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British Trust for Ornithology

Nest Record News

A newsletter for supporters of the NEST RECORD SCHEME, forming part of the BTO's Integrated Population Monitoring Programme carried out under contract to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

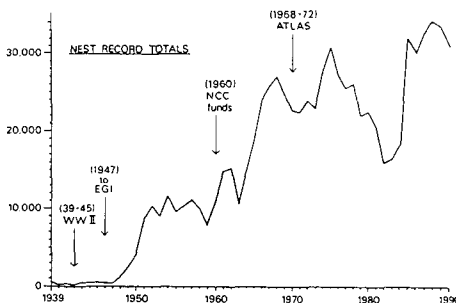
The new card comes of age!

Fantastic! Nearly 31,000 cards covering the 1990 breeding season have already been received at the BTO and they're still coming in. The response by you, the Nest Recorders, towards the new orange-and-white card has been overwhelmingly positive and the Trust would like to thank you all for proving so adaptable to the Scheme's changing needs. (See inside for more).

A very large thank you to all nest recorders

The BTO had received 30,945 cards for 1990, covering 182 species by the end of March 1991. Another superb total and slightly higher than that attained by the same time last year.

WELL DONE!



The 1989 annual breeding report

The breeding performances of 41 species were summarized in the report 'Breeding Birds in 1989' in *BTO News* (No.170) and in *Britain's Birds 1989/90*, co-edited by David Glue. The 1989 season was compared with the previous 11 years and showed that 1989, like 1988, was a very early year for most species. The nest record cards for Linnets caused the BTO to give a cautionary ring of the alarm bells as its clutch size has inexplicably declined from 4.85 eggs in 1986 to 4.50 eggs in 1989. On a more positive note, the nesting success of Sparrowhawk and Merlin have increased, adding evidence to a picture of recovery from the harmful effects of organochlorine pesticides (DDT, dieldrin).

Milestones passed in 1990

Among the coastal birds, the 3,000th Shag card came from S.Walker, Bardsey Island, Gwynedd and the 5,000th Black-headed Gull card was completed by D.Luckhurst: a nest on the margins of a Durham reservoir. The 500th Long-eared Owl nest history was filed by D.J.Garner: a pair nesting on a Cambridgeshire fen. Among the passerines, the 5,000th House Martin card was submitted by P.C.Turner, Sussex; the 1,000th Marsh Tit record was of 6 young raised in a nestbox, courtesy of J.D.Sells, Gloucestershire; and the 5,000th Magpie card was compiled by J.P. Moulton for a nest in a hawthorn bush in a Gwynedd cow-field.

1990 breeding season

Record breaking high sunshine totals and temperatures, combined with widespread drought conditions during the spring and summer of 1990, led to a nesting season of mixed fortunes for Britain's breeding birds.

Windblown doves and thrushes

The New Year started with exceptionally mild mid-winter conditions and by late January the BTO had received details of a scattering of early nesting attempts. These included cases of Great Crested Grebe, Tawny Owl, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Woodpigeon and Collared Dove with clutches or young. The records came from London, west to Dorset, across to Gwent and north to Glasgow. Sadly the Great Storm of 25th January shifted all but the very tightest of sitting birds (see *BTO News* 168).

The hurricane force winds of that fateful yet memorable Bum's Day, disrupted virtually all early nesting activity. More important, perhaps, the winds destroyed many large stick nests used by corvids, Heron, Buzzard, Goshawk and others, and flattened or snapped off many trees with cavities regularly used by nesting owls, woodpeckers and smaller passerines. Around 4 million trees were lost on the 25th, with Devon, Hampshire and Dyfed the chief counties affected. This total is about one quarter of that flattened by the Great Storm of October 1987 (when trees were generally in full leaf), but in 1990 considerably more of the country was affected. However, not all of the storm damage was negative. In 1990 nest recorders found Great and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers nesting in snapped off tree trunks and Coal Tit, Wren, Robin, thrushes and even Kingfisher occupying cavities amongst the rootplates of upturned trees.

Magpie and Starling: a flying start

From March to May 1990, the country received a third less rainfall and a quarter extra ration of sunshine than usual. The first five months of the year were the warmest since records began over 300 years ago, fuelling speculation that the 'greenhouse effect' was having an impact. There was a wealth of early spring nesting. Nest recorders reported clutches started by Starling and Robin in mid-February, Magpie and Moorhen in early March, Chaffinch and Buzzard in early April, and Wheatear and Swallow during the last week of April.

Titmice fade as owls prosper

Nestbox operators, in lowland sites particularly, described how titmice generally got off to a prompt start. The EGI's famous nestbox programme in Wytham Woods, Oxford, reported the first Great Tit egg laid on 1st April, by several days the earliest date since the project started over 40 years ago. Blue Tit broods fledged as early as 26th April on the periphery of the New Forest, Hampshire. As in 1989, though, it proved to be only a 'moderate' season success-wise with a poor match of the main caterpillar crop and developing young titmice. Late May frosts killed larval invertebrates widely and, as a result, the BTO received numerous reports of partial and complete brood losses with successful Blue Tit families ranging from 3-15 in size.

Improved small rodent populations helped Tawny Owls in many regions to a far better year than the disastrous 1989. Good sized clutches of up to six eggs and regular broods of three, even four young owlets reared were reported from the Kielder Forest, Chiltern Woodlands, and across to the Forest of Dean. Kestrels began egg laying by the first week of April in the south where traditional nest sites held five or six young, and up to five young for broods in inner city London where the continuing abundance of immature rats provided the staple diet.

