



Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1990

Robert Spencer and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This is the eighteenth annual Report published by the Panel, setting out the annual stock-taking of most of our rarer breeding species. The seventeenth report was published in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 349-392).

The history of the Panel, its purposes and methods of operation were recently described in detail (*Brit. Birds* 85: 117-122). As part of a general review of its work, the Panel has reassessed the purposes and usefulness of this annual published report. Several changes have been introduced now and there will be others in the future, aimed mainly at increasing background information and comments on and interpretation of the data. Automatic repetition of the annual totals each year is being discontinued, and tables will be included only when especially relevant. For the commonest species, the detailed county-by-county breakdown of regional totals which has recently appeared as an appendix will, in future, be compiled in the same way as hitherto, but distributed individually to each county or regional bird recorder for checking purposes, rather than published in the Panel's annual report.

Forty years ago there was a very modest programme of counting birds in Britain: a monthly wildfowl count, an annual count of nests of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* and, inspired by the late James Fisher, an occasional count of Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus*. Today, counting and recording is more widespread. Article 2 of the European Community Directive on the conservation of wild birds requires Member States 'to take requisite measures to maintain the population of the species referred to in Article 1 at a level which corresponds in particular to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking account of economic and recreational requirements, or to adapt the population of these species to that level.' Counting birds, it seems, has developed from being an enjoyable outlet for scientific curiosity to a manage-

ment tool for use in European Community countries. The large number of voluntary observers, submitting records via the county recording network to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, play a vital part in the census programme.

The Panel confines its attention to about 90 species, the breeding populations of which are normally fewer than 300 pairs. With such small numbers, it might be thought a relatively easy task to count the entire populations with some accuracy. Alas, that is not the case, and it is worthwhile to examine why some rare breeding species pose problems.

There are about 150 territory-holding pairs of Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* in Britain. In any one year, only a small proportion of them is found by casual birdwatching. Furthermore, non-breeding pairs and individuals often move from water to water. Thus, the Panel's data-collecting methods, based on reports from casual observers, received via county recorders, and on Schedule 1 licence returns, are simply not geared to obtaining reliable population estimates: this species needs to be censused by special, co-ordinated surveys of potentially suitable waters, and so is not included on the Panel's list.

Some of the species for which the Panel does attempt to monitor total breeding populations also present difficulties. For example, local and holidaying birdwatchers are likely to find most of the Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* at well-known, readily accessible sites, and this, combined with systematic checking of other suitable, but often remote, lochs produces a reliable national total. The quest for accurate totals of Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra*, however, calls for co-ordinated searching.

There are often problems in determining whether or not breeding took place. For example, most Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* are located by sound. According to *BWP*, however, successful pairs of Spotted Crakes are almost silent when nesting; it is the lone males which may seek to attract a female in June and July. How many pairs remain undetected? Corn Crakes *Crex crex* are almost silent for about two weeks after arrival, very vociferous for two to four weeks, and then sing only irregularly in July and August. Of Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, *BWP* notes that the male calls only occasionally once mated. Yet many observers interpret a Quail calling over two or three months as an indication of probable breeding. Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* are at least seen during the breeding season, but males may boom at some distance from their regular spot, so that counting booming males may lead to an overestimate.

Most bird populations are conventionally counted in pairs, and this is appropriate for the majority of Panel species, but not all. Marsh Harrier males *Circus aeruginosus* are often bigamous or even polygamous, so that the most meaningful figure—if it can be obtained—is the number of breeding females. Male Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* can also be polygamous, but locating the retiring females is so much a matter of chance that the only practicable course is to count the singing males.

The numbers of pairs of European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* and Leach's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* are so difficult to count that the size of colonies usually has to be expressed within wide limits. On a smaller scale, observers supplying data to the Panel may sometimes be faced with similar problems, such as determining the numbers of Cetti's Warblers in an exten-

sive reedbed or Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* within large areas of heathland. Many Panel species are protected by the confidentiality which observers themselves attach to their records. An exchange of information between observers would often clarify apparently confusing situations, such as those presented by Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*.

In some localities, both splitting and lumping of sites occur. Thus a linear distribution of Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* nesting in twos and threes is by one observer lumped as a single colony, whilst another may judge it to consist of separate, small colonies. Many such problems are avoided by the provision of map references, which fortunately is an increasingly common practice. Yet it may not always be practicable. For example, the New Forest is a great reservoir of wildlife, including the Dartford Warbler. Which is more useful, a list of those pairs which were located, with map references, or an estimate of the total population, made by an experienced observer scaling up the figures from that part of the area which was covered thoroughly? Using this sampling technique, the Dartford Warbler total in 1990 was 911 pairs, compared with 522 pairs in 1989 and only 116 pairs in 1979. But, given the above choice, the Panel would greatly prefer the detailed, precisely located count information (since this is factual rather than conjectural).

If recording were left to chance, the totals of secretive, inconspicuous species, such as Northern Goshawk and Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, would be grossly underestimated. Fortunately, informal study groups devote many long hours each spring and summer tracking down and counting their target species and ensuring, so far as possible, their well-being. Thus, our knowledge of each targeted species is often relatively good. More such specialist groups would be welcomed.

One great asset of the Panel is the vast network of co-operating observers, who pick up the local and the occasional records such as nest-building by a Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, and the successful breeding in Scotland of Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (a species whose demise as a breeder was mourned in the report for 1989) and breeding by the elusive and secretive Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*. At a less exotic level, one cannot devise a survey to discover, for example, all breeding Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*. Only a large, voluntary network can gather in data when the species' habitat is extensive and breeding could occur 'almost anywhere'.

The problems of providing an accurate summary of the UK's rare breeding birds, discussed above, may be summarised as:

- (1) under-reporting, either because of a dearth of observers within the species' range (e.g. Redwing *Turdus iliacus*) or because information is deliberately withheld (e.g. some raptors in some areas)
- (2) reconciling differing reports to determine the degree of overlap, or to detect gaps, if map references are not included (e.g. Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus*, Avocet)
- (3) censusing difficulties, often caused by habitats that are extensive or difficult of access (e.g. Common Scoter, Dartford Warbler, Great Bittern)
- (4) biological, such as cessation of singing by breeders but not by non-breeders (e.g. Spotted Crake, Common Quail, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*), wandering by singing males even if they are breeding (e.g. Great Bittern) and polygamy (e.g. Marsh Harrier, Cetti's Warbler).

Thus, establishing the numbers of rare breeding birds is, at present, often an imprecise science. The totals of each may be fewer than 300 pairs, but for

most species the challenge to provide reliable figures is probably greater than when counting thousands of commoner ones.

In general, 1990 was a year in which successes outnumbered failures. Wild Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* bred, and increased numbers summered. The total of Honey-buzzards *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (a species notoriously under-reported) was the highest for 15 years, but is still known to be too low. The Hobby's *Falco subbuteo* remarkable increase in numbers and range expansion continued undiminished. Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*, for decades confined to East Anglia, continued their move to wetlands elsewhere. The Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* appeared to be more securely established than ever before. It was possible to believe that Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* were starting to make a come-back.

On the negative side, the Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*, although coming so near, once again failed to fledge any young. Common Scoters and Great Bitterns were both reduced to dangerously small populations. Numbers of Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* dropped back after several encouraging years, but a pair did nest in a new county. Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros*, despite their presence over many decades, still show no signs of widespread major colonisation. The population of Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus* remained as volatile as ever, and it may be that the numbers present in any one spring are determined largely by the weather they experience on their northbound passage.

The Panel

The members of the Panel are Dr L. A. Batten, Dr C. J. Bibby, Dr J. J. D. Greenwood, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr K. W. Smith, Robert Spencer (Secretary), D. A. Stroud and Dr R. W. Summers. Although they reflect the interests and needs of the Panel's sponsoring bodies—the JNCC, the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*—the individual members each serve on the Panel in a personal capacity.

The Panel's work was commissioned by the NCC (now the JNCC) as part of its programme for nature conservation, but the Panel's other sponsoring bodies—the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*—have also supported the work financially.

The Panel collects records for the whole of the United Kingdom (both Great Britain and Northern Ireland), but not for the Republic of Ireland.

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SPECIALIST CONTRIBUTORS Jake Allsop, Colin Crooke, Peter E. Davis, Dr Andy Evans, Dr Rhys Green, R. A. Image, John Mitchell, S. J. Petty and Glen Tyler.

We apologise if any names have by mischance been omitted: the spirit was willing.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

Northern Ireland Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone

England, SW Avon, Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly, Somerset, Wiltshire

England, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire and South Humberside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

England, Central Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire (West Midlands, in the new county structure), Worcestershire

England, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)

Wales All present-day counties (i.e. includes the former Monmouth)

Scotland, S The former counties of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Lothian (East, Mid and West), Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Wigtownshire

Scotland, Mid Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Fife, Kincardineshire, Kinross, Moray, Nairn, Perthshire, Stirlingshire

Scotland, N & W Argyllshire, Bute, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Orkney, Ross & Cromarty, Shetland, Sutherland, Western Isles (Outer Hebrides)

Systematic list

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Five localities in six counties: two pairs built nests.

