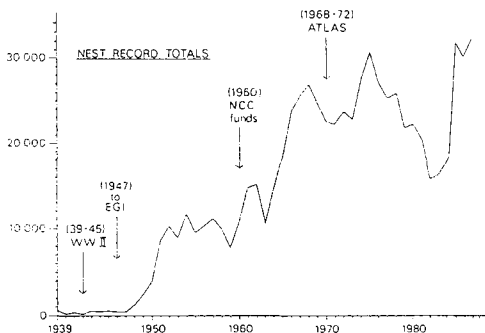


Nest Record News

A Newsletter prepared specially for supporters of the BTO's NEST RECORD SCHEME
 No. 4 MAY 1988

1987 - A SEASON OF MIXED FORTUNES

Neither good nor bad, 1987 will best be remembered as a year of considerable variation in the nesting success of birds nationwide. An Easter in early April, graced by gloriously warm southerly winds, recalled memories of the 1960s for old hands. It did wonders to help erase memories of the late cold springs of the last three years and drew comments such as 'fine season' (Devon), 'bumper year' (Mid Wales), and 'excellent summer' (Western Isles). Tales of Swallow clutches completed in April (Bucks), Barn Owl laying eight and nine eggs (Wigtown), Sand Martin back to near normal numbers (Lancs), were splendid news. Less so were reports of the impact of wet weather spells in late May, during June and in mid-July. These substantially dampened the breeding performance of many species, ranging from Buzzard and Red Grouse in the Highlands, Blue Tit and House Martin in the Midlands, to early nesting Reed Warbler and late brooding Tree Sparrow in the south.



RECORDS BROKEN AGAIN

Despite the closing damper to the 1987 season, a record total of 31,853 cards had reached Beech Grove by the close of March 1988 covering 181 species. This very healthy figure is 5.8% up on the previous year and pipped the previous highest ever year of 1985 by just 71 cards. The species' totals ranged from the Scheme's first Ruff card to 2,581 Blue Tit nest histories, a tremendous effort from some 511 individual observers and 60 bird clubs and ringing groups. TO THE THOUSAND PLUS NEST RECORDERS INVOLVED, THE TRUST EXTENDS A VERY LARGE THANK YOU.

TITMICE AND WADERS CATCH LATE CHILL

The warmth of April triggered many hole nesting birds into early action. Nestbox operators as far apart as Hertfordshire, Hampshire, Nottinghamshire and Herefordshire reported their earliest laying dates for many years for both Great Tit and Blue Tit - a complete reversal of the cold miserable late 1986 season. Fledged broods of nine or more young were commonly reported where defoliating caterpillar populations were high. Instances of Coal and Great Tit rearing second broods were widely recorded. Away from many eastern parts of England, Wales and Scotland, the subsequent wet and cool spells of weather resulted in numerous chilled broods and losses.

It proved to be a similar season for many waterbirds. In much of southern Britain, contributors to the BTO Lapwing Survey noted a large hatch in late April and early May, but relatively few young surviving thereafter. In contrast, along the coast of Lancashire and the uplands of Cumbria, many Lapwing, Curlew and Oystercatcher reared healthy broods, alongside Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Reed Bunting.

STILTS STAR AS SHRIKES STUMBLE

Top birds of the 1987 season were unquestionably the superb pair of Black-winged Stilts which were among a scattering of birds which overshot their normal Continental breeding grounds and stayed to nest. They settled at the Norfolk Naturalists' reserve at Holme in mid-May and reared two from a clutch of three eggs. This represents only the third successful breeding record by Black-winged Stilt in recent times and follows the two broods reared at Nottingham sewage works in 1945.

For other scarce birds it was a mixed season. Fewer Montagu's Harrier bred than during the previous summer, but signs of a continuing recovery are good. More Marsh Harrier young were reared than at any time in recent years. Sea Eagle bred successfully for the third year running. News about rare passerines was less encouraging. Just four Marsh Warbler territories were apparently occupied in Worcestershire. From six, then three pairs of Red-backed Shrikes during earlier years, just a single nest reared a brood in 1987.

WHITETHROAT AND GOLDCREST BOUNCING BACK

It was especially warming to note Sahelian species such as Whitethroat, Sand Martin, Sedge Warbler and Redstart high on the list of summer visitors reported in greater numbers in 1987 on nest recorder plots and, apparently, among successful breeders. Pied Flycatchers continued to occupy fresh woods and nestboxes. Early clutches of up to nine eggs were reported in Wales and northern England, but again losses during the later rains were not infrequent. Wheatear and Whinchat were just two of several species which returned to breed in former sites on the edge of their range. Quail in the south and Corncrake in the north-west and Ireland, were more numerous - or more vociferous in the fine spring weather?

