

# NRSnews

The newsletter of the Nest Record Scheme



## ISSUE 29 • MAY 2013 INSIDE THIS EDITION

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**PLUS** TRIBUTE TO ALAN BURGESS, NEW PARTICIPANTS IN 2012, AWARD FOR BOB SHEPPARD



Thanks to Mark Joy for this great photo of a Goldfinch attending a brood of chicks. See page 4 for our appeal for more finch records.

## A new nest record

After dropping substantially in the early 2000s, NRS annual totals are now at their highest level since the scheme began in 1939.

In the early 2000s, participation in the Nest Record Scheme was waning. Annual submission totals were down a quarter on 1990s levels and far fewer records were being submitted for those species whose nests are more challenging to find.

Last spring, in *NRS News 28*, we reported how far the Scheme had since come, with numbers of active recorders up 35% and lots more monitoring of priority species such as Blackcap and Goldfinch. We are delighted to announce that the NRS annual total for 2012 currently stands at 44,350 records, the highest since the Scheme began in 1939.

We're extremely grateful to all nest recorders for their help getting NRS back on track: new recorders, recorders who have helped with recruitment and training, recorders who have focused on priority species, and recorders who have made sure that well-monitored species continue to be well-monitored. We're also grateful for funding from the Dilys Breese project, which has made development work on NRS possible.

We look forward to the Nest Record Scheme developing further as both a tool for science and a community of keen ornithologists. As ever a huge thanks to all NRS supporters for their efforts!



KANE BRIDES, CHRIS BRIDGE, GILLIAN DINSMORE

Kane Brides, Chris Bridge and Gillian Dinsmore set themselves a group challenge to monitor over 1,000 nests in 2012. See how they did on page 14.

## FROM THE EDITOR

# Welcome...

...to the 29th edition of *NRS News*. I'm very excited that, after about four years of talking about it, we're finally launching the mentoring scheme (see opposite). I hope that, as well as providing another means of training, mentoring will in time lead to more nest recorders getting to know each other locally and supporting each others' activities. For anyone starting nest recording in an area, it's a boon to be able to make contact with local ringers and nest recorders who can provide both training and potential opportunities to get involved with existing projects. And for local nest recorders, it makes sense to be aware of new volunteers in their area who might be looking for monitoring sites/projects to get stuck into.

Once again, this newsletter brings a flavour of what different nest recorders are getting up to in different parts of the country, along with the usual nest-finding tips, news and guidance from the Demography Team on monitoring priorities. If you'd like to write an article for *NRS News*, or if you want to get in touch with one of the authors in this issue, please contact us at [nrs@bto.org](mailto:nrs@bto.org)

**Carl Barimore** Editor & NRS Organiser

### A special welcome to the following new nest recorders...

Nigel Arnold • Patrick Barker • Eddie Bew • Marcia Blackman • Christopher Bridge • Genevieve Bridgeman • Colin Brown • Will Bush • Gary Carter • Steve Chastell • Michael Claydon • Don Cload • Adrian Cole • Brenda Cook • Jason Crook • Adam Cross • Mike Daly • Michael Darby • Peter Dare • Christine Darmody • Jacob Davies • Phillip Deacon • Carol Dear • Stephen Dixon • John Doe • Hugh Dorrington • Kathy Etheridge • Deborah Ewan • Terry Fountain • Christine George • William Haines • Beth Hamblin • Philip Hammond • Ian Hampson • Graham Hanlon • John Harris • Stuart Heath • Stephen Hewitt • Brian Hill • George Hills • David Hindle • Michael Holdsworth • Dave Horsley • John Howell • David Hubbard • Alan Hubbard • James Hulse • Derek Humphries • Stephen Inglis • Val Jackson • Vanessa Jackson • Nigel Jackson • Gary Johnston • Adam Jones • Philip Jordan • John Kennedy • Peter Kent • Ian Lees • Duncan Long • Ian Macpherson • John Matthews • Andrew McCubbin • Chris McIntyre • Jamie McMillan • Elizabeth Mildner • Lorraine Miller • Lowell Mills • Matthew Milton • Sandra Molloy • Karen Murray • Donald Omand • Catherine Owen-Pam • Karl Partridge • Robert Pell • Angie Polkey • Richard Priestley • Henrietta Pringle • Abigail Rhodes • Alex Rhodes • Bryn Roberts • Alison Rymell • Ashley Saunders • Sharon Scott • Jim Scott • David Smallwood • Brenda Smith • William Smith • Derek Spooner • Nick Stephens • Patricia Summerlin • Luke Sutton • John Swallow • Ian Thompson • Lewis Thomson • Dean Trenam • Barry Trevis • Steve Turnbull • Raymond Turner • John Turner • Ken Venus • Kelly Vincent • Daniel Wallace • Marcus Ward • Stephen Ward • Roger Warren • Paul Watts • Daniel Webb • Stephen Westerberg • Michael Whelan • Oscar Wilkie • Helen Williams • Stephanie Witham • Hannah Woodhouse • Chris Wright

## NRS NEWS

*NRS News* is the annual newsletter for supporters of the Nest Record Scheme (NRS). The views expressed by the contributors to this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Council of the BTO or its Committees.

*NRS News* is written by you, so please send your ideas and contributions to:

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### Desk-top publishing:

Carl Barimore and Jane Waters.

**Printers:** Swallowtail Print, Norwich.

Thanks to the proof readers for all their efforts!

The Nest Record Scheme is funded by a partnership of the British Trust for Ornithology and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (on behalf of Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural Resources Wales, and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency).

The British Trust for Ornithology is a charity dedicated to researching birds found in the UK. For Membership details please contact Chris Morley at [info@bto.org](mailto:info@bto.org)

Cover photo: Mark Joy



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Registered Charity

No 216652 (England & Wales)

No SC039193 (Scotland)



## IN THE NEWS...

### TRAINING

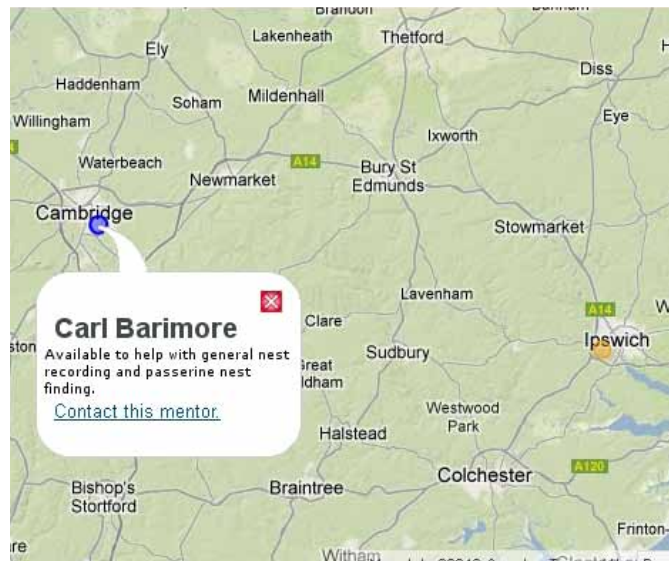
## NRS mentoring launches this spring

Over the past six years, thanks to volunteers Tony Davis, Richard Castell, David Oliver, Daniel Eva, Steve Carter, Peter Kent, Matt Prior, Alison Rymell, Steve Hewitt and others, 17 field courses on finding and monitoring nests have been run across the country, with training given to 176 people.

Building on the success of these courses, we are now introducing an NRS Mentoring Scheme to make training both more widely available and more flexible. 'Mentors' are experienced nest recorders who have volunteered to help others by making themselves available to be contacted for advice and training in the field. New participants will be able to find and contact their nearest NRS mentor by going to [www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/mentoring](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/mentoring) and searching the interactive map (right). In due course, we hope to have at least one mentor available per county.

If you're interested in becoming a mentor, please email [nrs@bto.org](mailto:nrs@bto.org) or have a look at the information sheet at [www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/mentoring](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/mentoring). You don't have to be an expert on hundreds of species to be a mentor, nor have lots of time available. Just a couple of hours spent helping one new participant each season would be a huge help. Many thanks indeed to those who have registered so far.

Places are still available on this year's training courses in Cheshire (24–26 May) and Fife (31 May–2 June). See [www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/taking-part/training-courses](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/taking-part/training-courses) for more details.



