

SOMERSET BIRDS 2008

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FOREWORD

In composing these words it is often instructive to look back. For the 1998 Report, Tony Parsons penned his valedictory foreword after serving many years as the Society President. He repeated a theme he had returned to many times: just how dependent we are on the records submitted by members to give an accurate picture of the status of Somerset's birds.

Given their recent steep declines, it seems extraordinary now to reflect that for many years, until 1984 in fact, many species now giving cause for concern were relegated to a section of the Report entitled *Species reported but not included in the systematic list*. This included birds such as Little Owl, Marsh Tit, Spotted Flycatcher and Bullfinch, all of which have since shown worrying declines, not only in Somerset but nationally.

Thankfully the situation has been rectified, though no doubt the Editorial Committees of the time did their best with the information available. Records for all species are now analysed and synopses produced for each, no matter how apparently unchanged in status or common they may appear.

This much remains true: we still rely on the records sent in by observers, mostly members, to track any changes in the fortunes of Somerset's birds. By comparison with the 1960s, a huge volume of records is now received by the Recorder, and from a variety of sources. These include the messageboard on the website, which continues to be a valuable resource for its many visitors. For some species, such as Dunnock, it is difficult to come up with any meaningful analysis, but this does not mean it should not be attempted and that records of a species such as this are unimportant. We cannot assume the future of a species like the Dunnock is assured.

Without the efforts of dedicated observers, a Report such as this would be impossible to produce. The Editorial Committee, led by Brian Gibbs, is to be congratulated for converting the raw material into another excellent Report, as they do year after year. Many contributors are also involved in fieldwork for the BTO. In a recent exciting development, the General Committee is exploring the possibility of using this data to produce a Somerset Atlas. Watch this space, as they say!

It is an easy, if depressing, exercise to dwell on population declines but there is much cause for optimism too. In the same 1998 Report we learned that Little Egret had bred for the first time in the County. This beautiful heron is now widespread here and has greatly increased in numbers. Moreover, thanks in the main to the huge efforts of the RSPB, Bittern has returned as a breeding species, and Cattle Egret has joined the list of rare herons breeding here. There cannot be a better County in Britain to see such a variety of herons than Somerset.

Early in 2009 Noel Allen, founder of the Exmoor Natural History Society, died. His contribution to Exmoor ornithology was enormous, and he will be greatly missed. An obituary will appear in *Bird Notes*.

Eileen Palmer died on November 7th, 2008. Older members will recall her widespread activities in Somerset ornithology from 1955 to the late 1970s. A full obituary will appear in *Somerset Birds* next year.

Tony described the 1998 Report as the best to date. I hope you will agree that the standard continues to improve, and that this year is no exception. This is due in no small part to financial contributions from our sponsors, Magnox South at Hinkley Point A and British Energy at Hinkley Point B. We are most grateful for this.

Brian Hill
President, Somerset Ornithological Society

WEATHER 2008

2008 NATIONAL SUMMARY

2008 again produced temperatures above the long-term average. However, due to a cold February and December, the positive anomaly was less than 1 deg C.

Rainfall

- 987.2mm
- 119% of average (1961/90)

Average Temperature

- 9.8 deg C
- 0.7 deg C above average (1961/90)

Total Sunshine

- 1544.9 hrs
- 108% of average (1961/90)

SIGNIFICANT WEATHER EVENT

During the late evening of 29th October and early hours of 30th October a severe thunderstorm developed over Ottery St Mary, Devon. As well as intense rainfall, up to 300cm (1 foot) of hail fell, which led to significant flooding. The heaviest rain fell between 01:00hrs and 02:00hrs, producing 27mm. A total of 63mm (2.52 inches) of rain fell throughout the duration of the storm.

ANNUAL STATISTICS (SOMERSET)

The following data have been supplied by CMS from observations at Staplegrove, and by the Nettlecombe Field Study Centre.

Temperature

Highest 28.6 deg C (83 deg F) July 28th
Lowest - 5.1 deg C (23 deg F) December 2nd

Number of Days with Air Frost 44

January	4
February	11
March	2
April	4
October	1
November	4
December	18

Last air frost – April 10th

First air frost – October 29th

There were seven consecutive nights of frost between December 6th and 12th.

Rainfall

The Nettlecombe Field Study Centre supplied data for rainfall.

Total Rainfall 1198.6 mm (47.2 ins)

Rainfall of 25mm (1 inch) or more occurred on the following dates:

January 16th	29.30mm	1.15 inches
March 11th	25.00mm	1.00 inches
March 16th	34.80mm	1.37 inches
May 26th	28.40mm	1.14 inches
May 27th	42.70mm	1.68 inches
July 6th	35.60mm	1.40 inches
September 7th	31.80mm	1.25 inches
December 13th	32.50mm	1.28 inches

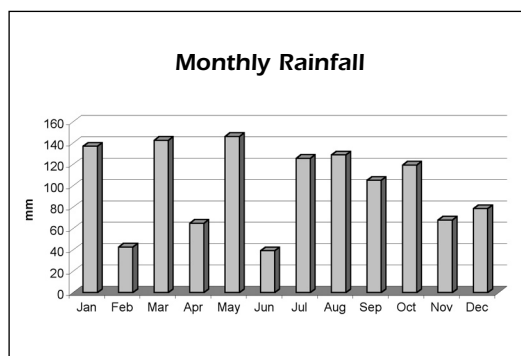
Rain fell on 173 days (47.4%).

The longest dry spell was from February 8th to February 25th (17 days).

The longest wet spell was from March 23rd to April 2nd (11 days).

The driest month was June, with 39.20mm (1.5 inches).

The wettest month was May, with 146.20mm (5.8 inches).



Wind

Month	Highest Gust (knots)	Date	Dominant Direction
January	43	13	SSW
February	46	3	SSW
March	49	1	W
April	30	17	NW
May	40	26	NE
June	33	19	WSW
July	27	29	WSW
August	30	13	WSW
September	31	5	N
October	35	7	S
November	41	23	N
December	41	13	NE

The gust of 49 knots on March 1st is equivalent to Force 10 (Storm) on the Beaufort Scale.

MONTHLY SUMMARIES

The monthly summaries are divided into two paragraphs: a national summary followed by a local review.

January

January was mainly mild but unsettled, with a short cold snap during the first week and a drier spell towards the end of the month. It was the second-wettest January on record after 1928.

1st to 6th:

A generally cold start to the year, with frosts and a biting easterly wind.

7th to 23rd:

A series of depressions brought westerly gales, heavy rain and showers, resulting in flooding on the 11th, 15th and 17th. Hill fog was extensive on 19th and 20th before a further period of heavy rain on 21st.

24th to 31st:

A ridge of high pressure brought settled conditions, resulting in almost cloudless skies on 27th. As the month drew to a close, cloud and drizzle marked a return to unsettled weather.

February

February was dry and very sunny, with above-average mean temperatures. It was the sunniest February on record (102.8 hours), the previous sunniest being 1970 with 94.4 hours.

1st to 6th:

The first week of February was unsettled, with frequent showers and south-westerly gales. It was cold

Winter and Spring	
January 7th	WSW
January 8th	SSW
January 10th	SSW
January 13th	SSW
January 17th	W
January 31st	W
February 3rd	SSE
February 4th	SW
February 25th	SSW
February 29th	SSW
March 1st	WNW
March 10th	W
March 11th	W
March 12th	W
March 20th	W
March 21st	NW
March 22nd	N
March 29th	SSW

Winds of gale force strength (Force 8 / 34 knots) or greater were recorded on 25 days:

Autumn and Winter	
October 7th	S
November 8th	SSW
November 9th	SSW
November 10th	SW
November 23rd	NW
December 12th	S
December 13th	W

enough for snow on high ground on 1st. Heavy rain fell on 3rd before more settled conditions arrived.

7th to 21st:

A large cell of high pressure moved into the area, giving severe frosts and prolonged periods of sunshine. There were nine completely cloudless days during this spell. Despite the cold nights, day temperatures were almost balmy – with 18.2 deg C being reached in Wales (warmest February day on record). Fine drizzle briefly interrupted the sunshine on 15th before frosts returned until the high pressure eventually drifted away.

22nd to 28th:

Cloudy conditions with drizzle gave way to heavy rain on 24th as a front moved through. The 25th was marked by fog and frost before further rain fell on 26th. The remainder of the month had variable cloud.

March

March temperatures and sunshine were slightly above average. However, rainfall was well above average, resulting in the wettest March since 1994.

1st to 3rd:

March started very unsettled, with gales and heavy rain. Snow showers occurred over high ground on 3rd, with sleet near sea level.

4th to 5th:

A ridge of high pressure brought cloudless skies and associated frosts.

6th to 17th:

Mid March was wet and sometimes stormy, with persistent westerly gales. Heavy showers with hail fell on 9th. An intense low (955mb) crossed the region on 10th, producing gales and heavy rain resulting in flooding. Strong winds continued until the 13th, as former Hurricane Joanna swept through. Further heavy rain fell on 15th and 16th.

18th to 19th:

A second ridge of high pressure developed off Ireland, again bringing cloudless skies and associated frosts.

20th to 24th:

A colder showery spell with gale force north-westerly winds heralded wintry conditions. As the winds turned northerly on 22nd the showers turned to snow.

25th to 31st:

Mostly fair conditions interspersed with periods of rain and blustery showers.

April

The mean temperature was close to average, but it was the coldest April since 2001.

1st to 10th:

High pressure arrived on the 3rd, giving a very warm day after early fog. However, it became much colder in northerly winds, which gave a few snow showers on 6th and 7th. Late frosts with plenty of sunshine marked the end of the spell as the high pressure drifted away.

11th to 13th:

South-westerly winds brought a continuous band of heavy showers, which included hail.

14th to 18th:

A further spell of high pressure again brought frost and virtually cloudless skies. A strong easterly wind on the 18th resulted in a very raw feel.

19th to 30th:

The end of the month was mostly unsettled, with periods of rain. This was particularly heavy on 24th, with hail on 28th. Torrential rain fell on 29th as a front passed through the region. Temperatures began to rise towards the end of the month as winds from the south-east became dominant.

May

During May, mean temperatures were well above average. Rainfall was well below average across the north but well above average across the south. It was the warmest May on record (12.1 deg C), the previous warmest being May 1992.

1st to 14th:

After a few showers and a short spell of rain on the 4th, high pressure produced a fine spell of weather. The 6th to 8th and 10th to 14th were virtually cloudless and very warm at times, with winds from the easterly sector.

15th to 30th:

Heavy overnight rain fell on 15th as the fine weather came to an end. The weather became changeable, with plenty of cloud which kept temperatures down. A ridge of high pressure developed from 19th to 21st, giving a more settled period. Easterly winds increased in strength, and heavy rain arrived on 26th, resulting in the wettest day of the year. Further rain fell on 28th and was followed by heavy showers accompanied by thunder on 29th.

June

June was very unsettled and changeable for the time of year, with only short spells of fine weather.

1st to 7th:

Periods of rain interspersed with sunny spells marked a changeable start to the month. Although winds were variable, a strong breeze kept temperatures down.

8th to 10th:

High pressure resulted in warm, cloudless conditions.

11th to 30th:

The remainder of the month was generally unsettled. Cloudy conditions marked the start of the period, but easterly winds brought torrential showers on 15th. Further periods of rain fell on 18th, 20th and 21st with sunshine in short supply. Strong south-westerly winds kept temperatures down, particularly on 22nd. These winds persisted until the end of the month, although it remained mostly dry with variable cloud.

July

July was unsettled for most of the month, although a fine and hot spell occurred towards the end.

1st to 11th:

Apart from 1st, which was warm and sunny, heavy, thundery showers marked the first two weeks. Heavy rain and strong southerly winds occurred on 5th. Further heavy rain fell on 9th, with flooding the inevitable outcome.

12th to 28th:

A ridge of high pressure resulted in a brief sunny spell on 12th and 13th. Thereafter, it was generally cloudy, with the odd spell of drizzle or occasional shower. A further cell of high pressure drifted over the region on 21st, giving virtually cloudless skies and very warm conditions during light easterly winds. Humidity increased on 28th (the warmest day of the year) leading to a breakdown of the fine weather:

29th to 31st:

Torrential showers on 29th marked the end of fine weather. More organized bands of rain, which were often heavy at times, occurred on 30th and 31st.

August

August was very unsettled, with heavy rain or showers for much of the month. It was the dullest August on record (105.5 hours), the previous dullest being 1942.

1st to 31st:

August can be described as very dull with periods of

heavy rain at times. Sunshine was limited to a few bright days (8th, 15th, 17th, and 22nd – 24th). Strong westerly or south-westerly winds dominated as low-pressure cells continually traversed the South West. Rain was particularly heavy on 5th, 9th, 12th, and 13th, with heavy showers on 14th. Torrential showers were a feature of 7th. Drizzle and hill fog occurred on several days.

September

September was unsettled and wet through the first half of the month, but much drier and brighter through the second. It was the coldest September since 2001, the wettest since 2000, and the dullest since 1993.

1st to 12th:

September started very unsettled, with heavy rain and gales on 5th and 6th resulting in extensive flooding. Thereafter calmer conditions arrived and it became drier, despite heavy showers on 11th.

13th to 29th:

A large cell of high pressure became established for the remainder of the month, with easterly winds becoming dominant. Despite anticyclonic gloom on 16th followed by rain on 17th, it was generally sunny. Mist was a common early-morning occurrence. The 18th to 22nd were virtually cloudless. Cloud increased from 23rd to 25th, before sunny weather returned until the end of the fine spell.

30th:

Fresh south-westerly winds brought periods of rain and drizzle, marking the end of summer.

October

October rainfall was well above average across the north-west, with some areas recording over double the average. Mean temperatures were below average, but with above-average sunshine. It was the coldest but sunniest October since 2003. Snow fell in parts of southern England on 29th, for the first time in October since 1934.

1st to 7th:

The start of the month was very unsettled, with heavy showers arriving on gale force north-westerly winds. Heavy rain occurred on the 4th and 7th.

8th to 13th:

A high-pressure cell moved over the region. Mist and fog were common in early morning, but soon cleared to give cloudless skies and warm temperatures.

14th to 26th:

Cloudy conditions very prevalent throughout the period, and it became noticeably colder, with some night frosts. The little rain that fell occurred mainly as showers.

27th to 31st:

Northerly winds brought frequent showers and much colder conditions – a prelude to the winter. Rain fell steadily from late afternoon on 29th and culminated in the severe thunderstorm which struck Ottery St Mary as the low became stationary over East Devon. Flooding was widespread on 30th.

November

November was mild at first but turned much colder later, with some snowfall (23rd), especially in the east, and sharp frosts. Rainfall and sunshine were close to average.

1st to 6th:

The northerly winds continued and, apart from some rain on 1st, the period was dry. However, low cloud prevailed, giving very gloomy conditions.

7th to 22nd:

A series of south-westerly winds brought gales and very heavy rain from 7th to 10th, which led to extensive flooding. This was followed by showers before a further band of rain crossed the region on 13th. Drizzle and hill fog dominated from the 15th to 17th. Thereafter, north-westerly winds brought periods of sunshine, with the odd shower on 22nd.

23rd to 30th:

Heavy showers accompanied by much colder conditions arrived on 23rd. The weather then settled down, as Continental high pressure brought easterly winds, which were strong at times. Cloud was variable, with fog occurring on 28th and 29th.

December

December was generally cold in the first half of the month followed by a milder, mainly dry, period towards Christmas, before turning very cold by the New Year. Rainfall was mostly below normal and sunshine generally above or well above normal. Temperatures were around one degree below normal. It was the coldest and driest December since 2001, but also the second sunniest on record.

1st to 5th:

December began with severe frosts and cloudless skies alternating almost daily with cloud and heavy rain. The coldest night of the year occurred on 2nd.

6th to 17th:

Severe frost, dense overnight fog and mostly sunny days dominated the period. Winds were variable, with daytime temperatures never rising very high. Heavy rain and gales occurred overnight on 12th, leading to flooding throughout the County. Severe frosts and generally clear skies then returned, although the 16th was cold, grey and gloomy.

18th to 24th:

A milder spell interrupted the wintry weather with south-westerly winds and occasional periods of low cloud and drizzle raising the temperatures.

25th to 31st:

High pressure over Scandinavia drew in strong easterly winds, giving a significant wind-chill factor. There were severe frosts and virtually cloudless skies. The 31st was bitterly cold, with temperatures hardly rising above zero and a hoar frost lasting the entire day.

References

- BBC Weather on-line
- Met Office on-line

A REVIEW OF 2008

The year of 2008 will be remembered for some significant events and the sheer number of National and County rarities. No new species were recorded, but one new subspecies, Balearic Woodchat Shrike, which was only the seventh British record. The influx of Cattle Egrets at the start of the year raised hopes that they might stay and breed, which were justified when a juvenile was seen in July. Bitterns were booming throughout the spring and eventually two females raised young. Amongst the other *British Birds* rarities were Lesser Scaup (3rd County record), Squacco Heron (5th), Glossy Ibis (7th), Black-winged Stilt (7th), Baird's Sandpiper (3rd), Bonaparte's Gull (3rd), Franklin's Gull (3rd), Whiskered Tern (5th) and Dark-eyed Junco (2nd). The list of county rarities was also very impressive but this year almost too long to list without missing some out! A total of 249 species were recorded, far more than in any previous year.

January to March

Numbers of Bewick's Swan were low: the only counts in double figures were at Athelney on February 12th and Westhay Heath on March 9th. The three Whooper Swans that arrived in the previous autumn at Shapwick Heath were last seen on March 4th; they may have been the ones at Catcott Heath on January 25th; one was at Tealham Moor from March 23rd until April 5th. A Pink-footed Goose was at Edington Moor on March 1st and remained in the area to the west of Catcott Lows until April 30th. A Bean Goose was on the floods at Wet Moor on January 10th and 27th. On the same flooded area were two White-fronted Geese between the 27th and February 5th; one had been at Curry Moor on January 12th and was seen again on February 11th; other singles were on Noah's Lake and Catcott Lows, and in the west two were at Wimbleball Lake between March 8th and 27th. A small number of Brent Geese wintered along the coast between Wall Common and Shurton Bars up until April 10th; they contained 11 Light-bellied.

A flock of five Red-crested Pochard were on Noah's Lake on January 3rd. The male Lesser Scaup seen at Torr Works Reservoir in the previous autumn, and which then over-wintered in Wiltshire, returned for one day only on March 2nd. The female Long-tailed Duck from the previous December remained at Wimbleball Lake until March 25th. A Red-breasted Merganser had been there on January 2nd; another was at Cheddar Reservoir on several dates in March.

Red-throated Divers were recorded on five dates in this period in the west; the most were three on January 26th. A Great Northern Diver was present throughout at

Cheddar Reservoir and was last seen on April 6th; it had been joined by another from January 26th until March 15th: other singles were seen off Berrow on January 10th and at Tealham Moor, presumably on the North Drain, on the 15th. A Red-necked Grebe was at Cheddar Reservoir between February 17th and April 2nd. Also on the reservoir were two Black-necked Grebes from the start of the year until January 27th, one remaining until March 22nd.

An early Manx Shearwater was in the Parrett Estuary on March 12th. A Great White Egret at Ham Wall on February 1st was possibly the same as seen at Kennard Moor on the 14th before settling down in the Shapwick Heath/Ham Wall area from the 27th until April 8th; another had flown by Five Bells on February 25th – or was this the Shapwick bird? One of the species of the year in the County were Cattle Egrets and the year opened with three singles present. By the middle of March five had been present at Stretcholt, Andersea and North Newton, and on some days there were totals into double figures when adding up those from across the County. Bitterns were at several sites from within the Avalon Marshes and the first booming was heard.

There were three records of Red Kites, all from the Exmoor area in January and February; from March 13th there were another eight singles reported from Ebbor Gorge in the east to Exford Common in the west. At least three Marsh Harriers wintered on the Avalon Marshes and there were two records away from this area: an immature quartering fields near Highbridge on March 5th; and a male flying in high from the south at Wet Moor on the 18th. There were single Hen Harriers widely reported from across the Levels, the coast and on Exmoor, where there were no records from the roost that formed in the first part of 2007; the only report of two together was at Catcott Lows on January 21st. There were several reports of Goshawk, including a number from Steart, where one was hunting over the saltmarsh between here and Stockland Reach in early January. The first Osprey, and the only March record, was one flying north over Combwich on the 13th.

The Avocet flock on the Parrett peaked at 44 on January 12th, an increase again on the previous first winter period. The earliest Little Ringed Plover recorded in the County was at Earlake Moor on March 15th; another was Catcott Lows on the 19th. The exceptional numbers of Purple Sandpipers wintering at Hinkley Point, which were first reported in the previous December, increased to 15 by January 12th, and there were still 11 here in late March. The first Whimbrel of

the year were eight at Dunster Beach on the 22nd. Only two Spotted Redshank wintered in the Parrett Estuary. For the second year running there was a wintering Greenshank on the Parrett, at Combwich on February 18th. There was also a Common Sandpiper there and eight others at seven sites.

In contrast to the same period in 2007 there was only one skua reported: an Arctic at Berrow on January 12th. A first-winter Bonaparte's Gull, the third County record, was a surprising find at Cheddar Reservoir on March 22nd; it stayed until the 27th. One Little Gull was at Hinkley Point between January 25th and 31st, another was in the Parrett Estuary on March 12th, and it or another was at the Axe Estuary on the same day. Equally rare as the Bonaparte's Gull was the third Franklin's Gull to be recorded in the County, seen at Torr Works Reservoir on January 13th and March 25th. There were 39 reports of Mediterranean Gull, which are being seen more frequently in the County; the most were five at Blue Anchor, March 17th. Single Yellow-legged Gulls were at Torr Reservoir in January but three were seen on March 26th; other single birds were in the Parrett Estuary on January 25th, and at Wyke Champflower on February 17th. A juvenile Iceland Gull was found on the Tesco's Pond at Minehead on January 26th; it soon moved to the area in front of Butlin's where it could be found most days until at least March 20th; another, aged as a fourth-year bird, was at Dunster Beach and on the marsh behind from March 28th to 30th. The first tern of the year was a Sandwich at Noah's Lake on March 31st.

A roost of up to eight Long-eared Owls were reported from the old railway line near Thorney during March; another was sitting on a fence near Rodhuish on the 27th. Short-eared Owls were scarce during the first winter period: there were sightings from only eight sites, all of singles apart from three at West Sedge Moor, January 13th, and two at Steart on March 10th. The only Woodlark of the year was just to the east of South Cheriton on February 11th. Returning migrants included four exceptionally early Swallows at Westbury-sub-Mendip on February 9th – it snowed over the following night; a Sand Martin on March 2nd, a Wheatear at Brean Down Cove on 13th, a House Martin at Bayford on the 16th, a Ring Ouzel on Exmoor the following day, a singing Willow Warbler on the 26th, and a Redstart at Brean Down on the 31st. Black Redstarts were reported from seven places, the favoured areas being Brean Down Cove, where three wintered, and Hinkley Point, where there were two.

A Siberian Chiffchaff was positively identified at Westhay Moor on January 1st and accepted by BBRC as being of this race. There were 24 reports of Firecrest, of which 17 were from the Avalon Marshes, mainly at Shapwick Heath (East); the most together

were two seen frequently with a feeding tit flock. The stronghold of Bearded Tit in the County has moved from Berrow to Ham Wall, where up to eight were seen in this period.

There were three Great Grey Shrikes: one on Wavering Down and two on Exmoor, of which one crossed into the County from Devon at Hawkridge and the other moved between Thurley Combe and Ley Hill. There were large numbers of Bramblings wintering in the west, with up to 200 at both Raleigh's Cross and Culbone, and 150 at Triscombe Stone. Crossbills were at Gare Hill and in the west in the area between Croydon Hill and North Hill, the most being ten at Hopcott Common on February 8th. Four Hawfinches were in flight over Bagborough Plantation on January 26th. There were two Snow Buntings: at Chewton Mendip on the 20th and Minehead Golf Course on the 30th.

April and May

The first Garganey of the year was not until April 2nd at Meare Heath; the highest count was of four here on May 8th/9th. A Quail was calling at Tealham Moor from May 21st.

A Red-necked Grebe at Durleigh Reservoir, April 8th, was the possibly the bird from Cheddar Reservoir which left on the 2nd only to return from the 10th to the 23rd. A Purple Heron was in the Loxton's Marsh/Ham Wall area from 6th to 14th. A Cattle Egret away from the breeding area was at Dunster Beach/Minehead Marshes on 22nd and 24th; it was thought to have been a different bird from the one present in the Chapel Cleeve area earlier in the year, which roosted here. Three White Storks were in fields behind Wall Common on the 16th; others were seen around this time but unfortunately no details or descriptions were submitted. A second-year Glossy Ibis was on the pumped-out lagoon on Meare Heath on May 16th; it flew off east and was seen over Ham Wall as well. An adult Spoonbill feeding at Catcott Lows on the morning of April 16th was seen later at Westhay Moor, where it appeared occasionally up to the 21st.

Red Kites were on the move across the County throughout the period; mid to late May was when most were seen. Much rarer was the fourth record of Black Kite, seen over the Somerset County Cricket Ground at Taunton, May 17th. Hen Harriers were recorded, mainly in the west, up until May 29th. There were Ospreys: at Ham Wall on April 8th and then in the Avalon Marshes from May 5th to 30th; and at Sutton Bingham, the first on April 9th, and then one between May 29th and June 3rd. A female Red-footed Falcon was at Meare Heath from May 13th to 17th; this was the first since 1992. The maximum number of Hobbies in this area was 47 on the 5th.

The first Black-winged Stilts since 1980 were two at King's Sedge Moor, on May 6th, found in the morning during a breeding-wader survey in a wet field; unfortunately they had gone by the evening. Further Little Ringed Plovers were seen across the County as far west as the flooded fields behind Minehead Golf Course, where two on April 20th/21st were the first records for here; three Greenshank were also in this area on May 10th. There were a few Little Stint records, all from the coast between Berrow and Wall Common, with a maximum of two on May 17th and 19th, and single Curlew Sandpipers here on the 16th and 18th. There were still 12 Purple Sandpipers at Hinkley Point on April 9th; the last two were seen on May 6th. There were up to 15 Ruff at Meare Heath between April 4th and 26th; others were at Steart, Greylake Reserve and West Sedge Moor. The highest count of Whimbrel on passage was of 133 at Pawlett Hams on April 27th. There were five records of Wood Sandpipers, all singly, apart from three at the newly-created wetland at Cary Moor on May 7th.

There were single Pomarine Skuas in the Parrett Estuary on April 24th and May 5th. Arctic Skuas were seen here between April 5th and 28th; the only other records were from Brean Down, where there was one on April 26th, and two on May 4th. The most Little Gulls in this period were 13 at Noah's Lake on April 21st; others were seen at Torr Works Reservoir, Cheddar Reservoir and the Parrett Estuary. The Minehead Iceland Gull was last seen on May 3rd, but it had become irregular during April. The only Little Tern was on the beach at Berrow for three days from May 17th. The fifth Whiskered Tern for the County patrolled the tideline here on the 5th. A Roseate Tern was amongst Commic Terns and four Black Terns off the Huntspill Sea Wall on the 4th, the first since 1998.

An increasingly scarce bird in the County is Turtle Dove and there were only four records of singles in this period; the only one to be seen for more than a day was at Withycombe where it was seen on May 25th/26th. There were still Short-eared Owls in April at the Axe Estuary, Berrow and Meare Heath; two were seen in fields near Brean on May 4th/5th; the last of the period was flushed by a dog at Withypool Common on the 10th. A flock of nine Bee-eaters were heard and then seen flying away over Old Cleeve on April 26th, and a few minutes later they were over Five Bells at Watchet; on May 20th one flew north over the tower hide at Steart towards Burnham. There were three Hoopoes: singles near Bishops Lydeard on April 17th, on Exmoor at Great Tom's Hill on 29th, and Shapwick Heath on May 13th. A Wryneck in a Staplehay garden, April 20th, was only the second spring record in the last ten years.

A small number of Blue-headed Wagtails were noted: one at West Sedge Moor on April 18th; three among 17 Yellow Wagtails in fields behind Dunster Hawn on 20th, and a male on Tealham Moor on May 18th. Ring Ouzels on passage were noted at six Exmoor sites and along the coast from Brean Down to Kilve Beach; the most were five at the latter on April 20th. Following on from the two Siberian Chiffchaffs in January a singing male, found at Apex Leisure Park on April 3rd, stayed until the 10th. A Firecrest was here on April 4th.

A Hooded Crow was on Dunster Beach on April 23rd/24th, the first here since 1990. A singing male Serin was around Steart village early in the morning of the 27th; unfortunately it could not be found later. Twelve Crossbills were at Gallax Hill on the 29th and three others were at Land Combe on May 29th.

Selected breeding records

The County saw the first successful breeding of Cattle Egrets in the U.K., when single pairs raised young at two sites. This year also saw the first confirmed breeding of Bittern since 1969; this was at Ham Wall, where two females raised young, justifying all the hard work put in on the Avalon Marshes.

Mandarin Ducks raised two families at Sutton Bingham Reservoir. A family of Teal were seen at Meare Heath but for the second year running there were no confirmed breeding records of Garganey, although pairs were present. There were three families of Goosander on the Barle, although one may have been recorded twice in slightly different areas. It should be mentioned there was a dearth of breeding records of most species from the Avalon Marshes considering the number of observers; perhaps it is wrongly assumed that someone else is reporting families here.

There were about 14 calling Quail, an improvement on 2007, including six at West Sedge Moor.

Up to four pairs of Fulmar were on the cliffs of the only breeding colony at Glenthorne. Cormorants continued to expand their colony at Noah's Lake after the first records last year; there were 13 nests in June. Little Egrets continued to expand as well and there were 20 pairs nesting successfully at one site.

The number of pairs of Peregrines reported at this time remained about the same as in the previous year, but once again a number of traditional sites were not visited.

Two pairs of Little Ringed Plover bred at Torr Works Reservoir, one of which was successful, with two juveniles seen. Six pairs of Ringed Plover bred in the Steart area; one may have further west at Warren Point. Inland, between 100 and 120 pairs of Lapwing bred or attempted to breed, which was slightly up on

the previous year. There was a significant increase in the number of breeding Common Snipe with 136 displaying males located. Curlew also continued to increase, with up to 42 breeding, but numbers were down again on Exmoor. Redshank numbers were up to 43 pairs after falling to 26 in 2007.

For the second year running Common Terns bred: an adult was seen feeding a recently fledged young in the Avalon Marshes.

Long-eared Owls bred at two sites, but there were no records from the Mendips. Nightjars must have also suffered for the second year in succession with the very wet months of June and July.

The RSPB Exmoor Moorland Survey found several species in numbers not suspected (for instance 235 Grasshopper Warblers were recorded in Somerset) but others had declined as well; full details are in a separate article at the end of this Report. Dartford Warblers were also noted in good numbers by this Survey and the total in the County was probably in excess of 170 pairs; this population crashed during the winter of 08/09 and at the time of writing only six pairs/males have been found in 2009! There were six singing male Firecrests in the east of the County.

Bearded Tits did not breed at Berrow and the eight pairs at Ham Wall had reduced to three. The decline of the population of Tree Sparrows in the east, noted in 2007, continued to the extent that not one pair could be found. On a positive note, Siskins are thriving in West Somerset, as shown by the ringing at Bratton, where large numbers of juveniles were caught.

June and July

A most unexpected record was that of a Dark-bellied Brent Goose on Brean Down on June 8th. Equally surprising was an adult male Long-tailed Duck on small pools in the inner harbour at Porlock Weir on the 11th. Further Quail included three at West Sedge Moor, two at Sutton Moor and on Exmoor at Long Combe, and singles at Tealham Moor, Greylake Reserve, Butleigh Moor and West Moor.

Amongst the Manx Shearwaters at Minehead on June 22nd was a Balearic Shearwater. Two European Storm-petrels were off Hurlstone Point on June 28th; others in July were two in the Parrett Estuary on the 8th, and one at Minehead on 19th. A Great White Egret flew over Ham Wall towards Meare Heath on June 3rd. A Squacco Heron was photographed on the edge of the reeds at Chilton Trinity Ponds on the 1st, the fifth County record. Away from the breeding area a Bittern was on the bank of the North Drain at Tealham Moor, July 22nd. In the west, a Spoonbill was at Porlock Marsh on the 7th.

A further 12 Red Kites were seen in this period. An Osprey was at Shapwick Heath from June 4th to

6th and was also seen over Ham Wall; one at Sutton Bingham on July 14th might have been the bird seen there in early June.

Waders were on their return passage, but five Little Stints and 14 Curlew Sandpipers at Wall Common on July 31st were unusual in such good numbers this early.

A total of four Great Skuas were seen: two at Berrow on June 19th/20th, and singles at Minehead and Hurlstone Point in July. Arctic Skuas were also on the move, with four singles in June and two in July. A first-summer Little Gull at Steart on June 27th was no doubt the same that was at Berrow from July 5th until at least September 20th. Up to four Yellow-legged Gulls were seen in the roost during July at Torr Works Reservoir; others were at Kennard Moor, presumably the same returning adult at Sutton Bingham Reservoir from July 4th, and Hinkley Point. Three Little Terns were at Durleigh Reservoir on the evening of July 24th, and seven others at Berrow on the 31st. On the same date four Black Terns were at Durleigh Reservoir during an evening squall. A Puffin flew up-Channel in company of two Guillemots at Minehead on June 17th, returning 15 minutes later.

A Turtle Dove was 'purring' in suitable breeding habitat on the Brendons on July 2nd. A Short-eared Owl was at North Moor on the very unusual date of July 17th.

A Woodchat Shrike reported from North Hill on June 29th turned out to be of the Western Mediterranean Island race *badius*, the first recorded in the County and only the seventh British record. It was present briefly the next day before it was flushed by a Raven and was not seen again. Two adult Rosy Starlings were seen in June: one at Rockwell Green on June 4th/5th, and another at Porlock on the 7th; could this have been same bird?

August and September

The first returning Dark-bellied Brent Geese were single birds at Berrow on September 15th and Dunster Beach on the 26th; a juvenile Light-bellied Brent was at Hinkley Point on the 24th. Two Ruddy Shelducks were at Dunster Beach from August 2nd to September 15th – they were extremely wary and could not be approached, taking flight at 50m range. The last Garganey of the year was at Meare Heath on August 21st; normally they are seen much later in the year.

A juvenile Black-necked Grebe was found at Orchardleigh Lake on August 30th, but was not present the next day. A Cory's Shearwater flew slowly west off Blue Anchor on August 3rd, when the only other bird seen during an hour's sea watch was a Fulmar! From August 10th to 13th at least 16 European Storm-petrels were off the coast in the west; in the Parrett Estuary two unfortunate birds were

killed by Herring Gulls off the Huntspill Sea Wall on the 12th/13th; another was off Wall Common on the 20th. The only Leach's Storm-petrel of the period flew down-Channel at Minehead, September 7th. A Purple Heron was flushed by a low-flying Hercules at Shapwick Heath (West) on the 15th. Cattle Egrets had left their breeding areas and were seen regularly in the Avalon Marshes from early August onwards. A Spoonbill was in the Parrett Estuary on the 14th-16th.

Somerset did not miss out on the September influx of Honey-buzzards into the U.K. Singles were at: Torr Works Reservoir, on the 7th; Brean Down, on the 16th; and Shapwick Heath (East) and Chapel Cleeve on the 19th. There were only two Red Kites: at Westbury-sub-Mendip on 14th, and Goosemoor Common on the 27th. There were reports of Marsh Harriers throughout the Avalon Marshes; elsewhere there were migrants at Berrow, Stolford, Steart, Huntspill Sea Wall, Mark, Tealham Moor, West Sedge Moor and Shurton. The first Hen Harrier of the autumn was a ringtail flying across Wembleball Lake on September 15th; there were others at Nutscale Reservoir on the 28th, and King's Sedge Moor from the 27th to 31st. Ospreys were reported in the Avalon Marshes from August 23rd and then frequently until September 15th; others were at Somerton on August 25th, Mark on September 13th, Sutton Bingham Reservoir on the 14th, and Lympsham and Huntspill Sea Wall on the 15th.

The first Avocets back on the Parrett were nine on September 14th. Little Ringed Plover were present in very low numbers at only three sites, including a long-staying juvenile at Huntspill Sea Wall from August 12th to 18th. A juvenile Dotterel was at the favoured location for this species in the County, Dunkery Beacon, from September 7th to 9th; as usual it was extremely confiding to the many walkers around the top. Continuing the run of recent years, there were two Pectoral Sandpipers at Meare Heath on the 17th. After the wet summer the water levels on most of the reservoirs were high, with little mud exposed, and this resulted in extremely low numbers of waders inland, apart from the Meare Heath lagoon, where pumping controls the level. For instance, the peak count of Greenshank was only four. There were four records of Grey Phalarope: on Kennard Moor from August 21st to 24th, at Huntspill Sea Wall on the 21st, in a puddle at County Gate on September 3rd, and at Berrow on the 6th.

In comparison with recent years it was a poor passage year for skuas, the highlight being three juvenile Long-taileds at Minehead on September 7th; there were 12 Arctics on the same day, and one at Steart on the 30th. Apart from the long-staying Little Gull at Berrow there were only singles at Steart and

Cheddar Reservoir. Mediterranean Gulls were widely reported from across the County; are there more around or are observers looking harder at gulls? The County's second Caspian Gull was a second-winter at Torr Works Reservoir on 23rd to 25th; there were also up to about 15 Yellow-legged Gulls here during the month. There was a large movement of terns at Dunster Beach and Hurlstone Point in late August, culminating on the afternoon of 31st when five Little, 15 Black, five Sandwich, 14 Common and about 110 Arctic flew west in two hours. An exceptionally early Little Auk flew down-Channel at Minehead on September 7th.

A Hoopoe frequented gardens at North Wootton between the 7th and 10th. A total of five Wrynecks were found, including two at Minehead Golf Course on September 4th to 9th; the others were at Kennard Moor on August 30th, Wavering Down and Blue Anchor on September 21st, and Oake on the 22nd. Ring Ouzels were on return passage from the 22nd, when two were present at Weir Water; others followed at Brean Down, Thurley Combe and Chetsford Water.

An Aquatic Warbler was trapped and ringed at Steart on September 19th. Rarer in the County than this species was a Barred Warbler, photographed at Brean Down on the 16th, and only the fifth record. Unfortunately it could not be relocated after the initial morning sighting.

A juvenile Red-backed Shrike was seen on a roadside hedge at Mark Moor on the 27th; this one stayed around for the rest of the day. A Hawfinch was on a treetop at Mells Park on the 6th.

October

Whooper Swans arrived back earlier than normal: seven flew over East Coker on the 13th; others followed at Torr Works Reservoir, on the sea at Lilstock, near Stockland Bristol, and at Ford Common and Noah's Lake. There were three records of Dark-bellied Brent Goose, the most being four at Dunster Beach on 28th. Light-bellied Brents included a family at Steart on the 22nd; the only one away from the Parrett Estuary was at Dunster Beach on the 23rd.

A Red-throated Diver flew north over Burnham, October 23rd. At Brean a Great Northern Diver flew across fields at the back of the car park towards the Axe Estuary on the 5th. A Black-necked Grebe arrived at Cheddar Reservoir on the 29th and stayed until at least December 30th. There was a small movement of seabirds early in the month off the Parrett Estuary, with a Fulmar and ten Manx Shearwaters, and only the second Leach's Storm-petrel of the year on the 1st.

The only Red Kite of the month was in the East Chinnock area for the rest of the year. There were two records of Marsh Harrier away from the Avalon

Marshes: a juvenile on the 12th, and one roosting near the canal at Creech St Michael on the 17th. The 14 records of Hen Harrier were all from the Levels or Exmoor and all of single birds apart from two at West Sedge Moor on the 22nd and Wilmersham Common on the 26th.

The third Baird's Sandpiper for the County was at the high-tide roost in the Brue Estuary on the 20th/21st. Another Pectoral Sandpiper was at Meare Heath for only a couple of hours on the 17th. A confiding Purple Sandpiper was along the Huntspill Sea Wall from the 20th. More Grey Phalaropes were seen: at Cheddar Reservoir, from 1st to 12th; Huntspill Sea Wall, on the 10th and the 24th; and Chard Reservoir, on 21st/22nd.

A few skuas were seen, including three Great and an Arctic at Burnham on the 1st and two Pomarines at Hurlstone Point on 17th. The only Little Gull of the month was at Cheddar Reservoir on the 10th. Among the last terns of the year were a Little in the Parrett Estuary on the 1st, and a Black at Durleigh Reservoir on the 19th.

There was only one Short-eared Owl: at Huntspill Sea Wall on the 10th. A Richard's Pipit was found in stubble on the coast behind Shurton Bars on the 10th. The only Black Redstarts were both in gardens at Williton on the 14th and 27th. A lone Ring Ouzel was in hawthorns near Bicknoller Post on 10th.

Continuing the run of recent years, there were Yellow-browed Warblers at four sites, including Millwater (where one was ringed on the 6th), Ashcott Corner on the 8th, in a Berrow garden the next day, and finally at Steart on the 12th. As in 2007 it was a poor month for Firecrests, with five records of single birds, two from both Brean Down and Hinkley Point and one at Stogumber.

A Great Grey Shrike was at Ford Common for four days from the 12th; five reports from Exmoor all centred on the Wilmersham Common area between the 22nd and 28th, probably all relating to the same bird. Hawfinches were on the move on the 23rd, all flying south: one over Bruton and five at Burnham. An elusive Lapland Bunting was on the Huntspill Sea Wall on the 17th/18th.

November and December

Three immature Whooper Swans that arrived at Ford Common, near Berrow, on October 30th were present until November 8th. Others arrived, the most being seven at Noah's Lake on December 19th and 26th; three adults were present on flooded linseed fields near Stockland Bristol from November 11th to 23rd. These birds were joined by up to 11 Bewick's Swans on December 15th; others were scarce, with no other counts in double figures. A flock of 19 Pink-footed Geese flew slowly north out of the Parrett Estuary on

November 4th. Two White-fronted Geese were at West Sedge Moor from December 2nd to 14th; these may account for the two birds seen at Wet Moor on 15th and West Moor on the 29th; five were at West Sedge Moor on the 26th. It is difficult to be sure whether Barnacle Geese are wild but ten at Torr Works Reservoir on November 8th/9th and five remaining to the 23rd never mixed with the feral birds present or the Canada Goose flock. Up to 13 Light-bellied Brent Geese were wintering at Stolford. Also of dubious origins can be Red-crested Pochard: eight of these were at Cheddar Reservoir on November 18th and two here on December 15th. A drake Ferruginous Duck was on the lagoons at Ham Sewage Works from December 10th, a site that has received little attention in the last few years. The returning male Lesser Scaup was at Torr Works Reservoir on December 22nd. Increasingly scarce are Eider in the County: two flew off from Hinkley Point on November 27th and were seen later flying past Blue Anchor. An adult male Long-tailed Duck was on the sea at Hinkley Point from November 25th to December 10th. A drake Velvet Scoter flew east with four Common Scoters, off Hurlstone Point, on November 29th.

December is the peak month for Red-throated Divers in the west and this year was no exception, the peak count being 17 in Minehead Bay on the 4th. Black-throated Divers are not as easy to predict but there were three records, again all in the west; the most were four passing Hurlstone Point on November 30th. The only Great Northern of the period were two off Minehead on December 20th. The Black-necked Grebe at Cheddar Reservoir from October was joined by another from December 9th to 13th and then by a third on the 14th, but the following day there was only one again. A Great White Egret was again at Shapwick Heath from December 9th to 21st. The Cattle Egrets became concentrated in the Sharpham area, where six were present on most days throughout the period.

A new Red Kite patrolled the fields at Wet Moor on November 3rd. Up to four Marsh Harriers were seen in both months in the Avalon Marshes. There were 45 reports of Hen Harrier, the majority from the Levels and Exmoor; no more than two at any one time and no roost records.

The numbers of wintering Avocets on the Parrett were down in comparison with last year: a maximum of only 11 on December 12th/13th. A Little Stint in winter is unusual, but one was along the Huntspill Sea Wall on the 29th; there had been four Curlew Sandpipers here on November 4th. The high-tide roost of Purple Sandpipers on the water intake at Hinkley Point formed again and there were 13 there during December. Spotted Redshanks were also low in numbers, the highest count being of six at Steart on

November 14th. There were wintering Greenshank on the Parrett at the entrance to Combwich Pill: two on December 13th and one still present on the 29th. There were also two Common Sandpipers here; others were at Torr Works Reservoir, Brue Estuary and Queen's Sedge Moor.

Two first-winter Little Gulls were at Torr Works Reservoir on November 2nd. An adult Ring-billed Gull was here on the afternoon of December 28th and 30th before flying off to roost elsewhere. A first-winter Iceland Gull was at Hinkley Point on December 15th before flying off to the west; presumably the same bird was on the beach in the late afternoon at Blue Anchor on the 16th/17th.

A Long-eared Owl was on a hedge near Croscombe on December 17th. Short-eared Owls were still low in numbers, being recorded at six places; the most were four at King's Sedge Moor from 22nd to 31st. Late Swallows were seen, including two in December, one at Westhay on the 2nd, and the latest ever recorded in the County at Bishops Lydeard on Christmas Eve. A Richard's Pipit was in a grass field along the King's Sedgemoor Drain on November 25th. Water Pipits were recorded from the Huntspill Sea Wall, where up to four were seen, and Meare Heath, where three were present. A Waxwing was on the wires at Bradford-on-Tone on December 5th; two were at Pilton and one flew from Turkey Cottage across Curry Moor, both on the 26th. Black Redstarts were recorded from nine places; the maximum at any site was two at Hinkley Point and East Coker. Ring Ouzels were recorded in November at Dunster Station

on 4th, Hurlstone Point and Bagley Combe, both on the 8th, and finally two at Brean Down on the 9th.

A Reed Warbler at Brean Down on November 6th and 8th was checked carefully to make sure it was this species and not anything rarer! Although not the first wintering Lesser Whitethroat in the County, the one at Aller on December 14th was extremely rare. After the poor autumn, Firecrests were still scarce and only four were found. An adult male Bearded Tit at Cary Moor from November 16th into the New Year was the first for this new wetland. The first Willow Tit since 2003 was found during survey work for the BTO *Atlas* at Staple Hill on December 1st.

A Great Grey Shrike at Webber's Post on December 3rd could have been the bird from October; on Mendip, another was in the Charterhouse area from the 6th to the 14th. Bramblings were low in number compared with the first winter period, the most being about 20 at Simonsbath on November 23rd. There were a number of Hawfinchs in East Somerset, including five at Bruton on December 29th; elsewhere, there was only one, in a West Monkton garden on the 31st.

For many the bird of the year was the Dark-eyed Junco found feeding in an East Coker garden from November 16th to 18th. Many were extremely grateful to the owners of the house who allowed many strangers to go and sit in their conservatory and watch this visitor over the three days.

There were four records of Snow Bunting, all of single birds apart from three at Porlock Marsh on December 7th; the others were at Lilstock, Blue Anchor and Minehead Golf Course.

EDITORIAL NOTES

BIRD RECORDS

Records for *Somerset Birds 2009* should be sent as promptly as possible after the New Year, and **not later than the end of January**, to the County Recorder:

Brian Gibbs, 23 Lyngford Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7EE or by email to brian.gibbs@somersetbirds.net

STATUS DESCRIPTIONS

An explanation of each term used is given below. There will be, of course, variations from the rule, an example being Dunlin, which is an abundant winter visitor to the coast but not to the centre of Exmoor.

Abundant: Occurs in large numbers in suitable habitats and seasons.

Common: Occurs regularly, or is widely distributed in suitable habitats.

Fairly Common: Occurs annually in small numbers in suitable habitats.

Uncommon: Occurs annually in very small numbers.

Scarce: One or two annual records or restricted to very limited habitats.

Rare: Occurs less than annually, but more often than the classes below.

Very Rare: From three to 15 individuals recorded in the last 30 years.

Accidental: Fewer than three individuals recorded in the last 30 years.

National Rarities

Records of species considered by the *British Birds Rarities Committee* can be submitted directly or, preferably, via the County Recorder, from whom the appropriate forms can be obtained.

Local Rarities

Full descriptions from all observers are required for all records of the following County rarities:

Bean Goose	Ferruginous Duck
Pink-footed Goose	Red Grouse
American Wigeon	Black-throated Diver*
Green-winged Teal	Balearic Shearwater
Blue-winged Teal	Cory's Shearwater
Ring-necked Duck	Great Shearwater

Sooty Shearwater	Puffin
Wilson's Storm-petrel	Little Auk
Night Heron	Alpine Swift
Great White Egret	Bee-eater
Purple Heron	Short-toed Lark
White Stork	Shore Lark
Honey-buzzard	Red-rumped Swallow
Black Kite	Tawny Pipit
Montagu's Harrier	Red-throated Pipit
Rough-legged Buzzard	Bluethroat
Red-footed Falcon	Savi's Warbler
Spotted Crake	Aquatic Warbler
Corn Crake	Marsh Warbler
Common Crane	Icterine Warbler
Stone Curlew	Melodious Warbler
Kentish Plover	Barred Warbler
American Golden Plover	Pallas's Leaf Warbler
Temminck's Stint	Dusky Warbler
White-rumped Sandpiper	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Pectoral Sandpiper	Willow Tit
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Red-backed Shrike
Red-necked Phalarope	Woodchat Shrike
Long-tailed Skua	Serin
Ring-billed Gull	Chough
Caspian Gull	Hooded Crow
White-winged Black Tern	Rose-coloured Starling
Roseate Tern	Common Redpoll
Black Guillemot	Common Rosefinch

Short notes are required for the following species:

Whooper Swan	Pomarine Skua
White-fronted Goose	Sabine's Gull
Red-crested Pochard	Yellow-legged Gull
Long-tailed Duck	Iceland Gull
Velvet Scoter	Glaucous Gull
Red-throated Diver*	Hoopoe
Great Northern Diver	Wryneck
Red-necked Grebe	Woodlark
Slavonian Grebe	Richard's Pipit
Black-necked Grebe	Waxwing
Shag*	Yellow-browed Warbler
European Storm-petrel	Golden Oriole
Leach's Storm-petrel	Great Grey Shrike
Spoonbill	Twite
Goshawk	Hawfinch
Osprey	Lapland Bunting
Dotterel	Snow Bunting
Grey Phalarope	

*away from coast west of Minehead

Apart from these, descriptions are required for any species or subspecies not currently on the Somerset List, even if they are not *British Birds* rarities.

Guidelines on how to submit descriptions are available on the website.

DEFINITIONS OF LEVELS NORTH OF THE POLDENS

The term 'Avalon Marshes' is now used to cover the area formerly referred to in Somerset ornithological literature as the 'Peat Moors'. Strictly, it applies for survey purposes to two separate areas: the 'Northern Peat Production Zone', consisting of Westhay Moor; and the 'Southern Peat Production Zone', which covers the area from Sharpam and the west end of Glastonbury Heath WNW to Westhay Heath, and includes within it Street Heath, Walton Heath, part of Ashcott Heath, Meare Heath and Shapwick Heath. In some looser contexts it may include land to the west of this: Catcott Heath, Catcott Lows, Burtle Moor and Chilton Moor. 'Ham Wall', which is not yet marked on O.S. maps (except as a Rhyne), is within the area, north of Walton and Street Heaths.

HISTORY OF THE ARRANGEMENT OF RECORDS

From 1924 to 1983, the Editors of the Report divided the County into VII Districts, numbered roughly from east to west. Of these, District I was lost to "Avon" in 1974, though it continued to be reported on in *Somerset Birds* until 1978. The boundaries between them were complicated, and the system was increasingly difficult to operate.

So, in 1984, the "new" County was divided into six Districts:

- E** = east of the ST60 Grid Line.
- N** = from ST60 west to ST20 and south to ST40. This had the advantage of including the whole coast of Bridgwater Bay, but it split what we now know as the Avalon Marshes, since the ST40 line bisects Shapwick Heath.
- C** = Central Somerset to the south of the ST40 line as far as ST20 and west to ST30.
- S** = west of ST60 and south of ST20.
- SW** = a somewhat awkward area, designed to include the Quantocks and their coast, and also the Vale of Taunton Deane; from ST30 west to ST10 and south from the sea to ST20, apart from the area around the Parrett Estuary.

W = west of ST10.

These divisions are still given for places in the Gazetteer.

They were used in *Somerset Birds* from 1984 to 1987 in much the same way as the old Districts had been, the records of most species being arranged on that basis. A new County map showed them.

In 1988, this system, which had proved too inflexible, was abandoned, though records were still organised within species in something like the old order, from east to west, and the map continued in use until 1993. It was then replaced by a folding map, which did not show the formal divisions.

During the years that followed the abandonment of these, records came to be arranged according to two principles:

a) Breeding and wintering records

These are in order of places, which is mainly east to west, as follows: East Somerset; western Mendip; the coastal strip from Brean Down to Hinkley Point; Levels north of the Poldens; King's Sedge Moor and other Levels south of the Poldens and north of Langport; West Sedge Moor (with Curry Moor and Hay Moor); Central Somerset (Somerton, Langport and the area east to ST60); South Somerset, from Yeovil west to Chard, including all the South Levels; the Blackdowns; the Vale of Taunton Deane; the north-east foothills of the Quantocks, including Durlough Reservoir; the Quantock coast from Hinkley Point to Doniford; the higher Quantocks, in which places are normally described from south-east to north-west; the area between the Quantocks and the Brendons (including Crowcombe Heathfield); the Brendons from east to west; Exmoor and its coast, where the northern side is given first, followed by the areas around Exford and Simonsbath and the Barle Valley. Places within all these areas are generally arranged from east to west, unless it is more convenient to group them otherwise.

b) Records of passage-migrants

Often given in date order, so that a pattern for the County can be established. In commoner duck and waders, which are usually tabulated, the two systems are combined, the counting sites being arranged in the order given above.

THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Classification broadly follows the sequence and nomenclature of the *British Birds* 'List of Palearctic Birds', but we did not adopt all the new English names. A number of changes made during 2005 have been adopted, especially with regard to terns and tits. There have recently been further changes, especially relative to gulls.

Records of rarities are always submitted to the *British Birds* Rarities Committee and are published when a decision has been reached. This may mean that some of them will not appear until the Report of the year following the observation. Rejection does not necessarily preclude a record from being mentioned in *Somerset Birds*, and where this has occurred it will be clearly stated. The list of species considered by the Committee has recently been greatly reduced, and the task of validation transferred to County Rare Birds Committees.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Fairly common resident breeder; non-breeding summer and winter visitor.

Very few records submitted for an area as well-watched as the Avalon Marshes: two families, Shapwick Heath (East); single families, Westhay Moor, Sharpham and Catcott Lows.

All other breeding records of single pairs/families unless stated: Bishop's Palace Moat, Wells; Catsford Common and Wall Common; two families, Kennard Moor; three pairs, Tealham Moor; Moorlinch Moor; Bridgewater Docks; eight nests located and six broods seen later, Greylake Reserve; seven pairs, King's Sedge Moor; Southlake Moor; North Moor (Moorland); two families, Curry Moor; Stan Moor; 11 pairs, West Sedge Moor; four pairs, Wet Moor; three nests, West Moor (Hambridge); Otterhead Lakes and Luxhay Reservoir; four families between Huntworth and Creech St Michael along the Canal; Blackbrook; single families on Tone at Taunton and Creech St Michael; Greenham; Ashford Reservoir; Clatworthy Reservoir; Tesco's Pit, Minehead.

Mute Swan – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	6	58	9	8	10	3	2	10	11		14	
Parrett Estuary	13		48	29		17				10	10	26
Stockland Bristol	16	24	45								17	27
Cheddar Reservoir	1	1	2	5	4	10	3	8	8	11	11	4
East & West Waste	43	15	35							12	21	11
Tealham Moor	111	83	23		147	114				125	135	203
Westhay Moor	187	168	136	222						36	34	39
Sharpham	6	76	4					12			10	35
Ham Wall	42	9	24	50	4		5		2	5		
Shapwick/ Meare Heaths	136	147	150		42		50			70	155	104
Westhay Heath	21	22									18	31
Catcott Lows	14	20	6	5				11		9	13	10
Catcott, Edington, Chilton & Burtle Moors	14	12	50								25	87
Butleigh Moor	24									36	90	50
King's Sedge Moor (excl. Greylake & Huish Moor)	76	35	39	14							73	95
Huish Moor	58	32	58									
Greylake Reserve	32	16	10		8	18				71	27	40
Lang Moor		8	5							31		76

Mute Swan – main counts, continued

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
North Moor (Moorland)	21		1								10	26
Curry/Hay Moors	155	143	49							31	83	77
West Sedge Moor	61	43	65							18	77	
Aller Moor		111								108	115	73
Hay Moor (S. of Langport)	12	35	8							2	14	18
King's Moor	2	55	37							6	2	17
West Moor (Hambridge)	4	3	3	48	47	10				15	27	40
Wet Moor	20	27	29	19	18	9	10			31	40	15
Witcombe Bottom	25	16								22	54	37
Dunster Beach/ Minehead Marshes		2			18	24	18				5	6

All other counts of 25 and over: 60, Earlake Moor, January 5th; 40, Westbury Moor, February 18th; 52, Upper Axe Valley, April 10th-12th; 40, Pawlett Hams, on 22nd, and 41 on May 7th; up to 100 feeding on oil-seed rape, Westonzoyland Airfield, February; 45, Ash (near Martock), June 5th.

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus**Uncommon winter visitor. Declining.*

At the start of the year there were up to five adults at North Moor (Moorland) to January 12th. On the 14th there were two adults on the Huish Moor part of King's Sedge Moor. On Wet Moor and the adjoining Hay Moor a flock of up to eight adults were present between the 19th and February 2nd. A single adult was on Curry Moor on February 11th; nearby at Athelney there were ten on the 12th, two of which remained until the next day. The final report of the first winter period was the largest: 15 at Westhay Heath during a WeBS count on March 9th.

The first returning birds were seven adults in flooded stubble fields near Stockland Bristol on November 14th; these remained until the end of the year. On December 15th there were 11 here: six adults and five juveniles. One of these had been ringed on August 18th, 2008, on Lovetskiy Island in Arctic Russia; this was the first sighting since then.

The only other records were of two adults at Wet Moor on November 16th; possibly the same birds at nearby Hay Moor on the next day. A group of five adults joined the Mutes on Butleigh Moor on the 26th. All the other records came from around Muchelney: four, December 17th; two on Thorney Moor on the same day; one on West Moor on the 27th was joined by six others by the 29th.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus**Scarce winter visitor.*

Almost as many records of this species as of the last!

In first winter period, two or three records: three, Noah's Lake, from 2007 to March 4th; three, Catcott Lows, January 25th, may have been these birds; adult, Tealham Moor, March 25th-April 5th.

In autumn and second winter period, about ten records, involving total of 34 birds: seven flying south-west over East Coker in early morning of October 13th, an exceptionally early date; three, Torr Works Reservoir, in late afternoon of 16th, flew off at dusk; adult on sea, Lilstock, on 17th; three adults in fields between Wall Common and Stockland Bristol from 19th to end of year; two adults, Shapwick Heath, October 23rd (perhaps from 17th) and again on November 9th; three immatures, Ford Common, October 29th-November 6th; two, Witcombe Bottom, on 24th; five adults landing on sea in Parrett Estuary at high tide, December 1st; one, Shapwick Heath, on 3rd, joined by family of six on 19th and remained to end of year; and one over Queen's Sedge Moor on 24th.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus****Rare winter visitor.***

Two records: one in Edington Moor/Catcott Lows area, March 1st, and presumably same bird, April 30th (BDG, RLM, JJP *et al.*); flock of 19 flying slowly north out of Parrett Estuary, November 4th (JAH, AW).

TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis rossicus****Very rare winter visitor.***

One thought to have been of this race was present on Wet Moor floods January 10th-27th (NS *et al.*).

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons****Scarce winter visitor and passage-migrant, now irregular.***

In first winter period, about four records, involving total of six birds: one, Curry Moor, January 12th and February 11th; two on Wet Moor, with the Bean Goose, January 27th-February 5th; one around Shapwick Heath from 27th to March 15th (one at Catcott Lows, March 3rd, probably same); and two, Wimbleball Lake, March 8th-27th.

In December, two on West Sedge Moor from 2nd to 14th, and five there on 26th; two on Wet Moor, December 15th, and on West Moor on 29th were perhaps the same.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser****Uncommon feral resident breeder; rare winter visitor and passage-migrant.***

Surprisingly, no breeding records submitted from the Avalon Marshes! Elsewhere there were a pair at Greylake and two at West Sedge Moor in the breeding season.

Greylag Goose – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Torr Works Res.		1		1			2					1
Avalon Marshes	60	28	43					35	60	7	55	65
West Sedge Moor	7	5			4							2

The maximum count of the resident flock around the Avalon Marshes was of 65 on December 21st at Shapwick Heath (East).

About 15 others: two, Wet Moor, January 13th, and Sutton Bingham Reservoir, April 7th; three over Bruton and later at Torr Works Reservoir, on 16th; two, Brea, on 19th, of which one had been colour-ringed at Llanwern, Gwent, on June 25th, 2007; four, Pawlett Hams, April 22nd; one, Wimbleball Lake, July 22nd; and one, Tadham Moor, December 21st.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis****Common resident breeder and irregular visitor. Increasing.***

Again, very few breeding records from the Avalon Marshes. The only ones received were: one family, Shapwick Heath (East); four families, Catcott Lows.

All other breeding records of single pairs/families unless stated: two families, Mells Park and Torr Works Reservoir; Steart; Tealham Moor; Moorlinch Moor; Durlough Reservoir; West Sedge Moor; West Moor, Hambridge; at least three families, Sutton Bingham Reservoir; Rowdon Farm, Stogumber; two families, Clatworthy Reservoir and Wimbleball Lake; Orchard Wyndham Estate and Torweston Farm, both near Williton; two families, Dunster Hawn; five families, Butlin's (Minehead); Downscombe; Winsford.

Canada Goose – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mells Park Estate			16	8	12			72	23			

Canada Goose – main counts, continued												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Torr Works Res.								80		121	187	143
Axe Estuary	57			10	2		6	50	70			
Parrett Estuary	20	20		10	7		37	186	195	41	37	32
Cheddar Res.	33		9	2	8	46			131		28	8
Westhay Moor	23		23	5								
Shapwick/ Meare Heaths	18	13	8				5			46	24	26
Catcott Lows			26								80	83
West Sedge Moor	171	3	3							100	383	
Wet Moor	220	7								5	96	200
Witcombe Bottom	50		12							49		16
Sutton Bingham Res.				16	13	8	14	134			40	130
Chard Res.	25	6	8	3						61		1
Hawkridge Res.		6	6			23	12					37
Clatworthy Res.				12		40	51					
Wimbleball Lake	107	45	18		20	74	95	8	28	101	1	115
Blue Anchor– Minehead	1		1		7	200	59	209	471			
Porlock Marsh	1	15	4	7	9	14						8

All other counts of 40 and over: 59, Vobster, September 12th; 81, Aller Moor, December 14th; 228, Athelney, January, and 216 on December 18th; 130, Curry Moor, January 12th; 175, King's Moor on 13th, and 150 on December 14th; 40, Greenham, January, and 114 on October 3rd.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

Rare winter visitor; most records probably of escaped or feral birds.

A flock of ten arrived at dusk at Torr Works Reservoir on November 8th and all were present the next day; five then remained until the 23rd. At no time during this period did they associate with the feral Barnacle Goose or the Canada flock.

All other records appear to be of feral birds. A family at Torr Works Reservoir in August did not originate from here.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Torr Works Res.	1	1	2					7			11	1
Wimbleball Lake	3				1		1			4		4
Dunster Beach– Minehead		1			1	1		3	3			

All other records, of single birds unless stated: Wet Moor, January 10th; West Coker, April 16th, 25th and May 1st; Sutton Bingham Reservoir, August 4th; West Sedge Moor, December 2nd; two, Mell's Park, on 7th.

BRENT GOOSE

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Where the race has not been specifically given it is assumed that records relate to Dark-bellied.

In first winter period, all records from coast between Burnham and Hinkley Point: three, January 12th; seven on 27th; ten on February 19th; nine on March 19th.

An unusual record of one at the base of Brean Down with a small group of Shelduck on June 8th.

Autumn and second winter period: one flew north at Berrow on September 15th; singles in the Parrett Estuary on October 15th/16th, November 20th and December 27th; four on December 9th and 18th, and three on 22nd; in the west, one was at Dunster Beach on September 26th, four on October 28th, and further singles on November 28th/29th; one at Porlock Marsh on December 3rd.

The only inland record was of a flock of 12 on Wet Moor, November 16th.

Light-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. hrota*

Rare winter visitor and passage-migrant.

In first winter period: one, Wet Moor, January 13th; between Burnham and Hinkley Point, up to nine in January/February, 11 on March 9th and eight on 25th, of which five remained until April 10th.

The first in autumn was a juvenile just east of Hinkley Point, September 24th. Others in the Parrett Estuary included: two, Steart, October 3rd, and four on the 22nd; up to 13, Stolford, between November 8th and December 24th. Further west, one at Dunster Beach, October 23rd.

A juvenile at Chard Reservoir, November 10th-12th, was the first recorded here.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Scarce or rare visitor. Has bred.

The bird first reported in 2008 at Wimbleball Lake was present again throughout January and on a number of dates from September 14th to the end of the year.

RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*

Rare feral or accidental winter visitor.

Two at Hinkley Point on July 18th may have been from the collection at Stockland Bristol, or possibly the pair at Dunster Beach from August 2nd to September 15th. The birds at Dunster were extremely wary and not approachable.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Uncommon resident breeder; common summer, autumn and winter visitor, and passage-migrant.

After one of the best breeding seasons in 2007, this was one of the worst, with only one confirmed success: a family at Stockland Reach on August 24th. There were several reports of pairs prospecting, including birds at Greylake Reserve and King's Sedge Moor and along coast in west.

Shelduck – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	133	151	71	70	40	118	80	48	238	400	383	74
Berrow	50	110	60	52	53	350	750	300	1000	68		
Parrett Estuary	1080	395	320	350	250	2180	3590	4400	2355	3230	1750	120
Dunster Beach	72	26	29	12	11	3	1		3	19	101	68
Porlock Marsh	59	58	44	18	8	17					30	45

Numbers at the main site around the Parrett Estuary were up on the previous year at the time of the moult gathering but fell away quickly during November and December, when only 120 were present.

Inland counts of ten or over: 20, Wet Moor, February 5th, and ten on 10th; 13, Curry Moor, on 11th.

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata**Scarce feral resident or escapee. Rare breeder.*

Breeding confirmed at Sutton Bingham Reservoir, when two families of 12 and 10 young were seen in late May; these were reduced to six and five by the second half of June. Two pairs had been present in March and four males on April 25th. Numbers decreased during the rest of the year to single figures, apart from 12 on September 29th. There again appeared to be movement between here and West Coker House during the year; there were four pairs there on December 11th. Also records of single birds around Yeovil, at Augusta Westlands and Nine Springs.

All other records: pair, Orchardleigh Lake, throughout year; female, Cheddar Reservoir, April 5th; female, Chard Reservoir, July 8th; up to seven, Hawkridge Reservoir, October 17th-December 12th, no doubt from the collection mentioned in *SB* 2007.

WIGEON *Anas penelope**Common (or locally abundant) winter visitor and passage-migrant. Breeding unconfirmed.*

Two calling males at Ham Wall and a pair at Greylake were present in June, but again nothing to suggest that breeding took place.

Wigeon – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	129	29	12						2		141	111
Parrett Estuary	940	130	180						20	105	600	550
Cheddar Res.	3	2							2		5	38
Kennard Moor			20							150	450	50
Westhay Moor	123	72	56							2	3	8
Sharpham	18	48	20	2						2	10	26
Ham Wall	494	142	63						30			
Walton Heath	35									65	197	
Shapwick/ Meare Heaths	91	159	90							151	566	505
Westhay Heath	120	95	30								62	10
Catcott Lows	1800	1500	1000	98	1					10	350	600
Tealham Moor	456	18	2								2	302
Greylake Reserve incl. Moorlinch Moor	200	20	10	2	2	2				83	78	615
King's Sedge Moor incl. Huish Moor	64	4	15									186
Curry Moor	475	150	106									
West Sedge Moor	23195	17027	2787	2			1			60	10345	11406
Wet Moor	2356	1700	45								509	1590
Witcombe Bottom	23									15	7	170
West Moor	40	40	25									400
Sutton Bingham Res.	46		77	8	1					18	60	25
Wimbleball Lake	31	10	18						7	18	51	36
Doniford		110										72
Dunster Beach/ Minehead Marshes	169	127	86	5					81	90	100	86

The improvement in numbers at West Sedge Moor in the first winter period noted last year continued in 2008. The Levels maintain their position as the third most important wintering area within the U.K.

All other counts of 30 and over: 65, South Drain (Chilton Moor), January 6th; 1,150, King's Moor, on 13th; 54, Athelney, March 16th; 634, Aller Moor, December 14th; 74 on sea, Lilstock, on 26th.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

Locally fairly common breeder; autumn and winter visitor and passage-migrant. Increasing.

Five families on Westhay Moor, half the 2007 total; nearby, there was a family at Godney Moor. Apart from three families at Westhay Heath and one at Loxton's Marsh, no other reports of successful breeding from the Avalon Marshes. However, an indication of the true status may be the presence of 39 moulting males at Meare Heath and 23 at Catcott Heath in late May.

Away from Avalon Marshes: five pairs, Tealham Moor; six pairs, Greylake Reserve; a pair on the new RSPB Reserve at Nythe; one pair, West Sedge Moor.

Gadwall – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	5	2			1				4		9	8
Cheddar Res.	5	1				1			2		6	10
Tealham Moor		4	2		9	4						22
Westhay Moor	130	113	64	7					6	11	6	9
Sharpham	61	49	40	24	6	18	49	75		37	27	62
Ham Wall	288	141	112	12		200						
Walton Heath	6	17	71							62	103	
Shapwick/ Meare Heaths	169	150	116	7	39				40	50	304	210
Westhay Heath	67	69	27								30	15
Catcott Lows	1				23				8		13	8
Greylake Reserve		2	15		12				2			30
West Sedge Moor	4	10	2									

Others reported from Avalon Marshes may be connected with these: for example, 31 at Long Drove, February 11th, and 38 at Loxton's Marsh on 27th.

Smaller numbers at 22 other sites, including: eight, Kennard Moor, June 4th, and on King's Sedge Moor, December 14th; and about 40, West Moor, on 27th.

The Levels have now fallen from third to sixth in the sites of international importance within the U.K., the threshold being 600.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Scarce breeder; common (or locally abundant) winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Breeding was confirmed at Meare Heath, where a family was seen on May 8th. Other pairs seen during the breeding season: one, Greylake Reserve; four, King's Sedge Moor; three, West Sedge Moor.

Teal – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cheddar Res.	18	6	11								13	40
Axe Estuary	230	124	21	12				8	86	24	270	515
Parrett/Brue Estuary	1350	50	85	30				7	13	480	1000	1300

Teal – main counts, continued												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Kennard Moor	150	60	60							50	200	150
Tealham Moor	220	33	6	5							40	466
Westhay Moor	486	95	45							3		6
Sharpham	31	40	8							4	8	37
Ham Wall	157	219	86	14			3		1			
Shapwick/ Meare Heaths	574	224	108	33				56		88	705	368
Westhay Heath	45	71	17								26	
Catcott Lows	300	106	120	96	10					15	50	200
Greylake Reserve	500	500	35	1	1	2			10	28	95	953
Huish Moor	117	335	35									
King's Sedge Moor (excl. Greylake & Huish Moor)	272	75	152								14	175
Curry Moor	115	120	32									
West Sedge Moor	7857	15350	2022	350						50	5683	
Wet Moor	596	290	287	4							51	61
Witcombe Bottom	42	70										20
West Moor (Hambridge)	12	15	10									1000
Chard Res.	47	8	2					5	49	55	41	55
Dunster Beach/ Minehead Marshes	4	25	26	15				4	19	30	10	11
Wimbleball Lake	56	26	4						2	8	17	15

The January count for West Sedge Moor was 12,000 fewer than the previous year! Numbers recovered in February to 15,350, and the Levels are still the most important site in the U.K.

All other counts of 30 and over: 105, Porlock Marsh, January 6th; 62, Ham Sewage Works, December 12th; 39, Gold Corner, 37 at Aller Moor, 38 on Hay Moor (Langport), and 152, King's Moor, all on the 14th.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Almost impossible to gauge what sort of breeding season was enjoyed within the Avalon Marshes since only three records submitted from any of the main reserves: at least four families, Sharpham; two families, Ham Wall and Catcott Lows. The breeding population in the Upper Axe Valley dropped from 57 pairs in 2007 to 41. A survey of Tealham Moor found at least 15 pairs; on one count there were 28 males present. At least 23 pairs were present at Greylake Reserve and later at least nine broods were seen nearby; at least ten pairs on King's Sedge Moor. On West Sedge Moor there were 148 pairs present, a big increase from 98 the previous year.

All other reports of families/pairs, singly unless stated: eight families, Mell's Park; Emborough Pond; Holcombe; Wells; Kennard Moor; two families, Bridgwater Docks; Barrington Court; at least eight pairs, Wet Moor, and 11 nearby at West Moor; three families, Sutton Bingham Reservoir; two families, West Coker; Wayford Woods; Woolminstone; two families, Chard Reservoir; three families, Otterhead Lakes; Luxhay Reservoir; R. Tone, Taunton, and two families on Vivary Park Golf Course; three families, Wimbleball Lake; two families, Dulverton; Exford; Weir Water.

Mallard – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mells Park			20	40	50			150		180		200
Cheddar Res.	166	64	38	30	33	65	38	100	66	41	102	118
Axe Estuary	58	34	17	11	24	74	57	120	70	54	102	92
Berrow	2			3		13		30	18	2		4
Parrett Estuary	50	5	4	6	4	10		85	10	40	10	45
Kennard Moor			10					150			100	50
East & West Waste	18	8	13							11		20
Westhay Moor	113	118	56	29						22	54	28
Sharpham	36	60	39	12	16	17	36	48	2	24	28	63
Ham Wall	99	46	82						8	14		
Shapwick/ Meare Heaths	216	134	54	8						78	267	312
Westhay Heath	12	20	21								2	12
Catcott Lows			3	7							11	50
Tealham Moor	141	97			40	34				21	51	46
Greylake Reserve	556	500	34					40		83	46	200
Huish Moor (part of King's Sedge Moor)	121	63	93									
King's Sedge Moor (excl. Greylake & Huish Moor)	17	19	47								16	78
Curry Moor	155	27	35							16		
West Sedge Moor	252	423	190		296			40		50	237	
Aller Moor										52	9	38
Wet Moor	29	17	38	19	43	25				14	21	22
Witcombe Bottom	50		29							91	74	38
West Moor	10	20	25	18	12	25						200
Sutton Bingham Res.	58			26	25	19						40
Chard Res.		127					98			101	120	
Hankridge LNR			18	20	12		130	42				
R. Tone, Taunton	46	46	60	50	34	34	70	56	64	84	76	75
Wellington Basins	46	46	20	46	28	36	38	28	48	28	66	38
Hawkridge Res.	10	20	26			24	22	27		52	32	20
Ashford Res.		3	6				11	6	23		37	43
Wimbleball Lake	90	40	30		31	22	42	61	77	53	49	73
Dunster Hawn/ Beach	80	50		20	50		30					
Porlock Marsh	45			4	4		13				70	20

All other counts of 50 and over: 70, Cary Moor, September 28th, and 50, October 12th; 60, Orchardleigh Lake, October 4th; 56, Walton Heath, January 14th; 177, Durleigh Reservoir, September 1st; 82, Ham Sewage Works, December 10th; 60, Clatworthy Reservoir, July 14th.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Locally fairly common winter visitor; also passage-migrant. Has bred.

Pintail – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Parrett Estuary	40	66	40						48	50	52	55
Shapwick/Meare Heath	2								1		6	90
Catcott Lows	100	100	25	1							50	80
Curry Moor	22	32	5									
West Sedge Moor	400	613	24	6						1	317	
Wet Moor	100	240										14

Numbers continued to recover at West Sedge Moor. The Levels are a site of national importance, with a December average of 587; the threshold of international importance is 600.

Four other counts in double figures: 40, King's Moor, January 13th; 38, Tealham Moor, on 15th; 53, Aller Moor, December 14th; and 150 on floods, West Moor, on 29th. Recorded at 13 other places.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

Scarce and very local migrant breeder; uncommon passage-migrant, chiefly in spring.

The first returning bird was a male at Meare Heath, April 2nd, followed by two at Ham Wall the following day. There were fewer recorded in the Avalon Marshes than in 2007. The highest count was on May 8th/9th, when there were three males and a female at Meare Heath and a male at Catcott Lows. The last record here in this period was on June 9th.

Other records away from Avalon Marshes: pair, Greylake Reserve, April 8th-15th, and the male again on 19th, followed by female or eclipse male on June 17th and 27th; on May 7th, two males at Cary Moor (first record for site) and one on Pawlett Hams; two males, West Sedge Moor, on 12th, and one on 16th.

No reports in July; the last were at Meare Heath on August 20th/21st.

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

Scarce breeder; locally fairly common winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Only one confirmed breeding record: a female with ten juveniles, Sharpham, June 18th. Other pairs during breeding season: five moulting males, Meare Heath, but no females, perhaps indicating they were nesting; one pair displaying, Catcott Lows, and up to three pairs, Catcott Heath; single pairs at Greylake Reserve, Moorlinch Moor and West Sedge Moor.

Shoveler – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cheddar Res.	2	3	2					5		2	1	48
Axe Estuary	14	22	21	4				14	3		34	26
Parrett/Brue Estuary	6	12	2					4	2	17	9	
Kennard Moor		11	20								20	
Tealham Moor	71									1		52
Westhay Moor	70	19	12							1	4	21
Sharpham	32	38	15	3	2			1		2	3	4
Ham Wall	28		118	9	8		3			8		

Shoveler – main counts, continued

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Walton Heath	1	9	59							134		
Shapwick/ Meare Heaths	70	24	56	2	5				25	24	74	14
Catcott Lows	100	100	64	23	2						100	100
Greylake Reserve	50	50	1		2					2	10	10
Curry Moor	17	8	22									
West Sedge Moor	1216	1055	235							4	519	
Wet Moor	217	50		1								55
Sutton Bingham Res.	3											1
Chard Res.	4			1						3	4	8

The Levels maintain their position as the second most important site in the U.K. and are of international importance. Numbers at West Sedge Moor were comparable with the first winter period of the previous years, but totals for Westhay Moor and Catcott Lows were almost halved.

Recorded at a further 17 sites, but in double figures at only five of these: 17, Athelney, March 16th; 87, Ham Sewage Works, December 10th – this site has not been recorded for a number of years but permission has now been obtained to gain access; about 40, West Moor, on 27th; 12, Orchardleigh Lake, on 29th.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina****Scare feral visitor.***

Three records, as in 2007: five, Meare Heath, January 3rd; five males and three females, Cheddar Reservoir, November 18th, and two males there, December 15th.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina****Scare and very local breeder; fairly common winter visitor.***

Another good breeding year, with ten families, one more than in 2007: at least three at both Glastonbury Heath and Sharpham; two, Street Heath; one at both Ham Wall and Ashcott Heath. Surprisingly few records from Ham Wall and Shapwick Heath, so true figure may be much higher.

Pochard – main counts

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Torr Works Res.							2			2		18
Cheddar Res.	89	62	25						5	11	204	230
Westhay Moor	85	48	29									
Sharpham	9	2	13	4				2	2	1	1	
Ham Wall	4	37	79	7							3	
Shapwick/Meare Heaths		2	28	1								1

Other double-figure counts within Avalon Marshes included: 58, Long Drove (south of Walton Heath), February 11th; 22, Loxton's Marsh, on 27th; and 31, Walton Heath/Loxton's Marsh, March 9th.

All other counts of ten and over: ten, Wet Moor, January 26th; 12, Orchardleigh Lake, February 23rd; up to 21, Wimbleball Lake, December 14th-27th. Recorded at six other sites.

FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca**Very rare visitor.*

Adult male, Ham Sewage Works, December 10th-31st.

The first since 2002, when the female that had been present at Ham Wall until February 20th failed to return in the autumn for its sixth winter.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula**Uncommon breeder; fairly common winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

A far better breeding season, mainly due to Mells Park being recorded for the first time for a number of years; a total of eight families were seen here (JHa). All other families, singly unless stated: two, Torr Works Reservoir; Redlynch Park Lake; two, Glastonbury Heath; at least two, Sharpham; Street Heath; five, Ham Wall; Loxton's Marsh; Ashcott Heath; Meare Heath; two, Hawkridge Reservoir.

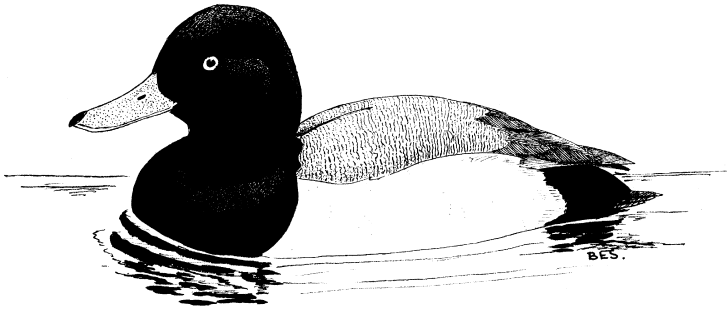
Tufted Duck – main counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mells Park Lake			50	30	35	50	30	50	40	30		65
Torr Works Res.							47	62	60	65	83	71
Orchardleigh Park	40	55								35		25
Cheddar Res.	101	20	28	5	1	1	1	1	2	2	64	166
Tealham Moor	25	35								2	32	22
Westhay Moor	171	74	81	16								19
Sharpham	41	40	52	17	9	16	17	18		7	13	16
Long Drove (S. of Walton Heath)	16	41	66									
Ham Wall	69	76	151	18	10					3		
Walton Heath	1	4	43									
Shapwick/Meare Heaths	6	37	56	2	4	6		2			1	28
Catcott Lows	10	26	6	10							6	5
Sutton Bingham Res.	8		12	25	8		4	2		2	13	6
Chard Res.	9	8	11	13	5	2	4	7	10	16	15	14
Hawkridge Res.	61	6	39		11	14	7	4	21	22	17	39
Ashford Res.	3	17	12				13	22	6		27	22
Wimbleball Lake	35	35	30		5	15	4	1	17	13	40	30

Apart from the breeding records, these are also the first records from Mells Park for a considerable number of years, from what is clearly a very important site.

All other counts of ten and over: 53, Glastonbury Heath, January 13th; 26, Loxton's Marsh, February 27th; 32, Enmore Castle Lake, April 6th; 11, Bradley Pond, May 22nd; 24, Clatworthy Reservoir, July 14th; 22, Cheddar Moor, November 30th; 42, Ham Sewage Works, December 18th. Recorded in smaller numbers at 19 other sites.

GREATER SCAUP *Aythya marila**Uncommon and irregular winter visitor.*

First winter period: up to three, Cheddar Reservoir, January, four during February, and six in March, dropping to three in April, when last seen on 22nd; female and immature male, Ham Wall, January 1st and 3rd, and two females on the 26th; two, Apex Leisure Park, January 3rd-February 12th; male, Hinkley Point, January 28th and



Greater Scaup

February 17th; one, Godney Moor Pools, February 23rd; a female, Torr Works Reservoir, March 14th, was the first recorded here.

Second winter period: four, Hinkley Point area, November 8th to end of year; one, Cheddar Reservoir, November 15th-December 14th.

A hybrid which closely resembled a Lesser Scaup was at Cheddar Reservoir on a number of dates, January 13th-19th. Possibly the same bird was at Godney Moor Pools on February 23rd.

LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis*

Accidental.

The adult male seen in the previous October and November over-wintered at Stourhead, Wiltshire, and returned to Torr Works Reservoir, March 2nd (BAT).

What was presumably the same male was present again at Torr on December 12th; the third County record (BAT).

EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

Scarce and irregular winter and spring visitor and passage-migrant.

Two immatures/females on the sea, Hinkley Point, November 27th, flew off west and were seen later still flying west past Blue Anchor (CG, JAH, AW).

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*

Scarce and irregular winter visitor.

Three records of single birds: immature female, Wimbleball Lake, from 2007, still present to March 25th (BDG *et al.*); adult male in full summer plumage in inner part of Porlock Weir harbour, June 11th (A. Borlase); and adult male off Hinkley Point, November 25th-December 10th (JRB, NEW *et al.*)

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Uncommon visitor, chiefly offshore.

Another disappointing year, particularly in the west, with the lowest number recorded for some years. The largest flock was of 15 in the Parrett Estuary during December.

One inland record: female, Cheddar Reservoir, November 22nd/23rd.

Common Scoter – Brean Down to West Quantoxhead

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. dates recorded	3	2	2	1	3	1	3		2	1	4	3
Maximum count	9	8	4	4	3	1	4		1	2	12	15
Total number	19	13	5	4	9	1	8		2	2	21	28

Common Scoter – Blue Anchor to Porlock Bay												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. dates recorded	1					1	2	2	2		2	1
Maximum count	2					1	7	4	2		4	6
Total number	2					1	8	5	3		7	7

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

Rare winter visitor and passage-migrant.

A male flew east with four Common Scoter, Hurlstone Point, November 29th (BDG). The first since 2005.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Goldeneye – maximum monthly counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cheddar Res.	23	5	2	1						3	7	14
Westhay Moor	11	8	4	1							2	2
Blakeway Lake	5	3										4
Shapwick/Meare Heaths	6	6	2									4
Wimbleball Lake	3	5	6								2	3

Singles recorded from a further seven places: Chard Reservoir, January 16th; female/immature, Ashford Reservoir, August 30th, and presumably the same at Durleigh Reservoir the next day; Torr Works Reservoir, November 1st; Wall Common, on 21st; and male, West Moor, December 22nd. The August records appear to be the first for that month in the County.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Scarce and irregular, chiefly as winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Five records, of which three were at Cheddar Reservoir.

In first winter period: female, Wimbleball Lake, January 2nd; male, Cheddar Reservoir, February 9th/10th, and on 20th it or another flew off in early morning with Goosander.

In autumn and second winter period: one flew west, Hurlstone Point, October 19th; female, Cheddar Reservoir, December 3rd.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Scarce and very local breeder (first record 1993); locally fairly common winter visitor. Increasing.

Two or three families seen along Barle, where only two had been seen in the previous two years: female and 12 young, Castle Bridge, on very early date of April 27th (AS); female and six very small young, Dane's Brook, May 2nd, possibly the previous family reduced in number; female and eight young, Sherdon Hutch, June 13th (both DKB).

Goosander – maximum monthly counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Orchardleigh Lake		5										12
Emborough Pond	4	5										

Goosander – maximum monthly counts, continued

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cheddar Res.	9	10	21	1							21	26
Westhay Moor	20	19	2								5	22
R. Brue, Westhay	6	8									6	
Huntspill/Cripps Rivers	17	6	20								14	15
Wimbleball Lake	3	2	2								2	5

The numbers at the roost at Wimbleball Lake appear to have dropped dramatically over the last few years, but the number of counts at dawn or dusk has also fallen sharply, so this may not be a true picture.

Only two Exmoor records away from the Barle: two, Bridgetown, April 19th; one, Nutscale Reservoir, September 28th.

Other records in first winter period, singly unless stated: three, R. Sowey (Aller Moor), February 10th; Torr Works Reservoir, on 17th; three, King's Sedge Moor, March 27th.

One flying south over Wall Common, June 21st, was unusual for the time of year. Not quite so unusual was a redhead at Dunster Beach on August 7th.

Second-winter records, again singly unless stated: Torr Works Reservoir, November 2nd; two, Cheddar Moor, on 18th, and one on December 30th; one in flight, Bruton, November 20th; two, Combwich Ponds, on 22nd; at least five flying west, Burtle, on 24th; Sutton Bingham Reservoir, on 28th; three, Blakeway Lake, and one, R. Brue (Butt Moor), December 17th; R. Tone (Hay Moor), on 30th.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Rare breeder (since 1994); uncommon visitor, chiefly in winter. Threatened by culls.

For the second year in succession there were no breeding records.

Greatly reduced at other times of the year, being recorded from only three sites: female, Cheddar Reservoir, January 1st-13th, and one, December 13th-20th; one, Westhay Moor, January 9th-13th; at Ham Wall, two on 26th, singles on March 31st and April 27th, and two, May 1st and June 9th.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Resident breeder, originally introduced; uncommon as self-sustaining species, but now locally abundant through releases.

A number of possible breeding records, but only one of these was of a family: pair with two well-grown young, Faulkland, August 8th.

Only one report of a large release: 100, Langham Hill area, November. Only three other counts in double figures. Otherwise reported from across the County in small numbers, mainly during BTO *Atlas* survey work.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Scarce and very local resident breeder. Still decreasing, and perhaps almost extinct.

As in 2007 a total of six reports, singly unless stated: Kennard Moor, June 28th; four, Catcott Lows, September 6th; Nythe, May 25th; two, West Coker, October 22nd; Cheddon Fitzpaine, March 27th; four, Broomfield, November 7th.

Two of these reports may feature birds from a re-introduction scheme at Staplegrove, now in its second year.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce and erratic migrant breeder and passage-migrant.

A better year, particularly at West Sedge Moor, where up to six different birds were calling throughout June.

At least eight others: one calling, Tealham Moor, May 21st-June 7th; one flushed during wader survey at Greylake Reserve in June; one or two calling, Sutton Moor, June 7th-July 3rd; single birds calling, Butleigh Moor, June 16th, and West Moor, on 20th; and two heard in Long Combe below Larkbarrow, June 15th.

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus**Common resident breeder, locally abundant through releases.*

Only three confirmed breeding records in the wild: families seen at Curland, Little Silver (near Wellington) and Milverton.

Otherwise no change in status, with more records than normal due to the BTO *Atlas* survey work being undertaken.

An article in the *West Somerset Free Press* described how in December over 400 were the victims of poachers in the Langham Hill area; they were debreasted, piled up and left for the Ravens (DKB).

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata**Uncommon winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

Red-throated Diver – monthly counts from coast between Dunster Beach and Porlock Bay				
	January	March	November	December
No. dates recorded	3	2	4	8
Total number	5	3	18	55
Maximum count	3	2	5	17

The most seen were 17 off Minehead on December 4th (AW).

One record away from the west of the County: one flying north over Burnham, October 23rd (AMS).

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica**Rare winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

Three records, involving seven birds: one, Hurlstone Point, November 29th, and four past there the next day (BDG); two, Minehead, December 4th (AW).

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer**Scarce winter visitor and passage-migrant*

Four records, all of immatures: one, Cheddar Reservoir, from 2007 to April 6th, was joined by another intermittently, January 26th-March 15th (many observers); one south past Berrow, January 10th (BES); one flying over fields behind Brean Down towards Axe Estuary, October 5th (PB).

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis**Fairly common resident or migrant breeder; perhaps passage-migrant.*

Only one breeding-season record received from within the Avalon Marshes: pair with one young on Ham Wall. This surely cannot reflect the breeding population in this area!

Elsewhere, breeding attempted by pairs at the following sites, with * where proved: Mells Park Estate* (two families); Orchardleigh Lake*; Bayford*; Torr Works Reservoir* (two pairs); Cary Moor* (two families); Greylake Reserve (two pairs); Sutton Bingham Reservoir*; West Coker*; Odcombe*; Steart*; Catsford Common*; Clatworthy Reservoir* (two pairs).

Highest counts outside the breeding-season: 14, Mells Park Estate, December 13th; 17, Torr Works Reservoir, September 6th; 22, Walton Heath, and 15, Sharpham, March 9th; 22, Ham Wall, on 10th; ten, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, September 26th; 17, Wimbleball Lake, November 16th.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus**Fairly common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

In breeding season, only records received from Avalon Marshes were: three families on Walton Heath; a pair feeding young at Ham Wall; and single families at both Shapwick Heath (East) and Canada Farm. As with Little Grebe, this total probably does not reflect the true position of this species here.

Other sites: pair bred successfully, Orchardleigh Lake; pair present, Tealham Moor, though breeding not confirmed; three young seen, Apex Leisure Park; six families, Sutton Bingham Reservoir; five pairs raised eight

young, Chard Reservoir; four families, Durleigh Reservoir; pair with four young, Clatworthy Reservoir; bird sitting on nest, Wimbleball Lake, though breeding not confirmed.

Great Crested Grebe – maximum monthly counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cheddar Res.	60	67	42	42	33	38	2	5	22	30	60	125
Avalon Marshes	3	17	27	17							10	10
Durleigh Res.				38	20	22	25	20	20	62		
Sutton Bingham Res.	3		13	19	10	40	30	34	40	19	17	21
Chard Res.	48	39	41	23	21	28	34	31	35	37	40	61
Hawkridge Res.	2	2	4	2	2	5	1	2			5	7
Wimbleball Lake		2	7		5	2	2		5	2	3	

Four coastal records: two, Hinkley Point, January 28th; one, Minehead, August 31st, and two, Dunster Beach, September 6th; two, Parrett Estuary, November 30th.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena*

Scarce winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Two records, perhaps of same bird: Cheddar Reservoir, February 17th-April 2nd, then reappearing from 10th to 23rd (SMo *et al.*), having attained full summer plumage by last date; and Durleigh Reservoir, April 8th (DRy).

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Rare winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has bred.

Four records, a total of seven birds: two, Cheddar Reservoir, from 2007 to January 27th, one staying to February 12th (many observers); summer-plumaged bird there, March 22nd (RJH, JJP, JLT); juvenile, Orchardleigh Lake, August 10th (JHa); and one, Cheddar Reservoir, October 29th-December 30th, joined by another on December 9th and 13th, and by a third on 14th (RMA, RPB, NAS *et al.*).

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

Scarce migrant breeder; as offshore visitor, fairly common in spring and summer, but scarce in winter.

Up to four pairs on cliffs at Glenthorne, May 29th and June 6th, but success unknown (DKB, BDG).

Fulmar – monthly counts from Berrow to Steart			
	March	September	October
No. of dates recorded	1	1	1
Maximum count	3	1	1
Total number	3	1	1

Fulmar – monthly counts from Blue Anchor to Glenthorne							
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of dates recorded	3	3	7	11	5	9	3
Maximum count	35	10	5	4	8	23	8
Total number	45	13	12	21	12	47	11

CORY'S SHEARWATER *Calonectris diomedea**Very rare visitor.*

One, west past Blue Anchor, August 3rd (CG). The first since 2005; the ninth record for the County (total of 12 birds).

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus**Common offshore summer visitor and occasional autumn storm-vagrant.*

The first of the year was in the Parrett Estuary on March 12th. No more until May 19th when one flew past Hurlstone Point. A poor year for larger movements, with only three counts in excess of 900 birds: 1,387 past Minehead, June 17th; 1,331, Hurlstone Point, on 28th, and 900 there on July 7th. Last of year were three in Parrett Estuary on October 3rd.

Manx Shearwater – monthly counts from Berrow to Steart						
	Mar	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
No. of dates recorded	1	3	2	2	2	2
Maximum count	1	548	66	12	38	10
Total number	1	703	74	13	90	13

Manx Shearwater – monthly counts from Dunster Beach to Porlock Weir					
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of dates recorded	5	11	7	6	1
Maximum count	141	1387	900	173	5
Total number	300	4192	1281	209	5

One picked up inland on the A39 at Pedwell, October 1st (D.Cottle), was taken into care at Secret World.

BALEARIC SHEARWATER *Puffinus mauretanicus**Very rare passage-migrant.*

One, east past Minehead, June 22nd (JLT). Brings the County total to 17; recorded for second year running.

EUROPEAN STORM-PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus**Scarce offshore summer visitor, storm-vagrant and passage-migrant.*

Ten records, a total of at least 20 birds: two off Hurlstone Point, June 28th (BDG); on July 8th, two off Stolford and one (of these?) off Steart (JAH, BJH); in Minehead Bay, one on July 19th, six on August 10th and at least six on 13th, when two attacked unsuccessfully by a Peregrine (BDG, RLM, JLT, JRW *et al.*); during same movement, single birds in Parrett Estuary on August 12th/13th, both killed by Herring Gulls (BJH); and one off Wall Common on 20th (SCJF).

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa**Rare visitor, chiefly as storm-vagrant in autumn.*

For the second year running, only two records: one flying west past Minehead, September 7th (RLM); and one off Burnham, October 1st (JAH, JLT).

GANNET *Morus bassanus**Fairly common offshore visitor, chiefly in summer.*

One, Chard Reservoir, September 14th/15th (AG, DWH); taken into care on the latter date, when it died. It was found to be wearing a Russian ring, the details of which can be found in the Ringing Report.

Gannet – maximum monthly counts from Brean Down to Stolford								
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of dates recorded	1	1	1	2	2	4	1	1
Maximum counts	18	3	1	25	5	4	1	3
Total number	18	3	1	30	7	8	1	3

Gannet – maximum monthly counts from Dunster Beach to Glenthorne									
	Jan	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
No. of dates recorded	1	3	3	7	17	12	7	7	1
Maximum counts	3	69	35	18	69	45	32	8	1
Total number	3	101	52	38	389	178	67	24	1

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Scarce and very local resident breeder; fairly common winter visitor, passage-migrant.

Breeding-season record: 13 pairs nested at Noah's Lake for second successive year (JAH, NS *et al.*).

Cormorant – maximum monthly counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cheddar Res.	22	20	19	15	12	6	8	18	18	16	25	22
Parrett Estuary	14	11	5	4		1			5	9	9	15
Westhay Moor	23	18	5	7							22	
Avalon Marshes (excl. the above site)	64	53	36	30	40	40	50	45	41	28	43	70
Sutton Bingham Res.		20	32	8			30			48		45
Chard Res.	12	17	13	8	1	4	9	14	20	14	26	25
Wimbleball Lake	10	14	10		4				2	2	14	18

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Uncommon offshore visitor, chiefly in autumn; rare storm-vagrant inland.

Shag – monthly counts from Dunster Beach to Hurlstone Point			
	July	August	September
No. of dates recorded	2	3	4
Maximum count	3	4	3
Total birds	4	7	6

Two other records away from the west of the County: four, Hinkley Point, August 15th (DJC); one, Axe Estuary, September 3rd (PB).

BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce winter visitor. Has bred in past, and did so again in 2008.

Two females successfully raised young at Ham Wall (RSPB). The first confirmed breeding since 1969, though may have bred in some years from then up to 1980; these were in pits around Bridgwater. A triumph for the RSPB, who saw their years of work finally come to fruition.

One summer record away from Avalon Marshes: one on North Drain, Tealham Moor, July 22nd (R.Richley).

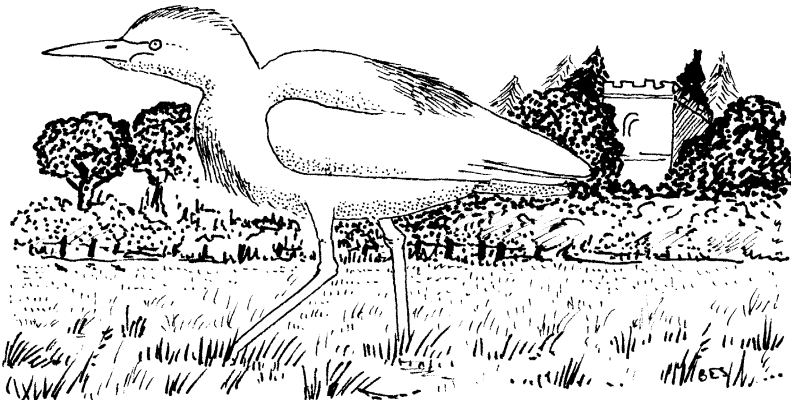
At least four in first winter period: single birds, Westhay Moor, January 1st and February 2nd (DLB *et al.*); one or two, Ham Wall and Walton Heath, January 18th-February 19th (CB *et al.*); and one, Canada Farm Lake, February 6th (EW).

Second winter period: up to three, Westhay Moor, November 18th-December 7th (RLM *et al.*); a number of single birds at this time at Street Heath, Walton Heath, Ham Wall, Meare Heath and Shapwick Heath (West), but impossible to say how many were wintering in Avalon Marshes (many observers).

SQUACCO HERON *Ardeola ralloides*

Very rare visitor.

One record: adult, Chilton Trinity Pits, June 1st (J.Andrews). Record accepted by the BBRC. The County total now moves to five.



Cattle Egret

CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

Formerly rare visitor. Following influx, bred in 2008.

The Long Load bird from 2007 remained until March 17th; during this period it also frequented Muchelney and Wet Moor; on January 24th it was joined at Long Load by another, possibly the one seen on West Sedge Moor on 27th (RSPB, NS *et al.*). Three other single birds in January: Leigh upon Mendip, January 1st-February 4th (J.Cole, JHa *et al.*); Old Cleeve, January 1st-March 28th (CG *et al.*), and same bird roosting at Dunster Hawn, February 6th-9th (JRW); and Steart, January 10th-14th (RLM *et al.*).

Many more records from February to April: one, Westhay, February 4th (MS); three in fields at Stretcholt from 5th to 13th (RLM, JJP, RPt *et al.*); on 19th, five by M5 near North Newton, remaining there to March 1st (R.Laughton *et al.*); these re-found at Andersea on 25th, decreasing to four on 26th, which remained to April 20th (JAH, RLM *et al.*); five again at Stretcholt, April 19th, increasing to eight on 26th, but dropping to three by 30th (RPr *et al.*); three, Steart, April 21st, perhaps from these (JRB, PJE), as was one on 27th in fields by Brean Down, and then flying west over Berrow (PB, JJP); one, Minehead Marshes, on 22nd and 24th, probably not the earlier Old Cleeve bird (CG, RLM).

In breeding season, present at two sites. In Area A, two pairs, April 29th-August 10th, and one fledged young first seen on August 3rd (JAH, RLM *et al.*). In Area B, one pair raised one young, the fledgling being first seen on July 10th (DKB, BES *et al.*). These are the first breeding records for Somerset and for the U.K.

In second winter period, recorded only within Avalon Marshes, from August 30th into 2009, peak counts being of five at Meare Heath/Shapwick Heath (East), October 16th/17th (GCa, GMD, JAH *et al.*) and of six at Sharpham, November 1st, and many dates from December 1st to 29th (BDG, JAH, NAS *et al.*).

Not all records yet submitted to BBRC, but all included here in order to give a complete picture.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Scarce and very local resident breeder; irregular year-round visitor. Increasing.

Breeding took place or was suspected at five sites, the same as 2007.

- A. Up to 20 pairs nested successfully.
- B. A minimum of three pairs present.
- C. Birds present, though nesting not proved.
- D. Bird seen in vicinity of heronry, though breeding not proved.
- E. 12 pairs nested.

Little Egret – maximum monthly counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	2	2	1	3	5	3	4	7	3		5	2
Parrett Estuary incl. Huntspill River	9	50	28	12	28	31	27	26	26	32	8	3
Avalon Marshes	45	10	25	20	10	4	15	10	10	62	38	23
Kennard Moor	11	10		1	1			4	1			6
Greylake Reserve	4	18	12	12	2			18		3	6	10
West Sedge Moor		8	9	4	1		4				3	2
Curry Moor	1	27	15									15
Wet Moor/Long Load	42	21	1			1					11	4
Chard Res.	1	3	1			1	5	3	3	5	3	14
Dunster Beach	6	19	8	2	1	3	3	3	3	6	7	6
Porlock Marsh	5	1	2	2	1	1	7	2	6	4	7	4

Some other counts: 21, Moorhouse, November 18th; 13, King's Sedge Moor, December 14th; 20, Queen's Sedge Moor, on 24th.

GREAT WHITE EGRET *Ardea alba*

Very rare visitor.

Five records, referring to two or three birds: one at Ham Wall, February 1st (JCr), and over Kennard Moor on 14th (GU) then settled down in Avalon Marshes, where seen regularly from 27th to April 6th (JAH *et al.*); one flying east, Five Bells, Watchet, February 25th (WJW); and one west over Ham Wall, June 3rd, which could have been the first, though it seems unlikely that it would have been unnoticed for two months (JAH).

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Fairly common resident breeder; also passage-migrant and occasional winter visitor.

Heronry totals		
Site	Total of occupied nests	Recorder
Orchardleigh Park	8	BAT
Thickthorn Wood, Marston Park	3	ET
Butleigh/Moorhouse	2	RC&JN

Heronry totals, continued		
Site	Total of occupied nests	Recorder
Bere Wall, Edgarley Hall	9	GU
Queen's Sedge Moor	3	JAH
Little Ranch, Glastonbury Heath	15	JAH
The Bungalow, Tadham Moor	7	JLe
Lympsham Manor	6	DKB
West Huntspill	2	DKB
Swell Wood	89	RSPB
The Shields, Somerton Erleigh	29	RCD
Nine Acre Plantation, Midelney	5	PGC
Batch Moor Copse, Wayford Woods	3	AJP
Hopkins' Farm, Ash Priors	0	DKB
Home Covert, Otterhampton	1	RLM
Bossington Lane, Porlock	4	CS
Oare House	3	RJB
Week Wood, Winsford	6	RJB
Hayes Wood, Withypool	4	DKB

Grey Heron – monthly counts at selected sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Parrett Estuary	6	3	2	2	10	2	1	1	3	5	3	2
Avalon Marshes	16	19	9	10	22	28	10	17	15	5	8	8
Kennard Moor	7	11						12			11	10
Greylake Reserve	1	4	3									
West Sedge Moor	10	29	24						10	2	18	
Curry Moor	14	11	13							6		
Wet Moor	4	7	9		3	10					4	
West Moor, Hambridge	6	5	3			20						
Chard Res.	1	2	2	2		2	4	3	3	2	2	
Wimbleball Lake	1	3	1			1	1	1	1			

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*

Very rare spring and summer visitor.

Two records: adult, Loxton's Marsh, Walton Heath and Ham Wall, April 6th-14th (RLM, JJP *et al.*); one flushed by a low-flying Hercules, Canada Farm, September 15th (BJH).

The 15th and 16th County records.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia alba*

Rare visitor from spring to autumn.

Three, feeding in a field between the River Parrett and Wall Common, April 16th (C.Bishop *per* JRB).

Others reported but no details or descriptions received.

GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*

Very rare visitor.

A second-year bird, Meare Heath, Ashcott Corner and Ham Wall, May 16th (JPM, M.Passman *et al.*).

Record accepted by BBRC, the seventh County record and the second year running that this species has been recorded.

SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

Rare passage-migrant.

Four records, involving three birds: adult, Westhay Moor, April 16th-21st (N.Champken *et al.*), also seen at Catcott Lows on 16th (RCFH); one, Porlock Marsh, July 7th (ENHS); adult, Parrett Estuary, September 14th-16th (NEW *et al.*).

HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Rare passage-migrant or summer visitor; has bred.

Four records, all singles in September: dark-phase, flying SSE, Torr Works Reservoir, on 7th (BAT); dark-phase, Brean Down, on 16th (P. Gasson, with photo); pale-phase (photo), slowly rising above tree-line, Ashcott Corner, before drifting south-west, on 19th (JAH, RJI, BES); soaring over Huntingball Wood, Chapel Cleeve, on same day (CG). The first three (and probably the last) were juveniles, which migrate later than the adults, with a peak around mid September.

These birds, which equalled the second-best yearly Somerset total (of 2002), occurred during a large southerly movement in Britain during the second half of September, when upwards of 720 birds reported from Shetland to Cornwall. They were mainly concentrated in eastern counties: peak of 41 in Norfolk and 44 in Suffolk on the 13th; 66 in Norfolk and 31 in Lincolnshire on the 14th, when a total of 190 were reported; and at least 39 occurred on 18th, 44 on 19th, 69 on 20th, and 66 on 21st; of these, some were more widely distributed. The high-pressure system over Scandinavia at this time, with associated light south-easterly winds, were ideal for birds to leave their northern and eastern European breeding areas and enter Britain (BirdGuides Weekly News Letters).

Almost annual in Somerset: recorded in 14 of last 18 years; mostly one or two, but five in 1995.

BLACK KITE *Milvus migrans*

Very rare spring vagrant.

One that drifted fairly high north-west over the County Cricket Ground at Taunton at 11:40 on May 17th (BJH) was an unexpected match-day bonus for this fortunate observer. [Perhaps worthy of mention: some twenty minutes later, at midday, a Black Kite (maybe the same?) was posted on the S.O.S. website message board as seen flying over Steart, but unfortunately a description has never been submitted.]

The fourth County record since the first near Bruton, May 18th, 1986. The others were: Ham Wall, April 15th, 1995, and Hawkcombe Head, June 4th, 2006.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Scarce summer and winter visitor and passage-migrant. Formerly bred and has recently attempted to do so.

A total of 76 records. Little change from previous year, perhaps involving about 56 birds, but exact numbers difficult to determine, especially when considering possible wandering individuals. Only two records reported any wing-tags: Callow Hill, May 11th, and Aller, on the 24th; colours not noted in either.

Table shows monthly spread of records, most in spring/early summer, with an attempt (in brackets) to rationalise possible wanderers.

January	February	March	April	May
2 (1)	1 (0)	8 (6)	10 (6)	39 (29)
June	July	September	October/November	December
9 (8)	2	2	2	1 (0)

In the past, it was thought that most birds in South-west England during spring/early summer probably originated from the Continent. However, in a recent paper it has been suggested that these influxes may originate from the ever-expanding British population, perhaps with some Continental birds involved. In recent years, probably around 1,500 young are produced from the combined 600+ native Welsh pairs and the re-introduced Southern England breeding populations, many of which are not wing-tagged, and it is these, non-breeding, wandering one- and two-year-olds that we may be seeing, especially when triggered by high pressure in late spring, conditions that allow soaring raptors to cover a lot of ground (Darlaston, M.: Red Kites – updates and comments. *Devon Birds* 62, No. 1 (April 2009): 23-25).

Two or three in first winter period: Porlock Hill, January 1st; Exford to Stone Down, same date and February 6th.

Most records were in spring and early summer, March 16th-June 15th. They are given chronologically within the usual recognised areas and are of single birds unless otherwise stated. In the east: south-east over Torr Works Reservoir; May 3rd; north-east over Cary Moor on the 9th; west over Stoke St Michael on the 18th; and over Frome on 31st and June 10th, when also at Stratton-on-the-Fosse. On Mendip: Cheddar, March 16th; Ebbor Gorge, on 17th; Callow Hill, May 11th; Tynning's Farm, on 24th; Charterhouse, on 25th, and Westbury-sub-Mendip on 31st. Coast from Axe Estuary to Lilstock: east over Steart, March 13th; two, Breaun Down, April 17th; east over Stockland Bristol, May 9th; two, north-east over Berrow on 17th, and Hinkley Point on 27th. Levels north of Poldens: west over Catcott Lows, March 17th; south-east over Ham Wall, April 6th; over various parts of Avalon Marshes, May 13th-19th, including two on 17th; south-east over Mark on the 21st; south over Street, June 15th/16th. Levels south of Poldens and Bridgwater area: Moorlinch, March 26th; south-east over Aller, May 4th and 24th; and Bridgwater, May 10th and 19th. Central Somerset: Charlton Mackrell and Kingweston, on 14th; Compton Dundon, on 25th and June 10th. In south: south over Chard, May 6th; Hatch Beauchamp, on 20th; and Dinnington, June 8th. In south-west: Taunton Deane Services, March 17th; Bishop's Hull, June 7th, and West Buckland, July 15th. On or near Quantocks: north-west over Bicknoller Post, March 18th; East Combe and Crowcombe Station, May 3rd; north-east over Broomfield Hill, on 9th; Beacon Hill, on 10th; two, circling over sheep carcass, Kilve, on 14th.

Brendons and Exmoor: frequent records from Dunkery Beacon west to Exford Common, Chetsford Water and Larkbarrow, March 29th-May 1st, perhaps all of same bird with its base on Greenlands and the Pheasant-rearing areas along Allcombe Water; Winsford, May 5th; Five Bells, on 9th; Porlock, on 14th; two over Old Cleeve and one north over Landacre Bridge on 18th; Exford, on 29th; north over Warren Bridge, June 8th; and east over Williton and Washford on 9th.

One record in summer, at Oare Post on July 11th.

Four single birds in autumn and second winter period: Westbury-sub-Mendip, September 14th; Goosemoor Common, on 27th; around East Chinnock, early October-December 31st; Wet Moor, November 3rd.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Rare and irregular migrant breeder; uncommon summer and winter visitor, and passage-migrant.

A total of 138 sightings, slightly below the 153 in 2007; all from the Avalon Marshes apart from the 20 noted otherwise.

The adult male and female and a juvenile (now first-winter) from 2007 were present until at least January 21st and probably until early February, though hard to be certain of this from the records received. Then a female on eight dates until April 13th, a second-calendar-year female on the 20th, and a distant silhouette of uncertain sex or age on May 11th, during a period that may have included one or two on spring passage. Late summer to autumn: adult female, August 1st and 11th, and juvenile from 11th to 25th; two juveniles together mobbing an Osprey at Shapwick Heath on 26th; these three remained until December 19th, being joined by a sub-adult male from December 6th; female and juvenile remained to 31st.

All passage birds were females or immatures unless otherwise stated. At least seven in spring: Highbridge, March 5th; adult male, high from the south, Wet Moor, on 18th; adult male east across Parrett Estuary, at Steart, April 5th; two (possibly three), including male, Dunster Beach and Hawn, on 20th; Axe Estuary, May 18th; and Steart on 22nd.

Ten records in autumn, of perhaps eight birds: West Sedge Moor, July 31st and August 10th; flying east, Shurton, and probably same at Huntspill Sea Wall on 14th; flying in from sea before turning west, Stolford, on 28th; West Sedge Moor, September 12th; Parrett Estuary on 15th, and perhaps same, Berrow, on 19th; King's Sedge Moor, October 12th, and Creech St Michael on 17th.

Only two records in second winter period: two juveniles, Greylake Reserve, December 28th, and a female, West Sedge Moor, on 31st.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Uncommon, but increasing, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Formerly bred.

All records are of single ringtails unless otherwise stated.

In first winter period, about six away from the Brendons/Exmoor. On Avalon Marshes, regular at Ham Wall, Shapwick Heath, Catcott Lows, Westhay Heath and Burtle, January 1st-April 6th, including two together on Catcott Lows, January 21st, and (presumably different?) on Westhay Moor, January 29th-February 2nd. Three others: Wet Moor, January 1st and 15th; West Sedge Moor, from 27th to March 31st; at Greylake Reserve, February 16th.

On Brendons/Exmoor: Porlock Marsh, January 1st-February 4th; on the Moor, four birds on five dates, January 27th-February 23rd, including single males at West Myne, Ley Hill, Red Deer Farmhouse (hunting a beech hedge like a Sparrowhawk) and Comerslade, which were probably all different, and a ringtail on Ley Hill.

From March 23rd to May 29th, 11 sightings in addition to those already given, probably of birds on spring passage but could have involved some already given as wintering: male crossing M5 on Horsey Level, March 23rd; at Greylake Reserve, one on 24th, and male on 28th flying north and over Polden Ridge; Steart, on 30th; West Sedge Moor, April 15th-17th; Stoke Pero Common and Wilmersham Common, on 26th, and Lang Combe on 28th; King's Sedge Moor and Chetsford Water, May 4th; Five Bells on 27th; and a male, Selworthy Beacon, on 29th.

About 20 in autumn and second winter period: Wimbleball Lake on September 15th, eight other records on Brendons and Exmoor from 29th to December 26th, including a male on Black Hill (Brendons) and ringtails on Withycombe Common, on Hoar Moor and Chetsford Water, above Weir Water, and at Prayway Head, of which most were probably different birds; two, Greylake Reserve and King's Sedge Moor, October 2nd-December 31st, of which one close enough to be identified as a young male, December 6th and 18th; on West Sedge Moor, one, October 8th-December 4th, accompanied by a male on October 22nd, and two ringtails from December 4th to 31st; one off the sea, Berrow, November 1st, and (probably same) Brean Down on 2nd; on November 5th, one at Lower Stonehouse (Staplegrove) and another at Burtle Moor, which then frequented Catcott Lows until the 30th; Aller Moor, near Aller, November 16th; Muchelney, December 5th, and West Moor (Hambridge) on 28th.

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Probably rare resident breeder; scarce visitor or passage-migrant.

With a meagre handful of breeding-season records and no sign of a displaying pair, this is yet another year with no positive proof of breeding within the County. Breeding-season records are given under the reporting areas as outlined in *SB* 2005.

Area 2: at one site, a male on four dates between February 10th and April 20th; at another site, a female on March 24th (JHa).

Area 5: a second-calendar-year male on March 9th (NPW).

Area 8: one, probably a female on size, soaring, March 25th (DKB); adjacent to this area, a female on April 26th (BDG).

Area 9: one, probably a female on size, January 26th (N. Hester *per* DKB).

Seven other records of single birds: juvenile male, quartering over the saltmarsh, Steart, January 1st, and possibly same on 8th (NEW); female in Area 2, September 11th (JHa); adult male, soaring and circling for about ten minutes over Meare Heath, October 8th (JAH), and presumably the same male here on the 12th (A.J. Bundy); adult male, flying west, Catcott Lows, November 30th (AW); one, unsexed, east of Steart, December 15th (NEW); and adult male, hunting along edge of flood-water, West Moor (Hambridge), on 28th (J. Phillips).

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Common resident breeder; also passage-migrant and winter visitor.

The 439 widely-spaced records were back on a par with the years 2002 to 2006, following the 13% fall in 2007 (see Table in *SB* 2007), but the submitted breeding records showed yet a further decline from 2007.

In first winter period, 139 records from 64 places; and 168 from 74 (mostly the same) in second.

During breeding season, 132 records from 88 places, compared to 143 from 63 in 2007 and 171 from 81 in 2006. However, except for the spring display-period, this hawk can be elusive, so perhaps not too much should be read into these figures, especially as only one negative comment was received: from Crewkerne, where

numbers said to be markedly down throughout the year and birds are unlikely to have bred (AJP). Breeding or suspected breeding was reported from only 16 places, again with few reports from the Avalon Marshes, where, apart from the more obvious Common Buzzard, it is probably the most seen of the commoner raptors.

Prey taken or attempted: young Woodpigeon (taken by a female), Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Dunnock, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Starling (especially at huge winter-roost on Avalon Marshes, where up to six in attendance during February), House Sparrow, Chaffinch and Greenfinch. Garden bird-feeders again proved attractive to this small, fierce hawk, which may use them as a ready source of prey. One at Aller Moor (near Aller) was being aerially harassed by a Peregrine on December 27th.

COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Common resident breeder; also passage-migrant and perhaps winter visitor.

The 625 records received equate to a total of 2,190 birds, a very similar figure to the previous year, and the comment in *SB* 2005 regarding population would still hold true across most of the County. A closer look at these records shows they were from 214 widespread places. If the Buzzard is regarded as being mostly sedentary, especially in the breeding season, then adding together the highest count from each place gives a revised total of 1,063 birds, which is surely well below the actual population figure.

Forty gatherings of ten or more reported, of which the four largest were: 36 in a field, Woolverton, January 27th; 20, Mell's Park Estate, March 1st; 27, feeding on a freshly-cut hay meadow, Torr Works Reservoir, June 8th; and 33 in a field at Stocklinch, December 10th.

Large gatherings in spring are mostly soaring birds maintaining territorial boundaries; at other times of the year they are generally birds feeding on invertebrates made readily available by recent farming activity. In the west of the County large numbers are generally associated with the carrion possibilities of game farms and Pheasant-rearing estates.

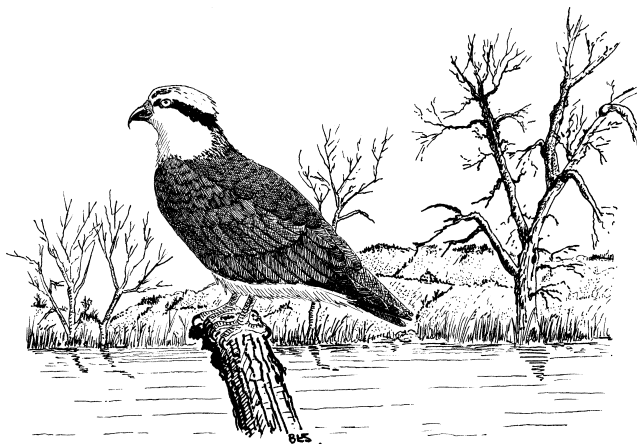
During the breeding season, territorial soaring was seen at many widely-spread sites, including 30 birds visible at one time from Steart, but only a few nesting successes reported, although there must have been many. Successful breeding records with the number of young in brackets, together with some comments received, were: two pairs (one young each), Faulkland; pair (two young), Gurney Slade; three pairs (total of four young), Rowberrow Warren; at nest, King's Sedge Moor; pair (two young), Witcombe Valley; pair (two young), large garden at Crewkerne; pair with fledged youngster, near Forde Abbey; seven pairs, from Sampford Arundel to south-east of Wellington, and also from Runnington to East Nynhead; pair bred, Linden Wood (Wellington); pair (one young), North Moor, near Moorland; at nest in willow tree, Steart; between six and eight young, at four sites near Hinkley Point; ten recently fledged young, Knighton area; incubating on nests at Holford and at Nether Stowey; and pair (two young), Stogumber.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce passage-migrant; has summered.

An average year, with about 11 records, all of single birds: six in spring, one in summer and four in autumn.

In spring: arrived from north-east and then flew north, Combwich, March 13th (RLM); Ham Wall, April 8th (AW); Sutton Bingham Reservoir, on 9th (*per* BJW); made two attempts to catch a fish before flying west, South



Osprey

Drain at Catcott, May 9th (AA); Shapwick Heath and Ham Wall, May 29th-June 6th (AA, JAH, MS *et al.*); a ringed bird, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, May 29th-June 3rd (NAS, JLT, BJW *et al.*).

In summer: Sutton Bingham Reservoir, July 14th (NAS).

In autumn: adult, Shapwick Heath, August 23rd - September 12th (AA); over Somerton, August 25th (RCD); south over Mark on September 13th (M. Kwan, SMO); Sutton Bingham Reservoir, on 14th (*per* BJW); on 15th, passing over Lymphsham and turning south up Parrett Estuary (R.Dyson, TR) and a ringed adult at Shapwick Heath; some of these last four may have been identical.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Common resident breeder; also passage-migrant and probably winter visitor.

Excluding the Exmoor Survey (below), records totalled 631 from 276 widespread places, a 16% increase compared to the 545 of last year and significantly better than the 465 in 2006. Yet only 197 were in the breeding season so perhaps this signifies another poor breeding year?

From mid March to end of July, present at about 141 sites, including 26 pairs, of which only five were proved to breed. The RSPB Exmoor Survey recorded presence in 21 tetrads within Somerset; presence in a further six was established by EMP. To these can be added: 26 sites in the east, including five pairs and one family; eight sites on Mendip, including one pair; 13 coastal sites from Axe Estuary to Lilstock, including four pairs; 26 sites on Levels north of Poldens, including five pairs, and three territories in Upper Axe Valley; eight on Levels south of Poldens, including one pair and one sitting on nest; at two sites in Central Somerset; ten in south, including three pairs and one family; nine in south-west, including two pairs and one family; 12 sites around Quantocks, including two pairs and another pair at a quarry nest.

Three negative comments received: male and female throughout year at Crewkerne, but no nest found nor any young seen, and seems to have disappeared completely from four previous breeding sites in this area (AJP); breeding not noted around Creech St Michael, where it seems to have declined (BJH); very scarce at Dunster Hawn, with only eight records from five months of the year (JRW).

In winter, recorded at 120 widely spaced sites in first period and at 129 in the second; the highest count was of six at Greylake Reserve and at King's Sedge Moor.

A presumed migrant, seen flying in towards landfall from far out, low over the sea at Minehead, September 7th (RLM).

RED-FOOTED FALCON *Falco vespertinus*

Rare spring and summer vagrant.

Female (photo), probably second-calendar-year, Shapwick Heath, May 13th-17th (NPW *et al.*).

A long-awaited first sighting since the previous exceptional influx that saw at least 11 birds in May/June 1992. This brings the County total to about 17, all but one since 1969.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Scarce and very local breeder; uncommon winter visitor and passage-migrant.

A total of 174 records, of which 27 (16%) were males, are summarised numerically, but many are duplicates especially at well-watched places.

On Exmoor, where no evidence of breeding: at one site, a female on two dates, April 16th and May 5th, and perhaps the same, near Devon border, on June 7th and July 4th; at a second location, a pair displaying, May 9th, then one or the other seen here or nearby on three dates until June 10th; at a third location, one (sex not given) on three dates, June 25th, July 3rd and 25th.

From January to mid March, during a poor first winter period, only 38 records from 22 places, involving about 28 birds: Cary Moor, in January and February; about seven on coast around Bridgwater Bay; about nine, Levels north of Poldens, mostly at Kennard Moor and Catcott Lows; about eight south of Poldens, at Greylake, King's Sedge Moor, West Sedge Moor and Wet Moor; on Exmoor, at Chalk Water and Sandyway; and at Porlock Marsh.

Only about 14 during a poor spring passage: about six, coastline around Bridgwater Bay, late March to mid April; Tealham Moor, April 14th; Greylake, March 27th-April 8th; Sutton Mallet, March 30th; Earlake Moor, May 7th; West Sedge Moor, March 26th, and another, April 12th; Porlock Post, March 27th, and Thurley Combe, April 2nd.

An unusual inland record was of one at West Pennard, July 29th (JHa).

From August 1st to December 31st, 103 records from 35 places, of which only three were in August and four in September. Forty-four on coast from Axe Estuary to Shurton, with a total of about 20 birds, including two records of two together; 41 on Levels south of the Poldens (mostly Greylake Reserve, King's Sedge Moor, West Sedge Moor and the South Levels), including about 16 birds, with one record of three together (West Moor, December 28th) and three records of two. Records from other sites were: Cheddar Reservoir, September 4th; Blue Anchor, October 8th, and Hurlstone Point, on 14th; Chetsford Water, November 7th; one or two, Catcott Lows, from 9th to end of year; Coleford and Meare Heath, November 16th; Thurley Combe, on 28th, and Minehead Marshes, on 29th; Weir Water, December 7th; over Street and at Curry Moor on 18th, and Shapwick Heath on 19th; and Kennard Moor, on 27th.

Prey taken or chased included Common Snipe, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wheatear and Starling – especially at winter roosts on Avalon Marshes.

At Westthay Moor, on February 4th, a female or juvenile was in hot pursuit of a small wader, possibly a Jack Snipe, 25 minutes after sunset (JAH).

At Huntspill Sea Wall, on October 18th, two were co-operatively hunting a Meadow Pipit (TR).

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Scarce migrant breeder; uncommon passage-migrant, but locally numerous in spring.

Total of 221 records from 81 sites; 54% from Avalon Marshes and adjacent areas; little change from previous two years, but again, some probably not submitted from well-watched sites, where many are duplicates.

First arrivals: three, Shapwick Heath, April 20th, six on 22nd, increasing to 12 the next day; singles at West Coker on 24th, Brean Down on 26th and East Woodlands on 27th; two, Outmoor Wood (Williton) on 28th. Apart from a rapid build-up on the Avalon Marshes, elsewhere small numbers continued into mid May and there were about 45 on spring passage from end of April to mid June. On Avalon Marshes, usual reports of feeding gatherings at Shapwick Heath from April 24th to late May and some to early June: most counts of 15 or more from April 28th to May 21st (see Table); highest count, 47, Shapwick Heath, May 5th.

Date:	Apr 28	Apr 30	May 2	May 3	May 4	May 5	May 6
Count:	16	25	34	46	36	47	15
Date:	May 7	May 9	May 10	May 13	May 17	May 18	May 21
Count:	20	40	27	35	20	30	38

At West Sedge Moor, another poor year: mostly two to four during first two weeks of May, with peak of six on 17th; and five at Greylake Reserve on 21st.

Possible breeding near Combwich, where fledged juvenile seen July 29th. Birds regularly present during summer as follows: at four sites in East Somerset, where two fledged young at one; at a site on Mendip; at three sites on Levels north of Poldens, including count of six at one of these on June 16th and July 13th, though some were probably non-breeding, second-year birds; at one escarpment site on Levels south of Poldens; at a site near Quantocks, and at one on Exmoor, where adult seen carrying food.

Usual, thinly-scattered summer records from: Bruton, Hemington, Holcombe Wood and Gurney Slade in the east; three Mendip sites; South Somerset; three coastal sites from Berrow to Knighton; and the Quantocks and the Brendons.

In Avalon Marshes, most records were of one or two in September, up to the 29th, with three on the 9th and a maximum of five on the 11th; then one, the last of the year, on October 8th. Elsewhere, only 16 records in September.

Apart from the usual insects, other prey taken or chased were Swallow, House Martin, and Linnet.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Uncommon, but increasing, resident breeder, dispersing in winter over wide range; presumably also winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Total of 394 records from about 105 sites; very little change from previous two years.

Breeding proved, or suspected from continual presence, at 13 sites; five inland, mostly at quarries, the remainder coastal. Of these, three pairs fledged seven young; two failed, presumably because of prolonged wet weather, and the outcome from the others was unknown.

Details of three sites in East Somerset: at one, only one young fledged; present at the other two but outcome unknown. On Mendip: carrying prey to one well-known site but outcome unknown; at second site, single chick at initial nest did not survive for long and new nest used 20 metres away, where female sitting but outcome unknown. At pylon site in south-west (also used in two previous years), pair at nest but outcome unknown. At inland site in west, two young hatched but soon deserted because of bad weather. At six known coastal sites, one produced two young, another four; outcome unknown at the other four.

As usual, outside breeding season most records were from Levels, coast and western hills. The largest number reported were four, at Axe Estuary in November, and at Steart and Parrett Estuary in January and September. Favoured lookouts included the main building at Yeovil Hospital, St Mary's Church in Taunton, electricity pylons (commonly), and radio and mobile-phone masts.

At Ham Wall, February 17th, one, chasing Starlings, suddenly switched its attention to a Sparrowhawk, which it hit and knocked to the ground. The hawk quickly recovered and flew into a nearby bush before the falcon could return (NPW).

Other prey taken or chased included Manx Shearwater, European Storm-petrel, Teal, Garganey, Black-tailed Godwit, Black-headed Gull, Common Tern, and Wood and Feral Pigeons.

Interactions noted with other raptors were: harassing a Sparrowhawk (NAS), and in brief clash with a Merlin and a Kestrel (BHJG).

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Fairly common but very local resident breeder; more widespread as winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Confirmed breeding: four families at both Westhay Moor and Westhay Heath; one family, Glastonbury Heath; one juvenile, Meare Heath. No doubt the number of families reported will now decline sharply because after many years JAMcG has decided he can longer undertake this survey work; his efforts will be greatly missed. No reports from either Ham Wall or Shapwick Heath. Away from this area the only report was of a pair at Greylake Reserve.

Water Rail – maximum monthly counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cary Moor	2	2								8	8	8
Steart	2	2								2	2	2
Westhay Moor	17	15	19	3						5	3	7
Sharpham	1	1	2							1	2	1
Ham Wall	7	7	7						1			
Walton Heath/ Loxton's Marsh	4	3	5									
Shapwick Heath/ Meare Heath	6	10	7	2				2		2	11	15
Westhay Heath	7	9	6								3	
Dunster Hawn	2	2	2	1						1		2

The Somerset Levels are the most important wintering site for this species in Great Britain, but owing to its secretive nature these figures are probably only a fraction of those present throughout the Avalon Marshes.

Other records of two or more: two, Rodden Nature Reserve, December; three, Berrow, throughout the year except May; two, Huntspill River, November and December; two, Millwater, January 1st to February 25th. Singles recorded at a further 16 sites across the County.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Common resident breeder; occasional winter visitor.

This was the first year that JAMcG did not survey this species within part of the Avalon Marshes. No other surveys were undertaken at Ham Wall or Shapwick Heath and the only breeding record from this area was of

three families at Sharpham. About 17 territories at Greylake Reserve, where eight broods were seen. Hardly any records from West Sedge Moor, where only one pair noted, compared with 28 in 2007.

Other breeding records, of single pairs/families unless stated: two families, Bruton; Mells Park; two families, Holcombe Wood; Berrow; six pairs, Tealham Moor; Bridgwater Docks; a number of pairs/families along the Canal between Huntworth and Creech St Michael, including five between the latter and Charlton; King's Sedge Moor; Hambridge; five pairs, Wet Moor; eight pairs, West Moor (Hambridge); Sutton Bingham Reservoir; two families, West Coker; Millwater and Crewkerne Sewage Treatment Works; two pairs, Wayford Woods; Woolminstone; Chard Junction; Chard Reservoir; three families, Hankridge LNR; Blackbrook (Taunton); Tonedale; two families, Wellington Basins, and one at Wellington Park; Rodhuish; Dunster Hawn; Withypool; Bradley Pond.

Moorhen – monthly maximum counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mells Park			12	4				6	12			17
Cheddar Res.	3		6									2
Tealham/Tadham Moors incl. Blakeway Lake	8		18		12					24	13	18
Westhay Moor	145	172	142	20						7	10	4
Sharpham	9	4	11	11				9		7	9	6
Ham Wall/Loxton's Marsh	9	30	32	1	3	3			3			
Shapwick/Meare Heaths	26	76	26	3						11	42	32
Westhay Heath	95	61	55								16	4
Butleigh Moor										8	2	3
Huish Moor	5	9	4									
King's Sedge Moor (excl. Greylake & Huish Moor)	1		3	1	3						6	3
Greylake Reserve	1									7	2	5
Curry Moor	8	2								1		
Aller Moor, Aller										3	2	8
West Sedge Moor	2	6	9								2	
Nine Springs, Yeovil	3			5	4							
West Coker	7	7	3								7	7
Chard Res.	5	11						9	21		8	
Ashford Res.		4						4			8	11
Hawkridge Res.	3									3		12
Dunster Hawn	35			5			3		2			

All other records of ten and over: ten, Cary Moor, August 31st, and 12 on September 21st; 21, Walton Heath, March 9th – these may have been included in Ham Wall count; 12, Hankridge LNR, March 25th; 14, Clatworthy Reservoir, June 20th.

COOT *Fulica atra*

Locally common resident breeder and winter visitor.

As with previous species, very poor coverage from Avalon Marshes. Only breeding records submitted: at least three families, Sharpham; one juvenile, Ham Wall.

All other breeding records, of single families/pairs unless stated: three families, Mell's Park; Nether Wood; Catsford Common; Blakeway Lake; three pairs and one family, Greylake Reserve; five pairs, West Sedge Moor; Sutton Bingham Reservoir; Chard Reservoir; two families, Ashford Reservoir; Rowdon Farm, Stogumber; four families, Wimbleball Lake.

Coot – maximum monthly counts												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Torr Works Res.										31		38
Cheddar Res.	3324	1185	426	76	3	5	4	75	680	1636	2040	2115
Westhay Moor	26	35	45	10						7	3	16
Blakeway Lake	3	5								14	27	19
Sharpham	81	27	19	17	11	38	20	32		19	26	14
Long Drove, S. of Walton Heath	41	115	95									
Ham Wall	58	44	62	1	4				8	20		
Walton Heath incl. Loxton's Marsh		4	55							129	66	
Shapwick/Meare Heaths	46	31	70					6		2	102	38
West Sedge Moor		31	58									
Sutton Bingham Res.				5	3	15	3				7	9
Chard Res.	6	11	8					9	6	9	9	10
Hawkridge Res.	15	8	8	32				2		9	9	13
Ashford Res.		1	2						4		12	13
Wimbleball Lake	59	31	22				12	45	40	72	80	103

Cheddar Reservoir has now become the fifth most important site in Great Britain; the threshold to be of national importance is 1,730.

All other counts of ten or more: 30, Orchardleigh Lake, February 23rd; up to 20, Mell's Park, March; 26, Apex Leisure Park, January 14th; ten, Westhay Heath, March 9th; 200 on floods, Wet Moor, February 5th; 12, Hay Moor, Muchelney, on 10th; 80 on floods, Curry Moor, on 11th; ten, Hankridge LNR, March 25th, and 14 there, July 4th; 15, Enmore Castle Lake, November 8th, and 18 there, December 28th; ten, Rowdon Farm, Stogumber, July 11th; 32, Clatworthy Reservoir, June 20th, and 36 there, July 14th.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Scarce breeder; fairly common winter visitor, non-breeding summer visitor and passage-migrant.

Up to seven pairs bred along coast from Parrett Estuary to Hinkley Point; fledged young recorded at Steart Point. No successful breeding known in Porlock Bay.

Oystercatcher – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	144	127	64	41	4	4	45	141	127	94	161	94
E. Parrett Estuary (incl. Berrow)	120	7	73	112	49	100	172	328	184	150	200	33
Steart Point/Steart Island	35		55	125	110	19	6	2	130	180	85	64
Hinkley Point	99	30	42	24	2	4	3	60	33	79	100	100
Dunster Beach	86	77	39	20	9	13	79	65	92	95	96	67

Oystercatcher – monthly maxima at main sites, continued

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Porlock Bay		10	1	2		2		6	5	8	14	10
Other sites	62	38	2	5	11	3	8	3	6			71
Totals (incl. higher Parrett Estuary count)	511	289	221	217	136	122	307	503	447	456	571	406

Recorded along whole coast, the peak passage and winter concentrations being in the Axe Estuary, around Bridgwater Bay and at Dunster Beach.

Seven inland records, involving nine birds: two, Catcott Lows, March 2nd, and one there, April 12th; one, Meare Heath, April 11th; two, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, on 15th; single birds, Cheddar Reservoir, May 20th and August 16th/17th, and at Coleford on 24th.

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*

Very rare visitor.

One record: two were found during survey work, King's Sedge Moor, May 6th (JLe). Accepted by BBRC.

The seventh and eighth birds for Somerset, the last being one at Steart Point in 1980.

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Scarce and very local winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Avocet – monthly maxima

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Parrett Estuary	44	4	6						18	7	8	11

Recorded from R. Parrett between Stockland Reach and Steart Point (many observers). The only record elsewhere was of seven on Axe Estuary, October 13th (PB).

After recent increase in wintering numbers on Parrett Estuary, fewer in 2008, especially of autumn arrivals remaining into second winter period.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Rare migrant breeder; uncommon passage-migrant.

Breeding confirmed at Torr Works Reservoir, where two pairs raised four young: one hatched three chicks on west side, of which one was predated when adults were disturbed by boating; the other believed to have bred on south-eastern side, where two juveniles were later seen (JHa, BAT).

Little Ringed Plover – monthly maxima

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Totals			2	22	3	4	4	2	1			

First arrival on Earlake Moor, March 15th, the earliest Somerset date; a second at Catcott Lows on 19th. In April, breeders at Torr Works had returned by 3rd. Later arrivals: up to five on Cary Moor and up to seven on Meare Heath throughout the month, of which one remained until May 2nd; one, Cheddar Reservoir, April 19th, and three, Dunster Beach, on 20th/21st; single birds at Wall Common on 22nd, Kennard Moor on 27th and King's Sedge Moor on 29th; and two, West Sedge Moor, May 12th.

As usual, much scarcer on autumn passage, when all four records were of single juveniles: Torr Works Reservoir, July 26th; Huntspill Sea Wall, August 12th-14th; Cheddar Reservoir, on 16th; and Meare Heath, September 14th-16th.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula**Scarce breeder; fairly common winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

Six breeding pairs from Steart Point to Stolford, of which one, on Wall Common, had recently fledged young in late June, and apparently produced a second brood of three. One pair may have bred at Warren Point.

Ringed Plover – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary				1	12	5		16	48	33	32	24
Berrow – Brue Estuary		10		5	100	208		580	19	33	80	
Stert Island/Steart Point/Wall Common		7	35	85	452	126	47	903	350	21	23	16
Dunster Beach	32	21	9	24	37	6	4	185	80	31	8	16
Other sites (coastal)	38	3		1	2		35	8	33	6		21
Other sites (inland)			1	7	14			30	23			
Totals (incl. higher Parrett Estuary count)	70	41	45	133	517	219	86	1142	524	103	120	77

Fewer wintering birds than in 2007, in accordance with recent national decline. Bridgwater Bay held the majority of migrants: a good spring passage was followed by a particularly healthy return movement, as in 2006, though some birds may have been double-counted.

Coastal records from “other sites” were mainly from Stolford to Shurton Bars. Inland records mostly from Meare Heath, where now regular on passage; maximum of 21 here, September 5th. Elsewhere, total of 11: single birds at Catcott Lows, March 22nd, and Sutton Bingham Reservoir, May 6th; three, West Sedge Moor, on 13th; two, Torr Works Reservoir, August 16th; single birds at Chard Reservoir and on Kennard Moor on 21st; and two, Kennard Moor, September 28th.

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus**Scarce passage-migrant.*

One record: juvenile present at Dunkery Beacon, September 7th-9th (L. Pickersgill *et al.*). This site, perhaps unsurprisingly, seems to be a regular stopping-off point for the occasional Dotterel in both spring and autumn.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria**Locally common winter visitor and passage-migrant. Formerly bred.*

Golden Plover – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
West Sedge Moor	15000	11787	6961							800	3030	800
Other sites on the Levels	6678	917	1510	120					2	210	2949	5622
Parrett Estuary	310	1510	650	290					4	3480	1430	1965
Dunster Beach/ Minehead Marshes	24	103	87	20				35	8	14	8	
Exmoor (incl. Porlock Marsh)	45	25	340	415					46	1070	300	856
Other sites away from the Levels	176	427	9	18	1			20	1	49	151	111
Totals	22233	14769	9557	863	1			55	61	5623	7868	9354

Very good numbers in both winter periods, particularly on Levels, where counts continue to increase annually. Significant reductions in wintering numbers have been noted in parts of East Anglia and the South East; birds may be increasingly favouring the Levels.

Last in spring: Draycott Sleights, May 4th. First returning birds flying east off Minehead, August 13th; up to 35 at Dunster Beach in same month.

Highest Exmoor counts, at least on passage, are generally from area round Lucott Cross, where the large intake serves for feeding and roosting.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Fairly common, but very local, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Grey Plover – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
E. Parrett Estuary	19		5		8					25	20	30
Steart Point	170	150	190	25	8	7	15	45	25	54	224	220
Dunster Beach	10	5	4	2							1	1
Other sites		2		4	7	6	1		4	3		4
Totals (incl. higher Parrett Estuary count)	180	157	194	31	15	13	16	45	29	57	225	225

As usual, most around Parrett Estuary, where recorded in every month. Increasing numbers are reported to be wintering in the Waddenzee and the Maas/Waal deltas in the Netherlands. There may be an eastward shift in wintering populations, a theory supported by the decline in U.K. numbers over the last 15 years. Somerset counts were slightly higher than in 2007; the feeding in Bridgwater Bay may be sufficiently attractive. On-going WeBS counts across the U.K. will continue to provide data which may help to answer such questions.

Elsewhere, small numbers on coasts, mainly at Axe Estuary and Dunster Beach.

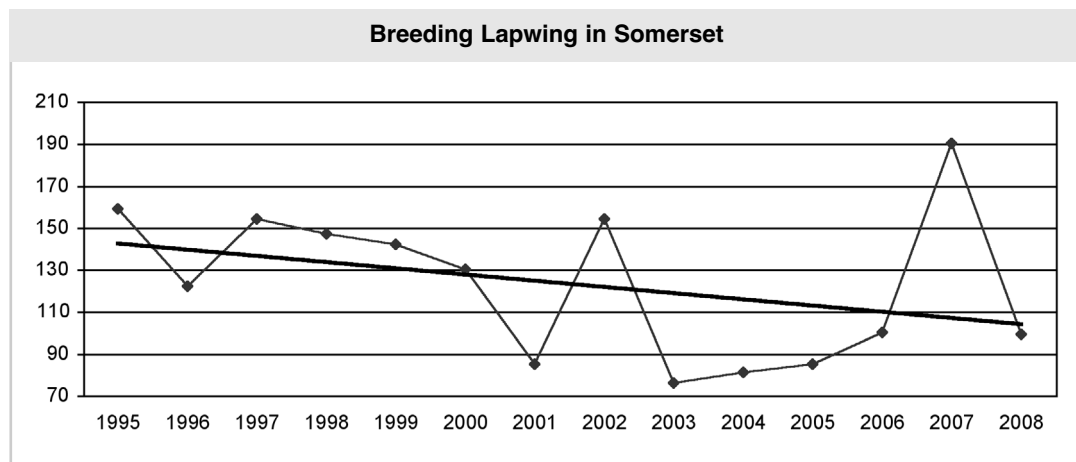
One inland record: one, Meare Heath, April 18th-21st.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Fairly common local breeder, though greatly decreased; abundant winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Between 100 and 120 breeding pairs recorded, a similar number to 2006; the 2007 total was enhanced by special survey work, of which there was little in 2008 except in Raised Water Level Areas and RSPB Reserves.

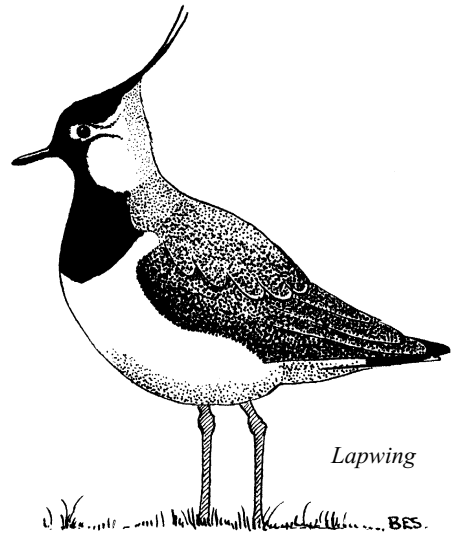
As usual, mostly on Levels, at following sites, with number of pairs attempting to nest in brackets: Upper Axe Valley, where there were only 16 females, so some of the 25 males remained unpaired; Kennard Moor



(perhaps two); Godney Moor (two or three); Catcott Lows (ten) and Chilton Moor (two); Tealham Moor (ten); Somerton Moor (13, on both bare peat and adjacent arable); Walton Moor (one), King's Sedge Moor SSSI (four), Greylake Reserve (five) and Moorlinch Moor (three); Weston Level (one or two) and North Moor, Moorland (five); Earlake Moor (two) and near Athelney (possibly two); West Sedge Moor (four, but only two nests found and one brood, which vanished after 30 days); King's Moor (four at Bearley Farm and two elsewhere in area), Wet Moor (five) and West Moor (six); Westport (two in arable) and between Hambridge and Curry Rivel (three in linseed).

A few encouraging pockets elsewhere: up to eight pairs on Mells Down; two unsuccessful pairs in broad beans near Faulkland; up to three on Pawlett Hams; and four in setaside near Kilve. None in south-west or west.

Breeding Lapwing face numerous hazards: on grassland Levels, predation by foxes and corvids, and unseasonable floods, as were encountered in late May 2008; on arable, the perils of machinery are added. At many sites, numbers of displaying birds in April can be



Lapwing

Lapwing – monthly maxima at main sites on Levels

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Avalon Marshes	270	54	90	14	18			662	200	728	289	620
Catcott Lows	2000	1500	30	40	4					11	100	1000
Greylake Reserve	8000	1250	45			5					2160	3000
King's Sedge Moor	10000	2116	11	8	4						4000	15000
West Sedge Moor	29954	8928	174	6	4	4	51	80	7	300	6594	500
Other sites on Levels	13336	10634	301	176	75	124		120		380	1100	1509
Totals	63560	24482	651	244	105	133	51	862	207	1419	14243	21129

Lapwing – monthly maxima at main sites on coast

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	200	400					1	23	16	140	430	2000
Parrett Estuary	2520	807	34	3	2		1		80	1300	1200	3709
Dunster Beach/ Minehead Marshes	280	100					3	8	4	31	85	80
Porlock Marsh	9	32									60	55
Other sites	762	76	1	12	7	8	3			113	350	1044
Totals	3771	1415	35	15	9	8	8	31	100	1584	2125	6888

Post-breeding flocks began to arrive in mid June. Excellent wintering numbers on Levels maintained them at or near the top of the list of U.K. sites of international importance.

Elsewhere, numbers in second winter period notably higher than usual, possibly the first indications of hard weather to come in 2009.

KNOT *Calidris canutus**Locally common winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

Knot – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Berrow				3	5		3	510	1		5	4
E. Parrett Estuary									96		800	
Stear/Stolford	500	250	260	50		1	22	125	301	51	4030	2800
Other sites				2				4	24	6	1	
Totals (incl. higher Parrett Est. count)	500	250	260	55	5	1	25	639	326	57	4036	2804

Low numbers in first winter period, when confined to Steart area. Good autumn passage, followed by excellent winter numbers, possibly due to the harsh weather imminent at the end of the year. Away from tabulated sites, only coastal records were of up to three in Axe Estuary and single birds at Dunster/Minehead.

Inland, up to 19 at Meare Heath scrape, September 9th-October 21st.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba**Locally fairly common passage-migrant; uncommon winter visitor.*

Sanderling – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Berrow/Brean	200	200	277	250	200	6	202	235	250	250	100	30
Parrett Estuary (incl. Steart)					14		4	28	9			
Dunster Beach	13	14	12		6	2	5	15	22			7
Other sites					5				4		10	
Totals	213	214	289	250	225	8	211	278	285	250	110	37

Good numbers at Berrow throughout year, except at midsummer and in December. Fairly regular at Dunster Beach except in late autumn, and more sporadic at Steart.

One inland record: summer-plumaged bird at Meare Heath, May 24th.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta**Uncommon autumn passage-migrant; rare in spring and as winter visitor.*

Little Stint – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Stear Point/ Wall Common					2		6	3	8	2		
Other sites					2			1	4	1		1
Totals					4		6	4	12	3		1

Four in spring: two at Berrow and two at Wall Common, May 16th-20th.

In autumn, sporadic at Steart Point and Wall Common, with a maximum of eight, September 14th, and the last on October 19th. About five elsewhere: one, Berrow, September 13th; three, Meare Heath, from 16th to 29th; and one along Huntspill Sea Wall, October 13th.

One winter record: one, Huntspill Sea Wall, December 29th.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER *Calidris bairdii*

Accidental.

One record: juvenile during WeBS count, Brue Estuary, October 20th, was still there on 21st (N.Calbrade, JAH, BJH *et al.*). Accepted by BBRC. Third County record, and first since 1974.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

Rare passage-migrant, chiefly in autumn.

Two records, both from Meare Heath: two, September 17th (PG, JAH *et al.*); and one briefly on morning of October 17th (AA).

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Uncommon passage-migrant, chiefly in autumn; rare winter visitor.

Curlew Sandpiper – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brue Estuary/ Huntspill Sea Wall	1								3	4	4	
Steart Point/ Wall Common					1		14	15	4			
Other sites					1				4	1		
Totals	1				2		14	15	11	5	4	

As usual, most records from Parrett Estuary; a below-average total. The six records from 'other sites' were of single birds unless stated: Berrow, May 18th and September 15th and 17th; two, Meare Heath, September 2nd, one on 16th; and Axe Estuary, October 14th.

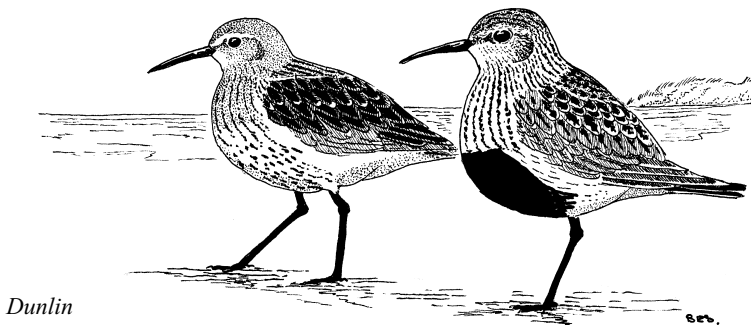
PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Scarce and very local winter visitor; rare passage-migrant.

Purple Sandpiper – monthly maxima												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Totals	15	16	11	12	2					14	15	19

A welcome resurgence, mainly due to the Hinkley Point birds which have appeared over the last two winters. Up to 16 roosted on the Power Station intake structure during high tides; at low water they were distributed along beaches from Stolford to Shurton Bars, where they were usually hard to find.

Six elsewhere: one, Watchet, January 5th; one, Huntspill Sea Wall, October 20th into December, when joined by a second; one, Dunster Beach, November 8th; and two at Watchet in December.



Dunlin

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina**Abundant winter visitor; common passage-migrant. Has bred.*

Dunlin – monthly maxima at main coastal sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	25	130	130	9	7		2	28	21	35	600	1220
E. Parrett Estuary incl. Berrow	15000	20000	1000	220	100	23	20	860	600	225	3030	3000
Stear Point/Stolford	20000	15000	800	1120	1200	200	250	600	1000	2500	9800	15000
Dunster Beach	128	110	4	3	22	5	9	28	37	1	32	56
Other sites		1		7	18		1	3	10		2	4
Totals (incl. higher Parrett Est. count)	20153	20241	1134	1139	1247	205	262	919	1068	2536	10432	16280

Records at “other sites” came from Torr Works, Cheddar, Sutton Bingham and Chard Reservoirs, and from Combwich, Hinkley Point, Minehead and Porlock Marsh.

Dunlin – monthly maxima at main inland sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
West Sedge Moor	9	200	100								47	80
Other sites on the Levels	363	396	9	11	4			13	8	4	74	470
Totals	372	596	109	11	4			13	8	4	121	550

Highest numbers on Levels were on King’s Sedge Moor, Greylake Reserve, West Sedge Moor, Hay Moor, King’s Moor and Muchelney Level.

Around Bridgwater Bay, significant increase from second winter period of 2007. This suggests that there may be a regular January influx, although it is not clear where these birds might come from.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax**Uncommon winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

Ruff – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Levels	3	100	2	20	1			5	8		19	50
Parrett Estuary				2				6	7	1		
Totals	3	100	2	22	1			11	15	1	19	50

Good numbers in first winter period, mainly due to the 85 counted at West Sedge Moor on February 12th. Peak counts elsewhere on Levels: 11, Curry Moor, February 8th; 15, Shapwick Heath/Meare Heath, April 8th; 22, King’s Sedge Moor, December 4th; and 21, West Moor (Hambridge), on 28th. All other records were from Parrett Estuary.

JACK SNIFE *Lymnocyrtus minimus**Uncommon winter visitor and passage-migrant. Decreasing.*

Above-average numbers, perhaps through increased coverage. Some noteworthy counts: in salt-marsh around Brue Estuary, six in first winter period and up to 14 in second; nine, Greylake Reserve, January 13th; and five, West Sedge Moor, November 17th.

Jack Snipe – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Levels	12	8	8	2							10	3
Parrett Estuary	5	2	2	1						2	8	15
Other sites	1	1									2	
Totals	18	11	10	3						2	20	18

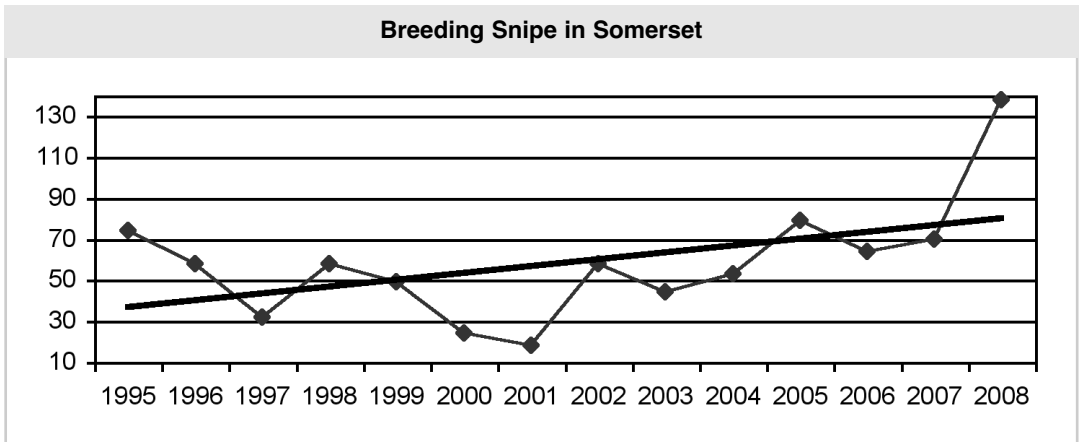
Records from “other sites” were of single birds: Priddy Mineries, January 24th; near Tesco’s Pit, Minehead, February 9th; Axe Estuary, November 16th; and near Crewkerne on 23rd.

COMMON SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Uncommon resident or migrant breeder; common winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Up to 136 pairs bred (based on counts of displaying males), a very significant increase on recent years; some searching was undertaken on Exmoor in connection with the Moorland Survey (RSPB, ENPA). The major site was West Sedge Moor, with up to 80 displaying males and 14 more “wing-archers” (RSPB). Other sites on Levels were: East and West Waste (four in April); Catcott Lows (four); Tealham Moor (18) and Tatham Moor (one); King’s Sedge Moor SSSI (seven) and Moorlinch Moor (five); North Moor, Moorland (two); and Wet Moor (one).

The RSPB Exmoor Survey found 16 displaying males, all but two in Somerset or on Devon boundary: two on Dunkery Hill, above Brockwell and in Hollow Combe; two on Codsend Moors and one at head of Ember Combe; single birds at Blackpitts, in Upper Farley Water, near Saddle Gate (possibly in Devon), near Pinkery Centre and on Roosthitchen; and four on south side of Winsford Hill. To these other observers added single birds on Comerslade and at the head of Squallacombe. At least three of these were on sites improved by the Exmoor Mires scheme.



Snipe – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
West Sedge Moor	820	968	112	3	3	80	9	8	5	44	323	
Other sites on the Levels	1262	927	392	16	36	22		560	239	331	683	1229
Exmoor (incl. coastal marshes)			3	1	13				4			6
Other sites	63	140	66	3			2	1	12	76	154	500
Totals	2145	2035	573	23	52	102	11	569	260	451	1160	1735

Winter numbers significantly higher than in last few years, although notoriously hard to make accurate counts of this secretive species or to interpret variations in its numbers. Apart from West Sedge Moor numbers given in Table, high counts on East and West Waste, Catcott Lows, King's Sedge Moor and Greylake Reserve.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Rare or scarce breeder; fairly common winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Woodcock – monthly numbers (all sites)												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Totals	15	21	6								10	23

None recorded, March 16th–November 10th, though the four earlier March records may indicate that a small number attempted to breed: one, Dunster, on 1st; two, Edford Wood, on 6th; three, Bickham Wood, Worthal, on 9th; and one, Ston Easton, on 16th.

Greater numbers of wintering birds seem to have been noted, but with few precise figures: on February 6th, 15 flushed in a valley at Blackmoor Farm, Woolminstone; “plentiful” around Porlock in December.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Locally common winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has bred.

Black-tailed Godwit – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Meare Heath			1	8	33	14		40	230	146		150
Other sites on the Levels	5	27	39	4	6			2			34	140
Parrett Estuary (incl. Berrow)	1		2	4	18	4	3	91	226	200	200	120
Other sites				1	1		1	19	7	9	33	
Totals	6	27	42	17	58	18	4	152	463	355	267	410

Low numbers in first winter period and on spring passage were followed by an autumn influx, after which many remained into second winter period. There may have been one or two flocks of 100+ birds which commuted between various sites on Levels and the Parrett Estuary; total numbers in second half of year perhaps half those shown in Table.

None assigned to subspecies. Historically, autumn-passage and wintering birds are of Icelandic origin *L. l. islandica*; late-spring and summer birds are of the nominate race (*L. l. limosa*).

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Scarce winter visitor and erratic passage-migrant.

