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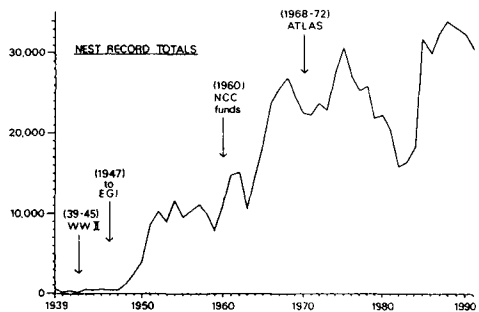
Nest Record News

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.

Totals maintained despite weather

The BTO had received 30,443 cards for 1991, covering 180 species by the end of March 1992. Considering the poor breeding season for many species, this is an excellent total.

Thank you to all nest recorders for keeping up the good work in 1991!



1990 Annual Breeding Report

The third annual breeding report of the Nest Record Scheme was published in *BTO News* (No.179). 1990 was another early year but many species stopped breeding earlier than normal because of the cool June and hot drought in many places in July, August and September. Insectivorous birds such as Swallow, Spotted Flycatcher and Sedge Warbler were particularly affected. The report showed that average Hen Harrier clutch size has decreased by about one egg over the past thirteen years, which is worrying for conservationists. Oystercatchers showed a sharp drop in average clutch size from 2.7 to 2.4 eggs in 1990, which may have been due to the affect of dry weather on the availability of their soil-living invertebrate food supply. The lack of second and third clutches by birds generally, may have combined with the cold winter of 1990/91 and severe sub-Saharan drought, to produce the population crashes reported by the Constant Effort Sites Ringing Scheme (*BTO News* 179).

Milestones passed in 1991

Of the water birds, the 200th Mandarin card was sent in by C Goatman, Gloucestershire; the 500th Kingfisher card by M Jones and J Hawkins, Shropshire; and the 10,000th Coot nest history came from A Ramage, Fife. The two raptors making milestones this year were Barn Owl, which reached 2,000 with a card sent in by G Sheppard, Dumfries and Galloway, and Peregrine with J Watts, Lancashire, completing the 1,500th card. Both Corn Bunting and Nightjar attained milestones which is quite apt, as BTO surveys are being carried out on these species in 1992. The former made the 500 mark with P H Ridout's card for a Wiltshire pair rearing 5 young and J Stoner, Nottinghamshire, completed the 1,000th card for the latter. Of the other passerines, Stonechat, with J Baldwin and P Maynard's Hampshire nest, made the 2,000 mark; Whitethroat, with a card sent in by P J Chadwick (Avon) reached 5,000; and Carrion Crow also made 5,000 with M L Denton's card for a moorland nest in West Yorkshire.

1991 breeding season

After three successive mild winters in the late 1980s followed by generally early springs and productive nesting seasons for many of Britain's birds, 1991 brought both the birds and nest recorders back to reality with a jolt. The 1990/91 winter was a more typical one for Britain with a mixture of cold spells, gales and mild, wet conditions. Of note was a particularly severe cold spell during the first half of February. There followed from early April through to mid-July an unusually prolonged cool, often very damp spell of weather in most regions of Britain. This resulted in a less productive breeding season for many birds, as long standing contributors to the BTO's Nest Record Scheme described countrywide: G H Gush (Devon) "I have never had such a terrible year"; R Peart (Dorset) "rather poor as far as nesting success goes"; F J Mawby (Cumbria) "An interesting if generally frustrating season"; and D MacDonald (Sutherland) "It has been the worst season I can recollect".

Siberian conditions in February a killer

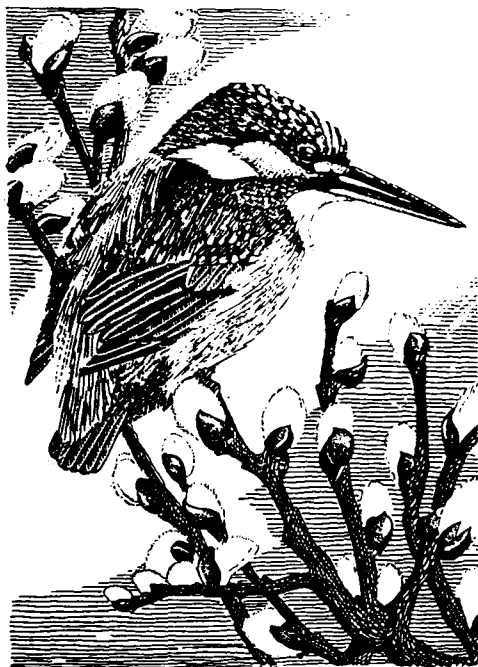
Mild weather in the New Year resulted in reports of young Collared Doves (Hants) and Woodpigeon (North London) in the nest, plus early descriptions of nesting activity for Tawny Owl (Herts) and Lapwing (Hants). Such early activity was dashed quickly by a bitterly cold easterly airstream in early February producing drifting snow, freezing fog and glazed-ice conditions, all weather that many birds find hazardous, resulting in the coldest month on record for five years. Wren, Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit, Kingfisher and Cetti's Warbler were high among a range of resident species with bumper populations after the succession of mild winters, that suffered more than most.

Birds are remarkably resilient and the arrival of substantial rains on a milder southwesterly airflow in late February washed away all the residual snow in lowland Britain and nesting activity restarted. Over the first week of March the Trust received reports of egg-laying by Robin (Cornwall), Mistle Thrush (Bucks) and Great Crested Grebe (Surrey), closely followed in mid-month by Lapwing (Yorks),

Long-eared Owl (Cambs), as well as Woodlark (Surrey), Stonechat (New Forest) and inland breeding Ringed Plover (Bucks) at the end of March.

Titmice fail to live up to promise

Following a bumper fruiting crop of seeds in Britain's hedges and woods, ripened by the warm summer of 1990, titmice were expected to over-winter successfully in high numbers and good condition and breed productively. Reports from nestbox scheme operators vary, but site occupancy appears generally to have been high for Great, Blue and Coal Tits alike. The most successful schemes were generally in southern Scotland, south west England and parts of Wales. Many nest recorders, however, commented upon a higher than usual rate of nestling mortality. In addition, many titmice broods fledged in late May and early June coinciding with a particularly damp spell of weather that cannot have helped juvenile survival.



