

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1978

*J. T. R. Sharrock
and the Rare Breeding
Birds Panel*



The primary function of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel is to provide a safe store for confidential information, so that this is collected in one file for posterity. In the past, details of important records have been lost forever through the deaths of the only people having knowledge of the circumstances; storing of confidential records in the scattered files of individual

continued...

county societies is also unsatisfactory, since they will not be easily accessible to researchers in the future and, inevitably, some will be mislaid over the years. Records submitted to the panel on its special forms (two copies of each) are filed in locked containers at two places, to guard against loss by fire. As the years pass, the accumulated information becomes more and more valuable. We are, therefore, pleased that co-operation from county and regional recorders is being maintained and, in many cases, is improving. A few societies or recorders do not supply full data for their most sensitive species (which are, of course, different in each area). We regret this, since the confidentiality of the panel is now thoroughly established and neither posterity nor present-day conservationists will welcome less than the full picture. We urge those who have held back information to supply data for past years so that the scientific record is completed.

Serving conservation is our second function. It is obviously important for the RSPB, the Nature Conservancy Council and others to know which species are increasing and which decreasing, whether breeding success is improving or declining, whether breeding ranges are expanding or contracting, and so on. Such information can be obtained only by collection of much otherwise confidential data into one central register, from which summaries (but not details) can be fed to the conservation bodies. The panel is funded and supported jointly by *British Birds*, the BTO and the RSPB; it also includes a representative of the NCC.

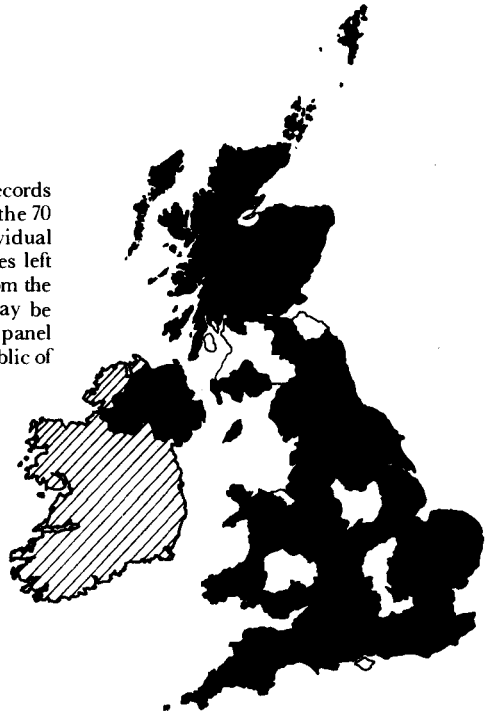
We believe that it is in the best interests of the birds for the fullest possible details to be deposited in the panel's files. Most county and regional recorders clearly agree, since we have now received 1977 information from every single area of the UK. So far, 1978 details have been received from 70 areas (fig. 1); 15 are still outstanding, but we expect to receive data from most if not all in due course. The policy in our published reports is to include information only when safe to do so, and provided that we have received permission: we publish basic details, sufficient for the purposes of most researchers and enough to give birdwatchers a balanced annual summary of the events concerning the United Kingdom's rarest breeding birds.

During 1978, the panel's members were Dr L. A. Batten, R. H. Dennis, I. J. Ferguson-Lees, Ian Prestt and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (secretary). In May 1979, James Ferguson-Lees retired from the panel; he was, with David Lea, one of the founders of the panel and responsible in a large measure for its present successful methods. With the necessary approval of the editorial board of *British Birds* and of the councils of the BTO and the RSPB, Robert Spencer was appointed to the vacancy in October 1979.

Most records reach the panel from the county and regional recorders (see names and addresses in *Brit. Birds* 72: 446-449). Individual observers are strongly encouraged to submit their data via the relevant county recorder, although it is recognised that there may very occasionally be exceptional reasons for sending a record directly to the panel's secretary. The special forms for submitting records are available free from the address at the end of this report.

In this report, counties are named only when permission has been given.

Fig 1. Areas covered by this report. Records (or negative returns) were supplied for the 70 areas shown black. Some individual observers supplied data for the counties left white, but records were not received from the local recorders, and so the picture may be very incomplete for these 15 areas. The panel does not collect records from the Republic of Ireland



In other cases, code letters are used: these are the same as in previous reports, so that histories of decline or colonisation can be followed, even though the locations must remain confidential to ensure freedom from disturbance. This report contains a mixture of old and new county names: we have used those supplied by the recorders.

For most species, we have given a range of figures for 'pairs breeding', the lower representing the number confirmed breeding and the upper the maximum if, for instance, every singing male or single sighting represented a nesting pair. Although these ranges are often very wide, they can be consistently calculated each year and will, we hope, be valuable for comparisons.

With the appearance of this sixth report in the January issue, only five months after the fifth (*Brit. Birds* 72: 363-381), we have achieved our aim of reverting to our usual schedules. We hope to publish the seventh report, covering 1979, in the January 1981 issue.

Summary of the year

The summer of 1978 was remarkable for record numbers of several scarce species. Unfortunately, however, it was also cold, wet and windy, so that breeding success was generally poor.

Notable wildfowl events included the first proved breeding records of Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* for more than 30 years and of Scaup *Aythya marila* for five years. The welcome colonisation of Scotland by Goldeneyes

Bucephala clangula continued apace, with the highest ever numbers of nesting females and of broods.

There were also significant milestones among the raptors. It was pleasing to find the number of nesting female Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* maintained at the high 1977 level. The numbers of nesting pairs of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* and of Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* were both the highest this century, but, unfortunately, the poor summer had a disastrous effect on their breeding success. Hobbies *Falco subbuteo*, however, managed their most successful year for young known to have been reared, despite the weather.

The major wader event was the discovery of Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* breeding in Scotland. The main colony of Temminck's Stints *C. temminckii* was still extant and, if it remains undisturbed, may act as a nucleus from which further colonies will arise. Also in Scotland, Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* were in their highest ever numbers and Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* reached a post-Atlas peak, but production of young was low owing to the bad weather in late summer. Mainly in England, Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* were in best-ever numbers away from their main area, where, however, early summer rains may have had an adverse effect through flooding (Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* failed to breed, possibly for the same reason). The second and third breeding attempts by Little Gulls *Larus minutus* regrettably both failed, as did the first, three years earlier. A pair of Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* was robbed by an egg-collector.

Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla*—almost written off as lost to Britain as a breeding species when there was only one pair in England and one singing on one day in Scotland in 1973, and none in England in 1974—maintained their high 1977 numbers in the Scottish Highlands. Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* seem at last to be expanding their range in England; the pattern suggests scattered colonisation by overshooting migrants rather than colonisation from their western stronghold where numbers appear to be relatively stable. Cetti's *Cettia cetti* and Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinioides* both had successful seasons. Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* are clearly on the increase and 1978 was their best year yet. Another expanding species, the Serin *Serinus serinus*, produced its long-awaited third British breeding record, roughly a decade later than anticipated. Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus*, however, returned for the second year in succession, to give Scotland and our lists further arctic flavour.

