This is the fiftieth annual report of the British Birds Rarities Committee. This is not an insignificant milestone and, as last year’s introduction alluded, there are a number of changes in personnel responsible for the production of this report. After eight years as a voting member, this is my first report as Chairman. It is a tall order to follow Colin Bradshaw, the longest-serving Chair in BBRC’s history, who was at the helm for nearly 11 years. Colin’s efforts to move the Committee forward should not be underestimated. He has been instrumental in co-ordinating the transition from a paper-based to an electronic system and he endeavoured to ensure that the Committee’s processes and procedures were made more publicly available. Although his efforts did not always meet with universal approval, they were always well intentioned and his legacy is a stronger Committee, more able to cope with rare-bird recording in the twenty-first century. Colin also worked closely with Pete Fraser to allow a relatively smooth transition in personnel from the late Mike Rogers, BBRC Secretary for more than 25 years, to our new permanent Secretary, Nigel Hudson. Pete continued to assist with data collation this year and we are extremely grateful for the significant work he has done in his role as Statistician and temporary Secretary. Nigel has continued the process of transforming the Committee’s assessment procedures and the switch to an electronic system and has made significant progress in terms of the reliability of our statistics. Sharp-eyed readers will notice some important differences from last year’s report in some of the figures given in the individual species accounts as a consequence. The work done by Colin, Pete and Nigel over the last year has been outstanding and this report reflects the benefit of their collective efforts.

The improvements in our procedures for electronic circulation of records have certainly paid dividends, helping to ensure that the 2007 series of records were processed at least one month earlier than in recent years. Improved systems to generate the report, which Nigel has developed, have been instrumental in enabling the report to be published in the October issue of BB. We are also confident in the accuracy of the data published here, owing to improved efficiency at acknowledging receipt of records (including a request to clarify dates, observers and other details), along with the opportunity for records to be checked via the widely publicised Work in Progress files uploaded to the BBRC website (www.bbrc.org.uk) and a draft of the report circulated to all County Recorders in July. Once again, the BirdGuides team (www.birdguides.com) were extremely helpful in providing links to photographs that had been uploaded to their site with permission to circulate around BBRC, and with providing details of rare bird occurrences and various other requests. We welcome the interest of other birding websites in supporting the work of the Committee and anticipate this becoming an even more valuable resource for the 2008 report. The BBRC website now includes an online submission form to accompany records supported by photographs and we are working to provide a similar form to enable the online submission of non-photographed rarities. We would remind observers that if you are submitting a photographed rarity but using the traditional recording form, it assists us greatly if the photographs are submitted separately and not embedded in the recording form or Word or other documents.

We have been receiving a steady flow of
formal and informal submissions of rare races that are now considered by BBRC (see Brit. Birds 99: 619–645 and the BBRC website www.bbrc.org.uk). A few appear for the first time in this report (e.g. ‘Baltic’ Lesser Black-backed Gull Larus fuscus fuscus and ‘Black-bellied Dipper’ Cinclus cinclus cinclus) or as entries in their own right for the first time (‘Eastern Subalpine Warbler’ Sylvia cantillans albiestriata and ‘Hornemann’s Arctic Redpoll’ Carduelis hornemanni hornemanni). We also reiterate our requests for 2008 records of ‘Siberian Chiffchaffs’ Phylloscopus collybita tristis (Brit. Birds 101: 165–166, 477). All post-2007 records will be reviewed against criteria set out in the original request in an effort to establish whether records attributable to this race are statistically rare enough to be considered by BBRC. The results will be published in due course, but our analysis can only be as complete as the data provided, so we encourage formal submissions of any outstanding or forthcoming claims for 2008. We also thank those observers who have submitted records from previous years. Although these will not be considered as part of the formal exercise, they have provided useful reference material for the panel to consider.

Decisions are still awaited on a number of other races while acceptance criteria are clarified. This can be a time-consuming process, incorporating skin searches and analysis of images of birds of known taxa, but we intend to publish this research in BB in due course. Electronic communications have assisted us greatly here also, and permit more efficient interaction with BOURC members, where appropriate. In relation to the latter aspect of BBRC’s work, a number of files have been passed on to BOURC this year, including those for the following records: the Yellow-nosed Albatross Thalassarche chlororhynchos at various sites in June–July 2007; the Madeiran Petrel Oceanodroma castro from Scilly in July 2007; the Pacific Divers Gavia pacifica from 2007; the Glaucous-winged Gull L. glaucescens from winter 2006/07; the Chinese race of Pied Wagtail Motacilla alba leucopsis in Durham from 2005; and the Brown Flycatcher Muscicapa daurica in Yorkshire in October 2007.

To add to this impressive selection of pending potential firsts for Britain, Great Blue Heron Ardea herodias appears in this report for the first time; ‘Wilson’s Snipe’ Gallinago gallinago delicata is now formally accepted following a revised decision on the Scilly bird of winter 1998/99, which was previously regarded as not proven (Brit. Birds 98: 630 & 692) but has been accepted after review and valuable input from Killian Mullarney and Ian Lewington; and Hooded Merganser Lophodytes cucullatus returns to Category A, following a spell in Categories E and D. The last species illustrates the value of documenting records of potential vagrants currently placed in Category D, to allow BBRC to review the identification and BOURC to consider origins. Despite the request in last year’s introduction (Brit. Birds 100: 694), many Category D records are still not being documented. As indicated last year, BOURC has recently established a programme of reviewing all Category D species (Ibis 150: 219–220) and this process is made significantly easier if there is formal documentation to support the claims. Once again, we request that observers submit all Category D records and would ask observers or County Recorders to flag up records to the BBRC Secretary of known or suspected escaped individuals of Category D species, as this will assist further with assessing the patterns of occurrence of such species.

Some assessments and reviews are still taking place. You can view progress on many of these files on the Work in Progress section of the BBRC website, but some reviews have not yet been reported through that forum. These include that of the ‘orange-billed’ and Elegant Tern Sterna elegans records during 2002–05. That assessment is still ongoing, following research by BBRC members investigating the appearance and identification of similar birds elsewhere in Europe. Reviews of the British records of Redhead Aythya americana, the Druridge Bay Slender-billed Curlew Numenius tenuirostris, the ‘southern skua’ Stercorarius and Royal Terns Sterna maxima (following the removal of the 1965 Kent record – see Brit. Birds 100: 694–695) are now under way. One significant obstacle here has been the transfer of detailed and complex paper files, with associated images and reference material, to electronic format, but this has now been achieved. Jimmy Steele has prepared assessment criteria for the review of North Atlantic Little Shearwaters Puffinus baroli and we are currently contemplating the logistics of completing this mammoth task. Jimmy has also presented criteria for assessment of Iberian Chiffchaffs Phyl-
Iberian Chiffchaff (*loscopus ibericus*), to establish whether sound recordings of the song remain a prerequisite for acceptance. Provisional conclusions are that in some cases it may be possible to consider accepting a bird (preferably in spring) that has merely been heard calling (rather than in song), but sound recordings would still prove invaluable to support the identification. For the time being, however, BBRC considers the acceptance of silent Iberian Chiffchaff unlikely. We are also revisiting the identification criteria for Black-headed Emberiza melanocephala and Red-headed Buntings *E. bruniceps* in non-adult male plumages and autumn records of ‘Eastern’ Black-eared Oenanthe hispanica melanoleuca and Pied Wheatears *O. pleschanka*; several 2007 records are pending the outcome of this analysis.

Finally, we are endeavouring to catch up on a number of pended records from previous years to ensure that an outcome is achieved. We apologise to those observers and County Recorders who may have been exasperated by the apparent delay in decisions in these cases, but are confident that we can resolve the majority of them in the coming months.

So, to this year’s report. We have processed c. 700 submissions this year, almost 20% up on 2006, showing that our almost total conversion to electronic procedures is having a positive effect. The following box gives a breakdown of these submissions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptances: current year</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not proven: current year</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptances: previous years</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not proven: previous years</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updates &amp; corrections</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of taxa represented in the accepted records was 130, very similar to last year’s 128. We have included this analysis for the first time to enable an assessment of the number of records processed by the Committee and to allow comparisons in future years to establish whether our modified procedures continue to deliver improvement.

Currently, we have another 70 submissions for 2007, split 50/50 between those which are proving difficult to assess and those received too late for inclusion in this report. We again urge that records are submitted as soon as possible after the sighting to ensure inclusion in the BBRC report for the year in question. Some significant 2007 records that have not been reported include a Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* in Somerset in May, an American Herring Gull *L. smithsonianus* in Cornwall in April and the photographed ‘Balearic’ Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator badius* in Cornwall in May.

We are also aware of c. 60 records in 2007 that have been reported but for which we have received no submission. Many of these were seen only briefly and we can fully appreciate why observers might choose to report such sightings to the bird information services, in the hope that the bird is relocated, while not feeling that they saw enough to confirm the identification to a standard acceptable to BBRC. This will always cause some discrepancy between those records reported and those actually considered by the Committee.

If we take 50% of these non-reported sightings to be genuine records, that means that there should have been about 800 submissions in total for 2007. Since almost 700 records have been processed by BBRC and 70 more are being processed, this leaves just 30 that have not been received. In other words, BBRC is assessing more than 95% of national rarities. We are of course looking to improve this proportion still further, but suggest that those who continue to question the relevance of BBRC might reconsider their views in the light of these numbers.

As ever, the report does contain a number of mouth-watering rarities, including the first Great Blue Heron, second ‘Baltic’ Lesser Black-backed Gull, third Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*, third and fourth Audouin’s Gulls *L. audouinii*, fourth and fifth ‘Hudsonian’ Whimbrels *N. phaeopus hudsonicus*, fifth White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*, sixth Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* and seventh Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* and Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*; as well as an influx of Buff-bellied Pipits *Anthus rubescens* and invasions of both Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*. Given the recent confirmation that Cattle Egrets bred successfully in Somerset in 2008, it will be interesting to see how this species fares in the coming years, and whether its stay on the BBRC list is nearing an end.
Acknowledgments

Once again, we wish to thank all the observers and photographers who sent details of their rarity observations to BBRC, either directly or via County Recorders and BirdGuides. We also continue to express a significant amount of gratitude to county and regional recorders and their records committees for the invaluable work that they undertake in supporting the BBRC function. Thanks also to all those individuals who updated information on earlier sightings through correspondence following the posting of Work in Progress files throughout the year. While they may not be acknowledged in the report, their contribution remains very significant for improving the accuracy of the information provided. BBRC continues to be supported financially by Carl Zeiss Ltd, and has done so now for 27 years – more than half the Committee’s history. BirdGuides has continued to assist, particularly by enabling the submission of photographs for consideration by BBRC. We would also like to thank the following for their help in various ways this year: David Allan, James Dean, Dick Forsman, Steve Heinl, Steve Howell, Peter Kennerley, Nils Kjellén, Yann Kolbeinsson, Ian Lewington, Killian Mullarney, Pete Ryan and Jean-Claude Stahl. Previous BBRC members have assisted the Committee with a number of duties during the course of the year, including Alan Dean, John Martin, Jimmy Steele, Andy Stoddart and Graham Walbridge. John Marchant continued in his role as Archivist and Reg Thorpe in his role as Summariser.

Adam Rowlands

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 in the 2006 report (Brit. Birds 100: 694–754). 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 photographed or sound-recorded (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) dates(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 cases of the very similar Eastern Phylloscopus orientalis and Western Bonelli’s Warblers Ph. bonelli, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of frigatebirds Fregata, Zino’s/Fea’s Petrel Pterodroma madeira/feae and Booted Hippolais caligata and Sykes’s Warblers H. rama (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; see www.britishbirds.co.uk/bblist.htm

4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain (i) to the end of 1949, (ii) for the period since 1950, 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 same’ (counted as different in the totals) or ‘probably/presumed same’ (counted as the same in the totals). 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.

5. The breeding and wintering ranges for each species are given in parentheses at the end of each species account.

6. The following abbreviations have been used in the main text of the report: CP = Country Park, GP = Gravel-pit, NMS = National Museums of Scotland, NR = Nature Reserve, Resr = Reservoir, SF = Sewage-farm.
Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (9, 64, 2)

**Cumbria** Newton Marsh, adult, 13th–16th December, photo (per www.birdguides.com); see also Dumfries & Galloway.

**Dorset** Poole Harbour area, adult, 18th November 2006 to 25th January, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: 696); presumed same Ferrybridge, 15th February, photo; see also Hampshire/Sussex.

**Dumfries & Galloway** Caerlaverock WWT reserve, adult, 13th–25th November (B. Morrell et al. per P. N. Collin); presumed same Cummertrees and Caerlaverock WWT reserve, 23rd December (per www.birdguides.com) and Caerlaverock WWT reserve, 26th December to 6th February 2008, photo (A. W. Reid et al.); see also Cumbria.


**Dumfries & Galloway** Caerlaverock WWT reserve, adult female, 27th November 2006 to 13th March, photo (I. Outlaw, J. Smith et al.).

**Lincolnshire** Saltfleet/Donna Nook area, two, adults, 13th October 2006 to 23rd January, photo (*Brit. Birds* 99: plate 358; 100: 696, plates 49, 333); note extended dates; see also Norfolk.

**Norfolk** Warham Greens, two adults, 10th March, photo (per G. Dunmore); presumed same Wells, 11th–21st March, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 138), Lynn Point, 25th–28th March, photo, and Snettisham RSPB reserve, 30th March to 2nd April, photo; see also Lincolnshire.

**Sussex** West Wittering and East Head, Chichester Harbour, adult, 24th February to 7th March, photo (D. I. Smith et al.); presumed same 30th November to 5th March 2008, photo (per C. Melgar); see also Dorset/Hampshire.

**Upper Forth** Haugh of Blackgrange, adult, 3rd–12th February, photo (J. B. Bell, R. Dawson et al.); presumed same 15th April (per C. Henty).

**2006 Lincolnshire** Covenham, two adults, 12th October, photo (G. M. Orton, J. R. Walker); earlier sighting for Saltfleet birds (*Brit. Birds* 100: 696).

**2002 Perth & Kinross** Powmill, adult, 16th–18th February (J. S. Nadin et al.); presumed same as Findatie, etc. (*Brit. Birds* 96: 555).

(Breeds Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter in coastal regions of W Black Sea in Romania & N Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter in The Netherlands, Greece & Turkey. Some may still use former wintering areas along Caspian Sea.)

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (0, 31, 1)

**Cornwall** Colliford Resr, adult male, 23rd May, photo (S. C. Votier); presumed returning bird from 2003 and other years (*Brit. Birds* 97: 563).

**Highland** Loch Sunart, adult male, 16th–17th June, photo (D. & J. Wozencroft).

(Breeds E North America from Labrador S to North Carolina & W to Manitoba. Most are resident or dispersive but N breeders migrate to winter in coastal SE USA.)

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (10, 223, 0)


(Breeds from S Alaska, across much of temperate Canada to SC USA. Migratory, wintering in S USA, Mexico, Caribbean & N South America.)

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 102, 25)

**Avon** Blagdon Lake, adult male, 11th–20th March, photo (R. Mielcarek, N. Milbourne et al.); see also Somerset. Blagdon Lake, adult male, 30th September to 21st November, photo (R. Mielcarek, N. Milbourne et al.).

**Berkshire** Woolhampton GP, adult male, 28th October to 15th November, photo (C. D. R. Heard, K. E. Moore et al.).

**Caithness** Toftingall Loch, adult male, 12th–13th May, photo (I. Outlaw, J. Smith et al.). St John’s Loch, two adult males, 7th–8th October (J. Smith et al.).

**Dumfries & Galloway** Caerlaverock WWT reserve, adult female, 27th November 2006 to 13th March,

**Fife** Loch Gelly, adult female, 28th–29th May, photo (W. McBay, J. S. Nadin).

**Gloucestershire** Cotswold Water Park, male, 19th–20th February, photo (K. Milsom, P. J. Taylor *et al.*); see also Wiltshire.


**Leicestershire & Rutland** Eyebrook Resr, first-summer male, 24th April intermittently to 3rd May, photo (K. Earnshaw, D. Gray, S. M. Lister *et al.*). Rutland Water, adult male, 16th–22nd September, photo (R. G. Bayldon, M. G. Berriman *et al.*).

**Lothian** St Margaret’s Loch, Edinburgh, first-winter male, 30th March to 16th April, photo (K. Gillon *et al.*).

**Northumberland** Linton Pond, two, male & female, 26th May, photo (G. Bowman, M. Lowther, L. A. Robson *et al.*) (plate 256).

**Outer Hebrides** Loch Sandary, North Uist, first-winter male, 17th November 2006 to 9th January, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: 698); presumed same 30th April, photo (S. E. Duffield). Coot Loch, Benbecula, male, 16th January to 19th April, photo (S. E. Duffield, J. Kemp *et al.*); presumed same Loch Fada, Benbecula, 21st January, and Loch Mor, Benbecula, 25th January. Coot Loch, Benbecula, adult male, 4th February to 19th April and 21st December to 18th March 2008, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*); presumed same Loch Bailfinlay, Benbecula, 15th April, photo.

**Oxfordshire** Sonning Eye GP, male, 3rd January to 26th February, photo (H. Netley *et al.*). Appleford, first-winter male, 30th December to 17th February 2008, photo (A. H. J. Harrop, I. Lewington *et al.*).

**Perth & Kinross** St Serf’s Island, Loch Leven, first-winter male, 14th February to 6th March (K. D. Shaw, J. J. Squire *et al.*). Findatie, Loch Leven, adult male, 25th February to 8th March, photo (C. Pendlebury, K. D. Shaw *et al.*). Vane Farm, Loch Leven, first-summer male, 22nd–30th April, photo (J. S. Nadin, K. D. Shaw, J. J. Squire *et al.*). Burleigh Sands, Loch Leven, adult male, 8th December (K. D. Shaw).

**Shetland** Loch of Funzie and Papil Water, Fetlar, female, 11th November to 7th January 2008, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

**Somerset** Cheddar Resr, adult male, 24th–31st March, photo (N. Milbourne *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 141); presumed same Burtle Road Fishery, 2nd–7th April, photo (J. J. Packer *et al.*); see also Avon. Torr Resr, adult male, 12th October, photo (A. & B. A. Taylor, J. Vickers); presumed same 10th November, photo; see also Wiltshire.


**Wiltshire** Cotswold Water Park, male, 13th–25th February, photo (S. B. Edwards, R. Turner *et al.*); see also Gloucestershire. Stourton, adult male, 20th October intermittently to 1st March 2008, photo (J. P. Martin *et al.*); see also Somerset.

**2006 Cambridgeshire** Ouse Washes, first-winter male, 29th January to 12th March, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: 698); note revised dates.

**2006 Outer Hebrides** Loch Sandary, North Uist, first-winter male, 26th November, photo (J. Kemp, B. Rabbitts *et al.*); presumed same Loch Hosta, North Uist, 14th–18th December, photo, and Baleshare, 30th December to 26th February 2007, photo.


The year 2007 marked the twentieth anniversary of the first Lesser Scaup in Britain, a first-winter male at Chasewater, West Midlands, in 1987, which ended a somewhat tortuous period of uncertainty in terms of identifying this species as a vagrant. The following decade produced a steady trickle of records, with a notable surge in 1996 when seven were recorded and the first accepted female in 1997.

The increase in records of this species has continued unabated to an impressive 25 for 2007, with a strong showing of first-winter birds, particularly males. This clearly indicates that genuine new arrivals, combined with increasing observer awareness, are fuelling the growth in records. It should be
axiomatic that the fullest possible documentation remains essential because of the ever-present problem of hybrids.

Occasional multiple arrivals (including pairs), coupled with the appearance of some *Aythya* hybrids, has raised the question of whether Lesser Scaup has already bred in the Western Palearctic. The returning adult female Lesser Scaup at Caerlaverock was part of a small flock which included one possible hybrid offspring. Others have been suspected elsewhere.