Kingfisher by Thelma K Sykes

Waders and Warblers suffer together

In no way did April see the nesting season in full swing. From mid-month, throughout most of May, June and into July, cool and often cold and wetter than average conditions were endured by birds and nest recorders alike, most markedly in southern Britain. Some early migrant leaf warblers, Swallow, Sand Martin, Tree Pipit and Wheatear arrived on schedule and reared early broods, but these were the exceptions rather than the rule. Bitterly cold winds, often from the northern sector in May held back many migrants, including House Martin, Cuckoo, Swift, Spotted Flycatcher and Nightjar. Unusually persistent cold weather in the Mediterranean region caused an unknown, but potentially appreciable, mortality among northward bound British migrants.

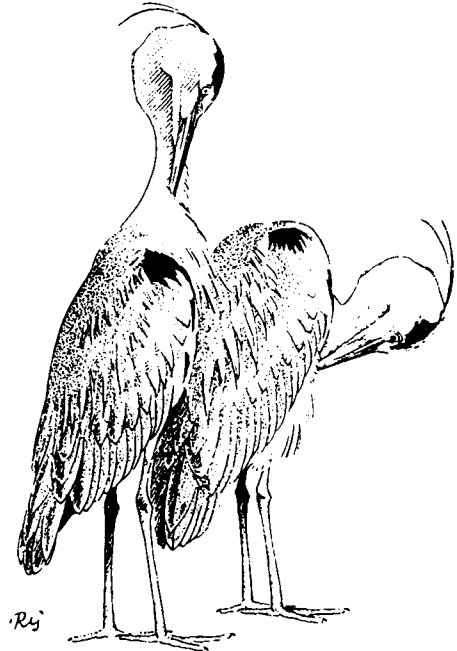
Typically, Pied Flycatchers showed some reduction in the numbers of nestboxes occupied, often with staggered arrival dates and a surplus of male birds. Most, though, reared fair sized broods, especially in western parts where the caterpillar crop was often reported as more plentiful. For dabbling ducks, rails, certain plovers and many warblers, the cool weather of early May, followed by the coolest June since records began in the 1650s resulted in many clutch desertions, infertile or addled eggs, plus widespread partial and complete clutch losses.

Season ends with late flourish

In many parts of Britain, both Swallow and House Martin endured a very poor nesting season but at some sites they persisted in the warmer conditions from July onwards and managed successfully to rear two broods. For Swifts it appears to have been a frustrating year widely. At some localities Swifts showed no great urge to nest, some dispersing in early July before moving back south. Throughout the inclement summer weather, Swifts and hirundines were often absent from traditional nesting sites for long periods, often gathering over water bodies to feed: survival appeared to be their first priority.

Other species managed to persevere in the more favourable later conditions and raise twin sets of young including Robin, Nightjar, Stone Curlew, similarly Stonechat and Tree Sparrow (though little evidence of triple brooding in latter cases). Among the latest of nesting attempts reported were Linnet (Northants) and Blackbird (Cornwall) incubating clutches in July, Great Crested Grebe (West Yorks) and Stock Dove (Notts) rearing young in late September, plus Barn Owl (Norfolk) and Woodpigeon (Dumfries) with eggs and broods into October.

Thus the season ended on an upbeat but it will best be remembered for the inclement weather that dogged the key nesting periods for so many species, resulting in a below-average year in terms of young reared.



Grey Herons by Robert Gillmor

1991 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 Schemes's monitoring and fact-finding roles.

This year the Trust received cards from 406 individuals and 76 groups. Those birdwatchers operating through the 24 local bird clubs, 32 ringing groups and bird observatories, or the 20 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 also 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) 182/184 inc. 2 Woodcock, 26 Blue Tit; Argyll Bird Club (Strath) 123/139 inc. 25 Pied Flycatcher, 97 Blue Tit; R E Batty (Norfolk) 99/137 inc. 24 Blackbird, 9 Chaffinch; Barnsley Ringing Group (S Yorks) 120/146 inc. 23 Grey Heron, 74 Sparrowhawk; Bristol Naturalists' Society (per H R Hammacott, Avon) 65/197 inc. 27 Willow Warbler, 35 Yellowhammer; J E A Brook & R C Cooke (Warks)