Each year, the highlights seem unexpected or pleasing. In many cases, however, they are the result of much hard work, at desk and in committee room as well as in the field. Perhaps the majority of our annual successes would not exist if those with foresight had not established nature reserves in appropriate places to maintain the landscape in a condition suitable for the colonisations or expansions of small populations. Even now, wardens and regional officers of the RSPB, the NCC, the county naturalists' trusts and other bodies expend time, energy and money protecting the birds which we like to see or to read about. We hope that everyone reading this report will remember their responsibility to help those who try to protect our birds, by

avoiding taking any action which could jeopardise the good of the birds. For our part, the members of this panel all avoid visiting the sites of rare breeding birds, except in the course of essential work or when the finder requests confirmation of his or her discovery.

Not all rare birds are increasing, however, and 1978 saw exceptionally low numbers of several species. Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* and Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus* were at their lowest levels since these reports started. There was only one confirmed breeding record of Redwing *Turdus iliacus* and none—for the first time since its colonisation—of Fieldfare *T. pilaris*. And no male Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* appeared to cheer up the lonely Fetlar females.

Systematic list

No relevant records of the following species were reported for inclusion in this report:

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*
Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*
Sanderling *Calidris alba*
Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*
Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*
Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*
Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

None reported in 1978.

1977 Perth One site: adult on 11th April and 14th August, presumably summered.

This 1977 record is the second relating to possible summering in that year (cf. Gwynedd, *Brit. Birds* 72: 366).

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

17 sites: 37-51 pairs breeding, 23 young reared.

Inverness 15 sites, 35-47 pairs rearing 21 young: (1) ten pairs reared six young; (2) four pairs, at least three bred, rearing two young; (3) three pairs, but probably none bred; (4) one pair reared two young; (5) two pairs, one possibly nested, no young reared; (6) at least 17 pairs nested, at least ten young reared; (7)(8)(9) single pairs bred, but no young reared; (10) two pairs, one probably bred; (11) one pair, outcome unknown; (12)(13) single pairs, did not breed; (14) one or two irregularly, did not nest; (15) one pair reared one young.

Perth Four sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair present until 12th July, nest with two eggs on 16th May, but no young seen; (3) pair on 30th April; (4) at well-watched site, single on 22nd April.

The lowest number of pairs proved breeding in any year since reports started in 1973: 52-53 pairs breeding in 1973, 58-63 in 1974, 39-43 in 1975 (when only eight sites visited in Inverness-shire), 70-75 in 1976 and 42-51 in 1977.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Six sites: 13-15 pairs breeding, at least 18 young reared.

County A Two sites, ten pairs rearing at least 12 young: (1) six pairs hatched 15 young, of which eight probably fledged; (2) four pairs hatched nine young, of which at least four fledged. 'Average season, minimal disturbance.'

County E One site: one in breeding plumage from 22nd April to 16th July.

County D One site: two pairs nested, rearing four young.

County G One site: pair reared two young.

County H One site: adult with juvenile on 5th August, but not seen previously and almost certainly bred elsewhere.

Average numbers compared with previous totals of 18-19, 15-18, over ten (no details from County A), 10-11 (no report from County A) and 11-16 pairs breeding during 1973-77.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

15 sites: two to 27 pairs breeding.

Kent One site: two males booming from 21st May; one intermittent, thought to be almost certainly unpaired; second booming up to early July, thought to be paired.

Lancashire Two sites: (1) 11 males booming; (2) male booming.

Lincoln/south Humberside Two sites: (1) pair, thought to have nested, but not to have reared young, one bird from 30th January to early April, the male booming (occasionally and quietly) to early May, two together 28th April, one carrying eels and other fish during 10th-15th May, but none seen thereafter; (2) male booming on a few evenings, and two individuals on one day, in mid May.

Norfolk Six sites: (1) two males booming; (2)-(5) single males booming; (6) one nest.

West Glamorgan One site: booming heard from early spring to 25th May.

County A Three sites: (1) male booming 23rd April to 3rd June; (2) male booming 14th May, one seen 26th July; (3) male booming on 14th May.

1977 Lincoln/south Humberside Second site: (2) male booming quietly and intermittently in spring (and also in spring 1976), but no proof of breeding.

1977 West Glamorgan One site: booming heard from 5th April to 15th June, singles seen in April and July.

The total is lower than last year's (0-42 breeding pairs) for this declining species, but, as with many reedbed birds, breeding is very difficult to prove; it must also be noted that no report was received from Suffolk.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

No relevant records reported in 1978.

1976 West Glamorgan One site: male on 24th June and 6th August, presumably summered.

This is the first instance of probable summering noted in these reports; this species has yet to be proved to breed in the UK.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

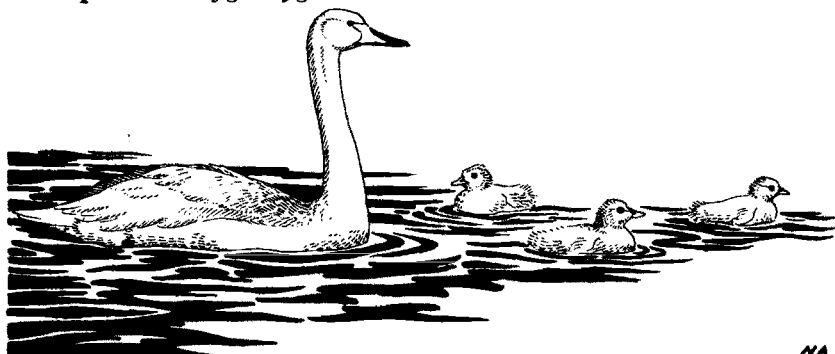
No relevant records reported in 1978.

1976 West Glamorgan One site: one during 21st-27th May, 13th-19th June and 8th-9th July.

1977 West Glamorgan One site: one during 28th May to 4th July.

These are the first cases of summering noted in these reports; this species has yet to be proved to breed in the UK.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*



One site: one pair with three young.

Scotland One site: pair with three young about seven days old on 7th July.

Western Isles One site: adult male displaying over nest of a pair of Mute Swans *C. olor* and even, at times, sitting on their nest; Mute Swans eventually hatched young. Not a breeding record or even a mixed pair, but could easily have been mistakenly reported as such.

This species has not been included in these reports before, but there have been a handful of breeding records this century, the most recent being in the Western Isles in 1947, and, more frequently, cases of mixed Whooper × Mute pairings (see *The Atlas*, page 447).

Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

One female paired with Mallard *A. platyrhynchos* and reared hybrid young.

Scilly One site: female daily from 12th March to mid April, reappeared on 26th June, accompanied by seven ducklings about two weeks old; only five ducklings in mid August, only two (both females) in October and one in December. This is same site as that listed under 'Cornwall' in 1977.

This Nearctic duck is closely related to the Mallard and hybridisation is frequent in North America.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Ten sites: seven to 23 pairs breeding.

Angus One site: pair seen on 23rd April, 8th June and 29th July, did not nest at site, but could have attempted to breed nearby.

Argyll One site: on 9th July, three females, one with one nearly-flying young, second with about four fledged young and third injury-feigning.

Cambridge One site: pair mating on 26th April.

Cambridge/Norfolk One site: potentially six pairs early in season, but only proof of breeding was single female with one nearly-fledged young in August.