England, E One locality: male from 29th March to 21st August, joined by female on 10th May; they nested, but she died on 28th May.

England, Central One locality: one in breeding plumage on 1st April.

Wales One locality: one on 20th July.

Scotland, S Two localities: (1) pair made three nesting attempts, but failed; (2) adult on 11th April.

Over the last 15 years, this beautiful grebe has increasingly summered in Western Europe and has bred in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Its attempts to nest in Britain have so far failed to result in any fledged young, and seem to have levelled off. For a full account of this species attempting to breed in England, see Parslow-Otsu & Elliott (1991, *Brit. Birds* 84: 188-191). LAB

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

36 localities: 74-86 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1) adult in May and September; (2) adult from 4th May to 11th June; (3) adult in April and May.

Scotland, N & W 33 localities: (1)-(33) 77 pairs and six singles summered; 74 pairs bred, rearing 46 young.

The RSPB Highland Office co-ordinated the fieldwork on which these results are based. The population has been increasing very slowly from initial colonisation in 1908 to 43 pairs in 1971, when the first full count was carried out, and now to 74 pairs confirmed breeding in 1990. Productivity, however, continues to be low. RS & RWS

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

19 localities in 11 counties: 21-37 pairs breeding.

England, E One locality: two from April to July, but no evidence of breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1) pair in March; (2) pair fledged three young.

England, Central Nine localities: (1) five adults reared at least three young; (2) four adults; (3)-(9) one or two present in summer, but no evidence of breeding.

England, N Three localities: (1) 12 pairs reared 11 young; (2) pair in May; (3) one on 29th April.

Scotland Four localities: (1) four pairs reared four young; (2) two pairs bred, raising two young; (3) two pairs present from April, but no young seen; (4) one in May and three in June.

The long-term trend for this grebe is encouraging, but more-detailed monitoring is required to determine productivity. RWS

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Twelve localities: 20 booming males.

England, E 11 localities: (1)-(6) single booming males; (7) two booming males, and young being fed at one nest; (8) booming male, and nest with young; (9)(10) two booming males at each; (11) three booming males.

England, N One site: four booming males, one nest located.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	19	16	15	18	18	15	12	17	14	14	8
Confirmed (pairs)	4	1	1	0	5	0	0	1	2	3	3
Booming males	48	47	35	44	36	28	23	22	30	30	20

The Panel is indebted to Glen Tyler of the RSPB for supplying some of the data used in this report. The Great Bittern is a difficult species to count, but the long run of data from 1977, when the RBBP first covered the species, indicates a marked decline in the number of both individuals and occupied sites. The 1990 total of 20 booming males was the lowest ever recorded by the Panel. Although some of this decline can be explained by a re-appraisal of counting techniques, the plight of the Great Bittern is causing considerable concern. Research by the RSPB suggests that habitat degradation may be one of the most important causes of the decline, so there is hope that the situation can be improved by appropriate management of the key sites. KWS

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

15 localities: 5-32 pairs breeding, at least three of them feral.

England, SE One locality: four adults on 27th May, pair with one cygnet on 31st May.

Scotland, S One locality: one, described by observer as 'tame'.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) two feral pairs, each hatching three young; (2) pair with four large cygnets.

Scotland, N & W 11 localities: (1) four adults and a first-year, no date given; (2) single; (3) single, injured; (4) four all summer; (5) one on nest, later deserted; (6) pair, one injured; (7)(8) single adults summered; (9) two adults summered; (10) pair present until at least 12th May; (11) two pairs, one laid five eggs, none of which hatched, 13 other singles all summered.

1989 Scotland, N & W CORRECTION: the entry under the heading SHETLAND in the report for 1989 should have been headed ORKNEY.

A remarkable year for the number summering and for breeding by pairs which appeared to be genuinely wild, in contrast to many records of recent years that have clearly related to 'pricked' birds unable to migrate back to their Icelandic breeding grounds. It will be intriguing to record the fortunes of cygnets in areas where breeding has been successful. Elsewhere, extra-territorial populations of Arctic-breeding species such as Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* have developed in temperate regions from just a few successful pairs. Perhaps Whooper Swan could yet become a more regular breeder here. DAS

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

May have bred.

Scotland, S Two localities: (1)(2) at least one individual summered, being seen on 16th June and 14th and 27th July. A party of six was seen on 7th August—five weeks earlier than the earliest migrant arrivals from Iceland—but the individuals were not aged.

Since Greylag Goose *Anser anser* is an increasingly common reintroduced species, few observers bother to examine them closely. Perhaps we should do so since Pinkfeet could perhaps be overlooked amongst them. RS

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

20 localities: 9-36 pairs breeding.

England, SE Four localities: (1) pair on 26th-27th May, but no evidence of breeding; (2) two throughout June; (3) two males in May, one in June; (4) two males and a female on 8th June, pair on 23rd June, male in July.

England, E Six localities: (1) two pairs most of April, but no evidence of breeding; (2) three pairs in late spring, but only one injured male in summer; (3) pair seen nest-prospecting, but did not stay; (4) pair on 29th April, one on 26th May; (5) female on 3rd May; (6) female throughout May.

England, N Three localities: (1) four pairs from early April to early May, one pair remained through summer, but no proof of breeding; (2) three pairs on 17th April, one pair during 21st-24th April, male on 16th and 24th June, female on 22nd July; (3) prospecting pair stayed from April into the summer.

Wales One locality: two females, one with nine eggs, but no young reared.

Scotland Two localities: (1) pair from 19th March to 20th April; (2) male from 8th May to 27th June.

Scotland, N & W Four localities: (1) three pairs on 7th April, one pair on 17th May; (2) probably seven pairs bred, two broods of four; (3) pair on several dates during April to June; (4) at least six pairs bred.

The population is relatively stable, but with a bias in numbers towards the north. As with other rare breeding ducks, this species is probably under-recorded, with a high proportion of records coming from nature reserves and other areas with resident wardens or staff. DAS

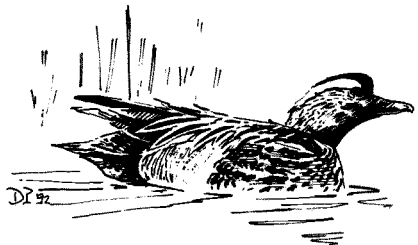
Garganey *Anas querquedula*

87 localities: 14-111 pairs breeding.

England, SW Eight localities in four counties: 2-10 pairs breeding.

England, SE 20 localities in eight counties: 1-28 pairs breeding.

England, E 29 localities in three counties: 7-39 pairs breeding.



England, Central Seven localities in four counties: 1-7 pairs breeding.

England, N 14 localities in seven counties: 2-18 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid, N & W Five localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	34	48	66	59	46	32	42	36	37	81	87
Confirmed (pairs)	4	8	10	15	4	4	8	8	11	18	14
Possible (pairs)	50	50	84	55	53	36	47	37	40	80	97
Max. total (pairs)	54	58	94	70	57	40	55	45	51	98	111

A second good year for this species, with the highest number of sites for over ten years, although only 14 pairs were confirmed to have bred. Since 1980, numbers have been very variable, with a peak in 1982-83, followed by low numbers until the last two years. The Garganey is well known as a sporadic breeder: numbers in the UK are said to be related to spring weather and flooding conditions, although the exact factors have never been demonstrated. A detailed study of the RBBP records may help us to understand this variability.

KWS

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

133 localities: 207-293 pairs breeding.

England, SW Eight localities: 14-18 pairs breeding.

England, SE 46 localities: 78-127 pairs breeding.

England, E 31 localities: 46-54 pairs breeding.

England, Central Eight localities: 9-12 pairs breeding.

England, N 28 localities: 58-68 pairs breeding.

Wales Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Four localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid One locality: one pair breeding.

Scotland, N & W Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

The numbers reported to the Panel almost certainly underestimate the true size of the population, and it is likely that numbers changed little in the three years 1988-1990, though those reported varied from 184-336 pairs breeding in 1988 to the 207-293 in 1990. A full account of the history of the Common Pochard breeding in Britain, by Dr A. D. Fox, was published in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 83-98).

RS & JTRS

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.

Scotland, N One locality: pair on 4th June.

This is the poorest showing for several years, serving to emphasise how atypical were the records in Anglesey in 1988 and Lincolnshire in 1989. CJB

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, Mid One locality: female summered, not departing until 19th November.