Inevitably some have (already) begun to question how long this species will remain on the BBRC list. There are simple rules governing this. For a species to be considered for removal, there must be at least 150 records in the last ten years, with ten or more records in at least eight of those years. Conceivably, that point could be reached as early as 2010.

So, for those keen on adding it to their self-found list before then, or those searching for Norfolk’s first, the peak season is unsurprisingly December to March, although the species has occurred in all months and an increasing number are being found in autumn. The geographic spread indicates that almost any eutrophic lake or pond with a few other *Aythya* ducks will always be worth a second look.

(Breeds from C Alaska through Canada to Hudson Bay & S to Washington & South Dakota. Isolated populations E of Great Lakes. Winters along both coastlines of USA, in E from New Jersey to Mexico, W Indies, C America to N Colombia.)

**King Eider Somateria spectabilis (58, 130, 7)**

**Argyll** Ormsary, adult male, 1st April, photo (A. & S. Smout), presumed same Machrihanish, 12th May, 7th–12th June, 7th July, photo (E. Maguire, C. Mathew *et al*.), and Rhunahaorine Point, 24th May, photo (T. Charmin, E. Maguire).

**Fife** Leven, first-winter male, 29th December, photo (M. A. Wilkinson).

**Highland** Clachtoll, adult male, 7th February, photo (A. & D. Haines); presumed same 12th February, photo (A. Summers).

**Moray & Nairn** Burghead, first-winter male, 7th to 23rd May, photo (S. M. Lister, J. Jennings *et al*.).

**North-east Scotland** Peterhead, adult male, 28th October 2006 to 22nd April (*Brit. Birds* 100: 699); note revised dates; presumed same 26th October (M. Innes). Girdle Ness, Aberdeen, female, 23rd November to 30th December, photo (H. Addlessee *et al*.). Girdle Ness, Aberdeen, first-winter male, 1st December to 28th March 2008, photo (R. King, A. Whitehouse *et al*.).

**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, first-winter male, 3rd–14th April, photo (P. A. Brown *et al*.).


**2006 North-east Scotland** Blackdog, Aberdeen, adult female, 27th May, photo (A. Webb *et al*.).
2005 Dorset  Portland Bill and Chesil Beach, first-winter male, 27th March (J. Down, P. Harris, C. White).

1955 Kent  Shellness, Sheppey, first-winter male, 27th December; previously accepted (Naylor) but now reviewed by BBRC and considered not proven.

An average year for this species with the usual scatter of records from Scotland, plus some returning birds and leftovers from 2006. More unusual is the belated 2005 record from Portland Bill and Chesil Beach. With accepted records for Cornwall in previous years, and one from Devon in 2008 under consideration, it is perhaps surprising that it took so long for this species to be added to the Dorset list. King Eider has been recorded several times even farther south than this, and also inland in Europe. To the end of 2003 there were three records from Spain, six from the English Channel and Atlantic coasts of France and one from the French Mediterranean coast off the Camargue in 1999. It has also been recorded inland in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Switzerland and Austria, while the most southerly European sightings are from Italy, where it has appeared on six occasions. Farther west there are one or two records from the Azores, highlighting the species’ vagrancy potential to all areas of Europe.

(Breeds from Kanin Peninsula E across Arctic Siberia, including Novaya Zemlya & W Svalbard, Arctic Alaska, N Canada & N Greenland. European population winters along ice-free coasts of White Sea, N Norway & Iceland. Pacific population winters in Bering Sea.)

Harlequin Duck  Histrionicus histrionicus (6, 10, 1)

Outer Hebrides  St Kilda, adult male, 18th June, photo (W. T. S. Miles, S. Money, I. Win) (pl. 257 & 258).

This brief visit by a stunning drake to one of the most remote parts of Scotland represents the first June record for Britain. Prior to this, none had arrived between 18th April and 15th October and the latest sighting in spring was of the female that lingered on Lewis, Outer Hebrides, until 20th May 2004. Adult males typically leave the breeding areas to moult on the coast from mid June to mid July (BWP), so this may well have been a lost individual searching for a moulting flock. It maintains Scotland’s monopoly of accepted records during BBRC’s recording period, the majority along the west coast or in the Northern and Western Isles. There are three historical records from England between 1862 and 1915 or 1916, and an accessible bird south of the border would prove immensely popular. Although the photographic evidence was of record shots only, this was clearly a stunning adult male, the first record in this plumage for at least 42 years, females having accounted for 60% of sightings since 1950. Harlequin Ducks have become slightly more frequent in recent years, with 73% of the post-1950 total occurring within the last 20 years.

The source of our Harlequin Ducks remains unknown; the largely resident Iceland population is the closest, but those from Greenland and eastern Canada migrate to moult off the coast of southwest Greenland. Boertmann et al. (2006) estimated a moulting population of 5,000–10,000 males in the waters around southwest Greenland in July 1999 and suggested that the (unknown) wintering population here may be significant. This supports the idea that the British vagrants may originate from southwest Greenland, rather than the less migratory Icelandic population as suggested previously (Brit. Birds 98: 637).

(Atlantic population breeds Iceland, S Greenland, & E Canada from S Ellesmere Island to Labrador & Gulf of St Lawrence. Pacific population breeds NE Russia from Lake Baikal E to Kamchatka & S Sakhalin, Alaska & W Canada south to Oregon, USA. Resident Iceland. Other populations disperse to coasts S of breeding range.)

Ilka Win

257 & 258. Adult male Harlequin Duck  Histrionicus histrionicus, St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, June 2007.
Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* (0, 7, 1)

**Caernarfonshire** Llanfairfechan, adult male, 24th September 2006 to 9th April (*Brit. Birds* 100: 700); note extended dates.

**Lancashire & North Merseyside** Leighton Moss, male, 16th May, found exhausted and later released at Jenny Brown’s Point, photo (J. Beattie, K. Kellett, T. Wheeler *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 184; plate 259).

This, the eighth British and first English record of a species that remains a true mega-rarity, is one of the more bizarre records of the year. Railway workers found the bird on a railway line adjacent to the Eric Morecambe Pool at Leighton Moss RSPB reserve and some 1.5 km from the sea. We can only imagine how it arrived in such an incongruous setting. Its true identity was not realised immediately as it travelled, via staff at Leighton Moss, to a local vet, where reference to the *Collins Bird Guide* suggested that it might indeed be a rare bird. The decision was made for it to be released back at sea. Unfortunately, Morecambe Bay (which has one of the largest tidal ranges in Britain) was in the midst of a spring tide and, once the bird headed away from Jenny Brown’s Point on the outgoing tide, its chances of being seen again were pretty slim.

Speculation as to whether this may have been the bird seen in recent winters off the North Wales coast is understandable, if a little tenuous (and it is treated in our statistics as a new bird). In excess of 50,000 Common Scoters *M. nigra* winter between North Wales and Morecambe Bay, most of which never come within telescope viewing range. This situation is replicated off some other British coastlines, and clearly suggests that there may be more Black Scoters ‘out there’ than we are recording. All records in the Western Palearctic have so far been of adult males (Britain 8, The Netherlands 3, Denmark 1, Germany 1, Spain 1). Some females and immatures may, however, be more readily identifiable than generally realised, though the features are particularly subtle. Garner (2008) highlighted a number of features (the shape and pattern of colour on the bill and pattern of dark on the nape may provide key clues), but these are only for those expectant and prepared.

(Breeds on Siberian tundra from Yana River E to Alaska, & N Canada to Newfoundland. In N Atlantic, winters along coasts of E USA, N to South Carolina, & inland on Great Lakes. Elsewhere, winters in ice-free seas along both coasts of N Pacific Ocean, S to N Japan & California.)

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* (1, 11, 1)

**Highland** Glenbeg, Ardnamurchan, 7th June, photo (M. Hows, A. Jenkins); see also Outer Hebrides.

**Outer Hebrides** Loch na Muilne, Isle of Lewis, 8th–9th June, photo (M. S. Scott, J. Walsh); see also Highland.

**Shetland** Loch of Snarravoe, Unst, adult male, 12th November 2006 to 20th January, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: 700, plate 335).

(Forested regions of North America from C Alaska throughout W & C Canada to Hudson Bay, S to Montana & NE California. Winters throughout North America, from Aleutian Islands & coastal Alaska S along both seaboards to N Mexico, with small numbers wintering inland.)
Barrow’s Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* (0, 3, 0)

**Upper Forth** Callander and Loch Venachar, adult male, 19th November 2006 to 27th April, photo ([*Brit. Birds* 100: 701, plates 52, 336].

(Resident W Pal. population breeds Iceland. Two North American populations: larger breeds S Alaska & W Canada, S to N California, wintering on adjacent coastal lowlands; smaller breeds Labrador, winters along coast S to New York.)

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus* (0, 3, 0)


2000 Outer Hebrides Oban Trumisgarry, North Uist, first-winter or female, 23rd October to 1st November, photo; previously included in Category D ([*Brit. Birds* 95: 524]) but after assessment by BOURC now accepted into Category A of the British List. This becomes the first British record and full details will appear in *BB* shortly.

Hooded Merganser has had a rather difficult relationship with the British List. Originally in Category B on the basis of an old record from 1830–31, it was temporarily elevated to A in 1987–92 (on the basis of a record from Buckinghamshire in 1983), then moved back to B before being removed completely in 1999 and placed in Category E. It was subsequently admitted to Category D in 2001, on the basis of the Outer Hebrides record reported here. Two more records were accepted by BBRC into Category D, those in Northumberland in March 2002 ([*Brit. Birds* 96: 606]) and Shetland in 2006 ([*Brit. Birds* 100: 752]), before the species was finally admitted to Category A by BOURC earlier this year – again on the basis of the Outer Hebrides record, but also with the knowledge of the other two and aided by an accumulating body of circumstantial evidence.

This saga is a good illustration of the appropriate use of Category D. ‘D’ does not stand for ‘Dodgy’! It is a holding category for potential admission to Category A of species for which there is a record but also significant doubt about natural vagrancy. Such records can be reviewed and elevated to Category A if further supporting data are forthcoming or if a pattern emerges that confirms the natural vagrancy potential. In this case, multiple records from the Azores and Iceland since 2000 and an increasing population wintering on the eastern seaboard of North America strengthened the case for genuine vagrancy substantially. The circumstances of the three British candidates also helped. The arrival of the Outer Hebrides female/immature coincided with an influx of Nearctic ducks. The first-winter in Northumberland in early March 2002 coincided with the arrival of four other first-winter Hooded Mergansers, all on Atlantic islands in the preceding four months (two on Iceland, and singles on Tenerife, Canary Islands, and Flores, Azores). This was a unique event and these were the first confirmed first-winters recorded in Europe. The stunning adult male in Shetland in 2006 also conformed to a recent pattern of overshoot vagrancy of adult birds to Iceland in spring.

The problem for BBRC in years to come will be to distinguish between vagrants and escapes. Hooded Merganser is still relatively common in captivity in Britain, but making judgements about origins is an imperfect science. Just because a species is in Category A does not mean that every subsequent record is acceptable as a vagrant. BBRC needs to judge each record on an individual basis. This is a familiar situation, faced in every cycle of record assessment for a range of rare wildfowl. For this particular species, establishing the absence of a ring with certainty (photographs of the legs would help) and accurate ageing of female-type birds (best done by accurate assessment of the tertials) may both be helpful, though neither guarantees vagrancy by any means. Ultimately every decision will be somewhat subjective, but hopefully informed by a detailed body of evidence.

(Breeds S Alaska, E across S Canada & N USA to Newfoundland, & S to Oregon, Virginia & locally almost to Gulf coast. Winters coastaly, from S limit of breeding range to California & Florida.)

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White-billed Diver Gavia adamsii (7, 305, 27)

Borders St Abb’s Head, juvenile, 11th November (F. Evans, D. K. Graham); see also Northumberland.

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, adult, 13th October (C. Dodsworth, G. Iceton, G. Lawler et al.); see also Durham.


Durham Whitburn Coastal Park, two single adults north, 13th October, photo (P. Hindess, M. Newsome et al.); see also Cleveland.

Norfolk Eccles on Sea, Walcott and Sheringham, second-winter, 6th November (P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane, A. J. L. Smith et al.); presumed same Cley, 9th November (R. Millington, D. Wileman).

Northumberland Boulmer, 11th November (T. Cadwallender, S. Sexton) (fig. 1); presumed same Cullernose Point, 11th November (T. Farooqi); see also Borders.


Outer Hebrides Tiumpan Head, Isle of Lewis, two, 25th February, photo (T. ap Rheinallt); presumed same 27th April, photo (T. ap Rheinallt). Skigersta, Isle of Lewis, three, adults, 13th–14th April, photo (B. Doe, J. Regan). Aird an Rùnair, North Uist, adult, 6th May (S. E. Duffield, B. Rabbitts).


Fig. 1. White-billed Diver Gavia adamsii, Boulmer, Northumberland, 11th November 2007.
Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2007

(R. A. Haywood); presumed same 30th April, photo. Mousa Sound, 27th April (M. Heubeck, R. M. Mellor).

Sussex
Selsey Bill, adult, 30th September to 17th November, photo (C. Fentiman et al.).

Yorkshire
Flamborough Head, adult, 10th November (R. Harrington, A. Malley, B. Richards).

2006 Outer Hebrides
Skigersta, Isle of Lewis, four adults, 24th March intermittently to 29th April, photo (Brit. Birds 100: 701); note revised dates; presumed same as Cellar Head, Isle of Lewis, four adults, 16th April (S. D. Housden, M. S. Scott, K. D. Shaw).

2006 Shetland
Kirkabister, Mainland, adult, 23rd–25th October 2006 (Brit. Birds 100: 701); note revised dates.

2005 Moray & Nairn
Cummingston, adult, 3rd–7th May (Brit. Birds 100: 701); note revised dates.

(In W Pal., rare & sporadic breeder along Arctic coasts of European Russia, E from Yamal Peninsula & Novaya Zemlya. Also breeds in coastal regions of Siberia, N Alaska & Canada E to Mackenzie River & Baffin Island. Winters at sea, in E Atlantic, S to S Norway, but distribution poorly known.)

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* (1, 22, 0)

Outer Hebrides

(Breeds on islands in S South Atlantic & Indian Oceans. In non-breeding season, disperses N throughout southern oceans as far as Tropic of Capricorn.)

Zino’s/Fea’s Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae* (0, 31, 1)

Durham
Whitburn Coastal Park, 11th September (R. Ahmed, P. Hindess, T. I. Mills et al.).

2005 Yorkshire
Flamborough Head, 23rd October (A. M. Clewes, A. Malley, B. Richards et al.).

(Zino’s confined to central mountains of Madeira where entire world population is c. 65–80 pairs; non-breeding range unknown. Fea’s breeds in Madeira archipelago (Bugio) & Cape Verde Islands. In non-breeding season disperses throughout N Atlantic.)

North Atlantic Little Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* (3, 58, 1)

Cornwall
St Ives, 15th August (P. A. J. Morris, N. R. Stocks et al.).

(N Atlantic range restricted to warmer waters of Madeira, Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands & possibly the Azores. Outside the breeding season found at sea near breeding sites within N Atlantic.)

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (261, 219, 3)

Devon
Yelland, adult male, 12th May, found dead, photo (R. Jefferey et al.).

Norfolk
Titchwell RSPB reserve, male in song, 18th–27th June, photo (J. & S. Jex et al.). Titchwell RSPB reserve, juvenile, 19th–20th October (A. Saunders et al.).

(Widespread, patchy and declining in Europe N to 53°N. To E, breeds to 60°N in Russia, & E to Kazakhstan & NW China. W Pal. population migratory, wintering mainly in E Africa, S from Sudan & Ethiopia. Other populations largely resident or dispersive in N Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa & Australia.)

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (69, 62, 8)

Cambridgeshire

Dorset
Lodmoor RSPB reserve, adult, 28th May (D. Foot, M. Forster); presumed same Radipole, 6th–7th June, 30th June to 3rd July, photo (per J. A. Lidster), and Abbotsbury, 27th June, photo (S. A. Groves).

Greater London
Crossness Southern Marsh, Thamesmead, adult, 29th May to 8th June, photo (D. T. McKenzie et al.).

Isles of Scilly
Porth Hellick, St Mary’s, first-summer, 13th–30th May, photo (R. Mawer, K. Webb et al.) (Brit. Birds 100: plate 185).

Kent
Palmarsh GP, Hythe, first-summer, 2nd June (I. A. Roberts); presumed same Oare Marshes, 3rd–5th June, photo (C. & M. Perkins et al.), and Ham Marsh, 16th–18th June, photo (G. J. A. Burton per B. & M. Wright). Dungeness, adult, 9th June, photo (R. Butcher et al. per J. M. Warne).

Suffolk
Minsmere RSPB reserve, adult, 15th July, photo (J. A. Rowlands et al.).
The eight accepted records here make 2007 the best year ever, and there may possibly be others not yet submitted. The Worcestershire bird was the first for that county, with the majority being found during the peak period of mid to late spring.

A large population decline in Europe during 1970–90 (BirdLife International 2004) was responsible for a noticeable dip in British records during the 1980s. Since 1989 the species has been a more regular vagrant, with just two blank years (1991 and 1993) and with the best four years on record all since then. Expanding populations in Spain and southern France in particular have been linked with the increases here, but greater observer coverage is also a factor. However, in common with the situation with other southern herons, our warming climate should ensure that this species continues to feature in BBRC reports.

(W Pal. breeding population small and fragmented, centred on Mediterranean basin, from S Spain to Black Sea & E to Kazakhstan, with large population in Danube Delta. Northern populations migratory, wintering in N tropical Africa. African population largely resident.)

Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis (3, 169, 90)
Berkshire Lower Farm GP, 14th October, photo (S. Graham et al.).
Caithness Scrabster Mains, 22nd September to 3rd October, photo (S. Laybourne et al.).
Cambridgeshire St Neots and Abbotsley, 26th–29th December, photo (S. L. Bain et al. per M. L. Hawkes).
Dorset Radipole, two, adults, 15th April, photo (C. Courtaux, A. Taylor). Arne Moors, three, 2nd–12th November (M. Singleton et al.); presumed same Lychett Bay, Poole Harbour, when total of four birds, 3rd November (M. Gould, S. Robson et al.), Radipole, 4th November (P. Baker), and Bestwall, Wareham Moors and Poole Harbour, 4th–12th November (B. Spencer et al.). Upwey and Buckland Rippers, six, 24th November to 20th March 2008 (J. Lowther et al. per K. Lane). Upton CP, Poole, 27th November to 6th December (L. Kirton et al. per K. Lane). Abbotsbury, 13th December (S. A. Groves).


East Glamorgan Kenfig, 5th November, photo (D. G. Carrington, N. Donaghy et al.); see also Gower.

Essex Great Bentley, 18th December (P. Brayshaw).

Gloucestershire Saul Warth and Frampton-on-Severn, 9th December to 22nd June 2008, photo (G. Hodgson et al.).


Greater Manchester Pennington Flash, 2nd December, photo (P. Alker, N. Dowson et al.).

Isles of Scilly Porth Hellick, St Mary’s, 18th–22nd November (N. Hudson et al.). Old Town and Higher Moors, St Mary’s, 18th–24th December, photo (M. Goodey et al.); Old Grimsby, Tresco, three, 18th–21st December, photo (A. White et al.); presumed same Pig Field, St Martin’s, 18th December (V. Jackson per N. Hudson), Old Town and Higher Moors, St Mary’s, 18th–19th December, photo (W. Scott et al.), and Garrison, St Mary’s, 22nd December (per www.birdguides.com).


Lancashire & North Merseyside Martin Mere WWT reserve, 14th December, photo (A. Bunting).


Somerset Holywell Lake, 11th–14th December, photo (B. Gibbs et al.). Wet Moor, 29th December to 11th February 2008, photo (D. J. Chown, B. Gibbs et al.).

