



This is the eleventh edition of *RAS News*, the newsletter for the British Trust for Ornithology's Retrapping Adults for Survival Scheme. If you require further copies, then please contact Greg Conway at The Nunnery.

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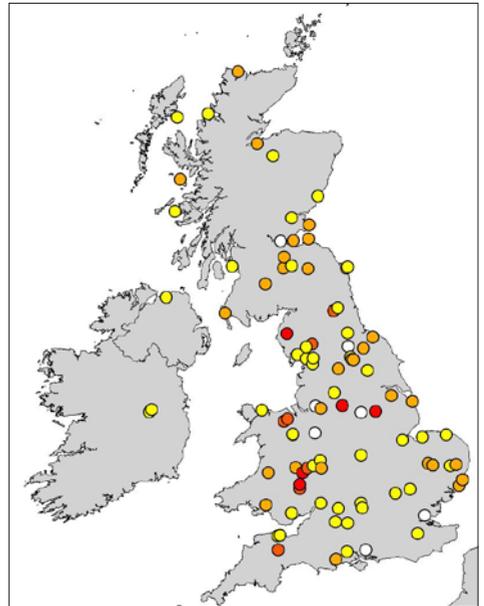
The fledging of RAS

There has been a great deal of interest in RAS over the last few months at BTO HQ, with a real flurry of activity and discussion. As well as looking in more depth at the core aims of the Scheme, thanks to your hard work we now have sufficiently long runs of data to enable us to start developing methods to produce standard outputs (such as annual trends).

Following on from several internal meetings with key members of modelling staff at the BTO (not the catwalk variety), we recently hosted a workshop focussing on a review of the population dynamics strand of the BTO Strategy theme, to which ringing and nest recording are primary contributors. Representatives from BTO Council, University of East Anglia, RSPB, JNCC, Centre for Population Biology and the Swiss Ornithological Institute met for a day of discussions and the outcome from this meeting will be announced more widely soon. For more information on the BTO Strategy see: www.bto.org/aboutBTO/strategy.htm

Strategic direction

The ideal end-point of the RAS Scheme would be development of a series of studies across the UK that monitored survival, nesting success and breeding population size within the same site. This approach would significantly improve our understanding of population dynamics, which are likely to be driven by



Distribution of RAS projects in 2009. Colours indicate the number of years of data available. 1–10 years in yellow, 10–29 years in orange and over 30 years in red. New projects are in white.

factors acting at a site level, but will require an increase in the degree of coordination of the suite of surveys that BTO currently operate.

Another idea was to stimulate greater focus on structured ringing of those populations where work is already underway. This could be achieved by encouraging ringers already

retrapping large numbers of priority species to concentrate their efforts further (see below). We would also like to explore the use of new technologies in RAS to generate 're-encounters', in particular the use of PIT tags and similar devices, which are becoming increasingly affordable.

As for the future, the aim is to develop a more integrated approach to population modelling, with comparison of results from all the demographic monitoring projects (RAS, CES, Nest Record Scheme and general ringing), providing a fuller picture of our changing bird populations. Understanding the spatial pattern of population change is very important and focussed, site-based studies like RAS will be a key tool with which to look at this.

New projects

We mentioned in *RAS News* 10 that we were investigating ways of making better use of existing data from projects where good numbers of retraps are already being generated. If catching effort was recorded as well, these are practically ready made RAS projects. Aside from the more structured and focussed ringing during the breeding season that RAS encourages, it is the recording of effort that makes RAS so special. Having well over 95% of all data coming in electronically now gives us great scope to examine the

ringing data as it arrives and source new projects. Looking at all recaptures over the last five years (all 899,503 of them!), 444,137 correspond to breeding season captures, of which 166,232 are adults. Grouping records by grid reference and species, we can identify individual sites retrapping suitable numbers of certain species.

At a rough first sweep, there are perhaps an extra 30-40 'projects' worthy of further investigation: Storm Petrel (five possible new projects), Coot, Puffin (three), Blackbird (six, two of which are now registered!), Linnet (four, a species recently dropped from the CES analyses due to a small sample size), Bullfinch (two) and Reed Bunting (three).