This is presumed to be the same individual that summered at the same locality in 1989, which was the first to be reported to the Panel. Whilst breeding occurred in Orkney in 1911, and perhaps on five other occasions there and in Shetland in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, there have been no reports since 1926 apart from in 1969, when breeding was suspected in the Western Isles.

LAB

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Nine localities: 6-29 pairs breeding.

Northern Ireland One locality.

FERMANAGH One locality: at least six pairs present but no young seen.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) two males and one female on 10th May; (2) two pairs on 10th May, two females and three juveniles on 3rd July, a female and one juvenile on 18th July.

Scotland, N & W Six localities.

ARGYLL One locality: three nests, clutches of 6, 6 and 12, but no young fledged, seven other possible pairs.

CAITHNESS One locality: three or four pairs on 12th May.

SHEPHERD One locality: two pairs, one of which reared a duckling.

SUTHERLAND Three localities: (1) male on 29th May; (2) female on 11th May; (3) at least one pair, and breeding thought probable.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	10	6	17	6	9	25	35	15	36	7	9
Confirmed (pairs)	7	5	14	10	17	2	8	29	14	8	6
Possible (pairs)	106	77	98	75	52	72	92	33	76	32	23
Max. total (pairs)	113	82	112	85	69	74	100	62	90	40	29

A new low point for a species known to be declining in numbers. The Northern Ireland population, on Lower Lough Erne, has declined from around 150 pairs in the late 1960s to a remnant of six pairs now. Elsewhere, the losses may not be so severe as the table suggests, for only a systematic survey of remote hill lochans is likely to produce reasonably complete figures.

RS & KWS

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Breeding mainly confined to one extensive nestbox scheme.

England, SE Three localities.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: female summered.

ESSEX One locality: male summered.

KENT One locality: female from May to July.

England, Central Three localities.

LEICESTERSHIRE Three localities: (1) male on 7th May; (2) male to 12th May, two females on 23rd July, female from 1st August; (3) five in mid May, male, female and juvenile in June, female and five in eclipse in July.

England, N Four localities.

CHESHIRE One locality: two birds of the year from early August.

LANCASHIRE One locality: two feral broods, totalling 15 young, on 25th May.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female and seven flying juveniles on 28th July.

YORKSHIRE One locality: male from 29th May to 10th September.

Scotland, S Three localities.

BORDERS Two localities: (1) male on 9th June; (2) male on 27th June.

LOTHIANS, M & W One locality: male from 22nd April to 13th May, two males on 18th May, three males and a female on 27th June.

Scotland, Mid Three localities.

MORAYSHIRE One locality: pair plus one male on 23rd April, female with duckling from 2nd to 9th June.

COUNTY CONFIDENTIAL Two localities: (1) pair from 28th May to 28th July; (2) first-year on 2nd June.

Scotland, N & W Three localities.

CAITHNESS One locality: 13 on 9th June, four males and seven females on 21st June.

SHEPHERD Two localities: (1) female on 8th July, possibly summering; (2) female summered.

HIGHLAND Nestbox area: 92 boxes and 8 natural sites occupied, 53 clutches laid, at least 529 young produced.



	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Confirmed (pairs)	26	29	27	47	53	67	77	80	90	88	100
Young hatched (min.)	165	286	220	209	311	336	390	332	427	455	529

It is pleasing to note the continuing increase in both the confirmed number of pairs and the number of young reared from the nestbox population. This began in 1970, when a female produced four young in the Spey Valley; by 1978 there were 12 nests. In recent years, some pairs have started to nest in natural holes, so there may now be additional pairs nesting in unknown, natural sites.

There has been a growing tendency for individuals to summer well to the south. In 1990, there was successful breeding in two localities in addition to the known feral population in Lancashire. These are the first documented successful breeding attempts in England since the report of nesting in Cheshire in 1931-32.

LAB

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

19 localities, in 13 counties: 3-19 pairs breeding.

Great Britain 19 localities: (1) pair laid two eggs, but young died when about three weeks old, apparently owing to drought; (2) pair believed to have attempted breeding; (3)-(5) a minimum of seven individuals during 26th May to September; (6) single on 20th May, two on 25th August, pair displaying in August; (7) pair on several occasions; (8) first-summer on 6th June; (9) singly on 9th August and 2nd September; (10) male from 31st May, pair on July 3rd, at least one young fledged; (11) displaying male on 26th May; (12) one or two on several dates; (13) one in June; (14) pair, and family party of two adults and two juveniles in September; (15) 'reported to have bred'; (16) one, on one occasion; (17)(18) singles, thought to be on passage; (19) one displaying.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Confirmed (pairs)	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	3
Max. total (pairs)	5	9	3	5	2	4	6	7	10	20	19

A secretive species which probably often goes unrecorded. The records received by the Panel indicate that the species is increasing slightly in numbers, but this may in part be due to greater skills on the part of observers, and the realisation that Honey-buzzards are not, as was popularly supposed, confined to a restricted area of southern England.

KWS

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

84 pairs, and at least 58 other individuals.

Wales 84 localities: breeding successful at 65 localities. Welsh kites had a remarkable season in 1990, the most successful by far since records began. A total of 65 pairs was proved to breed, 11 more than in 1989. No fewer than 47 of them reared young, and 73 young birds flew, 25 more than the previous highest number, in 1989. No doubt a second very mild winter, followed by another warm, dry spring, provided a good prey-base and good conditions for obtaining food. It was the first time since 1954 that the number of young reared exceeded the number of breeding pairs. It may be no coincidence that rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* reached plague proportions in much of central Wales in 1990, for the first time since they were greatly reduced by myxomatosis in the summer of 1954. The great affliction of 1990 turned out to be egg-collecting, and probably eight (possibly ten) clutches were stolen. (As in previous years, the Panel is much indebted to Peter Davis, the NCC contract worker on Red Kites, for much detailed information.)

The welcome increase of the Welsh population comes at a time of growing international measures to conserve Red Kites in Europe - listed as 'globally endangered'. Some progress has been made with the Government-initiated

programme to stamp out the scourge of illegal poisoning. Red Kites will always be vulnerable to the use of poison on baited carrion. In parallel with these initiatives is a joint JNCC/RSPB programme to reintroduce Red Kites to England and Scotland. This work is being undertaken with the close co-operation of Swedish and Spanish conservation authorities. All these steps suggest that the fortunes of Red Kites in Britain are unlikely to be as insecure as they have been in recent decades. DAS

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Reintroduction.

Scotland Nine pairs made breeding attempts and two young were raised, one each from two nests.

This is the largest number of breeding attempts so far. The seemingly low productivity may be because the breeding birds are still inexperienced. RWS

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

82-115 'pairs' breeding.

Great Britain Some of the information submitted is too sketchy to permit consistent, detailed analysis, but a best estimate is that there were 73 males, some of them bigamous, one polygamous, and as many as 110 females. A minimum number of 154 young is almost certainly an underestimate, since the bald statement 'bred' has been interpreted as one young. The totals above include four pairs in Scotland, two of them breeding successfully.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Breeding males	16	17	19	21	27	29	26	40	42	58	73
Breeding females	20	20	24	28	32	31	32	46	56	66	110
Young*	44	48	59	71	66	86	82	126	145	172	154

*It is not possible to report how many of these young fledged.

Given much careful protection by conservation bodies, and sympathetic consideration by farmers and landowners, the species is clearly thriving.

There are many marshy habitats in Britain to which Marsh Harriers might spread. If they do turn up in a new locality, it is essential to remember that they are intolerant of disturbance.

The Panel is very grateful to R. A. Image for much detailed information about the breeding performance of this and the next species. RS



Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Nine localities: 5-9 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1) clutch of five eggs laid, but young taken by fox *Vulpes vulpes*; (2) nest, from which two young fledged during 28th-30th June.

England, SE Two localities: (1) two young hatched from clutch of two and fledged on 31st July; (2) male during 15th-16th June.

England, E Five localities: (1) four young hatched and ringed, and at least three fledged; (2) first-summer male from 4th June to 23rd August; (3) pair present during late April and early May, the female being seen nearby in June, and a juvenile in August near to a site occupied in 1989; (4) brood of four, all ringed; (5) pair in mid June.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	8	8	7	8	2	9	10	10	14	15	9
Confirmed (pairs)	2	2	3	6	1	3	7	6	6	7	5
Possible (pairs)	6	7	5	4	1	6	3	4	8	8	4
Max. total (pairs)	8	9	8	10	2	9	10	10	14	15	9

A somewhat disappointing year, especially when compared with the continuing success of the Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*, but the table does suggest that there are occasional disaster years. It was encouraging that the localities in SE England were in a county which has not featured before in the Panel's files for Montagu's Harrier.

RS

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

155 localities: 93-172 pairs breeding.

England & Wales 101 localities involving 27 counties: (1)-(101) total of 56 pairs known to have attempted breeding, hatching at least 59 young, with a further 30 pairs probably attempting breeding and 32 pairs possibly doing so.