Suffolk North Warren, adult, 26th–30th July, photo (J. A. Rowlands, D. Thurlow et al.).


Yorkshire Spurn, 25th November, photo (J. M. Turton et al.).


2006 Yorkshire Fairburn Ings, 15th October, photo (J. Glendinning et al.).

2005 Kent Elmley RSPB reserve, 22nd September to 22nd November, photo (C. Drake per B. E. Wright).

The unprecedented influx of Cattle Egrets in late 2007 was one of the major events of the year, breaking all previous records for this species. Following a scatter of records in October, the main influx into the southwest began in early November, with arrivals continuing throughout December and into 2008. The arrival was centred on Cornwall, with over 40% (37/90) of all birds recorded there; Devon and Dorset together accounted for a further 21% of records (fig. 2).

Away from the southwest, most sightings came from the western counties of England with just a few birds making it to the eastern side of the country and (surprisingly) only one in Wales. These included the first records for both Greater Manchester and Glamorgan. There have been flocks of Cattle Egrets recorded in Britain before, with eight in Hertfordshire in May 1992 and again in Sussex in the early part of 2006; nonetheless, the group of 18 together in Cornwall is particularly noteworthy.

There had been just three previous records in Scotland, so the birds in Caithness, Dumfries & Galloway and the Outer Hebrides swiftly doubled that country’s tally. Also interesting was the juvenile,
together with an adult, in Kent in late July. The juvenile sported a dark bill, a character that is gradually lost at an age of 2–3 months as the yellow bill colour is acquired, and perhaps suggests that it had not travelled far since leaving the nest. Even if this bird had not fledged in Britain, the successful breeding by two pairs in Somerset during 2008 emphasises the comment in last year’s report that this species may soon become a more regular feature of the British avifauna.

Although it is difficult to know precisely what factors may have influenced this arrival, meteorological events in the western Mediterranean seem likely to have played a part, as with the influx of Glossy Ibises earlier in the year. Cattle Egrets are highly adaptable and well known for their ability to colonise new regions and the increasing records in Britain reflect flourishing breeding populations in the Iberian Peninsula. A large increase in that region during 1970–90 was followed by continued growth to 2000 (BirdLife International 2004).

(In Europe, common and widespread in S Spain & Portugal with small, expanding populations in France & Italy. N populations disperse outside breeding season, mostly into Africa. Widespread resident throughout much of Africa, S USA, N & C South America. Distinctive race, coromandus, sometimes treated as a full species, breeds S & SE Asia N to S China & Japan, Australia.)
Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* (0, 0, 1)

Isles of Scilly Lower Moors, St Mary’s, juvenile, 7th December, photo (E. A. Fisher et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 101: plate 33; plate 262).

The identification of Great Blue Heron in a vagrancy context has been well covered previously (Gantlett 1998) and the species’ occurrence in the UK has long been anticipated. Nonetheless, Ashley Fisher still deserves great credit for pulling this one out of the bag as the tail-end of autumn edged into winter. He clearly had an active ‘search image’ for this species and was able to confirm the identification and spread the news very quickly, allowing most of the resident Scilly birders to catch up with this individual. Despite the bird being a one-day wonder, the finder also submitted excellent documentation in support of the claim. Foul weather could not prevent several dozen would-be observers reaching St Mary’s the following day but all were to be disappointed as, to most people’s surprise, it was never seen again.

Great Blue Herons have reached British waters on at least two previous occasions but each was fed aboard ship and thereby fell foul of ship-assistance rules. One was transported to Avonmouth in November 1968 and another died within 250 km of the Isles of Scilly in May 1982. Both were arguably no less ‘wild’ for accepting human assistance in a presumably desperate situation, but this is not the place for a discussion of the philosophy of ship-assisted vagrancy. Records from France, the Canary Islands, the Cape Verde Islands, and the Azores (about 23 in total) suggest that unassisted vagrants do reach the Western Palearctic. There was no reason to believe that the 2007 Scilly bird had been aboard ship; indeed, the prevailing weather conditions (a near-continuous southwesterly airflow across the Atlantic created by two low-pressure systems) would have been very helpful for an unassisted crossing.

Most Great Blue Herons breeding in the northern parts of their range vacate the breeding areas during September and October and, although their movements are not well understood, ringing has shown that many winter as far south as the Caribbean. In contrast, a few are recorded annually in December in Canada and they winter farther north than any other North American heron. The northern limits of the regular winter range extend along the Pacific coast to southeast Alaska, into Massachusetts on the Atlantic coast and inland as far as southern Montana. They can suffer high mortality during severe winter weather and presumably move to avoid it when possible (Blus & Henny 1981). Might the late date of the Scilly bird suggest that it was dodging severe weather rather than being simply a late migrant? The first major winter storm of the season struck the northern third of...
North America over the first weekend of December 2007, bringing a combination of snow, freezing rain, and rain to everywhere from Washington State to New York (and into Canada) as a low-pressure system combined with cold Arctic air moved across the country. Portions of Michigan reported up to 25 cm of snow on 2nd December, so it is tempting to suggest that the Scilly bird was escaping from this weather system when it went off course.

Historically, populations were adversely affected by shooting (mainly for plumage) and egg-collecting early in the twentieth century, then latterly by loss of wetland habitat and pollution (Bent 1926; DeGraaf & Yamasaki 2001). Better protection of the birds and their habitats has allowed the species to recover throughout much of its range. The North American Breeding Bird Survey indicates that the population has been increasing significantly (at about 2% per annum for the Eastern Region and at 1.3% survey-wide) since the mid to late 1960s. Further vagrancy might well be as likely now as at any time in the past century.

(Breeds S Canada from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, S through USA to C America, & West Indies to N Venezuela. Northern populations migratory, wintering to S of breeding range.)

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (23, 140, 9)

**Anglesey** Alaw Estuary, adult, 31st July to 31st August, photo (K. G. Croft *et al.*).

**Cornwall** Redruth, St Just, Penzance and Sennen, 8th August (D. S. & G. H. Flumm, B. K. Mellow, J. Parker, D. Pointon).

**Devon** Colyton, adult, 8th–9th June, photo (S. Waite *et al.*); presumed same Holsworthy, 9th June, photo (R. Kirkwood), and Northam and Northam Burrows, 10th–12th June, photo (C. & D. Churchill, D. Paull *et al.*).

**Dorset** Abbotsbury and Burton Bradstock, adult or near adult, 7th August (S. A. Groves); presumed same The Fleet area, 8th–10th August (D. & G. Walbridge *et al.*).

**Hampshire** Steep Marsh, adult, 12th July (D. Offer).

**Isle of Wight** Arreton, adult, 13th June (D. T. Biggs, J. M. Cheverton).

**Kent** Sandwich, adult, 4th July (I. & S. Hunter).

**Lancashire & North Merseyside** Leyland, 2nd May, photo (J. Clarke).

**Wiltshire** Liddington, adult, 6th August (S. B. Edwards).

**2006 Yorkshire** Wykeham, adult, 23rd May (A. Ashworth); presumed same Filey, 23rd May (*Brit. Birds* 100: 706), which also should have read 'see also Durham, Highland, Moray & Nairn, Northumberland, Orkney.'

(Breeds from C Iberia & E France through C Europe to Russia and, in small numbers, into N Greece & Turkey. To E, breeds widely in small numbers in forested temperate regions of Russia & Siberia to Russian Far East. Most are migratory, wintering in Africa, S & SE Asia.)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (341, 92, 29)

**Avon** Chew Valley Lake, first-winter, 2nd–3rd November, photo (A. H. Davis, G. Thoburn *et al.*); see also Devon, Somerset.

**Cheshire & Wirral** Neumann’s Flash, seven, 5th May (A. P. Josephs); see also Cornwall.

**Cornwall** Helford Passage, 17, 20th April (per www.birdguides.com); see also Gloucestershire. Lizard, seven, 21st April to 3rd May (W. R. Wilkins, L. P. Williams *et al.*); presumed same Hayle, Kimbro Pool, 24th April (W. R. Wilkins, L. P. Williams); see also Cheshire & Wirral.

**Devon** West Alvington, 22nd April to 1st May, photo (M. Foss, D. Horton *et al.*). Braunton Burrows, adult, 29th April (I. K. Moore). West Alvington, first-winter, 18th–21st November, photo (D. Horton *et al.*); see also Avon, Somerset.

**Gloucestershire** Frampton-on-Severn and Slimbridge, 17, 20th April to 15th May, photo (R. G. Baatsen, J. Overfield *et al.*) (plate 263); see also Cornwall.

**Kent** Dungeness RSPB reserve, adult, 9th May, photo (R. Turley, D. Walker *et al.*).


**Somerset** Catcott Lows and Greylake RSPB reserve, first-winter, 3rd–16th November, photo (B. Gibbs, M. Jackson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 101: plate 34); see also Avon, Devon.

**Sussex** Breach Pool, Pagham Harbour and Ferry Pool, Sidlesham, 30th April to 1st May (I. Lang,
S. Ricks et al.); presumed same Pannel Valley, Icklesham, 3rd May (P. Jones).

A record-breaking annual total of at least 29 individuals. Most arrived in the southwest during late April and some of these may then have dispersed as far north as Cheshire & Wirral. Since they arrived in the same year as an equally unprecedented 90 Cattle Egrets, it may be that weather conditions stimulated numbers of both species to stray northwards out of the Mediterranean basin during 2007, even though annual totals of the two species are not closely correlated (fig. 3). Since 1980, there have been more-than-average numbers of Cattle Egrets in seven years but only in two of those years (1986 and 2007) were the numbers of Glossy Ibises above average. Although populations in southeast Europe have been undergoing a slow decline in recent years (BirdLife International 2004), colonies in the western Mediterranean have been stable or (notably in Spain) expanding, so perhaps the numbers seen in Britain are simply a reflection of these trends. This suggestion is supported by a bird ringed as a chick in the Coto Doñana, Spain, which spent two months in Lincolnshire in early 2008, having arrived via Co. Wexford.

Glossy Ibis has certainly been commoner in recent decades, with three in the 1960s, 15 in the 1970s, 28 in the 1980s and 20 in the 1990s. Going even further back, however, double-figure influxes are not

![Glossy Ibises Plegadis falcinellus, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, April 2007.](image)

**Fig. 3.** Accepted records of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* and Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* in Britain since 1980.
unprecedented. At least 12 such influxes occurred between 1900 and 1945, and a minimum of 80 birds appeared between 1906 and 1909. Glossy Ibis is doubtless being recorded more effectively now, by mobile birders with good optics and via a well-oiled recording system, than in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so there may have been even more birds reaching Britain 100–200 years ago. Whatever the long-term trend, it is certainly welcome to see more of these odd, somewhat prehistoric-looking birds roaming around the country at the moment.

(Regularly breeds France & Spain; otherwise, European breeding range centred N & W of Black Sea in Ukraine & Romania, with small, declining population in Balkans. To E, breeds from Volga River to Kazakhstan. Palearctic population migratory, most wintering in E Africa, but W European population wintering Morocco & Mediterranean basin. Resident or dispersive populations occur in Africa, S Asia, Australia, E USA & the Caribbean.)

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* (2, 22, 1)


(Fragmented range on steppe grasslands from Ukraine E through Russia to 100°E & S to Kazakhstan & NW China. Occasionally breeds to W of main range in Europe. Migratory, wintering throughout much of E & C Africa & the Indian subcontinent.)

**Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* (0, 153, 3)

Cornwall Stepper Point, juvenile white-morph, 16th January to 12th March, photo (A. Davies, C. Selway et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 115; plate 264); presumed same Pentire Point, Wadebridge, 13th–21st March (per [www.birdguides.com](http://www.birdguides.com)).

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, adult white-morph, 17th February, photo (S. Money et al.). St Kilda, white-morph, 20th May, found dead, photo (S. Bain, J. Harden, W. T. S. Miles et al.).

2006 Durham Barnard’s Castle, adult white-morph, 12th January, photo (per M. Newsome).

2006 Shetland Fetlar, white-morph, 27th December to 21st January 2007 (N. Coutts, B. Thomason et al.).

2002 Isles of Scilly St Martin’s and St Mary’s, juvenile white-morph, 15th–23rd December (M. S. Scott et al.).

Gyr Falcons are monotypic but polymorphic. White-morph birds breed in the high Arctic, dark-morph birds breed in Canada and do not occur in Europe, while grey-morph birds breed closest to Britain, in Fennoscandia and Iceland (where many birds are intermediate between grey and white morphs) (Forsman 1999). Non-white morphs have occurred in Britain since at least the nineteenth century (when they were referred to as ‘Iceland Falcon’, as opposed to the white-morph ‘Greenland Falcon’) but are surprisingly rare, with only 11 records published in BBRC reports (note that the

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**Fig. 4.** Accepted records of Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* in Britain since 1950 by month of discovery, showing those in Shetland, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides separately from those at other sites.
plumage phase has not always been published along-
side records and at least one other grey-morph bird has 
occurred, but not been published as such).

Being more difficult to identify, non-white morphs 
tend to be controversial, perhaps especially since all 
the twitchable birds have been white morphs, but two 
grey-morph Gyrs have been found dead: in Anglesey in 
1972 and Orkney in 1999. Recently, identification has 
become even more difficult, 
since eliminating falconer’s 
hybrids has become a very 
real problem. Saker *F. cherrug* 
× Gyr hybrids appear to be 
quite frequent in captivity 
and birds do escape – one 
which escaped in southern 
Scotland spent several 
months in Shetland in 2004 

What appears to be a 
good-candidate grey-morph bird was photographed in the Outer Hebrides in November 2007. Initial 
investigations suggest that it resembled birds of the Icelandic population but the record was submitted 
only shortly before this report went to press.

However, even white-morph birds may not be straightforward. Although some are conspicuous, 
ev even reported by members of the public, not all of them are finally tracked down to a roost site like the 
Cornish bird in 2007. For example, the Shetland bird above was seen only briefly on five occasions 
during a month, and descriptions of birds like these are often necessarily brief. These elusive individ-
uals do, however, tend to occur at times and in places where Gyr Falcons may be expected.

Since 1950, just over 150 Gyr Falcons have been seen in Britain. Almost exactly half of these have 
been in the Scottish archipelagos of Shetland, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides. Of the remainder, 30 
have been seen in the rest of Scotland, 20 in southwest England between Devon and Scilly, 20 else-
where in England and just four in Wales. Perhaps surprisingly, the pattern of occurrence of these two 
groups is remarkably similar, suggesting that birds away from the Scottish islands are probably also 
wild birds; even the bird in Durham in 2006, which hit a window in a garden in the Pennines, circum-
stances that led to some debate about its provenance. What is also noticeable is the clear spring 
passage, peaking in April in Britain as a whole, but extending into May in the Scottish islands (fig. 4). 
Overall, more than a third of all records are in March and April.

(In Europe, most numerous in Iceland & Norway, smaller populations breeding N Sweden, Finland & Arctic Russia. 
To E, breeds across Arctic Siberia, Alaska, N Canada & Greenland. European birds mostly resident but high Arctic 
breeders from N Canada & Greenland migratory, occasionally wintering S to NW Europe.)
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**Little Crake *Porzana parva* (63, 36, 1)**


(Fragmented distribution across temperate steppe of W Pal., from Austria through Ukraine & European Russia to W Siberia, C Kazakhstan & NW China. Small numbers occasionally breed to N & W, reaching The Netherlands, Finland & Spain. Most winter in NE & E Africa, although some W to Senegal.)

**Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (130, 241, 1)**

Sussex Pannel Valley, Icklesham, 4th June, photo (P. Jones *et al.*).


2005 Suffolk Orfordness, two, male & female, 16th–30th May, photo; revised dates, mating seen and empty nest found *(Brit. Birds* 100: 35).

(Breeds along Atlantic coast of France & locally throughout Mediterranean basin to Black Sea. To E, breeds from S Siberia & C Asia to NW China & S to Hong Kong. Most European birds winter in sub-Saharan Africa and, increasingly, in SW Iberia. Asian breeders winter across S & SE Asia & S China. Other distinctive races occur in Australasia, the Americas & Hawaii.)

**Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (4, 45, 1)**

Shetland Bannamin, West Burra, first-summer female, 6th April to 5th May, photo (R. A. Haywood *et al.*). *(Brit. Birds* 100: plate 142; plate 266); presumed same Exnaboe and Virkie, Mainland, 14th May to 19th November, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*).

The only record for the year seemed typical at first; found in early April by Russ Haywood on his local patch at Banna Minn, it had apparently gone the next day. However, it was relocated just over a week later, when it seemed to be paired up with a male Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*, and it remained in the area for almost a month. It was then relocated some 19 km SSE in south Mainland Shetland (this time found by the BB editor while out jogging!). Yet again, it was apparently paired with a male Ringed Plover (the same one?), and was observed in a broken-wing distraction display on more than one
occasion. It remained in the area until November, although from mid June it was increasingly to be found at the Pool of Virkie, the nearest thing in Shetland to an estuary.

Even more incredibly, it reappeared in the Virkie area on 6th March 2008, just under four months after it had last been seen there. It was more wide-ranging after its return, however, and was recorded on the islands of Mousa and Noss in April.

In 2007, the bird spent 227 days in Shetland, an unprecedented stay for this species in Britain, although some autumn or winter arrivals have been present for up to two months. There are no other summering records and all previous sightings have been between late September and early May. This was only the second for Shetland and, apart from twelve in Scilly and five in the Outer Hebrides, the 50 British records are surprisingly widespread geographically.

(Breeds S Alaska, S Canada & throughout USA to Mexico. Northern breeders migratory, wintering S USA & Mexico to Columbia. Other races resident in Caribbean & South America.)

Pacific Golden Plover Pluvialis fulva (2, 60, 1)

Yorkshire Spurn, 17th July, adult, photo (A. A. Hutt, I. Smith et al.).

(Breeds across Siberian tundra from Yamal Peninsula E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, including New Siberian islands, & W Alaska. Small numbers winter regularly Kenya & Persian Gulf, main wintering range from Indian subcontinent to S China & S Japan, S through SE Asia to Australia, New Zealand & islands in C Pacific.)

White-tailed Lapwing Vanellus leucurus (0, 4, 1)

Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock WWT reserve, adult, 6th–8th June, photo (R. Hesketh et al. per P. N. Collin) (Brit. Birds 100: plate 187; plate 267); see also Lancashire & North Merseyside.

Lancashire & North Merseyside Leighton Moss, adult, 10th–17th June, photo (E. & J. McLachlan et al. per S. J. White); see also Dumfries & Galloway.

This striking lapwing, with its long yellow legs, black-and-white wings and lilac-tinged, grey-brown body, is not easily overlooked, so with only five records ever it remains a genuine rarity. This is also the case throughout continental Europe, where it remains an extreme vagrant to the west of its mostly Central Asian breeding haunts. Isolated records in Europe predominate but a pattern of occasional influxes is starting to form. The first British record, at Packington, Warwickshire, in July 1975, formed part of such an incursion into Europe, involving eight birds from no fewer than seven European countries, as far apart as Sicily in the south and Finland in the north. A more recent influx, which brought about 50 individuals to the Black Sea coast of Romania between 30th April and 16th July 2000, resulted in breeding by seven pairs at three sites in that country in 2000, with further attempts in the two subsequent years. Sadly, no birds were found in Britain that year, though one did venture as close as The Netherlands. Observers who have witnessed the rather catholic nesting requirements in
Romania will appreciate that lack of habitat is not a limiting factor in any potential westwards spread.

This year’s bird, the first for 23 years, reinforced the belief that late spring and summer is the time to look for this species. (Occasionally breeds along Black Sea coast of Romania. To E, main breeding range from Armenia & E Caspian Sea, E along Syr Darya & Amu Darya through Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan to S Kazakhstan, & S to Iraq & N Iran. Resident in Iraq & S Iran, but N populations winter Pakistan to N/C India, & also S Egypt & N Sudan.)

