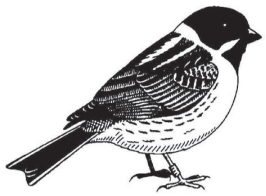
RAS *News*



This is the seventh edition of the British Trust for Ornithology's newsletter for its Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) scheme. Additional copies are available on request or can be viewed or downloaded in pdf format from the BTO website www.bto.org.

Number 7 April 2005

Sand Martin survival trends

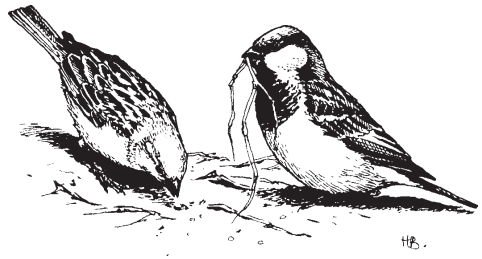
RAS is a programme that encourages the BTO's licensed ringers to focus their efforts on collecting data that can be used to monitor the survival rates of breeding birds. In a series of independent RAS projects, ringers concentrate on a particular species within a defined area, and attempt each breeding season to record every breeding adult as an individual – by ringing it or by examining a ring or colour rings placed earlier. The turnover of breeding adults between seasons measures survival rates, site by site, in a way that is not possible through general ringing.

The most valuable RAS projects are for species that are poorly covered by the Constant Effort Sites (CES) scheme and are of conservation concern. Ideally, there would be at least five projects per species, to monitor survival over a representative part of the species' range.

RAS began formally in 1998, but many of the projects registered since then have provided data for earlier years – in one case beginning in 1968!

A graph showing the year-to-year changes in survival rates of Sand Martins over a 25-year period is about to be published in *Bird Study* (see page 9). Although not strictly a RAS output, because it pre-dated the start of the scheme, this project shows clearly what it is that RAS ringers are aiming to provide.

There are a number of long-term ringing projects fully compatible with RAS that have not yet been registered with the scheme. We hope they may eventually add to RAS totals for earlier as well as future years. Registering as a RAS project will ensure that the fullest use is made of hard-won data.



Drawing: Hilary Burn

Four new House Sparrow RAS projects began in 2004.

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RAS in 2004

Last year's newsletter tabulated 103 active projects for 2003, for 43 species, for which data had been received by early March. Since then further data sets have been sent through and the figure for 2003 has since grown to 114 projects for 45 species. This may grow further if projects not currently registered with RAS can be persuaded to join the scheme.

The comparable total for 2004 is 114 data sets for 44 species. This represents a further year of strong RAS participation. Totals by species for 2004 are as follows – but, again, some late data sets are likely to be still awaiting submission. The figure in brackets is the current number of data sets for that species for 2003.

Eider	4	(4)	Wheatear	2	(2)
Manx Shearwater	1	(1)	Blackbird	1	(3)
Storm Petrel	3	(3)	**Song Thrush**	1	(1)
Shag	1	(1)	Sedge Warbler	3	(3)
Little Ringed Plover	1	(1)	Reed Warbler	4	(4)
Ringed Plover	1	(1)	Whitethroat	4	(4)
Dunlin	2	(1)	*Wood Warbler*	1	(1)
Common Sandpiper	2	(2)	*Willow Warbler*	1	(2)
Kittiwake	2	(2)	*Goldcrest*	1	(1)
Arctic Tern	-	(1)	Pied Flycatcher	17	(17)
Guillemot	1	(1)	*Bearded Tit*	1	(1)
Razorbill	1	(1)	**Marsh Tit**	1	(1)
Barn Owl	1	(1)	Coal Tit	1	(1)
Tawny Owl	1	(1)	Blue Tit	1	(1)
Swift	2	(3)	Great Tit	2	(2)
Sand Martin	16	(15)	**Starling**	1	(-)
Swallow	7	(5)	**House Sparrow**	7	(5)
House Martin	4	(4)	**Tree Sparrow**	-	(2)
Tree Pipit	1	(1)	Chaffinch	3	(3)
Dipper	3	(3)	Siskin	2	(1)
Dunnock	1	(1)	**Linnet**	-	(2)
Robin	1	(1)	**Yellowhammer**	1	(-)
Stonechat	1	(1)	**Reed Bunting**	1	(1)
Whinchat	1	(1)			