ABOVE: Participants will be able to find and email their nearest mentor by using a map on the NRS webpages. BELOW: Tutor Richard Castell talks about sticks on the 2012 Cheshire course.



### APPEAL

## Please send us your pics

All the nest photographs featured in *NRS News*, as well as BTO leaflets, posters and online material, are very kindly provided by volunteers. Although we are regularly sent photographs of nests for a range of species, we have few of the following: **Moorhen, Coot, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Tawny Owl, Dipper, Dunnock, Jackdaw, Chaffinch** and **Linnet**. If you have photos you'd be happy to supply for BTO use, please do let us know ([nrs@bto.org](mailto:nrs@bto.org)).



Top: Long-tailed Tit nest by Chris and Elspeth Rowe, who have provided over 100 photos for BTO use. Bottom: Starling clutch in a box by Richard Castell, who has provided many photos for use in BTO publications.

## Making waves

Listeners to BBC Radio 4's *The Living World* have recently been getting a flavour of nest monitoring thanks to interviews with Dave Leech on Reed Warblers (29 July) and Emily Joachim on Little Owls (19 August). Listen to both online, along with Mark Lawrence's 2010 interview on nest finding:

- A home in the reeds  
[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0115pfk](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0115pfk)
- Little Owls  
[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01m0f1r](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01m0f1r)
- The nest finder of Dartmoor  
[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tcy3n](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tcy3n)

## NRS LATEST RESULTS

# Finding finches – a priority group for NRS

Annual record totals for many species are showing a positive trend for the first time in many years, but there are some exceptions. Dave Leech explains why more recorders should become fascinated by finches.

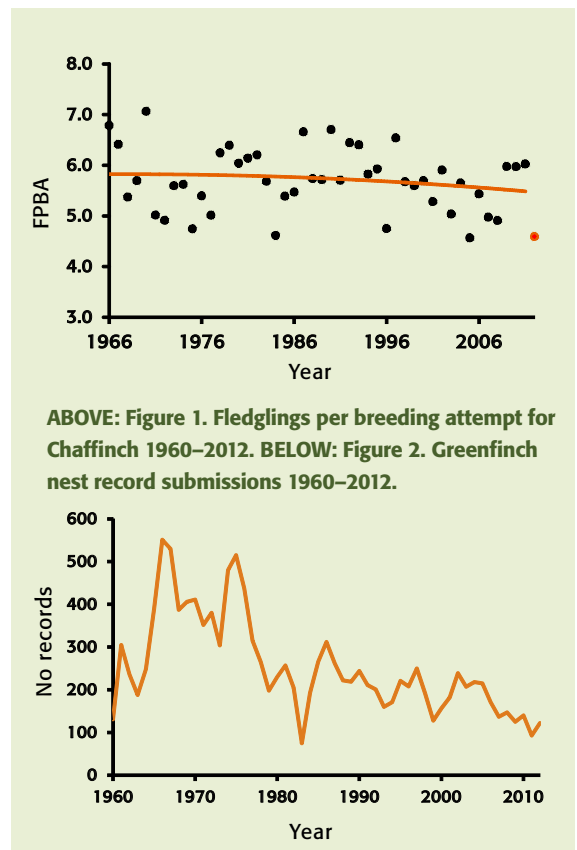
If 2012 was your first year of monitoring nests for the BTO, I can assure you that it can only get better from here on in. With rain falling in record-breaking volume during the key months of April and June, the first half of the season was a near-total washout. The problems this caused for nest recorders were nothing compared to those it posed for the birds themselves, and no-one will be surprised to hear that the preliminary NRS results produced last autumn ([www.bto.org/nrsprelim2012](http://www.bto.org/nrsprelim2012)) showed a significant decline in the number of offspring fledged across the board, from raptors to passerines. The preliminary CES results ([www.bto.org/cesprelim2012](http://www.bto.org/cesprelim2012)) suggest that the reduced productivity may have been compounded by a fall in survival rates post-fledging, the ratio of juvenile to adult birds caught in mist nets falling well below average for the majority of resident and migrant species.

One of the worst-hit species was Chaffinch, the number of fledglings produced per breeding attempt (FPBA) dropping by 57% (Fig 1) due to declines in both the proportion of nests failing during incubation and the average brood size of those that made it as far as hatching. Chaffinches do tend to build in high, relatively exposed spots in shrubs and trees and may therefore be particularly susceptible to waterlogging during heavy rain. The reduction in caterpillar numbers during the cold, wet weather, apparent from the simultaneous fall in Blue and Great Tit productivity, may also have led to more irregular incubation or brooding patterns and to decreased nestling food

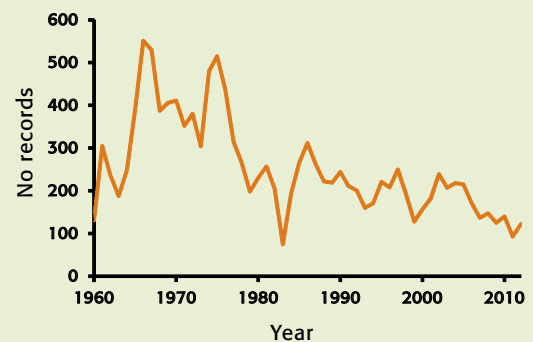
availability.

While BBS results suggest that the UK Chaffinch population is still on the rise, increasing in number by 27% over the last 45 years, analysis of NRS data has identified a decline in breeding success of approximately 20% since the late 1980s. The reasons for this are not yet clear, but productivity may be density dependent, reflecting more intense competition for nestling food with other breeding pairs as numbers increase. Such competition may be exacerbated by the increasing asynchrony between hatching dates and caterpillar availability in woodlands as springs warm.

One of the most powerful methods of investigating causes of breeding declines is through the exploration of spatial variation in the dataset. Are populations in a particular region or habitat faring better than others, and does this relate to differences in abundance or climate? Large annual sample sizes are needed to answer these questions but representation of finches in the NRS dataset is relatively poor, even for species frequenting gardens and those with a tendency to nest in loose colonies. As a result, more finches feature on the NRS priority list ([www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/taking-part/priority-species/full-list](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/taking-part/priority-species/full-list)) than do warblers, thrushes, pipits or buntings. Submissions for Chaffinch, Greenfinch (Fig 2), Linnet, Lesser



ABOVE: Figure 1. Fledglings per breeding attempt for Chaffinch 1960–2012. BELOW: Figure 2. Greenfinch nest record submissions 1960–2012.



Redpoll and Bullfinch have all declined by at least 50% since the 1970s (Fig 2), despite population sizes of some species increasing at the same time.

We are incredibly grateful for the positive response to our requests for increased monitoring of open-nesting passerines. Linnet is a species that has clearly benefited, submissions having doubled over the last five years, while Goldfinch totals in 2012 were the third highest in the history of the scheme. This is great progress and we'd love the 2013 season to mark a reversal in the trends for some of the other finches; David Oliver's article on Bullfinch nest finding on page 12 is sure to provide inspiration, but don't forget to keep your eyes peeled for Chaffinch and Greenfinch nests too.

# Breeding birds and the weather in 2012

BTO research ecologist David Glue summarises the breeding season, drawing on comments and findings from nest recorders, ringers and reserve wardens.

**J**anuary temperatures reached a balmy 13.9°C in Devon as a southwesterly airstream of subtropical Atlantic origin engulfed the UK. The midwinter heat and a surfeit of sunshine brought out basking butterflies—Brimstone, Comma, Peacock, and Red Admiral—and flowering foxglove, bluebell and roses. A loud, rich dawn chorus was more akin to March, and there were various reports of Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Mallard, Moorhen, Tawny Owl, Stock Dove, Crossbill and Robin with eggs or young. Spring seemed poised to burst, but then a bubble of intensely cold air arrived from Russia, resulting in rock hard, snow-clad countryside for the first two weeks in February, the coldest since 1991. Songbirds on territories reverted to feeding in flocks, and only a few species were noted nesting by mid February.