Scotland 54 localities in three regions: (1)-(54) total of 37 pairs bred, rearing 103 young, 14 more pairs may have bred, and three possibly did so.

A total of 30 counties (including Scottish regions) was involved, a number exceeded only by the 31 in 1986-88; numbers of pairs confirmed breeding were exceeded only in 1988 and 1989 (108 and 112 respectively); and calculated maximum number of pairs only in 1988 (when there were 176).

With most of the Goshawk pairs nesting in extensive, thick conifer forest, proving breeding calls for determination, experience and stamina on the part of observers, and the above record would be nothing like so full without the efforts of a number of Goshawk enthusiasts, particularly those inspired and guided by the efforts of S. J. Petty of the Forestry Commission Wildlife and Conservation Research Branch. Even so, many pairs of Goshawks must go undetected, or unreported, and informed opinion puts the probable population at 200-300 pairs. The trend, despite vicissitudes, is one of an increasing and expanding population.

Recent papers have described the breeding habitat and breeding biology of a population of Northern Goshawks in lowland Britain (*Brit. Birds* 82: 56-67; 83: 527-540).

RS & JTRS

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

62 pairs: 48 pairs fledged 88 young.

England, SE One locality: two adults from 10th to 12th May, one to 13th May, and one during 23rd-25th May.

England, E One locality: at least one, probably two, summered.



Scotland, S Three localities: (1) pair plus another adult in May and June, and a nest built; (2) one or two from 3rd May to 14th June, frequenting six or seven sites; (3) 'pair reported to have bred'.

Elsewhere in Scotland Total of 62 eyries known to be occupied, an increase of four on 1989; 56 pairs laid eggs; 48 clutches hatched, but there were only 44 successful broods, from which a total of 88 young fledged. Very cold weather after hatching is thought to have caused the deaths of some young, and six (possibly seven) nests were robbed.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Pairs	25	25	30	30	31	34	42	50	53	58	62
Successful pairs	19	20	21	20	21	22	24	30	38	38	44
Young reared	41	42	45	45	47	53	48	56	81	81	88

The formula 'Elsewhere in Scotland' permits the recording of the ever-growing population, without giving any indication of the spread of the species. Extension of range has been occurring all the time, and the entries under the heading 'Scotland, S' indicate that the spread is, or will shortly be, to areas beyond the bounds of Highland Scotland. RS

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

390 localities: 154-434 pairs breeding.

England, SW 55-120 pairs breeding, 60 young reported.

England, SE 34-167 pairs breeding, 63 young reported.

England, E 36-88 pairs breeding, 50 young reported.

England, Central 23-38 pairs breeding, 57 young reported.

England, N 1-16 pairs breeding, two young reported.

Wales 5-10 pairs breeding, seven young reported.

Scotland 0-2 pairs breeding, no young reported.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Confirmed (pairs)	64	51	97	80	93	98	91	108	103	140	154
Possible (pairs)	91	10	105	182	116	148	202	164	226	250	287
Max. total (pairs)	155	160	202	262	209	246	293	272	329	390	441
Young reared (min.)	86	89	63	104	91	117	126	160	133	205	239

The increase in numbers and the expansion of range both continue, with the species pushing westwards into Wales, eastwards through East Anglia and northwards as far as Yorkshire. It is breeding successfully, and the figures given for the number of young reared really are minima, because the statement 'bred'—not uncommon in some reports—is arbitrarily counted as one.

In 1985, Fuller *et al.* (*Ibis* 127: 510-516) proposed an average of two pairs per occupied 10-km *Atlas* square, which, if correct, would have given a figure

of about 500 pairs in the early 1970s. I. J. Ferguson-Lees has used the same figure of two pairs per occupied 10-km square to project a possible present maximum of 850 pairs (*New Breeding Atlas*, in press). RS & LAB

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

255 localities: 13-377 pairs breeding.

England, SW 63 localities: 2-127 pairs breeding.

England, SE 23 localities: 0-45 pairs breeding.

England, E 21 localities: 1-39 pairs breeding.

England, Central 37 localities: 3-42 pairs breeding.

England, N 37 localities: 3-41 pairs breeding.

Wales 21 localities: 0-22 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S 13 localities: 1-19 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid 31 localities: 0-31 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W 9 localities: 3-11 pairs breeding.

The Panel has been collecting Quail data only since 1986, so it is difficult to put the 1989 invasion (27-1,655 pairs) into perspective using the Panel's data alone. An analysis of local bird report records during 1973-89 showed a range from 20 singing males in 1973 to 236 in 1983. The previous peak years were 1947 (over 100), 1953 (over 300) and 1964 (over 600) (*Brit. Birds* 49: 161-166; 57: 340; 60: 101-102), but there were far fewer observers then, so it is difficult to compare these totals with those in recent years. Nevertheless, the 1989 invasion was the largest for many years, and almost certainly the largest this century. The 1990 totals are also much higher than those reported during 1986-88, so it may be legitimate to assume that some of the 1989 birds returned in 1990. The previous year's invasion will, however, have alerted observers to the possible presence of Quails, so perhaps led to a wider-than-usual search of likely localities, and perhaps also to an increase in reporting to the Panel of any found.

The vast majority of records are of males singing, and evidence suggests that this is principally to attract a female, since the frequency of singing declines or even ceases after mating. Interpretation of singing is further complicated because unmated males have been proved to move considerable distances, up to 40 km or more. LAB & JTRS

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*

10 localities: 1-17 pairs breeding.

England, SE Two localities.

BERKSHIRE One locality: one singing on 6th May.

ESSEX One locality: one singing from 13th April to mid May.

England, E Two localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) one singing from 14th April to 12th May; (2) seven singing sporadically in May.

Scotland, S, Mid and N & W Six sites: (1) one singing, young probably heard; (2)(3) singles singing at each; (4) call indicative of parental anxiety; (5) single, no further data supplied; (6) two males each singing for one day in May.

Although there were fewer in 1990 than in 1989 (when there was a total of 21 singing, at 14 localities), there is a very clear upward trend in recent years, mean annual numbers singing being 4.6 during 1975-79, 7.6 during 1980-84 and 9.2 during 1985-89, compared with the 17 in 1990.

The 'whiplash' song of this species is so distinctive that it is unlikely to be

ignored or overlooked by any ornithologist. It is likely, therefore, that the increase in the frequency with which Spotted Crakes are being reported does reflect a genuine increase in numbers occurring here during the summer, and probably in the numbers breeding, though that is always very difficult to prove because of the need to avoid disturbance of the birds and their habitat.

Numbers in Sweden, which holds the bulk of the West European population, have remained comparatively static, apart from annual fluctuations, averaging about 225 singing males during 1972-79 and 205 during 1986-90 (*Vår Fågelv.* 39: 237-245; 50: 27-61).

JTRS

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

13 localities: 2-26 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

AVON One locality: one seen to fly into a barley field on 28th June (cf. Avon in 1989).

England, N Four localities.

CUMBRIA Three localities: (1) one singing on 3rd May, but not subsequently; (2) one singing during 1st-16th June; (3) adult with three small chicks on 12th July.

YORKSHIRE One locality: adult and two juveniles, seen frequently.

Northern Ireland Data not yet available.

Scotland, S Three localities.

AYRSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) singles singing.

BORDERS One locality: one singing on 21st July.

Scotland, Mid Three localities.

GRAMPIAN Two localities: (1)(2) singles singing for several days at each.

PERTSHIRE One locality: pair throughout May in the same location as in 1989.

Scotland, N & W Two localities.

ARGYLL One locality: 14 singing during 12th-14th June.

CAITHNESS One locality: one singing from mid June to 19th July.

The Panel collects only those records away from the Western and Northern Isles. Those frequenting the same locality in consecutive years (see Avon and Perthshire) perhaps indicate that there is the potential for recovery, but the considerable and long-term decline, associated with intensification of agriculture, seems likely to continue unless conservation measures are instituted quickly. An innovative scheme in Northern Ireland has encouraged farmers with singing Corn Crakes to delay cutting grass until chicks are sufficiently mobile to reduce the risk of mortality from grass-cutters. The uptake of the scheme, funded by Government and administered by the RSPB, was good, but its long-term effect on the population remains to be demonstrated. The



purchase of part of the island of Coll by the RSPB and the management of this and other reserves in a 'Corn Crane-friendly' manner are useful steps, but radical changes to wider agriculture frameworks are needed if Corn Crakes are to regain their former abundance throughout the United Kingdom. *DAS*

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

United Kingdom One locality: eight present at New Year 1990, but disturbance by birdwatchers of the cranes' favourite feeding area, together with a hard spell of weather in January, pushed them all away. Only six returned in spring. One pair made two breeding attempts and one young hatched but was believed to have been taken by Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* when ten days old.

