

# The state of the UK's birds 2016



One of the UK's most-loved birds, the puffin is now considered threatened with global extinction.



Mark Sisson (rspb-images.com)

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Throughout this report species names are colour-coded according to their updated conservation status, as identified by *Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (BoCC4)*, published in 2015 (see pages 24–29).

All bird species are shown in **bold**. There are now 67 species identified as being of the greatest conservation concern that are **Red**-listed, 96 species of moderate concern that are **Amber**-listed and 81 species of least concern that are **Green**-listed.

This report should be referenced as: Hayhow DB, Bond AL, Douse A, Eaton MA, Frost T, Grice PV, Hall C, Harris SJ, Havery S, Hearn RD, Noble DG, Opiel S, Williams J, Win I and Wotton S (2017) *The state of the UK's birds 2016*. The RSPB, BTO, WWT, DAERA, JNCC, NE, NRW and SNH, Sandy, Bedfordshire.



Wren by Mark Sisson photography shutterstock.com



Wrynecks once bred in most counties in Britain, but are now considered a “former breeder” by the *Birds of Conservation 4* assessment.

## Headlines

- The latest *Birds of Conservation Concern* assessment (*BoCC4*) used the latest monitoring data to assign species to **Red**, **Amber** and **Green** lists of conservation concern.
- The *BoCC4* Red list grew substantially, with a net increase of 15, from 52 species in 2009 to 67 in 2015. More than a quarter of the species assessed are now Red-listed.
- The *BoCC4* Green list also increased, as 22 species moved from Amber to Green. While some moved due to minor changes in the assessment process, 13 moved to Green due to genuine improvements in status.
- Targeted conservation action can and does improve the status of threatened species. **Bitterns** and **nightjars** are examples of this, moving from the Red to the Amber list in *BoCC4*. **Woodlarks** and **bearded tits** moved to the Green list as they are no longer declining in Europe.
- Three species, **Temminck’s stints**, **wrynecks** and **serins**, have been lost as breeding species in the UK and were added to the list of “former breeders” in *BoCC4*.
- Concern for the population status of **curlews** across Europe, highlighted by the species’ addition to the Red list, has prompted the development of an International Species Action Plan.
- Good news from recent surveys: the British **golden eagle** population has increased by 15% since 2003, and **cirl buntings** exceeded the 1,000-pair target after 25 years of dedicated research and recovery action by conservation partnerships.
- In the UK Overseas Territories, **St Helena plovers** and **Montserrat orioles** were both down-listed from Critically Endangered to Vulnerable on the Global Red List as a result of positive population trends.

# Introduction

*The state of the UK's birds (SUKB) report provides a one-stop shop for all the results from annual, periodic and one-off surveys and monitoring studies of birds.*

Since 1999, these reports have provided an annual overview of the status of bird populations in the UK and its Overseas Territories. We present trends for as many of the UK's regularly occurring species as possible.

This year's *SUKB* reports on the latest assessment of the status

of the UK's breeding and non-breeding bird species. These are listed in *Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (BoCC4)*, published in December 2015. Species were assessed against a set of objective criteria in order to be placed on the **Green**, **Amber** or **Red** lists – indicating increasing levels of conservation concern.

More than a quarter of the UK's bird species are now on the Red list, and in this report we highlight some of the species that have been reclassified since the last review in 2009, as well as those groups of species for which there are particular concerns.

## A special thank you to volunteers

Bird monitoring in the UK is led by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the UK's statutory nature conservation bodies, but it relies on the efforts of many thousands of volunteers. Without their time and dedication, the evidence base on which bird conservation in the UK depends would simply not exist.

The monitoring programmes and surveys that feature in *SUKB* provide the vital data required to carry out status assessments like *BoCC4*.

Many thousands of people take part in bird monitoring each year in the UK. While the amount of time each person spends varies – from

the commitment of carrying out monthly counts, to the casual records submitted by birdwatchers to BirdTrack – every contribution is valuable. If you are one of these volunteers, thank you. If not, why not consider getting involved in one of the wide variety of monitoring opportunities outlined on pages 44–45 of this report?

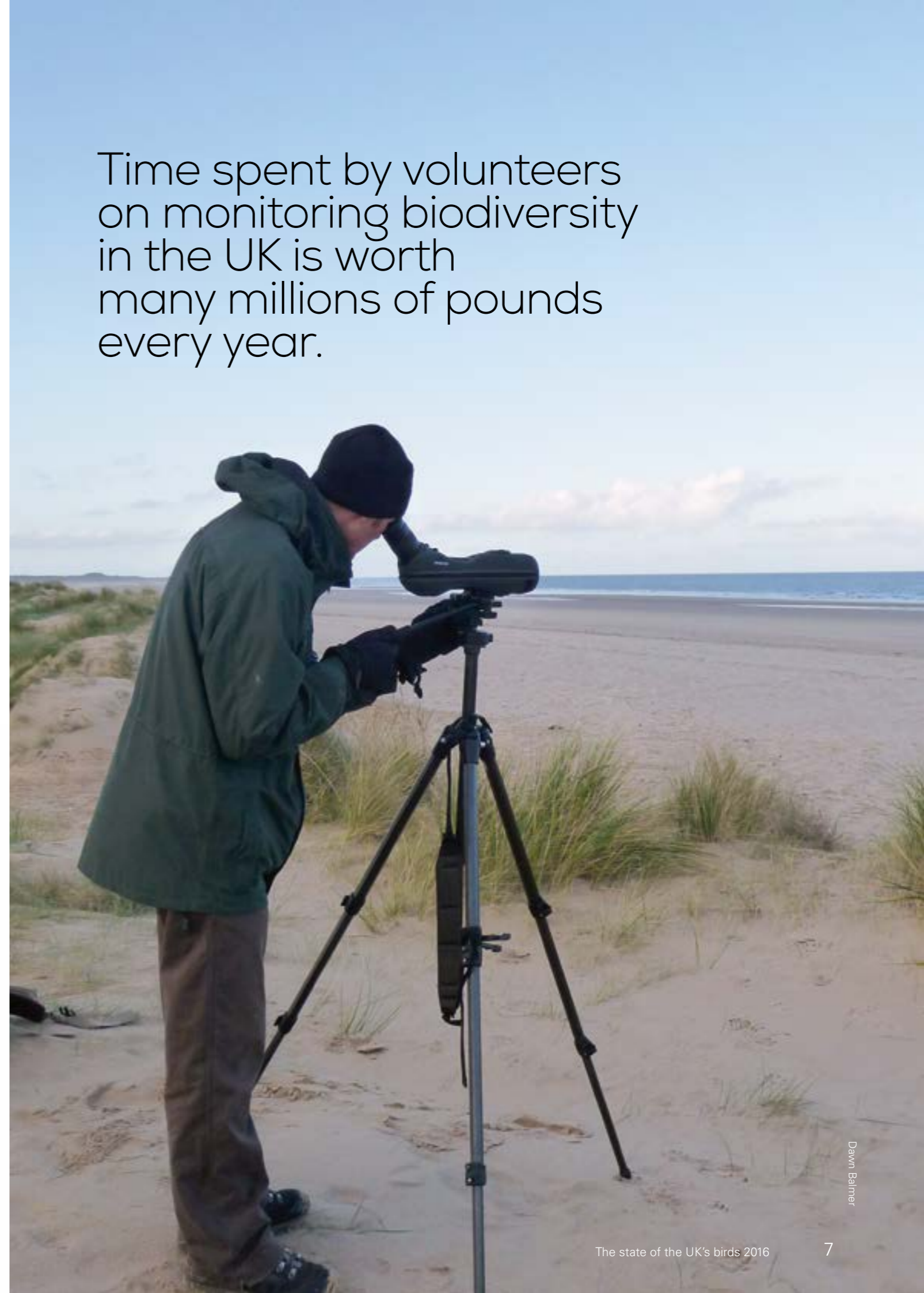
## The *SUKB* partnership

*SUKB 2016* is produced by a coalition of three NGOs: the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), together with the UK's statutory nature conservation bodies:

the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland (DAERA), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

Conservation relies on the efforts of thousands of dedicated volunteers.

Time spent by volunteers on monitoring biodiversity in the UK is worth many millions of pounds every year.



# Wild bird indicators: farmland, woodland and wetland

## UK wild bird indicator

The UK wild bird indicators are high-level measures of the state of birds. In conjunction with indicators for other well-monitored groups, such as butterflies and bats, they are used as a proxy for the overall state of biodiversity. They are used to track progress towards targets for conserving the natural environment and sustainable development goals.

The presentation of the indicators has changed over the years, to improve communication of their variability and assist with interpretation of the trends. The bar chart provided alongside each habitat chart (see opposite) shows the percentage of species within that indicator that have increased, decreased or shown no change.

The indicators are shown by habitat type. They present the average population trends for bird species associated with farmland, woodland and wetlands, and for seabirds (page 30) and wintering waterbirds (page 35). While they communicate broad trends, and are a good tool for summarising these trends, it is important to note that there is considerable variation in the individual species' trends that go into the indicator.

To see how individual species are faring, pages 11 and 13 show trends in the common and widespread breeding birds included in the farmland, woodland and wetland indicators.

- The farmland indicator remains at less than half its 1970 starting value, with no new farmland birds added to the *BoCC* Red list. Of the 19 species in the indicator, 10 were Red-listed already (particularly those restricted to or highly dependent on farmland, such as **grey partridges**, **turtle doves**, **tree sparrows** and **corn buntings**).

By contrast, in more recent years **whitethroats** have continued their recovery and as a result have moved from the Amber list to the Green list in *BoCC4*.

- The woodland bird indicator is 20% lower than its 1970 level. Within the indicator, **green woodpeckers** moved from the Amber list to the Green list in *BoCC4*, reflecting their improved status in Europe.
- Negative trends in a number of newly Red-listed species, including **curlews** and **grey wagtails**, contribute to the continuing decline of the wetland indicator. Within the overall decline, birds of slow flowing and standing water have shown the most positive trends – including **little grebes**, which moved from the Amber list to the Green list in *BoCC4*.



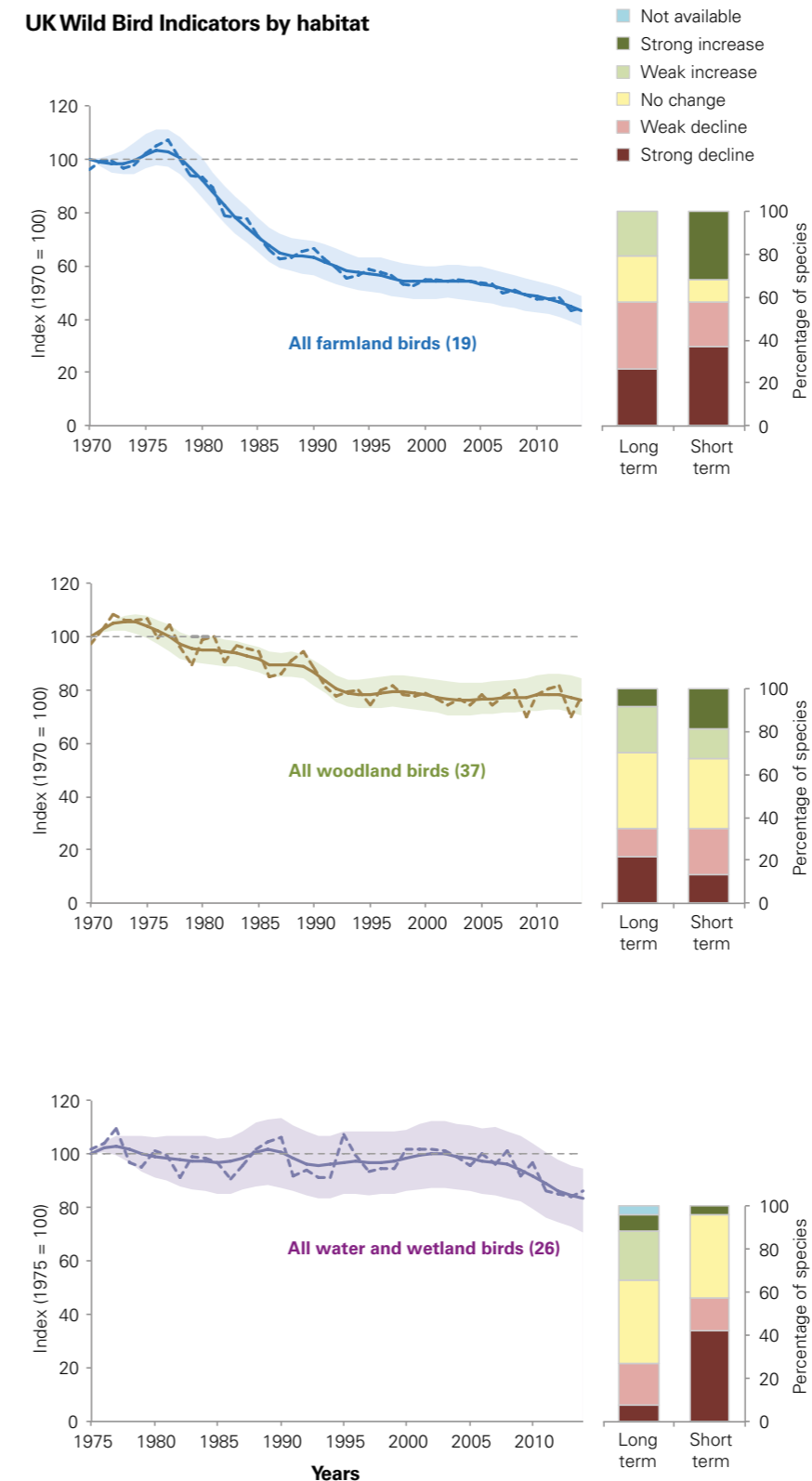
Of the 19 species included in the farmland bird indicator, 10 – including tree sparrows – are Red-listed.

