrease was evident in 53 counties, whereas an increase was detected in only 12 (and no change in 16). It seems highly likely that there was a genuine decline in the number of breeding pairs between 2022 and 2023.

Peregrines might be considered amongst the raptor species most vulnerable to the recent impacts of HPAI H5N1, owing to them taking predominantly avian prey (with seabirds being particularly important in some regions). Certainly, there are reports of breeding failures and adult deaths directly attributable to HPAI; of 62 Peregrine corpses tested for HPAI by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) over two years from October 2021, 34 (54.8%) tested positive for HPAI (Atkinson *et al.* 2025). As we described in last year's report, Wilson *et al.* (2023) found a decline in Peregrine productivity in Scotland in 2022 compared with 2018–21, with a lower proportion of broods fledging successfully. Subsequently, Smith *et al.* (2025) used data collected by the Lothian & Borders Raptor Study Group from 2012–23 to assess the impact of HPAI on Peregrines breeding in Lothian and Borders. Although they could not conclusively link their findings to HPAI, they found that productivity in 2022 and 2023 was the lowest in their 12-year time series; that territory occupancy fell

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slightly in 2022 and 2023; and that 15.8% of the pairs for which the age of both birds was known contained a subadult bird in 2023, compared with only 0.9% of such pairs in years before 2023, suggesting possible disease-related mortality of adults prior to that breeding season. While it is not possible to draw a firm link between the drop in numbers of breeding Peregrines reported in 2023 and the impact of HPAI, there is certainly evidence to suggest that this may have been the case.

* Wilson *et al.* (2018).

Peregrine Falcon			Wales (e 237)	65	114
	CP	TP	Anglesey (e 9)	5	5
England (e 763+)	371	487	Breconshire (e 16)	6	10
England, SW (e 230)	101	128	Caernarfonshire (e 15)	3	6
Avon (e 10)	7	10	Carmarthenshire (e 6)	1	2
Cornwall (e 50)	22	26	Ceredigion (e 5–15)	2	2
Devon (e 64)	10	17	Denbigh & Flint (e 6)	4	6
Dorset (e 25)	13	15	East Glamorgan (e 30)	14	22
Gloucestershire (e 16)	16	16	Gower (e 35)	4	5
Hampshire (e 22)	22	22	Gwent (e 30)	4	8
Isle of Wight (e 7)	4	7	Meirionnydd (e 15)	1	3
Isles of Scilly (e 1)	0	1	Montgomeryshire (e 15)	2	15
Somerset (e 30)	5	9	Pembrokeshire (e 30)	15	20
Wiltshire (e 5)	2	5	Radnorshire (e 15)	4	10
England, SE (e 146)	74	99	Scotland (e 452+)	181	323
Bedfordshire (e 2)	2	2	Scotland, S (e 190+)	103	172
Berkshire (e 6)	5	6	Ayrshire	16	25
Buckinghamshire (e 4)	2	4	Borders (e 59)	31	59
Essex (e 15)	11	12	Clyde	17	22
Greater London (e 22)	19	22	Clyde Islands	3	5
Hertfordshire (e 6)	5	6	Dumfries & G'way (e 64)	31	47
Kent (e 30–40)	6	12	Lothian (e 15)	5	14
Oxfordshire (e 4)	4	4	Scotland, Mid (e 94+)	50	94
Surrey (e 7)	7	7	Angus & Dundee	6	14
Sussex (e 40)	13	24	Fife	7	16
England, E (e 47)	34	46	Isle of May (e 1)	1	1
Cambridgeshire (e 5)	3	5	Moray & Nairn (e 4)	2	4
Lincolnshire (e 18)	13	18	NE Scotland (e 30)	15	30
Norfolk (e 6)	6	6	Perth & Kinross	13	18
Northamptonshire (e 6–7)	5	6	Upper Forth	6	11
Suffolk (e 11)	7	11	Scotland, N & W (e 168+)	28	57
England, C (e 134)	85	109	Argyll (e 20–50)	5	8
Derbyshire (e 31)	28	31	Caithness	0	2
Herefordshire (e 9)	4	6	Fair Isle (e 1)	1	1
Leics & Rutland (e 20)	10	12	Highland (e 90)	11	29
Nottinghamshire (e 10)	9	10	Orkney (e 10)	6	10
Shropshire (e 22)	14	22	Outer Hebrides (e 15)	5	7
Staffordshire (e 6)	5	6	Northern Ireland (e 66+)	56	66
Warwickshire (e 10)	4	5	Co. Antrim	16	21
West Midlands (e 10)	2	3	Co. Armagh	6	7
Worcestershire (e 16)	9	14	Co. Derry/Londonderry	6	7
England, N (e 206+)	77	105	Co. Down	5	7
Cheshire & Wirral (e 9)	7	9	Co. Fermanagh	11	12
Cleveland (e 1)	1	1	Co. Tyrone	12	12
Co. Durham (e 6)	3	6	Isle of Man (e 5)	3	3
Cumbria (e 80)	14	15	Channel Islands (e 10)	7	10
Greater Manchester (e 9)	5	9	Guernsey (e 4)	1	4
Lancs & N Mersey (e 35)	9	9	Jersey (e 6)	6	6
Northumberland (e 25)	9	15	TOTALS (e 1,533+)	683	1,003
Yorkshire	29	41			

