

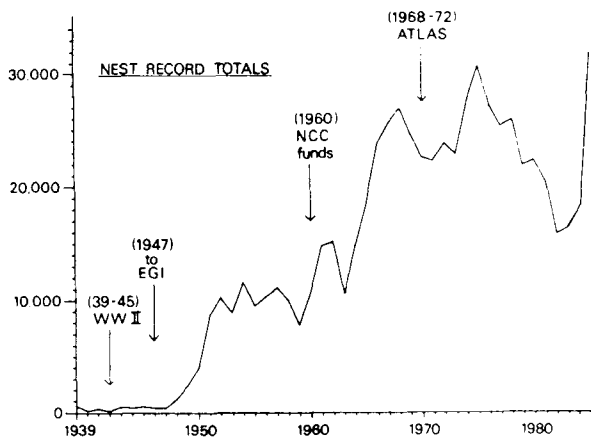


Nest Record News

A Newsletter prepared specially for supporters of the BTO's NEST RECORD SCHEME
MAY 1986

1985 - A RECORD SEASON

1985 was one of the wettest summers for some thirty years in parts but the weather did little to dampen the spirits of nest recorders. By the end of March 31,782 cards had reached Beech Grove, 43% up on the previous year's encouraging total and the highest since the scheme started back in 1939 (see figure). Grateful thanks to go to all 523 observers and members of the 56 bird clubs who contributed from just one to 1,137 cards. Hopefully the good work will be maintained in 1986.



A glance through the species totals shows a general improvement in the intake of cards for most species in 1985. It is especially gratifying to note the increases in 72 of the 82 'target' species - those identified as deserving extra attention (see page 8). The number of nest histories ranges from just one Golden Oriole (first for the scheme) up to 3,254 Blackbird cards - the result of much hard fieldwork, hopefully enjoyed.

Some interesting stories lie behind these totals. The damp spring washed out many early wader nests, Lapwing, Redshank and Curlew suffering. Flood water and river spate conditions destroyed early nesting attempts by Moorhen, Dipper, Common Sandpiper and Grey Wagtail. A few species actually benefitted. Stable water levels on the Scottish lochs helped Red and Black-throated Divers and Slavonian Grebe to one of their most productive summers.

Titmice (especially Great and Coal) over-wintered in good condition aided by the bumper fruiting crop of the previous autumn. Large clutches and broods were widely recorded. With rodent populations also high, owls (notably Tawny) laid above average clutches while there were several instances of confirmed double brooding by Barn Owls. Kestrel and owl broods met with mixed fortunes through the incessant rains of July leading to regular losses.

The general damp, cool, spring and summer weather contrived to delay nesting attempts by insect feeders like HouseMartin and Swift. The same applied to some upland nesters, including Wheatear and Meadow Pipit. Some species such as Swallow and Nightjar finished breeding early and departed south.

Several observers reported more unhatched eggs than usual, an increased proportion containing developed chicks suggesting that poor weather may have caused chilling and death. On the southern open heaths Stonechat and Dartford Warbler had a poorish summer 'missing out' their second (middle) broods. In coastal habitats Shag, Little Tern and Ringed Plover were a trio of seabirds that experienced abysmal seasons in places.

Many other birds, including most representatives of the thrush and finch families, responded to the conditions by having protracted nesting periods. Song Thrush, Blackbird, Bullfinch and Redpoll were all recorded as egg-laying in August.

Parrot Crossbills, the star birds of 1984, again reared young in coastal north Norfolk. Meanwhile Pied Flycatchers raised three young at a nest in the Antrim Glens - apparently the first successful breeding record for Ireland.

Historically 1985 will perhaps be remembered as the year that the Sea Eagle finally returned as a successful British breeding bird after an absence of seventy years (last bred Skye 1916). For the BTO nest record scheme though 1985 will be recalled perhaps for a record intake of cards completed through the energies of over five hundred nest finders.

