

THE POPULATION STATUS OF BIRDS IN THE UK

Birds of conservation concern: 2002–2007

THE POPULATION STATUS OF THE UK'S BIRDS

The leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations in the UK have reviewed the population status of the birds that are regularly found here.

A total of 247 species has been assessed, and each has been placed onto one of three lists – red, amber or green. Forty species are red-listed, 121 are amber-listed and 86 are green-listed.

¹This review covers the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.









The lists update earlier assessments, *Birds of conservation concern* and *Birds of conservation importance*, which were published in 1996. The population status of birds is reviewed every five years to keep track of changes in abundance and range. The new lists are based on the most up-to-date information available, principally:

- information on the global and European conservation status of UK bird species from BirdLife International's *Threatened Birds of the World* and *Birds in Europe*
- information on trends in breeding populations and range sizes from the BTO²/JNCC³ Common Birds Census and Waterways Bird Survey; the BTO/JNCC/RSPB⁴ Breeding Bird Survey; the JNCC/RSPB/SOTEAG⁵ seabird monitoring programme and Seabird 2000; the Rare Breeding Birds Panel; single-species surveys, mostly undertaken as part of the SCARABBS⁶ agreement; and the BTO/SOC³/IWC⁶ New Atlas of Breeding Birds
- information on population trends in non-breeding waterbirds from the WWT⁹/BTO/JNCC/RSPB Wetland Bird Survey and WWT/JNCC goose counts
- information on species' distributions from BirdLife's Important Bird Areas in Europe and JNCC's The UK SPA Network
- information on population sizes in the UK and Europe from the Avian Population Estimates Panel and BirdLife/EBCC's¹⁰ European Bird Populations: Estimates and Trends.



THE CRITERIA

Seven quantitative criteria were used to assess the population status of each species and place it onto the red, amber or green list. These criteria are listed below. The review excluded species that are not native to the UK¹ and those that occur irregularly as vagrants or scarce migrants.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS

Species assessed as Globally Threatened using IUCN¹¹ criteria were placed on the red list.

RECENT DECLINE

Species whose breeding or non-breeding population declined, or range contracted, rapidly (by more than 50%) or moderately (by between 25 and 49%) over the last 25 years were placed on the red and amber lists respectively.

• HISTORICAL DECLINE

Species whose populations declined severely between 1800 and 1995 were placed on the red list, except for those that have recovered substantially (more than doubled) in the last 25 years, which were amber-listed¹². In earlier assessments, all species showing a serious historical decline were red-listed, but in this assessment the success of recent conservation action has been recognised by moving recovering species to the amber list.

• EUROPEAN CONSERVATION STATUS

Species whose population status is unfavourable in Europe (but which are not Globally Threatened) were placed on the amber list.

• RARE BREEDERS

Species with a mean population size of 1–300 pairs breeding annually over the last five years were placed on the amber list. If a full census was carried out in a single year, the result of this was used instead of a five-year mean.

LOCALISED SPECIES

Species for which 50% or more of the breeding or non-breeding population occurs at 10 or fewer sites were placed on the amber list. This criterion was used because a species whose population is confined to a few sites faces a greater threat from chance events than one whose population is widespread. The sites considered were either Important Bird Areas (identified by BirdLife International) or Special Protection Areas (designated under the European Union's Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds).

• INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Species with 20% or more of their European population breeding in the UK were placed on the amber list, as were non-breeding wildfowl with 20% or more of their northwest European population occurring in the UK and non-breeding waders with 20% or more of their East Atlantic Flyway population occurring in the UK. This criterion is different from the others as it is a measure of the UK's responsibility for each species rather than the extent to which species are threatened.

- Red list species are those that are Globally Threatened according to IUCN criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery.
- Amber list species are those with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe; those whose population or range has declined moderately in recent years; those whose population has declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery; rare breeders; and those with internationally important or localised populations.
- Species that fulfil none of the criteria are green-listed.



CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS

The new listings describe the population status of each species and will, when combined with additional information, help to guide conservation action between 2002 and 2007. Importantly, both non-governmental and governmental organisations have endorsed the new lists. The JNCC will use this objective review as one element of its ongoing Species Status Assessment Programme, which will in turn inform the revision of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.





FARMLAND BIRDS

The 1996 assessments helped to focus attention on a suite of widespread but rapidly declining birds of farmed land, such as the turtle dove, the skylark and the corn bunting. It is generally accepted that these species have declined because of agricultural intensification, and in the last few years a range of schemes have been introduced to help them. All of the birds of farmed land that were on the red list in the earlier assessments are still there. In addition, another farmland bird, the yellowhammer, has joined them. Many red list species remain relatively common in the countryside, despite substantial

WOODLAND AND URBAN BIRDS

Birds from two new groups appear on the red list: lowland woodland birds and urban birds. The red-listed woodland birds are the lesser spotted woodpecker, the marsh tit and the willow tit, which have declined by 73%, 50% and 80% respectively over the last 25 years. A number of other woodland species have entered the amber list. The urban species new to the red list are, remarkably, the house sparrow and the starling, both of which were formerly ubiquitous but have declined by more than 60%. In contrast to the situation with farmland birds, we do not know why these woodland and urban species have declined, and urgently need to find out. As with farmland birds, some of these species remain quite common despite

• NORTHERN / UPLAND BIRDS

Several species characteristic of Scotland, Wales or northern England, such as the capercaillie and the black grouse, remain on the red list because of continuing steep declines. Others, such as the corncrake and the white-tailed eagle, are still red-listed although their numbers are increasing due to successful conservation action. One upland bird, the ring ouzel, is new to the red list.

