

Wryneck 1964-66

Title

Wryneck Survey 1964-1966

Description and Summary of Results

A BTO investigation carried out by James Monk 1954-1958 showed that the Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* had decreased steadily as a breeding species in Britain during the previous hundred years or so. So it was decided to repeat the survey from 1964 to 1966 to see how much things had changed.

Compared with 1954-1958, the annual average of all breeding-season records in 1964-1966 was down by 55% (average 44 records *cf* 96), and of proved and probable breeding records by 58% (23 records *cf* 54). Situations where one or two birds were observed in a potential breeding area were classed as 'probable breeding', so some unmated birds may have been included in this category – indeed four (1964), six (1965) and one (1966) records relate to birds which in fact probably failed to pair.

All breeding season records were south of a line from the Wash to the Severn estuary and the distribution was not dissimilar from the 1954-1958 survey.

Between 1950 and 1966 there were eight Wrynecks recorded in Inverness-shire between 25 May and 20 June – the only Scottish records in that time which were not obvious migrants. However Wrynecks had never been known to breed in Scotland and it was impossible during this survey to confirm breeding anywhere near these.

Examination of the 39 places where proved or probable breeding was recorded in Essex, Kent, Surrey and Sussex in one or more years during the survey, showed that they were all on or within 250m of chalk, gravel or sandy soil, except one in an extensive area of heavy clay. This pronounced association with well-drained soil was not a recent development, although when numbers were higher the association was not so apparent.

Twenty of the 39 breeding or probable breeding sites were in habitats with an appreciable area of uncultivated ground, 15 were in gardens and four in other biotopes. These are mostly places in which the ants *Lasius niger* and *L. flavus* were likely to be present.

Methods of Data Capture

Publicity for the survey was placed in ornithological and other natural history publications, in the press and on BBC radio. Reports were obtained from county ornithological societies in England and Wales, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, La Société Guernesaise, La Société Jersiaise, Manx Museum and National Trust, BTO Regional Representatives in Ireland, Bird Observatories and the Field Studies Council. Also 137 more local societies concerned with ornithology in the southern half of England were specifically contacted. No form or specific questionnaire was used but all breeding-season records sent in were followed up personally to request as complete details as possible. In 1964 and 1965 all records were collected but in 1966 the survey was restricted to records indicative of breeding and attention was therefore concentrated in southern and eastern counties of England. In 1966 areas where there had been proved or probable breeding records in either of the two preceding years

were generally well watched but there was a greater chance than in 1965 of birds in new sites not being reported.

All records were classified on the same basis as in the previous survey, namely:

Pairs known to have bred – Proved breeding;

records 1 March-26 April and 21 August onwards – Migrant;

records 27 April-14 May on 1 day only – Just possible breeding; 2 days – Possible breeding; more than 2 days – Probable breeding;

records 15 May-31 July: 1 day only – Possible breeding; more than 1 day – Probable breeding;

records 1-20 August: 1 day only – Just possible breeding; more than 1 day – Possible breeding;

all records from coastal bird observatories and similar sites, which were not near areas where there had been breeding in recent years – Migrant.

Purpose of Data Capture

To determine the distribution and numbers of breeding Wryneck throughout Britain and Ireland ten years after the previous survey.

Geographic Coverage

All of Britain and Ireland.

Temporal Coverage

The breeding seasons of 1964 to 1966.

Other Interested parties

The survey was organised and run by BTO as a Trust-aided enquiry.

Organiser(s)

Ronald E F Peal.

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The main report of the survey is:

Peal, R.E.F. 1968. The distribution of the Wryneck in the British Isles 1964-1966. *Bird Study* 15: 111-126.

The survey was noticed in *BTO News* numbers 4, 9 and 17, and in *Bird Study* issues for March 1964 and March 1965.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

A few letters, stored with 1954 survey.

Notes on Access and Use

Other information

Notes on Survey Design

Specific Issues for Analysis