The eight species whose names are in bold are **Red-listed** on the UK list of birds of conservation concern, and the 21 in italics are *Amber-listed*. The remaining 18 species are Green-listed.

Three species, Arctic Tern, Tree Sparrow and Linnet, are missing from the 2004 table but had five active projects between them in 2003. It would be sad to lose these species entirely from the list, although volatile capture totals are clear evidence of the problems involved. Two species, Starling and Yellowhammer, are welcome additions, especially as these are both species Red-listed on the strength of their UK population declines.

The five-year review of RAS in 2003 drew attention to the special value of multiple projects for each species across the country. As RAS develops, it is likely that we would like to focus on a set of core species, which are poorly covered by other BTO schemes. A list of these species appeared in a previous *RAS News* (5: 9). It is good to see that for several of these species, Sand Martin, Swallow, Pied Flycatcher and House Sparrow, the number of active projects is already above five.

Electronic submissions

Of the 114 data sets received for 2004, 102 (89%) arrived electronically, mostly by email direct from IPMR. This is much the easiest way to submit data. See page 10 for more news on IPMR.

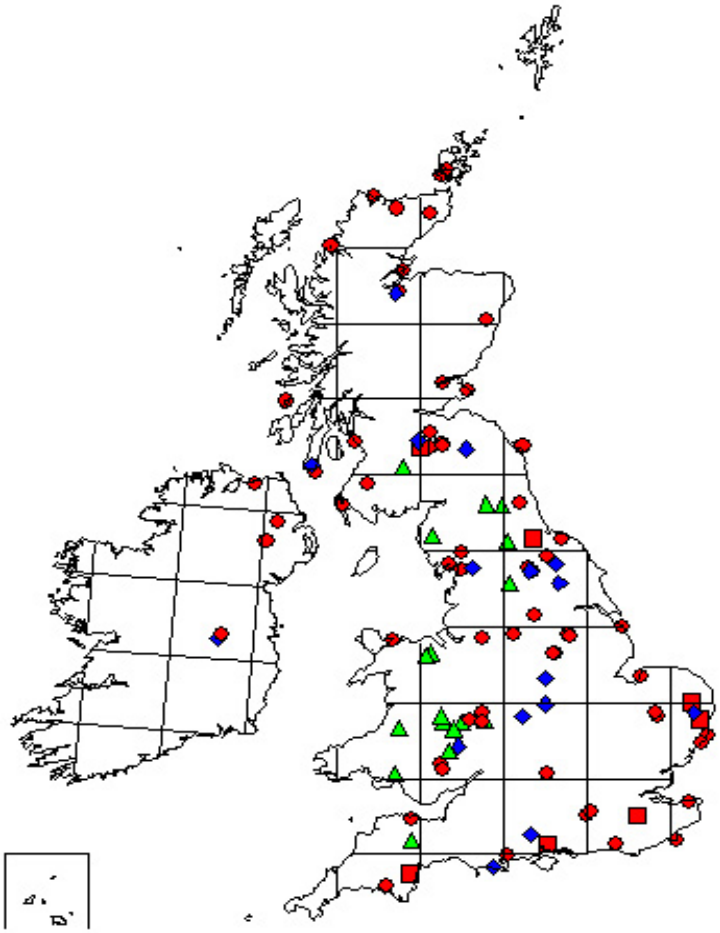
Geographical coverage

The distribution of 2004's active projects is shown below. RAS has drawn an excellent response from ringers throughout Britain & Ireland. In all there were 69 in England, seven in Wales, 31 in Scotland, and seven in Ireland including two in the Republic.