We hope to recruit some of these into the RAS Scheme in the next few months.



2009 RAS Season

Table 1 details all the RAS projects submitting data over the last five years. The total of 104 projects submitting data in 2009 is slightly up on the 2008 figure.

We have also had some real interest in new projects and, besides the two Blackbird studies mentioned above, we will have projects starting in 2010 on:

- Moorhen.
- Bearded Tit (our third now, which is turning into a great set of projects).

- Marsh Tit and Willow Tit (complementing the existing Marsh Tit project).
- Pied Flycatcher (data back to the 1970s).
- Bullfinch
- Yellowhammer.

We are, of course, always keen to see more projects coming under the RAS umbrella, so if you know of anything happening locally that might fit the bill (such as work on Pied Flycatchers, Sand Martins or Swallows for example) then do encourage people to get in touch.

Table 1. The number of RAS projects submitting data in each of the last five years. Birds of Conservation Concern are indicated with the relevant list colour.

Species	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Eider	4	3	2	1	2
Manx Shearwater	2	2	1	1	1
Storm Petrel	3	3	3	2	2
Shag	2	2	2	2	3
Little Ringed Plover	1	1	1	1	1
Ringed Plover	1	1	1	1	1
Dunlin	2	2	–	–	–
Common Sandpiper	2	2	2	2	2
Black-headed Gull	–	–	–	–	1
Kittiwake	3	3	2	2	2
Guillemot	1	1	1	–	–
Razorbill	1	1	1	–	–
Puffin	–	–	–	1	1
Barn Owl	1	1	1	1	1
Tawny Owl	1	–	–	–	–
Swift	1	1	1	1	1
Sand Martin	18	17	15	15	12
Swallow	6	5	5	4	4
House Martin	3	3	2	2	2
Tree Pipit	1	1	1	–	–
Dipper	2	3	3	2	2
Duncock	1	1	1	1	1
Robin	1	1	1	1	1
Stonechat	1	1	1	1	2
Wheatear	2	2	2	1	1
Blackbird	2	2	1	2	2
Song Thrush	1	1	1	–	–
Sedge Warbler	4	3	3	3	3
Reed Warbler	5	5	5	5	5
Whitethroat	3	2	2	2	1
Willow Warbler	1	1	1	1	1
Wood Warbler	1	1	1	1	1
Firecrest	–	–	–	1	1
Pied Flycatcher	22	21	19	18	17
Bearded Tit	1	1	1	1	2
Blue Tit	1	1	1	1	1
Great Tit	2	3	3	3	3
Coal Tit	–	–	–	–	1
Marsh Tit	1	1	1	1	1
Starling	1	1	2	3	2
House Sparrow	7	9	9	8	8
Tree Sparrow	–	–	1	1	1
Chaffinch	3	3	4	4	4
Siskin	5	5	4	5	5
Common Crossbill	1	1	1	–	–
Yellowhammer	–	–	1	1	2
TOTAL	121	118	110	103	104

Species News

Pied Flycatcher

I had a mixed year: numbers were down to start with and then I suffered predation at quite a few nests before I even had chance to trap the males. I had a few males that were reluctant feeders – I set a video on a tripod at one nest and during the 100 minutes of recording the score was: female 64 times, male 0! At two very late broods the males again proved hard to trap but persistence paid off. One was a retrap and both were in advanced moult, so it was even better to see them.

Peter Coffey – Clwyd

My Pied Flies have been declining from about 316 pairs to 107. The unusual factor this year was a strong recovery in attempts, but catastrophic productivity. For some reason spring arrived very late in the Clun valley and the leaves did not fully emerge until late June. The mortality in the boxes was horrible. It was the worst pulli season since 1987, with chicks in large areas starving to death. Another small scheme I have got at lower altitude had the best productivity I have experienced since the late 80's. It will be very interesting to learn what the Oak woodland schemes achieved.