Early birds flourish

Many populations of our small, tender and early nesting residents such as Wren, Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit and Treecreeper were already standing at unusually high levels after the succession of mild winters. Most are reliant on adult insects or their larvae and the signs are that the sunniest May on record in 1990 helped them to another productive year with bumper broods reported.

For many migrants, the pattern of performance revolved around staggered arrival dates and the influence of a cool period in late May and June. 'Early' migrants such as Chiffchaff, Wheatear, Ring Ouzel and Sand Martin returned promptly from late February to early April and nesting operations were quickly underway. A three week spell of stormy conditions in the Mediterranean region contrived to hold back many 'mid' and 'late' migrants. Early May saw the flood-gates open and the mass arrivals of Whitethroats and House Martins alongside Swifts and Spotted Flycatchers, with rapidly initiated nesting activity.

Nesting stopped by drought

As drought conditions tightened and temperatures soared into the 90s during July, the extreme weather conditions took their toll. Rooks failed to satisfy hungry broods. Receding water levels along many rivers and lake margins exposed nests, and nest recorders commented on increased predation of clutches and young of certain waterfowl. Parched wetlands and moors appeared at first to favour early-nesting waders and some gamebirds before a lack of important invertebrates, both in the soil and air, impaired later attempts. Exposed substrates on inland water bodies favoured certain waders including Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers in widespread localities.

Continuing warmth and dryness did encourage some late nesting attempts. Some species that only irregularly or just occasionally rear two broods, such as Ringed Plover, Stone-Curlew, Nightjar, Wheatear and Starling, consistently reared twin sets of young widely. However, for many others, including thrushes, warblers and hirundines, the season ended prematurely, bringing a fascinating if truncated breeding season to a close.

1990 card intake - sample highlights

A great strength of the Nest Record Scheme comes from the wide national coverage that is achieved each year. In almost all parts of the country there are birdwatchers who fill in just a handful of detailed cards for nests found on their local "patch". Then there are others who are able to spend more time, sometimes concentrating on a particular species or travelling widely to find nests. Such "specialists" provide very useful detailed information that can be used to calibrate the widespread national coverage achieved by other recorders. Both types of recorder are equally vital in maintaining the accuracy of the Scheme's monitoring and fact-finding roles.

This year the Trust received cards from 436 individuals and 75 groups. Those birdwatchers operating through the 19 local bird clubs, 36 ringing groups and bird observatories, or the 14 National, County or RSPB Nature Reserves all had the advantages of being able to exchange ideas, help with co-operative projects, and also helped to reduce the Trust's time with administration.

The list that follows shows the total Nest Record Cards each recorder or group sent to the BTO (where it exceeded 100), preceded by the number that were for nests visited more than once

(eg: 82/109 means that 82 of the 109 cards sent were multi-visit nest histories). Single-visit cards have limited usefulness, primarily helping to illustrate habitats and nest-sites: relatively few reveal other information about breeding biology, except when a nest is found at egg-laying, hatching or fledging. *Multi-visit cards are much more valuable*, because even just two visits allow the calculation of the survival rate of a nest, they show whether egg laying has finished and allow a more accurate calculation to be made of the first egg laying date - all important facts.

W D Allen (Shrops) 180/180 inc. 21 Blue Tit, 22 Rook; **D J Andrews** (Co. Down) 98/101 inc. 14 Ringed Plover, 14 Black Guillemot; **Argyll Bird Club** (Strath) 176/176 inc. 42 Pied Flycatcher, 96 Blue Tit; **G E & G K Austin** (Strath) 249/267 inc. 39 Buzzard, 133 Pied Flycatcher, 12 Hooded Crow; **J Baldwin & P Maynard** (Hants) 239/251 inc. 25 Nightjar, 25 Stonechat, 11 Dartford Warbler; **Barnsley Ringing Group** (S. Yorks) 219/241 inc. 26 Grey Heron, 86 Sparrowhawk; **J & T Barrett** (Co. Durham) 233/233 inc. 65 Pied Flycatcher, 22 Coal Tit, 105 Blue Tit; **R E Batty** (Norfolk) 225 inc. 7 Swift, 43 Great Tit; **K B Briggs** (Hants) 95/106 inc. 2 Goosander, 22 Oystercatcher; **Bristol Naturalists' Society** (Avon) 98/295 inc. 20 Whitethroat, 44 Willow Warbler, 31 Yellowhammer; **J E A Brook & R C Cooke** (Warks) 729/819 inc. 138 Woodpigeon, 106 Blackbird, 17 Long-tailed Tit; **D Buckingham** (Somerset) 119/126 inc. 8 Great Crested Grebe, 85 Coot; **Burton & Holder group** (Herts) 147/167 inc. 141 Kestrel, 21 Tawny Owl; **R F E Butler** (Worcs) 103/110 inc. 28 Canada Goose, 8 Mallard; **Calf of Man Bird Observatory** (L.O.M) 203/232 inc. 74 Shag, 68 Great Black-backed Gull, 20 Razorbill; **J M Cheverton** (L.O.W.) 70/100 inc. 11 Cormorant, 8 Herring Gull; **J Clark** (Gwynedd) 131/151 inc. 8 Tufted Duck, 40 Common Tern; **J E S Cooper & R F Sanderson** (Sussex) 211/231 inc. 14 Redstart, 78 Blue Tit, 14 Nuthatch; **M J Cowlard** (Surrey) 101/101 inc. 97 Sparrowhawk; **D Cox & B Hawes** (Bucks) 304/326 inc. 33 Pied Wagtail, 44 Blackbird; **A V Cross** (Dyfed) 177/204 inc. 18 Peregrine, 12 Chough, 96 Raven; **R E Danson** (Lancs) 302/304 inc. 4 Shelduck, 92 Tree Sparrow; **C N Davison** (Lothian) 282/301 inc. 23 Skylark, 58 Blackbird, 63 Linnet; **J Driver** (Gwynedd) 249/251 inc. 23 Redstart, 49 Carrion Crow; **P Eccles** (Northum) 108/114 inc. 10 Coal Tit, 44 Blue Tit; **C W Emms** (Warks) 178/199 inc. 13 Wren, 42 Blue Tit; **M Fletcher** (MAFF, Surrey)

