



Report on Rare birds in Great Britain in 2003

M.J.Rogers and the Rarities Committee

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (Brit. Birds 53: 155-158). The 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 sound-recorded or photographed/video-recorded (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) date(s); and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the cases of the very similar Eastern *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers *P.bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of frigatebirds *Fregata*, the 'soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma mollis/feae/madeira* complex and Booted *Hippolais caligata* and Sykes's Warbler *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* (1997), but adopt the modifications set out in Brit. Birds 97: 2-5 and 110.
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species' name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded (i) in Britain & Ireland to the end of 1957, (ii) in Britain only for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in the totals), or 'the same' when evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same, or a nearby, locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (41, 89, 1)

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, first-winter, 16th-28th February, photo (M.J.McGill *et al.*).

This is the first since the winter of 1997/98 at this customary hotspot for the species (Brit. Birds 92: 561). Slimbridge accounts for around half of all British records of Lesser White-fronted Goose and, because of this pedigree, birds here are probably the least likely to be regarded as suspect, despite the proximity of an extensive wildfowl collection. Even though Slimbridge is situated on the west coast, the White-fronted Geese *A.albifrons* that winter there are of the European race *albifrons* and it is flocks of this race which are most likely to carry a Lesser White-front of natural origin.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

North American and E Siberian race *B. b. nigricans*, 'Black Brant' (1, 138, 8)

Dorset Moonfleet, 19th-20th and 26th October (J.Lidster, B.Spencer); same, Ferrybridge, 1st-2nd November, photo (M.Cade, J.A.Lucas, J.P.Martin *et al.*).

Essex Hamford Water, 5th January to 7th February (S.Cox, J.Novorol); same as Holland Haven, 14th December 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 554). River Crouch, South Woodham Ferrers, 4th January to 17th February (A.W.Shearring, D.Wood); same, 30th November to 2004 (A.W.Shearring); same as 2002 Essex below. Blackwater Estuary and Old Hall Marshes, since 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 554), to 23rd March (D.L.Acfield, J.T.Smith *et al.*); same, Steeple, 7th March (D.Wood). One or other returned Old Hall Marshes, 6th November; three present 9th November, two of same to 2004 (C.J.Tyas *et al.*); one or other, Northey Island, 27th December (J.Buchanan); two of same, Heybridge Gravel-pits, 28th December (D.Rhymes).

Gower Wernfrwd, 26th November to 8th March 2004, photo (B.Stewart *et al.*).

Hampshire Farlington Marshes and Langstone Harbour, 1st February to 30th April, photo (J.Crook).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 12th January to 6th March, photo (D.E.Balmer, D.Waller, K.M.Wilson *et al.*); 18th December, photo (A.Sims, P.M.Troake, K.M.Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Admiralty Point, near King's Lynn, 15th February, 1st March (C.A.Holt); presumed same as Terrington Marsh, 3rd February 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 555). Ousemouth, two, 16th March (C.A.Holt *et al.*); presumed same as Terrington Marsh, 3rd February 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 555). Terrington Marsh, 2nd February (D.E.Balmer, S.J.Holloway, P.M.Wilson); presumed same, 4th December (C.A.Holt, S.J.Turner); presumed returning individual of 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 555). Titchwell, see 2002 Norfolk below. Snettisham, 24th-25th April (B.Stretch).

Suffolk Kingsfleet and Falkenham Marshes, since 2002 to 3rd January (Brit. Birds 96: 555); probably same as Falkenham, 8th, 26th December 2000 (Brit. Birds 94: 460), Trimley, 21st February 2002 and King's Fleet, 21st December 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 555). Shotley and Trimley Marshes, since 2002, intermittently to 27th March (N.C.Crouch, N.Odin *et al.*), considered different from Kingsfleet/Falkenham, 21st December 2002 to 3rd January 2003 (above). See also 2002 Suffolk below.

Sussex, West Thorney Island, 16th-26th January (C.B.Collins); same as Thorney, Pilsey Islands, 11th-31st December 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 555).

2000 Lincolnshire Humberstone, 10th November (S.D.Wellock); same as Cleethorpes area, 9th November 2000 to at least January 2001 (Brit. Birds 94: 460).

2001 Essex Blackwater Estuary, 24th November to at least 30th December (D.Rhymes *et al.*).

2001 Hampshire Needs Ore area, 2nd to at least 31st December (Brit. Birds 95: 484) and Beaulieu Estuary, 2nd December (Brit. Birds 95: 484), were same individual and present to 29th March 2002. Pennington and Keyhaven Marshes area, 25th November to 2002 (Brit. Birds 95: 484), present to 22nd March 2002. Keyhaven, 16th December to 22nd March 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 555), present to 24th March. Hurst Beach, 27th December to 2002 (Brit. Birds 95: 484), present to 29th March 2002 and same as Keyhaven above. Cams Bay, Fareham, 29th December (Brit. Birds 96: 555), present Portsmouth Harbour, 11th December to 7th March 2002 and not same as Weston Shore, 25th-26th February 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 554).

2001 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 20th-21st February, two 21st (S.Evans, A.Mills, K.M.Wilson).

2001 Suffolk Shotley Marshes, Stour Estuary, 29th March (Brit. Birds 96: 555) now considered same as Trimley Marshes, 18th January (Brit. Birds 95:484) (per N.Odin).

2002 Essex Goldhanger, River Blackwater, two, 13th January (Brit. Birds 96: 554); should have read one only (per H.Vaughan). River Thames, Leigh-on-Sea, 1st-29th October; same, South Woodham Ferrers, 11th November to 27th December (A.W.Shearring, D.Wood).

2002 Hampshire Milford-on-Sea, 7th October, photo (M.P.Moody). See also 2001 Hampshire above.

2002 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 7th January to at least 14th February, photo (K.M.Wilson *et al.*). Witham Mouth and Frieston Shore, 3rd February, 3rd March (J.Badley, L.James, S.Keightley). Holbeach Marsh, 26th October, photo (P.Todd).

2002 Norfolk Titchwell, two, 3rd November to 22nd March 2003 (J.A.Rowlands *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 188).

2002 Suffolk Shotley and Trimley Marshes, 24th December, intermittently to 27th March 2003 (N.Crouch, N.Odin *et al.*).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (14, 55, 0)

Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, adult, 18th October 2002 to 9th April, same 10th November to at least 28th March 2004 (A.W.Reid *et al.*); presumed returning individual of 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 555).

1970 Essex Potton Island, adult, shot, 29th December, specimen now at Colchester Museum, photo (P.Philpot per N.C.Green).

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (28, 336, -)

2001 Clwyd River Clwyd, male, 14th December (S.Morris); presumed same as Caernarfonshire, 2000 (Brit. Birds 94: 461).

This species was removed from the list of species considered on 31st December 2001.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (0, 26, 1)

Cornwall Colliford Reservoir, male, 9th-22nd July, 12th August, 15th September; presumed same, Crowdy Reservoir, 23rd August (S.M.Christophers *et al.*); presumed same as 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 556). Loe Pool, male, 9th January (E.H.Thomas), returned 23rd September, again 6th-12th December (per K.A.Wilson); presumed same as 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 556).

Scilly Tresco, St Mary's and St Martin's, male, since 26th December 2002 to at least 5th November, photo (Brit. Birds 96: 556, plate 310; 97: plate 331).

Shetland Dales Voe, male, 18th January to 24th February (B.H.Thomason *et al.*).

2002 Cornwall Colliford Reservoir, male, 19th January to 5th August (Brit. Birds 96: 556); dates should read, 19th, 31st January, 19th April, 4th-15th July, 5th August (S.M.Christophers); same, Garrow Tor, 19th June.

2002 Shetland Loch of Hillwell, male, 13th-25th May (G.J.Fitchett *et al.*).

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (13, 209, 4)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, female, 12th-30th September, photo (R.M.Andrews, G.Jones *et al.*).

Leicestershire Rutland Water, male, 22nd September to 4th October, photo (M.G.Berriman, S.M.Lister *et al.*).

Sussex, East Icklesham, male, 18th June (R.K.Haggart, R.E.Smith *et al.*), present 14th June to mid July.

Sussex, West Goring Gap, male, 7th May, photo (C.W.Melgar *et al.*).

2002 Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, male, 3rd August, 25th August to 26th September (N.P.Adams, K.J.Greerson *et al.*).

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* (0, 6, 0)

1997 Essex Abberton Reservoir, male, 23rd-24th, 30th November (Brit. Birds 92: 566), also Ardleigh Reservoir, 29th (A.J.A.Dally).

Redhead *Aythya americana* (0, 2, 1)

Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, male, since 21st September 2002 to 31st January (Brit. Birds 96: 557); same, Cosmeston Lakes, 6th-16th February; same, Lisvane Reservoir, 16th-23rd February; returned to Kenfig 29th October to 14th November (per S.J.Moon).

Outer Hebrides Loch Tangasdale, Barra, first-winter female, 20th September to 15th April 2004 (K.Gillon, S.L.Rivers, C.Scott *et al.* per M.S.Scott).

The drake in South Wales returned for its third winter. More remarkably, the female on Barra was found during a purple patch for rarities on this previously little-watched Hebridean island. The identification of female Redhead and the problem of Redhead-like hybrids was covered briefly but effectively by Keith Vinicombe and the late Laurel Tucker in *The Macmillan Field Guide to Bird Identification* (Macmillan, 1989), seven years before the first male was recorded in Britain. More details of the Barra bird can be found in *Birding World* 17: 59, where Martin Scott's videograb shows the bill- and head-shape, and Ring-necked Duck-like pale spectacles and loreal area. The typical bill pattern, a duller version of the male's, is also visible in the image, which was taken in February 2004. This was not apparent when the bird arrived in September, a time of year when the identification of female and immature *Aythya* ducks can be even more difficult than usual because important bill patterns may be obscured.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (many, 277, 10)

Argyll Loch Bhasapol, Tiree, male, 21st-29th April (J.Bowler *et al.*).

Bedfordshire Elstow, female, since December 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 557) to 26th February (per D.J.Odell).

Cambridgeshire Paxton Pits NR, male, 14th September, photo (J.Lansdell, B.Stretch, S.Webb *et al.*); presumed same as Fen Drayton/Godmanchester, 2000/01 (Brit. Birds 96: 558).

Derbyshire Willington Gravel-pits, first-winter, 17th October, photo (J.A.Eaton, R.C.Hutchinson).

Devon Slapton Ley, male, 31st October to 8th November, photo (M.Knott *et al.*).

Dorset Morden Park, male, since 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 557), to 26th January (per J.Lidster); same, Little Sea, Studland, 4th-6th January (G.Walbridge *et al.*).

Fife Loch Gelly, male, 30th July to at least 18th August (D.Ogilvie, K.D.Shaw, J.J.Squire). Also in Perth & Kinross.

Glamorgan Cosmeston Lake, male, 20th-31st October (D.R.W.Gilmore *et al.*).

Kent New Hythe Gravel-pits, female, 19th December (J.M.Warne).

Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, male, 20th September to 12th October (J.B.Bell *et al.*).

Norfolk Welney, male, 3rd January (J.B.Kemp); presumed same as November 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 557); same, Welney, 1st-4th November (J.B.Kemp) and Tottenhill Gravel-pits, 14th-17th December (C.Donner). Welney, female, 5th-7th December (J.B.Kemp). Lynford Gravel-pits, male, 11th-23rd February, 18th-24th April; same, Fowl Mere, 16th February and Stanford Water, 1st March to 11th April (per G.E.Dunmore); presumed returning 2002 individual (see below). Stiffkey Fen, female, 23rd June (S.J.Aspinal).

Northamptonshire Daventry Country Park, juvenile/first-winter male, since December 2002 to 10th February (Brit. Birds 96: 558); same, Hollowell Reservoir, 1st February (A.L.Gillam, M.L.Piper).

Perth & Kinross Vane Farm, Loch Leven, male, 1st-16th September (K.D.Shaw *et al.*); same as Fife.

Suffolk Minsmere, male, since 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 558) to at least 28th February; presumed same, 3rd November intermittently to 21st March 2004 (R.Drew, D.Fairhurst *et al.*); presumed same, Benacre, 4th November (R.Drew).

Wiltshire Langford Lakes, male, 12th-16th March (K. & J.Mortimore, D.E.M.Peart, J.Vickerman *et al.*).

2001 Hertfordshire Amwell, female, 3rd-4th November, photo (B.Reed *et al.*).

2001 Lancashire & North Merseyside Fairhaven Lake and Marton Mere, male, 20th October to 2002 (Brit. Birds 95: 487), to 8th March 2002 (per S.J.White).

2001 Norfolk Fowl Mere, male, 1st April (Brit. Birds 96: 558), presumed same, 23rd June to 29th July (per G.E.Dunmore).

2002 Hertfordshire Wilstone Reservoir, first-winter male, 17th-18th November (D.Bilcock *et al.*).

2002 Lancashire & North Merseyside See 2001 Lancashire & North Merseyside above.

2002 Leicestershire & Northamptonshire Swithland Reservoir, male, 5th-15th October (Brit. Birds 96: 557), locality is only in Leicestershire.

2002 Norfolk Stanford Water, male, 16th February, 22nd-31st March, 14th April, and Thompson Water, 13th April (Brit. Birds 96: 558); now presumed same as Fowl Mere, intermittently, 5th February to 14th April (Brit. Birds 96: 557) and not same as Hickling, 16th March (Brit. Birds 96: 558) (per G.E.Dunmore).

2002 Wiltshire Ramsbury, female, 22nd January to 26th February, photo (K.J.Beint, M.Coller, S.B.Edwards).

2002 Worcestershire Grimley Gravel-pits, female, 9th-11th, 14th October; same, Westwood Pool, 12th-13th October (T.M.Hinett, S.M.Whitehouse).

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 54, 13)

Carmarthenshire Penclacwydd, male, age uncertain, 4th June, photo (B. & S.Stewart *et al.*).

Cumbria River Eden, Armathwaite, first-winter male, 12th-14th January; same, Castle Carrock Reservoir, 16th January; same, Talkin Tarn, 18th January intermittently to 20th February, photo (C.Raven, F.J.Roberts *et al.*); same, Longtown, intermittently 21st to 30th April, 14th May intermittently to 16th June, photo (per C.Raven) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 332).

Dorset Little Sea, Studland, male, since 14th December 2002 to at least 31st March (Brit. Birds 96: 558); returned 15th October to 29th February 2004 (per J.Lidster).

Dumfries & Galloway Castle Loch, Lochmaben, male, 29th December to 28th January 2004 (A.W.Reid *et al.*).

Durham Bishop Middleham, female, 27th March to 23rd April, photo (A.J.Wheeldon *et al.*).

Essex Seventy Acres Lake, Fishers Green, male, 23rd-25th March (A.J.Harris *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: page 565 fig. 1).

Greater London Brent Reservoir, first-winter male, 14th-23rd February, photo (A.M.Self *et al.*).

Greater Manchester Pennington Flash, male, 1st July to 23rd August, photo (A.Disley *et al.*).

Hertfordshire Stocker's Lake, first-winter male, 4th January, photo (A.V.Moon *et al.*).

Perth & Kinross Vane Farm, Loch Leven, first-winter male, 1st, 11th February (D.Abraham, K.D.Shaw *et al.*). Findatie, Loch Leven, male, 16th-20th March (R.Shand, K.D.Shaw, A.Wilson *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Hornsea Mere, first-winter male, 11th January to 1st February, photo (B.Richards *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Potteric Carr, male, 2nd-9th April (S.M.Bird, D.Carroll *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West New Swillington Ings, first-winter male, 16th-23rd February, photo (P.R.Morris, M.Pygott *et al.*).

2001 Outer Hebrides Loch an Eilean, South Uist, first-winter male, 27th January (P.R.Boyer, B.Rabbitts, A.Stevenson *et al.*).

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (75, 107, 5)

Ayrshire Stevenston Point, male, 14th June to 6th July, photo (R.Lambie *et al.*).

Clyde Islands Toward, male, 25th May (C.M.Waltho); same, Inellan, 21st June (J.T.M.Towill).

Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, male, since 3rd October 2002 to at least 27th March (Brit. Birds 96: 559); presumed same, 29th December to at least 29th February 2004 (P.N.Collin *et al.*).

Fife Leven, female, 3rd-5th May; same, 20th-26th July, 18th, 27th-28th September, 1st, 25th October, 13th-14th December (per D.Ogilvie), same as 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 559). Also in Lothian.

Lothian Aberlady Bay, female, 13th-31st May, 15th June (per D.J.Kelly); same as Fife.

Shetland Cat Firth, male, 25th October (P.Sclater *et al.*); first-winter male, 31st October to 2nd December (S.E.Duffield, P.Sclater *et al.*). Weisdale Voe, first-winter male, 1st December (P.V.Harvey, M.Heubeck *et al.*).

2002 Lothian Aberlady Bay, female, 20th April to 9th July (per D.Ogilvie); same as 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 489); also in Fife.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

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

Anglesey Point Lynas, male, 31st January (D.Powell); presumed same as Caernarfonshire.

Caernarfonshire Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr, male, since 2002 to 28th April (Brit. Birds 96: 559), returned 28th September to at least 31st December (per J.Barnes).

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* (2, 7, 0)

2002 Suffolk Great Livermere Lake, female, 11th-20th June, 7th-9th July; same, Layham, 22nd-29th September, 8th-9th October, photo (S.E.Newson, J.Oxford, R.M.Thewlis *et al.*).

The inclusion of this individual within this report merely confirms acceptance of its identity by BBRC, but does not endorse its credentials as being of wild origin. In fact, this bird was, at times, remarkably confiding and could be approached to within a few metres.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 215, 14)

Argyll Between Iona and Tresnish Isle, adult, 15th May (B.Harrington, R.Johnson, L.Potter *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Butt of Lewis area, five adults, 19th April; two adults (presumed different), one second-summer, 20th (S.Hulka, J.Stirling).

Shetland Foula, adult, 4th May, photo (D. & G.Atherton, A.R.Mainwood). Burra Firth, Unst, adult, 4th May (W.Dickson, S.E.Duffield *et al.*). West Burrafirth, adult, 9th May (S.E.Duffield). Colgrave Sound, Fetlar, first-summer, 30th May (P.R.French, M.Smith). Kirkabister, Nesting, adult, 17th November to at least 26th April 2004 (P.Sclater *et al.*), presumed same as Kirkabister, 19th October to 2003 (Brit. Birds 96: 545).

Yorkshire, North Cloughton Wyke, Scarborough, adult, 8th February, photo (D.Bywater *et al.*).

1982 Shetland Bunidale, Mainland, adult, 14th February, now considered same as individual off Whalsay, to 24th March (Brit. Birds 76: 478) (The Birds of Shetland, 2004).

1993 Shetland Fetlar, age uncertain, 23rd January (Brit. Birds 87: 508), now considered same as Fetlar, adult, 28th December 1992 (Brit. Birds 86: 452) (The Birds of Shetland, 2004).

2001 Orkney See 2002 Orkney below.

2002 Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 25th-28th April (Brit. Birds 96: 545), was in 2001.

2002 Shetland Bluemull Sound, adult, 6th-7th, 14th November (B.H.Thomason *et al.*). Kirkabister, Nesting, 19th October to 1st January 2003 (Brit. Birds 96: 545), now considered to be a new individual (The Birds of Shetland, 2004).

White-billed Diver is a scarce bird, even within its rather restricted European range. In 1995, Folvik & Mjøs described a small but regular northward spring passage off the coast of southwest Norway, at about the same latitude as Shetland, in late April and May (Brit. Birds 88: 125-129). They estimated that the passage involved up to 100 individuals each year and postulated that these birds may winter well offshore in the North Sea, or possibly in sea areas farther west and south. Rogers (Brit. Birds 90: 292-293) supported this hypothesis, noting the evidence of a marked spring bias to British records, with the timing similar to those seen off Norway.