Chris Whittles – Shropshire



Pied Flies did very badly: of 10 nests, only four got to ringing stage, the rest failed. So from c 22 successful nests two years ago we're down to four! Not good.

Iain Livingstone – Strathclyde

Sand Martin

Weather was kinder this year, at least until June, and I got out more, especially to the Sand Martin colonies. Swallows also did well. I caught a lot of juveniles in a maize roost late in season - they seemed to have had a good breeding season. Got two Spanish and one French Sand Martin also, which was interesting.

Declan Manley

I lost all three of the Lower Windrush Valley colonies, but we may be able to save Radley. Peter Delaloye and myself will try to meet with the owners/operators and do some civil engineering on the site.

George Candelin – Oxfordshire

The problem we experienced at Ratcliffe over the last two years was a temporary loss of the quantity of ash, coupled with a change in the attitude of an operative at the site. The quantity of ash has now improved and the second problem might also be resolved. As far as any other sites (Huncote, Dunton Bassett, High Cross, Ibstock) that we know of in Leicestershire, that are not covered by any other ringing group, we are concerned these are either coming to the end of their life or are managed in such a way as to exclude Sand Martins or make ringing impossible. That leaves us with one site, Welford, which changes from year to year (some years we are able to ring; some years we are not) so that we cannot guarantee year on year visits suitable for a RAS scheme.

John Cranfield – Leicestershire

Fame and Fortune: Blackbird Survival in a Thetford Garden

Our RAS project involves attracting, catching and colour-ringing our local population of Blackbirds between the end of March and the end of June. The provision of supplementary food, including mealworms, oats and fruitcake, through the breeding season attracts 'territorial' adults into the study garden from up to 200 metres away. The surrounding gardens hold a high density of Blackbirds, and in 2005 a staggering 164 adults were recorded during the breeding season.

The high density of Blackbirds indicates that this combination of large gardens with trees, grass and shrubs on a light sandy soil provides very suitable habitat. Sustaining this high population density appears to be related to very high productivity. The number of adults peaked in 2005, with relatively poor breeding seasons in the wet summers of 2006 and 2007. These summers produced fewer juveniles to recruit as adults in the following years.

One of the advantages of ringing in one spot over a long period of time is that you get to know particular individuals. We have spent a lot of time recording our colour-ringed individuals and have now amassed over 12,000 resightings! With this long run of data it was possible to calculate survival of adults,



both between years and, uniquely for Blackbirds, through the different seasons. On average, two-thirds of adults return each year, which is fairly typical of a medium-sized passerine.

Looking at survival rates by season revealed a very interesting

pattern. During the late summer and autumn, and even into early winter, relatively few Blackbirds appeared to die; only 9% in the six months from August to January. In late winter, mortality increased dramatically, with 10% of birds dying in February/March. Unexpectedly, this high level of mortality continued into the spring and summer with 20% of birds dying during the breeding season (April to July). Interestingly, there are differences between the sexes over this time, with survival rates lower for males in April/May (when they are very territorial) and lower for females in June/July when incubating - raising chicks is clearly hard work for Blackbirds.

Colour-ringing the adults has also produced rather unexpected results. One bird (Homer as he was named by the *Daily Mail*) ringed as a juvenile, and then colour-ringed as a young male, achieved national fame with its regular winter holidays spent in the same Devon garden.



Jeff and Allison Kew have been participating in RAS since the start of the project in 1998 and are now in their 13th year of collecting data for their study species: Blackbird, Siskin and Chaffinch. Amazingly, they single-handedly ringed more Siskin in their garden in 2009 (2,011) than all 'counties' except Highland and Suffolk!

33 tears for Common Sandpipers

The last issue of *RAS News* showed a table of the five longest running RAS studies: four on Pied Flycatchers and one on Common Sandpiper. First let me confess that although I started my project in 1977 (and have been chief submitter of RAS data), since 1990 the actual ringing has been solely done by Derek Yalden after I moved away from the area, so thanks Derek!

