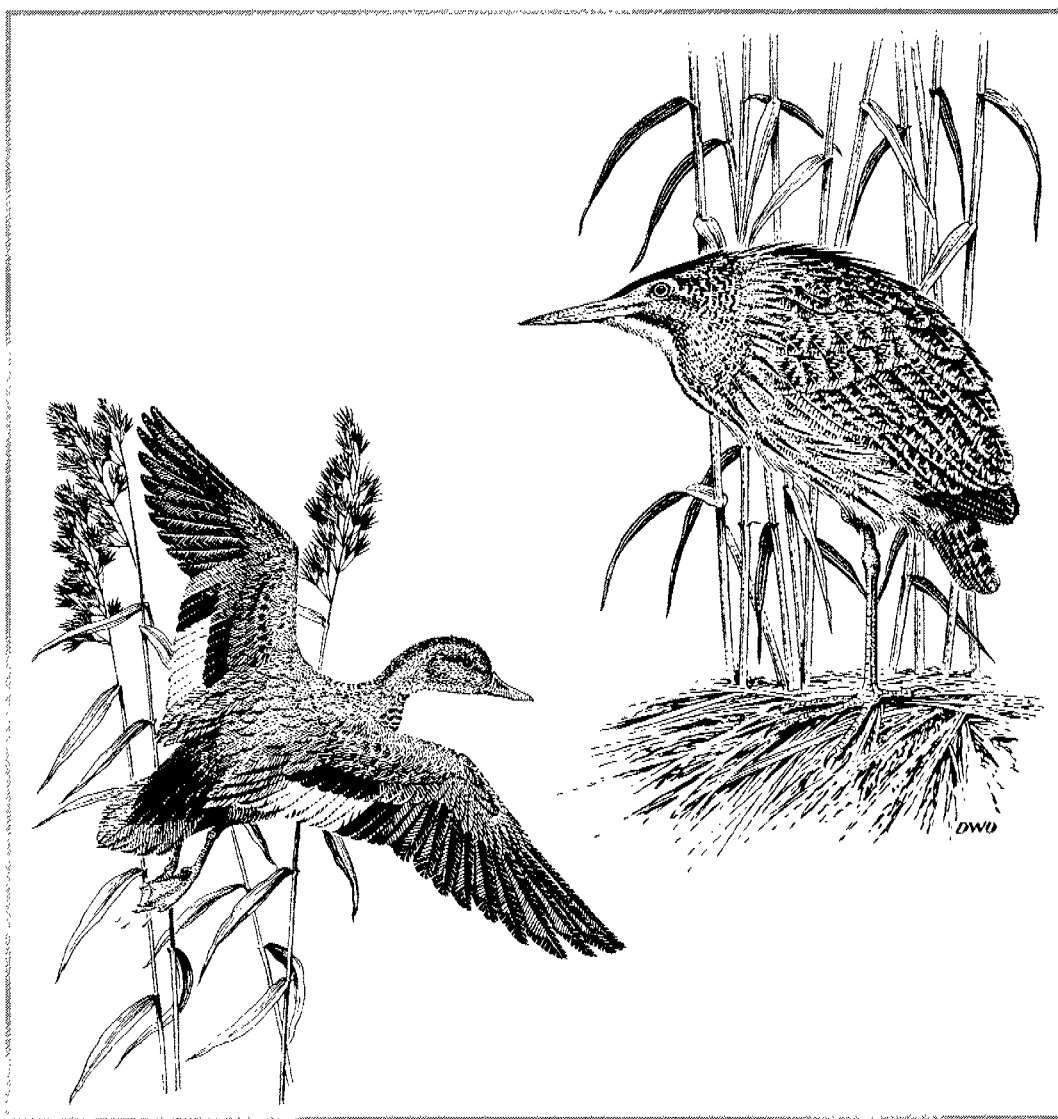


Birds in England: context and priorities

No. 62 - English Nature Research Reports



working today
for nature tomorrow

ENGLISH NATURE RESERCH REPORTS
No 62

**BIRDS IN ENGLAND:
CONTEXT & PRIORITIES**

**ANDREW F BROWN
&
PHILIP V GRICE**

Further copies of this publication may be obtained from:

**ORNITHOLOGY SECTION
SPECIES CONSERVATION BRANCH
ENGLISH NATURE
NORTHMINSTER HOUSE
PETERBOROUGH
PE1 1UA**

ISSN 0967 876X
ISBN 1-85716 117 3

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SUMMARY

1. English Nature seeks to integrate the specific requirements of birds into all its conservation efforts and those of its partners. Whilst the conservation of all naturally occurring bird species is important to English Nature, we recognise that funding for bird conservation is finite. It is therefore essential that we establish clear priorities for bird conservation action in order that limited resources are used most effectively. This document reviews the conservation significance of England's birds and bird habitats, enabling priorities for bird conservation in England to be identified from both a species and habitat perspective. We hope that this information will help those setting local conservation objectives and targets to reflect national as well as local conservation priorities.
2. Over 520 bird species have been recorded in England; 188 species regularly breed and 189 species regularly occur during the winter (231 different species). Five criteria were used to select 139 regularly occurring breeding and wintering species of the greatest conservation significance in England. For each of these species a detailed review was conducted of all information available on distribution, abundance, population size and dynamics, habitat use and legal status, both in England and in a wider national and international context. This review enabled England's birds as a whole to be viewed in context.
3. England is as similarly species-rich as Wales and Scotland but does, however, support a number of species and assemblages that do not occur elsewhere in Britain. A large number of species occur at or near the northern or southern-most edge of their West Palearctic range within England. England supports internationally important breeding populations of two species, Sandwich Tern and Little Tern, and contributes to the populations of a further 12 species that breed in Britain as a whole in internationally important numbers. England is outstanding in supporting 16 species in internationally important numbers during the winter and contributes to the populations of a further 12 species for which Britain as a whole supports internationally important wintering populations.
4. England holds all or virtually all of the British breeding populations of 23 rare, local or declining *Red Data Birds* and supports breeding populations of a further 12 such species that are not confined to England within Britain. England also supports extremely small or intermittent breeding populations of an additional 16 *Red Data Birds*. Ten *Red Data Birds* that are wholly or virtually confined to England during winter are supported by a small number of sites. A further 14 localised wintering *Red Data Birds* also occur in England. Seven 'Special Category' *Red Data Birds* breed in England and a further 37 breeding and wintering species are of special interest in England. Six species are thought to have become extinct in England in the last two centuries, although Red-backed Shrike returned in 1992 after a four-year absence. A number of non-native bird species are present in the wild in England resulting from both intentional and accidental introductions.
5. Two groups of bird species that are of the highest priority for conservation action in England are identified. High Priority 'List 1' species consist of 27 *Red Data Birds* whose British populations are wholly or virtually confined to England. They include species that are supported in internationally important numbers by England, rare breeders of greater than 10 pairs, locally distributed species and one of special concern. They are Bittern, Bewick's Swan, Bean Goose, Brent Goose, Gadwall, Pochard, Montagu's Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Avocet, Stone Curlew, Grey Plover, Knot, Dunlin, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Sandwich Tern, Little Tern, Nightjar, Woodlark, Cetti's Warbler, Savi's Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Bearded Tit, Golden Oriole and Cirl Bunting. English Nature should take the lead role amongst the Statutory Conservation Agencies in the conservation of these bird species, working closely with key partners.

6. High Priority '*List 2*' species are also all *Red Data Birds*, with the exception of Lapwing. England, together with Scotland and/or Wales, supports breeding or wintering populations of all 50 species. Some occur in internationally important numbers within Britain, some are rare breeders, globally threatened, locally distributed, declining or of special concern. English Nature has a joint responsibility with the other Statutory Conservation Agencies to undertake co-ordinated conservation action for these species with key partners in both the statutory and non-governmental sectors.
7. A further 42 bird species are identified as Medium Priority for conservation action within England. They consist largely of 'candidate' *Red Data Birds* and other species whose British populations lie mostly within England. These species represent the 'Birds to watch in England'; as we learn more about their status, it may be necessary to transfer individual species to another priority group. Finally, 117 species are identified as Low Priority for conservation action within England. They consist of all regularly occurring breeding and wintering species not considered to be of high or medium priority.
8. Nine broad bird habitat groups present in England are identified: uplands; woodland and scrub; lowland heaths, bogs and dry grassland; lowland wet grasslands; lowland freshwaters and their margins; farmland; estuaries; other coastal habitats and marine areas; and the built environment. Each habitat is discussed in terms of its overall ornithological significance (indicating the status and population trends of the most important species), the current state of knowledge regarding the population dynamics and ecological requirements of their characteristic bird species, and the threats and opportunities they face. A list of internationally important sites, brief recommendations for the implementation of conservation action, and a key bibliography are also provided for each habitat. These are intended primarily as a synopsis of information on birds for habitat and non-bird specialists.
9. Conservation action for birds is, for the most part, likely to be most effective where action for species or suites of species is taken as part of co-ordinated plans based on habitats or geographical areas. The nine broad habitat groups were therefore sub-divided into 24 more narrowly defined bird habitats to allow conservation action to be more clearly focussed. An index of conservation action priority was calculated for each bird habitat based on the area of available habitat, the past and predicted losses, and the number of associated high priority species (biased towards '*List 1*' species). Five bird habitats clearly stand out as high priority for birds in England: lowland wet grasslands, swamps/fen/carr, intertidal flats, saltmarsh and lowland heath. A number of other habitats also score highly including dry grasslands, coastal lagoons and 'improved' pastureland.
10. Effective bird conservation in England will require the cooperation and coordinated action of many individuals, groups and organisations. This document should help those determining local conservation objectives and targets to reflect national priorities. Species Action Plans should focus all our efforts so that they may be as effective as possible.