1985 THE RECORD INTAKE - SOME HIGHLIGHTS

The strength of the nest record scheme comes from those birdwatchers able to complete a handful of nest histories on a local plot - their garden, wood, farm, gravel pit or whatever. For others who have more time to spend nest finding may become an absorbing hobby and large numbers of cards result. Many of these observers are included in the list on the following pages. It serves to illustrate several points. Firstly, just what a single nest recorder can achieve in one season. Then how certain species are demanding the attention of individuals. How the plea for extra help has also improved the geographical spread of contributions - most regions and many counties are represented. Finally, how some nest finders are operating in small groups connected often with a bird club, natural history society or ringing group.

TOTALS FOR NEST RECORD SCHEME FROM PRE 1984 to 1985

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>PRE-84</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Red-throated Diver +	1040	49	88	1177
Black-throated Diver +	124	3	8	135
Little Grebe *	1190	37	66	1293
Great Crested Grebe *	1518	45	113	1676
Slavonian Grebe +	117	1	6	124
Black-necked Grebe +	11	1	-	12
Fulmar	1427	130	180	1737
Manx Shearwater	51	-	-	51
Storm Petrel	18	1	-	19
Leach's Petrel +	2	-	-	2
Gannet	17	1	-	18
Cormorant *	785	21	53	859
Shag *	1742	230	132	2104
Bittern +	13	-	4	17
Little Bittern +	-	1	-	1
Grey Heron *	1650	89	150	1889
Mute Swan *	2351	79	131	2561
Greylag Goose +	171	11	37	219
Canada Goose	799	40	86	925
Egyptian Goose	2	-	-	2
Shelduck	157	10	12	179
Mandarin	73	6	26	105
Wigeon	87	4	-	91
Gadwall	40	-	1	41
Teal	147	3	3	153
Mallard *	4849	197	254	5300
Pintail +	6	-	1	7
Garganey +	6	-	1	7
Shoveler	79	2	5	86
Pochard	82	10	9	101
Tufted Duck	538	24	49	611
Eider	985	17	103	1105
Common Scoter +	25	4	-	29
Goldeneye +	8	-	3	11
Red-breasted Merganser	189	1	5	195
Goosander	96	10	14	120
Ruddy Duck	6	2	5	13

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>PRE-84</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Honey Buzzard +	8	-	-	8
Red Kite +	10	2	1	13
Marsh Harrier +	5	-	-	5
Hen Harrier +	308	90	50	448
Montagu's Harrier +	44	1	-	45
Goshawk +	25	11	17	53
Sparrowhawk *	1986	128	181	2295
Buzzard *	2013	167	211	2391
Golden Eagle +	249	11	29	289
Osprey +	23	-	1	24
Kestrel *	2851	173	265	3289
Merlin +	651	35	57	743
Hobby +	236	21	26	283
Peregrine +	571	177	79	827
Red Grouse	386	8	16	410
Ptarmigan	77	1	3	81
Black Grouse	30	-	2	32
Capercaillie	60	-	-	60
Red-legged Partridge *	331	11	16	358
Grey Partridge *	665	16	13	694
Quail +	9	-	-	9
Pheasant *	1485	42	67	1594
Lady Amherst's Pheasant	1	-	-	1
Water Rail	52	-	8	60
Corncrake +	24	1	-	25
Moorhen *	14369	232	478	15079
Coot *	7174	192	442	7808
Oystercatcher *	6606	295	490	7391
Avocet +	3	-	-	3
Stone-curlew +	366	-	3	369
Little Ringed Plover +	875	49	52	976
Ringed Plover *	3935	145	407	4487
Kentish Plover +	19	-	-	19
Dotterel +	101	9	4	114
Golden Plover	428	126	20	574
Lapwing *	12891	497	563	13951
Temminck's Stint +	1	-	-	1
Purple Sandpiper +	3	-	-	3
Dunlin	402	10	11	423
Snipe *	1065	28	23	1116