777/1,306 inc. 36 Oystercatcher, 251 Woodpigeon, 125 Blackbird; D Buckingham (Somerset) 103 inc. 9 Linnet, 9 Yellowhammer; R F E Butler (Worcs) 132/133 inc. 27 Canada Goose, 8 Tufted Duck; Calf of Man Bird Observatory (I.O.M) 252/256 inc. 80 Shag, 90 Kittiwake, 17 Razorbill; M Canham (N Scotland Forestry Commission, Highland) 96/119 inc. 25 Kestrel, 32 Tawny Owl; J Cameron (Staffs) 74/109 inc. 20 Woodpigeon, 13 Swallow; J Clark (Gwynedd) 128/137 inc. 11 Canada Goose, 36 Tufted Duck; J E S Cooper & R F Sanderson (Sussex) 178/189 inc. 60 Blue Tit, 83 Great Tit; D Cox & B Hawes (for Hughenden Ringing Group, Bucks) 200/206 inc. 48 Blackbird, 4 Lesser Whitethroat, 14 Greenfinch; R E Danson (Lancs) 324/325 inc. 6 Shelduck, 51 Swallow, 77 Tree Sparrow; C N Davison (Lothian) 208/260 inc. 22 Skylark, 41 Linnet; S J Denny (Suffolk) 70/122 inc. 39 Sandwich Tern, 19 Common Tern; R A Denyer (Surrey) 69/103 inc. 19 Lapwing, 11 Stock Dove; E M Doley (Northum) 181/181 inc. 6 Herring Gull, 174 Kittiwake; J Driver (Gwynedd) 282/283 inc. 15 Fulmar, 64 Great Tit, 62 Carrion Crow; Dursley Birdwatching & Preservation Society (Glos) 128/128 inc. 12 Woodpigeon, 35 Blue Tit; J Dyda (Gwynedd) 151/156 inc. 17 Coot, 10 Feral Pigeon; E Flatters & S Hales (Dorset) 123/125 inc. 24 Blackbird, 34 Blue Tit; D J Garner (Cambs) 77/100 inc. 9 Oystercatcher, 5 Long-eared Owl; Grampian Ringing Group 146/159 inc. 4 Teal, 38 Tawny Owl, 51 Starling; K J Green (Lancs) 126/126 inc. 44 Blue Tit, 18 Great Tit; D Gyngell & W Attridge (Surrey) 104/114 inc. 14 Woodpigeon, 22 Jackdaw; S R Hacker (Tayside) 229/229 inc. 29 Lapwing, 44 Swallow, 36 Tree Sparrow; D Hazard (S Yorks) 190/194 inc. 24 Woodpigeon, 31 Swallow; J A High & P Burston (Devon) 193/197 inc. 68 Blue Tit, 15 Nuthatch; I, P & D Hildred (Lincs) 124/125 inc. 12 Robin, 11 Starling; P & D Hill (Gr Manchester) 62/114 inc. 12 Great Crested Grebe, 13 Coot; T W Hill (Merseyside) 324/324 inc. 11 Pheasant, 74 Blackbird, 22 Linnet; P R Holness (Suffolk) 190/270 inc. 12 Kestrel, 161 Swallow; B R Hughes & M Bolds (Surrey) 94/100 inc. 12 Lapwing, 11 Pied Wagtail; R J Jones (Powys) 153/153 inc. 77 Pied Flycatcher, 30 Great Tit; T Kuechel, V & P Roe (W Yorks) 189/211 inc. 14 House Martin, 11 Mistle Thrush; J M S Lewis & S J Roberts (Gwent) 217/241 inc. 16 Grey Wagtail, 47 Dipper; J V Lloyd (Dyfed) 153/185 inc. 18 Swallow, 43 Pied Flycatcher; R J Louch & D Tompson (Oxon) 99/109 inc. 9 Garden Warbler, 14 Chiffchaff; D Luckhurst (Durham) 149/151 inc. 47 Lapwing, 9 Spotted Flycatcher; C F Mapletoft (Birklands Ringing Group, Notts) 903/931 inc. 161 Blackbird, 61 Chaffinch, 35 Greenfinch; F J Mawhy (Cumbria) 89/135 inc. 5 Ringed Plover, 33 Lapwing; P Maynard & J Baldwin (Hants) 186/190 inc. 13 Woodlark, 28 Tree Pipit, 19 Stonechat; I McAlpine (Cheshire) 60/119 inc. 8 Mallard, 7 Nightjar; M O Meadows (Essex) 861/892 inc. 41 Moorhen, 72 Carrion Crow, 43 House Sparrow; Merseyside Ringing Group 788/1,035 inc. 107 Grey Heron, 51 Little Tern, 162 Swallow; A P Mossop & R J Lockwood (Northum) 132/133 inc. 62 Arctic Tern, 55 Little Tern; J P

Moulton (Northants) 125 inc. 17 Swallow, 21 Blue Tit; D A Myers (Gtr Manchester) 90/106 inc. 22 Oystercatcher, 10 Woodpigeon; National Trust, Farne Islands (Northum) 784/785 inc. 149 Eider, 71 Guillemot, 32 Puffin; North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory (Orkney) 172/172 inc. 55 Fulmar, 44 Rock Dove; North West Norfolk Ringing Group 89/101 inc. 14 Ringed Plover, 23 Lapwing; A B Old (Cumbria) 139/139 inc. 71 Pied Flycatcher, 46 Blue Tit; Orkney Ringing Group (per E R Meek & K Fairclough) 122/201 inc. 23 Hen Harrier, 25 Peregrine, 60 Curlew; L O'Toole & L Ryan (Co. Dublin) 101/101 inc. 101 Roseate Tern; P Page (Devon) 180/180 inc. 74 Pied Flycatcher, 82 Blue Tit; G Pearce (Devon) 172/177 inc. 14 Barn Owl, 46 Blue Tit; R Peart (Dorset) 166/168 inc. 16 Spotted Flycatcher, 49 Blue Tit; A C Pout (Western Isles) 129/129 inc. 57 Common Gull, 24 Herring Gull; I Proctor (Glos) 309/310 inc. 80 Pied Flycatcher, 147 Blue Tit; R Proctor (Grampian) 68/113 inc. 4 Capercaillie, 14 Oystercatcher; W Proctor (Warks) 1,785/2,260 inc. 118 Common Gull, 198 Kittiwake, 577 Rook; A D K Ramsay & D Butterfield (Highland) 151/202 inc. 24 Buzzard, 104 Swallow; G P Richardson (Staffs) 108/108 inc. 15 Blackbird, 15 Great Tit; J Richardson (Durham) 121/848 inc. 122 Blackbird, 110 Song Thrush; P H Ridout (Hants) 136/136 inc. 26 Jackdaw, 27 Corn Bunting; H Robb (Central) 161/161 inc. 25 Redstart, 61 Pied Flycatcher; J L Roberts (Clwyd) 167/180 inc. 10 Meadow Pipit, 45 Pied Flycatcher; P J Robinson (Isles of Scilly) 448 inc. 49 Shag, 154 Great Black-backed Gull, 51 Kittiwake; M D Russell (Beds) 124/137 inc. 21 Mallard, 35 Moorhen; Rye Meads Ringing Group (per A D D Wilson, Herts) 173/183 inc. 41 Common Tern, 15 Sedge Warbler; A Sapsford (I.O.M.) 79/119 inc. 10 Cormorant, 26 Sandwich Tern, 7 Chough; G Shaw & A Dowell (Dumfries & Galloway) 161/228 inc. 65 Barn Owl, 24 Tawny Owl, 25 Pied Wagtail; S P Singleton (W Yorks) 125/128 inc. 80 Blue Tit, 21 Great Tit; F M Slater (Powys) 151/151 inc. 102 Pied Flycatcher, 21 Blue Tit; Sorby Breck Ringing Group (S Yorks) 205/231 inc. 109 Swallow, 29 Great Tit; South Lakeland RSPB Group (per G Bottomley, Cumbria) 129/130 inc. 52 Pied Flycatcher, 48 Blue Tit; I M Spence & I W Lloyd (Clwyd) 256/266 inc. 96 Pied Flycatcher, 13 Coal Tit; B Standley (Cheshire) 98/153 inc. 13 Linnet, 7 Yellowhammer; R Stevens (Notts) 748 inc. 115 Coot, 242 Black-headed Gull, 161 House Martin; J A Stoner (Notts) 116/120 inc. 27 Nightjar, 18 Long-tailed Tit; A Stratford (Gwynedd) 145/145 inc. 18 Peregrine, 74 Pied Flycatcher; Tain Field Club (per R & R L Swann, Highland) 246/265 inc. 37 Eider, 19 Buzzard; P M Troake (Lincs) 150/152 inc. 69 Ringed Plover, 79 Little Tern; S J Tyler, S J Ormerod, F Burge & I Williams (Gwent) 143/183 inc. 33 Grey Wagtail, 108 Dipper; G Vaughan (Devon) 170/170 inc. 56 Pied Flycatcher, 20 Nuthatch; R Walton (Northum) 104/104 inc. 18 Spotted Flycatcher, 17 Pied Flycatcher; D Warden (Avon) 172/189 inc. 28 Woodpigeon, 44 Reed Warbler; E H Webb (Suffolk) 108/112 inc. 11 House Martin, 41 Blue Tit.