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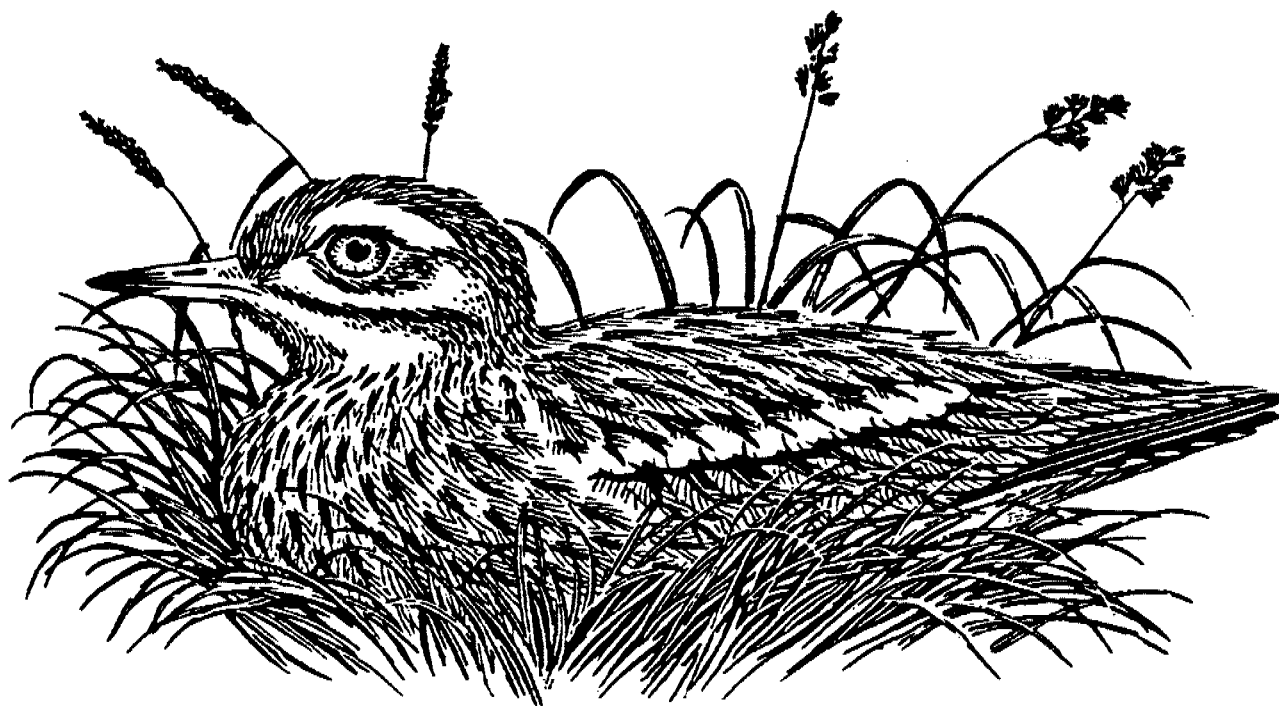
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1. INTRODUCTION

English Nature believes that the conservation of all naturally occurring bird species in England is important. We seek to maintain and, where appropriate, enhance their range, numbers and productivity. We believe that effective bird conservation will only be achieved through the co-ordinated actions of many organisations, groups and individuals. We seek to integrate the specific requirements of birds into all our work, that of our key partners and customers and all aspects of Government policy. We recognise that funding for bird conservation is finite. It is therefore vital that we establish clear conservation priorities and, from these, set appropriate targets and goals for bird conservation in England. We should monitor the effectiveness of our actions and review our approach at regular intervals.

This document is a statement of our vision, business and goals with respect to birds. It is about part of the resource English Nature seeks to conserve. It views birds in England in a wider national and international context. It provides a summary insight into the status and ecology of birds associated with the major habitats found in England, their significance, the threats facing them and the opportunities for their conservation. It states our priorities for bird conservation from both a species and habitat perspective. Examples of work in progress towards our goals are also given, together with summary proposals for further initiatives.

A central theme is that whilst it is clearly important to recognise the special characteristics of the English avifauna, and take action to conserve and enhance this, action is also required in England for rare species for which Britain as a whole is internationally responsible. Similarly, local conservation objectives and targets need to reflect national priorities. We hope this document will aid the selection of characteristic, indicator and priority bird species throughout the natural areas of England.



Our vision

English Nature believes that the conservation of all naturally occurring bird species in England is important. We seek to maintain and, where appropriate, enhance their range, numbers and productivity. We believe that effective bird conservation will only be achieved through the co-ordinated actions of many organisations, groups and individuals. We will focus on priority areas where our particular skills, abilities, powers and statutory tools can be most effectively employed to achieve the greatest gains for bird conservation. We seek these gains within a strategic framework for the conservation of all the wildlife and natural features of England.

Our business

We are England's statutory nature conservation service for the wildlife and natural features of England. With respect to birds we will:

- develop and maintain an overview of conservation issues relating to birds in England;
- collect and collate information on the distribution, numbers and productivity of birds in England;
- conduct or commission research into those aspects of avian ecology that will assist with effective conservation action for birds in England;
- provide high quality advice and other services to all our customers in order that they might manage the land and waters of England in the interests of naturally occurring wild birds;
- manage our nature reserves to maximise their value for birds as appropriate;
- work towards the recovery and enhancement of priority bird populations in England;
- seek to integrate the needs of bird conservation into the work of our key partners and into all aspects of government policy;
- work with key partners to safeguard global avian biodiversity;
- maintain the high profile of birds and bird conservation issues.

Our goals for 2000

- maintain and enhance characteristic bird communities in each natural area of England;
- stabilise population distributions and, where appropriate, increase the numbers and productivity of defined indicator species in each natural area;
- increase the size, productivity and geographical range of selected Red Data Bird populations in each natural area where appropriate, through the establishment of co-operative conservation programmes

2. BIRDS IN ENGLAND: SETTING THE CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

The special characteristics of Britain's breeding, wintering and passage bird populations, its bird communities and their relationships to habitats within the countryside and on the coast are relatively well understood and documented (Sharrock 1976; Fuller 1982; Lack 1986). Much of this knowledge results from the professional analysis of a mass of information collected by the large network of skilled volunteer ornithologists.