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>PRE-84</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Woodcock	431	25	15	471
Black-tailed Godwit +	6	-	-	6
Whimbrel +	42	-	-	42
Curlew *	1551	146	75	1772
Redshank *	1505	32	91	1628
Greenshank +	103	13	8	124
Wood Sandpiper +	2	-	-	2
Common Sandpiper *	824	38	48	910
Red-necked Phalarope +	32	-	-	32
Arctic Skua	164	21	5	190
Great Skua	252	4	6	262
Black-headed Gull *	2769	51	249	3069
Mediterranean Gull +	2	-	-	2
Common Gull *	1557	37	60	1654
Lesser Black-backed Gull	678	2	10	690
Herring Gull	3186	49	148	3383
Great Black-backed Gull	741	3	7	751
Kittiwake	1162	225	108	1495
Sandwich Tern	138	-	-	138
Roseate Tern +	62	36	13	111
Common Tern *	2100	75	130	2305
Arctic Tern *	947	32	103	1082
Little Tern +	2162	9	260	2431
Guillemot	513	2	68	583
Razorbill	278	5	56	339
Black Guillemot	150	13	192	355
Puffin	75	4	68	147
Rock Dove	95	6	14	115
Feral Pigeon	736	5	38	779
Stock Dove *	3210	115	226	3551
Woodpigeon *	14370	455	614	15439
Collared Dove *	1524	71	158	1753
Turtle Dove *	1522	30	41	1593
Ring-necked Parakeet	1	-	-	1
Cuckoo *	1197	48	164	1409
Barn Owl +	791	65	92	948
Snowy Owl +	1	-	-	1
Little Owl *	909	49	52	1010
Tawny Owl *	3047	138	335	3520
Long-eared Owl	354	15	24	393

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>PRE-84</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Short-eared Owl	133	11	19	163
Nightjar	464	33	30	527
Swift *	732	24	31	787
Kingfisher +	320	14	16	350
Hoopoe +	1	-	-	1
Wryneck +	11	-	-	11
Green Woodpecker	200	5	8	213
Great Spotted Woodpecker	498	27	35	560
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	97	4	4	105
Woodlark +	306	10	9	325
Skylark *	4722	144	231	5097
Sand Martin	633	15	9	657
Swallow *	25207	597	1258	27062
House Martin *	2545	143	211	2899
Tree Pipit	970	40	52	1062
Meadow Pipit *	5548	393	394	6335
Rock Pipit	402	13	16	431
Yellow Wagtail	726	14	18	758
Grey Wagtail	2604	161	182	2947
Pied Wagtail	5200	250	249	5699
Dipper	3623	406	440	4469
Wren *	9444	194	373	10011
Dunnock *	23673	239	675	24587
Robin *	13188	390	629	14207
Nightingale	319	2	11	332
Bluethroat +	1	-	-	1
Black Redstart +	108	-	7	115
Redstart *	1864	74	171	2109
Whinchat *	1059	74	97	1230
Stonechat *	1583	71	31	1685
Wheatear *	1705	115	213	2033
Ring Ousel *	928	51	55	1034
Blackbird *	96861	1395	3254	101510
Fieldfare +	1	-	-	1
Song Thrush *	59708	637	1267	61612
Redwing +	52	26	7	85
Mistle Thrush *	5074	119	227	5420
Cetti's Warbler +	16	-	1	17
Grasshopper Warbler	229	3	14	246
Savi's Warbler +	2	-	-	2