Record 2,260 nest records

1991 was a below average year for breeding birds and nest recorders alike due to the cool, dismal and often wet weather. It was a great delight, and pleasant surprise therefore to find that BILL PROCTOR of Market Bosworth in Warwickshire completed 2,260 individual nest record cards covering 59 species, including 1,785 multi-visit records and a high proportion detailing nest 'outcome'. It was a staggering effort and broke the 2,000 card barrier by an individual or group for the first time in the scheme's 53 year history. Below, Bill explains how he achieved his outstanding feat.

This milestone was achieved only through the help of many landowners (notably three farmers) who allowed me to visit their land for my nest record survey in the Market Bosworth area. It was here that many of the 41 Swallow, 44 Starling, 97 Magpie and 577 Rook nests were studied. Within walking distance of my home I found a large number of the 32 Blackbird and 9 Song Thrush nests, while the local housing estates gave most of the 23 House Sparrow and, later in the year, 222 House Martin nests. I found a high proportion of the 95 Feral Pigeon nests while working around various collieries. Kind help with transport by friends to Scotland and later Wales, provided many gull, Fulmar and Grey Heron nests while regular checks on Mute Swan nests encountered totted up eventually to 137. Among highlights of the year were the nests of Eider, Grey Partridge, Kittiwake, Little Owl, Blackcap and Long-tailed Tit.



Magpie by C J F Coombs

TOTALS FOR NEST RECORD SCHEME FROM PRE-1990 to 1991

SPECIES	Pre-90	1990	1991	TOTAL
Red-throated Diver	1,636	47	69	1,752
Black-throated Diver	155	7	3	165
Little Grebe	1,530	47	43	1,620
Great Crested Grebe	2,043	124	142	2,309
Red-necked Grebe	1	-	-	1
Slavonian Grebe	146	8	2	156
Black-necked Grebe	12	-	-	12
Fulmar	2,574	182	294	3,050
Manx Shearwater	95	1	2	98
Storm Petrel	31	3	3	37
Leach's Petrel	2	-	-	2
Gannet	22	-	-	22
Cormorant	1,065	130	27	1,222
Shag	2,965	166	294	3,425
Bittern	17	-	-	17
Little Bittern	1	-	-	1
* Grey Heron	2,728	309	247	3,284
* Mute Swan	3,194	284	274	3,752
Whooper Swan	1	-	2	3
Greylag Goose	453	6	17	476
Canada Goose	1,441	207	170	1,818
Egyptian Goose	7	4	2	13
Shelduck	211	9	9	229
Mandarin	184	11	10	205
Wigeon	125	9	7	141
Gadwall	55	2	4	61
Teal	177	5	8	190
Mallard	6,343	207	255	6,805
Pintail	18	-	-	18
Garganey	7	2	-	9
Shoveler	109	2	2	113
Pochard	107	1	-	108
Tufted Duck	822	34	62	918
Scaup	1	-	-	1
Eider	1,825	123	197	2,145
Common Scoter	38	1	-	39
Goldeneye	26	6	5	37
Red-breasted Merganser	220	3	2	225
Goosander	172	14	5	191
Ruddy Duck	33	12	11	56
Honey Buzzard	9	2	2	13
Red Kite	15	-	-	15
Marsh Harrier	10	3	2	15
+ * Hen Harrier	884	146	73	1,103
Montagu's Harrier	46	-	-	46
Goshawk	158	29	38	225
* Sparrowhawk	3,269	360	239	3,868
+ * Buzzard	3,050	151	134	3,335
Golden Eagle	373	12	8	393
Osprey	30	2	2	34
* Kestrel	4,638	357	190	5,185
+ * Merlin	1,368	202	149	1,719
Hobby	383	22	14	419
+ * Peregrine	1,385	171	126	1,682
Red Grouse	583	31	15	629
Ptarmigan	109	4	2	115
Black Grouse	40	11	1	52
Capercaillie	62	-	4	66