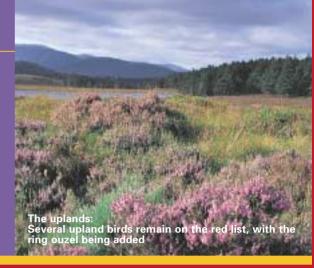
SUCCESSES

Although the overall number of species on the red list has increased since the last assessment (from 36 to 40), five species have moved from red to amber. The populations of the red kite, marsh harrier, osprey, merlin and Dartford warbler have more than doubled in the last 25 years, even though they had declined substantially previously. Much of the recent recovery in these species is due to the success of targeted conservation action.

While it is encouraging to see the success of conservation actions for some of our rare species, reversing the declines of widespread and commor species remains a key challenge in bird conservation today.

FOOTNOTES

- This review covers the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.
- British Trust for Ornithology Joint Nature Conservation Committee
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group
- Statutory Conservation Agencies and RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme
- Scottish Ornithologists' Club
- Irish Wildbird Conservancy (now BirdWatch Ireland)
 The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
- 10 European Bird Census Council
- The World Conservation Union
- 12 However, globally threatened species and those with populations of fewer than 100 breeding pairs in the UK remain red-listed.



FURTHER READING

A more complete explanation of the new listings is given in:

· Gregory RD, Wilkinson NI, Noble DG, Robinson JA, Brown AF, Hughes J, Procter DA, Gibbons DW and Galbraith CA (2002) The population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man: an analysis of conservation concern 2002-2007. British Birds 95: 410-450.

The following sources were invaluable in the production of these lists.

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- · Noble DG, Raven MJ and Baillie SR (2001) The Breeding Bird Survey 2000. BTO Research Report No 265. BTO. Thetford.
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- Stroud DA, Chambers D, Cook S, Buxton N, Fraser B, Clement P, Lewis P, McLean I, Baker H and Whitehead SH (2001). The UK SPA Network – Its Scope and Content. JNCC, Peterborough.
- Tucker GM and Heath MF (1994) Birds in Europe: Their Conservation Status. BirdLife International, Cambridge.

RED LIST SPECIES - high conservation concern

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SPECIES

Hen harrier Black grouse Capercaillie

Common scoter

Grey partridge¹

Stone-curlew

Roseate tern

Turtle dove1

Nightjar

Wryneck

Woodlark

Ring ouzel

Song thrush¹

Savi's warbler

Marsh warbler

Marsh tit¹ Willow tit¹

Starling¹

Linnet¹

Bullfinch¹

Cirl bunting Reed bunting

Corn bunting

Twite

Aquatic warbler

Spotted flycatcher¹

Red-backed shrike

House sparrow¹
Tree sparrow¹

Scottish crossbill

Yellowhammer¹

Skylark¹

Black-tailed godwit

Red-necked phalarope

Lesser spotted woodpeck

Grasshopper warbler¹

White-tailed eagle

Bittern

Quail Corncrake

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RED LIST CRITERIA

- IUCN Globally Threatened
- **HD** Historical population decline in UK during 1800–1995
- BDp Rapid (≥50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years
- BDr Rapid (≥50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last
 25 years

ADDITIONAL AMBER-LISTING CRITERIA

- BDMp Moderate (25–49%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years
- BDMr Moderate (25–49%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years
- SPEC Species with unfavourable
 2 or 3 conservation status in Europe
 (SPEC = Species of European Conservation Concern)
- BR Five-year mean of 1–300 breeding pairs in UK
- BL ≥50% of UK breeding population in 10 or fewer sites, but not rare breeders (BR)
- WL ≥50% of UK non-breeding population in 10 or fewer sites
- BI ≥20% of European breeding population in UK
- WI ≥20% of NW European (wildfowl), East Atlantic Flyway (waders) or European (others) non-breeding populations in UK

¹UK population >10,000 pairs

AMBER LIST SPECIES – medium conservation concern

AMBER LIST CRITERIA

• **HDrec** Historical population decline during

1800–1995, but recovering; population size has more than doubled over last 25

years

• BDMp Moderate (25–49%) decline in UK

breeding population over last 25 years

• BDMr Moderate (25–49%) contraction of UK

breeding range over last 25 years

• WDMp Moderate (25–49%) decline in UK

non-breeding population over last

25 years

• SPEC 2 or 3 Species with unfavourable conservation

status in Europe (SPEC = Species of European Conservation Concern)