Bar-tailed Godwit – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Parrett Estuary (incl. Berrow)			3	31	17			1	5	22	12	6
Other sites				3	3				2	3	1	
Totals			3	34	20			1	7	25	13	6

An average year. Most were around Bridgwater Bay, the largest flock being of 21, at Steart on April 20th. About nine elsewhere: three, Ham Wall and Catcott Lows, April 11th; two flying east with Black-tailed Godwits, Meare Heath, May 3rd; one, Dunster Beach, on 10th, and one or two there, September/October; and one, Axe Estuary, September 12th–November 8th.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus**Passage-migrant, commoner in spring than in autumn.*

Whimbrel – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Levels				123	135			1				
Parrett Estuary (incl. Berrow)				407	212	30	54	26	5			
Other sites			8	55	117		7	11	4			
Totals			8	585	464	30	61	38	9			

First arrivals: eight, Dunster Beach, March 22nd. Then reasonable numbers on spring passage for second year running, though some mobile flocks may have been double-counted. Largest flock was of 133 at Pawlett Hams on April 27th. Other sites with counts of over 20, April 26th-May 2nd: Brean Down (23), Berrow (60) and Huntspill Sea Wall (80); Steart (51); Meare Heath (38), Shapwick Moor (20) and Catcott Common (50); West Sedge Moor (28); and Dunster Beach (23)

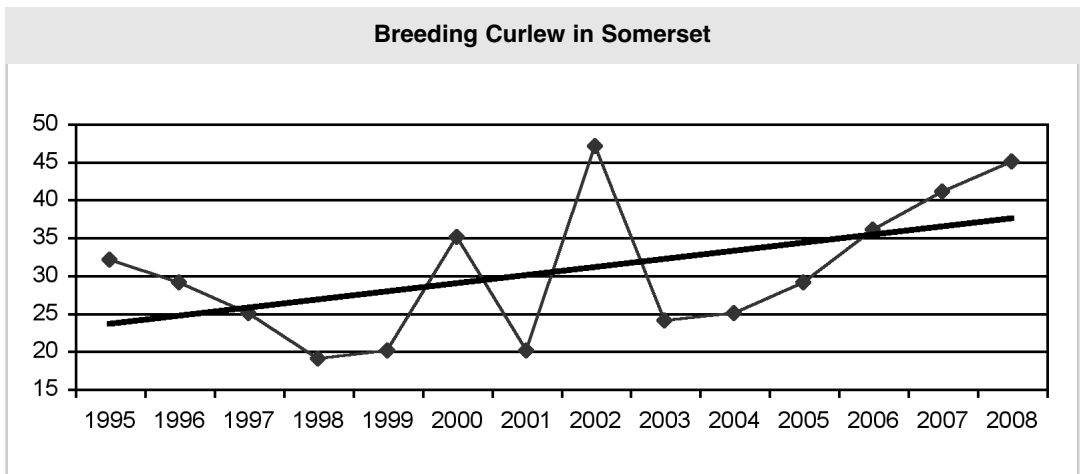
One unusual summer record: 30, Steart Point, June 21st/22nd.

Autumn passage was typically small, the last being one at Stolford on September 20th.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata**Uncommon breeder; common winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has decreased in uplands.*

Up to 42 pairs bred, continuing a steady increase over last decade. Mostly on Levels: 27 on West Sedge Moor, as in 2007, and up to ten at other sites: King's Sedge Moor SSSI (two); Greylake Reserve (one) and Moorlinch Moor (two); Wet Moor (about three, though five were displaying in April); West Moor and Muchelney Level (one each).

Elsewhere, two in Blackmoor Vale in April did not stay to breed; RSPB Survey and local observers found only five territories on Exmoor: two on north side of Dunkery Hill, one on Stoke Ridge, one in Ember Combe, and one on Codsand Moors. Breeding was not proved.



Curlew – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	100	81	38	11	1	2	28	24	35	40	63	109
Levels	5	12	24	15	62	11	1				1	1

Curlew – monthly maxima at main sites, continued												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
E. Parrett Estuary (incl. Berrow)		16	90	5			2	2		3	200	131
Stear	868	1000	340	1000	90	85	535	74	265	960	1385	1005
Dunster Beach/ Minehead	81	85	33	1	1	21	83	80	60	47	63	60
Porlock Marsh	48	45	115		3	9	36	31	22	4	32	43
Exmoor				2	3							
Other sites		31	26	27	6	3	60	30	47	34	15	62
Totals (incl. higher Parrett Est. count)	1102	1254	576	1056	166	131	689	239	429	1085	1559	1175

Similar picture to that in 2007, except for passage of up to 1,000 at Stear Point in first week of April.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Fairly common passage-migrant; rare in winter. Has bred.

Common Sandpiper – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Parrett Estuary	2	2		1	1		10	24	19		2	3
Cheddar Res.				6	2	2	2	5	4			
Levels			1	5	3		1	2	4			1
Sutton Bingham Res.				9	3		14	3	1			
Chard Res.							14	8	10			
Other sites	2	3		20	9	1	22	22	7	1	1	1
Totals	4	5	1	51	18	3	63	64	45	1	3	5

One near Landacre Bridge, May 18th/19th, was in former breeding area (DKB). Further increases in wintering birds were noted: at Torr Works Reservoir and around the Parrett and Brue Estuaries in both winter periods; at Axe Estuary and Porlock Marsh in first; and on Queen's Sedge Moor in second.

Passage numbers were again low, perhaps through wet summer diminishing reservoir mud, so birds did not alight.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Locally fairly common passage-migrant, chiefly in autumn; uncommon in winter and spring.

Green Sandpiper – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Levels	16	10	11	5	3	5	7	20	4	9	10	11
Other sites				2		2	6	39	7	4	9	1
Totals	16	10	11	7	3	7	13	59	11	13	19	12

A poor year, similar to 2007, perhaps for the same reasons as given for Common Sandpiper.

Counts of three or more in August: 12, pools behind Dunster Hawn, on 4th; three, Chard Junction (partly in Dorset), on 10th; five, Meare Heath, from 15th to 17th; six, Kennard Moor, on 21st; four, Durleigh, on 27th; three, Bradford-on-Tone, on 30th, and Wincanton Sewage Works, on 31st.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus**Scarce winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

Spotted Redshank – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Stear	2		2	1					2	4	6	2
Brue Estuary/ Huntspill Sea Wall	1	1						4	4	5	4	1
Other sites	1		1		1			1	1	1	1	
Totals (incl. higher Parrett Est. count)	3	1	3	1	1			5	5	6	7	2

As usual, most records came from Parrett Estuary. Seven single birds elsewhere: Axe Estuary, on January 1st, March 9th and November 8th-12th; one in full summer plumage, West Sedge Moor, May 2nd-5th; Meare Heath, August 24th and September 21st-26th; and Berrow, October 21st.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia**Locally fairly common passage-migrant, chiefly in autumn; rare winter visitor.*

Greenshank – monthly maxima at main sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Levels				3	6			5	2	3		
Parrett Estuary				2	4		1	1	4			
Other sites		1		1	3	1	1	8	2			2
Totals		1		6	13	1	2	14	8	3		2

A rather poor year. Away from Levels and Parrett Estuary, records came from widespread sites. In spring, they included three at pools behind Dunster Hawn on May 5th.

Wintering birds at Comwich, where now apparently regular: two, January 13th, and single birds on 29th and February 18th; and two in late December.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola**Uncommon passage-migrant, chiefly in autumn.*

Five spring records, involving eight birds: single birds, Meare Heath, April 26th and May 4th; three at new Cary Moor wetland, on 7th; single birds at Greylake Reserve on 16th and West Sedge Moor on 26th.

Three in autumn, the first since 2006: Greylake Reserve, August 6th; and Meare Heath, on 21st and September 22nd.

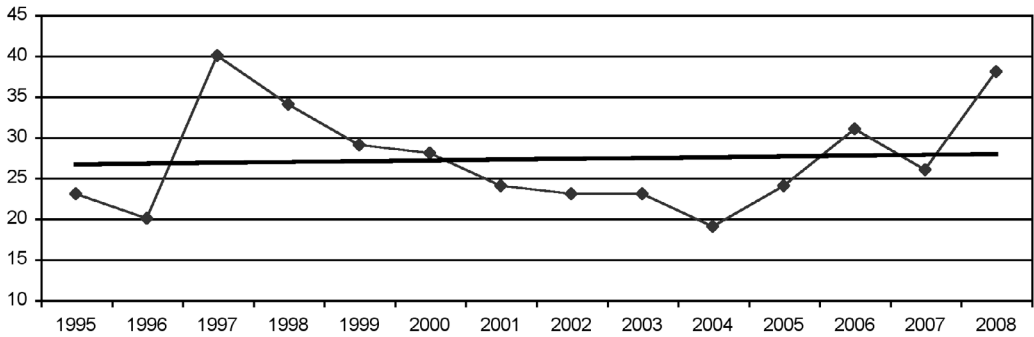
Despite recent records, spring total for Somerset is still only 56, as against 358 in autumn.

COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus**Uncommon breeder; fairly common winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

Up to 43 breeding pairs found, some as a result of dedicated surveys and all but one on Levels: five, Catcott Lows, and ten, Tealham Moor; five on King's Sedge Moor SSSI, six on Greylake Reserve, and two on Moorlinch Moor; two on North Moor, Moorland, and one on Pawlett Hams; nine on West Sedge Moor; and one each on Wet Moor and West Moor (Hambridge); and one, Porlock Marsh, where two young were seen on June 26th.

A welcome increase, which must owe a lot to improved habitat, although the long-term trend remains flat, as can be seen in the graph.

Breeding Redshank in Somerset



Redshank – monthly maxima at main sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	35	190	290	186	32	10	220	220	405	320	275	111
Levels	5	5	13	38	33	41	1	20			2	1
E. Parrett Estuary	480		80		1			200		850	1200	
Stearth	430	12	680	240	1	1		502	300	1000	800	343
Porlock Marsh	2	8	4	6	6	3	1				5	5
Other sites	3		1	4			4	4	5	141	1	42
Totals (incl. higher Parrett Est. count)	525	215	988	474	72	55	226	746	710	1461	1483	502

Fairly typical numbers. Autumn passage lighter than in 2007, although there appeared to be a late-autumn/early-winter influx around Parrett Estuary. Records from “other sites” were mainly from coast at Berrow, Stolford and Hinkley Point.

Seven inland, all singly at reservoirs: Cheddar, March 6th, August 13th and December 31st; Chard, April 19th and August 9th; Torr Works, July 11th; and Durleigh, August 17th/18th.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Locally common winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Turnstone – monthly maxima at main sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
E. Parrett Estuary	100			45	3		3	21	243	150		
Stearth Point to Knighton Beach	24	32	243	165	50	55	36	39	71	50	80	143
E. Quantoxhead to Dunster Beach	76	45	35	16	9	2	1	13	33	27	35	14
Others					8				2			
Totals	200	77	278	226	70	57	40	73	349	227	115	157

Good numbers, though somewhat fewer than last year.

Two inland records: single birds making brief stays, Meare Heath, September 3rd and 7th.

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius**Rare passage-migrant or storm-vagrant, nearly always in autumn.*

Nine or ten single birds: Huntspill Sluice, August 21st (TR), the second-earliest Somerset date; Kennard Moor, from 21st to 24th (GU); in a puddle at County Gate (only a few feet inside Somerset!), September 3rd (B.Uttley *per* DKB); Berrow, on 6th (JJP); Cheddar Reservoir, October 1st (RMA) and probably different bird there from 7th to 12th (D.Newell *et al.*); Huntspill Sluice, October 10th and 24th (BJH); and Chard Reservoir, October 21st/22nd (AG, DWH).

August and September birds arrived during or after westerly gales, but those in October were in a period of largely high pressure.

To find a higher autumn total for Somerset, one must go back to 1983, when there were 12.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus**Scarce offshore passage-migrant or storm-vagrant; rare winter visitor.*

Four records, involving total of five birds, two in spring and three in autumn: single birds, Hinkley Point, April 24th (STh), and Berrow, May 5th (AMS); one off Hurlstone Point, September 8th, and two past there, October 17th (BDG).

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus**Uncommon offshore passage-migrant or storm-vagrant; occasional in summer; rare winter visitor.***Arctic Skua – monthly counts from Brean Down to Lilstock**

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Aug	Sep	Oct
No. of dates recorded	1	3	1	2	2	2	1
Maximum count	1	2	2	1	1	2	1
Total number	1	4	2	2	2	6	1

Arctic Skua – monthly counts from Minehead to Hurlstone Point

	June	July	August	September
No. of dates recorded	2	2	4	1
Maximum count	1	1	10	12
Total	2	2	26	17

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus**Rare offshore passage-migrant or storm-vagrant, chiefly in autumn.*

Two autumn records, involving total of four juveniles: three flying west past Minehead, 08.15-09.00 hrs, September 7th (RLM, JLT); and one in Parrett Estuary on 30th (GS).

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua**Uncommon offshore passage-migrant; occasional in summer; rare winter visitor.***Great Skua – monthly counts from Berrow to Steart**

	June	August	October
No. of dates recorded	1	1	1
Maximum count	2	1	1
Total	2	1	2

Great Skua – monthly counts from Watchet to Hurlstone Point				
	July	August	September	October
No. of dates recorded	2	4	3	1
Maximum count	1	8	6	2
Total	2	17	16	2

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Fairly common offshore, as summer and winter visitor, storm-vagrant and passage-migrant.

Kittiwake – summary of coastal records												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. dates recorded	1	2	3	1	2	5	1	1	2	1	9	2
Maximum count	1	150	85	1	21	20	6	2	3	2	40	4
Total	1	151	159	1	31	55	6	3	7	2	83	5

One inland record: adult or second-winter bird, Torr Works Reservoir, December 20th; the second site record.

BONAPARTE'S GULL *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

Accidental.

First-winter bird, Cheddar Reservoir, March 22nd-27th (JJP *et al.*). This confiding individual becomes the third County record; the first was as recent as 2001.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Abundant winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has bred.

No breeding attempts in 2008.

Black-headed Gull – monthly maxima at regularly counted sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Torr Works Res.		2500		5		20	1		150			250
Axe Estuary	450	62	250		34	112	570	730	430	4000	452	633
Parrett Estuary	1000	1000	500	60	150	142	140	500	3000	250	1000	3500
Cheddar Res.	360	170	490	18	8	4	32	20	60	700	2400	4500
Sutton Bingham Res.		250	500				32		50	100	550	450
Chard Res.	830	600	263	4		2	55	118	107	490	400	360
Dunster Beach/ Minehead	650	150					60	40	25			50

First signs of post-breeding dispersal at several sites from the third week of June.

Some selected high counts in first winter period: 200, Westbury Moor, January 3rd; 650, Tealham Moor, on 15th; 300, Kingsbridge, on 27th; 200, Muchelney, February 4th; 1,200, Mells, on 14th; 200, Porlock Marsh, on 22nd; and 500, Orchardleigh Park, on 23rd.

Interesting autumn movement of 500 off Hurlstone Point, August 30th, and the following later counts: 200, Kilve, November 4th; 325, King's Sedge Moor, on 16th; 2,000, Ham Sewage Works, December 1st; 400, Ilchester, on 14th; 300, Kingsbridge, on 15th; 5,000 on Curry Moor and 300 at Wimbleball Lake (where probably roosting), both on 18th.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus**Uncommon passage-migrant or storm-vagrant; scarce winter visitor.*

Total of 24 in first-winter/spring period, singly unless stated: first-winter bird, Hinkley Point, January 26th-28th; adult, Parrett Estuary, March 3rd; first-winter birds at Axe Estuary on 12th and Ham Wall, April 3rd; two adults, Torr Works Reservoir, on 20th, and a first-summer bird there on 23rd/24th; three, Noah's Lake, April 20th, rising to 13 on 21st, of which one still present on 24th; single adults, Cheddar Reservoir, April 22nd/23rd and Sutton Bingham Reservoir on 23rd; and a first-summer bird, Parrett Estuary, on 24th.

Only eight from midsummer through autumn: single first-summer birds, Parrett Estuary, June 27th, and Berrow, July 5th-September 20th; at Cheddar Reservoir, a juvenile, September 2nd-7th, and un-aged birds on 13th/14th and October 10th; juvenile, Steart, September 30th; and two juveniles, Torr Works Reservoir, November 2nd.

FRANKLIN'S GULL *Larus pipixcan**Very rare visitor.*

One record: second-winter bird, Torr Works Reservoir, January 13th and March 25th (BAT). On both occasions, it flew off to roost, evidently at Chew Valley Lake, where it was observed on several intervening dates and March 28th; during March, it was also seen at Keynsham, Blagdon Lake and Portishead (BOC).

Accepted by BBRC; the third County record, and the first since 2000.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus**Uncommon but increasing winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

Mediterranean Gull – coastal records													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Axe Estuary						2		1				4	7
Brean/Berrow							2	2	2	1	1		8
Parrett Estuary		1	2		1		1	1	3	1	1	2	13
Blue Anchor–Dunster Beach	3	1	8			1	3	5	4	1	1		27
Minehead	2	1					1	1					5
Porlock Bay	2	1						1					4
Juvenile								2					2
First-year			2		1	2	1		4				10
Second-year	1		2				1		1				5
Adult	7	4	6			1	5	9	4	3	3	3	45

Mediterranean Gull – reservoir records													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Torr Works	2	5	3	1						2	1	2	16
Cheddar	1	2	1	1									5
Sutton Bingham								2					2
Chard		1	1										2
Juvenile													
First-year	1		1	1						1			4
Second-year			1	1									2
Adult	2	8	3					2		1	1	2	19

Records elsewhere, of adults unless stated: Wyke Champflower, February 9th; three at Wanstrow and one at Mells on 14th, and one at Hardington on 22nd; first-summer bird, Meare Heath, May 3rd, and two un-aged birds there on 10th; Street, July 3rd, and two, Cary Moor, on 5th; juvenile, Meare Heath, August 29th, and adult there, September 26th.

Records of colour-ringed birds can be found in the Ringing Report.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Locally common winter visitor and passage-migrant, but recently decreased, especially in west.

Common Gull – monthly maxima from selected sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Torr Works Res.		1500		2			2	2	1			1000
Axe Estuary	4	2	50					1		3	1	1
Parrett Estuary	3		32	1	1	1	6	5	15	5	12	50
Cheddar Res.	50	4	25	1	1						60	755
Chard Res.	4	13	8					1	1	1	1	3
Dunster Beach/ Minehead	30		10				10			1	246	
Wimbleball Lake	75	10	100									2

Selected counts in first winter period: 375, Charterhouse, January 6th; 400, Bilbrook, on 14th, and Ilchester, on 17th; 45, Orchardleigh Lake, February 23rd; and 30, Hawkridge Reservoir, on 24th.

Only two counts in autumn and second winter period: 50, Kilve, November 4th; and 1,200, Wyke Champflower, December 29th.

RING-BILLED GULL *Larus delawarensis*

Rare visitor, chiefly in winter.

One record: adult, Torr Works Reservoir, December 28th and 30th (BAT *et al.*). On both afternoons, it flew off to roost, presumably at Chew Valley Lake; it could not be found on 29th. Probably same as had been seen at Chew Valley on November 22nd and December 20th (BOC).

This is the third year running in which the species has been recorded at Torr Works.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Fairly common breeder; common winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Lesser Black-backed Gull – breeding pairs	
Bridgwater	Bred, no count
Chard Reservoir	Breeding attempted
Taunton	20
Watchet Paper Mills	8
Minehead (Vennland Centre)	2
Butlin's, Minehead	3

Lesser Black-backed Gull – monthly maxima at selected sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Torr Works Res.		100		100			370	550	3500	7000	59	
Axe Estuary	4	9	150	24	12	16	24	20	13	14	14	14

Lesser Black-backed Gull – monthly maxima at selected sites, continued												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Parrett Estuary			39	50	20	20	22	6	25	24	50	22
Cheddar Res.	11	4	320	50	8	40	15	10	7	6	120	180
Sutton Bingham Res.		5	13	10	5				20	12	2	
Chard Res.	1	11	34	9	11	4	2	1	1	3	4	1
Wimbleball Lake		12	10		10		10	6	10	40	140	3

A few selected high counts: 300, Mells, February 14th; 200, Brean Down, April 3rd; 117, Upper Axe Valley, on 10th; 28, Clatworthy Reservoir, June 20th; 53, King's Moor, November 9th; and 49, West Sedge Moor, on 17th.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Fairly common resident breeder, increasing in towns; also winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Herring Gull – breeding pairs	
Berrow	3
Bridgwater	Bred, no count
Hinkley Point	Bred
Street	2
Ilminster	2
Chard	Breeding attempted
Wellington	26
Williton	10
Watchet Paper Mills	72
Butlin's, Minehead	85
Minehead	11
Hurlstone Point	4

Breeding was again controlled in many towns, especially Bridgwater and Chard. The colony at Butlin's had increased from 45 pairs in 2007. Elsewhere in the town, there were five pairs at the Vennland Centre, two in Mart Road, and single pairs in Blenheim Road, Queen's Road, King Edward Road and Ponsford Road.

Herring Gull – monthly maxima at selected sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Torr Works Res.	350	350							300	20		97
Axe Estuary	6	90	600	240	117	17	19		60	15	45	49
Parrett Estuary	150	100	500	650	76	40	100	100		24	276	200
Cheddar Res.	130	18	32	26	2	10	21	6	52	350	54	330
Sutton Bingham Res.	200	280	210	70					850	600	300	545
Chard Res.	140	134	148	93	80	63	80			73	55	80
Dunster Beach/ Minehead	20	20		20	340	170	100	100	250			40

A few selected high counts: 300, Mells, February 15th; 1,500, Wyke Champflower, on 18th; 150, Brean Down, April 3rd; 170, Landacre Bridge, June 12th; 310, Luxhay Reservoir, August 11th; 250, Wick Moor, November 15th; 200, Churchinford, December 10th; and 250 at pre-roost gathering, Wimbleball Lake, on 18th.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Regular visits to the gull roost at Torr Works Reservoir again reaped dividends, birds being absent only during April and May (BAT *et al.*).

Yellow-legged Gull – monthly maxima from Torr Works Reservoir												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Juvenile												
First-year	1	3	3	3						3	2	
Second-year						2						
Third-year						1						
Adult					1	4	7	15	5	1		
Total	1	3	3	3	1	7	7	15	5	4	2	

About 15 other records: single adults, Cheddar Reservoir, January 1st (JLT), and at Steart on 25th (PJE); first-winter bird, Wyke Champflower, February 17th (BAT); second-winter bird, Morland Pond, Burnham, May 5th (JJP); adult, Dunster Beach, on 22nd (JRW); first-summer bird, Kennard Moor, June 8th and 17th (GU); adult, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, July 4th-September 13th (BJW *et al.*); single juveniles, Hinkley Point, July 8th and August 4th, when also at Kilve and Dunster Beach (BJH); first-winter bird, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, September 5th (DJC); second-winter bird, Cheddar Reservoir, October 6th (D.Newell); first-winter bird, Orchardleigh Lake, November 16th (BAT); and second-winter bird, Cheddar Reservoir, December 27th (DLB).

CASPIAN GULL *Larus cachinnans*

Accidental, though possibly overlooked.

Second-winter bird, Torr Works Reservoir, September 23rd-25th (BAT *et al.*). The second record for the County, the first being in 2007.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Rare winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Three records of single birds: a confiding first-winter bird, Minehead, January 26th-April 25th (JRW *et al.*); a fourth-summer bird, Dunster Beach, March 28th-30th (CG, JRW); and a first-winter bird off Hinkley Point, November 15th (DJC), which was seen to depart westwards and was found the next day at Blue Anchor, where it remained until the 17th (RPB, CG).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Rare and irregular resident breeder; regular visitor, chiefly to coasts.

No breeding attempts.

Great Black-backed Gull – monthly maxima from coastal sites												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Axe Estuary	1	2	2	2		4	1	1		2		1
Parrett Estuary	9	2	3	5	15	5	2	2	45	20	5	8
Dunster Beach/ Minehead	8	8	8	6	8	8	2	8	6	8	7	8
Hurlstone Point/ Porlock Marsh	5	7	4	4	7	9	4	4	4	1	2	4

Inland records: in the east, a first-winter bird at Mells, February 14th, an adult at Torr Works Reservoir, March 22nd, and a first-winter bird there, December 22nd; at Cheddar Reservoir, two adults, January 27th-30th, single adults on three dates, March 12th-April 7th, and September 14th, and a second-winter bird, December 31st; one flew south over Tealham Moor, June 27th; on South Levels, two single birds on January 13th and one on February 17th; in coastal areas west of the Parrett, two at Stogursey, January 27th, at Hawkridge Reservoir on March 3rd, and over Stringston on May 25th, and an adult with two juveniles at Durleigh Reservoir, September 1st; and on the Brendons, two adults at Wimbleball Lake on March 8th, and single adults there on May 10th and July 22nd.

LITTLE TERN *Sternula albifrons*

Uncommon passage-migrant. Has bred.

Only one in spring: a single bird at Berrow, May 17th-19th.

Total of 22 in autumn: three, Durleigh Reservoir, July 24th; seven, Berrow, on 31st; two, Axe Estuary, August 20th; five, Hurlstone Point, on 30th; four, Parrett Estuary, September 1st, and one there on October 1st.

WHISKERED TERN *Chlidonias hybrida*

Very rare visitor.

One record: one, Berrow, May 5th (BES *et al.*). The bird appeared at both tides during the day, but still led many observers a merry dance. Accepted by BBRC. The fifth County record, and the first since 2004.

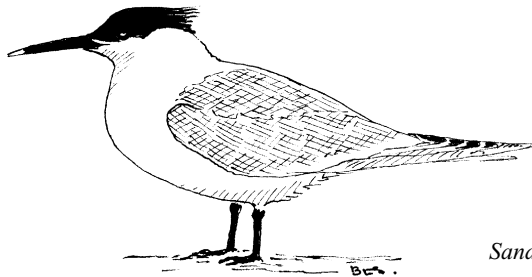
BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Uncommon passage-migrant, chiefly in autumn.

About 27 on spring passage: one, Noah's Lake, April 20th; four, Shapwick Heath, and one, Chard Reservoir, on 22nd; from May 1st to 16th, four each at Berrow and Huntspill Sea Wall, two at Cheddar Reservoir, nine at Shapwick Heath (East), and single birds at Durleigh and Sutton Bingham Reservoirs.

About 126 in autumn: four, Durleigh Reservoir, July 31st, and one, Sutton Bingham, August 1st-3rd; one, Huntspill Sea Wall, on 21st; from 30th to September 19th, about 120 recorded, the highest counts being of eight at Dunster Beach on August 30th, 15 at Hurlstone Point on 31st, 11 at Noah's Lake on September 2nd, and ten at Sutton Bingham on 15th; the last was at Durleigh, October 19th.

The highest total since 1993, when about the same number were seen; only seven in 2007!



Sandwich Tern

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Uncommon passage-migrant or storm-vagrant.

Surprisingly, first record of year came from an inland site: one, Noah's Lake, March 31st.

Sandwich Tern – monthly counts from Berrow to Hinkley Point		
	May	August
No. of dates recorded	2	4
Maximum count	1	2
Total birds	2	7

Sandwich Tern – monthly counts from Dunster Beach to Porlock Bay						
	April	May	June	July	August	September
No. dates recorded	2	1	4	1	5	4
Maximum count	1	2	9	3	5	2
Total	2	2	16	5	14	6

Two other inland records: three, Chard Reservoir, June 28th, and four, Ham Wall, September 29th.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

(including "Commic" Tern *St. hirundo/paradisaea*)

Fairly common passage-migrant or storm-vagrant, and occasional summer visitor. Has bred.

Breeding-season record: for the second year running a pair bred successfully at a site within the Avalon Marshes. Breeding was first suspected in early June and confirmed on September 1st, when an adult was watched feeding a recently fledged juvenile (JAH).

Spring passage: one, Durleigh Reservoir, April 19th; a further 29 at seven sites up to the 30th, including eight at Berrow on 26th; 121 on 21 days in May, but in general another poor spring; mostly in ones and twos, the only higher counts being on 16th, when 73 passed Berrow and there were 11 at Shapwick Heath East; apart from breeding pair, only two June records, of two at Cheddar Reservoir on 10th and one at Durleigh on 28th.

Autumn passage much better than in 2007: five, Durleigh, July 31st; total of 257 on 37 days in August/September, highest counts being of 17 at Sutton Bingham, August 4th and September 5th, 35 at Shapwick Heath (East) on September 1st, and 17, Dunster Beach/Minehead, on 11th; the last was one at Meare Heath, October 3rd.

There was no specific identification of 161 birds in spring and 30 in autumn.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii*

Very rare passage-migrant or storm-vagrant.

One in company with other terns off Huntspill Sea Wall, May 4th (TR).

The first since 1998, and the tenth County record.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Fairly common passage-migrant or storm-vagrant.

Spring passage: 44 off Berrow and one at Torr Works Reservoir, April 23rd; a further 74 at eight sites up to May 14th, the only double-figure counts being from Berrow in May - 16 on 4th and 27 on 8th.

Autumn passage: one, Ham Wall, July 17th; from August 19th to 31st, total of 114 along coast, including an impressive 110 off Hurlstone Point in the afternoon of the 30th; about 40 in September, mainly along coast from the Parrett to Greenaleigh Point, but also from Cheddar, Durleigh and Sutton Bingham Reservoirs and Shapwick Heath (East); three single birds in October, at Sutton Bingham on the 2nd and 7th and at Shapwick on 4th.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Fairly common offshore visitor or storm-vagrant. May have formerly bred.

Only one record away from the west of the County: one in Parrett Estuary off Steart, October 3rd.

Guillemot – monthly counts from Dunster Beach to Porlock Bay									
	Jan	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of dates recorded	1	1	4	8	3	1	2	5	4
Maximum count	2	1	2	12	4	2	1	7	3
Total birds	2	1	5	37	7	3	2	12	7

RAZORBILL *Alca torda**Fairly common offshore visitor or storm-vagrant.*

Razorbill – maximum monthly counts from Dunster Beach to Porlock Weir							
	Jan	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Nov	Dec
No. of dates recorded	1	1	3	7	1	5	3
Maximum count	5	2	3	33	5	2	4
Total birds	5	2	7	84	5	5	8

AUK sp.

The following auks not specifically identified as Guillemots or Razorbills were recorded along the coast from Minehead to Hurlstone Point.

	Jan	Mar	Jun	Jul	Nov	Dec
No. of dates recorded	1	2	3	2	6	4
Maximum count	8	4	9	8	25	20
Total birds	8	1	17	9	52	31

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle**Rare offshore winter visitor or storm-vagrant.*

One flew west, Minehead, September 7th (RLM, JLT). Only one other September record, on the 2nd in 1923.

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica**Rare offshore visitor or storm-vagrant.*

One flew east at 08.30hrs, June 17th, in company with two Guillemots, before returning west on its own 17 minutes later (RLM).

ROCK DOVE (feral form) *Columba livia**Fairly common resident breeder.*

This species continues to be ignored by most observers, with reports submitted only from the following places: Priddy and Charterhouse; Berrow (where noted as being common and present all year), Pawlett Hams, Steart and Knighton; Bridgwater; Taunton, Wellington, Tonedale and Stogursey; and various sites in the Minehead/Dunster Beach area.

Several counts of over 100 birds in Taunton, the highest being of 160 on October 24th; the next highest count was of 80 in Bridgwater in December.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas**Fairly common resident breeder; also winter visitor and presumably passage-migrant.*

The number of records submitted was similar to that in 2007; there are few indications of population trends and those are mixed. In the Withypool area, DKB notes that the population appears to be in recession, with 39 records in 2006 (96 birds), but only 11 (20 birds) in 2007 and only eight (nine birds) in 2008. On the other hand, six pairs in the Crewkerne area were the best for several years (AJP).

Breeding-season records, with * where nesting confirmed: Bruton, Mells Park Estate, Coleford, Newbury, Holcombe Wood and Gurney Slade; Priddy and Charterhouse; Breaun Down; Upper Axe Valley; Kennard Moor, Street, Meare Heath, Catcott Lows, Burtle, Tealham Moor and Woolavington; Bawdrip Level and Combwich*; Burrowbridge, West Sedge Moor, Wet Moor, Kingsbury Episcopi and Hambridge; Butleigh; Sutton Bingham Reservoir, Crewkerne area (six pairs)*, Dinnington, Ludney, Dowlish Wake, Horton Cross, Broadway and Chard; Curland, Robin Hood's Butts, Luxhay Reservoir and Trickey Warren; East Lyng, Taunton, North

Newton, Fordgate, Preston Bowyer, Nynhead and Wellington; Knighton, Lilstock, Strington, Nether Stowey and Holford; Raleigh's Cross, Charget and Wimbleball Lake; Simonsbath, Withypool, Hayes Wood, Tarr Steps, Great Birchleeve Wood and Hawkridge.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident breeder; also winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Confirmed breeding records only from: Berrow ("a common breeder"), Steart, Pilton, Crewkerne area (where nesting was confirmed in six tetrads, but breeding numbers were reported as being low), Chard, and Nynhead (up to 20 pairs). Again the upward trend in reporting continued, however, with records submitted from 124 sites.

Flocks of 100 or more in the first winter period: 120, Steart, January 2nd; 150, Bossington, 6th; 800, on oilseed rape, Hinkley Point, 17th; 350, West Huntspill, February 5th; 1,100, Mells, on 6th; 100, West Coker, on 20th; 118, Holford and 105, Strington, on 22nd; and 500, Haselbury Plucknett, March 11th.

Flock of 300 on stubble, Kennard Moor, September 28th. Autumn movements less impressive than in some recent years, but still included: 250, south over Emborough Pond, October 10th, and another 150 over there on 28th; 235 south over Berrow, on 25th; and 150, Brean Down, November 1st.

Flocks in second winter period included: 500, Bilbrook, November 5th; 195, Red Post Cross (south of Kingsdon), on 9th; 300, Langham Hill, on 18th; 240, Westford (near Wellington), December 6th; and at least 500, Ellicombe, on 21st.

Impressive though some of these numbers are, they all pale into insignificance compared to the astounding number of at least 9,000 put up out of the woods above West Sedge Moor by the report from a wildfowler's gun, December 6th (NPW). What a sight that must have been! This was at least three times larger than any known Somerset count: the previous record was of a mere 3,000 in the same area on January 1st, 1988. They were said to have gathered "to gorge themselves on acorns", as these had perhaps been doing.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common resident breeder and occasional passage-migrant.

The hope expressed in *SB* 2007 was partly fulfilled; the number of records submitted declined again to 116, but came from a wider spread of localities (61).

Confirmed breeding records: Bruton (at least 16 pairs), Berrow ("a common breeder"), Lilstock, Crewkerne (two pairs confirmed to have bred and at least 26 pairs present and probably breeding in area), and Street. Pairs noted at many other localities without breeding being proved.

On Exmoor, DKB thought that "there has been a marked decline over the last ten years, in numbers if not in actual distribution", and hinted at a reason, noting that "the presence of horses may be useful to them, now that grain is better guarded than it once was".

Counts over ten: 18, Hawkwell Cross, March 8th; 13, Strington, May 25th; 14, Knighton, July 19th; 29, Dunster Hawn, September 4th; 74, Minehead Marshes, November 4th; 24, Tonedale, 20th.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Rare migrant breeder, perhaps now extinct; also passage migrant.

Four records in May, all of single birds: Brean Down, on 5th (RLM); near Ilchester, on 16th (BES); on Mendip at G.B. Gruffy NR, on 23rd (JBI); and at Withycombe, on 25th/26th (JRi). One was heard purring on Kennisham Hill, July 2nd, and another or the same seen around that date (B. Hay *per* DKB).

A better showing than in most recent years, including (despite *SB* 2007) a glimmer of hope that this declining species may still breed in the County, at least occasionally.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Locally fairly common migrant breeder, and passage migrant, chiefly in spring. Greatly decreased in lowland farmland.

First record: Millennium Wood, Selworthy, April 9th.

A total of 165 records, well down on 2007. The vast majority, unsurprisingly, were of calling males and dated from the second half of April and May.

The RSPB conducted a full survey of Exmoor for the species in May, and recorded 65 males in the National Park, 43 of which were in Somerset; this was exactly the same result as in 2002. The largest concentrations were

19 in north-east Exmoor, from the Hawkcombe Head to Hillhead Cross road east to Dunkery Hill, and five around Winsford Hill. Records were also submitted by individual observers from 45 localities in the west; exactly how many of those from Exmoor sites duplicate the survey results is a difficult question to answer, other than that there must be a large degree of overlap. However, records from at least nine specific localities fall outside the broad areas identified by the RSPB, including Wimbleball Lake, Selworthy, Porlock, and Brushford.

The Levels remain the other stronghold for the species, with many records (often duplicates) from the Avalon Marshes, and also from Tealham/Tadham Moors, Bawdrip Level, Walpole (two males chasing a female), King's Sedge Moor SSSI, Greylake Reserve, Moorlinch Moor, North Moor, Moorland, Earlake Moor, Wet Moor, and West Sedge Moor.

Away from these areas, Cuckoos are rare birds in many places now. In the east, they were only recorded from two localities: Bayford (near Wincanton) and Coleford, though the latter area may have harboured more than one bird.

On Mendip, only three records (one of two birds) from Black Down and Rowberrow Warren.

In the south, records (all of single birds) from 13 sites, over half in the Ilminster/Chard area, at Over Stratton, West Moor (Hambridge), Ilminster, Donyatt, Crock Street, Broadway and Combe St Nicholas, and isolated records from Yeovil, Ilchester, Crewkerne, and Hatch Beauchamp. Recorded from three sites in the Wellington area, but none on Blackdowns.

Only four Quantock records of single birds: Broomfield Hill, West Bagborough, Bagborough Plantation, and Lowsey Thorn.

Last record: one flushed from roadside, Wilmersham Common, July 20th.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Uncommon and now very local resident breeder.

Breeding-season records, with * where nesting confirmed: Rookham and Stock Hill; Upper Axe Valley, Draycott Moor and Knowle Moor; East Brent, Mark, Mark Moor; Pilton *, Kennard Moor, Cinnamon Lane, Ham Wall, Shapwick Heath (in tin shed on Noah's Lake), Burtle, Edington Moor and Tealham Moor; Butleigh Moor, Greylake Reserve, Moorland and Othery*; Hamdon Hill and Ilton; Cannington, Hinkley Point, Williton, Porlock and Exford *.

Also recorded outside breeding season at: Cary Moor, Hadspen, Creech Hill, Bruton, Batcombe, Charlton (Kilmersdon), Coleford and Nettlebridge; Priddy Mineries, Priddy, Rodney Stoke, Cheddar Head, Charterhouse and Chapel Allerton; Steart, Wall Common, Stockland Bristol and Otterhampton; Launcherley, Queen's Sedge Moor, Westhay Moor, Meare Heath, Shapwick, Catcott Lows, Chilton Moor, Liberty Moor, Tadham Moor and Gold Corner; Bawdrip Level, Huntworth, King's Sedge Moor SSSI, Westonzoyland and North Moor; West Sedge Moor, Muchelney, Wet Moor and King's Moor; Cary Fitzpaine and East Lydford; Martock, Donyatt, Henlade, Creech St Michael and Fordgate; Combe Florey, Crowcombe and Halsway; Bratton, Selworthy, Winsford, Simonsbath and Hawkwell Cross.

Casualties: feathers found spread over two fields at Leigh upon Mendip in February probably belonged to one evicted from an owl box by a Tawny Owl, and possibly killed by it; one found dead on road, Muchelney, April 4th.

Instances of owls being killed by other owls are not uncommon. Mikkola (*Owls of Europe* 1983) considered that for hole-nesting species interspecific competition for suitable nest sites may be a more important factor in such instances than predation for food. Interestingly, however, his literature search produced only one recorded case of a Barn Owl being killed by a Tawny.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Uncommon and increasingly local resident breeder.

A total of 113 records submitted, from 66 sites, up from 88 and 46 respectively in 2007. It is likely that increased observer effort (particularly BTO *Atlas* fieldwork) is largely, if not wholly, responsible for this increase.

Breeding-season records, with * where nesting confirmed: Cary Moor (up to three pairs) and Wyke Champflower (two); Farleigh Hungerford, Faulkland and on Avon boundary at Hassage Farm; Mells Park Estate (probably two pairs), Edford Wood, Coleford, Holcombe and Nettlebridge; Cheddar Reservoir and Mark; Butt Moor and Kennard Moor/Cinnamon Lane (four pairs, of which three were successful)*; Westhay, Burtle, Catcott, Tealham Moor and Woolavington; Stathe, Curry Rivel and West Moor (Hambridge); Butleigh*, Kingsdon Wood* and High Ham; Yeovil Marsh, Lopen, Ilminster, Ilford, Stewley, Perry Street and Chard

Junction (two pairs)*; Steart* and Otterhampton*; Tuckerton (North Newton)*; Holford*; Williton (three, with young heard at one site)*; and Timberscombe.

Additionally recorded outside the breeding season at: Coleford (three other sites), Neighbourne, and Nettlebridge (another site); Knowle Moor and Alston Sutton (Stone Allerton); Launcherley, Meare, Shapwick; Moorland; West Sedge Moor, Long Load, Muchelney and Hambridge; Somerton; Cannington, Combwich, Steart (second site), Stolford, Knighton, Stringston, Stogursey, Kilve and East Quantoxhead; and Wootton Courtenay.

Negative reports from previously occupied sites at Creech St Michael and Fitzhead.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Common resident breeder.

Breeding-season records, with * where nesting confirmed: Bayford, Leigh upon Mendip, Mells Park Estate, Edford Wood, Nettlebridge, Coleford and Ham; Rowberrow Warren; Kennard Moor, Meare Heath and Burtle; Butleigh; Millwater*, Over Stratton*, Ilminster (two pairs), Ilford*, Chard, Combe St Nicholas, Hatch Beauchamp, West Monkton*, Taunton and Wellington*; Broomfield, Cockercombe*, Hodder's Combe and Slaughterhouse Combe; Croydon Hill, Williton* and Carhampton; Minehead, Bratton (one or two pairs), Woodcombe, Hopcott Common*, North Hill*, Bury Castle, Porlock and Porlock Parks; Silly Bridge, Exford, Old Barrow Plantation, Tarr Steps, Ashwick, Dane's Brook and Hawkwell Cross.

One road casualty: Chard, June 1st.



Long-eared Owl

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Rare resident breeder; scarce winter visitor and passage-migrant.

In first winter period at least seven or eight were seen for a few days in March at Thorney (Mrs R. Dobson) and one was near Lower Rodhuish on March 27th (RHD).

Two confirmed breeding records this year: adult seen and young clearly heard calling near the traditional Quantock site, June 30th, during a survey looking for the species (AHA); and a pair bred on the east coast of Bridgwater Bay, at the same site as in 2005, two juveniles being heard calling on July 31st and into early August (JJP, BES).

Two other spring/summer records: one in suitable habitat near Holford, May 31st (NEW); and one on Somerton Moor, June 16th, being mobbed by small birds at its daytime roost in willows (JAH).

Two records in autumn and second winter period: one flew over Berrow village on September 27th (JJP); and one perched on a hedge near Croscombe, December 17th (JHa).

A welcome return for this species after a couple of lean years.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Uncommon and irregular winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has bred.

Eleven records in first winter period (singles unless otherwise indicated): Wet Moor, January 1st, flushed by a Hen Harrier (!); Wall Common, also on 1st; three, West Sedge Moor, 13th (one still present February 10th); Burtle Moor, January 24th and 29th, and February 12th; Long Holcombe, March; Witcombe Bottom, March 9th; two, Parrett Estuary and Steart, on 10th; Kennard Moor, on 14th.

Several spring records, involving at least four birds: one lingering in Brean/Axe Estuary area in April and May; Meare Heath, April 10th; Berrow, on 15th and 27th; Withypool Common, May 10th. Also an unusual summer record: one at North Moor, Moorland, July 17th.

None then until October 10th, when one flew across the Parrett Estuary from Steart to the Brue; perhaps the bird seen regularly around the Huntspill Sluice/Sea Wall area, November 11th-23rd, when found dead, possibly killed by a Peregrine. Ten others in second winter period: West Sedge Moor, November 17th; Long Holcombe, November, and three there, December 3rd (D. Smith of Exmoor NPA); four, King's Sedge Moor, from 22nd to 31st; Charterhouse and Kinsford Gate, both December 24th.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Locally fairly common migrant breeder; occasional passage-migrant.

Recorded in May on Mendip, but no exact arrival dates; all other records were June 1st-August 4th.

Breeding-season records – numbers are of churring males unless otherwise stated:

Mendips

Stock Hill/Priddy Mineries: five.

Black Down: three.

Rowberrow Warren: four, but had decreased to two by late July.

Blackdowns

Staple Hill: at least two, and birds seen on July 3rd may have been juveniles.

North Down Plantation: two.

Quantocks

Cockercombe: two.

Vinny Combe: one.

Staple Plain: two or three.

Herridge Combe: one.

Brendons & Exmoor

Haddon Hill: one near Hadborough Plantation, where probably bred.

Galloping Bottom: visit permitted this year, but none heard in poor conditions.

Kennisham Hill: none heard in poor conditions; Collyhill Plantation and Langham Hill Plantation not visited.

Croydon Hill massif: about 16 in reasonably full coverage from Slowley Wood west to Timberscombe Common, north to Rodhuish Common, Broadwood Plantation and Nutcombe Bottom; some formerly suitable sites have lost their attraction with the growth of timber.

Withycombe Hill: only one contact.

Gallax Hill/Bat's Castle Camp: nest found on Bat's Castle in July.

North Hill/Selworthy Beacon/Bury Castle/Lynch Combe: total of about ten, all north of road except on Bury Castle; these included two on private land along north edge of Moor Wood.

Dunster-Tivington ridge: at least six, of which three were on Alcombe Common.

Little Headon Plantation: one.

Crawter/Ley Hill/Doverhay Plantation/Halse Combe: three.

Cloutsham Ball and Webber's Post to moorland above Brockwell/Ford: about nine, but none this year on

Cloutsham Ball or in Luccombe Plantation.

Culbone Hill area: none found in coverage of Met Combe, Stent Hill and Squallacombe; some possible sites cannot be visited.

Total of about 48 churring males west of Quantocks; there were 45 in 2007.

Like 2007, a generally poor year. Every effort was made, but cold and rainy weather in July frustrated observers, and it is likely that few second broods were successful; several well-known sites deserted by August (DKB, RJB, RHD, JRi, CS *et al.*). As in 2007, the persistent north-west winds often made it hard to pick up distant birds. The weather occasionally relented for long enough to enable coverage of major Exmoor sites; the RSPB Exmoor Survey Team were able to help the completion of thorough searches on Croydon Hill/Black Hill and along the Dunster-Tivington ridge. Second visits were seldom possible.

In 2008, a start was made with a scheme to extend coverage with help from Exmoor NPA volunteers.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Common migrant breeder and passage-migrant.

First record was of one at Ham Wall on the notably early date of April 8th. This is some ten days earlier than the ten-year average given in *SB* 2007, though there were only a trickle of records after that until a more substantial arrival in the last week of April. The few comments received suggest a fairly normal set of arrival dates at breeding sites, though one observer noted that his local birds were “unusually late”.

Breeding records of pairs: Knighton, Bruton (11-12, “population stable, but fewer young on the wing this year”), Creech St Michael (at least ten), Wellington (24, “down on recent years”), Coleford (ten, and two young found dead), Street (eight), West Coker (two), Crewkerne (two), Wadeford (two).

Spring flocks: two totalling 220 birds over Shapwick Heath, April 27th, and about 300 over there on 30th; 150, Brean Down, May 3rd, and 100 on 17th; 64 east past Hurlstone Point on 3rd, and 150 there on 29th; about 280, Steart, 18th. Only a few midsummer feeding flocks, most notably 200 flying south over the Axe Estuary, July 6th – one of these was a partial albino with white on belly and upperparts (RJH).

No flocks over 50 on return passage. The last record was of one over Brean Down on the relatively early date of September 4th. Both of these facts are consistent with the impression of a poor breeding season.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Uncommon resident breeder: perhaps winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Breeding season records, with * where nesting confirmed: Bayford, Mellis Park Estate*, Ham (Coleford) and Holcombe Wood; Wookey, Wookey Hole, Cheddar and Cross Moor; Apex Park (Highbridge) and Hinkley Point; Kennard Moor, Godney Pools, Westhay, Ham Wall, Meare Heath, Shapwick Heath, Canada Farm, Edington Moor, Tealham Moor and Tadham Moor; Bridgwater and Durleigh Reservoir*; Henley, King’s Sedge Moor SSSI, Greylake Reserve and Moorland; Wet Moor; Nine Springs, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, West Coker, Millwater, Dillington, Broadway, Chard Reservoir and Hatch Beauchamp; Otterhead Lakes; Creech St Michael, Hankridge Farm*, French Weir and Bradford-on-Tone; Wimpleball Lake and Haddeo Valley below Bury; Williton and Dunster Hawn; Exford and Draydon Wood.

Recorded at an additional 37 localities outside the breeding season.

BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster*

Very rare visitor.

Two records: two lucky observers independently located a flock of nine flying east over Old Cleeve and Five Bells, April 26th (CG, WJW), and one seen briefly at Steart, May 20th (PJE).

The first since two in 1997, when there was a notable influx nationally; with only two other singles prior to that, this year’s records more than treble the number of individuals seen in the County.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

Rare passage migrant, chiefly in spring. Has bred (last in 1977).

Four records of single birds, the first and last in gardens: photographed near Bishops Lydeard, April 17th (J. Morris); Great Tom’s Hill, 29th (Mrs England *per* DKB); Shapwick Heath, May 13th (NPW); and North Wootton, September 7th and 10th (Mrs J. Keene *per* JAH, S. Slater).

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Rare passage-migrant, chiefly in autumn. Formerly migrant breeder.

Six records, with a total of seven birds: Trull/Staplehay, April 20th (J. Webber *per* WJW); Kennard Moor, August 30th (GU); one, Minehead Golf Course, September 4th-12th and two seen on 11th (CG, JRW *et al.*); Wavering Down (G. Jones) and Blue Anchor (CG) on 21st; and Oake on 22nd (S. Anderson). The last was shown on TV as background to the BBC Points West weather forecast!

The highest annual total of modern times; the spring record was the first since 2005.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Common resident breeder.

Confirmed breeding at: Bruton (at least two pairs), Fairy Cave, Mells Park Estate, Ham (Coleford), Berrow, Combwich, West Sedge Moor, Butleigh, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, Millwater, Chard Junction, Tatworth, Wambrook, Chard Reservoir, Quants, West Monkton and Collyhill Wood.

Recorded at 82 other sites in breeding season; most of these records presumably also indicate breeding pairs.

The RSPB Exmoor Survey in May located 16 birds, but not all in Somerset. Ten were noted in Orchardleigh Park, February 23rd.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Common resident breeder; scarce passage-migrant.

A small increase in the number of records, up to 368 from 328 in 2007.

Breeding proved at the following sites: Faulkland, Kilmersdon and Kilmersdon Common; Mells Park Estate, Holcombe Wood, Coleford and Nettlebridge valley (three pairs); Rowberrow Warren; Berrow; Mark; Butleigh; Crewkerne (two pairs), Chaffcombe, Chard Reservoir (two pairs) and Chard; Staple Fitzpaine, Dommatt Wood (two pairs), Britty Common, Otterhead Lakes, Buckland St Mary, Lowton, Buckland Wood, Wellington (up to six pairs) and Langford Heathfield; Knighton; West Hill Wood (Wimbleball Lake), Timberscombe, Woodcombe, Worthy Combe, Horner Wood, Simonsbath, Dulverton and Hawkwell Cross.

As expected with this often noisy and obvious species, it was also recorded at another 85 sites in the breeding season, and 107 outside that period (with much overlap between the two).

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor*

Uncommon resident breeder; decreasing.

Only 17 records from 14 sites: Bruton, Orchardleigh Park, Mells Park, Edford Wood, Nettlebridge, Ham (west of Coleford) and Holcombe Wood; Haybridge; Kennard Moor; Langford Heathfield; Porlockford, Horner Wood, Culbone, and Exford.

No confirmed breeding records, but drumming recorded in several cases, and this notoriously sedentary species can be assumed to be at least attempting to breed at most recorded sites. Most records were from the first winter period, and two in August were the only ones in the second half of the year, but this probably reflects the timing of observer effort to record this often elusive bird.

The complete lack of records from Quantock combes is perplexing.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

Rare passage-migrant, chiefly in autumn. Formerly bred.

One record: one east of South Cheriton, February 11th (DJC).

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Locally common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has decreased in many areas.

Breeding-season records of singing males or pairs: in east, where coverage is very patchy, recorded only on Mells Down (up to three), at various places around Kilmersdon and Charlton (up to 14) and at Stratton Moor (one); on Mendip, where the Survey of 2007 had shown it to be locally fairly common, only one on Black Down, but ten each at two sites near Charterhouse; on coast from Brue Estuary to Stolford, only one or two along

Huntspill Sea Wall, about eight on Pawlett Hams, up to 25 around Steart, and one or two at Stolford. On Levels, the following important counts of singing males: 32, Tealham Moor; 15, King's Sedge Moor SSSI, 28 on Greylake Reserve, and 11, Moorlinch Moor; 16, Curry Moor; 273, West Sedge Moor; 22, West Moor, Hambridge; and 19 on Wet Moor. Other counts of at least four on Levels and coasts and at other sites in the south and south-west: Upper Axe Valley, Godney Moor, North Moor (Moorland), Somerton Moor, Stan Moor, Athelney to Ham, Langport to Muchelney, Midelney, Long Load, Brearley Farm (Ash), Snowdon Hill (12), Curland, Lilstock to Kilve, and Porlock Marsh.