Britain supports populations of three globally threatened bird species (Collar & Andrew 1988). The size of the breeding or wintering populations of others is of international importance. In addition, some of Britain's avifauna are nationally rare, and/or local in distribution, some are declining and the status of others gives cause for concern. A total of 117 species fall into one or more of the above categories and therefore qualify for *Red Data Bird* status in Britain (Batten *et al* 1990). This book formalises the current thoughts and attitudes of both the statutory and voluntary conservation organisations on the status and conservation of Britain's birds.

Within Britain, however, both the components and the special characteristics of the avifauna differ between regions and, as a reflection of this, priorities for conservation and specific action might also be expected to differ between regions. This chapter describes the special characteristics of bird populations and assemblages in England.

2.2 Methods

Some 544 species of bird have been recorded in Britain and Ireland (Knox 1992). All but 21 of these species have been recorded at some time in England. Many are extremely rare vagrants or occasional passage visitors (see Dymond *et al* 1990 for full details) and many others are widespread and abundant breeding, wintering or passage species. Fortunately, many of these species are not in need of urgent conservation action within England. A number of species, however, are of special concern in England, and information concerning them has been subject to a detailed review for the preparation of this document.

Species were selected for review using five criteria which provide an indication of the importance or vulnerability of each species. The criteria are listed in Table 2.1, together with the number of species which qualify for review under each criterion.

Table 2.1 Number of species qualifying for review under each of five criteria

Criteria	Number of species
<i>Red Data Bird</i>	104
<i>Candidate Red Data Bird</i>	28
Listed on 'Annex I' of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (EEC/79/409)	40
Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981)	61
England supports greater than 75% of the British population	61
Total number of bird species selected	139

Clearly, many species qualify for inclusion against several criteria. A more detailed explanation and discussion of these criteria is provided as Appendix III. It should be noted that regularly occurring passage species have not been considered. The conservation needs of most of these species may be catered for by measures to conserve breeding and wintering birds. For example, conservation action on estuaries will help conserve Curlew Sandpipers, and marine conservation measures will help protect the habitat for Great Skua and Leach's Petrel (both qualify as *Red Data Birds* on the basis of their breeding populations elsewhere in Britain). In contrast, the traditional passage feeding areas of Whimbrel (another *Red Data Bird*) may require special conservation measures, and these will be dealt with through the Species Action Plan. The facts that we have only scant knowledge on the distribution, abundance and habitat requirements, and that key areas may only be occupied for brief periods, make it inappropriate to base conservation strategies on these species.

For each of the qualifying species, a detailed review was conducted of all information available on their distribution, abundance, population size and dynamics, habitat use and legal status. The review was not confined to information regarding the species in England. In order to set England's birds in context and assign priorities, a review of all information relevant to Britain and the appropriate international areas of interest is also required.

The full results of this review, and associated data analyses form part of an English Nature ornithological database. The current version forms Appendix I to this document. For each species, information is provided on relevant sub-specific populations; status in England; habitat associations; conservation status with respect to population dynamics; a summary of relevant European and domestic legislation; an up-to-date estimate of numbers within England, Britain and the appropriate international area; the population trend in England and an indication of the accuracy of the English population estimate(s).

Appendix II gives the sources for all the data used in the review. Appendix III provides a full explanation of the methods used to derive estimates for species included in the data fields of Appendix I. The main text of the document contains summary information from Appendix I in tabular form, and the reader need only refer to this appendix for full or additional information.

It should be remembered whilst reading this document that, although the data upon which the evaluations have been made has been gathered using scientific methods, a number of value-judgements have also been made, principally in relation to priority setting. Expressed as percentages or total numbers, these values are subjectively chosen. Full details of their use are provided in the text where appropriate.

2.3 The review : England's birds in context

2.3.1 Species richness

England supports 90% of the breeding species and over 97% of the wintering species that regularly occur in Britain (Table 2.2). Despite large differences in the avifauna between England, Scotland and Wales, each country is similarly species-rich, although England is the most species-rich country in Britain. This reflects a number of factors. For example, the greater climatic variation and habitat diversity in England means that it can support several bird assemblages, containing a number of species at or near the edge of their range, that are not found elsewhere in Britain. These are discussed further in the following sections.

Table 2.2. The numbers of regularly occurring breeding and wintering bird species in England, Scotland, Wales and Britain.

	Breeding	Wintering	Total
England	188	189	231
Scotland	180	182	219
Wales	155	180	210
Britain	208	194	241

Sources: Sharrock (1976), Lack (1986), Batten *et al* (1990).

2.3.2 Outstanding assemblages

England is internationally significant for several distinct assemblages of breeding and wintering birds.

Mild winters and rich intertidal food resources ensure that England's estuaries and saltmarsh support enormous gatherings of wintering and passage wildfowl and waders. Twenty-two estuaries support over 10,000 wildfowl and 18 support over 20,000 waders in winter; 25 sites in total (Kirby *et al* 1991). Of these, two are shared with Wales and one with Scotland. Many species are present in numbers of international significance; for example, England supports around half the world population of Dark-bellied Brent Goose in winter (Madsen 1990; Kirby 1991). Elsewhere on the coast, England supports an important assemblage of breeding seabirds, contributing to Britain's international importance for a number of species. Perhaps most important amongst these are England's Sandwich and Little Tern populations, which breed in internationally significant numbers on shingle and sand beaches (Lloyd *et al* 1991).