Cranes are intolerant of disturbance. It is most unfortunate that the site, carefully protected by its sympathetic landowner, has been given unnecessary publicity. We appeal to all birdwatchers to avoid disturbing these birds in any way at any time of the year, so that this tiny population, in such a precarious position, is given every chance to become established. *LAB*

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

21 localities: 355-361 pairs reared at least 200 young.

England, SE & E 21 localities: (1) pair bred; (2) 18 pairs bred, with poor success; (3) 12 pairs bred, with very poor success; (4) 21 pairs reared 43 young; (5) two nests in May, eight chicks in June; (6) 13 adults plus three juveniles in June; (7) six pairs bred; (8) 23 pairs bred; (9) pair, reared no young; (10) 35 pairs bred; (11) four pairs fledged two young; (12) 49 pairs, 60 young reared (minimum of 112 free-flying young in the county concerned); (13) 11 pairs, four young reared; (14) two pairs, outcome not known; (15) Minsmere, 47 pairs, 23 young reared; (16) five pairs, outcome not known; (17)(18) single pairs, outcome not known; (19) 11 nests, outcome not known; (20) seven pairs, no further details; (21) Havergate, 98 pairs, 14 young reared. A statement from one county that '75 pairs reared 23 juveniles at seven coastal sites' has not been included since it is likely that some of those seven sites have also been reported individually.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	5	5	9	9	11	14	15	18	27	24	21
Confirmed (pairs)	168	201	190	238	237	269	255	341	389	521	355
Young reared (minima)	101	155	150	192	118	245	227	315	136	150	200

When there is a 'ribbon development' of nests, it is difficult to decide what constitutes a separate locality. Thus, it seems possible that there was little change in the population, and that breeding success was the highest since 1987. *RS*

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Nine counties: 139-149 pairs.

England, SW Three counties: 42-48 pairs fledged a minimum of 31 young.

England, SE Two counties: six pairs fledged a total of five young.

England, E Four counties: 91-95 pairs and one unmated female fledged a minimum of 76 young.

Stone-curlews are difficult to locate and to confirm as breeding. Hence even the maxima recorded probably slightly underestimate the total number of pairs. Such errors were probably much greater in the past, before systematic surveying of Stone-curlew populations began in the late 1980s. Mark-resighting estimates of the total breeding population in Breckland (Norfolk/Suffolk), which use records of individually marked breeding birds, indicate that there

were 95 pairs in 1990 rather than the 86 located by the RSPB field team. There is now evidence that the Stone-curlew population of Breckland is stable or gradually increasing, the mark-resighting estimate for 1986 being 80 pairs. The sub-populations in north Norfolk, south Cambridgeshire/Essex, east Cambridgeshire, east Suffolk and Berkshire, however, give cause for concern, all now holding fewer than five pairs. Breeding success in Breckland and SW England was good in 1990, partly because of wardening by RSPB staff to protect nests and chicks on arable farmland from accidental destruction by farming operations. It is estimated that about 32 of the 112 young which fledged would not have done so had there been no protection measures. In Breckland, 63% of pairs made at least one breeding attempt on arable farmland, and in SW England 53% of the breeding attempts recorded were on arable land.

RHYS GREEN

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Four localities: 2-8 pairs breeding (excluding those in main Scottish breeding area).

England, N One locality.

CUMBRIA One locality: nest with two eggs on 20th June, outcome not known.

Scotland, S Three localities.

BORDERS Three localities: (1) pair with clutch of 3 eggs, later taken by predator; (2) seven on 5th May; (3) six on 6th May.

Since NCC field teams established that the Scottish population of this species may exceed 800 pairs, the Panel concentrates on collecting data from localities to the south of the Central Lowlands of Scotland. Doubtless, many will be birds bound for Scotland, or even Norway, but eggs are laid on southern summits in most years.

RS

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.

Scotland, Mid One locality: adult in summer plumage feeding near a summit on 14th July.

No report has been received from the regularly occupied site. It would be a cause for concern if no breeding attempts were made there in 1990.

RS

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One locality: one pair breeding.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair hatched four young, but fledging not established.

This species continues to maintain a tenuous hold. There have been confirmed breeding records in all but two of the years since the first in 1978. It is, however, a difficult species for which to obtain breeding information during fieldwork, so it is probably overlooked and under-recorded.

RWS

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

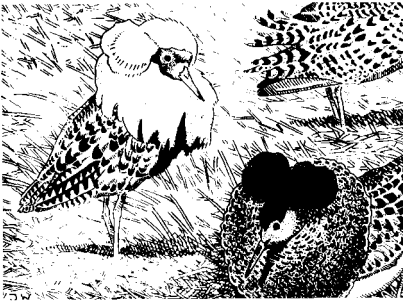
Eight localities: 3-15 females nesting.

England, SE Three localities.

ESSEX Three localities: (1) 1-2 in June; (2) 2-6 in June; (3) one on 16th June.

England, E Four localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: (1) one in May, but no evidence of breeding; (2) nest and 4 eggs on 20th May, and 'a second male suspicious' on 25th-26th May; (3) two reeves nested, three juveniles seen in mid July.



NORFOLK One locality: pair during breeding season.

England, N One locality.

CHESHIRE One locality: five males lekking during early March to May, five females present, but were gone by 9th May.

The best year for proved breeding since 1980. The species remains a very scarce breeder and, although in some years there may be 20-30 or more present in suitable breeding habitat for a time in spring, there is no evidence to suggest that a breeding population is firmly established in Britain. LAB

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

16 localities: 33-66 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

SOMERSET One locality: pair from April to early June and non-breeding pair from late April to mid June.

England, SE One locality.

KENT One locality: three pairs laid clutches, but all were taken by predators.

England, E Nine localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) 13 pairs, seven of which bred successfully, fledging at least two young; (2) 23 pairs on territory in May, 14 pairs hatched eggs, and nine young fledged.

NORFOLK Four localities: (1) pair laid, but eggs taken by predator; (2)(3) single pairs, but nests destroyed by predators; (4) pair, but no young known.

ELSEWHERE Three localities: (1) pair attempted to breed, but failed; (2) two pairs possibly bred; (3) pair, possibly one that had failed elsewhere, arrived and displayed.

England, N One locality.

CHESHIRE One locality: up to 25 from May to late June.

Scotland, N & W Four localities.

ORKNEY One locality: pair with at least one nearly full-grown young on 15th June.

SHETLAND Three localities: (1) pair with clutch of 4 eggs found on 21st June, probably hatched on 5th July; (2) pair with clutch of 4 eggs, probably failed; (3) pair successfully reared three young.

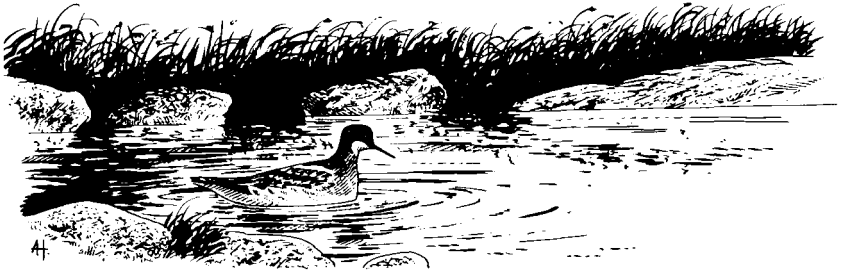
In south and east England, the population is fairly stable, with the majority at two key sites. When nesting in loose groups, Black-tailed Godwits can be very effective in deterring potential avian predators. The low breeding success of isolated pairs suggests, however, that new viable breeding groups may be difficult to establish. KWS

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs bred.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) pair, and 'alarming' adults suggest hatching at least; (2) pair, but no evidence of chicks.

The lesser number of records compared with 1989 (when there were 2-6 pairs breeding, at six localities) probably represents under-recording rather than a population decline. RWS



Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Four localities: 14-18 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Four localities: (1) two females; (2) females in June, but not in July; (3) two or three pairs, but no evidence of breeding; (4) 12-13 pairs.

The situation remains unchanged since 1989, with most occurring in their Shetland stronghold. RWS

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Ten localities: 11-16 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1) two pure pairs, both of which apparently failed; (2) three pure pairs, all of which failed, plus two other individuals.

England, SE Six localities: (1) pair bred, two young found when nearly three-quarters grown; (2) two pairs, one seen with nearly fledged young; (3) pair on cliffs, into July; (4) pair reared one young, which was eaten by a fox *Vulpes vulpes*; (5) pairs on 11th and 29th April, 28th May and 20th June; (6) clutch of 1 on 6th May, and another of 3 on 2nd June, but both flooded.