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>PRE-84</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Sedge Warbler *	2756	160	121	3037
Marsh Warbler +	63	20	16	99
Reed Warbler *	7078	154	230	7462
Dartford Warbler +	177	50	45	272
Lesser Whitethroat	555	29	29	613
Whitethroat *	4226	74	89	4389
Garden Warbler *	979	51	64	1094
Blackcap *	1763	83	150	1996
Wood Warbler	1124	78	81	1283
Chiffchaff *	1303	37	78	1418
Willow Warbler *	8062	349	600	9011
Goldcrest *	536	34	26	596
Firecrest +	7	-	1	8
Spotted Flycatcher *	6771	204	276	7251
Pied Flycatcher	10907	532	1027	12466
Bearded Tit +	43	3	6	52
Long-tailed Tit *	2893	69	123	3085
Marsh Tit	806	13	35	854
Willow Tit	298	12	12	322
Crested Tit +	115	6	14	135
Coal Tit *	3091	78	139	3308
Blue Tit *	32342	1310	2597	36249
Great Tit *	20461	1058	1959	23478
Nuthatch *	1044	56	113	1213
Treecreeper *	1396	39	89	1524
Short-toed Treecreeper +	1	-	-	1
Golden Oriole +	-	-	1	1
Red-backed Shrike +	251	-	-	251
Jay *	1014	17	39	1070
Magpie *	3510	231	267	4008
Chough +	279	9	41	329
Jackdaw *	3010	169	226	3405
Rook *	2567	140	263	2970
Carrion Crow *	3426	189	176	3791
Hooded Crow	487	61	45	593
Raven *	1460	82	82	1624
Starling *	8552	259	927	9738
House Sparrow *	9050	184	192	9426
Tree Sparrow *	11228	145	543	11916
Chaffinch *	14073	319	756	15148

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>PRE-84</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Serin +	-	-	1	1
Greenfinch *	10439	193	266	10898
Goldfinch *	2233	34	56	2323
Siskin	33	1	6	40
Linnet *	20511	197	572	21280
Twite	706	13	21	740
Redpoll *	1080	11	49	1140
Common Crossbill +	76	4	8	88
Parrot Crossbill +	1	2	1	4
Scarlet Rosefinch +	1	-	-	1
Bullfinch *	4298	66	109	4473
Hawfinch	84	22	2	108
Snow Bunting +	10	-	-	10
Yellowhammer *	4913	127	165	5205
Cirl Bunting +	55	-	-	55
Reed Bunting *	5864	159	125	6148
Corn Bunting *	276	32	121	429
	<u>PRE-84</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>GRAND</u>
	618969	18185	31782	<u>TOTAL</u>
				669036

Bird species protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act
+ TARGET SPECIES - deserving special attention.

* These species fall into two categories:

1) a range of 'indicator' species which the BTO is able to use to assess variations in breeding performance between years, regions and habitats.

2) species for whom the sample of nest histories is nearing the point where a sufficiently large number are housed at Beech Grove to merit a detailed analysis and publication of a paper on the breeding biology of the bird.

All cards are treasured for the range of 'Target' species.