SPECIES	Pre-90	1990	1991	TOTAL
Red-legged Partridge	396	9	6	411
Grey Partridge	747	10	11	768
Quail	10	-	-	10
Pheasant	1,771	32	40	1,843
Lady Amherst's Pheasant	1	-	-	1
Water Rail	69	3	1	73
Corncrake	26	1	-	27
* Moorhen	16,789	397	433	17,619
Coot	9,426	595	504	10,525
* Oystercatcher	9,200	312	407	9,919
Black-winged Stilt	1	-	-	1
Avocet	343	106	7	456
Stone Curlew	425	2	6	433
Little Ringed Plover	1,255	52	55	1,362
* Ringed Plover	5,965	162	276	6,403
Kentish Plover	19	-	-	19
Dotterel	135	7	3	145
* Golden Plover	745	25	7	777
* Lapwing	16,111	518	452	17,081
Temminck's Stint	1	-	-	1
Purple Sandpiper	3	-	-	3
Dunlin	522	3	2	527
Ruff	1	-	-	1
Snipe	1,314	19	9	1,342
Woodcock	531	8	9	548
Black-tailed Godwit	12	1	-	13
Whimbrel	52	1	2	55
+ * Curlew	2,170	101	106	2,377
Redshank	1,856	45	25	1,926
Greenshank	145	-	1	146
Wood Sandpiper	2	-	-	2
Common Sandpiper	1,114	41	24	1,179
Red-necked Phalarope	33	-	1	34
Arctic Skua	235	31	2	268
Great Skua	273	2	-	275
Little Gull	3	-	-	3
Black-headed Gull	4,678	765	986	6,429
Mediterranean Gull	2	-	1	3
Common Gull	2,244	178	240	2,662
Lesser Black-backed Gull	919	1	63	983
Herring Gull	3,784	54	205	4,043
Great Black-backed Gull	1,043	73	190	1,306
Kittiwake	2,751	151	637	3,539
Lesser Crested Tern	1	1	-	2
Sandwich Tern	574	2	415	991
Roseate Tern	207	2	377	586
Common Tern	3,426	180	137	3,743
Arctic Tern	3,020	194	141	3,355
Little Tern	3,504	182	261	3,947
Guillemot	996	25	71	1,092
Razorbill	544	49	64	657
Black Guillemot	886	63	23	972
Puffin	165	-	33	198
Rock Dove	194	21	46	261
Feral Pigeon	967	96	158	1,221
* Stock Dove	4,669	201	196	5,066
Woodpigeon	17,939	596	729	19,264
* Collared Dove	2,412	183	179	2,774

SPECIES	Pre-90	1990	1991	TOTAL
Turtle Dove	1,694	37	16	1,747
Ring-necked Parakeet	2	-	-	2
Cuckoo	1,594	27	16	1,637
* Barn Owl	1,673	259	235	2,167
Snowy Owl	1	-	1	2
Little Owl	1,233	50	38	1,321
* Tawny Owl	4,690	320	321	5,331
Long-eared Owl	486	29	25	540
Short-eared Owl	270	18	12	300
+ * Nightjar	842	148	75	1,065
Swift	919	37	28	984
Kingfisher	459	33	20	512
Hoopoe	1	-	-	1
Wryneck	15	2	-	17
Green Woodpecker	257	10	2	269
Great Spotted Woodpecker	746	47	43	836
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	133	7	5	145
Woodlark	459	29	15	503
+ * Skylark	5,941	144	77	6,162
Sand Martin	901	24	26	951
* Swallow	34,389	1,955	1,411	37,755
House Martin	4,592	480	568	5,640
Tree Pipit	1,281	58	50	1,389
+ * Meadow Pipit	7,571	199	140	7,910
Rock Pipit	536	46	14	596
Yellow Wagtail	839	18	12	869
+ * Grey Wagtail	4,175	250	149	4,574
* Pied Wagtail	6,863	424	232	7,519
* Dipper	6,637	418	300	7,355
* Wren	11,575	473	248	12,296
* Dunnock	26,630	407	222	27,259
* Robin	16,022	446	353	16,821
Nightingale	394	11	6	411
Bluethroat	1	-	-	1
Black Redstart	131	-	-	131
* Redstart	4,368	243	129	4,740
* Whinchat	1,567	60	20	1,647
Stonechat	1,931	65	42	2,038
+ * Wheatear	2,806	58	86	2,950
Ring Ouzel	1,225	33	20	1,278
Blackbird	111,153	1,803	1,853	114,809
Fieldfare	5	1	-	6
* Song Thrush	65,653	830	749	67,232
Redwing	96	2	4	102
* Mistle Thrush	6,193	179	206	6,578
Cetti's Warbler	18	-	-	18
Grasshopper Warbler	299	14	7	320
Savi's Warbler	2	-	-	2
+ * Sedge Warbler	3,679	178	93	3,950
Marsh Warbler	106	5	4	115
* Reed Warbler	8,909	316	190	9,415
Dartford Warbler	373	18	9	400
Lesser Whitethroat	688	18	19	725
+ * Whitethroat	4,844	139	62	5,045
Garden Warbler	1,366	56	47	1,469
+ * Blackcap	2,445	91	65	2,601
* Wood Warbler	1,738	52	43	1,833
+ * Chiffchaff	1,833	95	66	1,994
* Willow Warbler	10,406	252	177	10,835
Goldcrest	670	21	6	697
Firecrest	9	1	-	10

SPECIES	Pre-90	1990	1991	TOTAL
* Spotted Flycatcher	8,548	275	198	9,021
Pied Flycatcher	1,9750	2,157	1,498	23,405
Bearded Tit	53	-	-	53
* Long-tailed Tit	3,544	150	136	3,830
Marsh Tit	976	43	27	1,046
Willow Tit	372	11	8	391
Crested Tit	232	14	15	261
Coal Tit	3,868	157	138	4,163
Blue Tit	48,047	3,406	3,040	54,493
Great Tit	30,005	1,813	1,774	33,592
* Nuthatch	1,712	172	151	2,035
Treecreeper	1,804	75	70	1,949
Short-toed Treecreeper	1	-	-	1
Golden Oriole	18	-	10	28
Red-backed Shrike	251	-	-	251
Jay	1,211	50	25	1,286
* Magpie	4,901	205	344	5,450
Chough	403	29	18	450
Jackdaw	4,213	255	255	4,723
* Rook	5,624	790	980	7,394
* Carrion Crow	4,675	224	295	5,194
Hooded Crow	953	33	16	1,002
+ * Raven	2,260	154	37	2,451
* Starling	11,421	411	336	12,168
House Sparrow	10,221	193	254	10,668
Tree Sparrow	13,055	344	256	13,655
* Chaffinch	17,290	449	412	18,151
Brambling	2	-	-	2
Serín	2	-	-	2
* Greenfinch	11,922	244	203	12,369
Goldfinch	2,526	66	58	2,650
Siskin	56	2	1	59
* Linnét	22,865	429	342	23,636
Twite	792	11	8	811
Redpoll	1,229	22	13	1,264
Common Crossbill	113	1	4	118
Parrot Crossbill	4	-	-	4
Scarlet Rosefinch	1	-	-	1
Bullfinch	4,792	78	37	4,907
Hawfinch	129	8	3	140
Snow Bunting	10	1	-	11
+ * Yellowhammer	5,785	103	115	6,003
Cirl Bunting	64	14	-	78
+ * Reed Bunting	6,830	184	64	7,078
+ * Corn Bunting	481	14	37	532
	Pre-90	1990	1991	GRAND TOTAL
	802,975	32,492	30,443	865,910

NB A few records for some wildfowl species may relate to feral birds (e.g. Whooper Swan, Greylag Goose and Mallard).