England's lowland heaths are widely recognised as internationally important remnants of this unique habitat (Farrell 1989). Heathlands support a characteristic and highly vulnerable breeding bird assemblage, including Hobby, Stone Curlew, Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler.

The English uplands support a breeding bird assemblage typical, in many ways, of more northern latitudes but with a unique species-mix of arctic and maritime bird species (Ratcliffe 1990). Many species also occur at or near the southern-most edge of their range, breed at high densities or are present in internationally significant numbers.

2.3.3 Species at or near the edge of their range

A number of bird species occur at or near the normal northern or southern-most edge of their West Palearctic range in England. These are listed in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Birds reaching the edge of their West Palearctic range in England

Breeding Range		Wintering Range	
Northern edge	Southern edge	Northern edge	Southern edge
Stone Curlew	Fulmar	Black-necked Grebe	Pink-footed Goose
Mediterranean Gull	Merlin	Bittern	Long-tailed Duck
Kingfisher	Red Grouse	Marsh Harrier	Red Grouse
Cetti's Warbler	Golden Plover	Crane	Glaucous Gull
Dartford Warbler	Dunlin	Spotted Redshank	Iceland Gull
Firecrest	Kittiwake	Common Sandpiper	Twite
Nightingale	Razorbill	Green Sandpiper	
Bearded Tit	Puffin	Ruff	
Cirl Bunting	Twite	Black-tailed Godwit	
		Mediterranean Gull	
		Kingfisher	
		Woodlark	
		Cetti's Warbler	
		Blackcap	
		Dartford Warbler	
		Firecrest	
		Black Redstart	
		Bearded Tit	
		Cirl Bunting	

Sources: Cramp *et al* (1977-92), Harrison (1982)

The largest group (19 species) comprises wintering species which occur on the northern edge of their range in England. This reflects the comparatively mild winters experienced in England. A number of species which migrate further south at comparable latitudes on the continent, remain in England throughout the winter. These include several reedbed species such as Bittern, resident passerines such as Dartford Warbler, a number of uncommon waders

wintering both inland and on the coast such as Green Sandpiper, Ruff and Black-tailed Godwit, and several other resident species such as Kingfisher and Woodlark. Six species occur at the southern edge of their regular winter range in England, including Long-tailed Duck, Glaucous and Iceland Gull, and Twite.

Nine species occur at the southern edge of their breeding range in England. These include a number of upland breeders such as Merlin, Golden Plover, Dunlin and Twite, and several cliff-nesting seabirds such as Fulmar, Kittiwake, Razorbill and Puffin (though small numbers of these latter species are also present on the cliffs of north-west France). Likewise, nine species also occur at the northern edge of their breeding range in England. These include Stone Curlew, Woodlark, Kingfisher, Dartford Warbler, Bearded Tit and Cirl Bunting. The comparatively large numbers of species that breed at the edge of their range may be a function of the considerable habitat diversity in England, coupled with its maritime and south-westerly position in the West Palearctic.

Species occurring at or near the edge of their range are of particular conservation significance. Firstly, we have a statutory responsibility to maintain the area of distribution of all naturally occurring 'Annex I' and migratory bird species under the terms of the EC Birds Directive. Secondly, species on the edge of their range may respond most rapidly to climate and other environmental change and so can provide valuable biological indicators. Finally, individuals that occur at the edge of a species' range may exhibit the greatest genetic variability in that population due to the variety of environmental conditions that they encounter. They may therefore be of great value to the population in coping with more widespread environmental changes.

2.3.4 Globally threatened birds in England

England now supports very small populations of two of the three *globally threatened* bird species that occur in Britain (see Collar and Andrew 1988 for definitions). The Red Kite was extinct as a breeding bird in England by the 1870s, but has been the subject of an experimental re-introduction programme since 1989. Young birds, initially from Sweden and now from Spain have been released every year, and the first successful breeding in the wild this century occurred in 1992. The Comcrake formerly bred throughout much of England but suffered a catastrophic decline after World War II associated with the increased intensity and mechanisation of farming practices (Cadbury 1980). Each year, a small number of calling birds are found in England. These may be breeding birds or males holding temporary territories during passage to breeding areas elsewhere. The White-tailed Eagle, the remaining globally threatened species with a British population, became extinct in England in the 1830s and has not re-colonised (Snow 1971), though individuals occasionally winter in England.

2.3.5 Internationally important populations of birds breeding in England

England supports the majority of pairs of two bird species, Sandwich Tern and Little Tern, which breed in Britain in internationally important numbers (defined as greater than 20% of the North-west European population, after Batten *et al* 1990). In addition, England also makes a significant contribution to the international importance of Britain for breeding populations of a further 12 species. Summary data for all these species is given in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 England's contribution to the internationally important breeding bird populations of Britain

Species	Number of pairs in England	Number of pairs in Britain	% British population in England	% international population in Britain [^]
Manx Shearwater	1800-2100	235,000	<1	80
Storm Petrel	>2500	20,000	>12.5	5-15
Gannet	780	160,000	<0.5	61
Golden Eagle	1+	424	<1	27
Peregrine	c.150	900+	c.17	45
Red Grouse	?	260,000-660,000	?	100
Curlew	?	33,000-38,000	?	26-31
Sandwich Tern*	11,300	14,000	81	26
Roseate Tern	40-45	172-177	25	10
Arctic Tern	4587	78,200	6	9
Little Tern*	1940	2,400	81	3.5
Guillemot	30,860	525,050	6	23
Razorbill	5400	73,850	7	13
Twite	?	20,000-40,000	?	100

[^] Where country groupings for assessing international importance differ from those used in Batten *et al* (1990), these are indicated in Appendix I and explained in Appendix III.