141/143 inc. 24 Song Thrush, 52 Starling; **J Flynn** (Glos) 126/171 inc. 16 Dipper, 65 Sand Martin; **DM Francis** (Northants) 99/102 inc. 22 Coal Tit, 24 Blue Tit; **D J Garner** (Cambs) 81/104 inc. 5 Long-eared Owl, 13 Starling; **R Graham & G Stitt** (Dumfries) 126 inc. 23 Sparrowhawk, 13 Buzzard; **Grampian Ringing Group** 204/241 inc. 44 Starling, 25 Greenfinch; **S R Hacker** (Tayside) 300 inc. 61 Swallow, 69 Tree Sparrow; **P Hawkey** (The National Trust, Farne Islands) 611/611 inc. 172 Fulmar, 65 Eider, 55 Arctic Tern; **D Hazard** (S. Yorks) 191/193 inc. 21 Woodpigeon, 12 Collared Dove, 34 Swallow; **L S Higgins** (W. Yorks) 65/156 inc. 45 Swallow, 43 Blue Tit; **J A High** (Devon) 178/178 inc. 60 Blue Tit, 12 Nuthatch; **I, P & D Hildred** (Lincs) 160/160 inc. 18 Wren, 12 Starling; **P & D Hill** (Gtr. Manchester) 53/101 inc. 16 Great Crested Grebe, 13 Coot; **T W Hill** (Mersey) 310/310 inc. 29 Wren, 65 Blackbird, 41 Linnets; **P R Holness** (Suffolk) 191/339 inc. 20 Stock Dove, 175 Swallow, 31 Pied Wagtail; **J C & C A Holt** 119/140 inc. 17 Woodpigeon, 11 Carrion Crow; **S J Huddleston** (Linc) 159/516 inc. 15 Jackdaw, 408 Rook; **M Humphreys** (W Glam) 163/163 inc. 94 Pied Flycatcher, 47 Blue Tit; **R J Jones** (Powys) 159/160 inc. 10 Redstart, 91 Pied Flycatcher; **J Keiser** (Hants) 101/111 inc. 59 Swallow, 5 Whitethroat; **T Kuechel, P & V Roe** (W Yorks) 166/206 inc. 14 Sand Martin, 39 Swallow, 10 Mistle Thrush; **J Lewis & S Roberts** (Gwent) 197/223 inc. 24 Goshawk, 33 Dipper, 56 Pied Flycatcher; **J Lloyd** (Dyfed) 143/149 inc. 9 Redstart, 41 Pied Flycatcher; **R J Louch & D Tompson** (Oxon) 140/142 inc. 8 Nightingale, 33 Whitethroat, 26 Chiffchaff; **D Luckhurst** (Co. Durham) 147/152 inc. 38 Lapwing, 20 Black-headed Gull, 11 Spotted Flycatcher; **IMcAlpine** (Cheshire) 109 inc. 8 Mallard, 7 Nightjar; **C F Mapletoft** (Birklands Ringing Group, Notts) 890/911 inc. 68 Wren, 116 Great Tit, 57 Chaffinch; **E Maughan** (Highland) 129/134 inc. 128 Arctic Tern; **F Mawby** (Cumbria) 123/139 inc. 39 Lapwing, 10 Skylark; **M Meadows** (Essex) 457/497 inc. 27 Magpie, 41 Carrion Crow, 33 House Sparrow; **Merseyside Ringing Group** 493/794 inc. 103 Grey Heron, 40 Sparrowhawk, 53 Reed Warbler; **J P Moulton** (Northants) 106/138 inc. 21 Swallow, 26 Magpie; **M Mulligan** (Warks) 123/178 inc. 17 Jackdaw, 54 Rook; **J Mullins, A Riley & H Mayer-Gross** (Middx) 52/105 inc. 14 Sparrowhawk, 7 Whinchat, 13 Willow Warbler; **P C Noakes** (Norfolk) 122/135 inc. 118 Swallow; **North West Norfolk Ringing Group** 157/167 inc. 22 Oystercatcher, 17 Reed Warbler; **A B Old** (Cumbria) 167/167 inc. 114 Pied Flycatcher, 33 Blue Tit; **Orkney Ringing Group** 169/204 inc. 32 Red-throated Diver, 52 Curlew, 15 Arctic Skua; **P Page & R Lambol** (Devon) 193/193 inc. 91 Pied Flycatcher, 10 Nuthatch; **G Pearce** (Devon) 124/125 inc. 17 Barn Owl, 30 Blue Tit; **R H Peart** (Dorset) 193/198 inc. 13 Spotted Flycatcher, 50 Blue Tit, 18 Greenfinch; **P F J Playford** (Gwent) 109/109 inc. 71 Pied Flycatcher, 26 Blue Tit; **I Proctor** (Glos) 294/296 inc. 103 Pied Flycatcher, 138 Blue Tit; **W Proctor** (Warks) 1,158/1,352 inc. 132 Mute Swan, 107 Common Gull, 177 House Martin, 200 Rook; **G Richardson** (Staffs) 100/100 inc. 15 Coot, 19 Great Tit; **J Richardson** with **N & P Fenwick, R W Grainger & M Lonsdale** (Durham) 334/952 inc. 187 Black-headed Gull, 154 Blackbird, 111 Song Thrush; **J A L Roberts** (Clwyd) 150 inc. 50 Pied Flycatcher, 26 Blue Tit; **MD Russell** (Herts) 130/141 inc. 11 Mallard, 44 Moorhen; **Rye Meads Ringing Group** (Herts) 291/328 inc. 50 Common Tern, 20 Reed Bunting; **G Shaw & A Dowell** (Dumfries & Galloway) 109/153 inc. 46 Barn Owl, 18 Tawny Owl; **S P Singleton** (W Yorks) 144/146 inc. 90 Blue Tit, 22 Great Tit; **N Skinner** (Suffolk) 73/110 inc. 21 Swallow, 13 Blackbird; **Sorby Breck Ringing Group** (S. Yorks) 231/246 inc. 161 Swallow, 15 Great Tit; **I M Spence** (Clwyd) 250/256 inc. 86 Pied Flycatcher, 41 Great Tit; **Souder Ringing Group** (Derby) 290/290 inc. 210 Pied Flycatcher, 49 Blue Tit, 13 Nuthatch; **South Lakeland RSPB Group** (Cumbria) 140/140 inc. 64 Pied Flycatcher, 35 Blue Tit; **B Standley** (Cheshire) 122/189 inc. 7 Skylark, 8 Willow Warbler; **R J Stevens** (Notts) 462/502 inc. 94 Coot, 47 Nightjar, 101 House Martin; **R L & R Swann** (Highland) 126/135 inc. 23 Eider, 14 Tawny Owl; **J Szczur** (South West Notts Ringing Group) 218/322 inc. 3 Ruddy Duck, 27 Whinchat, 18 Sedge Warbler; **B & P Taylor** (Moray) 88/101 inc. 11 Crested Tit, 5 Coal Tit; **S J Tyler, S J Ormerod, S Yoerg & F Burge** (Gwent) 159/199 inc. 62 Grey Wagtail, 112 Dipper; **G A Vaughan** (Devon) 149/149 inc. 67 Pied Flycatcher, 13 Nuthatch; **R Walton** (Tyne & Wear) 125/126 inc. 13 Spotted Flycatcher, 22 Pied Flycatcher; **D Warden** (Avon) 120/160 inc. 22 Woodpigeon, 51 Reed Warbler; **E H Webb** (Suffolk) 109/112 inc. 37 Blue Tit, 25 Great Tit; **West Wilts Ringing Group** 103 inc. 33 Swallow, 64 Blue Tit; **N Winter** (Wilts) 220/244 inc. 56 Canada Goose, 54 Reed Warbler; **J H Wood** (Co. Durham) 110/111 inc. 48 Pied Flycatcher, 23 Blue Tit.