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Very rare 3 bp

25y trend: **weak decrease** -40%

Red

High

One site: one singing male. This is the third successive year with no confirmed breeding record, and only a single male reported. The sweeping decline in this once-widespread species occurred largely before the inception of the RBBP in 1973; even so, reports such as a maximum total of 64 pairs in 1977 (Batten *et al.* 1979) seem almost unimaginable given the parlous state of the species now. The decline of 93% since 1973 is the largest of any of the species that RBBP has ever reported on.

England, SE
Kent One site: one singing male between 28th and 31st May.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Former breeder

Two sites: two singing males. A typical return of unpaired lingering migrants, albeit in apparently suitable habitat; the last confirmed breeding record was in 2009.

England, E
Suffolk Two sites: (1) one singing male between 20th May and 4th June; (2) one singing male between 26th May and 2nd June.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Scarce 493 bp*

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

Green

High

376–422 pairs. This is the highest total reported since the last national survey in 2014, which suggests that the population is in good health. As we reported last year, however, Cross *et al.* (2023) flagged concerns over the health of the populations in north and mid Wales, and the number in Scotland has fallen from 63 pairs in 2014 to 38 in 2023. Conversely, numbers in Cornwall continue to rise following natural recolonisation there in 2002.

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

Red-billed Chough			Carmarthenshire	1	2	Scotland, N & W	38	38
	T	TP	Ceredigion	21	33	Argyll: Colonsay		
England, SW	62	68	Denbigh & Flint	2	2	& Oronsay	4	4
Cornwall	62	68	East Glamorgan	1	1	Argyll: Islay	34	34
Wales	260	300	Gower	4	5	Isle of Man	16	16
Anglesey	36	39	Meirionnydd	9	12	TOTALS	376	422
Caernarfonshire	104	111	Pembrokeshire	82	95			

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*

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

Green

Low

13–57 pairs. This is only the fourth year of reporting since Crested Tit returned to the RBBP's species list. The number reported has doubled since 2020, and while we obviously have a long way to go to reach more meaningful coverage, we thank all the observers who have submitted records, as well as the county recorders for Highland and Moray & Nairn for their diligent efforts in compiling these data. There surely must, however, be far more Crested Tits observed than

these 57 pairs, and so we encourage all observers encountering Crested Tits in the breeding season to share their sightings through the appropriate channels.

* Woodward *et al.* (2020).

Crested Tit			Scotland, N & W	10	48
	CP	TP	Highland	10	48
Scotland, Mid	3	9	TOTALS	13	57
Moray & Nairn	3	9			

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Scarce 611 bp

25y trend: **strong increase +111%**

Green

High

95 sites: 652 pairs. This is a drop in numbers from the record total reported for 2022, largely owing to lower numbers reported from the vast and hard-to-access Tay Reedbeds, Perth & Kinross. Gilbert *et al.* (1998) hit the nail on the head with the statement: ‘Bearded Tits are difficult birds to census. They do not sing, are non-territorial, and their reedbed habitat is often impenetrable.’ As a consequence, many larger reedbed sites that hold important populations of the species are not censused annually, and in some years we may receive a report of presence only. As mentioned previously, we are working to develop statistical modelling approaches that might account for some of the variation caused by uneven monitoring coverage, and Bearded Tit is one species for which reporting might benefit from such approaches.