England, N Two localities: (1) pair with 3 eggs, taken by predator, probably by a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*; (2) pair, mating observed, female incubated for 11 days, then pair deserted clutch.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	5	4	2	6	4	3	5	3	9	5	10
Confirmed (pairs)	1	3	2	2	4	3	1	1	5	6	11
Possible (pairs)	4	3	1	6	1	5	4	2	10	3	5
Max. total (pairs)	5	6	3	8	5	8	5	3	15	9	16

Many of the pioneer colonisers formed mixed pairings in colonies of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*. No mixed pairings were reported in 1990, however, from which fact one may deduce that it is no longer difficult for Mediterranean Gulls to find mates of their own species in southern England. RS

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

One locality: one individual.

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female present from 30th April to 19th August, mated to male Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*; one egg laid on 7th June, but the chick died.

This individual was first discovered associating with Sandwich Terns at this site in 1984 and has returned every year since (*Brit. Birds* 84: 369). RS

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougalli*

15 localities: 93-124 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities.

ISLES OF SCILLY Two localities: (1) pair from 11th June to 30th July, when seen with one young; (2) pair during 4th-30th June.

England, SE Two localities: (1) one or two pairs, but young died soon after hatching; (2) single adults on 13th May, 15th and 20th June, pair in colony of Common Terns *S. hirundo* on 18th May.

England, N Three localities: (1) two pairs bred; (2) five pairs bred; (3) 23 pairs, plus four re-lays, 28 young, of which 19 fledged.

Wales Three localities: (1) seven pairs laid, hatching 28 young, of which two fledged; (2) maximum of 34 clutches, but predation by gulls *Larus* resulted in no young fledging; (3) three pairs on 15th June.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1) 21 pairs, of which 17 bred, laying 28 eggs and fledging 20 young; (2) two in a tern colony for several days.

Northern Ireland Three localities: (1) 19 pairs; (2) three pairs; (3) one pair.

A serious drop in numbers at UK colonies in 1990, but this probably reflects a shift of part of the population to one of the major colonies in Ireland. KWS

Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*

One locality: one individual.

England, SE One locality: an individual identified as this form summered, for the eighth consecutive year, in a colony of Little Terns *S. albifrons*.

This is the first time that this North American form, closely related to (and formerly regarded as conspecific with) Little Tern, has featured in the Panel's annual reports. Presumably this individual winters with European Little Terns. (The identification of this individual is still under consideration by the Rarities Committee, and will in due course also be assessed by the BOU Records Committee.) RS

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One locality: two females.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

SHETLAND One locality: two females, one of which laid an unfertilised egg, which was found crushed at the second visit.

Snowy Owls ended their nine-year run of breeding in Shetland in 1975, since when only females have been present. Unless a male finds them soon, they may grow too old to breed, or too set in their ways. Permanent colonisation of an area this far south must be unlikely, but further sporadic breeding is always a possibility. RS & CJB

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Two localities: 0-2 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: pair displaying on 10th May, not seen subsequently.

England, Central One locality.

WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: male singing from at least 24th to 30th May.

In 1977, four pairs nested, in Avon, Somerset, Surrey and Sussex (*Brit. Birds* 72: 375), but since then there has not been a single instance of confirmed breeding. None was reported to the Panel in 1989 or 1987, and 1985 was the last time that even possible breeding was reported from two localities. This

species is likely to remain a sporadic breeder here, relying for its occasional 'good' years on a large spring influx followed by a dry, warm summer. *JTRS*

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Six localities: 0-6 pairs breeding.

England, SE Two localities.

ESSEX Two localities: (1) one on 13th May; (2) one on 16th June.

England, E One locality.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE One locality: one singing on 6th June only.

England, Central Two localities.

SHROPSHIRE One locality: one singing on 13th May.

WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: one seen and heard from 1st June to at least 24th August.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

GRAMPIAN One locality: male singing on several days in a new area.

The above reports of 'males' have been taken at face value, but it should be noted that, as with other woodpeckers, both sexes sing (or drum).

More than one pair confirmed breeding has not been recorded in the UK since the four pairs in 1978, following seven pairs the previous year; none was proved for four years during 1981-84, then single pairs each year until the blank in 1990.

Although noisy when newly arrived or when unpaired, singing ceases very soon after nesting starts, so the 'disappearance' of a 'noisy migrant' deserves careful investigation in case a pair of this well-camouflaged and surreptitious breeder is quietly getting on with the job of procreation. *JTRS*

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

64-336 pairs breeding.

England, SW 14-129 pairs breeding.

CORNWALL One locality: male singing in last week of May.

DEVON Five localities: (1)-(5) total of two pairs proved breeding and three pairs probably breeding.

DORSET Six localities: 22 pairs (four proved and 18 probably breeding).

HAMPSHIRE RSPB survey estimated 60 pairs in the New Forest; 40 pairs at eight localities elsewhere.

WILTSHIRE One locality: pair feeding young.

England, SE 22-36 pairs breeding.

BERKSHIRE Five localities: (1)-(5) total of six pairs (three proved, two probably and one possibly breeding).

ESSEX One locality: pair raised young.

KENT One locality: single 'around for some time'.

SURREY 11 localities: (1)-(11) total of 22 pairs (nine proved, six probably and seven possibly breeding).

SUSSEX Three localities: four pairs proved to breed.

England, E 27-168 pairs breeding.

LINCOLNSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) three pairs proved to breed and four pairs possibly breeding.

NORFOLK One locality: 14 pairs proved to breed and 34 probably breeding.

SUFFOLK Ten localities: (1)-(10) total of ten pairs proved to breed and 103 probably breeding.

England, Central One to three pairs breeding.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: pair proved to breed and two pairs possibly breeding.

The totals for SW and E England are both significantly higher than those in 1989, but this probably reflects the increased coverage resulting from two special surveys. *KWS*

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

50 localities: 28-74 pairs breeding.

England, SE 26 localities.

BERKSHIRE Two localities: (1) male singing on 3rd April; (2) male singing on 18th May.

ESSEX Four localities: (1) three pairs bred; (2) three males singing several times, almost certainly bred; (3) pair bred; (4) male in June.

HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: pair bred.

KENT Six localities: (1) male singing in June; (2) male singing in August; (3) pair bred; (4) pair reared four young; (5) one on 12th July, very agitated on 25th July, presumed to have bred; (6) two pairs, three broods reared.

LONDON One locality: male singing on one date in June.

MIDDLESEX One locality: male singing on 6th May, regarded as 'probable breeding' as the species bred there in 1989.

SURREY Nine localities: (1) pair in June; (2) pair in late April; (3) pair bred; (4) one on 30th April; (5) pair bred; (6) pair with two juveniles on 22nd May; (7) male singing on 24th April; (8) many sightings, at least one probable breeding pair; (9) two females or juveniles on 25th May.

SUSSEX Two localities: (1) male singing on 3rd May; (2) male singing throughout April and May.

England, E 12 localities.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE One locality: subsong at a former site, on one date only.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: at least two females and a male, two broods reported to have fledged during 17th-22nd June.

NORFOLK Four localities: (1) unpaired male in late July and August; (2) pair fledged young; (3) pair fledged young and an additional four singing males; (4) unpaired male in May and June.

SUFFOLK Six localities: (1) pair probably bred; (2) two pairs bred; (3) pair probably bred; (4) two pairs bred; (5) pair possibly bred; (6) three pairs bred and an additional three pairs probably bred.

England, Central Nine localities.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: pair bred, young fledging by end of May.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: single male, but no females.

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: male seen.

WEST MIDLANDS Six localities: (1) male singing from April to June, plus a female on 25th May, two males on 30th May, young seen; (2) pair on 11th April, male singing; (3) pair on 11th June, female posturing and soliciting; (4) sub-adult male singing on 10th June; (5) sub-adult male singing on 23rd April; (6) male singing on 21st June, probably having moved from one of the other West Midland sites.

England, N One locality.

YORKSHIRE One locality: three pairs each reared at least one brood.

Wales One locality: female or first-summer male.**Scotland, S** One locality.

LOTHIANS One locality: male on 13th July and unsexed individual on 20th September.

Reported numbers of birds, and of localities occupied, have fallen by almost 50% since the species was reinstated as a Panel species in 1986. We believe that this reflects a genuine decline in numbers, but also believe the species to be seriously under-reported. We urge birdwatchers to report to the relevant county recorders *all* Black Redstarts seen in likely breeding habitats during April to September.

JJDG

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

12 localities: 5-12 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: one on 12th June 'shaking' and reluctant to leave the area.

England, N Four localities.

NORTHUMBERLAND Three localities: (1) one on 9th June; (2) one collecting food, presumably for nestlings or fledglings, on 9th June; (3) one in May and June, followed by four young on 16th July.

YORKSHIRE One locality: five eggs laid from which three young reared.

Wales One locality: one giving alarm calls on one date in early July.

Scotland, S Two localities.