Kirkcudbright One site: pair fledged four young from nine eggs; another female with seven half-grown young on 18th June; further three pairs probably deterred from breeding by floods.

Orkney Five sites: (1) at least three pairs probably bred, but only one proved; (2)(3) single pairs probably bred; (4)(5) single pairs possibly bred.

About average numbers.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Two sites: one female with brood and one female present.

North Yorkshire One site: female, perhaps not 100% pure-bred, with male Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* in April-June and alone into July, possibly tried to breed, but nest area flooded in mid May.

Orkney One site: female with seven or eight young in late June.

Most of the few post-1945 breeding records have been in Orkney. The only records in the 1970s have been in Perthshire (three nests at one site in 1970) and in Orkney (female with two young in 1973), although an unmated female laid infertile clutches in Suffolk annually during 1967-71.



NA.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Nine sites: 16-141 pairs breeding.

Caithness Five sites, with breeding proved at two: (1) female with seven young and three other females present on 15th July; (2) female with six young on 15th July; (3) four males and three females on 15th May; (4) female on 23rd June; (5) two females on 9th July. Some sites not checked; wet, cold summer; regular nesting areas not searched because of danger of chilling of clutches in adverse weather conditions.

Dunbarton/Stirling One site: nine males and seven females on 17th May, female with two ducklings on 12th July, female with one well-grown young on 5th August.

Fermanagh One site: 113 pairs estimated during 1st-2nd June; minimum of 12 broods.

Perth One site: two males and three females displaying in May; adult with brood on 14th July.

Shetland One site: up to four pairs in May-June; probably bred, but no proof.

1977 Fermanagh One site: 121 pairs estimated in late May; minimum of 14 broods.

The possible maximum total was the lowest for at least four years, but fluctuations probably largely reflect differences in the degree of coverage; pairs breeding each year during 1973-77 were 4-133, 10-142, 32-159, 22-159 and 24-156.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

13 sites: 12-15 females, hatching at least 40 young.

Highland Ten sites, 12-15 females laid over 138 eggs in 13 nests, six broods totalling at least 40 young: (1) three nestboxes occupied, one with 22 eggs (probably two females) failed, second with nine eggs robbed by egg-collector, third with unknown number of eggs also probably robbed by collector; (2) nestbox with nine eggs which failed to hatch; (3) nestbox with 13 eggs not incubated; (4) two nestboxes occupied, one with 17 eggs of which some hatched and young seen nearby, second with 12 eggs which did not hatch; (5) nestbox used, number of eggs not known, but eight young nearby on 5th June; (6) nestbox with ten eggs, five stolen by predator, five remaining eggs failed to hatch; (7) nestbox with 12 eggs, nine young on 31st May of which four survived; (8) nestbox with eight eggs, six young hatched; (9) natural hole in birch *Betula* with ten eggs, nine young on 23rd June; (10) unknown natural site, six young on 8th July.

Isle of Man One site: male on 20th June, no suggestion of breeding.

Midlothian One site: adult pair and an immature from 3rd June to mid July.

Roxburgh One site: female on 23rd June at site where many often remain until late May and display is frequently observed.

1977 Mid Glamorgan/West Glamorgan Two sites: male alternating between two sites from winter to 23rd June.

The number of females nesting in 1978 was about double the total of any previous year. Although at least one and perhaps two clutches were stolen by egg-collectors, the number of broods was also a record. The totals of nesting females (and, in brackets, young seen) were as follows each year during 1970-78: 1 (4), 1 (0), 1 (9), 3 (22), 3 (19), 2-3 (10+), 5 (46), 6-7 (11) and 12-15 (40+).

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

At least eight sites, in at least three counties: one to eight or more pairs breeding.

It continues to be impossible to monitor the national status of this species, since even retrospective data are still withheld by a few observers from both the local and the national ornithological conservation bodies as well as from the panel. We believe, however, that the UK population is fairly stable at about eight to 15 (probably ten to 12) pairs.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

34 pairs: 20 young reared from 12 successful nests.

County A No pairs, just a single in April.

County B Three sites: (1)-(3) single pairs all failed.

County C 24 sites: (1)-(4) single pairs each reared two young; (5)-(7) single pairs each reared one young; (8)-(21) single pairs failed, mainly due to persistent heavy rain when young were in the nest; (22)-(24) single pairs built nests but did not lay eggs. There were also about 17 other unpaired individuals present in April.

County D Four sites: (1)-(3) single pairs each reared two young; (4) pair failed. Also one unpaired individual present.

County E Two sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair reared one young. Also one or perhaps two unpaired individuals in April.

County F One site: pair failed.

The number of nesting pairs was the highest this century; although the poor summer resulted in only about one-third rearing young, the total fledged was higher than in all recent years except 1975, when 24 young were reared. The numbers of nesting pairs and successful nests (and, in brackets, young reared) were as follows: 26, 10 (14) in 1973; 27, 9 (12) in 1974; 28, 15 (24) in 1975; 28, 14 (18) in 1976; and 33, 12 (17) in 1977.



Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

12 sites: 15 males and 16 females breeding, 12 pairs nested successfully, rearing total of 34 young.

Norfolk Seven sites: (1) two pairs reared four and two young; (2) two pairs, one rearing three young, second nest failed; (3)-(5) single pairs each reared three young; (6) pair nested, but all three young died; (7) pair probably bred.

Suffolk Four sites: (1) at Minsmere, male mated to two females, three young reared from one nest, but clutch at other did not hatch, presumed infertile eggs; (2) three pairs reared four, three and one young; (3) pair reared four young; (4) pair reared one young.

West Glamorgan One site: female or immature on 1st and 5th May and 13th June.

1977 West Glamorgan One site: immature male from 4th April to 31st July.

The welcome recent build-up of breeding pairs was maintained, with an equal number of nesting females to that in 1977; but fewer young were reared. During 1973-78, the numbers of nesting females (and, in brackets, young reared) in each year have been as follows: 6 (16), 6 (10), 7 (18), 11 (25), 16 (44) and 16 (34). The 1977-78 level is almost certainly the highest in Britain this century.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Six sites: one to six pairs breeding.

County D One site: pair spent 'a day or so' in area where nesting has occurred in the past.

County E Four sites: (1) one pair present throughout breeding season, said to have nested and rumoured to have reared three young, but details not submitted to county recorder; (2) male on 30th May; (3) female on 4th June; (4) pair at end of June and early July.

County F One site: pair hatched five young, of which three fledged 'despite massive human interference'.

This elegant raptor remains a British breeding species... just. It will need birdwatchers' restraint to survive, and we appeal for visits to known breeding sites to be limited to official observers watching on behalf of the RSPB, the NCC or the local society.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

17 or 18 sites: four to 18 pairs, but only three known to have nested successfully, rearing eight young.

County C One site: report of male in display flight, but county editor knows that other data have been withheld.

County D One site: nest and eggs in early April, but robbed; pair then moved nearby and successfully hatched eggs, but young disappeared when small.

County F One site: one, probably female, seen soaring on 10th February.