TOTALS FOR NEST RECORD SCHEME FROM PRE-1989 to 1990

SPECIES	Pre-89	1989	1990	TOTAL
Red-throated Diver	1,544	92	47	1,683
Black-throated Diver	151	4	7	162
Little Grebe	1,479	51	47	1,577
Great Crested Grebe	1,963	80	123	2,166
Red-necked Grebe	1	-	-	1
Slavonian Grebe	139	7	8	154
Black-necked Grebe	12	-	-	12
Fulmar	2,356	218	182	2,756
Manx Shearwater	54	41	1	96
Storm Petrel	31	-	3	34
Leach's Petrel	2	-	-	2
Gannet	22	-	-	22
Cormorant	1,025	40	11	1,076
Shag	2,880	85	166	3,131
Bittern	17	-	-	17
Little Bittern	1	-	-	1
Grey Heron	2,479	243	299	3,021
Mute Swan	2,925	184	269	3,378
Whooper Swan	1	-	-	1
Greylag Goose	424	29	6	459
Canada Goose	1,316	125	203	1,644
Egyptian Goose	5	2	4	11
Shelduck	201	8	8	217
Mandarin	168	16	11	195
Wigeon	117	8	9	134
Gadwall	50	5	2	57
Teal	170	7	5	182
Mallard	6,136	204	199	6,539
Pintail	14	4	-	18
Garganey	7	-	2	9
Shoveler	106	3	1	110
Pochard	107	-	1	108
Tufted Duck	783	45	25	853
Scaup	1	-	-	1
Eider	1,715	109	123	1,947
Common Scoter	31	7	1	39
Goldeneye	22	4	6	32
Red-breasted Merganser	211	8	3	222
Goosander	152	20	14	186
Ruddy Duck	27	6	12	45
Honey Buzzard	8	1	2	11
Red Kite	15	-	-	15
Marsh Harrier	9	1	3	13
● Hen Harrier	700	165	140	1,005
Montagu's Harrier	46	-	-	46
Goshawk	114	44	29	187
Sparrowhawk	2,985	284	358	3,627
● Buzzard	2,914	131	153	3,198
Golden Eagle	351	22	12	385
Osprey	30	-	2	32
Kestrel	4,277	358	355	4,990
● Merlin	1,166	166	202	1,534
Hobby	360	19	26	405
● Peregrine	1,174	154	169	1,497