Of our residents, Goldcrest and Long-tailed Tit reared many large broods which should help to bolster populations depleted by recent cold winters. The changeable weather meant a protracted breeding season for thrushes like Blackbird and finches like Chaffinch, though a profitable one, as ringing at autumn Constant Effort Sites found, with a large number of juveniles (see BTO News No. 155). After a good start for most hirundines and some warblers it was an early departure south. There were many exceptions however, with Swallow feeding third broods in September, Woodpigeon in October and Collared Dove in November - all emphasizing the importance of keeping a wary eye open for late nesting attempts to help ensure that our nest histories cover the full season.

1987 CARD INTAKE - SAMPLE HIGHLIGHTS

The central strength of the nest record scheme comes each year from those birdwatchers who fill in a handful of detailed cards for nests found on their local patch - a wood, farm, garden, gravel pit, ringing site, CBC plot, or whatever. Others are able to spend more time extending their efforts into an absorbing study, sometimes concentrating on particular birds. Those nest finders who completed one hundred or more cards are listed below. The list serves several functions. It gives some idea of the spread of nest finders, shows what species are receiving specialist attention, and just what can be achieved by an individual or group. Those birdwatchers operating through a local bird club, ringing group, or natural history society have the advantages of being able to exchange ideas, help with co-operative projects, and reduce the Trust's time with administration.

G. Alexander (Hants) 159 cards including 37 Swallow, 36 Blackbird; W.D. Allen (Shrops) 227 cards including 6 Teal, 38 House Martin; G.E. and G.K. Austin (Shrops) 244 cards including 65 Pied Flycatcher, 21 Reed Warbler, 48 Blue Tit; M.J. Austin (Suffolk) 169 cards including 20 Canada Goose, 19 Lapwing; P. Baker (Cumbria) 323 cards including 47 Cormorant, 73 Swallow; J. and C. Barrett (Cleveland) 108 cards including 21 Pied Flycatcher, 10 Coal Tit; L.G. Baxter (Clwyd) 402 cards including 15 Moorhen, 12 Dipper, 237 Black-headed Gull; J.E.A. Brook and R.C. Cooke (Warks) 552 cards including 28 Oystercatcher, 90 Blackbird, 7 Garden Warbler; Dr. P.J.K. Burton (Herts) 132 cards including 101 Kestrel, 22 Tawny Owl; R.F.E. Butler (Worcs) 134 cards including 27 Canada Goose, 14 Blackbird; J. Callion (Cumbria) 157 cards including 5 Grasshopper Warbler, 28 Sedge Warbler, 54 Pied Flycatcher; J.M. Cheverton (I.O.W.) 142 cards including 27 Cormorant, 51 Black-headed Gull; J. Clark (Gwynedd) 187 cards including 32 Common Tern, 4 Ruddy Duck; J.E.S. Cooper and R.F. Sanderson (Sussex) 325 cards including 3 Mandarin, 118 Blue Tit, 96 Great Tit; D. Cox and B. Hawes (Bucks) 563 cards including 31 Pied Wagtail, 132 Blackbird, 41 Blue Tit; Dr. S. Cox (Essex) 222 cards including 102 Ringed Plover, 98 Little Tern; A.V. Cross (Dyfed) 149 cards including 35 Buzzard, 8 Barn Owl, 60 Raven; J.K. Cross and M.M. Baggs (Hants) 145 cards including 3 Shelduck, 32 Blue Tit; R.E. Danson (Lancs) 287 cards including 38 Blue Tit, 123 Tree Sparrow; P.G. and S.G. Davis (Surrey) 113 cards including 6 Woodlark, 10 Meadow Pipit; C.N. Davison and S. Foster (Co. Antrim) 314 cards including 9 Rock Pipit, 18 Sedge Warbler, 23 Willow Warbler; M. Davison (Northumbria Ringing Group) 615 cards including 23 Merlin, 31 Tawny Owl, 101 Pied Flycatcher; S.J. Denny (Suffolk) 356 cards including 17 Canada Goose, 200 Sandwich Tern, 71 Avocet; R.A. Denyer (Surrey) 132 cards including 5 Mandarin, 15 Greenfinch; T.J. Dix and B. Neill (Western Isles) 199 cards including 10 Red-throated Diver, 81 Ringed Plover, 48 Lapwing; C. du Feu (Notts) 102 cards including 11 Song Thrush, 22 Great Tit; D.M. Elliot and D. Squires (Powys) 124 cards including 10 Redstart, 74 Pied Flycatcher; J.E. Flynn (Gloucs) 122 cards including 17 Dipper, 51 Blue Tit; D. Francis (Northants) 135 cards including 24 Coal Tit, 29 Great Tit; D. Fulton and T. Crossman (Shrops) 174 cards including 37 Wheatear, 36 Pied Flycatcher; D.J. Garner (Cambs) 149 cards including 6 Long-eared Owl, 20 Reed Warbler; K.J. Green (Lancs) 127 cards including 42 Swallow, 29 Blue Tit; M. Green, A. Knight et al (Cambs) 126 cards including 3 Pintail, 15 Snipe; J. Groves (Surrey) 100 cards including 2 Hobby, 11 Woodpigeon; J.B. Halliday (Midlothian) 111 cards including 12 Snipe, 21 Curlew, 18 Meadow Pipit; H.R. Hammacott (Bristol Naturalists' Society) 305 cards including 48 Blackbird, 37 Willow Warbler, 31 Chaffinch; P. Hawkey The National Trust (Northumberland) 921 cards including 171 Eider, 209 Kittiwake; I., P. and D. Hildred (Lincs) 154 cards including 12 Moorhen, 19 House Sparrow; P. and D. Hill (Lancs) 116 cards including 17 Great Crested Grebe, 11 Carrion Crow; D. Holloway (Cumbria) 132 cards including 37 Wheatear, 15 Pied Flycatcher; D. Holman and M. Goodman (Northants) 106 cards including 26 Sparrowhawk, 2 Hobby; P.R. Holnes (Norfolk) 232 cards including 135 Swallow, 10 Chaffinch; S.J. Huddleston (Lincs) 144 cards including 20 Black-headed Gull, 37 Blackbird; B.R. Hughes (Surrey) 129 cards including 26 Pied Wagtail, 18 Blackbird; J. Kieser (Hants) 338 cards including 7 Turtle Dove, 42 Swallow, 30 Yellowhammer; T. Kuechel, P. Roe and C. Harrison (West Yorks) 152 cards including 9 Grey Heron, 28 Blackbird; D.E. Lewis (Gwent) 192 cards including 10 Little Owl, 10 Tree Sparrow; J.M.S. Lewis and S.J. Roberts (Gwent) 205 cards including 3