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (0, 82, 3)
Cambridgeshire Ouse Fen, 19th May, photo (I. D. Ellis, R. M. Patiente, R. Thomas et al.).
Isles of Scilly Porth Hellick, St Mary’s, adult, 15th–18th August, photo (B. Geldenhuis, R. Mawer, K. Webb et al.).
Pembrokeshire Gann Estuary, juvenile, 14th–27th October, photo (D. Astins, P. Grennard et al.).
2006 Cleveland Saltholme Pools, adult, 5th–11th July, photo (C. Sharp et al.) (Brit. Birds 100: 711); note revised observers.

(Breeds on tundra of W Alaska, E across Arctic Canada to S Baffin Island & coastal Labrador. Has bred extreme NE Siberia. Migrates across Great Plains & E seaboard of USA to winter in C America & coasts of tropical South America to Brazil & Peru.)

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (4, 28, 1)
Outer Hebrides Butt of Lewis, Isle of Lewis, juvenile, 12th October, photo (A. & J. Drake) (plate 268).
(Breeds in C & S Alaska, E across N Canada to Labrador & Newfoundland. Winters in S USA, C America, the Caribbean & South America, S to Brazil & N Chile.)

Baird’s Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (1, 199, 8)
Argyll Loch a’ Phuill, Tiree, first-summer, 30th–31st May, photo (J. Bowler).
North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary, juvenile, 30th September (H. E. Maggs et al.).
Perth & Kinross Loch Leven, juvenile, 12th–17th October, photo (J. J. Squire et al.).
(Breeds in extreme NE Siberia on Chukotskiy Peninsula & Wrangel Island, E across N Alaska & Arctic Canada to N Baffin Island & NW Greenland. Migrates through North American interior to winter in South American Andes, from S Ecuador to Tierra del Fuego.)
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (4, 22, 2)


**Yorkshire** Sammy’s Point, adult, 8th September, photo (J. Grist *et al.*).

These two records, the first since 2004, are typical of this species’ appearances in Britain, both being adults and turning up during the well-established peak period. Over 80% of all records have been of adults and the shortage of juveniles is mirrored by a number of other East Asian wader species. The reasons why juveniles are quite so rare remain unclear. Similarly, almost 80% of all records have been in August–September, with just three in October and single birds in July, April and, more surprisingly, January. Apart from 1985, with three, and 1973, with two, 2007 is the only other year to produce more than a single record. These two bring the total to five since 2000, a slightly better showing than the three during the 1990s.

Prior to 1985, Kent had not recorded this species, but since then it has become established as the joint-best county, the Oare Marshes bird being its fourth. Norfolk can match this total but the last record was in 1892, so the county is surely overdue a visit! There are three records from Cleveland but the general spread of records shows a distinctly southern bias, plus an interesting cluster in North Wales and just four records from Scotland.

The relatively small population size and primarily north–south track of the species’ migration route probably accounts for its continued rarity here and it remains a highly desirable find for wader watchers.

(Breeding range restricted to Siberian tundra from Yana River to Kolyma River delta, possibly further E. Migrant through coastal Alaska, China & Japan to winter New Guinea, Australia & New Zealand.)

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Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (15, 206, 2)

**Cleveland** Saltholme Pools, adult, 27th May to 1st June, photo (C. Bielby *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Breydon Water, 21st–22nd May, photo (I. N. Smith *et al.*).

**2006 Lothian** Aberlady Bay, juvenile, 19th–20th August, photo (K. Gillon, E. Ogston, I. Thomson *et al.*).

(Nominate European race breeds in boreal forest bogs of N Norway, Sweden & Finland, and into Arctic Russia, where distribution uncertain. It migrates through E Mediterranean, Black & Caspian Seas to winter in Persian Gulf, W India & Sri Lanka, with small numbers in coastal E Africa. E race *sibirica* breeds from Taimyr Peninsula to Kolyma River delta, and winters from Bay of Bengal through coastal SE Asia to Australia.)

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Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* North American race *G. g. delicata*, ‘Wilson’s Snipe’ (0, 1, 0)

**1998 Isles of Scilly** Lower Moors, St Mary’s, 9th October to 7th April 1999, photo (B. Bland *et al.*).

The tortuous journey of Wilson’s Snipe onto the British List has been relatively well documented. This bird was initially reported as a Wilson’s Snipe in *Birding World* and *Birdwatch* but BBRC was concerned that some of the key identification features (axillary pattern, width of white tips of secondaries, outer-tail-feather pattern) were in the overlap zone between *delicata* and nominate *gallinago*. We were then left with the task of examining the shape and measurements of the outer-tail feather from the published photographs. Our initial analysis, based on museum specimens at the Natural History Museum, suggested that the shape was also in the overlap zone. BBRC felt that, for the first record of Wilson’s Snipe, it had to be 100% and that this fell just short of the mark. It was thus published as unacceptable in our report of 2004 (*Brit. Birds* 98: 692).

Killian Mullarney subsequently suggested a new way of interpreting the photographs and Ian Lewington modelled this methodology with specimens, again at the NHM. This analysis was strongly in favour of the identification of the Scilly bird as *delicata* and it has subsequently been accepted as such by both BBRC and BOUCR. Although the process of acceptance has been arduous, it has allowed us to be fairly confident about the way we should proceed with such records in the future and we have devised the following list of statements to sum up the current situation:

- owing to the variability of *gallinago*, there is overlap in most identification features of *delicata*;
- safe identification is only possible for those *delicata* whose plumage lies outside this overlap zone;

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some *delicata* will not be safely identifiable in the field in Britain;

any record of *delicata* in Britain would require prolonged views and high-quality photographs;

if *delicata* proves to be a regular vagrant in Britain, it is possible that, in future, identification may be possible using a suite of ‘soft’ features’ (as our understanding of identification criteria improves).

AOU considers *delicata* and *gallinago* to be separate species because of differences in winnowing display sounds and morphology. These represent two of a significant number of Nearctic/Palearctic sister taxa that are worthy of consideration by BOURC’s Taxonomic Sub-committee. A paper discussing the separation of *delicata* from *gallinago* recently appeared in *British Birds* (Reid 2008).

(Breeds throughout North America from N Alaska & N Canada S to N California & North Carolina. Winters SW Canada & throughout USA & C America to N South America.)

**Great Snipe Gallinago media** (562, 150, 1)
Norfolk Blakeney Point, 21st August (J. R. McCallum et al.).

(Scarce & local breeder in Norway & Sweden, which hold most of declining European population. Smaller and fragmented population breeds from Poland to Estonia. Also breeds E through European Russia, W & N Siberia to Yenisey River. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

**Long-billed Dowitcher Limnodromus scolopaceus** (6, 179, 6)
Anglesey Alaw Estuary and Inland Sea, first-winter, 28th November 2006 to 1st April, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: 715, plate 116).

Cornwall Hayle Estuary, adult, 14th–17th July, photo (P. Freestone, M. Halliday, J. H. Johns).

Devon Bowling Green Marsh, juvenile/first-winter, 1st October to 29th March 2008, photo (M. Knott et al.).

Essex Stour Estuary, Mistley and Manningtree, 9th March to 15th April, photo (T. Nicholson, M. Nowers et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 143; plate 269); see also Suffolk.

Kent Oare Marshes, juvenile/first-winter, 2nd October 2006 to 12th April, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: 715). Bough Beech Resr, juvenile, 29th September to 2nd October, photo (per www.birdguides.com); presumed same Minnis Bay, 3rd October (T. Hodge, D. Smith), and Oare Marshes and Elmley, 5th–16th October, photo (C. D. Abrams et al.).

Lincolnshire Branston Fen, juvenile, 24th September to 14th October, photo (per www.birdguides.com).

Norfolk Titchwell RSPB reserve, juvenile, 21st–25th September, photo (B. Lewis et al.); presumed same Salt-house, 2nd October (A. J. Gardiner).

Suffolk Stour Estuary, Brantham, 9th March to 15th April, photo (T. Nicholson, M. Nowers et al.); see also Essex.


2006 Yorkshire Nosterfield, 1st May, photo (A. M. Hanby, G. Rickers et al.).
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

North American race *N. p. hudsonicus*, ‘Hudsonian Whimbrel’ (0, 3, 2)

_Cumbria_ Walney Island, first-summer, 14th June to 19th August, photo (T. Phizacklea, C. Raven et al.) (plates 270 & 271).

_Fair Isle_ Buness, adult, 29th–31st August, photo (D. N. Shaw et al.) (Brit. Birds 100: plates 292 & 293). This is one of the rarest North American waders to reach Europe. These two individuals are only the fourth and fifth British records of this highly distinctive race of Whimbrel, following two in Shetland (Fair Isle, May 1955, Out Skerries, July to August 1974) and one in Gwent (Goldcliff Pools, May 2000). The only other European records come from Ireland, in Co. Kerry in October 1957 and Co. Wexford in September 1980.

The South Walney bird, aged as a first-summer based upon the timing and extent of wing moult, occurred at a time when young birds of both *N. p. hudsonicus* and European *N. p. phaeopus* would normally remain in their tropical wintering grounds. Quite why it took up residence in northern England for two months remains a mystery, but the fact that it was in primary moult might explain the missing migratory urge to continue on further north. The Fair Isle bird was a worn adult, perhaps on its way back south after spending the summer on the breeding grounds of *phaeopus* in northern Europe.

North American *hudsonicus* exhibits a range of morphological differences from the European form, making it rather more than just a Whimbrel with a brown rump. Although the dark rump may be the most eye-catching feature, the combination of tawny-brown underwings, blacker coronal bands standing out starkly within a more contrasting face pattern, buff-washed underbody (indeed a virtual absence of pure white anywhere), and an obviously pale base to the lower mandible create a very different appearance from European *phaeopus*. In addition, some observers commented on the proportionately longer bills that these two birds showed when seen alongside their European counterparts. These differences in appearance, together with significant differences between the mitochondrial DNA-sequences of *hudsonicus* and the East Asian form *N. p. variegatus*, led Zink et al. (1995) to suggest strongly that the three forms might best be considered as sister species. Such a split is currently being considered by BOU’s Taxonomic Sub-committee.

(Breeds on tundra of W & N Alaska & N Canada E to Hudson Bay & Greenland. Migrates through Canada & USA to winter in coastal regions of S USA, S to Chile & Brazil.)

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Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (0, 66, 1)


(European range restricted to small population in N Gulf of Bothnia, Finland, & Belarus. To E, breeds widely but locally throughout N Russia to E Siberia. Winters widely along coasts of S & E Africa to Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia & Australasia.)

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* (1, 136, 11)

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<th>Photo Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Avon Chew Valley Lake</td>
<td>adult, 7th–9th August, photo (K. E. Vinicombe et al.)</td>
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<td>Cornwall Hayle Estuary</td>
<td>juvenile/first-winter to first-summer, 27th September to 15th October 2006, photo (Brit. Birds 100: plate 117; 101: plate 160)</td>
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<td>East Glamorgan Lisvane Resr, Cardiff, juvenile/first-winter to first-summer, 20th October to 28th April 2008, photo (P. Bristow et al.)</td>
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<td>Isles of Scilly</td>
<td>Porth Hellick, St Mary's, juvenile, 27th August to 25th September, photo (B. Thomas, W. H. Wagstaff et al.) (plate 272).</td>
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<td>Lincolnshire Messingham Sand Quarry</td>
<td>adult, 31st May, photo (D. Nicholson et al.).</td>
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<td>Outer Hebrides Loch Ordais and Bragar, Isle of Lewis</td>
<td>first-winter, 27th September, photo (M. S. Scott).</td>
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<td>Shetland Lamba Ness, Unst, juvenile</td>
<td>21st September to 4th October, photo (H. Moncrieff, M. G. Pennington, K. D. Shaw et al.).</td>
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<td>Upper Forth Kinneil Lagoon</td>
<td>adult, 24th December to 14th April 2008, photo (G. Owens, R. Shand et al.).</td>
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<td>Warwickshire Draycote Water, adult</td>
<td>20th July, photo (R. Norris et al.).</td>
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(Breeds over much of North America from W Alaska to Newfoundland & S to California, Texas & North Carolina. Some winter in coastal USA to S of breeding range but most winter in C America, Caribbean & N South America, S to N Argentina & Chile.)

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 25, 1)

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<td>Outer Hebrides St Kilda</td>
<td>27th–31st August, photo (S. E. Duffield et al.).</td>
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(Breeds C & S Alaska through subarctic Canada to Quebec & Labrador. Migrates throughout USA and winters Caribbean & C America, S to Argentina.)
Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (6, 19, 3)

**Hampshire** Farlington Marshes, 26th–27th September, photo (K. Crisp, J. Crook *et al.*).

**Lincolnshire** Frieston Shore RSPB reserve, adult, 9th April and 19th May, photo (S. Keightley *et al.*); presumed same Gibraltar Point, 30th–31st May, photo (E. J. Mackrill, J. P. Shaughnessy, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

**Shetland** Foula, juvenile, 11th October, photo (M. A. Maher, B. H. Thomason, M. A. Wilkinson *et al.*). The three here make 2007 the joint-best year ever for this rare *Tringa* (there were also three in 1985) and, with only 28 records to date, it remains one of the rarest of American waders to reach Britain. The pattern of occurrence, as shown in fig. 5, is revealing. The graph shows the month of first arrival and, while May is clearly the peak month to be checking all fly-over Greenshanks *T. nebularia*, the spread of 19 new arrivals in autumn as opposed to just nine in spring suggests that some individuals at least are capable of a direct transatlantic crossing.

Offshore autumn migration of a proportion of southbound Greater Yellowlegs was described by Brady (1990–1991), and some individuals may therefore be vulnerable to displacement by fast-moving Atlantic depressions. Three previous records, from Scilly in August and September and Cornwall in October, support this hypothesis, as do five Irish records: from Co. Cork in August, Antrim, Kerry and Londonderry in September and Donegal in October. However, McNeil & Cadieux (1972) found that Greater Yellowlegs do not generally store enough fat for long transatlantic flights, which leads to the idea that British and Irish birds may be arriving via Greenland and perhaps Iceland, as described by Vinicombe & Cottridge (1996). In this way, overshooting spring birds may account for records on the Outer Hebrides in April and Argyll and Highland in May, while reverse migrants in the autumn could account for records from Argyll, North-east Scotland, the Outer Hebrides and Shetland. The Cumbrian bird of October–November 1994 was thought to be the same individual seen later in Belgium and perhaps provides the best evidence to date of this theory. Drawing a line back from Belgium and through Cumbria leads to the Hudson Bay area, via Greenland, on a great-circle route.

The spread of remaining records in Britain serves only to confuse the picture, and is perhaps best explained by birds that have arrived on this side of the Atlantic in previous years and are now migrating along the East Atlantic Flyway. Four midwinter records from Ireland suggest that this may be a good time to check for this species among Greenshanks in the sheltered estuaries of the southwest. An accessible, long-staying Greater Yellowlegs would certainly be welcomed by many birders, as this year’s trio put in typically brief appearances.

The identification of Greater Yellowlegs has been well-served in the literature, but can still be surprisingly tricky on lone individuals where the crucial differences in size and structure are more difficult to evaluate accurately. In breeding plumage, Greater shows heavier black barring on the underparts than Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*, and sometimes barring extending across the belly. In non-breeding plumage, a good starting point is the size and structure of the bill and whether it shows a distinctly paler base. Lesser Yellowlegs has an attenuated rear end, while that of Greater is blunter, owing to relatively shorter primaries. Vocalisations are usually distinctive, with Greater Yellowlegs having a clearer, more ringing ‘dee-dee-dee’ flight call compared to the sharper, more clipped double ‘tu-tu’ of Lesser Yellowlegs. The number of notes is not diagnostic, however, and observers should pay close attention to the exact tone, as well as the more easily assessed number of notes.

(Breeds from S Alaska across subarctic Canada E to Labrador & Newfoundland. Migrates throughout USA to winter in coastal S USA, C America, Caribbean & South America.)
**Lesser Yellowlegs* *Tringa flavipes* (19, 256, 10)**

Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, first-winter, 10th November to 9th March 2008, photo (N. Mitchell *et al.*).

Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, 6th–14th May, photo (J. Armitage, I. Brooke, J. How per J. Dickson).

Essex Hanningfield Resr, juvenile, 22nd September, photo (D. Acfield *et al.*).

Herefordshire Stretton Sugwas, 28th April to 5th May, photo (S. P. Coney, P. H. Downes *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Porth Hellick, St Mary’s, 15th October (T. Francis).
Lancashire & North Merseyside Leighton Moss, adult, 24th–27th July, photo (J. Fenton et al. per S. J. White).

Norfolk Thornham, first-winter, 13th January to 10th February, photo (J. Bhalerao, A. Morgen et al.) (Brit. Birds 100: plate 81; plate 273).

Orkney Loch of Tankerness, Mainland, juvenile, 19th and 28th September, photo (K. E. Hague); presumed same Shapinsay, 6th–8th October, photo (P. Hollinrake, S. J. Williams et al.).

Outer Hebrides Peninerine, South Uist, juvenile, 1st September, photo (S. E. Duffield, T. Fountain).

Suffolk Tinker’s Marshes, juvenile, 25th–26th September (P. Hobbs et al.); presumed same Minsmere RSPB reserve, 30th October to 9th November, photo (B. Buffery et al.); and Southwold Town Marsh, 21st December to 9th February 2008, photo (B. J. Small et al.).

(Breeds throughout much of subarctic Alaska & Canada, east to James Bay. Migrates through USA, where some overwinter, but majority winter from Caribbean & C America to Chile & Argentina.)

Marsh Sandpiper Tringa stagnatilis (6, 122, 2)


Suffolk Trimley Marshes, 31st August, photo (P. Oldfield).

(Occasionally breeds Finland & Baltic countries to Ukraine & W Russia. To E, breeds commonly in forest-steppe region of Siberia to Mongolia & NE China. Winters throughout sub-Saharan Africa, especially E Africa, & Indian subcontinent E to S China & SE Asia; also Australia.)

Wilson’s Phalarope Phalaropus tricolor (0, 216, 4)

Buckinghamshire Willen Lake, adult female, 24th–26th August, photo (A. V. Harding, A. Ploszajski et al.); see also Durham/Yorkshire.

Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, adult female, 4th–9th May, photo (C. D. Addington et al.) (Brit. Birds 100: plate 157); presumed same Nene Washes, 10th–11th May, photo (J. P. Taylor et al.).

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, juvenile/first-winter, 6th–8th September, photo (D. H. Taylor et al.).

Durham Bishop Middleham, adult female, 15th–18th August, photo (D. Charlton, S. Evans et al. per M. Newsome) (Brit. Birds 100: plate 294); see also Buckinghamshire/Yorkshire.


Yorkshire Catterick, adult female, 18th–19th August, photo (S. Clifton, R. Marshall et al.); see also Buckinghamshire/Durham.

(Breeds interior W Canada south to California and throughout mid-west states of USA; also S Ontario. Most migrate through interior USA and winter in South America from Peru S to Argentina & Chile.)

Laughing Gull Larus atricilla (1, 173, 5)


Devon R. Teign, Exmouth, Topsham and Countess Wear area, first-winter to second-winter, 13th January to 15th December, photo (M. Knott et al.).

Outer Hebrides Coot Loch, Benbecula, second-summer, 7th May, photo (S. E. Duffield, J. Kemp, B. Rabbitts).

Shetland Fitrhis Voe and Swinister Voe, Mainland, first-winter, 8th–22nd December, photo (M. S. Chapman et al.).

2006 Cornwall Hayle Estuary, first-winter, 1st May, photo (L. P. Williams); presumed same as Newlyn (Brit. Birds 100: 716).


2006 Outer Hebrides Traigh Athmor, North Uist, adult, 6th June (J. Boyle, M. Finn).


(Locally common from Nova Scotia, S along E seaboard of USA to Florida & Gulf coast, the Caribbean, & C America to N Venezuela. Southern populations largely resident but N breeders winter within southern breeding range.)
Franklin’s Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 53, 6)


**Devon** Topsham, adult, 10th June (K. & V. Fox). Braunton, River Caen, 29th August, adult, photo (L. & S. Bruce et al.).