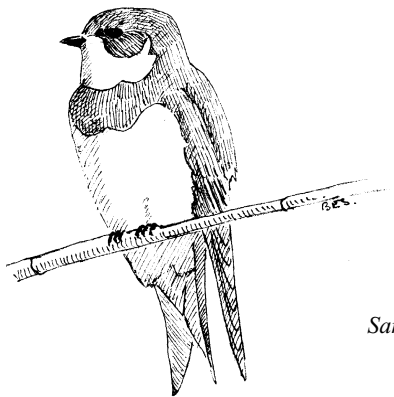
In partial survey of Quantocks, 32 in song, of which eight south of Crowcombe Park Gate and 24 north of there, the highest concentration being of four on Thorncombe Hill.

The RSPB Moorland Survey found 2,470 territories on Exmoor and the Brendons, including Devon. Densest concentrations on Somerset side were on Lucott Hill, from Larkbarrow to Warren, from Wintershead to Squallacombe, and on South Common (Oare), Horsen Hill, Halscombe Allotment/Withypool Hill/Worth Hill and Brady Moor, which all had three to four singing birds per square kilometre. Outside main area, present on Haddon Hill and Rodhuish Common (four each), Selworthy Beacon (six) and Ley Hill (two). A slight decline along the fringes of the Moor was perhaps due to increased sward length; one may also suspect a recent fall in the swaling of heather moorland.

In first winter period the following flocks were substantial: 160, Steart; 80 on stubble, Kennard Moor; 34 on fallow in ST4509 (East Crewkerne); 110 on stubbles west of Chard; 31, Broadway; 23, Minehead Golf Course; and up to 57 on stubbles from Bossington to Porlock Marsh.

Not one August record was submitted, but in fact some birds remain on Exmoor until at least September. Notes on autumn passage include: 55, Hinkley Point, September 23rd; 15 south, Bawdrip, October 9th; a total of only 24, West Myne, in 14 days' observation after dawn, October 6th-19th, when birds were evenly divided between those coasting westward and those coming high off Channel and continuing south; 120, Hinkley Point to Lilstock, October 17th, and around Lilstock, November 8th; and total of 102 moving south, Axe Estuary to Berrow, October 18th-November 8th.

In second winter period, highest counts were all in December: 40, Steart; 34, south of Crewkerne; 120, Curry Mallet; and 85, Porlock Marsh.



Sand Martin

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Uncommon migrant breeder; common passage-migrant.

First arrivals: three, Meare Heath, and one, Shapwick Heath, March 2nd. These were swiftly followed by build-up on Avalon Marshes and Cheddar Reservoir: from 15th to 30th, counts of up to 500 on Meare Heath and 300 at Cheddar; smaller numbers elsewhere, including a movement of 250 over Black Down on 18th. A second wave arrived from April 3rd to 8th: 500 passed northward at Cheddar on 5th; on next two days there were 500 at Meare Heath and 750 at Ham Wall/Shapwick Heath. Numbers continued high until 21st, by which time almost all seemed to have passed on, apart from a few stragglers up to mid May. Highest counts away from Levels were of 130 at Steart on April 4th, 70 at Wimbleball Lake on 5th, 120 at Sutton Bingham Reservoir on 7th, 150 at Durlough Reservoir on 9th and 50 at Dunster Beach on 20th.

Breeding confirmed or suspected at following sites: three (possibly four) pairs in vertical face of old spoil-heap on Rock's Drove, Glastonbury Heath, were first breeders in this area since 1977 (JAMcG); at least ten pairs in drain-holes, Ashford Reservoir; three at Creech St Michael, which were again flooded out, and five at Bathpool; up to three, East Nynhead; about 12, and perhaps as many as 22, ARC Sandpits, Greenham; up to ten present on Barle from Sherdon Hutch to Landacre Bridge, though breeding was probably unsuccessful because of poor weather and the usual disturbance by picnic parties; at least one pair at Hele Bridge, a new site. No breeding proved on Barle below Landacre, though up to five may have attempted to colonise the left bank opposite Hayes Wood; one or two again frequented Exebridge Lakes throughout the summer and may have bred on a private sector of the Exe near there, in either Devon or Somerset. No records from Axe at Chard Junction.

Thin autumn passage from mid July to September 23rd, when the last bird was seen at Combe St Nicholas. Apart from breeding sites at Ashford Reservoir and Greenham, where some remained until at least late August, only counts of over ten were from Shapwick Heath, where there were 100 on September 2nd and 20 on 9th.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common migrant breeder and passage-migrant.

The first were four at Westbury-sub-Mendip on February 9th (JBI), which were the fifth record for that month; it snowed the following night!

Apart from these, first records from Wet Moor and Mole's Chamber on March 17th. Main passage did not begin until first week of April, when 30 at Cheddar Reservoir on 2nd and 40 at Brean Down on 4th. A sudden increase on the 20th brought a stream of 3,000 to the east at Wall Common and 2,000 at Brean Down. On 21st, 250 at Torr Works Reservoir, but numbers were generally rather low, with little movement after May 3rd.

Little information on breeding success, but the following records were of interest: 30 at Lodge Farm, Bayford, in June; 44 young reared from seven pairs at riding stables in Bawdrip; about 20 pairs in Crewkerne parish, but few juveniles fledged; first juveniles fledged at Otterhampton on June 12th; four pairs bred at the high Exmoor Forest site of Driver Farm.

Autumn passage and local assemblies largely from mid August to third week of September. By far the highest count was of 2,000 over Cary Moor reedbed, September 12th. Other counts included: up to 300 around Bratton in late August; in afternoon of September 18th, 200 moving ESE over Brean Down in a minute and a half; on 20th, 450 moving south-east over Vale of Taunton Deane in 45 minutes. Although most had gone by late September, there were two October records of sizeable flocks: 100 at Catcott Lows on 6th and 200 at Brean Down on 8th. Stragglers persisted to November 4th, and there were three later records of single birds: in Brue Estuary on 29th, at Westhay on December 2nd, and at Bishops Lydeard on 24th.

A Swallow at Meare Heath on March 28th, 2007, had underparts and under-wing coverts of a wholly deep-reddish colour, resembling the race *H. r. transitiva* from Lebanon, Syria and Israel, or even *H. r. savignii*, the resident Egyptian race (JAH). Such a variation is occasionally found outside those areas, and the only race yet admitted to the British List is the nominate *H. r. rustica* (see *BWP*). This record was omitted in error from *SB* 2007.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Common migrant breeder and passage-migrant.

First arrivals: single birds at Bayford, March 16th, and at Shapwick Heath on 25th; ten, Brean Down, on 28th. Very limited and erratic spring passage, from April 8th to end of May, the highest concentrations being at end of period: "hundreds" at Hinkley Point on May 20th and 200 at Hurlstone Point on 31st.

Reports on breeding success varied widely. At Crewkerne, AJP thought it the worst season in 40 years, with only six pairs in the whole town, but at Combwich 81 nests in village, an increase from 73 in 2007. Other counts were: 14 nests on St Hugh's Church at Charterhouse; 22 on five houses in Burtle; 27 at Ferne Animal Sanctuary, Chard; 59 in Porlock village; and 14 on one house with wide eaves at Hele Bridge. High sites on Exmoor included those at Driver Farm and Acklands. There has probably been a general withdrawal from towns and suburbia, where there is a shortage of insects and some householders take measures against the species, though destruction of nests is in fact illegal; in a dry spring there may also be little building mud. Artificial nests were used at Combe St Nicholas two years after erection.

Autumn gatherings and passage from mid August to late September. Higher counts included: 400 on wires and roofs, East Lynch, August 30th; 200, Minehead, September 7th; 220, Steart, on 17th; 160 SSE in 45 minutes, Vale of Taunton Deane, on 19th; and 300, Dunkery Hill, on 28th. Migrating flocks at Hurlstone Point included:

240 at 09.00 hrs on September 11th; a gradual build-up from 200 to 600 from 07.50 to 08.30 hrs on 21st; and 120 from 08.15 to 08.50 hrs on 27th. Smaller numbers up to the last at Torr Works Reservoir on October 12th, but some would probably have been later, as young were still being fed at nests at Taunton School and Wellington in early October.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus richardi*

Rare passage-migrant, chiefly in autumn; very rare winter visitor.

Two records of single birds: west of Hinkley Point Power Station, October 16th (DJC); and on King's Sedge Moor, two fields east of Greylake Bridge, November 25th (IH, GS *et al.*).

These bring the County total to about 50.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Uncommon migrant breeder; also passage-migrant. Has decreased.

First arrivals: five, Brean Down, April 8th. They were followed by six from 20th to 22nd, including three singing on the Quantocks and one south of Watchet, and single birds passing over Brean Down and Wall Common.

Breeding-season records, with number of singing males/pairs where more than one: on Mendip, only one at Priddy Mineries, but at least five on Rowberrow Warren, where breeding proved; on Blackdowns, single birds in May at Dommatt Wood and Mount Fancy; on Quantocks, at Broomfield Hill (five), Cothelstone Hill (two), Bagborough Plantation (three), Lydeard Hill, Marrow Hill, Robin Upright's Hill, Frog Hill (two), Lady's Combe/Dowsborough (three), Hare Knap and Stert Combe (two each), and Hodder's Combe.

The RSPB Survey found 180 territories on the Brendons and Exmoor, a recovery since 2002, but still 8% lower than the 1992 figure; about 160 of these were in Somerset. In detail that follows, about six territories have been added from members' observations and from EMP, which found 32 singing males, almost all of which were also recorded by RSPB. Some suitable sites are outside the Moorland Survey Area, and one or two additional males have been added from these to the RSPB's figures. On Brendons, Haddon Hill held at least six, and perhaps as many as ten; RSPB's distribution map was at odds with other observers' locations! Elsewhere on Brendons: two on Willett Hill; at least 12 on Rodhuish Common/Black Hill/Croydon Hill/Monkham Hill, of which two were at sites not covered by RSPB Survey; and five on Gallax Hill/Bat's Castle. On western coastal heaths: eight along ridge from Dunster to Tivington, where not all suitable sites were covered by any observations; three on North Hill; one in Selworthy Combe; three each on Ley Hill and Met Combe/North Common; and single birds in Pitt Combe, Withycombe (Oareford) and Diddy Combe. On Exmoor proper: 11 north of Robin How, in North Dunkery combes and around Webber's Post and Cloutsham Ball; 15 from Codsend Moors to Prescott Down; five down Chetsford Water from Almsworthy Common to Nutscale; one in Weir Water and two at Tom's Hill; at least four in Curr Cleeve or on Room Hill and Road Common; nine on Varle Hill and Ashway Side, and ten round other edges of Winsford Hill; one at Blackpitts and 13 from Warren Bridge down to Orchard Bottom and its side-combes; three in Barlynch Wood (RSPBW); nine down Squallacombe and along Barle to Simonsbath; 14 along Barle and in side-combes from there to Pickedstones Bridge; four from Pickedstones to Landacre Bridge, including Brady Moor; four in Knighton Combe or on Halscombe Allotment/Worth Hill; and 11 in Long Holcombe, which provides a specially good example of the importance of tall hedgerow beeches as song-posts.

Six records of a total of nine autumn migrants, August 22nd-September 25th: two over Bruton, two over Haddon Hill, and the rest along Bridgwater Bay coasts.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Locally common resident or migrant breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

From January to mid April, 17 flocks of 20 or more, including spring migrants, the largest being: in January, 40 at Westbury-sub-Mendip, 50 at Steart, on Kennard Moor and on Wills Neck, and 54 on West Sedge Moor; in February, 35 on Cheddar Reservoir, 60 at Hinkley Point and 50 on Wet Moor; on March 17th, 50 moving east around Hinkley Point and 95 on Wick Moor, and about 65 in same areas on April 14th.

In spring and summer, the only records outside the Quantocks, Brendons and Exmoor were of the following pairs: on Mendip, 14 on Black Down, five at Stock Hill, eight at Charterhouse and one at Priddy; on Levels and Bridgwater Bay coast, six on Pawlett Hams and a few others around Parrett Estuary/Steart, eight on Tealham Moor, five on Moorlinch Moor, seven on Greylake Reserve, four on King's Sedge Moor SSSI and one at Nythe, 110 on West Sedge Moor, five on West Moor (Hambridge), and five on Wet Moor.

About 78 pairs in partial survey of Quantock tops, the highest concentration being of ten on Weacombe Hill.

The RSPB Survey found 2,486 territories on the Brendons and Exmoor, including Devon. The authors tentatively suggest a decline of 7% since 1992, with some contraction towards the core central areas and a decline around the edges and on coastal tops. On the Brendons, birds were widespread on Haddon Hill and on Rodhuish Common/Black Hill, but there were none on Withycombe Common or Gallax Hill/Bat's Castle, nor on the nearby Dunster to Tivington ridge. Birds were present on all other moorland areas, the greatest concentrations in Somerset being from Wilmersham Common and Porlock Post west to the Exford road, across the North Forest from Brendon Two Gates to Pinkworthy Pond, and on parts of the South Forest from Blue Gate west to Mole's Chamber. The distribution on Dunkery Hill and Winsford Hill (both largely heather-moorland with some gorse) was patchy, the steeper slopes of the former being largely shunned. Many were still on the Moor in September.

Most passage was from mid September to late October. At West Myne, total of 190 in regular after-dawn watches, October 6th-17th, with maximum of 68 on 9th; directions generally between south and west; very few passed later, from November 6th to 19th. On Black Down, 50 headed east, September 26th, and 127 south in two hours on October 6th. Most autumn flocks on farmland were of 20 or fewer, but the following larger numbers were reported: 200, Stratton Moor, September 19th; 40, Wick Moor, on 23rd; 50, Queen's Sedge Moor, on 26th, and 80 on Kennard Moor on 28th, the latter increasing to 200 by October 5th; 100, West Sedge Moor, September 30th; 150, Catcott Lows, October 6th; 50, Huntspill Sea Wall, on 18th; and 40, Wet Moor, on 24th.

A wide scatter of small flocks on coast and farmland in November/December, but highest counts were of only 95, on West Sedge Moor, and 70 in stubbles at Bossington. Parties in areas less commonly covered included 50 on Cary Moor, 37 at Charterhouse, 30 on Butt Moor and 42 near Castle Neroche.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage-migrant.

One (and perhaps a second) on Loxton's Marsh, January 1st, had been recorded in 2007 (DLB). Up to ten others in first winter period: one, Steart, January 12th (SMo); six at new shallow lake at Walton Heath on 14th (JAH); one at Street Heath on 20th may have been one of these (JLT); up to three, Huntspill Sea Wall, January 16th-February 6th (JAH, BJH, TR, BES).

Up to seven in autumn and second winter period: three on Huntspill Sea Wall, November 2nd (AW); one of these there or on the Brue Estuary up to 10th (TR), but on 12th four were present (BJH), which remained to the end of the year; on Meare Heath, two on December 6th (DWH) were joined by another on 7th (IH, JLT), and one was in front of the hide on 21st (JJP).

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

Uncommon resident breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Present in breeding season at following sites, with number of pairs in brackets: Brean Down (at least one bred at the tip of the Down, after six birds had been present in March); Hinkley Point (at least one pair bred); Kilve Beach (one); and Hurlstone Point (two). Coverage was much thinner than in 2007. At Hurlstone, display started as early as February 9th. Also up to three regular throughout year on Blue Anchor to Culver Cliff coast and up to five along Porlock Bay; presumably breeds somewhere along inaccessible parts of western coast.

In first winter period, only one outside breeding areas: at Huntspill Sea Wall on January 29th. Up to five regular there again from September 25th to end of year; on November 4th, numbers rose to 12, including a clearly marked example of the Scandinavian race, *A. p. littoralis* (JAH), to which most wintering birds may belong, though they can seldom be separated at this season; this is the tenth County record.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flavissima*

Uncommon migrant breeder and passage-migrant.

First arrival: one, Greylake Reserve, April 12th. From then to first week of May, slow build-up on Levels of breeding populations, and about 80 on passage at various other sites, mostly on coast, but also at Cary Moor, Torr Works and Cheddar Reservoir. These included 33 on Wall Common on April 17th and up to 20 on fields behind Dunster Beach on 20th/21st.

Breeding-season records, of pairs unless otherwise indicated: two, Pawlett Hams; one attempted nesting, Tealham Moor; four, Greylake Reserve; one, Aller Moor (Aller); one bird on Earlake Moor; pair bred, Hay Moor; 29, West Sedge Moor; pair near Long Load Pumping Station; six, Wet Moor; and up to eight males on West Moor, Hambridge. Most had left by early August, but stragglers at three of these sites until 24th.

Autumn passage from July 22nd (one over Black Down) to September 20th: total of about 75, mainly on coast from Axe Estuary to Minehead, or on Levels. These included 11 on Minehead Golf Course, August 23rd, 30 on West Sedge Moor on 26th, and ten there on September 17th. Unusual records included one in Bristol Road Cemetery, Bridgwater, August 26th, four at Wincanton Sewage Treatment Works on 31st, and one at Vobster on September 12th.

Blue-headed Wagtail *M. f. flava*

Scarce summer visitor and passage-migrant. Has bred.

Three records: male, West Sedge Moor, April 18th; two males and a female with Yellows behind Dunster Beach, on 20th; and male, Tealham Moor, May 18th.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Fairly common resident or migrant breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Breeding-season records, mainly of pairs or proved nesting: in the east, at Bruton, Rodden, Mells Park, Edford Wood and Nettlebridge; between Mendips and Poldens, only at Rodney Stoke and Cheddar Reservoir; in Central Somerset, only at Baltonsborough; on South Levels, at West Moor (Hambridge), Thorney Mill and Midelney Pumping Station; in south at Hinton (Mudford), Nine Springs, Barwick Park, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, West Coker, Millwater, Clapton, Chard Junction, Chard Reservoir, Ashford Mill (Ilton), Hort Bridge, Dowlish Wake, Pudleigh and Nimmer; in south-west, at Broadway, Creech St Michael (but breeding here not proved), West Monkton, Firepool, Goodlands Gardens, St John's Stream (Taunton), Bradford-on-Tone, Tonedale and Westford; and on Brendons at Wimbleball Dam and Hurscombe Reserve, at Chargot and Cleeve Abbey, and at Ford Farm (Wheddon Cross). Reports in late March and April from Cheddar, Kennard Moor, Bawdrip Level and Butleigh Moor were not followed by breeding records. There was a curious absence of all summer records from sites round the Quantocks and from the Blackdowns.

Exmoor records are a combination of EMP (which found 32 birds in Somerset), other members' reports and the RSPB Moorland Survey. The last, of course, covered only part of the population, amounting to an estimated 45 pairs in Somerset; many pairs are along streams or around farms below or outside the Moor. There is also some evidence (from a comparison with EMP, where streams are often followed closely by the observers) that RSPB methods tended to exaggerate numbers, since early broods may disperse along such streams, which are not themselves survey lines. Pairs or young at the following sites: at least two in Hawk Combe; Worthy Combe; perhaps seven from Chetsford Bridge, Nutscale and Pool Bridge down Horner to West Luccombe, or up East Water; near Luccombe and on Codsend Moors; three or four each in Weir Water and Chalk Water; at least seven in Somerset stretches of Badgworthy Headwaters and down to Malmsmead; at least four on Exe from Blackpitts to Westermill Farm, and at least three from Exford to Copplesham Cross; one on Quarne at Luckwell Bridge; at least 17 along whole length of Barle and tributaries from Pinkworthy Pond to Dulverton; five in Long Holcombe; two or more along the Dane's Brook; and single pairs in Upper Farley Water and Upper Hoarok Water.

There must be many unknown sites by farm ponds on lower ground and on private ground along rivers.

More widespread on lowlands from autumn to spring. In first winter period, recorded at about 15 sites where not known to breed. From August 30th to mid November, about 40 migrants along coast and at reservoirs, including eight west or south over Hinkley Point, September 14th, and seven south over Berrow, 07.00-11.00 hrs, October 12th. During same period, and from then to end of year, total of about 60 at various inland sites, almost all on lower ground; none on higher parts of Exmoor after November.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Common resident or migrant breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Very few breeding-season comments: about seven pairs attempted to nest in four kilometre squares in and around Crewkerne, but probably none successfully; three pairs bred at Wellington; one carrying food at Hurlstone Point on July 20th; high sites occupied on Exmoor Forest at Blackpitts and Acklands.

Flocks and roosting in first winter period and early spring: 20, Tesco's, Shepton Mallet, March 10th; up to 40, Cheddar Reservoir, March; 24 in one field, Moorhouse (Butleigh), January 17th, and 75 on Kennard Moor on 27th; up to 40, Stoke St Gregory Sewage Treatment Works, January/February; 90 at pre-roost gathering, Hankridge, February 9th; 85 coming in to roost, Ham Wall, on 18th, and 150 at Meare Heath on 25th. The only records clearly of migrants were of ten moving east in the morning at Hinkley Point on March 17th and 30 at Torr Works Reservoir, April 21st.

Flocks on autumn migration: at Dunster Beach, 14 on July 11th and 40, September 5th (roosting in maize) and October 5th; 34 south over Black Down from 08.00 to 10.00 hrs on 6th; 21 south at Berrow, from 07.00 to 11.00 hrs on 12th; 120 at Steart on 31st.

Gatherings in second winter period: 30, Butt Moor, December 17th; 25, Chilton Cantelo Sewage Treatment Works, on 30th; 51 in a field of sheep, Tatworth, November 16th; and up to 76, Ham Sewage Treatment Works, in December.

White Wagtail *M. a. alba*

Fairly common spring passage-migrant. May have bred.

First arrivals: two, Brean Down, March 15th. About 25 others in parties of up to five, on Levels north of Poldens and on coasts from Steart to Dunster Beach, from April 3rd to 25th, but mainly after 16th.

One with Pied Wagtails at Aller Court Farm, Aller, July 12th; an unusual summer record (JLT).

Sixteen identified in autumn, singly or in parties of up to five. All from August 30th to September 16th and on coast from Huntspill to Dunster Beach, apart from one at Cheddar Reservoir and a party of five at Wincanton Sewage Treatment Works on August 31st.

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

Rare and erratic winter visitor; of some 600 birds, about 450 were in 2005.

Three records: one on wires, Bradford-on-Tone, December 5th (*per* S.Holdsworth); on the 26th, two in East Town Lane, Pilton, moved off towards Worthy Farm (JHa), and one on Curry Moor flew from trees near Turkey Cottages towards Lyng (R.Billington).

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

Locally fairly common resident breeder. Decreasing in lowlands and perhaps elsewhere.

The following were recorded outside Brendons and Exmoor: one on the Cale at Lodge Farm, Bayford, in November, apparently the first for this corner of Somerset or for neighbouring areas of Dorset (NHC); pair on Brue at Bruton; several pairs regular along Mells River from Nettlebridge to Mells; single birds at Wookey Hole and Cheddar Reservoir in January and two at Wookey in November; two on December 20th on Keward Brook at south-west corner of Wells (RR), where the last record was in 1998, were followed by one nearby on the 25th and two at the Bishop's Palace the next day (JHa), which were probably all the same birds; one on the Pill Brook at Norton Sub Hamdon in November (*per* J. Fisher – the last record here was for breeding in 1954!); in the Axe Valley, one singing at Ammerham (as in 2007), and another at Chard Junction, probably from a known pair at the nearby Perry Street Lace Factory, though there may be two along this largely private reach; one in December on Galmington Stream in Taunton, but none this year on the parallel Sherford Stream, or along the Tone, on the Blackdowns or the Quantocks.

Most records outside the core areas are in winter, when Dippers are much easier to see on smaller streams, as the vegetation along the banks is shorter.

None on south side of Brendons, even in the Haddeo Valley. On the east and north sides, recorded from the Doniford Stream at Leigh Bridge, and from the Washford River at Roadwater and between Washford and Watchet.

Along north-east side of Exmoor, recorded from the Avill at North Hawkwell and Pitt Bridge, and from Avill Farm through Dunster Park to Loxhole Bridge; on Horner Water, many records from Nutscale down to West Luccombe, but these are rarely given precisely enough to make even a guess at the total number of pairs, though there seem to have been at least four, and others in East Water and at Bossington, but none this year in Chetsford Water; at least one pair in Hawk Combe, and one bird on Porlock Marsh in November, during neap tides; pair in Lower Weir Water in December; pair probably bred in Chalk Water; and two or three pairs from Hocombe Combe down Badgworthy to Malmsmead.

On the Exe, none above Westermill Farm; probably one pair at Riscoombe but scarce this year from Exford to Larcombe Foot, where there seemed to be only one pair, near Lyncombe; lower down, recorded from Winsford, Bridgetown and Perry Farm Bridge.

On the Barle, RSPB found one territory near Cornham Ford and another at Flex Barrow; at least 13 pairs from Pickedstones Bridge to Dulverton, about the same as in 2006 and 2007 (DKB, JRi *et al.*), to which should probably be added another on the Dane's Brook, though RSPB, surprisingly, found none in the upper sections. A November count of five from Simonsbath to Cow Castle was exceptional for this stretch (B.Mear).

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant resident breeder.

About 220 records received, far fewer than in 2007. Perhaps observers were deterred by our last year's comment that only a national computerised survey can make much sense of casual notes on a very common species.

Counts of ten or more, or made on regular basis: maximum of 47, Nettlebridge, and 26, Gurney Slade, in two-hour timed tetrads, April-June; 11 singing males, Black Down, March; 12, Rodney Stoke Wood, December; 27 pairs, Tealham Moor, May; 35 pairs, West Sedge Moor, May; 13, West Moor, Hambridge, June; up to 15, ST4408 (South Crewkerne), February-June; 14, Crock Street, Donyatt, May; 15, Broadway, June; maximum of 22, Combe St Nicholas, May, and 14 near there at Sticklepath, April; 16 singing, Hodder's Combe, May; ten, Washford to Watchet, April; and 11, Bradley Ford to Tarr Steps, April.

RSPB found 1,373 territories on Exmoor moorland (including Devon). On Exmoor Forest, and on most other habitat west of the Porlock-Exford road, largely confined to valleys, but occurs on higher ground with good heather and gorse, as from North Hill to Hurlstone and on Dunkery and Winsford Hill.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Common resident breeder.

About 193 records received, fewer than for Wren.

Counts of ten or more: 12 around Coleford, in ST6848/6849, in January, and 14, Nettlebridge, April; 15, Berrow, September; maxima of 17, ST4408 (South Crewkerne), February/March, and ten, Bratton, May. At Crewkerne, reasonably successful season, though less so than in 2007 (AJP).

RSPB found 223 territories on Exmoor moorland, of which the 50 in Devon were chiefly in coastal scrub and gorse; most sites were along moorland edge, the highest concentration in Somerset being of 24 on Winsford Hill.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant resident breeder; also passage-migrant and winter visitor.

About 260 records received.

Counts of ten or more, often in connection with BTO *Atlas*, involving a two-hour walk in a tetrad: 19 in Coleford area (ST6848/6849), January; 50, Nettlebridge, April; 51, Gurney Slade, May; 11, Fairy Cave, March, and Rodney Stoke, December; 14, Westhay Moor, January; 13, West Sedge Moor, June; 11, Nine Springs, January; maximum of 27 in ST4408 (South Crewkerne), February and October; in January, 13 at Crock Street (Donyatt), 23 at Broadway, and 18 at Combe St Nicholas; ten, Staple Hill, December; 13, Washford, April; 24, Bratton/Woodcombe, January; and 16, North Hill, February.

RSPB found 477 territories on Exmoor, of which about 357 were in Somerset, mostly along valley-bottoms.

Around Crewkerne, numbers rose in November/December, suggesting an influx; Robins usually arrive unobtrusively, before dawn.

NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Uncommon migrant breeder, and passage-migrant in spring.

First arrival: West Sedge Moor, April 3rd, an exceptionally early date. Main arrival (such as it now is!) from 14th to 26th. Singing birds at following sites, all but two within the usual limited area of Central and South-west Somerset: Billicombe Wood, Moorlinch (one); Merryfield (four on south side of airfield); Hambridge-Westport Canal below Hambridge Church (four); Isle Brewers (two); Midelney and Curry Mallet (one each); Fivehead Hill (two or three); Thurlbear Quarrylands (up to six); and Hinkley Point (three). Some other areas not visited by observers.

Last fully-dated record was on May 23rd, but one was still present in June at an unspecified site overlooking West Sedge Moor.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Uncommon passage-migrant and winter visitor. Has bred.

All single females or immatures unless otherwise stated.

No obviously overwintering birds from 2007, though one at Hinkley Point on January 2nd may have been already there in December. About 12 from early January to March 30th; although there was a gap from February

3rd to March 13th, birds could easily have been missed at Brean Down and Hinkley Point, the main sites. Most were seen singly, apart from two at Hinkley in February and up to three at Brean Down Cove in March, including a male. Four other odd birds: Rooks Bridge, January 5th; Williton, from 14th to 25th; Taunton Cricket Ground, March 18th; and Watchet, on 24th.

About 11 in autumn and second winter period, from October 14th to December 24th, but with a gap from November 19th to December 11th. At Brean Down, none until arrival of male on December 22nd; from Steart to Hinkley Point, total of about five, November 4th-December 23rd. Others, singly unless stated: Williton, October 14th-November 12th; Aller, November 3rd/4th; Bossington Beach, on 9th; two, East Coker Churchyard, on 19th; and Ham Sewage Treatment Works, December 18th.

COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Locally common migrant breeder; also passage-migrant.

First arrival: Brean Down, March 31st. Three others from April 5th to 7th, but main arrival from 12th to early May, when about 26 on passage along coasts, including five at Brean Down and four at Wall Common on 20th, and 12 inland outside present breeding areas.

The following Mendip records were the only ones outside western hills: male, Black Rock, May 9th/10th; three, including two singing males, Velvet Bottom, on 13th, and one still there on 31st. No Blackdown records, but coverage was poor.

On Quantocks, about 21 singing males or pairs, ten of which were in wooded combes of north-east (Bin Combe, Holford Combe, Hodder's Combe and their tributaries); apart from one on Halsway Hill, the rest were from Cothelstone Hill to Crowcombe Park Gate (BDG).

On Brendons and Exmoor, RSPB found 86 territories, 74 being in Somerset. Comparisons with earlier Surveys are hard to make; it was thought that in 2002 some pairs were counted beyond the true moorland boundary. There seems to have been a decline of up to 50% in higher territories, perhaps accompanied by withdrawal to a more strictly woodland habitat. The figures given combine RSPB data with other records submitted by EMP and members, mostly from woodland.

On Brendons, at least eight pairs around Wimbleball Lake (Haddon Hill, Haddeo Valley and Hurscombe Reserve); single pairs on Bird's Hill and in Collyhill Wood; four on Rodhuish Common and two on Withycombe Common.

On Exmoor and coastal outliers: single pairs on Hopcott Common and North Hill; four in Selworthy Woods and around Bury Castle; three or more in Shillett Wood and one in Porlock Parks West; about 20 pairs in and around Horner Wood, including Ley Hill, East Water and its southern tributaries and Cloutsham Ball, and taking into account contacts made by RSPBW counts; at least four in Chetsford Water/Nutscale; five on edges of south-eastern slopes of Dunkery Hill/Robin How; six on Codsend Moors; eight in Met Combe, on Hookway or in Weir Water; two in Chalk Water; five in Badgworthy Headwaters and Long Combe; two along Exe above Westermill, single pairs at Riscombe Farm, Lyncombe and West Nethercote, and three on Room Hill/Road Common; seven on Winsford Hill; along Upper Barle, single pairs at Pinkery Centre, near Acklands and at Driver Farm; two in Cornham Brake and one in Lime Combe; eight from Simonsbath to Sherdon Hutch, including three in White Water; male singing from chimney-pot at Lanacre Farm and one in Hillway Wood; ten from Pit Wood down to Tarr Steps and at least ten in woodland on both banks from there to Marsh Bridge; three on Worth Hill and two in Long Holcombe.

Early return movements included single birds on Pawlett Hams, June 24th, at Collard Hill on July 20th, on Westbury Moor on 28th and at Combwich on 30th. One or two still in Chalk Water until September 8th, and a further 14 up to October 6th, at various sites on Mendip, coast and Levels.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Locally fairly common migrant breeder; uncommon passage-migrant. Now almost entirely limited to uplands.

First arrival: Brean Down, April 20th. As in other years, slow to settle on breeding grounds, which were not fully occupied until second week in May. About 12 migrants on coasts, reservoirs and Levels, April 22nd-May 5th, and four later ones from 17th to 19th.

No breeding records for Mendip or Levels. On Quantocks, only four males seen, all within small area north of Crowcombe Park Gate: Lowsey Thorn, Hurley Beacon, Black Hill, Hare Knap and Halsway Combe. No breeding recorded on Brendons.

On Exmoor, RSPB found 411 territories, of which at least 120 were in Devon; there were only 292 in 2002. Details were as follows: on north-eastern outliers, single territories in Henners Combe and on Ley Hill; on Dunkery Hill, only three at the eastern end, all at head of Hanny Combe, but 25 along foot of north slopes between Hollow Combe and Dady Combe and seven from Codsend Moors west to Hillhead Cross; 24 in Chetsford Water and its tributaries or on Almsworthy Common; 21 in Weir Water and 30 in Chalk Water and their side-combes; 36 in Badgworthy Headwaters down to Lank Combe Foot (including 11 in Hoccombe Water within Somerset totals, though most were probably in Devon); six in Upper Farley Water or Upper Hoar oak Water; on Exe, three on Exe Plain, 18 from Exe Head Bridge down to Orchard Bottom; two on Room Hill and 16 on Winsford Hill; on the Barle and its side-combes, 16 from Pinkworthy Pond down to Simonsbath, 15 from there down to Pickedstones Bridge, 20 from Sherdon Hutch to Hillway, including Brady Moor and Dillacombe, six in Knighton Combe or Halscombe Allotment, and 11 in Long Holcombe. There appeared to be no evidence that Stonechats have been displacing Whinchats, but the latter have withdrawn over the last 30 years from outlying blocks of moorland and from parts of north-east Exmoor. The most concentrated populations are mostly on grass moorland with little gorse or on bracken slopes.

Some Exmoor breeders remained into August, the last record being in Chalk Water on the 13th. As in other recent years, widely observed on autumn passage, perhaps because of the high population on Salisbury Plain. Even allowing for some double-counting, from 70 to 80 recorded, generally singly or in groups of up to seven, but an unprecedented 24 on King's Sedge Moor on September 27th/28th (TR); apart from one on Tealham Moor on July 25th, and three on Levels or coast on August 14th, all arrivals were from 21st to early October. Most on Levels or on coast west to Dunster Beach, but a few on Mendip tops, and odd birds at Faulkland and Wellington. The last was one in Parrett Estuary on October 17th.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

Locally common resident or migrant breeder; fairly common winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has increased.

Almost 530 records received, but this figure was swollen and complicated by the RSPB Exmoor Survey.

Breeding-season records, with number of pairs or males where more than one. On Mendip, bred at Priddy Mineries and at Broadmead Quarry (Westbury-sub-Mendip), and present on Black Down (only two, despite some counts of up to nine birds in area), at Paywell Farm and Blackwell Reserve (both near Charterhouse), Ubley Warren, Cheddar Head and Draycott Sleight, and further west from Wavering Down to Crook Peak (about four). On coast: two singing males on Brean Down in April; two pairs bred successfully at Berrow, the first for 30 years (BES); one pair bred west of Hinkley Point Power Station and about three from Lilstock to East Quantoxhead. On Levels, present from April to July at the following sites: Kennard Moor (at least three families); Tealham Moor (one pair); Somerton Moor (23 males and a female in June), Butleigh Moor (12 males and a female in June), King's Sedge Moor SSSI (pair) and Moorlinch Moor (family); West Sedge Moor and Southlake Moor (single pairs); West Moor, Hambridge (two pairs), Wet Moor (pair) and King's Moor (family and another male). In south-west, pair probably bred near Tatworth, but no records from Blackdowns.

On Quantocks, where coverage was not so intensive as in 2007, at least 54 pairs/singing males, of which 12 were south of Crowcombe Park Gate (including four on Wills Neck) and the rest north from there, the main concentrations being around Wilmot's Pool, Hurley Beacon and Hare Knap, all of which held five or six pairs.

The RSPB Survey found 442 territories on Exmoor and Brendons, a slight fall from the 468 of 2002; of these, about 135 were in Devon. On Brendons, there were 25: nine on Haddon Hill, 13 on Rodhuish Common/Black Hill, and three on Gallax Hill/Bat's Castle. On north-eastern Exmoor outliers there were seven from Dunster to Tivington, 25 from North Hill to Hurlstone Point and five on Ley Hill. The main moorland areas held: 50 on Dunkery Hill from Brockwell west to Wilmersham Common and Stoke Ridge, including Codsend Moors; 18 from Ember Combe up to Almsworthy Common and north to the Toll Road; 11 in Weir Water and 12 in Chalk Water, with their side-combes; three on North Common or in Deddy Combe; 35 in Badgworthy Headwaters, including those in Hoccombe Water, which is shared with Devon; three in Upper Farley Water and nine in Upper Hoar oak Water/Long Chains Combe; two on Exe Plain and 11 from Exe Head Bridge to Orchard Bottom; 25 on Winsford Hill; on the Barle and in side-combes, 23 from Pinkworthy Pond down to Simonsbath, six from there to Pickedstones Bridge, 14 from Sherdon Hutch to Hillway, including Brady Moor and Dillacombe; 16 in Knighton Combe or on Withypool Hill, Worth Hill or the Halscombe Allotment; and five in Long Holcombe. Outside Survey Area, probably also bred at Dunster Beach and Porlock Marsh.

Stonechats were found to have close associations with valleys, gorse (which has spread in recent years along some Forest combes), taller swards and heather. They appear to have moved uphill to colonise higher areas, but have declined on coasts.

Widespread in first winter period on coasts and on Levels, though highest sites are usually deserted from October/November to March. Some notable records from this period were: one at Lodge Farm, Bayford, January; up to six, Cary Moor; in February, 11 on Kennard Moor; six on East and West Waste, and 18 on West Sedge Moor; and nine on King's Moor in January. Numbers fall on the Levels in late February and March, when the situation becomes confused, with simultaneous departures, coastal passage and vertical movements; for instance, on March 17th there were nine at Hinkley Point and three along the ridge road from Sandyway to Mole's Chamber. Many Exmoor birds are on breeding grounds from early March, but are reinforced by later arrivals.

From July, slow dispersal from higher sites. By late October most of Exmoor is deserted, though some remain to winter in sheltered spots, mostly in heather moorland with tall gorse. Quail winter records seem to be unusual, though there are generally few observers. Many casual records across Levels and on coast, increasing in late September and October. Highest concentrations on autumn passage and in second winter period: eight, Hinkley Point, September 14th and October 13th; six, Wall Common, October 18th; up to six on Cary Moor, November/December; ten on Kennard Moor, November 5th; five on Curry Moor and four on King's Moor on 9th, the latter increasing to nine by December 14th; 26, West Sedge Moor, November 17th; five, Brean Down, December 24th; and six on part of Wet Moor on 28th. In December, casual records of ones and twos outside usual areas from Faulkland, Barrington Hill, Ashill and Combe St Nicholas.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Uncommon and local migrant breeder; common passage-migrant.

First arrivals: Hinkley Point and Brean Down, March 13th. Thereafter a steady trickle of migrants, mainly on coasts and Levels, until beginning of April, the highest count being of ten males on Wavering Down, March 25th; then a marked pause from 3rd to 19th; large-scale movement resumed on 20th, with 20 on Brean Down and eight on Wall Common; further high counts of 16 on Catsford Common and nine at Williton on 20th, and 12 at Stolford on 28th; some passage continued to mid May, followed by stragglers to mid June; about 20 larger birds, presumably of Greenland race, were reported from April 26th to June 14th.

On Mendip, no confirmed breeding records, but pair may have bred at Draycott Sleight, and birds were present at two sites near Charterhouse. On Exmoor, RSPB Survey found 15 territories in Somerset, but about another eight can be added from EMP, where observers perhaps had the advantage of being able to follow linear features closely. The combined result was therefore: four at Hurlstone Point and on cliffs east from there; two in Upper Weir Water; pair in Madacombe; three pairs on or near Forest Wall in Chalk Water and Stowford Bottom; one at foot of Tom's Hill Combe; two in Upper Farley Water and five or six in Upper Hoar Oak Water, perhaps the best Wheatear territory on the Moor; one on Winsford Hill; and four in the Barle Valley: below Cornham Ford, in Drybridges Combe, near Flexbarrow and on Brady Moor. A pair may also have bred on Porlock Marsh. One on north slope of Dunkery on June 10th was perhaps a migrant.

As usual, prolonged autumn passage from early August to late October. Even allowing for duplication, over 300 recorded: 75 in August, 190 in September and 50 in October. Of these, 170 were on coast, 70 on Levels (including Cheddar Reservoir), 25 on Mendip and 45 elsewhere. Highest counts: ten, Wall Common, August 24th; eight, Minehead Golf Course, September 4th, and ten there on 10th/11th; seven, Faulkland, September 8th; ten, Tealham/Tadham Moors, on 18th; eight, King's Sedge Moor, on 28th; and ten around Brue Estuary on 29th. The last was one on Minehead Golf Course, October 25th.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Rare migrant breeder, very local and probably now extinct (last proved 2002); scarce passage-migrant.

First arrival: male, Lang Combe, March 17th. Only about 17 others on spring passage, April 5th-28th: six on Brean Down (including five on 20th); one at Kilve Beach; and the rest on north-east Exmoor. The gap of almost three weeks in spring passage on Exmoor is ominous. The last sighting there, of a pair in a former haunt, did not lead to breeding; EMP found none and the RSPB Survey had only an odd bird on Winsford Hill.

In autumn, about 11: four on Brean Down; single birds at Bicknoller Post, Minehead Marshes and Hurlstone Point; and the rest on north-east Exmoor, September 22nd-October 9th, the last being two on Brean Down, November 9th.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula**Abundant resident breeder; common winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

For such an abundant species, hard to draw any conclusions from the number of records submitted, which this year shrank to 280.

Blackbird – regular monthly counts at two of the three clearly-defined sites listed in 2007

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
ST 4408 S Crewkerne (BE)	21	23	18	27	18	10	13	9	11	10	18	13
North Hill (JRI)	15	15	8	16	17	12	6	9	9	10	20	21

The highest counts for limited areas were mainly in the first winter period, perhaps reflecting the big influx in November/December 2007. These and other records again show influx in late November/December, though on nothing like the scale of 2007; the highest count was of 31 in Rodney Stoke Wood, December 31st.

Other high counts at various times: 49 in *Atlas* survey within ST6848/9 around Coleford, January, and in same area at least 12 active nests in May within 100 metres of observer's house in Harris Vale; 40, in two-hour tetrad survey around Nettlebridge, April; 27, Cheddar Reservoir, February; 17 pairs on Tealham Moor, May; 63, Combe St Nicholas, January, and 35 there in May; 32, Broadway, January, and 28 there in May; 22 along Old Mineral Line, Washford to Watchet, April.

RSPB Exmoor Survey found 127 territories in Somerset, mainly along moorland edge and nowhere beyond limit of sizeable bushes.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris**Common winter visitor and passage-migrant.*

In January/February, widespread over Levels and in lower-lying farmland, though in rather smaller numbers than during these months in 2007. Highest count: 400, Ilchester, February 17th. Other counts of 200 or more: 318, Charterhouse; 200, Kennard Moor and West Coker; and 317 at Broadway. Most March flocks were small, the largest being of 100 on Catcott Lows, 150 on Queen's Sedge Moor, King's Sedge Moor and Greylake Reserve, and 140 on Wet Moor. Only seven April records, including 110 over Penselwood on 2nd and 50 at Cheddar Head on 12th. The last was a single bird at Henley on 20th.

Autumn passage began at several places on October 18th, but no flocks of over 100 until 31st. Large numbers from November 1st to 4th, including 1,500 north-east at Combwich and 1,000 at Wall Common on 1st, followed by 1,800 on Wet Moor on 3rd and 1,310 moving north at Berrow on 4th. From then to end of year numbers were much smaller, with only eight counts of over 100, of which by far the largest was of 1,300 on Queen's Sedge Moor on December 24th.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos**Common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has decreased except in woodland.*

Total of 370 records submitted, excluding those from the RSPB Exmoor Survey, involving 900 birds during year; of these 430 were on Quantocks, Brendons, Exmoor and their coasts. Quantock recording was rather thin, probably because most visits were not made until well on into the summer, when song has either ceased or become muted. More records were received this year from the Blackdowns, but very few from woodlands along the Wiltshire and Dorset borders.

No sign of general return to gardens, where in most parts now scarce or absent. Very thinly distributed on Levels, where local surveys of reserves and SSSIs usually produce only one or two pairs, but such places have little cover, and nearby escarpment woodlands are better suited to Song Thrushes, but seldom visited by observers.

Some notable breeding-season records: 11 in Nettlebridge Valley in evening of March 25th and seven in two hours at Gurney Slade in May; eight in Melcombe Wood in April; five pairs in Berrow; in the five OS kilometre squares in Crewkerne parish, at least 12 territories, but only one certain juvenile seen; six pairs bred at Creech St Michael and four in West Monkton; at least eight around Wellington; and five singing on Southey Moor and Cothelstone Hill.

On Exmoor and Brendons, RSPB found 116 territories in Somerset; thick, tall gorse is attractive, so there were ten from North Hill to Bossington Hill, nine on Ley Hill, 14 on Winsford Hill, six on Brady Moor West and ten on the slopes south and west of Withypool. Most others were on the edge of moorland: there were 14 along the south side of Dunkery Hill, including Codsend Moors. Outside the Moorland Survey Area, many records of singing birds: for example, seven on a road circuit round Croydon Hill; 13 in woods between County Gate and Porlock Weir; 16 in Horner Woods; five in Bury Castle Combe; nine from Westernmill Farm to Silly Bridge and up to White Cross; six in Barlynch Wood; and 73 along the Barle from Withypool Bridge down to Dulverton, including some side-combes and adjacent farmland (DKB, RSPB *et al.*).

No flocks in first winter period. In autumn, one unusual record of a migrant flock: 50 flying north-east over Combwich on November 1st. Hard weather in December produced some local counts on a scale largely unknown in recent years: 57 at Hinkley Point on the 11th; and 30 around Porlock Marsh throughout the month.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor and passage-migrant.

In first winter period, rather more numerous than in 2007, including 11 flocks of 100 to 230 birds, mostly on lower ground. These were at Coleford, Holcombe Wood, Cheddar Reservoir, Knowle Moor, Cinnamon Lane (Glastonbury), Ilchester, North Perrott, Crewkerne, Ilminster, Broadway and Brown Down; mostly in February. Smaller numbers persisted through early March, but by the 25th all had gone, apart from one straggler at Cheddar Reservoir on April 13th.

In autumn, first heard over Coleford on September 26th and seen on berries at Cocklake on 30th. Main arrivals from October 9th, but in very small numbers until 18th, when 2,000 flying south over Berrow were followed next day by 2,330 to the north. Larger numbers appeared on 31st, with about 6,800 at Steart. Next day these had increased to 8,000, and there were also counts of 4,000 at Combwich and Wall Common, perhaps partly of same birds. On November 3rd, 1,800 on Wet Moor and 500 at Greylake. Much lower numbers after this: from 11th to December 31st, only nine counts of over 100, at first along the east coast of Bridgwater Bay, but later more widely dispersed inland, on Butt Moor, Wet Moor and West Moor (Hambridge), and at Whitestaunton. Numbers in west were unusually low: apart from small movements over West Myne, November 6th-18th, only six records west of Quantocks, the highest counts being of 50 at Wimbleball Lake and Chibbet Post.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Fairly common, but local, resident breeder; scarce and irregular passage-migrant.

At least 120 pairs, families or singing males from January to June. These records maintain the improvement in reporting noted in 2007 of a rather neglected species. Breeding-season records again given in detail; numbers are of singing males, pairs or families where more than one.

In the east: Milborne Port; Orchardleigh Park (two); many sites along and to the south of the Mells River, from Ashwick and Nettlebridge through Edford, Coleford, Vobster, Stoke St Michael and Leigh upon Mendip to Mells Park and Mells Down (total of at least 16, and a number of families seen); and at Charlton Park and Emborough. No records from Wincanton, Castle Cary and Bruton areas or from the Selwood ridge. On western parts of Mendip, recorded only from Charterhouse, Priddy, Westbury-sub-Mendip, Draycott Sleight, Cheddar and Wavering Down.

On and around Levels, Bridgwater Bay coast and Poldens: Cheddar Reservoir, Cross Plain and Lympsham; Shapwick Heath (two), Westhay, Burtle and Tadham Moor; North Moor (Moorland), Somerton Moor and West Sedge Moor; and Langport and Hambridge. Some of these records were of post-breeding parties, whose birds had probably bred in more wooded areas.

In Central Somerset, only at The Shields (Somerton) and High Ham; present at Butleigh in winter. In the south: at least five territories in four kilometre squares around Crewkerne of ST4309 (two), 4310, 4410 and 4510, and others at Tuncombe, Mancombe and Wayford Woods (AJP); elsewhere, present at Sutton Bingham Reservoir, West Coker, Martock, Over Stratton, Barrington, Winsham (two), Chaffcombe, Chard Reservoir, Chard and Tatworth. In south-west: Creech St Michael and West Monkton (three); in Taunton at Vivary Park, Obridge and the Hydrographic Office; Combe St Nicholas; Thurlbear Wood and Witch Lodge (two); Dommett Wood, Forches Corner, Fresh Moor, Britty Common, Buckland Wood and Sampford Point; no records from Vale of Taunton Deane west of Taunton. On Quantocks, recorded only from Bagborough Plantation, Bin Combe and Hodder's Combe; none in surrounding villages or farmland.

On Brendons and Exmoor, RSPB Survey found 31 territories in Somerset; the list of sites includes these, though most Mistle Thrushes would be outside the Survey Area until flocks form in June and July. On Brendons, apparently recorded only from Britannia Shield at Upton, Rodhuish Common and Gallax Hill/Bat's Castle (two). In north-east Exmoor combes and adjacent farmland and on coast at Bratton, Little Headon Plantation, North Hill, Allerford, Bossington, Porlock/Doverhay Down, Horner Woods, Hawk Combe and Porlock Parks West; along north fringes of Robin How/Webber's Post (four) and at Codsand Moors (three), Sweetworthy Combe, Stoke Ridge, Stoke Combe, Nutscale and Hillhead Cross. Elsewhere on Exmoor: in lower reaches of Weir Water and Chalk Water; at Tom's Hill/Larkbarrow (three, including a breeding pair at Larkbarrow); along the Exe, at Warren Farm, from Orchard Bottom to Silly Bridge/Riscombe (seven), in Exford Churchyard, and from Lyncombe and Curr Cleeve to West Nethercote (three); on edges of Winsford Hill (two); along the Barle, at Cornham Brake, Lime Combe, Simonsbath, Cow Castle, White Water and Hillway, from Withypool to Castle Bridge (15), at Upper Willingford and along the Dane's Brook, and in Long Holcombe (three).

Family parties and flocks formed in late summer: in June, ten on Somerton Moor and at Chetsford Water, the latter increasing to 20 in July, when there were also 11 at Isle Abbots; in August, 25 at Duredon Farm on the North Forest; in September, 28 on Room Hill.

On autumn passage: one at Brean Down, September 29th; total of ten at West Myne, October 9th-19th; one at Hurlstone Point, October 14th; five to north-east with other thrushes at Combwich, November 1st; and one at Berrow on the 18th.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Locally fairly common resident breeder; rare passage-migrant.

One on Cary Moor, October 16th-December 31st, was first record for the new wetland (BAT).

To east and north of Parrett Estuary: two on Axe Estuary, February-April, and three there in September; at least seven males at Berrow throughout year; one at Apex Leisure Park in December; three singing males along Huntspill Sea Wall, May/June, and one at the Sluice in October; two singing on opposite sides of Huntspill River at Stretcholt in May; and one on Pawlett Hams in April.

In Avalon Marshes, no comprehensive counts of singing males from Shapwick Heath (East), Meare Heath, Ham Wall, Loxton's Marsh/Walton Heath or Sharpham, the highest figures being 11 on both Shapwick Heath (East) and Ham Wall; 22, Westhay Moor, but no records from Westhay Heath; at least seven on Catcott Heath, and two each on Catcott Lows and Chilton Moor. Elsewhere north of Poldens, one on Tealham Moor and five on Puriton Level.

Around Bridgwater, five along Canal from Fordgate to Huntworth, and one each at Summerhayes Fisheries and Chilton Trinity. Up to four regularly at Steart, one or two upstream from there along the Parrett Estuary, one breeding at Hinkley Point, and three on Wick Moor.

A few single birds elsewhere: Apex Leisure Park, Moorlinch Moor, North Moor (Moorland), King's Sedgemoor Drain, Crewkerne Sewage Works and Minehead Golf Course.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Irregular but locally common migrant breeder; also passage-migrant, chiefly in spring.

First arrivals: three, Brean Down, April 5th. About 18 on coasts, Levels and north-east Exmoor, April 10th-May 3rd, including two on Brean Down, April 22nd, and on Wilmersham Common on last date. Most were reeling, but probably on passage.

Apart from Brendons and Exmoor records, the only birds heard or seen in June were three on West Sedge Moor, one on Merryfield Aerodrome and two at Northay.

The RSPB Exmoor Survey produced the astonishing figure of 300 territories, of which about 235 were in Somerset; a small number can be added from observations of EMP and other observers. This result seems to have been mainly due to early starts by the team; previous surveys had seldom begun before 08.00 hrs BST. Birds were usually associated with high swards, tussocks (which provide channels for surreptitious movement), thick heather and *Juncus* rushes. The 1978 Survey found only 15; in 1992 there were 52. Increases have also been detected on Salisbury Plain, Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor; there appears to have been an upward movement to colonize higher grassland. Birds had long been known from dense heather on north-east Exmoor, but few observers entered grass moorland (or anywhere on Exmoor Forest) before the 1960s.