SPECIES	Pre-89	1989	1990	TOTAL
Ptarmigan	94	2	4	100
Black Grouse	34	1	3	38
Capercaillie	62	-	-	62
Red-legged Partridge	391	5	9	405
Grey Partridge	737	10	10	757
Quail	10	-	-	10
Pheasant	1,729	42	29	1,800
Lady Amherst's Pheasant	1	-	-	1
Water Rail	64	3	2	69
Corncrake	26	-	1	27
Moorhen	16,360	428	369	17,157
Coot	8,982	444	554	9,980
Oystercatcher	8,780	420	305	9,505
Black-winged Stilt	1	-	-	1
Avocet	198	145	3	346
Stone-curlew	384	4	2	390
Little Ringed Plover	1,184	71	52	1,307
Ringed Plover	5,733	232	147	6,112
Kentish Plover	19	-	-	19
Dotterel	131	4	7	142
Golden Plover	723	22	24	769
Lapwing	15,592	516	477	16,585
Temminck's Stint	1	-	-	1
Purple Sandpiper	3	-	-	3
Dunlin	512	5	3	520
Ruff	1	-	-	1
Snipe	1,241	24	19	1,284
Woodcock	512	7	7	526
Black-tailed Godwit	12	-	1	13
Whimbrel	47	5	1	53
● Curlew	2,058	65	101	2,224
Redshank	1,775	39	44	1,858
Greenshank	137	8	-	145
Wood Sandpiper	2	-	-	2
Common Sandpiper	1,044	34	39	1,117
Red-necked Phalarope	32	1	-	33
Arctic Skua	229	6	31	266
Great Skua	272	1	2	275
Little Gull	3	-	-	3
Black-headed Gull	4,121	557	362	5,040
Mediterranean Gull	2	-	-	2
Common Gull	2,066	177	17	2,421
Lesser Black-backed Gull	915	4	1	920
Herring Gull	3,709	75	53	3,837
Great Black-backed Gull	964	79	73	1,116
Kittiwake	2,371	380	151	2,902
Lesser Crested Tern	-	1	1	2
Sandwich Tern	573	1	2	576
Roseate Tern	130	77	2	209
Common Tern	3,068	358	145	3,571
Arctic Tern	2,901	119	194	3,214
Little Tern	3,304	200	178	3,682
Guillemot	890	106	25	1,021
Razorbill	468	76	49	593
Black Guillemot	847	39	63	949
Puffin	165	-	-	165
Rock Dove	176	18	9	203
Feral Pigeon	919	48	96	1,063
● Stock Dove	4,043	173	201	4,408
● Woodpigeon	17,244	691	591	18,526
● Collared Dove	2,251	160	182	2,593

SPECIES	Pre-89	1989	1990	TOTAL
Turtle Dove	1,671	23	37	1,731
Ring-necked Parakeet	2	-	-	2
Cuckoo	1,557	33	25	1,615
● Barn Owl	1,446	206	261	1,913
● Snowy Owl	1	-	-	1
● Little Owl	1,173	59	50	1,282
● Tawny Owl	4,372	317	311	5,000
● Long-eared Owl	465	20	26	511
● Short-eared Owl	241	28	18	287
● Nightjar	735	96	137	968
● Swift	869	50	34	953
● Kingfisher	420	39	31	490
● Hoopoe	1	-	-	1
● Wryneck	13	2	2	17
● Green Woodpecker	244	13	9	266
● Great Spotted Woodpecker	713	33	44	790
● Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	125	8	6	139
● Woodlark	436	23	29	488
● Skylark	5,797	105	143	6,045
● Sand Martin	853	48	22	923
● Swallow	32,137	2,252	1,924	36,313
● House Martin	4,103	489	480	5,072
● Tree Pipit	1,214	67	57	1,338
● Meadow Pipit	7,374	174	192	7,740
● Rock Pipit	507	29	46	582
● Yellow Wagtail	822	17	18	857
● Grey Wagtail	3,899	274	235	4,408
● Pied Wagtail	6,502	360	415	7,277
● Dipper	6,088	548	321	6,957
● Wren	10,996	575	460	12,031
● Dunnock	26,084	536	401	27,021
● Robin	15,526	478	435	16,439
● Nightingale	371	23	11	405
● Bluethroat	1	-	-	1
● Black Redstart	126	5	-	131
● Redstart	4,082	265	241	4,588
● Whinchat	1,455	112	60	1,627
● Stonechat	1,814	82	65	1,961
● Wheatear	2,704	102	58	2,864
● Ring Ouzel	1,185	40	33	1,258
● Blackbird	108,993	2,139	1,754	112,886
● Fieldfare	5	-	1	6
● Song Thrush	64,653	992	803	66,448
● Redwing	91	5	2	98
● Mistle Thrush	5,969	214	175	6,358
● Cetti's Warbler	18	-	-	18
● Grasshopper Warbler	290	8	14	312
● Savi's Warbler	2	-	-	2
● Sedge Warbler	3,510	131	171	3,812
● Marsh Warbler	106	-	5	111
● Reed Warbler	8,585	324	265	9,174
● Dartford Warbler	351	21	18	390
● Lesser Whitethroat	670	18	18	706
● Whitethroat	4,716	121	139	4,976
● Garden Warbler	1,305	60	56	1,421
● Blackcap	2,339	106	91	2,536
● Wood Warbler	1,653	77	52	1,782
● Chiffchaff	1,699	122	92	1,913
● Willow Warbler	10,088	316	251	10,655
● Goldcrest	619	51	21	691
● Firecrest	9	-	1	10