During these 33 years, the streams of the Peak District have been the ‘frontline’ in the retreat of Common Sandpiper (see box opposite). The thriving population at the start of the century was no longer there by the middle, and through the latter half a thinning out in the southern Pennines occurred such that our RAS study population of 20+ pairs reached just two, maybe three, in 2009.

The study itself has been based on colour ring sightings and would be expected to provide good data to understand a decline that has recently led to the species’ Amber-listing. Unfortunately, analysis using our data looking primarily for evidence of links to climate change was inconclusive (Pearce-Higgins *et al* 2009).

It is pretty clear that for the last few years the local decline has been driven by emigration and a failure to attract new recruits to the population. The streams chosen for study in 1977 were those where it was easier to catch birds with a net across a stream rather than around lake or reservoir edges. Our study streams feed into the upper Derwent reservoir system and the population around those reservoirs has remained healthy. Indeed, in the Peak District the reservoir populations appear stable, whilst nearly all stream sites have been abandoned. However, catching birds in walk-in or spring traps is extremely frustrating, taking 10 times longer per bird. Nonetheless, we have now accumulated enough observations of birds moving between streams and reservoirs to say that this is mainly one way traffic.

In our first report on this study, we could not work out how the population maintained itself, as the local productivity did not appear to balance adult losses. Very few of our ringed chicks or juveniles returned to the study area (a much smaller proportion than in the other RAS study run by Tom Dougall in the Scottish Borders). Thus we have been aware for a long time of our need to recruit birds from other areas.

Although breeding in the temperate zone, the behaviour of Common Sandpipers appears similar to that of an Arctic wader. The female arrives and pairs up, feeding rapidly so that within three weeks she lays a clutch of four eggs, each weighing 25% of her lean weight. Following three weeks of incubation, she helps the male mind the young for 10 days and then departs pronto: total time in territory less than two months! Research using genetic markers has also shown that there is plenty of



Ringing of chicks is not without its problems, and finding them is one!



Colour-ringing of birds greatly increases the value of many RAS studies, and this is no exception.

extra pair parentage going on. Basically, the female is looking for a good site with a good mate and a few other males around. The female fidelity to the previous year's site is low and thus her survival is not well measured.

Males are the territory holders and are thus generally site faithful between years. However, because of the urgency with which breeding is completed, he cannot spend too much time fighting for a territory in a crowded area, nor can he afford to hang around in an area when females are deserting it. The latter has been the situation in our streams over the recent years of the study so that now males are also being increasingly nomadic in breeding sites and potential new recruits pass by.

Thus, in terms of survival, the figure of 0.80 obtained during the 1980s for return of territory holding males is probably the most representative value. During this time the population was slowly increasing and there was plenty of territorial display as the birds arrived to advertise it as a good area.

A more detailed account of some of the work done by Phil Holland, Derek Yalden and Tom Dougall can be found in the February 2010 edition of British Birds (The population biology of Common Sandpipers in Britain).

The Common Sandpiper abounds in summer on all the streams and reservoirs in the hill-country of east Cheshire, and on all the meres and many of the rivers of the plain it is common. ...and within recent years a few pairs have even reared their broods on the polluted Mersey... ..whilst on the margin of the reservoirs in Longdendale, at Bosley, and elsewhere, no bird is more plentiful. It is even more characteristic of this district than the Dipper and Grey Wagtail.

The Vertebrate Fauna of Cheshire and Liverpool Bay, T.A. Coward, 1910

Nowadays, the Common Sandpiper is, as a breeding bird, largely restricted to hill-streams and reservoirs which have shingly shores.

Breeding Bird Atlas - 1978-84 (confirmed breeding in 14 tetrads).

Common Sandpiper is normally regarded as one of the characteristic breeding birds of upland hill streams, but none was found in such habitat during this survey.

Cheshire Breeding Bird Atlas - 2004-06 (confirmed breeding in one tetrad).

Pearce-Higgins, J.W., Yalden, D.W., Dougall, T.W. & Beale, C.M. (2009) Does climate change explain the decline of a trans-Saharan Afro-Palaeartic migrant? *Oecologia* **159**, 649-659.