On Brendons, single birds on Haddon Hill and Black Hill; none on heathery north-eastern outliers of Exmoor. Apart from these areas, details were as follows: 40 on Dunkery Hill west to the Cloutsham-Hillhead

Cross road; 37 from there over Stoke Ridge, Wilmersham Common, Ember Combe, Chetsford Water and Nutscale to Hawkcombe Head; 14 in Upper Weir Water and Chalk Water and their side-combes; about 48 in Badgworthy Headwaters and from there north to Cloud; eight in Upper Farley Water and Upper Hoar Oak Water; six on Exe Plain and 11 from Exe Head Bridge to Orchard Bottom; four on Winsford Hill; 28 along Barle from Pinkworthy Pond to Pickedstones Bridge, mostly in side-combes; 14 from Sherdon Hutch to Withypool, including Knighton Combe; 12 in the Halscombe Allotment and on Worth Hill; and ten in Long Holcombe and on Horsen Hill.

These numbers are reckoned to be about 3% of the U.K. population and 56% of those in South-west England; they are of national and regional importance. The status assessment for Somerset given above has been altered to accord with these results, but it should be remembered that this species has a history of wide fluctuations.

Only five on autumn passage, July 26th-September 29th: three on Brean Down and single birds on Cary Moor and West Sedge Moor.

SAVI'S WARBLER *Locustella luscinioides*

Very rare visitor.

2007. One heard, Ham Wall, April 24th-June 3rd (DJC, RSPB). Twelfth record for the County; accepted by BBRC.

AQUATIC WARBLER *Acrocephalus paludicola*

Rare passage-migrant in autumn.

One record: one trapped and ringed, Steart, September 19th (DFM, DWa). There are now 83 records since 1963.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Locally common migrant breeder and passage-migrant.

First arrival: Berrow, April 5th. No others until 13th, after which a slow build-up into early May, with main arrival from April 26th.

The following sites held four or more singing males, or were of special interest, those starred being full counts, many by JLe: Steart area (up to four); Kennard Moor (seven); Chilton Moor (seven*); Tealham Moor (22*); Sloway Lane, West Huntspill (four); Somerton Moor (eight*), Butleigh Moor (seven*), Nythe (three on the new RSPB purchase*), King's Sedge Moor SSSI (18*), Greylake Reserve (18*) and Moorlinch Moor (16*); Weston Level (eight*) and Earlake Moor (six*); West Sedge Moor (167*) and Curry Moor (16); King's Moor (six), Wet Moor (38*) and West Moor, Hambridge (29*); along Parrett below Langport (four); Canal between Creech St Michael and Charlton (five*, and one or two more north to Huntworth); Combe St Nicholas (two); Westford, Little Silver and Wellington Basins (one each); Wimbleball Lake (one at Rugg's Bay on June 8th); and along Barle from Goat Hill Bridge to Squallacombe Foot and in Smallacombe (four found by RSPB, but perhaps not breeding there). No records from East Somerset, and no counts from Reserves at Ham Wall, Shapwick Heath, Westhay Moor or Westhay Heath. On Meare Heath, juveniles still being fed by parents on late date of August 17th.

On autumn passage, 14 at Steart, July 27th, but only 13 others up to September 28th.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Locally common migrant breeder and passage-migrant. Has increased.

First arrival: Ham Wall, April 6th. Although there were 15 on Westhay Moor by 20th, main arrival was not until May, the next double-figure count being on 21st.

Records from selected sites, mainly those with at least four singing males: Cary Moor (20, a predicted increase as reedbed has spread); Berrow (20-30); Huntspill Sluice to Sloway Lane (ten); Cheddar Reservoir (four); Kennard Moor (five in new reedbed); Tealham Moor (five); Greylake Reserve (13); West Sedge Moor (seven); along cycle-path from Langport to Muchelney (seven); West Moor, Hambridge (13); Chard Reservoir (four); Canal from Huntworth to Creech St Michael (23, including the Tone at Creech); Steart area and along nearby Estuary (at least 11 in May, and up to 24 in late July, of which some were perhaps migrants); and Butlin's, Minehead (at least 12 including Tesco's Pit). Smaller numbers also present at Walpole, Pawlett Hams, Moorlinch Moor, Moorland, Long Sutton, Wet Moor, Midelney, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, Millwater and ST4408 (South

Crewkerne), Hankridge Farm, Tonedale, Wall Common, and Dunster Hawn. One in a garden at Mark, May 3rd, was presumably a migrant. Unfortunately, no substantial counts received from any of the most important sites in the Avalon Marshes (Ham Wall, Shapwick and Meare Heaths, Westhay Heath and Westhay Moor).

About 30 passage or late-staying birds from mid August to September 28th, on coast from Brean Down to Dunster Beach, on King's Sedgemoor Drain and at two Wellington sites; these included ten on Wall Common, August 25th. A straggler was on Brean Down, November 6th and 8th; this is second-latest Somerset date.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common and probably increasing migrant breeder and passage-migrant; uncommon winter visitor.

About 60 birds at 40 sites, January 1st-March 16th, almost exactly the same result as in 2007. Mainly in lowland gardens, singly or up to six together. Notable records were of five in Orchardleigh Park, February 23rd, and three feeding on seeds of a Torbay Palm at Bishop's Hull on January 30th.

Passage from mid March to early May, including: seven, Wellington, March 31st; eight, Holcombe Wood, April 3rd, and 12 at Nettlebridge on 13th; and eight or nine from 26th to 28th at Kennard Moor and Otterhead Lakes, and along old Mineral Line from Watchet to Washford.

In breeding season, about 310 singing males at 150 sites, excluding Brendons and Exmoor places within the RSPB Survey Area. Because of *Atlas* work, coverage was wider than in 2007, but some important sites were not visited, including Westhay Moor and Westhay Heath, which then held nearly 50 between them. Some higher counts, mainly of singing males: Faulkland area (13); Edford Wood (12), Gurney Slade (five) and Nettlebridge (20 birds in two-hour timed tetrad); Black Down/Rowberrow Warren (seven); Tealham Moor (ten); West Sedge Moor (five); Crewkerne (ten in parish); Donyatt (seven); Broadway (up to ten); Witch Lodge and Britty Common (five each); Hinkley Point (six); Bagborough Plantation (eight); North Hill, Hawk Combe and Burrige Wood (five each). Relatively scarce across Levels (at least, south of Poldens), where there is little suitable habitat.

RSPB Exmoor Survey found 43 territories in Somerset, all along moorland margins. These included 15 on Brendons and north-eastern outliers of the Moor (but none on Ley Hill), 12 along the eastern and northern edges of Dunkery Hill, north-west to Nutscale; and four in scrub around Curr Cleeve.

In August, only about 14, including five in South Crewkerne, and 29 on passage from September 3rd to October 17th, only half the total for 2007; these included eight on Huntspill Sea Wall, September 22nd.

Wintering birds entered gardens from October 16th, though only two were in that month. Main arrival from early November: about 36 at 18 sites, including in December seven in a one-hour walk through Butleigh, six each at Berrow and in Priory Road, Taunton, and four in West Monkton; less than half last year's numbers in this period.

One re-trapped at Watchet on April 2nd had been first ringed there on May 13th, 2004; it had been re-trapped there on April 29th in both 2006 and 2007 (WJW).

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Locally fairly common migrant breeder and passage-migrant.

First arrival: Dunster Hawn, April 20th. Five others from 26th to 30th and steady arrival thereafter, mostly in first ten days of May.

Slightly more than in 2007: at least 148 singing males at about 86 sites, of which 47 were on Brendons and Exmoor; these do not include the RSPB Survey. In East Somerset and on Mendip, total of 14: Alfred's Tower (two), Faulkland area (three), Edford Wood, Nettlebridge/Stratton Moor (three), Black Down/Rowberrow Warren (four), Charterhouse and Dinder. On Levels north of Poldens, about 16, all in Avalon Marshes, where there were no full counts of Westhay Moor or Westhay Heath. The East Poldens, with large areas of apparently suitable woodland Reserves, were again unrecorded. In south and in lowlands or foothills of south-west: one at Nine Springs; two south of Crewkerne and at Donyatt; one at Broadway; single birds in Yeovil and at Combe St Nicholas and Sticklepath were perhaps migrants. On Blackdowns, total of 14: Thurlbear Quarrylands (two), Staple Fitzpaine, Mount Fancy (four), Churchinford (a magnificent songster on June 4th!), Otterhead Lakes, Quants, Buckland Wood and Gortnell Common (three). None in Vale of Taunton Deane.

On Quantocks, only 11 at eight sites, all along west side from Cothelstone Hill to Bicknoller Combe, apart from two in Smith's Combe; coverage was not so thorough as in some years. One at Hinkley Point.

On Brendons and Exmoor, RSPB found 41 territories in Somerset. Including these, distribution was as follows: about 15 around Wimbleball Lake, on Haddon Hill and below Bury; single birds on Kennisham Hill and in Charget Wood; four on Croydon Hill massif; ten along ridge from Grabbist to Tivington; six from North Hill to Hurlstone Point, though one singing at latter on May 7th was probably a migrant; one on Ley Hill; at least nine around east and north edges of Dunkery Hill from Hanny Combe to Aller Combe, three on Cloutsham Ball and two in Horner Wood; three around Nutscale; two or three in Weir Water and one in Deddy Combe; two each in Coscombe and Land Combe, and one at Lank Combe Foot; six from Exford to Larcombe Foot, including Curr Cleeve and Room Hill; four around Winsford Hill; five from Bale Water and Lime Combe to Simonsbath; two at Cloven Rocks and one at Flexbarrow; five from Brady Moor to Hillway Wood; 18 down Barle and side-combes from Withypool to Burrigge Wood, including the Dane's Brook; and one on Briggins Moor.

No breeding birds seen after June 30th, apart from family at Kennisham Hill on July 11th. Total of six on autumn passage, August 29th-September 21st, including one at Wincanton Sewage Works on August 30th.

BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria*

Very rare passage-migrant in autumn.

One record: one photographed in bushes on north side of Brean Down, September 16th (PB). The fifth for Somerset, and the latest date; the first since 1990.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Locally fairly common migrant breeder; uncommon passage-migrant.

First arrivals: Cary Moor, Steart and Wellington, April 20th; a week later than in 2007. Other April records, all within possible breeding areas, have been included with definite breeders, though a few may have been of migrants, as was suggested for several sites by a fall in numbers after April or early May. Numbers of this elusive species are always erratic, as might be expected in a bird at the edge of its range. It has probably declined in the South West over the last few years.

From April 21st to July 20th, about 65 recorded at following sites, and single males unless otherwise noted: Faulkland and Holcombe Wood (both probably on passage); Brean Down (three) and Berrow (up to five); Cheddar Reservoir (two); Launcherley, Kennard Moor (one pair bred), Shapwick Heath, Catcott Heath, Burtle, Cossington, Mark (at least two) and Mark Moor (family); Pawlett Hams, Bawdrip Level, Chilton Trinity, and Bridgwater-Taunton Canal from Huntworth to Creech St Michael (only one, at an unspecified site); Moorlinch Moor (two); West Sedge Moor (two) and Higher Lilstock Farm, Wrantage; Long Sutton, Wet Moor (two), West Moor (Hambridge), Westport Canal at Hambridge (three) and King's Moor (one pair bred); Butleigh and Red Post Cross, Kingsdon (three); Sutton Bingham Reservoir (two); Draycott (Limington), Ilchester (breeding attempted) and Tatworth; Broadway (two) and Staple Fitzpaine; Creech St Michael (only one record); Steart/Parrett Estuary (two), Wall Common, Catsford Common (two), Hinkley Point (four), Stolford (three in April only) and Lilstock; and Five Bells, Watchet. Unrecorded further west.

Nine on passage, August 1st-September 23rd: two on coast in Steart area, one on Mendip, three on Levels, and others at Wincanton Sewage Works, Butleigh and Crewkerne.

One in an Aller garden on December 14th was second winter record for Somerset of the nominate race (TR). There are two or three recent wintering records for Devon.

COMMON WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Common migrant breeder and passage-migrant.

First arrival: Brean Down, April 14th. Steady arrival and passage from then to early May, including seven on Brean Down, April 22nd, six on Bawdrip Level on 24th, and seven on Kennard Moor on 26th.

Breeding-season records from May 1st to July 26th: total of about 262 singing males, excluding RSPB Exmoor Survey. Decline in numbers and breeding success noted at several sites, but the fall from the 325 of 2007 was exaggerated by the absence of counts from the important site of Westhay Moor.

In East Somerset: up to 25 in parts of ST75 around Faulkland, of which three were in oil-seed rape (GS); otherwise only two at Holcombe and single birds at Ham and Edford Wood; unrecorded from around Castle Cary, Bruton and Frome. On Mendip, recorded only from Priddy, Charterhouse (three) and Black Down/Rowberrow Warren, where 13 in May, though only two could be found on Black Down in June.

On east coast of Bridgwater Bay, 16 between Brean Village and Berrow; seven on Brean Down. Only 27 on Levels north of Poldens, including three on Kennard Moor, five on Shapwick Heath (East), four on Ham Wall

and eight on Tealham Moor. Between Bridgwater and Taunton, nine along Canal from Huntworth to Creech St Michael. About 26 on Levels south of Poldens, of which 16 were on Somerton Moor; on South Levels, only 12, despite some intensive survey work. About 39 at 17 sites from Sutton Bingham Reservoir through South Somerset to Blackdown foothills; of these, 15 were in a survey of the Snowdon Hill area above Chard. Only 15 elsewhere in south-west: nine north of Monkton Heathfield and eight at Creech St Michael. Unrecorded in Wellington area.

Six at Steart and along Parrett Estuary and seven from Lilstock to Kilve Beach. On Quantocks, about 20, the best site, as last year, being Lydeard Hill, with five.

The RSPB Survey found 157 territories on Brendons and Exmoor, of which 121 were in Somerset. When combined with other records, mostly by DKB and EMP, this gives following distribution: five casual records in farmland of eastern and northern Brendons; at least six territories on and around Haddon Hill/Britannia's Shield/Wimbleball Lake; five on Rodhuish Common, three on Withycombe Common and seven on Bat's Castle/Gallax Hill; three between Grabbist and Tivington; four from Watchet to Dunster Beach; 28 from North Hill to Hurlstone Point and up to three on lower ground from Bratton to Bossington; two in the Yearnor/Smalla Combe area; four on Ley Hill; eight on east and north sides of Robin How and 11 from Webber's Post and Cloutsham Ball to Bagley Combe; two on Stoke Ridge; six in Chetsford Water and Ember Combe and three north from there to Porlock Common; eight from Robbers' Bridge over North Common to Deddy Combe; four on east side of Badworthy Water and up to five in Lower Hoccombe Water; two at Blackpitts/Prayway Head; ten in general area of Curr Cleeve, including Lyncombe, Road Common and Room Hill; one or two on south side of Winsford Hill; along the Barle, two on Brady Moor and single territories at Flexbarrow and above Sherdon Hutch.

Recorded from 12 of these sites in July. A very small autumn passage perhaps reflected poor success in a wet summer: only 19, of which at least 13 were from August 24th to 31st; only later records were for Meare Heath on September 7th and Berrow on the 20th.

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

Locally fairly common resident breeder; rare passage-migrant and perhaps winter visitor.

On Mendip, about nine pairs on Black Down/Rowberrow Warren, where six or seven pairs bred and young were seen at two sites (GS, DW); and one or two pairs on Wavering Down/Crook Peak.

On Blackdowns, two singing males at Somerset end of Sampford Point, as last year.

On Quantocks, in contrast with 2007, recorded at four sites in January; 12 occupied sites in breeding season, when apparently between 12 and 20 singing males/pairs/families. This would amount to no more than half of the 2007 population, but coverage was not quite so thorough. Distribution was from Wills Neck and Great Hill north to Vinny Combe and Herridge Combe, the greatest concentration being from Dowsborough, Woodlands Hill and Hurley Beacon north to Longstone Hill and Beacon Hill; the highest site-count was of seven on Longstone Hill in March (BDG *et al.*).

The RSPB Survey of the Brendons and Exmoor found at least 129 probable territories (with pairs and/or singing males), and 25 possible ones (with only unsexed calling birds); in Somerset, there were 110 of the former and 14 of the latter, but this summary does not distinguish between the categories: on Brendons, four on Haddon Hill, eight on Rodhuish Common/Black Hill and one on Gallax Hill/Bat's Castle; five from Grabbist to Tivington; 21 from North Hill to Bossington Hill; six on Ley Hill; eight on Porlock Common; 50 on Dunkery Hill (all east of Sweetworthy Combe, and concentrated in a circuit on lower slopes from Brockwell to Aller Combe); three on Stoke Ridge or in Lang Combe; one at Colley Water Bridge; five on Brady Moor; and four on Winsford Hill. One or two records from County Gate may have been for Somerset, but RSPB entries for the site were just in Devon.

Seven records elsewhere, all of single birds: Berrow, January 17th; Burtle Moor, on 29th; Ford Common, October 17th; Brean Down, November 8th/9th; Steart, on 14th; Rodden Nature Reserve, December 6th-29th; and Axe Estuary, on 30th.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Rare passage-migrant and winter visitor.

Four autumn records of single birds: one in second calendar-year trapped and ringed, Millwater, October 6th (AJP); Ashcott Corner, on 8th (D.Smallshire); in a Berrow garden on 9th (BES); and at Steart on 12th (JRB *et al.*).

There are now 35 Somerset records.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Locally fairly common migrant breeder; uncommon passage-migrant.

First arrivals: three, Horner Wood, April 17th. Most breeders had probably arrived by about May 5th.

Away from western hills, recorded only from: Alfred's Tower, where three sang on April 29th and through May; and single birds in Edford Wood, June 5th, and at Wellington Monument, where one sang in May and June. Also one on spring passage on outskirts of Wellington, April 18th.

On Quantocks, about 18 singing males, a sharp decline from the 38 of last year: all in north-eastern combes, apart from two in Bagborough Plantation and one in Weacombe; highest counts were of four in Hodder's Combe and three in Bin Combe; other occupied sites were on Dowsborough and in Holford Combe, Somerton Combe, Stert Combe and Slaughterhouse Combe (BDG). One off the Quantocks at Heddon Oak, a male singing on May 13th.

On Brendons: at least 13 around Wimbleball Lake, on Haddon Hill, in West Hill Wood and along Haddeo below dam; two in Collyhill Wood.

On Exmoor, main site is Horner Wood, where on May 9th WJW heard or saw 16 and found seven nests; there were also 16 singing on the following day (GMD), but it is not clear how much of the area was covered by the observers; also, in adjacent areas, six in East Water, three in Hollow Combe and single birds in Halse Combe (Ley Hill), Lucombe Plantation and Aller Combe; RSPBW observers heard 22 in their three Horner areas, but many of these would have overlapped records by other observers. Other sites were: Selworthy Combe, Allerford Combe and Bury Castle (total of seven); Bincombe Wood and Mansley Combe (one each); Hawkcombe Head Combe (one); Met Combe/Weir Wood (four); Culbone (two); on Exe, one at West Nethercote and three in Barlynch Wood; and at least 17 along the Barle and in side-combes from Greystone Gate down to BurrIDGE Wood, including three in Great Birchcleeve Wood and four in Draydon Wood/Marsh Wood (DKB *et al.*).

The last record was of two in Horner, June 26th.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common migrant breeder and passage-migrant; uncommon winter visitor.

From January to March 2nd, about 50 at 25 sites, largely on Levels, along coasts, in town gardens at Frome, Chard, Taunton and Wellington, and at sewage works at Stoke St Gregory and Pudleigh; mostly single birds, but four to six together at the works, at Noah's Lake, on Westhay Moor (perhaps as many as ten) and at Dunster Hawn.

Prolonged spring passage through March and into at least third week of April. Highest counts: 30, Brean Down, March 15th, and 25 on 31st; 47 in Upper Axe Valley, April 12th; and 27 singing from Wick to Knighton, on 14th.

Breeding-season counts of six or more singing males after April 20th, though some may have been migrants at the start of this period, counts being in May/June unless stated: 17 in four tetrads around Faulkland; 12, Mells Park Estate, April; 15 around Gurney Slade and 16 around Nettlebridge, both in two-hour walks; 15, Black Down/Rowberrow Warren; six, Cheddar, and nine, Tealham Moor; 19 along Canal from Huntworth to Creech St Michael; 13, West Sedge Moor; seven, South Crewkerne; 36 along 15 miles of lanes from Chard to Thurlbear, April 23rd, and on 28th, 23 in 12 miles from Chard via Dowlish Wake to Dinnington (HCS); eight, Crock Street, Donyatt; 11, Broadway, and 15, Combe St Nicholas; seven, Britty Common/Mount Fancy; eight, Bagborough Plantation, and seven, Broomfield Hill; seven, Hinkley Point; eight at three sites around Wimbleball Lake; ten, Kennisham Hill/ Chargot Valley; ten, Rodhuish Common/Withycombe Common, and 11, Croydon Hill; and six at Bratton.

The RSPB Survey of Brendons and Exmoor found 132 territories, of which 115 were in Somerset. All but one – at Tom's Hill – were on the very edge of moorland. Of the total, 94 were on the Brendons, between North Hill and Bossington, round Dunkery Hill and Codsand Moors, or in the scrubby areas round Curr Cleeve. Most other records in the west were for ones and twos along woodland edge and in overgrown corners; these included 16 along the Barle and in its side-combes from Withypool to Marsh Bridge.

Only about 25 in August, mainly inland, apart from 40 at Wincanton Sewage Works on the 31st (BAT). Main passage from then to about third week of September, especially on coast: 20 at Hinkley Point on 14th; 15 on Brean Down on 20th and seven there on 28th.

Earliest garden record in autumn was at Taunton, September 27th. About 30 in October, mainly at lowland and coastal sites, including at least ten at Brean Down on 6th.

In November/December, about 31, mainly on Levels, along Tone and around sewage works at Chilton Cantelo, Pudleigh and Ham.

Two of the **Siberian** race *Ph. c. tristis*: one at Westhay Moor NNR, January 1st, and probably not the same as the bird there in December 2007 (DLB); and one singing in Apex Leisure Park, April 3rd-14th (AMS *et al.*)

The following may have been of the **Scandinavian** race *Ph. c. abietinus*: five on Westhay Moor and one at Ham Wall, January 1st (DLB); and six on Shapwick Heath (East), December 21st (DLB, NAS); all were cautiously recorded as *collybita/abietinus*.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Common migrant breeder and passage-migrant. Has decreased or disappeared in lowlands.

First arrival: Bruton, March 26th, followed by 15 others in March, including eight at Apex Leisure Park on 31st. Spring passage to late April, but not widespread except in west, where not common until last week. There were 17 at Berrow on the 15th, and a big "fall" along the coast on the 20th, including 150 on Brean Down (PB) and 32 at Wall Common.

As breeder, very scarce outside the Quantocks, Brendons and Exmoor; the following all refer to May/June records. On Mendip: one at Black Down/Rowberrow Warren; three on Kilmersdon Common and one in Maggs Wood at Coleford, two in Edford Wood, two in Holcombe, one at Gurney Slade, five in a two-hour timed tetrad around Nettlebridge, four at Paywell Farm (Priddy) and one at Charterhouse. On Levels: one each at Cheddar Reservoir, Ham Wall and Meare Heath; two on Shapwick Heath; 11 in full survey of Tealham Moor; three on West Sedge Moor, single birds on Wet Moor and West Moor (Hambridge), and two along cycle-path from Langport to Muchelney. In south: single birds at Nine Springs, East Coker and Over Stratton; none at all around Crewkerne for the first time in 40 years' observation by AJP; three at Ferne Animal Sanctuary, Chard; three at Broadway; and one carrying food at Combe St Nicholas, the first proof of breeding there in four years. On Blackdowns: one at Dommett Wood; four each on Ringdown Common, Otterhead Lakes and Southey Moor, eight on Britty Common/Mount Fancy, one each at Quants and Buckland Wood, 12 on Gortnell Common; and three each at Quarts Moor and Wellington Monument.

On Quantocks, 18 sites held a total of 57, less than half of 2007 numbers; of these, 18 were south of Crowcombe-Nether Stowey road. Highest site-counts were of nine on Cothelstone Hill and in Bin Combe, five on Hare Knap and four in Stert Combe (BDG *et al.*).

The RSPB Survey of Brendons and Exmoor found 958 territories, of which 713 were in Somerset. Highest counts on Brendons were of 35 on Haddon Hill, 18 on Rodhuish Common/Black Hill and 15 from Withycombe Common to Gallax Hill/Bat's Castle. Outside Survey Area, a further 23 found by other observers around Wimbleball Lake (excluding Haddon Hill); also, three each on Willett Hill and in Britannia's Shield, six on Kennisham Hill and at least 20 on Croydon Hill.

On Exmoor, main counts were as follows, incorporating figures from EMP and other observers where they were higher than RSPB's or where they referred to the many sites, chiefly in woodland, outside the Survey Area: 22 from Dunster to Tivington Common; 45 from North Hill to Bossington; 14 on Ley Hill; at least 14 in Horner Woods (RSPBW *et al.*); 15 on Porlock Common; 78 round fringes of Dunkery and 31 on Codsand Moors; 15 from The Mound to Lang Combe; 32 from Alderman's Barrow down Chetsford Water to Nutscale; 30 in Met Combe, Weir Water or Chalk Water; seven in Deddy Combe and three in Coscombe; 13 in Badgworthy Headwaters, and three in Lower Hoccombe Water; about 18 from Hoccombe Foot down to Cloud, including side-combes; six in Upper Hoarok Water; 33 from Exe Head Bridge and Prayway Head down to Orchard Bottom; 26 in the area of Curr Cleeve, including Room Hill and Road Common; 17 elsewhere along non-moorland reaches of Exe from Sellbed Cross to Bridgetown; 41 down Barle and in side-combes from Pinkery Centre to Simonsbath; 50 from Simonsbath to Hillway, including Cloven Rocks and White Water; 15 on or near Brady Moor; 19 in Long Holcombe; about 40 in area south of Withypool, including Withypool Hill, Worth Hill, Knighton Combe and the Halscombe Allotment; 40 along Barle and in side-combes from Withypool to Castle Bridge; and one on Briggins Moor. About ten others recorded from minor sites, usually small areas of unkempt land or the wider verges of roads. Very little comparative material from earlier surveys, but general impression is that Willow Warblers have increased on Exmoor since 1978, though they are seldom found on highest ground.

Autumn passage from August 2nd to late September: about 28 in August, including four each at Wincanton Sewage Works and two Wellington sites; and 15 in September, including three at Vobster and five near Wellington. The last was at Brean Down on the 28th.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Fairly common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

All records given from March to July except for obvious wanderers. March birds were previously considered with those for first-winter period or for spring passage, but many records evidently concern displaying and singing males from local populations, which are thought to be largely resident, at least in southern England (*Migration Atlas*).

Sites as follows, with numbers of pairs/singing males if more than one. In the east: Charlton and Holcombe Wood (two each); Mells Park (ten in March, falling to three later); further up the Mells Stream, six sites in and around Coleford (12), and three around Edford and Ham (22, including 14 in Edford Wood and an August count there of 25, with many juveniles); Harridge Wood (13 in one loop of east part); three sites around Nettlebridge (at least 12, and 19 birds in a two-hour timed tetrad); Oakhill; and Gurney Slade Bottom (four). On Mendip: Priddy, Charterhouse (four), Rodney Stoke Woods and Draycott Sleight. On Levels north of Poldens: Yeo Moor; Ham Wall (two), Westhay Moor and Tealham Moor. In Central Somerset: The Shields (Somerton) and Pilton. In south: Yeovil and West Coker; five kilometre squares around Crewkerne (about 11), Mancombe, Hewish, and Wayford Woods (two); Barrington Court; Chard Reservoir, Donyatt, Broadway and Sticklepath. In south-west: Thurlbear Wood; three sites in or on outskirts of Taunton; West Monkton (two); Stedham's Wood (Nynehead) and Wellington (three). Along coast of Bridgwater Bay only at Combwich.

On Quantocks, at nine sites, all in north-eastern or northern combes, including three each in Bin Combe and Hodder's Combe and four in Slaughterhouse Combe, but no records from main eastern areas of conifers, or from southern parts of range.

On Brendons and Exmoor, RSPB Survey found (perhaps surprisingly!) 47 territories, of which 42 were in Somerset. When combined with other records outside moorland areas, these give the following list of sites: Haddon Hill (two); Kennisham Hill (ten, including a pair feeding young on July 11th); Nutcombe Bottom and elsewhere on Croydon Hill (four); Withycombe Common and Gallax Hill/Bat's Castle (three); Dunster Hawn (probably a migrant); North Hill to Burgundy Combe (at least four); Woodcombe; Hawk Combe; Porlock Parks East (two); fringes of Ley Hill (three); Horner Wood and East Water; north fringes of Robin How and Webber's Post (four); Bin Combe and Ham (two); Codsend Moors (four); Thurley Combe Foot to Nutscale (three); along upper end of Toll Road (three); North Common and Deddy Combe; east side of Badgworthy (one territory, and three other records); Blackpitts; around Orchard Bottom (three); Riscombe Farm, Exford (three), West Nethercote and Barlynch Wood (two); Simonsbath; Brady Moor (two); Barle just above Withypool (two) and at various sites along the river down to Marsh Bridge (at least ten); and Dulverton.

It would be helpful if observers would record the type of woodland in which birds were found, especially in the breeding season.

As usual, more widespread (or more noticeable) outside breeding season. More in January/February than in 2007; highest counts were of six in Orchardleigh Park and at Coleford, and eight in Edford Wood, ten on Shapwick Heath (East), and eight in King's Brompton Forest and from Castle Bridge to Marsh Bridge along the Barle.

No spring passage noted on coast.

Seven records in August, including 25 in Edford Wood on the 17th, with many juveniles, and recent fledglings at Chard Reservoir.

Many scattered records from early September to the end of the year. Coastal passage at various points from Brean Down to Hurlstone Point, September 28th-October 22nd, including 37 at Brean Down on first date. Some high counts in the east: 20, Mells Park, September 6th; 100, Harridge Wood, on 28th (JHa – perhaps highest local count for Somerset); 20, Emborough Pond, October 28th; and 14, Rodney Stoke Wood, December 31st.

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapilla*

Rare migrant breeder; scarce winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Around Alfred's Tower, five singing in an area including Newpark Wood (BAT). The only summer record elsewhere was of one singing in Harridge Wood on June 14th (JHa).

About 20 others, singly apart from first: one or two, Shapwick Heath (East), January 12th-February 11th; Canada Farm, January 20th-29th; Stogumber, January 23rd; Jenny Cridland's Copse, Watchet, on 28th; Porlockford, February 10th; Edford Wood, March 2nd and 9th; Ham Wall, March 6th, and Ashcott Corner, on 7th; Shurton, on 18th; Apex Leisure Park, April 3rd; Brean Down, October 3rd and 6th; Hinkley Point, on 13th and 16th; Stogumber, on 20th; Westonzoyland, November 24th; south of Crewkerne, December; Torr Rock Point, Mells Park, December 7th; and West Monkton, from 31st into 2009.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata****Uncommon migrant breeder and passage-migrant.***

First arrivals: one, Horner Wood, April 22nd, was earliest since 2003. Thereafter, fairly steady influx, but in small numbers, from May 3rd to end of month; some of these may not have settled, but only obvious migrants were single birds around Brean on May 8th and 20th.

Present up to early August at following sites, with * for pairs or breeding proved or suspected; a number of birds seemed unpaired, but total of summer records, about 120, was a slight improvement:

In east and on Mendip: Bayford (three*); Bruton (but did not breed); Orchardleigh Park*; Faulkland; Mells Park (four), Coleford (two), Edford Wood (three*) and Stoke Bottom (Nettlebridge); Charterhouse (two), Black Down and Rowberrow Warren*; and at the Bishop's Palace, Wells*.

On east coast of Bridgwater Bay only at Berrow. On Levels north of Poldens at Cross, Shapwick Heath (three in July), Canada Farm (up to five in early August), Westhay Heath, Catcott Lows*, Cossington; and Tealham Moor; south of Poldens on King's Sedge Moor (two), along King's Sedge Moor Drain in August; and on North Moor, Moorland.

In Central Somerset at Butleigh (one in May but not later – failed to breed after eight years' attempts), Lytes Cary, Kingsdon Wood, Great Breach Wood and Pilton. In south at: West Coker; Draycott (Limington); Swell Wood; in Crewkerne at Maresfield House (but two other nests in the town failed after scaffolding had been erected); South Crewkerne and Wayford Woods; Dillington House (two*), Barrington Court* and Dowlish Wake*; Ashcombe Farm, Winsham; Purtington, Knowle St Giles, Chard Reservoir*, Avishays House and Tudbeer Farm (Chard), Forton, Chaffcombe and Tatworth.

On Blackdowns and in south-west: Domett Wood*; Wortheal; Bishopswood (two); Southey Moor; Quarts Moor and Wellington Monument; Hatch Beauchamp (six in village and one in Line Wood); Creech St Michael; West Monkton (two*); and Buckland St Mary and Wellington (five sites).

On Quantocks: Broomfield, Hodder's Combe, Somerton Combe (two) and Vinny Combe Quarry.

On Brendons and Exmoor, RSPB Survey found only six territories, of which three were in Somerset. These are incorporated in the following list: Carslake (Stogumber); Wimbleball Lake; Williton (four sites, but only one pair bred); Mansley Combe/Snowdrop Valley (seven birds in July); Hawk Combe (two*); Porlock and Porlock Weir; Halse Combe (Ley Hill)*; Horner Wood (at least two), East Water (seven birds) and Cloutsham; Nutscale; Met Combe and Upper Weir Water; Coscombe; Riscoombe Farm, Higher Combe* (Exford), Edbrook, Bridgetown and Week Lane; Winsford Hill North; Simonsbath and White Water; Westwater Bridge and Tarr Steps; and between Marsh Bridge and Dulverton.

Little autumn passage: about eight, September 2nd-21st, were probably migrants.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca****Locally fairly common migrant breeder; uncommon passage-migrant.***

First arrival: Yeovil, April 8th. The next was at Wellington on 17th; the first in breeding territory, at Horner, was the next day. In addition to the first two, six were on spring passage on or near coasts from Brean Down to Dunster Hawn, from 22nd to 24th.

On Blackdowns, pair bred in a nest-box in Domett Wood (DWH).

On Quantocks, at least 25 singing males: none south of Crowcombe Park Gate except for single occupied nest-boxes in Seven Wells Wood and at the west of Rectory Wood, Over Stowey; one in Bin Combe; five on Dowsborough/Lady's Combe; four occupied boxes in Holford Combe; and 13 males in Hodder's Combe and its tributaries, five being at boxes in the main combe. Total of 66 young ringed at boxes (DFM).

On Brendons: probably at least nine pairs around Wimbleball Lake, where one in West Hill Wood, one above the dam and four below it, and three along Upton Cleave (BDG); no reports from boxes in Treborough Wood; family ringed from Nutcombe Bottom nestbox on June 3rd; at least three pairs at boxes in Slowley Wood or on Monkham Hill/ (DFM, DWa).

On Exmoor: one occupied box in Upper Hawk Combe and two in Shillett Combe; another pair in Hawkcombe Head Combe; four occupied boxes in the Woodcock Gardens area; hard to assess situation in Horner/East Water, where 11 boxes were occupied, including an outlier at Luckbarrow, but also at least two using natural holes along East Water, single pairs in Aller Combe and on Cloutsham Ball, and up to three along the western slope from Yeals Combe to Halse Combe, an area without boxes but in 2008 covered by RSPBW; further west, two pairs in boxes in Porlockford Combe (R.Binding), one "along the Toll Road" (a possible three miles of suitable territory!) and single pairs in Weir Wood and in Yenworthy Combe; on the Exe, one in the

nameless wood opposite West Nethercote and six contacts in Barlynch Woods (RSPBW); on the Barle, about 11, including single males in Hillway Wood, on the left bank at Bradley Ford, in Westwater Copse and on the left bank between Westwater Bridge and Tarr Steps, three in Great Birchcleeve Wood, one at Great Gate, a male and two females on the Dane's Brook at the west end of West Hollowcombe Wood, and two found by RSPBW in woods round New Invention.

In *Exmoor Naturalist* 35 (Spring 2009), there is an analysis of ENHS nest-box data by JRW. The graph for this species shows a general decline from 40 successfully used boxes in 1993 to 18 in 2009.

This is the first year that a sustained effort has been made to combine casual records from members with nest-box data from ENHS and the Forestry Commission, and with detail from a woodland survey by point counts in RSPBW (which will continue at other sites in 2009). It is important that sightings by members should give locations as exactly as possible, and preferably by map reference; for instance, "Horner" is useless on its own!

Last records on June 26th, when two pairs still feeding young in Horner; an unusually late date.

None on autumn passage.

BEARDED TIT *Panurus biarmicus*

Scarce and very local resident breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

A disappointing year, with a marked reduction in the number of sightings: only 12 records, compared with 55 in 2007.

Breeding-season records: at Berrow, where colony established in 1974 and breeding was annual from 1983 to 2006, no more than two seen and no breeding proved (BES); three pairs at Ham Wall, where eight present in 2007 (RSPB); three seen, Shapwick Heath (East), April 3rd (ANE), and one, Shapwick Heath NNR, May 20th (RGr).

Records outside breeding season: adult male, Cary Moor, November 16th and December 6th and 31st (BAT); one heard, Ham Wall, January 6th (JLT), and five there, October 10th (JAH); two, Meare Heath, September 20th (TR), and October 10th (JAH); and four, Shapwick Heath (East), September 14th (IH, NAS).

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident breeder; occasional passage-migrant in autumn.

The number of records submitted has slightly increased on last year, with an apparent rise in the number of potential breeding sites. This reflects a national trend, possibly due to the early breeding season of this species avoiding the cold wet spring of recent years.

Breeding confirmed, by evidence of nest-building at Chard Reservoir and Dulverton, March 18th, and Porlock, on 19th, and presence of juveniles at: Nettlebridge; Cheddar; Shapwick Heath; West Sedge Moor; Somerton; South Cadbury and Stoke-sub-Hamdon; Winsham, Chaffcombe, Chard, Whitestaunton and Bickham Wood; Thurlbear and Quants; Roughmoor and Lowton; Wellington; West Bagborough, Bicknoller and Smith's Combe; Wimbleball Lake; and Horner Water.

Only a few reports of large post-breeding groups in May/June: 11 on Tealham Moor, 12 in Mells Park and 38 on Collard Hill.

Other counts, in autumn or second winter period: 30, Harridge Woods, September; 40, Nettlebridge and North Moor, October; and 28, Shapwick Heath, December.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant resident breeder; occasional winter visitor and passage-migrant.

The number of records submitted was 30% down on the previous year, possibly reflecting a reduction in abundance or in observer activity.

Recorded in the breeding season at sites throughout the County, with nest-boxes being used at many. Birds investigating possible sites and carrying nest material were reported as early as February 5th from Edford Wood. First record of fledging: Chard, June 6th. At Millwater, Crewkerne, AJP ringed only 12 juveniles, a very low number for this site, "suggesting another poor breeding season". At Hinkley Point County Wildlife Site, in the first year of a woodland nest-box scheme, from 82 eggs laid in 13 clutches a (possible) total of 44 nestlings fledged, giving a fledging rate of 54%.

Largest site counts recorded, many based on surveys made for the BTO *Atlas*: 31, Nettlebridge, April 13th; 38, Coleford, January 1st; 41, Gurney Slade, May 4th; 58, Woodcombe, January 22nd. RSPB Exmoor Survey found 18 territories in moorland areas.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant resident breeder; occasional winter visitor and passage-migrant.

The number of records submitted was 30% down on the previous year, possibly reflecting a reduction in abundance or in observer activity.

Recorded in the breeding season at sites throughout the County, nest-boxes being used at recording sites. Most breeding attempts were in May, the earliest record of newly-fledged young being Chard Reservoir, May 24th and the latest from Tatworth, July 25th. At Millwater, Crewkerne, AJP ringed 24 juveniles, half the number ringed in 2007.

Largest site counts recorded, many based on surveys made for the BTO *Atlas*: 31, Nettlebridge, April 13th; 17, Gurney Slade, May 4th; 23, Woodcombe, January 22nd; 30, Bratton, March 18th. RSPB Exmoor Survey found 36 territories in moorland areas.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common resident breeder; occasional passage-migrant, and presumably winter visitor.

Breeding confirmed at nine sites, most being in either the south or the west of the County: Coleford, Gurney Slade, Chaffcombe, Dillington, Staple Fitzpaine, Holford, Bratton and Pool Bridge. Earliest date for newly-fledged young, Staple Fitzpaine, June 15th; latest, Chard Junction, July 26th.

Largest site counts recorded, many based on surveys made for the BTO *Atlas*: ten, Nettlebridge, June 14th; 18, Edford Wood, February 17th; 20, Harridge Wood, September 28th; 12, Treborough Wood, December 3rd; and 11, Brompton Regis, February 7th.

WILLOW TIT *Poecile montana*

Rare resident breeder, apparently on the verge of extinction.

One, Staple Hill, December 1st (RGr). The last acceptable County record was in 2003, on Meare Heath, but the species still survives at a number of North Devon sites, as near to us as Wistlandpound Reservoir, South Molton, Knowstone and the Exe Valley. [We cannot accept a record from Horner in RSPBW, since the identity of the observer has not been made clear to us.]

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris*

Uncommon resident breeder. Decreasing.

The number of records submitted for 2008 showed a 50% increase on the previous year; many were obtained during surveys for the BTO *Atlas*. The majority of records were from the east and south, the highest site-count being of 21 singing birds in Edford Wood, April 2nd (JHa). The earliest record of newly-fledged young was at this site, May 18th, and the latest, Britty Common, June 6th.

Recorded from following sites, with an asterisk to show confirmed breeding: Wincanton, Alfred's Tower and Torr Works Quarry; Orchardleigh Park and Faulkland; Mells Park, Coleford, Holcombe, Harridge Wood* and Edford Wood*; Wells, Wookey Hole, Ebbor Gorge and Rodney Stoke; Street, Combe Hill, Butleigh Wood and Great Breach Wood; West Sedge Moor and Swell Wood; Sutton Bingham, South Cadbury, Crewkerne, Cricket St Thomas, Dillington, Chaffcombe, Chard Reservoir* and Forton*; Bickham Wood (Wortheal)* and Whitestaunton; Castle Neroche, Britty Common, Ringdown Common, Otterhead Lakes, Southey Moor and Wellington Monument*; Hinkley Point and Hawkridge Reservoir; Hodder's Combe; Bury, Treborough Wood and Timberscombe; West Luccombe, Horner Wood (four in south-east section of RSPBW); Porlock Parks East; Barlynch Wood (RSPBW); Tarr Steps, New Invention (RSPBW) and Burridge Wood.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Fairly common resident breeder.

Almost 50% more records were submitted than in 2007, many being obtained during surveys for the BTO *Atlas*. The earliest record of newly-fledged young was from Mount Fancy, June 3rd, and the latest from Chard Junction, July 26th.

Recorded from following sites, with an asterisk to show confirmed breeding: Bruton; Dean and Cranmore Wood; Orchardleigh Park; Mells Park*, Coleford, Holcombe, Harridge Wood, Edford Wood* and Nettlebridge and Gurney Slade; Emborough Pond; Wookey, Ebbor Gorge, Rodney Stoke, Priddy, Charterhouse and Cheddar; West Huntspill; Ham Wall, Ashcott, Shapwick Heath and Westhay; Combe Hill, Butleigh Wood, Compton

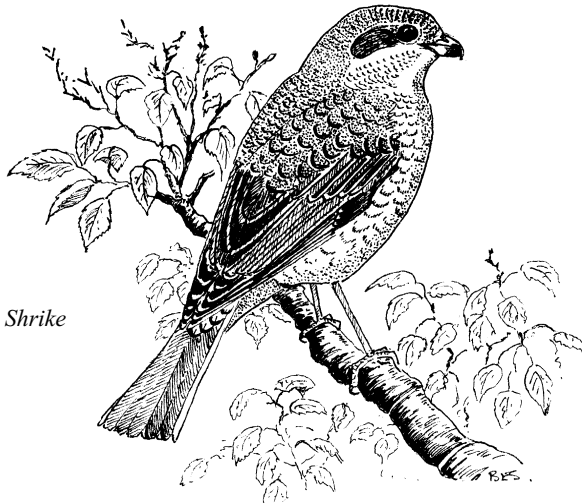
Dundon and Somerton; Yeovil, Sutton Bingham Reservoir and West Coker; Crewkerne, Chard Reservoir*, Chard Junction* and Combe St Nicholas; Wambrook* and Whitestaunton; Thurlbear, Witch Lodge and Staple Fitzpaine; Domett Wood (in nest-boxes)*; Britty Common, Mount Fancy, Staple Hill, Quants, Ringdown Common, Otterhead Lakes, Southey Moor and Quarts Moor; Lowton*; Lilstock; Aisholt, Lady's Combe and Holford; Clatworthy Reservoir, and Haddon Hill/Wimbleball Lake; Treborough Wood and Timberscombe; Woodcombe, Bratton, North Hill and Selworthy; Porlock Parks East, Hawk Combe, Culbone and Coscombe; West Luccombe, Horner Wood (five in north section of RSPBW) and East Water; Weir Water, Oare and Malmsmead; Silly Bridge, Exford, Winsford Hill and West Nethercote to Larcombe Foot (five); Lime Combe, Simonsbath and Hillway; and at least 23 pairs in Barle woodlands from Withypool to Dulverton or along Dane's Brook (DKB, RSPBW).

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Fairly common resident breeder.

The 124 records submitted were a 25% increase on those for 2007; many came from surveys for the BTO *Atlas*.

Recorded from following sites: Alfred's Tower; Woolverton; Mells Park, Holcombe Wood, Edford Wood, Downhead and Nettlebridge; Ebbor Gorge, Priddy, Charterhouse, Black Rock, Rodney Stoke, Draycott Sleight, Cheddar and Wavering Down; Knowle Moor; Brean Down; Shapwick Heath, Westhay Moor, Catcott Heath and Tealham Moor; West Sedge Moor; Combe Hill and Butleigh Woods; Yeovil and Sutton Bingham Reservoir; Crewkerne; Chaffcombe, Chard Reservoir and Nimmer; Broadway and Hatch Beauchamp; Domett Wood, Staple Hill, Britty Common, Ringdown Common, Wortheal, Otterhead Lakes and Wellington Monument; Blackbrook and Wellington; Hinkley Point, Strington and Enmore; Bin Combe, Holford and Hodder's Combe; Wimbleball Lake; Bratton, North Hill and Bossington; Porlock Parks, Culbone and County Gate; Horner Wood (seven in RSPBW, where recorded in all three sections), Webber's Post and Mansley Combe; Hookway; Exford and Barlynch Wood; Simonsbath* and Hillway Wood; Withypool, Westwater Bridge to Tarr Steps, Dane's Brook, Castle Bridge to Marsh Bridge (five), Ashwick Wood and Dulverton.



Red-backed Shrike

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

Very rare summer visitor and passage-migrant. Formerly bred.

One record: one on Mark Moor, September 27th, was possibly a juvenile (JAH, G.Pudney *et al.*).

Recorded for the fourth year running, though other recent birds have all been in May/June.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Rare winter visitor and passage-migrant.

This year has proved to be even more outstanding than 2007, with up to nine being reported around the County from Mendip, the coast, the Brendon Hills and Exmoor.

Five in first winter period: Zeal Farm, Hawkridge, January 9th (CG); King's Wood, on 15th (JTh), remaining on Wavering Down to February 13th (RGR, MS) – perhaps same as bird in November 2007; Rodhuish Common, January 22nd (JDH); one roaming between Ley Hill, Bagley Combe and Thurley Combe, February 6th-March 27th (DKB, CG, JRi, CS, AS); and Black Down, March 18th (IH, GS).

A further four in autumn and second winter period: Ford Common, Berrow, October 12th-16th (JAH, RJI, JJP); one roaming between Bagley Combe, Wilmersham Common and Almsworthy Common, from 22nd to 29th (ENHS, RLM, CS, AS); Webber's Post, December 3rd (R.Daw); and Blackmoor Reserve and Ubley Warren, from 6th to 14th (RMA, NRM, MS).

WOODCHAT SHRIKE *Lanius senator*

West Mediterranean islands race, 'Balearic Woodchat Shrike' *L. s. badius*

Accidental.

One record: an immature female of this race, North Hill, June 29th-30th (BDG, CG, RLM *et al.*). Record accepted by BBRC as the seventh British record. This is the ninth county record of the species and the first of this sub-species. Woodchat Shrikes have now been recorded in the County in five of the last eight years.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Fairly common resident breeder; occasional passage-migrant.

Recorded from following sites in breeding season, with asterisk indicating confirmed breeding: Mells Park, Coleford*, Edford Wood, Holcombe Woods, Stoke St Michael, Nettlebridge* and Gurney Slade; Priddy and Charterhouse; West Huntspill, Parrett Estuary and Steart; Ashcott Corner, Ham Wall, Shapwick Heath and Westhay Moor; Yeovil, West Coker, Crewkerne and Combe St Nicholas; Thurlbear and Southey Moor; West Monkton* and Wellington; Stringston; Broomfield Hill and Slaughterhouse Combe; Nettlecombe, Haddon Hill, Gupworthy and Croydon Hill; Bratton and North Hill; Blackford, Horner, Webber's Post and Cloutsham; Pitt Combe, Orchard Bottom to Silly Bridge and Bridgetown; Landacre Bridge, Withypool, Oakbeer Wood to Tarr Steps, Great Cleave/Rowdown Wood and Draydon Wood; and Brushford. Some of these sites have no suitable habitat, and birds seen there were probably nomadic.

Highest counts outside breeding season: six, Brean Down, September 29th, and five there on October 10th, when also seven at Emborough Pond.

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Very common resident breeder.

Although widely reported throughout the County, insufficient records of breeding were submitted to allow any form of analysis.

Highest counts: 19, Broadway, January 25th; 18, Hydrographic Office, Taunton, January 9th, and 20 there, September 22nd; 21, North Hill, November 9th.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Very common resident breeder; scarce passage-migrant.

Widely reported resident found throughout the County, with some large pre-roost counts, especially in pastoral farming areas. Insufficient records of breeding were submitted to allow any form of analysis.

Highest counts: 1,000, Torr Works Reservoir, August 8th and October 6th; 250, Pilton, October 19th; 420, Fivehead, July 15th; 600, Clapton, February 26th; 250, Chard Junction on 27th.

CG reported one on February 14th at Chapel Cleeve amongst a large flock of mixed corvids, which showed plumage characteristics suggestive of the nominate "Nordic" race, *C. m. monedula*. It had pale underparts and an obvious white collar.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Abundant resident breeder.

Several reports indicate a reduction in the number of nests within rookeries, and only a few show an increase. A survey of rookeries in the Upper Axe Valley and adjacent areas of the Mendips registered 604 active nests; this

represented a 23% decline since 2007, with a greater decline on Mendip (26%) than on the moors (20%) (DLB). At other rookeries: a 10% reduction from 2007 at Fitzhead (PSH) and unquantified reductions at Sutton Bingham (BJW) and Foxdown Hill, Chard (HCS).

Pre-roost and feeding flock counts of 200 birds or more: 200, Mells Park, October 11th; 200, Nettlebridge, February 3rd; 400, Queen's Sedge Moor, July 7th; 300, Clapton, February 26th; 380, Minehead Marshes, July 8th; and 300, Bratton, October 31st.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Abundant resident breeder.

Although widely reported throughout the County, insufficient records of breeding were submitted to allow any form of analysis.

Counts in excess of 50: 300, Orchardleigh, February 23rd; 113, Walpole, November 11th; 150, Ham Sewage Works, December 12th; 65, Broadway, June 28th; and 90, Dunster Beach, March 8th.

A bird showing plumage characteristics suggestive of a Carrion Crow x Hooded Crow hybrid, Shurton Bars, July 18th (NEW).

HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix*

Very rare visitor.

One, Dunster Beach, April 23rd/24th (CG, RLM, JLT, JRW).

Now classified as a full species; this is the first County record since April 2003.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Locally common resident breeder.

The number of records submitted for 2008 were 80% greater than those of the previous year. This could indicate an increase in the population or increased observer activity, as many records were obtained during surveys for the BTO *Atlas*.

Breeding confirmed or suspected at one site on Mendip, eight along coast, four on Levels, one in South Somerset, two on Blackdowns, one on Quantocks, two on Brendons and three on Exmoor. One carrying nesting material at Kilmersdon on early date of December 12th.

Large gatherings reported in both winter periods and in autumn, mainly on Blackdowns and Exmoor: at Churchinford, 60 on February 8th and up to 140 in mid December; 45, Langham Hill, November 18th; and 40, Sandyway, October 18th (though these were from a roost just over the Devon border).

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Very common resident breeder, but declining in some areas; abundant winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Only ten records of successful breeding received, almost all including nests in buildings. Largest post-breeding roving flock was at Steart: 2000, August 4th.

Visible migration noted on coast and inland: 20,000 moving eastwards in late afternoon, Steart, October 10th; 500 moving south, Berrow, on 23rd; 283 east, Dunster Beach, November 1st; 793 west, West Myne, November 17th.