* Species used within the BTO's Integrated Population Monitoring Program.

+ Species for which we would particularly like more cards.

The totals for pre-1990 and 1990 have changed since those printed in *Nest Record News* No.7 due to the addition of cards received at the BTO after March 1991.

Common coding mistakes and problems

Please help us by reading through the following list of common problems found by observers when completing nest record cards. We are hoping in future to send cards for common species to a data processing company for speedy computer input and so completion needs to be as accurate as possible, since the inputters will be unable to deal with any errors. (NB cards for Schedule 1 species will only be processed by the Nest Records Unit.)

1 Observer Codes

Please write your observer code on the cards, as it is your code and not your name that is computerised. If you use your observer code and wish to save time, there is no need to write your name as well. However, if you are new to the Scheme, write your name for the first season and we will issue you with a code when you send in your first batch of cards. This saves us 'wasting' codes on people who decide after receiving their starter pack that they are unable to participate in the Scheme after all.

2 Status Codes

Please make sure that your status codes always comprise TWO characters (usually letters but, for nest building, a letter plus a number).

3 Adult Activity Codes

This series of codes has been overlooked by many recorders. The codes 'AN' (Adult on/at Nest) and 'FN' (Female on/at Nest) are probably the most useful, but there are other codes to use if an adult is found dead, feeding the young, trapped at/near the nest for ringing purposes, or in the vicinity of the nest. For a full list of adult activity codes see the coding card or the bottom of page 25 of the instruction booklet.

4 Outcome Success Codes for Nidicolous Species

For young that hatch naked, blind and helpless, such as the typical song-bird nestling, outcome success codes should only be used on the last visit to the nest,

when the eggs or young have failed or the young have fledged (eg codes 'VA' and 'AC').

5 Outcome Success and Failure Codes for Nidifugous Species

For young that hatch covered in down and are able to leave the nest soon after hatching, the code 'LB' (Young left nest naturally before fledging) should be used until they can fly, after which time 'NN' (Young near nest) should be used.

6 Partial Success

Failure codes for individual eggs or chicks can be written for any visit. When a nest is partially successful, this can be indicated by putting both a success code (eg NE) and a failure code (eg JD) on the final line. Although the code 'NE' means 'Nest empty, undisturbed and well-trodden lining, containing feather scale and/or droppings', it may also be used in cases of partial success, for example, when a small dead chick is found trampled at the bottom of a Blue Tit nest after the rest of the brood has fledged.

Also, in the case of nidicolous species, if some young have fledged whilst others are still in the nest, use the code 'NN' (Young near nest), but only record the number of young still in the nest in the young column.

7 Recording Numbers of Addled/Broken Eggs and/or Dead Young

If there are addled or broken eggs in the nest as well as fertile and unbroken ones, record the number of healthy eggs first, then, after a comma, write the number of addled or broken eggs, for example 3,1 if there are 3 fertile/unbroken eggs and one which is broken. The same applies to dead young, where the number alive should be recorded before a comma followed by the number dead, for example 4,2 would mean 4 live young and 2 dead young.

8 Recording Growth of Species whose Young Hatch Asynchronously

The broods of some species (eg owls),

normally have young at various stages of growth. In these cases, please record in the columns, status codes to describe the age of the **oldest** chick only. Codes to describe the growth of younger birds may be recorded in the comments section.

9 When to Use Codes 'YC' and 'RF'

There is some confusion over the use of codes 'RF' (Ready to Fledge) and 'YC' (Young Capable of leaving nest when last seen). 'RF' is to be used when young look ready to fledge but none have yet done so. 'YC' should only be used on a **final** entry (as it is a success code) and may follow a visit where young are described as 'RF'.

10 Grid References

For counties in England, Scotland and Wales, please use the two letters denoting your 100km grid square at the beginning of the sequence of numbers eg **SH432621**. For counties in Ireland, use the relevant letter followed by a dash eg **D-213123**. Four and two-figure grid references should be written with **dashes** in the boxes where numbers are missing eg **SH43-62-** for a four-figure grid reference or **SH4-6-** for a two-figure grid reference.

11 Habitat

When coding the habitat, please cross **one** box only in column 'A'. Any number of boxes may be crossed in columns 'B' and 'C'. If you need to describe more than two habitat types, write details of additional ones in the extra comments box.

For farmland habitats which comprise mixed grass and tilled land, cross box 3 only in column A (Mixed grass/tilled land) regardless of whether the grass is improved or unimproved. The type of grass can be specified in the extra comments section.

12 Extra Comments on Habitat and Nest Site

In the extra comments box on the reverse side of the card, please put details of plant species and specific detail about

the nest site next to the relevant heading. Anything written next to 'H1' should apply to the First Habitat, next to 'H2' the Second Habitat, and next to '*' to the Nest Site.

13 Near Centre/Margin of Field/Wood

Of the two boxes 'Centre' and 'Margin' only one may be crossed. This also applies to the two boxes 'Field' and 'Wood' where either one or the other box should be crossed but not both. In cases where the nest is on the edge of a field **and** a wood, cross off the box for the habitat which actually contains the nest. If the nest is in the wood, cross that box rather than the field one; if it is in the field or a hedgerow separating the field from the wood, cross the 'Field' box.

14 Stapling Cards Together

If you are stapling cards together, either because you have further visits to record or you have details of subsequent nests by the same pair of birds, please staple them together **only** at the red 'STAPLE HERE ONLY' box on the back of the card. The cards will not go through the Optical Mark Reader if they have been stapled anywhere else and the Habitat and Nest Site details will then have to be input manually.

15 Mixed Broods

Occasionally two species lay in the same nest (eg Great Tit and Pied Flycatcher). When this happens, treat the nest like that of a Cuckoo and fill out a card for each species, writing the other species's name in brackets and putting the egg or young count for the second species after a '+' (eg 4+2).