Sand Martin projects are distributed very widely – but is there scope for more in southeast England? House Sparrow projects are also widely scattered. Pied Flycatcher studies cover the main range of the species very well, from Devon north through Wales, the Welsh borders, and northern England, to Galloway.

RAS projects active in 2004: Pied Flycatchers (triangles), Sand Martins (diamonds) and House Sparrows (squares) are shown separately from other species (circles).

Map by DMAP, by courtesy of Dr Alan Morton.



Ringing Wood Warblers for RAS

Since I started ringing Wood Warblers in 1976, I have ringed a total of 1,672, which is a fair proportion of the total number of this species ringed in the UK. These have mainly been nestlings and only in the last couple of years have I had the opportunity to catch and ring more adults. Catching Wood Warblers is certainly a challenge, as they seem to spend most of their time in this country in the tops of tall oak trees.

I decided to make a study of this species as a RAS project in 2003. My study area is Horner Wood, near Porlock in Somerset. Principally a mature sessile oak woodland with little undergrowth, it is an SSSI and covers some eight square kilometres near the northern edge of Exmoor.

Wood Warblers begin to arrive at the site in the middle of April. I make my first visit to the wood usually towards the end of April to assess the number of singing males by listening for their distinctive song. Early in the season, before there is too much leaf cover, is a good time to get a clear view of the birds and see if any of them are already ringed! It is very difficult to establish accurately, from this first visit, the numbers of males that will stay to breed, as many seem to be just passing through and do not remain on a particular territory.

The next visit is during the second week of May when some of the Wood Warblers have paired up and nest building is under way. It is important to know the alarm call at this stage of the nesting cycle, which is a "*pew*" call, uttered every two to three seconds by the female whilst building. My wife assists me on these trips and has a very good ear for picking out the calls.

Finding nests

Fortunately, Wood Warblers nest on the ground and so one does not have to risk life or limb to find the nest. With patience, it is possible to locate the nest site by following the female. It is worthwhile having a good look at any Wood Warbler on the ground at this time of the year, because it might be picking up material to carry to the nest.

If you find a nest this early in the season, it is sometimes a problem to relocate it several weeks later when the vegetation has grown up. One area looks very much like another! I use a digital camera to record the nest, with its surrounding features, for ready identification on a later visit.

It can be more difficult to find nests during incubation, as the female sits very tightly and will not leave the nest until approached within two or three feet. While the female is off the nest, feeding, she makes a similar "*pew*" alarm call and she can be watched back to the nest by careful observation. The male may sometimes attempt to chase her back to the nest.

Photo: John Webber

The first young hatch towards the end of May, with the majority of nests holding young in the first two weeks of June. This is a busy period: nests are easiest to find now, with the parents regularly returning to the nest to feed the nestlings. They drop down gradually from the tree canopy, usually making their final descent to the ground from a branch overhanging the nest. The parents will be alarm calling on their return to the nest from the canopy, the male and female birds having distinctly different tones.

The nest is usually built on sloping ground with the entrance hole facing downhill. As the adults leave the nest they tend to fly out across the valley without immediately gaining height. A two-shelf net about four to five metres long is used, which is fairly quick to erect and take down. The net is set about two to three metres downhill from the nest and after about half an hour it will usually have caught the nesting adults. I only attempt to catch the adults when they are feeding young: at this stage, they readily return to the nest after being trapped.

Details of all visits to the nests are recorded under the Nest Record Scheme, which adds to the knowledge obtained from the project.

The nesting season is usually finished by the end of June or beginning of July and the Wood Warblers soon disappear from the area. By the beginning of August the birds are returning to their winter quarters. The latest Wood Warbler that I have caught was a first-year bird in my garden in West Somerset on 14 August 1996.