Turtle doves are highly dependent on farmland for foraging when breeding in the UK.



David Tipling (rspb-images.com)

### UK Wild Bird Indicators by habitat



The UK wild bird indicators were not updated in 2016, so the data here are the same as in *SUKB 2015*.

The figure in brackets shows the number of species.

The line graph shows the unsmoothed trend (dashed line) and smoothed trend (solid line) with its 95% confidence interval (shaded).

The bar chart shows the percentage of species within the indicator that have increased, decreased, or shown no change (based on set thresholds of change).

Whether an individual species is increasing or decreasing has been decided by its rate of annual change over the time period (long or short) of assessment. If the rate of annual change would lead to a population increase or decrease of between 25% and 49% over 25 years, the species is said to have shown a "weak increase" or a "weak decline" respectively. If the rate of annual change would lead to a population increase or decrease of 50% or more over 25 years, the species is said to have shown a "strong increase" or a "strong decline" respectively.

These thresholds are the same as used to define severe and moderate levels of decline in the *BoCC* status assessment for birds in the UK.

For details of species' trends in each indicator, download the datasheet: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4235>

Source: British Trust for Ornithology, Defra, Joint Nature Conservation Committee and The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

# Common and widespread breeding birds

Monitoring the population changes of common and widespread breeding bird species is important for three main reasons: so that we can track changes in individual species; to provide an “early warning system” of major changes within groups of species, which may provide clues about the health of particular habitats or ecosystems; and to assess the effectiveness of environmental policies and interventions.

Data from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), the core scheme for monitoring widespread breeding birds for over 20 years, provide this information in the UK.

The BBS is co-ordinated by the BTO, in partnership with the JNCC and the RSPB, and is only possible with the help of more than 2,700 dedicated volunteers who collect the all-important data. In 2015, 3,731 BBS squares were surveyed, and 215 bird species were recorded in total.

The information presented here also incorporates data from other BTO surveys of widespread species such as the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS) and the Heronries Census. Data from the BBS and WBBS predecessor surveys, the Common Birds Census (CBC) and Waterways Bird Survey

(WBS) respectively, are also used, in order to calculate long-term trends.

When combined, the data from these surveys provide the long-term (1970–2014) and shorter-term (1995–2014) trends shown in the tables on pages 11 and 13. The fourth column in these tables is particularly topical. It illustrates where each species sits on the *BoCC4* assessment: the Green, Amber or Red list, and how these have changed since the previous assessment. For full details about how the assessment was conducted, see pages 24–29.



Grey wagtails moved onto the Red list in *BoCC4*.

Species	Long-term trend % (1970–2014)	BBS trend % (1995–2014)	BoCC4
Mute swan	198	29	▲
Greylag goose	na	211	
Canada goose	na	84	
Shelduck <sup>1</sup>	128	-6	
Gadwall	na	105	
Mallard	95	15	
Tufted duck <sup>2</sup>	na	38	▼
Red-legged partridge	-22	13	
Red grouse	na	19	
Grey partridge	-92	-58	
Pheasant <sup>1</sup>	74	32	
Grey heron <sup>2</sup>	-6	-18	
Little grebe <sup>2</sup>	na	33	▼
Great crested grebe	na	13	
Red kite	na	1026	▼
Sparrowhawk <sup>3</sup>	74	-11	
Buzzard <sup>1</sup>	454	80	
Moorhen	-27	-12	
Coot	59	19	
Oystercatcher	na	-19	
Golden plover	na	-16	▼
Lapwing	-63	-43	
Curlew <sup>1</sup>	-64	-48	▲
Common sandpiper <sup>2</sup>	-47	-35	
Redshank	na	-39	
Snipe	na	16	
Feral pigeon	na	-18	
Stock dove <sup>1</sup>	116	22	
Woodpigeon	124	36	
Collared dove <sup>3</sup>	327	8	
Turtle dove	-97	-93	
Cuckoo <sup>1</sup>	-56	-43	
Barn owl	na	227	▼
Little owl	-65	-58	
Tawny owl	-32	-21	▲
Swift	na	-47	
Kingfisher <sup>2</sup>	-15	-2	
Green woodpecker	101	31	▼
Great spotted woodpecker <sup>1</sup>	360	136	
Lesser spotted woodpecker	-83	na	
Kestrel <sup>1</sup>	-48	-36	
Hobby	na	-10	
Peregrine	na	-13	
Ring-necked parakeet	na	1314	
Magpie	100	0	
Jay	14	25	
Jackdaw	152	57	
Rook	na	-20	
Carrion crow <sup>1</sup>	99	19	
Hooded crow	na	19	
Raven	na	45	
Goldcrest <sup>1</sup>	-21	3	
Blue tit	24	3	

For most species, long-term trends and short-term trends are based on smoothed estimates of change in the UK between 1970 and 2014, and 1995 and 2014 respectively. Although all data, including the most recent from 2015, are included in analyses, we report measures of change to the penultimate year (2014), to avoid unreliable effects due to smoothing at the endpoints of time series. Exceptions to these time periods are identified in the table and explained below:

<sup>1</sup> For most species, the long-term trends are based on the smoothed estimates of change between 1970 and 2014 in a combined CBC–BBS analysis. However, for species with evidence of marked differences in the populations monitored by the BBS and its predecessor the CBC, we use the CBC results to 1994 anchored to the BBS from 1994 to 2015. Hence, long-term trends for these species may not be representative of the UK population prior to 1994, due to the more limited geographical and habitat coverage of the CBC (mainly farmland and woodland sites in England).

<sup>2</sup> For five riverine species (**grey wagtails**, **sand martins**, **dippers**, **kingfishers** and **common sandpipers**), a smoothed trend for both time periods is calculated by combining the WBS and WBBS data. For **grey herons**, the trend is based on the Heronries Census (page 44).

<sup>3</sup> Long-term trends cover shorter time periods for three species due to the later availability of reliable data, as follows: 1972–2014 for **collared doves**, 1975–2014 for **sparrowhawks** and 1977–2014 for **house sparrows**.

More details on the BBS, including *The Breeding Bird Survey 2015* report, can be found at [bto.org/bbs](http://bto.org/bbs)

na = trends not available

▲ ▼ Indicates where a species has moved up or down between the Red, Amber and Green lists since *BoCC3*. For example, curlews have moved up from the Amber list in *BoCC3* to the Red list in *BoCC4*, showing that they are now considered more threatened.



Curlews could be considered one of the most pressing bird conservation priorities in the UK.

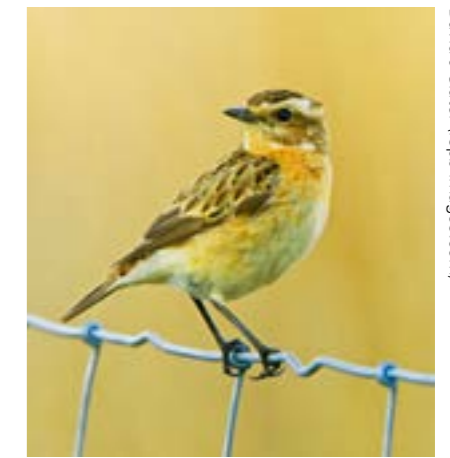
Common and widespread breeding birds

Species	Long-term trend % (1970–2014)	BBS trend % (1995–2014)	BoCC4
Great tit	86	40	Green
Coal tit	20	3	Green
Willow tit	-93	-77	Red
Marsh tit	-72	-32	Red
Skylark	-60	-24	Red
Sand martin <sup>2</sup>	2	-34	Green with downward arrow
Swallow	15	26	Green with downward arrow
House martin	-47	-10	Yellow
Long-tailed tit	90	12	Green
Wood warbler	na	-56	Red
Chiffchaff	92	96	Green
Willow warbler	-42	-8	Yellow
Blackcap	298	151	Green
Garden warbler	-5	-19	Green
Lesser whitethroat	19	2	Green
Whitethroat	9	33	Green with downward arrow
Grasshopper warbler	na	-18	Red
Sedge warbler	-25	-6	Green
Reed warbler	105	13	Green
Nuthatch	259	94	Green
Treecreeper	-11	7	Green
Wren	52	20	Green
Starling	-80	-49	Red
Dipper <sup>2</sup>	-28	-13	Yellow with upward arrow
Blackbird	-15	22	Green
Song thrush	-53	15	Red
Mistle thrush	-57	-28	Red with upward arrow
Spotted flycatcher	-86	-44	Red
Robin	45	17	Green
Nightingale	na	-40	Red with upward arrow
Pied flycatcher	na	-48	Red with upward arrow
Redstart	75	47	Yellow
Whinchat	na	-53	Red with upward arrow
Stonechat	na	29	Green
Wheatear	na	-11	Green with downward arrow
Dunnock	-30	22	Yellow
House sparrow <sup>3</sup>	-66	-5	Red
Tree sparrow	-90	125	Red
Yellow wagtail	-67	-42	Red
Grey wagtail <sup>2</sup>	-46	-8	Red with upward arrow
Pied wagtail	36	-2	Green
Tree pipit	-67	16	Red
Meadow pipit	-35	-9	Yellow
Chaffinch	27	4	Green
Bullfinch	-40	9	Yellow
Greenfinch	-39	-39	Green
Linnet	-57	-25	Red
Lesser redpoll	-86	38	Red
Common crossbill	na	16	Green
Goldfinch	154	117	Green
Siskin	na	59	Green
Yellowhammer	-55	-14	Red
Reed bunting	-32	29	Yellow
Corn bunting	-90	-34	Red



Whitethroat

John Bridges (rspb-images.com)



Whinchat

David J Slater (rspb-images.com)



Dipper

Tom Marshall (rspb-images.com)

## Downward trends for three upland breeding birds

Of the five upland species moved onto the Red list in *BoCC4*, three are monitored by the BBS or WBBS: **curlews**, **whinchats** and **grey wagtails**.

The UK supports up to 27% of the global **curlew** population, and the long-term trend shows a 64% decline from 1970 to 2014. This, combined with the bird's global status of Near Threatened, suggest that the **curlew** could be considered one of the most

pressing bird conservation priorities in the UK.

The decline of the **whinchat**, another largely upland species, has been monitored by the BBS; the data shows a 53% decline during the last two decades. As an Afro-Palearctic migrant, this species is a member of two groups for which there is particular concern. This means that threats and pressures during migration and on the wintering

grounds need to be considered alongside the impact of changes in upland habitats in the UK.

More unexpected perhaps, is that **grey wagtails** have moved from the Amber list to Red list. Alongside declines in **common sandpipers** and **dippers**, this raises wider concerns about species associated with upland streams and rivers.

## Woodland specialists move into the Red

Both **nightingales** and  **pied flycatchers** have declined since monitoring began in 1994, leading to their appearance on the Red list. These two woodland specialists bring the total number of woodland birds on the Red list to 16.

These 16 species are evenly split between long-distance migrants and resident birds. This reinforces existing concerns about the birds associated with UK woodlands, which have been subject to reduced management in recent decades, and increasing pressure from deer browsing in many

regions. By contrast, a number of resident woodland species with broader habitat requirements that are typically found in gardens (such as **robins**, **great spotted woodpeckers**, and **blue tits**) as well as shorter-distance migrants (such as **blackcaps**) are faring well.