A clear pattern in British records of White-billed Diver has since emerged, with most records falling into one of three distinct categories. The first category is that of occasional wintering birds. These are fairly regular in the Northern Isles, with isolated records farther south in most years, as far south as the English Channel. Approximately half of all records prior to 1975 were of dead or moribund birds in the winter months, from all around the British coast. Subsequently, most have been seen alive and, in 2003, the wintering birds were in Yorkshire and Shetland. The second category is the smallest and refers to a cluster of passage birds which occur between late August and mid October. Most of these turn up along the east coast, between Northeast Scotland and Norfolk, although there is a recent record from Wales during this period. The numbers involved are small, and most birds are recorded flying past during seawatches, typically during periods with a northerly airstream, although occasionally one may linger in an area for a few days. The timing, location and direction of travel of these birds would fit with a weather-induced displacement of active, southbound migrants from the western population into the North Sea. Moreover, the timing confirms that White-billed Diver is an early autumn migrant, with the majority occurring well before the peak of the small passage of Great Northern Divers *G.immer* along eastern coasts, in November. The third, largest, and most consistent category is that observed by Rogers (1997), of returning spring birds. These now occur annually, chiefly in the Northern and Western Isles, and with a peak in late April or early May.

Against such a background, the occurrence of five together in a remote corner of the Western Isles in spring 2003 may not be quite as surprising as it first appears. Further observations here may provide an even clearer indication of the true status and range of White-billed Diver in Britain. Scattered over a huge area at extremely low density, often well offshore in choppy seas, and usually in areas with few observers, a few tens of birds may easily evade detection off the more remote coasts of Scotland, and probably elsewhere in Britain, particularly in winter. This pattern would closely resemble that apparent on the Pacific coast of North America, where small numbers of White-billed Divers winter south to southern British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest, with occasional birds as far south as California.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* (3, 18, 0)

2002 Norfolk Mundesley, 31st December (M.Fischer).

A winter record of Black-browed Albatross is unusual but there have been similar records before: one was seen off Durlston Head, Dorset, on 4th February 1980 (Brit. Birds 74: 455), while the long-stayer at Bass Rock, Lothian, was noted off Eyemouth, Borders, on 7th or 8th February 1968 and off St Abbs Head, Borders, on 28th February 1969 (Brit. Birds 62: 460, 63: 269). Another long-stayer, the one at Hermaness, Unst, Shetland, from the early 1970s until 1995, would frequently arrive back at the gannetry in early March and it seems unlikely that this individual ever left European waters.

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

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 24th October (P.A.Lassey, I.Marshall, J.Wasse).

1983 Kent Dungeness, 15th October (T.P.Inskipp).

2002 Durham Whitburn, 23rd September (P.Hogg, W.Moss, B.Unwin); presumed same as Farne Islands, Northumberland, also 23rd (Brit. Birds 96: 547).

2002 Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 26th August (P.A.Lassey, I.Marshall *et al.*); presumed same as Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire, also 26th (Brit. Birds 96: 547).

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (1, 341, 19)

At sea Sea area Sole: 9 km SE of St Mary's, Scilly, 12th June (R.L.Flood, J.K.Higginson *et al.*); 9 km SE of St Mary's, 30th June (E.A.Fisher *et al.*); 11 km SE of St Mary's, 3rd July (R.L.Flood *et al.*); 10 km S of St Mary's, 12th July, photo (J.K.Higginson *et al.*); 8 km S of St Mary's, 14th July (E.A.Fisher *et al.*); 8 km S of St Mary's, 22nd July, photo (R.L.Flood *et al.*); 8 km S of St Mary's, two, 25th July, one photo (E.A.Fisher, R.L.Flood *et al.*); 14 km S of St Mary's, 26th July (J.Pender *et al.*); 9 km S of St Mary's, 27th July (R.L.Flood *et al.*); 8 km S of St Mary's, two, 8th August (E.A.Fisher, B.Lascelles, P.L.Varney *et al.*); 9 km S of St Mary's, two, 10th August (E.A.Fisher, R.L.Flood *et al.*); 12 km SE of St Mary's, two, 13th August (E.A.Fisher, R.L.Flood); 10 km S of St Mary's, 22nd August (J.K.Higginson *et al.*); 10 km W of St Mary's, 26th August (E.A.Fisher, J.K.Higginson); 10 km SE of St Mary's, 28th August (E.A.Fisher, J.Pender *et al.*).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (269, 192, 4)

Cornwall Swanpool, Falmouth, first-summer male, 26th May to 7th June, photo (G.Cockill, S.F.Elton *et al.*).

Hampshire Barton-on-Sea, male, 26th May, photo (C. & J.Tabor) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 333).

Kent Dungeness, male, in song, 11th-18th May, photo (P.G.Akers *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, first-summer male, 22nd May to 2nd June, photo (M.Hicks, D.Page *et al.*).

Occasionally, we encounter a record that causes more problems than it deserves to. This was certainly the case with the Hampshire Little Bittern record (above), which highlights some of the problems associated with digital photographs and the assessment process. The image which accompanied the record (Brit. Birds 97: plate 333) certainly showed a Little Bittern, but the pattern of pixels gave the impression of a two-dimensional bird which had been superimposed onto an unrelated background. Although we had no reason to disbelieve the observers, we asked for the original digital file to be submitted as well. An examination of this convinced us that it was simply an unfortunate photographic effect that was responsible for our concern.

The pattern of occurrence in 2003 is fairly typical. The vast majority of Little Bitterns in Britain are overshooting males which appear on the south coast in May. The singing bird in Kent, and long-staying Cornwall and Scilly birds are a reminder of the pair which bred at Potteric Carr, South Yorkshire, in 1984. Autumn birds are a major rarity, the last one being a juvenile in Surrey on 16th September 1984.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (184, 423, -)

1980 Greater London/Surrey Richmond, adult, 23rd May (Brit. Birds 74: 457), was Greater London only.

1987 Shetland Baltasound, Unst, 30th May to 15th June, now presumed same as Haroldswick, Unst, 15th May, age uncertain (Brit. Birds 81: 542) (The Birds of Shetland, 2004).

This species was removed from the list of species considered on 31st December 2001.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (78, 50, 2)

Ceredigion Aberleri, Dyfi, 3rd-5th June, photo (R.Bamford, R.Jones, J.Lee *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 246).

Glamorgan Lamby Lake, Cardiff, 24th-25th June (R.Mitchell *et al.*); also in Gwent.

Gwent Newport Wetlands Reserve, 11th June (R.de Borde *et al.*); same as Glamorgan.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (3, 118, 2)

Devon Bowling Green Marsh, 5th August, photo (R.Doble, A.Gladwin, K.Praghnall *et al.*).

Dorset Abbotsbury, 23rd March (S.A.Groves).

2002 Buckinghamshire Higher Denham, early January to end of February (M.Randall); same as High Wycombe, 16th January (Brit. Birds 96: 551).

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 189, 42)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, 20th-21st June, photo (A.H.Davies *et al.*); again, 11th-12th July, photo (R.M.Andrews, D.Angel *et al.*).

Berkshire Theale, 25th February (R.Addison).

Cambridgeshire Cam Washes, juvenile, 8th-9th July, photo, colour-ringed as pullus, Lac du Grande Lieu, Loire Atlantique, France, 30th April 2003 (B.S.Green, J.Oates *et al.*). Kingfishers Bridge, 28th July to 29th August, photo, colour-ringed; same as Abberton, Essex, below (J.Oates *et al.*).

Carmarthenshire Dinefwr Park, 7th, 17th August (T.Forster, J. & M.Stansfield). See also Pembrokeshire.

Cleveland Saltholme Pools, 11th July (M.Rowbottom).

Cumbria Bassenthwaite, 1st-2nd August, photo (P.Ullrich *et al.*).

Derbyshire Drakelow, 21st August intermittently to 12th October, photo (T.Cockburn).

Devon Colyford Marsh, Seaton, 31st August (P.Abbott, I. & S.Waite). Powderham Estate, 31st August, colour-ringed as pullus, Lac du Grande Lieu, Loire Atlantique, France, 26th June 2001; same as Essex, South Yorkshire (D.L.Buckingham *et al.*).

Dorset The Fleet (Abbotsbury and Langton Herring), 26th-29th June (S.A.Groves *et al.*); presumed same, 4th August (J.Down, S.A.Groves). Abbotsbury, 20th October (S.A.Groves). Sturminster Marshall, 16th August, intermittently to 26th October, again, 3rd-4th January 2004 (G.P.Green *et al.*), colour-ringed; see also Hampshire.

Essex Abberton Reservoir, 26th July, colour-ringed as pullus, Lac du Grande Lieu, Loire Atlantique, France, 26th June 2001; same as Devon, South Yorkshire (A.Kettle *et al.*).

Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, 5th October (H.Thomas).

Gloucestershire River Severn, Fretherne, 13th April (M.King).

Hampshire Mockbeggar and Ivy Lakes, Blashford, 21st August (L.Chappell, R.Howell), colour-ringed; same, 31st October intermittently to at least 24th January 2004 (D.E.J.Dicks, S.S.King *et al.*); see also Dorset. Langstone Harbour, 7th September (I.Calderwood); same, Testwood Lakes, 7th (S.S.King, I.Pibworth). Hurst Castle, 10th December (A.P.S.Hale). Arlebury Park, Alresford, 13th December to 16th February 2004, photo (D.Pearson *et al.*). Itchen Valley Country Park, 21st December (M.J.W.Hay).

Hertfordshire Wilstone Reservoir, 28th April (K.Austin, M.Mackay, R.Tomlin).

Highland Collabol, Loch Shin, Sutherland, 28th May (D.C.Davenport). Ruadh Loch, Achnahaird, Wester Ross, 1st June (P.Cosgrove). Loch Na Mair, Sutherland, 4th June, photo (J.Butterworth).

Kent Scotney Gravel-pits, 12th, 15th, 18th July (A.J. & B.J.Holcombe *et al.*), colour-ringed and possibly same as Cam Washes, Cambridgeshire (also in East Sussex below). Pegwell Bay, 22nd August (P.Forrest).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Eric Morecambe Pools, 5th August (M.Dawson, R.Hobbs, J.Reddish *et al.*).

Leicestershire Oakthorpe, 24th July (J.A.Sharpe *et al.*); probably same as Derbyshire and Staffordshire. Eyebrook Reservoir, 10th August, photo (R.M.Fray *et al.*); present 9th-12th; same, Rutland Water, 12th August to 23rd September (per R.M.Fray).

Lincolnshire Baston/Langtoft Gravel-pits, 31st March (W.Bowell). Gibraltar Point, 19th May, photo (M.M.Potter, J.S.Sansome). Frieston Shore, near Boston, 18th August (A.J.Blaydon, S.Keightley).

Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, 13th June, photo (M.A.Wilkinson); also in Northumberland.

Norfolk Hickling, 11th January (A.D.Boote); presumed same, Warham Greens, 11th (A.M.Stoddart *et al.*). Snetterton Gravel-pits, 13th-14th February, photo (C.A.Holt *et al.*); presumed same as above. Caston, 13th March, photo (P.Newport). Overstrand, 14th April (G.Dormer, B.J.Murphy); presumed same, Sheringham, 14th (A.P.Benson). Holkham, 18th October (K.Barrett, P.Hawkins, H.Vaughan *et al.*). Holkham, 22nd October (J.R.McCallum); not same as 18th October. Burnham Norton, 27th October (A.J.L.Smith), presumed same as one of Holkham (above). Burnham Overy, 10th November (R.Johns, S.Morrison), presumed same as one of Holkham (above).

Northumberland Linton Pond, 29th May (A.Belshaw); same, Longhirst Flash, 29th-30th May (D.Elliot, R.Hunter), 8th and 10th-12th June (A.D.McLevy *et al.*); same, Bothal Pond, 8th June (A.D.McLevy *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Holme Pierrepont, 20th July (D.C.Wood); same, Attenborough, 21st (T.P.Gibson).

Pembrokeshire Newport, 5th August, colour-ringed (P.K.Grennard); presumed same as Carmarthenshire.

Somerset Ham Wall, 8th June (J.L.Thomas).

Staffordshire Whitemoor Haye, 12th-19th October (D.Abbott, R.W.Key); same as Derbyshire.

Sussex, East Scotney Gravel-pits, 12th, 15th, 18th July (A.J. & B.J.Holcombe *et al.*), colour-ringed and possibly same as Cam Washes, Cambridgeshire; also in Kent. Rye Harbour, 23rd August (I.J.Whitcombe *et al.*).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, 7th September (T.Edwards, R.Prior *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Denaby Ings, two, 19th-22nd July, one colour-ringed as pullus, Lac du Grande Lieu, Loire Atlantique, France, 26th June 2001; same as Devon, Essex (J.Denman, R.Gething *et al.*).

2001 Staffordshire Copmere, 22nd July, photo (G. & H.Hallwell).

2002 Cleveland See 2002 Lincolnshire below.

2002 Greater Manchester Chorlton Water Park, 11th August (Brit. Birds 96: 552), correct first observer/identifier was P.L.Hines.

2002 Lincolnshire Grainthorpe Marsh, 28th October to 4th November, again, 11th-27th November, 31st December (Brit. Birds 96: 552); link with Cleveland individual now considered invalid.

2002 Norfolk Hickling, three, 10th May (J.Hampshire); previously not considered acceptable (Brit. Birds 96: 606); presumed same as Stone Point, Essex, 11th (Brit. Birds 96: 552). Sea Palling, 17th December (I.Fisher).

2002 Northamptonshire Storton's Gravel-pit, three, 7th October; same, Pitsford Reservoir, 8th October; two of same, 9th; one or other, Stanwick Gravel-pit to 12th; one or other, Storton's Gravel-pit, 12th (Brit. Birds 96: 552); one or other, Earl's Barton Gravel-pit and Stanwick Gravel-pit, 13th (C.J.Coe *et al.*).

2002 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 2nd May, photo (P.J.Donnolly, B. & I.Muir *et al.*).

2002 Shetland Sand Water, Voe and Sae Water, 23rd-26th April, photo (G.Ball, M.S.Chapman, L.Robertson *et al.*); same, Loch of Spiggie, 19th-25th May, photo (A. & G.J.Fitchett *et al.*).

2002 Suffolk Minsmere, 20th May; same, North Warren, 21st (R.Drew *et al.*). Waldringfield, 19th June (T.Gray).

2002 Wiltshire Coate Water, 20th May (S.J.Covey *et al.*).

2002 Yorkshire, North Leyburn, 19th April (L.Caville, K.Durose).

1985 Shetland North Nesting, Mainland, 25th-26th June, now considered same as Caithness and Burrafirth (Brit. Birds 79: 531) (The Birds of Shetland, 2004).

There is no escaping the fact that compiling the statistics for the number of individuals recorded is particularly difficult for this species, something referred to in last year's report (Brit. Birds 96: 552-553) but worth reiterating here. The total of 42 is our best estimate, given the advice and opinions of local observers on the ground. The movements of colour-ringed birds such as the one seen in Devon, Essex and South Yorkshire demonstrates that this large and obvious species is highly mobile. A broadly conservative approach to the number of different birds recorded over the course of the year in an area is probably wise in most cases; but, on the other hand, there is no doubt that Great White Egrets are on the increase in Britain.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (29, 129, 1)

Sussex, East Wych Cross, 25th May (L. & R.C.Owen, M.Scott-Ham).

2002 Devon East Okement Valley, 2nd, 3rd or 4th June (M. & S.Davies).

2002 Hertfordshire Amwell, 4th June (B.Reed).

2002 Kent Dungeness, 10th September (R.J.Price *et al.*).

2002 Suffolk Hawstead, 1st May (Brit. Birds 96: 553), previously published as Bury St Edmunds.

2002 Yorkshire, West Anglers Country Park, juvenile, 10th September (M.Spedding, M.Warrington)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (3, 86, 1)

Devon Exe Estuary, since September 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 553), present throughout 2003 to April 2004 at least (Brit. Birds 97: plate 334); juvenile, 18th October (M.Tyler *et al.*), present from 3rd October to 23rd October.

2002 Norfolk Strumpshaw Fen, 6th September (M.Chipperfield *et al.*); presumed same as various localities in Norfolk, 7th-10th September (Brit. Birds 96: 553).

With two blank years in the last six, Glossy Ibis remains a great rarity. It is, therefore, surprising to find that both records in 2003 came from the same locality. The first individual arrived as a juvenile among an exceptional group of eight in September 2002, and subsequently remained alone on the Exe estuary throughout 2003. Bowling Green Marsh, in particular, was a favourite haunt, although occasionally it moved to the nearby RSPB reserve of Exminster Marshes. Remarkably, a second individual, also a juvenile, arrived to join the original bird, then in its second winter, on 2nd October 2003, and both birds could often to be seen together at Bowling Green Marsh until 23rd October, when the newcomer departed.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 308, 19)

Buckinghamshire Little Marlow Gravel-pits, 8th May (C.Bulloch, M.McQuaid, A.Stevens). Near Ivinghoe Beacon, 10th May (M.S.Wallen *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Trumpington, 1st June (C.Hewson).

Cornwall Trethewey, 29th May (M.D.Warren, K.A.Wilson *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, 6th-7th August (C.E.Richards, K.Tucker); same, 10th August (G.Walbridge *et al.*); same, Weymouth, 6th August (B.Spencer).

Essex Shoeburyness, 24th April (S.Arlow).

Hampshire Millersford Bottom, New Forest, 6th May (M.Rafter).

Highland Kinbrace, Sutherland, 15th June to at least 8th July (N.Dales *et al.*); presumed returning individual of June to August 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 560). Glen Glass, Easter Ross, 2nd August (R.H.Hogg).

Kent Margate, 3rd May (D.C.Gilbert, S.Tomlinson); same, Bockhill, 3rd, photo (J. & P.Chantler, R.Heading, B.A.Ryan *et al.*); same, Swalecliffe, 3rd (G.J.A.Burton, M.T.Gould, R.Jose). Pegwell Bay, 31st May (D.C.Gilbert, P.Milton).

Norfolk West Runton, 26th April (D. & M.Saunt). West Somerton/Rollesbury, 27th April (K.R.Dye *et al.*), possibly same as West Runton. Presumed same, Happisburgh, Eccles-on-Sea and Mundesley, 27th (M.Fischer, A.J.Kane *et al.*). Sheringham, 27th April (R.Lee, T.Wright). Near Holt, 27th April (T.Eadson). Breydon, 29th April (P.R.Allard, C.Newcombe). Holme NOA, 30th April (J.Andrews, S.Barker).

Scilly St Mary's and Tresco, 17th-18th April, photo (E.A.Fisher, R.L.Flood, K.Webb *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, Westleton Heath and Dunwich, 29th-30th April (R.Drew, N.C.Green *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 3rd August (M.E. & R.H.Charlwood *et al.*); same, East Dean, 3rd (J.Curson).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (3, 11, 4)

Cornwall Sennen, male, 29th-30th March, photo (J.J.Gilroy, S.Mahood, R.Moores *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 335).

Norfolk Stiffkey and Warham Greens area, juvenile, since 24th December 2002 to 30th March (Brit. Birds 96: 560); same Cley and Blakeney, 23rd February. Blakeney Point, first-summer female, 16th-17th May (D.Boughtflower, J.R.McCallum, R.F.Porter *et al.*).

Shetland Baltasound/Haroldswick area, Unst, juvenile, 2nd-17th September, photo (S.E.Duffield, M.A.Maher *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, male, 1st, 3rd April (A.Gibson, B.R.Spence *et al.*).