Woodcock, 3 Nightjar; I. Livingstone (Strathclyde) 110 cards, all Swallow; R.J. Louch and I.D. Tompson (Oxon) 412 cards including 42 Blackcap, 46 Chiffchaff, 27 Yellowhammer; R.N. Macklin (Suffolk) 106 cards including 15 Avocet, 30 Great Tit; B.A. Madden (Dublin) 127 cards including 68 Swallow, 20 Jackdaw; C.F. Mapletoft (Birklands Ringing Group) 454 cards including 87 Blackbird, 65 Great Tit, 7 Treecreeper; P. Maynard (Hants) 192 cards including 3 Mandarin, 17 Nightjar, 8 Redpoll; I. McAlpine (Merseyside) 168 cards including 19 Cormorant, 11 Herring Gull; M.O. Meadows (Essex) 324 cards including 31 House Martin, 196 Rook; Mid-Lincs Ringing Group 103 cards including 18 Swallow, 23 Blue Tit; G. and D. Moss (Gwynedd) 112 cards including 10 Barn Owl, 58 Pied Flycatcher; C. Murray (Co. Durham) 102 cards including 8 Blackbird, 10 Blue Tit; North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory (Orkney) 263 cards including 54 Oystercatcher, 35 Arctic Tern; Orkney Ringing Group 502 cards including 75 Red-throated Diver, 35 Hen Harrier, 94 Black Guillemot; P.A. Page and A. Robinson (Devon) 113 cards including 69 Pied Flycatcher, 32 Blue Tit; R. Peart (Dorset) 150 cards including 34 Blackbird, 24 Blue Tit; P.F.J. Playford (Gwent) 118 cards including 82 Pied Flycatcher, 23 Blue Tit; R.E. Proctor (Gloucs) 272 cards including 90 Pied Flycatcher, 47 Great Tit; R. Proctor (Grampian Region) 100 cards including 12 Kittiwake, 23 Rook; W. Proctor (Warks) 454 cards including 82 House Martin, 52 Blackbird, 92 Rook; I. Rendall (Grampian Ringing Group) 305 cards including 81 Skylark, 47 Blackbird, 39 Linnet; J. Richardson (Co. Durham) 546 cards including 64 Song Thrush, 32 Chaffinch, 28 Lapwing; J.A.L. Roberts (Clwyd) 108 cards including 7 Wood Warbler, 49 Pied Flycatcher; Rye Bay Ringing Group (East Sussex) 445 cards including 48 Grey Heron, 131 Reed Warbler; G. Shaw (Dumfries and Galloway) 166 cards including 75 Shag, 18 Kittiwake, 8 Barn Owl; South West Notts Ringing Group 166 cards including 19 Reed Warbler, 36 Great Tit; R.L. Swann (Glenurquhart Bird Club, Highland) 220 cards including 17 Buzzard, 27 Tawny Owl, 2 Fieldfare; S. Thomson and W. Hartley (North Yorks) 205 cards including 17 Collared Dove, 51 Blackbird; D.M. Tuck (Surrey) 128 cards including 14 Moorhen, 1 Ring-necked Parakeet; M. Turner (Surrey) 101 cards including 10 House Martin, 30 Blackbird; Dr. S. Tyler and S. Ormerod (Powys) 250 cards including 107 Grey Wagtail, 143 Dipper; Dr. L.L.J. Vick (Midlothian) 152 cards including 50 Dipper, 71 Wheatear; D. Warden (Avon) 196 cards including 16 Great Crested Grebe, 61 Reed Warbler; Mrs P. Webb (Derby) 348 cards including 95 Pied Flycatcher, 88 Blue Tit; A.D.D. Wilson (Herts) 392 cards including 45 Common Tern, 12 Cuckoo, 33 Sedge Warbler; I. Wolfenden (Merseyside) 178 cards including 53 Skylark, 42 Linnet; M. Wright (Suffolk) 151 cards including 29 Oystercatcher, 17 Little Tern.