Over the years a number of ringed Wood Warblers have been spotted in the wood and in 1989 an attempt was made to retrap some of these individuals. Two nesting adults were caught. One had been ringed in the nest in the same area three years before and the other was returning after four years. At the time, this was the longevity record for Wood Warbler in Britain & Ireland. Many more year-to-year retraps can be expected now that adults are being caught regularly. There has only been one recovery away from the ringing area and this was of a bird ringed as a nestling in June 1987 and controlled at Sandwich Bay, Kent, on 4 August 1988.

The results of the RAS project for the first two years of operation are 41 adults and 122 nestlings ringed, three birds retrapped (returning to the wood in the following year), another two ringed birds seen but not caught, and 28 nest record cards completed.

The photo opposite, taken on 17 May 2004, shows a female on the nest. She had been ringed as a nestling, one of a brood of six, on 31 May 2003. This bird laid six eggs in 2004 and successfully raised five young, which left the nest in the first week of June. Her sister was recaptured at another nest site on 9 June where she raised a brood of four.

From my experience the local Wood Warbler population has shown a substantial decline over the last 30 years. There are areas within the wood that no longer have any Wood Warblers holding territory but would have held several pairs in the past. I believe this is due to the food supply, and this can be confirmed by examining the leaf canopy for caterpillar damage. Where the trees show greater leaf damage the population is high, the birds being absent from other areas where the leaves are unblemished.

The main hazard associated with this operation for the ringer comes from ticks, which are prevalent here and can carry Lyme Disease. It is wise to try and protect oneself by covering up as much as possible and by carrying out a careful examination later at home.

If other ringers paid more attention to this attractive warbler, I am sure the results would be interesting, and much new information would be gathered.

I am grateful to the National Trust for granting permission to conduct this project on their property.

John Webber

Hatched, matched, dispatched!

In 1993 I started to colour-ring adult and pullus Common Sandpipers in the Moorfoot Hills, Scottish Borders, to try and find out a bit more about the local population, and also to complement (I hope) the important and long-running study in the Peak District by Derek Yalden and Phil Holland.

It was a logical step, therefore, to register the project for RAS, when that scheme was started in 1998. This also coincided with the start of a PhD study on this population by Allan Mee, who greatly boosted the numbers of adults ringed and retrapped, using mist nets, baited spring traps and nest traps.

In addition to RAS work per se, colour ringing has also produced sightings of birds away from the study area. It was with interest, therefore, that I read on the excellent BTO Migration Watch web pages in May 2004 of a colour-ringed Common Sandpiper found dead in Wiltshire. I contacted Dawn Balmer who supplied the ring number, and further brief details of the bird (NV82841) were posted on the web site as a follow-up for Migration Watch contributors.

I present opposite a family history of this bird, thanks entirely to the benefits of colour ringing and resighting. The local movements revealed are not spectacular in terms of distance, but are of interest to the breeding ecology of the species, and of course, to the RAS scheme.

Photo: Derek Belsey

The Wiltshire finding also highlights how well BTO surveys can integrate, in this case RAS and Migration Watch. ***[BirdTrack now replaces Migration Watch, of course. Log onto*** www.birdtrack.net ***to see how to take part. Eds.]***

I am grateful to the various landowners, gamekeepers and shepherds who allow me access to their ground and tolerate my activities. Thanks also to Derek Yalden for all his help over the years.

NV82841 – a short biography

- One parent of our bird (CS41, for short) was NV75760, a bird ringed as an adult at Garvald Lodge, Moorfoot Hills, on 3 May 1995: it raised chicks at this location in 1995 (2), 1996 (3) and 1997 (4), but was not seen subsequently. CS41 was one of the brood of three, ringed on 8 June 1996.

- CS41 was not seen again until 9 June 2002, at Whitehope (6 km to the south). He was mated to female NV94590 (CS90), a bird ringed as an adult at Williamslee (3 km west of Whitehope) on 8 May 1999. The first sighting of CS90 after ringing had been back at Williamslee on 20 May 2001. Her then mate, NV94691, had been ringed as a chick at Colquhar (3 km southeast of Williamslee) on 13 July 1999, and was not seen after 2001.