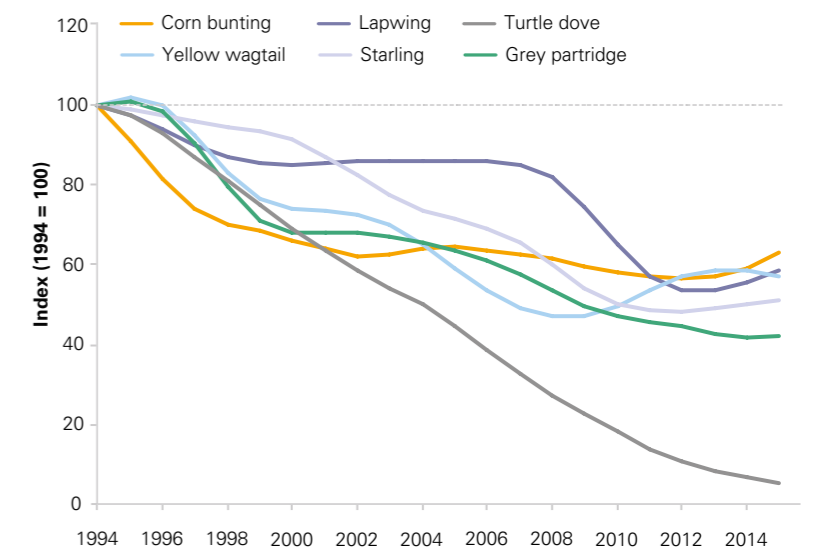
**Pied flycatchers** have declined by 48% and now appear on the Red list.

## Signs of recovery

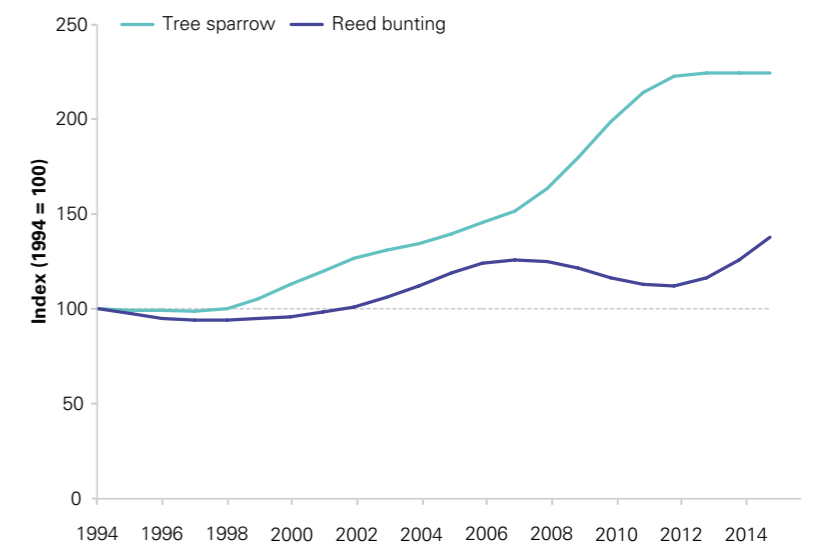
The BBS is well designed to monitor the UK's farmland birds and, together with the CBC from the late 1960s, has documented the decline of many farmland species over the years. Trends have varied since 1994 (smoothed trends shown on the right), but overall show the continued declines of nine farmland birds on the Red list (such as **turtle doves**, **starlings** and **grey partridges**).

However, there are signs of recovery for two species over the period of BBS monitoring: **reed buntings** and **tree sparrows**. It is important to view the significant increase since 1994 for **tree sparrows** in the context of massive declines between the late 1970s and 1990s. For every **tree sparrow** today there were perhaps around 20 in the 1970s, and therefore any recovery still has a very long way to go.

Continued declines for Red-listed farmland birds



Improving trends for two Red and Amber-listed species



## The Green list grows

**Red kites**, **little grebes**, **whitethroats** and **wheatears** now join species such as **blue tits**, **blackbirds** and **robins** on the Green list of least concern. The **red kite** has shown a particularly dramatic recovery, increasing by 1,026% since 1994.

Reintroductions and high breeding success have led to the dramatic recovery of red kites in the UK.







The status of bearded tits is now less precarious: they've moved from the Amber to the Green list.

## Scarce and rare breeding birds

The BBS provides reliable population trends for more than 100 of our most common and widespread breeding birds (pages 11–13). Other approaches are needed for those species which, either through habits, rarity or restricted ranges, occur on BBS transects too infrequently to enable monitoring. The data on these species are collated mostly by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), based largely on the records collected by a myriad of volunteer recording networks. In some cases, the RBBP simply reports the efforts of focused annual monitoring on species of high conservation interest, such as **corncrakes**. However, in many cases it provides a unique synthesis by compiling data from many sources.

The quality of monitoring by the RBBP's efforts varies widely between species. For some species it is complete, or virtually so. For other species, the data covers only a small proportion of the population; may vary in quality between years; or is biased in other ways. This is particularly true for some of the scarce species covered by the RBBP, and those which have distributions away from reserves, popular birdwatching locations and well-populated areas.

For such species, bespoke surveys, repeated at regular intervals, such as those conducted under the Statutory Conservation Agency and RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS), provide the higher

quality data required to inform conservation decision-making.

Of the 91 species reported on in the most recent RBBP report, covering 2014, 71 were assessed by *BoCC4*, and we give their updated statuses in the table on page 19. Eight species showed an improvement in status (including **woodlarks**, **bearded tits** and **choughs**, which joined the Green list), with conservation action helping the populations of species such as **bitterns** recover. Five species, **pochards**, **Slavonian grebes**, **merlins**, **dotterels** and **black redstarts** moved onto the Red list. The remaining 20 of the 91, not assessed by *BoCC4*, are those which are not considered to be a regular component of the UK's birdlife. This may be because they breed only occasionally (eg. **European bee-eaters**), or indeed they have never bred, but from time-to-time visiting individuals exhibit breeding behaviour (eg. **great reed warblers**). The RBBP logs such occurrences, as it may be that they represent a precursor to future colonisation, such as the first **little egrets** that displayed to each other in the early 1990s, before their first breeding in 1996 and subsequent population explosion.

As well as logging the arrival of new species as breeding birds in the UK, the RBBP has the less enviable task of tracking the declines of other species. In rare cases, such declines can lead to the disappearance of species. The most recent *Birds of*

*Conservation Concern* assessment added three species to the list of those now considered as "former breeders": once regular breeding species that have not been recorded breeding in the five most recent years for which data were available.

Two of these, **Temminck's stints** and **serins**, have always been extremely rare breeders in the UK.

**Temminck's stints** are breeding birds of northern Europe and Asia, but they established a small population in northern Scotland in the late 1960s. There have never been more than a handful of pairs, and the population dwindled from the 1980s onwards. The last proven breeding was in 1997, although it was suspected in 2007.

**Serins** arrived from the other direction, at around the same time as the **Temminck's stints**, with sporadic records in the 1960s building up to regular breeding in scattered counties of southern England in the 1970s and 80s. It seemed this species of southern Europe was moving north, and colonisation was imminent, but this never happened and, like the **Temminck's stints**, numbers began to fall, with the last known breeding in 2006. Predictions of range change in response to climate change do, however, suggest that one day **serins** may be back in the UK.

Species <sup>1</sup>	Population estimate <sup>2</sup>	Trend (% change)	Trend source and period <sup>3</sup>	BoCC4
Whooper swan	23	729	RBBP	
Pintail	28	9	RBBP	
Garganey	95	65	RBBP	
Pochard	681	177	RBBP	▲
Common scoter	52 <sup>(2007)</sup>	-50	RBBP	
Goldeneye	200 <sup>(APEP)</sup>	Increase	RBBP	
Quail	757	64	RBBP	
Black grouse	5,100 <sup>(2005)</sup>	-80	SCARABBS (1991/92–2005)	
Capercaillie	1,300 <sup>(2009/10)</sup>	-42	SCARABBS (1992/93/94–2009/10)	
Red-throated diver	1,300 <sup>(2006)</sup>	38	SCARABBS (1994–2006)	▼
Black-throated diver	220 <sup>(2006)</sup>	16	SCARABBS (1985–2006)	
Bittern	162 <sup>(2016)</sup>	737	Annual monitoring (1990/94–2012/16)	▼
Little egret	855	Large increase	RBBP	▼
Slavonian grebe	27	-61	Annual surveys	▲
Black-necked grebe	52	55	RBBP	
Honey buzzard	41	338	RBBP	
White-tailed eagle	106 <sup>(2015)</sup>	917	Annual surveys	
Marsh harrier	340	605	RBBP	
Hen harrier	630 <sup>(2010)</sup>	15	SCARABBS (1988/89–2010)	
Montagu's harrier	12	2	RBBP	
Goshawk	505	303	RBBP	
Golden eagle	508	16	SCARABBS (1982–2015)	▼
Osprey	218	360	RBBP	
Merlin	1,100 <sup>(2008)</sup>	94	SCARABBS (2008)	▲
Hobby	2,800 <sup>(APEP)</sup>	284	RBBP	
Peregrine	1,505 <sup>(2014)</sup>	5	SCARABBS (1992–2014)	
Spotted crane	28 <sup>(2012)</sup>	150	RBBP	
Corncrake	1,090 <sup>(2015)</sup>	120	Annual surveys (1993–2016)	
Crane	21	1,633	RBBP	
Stone-curlew	400	213	Annual surveys	
Avocet	1,735	377	RBBP	
Little ringed plover	1,200 <sup>(2007)</sup>	80	Surveys (1984–2007)	
Dotterel	423 <sup>(2011)</sup>	-57	SCARABBS (1987/88–2011)	▲
Whimbrel	300 <sup>(2009)</sup>	>-50	Surveys (1995–2007)	
Black-tailed godwit	56	13	RBBP	
Ruff	8	-63	RBBP	
Purple sandpiper	1	-50	RBBP	
Red-necked phalarope	38	141	RBBP	
Green sandpiper	3	Increase	RBBP	
Wood sandpiper	28	595	RBBP	
Mediterranean gull	921	>10,000	RBBP	
Yellow-legged gull	2	Increase	RBBP	
Nightjar	4,600 <sup>(2004)</sup>	114	SCARABBS (1982–2004)	▼
Wryneck	3	-67	RBBP	Former breeder
Golden oriole	2	-92	RBBP	
Red-backed shrike	4	-59	RBBP	
Chough	394 <sup>(2014)</sup>	-1	SCARABBS (1982–2014)	▼
Firecrest	832	1,021	RBBP	
Bearded tit	607	63	RBBP	▼
Woodlark	3,100 <sup>(2006)</sup>	1,086	SCARABBS (1986–2006)	▼
Cetti's warbler	1,622	694	RBBP	
Dartford warbler	3,200 <sup>(2006)</sup>	663	SCARABBS (2006)	
Savi's warbler	5	-70	RBBP	
Marsh warbler	8	-71	RBBP	
Ring ouzel	5,332 <sup>(2012)</sup>	-72	Atlas & SCARABBS (1988/91–2012)	
Fieldfare	1	-78	RBBP	
Redwing	13	-70	RBBP	
Black redstart	59	-46	RBBP	▲
Cirl bunting	1,079 <sup>(2016)</sup>	814	SCARABBS (1989–2016)	

#### Notes for table (opposite)

<sup>1</sup>Trends for three rare breeding seabirds – **Arctic skuas**, **roseate terns** and **little terns** – are presented on page 31.

<sup>2</sup>Population estimates are based on the most recent survey results (with the year of origin in brackets), or means of RBBP or annual survey totals from the five years 2010–2014.

For species for which RBBP totals may underestimate numbers, we have used alternative estimates from the Avian Population Estimates Panel (Musgrove, *et al.* (2013) *British Birds* 106: 64–100). For those well-monitored species with increasing populations, we have used the most recently available year of data.

Numbers are pairs, territories or units which are likely to be equivalent to breeding pairs, but for RBBP are based on possible breeding attempts and therefore include, for example, single territorial male birds and so do not necessarily equate to successful breeding attempts. Thus for **wrynecks** we present an average population of three, based on the continued occurrence of small numbers of unpaired birds each spring. The estimate for **capercaillie** is individuals counted in the winter.

<sup>3</sup> RBBP and annual survey trends are five-year means calculated for a 25-year period between 1985–1989 and 2010–2014, except for **white-tailed eagles**, for which 1987–1991 and 2012–2016 are used. The trend periods for those species covered by periodic surveys, such as SCARABBS, are given. RBBP trends for **common scoters** and **spotted crakes** have been given despite SCARABBS coverage, as they allow a 25-year trend to be given rather than just 12 years between surveys.

Species that have colonised the UK since the start of the 25-year period cannot have percentage figures calculated, so we have just noted that an increase has occurred.

