

Great Crested Grebe 1935

Title

Great Crested Grebe Inquiry (originally known as Effects of drought on waterbirds)

Description and Summary of Results

In 1931 Tom Harrisson and Phil Hollom had organised a full census of the Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* in Great Britain and found around 1240 breeding pairs. In 1933 and 1934 there was a severe drought in some parts of Great Britain and so the then newly formed BTO decided to do a sample count of the species to determine how much if any effect this drought had had.

The areas chosen represented 45% of the population recorded in 1931. Areas were well spread geographically and included waters in Wales and Scotland. Various other waters were also reported on, but the request in *British Birds* for casual observations met with a very poor response. Most of the counts were made in June, and the numbers of non-breeders in particular refer to that month.

The 1935 figures showed a decrease of about 35 breeding pairs or 6%; an increase of 109 non-breeding birds (78%); and an overall increase in population of 39 birds (3%).

Although the exact extent to which the Great Crested Grebes were affected at the height of the drought was not determined, it is clear that there were considerable disturbances and readjustments, particularly in 1934. In general it seemed that there was a small redistribution of birds onto natural waters and away from reservoirs where the effects of the drought were accentuated. But more significant was that all the decreases, except a possible one in Cheshire, were in counties in the Thames Valley, or just to the north, and either no change or an increase in the number of breeding pairs were recorded in all other areas. The Thames Valley area corresponded closely with those parts of the country which received 70% or less of average annual rainfall in 1933/34. Overall, the effect of the drought seemed slight.

Methods of Data Capture

The idea was to carry out breeding season counts, on the same lines as the complete census of 1931 at rather under half of the sites covered in the earlier survey. The form was slightly modified, in particular placing the request for numbers of non-breeding birds into an adjacent column to that of breeding birds rather than being relegated to being supplementary information. The result was that some observers were more circumspect about placing numbers as definite breeding pairs.

Purpose of Data Capture

The main object of this count was to discover the effect on numbers of breeding grebes of the severe drought in some parts of the country during 1933 and 1934, and to trace the general trend in numbers and distribution since the complete census of 1931.

Geographic Coverage

All of Great Britain.

Temporal Coverage

The breeding season of 1935.

Other Interested parties

Phil Hollom organised and ran the survey with the support of BTO.

Organiser(s)

Phil A D Hollom

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The main report of the survey is:

Hollom, P.A.D. 1936. Report on Great Crested Grebe sample count, 1935. *British Birds* 30: 138-158.

The survey was noticed in *BTO Annual Report* numbers 1 (noted under Drought), 2 and 3; and in *BTO Bulletin* numbers 2 and 4.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

1 box containing 2 folders of letters, and 1 of data and cards.

Notes on Access and Use**Other information****Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**