Estimates of birds roosting on Avalon Marshes appeared to be smaller than in 2007: in first winter period, 80,000 at Ham Wall, January 1st, and two million, February 18th; in second winter period, 50,000 at Shapwick Heath, December 21st. The only other large roost reported was at Litton, Exmoor, with 75,000 on January 30th and 5,000 on November 11th.

ROSY STARLING *Sturnus roseus*

Very rare visitor.

Two records of single adults: in a Wellington garden, June 4th/5th, where the owner, Mrs Quarman, provided a full description; and at Porlock on the 7th, where a photo was supplied (*per* CS).

These bring the County total to about 22.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Abundant resident breeder; occasional passage-migrant.

Although the number of reports received has not decreased from last year, there were only three site counts exceeding 60 birds, compared with 25 in 2007 and 16 in 2006.

Breeding confirmed at the following sites: Coleford and Nettlebridge; Ilchester and Crewkerne; Knighton; Holford and Nether Stowey; Exford.

The largest group outside the breeding season was 200, Huntspill Sluice, August 21st.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Uncommon and very local resident breeder and winter visitor; rare passage-migrant.

There have been no records of breeding this year, nor of birds present during the breeding season. This disappointment is a sequel to the significant reduction that occurred last year in the small breeding populations in the east of the County. Concerns have been raised that infectious disease could be involved in this collapse.

Non-breeding season records: two (possibly migrants), Bruton, October 24th (BAT); about ten, Cary Moor, January 1st-April 15th; ten, Cloford, January-February (BAT); up to 16, Green Ore, January 2nd-February 10th (CC, JAH, DWH, BR-W, JLT); two, near Holford, December 31st (NEW).

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant resident breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Widespread throughout the County.

Breeding-season counts of singing males; 25, Nettlebridge, April 4th; 33, Gurney Slade, May 4th; and 29 pairs, Tealham Moor, on 16th. Few records of confirmed breeding: Harridge Wood, young being fed at two sites; Crewkerne (six survey tetrads) but very few juveniles fledged and a noticeable decline in the population over the year (AJP).

In first winter period: 250, Cary Moor, January 8th; 450, Woolverton, on 27th; 200, Purtington, February 17th; 650, Bossington, January 6th.

Strong autumn passage along coast from mid October to mid November included: total of 10,500, Berrow, October 9th-November 9th, the peak day being October 23rd, when 3,500 at Axe Estuary, 5,541 at Berrow and 5,600 at Burnham; total of 660, West Myne, November 9th-19th.

In second winter period; 200, Purtington, November 22nd, and Winsham on 30th; 300, Cary Moor, December 8th. On Exmoor and Brendons, very small numbers, perhaps because of shortage of beech-mast.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Uncommon and erratic winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Compared to 2007, a better first winter period, with records from across the County. In East Somerset and Mendip: 13, Charterhouse, January 6th; 20, Stock Hill, February 15th; 23, Rowberrow Warren, on 28th; regular at Coleford, March 17th-April 23rd, with peak of 26, March 31st. Present at Butleigh, January 1st-April 13th, with peak of 21, January 25th. Largest numbers in western hills: 200, Culbone, January 1st, and at Raleigh's Cross on 3rd; of 200 at Triscombe Stone on 8th, 150 still present on February 22nd; at least 100 feeding on grain, Hawkwell Cross, March 11th-14th, dropping to 80 on 22nd. In same period, small numbers in gardens and at feeders at: Nettlebridge, Wookey, Easton and Burtle (one or two each); Bridgwater (ten); Yeovil (five); Hatch Beauchamp (two); Taunton (four); Nether Stowey (three feeding on sunflower seeds); Gupworthy (three); and North Hill (one). Male ringed at Westonzoyland, January 15th.

Light autumn passage on coast of Bridgwater Bay, September 13th-November 16th: total of 89 birds, including peak counts of 20, Axe Estuary, October 23rd, and Brean Down, November 6th.

Fewer in second winter period, with maximum of 20, Simonsbath, November 23rd.

SERIN *Serinus serinus*

Very rare visitor.

Adult male, Steart, April 27th (JRB). The tenth County record and the first since 2003.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Population still much lower than before the outbreak of trichomoniasis and decline continues in specific recording areas at Taunton and Butleigh, although some recovery noted at Berrow in second winter period.

During breeding season, widely reported in small numbers. At Crewkerne, only seven territories in four tetrads, reflecting a 90% decline in ten years, and few fledged young seen (AJP). On Exmoor, thinly distributed around farms and in villages, but away from these only on gorse of Road Hill, which held two pairs.

In first winter period, highest counts of 60, at Westbury-sub-Mendip in February and Porlock Marsh in January.

Passage on coast from late September to mid November, including: 150, Steart, September 25th; 125, Brean Down, October 8th; 200, Berrow, on 12th; 200, Axe Estuary, and 400 south over Berrow/Burnham on 23rd; only two at West Myne, October 6th-November 19th.

More abundant in second winter period: about 50 feeding on yew berries in and around Bruton churchyard, mid October-November; 60, Porlock Marsh, November 27th, and 50 still present on December 7th.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Common resident and migrant breeder, and passage-migrant; probably winter visitor.

Breeding widely throughout County, with a good number of fledged young reported. On Exmoor, RSPB Survey found 26 territories in lower combes and around edges of moorland; outside the Moor itself, a flourishing species of beech-hedged farmland, but generally scarce in winter.

Few flocks from January to early spring, the largest being of 100 moving through Coleford on January 1st and 200 at Yeovil on 23rd. A marked passage from the coast during April, with both westward and eastward movements noted. Maximum counts: 200, Brean Down, and 250, Wall Common, April 22nd.

Post-breeding flocks in August and September in many areas, several containing 40-50 birds; 200, Kennard Moor, September 28th.

Autumn passage south along coast throughout October, with a maximum of 200, Brean Down, October 6th. Inland, passage also noted from Emborough Pond, on 28th.

More abundant in second winter period, with largest flock of 150, Coleford, October 19th, rising to 250, November 26th.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Uncommon but increasing resident or migrant breeder; locally common winter visitor and passage-migrant.

Breeding-season records: family party including recently fledged juveniles, Rowberrow Warren, July 28th; many singing males and pairs along Wiltshire border from Alfred's Tower to Gare Hill (BAT – they have bred on the Wiltshire side of the Longleat Estate since 1988); singing male and two females, Yeovil, March 20th; three, Britty Common/Mount Fancy, May 5th; pair in suitable breeding habitat east of Holford, May 31st; recently fledged juvenile at Rodhuish, August 24th; pair, with female collecting nesting material, East Water, June 4th. At Bratton, juvenile on August 17th and high counts there at feeding station in that month, with 45 on 18th and 100, probably flying to roost, on 29th. A number of other March-June records from Exmoor and the Brendons: several sites on Haddon Hill and near Wimbleball Lake; Kennisham Hill and Croydon Hill massif; Little Headon Plantation; West Luccombe, Webber's Post, and other places around Horner Wood; Woodcock Gardens, Culbone and Dulverton.

Outside the breeding season, widespread in both winter periods, when many attracted to garden feeders and alder trees. Occasionally in mixed flocks with Lesser Redpoll.

First winter period: scarce around Crewkerne, but one ringed at Millwater, February 10th; 82, Bratton, January 22nd, rising to 150, February 20th; 100, Croydon Hill, February 10th, and Coleford, March 27th.

In second winter period, greatest concentrations in the Avalon Marshes with 150 (two flocks), Shapwick Heath, November 2nd, and 118 on December 24th; 60, Meare Heath, on the 19th. Away from the Levels: 50, French Weir, Taunton, December 26th, and 50, Broadway, on 29th.

Spring passage very light: only eight, Brean Down, April 5th-27th. In autumn, 247 along coast from Axe Estuary to Hurlstone Point, October 6th-November 8th.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Fairly common resident and migrant breeder, winter visitor and passage-migrant.

A westerly bias in terms of the number of records received but widely reported throughout the County in all months.

Breeding-season records: bred at Corton Denham, Torr Works Reservoir, Coleford and Nettlebridge; on Levels, family on Somerton Moor, four territories on King's Sedge Moor and Wet Moor, one on West Moor, but only four on West Sedge Moor, which held 17 in 2007; bred at Butleigh; at least five pairs from Steart to Stringston; 47 pairs on Quantocks, only half the 2007 numbers, but coverage less complete; 129 territories in Somerset in RSPB Exmoor Survey, a slight increase on 2002, the densest populations being on the North Hill ridge, Ley Hill and the east end of Dunkery Hill, all places with good cover of Common Gorse.

Wintering flocks concentrated in maize stubble, winter wheat and straw/manure piles. First winter period and spring: 70, Westhay Moor, January 1st; 150, Bossington, on 6th; 90, Kennard Moor, on 24th; 100, Porlock Marsh, February 20th; 101, Minehead Golf Course, April 14th; 150, Dunster Beach, on 21st.

A strong autumn coastal passage from August to the end of October, with an estimated peak of 1,000, Axe Estuary, September 2nd.

Largest second-winter flocks mainly on coast, including: 120, Axe Estuary, November 8th; 140, Hinkley Point, on 15th; 170, Porlock Marsh, December 29th. Inland: 150 in root fields, Bratton, December 31st.

LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis cabaret*

Uncommon resident breeder and passage-migrant; fairly common winter visitor.

Recorded in all months, mostly in the Avalon Marshes and the west of the County.

Apart from single male, on Woodlands Hill and Frog Hill in June, all breeding-season records were from Brendons and Exmoor, where RSPB Survey and other observers found 87 territories in Somerset, including nine on Haddon Hill, seven on Black Hill/Croydon Hill/Withycombe Common, 21 from Robin How west to Porlock Post, 25 on Room Hill and Winsford Hill, seven around Brady Moor, and five south of Withypool.

Widespread in first winter period, including: 50, Croydon Hill, January 4th; ten, Shapwick Heath (East) on 13th and at Dommatt Wood on 26th; 12 east of Holford, February 22nd; and 30, St Audrie's Deer Park, April 2nd.

Only one record in August and two in September.

More abundant in second winter period, especially in Avalon Marshes: 30, Shapwick Heath, November 2nd; 40, Westhay Heath, on 15th; 35, Canada Farm/Shapwick Heath, on 29th; and 35, Meare Heath, December 9th.

On migration, total of 18 birds at Brean Down/Berrow on seven April dates; autumn total of 26, Brean Down to Hinkley Point, September 29th-November 2nd.

CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Locally common visitor following irruptions; intermittent breeder.

In first winter period (the normal breeding season), recorded from four main sites: pair, Gare Hill, February 12th, of which female was watched breaking off splinters and flying into Scots pine (GS); total of 11 at various places on Croydon Hill massif, including Rodhuish Common, January 22nd-February 17th; ten, Hopcott Common, February 8th; and three, North Hill, March 7th. Then a gap until April 29th, when 12 on Gallax Hill might have been local breeders or early immigrants.

From May 29th to August 30th, total of about 85 recorded from 15 widely spread sites at Bruton, and on Selwood Ridge, Mendip, Blackdowns, Brendons and north-east Exmoor. Two-thirds of these, and all flocks of over six, were from May 29th to late June, a characteristic period for irruptions. They included 15 on Grabbist Hill, June 3rd, 12 on Stock Hill on 11th, and 12 in Dunster Park on 23rd.

Seven later records, August 30th-October 31st, all of single birds, though a juvenile at Mells Park on September 14th may have been accompanied by others; of these, three were on passage on Bridgwater Bay, including the first and last birds.

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Fairly common resident breeder and occasional passage-migrant.

Records received from a large number of observers indicate a healthy population.

Many breeding-season records throughout County, mainly of one or two pairs. Confirmed breeding, of one pair unless stated, or estimated number of territories: Coleford, Nettlebridge and Gurney Slade; G.B. Gruffy NR

(Tynning's Farm); five territories round Crewkerne, where at least two pairs successful; Hewish; Worthal; and 16 territories in RSPB Exmoor Survey.

Widely reported in both winter periods, with highest counts of six, Hinkley Point, January 8th, and 11, Edford Wood, November 29th.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Rare winter visitor and passage-migrant. Has bred.

After an absence in 2007, four flew over Bagborough Plantation, January 26th.

Other records started with one in Mells Park, September 6th. Evidently a small influx in late autumn, beginning on October 23rd, when five flew south over Berrow/Burnham and one over Bruton. Later records were: one, Emborough Pond, October 28th; one over Bruton, November 4th, after which one or two were seen there in and around the churchyard until end of year, often in yew and cherry trees, five being present on December 20th; other single birds at Cary Moor on November 8th, at Torr Works Reservoir on 12th, at Norton-Sub-Hamdon on December 4th, at Cucklington on 17th and at West Monkton on 31st.

DARK-EYED JUNCO *Junco hyemalis*

Accidental.

One present at garden feeders, East Coker, November 16th-18th (TMF *et al.*). Second record for the County, the first being at Langford Budville, May 21st, 1983.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Rare winter visitor and passage-migrant.

One record: one, Huntspill Sea Wall, October 17th/18th (BJH,TR).

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage-migrant.

About nine birds, all coastal except one present for several days at North Hill, Chewton Mendip, and identified on January 20th.

First winter period: one, Minehead Golf Course, January 30th.

Second winter period: one, Lilstock, November 6th; one, Blue Anchor, on 15th; one, Minehead Golf Course, November 30th and December 9th/10th; and a male and two females, Porlock Marsh, December 7th.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Locally common resident breeder; perhaps also passage-migrant.

Breeding-season records, with number of singing males, where more than one: in east and on Mendip, at Shepton Montague (four), Newbury, near Coleford (three), Stratton-on-the-Fosse (four), Priddy (four) and Tynning's Farm (two); on Levels, at Shapwick, Weston Level (Westonzoyland), Curry Moor, King's Moor. Muchelney Ham and Hambridge; in south, at West Coker, Crewkerne (two) and Dowlish Wake, and survey of seven parishes around Fivehead yielded 23; west of Chard, at least 15 pairs between A30 and A358, west to Devon border, and 11 on Snowdon Hill; on Blackdowns, at Thurlbear Quarrylands, Gortnell Common (two) and Churchinford (four); 62 on Quantocks, including six on Broomfield Hill, four on Cothelstone Hill, seven in Bicknoller Combe and five in Weacombe; on coastal farmland to north at Knighton (three) and Stringston (five); and in area east of Holford, where 24 counted in ST14Q, May 31st.

Only four records from arable of East Brendons, where slowly declining in key area from Rodhuish and Sampford Brett south to Halse and Milverton. On Brendons and Exmoor, RSPB Moorland Survey found 44 territories in Somerset: one on Haddon Hill; nine on Rodhuish Common and Black Hill; four each on Withycombe Common and Grabbist/Alcombe Common; three on Ley Hill; 12 along lower slopes of Dunkery Hill from Ford to Webber's Post; single pairs on Codsand Moors and Room Hill; three on Withypool Hill; and six on Winsford Hill.

Generally restricted as breeder to two distinct habitats: arable fields (which must have song-posts of some kind) and lower sections of heathland, with some gorse and scattered trees. It has benefited from set-aside, which will now be largely lost, and from winter stubble.

Winter records are of concentrations within breeding areas. In first period, widespread in small numbers, highest counts being: 70 feeding on triticale, Cary Moor, January 8th; 12, Mendip Farm, Green Ore, February 1st; and 44 on stubble at Shurton, January 18th.

On autumn coastal passage, only single birds at Brean Down, October 6th, and Axe Estuary on 23rd.

In second winter period, recorded in seven out of 25 tetrads around Podimore, November/December. Flocks of 75, Limington, November 29th; 30, Shurton, December 11th, and 25, Chilton Cantelo, on 30th.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

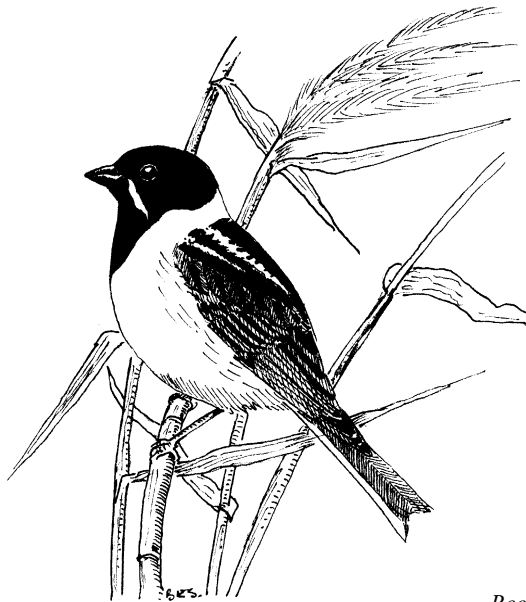
Locally common resident breeder; fairly common winter visitor and passage-migrant.

In breeding season, total of 381 pairs/singing males reported, excluding Exmoor, but very little coverage of major reserves in Avalon Marshes. Highest concentrations on Levels: four in Upper Axe Valley; 25 pairs, Tealham Moor; five on Butleigh Moor, ten on King's Sedge Moor RWLA, ten at Moorlinch, and 22 at Greylake Reserve; 11 on Curry Moor and 204 on West Sedge Moor (where 122 in 2007); 27 on West Moor (Hambridge) and 21 on Wet Moor. On Mendip, two singing males on Black Down in May and a fledged juvenile in July. On coast, four pairs at Berrow and 11 in Steart area. In south, recorded only from Sutton Bingham Reservoir, where two pairs.

On Somerset Exmoor, RSPB Survey found 163 territories (125 in 2002); largely a species of wetter grass moorland, absent from north-eastern heathery outliers: 22 from Ham and Hanny Combe over Codsand Moors and Ember Combe to Hawkcombe Head-Hillhead Cross road; about 70 west from there over Badgworthy Headwaters to Pinkworthy Pond and along Upper Exe; 37 along Barle from Goat Hill Bridge to Pickedstones, mainly in southern side-combes, and in Long Holcombe; 12 in Landacre Bridge/Dillacombe/Brady Moor area; 16 on commons south of Withypool; and six on Winsford Hill. Also bred at Wimbleball Lake.

Total of 43 on autumn migration, Axe Estuary/Brean Down, on six dates, October 1st-20th.

Small numbers at many sites in both winter periods. Highest counts: 44, Westhay Moor, January 1st, increasing to 100 on 6th; 50, Cary Moor, on 8th. At Berrow, up to 15 visited a garden in first winter period and 12 in the second. Elsewhere, up to 75, Cary Moor, and 25 at Greylake Reserve and east of Steart, November/December.



Reed Bunting

EXOTICA AND ESCAPES

All observations of escaped and feral species help to monitor possible colonisation, which in the future may become established. So all records are required.

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus*

Eight records of singles: Chedzoy, spent the winter with Mute Swans in a oil-seed rape field; immature, Chard Reservoir, July 12th/13th; Huish Bridge (Langport), on the 18th; Westhay Moor, on the 29th and August 23rd; Greylake Reserve, November 16th; Catcott Lows, December 6th; and West Sedge Moor, on 27th.

TRUMPETER SWAN *Cygnus buccinator*

One, Butleigh Moor, throughout the year.

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

Singles: at various sites within the Avalon Marshes, February 24th-May 8th; Steart, August 30th; Noah's Lake, Shapwick Heath, September 22nd-29th.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens*

One, Wet Moor, December 15th; two, Wimbleball Lake, on the 18th.

MUSCOVY DUCK *Cairina moschata*

One, Noah's Lake, Shapwick Heath, May 5th.

BUFFLEHEAD *Bucephala albeola*

One, Goodland Gardens, Taunton, September 15th.

HARRIS' HAWK *Parabuteo unicinctus*

One, Cheddar Reservoir/Fry's Hill area, April-November; one on a Stock Dove carcass, Compton Durville, October 9th.

SAKER FALCON *Falco cherrug*

One flew off inland, Dunster Beach, October 9th.

GREAT BUSTARD *Otis tarda*

Birds from the Salisbury Plain reintroduction scheme: one, tagged yellow '22', Burtle Moor, February 12th and 19th: one untagged male, West Sedge Moor, June 17th, thought to be yellow '07'; possibly the same untagged male, Curry Moor, various dates, July 20th-November 19th; it or another, North Moor Moorland, December 26th/27th.

LIST OF OBSERVERS

Andrews R.M.	RMA	Goldie P.	PGo
Ashman A.	AA	Gorringe D.J.	DJG
Awford L.E.	LEA	Grant P. & P.	PGr
		Gray B.H.J.	BHJG
Ball J.	JBI	Greenwood M. & R.	MG
Ballance D.K.	DKB	Grimmond R.	RGr
Ballantine R.P.	RPB	Grinter A.	AG
Bartlett T.	TBa		
Beavis S.A.	SAB	Halsey R.J.	RJH
Best J.R.	JRB	Hansford J.	JHa
Bovett W.P.	WPB	Harris A.	AHa
Bowyer P.	PB	Hastings R.C.F.	RCFH
Bristol Ornithological Club	BOC	Hazell J.A.	JAH
British Trust for Ornithology	BTO	Helliar D.W.	DWH
Buckingham D.L.	DLB	Hill B.J.	BJH
Burrows C.	CB	Hill P.S.	PSH
Butcher R.J.	RJB	Holmes J.D.	JDH
		Hull I.	IH
Campbell G.	GCa	Ingram R.J.	RJI
Caola S.	SC		
Carter B.	BC	Jackson M.	MJ
Case N.H.	NHC	Jones R.J.	RJJ
Chace R.	RCh		
Chapman S.J.	SJC	Klim R.	RK
Chidgey J.W.	JWC		
Chown D.J.	DJC	Leece J.	JLe
Clement P.A.	PAC		
Connolly J.G.	JGC	Martin J.P.	JPM
Cook P.G.	PGC	McGeoch J.A.	JAMcG
Cotton D.J.	DJCo	Milbourne N.R.	NRM
Craig C.	CC	Miller D.F.	DFM
Crispin J.	JCr	Mockridge D.G.	DGM
Cropper R.S.	RSC	Moss S.	SMo
		Murray-Smith D.	DM-S
Devitt R.H.	RHD	Musgrove R.L.	RLM
Dicker G.M.	GMD		
Dickey R.C.	RCD		
		Nevitt D.	DNe
Edwards K.	KE	Newman C. & J.	C&JN
Edwards P.J.	PJE		
Ellis B.R.	BRE	Packer J.J.	JJP
Evans B.	BE	Parsons A.J.	AJP
Everett A.N.	ANE	Phillips J.	JP
Exmoor Natural History Society	ENHS	Pratt R.	RPr
		Pugsley A.M.	AMP
Fairweather S.C.J.	SCJF	Raven T.	TR
Farr T.M.	TMF	Richardson R.	RRi
Ford T.D.	TDF	Riley D.	DRy
		Rivoire J.	JRi
Gay P.	PG	Roberts-Wray B.	BR-W
Gibbs B.D.	BDG	Robinson R.	RR
Gladman C.	CG		

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	RSPB	Tidswell S.	ST
RSPB Woodland Survey	RSPBW	Treeby R.K.	RKT
		Urch G.	GU
Sage C.	CS	Vaughan R. & M.	R&MV
Sage M.	MS	Wall E.	EW
Sawyer C.M.	CMS	Wall N.E.	NEW
Simmons A.G.	AGS	Warden D.	DW
Simms A.	AS	Ward-Smith R.	RW-S
Slade A.M.	AMS	Warne A.	AW
Slade B.E.	BES	Wawman D.	DWa
Smith N.	NS	Webber W.J.	WJW
Smith N.A.	NAS	White J.R.	JRW
Squire H.C.	HCS	Whitworth P.	PW
Stevenson A.	ASt	Widden B.J.	BJW
Suter G.	GS	Williams N.P.	NPW
		Wilson P.H.	PHW
Taylor B.A.	BAT	Wolton A.W.	AWW
Thomas J.L.	JLT		
Thomas S.	STh		
Thorogood J.	JTh		

With apologies for any omissions.

RINGING REPORT 2008

A total of 6,545 birds of 58 species were ringed in Somerset during 2008; compared to 2007 an increase in the total but a decrease in the number of species.

Ringing highlights included an Aquatic Warbler at Steart and a Yellow-browed Warbler in Crewkerne.

As always, our thanks go to all the ringers and their helpers in the County, and to the landowners for continued permission to ring on their land.

RECOVERIES, CONTROLS & SIGHTINGS

Birds included were recorded over ten km from where they were originally ringed, or are of special interest, e.g. long-lived birds or returning migrants.

Age when ringed

1. Pullus: bird ringed in the nest.
- 1j Pullus: bird just about able to fly but after leaving nest.
2. Fully-grown; year of hatching unknown.
3. Definitely hatched during calendar year of ringing.
- 3j Definitely hatched during calendar year, but with juvenile plumage.
4. Hatched before calendar year of ringing, but exact year unknown.
5. Hatched during previous calendar year.
6. Hatched during previous calendar year, but exact year unknown.

M=Male F=Female

Conditions of recovery

- X Found dead.
XF Found freshly dead or dying.
XL Found long dead.
A Alive and probably healthy.
+ Shot or intentionally killed by man.
+F Shot or intentionally killed by man (fresh).
+L Shot or intentionally killed by man (not recent).
V Alive and probably healthy; caught and released by non-ringer.
R Caught and released by ringer.
RR Ring or colour marks read in field.

Mute Swan

4	29.08.2007	Radford Lake, Plymstock, Devon.
RR	26.01.2008	Minehead.
4	01.09.2008	RSPCA West Hatch, Taunton.
RR	08.05.2008	Dunster Beach.

This bird had been rescued in Barry, Glamorgan, and taken to West Hatch, where it was ringed. On the same day, it was released onto Hay Moor.

4M	23.07.2007	Abbotsbury Swannery, Dorset.
RR	17.05.2008	Dunster Beach.

Also present the next day.

4M	23.07.2007	Abbotsbury Swannery, Dorset.
RR	08.05.2008	Dunster Beach.

Present until May 18th.

Bewick's Swan

2F	18.08.2008	Lovetskiy Island, Arctic Russia.
RR	14.11.2008	Stockland Bristol.

The first sighting of this bird anywhere since its initial ringing.

Shelduck

3j	06.08.2008	Steart.
R	26.11.2008	Seaton, Devon.

Ringed and released by the RSPCA, West Hatch, after being picked up in Barnstaple, North Devon.

Gannet

1	07.08.2008	Kharlov Island, Barents Sea, Murmansk, Russia.
XF	15.09.2008	Chard Reservoir.

Taken into care but died overnight. It had travelled 2956km in only 39 days since being ringed.

Little Egret

1	13.06.2006	Goldcliff, Gwent.
RR	12.07.2008	Dunster Beach.
RR	28.10.2008	Chapel Cleeve.

Present to March 16th at Chapel Cleeve and returned October 28th. Code: Green with black D right leg, Yellow with white A left leg.

Sparrowhawk

3F 29.10.2006 Westonzoyland.
 XF 24.11.2006 Moorland.

Although under the ten km distance usually applied to records in this section; it was thought to be interesting enough to include. It was taken to West Hatch RSPCA, where it died overnight from trauma due to a traffic collision.

Mediterranean Gull

4 06.05.2006 Mietkow Reservoir, Wroclaw, Poland.
 RR 03.07.2008 Minehead.

Recorded in North Devon in 2006 and back in Poland during the breeding season in 2007.

4 23.06.2006 Zandvlietsluis, Antwerpen, Belgium.
 RR 05.01.2008 Dunster Beach.

4 31.05.2008 Noordelijk Insteekdok, Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium.
 RR 04.08.2008 Dunster Beach.

Stayed in the Dunster Beach and Blue Anchor area until September 11th; recorded at Radipole Lake, Dorset on October 19th.

Black-headed Gull

4M 14.06.2006 Böhme und Werder, Ostvorpommern, Germany.
 RR 10.11.2008 Minehead.

In the first winter period this bird had stayed until February 24th; recorded annually since 2006.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

4 17.05.2008 Hempsted Landfill Site, Gloucester, Gloucestershire.
 RR 20.07.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

4 23.06.2005 Bristol.
 RR 23.07.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

This bird was also recorded in Madrid, Spain, in April 2008.

4 06.07.2001 Bath.
 RR 16.10.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.
 Also recorded at the Hayle Estuary, Cornwall, in 2002 and on Flat Holm, Glamorgan, in 2007.

4 09.07.1999 Bristol.
 RR 10.12.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.
 This bird was also recorded at Stubber's Green, West Midlands, in 2005.

4 29.06.2005 Bristol.
 RR 04.05.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

This bird was also recorded at several locations in Portugal during 2006.

4 27.06.1998 Bristol.
 RR 16.04.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.
 A much-travelled individual, having also been recorded in Morocco, Portugal and France.

4 16.02.2008 Stoke Orchard Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.

RR 20.07.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

4 20.04.2008 Hempsted Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.

RR 20.07.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

4 05.02.2007 Stoke Orchard Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.

RR 20.07.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

4 21.08.2004 Stoke Orchard Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.

RR 05.07.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

Also recorded near Cannock, Staffordshire, during 2007.

4 27.07.2002 Bristol.
 RR 20.07.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

1 21.06.2007 Arnhem, Netherlands.
 RR 04.05.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

Also recorded in the Algarve, Portugal, in 2007.

4 29.06.2006 Bath.
 RR 04.05.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

4 24.06.2003 Bristol.
 RR 04.03.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

This bird was also recorded in Tarragona, Spain, during the winter of 2003/04.

4 06.07.2007 Bath.
 RR 05.01.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

4 00.00.2001 Bath.
 RR 05.07.2008 Torr Works Reservoir.

Herring Gull

3	22.12.2007	Hempsted Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.
RR	28.08.2008	Hinkley Point.
4	14.07.2007	Lilou Island, just west of Guernsey, Channel Islands.
RR	05.01.2008	Torr Works Reservoir.
3	30.06.2007	Gloucester.
RR	06.01.2008	Torr Works Reservoir.
4	16.12.2006	Hempsted Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.
RR	08.09.2008	Blue Anchor.

Recorded again on October 8th; this bird had also been seen in 2007.

4	16.12.2006	Hempsted Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.
RR	03.03.2008	Minehead.

Also recorded on two dates at Dunster Beach during 2008, and seen in 2007.

1	12.07.2004	Bristol.
RR	14.03.2008	Minehead.
4	13.02.2007	Hempsted Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.
RR	07.10.2008	Blue Anchor.
1	21.06.2007	Bristol.
RR	15.04.2008	Dunster Beach.
4	11.10.2008	Hempsted Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.
RR	10.12.2008	Torr Works Reservoir.
4	11.11.2006	Hempsted Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.
RR	10.12.2008	Torr Works Reservoir.
4	00.00.2005	Bristol.
RR	05.07.2008	Torr Works Reservoir.
3	20.10.2007	Hempsted Landfill Site, Gloucestershire.
RR	28.01.2008	Minehead.

In the area until March 17th at least.

House Martin

1	17.08.2007	Birchwood, Chard.
XF	29.06.2008	Buckland St Mary.

Pied/White Wagtail

3	18.08.2007	East Kilbride, Clyde, Scotland.
RR	07.02.2008	Minehead.

Blackbird

6M	07.02.2008	Bratton.
R	18.11.2008	Het Groene Glop, Schiermonnikoog, Netherlands.

Caught at this ringing station off the north-west coast of The Netherlands.

Sedge Warbler

4	09.07.2007	Coria del Rio, Rio Guadaira, Seville, Spain.
R	24.05.2008	Stearr.

Reed Warbler

3j	24.07.2004	Stearr.
R	30.07.2006	Farlington Marsh, Hampshire.
3j	25.08.2007	Usk, Gwent.
R	27.07.2008	Stearr.

Blue Tit

3M	04.09.2006	Westonzoyland.
XF	11.03.2007	Burtle.

Nuthatch

1	19.05.2007	Rifton, Tiverton, Devon.
R	01.11.2007	Birchwood, Chard.
R	27.05.2008	Birchwood, Chard.

Trapped as a breeding female in 2008.

Greenfinch

3F	14.10.2006	Westonzoyland.
R	04.11.2006	Street.
5F	22.01.2005	St Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands.
R	23.12.2006	Westonzoyland.
3F	04.10.2008	Winfarthing, Norfolk.
R	01.12.2008	Westonzoyland.

Siskin

3F	20.10.2007	Lundy, Devon.
R	20.02.2008	Bratton.
5F	26.02.2008	Birchwood, Chard.
R	29.03.2008	Neerpelt, Limburg, Belgium.
5F	16.03.2008	Birchwood, Chard.
R	15.04.2008	Brandon, Suffolk.
5M	16.03.2008	Birchwood, Chard.
R	04.04.2008	Eksel, Limburg, Belgium.
5M	23.03.2008	Broad Oak, Devon.
R	09.12.2008	Birchwood, Chard.
3J	26.06.2008	Birchwood, Chard.
V	11.09.2008	Nether Stowey.
5M	24.02.2008	Five Bells, Watchet.
R	02.04.2008	Kerkhoven, Limburg, Belgium.
3M	20.10.2007	Lundy, Devon.
R	26.03.2008	Five Bells, Watchet.

Reed Bunting

3	04.10.2005	Stear.
RR	10.11.2008	Bridgend, Glamorgan.

SYSTEMATIC LIST WITH RINGERS' INDIVIDUAL TOTALS FOR 2008

Species	JWC/DFM	AJP	AMS	RW-S	DWa	WJW	TOTAL
Sparrowhawk	3				2		5
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1						1
Herring Gull	1						1
Wood Pigeon	7				2	2	11
Collared Dove	10					1	11
Barn Owl	2						2
Green Woodpecker	5					1	6
Great Spotted Woodpecker		3		13	4	1	21
Swallow	147			5	10		162
House Martin	13						13
Meadow Pipit	12					3	15
Pied Wagtail	8	1				2	11
Wren	32	10		7	3	16	68
Dunnock	37	6		13	52	26	134
Robin	55	9	2	23	43	36	168
Stonechat	2					6	8
Blackbird	106	11	1	12	21	75	226
Fieldfare	2					10	12
Song Thrush		1		1		9	11
Redwing						3	3
Cetti's Warbler	3						3
Aquatic Warbler	1						1
Sedge Warbler	28						28
Reed Warbler	64						64
Blackcap	56	11		4	4	75	150
Garden Warbler	1			2		2	5
Lesser Whitethroat	3						3
Common Whitethroat	4					4	8
Yellow-browed Warbler		1					1

Species	JWC/DFM	AJP	AMS	RW-S	DWa	WJW	TOTAL
Wood Warbler						41	41
Chiffchaff	62	8		4	11	38	123
Willow Warbler	5			6	5	19	35
Goldcrest	17	2		4	5	25	53
Firecrest	1						1
Spotted Flycatcher	1			9			10
Pied Flycatcher	91						91
Long-tailed Tit	16	3	11	16	17	19	82
Blue Tit	313	24	28	129	406	43	943
Great Tit	160	33	7	129	189	34	552
Coal Tit	19	2		59	37	13	130
Marsh Tit				4	1		5
Nuthatch				14	1		15
Treecreeper				2			2
Magpie			1		3	3	7
Jay						2	2
Rook	1						1
Starling	225						225
House Sparrow	581	6	1	1	174	2	765
Chaffinch	216	8		86	47	83	440
Brambling	2			16		6	24
Greenfinch	253	1	1	60	110	73	498
Goldfinch	265			148	23	37	473
Siskin		1		235	385	125	746
Linnet	2						2
Lesser Redpoll	1						1
Bullfinch	3	2		1	1		7
Yellowhammer	1						1
Reed Bunting	118						118
TOTAL	2956	143	52	1003	1556	835	6545

Ringers' initials as in the "List of Observers".

SOMERSET GAZETTEER

Listed below are all the places mentioned in the Systematic List. A six-figure OS map reference is given (except to some large areas) as a fairly accurate guide. The capital letter at the end of each place corresponds with the District reference used on the County map in the Reports from 1984 to 1993.

- Acklands, SS732396, W.
Aisholt, ST194357, SW.
Alcombe, SS974442, W.
Alcombe Common, SS975440, W.
Alderman's Barrow, SS843427, W.
Alfred's Tower, ST745352, E.
Allcombe Water, SS830405, W.
Aller, ST400293, C.
Aller Moor, ST387287, C.
Aller Wood, ST406306, C.
Allerford (Exmoor), SS905470, W.
Allerford Combe, SS910474, W.
Almsworthy Common, SS842419, W.
Ammerham, ST367057, S.
Andersea, ST332335, C.
Apex Leisure Park, ST316475, N.
Ash, ST478206, C.
Ash Priors, ST151295, SW.
Ashcott, ST437372, C.
Ashcott Corner, ST449397, C.
Ashcott Heath, ST445392, C.
Ashford Mill, ST357189, C.
Ashford Reservoir, ST235384, SW.
Ashill, ST323174, S.
Ashway Side, SS874319, W.
Ashwell, ST363159, S.
Ashwick Wood, SS889297, W.
Athelney, ST347288, C.
Avalon Marshes, N.
Axbridge, ST430545, N.
Axe Estuary, ST295595, N.
- Badgworthy, SS791450, W.
Badgworthy Water, SS791450, W.
Bagborough Plantation, ST170343, SW.
Bagley Combe, SS880426, W.
Bale Water, SS762392, W.
Baltonsborough, ST542348, C.
Barlynch Wood, SS936287, W.
Barrington, ST388181, S.
Barrington Hill, ST300170, S.
Barwick Park, ST555143, S.
Batcombe, ST691390, E.
Bathpool, ST253258, SW
- Bat's Castle, SS988423, W.
Bawdrip, ST343396, C.
Bawdrip Level, ST350391, C.
Bayford, ST726291, E.
Beacon Hill (Quantocks), ST125410, SW.
Bere Wall Wood, ST515374, C.
Berrow, ST295524, N.
Bickham Wood, ST272081, S.
Bicknoller, ST110395, SW.
Bicknoller Combe, ST115399, SW.
Bicknoller Post, ST128403, SW.
Bilbrook, ST032410, W.
Billicombe Wood, ST392376, C.
Bin Combe (Quantocks), ST175393, SW.
Bin Combe Wood, SS907408, W.
Birchwood, ST242142, S.
Bishop's Hull, ST208249, SW.
Bishops Lydeard, ST167297, SW.
Bishopswood, ST260128, S.
Black Down, ST475575, N.
Black Hill (Brendons), SS986401, W.
Black Hill (Quantocks), ST148386, SW.
Black Rock, ST485547, N.
Blackbrook, ST259255, SW.
Blackford, SS924453, W.
Blackmoor NR, ST500550, N.
Blackpitts, SS764417, W.
Blakeway Lake, ST437445, N.
Blue Anchor, ST022435, W.
Blue Gate, SS759377, W.
Bossington, SS898479, W.
Bossington Beach, SS893485, W.
Bossington Hill, SS905484, W.
Bradford-on-Tone, ST173229, SW.
Bradley Ford, SS860335, W.
Bradley New Pond, SS862337, W.
Brady Moor, SS815370, W.
Bramble Combe, SS946482, W.
Bratton, SS947463, W.
Brean, ST295585, N.
Brean Down, ST290590, N.
Brean Down Cove, ST294587, N.
Brean Farm, ST301587, N.
Brendon Two Gates, SS765432, W.
Bridgetown, SS923332, W.
Bridgwater, ST300370, C.
Briggins Moor, SS893250, W.
Britannia Shield, SS985285, W.
Britty Common, ST258157, S.
Broadway, ST320155, S.
Broadwood Plantation, SS977413, W.

Brockwell, SS929432, W.
Brompton Regis, SS951315, W.
Broomfield, ST223322, SW.
Broomfield Hill, ST215328, SW.
Brown Down, ST230137, S.
Brue Estuary, ST302478, N.
Brushford, SS919258, W.
Bruton, ST685347, E.
Buckland Wood, ST182176, S.
Buckland St Mary, ST270134, S.
Bungalow, The, ST434443, N.
Burgundy Combe, SS947181, W.
Burnham (-on-Sea), ST305495, N.
Burrige Wood, SS913285, W.
Burrowbridge, ST358306, C.
Burtle, ST397429, N.
Burtle Moor, ST402439, N.
Bury, SS947272, W.
Bury Castle, SS917473, W.
Butleigh, ST520335, C.
Butleigh Moor, ST440347, C.
Butleigh Wood, ST500340, C.
Butlin's (Minehead), SS985461, W.
Butt Moor, ST529359, C.

Callow Hill, ST441560, N.
Canada Farm, ST417407, N.
Canada Farm Lake, ST414413, N.
Cannington, ST257395, W.
Carhampton, ST008426, W.
Carslake, ST109366, W.
Cary Fitzpaine, ST550270, C.
Cary Moor, ST610306, E.
Castle Bridge, SS883296, W.
Castle Cary, ST640324, E.
Castle Neroche, ST271158, S.
Catcott, ST395394, N.
Catcott Heath, ST405415, N.
Catcott Lows, ST402413, N.
Catsford Common, ST237455, N.
Chaffcombe, ST352101, S.
Chalk Water, SS818454, W.
Chapel Cleeve, ST036430, W.
Chard, ST323082, S.
Chard Junction, ST341049, S.
Chard Reservoir, ST335097, S.
Chargot, SS980372, W.
Chargot Wood, SS975358, W.
Chargot Valley, SS975365, W.
Charlton (Creech St Michael), ST292266, SW.
Charlton (Kilmersdon), ST682523, E.
Charlton Mackrell, ST528283, C.
Charlton Park, ST685525, E.
Charterhouse, ST501557, N.

Cheddar, ST455535, N.
Cheddar Head ST500531, N.
Cheddar Moor, ST455512, N.
Cheddar Reservoir, ST442537, N.
Cheddon Fitzpaine, ST243277, SW.
Chedzoy, ST340375, C.
Chetsford Water, SS851421, W.
Chewton Mendip, ST598530, N.
Chilton Cantelo, ST517221, S.
Chilton Moor, ST380430, N.
Chilton Trinity, ST297391, SW.
Chilton Trinity Pits, ST298395, SW.
Churchinford, ST213126, S.
Cinnamon Lane, ST507380, C.
Clapton, ST636527, E.
Clatworthy Reservoir, ST040310, W.
Cloford, ST723440, E.
Cloud Farm, SS794467, W.
Cloutsham, SS892431, W.
Cloutsham Ball, SS898435, W.
Cloven Rocks, SS786396, W.
Cockercombe, ST180363, SW.
Cocklake, ST440494, N.
Codsand Moors, SS873407, W.
Coleford, ST687490, E.
Collard Hill, ST487342, C.
Colley Water, SS842446, W.
Collyhill Wood, SS966366, W.
Combe Florey, ST157312, SW.
Combe Hill, ST501331, C.
Comberow, ST029353, W.
Combe St Nicholas, ST301112, S.
Combwich, ST259423, N.
Combwich Pill, ST261422, N.
Combwich Ponds, ST258418, N.
Comer's Gate, SS860354, W.
Comerslade, SS736373, W.
Compton Dundon, ST492330, C.
Compton Durville, ST417174, C.
Copleham Cross, SS923343, W.
Cornham Brake, SS761387, W.
Cornham Ford, SS748387, W.
Corton Denham, ST636225, E.
Coscombe, SS796489, W.
Cossington, ST358403, N.
Cothelstone Hill, ST183326, SW.
County Gate, SS794486, W.
Cow Castle, SS794374, W.
Cranmore Wood, ST675455, E.
Crawter Hill, SS893458, W.
Creech Hill, ST672360, E.
Creech St Michael, ST275255, SW.
Crewkerne, ST442095, S.
Crewkerne Sewage Works, ST450090, S.

- Cricket St Thomas, ST373087, S.
 Cripps River, ST368443, N.
 Crock Street, ST323132, S.
 Crook Peak, ST387558, N
 Croscombe, ST591445, N.
 Cross, ST415547, N.
 Cross Moor, ST413545, N.
 Cross Plain, ST415555, N.
 Crowcombe, ST141367, SW.
 Crowcombe Heathfield, ST136340, SW.
 Crowcombe Park Gate, ST145375, SW.
 Crowcombe Station, ST137342, SW.
 Croydon Hill, SS972405, W.
 Cucklington, ST755275, E.
 Culbone, SS843483, W.
 Culbone Hill, SS833475, W.
 Culver Cliff, SS963476, W.
 Curland, ST277175, SW.
 Curr Cleve, SS865364, W.
 Curriott Hill, ST435092, S.
 Curry Mallet, ST332213, C.
 Curry Moor, ST325275, C.
 Curry Rivel, ST390252, C.
- Dady Combe, SS868427, W.
 Dane's Brook, SS835315, W.
 Dead Woman's Ditch, ST162381, SW.
 Dean, ST672441, E.
 Deddy Combe, SS808476, W.
 Dillacombe, SS802355, W.
 Dillington, ST376154, S.
 Dillington Park, ST370155, C.
 Dinder, ST576447, N.
 Dinnington, ST403128, C.
 Dommett Wood, ST276145, S.
 Doniford, ST088428, W.
 Donyatt, ST335143, S.
 Doverhay Down, SS885454, W.
 Doverhay Plantation, SS889457, W.
 Dowlish Wake, ST375125, S.
 Downhead, ST691459, E.
 Downscombe, SS840390, W.
 Dowsborough, ST163303, SW.
 Draycott (Limington), ST549215, C.
 Draycott Moor, ST465500, N.
 Draycott Sleight, ST486516, N.
 Draydon Wood, SS893294, W.
 Driver Farm, SS736405, W.
 Drybridge Combe, SS758382, W.
 Dulverton, SS913278, W.
 Dunkery Beacon, SS892416, W.
 Dunkery Hill, SS903423, W.
 Dunster, SS992436, W.
 Dunster Beach, ST000450, W.
 Dunster Hawn, SS998450, W.
 Dunster Marsh, SS994454, W.
 Dunster Park, SS993429, W.
 Dunster Station, SS996448, W.
 Duredon Farm, SS756402, W.
 Durleigh Reservoir, ST270364, SW.
- Earlake Moor, ST360316, C.
 East Brent, ST348520, N.
 East Coker, ST542123, S.
 East Combe, ST161311, SW.
 East Lydford, ST574313, E.
 East Lynch, SS928463, W.
 East Lyng, ST335290, C.
 East Nynehead, ST155229, SW.
 East Quantoxhead, ST138437, SW.
 East Waste, ST481416, N.
 East Water, SS895430, W.
 East Woodlands, ST790442, E.
 Easton, ST511478, N.
 Ebbor Gorge, ST528490, N.
 Edbrooke Hill, SS307335, W.
 Edford, ST671491, E.
 Edford Wood, ST667485, E.
 Edington, ST387397, C.
 Edington Moor, ST390410, N.
 Ellicombe, SS983447, W.
 Ember Combe, SS855420, W.
 Emborough, ST614513, E.
 Emborough Pond, ST613509, E.
 Enmore, ST240352, SW.
 Enmore Castle Lake, ST237352, SW.
 Exebridge, SS930245, W.
 Exe Head, SS750416, W.
 Exe Head Bridge, SS763416, W.
 Exe Plain, SS755420, W.
 Exford, SS855385, W.
 Exford Common, SS855408, W.
- Fairy Cave, ST655475, E.
 Farleigh Hungerford, ST800565, E.
 Farley Water, SS757427, W.
 Faulkland, ST738546, E.
 Ferne Animal Centre, ST276076, S.
 Firepool, ST235252, SW.
 Fitzhead, ST120283, SW.
 Five Bells, ST065423, W.
 Fivehead, ST352228, C.
 Fivehead Hill, ST353237, C.
 Flaxpool, ST140354, SW.
 Flexbarrow, SS782381, W.
 Forche's Corner, ST183171, S.
 Ford (Brockwell), SS930426, W.
 Ford Abbey (Dorset), ST360052

Ford Common, ST305539, N.
Fordgate, ST324326, C.
Forton, ST336070, S.
Foxdon Hill, ST312101, S.
French Weir, ST220248, SW.
Fresh Moor, ST282127, S.
Frog Hill, ST152385, SW.
Frome, ST777477, E.

Gallax Hill, SS985427, W.
Galloping Bottom, ST051350, W.
Gare Hill, ST779402, E.
G.B. Gruffy NR, ST476562, N.
Glastonbury, ST500390, C.
Glastonbury Heath, ST472396, N.
Glenthorne, SS805494, W.
Goat Hill Bridge, SS724406, W.
Godney Moor, ST480439, N.
Godney Pools, ST466444, N.
Gold Corner, ST367432, N.
Gold Corner RWLA, ST375426, N.
Goodland Gardens, ST225246, SW.
Goosemoor Common, SS880421, W.
Gortnell Common, ST165175, S.
Grabbist Hill, SS980436, W.
Great Birchcleeve Wood, SS872304, W.
Great Breach Wood, ST505320, C.
Great Buscombe, SS778419, W.
Great Cleeve, SS866312, W.
Great Hill (Quantocks), ST156365, SW.
Greenaleigh Point, SS957403, W.
Greenham, ST078202, W.
Greenlands, SS844413, W.
Green Ore, ST578502, N.
Greinton, ST413363, C.
Greylake, ST388335, C.
Greylake RSPB Reserve, ST379353, C.
Greystone Gate, SS840330, W.
Gupworthy, SS970350, W.
Gurney Slade, ST624492, E.

Hadborough Plantation, SS963285, W.
Haddeo Valley, SS950295, W.
Haddon Hill, SS975285, W.
Hadspen, ST657326, E.
Halscombe Allotment, SS820935, W.
Halse Combe, SS895467, W.
Halsway, ST130378, SW.
Halsway Combe, ST136383, SW.
Halsway Hill, ST135384, SW.
Ham (Exmoor), SS901408, W.
Ham (Edford), ST675486, E.
Ham Sewage Works, ST287247, C.
Ham Wall, ST464397, C.

Hambridge, ST395215, C.
Hamdon Hill, ST479170, S.
Hankridge LNR, ST253256, SW.
Hanny Combe, SS918419, W.
Hardington, ST742526, E.
Hare Knaps, ST148396, SW.
Harridge Wood, ST658484, E.
Harris Vale, ST693495, E.
Haselbury Plucknett, ST472110, S.
Hassage (Faulkland), ST752558, E.
Hatch Beauchamp, ST303205, C.
Hawk Combe, SS874457, W.
Hawkcombe Head, SS845457, W.
Hawkridge, SS861307, W.
Hawkridge Reservoir, ST208362, SW.
Hawkwell Cross, SS872258, W.
Hay Moor (North Curry), ST324335, C.
Hay Moor (Long Sutton), ST455251, C.
Haybridge, ST532458, N.
Hayes Wood, SS849346, W.
Heddon Oak, ST120372, SW.
Hele Bridge, SS933278, W.
Hemington, ST727533, E.
Henlade, ST270240, SW.
Henley (High Ham), ST437324, N.
Henner Combe, SS917488, W.
Herridge Combe, ST131415, SW.
Hewish, ST420083, S.
High Ham, ST427310, C.
Highbridge, ST320475, N.
Higher Combe, SS869381, W.
Higher Dumbledeer, ST001412, W.
Hillhead Cross, SS851403, W.
Hillway, SS827363, W.
Hillway Wood, SS830362, W.
Hinkley Point, ST215463, N.
Hoar Moor, SS863407, W.
Hoar Oak Water, SS785434, W.
Hoccombe, ST105297, SW.
Hoccombe Water, SS780433, W.
Hodder's Combe, ST146406, SW.
Holcombe, ST672497, E.
Holcombe Wood, ST667506, E.
Holford, ST158411, SW.
Holford Combe, ST154395, SW.
Hollow Combe, SS900428, W.
Home Covert, Otterhampton, ST250429, N.
Hookway, SS827464, W.
Hopcott Common, SS957443, W.
Hopkins' Farm, Ash Priors, ST151278, SW.
Horner, SS898455, W.
Horner Water, SS896452, W.
Horner Woods, SS894443, W.
Horsen Hill, SS789357, W.