**Oxfordshire** Farmoor Resr, adult, 10th–11th November, photo (N. J. Hallam et al.).

**2005 Gloucestershire** Newnham-on-Severn, adult or second-winter, 22nd March (*Brit. Birds* 100: 48); note revised year, not 2004.

(Breeds locally throughout interior provinces of temperate W Canada, E to Great Lakes & S to mid-west USA. Winters along Pacific coast of South America, from Guatemala to Chile.)

Audouin’s Gull *Larus audouinii* (0, 2, 2)

**Devon** Seaton Marshes, adult or third-summer, 14th August, photo (G. M. Haig, S. Waite et al.).

**Kent** Dungeness, second-summer, 16th May, photo (R. Butcher, D. Walker et al.).

These records represent the third and fourth for Britain and include the second record for Dungeness. Despite being first recorded in 2003, it appears that this species may appear increasingly frequently. Gutiérrez & Guinart (2008) discussed the possible origin of our vagrant Audouin’s Gulls, indicating that they may well arrive from the central and eastern Mediterranean populations, rather than the larger Spanish colonies. They also noted that second-summer birds are most likely to be recorded as vagrants (and now three of the four British records are of that age class), so it appears unlikely that younger birds are being overlooked. The older Devon bird may either have been a non-breeder that had wandered from the species’ breeding range or could represent post-breeding dispersal.

(Breeds throughout Mediterranean basin from Spain E to Greece & Turkey, with majority at Ebro Delta & Chafarinas Islands, Spain. Majority winter along the Atlantic seaboard of Africa, from Morocco to Senegal & Gambia.)

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

**Northeast European race** *L. f. fuscus*, ‘Baltic Gull’ (0, 1, 1)

**Gloucestershire** Hempsted, adult, 18th–20th April, ringed as a pullus in Finland in 2004, photo (J. D. Sanders).

**1981 Suffolk** Orfordness, adult, found dead, 24th October, ringed as a pullus in Finland in 1978 (per BOURC).

The identification, and assessment of claims, of Lesser Black-backed Gulls of the nominate race *fuscus* (sometimes known as ‘Baltic Gull’) has had a chequered and complicated history in Britain. Prior to this record, there had been a number of recent claims (many of them looking very promising) that were ultimately considered not proven. Discussion within BBRC almost always revolved around two issues: firstly, our confidence about whether the field characteristics were fully resolved; and, secondly, if they were, whether they could be applied with any degree of certainty to the records received. These same questions can be found in the minds of any gull enthusiast looking for *fuscus* among their local Lesser Black-backs. With uncertainty about the first issue, we were left with even more of problem with the second.

Lars Jonsson’s groundbreaking article (Jonsson 1998) confirmed the difficulty involved in identifying ‘Baltic Gull’ in adult and immature plumages. This has been followed by several recent papers, including Winters (2006), which contain as many questions as answers. These articles question the precision with which it was once thought possible to assign the three forms of Lesser Black-backed Gull. This had often been done simply on the mantle tone of adults, which was thought to grade from the paler grey of the western form (*graellsii*), eastwards through a darker grey intermediate form (*intermedius*), to almost black in the Baltic region of Scandinavia (*fuscus*). We now know that this picture is far too simplistic, with complications such as very dark, *fuscus*-like birds in *intermedius* populations, and intergrade populations between *graellsii* and *intermedius* (like those on Orfordness, in Suffolk).

Other subtle elements, such as the timing of moult, are also relevant but even these are now ques-
tioned or open to different interpretations. Further problems are apparent with non-adult birds, and BBRC ultimately made the decision that, given the lack of clarity, it would adopt the protocols widely used by other records committees (e.g. the Dutch CDNA) and would accept only ringed birds of known provenance. This may seem harsh, but for the time being it remains a cautious but workable approach. Nonetheless, BBRC also encourages observers to submit well-documented claims of unringed birds as they add to the overall picture and improve our understanding; they are also archived, in case future assessors become more confident.

Jonsson (1998) expressed concerns over the validity of records of ringed *fuscus* in the UK, noting that some pulli ringed as *fuscus* have been misidentified Herring Gull *L. argentatus* chicks. He went on to raise doubts about the provenance of the (then) five British ringing recoveries, commenting that 'the identity of all 12 reported recoveries of *fuscus* from the North Sea area can be questioned.' Some are questionable for the circumstances in which they were found, others for the date. The record which now stands as the first for Britain concerns a fourth-calendar-year bird ringed as a pullus in Finland in July 1978 and found off the Suffolk coast on 24th October 1981. Jonsson commented that this report lacked 'basic information regarding the circumstances of the findings, and the exact localities are also very vague.' However, this record has since been examined by BOURC, who concluded that it should be retained as the first for Britain.

The discovery of the bird in Gloucestershire by John Sanders is admirable and a clear reward for many hours spent watching gulls. This bird had been ringed as a pullus at Pietersaari, Vaasa, Finland, on 5th July 2004 and its colour ring provided the essential evidence of its origin.

(Breeds along Baltic coasts of Sweden and Finland, inland to N & E Finland, rarely N Norway and W Russia. Migrates S across E Europe, Black Sea, E Mediterranean and Middle East to winter coastal E Africa & W Rift Valley Lakes.)

**American Herring Gull Larus smithsonianus (0, 14, 2)**

**Argyll** Gott, Isle of Tiree, first-winter, 20th March, photo (J. Bowler); presumed same Loch Bhasapol, Isle of Tiree, 25th May, 7th June, photo (J. Bowler).

**Outer Hebrides** Stinky Bay, Benbecula, first-summer, 19th June, photo (J. B. Kemp).

**2004 Outer Hebrides** Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, juvenile, 6th March to 17th April, photo (M. S. Scott). This is the first BBRC report in which American Herring Gull appears as a separate species, following the BOUC decision to treat 'herring gulls' from North America, northern and central Siberia as a distinct species (Sangster *et al.* 2007; Collinson *et al.* 2008) – although this split has not been adopted by the AOU. All British records involve nominate *smithsonianus* from North America (rather than the East Asian *L. s. vegae* and *L. s. mongolicus*) in their often distinctive 'first-cycle' plumage.

With two records in 2007, and this late-accepted one from 2004, there have now been 16 accepted British records, although there are almost as many claims currently in circulation (including some adults and subadults) and it is hoped that a more complete pattern of occurrence of this species will be available soon. This compares with 72 records from Ireland to the end of 2006 (Milne 2008). Including the first for Britain, in Cheshire & Wirral then Lancashire & North Merseyside in 1994, more than half of the accepted records have been discovered in late February or March. There is an expected westerly bias to these occurrences with nine records from southwest England (including three each from Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly), five from northwest Scotland and two from northwest England.

Following several detailed papers concentrating on the identification of immature *smithsonianus* as a vagrant in western Europe (Mullarney 1990; Dubois 1997; Diggin 2001; Hoogendoorn *et al.* 2003; Lonergan & Mullarney 2004), birders are better prepared and more confident in locating juveniles and first-winters, yet it is notable that two observers are responsible for discovering and documenting more than a third of the accepted British records.

Advances have been made in defining criteria for the identification of adult *smithsonianus* (Adriaens & Mactavish 2004) and BBRC welcomes submissions for birds matching these criteria. However, as with first-cycle birds (particularly following cautionary notes regarding the identification of such birds; Adriaens *et al.* 2008), adults and subadults of this species will always require a detailed submission, preferably including photographs.

(Breeds S Alaska E across C & N Canada to S Baffin Island, Labrador, Newfoundland & NE coastal region of USA. Many resident, others winter S to S USA & Mexico. Other races breed Mongolia to C Siberia, & NE Siberia.)
Ross’s Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (1, 88, 0)

**Argyll** Ormsary, first-winter, 14th December 2006 to 15th January, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: 718; plate 275); presumed same Portavadie, 13th–25th February (per J. Dickson) (*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 55).

(Locally common on tundra of NE Siberia from Lena River E to at least Kolyma River. In Canada, rare and local breeder in W Hudson Bay region, perhaps elsewhere. Siberian birds migrate E past Point Barrow, Alaska in September to unknown wintering area assumed to lie near edge of pack ice, perhaps in Bering Sea or N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

Bonaparte’s Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* (8, 141, 10)


**Devon** Plym Estuary, second-winter, 6th–14th January, photo (S. C. Votier et al.), presumed returning bird from Ernesettle Creek 2006 (*Brit. Birds* 100: 717); presumed same River Otter, 31st January to 3rd February, photo (M. Knott et al.). Seaton Marshes, first-summer, 30th April, photo (S. Waite et al.).

**Isles of Scilly** Porthcressa and Porth Mellon, St Mary’s, first-winter, 7th December 2006 to 23rd February, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: 717).

**Moray** & **Nairn** Loch Spynie, first-summer, 23rd–26th May, photo (D. A. Gibson et al.).

**Norfolk** Hickling Broad, first-summer, 12th–26th May, photo (G. Etherington, O. J. Richings et al.). Breydon Water, first-winter, 28th November (P. R. Allard).

**North-east Scotland** Rattray Head, adult, 20th October, photo (A. Biggins, A. Perkins). Peterhead and Ugie Estuary, Aberdeen,
Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (81, 51, 0)

2006 Ayrshire Benslie, Irvine, juvenile, 31st December to 4th January 2007, died in care, photo (per F. Simpson); presumed same as Troon (*Brit. Birds* 100: 718, plate 56).

(In Europe, breeds only in Svalbard. Elsewhere, restricted to islands in the high Arctic between Franz Josef Land & Arctic Canada, with small numbers in N & SE Greenland. Wintering range poorly known, but apparently within or close to edge of pack ice.)

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (51, 270, 2)

Ceredigion Dyfi Estuary, Ynys-hir and Ynyslas, adult, 2nd–7th August, photo (R. Jones *et al*.).

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, 29th September (J. R. Duffie, I. J. Foster, R. C. Taylor *et al*.).

2006 Durham Lizard Point, Whitburn, two, adults, 9th May (P. Hindess); presumed same as Cleveland and Northumberland (*Brit. Birds* 100: 719).


(Small population in N Germany & Denmark. Widespread though local in Spain but colonies are isolated and small elsewhere in Europe. To E, breeds discontinuously from Turkey & SW Russia through Kazakhstan, Mongolia & NW China, with isolated population in NE China. European population winters coastal W Africa, S to Gulf of Guinea. Asian populations winter Persian Gulf to Indian subcontinent & SE Asia. Other races occur Australia & the Americas.)

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (26, 254, 4)

Bedfordshire Marston Vale CP, adult, 20th May, photo (S. Northwood, P. Smith *et al*.).

Derbyshire Willington GP, second-summer, 11th June (R. M. R. James).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Knott End-on-Sea, adult, 2nd July, photo (C. G. Batty *et al*.); presumed same Fairhaven Lake, 5th July (C. I. Bushell per C. Batty).

Northumberland Big Waters, adult, 14th July, photo (J. C. Day, A. J. Johnston *et al*.) (*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 245); presumed same Bothal Pond (A. D. McLevy) and Blyth Estuary (S. T. Holliday *et al*.), both 14th July.

(Isolated and declining European population breeds Baltic coasts of Estonia, Sweden & Finland to head of Gulf of Bothnia. To E, fragmented populations from Black Sea coast of Ukraine across steppe-lake region of C Asia to NW Mongolia & E China. European birds winter W Africa to Gulf of Guinea, Asian birds winter on coasts to S of breeding range. Other populations in Australia, S Africa & North America.)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (23, 129, 4)

Argyll Machrihanish, 9th July (E. Maguire, J. McGlynn).

Cumbria Siddick Ponds, adult, 20th June, photo (J. Manson, N. White *et al*.).

Leicestershire & Rutland Eyebrook Resr, adult, 18th June, photo (A. S. & R. G. Brett); see also Yorkshire.

Staffordshire Belvide Resr, adult, 8th June, photo (S. Nuttall *et al*.).

Yorkshire Pugney's CP and Wintersett Resr, adult, 17th June, photo (P. Smith *et al*.); presumed same Broomhill Flash, 17th June (G. J. Speight *et al*.); see also Leicestershire & Rutland.

(Breeds in small, scattered colonies through S & E Europe from Iberia to Poland. Numerous and widespread from N Black Sea E to W Kazakhstan, with Volga/Ural River complex holding most of European population. Winters tropical W & C Africa & from Nile Delta to E Africa. Other populations in Indian subcontinent, E Asia, S Africa & Australia.)
Brünnich’s Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (1, 38, 2)

**North-east Scotland** Girdle Ness, Aberdeen, 7th November, photo (A. J. Whitehouse et al.).

**Shetland** Scousburgh, Mainland, 25th March, found dead, photo, specimen in NMS (R. Riddington et al.).

A recent analysis of all European records outside the normal range (incorporating both live birds and those picked up dead on beached bird surveys, like the one reported here from Shetland) found that most arrivals in Britain are closely correlated with severe Atlantic weather systems (Van Bemmelen & Wielstra in press). This supports the theory that birds which turn up here have been displaced from distant wintering grounds rather than being from a small population wintering in British waters.

(Apparently declining, but huge colonies remain in Greenland, Iceland, Svalbard & Novaya Zemlya, with tiny population in NE Norway. Outside Europe, breeds on islands off N Siberia into Bering Sea, S to Kuril, Komandorskiye, Aleutian & Pribilof Islands. Also W Alaska & N Canada from Baffin Island to Hudson Bay, Labrador coast & W Greenland. Winters among open leads in pack ice or at sea from Barents Sea S to N Norway, S Greenland, & along Labrador coast S to NE coastal USA. Other populations winter in N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* (0, 2, 1)

**Outer Hebrides** Carnach, North Uist, first-winter, 29th October to 7th November, photo (A. & A. MacDonald, B. Rabbitts et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 101: plate 15; plate 277).

If the Outer Hebrides recorder, Brian Rabbitts, was surprised to be summoned to a neighbour’s garden on North Uist in November 1999 to identify Britain’s first Mourning Dove, he must have been astounded when, on 1st November 2007, he discovered Britain’s second little more than 3 km from the scene of the first (Rabbitts 2007, 2008).

Other accepted Western Palearctic records of this Nearctic species prior to 2007 are restricted to singles on the Isle of Man in October 1989, Iceland in October 1995 and the Azores in November 2005, while a bird in Sweden in June 2001 may have been of captive origin and was placed in Category D of that national list.

Remarkably, the day after the 2007 North Uist Mourning Dove was first identified (it had been noticed by a local crofter on 29th October), Ireland’s first Mourning Dove was discovered on Inishbofin, Co. Galway (McGeehan 2007). McGeehan noted that the weather was favourable for an Atlantic crossing by an American landbird during 27th–29th October 2007, with a strong westerly airflow
reaching western Scotland and northwest Ireland, and the strongest winds of the period being recorded in the Outer Hebrides.
(Breeds SE Alaska & S Canada from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, S throughout USA to Panama & West Indies. Some northern populations remain in S Canada while others winter S to Panama.)

**Great Spotted Cuckoo Clamator glandarius** (3, 39, 1)

Kent Dungeness, 6th–7th March, photo (O. Gabb, R. E. Turley et al.).
(Common summer migrant to Spain, rare and local breeder Portugal, S France & E to Greece. W Asian population uncommon, breeding discontinuously from C Turkey, Cyprus, Israel & Jordan to N Iraq & SW Iran. Palearctic breeders winter in sub-Saharan Africa but range uncertain owing to African populations.)

**Eurasian Scops Owl Otus scops** (45, 37, 0)

Oxfordshire Thrupp, male, 15th May to 5th June (per www.birdguides.com); presumed returning bird from 2006 (Brit. Birds 100: 723).
(Common summer migrant to N Africa & S Europe, from Iberia N to C France & E to Greece. Also breeds across Ukraine, S Russia & S Siberia to W Mongolia, Kazakhstan & Iran. Most winter N equatorial Africa, but some remain in S Europe.)

**Snowy Owl Bubo scandiacus** (194, 169, 12)

North-east Scotland Nr Braeriach, Cairngorms, 5th April, photo (I. Maw).

Outer Hebrides Lewis, adult male, intermittently at Bru, Borve and Uig, 1st January to 12th October, presumed same as Bru 2006 (Brit. Birds 100: 725, plate 119) (M. S. Scott et al.). Lewis, immature male, Borve, 20th February to 26th March, photo (M. S. Scott et al.). Paiblesgarry, North Uist, 3rd–5th April, photo (A. MacDonald, B. Rabbitts et al.). Solas and Aird an Rùnair, North Uist, male, 21st April to 3rd June, photo (J. Boyle, B. Rabbitts et al.). Hirta, St Kilda, adult, 5th April, photo (T. Avent et al.). Hirta, St Kilda, first-year, 24th–31st May, photo (E. Mackley, W. T. S. Miles et al.). Hirta, St Kilda, adult female, 4th–19th June, photo (W. T. S. Miles, S. Money et al.). Hirta, St Kilda, adult male, 4th–29th June, photo (W. T. S. Miles, S. Money et al.). Hirta, St Kilda, subadult male, 8th July to 1st August, photo (E. Mackley, W. T. S. Miles et al.). Hirta, St Kilda, subadult male, 10th July to 5th August, photo (W. T. S. Miles, S. Money et al.).

2006 Outer Hebrides Aird Uig, West Lewis, immature male, 9th September, photo (A. & V. Williams); presumed same as Bru, Lewis (Brit. Birds 100: 725, plate 59).


2005 Outer Hebrides North Harris, Isle of Lewis, 19th March (R. Reid).
(Occasionally breeds N Scandinavia & Iceland, depending on availability of small mammals. Outside Europe, erratic circumpolar breeder across tundra & N islands of Arctic Russia, Siberia, Alaska, Canada & N Greenland. Most disperse S in winter but some resident or nomadic if food available.)

**Hawk Owl Surnia ulula** (8, 1, 0)

1966 Cornwall Gurnard’s Head, 14th August, photo; previously accepted (Brit. Birds 61: 363) but now considered not proven following review.

This species has not featured in a BBRC report since 1998, which saw the removal of the 1959 report from Beasdale Fells, Lancashire and North Merseyside, from the list of accepted records. The last accepted record was as long ago as 1983 (Brit. Birds 77: 538). With the removal of yet another individual from the totals, it becomes even rarer than previously thought, with just two post-nineteenth century records remaining.

The Cornish record was reassessed as part of BOURC’s work to establish the racial identity of the Hawk Owls on the British List. Given the southwest location, it had earlier been thought most likely to have been of the North American race *S. u. caparoch*. But when this record was examined again, there was clearly not sufficient evidence to assign it to a particular race or indeed even to species. This now leaves the Shetland bird from 1983 as the only post-1950 record; this well-documented individual was part of an invasion that included over 1,000 in southern Sweden, suggesting strongly that it was of the nominate race *S. u. ulula*.

The first British record of Hawk Owl was of the American race, caught on a ship off Cornwall in
March 1830, so both the Eurasian and North American races presently remain on the British List, subject to the outcome of the ongoing BOURC review. Separation of the two forms is possible given good views. North American caparoch is darker above than European breeders, while the pattern of the underparts also differs — caparoch shows tawny-brown barring on the flanks and lower belly which equals or is wider than the white barring, compared with the thinner, blackish barring of nominate ulula.

Racial identification is clearly possible, although the finder of the next British Hawk Owl might be forgiven for just enjoying the moment!

(Breeds from N Scandinavia E across N Russia & Siberia to Kamchatka, & S to NE Kazakhstan, Mongolia, NE China & Sakhalin. Resident, some disperse to S & W of breeding range outside breeding season. North American race S. u. caparoch breeds N North America and has occurred in Britain.)