- CS41 and CS90 produced a brood of three in 2002. In 2003, they were back at the same locality and raised a brood of three.

- CS41 was found dead near Devizes, Wiltshire, on 22 April 2004, in his eighth year. CS90 was retrapped on 8 May 2004 at Whitehope, as a gravid female, possibly mated to NW05594, a previously unringed adult male. Her nesting attempt failed that year.

Tom Dougall

Some examples of longevity in *Acrocephalus* warblers

An existing long-term study of Reed Warblers at Rostherne Mere in Cheshire, based on nest finding and the ringing of nestlings, has been greatly enhanced by efforts to catch and monitor the adult population within the RAS project.

Some Reed Warblers can be exceptionally long-lived for a small UK passerine, with the oldest recorded so far living for over 12 years. Though this is already widely known, it is nevertheless rewarding to mist-net old birds and to build up valuable case histories.

On 27 June 2004 I was pleased to catch an adult male, which I had also trapped in 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002. I ringed this bird as an adult on 22 July 1995, so it must have at least been approaching its tenth birthday. I thought this bird was likely to be the patriarch of the Reed Warbler colony but I was in for a surprise.

On 6 July 2004, I netted an adult male, also trapped in 1997 and 2000, and was amazed to find that I had marked it as an eight-day-old chick on 4 July 1993. I wondered whether this, at eleven years and two days, would be the oldest-known passerine originally marked as a nestling, but was told that a pullus Reed Warbler, ringed at Rye Meads, Hertfordshire, in 1983, had survived for 45 days beyond the age of the Cheshire bird.

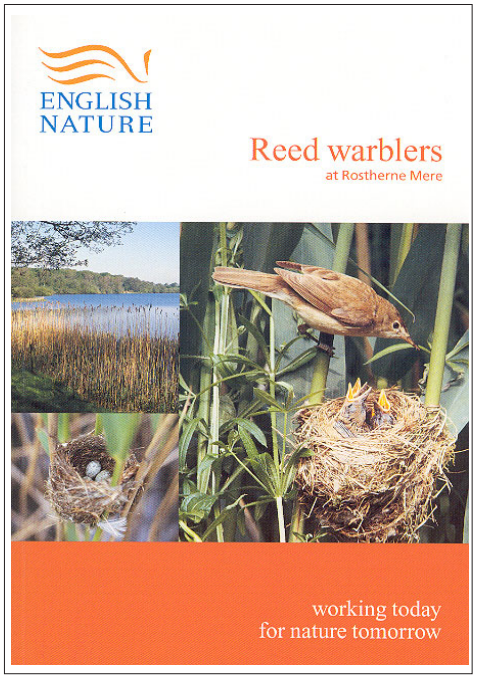
Overall, within the thirty-two seasons of my project, I have caught nine Reed Warblers which have survived six years after ringing. As well as the eleven-year-old bird, others have appeared after nine years (3), eight years (2) and seven years (3). A sibling of one of the nine-year-old birds was netted six years after its pullus ringing date. A curious observation is that of the nine long-lived birds, seven were males and two were females!

An analysis of the ages on recapture of known ringed pulli and juveniles has suggested an annual adult survival rate of approximately 60% (which fits well with the findings of other researchers – and is high for a small passerine, particularly one that migrates annually to tropical Africa). Thus, perhaps 2% of birds live beyond six years of age.

At the same location, a Sedge Warbler, first encountered as an adult male on 23 May 1997, has been trapped on site in eight consecutive seasons, being most recently netted on 15 May 2004 – so it is not just Reed Warblers that can be retrapped years later.

The 2005 season promises new challenges!