16 Don't worry!

Above all, don't worry too much about how to fill in the cards - its quite straightforward really. If in doubt, give the Nest Record Unit a quick ring to clarify any problem.

Tel: Thetford (0842) 750050

Nest Records for Conservation

The BTO's collection of nest record cards is a fantastically useful source of information. It can be called upon whenever concerns are expressed about the fate of one or other of our breeding species. Three recent studies by the Nest Records Unit have been used to alert conservationists (and especially the Joint Nature Conservation Committee) to problems facing some of our birds.

Great changes are afoot in Britain's moorlands. There have been losses of moorland to afforestation, conversion of heather moors into sheep pasture, decreases in game-keeping interests and increasing levels of disturbance from recreational walking in upland areas. In response to the changes, long-term trends in the breeding success of two moorland bird species were analysed recently: Merlin and Golden Plover.

The **Merlin** is the smallest falcon breeding in Europe. It feeds mainly on small moorland birds and its population has been in decline in Britain throughout the twentieth century. Although other birds of prey have shown some recovery since the withdrawal of damaging pesticides in the 1970s, conservationists have been worried that the Merlin has not. In the early 1980s the population estimate for Merlins was about 600 pairs. However, nest record analysis showed that brood size has been increasing overall since the 1970s. When the data were broken down into regions, it was apparent that while the situations in Scotland and the Midlands of England look promising, productivity in north England and Wales has actually declined. The BTO has recommended that detailed comparative studies in these regions should be initiated before there is any worsening of the current situation.

The **Golden Plover** is another characteristic bird of upland areas and the British and Irish breeding populations are distinct from the Scandinavian birds that visit us in winter. Again, populations have been declining but there is very little hard data to explain why.

Golden Plover nests are among the most difficult to find in Britain and we only have a collection of 669 nest record cards gathered

from 1943-89. However, the results were very interesting. Golden Plovers nest more productively on heather moorland and bog than on grass moorland. They lay on average 11 days earlier and clutch size is slightly larger. Although nest failure rates have not changed for Golden Plovers nesting on heather moorland and bog, they have increased significantly in north-west England and Wales on grass moorland in the 1980s. It seems quite likely that high sheep stocking rates in north England and Wales is the reason.

If new forestry occurs preferentially on heather moors and bog (as in Sutherland and Caithness) and if heather moor continues to be turned into grassland by grazing, then Golden Plovers may have to depend increasingly on the less productive grass moors. If these areas are subject to increasing stocking rates and the remaining heather moors are subject to more recreational disturbance, then the lowered nesting success and productivity of the Golden Plover populations in Britain may affect their overall sustainability.

Another BTO study has involved a comparison of six common seed-eating species. We investigated laying date, clutch size and nesting success over the period 1962-89. Interestingly, for the three species whose populations have been essentially stable according to the Common Birds Census, **Chaffinch**, **Greenfinch** and **Yellowhammer**, losses of nests actually declined over the period. For **Linnet** and **Reed Bunting**, nest losses have increased, concurrent with population declines, and this needs further investigation. We were surprised to find that **Corn Bunting** nest losses appeared to decrease rather than increase, even though their population has declined (but sample sizes were very small and not very conclusive).

Other Publications

Magpies have been in the headlines for several years and stimulated a study that was recently published by Steve Gooch, Stephen Baillie and Tim Birkhead (*Journal of Applied Ecology* 28:1068-86). In this it was shown that although Magpie populations have increased by 4-5% per year from 1966-86 the

nesting success of 15 species of common songbird didn't show any corresponding decrease. (Indeed, nesting success actually increased for Song Thrush, Greenfinch, Starling and Yellowhammer!) Nesting success showed no relationship with Magpie density and songbird numbers increased most rapidly when Magpie numbers were high and when Magpie numbers were also increasing most rapidly.

Droughts in Africa have caused terrible problems and a recent study by Will Peach, Stephen Baillie and Les Underhill has shown that low West African rainfall badly affects the survival of **Sedge Warblers** that overwinter there. As part of their analysis (in *Ibis* 133:300-305) they looked at the nest record cards but found that breeding productivity did not seem to have any effect on population changes from year to year. If anything, they found that nest survival had actually increased over the period during which populations had declined by about two thirds (since the 1960s).

Other studies that have used nest record cards include one by David Baines (*Ornis Scandinavica* 22:264-469) in which he showed that decreases in the **Black Grouse** population seem to be driven by a long-term reduction in breeding success, possibly due to increased predation and declines in their insect food supply.

Yoram Yom-Tov visited the BTO to look at the bunting nest record cards to help him test the idea that polygynous species lay later than monogamous species because the male doesn't help with nesting or feeding of the female (*Ibis* 134:52-55). He found that **Cori Buntings** lay later (25th May) than the monogamous **Yellowhammer** (4th May) or **Reed Bunting** (30th April). This agrees with data from eight species of North American wren and four British genera including Redstarts, *Acrocephalus*, *Sylvia* and *Phylloscopus* Warblers.

Another visitor to the BTO some years ago, Tad Stawarczyk, looked at our **Nuthatch** cards for comparison with his records from a primeval temperate forest in Poland. His findings (in *Ornis Scandinavica* 22:143-154)

showed that birds from the primeval forest bred earlier, laid similar numbers of eggs but suffered two to three times worse nest failure rates than British birds. Predation appeared to be very important to his birds which nested in natural sites and not nest boxes.

Greg Mudge looked at the historical collection of **Black-throated Diver** cards as part of his analysis of population changes (*Scottish Birds* 16:77-84). His study showed that there has been some contraction of breeding range since the 1970s for reasons that aren't quite clear and the population will require further conservation and research work.

