



Report on Rare birds in Great Britain in 2002

M.J.Rogers and the Rarities Committee

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (Brit. Birds 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as the 2001 report (95:476-528). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if video-recorded, tape-recorded or photographed (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) date(s); and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the cases of the very similar Eastern *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers *P.bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of frigatebirds *Fregata* and the 'soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma mollis/feae/madeira* complex (see also Brit. Birds 94: 395).
3. The sequence of species, English names and scientific nomenclature follow the '*British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1997).
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species' name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded (i) in Britain & Ireland to the end of 1957, (ii) in Britain only for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in the totals), or 'the same' when evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same or a nearby locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 205, 10)

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, adult, 14th September (R.Little *et al.*), also in Northumberland below; another adult, 18th October (C.Bielby, A.McLee).

Highland Gairloch, Ross & Cromarty, adult, 3rd-18th March (K.A. & K.D.Shaw, L.Steele).

Norfolk Holme, juvenile/first-winter, 24th September (G.F.Hibberd, D.Noble); presumed same, Scolt Head, 1st October (N.M.Lawton *et al.*). Another, West Sheringham, 5th October (J.E.D.Furse, P.J.Heath *et al.*).

Northumberland Annstead Point, adult, 14th September (S.T.Holliday *et al.*); same, Seaton Sluice, 14th September (B.Bullough, M.Hepple); both same as Cleveland.

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 25th-28th April (P.A.Brown, M.Gray).

Outer Hebrides Cellar Head, Lewis, adult, 9th May (S.Hulka, J.Stirling).

Shetland Off Kirkabister, Mainland, adult, 28th April to 24th May; presumed same, 19th October to 2003 (M.Mellor *et al.*); possibly same as 24th-25th April 2000 (Brit. Birds 94: 455). Harold's Wick and Burra Firth, Unst, adult, 1st-2nd June (R.M.Fray, R.M.Thewlis *et al.*); presumed same, 10th-11th, photo. (M.A.Maher *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: 546 fig.1). West Voe of Sumburgh, first-summer, 12th August (M.Mellor *et al.*).

2000 Yorkshire, North Ness Point, Whitby, age uncertain, 3rd September (J.A.Beaumont, A.M.Hanby, R.S.Slack).

2001 Orkney Rerwick Point, Tankerness, second-winter/second-summer, 30th April (K.E.Hague *et al.*).

One at Cellar Head, Lewis, on 9th May might possibly have been the same individual seen on roughly the same date at Tiumpan Head, Lewis, in 1999 (Brit. Birds 93: 515). How many birds make similar routine stopovers on their annual migrations? Although the bill colour of White-billed Diver may seem to be so obvious that other supporting identification criteria are not required, BBRC has on file a photograph of an undoubted Great Northern Diver *G.immer* in the USA which shows a very obvious whitish bill. BBRC still considers that an assessment of bill *shape* and relative body/head/bill size is important and, in non-breeding plumage, detailed notes on the head and neck plumage should be supplied.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 36, 1)

Caithness Harrow Harbour, 6th May, video. (J.Corbett, S.Laybourne, J.Smith *et al.*).

The Caithness bird was the first individual recorded on salt water in Britain, although one was present in the brackish mouth of the River Hayle, Cornwall, in 1996-97 (Brit. Birds 90: 457). This species' reluctance to take advantage of seawater appears odd, as Pied-billed Grebes are not uncommon on brackish waters in the New World, and occasionally occur on the sea. Perhaps enforced resting on the sea in transit from North America makes them shun it when they hit our shores?

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 15, 2)

Lothian Tor Ness, adult, 13th October (M.Griffin); presumed same as East Yorkshire below.

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, adult, 12th June (M.Gray, O.Melander).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, adult, 22nd September (L.G.Degnan, D.Hursthouse, T.McEvoy, J.Wozencroft *et al.*); also in Lothian.

Following two last year, another three similarly unexpected records in 2002 suggest that there may now be more birds present in the North Atlantic than previously in the recent past. The two North Sea sightings presumably refer to the same individual and are recorded statistically as such. On both occasions, the bird wandered rather close inshore in conditions not normally associated with great seabirds, to the astonishment of the finders. It is perhaps surprising that it was not seen at other North Sea coast seawatching sites during the intervening weeks. The third record, seen from a boat well out in the North Atlantic, in high summer and near a Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* colony, recalls the individual which returned to Shetland most years between at least 1972 and 1995. Perhaps this individual has already taken up residence, unseen, within the huge gannetry on St Kilda. Now *that* would be an interesting twitch!

Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae* (0, 25, 5)

Northumberland Farne Islands, 23rd September (D.Steel *et al.*); also in East Yorkshire below.

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 21st September (M.Ainscough, A.Disley, J.S.Lees) (Brit Birds 96:547 fig.2).

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 1st September (I.Marshall, P.Rhodes *et al.*); 23rd September (P.A.Lassey, J.McLoughlin *et al.*), also in Northumberland.

Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, 26th August (A.Norris, J.M.Turton *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Sole, 49°50'N 06°15'W, about 10 km S of St Mary's, Scilly, 8th September (R.L.Flood *et al.*).

2001 Cumbria Walney Island, 22nd July (C.Raven).

2001 Devon Berry Head, 17th July (M.Darlaston, M.R.Langman, B.R.Macdonald); same, Hope's Nose, 17th July (C.Proctor).

2001 Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 23rd September (A.Forsyth, I.Marshall, B.Richards *et al.*).

2001 At sea Sea area Sole, *M.V.Scillonian*, 49°08'N 06°54'W, about 96 km SW of Scilly, 12th August, video. (S.Rogers *et al.*).

These two closely related species, also known as Zino's Petrel and Fea's Petrel respectively, form part of the 'soft-plumaged petrel' group, the members of which, because of their pelagic habits and extreme global rarity, remain poorly known and are proving almost impossible to separate in the field. Nonetheless, good photographs were obtained of two individuals in the far southwest of Britain in 2001, one record appearing in last year's report (Brit. Birds 95: 479) and the other accepted here (both as 'either/or' records); and these have been circulated around BBRC with the aim of establishing whether there is sufficient evidence to accept either as a definite Fea's Petrel. If either (or both) is accepted, this would represent the first positively identified record of any 'soft-plumaged petrel' for Britain, despite the 30 accepted 'either/or' records to date. The record(s) would then be passed on to BOURC for consideration. Detailed identification and review papers will be published in British Birds shortly.

The majority of the 2002 records fit the increasingly familiar pattern of August and September birds off the southwest and northeast coasts of England. With the series of North Sea records it is difficult to be sure just how many individuals were involved. In the period between late August and late September, large flocks of seabirds, including Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* and Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, were feeding off the coast of northeast England. It is possible that the multiple records may represent just one bird circulating around areas of rich feeding and being relocated occasionally. Certainly, some individuals were tracked as they moved along the east coast, but the full picture remains incomplete as some records for the period have yet to be submitted. The bird in Orkney was only the second for Scotland and the first noted from land there.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 299, 41)

Scilly Nine: 6 km E of St Mary's, eight, 30th July, video. (R.L.Flood, J.K.Higginson *et al.*); 4 km S of St Mary's, 14th August, video. (J.K.Higginson, N.Wheatley *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Sole, 31: 12 km S of St Mary's, Scilly, 27th June, video. (J.K.Higginson *et al.*); three, 5th July, video. (J.K.Higginson *et al.*); 13 km S of St Mary's, 8th July (J.K.Higginson *et al.*); two, 10th July, video. (R.L.Flood *et al.*); 14 km S of St Mary's, 16th July (A.Hicks *et al.*); 22 km S of St Mary's, two, 20th July (R.L.Flood, P.A.Stancliffe *et al.*); 14 km S of St Mary's, two, 22nd July (L. & M.Love, P.A.Stancliffe *et al.*); 13 km SE of St Mary's, 24th July (R.L.Flood *et al.*); 14 km SE of St Mary's, 25th July (R.L.Flood *et al.*); 12 km SE of St Mary's, 27th July (J.K.Higginson *et al.*); two, 28th July, one video. (R.L.Flood, J.K.Higginson *et al.*); 14 km S of St Mary's, three, 4th August, one video. (R.L.Flood, J.K.Higginson, K.Pellow *et al.*); 12 km S of St Mary's, 7th August, video. (S.Aitken *et al.*); 8 km S of St Mary's, six, 14th August, two video. (R.L.Flood, J.K.Higginson, N.Wheatley *et al.*); 12 km S of St Mary's, 15th August (R.L.Flood *et al.*); 14 km S of St Mary's, 22nd August (P.A.Stancliffe *et al.*); 11 km E of St Mary's, 30th August (R.L.Flood *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plates 337 & 338); 12 km S of St Mary's, 5th September (R.L.Flood *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Tyne, 20 km E of Cambois, Northumberland, 1st September, photo. (S.T.Holliday, C.G.Knox *et al.*).

It is becoming increasingly apparent that Wilson's Storm-petrel is not a particularly rare bird off the southwest coast of England, thanks to a group of committed pelagic birders who work hard to clarify its status by documenting records throughout the late summer season. Last year (2001), we published 18 records from around the Isles of Scilly, there were 29 in 2000, and this year there are 40 records from this area. We cannot begin to guess at just how many birds are really present there. Whether this is a new phenomenon or simply the result of systematic pelagic trips in the area is unclear. It is, however, worth noting that numbers of this species peaked in 1987-88, when pelagic seabird trips frequently went farther out into the Atlantic.

Elsewhere, Wilson's Storm-petrel remains a major rarity. The bird seen from a boat off Northumberland represents the first record from the North Sea, in an area, which rarely provides many surprises on pelagic trips.

Red-billed Tropic bird *Phaethon aethereus* (0, 1, 2)

Cornwall About 1.5 km off The Lizard, 21st April (C.J. & P.Jose, B.F. & S.Woodgate).

At sea Sea area Sole, *M.V.Scillonian*, about 6.5 km E of Scilly, 29th March (P.Davison, J.Pegden, J.Robson *et al.*).

These two records, possibly relating to the same individual, come hot on the heels of the first British record, in June 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 480). Perhaps, if no more follow for a number of years, the statistical significance of this cluster will need to be taken into account.

Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila* (1, 0, 0)

1953 Argyll Tiree, first-stage juvenile, female, moribund, 9th July, now at National Museums of Scotland, photo. (per R.Y.McGowan, B.J.Small, G.Walbridge *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: 58-73, plates 34, 42 & 43). Previously accepted as Magnificent Frigatebird *F.magnificens* (Brit. Birds 47: 58-59, 86: 454).

The remarkable story of the re-identification of the 'Tiree Magnificent Frigatebird' as an Ascension Frigatebird, during a review of 1950-58 rarities, has been published recently (Brit Birds 96:58-73). Originally found caught in a net by a local fisherman, the specimen was sent to the British Museum where, based on limited comparative material, it was identified as a Magnificent Frigatebird *F.magnificens*, the first British record. Almost 50 years later, Grahame Walbridge examined photos of the specimen and began to suspect that a mistake had been made. Lengthy and detailed studies of the plumage of the Tiree specimen, particularly in comparison with other juvenile frigatebirds, confirmed its identity as Ascension Frigatebird. This re-identification has recently been supported by evidence from body parasites taken from the corpse (Brit. Birds 96: 454).

This record highlights the fact that not all sightings of frigatebirds in the North Atlantic can be assumed to be Magnificent on account of that being the most likely species. It also demonstrates the great care required to establish the presence of diagnostic features, particularly in the case of the highly variable immature plumages. Fortunate observers of vagrant frigatebirds need to concentrate on the shape and colour of any breast-band, the presence and shape of the axillar spur, the shape of the white patch on the belly, the extent of the pale 'hood', and the colour of any wash on the head.

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* (0, 1, 0)

Regular readers of British Birds will know that Magnificent Frigatebird has been removed from the British List (see above, and Brit Birds 96: 58-73). Although Magnificent Frigatebird occurred on the Isle of Man in December 1998 (Birding World 12: 11), records from the island are not formally admitted to the British List. Nonetheless, as records of other species from the Isle of Man are included in the BBRC statistics, this record also appears in the statistics above.

With the single exception of Ascension Frigatebird *F.aquila* (above), all other frigatebirds recorded from British waters were not identified specifically.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 190, 2)

Devon Exeter, female, 27th March, moribund, 28th, photo. (R.Dixon) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 156).

Kent Hoo Peninsula, male, dead, 19th July, photo. (per Kent Ornithological Soc.).

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 423, -)

2001 Cambridgeshire Nene Washes, age uncertain, 25th May (Brit. Birds 95: 481); also 2nd June when noted to be colour-ringed and presumed to have been of captive origin (per J.Oates).

2001 Warwickshire Brandon Marsh, adult, 13th May (J.M.Rushforth, F.G.Stoke, D.A.Stone).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 48, 2)

Cumbria Walney Island, 6th-11th June, photo. (C.Raven *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: 550 plate 339).

Devon East Budleigh, 20th June (P.M.Mayer, C.Shere).

2001 Cornwall Lamorna Cove, 25th May, video. (B.D.Blowers, J.Chapel *et al.*).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 116, 2)

Buckinghamshire High Wycombe, 16th January (W.L.Claydon).

Cornwall See 2001 Cornwall below.

Somerset Catcott Lows, 23rd-27th May (B.D.Gibbs *et al.*).

2001 Cornwall Chyvarloe/Gweek area, four, 11th December, two to 20th April 2002, video. (S.Bury, J.Chapel, K.Harris *et al.*).

2001 Scilly St Agnes, 16th-17th May (F.H.D.Hicks, M.Hicks, D.Page).

With two additional records, one of four together in Cornwall, the total for 2001 has increased to 12. Small influxes of this highly dispersive species, typically of ten or more birds, have occurred every 3-6 years in recent times, but 2002 saw a return to a trough between peaks.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* (0, 1, 0)

Argyll Isle of Arran, 13th January to 28th March; same, Loch Fyne, 3rd April and Balvicar, 4th April to 3rd May; same, Ettrick Bay, Bute, 15th-18th May; same, Loch Riddon, 19th and again Loch Fyne, 22nd May; same, Castleton, Lochgilphead, 25th-31st May; again, Seil Island to about 7th June (Brit. Birds 95: plate 113). All presumed same as 2001 Argyll, Ayrshire (Brit. Birds 95: 481-482).

Ayrshire Ardrossan and Ardeer, since 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 481-482) to 9th January; also near Slatcoats, early January (per A.A.Murray).

Dumfries & Galloway Tongland Bridge, 19th August, photo. (I.Mathewson, A.W. & I.Wiles); same, Caerlaverock, 6th September; same, Lochar Water, 7th-17th September (per A.A.Murray); all presumed same as Argyll above.

We received an unconfirmed report that this well-travelled bird had been in poor condition prior to its disappearance from Balvicar in early June 2002 and, indeed, some locals believed that it had died. So the appearance of a Snowy Egret in Dumfries & Galloway just over two months later was surprising, and raised the possibility of a second individual. The black-and-yellow pattern on the legs matched that of the Balvicar bird perfectly, however, confirming that it had recovered and resumed its tour of western Scotland.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 143, 37)

Argyll Loch A'Phuil and Cnoc Bhireapol, Tiree, 28th May to 2nd June (J.Bowler, J.Wolstencroft *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire St Ives Gravel-pits, 17th May (M.L.Hawkes, J.L.F.Parslow). Grafham Water, 11th September (M.L.Hawkes, R.Presley *et al.*). Sawtree Roughs, 14th October, photo. (S.P.Dudley, S.M.Elsom, L.Smith *et al.*).

Carmarthenshire Llandeilo, 30th July to at least 18th August (A.Clark, J.Friese *et al.*).

Cheshire Sandbach Flashes, 4th-6th January (A.Bromont, I.Dickinson); same, Great Budworth, 11th January, photo. (T.Coatsworth, M.J.Feltham, D.Walter); also in Lancashire & North Merseyside below (Brit. Birds 95: plates 37 & 78). Inner Marsh Farm, 17th May (E.J.Abraham *et al.*).

Cleveland Portrack Marsh, Stockton-on-Tees, 11th-12th October (S.Ashton, M.A.Blick *et al.*); same, North Tees Marshes, intermittently 13th October to 9th November (M.A.Blick *et al.*); presumed also in Lincolnshire below. Dorman's Pool, 2nd December (M.A.Blick).

Cornwall Porth Reservoir, Newquay, first-year, 4th-8th August, photo., same as Gloucestershire/Wiltshire, Suffolk, colour-ringed as a nestling, Lac du Grande Lieu, Loire Atlantique, France, 14th May 2002 (S.M.Christophers). Hayle, 1st September (L.P.Williams).

Devon Bowling Green Marsh, 3rd September (J.Gale, T.Smith, M.S.Wolinski).

Dorset Radipole Lake, two, 27th-28th July, photo. (A.Barrett, C.White *et al.*).

Essex Stone Point, three, 11th May (G.James).

Glamorgan Flat Holme, 22nd September (P.Bristow); also in Somerset below.

Gloucestershire/Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, first-year, 18th-28th August, colour-ringed (D.Lyford *et al.*); also in Cornwall, Suffolk.

Greater Manchester Chorlton Water Park, 11th August; same, Sale Water Park, 12th (I.M.McKerchar *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, 10th-26th August (J.Brown, R.Wincup, J.Wylson *et al.*). Capel Fleet, 20th October (C.E.Morris *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Martin Mere, 5th January (A. & J.Rimmer *et al.*); presumed same as Sandbach Flashes, Cheshire.

Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, 12th August (the late E.J.Locker, J.D.Periam). Fort Henry Ponds, 24th October (T.Mitcham).

Lincolnshire Holbeach Marsh, 19th October (A.H.J.Harrop); probably same, Grainthorpe Marsh, 28th October to 4th November, photo. (K.Robinson *et al.*); presumed same as Portrack Marsh and North Tees Marshes, Cleveland. Tetney Marshes, 18th December (J.Hawcroft, I.Higginson, P.C.Short *et al.*).

Norfolk Fritton Marshes and Hemsby, 28th January to 23rd February, possibly since 17th January; same, Haddiscoe Island, 15th-16th February, Halvergaye, 16th February (P.J.Heath, B.J.Small *et al.*). Holkham area, 13th-18th May (J.R.Williamson). Breydon, 12th June (P.R.Allard). Eccles-on-Sea, 4th July, photo. (N.Bowman).

Northamptonshire Storton's Gravel-pits, 12th October (M.R.Alibone).

Outer Hebrides Bornish, South Uist, 23rd-30th November, probably since 10th, photo. (A.Scott, A.Stevenson *et al.*).

Somerset Shapwick Heath, 22nd September (D. & M.Mockeridge *et al.*); also in Glamorgan. Wimbleball Lake, 11th-15th October, photo. (B.D.Gibbs *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, first-year, 30th August, colour-ringed, same as Cornwall, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire. Dunwich and Minsmere, 10th September (R.Drew); present 7th-27th.

Surrey Staines Moor, 6th September (F.J.Maroevic, P.J.Naylor, K.L.Purdey *et al.*); presumed same, Pudmore Pond, Thursley, 7th September (A.J.Fisher).