County K Four sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) pair present May-June, may have bred; (3) pair present, possibly bred; (4) reports not received, but thought still to be present in area occupied in 1977.

County L Three sites, but no breeding evidence: (1) pair on 24th March, one on 29th March, pair on 18th April, female on 27th August; (2) immature male and adult female on 4th March, female on 15th April, one on 18th May; (3) male on 4th March, female on 2nd April, male and two females on 15th April.

County N One site: pair reared three young.

County Q Three or four sites: pairs (or one or two birds) seen at each, with display reported, but no successful nesting.

County T One site: pair reared two young.

County U One site: pair present, display seen, breeding possible.

County V One site: female seen in June, nest-building reported nearby.

1977 County T One site: pair reared three young.

1977 County W One site: pair reared two young.

It is not easy to follow the changing status of the Goshawk in Britain, since some observers still withhold records. Those submitted, however, show totals during 1973-77 of 6-12, 8-17, 4-31, 11-22 and 4-21 breeding pairs; 1976 was the most successful year, with at least 17 young fledging.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

22 breeding sites: at least 11 pairs nested successfully, rearing a total of 19-20 young.

Inverness Loch Garten: pair, three eggs, three young reared.

Perth Loch of Lowes: first on 24th April, pair in mid May, female disappeared 17th May, new female later in summer, but no eggs laid.

Scotland 20 sites: (1)-(3) single pairs each laid three eggs and reared two young; (4)-(6) single pairs each laid three eggs and reared one young; (7) pair laid three eggs and reared one or two young; (8) pair laid three eggs but three young died when nest destroyed in gales in July; (9) pair laid three eggs but reared no young; (10)-(12) single pairs each reared two young; (13) new pair laid two eggs but young died in gales in July; (14) one or two at nest in April, but no eggs laid; (15) male on 1st April, female from 21st May, nest-building to end of summer, but no eggs laid; (16) late pair built nest, but no eggs laid; (17) eggs laid, but failed; (18) late pair at eyrie, but no eggs laid; (19) eggs laid in very exposed site, but failed; (20) new pair built new eyrie in April, but no eggs laid. Summering individuals present at an estimated further 12-15 sites.



The number of pairs present and the number laying eggs were both the highest this century, but the season was again late, with a cold spring. Three pairs failed during incubation and two nests (with five young) were destroyed in July gales.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

140 sites: 68-152 pairs breeding, rearing at least 95 young.

Avon Three sites, but no proved breeding: (1) singles regularly in June-August; (2) singles on 25th May, 28th June and 24th September; (3) one on 15th July.

Bedford 14 sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2)-(14) sightings during 3rd May to 23rd September, 'a remarkable increase on previous years'.

Berkshire Four sites: (1) pair reared at least one young; (2) adult seen on five occasions during 9th July to 12th September; (3) singles seen during 18th-28th June and 7th-9th July; (4) singles on 22nd July and 3rd August.

Buckingham One site: pair reared two young.

Cambridge Two sites: (1) pair with two flying young in August; (2) pair displaying.

Devon The only information supplied to us was: 'A good breeding season.'

Dorset The only information supplied to us was: '12 pairs are known to have raised 15 young, and one nest failed.'

Gloucester Three sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2)(3) single pairs possibly bred. Recorder comments: 'impression is that this species is more numerous than the records suggest.'

Hampshire 13 sites, seven to 24 pairs breeding: (1) at least 12 pairs, four confirmed breeding; (2)(3) single pairs each reared two young; (4) pair on three dates, immature in August; (5) pair for two weeks in late May; (6) pair through breeding season, 'no young seen, but probably bred'; (7)-(13) pairs or singles hunting or carrying food on two or more dates. 'In view of the many sites for which records were not received and the presumed under-recording in the New Forest, the county breeding population may well be of the order of 40-50 pairs.'

Huntingdon One site: adults and more than one flying young seen on several occasions in August-September.

Kent Three sites: (1) pair with flying young; (2) pair in June-July; (3) singly on three dates in June-July. Also: 'a good number of single reports at various sites during June-July, but nothing more.'

Leicester Three sites: (1) pair reared at least two young, which left nest on 13th August; (2) pair reared three or four young; (3) pair reared one young.

Northampton One site: pair reared two young, still in nest on 25th August, nest empty 29th August.

Nottingham Three sites: (1)(2) pairs in territory; (3) 'crop of sightings could have involved an adult pair and independent young'.

Oxford Six sites: (1)(2) single pairs each reared two young; (3) pair nested, details not supplied to county recorder; (4) 'seen often in June'; (5) 'seen several times in June and July'; (6) present, but details not supplied to county recorder.

Somerset 21-22 sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair reared at least three young; (3) pair carrying food regularly in July-August; (4) pair seen frequently from 9th May to 22nd July; (5) pair (sometimes only a single) during 10th-25th May and on 16th June, displaying on 25th May; (6) adult and, later, juveniles during 10th June to 4th September; (7) pair on 10th June; (8) two on 21st May; (9) pair displaying on 28th May; (10) two pairs (up to five adults) during 22nd May to 13th July; (11)-(21) singles, or sometimes two together, during June-August in possible breeding areas; (22) pair on 4th June, perhaps same as site 4.

Stafford 'No reports of breeding, but more casual sightings than ever before, particularly in spring' (cf. Bedford, Kent, Worcester).

Suffolk One site: 'one pair bred', but details not supplied to county recorder.

Surrey Ten sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) pair reared two young; (3) pair reared at least one young; (4)-(7) single pairs each reared one young; (8) two pairs, one rearing one young, clutch of second pair disappeared; (9) three pairs, one probably rearing two young, second probably rearing one young, no evidence of breeding by third; (10) pair, but no evidence of breeding.

Warwick Eight sites: (1) 'one pair nested'; (2) three noisy recently-fledged juveniles; (3) 'bred as in many previous years'; (4) pair soaring over regular site on 22nd May; (5) adults in June, juvenile in September and other sightings nearby; (6)-(8) many individual sightings in August-September where breeding proved or suspected in previous years. Lack of detail supplied to county recorder makes success difficult to assess; we have assumed that at least one young was reared at site 1 and at site 3.

West Sussex Five sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair reared at least one young; (3)(4) single pairs; (5) 'present'. Full details not supplied to us.

Wiltshire Eight sites: (1) pair reared at least two young; (2) pair with three flying young; (3)-(6) single pairs probably bred; (7)(8) single pairs possibly bred. No other details supplied to us.

Worcester One site: pair reared three young, also a third adult reported. Also: 'many more reports of single birds in May, June, August and September this year, involving widespread localities.'

County E 16 sites: (1)-(3) single pairs each reared three young; (4)-(8) single pairs each reared two young; (9) pair reared one young; (10) pair lost first clutch, repeated, small young in nest in August, outcome unknown; (11) pair nested, outcome unknown; (12)(13) single pairs reported; (14)(15) single pairs possibly bred; (16) one of a pair shot before nesting started. 'In spite of bad summer, Hobbies have done remarkably well.'

1976 Northampton One site: individuals present 'at harvest-time' suggests probable breeding at site where breeding was confirmed in 1978.

