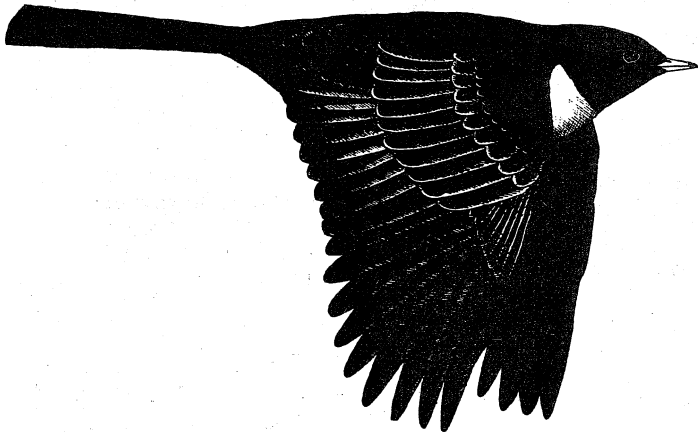


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49 (Part 2)*

**The Bedfordshire Bird  
Report for 1994**



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**THE BEDFORDSHIRE BIRD CLUB 1995**  
**(Established 1993)**

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The Bedfordshire Bird Club is the ornithological section of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society (Registered Charity No. 268659). All enquiries should be directed to the Hon. Secretary (BBC), 14 Hornbeam Close, Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 8UX.

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**CONTENTS**

**THE BEDFORDSHIRE BIRD REPORT 1994**

Officers of the Bird Club	ii
List of Plates	1
Report of the General Management Committee	2
Proceedings	3
Report of the Bird Recorders	4
Review of 1994	5
Systematic List	8
Miscellaneous Records – exotica	43
Appendix A – request for known records of other birds in 1994	44
Dunstable STW: Review of 1994 – P.Trodd	44
Ring Ouzels: Where from, where to, why here? – B.S. Nau	46
Waterways survey on the River Ivel – J.T.R. Sharrock	56
Bird Ringing Report 1994 – D.Woodhead	56
Bedfordshire County Bird List 1995 – D. Odell & M. Palmer	61
The Bird Club	iii
The Bedfordshire Natural History Society	iii
Map of Bedfordshire	iv

Front cover: Ring Ouzel – Michael Pocock

**LIST OF PLATES**

<b>Plate No.</b>	<b>Facing Page</b>
<b>Plate 1 Little Egret</b> <i>Richard Revels</i>	16
<b>Plate 2 Little Ringed Plover</b> <i>Paul Trodd</i>	16
<b>Plate 3 Wood Sandpiper</b> <i>Paul Trodd</i>	17
<b>Plate 4 Grey Phalarope</b> <i>Martin Palmer</i>	17
<b>Plate 5 Ring Ouzel</b> <i>Paul Adams</i>	48
<b>Plate 6 Blows Down</b> <i>Bernard Nau</i>	48
<b>Plate 7 Black Redstart</b> <i>Paul Trodd</i>	49
<b>Plate 8 Blackcap</b> <i>Errol Newman</i>	49

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The Society would like to thank Bedfordshire County Council, Bedford Borough Council, Mid Bedfordshire District Council, South Bedfordshire District Council and Luton Borough Council for grants towards the publication of the Journal this year.

## REPORT OF THE BIRD CLUB MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR 1994

The Club entered 1994 as one of the youngest but one of the fastest growing and most dynamic ornithological groups in the country . . . . a fact borne out by the magazine *Birdwatch*'s membership survey last year. Following on from the highly applauded conference in 1993 and with membership heading towards 300, the committee turned its attention to other, possibly more important, things.

Perhaps the most important initiative during the year was the questionnaire that was sent out to all members asking for their views on the Club's performance so far. Although the results are still being analysed, the general response was extremely favourable. Half the membership lives in the Luton-Dunstable urban district and the vast majority of members are over 30 years old. The *Hobby*, our bi-monthly newsletter, was extremely well received and some of the suggestions for improving the Bird Report are already in hand. The percentage of members sending in records annually for both common and rare species was disappointingly low; this is something that will hopefully be redressed as proposals come forward to involve a greater section of the membership in regular survey work of selected "patches", information that is convincingly needed to monitor and safeguard many lesser known sites or habitats within the county.

The Club also broke new ground this year by becoming twinned with the New Haven Bird Club in Connecticut, New England, the home city of Yale University. The establishment of links between the two clubs must be something of a first in birding circles and augurs well for the future. We in Bedfordshire should feel honoured to be partnered with one of the most respected and well organised of U.S. clubs which was founded in 1907. Notwithstanding this, the Club also twinned with Long Point Bird Observatory, on the shores of Lake Erie, Ontario, later in the year. We can be proud of launching this forward thinking, joint Anglo-American initiative.

The Records and Research Committee were busy setting up a full survey of the Lady Amherst's Pheasant. The Society's new Breeding Birds Atlas, published at the end of the year, postulated a possible decline in the species' fortunes and it became obvious that more knowledge was needed if we are to see the species survive in its only other stronghold outside China. Another aspect of their work has been to develop a "rare and threatened species register" prior to preparing conservation action plans for those species where numbers in the County are already low or are declining at a considerable rate. Developing a system to rate "County Wildlife Sites" for ornithological interest was also begun.

The Club's "winter garden birds feeding survey", begun in October 1993, was a huge success and has been repeated. A summary of the results can be found in the July edition of the *Hobby*. There were 84 contributors in 93/94, which increased to 101 in 94/95.

A joint "bird-race" with the East Beds RSPB Group was held at the close of the year and raised money both for the Club and for the RSPB's marine campaign.

The AGM, held at Maulden in February, saw Roger Dumpleton, Paul Trodd and Alan Wakeford standing down from the committee. We would like to thank them for their efforts during the initial period of the Club's formation. Martin Garner and Boo Matthews were elected to serve on the management committee. During the year seven indoor and eighteen outdoor meetings were included in the programme, the undoubted highlight of which was the talk on "The Birds of Russia" given by Dr. Algirdas Knystautas, an eminent ornithologist and bird photographer.

A. WHITNEY, Hon. Secretary, Bedfordshire Bird Club

## PROCEEDINGS

### Indoor Meetings

- 12th Ordinary Meeting** 25th January, Maulden. "Twitchers' evening", jointly with the Society. Chair: Mr D. Ball
- 2nd Annual General Meeting** 22nd February, Maulden. Followed by "Two in the bush – a review of recent bird-ringing results in the County" by Mr E. Newman. Chair: Mr D. Kramer.
- 13th Ordinary Meeting** 29th March, Maulden. "Birding in Turkey" by Mr R. Chittenden. Chair: Mr K. Sharpe
- 14th Ordinary Meeting** 27th September, Maulden. "Birds of five different habitats" by Mr P. Morrison. Chair: Mr K. Sharpe
- 15th Ordinary Meeting** 25th October, Maulden. "The Birds of Russia" by Dr A. Knystautas. Chair: Mr P. Smith.
- 16th Ordinary Meeting** 29th November, Maulden. "Birding in the footsteps of Darwin – the Galapagos Islands" by Mr P. Smith. Chair: Mr K. Sharpe
- 17th Ordinary Meeting** 20th December, Maulden. Social evening with a light-hearted birding quiz. Chair: Mr M. Palmer.

### Field Meetings

- North-west Norfolk** 9th January. Winter waders and wildfowl.  
Leader: Mr P. Marshall.
- Marston Vale brick pits** 29th January. Gull watch and wildfowl.  
Leader: Mr M. Palmer.
- East Norfolk** 6th February. Winter wildfowl. Leader: Mr B. Harding.
- The Lee Valley** 13th March. Wildfowl and early spring migrants.  
Leader: Mr T. Donnelly.
- Rutland Water** 10th April. Wildfowl, waders and spring migrants.  
Leader: Miss S. Alliez.
- Blows Down** 24th April. Spring Migrants. Leader: Mr R. Dazley.
- Maulden Woods** 8th May. Dawn chorus. Leader: Mr P. Trodd.
- Dunstable STW** 18th May. Passage waders and other migrants. Leader: Mr P. Trodd.
- Cliffe and the Isle of Sheppey** 22nd May. Summer migrants. Leader: Mr D. Green.
- The New Forest** 11th June. Species special to the area. Leader: Mr K. Sharpe.
- The Lodge, Sandy** 16th June. Evening walk for summer birds.  
Leader: Mr M. Kemp, reserve warden
- The Brecks and North Norfolk** 19th June. Species special to the area.  
Leader: the late Mr R. Moore.
- Waterloo Thorns** 17th July. Bird-ringing demonstration. Leader: Mr E. Newman.
- Earl's Barton and neighbouring gravel pits** 21st August. Birdlife of old and newly-dug gravel pits. Leader: Mr P. Campbell, Northants Bird Club.
- Fagbury and Landguard Point** 24th September. Autumn migrants.  
Leaders: Mr D. Green & Mr K. Sharpe.
- Portland Bird Observatory** 7th-9th October. Weekend trip for late migrants.  
Leaders: Mr M. Rogers, PBO Warden & Mr D. Green.
- Priory Country Park, Bedford** 23rd October. Winter migrants and bird-ringing demonstration. Leaders: Mr K. Sharpe & Mr E. Newman.
- Fen Drayton and neighbouring gravel pits** 19th November. Winter wildfowl and waders. Leader: Mr P. Almond.

## BIRD REPORT FOR 1994

### Report of the Recorders

#### INTRODUCTION

Firstly, it was with regret that we learnt that Dave Ball would have to retire as Recorder from the end of February 1995 due to pressures of work. Dave had undertaken the task of Recorder with a considerable relish and particular humour. If anyone could be considered a genuine Bedfordshire Birder then it is he. Is there a remote path or corner of the entire County, including the 'wastelands' of the north, which Dave has not checked out at some time? Not content with having seen more species in the County than any other (leading a 'famous five' in Barry Nightingale, Dave Odell, Martin Palmer, Arthur Livett and Lee Evans), he also has far and away the largest self-found list for Bedfordshire. We are delighted that Dave has agreed to stay on as a member of the local rarities panel.

Dave Odell and Martin Palmer took over jointly as Recorders for Birds for the BNHS and the BBC in early March 1995, and their first task was to compile this report. We hope that readers will find it a homely, none too dry report while still providing an accurate scientific record of birds in Bedfordshire during the year.

We are grateful to those BBC and BNHS members and all those others who submitted records for 1994. Well over 2,000 record cards were received, many crammed with individual sightings. A plea please for 1995 that submissions are sent in on correct record cards and, where appropriate for scarce and rare species, rarities description forms rather than a letter or list involving several species which somebody else then has to copy out onto cards for consideration. Batches of record cards and rarity forms are freely available on request from either of the Recorders or via any Bird Club committee member.

Not surprisingly the compilation of this report took very many hours. We would thank firstly the rarities committee, which assessed well over 100 records for 1994 between March and July this year. This committee comprises DJO and MJP plus D.H. Ball, B.J. Nightingale, J.T.R. Sharrock and our newest member P. Smith. Peter's appointment follows the decision reported last year to rotate the membership of the panel to bring in fresh blood. Our thanks go to those retiring members of the panel for their sterling efforts over the years. Arthur Livett gave 25 years excellent service and was duly accredited last year. We trust that his records from Luton Hoo will continue to form a key section of this report. Paul Trodd, as both a rarity team member and past recorder, will now concentrate on his beloved Dunstable STW and the clarity of the picture from this, arguably the best site in the south of the County, is in no small part due to his efforts. Duncan Woodhead is the third to stand down after some ten years or so membership of the rarities panel. Another who has provided much 'local patch' information from Harrold-Odell CP and Radwell GP over the years, Duncan remains one of the most experienced of our band of ringers in Bedfordshire as his annual ringing report bears testimony. The County also bade farewell to Paul Oldfield who has moved to Felixstowe. His dedicated ringing and recording efforts at South Mills NR were of considerable value. He will now bring his own special brand of humour and skill to the bird-ringing team at Landguard Point BO.

Next, due praise must be given to those who helped compile the species reports. As in recent years, various sections were drafted by a group of volunteers to whom we are particularly grateful, these sections being as follows:

Divers, grebes, cormorants and herons	– Dave Odell
Swans, geese and ducks	– Dave Kramer
Raptors, game birds and rails	– Dave Odell
Waders	– Pete Smith
Skuas, gulls and terns	– Martin Palmer
Doves, owls and woodpeckers etc	– John Swann
Larks, hirundines, pipits and wagtails	– John Bowler
Wren, dunnock, chats and thrushes	– Rob Dazley
Warblers, flycatchers and tits etc	– Barry Nightingale
Crows, sparrows, finches and buntings	– Dave Ball

Finally, thanks are also due to Peter Almond who analysed and wrote onto record cards all the relevant entries from the log book at Rookery South CIP. The systematic list was compiled by Martin Palmer and Dave Odell, and was proof-read by Errol Newman.

Contributors to the report are as follows, with due apologies to anyone inadvertently omitted:

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## REVIEW OF 1994

January saw a flock of 6,500 Golden Plovers near Broom. It attracted observers looking for rarities in their midst but, despite the odd unsubstantiated claim, none were found. Six Long-eared Owls were seen at a traditional roost in the south. Sadly though, three Barn Owls and one Short-eared Owl were found dead during the year. Overwintering birds included a few each of Green Sandpiper, Chiffchaff, Stonechat and Blackcap. The latter species was usually found visiting birdwatchers' gardens. Only a few Brambling were reported in both winter periods and Tree Sparrows were never easy to find. A Firecrest was elusive along the Caulcott side of Stewartby Lake. The massive gull roosts of the brick pits attracted many observers and they located good

numbers of Mediterranean Gulls, Iceland Gulls and Glaucous Gulls during the 'season'. A Smew and three Red-crested Pochards at Brogborough were brief visitors and a female of the latter species was occasionally seen at Priory CP. A Scaup, interestingly in transient first-winter plumage, stayed for some weeks at Priory CP. A few Buzzards were seen, a Hen Harrier wandered around the Cardington and Old Warden area and Merlins dashed over Biggleswade and Whipsnade. Twenty-three Knot at Priory CP on January 23rd were the largest group of this scarce species for the County ever recorded. Seven Grey Plover were at this site on the same date.

In February, a Bittern was reported by the gamekeeper at Southill but, unfortunately, no substantiating details were supplied. In comparing editions of the *Hobby* for 1994 with the year end records received, it was evident that a good number of claimed rarities for the County were not backed up with a description for circulation to the rarities panel. No doubt several genuine records have thus been lost. The Recorders appeal for all species needing a few descriptive lines or full details of their occurrence to be submitted promptly after the sighting so that these reports may be as fully as practicable a record of the birding scene in Bedfordshire each year [see Appendix A]. Elsewhere, a Brent Goose was found in the unlikely habitat of a farm pool at Shuttleworth, three Common Scoters at Priory CP were rather early for this species and a Merlin was seen at Rookery CIP. A flock of Hawfinches at Woburn Park attracted many observers and gave excellent views.

March saw another Merlin, this one at Streatley. An amazing total of four Iceland Gulls were seen in a single roost at Stewartby Lake, matching the all time total for Bedfordshire up till 1989! Another Firecrest, this time very well seen, was at Tiddenfoot WP. A Yellow-legged Gull was identified at Stewartby Lake; greater observer awareness of this difficult species, recently split from Herring Gull, is probably accounting for the increasing number of records. Six Crossbills were at Woburn Park and another at Northill. The first Sand Martin of the year had returned by the 14th of the month. By the third week of March, three Wheatears were at Blows Downs, increasing over the next few days to 22. Black Redstarts also appeared on Blows Downs and by the end of March the now expected Ring Ouzel passage was well under way. Three Garganey at Rookery CIP were early visitors and 35 Ruddy Ducks at this same site reflect the success of this North American stiffail in suitable habitat. Other unusual visitors to the County at this time included a Water Pipit at Dunstable STW and a Knot in Rookery CIP. The only spring record of Black-tailed Godwit was of twelve at Willington GP, and an Osprey at this site was the earliest ever recorded in Bedfordshire.

April started with a Mandarin Duck at Dunstable STW, which was a site first, and a Scaup at Cuckoo Bridge GP. Two Brent Geese were seen at Rookery CIP and at Stewartby Lake. Strong winds resulted in a movement of good numbers of Arctic Terns and one Kittiwake. A Common Scoter visited Brogborough Lake. Good numbers of Siskin stayed on well into April. The first Black Tern of the year was seen and waders recorded this month included Bar-tailed Godwit and Whimbrel. A drake Garganey was at Luton Hoo.

May saw an excellent wader passage. Bar-tailed Godwits were well recorded with an impressive 25 at Rookery CIP on 7th and 22 on 16th. Also here were a record total of 50 Dunlin, and other interesting and unusual species seen included Turnstone, Grey Plover, Whimbrel, Sanderling, Knot, Little Stint and Wood Sandpiper. Once again, Hobbies passed through in good numbers and a few pairs stayed to breed; observers are requested to submit all records of this nationally scarce species especially where breeding may be suspected. Ospreys excited observers at Broom, Langford, Priory CP and Rookery CIP. Marsh Harriers, rare but expected in May, provided three records. Two



Firecrests sang on Dunstable Downs and two Little Terns were at Stewartby Lake. Breeding wader records included a pair of Ringed Plovers in the centre of Luton on a building site, with water kindly provided by the local fire brigade. The Curlew pair in the north of the County were again present in the breeding season. No breeding records were received for Snipe from any location. The Recorders ask observers to submit all breeding details of waders and gulls in Bedfordshire.

As expected, June saw the breeding season in full swing. Quail called from several locations with more than one at Totternhoe. The Barn Owls at their traditional site at Willington Dovecote reportedly raised three young. The Black-headed Gull colony at Chimney Corner contained at least twenty nesting pairs. Two pairs of Wood Warbler bred at Aspley Heath. Long-eared Owls raised at least two broods in the south of the County. Several pairs of Grey Wagtails bred. Late June and into July brought unprecedented numbers of Buzzard sightings.

A Little Gull was an unusual July record at Priory CP. The only Nightjar claim came from Melchbourne. Water Rails reportedly bred at Flitwick Moor again. A Red-crested Pochard and another Turnstone were at Rookery CIP along with a Garganey, two Curlew Sandpipers and a very early Stonechat. A Red Kite flew over Blows Downs and a Crossbill was seen at Chicksands. Another Garganey was at Willington GP and a Marsh Harrier over Galley Hill.

Wood Larks probably bred in the County with a well grown youngster seen being fed in August. The wader passage included an excellent count of 19 Black-tailed Godwits at Rookery CIP. The star bird of the year was a well-watched and long-staying Little Egret at Harrold-Odell CP. Observers travelled from all over the County to see this elegant bird and to add it to their personal County lists. Further excitement was provided at the end of the month by a trip of five Dotterel at Galley Hill which also attracted many observers to what may prove to be a regular migration stop-over for this enigmatic species. Marsh Harriers were seen at Great Barford and at Luton Hoo and a possible Montagu's Harrier was found at Warden Hill. Ospreys were seen on migration over Priory CP in August and September.

Strong winds and rain resulted in a heavy passage of Black Terns across the County in September. Associated with this influx were Arctic and Sandwich Terns, Little Gulls and probably two Skuas. A confiding Grey Phalarope at Stewartby Lake was only the third this century. Five Little Stints and two Curlew Sandpipers were in Rookery CIP. Ospreys visited Dunstable STW and Blunham and there was a record count of 40 Cormorants at Dunstable STW.

The only acceptable Peregrine of the year was in October at Whipsnade Zoo. This month also saw a brief Great Grey Shrike at Bedford STW and another Mediterranean Gull was found nearby at Willington GP. The excellent year for Buzzards continued with a pair over Whipsnade and five soaring over Exeter Wood. A Red Kite spent an afternoon in this area where it was much appreciated by a few fortunate observers. A Hen Harrier was seen at Clifton. The first Iceland and Glaucous Gulls of the second winter period appeared. There was another Bittern at Priory CP where also there was a very good passage of Stonechats. There were late records of Black Redstarts and Wheatears at Blows Downs. Other Black Redstarts were seen at Harlington, Wootton and Houghton Regis. An Osprey spent three weeks at Blunham while a Knot at Rookery CIP completed an interesting month.

Buzzards continued to be seen in November. Red-crested Pochards were at Brogborough Lake and Rookery CIP. A Slavonian Grebe stayed briefly at Priory CP. A Brent Goose flew over Brogborough Lake which also produced two Red-breasted Mergansers, three Common Scoters, probably six Yellow-legged Gulls and further

Iceland Gull sightings. A Smew was at Willington GP and another Red-breasted Merganser was at Priory CP. Reports of a few Blackcaps suggested they were likely to overwinter. A Bar-tailed Godwit over Priory CP on 19th November was the latest ever date for this species in the County.

In December, a Great Northern Diver was briefly at Harrold-Odell CP before it flew off south. An Iceland Gull was only the second site record at Priory CP. A Bittern was found at Brogborough Lake and a Red-necked Grebe was located at the same site. Another Red-crested Pochard was found at Radwell GP. 120 Grey Partridges were counted in the Stopsley area. Two Smew flew over Priory CP and another was discovered on the last day of the year at Harrold-Odell CP when there was also a Scaup at Priory CP.

In summary, a total of some 185 species were accepted as occurring in the County during 1994 which is much the same as in other recent years. There were no new additions to the Bedfordshire list.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST FOR 1994

As noted last year, nomenclature still follows, by and large, the 'familiar' English names used in the '*British Birds' list of Birds of the Western Palearctic (1984)*. These are the names in general usage by the County's birdwatchers as, in general terms, we do not enjoy visits by exotica from European or trans-Atlantic shores where perhaps some of the more modern naming might be considered more appropriate.

The following abbreviations have been used in the text: BBRC – British Birds' Rarities Committee, BTO – British Trust for Ornithology, CBC – Common Bird Census, CES – Constant Effort Site, ChP – Chalk Pit, ClP – Clay Pit, CP – Country Park, GC – Golf Course, GP – Gravel Pit, NR – Nature Reserve, SP – Sand Pit, STW – Sewage Treatment Works, WP – Waterside Park, Zoo – generally used to refer to the Wild Animal Kingdom at Whipsnade. Place names for mineral excavations follow those by Nightingale (*Bedf.Nat.* 39 73–74) except that for Barkers Lane GP which is now generally known as Priory CP.

CBC – the Common Birds Census is the BTO's main scheme whereby breeding population levels of common birds are monitored in the UK (BJN, JTRS).

CES – Constant Effort Sites are those 120+ sites throughout Britain and Ireland where birds are trapped in a series of mist-nets, during 10–12 morning visits spread evenly between the beginning of May and the end of August, erected in the same place year by year, allowing the BTO to monitor changes in breeding success and survival of our common songbirds (ECN).

## Non-passerines

### Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* (Brunnich)

The only diver of the year was of this species seen at Harrold-Odell CP on the afternoon of 4th December. It was only seen briefly before it flew off south-west. It was the sixth County record since 1946 (DHB).

### Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (Pallas)

Breeding was proven at Rookery ClP, where three pairs raised six young, Houghton Regis ChP where there were two pairs, on the River Hiz and at Church Lane pits Arlesey. It undoubtedly bred elsewhere in the County but details were not forthcoming. Site maxima during the year were of 17 at Priory CP on 11th November the highest ever total for this site, 14 at Stewartby Lake on 6th November, 21 at Rookery ClP on 30th September, 17 at Luton Hoo on 11th September and just six at Brogborough Lake on 24th December. One at Whipsnade Zoo on 24th–31st March was a site first.

### Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* (L.)

Breeding season records came from Dunstable STW – where one pair summered, Houghton Regis ChP – one to two pairs, Tiddenfoot SP – one pair raised two young,

Willington GP – one pair raised two young, Brogborough Lake – one pair, Coronation CIP – two pairs, Priory CP – two pairs, Rookery CIP – one pair raised three young, Millbrook Pillinge CIP – two pairs, Langford GP – three pairs, Felmersham NR – three pairs, Southill Lake – two pairs, Battlesden Lake – one pair, Woburn Basin Pond – two pairs, and Luton Hoo – seven pairs.

Selected counts during the year included 30 at Priory CP on 25th February with 35 there on 21st December, 20 at Brogborough Lake on 19th February and 23 on 24th April. Southill Lake had 22 present on 28th August and there were 20 at Luton Hoo on 11th November. Counts of three figures were recorded at Stewartby Lake a few winters ago, the reduction resulting from a mixture of a series of milder winters as well as the regular disturbance by power boats and sailing. Nowadays it is likely that this species occurs at more numerous locations rather than concentrating on a few key sites.

**Red-necked Grebe** *P. grisegena* (Boddaert)

A presumed first-winter bird was found at Brogborough Lake on 24th December. Elusive at first, it remained until 25th February 1995 (MJP, PS, MSG *et al.*).

**Slavonian Grebe** *P. auritis* (L.)

The only record was a bird present for just an hour at Priory CP on 3rd November (DK).

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* (L.)

This species was widely reported in suitable habitat but previous predictions for breeding in the County have yet to be realised, though it does seem just a matter of time. A decline was noted in the winter roost at Brogborough Lake with a maximum of 40 on 26th November. Increased numbers continued to be seen away from the Marston Vale. At Dunstable STW there was “an astonishing increase” in August and September; 40 were recorded there on 18th September. Grovebury SP held 30 birds on 31st December, a site record. At Priory CP there was a maximum of 36 in December. Southill Lake had 12 in December, Luton Hoo had nine in February, Harrold-Odell CP had 33 on 14th March, and on 16th October there were nine at Rookery CIP.