Sussex, West Coldwaltham Brooks, two, 29th September (A.R.Kitson).

Wight, Isle of Newtown, 2nd June (R.Green *et al.*).

Wiltshire See Gloucestershire/Wiltshire above.

Yorkshire, North Riccall, 8th-15th January, photo. (C.S.Ralston, D.Tate *et al.*).

1999 Dorset See 1999 Wiltshire below.

1999 Wiltshire Britford, intermittently 3rd-22nd September, colour-ringed individual, also in Dorset, Worcestershire (Brit. Birds 94: 459), was colour-ringed as a nestling, Lac du Grande Lieu, Loire Atlantique, France, 8th May 1999 (per R.Turner).

1999 Worcestershire See 1999 Wiltshire above.

2000 Greater London Kempton Park Nature Reserve, 7th October (Brit. Birds 95: 483), locality is in Greater London as originally stipulated.

2000 Man, Isle of Langness, 18th-19th, 26th June (D.Goddard, A.M.Sapsford, C. & D.Sharpe *et al.*).

2001 Cheshire Neston Marsh, 27th October (C. & P.Brewster); presumed same as Flintshire, 12th August to at least 5th November (Brit. Birds 95: 483).

2001 Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, 21st June, video. (J.Chapel, S. Kolodziecki *et al.*).

The trio in Essex is the first such group to be recorded. The tracking of a colour-ringed youngster from its nest in a newly established French colony (the species first bred in northwest France in 1994: Brit. Birds 88: 27) to Cornwall, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire and finally Suffolk was remarkable. Without those rings, these sightings would almost certainly have been recorded as three different birds in the statistics. This brings into question the degree of duplication involved in the multiple occurrences of recent years. Without good evidence there is little which can be done to clarify the true picture, and BBRC must make occasional assumptions when a wandering individual is believed to account for a series of records. Though duplication may be exaggerating the picture somewhat, there is no doubt that the species is now occurring here in record numbers (see Brit. Birds 96: 553 fig, 3). As recently as 1988, the all-time total for Britain & Ireland reached 37, the number recorded in Britain (excluding Ireland) in 2002!

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 117, 8)

Essex Newport, 15th May (S.Patmore).

Hampshire Whitchurch, 17th May (J.Switzer *et al.*).

Highland Spean Bridge, Inverness-shire, 18th May, photo. (R. & S.Bottomley).

Kent Dungeness, 31st May (D.Walker, A.S.Wraithmell *et al.*).

Norfolk Gateley/Great Ryburgh/Sennow Park, 25th-30th May (R.H.Hogg, A. & M.Saunders, R.G.Vernon *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Blidworth, 2nd June (M.E.Taylor).

Suffolk Bury St Edmunds, 1st May, photo., metal ring on each leg (C. & J.R.R.Carr *et al.*).

Sussex, West Barlavington, 3rd May (A.Perry, G.C.M.Roberts).

Two records reported to various information services have not yet been submitted to BBRC, but, ironically, we include here an accepted record, which was not broadcast to the nation's birders at the time.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 71, 15)

Cambridgeshire/Norfolk West Walton, 12th-13th September, photo. (J.Ellis, B. & G.Martin); presumed same as Snettisham (Norfolk) below.

Devon Budleigh Salterton, eight, 4th-5th September, one, Exe Estuary area to at least end July 2003, photo. (D.Nicholls, D.Stone, A. & D.Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, four, 6th September (S.J.M.Gantlett, R.G.Millington *et al.*); presumed same as Oxfordshire. Hickling, 7th September (M.Fischer *et al.*); same, Blakeney Freshes, 8th (S.Aspinall, R.F.Porter); same, Holkham, 8th (per G.E.Dunmore); same, Holme, 9th (G.F.Hibberd, D.Noble); same Snettisham, 10th, photo. (D. & P.Wileman *et al.*); presumed same as Cambridgeshire/Norfolk above.

Northamptonshire Ravensthorpe Reservoir, 22nd September (G.Pullan).

Oxfordshire Otmoor, four, 6th September, photo. (R.Ebbs *et al.*); also in Norfolk.

Shetland South Nesting, 2nd-14th October, photo.; same, Houser, Tingwall, 19th-23rd October; same, Lerwick, 25th October (M.A. & P.R.Fisher *et al.*).

An excellent year for this species, the last comparable influx being that of 17 birds in 1986.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 89, 0)

2001 Outer Hebrides Berneray, North Uist, adult, 17th February (P.R.Boyer).

This individual arrived in an apparently wild state but, given the location and the age of the bird, there must be some doubt about its origins. For consistency, and until a clearer picture emerges, however, we will continue to include such birds in the BBRC statistics for the time being.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

North American and E Siberian race *B. b. nigricans* (1, 114, 14)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 12th-14th October (L.Chappell *et al.*).

Essex Goldhanger, River Blackwater, two, 13th January (D.Rhymes); same Old Hall Marshes, 30th January (per H.Vaughan); Old Hall Marshes, another individual, 13th January, 13th February; presumed one of same, Tollesbury Wick, 16th-17th February (D.L.Acfield); two of same since 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 483). Two of same, Old Hall Marshes, 9th November to at least 1st January 2003 (per H.Vaughan). Paglesham Lagoon, 24th November, photo. (S.Arlow). The Naze, 3rd February (G.C.Bond, D.Rhymes); another, 3rd (D.Rhymes), one or other since 2001 below; one of same, 8th December to at least 1st January 2003 (D.Rhymes); one or other, Holland Haven, 14th December (P.A. & S.Cox, T.H.Watson) (Brit. Birds 96: 554 fig. 4).

Hampshire Weston Shore, 25th-26th February (R.Bonser, N.Montegriffo per J.M.Clark); presumed same as Cams Bay, Fareham, 2001 below.

Kent Funton Creek, near Sittingbourne, 9th November, photo. (P.Broomhead, D.Miller, D.Willett).

Lincolnshire Tetney, 26th November (S.D.Wellock).

Norfolk Cockthorpe area, first-winter, intermittently 20th January to 4th May, photo. (A.M.Stoddart *et al.*). Terrington Marsh, two adults, 3rd February (D.E.Balmer, P.M.Wilson); presumed same with one first-winter, Snettisham, 16th February; one or other, 1st March (M.A.Ward). Lynn Point, 5th March (T.Lowe). Burnham Norton, two, 14th November (J.R.McCallum). Burnham Overy, 21st December to at least 13th January 2003 (D.P.Appleton).

Suffolk Trimley Marshes, 21st February (P.Besson, N.Odin); presumed same as Trimley Marshes, 18th January 2001 and Levington 27th November 2001 to 25th January 2002 (Brit. Birds 95: 484). Kingsfleet, 21st December to 3rd January 2003 at least (M.Ferris, J.A. & P.R.Kennerley *et al.*); presumed same as 18th January 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 484).

Sussex, West West Wittering, 17th February to 17th March (A.R.Kitson *et al.*); presumed same as 15th December 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 484); present throughout winter, accompanied by four intergrades (per E.D.Urquhart). Pilsey and Thorney Islands, 11th-31st December, two, 31st December (C.B.Collins), presumed returning individuals from 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 484).

1998 Essex Blackwater Estuary, 23rd December (Brit. Birds 93: 520), now assumed one of Cudmore Grove, last seen 28th January 1997 (Brit. Birds 91: 464).

2000 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 29th November (Brit. Birds 95: 484), now assumed to be returning bird from 1999. Tollesbury, 19th February (Brit. Birds 94: 460), now assumed to be returning bird from 1999.

2000 Lincolnshire Kirton Marsh, adult, 15th January (S.Keightley *et al.*).

2001 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 9th December to 9th March 2002 (per H.Vaughan), one of two from 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 483); 9th December to 13th February 2002 (per H.Vaughan), one of two from 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 483). The Naze, 17th November to 13th January 2002 (G.James).

2001 Hampshire Keyhaven, 16th December to 22nd March 2002 (per R.B.Wynn), same as Hurst Beach 27th December into 2002 (Brit. Birds 95: 484). Cams Bay, Fareham, 29th December (T.Carpenter).

2001 Norfolk Ousemouth, 13th January (Brit. Birds 95: 484), presumed same as Lynn Point 29th October 2000 (Brit. Birds 94: 460).

2001 Suffolk Shotley, Stour Estuary, 29th March (L.Woods).

2001 Sussex, West West Wittering, adult, 15th December to 3rd March 2002, returning bird with four juvenile intergrades (Brit. Birds 95: 484). Pagham Harbour, 19th December (N.J.Voaden), presumed same as 15th-16th November 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 484).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 52, 2)

Argyll Loch Gruinart area, Islay, adult, intermittently 18th October to at least 9th April 2003 (T.ap Rheinallt *et al.*); presumed returning individual of 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 484).

Perth & Kinross Findatie, adult, 15th February (I.Munro, S.Paterson, J.Sykes *et al.*); same, Vane Farm, 14th, 29th March (J.Fermer, S.Paterson *et al.*); same, Gellybank, 27th-28th March, photo., and present in area until 27th April (I.Munro *et al.*); second individual, adult, Vane Farm, 7th April at least (A.W.Reid, K.D.Shaw *et al.*).

2000 Suffolk Landguard, age uncertain, 17th January; possibly same as Southwold, 7th-15th January (Brit. Birds 94: 461), now considered not same as Southwold but probably same as Waldringfield, first-winter, 3rd-18th January (Brit. Birds 95: 484), now recorded as present 2nd January to 12th March. Southwold individual now considered probably of captive origin (per N.Odin).

2001 Moray & Nairn Redhill, adult, 17th-18th April; same, Roseisle, 19th (M.J.H.Cook, R.Hewitt), probably same as 2001 Perth & Kinross (Brit. Birds 95: 484).

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 334, -)

2000 Ayrshire Irvine Harbour, male, 21st-30th January (B.Orr *et al.*).

2000 Dorset Butterstreet Cove, male, 26th-28th November; considered same, Abbotsbury, 5th December (Brit. Birds 95: 486), now presumed returning 1999 individual (Brit. Birds 93: 520).

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 24, 1)

Cornwall Colliford Reservoir, male, 19th January to 5th August (per K.A.Wilson *et al.*); presumed same as 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 486). Stithians Reservoir, male, 31st March intermittently to 15th October (per K.A.Wilson); presumed same as 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 486). Loe Pool, male, 31st August to 13th October (S.F.Elton per K.A.Wilson); presumed same as 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 486).

Devon Slapton Ley, male, 1st January intermittently to at least 20th April; same, Bowcombe Creek, 17th January (per M.Tyler); presumed same as 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 486).

Scilly St Martin's and Tresco, male, 26th December intermittently to at least 31st May 2003, photo. (R.L.Flood *et al.*)

There must now be record numbers of Black Ducks in Britain. They readily hybridise with Mallards *A.platyrrhynchos* and the offspring of such pairings have the potential to confuse. Check the speculum and tail carefully for telltale signs of Mallard influence if you find a suspected 'Black Quack'. With more real Black Ducks around, the chances of two getting together, though still remote, must be increasing. Details of one reported from Shetland have not yet been submitted.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 208, 0)

1989 Yorkshire, East Beacon Pond and Sammy's Point, Kilnsea, female or first-winter, 29th October (the late N.A.Bell, R.C.Hart, M.K.Rotherham *et al.*).

2000 Greater London Walthamstow Reservoirs, age/sex uncertain, 5th November (D.G.Darrell-Lambert).

2000 Kent Elmley, male, 9th May (G.W.Allison).

2001 Essex Old Hall Marshes, male, 14th May (B.Churches, C.J.Tyas).

2001 Staffordshire Belvide Reservoir, male, intermittently, 11th July to 3rd September, photo. (S.Nuttall *et al.*); same, Blithfield Reservoir, 2nd September (per G.J.Jones).

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* (0, 5, 1)

Greater Manchester Pennington Flash, male, 11th-30th July, photo. (I.M.McKerchar *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: 557 plate 340).

1996 Kent Cliffe, male, probably first-winter, 7th December (P.Larkin, D.Mercer).

Since it came shortly before the Norfolk record in January 1997 (Brit. Birds 92: 566), the Kent record in 1996 had to undergo protracted consideration by both BBRC and BOURC before it could be finally accepted as the first for Britain.

The Greater Manchester bird was the first to be recorded outside the winter period in Britain. Rare ducks in late summer are often regarded with suspicion, yet this is a period of considerable wildfowl movement, with many birds travelling to gather in large moult assemblages. Some birds are known to move large distances to moult at favoured waters. Even so, it is more likely that, if a true vagrant, this individual had crossed the Atlantic some time prior to its discovery here.

Potentially of more concern than its origin was the possibility that the Greater Manchester bird was a hybrid (or inbred to some degree, and hence of captive origin). Keith Vinicombe recently discussed the problems presented by Canvasback x Common Pochard *A.ferina* hybrids, which are seemingly quite frequent in captivity (Brit. Birds 96: 112-118). While the presence of white or pale markings on the bill might be a give-away for a hybrid in full plumage, such marks may be reduced or even absent on eclipse males, and are invariably absent on females and juveniles. No plumage characters are known which enable a hybrid or impure Canvasback to be distinguished from the real thing. Extremely careful attention must, therefore, be paid to structure, as first-generation hybrids at least would be likely to lack the more extreme proportions shown by an uncontaminated Canvasback. The Greater Manchester bird showed features such as the classic head-and-bill shape, the forward-angled edge to the black breast, and very pale body typical of pure Canvasback, so, based on present knowledge, we are as sure as we can be that this bird was pukka.

Redhead *Aythya americana* (0, 2, 0)

Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, male, since 7th November 2001 to 5th February (Brit. Birds 95: 487); returned, 21st September to 19th January 2003 (D.G.Carrington *et al.* per S.J.Moon).

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (many, 263, 10)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, female, 22nd August, 14th September (R.M.Andrews *et al.*); presumed same as 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 487).

Bedfordshire Elstow, female, since 7th November 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 487), there or at Stewartby Lake to 31st January, same, 4th to at least 31st December (per D.J.Odell).

Berkshire Wraysbury Gravel-pits, juvenile, 1st October; same, Old Slade Nature Reserve, 2nd-30th November (C.D.R.Heard *et al.*); also in Greater London, Surrey.

Dorset Morden Park, male, since 27th December 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 487), to 9th March; same, 1st-31st December (per J.Lidster).

Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, male, 22nd July to 6th August, photo. (J.T.Smith *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, female, 13th-22nd March (M.J.McGill *et al.*).

Greater London Harmondworth Country Park, juvenile, 28th-30th October (C.D.R.Heard *et al.*); also in Berkshire, Surrey.

Leicestershire/Northamptonshire Swithland Reservoir, male, 5th-15th October, photo. (S.M.Lister *et al.*).

Norfolk Welney, male, 1st January (J.B.Kemp, D.Stevens); presumed same, 19th November (J.B.Kemp). Fowl Mere, male, intermittently, 5th February to 14th April (O.R.Marks *et al.*); presumed same as 2001 below. Hickling, male, 16th March (J.Hampshire); presumed same, Stanford Water, 16th February, 22nd-31st March, 14th April and Thompson Water, 13th April (per G.E.Dunmore).

Northamptonshire Daventry Country Park, juvenile/first-winter, intermittently 15th December to 10th February 2003 (G.Pullan *et al.*). See also Leicestershire/Northamptonshire above.

Somerset See 2001 Somerset below.

Suffolk Minsmere, male, 9th-21st January; another male, 11th-12th January, one or other to 21st, photo. (W.J.Brame, R.Drew *et al.*); both additional to 2001 below; male, 23rd October to 30th December (J. & P.Wright *et al.*); presumed same as one or other individual above.

Surrey Papercourt Gravel-pits, female, 2nd January, photo. (J.Gates *et al.*). Staines Reservoirs, juvenile, 1st October; also in Berkshire, Greater London.

1999 Dorset Morden Lake, male, 20th December 2000 (Brit. Birds 93: 523), previously noted, since 1998 to 23rd January; same, Lulworth Lake, 10th January; same, Hyde Lakes, 6th February (per J.Lidster).

2000 Dorset Morden Lake, male, since 1999 to 13th February, returning 23rd November to at least 23rd December (Brit. Birds 94: 464); same, Budden's Farm Lakes, 24th February; same, Sturminster Marshall Gravel-pit, 18th December (per J.Lidster).

2000 Greater London Kempton Park Nature Reserve, male, 22nd May (Brit. Birds 95: 488), locality is in Greater London as originally stipulated (per K.Purdey).

2001 Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, male, 15th January (Brit. Birds 95: 487), now considered same as Godmanchester, 13th-22nd January (Brit. Birds 95: 487), and Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, 1st January 2000 (Brit. Birds 94: 464) (per J.Oates).

2001 Dorset Morden Lake, male, 27th-30th December (Brit. Birds 95: 487), full dates 1st January, 9th March, 1st-31st December (per J.Lidster).

2001 Greater Manchester Salford Quays/Irwell Water, female, since 2000 (Brit. Birds 94: 464) to 25th January (P.Berry per A.J.Smith); same, Chorlton Water Park, 27th January to 11th March (P.Hines per A.J.Smith); same, Loots Lake, 19th March (B.T.Shaw per A.J.Smith).

2001 Norfolk Fowl Mere, male, 1st April (R.W.R.Seymour).

2001 Somerset Ham Wall, since 2000 to February (Brit. Birds 95: 488), to 10th February; returned, 28th November to 20th February 2002 (per B.D.Gibbs).

2001 Suffolk Minsmere, male, 14th October to 12th February 2002 (W.J.Brame, R.Drew *et al.*).

2001 Warwickshire Coombe Abbey, first-winter female, 2nd-28th October (J.J.Bowley *et al.*).

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 48, 5)

Cornwall Drift Reservoir, male, 14th-27th October, photo. (G.Hobin, F.Hull *et al.*).

Dorset Swineham Gravel-pits and Studland, first-winter male, since 11th November 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 488), to 29th April, returned as adult, 14th December to 1st January 2003 (per J.Lidster).

Dumfries & Galloway Auchenreoch Loch, three first-winter males, 20th-24th December, one or two, Auchenreoch and Milton Lochs, 28th December to 16th February 2003, two, 18th February to at least 20th April (S.Cooper, G.Stenning *et al.*).

Highland Loch Insh, Inverness-shire, male, 29th-30th March, photo. (C.Davis, C.Donald, M.A.Newell *et al.*).

2001 Hertfordshire Wilstone Reservoir, first-winter female, 4th-7th November, video. (D.Bilcock *et al.*).

All accepted records were of drakes this year, including an unprecedented three together in Dumfries & Galloway. These three provided a unique and rather magical viewing opportunity on the ice-bound Auchenreoch Loch in late December. Lone females can still create identification headaches, and two records of females remain under consideration. Additional identification features were highlighted recently by Martin Garner, who stressed the importance of the underwing as well as the upperwing pattern (Birding World 15:506-508).

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 103, 5)

Argyll Dunstaffenage, male, 6th April (I.A.Dillon, B.A.L.Howlett).