Malcolm Calvert



Reed Warblers at Rostherne Mere

English Nature has just published Malcolm Calvert's account of Reed Warblers at Rostherne Mere in Cheshire, based on 32 years of study. The report is in A5 paperback format, with photographs, and will no doubt raise great interest among conservation professionals and reedbed ringers. It is available from English Nature, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury, SY4 4TW, at £10, including p & p.

Swallows at a Danish farm

Thellesen, P.V. 2000. [Barn Swallow studies at a Danish farm, 1971–1998.] *Dansk Ornitologisk Forenings Tidsskrift* 94: 5–11.

Although the aims of this project were not specifically to estimate adult survival, its broader findings are of considerable interest in a RAS context. In the UK, the close collaboration of ringers undertaking RAS studies of Swallows has thrown up a number of questions regarding the breeding biology and return rates of the species. This paper goes some way towards answering those questions. It is written in Danish, but has a full summary in English.

The study concerns a population of Swallows monitored during 1971–98 at a farm in Hjortkær in southwestern Jutland. As in many RAS projects, the population size was fairly small, at 13–29 pairs. In total, 884 broods were recorded during the study period, of which 860 were of known size. At the time of ringing, the average sizes of the first and second broods were 4.37 young and 3.93 young respectively. Thellesen discovered a wide variation between years, from 40% to 95%, in the proportion of pairs laying a second clutch. The overall figure was 68%, which is slightly more than reported in other Danish studies. The average number of young raised per season per pair was 7.1.

Local recoveries or controls of ringed young suggest that juvenile Swallows left the breeding site about three weeks after fledging. Of the Swallows ringed as young and controlled or found dead during the same summer, 137 were near the ringing site and nine were found more distantly at up to 13 km from the ringing site (eight within 2.3 km).

A total of 93 ringed birds were known to have returned to the farm (or the near surroundings) after one or more winters. The returning birds comprised 0.8% of the nestlings ringed, 1.8% of the fledged young and 20% of the adults. There were only three ringed birds reported from other countries (Switzerland, Spain and Morocco), and a bird ringed on Corsica in spring was discovered breeding in Hjortkær later in the same year. The data tabulated below indicate a relatively short lifespan.

Using information from the national point-count programme as well as local counts, annual fluctuations in the Danish Swallow population were attributed to the conditions prevailing along the migration routes and in the winter quarters. In contrast, a downward long-term trend in the Danish point-count index is considered to be an effect of changing agricultural practices in Denmark.

Dawn Balmer

As well as producing estimates of adult survival, RAS has the potential also to unveil interesting biological information similar to that described here. We encourage RAS ringers where possible to collect additional information about their study species, for example to monitor population size, complete nest record cards (see page 11) and ring pulli. Eds.

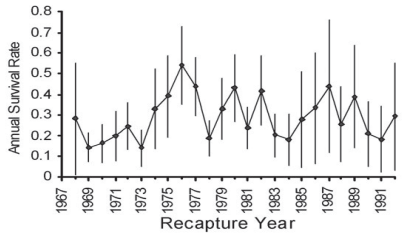
Number of years after ringing when 93 individual Swallows were controlled at the ringing site (some were seen in more than one year). Data from Thellesen (2000).

Years	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Ringed as nestling	19	10	6	4	1		40
Ringed as juvenile	3	2					5
Ringed as adult	46	21	4	2	1	1	75
Total	68	33	10	6	2	1	120

Changes in Sand Martin survival rates

Cowley, E. 2005. Rain in winter, rain in summer: life and death for the Sand Martin. *BTO News* 257: 8-9.

Cowley, E. & G.M. Siriwardena. 2005. Long-term variation in the survival rates of Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*: dependence on breeding and wintering ground weather, age and sex, and their population consequences. *Bird Study* in press.



Graph from Cowley & Siriwardena (2005)

Although the data collection for this study pre-dated RAS, these papers set a perfect example of how a RAS-type project can contribute long-term data on survival rates that themselves feed into integrated population studies, publishable in a world-class journal.