Birds showing characters of the continental race, *P. c. sinensis* (Blumenbach), were at Brogborough Lake on 10th February and Priory CP on 18th February.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* (L.)

The number of records of this rare visitor to the County have increased in recent years. This could be due to individuals returning to favoured sites. A Bittern was at Priory CP on 16th October (DK) and reported again a few days later. A very elusive bird was seen on three occasions in the reed-bed at the western end of Brogborough Lake on 15th and 31st December then on 18th January 1995 (MKB, RAN, MJP *et al.*).

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* (L.)

The fourth County record of this species and the first truly twitchable record occurred at Harrold-Odell CP from 17th August to 7th September (MJP, JB, PS, PA *et al.*). It delighted its many admirers once the news broke on the 20th giving close views on a small silted pool at the eastern end of the country park and roosting on the island in the middle of the main lake. This species is likely to occur far more often in Bedfordshire in the future as numbers continue to increase in the south-west of Britain and along the south coast. (*Plate 1*)

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* L.

The four heronries in the County all had successful seasons. The well-watched Bromham Hall site held 16 nests, eleven of which were successful with 23 fledged young. At Luton Hoo, nine pairs nested whereas at Southill Park there were 18–21 nests. Finally, at the County's newest heronry, at Harrold-Odell CP, two pairs nested. The highest counts during 1994 were 26 at Priory CP on 23rd January and 19 there on 10th July. There were twelve at Dunstable STW in September.

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor* (Gmelin)

Breeding was noted from Battlesden Lake, Brogborough Lake, Church End Pit (Arlesey), Coronation CIP (three pairs), Cranfield, Dunstable STW, Felmersham NR,

Harrold-Odell CP, Langford GP, Stewartby Lake, Millbrook Pillinge CIP, Luton Hoo, Oakley, Priory CP area (four pairs), Rookery North CIP, Rookery South CIP and Willington GP. Larger gatherings involved 32 at Woburn Lakes in February, c.40 along The Embankment, Bedford on 30th April, 78 at Stewartby Lake on 13th July, up to 41 at Rookery South CIP on 13th November and c.50 at Woburn Park on 3rd December – the highest count of the year.

Three birds died after hitting overhead cables at Dunstable STW following two here in 1993. A colour-ringed female present at Dunstable STW from early January to mid-March had been ringed on the River Cherwell, Gibraltar, Oxfordshire on 13th August 1990.

#### **Greylag Goose** *A. anser* (L.)

Breeding took place at the usual sites with 20 adults and 23 young at Southill Lake on 22nd May and 18 plus 23 respectively on 12th June. Three pairs nested at Felmersham with two of the pairs producing 15 young.

A count of 320 at Radwell GP on 3rd June included c.150 juveniles. Larger concentrations from traditional sites included 15 at Willington GP on 30th January, 68 at Southill Lake on 17th July and 96 there on 23rd October. Sixty plus were at Harrold-Odell CP on 20th August, 63 were at Rookery CIP on 29th August, up to 25 were at Dunstable STW in September with 49 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 11th. Forty-nine were at Rookery South CIP on 17th September and 60 on 22nd September, then 52 on 30th October.

#### **Greylag x Canada Goose hybrids**, *Anser x Branta*

One at Brogborough Lake on 24th April was paired with a Canada Goose. Other single 'Grenada' geese were recorded from Brogborough Lake and Woburn Park on 19th February, Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 15th May, and Rookery CIP on 29th August after three there on 14th.

#### **Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis* (L.)

Breeding was noted as follows; one pair produced five young near Bromham Hall, one pair bred at Coronation CIP, one pair raised one young at Dunstable STW, one pair raised two young at Langford GP, several nested at Luton Hoo, two pairs produced eight young at Millbrook Pillinge CIP, one pair produced six young at Stewartby Lake, three pairs produced 17 young at Priory CP and a pair with five young visited the lake in May and June, presumably having moved from Bedford Embankment during the River Festival activities, and, finally, 42 young were present with 41 adults at Southill Lake on 12th June.

High counts involved 90 at Priory CP in January, 71 at Woburn Park on 8th January with 101 there on 12th February, 132 at Stewartby Lake on 29th January, 104 at Luton Hoo on 13th March, 157 at Radwell GP on 3rd June, 107 at Rookery CIP on 4th June, 40 at Coronation CIP on 6th June, 135 at Southill Lake on 17th July, 180 at Rookery CIP on 14th August, 199 there on 29th and 230+ on 6th September, 95 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 25th August with 68 there on 11th September, 60 at Langford GP on 11th September, 350 at Luton Hoo on 12th September, 200 at East Hyde on 25th September with 150 there on 9th October. 168 were at Priory CP and 48 at Dunstable STW in September and 154 were at Woburn Lake on 3rd December.

#### **Barnacle Goose** *B. leucopsis* (Bechstein)

Possibly as a result of culling Canada Geese in Coronation CIP or elsewhere in the Marston Vale, numbers of Barnacle Geese in the County were down in single figures for much of the year but fortunately they bred successfully at Rookery South CIP again with one pair raising three young. Small numbers of between one to five birds were recorded from a variety of other sites, including Coronation CIP, Priory CP, Rookery North CIP and Rookery South CIP and Stewartby Lake, probably emanating from the small clay pit population. Singles at Luton Hoo on 13th January and Great Barford with Greylags on 30th March plus two at Willington GP on 16th October

could have come from elsewhere but no records in the year were believed to concern fully wild migrants. The largest numbers recorded this year were six at Stewartby Lake on 29th January with probably the same six at Rookery CIP on 15th March, seven were at Rookery North CIP on 10th July with eleven at Rookery South CIP on 30th August. Eleven were again at Rookery CIP (nine North and two South) on 17th September with records of eight at Stewartby Lake on 16th and 17th September involving the same birds.

**Brent Goose** *B. bernicla* (L.)

An adult dark-bellied Brent Goose was at Shuttleworth College Reservoir on 24th February (GG). Two adults of this nominate race were at both Stewartby Lake and Rookery South CIP on 10th April (JB, DJO). A single of the dark-bellied race flew low north-west over Brogborough Lake on 5th November, the description received confirming it as a juvenile (KO).

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* (L.)

One to two pairs were present at Grovebury Farm SP from 30th January to 8th May with five present on 8th March. One pair attempted to breed but was unsuccessful due to disturbance. There were fewer records of this species this year with three at Rookery South CIP on 8th January, two on 15th March and three again on 2nd May. Singles were at Priory CP on 7th and 25th February and at Luton Hoo from 22nd February to 1st March. Five were at Wardown Park, Luton on 20th February. Two at Mentmore Road SP, Linslade on 23rd and 29th April were flying around a possible nest site. One to two were seen regularly at Dunstable STW between 25th February and 25th April with four present on 19th April and three flying over on 4th May. A pair was present at Willington GP on 1st May, one was at Coronation CIP on 6th June and five adults were at Priory CP on 12th June. During the second winter period there were three at Houghton Regis ChP on 5th November, three at Rookery South CIP on 29th October with singles there on 30th October, 26th and 27th November and 31st December.

**Mandarin** *Aix galericulata* (L.)

At least one pair bred at Luton Hoo. Three were on the Basin Pond at Woburn Park on 1st January with one on 21st February. Two pairs were at Stockgrove CP on 6th January remaining until at least 6th March. A pair were at Luton Hoo on 13th February. A female was at Dunstable STW on 27th March, the first record for this site, and remained until 8th April. Two males and a female at Luton Hoo on 13th March had increased to three males and two females on 16th April with four males and a female present on 2nd May and six individuals were seen there in June. There were two sightings over a Woburn garden; a pair flew over on 26th March and a single female on 27th May.

A female was present at Grovebury Farm SP on 4th September and four pairs were on the Basin Pond, Woburn on 18th. An immature male at Priory CP on 25th September still had some down on its nape. A male was also seen there on 14th October and 11th November and a male was present on the River Ouse, Bedford on 5th November. A male and three females were on the Basin Pond, Woburn on 5th November with one pair there on 28th. At Luton Hoo monthly maxima were four in October, 15 in November and twelve in December. Three pairs were at Stockgrove CP on 26th December and a feral pair were near the Flying Horse PH, Clophill on 29th December.

**Wigeon** *Anas penelope* L.

Twelve record cards were submitted with reports from twelve sites but unfortunately no records were received from Blunham Lake or Radwell GP, both sites that have held very good numbers in the past. The highest first-winter count came from Harrold-Odell CP with 140 on 7th January. There were no records in the County for April to July with the first to return in autumn being at Luton Hoo with an eclipse drake present on 22nd August. The highest second-winter count being of around 500 present at Harrold-Odell CP on 4th December. Full details follow.

At Harrold-Odell CP there were 140 on 7th January, four on 5th and 6th September rising to 46 on 22nd then 98 on 6th October, 171 on 15th and 68 on 26th October followed by 327 on 26th November, c.500 on 4th December and 150+ on 15th. Monthly maxima at Priory CP were ten in January, seven in February, twelve in March then ten in September, five in October, six in November and just two in December. At Dunstable STW there were two in January, nine on 22nd September, 20 maximum in October and 16 for November. At Rookery South CIP there were 67 on 1st January, 40 on 8th, 100+ on 15th and 70 on 22nd January, 42 on 6th February, then three on 26th August and monthly maxima of 39 on 22nd September, ten on 22nd October, 41 on 13th November and 40 on 4th and 10th December. Away from these four main sites, reports came from Luton Hoo with 21 on 14th January, nine on 14th February, a drake on 22nd August and a pair on 6th November. 40 were at Snelson Cobs, Turvey on 21st February. At Woburn there were three on 24th September, 25 on 5th November and 49 on 3rd December. At Stewartby Lake there were two on 27th November and from Willington GP 41 on 30th January and 40+ on 19th December. Forty were at Turvey on 21st February, 20 at Grovebury Road SP on 16th October and 20 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 6th November.

**Gadwall** *A. strepera* L.

Another under-recorded species with no records received from Blunham Lake, a great pity as this was, and maybe still is, the stronghold of this species in Bedfordshire. Eleven observers submitted records for ten sites. Three pairs bred at Dunstable STW producing broods of ten, nine and eight young. Several pairs bred at Luton Hoo. Exact data was not obtained but at least one female with a youngster was seen there in July. One pair bred at East Hyde with six ducklings accompanying a female on 5th June. Dunstable STW and Luton Hoo provided the largest concentrations of the species. Smaller but fairly regular counts came from Rookery South CIP, Stewartby Lake and Priory CP.

*Monthly maxima of Gadwall at selected sites:*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Luton Hoo	55	60	30	50	15	30	1+1j	nc	65	16	40	40
Dunstable STW	34	27	10	10	10	14	14	12	67	71	52	53
Rookery CIP	9	8	nc	1	nc	nc	nc	9	23	8	13	8
Priory CP	9	6	6	2	pr	0	0	0	0	2	6	6
Stewartby Lake	3	16	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	nc	7	2

About 20 were at East Hyde on 6th February with notes of a pair present on 3rd April, four on 20th April and again on 10th December. Only two records came from Harrold-Odell CP with four on 6th September and nine plus on 15th December. At Willington GP, a female present on 11th May was possibly nesting and there were eight present there on 2nd September. Lastly, at Basin Pond, Woburn, there were 16 on 5th January, declining to 14 on 19th February and 15 present on 5th November.

**Teal** *A. crecca* L.

Behaviour of a bird at East Hyde in July suggested possible breeding but proof was not forthcoming. There were no other reports of breeding in the County in 1994.

*Monthly maxima of Teal at selected sites:*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dunstable STW	53	10	0	0	0	0	2	18	18	20	28	64
Luton Hoo	nc	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	6	nc	36	15
Harrold-Odell CP	18	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	6	7	nc	nc
Rookery S CIP	21	19	7	7	nc	nc	3	9	86	80	42	40
Rookery N CIP	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	61	65	50	19	nc
Priory CP	9	6	2	4	0	0	0	0	6	1	8	0

Other records came from Brogborough Lake with five on 8th January, two on 20th November and six on 24th December. Grovebury Farm SP had 30 on 6th February and Radwell GP had nine on 13th March. Twenty-two were recorded at Southill Lake on 28th August, with 14 there on 11th December.

**Mallard** *A. platyrhynchos* L.

About twenty pairs bred at Dunstable STW, with the first ducklings noted on 12th April, and 16 pairs bred at Priory CP. The first brood at Brogborough Lake was seen on 23rd April. Broods of twelve, three and five were noted at Stewartby Lake in May, June and July respectively. Breeding was also successful at Rookery North CIP. A Bromham garden was visited by at least three different females, a nest was found that contained 22 eggs of which 15 hatched (PA).

*Monthly maxima of Mallard at selected sites:*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Priory CP	70	56	46	26	32	39	100	116	80	105	59	87
Luton Hoo	nc	30	50	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	50	50	190	75
Dunstable STW	154	109	65	nc	nc	nc	nc	84	148	185	126	116
Rookery S CIP	30	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	150	200	185	nc
Rookery N CIP	88	69	27	nc	nc	37	31	nc	183	89	nc	78
Felmersham NR	81	47	21	nc	nc	nc	18	nc	157	nc	nc	94

Other interesting counts came from Eversholt Lake with 101 on 8th January, 30 at Wardown Park Lake on 20th February, a massive 327 at Southill Lake on 28th August (but unfortunately no other counts from this site), 88 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 25th August, 42 at Bromham Lake NR on 2nd December, 77 at Basin Pond, Woburn on 18th September and 112 there on 3rd December. No counts were received from Harrold-Odell CP, Radwell GP or Blunham Lake.

**Pintail** *A. acuta* L.

The only records during the first winter period were of a male at Brogborough Lake on 23rd January (KO) and a female at Dunstable STW on 25th January (PT). During the second winter period a male was logged at Rookery South CIP on 25th August. This was followed by an eclipse male and female at Harrold-Odell CP on 22nd September with two males there on 15th December (JM). An eclipse male remained at Dunstable STW from 24th September to 18th December with three birds briefly there on 19th December (PT). Another eclipse drake was at Priory CP on 28th September and an immature was at Willington GP on 17th November (AS). Single males were observed at Brogborough Lake on 1st October (MJS) and 29th December (MJP, DJO, KMS). An adult female was at Rookery CIP on 30th November (AS).

**Garganey** *A. querquedula* L.

Two males and a female were well-watched in Rookery South CIP on 26th March (PS *et al*). A male was in Luton Hoo on 15th and 16th April (BRS). An eclipse male was at Willington GP from 17th to 21st July (DHB, RIB).

**Shoveler** *A. clypeata* (L.)

Recorded from just ten sites during the year, there were no breeding records. Dunstable STW and Southill Lake held the largest numbers with a maxima at Dunstable STW of 18 in September, 42 in October, eleven in November and 14 in December. At Southill Lake, there were 19 on 16th January, 18 on 28th August, 34 on 11th September, 17 on 23rd October and 12 on 11th December. Other large numbers involved 16 south-west over Priory CP on 2nd September and at Rookery CIP, eight on 8th January, 18 on 13th November then ten on 26th November and 6th December. Eight were at Luton Hoo on 31st October. The first record for Bromham Lake NR was on 6th November. This species was also occasionally reported from Stopsley, Brogborough Lake, Basin Pond, Woburn Park and East Hyde during the year.

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* (Pallas)

Two males and a female were at Brogborough Lake on 3rd January (PS, AC, PT, RAN). A female was present at Priory CP on 10th, 13th, 24th and 27th January and again on 5th, 6th, 12th and 13th March (DK). A male was present at Rookery South CIP from 26th (MJP, RAN) to 29th November then from 15th December (MKB) into 1995 (KMS). Further males were at Brogborough Lake on 27th November (MSG) and at Radwell GP on 26th December (JDS).

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina* (L.)

There were no reports of breeding. Maxima during the first winter period involved 110 at Rookery South CIP on 8th January, 74 in January and 78 in February at Dunstable STW and up to 59 in February at Luton Hoo.

*Monthly maxima of Pochard at selected sites:*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Priory CP	232	240	138	0	1	7	4	0	5	34	85	143

Moult movements were indicated by two at Dunstable STW on 12th June, five there on 28th and six in July. Seven males were at Priory CP on 12th June and four on 12th July while four were at Willington GP on 6th July and nine at Luton Hoo in July. Moulting flocks in the clay pits now seem to have become a regular feature involving parties of 23 at Rookery North CIP and 26 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 10th July and 20+ at Rookery North CIP on 12th July. During the second winter period Rookery South CIP held very good numbers with 100+ on 22nd September increasing to 390 on 25th then 210 on 30th September, 240+ on 10th October, 350 on 16th to 22nd October and 225 on 13th November. Other peaks in the County included 63 at Luton Hoo and 65 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP in November and 60 in December at Dunstable STW. No counts were received from Brogborough Lake where 842 were counted on a wildfowl count visit on 3rd October 1983 with 630 the same month in 1984.

**Tufted Duck** *A. fuligula* (L.)

Breeding was reported from Dunstable STW (five pairs), Felmersham NR (one pair), Luton Hoo (two to three pairs), Stewartby Lake (one pair) and Willington GP (five pairs). Between five to ten pairs were reported from Millbrook Pillinge CIP and about six pairs from Coronation CIP during the breeding season.

During the first winter period, 57 were at Priory CP in January and up to 36 there in February. 56 were at Felmersham NR on 15th January with 50 there on 13th February. 77 were at Brogborough Lake on 19th February. 32 were at Luton Hoo on 4th January and 39 there on 14th February. 41 were at Dunstable STW in January, 43 in February and 46 in April. Twenty males and twelve females were present at Houghton Regis ChP on 4th June and ten were at Rookery North CIP and 40 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 10th July.

During the second winter period, the largest numbers were reported from Rookery South CIP with 60 on 25th September, 184 on 22nd October and 310 on 13th November. Other large numbers reported were 48 at Dunstable STW in September with 38 in November and December, 56 at Basin Pond, Woburn on 5th November and 70 there on 3rd December, 55 at Felmersham NR on 3rd December and 35 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 4th. Thirty-one was the peak count at Priory CP in December.

**Scaup** *A. marila* (L.)

A first winter male was found at Priory CP on 9th January and remained until 1st March, and was seen again on 6th March. By the end of February it was almost in full adult drake plumage (DK, JCP *et al*). An immature, not inconceivably the same bird, was at Willington GP on 25th January and 2nd February (AS). A male was present at Cuckoo Bridge GP on 1st April (DHB); was this also the Priory CP bird? Another male was at Priory CP on 31st December which remained well into the new year (DK, JCP).

**Eider** *Somateria mollissima* (L.)

The long-staying adult drake of unknown provenance and the immature drake believed to be of wild origin present at Wyboston GP in December 1993 were still present on 1st January (MJP) but no further reports were forthcoming.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* (L.)

Three males were present at Priory CP on 17th February (DK), a female was at Brogborough Lake briefly during the afternoon of 24th April (DCP, MJP) and two males and a female were at Brogborough Lake on 13th November (PT).



**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* (L.)

One to five were reported from Dunstable STW, Felmersham NR, Harrold-Odell CP, Langford GP, Luton Hoo, Priory CP, Radwell GP, Rookery CIP, Stewartby Lake and Woburn Park. The last of the first winter period were four at Harrold-Odell CP on 10th April and the first returning birds were two at Radwell GP on 21st October. Twelve plus were noted at Harrold-Odell CP on 15th December but otherwise the largest gatherings were at Brogborough Lake.

*Monthly maxima of Goldeneye at selected sites:*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brogborough L	28	35	29	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	15	9

**Smew** *Mergus albellus* L.

A red-head was at Brogborough Lake on 7th January (MSG). On 13th November, another red-head was at Willington GP (DHB, DJO). The only other records were of a pair at Priory CP Marina on 25th December (ECN) and a red-head at Harrold-Odell CP on 31st December into 1995 (SA, DJO).

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* L.

Two red-heads were seen at Brogborough Lake on 12th November (KO, RAN, TD) and a male was at Priory CP on 19th November (DK).

**Goosander** *M. merganser* L.

Sixteen observers submitted 37 records from the following ten sites: River Ivel at Blunham – a red-head on 18th November, Brogborough Lake, Eversholt Lake – a drake on 9th January, Felmersham NR – three on 15th January, Grovebury Farm SP, Luton Hoo, Priory CP, Stewartby Lake – a flyover pair on 13th March, Woburn Park and Woburn village – two flying over on 2nd December. Records usually involved just casual visits of from one to three birds. At Brogborough Lake, a female was present on 8th January, a male on 2nd December and a pair on 15th December. At Luton Hoo there were four 'red-heads' on 4th January and a pair from 22nd February until 3rd March. Drakes were at Priory CP on 6th January and 19th February and a female was there on 23rd November. At Grovebury Farm SP, Goosanders were seen on nine dates from 23rd January to 13th March with a high count of five on 20th February and a female was present on 4th, 11th and 18th December.

Goosanders were recorded at various sites in Woburn Park on eleven dates as follows: four on 1st and 5th, three on 8th, two on 9th and one on 15th January, two on 20th February, three males and seven females on 27th (the highest first-winter count) and five on 28th. Then, in the second winter period, there were six on 5th November, five males and three females on 29th December and three on 31st.

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* (Gmelin)

Breeding was recorded at Rookery South CIP where one pair raised three juveniles and a pair were also reported at South Mills NR. Display was noted at Brogborough Lake and Southill Lake.

*Monthly maxima of Ruddy Duck at selected sites:*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rookery CIP	12	18	35	13	2	3	10	5	7	31	15	14
Brogborough L	6	5	1	3	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Luton Hoo	0	3	9	13	6	7	12	11	18	19	23	6

The only other records came from Stewartby Lake with a singleton on 3rd January, Dunstable STW with a male from 17th to 20th July and from Southill Lake where there were two males on 13th March and single males on 11th April and 22nd May.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* (L.)

One bird of this species was over Blows Downs, Dunstable on 13th July (SH). Although no wing tags were seen, it is presumed that this bird originated from re-introduced stock in adjacent counties. This probably applies to the second record of the year which was again noted as untagged and occurred at Exeter Wood on 23rd October (DHB, PS, BJN).

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* (L.)

There were six records in 1994, all females or immatures, a good total for what remains a rare passage visitor to Bedfordshire but probably reflects the increased breeding population in East Anglia. The first was at Warden Great Wood on 9th May (MJS), on 15th one flew over Priory CP (DK, JCP) and another was between Sandy and Everton on 26th May (ME). Next was an immature at Galley Hill on 30th July (LRJ) followed by another at Great Barford on 14th August (ME) and lastly, the reward for working a 'local patch', one at Luton Hoo on 22nd August (BRS).

**Hen Harrier** *C. cyaneus* (L.)

A ringtail was seen at Cardington on 16th January (RAH) and again at Warden Great Wood on 29th (DJO), then near Warden Tunnel on 12th February (RM, BM). Another ringtail was found at Clifton on 9th October (RD).

**Harrier sp.** *Circus* sp.

A possible Montagu's Harrier, *C. pygargus* (L.), was seen at Warden Hill on 6th August. However, from the description provided, the rarities panel considered that the possibility of an early Hen Harrier was not ruled out and therefore the record was not 100% certain.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* (L.)

No fully acceptable records were received for 1994 though it is known that at least one pair continues to occur on the edge of the Buckinghamshire border, despite recent heavy disturbance and destruction of habitat in this vicinity. Observers are reminded of the rarity of this species in Bedfordshire and hence the need for a complete description. Goshawks were claimed from at least three other localities in the County but due to inadequate paperwork none of these reports proved acceptable to the rarities panel.

**Sparrowhawk** *A. nisus* (L.)

At Priory CP, this species was seen on 119 bird days, down from 139 in 1993. Six were seen displaying together at The Lodge, Sandy on 21st April. A minimum of four pairs bred at Luton Hoo. In Kempston, Sparrowhawks were seen on 33 bird days with up to six different individuals being observed. Prey taken at Dunstable STW included Meadow Pipit, Pied and Yellow Wagtail, Linnet, Goldfinch, Starling and a young Moorhen. The breeding situation is presumed to be much as recorded in the 1993 report.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* (L.)

In some ways, 1994 was the year of the Common Buzzard in Bedfordshire with a notable and very welcome increase in records. In the Old Warden and Southill area, two were present in the first winter period until at least 12th April. Away from this favoured area, two were at Ampthill Park on 11th January and again on 17th April. One was at Boughton End on 19th February. Possible migrants might have accounted for these spring records; south-west over Dunton on 15th March, over Dunstable on 31st March and at Whipsnade Zoo on 30th April and 9th May. There were three birds seen in June, two displaying at Pegsdon Hills on 11th and one in Southill Park. On 13th August one was seen in the Pegsdon and Shillington area. In September, up to two were in the Old Warden and Southill Park area and also Luton Hoo. On 14th, one flew over Ampthill in the direction of Elstow. In October, there were up to five in the Exeter Wood and Old Warden area. Other birds were recorded from The Lodge (2), Woburn Park, Rowney Warren and Steppingley Wood – with three at this site on 6th November, then two for the remainder of the year. Away from these sites only two others were seen in December with singles at Deepdale on 10th and south of Ridgmont on 31st December. A total of approximately 36 birds were recorded in 1994 as compared to about 16 in 1993, though, of course, some of the records will have involved wandering individuals.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* (L.)