SPECIES	Pre-89	1989	1990	TOTAL
● Spotted Flycatcher	8,273	273	259	8,805
Pied Flycatcher	17,588	1,900	2,089	21,577
Bearded Tit	53	-	-	53
Long-tailed Tit	3,368	175	145	3,688
Marsh Tit	941	35	37	1,013
Willow Tit	362	9	11	382
Crested Tit	215	17	14	246
Coal Tit	3,721	140	151	4,012
Blue Tit	44,403	3,589	3,327	51,319
Great Tit	28,222	1,749	1,758	31,729
Nuthatch	1,556	145	167	1,868
Treecreeper	1,718	85	73	1,876
Short-toed Treecreeper	1	-	-	1
Golden Oriole	15	3	-	18
Red-backed Shrike	251	-	-	251
Jay	1,177	34	50	1,261
● Magpie	4,708	193	202	5,103
Chough	387	16	29	432
Jackdaw	4,004	209	239	4,452
Rook	4,775	849	789	6,413
Carrion Crow	4,441	233	224	4,898
Hooded Crow	905	48	31	984
● Raven	2,097	163	153	2,413
● Starling	10,971	448	402	11,821
House Sparrow	10,006	215	193	10,414
Tree Sparrow	12,746	309	342	13,397
Chaffinch	16,846	432	447	17,725
Brambling	2	-	-	2
Serin	2	-	-	2
Greenfinch	11,694	228	241	12,163
● Goldfinch	2,452	74	65	2,591
Siskin	56	-	2	58
● Linnet	22,415	404	422	23,241
Twite	778	14	11	803
Redpoll	1,216	13	22	1,251
Common Crossbill	112	1	1	114
Parrot Crossbill	4	-	-	4
Scarlet Rosefinch	1	-	-	1
Bullfinch	4,725	66	75	4,866
Hawfinch	126	3	8	137
● Snow Bunting	10	-	1	11
● Yellowhammer	5,648	137	103	5,888
● Cirl Bunting	58	6	14	78
● Reed Bunting	6,613	160	182	6,955
● Corn Bunting	461	19	14	494
			GRAND	
	Pre-89	1989	1990	TOTAL
	767,705	33,538	30,945	832,188

● TARGET SPECIES for which we would particularly like more cards. (For a full list of species used within the BTO's Integrated Monitoring Program, see the breeding report in *BTO News* No.170.)

The totals for pre-1989 and 1989 have changed since those printed in *Nest Record News* No.6 due to the addition of cards received at the BTO after March 1990.

The new Nest Record Card

The great majority of nest recorders have taken to the new card very well and there has even been a slight increase in the number of contributors to the Scheme.

Although quite a few people found that it took a while to learn the 'ins' and 'outs' of the new system, many have found that they now have to spend less time writing than before. For the occasional recorder, the re-learning process involved with each card may not allow such time-saving, but he or she can feel satisfied in the knowledge that they are providing exactly the sort of information that the BTO needs for a prompt analysis of cards and a speedy feedback of results.

Recent comments from Nest Recorders' letters include:

"The new format does indeed make life a lot easier when you've got the hang of them!" (Somerset).

"A great improvement... quicker to fill in and prompting more precise general details" (Tyne & Wear).

"I like the new card, it holds so much more information than the old one and is fairly easy to use" (Cumbria).

A number of observers have made useful suggestions for further improvement on the card and new codes may be introduced when the cards are reprinted. For example, new codes may be needed for "young heard calling" and for "parents carrying nest material". In the habitat coding system, there may be a need for adding codes to cover human disturbance levels in categories other than just water-bodies, as at present. Other suggestions include the addition of "drained bog"; "island" in the water-bodies section; and "well-grazed" in the scrubland section. Any further comments would be welcome.

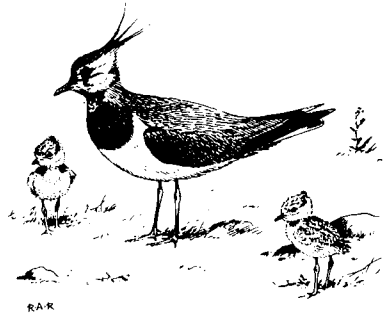
Various nest recorders have puzzled over how to record nests that occur in areas containing more than two habitats: one complex area seemed to need about 8! In these cases, the 3rd or more habitats can be written as codes in the Comments Box, eg: "F.2.(2,5).(2,4,6,8)" for "Human Site. Suburban. (Garden, Near Road). (Residential, Not well-wooded, Medium area of garden, Many shrubs)".

If you have any queries, comments or suggestions about the New Nest Record Card or the habitat coding system, please write to Humphrey Crick at the BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU.