The best year since 1993 (for which there are five accepted records), and one from Shetland remains under consideration. This report includes the first instance of a Pallid Harrier overwintering in Britain; all other records have been migrants or potential breeders. What is clear is that there has been a substantial change in the occurrence of this species since 1993. Prior to that year there were only three British records (and none in the BBRC era), but since then there have been 15. Perhaps the decline of collective farming in the Asian breeding grounds really is affecting their range.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (85, 641, 24)

Berkshire Pingewood Gravel-pits, Reading, first-summer male, 4th-9th July, photo (R.Crawford *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, female, 28th June (A.Hitchings, R.M.Patient). Wicken Fen, first-summer male, 19th-30th August, photo (J.Oates, P.S.Prince *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 330).

Devon Lundy, male, 30th May (J.Roberts, B.Sampson).

Dorset Abbotsbury, first-summer female, 29th May (S.A.Groves).

Essex Great Leighs, female, 2nd August (G.C.Bond).

Greater Manchester Horwich, female, 14th-15th September (A.Makin, C.Marston, J.Nisbet *et al.*).

Hampshire Acres Down, New Forest, female, 31st May (S.Buckell, W.Percy).

Kent Dungeness, male, 31st May (A.J.Holcombe, M. & Mrs J.Overall *et al.*). Grove Hill and Collards Lake, first-summer male, 31st May (P.Alfrey, F.Cackett, S.Woods). Eastborough/Northward Hill, first-summer male, 1st June, photo (A.Parker *et al.*). Kingsdown, male, 15th June (J.R.Chantler, R.Heading, N.L.Jarman).

Lincolnshire Baston and Deeping Fen area, first-summer male, 12th June to 2nd September (J.J.Gilroy *et al.*). Barton-on-Humber, first-summer male, 25th-26th July, photo (G.P.Catley *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, female, 31st May (S.J.Aspinall). Hickling, first-summer male, female and two first-summer females, 31st May to 2nd June (T.Barker, J.Hampshire, A.M.Stoddart *et al.*). Upton Fen, first-summer female, 28th-29th June (O.Campbell *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Collieston, first -summer female, 20th August to 24th September, photo (C.N.Gibbins *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 331).

Orkney Kirkwall, first-summer female, 18th June to 4th July, photo (C.J.Booth, Mr & Mrs M.Clouston).

Warwickshire Wormleighton Reservoir, first-summer male, 15th May (J.J.Bowley).

Yorkshire, North Scalby Mills, male, 1st June (B. & C.Richards).

1992 Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, first-summer male, 7th June (R.M.Patient)

2001 Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, female, 26th May (R.M.Patient).

2002 Suffolk North Warren, female, 10th July (R.N.Macklin).

Both the predominance of first-summer (at least 14 of the 24 individuals, and possibly some of the six unaged females as well) and the geographical bias towards the southeast in 2003 were typical. Even during the invasion year of 1992 (no fewer than 126 accepted records), the vast majority of birds for which the age was determined were in their second calendar-year.

Even with an average of almost 15 records per year during 1994-2003, the 24 in 2003 represent a bumper year for this attractive falcon. Birders may question why, given these numbers, BBRC continues to regard this species as a national rarity. Established guidelines for removal of species from the BBRC list require that more than 150 individuals have occurred during the previous decade, with ten or more in at least eight of those years. In this case, there have been 148 accepted records in the past decade and so, currently, it falls just short of the criteria for removal.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* (0, 4, 1)

Suffolk Reydon, adult pale-morph, 3rd October (B.J. & J.Small) (Brit. Birds 97: page xxx fig. 2).

This majestic falcon was a most unexpected find, arriving with a late 'push' of hirundines along the Suffolk coast. It may well have arrived earlier in the day; what was probably the same bird was reported at Minsmere earlier that morning, and it was almost certainly seen by a group at Benacre Broad later in the afternoon, but somewhat distantly. This is the fifth for Britain, following those in Merseyside in August 1977 (Brit. Birds 72: 517), in East Yorkshire in October 1981 (Brit. Birds 78: 541), on South Uist, Outer Hebrides, in June 1985 (Brit. Birds 83: 459), and in Norfolk in July 1987 (Brit. Birds 94: 468). Pale-morphs outnumber dark-morphs by around 3:1 on the breeding grounds (BWP Concise).

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (15, 124, 0)

2002 Orkney Queenamidda, Rendall, 22nd-23rd March (J.B.Ribbands); same as Greeny Hill, Mainland, 6th-8th April (Brit. Birds 96: 563).

Little Crane *Porzana parva* (74, 31, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 20th October, photo (R.L.Flood *et al.*).

American Coot *Fulica americana* (0, 2, 1)

Shetland Loch of Clickimin, first-winter, 30th November to 5th April 2004, photo (S.E.Duffield *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plates 27 & 336).

The single accepted record listed here does not do justice to the happenings of winter 2003/04, since the Shetland bird was the first of three American Coots to arrive in Scotland between November 2003 and February 2004 (two other records, from the Western Isles and Dumfries & Galloway, remain under consideration). With only two previous British records (Kent, April 1996; Cumbria, April 1999) and one in Ireland (Co. Cork in February to April 1981), this mini-influx was not only truly remarkable but also suggests that these earlier individuals might have crossed the Atlantic to Britain & Ireland during the preceding autumn, and not arrived here via the Azores and Iberia, and then migrated northwards in the company of wintering Common Coots *F.atra*.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (143, 202, 1)

Norfolk Titchwell, since 1993 (Brit. Birds 87: 521; 96: 565), present throughout 2003 (per G.E.Dunmore).

Sussex, West Locality withheld, 27th September (L. & R.Knight).

2002 Suffolk Lakenheath Fen, two, 8th May (Brit. Birds 96: 565); correct dates were 8th-11th May.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (35, 54, 1)

Orkney Loch of Tankerness, 30th May, photo (K.E.Hague).

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* (0, 2, 1)

Hampshire Key haven Marshes, male, 22nd-26th July, photo (L.Chappell *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 311; 97: plate 337).

As with a number of previous sand plover records, this individual initially caused much confusion and some observers thought it most likely to be a Greater Sand Plover *C.leschenaultii*. The recent paper by Garner, Lewington & Slack (Birding World 16: 377-385) has gone some way towards further clarification of the characters for identification of this species pair, although the authors were concerned primarily with the criteria to enable separation of Lesser Sand Plovers of the *atrifrons* and *mongolus* subspecies groupings. The Keyhaven individual, with its extensive white forehead and darker flank markings, would clearly fit into the *mongolus* group, and this is supported by several subsidiary features.

Observers fortunate enough to find one of these stunning birds in breeding plumage may ultimately have more than just the elimination of Greater Sand Plover to contend with, since individuals from both groups of Lesser Sand Plover have the potential to occur as vagrants in the UK. A review of the sand plover on the Don Estuary, Northeast Scotland, in August 1991 (and currently accepted as a Greater Sand Plover; Brit. Birds 85: 525) was unfortunately not completed in time for this report, although at the time of writing, the evidence suggests that it may eventually be accepted as the first Lesser Sand Plover for Britain.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (1, 227, 15)

Argyll Ardnave Loch, Islay, juvenile, 21st September to 2nd November, photo (J.Dickson *et al.*).

Avon Blagdon Lake, juvenile, 1st-2nd November (N.Milbourne *et al.*); also in Somerset.

Cambridgeshire Kneesworth, adult, 28th September (S.L.Cooper *et al.*).

Cornwall Predannack Airfield, adult, 1st October, photo (A.R.Pay).

Fife Eden Estuary, adult, 28th-29th September (D.E.Dickson, G.Evans, A.Watt).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Marshside and Crossens Marsh, juvenile, 19th October intermittently to 9th November (N.Hunt, B.McCarthy, S.Tomlinson *et al.*).

Norfolk Breydon, adult, 12th-19th October, photo (P.R.Allard *et al.*), also Breydon south shore, Suffolk, 16th-20th (per D.F.Walsh).

Scilly St Agnes, adult, 15th September (D.Page); juvenile, 6th October (D., H. & I.Bradshaw, A.Jayne, D.Page *et al.*); same, St Mary's, 7th, 9th, photo (per J.K.Higginson) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 338).

Shetland Sandwick, adult, 5th-22nd September, photo (G. & V.Blackman *et al.*). Fair Isle, juvenile, 3rd-8th November, photo (D.N.Shaw *et al.*). Fleck, juvenile, 5th November (P.M.Ellis).

Somerset Priddy, juvenile, 5th November (A.H.Davies, S.Isgar); same as Avon.

Suffolk See Norfolk.

Yorkshire, North Nosterfield, probably first-summer, 5th May, photo (A.M.Hanby *et al.*). North Bishopthorpe, adult, 30th September to 7th October, photo (A.J.Booth, D.Poyser *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Old Moor, juvenile, 20th-22nd September, photo (R.S.Slack *et al.*).

1992 Argyll Colonsay, adult, 3rd to at least 5th October, photo. Previously accepted (Brit. Birds 86: 477), now considered inadequately documented as this species, but see American or Pacific Golden Plover below.

1995 Lancashire & North Merseyside Fishmoor Reservoir, Blackburn, juvenile, 28th October to 11th November, photo (W.C.Aspin, J.F.Wright *et al.*).

1995 Yorkshire, East Buckton, juvenile/first-winter, 22nd October to 7th November (D.Waudby).

1999 Hampshire Keyhaven Marsh area, juvenile, 31st October to 28th November (T.Parminter *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 94: 502); originally published as Needs Ore Point, and as not accepted, in error. Needs Ore Point, juvenile, 30th October (Brit. Birds 94: 469); originally published as Keyhaven Marsh area and as accepted, in error.

2002 Central Region Kinniel Kerse, juvenile, 26th October (D.Thoroughgood).

A good year for this species, following the poor showing in 2002 (just three records, including the one in mainland Scotland, above). The 15 accepted records in 2003 raise the current ten-year average to a shade over 11 per annum and the additional 1995 records mean that there are now four years in the last decade with 15 or more. Brit. Birds 97: page 577 fig. 3 shows the trend towards increasing numbers which has been apparent since the early 1970s. As with many rarities, the growth in number of observers, together with an improved knowledge of field identification, has undoubtedly contributed to this trend.

With regard to field identification, a recent paper by Johnson & Johnson (Wader Study Group Bull. 103: 42-49; see also Brit. Birds 97: 434-443) examined the published identification criteria separating this species from Pacific Golden Plover *P.fulva*. The authors suggested that the only reliable characteristics to separate individuals of known identity were breeding plumage, the number of primaries exposed beyond the longest tertial, and primary projection past the end of the tail, and that all other identification criteria are not diagnostic owing to the individual variation shown by the two species. Given the problems that certain vagrants to the UK have posed, this may come as no surprise and reinforces the view that a careful approach is still required, although the differences in plumage coloration between juveniles of the two species will usually allow relatively straightforward separation at this age.

The bird in North Yorkshire in May 2003 is another well-documented occurrence of an individual apparently in first-summer plumage (following the well-photographed one on Scilly from 30th May to 5th June 2000, and several others). These individuals are interesting because, unlike Pacific Golden Plover, American Golden Plover is not known to assume a first-summer plumage (Byrkjedal & Thompson 1998, Tundra Plovers, Poyser). It seems likely that the moult cycles of these individuals may have been disrupted, perhaps as a consequence of geographical displacement; indeed, whether they can be aged definitively as second-calendar-years may be doubtful.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 50, 2)

Northeast Scotland Ythan Estuary, juvenile, 2nd-16th November, photo (P.A.A.Baxter, P.S.Crockett, C.N.Gibbins *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides North Boisdale/Daliburgh, South Uist, adult, 9th February to at least 5th April 2003 (A.Stevenson *et al.*), presumed returning bird from 2001 and 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 567).

Sussex, East Rye Harbour, first-summer, 1st to at least 19th April, photo (R.I.Fairbank, P.M.Troake *et al.*).

2002 Durham Whitburn, adult, 18th-29th September, photo (D.M.Foster *et al.* per B.Unwin) (Brit Birds 95: plate 348).

American/Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica/fulva* (4, 302, -)

1992 Argyll Colonsay, adult, 3rd to at least 5th October, photo, previously accepted as American Golden Plover (Brit. Birds 86: 477), but now considered indeterminate American or Pacific Golden Plover.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (1, 69, 4)

Norfolk Breydon Water and Berney Marshes, juvenile/first-winter, 26th September (P.R.Allard, A.Grieve, B.W.Jarvis).

Scilly St Mary's, adult, 2nd-8th August, photo (J.M.Turton, P.L.Varney *et al.*). St Agnes, juvenile, 16th-17th September, photo (E.A.Fisher, R.L.Flood, A.Morris *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 13th August, photo (A.J.Bull, D.N.Shaw *et al.*).

These records are all on classic dates for what is clearly the most regular of the North American 'peeps' to occur on this side of the Atlantic. The individual on St Mary's was extraordinarily tame, allowing observers to approach to within two or three metres.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (6, 24, 1)

Hertfordshire Startops End Reservoir, adult, 5th-12th August, photo (W.Pegram *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 332; 97: plate 339).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 342, 7)

Gwent Goldcliff Pools, adult, 2nd July (A.E.D.Hickman).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Wyre Estuary, adult, 3rd-11th August, photo (P.Slade).

Norfolk Cley, adult, 23rd June, photo (R.G.Millington *et al.*). Hickling, adult, 22nd-27th July, photo (P.J.Heath, A.J.Kane *et al.*).

Shetland Norwick, Unst, juvenile, killed by car, 10th October, now at National Museums of Scotland (G. Bundy, M.A.Maher, M.G.Pennington *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 340). Fair Isle, juvenile, 10th-11th October, photo (H.I.Scott *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, adult, 27th July, photo (J.Grist *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 312).

2002 Hampshire Testwood Lake, adult, 15th-16th September, photo (E.Rolfe, P.Winter).

The seven records of White-rumped Sandpiper in Britain in 2003, comprising five early-autumn adults and two late-season juveniles, constitute a fairly typical year. This is despite the above-average numbers of other Nearctic waders recorded in Britain and elsewhere in western Europe (notably American Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica*), and in particular the large numbers of White-rumped Sandpipers in Ireland during the autumn.

The pattern of age-related occurrence of this species is interesting, but not always easy to explain. In most years, juveniles are found in Britain from late September onwards only, the majority of these turning up in southwest Britain, but in some particularly good years for this species (e.g. 1996, 18 records) juveniles begin to appear in early September. By contrast, in other bumper years (such as 1984, 24 records) there have been relatively few records of juveniles, and nor was this age-class plentiful in the preceding year either (an influx of juveniles might provide one reason for a surge in records of adults the following season).

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (4, 165, 4)

Norfolk Salthouse, juvenile, 8th September, photo (R.Cobbold *et al.*).

Northumberland Hauxley, adult, 28th June, photo (M.J.Carr, I.Fisher, B.Galloway *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, juvenile, 1st, 6th September, photo (R.B.Wynn *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Nosterfield, juvenile, 20th-23rd September, photo (A.M.Hanby *et al.*).

2001 Moray & Nairn Findhorn Bay, juvenile, 21st-23rd September (D.M.Pullan *et al.*).

2002 Northeast Scotland Slains, juvenile, 17th September (P.Shepherd).

After just a single record in 2002 (above), the four in 2003 is a more typical return, and the three in September conform to the expected temporal pattern. At least one other (in Lothian) remains outstanding. Less typical was the east-coast bias, which gave birders in the north and east of Britain a chance to see this species closer to home. These records also coincided with a large arrival of Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos*.

Spring birds, like the one in Northumberland in June, sometimes provoke discussion about their identification as they do not fit the normal 'search image' that we have for autumn juveniles. They often appear much warmer-toned, rather more robust and with a different scapular pattern. Nevertheless, careful assessment of size and structure, as well as an understanding of plumage differences, usually make identification straightforward.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (21, 180, 2)

Cleveland Saltholme Pools, 6th June (J.B.Dunnett).

Yorkshire, East Patrington Haven, juvenile, 12th October (G.E.Dobbs).

2002 Yorkshire, North Nosterfield, 15th May (K.Durose, S.Worwood *et al.*).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (8, 612, -)

1964 Leicestershire Belvoir, two, 7th-8th September (Brit. Birds 58: 361), now considered inadequately documented.

1974 Dorset Ferrybridge, juvenile, 9th-12th September, photo (the late F.R.Clafton, G.Walbridge *et al.*).

This species was removed from the list of species considered on 31st December 1982.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (many, 117, 0)

2000 Orkney Queenamidda, adult, 2nd October (B.Ribbands *et al.*).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (7, 159, 0)

Highland See 2002 Highland below.

1985 Essex Heybridge Gravel-pits, juvenile, 29th September to 5th October; presumed same, Old Hall Marshes, 15th October (Brit. Birds 79: 548), to 26th January 1986 (P.Gothem *et al.* per N.C.Green).

1986 Essex See 1985 Essex above.

1988 Shetland Baltasound, Unst, first-winter, 6th December to 29th April 1989, now considered same as Fetlar, 18th October (Brit. Birds 82: 526).

2000 Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, juvenile/first-winter, 28th October to 5th April 2001 (Brit. Birds 94: 473), found and identified by A.J.Conway and T.Vaughan.

2002 Carmarthenshire Penclacwydd, juvenile/first-winter, 16th October to at least 8th December (M.Holding, N.W.Walter *et al.*).

2002 Highland Inver Bay, Ross & Cromarty, first-winter, 8th November to 16th March 2003 (D.P.Butterfield *et al.*).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 109, 3)

Cleveland Saltholme Pools, 5th-6th May, photo (J.B.Dunnett, G.Lawler *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, 25th-28th April (G.W.Allison, M.Dengate *et al.*).

Suffolk Great Livermere Lake, 17th April (M. & Mrs R.Wright).

2002 Kent Elmley, two juveniles, 16th-26th August, photo (G.W.Allison *et al.*).

Although numbers fluctuate from year to year, Marsh Sandpiper remains a good find. Wandering adults and juveniles in July and August are the norm, so three individuals in early spring are noteworthy, and constitute the first April records since one at Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, in 2000. The belated acceptance of two in Kent, in August 2002, brings that year's total to six.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (37, 204, 12)

Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, 25th-27th May (T.ap Rheinallt *et al.*).

Cleveland Saltholme and Dorman's Pools, adult, 13th-14th August, photo (J.B.Dunnett *et al.*). Greatham Tank Farm and Cowpen Marsh, juvenile, 22nd September to 19th October, photo (M.A.Blick *et al.*).

Cornwall Land's End, age uncertain, 1st October (M.D.Warren). Hayle, first-winter, 20th October to 25th April 2004, photo (S.M.Christophers *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 54).

Devon Dawlish Warren, 23rd May (L.Collins, J.E.Forley *et al.*). Exminster Marshes, 23rd May (P.Boulden *et al.*).

Northumberland Hauxley, 5th-11th May, photo (J.Alexander *et al.*).

Orkney Loch of Tankerness, juvenile, 3rd-4th September, photo (K.E.Hague).

Pembrokeshire Dale, juvenile, 19th October to 16th November (J.Best, S.Devonald, T.J.Price). Newgale, juvenile, 5th-6th December (P.Jenks *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Thorne Moors, adult, 27th April to 2nd May, photo (J.Blake, J.O'Malley, M.Stoakes *et al.*).

1964 Leicestershire/Northamptonshire Stanford Reservoir, 17th-23rd October (Brit. Birds 58: 360), now considered inadequately documented.

1999 Orkney Birsay Bay, age uncertain, 26th October (B.Ribbands *et al.*).

2002 Cheshire Elton Hall Flash, juvenile, 17th October, photo (D.Bowyer, A.J.Firth *et al.*).

2002 Durham Washington, adult, 18th-20th May (A.Donnington, B.Unwin *et al.*).

2002 Hertfordshire Amwell, juvenile/first-winter, 18th-28th October (B.Reed *et al.*).

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (5, 22, 2)

Outer Hebrides Gravir, Lewis, 23rd-24th October, photo (M.Witherall *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 405; 97: plate 341).

Scilly St Mary's, adult, 23rd-27th July, photo; same, Tresco, 25th, 27th (R.L.Flood *et al.*).