There were seven Ospreys recorded in Bedfordshire in 1994. One at Willington GP on 31st March was the earliest ever recorded in the County (AS). More typical spring



**Plate 1:** Little Egret, Harrold-Odell Country Park, August 1994 – fourth County record (p.9) *Photo: Richard Revels*



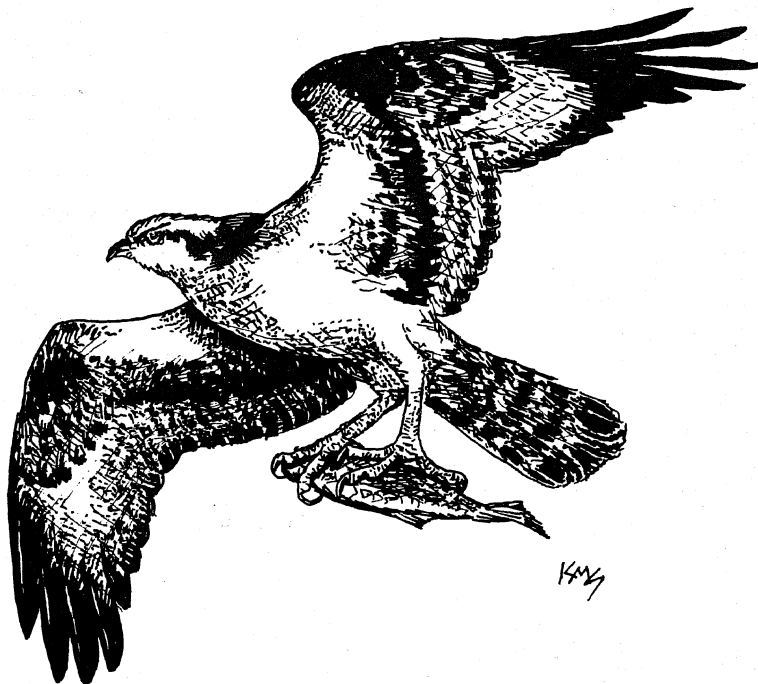
**Plate 2:** Little Ringed Plover, Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works, June 1994 (p.19) *Photo: Paul Trodd*



**Plate 3:** Wood Sandpiper, Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works, May 1994 (p.24)  
*Photo: Paul Trodd*



**Plate 4:** Grey Phalarope, Stewartby Lake, September 1994 – third County record this century (p.24)  
*Photo: Martin Palmer*



Osprey

Kevin Sharpe

records were from Jordan's Mill, Broom on 8th May (G&CG), probably the same bird at Langford on 15th (BRS), and one at Rookery CIP on 18th May (MSG). There were records at Priory CP in the autumn on 21st August and 30th September (ECN), while one at Dunstable STW on 24th September was a site first, found by the honorary warden (PT). The last for the year was one at Blunham seen on 1st, 11th and 21st October (JTRS).

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* L.

Only seven record cards were received for this species. A key to their abundance being that one observer recorded 2.9 Kestrels in the County for every Sparrowhawk he saw (BJN). By contrast, this species was recorded at Priory CP on slightly fewer occasions than Sparrowhawk (DK). A female at Eaton Bray on 8th October robbed a Sparrowhawk of its prey.

**Merlin** *F. columbarius* L.

There were four accepted records for 1994 and all were typically brief occurrences. A probable male was at Whipsnade Zoo on 2nd January (CT). A female was near Biggleswade on 14th January (SDH). A male was at Rookery CIP on 6th February (MJP/MJG) and one was seen briefly at Streatley on 4th March (BRS).

**Hobby** *F. subbuteo* L.

Thirty two observers submitted sightings of this dashing falcon, but both the new Recorders noted a decline in this species' occurrence this year, e.g. only five sightings recorded over Kempston. The first for the year was on 22nd April at Blows Downs and the last remained at Mentmore Road SP, Linslade from 29th September to 15th October and decimated the local dragonfly population (GD). A pair displayed at Grovebury Farm SP on 1st May and three were at Coronation CIP on 2nd May. At

Priory CP, Hobbies were recorded three times in May, the same in June and July, five days in August and on nine occasions in September. There were no confirmed breeding records received for this species in 1994.

**Peregrine, *F. peregrinus*** Tunstall

The only acceptable record was of an immature male which visited Whipsnade Zoo on 27th and 28th October (AR, CT). Observers are reminded of the rarity of this species in Bedfordshire. Full details are always required so that Hobby, or falconer's occasional escapes, can be satisfactorily ruled out.

**Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*** (L.)

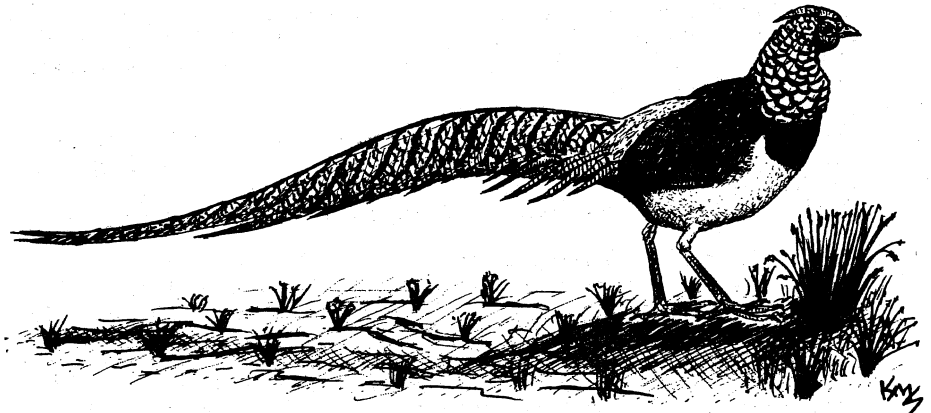
A mere six record cards were received for this common species in the County. The largest coveys were of 42 at Odell Great Wood on 26th October near some release pens, 20 at Luton Hoo on 11th October and 17 near Dunstable STW on 18th September. Of the three pairs that bred at the latter site, many of the first brood chicks were taken by Carrion Crows. On 8th and 19th February birds showing characters associated with Chukar *A. chukar* (J.E.Gray) were reported between Cardington and Old Warden, with other birds in this covey exhibiting hybrid characteristics.

**Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*** (L.)

Once again, perhaps conscious of its decline in recent years, this species was better recorded than Red-legged Partridge. Breeding season records came from Barton, Streatley, Biggleswade, Dunstable STW, Stopsley, Stevington, Turvey, Hockliffe, Grovebury, Sewell, Warden Hills, Galley Hills and Rookery CIP. The largest parties were 21 in the Galley Hill area on 1st January, 15 at Cople on 25th October and 37 in coveys of 14, 12 and 11, at the same locality on 22nd November and 1st December. Mention must be made of the Boxing Day partridge count by one enthusiastic observer who recorded 120 in Bedfordshire and another 36 in Hertfordshire at Stopsley Common, Butterfield Green, Warden and Galley Hills to the Icknield Way (JCP). A family party in the same well watched locality had 13 young.

**Quail *Corturnix corturnix*** (L.)

Calling birds were heard at Totternhoe Knoll from 25th June to 7th August – between three to six birds were reported. On 8th June one called from a kale field at Stratton Park, Biggleswade and on 11th June calling birds were heard at Hatch End, Keysoe and Little Billington. The next day one was heard near Potton. On 28th June additional birds were heard at another Totternhoe site and at Stanbridgeford. July records came from Cople on 3rd and between Sutton and Eyeworth on 14th. After the disappointments of 1993, this was another good "Quail year" in Bedfordshire with a minimum of twelve birds located.



Lady Amherst's Pheasant

Kevin Sharpe

**Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus* L.

Unfortunately, only one record card was submitted for this abundant species. Up to ten were counted at Dunstable STW in both winter periods feeding on grain.

**Lady Amherst's Pheasant** *Chrysolophus amherstiae* (Leadbeater)

Recorded at Kingshoe Wood near Steppingley (4), Moneypot Hill (3), Charle Wood (1), Woburn Park (2), Maulden Woods (4) and Luton Hoo (15 to 20). Most records were of calling males in the breeding season, or of males dashing across a ride. Only two females were reported. This species is under recorded in the County; for example, only one record card was submitted from Charle Wood, formerly the principal site of this Bedfordshire speciality. Much still remains to be learnt about Lady A. but it is probably in steady decline in the County. At Luton Hoo nearly all the birds seen were males and a presumed lack of females is restricting breeding and only four young were fledged according to the keeper (AJL). We wish those embarking on a full scale survey of this species' habitats in Bedfordshire in 1995 all the best to provide a more accurate picture of this enigmatic species' population.

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* L.

Birds were recorded at Houghton Regis ChP, Ouzel Brook, Dunstable STW, Flitwick Moor (where it probably bred), Harrold-Odell CP, Brogborough Lake and Luton Hoo. At Priory CP, birds were recorded on six days in January, three in February – with two birds present on 16th, and on five dates in March, with the last there on the 19th. Two birds, the first of the second winter period, had returned to this site by 5th November and one or two were then seen occasionally through to the end of the year. One bird spent two and a half hours in a Langford garden backing onto the River Ivel on 11th November.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* (L.)

At Dunstable STW, the monthly maxima were: 16 in January, nine in February, eight in March, 18 in July, twelve in September, 15 in October and November and twelve in December. Five pairs bred here, one three metres up in a Hawthorn hedge in an old Magpie's nest. Forty-one were along the River Lee at East Hyde on 6th January. At Luton Hoo, 165 were counted on 15th February and 50 on 6th November. Of 24 birds at Rookery CIP on 25th August, six were young.

**Coot** *Fulica atra* L.

One pair were already nesting at Brogborough Lake on 8th January. At Dunstable STW, 21 pairs nested, with nearly all of the first broods being predated by Carrion Crows. The second broods were more successful and no predation by Mink on this species was observed there in 1994. Selected counts reported were of 300 at Rookery CIP on 13th November, 120 at Luton Hoo on 13th February and 98 on 6th November, 77 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 15th January, 84 at Rookery CIP on 1st April, 205 at Harrold-Odell CP on 24th August, with 233 there on 26th October and over 200 on 15th December.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* L.

Only 17 individuals were found in Bedfordshire in 1994 which is well down on 1993 and the worst since 1989. All records were of singles apart from two at Willington GP on 19th April and two at Rookery CIP on 24th July. The earliest was a single at Brogborough Lake on 21st February and the last, a calling bird over Priory CP on 12th November.

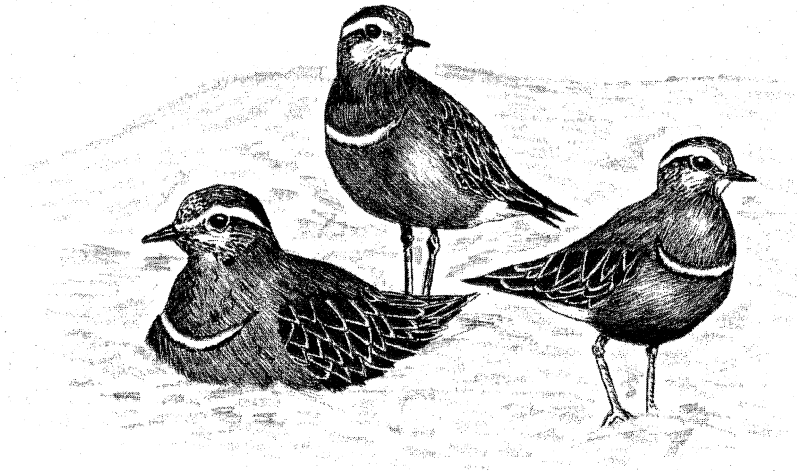
**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* Scopoli

The first was seen at Dunstable STW on 20th March, followed by another from 25th and then individual birds at Grovebury Farm SP, Rookery CIP and Priory CP on 27th March. Breeding took place at Dunstable STW where three pairs successfully raised nine young from two broods. One pair at Rookery CIP hatched two broods with five young fledging and two pairs with four well grown young were seen at Radwell GP. Possible breeding was reported from Laporte Way, Luton and also from Willington GP. Only five passage birds were recorded from Priory CP. A pair at Grovebury Farm SP

deserted their nest due to disturbance. The last record was of a single at Dunstable STW on 7th August. The largest concentrations were 13 at Dunstable STW on 4th July, six at Rookery CIP on 12th July and five at Willington on 6th April. (Plate 2)

**Ringed Plover** *C. hiaticula* L.

The first record was of a single bird at Stewartby Lake on 26th January and the last was an immature at Dunstable STW on 16th October. Successful breeding took place at Dunstable STW with one pair raising three young on the scrape. Two pairs raised a total of six young at Rookery CIP and a pair bred at Laporte Way, Luton. Passage birds only were recorded at Willington GP. High counts were of ten at Dunstable STW on 23rd April and at Rookery CIP with twelve on 22nd May and eleven on 18th July.



Dotterel

Kevin Sharpe

**Dotterel** *Eudromias morinellus* L.

Five birds were found in a field near Streatley, opposite Barton Hill Farm, on 29th August. Full descriptions were submitted of the trip, comprising two adult and three juvenile birds, perhaps a family party which was resting and feeding on the migration south. Thanks are due to first named for spreading the news so promptly after finding them (SFW, PS, MJP *et al*). A claim of a juvenile here on 1st September was not backed up with a description for acceptance.

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* (L.)

There was a massive flock of, usually, 1,800 to 3,000+ birds adjacent to the A1 near Biggleswade and Broom which peaked at an astonishing 6,500 on 22nd January, by far and away the largest number ever in the County, previous highs never having exceeded 3,000. Other notable flocks in the first winter period were 1,000+ at Cranfield Airport on 3rd January, 600 at Kempston on 8th January, 500 at Lewsey Farm, Luton on 23rd January, 500 near Dunstable STW on 4th February and 400 in the Cople to Cardington area on 23rd and 29th March. 180 at Shillington on 26th April were a good-sized, late flock.

The second winter period started with a single bird in summer plumage at Willington GP on 8th July, followed by flocks of 200 at Cockayne Hatley on 8th October, 600 at Cardington on 16th October, 300 at Priory CP on 30th October, about 1,000 near Dunstable STW from mid-October to mid-November, up to 2,500 near Biggleswade



between 19th November and 2nd December, 300 by the Leighton Buzzard by-pass on 16th December and 750 at Cople on 20th December.

**Grey Plover** *P. squatarola* (L.)

The year started extremely well with seven flying south-west over Priory CP on 23rd January (DK, JCP). All other records were confined to May with a single in adult plumage at Dunstable STW on 1st and 2nd (DG, PT), two at Rookery CIP – one summer, one winter plumaged – on 2nd, with one remaining next day (PS, MKB, JB *et al*) and, finally, one in summer plumage at Rookery CIP from 13th to 15th, with three present on 14th (KO, MJS).

Unusually, there were no autumn returnees.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* (L.)

Breeding was noted at suitable localities throughout the County. Three pairs nested, but only one chick survived, at Whipsnade Zoo, an estimated ten pairs bred at Rookery CIP, two pairs with five young at Pegsdon Hills, three pairs with five young at Butterfield Green, several pairs bred around Dunstable STW and five pairs were seen displaying at Great Oak Wood, Turvey.

Outside the breeding season, notable flocks included a peak at Priory CP of 1,000 on 9th January, 2,000 at Grovebury Farm SP on 16th and 30th January, 3,000 near Biggleswade on 22nd January, 900 at Cockayne Hatley on 8th October, 800 at Priory CP on 16th November, a massive peak of 7–8,000 in Rookery CIP on 26th November, 2,000 during November at Dunstable STW, 1,100 at Cople on 9th December, 1,500 at Grovebury Farm SP on 16th December and 2,000 near Biggleswade during December.

**Knot** *Calidris canutus* (L.)

The largest flock ever in Bedfordshire by some long way occurred at Priory CP on 23rd January when 23 Knot dropped in near the sailing club for just a couple of minutes before heading off west (DK, JCP). There were only three other records for the year; a single bird in winter plumage was at Rookery CIP on 30th March (JB, KO, RAN), three summer-plumaged birds were at this same site on 14th May (MJS) and a single bird in first winter plumage was also at Rookery CIP on 22nd October.

**Sanderling** *C. alba* (Pallas)

Twelve individual birds occurred in the County on six different dates, all in May. There were two in winter plumage in Rookery CIP on 7th (CT), with one remaining later in the day (GG, GDP *et al*). A single bird in winter plumage was at Willington GP on 8th (DHB, AS). Two moulting birds in Rookery CIP on 15th (KO) were followed by two in winter plumage at this site on 18th (RAN) and a single bird in summer plumage was also there on 22nd (MJP). Lastly, a winter-plumaged bird and three in summer plumage were at Dunstable STW on 23rd (PT).

**Little Stint** *C. minuta* (Leisler)

A poor year for this species compared with the very good numbers of 1993. Eleven individuals were recorded on four dates. A single bird, partially moulted into summer plumage, was at Rookery CIP on 7th May (GG, GDP *et al*), then a summer adult was there on 17th (KO). Four birds in summer dress were at Dunstable STW on 23rd May (LC per PT). Lastly, five were at Rookery CIP on 15th September (CT, AW, MP, KO *et al*).

**Curlew Sandpiper** *C. ferruginea* (Pontoppidan)

Only a few records of this scarce visitor occurred in Bedfordshire in 1994. Two adults in summer plumage were in Rookery CIP on 18th July (KO), and a single juvenile was at the same locality on 14th September (JB, KO), joined by an adult winter on 15th (MP, CT *et al*).

**Dunlin** *C. alpina* (L.)

The first record of the year was of two at Dunstable STW on 15th February and the last was of two at Houghton Regis ChP on 27th November, with a single the same day at Rookery CIP. High counts in spring at Rookery CIP were: 13 on 15th March,

20 on 22nd April, followed by a record site count of 50 on 7th May, when there were also nine at Dunstable STW. 14 were at Rookery CIP on 15th September and 30 were there on 19th November. Dunlin were recorded on 65 bird days in the County during the year but there were no records in the months of January, June or December and on only two dates in February. Elsewhere, Dunlin were recorded at Priory CP with singles on 19th September and 9th November, Brogborough Lake with four on 18th September and on four dates at Willington GP, with the highest being five on 8th May.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* (L.)

Spring passage came on ten dates at Rookery CIP from 9th April, with two males and a reeve the first in Bedfordshire this year and still present on the 10th to 16th May, then singles on 29th May and 12th June. Remarkably, a flock of 18 on 2nd May comprised entirely reeves (MJP, KO) and 14 reeves the same evening at Coronation CIP (JB) were probably from this group. Autumn returnees here were on 12th August then singles on 1st and 2nd September with three on 10th and 18th and last for the year was one on 21st October. At Dunstable STW, 17 on 2nd May reduced to 13 on 3rd, twelve on 4th, nine on 5th and 6th and just one on 7th and 8th. In autumn there was one on 27th August, then one from 9th to 14th and 18th to 19th September joined by a second there from 20th to 27th. Away from these sites, two were at Radwell GP on 10th April, a pair flew south over Priory CP on 24th April, one was at Willington GP on 2nd May and, interestingly, an immature male was seen feeding with gulls on Stopsley Common in atrocious weather on 19th September.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus* (Brunnich)

A poor year for this species with only nine records from four sites. Four were at Houghton Regis ChP on 1st January, one at Priory Business Park on 23rd January, one at Houghton Regis ChP on 13th February and, at the same location, one on 30th October, three on 12th November, four on 26th November and two on 10th December. A single bird was at Bromham Meadow Pond on 21st December and, finally, one at Grovebury Farm SP on 31st December.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* (L.)

A poor year, with no "drumming" birds or confirmed breeding records submitted. This species' status is, surely, under-recorded and observers are alerted to check it out in suitable habitat in coming summers. There were no really high numbers outside the breeding season but selected counts included: seven at South Mills NR on 7th January, 18 at East Hyde on 11th January, seven at Rookery CIP on 22nd January, eight at Houghton Regis ChP on 13th February, seven at Luton Hoo on 13th March, a maximum of ten at Priory CP during January to May, six at Willington GP on 18th April, 15 at Grovebury Farm SP on 23rd October, 20 flushed from the scrape at Dunstable STW on 24th November, 20+ at Rookery CIP on 26th November and six at Hollington Marsh, near Maulden on 24th December.

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* L.

Roding was recorded at Old Wavendon Heath (2), Maulden Woods (2), Barton (1), Southill Park (1), Home Wood, Northill (1), Flitwick Moor (1) and Shuttleworth Park (1). This species is definitely under-recorded in the County during the breeding season. Outside that season, records were received from Bramingham Wood, Warden Hills, Cople GP, Whipnade Zoo, Bluebell Wood Whipnade, King's Wood Heath and Reach (3), New Wavendon Heath, Charle Wood, Kingshoe Wood Steppingley, Priory CP and Hillgrounds, Kempston.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* (L.)

The only spring record was of twelve at Willington GP on 23rd March (AS). The return passage began with a single adult at Rookery CIP on 16th July (PS), followed by another single the next day at Houghton Regis ChP (DP). Next came an excellent flock of 19, comprising adults and juveniles, at Rookery CIP on 19th August (JB), followed by three singles at this same locality on 21st and 25th August and 17th September.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *L. lapponica* (L.)

A very good year for this attractive wader and, as usual, there were many more spring occurrences than during the autumn in Bedfordshire. A maximum of three birds, one in summer dress and two in winter plumage were at Rookery CIP from 30th April until 4th May (RAN *et al*) and an impressive flock of 25 were at this site on 7th May (JDS) – a record of three to eleven at this site later in the day were obviously part of this group (GG, GDP). A single bird was at Priory CP also on 7th (CT) and two birds remained at Rookery CIP on 8th May when there were three at Willington GP (AS, DHB). Three birds flew over Dunstable STW on 13th May (LC per PT) and another big flock, this time of 22, were at Rookery CIP on 16th May (MJS). A single which flew over Priory CP on 19th November was the latest date ever recorded for this species in the County (DK). Possibly six waders flying south-west over Willington GP on 24th July were also this species (AS).

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* (L.)

Five flew north over Willington GP on 23rd April (DHB), followed by one at Rookery CIP on 27th April (JB), then two flew north-east over Priory CP on 2nd May (DK), and another was at Rookery CIP on 3rd May (JB,KO). Two were noted flying north-east over Dunstable STW on 12th May (AW,DG,PT) and, on the same day, five flew over Stewartby Village (KMS). Seven were at Rookery CIP on 15th May (KO) and a single was there next day (MJS), followed by another single there on 4th June (MJS). Other singles flew over Totternhoe NR on 17th July (TD), over Water End, Cople on 11th August (AS) and, finally for 1994, one was seen at Brogborough Lake on 9th September (TD).

**Curlew** *N. arquata* (L.)

Twenty-two records were received, twelve for spring and ten for autumn. No information confirming breeding was received, just that two birds were seen displaying on 2nd May at Thurleigh Airfield (DHB). The spring passage began with a single bird at Rookery CIP on 2nd March, followed by one over Cockayne Hatley on 16th March. High counts during the year were of seven over Tiddenfoot WP on 21st April (AW), three south at Priory CP on 10th July (DK) and eight at Rookery CIP on 12th August (JB). The last report of the year was of a single at Priory CP on 4th September.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* (Pallas)

There were only two records of this scarce wader for Bedfordshire in 1994. A single juvenile was present by the River Hiz, Arlesley on 20th August (MJS) and another singleton was at Willington GP on 12th September (AS).

**Redshank** *T. totanus* (L.)

Although records were received from ten localities, no reports were submitted for the east of the County. Breeding was proven at Dunstable STW with three pairs raising six young to the flying stage. One pair fledged two young at Willington GP as did another pair at Rookery CIP. Outside the breeding season, the earliest record was of a wintering bird at Stewartby Lake on 12th February and the latest was a single at Willington GP on 22nd December. High counts for 1994 were 14 at Rookery CIP on 26th March, seven at Willington GP on 27th March, 20 at Rookery CIP on 2nd April with 13 on 4th, 12 on 21st and 16 on 22nd at this site. As usual, this species was much more scarce in the autumn.

**Greenshank** *T. nebularia* (Gunnerus)

A good year for this attractive wader with records on 58 different bird days. The earliest record was of a single bird at Grovebury Farm SP and two at Rookery CIP on 1st May. There was a remarkable late record of a singleton at Rookery CIP on 6th November. No particularly large flocks were present in the County during the year but there were four at Dunstable STW on 3rd and 4th May, three at Houghton Regis ChP on 16th July and four at Dunstable STW on 12th August. Apart from the November bird, all other reports were from May, July, August and September.

**Green Sandpiper** *T. ochropus* L.

Present at Dunstable STW in all months except May and June with maxima of six on 23rd July and 23rd August. Over-wintering birds were noted at Willington GP until 23rd April, with a peak of four on 21st April, then there were singles on 14th, 24th and 27th June with further records from 7th July through to 5th September, again with a maximum of four noted from 15th July to 25th August, then single reports for November on 6th, 16th and 21st. At Rookery CIP there were two on 15th June and one on 19th, after which records were regular between 2nd July and 21st September with a maximum of three on 25th July. Other over-winter records came from Bedford STW (2) and there were two seen flying over Biggleswade on 1st February. Seven were at Bedford STW on 2nd October with five there on 19th November. Movement between Bedford STW and Willington GP was again likely.

Elsewhere, singles were noted at Stewartby Lake on 20th February, Houghton Regis CHP on 25th July and 16th August, Whipsnade Zoo from 11th March to 8th October, Woburn on 21st February, 6th March and two there on 5th November. Two were seen east of Ampthill on 19th March, a single was at Arnold's SP, Leighton Buzzard on 20th March, and six singletons were recorded from Grovebury Farm SP on 13th and 27th March, 19th June, 3rd July, 7th and 13th August.

**Wood Sandpiper** *T. glareola* L.

Only two records were reported; an adult at Dunstable STW on 11th and 12th May (PT,AW *et al*) and a single bird at Willington GP on 25th August (DHB). (Plate 3)

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* (L.)