## April power showers

Magical shirt-sleeve, summer-like heat in March—the warmest since 1997, with a record high of 22.9°C for Scotland—accompanied blue cloudless skies, caused by an anticyclonic block. A spate of nest building by tits, wildfowl, raptors, Robin, Song Thrush and Wren in the first half of March was followed by a busy period for corvids, doves, thrushes, Buzzard, Red Kite, Raven, Nuthatch and Ring-necked Parakeet. Aerial insects, notably butterflies and midges, were in abundance, but the heat also brought rock hard soils, fewer ground invertebrates, retarded leaf bud burst and night chill. Meanwhile, although short-haul spring migrant Blackcap and Chiffchaff arrived ‘on cue’ in the UK, longer-distance migrants were held back for at least a fortnight by cyclonic weather in the Mediterranean Basin, causing sand

storms, lashing rain, and even snow in Iberia. April heralded a challenging switch to a cooler, moist, northwesterly Polar Maritime Atlantic airstream, accompanied by severe frosts and a regress to winter mode for many residents. A drab, grey, chilly April (the coldest since 1981), with below average temperatures and many areas receiving at least double the usual amount of rainfall, led to delayed and staggered laying, chilled clutches and moribund broods for dabbling ducks, rails, doves, tits, finches and scrub and leaf warblers.



**The cruellest month: April was the wettest since 1910, resulting in nest failures for species like Chaffinch.**

## Monsoon May

The 2012 breeding season lurched along uncomfortably. Slow-to-return summer migrants were quick to commence breeding, frustrating nest recorders with their limited song periods. Repeat slow-moving rain belts tracked eastwards across the UK in the first two weeks of May, delivering monsoon-like deluges, hail storms and tornadoes. One hundred mph winds across northern hills proved too severe for the hardiest of montane plovers, grouse, Merlin and Ring Ouzel. On rivers, flooding overcame Mute Swan, Common Sandpiper, Kingfisher, and Sand Martin, and species in all habitats suffered sodden nests, deserted

clutches and small brood sizes. Barn Owl pairs, having laid plentifully in the spring warmth, now endured locally heavy losses as adverse weather made hunting difficult. May closed with a welcome ten-day window of high pressure, lifting temperatures to 25°C for the first time since late March.

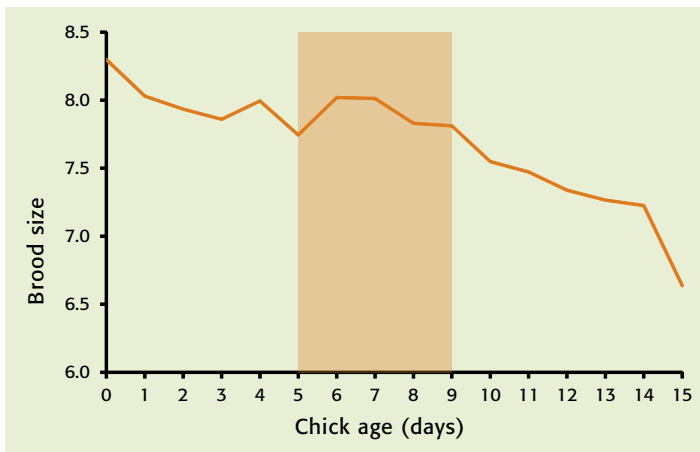
## July gales

June enhanced the cool, damp, turbulent theme of summer 2012; often chilly by day with damning night frosts and fitful sunshine. Early-on, gales of over 50 mph and lashing rain uprooted crown-heavy trees, leaving developing or ‘branching’ young of Grey Heron, Red Kite, Osprey, Peregrine and Raven, orphaned, dislodged or moribund. Torrential downpours caused flash floods in many areas, leading to heavy losses among breeding coastal gulls, terns, plovers, Skylark, pipits and chats. On the other hand, surprise pairs of Black-headed Gull, Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover and Yellow Wagtail were discovered nesting on field margins and brown field sites. As see-sawing temperatures and repeated downpours continued throughout July, multi-brooded migrants and residents such as Swallow, Reed Warbler, Wren and Yellowhammer, attempted repeat broods, while modest and meagre sized mixed flocks of tits, warblers, Treecreeper and crests, hinted at a ‘below par’ nesting season, which the CES and NRS 2012 preliminary reports would later confirm.

The year 2012 will be remembered for its exceptionally cold and wet April and June, which, spanning the heart of the nesting period for many UK residents and summer migrants, severely affected the fortunes of UK breeding birds.







**Figure 2.** Mean brood size recorded for Blue Tit nests containing chicks of different ages. The shaded bar represents the period where the majority of ringing (71%) takes place.

the 4,763 Great Tit attempts monitored last year were north of the border. Gardens and parks are also under-represented in the annual sample, accounting for fewer than 10% of submissions for tit species. Data from areas of human habitation allow us to investigate the role that supplementary feeding and heat island effects may play in mediating climate change impacts.

An increase in the frequency of late visits would also greatly increase the value of your records. Reductions in caterpillar availability due to climate change typically manifest themselves through partial brood losses, which are most likely to take place when the energetic demand of the chicks is highest, 9–12 days after hatching (Fig 2). While the majority of broods are ringed, this tends to occur immediately before the period of peak mortality and relatively few nests are revisited before fledging, so data on brood sizes when chicks are large is scarce. Repeat visits when chicks are 10–14 days old would provide vital information about the extent of brood reduction in warm and cool springs.

The take-home message is that no species is too common to monitor. While it might seem that we have plenty of information to inform population models, increasing the geographical and habitat coverage of the scheme is vital if we are to fully understand the impacts of global warming on birds.

Alan Burgess 1944–2012

**By Tracy Burgess** Alan's daughter

Alan's interest in nature was evident from an early age when as a teenager he would cycle into the Peak District and spend nights sleeping on the moors in order to listen to the dawn chorus.

In the early 1960s, Alan obtained his bird ringing permit and, with Jeremy Sorensen, spent the next 10 years ringing thousands of birds on the edge of the Pennine Moors in Derbyshire, Cheshire and Lancashire.



In 1987, Alan moved with his family to Helmesley Farm on the edge of the Peak District and embarked on his own project: using his knowledge of ecology and skills as a landscape architect to transform a 4.5 acre plot of intensively grazed farmland into woodland. Alan spent the next 25 years on this project and took on the ambitious task of recording every pair of breeding birds and monitoring every nesting attempt on the site. This resulted over 1,000 nest records for the BTO, including 46 Bullfinch records and 104 Goldfinch.

Alan also contributed to the BTO's Constant Nest Monitoring Plots (CNMP) survey and to the Cheshire Butterfly Recording Scheme. The wood Alan created at Helmesley Farm is now named Alan's Wood.

## Heavyweight boxer

**By Alan Ball** Nest recorder and ringer

Long-time BTO member Bob Sheppard has been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List with a British Empire Medal for services to conservation.

Bob began putting up Barn Owl boxes in Lincolnshire more than 30 years ago. Since then hundreds have been erected on farms and

estates across the county, and many more along river corridors, thanks to Bob's work with Colin Shawyer of the Wildlife Conservation Partnership, the Environment Agency and all 12 drainage boards in the county.

Bob also builds and erects Little Owl boxes, using his own very successful design (see *NRS News* 25), and

he now monitors around 60 Little Owl pairs annually. In 2012, two pairs of Peregrines nested on platforms put up by Bob, one of which was 86 metres up on a telecommunications tower—testament to the fact that Bob will always rise to the challenge!

Bob introduced me to the world of birds of prey in 1995 and between us we now ring around 1,000 adults and chicks and submit over 500 nest records to the BTO every

year. Bob's contribution to Barn Owl conservation in Lincolnshire is unequalled and it's surely no coincidence that the county Barn Owl population has undergone a likely four-fold increase over the period Bob's been active. His recent recognition is thoroughly deserved and I feel privileged to work alongside Bob as we continue to conserve and monitor birds of prey in Lincolnshire.

# Nest Record Scheme totals

A summary of the number of records per species submitted to the Nest Record Scheme in 2011, 2012 and from 1939–2012 (as of April 2013).

Species preceded with a bullet-point are listed in the annual BirdTrends report ([www.bto.org/birdtrends](http://www.bto.org/birdtrends)). An asterisk marks species that are on the NRS priority species list ([www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/taking-part/nrs-priorities](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/taking-part/nrs-priorities)). Schedule 1 species are in italics (please note that this list relates to GB classification and varies for Eire, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man).