Analyses of nest record cards

1990 saw the publication of a major analysis of Nest Record Cards by an amateur member of the BTO: Mike Shrubb. This hand-analysis (undertaken without a computer) involved the full holding of 15,000 Lapwing cards! A labour of love (hence the word "amateur") if ever there was one! But this labour has produced an important paper in *Bird Study* 37, 115-127, entitled "Effects of agricultural change on nesting Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* in England and Wales".

Mike began the study because he was worried about the possible effects of agricultural intensification and specialisation on Lapwing populations. There are many fascinating results in his paper, but among the findings he showed that more nests are now lost due to agricultural changes in grassland management than before, with increased chain-harrowing, dung-spreading and numbers of livestock in fields. The switch from spring-sown to autumn-sown cereals has involved an extensive loss of the best nesting habitat: Lapwings will not nest in an autumn-sown cereal field because the crop is already too tall in the spring. Finally, the nesting success of Lapwings on upland grass is lower than that on lowland grass, although the Lapwing population seems to have switched to upland areas. His calculations suggest that the Lapwing population may not be able to sustain itself in this country if the shift from lowland to upland continues. Food for thought for us all.



Other papers published in 1990 that used Nest Record Cards, included Stephen Baillie's national population study of the Song Thrush in *Ibis* 132, 151-166, which showed that the recent decline in the British Song Thrush population cannot be attributed to changes in breeding performance, but instead may be due to the effect of prolonged frosty weather on over-wintering survival. David Glue wrote a note in *British Birds* 83, 278-9, on triple brooding by a pair of Little Grebes; and other nest recorders have reported the efforts of their local groups in their bird reports, for example David Sharpe in *Birds of Lancaster & District* 31, 40-41.

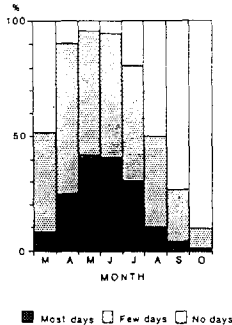
New Projects

Ten new projects were initiated by Nest Recorders in 1989: (a) David Allen - Common Sandpiper; (b) Jeremy Blakey and Ken Norris - nestling sex ratios; (c) John Barrett of the NCC requested information on Yellow Wagtail laying dates in order to influence silage cropping dates in the Pennines Environmentally Sensitive area; (d) Raymond Crooke - Jackdaw; (e) Stephen Freeman and Byron Morgan - two related analytical methodology studies; (f) David Garner - Long-eared Owl; (g) Brian Holden - Robin; (h) Paul Johnson - Barn Owls in Norfolk; (i) Yoram Yom-Tov - laying dates of buntings.

Have a go yourself?

Currently there are 43 studies underway that are using Nest Record Cards, 13 of which are by amateur birdwatchers. Analysing Nest Record Cards is interesting, challenging and rewarding and not just for the professional scientist. If you would like to get to know a particular species better and fancy analysing a set of Nest Record Cards, please don't hesitate to contact Humphrey Crick or David Glue. We will be pleased to give you advice and help in planning, analysis and writing up your study.

Seasonal coverage improves



Each year we check overall recording effort and the monthly picture for 1990 is shown above (based on 320 summary forms). Once again, the busy mid-season months of May and June saw most fieldwork, but it was good to see a similar effort in July (helped by the fine weather and late nesting attempts) as in April. Similarly, an equal number of observers were actively seeking late nests in August as were for early attempts in March. This is good news because it is vital that those late season repeat broods are detected and that the entire season is covered. Keep up the encouraging work this coming summer. Many thanks indeed.

John Mullins

Tragically, one of the finest nest-finders this country has ever seen, and consistent contributor to the Nest Record Scheme since 1957, died in a car accident in Ecuador in March 1991. A full obituary will appear in BTO News, but David L. Clugstone, a close friend, writes that John had seen the nest contents of over 200 species in Britain: a record that even Walpole-Bond could not achieve. John was "an outstanding nest finder who had that sixth sense built up over years of experience who rarely gave up the challenge. He was like 'a dog with a bone' when following up some hard species!" John will be sadly missed and the BTO gratefully acknowledges the very kind donations sent to the Nest Record Scheme in his memory.

Sending in your 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 15th February at the very latest (if you want them to be included in next year's Nest Record News). Early batches of cards and comments throughout the season provide useful material for articles prepared for BTO News. Cards can be handed directly to staff, if you are passing The Nunnery, or if you plan to attend one of the BTO's conferences.

PLEASE 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.

It is always tragic when cards go missing in the post due to flimsy packaging. Ordinary envelopes are not strong enough to take more than 20 cards; padded envelopes are much more suitable. Please don't let your hard-won data be lost like this.

A reminder

However competent you feel you may be, do please re-read the coding booklet at the start of the new season. No guesses please! New booklets available upon request from the BTO at Thetford.

Successive nesting attempts

Please 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.

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.

Grid references

Please, please enter complete grid references on your cards if possible. A description of how to find out grid references is given on Ordnance Survey maps. A fair number of recorders give six-figure grid references but omit the two letters that should precede the numbers; this causes the BTO a great deal of extra work in looking up the location in gazetteers. So please do include the letters, eg: TN 136 783. (If there is a problem with confidentiality of the site, it is quite acceptable to simply enter the 10 km square, eg: TN 13- 78-, or maybe even just the 100km square, eg: TN 1— 7—.

The Nest Records Unit

Humphrey Crick (Head of Unit) is employed under the NCC contract to develop the use of Nest Record data as part of the Integrated Population Monitoring Programme of the BTO. This is a programme of work aimed at combining the results of nest recording, ringing and censuses to build up an overall picture of how well each species is faring in Britain. To this end, he is modernizing the way in which Nest Record data are collected and analysed.