Dumfries & Galloway Kirkcolm Point, Loch Ryan, first-summer male, 3rd October to at least 27th March 2003 (S.Bearhop, C.J.McInerny, S.C.Votier *et al.*); presumed same, near Cairnryan, Loch Ryan, 15th December (P.N.Collin).

Fife Leven, female, 15th September, 17th, 26th October (per D.Ogilvie); presumed same as 2001 Fife below.

Man, Isle of Rue Point, male, probably first-summer, 24th May to 2nd June (S.Davies, B.Jones, J.P.Thorpe).

Norfolk Holkham Bay and Wells Harbour, and Morston, first-summer male, 19th January to 3rd April, photo. (J.V.Bhalerao, P.Etienne *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: 559 fig.5).

Shetland Bluemull Sound, Belmont, Unst, female, 31st March, possibly since mid March, photo. (W.Dickson, J.Goodlad, J.Gray).

2001 Fife Methil, female, 2nd December (Brit. Birds 95: 489), not male as stated; presumed same as Leven 3rd to at least 6th August, but reports (at Leven) on 2nd February and 8th April now withdrawn (per D.E.Dickson).

It would appear that annual recurrences of males off the east coast of Scotland have come to an end, at least for the time being.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

North American and E Siberian race *M. n. americana* (0, 7, 0)

Caernarfonshire Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr, male, since 17th December 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 489), to 8th April; returned, 3rd November, intermittently to at least 28th April 2003 (per J.Barnes).

2001 Moray & Nairn Burghead Bay, male, 27th October to 7th December (D.M.Pullan *et al.*).

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 300, 8)

Cornwall Boscastle, 20th-21st April, video., photo. (G.Fabbram).

Dorset Easton, Portland, 31st May (G.Walbridge *et al.*).

Gwent Newport, 5th June (J.O'Sullivan, J.D.Wilson).

Highland Near Rhifail, Strath Never, Sutherland, 4th June (N.Archer); probably same, Achentoul, 9th July to at least early August, photo. (C.H.Crooke, R.H.Dennis, A.F.McNee *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 23rd September, video. (R.L.Flood, A.Hutt).

Suffolk Tuddenham St Martin, 11th June (S.Abbott, Mr & Mrs Ambrose).

Sussex, East Glynde Reach, 8th June (M.J.Helps, A.R.Kitson).

Yorkshire, North Whitestone Point, Whitby, 10th September (S.Mills, R.S.Slack).

2001 Cambridgeshire Chippenham Fen, 18th May (K.J.Warrington).

Once again, more records of Black Kite have been rejected than accepted. The increase in records submitted to BBRC reflects a widespread belief that Black Kite is now occurring more frequently in Britain, in particular during the last three or four years. Information received from the Netherlands and northern France, however, suggests that there has been no comparable increase in numbers in parts of the Continent bordering the English Channel and southern North Sea. In the Netherlands, records of several rare raptors have increased in recent years, but Black Kite is not one of them. Numbers there increased until 1980 but since then seem to have remained at the same level. If numbers are not increasing on the near continent, where have all these new British birds come from? Could it be that a few mobile individuals have increased the expectation and decreased the rigour with which this species is being identified?

We all, apparently, identify Black Kite with ease when travelling overseas, so why do so many records fail to make the grade in Britain? To reiterate comments made in 1990, 'For a bird that is big and brown with a forked tail, and flies about in the open air, the Black Kite still has a troubled time in Committee circulations. Simplistic descriptions are all too often inadequate for a species that should, when a real one appears, present little trouble' (Brit. Birds 83: 456-457). Since then, little has changed. Many of the descriptions we receive are of birds seen either without optics or at considerable range. There is often little plumage detail to evaluate, while the description of shape and flight is cursory. Interestingly, in southern Europe both adults and second-calendar-year birds invariably commence primary moult in late May and June. It is, surprising, therefore, that many of the submitted descriptions fail to note this obvious feature, although it is generally apparent in birds, which are photographed.

For an acceptable record we require a detailed description of a well-seen bird. We need details of moult, flight behaviour, shape and structure, size and plumage. If the bird is too distant to see much in the way of plumage detail, we still require careful notes on moult, shape and flight, along with an explanation of how a dark Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* or European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* was considered and eliminated. BBRC will continue to take a hard line with poorly documented records.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (3, 8, 3)

Kent Elmley, third-calendar-year male, 3rd-20th August, photo. (C.G.Bradshaw, S.Brown, J.Hunt *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 316; 96: plate 341).

Norfolk Stiffkey and Warham Greens area, juvenile, 24th December to 30th March 2003, photo. (R.Johnson, S.C.Votier *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: 561 fig.6).

Shetland Sumburgh, juvenile, 10th September; same, Brow Marsh, 10th-14th, photo. (P.V.Harvey, R.Riddington *et al.*).

The comment in last year's report that 'a long-staying individual on the mainland would be well received' appeared prophetic as the hundreds of grateful travellers admired the Elmley bird in August. This year's influx of three individuals brings to mind the record year of 1993, when five were recorded. The similarity of occurrences is also striking, with the male in Kent recalling the third-calendar-year (or second-summer) individual in Essex in summer 1993, and autumn juveniles in Shetland in both years. Even more remarkable is the appearance of another juvenile at Brow Marsh, Shetland, on almost exactly the same dates as a juvenile at the same site in 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 490). The juvenile in Norfolk on Christmas Eve represents an amazing find, and brings to mind the juvenile Montagu's Harrier *C.pygargus*, which led many observers on a merry dance in late November 1995, before it was identified correctly (Birding World 8:420-421). Thanks to the perseverance of two sharp observers, many birders were able to enjoy their second Pallid Harrier on the British mainland within a few months.

With several Pallid Harriers reported in the spring of 2003, it remains to be seen whether these records represent a genuine upsurge in this (previously) almost mythical raptor's fortunes in Britain. A number of northern European countries have experienced an increase in numbers in recent years, and there is some evidence to suggest that the ongoing loss of breeding habitat to farming in southern Russia and Kazakhstan may be forcing adults to wander west of their regular breeding range in search of suitable habitat. A record from Sussex in 2002 remains under consideration and reminds us that the identification of immatures remains potentially difficult.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (11, 6, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, first-summer male, 13th-21st May, video., photo. (R.L.Flood, K.Webb *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plates 226 & 227; 96: plates 342 & 343).

This first-summer male, the first in Britain since 1992, sported a metal ring on its left leg. It will have struck most people who saw this bird that there is a world of difference between identifying one in central Spain and being confident enough to claim a vagrant in Britain. BBRC is currently re-examining the documentation on the contentious bird seen at Black Rock, Cornwall, in 1979, the file for which has gathered dust in the BBRC's pending tray for many years without a decision being made.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 627, 11)

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, first-summer male, 18th May (C. & T.P.Inskipp, M.Kohler, Z.Zöckler). Eynesbury, female, 8th June (S.M.Elsom, J.T.Williams).

Norfolk Hickling, first-summer male, 19th-22nd May, photo. (J.Hampshire, P.J.Heath *et al.*); first-summer female, 5th July to about 31st August, photo. (M.Chipperfield, J.Hampshire *et al.*). Blakeney Point, female, 21st May (M.I.Eldridge, A.M.Stoddart *et al.*). Upton Fen, female, age uncertain, 23rd May (J.Knowler). Salthouse, female, 8th June (B. & I.Burrows). Burgh St Peter Staithe, first-summer female, 29th August (G.J.Etherington); same, Oulton Dyke, Suffolk, below.

Nottinghamshire Gringley Carr, first-summer female, 12th-17th June, photo. (M.C. & S.Dennis *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 256; 96: plate 344).

Suffolk Orfordness, female, 17th May (J.Askins, D.Cormack). Oulton Dyke, first-summer female, 29th August (G.J.Etherington); also in Norfolk, above.

Yorkshire, North North Duffield, female, 19th May (M.Tunmore).

2001 Wiltshire Haxton, first-summer female, 3rd-9th June, photo. (M.Coller, R.Turner *et al.*).

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 118, 6)

Argyll Loch Gruinart and Gorn area, Islay, adult white-phase, 22nd-24th February (A.Kets, T.ap Rheinallt *et al.*).

Cornwall Trethewey and Land's End, juvenile/first-winter white-phase, 4th-5th December, video. (K.A.Wilson *et al.*).

Orkney Greeny Hill, Mainland, male, white-phase, 6th, 8th April, possibly since 14th March (E.J.Williams *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, white-phase, 2nd, 4th-5th April, photo. (A.Robinson). Loch Paible, North Uist, age uncertain, white-phase, 14th April (B.Rabbitts *et al.*).

Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, white-phase, 3rd May (M.A.Maher).

2000 Cornwall Goonhilly Downs, 3rd March (M.Eaton); same, Cape Cornwall, juvenile/first-winter white-phase, intermittently, 5th-23rd March, photo. (M.P.Semmens, J.D.Swann *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 93: plates 121 & 122; 96: plate 345).

We are pleased to publish a record, albeit belatedly, of the 2000 Cornish bird, which was well seen and photographed by many birders. We had been asked to reconsider our original decision (to accept it) by an observer who possesses widespread knowledge of hybrid falcons. He felt that this was not a pure Gyr Falcon, but probably a hybrid Gyr x Saker Falcon *F.cherrug*. This conclusion was based upon examination of photographs, which revealed that the primaries were at least as long as the tail and the pattern of the spots on the flanks, best seen on the underparts of the bird in flight, were more typical of a Saker Falcon than a Gyr Falcon.

BBRC takes such issues seriously and felt that it was essential to investigate this claim thoroughly before publishing the record. As Saker Falcon is also relatively short-winged, a Gyr x Saker hybrid would be unlikely to appear longer-winged than a pure Gyr Falcon. We examined the photographs carefully and felt that the side-on photos showed the primaries to fall well short of the tail-tip. We suspected that the problem was one of photographic angles rather than hybrid origin, however, and Bill Clark agreed with this view. He commented that: 'I have been looking at wing-tip to tail-tip relative positions on many species of raptors. I find that this can change on an individual raptor depending on how the wings are held, and one is often misled because the wing-tips are closer to or further from the viewer than is the tail-tip. I feel that this is the case in some of the photos you sent. Nevertheless, I have looked at all of the characters of this falcon to see if it showed any characters other than those of a juvenile white-morph Gyr. I found no characters that would suggest a hybrid...[It possessed] the following

characters shown only by Gyr Falcons: lack of a moustachial stripe, broad chest, wide wings, and some unbanded tail feathers. A hybrid should show dark moustachial marks and completely barred tail feathers, and would have narrower wings and chest. The streaks or flank spots are typical of a juvenile white-morph Gyr.'

This bird was also seen to attack a Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* at one point, perhaps a throwback to typical breeding-grounds behaviour? Certainly, Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis* frequently nest colonially around Peregrine Falcon *F.peregrinus* nests, as they benefit from the raptor's intolerance of other predators, especially Arctic Fox *Alopex lagopus*, which outweighs the danger of nesting so close to such a powerful hunter.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni* (1, 0, 1)

Dorset Weston, Portland, juvenile/first-winter, moribund, 10th February; specimen now at Natural History Museum, Tring (M.Cade, A.Snaith *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 346).

This bird was discovered by a member of the public and, like its predecessor, which was caught on a boat off East Anglia just over 100 years earlier, on New Year's Day 1902 (Ibis 116:578), it was exhausted and died soon after discovery. With two records of the species in Spain during the preceding month, and the first record of African Crake *Crex egregia* for the Western Palearctic, on Tenerife, two months prior to this (Birding World 15: 60-61), the bird at Portland is, perhaps, not quite as unprecedented as it seems. These records appear to suggest an unusual wet-season dispersal from sub-Saharan Africa. Allen's Gallinule is now elevated to Category A of the British List.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* (92, 18, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, male, 22nd March (F.Hicks, M.Hicks, D.Page *et al.*).

Spring records are surprisingly rare, with most having occurred in the late autumn and winter periods. The species has become much less frequent here during the last few decades, no doubt reflecting its decline across much of its European breeding range.

Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii* (0, 1, 0)

1962 Suffolk Westleton, 25th November to 29th December, photo. (Brit. Birds 56: 399, plate 61; 57: 247-249). This individual is now specifically identified as Macqueen's Bustard (Ibis 145: 175-180).

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 194, 8)

Devon South Huish, four, 17th-31st May, one to 2nd June, photo. (A.J.Livett, N.Ward *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, two, 17th April (K.Martin, P.Raby).

Norfolk Hockwold Washes, two, 8th-11th May (D.E.Balmer, S.Newson *et al.*); same, Fowl Mere, 12th (M.R. & O.R.Marks *et al.*); also in Suffolk below. Titchwell, since 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 491), throughout year (per G.E.Dunmore).

Suffolk Lakenheath, two, 8th May (I.Barton, P.J.Dolton *et al.*); same as Norfolk.

The presence of pairs and small parties during the spring raised hopes of potential breeding attempts, but these did not come to fruition. Meanwhile, the lonely male on the north Norfolk coast maintains his solitary vigil as he enters his tenth year.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 35, 3)

Cornwall Godrevy, 20th November (S.Marshall *et al.*).

Devon Saunton Sands, 19th April (R.Jutsum).

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 4th-10th November, photo. (J.K.Higginson *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plates 29 & 347).

Typically a late autumn vagrant, the St Agnes individual graced the island after nearly all the October birders had departed. On occasions, it was on Perigilis beach with a Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* (0, 1, 1)

Lincolnshire Rimac, female, 11th-15th May, photo. (B.M.Clarkson, M.J.Tarrant *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plates 228 & 229; 96: plate 348).

There has been much debate and argument surrounding the accepted record of a Greater Sand Plover *C.leschenaultii*, which frequented the Don Estuary, Northeast Scotland, in August 1991. Many observers believe that this bird was, in fact, a Lesser Sand Plover, and further research is currently ongoing to establish whether this is the case. Clearly, this species pair can still cause identification problems. The Rimac bird was, however, a typical Lesser Sand Plover, with its relatively short legs, large head and stubby bill.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 223, 2)

Ayrshire Barassie, Monkton Toon and Bogside, Irvine, juvenile, 26th-31st October, photo. (R.H.Hogg *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Smithey Fen, Cottenham, adult, 28th October (R.Thomas *et al.*); same, Holme Fen, Aldreth, 31st October to 3rd November (J.Oates *et al.*); presumed same as one or other of Swaffham Prior Fen individuals, October 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 491).

Orkney Birsay, juvenile, 25th September (I.A.Dillon).

1999 Hampshire Keyhaven Marsh area, juvenile, 30th October (Brit. Birds 94: 469), observer was T.Parminter.

2001 Cambridgeshire Swaffham Prior Fen (Brit. Birds 95: 491), observers should read A.Long, J.Oates *et al.*

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 45, 4)

Norfolk Thornham Marshes, adult, 17th May, photo. (P. & P.Ashton *et al.*). Berney Marshes, adult, 28th July, photo. (P.R.Allard, J.Harris).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 8th-9th July (P.A.Brown, J.S.Lees *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides North Boisdale/Oduburgh, South Uist, adult, 7th-14th April, photo., presumed returning individual of 14th October to 4th November 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 492); presumed same, North Boisdale and Garrymonie area, South Uist, 13th October to 10th November, again, 9th February to at least 5th April 2003 (A.Stevenson *et al.*). West Gerinish, South Uist, adult, 3rd-4th August, photo. (A.Stevenson).

2000 Essex Old Hall Marshes, first-summer, 7th May (Brit. Birds 94: 469), present to 9th (per S.Cox).

Overwintering is not unprecedented, with individuals in East Yorkshire in 1985 (Brit. Birds 79: 544) and in Dorset in 1996 (Brit. Birds 90: 470), plus a handful of isolated winter records. What is particularly unusual about the South Uist bird is that it is the first individual to have reappeared in consecutive winters. It is possible that this same bird has now been seen on South Uist in all seasons since it first appeared, in October 2001.

American/Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica/fulva* (9, 292, -)

1998 Man, Isle of Langness, adult, 25th-26th May (A.M.Sapsford *et al.*).

As from 1st January 2002, 'either/or' records of American/Pacific Golden Plovers will not be published in this report (Brit. Birds 94: 395).

Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* (5, 36, 0)

2001 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 23rd-24th February (P.E.Charlton, C.J.Tyas); presumed same as Suffolk, October-November 2000 (Brit. Birds 94: 470).

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 66, 3)

Cleveland Dorman's Pool, adult, 14th July (P.A.A.Baxter *et al.*).

Dorset Ferrybridge, adult, 13th-14th September, probably since 12th, photo. (E.D.Lloyd *et al.*).

Orkney Loch of Tankerness, adult, 28th-29th June, photo. (K.E.Hague *et al.*).

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (6, 23, 1)

Staffordshire Drayton Bassett, 23rd-25th May, photo. (M.J.Inskipp, G.J.Mant, M.Priest *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 230; 96: plate 349).

This record represents the third for the West Midlands and the second for Staffordshire but only the second spring record for Britain, the previous one being on 22nd May 1977 in Hampshire (Brit. Birds 71: 500).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 326, 15)

Cleveland Greatham Creek and Seal Sands, adult, 13th July (C.Sharp *et al.*). Seaton Snook and Seal Sands, adult, 8th-19th August (R.C.Taylor *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, juvenile/first-winter, 10th November, photo. (R.J.Curtis, K.Rylands).

Essex Old Hall Marshes, adult, 18th-21st July, photo. (Mr & Mrs Barnes, D.Rhymes, J.Wylson).

Kent Grove Ferry, adult, 20th July, photo. (M.P.Wilson *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Marshside Marsh, adult, 19th-20th May, photo. (J.Dempsey, B.McCarthy *et al.*).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, juvenile/first-winter, 9th-16th November (A.Brown, R.H.Hogg, A.J. & R.McNab *et al.*).

Norfolk Kelling, adult, 6th July, photo. (A.I.McElwee *et al.*). Titchwell, adult, 23rd-26th July (J.E.D.Furse, E.T.Myers, J.A.Rowlands *et al.*); adult, 31st August to 10th September (J.Oates *et al.*).

Northumberland Cresswell Pond, adult, 30th June, photo. (A.D.McLevy *et al.*). St Mary's Island, adult, 18th-22nd July, photo. (N.P.Dales *et al.*). Farne Islands, adult, 4th-9th, 14th-18th September, photo. (D.Steel *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, adult, 27th-30th August, photo. (D.Page *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, adult, 15th August (T.G.Davies).

1999 Dorset Ferrybridge, adult, 26th July (M.Cade, C.E.Richards *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: 493), now considered same as Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, 28th July to 1st August 1999 (Brit. Birds 93: 531).

2001 Cleveland Saltholme Pools, adult, intermittently 29th September to 11th October, photo. (G.Iceton, R.Little, R.C.Taylor *et al.*).

2001 Northeast Scotland Loch of Strathbeg, adult, 3rd August (R.Coleman, J.Harrison).

2001 Yorkshire, South Old Moor Nature Reserve, adult, 17th-18th June, photo. (J.Hewitt, S.C.Renouf *et al.*).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (5, 20, 0)

2001 Kent Grove Ferry, adult, 30th August, photo. (P.R.Laslett, the late R.Pettit *et al.*).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 174, 5)

Cleveland Dorman's Pool, 15th June, photo. (R.C.Taylor *et al.*).