Species	Code	2011	2012	Total
• Mute Swan*	MUTSW	121	134	7,483
<i>Whooper Swan</i>	WHOSW	2	0	28
Bar-headed Goose	BAHGO	0	0	9
<i>Greylag Goose</i>	GREGO	65	62	1,242
Snow Goose	SNOGO	0	0	8
Canada Goose	CANGO	144	124	5,344
Barnacle Goose	BARGO	1	1	77
Egyptian Goose	EGYGO	18	19	194
Ruddy Shelduck	RUSSH	1	0	5
Shelduck	SHELD	6	7	391
Wood Duck	WOODU	1	0	4
Mandarin	MANDA	32	31	876
Wigeon	WIGEO	0	1	188
Gadwall	GADWA	20	14	287
Teal	TEAL	2	2	245
Mallard	MALLA	137	168	10,298
<i>Pintail</i>	PINTA	0	0	23
<i>Garganey</i>	GARGA	0	0	11
Shoveler	SHOVE	0	6	241
Red-crested Pochard	RECPO	6	1	33
Pochard	POCHA	3	7	293
Tufted Duck	TUFDU	37	12	1,492
Eider*	EIDER	340	310	11,408
<i>Common Scoter</i>	COMSC	0	0	43
<i>Goldeneye</i>	GOLDE	20	16	311
Red-breasted Merganser	REBME	1	0	294
Goosander	GOOSA	13	8	442
Ruddy Duck	RUDDU	0	0	185
Red Grouse	REDGR	10	14	888
Ptarmigan	PTARM	1	0	133
Black Grouse	BLAGR	4	0	86
<i>Capercaillie</i>	CAPER	0	0	92
Red-legged Partridge	RELPA	8	4	515
Grey Partridge	GREPA	3	1	876
<i>Quail</i>	QUAIL	0	0	16
Pheasant	PHEAS	45	41	2,460
Golden Pheasant	GOLPH	0	0	6
• Red-throated Diver*	RETDI	18	20	2,525
<i>Black-throated Diver</i>	BLTDI	5	5	256
Little Grebe	LITGR	46	37	2,916
Great Crested Grebe	GRCGR	145	108	4,748
<i>Slavonian Grebe</i>	SLAGR	16	8	224
<i>Black-necked Grebe</i>	BLNGR	0	0	31
Fulmar*	FULMA	7	205	7,891

Species	Code	2011	2012	Total
Manx Shearwater	MANSH	0	80	713
Storm Petrel	STOPE	0	0	92
<i>Leach's Petrel</i>	LEAPE	0	0	75
Gannet	GANNE	0	0	33
Cormorant*	CORMO	46	126	2,686
Shag*	SHAG	283	442	16,614
<i>Bittern</i>	BITTE	0	1	40
Little Egret	LITEG	31	42	249
• Grey Heron*	GREHE	92	101	9,005
<i>Honey Buzzard</i>	HONBU	17	7	205
Red Kite	REDKI	314	397	1,875
<i>White-tailed Eagle</i>	WHTEA	1	1	17
<i>Marsh Harrier</i>	MARHA	21	27	208
• Hen Harrier*	HENHA	5	13	2,058
<i>Montagu's Harrier</i>	MONHA	0	0	47
<i>Goshawk</i>	GOSHA	86	103	1,729
• Sparrowhawk*	SPARR	84	62	6,001
• Buzzard	BUZZA	273	249	8,220
<i>Golden Eagle</i>	GOLEA	20	17	731
<i>Osprey</i>	OSPRE	14	19	163
• Kestrel	KESTR	413	488	11,199
• Merlin*	MERLI	73	52	4,213
• Hobby	HOBBY	90	62	1,431
• Peregrine	PEREG	139	190	3,992
Water Rail	WATRA	3	5	119
<i>Corncrake</i>	CORNC	0	0	32
• Moorhen*	MOORH	250	282	25,819
• Coot	COOT	803	764	24,114
• Oystercatcher*	OYSTE	353	456	19,603
<i>Black-winged Stilt</i>	BLWST	0	0	4
<i>Avocet</i>	AVOCE	36	45	1,062
<i>Stone Curlew</i>	STOCU	0	0	425
<i>Little Ringed Plover*</i>	LIRPL	77	43	3,028
• Ringed Plover*	RINPL	171	201	11,665
<i>Kentish Plover</i>	KENPL	0	0	19
<i>Dotterel</i>	DOTTE	0	1	265
• Golden Plover*	GOLPL	6	11	958
• Lapwing*	LAPWI	335	339	29,016
Dunlin	DUNLI	4	0	581
<i>Ruff</i>	RUFF	0	0	4
• Snipe*	SNIFE	5	5	1,869
Woodcock	WOODC	4	5	697
<i>Black-tailed Godwit</i>	BLTGO	0	0	43
<i>Whimbrel</i>	WHIMB	32	24	152
• Curlew*	CURLE	24	25	3,216
• Common Sandpiper*	COMSA	32	35	1,784
<i>Greenshank</i>	GRESH	8	6	215
• Redshank*	REDSH	38	31	3,559
<i>Red-necked Phalarope</i>	RENPH	0	0	163
Arctic Skua	ARCSK	1	2	379
Great Skua	GRESK	11	30	481
Kittiwake*	KITTI	665	847	20,523



Species	Code	2011	2012	Total
<b>Black-headed Gull*</b>	BLHGU	194	199	10,551
<b>Mediterranean Gull</b>	MEDGU	1	0	51
<b>Common Gull*</b>	COMGU	58	126	6,272
<b>Lesser Black-backed Gull</b>	LBBGU	11	27	4,804
<b>Herring Gull</b>	HERGU	65	84	7,909
<b>Great Black-backed Gull</b>	GBBGU	9	15	3,518
<b>Little Tern*</b>	LITTE	95	67	7,289
<b>Sandwich Tern</b>	SANTE	0	0	1,814
<b>Common Tern*</b>	COMTE	108	110	9,046
<b>Roseate Tern</b>	ROSTE	77	70	1,660
<b>Arctic Tern*</b>	ARCTE	5	967	14,366
<b>Guillemot</b>	GUILLE	0	145	1,819
<b>Razorbill</b>	RAZOR	89	64	1,802
<b>Black Guillemot</b>	BLAGU	32	29	1,902
<b>Puffin</b>	PUFFI	0	31	1,236
<b>Rock Dove</b>	ROCDO	51	63	1,008
<b>Feral Pigeon</b>	FERPI	9	12	2,528
<b>• Stock Dove</b>	STODO	776	897	16,418
<b>• Woodpigeon</b>	WOODP	916	819	34,172
<b>• Collared Dove</b>	COLDO	160	136	6,615
<b>• Turtle Dove</b>	TURDO	12	19	2,120
<b>Ring-necked Parakeet</b>	RINPA	4	3	154
<b>Cuckoo</b>	CUCKO	31	29	2,337
<b>• Barn Owl</b>	BAROW	1,947	2,289	22,480
<b>• Little Owl</b>	LITOW	150	146	3,318
<b>• Tawny Owl</b>	TAWOW	518	433	14,603
<b>Long-eared Owl</b>	LOEOW	17	17	901
<b>Short-eared Owl</b>	SHEOW	6	8	442
<b>• Nightjar</b>	NIJAR	105	94	2,409
<b>Swift</b>	SWIFT	53	74	3,514
<b>Kingfisher</b>	KINGF	23	28	872
<b>Wryneck</b>	WRYNE	0	0	23
<b>Green Woodpecker</b>	GREWO	10	10	583
<b>• Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	GRSWO	132	118	3,171
<b>Lesser Spotted Woodpecker</b>	LESWO	4	1	287
<b>• Woodlark</b>	WOODL	118	141	2,414
<b>• Skylark*</b>	SKYLA	67	77	8,958
<b>• Sand Martin</b>	SANMA	585	557	7,442
<b>• Swallow</b>	SWALL	3,066	2,710	83,705
<b>House Martin</b>	HOUMA	169	128	11,705
<b>• Tree Pipit</b>	TREPI	76	66	2,296
<b>• Meadow Pipit*</b>	MEAPI	234	308	10,979
<b>Rock Pipit*</b>	ROCPI	12	20	957
<b>• Yellow Wagtail*</b>	YELWA	17	14	1,142
<b>• Grey Wagtail*</b>	GREWA	85	129	7,148
<b>• Pied Wagtail*</b>	PIEWA	205	206	11,974
<b>• Dipper*</b>	DIPPE	414	525	12,936
<b>• Wren*</b>	WREN.	165	353	18,375
<b>• Dunnock*</b>	DUNNO	305	480	33,585
<b>• Robin</b>	ROBIN	388	550	25,355
<b>Nightingale</b>	NIGAL	14	21	540
<b>Black Redstart</b>	BLARE	1	3	187
<b>• Redstart*</b>	REDST	216	244	7,994
<b>• Whinchat*</b>	WHINC	55	94	2,752
<b>• Stonechat</b>	STOCH	142	223	5,188
<b>• Wheatear*</b>	WHEAT	42	62	4,366
<b>• Ring Ouzel*</b>	RINOUE	36	73	2,026
<b>• Blackbird*</b>	BLABI	1,330	1,639	144,686
<b>Fieldfare</b>	FIELD	0	0	7
<b>• Song Thrush*</b>	SONTH	396	649	79,443