Ted began ringing Sand Martins in a 400-km^2 area of north Nottinghamshire in the early 1960s, and has published previous papers from this study in *Bird Study* (1979 and 1983) and *Ringing & Migration* (1999 and 2001). Data collection finished in 1992, but the value of the ringing and recapture information accumulated is still being realised.

The new paper draws on the statistical expertise of Gavin Siriwardena to find the correlates of the annual survival rate, using up-to-date modelling methods. It sets out to answer the following questions: (1) did Sand Martin survival rates vary over time, (2) did males and females experience different survival rates, (3) did changes in survival over time differ between males and females or between adults and first-years, and (4) could the changes in survival over time be explained by changes in Sahel rainfall or in weather on the breeding grounds.

The figure shows the weighted mean annual survival rates for Sand Martins in north Notts during 1968–92, with the 95% confidence interval. It's clear from this that survival rates did vary between years. This is exactly the information that RAS projects should be aiming to collect.

Survival of males and females varied in the same way from year to year. Like previous work on Sand Martins, this study suggested that survival rates for females were somewhat lower than for males, but more emigration by females away from the colony may explain this pattern.

There was a positive correlation between survival rates and Sahel rainfall, as had been shown by other studies. A negative effect on survival, and on population size in the following year, of June rainfall during the breeding season is important new information from this paper. Data on population size were also drawn from the same north Notts study.

In his *BTO News* article, Ted calls for funding to enable members to draw on staff help to prepare papers for the major scientific journals, where increasingly complex analyses are becoming a requirement. In this instance, Gavin gave generously of his own personal time. ***If you are thinking about analysing your data for possible publication, please contact Rob Robinson – though no guarantees can be made. Eds.***

News items

Change of RAS organiser

Owing to new responsibilities in her work for BTO, Dawn Balmer retired as RAS organiser during autumn 2004, having been responsible for the day-to-day running of the scheme since its inception. She will continue other connections to ringing projects, and remains as CES organiser.

Much of Dawn's time is currently taken up with BirdTrack, the new web-based scheme for bird recording (www.birdtrack.net). BirdTrack developed from the Migration Watch project, which operated in the springs of 2002–04.

BirdTrack is an exciting new project that will look more closely at migration movements of birds throughout Britain and Ireland at all times of year. It will also study the distributions of scarce birds in Britain and Ireland. BirdTrack provides facilities for observers to store and manage their own records and for forwarding records to county bird recorders. The results will contribute to knowledge of birds and to their conservation at national, regional and local scales.

New version of IPMR

Mark Cubitt has been putting in a lot of hard work to improve IPMR even further and a new version (2.2) will be released in the summer. Amongst the many enhancements, submitting RAS and CES totals has been made much simpler: all files required can be submitted by clicking a single button. Upgrading and transferring databases is now very straightforward, so we would encourage everyone to upgrade when the new release is available.

A creature of habit

An individually colour-marked Blackbird, ringed as part of one of Jeff and Allison Kew's RAS projects in Thetford has recently made national news headlines by turning up in a birdwatcher's garden in Devon during successive winters, while spending the breeding seasons in Thetford. It was ringed as a juvenile male in July 2003 and was still present at the end of September. By Boxing Day it was in Newton Abbot, where it was recognised by its unique combination of red and blue rings, and remained there until at least mid February, but by late May 2004 it was back in Thetford. In 2004–05 it was again seen in the Newton Abbot garden between late December and mid February. Its return to Thetford in March this year caught the media's attention.

Photo: Jeff & Allison Kew

This occurrence highlights the importance of registering all colour-marking schemes through BTO, so that we can be confident that ring combinations are indeed unique! Eds.

RAS Forum

Don't forget that, alongside the BTO Ringers' Forum, there is a separate RAS email forum.

Threads that relate specifically to RAS-type studies are relevant here, while more general ringing topics should be raised on the Ringers' Forum.