SPECIES	4	"	4		, ₍₂)	1	щ	7	W	1
Red-throated diver										
Black-throated diver										
Great northern diver										*
Red-necked grebe										
Slavonian grebe										
Black-necked grebe						*				
Fulmar							*			
Manx shearwater										
Storm petrel										
Leach's petrel										
Gannet										
Cormorant										*
Shag										
Little egret										
Spoonbill										
Mute swan									*	
Bewick's swan										*
Whooper swan										*
Bean goose								*		
Pink-footed goose										*
White-fronted goose				Е				*		G
Greylag goose										*
Barnacle goose										*
Brent goose								*		*
Shelduck										*
Wigeon										*
Gadwall										*
Teal										*
Pintail										*
Garganey										



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Shoveler								*
Pochard								*
Scaup					*		*	
Eider							*	
Long-tailed duck							*	
Velvet scoter							*	
Goldeneye								
Honey buzzard					*			
Red kite								
Marsh harrier								
Montagu's harrier					*			
Golden eagle				*				
Osprey					*			
Kestrel		*						
Merlin	*							
Peregrine								
Red grouse		*						
Water rail								
Spotted crake					*			
Crane				*	*			
Oystercatcher							*	*
Avocet						*	*	
Ringed plover			*					*
Dotterel								
Grey plover								*
Lapwing								*
Knot							*	*
Temminck's stint					*			
Purple sandpiper					*			*
Dunlin			*	*		*	*	*

• BR	Five-year mean of 1–300 breeding pairs in UK
• BL	≥50% of UK breeding population in 10 or fewer sites, but not rare breeders (BR)
• WL	≥50% of UK non-breeding population in 10 or fewer sites
• BI	≥20% of European breeding population

(others) non-breeding populations in UK

E = European white-fronted goose subspecies only G = Greenland white-fronted goose subspecies only ²decline >50% but trend provisional or possibly unrepresentative of the UK

SPECIES	Ī	à	à	Š	Ů,	20	B	Š	B	Š
Sand martin										
Swallow										
House martin		*								
Tree pipit		* 2								
Meadow pipit										
Yellow wagtail		*								
Grey wagtail										
Dunnock										
Nightingale										
Bluethroat										
Black redstart						*				
Redstart										
Stonechat										
Fieldfare										
Redwing										
Mistle thrush										
Dartford warbler										
Wood warbler										
Willow warbler										
Goldcrest		* 2								
Firecrest										
Bearded tit										
Golden oriole						*				
Chough										
Serin										
Lesser redpoll										
Parrot crossbill						*				
Common rosefinch						*				
Hawfinch			*							
Snow bunting						*				

SPECIES	I	Q	Œ	Š	62	20	20	2	Ø	Š
Ruff						*		×		
Snipe		* 2								
Woodcock										
Bar-tailed godwit					*			*		*
Whimbrel								*		
Curlew										
Spotted redshank										
Redshank										
Green sandpiper										
Wood sandpiper										
Turnstone										
Great skua										
Mediterranean gull										
Black-headed gull										
Common gull										
Lesser black-backed gull										
Herring gull										
Kittiwake										
Sandwich tern										
Arctic tern										
Little tern										
Guillemot										
Razorbill										
Black guillemot										
Puffin										
Stock dove										
Cuckoo										
Barn owl										
Short-eared owl										
Kingfisher										
Green woodpecker										

BirdLife International

Wellbrook Court Girton Road Cambridge CB3 0NA Tel: 01223 277318 www.birdlife.net





The Hawk and Owl Trust

Zoological Society of London Regent's Park London NW1 4RY Tel: 01582 832182 www.hawkandowl.org

British Ornithologists' Union

The Natural History Museum Tring Hertfordshire HP23 6AP Tel: 01442 890080 www.bou.org.uk



SELVEN SE

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Monkstone House City Road Peterborough PE1 1JY Tel: 01733 562626 www.jncc.gov.uk

British Trust for Ornithology

Thetford Norfolk IP24 2PU Tel: 01842 750050

www.bto.org





The National Trust

36 Queen Anne's Gate London SW1H 9AS Tel: 0870 609 5380 www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Countryside Council for Wales

Plas Penrhos Ffordd Penrhos Bangor Gwynedd LL57 2LQ Tel: 01248 385500 www.ccw.gov.uk



CDD

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

The Lodge Sandy Bedfordshire SG19 2DL Tel: 01767 680551 www.rspb.org.uk



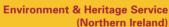
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SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

Scottish Natural Heritage

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The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

Slimbridge Gloucestershire GL2 7BT Tel: 01453 891900 www.wwt.org.uk



The Wildlife Trusts

The Kiln Waterside Mather Road Newark

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The Game Conservancy Trust

Fordingbridge Hampshire SP6 1EF Tel: 01425 652381 www.gct.org.uk



Cover photo: Yellowhammer by M Hamblin - new to the red list

Red kite by D Boucny, lowland woodland by E Janes, lesser spotted woodpecker by R Wilmshurst, capercaillie and ringed plover by M Hamblin, starling by G Downey, corncrake, roseate tern and skylark by C Gomersall, lowland farmland by M Walker, uplands by A Hay (all RSPB Images)