* denotes that England alone supports in excess of 20% of the North-west European population.

2.3.6 Internationally important populations of birds wintering in England

England is outstanding in supporting over 16 species in internationally important numbers in winter (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Birds wintering in internationally important numbers in England.

Species	Number of birds in England	Number of birds in Britain	% British population in England	% inter-national population in Britain [^]
Bewick's Swan*	7250	c.8000	c.90	47
Pink-footed Goose (Iceland/ E Greenland)	42,220	195,000	c.20	100
Dark-bellied Brent Goose*	124,000	124,000	100	50
Light-bellied Brent Goose* (Svalbard)	2710	2710	100	68**
Shelduck	58,480	75,000	>70	30
Wigeon	191,720	250,000	>70	33
Gadwall*	6570	c.7000	>90	>50
Teal	88,430	100,000	up to 80	25
Pintail	20,800	25,000	c.80	36
Oystercatcher	218,320	330,760	60	37
Ringed Plover	10,800	33,810	32	64
Grey Plover*	35,260	39,410	90	24
Knot*	266,050	283,190	94	60+
Bar-tailed Godwit	46,290	58,690	79	c.50
Dunlin*	390,830	450,610	87	33
Redshank	61,190	104,220	59	60
Turnstone	35,640	56,310	63	25+

[^] Where country groupings for assessing international importance differ from those used in Batten *et al* (1990). These are indicated in Appendix I and explained in Appendix III.

* England supports >85% of the British wintering population.

** England can support up to 100% of the Svalbard population of Light-bellied Brent Goose in hard winters.

It supports nearly all (over 85%) the British population of seven of these species (including both races of the Brent Goose). In addition, England supports populations of a further 12 species which winter in Britain as a whole in internationally important numbers (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 England's contribution to the internationally important wintering bird populations of Britain.

Species	Number of birds in England	Number of birds in Britain	% British population in England	% international population in Britain [^]
Red-throated Diver	?	>10,000	50-75	13+
Black-throated Diver	?	1300	50-75	1
Great Northern Diver	?	<3000	1-25	50?
Whooper Swan	1580	6000	c.25	35
Greylag Goose*	14,500	110,000	c.10	c.50
Barnacle Goose	2210	12,000	>15	100
Pochard	30,600	50,000	c.60	14
Golden Plover	140,000	200,000	c.70	25
Lapwing	?	1,000,000	?	15
Sanderling	13,230	17,380	76	14
Curlew	62,770	130,500	48	30
Twite (<i>pipilans</i> race)	?	20,000-40,000	?	100

[^] Where country groupings for assessing international importance differ from those used in Batten *et al* (1990), these are indicated in Appendix I and explained in Appendix III.

* The figures for Greylag Goose refer to the Icelandic breeding population and do not include feral birds.

2.3.7 Rare, local or declining breeding birds confined to England

In contrast to our internationally important bird populations, a number of species breeding in Britain are rare (less than 300 pairs), occur only at a few sites (greater than 50% of population occurs on 10 or fewer sites), or have shown marked declines over the last 25 years (50% or more). With few exceptions (Black Redstart and, possibly, Firecrest and Mediterranean Gull), these birds are extremely vulnerable. England holds all or virtually all of the British populations of no less than 23 such species (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Rare, local or declining breeding birds mainly or wholly confined to England

Species	Number of pairs in England	Number of sites	Long-term population trend in England	% of British population in England
Bittern	20-25	<10	Declining	100
Garganey	c.50	varies (>30)	Declining	up to 100
Pochard	250-350	>100	Stable	90+
Honey Buzzard	up to 20	c.20	Stable	c.75
Marsh Harrier	100*	70+	Recovering following decline	up to 100
Montagu's Harrier	7-15	<15	Slightly increasing after decline	100
Avocet	up to 520+	25+	Increasing	100
Stone Curlew	c.160	100+	Stable following decline	100
Ruff	up to 20-30	<10	Fluctuating	100
Black-tailed Godwit	up to 50+	<15	Fluctuating following increase	100
Mediterranean Gull	up to 15	c.10	Increasing	100
Sandwich Tern	11,300	20	Increasing	81
Little Tern	1940	c.40	Increasing	81
Woodlark	up to 350+	?	Fluctuating	100
Black Redstart	<120	varies	Stable following increase	100
Cetti's Warbler	up to 300+	varies	Fluctuating	up to 100
Savi's Warbler	<20	<10	Fluctuating	100
Marsh Warbler	<20	<10	Decline	100
Dartford Warbler	600-900	varies	Fluctuating	100
Firecrest	up to 100+	varies	Fluctuating	up to 80+
Bearded Tit	320	<40	Decline	100
Golden Oriole	up to 40	c.20	Fluctuating	100
Cirl Bunting	314	c.30	Declining	100

* The incidence of polygyny amongst Marsh Harriers makes estimating the precise number of breeding pairs difficult.

England also supports populations of a further 12 species which are rare, local or declining in Britain and which also occur in Scotland and/or Wales (Table 2.8).