Common Sandpipers were widely recorded from suitable habitats throughout the County. The first for the year was at Crowholt, Woburn on 11th April, followed by another at Dunstable STW two days later. The latest was an individual that stayed at Dunstable STW from 21st October to 30th November. High counts included three at Priory CP on 29th April and 20th May, six at this site on 13th May, five at Willington GP on 8th and 17th August, three at Rookery CIP from 12th to 14th August, four at Grovebury Farm SP on 4th September and five the same day at Dunstable STW (which may have involved some of the same birds).

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* (L.)

A poor year for this species with only four records. One was in partial summer dress at Rookery CIP on 2nd May (MJP,PS,JB,KO) and another was at this locality on 15th May (KO). One was at Willington GP on 18th May (DHB) and the last was again at Rookery CIP on 27th July (KO,JB).

**Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* (L.)

A single bird was seen very briefly, and in poor light, by the (ex) County Recorder at Stewartby Lake on the evening of 15th September and again very briefly the next day. Diligent searching of the lake-side on Saturday morning, 17th September by DHB at last confirmed its presence. The news was quickly spread, enabling many Bedfordshire birders and others from further afield to see it at close quarters, usually in a sheltered bay just west of the sailing club slipway. This was the rarest bird found in Bedfordshire in 1994, only the third County record this century, the others being a moulting adult at Stewartby Lake on 21st to 22nd June 1987 and a single in non-breeding plumage in the same year at Blunham Lake from 17th to 22nd October. This year's occurrence came during a period when Grey Phalaropes were also reported from other Midlands counties including Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Leicestershire (DHB, MJP,PS *et al*). (Plate 4)

**[Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.)]

A small Skua at Stewartby Lake mid-afternoon on 15th September was seen flying off west. The detailed description received differed substantially from that reported later in the day as a possible Long-tailed Skua (see below). There were a number of inland records across central England of Arctic Skua following poor weather at this time and it seems highly likely that this bird was part of that movement. However, because of

the brevity of the views, the local rarities committee determined that the record was only safely acceptable as a small Skua sp. but most probably Arctic Skua (MP *et al.*).

**[Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus* Vieillot]**

A bird, briefly present at Stewartby Lake late on 15th September, was thought to be quite probably this species but the views were too brief and in such poor light as to remain inconclusive. The observer was rightly cautious of claiming a County first on such evidence and this note is published for interest only and is not an accepted record (DHB).

**Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* Temminck**

Eight observers submitted records. Detailed descriptions of four individuals and notes of up to two others were accepted by the local rarities panel. The first was a first-winter bird found in the gull roost at Brogborough Lake on 8th January (MJP, MSG). Next came an adult at this same location on 6th February (MJP, MJG). A second-winter bird was in the roost at Stewartby Lake on 4th March (KO) and an adult was in this roost on 11th March (KO). Perhaps this was the same as the adult at Rookery CIP on 26–28th March (MJP, KO, PS, RAN). A juvenile moulting to first-winter was at Willington GP on 2nd October (DHB). Following three additions in 1993, the five singletons accepted for 1994 bring the County total to around 39, all since 1982.

**Little Gull *L. minutus* Pallas**

There were substantially fewer records of Little Gull this year than in 1993. Nine observers submitted cards for a maximum of eight records but these may only have involved five or six birds moving between adjacent sites. A first-year bird was at Rookery CIP in late May, seen intermittently on 17th, 18th, 20th and 22nd (KO, PT, RAN). It is not impossible that it was the same bird seen at Priory CP on 21st May (DK). A first-year bird was present at Rookery CIP on 16th September (KO) which is taken as being the bird accompanying an adult seen at Stewartby Lake on 15th September (DJO), the former seen also on 16th and 17th (MJP *et al.*). Two immatures were seen at Priory CP also on 15th September (DK), when there was much movement of seabirds through the County, and further duplication is quite possible although the immature seen at Dunstable STW on 16th September (DG) is treated as an additional record on distance from the foregoing sites. As last year, a late bird visited Priory CP in November, an adult being present on the 5th (DK).

**Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* L.**

Up to 200 were roosting on the lagoons at Dunstable STW from January through to April and again from September to the year end (PT). On 9th and 10th July steady passage was observed at this site with over 200 moving west in one half-hour period. At Priory CP, marked north-east passage was evidenced in early March with 650 north-east on 6th (DK). At the same site, 5–600 on 18th April were involved moving eastward; 360 were the maximum present at one time during the day, the majority in non-breeding plumage (ECN). Numbers at this site were low in May and June and return passage was recorded from the end of June through to mid-July. At Stewartby Lake, the white individual with the black wing tips seen in previous years was noted again in the roost on 19th March: it was also seen again in spring 1995. In a small roost of just some 700 total gulls on 20th April, only 230+ were Black-headed Gulls (MJP). At Bromham Lake, a pair took up residence on a nest raft from 3rd May and were still present on 23rd but did not stay to breed (PA). Five pairs were noted nesting with Common Terns on 3rd June at Radwell GP but no outcome is known (PT) and on 4th June 20 birds appeared to be incubating at Chimney Corner CIP (RD). No breeding records were reported from Rookery CIP, unfortunately, though they almost certainly did so, thus these are the only breeding accounts for 1994. More observer look-out for breeding gulls in 1995 please, especially the larger species. 700+ were noted at Willington GP on 6th November (AS). Lastly, on 23rd October at Eaton Bray, one of our ex-recorders witnessed a Black-headed Gull following a plough and eating small rodents – most unusual behaviour (PT)!

### **Common Gull** *L. canus* L.

Nine observers submitted a total of just 24 records, belying the abundance of this species in Bedfordshire, especially during the winter periods. However, Common Gulls were generally seen in similar numbers and locations as in recent years (MJP). A good series of counts were received from Priory CP with 238 on 22nd January and 85 on 30th, 60 on 19th March, 38 on 30th October, 63 on 19th November and 118 on 11th December (DK). Only single figure passage was recorded at Dunstable STW from end March to mid-April (PT). At Rookery CIP, numbers had fallen to under 30 by 1st April, decreasing further to four on 24th and only one on 28th April. Last in spring was one at Stewartby Lake on 7th May. The first autumn returnees noted were at Rookery CIP on 18th (KO per log) and 24th July (MJP). 30+ were present at this site on 22nd October (RAN). 600 were on playing fields at Stopsley Common on 29th December. A second-winter at Brogborough Lake on the afternoon of 24th December was pondered by the observer as possibly showing characteristics associated with far flung races of this species particularly on its tail pattern and upper-parts colouration – full details were submitted for reference (MSG).

### **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* L.

Twenty-one records from seven observers were received, the more interesting of which are noted here. At Rookery CIP there were seven on 1st January, 16 on 6th February and 260+ on 22nd May. At Stewartby Lake there were four on 29th January rising to 450+ in a diminished, total roost of just under 700 gulls on 20th April (MJP). Six *L.f.fuscus* were at this site on 5th March and c.1,000 on 12th included six *L.f.fuscus* and several *L.f.intermedius* (Schioler) (RAH). At Brogborough Lake there were nine on 8th January, 51 on 16th February and 122 on 19th. Just over 200 were at this roost on 20th November but only a third-winter individual was identified in the roost on 31st December, reflecting the usual turn-of-the-year paucity of this species in Bedfordshire. 10–20 were at Dunstable STW on 16–17th April, otherwise there were occasional single figure records from July declining to just one or two present from time to time in November and December (PT). A further *L.f.fuscus* was claimed at Stopsley Common on 16th September (JCP).

### **Yellow-legged Gull** *L. cacinmans* (Naumann)

As last year, only very few observers felt familiar or confident enough to submit records with the still developing identification criteria to separate this 'new' species split from Herring Gull. Fortunately, Bedfordshire is home to both Rob Hume – chair of BBRC and renowned gull enthusiast – and Martin Garner who is rapidly becoming the identification expert for this species. The remaining descriptions were submitted by gull roost regulars, Roy Nye and Martin Palmer.

An adult was seen in Coronation CIP on 19th March (RAH) and presumably the same bird was in the roost at Stewartby Lake that evening (RAH, MJP *et al*) with two different birds there on 20th (MJP *et al*). An adult was at Rookery CIP on 17th and 24th July (RAN, MJP) and another adult was at this same site on 17th September (RAN, PN, DJO). At Brogborough Lake, an adult was present on 30th August (MSG). An adult was on Brogborough Tip on 1st September (MSG). Four adults were at Brogborough Lake on 27th October (MSG) and an adult was at Coronation CIP on 29th October. In November, at Brogborough Lake, there were single adults on 12th, 19th (RAH), and 30th (MSG). Four adults were identified there on 23rd and a first-winter on 27th (MSG). A single adult was at Brogborough Lake on 9th December (MSG).

Good descriptions accompanied all the published records, several with line drawings as well, which allowed comparatively easy assessment. However, the first-winter claim is included in this report on the basis of the observer's expertise with this difficult plumage separation from Herring Gull. The details of this bird, as with a couple of other most unusual gull descriptions mentioned elsewhere in this report, have been sent to Rob Hume for comment or possible circulation to BBRC.

**Herring Gull** *L. argentatus* Pontoppidan

There were no claims of breeding or attempted breeding in the County in 1994. At Dunstable STW, less than five were generally present during January to March and just one or two during November to December (PT). At Stewartby Lake only four plus were present in a small roost of c.700 gulls on 20th April. Summer and autumn records logged at Rookery CIP were of one to two present on eight dates from 24th July to 10th September. A few thousand are present in mid-winter brick pit roosts but no counts or estimates were received for 1994. Numbers were considered though to be much the same as in recent years with a very high number – maybe 80% of the Herring Gulls present – in the mid-winter roosts being the Scandinavian nominate race *L.a. argentatus* rather than the smaller, western European race *L.a. argenteus* (Brehm) (MSG, MJP).

An interesting description of an adult present at Brogborough Lake on 19th December has been forwarded to the Chairman of the BBRC for comment on the observer's thoughts that the bird may have shown characters associated with *L.a. heuglini* (Bree) from north-west Russia (MSG).

**Iceland Gull** *L. glaucooides* Meyer

At least four birds were present in the first winter period. First of the year was an adult at Brogborough Lake on 7th February (MSG) which was followed by a second-year bird at this site on 12th February (RAH). At Stewartby Lake, Iceland Gulls were seen on 16 dates from the end of February to late March. An adult was present intermittently on 12 dates from 26th February to 26th March (MJP, RAN, KO *et al.*). Three differing first-winter to first-summer birds were present in early March at Stewartby Lake, separately identified on differing bare parts and plumage details. All three were together, as well as the adult, on 6th March, scattered about amongst the huge gull roost. One of these three stayed until the 26th March (RAN, KO, MJP *et al.*).

In the second winter period, a first-winter was seen at Brogborough Lake on 19th (RAH) and 20th November (MJP, MJG). Presumably it was this same individual that was seen there on 10th December but no details were submitted (PN) and was also quite probably that seen at Priory CP on 11th December (DK).

**Glaucous Gull** *L. hyperboreus* Gunnerus

There were probably four, or maybe five, individuals seen in Bedfordshire in 1994. An adult was seen at Brogborough Lake on eight dates from 21st January to 10th February. Presumably, the same bird was at Stewartby Lake on 28th February and 1st March (RAN, MJP, PA, PS, DJO). A first or second-year bird was at Brogborough Lake on 15th February (MSG). Four days later, a first-winter was found at Coronation CIP on 19th (JB) with the same seen at Stewartby Lake on 20th February (MJP) and, presumably, the same bird at Brogborough Lake on 5th March (RAN) and at Coronation CIP on 19th March (RAH). A third or fourth-winter was present at Brogborough Lake on 20th February (MJP, DJO, RAN) and perhaps a second-year bird at Stewartby Lake on 25th March but views were distant (KO).

In the second winter period, conceivably the same adult seen earlier in the year had returned to Rookery CIP, seen there on the early date of 9th September (JB, AW). A fourth-year bird was at Elstow refuse-tip on 28th October (MSG) and the last for the year was a fourth-winter or adult at Stewartby Lake on 9th December (MSG). Lastly, the mystery, virtually white bird was present in the County again in 1994 which was reported under Iceland Gull in the 1993 report (*loc cit.*). Between 1st January and 5th March, it was reported on ten occasions from Brogborough Lake. From 26th February to 18th March it was found on five dates in the Stewartby Lake roost and on 9th, 16th and 19th April it was in Rookery CIP. It returned again in the autumn and was seen intermittently until early May 1995. It was noted at Brogborough Lake on 18th November, 21st and 31st December. Much discussion continues on its identity. One rarity panel member would prefer it shot! One joint Recorder thinks 'seagull sp.' is the best we can accept. However, a more considered view is that of aberrant Herring

Gull or, perhaps, a leucistic runt Glaucous Gull as favoured by MSG and MJP. All views are welcomed by the Recorders. Certainly, separating this bird out of the multitude of reports of Iceland and Glaucous Gulls has again taken rather too many hours.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *L. marinus* L.

Three to four hundred were noted in the roost at Brogborough Lake on both 22nd and 29th January. At Dunstable STW, an adult was noted in January and a juvenile in August. At Stewartby Lake on 20th April, two first-summer birds were present amongst a roost of only 700 gulls counted. At Rookery CIP, five first-summer birds were present on 24th April. Three first-summer and two third-summer birds were there on 22nd May. First autumn returnees reported were a second-summer at Rookery CIP on 14th August and a single on 21st August.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* (L.)

The only record of the year was of an adult at Priory CP on 18th April when 27 Arctic Terns were also seen at this site (DK). As commented in the 1993 report, this gull is now less frequently recorded in the County than the three white-winged species.

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandwichensis* Latham

Just two records of this annual, but scarce, passage migrant to the County were recorded in 1994. Four flew over Brogborough Lake on 24th September (DHB). A single adult was at Rookery CIP on 25th September (KO).

**Common Tern** *S. hirundo* L.

The first arrival was a day later than in 1993 with a single on 10th April at Radwell GP. Selected counts from Priory CP included twelve on 23rd and 22 on 29th April, 26 on 6th May, 10 on 26th June, 43 on 17th July and lastly two on 25th September were the final Common Terns recorded in Bedfordshire this year. At Bromham, there were two along the river on 27th April, one pair bred and two young were successfully fledged. The two juveniles were still present on 13th August but no terns were left by 24th. At Dunstable STW, Common Terns were present throughout the summer. The first were four birds present on 12th April. A pair were established by 9th May, two juveniles fledged and were last seen on 24th August. The last passage report there being three seen on 15th September. At Willington GP, the first arrivals were three present on 23rd and 24th April. Around 25 pairs were estimated on 7th June and 25+ flying juveniles were seen on 30th June. Twenty-six fledged juveniles and some unfledged birds were recorded on 9th July from around 20 pairs (DHB). Total counts of 50 were made on both 8th and 13th July.

From Rookery CIP, the first were eleven on 23rd April and the last was on 24th August. No breeding was recorded at this site nor nearby Stewartby Lake, where the last was on 18th September. Common Terns were noted from Grovebury Farm SP from 1st May where a single pair tried to breed but the nest was robbed by crows (PS). Elsewhere, Common Terns were occasionally recorded from Langford GPs, Tiddenfoot WP, Houghton Regis ChP, Luton Hoo, Southill Lake, Woburn Park, along the River Ouse between Kempston and Great Barford, Harrold-Odell CP and Brogborough Lake.

**Arctic Tern** *S. paradisea* Pontoppidan

Ten observers submitted record cards. At Priory CP the first claim was of a single bird on the 13th April (AS); however, 27 were seen there on 18th (DK). Of sixteen *Sterna* terns present at Rookery CIP on 23rd April at least six were of this species and four were Common Terns (MJP). In autumn, there were three at Stewartby Lake on 16th September, two at Dunstable STW on 15th September and two adults and two juveniles on 16th, whilst records from Brogborough Lake were of a single adult on 12th September, 12 birds on 15th, six on 16th and a single juvenile on 25th and 30th September; the last was noted there on 1st October.

**Little Tern** *S. albifrons* Pallas

The only record in 1994 was of two adults at Stewartby Lake on 24th May (MSG).



**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* (L.)

Sixteen observers submitted record cards. At Priory CP, May passage records were of two on 3rd, two on 21st and one on 23rd, whilst September returnees noted were one on 1st, a massive 51 on 15th (DK) and four on 16th. At Stewartby Lake, an adult was present on 31st July (AC), then there were six on 1st September, seven on 14th, a huge 61 on 15th (DJO), three on 16th and 17th with just two on 18th. Next door at Rookery CIP, there were two on 21st April, ten on 2nd May and four on 18th, then, in autumn, two on 22nd August and five on 23rd, 17 on 15th September (CT), three on 16th and singles on 17th and 18th. From Brogborough Lake were two on 12th September, 20 on 15th (TD) and eight on 16th. Elsewhere, four were at Chimney Corner CIP on 14th May, one was at Luton Hoo on 16th May and there were four at Dunstable STW on 15th September and three on 16th.

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* Gmelin

Many birders still ignore this species so records received are all too few. However, a flock of up to 150 in fields by Bedford STW on 20th November was of note.

**Stock Dove** *C. oenas* L.

The largest flock reported was c.200 at Willington GP on 8th July. Other high counts were of flocks of 40 on 2nd January at Priory CP, 35 at Luton Hoo on 7th January and 44 east of Aspley Guise on 5th January, with another peak in October of 28 at Priory CP on 16th. Breeding records seem generally poorly recorded, those of note included eight pairs at the Old Warden CBC (which is in line with the recent average) and several on farmland surrounding Dunstable STW.

**Woodpigeon** *C. palumbus* L.

The largest flocks reported were an estimated 4,000 at East Hyde on 25th January, c.1,200 at Wood End, Marston on 25th February and c.2,500 on 18th November at Cople. At Lower Sundon, 1,000+ noted on 20th and 21st February, which were dispersed by shooting in March when only 2-400 were counted.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* (Frivaldszky)

A notable drop in roosting birds was evidenced compared with previous years with a maximum at Priory CP of 60 birds recorded in mid-December. Sixty were seen at Cople on 21st October.

**Turtle Dove** *S. turtur* (L.)

The first of the year was at Houghton Conquest on 24th April, with the last being seen at Whipsnade Zoo on 26th September. Most observers noted only low numbers of this species in Bedfordshire in 1994 and all records for 1995 should be submitted in case a decline in the fortunes of this elegant little dove is occurring. Two pairs bred at the Old Warden CBC - a four year low.

**Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* (Scopoli)

The long-staying (from 1991) occasional visitor to Blows Downs was seen from time to time, an excellent description being received (MP). An adult male was described at Henlow Grange on 27th February (MJS). Two were at Flitwick Moor on 9th and 16th July (KMS).

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* L.

The first was at Rookery CIP on 22nd April with sightings from several other locations before the end of the month. The last was at Whipsnade Zoo on 30th August. The only submitted breeding record came from Priory CP with a youngster occupying a Reed Warbler's nest on 17th July.

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* (Scopoli)

Breeding was confirmed from Willington Dovecote again. Roadside casualties reported this year included birds at East Hyde, Woburn Park and north of Dunstable. Records came from some 27 or so sites across the County, how many from re-introduction schemes is unclear.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua* (Scopoli)

Numerous sightings were noted throughout the year from well over twenty different

sites. Breeding season records came from Shuttleworth, Houghton Regis ChP, Luton, Pegsdon, Eaton Bray, Totternhoe, Cople, Kempston and near Eggington.

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco* L.

Surprisingly few records were submitted, from only seven sites, and only three confirmed breeding sites. The most regular site records came from Priory CP in April and May then October through to December. This species is not uncommon in the County and the paucity of records merely reflects a decline in the nocturnal habits of our local birders. Please submit all records in future so that we may have a better basis for monitoring this species' population in Bedfordshire.

**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus* (L.)

The traditional winter roost site in the south of the County produced January maxima of five birds. Two pairs bred at different locations in the south and one bird was seen on two occasions in July at a site in the north of the County. Two autumn records came from Priory CP. An *Asio* at Turvey on 10th March may have been this species.

**Short-eared Owl** *A. flammeus* (Pontoppidan)

Only two reports were received; one at Eaton Bray on 21st to 23rd October and one at Barton on 7th November.

**Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* L.

One was reported at Melchbourne in the breeding season (per DJO), otherwise 1994 was a blank year, unfortunately. All observers are requested to check suitable, publicly accessible habitat in future, in the hope that this enigmatic species has not been lost to the County.

**Swift** *Apus apus* (L.)

The first report for the year came from Priory CP on 24th April and the last also from this site on the 18th September. The largest flocks noted were c.500 at Dunstable STW on 24th May and again on 3rd June.

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* (L.)

Helped by the recent run of mild winters, Kingfishers were widespread throughout the County all year. Breeding success proved difficult to establish but numbers recorded suggest another good year.

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis* L.

Seven pairs at the Old Warden CBC site is the highest ever, eclipsing six pairs there in 1992. Unfortunately, no other confirmed breeding records were received but 'Yaffles' were recorded from some 21 other sites during the year by the eight observers submitting records.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major* (L.)

Records were received from nine sites during the breeding season, best was five birds seen together in woods at Willington GP on 15th July.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *D. minor* (L.)

A pair were present at Swiss Gardens, Old Warden for at least three months of the year. Others of this species were reported from Eversholt Lake, Kidney Wood, Woburn Park, Turvey, Blunham, Maulden Woods, Bromham, Bedford, Priory CP, Whipsnade Zoo, Houghton Conquest, Pavenham, Biggleswade and Felmersham, with breeding noted at these last two sites.

**Passerines**

**Wood Lark** *Lullula arborea* (L.)

One of the highlights of the year came in late July from the west of the County when, until mid-August, several observers were lucky enough to witness up to two adults and a youngster in suitable habitat quite near to the 1991 and 1992 sites. It is probable that the breeding was local but the youngster was well grown and could therefore have originated from outside Bedfordshire. Two singing males were noted at this site in spring 1995, however, and the situation is being monitored. Birders having knowledge

of this location are requested to keep it to themselves and avoid disturbance to this nationally rare breeding species and please avoid year tick and bird race visits – go and see them in well managed sites such as the Brecks instead!

**Skylark** *Aluada arvensis* L.

The largest flocks recorded in the first winter period were 120 near Edlesborough, over 100 in fields at Linslade, 100 at Cardington and 100 in fields near Bedford STW. Twenty pairs were holding territory in one square kilometre at Thurleigh Airfield. In the second winter period, a flock of 196 were in fields near Bedford STW and 110 were in a stubble field at Eaton Bray.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* (L.)

The first for the year were two at Langford GP on 13th March. Large spring counts included 200 at Girtford GP on 5th April, c.100 on 2nd and 150 on 10th April at Rookery CIP. Breeding was recorded at five sites with 166 nest holes counted at Willington GP, 80 pairs at Grovebury Farm and c.50 pairs at Mentmore Road SP were part of a total count of some 235 nest holes for the pits around Leighton Buzzard. A combined total of some 780 were counted over five dates in August at Priory CP. The last record for the year was of two at Dunstable STW on 26th September.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* L.

One over a garden at Eversholt on the 14th March was the first of the year and then one at Tiddenfoot WP on 28th. Seven were at Dunstable STW on 30th March with three or four at Luton Hoo next day, numbers and locations increasing as normal through April. In autumn, 350 were counted at Priory CP on 1st September and the last for 1994 in Bedfordshire was one at Harrold-Odell CP on 26th October.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbica* (L.)

The first migrant was noted at Rookery CIP on 2nd April, with three at Eversholt on 7th. Three hundred were at Dunstable STW on 23rd May with a grand tally of 1,000 at the same site on 25th. 460 at Priory CP on 25th September was the top autumn count and the last of the year were five at Stewartby village on 10th October.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* (L.)

Most records were from Aspley Heath with three singing there on 2nd May. The earliest record was of two at Pegsdon Hills on 23rd April and one at Willington the day after. Before the felling of the poplar plantation and extraction of gravel some years ago, this latter was a regular breeding site for the species. One was noted at Dunstable STW on 21st July but there were no records after that date this year in Bedfordshire.

**Meadow Pipit** *A. pratensis* (L.)

Only four record cards were received for this species, not reflecting their true status within the County. Please submit all records next year to establish a clearer picture. Counts of 43 at Moat Farm, Turvey and 32 at Hill Spinney, Turvey were made in the first winter period and a count of 50 birds at Dunstable STW was reported for the second winter period. The only confirmed breeding record received was from Blows Downs, with food-carrying noted on 4th June.

**Water Pipit** *A. spinoletta* (L.)

An adult at Dunstable STW on 27th March was fully detailed (PT, AW). Please provide full descriptions to confirm both Water and Rock Pipits *A. petrosus* (Montagu) in Bedfordshire.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava flavissima* (Blyth)

The first arrival was on 31st March at Dunstable STW and the last to go was seen on 25th September at Priory CP. Twenty juveniles were noted at Rookery North CIP on 21st July. Thirty-one birds at Dunstable STW on 25th April was the largest group of the year recorded. Also at this site came reports of birds showing the characters of the nominate Blue-headed race, *M. flava* L., with three there on 30th April. One was reported to have cross-bred with a Yellow Wagtail at this site (PT).

**Grey Wagtail** *M. cinerea* Tunstall

Recorded from an excellent 35 different sites across the County, with confirmed breeding at Grovebury Farm SP where a pair reared at least one fully fledged youngster

which is the first known breeding record for this site. Two young birds were seen at Bromham Mill on 22nd July but no confirmed breeding this year from Whipsnade Zoo. One to three were present all year at Church End STW, Arlesley and possibly bred. Up to five Grey Wagtails, including a couple of juveniles, were at Priory CP from July to the year end; also up to five were at Dunstable STW in the second winter period.