Bearded Tit			Sussex	4	12	Yorkshire	11	127
	S	TP	England, E	39	299	Wales	2	4
England	89	590	Cambridgeshire	5	6	Carmarthenshire	1	2
England, SW	9	63	Lincolnshire	2	72	Gwent	1	2
Dorset	4	22	Norfolk	14	100	Scotland, Mid	4	58
Hampshire	3	7	Suffolk	18	121	Moray & Nairn	1	1
Somerset	2	34	England, C	2	3	NE Scotland	1	1
England, SE	26	95	Nottinghamshire	2	3	Perth & Kinross	1	54
Bedfordshire	1	3	England, N	13	130	Upper Forth	1	2
Essex	7	17	Cleveland	1	2	TOTALS	95	652
Kent	14	63	Lancs & N Mersey	1	1			

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

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

Green

Moderate

1,025 singing males. While some of the numbers reported by the RBBP arise from robust monitoring of heathland sites, elsewhere coverage is incomplete, with farmland habitats particularly under-represented. The 2025 Heathland Birds Survey has used structured sampling across all suitable habitats within the range and so will provide a robust estimate with which to measure change since the previous survey in 2006 (Conway *et al.* 2009).

* Conway *et al.* (2009).

Woodlark		Dorset (e 145)	86	England, SE (e 302)	252
	SM/T	Gloucestershire (e 21–26)	18	Bedfordshire (e 1)	1
England, SW (e 536)	374	Hampshire (e 350)	255	Berkshire (e 47)	47
Devon (e 4)	4	Wiltshire (e 11)	11	Buckinghamshire (e 1)	1

Woodlark <i>continued</i>		Cambridgeshire (e 1)	1	Nottinghamshire (e 38)	38
Kent (e 3)	3	Lincolnshire (e 18)	18	Staffordshire (e 25)	6
Oxfordshire (e 3)	2	Norfolk (e 120–150)	116	Worcestershire (e 1)	1
Surrey (e 147)	147	Suffolk (e 270)	202	England, N (e 16)	16
Sussex (e 100)	51	England, C (e 65)	46	Yorkshire (e 16)	16
England, E (e 439)	337	Derbyshire (e 1)	1	TOTAL (e 1,358+)	1,025

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*
Potential breeder

One site: one bird. This is the second time this species has featured in a RBBP report, as a male held a territory on the Outer Hebrides in 2014.

Wales
Pembrokeshire One site: a single bird was present between 29th May and 6th September.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*
Occasional breeder

One site: one singing male. Individuals are reported upon by the RBBP only if they maintain territories for at least five days. This is the 14th successive year that male Iberian Chiffchaffs have established territories in the UK; a pair bred in Gower in 2015 (Hunter 2018) and a male bred in a mixed pairing with a Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* in Greater London in 2022.

England, SW
Gloucestershire One site: one male singing from 14th to 23rd May.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*
Potential breeder

Four sites: four singing males. Individuals are reported upon by the RBBP only if they maintain territories for at least five days. For a species that has never been confirmed as breeding in the UK, Great Reed Warbler is remarkably regular in RBBP reports – indeed, it has been absent in only two of the last 25 years we have reported upon. While we do not routinely report trends for species that have yet to establish themselves as breeders, it is notable that there has been no significant change in the numbers of territorial males over that period (25-year trend of +17%).

England, SW
Somerset One site: one male singing from 28th April to 11th June.
England, SE
Kent One site: one male singing from 26th May to 20th June.
England, E
Norfolk One site: one male singing from 14th May to 16th June.
England, N
Cleveland One site: one male singing from 5th to 24th 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.

[Scotland, N & W](#)

Shetland One site: one male singing from 9th to 16th June.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Very rare 16 bp

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

Red

High

14 sites: 2–18 pairs. A typical year by recent standards, with records concentrated along the North Sea coast and the highest numbers in Shetland. The pairs in Lincolnshire and North-east Scotland were the first confirmed breeding records for those recording areas. The male of the Lincolnshire pair arrived on 1st June, the female not until 13th June, after which the male soon stopped singing (Siddle 2025). This is typical behaviour; observers should be aware that if a male Marsh Warbler stops singing, it does not necessarily mean it has left a site. While there has been an upturn in numbers reported recently (+65% over the last ten years), the population is much smaller than 50 years ago, when breeding birds still remained in the former stronghold of Worcestershire (Bell *et al.* 2021); there has been a decline of 76% since 1973.

[England, SW](#)

Somerset One site: one singing male between 13th May and 19th June.

[England, SE](#)

Kent One site: one singing male between 28th May and 15th June. **Sussex** One site: one singing male between 13th and 22nd June.