- Horsey Level, ST320400, C.
 Hort Bridge, ST346153, S.
 Huish Bridge, ST425263, C.
 Huntspill River, ST340438, N.
 Huntspill Sea Wall, ST293463, N.
 Huntspill Sluice, ST292458, N.
 Huntworth, ST312343, C.
 Hurley Beacon, ST142381, SW.
 Hurlstone Point, SS898494, W.
 Hurscombe Reserve, SS975323, W.
 Hurstone Wood, ST053242, W.
- Ilchester, ST525234, C.
 Ilford, ST365175, C.
 Ilminster, ST360145, S.
 Ilton, ST352175, C.
 Isle Abbotts, ST351209, C.
 Isle Brewers, ST366211, C.
- Jenny Cridland's Copse, ST055428, W.
- Kennard Moor, ST553367, C.
 Kennisham Hill, SS962364, W.
 Keward, ST545448, N.
 Kilmersdon, ST696524, E.
 Kilmersdon Common, ST682489, E.
 Kilve, ST149430, SW.
 Kilve Beach, ST144444, SW.
 King's Brompton Forest, SS964326, W.
 King's Moor, ST482239, C.
 King's Sedge Moor, ST420338, C.
 King's Sedgemoor Drain, ST380352, C.
 Kingweston, ST525342, C.
 King's Wood, ST419559, N.
 Kingsbridge, SS984377, W.
 Kingsdon, ST518262, C.
 Kingsdon Wood, ST517276, C.
 Kingsland Pits, SS806358, W.
 Kinsford Gate, SS740366, W.
 Knighton, ST193445, N.
 Knighton Beach, ST192458, N.
 Knighton Combe, SS829347, W.
 Knowle Ford, ST504464, N.
 Knowle Moor, ST487463, N.
 Knowle St Giles, ST344114, S.
- Lady's Combe, ST157390, SW.
 Lanacre, SS823363, W.
 Landacre Bridge, SS816362, W.
 Lang Combe, SS873435, W.
 Lang Moor, ST355399, C.
 Langford Budville, ST110230, SW.
 Langford Heathfield, ST103230, SW.
 Langham Hill, SS976357, W.
- Langport, ST422270, C.
 Lank Combe Foot, SS792453, W.
 Larcombe Foot, SS895363, W.
 Larkbarrow, SS821429, W.
 Larkbarrow Corner, SS824415, W.
 Launcherley, ST552428, N.
 Lea Wood, SS861332, W.
 Leigh Bridge, ST118360, SW.
 Leigh upon Mendip, ST690472, E.
 Ley Hill, SS890452, W.
 Lillycombe, SS821470, W.
 Lilstock, ST171454, SW.
 Lime Combe, SS765399, W.
 Line Wood, ST306215, C.
 Little Headon Plantation, SS933463, W.
 Little Ranch, ST474402, N.
 Little Silver, ST138189, S.
 Litton (Exmoor), SS803337, W.
 Long Chains Combe, SS743422, W.
 Long Combe, SS817426, W.
 Long Drove, Sharpham, ST455386, C.
 Long Holcombe, SS773357, W.
 Long Load, ST467232, C.
 Long Sutton, ST470252, C.
 Longstone Hill, ST138407, SW.
 Lower Rodhuish, ST017396, W.
 Lower Stonehouse Farm, ST207278, SW.
 Lowsey Thorn, ST134390, SW.
 Lownton, ST198183, S.
 Loxhole Bridge, SS996439, W.
 Loxton's Marsh, ST459396, C.
 Luccombe, SS912445, W.
 Luccombe Plantation, SS903477, W.
 Luckbarrow, SS892461, W.
 Luckwell Bridge, SS906387, W.
 Lucott Moor, SS852435, W.
 Ludney, ST390126, S.
 Luxborough, SS977378, W.
 Luxhay Reservoir, ST203177, S.
 Lydeard Hill, ST179343, SW.
 Lympsham, ST337541, N.
 Lynch Combe, SS905479, W.
 Lyncombe, SS867375, W.
 Lyte's Cary, ST534267, C.
- Madacombe, SS831427, W.
 Malmsmead, SS795477, W.
 Mancombe, ST425101, S.
 Mansley Combe, SS902403, W.
 Mark, ST380480, N.
 Mark Moor, ST370463, N.
 Marrow Hill, ST160360, SW.
 Marsh Bridge, SS907290, W.
 Marsh Wood, SS900295, W.

- Marston Park, ST758449, E.
Martock, ST463197, S.
Meare, ST455416, N.
Meare Heath, ST440405, N.
Melcombe Wood, ST705483, E.
Mells, ST730490, E.
Mells Down, ST724515, E.
Mells Park, ST715485, E.
Merryfield Airfield, ST340186, C.
Met Combe, SS827467, W.
Midelney, ST411229, C.
Milborne Port, ST675189, S.
Millwater, ST4310, S.
Milverton, ST122259, SW.
Minehead, SS970465, W.
Minehead Bay, SS975475, W.
Minehead Golf Course, SS993463, W.
Minehead Marshes, SS993457, W.
Mole's Chamber, SS719394, W.
Monkham Hill, SS987389, W.
Monkton Heathfield, ST255268, SW.
Moor Wood, SS959474, W.
Moorhouse (Butleigh), ST526346, C.
Moorland, ST335323, C.
Moorlinch, ST397368, C.
Moorlinch Moor, ST390350, C.
Mount Fancy, ST246165, S.
Muchelney, ST429249, C.
Muchelney Ham, ST440238, C.
Mudford, ST573199, S.
- Neighbourne, ST645485, E.
Nether Stowey, ST190398, SW.
Nether Wood, ST508561, N.
Nettlebridge, ST650486, E.
Nettlecombe, ST057378, W.
New Invention, SS900292, W.
Newbury (Coleford), ST699502, E.
Newpark Wood, ST745330, E.
Nimmer, ST319109, S.
Nine Springs, ST557153, S.
Noah's Lake, ST436400, N.
North Common, SS815471, W.
North Down Plantation, ST231163, S.
North Forest, SS760420, W.
North Hawkwell, SS927400, W.
North Hill, SS943481, W.
North Moor (Moorland), ST325315, C.
North Newton, ST300310, C.
North Perrott, ST465095, S.
North Wootton, ST566417, N.
Northay, ST282112, S.
Norton Sub Hamdon, ST470159, S.
Nutscale, SS856432, W.
- Nutscale Reservoir, SS860433, W.
Nynehead, ST137227, SW.
Nythe, ST427347, C.
- Oakbeer Wood, SS855341, W.
Oake, ST153252, SW.
Oakhill, ST635472, E.
Oare, SS802473, W.
Oareford, SS814463, W.
Oare Post, SS836465, W.
Odcombe, ST508154, S.
Old Barrow Plantation, SS837324, W.
Old Cleeve, ST037418, W.
Orchard Bottom, SS815404, W.
Orchardleigh Lake, ST780508, E.
Orchardleigh Park, ST770514, E.
Othery, ST384316, C.
Otterhampton, ST247431, N.
Otterhead Lakes, ST226135, S.
Outmoor Wood, ST066417, W.
Over Stowey Common, ST164381, SW.
Over Stratton, ST434155, S.
- Parrett Estuary, ST290480, N.
Pawlett Hams, ST275425, N.
Paywell Farm, ST508568, N.
Pedwell, ST426364, C.
Penselwood, ST757314, E.
Perry Farm Bridge, SS934259, W.
Perry Street, ST335055, S.
Pickedstones, SS796369, W.
Pickedstones Bridge, SS797369, W.
Pilton, ST588408, M.
Pinkery Centre, SS723412, W.
Pinkworthy Pond, SS723423, W.
Pit Wood, SS855337, W.
Pitt Combe, SS846467, W.
Podimore, ST547249, C.
Pool Bridge, SS876447, W.
Porlock, SS888467, W.
Porlock Bay, SS870485, W.
Porlock Common, SS849459, W.
Porlock Hill, SS876463, W.
Porlock Marsh, SS880477, W.
Porlock Parks, SS875465, W.
Porlock Post, SS861411, W.
Porlock Weir, SS865478, W.
Porlockford, SS867474, W.
Porlockford Combe, SS864470, W.
Prayway Head, SS769410, W.
Priddy, ST527513, N.
Priddy Mineries, ST545510, N.
Pudleigh, ST317108, S.

Quants, ST187177, S.
 Quarts Moor, ST149178, S.
 Queen's Sedge Moor, ST530417, N.

 Raleigh's Cross, ST039344, W.
 Rams Combe (Quantocks), ST161377, SW.
 Red Post Cross, ST517253, C.
 Redlynch Park Lake, ST698325, E.
 Red Deer Farmhouse, SS811394, W.
 Ringdown Common, ST180160, S.
 Riscombe, SS834395, W.
 Road Common, SS858368, W.
 Roadwater, ST032383, W.
 Robin Hood's Butts, ST232144, S.
 Robin How, SS907427, W.
 Robin Upright's Hill, ST159385, SW.
 Rock's Drove, ST474401, N.
 Rockwell Green, ST125203, SW.
 Rodden NR, ST785475, E.
 Rodhuish, ST013397, W.
 Rodhuish Common, SS996397, W.
 Rodney Stoke, ST482499, N.
 Rookham, ST545483, N.
 Rooks Bridge, ST368524, N.
 Room Hill, SS858363, W.
 Roughmoor, ST208253, SW.
 Rowbarrows, SS875416, W.
 Rowberrow Warren, ST465579, N.
 Rowdon Farm Lake, ST082381, W.
 Runnington, ST119218, SW.

 St Audrie's Deer Park, ST116422, SW.
 Sandyway, SS794334, W.
 Sampford Arundel, ST108188, S.
 Sampford Point, ST117168, S,
 Screech Owl Pit, ST316350, C.
 Sellbed Cross, SS828377, W.
 Selworthy, SS918467, W.
 Selworthy Beacon, SS919480, W.
 Selworthy Combe, SS923473, W.
 Selworthy Woods, SS918470, W.
 Shapwick, ST418383, C.
 Shapwick Heath (East), ST423410, N.
 Shapwick Heath (West), ST411420, N.
 Shapwick Heath NNR, ST430402, N.
 Sharpham, ST468388, C.
 Shepton Montague, ST675315, E.
 Shepton Mallet, ST619437, E.
 Sherdon Hutch, SS807361, W.
 Sherford, ST222231, SW.
 Shields, The, ST511275, C.
 Shillett Combe, SS860458, W.
 Shillett Wood, SS858457, W.
 Shurton, ST202442, N.

 Shurton Bars, ST192462, SW.
 Silly Bridge, SS832397, W.
 Simonsbath, SS773393, W.
 Slaughterhouse Combe, ST137395, SW.
 Sloway Bridge, ST302452, N.
 Slowley Wood, SS992381, W.
 Smalla Combe, SS839472, W.
 Smallacombe, SS735390, W.
 Smith's Combe, ST132420, SW.
 Snowdon Hill, ST310090, S.
 Snowdrop Valley, SS923387, W.
 Somerton, ST409285, C.
 Somerton Combe, ST144395, SW.
 Somerton Erleigh, ST512276, C.
 Somerton Moor, ST460015, C.
 South Cadbury, ST633257, C.
 South Cheriton, ST700250, E.
 South Common, SS807444, SW.
 South Drain (Chilton Moor), ST380428, N.
 Southey Moor, ST192113, SW.
 Southlake Moor, ST370300, C.
 Squallacombe, SS731383, W.
 Stan Moor, ST358290, C.
 Staple Fitzpaine, ST263182, S.
 Staple Hill, ST240164, S.
 Staple Plain, ST114413, SW.
 Staplegrove, ST213266, SW.
 Staplehay, ST213217, SW.
 Stathe, ST375290, C.
 Steart, ST272458, N.
 Stent Hill, SS837476, W.
 Stert Combe, ST145390, SW.
 Stert Island, ST292480, N.
 Stewley (Ashill), ST315184, C.
 Sticklepath (Combe St Nicholas), ST303124, S.
 Stock Hill, ST558507, N.
 Stockland Bristol, ST240437, N.
 Stockland Reach, ST284450, N.
 Stocklinch, ST382174, C.
 Stogumber, ST098374, W.
 Stogursey, ST202428, N.
 Stoke Combe, SS880438, W.
 Stoke Ridge, SS875429, W.
 Stoke St Gregory, ST348271, C.
 Stoke St Gregory Sewage Works, ST338274, C.
 Stoke St Michael, ST664470, E.
 Stoke Sub Hamdon, ST473174, S.
 Stolford, ST233458, N.
 Stone Down, SS867395, W.
 Stowford Bottom, SS815444, W.
 Stratton Moor, ST657487, E.
 Stratton-on-the-Fosse, ST658508, E.
 Street, ST480360, C.
 Street Heath, ST462392, C.

Stretcholt, ST297440, N.
Stringston, ST177424, SW.
Sutton Bingham Reservoir, ST550110, S.
Sutton Mallet, ST373370, C.
Sutton Moor, ST436338, C.
Sweetworthy Combe, SS884422, W.
Swell Wood, ST360240, C.

Tadham Moor, ST425445, N.
Tarr Steps, SS868321, W.
Tatworth, ST328058, S.
Taunton, ST225247, SW.
Taunton Deane Services, ST196203, SW.
Tealham Moor, ST407457, N.
Tesco's Pit, Minehead, SS979458, W.
Thorncombe Hill, ST132390, SW.
Thorney, ST427229, C.
Thorney Moor, ST425238, C.
Thurlbear, ST265210, SW.
Thurlbear Quarrylands, ST274208, SW.
Thurlbear Wood, ST269208, W.
Thurley Combe, SS862425, W.
Timberscombe, SS955422, W.
Timberscombe Common, SS964417, W.
Tivington, SS932455, W.
Tom's Hill, SS811430, W.
Tom's Hill Combe, SS802435, W.
Tonedale, Wellington, ST126215, SW.
Torr Works Reservoir, ST688436, E.
Torweston, ST094407, W.
Treborough Woods, ST017369, W.
Trickey Warren, ST197150, S.
Triscombe Stone, ST164359, SW.
Trull, ST216222, SW.
Tuckerton, ST298297, SW.
Tuncombe, ST430100, S.
Tynning's Farm, ST470565, N.

Ubley Warren, ST510555, N.
Upper Axe Valley, ST500455, N.
Upton, SS995288, W.
Upton Cleave, SS983287, W.

Varle Hill, SS887318, W.
Velvet Bottom, ST498553, N.
Vinny Combe, ST120414, SW.
Vivary Park, ST232238, SW.
Vobster, ST705495, E.

Wadeford, ST309106, S.
Wall Common, ST255453, N.
Walpole Landfill Site, ST311430, N.
Walton Heath, ST455390, C.
Wambrook, ST295076, S.

Wanstrow, ST713418, E.
Warren (Farm), SS785407, W.
Warren Bridge, SS791407, W.
Washford, ST048412, W.
Watchet, ST072431, W.
Wavering Down, ST403558, N.
Wayford Woods, ST398066, S.
Weacombe, ST110408, SW.
Weacombe Hill, ST120402, SW.
Webber's Post, SS903437, W.
Week Lane, SS918334, W.
Week Wood, SS919339, W.
Weir Water, SS830461, W.
Wellington, ST140205, SW.
Wellington Basins, ST129208, SW.
Wellington Monument, ST137172, S.
Wells, ST552458, N.
West Bagborough, ST170335, SW.
West Buckland, ST 175205, SW.
West Coker, ST518136, S.
West Hatch, ST287210, C.
West Hill Wood, SS972296, W.
West Hollocombe Wood, SS866304, S.
West Huntspill, ST305445, N.
West Luccombe, SS899463, W.
West Monkton, ST263285, SW.
West Moor, ST410213, C.
West Myne, SS927407, W.
West Nethercote, SS874362, W.
West Porlock, SS872471, W.
West Quantoxhead, ST109417, SW.
West Sedge Moor, ST350250, C.
West Waste, ST472417, N.
Westbury Moor, ST485477, N.
Westbury-sub-Mendip, ST502488, N.
Westermill, SS823399, W.
Westford, ST120204, SW.
Westhay, ST436424, N.
Westhay Heath, ST420418, N.
Westhay Moor, ST455441, N.
Weston Level, ST347333, C.
Westonzoyland, ST352348, C.
Westonzoyland Airfield, ST365346, C.
Westport, ST386200, C.
Westwater Bridge, SS847330, W.
Westwater Copse, SS857327, W.
Wet Moor, ST452242, C.
Wheddon Cross, SS924387, W.
White Water, SS380799, W.
Whitestaunton, ST280105, S.
Wick Moor, ST217454, N.
Willett Hill, ST096336, W.
Williton, ST078410, W.
Wills Neck, ST165352, SW.

Wilmersham Common, SS864421, W.
Wilmot's Pool, ST153382, SW.
Wimbleball Lake, SS975305, W.
Wincanton, ST715285, E.
Wincanton Sewage Works, ST712274, E.
Winsford, SS903350, W.
Winsford Hill, SS878342, W.
Winsham, ST375064, S.
Wintershead Farm, SS771367, W.
Witch Lodge, ST250198, S.
Witcombe Bottom, ST480231, C.
Withycombe, ST017413, W.
Withycombe Common, SS987394, W.
Withycombe Hill, SS998413, W.
Withypool, SS846355, W.
Withypool Common, SS825349, W.
Withypool Hill, SS840345, W.
Woodcock Gardens, SS907444, W.
Woodcombe, SS955466, W.
Woodlands Hill, ST157400, SW.
Wookey, ST518457, N.
Wookey Hole, ST532475, N.

Woolavington, ST347416, N.
Woolminstone, ST410080, S.
Woolverton, ST791539, E.
Wootton Courtenay, SS937434, W.
Worthal, ST275085, S.
Worth Hill, SS833338, W.
Worthy Combe, SS857480, W.
Worthy Wood, SS860478, W.
Wrantage, ST309225, C.
Wyke Champflower, ST663347, E.

Yeals Combe, SS842390, W.
Yearnor Wood, SS850484, W.
Yenworthy Combe, SS805490, W.
Yeo Moor, ST460480, N.
Yeovil, ST555157, S.
Yeovil Marsh, ST551187, S.
Yeovilton, ST547230, C.
Yoxter, ST512540, N.

Zeal Farm, SS354300, W

ARRIVAL DATES OF MIGRANTS 2008

(excluding Blackcap and Chiffchaff)

Little Ringed Plover was recorded on the earliest date in the County, March 15th; the second year in succession that the arrival date of this species has moved forward by a day. Grasshopper Warbler equalled the earliest arrival date of April 5th.

Not included in the 'Last Observed' column in the Table is the Lesser Whitethroat seen at Aller on December 14th; it was presumed to be over-wintering.

Table 1: Arrival dates of migrant species

Species	Arrival date	Earliest-ever arrival	10-year average (1997–2007)	Last observed
Garganey	April 2nd	February 16th	March 19th	August 21st
Manx Shearwater	March 3rd	January 2nd	April 2nd	October 3rd
Hobby	April 20th	February 18th	April 8th	October 8th
Little Ringed Plover	March 15th	March 16th	March 27th	September 16th
Whimbrel	March 22nd	February 19th	March 27th	September 20th
Wood Sandpiper	April 26th	April 18th	May 5th	September 22nd
Little Tern	May 18th	April 11th	April 27th	October 1st
Black Tern	April 20th	April 4th	April 24th	October 19th
Sandwich Tern	March 31st	January 5th	March 27th	September 29th
Common Tern	April 19th	March 19th	April 9th	October 3rd
Arctic Tern	April 23rd	April 1st	April 24th	October 7th
Turtle Dove	May 5th	April 12th	May 4th	July 2nd
Cuckoo	April 9th	March 2nd	April 5th	July 20th
Nightjar	June 1st	April 13th	May 5th	August 4th
Swift	April 8th	March 27th	April 18th	September 4th
Sand Martin	March 2nd	January 27th	March 9th	September 25th
Swallow	February 9th	January 24th	March 12th	December 24th
House Martin	March 16th	March 9th	March 23rd	October 12th
Tree Pipit	April 8th	March 10th	April 3rd	September 25th
Yellow Wagtail	April 12th	March 4th	April 5th	September 20th
Nightingale	April 3rd	April 2nd	April 12th	May 23rd

Table 1: Arrival dates of migrant species, continued

Species	Arrival date	Earliest-ever arrival	10-year average (1997–2007)	Last observed
Common Redstart	March 31st	March 21st	April 7th	October 6th
Whinchat	April 20th	March 24th	April 16th	October 17th
Wheatear	March 13th	February 13th	March 9th	October 25th
Ring Ouzel	March 17th	February 1st	March 16th	November 9th
Grasshopper Warbler	April 5th	April 5th	April 10th	September 29th
Sedge Warbler	April 5th	March 22nd	April 7th	September 28th
Reed Warbler	April 6th	March 28th	April 6th	November 8th
Garden Warbler	April 20th	April 2nd	April 13th	September 21st
Lesser Whitethroat	April 20th	March 30th	April 17th	September 23rd
Common Whitethroat	April 14th	March 24th	April 4th	September 20th
Wood Warbler	April 17th	March 28th	April 17th	September 26th
Willow Warbler	March 26th	February 21st	March 17th	September 28th
Spotted Flycatcher	April 22nd	March 29th	April 27th	September 21st
Pied Flycatcher	April 8th	April 2nd	April 11th	June 26th

THE WILLOW AND MARSH TITS IN SOMERSET

Introduction

Willow Tit *Poecile montana* has always been a scarce and local species in Somerset, and has declined to the point where it might now be nearing extinction. Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* has, over the years, been consistently described as a locally common and widespread resident, but since the 1990s has undergone a severe decline.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the history of these two species within Somerset and to speculate on possible reasons for their decline against a background of factors being considered nationally.

Overall status and distribution

It was not until the late 19th century that Marsh and Willow Tits were recognised as distinct species and, although both have diagnostic features, the difficulties surrounding field identification, even for experienced observers, are frequently underestimated. Mis-identification has compounded the problems of assessing the true status of both birds in Somerset, and may continue to do so.

Marsh Tit is poorly named. Indeed, with its preference for damper woodland, Willow has a marginally better claim to the title. Marsh prefers open woodland with a good understorey for feeding but, in Britain, both species can be found in similar habitat. This compounds identification difficulties. Both species breed in a broad band across the Palearctic, east to Japan. Although there is much overlap in range, Willow has a more northerly distribution, and Marsh is absent from much of northern and eastern Scandinavia, and central Asia. Neither occurs in southern Iberia.

Geographical variation in both is largely clinal and, in both, smaller and darker subspecies are recognised for the British Isles, in the Willow Tit *P. m. kleinschmidti* and the Marsh *P. p. dresseri* (*BWP*).

In Britain, Willow Tit breeds in England and Wales, but becomes increasingly scarce in the west. At the northern end of its range, it extends into southern Scotland. The most robust populations are across the English Midlands and, perhaps significantly, Somerset lies close to the edge of its range. Alarming, populations overall have declined by over 80 per cent in the last thirty years or so (*BTO*).

Marsh Tit has a broadly similar overall distribution pattern but, in contrast, is scarcer in the north and north-west and the range barely extends into south-east Scotland. Hence the strongest populations are in the south of England. Both species are absent from Ireland. Marsh Tit declined sharply from the

early 1960s, and has continued to do so, although the rate of decline has varied greatly, with some periods of relative stability. Numbers have, however, fallen steeply since the 1990s, and this decline has been mirrored in north-west Europe, particularly France.

Both species are Red Listed birds under U.K. Conservation Listing, and research into population declines is seen as a priority.

The Willow Tit in Somerset

Stanley Lewis laid claim to the first breeding record of Willow Tit in Somerset, by discovering a nesting pair near Theale on May 2nd, 1919, although he appears to have first recognised the species a year earlier. Acknowledging the likelihood of confusion with Marsh, he believed, doubtless correctly, that Willow Tit had long been overlooked.

He assessed the species as extremely scarce and local and at no stage since has the status been anything more positive than local and uncommon.

Palmer & Ballance described the species as resident and very local. Most records came from the Peat Moors and were centred on what is now the Avalon Marshes, particularly at Shapwick Heath. This, and the immediate area, remained the County stronghold until the 1970s.

There were isolated records throughout the 20th century from a scattering of sites, including some in the Quantocks and the Blackdowns and, in the north of the County, at Stock Hill, many of these being occupied for several years.

Willow Tit also occurred regularly in woodland near Wimbleball Lake, albeit in very small numbers, and occasionally at a few Exmoor sites.

Severe decline set in from the mid 1970s, and a number of previously reliable sites were abandoned, although it may have bred in the Shapwick area until 1992. There have been few records since.

Confirmed breeding records from the regular sites are remarkably few, but breeding can reasonably be inferred by long occupation and site fidelity.

As the 21st century began, it became clear that the Willow Tit was in serious trouble in Somerset. In 2002 there were only five records, all at traditional sites, including Wimbleball, where this year proved to be the final sighting.

The single record in 2003 was of a bird at Meare Heath, which may not be without significance.

The editors of *SB* 2004 felt optimistic enough to describe Willow Tit as a 'rare resident breeder' although there were no records for that year, nor have there been any since (but see 'Summary' below).

This steep dive into possible extinction has been observed in neighbouring counties. Willow Tit is now absent from the old county (but current recording area) of Avon, and is now very rare in Devon and Dorset.

In Scandinavia, Willow Tit roams in the winter with other tit species (Daniel Green, personal comment) but does not appear to do so in Britain. Certainly in Somerset, it appears to be largely sedentary.

The Marsh Tit in Somerset

So stable did Marsh Tit populations appear that for many years the species was relegated to “Species reported but not included in the systematic list” in *SB*, which, in view of current concern, is both unfortunate and instructive. This complacency changed abruptly in 1983, when the Editorial Committee, alerted by the paucity of records, appealed for all sightings in 1984, while questioning whether it was indeed becoming rarer.

Certainly Lewis saw no reason for concern, considering it as “evenly distributed” and supposed it more common than the Coal Tit *Periparus ater*. Palmer & Ballance were of the view that it was local, but still fairly common, and BoS describes it in similar terms. Despite the lack of detailed reporting outlined above, the general impression is that, for much of the 20th century, Marsh Tit populations changed little, although some local populations suffered reductions, sometimes quite marked. Nationally, the decline began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, although alarm bells failed to ring in Somerset until the 1990s, and in 1999 it was, for the first time, described as “fairly common but decreasing”. By 2004, fears were expressed that it might follow the Willow Tit into extinction. *SB* 2007 published all records for Marsh Tit which, that year, was recorded at 39 sites, with breeding confirmed at six, and some comfort can be gained by a wide spread of sightings from suitable woodland, though it has disappeared from many former haunts.

A detailed description of its changing fortunes is given in Ballance, and cannot be bettered here. In this work, and currently by *SB*, it is described as an “uncommon resident breeder, decreasing”, which accurately reflects the present situation.

Marsh Tit is even more sedentary than Willow, and shows little tendency to migrate, although there is one extraordinary record of a bird arriving from seaward in 2007. Individual Marsh Tits remain faithful to their woodland territories for life, and Perrins (2003) puts matters rather well, when he writes: “one can fairly assume that if a Marsh Tit is missing from its territory it is dead”.

Population decline in Somerset – possible reasons

Recent research into the causes of decline in Marsh Tit populations strongly points to habitat degradation as the main reason. Other possibilities, such as increased competition with other tit species and increased predation, have been suggested but largely discounted, and breeding success during the period of decline has been good, whereas annual survival is now lower (BTO). In southern Scandinavia, Marsh Tits are strictly confined to broad-leaved woodland (Perrins 1979) but in Britain, while tending to shun coniferous woods, they favour often quite small woodlands with a flourishing shrub layer. This seems particularly important for foraging since, in the main, they are not canopy feeders. They can exist in quite small woodlands, sometimes as small as 1.5 hectare (Perrins 2003), a rich understorey being the most important requirement. These habitat preferences seem to hold good for Somerset.

The suggestion is that over-grazing by deer has significantly damaged the shrub layer in preferred woodlands, rendering them unsuitable for Marsh Tits, and that some woodland management may have had similar effects (BTO). Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* is common both on Exmoor and the Quantocks and has increased to the point where regular culling is necessary. Around a thousand are culled annually, yet the species continues to flourish (Devon & Somerset Residents Assoc. for Deer Protection – submission to Burns Enquiry, Jan. 2000). Red Deer regularly browse the woodland deep within cover at sites such as Horner, where Marsh Tits were once much more abundant (personal observation) and Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*, another common species in Somerset, cause similar damage in lowland woods and copses. Positive woodland management aimed at recreating the habitat preferred by Marsh Tits and, more controversially, rigorous deer control measures, may be the key to halting the decline in the County.

Determining why Willow Tit populations have declined so drastically in Somerset is altogether more difficult, and it may be useful to examine the hypotheses used by Lewis *et al.* (2009) while looking at other possible factors. This very recent paper puts forward three main suggestions: increased competition, increased predation and habitat change.

Increased competition. Willow Tit seems the least assertive tit in its family, both in Britain and elsewhere. In Scandinavia, where it wanders in winter with Siberian Tit *Poecile cinctus*, it gives way to this species at feeding stations (Daniel Green, personal comment) and is dominated by both Great Tit *Parus major* and

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* in Britain (Perrins 1979). Its breeding biology makes it particularly vulnerable. Apart from Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*, Willow Tit is the only British tit species to excavate a nest hole and is easily evicted by its more dominant cousins, even, ironically, by Marsh Tit on occasion. When this happens Willow Tits often make no further attempt at breeding (Lewis *et al.*).

In Britain, both Blue and Great Tits have increased in the last thirty years or so, in some places significantly. *SB* charts increases in both in Somerset, and classifies both as 'abundant'. This may be a factor in the decline of Willow Tit, but evidence is entirely lacking. At the moment we simply do not know.

Increased predation. Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* is the avian species most frequently implicated in Willow Tit decline, and the *prima facie* case against it is compelling. This woodpecker has significantly increased in numbers over the late twentieth century, perhaps by as much as 314% (Lewis *et al.*). This increase has been attributed to the availability of decayed elm *Ulmus* in the 1970s, though if this is so it is not clear why the increase continues. As the woodpecker has increased, so has Willow Tit declined and to make a connection is convenient. Throughout its range Great Spotted Woodpecker is an efficient and important predator of hole-nesting species, and some individuals specialise in this food source during the breeding season (Gerard Gorman, personal comment). Willow Tit nests, in rotting wood, must present an easier target than most. Moreover, the noisy parents are readily detected in and around the nest hole (Lewis *et al.*).

Gerard Gorman, the authority on European woodpeckers, does, however, discount woodpecker predation as the reason for the decline. He reasonably points out that, as a general rule, predators tend not to exterminate their food sources. More significantly, perhaps, he notes that Willow Tit remains common over much of its European range, which is shared with a healthy population of Great Spotted Woodpeckers. This is certainly true in parts of Sweden where Great Spotted is the commonest woodpecker, and Willow often the commonest tit (personal observation).

As far as Somerset is concerned, Great Spotted Woodpecker has undoubtedly increased, and has been doing so since around 1920 (Ballance, *SB*). It can be found at all the sites previously favoured by Willow Tit. Gorman acknowledges that where Willow Tit populations are already at a precarious level, Great Spotted Woodpecker predation may be disproportionate, and might tilt the balance to extinction. The possibility

that this may have happened in Somerset cannot be excluded, but it must be stressed that actual evidence of any kind is wanting. In any event, woodpecker predation should be discounted as the main reason for the decline.

Habitat change. At first sight, habitat change in Somerset seems an unlikely reason. Seasoned local observers will point to stands of damp woodland, once the regular haunt of Willow Tit, that appear, at first sight, largely unchanged. But is this so?

An important conclusion drawn by Lewis *et al.* is that Willow Tits prefer woodlands with high water/soil content, in the early stages of succession. Although there is much research to be done, and the reasons for this preference are currently unknown, it may provide a vital clue as to why the Willow Tit is being lost to Somerset. Could it be that the woodlands favoured by Willow Tits in Somerset are now in too far a stage of succession to provide optimum habitat, albeit they may be damp enough?

Willow Tits could once be found at Shapwick Heath. This, and the surrounding area, were once considered a stronghold. Yet the Shapwick Heath of 2009 is very different from that of 1970, and not only in the number of visitors. It is often forgotten that the flooding of this area, instrumental in creating the right conditions for breeding Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* and similar rare species, has rendered it unsuitable for other vulnerable birds such as Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*. Might Willow Tit be another victim of this general change? The woodland succession may have progressed beyond an optimum stage and, it seems at least possible that, much as Willow Tit prefers damp woodland, flooded woodland may be a step too far.

It must be emphasised that much of the research carried out by Lewis *et al.* was at a small-scale site in the Midlands, although their conclusions are supported by results from elsewhere. Certainly in Somerset we are nowhere near the stage where any firm conclusions can be drawn, but the signs are at least suggestive.

It seems at least possible that habitat change is a major reason for the decline of both the Marsh and Willow Tit in Somerset, but other factors may be at play. Both species are sedentary, and Marsh Tit in particular very rarely roams from its home territory. This makes both particularly vulnerable to any pressures, whether by domination from an increasing population of other tit species, by habitat change or, indeed by predation. It may be expected that a cove that loses its Marsh Tits will wait a long time for recolonisation, and the same is probably true of Willow Tit.

If habitat change is the major factor then, as the population reduces, other factors such as predation and competition will inevitably assume greater significance. Climate change too may be important, and the effect of this may be too subtle to detect with any ease. Willow Tit in particular is close to the edge of its European range in Somerset. It may be reasonably expected that populations are subject to the kind of periodic fluctuations typical of such species as Nightingale, also at the edge of its range in Somerset. This may have happened in the past. Unfortunately, there is no historical evidence to draw on.

Summary

It may be a little premature to sound the death-knell for the Willow Tit in Somerset. Indeed, while this paper was in preparation news came of a plausible sighting from a traditional site, and a record from the Blackdowns has been accepted and included in this year's *SB*. These are the first for some considerable time. However, despite this small ray of light, there is little cause for optimism and the decline may have gone too far to be arrested, even by effective habitat management.

There is, perhaps, more hope for the Marsh Tit but its future in Somerset may depend on steps to manage its habitat being implemented quickly. Some comfort may be drawn by a wide spread of records from across the County. It seems likely, moreover, that many small areas of woodland, little visited by observers, still hold resident pairs.

The plea of the Recorder and the Editorial Committee is repeated here. Please search for both species and forward all records of both Willow and Marsh Tit. Do not be deterred by the difficulties of separating the two. Experienced observers recognise how challenging this can be and are only too willing to assist if consulted.

In conclusion, we should be clear that the possible

reasons for the decline of both species suggested above are nothing more than conjecture, at least in Somerset, although habitat change is a common theme of all research currently in progress. If this paper provokes discussion, and stimulates research in any form, then it will have served a useful purpose.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Gerard Gorman for a stimulating discussion on woodpecker predation, and to Brian Gibbs, who read and commented on a draft of this paper.

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EXMOOR MOORLAND BREEDING BIRD SURVEY 2008

During the spring and summer of 2008, a Breeding Bird Survey was carried out on moorlands within Exmoor National Park (Stanbury *et al.* 2008). It was funded by the National Park, Natural England and South West Water. The main objectives were to provide data on the breeding populations of moorland birds and to put these into both national and regional contexts. The Survey also aimed to highlight trends in abundance and distribution since previous Surveys in 1978 (Davies & Jarman 1978), 1992/93 (Chown & Robins 1994) and 2002 (Geary 2002), and to investigate habitat associations relating to those trends.

Four RSPB field observers worked between April and July with the aim of covering 171 sq. km to within 100 metres. The methodology followed that used during the 1992/93 and 2002 surveys, with two exceptions: firstly, *all* species were recorded; and secondly, the surveys were mostly conducted during the mornings.

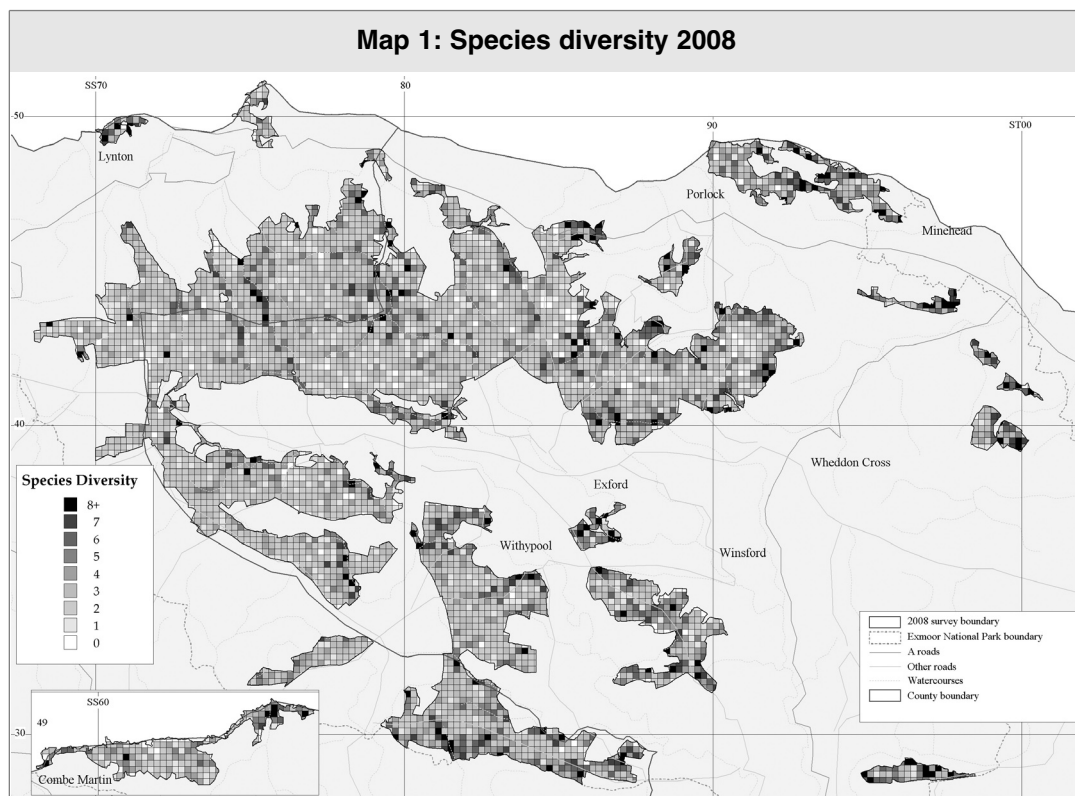
Nationally important populations in the Survey area included those of Nightjar, Whinchat, Stonechat,

Grasshopper Warbler and Dartford Warbler; Merlin and possibly Tree Pipit were regionally significant.

The results showed that avian diversity tended to be higher around the edge of the Moor, within the valleys and on the coastal heaths (see Map 1). Some areas of grass-moorland held very few species. Birds showing significant increases since previous Surveys included Stonechat, Grasshopper Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Linnets and Reed Bunting.

The 2008 Survey showed particularly encouraging signs for Grasshopper Warbler, which had increased 25-fold since 1992/93. Although this may be partly due to more early-morning visits, the species seems to be expanding over many parts of the Moor, particularly at high altitudes and within squares with taller swards and a greater number of large grass tussocks.

Stonechat and Dartford Warbler have also shown overall increases since the previous surveys. The former is widely distributed across the Moor, and the latter, which colonised the Moor only in the mid-1990s (Ballance & Gibbs 2003), has continued to



increase and was particularly abundant in the Dunkery area. Both species have moved altitudinally: Stonechats have moved up over 60 metres since 1992/93, and the median height of Dartford Warbler territories has increased by nearly 50 metres in only six years. Both species appear to be declining on the lower ground of the coastal heaths.

An apparent increase in Common Snipe may be due to the switch to earlier survey times; the population

may be relatively stable; territories were occupied on Codsend Moors and at Ember Combe Head.

A number of species have decreased significantly, including some that could be described as classic upland species: Kestrel, Curlew and Wheatear have suffered severe declines; and Red Grouse (introduced from 1916), Lapwing and Ring Ouzel have vanished. They are to some extent being replaced by species traditionally associated with lowland habitats.

Table 1: Exmoor population estimates and trends

Species	Population found during 2008 survey	% of British population	Trends (1992/93 to 2008) %
Grasshopper Warbler	300	2.86	+2518
Reed Bunting	208	0.11-0.12	+205
Dartford Warbler	129-154	3.59-5.35	+795-112 since 2002
Common Snipe	15	0.03	+88
Stonechat	442	2.01-5.20	+60
Linnet	349	0.07	+55
Grey Wagtail	56	0.14-0.16	+38
Dipper	10	0.05-0.16	+9
Lesser Redpoll	145	0.57	Probable range expansion since 1978
Willow Warbler	958	0.57	Probable range expansion since 1978
Merlin	Approx 2-3	0.15-0.23	0
Quail	2	0.63	0
Cuckoo	64	0.32-0.67	0 since 2002
Yellowhammer	78	0.01	0 since 2002
Common Whitethroat	157	0.02	-2 since 2002
Meadow Pipit	>2,486	>0.15	-7
Whinchat	411	1.47-2.94	-8
Tree Pipit	180	0.24	-8
Skylark	>2,470	>0.15	-19
Curlew	5	0.00	-44
Common Redstart	86	0.09	-51
Kestrel	Unknown	Unknown	Large range contraction since 1978
Wheatear	25	0.05	-81
Ring Ouzel	0	0.00	Extinct
Lapwing	0	0.00	Extinct
Red Grouse	0	0.00	Extinct

The decline of Wheatears by over 80% since 1992/93 may be due more to change of habitat than of climate. The numbers of Common Redstarts have halved since 1992/93: the median altitude of their territories has declined significantly, suggesting that they are contracting their range from the more exposed moorland to their core woodland habitats.

Since previous Surveys, Skylarks have declined by 19%, especially within squares dominated by rank *Molinia* and encroaching scrub. Meadow Pipits are down by 7%, and they fared worst in areas which seem to be in a condition favourable in assessment for SSSI status, with high grazing pressure and a greater frequency of Western Gorse. An analysis of the data suggests that losses have been greater than those figures suggest, since the past population is likely to have been underestimated by Surveys that were often carried out in afternoons.

Notable sightings of rarer species included a Red Kite near Lucott Cross and two Quail calling west of Larkbarrow.

During the fieldwork, data were collected on a number of variables in order to give a general impression of the habitats that were present. The collection of these was relatively subjective, but the recording had to be undertaken quickly, so as not to take the focus away from birds. Three examples are here given to illustrate the links between bird species and habitats.

Skylarks increased with heather cover, *Molinia*, other grasses, higher grazing pressure and the presence of cattle. They also showed a preference for flat ground and had significant associations with west- and south-facing aspects. Increased sward-height, bracken, European Gorse, scrub, woodland, wetness and fences all had a detrimental effect on numbers.

Whinchats tended to be more numerous within areas with taller swards, heather, bracken, *Juncus*, grazing pressure, wetness, slope, valleys and the presence of sheep and ponies, and in those with a favourable SSSI assessment. Gorse, hedges, woodland, a south-facing aspect and the presence of cattle all had a detrimental effect.

Grasshopper Warblers showed a preference for areas with taller swards and increased amounts of wetness, *Juncus*, heather, bracken and large grass tussocks. They also appeared to prefer valleys at higher altitudes.

As a whole, the Survey showed that the moorland within the Park continues to hold important bird populations, but it highlighted the mixed fortunes undergone by bird communities over the past 30 years. A changing climate is likely to have significant impacts on the biodiversity of the area. There is evidence that at least three species have moved altitudinally since the early 1990s; of these, Stonechat and Dartford Warbler have colonised the higher parts of the Moor. These moves seem to be a response to climate: either directly, to milder weather, or indirectly, to vegetation changes. Continued management, especially with regard to grazing, is vital if a range of bird communities is to be conserved.

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NEWS FROM THE RESERVES

This is a new feature in *Somerset Birds*, which we hope will become an annual one. We asked the organisations which own or manage major areas as Reserves to provide us with information on recent developments and problems, and on future plans. We expected only one or two paragraphs, but on this first occasion it has been necessary to accept rather longer contributions in order to explain current positions.

Carymoor Environmental Centre and Cary Marsh

The first is a 50-hectare former landfill site, sometimes still called “Dimmer Tip”, between the Weymouth and Taunton railway tracks west of Castle Cary. It was developed by the Carymoor Environmental Trust. An attempted merger between CET and SWT failed when it became apparent that the two organisations wished to pursue different objectives. It is now again in the safe hands of CET, with backing from Viridor Waste Management.

Wet weather in 2008 helped to ensure that the scrapes retained water throughout the year. This led to an increase in Common Snipe and more regular winter sightings of Jack Snipe. Barn Owls took up residence on one of the nest-boxes in January 2008 and remain much in evidence, although no breeding has yet taken place.

Winter forage crops of quinoa, triticale and millet proved highly successful, attracting large flocks of finches and buntings. Despite this and the provision of supplementary feed and nest-boxes, the Tree Sparrow population had a disastrous year in 2008: the small wintering flock dwindled; the last bird was seen in April; and there were no breeding birds, or sightings in the second winter period. Nevertheless, all may not be lost: a small flock arrived in the forage crops in January 2009. Attempts will now be made to encourage them to re-establish the breeding population, and CET is now growing a further eight acres of forage crops on an adjoining former maize field, thus providing one of the richest feeding areas in Somerset for declining farmland seed-eaters.

The new wetland of Cary Marsh lies immediately south of CET. It is owned and managed by the Boyer family. A two-year planting programme involving 60,000 reeds and many hours’ work by volunteers was finished early in 2008. The establishment of the reedbed has been rapid, as has its colonisation by Little Grebes, Coots and Reed Warblers; a Bearded Tit arrived in November. Management of the site has been fairly limited since the planting. The surrounding grassland has been lightly grazed by two Dartmoor ponies, and a cutting rotation for the reedbed will be eventually started.

B.A. Taylor for CET

Bridgwater Bay NNR

The most significant change to the management in 2008 was the retirement of Robin Prowse, the Senior Site Manager. He had been Warden and Site Manager here since 1979, and he was also Site Manager for the Somerset Levels. It is regrettable that Natural England does not at present have the resources to replace him.

During the course of the year, three major projects have been developing, all of which could have a significant impact on the NNR:

- a) The realignment of the deteriorating sea defences between Steart and Stolford in response to rising sea levels. The proposal is to create between 150 and 300 hectares of new intertidal habitat. The project is being developed, at least in part, as compensation for loss of habitat through the construction of a new deep-sea container port at Avonmouth.
- b) The second major proposal is to construct two new nuclear power stations to the west of the present Hinkley Point A and B Stations. As happened with these, it is expected that a small area of foreshore within the NNR will be lost in the construction of new sea defences.
- c) At a very early stage of investigation is the Bridgwater Bay Lagoon, one of the structures proposed to extract tidal power from the Severn Estuary. It would completely enclose the Bay in an arc from Brean Down to Hinkley Point. This would have the potential to inflict severe damage on the wildlife interest of the NNR.

R. Corns for Natural England

Raised Water Level Areas

In 1987, the Somerset Levels and Moors were designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) by the Ministry of Agriculture, and since then many landowners have voluntarily signed up to management agreements under the scheme. Since 1992 there has also been an option for farmers to sign up to Raised Water Level Area (RWLA) agreements, where payments are higher and the management of land is more difficult. The aim of this agri-environment scheme is to manage the land in the flood plain as

permanent wet grassland and to maintain the habitats of the wetland wildlife typical of the Levels.

The area currently in RWLA agreement is over 1,500 hectares, involving almost 100 individual agreements on 14 different Moors, many of them designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Management is aimed particularly at birds and their habitats, but also benefits wetland mammals, plants and invertebrates. The bird interest includes wintering waterfowl and breeding waders; it has been shown that high water levels and the presence of surface water on the fields will attract more wetland birds. However, the floodplain grasslands must also be farmed, and especially must be grazed by cattle, to provide ideal conditions for the birds. Fields must be cut and grazed annually to produce the varied vegetation required by the many species of wetland birds.

Farmers in RWLA agreements often struggled to manage their fields optimally for the wildlife interest, since they were not used to farming with so much water and with other restrictions imposed on them. In 2002 it was decided to set up a Project to advise them, and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) were invited to employ a Project Officer to work with them and with the government agencies. I have been in this post since then, and was seconded first of all to English Nature and then to its successor, Natural England. My working contacts include almost a hundred farmers, and also the staff of the Environment Agency and the Drainage Boards who are responsible for maintaining water levels and my colleagues in Natural England who administer the ESA agreements and oversee the condition of the designated SSSIs.

In a typical year, management of a RWLA involves:

- a) Closing sluices in December and then keeping ditches full of water throughout the winter, overtopping onto the lowest parts of the site.
- b) Opening sluices in March or April and holding water levels about 30 cm. below average land level.
- c) Either: i) Grazing with cattle from late May until November;
Or: ii) Cutting fields for hay in summer and providing aftermath grazing until autumn.
- d) Clearing ditches of weed in autumn.

In most winters there are large numbers of waterfowl in the region. They typically roost on some of the well-known RWLAs, such as West Sedge Moor and Catcott Lows; at night, they feed on farmland all round the roosts. Their long-term future depends on

the existence of reliable and safe roosts every winter and of a wide variety of feeding in surrounding farmland.

Every spring I carry out surveys of breeding birds on the RWLAs and particularly of breeding waders on the floodplain grasslands. These are generally holding their own in RWLAs, but continuing to decline on other parts of the floodplain. Their numbers remain quite low, and breeding success is often poor. Lapwing declined again in 2008, and this once-common breeding species is really fighting for survival in the County, in contrast to the huge numbers from eastern Europe which spend the winter here. Common Redshank and Curlew breed annually in small numbers on a few sites. There is, however, some good news in relation to breeding Common Snipe: they have increased steadily in recent years and were recorded from six sites in 2008. They like wet conditions, so the climate in the last two years has probably favoured them.

Conditions in 2008 were especially difficult for farmers in RWLAs, and many fields were left uncut at the end of the season. It is to be hoped that there will be more dry weather in the summer of 2009, so that these fields can be managed to provide more favourable conditions for our birds of wet grassland.

J.M. Leece for FWAG/NE

Somerset Wildlife Trust

By the end of 2008, the Trust had 78 reserves, of which some are linked, totalling 1,502 hectares, or 3,712 acres. This total includes a recent extension to the Catcott holdings of a further 4.7 hectares of wet grassland, referred to as Catcott Meadow. The second very wet summer in succession has caused major difficulties for grassland management, especially for hayfields and the wet grassland of the Levels. The build-up of rank vegetation is in danger of becoming a major problem both for breeding waders and for some of the wetland plant communities.

Towards the end of 2008, a large project to upgrade access and interpretation was started at Westhay and Catcott. This is due to continue through 2009. At the beginning of the year, Harridge Wood saw the refurbishment of the derelict cottage as a bespoke bat house; there are early signs of occupancy.

Following progress made in the Mendip Hills "Living Landscape" project, which helps landowners to farm in a way more friendly to wildlife and encourages education and public participation in natural history, the Trust has started a second major project of this kind in the Lower Brue Valley.

C.J. Hancock
Senior Conversation Officer, SWT

RSPB

There have been two new acquisitions: an extension of five hectares at the east end of Ham Wall will be combined with the adjacent Emery's Land; and 12 hectares of Nythe Moor, over the road from Greylake Reserve, will be managed as a satellite of Greylake.

There are now firm plans to release Cranes on the Levels in 2010, but no site had been decided at the time of writing.

A large-scale Survey of Breeding Waders was conducted on the Levels in 2009, the results of which will be published in the next *Somerset Birds*.

**From information supplied by Jane Brookhouse,
Area Reserves Manager, RSPB**

Exmoor National Park

An important scheme for mire restoration is in progress. By a combination of sluice construction and ditch filling it is planned to create or enhance small areas of wetland. The results, with some ponds and dams, can now be viewed in many places. To sample these, the most accessible area is perhaps north-west of Blackpitts Cottage on the Simonsbath-Brendon

Two Gates road, at the head of Farley Water: if you stand on the turf wall along the east side of the road you can look west over a landscape that might remind you of the pre-forested Caithness Flows. There are, as yet, no Dunlin, but passage Snipe have certainly found the site. There are other examples on Roosthitchen and in Squallacombe and Long Holcombe (which has been popular with wintering Short-eared Owls); outside Exmoor Forest, there is a site on Alderman's Barrow Allotment, north-west of Chetsford Bridge. The Project Officer is David Smith, at Exmoor House, Dulverton, the Park headquarters.

There have been recent developments concerned with restoration of heathland that had been taken for conifers. The most notable areas are along the south-west edge of Haddon Hill (Hadborough Plantation) and on Black Hill/Rodhuish Common.

Future Reporting

For 2009, we shall hope to present reports on developments at Westhay Moor and Shapwick Heath, as well as on the effects of bracken clearance on the Quantocks, planned for 2009.

**Information collected by David Ballance
from contributors**

SOMERSET ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

RULES

1. NAME

The Society shall be called "The Somerset Ornithological Society".

2. OBJECTS

The objects of the Society shall be:

- a. To further the study of birds.
- b. To assist in their preservation.

3. MEMBERSHIP

The Society shall consist of Ordinary Members, Junior Members below the age of 18, and such Honorary Life Members as may be elected at an Annual General Meeting of the Society. The conditions of Family Membership are set out in Section 4 below.

4. SUBSCRIPTION

The annual subscription, which is payable on the 1st of January, shall be ten pounds for Ordinary Members and six pounds for Junior Members: the husband or wife of an Ordinary Member, and children under 18, may become Associates on payment of a single additional payment of two pounds, thus paying a total subscription of twelve pounds and receiving one copy of each Society publication.

5. MANAGEMENT

Each Annual General Meeting of the Society shall elect a President, two or more Vice-Presidents, one or more Secretaries, a Treasurer, Recorder and Assistant Recorder. These shall be termed the Officers of the Society and shall be eligible for re-election.

The General Committee shall consist of these Officers, with up to four other Members. Members who are not Officers shall serve for a maximum of four years, unless subsequently appointed as Officers, and shall not be eligible for re-election for a period of one year. Names of candidates as Officers or Committee Members must be submitted to the Secretary at least 14 days prior to the Meeting. The Committee may fill any casual vacancy which occurs, but any replacement must be subject to election at the next Annual General Meeting.

6. PROTECTION

In pursuance of Section b. of Rule 2, it is the declared policy of the Society actively to further the effective protection of birds in the County, and to observe the law on the subject. Any member who, being reported to have acted in a manner seriously prejudicial to the declared policy or to the general interest of the Society, fails in the opinion of a two-thirds majority of those present at a meeting (after due announcement on the agenda) to give a satisfactory explanation of his or her conduct, shall cease to be a member of the Society.

7. MEETINGS

Meetings shall be held not less than twice a year.

8. REPORTS

The Committee shall each year appoint an Editorial Committee to consist of the Recorder and at least three other Members, who shall prepare the Annual Report, *Somerset Birds*.

The Annual General Meeting shall elect the Chairman and Members of the Somerset Ornithological Society Rarities Committee (SOSRC) in accordance with Section 3 of the SOSRC constitution. The first election will take place at the 2010 AGM and thence every two years.

9. CHANGES IN RULES

Changes in these rules may be proposed at an Annual General Meeting, or at any regular Indoor Meeting, provided that at least 14 days notice be given to all Members of any motion to this effect. A two-thirds majority of Members present will be required.



Front cover: Cattle Egret, Somerset Levels, Jeff Hazell
Above: Grasshopper Warbler, Wilmersham Common, Brian Gibbs

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