1977 Hampshire Additional sites: (5) pair reared three young; (6) pair reared one young.

1977 Northampton One site: one on 24th May at site where breeding probable in 1976 and confirmed in 1978.

1977 Nottingham Correction: records from site 1 and site 2 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 371) related to the same pair at the same locality.

It was clearly another very good year for Hobbies. The minimum and maximum numbers of pairs breeding and the number of young reared were all by far the highest since these reports started. The totals would clearly have been even more encouraging if the Devon figures—not supplied to us since 1974—had been available. We hope that the decision to withhold information for this key county will soon be reconsidered in the light of the very full details received from most other areas. The adjusted annual totals of pairs breeding (with, in brackets, number of young reared) during 1973-77 were: 22-60 (24), 43-91 (49), 37-132 (40), 58-140 (69) and 50-117 (78).

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Six sites: singing males at five.

Bedford One site: male singing during 10th-12th June.

Dunbarton One site: one in suitable habitat on 17th May, but no singing heard.

Dyfed One site: male singing from late April to 18th May.

Inverness One site: male singing on 8th May.

Western Isles One site: male singing for about a week in early June.

County A One site: two males singing and, later, sight records: breeding 'possible, if not probable'.

None has been confirmed breeding in the UK since these reports started in 1973.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Four sites: successful nesting at three, 145 pairs rearing 92 young.

Norfolk Two sites: (1) five pairs reared a total of 17 young; (2) pair mating, but did not breed.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) at Minsmere, 47 pairs reared a total of 19 young; (2) at Havergate Island, 93 pairs reared a total of 56 young.

During 1973-77, the number of breeding pairs varied from 125 to 158 (mean 146) and the number of young reared varied from 14 to 142 (mean 81); 1978 was, therefore, about average in both respects.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Over 29 sites: 28 to at least 41 pairs breeding.

Berkshire Three sites: (1) none located in visits from May onwards until two or more heard in August, but possibly bred nearby; (2) farmer reported that pair bred; (3) heard in April, but area not revisited.

Cambridge Five sites: (1) pair, calling heard, chicks seen; (2) pair, two chicks hatched on 28th June: (3)-(5) single pairs.

Dorset Two sites: (1) pair bred; (2) pair probably bred. Other possible areas not adequately covered.

Essex Three sites: (1)(2) single pairs with young; (3) pair probably bred.

Hampshire One site: nine breeding pairs.

Norfolk 'Present in usual areas, but no counts available.'

Oxford Two sites: (1) pair from April to late May; (2) pair in late May and June. Other likely areas not regularly visited.

Suffolk Breeding confirmed for six pairs in Breckland and four pairs in coastal strip.

West Sussex One site: two birds present from 20th April to 9th July.

Wiltshire Six sites: (1)-(4) single pairs confirmed breeding; (5)(6) single pairs possibly bred.

As in 1977, when the total was three to 26 pairs breeding, the calculated figures are completely unrepresentative for two reasons. First, the nocturnal habits of this species make censuses difficult and all counts are probably underestimates (perhaps gross underestimates). Secondly, there has been no census within the species' main UK breeding area of Norfolk; the last estimate there was in 1976, when 30 pairs were reported for Breckland alone. The 1968-72 British population was estimated in the *Atlas* to be probably not less than 300 pairs and perhaps over 500 pairs. Our knowledge is no better now than it was then. Concerted, co-ordinated all-night censuses by experts, together with liaison with landowners, are necessary to improve it.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

At least 15 pairs confirmed breeding, but data very incomplete.

Angus Two sites: (1)(2) total of four pairs bred, with 'average breeding success'.

Cumbria Two sites: (1) nest with one egg on 24th May, three eggs on 4th June, found destroyed by stock 29th June; (2) pair with single eight- to ten-day-old chick on 3rd July.

Grampian 'No change in number of pairs, but worst breeding season since at least 1967 (when intensive study began), due to snowstorm in July. A few late young from second clutches.'

Inverness/Banff/Aberdeen '19 (one juvenile) and pair with brood of three small young on 29th July; 42 (six small young and five juveniles) on 10th August. Suggests poor early season but better for late broods.'

County B One site: one on 24th April, nine on 26th April and five on 7th May, near site of 1975 attempted breeding (*Brit. Birds* 70: 10).

County E One site: up to 18 during 7th-19th May where breeding proved in past.

County G One site: unconfirmed report of adult in June, then adult with barely fledged juvenile on 31st July, adult and flying juvenile, presumably same two, nearby on 6th August.

County H Two sites: (1) one on 10th May, male with four young 4 km away on 26th June; (2) on 13th June, three males with newly hatched chicks, nest with three eggs and male which it was considered 'almost certainly had a nest'.

1977 County B One site: one on 24th May, but no subsequent search for nest.

The information supplied from the main areas is so incomplete that totals cannot be calculated. In any case, many suitable sites are not visited every year. D. Nethersole-Thompson (1973, *The Dotterel*) estimated 56-74 pairs; the Scottish population is probably still at approximately that level.

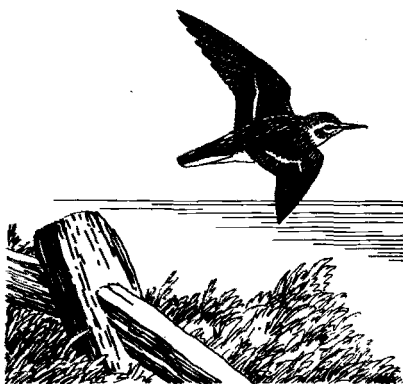
Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Three sites: ten individuals, with at least two attempting to breed.

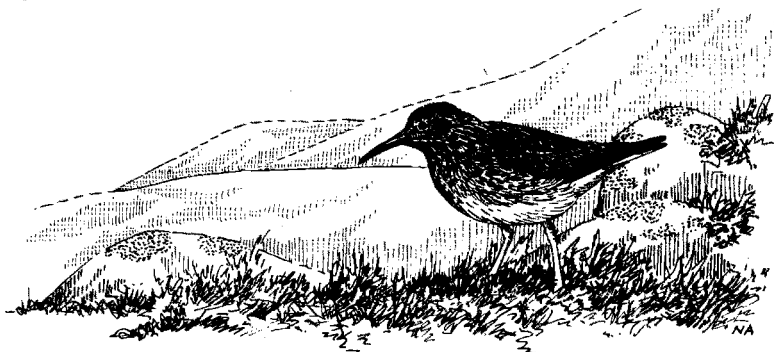
County A Two sites: (1) at least one bird present, four eggs on 4th June, but nest flooded, repeat clutch of four on 27th June, but eggs failed to hatch (cold in nest on 2nd August), perhaps only one unmated female present; (2) one summer sighting.

County B One site: first on 20th May, up to eight adults (on 31st May) and much display, still seven (three displaying) on 22nd June; bred, but success not known.

The main area continues to hold an active colony.



Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*



One site: one pair hatched three young of which at least one fledged.

Scotland One site: pair seen 3rd, 20th and 26th June, adult performing rodent-runs and three downy chicks found on 8th July, adult and one flying young on 29th July.