LONG STANDING NEST RECORDERS

This year, we have been updating and computerising our list of observers. One factor that came to light was just how many faithful observers participate in the Scheme. We looked at the number of observers who had taken part in the Scheme for 15 years and were amazed that this figure was 47! In view of this, we have decided to mention and thank those observers in this newsletter who have sent in cards continuously for the last 25 years. These are:

<u>OBSERVER</u>	<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>NO. OF YEARS</u>
P.J.K. Burton	Herts	26
J. Buxton	Wilts	32
J.M. Butterworth	Gtr. Manchester	32
A.E. Billet	Avon	26
E.D. Cameron	Tayside	29
B. Campbell	Oxfordshire	33
J.M. Cheverton	Isle of Wight	32
H.F. Church	Northumberland	30
P.G. Davis	Surrey	28
G.H. Gush	Devon	33
D. Macdonald	Highland	34
F.W.P. Radford	Herts	31
E. Ward	Lancs	32
D. Warden	Avon	34

TOTALS FOR NEST RECORD SCHEME FROM PRE 1986 to 1987

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>Pre-86</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Red-throated Diver +	1,177	133	112	1,422
Black-throated Diver +	135	2	6	143
Little Grebe *	1,293	48	59	1,400
Great Crested Grebe *	1,676	112	113	1,901
Slavonian Grebe +	124	5	6	135
Black-necked Grebe +	12	-	-	12
Fulmar	1,737	298	168	2,203
Manx Shearwater	51	-	-	51
Storm Petrel	19	11	-	30
Leach's Petrel +	2	-	-	2
Gannet	18	-	4	22
Cormorant *	859	65	94	1,018
Shag *	2,104	185	260	2,549
Bittern +	17	-	-	17
Little Bittern +	1	-	-	1
Grey Heron *	1,889	223	188	2,300
Mute Swan *	2,561	123	120	2,804
Greylag Goose +	219	112	75	406
Canada Goose	925	116	151	1,192
Egyptian Goose	2	-	-	2
Shelduck	179	12	10	201
Mandarin	105	36	15	156
Wigeon	91	10	9	110
Gadwall	41	2	3	46
Teal	153	6	1	160
Mallard *	5,300	247	213	5,760
Pintail +	7	-	4	11
Garganey +	7	-	-	7
Shoveler	86	4	7	97
Pochard	101	6	-	107
Tufted Duck	611	63	56	730
Scaup +	-	1	-	1
Eider	1,105	223	230	1,558
Common Scoter +	29	-	1	30
Goldeneye +	11	3	4	18
Red-breasted Merganser	195	9	4	208
Goosander	120	4	16	140
Ruddy Duck	13	4	7	24
Honey Buzzard +	8	-	-	8
Red Kite +	13	1	1	15
Marsh Harrier +	5	-	2	7
Hen Harrier +	448	51	74	573
Montagu's Harrier +	45	-	1	46
Goshawk +	53	17	23	93
Sparrowhawk *	2,295	212	221	2,728
Buzzard *	2,391	206	163	2,760
Golden Eagle +	289	13	28	330
Osprey +	24	1	1	26
Kestrel *	3,289	228	245	3,762
Merlin +	743	96	127	966
Hobby +	283	32	18	333
Peregrine +	827	107	116	1,050
Red Grouse	410	31	43	484
Ptarmigan	81	3	3	87
Black Grouse	32	-	-	32