David Glue (Nest Records Research Officer) keeps an eye on how each season progresses and summarizes the nesting year. He is undertaking a programme of analysis of the basic breeding biology of species of conservation interest. This he does by a detailed look through collections of cards to glean as much information from them as possible, something not really possible by a computer analysis. Currently he is working on woodpeckers, owls, Woodlark and Nightjar.

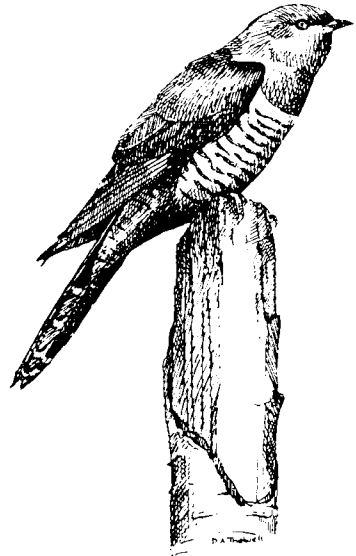
Caroline Dudley (Assistant Nest Records Officer) has special responsibility for maintaining the collection of cards and for overseeing their computerisation.

Shirley Fisher has now left the Trust but helped Caroline with her work and was responsible for a large proportion of the input of cards onto the computer. In addition, the BTO has been fortunate in having an Employment Training Team to computerise the Nest Record Cards. Working hard for us this year have been Pragna Nathwani and Brian Steadman. A record number of cards were computerised this year: 33,649. The Trust would like to thank the team for their excellent work and regrets that a similar team is unlikely to be available in Thetford.

1991: The BTO is now in Thetford!

Please remember that the BTO has now moved away from Tring and that all cards should be sent to our new premises at Thetford:

British Trust for Ornithology
The Nunnery,
Nunnery Place,
Thetford,
Norfolk IP24 2PU
Tel: Thetford (0842) 750050



The Unit gratefully acknowledges the help provided by Steve Dudley in the production of Nest Record News, using the BTO's Desk Top Publishing system.

Bird species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The species listed below are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. If you wish to consider visiting the nests of any of these species, write to J.K. Baker, the Licensing Officer, at the BTO for a licence application form. No nest may be visited without prior approval.

The majority of licenses issued during the breeding season for Special List Schedule 1 species are renewals for the same workers who held the appropriate approval during the previous season. Newcomers to the Nest Record Scheme, or recorders who have never held such a licence before, can apply for the relevant approval through the Trust. However, it is necessary to provide two references from 'respected' ornithologists e.g. County Recorder, BTO Regional Representative, Chairman of Bird Club, etc., or a letter of support from a study group - relevant to the species application being sought. Please apply to J.K. Baker at the BTO at Thetford.

GENERAL LIST OF SCHEDULE 1 SPECIES

CROSSBILL	OWL, BARN (England & Wales)	QUAIL
KINGFISHER	PLOVER, LITTLE RINGED	REDSTART, BLACK

SPECIAL LIST OF SCHEDULE 1 SPECIES

AVOCET	GODWIT, BLACK-TAILED	SANDPIPER, PURPLE
BEE-EATER	GOOSE, GREYLAG	SANDPIPER, WOOD
BITTERN	GOSHAWK	SCAUP
BITTERN, LITTLE	GREBE, BLACK-NECKED	SCOTER, COMMON
BLUETHROAT	GREBE, SLAVONIAN	SCOTER, VELVET
BRAMBLING	GREENSHANK	SERIN
BUNTING, CIRL	GULL, LITTLE	SHORELARK
BUNTING, LAPLAND	GULL, MEDITERRANEAN	SHRIKE, RED-BACKED
BUNTING, SNOW	HARRIER (ALL SPECIES)	SPOONBILL
BUZZARD, HONEY	HERON, PURPLE	STILT, BLACK-WINGED
CHOUGH	HOBBY	STINT, TEMMINCK'S
CORNCRAKE	HOOPOE	SWAN, BEWICK
CRAKE, SPOTTED	KITE, RED	SWAN, WHOOPER
CURLEW, STONE	MERLIN	TERN, BLACK
DIVER, BLACK-THROATED	ORIOLE, GOLDEN	TERN, LITTLE
DIVER, GREAT NORTHERN	OSPREY	TERN, ROSEATE
DIVER, RED-THROATED	OWL, BARN (Scotland)	TTT, BEARDED
DOTTEREL	OWL, SNOWY	TTT, CRESTED
DUCK, LONG-TAILED	PEREGRINE	TREECREEPER, SHORT-TOED
EAGLE, GOLDEN	PETREL, LEACH'S	WARBLER, CETTIS
EAGLE, WHITE-TAILED	PHALAROPE, RED-NECKED	WARBLER, DARTFORD
FALCON, GYR	PINTAIL	WARBLER, MARSH
FIELDFARE	PLOVER, KENTISH	WARBLER, SAVI'S
FIRECREST	REDWING	WHIMBREL
GARGANEY	ROSEFINCH, SCARLET	WOODLARK
GOLDENEYE	RUFF	WRYNECK
	SANDPIPER, GREEN	

N.B. A rarer breeding species than these may be added to the Special List without warning, so if you find one, contact the BTO's Licensing Officer for clearance.