These observations constitute the first breeding record of this Arctic wader in the UK. Breeding numbers have greatly declined in the Faeroe Islands (Dorete Bloch *in litt.*); Scottish breeding was, however, not unexpected in the light of the other recent colonisations by Scandinavian species.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Three sites: no confirmed breeding.

Cambridge One site: female at suitable breeding site on 20th May.

Cambridge/Norfolk One site: usual leks, but area then flooded and breeding considered highly unlikely.

Lancashire One site: up to four males and three females at lek from early May to mid June, but no proof of breeding.

A disappointing year.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

One site: early autumn records.

County A One site: single on 4th August and 4th September.

1975 County A One site: two displaying over sedgy meadow on 21st May.

1977 County A One site: singly during 13th-23rd August.

This species has not appeared before in these reports, and has never been proved to breed in the UK, but is a possible colonist. These late spring and early autumn records in 1975, 1977 and 1978 gain significance by all relating to a single site.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

13 sites: 50-68 pairs breeding.

Cambridge Two sites: (1) pair with two two- to four-day-old young on 9th May; (2) pair on 14th and 21st May, breeding suspected.

Cambridge/Norfolk One site: minimum of 40 pairs bred, but success not known; pairs much scattered and re-nesting after floods.

Norfolk Three sites: (1) five pairs reared young; (2) two pairs, of which one reared four young; (3) pair prospecting.

Shetland One site: pair from 28th April to end of June, display and agitation observed, but breeding success not known. 'This site has become too well known and disturbance by birdwatchers may have affected successful breeding.'

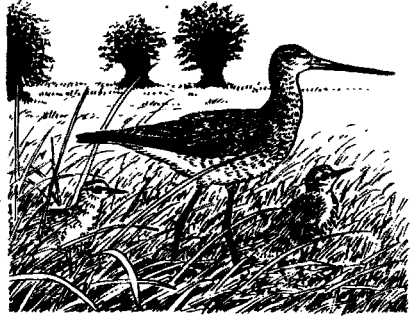
Somerset One site: three pairs probably bred (behaviour on 15th June strongly pointed to three pairs with young, though none seen) and fourth unsuccessful.

Suffolk Three sites: (1) pair with one chick and two other possible pairs; (2)(3) single pairs possibly bred.

County F One site: pair with chicks.

County G One site: certainly one, probably four and possibly seven pairs bred: three pairs and four males on 20th May; three pairs, two unpaired birds and nest with four eggs on 28th May; four pairs with young suspected on 31st May.

The number away from the main area (10-28 pairs) was the highest on record, but this species remains very dependent on the vagaries of the weather and consequent water-levels, and very vulnerable to disturbance. We hope that observers will read the Shetland comment and refrain from visiting breeding sites or be very circumspect when doing so.



Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Seven sites: four to ten pairs breeding.

Grampian Two sites: (1)(2) singles in May.

Inverness Two sites: (1) two or three adults, two males singing from 12th May, nest with four eggs on 13th June, hatched successfully and one to three young seen during 14th-16th June, one adult still song-fighting on 1st July; (2) one pair on 2nd-3rd June.

Ross Three sites: (1) two or three pairs on 27th May, two pairs agitated on 24th June and clearly with young; (2) agitated adult



with young on 13th June; (3) pair on 30th May.

1973 Inverness One site: one on 19th June.

The highest ever number of sites and, probably, the most pairs breeding. The previous peak year was the last year of the *Atlas* project, when fieldwork was at a maximum: 5-8 pairs breeding in 1972; since then, annual totals have been 0-3, 1-4, 2-6, 1-3, 2-5 and, now, 4-10.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Ten sites: 22-36 pairs breeding.

Shetland Three sites: (1)-(3) total of 19-24 pairs, apparently good hatching, but very poor fledging success and possibly as few as four juveniles reared: frequent northerly gales, almost daily drizzle and mist making conditions very cold and very wet at critical periods.

Western Isles Four sites: (1) two females and one male early in season, one male and one female on 16th June, females on 21st June; (2) two males and four females, 'males incubating but nests not searched for'; (3) pair chasing each other on 23rd June; (4) pair early in season, female on 9th June. These details are probably very incomplete.

County A One site: pair and nest with two eggs on 23rd June, male towered and returned to pool on 27th July; known egg-collector seen in vicinity.

County B One site on mainland Scotland: at same site as in 1977, female on 26th May, pair from 31st May, possibly third adult on 2nd July, probably bred.

County C One site: two involved in close-pursuit chase on 7th July, female feeding in area on 9th (perhaps male on eggs or with small chicks nearby?).

The numbers of sites and of pairs are both the highest recorded in these reports. The return to the Scottish mainland site in County B is very pleasing, but the poor breeding success in Shetland bodes ill for the future.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

One site: no breeding at a former site.

Hampshire One site: single adults on 12th March and 23rd April, and a hybrid Mediterranean × Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* on 11th June.

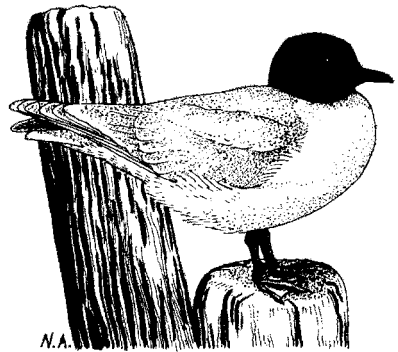
Nesting by pure pairs has occurred only in 1968, 1976 and 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 63: 67-79; 65: 185-186; 71: 22; 72: 375).

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

Two sites: two pairs nested, but no young were hatched.

Norfolk One site: pair (and seven immatures) in late May, adults displaying, nesting in early June, but clutch of three eggs found on 16th June failed to hatch; one adult lingered until 25th July.

North Yorkshire One site: at Fairburn Ings (RSPB reserve), pair took up residence in colony of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* in late May/early June, display, nest-building and incubation observed, then one adult found injured (possible vandalism), other adult deserted and nest destroyed by predator, possibly Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*.



These are the second and third occasions on which pairs of Little Gulls are known to have laid eggs in the UK, the previous record being on the Ouse Washes in Cambridgeshire/Norfolk in 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 331-332).

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

One site: for fourth successive year, one bred with a Herring Gull *L. argentatus*.

Shetland One site: same adult as during 1975-77 paired with Herring Gull and reared at least one young.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

One site: one pair nested.

Nottingham One site: pair nested, eggs stolen by egg-collector and stones substituted.

The only accepted breeding records in Britain since 1885 were in 1966, 1969, 1970 and 1975; pairs also nested in Ireland in 1967 and 1975.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One site: no breeding.

Shetland One site: on Fetlar, up to two females present, but no males.

After breeding for nine consecutive years during 1967-75 and rearing 21 young, Snowy Owls have now not bred in the UK for three years.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Four sites: 0-4 pairs breeding.

East Sussex/West Sussex Three sites: (1)-(3) three individuals at widely separated localities, each on single dates in June.

Huntingdon One site: one seen on many occasions between 14th June and 28th July, often collecting food and carrying it into a wood; no nest-hole found nor any second individual seen, but considered to have been almost certainly breeding.

Four pairs bred in 1977 but were the first since 1971; the meagre showing in 1978 was in fact more than in an average year.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

21 sites: three to 21 pairs breeding.