**Pallid Swift Apus pallidus (0, 65, 1)**
**Cornwall** Wadebridge, 12th June (C. Selway).
**2006 Isles of Scilly** Bryher, 23rd July (J. Askin, J. K. Higginson); previously not proven (*Brit. Birds* 100: 753) but now accepted after additional information submitted.

(Locally common throughout Mediterranean basin from Iberia to Greece, but rare or absent from many regions. Outside Europe, breeds locally from Mauritania & Canary Islands across NW Africa & Middle East to Arabian Peninsula & coastal S Iran. Most winters N African tropics, but some remain in S Europe.)

**European Roller Coracias garrulus (195, 110, 2)**
**Breconshire** Usk Resr and Glasfynydd Forest, second-summer, 29th–30th July (A. Davis, M. Hogan); see also Carmarthenshire/Gower.
**Carmarthenshire** Usk Resr and Glasfynydd Forest, second-summer, 29th–31st July (R. Evans, M. Hogan, J. Lloyd); see also Breconshire/Gower.
**Gower** Bryn Common, second-summer, 6th–7th August, photo (B. Stewart *et al.*); see also Breconshire/Carmarthenshire.
**Yorkshire** Easington, unaged, 15th–16th July, photo (A. M. Hanby *et al.*).
**2005 Sussex** Eridge, 11th June (I. & P. Russell).

(Declining, yet remains widespread and numerous in NW Africa & Spain. In E Europe, occurs locally N to Estonia & E to Ukraine. More common from Turkey & S Russia to S Urals, SW Siberia, S Kazakhstan & W China. Winters locally in equatorial W Africa but most in E Africa from Kenya to Zimbabwe. Another race breeds Iran, Afghanistan & N Pakistan, and winters in E Africa.)

**Calandra Lark Melanocorypha calandra (0, 13, 1)**

![Calandra Lark Melanocorypha calandra](image)


(Abundant on steppe grasslands of Iberia & Morocco but uncommon and local throughout much of Mediterranean basin. To E, breeds Ukraine, Turkey & SW Russia to Kazakhstan, NW China & Afghanistan. European & S Asian populations resident or nomadic, while N Asian populations disperse S of breeding range, wintering S to Persian Gulf coast of Iran.)
Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* (0, 7, 0)


This late-autumn record was seen relatively briefly by the two observers, although it did provide the opportunity for repeat viewing and was not simply a straightforward ‘fly-by’. This type of record often provides BBRC members with a very difficult decision – the detail described is compatible with the views but, as a consequence of the circumstances, it does not represent comprehensive documentation of all the salient features of the species.

There are some similarities between this and the first four records of this species in Britain, which all involved birds on single dates, each seen by no more than three observers (the first two records, in 1988, were seen by single observers). The two in 1999 proved the exception to this; they were seen only on single dates at any one location (although one relocated from Leicestershire to Yorkshire), but lingered long enough to be enjoyed by many observers. The pattern of previous records, both geographically and temporally, suggests that this species could be found anywhere in the UK between mid April and late October. The 2006 *Surrey* record is the latest for the UK, but coincided with the arrival of parties of four and three birds on 20th and 22nd October, respectively, in Sweden (the latter group lingering until 1st November) and was followed by an arrival of up to six birds in The Netherlands between 5th and 24th November, which represented the first confirmed Dutch records. Interestingly, vagrancy to the north of the breeding range appears to have increased since the first British record in 1988. In Denmark, the species was first recorded in May 1988 and there have been five subsequent records between May and mid November, with the last in 2000 (when three were seen in May). There have been two accepted records in Finland (June 1988 and May 2003) and two in Sweden (in October 1996 and 2001) prior to the 2006 arrival described above. Crag Martin was first reported in Norway in June 2007, although this record has yet to be accepted.

(Breeds NW Africa & Iberian Peninsula N to S Germany & E through Mediterranean & C Asia, N to Baikal region of S Siberia, S to Tibetan Plateau & E to NE China. S European population mostly resident but Asian populations migratory, wintering in NE Africa, & NW India to NC China.)

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Blyth’s Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 17, 3)

**Fair Isle** Boini Mire, first-winter, 27th October, trapped, photo, died later (M. T. Breaks, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

**Isles of Scilly** Old Grimsby, Tresco, first-winter, 16th–23rd October, photo (D. Acfield, A. White *et al.*) *(Brit. Birds* 101: plates 38 & 279).*

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Shetland  West Voe of Sumburgh, 17th–18th October, photo (R. Martin et al.).
(Breeds S Transbaikalia, N Mongolia & extreme NE China. Winters locally throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka.)

**Olive-backed Pipit Anthus hodgsoni (1, 300, 10)**

Norfolk  Wells Woods, 27th–29th October, photo (J. J. Gilroy, J. R. McCallum et al.).


Yorkshire  Thorngumbald, Hull, 22nd April, photo (L. Hinchcliffe et al.).

(European range restricted to N Urals. Widespread across C & E Siberia to N China, Kamchatka, Kuril Islands & Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & throughout N & C parts of SE Asia. Those in Himalayas & mountains of W/C China winter throughout Indian subcontinent.)

**Pechora Pipit Anthus gustavi (4, 71, 4)**


One of the highlights of the year for many birders was the discovery of this striking pipit in a small area of woodland in Fishguard, Pembrokeshire. Staying for five days, it put on a delightful show for the crowd, and represented the first record for Wales. Pechora Pipit remains a major prize for birders everywhere, and fig. 6 reveals that despite the relatively large number now seen in Britain, there is no realistic alternative to the far north if you want to add this species to your ‘self-found’ list. Shetland, including Fair Isle, accounts for 66 of the 79 British records, but the recent trend is for birds on this archipelago to be found away from Fair Isle. The increasing coverage afforded in recent years to Mainland Shetland and other islands in the group is paying dividends and, with five records in the last seven years, Foula has almost overtaken Fair Isle as the premier site in Europe to find this bird.

Although Pechoras have a well-deserved reputation for being silent and very skulking, the occasional bird will be mobile and more vocal. Time spent learning the distinctive flight call (a short, stony ‘tsep’, given either singly or repeated rapidly two or three times – it can be surprisingly similar to that of Grey Wagtail Motacilla cinerea) may be a good investment for coastal birders. The first British mainland record, and the first away from Fair Isle, was initially discovered on call flying over the Warren at Spurn, Yorkshire, way back in 1966. It was then trapped in one of
the Heligolands farther down the peninsula. Perhaps this is the more likely great event of 1966 to repeat itself!

(Breeds within narrow region of scrub-tundra & taiga of subarctic Eurasia, from Pechora region of NE Russia across Siberia to Chukotskiy Peninsula & Kamchatka. Migrates through E China & Taiwan to wintering areas in Philippines, N Borneo & N Sulawesi. Isolated race, menzbieri, breeds NE China & Amur River region of SE Russia.)

**Buff-bellied Pipit Anthus rubescens (1, 4, 6)**

At sea Sea area Hebrides 200+ km NW of Outer Hebrides, 19th–20th September, died on board ship (in British waters), photo (S. Cook).

Fair Isle Sukka Mire, first-winter, 23rd–25th September, photo (A. L. Cooper, M. A. Ward et al.); presumed same Vaasetter, 1st–7th October, photo (D. N. Shaw et al.).

Isles of Scilly Carn Friars, St Mary’s, 25th September to 2nd October, photo (P. Buxton et al.) ([*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 324]). Second individual, Carn Friars and Porth Hellick Beach, St Mary’s, 27th September, presumed same Abbey Pool and Pentle Bay, Tresco, 27th September to 2nd October, photo (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood, P. Fraser et al.).

Outer Hebrides Borve, Benbecula, 18th October, photo (S. E. Duffield et al.).

Oxfordshire Farmoor Resr, 8th–10th October, photo (N. J. Hallam, I. Lewington et al.) ([*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 325; plate 281]).

An unprecedented influx, which more than doubles the previous total. The arrival also produced the first inland record, another remarkable record from Oxfordshire’s rarity hotspot, as well as the first multiple occurrence. Presumably, more reached northwest Europe than were discovered but this is a subtle and unobtrusive species likely to be found only by the most diligent rarity-hunters and, given the spread of records from Shetland to Scilly, it seems inevitable that more were missed. As all these birds were photographed, British observers should...
now have a much more refined ‘search image’ of this somewhat variable species. Future autumns may therefore show whether the events of 2007 reflect an unusual combination of weather and migration slot or whether the species is more regular than we have so far thought.

(North American race *A. r. rubescens* breeds W Greenland, N & NW Canada, & Alaska, winters W & S USA, Mexico & C America. Asian race *japonicus* vagrant to W Pal., breeds NE Siberia W to Baikal region, winters N Pakistan & NW India to S & E China, S Korea & S Japan.)

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* (0, 185, 10)

**Fair Isle** Setter, first-winter, 13th–27th August, photo (D. N. Shaw *et al.*). (Brit. Birds 100: plate 295). Utra Scrape, first-winter, 24th August to 11th September, photo (M. T. Breaks *et al.*). Easter Lother, first-winter, 25th August to 11th September, trapped, photo (M. M. Breaks *et al.*). Da Water, two, first-winters, 27th September (S. J. Davies, M. A. Ward *et al.*). **Isles of Scilly** Carn Friars, St Mary’s, first-winter, 15th September, photo (M. Anderton per R. Mawer, B. Thomas *et al.*), presumed same Higher Town, St Martin’s, 16th September, photo (J. L. Hodgkins, M. G. Telfer), and Tresco, 16th–25th September, photo (A. White *et al.*). **Orkney** Birsay, West Mainland, male, 15th–16th June, photo (K. Fairclough *et al.*). Brides Ness, North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 28th September (G. M. Buchanan, P. A. Thomson); presumed same Westness, North Ronaldsay, 30th September (A. E. Duncan).

**Shetland** Sandwick, Mainland, first-winter, 25th September (R. A. Haywood). Symbister, Whalsay, first-winter, 3rd–8th October, photo (A. Seth, P. Stronach *et al.*).

(Nominate race breeds in N Russia, from E Kola & Kanin Peninsula across N Siberia to Taimyr Peninsula & S to C Siberia. To south, small numbers now breed regularly in Belarus, Baltic countries and occasionally S Finland; otherwise from Ukraine & S Russia, E across Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China. Black-backed race *calcarata* breeds S/C Asia to Tibetan Plateau. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent, S China & SE Asia to peninsular Thailand.)

**Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*

**North European race** *C. c. cinclus*, ‘Black-bellied Dipper’ (–, –, 1)

**Fair Isle** Wirvie Burn and Finniquoy Gully, first-winter, 5th December to 13th March 2008, trapped, photo (D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

This is the first time that this subspecies has appeared in the report, following its inclusion in the list of races to be considered by the RIACT subcommittee (Kehoe 2006). Nominate *cinclus* (‘Black-bellied Dipper’) is one of three races of Dipper on the British List. The other two breed in Britain: the endemic *C. c. gularis* (‘British Dipper’) over most of the British range and *C. c. hibernicus* (‘Irish Dipper’) in western Scotland, as well as in Ireland.

The slightly parochial British view of Dippers is that identifying subspecies is quite straightforward. However, *BWP* is rather more circumspect, stating that ‘racial identifications between ‘chestnut-bellied’ and ‘black-bellied’ forms are specious... geographical variation [is] highly complex, [with] some populations even varying within [the] same mountain range.’ It may well be that the taxonomy will be revised in the future and that variation in Europe is clinal, with dark-bellied birds in cooler and wetter climates and chestnut-bellied birds inhabiting warmer and drier areas (*BWP*). There is even marked individual variation within populations in Britain (Tyler & Ormerod 1994; Forrester *et al.* 2007), while there are also some differences according to age and sex, with males and older birds being darker on average (*BWP*).

All this makes racial identification less than straightforward, especially as nominate *cinclus* may have some restricted chestnut on the belly, while it appears that some birds within the presumed range of *hibernicus* in western Scotland may lack any chestnut. Moreover, although it has been suspected that some chestnut-bellied birds in eastern Britain could be Continental birds of the race *aquaticus*, proving this could be very difficult given the complex variation within and among populations.

The occurrence of ‘Black-bellied Dippers’ from northern Europe is, however, not doubted. There is strong circumstantial evidence; most of the birds seen in areas where the species is a vagrant, such as Shetland (over 50 records) and Norfolk (over 135 records), lack chestnut on the belly (Taylor *et al.* 1999; Pennington *et al.* 2004). More significantly, there are also two ringing recoveries: a bird ringed in Sweden in March 1985 was found in Fife in April 1987 (Forrester *et al.* 2007) and another ringed as a
chick in Norway in May 2004 wintered on Mainland Shetland in 2005/06 (Shetland Bird Report 2005). It is interesting to note that neither of these birds was in their first-winter when they were located in Britain.

For the moment, BBRC will take the pragmatic view that birds with little or no chestnut on the belly in eastern Britain are likely to be nominate *cinclus*, but other claims may have to await further investigations on the variation of plumage shown by all the races likely to occur in Britain.

(Breeds Scandinavia, Baltic countries & W Russia. Outside the breeding season, resident or dispersive to S & W of breeding range.)

**Thrush Nightingale Luscinia luscinia (1, 165, 2)**

Fair Isle Shirva, 13th May, photo (D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Ulta, 28th September, photo (J. Ginnever, W. T. S. Miles *et al.*).

(Widespread throughout E Europe with dramatic population increase during 20th century. Range still expanding NW into SW Norway, and locally abundant in S Scandinavia & Baltic countries. C European range extends from Denmark, SE to Romania & Ukraine, and through temperate European Russia to S Siberia. Winters E Africa, from S Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

**Siberian Rubythroat Luscinia calliope (0, 6, 1)**

Shetland Foula, male, 5th October, photo (R. G. Hook, K. B. Shepherd, N. D. Wright *et al.*).

(Breeds throughout Siberia from Ob River E to Anadyr & Kamchatka, with small numbers W to European foothills of Ural Mountains. S limit reaches N Mongolia, Ussuriland, NE Hokkaido & NE China, with isolated population on E slopes of Tibetan Plateau. Winters from Nepal E through Himalayan foothills to NE India, Burma & N Indochina to C Thailand, S China & Taiwan.)

**Red-flanked Bluetail Tarsiger cyanurus (2, 38, 8)**


Cornwall Cot Valley, 3rd November, photo (B. R. Field, J. R. Smart *et al.*).

Norfolk Weybourne, first-winter, 29th September, trapped, photo (M. Taylor *et al.*).


Suffolk Corton, 28th September (J. A. Brown).

Yorkshire Easington, first-winter, 31st March, later found dead, photo (M. G. Stoyle *et al.*). Flamborough Head, first-winter male, 20th–23rd October, trapped, photo (I. Marshall *et al.*).

This is no longer the extreme rarity that it once was, but it is surely still near the top of almost everyone’s dream find list. Just 15 years ago, in 1993, one on Fair Isle in September was only the 12th for Britain, and another at Winspit, Dorset, which stayed for ten days later in the same autumn, drew huge crowds as the first widely twitched bird. Since then, records have been almost annual (none in 1996 and 2000) and have averaged more than two a year, while the eight this year constitutes a new high. The increase seems likely to be linked to recent expansion in the west of the species’ range in Finland, where breeding was first recorded in 1949 but where there may have been as many as 500 pairs by the beginning of the present century (*BWPC*; BirdLife International 2004).

The classic migration hotspots along the east coast are the best places to find a bluetail, and there are records from most recording areas from Shetland to Kent, although surprisingly there is none from Orkney and these are the first from Yorkshire. There are also five records from southwest England from Dorset to Cornwall, although Scilly still awaits its first. These apart, the male on Bardsey in 2007 was only the second away from the east coast, following an extraordinary inland record of one trapped near Loughborough, Leicestershire, in October 1997.

The Bardsey individual was also unusual in that it was an adult male, although there have been a few other autumn males: the first for Britain involved a sight record of one at North Cotes, Lincolnshire, on 19th September 1903; one was in Suffolk in October 1994; singles were in both Northumberland and North-east Scotland in September 1998; and one was on Fair Isle in September 2004.

Most autumn records have to go down as ‘first-winter or female’, as reliable separation of these age
classes is difficult. Other than two of the adult males listed above (Bardsey and North-east Scotland), which were also caught, all autumn birds which have been trapped and for which age has been reported have been first-winters. Several recent submissions have noted blue on parts of the plumage other than the tail, but it is not clear whether this makes them first-year males or adult females, as both can show traces of blue.

The two spring records in 2007 are only the third and fourth at this season. As they were so early in the year, it seems highly likely that they were both birds that had wintered somewhere in western Europe and were heading north. This may have also been the case for one of the previous spring records, a male on Holy Island, Northumberland, on 23rd April 1995. The first spring record, and the fifth for Britain, was on Fetlar, Shetland, from 31st May to 1st June 1971 and it seems more likely that this was a spring overshoot.

The earliest autumn arrival remains the Fair Isle bird from 1993, which was on 16th September, while the Cornwall bird in 2007 is only the third to be seen in November: the latest was at Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, on 15th–16th November 2002.

(Small population breeds NE Finland but main range extends through cool temperate forests of N Eurasia from E Russia & Siberia to Kamchatka, N Japan & NE China. Winters S China, Taiwan & S Japan through SE Asia to N peninsular Thailand. Distinctive race rufilatus of Himalayas & W China, sometimes treated as distinct species, descends to lower elevations during winter.)

Common Stonechat Saxicola torquatus Eastern race S. t. maurus, ‘Siberian Stonechat’ (1, 322, 2)

Yorkshire Spurn, 2nd–6th October, photo (A. M. Hanby et al.).

2006 Cornwall Bray’s Cott, Goonhilly Down, 12th–26th November, photo (S. F. Elton, S. Rogers et al.).

(Breeds widely across N Asia from N Urals S to N Caspian Sea, Mongolia & N China, E to Kolyma basin, Okhotsk coast & N Japan. Winters from N Indian subcontinent to S China & SE Asia. Other races occur S Asia & Africa.)

Desert Wheatear Oenanthe deserti (9, 89, 6)

Cheshire & Wirral Crewe, male, 12th–14th December, photo (P. Farrington, A. H. Pulsford).

Denbighshire Towyn, male, 20th November, photo (M. Hughes, S. Morris).
Greater Manchester Irlam Moss, first-winter male, 8th–9th March, photo (J. Hamer, D. Steel et al.) (Brit. Birds 100: plate 121).

Norfolk Horsey, first-winter male, 24th November to 10th December, photo (per G. E. Dunmore) (Brit. Birds 101: plate 43).
Over 100 Desert Wheatears have now been recorded in Britain since the first, a male, shot in Clackmannanshire on 26th November 1880. The late-autumn to early winter period has since proved to be THE time to expect this species. There have been fewer than ten spring records and the first-winter male in Manchester in early March recalls the very popular first-summer male in April 1989 at Barn Elms, Greater London, only 10 km from the centre of the capital. Both of these spring males showed weak breast colour and quite a strong pinkish-buff or yellow-buff tone to the upperparts, inviting speculation that they may be of the North African form *homochroa* rather than from the eastern part of the species’ range, where most of our late-autumn records are assumed to come from. A number of the very early British records, which were shot, were specifically assigned to race, though the reliability of these attributions perhaps needs to be confirmed for the modern era.

(Breeds widely but discontinuously across arid and desert regions of N Africa from Morocco to Middle East, N to S Caucasus, & across C Asia from C Iran & N Pakistan to Mongolia & N China. Some N African birds resident, but many winter in Sahara & Sahel region of N Africa from Mauritania E to Ethiopia & Somalia. Asian breeders winter Arabian Peninsula to NW India.)