Species	Code	2011	2012	Total
<b>Redwing</b>	REDWI	0	2	129
<b>• Mistle Thrush*</b>	MISTH	77	73	8,765
<b>Cetti's Warbler</b>	CETWA	3	4	49
<b>Grasshopper Warbler</b>	GRAWA	30	15	502
<b>Savi's Warbler</b>	SAVWA	0	0	4
<b>• Sedge Warbler*</b>	SEDWA	93	53	5,368
<b>Marsh Warbler</b>	MARWA	0	0	170
<b>• Reed Warbler</b>	REEWA	1,095	922	21,624
<b>• Blackcap</b>	BLACA	220	266	4,906
<b>• Garden Warbler</b>	GARWA	79	62	2,579
<b>Lesser Whitethroat</b>	LESWH	12	9	1,038
<b>• Whitethroat*</b>	WHITE	278	143	7,423
<b>Dartford Warbler</b>	DARWA	25	25	625
<b>• Wood Warbler*</b>	WOOWA	174	113	3,220
<b>• Chiffchaff</b>	CHIFF	257	285	4,947
<b>• Willow Warbler*</b>	WILWA	328	377	15,086
<b>Goldcrest</b>	GOLDC	8	27	997
<b>Firecrest</b>	FIREC	0	5	14
<b>• Spotted Flycatcher*</b>	SPOFL	169	150	12,763
<b>• Pied Flycatcher*</b>	PIEFL	1,211	1,095	50,754
<b>Bearded Tit</b>	BEATI	4	6	393
<b>• Long-tailed Tit</b>	LOTTI	236	378	8,061
<b>• Blue Tit</b>	BLUTI	6,953	6,621	150,586
<b>• Great Tit</b>	GRETI	4,657	4,918	106,757
<b>Crested Tit</b>	CRETI	2	3	471
<b>• Coal Tit</b>	COATI	79	104	6,333
<b>Willow Tit</b>	WILTI	26	27	671
<b>• Marsh Tit</b>	MARTI	54	35	1,983
<b>• Nuthatch</b>	NUTHA	240	261	5,585
<b>• Treecreeper</b>	TREEC	57	61	3,023
<b>Golden Oriole</b>	GOLOR	0	0	42
<b>Red-backed Shrike</b>	REBSH	0	0	258
<b>• Jay</b>	JAY..	9	25	1,711
<b>• Magpie*</b>	MAGPI	81	70	8,709
<b>Chough</b>	CHOUG	25	25	1,111
<b>• Jackdaw</b>	JACKD	405	460	11,383
<b>• Rook*</b>	ROOK.	92	65	15,967
<b>Hooded Crow</b>	HOOCR	77	26	1,283
<b>• Carrion Crow*</b>	CROW.	104	110	8,926
<b>• Raven</b>	RAVEN	95	124	5,421
<b>• Starling*</b>	STARL	245	229	19,085
<b>• House Sparrow</b>	HOUSP	406	298	17,337
<b>• Tree Sparrow</b>	TRESP	1,945	1,943	38,264
<b>• Chaffinch*</b>	CHAFF	352	445	26,316
<b>• Greenfinch*</b>	GREFI	94	122	15,967
<b>• Goldfinch</b>	GOLDF	114	175	4,269
<b>Siskin</b>	SISKI	4	13	119
<b>• Linnet*</b>	LINNE	326	408	30,596
<b>Twite</b>	TWITE	1	9	1,250
<b>• Redpoll*</b>	LESRE	12	13	1,409
<b>Crossbill</b>	CROSS	5	38	224
<b>• Bullfinch*</b>	BULLF	95	99	6,489
<b>Hawfinch</b>	HAWFI	9	17	257
<b>Snow Bunting</b>	SNOBU	0	0	202
<b>• Yellowhammer*</b>	YELHA	120	125	8,758
<b>• Cirl Bunting</b>	CIRBU	74	0	673
<b>• Reed Bunting*</b>	REEBU	110	142	8,865
<b>• Corn Bunting*</b>	CORBU	130	78	1,334
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>		<b>41,241</b>	<b>44,503</b>	<b>1,625,714</b>

## 2012 TOP NESTERS

This regular section highlights the fieldwork feats of some of our busiest nest recorders, such as the trio of Mark Lawrence, Mark Penney and Dave Scott, who between them monitored 116 Meadow Pipit nests in Devon in 2012. It's important to note, however, that the largest overall contribution is made by recorders who monitor smaller numbers of nests at hundreds of sites across the country. A big thanks is due to all participants for their efforts.

### Recorders or groups who collected over 100 records in 2012

National Trust, Farne Islands 2,141 • Brides, Bridge & Dinsmore 1,131 • Merseyside Ringing Group 935 • Bowden, Ball & Sheppard 799 • Thetford Forest Ringing Group 671 • Lawrence, Penney et al 669 • Birklands Ringing Group 650 • East Dales Ringing Group 506 • Thomas Dewdney 466 • David Warden 462 • Stephen Carter 433 • Ron Louch & Dave Thompson 431 • South Manchester Ringing Group 413 • John Brook 408 • Arden Ringing Group 407 • South West Pied Flycatcher Monitoring Network 402 • South Derbyshire Ringing Group 397 • Short, Williams & Scott 378 • Nagshead RSPB Reserve 373 • Kevin Briggs 363 • Matt Prior 352 • Waveney Ringing Group 351 • Jonathan Lingard 345 • Sorby Breck Ringing Group 336 • Sarah West 332 • Geoff Myers 330 • Rutland Water Ringing Group 324 • Lancaster & District Birdwatching Society 320 • Newbury Ringing Group 319 • Gwent Wildlife Trust 318 • Peter Roe 317 • David Oliver 304 • Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project 301 • Rye Meads Ringing Group 299 • David Myers 292 • Northumbria Ringing Group 288 • Mid Lincolnshire Ringing Group 287 • Keith Seaton 286 • Allan Hale 283 • Stanford Ringing Group 273 • Frank Mawby 273 • Philip Harris 267 • David Coker 265 • Paul Robinson 255 • Robert Batty 254 • John Lloyd 247 • North-west Norfolk Ringing Group 239 • Neil Lawton 237 • Nunnery Ringing Group 236 • Jan Pritchard 232 • Bob & Rob Swann 224 • Simon Taylor 208 • Sarah & Philip Bone 203 • Rye Bay Ringing Group 202 • George Candelin 198 • Derek Holman, Karl Ivens & Andy Glover 194 • John Walshe 193 • Edward Cowley 193 • Dartford Ringing Group 187 • Jerry Lewis 183 • Sean Morris 183 • Simon Cox 178 • Barrie Roberts 172 • South West Lancashire Ringing Group 171 • Robin Husbands 171 • Chew Valley Ringing Station 170 • Paul Slater 169 • Victor Giles 167 • Paul Fenwick 166 • Tim Ball 165 • Dave Garner 164 • John Hyde 163 • Gerald Murphy 161 • John Lawton-Roberts 159 • BIAZA Nest Recording Project 156 • Garry Barker 148 • Mike Netherwood & Mick Cook 148 • Jeremy Gates 148 • Manx Ringing Group 146 • Peter Rose 145 • Ronald Turkington 143 • Ian Spence 143 • Paul Roughley 142 • Colin Davison 142 • Jim Hodson 138 • Cwm Clydach RSPB Reserve 136 • David Keates & Melvyn Preston 132 • Bob Danson 131 • Adrian Scott 130 • Felicity Burge 130 • Anne Goodall 129 • Noel Fenwick & Julie Brigden 129 • Philip May 128 • Hugh Insley 127 • Mike Russell 127 • Paul Holness 126 • Graham Button & Richard Tomlinson 125 • Mark Grantham 125 • Wicken Fen Ringing Group 123 • Andy Webb 122 • Roger Peart 121 • Lowell Mills 121 • Reginald Lanaway 121 • Paul Cammack 121 • Geoff Pearce 120 • Kevan Brett 119 • Robert Stevens 115 • Southern England Kite Group 114 • Douglas Bowker 114 • Dave Hazard 114 • Tony Davis 113 • Treswell Wood IPM Group 109 • Michael Mac 108 • Michael Thomas 108 • Scott Jarvis 107 • Dawn Pickett 106 • Richard Taylor 105 • Charnwood Ringing Group 105 • Ian Archer 104 • David Blenkinsop 104 • Garth Lowe 104 • Lynn Ritchie 103 • Roy Sanderson 102 • Berkshire Downs Ringing Group 102 • Andrew Ramsay 102 • West Midland Bird Club Boddenham 102 • Mike Rogers 101 • Gary Pitt 100 • Gwyn Roberts 100 •