Devon Exminster Marshes, 30th-31st May (P.M.Mayer *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, two juveniles, 3rd-6th August, one to 12th, photo. (S.J.M.Gantlett, R.G.Millington *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch Paible, North Uist, 8th-9th June (D.Allan *et al.*).

A rather typical showing of adults, but the two juveniles were much appreciated, being only the fifth record of birds of this age in the past decade. Their occurrence recalls that of the last juvenile, which lingered, also at Cley, in September 1993, and represents the first multiple arrival of juvenile Broad-billed Sandpipers in Britain.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* (1, 18, 2)

Hampshire Pennington Marshes, adult, 21st July to 3rd August, photo. (R.B.Wynn *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 278; 96: plate 350).

Shetland Norwick, Unst, juvenile, 5th-7th November, photo. (M.A.Maher, M.G.Pennington, M.I.Smith *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 351).

The Shetland individual, as well as being the latest ever, is the first confirmed British record of a juvenile, although one in Lancashire from 27th September to 8th October 1967 (Brit. Birds 61: 340) was not aged. Although juveniles have occurred previously in Ireland and Northern Ireland (most recently at Lough Beg, Co. Londonderry, in September 2001; see Brit. Birds 94: plate 283), birds of this age-class remain a true rarity in Europe. With most records relating to early autumn adults, often on the east coast, it is interesting to speculate where and when they initially make landfall.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 112, 4)

Norfolk Sheringham, 8th September (A.P. & L.G.Benson *et al.*). Warham Greens, 10th September (J.R.McCallum, D.Waddingham). Blakeney Point, 12th September (R.G.Millington, N.Mugan, R.F.Porter *et al.*).

Suffolk Corton, 13th September (J.Brown *et al.*).

2001 Hertfordshire Hollingson's Meads, 18th September (A.J.Harris).

An average number by recent standards, and on typical dates for the species, but this influx is particularly noteworthy as records were surprisingly concentrated in East Anglia. During the last decade, 70% of all records have occurred in the Northern Isles and this species remains a good find on the mainland.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 156, 2)

Lincolnshire Saltfleet Haven, juvenile, 1st-17th November, photo. (I.C. & S.J.M.Whitehouse, A.G.Williams *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, juvenile, 21st-30th September, photo. (R.M. & R.P.Fray, K.B.Shepherd *et al.*).

A bird seen at Loch of Strathbeg, Northeast Scotland, on 1st September, and recorded as not accepted in Appendix 2, was clearly a dowitcher sp.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

North American race *N. p. hudsonicus* (2, 2, 0)

Gwent Goldcliff Pools, 3rd-4th May (N.Desmond, J.Marsh *et al.*); presumed same as 6th-7th May 2000 (Brit. Birds 94: 473).

The reappearance of this bird at Goldcliff recalls the Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* at Blacktoft Sands, East Yorkshire, which reappeared there in spring 1983 after first being seen in autumn 1981 (Brit. Birds 76: 496; 78: 550). The Gwent bird may well have used Goldcliff as a staging post in spring 2001, when the site was not accessible owing to foot-and-mouth disease restrictions.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 29, 0)

1986 Devon Topsham, 22nd February (Brit. Birds 81: 559), now considered inadequately documented.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 103, 4)

Cheshire Inner Marsh Farm, adult, 21st-29th July (P.E.Miller, C.Wells *et al.*).

Essex Old Hall Marshes, adult, 25th August (E.Waliczky).

Yorkshire, East Blacktoft Sands, adult, 12th-17th July, photo. (V.Parslow *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Leventhorpe Hall Pond, 8th-9th June (P.R.Morris *et al.*).

2000 Highland Dingwall Bay, Ross & Cromarty, first-winter, 4th-5th October (D.P.Butterfield, R.Graham *et al.*).

2000 Kent Grove Ferry, adult, 17th September, photo. (C.Sammels, M.P.Wilson).

We await details of the two popular and well-watched juveniles at Elmley, Kent, in August.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (12, 16, 2)

Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, 11th-14th May (T.ap Rheinallt *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, 28th-30th April, 8th-9th May, photo. (A.Robinson).

While these records could well relate to the same individual, there was no direct evidence to back up this claim, so they are treated here as two birds rather than one.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 193, 8)

Ceredigion/Pembrokeshire Teifi Estuary, 22nd-25th May (H.Roderick, G.Walker *et al.*).

Cheshire Frodsham, 17th March to about 15th April (F.Duff *et al.*).

Cornwall Crowdy Reservoir, age uncertain, 14th October (S.M.Christophers).

Essex Old Hall Marshes, 16th May (P.Charlton, C.Hudson, C.J.Tyas *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Pilling, juvenile, 12th-19th September, photo. (C.G.Batty, R.E.Danson, S.Dunstan *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Frieston Shore, 31st May, video., photo. (S.Keightley *et al.*).

Norfolk Cantley, juvenile, 8th November to 8th December, photo. (C.P.Baker *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plates 30 & 352).

Outer Hebrides Loch Bee and Clachan Pools, South Uist, adult, 10th-11th August, photo. (A.Stevenson *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Pembroke, since 15th December 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 495), to 17th March. See also Ceredigion/Pembrokeshire above.

2001 Cornwall Treseuple Pool/Devoran River, adult, 2nd-8th September, video. (J.Chapel, M.May *et al.*).

2001 Kent Oare Marshes, adult, 13th October, photo. (I.Harding *et al.*); same, Elmley, 13th (per B.E.Wright).

2001 Scilly Tresco, juvenile, 30th August to 28th September (W.H.Wagstaff *et al.*).

This species was seen in every month except June and July. A number of birds reported during 2002 have yet to be submitted, including individuals photographed at Washington, Co. Durham, and Amwell, Hertfordshire. We would welcome details of these and any others missing from this report.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 21, 1)

Hertfordshire Rye Meads, adult, 13th-16th September, photo. (P.Roper *et al.*).

Astonishingly, this is the fourth record for this inland county and the second from this locality.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 56, 3)

Cumbria Grune Point, 29th July, photo. (D.Allen *et al.*).

Essex Maldon, 25th-29th August, photo. (R.Neave *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Beacon Ponds, Kilnsea, 1st June (A.Hutt *et al.*).

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 116, 2)

Durham Pow Hill and area, Derwent Reservoir, 19th June to 6th July, photo. (J.Dobinson, S.Rippon, S.Westerberg *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 353); also in Northumberland.

Northumberland Derwent Reservoir, 2nd July (D.J.Britton per I.Fisher), 3rd, 6th July (A.D.McLevy *et al.*); same as Durham above.

Scilly Gugh and St Agnes, first-winter, 11th-23rd October, photo. (T.R.Cleeves, J.Walsh *et al.*).

Two records is an average showing in recent years. Autumn juveniles still provide the occasional identification conundrum and one such bird in Derbyshire remains under consideration. The displaying male in Durham/Northumberland put on a great show, both for visiting birders and the female Common Sandpipers *A.hypoleucos* of the reservoir.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 208, 1)

Orkney Loch of Tankerness, juvenile/first-winter, 5th September, photo. (K.E.Hague).

1999 Man, Isle of Point of Ayre, adult, 10th September, photo. (R.Fraser, D.Shakleton, J. & M.Stott).

In the case of unusual habitat selection, behaviour, or when individuals exhibit unusual plumage or moult features, BBRC requires unequivocal supporting documentation before accepting the record. The 1999 Isle of Man record concerned an individual feeding on the sea, which was considered atypical for individuals on this side of the Atlantic. Further documentation was requested and the observer provided a photograph, which proved the identification.

After the first record, in 1954, this species occurred here regularly, with annual totals averaging three, four, six and five in each ten-year period between 1958 and 1997. Since then, however, the average has fallen to just one bird per year.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 94, 0)

1977 Cheshire See 1977 Lancashire & North Merseyside below.

1977 Lancashire & North Merseyside Mersey Estuary, adult, 3rd August (Brit. Birds 71: 506), locality was New Ferry, Cheshire.

2001 Cheshire West Kirby, first-winter, 2nd October (C.J.Butterworth, L.Greenstreet).

2001 Devon Upper Plym Estuary, adult, 4th August (R.W.Gould, S.M.R.Young *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: 573 fig. 7).

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 39, 2)

Leicestershire/Northamptonshire Stanford Reservoir, adult, 3rd-5th November (G.Pullan *et al.*); also in Warwickshire.

Oxfordshire Farmoor Reservoir, adult, 17th-28th August, video., photo. (N.J.Hallam *et al.*).

Warwickshire Draycote Water, adult, 6th November (J.F.C.Judge *et al.*); same as Leicestershire/Northamptonshire above.

1986 Gwynedd Aber Dyssyni, second-summer or adult, 22nd March (Brit. Birds 81: 562); record now withdrawn by observers.

The November adult was not particularly remarkable in itself. What was remarkable was that its finder at Stanford Reservoir (Gary Pullan) discovered a small, dark-mantled, hooded gull at Boddington Reservoir, Northamptonshire, in March 2001, which resembled a Franklin's Gull. It was thought most likely to be a hybrid, perhaps Mediterranean *L.melanocephalus* x Common Gull *L.canus*. Then, in March 2002, another small, dark-mantled, hooded gull was found at Draycote Water by John Judge, clearly different from the Boddington bird, but again superficially similar to Franklin's and again thought most likely to be a Mediterranean x Common Gull hybrid. It is good to see that the continuing efforts of both observers (and indeed Nic Hallam, another inland reservoir stalwart) were rewarded this year with an undisputed Franklin's. There is also a cautionary tale here though, and claims resulting from brief views of what might seem to be one of the more distinctive small gulls must be treated with caution by the Committee. The Boddington bird will be described more fully in a forthcoming paper in British Birds.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 104, 0)

Cornwall See 2001 Cornwall below.

Sussex, West Pagham Lagoon, adult, 16th to 25th March, video. (A.R.Kitson *et al.*); presumed same as 2001 Cornwall below.

2001 Cornwall Millbrook Lake, adult, 19th December to 9th March 2002, photo. (R.W.Gould *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plates 39, 40 & 114; 96: plates 354 & 355).

2001 Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, first-summer, 27th May, video. (T.J.Meehan *et al.*).

The relocation of the Cornish wintering bird in West Sussex is notable.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

North American race *L. a. smithsonianus* 'American Herring Gull' (0, 7, 3)

Cornwall Hayle, juvenile/first-winter, 9th-10th March (M.T.Elliott).

Dorset Corfe Mullen, Sturminster Marshall and Lychett Bay, first-winter, 4th March to 6th May (J.Lidster *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, first-winter, 6th-28th February, dead 28th, photo. (R.L.Flood, J.K.Higginson *et al.*).

1999 Caithness Scrabster, first-winter, 6th-13th March, video. (S.Laybourn, N.Money *et al.*).

With the features of 'American Herring Gull' becoming more widely known, observers are gaining both the ability and the confidence to identify darker first-winter *smithsonianus*, which are being increasingly recorded. Nonetheless, recent awareness of the plumage variability of other forms, most notably darker *L.a. argentatus*, which can match many features of *smithsonianus*, has required BBRC to undertake widespread consultation about this form. The result has been the establishment of clear criteria, which enable a thorough assessment of claimed first-winter *smithsonianus*.

The records accepted for 2002 concern three 'classic' first-winters. In each case, the features were described in clear detail and two were supported by video or digital images. As observer confidence grows and birds in Ireland return for their second and third winters, BBRC is actively investigating the range of features associated with other age-classes of *smithsonianus*. These criteria are still developing, and there is no hiding from the difficulties involved. It is telling that no records for any age-class other than first-winter have been submitted to BBRC for assessment.

The record from Scilly has been published previously (Flood 2002), being one of three individuals present on Scilly in the early part of 2002, but so far we have only accepted one ('Bird 2' in the aforementioned reference). One of the other claims from Scilly, 'Bird 3' in Flood (2002), remains under consideration: it showed characters, notably on the coverts, underparts and tail, which are not diagnostic of *smithsonianus*, although it may well prove to be one. The variability of this form is such that not all submitted records describe features, which match all of the presently agreed criteria. The relatively hard stance taken by BBRC will inevitably mean that, like the Scilly bird, some individuals might be *smithsonianus* but, because of the overlap of features with other forms, they are not considered safely identifiable as such, at least for the time being. Such an approach has enabled us to be consistent with our decisions and allows for some variation in characters. Some may accuse us of 'throwing out the baby with the bathwater', but we believe that we have got the balance about right, based upon our current knowledge.

Currently, large white-headed gull taxonomy is in a state of flux and the long-term status of *smithsonianus* is unclear. Yésou (2002) suggested that *argentatus* (along with *argenteus*) is 'biologically isolated' from *smithsonianus*, and that genetic and phenotypic differences would lead to treatment of *smithsonianus* as a 'good' species. This differs from the current position in Britain, but the Taxonomic Sub-committee of BOURC is presently reviewing the whole 'Herring Gull' complex.

References

Flood, R.L. 2002. Three American Herring Gulls on the Isles of Scilly. *Birding World* 15: 106-110.

Yésou, P.2002. Systematics of *Larus argentatus-cachinnans-fuscus* complex revisited. *Dutch Birding* 24: 271-298.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Central Palearctic race *L. (c.) cachinnans* 'Caspian Gull' (0, 75, -)

1995 Essex Mucking Tip, 9 adults: 16th August; two, 4th September; another two, 29th September, possibly same 18th October (one photo.); two, 2nd November (one photo.); one, possibly two, 15th December (M.Garner *et al.*).

1996 Essex Mucking Tip: three, possibly four adults, 31st January; second-summer, 10th-12th July; two adults, 10th August; four adults, one second-summer/third-winter, 24th August (Brit. Birds 90: plates 115, 117, 130); two adults, two third-winters, one second-winter, one first-winter, 7th October (photo.); four, possibly seven adults, one first-winter, 14th October (photo.); adult, one third-winter, one second-winter, two first-winters, 4th November (Brit. Birds 90: plates 97, 102-103, 113), video. (M.Garner *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plates 356 & 357).

1998 Cambridgeshire Milton, adult, 28th February, photo. (R.G.Newell).

1998 Gloucestershire Hempstead, adult, trapped, 7th December, photo. (P.Stewart *et al.*).

1998 Greater London Eel Pie Island, Twickenham, adult, 31st December to at least January 1999, photo. (A.Pearson *et al.*).

1998 Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, seven adults: 30th September; 11th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th November; 30th December (J.Wright).

1998 Northamptonshire Welford Tip, fourth-winter, 12th November; another, 13th (J.Wright).

1999 Derbyshire Poolsbrook Country Park, first-winter, 13th-14th March, photo. (E.A.Fisher, K.R.Gould *et al.*). Ogston Reservoir, first-winter, 8th December (R.J.Lowe).

1999 Gloucestershire Hempstead, adult, 25th August (M.T.Elliott, S.N.G.Howell, J.P.Martin).

1999 Kent Dungeness, adult, 15th-28th August (K.G.Holland, D.Walker *et al.*).

1999 Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, first-winter, 5th January; fourth-winter, 6th January; second-winter, 31st January; fourth-winter, 12th February; adult, 14th February; adult, 16th February; adult, first-winter, 21st October; first-winter, 23rd October; first-winter, 27th October (J.Wright). Rutland Water, third-summer, 25th July; adult, 1st August; adult, 23rd December (J.Wright).

1999 Norfolk Saxlingham, first-winter, 27th December (A.M.Stoddart).

1999 Northamptonshire Welford Tip, fourth-winter, 9th January; adult, 28th January; adult, 11th February; fourth-winter/fourth-summer, 27th February; fourth-winter, 25th October; two adults, 7th December (J.Wright).

1999 Suffolk Blythburgh, first-winter, 27th March; first-winter, 3rd December to 19th April 2000 (B.J.Small *et al.*).

Many birders have already concluded that 'Caspian Gull' is occurring in Britain, so the formal acceptance of the first British records of this form will come as no surprise – 'about time too' we hear many shout. On the basis of the Essex records, BOURC has recently accepted *cachinnans* onto the British List. We owe Martin Garner and his colleagues a huge debt, not only for proving that *cachinnans* is occurring in Britain, but also for disseminating the knowledge to other birders through ground-breaking articles which appeared in British Birds (Garner & Quinn 1997; Garner *et al.* 1997). In addition, we should also acknowledge the truly pioneering work of Klein (1994) and Gruber (1995) which, based in some instances upon observations of ringed gulls of known age, helped to clarify the identification and occurrence of *cachinnans*, which otherwise may have remained overlooked or discredited for much longer.

BBRC faced a number of challenges during the assessment process. Our initial concern was to establish a set of key structural and plumage characters for *cachinnans* at all ages. Having done this, it was recognised that many counties had already accepted and published records of Caspian Gull, and we were keen to see how these records stood up to evaluation using the criteria we had established. In the meantime, gull identification has continued to grow in popularity and, with experience and discussion, ideas and perceptions of certain forms have evolved rapidly. Perhaps our biggest hurdle has been one of understanding the picture an observer is trying to convey of a bird. It is not easy to put the image and subtle details of a gull into words, and it is no coincidence that Martin Garner's accepted records were, in a number of cases, supported by high-quality photographic or video images. On the issue of records prior to 2000, which have not yet been submitted, BBRC is aware of a number of published records and would still like to receive claims prior to 1st January 2000. Although we have received a number of descriptions from 2000 to the present date, which will not be published here, these have been instructive and BBRC has benefited greatly from the information these contained. We are indebted to all those who answered our request for information.

Since the mid 1990s, we have learned much more about the plumage (including its variability) of *cachinnans*. It is no coincidence that several of the observers associated with these records are now synonymous with Caspian Gull. Having established criteria, BBRC has adopted quite a strict approach to the assessment of records of this form. Some may believe we are too strict, and it is important to stress that a number of reports deemed unacceptable were close calls, but not quite up to the standard we set. A detailed paper based upon record evaluation at a county or local level will be published in due course, which we hope will enable records committees

to cope with the onerous task of assessing records and establishing a true picture of the status and distribution of Caspian Gull in Britain.

Despite the fact that there are ringing recoveries of *cachinnans* from Denmark, Germany and France dating back to 1953 – raising questions as to whether these gulls have been generally overlooked in Britain in the past – there are indications that there has been a recent westward expansion of the breeding range, possibly resulting in the larger numbers now being recorded in northwestern Europe. There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that *cachinnans* is also prone to minor influxes. Therefore, *cachinnans* should surely not now be considered a national rarity in the true sense of the word. In some parts of Britain, *cachinnans* is recorded with greater frequency than Glaucous *L.hyperboreus* or Iceland Gull *L.glaucoides*, but for those living outside East Anglia and the Midlands, where it appears to be a regular visitor, it is infrequently encountered and remains rare.