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>Pre-86</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Capercaillie	60	1	-	61
Red-legged Partridge *	358	12	11	381
Grey Partridge *	694	19	16	729
Quail +	9	1	-	10
Pheasant *	1,594	52	34	1,680
Lady Amherst's Pheasant	1	-	-	1
Water Rail	60	1	1	62
Corncrake +	25	-	1	26
Moorhen *	15,079	439	430	15,948
Coot *	7,808	415	365	8,588
Oystercatcher *	7,391	384	430	8,205
Avocet +	3	-	92	95
Stone-curlew +	369	-	1	370
Little Ringed Plover +	976	37	51	1,064
Ringed Plover *	4,487	395	550	5,432
Kentish Plover +	19	-	-	19
Dotterel +	114	7	4	125
Golden Plover	574	33	39	646
Lapwing *	13,951	397	663	15,011
Temminck's Stint +	1	-	-	1
Purple Sandpiper +	3	-	-	3
Dunlin	423	31	45	499
Ruff +	-	-	1	1
Snipe *	1,116	20	60	1,196
Woodcock	471	13	17	501
Black-tailed Godwit +	6	-	-	6
Whimbrel +	42	-	5	47
Curlew *	1,772	88	98	1,958
Redshank *	1,628	41	52	1,721
Greenshank +	124	1	9	134
Wood Sandpiper +	2	-	-	2
Common Sandpiper *	910	44	50	1,004
Red-necked Phalarope +	32	-	-	32
Arctic Skua	190	19	12	221
Great Skua	262	13	11	286
Little Gull +	-	-	3	3
Black-headed Gull *	3,069	144	415	3,628
Mediterranean Gull +	2	-	-	2
Common Gull *	1,654	97	91	1,842
Lesser Black-backed Gull	690	4	100	794
Herring Gull	3,383	89	79	3,551
Great Black-backed Gull	751	13	103	867
Kittiwake	1,495	245	285	2,025
Sandwich Tern	138	146	226	510
Roseate Tern +	111	5	14	130
Common Tern *	2,305	273	182	2,760
Arctic Tern *	1,082	274	1,332	2,688
Little Tern +	2,431	348	313	3,092
Guillemot	583	104	130	817
Razorbill	339	36	56	433
Black Guillemot	355	245	159	759
Puffin	147	18	-	165
Rock Dove	115	21	36	172
Feral Pigeon	779	52	45	876
Stock Dove *	3,551	156	180	3,887
Woodpigeon *	15,439	688	513	16,640
Collared Dove *	1,753	160	178	2,091
Turtle Dove *	1,593	27	31	1,651
Ring-necked Parakeet	1	-	1	2
Cuckoo *	1,409	40	52	1,501

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>Pre-86</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Barn Owl +	948	108	139	1,195
Snowy Owl +	1	-	-	1
Little Owl *	1,010	59	55	1,124
Tawny Owl *	3,520	162	314	3,996
Long-eared Owl	393	17	22	432
Short-eared Owl	163	20	18	201
Nightjar	527	15	87	629
Swift *	787	17	28	832
Kingfisher +	350	19	17	386
Hoopoe +	1	-	-	1
Wryneck +	11	-	1	12
Green Woodpecker	213	11	7	231
Great Spotted Woodpecker	560	52	43	655
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	105	9	6	120
Woodlark +	325	46	28	399
Skylark *	5,097	293	239	5,629
Sand Martin	657	27	87	771
Swallow *	27,062	1,375	1,440	29,877
House Martin *	2,899	230	356	3,485
Tree Pipit	1,062	61	43	1,166
Meadow Pipit *	6,335	326	344	7,005
Rock Pipit	431	19	19	469
Yellow Wagtail	758	22	13	793
Grey Wagtail	2,947	199	261	3,407
Pied Wagtail	5,699	253	269	6,221
Dipper	4,469	560	538	5,567
Wren *	10,011	262	316	10,589
Duncock *	24,587	530	494	25,611
Robin *	14,207	457	368	15,032
Nightingale	332	10	7	349
Bluethroat +	1	-	-	1
Black Redstart +	115	4	2	121
Redstart *	2,109	183	189	2,481
Whinchat *	1,230	45	47	1,322
Stonechat *	1,685	40	38	1,763
Wheatear *	2,033	237	218	2,488
Ring Ouzel *	1,034	29	40	1,103
Blackbird *	101,510	2,968	2,371	106,849
Fieldfare +	1	2	2	5
Song Thrush *	61,612	1,105	927	63,644
Redwing +	85	3	-	88
Mistle Thrush *	5,420	182	170	5,772
Cetti's Warbler +	17	-	1	18
Grasshopper Warbler	246	12	15	273
Savi's Warbler +	2	-	-	2
Sedge Warbler *	3,037	146	181	3,364
Marsh Warbler +	99	7	-	106
Reed Warbler *	7,462	389	401	8,252
Dartford Warbler +	272	55	6	333
Lesser Whitethroat	613	16	16	645
Whitethroat *	4,389	137	89	4,615
Garden Warbler *	1,094	67	64	1,225
Blackcap *	1,996	96	139	2,231
Wood Warbler	1,283	93	146	1,522
Chiffchaff *	1,418	52	93	1,563
Willow Warbler *	9,011	395	333	9,739
Goldcrest *	596	6	8	610
Firecrest +	8	-	1	9
Spotted Flycatcher *	7,251	357	322	7,930
Pied Flycatcher	12,466	1,395	1,507	15,368