The RAS Forum provides a rapid way to share information with other ringers, and to learn from their experience. In 2004, topics included Swift nestlings and a preview of Malcolm Calvert's information on longevity in *Acrocephalus* warblers.

To subscribe to the RAS Forum, please send a blank email to:

rasforum-subscribe@yahoogroups.co.uk

Counting your adults

With luck, perseverance, and a lot of hard work, your RAS capture data may eventually provide a long-term trend in survival rates for the birds in your study area. This should help to show whether changes in survival rates have been important in determining any changes in population size, and so feed through into conservation measures if any are needed. The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey would normally be drawn upon for the information that would be required on population trend.

A population count as part of the RAS study adds greatly to the value of RAS capture data, because together they show the population size and survival rate changes that have occurred in the same study area. Local counts may therefore be of more relevance than BBS in this context, for example where population change has not been uniform across the country. They are of particular value for species like Barn Owl, Pied Flycatcher and Wood Warbler, that have a BBS sample of fewer than 50 squares – too small to allow meaningful estimation of population change at regional level.

Your annual count of adults should normally be not many more than the number of individual adults you log in your RAS study. If it is, some re-design of the study may be needed to record a higher proportion of the adults annually within your study area.

Few RAS studies can boast a long-term mapping census of the site (as is the case for Robins at Treswell Wood), however, most RAS observers provide counts based on their observations during searches for ringed or unringed adults. The more accurate these counts can be, the better!

Recording the nests

The Nest Records Unit would be very pleased to receive records of any breeding attempts that you come across during the course of your RAS study. We're particularly keen to receive records of open-nesting species such as warblers, buntings, larks and finches, but submissions made for any species will be greatly appreciated. Records involving at least one repeat visit to the nest are particularly valuable, as they permit failure rates to be calculated and may allow laying dates to be determined with greater accuracy. If you're submitting nest records via IPMR, your database is already likely to contain the relevant site and habitat information as this will be associated with your ringing site, so you'll only need to input the visit dates and contents of the nest.

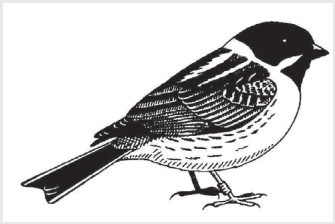
If you'd like to participate in the Nest Record Scheme (NRS), then please email us at nest.records@bto.org, mentioning your RAS scheme. For more information about NRS, visit our website at www.bto.org/survey/nest_records/index.htm.

A reminder

Annual totals of adults and of nest records are requested on the RAS summary sheet. We distribute this as a blue paper form, and it is also available for download at www.bto.org/ringing/ringinfo/ras/index.htm. Please remember to submit your summary sheet annually to ensure all the relevant information for your RAS study is on file. The summary statistics currently available in IPMR (under 'Summary Details' and 'Annual Summary Report') are only a partial substitute. Improvements to these automated reports are in the pipeline, however (see page 10).

If yours is a nestbox species or if you have a more general interest in the topic, you may be interested to know that 38 pages of extracts from the 1993 edition of the BTO *Nestbox Guide* are now available for download from the BTO website. Some of the species accounts and other material are not available in the 2003 edition of the guide. This is a first step towards providing more comprehensive information on nestboxes via the website.

In this context, of course, 'nestboxes' includes all kinds of boxes, platforms, rafts, nesting baskets and even wigwams!



RAS News

The British Trust for Ornithology's newsletter for its Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) scheme

Issue 7

April 2005

BTO
The Nunnery
Thetford
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The Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) scheme is funded by a partnership of the BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (on behalf of English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales, and also on behalf of the Environment and Heritage Service in Northern Ireland), the National Parks & Wildlife Service (Ireland), and the ringers themselves.

RAS contacts

If you would like to get in contact with other ringers working on particular RAS species, the following RAS ringers have offered their services as the first point of contact for their own subjects of study. Please use their contact details, as below. For other species and all other enquiries, please contact BTO HQ.

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