As mentioned above, BOURC has recently accepted Caspian Gull, as *Larus argentatus cachinnans*, onto Category A of the British List with the following comment: 'The committee considered that the identification characteristics of *L.a.cachinnans* were now well established on the basis of papers relating to birds of known provenance.' They also considered that it will, in practice, never be possible to eliminate the possibility of the genetic influence of other taxa in any individual and that the only pragmatic solution is to accept records of *cachinnans* provided that an individual displays no anomalous characters. On the question of just which criteria were necessary for acceptance, the majority of BOURC members felt that, in the case of adults, a description of the pattern of the 10th (outermost) primary was essential, in addition to all the other well-documented 'jizz' characters. On this basis, a record from Mucking, Essex, on 16th August 1995 was considered to fall short of the rigorous standards required for acceptance as the first record for Britain, whereas the record of 4th September 1995 did fulfil those criteria. For the reasons outlined above, the first record accepted by the BBRC is not the same as that accepted by the BOURC, who felt that the first individual to show unequivocally all the features required to place *cachinnans* on the British List was that at Mucking, Essex, on 4th September 1995.

There has been a great deal of debate concerning the taxonomic status of Caspian Gull, and BBRC has been thankful that it has only to deal with the identification! The most recent and well-received review of the '*Larus argentatus-cachinnans-fuscus complex*' was provided by Yésou (2002). In this, he gives sound reasons why *cachinnans* should be treated as specifically distinct from *michahellis* – differences in 'recognition signal', leading to reproductive isolation, and marked genetic differences – as well as *armenicus*, *barabensis* and *mongolicus*. BOURC prefer to treat 'Caspian Gull' as Herring Gull *L.a.cachinnans*, stating that 'this lively issue has not yet been resolved. Data concerning the breeding behaviour of *michahellis* and *argenteus* in western Europe are well documented, but much of the published literature regarding the situation in eastern Europe is anecdotal. Publication of an important peer-reviewed paper in the next few months is anticipated and is keenly awaited.'

Rather than making immediate and arbitrary short-term changes, British Birds continues to treat the 'yellow-legged gull' complex as *Larus cachinnans*, with 'Yellow-legged Gull' *L.c.michahellis* and 'Caspian Gull' *L.c.cachinnans* representing distinct forms within a single, wide-ranging species. Although it is widely recognised that this state of affairs is unsatisfactory, we, like many of our readers, look forward to a rapid clarification and resolution of this thorny issue.

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Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 73, 8)

Cornwall Sennen Cove, adult, 19th February, photo. (T.George, K.A.Wilson *et al.*).

Devon Blackstone Meadow, Plymouth, adult, 28th January to 5th March, photo. (M.Northey, S.Tonkin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 81; 96: plates 358 & 359).

Gloucestershire Frampton Pools, first-winter/first-summer, 16th April (A.H.Eveleigh, M.J.McGill, P.Zaltowski *et al.*).

Gower Blackpill, Swansea, adult, 10th February (S.L.Murray, R.H.A.Taylor *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Peterhead, second-winter, 9th-11th March (N.S.Littlewood *et al.*).

Shetland Loch of Tingwall, first-summer, 10th-28th May, photo. (P.Sclater *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Blacktoft Sands, adult, 31st March, photo. (L.Palmer, P.C.Short, S.D.Wellock *et al.*); same, Brough Haven, 31st (G.Thomas).

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, adult, 16th March to 4th April, photo. (D.Bywater *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 158).

These eight individuals (five adults, one second-winter and two in first-winter or first-summer plumage) were all found in the first half of the year, suggesting that exceptional numbers were present in British waters during this period. How many lurked unseen among Britain's vast wintering gull population? The average number per year since 1958 is only two, but eight were also recorded in 1993.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 42, 3)

Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, first-winter, since 27th December 2001 to 4th January (Brit. Birds 95: 497).

Caernarfonshire Criccieth and Morfa Bychan area, adult, intermittently, 9th-28th February; same, Porthmadoc, 15th; same, Morfa Harlech, Meirionnydd, 15th, photo. (E.Lewis *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plates 80 & 115; 96: plate 360).

Gower Blackpill, Swansea, juvenile/first-winter, 29th November to at least 5th December, photo. (R.J.Howells *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 31).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Fairhaven, adult, 13th-15th February, photo. (A.Hinchcliffe, K.Sharrock, P.Smith *et al.*).

Meirionnydd See Caernarfonshire above.

Two in one year in Wales is unprecedented as there are just two previous accepted records from the principality. The occurrence of two adults in February is also noteworthy.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* (52, 215, 2)

Cheshire Inner Marsh Farm, 18th May (E.J.Abraham, B.S.Barnacal, C.Wells).

Cornwall Sennen Cove, Drift Reservoir and Marazion Marsh, adult, 31st August to 21st September, photo. (per K.A.Wilson *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 318; 96: plate 361).

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 237, 6)

Central Region Skinflats, 9th July, photo. (G.Owens *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Boultham Mere, 10th August, photo. (S.P.Botham); same, North Hykeham, 10th (D.M.Jenkins).

Norfolk Filby Broad, 13th May (J.Hampshire, J.R.Williamson *et al.*); same, Hickling, 12th-14th, photo.; same, Rockland Broad, 13th (per G.E.Dunmore). Breydon, 23rd June (I.N.Smith); presumed same, Hockwold Washes, 26th-30th (J.D. & J.E.Geeson *et al.*).

Suffolk North Warren, 12th May (D.Thurlow). Havergate, 7th August (D.Short).

2001 Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 12th June (A.Tucker *et al.*); another, 27th July, photo. (G.Armstrong *et al.*).

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 17, 1)

Cornwall Hayle, first-winter, 25th November to 5th December, photo. (P.A.Rutter, L.P.Williams *et al.*).

2000 Pembrokeshire Gann/Dale, first-winter, 4th December (G.H.Rees).

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (20, 99, 5)

Anglesey Llyn Maelog, adult, 3rd August (R.Pritchard).

Gloucestershire/Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, 14th-15th April, photo. (K.J.Beint, A. & M.A.Croose, G.L.Webber *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 159).

Greater Manchester Pennington Flash, 21st-29th May, photo. (P.Berry, A.Doyle, I.M.McKercher *et al.*).

Norfolk Hockwold Washes, 16th May (P.Etherington, P.J.Milford *et al.*); same as Suffolk, below.

Nottinghamshire Kingsmill Reservoir, 2nd May (S.Dunn).

Suffolk/Norfolk Lakenheath Fen, 16th May, photo. (T.E.Bond, G. & P.Briggs, R.E.Buckland *et al.*); same as Norfolk, above.

Wiltshire See Gloucestershire/Wiltshire above.

2000 Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, 5th June (T.Baker, D.Buckingham, H.Gouldstone *et al.*); presumed same as Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 4th (Brit. Birds 94: 479).

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 711, 12)

Cambridgeshire Kingfisher's Bridge, juvenile, 24th September (J.Oates *et al.*); same, Shropshire's Reservoir, Stretham, 24th-26th (B.S.Martin, J.Oates *et al.*).

Cleveland Coatham Marsh and Saltholme Pools, 9th May (N.A.Preston *et al.*). Saltholme Pools, second-summer, 10th June (T.Francis *et al.*). Greatham Creek, Seaton Common, adult, 3rd August (D.Griss, J.Regan, R.C.Taylor *et al.*).

Kent Swale, 2nd June (D.Faulkner).

Lothian Musselburgh, juvenile/first-winter, 8th October (K.Gillon *et al.*).

Norfolk Welney, juvenile, 9th-11th August (J.B.Kemp *et al.*). Cantley, juvenile/first-winter, 18th October to 16th November, photo. (J.R.Lansdell *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Cove, adult, 4th August (P.A.A.Baxter *et al.*).

Northumberland Holywell Pond, adult, 8th intermittently to 19th August, photo. (A.D.McLevy, S.Sexton *et al.*); same, St Mary's area, 9th-11th, 19th August (A.Curry *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Tiumpán Head Loch, Lewis, 12th-20th May, photo. (G.Thompson *et al.*).

Suffolk Dunwich Heath, juvenile, 9th September (M.L.Cornish).

Yorkshire, North Bolton-on-Swale, 10th May (N.Dales *et al.*); probably same as Cleveland, 9th.

1992 Lincolnshire Covenham Reservoir, 31st May (K.Robinson).

1996 Lincolnshire Covenham Reservoir, second-summer, 2nd June (Brit. Birds 92: 583), first noted, 1st (per K.Robinson).

1999 Cornwall Marazion, juvenile/first-winter, 17th October; same, Cot Valley, 18th-20th, photo. (I.M.Wilson *et al.*).

1999 Dorset Ferrybridge, juvenile, 19th September (J. & R.Cockram, J.A.Lucas *et al.*).

2001 Lincolnshire Kirkby-on-Bain, juvenile, 27th September to 4th October, photo. (G.P.Catley, K.D.Robertson *et al.*).

2001 Warwickshire Draycote Water, adult, 29th-31st July, photo. (R.E.Harbird *et al.*).

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* (2, 3, 2)

Highland Portmahomack, Easter Ross, juvenile/first-winter, 9th November, photo. (R.F.Hewitt).

Orkney Stromness, juvenile/first-winter *S.o.meena* 20th November to 6th December, photo. (J.Bishop, E.R.Meek *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plates 32, 171 & 172).

For such a rare bird, two records in one year is outstanding. The Orkney bird has been widely reported and was of the race *S.o.meena*, which has been recorded in Britain on only one previous occasion, at Spurn, East Yorkshire, on 8th November 1975 (Brit. Birds 70: 448). All other records have been of the nominate race. The Highland bird was not seen sufficiently well to establish its racial identity, but the photograph leaves no doubt as to the species. In general, Oriental Turtle Dove is fairly obvious, as the photographs of the Highland bird showed, but the wing-bars can be surprisingly indistinct and, particularly for northern birders, a lack of familiarity with juvenile Turtle Dove *S.turtur* can impede identification. The western race *S.o.meena* is smaller than the nominate form, has a white rather than grey tail-tip, shows more white in the outermost tail feathers and has whiter flanks and belly. All of these characters combine to make it more difficult to distinguish from Turtle Dove than is the case with the nominate, especially in juvenile plumage.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 36, 0)

1988 Man, Isle of Gansey, adult, dead, 30th September, photo. (K.Scott *et al.*).

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (65, 26, 1)

Cornwall Porthgarra, 24th-26th March, photo. (R.Fuller *et al.* per K.A.Wilson).

This bird was found just two days after the Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* on St Agnes, Scilly (see above), and during a period of excellent weather for overshooting migrants. It is only the second ever to be recorded in March (the previous one being captured aboard a fishing boat off Portland Bill, Dorset, on 20th March 1990: Brit. Birds 84: 478). It was found during a moth-trapping session at Porthgarra.

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* (3, 16, 0)

1999 Ceredigion Mwnt, juvenile, dead, 28th October, specimen now at National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, photo. (P.Howlett, G.Walker).

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* (50, 407, 25)

Avon Sand Point, 21st April (A.J.Foan, P.A.Gregory *et al.*); also in Somerset below.

Cheshire Farndon, 24th March (C.P.Edwards).

Cleveland Hartlepool Old Cemetery, Seaton Carew and Seaton Common, 9th June, photo. (T.Francis, J.Regan, R.C.Taylor *et al.*).

Cornwall St Just, two, 26th March (per K.A.Wilson). Illogan, 1st June (M.J.Healan). Sennen, 2nd June (M.D.Warren). Near Cape Cornwall, 23rd September (R. & H.Dawson).

Dorset Studland, 31st March (N.Hopper). Lodmoor and Portland Bill, 21st April (R.C.F.Hastings *et al.*). Radipole Lake, 18th May, photo. (J.A.Lucas *et al.*). Peveril Point, 15th-17th June, photo. (per J.Lidster).

Essex Mundon, 20th July (J.F.Bright).

Kent Bockhill, 10th April (P.Chantler); presumed same, Capel le Ferne, 10th (I.A.Roberts). Bockhill, 17th May (J.Chantler, N.Jarman).

Norfolk Sheringham, 20th June (A.Dunkley *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 24th March (T.Purcell, G.Thompson). Penberi Pool, St David's, 25th March (S.E.Duffield *et al.*). Mullock Bridge, 26th March (S.D.Bosanquet).

Scilly Tresco and Bryher, 23rd March (R.L.Flood *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 30th September, photo. (M.Potts *et al.*); presumed same, Foula, 1st October (D. & G.Atherton).

Somerset Brean Down, 21st April (B.E.Slade *et al.*); same as Avon.

Suffolk Landguard, 6th June (N.Odin).

Wight, Isle of Ventnor Downs, 22nd March (R.J.Curtis, E.N.Wotton).

Yorkshire, East Cottingham, 24th March (S.P.Dudley).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 18th April, photo. (S.Cochrane, C.C.Thomas *et al.*).

A rather typical spread of records, falling between spring and early autumn. The Tresco and Bryher individual was part of an extraordinary influx of rarities into Scilly and western Cornwall in the early spring.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 37, 2)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 22nd November (L.Chappell *et al.*).

Scilly Bryher, 25th-26th March, photo. (J.K.Higginson *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 154).

2001 Durham See 2001 Northumberland below.

2001 Northumberland Tynemouth, 24th-25th October (Brit. Birds 95: 502), also seen at Marsden Quarry and South Shields, Durham, photo. (J.P.Cook *et al.*); different individual, Whitburn, 23rd-24th October (J.P.Cook *et al.*).

2001 Scilly Bryher and Tresco, 22nd June (W.H.Wagstaff *et al.*).

2001 Yorkshire, North Nosterfield, 28th May (T.Parrish, T.Scott, S.Worwood).

The two records from 2002 represent both the earliest and latest occurrences ever reported in Britain. While most of the records from the invasion years of 1999 and 2001 occurred in October, a quick search of the database reveals that Pallid Swift has now been recorded in every month except December, January and February. It is apparent that not only late, but also early swifts are well worth a second look.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (0, 17, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 17th May, photo. (G.Bellingham *et al.* per R.L.Flood).

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 95, 0)

2001 Ayrshire Ardeer, 7th-10th May (J.Gentleman *et al.*).

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* (0, 1, 1)

Shetland Burrafirth, Unst, 29th May, photo. (W.Dickson).

Only the second record for Britain and the Western Palearctic. The first occurred at a similar stage of the spring, but at the opposite end of the country: on St Mary's, Scilly, on 6th-10th June 1990 (Brit. Birds 88: 381-384). In contrast to that individual, this bird showed itself only to its finder during her regular morning walk along one of Britain's most northerly streams. It was associating with Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and House Martins *Delichon urbica* but remained at Burrafirth for little more than an hour.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 361, 21)

Borders St Abb's Head, 23rd April (C.Beale *et al.*).

Buckinghamshire Furston Lake, Milton Keynes, 29th April (E.J.Read *et al.*).

Cheshire/Flintshire Shotwick Fields, 9th August (B.S.Barnacal).

Cornwall Land's End, 2nd May (M.D.Warren). Skewjack, 4th May (K.A.Wilson).

Dorset Blocknor Point, Portland, 3rd May (G.Walbridge).

Essex See Hertfordshire/Essex below.

Flintshire See Cheshire/Flintshire above.

Hertfordshire/Essex Hollingson's Meads, 28th-29th May (A.J.Harris); also seen to enter nearby Essex.

Kent Grove, 3rd May (A. & C.H.Hindle). Dungeness, 19th May (A.S.Wraithmell *et al.*); another, Dungeness, 25th May (J.Cantelo *et al.*).

Norfolk Hunstanton Cliffs, two, 24th October (G.F.Hibberd).

Northumberland Cocklawburn, 23rd April (M.Hutcheson). Farne Islands, 9th September (J.Gorman *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Bosherton Ponds, 26th April (R.Thomas).

Suffolk Southwold, 11th April (B.J.Small). Flixton, two, 19th May (C. & J.Ayers, C.A.Jacobs, I.Levett *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East East Park, Hull, 2nd-23rd April, photo. (B.Richards *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 160). Spurn, 4th May, photo. (S.P.Nicholson).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 31st March (K.J.Barnard).

1999 Sussex, East Fairlight, 16th May (A.Borrows, A.S.Grace *et al.*).

2001 Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, 20th May (Brit. Birds 95: 503), second-named observer's correct name was P.Herkenrath.

2001 Devon Lundy, 26th October (M.Ferris, M.James).

2001 Fife Isle of May, 18th May (K.Hosy, D.J.Norden, I.Patinson).

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 10, 1)

Nottinghamshire Gringley Carr, first-winter, 28th December to 5th January 2003, video., photo., sound-recorded (C.J. & L.J.Degnan, J.Wozencroft *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: 584 fig. 8).

1988 Shetland Fair Isle, 13th-23rd October, photo. (A.J.Livett, N.J.Riddiford, P.G.W.Salaman *et al.*).

The Nottinghamshire individual represents an exceptional inland find and shows that virtually anything is possible, even in the depths of winter. With the long saga of bringing together full and satisfactory documentation now concluded, the 1988 Fair Isle bird becomes the first British record admitted to Category A, the only previous accepted record having been one in East Sussex in 1882.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 241, 7)

Man, Isle of Calf of Man, 10th May (T.Bagworth, J.D.D.Bishop).

Norfolk Lynford Arboretum, 2nd to at least 20th February, probably since 1st, photo. (J.V.Bhalerao *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 116; 96: plate 362).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, 22nd-23rd October (J.G.Brown, J.Darke, S.E.Duffield).

Scilly St Mary's, 20th October (N.Davis, J.K.Higginson, N.Wheatley *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 11th-14th October (P.R.French *et al.*). Scatness, 14th-15th October (P.M.Ellis *et al.*). Bressay, 16th October (P.V.Harvey, R.Riddington, B.H.Thomason *et al.*).

2001 Scilly St Agnes, 12th-17th October (Brit. Birds 95: 504), finders/identifiers, T.Davison, D.Scattergood, N.Topliss.

2001 Suffolk Corton, 30th September (J.Brown, A.Easton *et al.*).

Records in May, such as that on the Isle of Man, are certainly not without precedent, but overwintering Olive-backed Pipits are unusual, and the one in Norfolk recalls the bird, which frequented a suburban garden in Bracknell, Berkshire, from 19th February to 15th April 1984 (Brit. Birds 78: 566).

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 55, 4)

Shetland Fair Isle, 26th-27th September, photo. (P.French, S.Pinder, J.J.Sweeney *et al.*); another, 26th-28th September (A.Jayne *et al.*); third individual 5th-7th, 11th October (R.Still *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 350). Kergord, 5th October (P.M.Ellis, P.V.Harvey, R.Riddington).

2001 Shetland Foula, 19th, 21st September (C.G.Batty, T.C.Lowe *et al.*).

Four in a year is notable, although all occurred on typical dates and in typical places. No fewer than 47 of the 59 British records since 1958 have been in Shetland. The species rarely calls during its visits to Britain and can be remarkably elusive, so it is tempting to speculate that many others are missed on the British mainland.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 384, 9)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 31st May (S.D.Stansfield); 17th-18th October (D.Barnden, E.Bowler, S.D.Stansfield).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 21st May (R.Drew, M.I.Eldridge, A.M.Stoddart *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, 22nd-26th April, photo. (J.G.Brown, J.Darke, S.E.Duffield *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 7th October (N.Chambers, L.Hanninen); 6th November (R.L.Flood). Tresco, 18th-19th October, photo. (R.M.Fray *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 16th-17th May (A.J.Bull *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 11th October (M.Rowbottom *et al.*).