Phil Holland was trained in the Peak District by Ted Robson in the 1970s and decided that waders were to his liking. This study held his interest and when he moved to Lancaster, he studied Common Sandpiper

passage at the mouth of the Lune. He now rings with the Swale Wader Group.

From Great Tits to Tree Sparrows

I registered my first RAS in the very first year of the scheme (1998) to study a population of Great Tits in a quiet valley on the edge of the North York Moors. In a truly demographic way, I combined my general ringing with both a RAS and nest recording.

In the winter, I caught at a feeding site in order to colour ring individuals. In the summer, I combined my regular nest box recording visits with the opportunity to record colour-ringed individuals and capture unringed adults around the nest or at the feeding station. Whilst this experience was not without its difficulties, I was able to colour ring enough adults during the winter to provide sightings to underpin the RAS in the summer. As my experience grew, I realised that there were particular points in the breeding cycle when I was best able to find colour-ringed individuals. Regular nest box monitoring allowed me to determine first egg dates and using this information, I was able to concentrate my efforts. During the second week of incubation, I was able to read colour



Engaging the help of other local farmers has been a great way to generate more sightings. Four farms are now involved in the project, including two in the HLS scheme and one in Countryside Stewardship.

rings on sitting adults without taking them off the nest and during the second week after hatching, when both parents are normally willing to come to defend their nest, I could again read colour combinations.

So when the opportunity came to start a similar study on Tree Sparrows it seemed like it would be a 'walk in the park'...

Ten years ago, I erected 20 nest boxes on a local farm and in 2003 was surprised to find two boxes occupied by Tree Sparrows. I was further encouraged when three years later the farm joined the High Level Stewardship Scheme, which included Tree Sparrow as a target species, and we erected more nest boxes. The farm cultivates most of its land on a five-year rotation involving barley and grass but this cycle was modified to include permanent grass margins and two plots of 'bird seed'. The number of pulli Tree Sparrows ringed on the farm has risen rapidly from the initial five ringed in 2003 to around 150 in 2009 (Fig 1).

This rapid increase in the number of pairs lead me to wonder where all these birds had



Colour-ringing of birds at winter feeding sites generates a marked population for the subsequent RAS season.

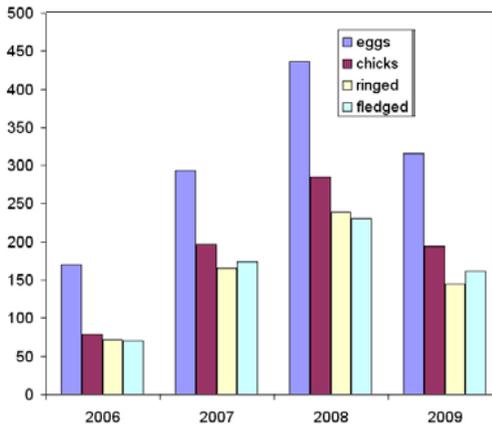


Figure 1. Number of eggs laid, chicks hatched, pullets ringed and chicks fledged annually during the Tree Sparrow RAS study.

come from, and I saw colour-ringing as a way of finding out, also giving the potential for a RAS. Pulli from 2006 onwards were ringed with a single 'year' colour ring or a unique combination of rings. In addition, I tried to catch adult birds at both feeding stations and in the 'bird seed' plots to add to the individually colour-ringed stock.

I guess this is where my experiences with Tree Sparrows and Great Tits started to differ. I used the same procedure for nest visiting, starting at the beginning of the nesting season so that I could monitor nest progress. I soon realised that I needed to rattle my ladder as I approached a box, using a small torch to illuminate the contents of nests and that I needed to ring chicks as soon as they could safely take rings.

Catching and ringing adult Tree Sparrows, however, is much more demanding: the adults are much more wary and seem to recognise nets very easily. I read with interest the debate about how best to work 'bird seed' plots and found that I needed to adopt different strategies for different plots. Sometimes nets work best placed within the plot, or on others, placed between the plot and the surrounding hedge. To date, I have individually colour-ringed 240 birds, had 36 retraps (with one control) and received 10 sightings.