## Scarce and rare breeding birds

### Wrynecks lost from the UK

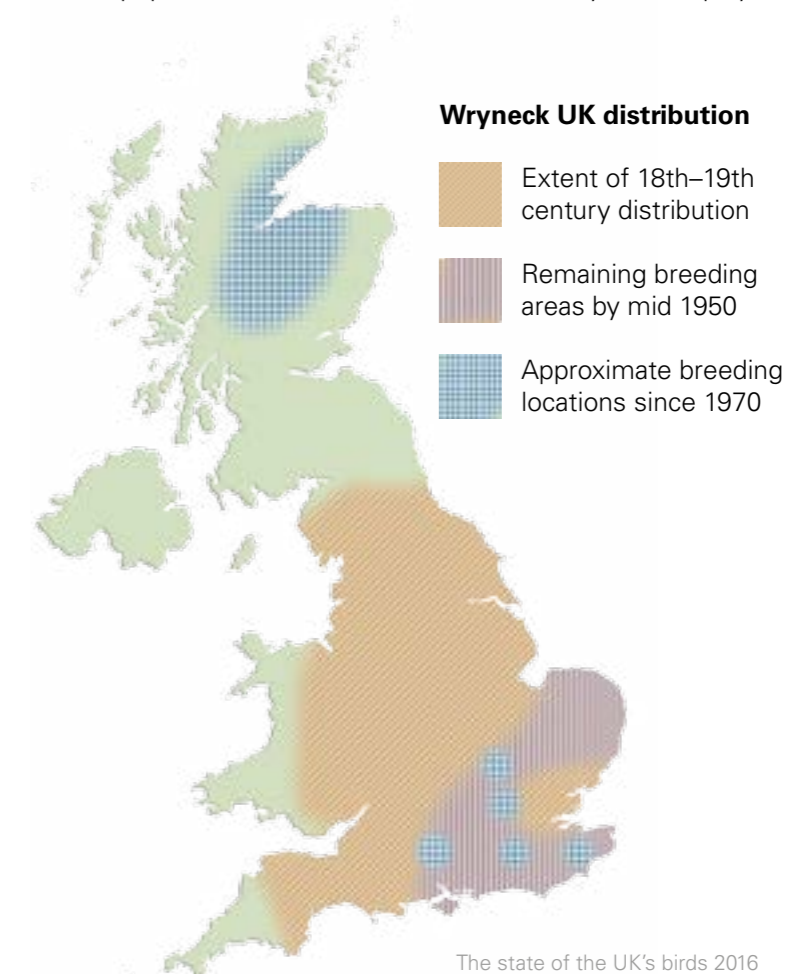
The **wryneck's** story is rather different to that of the two other lost breeders. This is not the loss of a transient visitor, but the extinction as a breeding bird of a species that was once widespread across the country. In the late 19th century, this bird of open woodland, heathland, parks and large gardens was recorded breeding in 54 counties across England and Wales, and was sufficiently common that in 1912 the RSPB was advertising bird boxes specifically for **wrynecks**.

But by this point, **wrynecks** were actually in decline and already lost from Wales. By the 1950s the species had contracted further, with few found away from southeast England. This decline continued until regular breeding ceased in England by the 1970s. At the same time there were signs of hope for **wrynecks** as a small population established

and grew in the pine forests of northern Scotland. But mirroring the tales of **Temminck's stints** and **serins**, this colonisation faltered. Although occasional sightings are still reported, the last known breeding in Scotland was in 2002, and 1985 in England.

**Wrynecks** thus earn the unfortunate distinction of being the first once-widespread breeding species to be lost from the UK for nearly 200 years, since **great bustards** were hunted to extinction in the 1830s.

**Wrynecks** have also declined across Europe: the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme estimates a decline of 54% since 1980. The causes are unclear, although changes in land management leading to loss of habitat and, possibly more importantly, a decline in invertebrate food availability, seem likely to have played a part.



# Recent surveys

## The 2015 national golden eagle survey

In 2015, a complete survey covering more than 700 potential **golden eagle** home ranges in Britain found 508 territorial pairs, a 15% increase in the population from the 442 pairs found by the previous survey in 2003.

The survey involved six months of tough fieldwork, with surveyors visiting each home range on a minimum of three occasions between January and August 2015. Firstly, to look for eagles or signs of their presence, then to look for evidence of breeding or carry out further checks for occupation, and finally to record productivity of nesting pairs.

This was the fourth complete survey of **golden eagles** in Britain enabling comparison with results from previous national censuses carried out since the early 1980s. Previous surveys showed an apparently stable population of around 420–440 breeding pairs, reached after a recovery from

much lower numbers following persecution in the 19th century. **Golden eagles** were once found across most upland areas of Britain, but they are now found only in Scotland, following the disappearance of England's last remaining **golden eagle** in 2016.

In 2015, the proportion of home ranges occupied was 70%, but there was marked variation between regions. The northern Highlands and the central spine of the country, between the Great Glen and Stirlingshire, saw the greatest increase in eagle numbers between 2003 and 2015. Recovery also continues in much of the west Highlands and Islands, with modest increases noted there. However, this positive progress is not consistent across Scotland. Concerns remain about low levels of home range occupancy in the east Highlands. Persecution associated with grouse moor management has been highlighted as a particular

factor limiting the population in some regions.

This recovery in numbers means that, at a national scale, the population now meets the abundance target identified in the *Conservation Framework for Golden Eagle* to define "favourable conservation status". Home range occupancy and productivity varies significantly by region.

Increased monitoring and tagging of eagles, as well as the introduction of new legislation, may be serving as effective deterrents against persecution of eagles, so facilitating this population increase.

Fieldwork was carried out by expert licensed volunteers from the Scottish Raptor Study Group and RSPB fieldworkers.



**Golden eagles have increased by 15% since 2003.**

## Cirl bunting numbers fly past the recovery target

Once widespread across southern England, by 1989 there were fewer than 120 pairs of **cirl buntings** left, almost all confined to a narrow coastal strip in south Devon. But a survey of the species in summer 2016 has shown the population has grown – passing the 1,000-pair target set by an ambitious recovery project 25 years ago.

The survey aimed to assess range expansion. It involved full territory surveys of 220 tetrads (2 km x 2 km squares) occupied by **cirl buntings** during the previous full survey in 2009 and in intervening years to 2015, as well as 132 adjacent tetrads.

There were 895 cirl bunting territories recorded in 186 tetrads, with the overall population estimated at 1,079 territories (using a correction factor for territories that may have been missed by only surveying tetrads twice, as derived from previous national surveys). The findings suggest that the population has increased by 25%, and the number of occupied tetrads by 36%, since the last national survey in 2009.

The core of the population remains in south Devon, with concentrations around the Salcombe, Dart and Teign estuaries. But there are also increasing numbers in Cornwall (following a successful re-introduction programme

between 2006 and 2011), and in east and north Devon.

The **cirl bunting's** recovery is a fantastic example of a species' recovery enabled by the use of an agri-environment scheme, supported by a dedicated project officer. Much of the success is due to how the robust evidence-base has been used to underpin the design and delivery of conservation action, by identifying the key resources needed by the birds and monitoring how they have responded to targeted interventions. It is also a great example of how conservationists, farmers and government agencies have worked together to turn around the fortunes of a threatened species at a landscape scale.



The cirl bunting's recovery is a great success that is linked to the use of targeted agri-environment schemes.

Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Between 422,000 to 715,000 mistle thrushes spend the winter in the UK.



## Winter Thrushes Survey

In the winters of 2012/13 and 2013/14, the Winter Thrushes Survey, undertaken by BTO volunteers, aimed to generate up-to-date estimates of numbers of each of the five thrush species present in the UK during the winter, and provide information about their habitat-use and food preferences. Three thrush species have large breeding populations in the UK, but the extent that winter numbers, especially of **blackbirds**, are boosted by continental migrants has never before been quantified. Partially migratory species, such as **song thrushes** and **mistle thrushes**, tend to leave the UK during severe weather. Small-scale movements of these species throughout the winter to Ireland, France and Spain also impact on wintering numbers to a lesser extent. For **redwings** and **fieldfares**, which breed almost exclusively outside of the UK, numbers visiting the UK during winter are unknown.

The survey collected data from a stratified random sample of 1 km core squares – more than 1,350 were surveyed over the two winters, with more than half (54%) surveyed in both winters. Volunteers also surveyed self-selected sites to provide additional data on thrush foraging behaviour. Core surveys were conducted within a ten-day period between the end of December and early January, to provide a snapshot during midwinter (to minimise double-counting and exclude birds passing through on migration). Population estimates were calculated using a modelling approach, to account for potential bias due to unrepresentative habitat composition of the surveyed squares, as well as variability in habitat, weather, time and duration of observation.

The survey resulted in wintering population estimates of 6.7 to 11.4 million **blackbirds**, 575,000 to 965,000 **song thrushes**, and 422,000 to 715,000 **mistle thrushes**. For **song thrushes**, the most recently estimated breeding equivalent of 1.2 million territories is higher than our winter estimates, suggesting that if these were typical winters, a significant proportion of the breeding **song thrush** population had departed the UK by this time. Neither of the two winters were particularly severe and both had relatively poor berry crops. The other key output of the survey was new estimates of 15.1 million **fieldfares** and 8.6 million **redwings** visiting from continental Europe.

Provisional results of the observed behaviour of the birds are that **fieldfares** and **redwings** fed most commonly on hawthorn berries, whereas **blackbirds**, **song thrushes** and **mistle thrushes** favoured invertebrates, particularly earthworms. The relative importance of food types changed over the winter for all species, with a shift from foraging in trees, shrubs or hedgerows at the beginning of winter to ground foraging from January onwards.

Further analysis should give us a better insight into the habitats and food resources that are most important for sustaining thrushes through the winter months.



8.6 million **redwings** are thought to visit the UK in winter.

# Birds of Conservation Concern 4: an overview

Pressures upon wildlife are many and varied, and limited resources mean action can't be taken for every species, everywhere, all the time. Red lists, which identify the species in most pressing need of help, inform decisions about how to use precious and limited conservation resources.

In the UK, *Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC)* assessments have been conducted at regular intervals since 1996. These use the best, most up-to-date data to assess all of the UK's regularly occurring breeding and non-breeding species against a set of tried and tested criteria. These criteria assess historical decline, trends in population and range, population size, localisation and the international importance for each species, as well as considering their status in Europe and globally. Depending on the criteria they meet, each species is placed on the **Red**, **Amber** or **Green** list.

**Red** list species meet one or more of these criteria:

- they are considered at threat of global extinction
- they have shown severe historical (since 1800) decline in the UK, without subsequent recovery
- they have shown severe (greater than 50%) population decline or range contraction, over the last 25 years or a longer-term period stretching back to 1969.

**Amber** list species meet one or more of these criteria:

- they are considered at threat of European extinction
- they have shown historical decline in the UK with some recent recovery
- they have shown moderate (between 25% and 50%) population decline or range contraction over the last 25 years, or a longer-term period stretching back to 1969
- they are rare in the breeding and/or non-breeding season
- they are localised to a few sites
- they have an internationally important population in the UK.

**Green** list species are those that meet none of the **Red** or **Amber** list criteria.

Full details of the *BoCC* assessment process and results can be found at: [britishbirds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/BoCC4.pdf](http://britishbirds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/BoCC4.pdf)



**Merlins** have returned to the Red list.

## Headlines from BoCC4

*BoCC4*, published in 2015, gave us the first new update since 2009. Every native species considered to be a regular breeder and/or to have an established non-breeding population in the UK was assessed, totalling 247 species.

Throughout *SUKB 2016* we use the new assessment to colour-code species names, and here we give an overview of the assessment and what it tells us for both individual species, and the UK's birdlife as a whole.



**Long-tailed ducks** jumped straight from the Green to the Red list.

- The Red list grew substantially: a net increase of 15, from 52 species in 2009 to 67 in 2015. Over a quarter of the species assessed (more than ever before) are now Red-listed.
- 20 species moved onto the Red list: 18 moved from Amber to Red and two, **white-fronted geese** and **long-tailed ducks**, moved straight from Green to Red. **Merlins** returned to the Red list having moved from Red to Amber in the past.
- Three species – **Temminck's stints**, **wrynecks** and **serins** – were added to the list of "former breeders" (those effectively declared extinct as breeding species in the UK). Given the mobile nature of birds, the possibility of a future return cannot be ruled out, but the loss of these breeding species is concerning. See pages 17–19.
- Three species moved the right way, from Red to Amber, including **dunlins**, **bitterns** and **nightjars**. The recovering breeding populations of **bitterns** and **nightjars** are a result of targeted conservation work.