**Blue Rock Thrush Monticola solitarius (0, 5, 1)**

**Radnorshire** Elan Valley, male, 11th April, photo (A. & S. Bridgman, P. Jennings, R. Spencer).

An exciting and most unexpected find for rarity-starved Radnorshire, and a salutary lesson in what surely goes missing within the inland counties and more remote areas of Britain. Previous records have all been in the western parts of Britain: Argyll, Cornwall (two), Gwynedd and the Isles of Scilly. It is interesting to speculate on the likely origins of these birds. There are five races of Blue Rock Thrush, including the largely resident or altitudinal migrant *M. s. solitarius* of Mediterranean Europe, North Africa and the coastal Levant, and the migratory *M. s. longirostris* of eastern Turkey to Iran, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and northern Pakistan (Clement & Hathway 2000). The first record, a male at Skerryvore Lighthouse, Argyll, died and the frozen corpse was examined by BOURC. Although they were reluctant to assign it conclusively to one particular race, biometrics fitted best with the slightly smaller *longirostris* (Brit. Birds 88:130–132). Further records have not been examined in the hand, and attributing individuals in the field to any particular race is unwise owing to variation in plumage, but a Central Asian origin is perhaps as likely as a southern European one.
certainly gives hope to east-coast birders that the next may well turn up there rather than in the south-west (as does the first for The Netherlands, in Zeeland in September 2003; Dutch Birding 26: 374).

(Resident or dispersive throughout Mediterranean basin from NW Africa & Iberian Peninsula, to N Italy & E to Greece & Turkey. Other races extend through mountains of C & SW Asia to Himalayas, E China, Taiwan & Japan. Winters within or to S of breeding range.)

**White’s Thrush Zoothera dauma** (25, 36, 3)

*Fair Isle* Kenaby, first-winter, 2nd October, found dead, photo (S. J. Davis, D. N. Shaw et al.).


*Yorkshire* Thorngumbald, Hull, 21st October, found dead, photo (G. E. Dobbs, P. Radcliffe et al.).

(Palearctic race *Z. d. aurea* widespread in C & S Siberia from Yenisey River to Usuriland, S to N Mongolia, extreme NE China, Korean Peninsula & Japan. Small population extends W to foothills of European Urals. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & S Japan to Indochina & C Thailand. Nominate race resident or altitudinal migrant in Himalayas, SW China & Taiwan.)

**Siberian Thrush Zoothera sibirica** (0, 6, 1)


This is the first Shetland record of this stunning *Zoothera* and adds to the geographic spread of records, which now extends the length and breadth of Britain. It is the seventh British record, following birds on the Isle of May on 1st–4th October 1954; at Great Yarmouth cemetery, Norfolk, on 25th December 1977 (some Christmas present that!); on South Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 13th November 1984; on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 1st–8th October 1992; at Burnham Overy, Norfolk, for the afternoon of 18th September 1994; and on Gugh, Isles of Scilly, from 5th to 8th October 1999 (together
with a White’s Thrush *Z. dauma* – a unique Western Palearctic *Zoothera* double act). Looking to our more immediate neighbours, there are two Irish records, from Cape Clear (Co. Cork) and Loop Head (Co. Clare), two nineteenth-century records from The Netherlands and three records from Belgium, the last being in 1912. However, with other European records coming from Norway, Sweden, Germany, Poland, France, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary and Malta, it can only be a matter of time before one arrives on the mainland and stays around long enough for all to see. Even in places where the species can be expected (e.g. at Beidaihe, in eastern China), birds can be surprisingly elusive, uttering a Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*-like ‘sip’ when flushed. But when a male sits out in full view, there can be few finer sights in birding. For those who found the Foula bird this was surely the stuff of dreams, and with a handful of Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni*, Pechora Pipit *A. gustavi*, Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* and a stunning male Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* on the same island within the space of just one week, it must at times have felt more like eastern China than the north of Scotland. Just rewards for persistence.

(Breeds C & E Siberia from Yenisey & Lena Rivers, S to NE Mongolia, & E to NE China, Amurland, Sakhalin, & N Japan. Winters C Burma, Indochina & Thailand S to Singapore, Sumatra & Java.)

**Swainson’s Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (0, 24, 1)**


(Breeds across S Alaska & Canada to S Labrador & Newfoundland, generally to S of range of Grey-cheeked Thrush *C. minimus*, S to N California, New Mexico, Great Lakes & West Virginia. Migrates across E USA to winter from Mexico S to NW Argentina.)

**Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (0, 46, 2)**

Fair Isle Hill Dyke, first-winter, 30th September, photo (D. N. Shaw et al.) (Brit. Birds 100: plate 327).

Isles of Scilly Porth Loo, St Mary’s, 12th–22nd October (J. A. Lidster et al.).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia E throughout Alaska & N Canada to Labrador & Newfoundland. Migrates across E USA to winter in N South America.)

**Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 59, 4)**

Clyde Islands Rothesay, Isle of Bute, first-winter male *T. r. atrogularis*, 18th January to 26th March, photo (R. W. Forrester, I. McMillan et al.) (Brit. Birds 100: plate 82).

Fair Isle Steensie Geo, first-winter female *T. r. atrogularis*, 23rd April, photo (M. T. Breaks et al.) (Brit. Birds 100: plate 159).

Shropshire Walcot Mill, first-winter female *T. r. atrogularis*, 8th April (G. Holmes, A. Latham et al.).

Yorkshire Buckton, first-winter female *T. r. atrogularis*, 25th–27th March, photo (M. Thomas, D. Waudby et al.).

(Western, black-throated *T. r. atrogularis* breeds C & N Urals, E across SW Siberia & E Kazakhstan, to NW China, winters Iraq to N India, E through Himalayan foothills to Bhutan. Nominate red-throated race breeds to E, in C Siberia & N Mongolia, wintering in E Himalayas & S fringe of Tibetan Plateau from Nepal to SW China, & N to NE China.)
American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (0, 23, 1)

**Yorkshire** Bingley, first-winter, 5th January to 13th February, photo (J. Crawshaw, M. Doveston, A. Jowett *et al.*). *(Brit. Birds* 100: plate 83; plate 287).

(Breeds throughout North America from tree line of Alaska & N Canada, S to S Mexico. Winters from S Canada to S USA & C America, S to Guatemala.)

Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (1, 34, 2)

**Fair Isle** Gilsetter, first-winter, 28th September, trapped, photo (W. T. S. Miles, R. J. Nason, L. C. Shaw *et al.*).

**Shetland** Out Skerries, 2nd October, photo (M. J. McKee, T. Warrick).

(Breeds across Siberia from Irtysh River in W Siberia, N to 64°N, & E to Yakutia & Sea of Okhotsk, & to the south from SW Siberia & NE Kazakhstan through Mongolia to Ussuriland & N & NE China. Winters from Sri Lanka & NE India to S China, & S throughout SE Asia.)

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (7, 103, 6)

**Fair Isle** Skadan, 27th–28th September, photo (M. Culshaw, P. A. Harris, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Plantation, first-winter, 27th September, trapped, photo (P. A. Harris, D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Pund/Upper Stoneybrek, 29th September to 3rd October, photo (M. T. Breaks *et al.*). *(Brit. Birds* 100: plate 329; plate 288). Gilsetter, first-winter, 2nd October, trapped, photo (P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*). Upper Leogh, 2nd–3rd October, photo (G. Bruneau, P. A. Crochet, S. J. Minton *et al.*).

**Shetland** Foula, 7th–9th October, photo (K. B. Shepherd, P. J. Wright *et al.*).

(Singing males regular in eastern Finland. To E, discontinuously from C Urals E across much of Siberia to Kamchatka, Kuril Islands, Hokkaido & NE China. Winters in Indian subcontinent, from Nepal E through NE India into SE Asia & Philippines.)
River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 32, 1)

Fair Isle Observatory, 11th June, trapped, photo (M. T. Breaks *et al.*). (*Brit. Birds* 100: plate 223).

(Breeds C & E Europe from Germany to C Finland, & E through C Russia to W Siberia. Southern limit extends to Croatia & Ukraine. Migrates through Middle East & NE Africa to winter in E Africa.)

Savi’s Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (many, c. 636, 2)

Kent Oare Marshes, male in song, 18th–20th May (G. J. A. Burton, M. Wright *et al.*). Norfolk Hickling Broad, male in song, 14th–27th May (A. Blackman, P. J. Heath, A. Musgrove *et al.*).

(Breeds W Europe, from Iberia to The Netherlands; range contracting to SE but expanding to N/C, into Baltic countries. To E, occurs through temperate Russia S through Ukraine to Black Sea coasts, & E across C Asia to NW China & W Mongolia. European birds winter in W Africa from Senegal to N Nigeria; Asian birds winter in NE Africa.)

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (1, 63, 4)

Fair Isle Gully, 9th June, trapped, photo (P. A. A. Baxter, M. Hughes, D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Kent Bockhill, St Margaret’s at Cliffe, adult, 28th–29th September, photo (J. M. Warne *et al.*) (plate 289). Shetland Quendale, Mainland, 9th–14th October, photo (R. M. Fray, A. J. MacKay, M. N. Reeder *et al.*).


289. Adult Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Bockhill, St Margaret’s at Cliffe, Kent, September 2007.
Sussex Pannel Valley, Icklesham, first-winter, 7th October, trapped, photo (P. E. Jones).
(In Europe, restricted to Black Sea coasts from N Bulgaria & Danube delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia & SW Siberia, Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia, S to Uzbekistan & N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent N of Sri Lanka.)

Blyth’s Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 67, 13)

Durham Whitley Coastal Park, 2nd–4th October, photo (J. P. Cook et al.).
Fair Isle Barkland, first-winter, 30th September, photo (P. A. A. Baxter et al.).
Isle of May 5th October, trapped, photo (A. R. Mainwood, J. Osborne).
Norfolk Blakeney Point, 8th June, photo (J. R. McCollum, P. Nichols, A. Stoddart et al.).

Yorkshire Spurn and Kilnsea, first-winter, 6th–10th October, trapped, photo (L. J. Degnan, P. R. French, G. C. Taylor et al.). Flamborough Head, 6th–10th October, photo (R. Baines, P. Cunningham, N. Parker et al.).

This species is fast becoming a regular fixture in the BBRC report, although the 13 in 2007 is exceptional. This trend of increasing sightings means that birders now have the species on their radar during autumn and are on the lookout for it, though very seldom will they come across one. With the Northern Isles traditionally accounting for the majority of records, this year’s crop, including six along the northeast coast, some staying for several days, was much appreciated by mainland birders.

Blyth’s Reed Warbler was formerly an extreme rarity. The first record, in 1910, was followed by a remarkable seven in 1912 and one in 1928. Subsequently, there were no further occurrences for over 50 years and it was not until 1979 that BBRC was called upon to assess this species for the first time. Fig. 7 highlights the astonishing rise in numbers in the last ten years.

It is likely that a combination of factors is responsible for this increase. Although westward range expansion into northeast Europe is important, it is likely that the clarification of identification features and increasing observer awareness play just as significant a role. This is a common summer visitor to European parts of Russia which has spread north and west in the last 50 years to colonise southern Finland and the Baltic countries, with first proven breeding in Estonia in 1938, in Latvia in 1944 and in Finland in 1947. Blyth’s Reed Warbler is now fairly common as a breeding species in these areas, numbers being stable or perhaps increasing slightly, with population estimates of the order of 5,000–8,000 pairs in Finland, 3,000–6,000 pairs in Latvia and 2,000–3,000 pairs in Estonia (Hagemeijer

![Fig. 7. Accepted records of Blyth’s Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* in Britain since 1978.](image-url)
This east European population has no doubt led to the occurrence of occasional spring overshoots in Britain. After the first spring record, at Spurn in 1984, and a further spring bird in 1989, a total of six were found during the 1990s and a further ten since 2000.

The European range is deserted by late August and birds are very rare in early September throughout Finland, and the Baltic countries. Autumn birds must therefore surely come from larger core populations further east, brought here by and associated with conducive weather conditions.

The identification of this plain and rather nondescript bird remains a challenge, most easily accomplished in spring when birds are in song. With increasing familiarity, however, observers are now also confidently identifying autumn birds in the field, and recent BBRC decisions have reflected this increasing knowledge. A cautious approach is still prudent, however, and a combination of careful observation and good views remains important as brief and incomplete views can give a misleading impression. The main identification features are well covered in recent books, especially Beaman & Madge (1999), and papers (e.g. Golley & Millington 1996). But knowing what to look for is usually only half the battle. It is actually seeing the features, and then waiting to recheck them, that is often the biggest problem with this secretive species. That all is not likely to go smoothly is illustrated by occasional problem birds which may defy common agreement (e.g. Bradshaw 2001); in fact, two steps forward and one step back is typical of the way advances are made with difficult identification issues. It goes without saying that observers should strive to note as many of the main features as possible, including call, the prominent fore-supercilium, the often dull tones to the upperparts (lacking contrasting rufous hues in the rump), short primary projection, and emargination on the fourth and sometimes the fifth primaries. At least the last of these is more easily determined from high-quality photos or on trapped birds in the hand.

(Breeds widely throughout S Finland, Baltic countries & European Russia to 64°N. To E, extends across C Siberia to Lake Baikal & upper Lena River, S through W Mongolia & NW China, Kazakhstan & Tajikistan to N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka & E into NW Burma.)

Great Reed Warbler Acrocephalus arundinaceus (8, 216, 3)

Kent Lydd, male in song, 10th–20th June, photo (J. E. Tilbrook, B. E. Wright et al.).

Shetland Virkie, Mainland, male in song, 14th–15th June, photo (P. V. Harvey et al.).

Staffordshire Barton GP, male, 20th May (I. Moore, S. A. Richards et al.).

2006 Kent Sandwich Bay, male in song, 15th June, photo (per www.birdguides.com).

2005 Surrey Frensham Great Pond, male in song, 30th April, sound recording (S. P. Peters).

(Breeds discontinuously throughout much of continental Europe from Iberia to Greece, N to S Sweden & Finland, & E across S Russia, Turkey & Caucasus to W Siberia. C Asian race zarudnyi breeds from Volga to NW China & W Mongolia. Winters throughout C & S Africa.)
Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 107, 3)

**Norfolk** Blakeney Point, male, 2nd June, sound recording, photo (J. J. Gilroy *et al*.). Scolt Head, 24th August (N. M. Lawton, M. Rooney, N. Williams).

**Outer Hebrides** Castlebay, Barra, 11th September, photo (T. P. Drew, M. A. Wilkinson).

2005 **Caernarfonshire** Bardsey Island, 30th August, photo (S. D. Stansfield *et al*.).

(Range expanding W, now breeding in S Finland. To E, breeds C Russia & W Siberia to Yenisey valley, C & N Kazakhstan to W Mongolia & W Xinjiang province, China. Winters N & peninsular India, S to Karnataka.)

Booted/Sykes’s Warbler *Hippolais caligata/rama* (0, 3, 0)


Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Southeast European race *S. c. albistriata*, ‘Eastern Subalpine Warbler’ (0, 17, 4)

**Caernarfonshire** Bardsey Island, first-summer male, 4th May, trapped, photo (M. Archer, R. J. Else, S. D. Stansfield). Bardsey Island, first-summer male, 24th–25th May, trapped, photo (R. J. Else, S. D. Stansfield *et al*.).

**Cornwall** Penlee, nr Rame Head, male, 16th April, photo (C. Buckland, K. Pellow *et al*.).

**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, first-summer male, 30th April to 11th May, trapped, photo (P. A. Brown *et al*.).

(Breeds SE Europe from Slovenia & Croatia S to Greece, Aegean Islands, Crete & W Turkey. Migrates through Middle East to winter along S edge of Sahara S to Sudan.)

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (0, 73, 1)

**Shetland** Spiggie, Mainland, female, 26th–30th September, photo (N. Alford, N. Stocks *et al*.).

(Largely resident or dispersive throughout Mediterranean basin, from NW Africa & Iberia to S France, N Italy & E to W Turkey & Israel. Some winter in N Africa from Sahara S to Mauritania & S Libya.)

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (11, 270, 3)

**Shetland** Out Skerries, 23rd–27th September, photo (P. Bridges, D. Waudby *et al*.). Symbister, Whalsay, 9th October, photo (J. L. Irvine, B. Marshall *et al*.). Baltasound, Unst, first-winter, 10th November, photo (M. G. Pennington, R. M. Tallack, B. H. Thomason *et al*.).

2006 **Isles of Scilly** Telegraph, St Mary’s, 13th October (P. Kinsella, R. A. Lambert *et al*.).

(Breeds locally in N Scandinavia, becoming widespread across N Russia E to extreme NE Siberia, S to Baikal region, Ussuriland & NE China. Other races breed in Alaska, & Kamchatka through Kuril Islands to N Japan. Migrant through E China to winter widely in SE Asia to Java, Philippines & Sulawesi.)

Hume’s Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 90, 3)

**Caernarfonshire** Penrhyd Bay, 18th November, photo (M. Hughes *et al*.).

**Norfolk** Holkham Meals, 6th–11th October, photo (A. I. Bloomfield, R. Millington, A. J. L. Smith *et al*.).

**Sussex** Belle Tout Wood, Beachy Head, 30th December to 14th January 2008, sound recording, photo (J. F. Cooper, R. D. M. Edgar, S. T. Underdown *et al*.).

(Breeds in Altai Mountains to W Mongolia, S through Tien Shan & Pamirs to NE Afghanistan, NW Himalayas & mountains in NW China. Winters S Afghanistan to N India, E to W Bengal. Another race breeds in C China from Hebei to S Yunnan, W to lower slopes of Tibetan Plateau.)

Western Bonelli’s Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (1, 83, 0)

2006 **Argyll** Balephuil, Tiree, 8th September, photo (J. Bowler).

2000 **Isles of Scilly** Vine Farm, Bryher, 2nd May (J. K. Higginson).

(Breeding range centred on SW Europe from Iberia to N France, S Germany, Italy, Austria, & locally in mountains of N Africa. Winters along S edge of Sahara, from Senegal & S Mauritania to N Cameroon.)
Eastern/Western Bonelli’s Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis/bonelli* (0, 75, 0)

2006 Shetland Baltasound, Unst, first-winter, 13th–18th October, photo (D. M. Foster, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0, 13, 2)

Devon Beer Head, male in song, 28th April, sound recording (G. Haig, S. Waite *et al.*).

2001 Kent Dungeness, male in song, 14th–17th April, sound recording (*Brit. Birds* 97: 614); note revised year.

(Breeds locally in French Pyrenees & S throughout W Iberia. N African range restricted to NW Morocco & N Algeria to NW Tunisia. Wintering range poorly known.)

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 203, 7)


Isles of Scilly Lower Moors, St Mary’s, 12th October (J. A. Lidster *et al.*); presumed same 21st October (R. A. Schofield *et al.*).

Kent Swanscombe, 30th January (M. Sutherland).

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB reserve, 4th–6th November (M. Deans, D. Fairhurst *et al.*). Dingle Marshes, four, male, female & two juveniles, 12th–25th November, photo (P. D. Green, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

(Widely but locally distributed throughout C & E Europe, from Denmark, Germany & Italy NE to C Sweden & Estonia. Absent from much of NW Europe but locally numerous in Spain. To E, breeds from S Russia to Volga River. Largely resident or dispersive in Europe. Other races, sometimes regarded as separate species, occur in C Asia & from S Siberia to NE China, & winter NW Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan.)

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (0, 76, 1)


The bird at Buckton proved to be very popular, being easily combined with a trip to see the Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* at nearby Flamborough (as stated in the introduction, the latter record is currently being assessed by BOURC). The shrike also has great merit as one of the most fully documented records of this species in Britain to date.