So why are Tree Sparrows so much more difficult to study? There seem to be a number of reasons for this. Firstly, they appear to be quite mobile; some birds are rarely seen around the nest boxes in the summer or at baited sites in the winter. They are also quite shy, which makes accurate colour ring reading around the nest difficult and recording on the nest is a big 'no-no'. There was a lot of evidence (particularly in second broods) this year that rings were getting coated with droppings in a way that I had not seen before, so colours were impossible to read. When you put this all together, the statistics from all this activity hardly makes good reading; I was only able to identify 15 individuals on my submission for 2009.

So what does that mean for the coming year and what am I going to do differently? I have been working to establish a small number of feeding stations which I can continue to monitor during the summer. These have been sited so that I can view birds easily and even get some photographs, making ring reading so much easier. I also plan to put in more time in the field in the early summer trying to net them, and also just observing, as they seem to spend more time just sitting around before the foliage develops.

Thanks to Richard and Rachel at the farm for getting me involved in their HLS Scheme and to Mick and Helen for supplying coffee whilst I use their feeding station for colour ring recording. More recently they have also photographed birds so I can read rings at my leisure. And of course, thanks to Paul for carrying the ladder!



Tom Dewdney has been involved in ringing for most of his life. He rings passerines, waders and birds of prey with the Swaledale Ringing Group and travels further north to ring seabirds.

Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group (TIARG)

In 1971, the late Barry Lawson organised an exploratory expedition of what has now become an annual pilgrimage to the Treshnish Isles by TIARG. The Treshnish Isles are a group of eight main islands, with three smaller vegetated islets and numerous skerries, situated, at its closest, three km west of Mull. Uninhabited by humans since 1834 (and livestock since the 1980s), the isles have recently become the property of the Hebridean Trust. They are designated a Special Protection Area for their importance for over



16,900 pairs of seabirds, including 5,000 pairs of Storm Petrel, 8,650 Guillemot and 1,280 Manx Shearwater.

To coincide with the most profitable period for seabird monitoring, optimum weather and day length, TIARG generally visit the isles in the last week of June. The expedition's base is around a ruined village at the northern end of Lunga, the largest of the islands. The majority of one week of fieldwork is centred upon Lunga and neighbouring Sgeir a Chaisteil where a now annual complete seabird census is undertaken.

Once we have completed the annual census, the six to eight person team redirect their efforts to the systematic ringing of specific colonies, which includes both pulli and the retrapping of adult Shag in specific sections of the colonies. The conservation value of this aspect of TIARG's ringing programme has, since 2006, been much increased with its development as a RAS project. Adult Shags are now colour-ringed, many having been metal ringed as pulli, with to date over 160 birds now individually identifiable in the field.

It is still early days for the RAS, for which the marking of adults has been hampered by the start of the study coinciding with a succession of poor breeding seasons. TIARG have arrived on Lunga to find large numbers of adults in the vicinity of colonies but which had not bred, as evidenced by atypical concentrations of over 700 birds offshore. Presumably many of these are in too poor condition to breed successfully. Of those birds that have been found nesting, great variation was found in the progress of breeding; all stages from eggs to fledged young being noted.

Brood sizes have in these years mostly been small in size, typically of two or three young.

Although over a hundred visitors may visit Lunga in a day, walking amongst the marked breeding Shags, few resightings ever reach us from the public. It is therefore during our annual one-week trip that almost all resightings are made, with 38 out of a possible 145 individuals recorded in 2009. The latter was when the number of actively breeding adults was only a third of what it can be, most of the remaining marked adults presumed to have either not bred or failed early. As a long-lived species, a good breeding season holds for us promise of a high resighting rate.

Robin Ward has, for much of his 24-year career in waterbird studies, been fortunate to have been able to use his ringing skills for both work and pleasure. His involvement with TIARG over 14 years has very much been thanks to the late Simon Walker who with much enthusiasm, humour and dedication led the Group since 1994.