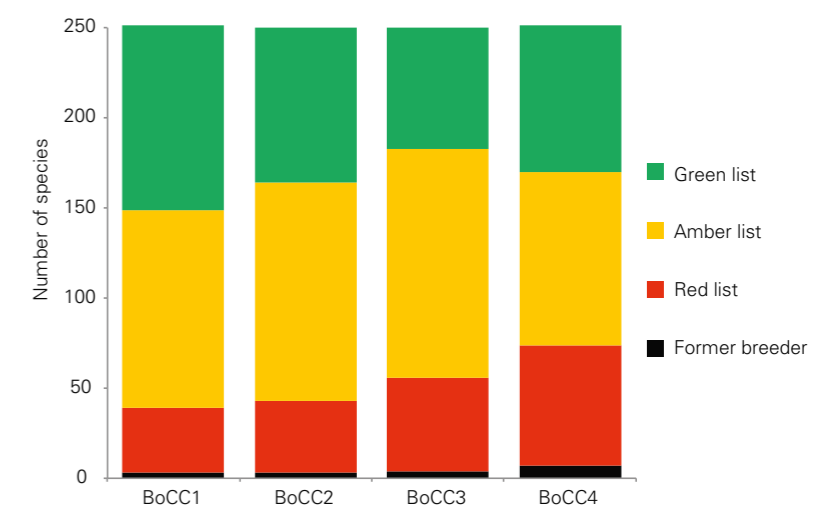
- The Green list increased, as 22 species moved from Amber to Green. Whilst some of these moves were due to minor changes in the assessment process, 13 were due to genuine improvements in status, such as for **bearded tits**, **woodlarks**, **golden eagles** and **whitethroats**.

There have been some minor changes in the way assessments are conducted, including improvements in data availability and amendments to the criteria used, but the four assessments are broadly comparable.

The Red list has grown in length at each review. The shifts in the numbers of species on the three lists tell a story about the changing fortunes of the UK's birds, with both good and bad news in the most recent assessment.

The bar chart below shows how the overall balance of Red, Amber and Green-listed species has changed since the first *BoCC* assessment in 1996.

Changes in *BoCC* lists



## Birds of Conservation Concern 4: an overview

The complete *BoCC4* Red, Amber and Green lists are shown on pages 28–29. They highlight a number of important themes for the conservation of birds in the UK:

- Farmland birds (see pages 8–9) remain a serious concern. Twelve farmland species are Red-listed and the majority of these, including **turtle doves** and **corn buntings**, continue to decline. No new farmland birds joined the Red list in 2015, but that simply reflects that those likely to be impacted adversely by modern farming practices are Red-listed already.
- There are more birds associated with woodland on the Red list (16) than birds of other habitats, now including **woodcocks**, **nightingales** and **pied flycatchers**.
- The publication of *Bird Atlas 2007–2011* in 2013 revealed worrying range loss and declines in abundance for a suite of upland birds. *BoCC4* gives further grounds for concern, with five upland species – **curlews**, **dotterels**, **merlins**, **whinchats** and **grey wagtails** – moving to the Red list.
- Colonies of breeding seabirds provide one of the UK's greatest wildlife spectacles and are, arguably, our most important ornithological feature in international terms. But many seabirds are in decline: **shags**, **kittiwakes** and **puffins** take the number of Red-listed seabird species to seven.
- Long-distance migrants, particularly those that winter in sub-Saharan Africa, are a major source of concern right across Europe. Three more – **whinchats**, **pied flycatchers** and **nightingales** – joined the *BoCC* Red list in 2015 (see pages 11 and 13 for trends).
- Climate change is increasingly implicated in the fortunes of the UK's biodiversity, and its impact can be seen in the new *BoCC* lists (pages 28–29). Warming weather has helped southern colonists such as **firecrests** and **little egrets** onto the Green list. But it may be contributing to the problems faced by long-distance migrants, as well as disrupting the marine ecosystems that seabirds rely upon, and shifting the climate space of upland species and northern breeding birds.
- An increasing number of species qualified for the Red list due to concern at a global scale. **Pochards**, **long-tailed ducks**, **velvet scoters**, **Slavonian grebes**, **puffins** and **turtle doves** are all on the threatened categories of the IUCN Global Red List. The UK has an international responsibility to act for these species and try to prevent their global extinction.
- Targeted conservation can and does improve the status of threatened species. As well as **bitterns** and **nightjars** moving off the Red list, other species have moved from Amber to Green. The **red kite** was once so threatened that it only survived in a few remote Welsh valleys, but protection of this population and reintroduction projects in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland have ensured that this majestic bird is now a common sight across many areas of the UK. Indeed, the species is now monitored by the BBS, the survey designed to monitor change in our more abundant species (page 11).

**Note:** the direction of the red, amber and green arrows shown alongside the species photographs (page 26–29) indicate the falling or rising levels of conservation concern for those species as they move from one list to another.



In 1997 the UK's **bittern** population was down to just 11 booming males at seven sites. Thanks to a programme of reedbed management, restoration and creation, **bitterns** have undergone a remarkable population expansion with 162 booming males recorded in 2016, at 75 sites. As a consequence of this recovery, **bitterns** moved from the Red to the Amber list in *BoCC4*.

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)



Recent breeding range expansion in **bearded tits** means that they no longer qualify for the Amber list, so have moved to Green. The 772 pairs reported to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) in 2014 was the highest number on record. The increase was aided by the restoration, creation and management of the reedbeds they require.

Considered “near threatened” globally, with an internationally-significant but rapidly declining population in the UK, **curlews** could be considered one of the most pressing bird conservation priorities in the UK, with urgent action required to halt their decline. Research and trial management in the uplands is intended to identify practical conservation management solutions.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)



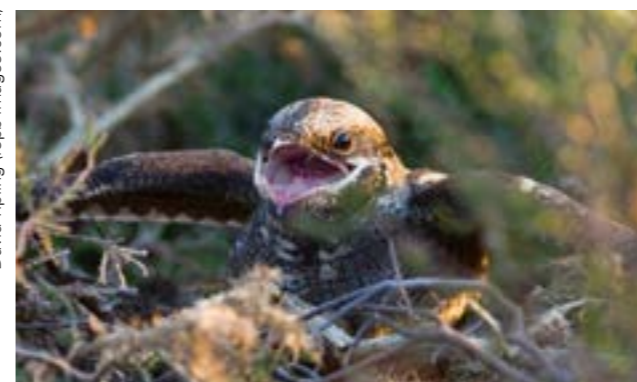
One of five upland species to move to the Red list in the latest review, numbers of breeding **dotterels** have declined severely since the 1980s. Causes may include changes in grazing pressure, atmospheric pollution, as well as the impact of climate change, which mountain-dwelling species are especially vulnerable to.

As reported in *SUKB 2015*, **nightingales** have declined and contracted in range; they are now rare away from the southeast of England. As both a long-distance migrant, and a woodland bird, the **nightingale** belongs to two of the UK's most at-risk bird groupings.



John Bridges (rspb-images.com)

David Tipling (rspb-images.com)



Although lowland heathland remains a rare and fragmented habitat, improved management of this habitat has aided an increase in **nightjar** numbers and an expansion of their range, resulting in a welcome move from the Red to Amber list.

# Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the lists

Where species have shown a change in status in the *BoCC4* review, we have noted the previous *BoCC3* status in parentheses: (R) = Red, (A) = Amber, (G) = Green, (na) = not assessed previously.

## BoCC4 Red list

White-fronted goose (G)	Ringed plover (A)	Golden oriole	Nightingale (A)
Pochard (A)	Dotterel (A)	Red-backed shrike	Pied flycatcher (A)
Scaup	Whimbrel	Willow tit	Black redstart (A)
Long-tailed duck (G)	Curlew (A)	Marsh tit	Whinchat (A)
Common scoter	Black-tailed godwit	Skylark	House sparrow
Velvet scoter (A)	Ruff	Wood warbler	Tree sparrow
Black grouse	Red-necked phalarope	Grasshopper warbler	Yellow wagtail
Capercaillie	Woodcock(A)	Savi's warbler	Grey wagtail (A)
Grey partridge	Arctic skua	Aquatic warbler	Tree pipit
Balearic shearwater	Puffin (A)	Marsh warbler	Hawfinch
Shag (A)	Roseate tern	Starling	Linnet
Red-necked grebe (A)	Kittiwake (A)	Ring ouzel	Twite
Slavonian grebe (A)	Herring gull	Fieldfare	Lesser redpoll
White-tailed eagle	Turtle dove	Song thrush	Yellowhammer
Hen harrier	Cuckoo	Redwing	Cirl bunting
Corncrake	Lesser spotted woodpecker	Mistle thrush (A)	Corn bunting
Lapwing	Merlin (A)	Spotted flycatcher	

## BoCC4 Amber list

Mute swan (G)	Manx shearwater	Common sandpiper	Stock dove
Bewick's swan	European storm petrel	Green sandpiper	Tawny owl (G)
Whooper swan	Leach's petrel	Spotted redshank	Short-eared owl
Bean goose	Gannet	Greenshank (G)	Nightjar (R)
Pink-footed goose	Bittern (R)	Wood sandpiper	Swift
Greylag goose	Spoonbill	Redshank	Kingfisher
Barnacle goose	Black-necked grebe	Snipe	Kestrel
Brent goose	Honey buzzard	Great skua	Shorelark
Shelduck	Marsh harrier	Black guillemot	House martin
Wigeon	Montagu's harrier	Razorbill	Willow warbler
Gadwall	Osprey	Guillemot	Dartford warbler
Teal	Spotted crane	Little tern	Short-toed treecreeper
Mallard	Crane	Sandwich tern	Dipper (G)
Pintail	Stone-curlew	Common tern	Common redstart
Garganey	Avocet	Arctic tern	Dunnock
Shoveler	Oystercatcher	Black-headed gull	Meadow pipit
Eider	Grey plover	Mediterranean gull	Water pipit
Goldeneye	Bar-tailed godwit	Common gull	Bullfinch
Smew	Turnstone	Lesser black-backed gull	Mealy redpoll (G)
Quail	Knot	Yellow-legged gull	Scottish crossbill
Red grouse	Curlew sandpiper (G)	Caspian gull (na)	Parrot crossbill
Black-throated diver	Sanderling (G)	Iceland gull	Snow bunting
Great northern diver	Dunlin (R)	Glaucous gull	Lapland bunting
Fulmar	Purple sandpiper	Great black-backed gull	Reed bunting

## BoCC4 Green list

Tufted duck (A)	Little ringed plover	Jackdaw	Lesser whitethroat
Red-breasted merganser	Little stint	Rook	Whitethroat (A)
Goosander	Jack snipe (A)	Carrion crow	Sedge warbler
Ptarmigan	Pomarine skua	Hooded crow	Reed warbler
Red-throated diver (A)	Long-tailed skua	Raven	Waxwing
Great shearwater	Little auk	Goldcrest	Nuthatch
Sooty shearwater (A)	Black tern (A)	Firecrest (A)	Treecreeper
Cormorant	Little gull(A)	Blue tit	Wren
Little egret (A)	Rock dove	Great tit	Blackbird
Grey heron	Woodpigeon	Crested tit (A)	Robin
Little grebe (A)	Collared dove	Coal tit	Stonechat
Great crested grebe	Barn owl (A)	Bearded tit (A)	Wheatear (A)
Red kite (A)	Long-eared owl	Woodlark (A)	Pied wagtail
Goshawk	Green woodpecker (A)	Sand martin (A)	Rock pipit
Sparrowhawk	Great spotted woodpecker	Swallow (A)	Brambling
Buzzard	Hobby	Cetti's warbler	Chaffinch
Golden eagle (A)	Peregrine	Long-tailed tit	Greenfinch
Water rail	Chough (A)	Chiffchaff	Crossbill
Moorhen	Magpie	Blackcap	Goldfinch
Coot	Jay	Garden warbler	Siskin
Golden plover (A)			

## BoCC4 Former breeders

Great Bustard	Temminck's stint (R)	Great auk	Wryneck (R)
Kentish plover	Black tern	Snowy owl	Serin (A)

Chris Knights (rspb-images.com)



There are more birds of woodland on the Red list than of any other habitat. The **woodcock** – an unusual wader known for its bizarre, crepuscular display flights – has shown a severe long-term decline in range. We need to know more about the causes of decline in this and other woodland birds.

Seabirds rose up the conservation agenda with the Red-listing of four species in *BoCC3*. Concern continues to rise, with **kittiwakes**, along with **shags** and **puffins**, added to the Red list in *BoCC4*. A widespread crash in the breeding success of this species is likely to be linked to the impact of rising ocean temperatures on **kittiwake** food supplies.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

# Breeding seabirds

Since 1986, breeding seabird colonies around the UK and Ireland have been monitored annually by the Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP), co-ordinated by the JNCC, with surveys undertaken by partner organisations and dedicated volunteers.

The SMP receives data on seabird breeding abundance and productivity from up to 500 different seabird colonies each year. Trends from these data allow us to assess the state of our breeding seabird populations,

help to identify the drivers of change, and to make inferences about the health of the wider marine environment.