**Pied Wagtail** *M. alba yarrelli* Gould

Maximum counts were of 70 at Girtford STW on 4th December and 56 at Priory CP on 9th October. Only one breeding record was received, from Dunstable STW, and observers are asked to confirm all breeding of this widespread and common Bedfordshire bird. Birds showing characters associated with the near-continental, nominate form, *M.a. alba* L., the White Wagtail, were noted at Dunstable STW in March and April, Tiddenfoot WP on 23rd March and at Blows Downs on 27th March and 19th April.

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* (L.)

Good juvenile production ensured high CES figures for this species which, combined with good adult winter survival, indicates a real increase in the County's population. Forty-four males held territory at Priory CP and at the Old Warden CBC site, there were 46 pairs holding territory, the highest figure since 1990 and six up on 1993.

**Duncock** *Prunella modularis* (L.)

CES data shows a pattern of mixed fortunes which is attributable to the different nature of ringing sites locally, but broadly shows a recovery from the 1992/3 low point. At the Old Warden CBC site, the 19 pairs present in 1994 was more than double the 1993 figure but still massively down on the 1975 peak of 107 pairs. Nine males held territory at Priory CP.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* (L.)

Figures from CES suggest that 1994 was a more normal breeding season than the very productive 1993. At Waterloo Thorns the number of adults caught was four times higher in 1994 than 1993. At Old Warden CBC area, 56 pairs held territory, the site's highest ever count, well up on the recent five-year average of 30 pairs. Fifteen males held territory at Priory CP.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* C.L. Brehm

The first arrival was at Priory CP on 23rd April, six days earlier than last year's earliest ever date! Before the end of the month, reports were added from Home Wood, Northhill and the Old Warden CBC site. Additional records came from six sites with breeding recorded in the Everton area – nine pairs, and at Priory CP – where a single pair nested, although there were up to three singing birds present. Results from the Waterloo Thorns CES site indicated a drop in numbers present of both adults and juveniles, a 75% decrease recorded against the latter. This drop is thought probably attributable to the habitat becoming too mature to sustain former numbers. The last record for the year came on 30th August from Priory CP.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* (J.F. Gmelin)

A quiet spring for this species with only two records, both from Blows Downs, where a female stayed overnight on 27th March and a different female was seen briefly on 1st April. In the autumn, the first sighting was of a male on Blows Downs on 17th October, followed by a female at Eaton Bray on 28th and another at Houghton Regis ChP on 30th. A notable arrival was of three together at Blows Downs' paddocks on 5th November with two there the following day. A bird stayed at Harlington from 21st to 24th November and the last of the year was at Wootton on 3rd December. (Plate 7)

**Common Redstart** *P. phoenicurus* (L.)

A male on Blows Downs from 31st March to 3rd April was unusually early. Other spring sightings came from Bromham Lake NR, with a male on 8th April, and, the following day, one was seen at Houghton Regis ChP. More normal was the arrival of a male on Blows Downs from 21st to 23rd April with three there on the last date. The only breeding records came from Aspley Heath, where one pair successfully raised young but a second pair deserted after disturbance by Jays *Garrulus glandarius*. Return

passage came on 11th August from Luton Hoo, Blows Downs on 14th, Turvey Abbey on 21st, Turvey Park on 28th August, Luton on 2nd and 27th September, two males at Whipsnade Zoo on 13th and a male at Stopsley Common on 16th September. A bird seen at Whipsnade Zoo at dusk in poor light on 25th September could not positively be identified as to which Redstart it was but the date supports a late *P. phoenicurus*.

#### **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* (L.)

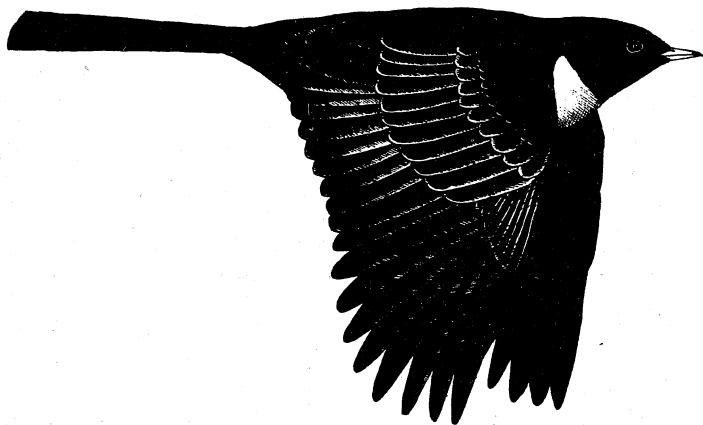
First of the year were males at Dunstable STW and Blows Downs on 23rd April. These heralded a busy period, with Whinchats being found at Willington GP (2), Priory Business Park, Brogborough Lake, Dunstable Downs, Blows Downs, Stewartby Lake and Thurleigh Airfield in the following nine days. Blows Downs had three on 30th April, two were reported from Cople on 6th May and the last of the spring was at Priory CP on 8th May. Widely reported in the autumn, this year's passage stretched from 13th August at Stopsley Common through until the last of the year on 2nd October at Priory CP. The chalk ridge in the south of the County dominated this season, with reports from Blows Downs on six days, four days at Warden Hills, three days at Pegsdon Hills, two days at Galley Hill, Stopsley Common and Butterfield Green. Other records came from sites receiving almost daily coverage, with Whinchats recorded on five days at Priory CP and seven days at Dunstable STW, with three birds present there from 14th to 17th September. Maximum counts were five or six at Stopsley Common on 29th August and four or five on Blows Downs on 31st August, 9th and 21st September.

#### **Stonechat** *S. torquata* (L.)

The recent good showing of this species continued with a string of records from both winter periods. A pair stayed on from 1993 at Blows Downs but only the female survived after 21st January, staying on until 27th February. A pair was found on 1st January at Priory Business Park where they stayed until 12th March. Other sightings came from Sewell on 30th January, Coronation CIP on 19th February, Luton Hoo on 25th and Bushmead on 26th February. A bird present at Grovebury SP from 4th to 25th February may have been the same as found nearer the A5 on 25th, remaining until the 29th. A peak count of four birds from Blows Downs on 7th March was notable and the final sighting of the first winter period came on 20th March at Priory CP. An intriguing record was of a female found at Rookery North CIP on 21st July (KO). The first two returning birds were on Warden Hills on 4th September. Two were at nearby Galley Hill from 13th to 16th September. Other records came from Ridgmont on 18th September, Wavendon Heath, two on 2nd October, and Luton Hoo on 14th October. Stonechats were in the Bedford STW area from 28th September into 1995 with five present on 2nd and four on 15th October. Records from Willington GP on 27th November and 29th December may have wandered from the previous, adjacent site. Blows Downs had two birds on the paddocks on 28th October, one remaining the following day and showing intermittently into 1995.

#### **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* (L.)

The first of the year were three males at Blows Downs. This site then recorded presence on 30 of the next 40 days with a peak of 22 on 31st March. Elsewhere, records came from Dunstable STW, Warden and Galley Hills, Grovebury SP, Dunstable GC, Rookery CIP, Luton, Willington GP, Pegsdon Hills and Priory CP which saw the last migrant on 15th May. A male was near Stagsden on 28th May whilst a bird carrying food at Thurleigh Airfield on 3rd June probably had young nearby, though there was no confirmed breeding from any locality. Return passage was recorded on 12th August at Dunstable STW, 26th and 29th August at Galley Hill, with three birds present on the latter date, Rookery CIP on 28th and 29th and Blows Downs on 30th August. Two were at Biddenham on 26th August and one there on 18th September. A singleton was at Luton Hoo on 13th October, but the previous record for latest sighting was eclipsed when, at Blows Downs, after one on 29th October, two arrived on 5th November, one of them staying on until the 8th.



Ring Ouzel

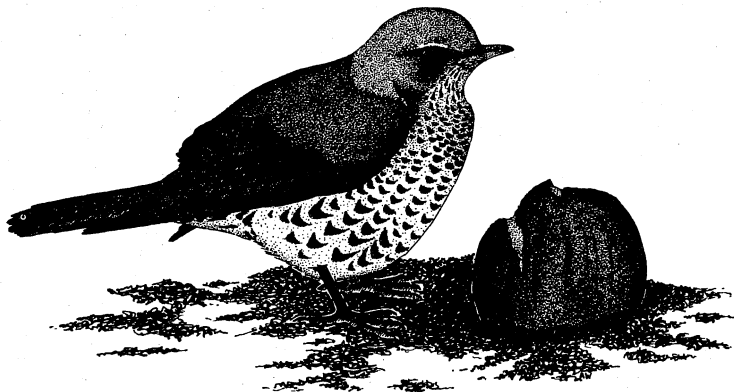
Michael Pocock

**Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* L.

Predictably the majority of sightings came from Blows Downs; the first wave were from 29th March until 5th April with five on 31st March. There was then a lull until 15th April when Ring Ouzels were present on eight of the next eleven days. Last in spring at this site was a female on 2nd May. Other spring sightings came from Luton Hoo, which had its first site record on 16th April, Pegsdon with a pair on 24th April and Dunstable Downs with a single on 4th and 5th April, followed by two on the 18th. A highlight of a BNHS spring field trip was watching a female being caught and ringed on Blows Downs on 24th April. (Plate 5)

**Blackbird** *T. merula* L.

On the CBC plot at Old Warden, numbers maintained the average of the last five years with 24 pairs present. Results from CES work agreed that adults were fairly stable but it was also a good year for juveniles after two bad years. Influxes were noted at Priors CP in February and from October into November with 56 on 6th being notable. An influx was also noted on Blows Downs at the end of October. Is it just fantasising to wonder if a diligent County birder might find a Siberian vagrant amongst our returning thrushes, as seems to occur regularly at some coastal watch point or other each autumn?



Fieldfare

A. White

**Fieldfare** *T. pilaris* L.

The first winter period had flocks of over 200 at Turvey, Bromham Lake NR, Shuttleworth, Priory CP and Eversholt with the largest count of 500+ at Pegsdon Hills. 160 at The Lodge, Sandy on 14th April were noteworthy but the last sighting was at Turvey on 28th April. The first returnees were on 11th October at Priory CP with the main arrival following within a week. Large movements were reported from Dunstable STW on 22nd and 23rd October with 'hundreds flying over'. Large flocks reported included 950 around Turvey on 26th October, at least 800 over Cople on 7th November, over 400 at Stopsley Common and c.500 at Keysoe on 13th November.

**Song Thrush** *T. philomelos* C.L. Brehm

The decline of this formerly abundant species has not reversed although it may have halted on 1994 evidence. At the Old Warden CBC site there were six pairs present, maintaining a three year low – in 1975 there were 44 pairs! Ringing data from Priory CP and Waterloo Thorns suggested something of a recovery and numbers were back to pre-1984 levels, though it should be noted that the species' fortunes were well into decline by that date. At the end of September, an influx was noted at Priory CP and at Blunham, where a garden population had swollen to 15 overnight on 29th only to return to 'residents only' on 30th and then experience a similar arrival on 1st November.

**Redwing** *T. iliacus* L.

Widely reported in both winter periods, the biggest early-year flock was of c.250 at Priory CP on 7 February. Last birds in spring were at Bromham on 15th April and at Whipsnade Zoo on 19th. First of the autumn were heard over Eaton Bray on 24th September and, by 16th October, over 200 were noted at Stopsley Common but the largest year-end gathering was at Priory CP, with 300+ on 30th November.

**Mistle Thrush** *T. viscivorus* L.

A very under-recorded species with reports only of post-breeding groups which included 11 at Dunstable STW and 16 at Peoples Park, Luton in September and up to 29 at Turvey during August.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* (Boddaert)

The first in spring were two at Willington GP on 21st April with the next at Bidwell Ditch, Dunstable STW and from near Lidlington CIP on 24th April. Further records, mostly of singles, came from near Arlesley, Brogborough Lake, Bromham Park, Coronation CIP, Dunstable GC, Dunstable STW, Flitwick Moor, Home Wood Northill, Blue Waters (Houghton Regis), Knotting Green, Old Warden CBC, Priory CP, Quest CIP, Rookery CIP and Tiddenfoot WP. The last record was at Knotting Green on 28th July.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (L.)

The earliest in spring was at South Mills NR on 11th April, with the main arrival between 20th and 27th April reported from Langford GPs, Priory CP, Dunstable STW, Bromham Park, East Hyde, Tiddenfoot WP and Brogborough Lake. Forty-one males held territory at Priory CP, a slight reduction from the 43 territories of 1993. Eleven males were noted at Dunstable STW, almost twice the level of 1993. CES results show a slight to gradual decline in adults over the years, possibly due to habitat changes. Juvenile productivity was very low in 1994 with a 76% drop, but only 12% lower for adults. CES data also showed that birds left seven to ten days earlier than the normal date in other years. However, the last to depart in autumn was at Priory CP on 16th October, a late date for the County.

**Reed Warbler** *A. scirpaceus* (Hermann)

Breeding records from Priory CP (45 singing males), Battlesden Lake (4), Southill Lake (3–4), Langford GPs (3+), Church End, Arlesley (2) and Mentmore Road SP (at least one pair bred). Also noted from Harrold-Odell CP and Rookery CIP, but no reports were received for South Mills NR or Houghton Regis ChP which held 21 pairs between them in 1993. Although this species was no doubt under recorded, observers commented on the lower than usual numbers this year. CES results show that, although

numbers are erratic from year to year, overall the trend is stable. 1994 was a good year for juvenile productivity with a 30% increase over 1993. The first arrival and latest departure were both at Priory CP, on 23rd April and 11th October respectively.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* (L.)

Arriving on a wide front, the first were on 23rd April at Blows Downs, along the River Hiz at Arlesley and at Cople, and on 24th April at Maulden Woods and Priory CP. In 200 acres on the Old Warden CBC site, there were no breeding pairs, compared to the three pairs in 1993 and eight pairs in 1974–5; this indicates a long-term downward trend at this site. CES results showed this was a very poor year for juvenile productivity, just 50% of the normal expectation and probably due to heavy rains during May. The latest records for the autumn were at Harrold-Odell CP on 22nd September and Priory CP on 25th September.

**Whitethroat** *S. communis* Latham

The first, about two weeks earlier than usual, was on 10th April at Blows Downs, where the last in autumn was also reported on 25th September. The main spring influx occurred between 22nd and 24th April, typical dates. At the Old Warden CBC site, only two pairs held territory compared to three pairs during 1991–3, and significantly down from the recent peak of 14 pairs in 1990. CES results showed that 1994 was the third year in a row with high adult survival and high juvenile productivity. Eight males held territory at Priory CP and the last there were two on 18th September.

**Garden Warbler** *S. borin* (Boddaert)

Blows Downs attracted the first spring arrival on 15th April and also had the last to depart in autumn, on 25th September. The main spring passage arrived between 24th and 30th April. By early May, this species was widespread, with, for example, about ten in Luton Hoo on 2nd May. At the Old Warden CBC area just two pairs bred, continuing the last five-year level, but down compared to an average of five pairs between 1985–89. 1994 CES indices produced a 25% decrease on 1993 for both adult survival and juvenile productivity which is no real surprise when considered against the increase in Blackcaps this year with which there is spacial competition for nest sites. Breeding numbers were noted as slightly down at Priory CP, from 24 pairs in 1993 to 20 pairs in 1994.

**Blackcap** *S. atricapilla* (L.)

During the first winter period, 14 observers, 17% of all those participating in the Garden Bird Feeding Survey, noted Blackcaps in their gardens. From all the records received it would seem that a minimum of 25 wintering Blackcaps were involved, mainly from gardens in the larger towns where the temperatures are a few degrees higher than in rural areas. Some individuals, like one seen frequently between early January and 20th February in Bedford, one in Luton from mid-January to the end of February, and a male and female in Bromham between 6th January and 20th February, were long stayers. Peak numbers were seen in the second and third weeks of February, coinciding with low temperatures. In the second winter period reports were typically fewer with November records from Blunham (2), Dunstable and Kempston, and in December from Blunham, Luton (2), Aspley Guise, Flitwick, Bidwell, Dunstable, Clifton and Bedford.

As usual, it was difficult to differentiate between over-wintering individuals and the earliest spring migrants, but singles at Priory CP and Tiddenfoot WP on 28th March were probably new arrivals. The last departures in autumn were two at Priory CP on 8th October. At the Old Warden CBC site, 14 territories were occupied, the highest since 21 territories in 1975. At Priory CP, 21 males held territory, a reduction of five from 1993. This supports CES findings at this site and at Waterloo Thorns of a 65% increase in the adult population. Juvenile productivity has, however, been stable for the last three years. (Plate 8)

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (Bechstein)

A migrant was found at Dunstable GC on 28th April. Two pairs bred at Aspley Heath



raising at least two broods. This is the first known successful breeding in the County since 1991. In the same area a further pair bred but were just over the County boundary with Buckinghamshire.

**Chiffchaff** *P. collybita* (Viellot)

One showing some of the characteristics associated with the race *Pc. tristis* Blyth was claimed at Priory CP on 2nd February (DK,JCP) and the *Pc. tristis/abietinus* ringed in 1993 was still present at Priory CP on 4th January. Contrary to the comment in the 1993 report regarding the bird trapped at South Mills NR on 7th February 1993, the identifier (PRO) has corrected the comment that this was an intergrade; he considers that this was not the case but was one or other of the two races and most likely *Pc. abietinus* (Nilsson).

Individuals of the nominate race were seen at Priory CP on seven dates between 1st and 23rd January with two on 4th. The only other record from the first winter period was of one in a Bedford garden in the middle of February. In spring, the first arrivals were four at Tiddenfoot WP on 11th March, with further migrants noted on 12th March at Priory CP, at Blunham and Bedford around 13th March, and at Willington on 14th March. They were widespread by the end of March, but a further influx was noted in Luton Hoo on 16th April when 15 were noted by the lake-side. At the Old Warden CBC site, eight pairs bred, slightly down on the average for 1989–93 of eleven pairs. Both adult and juvenile populations and productivity were normal in 1994 from the CES results, as were their ratios.

Autumn passage was noted at Priory CP from 2nd September until 16th October, with a peak of 24 on 10th September. In the second winter period, records were received from Priory CP, Bidwell and Bromham in November, and Barton, Priory CP, Blunham, Tiddenfoot WP and Houghton Regis in December.

**Willow Warbler** *P. trochilus* (L.)

The first, very early migrant was one singing at Dunstable STW on 12th March, with the next at Priory CP on 29th March and at Tiddenfoot WP on 31st. The main arrival was between 2nd and 4th April. At Priory CP, 31 males held territory, the same as in 1993. At the Old Warden CBC site, seven pairs was a slight recovery from just four pairs in 1992 and six in 1993. The breeding population at this site is still well down from the peak of 36 pairs in 1985 and 21 pairs in 1989, whereafter the population collapsed. CES results showed a 15% drop in the adult population at Waterloo Thorns and a 50% decrease at Priory CP; this may reflect stages in habitat progression but may also, perhaps, be evidence of a wider decline in south and southeast England and, due to possible lack of invertebrates on passage, the adults not returning from their wintering area following drier than usual summers since 1989 (per ECN). Juvenile productivity was low for all ringing sites this year. The last of autumn was noted on Blows Downs on 26th September.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* (L.)

The breeding population at the Old Warden CBC site remained constant at six pairs, this level being fairly static for the last 20 years. Autumn influxes were noted during October at Eaton Bray, from Priory CP, where the maximum was eleven on 9th October, and at Tiddenfoot WP in November with five or six present all month.

**Firecrest** *R. ignicapillus* (Temminck)

One stayed at Stewartby Lake from 1993 until c. 28th February (PN, MJP, DJO *et al*) but was always very elusive along the Caulcott ditch. A well-watched individual was at Tiddenfoot WP from 11th to 13th March (PS, PT, MS, AW *et al*). Two were seen on Dunstable Downs on 21st May (PM).

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* (Pallas)

After the first arrival, at Whipsnade Zoo on 30th April, the main arrival, more typically, was between 6th and 14th May. There were no sightings at all of this species on 200 acres of the Old Warden CBC area, which held a peak of eleven pairs in 1973, but only one pair in 1989–93. Summer observations were also reported as scarce at Priory CP

and Luton Hoo, indeed, only just over 30 records were received for the year from 14 observers. An interesting series of autumn passage records included ten at Turvey Abbey on 5th and 24th August with 30 there on 14th, eleven in Luton Hoo on 11th August and at least ten at Harrold-Odell CP on 24th August. The last reported in autumn was at Priory CP on 24th September.

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* (Pallas)

Good notes were received of a female at Whipsnade Zoo on 29th April (R.C, C.T, P.T *et al*), the only record for 1994.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* (L.)

In the first winter period, 20+ were noted at Flitwick Moor. Nine territories were occupied at the Old Warden CBC site, maintaining the high level established in 1989. However, the breeding success, as monitored by the combined CES in the County, was extremely low. Only two juveniles were trapped compared to the normal catch of between 35 and 50. Consequently, the largest flocks seen in the second winter period were 26 at Millbrook Pillinge CIP on 6th November, about 20 at Luton Hoo on 23rd December and 15–20 at Tiddenfoot WP through November but not noted after the first really cold snap around 5th December.

**Marsh Tit** *Parus palustris* (L.)

Seven pairs were noted at the Old Warden CBC area and, like the previous species, this maintains the high level since 1989. Records received from many localities, particularly woods along the Greensand Ridge, reflected the distribution of birders' favoured localities rather than this widespread species' real population.

**Willow Tit** *P. montanus* von Baldenstein

Breeding season records came from Bison Hill, Charle Wood, Dunstable Downs, King's Wood (Houghton Conquest), Pegsdon Hills, Stockgrove CP and Tiddenfoot WP. Winter and autumn records were received from Blows Downs, Dunstable GC, Felmersham NR, Harrold-Odell CP, Maulden Woods, Priory CP, Flitwick Plantation and Kingshoe Wood, Steppingley. Some novice observers still struggle in separating this species from the more numerous Marsh Tit in the County, especially from fresh plumaged Marsh Tits which can show a pale wing panel. Good views are always required of Willow Tits, confirming identity on a series of identification features such as call, head shape, extent of cheek patch, richness of flanks, dullness of cap and so on.

**Coal Tit** *P. ater* (L.)

Four territories were occupied at the Old Warden CBC site, maintaining the average level set in 1989.

**Blue Tit** *P. caeruleus* (L.)

Forty-four territories were held at the Old Warden CBC area, an increase of eleven from 1993, and equalling the previous highest recorded in 1974 and 1989. Combined results from the CES at Priory CP and Waterloo Thorns indicate a dramatic drop in fledging success with 50% of some broods dying in the nest. Juvenile productivity was just half the 1992 level, probably caused by low numbers of caterpillars at the critical time. Of amusement, perhaps, was the record of a pair nesting in a hole at the top of the signal post at Millbrook railway station.

**Great Tit** *P. major* (L.)

At the Old Warden CBC site, 27 territories were established, which is the highest ever since recording began here in 1973. This is a significant increase from the 1989–93 average of 17 pairs. However, judging by the results from the combined CES, juvenile productivity was very low, with the number of juveniles trapped only 28% of the 1992 level.

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* (L.)

Typically, most records came from the Greensand Ridge. Of note were two reports from the middle of Luton with singles in Wardown Park in January and Pope's Meadow in July. Also of interest was a record from Blunham in June, only the third there in 18 years (JTRS). The species was then seen in the area intermittently from 28th September

to 22nd December. Four pairs bred on the Old Warden CBC site, the highest since five pairs were there in 1988.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* L.

Although only half a dozen record cards were received for this species, the details supplied showed that this is a widespread and quite common species in Bedfordshire. Two pairs produced young at Priory CP and seven territories at the Old Warden CBC site equalled the previous highs in 1984 and 1991; the long term average since 1981 remains fairly constant.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor* L.

An example of this scarce visitor to the County occurred at Bedford STW on 1st October (DK, DHB, ECN *et al*), frequenting the fences and bushes around the old settling beds. However, it was reported that the conduct of some who went in search of it left much to be desired. Observers are reminded that, at all sites, not just sensitive ones, proper behaviour is called for.

**Jay** *Garrulus garrulus* (L.)

As usual there was some evidence of autumn passage with six west high over Sundon on 6th October, whilst above average numbers at Luton Hoo from January to March and from October to December were also considered possibly migrants into this well-kept estate. Seven at Maulden Woods on 1st January was a good count.

**Magpie** *Pica pica* (L.)

A party of 31 in trees on the old Anglian Water settling beds near Bromham Lake NR on 5th January was the largest reported (PA). One at Sundon Park on 28th January was behaving aggressively towards smaller gull species, driving ten Black-headed Gulls from football posts before settling on the back of a Common Gull and attacking its head, though, in the latter instance, the gull was able to gain the upper hand once airborne. No obvious reason for this behaviour was apparent to the observer (RJB). This species continues to increase its numbers and observers are requested to provide more records next year.

**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula* L.

A total of 650 corvids in flocks flying to roost south over Woburn on 4th December comprised mainly this species. The same day 450+ were noted at Girtford, perhaps indicating a late-year movement. Regular flocks of a few hundred go north over Kempston most evenings accompanying Rooks.