Stonechats in the Forest

We started colour-ringing Stonechat in Thetford Forest during 2006. Five years earlier there were hardly any pairs breeding in the forest, but numbers increased rapidly and have probably now reached 50 pairs. Having trapped Stonechat in the past with relative ease using spring traps, I thought we had a species here ready made for a colour ring based RAS. We soon found that the adults were not so easy to catch during the breeding season, looking at mealworms, crickets and hopper locust in our spring traps with some disdain. However, a combination of spring-trapping and mist-netting did just about get us into double figures, but not enough for RAS. We were more successful with our nest finding though, and ended up ringing 55 pulli in our first year.

We had wondered whether colour-ringing the pulli would pay dividends, although we did not have much idea about their survival or site fidelity within the forest. We were therefore encouraged to find 2006 youngsters popping up on territories in 2007. To date, we've marked 365 individuals and are gearing up for our fifth season now. As I write this the

first pairs are getting this season's proceedings underway. After the first few years it has become apparent that we can mark and resight enough birds in the forest to warrant running the study as a RAS project.

Birds ringed as adults, regardless of sex, have always been seen in subsequent years, but only on territories where they were first ringed. Some of these stay on territory year-round but others probably move outside of the forest, and a reasonable number of those ringed as pulli turn up to breed in subsequent years. It looks like males are more likely to return close to their natal territory and generally on, or adjacent to, the same heathland or restock area on which they were hatched. In one case, we had three brothers, all from the same nest, establish territories in their second year within 1 km of each other! We have had far fewer females ringed as pulli turning up subsequently, but those that do have always moved much further, usually 6 km or more, and invariably to a different heathland or restock area. Despite what we have seen within the forest, the few recoveries from outside the study area have all been of long distance movements of males (see box on page 12).

This study is being carried out by Thetford Forest Ringing Group, and many members have helped, but efforts are spearheaded by nest finders extraordinaire John Secker and Ron Hoblyn, the 'young pretender' to their throne, Niall Burton, and myself. The Forestry Commission kindly support our efforts with a small grant to fund colour rings and towards fuel costs.



Issues with maintaining a large colour-ringed population may be solved by colour-ringing of pulli, as for these Stonechats.

Graham Austin is Senior Research Ecologist in Wetland and Marine Research Team at BTO and runs a CES, as well as RAS projects on Pied Flycatchers and Stonechat.





This male Stonechat was photographed at Dersingham, north Norfolk, on 12 March 2007, whilst the photographer was trying (unsuccessfully) to see a Black-eared Kite. It had also been seen previously in the area on 4 November 2006. LBW,Y;RBP,M was ringed as a pullus in Thetford Forest on 10 June 2006.

A second male, ringed in the forest on 5 June 2008, was seen on Kelling Heath, also north Norfolk, from 13 March to 28 October 2009. LBP,P; RBP,M bred successfully on the heath, raising three broods, which were colour-ringed as part of a new 'bolt-on' project!

Completing, and confusing, the picture is the recent recovery of another male, ringed as a pullus in the forest in June 2009. This bird was seen with a female at Brightlingsea, Essex, on 5 October 2009.

Welcome to Greg

We are very pleased to announce that Greg Conway, long-standing 'A' ringer, is taking over as both RAS and CES organiser. Congratulations to Mark Grantham, RAS Organiser for the last year, who is now moving on. Mark will be working on a new collaborative project between BirdGuides (www.birdguides.com) and BTO, aimed at increasing the quality, quantity and value of bird recording.



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Photos and illustrations

Puffins by Stuart Newson, Pied Flycatcher by John Harding, Blackbirds by Jeff Kew, Common Sandpipers by Phil Holland (pullus) and Sean Gray (adult), Tree Sparrows by Tom Dewdney, Shag by Robin Ward, Stonechats by Graham Austin (pulli) and Phil Kenyon (adult). Greg Conway by Dawn Balmer.

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