Mrs J. Abbott (Glos.) 167 cards including 128 Blue Tit, 6 Nuthatch; W.D. Allen (Shrops) 150 cards including 6 Spotted Flycatcher, 12 Blackbird; P. Anderson (Tyne & Wear) 107 cards including 3 Shoveler, 26 Redshank; M.R. Bartle (Notts) 126 cards including 29 Blackbird, 30 Great Tit; G.G. Bates and I.M. and N.R. Foster (Sutherland) 108 cards including 9 Buzzard, 6 Hooded Crow; R.E. Batty (Midddx) 166 cards including 43 Blackbird, 14 Greenfinch; H. Bradley (North Down Ringing Group) 146 cards including 74 Willow Warbler, 13 Rook; K. Briggs (Lancaster Birdwatching Society) 755 cards including 129 Oystercatcher, 70 Lapwing, 6 Goosander; J.E.A. Brook and R.C. Cooke (Warwicks) 724 cards including 56 Moorhen, 106 Woodpigeon, 13 Blackcap; K. Bruce and K.G.G. Bruce (Kirkcudbright) 234 cards including 46 Cormorant, 13 Tawny Owl; R.H. Bucknall (Northumberland) 112 cards including 3 Red-breasted Merganser, 6 Short-eared Owl; I.D. Bullock (Glos) 281 cards including 75 Pied Flycatcher, 142 Blue Tit; Dr. P.J.K. Burton, T.G. Holder, M. Hunt and D.A. Lees (Herts) 313 cards including 80 Kestrel, 34 Tawny Owl; J. Callion (Cumbria) 235 cards including 39 Sedge Warbler, 19 Willow Warbler; Dr.B. Campbell and T. Young (Oxon) 232 cards including 10 Long-tailed Tit, 14 Chaffinch; M.C. Chesney (Perth) 117 cards including 5 Common Sandpiper, 17 Swallow; J. Clark (Gwynedd) 147 cards including 16 Tufted Duck, 17 Common Tern; I. Clowes (Northumberland) 117 cards including 39 Eider, 39 Arctic Tern; J.E.S. Cooper and R. Sanderson (Sussex) 371 cards including 6 Tawny Owl, 70 Great Tit, 35 Starling; D. Cox and B. Hawes (Bucks) 878 cards including 45 Pied Wagtail, 250 Blackbird, 44 Magpie; Dr. S. Cox (Essex) 393 cards including 166 Little Tern, 165 Ringed Plover; R.E. Danson (Lancs) 288 cards including 9 Jackdaw, 103 Tree Sparrow; F. Davison (Northumberland) 101 cards including 7 Heron, 18 Pied Flycatcher; P.G. Davis and S.G. Davis (Surrey) 186 cards including 11 Stonechat, 11 Dartford Warbler; F. Davison (Northumbria Ringing Group) 266 cards including 3 Goosander, 94 Great Tit; R.A. Denyer (Surrey) 145 cards including 4 Mandarin, 23 Stock Dove; N.R. Duncan (Grampian) 393 cards including 72 Skylark, 50 Meadow Pipit; M.R. Fletcher MAFF, Surrey) 335 cards including 144 Starling, 121 Tree Sparrow; D. Fulton and T. Crossman (Shrops) 248 cards including 36 Wheatear, 11 Mistle Thrush; H.R. Hammacott (Bristol Naturalists' Society) 356 cards including 29 Lapwing, 63 Willow Warbler, 8 Whitethroat; A.B.J. Harris (Rye Meads Ringing Group, Herts) 335 cards including 41 Common Tern, 62 Reed Warbler, 10 Reed Bunting; I and G.P. Hildred (Lincs) 217 cards including 18 Wren, 37 House Sparrow; P.M. Hill (Salop) 184 cards including 112 Pied Flycatcher, 7 Nuthatch; Dr. E. Hird (Kent) 148 cards including 74 Blackbird, 21 Linnet; P.R. Holness (Norfolk) 329 cards including 145 Swallow, 8 Whinchat; K. Hughes and Rev. J. Dagger (Hants) 198 cards including 4 Nightjar, 26 Dartford Warbler; G. Kaczanow (Devon) 115 cards including 25 Carrion Crow, 27 Raven; W. Kennedy (Co. Londonderry) 126 cards including 100 Black-headed Gull; J. Kieser (Hants) 272 cards including 42 Linnet, 12 Yellowhammer; R. Lambert (Gibraltar Point B.O., Lincs) 199 cards including 61 Ringed Plover, 22 Tree Sparrow; D.E. Lewis (Gwent) 133 cards including 25 Blackbird, 8 Greenfinch; J.M.S. Lewis and S.J. Roberts (Gwent) 224 cards including 43 Dipper, 3 Crossbill, 3 Siskin; J.V. Lloyd (Dyfed) 250 cards including 10 Redstart, 43 Rook; R.J. Louch and D. Tompson (Oxon) 358 cards including 11 Grasshopper Warbler, 27 Chiffchaff, 22 Yellowhammer;