**Rook** *C. frugilegus* L.

With a BTO survey due, more counts of Rookeries were received than usual. Most records were from the north of the County and, although this was probably mainly due to observer bias, a healthy population in that area is indicated as both the largest rookeries recorded were in TL06, with 106 nests at the extensive Sackville Lodge rookery at Riseley, and 102 in a scattered colony, with four roughly equal sub-groups, at Lower Dean. Next largest was at Tempsford cross-roads with 96 nests and other rookeries with more than 50 nests were noted at Potton Church (70), Great Barford House (55), opposite 'Canvins' near Cardington (56), Howbury Hall (82), Milton Ernest Hall (55), Greenditch Plantation, Sharnbrook (55), Bolnhurst (55), Wilden Church (83), Deadman's Spinney, Sharnbrook (81), Stewartby (58) and Luton Hoo (52).

**Carrion Crow** *C. corone corone* L.

As usual, several individuals showing white wing feathers were reported, e.g. at Felmersham NR, Bromham Lake NR, Kempston, Priory CP, Houghton Regis and Stopsley Common. A regular roost developed at Priory CP until early February and from mid November, with a peak of 41 birds on 5th February in the first winter period and a remarkable 139 on 18th December in the second period. Three pairs bred at this site, whilst the depredations of a further pair which bred at Dunstable STW were carefully noted; they were definitely responsible for the loss of two clutches of Little Ringed Plover, with all three pairs of that species failing on their first attempt,

and were also thought to have taken a juvenile Common Tern despite strong opposition from the hapless parents. Evidence was also found of Partridge, Mallard and Coot eggs being taken, and of Reed and Sedge Warbler nests being destroyed; they were also seen to take juvenile Mallard, Coot and Blackbird.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* L.

Very few records were submitted for this abundant species. Four pairs on the Old Warden CBC were a slight improvement on the single pairs in 1992 and 1993, though still well down from the peak of 42 in 1973. A roost of several thousand was recorded at Blows Downs in August.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* (L.)

No record cards were received. This is unfortunate as this once extremely common species is becoming less numerous and its status can no longer safely be ignored. Observers' comments on this species will be welcomed.

**Tree Sparrow** *P. montanus* (L.)

The only breeding reported came from Galley Hill (two pairs), Eaton Bray (two to three pairs), and single pairs at Little Billington and Thurlleigh Airfield. At the site of the Tilsforth colony, a single bird only was found calling on 22nd May. Outside the breeding season this species was also recorded at Studham, Chaul End, Milton Bryan, Eversholt, Woburn Park, Boughton End, Biggleswade and between Bedford STW and Willington. The party at Eversholt was recorded on several dates and reached a maximum of 30 on 6th March, but no other group exceeded single figures. Though doubtless overlooked, this species remains in a precarious state in the County and all records are required please.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* L.

Breeding numbers on the Old Warden CBC were stable at 39 pairs, matching the average over the preceding ten years, but indices for adults and juveniles were down by 36% and 79% respectively at Waterloo Thorns CES. In the first winter period, the largest flocks reported were c.200 at Eaton Bray in January, 110 at Woburn Park in February and 100 at Turvey in March. Autumn passage was noted at both Dunstable STW and Priory CP on 16th October, with 79 west at the latter site. No large flocks were reported in the second winter period. At Broom and Gamlingay (Cams.), Chaffinches have learnt to take food direct from peanut feeders (RB, ECN).

**Brambling** *F. montifringilla* L.

There were widespread records of small numbers in the first winter period, with the largest parties, both of seven birds, at Milton Bryan on 22nd January and Charle Wood on 27th March. From one to three were recorded in January, February or March at Whipsnade Zoo, Eaton Bray, Thrupp End (Brogborough), Priory CP and in gardens at Trevor Drive, Bromham. There were also garden records from the Bird Club Garden Bird Survey at Linslade, Aspley Guise and Bedford. A group of four males was at Rowney Warren on 26th March and the final spring records were of a single in another Bedford garden on 3rd April and a male on the Old Warden CBC site on the 8th. The first in autumn was at Whipsnade Zoo on 17th October, with five there on the 28th and two to three around this location during November. Elsewhere, Bramblings were much less widespread in the second winter period than in the first, being recorded from Pegsdon Hills with eleven on 5th November and four on the 13th, Stopsley Common with one or two with Chaffinches on three dates in late December and from Priory CP with two on 1st November and one on the 11th.

**Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris* (L.)

Only three pairs on the Old Warden CBC equalled the lowest ever total in 1992, compared with 27 pairs in 1975. CES indices were more encouraging with five adults trapped at Waterloo Thorns, compared with only a single juvenile in 1993. Numbers of juveniles were up 400% at Priory CP from four to 20. Combined indices for all Bedfordshire CES sites were 475% of the 1993 figures for adults and 400% for juveniles, showing some recovery in this species which was affected by a virus throughout East

Anglia in 1991/2 (ECN). The largest winter flocks reported were c.200 at Eaton Bray in January and c.100 at Barton on 18th September.

**Goldfinch** *C. carduelis* (L.)

Only two pairs breeding on the Old Warden CBC equalled the lowest ever total, in 1992, compared with 18 pairs in 1975. At Dunstable STW two to three pairs bred but no other breeding data from elsewhere in the County was received. The largest flocks recorded outside the breeding season were 110 at Priory CP on 12th March and the same number again there on 24th September.

**Siskin** *C. spinus* (L.)

In the first winter period, the largest parties reported in January were 40+ at Flitwick Moor and 30+ at Swiss Garden, Old Warden on 1st, 80–100 at Eversholt Lake on 9th, 34 at Priory CP on 15th and 40+ at Bromham Lake NR on 16th January. About 40 were at Woburn Park on 21st February, c.100 were at Luton Hoo on 28th February and at least 70 were at Southill Lake on 13th March. Elsewhere, in the same period, smaller numbers were recorded at Whipsnade Zoo, various sites in and around Luton, Leagrave Marsh, Sundon Marsh, Charle Wood, Kempston, Blunham, Bromham and Turvey Abbey. Birds stayed into April at Rowney Warren, Rookery CIP where there were 20 on 6th and 15 on 16th, Kempston, Priory CP and Bromham. The last party in spring were c.20 at Whipsnade Zoo on 17th April. On 8th June, one flew over Portobello Farm, Sutton.

In the autumn, the first were at Whipsnade Zoo on 17th September, followed by other September records from Bromham on 21st, Eaton Bray on 24th and Woburn on 27th. Large parties included 70 at Tempsford Airfield on 23rd October, 23 at Priory CP on 12th November, 23 at Swiss Garden and c.180 at Eversholt Lake on 24th December, c.40 at Blunham on 27th December, 30+ at Kempston Church End on 28th December and c.30 at Woburn on 30th December. Most of these are sites where Siskins are recorded regularly, showing peak numbers in late December. Elsewhere smaller numbers were reported from East Hyde, Leagrave Marsh, Sundon Marsh, Dunstable STW, Woburn Park, Southill Park, Rookery CIP and Bromham Lake NR.

**Linnet** *C. cannabina* (L.)

Only a few records were received. The largest flocks reported were 300+ on a rape field at Cople on 11th September and 160–200 near Bedford STW from 1st to 30th October. About 50 fed around Dunstable STW in both winter periods. No breeding records were submitted.

**Redpoll** *C. flammea cabaret* (P.L.S. Muller)

The only report of a large party was at The Lodge, Sandy with 60 on 12th January. However, reports from several observers suggest this species may have experienced a sudden decline. There were only two records of single birds at Whipsnade Zoo all year, in October and November, whilst in the garden at Fountains, Blunham, where Redpolls had bred every year since 1977, often with several pairs, there were no records in the first winter period or in the breeding season. The only record of the year there was on 26th September. The only other records in the County in 1994 were seven at Swiss Garden on 1st January, the same day as ten were also seen at Maulden Woods, two were at Millbrook Plantation on 13th May and two were at Wavendon Heath on 6th June. There were no further records until November when two or three were at Tiddenfoot WP on 5th, two flew over Dunstable STW on 12th, one flew over Blows Downs on 20th and, lastly, on 26th, two were at Boughton End and one was at Hillgrounds, Kempston.

**Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* L.

A small influx of this species was reported in the spring with the first two, one an adult male, at Whipsnade Zoo on 18th March. There were three subsequent records from this site, all of birds flying over, two on 19th April, another on 6th May and one on 3rd July. A single Crossbill was at Home Wood, Northill on 27th March. Six, including one male, at Woburn Park on 20th March were followed by a series of records from

Woburn GC/Aspley Heath area, commencing with a party of three and a single on 21st April, then eleven on 23rd April, four on 3rd May, another party on 8th May and c.16 on 20th May. This series of records probably involved a single party sometimes breaking up into sub-groups. The only other records were five at The Lodge, Sandy on 20th April, a single flying over Chicksands Wood on 24th July, a single immature at Aspley Heath on 13th August and a single flying over Bidwell on 18th September.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (L.)

There were some signs of a slight recovery for this species, which, whilst still not uncommon, has been giving cause for concern. Seven pairs on the Old Warden CBC site was the highest total since eight pairs in 1989, though still well down from 19 pairs in 1975, whilst combined CES indices showed slight increases in both adults and juveniles since 1992.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (L.)

This species was only recorded from two sites but, encouraging was a party of up to seven birds in Woburn Park between 26th February and 6th March, a new site for this elusive species in the County in recent years. The other records were from Luton Hoo, with a single in flight on 13th February and three sightings on 10th June.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella* L.

Five pairs on the Old Warden CBC equalled the lowest ever total in 1992, compared with the peak of 25 pairs in 1987. The CES results were also very poor, with the index for adults at Waterloo Thorns down to 11% of the 1988 figure and no juveniles were trapped at that site this year. The Yellowhammer is yet another seed-eating species giving cause for concern. In winter, no flocks larger than 100 birds were reported, but there were quite widespread records of groups of between 15 and 80 in the first winter period, the largest, of 80, being noted at Battlesden Lake on 6th March. Four flocks of 30, 45, 60 and 75 at different sites in the Turvey area between 14th January and 31st March were noted by one of the few observers covering farmland in winter. Fifty plus were in fields at Bideford Green, Linslade on 1st January when there was also a flock of at least that number between Cardington and Warden Tunnel. Twenty-five plus were at Priory Business Park on 29th January.

**Reed Bunting** *E. schoeniclus* (L.)

Very few records were received. Additional information from observers in 1995 is requested to allow some comparison with the records of previous years. Five pairs bred at Dunstable STW and the largest winter parties noted, co-incidentally both on 19th February, were 39 at Priory Business Park and 20+ at Coronation CIP.

**Corn Bunting** *Miliaria calandra* (L.)

Traditional, breeding concentrations of singing males, for which reports were received, were nine at Thurleigh Airfield, up to eight between Kempston and Biddenham, ten at the Stopsley Common/Galley and Warden Hills area, ten in the Sewell Quarry and Totternhoe Knolls area and 20 singing males at Eaton Bray. Most of these numbers were not significantly down compared with those of recent years. Smaller breeding season numbers of one to three singing males were noted at Langford, Grovebury Farm SP, Willington GP, Moggerhanger, Cople, Biggleswade and in a number of tetrads in the Kempston West End, Stagsden and Bromham area. A pre-breeding flock of 44 was noted at Langford on 4th April. A post-breeding gathering of 43 was at Stopsley Common on 14th August, declining slowly through September, but suggesting reasonable breeding success in this area. However, numbers at traditional winter roost sites were down with a maximum of 78 at Priory CP on 22nd January declining to 37 by 15th February, and the highest figure there in the second winter period was 37 on 1st December. The Houghton Regis ChP roost was well down with a maximum of only 25 on 9th October, declining to only six by 12th November, after which date no birds were seen there, despite regular visits. This site has held over 100 birds in quite recent times. The largest total recorded at the Brogborough Lake roost was 42 on 1st January but this number had declined to 14 by 16th February.

## MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS

“**Exotica**”: The following records relate to escapes and other occurrences believed to be of feral origin.

### **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus* (L.)

A feral, pinioned pair nested and had produced nine eggs at Blunham Lake by the end of March; four eggs were removed and incubated by the owner. One of the remaining eggs hatched and survived. Two of the artificially reared juveniles were wing-clipped and the other two remained full-winged. Thus by late 1994 there were three full-winged birds and by 1995 there will be five (AZ per JTRS).

### **Pinkfoot** *Anser brachyrhynchus* Baillon

One was present at Luton Hoo on 9th September but was thought to be most likely of feral origin as it was rather too early for a lone migrant (BRS).

### **Snow Goose** *A. caerulescens* (L.)

Two juvenile, blue-phase individuals were described at Rookery South CIP on 29th August, accompanying 63 Greylags *A. anser* (MJP).

### **Bar-headed Goose** *A. indicus* L.

Single birds were noted at Dunstable STW on 1st May (PT) and at Rookery South CIP on 21st August (MJP).

### **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* (Pallas)

A male was at Woburn Park on 7th February (MKB) and a female was there on 6th March (BJN). A female was present at Priory CP on 15th July and again from 2nd August until 12th September (DK,EN).

### **Cape Shelduck** *T. cana* (Gmelin)

Singles were noted at East Hyde on 25th September (PT) and at Willington GP on 2nd October (DHB).

### **Muscovy Duck** *Cairina scutulata* (L.)

Six were east of Old Warden on 1st January with another at nearby Swiss Gardens and a pair flew in to South Mills NR on the same day. Three were at Old Warden on 5th February and again on 6th March. Four were behind the ‘Flying Horse’ PH, Clophill on 31st December (MJP).

### **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* (L.)

The only record of this category D species this year was of a female at Willington GP on 24th April (DHB).

### **Chiloe Wigeon** *Anas sibilatrix* Poepfig

Two adults in eclipse were at Dunstable STW on 23rd June (PT).

### **Hooded Merganser** *Lophodytes cucullatus* L.

The male from 1993 was present for much of 1994 on the River Ivel near South Mills NR again. It is not from the Zwetsloot collection apparently, though it is considered to be of escaped origin (AZ, JTRS).

### **Peacock** *Pavo* sp.

Two were recorded north-east of Turvey during the BTO Breeding Birds Survey in spring and one was seen in Toddington in November and December. This is a species which could become established as a feral breeder in the County in the future. All records are requested to monitor the situation.

### **Golden Pheasant** *Chrysolophus pictus* (L.)

A male from introduced stock was seen at Luton Hoo on 13th February and was thought likely to be a survivor of four males and a female previously released by the ‘keepers. It is possible that these Golden Pheasants could interbreed with the closely related Lady Amherst’s Pheasant *C. amherstiae* which would be unfortunate as this location is one of the County’s key strongholds for that species (AJL).

### **Cockatiel** sp. *Psittacidae*

A single flew over Rookery CIP on 26th August.

## APPENDIX A: UNVERIFIED RECORDS – A REQUEST FOR RECORDS

The following is a list of scarce birds reported during 1994 for which no adequate descriptions were received. Any observer able to submit suitable details for consideration by the rarities panel of any occurrence from this list is requested to assist so that the record is not lost.

Bittern	Brogborough Lake in January
Bittern	Southill Lake in February
Pink-footed Goose	Radwell GP in March
Brent Goose	Rookery CIP in November
Hen Harrier	Riseley area in November
Black-tailed Godwit	four at Rookery on 22nd July
Mediterranean Gull	first-winter at Brogborough Lake on 9th,30th Jan.& 6th Feb.
Mediterranean Gull	adult at Brogborough Lake on 2nd March
Mediterranean Gull	second-winter at Stewartby Lake on 22nd September
Little Gull	adult at Priory CP on 19th May
Little Gull	adult at Rookery CIP on 15th September
Sandwich Tern	two Tiddenfoot WP on 23rd April
Water Pipit	Dunstable STW on 21st April
Firecrest	Kingshoe Wood, Steppingley on 13th November
Pied Flycatcher	male at Willington GP on 23rd April
Hooded Crow	between Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard in November

MARTIN PALMER and DAVID ODELL

## DUNSTABLE SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS REVIEW OF 1994

by Paul Trodd (BNHS Honorary Warden)

Following another successful year, only 14 days went unrecorded during 1994, all, barring August, during the winter periods. As expected, the busy spring migration months of April and May received saturation coverage. Apart from the 40 permit holders and their guests who regularly visited the site, several organised trips for local groups were arranged and proved to be highly successful, including the Society's evening visit in May. A permanent feature during 1994 was the opening of the site to all birders on the first Sunday morning of each month by providing wardening from 0800–1200 hours. This has proved to be a great success and will continue in future.

Conservation work continued with further shingle capping and vegetation clearance on the scrape, and several new nest-boxes were erected for wagtails. A new tern raft was built, partly funded by the Society, and floated into position on number four lagoon to compliment the original raft. Anglian Water's staff at Dunstable were, as always, flexible in their approach to the conservation effort, with the grass-cutting regime often adjusted to suit the needs of ground-nesting birds. Staff also made and fitted an escape ramp to one of the outlet sluices that was formerly a deathtrap for Coots and Moorhens.



Work began in November to reduce the size of the main island on the scrape in an attempt to create even more muddy feeding areas for waders, while, at the same time, controlling plant growth. However, this work was not finished until April 1995 due to the exceptionally wet winter weather. A JCB-type excavator was used and paid for by Anglian Water Services.

A total of 116 species were recorded within the site boundary during the year; a Nightingale singing from scrub between the reserve and Houghton Regis ChP was excluded from the list. Full species details and the site log are held by the Honorary Warden with all the important records being included in this year's main systematic list.

Some of the highlights are as follows:

A Mandarin in March and an Osprey in September both constituted new site records, while two Water Pipits, Tree Pipit, Little Gull and Arctic Tern were all welcome, scarce migrants. Cormorant numbers continued to increase with a peak of 40 noted in September, fishing in the Carp-rich lagoons. Ruddy Duck, Water Rail and Black Tern were all good site records and Hobbies were regularly seen over the water, hunting dragonflies and hirundines.

Despite lowering the water level on No. 3 lagoon to expose a wader-friendly margin, 1994 did not produce the numbers of the previous year and only time will tell whether or not 1993 will be remembered as a vintage year for waders. However, eighteen species were recorded with the month of May attracting the "icing on the cake" – Grey Plover, Whimbrel, Sanderling, Little Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit and Wood Sandpiper. A flock of 13 Ruff delighted everyone for about a week as they fed at close range on the scrape area, amongst the irate breeding plovers and Redshanks and the more nervous, passage Greenshanks. The latter species showed a good run of form with birds noted on no fewer than 35 days.

A second, full breeding census was carried out with Common Tern, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Little Ringed Plover and Gadwall all rearing young. Mute Swan and Canada Goose succeeded for the first time but many of the early-nesting wildfowl were plundered by Carrion Crows.

As always, though, it was the Little Ringed Plovers that stole the show with their constant activity around the scrape during the spring and summer. The first of the year was back home on 20th March and by mid-April three pairs had just about sorted themselves out and established territories. Success was mixed, with all first clutches spoiled by Crows. However, repeat clutches were soon laid and all three pairs eventually produced three young each to the flying stage; one pair, displaced by Ringed Plovers from the scrape, nested on the car park, enforcing a temporary parking ban until the chicks had fledged! As the exhausted adults fell silent throughout July and drifted off southwards, the final immature departed on 7th August.

I would like to thank all permit holders for their efforts during 1994 on work parties and for diligently recording their sightings in the log. The data will be of great use in any future statistical analysis. Finally, all of this would not have been possible without the good offices of the Anglian Water Authority, particularly Nina Sage, AWA's Conservation Officer, and the on-site staff of Peter, Steve, Derek and Barry. On behalf of all the birders at Dunstable STW, many thanks for your continued help in 1994.

*Address: 186 West Street, Dunstable LU6 1NX.*

**RING OUZELS: WHERE FROM, WHERE TO, WHY HERE?**

by B.S.Nau

Each spring, Ring Ouzels stop over on the Chiltern escarpment in Bedfordshire during their northward migration; the numbers are modest but comparable to those at coastal observatories (Portland, Lundy, Calf of Man and Spurn (Durman 1976)). They appear from late March to early May, with peaks in the first and last weeks of April.

Intensive observation at Blows Down, east of Dunstable, has increased the annual totals (Trodd and Kramer 1991, Dazley 1991). Since 1983 the annual count has usually totalled about 30 bird-days but in some years there are considerably more, bringing the average up to 44 bird-days/year (Table 1). Previously records were sporadic although birds were seen in most years from the early 1960's. Frequencies at all localities with multiple recent records are shown in Table 2. It is likely that the species was overlooked in the past, and possibly still is away from Blows Down. Similar comments on increasing frequency of observation have been made in the literature of several other counties in the south of England.

The travels of the Ring Ouzels which pause in the County present intriguing questions: where have they come from? Where are they going? Why do they stop where they do? The intention here is to offer some speculative answers. However, before doing this we need to consider the wider distribution and movements of Ring Ouzels in western Europe.

Blows Down, Dunstable	10 years
Houghton Regis Quarry	6
Whipsnade Downs	..
Bison Hill, Whipsnade	5
Warden Hill, Streatley	..
Barton Hills	4
Pegsdon Hills	..

Table 2. Regular sites for Ring Ouzels in spring (years of occurrence, 1984-93).

**Breeding area**

The Ring Ouzel is the mountain species of 'Blackbird' (a group including Ouzels, Blackbird, Red-bellied Thrush (Japan), and American Robin (N. America)). Ring Ouzels shun cultivated places, probably due to competition from the more successful Blackbird but it is also a shy bird so this may be a factor too. Such competition is also likely to affect the birds where they stop en route during migration. Certainly Blackbirds, which have established territories when the Ring Ouzels arrive in Bedfordshire, harry the Ring Ouzels.

Voous (1960) explains the breeding distribution as follows. At the end of the last glacial period Ring Ouzels were widespread in Europe. As the climate warmed this cut off populations in three upland regions, (i) north-west Europe (British Isles and Scandinavia); (ii) the mountains of central and southern Europe (Pyrenées, Alps, Carpathians, and the mountain ranges of Yugoslavia and the Balkans); (iii) the Caucasus and mountains bordering the Caspian Sea in Iran. Thus three sub-species formed; ours is the type sub-species, *Turdus torquatus torquatus*.

Year:	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	Bird-days
March 19										3		
20						1			1	3		
21						1			.	.		9
22					1	1	1		.	1		
23					1	1	.		.	1		
24					.	.	.		.	.		
25					.	1	.		.	.		
26					.	.	.		.	.		8
27		.	.	.	.	1	.		.	.		
28		.	.	7	.	.	.		.	.		
29		.	.	2	1	.	.		.	1		
30		.	.	3	.	.	2		.	.		
31		.	.	2	.	.	.		.	.		19
April 1		1	3	3	.	.	.		.	.		
2		1	3	2	.	.	.		.	4		
3		.	1	1	.	.	.		.	2		
4		.	.	1	.	.	.		.	1		
5		.	.	6	.	2	.		.	.		31
6		.	1	2	.	.	.		.	.		
7		.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.		
8		1	.	1	.	1	.	1	.	.		
9		2	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	1		
10	1	.	.	1	1	1	.	.	.	.		21
11	.	.	.	.	3	6	.	2	.	2		
12	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	1	.	1		
13	.	.	2	.	2	2	1	2	.	.		
14	.	.	.	.	2	2	.	1	.	5		
15	.	.	1	.	7	3	.	.	1	1		51
16	3	.	1	.	7	3	.	.	3	1		
17	3	2	1	3	3	.	.	.	4	1		
18	1	1	.	2	3	.	1	.	4	1		
19	7	.	.	2	4	2	1	.	3	1		
20	2	3	2	1	1	.	.	.	6	3		86
21	3	2	.	3	.	.	1	.	15	.		
22	1	1	1	3	1	.	1	.	1	.		
23	1	1	1	2	.	3	.	.	3	.		
24	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	23	.		
25	.	1	2	.	.	6	2	1	12	.		101
26	.	1	2	.	.	3	3	3	10	.		
27	.	3	.	2	1	2	2	2	6	.		
28	2	.	1	.	1	3	2	3	2	.		
29	1	.	.	1	1	2	2	3	2	.		
30			1		3	3	2	2	8	.		82
May 1						2	.	.	3	.		
2			2			.	1	2	6	1		
3			1			.	1	2	.	.		
4						.	.	2	.	.		
5						.	.	3	.	.		26
6						.		1	1	.		
7						3			1	.		
8						.			1	.		
9						1			1	.		
10						1				.		10
11						2				.		
12										.		2
<b>Bird-days</b>	26	21	26	53	43	69	24	33	117	34		

Table 1 Ring Ouzel daily counts on Blows Down

The breeding range in western Europe has been shrinking during the 20th Century, in the British Isles this shows in *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds* (Gibbons, Reid and Chapman, 1993). An interesting exception to the general decline is the recent establishment of a small breeding population in north-west France (Brest peninsula in Brittany). We shall refer to this again later.

In the British Isles the population is now small (5000-11000 pairs) and its distribution is patchy. Ring Ouzels in spring in Bedfordshire are 0.5-0.9% of the British population, if indeed they are all British birds. Ring Ouzels also breed the length of Norway, in adjacent mountains of Sweden, and in the Kola Peninsula of NW Russia (Voous 1960). These populations outnumber the British population, there are about 5000 pairs in Sweden alone (Cramp 1988).