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>Pre-86</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Bearded Tit +	52	1	-	53
Long-tailed Tit *	3,085	74	103	3,262
Marsh Tit	854	24	32	910
Willow Tit	322	6	15	343
Crested Tit +	135	10	20	165
Coal Tit *	3,308	109	148	3,565
Blue Tit *	36,249	2,280	2,581	41,110
Great Tit *	23,478	1,395	1,471	26,344
Nuthatch *	1,213	116	87	1,416
Treecreeper *	1,524	35	85	1,644
Short-toed Treecreeper +	1	-	-	1
Golden Oriole +	1	-	5	6
Red-backed Shrike +	251	-	-	251
Jay *	1,070	35	33	1,138
Magpie *	4,008	281	206	4,495
Chough +	329	19	27	375
Jackdaw *	3,405	168	179	3,752
Rook *	2,970	490	380	3,840
Carrion Crow *	3,791	217	227	4,235
Hooded Crow	593	114	48	755
Raven *	1,624	192	117	1,933
Starling *	9,738	368	363	10,469
House Sparrow *	9,426	189	213	9,828
Tree Sparrow *	11,916	266	274	12,456
Chaffinch *	15,148	652	578	16,378
Serin +	1	-	1	2
Greenfinch *	10,898	312	254	11,464
Goldfinch *	2,323	33	47	2,403
Siskin	40	5	4	49
Linnet *	21,280	344	413	22,037
Twite	740	14	14	768
Redpoll *	1,140	28	26	1,194
Common Crossbill +	88	-	5	93
Parrot Crossbill +	4	-	-	4
Scarlet Rosefinch +	1	-	-	1
Bullfinch *	4,473	78	106	4,657
Hawfinch	108	3	3	114
Snow Bunting +	10	-	-	10
Yellowhammer *	5,205	132	164	5,501
Cirl Bunting +	55	2	-	57
Reed Bunting *	6,148	116	151	6,415
Corn Bunting *	429	6	12	447
<u>TOTALS</u>	<u>Pre-86</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>GRAND TOTAL</u>
	668,936	30,003	31,853	730,792

+ Bird species protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act

* TARGET SPECIES - deserving special attention.

These species fall into two categories:

- 1) a range of 'indicator' species which the BTO is able to use to assess variations in breeding performance between years, regions and habitats.
- 2) species for whom the sample of nest histories is nearing the point where sufficiently large numbers are housed at Beech Grove to merit a more detailed analysis and publication of a paper on the breeding biology of the bird.

All cards are treasured for the range of "Target" species.

ANALYSES OF NEST RECORDS IN PROGRESS

It is pleasing to be able to report that the healthy increase in the intake of cards over recent years is being matched by a wider use of the Trust's historical bank of unique material. Also, how a good blend of both 'amateur' and 'professional' ornithologists are making welcome use of the cards. The use of such labels is dangerous though, the dedicated work of many analysts - like most nest-recorders enjoying an extension to their hobby - is often amazing and much applauded.

Studies in the provinces

In Scotland, for example, David Jardine (West Lothian) is comparing the nest site selection, laying periods and nesting performance of 'his' birds with those in the Pennines. For Paul Heppleston (Orkney) and Ian Bainbridge (Edinburgh) the general breeding ecology of the Curlew is their prime interest. To the south, in Cumbria, John Callion has a discrete Yellow Wagtail population and is comparing the range of nest sites occupied with those elsewhere in Britain.

In Wales, Pete Jennings (Powys) has gone some way towards unravelling the complex breeding behaviour of the Pied Flycatcher. In Gwynedd, Mrs Gill Moss is examining the national collection of Little Grebe cards, while Martin Garnett is interested in the relative breeding performance of Whinchats in different land types.

From Mandarins to Plovers

Andy Davies has a unique population of Mandarins in Surrey/Berks and has analysed, and greatly augmented, the national batch of cards. Members will have read his article 'The Mandarin Duck - outstripping the ancestors?' BTO News No. 136:12 and await further publications with interest. Paul Johnson (South Yorks) has local Tawny Owl studies underway both in Yorkshire and Bedford and is comparing nesting success countrywide by year, habitat and in nest-boxes compared with natural sites.

Nest records are also currently being used to augment national distribution surveys. Following on from the BTO Lapwing Survey, Mike Shrubbs (Powys) is examining the impact of changes in farming practice in recent decades on habitat usage and nesting success of this declining bird. Nest site information was also extracted from cards to include in the recent plover survey report 'Ringed Plovers Proliferate' by Tony Prater 'as LRPs Spread North' by Eileen Parrinder in BTO News No. 153: 6-7. Similarly, Barry Hughes of The Wildfowl Trust, consulted the BTO collection for his appraisal of the distribution and nesting habits of the Ruddy Duck in Britain.