New Projects

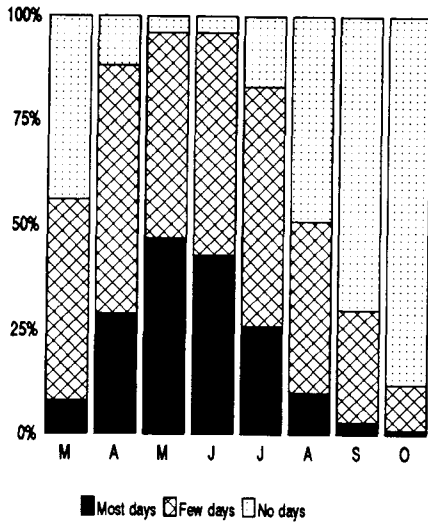
Fourteen new projects on nest record cards were initiated since the last Nest Record News: (A) Clive Bealey - Willow Warbler; (B) L Brack - Hawfinch nest sites; (C) John Clark - Hobby in Hampshire; (D) Alistair Crowle - Reed Bunting on farm versus marsh; (E) Trudie Docherty - Barn Owl in Herts; (F) John Eyre - Woodlark in Hampshire; (G) Paul Hobson - Sparrowhawk in S Yorks; (H) Andrew Hoodless - Woodcock; (I) Michael Jennings - Arabian Nest Record Cards; (J) John Lines - Bearded Tit; (K) Jeff Martin - Barn Owl in Suffolk; (L) Steve Ormerod - Kingfisher; (M) Roger Peart - Spotted Flycatcher and (N) Stuart Rae - Ptarmigan.

Have a go Yourself?

Currently there are 49 studies that are using nest record cards, 24 of which are by amateur birdwatchers. Analysing nest record cards is interesting, challenging and rewarding but cannot be undertaken lightly. It takes a good deal of time to pour through the cards, and for species with a reasonable number of records you really require a computer. The rewards are that you really get to know a particular species very well and you can find out facts that are new to science. If you would like to try an investigation on a particular species, contact Humphrey Crick and he will be pleased to give you advice on planning, analysis and writing up your studies.

Improved coverage maintained

Considering the cool and often damp weather of May and June in 1991, it was very encouraging to show from observers' summary sheets a recording effort during these key nesting months comparable with that of the warmer early spring of 1990. For venturing forth in these months, often during uncomfortable conditions, all nest recorders are thanked. It was equally encouraging to note a slight improvement in recording effort during the more clement weather of July and August, when it is vital to record replacement clutches and later broods by many species. For helping to see the full season through and placing on record those important early and late nesting attempts, all members are thanked. Please help to 'see the season through' in 1992.



BTO Nestboxes Guide Revision

Author Chris du Feu, is shortly to revise the BTO's Nestboxes Guide. To ensure that it retains its status as the most up-to-date and comprehensive guide to nestbox design, siting and maintenance, nest recorders are asked to check their copy and relay to the BTO any fresh facts not covered by the current version. Many thanks.

Cuckoo Draw - £150 Prize

A study of the interactions of Cuckoos and their hosts is being done at the Department of Zoology, Cambridge University. Part of the project involves a genetic analysis of differences between the strains (= gentes) of Cuckoos parasitising different host species. The analysis can be done using modern DNA techniques on a small drop of blood, which can be taken harmlessly from a nestling Cuckoo (under licence). If anyone finds such a nestling, anywhere in Britain (other than in a Reed Warbler nest within 100 miles of Cambridge), and would be willing to help, could they please contact Michael Brooke (0223-811059), reversing charges. All those who help will go into a draw (one ticket per Cuckoo) for a £150 prize at the end of the season.

The spring nest detective

Max Meadows of Writtle in Essex contributed a marvellous series of 892 nest records for the 1991 nesting season but when writing in mid-December commented "It is amazing how many nests one can miss. I knew Goldfinches were nesting in the college orchards but didn't find a single nest. On walking round the area the other day I saw no less than 14!" These are sentiments that will be endorsed by many nest finders.

There is one way of putting the finding of old nests in winter to good use. Many species from Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Robin, Long-tailed Tit to Chaffinch and Reed Bunting (and many more) often use the very same site (or extremely close) in successive or alternate years, be it the same crotch, fork, branch cluster or stem grouping in shrub, bush or tree. Goldfinches may religiously occupy the very same knotted spur in the pruned garden pear or apple tree. Similarly, many species nesting amongst ground vegetation are equally site faithful, Grasshopper Warbler and Whinchat returning to the same sedge tussock, Nightjar and Woodlark the same bare sandy patch amidst heather, Ringed Plover and Lapwing the same depression on a stony expanse.

Nest recorders can save valuable time by walking their local patch in winter or spring and making a careful mental picture, or better still a careful map of potential and old nest sites. This will prove very handy in late spring and summer when the leaves appear, visibility decreases and the site character changes, making nest finding by cold searching a difficult exercise.

Equally, energetic raptor enthusiasts can save much time by a careful tree to tree exploration of their study area for suitable nesting cavities in winter or early spring. But beware, early nesting Tawny Owls may get underway in February or early March, even earlier given favourable weather conditions and food supply. Once detected, a tree cavity may yield a nest history for Little Owl, Kestrel or another species for a decade or more.

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 15 February at the very latest.

The BTO needs your membership!

More and more people are supporting us through subscription, so now is the time to join the BTO if you have not yet done so. You already help us greatly by providing valuable information through the Nest Record Scheme, so why not help the conservation of Britain's birds even more. **Join the BTO today.**

The Nest Records Unit

Humphrey Crick (Head of Unit) is employed under the JNCC 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 modernising the way in which nest record data are collected and analysed. Also he has responsibility for raptor monitoring within the BTO.

David Glue (Nest Records Research Officer) keeps an eye on how each season progresses and summarises 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 gain as much information from them as possible, something not really possible by a computer analysis. Currently he is working on woodpeckers, Woodlark and Short-eared Owl. He also maintains the Raptor Research Register and advises on the BTO's garden bird work.

Caroline Dudley (Assistant Nest Records Officer) has special responsibility for maintaining the collection of cards and for overseeing their computerisation. She also helps with data analysis and answering data requests. Since moving to Thetford, the unit has lost a clerical post and the benefit of an Employment Training team to help with computerisation. This means that fewer nest record cards can be computerised each year but we are grateful for the volunteer help of BTO member John Turner.

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Registered Charity No. 216652



Pied Flycatchers by Donald Watson

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 eg 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, 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)	Tit, Bearded
Dotterel	Owl, Snowy	Tit, Crested
Duck, Long-tailed	Peregrine	Treecreeper, Short-toed
Eagle, Golden	Petrel, Leach's	Warbler, Cetti's
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	

NB 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.