A more detailed comment on BBRC’s ongoing investigation into the identification of the different forms of Isabelline Shrike can be found in the 2005 report (*Brit. Birds* 100: 92–94). As stated there, first-winters generally seem to fall into two groups (*phoenicuroides* and *isabellinus*), and the Yorkshire bird had the following distinctive characters: a whitish supercilium, flaring behind the eye; fine dark barring on the forehead and flanks; cold, earthy brown-toned upperparts contrasting with almost white underparts; dark-centred tertials and wing-coverts; dark bars on the uppertail-coverts; and a dark ear-covert patch. Collectively, these all point to a seemingly clear example of what is assumed...
to be a young L. i. phoenicuroides ('Turkestan Shrike'). Its rather greyish cast and lack of obvious rufous above pointed towards it belonging with greyer birds included within ‘karelini’: a poorly understood and highly variable form closely allied to phoenicuroides but possibly just a distinctive colour morph of that taxon. However, this last point nicely illustrates the problems facing the Committee: in some images there appears to be a strong rufous wash to the crown and the mantle is less grey-brown; on others – notably those of the bird in the hand – it appears much greyer and more uniform above (see plate 292). Such variance in images can sometimes make a true and critical assessment of colour and tone very difficult.

Like the Dutch and, more recently, the French, we should perhaps review the records of young birds in autumn; however, although the features seem clear-cut in theory, there are many birds that will not be easily assigned to one of the two groups. BBRC is looking at a more satisfactory way of categorising more obvious ‘types’ of first-winter as well as the less clear individuals.

(Breeds widely across arid regions of C Asia from Caspian Sea and W Iran E to Tajikistan, Afghanistan, N Pakistan, S Mongolia & NW China, with isolated subspecies in Zaidam depression, N Tibetan Plateau. Winters NE & E Africa, S Arabian Peninsula, S Iran & NW Indian subcontinent.)

**Lesser Grey Shrike Lanius minor (21, 153, 2)**


Norfolk Holkham, first-winter, 1st–8th October, photo (E. Hunter, D. & J. Moreton et al.).

(European range centred E of Balkans to E Poland, with small numbers W through N Mediterranean to S France & NE Spain. To E, breeds locally from Black Sea coasts, across S Russia & Kazakhstan to NW China & SW Siberia. Migrates through E Africa to winter in S Africa, from Namibia to S Mozambique & S South Africa.)

**Blackpoll Warbler Dendroica striata (0, 36, 2)**

Isles of Scilly Garrison, St Mary’s, first-winter, 9th–20th October, photo (S. Richards et al.) (plate 293).

Higher Moors, St Mary’s, first-winter, 10th–23rd October, photo (per www.birdguides.com) (Brit. Birds 101: plate 45).

Two typical first-autumn birds on Scilly. These islands are now responsible for over half of the 38 British records since the first, in 1968. There has only ever been one in spring, at Seaforth, Lancashire.
& North Merseyside, in June 2000; a location which clearly suggests a ship-assisted crossing.

Blackpoll Warbler remains the most frequent Nearctic wood-warbler in Britain by some distance, with more than double the number of records of the next most frequent, Yellow-rumped Warbler _D. coronata_, with 17. If the unprecedented nine in 1976 is discounted, the occurrence of the species has been remarkably consistent since 1968, with nothing to suggest any effect of the increasingly frequent Caribbean hurricanes of recent years (fig. 8).

The relative frequency of Blackpoll on this side of the Atlantic has traditionally been linked to a late-autumn transoceanic migration strategy making it vulnerable to displacement by westerly storms. Interestingly, Rose-breasted Grosbeak _Pheucticus ludovicianus_, which has a similar transoceanic migration route, is also among the more frequent Nearctic passerines reaching Britain. It is believed that, in mid to late autumn, Blackpoll Warblers from across their North American breeding range congregate on the eastern seaboard from Newfoundland to North Carolina before embarking on a non-stop flight to South America across the western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico (Nisbet _et al._ 1995). With no opportunity to make landfall during bad weather, these migrants are highly susceptible to being displaced eastwards by late-autumn weather systems. Butler (2000) demonstrated a correlation between autumn storms over the western Atlantic and lower numbers of breeding Blackpolls the following year. It is sobering to realise that conditions bringing this species to Britain cause measurable declines in the breeding population – and for each one reaching Britain thousands must perish at sea.

(Breeds widely across North America from W Alaska E throughout Canada to Newfoundland, S to Maine. Migrates through E USA to winter in South America from Panama to Chile & E Argentina.)

**White-throated Sparrow Zonotrichia albicollis** (1, 29, 2)

**Hampshire** Southampton, 12th–13th May, photo (per [www.birdguides.com](http://www.birdguides.com)).

**Northumberland** Inner Farne, Farne Islands, 11th June, trapped, photo (R. Mason, D. Steele _et al._).

With two records in 2007 there have now been 32 accepted records of this New World sparrow since the first, in 1909. Numbers reported in Britain are clearly increasing, with the present decade set to show more than twice the number of records of any previous decade.

The majority (78%) have occurred in spring, with discovery dates from 5th May to 17th June. Two-thirds of the spring records have been in Scotland, including 11 in Shetland alone at this season. The five autumn arrivals show a more even geographic spread, while the remaining two records both
concern wintering individuals at inland localities: in Norfolk/Suffolk from 16th November 1968 to 1st January 1969 (when found dead) and in Lincolnshire from 5th December 1992 to 28th March 1993.

There is widespread acceptance that at least a proportion of White-throated Sparrows arriving in Britain are ship-assisted (Elkins 2008). Durand (1972) and Cook (1998) described how, on a transatlantic voyage, multiple White-throated Sparrows joined and seemingly departed a ship a significant distance from land. It can be speculated that such a journey is undertaken by many of the Nearctic landbirds, particularly the granivores, that reach Europe. Nonetheless, only a small number of British White-throated Sparrows have been found close to international seaports, such as the bird in May 2007 reported here. The overwhelming majority are actually found at migration hotspots, presumably having resumed their migration after making landfall here.

(Breeds North America from SE Yukon E to Newfoundland, S to Great Lakes & N USA to New Jersey. Winters SE USA, from Massachusetts S to Florida, Texas & into N Mexico & California.)

Dark-eyed Junco Junco hyemalis (0, 24, 6)
Cornwall Illogan, 12th May, photo (G. Mills).
Highland Unapool, age uncertain, 23rd June, photo (H. M. & J. A. MacDonald).
Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult male, 19th June (R. J. Simpson).
Outer Hebrides St Kilda, 30th May, male in song, photo (S. Dennis, W. T. S. Miles, S. Money et al.) (fig. 9).

A record year for this charming and easily identified American sparrow. Spring has always been the peak time for records of this species (as with other vagrant Nearctic seed-eaters; see Elkins 2008), but this year’s influx extended from mid May to mid July. Dark-eyed Juncos are among the earliest spring migrants in Canada so perhaps only the two birds in May (both in the far west) were direct transatlantic arrivals. Those found in June and July are more likely to be birds which have moved on after an earlier, undiscovered, landfall. The June records are at coastal sites and suggest continued movement but the discovery of two in inland Norfolk within minutes of one another in July is one of the year’s most remarkable coincidences. Their route to Norfolk is of course unknown, but neither showed any
signs of having been in captivity and the ‘unusual’ summer dates surely just reflect the survival of birds which had already arrived in Britain earlier in the spring. Once here, gardens with feeders are perhaps as good a place for finding them as any other.

(Breeds throughout North America from tree line of N Alaska & Canada, S to S California, N Texas & N Georgia. British records are of forms previously recognised as Slate-coloured Junco, breeding throughout N & E of range, S to Georgia. Northern populations migratory, wintering to S of breeding range.)

**Pine Bunting Emberiza leucocephalos (2, 45, 1)**

Fair Isle Barkland, first-winter male, 25th October to 10th November, photo (M. T. Breaks et al.) (plate 294).

Are we missing a trick in finding Pine Buntings in Britain? This record, the ninth for Fair Isle and 48th for Britain, was, typically, a male and again showed a faint trace of yellow in the primary fringes and small underwing-coverts. The presence of limited yellow on males was discussed in detail in the 2003 BBRC report (*Brit. Birds* 97: 620–621), and is no longer considered a bar to acceptance.

Italy boasts regular wintering Pine Buntings, and there are smaller numbers in southern France. According to Occhiato (2003), Pine Buntings arrive in Italy from the second half of October, but chiefly in the first half of November. Maximum numbers occur from mid December to mid February. Birds leave the wintering grounds during the first week of March with fewer records into April. The occurrence patterns pretty much mirror those of Pine Bunting records in Britain, with one glaring exception: females! In Italy, 70% (of 110 individuals) were first-winter birds and there was an overall ratio of two females to every one male. In The Netherlands the ratio is approximately one female to every three males and many of these concern birds trapped at ringing stations (Arnoud van den Berg pers. comm.). Just across the North Sea in Britain, the ratio is approximately one female to every five males. It would thus seem a reasonable assumption that rarity hunters in Britain may be overlooking female Pine Buntings. Females (especially first-winters) can be dowdier buff- and brown-looking ‘Yellowhammer types’, not especially likely to catch the eye. Given the widespread inland wintering localities of many of our male Pine Buntings, the targeting of game-cover crops and winter Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* flocks may not be a bad pursuit. But remember to think female… you’re not likely to miss the males!

(Breeds temperate Russia from W Urals to upper Kolyma River, S to S Siberia, SE Kazakhstan, Mongolia, lower Amur River & Sakhalin. Isolated population breeds Qinghai & Gansu provinces, C China. Small isolated wintering populations regular W Italy & C Israel. Otherwise winters S of breeding range from Turkestan E through Himalayan foothills to C & E China, N of Yangtze.)

**Chestnut-eared Bunting Emberiza fucata (0, 1, 0)**


(Nominate form breeds Baikal region of Siberia, E to NE Mongolia & Russian Maritime Region, NE China, Korean Peninsula & Japan. N populations migratory, wintering S Japan, Taiwan & S China, S to N Thailand. Other races largely sedentary or dispersive in W Himalayas to SE China.)
Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (6, 176, 3)

Devon Pennsylvania, Exeter, male, 21st–22nd June, photo (G. D. Rendle).
Highland Canna, adult male, 8th July, photo (D. Aiton, H. Chisholm).
Isles of Scilly Wingletang, St Agnes, adult female, 5th June (F. D. G. Hicks, M. Hicks, D. Page).

2005 North-east Scotland Loch of Strathbeg RSPB reserve, adult male, 13th–18th October, photo (D. Funnell, S. Paterson et al.).

(Breeds from C Italy to Greece, Turkey, N Iraq & W Iran, N through Caucasus to Ukraine & S Russia. Winters in W & C India.)

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (0, 22, 1)


(Breeds C Canada to Nova Scotia & through mid-west & NE USA to Maryland. Migrates through E USA to winter from C Mexico through C America to N South America.)

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* (1, 21, 1)


The appearance of a stunning male Baltimore Oriole on a bird feeder in Caithness was one of the major surprises of the spring. This is only the third spring record of this species (following a male on Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, in May 1968 and a male in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, in May 1970) and, perhaps surprisingly, only the fourth for Scotland. The Caithness bird was in its third calendar-year or more, as males do not attain full plumage until their second post-breeding moult. Older females can approach males in colour but are more subdued; the head and mantle are not solidly black and the underparts and rump are a paler orange. As it was so far north, it is conceivable that the Caithness bird was a newly arrived spring overshoot; conversely, given its age, it may have arrived in a previous year and spent the intervening time unnoticed, migrating normally on the wrong side of the Atlantic. If so, and given that Baltimore Orioles can live for over 11 years, perhaps we may see it again, as this is another species (see Dark-eyed Junco, above) for which garden feeders are a good bet.

(Breeds S Canada from C Alberta E to C Nova Scotia, S throughout E USA from N Texas to W South Carolina. Migrates to winter from S Mexico to Colomba & Venezuela.)
References

Appendix 1. Late records of former BBRC species, removed from the list prior to 2007

**Brent Goose Branta bernicla**

North American and East Siberian race *B. b. nigricans*, 'Black Brant'

2004 Hampshire Gosport, adult, 29th December to 17th February 2005, photo (T. Carpenter, J. Clark et al.).

(Expanding west in Arctic NE Siberia to Lena delta, where overlaps with nominate race. Majority breed in Arctic Alaska & E to Victoria Island, Canada. Migratory, wintering on Pacific coast of North America, S to Baja California. Formerly, large numbers wintered coastal N China, Korean Peninsula & Japan, but now rare.)

**Green-winged Teal Anas carolinensis**

1959 Norfolk Lower Bure Marshes, adult male, 15th June (H. Smith per P. Allard).

(Widespread breeder throughout N America from Alaska to Newfoundland, S to N USA. Winters British Columbia, Canada, & throughout USA and Mexico to southern C America and W Indies.)

**Ferruginous Duck Aythya nyroca**

2005 Perth & Kinross Vane Farm, Loch Leven, 6th–7th September (T. P. Drew, D. Jones, K. D. Shaw et al.).

(Main breeding range in temperate steppe-forest from Poland & Hungary E through Ukraine to Caspian Sea, but distribution patchy. Other populations in S Spain, Kazakhstan, W Mongolia & Tibetan Plateau. Migratory, most winter in E Mediterranean, Black & Caspian Seas, NE Africa & Indian subcontinent.)

**Great White Egret Ardea alba**


(Small but increasing breeding population in The Netherlands & France. Elsewhere in Europe, highly fragmented breeding range from E Austria to Ukraine but generally rare. W Pal. population migratory, most wintering N Africa & E Mediterranean, although recent trend to overwinter in C & NW Europe. Other populations breed across much of Africa, Asia, Australia & the Americas.)

**Black Kite Milvus migrans**

2005 Yorkshire Low Barden Resr, adult, 21st June (A. A. Gough); previously considered not proven (*Brit. Birds* 100: 102) but now accepted after additional information submitted.

(Breeds throughout continental Europe, most in Spain, France & Germany, with smaller populations elsewhere, except maritime NW Europe & Scandinavia. To E, breeds European Russia to W Kazakhstan. ‘Black-eared Kite’ *M. m. lineatus* breeds C Kazakhstan E to Japan. Nominate race winters Africa & NW Indian subcontinent. Other races migratory, dispersive or resident, in sub-Saharan Africa, Indian subcontinent, E & SE Asia & Australia.)

**Red-footed Falcon Falco vespertinus**


1989 Essex Bradwell-on-Sea, adult male, 21st May (*Brit. Birds* 83: 458); note revised ageing; presumed same Old Hall Marshes, 1st June to 15th July (note revised dates), and Colne Point, 2nd June (previously reported as different bird with incorrect age/sex) (*Brit. Birds* 83: 458). Langenhoe, subadult male, 5th June; note revised ageing and that previously reported incorrectly as same as Bradwell (*Brit. Birds* 83: 458).

**White-rumped Sandpiper Calidris fuscicollis**


(Breeds in N Alaska & Arctic Canada, from Mackenzie River E to S Baffin Island. Overflies W Atlantic to winter in S South America.)
Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

**2004 Shetland** Mousa, 10th June (S. E. Duffield, H. Moncrieff *et al.*).

(The European & W Siberian race *viridanus* expanded W during 20th century to E Poland, Baltic countries & S Finland, with sporadic breeding in Germany, Sweden & Norway. To E, breeds through Russia & W Siberia to Yenisey River, S through NW Mongolia to N Afghanistan & NW Himalayas. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent. Other races occur throughout Himalayas to SW China, wintering from Indian subcontinent to Indochina & N Thailand.)

Radde’s Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

**2005 Sussex** Beachy Head, 7th October (M. & R. Charlwood).

(Breeds in S Siberia from Novosibirsk region E to Ussuriland & NE China. Migrates through E China to winter in N Burma, Indochina & C Thailand.)

Appendix 2. Category D species accepted (see *Ibis* 136: 253)

Ross’s Goose *Anser rossii*

*Cleveland* Saltolme Pools, adult, 5th October, photo (M. A. Blick *et al.*).

*Norfolk* Holkham, adult, 29th September to 31st December (M. A. Ward).

**2004 Perth & Kinross** Vane Farm, Loch Leven, adult, 13th–20th April, photo (L. Mercer, J. S. Nadin, K. D. Shaw *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: 693); note revised observers.

(Breeds in scattered colonies on tundra of Canadian Arctic, from Perry River region of Northwest Territories to N Manitoba, including Southampton Island, E to N Ontario. Most migrate across C USA to wintering grounds in S USA, with increasing numbers regular on Atlantic seaboard, & N Mexico.)

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*

**2006 Devon** Exe Estuary, 18th November to 11th January 2007, photo (*Brit. Birds* 100: 751, plate 363); note revised dates.

The Committee is undertaking further research on the age of this bird, as the criteria used to age it as an adult have been questioned.

(Breeds E Siberia from Yenisey River & Baikal region E to Sea of Okhotsk & S to NE China & Hokkaido, Japan. Winters from S Japan to SE China, locally W to Nepal.)

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

*Gloucestershire* Frampton-on-Severn, male, 9th April to 21st June, photo (R. G. Baatsen).

*Suffolk* Dingle Marshes, juvenile, 24th August (per D. F. Walsh); presumed same Lowestoft, 27th August to 8th October, photo (per D. F. Walsh); presumed same Minsmere RSPB reserve, 28th August (per D. F. Walsh).

**2006 Dorset** Stanpit Marsh, first-winter, 23rd September to 29th October, photo (D. Smith, D. Taylor).

(Breeds N Morocco & S Spain, & Turkey E to S Kazakhstan. Migratory and dispersive outside breeding season. Many Spanish breeders move NE in late summer to Ebro Delta, NE Spain. Some winter N Africa, with small numbers reaching Senegal, Mali & Chad. Asian population winters mostly Iran.)

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

**2006 Various localities** Two individuals, both adults. Bird 1 was seen initially in Kent, between 30th July and 4th August, moved north to Angus (where last seen on 15th September) via Essex and Yorkshire (per www.birdguides.com). Bird 2 was seen initially in The Netherlands on 7th–31st May, moving to Germany on 2nd–15th July before returning to The Netherlands from 20th July to 13th August. It arrived in Britain on 16th August, when it was tracked along the coast from north Norfolk to Lincolnshire. It was relocated in Lancashire the following day and remained there until 24th August before moving through Cleveland to Northumberland on 26th August, remaining in the last county until 12th September. It was at Findhorn Bay, Moray, on 17th–19th September (A. Lawrence, I. Phillips, R. Proctor *et al.*) then passed through Flintshire and Denbighshire on 22nd–23rd September, reaching Anglesey on 23rd where it remained until 6th October. On 7th October it flew over Conwy to Lancashire before continuing to Cumbria the following day and finally Northumberland,
where it was ultimately taken into care (per www.birdguides.com). CDNA accepted this individual as the ninth Dutch record (*Dutch Birding* 29: 350).

We received a formal submission only for Bird 2 and only from Moray. However, in future it would be useful to receive documented claims of this species in Britain to enable consideration of origins by Bourc, especially given the recent support for vagrancy within Europe provided by Jiguet *et al.* (2008).

(In Europe, breeding confined to Danube Delta in Romania & Ukraine, which holds c. 50% of entire Palearctic population. Small numbers breed Greece & Turkey, Volga Delta & throughout C Asia. N breeders migratory, European population wintering S to E Africa. Asian populations winter in Indus Delta, Pakistan, & locally in NW India. Other populations breed locally in E & South Africa.)

**Appendix 3. Category E species accepted (see Ibis 136: 253)**

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus*

**Norfolk** Holkham Freshmarsh, adult, 24th October to 1st November, photo (S. M. Lister, R. J. Pacey).

**1986 Devon** Bowling Green Marsh, adult, 1st January, photo (D. Paull *et al.*).

(Rare and declining throughout entire breeding range from N Scandinavia to NE Siberia. Reintroduction scheme in Swedish Lapland boosts numbers wintering in The Netherlands. Migratory, wintering in scattered groups in The Netherlands, Hungary, S Black & Caspian Sea areas, N Kazakhstan & Yangtze valley, China.)

**Appendix 4. 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) after discussion with the 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.


2003 American Herring Gull Garrison, St Mary’s, Isles of Scilly, 24th April.


1988 Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* West High Down, Totland, Isle of Wight, 12th April.

1983 Semipalmated Sandpiper Peterborough SF, Cambridgeshire, 5th–7th August.

1968 Nutcracker Wendover, Buckinghamshire, 9th September.

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