Table 2.8 Rare, local or declining birds not confined to England

Species	Number of pairs in England	Number of sites in England	Long-term population trend	% of British population in England
Black-necked Grebe	15-30	c.15	Stable	c.70
Manx Shearwater	1800-2100	5	Stable	<1
Storm Petrel	>2500	5	Declining	>12.5
Gannet	780	1	Increasing	<0.5
Pintail	5-10	<10	Stable	<25
Goshawk	90-120	<100	Increasing	up to 75
Grey Partridge	?	numerous	Declining	?
Quail	*	?	Declining	?
Spotted Crake	<15	?	Fluctuating	?
Corncrake	<5	?	Declining	<1
Lapwing**	116,000	numerous	Declining	c.50
Roseate Tern	40-45	2	Declining	25

* Massive yearly fluctuations; usually 20-250 calling birds in Britain but >2000 in 1989 'invasion'.

** The Corncrake may or may not now breed within England (see Section 2.3.4).

*** Although listed as a 'candidate' *Red Data Bird* in Batten *et al* (1990), recent evidence suggests that Lapwing is now eligible for full *Red Data Bird* status on the basis of breeding population decline (O'Brien & Smith 1992). This illustrates the dynamic nature of the *Red Data Bird* list.

2.3.8 Birds confined to a small number of vulnerable sites in England in winter

Despite the size of some of our internationally important wintering bird populations, these may still be vulnerable where the individuals are confined or otherwise reliant upon a small number of sites (greater than 50% of population occurs on the 10 sites or fewer). The major fraction of populations of 10 species (including both races of Brent Goose) are confined to a small number of sites in England (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9 Birds confined to a small number of sites in winter in England

Species	Number of birds in England	Number of sites in England	% of British population in England
Bewick's Swan	7250	7*	up to 100
Bean Goose	440	1	85+
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	124,000	18*	100
Light-bellied Brent Goose (Svalbard)	2710	1	100
Gadwall	6570	10+*	>90
Avocet	930	25+	100
Grey Plover	35,260	11*	90
Knot	266,050	14*	94
Dunlin	390,830	13*	87
Black-tailed Godwit	7070	10*	99
Curlew	up to c.650	<10	100

* denotes number of sites of international importance in England

England also supports populations of 14 species which have vulnerable, locally distributed wintering populations throughout Britain, as shown in Table 2.10.

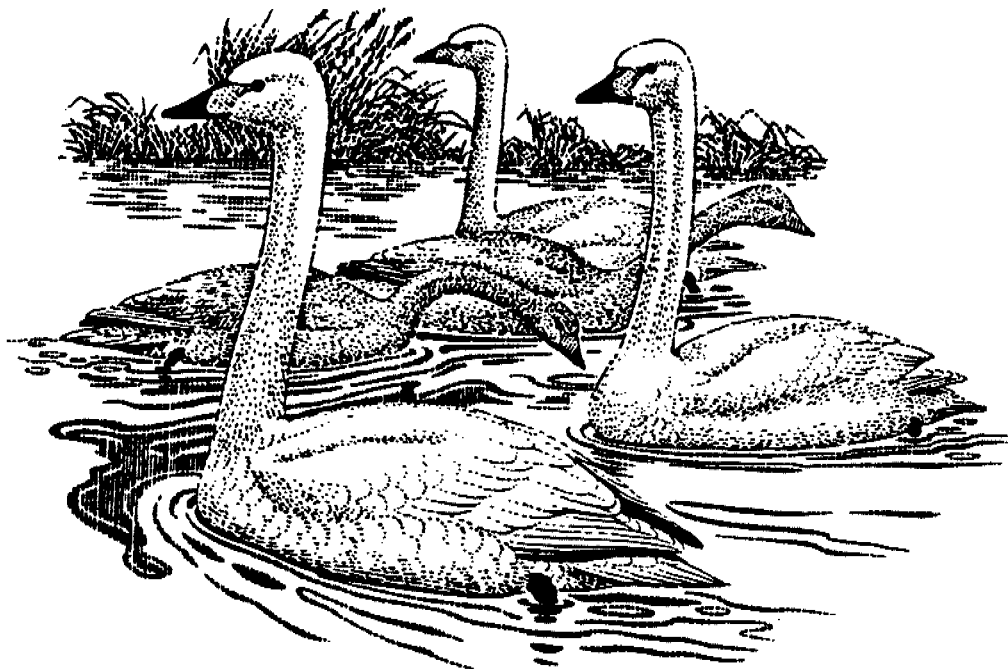


Table 2.10 Britain's wintering birds confined to a small number of sites in England

Species	Number of birds in England	Number of sites in England	% of British population in England
Barnacle Goose (Svalbard)	2210	1	>15
Shelduck	58,480	11*	>70
Wigeon	191,720	4*	>70
Pintail	20,800	10*	c.80
Shoveler	6890	4*	c.75
Scaup	970	c.35	c.30
Long-tailed Duck	510	?	<5
Common Scoter	1800	?	5
Velvet Scoter	?	?	?
Oystercatcher	218,320	5*	66
Ringed Plover	10,800	5*	32
Sanderling	13,230	1*	76
Bar-tailed Godwit	46,290	9*	79
Redshank	61,190	13*	59

* denotes number of sites of international importance in England

2.3.9 'Special Category' birds breeding in England

A small number of British species are listed as *Red Data Birds* because we are concerned about their status. However, the available data do not allow us to evaluate fully the current status or historical trends of these species. England supports breeding populations of seven of the nine 'Special Category' *Red Data Birds* (Table 2.11). None are entirely confined to England, but 95% of breeding Nightjars and over three-quarters of breeding Barn Owls occur in England (Gribble 1983; Shawyer 1987).