The professional interest

The universities continue to be involved. Martin Kelsey (EGI, Oxford) added past nest record card details to his personal field study data on the remnant Worcestershire population of Marsh Warblers and BTO members will have read 'Marsh Warblers on the brink' BTO News No. 151: 6-7. Whilst our Marsh Warblers are laying similar size clutches to nearby pairs in Belgium, and only slightly smaller clutches than those in E Europe, our birds are rearing almost one young fewer. Also based at the EGI, Heeb Philippe's interest lies with Jackdaws and annual variations in their brood sizes and nesting success.

Across at Cambridge, Mike de L. Brooke and Nick Davies examined the Cuckoo cards for indications of changes in host use. Their fascinating findings published in the Journal of Animal Ecology 56: 873-883 showed how the rate at which Reed Warbler nests have been parasitized has more than doubled over the last forty years, and reproductive success there improved, freeing other hosts including

Meadow Pipit, Robin, Pied Wagtail and others from victimization. At Leicester University changes in the nesting habits of Reed Bunting and Corn Bunting respectively are the subjects of Sean O'Malley and Dr. T.Burke's analysis of the Trust's cards.

The BTO was pleased to play host for two months in the summer to visiting ornithologist Tad Stawarczyk from Wroctaw University, Poland. 'Tadpole' - as he soon became affectionately known - calculated the range of nesting sites, laying periods, and nesting performance of Marsh Tit and Nuthatch from the British cards to compare with the fortunes of his own study populations of these species in the Bialowieza Forest.

The conservation tag

The potential value to conservationists now of the historical series of cards covering virtually fifty years is just being fully realized. Several analyses during 1987 reflected this fact. Rhys Green (RSPB Suffolk) calculated the timing of laying and relative performance of Stone Curlews in different habitats to supplement field studies of the dwindling Wilts/Hants population alongside the healthier Breckland birds. Greg Mudge (RSPB Highlands Office) looked at the Black-throated Diver nest histories for clues behind the demise of the Scottish population. A report on Cirl Bunting breeding biology based on the BTO cards helped Mark Robins (RSPB Exeter) frame a conservation regime for the Devon stronghold.

Stephanie Tyler (RSPB Wales) has extended her interest in Dipper cards from the River Wye (see Bird Study 33: 164-169) to an analysis of nest histories nationwide. For this upland bird and another, the Ring Ousel, her interest in annual breeding performance by area and land type will have acidification of waterways in mind. Whilst with the Game Conservancy (Fordingbridge), David Hill assessed the nesting success and habits of both Jay and Pheasant, comparing performance in kept areas against non-kept areas.

Studies at headquarters

Internally at Beech Grove, staff are examining the cards for a variety of birds. David Glue has completed analyses of the Woodpecker and Grasshopper Warbler cards while summaries for Woodlark and Nightjar are underway. Sara Cross is processing the Goldcrest collection. A kind grant from four agrochemical companies is allowing Steve Percival to analyse the Barn Owl material, alongside that for the Tawny and Little Owls.

Patrick Thompson is plotting Redshank laying seasons by habitat, region and altitude. Meanwhile, assistant Estuaries Officer Jeff Kirby, is looking for changes in Little Ringed Plover breeding habits and performance through the colonization process, and the potential effects of competition with Ringed Plover.

If you have an analytical mind and would like to consider having the chance to examine nest record material, do please write to David Glue for details.

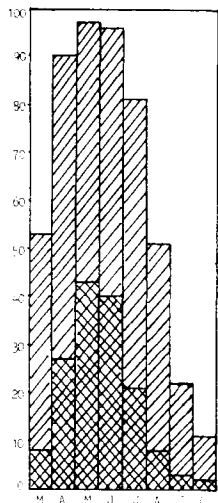
MANY MILESTONES PASSED

Again, several milestones were reached during 1987. Mr C.R.Linfoot completed the Scheme's 500th Hen Harrier card, a pair breeding on a heather slope on Islay, in the Western Isles. Both Peregrine Falcon and Common Sandpiper reached the 1,000 mark, with cards sent in, respectively, by Wendy Mattingley from Tayside and D.W.Yalden of Derbyshire. D. Macdonald completed the 5,000th Ringed Plover nest history with a nest found in a sandpit in the Highland region of Scotland. Three species passed 15,000 cards, the relevant cards being completed for Lapwing by P.Baker, Cumbria; for Pied Flycatcher by Mrs P. Webb, Powys; and for Robin by J. Linton-Smith, Perthshire. Great Tit exceeded the 25,000 mark with a card sent in by C.Murray from Co. Durham; and Blue Tit soared past the 45,000 milestone with a breeding pair in a nest box on the wall of K.J.Green's home in Lancashire.