From left, Devon nest recorders Dave Scott, Mark Penney and Mark Lawrence, with NRS Organiser Carl Barimore.

### Top 12 Bullfinch recorders in 2012

Recorder	Total
Ron Louch	15
Brides, Bridge & Dinsmore	10
David Oliver	10
West Pennines Nesting Group	4
Lawrence, Penney <i>et al</i>	2
Eric Rothery	2
Frank Mawby	2
Adrian Scott	2
John Brook	2
Colin Davison	2
David Hindle	2
Allan Dawes	2

### Top 10 counties in 2012

County	Total
Northumberland	2,855
Norfolk	2,486
Devon	2,291
Suffolk	1,927
Lancashire	1,811
Lincolnshire	1,663
North Yorkshire	1,495
Cheshire	1,334
Gwent	1,155
Highland Region	1,118

### Top 10 county Hirundine totals 2012

County	Total
Leicestershire	367
North Yorkshire	270
Dumfries & Galloway	198
Norfolk	148
Cheshire	115
Northumberland	111
Hampshire	106
Derbyshire	105
Devon	96
Suffolk	89

# Outcome success

Blakeney Point is a National Nature Reserve on the North Norfolk coast. National Trust warden Edward Stubbings talks about how the reserve has become an important contributor to the Nest Record Scheme.

**B**lakeney Point was donated to the National Trust in 1912 and a year later became home to a field station, established by University College, London (UCL). Consequently, the site has a rich history of ecological study, including the monitoring of nesting birds. In 1918, Canadian ornithologist William Rowan published a detailed article on Common Tern nesting ecology, *The Blakeney Point Ternery* and, since 1953, NT wardens have been submitting an annual report on breeding bird numbers and notes on nesting activity to the *Norfolk Bird and Mammal Report*.

However, it wasn't until 2008 that wardens began submitting nest records to the BTO. Things began slowly at first but really got going in 2011 with the help of Robert Morgen, a resident volunteer from Germany and a keen ornithologist and nest finder. That year, we took on monitoring a small heronry for the BTO Heronries Census, had

a look for Bittern nesting activity on Blakeney Fresh Marshes and managed to find and monitor four Skylark, three Meadow Pipit, and three Linnet nests, as well as an Oystercatcher nest, on the Point itself. Blakeney Point has high densities of ground-nesting passerines, particularly Meadow Pipit, although Skylark numbers have declined in recent years. The number of nest records we submitted for these Red- and Amber-listed species made up 67%, 20% and 14% respectively of the Norfolk NRS totals for 2011.

One interesting, albeit tragic, record was that of a Linnet nest in an American Tree Lupin outside the iconic blue Lifeboat House, where the National Trust team live for up to seven months of the year. On 13 May, the bush was infested by the Lupin aphid *Macrosiphum albifrons* and the nest was abandoned with a clutch of three eggs.

As has been the case almost every year since 1912, Blakeney Point is

## Blakeney Point nest record totals

	2011	2012
Gadwall		2
Mallard		1
Oystercatcher	1	31
Avocet		1
Ringed Plover		18
Redshank		7
Wood Pigeon		1
Skylark	4	
Swallow		2
Meadow Pipit	3	12
Dunnock		1
Linnet	3	9
Reed Bunting		2

manned throughout the spring and summer by a team of wardens and nest recording has now become part of our daily routine. A reserve nest log is kept, and any nests that reach egg-laying are transcribed into nest records for the BTO. Last year was even more successful than 2011; in addition to the Heronry and ground-nesting passerines, we began monitoring the nests of the declining Ringed Plover population on the Point, including trialling nest cameras to study predation. Moreover, a University of East Anglia student studying Oystercatchers agreed to complete nest records for all the nests he found. Undoubtedly the most interesting 2012 record involved a Gadwall, a Grey Partridge and a spot of egg dumping. On 18 June, a female Gadwall was flushed from a nest concealed in Marram grass. It was found to contain seven Gadwall eggs—just beginning to hatch—and 11 Grey Partridge eggs. Although seven Gadwall chicks were counted the next day, the partridge eggs got no further.

As wardens of Blakeney Point, we've found nest recording to be an interesting and fun part of our work and, given the importance of establishing long-term biological recording on reserves, and the BTO's need for detailed demographic data, we look forward to continuing with it into the future.

Follow the NT wardens' blog at <http://norfolkcoastnationaltrust.blogspot.co.uk/> for regular updates on their nest recording activities.



**Quite a clutch:** seven Gadwall and 11 Partridge eggs in a Gadwall nest. Only the Gadwalls hatched.



## NRS SPECIES SPOTLIGHT



# Bullfinch bonanza

Long-time ringer, nest recorder, and the tutor for the annual NRS training course in Fife, David Oliver shares his recent experiences finding Bullfinch nests in a previously unexamined habitat on his local patch.

On Howe of Fife, I would describe Bullfinch as a local breeding bird with concentrations in some areas. Until 2011, I would find the occasional nest by cold-searching strips of mature Sitka spruce, where Bullfinches typically build on foliated lower outer branches, ones where there is a restricted space—a 'slot'—between the chosen branch and the one above. These nests were very often predated, especially in areas where Jays were active.

On 26 April 2011, I was sitting watching an area of low scrub where I was used to seeing Bullfinches in winter, feeding on the plentiful seeds available. Most of this scrub is a suckering, garden escapee variety of bush, rather like a dogwood but with thinner, multi-stems and small, dense, currant-like leaves that produce tight cover. As I watched, I was surprised to see a pair of Bullfinches appear and fly to the edge of the patch, the

female carrying nest material. She soon disappeared into the vegetation while the male sat piping on a nearby branch. Both birds then flew off and returned a short time later with more material. They were surprisingly bold and disregarded my fairly close presence. After marking the rough location, I left and stayed away until 6 May, when I searched for the nest and found the male sitting tight. Then on 11 May, the female was incubating and would not leave, despite my close inspection. Watching the nest site from a distance, I noted that changeovers always involved the incoming adult dropping into vegetation a way off and making its way unseen through the thick foliage; later feeding visits were just as furtive. By 19 May, five tiny chicks were in the cup and on 24 May I ringed them. An inspection on 31 May was remarkable—I heard strange begging calls coming from the nest and found a single remaining chick, ready

to fledge. Concerned that this chick had been abandoned, I checked again the next day and found the chick still in the nest but no longer calling. The following day it had fledged.

I monitored two more Bullfinch nests in the patch of scrub that season, each found by watching the adults building. Given its composition, cold searching the site without causing damage would have been difficult, and watching back the adults during incubation or feeding just as tricky, as noted earlier. All three nests were about a metre high in forks, just underneath the top canopy. Two were within six metres of each other and might have been the same pair. One nest was in a cup that had actually been started by a pair of Goldfinches! All three fledged young.