Argyll One site: two seen and heard on 21st-22nd May.

Grampian Two sites: (1) one on 8th May; (2) one on 6th June.

Inverness 13 sites: (1) pair feeding young on 30th June; (2) one singing on 4th June; (3) pair feeding young in nestbox during 5th-13th July; (4) pair nested in nestbox, probably successfully; (5) one singing during 6th-27th June; (6) two singing during 19th May to 21st June; (7) at least one at usual site, probably nested; (8) one singing on 24th-25th May; (9) one singing on 30th May; (10)-(12) singles singing on 25th May; (13) pair, singing, on 3rd July.

Ross Two sites: (1) one singing during 2nd-26th May; (2) two seen and heard on 2nd June.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) one singing for one day in mid June; (2) one singing for five days in mid June.

Surrey One site: apparently unmated male sang from 28th May to 29th June.

Cessation of singing early in season can be indicative of successful pairing and starting of nesting, or of the departure of a transient migrant. Once breeding starts, Wrynecks can be very easily overlooked. It is, therefore, difficult to assess status, but the calculated totals of pairs breeding during 1973-78 show a generally encouraging trend: 1-2, 1-5, 3-10, 1-7, 7-19 and 3-21.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Two sites: no proof of breeding.

Kent One site: adult on 14th August and immature on 14th September.

Stafford 'No evidence of breeding in the usual area.'

Suffolk One site: one during June.

The two-pronged colonisation of the UK, from Scandinavia and from the Low Countries, came to an unexpected halt in 1978. Totals of pairs breeding during 1973-78 have been: 2-3, 3-6, 1-7, 3-9, 4-6 and, now, 0-2.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Seven sites: only one confirmed breeding record.

Inverness Six sites: (1) adult and two juveniles during 23rd-26th July; (2) four singing males on 11th June; (3)-(5) single singing males in early May, on 22nd May and on 8th June, respectively; (6) singing male during 21st-26th May, two on one day.

Suffolk One site: one on several days in July.

1977 Ross One site: adult with three fledged young.

In 1972, the last year of the *Atlas* project, 12-42 pairs were discovered and the breeding population was estimated to be as high as perhaps 300 pairs. The decline from that peak has been striking: totals of pairs breeding during 1973-77 were 4-11, 3-26, 10-34, 2-7, 2-12 and, now, 1-11.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

46 sites: 30-172 pairs breeding.

Cornwall One site: pair carrying food to inaccessible nest-site. First proved breeding in county.

Devon Eight sites, but breeding possible at only three: (1) up to eight singing to end of April, six remained during June, up to 16 in late October, five juveniles trapped; (2) heard and seen in every month; (3) one singing during June; (4) one singing until mid May and again in October, two on 28th October; (5) two trapped in July and one in October, but none noted in May-June; (6)(7) singles in April; (8) one heard and seen in November.

Dorset About 12 sites: (1) six pairs all successfully reared young; (2)-(12) pairs or singing males.

East Sussex One site: singing male in July at a former breeding site.

Hampshire Five sites: (1) two singing males; (2) pair, breeding probable; (3) one singing male; (4)(5) single singing males in May and June, respectively.

Hertford One site: pair, nest with clutch of four, but eggs infertile, male still singing. First proved breeding in county.

Kent Seven sites, at least 107 singing males, most if not all mated, at least nine pairs proved to breed: (1) 70 males, eight pairs known to have bred successfully; (2) 16 males, at least one pair bred successfully; (3) six males; (4) area not censused, at least five males; (5) five males; (6) three males; (7) two males.

Norfolk Three sites: (1)-(3) total of 23 singing males, including nine pairs proved breeding at one site.

Suffolk Five sites: (1) pair bred, two young seen; (2) pair bred successfully; (3) two individuals during summer, one singing from 'March to June, and breeding strongly suspected'; (4) singing in breeding season, possibly bred; (5) singing male in May and June.

Surrey One site: singing male from 7th May to 24th July. The first county record.

West Sussex One site: singing male in June.

Worcester One site: singing male all summer.

1977 Perth The record noted last year (*Brit. Birds* 72: 337) was not accepted for inclusion in the Scottish Bird Report and should be deleted.

1977 West Glamorgan One site: immature female trapped on 9th July.

A further extension, to 39 sites away from the stronghold county, Kent; and the highest ever number of pairs breeding (the 1973-77 totals were 1-14, 5-16, 8-75, 8-80 and 13-153).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

14 sites: four to 26 pairs breeding.

Devon Two sites: (1) three singing during April-July, breeding 'thought to be highly probable'; (2) one singing during April-May.

Dorset Two sites: (1) pair probably bred; (2) pair possibly bred.

Kent One site: seven singing males from late April, at least five paired, one pair watched nest-building, two pairs seen feeding young.

Norfolk Three sites: (1)(2) singles singing regularly; (3) one singing during 2nd-11th May.

Nottingham One site: one singing on 15th July.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) at Minsmere, two singing males and 'it seems probable that two pairs bred or attempted to breed'; (2) pair almost certainly bred, juvenile trapped on 20th August.

Warwick One site: one singing during 3rd-21st May.

County B One site: male on at least 9th and 10th May.

County C One site: two pairs successfully, third pair probably bred, fourth singing male present.

Another good year. Totals of pairs breeding during 1973-77 were 0-13, 1-8, 1-3, 0-9 and 3-26.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

16 sites: 'no change' at main site, four to 15 pairs breeding elsewhere.

Gloucester One site: male singing on 14th June.

Hertford One site: male singing during 25th May to 4th June.

Kent Two sites: (1) male singing from 3rd June to early July; (2) male singing on 3rd June.

West Sussex One site: pair reared at least one young.

Worcester Six sites: (1) in main area, 'no change in status' and 'breeding season was quite good'; (2) 'pair bred'; (3) pair feeding young; (4) male singing during 17th-23rd June; (5) one singing during 9th-11th June; (6) one singing on 14th June.

County A Two sites: (1)(2) single singing males present.

County B Three sites: (1)-(3) 'nest-building at one site and song at others'.

Reports from the main Worcestershire site have noted 40-70 pairs in 1973, 1974 and 1975, 50-60 pairs in 1977 and no estimates in 1976 or 1978. Outside this stronghold, annual totals have been 3-13 pairs breeding in five counties in 1973, 0-7 in two counties in 1974, 0-5 in two counties in 1975, 0-5 again, but in three counties, in 1976, and 2-11 in six counties in 1977. The total of 4-15 pairs in seven counties in 1978 is, therefore, a post-*Atlas* record, continuing the welcome upward trend shown in 1977.



Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One site: one singing male.

Norfolk One site: male singing during 23rd May to 10th June.

When vagrant male Great Reed Warblers turn up in the UK in spring, they often sing for the duration of their stays; indeed, those that do not sing are unlikely to be discovered. Breeding here has been expected for some years and the eight individuals recorded during May-July 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 536-537) was the highest spring-summer total ever. The long stay of the 1978 Norfolk individual was exceeded by one in Lincolnshire/south Humberside in 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 27).