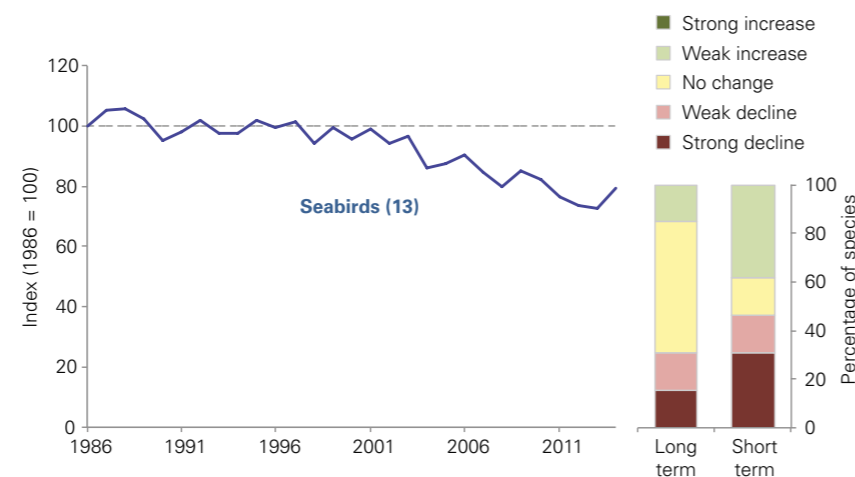
SMP data are used for several regional, national and international

agreements, as well as providing the broad scale measurement of the state of the UK's breeding seabird population.

## UK seabird indicator

The UK seabird indicator stands at 27% below the 1986 baseline. Two species (**guillemots** and **razorbills**) have increased since the beginning of the index, three species have decreased, and the remaining eight species have shown no marked change.

New additions to the Red list that feature in the seabird indicator are **kittiwakes**, which have declined by 60%, and **shags**, which have declined by 45% since 1986.



As data are based on a mixture of full counts and sample sites, standard bootstrapping methods used for other indicators cannot be applied and the trend is presented without confidence intervals. For details of species' trends in each indicator, download the datasheet: [jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4235](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4235)

Source: British Trust for Ornithology, Defra, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Seabird Monitoring Programme (co-ordinated by Joint Nature Conservation Committee).



**Razorbill** numbers have increased since the start of the seabird index in 1986.

## Trends in UK breeding seabirds

The table shows the differing fortunes of 16 seabird species monitored by the SMP over the short- and long-term. Results are presented for the UK and only include species whose trends are considered to be robust.

You can see the full SMP report at: [jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3201](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3201)

For more information on the SMP please visit: [jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1550](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1550)

Species	1986 – 2015 trend %	2000-2015 trend %	BoCC4
Fulmar	-33	-31	Yellow
Gannet *	86	34	Yellow
Cormorant	4	-8	Green
Shag	-45	-34	Red ▲
Arctic skua	-76	-64	Red
Great skua **	53	18	Yellow
Kittiwake	-60	-44	Red ▲
Black-headed gull	24	38	Yellow
Great black-backed gull	-1	-11	Yellow
Little tern	-34	-18	Yellow
Sandwich tern	5	13	Yellow
Common tern	-17	-10	Yellow
Roseate tern	-52	229	Red
Arctic tern	19	17	Yellow
Guillemot	37	5	Yellow
Razorbill	87	32	Yellow

\* Trend derived from census interpolations and extrapolations.

\*\* Due to low confidence in the data since the last census, this value is not presented in the current SMP report. Data are not available to produce robust trends for Red-listed **puffins** and **herring gulls**.

## Mixed fortunes

Since SMP monitoring began in 1986, substantial declines have occurred in the breeding populations of **shags**, **Arctic skuas**, **kittiwakes**, **roseate terns**, **little terns** and **fulmars**. Declines in these species have continued over the short term (2000–2015), with the exception of the **roseate tern** which continues to recover from the declines the species suffered in the 1980s.

**Great skuas'** breeding numbers are thought to be at their highest level since monitoring began, contrasting starkly with a continued decline in the **Arctic skua** population, now thought to be at its lowest level. In 2009, the **Arctic skua** became the first species to jump straight from the Green to the Red list of *BoCC*; and the decline first noted in the early 1990s has showed no signs of slowing. Factors behind this are likely to include competition

for nesting territories with, and predation by, **great skuas**. Rises in sea surface temperature may also have affected the abundance or availability of key prey species such as sandeels in some areas.

The decline in **little tern** numbers since 1986 is likely to be due to the low levels of productivity observed over the same period, leading to lower rates of recruitment (i.e. fewer young are surviving to join the adult breeding population).

Increased frequency of extreme weather events such as storms may also be affecting seabird populations. **Shags** and terns are especially susceptible due to their inability to forage effectively in rough seas, which can ultimately lead to starvation.

SMP data suggests the abundance of **fulmars** breeding in the UK

reached a peak in 1996, but has slowly declined, with some fluctuation, since then. This recent decline may be due to a reduction in the amount of offal discarded from fishing trawlers. This means it could represent a re-adjustment to more natural **fulmar** abundance levels following a period of artificially-elevated population size.

**Gannet** productivity has been consistently high since 1986. This may be due to their ability to avoid food shortages by foraging over large areas (up to 500 km<sup>2</sup> around their colonies), and feed on a wide variety of fish species and discards from the fishing industry. Combined with high adult survival rates and good breeding success, these may be the main reasons for the observed **gannet** population increase.



## Seabird status in BoCC4

Seabird censuses conducted in 1969–70, 1985–88 and 1998–2002 were used along with SMP data and IUCN listings to support *BoCC4* assessments for seabirds.

Seven of the UK's seabird species are currently Red-listed, 17 are Amber and one, the **cormorant**, is Green-listed.

Three species were Red-listed for the first time: **kittiwakes** and **shags** due to declining breeding populations, and **puffins** because of the upgrading of their global conservation status to Vulnerable.

**Arctic skuas**, **roseate terns** and **herring gulls** remain on the Red list due to ongoing population

declines. The latter two species are also of concern due to breeding range decline and wintering population decline, respectively.

**Balearic shearwaters**, visitors to UK waters, also remain on the Red list due to their global conservation status.

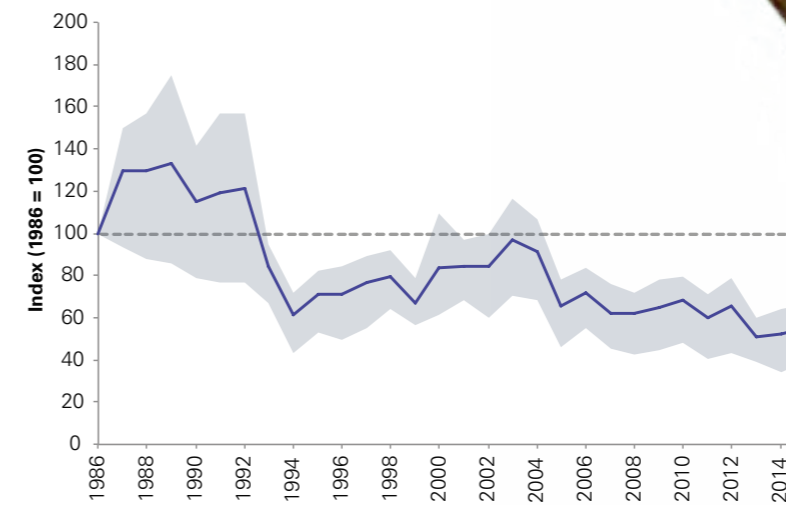
Kevin Sawford (rspb-images.com)



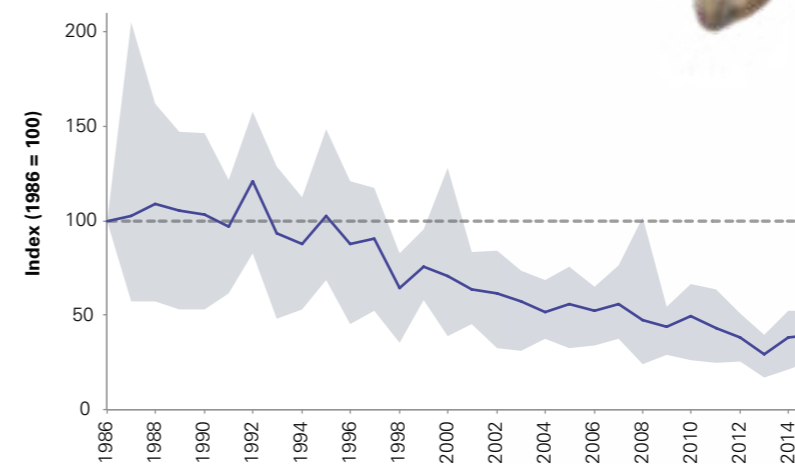
Declining breeding populations have caused **kittiwakes** to be Red-listed for the first time.

Shags and kittiwakes are Red-listed for the first time in *BoCC4*.

Breeding abundance of **shags**



Breeding abundance of **kittiwakes**



Shag by Andrew Parkinson (rspb-images.com)

During a year, The Wash, the Ribble Estuary and Morecambe Bay each attract hundreds of thousands of waterbirds.



Pink-footed goose by Steve Knell (rspb-images.com)

# Wintering waterbirds

The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and Goose and Swan Monitoring Programme (GSMP) keep track of waterbirds that visit UK wetlands in winter, or during passage as they migrate along the East Atlantic Flyway.

Millions of non-breeding waterbirds use the UK's wetlands every year, to spend the winter or pause to refuel on their way to wintering areas in southern Europe or western and southern Africa. Many of these come from Arctic breeding grounds stretching from Canada to Siberia. As these migratory waterbirds depend on a network of wetland sites across many countries, monitoring and

site protection require an international approach.

The international importance of many UK wetlands is widely recognised, either for their significant waterbird numbers or because of their importance for individual species. According to WeBS and GSMP counts, The Wash in eastern England and the Ribble Estuary and Morecambe

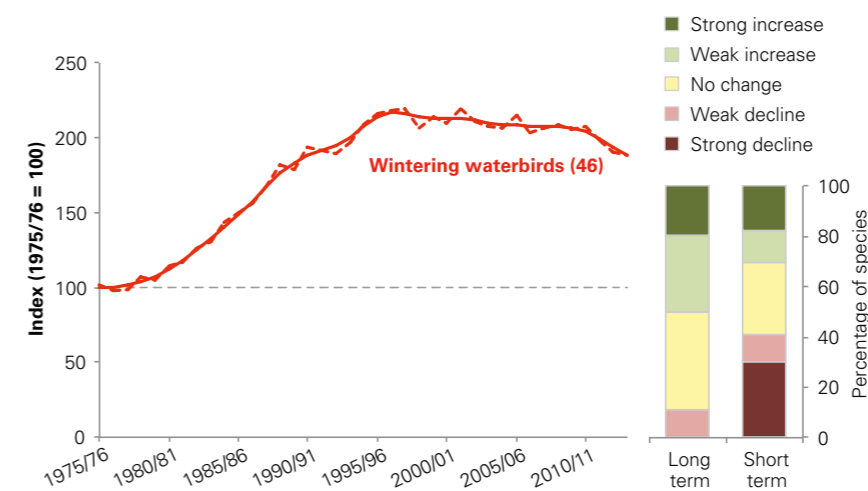
Bay in north-west England each attract 200,000–400,000 waterbirds during the year. Inland sites hold notable concentrations too: over 100,000 waterbirds are often recorded at the Somerset Levels and Ouse Washes. Individual birds move between sites throughout the season, and when this turnover is taken into account, the number of birds using each site would be even higher.

## UK wintering waterbird indicator

The wintering waterbird indicator shows that on average populations rose steadily from the mid-1970s into the late 1990s. Following a period of stability, numbers have now started to decrease, with the indicator

for wintering waders indicating particular declines. For example, the number of **ringed plovers** has declined in recent winters. This has led to the move for this species from the Amber to the Red list, reflecting the decreasing

number of winter visitors as fewer birds move across to the UK to avoid cold weather on the Continent. For more on trends for individual wintering waterbird species see page 37.



The figure above shows the unsmoothed trend (dashed line) and smoothed trend (solid line). Data from surveys of wintering waterbirds are based on full counts on wetland and coastal sites of markedly varying size. This means that standard indicator bootstrapping methods cannot be applied and the trend is presented without confidence intervals. Please see the notes on page 9 for a full explanation of the bar chart (above).