Dr.A.D.L. and Mrs S.L. Lyszkowski (London) 202 cards including 13 Great Crested Grebe, 63 Coot; B.A. Madden (Ireland) 224 cards including 113 Swallow, 22 Jackdaw; C.F. Mapletoft (Birklands Ringing Group, Notts) 896 cards including 43 Wren, 67 Song Thrush, 72 Chaffinch; P. Maynard and J. Baldwin (Hants) 188 cards including 10 Nightjar, 6 Woodlark, 8 Nightingale; M.O. Meadows (Essex) 146 cards including 15 Moorhen, 5 Corn Bunting; S.J. Meek (South Humberside) 149 cards including 4 Cuckoo, 22 Wren; I. McAlpine (Merseyside) 101 cards including 11 Moorhen, 27 Blackbird; J. Oldland and D. Harrison (Yorks) 316 cards including 4 Water Rail, 11 Redstart, 16 Reed Warbler; Orkney Ringing Group (co-ordinator E. Meek) 426 cards including 6 Merlin, 170 Black Guillemot, 11 Hooded Crow; G.D.A. Platt (Co. Antrim) 1,137 cards including 13 Peregrine, 179 Swallow, 18 Mistle Thrush; W. Proctor (Warwicks) 478 cards including 50 Woodpigeon, 130 Blackbird, 27 Magpie; D.J. Radford (Powys) 156 cards including 60 Oystercatcher, 78 Ringed Plover; I. Rendall (Aberdeen) 312 cards including 48 Song Thrush, 26 Greenfinch; J. Richardson (Durham) 417 cards including 10 Stock Dove, 14 Dunnock, 22 Chaffinch; S. Richardson (Durham) 100 cards including 26 Blackbird, 19 Chaffinch; K. Rideout (National Trust, Northumberland) 137 cards including 39 Kittiwake, 13 Roseate Tern; D. Rogers and A. Robinson (Devon) 145 cards including 61 Pied Flycatcher, 57 Blue Tit; G. Shaw (Dumfries & Galloway) 124 cards including 6 Barn Owl, 4 Whinchat; R.G. Short, D.G. Harris and C.F. Thorn (London) 117 cards including 10 Spotted Flycatcher, 5 Nuthatch; C. Smith (Mid Lincs Ringing Group) 602 cards including 11 Tawny Owl, 156 Blackbird, 73 Rook; I.M. Spence (Lancs) 126 cards including 47 Swallow, 29 Blue Tit; S. Squires (Mid Glamorgan) 100 cards including 10 Carrion Crow, 7 Willow Warbler; W. Squires (Powys) 192 cards including 103 Pied Flycatcher, 6 Redstart; R.L. Swann (Glenurquhart Bird Club) 235 cards including 15 Buzzard, 23 Tawny Owl, 20 Wheatear; W. Thrower and S. Organ (Norfolk) 160 cards 28 Song Thrush, 34 Blackbird; Dr. S.J. Tyler and S.J.Ormerod (Powys) 288 cards including 54 Grey Wagtail, 148 Dipper; Dr. L.L.J. Vick (Edinburgh Ringing Group) 143 cards including 55 Wheatear, 18 Ring Ouzel; D. Warden (Bristol) 218 cards including 12 Little Grebe, 47 Coot; I.H. Wolfenden (Liverpool) 113 cards including 34 Skylark, 17 Meadow Pipit; M. Wright (Suffolk) 132 cards including 15 Ringed Plover, 49 Linnets.

CARE WHEN NEST FINDING AND RECORDING

The role of the Nest Record Scheme in helping to reveal details essential to our understanding of the annual cycle and subsequently conservation of our birdlife has been demonstrated for many species. The nesting period is a particularly sensitive time for many birds, however, and recorders are asked to adhere closely to the Code of Conduct included in the standard Instructions and outlined in more detail in The Nest Record Scheme (BTO Guide No. 12). Safety of the bird and the contents of the its nest must come first at all times.

Details of those species protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act are given on the following page.

CURRENT ANALYSES OF CARDS

The historical bank of cards are increasingly being put to good use by analysts both inside and away from Beech Grove. Over 80,000 cards were examined during compilation of the book Farming and Birds by Raymond O'Connor and Mike Shrubbs. This involved an assessment of breeding performance and habitat utilization by species ranging from Woodpigeon and Reed Bunting to Linnet and Yellowhammer over a twenty year period. Mistle Thrush, Wren, Swallow and Redstart are among a group of birds whose past holdings of cards were analysed to compare the breeding strategies of resident and migrant species in Britain.