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 59, 1)

Northumberland East Chevington, 12th June, photo (A.D.McLevy *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 275).

Could this be a returning individual on passage through northeast England, and recorded previously in East Yorkshire in June 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 572) and in Northumberland in June 2001 (Brit. Birds 95: 495)? It is not unheard of for vagrant waders to reappear at particular sites and ringing recoveries have also illustrated such site fidelity in migrant waders. Terek Sandpiper has previously shown a predilection for returning to the northeast, with an individual wintering on the Blyth estuary, Northumberland, from 1989 to 1991.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (9, 118, 2)

Avon Barrow Gurney Reservoirs, age uncertain, 2nd November, photo (C.J.Stone, K.E.Vinicombe *et al.*).

Derbyshire Ogston Reservoir, 30th April to 1st May, photo (M.J.Blount, A.Hardman, M.Miles *et al.*).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 93, 2)

Angus & Dundee Loch of Kinnordy, adult, 26th April (A.J.Leitch).

Cleveland Port Clarence, second-summer, 16th July, photo (J.B.Dunnett, J.Grieverson *et al.*).

1977 Cheshire Fiddler's Ferry, adult, 3rd August (Brit. Birds 71: 506), now considered inadequately documented.

Laughing Gull must be one of the most unpredictable of the regular rarities that occur in Britain.

Records can come from almost anywhere at almost any time. The two records here, one in spring, one in summer, illustrate this, while a report of one on Scilly in late autumn remains outstanding. The 1977 Cheshire record was initially the subject of a boundary dispute, the location having been given originally as Lancashire, but after reviewing the record it was clearly no longer acceptable. BBRC usually reviews old records only as part of a formal species review or if asked to do so by the County Recorder, and the latter was the reason in this case.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (12, 104, 3)

Hampshire Langstone Harbour and Farlington Marshes, first-summer, 1st-6th June, photo (J.Crook).

Norfolk Hickling, first-winter/first-summer, 3rd-25th May, photo (D.Brown, J.J.Gilroy, S.Mahood *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, first-winter/first-summer, 18th April to 1st May and 9th-13th May, photo (J.J.Gilroy *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 214).

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* (0, 0, 1)

Kent Dungeness, second-summer, 5th-7th May, photo (D.Walker *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plates 215 & 216; 97: plates 308, 309 & 342).

Though widely anticipated, the arrival on British shores of this delightfully elegant gull was, for many, one of the highlights of the year. Remarkably, photographic evidence suggests that the Kent bird was the same individual as that discovered four days earlier at Neeltje Jans, Zeeland, The Netherlands, where it was also a national 'first' (Dutch Birding 26: 237-239). Much to the chagrin of its would-be Dutch admirers, it lingered in Zeeland for no more than two hours before making a premature departure in a southerly direction, only to be sensationally relocated by the sharp-eyed observatory warden at Dungeness. Fortunately, the Kent coast proved more to its liking, and it remained long enough to attract an appreciative audience (see Brit. Birds 97: 537-541).

As a breeding bird, Audouin's Gull is endemic to the Mediterranean basin, where its numbers have risen spectacularly from approximately 1,000 pairs in the early 1970s to more than 17,000 pairs in 1995 (Lambertini 1995, Birding World 8: 261-262). It is partly migratory and dispersive, the main wintering grounds lying in the western Mediterranean and along the Atlantic coast of northwest Africa, especially Morocco, where it is often encountered among flocks of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L.fuscus* and 'Yellow-legged Gulls' *L.(c.)michahellis*. Despite the increasing population, extralimital records north of the Mediterranean region remain surprisingly rare.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Central Palearctic race *L. (c.) cachinnans* 'Caspian Gull' (0, 85, -)

1997 Essex East Tilbury, adult, 13th September (A.J.A.Dally).

1998 Essex East Tilbury, first-summer, 26th April (A.J.A.Dally).

1998 Essex East Tilbury, adult, 26th July (A.J.A.Dally).

1998 Essex Royal Docks (London), adult, 28th November, 31st December to 1st January 1999, returning 21st November to 31st December 1999, photo (A.J.A.Dally).

1998 Essex Barking Bay (London), adult, 5th December (A.J.A.Dally).

1998 Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, third-winter, 31st October (J.Wright).

1999 Derbyshire Ogston Reservoir, adult, 9th November (M.F.Stoyle).

1999 Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, adult, 16th September (J.Wright).

1999 Northamptonshire Welford Tip, first-winter, 7th December (J.Wright).

1999 Suffolk Blythburgh, at least 6th December, also in 2000, photo (B.J.Small).

A small number of claims dating from before 1st January 2000 (the cut-off date for review by BBRC) are still under consideration, and BBRC will continue to receive and publish records prior to this date. Claims that have not been accepted represent around 20% of the total assessed, a relatively high rejection rate, although, as we have stated previously (Brit. Birds 96: 577), assessment was carried out using strict criteria and many claims fell only just short of the required level of detail. The job of county records committees in assessing claims is not an easy one but, with an average of at least 20 per year during the late 1990s, this taxon occurs too frequently to come within BBRC's remit. Although regular (yet perhaps prone to annual fluctuations in numbers) in parts of southeast England, East Anglia and the East Midlands, 'Caspian Gull' remains an extremely good find in other areas. A paper addressing the identification and assessment of this taxon is in preparation, and will hopefully help the assessment at county level. Autumn and winter is clearly the prime time for finding these exotic Larids.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 81, 0)

1998 Shetland Gremista, Lerwick, presumed same, Loch of Tingwall; correct dates were 16th January to 22nd March and 28th April to 22nd May, respectively (Brit. Birds 92: 582).

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* (82, 217, 3)

Essex Shoeburyness, 5th July (S.Arlow, J.Wright).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, 26th May (R.E.Innes, C.D.R.Jones); same, Chichester Harbour/ Hayling Bay, 27th-28th May (T.A.Lawman, D.Robertson per J.M.Clark). Also in West Sussex.

Shropshire Worfield, 11th June (A.Gaunt).

Sussex, West Littlehampton, 26th-27th May, photo (C.W.Glanfield). Same as Hampshire.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (28, 243, 1)

Northamptonshire Stanwick Gravel-pits, 16th-17th July, photo (S.P.Fisher *et al.*).

2002 Suffolk Lakenheath Flash, 26th-28th June (L.Woods *et al.*); same as Hockwold Washes, Norfolk, 26th-30th June (Brit. Birds 96: 580).

As in 2000, only one was recorded during the year. In terms of location and date, this was a typical sighting and constitutes the second record for this inland site, the last one being on 1st August 1998.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 19, 1)

Argyll Oban Bay and Loch Feochan, first-winter, 8th-11th January, photo (W.Jackson *et al.*).

2001 Orkney Tingwall and Eynhallow Sound area, adult, 24th-27th October (I.A.Dillon, E.J.Williams *et al.*).

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (24, 104, 3)

Kent Dungeness, 28th-29th May, photo (P.G.Akers *et al.*); first-winter, 26th-27th September, photo (P.G.Akers, D.Walker *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 343).

Nottinghamshire Hallcroft Gravel-pits, 15th-24th June, photo (I.Cowgill *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: page 586 fig. 4); presumed same as East Yorkshire below (Brit. Birds 96: plate 276).

Yorkshire, East Tophill Low, 14th June, photo (D.G.Fairweather, M.G.Hodges); also in Nottinghamshire.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (86, 724, 11)

Cheshire Hoylake, 13th July (J.E.Turner); also in Lancashire & North Merseyside below.

Clyde Barr Loch and Castle Semple Loch, second-summer, 26th-29th May, photo (W.Brock, J.Molloy *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, 14th-17th July, photo (S.J.White *et al.*); also in Cheshire. Conder Green, adult, 14th-24th August, photo (P.Woodruff *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Wetland Bank Gravel-pits, 12th July (K.Durose *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, adult, 31st July (R.Kimber *et al.*); same, Cley, 1st August (D.S.Honnor). Snettisham, juvenile/first-winter, 2nd-3rd October (J.Scott *et al.*).

Northumberland Hauxley, 9th June; same, East Chevington, 10th June intermittently until 14th August; same, Druridge Pools NR, 11th and 13th June; photo (J.Alexander, I.R.Douglas, A.D.McLevy *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 277). Farne Islands, 27th June, photo (A.Ash *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Earl's Barton Gravel-pits, 27th July to 4th August (C.Adams *et al.*).

Orkney Loch of Tankerness, second-summer, 2nd-8th June, photo (K.E.Hague).

Yorkshire, East Pulfin Bog, adult, 31st July, photo (D.G.Hobson).

2002 Durham Whitburn, 10th July (P.Hogg, B.Unwin *et al.*).

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* (2, 5, 1)

Caithness Hill of Ratter area, first-winter *S.o.meena*, 5th December to at least 24th March 2004, photo (N.Money *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 28).

2002 Orkney Stromness, 20th November to 6th December (Brit. Birds 96: 581) , to 20th.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (3, 36, 1)

Yorkshire, East Spurn, juvenile, 19th-31st July, trapped 27th, photo (P.Collins *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 313; 97: plate 344).

Spurn joins an elite group of localities, including Cley, Dawlish Warren, Dungeness and Sandwich Bay, which have recorded this species twice. July birds are by no means unprecedented and this bird becomes the sixth July record to date, all of which were along the east coast of England. The East Yorkshire bird's protracted stay was no doubt facilitated by a local abundance of Garden Tiger *Arctia caja* caterpillars, which literally swarmed over Spurn Point throughout this period. During the course of its stay, the bird was found settled in the holding area of a Heligoland trap and duly became the first to be ringed in Britain. Although the population in Iberia and southern France is slowly increasing, there does not appear to have been any commensurate increase in British records so far.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (56, 27, 2)

Shetland Northdale, Unst, 23rd-25th May, photo (R.M.Holyoak, M.G.Pennington *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 248). Fair Isle, 30th July, trapped, photo (S.A.Boswell *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 314).

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* (0, 157, 1)

Outer Hebrides Grenitote/Traigh Valley area, North Uist, 7th August to 24th October, same, Aird a'Mhorain, North Uist, 12th-16th December, photo (P.Prior-Pitt, A.Stevenson, N.Wilkinson *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 333; 97: plate 345).

2001 Caernarfonshire Bardsey, first-winter female, 13th April (S.D.Stansfield).

The Outer Hebrides have become the national hot-spot for this magnificent owl, with this popular individual being the eighth in the islands since 1992. The geographical spread of recent records in Britain & Ireland might suggest a Nearctic origin for at least some, but one which died on North Uist in 1992 had been ringed at Hordaland in Norway (Birding Scotland 6: 158).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (109, 434, 10)

Anglesey Fedw Fawr, 5th June (Mr & Mrs P.Delow).

Cornwall Hillbrook, 23rd April (C.Chan, J.J.Moore, B.Taggart).

Dorset Poole, 5th March (P.Robinson). Lodmoor, 28th April (G.Walbridge *et al.*). Abbotsbury, 3rd May (S.A.Groves *et al.*).

Essex Fairlop, 27th April (M.K.Dennis).

Kent Foreness, 8th-9th March (N.A.Driver *et al.*).

Norfolk Mundesley, 27th April (M.Fischer, A.J.Kane). Holme and Hunstanton area, 27th April (P. & V.Merchant); presumed same as Mundesley above and Suffolk below.

Shetland Heilinabretta, Fetlar, 5th May (P.Bedall, P.R.French).

Suffolk Aldringham, 27th April (D.Thurlow); same, Dunwich Heath, 27th April (M.L.Cornish *et al.*); same, Minsmere/Sizewell, 27th April to 5th May (per D.F.Walsh).

Warwickshire Merevale, 3rd August (S.M.Hayes, G.J.Mant).

2002 Caernarfonshire Aberdaron, 25th March (S.Hugheston-Roberts *et al.*).

2002 Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, 5th October (J.Glendingning).

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

Scilly St Mary's, 28th April, photo (R.L.Flood, N.Wheatley *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 346).

2002 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 25th June (K.M.Wilson).

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* (0, 11, 0)

2002 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 10th-11th May (P.J.Donnelly *et al.*).

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* (0, 1, 1)

Anglesey South Stack, male, 1st-8th June, photo (K.G.Croft, S.Rosser *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 249; 97: plate 347).

1984 Yorkshire, East Spurn, male, 27th April (the late N.A.Bell, A.Cruickshank, B.R.Spence).

The Anglesey Black Lark was, along with the aforementioned Audouin's Gull at Dungeness, surely one of the ornithological highlights of 2003. Since Black Lark was removed from the British List as part of the Hastings Rarities affair, it has been high on the list of most sought-after birds for many people. So it seems remarkable that we can include not one but two records in this report, with the 1984 Spurn bird now accepted by the BOURC as the first in Britain. The full story of this bird's struggle to gain admission to the British List will be published soon in British Birds. In short, a description from a completely independent observer came to light after publication of photographs of a bird in Sweden in the 1990s. What is perhaps more of a coincidence is that the Spurn bird was already in circulation around BBRC (and had been accepted by the eight voters who had reviewed it) by the time the Anglesey bird arrived.

It is curious that all except one of the birds which have turned up in western Europe in the last 30 years have been males, yet males tend to be relatively sedentary while females move away from the breeding grounds in winter. Is it possible that some of these females are going undetected?

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (5, 385, 40)

Bedfordshire Dunstable, 27th-28th April, photo (P.Trodd, A.Whitney *et al.*).

Cheshire Heswall, 20th-21st April (D.Horner, D.Wild *et al.*). Hurlstone Reservoir, two, 24th-25th April, photo (A.Green, M.Pennell, D.J.W.Taylor *et al.*).

Cleveland Seaton Common, 29th April (G.J.Lawlor).

Cornwall Sennen area, 13th-19th April (M.T.Elliott *et al.*).

Devon Prawle, date uncertain, May, photo (C. & P.Leigh). Beesands Ley, 1st June (P.Boulden, P.Sanders). Lundy, 12th September (R.Batch, R. & S.Campey).

Dorset Lodmoor, 25th-26th April (D.J.Chown, D.Croxon *et al.*).

Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, 28th April (D.L.Acfield *et al.*). Ardleigh, three, 2nd May (A.Lansdown).

Herefordshire Locality withheld, 24th April (C.Wells). Bodenham Lake, 25th April (P. & T.Downes).

Kent Wouldham, 26th April (I.E.H.Shephard). Dungeness, 26th April (K. & R.Kraaijeveld); 1st May, photo (P.G.Akers *et al.*).

Leicestershire Swithland Reservoir, 30th April to 1st May (A.J.Mackay *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Fishtoft, 27th April (S.Keightley). Gibraltar Point, four, 29th-30th April (T.Sykes, K.M.Wilson *et al.*); another, 2nd May (S.Evans, T.Sykes, K.M.Wilson *et al.*).

Orkney Birsay, 4th May, photo (H. & L.Leek).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, first-winter, 21st October (G. & T.Thompson).

Scilly Tresco, 17th April (A.E.Blake *et al.*); same, St Martin's, St Mary's, 17th-18th (W.H.Wagstaff *et al.*). St Agnes, first-winter, 11th October, photo (Mr Jolliffe, D.Page *et al.*).

Shetland Bressay, 3rd June; same, Gott, 4th (P.Goddard *et al.* per P.V.Harvey).

Shropshire Priorslee Lake, Telford, 27th-28th April (A.Latham).

Suffolk Minsmere, 29th-30th April and 2nd May (R.Harvey *et al.*).

Surrey Beddington Sewage-farm, 28th April (A.Pickett *et al.*).

Sussex, East Arlington Reservoir, 26th April (J.Curson *et al.*); presumed same, plus another, 30th April to 4th May (I.T.Barnard, R.K.Haggard, M.Hawkins). Cuckmere Valley, 7th May (J.C.Parish).

Wight, Isle of Brading, 3rd-4th May (C.J.Meaney, G.R.Sparshott *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Kilnsea and Spurn, 23rd April (A.A.Hutt *et al.*). Flamborough Head, 27th April (A.J.Booth, G.J.Etherington *et al.*).

2002 Buckinghamshire Furston Lake, Milton Keynes, 29th April (Brit. Birds 96: 583), finder/identifier was S.R.Nicholl and correct locality was Furzton Lake.

2002 Cornwall Hannaford, 9th November (G.D.Lewis).

2002 Durham Washington, 18th-19th April (A.Donnison).

2002 Hampshire Pitts Wood, New Forest, 10th July (M.Rafter).

2002 Yorkshire, East East Park, Hull, 2nd-23rd April (Brit. Birds 96: 584), finder was B.Jones.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 11, 0)

Nottinghamshire Gringley Carr, first-winter, since 28th December 2002, to 5th January (Brit. Birds 96: 584).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 249, 16)

Lincolnshire Skegness, 18th-20th October (K.Durose, D.M.Jenkins, J.Wright *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: page xxx fig. 5).

Norfolk Great Yarmouth cemetery, 18th-21st October, photo (J.Day, B.Stafford, H.Vaughan *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 22nd-26th October (A.Beolans *et al.*). St Agnes, 27th-28th October (K.D.Shaw *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, 29th September to 4th October, photo (M.J.McKee, C.Turner, T.Warrick *et al.*); 17th October (P.V.Harvey, J.D.Okill, P.Sclater *et al.*). Sumburgh, 12th October (T.R.Cleeves, P.V.Harvey, R.Riddington *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, 13th-18th October (M.A.Maher, M.G.Pennington *et al.*). Gord/Houbie, Fetlar, 14th-17th October (M.Smith, B.H.Thomason); another, 17th October (B.H.Thomason). Fair Isle, 23rd October to 6th November (A.Quinn, D.N.Shaw *et al.*); another, 24th October (C.A.Holt, S.J.Turner); first-winter, 3rd November, trapped, photo (A.J.Bull, D.N.Shaw).

Sussex, East Seaford Head, 30th October (J.Curson).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, 9th-10th November (J.Wozencroft *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 19th October (J.Harwood *et al.*).

2001 Suffolk Hopton, 30th September (Brit. Birds 96: 585), previously published as Corton.

2002 Shetland Baltasound, Unst, 16th October (M.G.Pennington).

Another good showing, following several lean years in the late 1990s. Once again, a majority of the records came from Shetland, and it is not unusual for these islands to account for half or more of the annual total.

Olive-backed Pipit remains a top-class rarity on the south coast, where the one at Seaford Head was the first since singles in Devon in 1997 and in Cornwall in 2000. Even on the east coast of the mainland, it is still an extremely creditable find; the Spurn bird was only the third for this well-watched location and the first since 1987. Quite why numbers are so variable between years is unclear, but the average of 15.3 per year during 2000-03, compares favourably with only 3.4 during 1995-99.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (7, 59, 3)

Shetland Fair Isle, 5th-14th October, photo (P.A.Harris, D.N.Shaw *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 348). Foula, 8th-15th October, trapped 12th, photo (T.P.Drew, M.A.Wilkinson *et al.*). Helendale, 14th-17th October (S.E.Duffield, S.J.Minton *et al.*).

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (18, 395, 6)

Devon Skern, 3rd-4th May (R.G.Marshall *et al.*).

Dorset Weston, Portland, 24th September (G.Walbridge).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 30th-31st May (S.J.Aspinall, B.A.E.Marr, R.F.Porter *et al.*). East Ruston South Fen, 21st November (A.J.Kane).

Scilly Tresco, 14th October (B.E.Wright).

Shetland Fair Isle, 16th-17th May (D.N.Shaw *et al.*).

2001 Suffolk Minsmere, 14th October (C.Dunn).

2002 Shetland Skaw, Unst, 21st October (M.G. & M.J.Pennington).

Six is a relatively poor return for a species which can boast over 400 records since 1958, and which is one of the commoner species assessed by BBRC.