### Wintering area

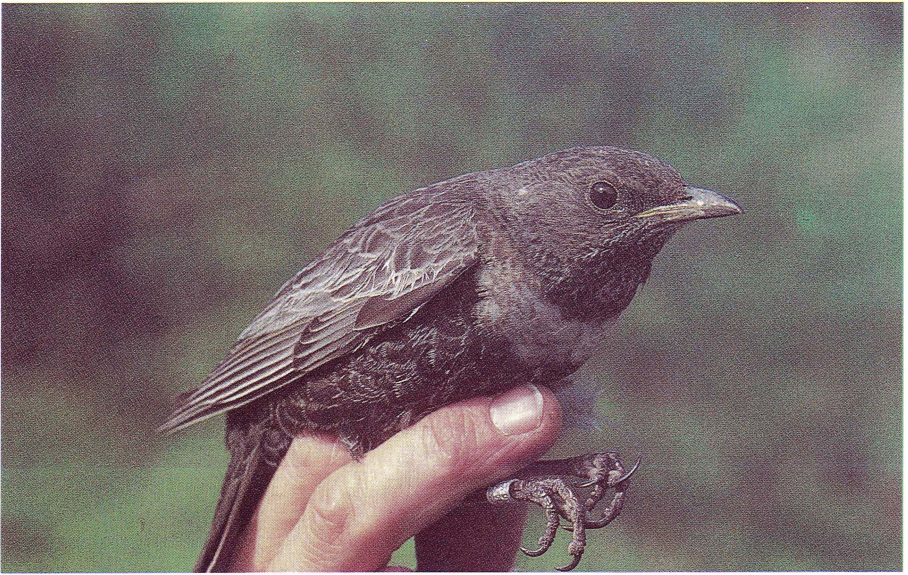
Our sub-species of Ring Ouzel is somewhat unpredictable in winter. Like the other thrushes of western Europe, populations have varying proportions of resident and migratory individuals. The wintering strategy may be determined by the need to find food in areas not pre-empted by other thrushes (including the southern sub-species of Ring Ouzel, *T.t. alpestris*). Some Ring Ouzels remain near their breeding area, moving to lower ground, but the majority migrate considerable distances. However, our knowledge may be biased as most recoveries of ringed birds come from hunters and their activities vary from region to region.

British and continental authors regard the Atlas mountain ranges in north-west Africa as the main wintering area. Ornithologists visiting in winter found subspecies *torquatus* and *alpestris* both abundant, feeding on berries of Juniper in 'Mediterranean Forest' habitat. There are winter recoveries of ringed birds, including British-bred birds, in the High Atlas of Morocco and scattered along the afforested ranges which extend eastwards through Algeria. The birds leave in March and April.

However, the full picture is rather more complex than at first appears. British and Scandinavian ringed birds have also been found further north in late autumn and winter, in eastern Spain and southern France. The main concentration of recoveries of British-ringed birds in Spain is in Mediterranean Forest on the mountains of Teruel, south of the Rio Ebro, and a few further south in Sierra Nevada. Recoveries in France are in the south – the Landes, Basses-Pyrénées, Dordogne, and Massif Central. Yeatman-Berthelot (1991) says there is no proof of wintering in France; he believes that the type subspecies winters in 'the south of Spain and, principally, in north-west Africa.' Perhaps the explanation is that migrating Ring Ouzels pause in France and Spain only as long as food is available, behaviour shown by other berry or seed-eating species.

### Spring migration

Ring Ouzels on spring passage in Britain include both British and Scandinavian breeders. There are ringing recoveries of Norwegian birds in Britain. Also, Ring Ouzels occur regularly on spring passage in the far north of the British Isles, notably Fair Isle. These are believed to be Scandinavian breeders as are occasional influxes further south, on the east coast of Britain. In France, Ring Ouzels occur regularly on



**Plate 5:** Ring Ouzel, ringed at Blows Down on 24th April 1994 (p.34 and article on p.46)

*Photo: Paul Adams*



**Plate 6:** Blows Down, the major stop-over point in Bedfordshire for Ring Ouzels on spring passage (article p.46)

*Photo: Bernard Nau*



**Plate 7:** Black Redstart, Eaton Bray, October 1994 (p.32)

*Photo: Paul Trodd*



**Plate 8:** Juvenile Blackcap showing the loosely textured body feathers, Priory Country Park, August 1993

*Photo: Errol Newman*

the Atlantic coast and southern Massif Central in late April and early May (Yeatman-Berthelot, 1991). This is the time when Scandinavian birds pass though Fair Isle and suggests that these birds in France are also Scandinavian birds.

Yorkshire breeders mostly arrive in early April (Mather 1986), as seems to be the case in Scotland too. The time of egg laying is also an indicator of the relative timing of the migration of different populations. In Britain generally, the first eggs are laid in the second week of April and the peak of the egg-laying period is the last week of April (Flegg and Glue 1975). In Norway the season is later, the first eggs are laid in late April and the peak is in May (Durman 1976).

In southern Britain, Ring Ouzels occur widely and regularly in small numbers on spring passage, mainly at coastal or downland sites. Gilbert White (1788) remarks on spring Ring Ouzels on the downs of Hants and Sussex. He also speculates on their destination. On present evidence they could be either British or Scandinavian breeders, or both.

In 1938 Walpole-Bond finds the Sussex situation is still as in White's time, and most birds within six miles of the coast. Other accounts indicate few in Kent, Surrey and Herts but regular modest numbers in Wilts, Isle of Wight, Oxon, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, and of course Beds.

At the coastal observatories of Portland, Lundy, Calf of Man, and Spurn numbers peak in early to mid-April (Durman 1976), presumably these are British breeders. In contrast, Fair Isle has few in April and a considerable number during May, presumably Scandinavian birds.

In Bedfordshire the timing of our passage birds suggests we have both British and, as we shall see later, some Scandinavian birds. The former arrive in March and the first half of April, the latter arrive in late April and early May. One may speculate that the situation in the other southern downland counties, referred to above, is similar to Bedfordshire while the East Anglian coastal counties see a higher proportion of Scandinavian birds.

### **The navigation problem**

Consider now the navigational problems of migration between the known breeding and wintering areas.

The concentrations of recoveries in south-west France and eastern Spain lie close to the Greenwich Meridian, as does Bedfordshire. Therefore migrants commuting between Britain and these areas have a relatively simple navigational problem. For the shortest route they only have to fly north-south, or vice versa. For High Atlas birds, the shortest route to Bedfordshire is a more westerly great circle which continues NNE through Norway. Therefore we are on the shortest route between the High Atlas and Scandinavia, and the shortest route for birds heading for northern Britain from south-west France or eastern Spain.

For High Atlas birds the great circle route passes west of the Pyrenées, which avoids this obstacle but entails over-flying the Bay of Biscay. To travel with stops in eastern Spain and south-west France involves a kinked route, and therefore more complex navigation, making this a less likely option. High Atlas birds have an alternative. They could set out on a more westerly heading towards the Western Approaches of the

English Channel. This is an area of prevailing south-westerlies which would automatically deflect them into southern England without complex navigation. A compromise is to make a fuel stop in NW Spain, in Galicia or Asturias, before continuing, possibly a less hazardous option than the preceding.

Route choice by a species population is a complex decision, it depends on the relative merits of a few long stages as against multiple shorter stages. A stop-over entails risk since birds need to find food in unfamiliar terrain. They will be in competition with resident birds and must avoid the local predators. On the other hand, for a shorter stage the weather is more likely to be favourable throughout and the consequences of error are less serious. For long stages it is important to avoid setting-out when there is adverse weather ahead but invisible. Birds could adapt either to setting-out in conditions optimal over the whole route, which might rarely occur, or to setting-out in the most probable conditions, or in the least disastrous conditions. For these two latter they would need to learn to handle the bad aspects of the option.

**Where from?**

We now return to a question posed at the beginning: from where do our birds set out?

Many migrating birds progress by a few long stages rather than 'hedge-hopping', and flights can extend to several days non-stop (Alerstam 1992). Energy storage evidence suggests that Sedge Warblers can leave southern England in autumn to cross the Sahara in a single flight. Radar shows that N. American passerines migrate south along a great circle route over the Atlantic Ocean, from New England to the West Indies and South America. In spring, returning warblers arrive over the Louisiana coast by a direct flight of 650 miles across the Gulf of Mexico from Yucatan (Mexico). Others may fly 1000 miles direct from Honduras (Moore and Kerlinger, 1987). Such flights are comparable to a non-stop flight to Bedfordshire from N. Africa, Spain or France.

Thrushes are normally night migrants, setting-out after dusk. Therefore Ring Ouzels arriving in Bedfordshire in spring will probably have flown through the preceding night, and perhaps for 24-hours or 48-hours before that. Where would this put their departure point? A short nocturnal flight from further south in England seems unlikely. Across the Channel, more or less plausible options are:

- Brest peninsula, Brittany* ..... 300 ml. SW [*Ouzels have bred*]
- Basses-Pyrenées, SW France* ..... 550 ml. S
- Galicia/Asturias, NW Spain* ..... 650 ml. SSW
- Teruel, E Spain* ..... 810 ml. S
- High Atlas, Morocco* ..... 1400 ml. SSW

We should not dismiss the more distant of these. The related Redwing commutes over the N. Atlantic between Iceland and the British Isles. However, to assess the most likely departure point requires estimates of likely ground-speeds of migrating Ring Ouzels.

Radar shows the air-speed of the related but smaller Redwing is typically 29mph [46km/h] during migration (Alerstam 1992). For the Ring Ouzel, scaling in proportion to wing-length gives 34mph [55km/h]. The effects of wind have also to be



considered. In spring the wind is most likely to be from the south-west in the Franco-British-Norwegian sector. Radar studies suggest a typical migration altitude of 1600ft [500m] at which height wind-speed is considerably greater than at ground level. Therefore assume a south-west wind of force 4-5, about 20mph [32km/h], for the northern sector of the route. In the Spanish sector, wind direction is lighter but more variable, therefore assume the wind effect is neutral here.

For the northern sector, the bird's air-speed and the wind speed have to be combined to obtain its ground-speed. If the track over the ground is to be due north, the bird must head west of north to compensate for the wind. The ground-speed is then the sum of the northerly component of its speed (i.e. 30mph [50.1km/h] ), and the northerly component of the wind-speed (14mph [22.6km/h] ), giving 45mph [72.7km/h]. In the southern sector the bird's ground-speed is the same as its air-speed, 34mph [55km/h]. We can now calculate flight-times from tentative departure points. These are listed below in order of arrival time:

*Brittany* : tail wind, 300 miles takes only 5.6 hours (at 54 mph), too short to be convenient, arrival during the night.

*Basses-Pyrenees*: 300 miles in S sector plus 250 miles in N sector takes 14.4 hours.

Mid-morning arrival, earlier with higher wind-speed.

*Galicia*: 550 miles N at 34 mph takes 16 hours, lateral drift handles the W-E component. Mid-day arrival.

*Teruel*: flight-time 19.5 hours, mid-afternoon arrival. Navigation is more complex.

This departure point is unlikely.

*High Atlas*: 1400 miles, flight time 45 hours, evening arrival.

Information on actual times of arrival would be most valuable.

Weather en route may give further clues. Synoptic weather maps for 2-3 day periods preceding peak arrivals (5+ birds) in March and April show wide variations but can be broadly classified as follows:

A) High-pressure Gibraltar to Britain: .....5 occasions.

B) High-pressure Azores to Iceland,  
static or slow-moving depression off NW Spain: .....4 occasions.

C) High-pressure Azores to Gibraltar,  
deep fast-moving depression approaching Britain from NW: ...3 occasions.

In May a fourth condition is associated with the smaller arrivals at that time:

D) High-pressure moving E across British Isles,  
usually a front spanning southern North sea : .....4 occasions.

Conditions A-C share relatively calm weather, without major fronts (cloud and rain), over most or all the potential migration region from N Africa. Although 'B' and 'C' can bring fronts spanning Brittany ,and 'B' brings strong W or SW winds over the Western Approaches, the latter are advantageous for birds on a northerly heading and the former are a relatively minor inconvenience. None of these conditions rules out possible points of departure.

An instructive event occurred on 3rd May 1969 when 300 Ring Ouzels arrived on Fair Isle about mid-day. On preceding days conditions had been type 'D', with warm southerly winds over Spain and France. A front had then moved north to span the North Sea from Scotland to Denmark, beyond this were strong east winds. The northbound birds flew into wet misty weather along the front, became disoriented and travelled downwind to make landfall on Fair Isle (Elkin 1983). They could have set out from northern Germany or Holland the previous evening, taking 15hr at 60km/h, with modest wind assistance. Alternatively, they could have set out from the southern Massif Central about 24hr earlier. They were in company with 45 Wrynecks, 32 Ortolans (presumably Swedish breeders), and 1500 Tree Pipits so it is unlikely that they are a population which normally migrates through Britain.

This event is interesting evidence of Ring Ouzel migration in type 'D' conditions. Also, since arrival of *May*

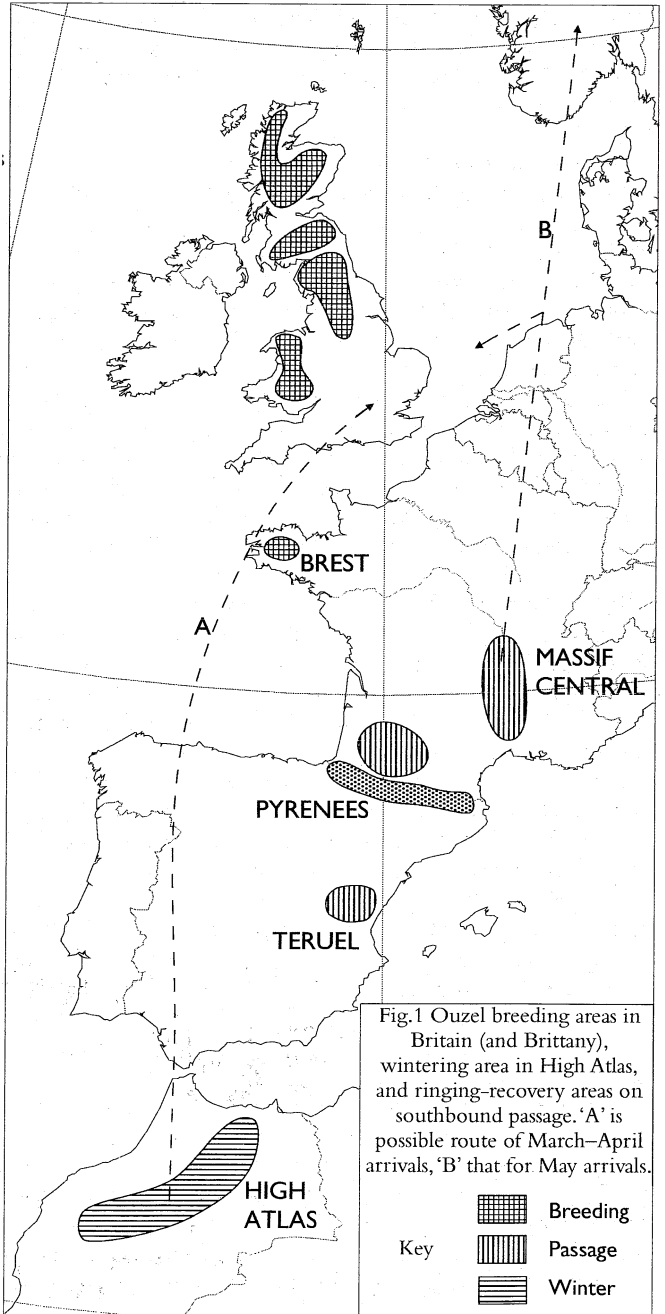


Fig.1 Ouzel breeding areas in Britain (and Brittany), wintering area in High Atlas, and ringing-recovery areas on southbound passage. 'A' is possible route of March-April arrivals, 'B' that for May arrivals.

Key	[Cross-hatch pattern]	Breeding
	[Vertical line pattern]	Passage
	[Horizontal line pattern]	Winter

Ring Ouzels on Blows Down is usually with 'D' and, often, a front over the southern North Sea, it seems likely that these are deflected Scandinavian birds!

The largest number of Ring Ouzels on Blows Down on one day was 23 birds on 24th April 1992. This occurred with type 'C' conditions, which favour a direct flight from N. Africa.

### **The onward journey**

In March and April our Ring Ouzels arrive in very different weather to those in May, suggesting the involvement of different populations. This timing coincides with the main arrival of British birds in their breeding areas, suggesting that some at least are heading for destinations further north within the British Isles. Others may be Norwegian, having followed a more western great circle than the Swedish birds which cross the eastern part of the North Sea in May, where they may suffer westward drift in adverse weather.

Blows Down counts show that Ring Ouzels normally leave within 1-3 days of arrival. This is the same length of stop-over as migrant warblers make to refuel after arriving on the Gulf coast of the USA in spring. The latter are heading for the northern USA or Canada, a thousand miles or more to the north (Moore and Kerlinger). Interestingly, even our May Ring Ouzels, presumed Scandinavian birds with a considerable journey ahead, usually stay no more than 1-3 days.

### **Why Bedfordshire?**

The Ring Ouzels which stop-off in Bedfordshire are no more than 1% of the British population. Therefore the site may not be especially significant to the species as it implies that many other such stop-over areas must be used or that most birds fly direct to their breeding grounds. Nevertheless, it is interesting to ask why Ring Ouzels do favour the Bedfordshire downs.

For populations following an established route one might expect regular use of stop-over sites by experienced birds. It is more surprising that off-course Scandinavian birds, in May, should choose the same sites. This seems to indicate that there is something specially attractive about this downland.

Physically, the steep Chiltern escarpment may be attractive for its similarity to the birds' breeding grounds, which is open moorland or fells 250m or more above sea-level (Flegg and Glue 1975). The crest of the Chiltern escarpment is about 200m a.s.l.

Another factor is competition. The literature suggests that Ring Ouzels are unsuccessful in competition with Blackbirds, the range of the former shrinking as the latter expands. This is probably more important than altitude, since Ring Ouzels have bred in lowland Britain in the past. Given this, Ouzels are likely to prefer stop-over sites where resident Blackbirds are limited by nest sites rather than food availability. This is likely to be the case with downland pasture.

Food of Ring Ouzels includes insects, earthworms, and a wide range of fruit, including Ivy, Rowan and Hawthorn (Cramp 1988). In spring few insects are available on the downs but the close-grazed, well-manured, churned-up cattle pasture of Blows Down is probably rich in accessible earthworms. Cattle grazing may indeed be the key distinction between Blows Down and other sites along the escarpment less favoured by Ring

Ouzels. Other sites are often more extensively covered by Hawthorn scrub or, if open, the grassland is dense and tussocky making earthworms inaccessible. However, some scrub seems to be required since the Ouzels often retreat into its cover when disturbed.

A feature of the escarpment, and Blows Down in particular, is the abundance of Ivy on mature Hawthorn trees, especially in hedgerows on the lower slopes. In spring this Ivy is heavy with ripe fruit. In some years too there are still quantities of hips on Dog Rose, which is common in the spreading scrub on the slopes. These are potentially valuable food resources available to Ring Ouzels at Blows Down, and other sites along the escarpment.

In conclusion, Blows Down appears a good choice as a resting and re-fuelling site as there is plenty of food and limited competition.

### **A travelogue**

On 1st April 1986 weather conditions were type 'C' when three Ring Ouzels appeared on Blows Down. They were the first of the year. Imagine the birds setting out from winter quarters in the High Atlas soon after dusk on 29th March. Heading due N, they climb to cruising height at several hundred metres. High pressure extends eastwards over Spain and Morocco, from a centre near 30° W, giving mild temperatures, light head-winds and a clear sky (Fig. 2a). Navigation is straightforward in these clear conditions. At dusk next day, the 30th, they are still flying, and on course, and more than half-way up Spain, weather unchanged (Fig. 2b). That night, in the small hours they cross the north coast and begin their sea crossing, over the Atlantic off the Bay of Biscay. There are now strong cross-winds from the west, in the warm sector of a large deep depression passing north of Britain (Fig. 2c). Over the ocean that morning they meet cloud and rain as they run into a front, navigation is difficult but they maintain their N heading, their track curving NE due to the cross wind. By mid-day they are over Brittany, with fuel in hand there is no need to stop, they press on across the Channel with even stronger westerlies. As dusk falls and the weather deteriorates, they decide to drop down to the shelter Blows Down. It is almost exactly two days from take-off, they have made good progress, taking advantage of the favourable weather further south. At first light next day, 1st April, they are busy feeding on worms in the pasture and Ivy berries from the hedgerows, between squabbles with aggressive local Blackbirds. The depression is now over Scandinavia bringing cool NW winds to the downs, the birds stay another night. Next day is calm and brighter, after two days actively feeding they wait until dark and then take off once more, with a light following wind, heading for familiar breeding sites in the north. They arrive in the Scottish Highlands in daylight next morning. They are the first in the area and take up last year's territories, tired but fit and soon ready to defend their territories against later arrivals in the coming days and weeks.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My thanks are due to Rob Dazley for making available Blows Down records, and Mike Williams for loan of weather maps. Without these this speculation would not have been possible.

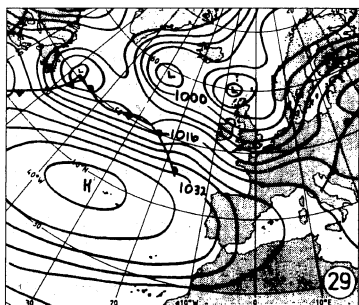


Fig. 2a

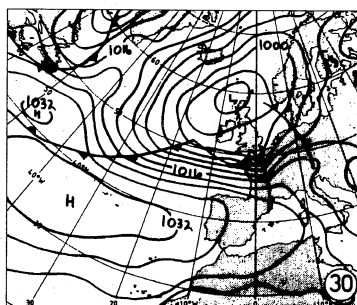


Fig. 2b

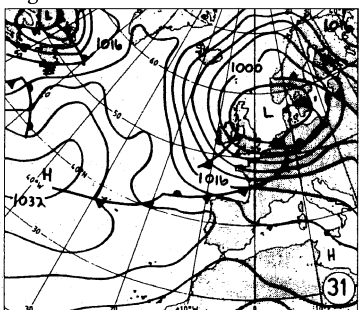


Fig. 2c

Fig. 2. Weather systems at mid-day over migration route for Ouzels arriving on 1st April 1986

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## WATERWAYS SURVEY ON THE RIVER IVEL

by J.T.R. Sharrock

Having now completed 15 years of annual censuses of the waterside birds along the River Ivel from the Twin Bridges at Blunham (TL 156519) upstream to the Bailey Bridge at South Mills NR (TL 158501), it is possible to review the major changes in five-year periods (Table 1). The results are based on 150 one-hour visits.

During 1981-95, a total of 34 waterside species has been recorded, 23 have been proved breeding, but never more than ten regularly in any five-year period. The decline in average number of species regularly present (from 21 to 17) is a reflection of reduction in habitat variety, specifically the infilling with rubbish of marshy pools beside the river at South Mills NR and the consequent loss of various wader species. The recent increase in numbers of Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus*, and perhaps Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*, probably reflects a decline in overmanagement of riparian vegetation by the river authority (now NRA, formerly Anglian Water). Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, however, have not responded. Will Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* ever return? The increase in numbers of Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* may reflect length of time since a really hard winter. The increase in numbers of Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* and Greylag Goose *Anser anser* and decline of Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* reflect national trends.

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## BIRD RINGING REPORT 1994

### Report of the Co-ordinator

A total of 3684 birds were ringed during the year made up of 71 species. We added a new species to the ringing totals list, one that was long overdue and was sure to be added once someone began ringing at Blows Downs - Ring Ouzel. As we are all aware, this is an exciting site, especially in spring, and is one of the key inland migration points for many species. It will be interesting to see over the years what other species are added to the list and indeed what species go unnoticed through the site, especially in the autumn when migration is more protracted and involves larger numbers of birds especially small passerines that very difficult to observe. A concerted ringing effort at such a site should provide us with some interesting data.

There were few other species of special interest but it is always nice to see species like Water Rail, Little Ringed Plover, Jack Snipe, Wheatear, Nightingale and Stonechat on the list, all birds that are infrequently caught, indeed difficult to catch, and are particularly pleasing when viewed in the hand.

Recoveries of note include the Sedge Warbler H890956 which took 4 days to move from Hampshire to South Mills NR on its spring migration, the Reed Warblers J600121 & J600349 which were both ringed at Priory CP and recovered on their autumn migration in East Bedfont, London and Sandwich Bay, Kent six and 16 days later later respectively and the Reed Warbler 3925179 ringed in Djoudj, Senegal and controlled at Brogborough Lake. This Reed Warbler and Sand Martin 3907133 also ringed at Djoudj and recovered at Ledburn SP moving 4,050km must take pride of place.

																AVERAGES IN FIVE YEAR PERIODS		
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1981-85	1986-90	1991-95
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓															✓
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			✓			✓		✓					✓	✓	✓			✓
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>											✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>				✓										✓	✓			✓
Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	1	1	1	2	1	1	✓	1	✓	1	1	1	2	✓	✓	1	1	1
Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> (feral)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	✓			1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	3	✓	✓	4	✓	✓	1
Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>					✓						✓							
Mandarin Duck <i>Aix galericulata</i>									✓						✓			
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>			✓				✓				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Teal <i>A. crecca</i>					✓	✓												
Mallard <i>A. platyrhynchos</i>	✓	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	2	6	3	3	1	3	4	2	2	3
Shoveler <i>A. clypeata</i>			1						✓									
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>			1	1	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	2	1	✓		1		✓	1	✓
Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	3	4	4	7	7	6	5	4	5	7	6	7	6	13	13	5	5	9
Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	1			✓						✓	✓	
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓	✓			1	✓		✓								✓		
Ringed Plover <i>C. hiaticula</i>			✓		1	✓	1	✓									✓	
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓			✓	1	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	
Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			✓	✓			✓				✓	1		✓				✓
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓	✓	✓	1	1		✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓		
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	2	✓	1	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1	✓	✓	✓	1	✓	✓
Grey Wagtail <i>M. cinerea</i>	✓		✓	1	✓				✓	✓	✓			1	✓	✓		✓
Pied Wagtail <i>M. alba</i>	4	2	3	2	1	1	✓	1	2	2	1	1	✓	1	1	2	1	1
Grasshopper Warbler <i>Locustella naevia</i>									✓		1	✓						
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	19	22	23	24	14	19	25	35	31	25	22	13	15	18	24	20	27	18
Reed Warbler <i>A. scirpaceus</i>	4	2	7	9	6	4	6	2	4	6	2	3	5	6	4	6	4	4
Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>	1	1	✓	✓	1	1	1	1	1	✓	1	5	6	4	4	✓	1	4
Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	9	6	6	5	4	5	4	7	5	3	3	5	5	6	6	6	5	5
Species present	16	13	25	20	24	23	19	22	19	18	24	19	17	20	18	20	20	20
Species breeding	9	8	10	11	13	12	9	8	8	9	12	12	8	10	9	10	9	10
Pairs	44	40	40	46	41	44	46	53	53	55	44	45	42	55	62	42	50	50
Species present regularly																21	19	17

Table 1. Numbers of pairs of waterside birds along River Ivel from Blunham to South Mills. Ticks indicate present but not breeding.