For details of species' trends in each indicator, download the datasheet: [jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4235](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4235)

## Celebrating 50 years of the International Waterbird Census



Counts of waterbirds at UK wetlands during January, for schemes such as WeBS or the GSMP, also contribute to a much larger programme that stretches around the globe: the International Waterbird Census (IWC). Co-ordinated by Wetlands International, the IWC entered its 50<sup>th</sup> year in January 2016 – it is a good time to pause, reflect and celebrate the success of the scheme and the achievements of all those involved.

the large amount of data needed to underpin the global status assessments of waterbirds. These enable conservation organisations and government agencies to monitor changes in waterbird populations, and direct and prioritise conservation action at site, national and flyway scales. In recent years, the following important international reviews were published, which were supported by data collected for the IWC:

the pressures and threats they face, and reported on conservation measures being undertaken.

- **The Conservation Status Report for the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)**

This publication looked at the conservation status of migratory waterbirds across the AEWA region (page 38). As part of this, the Waterbird Population Estimates for relevant populations, produced by Wetlands International, were updated.

- **The European Red List of Birds 2015 & the global IUCN Red List of Birds 2015**

Compiled by BirdLife International, both used the IUCN's Red List criteria to measure the extinction risk of all bird species within Europe and across the world, respectively.

- **Article 12 report**

A review by the European Commission on the implementation of the Birds Directive in each Member State, which looked at the status of birds, detailed

The IWC has supported the identification of almost five million km<sup>2</sup> of internationally-important areas for waterbirds, including nearly one million km<sup>2</sup> of Ramsar Sites, and thousands of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within Europe. It also provides the motivation for thousands of people to visit wetlands, as well as helping to raise awareness among both the public and decision-makers of the value of waterbirds and wetlands.

In January 2016, Wetlands International launched a year-long global "Let's make it count" campaign, to inspire and promote action for the conservation of wetlands along the world's flyways. The campaign engaged individuals from all walks of life, as well as governments and businesses, to increase awareness and participation in the IWC and support conservation action for wetlands and waterbirds.

For more information, visit the Wetlands International website: [wetlands.org](http://wetlands.org)

IWC data are collated from most major waterbird flyways across the world: Africa-Eurasia, Asia-Pacific, the Caribbean and the Neotropics. Since its launch in 1967, the census has grown to cover in excess of 25,000 sites in over 140 countries, with between 30 and 40 million waterbirds counted every year.

The success of the IWC is underpinned by the enormous effort of a vast network of counters and organisers, most of whom are volunteers. Thanks to their time and support, along with that of many organisations and agencies, the IWC can access



The mainland race of eider is listed as Vulnerable on the European Red list.

## Trends in wintering wetland birds in the UK

Species	25 year trend % <sup>1</sup> (1988/89-2013/14)	10 year trend % <sup>2</sup> (2003/04-2013/14)	BoCC4
Mute swan	49	-7	▲
Bewick's swan	-77	-60	
Whooper swan	98	51	
Pink-footed goose	108	37	
European white-fronted goose	-79	-47	
Greenland white-fronted goose	-19	-37	
Icelandic greylag goose	-15	8	
British greylag goose	149	31	
Canada goose	49	8	
Greenland barnacle goose	146	35	
Svalbard barnacle boose	210	37	
Dark-bellied brent goose	15	46	▼
Canadian light-bellied brent goose	60	37	
Svalbard light-bellied brent goose	77	-13	
Shelduck	-28	-28	
Wigeon	33	-15	
Gadwall	170	15	
Teal	52	1	
Mallard	-40	-17	
Pintail	-41	-46	
Shoveler	68	5	
Pochard	-65	-41	▲
Tufted duck	10	9	▼
Scaup	-34	-46	
Eider (except Shetland <sup>3</sup> )	1	-9	
Goldeneye	-50	-32	
Red-breasted merganser	-15	-20	
Goosander	20	12	
Ruddy duck	-99	-100	
Little grebe <sup>4</sup>	na	-9	▼
Great crested grebe	15	-22	
Cormorant	60	0	
Coot	1	-18	
Oystercatcher	-25	-19	
Avocet	910	46	
Ringed plover	-59	-38	▲
Golden plover	96	-25	▼
Grey plover	-17	-11	
Lapwing	14	-27	
Knot	-12	-13	
Sanderling	30	10	▲
Purple sandpiper	-59	-11	
Dunlin	-34	-23	▼
Black-tailed godwit	335	45	
Bar-tailed godwit	-3	-6	
Curlew	-8	-12	▲
Redshank	-23	-22	
Turnstone	-47	-18	

<sup>1</sup>Long-term trends are the percentage changes between the smoothed index values for 1988/89 and 2013/14.

<sup>2</sup>Ten-year trends are the percentage changes between the smoothed index values for 2003/04 and 2013/14. Calculation of smoothed indices by use of a generalised additive model is detailed further at [bto.org/webs-alerts](http://bto.org/webs-alerts)

<sup>3</sup>British eiders comprise two populations; trends here exclude birds in Shetland that are of the race *faeroeensis*.

<sup>4</sup>National monitoring of little grebes started later than for other species, so only 10-year trends are shown.

## Wintering waterbirds

### Status of migratory waterbirds in the Africa-Eurasia region

The conservation status of many globally-threatened or near threatened waterbird populations has been found to have deteriorated over the last 20 years, within the area under remit of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA).

Of the 376 populations assessed, 36% have declined over the last 20 years, 25% are increasing, and

39% are stable or fluctuating. The report indicates that the largest number of declining populations is amongst the ducks, geese and swans and the sandpiper group of waders. A high proportion of grebe populations are also declining.

These status updates were reported in the sixth edition of the *Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbirds in the Agreement*

Area in November 2015. The conservation status of waterbirds was worse in regions where there are fewer Parties signed up to the Agreement. Where concerted conservation efforts are being made, the conservation status of waterbirds is improving.

Further information can be found at: [unep-aewa.org/en/document/6th-edition-conservation-status-report-csr6](http://unep-aewa.org/en/document/6th-edition-conservation-status-report-csr6)

### White-fronted geese decline in the UK

The UK population of **white-fronted geese** is in decline: the species is now on the *BoCC4* Red list, moving straight from Green due to a decline in non-breeding numbers in the UK. The European and Greenland races are declining in the UK and both remain separately on the race-level Red list. However, the causes of these declines are different for the two races. The spring

2015 census of the **Greenland white-fronted goose** population indicated that numbers have fallen to their lowest since 1984. The cause – chronic poor reproductive success – has been linked to either changes in spring weather conditions, and/or competition from an expanding **Canada goose** population on their west Greenland breeding grounds. For **European white-fronted geese**,

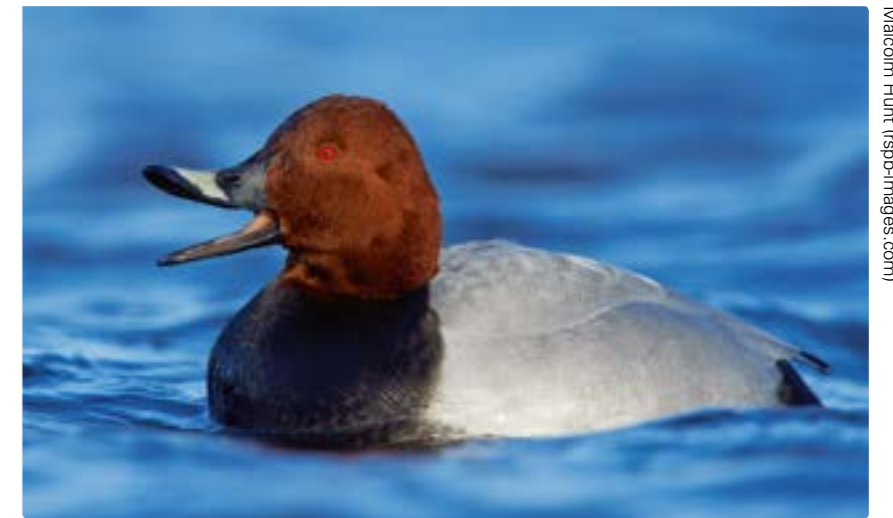
however, increasing IWC counts from other north-west European countries indicate that the decline in the UK is related to “short-stopping” – a distributional shift in wintering range as birds no longer need to migrate as far in response to milder winters. This suggests that **Greenland white-fronted geese** should be the greater conservation priority, in the UK and globally.



**White-fronted geese** moved straight from the Green to the Red list; this bird (above) is of the Greenland race.

### Pochards decline

According to WeBS and IWC figures, **pochards** are declining significantly in the UK and more widely in Europe, and their UK breeding range has also declined. The species moved from Amber to Red on the *BoCC4* list, as a result of being classified as Vulnerable on the global IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (moving from Least Concern to Vulnerable).



**Pochards** are declining and classified as Vulnerable globally.

### Action for curlews

**Curlews** and **ringed plovers** are two widespread waders that have been added to the *BoCC4* Red list; **curlews** due to breeding declines and **ringed plovers** due to non-breeding declines. An International Single Species Action Plan has been adopted for **curlews** – with governments, academics and species experts all contributing to a comprehensive and robust conservation strategy to secure the **curlew's** long-term future. The short-term aims include stabilising the breeding

population declines of the race which occurs in Europe (around 28% of which are in the UK). The wintering population in the UK originates largely from Scandinavia, but also includes a significant proportion of UK breeding birds, and this has declined by 20% in the last 15 years.

Concerted efforts are underway to understand drivers of decline across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Habitat management

and predator control interventions are being tested to inform the development of “curlew-friendly” land management options at the landscape level. Research will include: monitoring how **curlews** respond to these interventions; detailed habitat use studies during the breeding season; and using appropriate tracking technology during winter. Existing data will also be analysed to investigate how populations have changed in order to help identify key factors contributing to the decline.

### Sea ducks at risk

The ducks that use the UK's marine environment are of particular concern, but are challenging to monitor due to their offshore distribution. Four sea ducks are now on the Red list, with the addition in *BoCC4* of **velvet scoters** and **long-tailed ducks**, which are considered to be Vulnerable on the global IUCN Red List. **Velvet scoters**, **long-tailed ducks** as well as **red-breasted mergansers** (which remain Green-listed in the UK) have been up-listed in the AEWA classification, indicating that they are of higher conservation concern. In response, an International

Single Species Action Plan has been agreed for **long-tailed ducks**, with the objectives of increasing survival rates and closing key knowledge gaps. One is also in preparation for **velvet scoters**.

**Common scoters** have shown declines in their UK breeding population and remain on the *BoCC* Red list. The mainland (non-Shetland) race of **eidler** is listed as Red at the race level on the *BoCC* list, and listed as Vulnerable on the European Red list.

### Find out more

A fuller summary of the changing status of waterbirds from *BoCC4* and the latest results from WeBS can be found in the 2014/15 WeBS report: [bto.org/webs-annual-report](http://bto.org/webs-annual-report)

Results from the GSMP can be found at: [monitoring.wwt.org.uk/our-work/goose-swan-monitoring-programme/](http://monitoring.wwt.org.uk/our-work/goose-swan-monitoring-programme/)

# Birds in the UK Overseas Territories

The land and seas for which the UK is responsible extend far beyond what we tend to think of as our country. These include areas of tropical rainforest, vast coral reefs, volcanoes, ice caps and one of the largest maritime

zones in the world. These can be found in the 14 UK Overseas Territories (OTs), which are spread around the world. The OTs are mostly small islands, and include two World Heritage Sites of exceptional natural beauty. Their

inhabitants are British nationals, and the UK is responsible for helping to protect their incredible wildlife.

## Critically Endangered no more: some success for two birds on the IUCN Red List

The **St Helena plover**, also known as the wirebird, and the **Montserrat oriole**, were both down-listed from Critically

Endangered to Vulnerable on the global IUCN Red List in December 2016. This momentous result has been achieved through significant

recovery work and evidenced by the monitoring efforts of numerous partners on St Helena, Montserrat and support from the UK.

Gavin Ellick

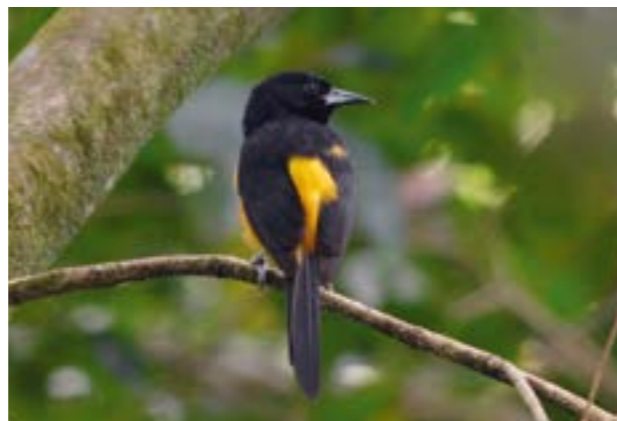


**St Helena plovers** are endemic to the island of St Helena in the South Atlantic.

The species' numbers have steadily increased since 2006 as a result of:

- successful control of invasive non-native species;
- improved habitat management;
- effective mitigation efforts to counter any negative consequences of an airport construction project.