SENDING IN YOUR 1988 CONTRIBUTION

The quality of cards sent in for the 1987 season was commendable; observers are certainly taking more time to consider habitat details and to include relevant information at the nest. We would like to upgrade the quality of cards even more in 1988 in a number of ways:

1. Seasonal Coverage



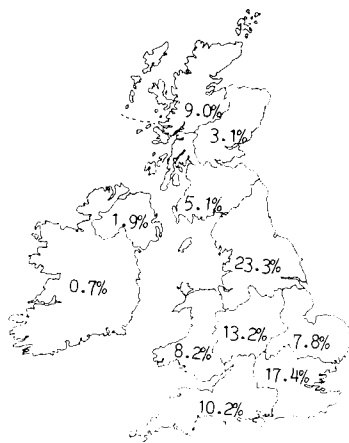
The histogram inset represents nest finding effort put in by observers during the 1987 season.

☒ = most days, ▨ = few days, □ = no days. The question of just how representative nest record cards are of nesting attempts over the entire breeding season has been discussed regularly over the last few years. It is known that certain multi-brooded species may have nestlings well into September, such as grebes, thrushes, finches and buntings. We also know that species such as sparrows and doves can rear young in every month of the year. Looking at the histogram, however, it is clear that after June there is a marked decline in activity so that by September only a handful of observers are looking for these late nests. The scarcity of data for late breeding attempts is now seen to pose a problem for analysts who find themselves working with possibly biased data. In view of this, we would like to urge nest recorders to begin to test the occurrence of late broods in 1988, to see what picture emerges. A couple of extra months tagged on to your usual nesting season should yield a wealth of extra information.

2. Multi Visit Cards

This season we will particularly welcome cards where two or more visits have been made to the nest. An analysis of current holdings reveals that about 20% of cards sent in are of single visits only, which, although still welcome have been found to be less helpful by analysts than multi visit cards. When investigating the breeding biology of a species, multi visit cards enable us to pinpoint factors such as first egg-laying dates, incubation and fledging periods to a far greater degree of accuracy than do a handful of cards containing only a single visit. We do appreciate that you may discover a nest in a place that you are unlikely to revisit. By all means record it as before, but, WE WOULD BE VERY GRATEFUL IF AN EXTRA EFFORT COULD BE MADE TO RETURN TO NESTS FOUND AT LEAST ONCE MORE.

3. Regional Distribution of Cards.



The figure below illustrates the proportional distribution by region of nests found in the British Isles in 1987. To gain an unbiased picture of the breeding season in any one year, ideally each area should be equally represented. It can be seen, however, that there is a tremendous variation between regions. We would particularly like to encourage extra activity in under represented areas such as Ireland and southern and eastern Scotland, so if you know of anyone in those areas who would like to take part in the Scheme, put them in touch with us. Also, if you intend holidaying in these areas, a few nest record cards in the luggage would not go amiss! Incidentally, on a county basis, the best represented ones were: 1. Orkney, 2. Northumberland, 3. Suffolk, 4. Surrey, 5. Cumbria Surprised? We were! Well done to those concerned.

4. Sending on Cards

Please send all completed cards in one batch as soon as your fieldwork finishes - by the end of January if at all possible and by 1st March at the very latest (cards received after this date are unlikely to be included in the year's totals). Early batches of cards and comments throughout the season could make useful contributions to articles prepared for the Trust's bulletin BTO News. Alternatively, if you plan to attend any of the BTO's conferences at Swanwick in Derbyshire, or if you are passing Beech Grove, batches of cards can be handed directly to staff. Please try to ensure that your cards arrive in one piece by binding them with rubber bands or string before placing them in a polythene bag and paper wrapping with a boldly marked address label.

5. The New Summary Sheet

All batches of completed cards should be accompanied by a summary sheet. This year, the summary sheet has been redesigned to incorporate colony nests as well as individual nests and all observers are requested to use the new style summary form enclosed with this newsletter from now on.

6. Successive Nesting Attempts

Make sure that all successive nesting attempts by a known pair of birds are clearly marked as such and that the cards are clipped together.

7. Duplicate Cuckoo Cards

Please complete a duplicate card for every Cuckoo nest found so that cards can be filed under Cuckoo as well as the species of the foster parent.

NEST RECORDS STAFF.

Happily 1987 saw further growth in the number of staff involved with running the scheme - the largest of its type in the world. The team involved with processing the scheme in 1987 comprised:

David Glue (Nest Records Research)
Sara J. Cross (Nest Records Officer)
David Pearman (Nest Records Assistant)
Caroline Stockley (Research Assistant)

In addition, a manpower services commission team currently comprising Sandy Durant, Alan Mills, John Preece and Terry Seaward have been working hard computerizing your hard won fieldwork. The team have also started to process cards covering a selection of 21 species as part of the newly formed integrated monitoring programme which is to check trends in breeding performance on a regular basis. During 1987 the MSC team coded, input and checked the computer files for a selection of over 25,000 nest histories covering 31 species and kindly totted up the species totals used in this newsletter.

ENJOY A REWARDING SEASON. THE TRUST IS ENORMOUSLY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR VERY KIND HELP. DO PLEASE PHONE OR DROP A LINE IF AT ANY POINT RECORDING MATERIALS RUN SHORT. GOOD LUCK.

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