KK09045, a Blackcap ringed at Priory and recovered 4 days later in Hollesley, Suffolk is worth noting, and the Reed Bunting ringed in Veurne, Belgium in November 1992 and recovered one month later at Houghton Regis Chalk Pit, continues the string of recoveries of this species showing the autumn movement they make from the continent into this country.

Recoveries do not necessarily have to be of note just because of interesting and fast migration data; they also show longevity, site fidelity and indeed movements for species which are not inclined to move more than a few hundred yards in their life e.g. the Dunnock H871184 moving from Gamlingay to Everton and the Wren OW4378 moving from Steps Hill, Bucks to Totternhoe. Green Woodpeckers are not commonly caught let alone recovered; DA53565 didn't get very far unfortunately and flew into a conservatory window of all places. The Garden Warbler E238223 is now 6 years old and shows how a species that migrates to and from Africa each year returns to exactly the same site to breed.

Once again, there were a number of recoveries from Icklesham in Sussex involving Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler and Sand Martin. As usual I would like to thank those active ringers in the county who contributed to the report.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DUNCAN WOODHEAD

### RINGING TOTALS FOR 1994

Mute Swan	46	Yellow Wagtail	4	Spotted Flycatcher	3
Teal	2	Grey Wagtail	2	Long Tailed Tit	182
Mallard	1	Pied Wagtail	12	Willow Tit	5
Sparrowhawk	4	Wren	148	Marsh Tit	1
Kestrel	9	Dunnock	125	Coal Tit	2
Water Rail	2	Robin	144	Blue Tit	237
Moorhen	3	Nightingale	5	Great Tit	160
Little Ringed Plover	3	Stonechat	1	Treecreeper	10
Ringed Plover	4	Wheatear	3	Jay	1
Lapwing	16	Ring Ouzel	1	Magpie	2
Jack Snipe	2	Blackbird	196	Starling	40
Snipe	11	Fieldfare	3	House Sparrow	7
Redshank	2	Song Thrush	77	Chaffinch	95
Green Sandpiper	1	Redwing	12	Greenfinch	123
Woodpigeon	4	Grasshopper Warbler	4	Goldfinch	17
Collared Dove	2	Sedge Warbler	188	Siskin	9
Cuckoo	3	Reed Warbler	269	Linnnet	15
Kingfisher	2	Lesser Whitethroat	52	Redpoll	10
Green Woodpecker	2	Whitethroat	119	Bullfinch	82
Gt Spotted Woodpecker	2	Garden Warbler	88	Yellowhammer	22
Sand Martin	106	Blackcap	142	Reed Bunting	329
Swallow	9	Chiffchaff	74	Corn Bunting	13
House Martin	102	Willow Warbler	201	<b>Total</b>	<b>3684</b>
Meadow Pipit	16	Goldcrest	23		



**SELECTED LIST OF RECOVERIES & CONTROLS****Age (Euring Notation)**

- 1 nestling or chick not yet flying
- 2 fully grown, year of hatching not known
- 3 hatched during calendar year of ringing
- 4 hatched before calendar year of ringing, exact year unknown
- 5 hatched during the previous calendar year
- 6 hatched before the previous calendar year, exact year unknown
- 7 hatched two years before the calendar year of ringing

**Sex**

- M sexed as a male on plumage or cloaca
- F sexed as female on plumage, brood patch or cloaca
- J birds which are still recognisable in juvenile plumage

**Manner of recovery**

- v caught or trapped & released with ring
- vB breeding when caught
- vv ring number read in field (includes colour rings)
- + shot or killed by man
- xF found dying or freshly dead
- xL found long dead
- // manner of recovery unknown
- = sexed on recovery

Species	Ring Number	Age Code	Ringing Date	Recovery Location	Recovery Manner	Distance (km)
<b>Mute Swan</b>	Z49573	3J	28.09.82	Enfield, Gtr London		
			11.01.83	North London	vv	
			18.02.94	Priory CP	v=F	59km NNW
	Z69484	3	05.08.90	Holton Mill, Oxon		
			18.01.94	Gt Barford Bridge	v=M	67km NE
	Z77029	3	19.07.92	Waterford, Herts		
18.01.94			Gt Barford Bridge	xF	41km NNW	
Z37162	5	29.06.91	Harrold CP			
		16.07.94	Hemel Hempstead, Herts	xF	47km S	
<b>Greylag Goose</b>	5175539	3M	26.06.93	Harrold CP		
			24.12.94	St Albans, Herts	X	54km S
<b>Kestrel</b>	ES52498	1	19.06.94	Nr Cardington		
			31.10.94	Leafield, Oxon	XF	83km W
<b>Green Woodpecker</b>	DA53565	3M	12.08.90	Harrold CP		
			16.06.94	Harrold	xF	3km E

<b>Sand Martin</b>	3907133	4	08.03.92	Djoudj, Senegal				
			01.07.94	Ledburn SP	v	4050km N		
	H964387	3	14.09.92	Icklesham, Sussex				
			16.07.94	Ledburn SP	v			
<b>Wren</b>	OW4378	3	29.08.94	Steps Hill, Bucks				
			22.10.94	Totternhoe	XF	8km NNE		
			H871184	4	12.03.94	Gamlingay		
					16.03.94	Everton	xF	4km SSW
<b>Sedge Warbler</b>	J008186	4F	31.07.93	Icklesham, Sussex				
			30.05.94	Houghton Regis ChP	v	139km NW		
	J271749	3	25.08.93	South Mills NR				
			02.08.94	Icklesham, Sussex	v=F	153km SSE		
	J434297	3	14.09.93	Icklesham, Sussex				
			03.05.94	South Mills NR	v=M	153km NNW		
<b>Reed Warbler</b>	H890956	4M	06.05.94	Abbots Barton, Hants				
			10.05.94	South Mills NR	v	137km NNE		
	3925179	4	14.04.93	Djoudj, Senegal				
			03.07.93	Brogborough	v	4065km N		
	H142506	3J	13.08.91	Icklesham, Sussex				
			07.08.94	Priory CP	v=M	156km NNW		
	H142996	4	20.08.91	Icklesham, Sussex				
			16.05.94	Priory CP	v=M	156km NNW		
	H980475	3	19.09.92	Icklesham, Sussex				
			19.05.94	South Mills NR	v=M	153km NNW		
<b>Garden Warbler</b>	J600121	5M	05.06.94	Priory CP				
			11.06.94	East Bedfont, Gtr London	v	78km S		
	J600349	3J	07.08.94	Priory CP				
			23.08.94	Sandwich Bay, Kent	v	158km SE		
	E238223	3J	19.08.88	Waterloo Thorns				
			19.05.91	Waterloo Thorns	v=M			
			25.05.92	Waterloo Thorns	v			
			17.07.93	Waterloo Thorns	v			
<b>Blackcap</b>	H992728	3F	15.08.93	Stoke Ferry, Norfolk				
			30.04.94	Waterloo Thorns	v	73km SW		
	J271003	3J	18.07.93	Bidwell				
			02.05.94	Windsor Gt Park, Berks	v=M	54km S		
	KK09045	3F	24.09.94	Priory CP				
<b>Reed Bunting</b>		3	5.11.92	Veurne, Belgium				
			31.12.92	Houghton Regis ChP	v=M	240km WNW		

## BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY BIRD LIST 1995

The immediate past Recorder for Birds reviewed the County List as recently as 1993 (*Bedf.Nat.* 47 68). With new joint Recorders appointed in March 1995, the opportunity has been taken to update the list and to review the recording status of species occurring in Bedfordshire.

Two new species to Bedfordshire have been accepted in the last two years, Red-footed Falcon and Dartford Warbler (*Bedf.Nat.* 48 70–71). These bring the total number of species recorded in the County since 1946 to 268, plus a further 11 species that had occurred prior to 1946.

Dave Odell and Martin Palmer have, however, reviewed the recording requirements for several species since the last listing. The ever growing number of active and increasingly more able birders about the County has produced a significant increase in the volume of records submitted – one good reason why there are two Recorders to cope with the workload. A number of species, hitherto barely annual in Bedfordshire, are now being found more frequently. Many of these are quite common coastal species and, given good views, are readily recognisable in the field, e.g. Knot and Sanderling. We have therefore increased the number of species which may now be termed a 'Minor Scarcity'. For these species, a description of the bird, the circumstances of its occurrence and the species accompanying it written on one or both sides of a recording postcard should normally suffice. This will lead to a reduction in the number of records having to be circulated to the Local Rarities Panel, will speed up the processing of the remainder and lead to earlier publication of the Bird Report. Of course, the Recorders reserve the right to request any observer submitting rather too scant a description on a postcard to supply a full written description on a rarities form to aid processing and, hopefully, acceptance of the record.

For those species listed as requiring full descriptions for circulation to the Local Rarities Panel, forms (freely available upon request) must be submitted. These descriptions should be despatched to the Recorders as soon after the sighting as practicable. Nationally rare species should also be submitted in this manner for forwarding on by the Recorders to the British Birds Rarities Committee. It is obvious that any species occurring that is currently not on the official Bedfordshire list will need to be supported by a full report to convince the panel that the identification is 100% correct. Ideally, any rare bird will have been seen by more than one observer. Descriptions of rare and scarce birds are welcomed from all observers not just expected from the finder. Multi-observer submissions of records are obviously easier to process.

It is customary for the finders of a species new to Bedfordshire to write a report of the circumstances for publication in the annual Bird Report following acceptance of the identification.

Records for inclusion in the annual Bird Report are indeed welcomed from anyone, be they Bird Club members, Natural History Society members or otherwise.

Observers should feel free to send in any records they wish. Record cards are freely available at all indoor Bird Club meetings or direct from the Recorders. Records of large numbers of fully grown or recently fledged birds and arrival and departure dates throughout the County are particularly useful and aid compiling. Observations of nesting success (or failure) are valuable for any species. If such information is collected assiduously over a lengthy period, any upward or downward trend can be identified.

Any species occurring in localities where it is uncommonly recorded should also be reported. Please include records of identifiable sub-species, e.g. Blue-headed or White Wagtails, escapes, e.g. Ruddy Shelduck, Budgerigar and Cockatiel, and possible feral birds such as Wood Duck, Muscovy and Peacock.

Written descriptions should be accompanied by particulars of the duration, weather and distance of the observation and optics used. Information on the observer's previous experience of the species described, or those similar to it, is useful. Records of birds in the categories requiring a description will not be accepted for publication in the Annual Report systematic list unless the Recorders and, where appropriate, the Local Rarities Panel are convinced that any such record is based on correct identification. The Recorders reserve the right to place a record in a broader category than that attributed by the observer.

Generally, we hope to raise the standard of the descriptions received and all observers are requested to take that little extra care and attention in preparing a submission now that we have reduced the proportion of species occurring in the County that require a full written report.

**We are looking for the bulk of all record cards to be passed to the Recorders by the end of November each year.** This will enable speedier processing of the record cards and any end of year reports can be quickly added in the following January. It is intended to have the draft of the Bird Report prepared by the end of February and this cannot be achieved without your support and co-operation. Please do submit your records on individual cards for each species (not on a list which somebody else has to transcribe) and as early as you are able; likewise your rare bird descriptions. This Report was delayed by more than a month because significant batches of rare bird occurrences in 1994 were not received until June 1995!

On the following two pages we have included a chart detailing the full Bedfordshire list. Each species is accompanied by one or more code letters signifying the details required to be submitted. We have also provided three columns for individual observers to make notes of, for example, their own County list, year list or local patch list.

In wishing you all good birding for the future, we have been pondering what species might next be added to the Bedfordshire list. It is interesting to consider what species have occurred in adjoining Counties in the last fifteen years or so that have yet to be discovered in Bedfordshire. The following are our 'top twenty' species which could well be found in the County in coming years, so please make sure you let us know when you find one of them!

Cattle Egret	Solitary Sandpiper	Savi's Warbler
Great White Egret	Marsh Sandpiper	Cetti's Warbler
American Wigeon	Spotted Sandpiper	Aquatic Warbler
Surf Scoter	Long-tailed Skua	Yellow-browed Warbler
Sociable Plover	Whiskered Tern	Rustic Bunting
Broad-billed Sandpiper	Short-toed Lark	Little Bunting
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Richard's Pipit	

Our thanks to Errol Newman for preparing an initial draft of this article.

Martin Palmer & Dave Odell  
c/o 48 Gilbert Close, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 8RN.

## BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY CHECKLIST

NO.	SPECIES	CAT.	SITES	NO.	SPECIES	CAT.	SITES
1	RED-THROATED DIVER	F		85	COOT	A	
2	BLACK-THROATED DIVER	F		86	OYSTERCATCHER	D	
3	GREAT NORTHERN DIVER	F		87	BLACK-WINGED STILT	G	
4	LITTLE GREBE	AC		88	AVOCET	F	
5	GREAT-CRESTED GREBE	AC		89	STONE CURLEW	F	
6	RED-NECKED GREBE	F		90	COLLARED PRATINCOLE	G	
7	SLAVONIAN GREBE	F		91	LITTLE RINGED PLOVER	CD	
8	BLACK-NECKED GREBE	F		92	RINGED PLOVER	CD	
9	FULMAR	F		93	KENTISH PLOVER	F	
10	MANX SHEARWATER	F		94	DOTTEREL	F	
11	STORM PETREL	F		95	AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER	G	
12	LEACH'S PETREL	F		96	GOLDEN PLOVER	D	
13	GANNET	F		97	GREY PLOVER	E	
14	CORMORANT	AC		98	LAPWING	AC	
15	SHAG	F		99	KNOT	E	
16	BITTERN	F		100	SANDERLING	E	
17	NIGHT HERON	G		101	LITTLE STINT	E	
18	LITTLE EGRET	F		102	TEMMINCK'S STINT	F	
19	GREY HERON	AC		103	BAIRD'S SANDPIPER	G	
20	PURPLE HERON	F		104	PECTORAL SANDPIPER	F	
21	WHITE STORK	F		105	SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER	G	
22	MUTE SWAN	AC		106	CURLEW SANDPIPER	F	
23	BEWICK'S SWAN	E		107	PURPLE SANDPIPER	F	
24	WHOOOPER SWAN	F		108	DUNLIN	D	
25	BEAN GOOSE	F		109	RUFF	D	
26	PINK-FOOTED GOOSE	E		110	JACK SNIFE	D	
27	WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE	E		111	SNIFE	AC	
28	GREYLAG GOOSE	AC		112	GREAT SNIFE	G	
29	CANADA GOOSE	AC		113	WOODCOCK	CD	
30	BARNACLE GOOSE	CD		114	BLACK-TAILED GODWIT	E	
31	DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE	E		115	BAR-TAILED GODWIT	E	
32	EGYPTIAN GOOSE	E		116	WHIMBREL	E	
33	SHELDUCK	CD		117	CURLEW	CD	
34	MANDARIN	CD		118	SPOTTED REDSHANK	E	
35	WIGEON	AB		119	REDSHANK	CD	
36	GADWALL	AC		120	GREENSHANK	D	
37	TEAL	AC		121	GREEN SANDPIPER	D	
38	MALLARD	A		122	WOOD SANDPIPER	E	
39	PINTAIL	D		123	COMMON SANDPIPER	D	
40	GARGANEY	CE		124	TURNSTONE	E	
41	BLUE-WINGED TEAL	G		125	WILSON'S PHALAROPE	G	
42	SHOVELER	AC		126	RED-NECKED PHALAROPE	F	
43	RED-CRESTED POCHARD	E		127	GREY PHALAROPE	F	
44	POCHARD	ABC		128	POMARINE SKUA	F	
45	RING-NECKED DUCK	F		129	ARCTIC SKUA	F	
46	FERRUGINOUS DUCK	F		130	GREAT SKUA	F	
47	TUFTED DUCK	AC		131	MEDITERRANEAN GULL	F	
48	SCAUP	F		132	LITTLE GULL	E	
49	EIDER	F		133	SABINES GULL	F	
50	LONG-TAILED DUCK	F		134	BLACK-HEADED GULL	AC	
51	COMMON SCOTER	E		135	RING-BILLED GULL	F	
52	VELVET SCOTER	F		136	COMMON GULL	AB	
53	GOLDENEYE	AB		137	LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL	AC	
54	SMEW	E		138	YELLOW-LEGGED GULL	E	
55	RED-BREASTED MERGANSER	E		139	HERRING GULL	ABC	
56	GOOSANDER	D		140	ICELAND GULL	E	
57	RUDDY DUCK	CD		141	GLAUCOUS GULL	E	
58	HONEY BUZZARD	F		142	GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL	AB	
59	BLACK KITE	G		143	KITTIWAKE	E	
60	RED KITE	F		144	CASPIAN TERN	E	
61	WHITE-TAILED EAGLE	G		145	SANDWICH TERN	G	
62	MARSH HARRIER	F		146	COMMON TERN	ABC	
63	HEN HARRIER	F		147	ARCTIC TERN	E	
64	MONTAGU'S HARRIER	F		148	LITTLE TERN	F	
65	GOSHAWK	F		149	BLACK TERN	D	
66	SPARROWHAWK	AC		150	WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN	G	
67	BUZZARD	CE		151	GUILLEMOT	F	
68	ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD	F		152	RAZORBILL	F	
69	OSPREY	E		153	LITTLE AUK	F	
70	KESTREL	AC		154	PUFFIN	F	
71	RED-FOOTED FALCON	G		155	FERAL PIGEON	A	
72	MERLIN	CD		156	STOCK DOVE	A	
73	HOBBY	CD		157	WOODPIGEON	A	
74	PEREGRINE	F		158	COLLARED DOVE	A	
75	RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE	AC		159	TURTLE DOVE	AB	
76	GREY PARTRIDGE	AC		160	RING-NECKED PARAKEET	F	
77	QUAIL	CE		161	CUCKOO	AB	
78	PHEASANT	A		162	YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO	G	
79	GOLDEN PHEASANT	F		163	BARN OWL	CD	
80	LADY AMHERST'S PHEASANT	CD		164	LITTLE OWL	CD	
81	WATER RAIL	CD		165	TAWNY OWL	AC	
82	SPOTTED CRAKE	F		166	LONG-EARED OWL	CE	
83	CORNCRAKE	F		167	SHORT-EARED OWL	CE	
84	MOORHEN	A		168	NIGHTJAR	CD	



## BIRD RECORDERS

Mr Martin Palmer, 48 Gilbert Close, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 8RN  
Mr Dave Odell, 74 The Links, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 7LT

Answer-phone (Dave Odell): 01234 857149

## THE BIRD CLUB

The Bedfordshire Bird Club was set up in 1993 by birdwatchers, from both inside and outside the Society, to cater for their specialist needs. Its main functions are to record and document the avifauna within the county and to provide a forum for local birdwatchers. Members receive the annual bird report as Part 2 of the *Bedfordshire Naturalist* and also receive a bi-monthly newsletter, *The Hobby*, and programmes of indoor and outdoor meetings. The winter meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month between September and April at Maulden Village Hall. Field meetings are equally spread between venues with a bird interest within the county and much further afield. The Club has a very active core of its membership participating in both locally and nationally organised surveys.

For membership details, write to: Hon. Membership Secretary (BBC), 28 Chestnut Hill, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 7TR.

## THE SOCIETY

The Bedfordshire Natural History Society was formed in 1946 and its main function is to record the flora and fauna of the county. For this purpose it has over twenty active Recorders who cover most branches of natural history study and whose annual reports are published in Part 1 and Part 2 of the *Bedfordshire Naturalist*. Members also receive a quarterly newsletter, *The Muntjac*, and programmes of meetings. These latter include field meetings to sites having a natural history interest within the county and occasional meetings further afield. During the winter months there are illustrated lectures, normally held at one of the following places: Bedford, Dunstable, Luton, Aspley Guise, Leighton Buzzard and Flitwick.

The Society depends on the annual subscriptions which are devoted entirely to carrying out its work, as all officers are honorary. Membership is open to anyone, whether resident in the county or not.

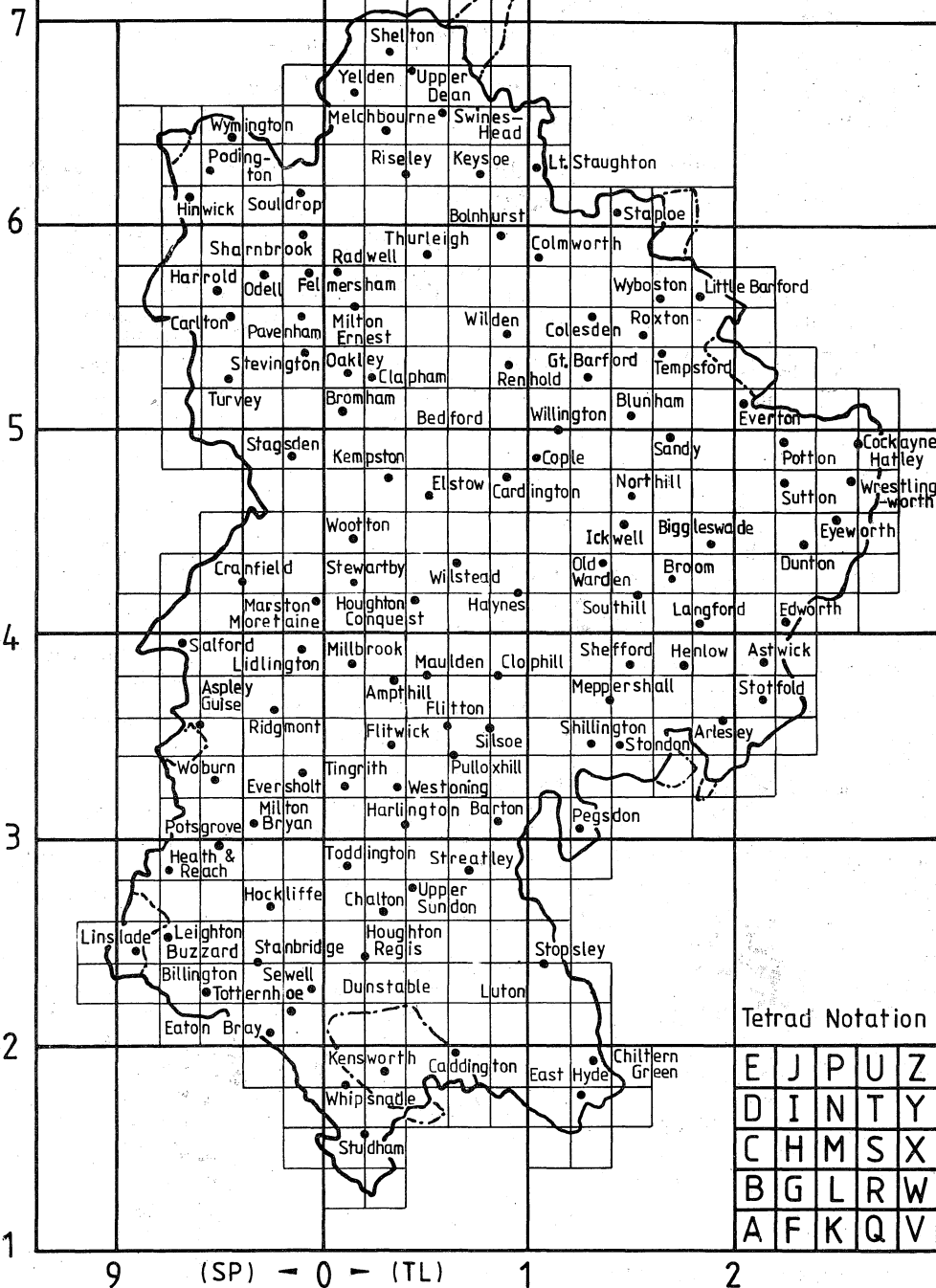
The *Bedfordshire Naturalist* is the official journal of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society, a body which has been the prime contributor to the botanical and zoological knowledge of the County. Published since 1946, the journal is noted for its original papers on all aspects of natural history, especially distribution, status, population, habitat and field ecology. It caters for the professional and amateur alike and aims for the middle ground. Guidelines are obtainable from and relevant papers are welcomed by the Editor.

Editorial address:

BNHS, c/o Bedford Museum, Castle Lane, Bedford, MK40 3XD.

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# BEDFORDSHIRE



Tetrad Notation

E	J	P	U	Z
D	I	N	T	Y
C	H	M	S	X
B	G	L	R	W
A	F	K	Q	V