Buoyed by success in 2011, I made another concerted effort with Bullfinch the following season and managed to monitor 12 nests, finding the first on 29 April and the majority between 20 May and 3 July. Seven nests were found in the now familiar 'garden escapee' patch of scrub, three were in a patch of gorse, one in a Honeysuckle and a bonus nest was found in a dwarf conifer, two metres from the back door of a house in the middle of a village. Of those nests, three were unused (like many a Chaffinch nest that year), the gorse and honeysuckle nests all failed, the suburban nest was abandoned with five eggs, but the nests in the thick patch of scrub succeeded. Success for this species at least appears to rely on the habitat being extensive and dense. Interestingly, almost all the clutches of five that hatched in 2012 included an addled egg.

Despite several netting sessions, none of the Bullfinch fledglings ringed in the last couple of years have yet been recaptured.



**A Bullfinch nest with a clutch of four eggs. Made from a twig cup with a straw and hair lining, Bullfinch nests tend not to disintegrate in winter, meaning that old nests can often be seen clearly in defoliated vegetation.**

# Monitoring Pigeons in the park

They may not be everyone's favourite bird, but Woodpigeons are a fascinating and relatively accessible study species. Paul Slater tells us about his ongoing project in Liverpool.

The 2012 season marked the 19<sup>th</sup> year of an ongoing study into the breeding ecology of suburban Woodpigeons in Liverpool, Merseyside. The main study site is Sefton Park, a large (c 100 ha) area of Victorian-era parkland that is bounded by the densely built-up areas of Dingle, Toxteth and Wavertree to the west, north and east, and the suburban area of Mossley Hill to the south and south-east. Sefton Park resembles pastoral woodland, but with lawnmowers in place of cattle, and it has about 4,200 trees that provide plenty of nest sites for Woodpigeons, Lime and Holly being the preference. Generally, the birds appear to have a high tolerance of humans, spending less time away from their nests than is typical for the species, which may make for a lower predation rate. Grey Squirrels have colonised the area since the beginning of the study but they do not seem to have affected Woodpigeon breeding success, though they may compete with them for winter food, such as acorns and beech mast.

From mid June, I try to locate all Woodpigeon nests by searching thoroughly every two weeks until no more are found, usually in September/October. While this means that a few early nests before June get missed, I found in the early years of the study that most Woodpigeon activity takes place between July and September. I monitor any accessible nesting attempts I find until they are finished, and any young that reach the right age I ring, with help from Merseyside Ringing Group.

So far, over the study period (1994–2012), 1,584 nests have been monitored at Sefton Park alone (c 85 per year) resulting in lots of data for the BTO and a write-up for *Bird Study*



ELSPETH ROWE

**LEFT: A Woodpigeon nest with three eggs—is the third an old egg from a previous brood? BELOW: Top ten 2012 NRS totals for Woodpigeon per county**

Merseyside	122
Gloucestershire	44
Cleveland	41
Lancashire	39
Warwickshire	32
Greater Manchester	31
Essex	28
South Yorkshire	22
Norfolk	21
Avon	20

in 2001. In terms of analysis, it's been interesting to compare the suburban Sefton Park Woodpigeons with the rural populations studied by Ken Murton and Ian Inglis in the 1960s and 1990s respectively, and also the inner city London population studied by Stanley Cramp in the 1960s/70s. It turns out that the Sefton Park birds, while nesting at similar densities to rural populations (as high as 60 per km<sup>2</sup>), have been enjoying better breeding success because of higher hatching rates (perhaps reduced predation, as suggested above?). Moreover, the timing of breeding of Woodpigeons at Sefton Park is more similar to that of Murton and Inglis' rural study populations, where most activity is in July to September, than to that of Cramp's inner city population, where peak laying occurred between April and June. This is probably because peak nesting activity at Sefton Park, as with rural populations, is tracking the maximum availability of arable food sources. From June, when nesting activity is at its peak, few Woodpigeons are actually seen feeding in the park, whereas large numbers are regularly observed following a flight line back and forth in the direction of the nearest arable fields, 6 km away. Furthermore,

crops of dead birds—both adult and young—have been found to contain relatively large quantities of rape seed and wheat and barley grains.

Recoveries of Woodpigeons ringed at the study sites have come from all directions, mostly within 15 km of Sefton Park, although there have been four recoveries from over 100 km away! The majority of the recoveries so far have been birds shot in agricultural areas, mostly in summer, which reflects the shift in shooting activity in recent decades.

There is much still to be learnt about the Woodpigeon population in the UK. What is presently influencing numbers? Is shooting in the summer significantly affecting breeding success? What is the interaction, if any, between suburban, urban and rural populations? Also, what is happening in the autumn, when large numbers of high-flying Woodpigeons are seen making predominantly southerly flights? My own studies at Sefton Park and surrounding sites have so far led me to conclude that UK population models should take account of the large numbers of birds in suburban habitats and their possibly higher breeding success.



# 2012: Our 'Big Year'

In 2012, an elite team comprising Kane Brides, Chris Bridge and Gillian Dinsmore set themselves an extreme nest recording challenge...

## Kane Brides, Chris Bridge and Gillian Dinsmore



KANE BRIDES, CHRIS BRIDGE, GILLIAN DINSMORE

The Kane Brides (left), Chris Bridge (right) and Gillian Dinsmore partnership find time to do some nest recording during a photoshoot



Gillian

I was a 'newbie' to nest recording at the start of 2012, so meeting up at weekends was a great opportunity for me to learn from Kane and Chris about the entire nest recording process, including finding and recording open nests. My weekdays were spent in Stirling and Stranraer, Scotland, where I recorded mainly

In 2011, the film 'The Big Year' was released, a story of three American birders competing to see the most bird species within 12 calendar months. That same year, as Hollywood stars Steve Martin, Jack Black and Owen Wilson went after ticks on the silver screen, three 20-somethings were planning something just as ambitious for Manchester, UK: a tale of early mornings and late evenings, many scratches and bites, leaky waders, lots of coffee and hours on end spent staring at a computer monitor. The 'Big Year' the newly formed Brides, Bridges and Dinsmore partnership had in mind was to complete 1,000 nest records in 2012.

We decided to form a nest recording partnership partly to ensure the continuation of several monitoring projects that Kane had been working on in the North West, including a Coot colour ringing project, Reed Warbler nest recording in Cheshire and Manchester, and Tree Sparrow box monitoring and colour ringing at

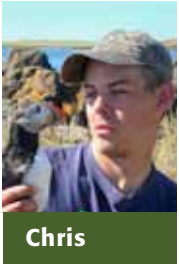
WWT's Martin Mere reserve. Kane was about to move to Gloucestershire and it became apparent that extra manpower would be needed for these projects to continue to receive the required attention.

So, our big year began with Kane in Gloucestershire, Chris completing his university degree at Bangor University, North Wales, and Gillian half-and-half at university in Stirling and doing her undergraduate dissertation on Reed Warblers in Manchester. All in all we were covering quite an area! Over the course of the 2012 breeding season, we would spend each working week on projects in our respective parts of the country, and then all meet up in Manchester each weekend, where we would continue finding and recording nests before going our separate ways for another week! All three of us approached our recording in different ways, dependent on our previous experience and the species that we were most interested in.

waterbirds, with a few passerines, waders and gulls thrown in for good measure. At weekends, I made the rather monotonous journey down to Manchester both to meet up with the guys for some nest finding lessons and to carry out fieldwork on a Reed Warbler study population for my dissertation. Of course, we made the odd visit to the pub too! When June came, I finished up at university for the year and became a full-time nester in Manchester.

I am very much looking forward to the 2013 season and spending more weekends nesting with my best friends. I honestly couldn't think of a better way to spend my time. Thanks to weekends spent colour-ringing, nest-recording and camera-trapping as part of my dissertation on Reed Warbler breeding ecology, I've totally fallen in love with the species and I yearn to hear their song again this May. I'm particularly excited about the coming season because I should start to get results from camera-trapping ringed pairs at the nest.