BORDERS Two localities: (1) one on 14th June; (2) one singing on 15th May.

Scotland, Mid Two localities.

GRAMPIAN Two localities: (1) pair in suitable habitat throughout the season; (2) pair with young.

Scotland, N & W Two localities.

CATHNESS One locality: two displaying on 4th April.

SUTHERLAND One locality: brood of five on 29th June, of which four were ringed.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	5	6	7	10	4	3	2	7	7	12	12
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	2	3	0	0	2	1	2	3	5
Possible (pairs)	4	6	5	9	4	3	0	6	5	10	7
Max. total (pairs)	5	6	7	12	4	3	2	7	7	13	12

With five pairs proved breeding, this was the best year yet for Fieldfares in the UK, the previous highest total being four in 1977. With over 700 pairs of this migrant species breeding as close to southern England as the Netherlands (*Brit. Birds* 84: 233), increases and range expansion throughout much of Europe over recent decades and almost continuous presence here as a breeding bird since the first (in Orkney) as long ago as 1967 (*Scot. Birds* 5: 31-32), establishment is tantalisingly slow and cannot yet be regarded as firm. *JTRS*

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

17 localities: 6-21 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Central Three localities.

MORAY/NAIRN One locality: one singing on 19th May.

PERTSHIRE Two localities: (1) one in full song on 11th May, not heard on 20th May; (2) one singing on 20th May, possibly a second, silent, individual with it.

Scotland, N & W 15 sites.

INVERNESS-SHIRE Two localities: (1) two pairs 'alarming' in late May, one nest with well-feathered young; (2) male singing, pair not seen, but nest found.

SHEILAND Ten sites: (1)-(10) singles at each, seven of them singing, but no evidence of breeding.

SUTHERLAND Three localities: (1) pair with four eggs; (2) pair, hatched eggshell found on ground, but nest not located; (3) songs from three different woods on 12th May, an egg found on 2nd May.

Fewer individuals and localities were reported in 1990 than in any year since 1981. The recent peak was in 1984, when there were 31-79 pairs breeding. The Redwing is, however, a seriously under-recorded species, which can be heard singing in many parts of north and west Scotland from which the Panel receives few formal reports. Two ornithologists who searched extensively for this species in the early 1980s produced much higher numbers than were reported before or since. *JJDG*

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

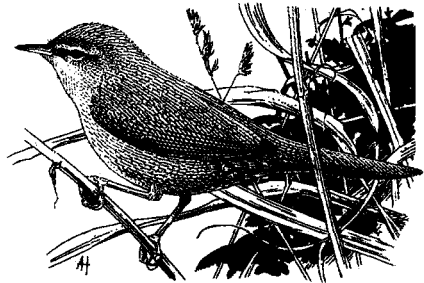
99 localities: 19-345 pairs breeding.

England, SW 62 localities in eight counties: 15-284 pairs breeding.

England, SE 12 localities in six counties: 2-19 pairs breeding.

England, E 22 localities in five counties: 1-34 pairs breeding.

Wales Three localities in two counties: 1-8 pairs breeding.



	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. counties	11	16	12	13	13	13	11	14	14	15	21
Confirmed (pairs)	19	56	29	90	78	59	4	31	24	12	19
Possible (pairs)	179	106	173	157	238	190	175	156	174	196	326
Max. total (pairs)	198	162	202	247	316	249	179	187	198	208	345

A succession of mild winters has evidently enabled this species to flourish, with the highest-ever maximum population. This has been achieved without the once-thriving Kentish population, although, after a lapse of several years, one pair did establish territory in Kent. There can be little doubt that the milder counties of southwest England and southern Wales provide the most suitable conditions for the species in Britain. *RS*

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Five localities: 1-10 pairs breeding.

England, E Five localities.

NORFOLK One locality: one singing male.

SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) at least four singing males; (2) up to three singing males in April.

ELSEWHERE Two localities: (1) one singing throughout the season; (2) female ringed on 17th June had a brood patch (a singing male was present there in 1989).

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	14	8	11	12	10	12	9	16	10	13	5
Confirmed (pairs)	2	5	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Possible (pairs)	27	10	18	15	12	14	11	20	13	17	9
Max. total (pairs)	29	15	18	17	12	15	12	20	13	17	10

A poor year, but all the birds were in that part of the country traditionally associated with Savi's Warblers. To judge by numbers of some of the common species, migrants may have had a very difficult spring passage north. *RS*

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

12 localities: 13-24 pairs breeding.

England, SE Eight localities: (1) pair bred; (2) one singing on 20th May; (3) one singing on 5th June; (4) one singing during 21st-28th June; (5) three males singing on 27th May, one singing on 29th May, one carrying nest material; (6) seven males singing on 30th May, five males singing on 4th June, five pairs successful and two pairs probably so; (7) pair bred and a second male on 10th June; (8) singing male from 28th May to at least 31st May.

England, E One locality: one singing from 27th May to 6th June.

England, Central Three localities.

WORCESTERSHIRE Three localities: (1) two pairs, one fledging five young, nest of the other pair possibly destroyed by predator; (2) pair bred, nest destroyed by predator, probably by wood mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*; (3) three pairs each fledged three young.

	1980	1981*	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	9	3	26	26	28	23	18	11	13	10	12
Confirmed (pairs)	2	0	2	3	4	2	12	10	6	11	13
Possible (pairs)	57	3	72	53	47	40	16	11	14	11	11
Max. total (pairs)	59	3	74	56	51	42	28	21	20	22	24

*The 1981 totals omit Worcestershire, then still the main population centre for this species.

An encouraging year, marked by a modest return of the species to its traditional haunts in Worcestershire, where 50-60 pairs persisted through the 1970s, but had decreased to 7-9 pairs by 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 239-256). Meanwhile, the population in SE England continues to hold its own, and even to thrive. The table shows that more pairs were proved to breed in the UK in 1990 than at any time in the previous decade. *RS & CJB*

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Two localities: two individuals.

England, SE One locality.

BERKSHIRE One locality: voluble singing male from 22nd May to 16th June (*Brit. Birds* 85: 539).

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: singing male during 12th-20th June (*Brit. Birds* 84: 492).

1984 HUMBERSIDE One locality: singing male from 19th May to at least 1st June (*Brit. Birds* 79: 571).

Spring vagrant Great Reed Warblers often sing from their reedbed habitat for a day or two, and such records are not noted in these annual reports. Sometimes, however, an individual takes up territory and remains for a longer period, and these records are included by us. It is probable that they almost always refer to unmated lone males, but such occurrences are likely to be the prelude if breeding does ever take place in the UK. There were one or two such long-staying singing males in six of the seven years 1975-81 (leading to high expectations of eventual colonisation), but then two blank years until the one in 1984 (above), followed by a five-year gap until these two in 1990. Perhaps the sudden silence of a singing male should not necessarily be assumed to indicate his departure; maybe, in one year, a female Great Reed Warbler will have heard his song . . .

JTRS

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

55-928 pairs breeding.

England, SW County maxima:

CORNWALL 1, DORSET 334, HAMPSHIRE 441, ISLE OF WIGHT 7, WILTSHIRE 1, ANOTHER 16.

England, SE County maxima:

SURREY 120, SUSSEX 8.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. counties	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	8	6	5	8
Confirmed (pairs)	19	50	8	14	11	26	15	8	26	23	55
Possible (pairs)	258	69	304	134	429	368	293	239	616	499	873
Max. total (pairs)	277	119	312	148	440	394	308	247	639	522	928

This is by far the highest total ever reported. The term 'locality' is not appropriate for this species, for whereas some reports are of a single pair others are for broad areas (e.g. 'New Forest'). Without map references for every pair, there is always a risk that some pairs will be counted twice, once as an individual pair, and once as part of the population of a wider area. Even allowing for this possibility, there is no reason to doubt that the population reached record levels in 1990.

RS

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

48 localities: 9-97 pairs breeding.

England, SW 13 localities.

DEVON Two localities: (1) pair proved breeding; (2) pair probably breeding.

DORSET One locality: pair bred successfully.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE One locality: approximately five pairs.

HAMPSHIRE Five localities: (1) New Forest, at least 19 pairs or singing males; (2)-(5) single males singing.

SOMERSET Two localities: (1) three singing males; (2) male on 12th and 15th July.

WILTSHIRE Two localities: (1) two singing on 6th May, three on 7th May; (2) two singing on 25th June, at least one pair bred later.

England, SE 21 localities.

BEDFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1) one singing on 25th May and 2nd June; (2) one singing on 28th and 29th May.

BERKSHIRE Two localities: (1) one singing, date not supplied; (2) singing male on 14th March, and from 16th April to 24th May, pair on 29th April and 2nd May.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Four localities: (1) one singing on 28th May; (2) one singing on 27th May; (3) one singing from 7th May to end of the month; (4) ten territories, one brood seen and one other young seen.