Although we do not receive many fly-over, call-only, claims of Red-throated Pipit, these are among the most difficult of all records to assess. Identification of this species based simply on call is something that only thoroughly experienced observers should even consider – and even skilled birders can make a mistake. In such cases, we strongly urge that observers should describe the call in as much detail as possible. Given that the call lasts only about a second, details of length, tone, frequency, volume and anything else is invaluable, along with a description of the observer's past experience of this species and its calls.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 147, 13)

Hampshire Pennington Marsh, first-winter, 7th-10th September, photo (G.C.Stephenson *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, first-winter, 2nd October, photo (A.Ash, N.Dawson, D.Parnaby *et al.*).

Norfolk Kelling, first-winter, 23rd-25th August, photo (N.R.Stocks *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 334).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 28th September to 11th October, trapped 28th (A.E.Duncan, J.Ginnever *et al.*).

Shetland Quendale, first-winter, 3rd-9th September, photo, another, 5th-8th (G.J.Fitchett, P.V.Harvey, R.Riddington *et al.*). Loch of Spiggie, juvenile/first-winter, 18th-22nd September, photo (R.Riddington *et al.*). Out Skerries, juvenile/first-winter, 6th-7th September (P.R.Gordon). Fair Isle, first-winter, 7th September, photo (R.J.Nason, C.Round *et al.*); first-winter, 20th September (D.N.Shaw *et al.*); first-winter, 29th-30th September, photo (H.R.Harrop, J.P.Hunt *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 349). Foula, first-winter, 4th-5th October, presumed same, 9th-11th (T.P.Drew, M.A.Wilkinson *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, first-winter, 21st September, photo (J.Harwood, F.X.Moffatt, A.Norris *et al.*).

2000 Shetland Foula, age uncertain, 23rd September (O.M. & T.P.Drew *et al.*).

2001 Outer Hebrides Callernish, North Uist, first-winter, 31st August (B.Rabbitts, A.Stevenson).

2002 Cornwall Marazion, first-summer male, 16th-19th May, photo (A.Swash, K.E.Vinicombe, J.Walters *et al.*).

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 145, 4)

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, first-summer male, in song, 19th-26th May, trapped 23rd, photo (M.J.Grantham, T.Sykes, K.M.Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 16th-17th May (A.Boughtflower, J.R.McCallum, D.Wood *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer, 25th-26th May, trapped 26th, photo (D.N.Shaw *et al.*). Foula, first-summer, 29th May to 1st June, trapped 30th May, 1st June (D. & G.Atherton, A.R.Mainwood, S.C.Votier).

2002 Fife Isle of May, trapped 10th May (Brit. Birds 96: 587), to 12th (per M.Holling).

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Central Asian race *L. m. hafizi* (0, 3, 0)

1987 Scilly St Agnes, 23rd October, photo (C.Bradshaw, A.R.Dean, P.A.Dukes *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plates 313 & 350).

This individual has now been accepted as being of the central Asian race *hafizi*, largely owing to the detail visible on photographs of the bird. Because both a Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* and Britain's first 'Two-barred Greenish Warbler' *Phylloscopus trochiloides plumbeitarsus* were discovered on St Agnes at the same time, not a great deal of attention was paid to this bird and few notes were taken, although all observers at the time commented on how distinctive it looked.

The first-named observer, who has no pretence of being the finder, reacquainted himself with this race in Kazakhstan in 2002 and finally realised that the photos actually showed all the characteristics that could be seen on birds in the field. These include a larger and longer-tailed appearance than the nominate race; a cold, sandy-grey mantle contrasting with a rufous tail; a distinct pale fore-supercilium; and a dark cheek-patch. The closed wing shows clear pale edges to the tertials and pale tips to the greater coverts, forming a distinct wing-bar, which is always obvious on *hafizi* in both spring and autumn, but can be matched by some first-years of the nominate race in autumn.

The two other records of *hafizi* Common Nightingale in Britain were on Fair Isle, Shetland (found dead on 30th October 1971), and at Spurn, East Yorkshire, on 6th-14th October 1991 (Brit. Birds 94: 485-486).

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* (0, 3, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter female, 17th-19th October, photo (A.J.Bull *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 406).

This, the fourth British record and the second for Fair Isle, follows hot on the heels of the previous two – in Dorset in 1997 and on mainland Shetland in 2001. It is tempting to suggest that this modest surge in records is a result of an increasing population size, or westward expansion of the breeding range, although there is no documented evidence for either. Many eastern vagrants are known to be expanding back westwards following range contraction during the last glaciation (Newton 2003, *The Speciation and Biogeography of Birds*, Academic Press). This individual came as something of a relief to Shetland-based observers, as the individual in 2001 was found dead. Imagine the surprise and delight on the faces of those who travelled north to Fair Isle to see a Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* and discovered that this was awaiting them too! All four British records have occurred between 9th and 25th October.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 26, 4)

Fife Crail, female or first-winter, 15th-17th October, photo (C.Andrews, R.Armstrong *et al.*).

Norfolk Caister-on-Sea, female or first-winter, 27th October (A.Grieve).

Shetland Funzie, Fetlar, female or first-winter, 28th September (P.Crockett, I.Gordon). Fair Isle, female or first-winter, 16th October (R.J.Curtis).

The pattern referred to in last year's report – of a long period with few records, followed by a perceptible surge in records over the past decade or so – was reinforced by the four in 2003, as shown in Brit. Birds 97 page 596 fig.7.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Eastern race *S. t. maurus*, 'Siberian Stonechat' (1, 297, 7)

Dorset Weston, Portland, female or first-winter, 13th October (J.A.Lucas).

Norfolk Scolt Head, male, 17th May (N.M.Lawton, N.Williams); female or first-winter, 11th October (N.M.Lawton, N.Williams). Titchwell, first-winter male, 24th-25th October, photo (J.A.Rowlands *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Cruden Bay, first-winter male, 1st November (P.A.A.Baxter, C.N.Gibbins *et al.*).

Suffolk Thorpeness, female or first-winter, 14th September (C.A.Holt, D.de Palacio, J.Zantboer *et al.*).

Wiltshire Whiteparish, female or first-winter, 13th October (P.Combridge).

Following the review of all records of 'Siberian Stonechats' in spring, discussed in the 2002 BBRC Report (Brit. Birds 96: 588-589), most have, in fact, proven to be acceptable (see below). This, perhaps, was something of a surprise considering the much greater understanding of the variable features of continental Common Stonechats (of the race *rubicola*) that we possess today. Many descriptions were of such high quality that features including the extensive white rump and uppertail-coverts, the extent of white on the neck, etc. were noted, and have proved again the value of the BBRC archives.

Following this review, it was good to receive a claim of a spring male; the bird on Scolt Head, Norfolk, was the first in spring since 2000 and was critically and thoroughly examined. It showed all the classic features we now associate with spring 'Siberian Stonechat', and we feel that the time and effort spent researching and establishing the criteria by which spring birds can be assessed was justified, and well worthwhile.

The following records are regarded as still acceptable:

1972 Norfolk Cley, male, 6th May (Brit. Birds 69: 361; 73: 519).

1978 East Yorkshire Flamborough Head, male, 1st May (Brit. Birds 72: 533); male, 25th May (Brit. Birds 72: 533).

1978 Lincolnshire Donna Nook, male, 23rd May (Brit. Birds 72: 533).

1985 Cleveland Hartlepool, male, 13th-14th May, photo, found dead on 15th (Brit. Birds 79: 569).

1985 East Yorkshire Spurn, female, 5th-10th May, trapped 6th, photo (Brit. Birds 79: 569).

1990 Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer male, 28th-30th April, trapped 28th (Brit. Birds 84: 482).

1992 Norfolk Burnham Norton, male, 6th May (Brit. Birds 88: 534); Holme, male, 7th-8th June (Brit. Birds 88: 534); Cromer, male, 8th June (Brit. Birds 88: 534).

1993 Northeast Scotland Near Banchory, male, 1st-24th June, photo (Brit. Birds 88: 534).

1993 North Yorkshire Whitby, male, 10th-13th May, photo (Brit. Birds 91: 501).

1993 Scilly St Agnes, male, 13th-15th May (Brit. Birds 88: 534).

1994 Shetland Fair Isle, male, 8th-9th May (Brit. Birds 88: 531).

1995 Shetland Fetlar, female, 9th-12th May (Brit. Birds 90: 496).

1995 North Yorkshire Filey, first-summer male, 30th April to 4th May, trapped 2nd May, photo (Brit. Birds 89: 515).

1996 North Yorkshire Filey, male, 6th-7th May, trapped 7th May, photo (Brit. Birds 90: 495).

1997 Norfolk Blakeney Point, first-summer male, 21st-23rd May (Brit. Birds 91: 501).

1998 Norfolk Mundesley, first-summer male, 4th May (Brit. Birds 92: 591).

The following records are no longer regarded as acceptable:

1985 Fife Fife Ness, female, 20th May (Brit. Birds 79: 569).

1990 East Yorkshire Flamborough Head, male, 21st April (Brit. Birds 85: 536).

1996 Norfolk Holme, male, 18th May, photo (Brit. Birds 91: 502).

2000 Shetland Fair Isle, male, 16th May (Brit. Birds 94: 486).

The following record is still under consideration:

1990 East Yorkshire Flamborough Head, male, 7th May (Brit. Birds 85: 536).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 42, 4)

Norfolk Waxham, first-winter male, 23rd-26th October, photo (J.V.Bhalerao, D.J.Holman, B.W.Jarvis *et al.*). Paston, first-winter female, 31st October to 1st November, photo (R.Cobbold, M.Fiszler, A.J.Kane *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Collieston, first-winter male, 18th-21st October, photo (P.S.Crockett *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter male, 15th-17th October, photo (K.Button *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 407; 97: plate 351).

2002 Orkney North Ronaldsay, male, 13th-27th October, photo (P.J.Donnely *et al.*).

1995 Shetland Skaw, Unst, female or first-winter, 14th October, published as 1994 in error (Brit. Birds 90: 496) (The Birds of Shetland, 2004).

2002 Shetland Loch of Hillwell, female or first-winter, 31st October, photo (A. & G.J.Fitchett, P.R.French *et al.*).

Now an almost expected annual rarity from mid October through to November, with an average of 2.2 records per annum over the past ten years. In fact, 1995 has been the only blank year since 1985, prior to which there had been only nine individuals recorded in Britain. The four in 2003 (an annual total bettered only by the five in 1991, but equalled in 1994 and 1997) are typical in terms of date and location, and maintain the significant east-coast bias. The belated acceptance of the 2002 North Ronaldsay bird relates to a different individual from the wheatear mentioned in last year's report under Black-eared Wheatear *O.hispanica* (Brit. Birds 96: 590). Those comments, relating to the difficulties of separating some late-autumn individuals from Black-eared Wheatear of the eastern race *melanoleuca*, were emphasised again this year by a belated claim from Deerness, Orkney, in 1999, for what was clearly either a Pied or Black-eared Wheatear but, on the basis of the evidence provided, could not be assigned to either species with certainty.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 43, 0)

1965 Norfolk Salthouse, male, 30th August to 14th September 1965 (Brit. Birds 59: 293). Previously unassigned to subspecies; was *hispanica*, probably adult.

1970 Caernarfonshire Bardsey, male, 18th April (Brit. Birds 64: 358). Previously unassigned, was *hispanica*.

1971 Cornwall Porthgwarra, 1st-5th October (Brit. Birds 65: 341). Previously accepted as two individuals (second from 2nd-5th October), now accepted as one only, considered unsafe to attribute to race.

Occasional blank years, like 2003, are to be expected for a species that has averaged a shade under one per year since 1958. The initial results of a review into subspecific identification were presented in the last report (Brit. Birds 96: 589-590). Including the latest decisions (above), nine previously unassigned birds have now been confirmed either as *melanoleuca* (three) or *hispanica* (six), and all of these nine were males. Furthermore, the racial provenance of three records previously assigned to race is now considered unsafe.

Precise details of the colour on both the mantle and the crown, the exact size and shape of the black head-markings on males, and careful ageing are all valuable clues when attempting to attribute individuals to subspecies. It is a testament to the observational and artistic skills of the late Richard Richardson that the 1965 Salthouse bird was duly confirmed as a *hispanica*; the discovery of his colour painting of the bird proved conclusive. Females and immatures are the most difficult to deal with, and spring birds, especially some first-summerers, are more difficult than those in fresh autumn plumage.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 66, 9)

Devon Lundy, first-winter male, 26th October, trapped, photo (A.M.Taylor, R.J.Taylor, J.Walsh *et al.*).

Fife Kilminning, female, 10th-15th November, photo (A.Whitehouse *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, female, 16th November, photo (P.G.Akers *et al.*). Reculver, first-winter male, 27th November to 5th December, photo (R.Dubbins, B.Poulter *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plates 29 & 352).

Norfolk Burnham Overy Staithe, male, age uncertain, 9th-10th November (P.Clement *et al.*). Blakeney Point, first-winter male, 9th-10th November, photo (M.Woodcock *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Girdleness, female, 12th-15th November, photo (P.S.Crockett, I.Gordon *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 56).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, female, 13th November (G.Thompson).

Sussex, East Climping, first-winter male, 9th-10th November, photo (P.M.A. & R.Gill *et al.*).

Any wheatear in Britain from late October into December is worth a second look, and Desert Wheatear remains a top-class find. The autumn of 2003 was a good one for this species, the nine records bettered only by the remarkable 17 in 1997 (and at least one record, from Shetland, remains under consideration). Eight of those listed above arrived between 9th and 27th November, two of these on the east coast of Scotland, two in north Norfolk, and three in Kent or East Sussex. The most likely origins of these birds are from Central Asia, although Naylor (1996) suggests that a number of old records are assigned to the North African race *homochroa*. Although one trapped on the island of Formentera, Spain, on 29th December 2003 was assigned to *homochroa*, it may be that a review of those individuals which have been identified to race, and indeed those adult males which have not, is overdue.

The Committee has attempted to determine the ages of the individuals from the information submitted, but has found the ageing of some, especially females, difficult. Although most are likely to be first-winter birds, the features by which ageing can be made (the fringing on the primary coverts, contrast between new and old greater coverts) are not always easy to see, even in well-photographed birds. It may well be that females cannot be reliably aged in the field, and while males are a little easier, some can still prove to be difficult.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (31, 25, 2)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 17th-19th October, trapped 17th, photo (P.Doyle, N.Gates, R.McGregor) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 408).

Shetland Scatness, hit window, caught and released, 28th September, photo (J.B.Bell, J.Robson *et al.*).

1962 Cornwall Bude, 1st-2nd January (F.E.Carter).

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (0, 20, 3)

Scilly Bryher, 21st October, photo (M.Lawson *et al.*).

Shetland Sandwick, Unst, first-winter, 27th-30th September, photo (M.G. & M.J.Pennington *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 353). Burrafirch, Unst, first-winter, 15th October, photo (M.A.Maher, M.G. & M.J.Pennington *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 409).

Transatlantic vagrancy patterns of *Catharus* thrushes are complex and difficult to interpret. Even though Swainson's is an early migrant through North America, there seems little difference in the timing of arrivals in Britain of this species compared with Grey-cheeked Thrush *C.minimus*. Moreover, there seems little correlation in the 'arrival years' of the two species in Britain. Three Swainson's were recorded in 1979, 1987, 1990 and 2003, with two in 2000; corresponding totals for Grey-cheeked were 1, 0, 3, 2 and 0. The two outstanding years for Grey-cheeked in recent years were 1986 with 12, and 1976 with five; corresponding totals for Swainson's were 0 and 1. From the mid 1970s to the early 1990s, these two arrivals, plus the three birds in both 1990 and 1991, made it seem that Grey-cheeked Thrush was somewhat less rare than Swainson's. Since 1991, however, the latter has held the upper hand, with a cumulative total of eight Swainson's but only six Grey-cheeked.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 41, 2)

Scilly Tresco, 11th-18th October, photo (R.Barratt, A.J.Livett, H.Price *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 410; 97: plate 354).

Shetland Foula, first-winter, 27th-30th September, trapped 27th, photo (A.R.Mainwood *et al.*).

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 48, 2)

Shetland Foula, first-winter male, *T.r.atrogularis*, 9th-18th October, photo (A.R.Mainwood *et al.*). Busta, Brae, female, age uncertain, *T.r.atrogularis*, 16th October (M.S.Chapman, A.Graham).

There is known to be some limited intergradation between the red-throated (*T.r.ruficollis*) and black-throated (*T.r.atrogularis*) forms of Dark-throated Thrush, and recently the Dutch Rarities Committee (CDNA) received a record of a 'Black-throated Thrush' which 'on some photographs, ... seemed to show some rufous in the outer tail feathers' (Dutch Birding 25: 375). Nonetheless, CDNA considered that this was not sufficiently convincing to label the bird as a probable intergrade with 'Red-throated Thrush'. There are now 52 British records of Black-throated Thrush, compared with just a single one of Red-throated Thrush (in Essex in 1994), so we will continue to accept all records of Dark-throated Thrush as black-throated, even those which might not be seen well enough to exclude red in the tail with certainty, unless there is clear evidence that the bird is a Red-throated Thrush.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (3, 16, 2)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, age/sex uncertain, 11th-12th November, probably since 9th, photo (D.Barden, E.Bowler, S.D.Stansfield *et al.*).

Cornwall Godrevy, first-winter female, 14th December to 2nd February 2004, photo (P.A.Gainey, A.R.Pay, M.Tunmore *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plates 57 & 355).

Previously one of the most sought-after of all Nearctic vagrants, British birders were recently spoilt for choice with two simultaneous long-stayers (the Godrevy bird and another in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, in early 2004). By contrast, the Bardsey bird (the first for Wales) was found by a local farmer and seen by only a dozen birders during its two-day stay. The appearance of these birds appears to have been linked to a massive easterly displacement of this species, and other late migrants, from the North American Midwest to the eastern seaboard of the USA during the second week of November 2003 (Birding World 16: 463).

This attractive thrush remains an outstanding rarity, which is occurring here less frequently than in the recent past, despite the massive growth in numbers of active birders. Following eight in the 1960s, there were two in the 1970s, five in the 1980s and just one in the 1990s. The 21 British records are, as expected, concentrated in the south and southwest (Scilly and Lundy together account for about a third) but have reached almost every corner of Britain. With the exception of one in April and two in May, all have occurred in late autumn or winter.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (1, 26, 1)

Shetland Skaw, Whalsay, first-winter, 28th September to 4th October, trapped 28th, photo (B.Marshall *et al.*).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 87, 4)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 8th September, trapped, photo (A.E.Duncan, N.Gates *et al.*). Near Burrian Point, Sanday, 29th September (G.P.Catley, K.Durose, D.M.Jenkins).

Shetland Fair Isle, 28th September, photo (S.J.Aspinall, D.N.Shaw, O.L.Wardman *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 411). Out Skerries, 30th September to 2nd October, photo (P.Forrest, M.J.McKee, C.Turner *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plates 314 & 315).

A typical spread of dates, but it seems extraordinary that these include only the second and third records for Orkney, following one on Pentland Skerries way back in October 1910. In contrast, there are now more than 80 Shetland records! Perhaps, in recent years, this difference is more a reflection of the relative amounts of vegetation than observer effort, and it is just reward for North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory that its dedicated band of observers finally registered the island's first. Three more reports from Fair Isle are still under consideration, or have yet to be submitted.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (many, 617, 3)

Devon Slapton Ley, male in song, 27th April to 1st May (D.Elphick *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Leighton Moss, male in song, 9th-23rd May, photo (R.Hobbs, J.Reddish, J.Sneyd *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, male in song, 28th April to 24th May (R.L.Flood, P.A.Stancliffe *et al.*).