Chris

Juggling nest recording with completing the final year of my BSc Environmental Conservation Degree at Bangor University, including the

honours project and final exams, was certainly a challenge. I'd recently taken over a 46-year-old ringing project on Pied Flycatcher in North Wales and so carried out the bulk of my weekday nest recording at the project's two nest box sites. This produced 30 Pied Flycatcher nest records for the group, as well as 100 chicks ringed and 10 adults captured. I was also able to do some nest finding in upland

habitats including oak woodland with steep bracken covered slopes and rivers with pristine waterfalls. Monitoring nests of Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher and Wood Warbler became a weekly activity throughout the summer and I was also lucky enough to find and record several Ring Ouzel and Rock Pipit nests. Also in North Wales,

I monitored a Cormorant and Shag colony and several Kittiwake colonies that were not in the most accessible of places!



Kane

In the end, 2012 was a highly successful year for us, both in terms of getting our nest monitoring done and managing to fit in our full-time work and

studies! Thanks to our partnership, we managed to keep up the various projects we were already involved with and do much more besides. It's hard to pick out just a few highlights; however, the excitement

of recording nests of Marsh Harrier, Avocet and Bullfinch is certainly hard to beat! Also very gratifying is the totals for some of our focal species, including the top three: Reed Warbler, Tree Sparrow and Woodpigeon (Fig 1). Best of all, our 'Big Year' ended on 1,131 nest records and we covered 80 species, of which 24 are on the BTO's priority list.

So what about the coming season? Well, we were asked whether the weather during 2012 'helped' us to record more nests, with high failure rates increasing the number that were built. So should we attempt to give it another go in 2013? If so let's just hope for some better weather along the way!



As well as targeting a wide range of species, Kane, Chris and Gillian also continued with several single-species monitoring projects, including Woodpigeon (above) Tree Sparrow boxes (right) and Reed Warbler (far right)



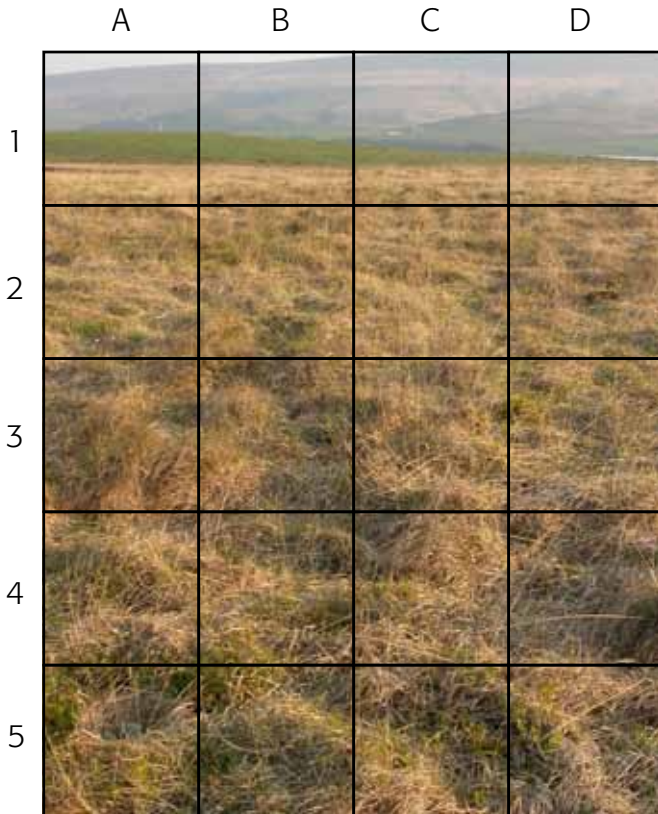
ALL PHOTOS: KANE BRIDES, CHRIS BRIDGE, GILLIAN DINSMORE

**Brides, Bridge and Dinsmore number of nest records collected per species in 2012**

Mute Swan	3	Kittiwake	49	Wren	11	Blue Tit	91
Greylag Goose	1	Lesser Black-backed Gull	7	Dunnock	16	Great Tit	55
Mandarin	2	Herring Gull	21	Robin	8	Coal Tit	3
Mallard	13	Great Black-backed Gull	1	Redstart	3	Willow Tit	1
Tufted Duck	2	Common Tern	14	Ring Ouzel	1	Nuthatch	3
Great Crested Grebe	3	Guillemot	7	Blackbird	54	Jay	1
Cormorant	102	Stock Dove	7	Song Thrush	16	Magpie	2
Shag	2	Wood Pigeon	113	Mistle Thrush	1	Jackdaw	27
Grey Heron	1	Collared Dove	7	Sedge Warbler	2	Raven	1
Marsh Harrier	1	Cuckoo	1	Reed Warbler	124	Starling	2
Sparrowhawk	1	Barn Owl	5	Blackcap	2	House Sparrow	3
Buzzard	2	Tawny Owl	4	Garden Warbler	2	Tree Sparrow	114
Kestrel	3	Great Spotted Woodpecker	4	Whitethroat	2	Chaffinch	10
Moorhen	22	Swallow	33	Wood Warbler	2	Greenfinch	10
Coot	38	House Martin	1	Chiffchaff	1	Goldfinch	5
Oystercatcher	4	Meadow Pipit	1	Willow Warbler	6	Linnet	4
Avocet	2	Rock Pipit	1	Goldcrest	2	Bullfinch	10
Ringed Plover	1	Grey Wagtail	3	Spotted Flycatcher	1	Reed Bunting	5
Lapwing	4	Pied Wagtail	4	Pied Flycatcher	29		
Common Sandpiper	1	Dipper	2	Long-tailed Tit	8	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,131</b>

## SPOT THE NEST

Thanks to everyone who responded to last issue's 'Greenfinch Guesstimate'. The correct answer was 1C, although bonus points were available for spotting that the three nests were actually Goldfinch (thanks to photographer Keith Johnson for the correction). A mirror on a stick is on its way to Mike Goss, whose correct answer was first out of a hat. This issue we have a photo of the West Pennine Moors, courtesy of Roy Rhodes. But where is the Curlew nest? Email answers to [nrs@bto.org](mailto:nrs@bto.org) by 1 December. First correct answer out of a hat wins a NRS pint glass.



### SCHEDULE 1 LICENSING INFORMATION

## Species specially protected by wildlife legislation

The species listed in italics on pages 8–9 are specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the Wildlife (NI) order of 1985. It is an offence to intentionally disturb these birds while they are building a nest, or are in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or to disturb dependent young even if not in the nest.

You must obtain a Schedule 1 licence to visit the nest of a Schedule 1 species. Any nests found by accident should not be visited a second time without a licence.

To obtain a Schedule 1 licence for nest recording on behalf of the BTO, please contact the BTO Licensing Officer, Jez Blackburn ([jez.blackburn@bto.org](mailto:jez.blackburn@bto.org)),

[blackburn@bto.org](mailto:blackburn@bto.org)), for an application form for non-ringers. A first-time licence application must be accompanied by two references from respected ornithologists (eg County Recorder, BTO Regional Rep, Bird Club Chairman, BTO Ringer, other Schedule 1 licence holder).

Licences are issued annually and must be renewed each season by submitting a renewal application. Please note that applications received after February may take longer to process owing to the volume of applications received at that time.

To obtain a Schedule 1 licence to approach nests for purposes other than BTO surveys, please contact the relevant Government body (eg Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage).

### The NRS team & contacts

#### Carl Barimore

*NRS Organiser*

The main point of contact for nest recorders.

#### Hazel Evans

*NRS Secretary*

Provides secretarial support to the Scheme, including processing records and sending out materials.

#### David Glue

*Research Ecologist*

Provides advice based on a long involvement with the Scheme.

#### Dr Dave Leech

*Head of NRS, CES and RAS*

Oversees the running of the Nest Record Scheme and undertakes research using the data collected.

#### Useful online addresses

NRS webpage: [www.bto.org/nrs](http://www.bto.org/nrs)

IPMR webpage: [www.bto.org/software/ipmr](http://www.bto.org/software/ipmr)

Latest trends: [www.bto.org/birdtrends](http://www.bto.org/birdtrends)

Online forum: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nrsforum>

General NRS enquiries: [nrs@bto.org](mailto:nrs@bto.org)

IPMR submissions: [nrs.data@bto.org](mailto:nrs.data@bto.org)



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