ESSEX Four localities: (1)-(4) singles singing on 1st, 10th and 27th May and 'in May', respectively.

MIDDLESEX Two localities: (1) female on 6th April and male during 9th-12th April; (2) singing male on 26th March.

SURREY Five localities: (1) male holding territory; (2) one seen feeding juvenile Goldcrest *R. regulus*; (3) one singing on 15th May; (4) male held territory in April and one other present; (5) singing male.

SUSSEX One locality: one singing on 28th April.

England, E Three localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: one in conifer plantation on 21st July.

NORFOLK One locality: pair from 23rd May to 18th July, one well-grown juvenile, probably two, possibly more, on 18th July.

SUFFOLK One locality: female and two males present in late May.

England, Central One locality.

WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: one singing in third week of April.

England, N Two localities.

LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1) male in breeding condition, ringed on 16th June; (2) one singing on 1st and 2nd May, a second may have been present.

Wales Eight localities.

GWENT Six localities: (1) song from 29th April to 27th May, two on 28th April and 1st May; (2) 12 singing, fledged young in three areas; (3)-(6) singles singing on 24th March, 13th April, 5th May and 22nd May, respectively.

GWYNEDD One locality: two, including singing male, on 15th March.

RADNORSHIRE One locality: one singing in May, probably feeding young later.

This species remains volatile in numbers each year: presumably the size of the population reaching Britain each year is affected by spring weather. The year 1990 experienced a poor spring and this affected a number of common migrants and may have reduced the number of Firecrests arriving here.

Although numbers have been generally higher and the distribution more widespread in the 1980s than in the 1970s, when the species was discovered to breed in localities outside the New Forest where it was first discovered in 1961, numbers now appear to have levelled off. The averages were 3-46 pairs breeding in 1973-79 and 8-85 during 1980-89, compared with the 9-97 in 1990.

LAB

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

One locality: one individual.

England, SE One locality.

KENT One locality: male from 21st April to 1st May (*Brit. Birds* 85: 546), during which time he built one nest and three-quarters finished a second.

With the species still extending its range in western Europe, and turning up more frequently in Britain (ten in 1990, compared with only 37 previously), one may hope that it will soon breed here regularly.

RS



Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

38 localities: 10-42 pairs breeding.

England, SW Three localities: (1) male on 17th May; (2) male, seen and heard, on 27th May; (3) pair present, but no young reared.

England, SE Seven localities: (1) pair and an additional male in late May; (2) male singing on 29th May; (3) male on 6th May; (4) one singing in May; (5) two males singing, no date reported; (6) three males and a female on 16th May; (7) an immature male during 22nd-31st May.

England, E 27 localities: (1) pair bred, three young ringed; (2) pair bred, but nest failed; (3) pair fledged two young; (4) singing male, but could have been from an adjacent site; (5) one heard on 29th May, seen on 30th June; (6) three pairs bred; (7) first-summer male on 24th June; (8) one singing in late May and early June; (9) pair probably bred; (10) male heard briefly on 7th June; (11) male, not far from a former breeding area; (12) male calling on 31st May; (13) at least four pairs bred and six pairs summered; (14) pair probably bred; (15) pair fledged at least one young; (16) male singing on 5th May and 5th June, one pair bred, second pair probably bred; (17) pair fledged at least one young; (18) pair fledged two young; (19) one singing on 28th May, 5th and 16th June; (20)(21) single pairs probably bred; (22) male singing in May; (23) pair bred; (24) pair probably bred and a second male present; (25) female and three males on 20th May, one pair bred; (26) pair fledged at least two young; (27) three calling in suitable habitat on 19th May.

England, N One locality: male sang continually on 22nd May, seen on 22nd June, when flew to another individual, presumed female.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	17	13	12	14	11	12	13	22	35	29	38
Confirmed (pairs)	2	4	3	2	4	4	5	11	16	15	10
Possible (pairs)	26	22	18	19	14	11	11	20	25	22	32
Max. total (pairs)	28	26	21	21	18	15	16	31	41	37	42

The diligence of the Golden Oriole Group, to whom the Panel is much indebted, must be partly responsible for the increased numbers of individuals and localities reported, but there is also evidence of a genuine increase in numbers.

RS & JJDG

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Seven localities: 1-8 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality: female on 28th May.

England, E Four localities: (1) male from 16th May to 30th June, a second male and a female

on 23rd May; (2)-(4) single males on 22nd May, 31st May and 16th June, respectively.

Scotland, S One locality: male sang throughout 20th May, but did not stay.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair successfully fledged one young, despite the fact that the male disappeared.

The number of confirmed pairs declined relentlessly from 172 pairs known in 1960 (*Bird Study* 9: 198-216), and 48-64 pairs breeding as recently as 1977, to zero in 1989, when there were only six instances of possible breeding, in three counties. It would be nice to think that 1990 marked a turning point in the species' fortunes, but the decline is widespread in the more maritime parts of western Europe, so there is little room for optimism. Goriup & Batten (1990, *Oryx* 24 (4): 215-223) remarked that 'the species appears to be doing well in those parts of Europe which are exposed to a drier or more continental climate', but this has not been reflected in better performance in Britain during recent, drought-stricken years. JJDG

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

One locality: one individual.

England, E One locality.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: pair seen and heard at the end of May.

There was a time in the early 1980s when it looked as though this species was becoming a regular, established breeder, but not so now.

With 50,000-2,000,000 wintering in Britain, it is perhaps surprising that more do not stay on to breed, at least in some years. The huge influx to the Merseyside area in winter 1980/81, with one roost containing up to 20,000 at a time and perhaps being used by 150,000 individuals over the winter (*BTO News* 114: 9), did not, however, lead to an increase in breeding numbers in summer 1981; indeed, that year was one of the worst in the past two decades, with only one pair confirmed breeding, whereas the following year provided the peak, with 2-10 pairs breeding.

With its close congener commonly occupying all likely Brambling nesting localities, it is far more likely that an itinerant individual will meet and hybridise with a Chaffinch *F. coelebs* than that it will chance upon a second Brambling of the opposite sex. That may perhaps be the key to the species' failure to become established here, although it is surprising that its wheezy notes, recalling Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, are not detected more often in our northern forests. Perhaps they *too* closely resemble Greenfinch, and are over-looked? JTRS

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs.

England, SW Two localities.

CORNWALL. Two localities: (1) pair held territory in a rural garden from 5th to 22nd May; (2) male held territory from 23rd May to 15th July.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
No. localities	1	3	5	7	4	5	2	4	6	1	2
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Possible (pairs)	1	4	6	5	3	5	3	5	9	1	2
Max. total (pairs)	1	6	7	7	5	6	3	5	9	1	2

Over the years, most of the records of summering Serins have come from the southwest of England (especially Devon, whence we have received no report for 1990), so the two Cornish records conform to a pattern. RS

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Three localities: 1-3 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Three localities.

ARGYLL One locality: pair, including a first-summer male.

CATHNESS One locality: singing male on 29th May.

SHEPHERD One locality: pair hatched four eggs and fledged three or four.

The only known nesting since the first, in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 133-135). Before the well-known events of summer 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 646), Robert Spencer wrote: 'At present the prospects for colonising Scarlet Rosefinches look better than those for—say—Serin *Serinus serinus*.' It has, however, taken a long time, the English Channel and the North Sea apparently acting as unexpectedly efficient barriers. The range expansion on the Continent is well known, with extension right to the shores nearest to Britain in 1987, first breeding occurring then on Heligoland, Germany, and in the Netherlands; the Dutch population had increased to 15 pairs by 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 11). Breeding pairs can be surprisingly inconspicuous, are easily overlooked and are so catholic in their choice of nesting site that suitable habitat must be widespread. Next year's report will reveal what may be the first real surge towards establishment. A paper by D. I. M. Wallace, outlining the species' European expansion and initial stages of colonisation of Britain, is in preparation for *British Birds*. JTRS

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

17 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid and N & W 17 pairs are known to have bred successfully, producing well-grown broods at least.

This total does not represent a complete census for this species. RWS

Girl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

94 localities: 48-133 pairs breeding.

England, SW

CORNWALL Two localities: (1) pair in March, male in song; (2) pair in June and August.

DEVON 91 localities: (1)-(91) totals of 48 pairs proved, 52 probably and 30 possibly breeding.

SOMERSET One locality: male from 30th June until 3rd July.

The Girl Bunting is the subject of a detailed research and monitoring programme by the RSPB, in collaboration with the Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society, and the Panel is indebted to Dr Andy Evans for furnishing precise details of the Devon population. The welcome increase in numbers in 1990 may, to some extent, be the result of more-complete coverage and better knowledge of the whereabouts of the birds. The range is now almost entirely restricted to a small area of Devon. KWS