2002 Cambridgeshire Fowlmere, male in song, 18th-22nd May (M.Amos, R.W.Jones, J.Oates *et al.*).

2002 Kent Dungeness, male in song, 15th-20th June, photo (D.Walker *et al.*).

The decision to readmit Savi's Warbler to the list of species considered by BBRC has been justified by its continued rarity. Just three records, all of singing birds, this year; these (together with the two from 2002 listed above) reinforce the fact that non-singing birds in particular are extremely rare in Britain. Of particular note was that the Scilly bird was the first for these well-watched islands. At the time of writing, none has been reported from the formerly regular localities in East Anglia.

One record for the year remains under review, from Fair Isle, Shetland, on 30th September. This may possibly relate to the eastern race *L.l.fusca*, and would be the first of this paler form to be recorded in Britain.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (28, 1186, -)

1970 Dorset Portland Bill, juvenile, 24th August (R.J.Senior *et al.*); another, 12th September (G.Walbridge).

This species was removed from the list of species considered on 31st December 1982.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 46, 5)

Kent Dungeness, 9th September, trapped, photo (W.Attridge, D.Walker, A.S.Wraithmell *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Bruernish, Barra, 26th-27th September, photo (K.Gillon *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, first-winter, 29th September to 8th October, trapped 29th, photo (A.R.Mainwood *et al.*); same, Kergord, 11th-12th October, trapped 12th, photo (R.Riddington, P.Sclater, B.H.Thomason *et al.*). Fair Isle, 14th October (P.A.A.Baxter, H.I.Scott).

Sussex, East Icklesham, 28th September, trapped, photo (M.Grantham, I.Hunter, P.Jones).

2001 Scilly St Mary's, 13th-14th October (Brit. Birds 96: 593), correct finders/identifiers were R.A.Filby, T.Francis.

The Barra record is further confirmation of the potential of that small island, which now seems set to receive thorough coverage for at least part of each autumn. The Dungeness individual was, perhaps, an overdue 'first' for Kent, while the one at Icklesham mirrors the only other Sussex record, trapped at the same site in October 1992. One wonders just how many others go undetected in southern reedbeds. The Shetland bird was interesting on two counts. Firstly, the short movement from Foula to Kergord was in a northeasterly direction, rather than northwesterly, which one might expect from a reverse migrant. Secondly, it spent nearly all its time foraging in the canopy of one of Shetland's few mature plantations, some 8-10 m above ground! This is a timely warning to birders not to take anything for granted, especially given some of the recent importance attached to habitat use by Booted *Hippolais caligata* and Sykes's Warbler *H.rama*.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 47, 7)

Essex Fisher's Green, male in song, 16th June, sound-recorded, photo (S.Connor *et al.*).

Fife Isle of May, first-winter, trapped 1st October, photo (A.W.Lauder, J.M.A.Osborne, K.D.Shaw *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 11th-17th September, trapped 11th, photo (A.J.Bull *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 356). Quendale, first-winter, 15th-16th September, trapped 16th, photo (P.V.Harvey, R.Riddington *et al.*). Foula, first-winter, 28th September to 8th October, trapped 1st October, photo (D. & G.Atherton, P.V.Harvey, R.Riddington *et al.*). Skaw, Unst, first-winter, 5th-8th October, trapped 5th, photo (J.M.Collinson, P.M.Ellis, P.V.Harvey *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, 8th-9th June, trapped 9th (P.Collins, B.R.Spence *et al.*).

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (18, 195, 2)

Kent Dungeness, male in song, 15th May, photo (D.Walker *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Marton Mere, male in song, 21st-29th May, photo (L.G.Blacow, M.Jones *et al.*).

2002 Kent Grove Ferry, male in song, 7th June (J.Cantelo, M.Heath, J.Russell).

Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon* (1, 2, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 16th-17th May, trapped 16th, photo (A.J.Bull, G.Tyler *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 250; 97: plate 357).

All four have been in Shetland but this is the first in spring. It comes just two years after the individual on Out Skerries in September 2001, which, by contrast, was the first for 30 years. Its arrival date strongly suggests that it had wintered somewhere in Europe or western Africa as this species does not normally leave its regular wintering grounds until mid April at the earliest, with many still present in southeast Asia until well into May.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* (0, 10, 1)

Dorset Portland, first-winter, 31st August, trapped, photo (M.Cade *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 335).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 85, 5)

Norfolk West Runton, 31st August to 2nd September (I.Prentice *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 336).

Scilly St Agnes, 28th-30th September (D.Page, R.Rhigaleto, N.Simpson *et al.*).

Shetland Quendale, 14th-19th September, photo (A. & G.J.Fitchett *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 412). Sumburgh, first-winter, 19th September, trapped, photo (P.V.Harvey, R.Riddington *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 358). Norwick, Unst, 20th September, photo (S.E.Duffield *et al.*).

The photographs and details of the trapped bird in Shetland, which was quite a large-billed individual, were instructive and illustrated well the difficulties with identification now that we know Sykes's Warbler *H.rama* is a real possibility.

Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama* (0, 6, 2)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 29th September to 1st October, trapped 29th (P.A.Brown, A.E.Duncan, N.Gates *et al.*).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, 4th-8th October, trapped 5th, photo (M.A.Maher, M.G.Pennington, B.H.Thomason *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 413).

2002 Norfolk Sheringham, 23rd August, photo (R.Lee, R.G.Millington *et al.*).

2002 Sussex, East Beachy Head, 31st August, photo (D. & J.F.Cooper, R.J.Fairbank *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plates 310-312).

Given that last year's report was the first time that Sykes's Warbler appeared in the BBRC annual report as a full species, readers may be surprised to see that two individuals (both from 2002) have been accepted this year without the benefit of biometric data to support the field observations. These are the first field-only Sykes's to be accepted in Britain, and we stick with our comments last year that this is a species at the cutting edge of field identification (Brit. Birds 96: 595). As such, all the observers involved with the Beachy Head and the Sheringham birds deserve great credit, as the level of documentation provided was exceptional in both cases.

Booted/Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais caligata/rama* (1, 93, 7)

2002 Cornwall Land's End, 10th-15th September, photo (M.D.Warren *et al.*).

2002 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 26th August, trapped, photo (P.A.Brown, M.Gray, J.S.Lees *et al.*).

Both of the birds described above were candidates for Sykes's Warbler but, for different reasons, neither can currently be assigned with total confidence. The description of the Cornish bird suggested Booted Warbler, but on the video it showed some features of Sykes's and, in the end, it could not safely be attributed to either species. The bird on Orkney was even more difficult to assess, being an excellent candidate for Sykes's Warbler but with one apparently anomalous measurement. For the time being, it has been placed in this category as a holding measure, but remains under review. BBRC continues to review new identification criteria as they emerge, and it is hoped that the identification of Sykes's Warbler, both in the field and in the hand, and its separation from Booted Warbler, will become clearer in the coming years.

Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* (0, 11, 0)

1975 Essex Frinton-on-Sea, 20th-21st November (Brit. Birds 69: 349; 70: 168-169).

1975 Yorkshire, East Spurn Point, 20th-24th October, trapped (Brit. Birds 69: 349; 72: 123-124).

1979 Cheshire Meols, 28th October to 22nd November (Brit. Birds 73: 524).

1988 Wight, Isle of Bembridge Pools, 30th October (Brit. Birds 82: 548).

1991 Wight, Isle of Bembridge, 27th October to 9th November, trapped 27th, photo (Brit. Birds 85: 539-540).

1991 Kent Seasalter, 3rd-5th November, photo (Brit. Birds 86: 516).

1991 Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, first-winter, 13th October to 5th November, trapped 13th, photo (Brit. Birds 86: 516).

1992 Devon Mount Gould, Plymouth, 19th-26th October, photo (Brit. Birds 86: 516).

1993 Norfolk Blakeney Point, male in song, 27th May to 1st June, photo (Brit. Birds 87: 556).

2000 Yorkshire, East Sammy's Point, Easington, 7th-11th May, photo (Brit. Birds 94: 491).

In December 2003, BOURC announced its recommendation that Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*, comprising the subspecies *nana* and *deserti*, be split into two monotypic species: Asian Desert Warbler *S.n.nana* and African Desert Warbler *S.deserti* (Ibis 146: 153-156). Prior to this announcement, BBRC had started a review of all but the first British record of this species. The first, on Portland, Dorset, from 16th December 1970 to 2nd January 1971, was trapped during its stay, and had been published as *S.n.nana* (Brit. Birds 65: 460-464; 66: 356). Only two of the ten subsequent accepted British records, at Spurn, East Yorkshire, and Frinton-on-Sea, Essex, both in 1975, were formally attributed to *S.n.nana* in these reports, while the 1979 Cheshire bird was published as 'showing the characteristics' of *nana*. It was, however, widely believed that all the records referred to *nana*, but even though comments to that effect had appeared (erroneously) in this report along with the record from East Yorkshire in 2000, this had never been formally acknowledged in print!

The separation of the two species should not be a problem if good views are obtained. The most obvious feature is perhaps Asian Desert Warbler's greyish-brown (drab sandy greyish-brown in autumn) upperparts, which contrast with the bright rufous rump and tail. In African Desert Warbler, there is less contrast between the upperparts (sandy-buff to almost golden) and the more rufous tail. With close views, the dark shaft-streaks on both the central tail feathers and the inner tertials may be seen on Asian Desert Warbler and are diagnostic. There are also a number of more subtle differences between the two species' bare-part coloration, tail pattern, head pattern, underparts and song (the latter heard from at least one British vagrant, the bird in Norfolk in 1993).

As anticipated, the review found that all the British records are attributable to Asian Desert Warbler. This is also the case with most, if not all, records from northwest Europe; for example, all nine Finnish records relate to Asian Desert Warbler (Heikki Luoto pers. comm.). The more sedentary African Desert Warbler appears to be an unlikely vagrant, though its occurrence here is perhaps not impossible. For example, it has been recorded in Italy (on Linosa Island, close to the North African coast, on 23rd April 1988; Andrea Corso pers. comm.), at least three times on Malta (in March, April and October), and on several of the Atlantic Islands. It might just follow in the footsteps of Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri*, White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* and Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* and make it to Britain one day. Since any vagrant desert warbler is still a major rarity and likely to receive close attention, it seems unlikely that one would be passed over for a 'mere' *nana*!

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (19, 483, 11)

Cornwall Goran Haven, male, 3rd May (M.Davis). Predannack Airfield, male, 2nd September (D.S.Flumm).

Dorset Portland, first-summer male, 15th June, trapped, photo (M.Cade *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, male, 4th-5th May (G.Morgan, G.Thompson).

Shetland Foula, first-summer male *S.c.albistriata*, 27th April to 4th May, probably same, 16th-18th May, photo (D. & G.Atherton, A.R.Mainwood, S.C.Votier). Fair Isle, first-summer female, 21st-22nd May (S.A.Boswell, T.C.R.Grant *et al.*); first-summer female, 3rd, 6th June (A.J.Bull, D.N.Shaw). Tresta, Fetlar, first-summer male, 7th June (P.R.French). Gorie, Bressay, male, 30th September (S.E.Duffield).

Surrey Lonsdale Road Reservoir, first-summer male, probably *S.c.albistriata*, 21st April, photo (R.J.Arnfield, J.Gordon *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Easington, female, 18th-19th October, photo (A.A.Hutt *et al.*).

2002 Shetland Sumburgh Head, first-summer male, 28th May to 8th June (D.Houghton *et al.* per P.V.Harvey). Whalsay, male, 28th-29th May, photo (A., J.L. & K.Irvine).

We used to think of Subalpine Warblers as easy and fun, particularly the males, which could be admired without too much effort or concentration as they perched atop bushes on a sunny May morning. However, things are now getting complicated. Given the possibility of eastern and western taxa being split, and with a greater understanding of the field separation of the different forms, BBRC attempts to assign records to taxon wherever possible. For well-observed or photographed birds this is sometimes relatively straightforward, and the differences between typical adult males of the eastern *S.c.albistriata* and western *S.c.cantillans/inornata/moltonii* forms can be quite striking. There are, however, complicating factors, one example being first-summer males of the race *cantillans* which show less extensive coloration on the underparts, and may superficially resemble *albistriata*. Then there is the issue of the recently described form *moltonii* (Shirihai *et al.* 2001, Sylvia Warblers), from the western Mediterranean islands, which has a distinctively different call from other forms. There is also the possibility that birds from areas where the different taxa meet may show mixed characters. Consequently, we label individuals in this report as one taxon or the other only where the evidence is strong, and will continue to use the term 'probably' where the evidence is good but not definitive. It would be helpful to be able to assign as many as possible to subspecies, but, ultimately, our ability to separate them will come down to the effort put in by observers and the level of documentation received. Careful observation to determine age, plumage tones, feather wear and voice are all potentially helpful in separating the different forms.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (2, 62, 6)

Lincolnshire Skegness, male, 2nd October to 11th January 2004, photo (K.M.Wilson *et al.*); female, 10th November to at least 4th January 2004, photo (K.Durose, J.Wright *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: page 609 fig. 9).

Norfolk Holme/Old Hunstanton, male, 16th-24th March, photo (N.M.Lawton *et al.*); possibly same as 2002 (Brit. Birds 96: 596) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 359). Beeston Bump, male, 29th March to 6th April, photo (L.Benson, J.V.Bhalerao *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plates 191 & 192). Winterton Dunes, male, 4th June (K.Brett, A.Leggatt, D.Parsons *et al.*).

Suffolk Dunwich Heath, male in song, 12th July, sound-recorded (D.Sutton *et al.*).

A record year but how many birds were really involved? Owing to the lack of chronological overlap and the occurrence in the same geographical area, it is tempting to suggest that some of these records relate to the same wandering individual. The evidence is, however, wholly circumstantial and, given that the Skegness male was joined by a female from November into 2004, we know that multiple occurrences of this species can happen. We have opted to treat such records as no more than 'possibly' the same, which means that they are counted independently for statistical purposes.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

***European and west Siberian race P. t. viridanus* (12, 356, 12)**

Dorset Verne Common, male in song, 7th June (C.E.Richards *et al.*).

Kent Reculver, 26th-30th August, photo (T.P.Laws *et al.*).

Norfolk Scolt Head, 26th-27th August (G.F.Hibberd, N.M.Lawton). Holme, 31st August (D. & R.Roche *et al.*). Overstrand, 7th September (T.Eadson, B.W.Murphy).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 20th August (H.Bell, N.Gates *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 4th-5th June (G.Morgan *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, trapped 3rd June, photo. (G.Atherton, A.R.Mainwood, S.C.Votier). Fetlar, 20th-22nd August (N.A.Littlewood *et al.*).

Suffolk Gunton, 25th-26th August, photo (J.A.Brown, A.Easton, J.Wright *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 12th-13th August, photo (J.Horton, F.X.Moffatt *et al.*); 4th-7th September, photo (P.J.Dunn *et al.*).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

East Asian race *P. t. plumbeitarsus* (0, 2, 1)

Scilly Bryher, 27th-28th September, photo (S.J.Dodgson *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plates 316, 317 & 360).

This is the third British record of this, the easternmost race of the Greenish Warbler complex, following those on Gugh (also Scilly) in October 1987 (Brit. Birds 86: 517; 94: 284-288) and at Holkham, Norfolk, in October 1996 (Brit. Birds 90: 501); but see also Brit. Birds 96: 74-78. While the Bryher bird is thus the first September record, there is also a September record from The Netherlands. Although, in the northern part of its range, *plumbeitarsus* appears to be taxonomically distinct from Greenish Warblers of the race *viridanus*, there is a ring of intermediates linking these two races through the Himalayas (Brit. Birds 96: 327-331). Nonetheless, *plumbeitarsus* does look significantly different from the majority of Greenish Warblers that arrive on these shores. Despite the name, the key feature of separation is not the presence of a median-covert wing-bar, as this can, occasionally, be shown by *viridanus*. Observers finding a bird they believe to be of this race should not only ascertain the presence of two wing-bars, but also make a careful assessment of the width and length of the greater-covert bar (which is broad and formed by pale, squared-off tips to these feathers rather than the thinner crescents typical of *viridanus*, and extends further onto the inner coverts) and the facial pattern (which is somewhat similar to that of Arctic Warbler *P. borealis*, in that the supercilium stops short of the bill base). With increasing awareness of the characters of this form, further discoveries seem likely.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 231, 9)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 1st September, trapped, photo (P.A.Brown *et al.*); another, 3rd September, trapped (A.E.Duncan, K.F.Woodbridge *et al.*).

Shetland Skaw, Unst, 2nd July (S.E.Duffield *et al.*). Wester Quarff, 1st-3rd September (D.Coutts, D.Playfair *et al.*). Foula, first-winter, 9th September (R.B.Wynn *et al.*); 16th-18th September, trapped 17th (G.Atherton, A.R.Mainwood). Grutness, 17th September (R.M.Fray *et al.*). Fair Isle, 20th September, photo (J.G.Headon, J.A.Hobson, D.N.Shaw *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 361).

Yorkshire, East Beacon Lane, Kilnsea and Spurn, 25th-31st August, trapped 26th, photo (P.Collins, T.McEvoy *et al.*).

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 50, 22)

Cleveland Skinningrove, 15th October (C.Dodsworth, S.J.Hinley, E.C.Parker *et al.*).

Cornwall Cot Valley, 25th-26th October (D.Brown, M.T.Elliott, S.Preddy *et al.*).

Dorset Pennsylvania Castle, Portland, 21st-22nd November (D. & G.Walbridge *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 23rd-29th October, photo, sound-recorded (R.J.Cosgrove, K.M.Wilson *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 415).

Norfolk Trimmingham, 17th-22nd October (A.Eadson, A.J.Kane, B.W.Murphy *et al.*). Hickling, 18th October (T.Barker, J.Hampshire). Wells-next-the-Sea, 21st-22nd October (J.R.McCallum, R.G.Newell, J.Oates *et al.*). Hemsby, 25th October (A.Grieve). Waxham, 26th-27th October, two on 27th (R.Harvey, A.J.Kane *et al.*). Great Yarmouth Cemetery, 30th November to at least 4th December (P.J.Heath *et al.*).

Northumberland Low Hauxley, 22nd October (M.J.Carr); 11th-12th November (M.J.Carr *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 13th-14th November, trapped 13th, photo (D.N.Shaw *et al.*); 17th-23rd November (D.N.Shaw *et al.*). East Ham, Bressay, 16th-23rd November, probably since 13th, photo (N.Davies, S.E.Duffield *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plates 30 & 362).

Suffolk Sizewell, 18th-23rd October (R.Harvey *et al.*). Southwold, 20th-27th October, photo (J.H.Grant, D.Richardson *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 6th-10th November, sound-recorded (D., D.R. & J.F.Cooper *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, 26th October to 1st November, trapped 26th, 29th, photo (P.Collins, L.J.Degnan *et al.*). Easington, 8th-11th November, trapped 11th; same, Spurn, 11th (T.R.Cleeves, M.Cunningham, B.R.Spence *et al.*). Holmpton, 9th November (G.J.Speight).

1985 Yorkshire, East Spurn, 26th-27th October, trapped 26th (A.S.Butler, J.Cudworth, B.R.Spence).

The 22 records in 2003 constitute the best year ever, allied to a bumper crop of Pallas's Leaf *Phylloscopus proregulus* and Yellow-browed Warblers *P.inornatus*, and this was the year in which many birders finally became acquainted with this rare species. This report features the first records for Lincolnshire, Suffolk and, more surprisingly, the bird-blessed Shetland Islands. This is very much an east-coast speciality; away from Portland, it is an extremely rare bird on the south coast, and even Scilly can muster only a single record. The arrivals in autumn 2003 came in two broad waves, the first in mid to late October, and the second in mid November. All the dates were fairly typical, although the one in Cleveland on 15th October was slightly earlier than the norm.