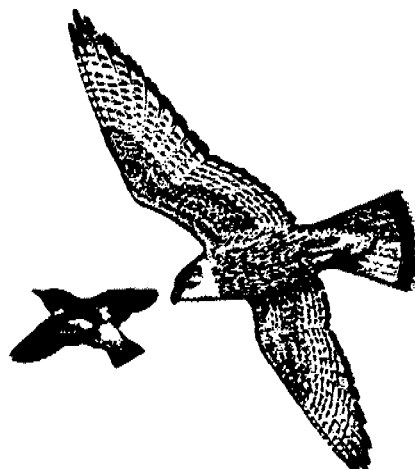
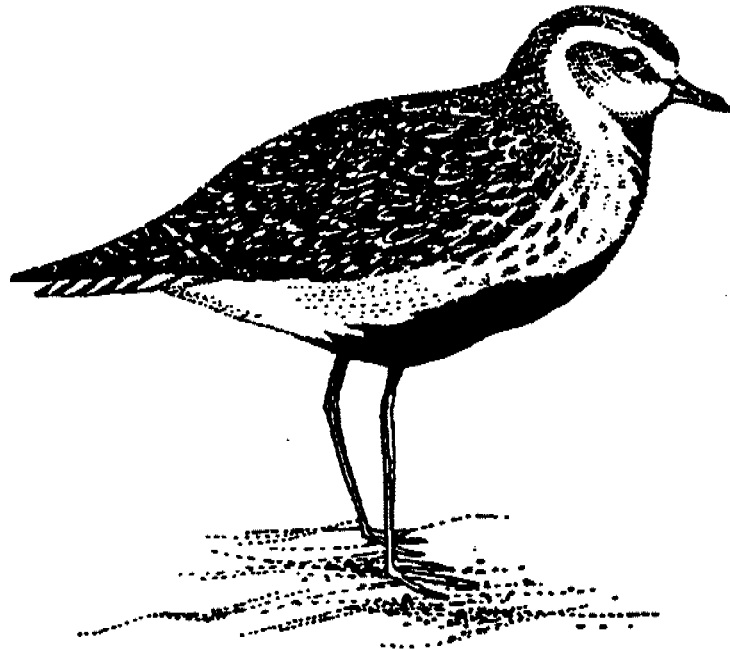


Table 2.11 'Special Category' *Red Data Birds* breeding in England

Species	Number of breeding pairs in England	% of British breeding population in England
Hen Harrier	<20	<4
Merlin	220-300	35+
Black Grouse	?	?
Dotterel	<5	<1
Golden Plover	?	?
Barn Owl	3340	76
Nightjar	1930	95



2.3.10 Birds which are occasional or extremely rare breeding species

England supports extremely small or intermittent breeding populations of 16 bird species, and all but one of these is a *Red Data Bird* (Table 2.12); Penduline Tit first bred in 1991, after publication of the Red Data Book. Several species such as Red Kite, Quail and Wryneck were formerly much more numerous and widespread. Four other species make regular nesting attempts and six have nested occasionally. The rarity of several of these birds is likely to result from England being at the edge of their breeding range. Others may be in the process of colonising England. This is no doubt true of the Mediterranean Gull, whose breeding population is now over ten pairs, and could soon be true of other species, not yet *Red Data Birds*, which may well breed in near future. These could include Little Egret, Spoonbill and Greenish Warbler.

Table 2.12 Birds which are occasional or extremely rare breeders in England

Species	Breeding status	Number of pairs in England	% of British population in England
Red-necked Grebe	Occasional	0-5	c.50-75
Little Bittern	Irregular (1)	0-1	100
Red Kite	Annual	8*	7
Crane	Annual	1-3	100
Black-winged Stilt	Irregular (2)	0-1	100
Little Gull	Irregular (4)	0-1	100
Hoopoe	Irregular (12)	0-1	100
Bee-eater	Irregular (0)	0-1	?
Wryneck	Occasional	0-2	<25
Fieldfare	Occasional	up to 6	up to 50
Redwing	Irregular (3)	0-1	<5
Penduline Tit**	First bred 1991	0-1	100
Red-backed Shrike	Occasional***	0-1	100
Serin	Annual	up to 9	100
Parrot Crossbill	Irregular (2)	0-1	100
Scarlet Rosefinch	First bred 1992	3+	up to 100

Figures in brackets give the number of recorded breeding attempts in the last 25 years for irregular breeders.

* Nine young were reared by four pairs in 1992, the first time the Red Kite has bred in England since the 1860s. This has been followed by eight pairs rearing 14 young in 1993. There are perhaps 100 individuals resident in England.

** The Penduline Tit is not listed as a *Red Data Bird* in Batten *et al* (1990), but now qualifies for this status as a rare breeder.

*** Thought to be lost as a breeding species but one pair bred in 1992, the first time since 1988. Dramatic decline since the mid-19th Century.

2.3.11 Birds which no longer breed in England

A small number of *Red Data Bird* species (Table 2.13) have ceased to breed in England within historic times and we have good evidence of both their former distribution and abundance.