[England, E](#)

Lincolnshire One site: one confirmed breeding pair, fledged four young. **Norfolk** One site: one singing male between 2nd and 10th June. **Suffolk** Two sites: (1) one singing male between 10th and 14th June; (2) one singing male between 19th and 25th June.

[Scotland, Mid](#)

North-east Scotland One site: one confirmed pair, fledged at least one young.

[Scotland, N & W](#)

Shetland Six sites: (1) three singing males from 17th June to 16th July; (2) two singing males from 11th to 16th June; (3) two singing males from 22nd to 30th June; (4) one singing male from 4th to 9th June; (5) one singing male from 12th to 16th June; (6) one singing male from 15th to 24th June.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina***Occasional breeder**

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. A typical showing, reflecting the northern bias in records of this species, with most potential breeding records coming from the eastern side of Scotland. The Lothian record is intriguing, with the presence of a pair well into the breeding season suggesting that a breeding attempt may have occurred prior to the pair being found. Had this been proven, it would have been only the fifth confirmed breeding record in the UK, following pairs in Highland in 1992, 1998 and 2009, and in Orkney in 2002 (Forrester *et al.* 2007; Holling *et al.* 2011).

[Scotland, S](#)

Lothian One site: one probable breeding pair. A singing male was present between 5th and 10th July, with a female observed on one date.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: one singing male from 15th to 28th June.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*
Very rare 11 bp 25y trend: **strong increase** +130%

Red
Near-complete

Eight sites: 0–8 pairs. Records of birds present for fewer than five days, and those not accepted by the BBRC, are excluded. Confirmed breeding records of this secretive species remain extremely rare – we have received only five such records, in four years, this century.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one singing male from 23rd April to 3rd May, presumed to be the same individual as in 2021 and 2022. **Somerset** One site: one singing male from 8th to 13th April.

England, SE

Kent One site: one singing male from 17th April to 31st May.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one singing male from 14th to 26th May. **Norfolk** One site: one singing male from 16th May to 26th June.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one singing male from 10th to 14th April. **Cleveland** One site: one singing male from 18th to 25th June. **Yorkshire** One site: one singing male from 20th to 29th June.



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Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*.

Dartford Warbler *Curruca undata*
Less scarce 3,214 bp* 25y trend: **weak increase** +62%

Amber
High

2,242 territories. The numbers reported in the last two years (2,286 pairs were reported in 2022) are the highest we have published outside of the last national survey in 2006 (Wotton *et al.* 2009). This was in part caused by a full survey in Hampshire, which reported the highest numbers ever recorded in this key county (Matthews & Clements 2024). Even so, as the estimates provided by county bird recorders suggest, the numbers reported are likely to underestimate the true population. The Heathland Birds Survey running in 2025 will give a robust estimate of the current breeding population.

* Wotton *et al.* (2009).

Dartford Warbler		Wiltshire (e 1)	1	England, C (e 2)	2
	TP	England, SE (e 541)	508	Staffordshire (e 1)	1
England (e 2,293)	2,215	Berkshire (e 36)	36	West Midlands (e 1)	1
England, SW (e 1,613)	1,568	Buckinghamshire (e 3)	3	Wales (e 29)	27
Cornwall (e 15)	14	Kent (e 2)	2	Caernarfonshire (e 1–3)	1
Devon (e 70)	48	Surrey (e 375)	375	Carmarthenshire (e 1)	1
Dorset (e 540)	518	Sussex (e 125)	92	East Glamorgan (e 1)	1
Hampshire (e 893)	893	England, E (e 137)	137	Gower (e 20)	20
Isle of Wight (e 10)	10	Norfolk (e 4)	4	Pembrokeshire (e 4)	4
Somerset (e 84)	84	Suffolk (e 133)	133	TOTAL (e 2,397)	2,242

'Fair Isle Wren' *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*

Rare 38 bp

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

Red

Near-complete

32 territories. The RBBP has reported on this endemic race only since 2008, when we expanded our remit to cover rare breeding subspecies, but – unsurprisingly given that the distribution coincides with the location of the famous bird observatory – censuses of this island race have been conducted since 1950 (Aspinall & Aspinall 2011). Over that time, the numbers reported have varied from as low as ten territories to as high as 52.