Despite this increasing familiarity, the identification of Hume's Warbler can be far from straightforward and care is essential. Dull Yellow-browed Warblers *P.inornatus* (and unusually bright Hume's) are out there, and the plumage of both species becomes increasingly dull (and potentially more similar) through the winter and spring. Calls remain a vital tool in the separation of these two closely related species. Nonetheless, interpreting the calls is not always easy, as Hume's Warblers have several quite different calls, not just one 'typical' one. Describing a call on paper is notoriously difficult; books and observers often rely on the traditional phonetic combinations of letters which cannot convey the tone, speed or volume of the sound. The best descriptions often draw comparisons with other, sometimes quite different, species. In addition to using phonetic transcriptions, we would strongly encourage observers to consider carefully how best to describe any call they hear and use whatever comparison comes to mind. Better still, of course, is the use of some sort of sound-recording, which is become increasingly popular with the arrival of lightweight digital equipment.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 242, 8)

Dorset Portland, 13th October, trapped, photo (M.Cade *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 13th October (S.Pinder, T.Sykes, K.M.Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Bacton, 15th-16th October (M.Fischer).

Shetland Fair Isle, 13th October (D.N.Shaw).

Suffolk Lowestoft, 13th October, photo (J.A.Brown, R.Fairhead).

Sussex, East Icklesham, 13th October, trapped, photo (D.Fletcher, J.Johnston, P.Jones *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, 1st October, photo (J.Dempsey, N.Hunt, P.Thomason *et al.*); 12th October (M.Cunningham, G.E.Dobbs, D.Prestt *et al.*).

2001 Kent St Margaret's, 9th October (S.R.Warry *et al.*).

2002 Suffolk Orfordness, 12th-13th October, trapped 12th, (M.Marsh *et al.*); 30th October, trapped (J.Askins, D.Cormack, S.H.Piotrowski *et al.*).

It is noteworthy that all eight birds in 2003 arrived in the first half of October, a period during which only two of the Dusky Warblers *P.fuscatus* appeared. Although Radde's Warbler has a tendency to be slightly earlier than Dusky, it is clear that, in 2003, very few Dusky Warblers had entered western Europe when the main arrival of Radde's was underway. It will be interesting to monitor this trend in future, as the later arrival of Dusky must, in part, be responsible for those occasional overwintering birds.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 249, 23)

Cleveland Brotton, 28th-30th October (M.A.Blick *et al.*).

Cornwall Land's End, 7th-15th November (M.D.Warren *et al.*). Nanjizal, 8th November (K.A.Wilson).

Devon Clennon Valley, Paignton, 21st November to 30th April 2004, photo (M.R.Langman *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, 9th November, trapped, photo (M.Cade *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Fairhaven Dunes, 23rd-24th October, photo (M.Jones *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 416).

Norfolk Hemsby, 21st-27th October, photo (A.Grieve *et al.*). Waxham, 27th-30th October (P.J.Heath, B.W.Jarvis *et al.*). Caister-on-Sea, 9th-11th November (A.Grieve *et al.*). Sidestrand, 9th November (B.J.Murphy *et al.*). Warham Greens, 9th-11th November (C.A.Holt, S.J.Turner). Holkham Meals, 11th November (A.I.Bloomfield, J.R.McCallum). Messingham, 11th-16th November (A.J.Kane *et al.*). Wells, 11th November (A.I.Bloomfield, J.R.McCallum).

Orkney South Cara, South Ronaldsay, 9th-15th November (E.R.Meek *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Porth Clais, near St David's, 10th-13th November (P.Grennard, O.Roberts *et al.*).

Shetland West Manse, Fetlar, 14th October (M.Smith, B.H.Thomason). Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 22nd October (A.J.Bull, C.A.Holt, S.J.Turner *et al.*). Foula, 22nd-24th October, trapped 22nd (D. & G.Atherton, A.R.Mainwood *et al.*). Out Skerries, 24th-25th October (P.M.Ellis, J.D.Okill, R.Riddington *et al.*). Sumburgh, 4th-8th November, trapped 4th, photo (P.M.Ellis, R.Riddington *et al.*).

Suffolk See 2002 Suffolk below.

Yorkshire, North Filey, 13th-14th October, photo (J. & T.G.Davis *et al.*); 29th-30th October, photo (J.Horton *et al.*).

2002 Suffolk Kessingland, 30th December to 6th January 2003 (D.J.Holman, J.Zantboer *et al.*).

Following last year's comparatively lean showing, a welcome return to form for this inveterate skulker; this is the second-best year on record, eclipsed only by the 26 in 2001 (see Brit. Birds 97: page 613 fig. 11). The main arrival took place in the second week of November and, not surprisingly, Norfolk and Shetland accounted for more than half of this year's crop of records. The well-watched Devon bird and the one in 2002/03 in Suffolk are particularly noteworthy as they continue the recent trend of occasional over-wintering in southern England, a habit yet to be recorded in Radde's Warbler *P.schwarzi*.

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (1, 60, 2)

Cornwall Nanjizal, 26th-28th September, trapped 26th, 28th, photo (J.M. & K.A.Wilson *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Beacon Lane, Kilnsea, 30th September, photo (G.Taylor *et al.*).

2002 Scilly St Martin's, 4th-6th October (Brit. Birds 96: 599), finder/identifier was T.Vaughan.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0, 7, 1)

Devon Kingswear, male in song, 19th May to at least 17th June, possibly since 6th May, sound-recorded (M.R.Langman, S.J.Lees *et al.*).

2000 Kent Dungeness, male in song, 14th-17th April, sound-recorded (A.S.Wraithmell *et al.*).

The acceptance of these two records proved relatively straightforward. In combination, the three-phase song (including a short trill or stutter at the end); the classic downward-inflected Siskin *Carduelis spinus*-like call; white underparts; strong and slightly yellow facial pattern; brighter green upperparts, including the rump and uppertail-coverts; and the pale bare parts were all typical.

As well as these two records, the Committee has had to face the task of assessing two non-singing birds: a first-winter from Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, and a spring 2000 record from Portland, Dorset. The former, after much deliberation and a number of circulations, was found to be unacceptable. The latter is currently pending, while further investigations are carried out. The assessment of non-singing birds is far from easy, and although there are two formulae which can be used to 'identify' Iberian Chiffchaff (Svensson 2001, Bull. B.O.C. 121: 281-296), the Committee is reluctant to use these on extralimital, non-singing birds.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 21, 1)

Kent Dungeness, 14th-16th October (D.Walker *et al.*).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 157, 10)

Devon Slapton Ley, male 22nd December to 23rd February 2004, photo (B.Whitehall *et al.*).

Dorset Abbotsbury, 24th October (S.A.Groves). Lodmoor, two juveniles, 26th October, presumed same, 15th-17th December (D.J.Chown *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, two males, female and two juveniles, 24th October (P.G.Akers, R.J.Price, A.Thunder *et al.*); juvenile, 10th November (R.J.Price).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 58, 5)

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, juvenile/first-winter, 13th October, photo (B.M.Clarkson, M.J.Tarrant *et al.*).

Norfolk Scolt Head, first-winter, 18th October (N.M.Lawton, M.E.S.Rooney, N.Williams); presumed same, Burnham Norton, 26th-27th, photo (D.Bridges, A.J.J.Smith *et al.*).

Scilly St Martin's, first-winter, 23rd-24th October, photo (A.Beolans *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 363).

Shetland Out Skerries, first-winter male, killed by cat, 30th September, now at National Museums of Scotland (J.Lidster, M.J.McKee, E.Tait *et al.*).

Somerset Porlock Marsh, male *L.i.pheonicuroides*, 3rd June, photo (D.J.Chown *et al.*).

BBRC's work on subspecies identification mentioned in last year's report (Brit. Birds 96: 601) continues in a somewhat 'two steps forward, one step back' manner. Some adults are readily diagnosable, as may be some first-years, but others continue to present much greater problems.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* (0, 1, 0)

2000 Outer Hebrides Howbeg and Howmore, South Uist, first-winter, 3rd-4th November, probably since 27th October, photo (J.C.Brain, B.Rabbitts, A.Stevenson *et al.*).

This bird arrived during a period in which other eastern vagrants (including Brown *L.cristatus*, Southern ('Steppe') Grey *L.meridionalis pallidirostris* and Isabelline Shrikes *L.isabellinus*) were found in Britain, Ireland and elsewhere in Europe. The identification of the South Uist Long-tailed Shrike to species level posed no problems, and plumage characters established that it was a first-winter, most probably of the migratory northern race *L.s.erythronotus*. However, two characters (the lilac tinge to the neck, and white above the eye) did not fit *erythronotus* and were more suited to individuals of the largely sedentary race *L.s.caniceps*, which has a more southerly distribution than *erythronotus*, and would be an unlikely vagrant to western Europe. Is it conceivable that there is a poorly described form of Long-tailed Shrike somewhere in Asia about which we know very little?

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 128, 2)

Norfolk Acle Straight, male, 26th June to 1st July, photo (I.Ellis, C.Morrison *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, male, 5th June, photo (T.C.R.Grant *et al.*).

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

Central Asian race *L. m. pallidirostris* (2, 15, 1)

Man, Isle of Ballaghennie Ayres, first-summer male in song, 17th June to 12th July, photo (C.Sharpe, C.Wormwell *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 278; 97: plate 364).

All but one of the previous 17 British records of *pallidirostris* have concerned birds arriving between mid September and early December, with a peak in late October and November. The remaining record involved one at Cape Cornwall and Kenidjack Carn, on 21st-23rd April 1993 (Brit. Birds 86: 524). Like the Cornish bird, the Ballaghennie Ayres bird proved to be particularly educational, and debunked one or two misconceptions about the appearance of *pallidirostris* in summer plumage (for example that the lores and the basal part of the bill must be pale, which is clearly not so).

A review of skins at the Natural History Museum, Tring, showed that the only subspecies of Southern Grey Shrike to match *pallidirostris* in the pale tone of the upperparts is the Saharan form *leucopygos*; other 'pale' forms, such as *elegans* and *aucherii*, are clearly darker in tone on their upperparts. There are pale forms of Great Grey Shrike *L.excubitor*, such as *homeyeri* (*leucopterus* is often considered synonymous with this form), but this can be eliminated since it has extensive white across the base of the secondaries.

Other issues, such as the taxonomy of *pallidirostris*, are still being investigated. Should it be deemed eventually to have full species status, then there is the task of giving it an English name. It is commonly known as 'Steppe Grey Shrike', yet it is clearly not a typical species of the steppe. In terms of habitat, it is most closely associated with Saxaul scrub, and so perhaps the name of 'Saxaul Grey Shrike', as proposed by Lars Svensson (Birdwatch 146: 34-38), would be more appropriate.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

West Mediterranean islands' race *L.s.badius* (0, 3, 0)

1986 Dorset Portland, male, 10th May (A.G.Clarke, C.D.Head *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 80: 563).

1995 Kent Dungeness, female, 15th-21st July, trapped 18th, photo (D.Walker *et al.*).

1995 Norfolk Great Cressingham, male, 2nd-6th July, photo (A.Goodall *et al.*).

Although Woodchat Shrike was dropped from the BBRC list at the end of 1990, the Committee has reviewed the rarity archive to examine potential records of the western Mediterranean islands' subspecies *L.s.badius*. Prior to that date, a small number of claims of this race were made, but, having stated in 1987 that BBRC was of 'the opinion '...that the characters of this race are not sufficiently well defined to distinguish such individuals from some individuals of the nominate race' (Brit. Birds 80: 563), we have now had to re-evaluate our position.

Following detailed examination of specimens at the Natural History Museum, Tring, combined with field observations of *badius*, BBRC has gained a much better understanding of the features by which *badius* may be identified. This is centred on the absence (or virtual absence) of a white patch at the base of the primaries on the closed wing, which is a conspicuous feature on other races. The results of our research will be published in British Birds shortly. In the meantime, the three records listed above have been found to meet these criteria, and BOURC has accepted Woodchat Shrike of the form *L.s.badius* onto category A of the British List.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* (24, 462, -)

2001 Gower Horton, juvenile, taken into care sick, 28th November, released in good health, 7th January 2002 (S.Allen *et al.*).

This species was removed from the list of species considered on 31st December 2001.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (0, 96, 3)

Outer Hebrides Aird Mhor Plantation, Barra, 5th-7th October, photo (M.Oksien *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 11th October, photo (I.Lewington *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 418; 97: plate 365). St Martin's, 13th-14th October, photo (A.C.Lees *et al.*).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (26, 772, 11)

Shetland Lerwick, first-winter male *C.h.hornemanni*, 22nd September, found dead, now at the National Museums of Scotland, photo (J.A. & P.M.Ellis *et al.*). Skaw and Norwick, Unst, first-winter male *C.h.hornemanni*, 28th September to 16th October, trapped 5th October, photo (P.S.Crockett, I.Gordon, M.G.Pennington *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plate 366); another *C.h.hornemanni*, age/sex uncertain, 5th-21st October, photo (S.E.Duffield, M.A.Maher, M.G.Pennington *et al.*); Skaw, *C.h.hornemanni*, age/sex uncertain, 17th-19th October, photo (M.G.Pennington). Toab, male *C.h.hornemanni*, 30th September (P.M.Ellis *et al.*). Fair Isle, *C.h.hornemanni*, age/sex uncertain, 2nd-3rd October (S.J.Aspinall, O.L.Wardman *et al.*). Foula, race, age/sex uncertain, 5th-6th October, photo; another, race, age/sex uncertain, 5th-7th October (J.M. & T.P.Drew, A.R.Mainwood, M.A.Wilkinson); first-winter *C.h.hornemanni*, 10th-11th October, trapped 11th, photo (J.M. & T.P.Drew, A.R.Mainwood, M.A.Wilkinson); first-winter *C.h.hornemanni*, 11th October to 1st November, trapped 12th, photo (J.M. & T.P.Drew, A.R.Mainwood, M.A.Wilkinson *et al.*). Loch of Gutcher, Yell, first-winter male *C.h.hornemanni*, 7th October, later found dead, now at the National Museums of Scotland, photo (J.H.Ballantyne, P.V.Harvey, E.Knight *et al.*).

1995 Norfolk Blakeney Quay, 21st November (D.J.Holman).

1999 Shetland Foula, 30th September (J.M. & T.P.Drew).

2002 Orkney Newark, Sanday, 18th October (K.Durose).

This represents the first significant influx of the northwestern race *C.h.hornemanni* into Britain. Of the eleven listed here, nine were assigned to this race, and it is likely that the remaining two were also *hornemanni*. Two further autumn records, from Orkney and Shetland, are still under consideration and they too were considered to be *hornemanni*. The first record of this race for The Netherlands also occurred during this period (Dutch Birding 25: 420-421). Although identification to subspecies should be undertaken with caution, a combination of size (most easily judged against other redpolls) and plumage – notably a rich chamois-leather wash on the face, throat and breast and typically fairly uniformly frosty-grey upperparts (lacking the striking pale central panel and tawny-/brown-edged mantle so often shown by *C.h.exilipes*) – are useful pointers.

Nonetheless, observers should beware of markedly cold-looking redpolls from the northwest, several of which have occurred in the Northern Isles in recent autumns and caused real problems. Critical observation of the rump and undertail-coverts (sometimes in the hand) was needed to confirm that these were indeed just Common Redpolls *C.flammea*. Exactly where these birds come from is something of a mystery as observers with recent field experience in Iceland suggest that birds matching this appearance simply do not occur there or, at best, are extremely rare. Are they all from Greenland? Heaven help records committees if just a few individual *C.h.hornemanni* are at large somewhere in Iceland and hybridising with the local *C.f.islandica*.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (1, 103, 5)

Buckinghamshire Hedgerley, male, 27th January to 14th March, photo (P. & M.McManus *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 100).

Highland Morangie, Easter Ross, two males, two females, 27th March to 14th April, photo, sound-recorded (R.Dawson, I.A.Dillon, R.Griffiths *et al.*).

2002 Shetland Tingwall, female, 21st August (P.Sclater). Noss, male, 23rd-24th August (O.Gabb, S.Thomas *et al.*).

2002 Yorkshire, South Bole Edge Plantation, male, 1st-5th September, photo (M.Garner *et al.*).

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* (1, 15, 1)

Orkney Evie, 31st October to 6th November, photo (D.Matson, J.B.Ribbands, E.J.Williams *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 419).

The sixth for Scotland and the second for Orkney. This well-photographed individual highlighted the benefits of garden feeders, and for the best part of three days delighted observers by feeding on apple halves in the company of a Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* and a Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*. A full account appears in Birding Scotland 6: 175-177.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* (0, 2, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 14th-19th October, trapped 14th, photo (D.N.Shaw, J.G.Walmsley *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 420; 97: plate 367).

Only the third record for Britain, following those in Dorset in April 1982 and on Fair Isle in September-October 1987. Given its unobtrusive nature and subtle identification features, and the fact that the yellow in the fore-supercilium of this individual was only visible at close range, it is likely that others in Britain go unnoticed and unrecorded, as this is one of the commonest Nearctic sparrows. Along with the Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* (present on Fair Isle on 17th-19th), it made a sensational 'double' for mainland birders, and the Fair Isle airstrip endured its busiest period ever!

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (1, 23, 3)

Cheshire Caldby, 21st-23rd May, photo (R.Smith *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 253).

Shetland Fetlar, 10th-11th May, photo (A.Hughson, M.Smith *et al.*). Fair Isle, male in song, 9th June, photo (D.N.Shaw *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 279).

Three in a year is unprecedented (although there were two in 1968, 1987, 1992, 1996 and 2002). The locations and dates are broadly typical; Shetland alone accounts for 11 of the 27 British records.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (0, 23, 1)

Shetland Out Skerries, first-summer male *J.h.hyemalis*, 1st-9th May, trapped 1st, 9th, photo (E.Tait *et al.* per R.Riddington) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 219).

This was the first since two in 2000. There have now been four on Shetland's outer islands, although surprisingly none has yet appeared on Fair Isle. All four arrived between 1st and 10th May, which fits in well with their migration pattern in North America where they are one of the earliest returning migrants in spring. Indeed the vast majority of British records have been in spring.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 37, 2)

Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, male, 31st October to 1st November (C.Batty, M.A.Maher *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, female or first-winter, 11th-12th November (A.M.Allport, M.Garner).

1994 Orkney Sanday, male, 22nd October (Brit. Birds 88: 551), previously published as accepted but now considered inadequately documented.

1995 Shetland Fair Isle, male, 29th-30th October (I.Barton, M.A.Newell, R.Riddington).

2000 Pembrokeshire Skokholm, male, 28th April (T.Purcell, G.Thompson).

2001 Caernarfonshire Bardsey, male, 30th April (S.D.Stansfield *et al.*).

Until this year, BBRC had adopted a potentially contradictory policy on male Pine Buntings. If a bird was seen to show traces of yellow in the pale fringes to the primaries, it was deemed to be of hybrid origin and, therefore, not accepted; whereas those birds which might not have been seen well enough to be certain about the colour of these fringes, but showed all other characters of a male Pine Bunting, were considered acceptable. This difficult situation was clearly untenable and change was required.

Debated fully at the 2004 BBRC AGM, there seemed to be two alternatives open to us: to accept only those birds that were trapped or photographed, in order to ensure that no yellow was present; or to acknowledge that, as long as the bird showed no features of hybrid origin other than some yellow in the primary fringes, it was acceptable. We contacted all the European Rarities Committees and found that no common policy existed, although the trend was more towards the second option. During these discussions with other committees, it became clear that this problem was not confined to Pine Bunting. For example, the Norwegian Rare Birds Committee recently received a series of superb photographs of what would have been their third record of Black Duck *Anas rubripes*. One image, however, showed that the pale tips to the greater coverts were broader than normal for Black Duck, intimating some degree of Mallard *A.platyrhynchos* influence. In previous correspondence about this species pair, we have established that some males in Toronto, Canada, show curled uppertail-coverts as the only sign of Mallard hybridisation (R.Pittaway pers. comm.). In similar vein to the present situation with Pine Bunting, we doubt that many British birders would welcome having to describe the precise shape of the uppertail-covert feathers in order to rule out any hybrid characters and get a Black Duck accepted.