2001 Outer Hebrides Hirta, St Kilda, 17th May (A.Robinson).

2001 Scilly St Martin's, 15th May (R.L.Flood).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 134, 10)

Scilly Tresco, first-winter, 2nd, 18th October; presumed same, St Martin's, 4th-18th, photo. (R.M.Fray, M.S.Scott, R.M.Thewlis *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 351; 96: 586 fig. 9).

Shetland Fair Isle, five first-winter birds: 10th-13th August (D.N.Shaw *et al.*); 16th-17th August (D.N.Shaw); 31st August to 6th September (A.J.Bull *et al.*); another, 31st August to 9th September (P.R.French *et al.*); 22nd September (P.R.French, S.Holloway, D.N.Shaw *et al.*). Out Skerries, first-winter, 18th August, photo. (G.Ball, M.S.Chapman, S.Minton). Quendale, juvenile/first-winter, 6th-10th September (R.Riddington *et al.*). Haroldswick, Unst, first-winter, 19th September, photo. (M.A.Maher *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, first-winter, 27th-30th September, photo. (R.Haughton, A.Marshall, P.Wren *et al.*).

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* (29, 13, 1)

Suffolk Minsmere, 16th-19th March, photo. (A.Connor, S.Naythan *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 161; 96: plate 363).

Given the fact that Alpine Accentors often leave their lowland wintering quarters at the beginning of March, the date of this record is not surprising. It is, however, by far the earliest record in modern times with the next earliest having been at Portland, Dorset, on 8th-30th April 1978 (Brit. Birds 72: 532). Prior to the BBRC era, there is an old record from Rottingdean, Sussex, on 16th March 1922.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 139, 6)

Fife Isle of May, trapped, 10th May (M.Hall, M.P.Harris, M.Moeller-Holtkamp *et al.*).

Norfolk Weybourne, 12th-13th September, trapped 12th, photo. (M. & W.Preston).

Northumberland Farne Islands, 8th May, photo. (D.Steele *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 12th May (P.R.French *et al.*); 20th-27th August, trapped 27th (S.J.Pinder *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, in song, 8th-10th May (M.G.Stoyle, B.R.Spence *et al.*).

2001 **Sussex, East** Combe Haven, in song, 6th-8th May (K.M.Johnston *et al.*).

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 23, 3)

Durham Marsden Quarry, female or first-winter, 7th October (J.P.Cook *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, female or first-winter, 15th-16th November, photo. (J.P.Shaughnessey *et al.*).

Shetland Helendale, Lerwick, female or first-winter, 11th-14th October, photo. (G.F.Bell, H.R.Harrop *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 352).

There were also three birds in 1998, and these two years are bettered only by 1999, when there were five. This increase in records (there have been 18 during the past decade, 1993-2002, but just 11 before that) is presumably correlated to an increasing population and westward expansion of the breeding range. Durham recorded its first in 2002, but Shetland and Lincolnshire remain the species' most favoured counties, now with seven and five records respectively.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Eastern race *S. t. maura* (1, 299, 2)

Cornwall St Levan, female or first-winter, 3rd October (R.P.Fray, A.J.Mackay).

Shetland Fair Isle, female or first-winter, 10th September (D.N.Shaw).

1999 **Dorset** Weston, Portland, female or first-winter, 23rd October (J.A.Lucas *et al.*).

2001 Devon Lannacombe Beach, first-winter male, 13th October (D.Smallshire, A.Swash).

2001 Orkney North Ronaldsay, female or first-winter, 16th-22nd September (P.A.Brown *et al.*).

2001 Shetland Brough, Whalsay, female or first-winter, 7th October (J.L.Irvine, B.Marshall).

2001 Yorkshire, East Bempton, female or first-winter, 22nd-24th September (M.E.Taylor *et al.*).

Just two records were accepted for 2002 as we go to press, but with the four additional records for 2001, the total for that year increases to 17, with 11 or 12 being found within the 11-day period between 16th and 26th September.

Following a number of reports of male Common Stonechats with white rumps and restricted orange on the underparts in spring, BBRC is currently undertaking a review of claims of male 'Siberian Stonechats' at this time of year. It seems likely that most will prove to be Common Stonechats of the form *rubicola*, and originating from the near continent. Our assessments have been based on field experience and museum work at the NHM, Tring, which reveal that, in spring, male 'Siberian Stonechats' possess a unique suite of characters, which permit identification. Careful scrutiny of three features - neck collar, rump and underwing - is essential, although in the case of the underwing this is invariably difficult to see in the field. Two further characters - white at the base of the tail and white inner greater coverts - are sometimes visible and provide valuable supporting evidence if *maura* is suspected. Other features, including the broader buff fringing on the upperparts and underpart coloration, are variable, but tend to be obvious on *maura*.

The results of this review will be published in due course, but the records for this report, all being of females or first-winter birds in the autumn, did not challenge BBRC in this respect. The next report of a spring male will, however, be very closely scrutinised.

The taxonomy of Common Stonechat has been well studied in recent years (e.g. Wittmann *et al.* 1995), and Urquhart (2002) recommended that Common Stonechat is split into at least three species: African Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Common Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola* and Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura*. Although this treatment has yet to be adopted by BOURC, the evidence supporting it is strong, although it does leave the form *variegata*, also recorded in Britain, in a state of limbo. British Birds continues to follow BOURC in its treatment of *maura* as a form of Common Stonechat. There has also been some discussion regarding the validity of the easternmost form of Common Stonechat *S.(t.)stejnegeri*, which some authorities consider to be synonymous with *maura*. It is interesting, therefore, to see it given full treatment by Urquhart (2002). Although its features are variable, many (perhaps even the majority) are considered to be inseparable from *maura* in the field.

References

Wittmann, U., Heidrich, P., Wink, M., & Gwinner, E. 1995. Speciation in the Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) inferred from nucleotide sequences of the cytochrome b gene. *J. Zool. Syst. Evol. Research* 33: 116-122.

Urquhart, E. 2002. Stonechats: A guide to the genus *Saxicola*. Christopher Helm. London.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 19, 0)

2001 Norfolk Near Warham, 22nd September; same, Lodge Marsh, Wells, 29th, photo. (A.I.Bloomfield, J.R.McCallum *et al.*).

There are no accepted records from 2002, although an October record in Wales is still under consideration. BBRC has recently undertaken a detailed review of a record from Blakeney Point, Norfolk, in October 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 486) following detailed and unbiased queries about its identification. Upon review, it was concluded that the identification, based upon the initial description, was correct and it was again accepted by BBRC, without reservation.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 43, 1)

Cornwall Nanquidno, male, *O.h.hispanica*, 23rd March to 1st April, photo. (M.T.Elliott *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 96: 590 fig. 11).

1975 Dorset Portland Bill, male, 14th June (*Brit. Birds* 69: 345). Previously unassigned, was first-summer *melanoleuca*.

1980 Fife Isle of May, male, 2nd-23rd May (*Brit. Birds* 74: 483). Previously unassigned, was first-summer *melanoleuca*.

1985 Dorset Portland, male, 27th-28th May (*Brit. Birds* 79: 570). Previously unassigned, was first-summer *melanoleuca*.

1987 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, male, 5th June (Brit. Birds 81: 579). Previously unassigned, was *hispanica*.

1989 Essex Jaywick, male, 26th May (Brit. Birds 83: 476). Previously assigned to *melanoleuca*, now considered unsafe to attribute to race.

1990 Outer Hebrides Howmore, South Uist, male, 23rd April (Brit. Birds 84: 483). Previously considered to be *hispanica*, although not published as such, now considered unsafe to attribute to race.

1992 Kent Denge Marsh, male, 16th May (Brit. Birds 86: 509). Previously unassigned, was *hispanica*.

1993 Norfolk Stiffkey, first-winter male, 24th October to 1st November (Brit. Birds 87: 549). Previously unassigned, was *hispanica*.

1998 Dorset Winspit, female, 16th May (Brit. Birds 92: 592). Previously assigned to *hispanica*, now considered unsafe to attribute to race.

The Cornish bird arrived during a period when a number of other Mediterranean overshoots appeared in southwest England, including Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (see above) and Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*.

Also presented here are the initial findings of a review of all records of Black-eared Wheatear, in an attempt to clarify racial identification of these birds. As several records remain under consideration, BBRC would be grateful to receive any previously unpublished colour photographs, which might assist this review, the full results of which, together with the criteria used, will be published in British Birds in due course.

In autumn, the separation of some individuals of the eastern form *melanoleuca* from Pied Wheatear *O.pleschanka* remains potentially tricky. One particular individual on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, in October 2002, was submitted as a Pied Wheatear, but BBRC concluded that this bird could not be attributed conclusively to either species. Observers faced with such a challenge are recommended to consult the identification papers by Magnus Ullman (Dutch Birding 16: 186-194; 25: 77-97).

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 65, 1)

Man, Isle of Niarbyl, female, 5th January, photo. (D.Thompson *et al.*).

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (30, 22, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 29th-30th September, photo. (S.J.Pinder *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 323; 96: plate 364). Collafirth, Northmavine, 30th September (R.J.Curtis *et al.*).

These are the first records since 1999. The fact that both turned up within a day of each other suggests that they were associated with the same movement and weather pattern. As observer coverage has increased along the northeast coast of Britain and in the Northern Isles, synchronous arrival dates have been shown to be a feature of some vagrant Siberian species. The same species often arrive in southern England and Scilly a few days later in the autumn. Both White's Thrushes in 2002 proved typically elusive, even though one frequented the relatively bare cliffs on the east side of Fair Isle! These take the Shetland total to 13, reaffirming its position as the best locality for the species in Britain.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 40, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 26th-30th October, photo. (D.Page, C. & E.Parnell *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 353).

Although both the date and location are predictable, this species has occurred less frequently in Britain since the early 1990s. This is only the third record since 1994, following singles in Cornwall in 1998 (Brit. Birds 92: 593) and Orkney in 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 508).

Veery *Catharus fuscescens* (0, 5, 1)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 30th September to 5th October, trapped 30th, photo. (J.S.Lees *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 324).

This was only the sixth record for Britain, but the second for Scotland following one in the Outer Hebrides in October 1995 (Brit. Birds 90: 497). The other four all turned up in southwest England. This was also the earliest record by almost a week, although Nearctic vagrants often appear early in the Northern Isles. This is presumably because they are displaced across the Atlantic during an earlier stage of their autumn migration, when they are at higher latitudes.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 45, 3)

Cornwall Nanjizal, first-winter male, *T.r.atrogularis*, 15th October (K.A.Wilson).

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter male, *T.r.atrogularis*, 19th October, photo. (M.J.Lawson *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 354).

Shetland Fleck, South Mainland, first-winter female, *T.r.atrogularis*, 17th October, photo. (P.M.Ellis *et al.*).

2000 Shetland Foula, first-winter female, *T.r.atrogularis*, 23rd September, video. (J.M. & T.P.Drew).

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* (0, 4, 0)

2000 Dorset Hengistbury Head, in song, 20th-30th May, photo. (D.N.Smith *et al.*).

This individual was easily distinguished from the bird present during 15th-16th May 2000 at nearby Portland Bill, Dorset, (Brit. Birds 94: 488) by the fact that the latter was missing its tail!

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (3, 24, 2)

Shetland Hametoun Burn, Foula, 6th-7th October, trapped 6th, photo. (A.R.Mainwood *et al.*). Skaw, Unst, 14th-15th October, trapped 14th, photo. (M.A.Maher, M.G.Pennington *et al.*).

Both the arrival date and location of these two fit the pattern of previous records perfectly. No fewer than 22 of the 28 British 'PG's have occurred in Shetland (one of the pre-1958 records was in Ireland), although both individuals in 2002 were the first accepted records for their respective islands. This species, like several other eastern vagrants, is experiencing something of an upsurge in its fortunes: there were just 13 records before 1996, but there have been 15 in the past seven years. The increase in observer coverage alone is surely not sufficient to explain this increase.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 83, 4)

Scilly Annet, 22nd-23rd September (F.H.D.Hicks, D.Page, R.Rhigelato *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, trapped, 7th September, photo. (A.J.Bull, R.J.Curtis); first-winter, trapped 6th October, photo. (P.R.French *et al.*); another, 10th October (I.A.Dillon *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 355; 96: plate 365).

Rather surprisingly, the Annet bird was the first record for the Isles of Scilly, being found on what is a typical arrival date for this species in Britain. One can only wonder how many more may have gone previously undetected on well-vegetated Scilly. Nonetheless, the Northern Isles retain their near-monopoly on this species.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 29, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 21st-25th September, trapped 21st, photo. (A.J.Bull, R.Caygal, R.Kemp *et al.*).

This was the first record since 1998. The fortunes of this fine *Locustella* appear to be in decline, unlike those of its Siberian relatives, and speculation regarding the possibility of a future breeding attempt (Brit. Birds 92: 594) now rings hollow.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (many, 610, 4)

Kent Grove Ferry, in song, 2nd-6th June (R.H.Lawrence *et al.*).

Norfolk Hickling, in song, 7th-15th May (P.J.Heath, A.J.Kane *et al.*).

Shetland Hametoun, Foula, 28th-29th May (S.C.Votier *et al.*).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, in song, 29th May to 3rd June (S.J.Patton *et al.*).

2001 Cambridgeshire Wicken Fen, in song, 27th April to 12th May (P.Atkinson, B.York *et al.*).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 45, 1)

Scilly Gugh, 1st-6th November (D.Page, K.D.Shaw *et al.*).

2001 Scilly St Mary's, 13th-14th October, photo. (R.E.Turley *et al.* per R.L.Flood) (Brit. Birds 94: plate 350).

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 42, 5)

Northumberland St Mary's Island, 13th-14th October (C.Bradshaw, A.Curry, C.Kehoe *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 30th October to 12th November, photo. (A.J.Middleton, R.J.Senior, K.E.Vinicombe *et al.*).

Shetland Norwick, Unst, first-winter, trapped 15th October, photo. (M.A.Maher, S.J.Minton, M.G.Pennington). Bressay, first-winter, 15th-16th October, trapped 16th (P.M.Ellis, P.V.Harvey, B.H.Thomason *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 12th-16th October, photo. (A.Norris, J.Sanderson *et al.*).

2001 Dorset Portland Bill, first-winter, 16th October to 3rd November, trapped 16th, photo. (M.Cade, P.J.Morgan, G.Walbridge *et al.*).

2001 Greater London Canary Wharf, 6th -28th October, video. (A.Middleton, K.Murray *et al.*).

2001 Shetland Fair Isle, 24th September (P.A.A.Baxter, S.E.Duffield, M.A.Maher *et al.*).

This is yet another species experiencing an upsurge in the number of sightings. The three additional records from 2001 bring that year's total to eight, and the tally to a remarkable 17 in the past three years. Viewed against a background of only 30 records in the previous 42 years, this would seem to represent an extraordinary change in fortunes. While there may well be a genuine increase in the numbers arriving here, associated with range expansion into northeast Europe, there are probably other factors at play too. Blyth's Reed Warbler remains one of the most difficult of all British species to identify, but the improvement in digital technology allowing good field images to support records, the availability of such images to the wider birding public, some good identification papers, and much greater overseas field experience means that we are now receiving high-quality submissions of birds in the field. Five of the eight records published here were not trapped, and even some that were trapped were correctly and confidently identified in the field beforehand.

BBRC has been developing guidelines for assessment of field records, but careful observation of a combination of field characteristics is required, as no single feature is diagnostic. Excellent views are a prerequisite to acceptance as even the most skilled and experienced of observers can make mistakes in the field with incomplete views. Plumage tones often vary markedly with angle and light, while structure can be affected by posture. Both are critical to safe identification and prolonged views under a range of conditions are essential. An accurate transcription of the call is important too, although whether this is absolutely diagnostic has yet to be clarified. This is not identification for the faint-hearted, but it is an identification, which can be made in the field. Observers of a putative Blyth's Reed Warbler are encouraged to spend time obtaining the maximum possible information, documenting it extremely carefully and, ideally, taking photographs or video evidence of the bird. We look forward to receiving, and accepting, more records based on such high-quality submissions.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 189, 6)

Cleveland Hummersea Farm, in song, 19th May (M.R.K.Askew *et al.*).

Dorset Radipole Lake, in song, 31st May, photo. (P.F.Baker *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, 16th May (J.G.Brown, J.Darke, S.E.Duffield).

Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, 29th May (P.V.Harvey *et al.*). Foula, 8th June to 13th July, trapped 6th July, photo. (D. & G.Atherton, A.R.Mainwood, S.C.Votier *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 366).

Surrey Frensham Little Pond, in song, 18th May to 12th June, photo., sound-recorded (S.P.Peters *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 233).

2000 Lincolnshire Chapel St Leonard's, in song, 29th May to July, photo. (S.Keightley *et al.*).

2001 Lincolnshire Near Deeping St James, in song, 16th-22nd May (S.Keightley, T.Williams).

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* (0, 9, 1)

Shetland Sandwick/Hoswick, adult *H.p.elaeica*, 18th to at least 28th August, trapped 18th, photo. (P.M.Ellis *et al.*).

British Birds has adopted the BOURC's recommendation to split Olivaceous Warbler *H.pallida* into two species: Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, which remains as *H.pallida*, and Western Olivaceous Warbler *H.opaca*, which was formerly treated as a subspecies of Olivaceous Warbler (Ibis 144:707-710). Although this is the first time that Eastern Olivaceous Warbler has appeared in our report as a distinct species, the nine previously accepted records have been reviewed and were all found to be of this form.

The 2002 individual occurred on an exceptionally early date, somewhat reminiscent of the adult at Portland on 4th-5th July 1999 (Brit. Birds 93: 555). It appears that midsummer may be a good time for those with limitless energy and enthusiasm to search for vagrants from southeast Europe and western Asia. Another claim from Essex remains under consideration.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 84, 2)

Dorset Portland Bill, first-winter, 15th-19th August, trapped 15th, photo. (J.A.Lucas *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 280).

Shetland Sumburgh Head, first-winter, 24th-25th August (P.M.Ellis *et al.*).

With the separation of Sykes's Warbler *H.rama* from Booted Warbler (Ibis 144: 707-710), the identification of Booted Warbler has now become even more complex. Never the most straightforward identification to make, an even more thorough assessment of plumage and structure is now required to identify this species with confidence. This situation is akin to that of Eastern *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers *P.bonelli*, and, like the latter species-pair we will maintain an 'either/or' category to ensure that good records of Booted/Sykes's Warblers are not lost (see below). Careful, objective observations, together with photographic or video images, are likely to be the key to sealing an identification. See also the comments below for Sykes's Warbler. An individual at Land's End, Cornwall, in September showed some features of Sykes's Warbler and is still under review.

Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama* (0, 4, 0)

1959 Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 29th-31st August, trapped 29th (J.Bazey, R.H.Dennis *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 53: 123-124, 425).