Scotland, N & W

Fair Isle 32 territories.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Very rare 1 bp

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

Red

High

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. A fairly typical showing, by recent standards, for what is now an extremely rare breeding species – had the Highland record been confirmed as breeding it would have been only the third such record in the last ten years. A paper reviewing the rise and fall of the Fieldfare as a breeding bird in the UK is in preparation by Panel members.

Scotland, Mid

NE Scotland One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one probable breeding pair. A pair was seen on 30th June near a juvenile thrush that may have been a Fieldfare.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Very rare 16 bp

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

Red

High

Six sites: 1–6 pairs. This is the lowest total (jointly with 2001 and 2006) we have reported since 1973. Numbers have waxed and waned over the 50 years, peaking at 79 pairs in 1984 (fig. 11). These fluctuations are partly due to variation in recording effort, but the recent decline appears to reflect broader patterns; the 25% decline over the last 25 years almost exactly matches that from the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (-26% between 1990 and 2023; PECBMS 2025). The absence from Shetland is particularly notable – this is only the third blank year from there in the last 20 years.

England, SE

Kent One site: one possible breeding pair.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one possible breeding pair.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one confirmed breeding pair.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Three sites: one probable breeding pair and two singing males.

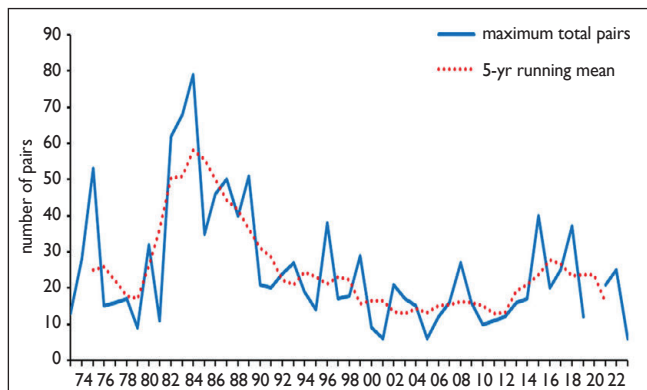


Fig. 11. Maximum numbers of Redwings *Turdus iliacus* reported by the RBBP, 1973–2023, with a 5-year running mean. Data for 2020 are omitted owing to the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on monitoring coverage.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*
Occasional breeder

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. As in 2022, there were records of both ‘Red-spotted Bluethroat’ *L. s. svecica* and ‘White-spotted Bluethroat’ *L. s. cyanecula* in 2023, the latter being a male returning to Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, for the third year running. The general pattern of territorial male Red-spotted Bluethroats in Scottish uplands, and White-spotted Bluethroats in English wetlands, was maintained although, as fig. 12 shows, there are no discernible trends in either race. There have been only five confirmed breeding records of Bluethroats in the UK to date, one being in 1968 before the formation of the RBBP. Four of these have been of Red-spotted Bluethroats, most recently in Moray & Nairn in 2016, while the only confirmed breeding of White-spotted Bluethroats was of two pairs in Yorkshire in 1996.

England, SW

Gloucestershire One site: one singing male ‘White-spotted Bluethroat’ *L. s. cyanecula* returned for the third successive year, being present for the lengthy period between 30th April and 10th September.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn One site: one male ‘Red-spotted Bluethroat’ *L. s. svecica* was reported from suitable montane breeding habitat on 6th July and an unsexed individual on 22nd July.

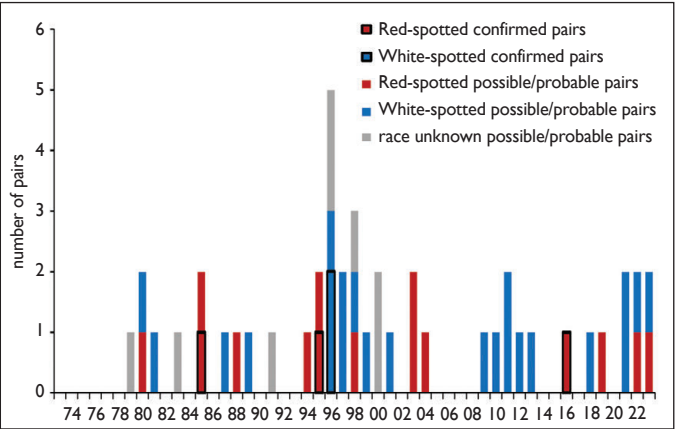


Fig. 12. Breeding records of ‘Red-spotted Bluethroats’ *Luscinia svecica svecica*, ‘White-spotted Bluethroats’ *L. s. cyanecula* and Bluethroats unassigned to race in the UK, 1973–2023.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*
Rare 85 bp **25y trend: stable -1%**

Red
High



76 sites: 21–92 pairs. There was a drop in numbers from the maximum total of 101 pairs reported for 2022, but this is still the second-highest number reported this century. A pair together on St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, if only briefly, was a notable record.