Carefully weighing up the available options, BBRC has decided to accept those Pine Buntings which show yellow on the primary fringes only, provided that the head pattern and other characters show no clear evidence of hybridisation. Equally, we will accept those birds where the primary colour was not seen, as long as the head pattern was described in sufficient detail to exclude any other hybrid features. This change in position will apply only to males; the differences between pure and hybrid females is so slight that we will continue to demand the previously published criteria for females (Brit. Birds 86: 378-386). We have also established the key head-pattern features required to separate pure Pine Buntings from the majority of hybrid males:

- The presence of chestnut (not grey or black) on the lores;
- The presence of extensive chestnut on the throat region – the whole throat and malar area must be virtually concolorous, and there should be no prominent dark malar line or pale submoustachial stripe;
- The absence of a white supercilium – the supercilium should be chestnut or, at most, grey;
- The presence of any yellow on the head (or any other part of the bird, other than along the primary fringes) confirms hybrid origin.

As a result of these discussions, BBRC felt that the 1995 Fair Isle bird was now acceptable. This male, which was described in the literature as a hybrid (Birding World 8: 430-431), showed some yellow tones at the base of the outer webs of the primaries when close views were obtained, but no other evidence of hybrid origin. This record epitomised the dilemma facing BBRC: the yellow in the fringes was clearly seen with close views on the first day, but the following day, when the light was duller and the views not so close, they could not be seen. Had the bird been discovered a day later, it would probably already have been accepted! Many British records of male Pine Bunting are not seen well enough to clarify the precise colour of the primary fringes, although some previous records have suggested that yellow tones might have been present. For example, the bird on Fair Isle in October 1980 showed yellow in the primaries, and some photographs of the bird at Dagenham Chase, Greater London, in February/March 1992 suggested there might have been some yellow tones present. Also as a result of this review, and because the observers were unable to describe the head pattern fully, the 1994 Sanday record is considered no longer acceptable.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (23, 410, 7)

Orkney Westray, male, 28th May (M.G.Oxlade). North Ronaldsay, male, 28th May (H.Bell, P.A.Brown *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Northbay, Barra, 28th September (K.Gillon *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 18th October, photo (J.Hopkins).

Shetland Fair Isle, male, 23rd May, photo (D.N.Shaw *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 254); another male, 29th May (T.C.R.Grant *et al.*). Foula, 23rd-26th September (A.R. & H.T.Mainwood *et al.*).

Records of this species have risen apace with increasing observer coverage and awareness, with 2.9 per year in the 1960s, 6.3 in the 1970s, 8.3 in the 1980s and no fewer than 20.0 per year in the 1990s. It is surprising that numbers have since fallen, with an average of only 9.0 per year since 2000. This mirrors a significant decrease in both South Korea and Japan (N.Moores pers. comm.; J.Yamashina Inst. Ornith. 34 (1)) and makes one wonder what is happening in their breeding areas. Nonetheless, those in 2003 fitted the established pattern of occurrence well.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 208, 6)

Dorset Southwell, Portland, female or first-winter, 3rd September, photo (P.A.Coe, P. & S.Saunders, G.Walbridge *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, female or first-winter, 1st September (A.Ash, D.Steel *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, female or first-winter, 12th, 17th-18th September (P.A.Brown *et al.*).

Scilly Bryher, female or first-winter, 21st-22nd September, photo (S.J.Dodgson).

Shetland Fair Isle, female or first-winter, 7th-8th September (R.J.Nason *et al.*). Sumburgh Head, female or first-winter, 26th September, photo (P.M.Ellis *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 421; 97: plate 368).

A good geographical spread of records, including the third for Dorset – the previous two in that county were also on Portland. Nonetheless, offshore islands remain the best bet for finding this species: Scilly has now recorded six, and Orkney nine, while the majority of Northumberland's 11 records have occurred on the Farne Islands. Shetland still dominates though with 147 of the 224 accepted records.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (10, 158, 4)

Caithness St John's Loch, Brough, male, 28th June to 1st July, again 9th, photo (D.Glass, J.Smith *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, male, 2nd-8th August (P.J.Donnolly, N.Gates *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, male, 16th June, photo (J.G.Brown).

Sussex, West Sidlesham Common, male in song, 13th-26th July, photo (M.Buchanan, R.Prior *et al.*).

2002 Lancs & North Merseyside Birkdale, Southport, male, 19th June (Brit. Birds 96: 605) to 22nd June (per S.J.White).

2002 Scilly Tresco, first-winter, 29th September to 3rd October, probably since 19th, photo (R.B.Bradbury, M.G.Telfer *et al.*).

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 24, 1)

Scilly Bryher, 16th-17th October, photo (R.Addison, M.Baynes, A.C.Lees *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 96: plate 422).

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* (1, 20, 1)

Oxfordshire Headington, first-winter male, 10th December to 16th January 2004, photo (P.Allen, R.Hurst, D.John *et al.*) (Brit. Birds 97: plates 61-63, 82 & 369).

Another overwintering bird, echoing the individuals in Pembrokeshire in 1989 and Essex in 1991/92 that similarly graced back-garden feeding stations. This confiding bird made the suburbs of Oxford an extremely popular venue for birders over the Christmas and New Year period, with many combining it with a visit to Cornwall for the American Robin *Turdus migratorius*. The last Baltimore Oriole appeared on Scilly in September 1999, an altogether more expected date and location for this stunning Nearctic visitor. An entertaining account of the Oxford bird appears in *Birding World* 16: 503-505.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see Ibis 136: 253)

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*

2002 Suffolk Minsmere, male, 14th May to 10th June (W.Miles *et al.*).

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

Somerset Green Ore, first-year, 7th-15th April, photo (P.Burrows, D.Clothier, A.H.Davies, I.Stapp).

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Hon. Secretary; b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; c) those mentioned in 'Recent reports' in British Birds if full details were unobtainable; or d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

2003 Blue-winged Teal Eyebrook Reservoir, Leicestershire, 20th September. **Ferruginous Duck** Minsmere, Suffolk, 5th July. **White-billed Diver** Near Heybridge Basin, Essex, 8th February; Gott Bay, Tiree, Argyll, 25th May; Newton Point, Northumberland, 26th August; Portree, Skye, Highland, 28th-30th October. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** North Sea, Sea area Humber, E of Donna Nook, Lincolnshire, 10th September. **Zino's/Fea's Petrel** Sheringham, Norfolk, 25th August; Brora, Sutherland, Highland, 29th August. **Squacco Heron** Hollowell Reservoir, Northamptonshire, 18th May. **Great White Egret** Holme, Norfolk, 13th February; Gwent Levels Wetland Reserve, Newport, Gwent, 17th-18th March; Deal Hall, Essex, 16th April; Theddlethorpe Dunes, Lincolnshire, 12th October; Laugharne Estuary, Carmarthenshire, 18th October. **Black Kite** Little Singleton, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 15th April; Bodham, Norfolk, 15th April; Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, 15th April; Uplyme, Devon, 21st April; Epsom, Surrey, 22nd April; Great Braxted, Essex, 24th April; Pegwell Bay, Kent, 24th April; Aylmerton, Norfolk, 26th April; Pencoed, Bridgend, Glamorgan, 29th April; Messingham Heath, Norfolk, 4th May; Wormegay, Norfolk, 26th May; Barrington, Somerset, 27th May; Broughton, Buckinghamshire, 3rd June; Canterbury, Kent, 7th June; Rowntree Park, York, North Yorkshire, 22nd June; near Wilverley Plain, Hampshire, 25th June; Aveton Gifford, Devon, 11th August. **Pallid Harrier** Rowhedge, Essex, 26th May; Sandwick, Shetland, 7th November. **Red-footed Falcon** West Bergholt, Essex, 21st April; Holme, Norfolk, 12th May; Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 28th May; Hadleigh, Essex, 30th May; Holkham/Burnham Overy, Norfolk, 1st June; Winterton Dunes, Norfolk, 16th June. **Eleonora's Falcon** Covehithe, Suffolk, 28th May. **Gyr Falcon** Rhyl, Flintshire, 29th January; Portknockie, Moray & Nairn, 9th February. **American Golden Plover** Earl's Palace, Birsay, Orkney, 10th October. **Great Snipe** St Agnes, Scilly, 24th October. **Marsh Sandpiper** Poolewe, Wester Ross, Highland, 17th April; Copperas Bay, Essex, 20th April; East Chevington, Northumberland, two, 14th July. **Bonaparte's Gull** CREDITON, Devon, 16th February. **Gull-billed Tern** Landguard, Suffolk, 2nd May. **Caspian Tern** Southeast, East Sussex, 20th June; Chelmsford, Essex, 13th September; Normandy, Hampshire, 10th October. **Whiskered Tern** Gosport, Hampshire, 14th April; Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire, 17th April. **White-winged Black Tern** Tophill Low, East Yorkshire, 15th August; St Mary's Island, Northumberland, 6th September. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** Holme, Norfolk, 5th November. **Alpine Swift** Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, 5th March. **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Westport Lake, Staffordshire, 6th September. **Red-throated Pipit** Wilverley Plain, Hampshire, 17th March. **Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens* Levington, Suffolk, 4th-5th November. **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* Papa Westray, Orkney, 13th-15th June. **Black-eared Wheatear** Cymystradilly, Caernarfonshire, 3rd May; Bognor Regis, West Sussex, 1st June. **Eye-browed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* Letham, Northumberland, 18th April. **Dark-throated Thrush** *T.r.ruficollis* Lavenham, Suffolk, 30th January. **Dark-throated Thrush** *T.r.atrogularis* Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, 25th October. **American Robin** Dalry, Ayrshire, 7th-8th January. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Bryher, Scilly, 2nd October. **Lanceolated Warbler** Fair Isle, Shetland, 11th September. **Savi's Warbler** Hickling, Norfolk, 15th April; Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire, 1st May. **Dusky Warbler** Collafirth, Shetland, 17th October; Whale Chine, Isle of Wight, 9th November. **Eastern or Western Bonelli's Warbler** Great Orme, Caernarfonshire, 2nd August. **Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* Leintwardine, Herefordshire, 29th-30th July. **Rustic Bunting** West Marden, West Sussex, 16th February. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 14th October. **Black-headed Bunting** North Sea, Sea area Dogger, oil installation Uisge Gorme, 30th April to 1st May.

2002 'Black Brant' Frieston Shore, Lincolnshire, 17th March, 3rd October. **Lesser Scaup** Lochs Ardvule and Bornish, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 9th November to 2003. **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* Middlebere, Dorset, 14th-23rd August. **Great White Egret** Near Hauxton, Cambridgeshire, 11th October. **Black Kite** Roydon Common, Norfolk, 24th June. **Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* Seaford, East Sussex, 23rd March. **Gyr Falcon** Rendall, Orkney (second individual), 15th April. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Penclacwydd, Carmarthenshire, 15th July. **Spotted Sandpiper** Williamthorpe Reservoir, Derbyshire, 22nd October. **Bonaparte's Gull** Ardivachar Point, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 28th April. **'American' Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus smithsonianus* St Mary's, Scilly, 30th January to 20th February; Barnes Wetland Centre, Surrey, 30th April. **Ross's Gull** Minsmere, Suffolk, 7th June (Brit. Birds 96: 607); previously published as 2001. **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* Frodsham, Cheshire, 23rd June; Holy Island, Northumberland, 11th September; Cley, Norfolk, 26th October. **Little Swift** Woolston Eyes, Cheshire, 4th September. **Red-rumped Swallow** Waxham, Norfolk, 12th May. **Red-throated Pipit** Blacktoft Sands, East Yorkshire, 10th October; Bryher, Scilly, 20th October. **Citrine Wagtail** Wilstone Reservoir, Hertfordshire, 15th August. **Two-barred Crossbill** Fersness, Orkney, 20th August. **Baltimore Oriole** Dervaig, Mull, Argyll, 29th

September.

2001 'Black Brant' Holbeach Marsh, Lincolnshire, 18th February. **King Eider** Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset, 21st October. **Night Heron** Brentwood, Essex, 12th May. **Black Kite** Lundy, Devon, 24th May. **American Golden Plover** Blacktoft Sands, East Yorkshire, 25th May; Maer Lake, Bude, Cornwall, two, 19th November. **White-rumped Sandpiper** South Ford, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 26th-27th October. **'American' Herring Gull** Dungeness, Kent, 6th February. **Ross's Gull** Peel Castle, Isle of Man, 27th October. **Caspian Tern** Farnham Gravel-pits, North Yorkshire, 25th August. **Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo pyrrhonota* Sandwich Bay, Kent, 4th November. **Savi's Warbler** Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 22nd August. **'Caspian' Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus fuscus* Filey, North Yorkshire, 10th-19th June.

2000 White-billed Diver Sound of Barra, Outer Hebrides, 6th May. **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus affinis* Hilbre Island, Cheshire, 6th September. **Gyr Falcon** Snishival, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 21st March. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Near Balgarva, Outer Hebrides, 9th September. **Baird's Sandpiper** West Gerinish, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 11th-14th October. **Laughing Gull** Arnside, Cumbria, 9th October. **'American' Herring Gull** Swansea, Glamorgan, 30th January and 8th March; Kirkwall, Orkney, 2nd February; Rainham Marshes, Essex, 22nd December. **Gull-billed Tern** Near Balgarva, Outer Hebrides, 13th August. **Olive-backed Pipit** Foula, Shetland, 24th September; two, 6th October. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Foula, Shetland, two, 27th September. **Lanceolated Warbler** Foula, Shetland, 27th September. **'Caspian' Reed Warbler** Fair Isle, Shetland, 12th June to 1st July. **Booted Warbler** Castlebay, Barra, Outer Hebrides, 4th-5th September. **Dusky Warbler** Ardmore, Barra, Outer Hebrides, 21st October. **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 26th September.

1999 Canvasback Monk's Wall, Kent, 10th-11th June. **'American' Herring Gull** Dunnet Beach, Caithness, 3rd February; East Tilbury, Essex, 6th February; Wick, Caithness, 9th February; Scrabster, Caithness, 6th-14th March; St Mary's, Scilly, 21st March; Walthamstow, Greater London, 23rd April; Southwold, Suffolk, 23rd April; Hayle, Cornwall, 31st September. **'Caspian Gull'** Dartford Marshes, Kent, three, 16th-17th January; Doonfoot/Greenan, Ayrshire, 30th-31st January; Redcar, Cleveland, 4th February; Westwood Great Pool, Worcestershire, 8th, 14th-15th February; another, 1st-2nd December; Ogston Reservoir, Derbyshire, 18th February; Martin Mere, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 6th March; Newquay, Cornwall, 11th March; Crosby Beach, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 18th August; another, 27th November; another, 11th December; Crosby Beach and Seaforth, 23rd November; Seaforth, 11th November; Dungeness, Kent, 15th-28th August; Withens Clough Reservoir, West Yorkshire, 11th September; Castron, Northumberland, 17th October; Hanningfield Reservoir, Essex, 23rd November; Davidstowe, Cornwall, 28th November; Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 11th December; South Woodham Ferrers, Essex, 12th December. **'Siberian Stonechat'** Foula, Shetland, 30th September. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Foula, Shetland, 23rd September. **Dusky Warbler** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 21st September.

1998 White-billed Diver Verran Island and Rubh Aird Mhichaeil, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 6th, 8th May. **Cattle Egret** Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 9th June. **'American' Herring Gull** South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 31st March; Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, 1st-4th April. **'Caspian Gull'** Eling Great Marsh, Hampshire, 2nd February to 30th April; another, 18th April to 4th September; another, 28th August to 2nd September; another, 18th-27th December; Dungeness, Kent, 3rd February; another, 8th August; Milton, Cambridgeshire, 14th February; another, 22nd November; another, 24th December; Wandsworth, Greater London, 12th September; Old Moor, South Yorkshire, 6th November; Ogston Reservoir, Derbyshire, 2nd December. **Black-eared Wheatear** North Rona, Outer Hebrides, 15th June. **Common Stonechat** *S.t.variegatus* Beachy Head, East Sussex, 8th-10th October. **Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia straminea* Norfolk, Sheringham, 20th September. **'African Chaffinch'** *Fringilla coelebs africana/spodiogenys* Kendall, Cumbria, early January to 5th March; Penrith, Cumbria, 12th February; Fair Isle, Shetland, 5th April to 1st May; Wigton, Cumbria, 27th-28th April.

1997 Gyr Falcon Howmore, Outer Hebrides, 24th November. **'American' Herring Gull** Walthamstow, Greater London, 27th December. **'Caspian Gull'** Musselburgh, Lothian, 13th July; Doonfoot, Ayrshire 25th September; another, 2nd-6th October. **Red-rumped Swallow** Camel Estuary, Cornwall, 3rd September.

1996 Black Kite Southfield Reservoir, South Yorkshire, 4th April.

1994 Grasshopper Warbler *L.n.straminea* Holme, Norfolk, 2nd September; Red Rocks, Cheshire, 12th October. **'African Chaffinch'** Fingringhoe, Essex, 9th-25th April, same 2nd-21st January 1995; St Mary's, Scilly, 12th April.

1993 South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* Sea area Sole, SW of Scilly, 26th August. **'Caspian' Reed Warbler** Spurn, East Yorkshire, 18th-19th September.

1992 'Caspian Gull' Doonfoot, Ayrshire, 1st August. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** Mountfield, East Sussex, 18th September. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Out Skerries, Shetland, 26th September.

1984 'Caspian' Reed Warbler Spurn, East Yorkshire, 3rd June.

1979 Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* Black Rock, Stithians, Cornwall, 16th September to October.

1977 'Caspian' Reed Warbler Spurn, East Yorkshire, 24th September.

Appendix 3. List of selected records still under consideration

This list is not intended to be complete. Some decisions may have been arrived at and County Recorders/observers informed prior to the publication of this Report. Some other outstanding records are referred to in the Systematic List

2003 White-billed Diver Lizard Point, Durham, 26th August. **Black-browed Albatross** Rerwick Head, Orkney, 3rd October. **Pallid Harrier** Unst, Shetland, 23rd-25th May. **Pied Wheatear** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 17th-21st, 26th November. **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus alpestris* Honiton, Devon, 26th October. **Dark-throated Thrush**, Fair Isle, Shetland, 16th October. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Barra, Outer Hebrides, 26th September; Fair Isle, Shetland, 28th September; North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 30th September to 1st October.

2002 'American' Common Eider *Somateria mollissima dresseri* Campbeltown Loch, Argyll, 18th October. **Black-browed Albatross** California Cliffs, Norfolk, 31st December. **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* Dawlish Warren, Devon, 18th May, 8th and 18th-19th July, Torbay 19th July; Porthmadog, Caernarfonshire, 23rd-26th July and other reports in E Britain. **Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti albiventris* Filsham, East Sussex, 19th October.

2001 Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 9th October. **Brown Skua** *Catharacta lonnbergi* St Agnes, Scilly, 7th October.

2000 Canvasback Loch of Rummie, Sanday, Orkney, 21st-23rd June. **Short-toed Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* Dungeness, Kent, 20th May.

1999 Dunlin *Calidris alpina sakhalina* North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 21st May.

1998 'Wilson's Snipe' *Gallinago g.delicata*, St Mary's, Scilly, 9th October to 1999.

Selected records of **Great White Egret** (review: subspecies); all sand plover *Charadrius* records (review: species, subspecies); a small number of pre-2000 '**Caspian Gulls**'; a small number of '**American' Herring Gulls**'; all records and recent reports of '**Eastern' Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides*, etc. (review); all records and recent reports of '**Ehrenberg's' Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus p.samamisticus* (review); all records of **Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis* (review: subspecies); all reports of '**Desert' Lesser Whitethroats** *Sylvia curruca minula*, etc.; all reports of '**Eastern' Common Whitethroats** *Sylvia communis icterops*, etc.; all records of **Isabelline Shrike** (review: subspecies); a small number of '**African Chaffinches**'.



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