Alistair Homer

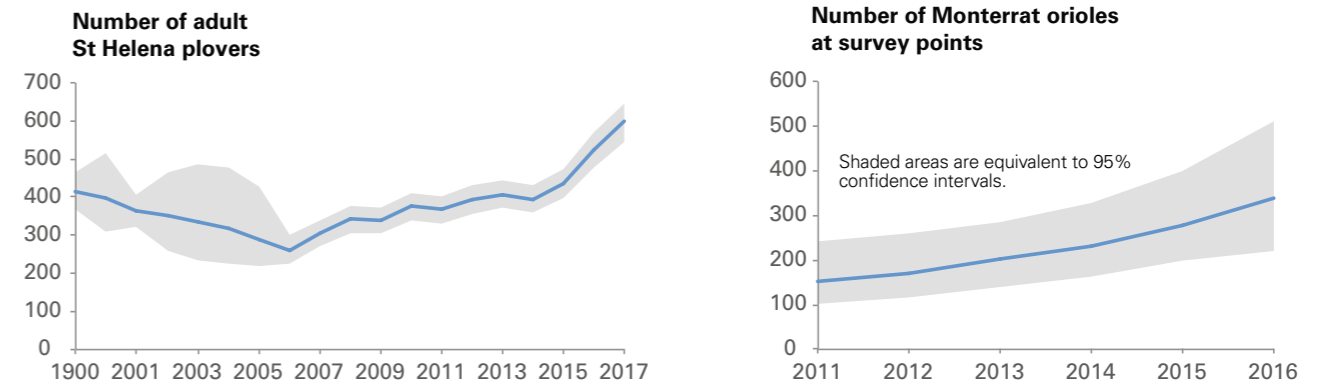


**Montserrat orioles** are endemic to the island of Montserrat in the Caribbean.

This population will always fluctuate because the species' breeding success is influenced by rainfall and the uncertainty of an active volcano on the island. But improved survey efforts in the Centre Hills area of Montserrat indicate the population has been stable or increasing mildly since 2010, and there has been a reduction in volcanic activity in recent years

Protection of the existing forest will be required to keep extinction risk low.

### Population trends of St Helena plovers and Montserrat orioles



## Populations no longer in decline

The populations of **St Helena plovers** and **Montserrat orioles** both number over 250 adult birds and are no longer declining, meaning they no longer meet the IUCN criteria for Critically Endangered. Considering the IUCN Red List criteria, and the threats facing these two species, it is highly likely that they will always remain listed as Vulnerable

and threatened with extinction, due to the limitations in suitable habitat and the continued impact or threat of invasive non-native species on both islands. Monitoring of their populations will continue.

The down-listing means that all of the Critically Endangered birds in the UK Overseas Territories

are now found on Gough Island, part of the Tristan da Cunha group in the remote South Atlantic. The Gough Island Restoration Programme is underway, aiming to address the threats to Critically Endangered **Tristan albatrosses** and **Gough buntings**.

## Monitoring illegal bird trapping in Cyprus

Bird trapping on the island of Cyprus, using mist nets and limesticks (long sticks covered in sticky glue), has been illegal since 1974, but the practice continues within the Republic of Cyprus – including in the UK Sovereign Base Area (SBA), a UK Overseas Territory.

The targets of this trapping are a range of migrant passerines, particularly **blackcaps**, which are traditionally served as “ambelopoulia” delicacies (grilled, pickled or boiled songbirds) – although over 150 species are known to have been illegally caught in traps.

Much of this illegal trade is now conducted by organised criminals to supply restaurants that sell ambelopoulia at high prices, but also for domestic consumption.

To assess the levels and trends of trapping activity across Cyprus, monitoring has been ongoing since autumn 2002. BirdLife Cyprus runs the monitoring programme and carries out systematic searches for active and prepared mist net rides. They search in a stratified random selection of 1km squares from the core trapping areas, every spring and autumn. The highest levels of trapping activity are during autumn, and despite variations over the years, autumn levels are considered similar to when monitoring began in 2002.

More information is available in the trapping reports on the BirdLife Cyprus website: [birdlifecyprus.org/en/html-36-Trapping\\_Reports.html](http://birdlifecyprus.org/en/html-36-Trapping_Reports.html)

The highest level of trapping activity in recent years has been at Cape Pyla, within the SBA, in extensive patches of acacia that have been illegally planted over the past 20 years in order to attract birds for trapping. There has recently been a concerted effort by the SBA administration to remove the acacia from the area, which has been declared a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for its important native coastal vegetation.

BirdLife Cyprus, with support from the RSPB, continues to campaign against this illegal activity within Cyprus and raise awareness of it, particularly with schoolchildren.

## Update on Henderson petrels

Following the unsuccessful attempt to remove introduced invasive rats from Henderson Island in 2011, research has now focused on increasing the understanding of rat ecology on the island. Henderson, one of the remote Pitcairn Islands, is the largest tropical or sub-tropical island where rat eradication has been attempted.

An expedition in 2015 studied the breeding biology of the endemic **Henderson petrel** in more detail than ever before. Henderson Island is so remote that the only previous population estimate (about 18,700 pairs) was derived from an expedition in 1991.

In total, 25 nests were found in 2015. Of these, 40% succeeded

in raising a chick, a higher success rate than the 12.5% reported from 1991. The number of detected nests along 8.9 km of paths was extrapolated to estimate that there were around 20,000 pairs, assuming that the birds nest at uniform density across the entire island.

Differences in survey effort render it difficult to compare the estimates from 1991 and 2015 directly, and variation in nesting success from year to year needs to be considered when assessing the status of the population. But the new estimate does provide some reassurance that the species is unlikely to go extinct within the next decade. There is currently no evidence that the population of **Henderson petrels** has deteriorated since it was listed as Endangered by the IUCN. These results give us more time to understand rodent ecology and ultimately improve eradication operations – and so save more species vulnerable to rats – on tropical islands in the future.



Endangered Henderson petrels are vulnerable to invasive rats.

## First robust population estimates of Atlantic yellow-nosed albatrosses

One of the smallest albatross species in the world, the endangered **Atlantic yellow-nosed albatross**, only breeds on the islands of Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic. Tracking studies show that they forage right across the South Atlantic Ocean, where sadly they are sometimes accidentally caught as bycatch in fisheries.

The Albatross Task Force, which the RSPB leads on behalf of BirdLife International, is working with fishermen to reduce albatross bycatch in this area. Monitoring the success of these efforts requires

robust population estimates of the breeding colonies.

Historically, the main island of Tristan da Cunha has been the species' stronghold but the only estimate of its population (16,000-30,000 breeding pairs) dates from 1974, and was based on general impressions only.

In partnership with the Tristan da Cunha Conservation Department and the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, the RSPB conducted a survey by helicopter in September 2015. By merging more than 600 photographic

images, and examining areas of suitable habitat, we estimate that the current population of Tristan da Cunha is around 15,000 pairs (9,300–24,000 pairs). This estimate is being complemented by an updated population estimate from Gough Island, where the previous estimate of 5,100 pairs dates from 2001.

Robust population estimates help us to understand the population trend of this globally-threatened species, enabling us to monitor the effectiveness of our actions to reduce bycatch of these beautiful birds at sea.

There are around 15,000 pairs of Atlantic yellow-nosed albatrosses in Tristan da Cunha – the birds' stronghold.

# Current and planned surveys

The information summarised in *The state of the UK's birds 2016* is drawn from the annual and periodic monitoring programmes described below, and from the work of individual ornithologists. Anyone interested in taking part in these surveys should contact the relevant organisations at the addresses given on page 47.

The **Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)** is the monitoring scheme for common and widespread breeding land birds throughout the UK. It aims to provide data on population trends to inform and direct conservation action. It is a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland (DAERA), Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)) and the RSPB. **Contact the BTO.**  
[bto.org/bbs](http://bto.org/bbs)  
@BBS birds

The **Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)** is a partnership between the BTO, the RSPB and the JNCC (the latter on behalf of the statutory nature conservation bodies: DAERA, NE, NRW and SNH) and in association with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT). **Contact the BTO.**  
[bto.org/webs](http://bto.org/webs)  
@WeBS\_UK

The **Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS)** has been running since 1998. This scheme, and its predecessor the Waterways Bird Survey (WBS) that ran from 1974 to 2007, aims to monitor riverside breeding birds, particularly waterway

specialists, across the UK. **Contact the BTO.**  
[bto.org/wbbs](http://bto.org/wbbs)  
@\_BTO

The **Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme (GSMP)** is a suite of surveys (funded under the WWT, JNCC and SNH partnership), designed to accurately assess the abundance and breeding success of the UK's native geese and migratory swans during the non-breeding season. **Contact the WWT.**  
[monitoring.wwt.org.uk/our-work/goose-swan-monitoring-programme/](http://monitoring.wwt.org.uk/our-work/goose-swan-monitoring-programme/)  
@WWTconservation

The **Heronries Census** collects counts of apparently occupied nests each year, from as many heronries as possible throughout the UK. It also aims to monitor populations of colonial waterbirds, especially **grey herons, little egrets** and **cormorants**. **Contact the BTO.**  
[bto.org/heronries-census](http://bto.org/heronries-census)  
@\_BTO

The **Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP)** gathers information on breeding numbers, breeding success and other parameters to help us understand drivers of change and to target conservation action.



Golden plover

Co-ordinated by JNCC, it is a partnership between the statutory nature conservation agencies, and research and conservation organisations. **Contact the JNCC.**  
[jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1550](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1550)  
@JNCC\_UK

The **Big Garden Birdwatch** is the largest wildlife survey in the world. Its simple design (one hour watching birds in your garden or local park over one weekend in January) means around half a million people take part every year. The data provide an excellent snapshot of garden bird numbers across the UK. **Contact the RSPB.**  
[rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](http://rspb.org.uk/birdwatch)  
@RSPBScience

**Garden BirdWatch (GBW)** is a year-round scheme recording the weekly occurrence and numbers of birds in participants' gardens. The data collected provide valuable information on annual and seasonal changes in bird use of rural and urban habitats. These can be related to population trends in the wider countryside. **Contact the BTO.**  
[bto.org/gbw](http://bto.org/gbw)  
@BTO\_GBW

**BirdTrack** is a year-round bird recording system run by the BTO in partnership with the RSPB, BirdWatch Ireland, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and the Welsh Ornithological Society. The collection of species list data from a large number of observers helps a range of national research and monitoring objectives. **Contact the BTO.**  
[birdtrack.net](http://birdtrack.net)  
@BirdTrack

**Gap-filling in 2017 for the European Breeding Bird Atlas (EBBA2)** is aimed at collecting up-to-date evidence of breeding for all Britain and Ireland bird species, to provide contributions to this major European Bird Census Committee (EBCC) project involving bird NGOs across Europe. Contributors should use BirdTrack to submit data with Atlas breeding evidence codes. **Contact the BTO.**  
[bto.org/ebba2](http://bto.org/ebba2)  
@\_BTO

The **Ringling Scheme** is run by the BTO and covers Britain and Ireland. It is funded by a partnership of the BTO, the JNCC (on behalf of DAERA, NE, NRW and SNH), the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Ireland) and the ringers themselves. Volunteer

bird ringers collect data on the survival, productivity, movements and condition of birds. Project ringling (such as the Constant Effort Sites Scheme, the Ringing Adults for Survival project, and other targeted ringling) forms an important part of the Scheme. **Contact the BTO.**  
[bto.org/ringing](http://bto.org/ringing)  
@\_BTO

The **BTO Nest Record Scheme (NRS)** gathers vital information on the breeding success of the UK's birds by asking volunteer nest recorders to find and follow the progress of individual birds' nests. The scheme is funded by a partnership of the BTO and the JNCC (on behalf of DAERA, NE, NRW and SNH). **Contact the BTO.**  
[bto.org/nrs](http://bto.org/nrs)  
@\_BTO

A programme of **UK-wide surveys** of priority breeding species are conducted under the Statutory Conservation Agencies and RSPB Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS) Programme. **Hen harriers, capercaillie** and **cirl buntings** were surveyed in 2016. **Contact the RSPB.**  
[rspb.org.uk/surveys](http://rspb.org.uk/surveys)  
@RSPBScience



Little egret

# Acknowledgements

Monitoring of birds in the UK and the Overseas Territories, such as that covered in this report, involves a broad partnership of government agencies, NGOs, sponsors and independent ornithologists, including:

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Pink-footed geese by David Tipling (rspb-images.com)



# Who we are

*The state of the UK's birds 2016* is also available online on the websites of the BTO, the RSPB and WWT (see addresses below).

Designed and published by the RSPB on behalf of:

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Front cover image: golden eagle by Mark Sisson (rspb-images.com)

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