Black Redstart			Cambridgeshire	2	0	2
			Norfolk	1	0	1
			Suffolk	7	13	14
England	74	21	90	England, C	3	3
England, SW	2	1	2	England, C	3	3
Dorset	1	0	1	Nottinghamshire	2	2
Isle of Wight	1	1	1	Shropshire	1	1
England, SE	55	3	63	England, N	4	1
Berkshire	4	1	4	Cleveland	1	0
Essex	2	0	2	Greater Manchester	2	1
Greater London	32	0	33	Northumberland	1	0
Kent	11	1	18	Scotland, N & W	2	0
Surrey	4	0	4	Highland	1	0
Sussex	2	1	2	Outer Hebrides	1	0
England, E	10	13	17	TOTALS	76	21
					92	



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'White Wagtail' *Motacilla alba alba*.

'White Wagtail' *Motacilla alba alba*
Very rare 3 bp (no trend available)

Amber
High

One site: one pair. Many breeding attempts entail hybrid pairings with Pied Wagtails *M. a. yarrellii*, and this may have been the case with the single record in 2023. In addition to the record given below, it is estimated that there are 30 breeding pairs on Guernsey and 20 breeding pairs on Jersey.

England, SW

Isles of Scilly One site: an adult was seen feeding two fledged juveniles in June, at the same site where one was seen collecting food in May 2022. As before, the identity of the other parent is not known, so it may have been a Pied Wagtail.

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

Red
Moderate

37–133 pairs. A relatively low total, which reflects a reduction in records submitted from core breeding areas such as the New Forest, Hampshire, rather than any genuine population change. Elusive and often present at low densities, the Hawfinch is a challenging species to monitor.

* Clements (2013).

Hawfinch		Sussex (e 50–100)	9	East Glamorgan (e 10)	4
	TP	England, C (e 4+)	4	Gower	1
England (e 611+)	89	Herefordshire	4	Gwent (e 310)	16
England, SW (e 445)	63	England, N (e 13+)	4	Meirionnydd (e 120)	3
Gloucestershire (e 20–25)	20	Cumbria	3	Montgomeryshire (e 3)	3
Hampshire (e 400)	29	Lancs & N Mersey (e 10)	1	Radnorshire	4
Wiltshire (e 20)	14	Wales (e 459+)	38	Scotland (e 9–10)	6
England, SE (e 139+)	18	Breconshire (e 5)	1	Scotland, Mid (e 3–4)	0
Essex	5	Caernarfonshire (e 3)	3	Scotland, N & W (e 6)	6
Kent (e 10–20)	1	Ceredigion	2	Highland (e 6)	6
Surrey (e 10)	3	Denbigh & Flint	1	TOTAL (e 1,080+)	133



355. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Spurn, Yorkshire, May 2024.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* Occasional breeder

Two sites: two singing males. A return to more typical reporting after last year's breeding on Fair Isle.

England, N

Cumbria One site: a male held a territory from 22nd May to 26th June.

Scotland, Mid

Highland One site: a singing male was present between 7th and 14th July.

'Common Redpoll' *Acanthis flammea flammea* Very rare 26 bp

15y trend: **strong increase** +290%

Amber
Moderate

18 sites: 5–25 pairs. As a result of taxonomic changes, Common Redpoll is no longer considered a separate species from Lesser Redpoll *A. cabaret* and Arctic Redpoll *A. hornemanni*, with the three taxa now lumped as Redpoll *A. flammea*. This change has arisen from the work of Funk *et al.* (2021), who determined that a single chromosomal inversion was responsible for most – if not all – of the phenotypic variation between (and within) what had previously been considered different species.

The RBBP has, since 2008, collected data on rare breeding bird subspecies such as Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava* and Fair Isle Wren. Thus, we will continue to collate and report data on Common Redpoll in exactly the same manner as before, simply now considering it as a subspecies, *A. f. flammea*.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Nine sites: (1–6) 11 pairs across six sites on the same island, with fledged birds noted at two; (7) two singing males; (8–9) one singing male at each. **Shetland** Nine sites: (1) two confirmed breeding pairs; (2) one confirmed breeding pair; (3–9) one probable breeding pair at each site.