Recently various organizations have found information extracted from nest record cards of benefit - the Nature Conservancy Council for Skylark, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology with Blackcock and the RSPB with Dipper. In addition a number of amateur and professional ornithologists have recently, or are currently, analysing the cards for a wide spectrum of species. These include: Bittern (M. Johnstone, Suffolk), Mandarin (A.K. Davies, Surrey), Hen Harrier (D. Elias, NCC, Gwynedd), Merlin (Dr.C.J. Bibby, RSPB, Beds), Water Rail (M.J. Bayliss, Oxford), Stone-curlew (R.A. Morgan, Cambridge), Little Ringed Plover (Mrs. E. Parrinder, Norfolk), Cuckoo (Dr.N.B. Davies and M.de L.Brooke, Cambridge), Jay (Dr.D.A. Hill, Hants), Pied Flycatcher (P. Jennings, Powys), Lapwing (M. Shrubbs, Powys).

The BTO is keen to encourage the analysis of cards away from headquarters. Papers written by BTO members, based upon the national collection of cards, have formed an extremely valuable element of the Trust's annual list of scientific publications in the past. It is to be stressed that though the advent of the computer facilities at Beech Grove greatly enhances the scope and speed of research by the professional staff of the BTO, there is still a very important analysts role to be played by the interested member. If you have a local study of a particular species under way and feel that your findings would supplement an in depth examination of the total holdings, do please write to the Nest Records Officer.

COMPUTER HELP GROWS

The team of four Manpower Service Commission employees based at Beech Grove have worked diligently throughout the past year helping to make the findings of the scheme more readily available. Over 30,000 cards were coded, input and checked. Hand analyses for species like Woodlark, Barn Owl and Grasshopper Warbler continues, but the presence now of annual samples on computer tape for common species like Lapwing, Blackbird and Yellowhammer makes rapid analysis of breeding performance possible, greatly extending the scope and importance of the scheme.

SENDING ON YOUR 1986 CARDS

Please send your completed cards as soon as fieldwork finishes - by the end of the year where possible and by 1st March at the very latest. Do bear in mind though that a variety of species will still be egg-laying in July, August, and even later and that the scheme's annual intake of cards must aim to cover the full breeding season. Early batches of cards, together with comments on the nature of the breeding season, can be integrated in descriptive reports for BTO News and other publications. Some contributors find the end of year BTO Annual and Ringing Conferences a safe, and money saving, way of passing across large batches of cards and collecting fresh recording materials.

SAFE ARRIVAL OF CARDS

It is pleasing to report that all batches of cards for 1985 appear to have reached Beech Grove safely. Many contributors heeded the suggestion of first binding large samples of cards with string or rubber bands, then placing them into a polythene bag before applying the outer wrapping. Before posting the hard won results of your current season's fieldwork, please make sure that the cards are in Vooos order (as listed on your summary sheet) and that this sheet is completed with your address clearly marked. Many thanks.

FURTHER HELP IN 1986

It is hoped that the excellent response to the plea for extra help with the scheme in 1985, resulting in a very fine total of 31,782 cards completed, will be maintained in 1986 and subsequent seasons. The broad aim of the scheme is 20,000 'quality' cards each year from all corners of the country. 'Quality' cards include multi-visit ones and those where the nest has been followed through to outcome (success or failure). There is scope in 1986 for improved quality of cards where time and circumstances allow. Also, further attention to the 'target' species listed.

Many of those species which deserve greater attention are widespread birds of garden, farm and wood - Swallow, Wren, Mistle Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher and Greenfinch are good examples. You may well be able to use the spare card and summary sheet enclosed to encourage a fellow birdwatcher to help - taking care to guide their fieldwork in the first instance. You may also have a chance to display the enclosed badge to advantage in some way.

If at any point you run out of nest record instructions, cards, summary sheets or code of conduct, please write to:
David Glue (Nest Records Officer) or Mrs Mercedes Tourle (Assistant to Nest Records Officer), British Trust for Ornithology, Beech Grove, Tring, Herts HP23 5NR.

DAVID GLUE

May 1986