1977 Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 20th-27th August, trapped 20th, photo. (R.A.Broad, M.A.Peacock, M.P.Sutherland *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 71: 520).

1993 Shetland Seafield, Lerwick, 22nd October to 9th November, trapped 24th, photo. (W.Jackson, K.Osborn *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 87: 554).

This is another species making its first appearance in this report as the result of a recent species split by BOURC (Ibis 144: 707-710), in this case the separation of *rama* from Booted Warbler *H.caligata*. A decade ago, many experienced birders were perhaps unaware that this taxon even existed, never mind ready to contemplate the challenge of trying to identify one in Britain. The two older records are published here following a review of all records of trapped Booted Warblers where the biometrics suggested that *rama* might be a possibility, while the Seafield bird has never been formally published as *rama* in the BBRC report. Although there were several promising candidates in our review, only these three (plus the one at Portland Bill, Dorset, in 2000: Brit. Birds 94: 489) had the appropriate biometric measurements to establish the identification conclusively. BBRC is, however, currently reviewing two extremely well-documented field records (from East Sussex and Norfolk) from August 2002, both supported by photographs, as well as another trapped individual (from Orkney), also from August 2002. Although precise biometric data from a trapped individual is the best route to conclusive identification, this species appears to have a distinctive structure and some helpful, albeit subtle, plumage features which are evident in the field, although the extent of overlap with both Booted Warbler and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *H.pallida* remains a potential minefield. This subject is right at the cutting edge of bird identification and we still have much to learn. Observers of a putative Sykes's Warbler would be well advised to observe the bird exceptionally carefully over a prolonged period, noting the fullest possible details of plumage, structure, movement and behaviour. Even if it is ultimately trapped, biometrics may not prove to be definitive, although these must be recorded with the utmost care.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 462, 19)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, male, 31st October (J.Lennon, S.D.Stansfield).

Cleveland South Gare, male, *S.c.albistriata*, 8th-9th June, photo. (N.A.Preston *et al.*).

Cornwall Porthgwarra, first-summer male, 26th March (M.D.Wallace) (Brit. Birds 96: 595 fig. 12).

Fife Isle of May, first-summer male, trapped 10th May (M.Hall, M.P.Harris, H.Möeller-Holtkamp *et al.*).

Norfolk Winterton Dunes, first-summer male, 24th April, photo.; female, 14th May (P.Cawley *et al.*). Cley, male, 19th May (A.Saunders *et al.*). Blakeney Point, male, 21st May (N.Mugan, R.F.Porter).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-summer male, 9th-10th April, trapped 9th, photo. (J.S.Lees *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, male, 16th May (J.G.Brown, J.Darke, S.E.Duffield).

Scilly St Mary's, male, 26th-28th April (R.L.Flood *et al.*); male, 9th October (S.Cromet-Beolans, D.Spittle). St Agnes, female, 30th May (D.Page). Bryher, male, 4th June (S.G.Hogan); present since 17th May.

Shetland Fair Isle, female, 12th-15th May (P.R.French, D.N.Shaw *et al.*); first-summer female, 31st May to 7th June, trapped 6th, (P.R.French, D.N.Shaw *et al.*). Foula, first-summer male, *S.c.albistriata*, 30th May to 11th June, dead mid June, photo. (Brit Birds 96: plate 367). (D. & G.Atherton, P.Gear, S.C.Votier *et al.*). Boddam, female, 4th-5th June (H.R.Harrop *et al.*). Maywick, first-summer male, 11th August (H.R.Harrop).

1989 Dorset Durlston Country Park, male, 3rd May (D.Leadbetter *et al.*).

1999 Outer Hebrides Carnon, South Uist, male, 4th June (P.R.Boyer).

BBRC is happy to consider well-founded claims of the race *albistriata*, preferably supported by photographic evidence. The last to be published as such was in 1993, and a review is currently taking place to put the published record straight in relation to any since then.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 58, 4)

Cornwall Sennen, male, 14th-15th November (M.D.Warren *et al.*).

Norfolk Old Hunstanton, male, 27th September to 15th October, photo. (W.Craig, A. & I.Dearing, H.Lacey *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 325).

Scilly St Agnes, male, 29th March to 2nd April (D.Page *et al.*). St Martin's, first-summer male, 21st-22nd April, photo. (R.L.Flood, N.Wheatley *et al.*)

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 337, 21)

Cleveland South Gare, two, 9th September (R.Little *et al.*). Old Cemetery, Hartlepool, 10th-12th September (T.Francis, R.C.Taylor *et al.*). Hartlepool Headland, 10th-15th September; another, 13th-15th, both trapped 13th, both photo. (C.Sharpe *et al.*).

Cumbria Walney Island, 19th September, photo. (T.Phizacklea, C.Raven *et al.*).

Fife Isle of May, 6th-7th June, trapped 6th, photo. (J.Graham, D.Robertson *et al.*); trapped 9th September, photo. (I.M.Darling *et al.*); 16th-18th September, photo. (D.A.Money *et al.*). Balcomie Castle, Fife Ness, 12th-17th September (K.D.Shaw *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 10th-13th September (G.P.Catley *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 368).

Norfolk Scolt Head, two, 27th-28th August (J.Brown, N.M.Lawton, M.E.S.Rooney *et al.*). Weybourne, 17th-18th September, trapped 18th, photo. (E. & M.Cram, M. & M.Preston).

Northumberland Holy Island, 10th September (S.Sexton *et al.*); another, 13th September (M.J.Carr *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: 597 fig. 13).

Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 23rd August (D.N.Shaw); another, 23rd-25th, photo. (J.Kerr, S.J.Pinder, D.N.Shaw *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Bempton, 12th-16th September, photo. (K.Belk, G.E.Dobbs *et al.*). Spurn, 14th-18th September, trapped 14th, photo. (G.E.Dobbs, J.Wozencroft *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Fair Isle, *R.V.Kommander Jack*, 61°55'N 01°10'E, 110 km NE of Shetland, 19th-20th August, photo.; apparently left vessel within sight of Out Skerries, Shetland (R.B.Wynn).

1976 Norfolk Holme, 14th-19th October, photo., previously accepted as Arctic Warbler *P.borealis* (Brit. Birds 70: 436).

The impressive total of 21 birds has only been exceeded in 1987 (23), 1992 (29) and 1995 (31).

The Holme bird of 1976 was previously accepted as an Arctic Warbler *P.borealis* (Brit. Birds 70: 436), but the discovery of previously unseen photographs resulted in this record being reassessed. BBRC was in no doubt that an error had occurred and that the bird was unquestionably a Greenish Warbler *P.trochiloides*, probably of the race *P.t.plumbeitarsus* (Stoddart 2003). There have been two subsequent records of this form in Britain, both on similar dates, but the documentation available for the Norfolk bird narrowly failed to meet the standard for acceptance as the first record for Britain of this race.

Reference

Stoddart, A. M. 2003. From the Rarities Committee's files: The Holme wing-barred Phylloscopus warbler. Brit Birds 96: 74-78.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 225, 6)

Cornwall Cot Valley, 16th-18th October, photo. (A. & A.Tate).

Northumberland Holy Island, 14th-15th September, photo. (C.G.Knox, W.Maguire, D.Watson *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 356).

Outer Hebrides Castlebay, Barra, 23rd-24th September (S.R.Green *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, trapped, 10th July, photo. (A.R.Mainwood *et al.*). Fair Isle, 19th July (D.N.Shaw, G.Tyler *et al.*); another, 30th July (A.J.Bull, D.N.Shaw *et al.*).

The three autumn records show a fairly typical spread of dates and locations, although the individual on Barra is the first record for the Outer Hebrides, and just reward for a small band of observers who focused their attention away from more popular birding hotspots. Late summer records are not as unusual as they may at first appear: there have been six previous records of adults at this time, five in Shetland and one in Norfolk, between 21st June and 14th August. Perhaps these individuals overshot their normal breeding areas and just kept going, eventually ending up in western Europe? Whatever the explanation, it serves as a reminder that eastern vagrants can, and do, occur in July.

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 47, 2)

Norfolk Eccles on Sea, 2nd-4th November, photo. (A.J.Kane *et al.*).

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, 20th January to 6th April, photo, (M.A.Maher, S.J.McElwee, J.G.Steele *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 117; 96: plate 369).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 237, 2)

Norfolk Wells Woods, 10th-14th October (C.Boness *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 1st-2nd November, photo. (N. Montegriffo *et al.*).

2001 Fife Isle of May, 28th September (K.M.Morton *et al.*).

2001 Norfolk Lodge Marsh, Wells, 22nd October (J.R.McCallum).

2001 Suffolk Sizewell, 13th October (R.Fairhead *et al.*).

These two well-watched individuals represent the lowest annual total since 1986. It was a poor year for both this species and Dusky Warbler *P.fuscatus* in 2002, following good numbers of both species in 2001. While easterly airflows emanating from Asia periodically bring good numbers of both Radde's and Dusky Warblers to our shores, their appearance in Britain is, in fact, poorly correlated. During the past 20 years, the annual totals of Radde's and Dusky Warblers have reached double figures on seven and ten occasions respectively, but their 'bumper' years have coincided just five times. Although commonly thought of as breeding in the same part of the world, Dusky nests across a much wider range of latitudes than Radde's, so perhaps weather-related differences in breeding success explains why often only one or the other (periodically) puts in a good showing.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 244, 4)

Shetland Sumburgh Head, 14th October (P.V.Harvey *et al.*).

Suffolk Thorpeness, 10th October (A.Botwright, P.Clack, R.Drew); 1st-4th November (D.Fairhurst, J.A. & P.R.Kennerley *et al.*). Hollesley Bay, trapped 16th November (P.Catchpole, R.A.Duncan).

2001 Essex The Naze, 14th October (D.Rhymes *et al.*).

2001 Norfolk Wells, 22nd October (J.R.McCallum).

A description of the well-watched wintering bird in Suffolk has yet to be submitted.

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 55, 5)

Cornwall Pendeen, 21st September (M.D.Warren *et al.*). Nanquidno, 10th-14th October (N.Beasley, M.D.Warren *et al.*). Land's End, 26th October to 1st November, video. (M.D.Warren *et al.*).

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, 13th-14th October (S.J.McElwee, J.G.Steele *et al.*).

Scilly St Martin's, 4th-6th October, photo. (J.P.Martin, R.E.Turley *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 357; 96: plate 370).

In some recent identification literature (e.g. Collins Bird Guide; Birding World 15: 411), it is claimed that Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *P.orientalis* may use a 'hü-if' alarm call similar to that of Western Bonelli's Warbler. Having discussed this with some of the authors of the material involved, however, they agreed that there is little or no evidence to endorse this claim (e.g. Birdwatch 119: 26-30). BBRC has reviewed original descriptions of the accepted records of Eastern Bonelli's Warbler and still believes that call is undoubtedly the safest and most reliable means of separating Western and Eastern Bonelli's Warblers. Silent birds pose one of the trickiest identification challenges and particular attention needs to be paid to precise upperpart colours and tones, bare-part detail, wing structure and, perhaps, facial pattern. In combination, these may confirm the identification.

Eastern/Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis/bonelli* (3, 131, 5)

2000 Shetland Foula, 2nd October, video. (J.M. & T.P.Drew *et al.*).

As the bird on Foula in 2000 was not heard to call, it is currently accepted only as Eastern/Western Bonelli's Warbler. The video is, however, of a high quality and BBRC is analysing details of the wing formula to see if specific identification is possible.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 22, 1)

Sussex, West Church Norton, male, 20th June, photo. (T.J.Edwards, D.Francis, O.Mitchell *et al.*).

1985 Norfolk Holkham Meals, first-summer male, 12th-13th May, photo. (P.M.Cocker, R.Grimmett, R.G.Millington *et al.*). Previously rejected, Brit. Birds 83: 495.

Acceptance of the much-debated 1985 Norfolk individual was facilitated by the discovery of a new series of photographs. The hybrid spectre, although not 100% eliminated, was considered very unlikely. BBRC are grateful to Dr Ben Sheldon at the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford, for his invaluable input.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 155, 2)

Kent Dungeness, first-winter and one other, 23rd October (D.Walker *et al.*).

2000 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, male, 13th June, photo. (N.Smith).

2001 Lincolnshire Barton-on-Humber, male, 10th-11th April, photo. (G.P.Catley *et al.*).

Now seemingly returning to its former rarity status, this masked reed swinger retains its pulling power. Following the ten-year average of eight records per year during the 1990s, there has been a total of only 11 records for the three years 2000-2002.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 55, 3)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, first-summer male, 26th June, video. (M.D.Wallace *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 18th-22nd October, photo. (A. & E.Reed *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 358; 96: plate 371).

Shetland Fetlar, male, *L.i.isabellinus*, 14th-17th September, photo. (P.Kelly, M.Smith *et al.*).

1961 Norfolk Walcott, 10th-14th September (Brit. Birds 55: 581), now considered inadequately documented.

1976 Suffolk Benacre, 30th August to 25th September (Brit. Birds 72: 539), now considered inadequately documented.

1977 Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 21st August (Brit. Birds 72: 539), now considered inadequately documented.

1978 Cambridgeshire Hemingford Grey, 8th October (Brit. Birds 73: 525), now considered hybrid with Red-backed Shrike *L.collurio*.

The ongoing review of all previously accepted records, the purpose of which is to determine the subspecies involved in each case, where possible, continues. A number of issues have complicated the review of adults, which we had thought to be virtually complete. In particular, some of the descriptions of key features necessary to assign individuals to subspecies are contradictory, partly a consequence of different observers' perceptions of subtle colour tones in varying light conditions. Several birds also appear to show features of *karelini*, which is frequently treated as a colour-morph of *phoenicuroides*. Recent work in Central Asia, however, suggests that *karelini* may be a diagnosable and distinct population, and separable from *phoenicuroides*. If correct, this may have implications regarding the acceptance of the first individual to the British List. We hope to publish the preliminary results of this review as soon as possible.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 127, 1)

Devon Dawlish Warren, 26th May, photo. (L.Collins *et al.*).

2001 Northeast Scotland Girdleness, first-winter, 10th October (O.Campbell).

Another poor showing. This species has declined markedly here in recent years, with 74 recorded during the 1960s and 1970s, then only 47 during the 1980s and 1990s, and just six in the last five years. This bucks the general trend of increasing numbers of southern and eastern vagrants being recorded here, due, in part, to better observer coverage and, possibly, changing climatic factors. The increasing rarity of Lesser Grey Shrike is surely linked to the long-term decline in breeding populations across Europe, this being particularly catastrophic in the western part of its range where it is now extinct, or nearly so, as a breeder in France, Germany, Austria, Italy and the Baltic states. This range contraction has been linked to deteriorating breeding success, as a result of cooler, wetter summers (BWP), so might the Lesser Grey's fortunes eventually improve with global warming?

The delayed acceptance of the Girdleness bird was because of the need to safely eliminate Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* of the migratory Central Asian form *pallidirostris*. While adult Lesser Grey Shrike is distinctive, first-winter birds, which lack obvious black feathering on the forehead can appear superficially similar to *pallidirostris*. A casual or incomplete description of a first-winter may fail to separate the two safely. Any claimed first-winter Lesser Grey Shrike or Southern Grey Shrike should, ideally, include a careful estimate of the primary projection beyond the visible tertials on the closed wing and, if possible, a count of the primary tips visible past the longest tertial. Other important points to note include the extent of black on the lores, prominence of any whitish supercilium, the exact tone of grey on the upperparts, the extent of any paler areas on the rump and/or lower scapulars, and the bill shape and colour.

After some debate over the relative primary projections of *minor* and *pallidirostris*, we concluded that the Girdleness bird was too long-winged for *pallidirostris*, and that, on balance, the supporting features also favoured Lesser Grey.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 463, -)

1990 Dorset Portland, adult, since 30th August 1989 to at least February (Brit. Birds 84: 498), to 22nd April; presumed same, Weymouth, 26th January to 7th February (per G.Walbridge).

1994 Dorset The Grove, Portland, 8th June (Brit. Birds 95: 518); first-named observer was M.Snell.

2000 Dorset Portland Bill, juvenile, 15th October (Brit. Birds 94: 496), correct date 16th October, but not same as The Grove, Portland, same date.

- 2001 Dorset** Portland, various localities, juvenile, 7th September (Brit. Birds 95: 517), to 24th October.
- 2001 Hampshire** Hayling Island, adult, 23rd-30th October, photo. (T.Parminter, M.Tate).
- 2001 Highland** Durness, Sutherland, 22nd June (M.Fitch, Mr & Mrs Groutage).
- 2001 Lincolnshire** Louth, in song, 13th-15th June, photo. (H.Bunn, G.P.Catley *et al.*).
- 2001 Pembrokeshire** Haverfordwest, juvenile, 16th October to 21st November, photo. (F.Lanthorn, B.Morgan, G.H.Rees).
- 2001 Scilly** Bryher, 6th June (K.Webb *et al.*).
- 2001 Shetland** Symbister, Whalsay, adult, 2nd August, (B.Marshall, E. & J.A.Simpson). Bigton, adult, 12th-15th August, photo. (L.Johnson). Tingwall, adult, 25th August (I.Sandison *et al.*).
- 2001 Warwickshire** Exhall, 21st-27th June, photo. (J.J.Bowley, A.Tustin *et al.*).

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 96, 0)

- 2000 Scilly** St Mary's, 26th September (K.Bloomfield, K.Webb *et al.*).

European Serin *Serinus serinus* (76, 1,458, -)

- 1968 Shetland** Scalloway, 17th November (Brit. Birds 62: 487), now considered inadequately documented.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 768, 1)

- Norfolk** Titchwell, two females or first-winters, since 15th December 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 519), up to two intermittently to 23rd February (per G.E.Dunmore).

Shetland Fair Isle, *C.h.exilipes*, 19th October (P.R.French *et al.*).

Worcestershire See 2001 Worcestershire below.

1996 Yorkshire, North Pannal, near Harrogate, 23rd February (R. & M.Fairclough, P.V.Irving), considered same as Farnham, 24th-26th March (Brit. Birds 90: 508).

2001 Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, first-winter, 22nd-24th September (I.Brook, C.R.McKay, T.ap Rheinallt).

2001 Worcestershire Habberley Valley, first-winter male, 30th December to 22nd January 2002 (A.Warr, S.M.Whitehouse *et al.*).

The worst showing since the completely blank year of 1983. The confusion risk presented by some Common Redpolls *C.flammea*, particularly frosty individuals of the northwestern race *islandica*, should not be underestimated. Acceptance, especially in a non-influx year, still requires adequate description of a range of features and, in particular, an accurate description of the rump and undertail-coverts. Sadly, many descriptions we receive are somewhat cliché, describing the undertail-coverts as white and unmarked, which, in reality, they rarely are.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (40, 88, 12)

Norfolk Sandringham, female, 12th December, photo. (J.V.Bhalerao *et al.*); present 8th-15th (Brit. Birds 96: plate 63).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, male, 13th August, photo. (P.A.Brown *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Bagley Wood, female, 9th December to 16th January 2003, photo. (J.Gosling *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, male, 2nd August (A.J.Bull); male, three females/juveniles, 16th-19th August, male, juvenile, photo. (A.J.Bull *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 319); male, female or first-summer male, 22nd August (P.R.French *et al.*); male, 8th-11th September, photo. (M.Fraser, D.N.Shaw *et al.*). Foula, first-winter, 17th-19th August (A.R.Mainwood *et al.*).