European Serin *Serinus serinus* Former breeder

One site: 0–1 pairs. The history of European Serin as a breeding species in the UK was reviewed by Holling (2023).

England, SE

Sussex One site: a series of records between 24th April and 4th July included a male on numerous occasions, two different females and, on one date, a pair together.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

Less scarce 1,709 bp* 27y trend (survey): **large increase** +814%

Red

Moderate

50–340 pairs. Although only a relatively small proportion of the Cirl Bunting population is recorded annually, the numbers reported have increased in recent years owing to the establishment of a volunteer-based Cirl Bunting Monitoring Programme by the RSPB. In time it is expected this will provide a robust, sample-based approach to tracking the population.

* Jeffs *et al.* (2018).

Cirl Bunting			Devon	42	273
	CP	TP	Dorset	2	5
England	46	336	Channel Islands	4	4
England, SW	46	336	Jersey	4	4
Cornwall	2	58	TOTALS	50	340

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Rare 79 bp* (no trend available)

Amber

Moderate

3–43 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 2023. We know, however, that the actual population is higher (Hayhow *et al.* 2018a) as pairs breed in less-visited parts of the Cairngorms and elsewhere in northern Scotland and some are rarely reported. The montane survey conducted in 2025 will give a new estimate and hence, for the first time, a robust population trend for Snow Bunting.

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

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee Cairngorms: one confirmed pair. **Moray & Nairn** Cairngorms: two probable breeding pairs, four possible breeding pairs and three singing males. **North-east Scotland** Cairngorms: three probable breeding pairs, six possible breeding pairs and 14 singing males.

Scotland, N & W

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

Appendix 1. RBBP taxa for which no data were received in 2023.

The following rare taxa are regular breeders in the UK. Confirmation of presence was received in 2023, but no breeding records were submitted.

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

‘St Kilda Wren’ *Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis* (St Kilda only).

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (Highland only).

Appendix 2. Rare non-native species considered by RBBP recorded in 2023.

Data on the following rare non-native breeding species have been received for 2023; many are of non-breeding birds which may be recent releases or escapes from captivity, rather than part of established breeding populations.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* Reported from one site in Cornwall.

Reeves’s Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii* Reported from two sites in Derbyshire (up to seven at one site, a single at the other) and one site in Breconshire.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* The only report received was from one site on the Isles of Scilly. Birds were present all year, and a nest with young was found on 15th June; no further details were received.

Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae* An unknown number of birds were present at a site in the Isles of Scilly (the same site as Golden Pheasants, above) with singing males reported.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* Breeding was reported from single sites in Hertfordshire (three young fledged from one pair) and Yorkshire (five pairs). Birds were also reported from six sites in Cornwall, two in Dorset and one in Derbyshire.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* Only four adults were reported from Coll, Argyll, but a juvenile indicated the first breeding for several years.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* Confirmed breeding records were received from single sites in Dorset, Hampshire (two pairs), Lancashire & North Merseyside, Sussex (two pairs) and Yorkshire. A pair was present in Kent and records of non-breeding birds were received from two sites in Derbyshire (including a juvenile from an unknown source) and one in Yorkshire.

Muscovy Duck *Aix sponsa* No breeding records were received, but birds were present at 11 sites in Cornwall, ten sites in Derbyshire, two in Norfolk, one in Shropshire, and at the long-established site in Ely, Cambridgeshire. It is clear that this species is present far more widely than these few reports suggest.

Wood Duck *Cairina moschata* Two reported from a site in Gwent.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* 30 sites: 14–48 pairs. The Gloucestershire and Wiltshire sites are all within the extensive Cotswold Water Park complex.

Red-crested Pochard				Essex	1	2	2
	S	CP	TP	Hertfordshire	8	2	8
England, SW	12	4	24	England, E	6	5	10
Gloucestershire	8	3	20	Cambridgeshire	5	0	5
Wiltshire	4	1	4	Lincolnshire	1	5	5
England, SE	12	5	14	TOTALS	30	14	48
Berkshire	3	1	4				

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus* One was reported from a site in Derbyshire in the spring.

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



Records of rare breeding birds in 2024 are now being collated; county recorders are reminded that data should be submitted by 30th November 2025 using the spreadsheet downloadable from www.rbbp.org.uk.

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