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

At least 71 and probably about 118 pairs in New Forest; 25 sites outside New Forest: 35-88 pairs breeding.

Devon One site: three singing males in early spring, one pair reared two broods.

Dorset Eight sites: (1) about ten pairs; (2) five pairs bred successfully, at least two rearing second broods, also two additional singing males (there were 20 pairs at this site in 1977); (3)-(8) single pairs.

Hampshire Seven sites, 71 pairs located in incomplete census of New Forest, 12-24 pairs breeding elsewhere: (1) in New Forest, 71 territories located in 60% of suitable habitat, suggesting a total of about 118 territories, compared with 250 in the last full census in 1974; in 11 blocks of heathland for which results are directly comparable, there were 140 territories in 1974 and 55 in 1978; (2)(3) three pairs bred successfully at each site; (4) 14 pairs or singing males, three pairs proved breeding; (5) two pairs proved breeding; (6) pair proved breeding; (7) singing male.

Surrey Seven sites, with 'some success' at each, total of possibly 29-35 pairs, of which 12 pairs proved and further 12 pairs probably bred: (1) ten to 12 pairs; (2) seven pairs; (3)(4) total of six to eight pairs; (5)(6) total of four to six pairs; (7) two pairs.

West Sussex One site: pair reared unknown number of young.

County A Two sites: (1) pair reared two broods, totalling five young; (2) pair throughout summer, carrying food in May and in July.

1977 Hampshire Revised details from one site: (4) three pairs bred successfully.

Assuming that the New Forest territories all represented breeding pairs and that the censusers' extrapolation is legitimate, the 1978 total was 104-206 breeding pairs. This compares with estimates of about 560 pairs in 1974 and 1975, perhaps over 350 pairs in 1976, and almost certainly over 300 and possibly over 400 pairs in 1977. Thus, the UK population has apparently halved, probably as a result of a combination of heath-fires, cold weather in February 1978 and—the most serious long-term threats—habitat loss and fragmentation.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

Four sites: the only confirmed breeding involved a mixed pairing with female Goldcrest *R. regulus*.

Buckingham One site: male mated with female Goldcrest and reared two hybrid young.

Gwent One site: male singing on 11th May near site where nest-building recorded in 1977.

Hampshire None reported from the traditional New Forest sites.

Kent One site: male singing on 23rd May and one seen on 2nd June at site where breeding confirmed in 1975.

Merseyside One site: pair, with male singing, on 17th April.

It is disappointing that the main Buckinghamshire site—where there were totals of 11, 24, 46, 11 and 14 singing males during 1973-77—was almost untenanted in 1978. Away from that area, annual totals of pairs breeding have been 2-7, 0-9, 3-75, 3-16 and 2-17 during 1973-77, so the 0-3 pairs in 1978 is the lowest level since these reports started. (The number in the UK in 1975 has been misquoted in the past two reports: the correct total is 4-121 pairs breeding.)

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

13 sites: seven to 27 pairs breeding.

Durham One site: male singing on 24th June. Also unconfirmed report of pair present from May to July at a second site.

Essex Three sites: (1) pair nested and hatched young, but probably none fledged; (2) pair during summer; (3) male in June.

Gwent One site: on 27th May, song heard and then female (or male with female-type plumage) seen.

Kent Five sites: (1) pair from 27th May to 11th July; (2) two males during 20th-27th May, pair from 26th May to 11th June; (3) male on 1st June, two pairs on 11th June, pair on 29th June; (5) one to three males in June, pair in July.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) at least six, and possibly as many as ten, pairs bred; (2) one on several dates in June.

Tyne & Wear One site: one singing and seen on 30th May.

West Glamorgan One site: male singing on 18th and 24th June.

1976 West Glamorgan One site: male on 25th May.

1977 South Glamorgan One site: male on 20th June.

This was the third successive good year for Golden Orioles. The total in 1978 was the highest on record, exceeding the 1976 and 1977 estimates of 6-22 and 5-20 pairs breeding.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

35 sites: 13-37 pairs breeding.

Bedford One site: male on 10th-11th June.

Hampshire Two sites: (1) two pairs, one rearing five young and second rearing three young; (2) female on 10th June.

Kincardine One site: female on more than one occasion in late June and larder found.

Lincoln/south Humberside One site: pair, found displaying on 20th May, reared five young.

Norfolk Seven or eight sites: (1) two pairs nested but reared no young; (2)(3) single pairs reared no young; (4) pair reared two young; (5)-(7) single pairs; (8) pair reared two young (perhaps same pair as site 5).

Nottingham One site: pair in early May, a female 'for a time, presumed on passage'.

Suffolk 15 sites: (1)-(14) 14 single pairs probably bred in coastal strip; (15) one pair probably bred in Breckland.

Wiltshire One site: male, at locality near that where a pair bred in 1977.

County A Three sites: (1) male on 15th-22nd June; (2) singing male on 30th May; (3) male on 30th June.

County E One site: pair bred successfully.

County F Two sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) male during 16th-23rd June.

1977 Wiltshire One site: pair from late June into July, nest found, but three eggs disappeared before hatching.

Totals of breeding pairs during 1973/77 were 27-34, 30-52, 51-54, 3-25 and 48-64. Although the calculated number of pairs breeding in 1978 was below the average of the previous five years, some comfort may be gained from the continuing wide spread of reports, from 11 counties, as in 1977; counties A and F are both in Scotland. More than one county recorder expressed the view that there may be more breeding pairs present than are listed here.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

One site: probable hybridisation with Chaffinch *F. coelebs*.

Hampshire One site: one male on 17th and 18th July, on latter date in close association with female Chaffinch and three unusual juvenile finches considered perhaps to be hybrids.

There was a similar instance in Inverness-shire during 1968-72 (see *The Atlas*).

Serin *Serinus serinus*

Four sites: one to four pairs breeding.

Devon Three sites: (1) pair, present from 8th May to 1st October, reared two broods, totalling five to seven young; (2) pair on 11th May; (3) male singing in June.

Worcester One site: two, presumed to be pair, the male in song, on 17th-18th June.

The third breeding record in the UK comes at last, nine years and 11 years after the first two, which, at the time, were expected to be precursors of almost instant widespread colonisation from the Continent (see *Brit. Birds* 61: 87-88; 64: 213-223).

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

Three sites: two to six pairs breeding.

Scotland Three sites: (1) three pairs, at least one female sitting on five eggs on 28th June, young seen later; (2) pair built nest, but female did not lay, second male nearby; (3) one or more adults present.

After the first confirmed nesting in the UK in the previous year (*Brit. Birds* 72: 53-59), breeding of two pairs was confirmed in 1978.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Several pairs bred.

Grampian Information incomplete: 'three males and three females present, breeding production from first broods very poor due to snowstorm in early July, better from second broods.'

County C Three sites: (1) five males and six females, 'poor first broods due to snow, but better later broods'; (2) two or three pairs, one nest found; (3) pair.

County D One site: two males chasing and singing, and one female, on 9th July.

The lack of detail supplied and likelihood of overlap between reports from different sources make it difficult to assess numbers, but the total was almost certainly within the range 2-15 and probably within the range 3-10 pairs breeding.

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