2001 Fife Isle of May, juvenile/first-winter male, 27th July to 3rd August, trapped 27th, photo. (J.M. & L.J.Wilson, R.I.Parkinson).

During the midsummer influx (which corresponded with a major eruption in Scandinavia) there was also a controversial male present in South Yorkshire, which has only recently been submitted to BBRC. Despite large numbers of Common Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* throughout the country during the late summer and autumn, there were no further discoveries of Two-barred Crossbills until December.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (1, 21, 2)

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 22nd-29th October, photo. (M.Carroll, J.M.Pearson, B.Richards *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 95: plate 359; 96: plate 372).

At sea Sea area Dogger, oil installation *Uisge Gorm*, 56°01'N 03°11'E, 20th May to 1st June, photo. (D.Rodger).

2000 Man, Isle of Llergydhoo, Peel, 28th May, photo. (T.Bagworth, J.Bishop, Mrs I.Crellin *et al.*).

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* (0, 4, 0)

2001 Devon Lundy, 12th October (Brit. Birds 95: 520), first-named observer was A.L.Cooper.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 35, 0)

1998 Durham Langley Moor, female, 22nd-24th March, dead 28th, mounted specimen retained by finder, photo. (R.Urwin *et al.*).

2001 Yorkshire, North Filey, 3rd March (D.J. & P.M.Scanlan, C.C.Thomas *et al.*).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 406, 4)

Lothian Thorntonloch, male, 6th-8th June (K.Gillon *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides North Rona, in song, 6th-7th June (M.Gray).

Scilly St Mary's, 5th to at least 8th October, photo. (S.Hall *et al.*).

Sussex, East Hove, male, 10th-11th May (T.J.Wilson).

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 202, 6)

Essex Colne Point, female or first-winter, 5th September (R.Allen).

Norfolk Scolt Head, female or first-winter, 24th-25th September (N.M.Lawton *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, female or first-winter, 3rd-5th September, photo. (R.M.Harvey).

Shetland Sumburgh, female or first-winter, 8th September (P.V.Harvey, R.Riddington, I.S.Robertson). Skaw, Unst, female or first-winter, 9th September, photo. (R.P.Fray *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 373). Quendale, female or first-winter, 10th-14th September (R.Riddington *et al.*).

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 154, 3)

Lancashire & North Merseyside Birkdale, Southport, male, 19th June (C.Fyles *et al.*).

Lothian Gullane, male, 3rd June, photo. (P.Morris) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 374).

Suffolk Gunton, first-winter, 24th-25th September, photo. (J.Brown *et al.*).

1993 Suffolk Oulton Broad, male, 30th May (Brit. Birds 87: 566), now considered inadequately documented.

1999 Dorset Verne Common, Portland, male, (Brit. Birds 93: 564); correct date was 1st June.

From late May to June is now firmly established as the best time to find this species in Britain. The records in Lancashire & North Merseyside and Lothian were both firsts for their respective counties. The identification of adult females and first-winters can still prove to be a major headache with anything other than the more classic individuals. Precise attention to primary projection, wing structure, plumage tones, the presence and strength of streaking on various feather tracts of the upperparts, and bill size may help. Note that, in autumn, accurate ageing is the crucial first step in the identification process.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 23, 1)

Dorset Hengistbury Head, first-winter, 1st-23rd November, photo. (G.Armstrong, G.D.Masser, S.Simmonds, I.Southworth *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plates 33 & 375).

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see Ibis 136: 253)

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, first-winter, 7th-25th March, photo. (S.J.McElwee, A.Priest *et al.*).

It is now possible to establish the age of female-type and first-winter Hooded Mergansers accurately. Armed with this new-found knowledge, there is little doubt that the Newbiggin bird was a first-winter, and that this may also be true for the North Uist individual of 2000 (Brit. Birds 95: 524). As a result, BOURC will undertake a review of the status of this species in Britain and Europe, and assess the likelihood of birds escaping from captivity in Europe.

Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*

Shetland Fair Isle, female, 4th-7th September, trapped 5th, photo. (A.J.Bull, M.A.Newell, D.N.Shaw *et al.*).

This species currently resides in Category D of the British List as, in the majority of cases, it is difficult to establish the provenance of the individual. In the case of the Fair Isle bird, the combination of plumage damage, including broken rectrices, the early date and its age all point to a higher chance of this being an escape than a wild vagrant. Nonetheless, BBRC feels that, until the British status of the species is clarified, it is prudent for all records to be published.

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Hon. Secretary; b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; c) those mentioned in 'Recent reports' in British Birds if full details were unobtainable; or d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

2002 White-billed Diver St Andrews, Fife, 7th March; Sanga Bay, Sutherland, Highland, 30th May. **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* of nominate form *diomedea* ('Scopoli's Shearwater') Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 21st July; 3rd August. **Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel** Holy Island, Northumberland, 24th September. **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* Alton Water, Suffolk, 3rd February. **Little Bittern** Horrock's Flash, Greater Manchester, two, 17th January. **Squacco Heron** Hickling, Norfolk, 26th June. **Great White Egret** Quenington, Gloucestershire, 5th January; Sudbury, Suffolk, 4th May; Hickling, Norfolk, three, 10th May; Harwich Fort, Essex, 11th May; Hartlepool Headland, Cleveland, 3rd June; Breydon, Norfolk, 15th-17th August; Burnham Overy/Deepdale, Norfolk, 29th August; Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 13th September; Burnham Norton, Norfolk, 30th September; St Mary's, Scilly, 16th October. **Black Stork** Storrington, West Sussex, 7th September. **Glossy Ibis** Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, four, 25th August. **'Black Brant'** Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 6th January; Beaumont Quay, Hamford Water, Essex, 28th January; Hook-with-Warsash, Hampshire, 10th February to 19th March; 10th November to December. **Black Kite** Heacham, Norfolk, 5th April; Camber, East Sussex, 12th April; Little Haldon, Devon, 14th April; near Colchester, Essex, 23rd April; Stoke Common, Buckinghamshire, 11th May; Bookham, Surrey, 12th May; Piddlehinton, Dorset, 2nd June; Aldringham, Suffolk, 4th June; Thorntonloch, Lothian, 9th June; Glen Prosen, Angus & Dundee, 12th June; Tomatin, Sutherland, Highland, 18th June; Kerry Ridgeway, Shropshire, 13th August; Worlaby Carrs, Lincolnshire, 4th September; near Cosmeston, Glamorgan, 7th September. **Red-footed Falcon** Dunwich Heath, Suffolk, 24th April; Willington Gravel-pits, Derbyshire, 10th May; Kingfishers' Bridge, Cambridgeshire, 18th May; Salthouse Heath, Norfolk, 19th May; Langham, Norfolk, 27th May; Scurdie Ness, Angus & Dundee, 12th August; Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire, 1st September; Sandscale, Cumbria, two, 15th September; Port Logan, Dumfries & Galloway, 15th-20th September; Freshwater West, Pembrokeshire, 1st October. **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* Nanquidno and Hendra area, Cornwall, 20th June. **Gyr Falcon** Astley Green, Greater Manchester, 28th January; Matley Wood, New Forest, Hampshire, 10th October; Landguard, Suffolk, 29th October; Thornbury Holsworthy, Devon, 29th December. **Black-winged Stilt** Orcharton Bay, Dumfries & Galloway, 9th December. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Sandscale, Cumbria, 27th August; Goldcliff Lagoons, Gwent, 31st August. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Martin Mere, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 9th August; Bowling Green Marsh, Devon, 3rd September. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Marshside Marsh, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 6th May. **Great Snipe** Balcomie Golf Course, Fife, 10th September; Trimley Marshes, Suffolk, 10th September; Westleton Heath, Suffolk, 22nd October. **Long-billed Dowitcher** Loch of Strathbeg, Northeast Scotland, 1st September. **Marsh Sandpiper** Peterstone Wentloog, Gwent, 2nd May; Pulborough Brooks, West Sussex, 3rd-4th May; Cley, Norfolk, 22nd August. **Greater Yellowlegs** Dawlish Warren, Devon, 24th August. **Grey-tailed Tattler** *Heteroscelus brevipes* Dawlish Warren, Devon, 16th September. **Laughing Gull** Hoveringham Gravel-pits, Nottinghamshire, 15th October; South Huish, Devon, 27th November. **Bonaparte's Gull** Sellafeld, Cumbria, 8th February; Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 13th February. **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* Martin Mere, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 6th March. **Gull-billed Tern** Ythan Estuary, Northeast Scotland, 19th May; Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, 16th July; Leith and Seafeld, Lothian, 27th July; Telscombe, East Sussex, 22nd August. **Caspian Tern** Landguard, Suffolk, 26th August. **Whiskered Tern** Scurdie Ness, Ferryden and Montrose Bay, Angus & Dundee, 14th-18th October. **White-winged Black Tern** Fife Ness, Fife, 31st August. **Alpine Swift** Martin Mere, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 22nd May. **Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius* Bognor Regis, West Sussex, 4th July. **Red-rumped Swallow** Watermead Lake, Leicestershire, 29th April; Salthouse, Norfolk, 24th May; Thrybergh Country Park, South Yorkshire, 16th July. **Pechora Pipit** Gugh, Scilly, 12th October; St Agnes, Scilly, 24th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Cossington, Leicestershire, 31st March; Holkham Meals, Norfolk, 10th September. **Citrine Wagtail** Radway, Warwickshire, 30th April. **Thrush Nightingale** Fair Isle, Shetland, 27th May. **Black-eared Wheatear** Machrihanish, Argyll, 5th-6th October. **Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* Colsterdale, North Yorkshire, 5th June. **White's Thrush** Goldsithney, Cornwall, 9th December. **Dark-throated Thrush** Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 20th October; near St Nicholas at Wade, Kent, 24th October. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Tresco, Scilly, 6th October. **Lanceolated Warbler** Fair Isle, Shetland, 19th October. **Savi's Warbler** Sea area Forties, 23rd August. **Greenish Warbler** Brean Down, Somerset, 2nd June. **Hume's Warbler** Brook Down, Isle of Wight, 6th October. **Dusky Warbler** Dawlish Warren, Devon, 9th November. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** Cley, Norfolk, 12th October. **Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* North Nibley, Gloucestershire, 17th July; Beeston Bump, Norfolk, 5th September; North Nibley, Gloucestershire, late October; Newton Abbot, Devon, 27th December. **Arctic Redpoll**

Tregonnick Point, Cornwall, 7th May. **Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus* Sullom Plantation, Shetland, 9th June; Auchmithie, Lothian, seven, 9th September. **Yellow-browed Bunting** *Emberiza chrysophrys* Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, 21st October. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Burrafirth, Unst, Shetland, 9th October.

2001 Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* Reculver, Kent, 4th September. **Night Heron** Southampton, Hampshire, two, 13th May. **Great White Egret** Stockton Heath, Warrington, Cheshire, 25th July; Bowcombe Creek, Devon, 9th-10th August. **'Black Brant'** Blackwater Estuary, Essex, 24th November to 30th December. **American Wigeon** Hodbarrow, Cumbria, two, 17th September; St Peter's Pool, Orkney, 26th September to 5th October. **Black Kite** Sandwich Bay, Kent, 8th April; Knighton, Somerset, 12th April; Cotswold Water Park, Wiltshire, 14th April; Dartford Heath, Kent, 1st May; Brading Marsh, Isle of Wight, 18th May; Codshall, Staffordshire, 22nd May; South Tyne area, Northumberland, 9th June; near Marden Quarry, Northumberland, 27th July; Broughton, Buckinghamshire, 3rd September. **Red-footed Falcon** Winterton Dunes, Norfolk, 4th July. **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* Spurn, East Yorkshire, 27th June. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Fair Isle, Shetland, 13th November. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Crowdy Reservoir, Cornwall, 10th September. **Spotted Sandpiper** Beddington Sewage Farm, Surrey, 30th September to 10th October. **Laughing Gull** Wormleighton Reservoir, Warwickshire, 11th October. **Ross's Gull** Minsmere, Suffolk, 7th June. **Forster's Tern** Draycote Water, Warwickshire, 26th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Cop Mere, Staffordshire, 30th September. **Citrine Wagtail** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 16th May. **Thrush Nightingale** Wells, Norfolk, 25th September. **Black-eared Wheatear** Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 28th October. **Great Reed Warbler** Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, 12th May. **Booted Warbler** Netherstone, Deerness, Orkney, 20th August; Hoswick, Shetland, 24th September. **Dusky Warbler** Sizewell, Suffolk, 13th October. **Nutcracker** Lymington, Hampshire, 28th October. **Rosy Starling** Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 29th August. **Parrot Crossbill** Uigen, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 11th July. **Rustic Bunting** Broad Chalke, Wiltshire, 28th November. **Black-headed Bunting** near Llanpumsaint, Carmarthenshire, 3rd June.

2000 White-billed Diver Dungeness, Kent, 30th April. **Lesser Scaup** Sandwell Valley, West Midlands, 16th November. **Black Kite** Horsey Mere and Hickling, Norfolk, 11th June. **Red-footed Falcon** Rowley Regis, West Midlands, 6th June. **Least Sandpiper** Titchwell, Norfolk, 19th October. **Solitary Sandpiper** Hayle, Cornwall, 28th September. **Slender-billed Gull** Cley, Norfolk, 22nd May; Farne Islands, Northumberland, 15th October. **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* Seahouses, Northumberland, 22nd November. **Olive-backed Pipit** Foula, Shetland, 24th September; 6th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Holme, Norfolk, 7th May. **Lanceolated Warbler** Foula, Shetland, 27th September. **Booted Warbler** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 4th June. **Hume's Warbler** Seahouses, Northumberland, 10th November. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Seaforth, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 24th September.

1999 White-billed Diver Bressay Sound, Shetland, 2nd May. **Great White Egret** Holme Pierrepont, Nottinghamshire, 9th June. **European Roller** Eaglesfield, Cumbria, 27th July. **Common Stonechat** *S.t.maura* Foula, Shetland, 30th September. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Foula, Shetland, 23rd September. **Dusky Warbler** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 21st September.

1998 Caspian Tern Hornsea Mere, East Yorkshire, 9th August.

1995 Pine Bunting Tresco, Scilly, 22nd October.

1989 Blyth's Pipit Portland Bill, Dorset, 16th March to 3rd May.

1985 Little Shearwater Minsmere, Suffolk, 3rd November.

1978 Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* Guildford, Surrey, 15th November.

Appendix 3. List of records not accepted but identification proved

This list provides a permanent record of those occurrences which, usually on the grounds of likely escape from captivity, find no place in any category, but which may, at some future date, merit further consideration. It does not include (a) any record of a species for which natural vagrancy is wholly unlikely, or (b) those records of presumed escapes already mentioned in the main text of this or earlier Reports.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* Wells and other localities in north of county, Norfolk, juvenile or first-winter, 3rd November 2001 to 6th February 2002, photo.; presumed same, returning as adult, Holkham and other localities in north of county, 1st October 2002 to 15th January 2003, photo.; presumed same Read's Island, South Ferriby and Winterton, Lincolnshire, adult, 10th November, photo. (Brit. Birds 95: plate 11). Budle Bay, Northumberland, adult, 5th October, photo.; presumed same, Cardruff, Cumbria, 3rd December 2002.

Since the arrival of a young bird with Pink-footed Geese *A.brachyrhynchus* in northwest Norfolk in November 2001, this species has generated a great deal more interest than previously. The records listed above do not represent the complete picture, and BBRC is keen for all recent records of potentially wild Ross's Geese to be submitted. We would particularly like to receive further detailed descriptions, and photographs, of a second bird in Norfolk in autumn 2002, as there is a difference of opinion between observers about the size of the bird.

Currently, Ross's Goose is not on any category of the British List, although it is accepted onto Category A of the national list of the Netherlands. When BBRC has completed its review of all records, it intends to submit the file to BOURC, who may then investigate the likelihood of escape from captive waterfowl collections in Europe.

It is well known that the population of this Arctic breeding goose, once considered endangered, has increased greatly in recent years and may now number close to one million individuals. Its winter range, once almost exclusively restricted to the Sacramento Valley in California, has extended eastwards to the eastern seaboard of the USA, where it is now regular. One might well expect increased transatlantic vagrancy as a consequence of this expansion, and this may be occurring. The problem, as ever, is sorting out the genuine wild birds from the frequent escapes of this attractive goose, which is commonly kept in captivity. The credentials of some of the birds listed seem, on the face of it at least, very promising.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* Hardley Flood, Norfolk, male, 18th June to 25th August 2002, photo. Stanford Reservoir, Leicestershire/Northamptonshire, male, 10th to at least 22nd September 2002, photo. Broadwater Gravel-pits, Greater London, female or first-winter, 14th-18th December 2002.

Appendix 4. List of selected records still under consideration

This list is not intended to be complete. Some decisions may have been arrived at and notified to County Recorders/observers prior to the publication of this Report.

2002 Black-browed Albatross Mundesley, Norfolk, 31st December. **Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel** Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 26th August. **Brown Skua** *Catharacta lonnbergi* Aberavon, Glamorgan, 1st February. **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* Dawlish Warren, Devon, 18th May; Porthmadog, Caernarfonshire, 23rd-26th July. **Little Swift** Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 25th June. **Sykes's Warbler** Sheringham, Norfolk, 23rd August; North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 26th August; Beachy Head, East Sussex, 31st August.

2001 Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 9th October. **Brown Skua** St Agnes, Scilly, 7th October. **Forster's Tern** Tingwell and Eynhallow Sound area, Orkney, 24th-27th October (Brit. Birds 95: 528). **Iberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus ibericus* Dungeness, Kent, 14th-17th April.

2000 Canvasback Loch of Rummie, Sanday, Orkney, 21st-23rd June (Brit. Birds 95: 528). **Short-toed Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* Dungeness, Kent, 20th May. **Iberian Chiffchaff** Portland Bill, Dorset, 11th May (Brit. Birds 95: 528). **Collared Flycatcher** Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 26th September (Brit. Birds 95: 528).

1998 Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* of North American race *G.g.delicata* ('Wilson's Snipe') St Mary's, Scilly, 9th October to 1999 (Brit. Birds 95: 528).

1997 Common Snipe of North American race *G.g.delicata* ('Wilson's Snipe') St Mary's, Scilly, 19th October (Brit. Birds 95: 528).

1996 South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki* Dawlish Warren, Devon, January, February; presumed same, West Bexington, Dorset, January, February (Brit. Birds 95: 528).

1993 South Polar Skua At sea, Sea area Sole, 26th August (Brit. Birds 95: 528).

1962 Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* St Agnes, Scilly, 30th September to 2nd October (Brit. Birds 95: 528).

1961 Olivaceous Warbler St Agnes, Scilly, 3rd-4th October (Brit. Birds 95: 528).



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